

Out of Bounds

Introduction by Catherine Elwes

Ever since the camera first revealed the photographic likeness of a human being, artists have used photography, film and video to explore the body as both presence and a ghostly reminder of the absence of s/he who once stood in front of the camera. The realism of photography became all the more convincing to an audience now that the likeness could walk, talk and move in time parallel to the time-space occupied by the viewer. Since the body first breathed its simulated breath on the screen, it has conjured up every aspect of the lives it represents. The filmic body operates in the anxious space between our mortality and the libidinous dreams of our desires.

Jo Ann Kaplan and Franko B take the body to the extremes of experience, to a state of abjection that frees it from the constraints of social convention. Sam Taylor-Wood, Jayne Parker and Catherine Elwes show the body in all its poetry and power, the physical realities revealed as conduits to deeper desires and fears. The female body invaded by culture and by individual male aggressors are the themes of work by Louise Forshaw and Amanda Holiday who also shares with Keith Piper a concern with the colonisation of the black body by white culture. Cerith Wyn Evans, for his part shows us how the male body has been subjected to the same commercialisation as its female counterpart. The male body under threat of AIDS is the theme of Neil Bartlett's moving reply to his father's anxieties about who would take care of him when he is sick or old.

The body politic re-emerges in the work of Gorilla Tapes as they reassess the effect of American imperialism on the bodies of the third world. Death gets a more light hearted treatment with Simon Pummell's dancing skeletons while Dryden Goodwin and Jo Pearson take a sensitive and compassionate view of illness. Harrison & Wood stand alone as the physical jokesters defying gravity while Smith & Stewart's performances to camera are poignant evocations of the explosive territory of heterosexual coupling.

The body remains one of the most compelling images in art. It is an enduring testament to the artist's creative existence which will never fail to connect with the subjective "I" of each member of audience.

SAM TAYLOR-WOOD *Brontosaurus* 1995

10 min

A naked boy dances with unfettered abandon to the powerful strains of classical music. The synthesis of the highly sophisticated with the primal allow raw emotion and beauty to surface, disrupting our densely coded universe.



SMITH & STEWART *Dead Red* 1994 3 min

The work centers on the artists' bodies which suggest both a lived relationship and the universal experiences of physical and emotional interdependence. The simplicity of the imagery, a neck covered in lipstick kisses, frames the emotional content in the solidity of minimalist form.

JO ANN KAPLAN *Story of I* 1998 5 min extract

Based on the writings of George Bataille, the film creates a montage of body images combining graphic representations with footage of a woman taking a bath. The story of sexual transgression is told from the male point of view, but with a woman's voice, thereby confusing identities and casting the female as the active partner.

CATHERINE ELWES *There is a Myth* 1984

3 min

A breast fills the screen like a minimalist target painting. An infant's hand moves across the nipple with rough caresses. The breast milks in response to the touch and the sound of the baby. The breast demonstrates its original function, one which in Oxford at least, no mother is sanctioned to perform in public.

DRYDEN GOODWIN *Ospedale* 1998 10 min

extract

Time is speeded up as processions of visitors hurtle down anonymous hospital corridors. Time is slowed down as an infant, pink and newborn is lovingly bathed by a nurse. The body as a living structure is mirrored in the highly structured flow of this work, but without losing the emotional charge that inevitably accompanies these poignant physiological realities.

LOUISE FORSHAW *Hammer and Knife* 1987

1 min

A woman stands in a field. As she explains why it is that she sleeps with a hammer and knife under her pillow, the camera slowly zooms into her face. She describes the unwanted attentions of strangers, the chat-up that led to her rape. This tape is apposite in the context of recent attempts in Britain to decriminalise rape.

FRANKO B *Dead Mother* 1995 5 min

Franko B's body-in-extremis performances are worked into disturbing technological fantasies by digital trickery.

TIM MACMILLAN *Ferment* 1998 5 min

A journey through the city takes on a dream-like quality as we are able to drift seamlessly around spaces inhabited by a frozen humanity. This dislocation of the viewer's position is both disturbing and highly seductive.

AMANDA HOLIDAY *Manao Tupapau* 1990

1 min

This one-minute critique of painting in the grand manner centers on the image of South Pacific beauties that Gauguin offered western audiences as the exoticism of the 'primitive'. The painting is juxtaposed with the real-life flesh of a Melanesian woman who we are invited to consume both as image and as reality.



SIMON PUMMELL *Stain* 1992 1 min

A humorous meditation on death in which two skeletons cavort in a deadly dance. Part children's animation, part moral tale, the little skeletons end their frantic coupling collapsed on a firmly rubber-sheathed penis.

CERITH WYN EVANS *Kim Wilde Auditions*

1996 5 min

The male body is exposed and sold as a commodity of consumer culture in the same way that women's bodies have been marketed for centuries. Audition nerves break out in uncontrolled trembling of lips and hands and the male model's predicament is all too familiar to a female audience.

KEITH PIPER *Nation's Finest* 1990 7 min

Keith Piper celebrates the achievements of black athletes and analyses the commodification of their 'animal power' within a white culture. The fantasy of blackness bringing whites closer to their fundamental human nature is set against the discrimination that black communities suffer within British society.

ISAAC JULIEN *Vagabondiana* 2000

world premiere

Isaac's films have often included a fictional black conservateur, a woman who reappears in this work in the guise of Olaudah Equiano author of 'The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano, written by himself' 1789. Julien recreates the life of this spokesman for abolitionism who also had an interest in the intersection of African and Western aesthetics.

CATHERINE ELWES

Moving from performance to videomaking in the late '70s, Catherine Elwes has produced a rich body of work within the context of a feminist analysis of the personal as political. She has touched on the parent-child relationship from the positions of both child and mother. She has an enduring preoccupation with the female body and its tabooed reproductive functions. More recently she has investigated the nature of masculinity in the image of the father as war hero. Overall, her work has been centrally concerned with the search for a language reflecting the 'unspoken' perspective of the female subject.

She has worked as a curator and critic and teaches at Camberwell College of Arts in London.

Key works:

With Child 1984 18 min

There is a Myth 1984 10 min

Wishing Well installation 1991

The Liaison Officer 1998 40 min

