

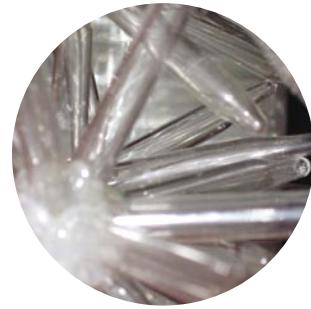


THE MEDICAL BODY

*This catalogue documents **The Medical Body** - a collaborative exhibition by Ana Terry and Don Hunter,
curated by Pennie Hunt and displayed at the Hocken Collections Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand.*

September 3rd to November 5th, 2005.





THE BODY AS MEDICAL METAPHOR

TEXT WRITTEN FOR THE EXHIBITION
BY PENNIE HUNT

The Medical Body is an exhibition that uses archived objects from the Medical School at the University of Otago to explore ways in which the human body has been used as a teaching and research tool. Showcased are a collection of instructional devices including the anatomical watercolour paintings of John Halliday Scott, the School's first dean from 1877-1914, and slide biopsies prepared by New Zealand's first female graduate of medicine, Emily Siedeberg-McKinnon. Whilst the exhibition aims to provide a context for the medical view of the body, it also subjects the Cinderella items of the dissecting room – scientific instruments and tools – to a new kind of public display.

Dunedin artists Ana Terry and Don Hunter have sculpturally transformed redundant phials, pipettes and test-tubes from the Department of Physiology to conjure a three-dimensional view of the body as a fragile container. Phials partially filled with fluid denote the liquid and solid nature of the human body. The medium of glass here acts like a lens to alter the viewers' perspective on the function of these instruments. The transparency of glass alludes to ways in which solid bodies can be seen

into using medical technologies such as magnetic resonant imaging.

Today's teaching tools have clearly surpassed the sorts of objects installed here. Yet as testament to the accuracy of Scott's instructional charts, his paintings were still in use in the Department of Anatomy only a decade ago. Refined, factual and communicative, Scott's anatomical paintings are at once practical aids to learning, executed in the 'no-frills' style of Gray's classic text on anatomy, while revealing, at the same time, a sense of beauty and wonder in their subject. In the artist's delicate use of watercolour and his deft handling of anatomical and microscopic intricacies, the body is rendered as another world, a human microcosm.

Indeed during Scott's time as a teacher, the body came to be viewed in an increasingly abstract manner. Anatomical illustrations became more scientifically specific and microscopy became integral to the teaching of the medical sciences. The cabinet of histological slides exemplifies the findings of this artful science through beautifully coloured biopsies. Their detailed molecular formations are revisited in the installation as a whole, where glass forms mimic the stellar constellations and molecular nature of the cellular world seen through the microscope.

Though they are largely historic, the objects that feature in *The Medical Body* elicit an understanding

of ourselves that still holds true today – an age in which a sustained attention to medical themes finds us looking for the truth of the body at ever-more intimate levels. ☒



"Laboratory" by John Halliday Scott from *Sketchbook volume 12, Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hakena.*

STRANGELY ORGANIC

AMORPHOUS SOLID



GLASS, A HIGHLY VISCOUS LIQUID

TRANSLUCENT

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN MERCURY AND BLOOD, GLASS AND FLESH
REPELLED BY THE LIQUID IN REDUNDANT PHIALS, THE FLESH (THE 'INNER') IS

TRANSPARENCY GIVES ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE
BEING REVEALED

...WHERE THE HUMAN BODY CAN BECOME

THIN BORDERS BETWEEN THE EXTERIOR AND THE INTERIOR

THE HUMAN BODY, AS BOTH LIQUID AND SOLID, THREATENS OUR SENSE OF 'CLEANLINESS' AND 'PROPRIETY' EXPOSURE OF THE HUMAN FLESH.

A THIN TRANSLUCENT MEMBRANE EXPOSING THE PHYSIOLOGY OF THE HUMAN INSIDES...



