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“The Beautiful Trap: Janine Antoni’s Body Art”
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When Janine Antoni performed Loving Care in 1993, she moved herself into the history of contemporary art, and she has occupied that place ever since. Like any negotiation with history, the understanding of her performance, in which she dipped her long hair in black dye and set about mopping the floor, has been complicated by its initial reception. Loving Care is famous because of a series of black-and-white photographs documenting the event that recalls the photographs Hans Namuth took of Jackson Pollock working on an Abstract Expressionist canvas. The association is apt; as a woman artist Antoni was mimicking the making of an
action painting and claiming a piece of the territory that had been occupied primarily by male artists. (She was also referencing Yves Klein’s use of his models as paintbrushes with the transformative difference that in her enactment she was both model and master). But what the Loving Care photographs don’t show is that she was also driving out of the performance space the crowd that had gathered to watch a woman, in a vulnerable position, enact a laborious and inexplicable ritual. Like so much of her subsequent work, Loving Care was simultaneously about being in danger and being defiant. It was a piece that did double duty.

From the beginning, Antoni has used her body as the object through which she has measured her place in the world. She has said that her body “is a funnel through which the world is poured,” and for the last 20 years she has discovered subtle ways to effect that pouring. Early works, like Gnaw, 1992, and Lick and Lather, 1993, were inspired sculptures that engaged important trajectories in contemporary art. In Gnaw, Antoni chewed away at two 600-pound blocks of chocolate and lard, an act of literal consumption that was also the ingestion and transformation of the minimalist cube. Here came the Janice; there went the Judd. She completed the piece by melting down the gnawed chocolate into 40 heart-shaped candy packages, and mixed the lard with pigment and beeswax to make 150 lipstick containers, which were then exhibited in a display case. Gnaw was a multi-tasker; it touched on consumer culture, the cult of beauty and art history, all neatly packaged in a single installation. Antoni refers to it as “a mouth-made ready-made.” Her logic in this early work was simple: if her mouth was the hammer and chisel in Gnaw, then in Loving Care her hair could be a paintbrush.

Lick and Lather also took its lead from art history. On two rows of facing pedestals, Antoni arranged 14 self-portrait busts, seven in chocolate and seven in soap. Each of the sculptures had undergone different degrees of defacement; the artist had cast herself and was in the process of licking and washing herself away. The installation was at once historical and contemporary; it was embodied in the tradition of classical self-portraiture and was body art for the late 20th century. More than any artist of her generation (she was born in 1964), Antoni has fashioned from her own body and its intimacies an art of visceral delicacy. Her tools and her processes are uncommon, from tightrope walking to steam shovels, from using her teeth as a carving tool to re-casting silver in the form of the inside of her mouth. But the effect of the materials she uses, and what she does with them, resonates in her audience like memory and blood.

Motherhood is the larger story that connects the work in “Up Against” to her earlier production. The first piece she made after graduating from Yale in 1989 was a set of negative wall imprints of her breast and nipple. Called Wien, 1990, it drew attention to her interest in finding ways to represent the various stages of separation from her own mother, and to articulate that relationship through a form of absence. The thing not there was the thing most present. “All my objects mediate our intimate interaction with our bodies,” Antoni says, “or they are objects that replace the body, or that somehow define the body within the culture.”

Her engagement with the ambiguities of mothering continued in works like Mamm, 1995, Coddle, 1999, and even in 2038, a colour photograph in which the artist, naked in a bathtub, seems to be nursing the cow whose number gives the image its name. 2038 is a strangely moving variation on the theme of the pieta. In 2009, the most dramatic of the photographs in “Up Against,” her exhibition at Luhring Augustine in fall, 2009, shows the artist suspended by a harness, while her body is enclosed in a dollhouse.

The wind blew my hair into a beard.
I became part pirate or lion. The griffin is itself a hybrid of a lion and a bird.
I also became half man and half woman.

that contains miniaturized objects that are consistent with the style of her real house. A spider has taken up residency in the kitchen and has attached its web to a bowl of fruit on one side and to a wall on the other. Antoni’s suspension is, itself, ambiguous. It’s not entirely clear whether we should regard her as the weaver of her own suspending web, or as a victim caught in the filaments of its harness strings. The double read is an inescapable response. Antoni is aware that she is inhabiting an in-between space, one that sits, as she described it, “somewhere between being suspended and ascending and either entrapped or inside the structure of support, which to me is motherhood.”

