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BY **FRAN SCHECHTER** JULY 2, 2015 4:19 PM



The Flesh Of The World at U of T Art Centre (15 King's College, 416-946-8687) and Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (7 Hart House, 416-978-8398), to October 10. Rating: **NNNN**

Billed as a Games-related exploration of athleticism and the body, *The Flesh Of The World* is a mind-bender, miles away from the rah-rah nationalism usually associated with international sporting events.

Curator Amanda Cachia, an Australian-born expert on the intersection of art and disability, brings together performances, videos, photos and interactive installations by 16 big names and lesser-knowns that investigate human physicality. (A third show with eight more artists runs concurrently at Doris McCarthy Gallery in Scarborough.)

In performances that may draw on having endured painful conditions or medical procedures, Noëmi Lakmaier drags herself on non-functioning legs through the busy streets of London, and Aaron Williamson repeatedly jumps from a ramp onto a gallery wall. Contrast them with Stelarc, who suspends his naked form from hooks in his back, and Raphaëlle de Groot, who lugs around detritus attached to her body.

Helen Dowling films her brother, who has cerebral palsy, leading a dancer who mimics his movements, an act that both empowers him and can feel like mockery. Alexa Wright, who collaborates with the medical system, recontextualizes skin ailments by photographing bodies against patterned textiles, and plays the recorded testimony of heart transplant recipients from speakers mounted in felt vests.

Installations offer viewers a bodily experience: Wendy Jacob's gym-floor-style platform transfers electronic vibrations; Mowry Baden's seat belts put wearers into eccentric orbits; and a volunteer wrapped in Catherine Richards's Shroud of electromagnetic-shielding copper fabric gets a funereal unplugging while lying on exhibit like a sculpture.

A fascinating video documents Artur Zmijewski's very physical painting workshop for a group of blind people, their different approaches revealing their unique personalities and histories.

I love the language: Cachia in her curatorial essay uses the phrase "complex embodiment" instead of "disability"; wall text describes the narrator's voice in Lindsay Fisher's How To Paint Your Nails video as "crippled."

If the Games leave any legacy, let it be a continuation of the conversation about bodily diversity begun here.

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Tags *Hart House, video, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, U of T Art Centre, installation, photography, Critics' Picks*

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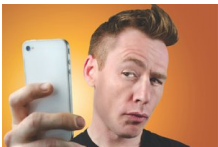
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