I FEEL UNEASY STANDING DIRECTLY UNDERNEATH PIPETTES



GLASS, A SLOW MOVING LIQUID,...



NAVIGATING THE INTERIOR

BY MAARI MCCLUSKEY

The Medical Body combines both traditional and contemporary notions of display, fusing archival representations of the medical body with new interpretations in a sculptural installation. John Halliday Scott, the amateur artist and physician, created instructional drawings for his students to supplement their work in the dissecting room, placing art in the service of science. These drawings map the development of his interest in human anatomy, and provide a historical counterpoint to the contemporary conceptualisations of the medical body provided by the artists, Ana Terry and Don Hunter.

Glass features in this installation as a compound repeatedly implicated throughout history in new technologies. It was in the 19th century that the invention of microscopy provided the means to see into the internal world of the human organism. Until then, knives were the tools of physicians, and it was by dissection of the human cadaver that structural anatomy was analysed, and had been for centuries. It was in Scott's era that the internal world beneath the pallid skin of the cadaver surged into view through the microscope lens, revealing itself in all its rare and wondrous design. The exquisite forms at the molecular level fired the imaginations of curious

physicians, and encouraged an aesthetic response to this microcosmic world.

Conversely, science has penetrated the creative minds of artists throughout history, notably in Florence in the Renaissance era. It was Leonardo in particular whose curiosity drove his desire to understand in detail the anatomy and physiology of the human subject. Although many of his assumptions regarding physiology were scientifically inaccurate, his unfailing drive to understand the medical body presages medical scientists' subsequent endeavours to know and interpret this mysterious realm.

The interface of art and science occurs on many levels within the scope of this exhibition. Archive material in the form of Scott's anatomical drawings and workbooks converse with Terry and Hunter's fluid, sculptural glass structures assembled and created from the hundreds of glassware objects retrieved from the Department of Physiology at the University of Otago – pipettes, test tubes and globular-shaped phials.

The artists have taken glass containers designed for measuring, analysing and blending liquid compounds in the laboratory, recognising their sculptural potential as objects in themselves, and as the raw material for elaborate hybrid forms. From this now redundant hoard of glass they have

assembled two shimmering curtains of pipettes, suspended from the ceiling, dissecting the space. An elaborate functional and conceptual element of the whole installation, it lures the viewer into the space with its light-splitting surface and subtle undulations, provoking the desire to touch or the need to retreat to view the spectacle with greater clarity. This semi-permeable veil, casting its graph-like shadows on red walls, creates palpable atmospherics.

Where Scott dreamed of interstitial spaces and rendered the pathways of venal and arterial blood flow in coloured ink, Terry and Hunter theatricalise the hidden features of body cavities, membrane interfacing and floating pathogens with an imaginative use of material and metaphor. Individually and in combination, these hanging glass sculptures mirror and morph the anatomical drawings on display.

Rather than dramatise the gruesome performance of human dissection, the artists transform elements of the microcosmic medical body into a macrocosmic space, with a delicate and poetic touch. Each sculptural element contains and projects its myriad associations, creating a fluidity of meaning from one realm to another, linking the alien features of the once-unknowable worlds science and technology have succeeded in revealing to the human eye: deep space and hidden anatomies. The aesthetic possibilities in cellular design are worked into floating glass entities, suggesting mutating cells or stellar formations suspended in deep space – fragile, brittle, crystalline, globular – each casting its own mesmeric shadow on the gallery walls.

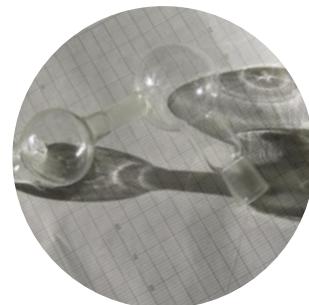
One drawing of a larger than life-sized human eye hangs beside representations of pelvic bones and arterial mappings, strangely menacing and

comical at once. It brings into play the central anatomical feature necessary for viewing the sub-molecular features of the medical body through the microscope, and the artistic eye required to represent in ink and wash the tonal qualities in a femur or the intricate gradations of dermal layers and twining capillary formations.