She keeps returning to the doubleness of things; nowhere is that more evident than in Tinier, the piece that dominated “Up Against.” Part of the piece took the form of a two-and-a-half ton wrecking ball, an object we invariably associate with destruction and violence. But Antoni’s wrecking ball was made of lead, so that every time...
it struck the building it was knocking down, it was suffering damage. Embedded in its surface were fragments broken from another surface. That inescapable condition of being alive—that we visit damage on others and damage visits us in turn—may well be the cause of the tear in the magnificent eye that occupied the gallery for two months last fall.

The following interview was conducted in Janine Antoni’s studio in Brooklyn in October 2009. It was both a conversation and a show-and-tell, as Antoni brought a collection of props, pictures, objects and images for us to better understand the meaning and making of her captivating art.

BORDER CROSSINGS: You tend to ask yourself questions when you work, like what is the material of dreams? In your latest work what questions did you pose?

JANINE ANTONI: What were the questions? What does it mean to both hold space and get out of the way at the same time? And then there were the more specific questions, such as with Conduit, which includes an apparatus that allows a woman to pee standing up, I asked myself if I’m going to pee through an object, what material should it be made of? I was thinking about Duchamp’s Fountain, of course, and so I first made it in porcelain. Then I came to copper. It would patina when in contact with my urine and it calls to mind the decorative cornices on buildings. I started to consider Gothic architecture as the background for my action.

Because of the gargoyle?

Yes, and the copper seemed to bring it all together. But I think I should tell you the story of the artworks from the show, and then the questions will come. One Another came first.

That’s the digital c-print of your midsection and a child?
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Right. The gesture in this photograph first happened when Indra was learning to feed herself. She has always been completely fixated on my belly button. Psychologists talk a lot about transitional objects and my belly button was her transitional object. However, it isn’t a true transitional object because she replaced my breasts with my belly button, as opposed to a teddy bear or a blanket. Even now, at five, she still likes to sleep with her finger in it. If she falls down, she wants to put her finger there for comfort, like a security blanket. She calls my belly her belly. “Give me my belly,” she says.

The separation clearly hasn’t happened yet.

Right. One time when I was feeding her she wanted to feed my belly button. I was struck by the spirit of reciprocity in her gesture. There was something about it that was very touching. Also, she was making my work. I can’t claim that piece. Somehow she becomes the mother and her gesture, like an umbilical cord, turns me into a fetus. Certainly having a child has made me grateful to my own mother because you don’t know what it takes until you do it. At the time, I was reading the psychologist D.W. Winnicott, who said that mothering your child is an opportunity to re-mother yourself. His is the notion of the good enough mother, which I’m really interested in. I had an opportunity to work with a home for the elderly, and I decided I was going to interview all the women there and ask them if they had any advice on how to be a good mother. There was this one woman who said, “Get out of the way.” Her words still ring in my mind. Once the child isn’t hurting herself or anyone else, you have to trust the process to unfold naturally and in its own time.

What about the gargoyle form of conduit?

When I was a little girl, my brother was reading a book about pirates and it mentioned Anne Bonnet. She was a woman pirate who disguised herself as a man. What I remember is that she was able to get away with it because she had an apparatus for peeing while standing up. Around the same time, my brother used to tell me about the joys of peeing from high places. My mom told me that when my brother was young they were by the pool at a Holiday Inn, and he walked to the end of the diving board and peed. My mother, who is very proper, was so horrified that she pretended he wasn’t her son. A few years ago a friend told me she’d found this thing on the market called a Travel Mate. It can be used so you don’t have to sit on the toilet seat. When I saw it I thought, “There’s some potential here.” Believe it or not, there are other designs like the WhizBuz or the Shepee, but I modeled the gargoyle using the Travel Mate as its inner core. I then made a photograph of me actually using it. I approached a few churches with the idea and you can imagine the answer I got. “You want to what?” Instead, I started to consider skyscrapers and Gothic buildings and began to look for other Gothic buildings that I might use to create this image. It’s hard to get access because no one wants you on their roof, so I got turned down a lot. Then a patron of the arts who happens to have access to the Chrysler Building made it happen for me.

