



PRESS RELEASE

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From Head to Toe

Summer Review/Fall Preview

*Opening reception: Thursday, June 12, 6-8 PM
June 12 – August 14, 2008*

Thordis Adalsteinsdottir, Blue Noses, Miki Carmi, Margi Geerlinks, Zigi Ben-Haim, Aaron Johnson, Reena Kallat, Shimon Okshteyn, Dennis Oppenheim, Orlan, Don Porcella, Ruud van Empel, Lydia Venieri, Zhang Xiaotao, Su Xiping

Stux Gallery is pleased to present *From Head to Toe*, a rotating exhibition connecting artworks that focus on, or highlight as their subject, the various (and sometimes mysterious) appendages of the human body. Acting as a stand in for a medical laboratory, the rotation of artworks within the Gallery space will allow the curators to play the part of Dr. Frankenstein.

In our consumer society, we are continually exposed to idealized and commercialized body types. In contrast, this exhibition questions such stereotypes, calling into question the reality of our self-representations. Do such images conform to an inner truth, or are they merely carefully contrived falsehoods fabricated by the media for commercial purposes. Through the rotation and juxtaposition of these individual works, what emerges is a monster or golem, which may (or may not) be greater than the sum of its collective parts.

The featured artists embrace the use of new media technologies in a way that echoes both modern genetic science and the uncanny effects of the Surrealists. Where an explosion of hybrid media works continues to challenge the social and cultural pressures exerted on the body, a more organic approach offers the viewer a glimpse of the macabre and grotesque.

On the Artists:

Thordis Adalsteinsdottir's idiosyncratic figurative paintings inhabit a peculiar zone somewhere between realist figuration, cartoons, anime and pure fantasy. The artist's subjects, both human and animal, are often represented as unsettling psychological distortions of their natural physical forms.

Blue Noses (Vyacheslav Mizin and Alexander Shaburov) are the direct heirs of the Soviet revolutionary-acrobatic brigades of the 1920s. Coquettishly hidden in cardboard boxes, their absurd video works show scenes ranging from sexual obscenity to political mockery. Blue Noses are internationally known for their politically provocative videos, photographs and performances which parody Russia's past and present. Their targets include political leaders, sexual and political correctness, and the platitudes of art history.

Miki Carmi explores the details of human physiognomy in an attempt to construct a contemporary icon for the human condition. Through the elimination and subversion of the basic logic of portraiture such as class depiction and narrative scenarios, and by “castrating” the pictorial space through the removal of hair, neck and torso, Carmi creates an uncanny correlation between the surface of the face and the surface of the paintings.

Margi Geerlinks’ disturbing yet alluring photographs make manifest the powerful connection between desire and technology; in these works, which seamlessly intertwine the somatic and the digital, one is tempted to draw the conclusions that while technology itself is born of a basic yearning for a changed reality, the altered vistas of technology in turn can also fuel desire.

Zigi Ben-Haim melds urban elements with those from his native home in the Middle East, creating multi-layered compositions that invite viewers to delve deeper, past the veneer of the works. These highly textured “sculptural paintings” are a testament, not only to existence and survival, but also to Ben-Haim’s determination to create a universe within a universe.

Aaron Johnson references the grotesque by culling imagery from such disparate sources as fashion magazines and psychedelic iconography. His painting process consists of applying acrylic paint and collage elements directly onto synthetic mesh.

Reena Saini Kallat’s ‘Saltlines’ paintings depict the five sensory organs of the body as being overlaid with stylized forms of spillage as though they were secretions of bodily fluids. These forms illustrate drawings of demons sourced from the *Razmnama*, the book of war, with the five organs ejecting hatred and violence in the form of tiny, undesirable parasites.

Shimon Okshteyn’s “sculptural paintings”, are hybrids that combine 2D interpretations of well-known Dutch and Flemish master still-life paintings with 3D easily recognizable contemporary household objects rescued from mass culture. Okshteyn is well known for his monumental and meticulously executed graphite on canvas drawings and sculptures of ordinary objects of historical and / or personal significance.

Attaching humanistic qualities to his large-scale constructs, **Dennis Oppenheim** subverts the fleeting nature of human emotions. Since the early 1970s, Oppenheim has used film, video, installation and sculpture to explore the boundaries of personal risk, transformation, and communication.

Orlan’s Self-Hybridization: Pre-Columbian series focus on the merging of histories, past and present, cultural identity and ideal forms of beauty. In these works, Orlan relies on the advances of technology to assist her in combining her own constructed image with those of Pre-Columbian icons representing the standards of ideal beauty from non-Western cultures.

Don Porcella’s highly detailed, ironic pieces, built of pipe cleaners, precisely examine the nature of cultural ephemera. The iconic “Cheesy Yums” bag, complete with scattered “Yums”, pokes fun at a ‘fast food nation’, whereas “Abdul Jabbar”, a high-top sneaker enclosing a severed leg, delves into the traumatic.

Ruud van Empel’s high gloss and richly saturated photographs, inhabited by seemingly “lost” characters including prepubescent children and digitally collaged landscapes, create a striking balance between the real and the unreal, the possible and the impossible. All of the photoworks are comprised of hundreds of individual photographs that were taken by the artist himself, then digitally compiled to produce what, in reality, would be impossible to capture in one, or even multiple film exposures.

Lydia Venieri’s images explore the juxtaposition of hyper-realistic photographs of war taken from film-stills and the news media to seemingly naïve images of children’s dolls. Positioned, digitally, to fit within the eyes of children’s dolls, the works disarm viewers at first glance, while delivering a potent punch of terror upon further inspection.

Zhang Xiaotao’s paintings are formally ambitious—large in scale, they enlist techniques from both Western and Chinese traditions. While the artist tends to reflect on his immediate surroundings, his approach is usually allegorical rather than strictly narrative. Zhang’s paintings, videos, and installations focus on psychologically charged symbols—feasting ants, moldering strawberries—that suggest and elicit powerful, conflicting affective states: longing and disappointment, desire and disgust.

Su Xinping’s paintings provide the viewer with an observation of China's social conditioning, and express with a skilled hand his personal experience with life at a particular moment. It is the changes in China's realities, on a social and historical level, that have played a substantial role in the evolution of Su Xinping's work. Refusing to follow official or avant-garde trends, instead the artist creates works marked with a reserved introspection.

For further information please contact the gallery at Joshua@stuxgallery.com