

By **patricia**

COMMENTS [2]
SHARE [+]

TAGS:

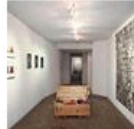
arts and culture
benjamin tischer
bob flannagan
hannah wilke
invisible exports
jana leo
mine
patricia
risa needleman
wall of pain



ARTS & CULTURE

Body As Charged Canvas

September 21st, 2010 | 12:36 pm



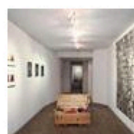
Opening the Fall 2010 season with a dynamic group show, titled *Mine, Invisible Exports* features video and photographic works by three distinct artists for whom the physical body is canvas: Hannah Wilke, Jana Leo and Bob Flannagan. The pieces in this show were created during periods when producing work was inseparable from healing as an art form. Despite each artist's signature style, the curators selected for subtlety. "Rather than staging transgression as a form of extravagant melodrama, these works reveal real unwilling experience—intimate and personal, unscripted and undesired." Each artist in *Mine* presents the body's limitations in direct contact with limitless human transgression.

Benjamin Tischer, who co-curated the show with Risa Needleman, described the show as "essentially a portraiture show." Intensities of brutal circumstance — terminal illness, sexual assault — become personal vignettes of reclaiming one's indestructible spirit, despite emotional turmoil and temporality of the body. By showing acceptance and/or self-repossession through portraiture, masks are removed. Raw emotional potency is poetically expressed through methods that challenge expectations of therapy and transformation.



Bob Flannagan & Sheree Rose, "Wall of Pain", 1981-1992. Photographs and hypodermic needles, 132 x 168 in.

Bob Flannagan was many things: writer, poet, comedian, performance artist. From 18 months on, Flannagan spent his life in excruciating physical pain, in and out of hospitals. Expected to live until age 7, Flannagan was one of the longest survivors of cystic fibrosis, "fighting pain with pain" until his death at 43. To say he is disciplined is an understatement. His work fuses BDSM, illness, trauma, mortality, memory and sexuality. Although his work showcases the body in its performative function of pushing/recategorizing limits, *Mine* brings us close to his face, his eyes.



Wall of Pain is tacked to the wall with hypodermic needles. Comprised of 98 (out of several hundred) photographs of Flannagan's expressions, each image was taken every time Flannagan was hit by his partner Sheree Rose. As we gaze into variations of his ecstatic smile, Flannagan shows no traces of pain, only liberation. The liberation of numbing one kind of pain (one he couldn't control) with another (one he could create and control). In Flannagan's work, servitude becomes

aphrodisiac in an oasis of transgression as therapy.

M
St
Th
Bc
Th
Th
JC



Jana Leo, "Frozen Memory", 2006. Archival inkjet prints on Sintra mounted Hahnemuhle rag paper, 18 x 13 in each.

Jana Leo's previous show at Invisible Exports was called *Rape New York*. That show converted the gallery space into an open archive for numerous crates of paperwork relating to the traumatic experience of rape, which Leo endured while held captive in her own apartment, eight years before. A photograph she made during that time, *Frozen Memory*, is shown here in a new context, framing the event through new eyes. With *Frozen Memory* Leo uses the medium as a vehicle to "record and forget", using inherent photographic properties of freezing and discarding. With *Doing & Undoing, Part 1 & 2* Leo employs video to communicate the emptiness one can feel, alone in the company of a full plate of food. (I couldn't help thinking of Wilke's *Plate and Spoon*.) In this work, Leo shows consumption, regurgitation and the return to consumption as a process that mirrors the body's regenerative course. The work references nature as a constant recycler. Through mastication, Leo presents body as conduit for process and reprocess.



Hannah Wilke, *Untitled*, 1992. Three color photographs, 14 x 38 in framed.

Living body as sculpture is the primary medium for Hannah Wilke, who died prematurely from lymphatic cancer in 1993. Besides sculpture, Wilke produced writings, drawings, photography and video. Mostly known for her vulva sculptures in terra-cotta from the 60s, and chewing gum pieces created in the 70s, such iconic works share a haunting connection to her three works currently at Invisible Exports. Wilke's *labial works* evoke fertility and decay simultaneously, but in their repetition and scale, they resemble relationships of cellular division and mutation: much like the life cycle of a tumor. When applied to her body, *labial gum sculptures* address the formation of cysts, nodes, sores, scars; as well as a sprouting of erotic eruptions.

With *Untitled* Wilke chronicles her mental and physical transformation throughout stages of treatment. A staging that deliberately degenders perceptions of the body. Her post-treatment hairless scalp does not prevent her from smiling triumphantly, defying expectations of suffering, of aesthetics. As an artist for whom feminism was more important than art, and whose femininity was under constant public investigation, hers is an energy steeped in the confidence of beauty beyond physical encasement.

Mine will be exhibited until October 17, 2010 at the *Invisible Exports* gallery, 14A Orchard Street, New York NY.