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(1970-2004)

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ISSN: 2183-1726

<http://www.es.ipvc.pt/revistadialogoscomaarte>

5

2015

Diálogos com a arte
revista de arte, cultura e educação



Diálogos com a arte

revista de arte, cultura e educação

Escola Superior de Educação de Viana do Castelo - IPVC
Centro de Estudos da Criança do Instituto de Educação - UM

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ISSN 2183-1726

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3 | Art and the Body Image: about Self and Stereotypes

Mónica Oliveira

ABSTRACT

Today's man is socially absorbed by problematic body issues and everything that this means and involves. Literature, publicity, science, technology and medicine compound these issues in a form of this theme that has never been seen before. In the artistic framework, body image is constantly suffering modifications. Body image in sculpture unfolds itself, assuming different messages and different forms. The body is a synonym of subject, an infinite metaphorical history of our looks, desires, that leads one to interrogate his/her image and social and sexual relations. These are understood as a manifestation of individual desires freed from a moral and social imposition. It attempts a return to profound human nature before we are turned into a cloning industry.

In this study it is important for us to understand in which form does sculpture reflect body image as a sociocultural and psychological phenomenon within the coordinates of our time. To understand how they represent and what artists represent in sculpture as a multiple and complex structure of human sexuality. Today, the sculptural body, expanding its representation, no longer as a reproduction of the corporal characteristics, presents the body in what it possesses of most intimate, unique, human and real, that moves, reacts, feels, suffers and pulsates, a mirror of us all.

Keywords: Body image; sculpture and contemporary society

The body in sculpture: a mirror of the social subject

The body is one of the themes that is often discussed in the contemporary world, being the object of frequent studies of human and social science and in the artistic framework. At the same time, in daily life, this real 'corporal explosion' has manifested in the exuberance and imagination of the multiple techniques used in adornments, clothing, theater, dance, visual arts, games and sports and, ultimately, in small details of human life. The importance given to the body in our time, opposes the concealment it was submitted to in the past; phenomenon verified in the sequence of a remarkable inversion of values. The new beauty, happiness or youth values are identified by a body that transforms itself as an object of care and preoccupation. The body's liberation project is present in each moment, expressing itself in a dynamic way, and reaching a large web of social relations.

Initially it is not useful to justify a reflection about the body: life imposes the body upon us every day. The body is our existential condition in the world; through it we create relationships, intervene, understand/know and express. It offers itself in its concrete and singular forms in a mobile form, attractive or repugnant, inoffensive or threatening. In this sense, living for each of us assumes the carnal condition of an organism whose structures,

functions and faculties give us access to the world, opening us to corporal presence of the rest.

To speak of the body is to speak of a multiplicity of aspects that it possesses, from its physical and concrete image, through the desire and pleasure associated to sexuality and finishing in the tragic aspect of its temporary nature, of its weakness. Using Valéry's words, one could say that our body is "the organ of the possible" (Paul Valéry, 1957, p. 919) and simultaneously, of the inevitable. Therefore, the speech/oration about the body can never be neutral. To speak about the body forces to clarify, more or less, another of its aspects: the aspect that is sometimes promethium and dynamic of its demiurgical power, and of its avid desire for enjoyment and that other tragic and dolorous aspect of its temporary state, of its weakness, of its territory and precariousness. In the form that all reflection on the body is whether we want it or not, ethical and metaphysical: it proclaims a value, indicates a specific conduct and determines the reality of our human condition.

Today, the body intensifies itself as more than an individual identity: a collective identity. It transforms itself into sculpture as a mirror of the social subject. Its metamorphoses are multiple, it is the evidence of the life of a nation, and it is contemplated in a diverse materialization, which is compromised between the figurative or the abstract. Today, the body, being one of the central problems to vindicated social concerns around the difficult conciliation between individual and collective ethics, stimulates sculptural works where it is a mirror that only reflects the question of those who look at it.

