



PERSONA: A BODY IN PARTS GREENSBORO, NC

Persona: A Body in Parts features works by six artists who see humans not only as collections of body parts but as clusters of variant identities that ripple and change with every contact, with every shift in time and space [Weatherspoon Art Museum; September 17—December 11, 2011].

Kate Gilmore's performance-installation *Wall Bearer*, 2011, immobilizes five women for several hours to suggest the stress of maintaining a position within an institution. The multi-ethnic group of women, whose bodies range from svelte to heavysset, stand in five niches carved in a wall; they all wear identical pink "business" costumes, the same shade as the wall into which they fade. A video of Gilmore performance's *Main Squeeze*, 2006, is installed next to *Wall Bearer*. Here, the artist exhibits intense stress as she forces her way into and out of a self-created wooden tunnel—a role or identity into which she has boxed herself.

If the box is taken as a kind of skin into which Gilmore disappears, it may be related to Nick Cave's five towering *Soundsuit* works, 2011. Here, a myriad of glistening found objects—beads, brightly colored fabrics, plastic flowers, birds, toys—coruscating surfaces, and tunics mask whoever or whatever is beneath, except for the two costumed legs supporting the unit. "When I was inside a suit," said Cave in a 2009 *New York Times* article, "I was no longer Nick, I was a shaman of sorts." A nearby video takes this concept a step further as the *Soundsuits* perform fierce, shamanistic dances.

Barbara Probst and Nikki Lee are more direct in their exploration of the near-infinite number of ways in which we may see ourselves or be perceived by others. Probst's *Exposure #49: N.Y.C., 555 8th Avenue, 05.21.07, 4:02 p.m.*, 2007, comprises twelve photographs of the same model in the same place at the same second, but from twelve different angles and distances. The images are revelatory. Seen full face, the model is dour, unsmiling. But elsewhere there is delicacy, as a lock of hair curls across her cheek. A close-up of one eye suggests a mixture of curiosity and desire. Ironically, one image has her hand covering her face, as though she might yet remain

anonymous. Our vantage point determines what we see: the cameras themselves appear in some of the images.

The show presents two photographic series by Nikki Lee. *Parts*, 2002-2005, develops a relatively simple concept: "We all have many different personas," presenting a different face to "a schoolteacher or to your parents or to a new boyfriend." The photographs in *Parts* are cut in half, only hinting at the partner or "part" eliciting Lee's response. Far more sophisticated are the three large chromogenic prints that make up *Layers*, 2007. Lee had street artists in three cities—New York, Rome, and Istanbul—draw her portrait on translucent sheets of Mylar. She then placed the drawings on top of each other so that multiple eyes, noses, lips, and hairlines slide across the prints.

For Carter, interchangeable prosthetic limbs may well represent the self. The nine-image *Hand Model*, 2006, focuses on the artist—specifically, his hands—awkwardly toying with his materials. *Leg Model*, 2007, is a photograph of a prosthetic leg whose owner remains unknown. In the midst of the two-dimensional wall pieces, Carter has placed two solid lead crystal busts; altogether different, they are nevertheless both titled *Although*, 2010. Heavily carved and milky white, one is opaque and withstands any effort to understand its nature. The other is darker but somewhat translucent. Even as light bounces around in it, nothing is disclosed. Identity remains a mystery.

While identities may seem more sharply focused in Gillian Wearing's photographic series *Album*, 2003, they still merge in the creation of a single complex being. Her "self-portraits" as her mother, father, uncle, sister, brother, and herself at age seventeen required the manufacture of prosthetic clay masks, which were then cast in silicone. Wearing enlists pose, costume, and makeup to develop a clear, personal sense of each of her family members as they join in her. But, of course, her eyes appear and look through each mask. "There is something of me, literally, in all those people," she writes, "but we are each very different."

—Max Halperen

Carter, *Although*,

2010, solid Gaffer lead crystal with multi-colored, hand-blown glass eyes: brown/green, 20 x 13.5 x 11.5 inches [courtesy of the artist and Marc Jancou Contemporary, New York]