

EMBRACE YOUR BODY

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The Body as Presence, Trace and Energetic Archive

Abstract

This research-based artistic project, *EMBRACE YOUR BODY*, investigates the physical body as a site of memory, resilience and energetic inscription. Through the practice of collaborative body casting using plaster, the project reframes nudity and corporeal exposure as acts of self-reclamation rather than objectification. Grounded in feminist theory, new materialism and performative art discourse, the work explores how matter, memory and emotional energy co-exist within sculptural traces. The project positions the artistic process itself as a performative and relational space, where intimacy is defined not as physical exposure but as emotional and spiritual exchange. Ultimately, *EMBRACE YOUR BODY* proposes the body as an archive of lived experience and the sculptural cast as a material threshold between presence and absence.

1. Introduction: The Body as a Contested Territory

The human body exists within complex power structures that shape its visibility, value and meaning. Historically, women's bodies have been subjected to objectification, surveillance and violence, transforming the body into a site of control rather than agency (Bordo, 1993; Butler, 1990). Sexual violence, aesthetic norms and social regulation inscribe themselves into posture, gesture and embodied memory.

EMBRACE YOUR BODY emerges from this socio-political landscape as an artistic intervention that seeks to reclaim the body as a sovereign and expressive space. Rather than presenting the body as spectacle, the project repositions it as **presence**—a lived, emotional and energetic reality.

2. From Objectification to Reclamation

Objectification reduces the body to a consumable surface (Mulvey, 1975), while denying its subjective experience. In contrast, this project conceptualizes nudity not as exposure, but as **agency**. **The participant chooses to engage in an artistic act that transforms her body from object to collaborator.**

This shift aligns with feminist performance art practices that challenge visual consumption and instead emphasize embodied presence (Schneider, 2001). Here, the body becomes a **co-creator**, rather than a passive subject.

3. Intimacy as Relational and Energetic Space

Unlike conventional understandings of intimacy as physical proximity, *EMBRACE YOUR BODY* defines intimacy as **emotional, dialogical and energetic exchange**. The relationship between artist and participant is rooted in mutual vulnerability, consent and presence.

This relational dynamic resonates with Bourriaud's concept of *relational aesthetics*, in which art is produced through human interactions rather than objects alone. The artwork exists in the shared moment, the dialogue, the silence and the emotional resonance of the encounter.

4. Plaster as Energetic and Material Archive

Drawing from new materialist thought (Bennett, 2010; Barad, 2007), this project considers matter not as inert, but as **active and responsive**. Plaster, a natural and crystalline substance, becomes a receptacle of both physical and emotional traces.

The warmth of skin, fragments of dead cells, scent, tension and breath become materially embedded within the cast. The sculptural form thus operates as a **threshold between presence and absence**, holding the memory of a moment that can never be reproduced.

As one mentor described:

"It represents presence and non-presence at the same time."

5. Process as Artwork

In *EMBRACE YOUR BODY*, the casting process itself constitutes the artwork. The gestures, conversations, silences and emotional states form an ephemeral performance that continues to resonate in the material object.

This aligns with performative and process-based art traditions, where the act of making holds equal ontological value to the final object (Phelan, 1993). The sculptural trace becomes a **material witness** to an irretrievable moment.

6. Singular Bodies, Singular Traces

No two casts can be identical. Emotional states, memories and energies alter posture and presence. The body is not fixed, but continuously becoming. Each work therefore embodies a unique constellation of lived experience.

The project thus resists mass reproduction and artisanat. It is neither craft nor technique, but an **embodied philosophical inquiry**.

7. Conclusion

EMBRACE YOUR BODY reframes the body as a living archive—marked by vulnerability, resilience and transformation. Through collaborative sculptural rituals, the project challenges systems of control and objectification, offering instead a space for self-sovereignty and relational presence.

The body is not merely represented.
It is **remembered, felt and reactivated through matter**.

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