



EMBODIED

Artist as Medium

Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth | October 1–December 17, 2022

EMBODIED: Artist as Medium is concerned with the body: with how artists use their own bodies in their work; how the body can be manipulated through pose, costume, or technology to produce meaning; and how society ascribes meaning to bodies. The exhibition seeks to raise questions and prompt new ways of thinking. How does the artist-subject's sex, gender identity, or race impact our readings of their work? What new understandings or possibilities arise because the artist used their own body as subject, medium, material?

In the 1970s, Francesca Woodman posed and wrapped her body to create surrealist compositions—including *Untitled* from the *Eel Series* and *My House, Providence, Rhode Island*—that prompt a serious and emotional consideration of the feminine psyche. Forty years later, in *Rolled Up Mats*, Polly Penrose used her own form to call attention to the enduring art historical tradition of the female nude and hint at her own interiority through self-deprecating humor. By using their own white, nude bodies to assert selfhood and agency, these artists subvert the centuries-long tradition of cloaking white female nudity in allegory to make it available for display.

Hanging near Woodman's *My House, Providence, Rhode Island*, Martine Gutierrez's *Raquel 2* from her *Real Dolls* series features a subject similarly wrapped in plastic and tucked into the corner of a house. Photographed decades apart, both bodies are trapped within the confines of domesticity. In posing as a series of sex dolls, Gutierrez asks viewers to consider what is expected of certain bodies, whether real or not. Playing with each doll's appearance and posture, the artist performs what an imagined heteronormative male consumer desires. What, the artist asks, does the doll's owner want in terms of looks, race, dress, or behavior? By using her own nonwhite, transgender body for this performance of female objectification, Gutierrez critiques the essentializing understanding of desirable femininity as cisgender and white,



challenging viewers to ask how one's body standards are shaped by others' values and desires.

Like Gutierrez, Yasumasa Morimura evokes the language of consumerism to provide a unique spin on gendered expectations in *Aimai-no-bi* (*Ambiguous Beauty*). The artist uses his own cis male body to reprise a highly sexualized *Playboy* photo of icon Marilyn Monroe from 1953. By co-opting a pose recognizable from pop culture and art history as offering the female body for display, Morimura questions gendered norms and assumptions. Both Gutierrez and Morimura highlight the commodification and consumption of certain bodies through the medium of consumer objects: a doll and a fan, respectively.

South African artists Sir Zanele Muholi and Nomusa Makhubu address how violence is inflicted on the racialized Black body and explore the trauma of that lived experience. A visual activist, Muholi has made it their life's work to photograph LGBTQI individuals and communities in South Africa. By turning the lens on themselves in the self-portrait *Sifikile, Nuoro, Italy*, Muholi adds to the record their own queer, Black body, acknowledging their identity and lived experience

I think I chose the body as a subject, not consciously, but because it is the one form that we all share; it's something that everybody has their own authentic experience with.

— KIKI SMITH

as a member of a community still facing discrimination today.

Makhubu addresses contemporary and historical trauma by projecting a colonial photograph onto her own body in *Umasifanisane II (Comparison II)*. Colonial photography from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reduced the Black body to an ethnographic gaze, dehumanizing sitters as objects meant to be recorded and categorized. Inserting her own self-possessed body into this image, Makhubu stands up against that history and asks the viewer to confront not only the past but its legacy today. Through performance, she transforms demeaning colonial photograph into a politically charged image.

Sonia Landy Sheridan was among the first to employ copy machines for personal creative use, engaging in what she considered an interactive give-and-take with technology. She used her body as a material through which to explore the power of technology as an artist's tool, as seen in *Self Portrait with Pig Foetus* and *Thermogram: Female Groin Area Body Print*. Intrigued by skin as an envelope and a boundary, Kiki Smith attempted to render the human body unfolded in prints but only fully achieved her desired effect with *My Blue Lake*, photographing her own body with a rare periphery camera originally designed by Shell for use in geological surveys.

The artists in *Embodied: Artist as Medium* use the body as a site for inquiry and exploration. They contend with issues including race, gender, and sexuality by drawing upon complicated histories and contemporary expectations. As you explore the exhibition, consider how the body—something we all possess—has been racialized, politicized, and culturally marked through time, and how artists can both draw our attention to this fact and help us imagine new possibilities.

Isadora Italia

Campus Engagement Manager

Curator of the Exhibition



CHECKLIST

Martine Gutierrez, American, born 1989. *Real Doll, Raquel 2*, from the series *Real Dolls*, 2013, archival inkjet print. Purchased through a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hazen, by exchange; 2014.25.2

Martine Gutierrez, American, born 1989. *Real Doll, Raquel 4*, from the series *Real Dolls*, 2013, archival inkjet print. Purchased through a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hazen, by exchange; 2014.25.4

Nomusa Makhubu, South African, born 1984. *Umasifanisane II (Comparison II)* from *The Self Portrait Project (2007/2013)*, 2014, archival digital print. Purchased through the Julia L. Whittier Fund; 2014.58.8

Yasumasa Morimura, Japanese, born 1951. *Aimai-no-bi (Ambiguous Beauty)*, 1995, printed fan in Paulownia wood box. Gift of Trevor Fairbrother and John T. Kirk; 2010.88.23

