Please Touch: Body Boundaries

JERSEY CITY, NJ, April 6, 2018—Please Touch: Body Boundaries is a large exhibition of more than fifty artists who reference the body to illuminate conceptions of identity, femininity, and the gaze. “The sexualization of the human body has been an ongoing theme throughout art history, from breast imagery in churches to classical female archetypes,” states Ysabel Pinyol, curator of the exhibition and Curatorial Director of Mana Contemporary, “and with the increased attention surrounding gender politics and body-boundary violations, I thought it was important to present an exhibition that examines both the ubiquity and longevity of artists using the body to illustrate broader social topics.”

In Prehistoric art, the female figure was rendered in one of two forms: either with swollen breasts and hips as markers of fertility, associated with the Paleolithic Venus of Willendorf; or with geometric proportions like those of Early Cycladic figurines. This fundamental split underlies varieties of approaches to the female form today. Representations of the female body, specifically the breast, tend to reflect conceptions of female identity, beauty, status, and eroticism, which have historically evolved with societal and cultural developments:

By “reading” the breast in these political, social, literary, and religious contexts, we see that rather than simply signaling female beauty, sexuality, or a desired “return to innocence,” it [the breast] becomes a prominent means of conveyance for cultural values and conflicts.¹

Please Touch: Body Boundaries is an examination of the breast and the body as motifs used by artists to illuminate different gazes and experiences. The exhibition includes contemporary art dating from the 1960s through 2018, presenting works that examine questions of identity and sexuality, expectations and presumptions, and role playing. Featuring a close look at breastfeeding and motherhood, Please Touch: Body Boundaries engages with today’s climate of accusations, denials, bodies, and borders through work that is sensual, exhilarating, painful, confusing, sexual, and vulgar.

For Pinyol: “The artists in this show examine these conceptions from a contemporary context asking questions like, When is the body’s anatomy sexualized and in what contexts? For what reason? Is there a boundary? What are the ramifications of these experiences?” Organized in collaboration with filmmaker Dana Ben-Ari, Please Touch: Body Boundaries opens to coincide with Mana Contemporary’s annual Spring Open House on Sunday, April 29, 2018 (1–7pm). A publication will also be available at the opening. Mana’s Spring Open House 2018 will include the exhibition opening of Only Human, presented by NEW INC and Bell Labs, a lineup of performances, open studios, and other special programming to be announced.

ARTISTS

ABOUT MANA CONTEMPORARY
Founded in 2011, Mana Contemporary is dedicated to providing a platform for contemporary art and artists through exhibitions, studio programs, and public programs. Mana’s community network began in New Jersey and has since expanded to include Mana Chicago (2013) and Mana Miami (2017). Mana Contemporary continues to create new partnership opportunities that explore the intersection of contemporary art, design, new technologies, and music. For more information, visit manacontemporary.com.

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