Gender, Visual Culture and Explorations of ‘Africa’ in Christine Dixie’s *Parturient Prospects*

Dixie is well known for her insightful explorations of the ways in which a construction of gender identities is informed by histories of representation, particularly visual images. *The Interior* is both a map of the African continent and a diagram of female reproductive organs, and includes allusions to both geographical and medical discourses from early modern Europe.

References to geographical and medical discourses are coupled with allusions to religious representations from historically Western visual sources. In synthesizing references to different kinds of visual histories, Dixie comments on the ways in which they use devices to construct woman as “other” and to situate her as a voiceless ‘object’ rather than an empowered ‘subject’. More significantly, her works challenge their authority. By invoking simultaneous allusions to visual discourses that are normally kept discrete from one another, Dixie’s works make evident their gendered underpinnings. And by reworking motifs from the representations which serve as her sources, she interferes with their meanings. In keeping with a strategy adopted by many feminist artists working in postmodernist frameworks, Dixie uses ‘otherness’ as a position of strength and a place from which she can transgress inherited norms and understandings.


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*The Interior*, 2006, 3470 x 3000cm, linocut, woodcut, latex, stitching.

This large work is suspended from a pole that runs along the top inside seam. Along the top register of the ‘map’ replacing the harbours depicted in the original map of Africa by de Bleu, are eight ‘birthing trays’. These form the basis of the *Birthing Tray* series.
Birthing Tray Series: 9 Digital Prints, 830 X 540 cm, 2006. Framed with wooden frame and perspex. Crated