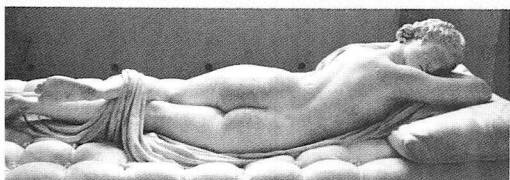


International
Center of
Photography
1130 Fifth
Avenue
New York City
September 8
through
October 29
1989
with a
performance
Friday
October 27
8:30 pm



The Naked Nude



Ninth in the
New Directions
series supported
by the National
Endowment
for the Arts and
the Jerome
Foundation.
Projection
equipment for
the installation
was made
available
through the
generosity of
Russell-Manning
Productions,
Minneapolis.

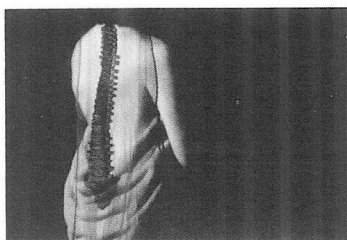
Dorit Cypis

In concept, the nude is an ideal. It is an unreal image that traps us in another's vision of perfection. The naked, on the other hand, is a fact, an often embarrassing truth we all inhabit. Historically, art

and more recently media have used the nude to construct objectified portrayals of human perfection. Both the male and female nude are susceptible to this objectification, which denies the individual and inhibits a natural relationship with our bodies. Dorit Cypis's goal is to "repossess" the body and reclaim it from the systems of representation that turn individuals into subject/objects. Drawing on images of the body in art, science, media, myth and history, Cypis attempts to expose the fallacies of conventional representation and return the nude to a state of nakedness. Her "naked nude" attempts to free itself from idealization, and repudiates those attitudes which have distanced us from our bodies as sources of power, emotion and self-knowledge.

The Naked Nude is a complex environment of sound, projections, light, holograms, photographs and plaster-cast frames. Out of near darkness seven computer-programmed slide projectors superimpose images on the architectural environment. Two large classical frames are constructed on the walls of the room. Into one, images of the naked artist are projected. In the other, anatomical images appear that provoke us to go beyond the surface and consider the body from both the outside and inside, to see it as physical and psychological. A revolving projector sends images sweeping around the room, images of a cremation ceremony in Bali that the artist participated in and photographed. These pictures of ritual evoke the spiritual and mythic aspects of the body. Six holograms of apples are placed throughout the room: these are classic emblems of seduction and forbidden desire. Synchronized to an audio track of altered music and monologue, the slide projectors illuminate the room, revealing that it contains a continuous mantel displaying photographs of classical paintings and sculptures that depict the nude.

Audience interaction is an important component of Cypis's work and viewers necessarily enter directly into her installations. The complexity of projections, sound and photographs



*Nervous System:
Spine, 1987*

creates a seemingly random environment in which viewers become active participants as their bodies block, frame or alter the projections, and the various layers of images become visible on them and the walls of the architectural setting.

In *The Naked Nude*, Cypis uses the triangular relationship of the artist, model, and viewer to structure her installation. The traditional relationship of the artist and the model is one in which the male artist takes possession of the female model through his rendering. The artist "fathers" the work of art, gives it his name, and the identity of the model is submerged in the form. The viewer then sees the model in the work of art from the point of view of the artist. (Variations of this relationship are rare, and in the case of male artist and male model, largely taboo.) Cypis asks how the woman/model can acknowledge the male/artist's gaze while still retaining possession of her body.

The primary images in *The Naked Nude* are of the artist's naked body. Cypis functions as both artist and model creating a composite image of a woman seeing herself. This dual role eliminates the gender distinction between artist and model, as well as any separation between the one rendering and the one being rendered. This allows the artist the possibility of reclaiming possession of both her body and her identity.

The installation *The Naked Nude* evolved from an earlier work, *X-Rayed*, in which Cypis was not the model, but photographed the naked body of another woman. Both the artist and her collaborator were committed to challenging the traditional stereotypes of female representation. Yet, when the images became public the collaborator felt that her privacy had been violated and denied Cypis the right to use them in any future context. The

artist felt that her efforts and purpose had been betrayed, but was unable to resolve the contradictions between her artistic intent and the emotions that the public presentation of the work had created for the model.

One year later, in a subsequent piece titled *X-Rayed*, (*altered*), Cypis assumed the burden of public display and substituted her own naked body for the model's. With the aid of a female photographer, she replicated the images she had taken earlier. Even though Cypis felt "actively in possession of her body" while being photographed, she was nevertheless "overwhelmed by a deep sense of shame, guilt, and repulsion" on first viewing the images of herself. The dilemma of her own shame, which she recognized as socially conditioned behavior, clearly embodied the irony of her struggle. As with her original collaborator, it was not the act of being photographed that brought on her discomfort, but the act of viewing and being viewed in her nakedness. Her intellectual desire to go beyond the power of socially conditioned representation was complicated by the very same emotions that had sabotaged her earlier collaboration.

For the work, *The Naked Nude*, Cypis has continued to use these images of herself, but has also rephotographed sections of some of them as a method of re-viewing herself and the details of her body.

