

The Body As Site Of

CSREA Art Exhibit Fall 2017 - Spring 2018

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We are born into human bodies we don't choose. Our bodies then become the site of everything we experience. It is the site from which we view the world, from which the world views us, and from which we view ourselves being seen by the world. As social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner point out, all of this informs our social identities. In this exhibition, four contemporary artists of color engage in reflection on the complexity of identity, sometimes pushing back on misrepresentations, including stereotypes and cultural appropriation, other times presenting alternatives.

Jamaican-American artist **Akujixxv's** digital illustrations are contemporary and personal, exploring themes of friendship, spirituality, and self-care. The settings of these artworks, ranging from bedrooms to desert landscapes, are composed primarily of vivid color-fields. Depicting women with a variety of hairstyles, figures, and skin tones, the artist portrays the subjects of these artworks in moments of activity and contemplation, alone and with friends. While the figures in Akujixxv's illustrations are largely faceless, details of accessories, including earrings, backpacks, and socks, lend them a degree of realism and specificity. The result is abstraction that feels at once general and specific; removed and personal.

Devyn Galindo's photos document contemporary Chicana and indigenous people participating in acts of political resistance in Los Angeles. The primarily femme and non-binary subjects of Galindo's photos appear poised, confident, and empowered. Politically, the photos resonate on two registers: there is the direct expression of political protest but also the subtler evocation of solidarity as an emotion shared between people.

Panteha Abareshi's vibrantly inked illustrations convey the complexity of mental and physical illnesses as experienced by women of color. Rejecting conventional ideas of intimacy, her artworks challenge the societal perception of women as being defined by their romantic appeal. Employing symbols like knives and roses, Abareshi conveys the pain of physical illness but does not prioritize it above mental illness; in doing so, she dismantles the notion that one is more legitimate than the other.

First generation Colombian-American **Carolina Hicks'** artworks defy easy categorization. Working in a variety of mediums, including illustration, self-publishing, and assemblage, Hicks

creates illustrations with a simplicity that underscores the conviction of the sentiments expressed in them. Emotional without being maudlin, compassionate without being saccharine, Hicks' artworks elegantly grapple with the legacy of colonialism, misogyny, and grief.

The artworks in this exhibition address the body as a site of personal agency, political activism, and vulnerability, while acknowledging that these topics are not necessarily discrete. Human experience rarely unfolds in only one plane at a time and thus identity is complex. Whether in the form of a photograph or an illustration, the emotionally evocative works by these talented young artists convey multidimensional realities that challenge divisions of the physical and mental, the cerebral and visceral, and the spiritual and the material. As you take a look around, we hope that the works inspire you to reflect on your own experiences.