The artistic works materialize as a concern for the themes of life, evoking a multiplicity of body meanings: a biological body, sexual body, sick body or absent body is constructed. Beginning by breaking through this diverse range of concepts appears to be, from the beginning, the most obvious dimension of a body that is a presence in the world. Today, to think of the body is, above all to be understanding of its presentations and representations: in other words, to be sensitive to its anatomies. The biological body is the present body, it is the one that shows itself through its physicality, its anatomical construction, or is emphasized by its biological characteristics. It is through its anatomy that the body reveals and desires itself visibly and intelligibly. This body can appear in its totality, as in the Charles Ray models, or as fragments exposed through identifying organs of sexual identity like *Gêmeos de Pedro Cabrita Reis*. The fragmented body is reduced to a series of first schemes and detail schemes. The body has lost its "architectonic dimension", its plenitude, and presents itself as destroyed and fragmented. It has lost its vertebrate and unified capacity, and each part of the body desires to possess a unique and sacred character. We can affirm that the body now presents itself through the ruined image that contemporary man no longer constructs, but "does it himself"; no longer venerates, but becomes profane. So, contemporaneity presents us with a new paradigm brought during a "post humanistic" period that, amongst many differentiated characteristics, is characterized by the conception of the haggard and disjointed body, that performs the appropriation of the world according to the proclamation of its consumed finiteness.

But the anatomic attitude also regards the interior of the body, to what is kept from the indiscretion of

appearance. For this body to be looked at demands the intervention of a cut that rips the exterior layer. The Penetration by Annette Messager is an example of this. The artist shows us a panoply of hanging organs that refer to the different interior parts of the human body, as if it was an anatomy manual. Therefore, we can say that the interior of the body in contemporary sculpture is seen as a complex group of morphological solutions that offer consistency to exterior appearance and manifests as the body's true identity: in other words, its profound identification.

Afterwards, there is the connection between the physical body and sexual gender that manifests through a body language and the projection of human desire around sexuality. The exploration of gender, identity, the participation of sexual minorities for instance homosexuals, and women in society, history and religion, as well as the depiction of sexual deviation, are elected themes with which we are constantly confronted in the sculptural framework. The body as a sexual gender refers to a group of actions and representations that are socially constructed around sex, sexual phenomenon and human sexuality. An example of this theme is Louise Bourgeois's work that exposes a sexual language of the body and fertility. This theme and iconography revolves around the woman and her self-image. Using the body as a metaphor, she portrays the pregnant woman, the human body as a weapon, the human being in relation to others and in relation to sexual nature. The eroticism of her work is a result of the anatomic concretion of forms that a breast and male/female organs depict.

Furthermore, the sick body, based on its vulnerability and mortality, is a synonym of pain but also human affirmation. The sculptures bring to memory images of medical illustrations, atrocities from horror movies, Christian martyrdom or mortal sicknesses. Catherine Heard shows us replicas of terrible skin diseases, shows us the body as a symbol of human debilities, causes by sicknesses, many of which are characterized by remains of skin injuries. All of them manifest themselves through all of the skin's surface in the form of bruises, discoloration, spots, as in the case of the work entitled *Florescimento*. Phobias are created, allegories of primary fears felt by culture, by a body that is more and more threatened by technology, society, science, medicine, defying humanity itself. Pepe Miralles also worked on an account of the development of construction processes, and the experiences of people subjected to mortal diseases, reflecting suffering and pain being distressing and inhuman.

Finally, the body no longer appears in the sculptural framework in a concrete form but as a reflex of a mental process that the work offers, and it addresses the spectator through the formal components: in other words, the relationships that objects establish with him/her. It addresses locations and proposes allusive scenes to sexual gender, fetish objects, and clothing. Namely, it creates a panoply of body suggestions that are not more than a reflection of the space of the sculpture in its body extension. An example of this is *Red-Room* (parents) by Louise Bourgeois. The presence of the body, its symbolism and its metaphor acquire, in her work, not in a concrete form, but the memory of a body lived through the senses, its members, its objects, its organs. This is a couple's room, where you sense love without the need of a relationship being present, where you sense a relationship without the bodies being present. In other words, this installation is highly eroticized but the body is absent, or is projected

in all of the objects that are a part of this scene.

The body and its masks

“By the human body image we understand the representation that we mentally form of our own body, in other words, the form that it appears to us” (Paul Schilder, 1994, p. 15). This body form isn't an appearance or a mere sensation, it is three-dimensionally accomplished as a proper or real image, in other words, it indicates to us that the body, as an object of study, is not a product of abstraction or imagination.

