

The Belly and the Members

Karen Black, Cybele Cox, Sarah Drinan, Mehwish Iqbal, Solomon Kammer, Juz Kitson, Caroline Rothwell and Grace Wright

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This exhibition is a courageous and form-bending exploration of the human body. The body has been co-opted, admired, sold, touched, tasted, beaten, imprinted, raped, medicalised, spiritualised, colonised, traded, desired, used, killed, legislated against, denigrated, objectified, sexualised and de-sexualised.

This show, a reclamation of the body, is interrogated from vastly different standpoints ranging from diasporic perspectives to differently abled bodies; non-conformist genders to colonised, medicalised and industrialised bodies; to spaces where the spirit, natural forces, and the botanical fuse with the human form and therefore imaginatively conspire to an ownership and empowerment that is not yet written.

Where words arch and stretch to explain, these visual forms allow a deep contemplation of how we reimagine, how we experience, and how we free the body from the constraints and definitions visited upon it. There is both delicacy and weight; mediums are utilised that are juxtaposed against the harshness of the political treatise they are exploring. Others are heavy and bold, yet veer toward the mystic and occult. There is a physicality to each work that speaks to the viewer in a language that is without words and takes us on a path that has no final destination. Perhaps that is the point, the human body is boldly defying categorisation, is merging with nature, with the unseen, with the matter that makes us part of something bigger than the mere flesh we assume.

The human body is marked by so many, co-opted by story and myth, by images and sex. We are confronted by the unexamined sense of our own form, made aware of how we have been trained to accept control and definition. This exhibition is a lens through which we see an exquisite new mode of self-determination. Ultimately the lens is a feminist lens in its purest form. A decision to see differently and to resist the patriarchal definition of all things. A way to reclaim and expand upon our experience of the bodies we live within.

The exhibition offers us unique perspectives on how the political discourse written upon bodies through colonisation, immigration and industrialisation are deeply arresting. The art pieces move us to experience our own bodies as more than 'ours' but as a story. That bodies carry the experiences, traumas, life blood and stories of those who came before us, reminds us that we are part of a cultural and physical experience uniting past and future, landscape and flesh.

Amongst all the works is a desire to encompass what it means to live in a body, move with a body, seek, desire and exist within a body, in spite of its contradictions, tenderness and pain. We are therefore drawn into a dialogue about how we move towards embracing and redefining the bodies we hold, the human spaces we live within, and its merging with outside forces. The experience invites us to rethink body shapes, forms and textures and movement while also being cognisant of the myths that have rendered it dangerous and in need of control.

Suzie Miller is a contemporary international playwright, novelist, and screenwriter. Based in both London and Sydney, Australia, Miller has had her work produced around the world, winning multiple prestigious awards, including for her smash-hit one-woman play *Prima Facie*, which ran a sold-out, critically successful season on London's West End, winning the Laurence Olivier Awards for Best New Play 2023 and Best Actress 2023; followed by a critically successful season on Broadway, receiving four Tony Award nominations and a win for Best Actress 2023. Miller is educated in science and law, with a doctorate in drama and mathematics. She practiced human rights law before turning to writing full-time and is currently developing major theater, film, and television projects across the UK, USA, and Australia, including feature film adaptations of her plays.

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