

ART AND CAKE

A Contemporary Art Magazine with a Focus on the Los Angeles Art Scene



Masculine Feminine. Photo Courtesy of The Beall Center for Art + Technology. Lynn Hershman Leeson. Roberta Turning Blue. 1979.

Male or Female? You Decide

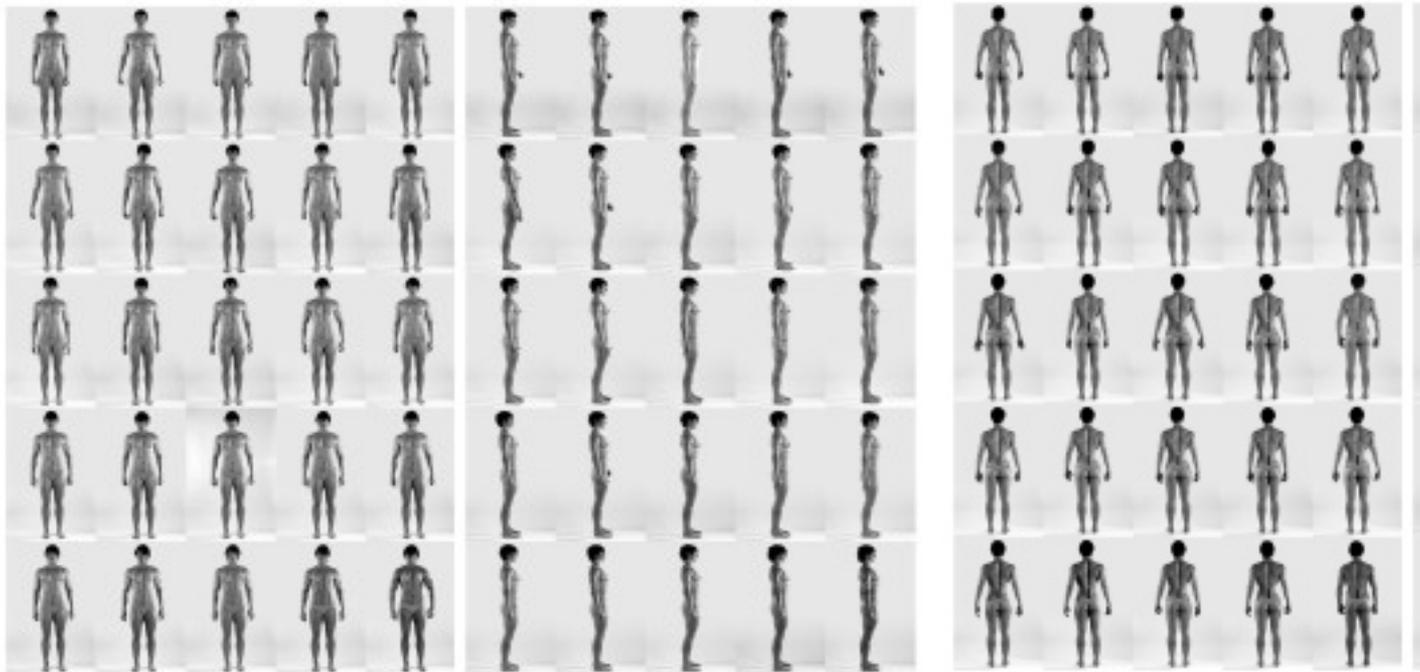
By Sydney Walters

Through May 13th

The Beall Center for Art + Technology presents *Masculine Feminine*, a show that acts as a rebuttal to the limitations society has placed on gender. Curated by David Familian and Micol Hebron, this multi-medium exhibit declares that gender identity ought to be specialized rather than generalized.

The gallery space is dark and it is difficult to read the museum-like placards next to the art pieces. However, the dark spaces give remarkable contrast to the illuminated sculptures and video art. As suggested by the show's title, *Masculine Feminine*, each art piece explores pivot points that assign

gender such as having a vagina or penis. However, each artist reckons with the ambiguity between male and female. The result of this collaborate venture to disband abstract judgments on gender brings forth evidence of vibrant individual experiences.



One of the best examples of this intertwining is Heather Cassils' *Time Lapse* series. Modeled after Eleanor Antin's 1972 *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture, Cut: A Traditional Sculpture* is a photo documentation of the artist as Cassils gains twenty-three pounds of muscle. For Cassils, a transgender artist, "getting cut" means something different than going under the knife. The twenty-three week transformation suggests Cassils operates in a state of flux rather than a calculable end.

Not an artist to embrace subtlety, Micol Hebron's *Barbara* is a giant installation of a vagina. The vaginal opening is adorned with a thick circle of quartz crystal. A steady stream of Piña Colada cocktail pours from the sculpture and is available for consumption. *Barbara*, named after the artist's mother, is a commentary of the synchronic acceptance of the vagina as commodity and life force.



Hanging eye level in the gallery is a metal belt that looks like a futuristic chastity belt. Next to it, a music video plays showing a Japanese transvestite wearing this *Menstruation Machine*, this aluminum belt equipped with electrodes which stimulate the lower abdomen to replicate menstrual cramps. In addition, the device has a blood-dispensing system so that menstruation, often associated as private or even embarrassing, is publicized.



Masculine Feminine. Photo Courtesy of The Beall Center for Art + Technology. Hiromi Ozaki.
Menstruation Machine. 2010.

The longest project in the making, *Bodies INCorporated* began in 1996. Victoria Vesna has crafted a large manual book with a bronze hammered, Buddha-like face on the front. The book contains the rules and licensing agreements of Bodies Corp 2.0. In it, visitors learn how they can create digital avatars of themselves using Vesna's innovative model. These avatars have physical and metaphysical options that allow participants to use their unadulterated imagination to craft their avatar. Enrollment is simple, yet the comprehensive manual and mystical nature of the avatars have the thrill of experimental research. To be part of this project, visit www.bodiesinc.ucla.edu



Masculine Feminine. Photo Courtesy of
The Beall Center for Art + Technology.
Victoria Vesna. *Bodies INCorporated*.
1996-2017.

This exhibit hails from a long history of oversimplifying gender. By superimposing several creative interpretations of gender, the result message is that gender is more than what you were born with, but what you make of it.

Featured artists: Cassils, Freewaves, Micol Hebron, Julie Heffernan, Robert Heinecken, Maria Lassnig, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Danial Nord, Hiromi Ozaki, Alexis Smith, Laetitia Sonami and Victoria Vesna

Exhibit open until May 13, 2017
712 Arts Plaza, Irvine, CA 92697
Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 12-6pm
Closed March 28-April 3
