

E A S T H A W A I ' I C U L T U R A L C E N T E R

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Em-bodied. Body Politics

Curator: Andrzej Kramarz

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Em-bodied. Body Politics

What does it mean to inhabit a body in today's world of often contradictory relationships? The body is not only a biological entity but also a cultural, social, and political site where power, identity, and resistance are continuously negotiated, a canvas where personal and collective narratives unfold—where norms are imposed, identities are shaped, and agency is claimed or denied.

A subject of fascination in medicine, biology, anthropology, and philosophy, the body remains the locus of lived experience, shaped by political, cultural, and technological forces. Bodies are cherished, controlled, adorned, mutilated, excluded and commodified. From the arena of sports to the stage of protest, bodies are disciplined by societal expectations—and by how they resist them.

Race and sexuality are inscribed in our social hierarchies and power structures. Racialized and gendered bodies confront and subvert norms of conformity, positioning the body as a site of activism, protest, and reclamation. The body is fragmenting and evolving, shaped by forces larger than ourselves—not merely something we have but something we are.

Oksana Briukhovetska

Solidarity with Ukraine

My practice is interdisciplinary and includes visual art, curating, writing, translating and theater. I often address social and political topics, using feminist lenses, referring to women's experiences. Beside making art I have published two books and many texts in online and paper journals. I worked as a curator at the Visual Culture Research Center in Kyiv, Ukraine, where I curated among others several feminist exhibitions on topics of motherhood, construct of femininity, textile and embroidery as feminist mediums. I was a co-curator of the Ukrainian part of the Secondary Archive, a platform for women artists from Central and Eastern Europe. During the years spent in the U.S., the topic of race was in my focus. Recently, I published a book "Black Lives Matter Voices" in Ukraine, based on my interview research, conducted in the states in 2020-2021.

The work presented at the exhibition "Em-bodied. Body Politics" titled "In Solidarity with Ukraine." Its first version was created in 2022 in the United States. The second version - in Ukraine in 2025. I came up with the initial idea just before the full-scale war that Russia launched in Ukraine. I was in the process of creating the work when full-scale war broke out at home. This tragic event made a huge shift and rapture in the context of my practice, and it affected the work as well. Since the beginning of its creation it underwent few stages of recontextualization. In this work many ideas and references intersect. It presents a complex statement formed by my research interests, identity and the circumstances of my and my country's life.

The idea of the work emerged when the war in Eastern Ukraine already lasted for 10 years. In Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, we have a monument in the form of a gigantic rainbow, that was constructed in late Soviet time to celebrate "friendship" of Russian and Ukrainian peoples. It was called People's Friendship Arch and was complemented with the sculptural composition featuring Ukrainian and Russian workers and some other historical figures from both sides. It was obvious that this "friendship" failed, and that the Soviet myth about "brotherly Ukrainian and Russian nations" which always in

fact assumed Russian dominance, became the justification for the cruel Russian invasion in Ukraine with the aim to erase Ukrainian identity and independence.

There were few attempts to reappropriate the monument and to assign a different meaning to it. In 2016 the Ukrainian government announced plans to dismantle the Arch as part of decommunization laws but the plan was not carried out. For the Eurovision Song Contest 2017, the Arch was temporarily renamed the Arch of Diversity and was used as the symbol of the Kyiv Pride parade being illuminated with rainbow colors at night. In 2018 human rights activists put a temporary sticker that looked like a crack on the Arch as a sign of support for Ukrainian political prisoners who are illegally detained in Russia and annexed Crimea.

My idea was to search for another representation of people's friendship using the Arch as a symbol, because I believe that the notions of solidarity, friendship, support and shared struggle are important. While learning about Black art during my research on Black Lives Matter, I encountered the work of Faith Ringgold, Sunflower quilting bee at Arles. The sunflowers' landscape stuck with me, because it reminded me of Ukrainian sunflower fields so strongly. Also, during the first days of the full-scale war, there was a video circulating online about a Ukrainian woman confronting a heavily armed Russian soldier who invaded her city. She offered him sunflower seeds saying: « Put these seeds in your pockets so at least sunflowers will grow when you all lie down here ». Then the sunflower became a symbol of Ukrainian resistance.

