

BODY ANXIOUS

CRESSMAN CENTER GALLERY

27 JULY - 25 AUGUST 2007

"Perform your duty to the body with joy but with non-attachment. More and more you will realize this truth, that man is a soul, but has a body; you will no longer dread parting with the fleshy garment."

— Paramahansa Yogananda

"Body Anxious" includes works by seven artists from around the world. In a number of instances, these works are rendered in unconventional media. All the artists represented are connected by themes of hypothetical or real anxiety associated with medical procedures, instruments, and experiences. Each artist explores and translates the human condition: the vulnerability and anxiousness that accompany living in a human and mortal body.

Gottfried Helnwein's painting "Los Caprichos 8" (2006) illustrates a nightmarish image of physical pain; select works from Diana Falchuk's recent "Sweet Remains" (2007) series highlight her minor surgeries on fruit and plant bodies; James R. Southard's photograph "Avoid Agitation" (2007) captures his father's declining mental and physical state due to Alzheimer's; Drew Sellers's musical composition "Suffocating(jag lovar!)" (2007) aurally explores psychological trauma and the toll it takes on the body; Cristin Millett's gynecological tools series (1994), created by combining household items, satirizes real gynecological instruments; Chiharu Shiota's "Angst vor. . ." (2003) photograph, documenting her installation at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in 2003, conveys fear and isolation in the medical world; and Kiki Smith's four prints called "How I Know I'm Here" (1985 – 2000) apprehensively display the external as well as the internal parts of the male and female human body in a frightening garden.

The anxiety that underlies our existence as humans in physical bodies connects all the works in this exhibition. Anxiety is often associated with the human condition because of our precarious biological situation. Our bodies get sick, need surgeries, suffer pain, and eventually die. The power of this exhibition, "Body Anxious," is in its ability to bring together seven artists from six different parts of the world, representing multiple generations, using art-historically unrelated styles, and treating the underlying conceptual theme of anxiety.

Each of these artists gives the audience his or her creative interpretation of the anxiety that plagues us. At the same time the artists illustrate this anxiety in ways that often allow us to experience ourselves through our physical bodies, which ultimately connects us to ourselves and to one another.

— Curated by Jesse Levesque



LOS CAPRICHOS 8 (2006)

GOTTFRIED HELNWEIN

Helnwein studied at the University of Visual Art in Vienna (German: Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Wien). He was awarded the Master-class prize (Meisterschulpreis) of the University of Visual Art, Vienna, the Kardinal-König prize, and the Theodor-Körner prize.

His subject matter is the human condition. The metaphor for his art is dominated by the image of the child, but not the carefree innocent child of popular imagination. Helnwein instead creates the profoundly disturbing yet compellingly provocative image of the wounded child.



UNTITLED (STAPLED KIWI) (2003)

DIANA FALCHUK

Falchuk comes from a family of doctors. With a gastroenterologist father and a surgeon grandfather, Falchuk has always been particularly interested in processes like digestion. She has long been interested in mimicking surgical and digestive processes in her work. This led her to many studies of food doubling as bodies. She scars, discolors, and otherwise degrades an ever-growing collection of bodies — fruits and vegetables, meat, flowers, textiles, and fibers. Then she operates on them with domestic “tools” (e.g., pins and staples). She nurtures these delicate bits of destruction in order to honor what they once were and to give them new life.



AVOID AGITATION (2007)

in one's life cannot be expressed in a single photograph, but rather, in an elaborate replica that shows all aspects of the moment. I would not omit an important portion of an image just because it did not fit in a single frame. Now, more than ever, I hesitate to erase a memory, whether real or photographic."

JAMES R. SOUTHARD

James R. Southard's father has recently been experiencing a declining mental state due to Alzheimer's. His health has taken a sharp turn for the worse in the past few months. Because of his father's extreme memory loss, Southard came to the realization that the ability to reflect on our past is a privilege that is not to be taken for granted. Southard writes, "I feel that vivid moments

DREW SELLERS / SAREDREN WELLS

"Suffocating(jag lovar!)" aims to capture the kind of dread and anxiety experienced in nightmares and /or heightened emotional states of distress, particularly those that follow or accompany traumatic experiences. It is one in a series of songs and compositions that will be included on a forthcoming album titled "Memories are Hunting Horns," slated to be released in early-2008. The album title, taken from a poem by Gustave Apollinaire, was chosen for its reminder of the way in which traumatic events of the past often cast troubling shadows over the future.



EXPANDABLE SPECULUM (1994)

CRISTIN MILLETT

Millett grew up in a house of medical professionals, and was surrounded by discussions, most often at the dinner table, that focused on the human body — its diseases, its symptoms, its diagnoses, and its treatments. She has come to recognize the profound effect that this exposure has had on her art. In an effort to overcome both fear and ignorance of her own body, Millett began to research gynecology as a gender-specific metaphor.

Her first artwork was made in response to her research of a series of obstetrical and gynecological instruments housed in the Göttingen Collection at the University of Göttingen, Germany. After studying the form and function of each historical instrument, she gained a deeper understanding of the tool's significance through the artistic process of re-creating it. However, instead of simply remaking it, she uses common household objects to parody the gynecological instrument, while retaining, to some extent, its original function.



ANGST VOR . . . (2003)

CHIHARU SHIOTA

Chiharu Shiota is from Osaka and has been living in Berlin since 1999. In Germany she gained recognition while still an art student by taking part in group and solo exhibitions. Within two years this led her from the fringe to the center. Shiota has had exhibitions in the Ludwig-Forum in Aachen, the House of World Cultures in Berlin, and the Queensland Art Museum in New York.

The spatial complex of black lines in this piece is threatening, but the lines also create labyrinthine structures, calling at every point for new decisions. Anxiety within the medical world is woven into them, as well as metaphors of electronic webs, new technology, and neural channels.



HOW I KNOW I'M HERE
(1985 - 2000)

KIKI SMITH

Smith was born into a family of artists. Her father was a sculptor, and she assisted him when she was young. Over the years she has continued to work with other artists, printers, performers, and architects. In the late 1970s Smith began to participate in exhibitions with Collaborative Projects Inc. (Colab), a group of artists who shared a desire to make their art more accessible to people outside of the conventional art world.

Smith has explored different aspects of the body in her work — the skeleton and organs, the musculature and skin, the body's fluids and forms, in fragments and as full figures. "How I Know I'm Here" (1985 - 2000), a four-part linocut, includes images of internal and external body parts in a nightmarish garden setting.