Initially, I was going for a very different image. I wasn’t going to have my face in it. I was just going to have my body, the gargoyle, the peeing and the landscape. The photographer and I were on
platforms to get me at the right height. A professional window cleaner harnessed us up, so what you don't see is that I have a harness that goes under my dress. I was very cavalier because I'm a tightrope walker and have good balance. I thought it will be great to be so high, but when I actually got out there, the wind was terrifying. It was fine when I was on one side of the building because the gusts were throwing me into the building, but on the other side they were pushing me away from it. There was one moment when the wind was so strong I went down to my knees. After that I was scared to stand on the side of the building. Fortunately, we had the image by then. It is strange that in the end I got access to the Chrysler Building because its bird is not so different from my bird, although I made Conduit long before I knew where I was going to take the photograph. I got to live out all the fantasies I rolled into the work. The wind blew my hair into a beard and that opened up a whole new set of readings. For me, I became part pirate or lion. The Griffin is itself a hybrid of a lion and a bird. I also became half man and half woman.

These coincidences often happen to you. The connections get made afterwards rather than being intentional.
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It depends on what you mean by intentional. I would say that I start with setting an intention and then pay close attention to what is happening. I think the serendipities have somehow always been there, but it's only now that I can be flexible enough, and take them seriously enough, to have them guide me. We only had one day to get the photo; we were trying to compose an image before we got up on the Chrysler Building. We spent several days using Photoshop to superimpose images of me onto pictures taken from the building. In my old way of working, I would have been so set on what I concluded from those mock-ups that I wouldn't have noticed this crazy thing that happened with my hair. I think this shift in my creative process has arisen because of my daughter. As a mother, you have to be flexible, spontaneous and responsive in the moment. Nothing is predictable.

The house closes on me and I have to be hung. The harness and the house are heavy and painful, yet I was trying to look calm, like the Virgin Mary ascending into heaven.

One of the other props you brought along is an image of Frida Kahlo, and I suddenly realize one of the sources for the harness in your show. That piece (Inhabit) came to me as an image while I was thinking about a spider making a web between my legs. Going back to Winicott, I wondered how one can hold space for someone else. He writes that it is important for the child to feel that the mother is present, but that it is also important to give the child enough space to be in its own imagination. I think again of the elderly mother advising me to "get out of the way," I connected the idea of simultaneously holding space and getting out of the way to the idea of a spider's web. I wanted to actually be the support structure for the web. As a mother I provide that container and the rest happens on its own. I got obsessed with trying to get a spider to make a web between my legs, which is ridiculous. It's really a magical image. It can't happen, but I still thought maybe somehow I could make it happen. We started calling renowned entomologists for advice. They told us about orb-weavers and what they do. I explained what I wanted to do and they said, "You'd have to wait for a very long time." This is what brought me to the harness. If I had to wait all night for the spider to make its web, I could use the harness to rest and take the weight off my legs. The more I got into it, the more I realized this is probably not going to happen. Then I thought, "I'll make a cage which will keep the spider between my legs and we'll remove the cage and take the photo." Next, we called up harness experts and explained that I needed to stand up for a very long time without saying what I needed to do. Finally they said, "Listen lady, we've seen everything. Just tell us what you're trying to do." This is a company that makes harnesses specifically used for different actions. They showed me various harnesses, and something clicked when I saw one that could be attached on all sides of the body. I thought of the web and even of the idea of a web within a web. At first, I thought the harness was going to be concealed, but then I realized that seeing it contributed to the meaning of the artwork. I also realized that my cage could be a house within a house. Then I thought doll's house. If I could only get the spider to build a web inside the house, then all I would have to do is put the house on and I'd have everything I wanted.

But did Kahlo and her harness come into your mind? Hers is a pretty distressing image. Who knows? I've had this postcard floating around for a long time. But at some point I realized, "Oh my god, that's my harness." For my image, I wanted the reader to sit somewhere between being suspended and ascending and either entrapped or the structure of support, which to me is motherhood. One minute you just want to rip your hair out and the next minute you're melting with joy. So I was trying to get this weird place in the image where the house is trapping me but we have grown together.

For me the ambiguity is whether you are the web-maker or are you caught in the web? You may not become aware of that ambiguity until you notice the web itself. This delicate, barely visible thing that is almost indestructible. It ends up being so strong that it casts itself back onto the other work. Yes. And coming to that information is a slow reading. It was slow for me, too. This slow was almost five years in the making. In one way the images in the exhibition seem rather obvious, so you think they're a shallow read. But in listening to you talk about the work, you realize how complicated that read actually is. You have talked before about deciding how much information to give the viewer, how much space you have to allow the viewer. This work is dealing with that problem in a more intense way than other of your work.
That obvious thing that you talk about stems from the fact that I don’t want to lose anybody. People might walk away with the obvious thing, but they’ll never get to the complex thing if they don’t have an interest. I think that is something I do consistently. I want you; I want everybody. I throw a wide net and then the question is, “How do I convince you to stay around long enough to get all those other things?” That’s more tricky and that’s where the art comes in.

