

Some Body Significant

It is distinctly through the eyes of a visionary and the lense of his or her camera that the aesthetic significance of the human form may be realized. Undeniably, the body is an object scrutinized and analyzed on a daily basis, whether through critical self-inspection or peer evaluation. However, in a world of constant movement with shifting grades of light and the natural twitches of flesh, the body is never truly given an idealized moment unless it is taken from the realm of the mundane and projected into that of art.

None of the photographed bodies presented as part of this exhibition belong to anyone “famous”, yet they are now each privy to a celebrated status granted through the immortality of art. A photograph is merely a snapshot unless a distinct intention is made to capture an essence rather than simply an image.

Jill Glessing's *Untitled* sets the tone for this exhibition as a work of meta-photography. The photographs selected may be considered works not so much about the body as about the concept of photographing the body. Exhibited are a variety of specifically constructed images each of which draws upon the voyeuristic tendencies held (to some degree) by all. The subjects within each work remain naturally aware of the viewer's gaze and so the viewer's sense of comfort is heightened while partaking in this otherwise “inappropriate” act.

Even with anonymous figures these photographers have succeeded in constructing scenes that encourage closeness giving the viewer an opportunity to carefully focus upon what would not normally be accessible.

Of the three works selected from Glessing's twelve piece series entitled *The Book of Her Body* the central form, exuding an air of self-awareness, is

placed between two starkly natural symbols of female sexuality. The figure is conscious of an onlooker but is perhaps comforted by not knowing who that viewer may be. *Navigating: Inwomb/Intomb* features a bluntly laid bare female amidst a natural setting. Without a face for identity, the figure assumes a pose akin to an omniscient Earth Goddess. Sexuality is displaced by the warm ideal of maternity. The subject invites and the viewer is drawn without knowing precisely towards whom.

Carrie Bacher's technique is key to her success in the portrayal of nudes trapped within the grace of time that was once a sudden action. Careful shades of passionate colour capture the dynamism of muscularity. Nudity here is a state of nature but the intensity of tone and coyly hidden faces insist that sensuality be admired.

Tho's works create an immediate sense of humility. In the typical viewer because what is portrayed appears to be a primate moment intruded upon (particularly as a result of the cropped edges imitating the view from a crack in a wall). Here maleness is a commodity packaged in plastic wrap (or denim, as the case may be). The men are unaware of the presence of onlookers beyond the scope of their immediate scene. In their state of seeming helplessness is it acceptable to stand and watch them?

Jeremy Mimmagh has created works, which, despite obvious anonymity and abstraction through inflated detail, a feeling of close personal contact is achieved; there is no denying the tenderness emanating from the areas of flesh and skin presented. The textures are real enough to touch.

Ingrid Z offers a unique interpretation of the classic image of a female at her vanity. A moment of privacy when a woman inspects herself before a mirror is redefined and intended for presentation to

the masse. The viewer questions his/her own condition of decency in accepting this opportunity, yet remains unable to resist.

Certainly the works of **Sandra Guinand** does not resonate sensuality, but intimacy is inescapable. The juxtaposition between the readily available, and that requiring closer examination, presents a situation to which a viewer may not normally have access. The camera can reach areas deeper than the boundaries of personal space will ever permit.

André Sebok's work takes the mundane and makes it extraordinary giving dramatic tension to a simple bodily feature through contrasts in lighting and perception. Hence intimacy is understood as a chance to carefully study an object never still for long enough.

The notion that intimacy can be achieved between two parties so disassociated (a gallery patron and an anonymous figure in a photograph) is a stimulating one. That this is possible assures the viewer that the photographer has taken careful consideration in mediating the image by adding to it characteristics (lighting, colour, texture, composition) which will ensure that the viewer become fully absorbed without concerns of committing social taboos. “Bodies” are available at anytime for observation but so rare is the opportunity presented which welcomes it so wholeheartedly. This is thanks to the art of the photographer and his/her desire to present a form for admiration.

Milena Placentile, Curator
Toronto
June 25, 1999

Many of the works on display as part of this exhibition are available for purchase. For further information, or to reach any of the artists, please contact Milena Placentile via e-mail: milena.placentile@utoronto.ca

Special thanks to:

Judi Schwartz for her continual encouragement and support in addition to professional advice; **Jennifer Linton** for outstanding work on the various promotional materials; **Rik MacLean** and **Carrie Bacher** for providing valuable assistance during the installation of the exhibition; and **Fruition** for providing an exception venue to host *Some Body Significant*.

Coming Soon:
Some Body Significant On-line
<http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Exhibit/1408>

Carrie Bacher

After discovering non-silver photography, which provides infinite possibilities for texture and colour, Carrie has been reluctant to return to more traditional forms. The processing for each work is a long ordeal encouraging her devotion to only the images she loves.

Having just completed for BFA at York University, Carrie is looking over her options for perusal of a MFA. Her current project is a series of portraits as she is now focusing on capturing stillness and persona instead of movement as seen in the work displayed as part of this exhibition.