I already reflected the similarities in struggles of different peoples, including Ukrainians and Black Americans. I was interested to define what we may share despite racial differences and differences in histories of oppressions. Black struggle resonates with me because I have experience of Ukrainian revolutions, its fight for independence, and today my people are fighting against imperialist colonial Russian aggression.

Being inspired by Faith Ringgold's quilt, I imagined women with different skin tones gathered in front of the Arch in the sunflower landscape in Ukraine. The colors of their skin are reflected in the rainbow. When a full-scale war broke out, solidarity with

Ukraine from all over the world became crucial. In April 2022 sculptures under the Arch in Kyiv were dismantled and the monument was renamed into Arch of Freedom of the Ukrainian People. Freedom of Ukraine symbolizes democracy. But for me it is also a question of mutual solidarity, about how we, Ukrainians, can support other peoples in their fight for freedom.

When I came back to Ukraine in 2024, I realized that people are talking a lot here about decolonization and liberation from historical domination of Russia. In these conversations, the histories of other decolonizations matter as well. The women in my work gathered around the table to share their decolonial testimonies and to solidarize with each other. I dream about a peaceful Ukraine that is open to solidarity and diversity. My installation is an invitation to sit down at the table for conversations.

I became drawn to the medium of textile because of its potential as a previously marginalized medium in the history of art, because of its feminist connotations and due to the fact that my grandmother taught me a lot of this craft when I was a child. It connects me with my personal memories and family stories and also it has a huge therapeutic impact on me at the time of constant uncertainty and anxiety. Textile interests me as a craft and as a medium for storytelling and political message. These features of textile narrations I borrowed from Chilean arpillerias I researched during my travel to Santiago, Chile. I was deeply impressed by the connection of arpillerias to the country's history being a tool by Chilean women. It became a tool of expression, consolations and of shared experience of oppression and liberation.

I am interested in transnational connections of people's histories, and art provides me with such a possibility. I believe art can connect people on a deeper level and help them to find strength to resist dehumanization.

For the exhibition "Em-bodied. Body Politics" I created a special second version of the work "Solidarity with Ukraine." It is slightly different from the first one in details, but presents the same composition and same idea.

1. Solidarity with Ukraine, 2025

92 in x 170 in - the size of quilt; depth depends on the length of a table.

Textile collage, installation

**2. Created in the frame of “Your Story Mirrors Mine” exhibition project in Ukraïnka
Gallery in Kyiv, Ukraine, in June-August 2025.**

Lori B. Crawford

BAG IT

What color is Black? Who is too Black or not Black enough? Is Black really beautiful? These are a few questions some in the African-American community ponder on a daily basis in one form or another. Bag It is an ongoing project I have been working on for several years. The overall theme of the work deals with simple biases/prejudices within one's culture; for example, having preferences for taller, slender bodies, lighter skin tones, or certain hair textures/colors. It is my contention that these biases spill over into the wider society and thus racism, classicism, sexism and all of the other “isms” that fester and gnaw at us like termites, continue to infest our minds. Brown paper bags are used to support my subjects based upon a decades-old practice within the African-American community called the Brown Paper Bag Test. The bag test involved comparing one's skin tone to the color of a paper bag. “Passing” the test meant your complexion was the same as or lighter than the paper bag. One failed, however, if the opposite was so. Though this test has long since been eradicated, skin color biases and many other forms of intra-racial prejudices plague our world today. My subjects span the globe: Germany, Haiti, Korea, England, Italy and the US. This work asks each of us

what our “bag issues” are. Why not let the Brown Paper Bag be the last receptacle for all prejudices and simply toss the bag out when it becomes filled. Perhaps then we can all move on with our mission of living, learning and seeking happiness.