Body image is one of the basic experiences in all of our lives, it is one of the capital points of the vital experience. In daily life, we function with our bodies and with the knowledge that we have of them. The postural mode of the body is not static, it is constantly modified according the circumstances of life. We build it and return to rebuilding it again. This way, and as Paul Schilder says, “the social relations of the body images isn't a fixed “gestalt”, on the contrary, it's about a “gestalten”-gestaltung- learning process or the creation construction of social image” (1994, p. 208).

Having in mind this basic premise, the artist can rescue himself from multiple expedients in order to fulfill a body image. One of the reasons for this “formal operation” is to overcome the rigidity of body image and turn it into something more “seductive”. In order to do so, he turns to strategies of transforming body image, mainly using clothing, prosthetics or cosmetic surgeries. In this sense, clothing constitutes a very significant symbol of this social reality: “Clothing hides the body or attracts attention to it”, writes the Dutch sociologist Oldendorf, it “permits to discern, until a certain point, the attitude adopted in regards to corporalization” (Oldendorff, 1969, p. 29). Clothing is turned into an intimate monitor and an ornament of body seduction. Clothing is the covering that contains a person's mark, it is a relic that at times substitutes and represents a state of mind, a space, a living emotion.

In the form that clothing seems to transmit explicit and coherent messages about personality, social condition and identity of the subjects that carry it. Clothing is a second skin, less rigid than the first, because it adapts to various life situations and the roles that we interpret. But, besides this social determination of our clothing, there are extensive possibilities of election of that second skin, probably converting itself into a projection surface of what we are. This includes the contradictions that characterize us (contradictions between desire and defense, between ideal images and real images of ourselves). Clothing, as a ‘second skin’, has always fascinated artists. Clothes adopt the body's forms, but also its spirit, involving in its creases the perfume of a certain time, the memory of a fashion or an age of life. Clothing is a protection, a type of cabin/home architected and seized from the exterior.

There are various artists that work this theme, either they identify clothing with an absent or present body or, as

relics or memories of the past. For Boltanski, clothing, as a found object, is a sign of disappearance or death, it evokes the people who wore it, who meanwhile are turned into anonymity. The opposite happens with some sculptures/performances by Maribel Doménech: her forms seem to want to emerge naked from their dresses, or the dress is almost falling, erasing itself before the triumphant apparition of the naked body. For Maribel Doménech, "Being naked is like a chair or a house, their constructions that humans construct in order to live in them, it's like a second skin that accompanies us in our roam through the space of life" (1997, p. 39). The sculptress weaves her dresses by materializing a thought, a speech that is conscious of a time and turns it into something visible. She constructs clothing for it to maintain immobility, like a house, fixed in a specific place, to observe the world being in contact with it, in contact with life within a certain distance.

Annette Messager knits, embroiders, cuts and sews again; in a 1990 series she closed wedding gowns or first communion gowns in a type of box/coffins, giving those clothes a sense of relic status: work to honor her mother. Louise Bourgeois also has a distinct form of working with clothes: her clothes have nothing to do with fashion, but they are her personal objects, carriers of her affections. From 1995, and in the quest to construct her past, she made a series of sculptural pieces entitled Poles, using her clothes; home clothing, dresses, underwear, coats, combinations that she hung on metallic frames. Here an old tension is carried of past emotions that materialize themselves through rigid geometry and organic influence. Sometimes, clothes are hung on bovine bones that act as a stand. This sculptural presence of the skeleton, besides the morbid effect, reminds us of the structure of our body, when it's gaunt and when there is only a phantasmagorical presence of empty clothes. Eroticism appears, and ideas of phantoms/ghosts are conjured when clothes are only a whole with the body, when the flesh and fabric are mixed or confused. Therefore, clothing is considered an external structure that materializes internal experiences and that image to make sense, it has to reference a body. It is this duality that allows us to conclude the creation process and witnesses a plurality of concepts underlying modern society, that are conscious of the different stimulants that awake within the spectator.

