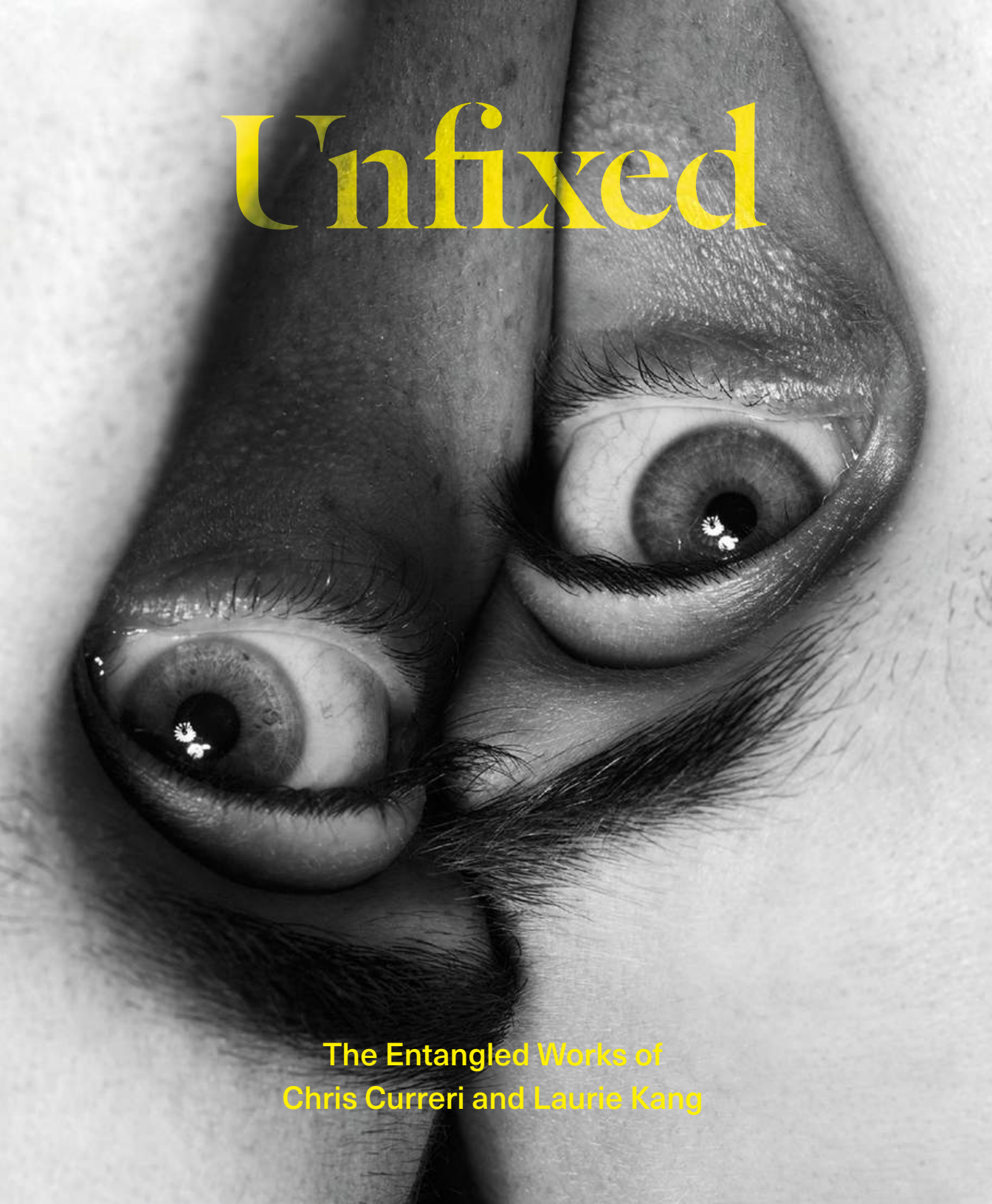

Unfixed
The Entangled Works of
Chris Curreri and Laurie Kang

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The Gordon and Marion Smith Foundation for Young Artists