The seemingly vast world of cellular structures in their fluid environs provided a new source of knowledge and instructional material for teaching anatomy and structural biology in the early twentieth century. For this exhibition Andrew McNaughton, from the Otago Centre for Confocal Microscopy, has created digital images from abstract designs produced by slide biopsies from Scott's era. Tissue from various sites in human and animal specimens, including muscle from a frog's bladder and a section of human placenta, are reworked into images on DVD, demonstrating the structural variation in the physiological interior. These images also signpost the development from a representational to an increasingly abstract view of the biological body as seen through the lens of the microscope, transforming the study and application of medical knowledge.

This inter-weaving of historical evidence and contemporary technology mirrors the dialogue the artists have invoked between the historical

medical body and current conceptualisations of the body as the site of imaginative interpretation. The installation as a whole suggests the extent to which the imagination has been employed in depicting and exploring the corporeal body in the past and the ways in which it can be imagined in the present. The use of glass suggests the body as an organism that can be broken, breached or seen through via technological devices, redefining the body as the site of permeable selfhood rather than contained and static in its genetic and anatomical configuration. ⊕



"The Anatomist" by Frances Hodgkins, 1892 watercolour.



THE BODY IN GLASS

A RESPONSE BY DI HALSTEAD

Blood red walls, anatomical drawings, test tubes and medical implements create the framework for this installation. Glass pipettes hang like slivers of ice, precariously shimmering and shining like a chandelier.

Here the notion of the body is realised in various forms, making me wonder at its fragility and tangibility. Its vulnerability is echoed in the sublime nature of the pipettes glistening and shifting unnervingly in the air conditioned room.

Glass vessels and phials are joined together to remind us of cells and our own genetic make-up. In a corner of the room suspended funnels pour fine hollow threads of glass, as if to gesture their functional use, casting shadows to reveal glass as liquid.

Each part of the exhibition echoes itself by its capacity to speak or hint of the body. The fragility of the sculpted objects speaks of our mortality. Death

drips from the walls in this space as it seductively encourages our navigation through the transparent bead-like frieze of pipettes, dissecting the room like a fissure. As the glass pieces eerily move, the desire to touch and hear their music is strong. But this desire is not without a hint of fear – hanging tenuously the thin glass tubes suggest the potential to fracture into shattering, slicing, splintering glass.

On a light-box in the centre of the room are a selection of glass slides. Alongside the collection a moving image is viewed through a portal in the table. Hypnotically the abstract cellular images well and unwell, swirl and fade in and out of view. The fluidity of the movement is haunting as they form and reform. As my eyes flick back to the glass slides, reading their inscriptions of malignancy, my mind wanders to thoughts of recreating, cloning and molecular engineering.

As I walk through the space I am enticed further into the archives of the body – a mimetic experi-

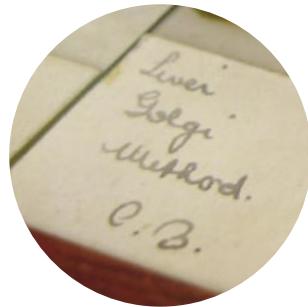
ence, tinged with ambivalence. I am reminded of our birthing experience, our good health or ill, our experience of the scientific world and the hospital – practices that serve our hopes of immortality.

Have I entered a mad experiment, are we bringing Frankenstein into existence? Not quite. Am I entering the medical body or an artist's journal? A dialogue takes shape within and an awareness evolves as I move through the exhibition space becoming artist, forensic scientist, pathologist and detective, trying to answer the questions provoked by the images before me.

I look at a watercolour of a surgeon as he is about to pierce a cadaver, to dissect and understand the human body. As the artist uncovers and observes the body, dissecting the surface and the anatomical interior, so too does the surgeon, eager to discover and represent the body.