Zanele Muholi, South African, born 1972. *Sifikile, Nuoro, Italy*, from the series *Somnyama Ngonyama (Hail the Dark Lioness)*, 2015, gelatin silver print. Purchased through the Florene and Lansing Porter Moore 1937 Fund. Selected by participants in the seminar Museum Collecting 101: Huy Dang, Class of 2019; Farid Djamalov, Class of 2021; Yon Jee Hong, Class of 2016; Sophia Linkas, Class of 2021; Armando Pulido Jr., Class of 2019; Hanna K. Riendeau; Cecilia Duran Torres, Class of 2018; Iris L. Wang, Class of 2020; Lydia Yeshitla, Class of 2021; and Kimberly Yu, Class of 2018; 2018.11

Polly Penrose, English, born 1976. *Rolled Up Mats*, from the series *I Was Never Good at Yoga*, 2015, archival pigment ink print. Purchased through the Sondra and Charles Gilman Jr. Foundation Fund. Selected by participants in the seminar Museum Collecting 101: Sarah Alpert, Class of 2021; Cristal De la Cruz, Class of 2022; Ekene M. Duruaku, Class of 2022; Analia Gonzales, Class of 2021; Grace Hanselman, Class of 2020; Cheron Laughing, Class of 2019; Barbara Yijing Li, Class of 2022; Michael A. Nielson, Tuck Class of 2020; Margot Putnam, Class of 2019; Paulomi Rao, Class of 2019; Kelly Scrima, MALS Class of 2021; Amy Tsai, Class of 2021; 2019.62

Sonia Landy Sheridan, American, 1925–2021. *Self Portrait with Pig Foetus*, 1971, copy art; 3M Color-In-Color I on paper. Gift of the artist; MIS.2004.84.572

Sonia Landy Sheridan, American, 1925–2021. *Thermogram: Female Groin Area Body Print*, 1970s, fax art; 3M Thermo-Fax on B System paper. Gift of the artist; MIS.2004.84.280

Kiki Smith, American (born Germany), born 1954. *My Blue Lake*, 1995, photogravure, à la poupée inking, and lithograph in 3 colors on mold-made En Tout Cas paper. Purchased through the Virginia and Preston T. Kelsey 1958 Fund, a gift from the Muchnic Foundation in honor of Angela Rosenthal, Associate Professor of Art History, Dartmouth College, 1997–2010, and through a gift from Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hazen, by exchange; 2014.24

Francesca Woodman, American, 1958–1981. *Untitled*, from the *Eel Series, Rome*, May 1977–August 1978, gelatin silver print. Purchased through the Elizabeth and David C. Lowenstein '67 Fund; 2013.13

Francesca Woodman, American, 1958–1981. *My House, Providence, Rhode Island*, 1976, gelatin silver print. Purchased through a gift from Marina and Andrew E. Lewin, Class of 1981; 2013.12.1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Battista, Kathy. "New Critical Positions: Disrupting a White Feminist Canon." *Third Text: Trans-Figurations: Transnational Perspectives on Domestic Spaces* 29, no. 4–5 (2015): 397–412. <http://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2016.1169636>.

Counihan, Clare. "Interview with Nomusa Makhubu." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 36, no. 2 (2016): 307–19. <http://doi.org/10.1215/1089201x-3603367>.

Hancock, Caroline. "In Conversation with Nomusa Makhubu: A Disturbing Memory." C&, February 5, 2015. <http://www.contemporaryand.com/magazines/disturbing-memory-an-interview-with-nomusa-makhubu/>.

Muholi, Zanele. "Ngibonile—Yo He Vist o . . . / Ngibonile—I Have Seen . . ." In *Zanele Muholi, 44–49. Fotografas Africanas / African Women Photographers*, no. 1. Las Palmas, Canary Islands: Casa Africa, 2011.

Smith, Kiki. "Anthology from Conversations 1990 to 2016." In *Kiki Smith: Procession*, ed. Petra Giloy-Hirtz, 34. Munich: Haus der Kunst, 2018.

This exhibition is organized by the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, and was generously supported by the George O. Southwick 1957 Memorial Fund and the Bernard R. Siskind Fund. *Embodied: Artist as Medium* is on view at the Hood Museum of Art, October 1–December 17, 2022.

Brochure © 2022 Trustees of Dartmouth College

Copyedited by Kristin Swan

Designed by Jennifer Shaevel Hopkins

Printed by Puritan Capital

Cover image:
Polly Penrose, *Rolled Up Mats*,
from the series *I Was Never
Good at Yoga*, 2015. Courtesy
of the artist and Benrubi
Gallery, NYC

Inside left:
Kiki Smith, *My Blue Lake*, 1995.
© Kiki Smith and Universal
Limited Art Editions

Inside right:
Zanele Muholi, *Sifikile,
Nuoro, Italy*, from the series
*Somnyama Ngonyama (Hail
the Dark Lioness)*, 2015.
© Zanele Muholi Courtesy of
the artist, Yancey Richardson,
New York, and Stevenson Cape
Town / Johannesburg