

*INTIMATE
MATTERS*



By Brian Bentley
Angel Jiang
Sarah B. Vogelmann

Intimacy is an elusive concept, easily called to mind, but difficult to define. It can take on many forms, literal or abstract. It may require intellectual, emotional, or physical proximity, and often manifests in minute details, whether seen, felt, or merely implied. Often associated with specific places, objects, or ideas—both archetypal and personal—it may be experienced in moments of solitude, or persist through absence in loneliness or longing. Intimacy can be found within ourselves—through personal memories and material familiarity—or may be contingent upon others. Intimacy is revered, yet commonplace, rendering it susceptible to transgression. It is a universal condition with nearly endless connotations.

Featuring work across nearly all media, *Intimate Matters* brings together nine artists, whose works connote, imply, or challenge notions of intimacy. Whether emotional or physical, personal or public, literal or symbolic, the intimacies presented here provoke this intangible idea. Collectively, they reify the ambiguity and ubiquity of the intimate, in practice, we see this diversity applied.

Despite the lifelong availability of digital technology and the Internet for this generation of artists, many use overwhelmingly traditional media. With a degree of disengagement from the instant interpersonal gratification and disappointment offered by pervasive communication today, artists, including David Shamie, Yuki Hamada, Aidan Romick, and Janet Ji Min Lee, share a sense of the physically intimate by emphasizing scale and materiality rather than literal proximity or human contact. For others, like Jerry M. Wilson and Anjelica Russell intimacy is personal and tied to memory and anxiety—catharsis of auto-biographical work becomes a means of controlling the past. Meanwhile, the work of Ondine Viñao delivers theatrical glimpses into the personal and private, troubled or complicated by exposure to voyeurism and audience intervention. In several works, the body is implied, but not addressed directly. The body is a crucial element in the construction of Autumn Hamra's *11-17 Periphery* (2015), yet its physicality is conspicuously absent. On the other hand, for Reba Kittredge Tyson the uncanny examination of the body provokes or challenges intimate conditions.

The diversity of works exhibited invites us to consider the innumerable iterations of intimacy. As a collective effort, *Intimate Matters* reconstitutes nine unique perspectives on a theme that is both experiential and hypothetical.

Introduction

by Ksenia M. Soboleva

Intimate Matters is the second group exhibition organized by the New York University Curatorial Collaborative. Initiated in the summer of 2014, this collaborative aims to create a dialogue between artists from Steinhardt's studio art program and curators from the Institute of Fine Arts.

In the second edition of the NYU Curatorial Collaborative, three curators and nine artists have challenged themselves to investigate the concept of *intimacy*. These past few months, the artists and curators have gotten to know each other through close collaboration that in itself relates to the show's title. What does it mean to have to share your work and artistic ideas with total strangers?

Exploring how the most intimate aspects of young artists' lives are translated into their art and communicated to a largely nameless audience through endlessly varying methods, *Intimate Matters* questions our preconceived notions of intimacy. In its most obvious form, intimacy manifests itself through the body and artists often use their own physicality as a surface or a medium through which to convey their ideas. Additionally, intimacy can extend beyond the materiality of the body and find its place within the materiality of the work. Whether the first is more intimate than the latter is a thought-provoking question. As argued by Michel Foucault, the physicality of the body can restrict the possibilities of experimentation. In his essay *The Utopian Body*, the author describes his body as a pitiless place that prohibits movement, if only because one cannot move without it.

Not that I am nailed down by it, since after all I can not only move, shift, but I can also move it, shift, change its place. The only thing is this. I cannot move without it. I cannot leave it there where it is, so that I, myself, may go elsewhere.¹

In the works exhibited in this show, the presence of the artist's body is implied even when the body itself is absent, and the viewer is left to visualize a situation in which the body was an active participant in the creation process. Wandering around *The Commons*, our minds wander off to alternate times and places that exceed the gallery walls. Ultimately, *Intimate Matters* makes us consider intimacy as a collective experience, something that is not bound to any individual body or material, but has many voices and manifests itself in various ways.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the inspiring curators and artists who have fully dedicated themselves to the second edition of this exciting collaboration. Special recognition must be given to Tammy Brown and Ian Cooper who have fueled the collaborative from the very beginning with passion and devotion, as well as my NYU Curatorial Collaborative Coordinator predecessor Madeline Murphy Turner. This project would also not be possible without the unwavering support of Jesse Bransford. Finally, many thanks go out to Ben Hatcher, Jason Varone, and the numerous devoted faculty and staff from Steinhardt and the Institute of Fine Arts.

