

Elena del Rivero

NINE BROKEN LETTERS

(November 2002-May 2004)

May 19 - June 19, 2004

Opening: Wednesday, June 19, 6 to 8PM

Cristinerose | Josee Bienvenu Gallery is pleased to announce *Nine Broken Letters*. This is Elena del Rivero's first one-person exhibition with the gallery. Elena del Rivero's installations are rooted in estrangement and recollection, with paper, pearls, thread, and sound serving as primary materials for such activities as sewing, drawing, reading, and talking.

Work and daily routine intermingle in her oeuvre to become one; whether work becomes daily routine or daily routine becomes work is the tight rope which she traverses. She has found in paper a perfect medium to recreate the fragility of life. Paper doesn't relate to grand narratives. It has almost a "domestic" connotation.

The best known body of work are her letters, especially her Letter to the Mother. More than 4,000 letters have been written up to now. They very much relate to visual poetry, and are obsessive and difficult to decipher at first glance. Her diary kept for eleven years depicts the same drawing everyday stating the time and place and the minutes to accomplish it. Recently, she has incorporated her diary into the sides of her paintings, combining diary, paintings and stitching and furthermore enlarging the idea of painting into installations that dialogue with other means of creation like crafts in which she is very interested. Her recent show in Madrid BROKENCLOUD introduced a dialogue of paintings with tapestries of clouds produced at La Real Fabrica de Tapices in Madrid in the old 18th century tradition from the time of Goya.

Elena's oeuvre, however, includes labor intensive paintings as well as photographic support works: her tableaux vivants which include "Las Hilanderas" "Elena and Rrose" and "Heloise over a sea of fog". Trained as a painter and printmaker, her work has expanded to include different supports according to the needs to express her subject matters. She holds a degree in English Literature as well as studies in music composition; both bear a great influence in her.

This exhibition consists of works on paper and a sound installation. Elena del Rivero wrote these nine letters in broken English during nine consecutive sleepless nights while she was displaced from her studio home at Ground Zero after the attack on 9/11.

The Letters were hand-calligraphed in light gray on 60 x 40 inches watermarked abaca paper produced by Dieu Donne Papermill for the project. The font *Aksidens Grotesk* used in capital letters makes the reading more difficult and at times confusing. Concurrently, the letters are read out loud by the artist and translated simultaneously into Spanish. English and Spanish are blended into a monotonous dialogue. The artist was coached by the performance artist Shelly Hirst.

Nine Broken Letters is a statement about language and the impossibility of communication. The work takes place in a space of nonexistence, a delirium of memories, sound and words. The sheets of paper on the wall become ghost-like drawings, they are like foot prints echoing confessional literature. *Nine Broken Letters* bear no relation to real situations or persons. They strictly belong to the realm of fantasy and dreams.

Elena del Rivero was born in Valencia Spain. She has been living in New York since 1991. Exhibitions of the past three years include: Museo Nacional Centro Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Galeria Elvira Gonzalez, Madrid; The Drawing Center, New York; Art in General, New York. Her work is included in the collection of Yale University Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC; the Fogg Art Museum, the Museo Nacional Centro Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, the Judith Rothschild Foundation, La Caixa Foundation.