This installation is about the archive as much as it is about the medical body. The juxtaposition of the material on display leads us into the historical nature of the anatomical body, the medicinal body and to the realm of science. *The Medical Body* provokes a consideration of the future of the body and of the human drive to experiment continually with medical science. ☒





THE BODY THROUGH THE LENS

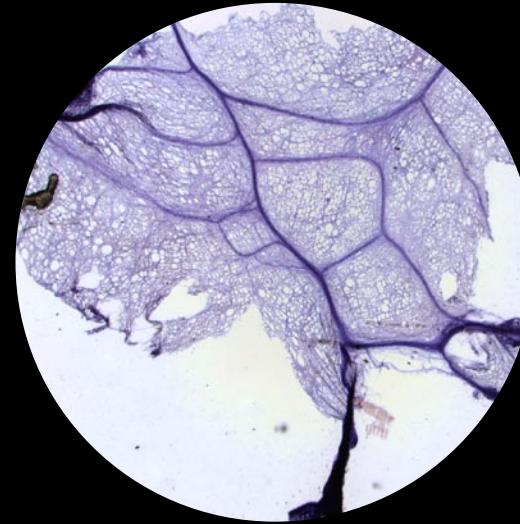
BY ANDREW MCNAUGHTON

I train people to use specialised light microscopes, which are used mainly for biological research purposes.

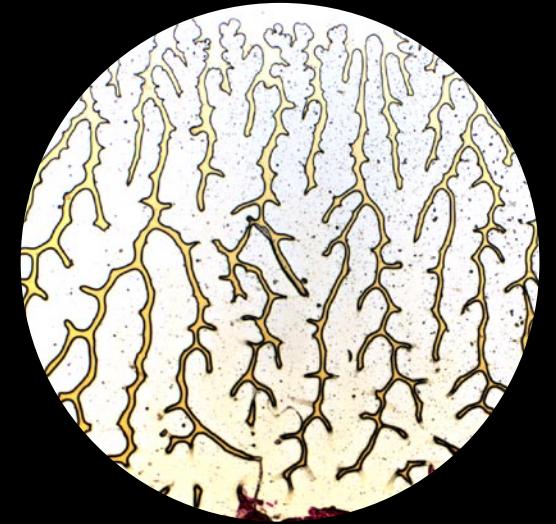
Some modern microscopy techniques use false colours to produce sufficient contrast. The colours seen from histological stains are, however, real. They represent a long and hazardous history of stains used to enhance the myriad cell types and tissues found in the body. Stains such as alician yellow, amethyst violet, celestine blue, congo red, indigo carmine and sirius red are applied, to name but a few.

The images were selected entirely for their beauty or intriguing appearance. Scientific merit, for once, was banished to the back seat. The theme was ambiguity: the lung could be ice crystals or lightning; papillae on a cat's tongue seemed to be reminiscent of an impressionist painting – somewhere in there lurks a lady with a parasol and small dog.

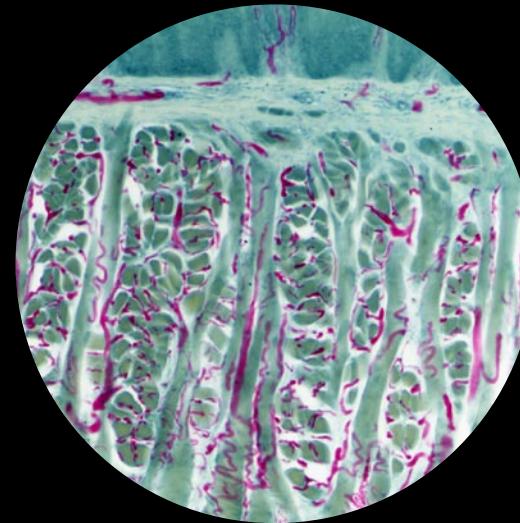
To view these slides was to view a time when the relationship between art and science was perhaps better balanced than it is now. ☒