The poses employed in these images are not random, but are based on a kinesthetic process. Through movement and attention to focused breathing, Cypis heightens her perceptions of her internal body. This process is used by the artist to stimulate a relationship between the physical, psychological and spiritual self.

At times her poses are similar to the patriarchal stereotypes in art and media. Cypis does not deny that she also is susceptible to the power of conventional patriarchal representation. Such poses do not mean that she is giving herself over to the viewer, but allow for the erotic possibilities of the female body. As the viewer may gain pleasure from seeing, she gains pleasure from being seen.

The artist's father, Moshe Cypis, was disturbed by his daughter's use of

her naked body as a central aspect of her art. In response, he presented her with a group of snapshots taken in Paris of nudes in classical paintings and sculptures. These photographs created a visual dialogue between the daughter and father. Both use the vocabulary of the female nude and reflect the ambiguous relationship to nakedness that society holds. Do the photographs represent the father's attempt to understand his daughter's actions and his acceptance of them, or do they represent his own conflicting emotions and uneasiness? As with Cypis's female collaborator in *X-Rayed*, seeing his daughter's "nakedness" led to discomfort and the need for response by the artist's father.

The Naked Nude uses the multi-representational systems of image, object, language, sound and music. Cypis does not try to define a simple narrative form. She creates multiple layers of meaning in order to fracture our static definitions of the body and allow for a fuller understanding of the power it holds for both women and men. She acknowledges the unavoidable influence of conventional patriarchal representation, but tries to go beyond these limited definitions. Cypis wants us to consider the spiritual and mortal body, as seen in the Balian cremation ceremony, as well as the physiological workings of the body, as seen in the anatomical images. The difficulty of her task is indicated by the emotional contradictions the work creates for the artist and the viewer. While Cypis presents the body as a source of power, self-knowledge and individuality, it is also a source of shame, fear and guilt. These contradictions are shared by the viewer who is challenged through a kaleidoscope of images that may sometimes be difficult and shocking, underlining our vulnerability. *The Naked Nude* attempts to give us permission to look and be looked at. It permits viewers to see the body, to experience their own ambivalence about looking and finally to recognize their own nakedness. Cypis presents her nakedness to viewers in the hope that they will be better able to see themselves.

Willis Hartshorn
Director of Exhibitions

Selected Biography

Dorit Cypis was born in Tel Aviv, Israel, in 1951. In 1958, her family emigrated to Montreal, Canada. She studied sociology at Sir George Williams University, Montreal, and graduated from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax (B.F.A. and B.A., 1974) and the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia (M.F.A., 1977). She is currently living and working in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Image of the human anatomy, Projection from X-Rayed, (altered), 1989
Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis.

Installation Exhibitions

1989 *X-Rayed, (altered)*, Intermedia Arts and First Banks, Minneapolis

1988 *X-Rayed*, Installation and Performance, New American Filmmakers, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

1987 *Heavenly Embrace*, Baskerville Watson Gallery, New York

1986 *Love After Death*, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, Belgium, Exposition D'Adieu de Karel: Au Couer du Maelstrom

1985 *Vanity: Just a Split Second Away*, "Talking Back to the Media" Exhibition, Amsterdam, Holland

1984 *Together We Are A Part: A Tropical Blend*, Post Olympics Exhibition, L.A.C.E., Los Angeles

Performance Presentations

1989 *Threshold in Musical Time*, Brattle Theatre, Photographic Resource Center, Boston

1988 *Threshold in Musical Time*, Space AD 2000, Tokyo, Japan

1987 *A Phantasmagoria*, with Leeny Sack, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia

1986 *The Artist and Her Model*, DeZaak, Groningen, Holland

Exhibitions

(Photographic Objects)

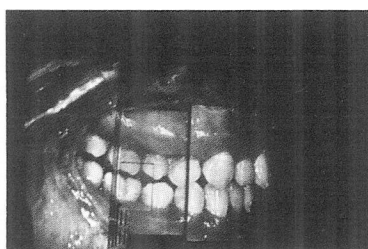
1989 *The Photography of Invention: American Pictures of the 80s*, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Sequence (Con)sequence, Avery Center for the Arts, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY

1988 *Utopia: Post Utopia*, Group Exhibition, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston

1987 *Sexual Difference: Both Sides of the Camera*, CEPA, Buffalo, NY; SUNY, Old Westbury; Columbia University Gallery, New York

1986 *BodyTalk: The Panorama Story* "The Real Big Picture" Exhibition, Queens Museum, New York



Theatre, Dance, Video Commissions and Collaborations

1988 Photography & Projection Dissolve Design of *A Portrait of Paul as a Woman*, for Paul McMahon's *Emotional Tidal Wave*, Home for Contemporary Theatre & Art, New York

1987 *It Came from Inner Space*, performance conceived with Valerie Ellis and Sara Weiner, Film In The Cities, Minneapolis

1985 Photography, projection design and direction of *An Unveiling*, to interact with choreographer Wendy Morris and composer Wendy Ultan, for "Shadow to Frame," a dance performance by Wendy Morris, Landmark Center, St. Paul, MN. Produced by Film In The Cities, Minneapolis

Published Writings and Photography

1989 *Courbet: Reconsidered*, Artpaper, Vol. 8, #10, pg. 18.

