

## c magazine 154, Spring 2023

**“I don’t know you like that: The Bodywork of Hospitality” — Eglé Budvytytė, Jean-Charles de Quillacq, Heather Dewey-Hagborg, Celina Eceiza, Adham Faramawy, Mounir Fatmi, Oliver Husain and Kerstin Schroedinger, Luis Jacob, Lynne Marsh, Rodney McMillian, Lucas Michael, Bridget Moser, Jeneen Frei Njootli, Berenice Olmedo, Slinko, Ana Torfs**  
**University at Buffalo Art Galleries, Buffalo, 10 November 2022 to 12 May 2023**  
 by Jayne Wilkinson

Working in the hospitality industry is a formative experience for many artists and cultural workers. It’s a particular kind of work, performing rapid-fire mental calculations while still appearing at ease, graceful, and in service of physical and psychological demands. How one treats those paid to provide hospitality is entirely telling of one’s character. This is not exactly what the exhibition “I don’t know you like that: The Bodywork of Hospitality” is about, but it’s not unrelated. The evocative title reminded me of my own “bodywork” of hospitality. So many routines of serving coffee, running food, the horrors of brunch, pouring pints and the like, all embedded somewhere deep in muscle memory.

The works gathered here are more expansive in addressing the limits of the labouring, hosting body. Curated by Sylvie Fortin (former artistic director of La Biennale de Montréal), the exhibition is structured around the premise that definitions of the body can be radically expanded through the politics of hospitality. The open-ended survey format offers some unexpected perspectives on the overwrought use of care as curatorial thematic, leaving room for practices engaged with gender fluidity, body technologies, transfusion, cellular and microbial life, non-human species relations, viral genealogies, health and wellness. With 17 artists spread across the University at Buffalo’s Anderson Gallery

and Center for the Arts, the show feels like a biennial, incorporating a familiar mix of video, installation, sculpture, and prints. The boundless theme makes it difficult at times to form clear connections between practices, and this iterative, tangential approach is strongest when material and conceptual contrasts are in dialogue, rather than distinct.

*La vida terrenal reconquista al soñador* (2022), Celina Eceiza’s multiroom textile installation, is the most literal in its offering of hospitality, welcoming visitors with large pillows, tactile fabrics, brightly coloured floor-to-ceiling canvases, and hand-embroidered cloth books. The lounging “fun-house” feel is emphasized by Eceiza’s distinctive series of oversized geometric figures, which produce an uneasy viewing more aligned with investigations of the psyche. A figure pees gold droplets into a bronze bowl while a humanoid goose licks her hair, a family of worms with shell hats stands upright and stares back at you, and a book titled *People I Think I Have Seen* reveals more eerie portraits drawn from memory. It’s a strange world we are inhabiting, with all the eggs, birds, legs, eyes, and hands throughout suggesting the symbolism of the subconscious.

Adjacent to Eceiza’s overlit dream space, the dark, immersive theatricality of Oliver Husain and Kerstin Schroedinger’s installation, *DNCB* (2021), upends the



Celina Eceiza, *La vida terrenal reconquista al soñador* [Earthly Life Reconquers the Dreamer] (detail), 2022, chalk on canvas, hand-dyed fabric, embroidery, burlap, carpets, soft sculptures, polychrome plaster sculptures; installation view from “I don’t know you like that: The Bodywork of Hospitality,” 2022-2023, University at Buffalo Art Galleries, curated by Sylvie Fortin  
 PHOTO: BILL HENRICH/IMG-INK, COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO ART GALLERIES

senses in a different way. DNCB is a chemical compound used to process colour film that was also used by people with AIDS in the '80s and '90s as an alternative treatment; people would paint the chemical onto their skin in hopes that the body's porosity would rid itself of lethal infection. The three-part project includes a large video showing hypercolour close-ups of painted body parts, a 16 mm film with archival material describing the properties and uses of DNCB, and several audio interviews from people reflecting on their experiences with HIV/AIDS and their attempts at self-treatment. The concept is beautifully executed. The slightly asynchronous timing of video performance, archive, and audio induces repeated watching, and the stories of communities ravaged by an epidemic that governments refused to address is at times gut-wrenching.

