

Translations Gallery
773 Santa Fe Drive
Denver, CO 80204
www.translationsgallery.com

Sam Bennett

Laura Splan

Jeff Hand

Lindsay Obermeyer

Christine LoFaso

Adrienne Outlaw

Essay By:
Ruth McDougall, Assistant Curator,
Queensland Gallery of Modern Art



It sounds slightly irritating, if not macabre to go 'under the skin'. Especially when asked to travel in the company of artists rather than under the trained 'objective' eye of medicine. Yet the works in this exhibition about our messy insides, exude a certain allure.

Engaging with the structures and rhythms of fibre and its processes Samantha Bennett, Jeff Hand, Christine LoFaso, Adrienne Outlaw, Lindsay Obermeyer and Laura Splan manifest more than just visual records of what lies under this vital organ of our bodies. Parallels between sinews and thread, skin and fabric, intricate cell structures and beads become sites in which each of the artists creatively engage with their insides. Something of the magic Sinatra grasped in his 1946 rendition of the Cole Porter hit sneaks in...

*I've got you under my skin
I've got you deep in the heart of me'(1)*

Exploring process and material, the artists become intimately involved. As this happens, spaces open up for new understandings and approaches to the physical body. A courtship of sorts begins, full of wonder and a small amount of trepidation.



Sam Bennett
"Acid Reconstruction"
(detail)
2006

For Samantha Bennett the time involved in dyeing, stitching and beading provides an emotional connection to the work and its subject. Cell structures are built up slowly – palpable layers of carefully selected colour, stitched lines and tiny beads. Bennett presents these as long yards of fabric which breathe and respond to the viewers' movement, or as intricately stitched wall hangings inviting closer inspection and creating the desire for touch. Such physical responses and the awareness of the time invested in the work contrasts strongly with the fast pace and resulting alienation of our everyday lives. Bennett reminds us, if momentarily, of another experience of our bodies and their time. Her cells vibrate with this awareness echoing the amazing energy involved in the process of their generation and regeneration.



Jeff Hand
"Human Torso"
48"x36"
Faux fur on board

Jeff Hand uses the soft, warm and often bright colouring of synthetic fur to represent the various organs hidden 'under the skin'. Full of anatomical detail, his Human torso and Human heart translate the shiny, visceral surfaces of organ, muscle and bone into simplified blocks of colour, reminiscent of children's felt boards. Like these boards it is hard not to imagine moving things around - grabbing handfuls of the soft candy coloured ropes of intestines or sticking fingers into the aortic valves. Treated with a sense of delighted fun, Hand rescues our most vital parts from the pages of scientific manuals. They become once more ours.

Christine LoFaso
"Hair Blood" (detail)
Large-format digital print
on silk gauze & silk shantung
(2 panels)
2004



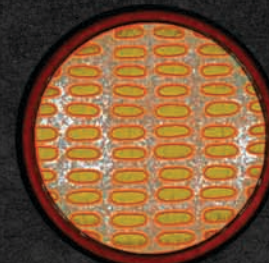
For the Body Project Christine LoFaso invited a diverse range of men and women to respond to a series of questions about their body and their feelings towards it. These often intimate texts are digitally printed on panels of silk along with microscopic imagery of the body including muscle, hair, blood and macrophage cells. Moving around these diaphanous body sized panels, a sense of attraction mixes with horror as colour and imagery sharpen into focus. Such responses meld with the texts and the vulnerabilities they proffer. LoFaso likens this to the process of going 'inside'. Her textiles provide quiet spaces in which to ponder what this has meant for others and may mean for the self.

Adrienne Outlaw is enamored with the intricate processes nature has developed for the protection and survival of different species. In *Fecund* her favorite examples- porcupine quills, spider webs and seed pods - are painstakingly arranged or 'developed' into intricate new forms. These are presented, suspended within funnel shaped casings constructed from the materials we associate with our own cover and protection - leather, wax, wire and fabric. Outlaw is interested in reminding us of the 'possibility of Frankensteinian horrors' (2). As if peering through a microscope at her constructions, viewers are reminded of the scientific impulse to study, change and perfect. Are Outlaw's fragile forms the result of such yearnings taken too far for the creatures involved, or would nature's fecundity have developed these beautiful but untouchable forms anyway? Outlaw's *Fecund* leaves the question open.



Adrienne Outlaw
"Fecund Series"
Installation shot
mixed media,
variable dimensions
2000-2007

For Lindsay Obermeyer, stitching mends the ill body. She closely studies the history and craft of surgery, borrowing tools such as the microscope to see intricate cellular patterns she will enlarge and transform into mesmerizing new views. Like the surgeon, Obermeyer is interested in leaving little trace of her 'handwork' or *Chirurgi* (3). Her stitches quietly draw attention to a key word from a medical manual, shimmer into whirl or pattern or disappear under the reflective surface of a bead. Yet, her rhythmic hand movements physically create vibrant new cells and layers of skin to replace those lost to disease and medical treatments.



Lindsay Obermeyer
"Femur"
Bead embroidery and applique
18" diameter
2006

Laura Splan engages with the seductive qualities of sheer fabrics in her video installation *Underneath*. The flickering of warm flesh tones entices viewers towards an intimate inspection of a cosmetic facial peel. Shot close up the video imagery breaks up into parts that are shimmering veil like patterns and others that become disturbingly recognizable. Splan is interested in challenging our initial responses to different materials and imagery. The discomfort of seeing membranes of skin peeled is mediated by the alluring similarities of the imagery to fabric just as the seductive outcome of the surgery is disturbed by the view of a little too much 'underneath'.



Laura Splan
"Underneath #2"
Digital C-print
20"x20"
2005

It is not only a familiarity with medical imagery and what it has revealed about our bodies that 'touches' us when looking at the works in this exhibition. Our sensate experience of the textiles themselves provides a shifting back and forth between views of our insides and handworked materials, between our mediated experience of the body and our physical presence. The textiles put us intimately in 'touch'.

1. Cole Porter, *I've got you under my skin*, 1936 for *Born to dance*, Eleanor Powell, MGM

2. Adrienne Outlaw, email statement to the author, 18 April 2007

3. The title of Obermeyer's work, *Chirurgi* is the Greek root for surgery and translates as 'handwork'.