

Head to Toe

IMPRESSING THE BODY

Vito Acconci	Ana Mendieta
William Anastasi	Larry Miller
Janine Antoni	Jennifer Monick
Chuck Close	Robert Morris
Charles Clough	Dennis Oppenheim
Bruce Conner	Nam June Paik
Eduardo Difarnecio	Tina Potter
Cheryl Donegan	Marc Quinn
Suzan Etkin	Seth Rubin
Antony Gormley	Carolee Schneemann
Nene Humphrey	Gary Schneider
Jasper Johns	Joel Shapiro
Annette Lemieux	Kiki Smith
Richard Long	Charles Spurrier
Andrew Lord	Not Vital
Claudia Matzko	Robert Wilson

Curated by Donna Harkavy and Margaret Mathews-Berenson

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appropriated image of a Jasper Johns Savarin coffee can, an allusion to another one of her artistic heroes.

Jasper Johns's use of body impressions makes reference to his endeavors in the studio and to traditions of portraiture and figuration; it also enables him to create "representational image[s] without illusionistic drawing."⁽⁷⁾ *Savarin* (1978), one of Johns's earliest monotypes, conflates the artist's hand with the brushes in his signature coffee can to acknowledge the primacy of the hand as a tool in making art. Following a series of four drawings of 1962, *Study for Skin* (not included in this exhibition), Johns produced the lithograph *Skin with O'Hara Poem* (1963-65) in homage to poet and curator Frank O'Hara.⁽⁸⁾ Here Johns impressed his hands and both sides of his face onto the stone. The disturbing yet powerful image shows the artist pushing against the surface of the paper, seemingly trapped inside his own artwork, struggling to escape. His ghostly presence is both erotic and morbid—the impressed skin evokes the sensual self even as it suggests self-sacrifice and death. With their allusion to the corporeal body and its absence, Johns's body imprints call to mind the Shroud of Turin and Veronica's veil.⁽⁹⁾

Gary Schneider's haunting *Mask* (1999) was inspired by Johns's series *Study for Skin*. Named for the purported gold death mask of Agamemnon, it was created from the heat and sweat of the artist's face pressed into film emulsion. Schneider's self-portrait alludes to the perpetual cycle of life and death and perhaps to his own mortality through the seemingly disintegrating flesh of his visage. The artist has spoken of this and other works as "residues of an activity" and cites Klein and Acconci as important precedents.⁽¹⁰⁾

Seth Rubin speaks of his work as performances for the camera and his titles such as *I threw ash on the snow and then lay down in a walking position* (1994) underscore the importance of process to the artist. Rubin records the impression of his body, both fragmented and whole, left in various natural materials. His sensuous and ghostly photographs speak of the spiritual and the corporeal, birth and death, presence and absence. Like Rubin, **Dennis Oppenheim** examines the nexus between bodyscape and landscape. In *Identity Stretch* (1970-75), the artist's thumbprint and that of his son were writ large (300 x 1000 feet) on a tract of land at Artpark in Lewiston, New York. This monumental earth work and the photo montage documenting the project relate to Oppenheim's interest in performance and in the hand as the embodiment of energy and identity.

Richard Long, best known for his sculptures made from materials collected during his extensive nature walks, has created a series of drawings using earth as his medium. The impressions of his mud-covered fingers and hands in *Mud Finger Piece* (1984) and *Mud Hand Prints* (1984) are a realization of Long's desire to "make images and ideas which resonate in the imagination, which mark the earth and the mind."⁽¹¹⁾

Before the advent of forensic DNA analysis, fingerprinting was the surest way to establish individual identity in the legal realm. **Bruce Conner's** multiple, *Prints*, (1974) documents the artist's personal crusade to maintain ownership of his own fingerprints, which he believed were integral to his artwork. As a conceptual act, he challenged the mandatory fingerprinting policy at California State University at San Jose, claiming that as an artist, his fingerprints have monetary value. **Claudia Matzko** also alludes to the methods and tools of fingerprint analysis, or dactylography, in a series of works, *Untitled (Dusting)* (1992). These intimate drawings are accumulations of seemingly random finger markings that have been gently coaxed into materiality through the act of dusting for fingerprints.

Philip Glass's face also seems coaxed into existence through the accretion of fingerprints in **Chuck Close's** portraits of the composer. The swirling lines of Close's fingerprints lend tactility to the portraits and meld the artist's identity with that of his sitter. Other artists who use imprints of the hand as potent markers of identity are **Mark Quinn** and **Robert Wilson**, as can be seen