¹ Michel Foucault, "Utopian Body" in Caroline A. Jones ed., *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art* (Boston: MIT 2006), 229.

Intimata. Things laid bare

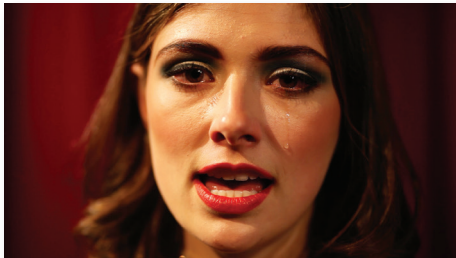
By Sarah B. Vogelmann



Janet Ji Min Lee
Study for Fever, 2015
Latex, light, and wood
96 X 48 X 82 inches

The sort of intimacy evoked in the works of artists Janet Ji Min Lee, Ondine Viñao, and Aidan Romick implies the presence of the body through materiality and concept. In the creation of their works and in their reception, the artists implicate their own bodies, and at times those of the viewers, in acts of labor. Intimacy is not effortless. It must be nurtured, practiced, and performed. The performative aspect of the intimate labor implicit in these works mirrors the type of gender performativity proposed by Judith Butler in her 1990 publication, *Gender Trouble*. The labor is intimate because it is performed for others, but also because it is a reflection of the artist herself. The intimate labor in which the artists and viewers engage project behaviors and actions linked to femininity. But is the labor intimate because it is feminine. Or is it feminine because it is intimate.

Janet Ji Min Lee's installation, *Fever*, emanates a warm glow. One enters the small space and is enveloped by walls of soft light, the latex creating a protective barrier between the viewer and what radiates on the other side. One is reminded of the bright flush produced when a flashlight is held up to the skin. The latex becomes a membrane monitoring the flow of substances along its surface, attempting to maintain homeostasis, transforming the room into a sort of organism. In the creation of the space, Lee reflects upon her her own body and the bodies of others. Upon entering the confined area with walls that protrude slightly into the interior, the viewer might feel his or her own breath quicken, temperature rise, blood rushing to the skin. The assembly of an installation might be considered something akin to nesting, preparing a space for an awaited inhabitant. This widely studied social behavior, often associated with an expectant mother, allows for the arrival and care of infants, newcomers, and returning guests. Lee's work invites the viewer to briefly experience the vaguely uterine space she has constructed, but no one is meant to stay long. With each expulsion of a visitor, the space is renewed for the arrival of the next.



Ondine Viñao
As Long As I Have You, 2015
Video
Duration: approximately
2 minutes, 30 seconds

The photographic and video work of Ondine Viñao express moments experienced in solitude. Although Viñao's photos are displayed in two series set side-by-side, her photography captures the solitary instances of exclusion from feelings of belonging or intimacy. Upon viewing the images, the individual viewer is obliged to invent formal or narrative connections between them. Her video, *As Long as I Have You*, features a woman lipsyncing to Elvis Presley's rendition of a song by the same name. Through Viñao's camerawork and editing, the viewer is pushed and pulled out of and into scenes of varying emotional and physical depth. The male voice projected from a female body, to which the viewer is offered vacillating proximity, calls into question both narrative and performance. Which emotional state is true for the character. Which is false. She sings, "You're not my first love/ But you're my last." Is she one of these loves from Presley's lyric. Which one. Where does the performance begin. Where does it end.



Aidan Romick
Sleep Cycle, 2014
Thread on canvas
120 x 36 inches

Finally, we find the woman is alone in an empty auditorium--was there even a performance at all. Here, staged in the female form, these dichotomies are spliced together and blended just as they often are in real life.

In *Sleep Cycle*, Aidan Romick chronicles in embroidery her reposed body during one night of sleep. Her body, stitched onto the canvas countless times, has contributed more than just the hours of one night's sleep to this piece. She spent over eighty hours meticulously outlining the contours of her head, arms, and torso, over and over again. The painstaking labor performed by the artist is as much the subject of this work as the resting body it depicts. The large scale and documentary nature of Romick's work engages with historically significant art such as the *Bayeux Tapestry*, a monumental needlework narrative that many argue ought to be renamed based on its formal definition as embroidery and the female agency responsible for its construction. *Sleep Cycle* bridges the gap between document and work of art using a traditional medium often relegated to the realm of craft. In her collaborative performance with Jerry M. Wilson, Romick will test the limits of embroidery as an intimate and reflective practice by sharing the experience publicly with another artist. The embroidered canvas left behind will serve as a record of their performance.