Besides the importance of clothing, there are other forms of transforming the body's appearance, such as prosthetic and plastic surgeries. Prosthetics are, in an artistic framework, a very important work element for various artists, used most of the time as an extension of the potentialities of our body. Santaella affirms that "a prosthetic is always one part, a supplement, an artificial part that supplements some deficiency or weakness of the organic or that increases the body's potential power" (2003, p. 187). Paul Virilio affirms that "the human body, inherited and natural, has turned itself into something obsolete" (1988, p. 88) and, because of this, it is insufficient, as in Stelarc's work. In the beginning of the 1980's, this artist carried out an authentic recreation of the human body. For example works such as *Writing with three hands simultaneously* or *The Third Arm* (1995), where the artist adds an articulated arm or a third hand to his body so that it did not allow an increase in the force of their superior/upper limbs or their capacity to grab objects. He affirms that "The body isn't a very efficient structure, or very durable. It frequently functions badly and gets tired quickly (...) It's susceptible to diseases and

it's fated to an imminent death" (1997, p.54).

If the technological advances in cybernetic matters provide a body prosthetic, the development of medical science, especially surgery and genetics, are going to take a step into the new conception of the body. The daily use of plastic surgery and assisted reproduction techniques impact more and more on the expansion of a greater conscience of the emancipation of the body, so that the body is, in reality, physically changeable, and that metamorphosis is possible. This reality appeared in the last century: for example, the artist Orlan, who experimented with the revolution of the body as a support of a series of surgical interventions. In 1990, Orlan underwent various operations: in the first five, succeeding two more, he acquired Venus's chin according to Botticelli's ideal, Europa's lips according to Boucheur's style, the front of Leonardo's Mona Lisa and Psique's eyes according to Gérôme. With this type of action he wants to rupture conventional representation and destroy the border between art and life. Orlan shows us identity forms of a substantial type in gender, ethnicity or race and gives place auto-constructive forms of identity. The nucleus/core of his strategy begins upon the opposing concept of nature, of his ultra-modern and radical connection, and is able to understand art as a form of constructing reality. The idea of concentrating in one space, that is in the face, different moments of art history, creates a sensibility in the spectator, through his/her acceptance or repulsion. With Orlan we can think that the revolutionary body is, in itself, the only path to abandon the representation that the revolution of the body has brought.

All of these representation forms give origin to a post-human body that comes from the computer industry, new technologies, consumption and genetics societies, leading to new forms of constructing and of understanding the body and originating a false, artificial or simulated body, in other words, the post-human body. A model that no longer has anything to do with the Freudian model of the psychological individual that links each person to his/her past and their inherited genetic code and their childhood and family experiences, favouring a new and predictable species, a product of biotechnology. As Jeffrey Deitch says in the *Post-human* exposition:

'The search for an individual absolute truth was substituted by new alternatives. Many people don't dispose of a perspective, a past or a future. Only a present. Disconnected from traditions of family history, people are forced to link their identity with the present. Few feel the need to psychologically interpret or discover themselves. Identity depends, more and more, on how each one feels they are interpreted by others. The world has turned into a mirror.' (Jeffrey Deitch, 1993, p.65).

All of these transformations are justifiable, according to Schilder (1968), man has the need, through objective means, of modifying his/her body image. Those metamorphoses would, in themselves, be sources of pleasure, in virtue of a permanent game of extension and retraction of the body, that allows us to triumph over our body limits, and at the same time dominate the transformations that could be a threat. For Argyle (1975), the voluntary modification of the physical appearance should be considered as a form of a non-verbal communication, that

serves as a carrier of various information, and that makes up a group of signals that indicates the group to which the person belongs: age, sex, status, social performance and personality. In this form, it follows that a person's physical appearance can simultaneously transmit various messages. That public body is therefore destined to be a subject to be looked at by others, and is probably an indicator of feelings that the individual experiences in regards to his/her body, and is also an indicator of the feelings and images he/she desires to evoke on others.

The female identity in sculptures

The images of the female body in Western Art history are constant. The female body no longer is simply another theme raised by artists, but, it should be acknowledged as a particularly significant reason within art and western aesthetics. The notable fluctuations in the female body throughout time are variable from time to time.

The female body, carrier of metamorphoses throughout time, has taken various forms: from Venus the woman became Aphrodite that after was transformed into Eve. From the XV (fifteenth) century to the XIX (nineteenth) century, the artist disguised her as Leda or Susana, as Ninfa, Bacante or Betsabé. With these names, he reassured moral stances, and what they covered up was to reassure man. In the twentieth century, the woman's body suffers constant change; it distorts and abstracts itself to show, today, a formal and conceptual vitalism, which is personified through the eclecticism regarding forms of looking at and treating the body relatively to the artistic subject that creates it. Initially, there are two different realities that deal with the female body: one that is fixed in a masculine vision: the female body constructed by men: and another, put through a feminine sensibility: sculptures designed by women.