Did you build the dollhouse?

We bought a dollhouse and reproduced it in cardboard. We retrofitted it to my body, refining it again and again. Then I worked with architects to make it fit seamlessly. Even so, it was like a guillotine, in

inhabit and become aware that I’m in pain. In fact, I was trying to act like I wasn’t in pain because I wanted an image that seems peaceful.

If you’re after transcendence you don’t want to look tormented.

Right. But what you say is interesting because in Catholicism transcendence comes through pain.

I want to talk about the spider. Was this a dream you had or just an image you carried around?

It was an image that came to me when I was dancing. The kind of dance I do doesn’t involve steps. You partner, and I was partnering with an older woman. I felt she was holding the space for my dance and I got the idea that I was a spider.

But the spider image is very female.

Right. As a metaphor, it is certainly something that women artists have worked with a lot. Mine is not only a depiction of a spider but is also a collaboration. I realized that if the spider built the web in the right place, I could put on the dollhouse and take the photo. I had to design a situation to direct the spider. I used sheets of plastic covered with vaseline that would stop the spider from wanting to attach to the vaseline but not from attaching to the house. So we found three spiders around the neighborhood and put one in each room. My assistant, Rosemary, found the spider that is in the picture. It had made a web in my daughter’s swing, so she took it and put it in the dollhouse kitchen. When it made its web it was perfectly parallel to the picture plane as if I had instructed it. The next morning we dismantled the webs of the other spiders, who ran away, leaving this one spider. It hadn’t yet made the web completely. I put on the house, the spider stayed where it was, and we took some photos. I put the cage back on to have lunch, and when we came back the spider had completed the web. It stayed at the center of that web for two days. We gave the spider flies at night to keep it happy. I must have put the house on and off ten times in two days while taking those photos and the spider didn’t move.

Is this normal spider behaviour?

I don’t know what normal spider behaviour is, but I was very grateful to this spider.

How did the dollhouse take shape?

I wanted it to be like my house but not an exact replica. We did little things like using the material I was wearing to make the curtains in my daughter’s room. The drawing on the easel in her room is a reduced version of one of her real drawings. These are the things that kept me engaged and connected on a personal level.
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So those details are not critical to an understanding of the piece, but they helped inform the piece for you?
That's a good question. I think it goes beyond the discussion of my own work and asks what we as artists do for the viewer and what we do for ourselves. In this interview, for example, I tell you I got that image while dancing, but there's a lot more that I could say that I choose to leave unsaid. What becomes part of the work, or what becomes part of the mythology of the work? As a young artist I don't think I would have talked about the serendipity, for example. That wouldn't be important because it was image. This physical sensation was an inspiration for Conduit.

In the photomontage, Klein didn't just fall into the void. He leaped into it. Right and we never see the fall. I like to think he flew away. What is that leap into the unknown? Do you have faith that the unknown will carry you to another place? I mean the whole process is so mysterious. I ask myself these questions, both in terms of my process and considering the way the viewer encounters the work. Am I closing down other people's ideas by talking too? How much can I give, even in the work? Giving can all about the way meaning is made through a decoding process. Now I realize that to follow my creative process I must allow a lot of things to happen that are unreadable in the work. There are ways to understand besides just reading or decoding, such as physical sensations or personal memories.

On this note, I think of Yves Klein's Leap into the Void. That is such an important image for me because it captures the nature of the creative process. I am always struck by the exuberance of that also be giving space for viewers to have their own readings, but too much information is like an overhearing mother. The child needs to have its own space. Maybe the viewer gets to leap into the void, too.

It works the same way with memory. Once you commit memory to paper, the memory is narrowed. And are you really remembering? That's the delicate character of the creative process, trying to stay open and float in this unknown, powerful,
potent, place of possibilities—the void—which is terrifying. That's why showing is so painful: to crystallize your ideas you have to shut down some of the potential.

