



An exhibition
of the work of artists
Susan Aldworth
Andrew Carnie
Karen Ingham

Exploring how personal identity
has become embedded in a new
landscape of anatomical imagery

19 April – 30 June 2012
Monday – Saturday 1.00 – 7.00pm

Inigo Rooms
Somerset House East Wing
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Inigo Rooms

KING'S
College
LONDON



Thought Portrait Emily from the photographic series
Variance Karen Ingham 2012

Exhibiting together for the first time, and working with neurobiologist Richard Wingate from the MRC Centre for Developmental Neurobiology at KCL, artists Susan Aldworth, Andrew Carnie and Karen Ingham present works that explore emerging and enriched images of the Self.

Susan Aldworth's work engages with neuroscience and philosophy to develop an understanding of human identity. Her films and *Reassembling the Self* lithographs, made in collaboration with Stanley Jones at the Curwen Studio, consider the relationship between the physical brain and our sense of Self. <http://susanaldworth.com>

Andrew Carnie uses time-based media to reflect the evolving nature of our sense of Self, as we construct an identity through the acquisition of knowledge and the challenges of medical disorders. *Seized* uses projection to explore how the experience of epilepsy impacts on the sense of being embodied. <http://andrewcarnie.co.uk>

Karen Ingham's works juxtapose the narratives behind scientific objects, language and images conferring new meaning onto the notion of embodiment. The films exhibited include *Narrative Remains*, made in collaboration with The Hunterian Museum and *Variance* with The Francis Galton Collection. *Vanitas: Seed Head* and the *Piece of Mind Mask* were made with the assistance of the Cardiff Neuroscience Research Group.

<http://kareningham.org.uk>



Reassembling the Self 4 Susan Aldworth
lithograph 2012

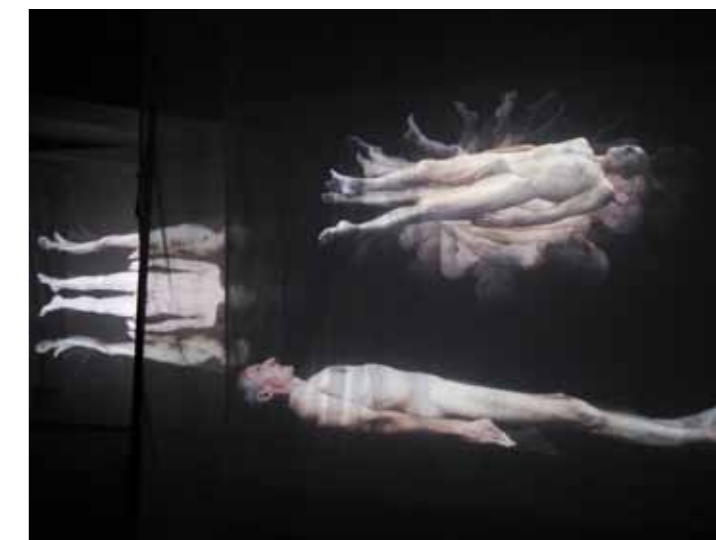
BETWEEN: Embodiment & Identity

Biomedical Sciences have been transformed in the last twenty years by visualisation techniques that have harnessed optical physics and the genome to give a dramatic window into living cells and functioning systems. How much is this imagery now informing our sense of Self?

Advances in imaging technology are the currency of scientific exploration and improved medical diagnosis. Our ability to manipulate, render and threshold vast volumes of data have generated a new biology in digital form. Anatomy and physiology can be visualised and modelled within the computer in four dimensional data sets that are almost tangible embodiments of what lies beneath the surface of cells and bodies.

Our new-found mastery of the genome has seen an explosion in molecular techniques through which cells and tissue are engineered to make them reveal their form and function. Genetic methods have shuttled naturally occurring biofluorescent proteins from jellyfish and coral into the microscopic domains of cell interiors. The same approaches that reveal microscopic anatomy also allow the activity of brain cells to be controlled. Together, the machinery of visualisation and the power of molecular biology have made biological tissue increasingly transparent to both examination and manipulation.

These technological interventions have altered the



Seized: Out of this World Andrew Carnie slide dissolve
installation 2009

Front page, background image:
Vanitas: Seed-Head Karen Ingham film 2005

Front page, clockwise from top:
Out of Body Susan Aldworth film 2009
Piece of Mind Mask (Red) Giclee print
Karen Ingham 2012
Seized: Out of this World Andrew Carnie slide dissolve
installation 2009

material stuff of biomedicine and human anatomy, from the slab of dissected material or collection of glass slides, to a three-dimensional, digital theatre of the spectacular, interpreted through computer-generated palettes of reds, purples and greens. These crafted and stylised forms are complemented by an industrialised production of online databases and digital atlases, which collectively confront us with new perspectives on biological form.

What effect does the mechanics and aesthetic of visualisation have on our sense our own biology? Is the self embodied in the material substance of our cells and tissues, or is our identity best captured or imagined in the rendered, stripped-back and ultimately immaterial digitisations of scientific imaging? This exhibition is the manifestation of these questions, arising from science, but posed by artists, to be explored by the subject – ourselves.

