

SPLICE: At the Intersection of Art and Medicine

September 20–
November 9, 2013

Opening reception:
September 19, 6–8 PM

Pratt

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At the

Intersection of Art and Medicine

Contemporary Artists:

Ælab: Gisèle Trudel
and Stéphane Claude

Jack Burman

Jack Butler

Andrew Carnie

Dana Claxton

Joyce Cutler-Shaw

Orshi Drozdik

Eric Fong

Terry Kurgan

Patricia Olynyk

Piotr Wyrzykowski

Anatomical Artists:

Elizabeth Blackstock

Dorothy Foster Chubb

Marguerite Drummond

Nancy Joy

Eila Hopper-Ross

Maria Wishart

Curated by Nina Czegledy

Body Beyond by Nina Czegledy

SPLICE: At the Intersection of Art and Medicine aims to investigate changing corporeal perceptions influenced by scientific, social, political, and cultural interpretations. To reach this goal, *SPLICE* presents a scientific gaze of the human body by showcasing historic anatomical art as both complemented and challenged by contemporary artworks.

The human figure has been interpreted and presented in the arts from time immemorial, nevertheless, the realm of medical imagery and the depictions of the human body in the arts inhabit by tradition different domains. During the last century, numerous paradigm shifts have revealed significant questions about the potential loss of agency, while at the same time allowing us new opportunities for expressions of identity. The increased use of technologies has changed how we see ourselves and the world around us. Thus the intended integration of historical material with a careful selection of contemporary works in *SPLICE* represents a significant benchmark in addressing issues of conjecture.

The archival images in the exhibition date back some 85 years. They are rooted in classical traditions yet form a boundary between the history of scientific representations and contemporary interpretations. It was the early anatomist Andreas Vesalius (1514–1564) who broke with medieval traditions and taboos by systematically dissecting the human body so that a detailed scientific view of the “interior” body could emerge. During the last five centuries, a more intimate, private landscape of the human body has been charted in ever greater detail. Today it is viewed with a far wider range of scientifically derived and technically supported methods disclosing features of a previously undreamt inner scale and complexity.

Although traditional anatomical education has changed profoundly during the last century, Maria Wishart’s establishment in 1925 of the Department of Medical Art Service at the University of Toronto remains a pioneering progressive initiative. Now called Biomedical Communication, it continues to be facilitated by contemporary technologies to this day. Once every medical faculty in North America used one of two anatomical textbooks produced in Europe. Then in 1941, Dr. J.C.B. Grant from the University of Toronto initiated the first anatomical atlas developed in North America. Grant was working with a team of highly skilled, predominantly women

artists including Maria Wishart, Eila Hopper-Ross, Nancy Joy, Dorothy Foster Chubb, Elizabeth Blackstock, and Marguerite Drummond, who all became major contributors for this atlas – which is still in print. A selection of their works is featured in this exhibition.

In contrast to such historical illustrations as exhibited in *SPLICE*, contemporary artists take vastly different approaches. Today the body is frequently politicized, symbolized, and even digitized by way of manipulation, to dissection and provocation. The provocation is clearly evident in Dana Claxton and Orshi Drozdik’s work. Claxton weaves together ancestral history, landscapes, wrath, and beauty, taking us on a socio-political journey exploring identity, self, and spirit. *Paint Up #1* (2010) presents a close up of the dancer Joseph Paul’s face, painted in ceremonial colors, confronting the visitors’ gaze leveled at him. Claxton remains an exceptional spokesperson for indigenous self-determination and what she calls the “politics of being aboriginal.” In turn, Orshi Drozdik’s *Brain On High Heels* (1991) questions the exclusive and generalized viewpoints of patriarchal science by utilizing a range of tools often dubbed “women’s devices” that has critically analyzed textual and visual models of authenticity from a women’s perspective.

Deconstructing particularities between scientific and artistic representation, Ælab, Eric Fong, Patricia Olynyk, and Joyce Cutler-Shaw all engage with immediate and technically-mediated perceptions, making us aware that the body has itself become a medium. The works by the artist collective Ælab reflect their deeply rooted interest in art, science, and ecological issues. *Dark Room* (2011) is designed for blackness and tactile sound, evoking the bones, muscles, and nerve network in the body. “Our singularity,” explains Ælab, “lies in the association of experimental and documentary genres as well as interdisciplinary collaboration, elements, and guidelines that we have explored since the unit’s inception.”

Trained as both physician and artist, Eric Fong brings to his work—such as *Phantom RHO* (2001)—both elegant, aesthetic considerations and a distinct analytical point of view. He focuses on the exploration of the body as a technological, ideological, and aesthetic construct, regarding himself “as an artist...rather than attempting to solve problems and looking for consensus, [for] I aim to create new ways of asking questions and encouraging debate about various

issues concerning the human condition.” In parallel, *Orb* (2006) by Patricia Olynyk reveals an exquisite composition combining the artist’s own retina scans with scanning electro-micrographs. She notes: “My installations frequently call upon viewers to expand their awareness of the worlds they inhabit—whether those worlds are their own bodies or the spaces that surround them.”

By Joyce Cutler Shaw’s own admission, *What Comes to Mind* (2012), part of a larger project titled *The Anatomy Lesson*, is an examination of the physical self and human life cycle. “Exploring across the disciplines of art and medicine, I have discovered the medical field to be an arena for the newest forms of body representation,” says Cutler Shaw. “It is at the intersection of art and medical science that new insights in interpreting the physical self can emerge.”