Wordsworth had the idea that, "we murder to dissect." The argument is that if we over-analyze and over-explain, we kill the thing. But in an earlier conversation you explained to the audience that you went through months of training to learn how to walk a tightrope, that you had someone teach you seven different ways to fall so you wouldn't be hurt when you landed in the hemp. In giving that information you in no way diminished the sheer lyric beauty of the fall. I'd say that knowing how much training you went through and recognizing that your art concealed all of that preparation not only didn't diminish the work, it augmented it.

I think of calligraphy. Behind one beautiful line is the experience of having made that same line millions of times. Are those million gestures in that one gesture? Of course they are. Maybe it's okay for the viewer to think that it came out in one moment, without knowing the entire background.

One of the most telling examples of this question about how much information is passed on comes out of Loving Care. In showing the black-and-white photographs, you invoke the Pollock connection and the photos of Hans Namuth. But what you don't get, even if you see a whole
sequence of the photographs, is that what you're doing is moving people out of the room, so that your vulnerable position is alleviated. That doesn't come through in the photographs and it's a critical notion.

Those photos don't exist as art works. They're just documentation and that's an important distinction to make in my work. Inhabit is an absolutely conceived image in every detail of its composition, where those are documentation, which is by definition only half the story. The Loving Care video, which is also documentation, gives you some sense of me pushing people out of the room as I mop the floor. I felt that this work was misread because a lot of people didn't get to see the performance but spoke about it from seeing those images. I think that what you're talking about is at the root of the piece. It's not only that I pushed people out; there was this tension in the room of people wanting to see, but they are being pushed away. My challenge is how to get the viewer to think about their frustration and discomfort as part of the meaning. As an artist it has taken me a long time to figure out what situation allows viewers to stay present with their own discomfort.

I began to anticipate what they're going to do, I learned how to move them through the space, I had more confidence in how I claim the space, and because of all that, I think the work changed.

Let's talk about Tear, the most dramatic work in the exhibition.

I think Tear is the most open of all the works. Or maybe it presents the biggest gap for the viewer to bridge. They have to make a connection between my eye and the ball.

What's interesting about Tear is that you only provide the aural residue of the wrecking of the building.

Yes, which is really important. I have removed the most dramatic part of the whole process, which is to see this 4000-pound sculpture smashing into the building. I only give you the sound and the marks produced by that activity. I think what these hints conjure in the imagination is better than showing it. My wrecking ball is vulnerable; it shows its history on its surface. It was conceived when the United States was in a different place than it is right now. When I made it in 2008, I was thinking about being at war and our destructive nature; now I feel we're more like the ball. We're feeling what we did to ourselves. Our economy is only one example of the repercussions of our destructive nature. The eye came to me when I was considering showing it in New Orleans. I was making a video where I was only going to show the dust of the demolition rising and falling. I wanted it to be very serene and quiet. But when I go to New Orleans, I started to think about Katrina, about witnessing and the responsibility of seeing. I kept thinking about our delayed reaction in helping the victims. I also thought about the viewer as witness. I realized blinking is one of the body's instincts to protect itself. But there is also the psychology of not wanting to look when you're watching a scary movie, of protecting yourself from something you don't want to see. I recorded the sound and then edited it to the blinking of the eye. I tried to edit it in such a way that you didn't know whether the eye is producing the sound or whether the eye is responding to the sound.

You've redone Loving Care half a dozen times now. Does it change every time you do it?

Well, the problem, or the interesting part, is that when I first did it I was very awkward. The more I did it the better I got at mopping the floor with my hair, which is a weird thing to be good at. So when you look at the first videos, there's a vulnerability, which was powerful because of the awkwardness. Then as I get good at doing it, I become more and more empowered. After working with more audiences, I began to anticipate what they're going to do, I learned how to move them through the space, I had more confidence in how I claim the space, and because of all that, I think the work changed.

Didn't you have at least ten microphones on the building itself so that you were getting every possible level of sound?

Ten channels and then it was mixed and played back with surround sound. It has a powerful physical effect. I'm always surprised at how sound enters the body in such a different way than vision does. I have this big subwoofer, and you feel the vibration in your chest. People have told me that
the sound is so disturbing that they had to leave for a while and then come back.