Installed between these two projects, and throughout both galleries, is a multipart installation by Jeneen Frei Njootli whose subtlety belies what is perhaps the most powerful work in the show. *Fighting for the title not to be pending* (2020) is composed of thousands of multicoloured glass beads loosely spread in corners, doorways, and cracks in the sidewalk, with their collective mass equaling that of the artist's body weight. It recalls Félix González-Torres's *"Untitled" (Portrait of Ross in L.A.)* (1991), where a large pile of candy stood in for the body of the artist's lover, who had died of AIDS. Frei Njootli's work metaphorically disperses her own body throughout the institution, implicating not only the gallery but also museums and systems of education, particularly given the Anderson Gallery's history as a former schoolhouse. In the context of ongoing colonial violence against Indigenous peoples, it's a work that underscores the structural power of institutions, while its multiple readings also suggest infiltration, resistance, and collective beauty.

The large state university that here acts as host contextualizes many of the projects through the medical research industry. Mutations forced upon the body arrive in Rodney McMillian's powerful series on the violence done to communities of Black Americans through medical testing. His large, commanding sculptures, *Cell I* (2017–2020) and *Untitled (Entrails)* (2019–2020), correspond to the politics of the body at the cellular level, but through an elegant, minimalist approach. Heather Dewey-Hagborg's highly watchable *Hybrid: an Interspecies Opera* (2022) draws out the relationship between humans and pigs, from histories of domestication to ethical questions around genetic engineering and growing pigs for xenotransplantation. And in *When I Am Through With You There Won't Be Anything Left* (2021), Bridget Moser's stylized comedic performance and video installation, the medicalized body is ironically interrogated as she excavates her own body of its plasticized organs.

This unexpected crossover, between medical and aesthetic study, was heightened when I learned that medical school residents are invited to experience the exhibition as part of their training; Frei Njootli's beads, for example, are frequently used to address the necessity of close observation for the residents. It points to how our bodies become trained, over lifetimes, to see or unsee specific details in the worlds around us. This differential aspect of vision—of relating across differences and labouring to connect with one another despite institutions that are structured to divide us—is the most memorable part of this extensive project.

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**"JUNK IS NO GOOD BABY" — Justin Chance, Nina Hartmann, Lyric Shen, Mike Yaniro  
Silke Lindner, New York City, 26 October to 3 December 2022  
by Sasha Cordingley**

Try to peek inside Silke Lindner's compact space in Tribeca, New York, and you'll find your view partially obstructed. Parked in the centre of the gallery's floor-to-ceiling window is a thermogram image of an obscured figure, caught in motion between departure and arrival, with only their featureless face and a sliver of their wrist distinguishable, each radiating a deep crimson. Enclosed in black metal rods which suggest the bare-bones simplicity of an Amazon bed frame, almost every component of this imposing vinyl print by Nina Hartmann is blurred, as the depicted central figure bleeds into the surrounding it is embedded in. At the print's edges, a transparent orange border morphs into an arrow that points in opposition to the figure's direction. This graphic offers the only chance at pictorial clarity.

Hartmann's *Surveillance Study I (Diagram Excerpt)* (2022) is an apt introduction to the works on view at Silke Lindner. As with the life-sized print which hails the viewer behind glass, nothing is legible in the eight multimedia works in the gallery's inaugural exhibition, "JUNK IS NO GOOD BABY." Featuring artists Justin Chance, Lyric Shen, Mike Yaniro, and Hartmann, the exhibition's objects refuse any possibility of comprehension by distorting or clouding materials, language, and images alike.

While most of the objects are discernible in craft, Shen's three sculptural works evade easy identification. Warped ceramic mimics the qualities of a dried-out sponge, its exterior pockmarked by cavities like a planet impacted by unceasing welts of solar debris. Intimate in size, the sculptures' surfaces hold images—transferred through hydrographic printing—of the artist's personal memories. And personal memories they will remain, for a cohesive portrayal of Shen's recollections is dissimulated by purposeful collage, which renders the snapshots something akin to crumpled and soiled newspaper—visible in fragments, yet abstruse in their lack of complete content. A woman's head embellished with a headband and claw clip is visually interrupted by the drapery of an emerald fabric; a pile of garbage bags left out on the sidewalk is reduced to blobs of white, pink, and black. In *Jewel's Stand* (2022), any gesture toward a coherent image is foreclosed as the assortment of photographs dissolves into marbled ornament. At the sculpture's base, black steel has been cut and crafted into two elongated seraphic figures and a tip-of-the-tongue assortment of letters and numbers, which recall the chapter and verse format of biblical citations. Linguistic recognition is yanked away as words dissolve into gibberish.