Lori B. Crawford is a Professor of art at Delaware State University where she has been teaching computer graphics and art history for over 20 years. Ms. Crawford earned her Bachelor of Arts from Morehead State University in Eastern Kentucky, and was the first African-American female student to earn a Master of Fine Arts in Computer Art from the Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia in 1996. Her socially conscious work manifests itself in several media such as, acrylic paint, collage, photography, electronic art and installations. Lori has had solo exhibitions in Syracuse, NY, Gettysburg, VA, Birmingham, AL, Washington, DC and several Delaware locations

Hans van der Meer

Flemish Fields, 29 min video, 2000.

Two years after the publication of my book “Dutch Fields” the Netherlands and Belgium hosted the 2000 European Championship. I decided to film a sequel in Belgium, focusing not only on photography but also on filming. Technological advancements made it possible to capture moving images inexpensively. The compact digital camcorder with DV tape I’d recently acquired was my tool. “Flemish Fields” was primarily about testing out the possibilities. Experimenting with viewpoints, seeing what works and what doesn’t. Keeping the camera rolling, giving chance a chance. On my journey through the Flemish Fields, I thus found the format I would use in other films.

Television coverage of football matches follows the ball. But I wasn’t interested in the flow of the matches, but in what happens around the pitch when you’re not watching the

action. It wasn't the match itself that determined my choice; it was the setting and the location. These had to provide a seemingly coincidental glimpse of the world beyond the pitch. In Flanders, it was a farm, or a horse in a neighboring meadow. In later films in Europe, oil storage tanks on a nearby industrial estate, characteristic houses, a typical landscape, or the Mediterranean Sea.

The view of the background dictated the point of view and framing; players run in and out of my frame. My favorite spot: the side of a penalty area, usually on a staircase for a slightly higher vantage point. The game ebbs and flows, leaving you with the goalkeeper in a deserted setting for half the time. I had the video camera ready on a tripod next to me; all I had to do was jump off my staircase. That would not only yield much more footage, but also show me where photography was less effective. Such as observations of gait or limping. Where photography ended, moving images took over.

In the editing, I wasn't looking for a narrative; the structure is determined by the ritual that unfolds on match days all over the world. Preparing the pitch, the players arriving, warming up, checking their studs, the toss. I could watch endlessly, watching atypical players, theatrical behavior, injuries, the movements of referees and linesmen, waiting goalkeepers, or the commotion of spectators. Then the shrill final whistle, the walk to the locker rooms, and the silence that returns.

This relaxed approach aligns with the content. Human shortcomings are more likely to manifest themselves in imperfection. The slow pace is characteristic of an amateur match at the lowest levels. But amateur football, in its imperfect execution, also has a theatrical and dramatic effect. Within the rules of a game, people feel safe and let themselves go; we let ourselves be carried away by our imagination.



Hans van der Meer (1955) belongs to the most distinctive Dutch documentary photographers of his generation; he is a storyteller in image and text. His approach is based on an inquisitive look and a sharp sense of observation, in which empathy, social involvement, and a strong sense of humour and absurdity go hand in hand. They run like a thread through his entire oeuvre.

*He studied at the Technical School for Photography in The Hague between 1973-1976 and attended in 1983 the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. During the study he went in 1984 to Hungary, where he photographed everyday life on the streets of mainly Budapest around 1985. His observations were published in **QUIRK OF FATE** (1987) and won a World Press Award in the Daily Life category. In 2022 a wider selection was published in the book **Minor Mysteries** alongside a retrospective exhibition at the Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Center in Budapest.*

*In 1995 he started to photograph amateur football in the lower divisions, choosing fields that offered a view on the surrounding landscape. The resulting landscapes were published in the book **Dutch Fields** (1998) and brought him international acclaim in the art world and beyond. Commissioned by several photography institutions across Europe, the following years he was able to produce a large number of photographs and some videos in Europe as well. In 2006 **European Fields - The Landscape of Lower League Football** was published by SteidlMack and the exhibition was launched at museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam. The videos were part of the exhibition **European Fields** produced by Paradox Foundation that has been traveling since.*