Your work has traditionally taken as one of its points of departure a referencing of art history, so Donald Judd comes up in Gnaw. You mention Duchamp in connection with Conduit. When I look at the wrecking ball, I think of Chris Burden and the way the building gets embedded in the thing that destroys it. Chris Burden obviously weighs heavy everywhere in my work. I am very interested in the way he deals with the relics of his performance. He gives one very clear example of a way to give that information to the viewer. I’m definitely trying to push that line forward. He held back. He would tell you this incredible thing, and you’d see only a black-and-white photo and one line of text around which you would create this amazing story. I’m trying to produce more than a relic. I want the object to hold the information. I want to get rid of the descriptive line, which is a really hard thing to do. At first I thought my installation should feel like entering the scene of a crime. You come in, there are clues for you to uncover. In the end, I’m not telling the story in such a linear way.

It is intriguing to hear you talk about Burden because your pedigree has been through women artists.

But it’s appropriate with this piece to bring up Burden because, unlike any of my other works, this piece has a real violence in it. I guess the bite in Gnaw is violent.

Gnaw was read as a criticism of and an attack on the patriarchy by eating through Judd’s cube. And that is certainly violent.

But you also had humour in mind. Much of the wit in your work seems to get lost on viewers. Especially with Conduit, do you think it’s funny?
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I think it's hilarious. I think even the melodrama of it is hilarious. It is a little crazy. I've had some really interesting responses to this show. I have learned a lot from the personal responses. Mothers seem to recognize themselves in the work, and several women mention something about how my gray hair plays out in the work.

Those are very close and very specific readings. They are very specific but nonetheless important because they were intentional. I realize that not all viewers will catch every meaning I intend. Personal experiences weigh heavy on an individual's take. If I were a younger artist making Conduit, it would be a very different work. Actually, I probably wouldn't have made it. In 1992 I would have been afraid of the reading and I wouldn't have touched this content. There is a difference between a 23-year-old woman enacting that gesture versus a 46-year-old woman doing it.

Are you aware that you're inescapably a part of contemporary art history in the same way that Hannah Wilke and Carolee Schneemann are?
Do you think that's true?

I do. But what do you think?
I can say that I am trying to have a dialogue with those artists. I'm consciously in dialogue with that history and feminist ideas. I also feel that because I worked with my mother I should work with my daughter, that we need to hear more from women artists about mothering.

The maternal thing is interesting. It occurs to me that one compulsion in your work has been to make the world come into your body and to then somehow get it back out again. That cycle is a profoundly maternal one.
The thing we didn't talk about with Conduit is that the rain is rerouted through the building into the landscape, and I'm looking at a river going by in that image. Then to replace my body with that pipe is a way to have the landscape flow through me. It's like I'm performing some kind of strange ritual. I wrote in the press release that my body is a funnel through which the world is poured. It's a literal metaphor, but that's what we are; culture is poured through us and we are constantly digesting and spitting out this stuff. For me, to make is a way of knowing and a way of locating myself. My body is a filter, a porous structure. I am constantly looking for ways to become even more porous.

For you, though, the body is still the centre. The work emanates out from that central place?

The centre or the channel? They're different. The centre makes me seem self-obsessed. Well, I am a bit. But I called the piece Conduit because I like to think about the creative process in that way. In the end, my body is the only thing I know.

And you can't look out from any other place. Yes, the body is a trap, but it's a beautiful trap.

Is there a teleology involved in the work? Do you want it to read in a certain way?
I definitely have an intention. The question is, are there wrong readings? As much as I want to be generous, there are some readings that I would be very unhappy about. But as you're talking, I'm thinking that it's really about your world view. I believe we are connected through our body, so I take the body as my starting point. It goes across cultures. So I start with those really basic things that relate to the human condition. Maybe that addresses what you referred to as the obvious in my work. That's not to be littled; that's to be taken very seriously.

For me, to make is a way of knowing and a way of locating myself. My body is a filter, a porous structure. I am constantly looking for ways to become even more porous.

Our response had been that metaphor wasn't your prime motive. It's not this is like this is like this. For starters, the works were readable on one level. They could be read as they appeared, and it wasn't necessary to develop a narrative from them. But the narrative makes itself. In the enacting, it somehow forms its own story. How do you make a metaphor, or better yet, how do you live a metaphor?

You talked about getting on a bus and sitting down where someone has just been and experiencing the residual intimacy of the warmth of their body. The bigger recognition is that as human beings we are warm-blooded and we leave an imprint of heat, and that is both consoling and disturbing. Your work often treads this edge where, if you turn the corner one way, it gets disturbing. If you come back another way, it's about consolation or comfort. Is that a deliberately enshrined notion you have in the work?
I think that is my problem and it might possibly be my asset. I'm not so disturbed by that.