The realization of the male artist's vision is based on modification of woman's anatomy in order to make her an object pure erotic function, only keeping the essential pieces, such as breasts and thighs, among others. It's all a mechanized sexual universe, made up of scrapes and crossings (transplanted cut breasts, isolated breasts). The body no longer is another whole. The complete woman has disappeared. It leads to a series of organs: breasts, anus, mouths that indicate all of the imperative desires. It is these organs that seek a partial object to which they can grab on again, that Deleuze and Guattari call "machines of desires". The extinction of the real woman is notable, only the exterior, the female body, serves as a model to construct the woman-doll. The doll is an artificially manipulated body, it does not appear in daily life, externally as a unit, she opposes this idea through prosthetic bodies, the face masks and the artificial sexual organs, exaggerated in size. Playing with a doll in a perverse manner was something that artists did not deprive themselves from. In the sculptural field, in 1997 the Barbie dolls appeared, from the *Los Lichis* group, formed by the artists; José Luis Rojas, Gerardo Mossavais and Manuel Mathar. His work entitled *Pumpin' Barbi*, shows various dolls, a series of photographs and a video with Barbie, the famous doll, as the leading role. Most of these were without clothes, with their breasts elevated and legs opened in an obscene manner, they were put in corbels, alternating with the photographs that told a

pornographic story. In the video one can also observe scenes with Barbie dolls sniffing cocaine, kissing one another or even having sexual relations with Ken, her male counterpart.

The perfect scenic creation of the doll's human figure and the disturbing effect that arises in these exposed scenes seem to appeal, firstly, to our senses; only when we admit that it is impossible (besides the drastic concept exposed, with all of its implications) for us to feel some consternation or pity, we begin to understand the subversive message of the images. In them an ambivalence coexists between the human and non-human. Consequently, the doll has adjusted to a type of model without identity, variably constructed with parts of standardized fragments, and this is always strange to the viewer. The artist's sculptures are able to present a reality that, due to its artificiality, makes us notice the theatricality of what we call reality.

Parallel to all of this artificiality, emerges the feminine artists' sculptural proposal. Today's woman inherently understands behaviours and attitudes that have been historically imposed on her, adopting an aesthetic that obeys the image of femininity based on an intimacy that does not lose its private side. They portray the body, identity and the female gender in its more realistic side, because what they look to find is a more authentic and more natural side. They aim to awaken these concepts before a social and moral passivity of the existent world. They try to return to the nature of man, so that we are not turned into clones of one another. Meanwhile, there is a theme that arises, in one form or the other, in the work of most artists: intimacy, the private relation, for example as can be seen in the work of artists Sally Man, Nan Goldin and Sophie Calle. These themes make the body an obvious battle-field but, also desire, loneliness, love, pain and sex as leading roles in an endless story that repeats itself. As Rocío Villalonga says "I speak of my day-to-day, life as an amalgamation of unconnected things (...) I simply narrate my own existence" (199, p. 82). Kiki Smith presents figurative work that informs her interest in a feminine discourse, the anatomy of the human body, religion and sex. The strength and resonance of her work proceed of the simplicity of a direct character and a morphological pureness, producing a large emotional impact. But, that space isn't only of sexuality and of the woman's body, it is also the place of memory, thought, of an intimacy that has nothing to do with the relation with others but with themselves. The artist, Annette Messager, developed pieces on the daily, small and marginal world that surrounds the woman. Conscious of the marginalization of the woman in large esthetic debates, she creates a multiplicity of characters through which she says *she finds her identity* Annette Messager; *practical woman*; Annette Messager: *artist*; Annette Messager: *collector*. What she projects is precisely what she wants to destroy, all of the iconography and clichés that define what is feminine, depositing it in this composed and neutral place, where the subject permanently loses her identity. All of the aspects of Annette Messager with which she plays, allows her to present, at the same time, divergent and contradictory characters that co-exist in each one of us.

