

VANCOUVER ART GALLERY EXPLORES THE HUMAN BODY IN NEW EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY ART

VISCERAL BODIES

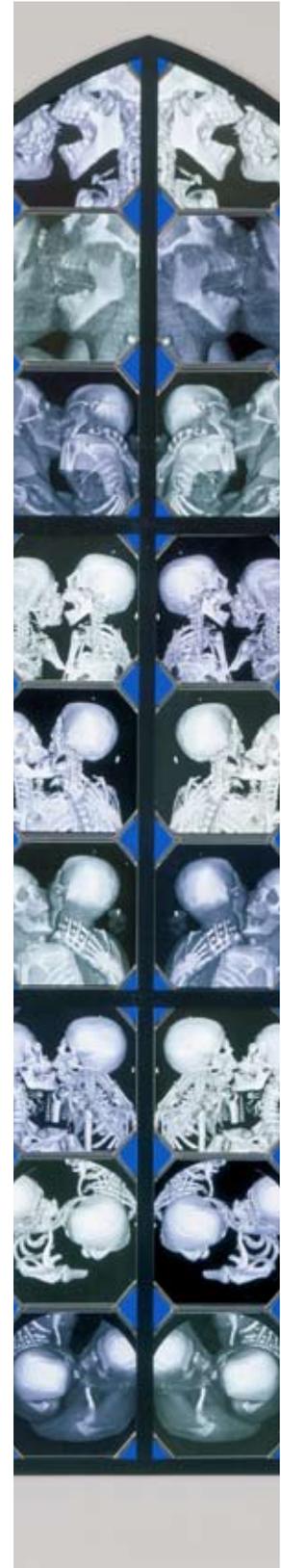
VANCOUVER, BC – *Visceral Bodies*, on view at the Vancouver Art Gallery from February 6 to May 16, 2010, presents some of the most arresting contemporary art investigating the human form produced over the last 20 years. Tracing artistic responses to scientific and medical innovations, the show reveals how perception of the body has shifted from an anatomical fact to a form that is perpetually in flux. Presented in conjunction with *Leonardo da Vinci: The Mechanics of Man*, a landmark exhibition of renowned 16th century anatomical drawings, *Visceral Bodies* draws attention to how the human form is understood in the contemporary context.

“As the world’s athletes gather in Vancouver for the 2010 Winter Games and our attention is gripped by the astonishing capabilities of the human body, we are pleased to present this groundbreaking exhibition of contemporary art focused on the human form,” said Vancouver Art Gallery director Kathleen Bartels. “Together with Leonardo da Vinci’s magnificent drawings, this exhibition represents the considerable history of artists using the body as a subject of anatomical, social and psychological study.”

Fluidly organized into three interconnected themes, *Visceral Bodies* features 20 international artists working in a diverse range of media, including sculpture, painting, mix media, photography and video. The first section considers the body as a site of emotional, political and gendered meanings. Next, the exhibition presents artworks drawing on advances in scientific and medical technologies to explore the physicality of the body in new ways. The remainder of the exhibition envisions a future where the human form is exploded and no longer contained as a definable whole. Often examining the impact of new technologies, the exhibition’s artists vigorously explore and express what it means to inhabit the human body in today’s world. They refute the scientific certainty that finds its roots in the work of artists and scholars like Leonardo da Vinci and question humanity’s ability to fully comprehend its own physical presence.

Artists in the exhibition who approach the body as a symbolic object include Kate Craig, Betty Goodwin, Shelagh Keeley, Teresa Margolles, Wangechi Mutu, Kiki Smith and Sue Williams. These artists create encounters that encourage the viewer to negotiate socially constructed meanings commonly imposed on the human form. Combining anatomical imagery with personal gesture, they explore relationships between clinical representation and subjective experiences of the body. Offering visceral interpretations, they layer personal and cultural narratives on top of the framework of science that typically defines the body’s parameters.

The exhibition continues with the work of artists who draw on advances in medical technologies and the biological sciences to construct new ways of representing the human form. Artists Helen Chadwick, Gabriel de la Mora, Wim Delvoye, VALIE EXPORT, Mona Hatoum, Marc Quinn and Magnus Wallin borrow



the tools of medical imaging to exteriorize the body's internal systems, making what is usually hidden the material for their works. By using these imaging techniques for their investigations, artists highlight how advances in biotechnology have opened up the body to unprecedented levels of surveillance. They explore the seductive quality of these internal views and underscore how medical interpretations of this imagery are informed as much by culture as by science.

Finally, *Visceral Bodies* presents work by artists who question whether our physical form is becoming increasingly irrelevant, and who reflect the cultural anxiety about what the future holds for the human form. The work of David Altmejd, Berlinda de Bruyckere, Antony Gormley, Luanne Martineau, Hiroko Okada and Thomas Schütte prophesize a body that is fragmented, revealing hybrid species and mutated genders, which could be the consequences of biological experimentation. Unconcerned with accurately depicting the body, these artists convey powerful ideas, concepts and fantasies about an uncertain future of the human form.

Countering the modernist image of science as an unquestioned source of progress, the exhibition presents reflections on how the human form can be understood and represented in the genetic age, where the determination of the body is increasingly in the hands of humans.

Presented with:



Wim Delvoye, *Erato*, 2001-2002, steel, X-Rays, lead, glass. Courtesy studio Wim Delvoye, Belgium

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