1988 *6 hours of hypothetical television programming*, Artpaper, Summer 1988, pg. 17.

1987 *Death Masks*, New Observations, Winter, 1987

Awards

1989 Artist Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts

1988 Sumitomo Shintaku Bank, Tokyo, Japan

1987 Jerome Foundation Travel Grant (travel to Indonesia and Japan), Minnesota Arts Board

1985 Interarts Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts, *Ex(centric) Lady Travellers*

1983 Artist Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts

1979 Artist Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts



History,
Projection from *X-
Rayed, (altered)*,
1989
Intermedia Arts,
Minneapolis

Recently, my father gave me a handful of snapshots he had taken on his trip to France, adding with a smile, "You don't have a monopoly over being naked." The photographs were all of classical paintings and sculpture of "the nude," which my father had photographed at museums in Paris. I understood these as his response to my recent work of explorations of my own body. Was he acknowledging my work, competing, reasserting his historical position, playing seduction or suggesting coexistence?

I continue my questioning. Can a woman allow herself to be looked at while remaining in possession of her own body? What substances are this body made of? How is memory stored within this body? How does history shape this body and how does this body shape culture? Where lies desire? What is the inter-relationship between the physiological, the psychological and the spiritual?

The nude exists in our histories, in our memories and in our bodies. Where is the naked?

The Naked Nude is a cauldron into which many elements dissolve, mutating and reforming into new possibilities.

Structurally, the form is tight. All variables are accounted for. The contents continuously shift within. There are frames within frames, bounded by the room perimeter, by history, by the nudes of my father's gaze. My body evolves and dissolves, suggesting a search for repossession, for pleasure, shame, horror, desire and denial. The anatomical body of flesh, sinew, bones and organs looms remindingly. Mythologies, histories and dreams revolve, washing over all. Eve's apples glare seductively through their holographic realities. All apparatus stand clearly exposed.

Movement is essential as elements appear and recede, no one taking a lasting central position. Each element is permitted a voice and the possibility of being "looked at." Sound conducts the movement, creating an elastic channel for difference.

Ultimately, it is within the viewer that meaning is evoked. Each viewer is challenged to feel, to allow the resonance to restimulate her/his own projections. The viewer participates in her/his own delivery from the absurd to the familiar.

I, the artist, expose my own body, with the knowledge that the viewer's look cannot take me away from myself, and too, with the knowledge that the viewer is more than the way he/she "looks."

Dorit Cypis
August 1989

Components

7 computer programmed slide projectors, 3 projector stands - 1 with rotating mechanism, 300 slides, 2 plaster frames, audio cassettes for programmed sound-synch dissolve, 21 photographs of "the nude" from classical paintings and sculpture and 6 holograms of apples.

cover:
*Image of the
artist's body,*
Projection from
X-Rayed,
(altered), 1989
Intermedia Arts,
Minneapolis.

Classical
sculpture
photographed
by Moshe
Cypis
(the artist's
father)
Paris, 1989

Installation

Conceived, created and directed by
Dorit Cypis.
Musical arrangement and engineering
by James Harry.
Projection dissolve programming by
Bruce Clark of Russell-Manning
Productions, Minneapolis.
Wall frame construction by Judy
Kepes.
Revolving tower engineering by Tom
Briggs.
Holograph technician, Steve Suger-
man.
Mantle photographs of "the nude"
taken by Moshe Cypis, the artist's
father, in Paris, May 1989.
Photographs of the artist nude, taken
by Lyn Hambrick, replicating original
photographs by Dorit Cypis, of "the
nude" in *X-Rayed*, first presented at
the Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York, January 1988.
Photographs of Bali cremation
ceremony taken by Dorit Cypis, in
Pedantegal, Bali, September 1988.
The anatomical body was rephoto-
graphed from bio-medical photographic
atlases of the human body.
All other photographs by Dorit Cypis,
from life and rephotographed from a
variety of sources.

Performance

Singer and performer: Johanna Cypis
Narrator and Model: Dorit Cypis
Jazz musicians: Metric System,
(with special arrangement by David
Lahm)
Sound engineering and arrangement:
James Harry
Original song *I Wanna Be Your White
Guitar*, 1989, lyrics by Dorit Cypis,
Johanna Cypis, James Harry; music by
James Harry; after a text by Dorit
Cypis.

*This exhibition would not have been
possible without the support and assis-
tance of the following staff members of
the International Center of Photogra-
phy. Cornell Capa, Ann Doherty, Phil
Block, Lisa Dirks, Art Presson, Chris
Heindl, Anne Hoy, Phyllis Levine,
Marta Kuzma, Jeri Coppola, Charles
Stainback and Patti Boustany.*



Performer
Johanna Cypis
singing,
*I Wanna Be Your
White Guitar*,
Dancer in
shadow, Sharon
Weiner from
*Threshold in
Musical Time*,
1989, performed
at the Brattle
Theatre,
Cambridge,
Mass., through
Photographic
Resource Center.