

The Body, Deconstructed

MFA show glories in sculpture and humanity

Insides out. That's an overarching theme — not that one is expected in a show with such variety — of "OPEN/END," the 2008 MFA show at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art.

Or sometimes, outsides in, as in Jaylene Arnold's *Hibernatal*, a series of four soft, fuzzy biomorphic Schmoo-like shapes on the floor that each feature a small round opening, a black tunnel leading to a slightly off-the-frame video loop. Viewers should squat or kneel on the floor and look at the short, unexplained loops of women and girls while listening to soft music coming from each piece. The tunnels have an obvious vaginal reference, and the images hidden inside have an allusive Nancy Friday *Secret Garden* quality — what's going on with our complex interiors while the exterior looks meek and cute?

Ask Jane Snar, maybe. Her Eva-Hesse-like *Disparities and Deformations* drapes itself dramatically across one large corner of the exhibit space. The work combines globby corporeal masses and gigantic blood vessels, not in a fully literal manner but with enough clarity that the Seuss-like stalks and colors should be decodable. Though by "decodable" I do *not* mean immediately understandable: After all, the interior of the human body, with its weird shapes, smells, textures, drips, goo and gore, holds many

a mystery. The artist says, "This scenario is at first glance alluring, but reveals the grotesque upon intimate inspection." I think the opposite: At first glance, the work looks rather disgusting, but with more time and much more viewing, *Disparities and Deformations* reveals the tender threads holding together our vulnerable selves.

Metalsmith Karrie Harbart focuses on the interior as well, the bumpy, lumpen shapes and colors of guts in *Psychosomatatype*. Some of the shapes literally resemble intestines while others look like unchecked tumors or warts flowering on top of each other. Though Harbart has much experience in the arena of jewelry, she obviously wants to explore the ugly, the deformed, the seemingly gross. Approaching the pieces of the artwork means thinking about growths, moles, all of the skin's imperfections as well as what's moving through the turned and complex length of our digestive tracts. "In my work, I wish to explore the unacceptable/unwanted," Harbart writes in her artist's statement, and indeed she investigates that which most humans would prefer not to think about.

On the wall, Chang-Ae Song's *MASS: The Clod and Cloud* explores human bodies in a very different context. From afar, the long paper works appear somewhat conventional if powerful in their composition and beauty. But a closer look at the graphite pencil/acrylic

paint/photocopy collage shows fragmentary human bodies forming the very "clouds" that looked so calm from across the room. Song's sketched, skillful rendition of human musculature inevitably refers to Renaissance masters like da Vinci and Michelangelo while leaping to concerns of the present — Song writes that images of torture at Abu Ghraib inspired the *MASS* series. The images, drawn and copied and collaged, mask and also mark the body's strength and pain.

Speaking of strength and pain, several other works address physical and emotional strains. Ty Warren's *Aufhebung* (a word which expresses Hegelian tension between preservation and alteration, and which also refers to the lifting of restrictions) combines a projected photo with a video. The video loop, in which Warren performs push-ups until she passes out (though we never see her, only the floor approaching and receding), gets much of its power from the repeated grunts played over the sound system. This is a body being

pushed to its limits. Rani Robinson's *Inside* slyly investigates hands, faces, the intimate meanings of rings and letters and love (between partners? Between a parent and a child?) through video and photography. The unspoken connections leave a liminal space for the viewer to fill in — something about desire, nostalgia, longing, connection ... that's what comes from *Inside*.

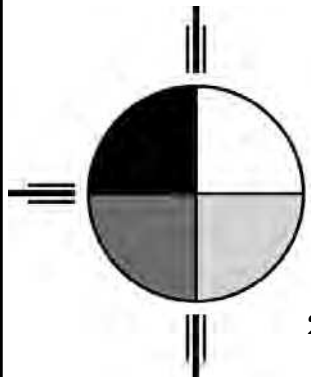
The other six artists in the group present compelling visions as well, from Joshua Jalbert's gorgeously framed variations on natural themes to Johnnie Mazzocco's stills from her film *Found Objects* to Shelley Socolofsky's Beuys-like *Piecework* with its references to weaving, labor and women's lives.

But the show belongs to the body, the inside, the outside, the tests and challenges of remaining in this fleshly form. **EW**

"OPEN/END" stays up at the J-Schnitz through June 15. More info online at jsma.uoregon.edu or 346-3027.



Psychosomatatype, by Karrie Harbart



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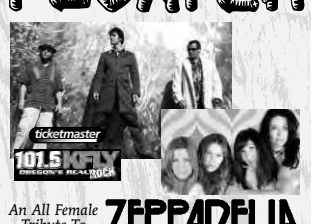


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