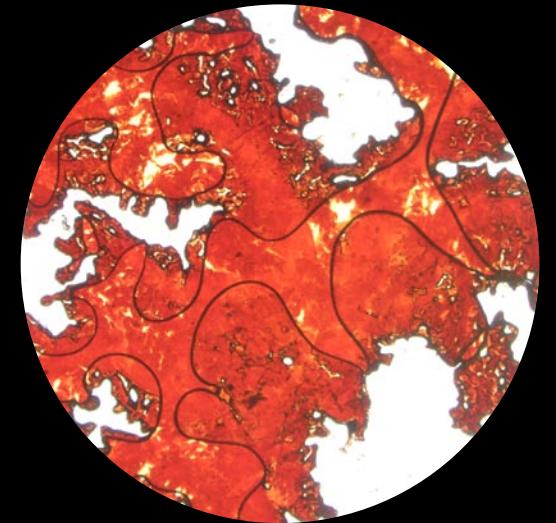
ACX1 MENINGES.



CAX7 LUNG, INJECTED.



EAX1 FILIFORMOUS PAPPILLAE,
TONGUE OF CAT.



FFX22 PLACENTAL VILLUS, HUMAN.

Di Halstead has a MFA from RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia. She has been lecturing for twelve years at the Otago Polytechnic School of Art. She is currently based in Auckland studying towards a PhD at the University of Auckland. Her art practice centres around her New Zealand/West Indian heritage. The ideas are framed within a post-colonial discourse and draw from a photographic and multi-disciplinary approach. She exhibits nationally and internationally and has had her writing and art work published nationally.

Pennie Hunt is Assistant Curator of Pictures at the Hocken Library, Dunedin. She has a MA in Art History and Theory from the University of Melbourne, Australia and is a regular contributor to art journals and publications on contemporary art practice.

Don Hunter works with industrial strength kinetic sculpture. He pursues and investigates the idea of function in his machines until it reaches absurd vanishing points. He thinks about power relationships, the cultural and social impact of subverting factory standards. His inventions are perverse and willful; very often the idea of an operator is completely redundant. These slightly demented inventions promise action but seldom deliver what might reasonably be expected. He regularly is called upon to provide technical support for individual artists and organisations.

In 2004 he worked as an artists technician for the Sydney Biennale. During his Fine Arts study he undertook a highly successful exchange at Utrecht School of the Arts in the Netherlands, where he also exhibited. He is currently studying towards an MFA at Otago Polytechnic, where he is also employed as a technician in the Sculpture Department. He is self employed through Art Crew Ltd, and an active member of the Blue Oyster Arts Trust.

Gala Kirke was born in the central European country of Slovakia. She now lives in New Zealand where she teaches Art at Christchurch Girls High School. She has a BFA in Painting and Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and is also a practicing contemporary artist.

Maari McCluskey is an art critic and poet, originally from Scotland and now living in Dunedin. She studied Art History and Theory at the University of Otago and has contributed to art journals and publications in both New Zealand and the United Kingdom. She has a long held interest in the philosophy and history of science and has published articles on various areas of scientific research. She is currently studying towards an MA in Museum Studies with Massey University.

Andrew McNaughton manages the confocal and light microscopy facility in the Department of Anatomy and Structural Biology, University of Otago. His qualifications are a BSc in Botany and Zoology and an MAppSci in Plant Physiology.

Ana Terry is a Dunedin based artist who works predominantly with installation forms. She has been very prolific since graduating with her BFA in 2002 producing a large number of works for group shows and solo projects nationally. She also runs a business as a graphic designer (Ana Terry Design Ltd) and has tertiary teaching experience in both design and fine art. She is currently lecturing at the Otago Polytechnic School while studying towards an MFA. She is an active member of the Blue Oyster Arts Trust.



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