Without a doubt, the objective of this, and other current artists, is to recover the intimate and silent space with foundation on honesty within artistic experimentation. However, it is in the moment of establishing that feminine vocabulary of forms, of the most sensitive senses, that resides the difficulty in really finding a place, a space of

public recognition. The profoundness of these feminine proposals are witness to an individual and private history that formulates daily vital themes, which contrast with a society that presents itself as fragmented and artificial, where the body is the expression of a non-identity, witness of the means of communication that is shaken by genetic engineering and lost in virtual reality.

The recovery of an individual space, where they can be themselves, without external guidelines, without constructing their appearance, their intentions, according to others, according to man. This way, the sculptures configured a form of art-making where the territory of intimacy and experience come together with the observations of the world; each art piece seems to be constructed with oddments of experiences, portraying the interior and exterior, and joining it in an inseparable whole. These artists situate their work in a territory where difference is not a condition but is another possibility of telling the same story, so many times rewritten, so many times narrated. A story, where the body, daily life, memory, the apparent insignificance, interpersonal relations, dis-encounters, loneliness, love and its inevitable loss, will be situated in everyone's reality.

The masculine body and its anatomic representations

Today, the manifestations of the male body have multiplied remarkably. Aesthetic transformation and sexual approximation of the masculine corporeality initiates its first moment when the plural condition of the sexual modality emerges under the disappearance of homogeneity, and modernist sexuality adapts to a phenomena of sexual post-revolution: the interest of sexual genealogy of "I" as a subject of sexual desire and the increase of bisexual, homosexual and female artists. In general, all of those that possess a certain sexual modality and are anthropologically attracted by masculine sexuality, gave a new contribution to masculine sculpture.

One of the central matters relative to the masculine body articulates itself around the impact of homosexuality in the organized work and gay speech. Therefore, sculpture reflects the repertoire of body themes of interest to offer the most global image possible of human limits, its multiple resources and the interactions of social and personal conduct. The installation of the homosexual and transsexual crises allowed for sculpture the militant recovery of political possibilities in its practice and in its form, dissolving borders between artists, raising and provoking answers amongst the social, behavioral, individual and artistic aims. Before this context, the masculine body acquired various metamorphoses. It is pictured in a general form according to masculine iconography – military, construction worker, policeman, cowboy, skinhead, etc. All adorned their identity with the use of fetishes – muscular body, shaved heads and genital size. Others are represented by their fetish attire, with the military uniform or legionary boots, etc.

Another form of representing the masculine body is by using manly iconography, such as depicting man through his genital organ. Here, more than evidencing the body, the artist intends to evidence sexuality, or better, heterosexuality. Today, more than ever, to be masculine it is necessary to show and prove oneself. This way,

artists like James Lee Byars present the masculine genital organ as obelisks that assume over-dimensional importance, which can be seen as true manly symbols, like *Golden Tower*, or *Carving nº3* by Barry Flanagan, that presents us a triumphant image of the genital organ in erection. The doll also becomes a symbol of heterosexuality, appearing in sculpture as a representation of a super-hero. If the sculptures and monuments in public spaces represent heroes, sculpture-dolls represent super-heroes. They're small plastic figures (soldiers or fantastic figures such as galaxy war characters or journey to the stars) that show action as in the case of the sculptures by Mario Ybarra Jr. Most of the pieces, for example, the *Vato* collection, *Action Figures*, are shirtless and show their huge muscular chests. Meanwhile, on these characters' chests we don't see the modern and colourful logos of known super-heroes, we see tattoos of the Los Angeles neighborhoods. These illustrations mix religious and nationalist iconography with letters, caricatures and elements of culture restricted to certain social groups. As in in any action man, these sculptures come equipped with accessories: machine-guns, pistols, knives, sunglasses, wool hats, thin mustaches, etc. So, we can perceive that the masculine group, in the sculpture field, is a result of manly concretion and masculinity, presented through the power of physical attributes (muscles or genital organs) or through fetish iconography regarding that masculinity. Therefore, the masculine body image is in line with power, force and action.

Final considerations

Sculpture allows us to visualize the importance that is given to the body today, the transformations operated upon it regarding our daily posture and attitude. Analyzing the body in the sculptural field is being sensitive to its anatomies and contextualizing them in a time that is ours. Filled with sexual signs, society functions as a thematic repertoire for current sculpture. Indeed, this artistic activity produces strong and intense images taken from the private lives of each one of us, where we witness our desires and fantasies, frustrations and limitations. Its formal possibilities are various: the expansion of the I, the behavioral relationship between sexes, the ambiguity relative to sexual identity and all of the ramifications and variations of sex are intimately connected to the body.