Notions of corporeality directly inform the work of Terry Kurgan, Andrew Carnie, Jack Burman, and Jack Butler. Terry Kurgan’s multi-platform works, such as *Body Parts* (1994), are derived from her photographs. She reveals: “As I try to capture something of the photograph in the making of a drawing, the effect I have invested in the photo is put on standby. In concentrating on the surface rather than trying to dig out anything that was buried, I have found myself thinking that a photo reveals nothing of the temporal substance it ostensibly captures.”

Based on interviews, Andrew Carnie demonstrates in *Lacuna* (2012) the vulnerability, exposure, and resilience of heart transplant patients where “What I am interested in from the science is a ‘spark’, an idea that will make a work, the little ‘nub’ of an idea that will allow

me to make an artwork that has a resonance in the cultural domain.”

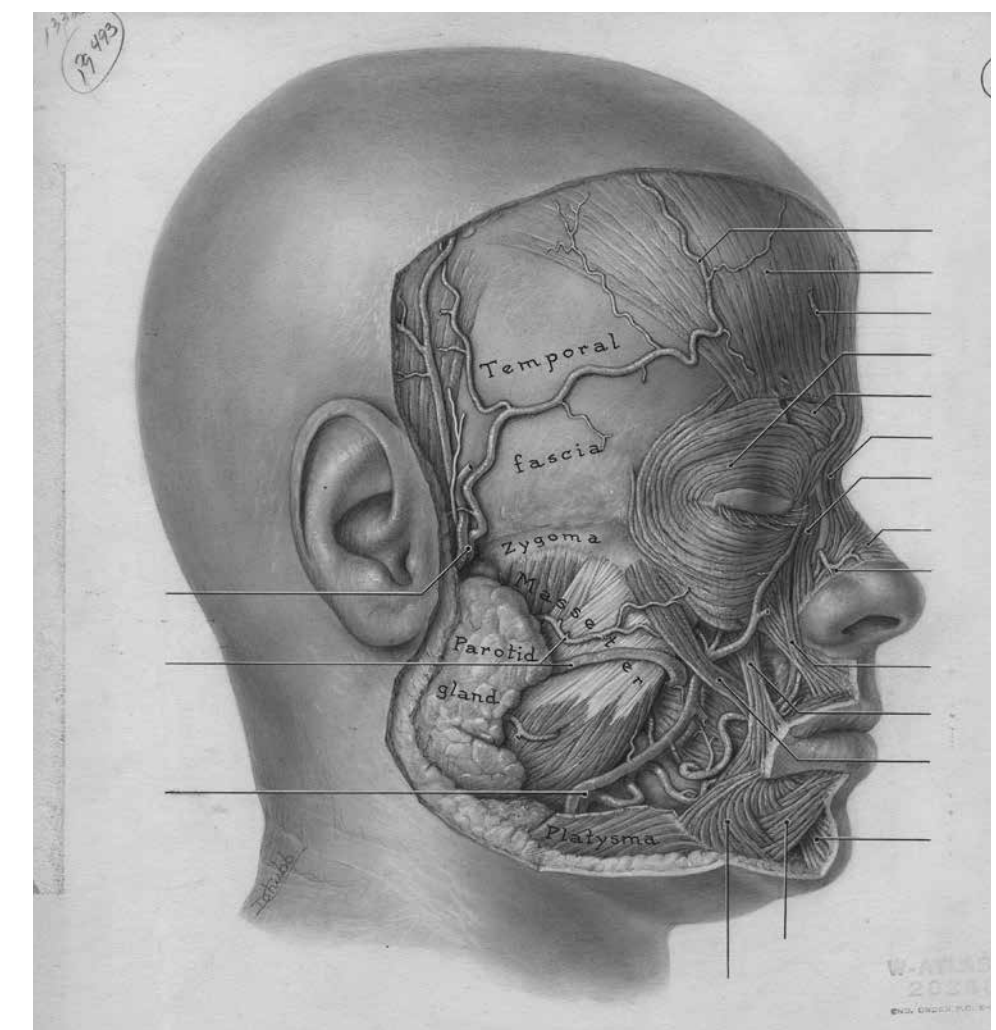
In comparison, Jack Burman deals with ossuaries of the dead, where the preserved and dissected body becomes an object of ambivalent beauty and poetic elucidation, simultaneously riveting and repelling the audience. His passionate approach to the dead also means an intimate approach to what is alive. Jack Butler creates a third space from intimate, body-centered, and sexual internal dialogue including *In the MRI: Coffin and Chrysalis* (2012). He notes: “I draw. Drawing-as-process has taken me into diverse media for the realization of my ideas—extended into sculptural modeling, computer animation, video installation, and performances (often in pedagogical contexts).”

Piotr Wyrzykowski emphasizes technological influences on the perception of presence including the very identity of a human body. His video *Watch Me* (1995) is a visualization of the digitalization process of the artist, one whereby his own body is dematerialized into binary code and wedges of sliding pastel colors.

In these artworks, *SPLICE* exposes the complexity of human anatomy, demonstrating the gift of combining a scientific approach with aesthetic interpretation. It reveals an eclectic and complex picture of the shifting perceptions and paradigms of the human body, challenging established platforms and questioning the role of the human body, both past and future.

Below:

Dorothy Foster Chubb, *Head*, 1942–1945, carbon dust on paper. Collection of Biomedical Communications, University of Toronto Missis-sauga and the Division of Anatomy, Faculty of Medicine.



PRATT MANHATTAN GALLERY

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Nina Czegledy**

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Eric Fong, *Phantom RHO*, 2001, clear acrylic resin, 12 x 7 7/8 x 6 inches.

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