*In 2018 **Time to Change – The Changing World of the Dutch Cow** was published, in which he is looking at and thinking about cows and consequently dairy farming, animal welfare, hi-tech food production and its impact on the environment. He is currently working on **Counting on Nature**, a project about monitoring the living environment in the Netherlands, that illustrates the changing position of humans towards nature. He has been teaching documentary photography at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague for ten years, his work is part of museum- and private collections.*

Katarzyna Mirczak

TOOLS OF CRIME

Death is indefinable in any single sense common for the many disciplines studying it; it may be genetic, quantum, functional, of organs and cells, systemic, apparent, relative and absolute, clinical and physiological; programmed cell death – apoptosis, or programmed cell death, mitotic catastrophes, passive pathological processes such as necrosis, occurring as a result of physical, chemical, and biological factors, aging, genetically determined mechanisms completely beyond of our will. In this aspect, death seems mechanical and routine.

We confront our own mortality through evasion or courage to fear. Photography makes possible manifesting the latter, making it real. Confronting its image, we run towards it, charting our own existence on a horizon of personal mortality. These images, however, forever remain uncertain testimonies, always accompanied by our own expectation. We are not observers; we do not look at death, we look towards it, examining ourselves in its manifestations. We see the blank space left by it in posthumous photographs, for we know that it wasn't there anymore when the picture was being taken, but we know for sure that what has been left of it is its trace. These images enumerate pain. Force us to ask about the kind of wound inflicted. But they also play a game with the death effect, a game of appearances, a refuge of uncertain living.

Katarzyna Mirczak – visual artist and cultural researcher. In her creative practice, she focuses on issues of cultural memory and visual representations of the past. Her artistic projects lie at the intersection of documentary art, photography and research on tangible and intangible heritage. Mirczak creates photographic and installation series that reflect on the processes of storing, reinterpreting and negotiating history. She combines editorial experience with artistic practice, which is reflected in the interdisciplinary nature of her projects – situated between visual essay, source research and theoretical reflection. She collaborates with cultural institutions in Poland as a creative and artistic director, developing curatorial concepts, visual narratives and editorial strategies for projects carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Poland.

In 2016, Katarzyna Mirczak was invited to the prestigious FLESH exhibition at York Art Gallery (England), where works from her Special Signs series were shown alongside artists such as Francis Bacon, John Coplans, Lucian Freud, Peter Paul Rubens and Edgar Degas, and to the special show Nuit de l'Année during the Rencontres d'Arles festival in France. Since 2010, she has been represented by Eric Franck Fine Art, London.

Bruno Schulz (1892–1942) was a significant Polish-Jewish modernist writer and artist, known for his unique, dreamlike prose and drawings. He gained recognition for his short-story collections *The Street of Crocodiles* and *Sanatorium Under the Sign of the Hourglass*, which blend autobiography, fantasy, and philosophy. A teacher in his hometown of Drohobycz, he was tragically killed by a Gestapo officer during the Nazi occupation of Poland in 1942. His limited but powerful body of work established him as a major 20th-century Polish literary figure.

In 1986 the Brothers Quay released a 21- minute long stop-motion animation based on Bruno Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles*.

Brunon Schulz's works were made available thanks to the courtesy of the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw.

Mitchell Squire

“reclining Black-Man” (1-5), 2021

digital prints on fabric, 5 panels 60 x 90 inches each, installed at width of 18'-0"

Squire's plein-air self-portraiture begun in early 2020, depicts various performative actions initiated as an exploration on “the socio-sexual effects of extractive economies and the material geophysics of race”. The effort quickly evolved into a survivalist means

to quell his personal disquietude during the burgeoning COVID-19 pandemic and the shifting sociopolitical landscape toward Black Lives in America. Interestingly, his self portrait practice had lain dormant for over 30 years until it became necessary for its reemergence at the outset of the global crisis, a time during which he became increasingly vulnerable and uncertain, as a sexagenarian Black man with pre-existing medical conditions, of whether he would live through it. He wondered at the time if he had lived his life to the fullest or whether he had been chasing some form of cruel optimism.