So, sculpture seeks a new form of relationship with what's real, trying to transmit in its work the most real and natural side of the body based of the models of the current society. This art form defends a heterogeneous and plural character, it is an art response, in its own formal openness, to diversity and idealism existent in a society defined by its multiculturalism. Once the notion of linear progressiveness has disappeared, we find ourselves submerged in a present full of contradictions, and simultaneity configured in a series of speeches and performances that focus on the transformation of the conceptual character of the sculpture. In its autonomous form, this has tried to recover the provocative sense of a practice that does not desire to quit operating like a transformer or alert instrument. The female artist indicates the body as a "mirror" of the collective subject, as a carrier to claiming social matters around sexuality and presents it to us in its different metamorphoses; we are then witness to the life of the nation, manifested in a certain time that is ours.

Sculpture, as a means of communication and aesthetic expression, will continue to modify its themes about the body and human condition, continuing to walk towards a path where plastic discourse is relative to each artist. A place where freedom of speech, formal and technical proceedings are related to the reality lived, and technological evolution is always allowing a better understanding of an actual time. It is unthinkable that body image stops being a part of the artistic purposes of sculpture. Coming times will be 'troubled' times and times that collect dividends of the advances in technology and sexual liberty. In other words, the future will initiate a new social reality: the pacified coexistence of different sociocultural groups with diverse attitudes in regards to the body and sexuality and sculpture will be, once more, a reflection of this.

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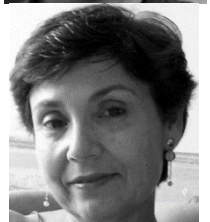
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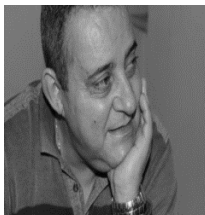
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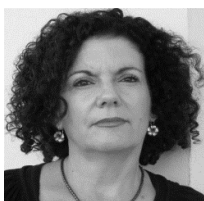
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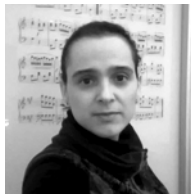
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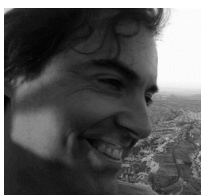
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Sudha Daniel is a British artist who had collaborated with Viana do Castelo Polytechnic as an Artist in Residence in Painting, between 2007 and 2009. He also taught some students on the under & postgraduate Course in Art Education and ran several workshops on oil painting for the community there. In the past, he was a curator of Multicultural Art at Leicestershire Museums in England and at the Commonwealth Institute, London, where he interpreted the art and culture of 7 Asian countries. Subsequently, he worked as Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at the University of Derby for 14 years. Nowadays he is engaged in full-time painting, his passion and forte; his paintings are on the theme of the Cosmos, inspired mainly by Hubble Space Telescope imagery. In recent years his artwork has been shown in several venues in Britain and on a large electronic LED outdoor screen at the Cultural Centre, Perth, Australia for a whole month. His Cosmos Art is due to be shown at significant universities and other venues across the world soon.

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Suparna Banerjee has been awarded a PhD degree in Dance Studies from the University of Roehampton, UK. Besides, she holds an MA in Performing Arts and English from the University of Pune and the University of Kalyani, India respectively. Trained in Bharatanatyam dance, she has received numerous awards for her performances and teaching. She is an Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and has taught in many undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the USA and India. Her writings have appeared in "Research in Dance Education" and "The Global Studies Journal". To expand her work in the post-doctoral phase, she would be interested in studying supermodernity and the conceptualisation of 'non-place'; accelerated modernity and gendering technology in screendance/digital performance.

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Susan Ogier is a Senior Lecturer in Primary Education, specialising in Art and Design. She works at Roehampton University, London, on both undergraduate and post-graduate courses. Susan holds a Master of Arts (Fine Art – Drawing) from Wimbledon School of Art, London, and maintains her own art practice. She is author of a series of art books for children, several professional journal articles and book chapters. Her research interests relate to the contribution of visual arts practice to social and emotional well-being through a deepening understanding of personal identity, and how this can be an influencing and motivating factor for children to learn across the curriculum.

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