Jill Glessing

A professor of photography at Ryerson, Jill is concurrently working on her Master's Degree in Interdisciplinary Studies at York University. In addition, Jill is actively involved with the Hart House Camera Club at the University of Toronto.

Jill's experimental photographic work usually involves various manipulations and often engages literary and philosophical concerns. Her current project is a book work which included photographs and writing. Its subject is the body in reading, specially, the metaphor of eating in relation to reading.

Sandra Guinand

As a member of Hart House's camera club Sandra has had the opportunity to become more experimental in her techniques. In the series featured as part of this exhibition, Sandra has endeavoured to show that an enlarged detail of body part (in particular the face) may appear similar to a topographical map requiring greater context for understanding. Additionally, Sandra admires the uniqueness of each texture in the face believing that each line may have its own story to tell.

Jeremy Mimmagh

Jeremy feels that in photographing a human form it is best to create images that are segmented thus encouraging the mind to wander. Additionally, Jeremy invites a variety of viewing perspectives hence an interest in abstracted forms.

Having taken courses at Ryerson, Jeremy continues to work artistically. His current project is a photographic study of plants involving a variety of special techniques.

Endré Sebok

Having only picked up a camera for the first time a year ago, Endré is a current member of the Hart House Camera Club. His motivation as a photographer is derived from impulsive passions for certain objects; in this case it was fervent interest in the hands of a friend.

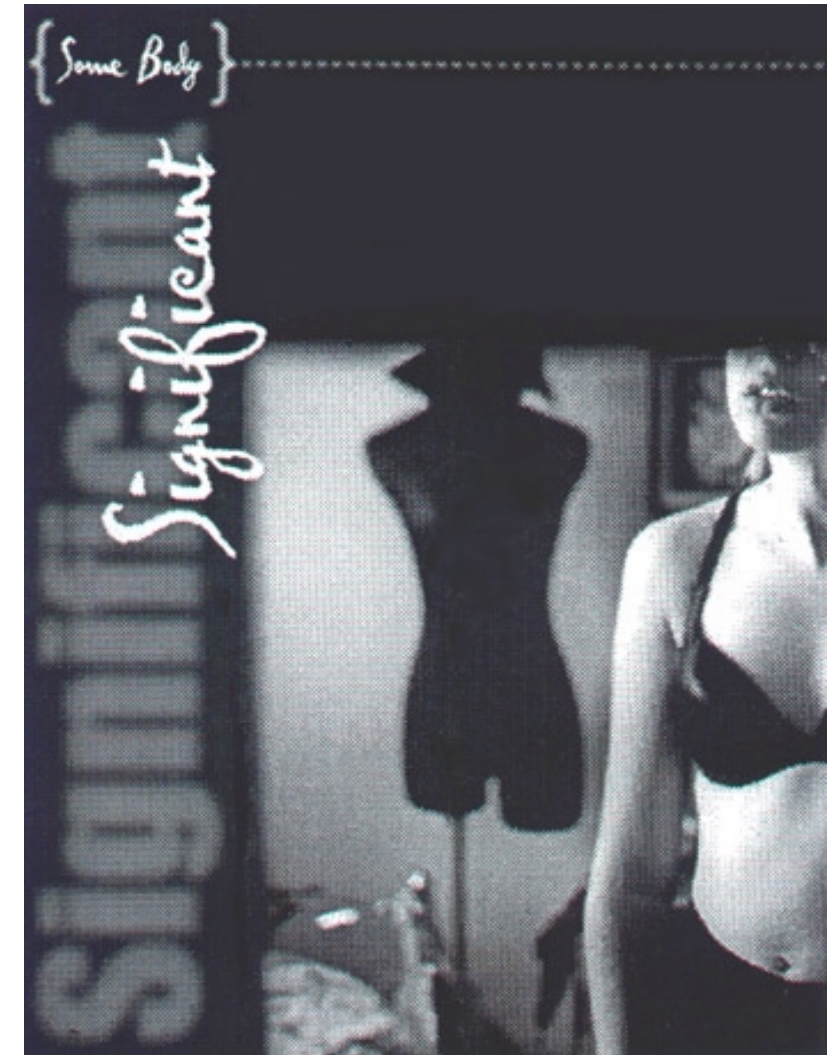
Tho

Tho, currently working on his BFA at York University, works most frequently with human subject matter creating dramatic photographic images laden with intense contrasts of shade, texture and tension. Tho prefers to have his work speak for itself.

Ingrid Z

"The Looking Class sparks interests in the social epidemic of body consciousness. The self-portrait exposes a play of image and body issues as experienced by narcissists, voyeurs and gallery spectators alike."

Ingrid Z is an inter-disciplinary artist also working on her BFA at York University. She creates works celebrating social-ills and thrills.



An Exhibition of Photography Examining Human Form

June 24 – August 28, 1999
Fruition
492 College Street, Toronto ON