

Please Touch: Body Boundaries



Louise Bourgeois, *Self Portrait*, 2007. Gouache on paper. 23 1/2 x 17 7/8 inches (59.7 x 45.4 cm). Signed on recto., lower right: Louise Bourgeois. Private Collection, New York.

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.²

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

Z Behl, Brigid Berlin, Iris Bernblum, Louise Bourgeois, Larry Clark, Renee Cox, Isabel Czerwenka-Wenkstetten, Sue de Beer, Jamie Diamond, Jess Dobkin, Ange Donhauser, Jill Downen, Faith47, Nona Faustine, Yara Flores, Zhen Guo, Clarity Haynes, Stephen Irwin, Amy Jenkins, Malia Jensen, Zoë Sua Kay, Laura Kimmel, Martin Kippenberger, Jiří Kolář, Justine Kurland, Ani Liu, Mary Ellen Mark, Azikiwe Mohammed, Jeffly Gabriela Molina, Kristianne Molina, Takashi Murakami, Michelle Murphy, Ebecho Muslimova, Ruby Neri, Olek, Yoko Ono, Catherine Opie, Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, Elaine Reichek, ThreeASFOUR, Lola Montes Schnabel, Tschabalala Self, Cindy Sherman, Kiki Smith, Annie Sprinkle, Swoon, Atelier van Lieshout, Pinar Yolaçan, and Barbara Zucker

¹ Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956), 71.

² Cathy Yandell, “Iconography and Iconoclasm: The Female Breast in French Renaissance Culture,” *The French Review*, 83 (3), Feb. 2010, 555.

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April 29–August 1, 2018

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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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