Dr Richard Wingate, KCL

THE GAP

Susan Aldworth, Andrew Carnie and Karen Ingham draw upon the figurative traditions of Western art, whose historic task has been to make the human body meaningful. Since the body was, according to classical poetic theory, the main vehicle for visual communication, artists were expected to move their audiences by mastering the depiction of its expressions, poses and gestures. According to doctrines established by Renaissance theorists such as Alberti, the human





Reassembling the Self 2 Susan Aldworth lithograph 2012



Variance Karen Ingham film 2012



Left top and bottom:
Seized: Out of this World Andrew Carnie
slide dissolve installation 2009
Images courtesy of the artist and GV Art



Narrative Remains Karen Ingham film 2009

figure was to be read for its emotional content, preferably as part of some grand, edifying narrative from history or mythology. The study of anatomy helped in this task, but not for the most part using dissection as a method; rather, the dynamics of expression were to be grasped by the emulation of ancient Greek and Roman sculpture, usually presented to art students in the form of plaster cast reproductions.

Under this longstanding regime, which stood until the advent of twentieth century Modernism, the idea of a unique and continuous identity rooted in the individual body was less important than its corollary of moral character. The outward signs of character might be interpreted through the science of physiognomy, where facial characteristics were usually given ethnic overtones. However, true character was elusive and could only be proven in the exigencies of a dramatic situation. Demonstrating the rewards of virtue and the perils of vice by narrative means was as much the purpose of theatre in Shakespeare's time as it was of history-painting for Sir Joshua Reynolds nearly two centuries later.

By contrast, identity, meaning an abstracted, fixed, scientifically discernible essence, became an overriding administrative concern with the rise of the modern capitalist nation-state during the nineteenth century. With huge population influxes into the teeming industrializing cities of Britain and Europe, and

seemingly beset by anonymous, rootless crowds of the criminal classes, police forces adopted new graphic and photographic techniques such as mug-shots, tattoo-charts and fingerprinting to penetrate disguise and record offenders. Colonial officers also used comparable anthropometric methods to study and classify the various ethnic groups under their control, feeding the racial science devised by professors of natural history in museums and universities. Like the biometric data gathered by the ubiquitous security industries today, these visual technologies were used to hugely discriminatory effect. Individuals were fragmented into discrete and repeatable elements and components for the purposes of containment and elimination.

Attempts to manage the moral health of the people went alongside increasing research into the effects and treatment of sickness within the individual body. From the sixteenth century onwards, medical practice - for centuries in hoc to a mixture of ancient doctrine and folk remedy - began its gradual move towards an empirical scientific basis. Ancient restrictions on human dissection were loosened as anatomy theatres in a few university cities such as Padua and Leiden were established, attended by both medical students and curious members of the public, and liberally supplied with cadavers from gallows that were busy executing harsh sentences for property crime. The anatomists Vesalius and Albinus became famous for producing exactly engraved,

luxury atlases of human anatomy, showing peeled and eviscerated corpses affecting classically-derived poses in pastoral landscapes.

Thus the mysteries of the human body were unveiled and offered up to a literate few - the bodies of unnamed and unremembered criminals dismembered and embellished with token elements of respectable narrative. Sometimes, pictures of dissections likened the recumbent cadaver to the figure of the dead Christ, as, for example, in Rembrandt's Anatomy Lesson of Jan Deijman (c. 1656, Amsterdam Museum). Indeed the very term 'embodiment' highlighted by this exhibition has associations of human fallibility, which, according to Christianity, God shared when he incarnated his son Jesus. In Christian culture, and not least in the art of the Renaissance and Counter-Reformation, abject, mortal suffering only became meaningful in comparison to the crucifixion and humiliation of Christ, the ultimate sacrifice.

More prosaically and effectively, by the nineteenth century, dissection had become the norm for the study of pathology, and teaching hospitals amassed large collections of diseased organs and body parts, usually preserved in glass jars. Here, the original owners of these organs are identified only by their names and diagnoses, reduced to the grisly remains of their downfalls, disembodied from any of their human achievements. It was only in 1895, with Roentgen's invention of the

X-ray, and various scanning devices such as CT and fMRI succeeding more than 80 years later, that structures and traces of physiological processes could be revealed within the living body. But how to interpret these compelling, often ghostly images of an invisible world, which seemed almost to hint at electro-chemical, implicitly spiritual, animating forces, became the subject of speculation and debate which lasts to this day.

The effectiveness of these technologies in understanding and often treating disease is undeniable; anatomy quite properly takes the unsentimentally objective approach while, at best, being motivated by the noble intent to alleviate suffering, mindful of the final equality of all bodies. And while much biomedical imagery has been readily absorbed into popular culture as a kind of shorthand for mortality and interior mystery, profoundly symbolic meanings are not properly its business. Scans and X-rays are not designed to communicate what it means or feels like to suffer disease, or even to have a mortal body. That is the job of art. Thankfully, it has been the calling of Aldworth, Carnie and Ingham to fill the gap between such nevertheless fascinating imagery and its poetic implications, sympathetically reassembling selves and kicking out against the delimiting of life by social attitudes and the vagaries of nature.

Dr Marius Kwint

Senior Lecturer in Visual Culture, University of Portsmouth