In Latin, the word *curator* means guardian or overseer, *curtare*, to care for, or give attention to. The intimate labor implied in the title of curator mirrors that of the three artists discussed above. In order to perform close collaborative work with artists and fellow curators, we carved out time in our daily lives to meet, discuss, plan, and create together. My fellow curators and I have attempted to lay bare the care afforded the art and The Commons Gallery, permitting the viewer to freely perform their own intimate labor of engagement with the work.

Intim_ : Implied Bodies

By Angel Jiang



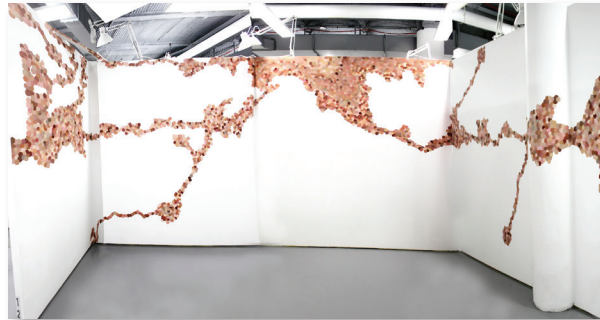
Anjelica Russell
Flamingo Drive Series, 2015
Pencil drawing on paper
24 x 30 inches

The drawings of Anjelica Russell suggest an estrangement of the body and a desire to reclaim and reframe memories. In an exercise of agency, *Flamingo Drive* explores the artifacts of memory through a series of meditative portraits. A portrait of the "self" is drawn in a series of architectural renderings, cloaked in an idiom of exactitude and control. Each incision imprints an effect of supposed permanence, yet each portrait of the "self" is revised and reproduced serially. Turning to the body, the "split" *Creature 1* is birthed from the dualities a mental space may harbor. The artist presents to us an illustration of *psychomachia* by transforming the body into an alien form straddling attraction and apprehension, familiarity and estrangement. These works invite us to visit a cognitive landscape--revised, reproduced, and delineated with purported clarity--accessible only by invitation.



Autumn Hamra
11_17 Periphery, 2015
Video installation
Dimensions Variable.

In the site-specific installations of Reba Kittredge Tyson, the artist retroactively construes a process of comfort into an object of discomfort. In their insistent monotony, a profusion of forms--taken collectively, and examined nearly microscopically--perform as works capable of inciting aversion. For the artist, the tedium of the process involved in producing these forms is approached with meditative clarity. For the viewer, a profusion of abstract cells, too close to the skin, registers an overwhelming sense of uncanny examination. In *Skin Study*, an enlarged and engorged environment of cellular shapes, the artist finds solace in an immersive *horror vacui*. In *Watch Me I*, an accumulation of circular reliefs, molded in plaster and born from a similar process of meditative repetition, demonstrates how this effect is achieved monochromatically, and across media and scale.



Reba Kittredge Tyson,
Skin Study (New York
Installation), 2014;
Paint on plaster walls
Dimensions variable

In *11_17 Periphery* by Autumn Hamra, the artist has left the room. This piece, specifically installed for The Commons, is programmed for participation and conducted in the absence of instruction. With little in the way of guidance, the viewer enters and catalyzes a process of re-occurrence, which is then projected into an innocuous void. An image and the visitor's intervention create a slippage in time and perspective, separating the visible from a perceived moment. This process of defamiliarization generated by cognitive dissonance is singularly effective, and casts a ghostly recollection of the mundane as strange once more--if only temporarily. We are left with its bare recollection, we exit the room.