As such, all of his photographic work then and since are part of an intentionally expansive project and practice: to live ungovernably. His work pushes back against the lack of breadth in the representations of senior Black men historically and presently circulating in photographic media. It inquires courageously beyond stereotypes, tropes, or trends, in search of a fuller expression of who he was and who he desires to become. His is an expansive space of male identities, associations, proximities, and humanities which teases out a potentially new non- technological adaptive human species. Throughout various studio-based processes, he opens new doors to a more pleasure-filled and quickened state of existence compounding an ever- renewing life purpose.

Whether reclining alone while undulating nude in a darkened studio, teasing out relationships with non-human life forms, creating new and uncommon contours of a personae that had only prior existed in his peripheral vision, Squire remains non-self-censored, provocative, investigatory, imaginative, befuddling, and all things in between. Underpinned by the threat of erasure or the desire of invisibility, and touching on themes of, fugitivity, marronage and freedom, human rights, identity, sexuality, masculinity, realness, self-love, and mental health, the project keeps him searching for a plausible spatial expanse where he imagines to exist a Black outdoors (even if it's inside).

Mitchell Squire is a multidisciplinary artist, educator, and curator. His expanded creative practice encompasses the fields of architecture, visual art, photography, Black study, and

explorations of material culture. He is best known for his provocative and transformative architectural pedagogy administered across an array of innovative and award-winning courses; his elegiac object assemblages that highlight events in Black history critical to but often overlooked in our national story; his searing examination of the afterimage recorded onto the backs of spent law enforcement firearms training targets; and a self-published trilogy of large format zines documenting his pandemic-era series of vulnerable plein-air self portrait photography.

Latai Taumoepeau

Dark Continent, 2018

“Dark Continent” is a series of four documentary photographs taken from a durational spray tanning performance over 48 hours also titled *Dark Continent*.

Photo Credit; Zan Wimberley

133.3cm x 200cm, Digital print on paper

Artist | Performance | Faiva Haka Tonga | Australia (b.1972, Gadigal Ngura/Sydney)

Latai Taumoepeau makes live art as an expanded Indigenous practice of service that merges cultural, political, rhetorical and formal concerns. Based on the Tongan doctrines of *fonua* (*land/place/body*) and *tauhi fonua* (*care for land/place/body*); *faiva* (*body-centred actioning*); *vā* (*space*) as informed by her birthplace on the unceded lands of the Gadigal people, her work is in service of climate justice and its dire implications on race, class, woman and the Pacific body politic.

Working across performance, choreography, film, sound, print and poetic materials her collaborative immersive installations are composed through instructional scores and logic systems.

Through her work she aims to illuminate unseen communities to the frangipani-less foreground; alongside her eventual return to the Kingdom of Tonga where she will continue what to her is the ultimate *faiva*: sea voyaging and celestial navigation before becoming an ancestor.

We Latai (reminisce) Tau-moe-peau (battle-with-waves)

We stand for Moana Oceania interventions

We stand for the baptism of the frontline

We stand for saltwater sovereignty

We stand for the embodied archive

We stand for 1 degree of difference

We stand for the monstrous femme body

We stand inside shifting coordinates of the in-between

We stand for defending our Moana.

As part of the Djamu Program at the Art Gallery of NSW, Latai is currently collaborating with Paris Taia on a socially engaged art work. They are co-designing and growing a Pacific garden with young men in the Pacific brotherhood program at the Frank Baxter Youth Justice Centre and it is her favourite most meaningful project.

Taumoepeau has presented and exhibited across borders, countries and coastlines, including most recently Oceanspace Venice Biennale, Bangkok Biennale, ANTI Festival - Finland; Taipei Contemporary Arts Festival, National Portrait Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Art Gallery of NSW and Sydney Festival; Auckland Art Gallery Toi O Tamaki; Serpentine Galleries, London and 22nd Biennale of Sydney, 9th Asia Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane. Her works are held in private and public collections. In 2023, she was the recipient of the Creative Australia Emerging and Experimental Arts Award.

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