Jerry M. Wilson
Valley of the Moon, 2015
Enamel paint on layered sheet glass, light
6 x 9 x 4 inches

Intimating Intimacy

By Brian Bentley

Jerry M. Wilson's work is marked by an active sense of place, from a familial hometown in northern California to the emergent site of adult independence in *moving-tobrooklyn_echoheavy.tif* and liminal, often dissociative spaces in between. Location and landscape provide a sense of psychic security. By manipulating photographs with sound-editing software, however, Wilson's *Memories.zip* series disrupts the legibility of each image through a process of synesthesia that invokes a disquieting opacity of memory and manifests our imperfect recall of events, whether traumatic, banal, or



Yuki Hamada
Let the cat out of the bag (detail), 2015
 Latex balloon, acrylic, tracing paper, ceramic
 3 x 4 inches



David Shamie
Suspended Ball (detail), 2015
 Steel, Elk Rawhide
 81 x 14 x 72 inches

momentous. In *stairsgrandpafelldown_reverbheavy.tif*, the anguish of memory is rendered explicit, and the aural dissonance of heavy reverb distorts a vision of a site we come to understand as being overwrought with distress.

Often called the Valley of the Moon, Sonoma appears as a wild, uncultivated, and appropriately depopulated place in Wilson's work that takes its title from this affectionate, but perhaps ecologically menacing nickname. Twelve layers of painted sheet glass are mounted on a pedestal and lit from behind to reveal a luminous prairie-like landscape of coastal scrub native to the region. Subverting a more essentializing visual imaginary of grand redwood forests or sun-dappled vineyards in orderly rows, the work's form reflects the layers that define the region. endless blankets of fog, undulating waves, and rows of low-slung hills like those we see receding into an illusory horizon. Glass engenders a reflective sense of sifting through the endless layers of the mind to recall a moment of quiet introspection in nature, alone, or sharing silence with a significant other. Yet the comfort of such an idyll is tinged with crisis, as the drought currently gripping the region threatens the endurance of the intimate natural refuge here memorialized.

Yuki Hamada's delicate multimedia arrangements group together hand-shaped geometric ceramics with abstract paintings on a miniature scale, investigating the properties of acrylic paint and watercolor on materials like low-opacity tracing paper and latex balloons deflated to the point of retaining nearly immeasurable, yet visible degrees of inflation. The retention of this small amount of air lends them a semblance of life, or function, while their oblong shape shares an affinity with the spheroid, stone-like micro-sculptures whose density and organic volume is reified by this tenuous formal relationship. Hamada's deconstructed triptychs challenge the immutability of each medium - painting, sculpture (both hard and soft, permanent and ephemeral) - inviting us to scrutinize the fluidity of boundaries between such forms, questioning their relation to one another and to our own individual notion of material intimacy.

David Shamie's *Suspended Ball* sculpture is predicated on material tension. It is held together by design of its own counterweight. Industrial metal supports are enveloped by a diaphanous elk rawhide wrapped around a well-polished sphere, suspending it in inertia. Balanced between contending impressions of formal malleability and material stasis, there is an unexpected illusion of grace, even an implication of sensual movement at odds with the stagnant structure. Yet, the disconcerting resemblance to human skin caught between forces going in opposite directions and pulled taut almost to the point of puncture by the weight of its own languid sag, engenders anxiety of the sort the sculpture itself seems to manifest in palpable form.

Intimate Matters
January 27 - February 6, 2016

The Commons
34 Stuyvesant Street
New York, NY 10003

Intimate Matters is a group exhibition specially conceived of by three contemporary curatorial Masters/PhD candidate from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts incorporating artworks created by nine BFA candidate Studio Art majors in the final year of their undergraduate career from New York University's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development's Department of Art & Art Professions under the auspices of the student-organized NYU Curatorial Collaborative initiative.

Artists.

Yuki Hamada, Autumn Hamra, Janet Ji Min Lee, Aidan Romick, Anjelica Russell, David Shamie, Reba Kittredge Tyson, Ondine Viñao, Jerry M. Wilson

Curators.

Brian Bentley, Angel Jiang, Sarah B. Vogelmann

Organizers.

Tammy Lee Brown - Director, Planning & Communications
Ian Cooper - Senior Studio Program Coordinator
Ksenia M. Soboleva - NYU Curatorial Collaborative Coordinator
Ben Hatcher - Exhibitions Coordinator
Olivia Andrews, Christopher Minafo, Dylan Riley - Exhibition Assistants

Jenny Noguchi - Publication Designer
Juliet Lynn Vinegra - Copy Editor
Jason Varone - Web & Electronic Media Manager
Patryk Tomaszewski - NYUCC Website Coordinator

Cover image:
Ondine Viñao
Claudia (Baltimore), 2015
Digital C-print
11 x 14 inches

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<http://www.nyucuratorialcollaborative.org/>