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Unfixed, installation view of exhibition



Guts (detail),
Laurie Kang, 2019
50.8 × 60.96 cm,
photograms, magnets,
silicone, Courtesy of
the Artist and Franz Kaka

Foreword

MEREDITH PREUSS

Unfixed explores how the concepts of fixing and unfixing operate as metaphorical and artistic strategies in the work of two Toronto-based Canadian artists: Chris Curreri and Laurie Kang. Through works of photography, installation, and sculpture, these artists suggest a network of connectivity between traditional understandings around photography, art history, and intimate personal narratives. They challenge the notion that living things operate through distinct categories and domains, and their work suggests that photography itself creates a rhizomatic, interrelated relationship between seemingly disparate ways of thinking about our bodies, the political, and the social.

Central to photography is fixing an image in time and space, thus capturing an authentic record of an event or moment. Yet the physical reality of the process and the inherent bias of the artist's eye rarely fulfill that promise. Rather, materials change over time, and what's left outside the frame is as important as what's included. To fix and to unfix can be used as lenses through which to view the ebbs and flows of social tides, many of which have been at the forefront of global conversations throughout the last year; the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted the precariousness of our health, livelihoods, and relationships, has demanded the rethinking of our social norms so that we can protect one another. Likewise, the dismantling of monuments to racist leaders and imperialists throughout the summer of 2020, and the renewed understanding of the corruptibility of democratic institutions, signalled a social unfixing that was long in the works. That which was once taken for granted as unchanging has been called into question: that which was fixed became unfixed.

The photo-based installations and mixed-media sculptures of Laurie Kang act as sites where veiled references to the

human body are expanded through different rhetorical possibilities. Ranging in scale from human-sized to larger-than-life, these works combine synthetic and industrial materials with natural ones to explore themes of duality, mimicry, embodiment, temporality, preservation, and entropy. *Guts* (2019–), a two-dimensional piece, is built on a mutable and light-sensitive frame of unfixed photo paper, upon which the artist laid textiles, dried seaweed, and other foodstuffs common to her upbringing and found in Korean grocery stores and North American Chinatowns; the whole thing was then exposed to daylight in her studio. Once discarded, the objects and organisms remained pictured as silhouettes with finely contoured and muted traces of colour, creating abstract references to the inner workings of the human body.

Likewise, *Knot* (2019)—three large pieces of unfixed photo paper treated with darkroom chemicals and then peeled from their backing—have been tied loosely into an entangled bow. The implied fixedness of a knot is undermined by the ever changing surface of the material, suggesting a tenuous permanence and lack of distinction between opposing states: a kind of Möbius strip. The body is summoned once again, as the knot form evokes a common turn of phrase used to describe anxiety—"My stomach is tied in knots"—linking back to *Guts* in a roundabout way.

In a subtle gesture of domesticity, stainless-steel bowls, typically used for preparing foods like kimchi, have been filled with silicone. The semi-opaque gel has pooled and hardened to hold in place an array of edible and inedible materials. With their pastel tones and shimmering spirals, the bowls each read as part Petri dish and part kitchen project. These paused experiments suggest a generative process of creation shifting ceaselessly between decay and growth. The installation work, titled *Mother* (2019), intersperses the silicone-filled bowls with soft foil sun hats, evoking a mother figure absorbed in ritualized domestic work, yet simmering with generative potential as a creator of life.

The human-scale installation *Bloom* (2019) offers an insidious take on some of the consistent themes in Kang's work (in this case: the body, entropy, mimicry, transformation). It is composed of two parts: black palm-sized polymer-clay sculptures shaped like worms and ensconced in mesh fruit bags, and gleaming silver paint cans filled with *Cordyceps*, a fungus often used as an immune-boosting adaptogen and marketed as an accessory to enlightened self-care, and which also happens to be parasitic to larval insects.

If we are to interpret Kang's play with sensuality as a cheeky by-product of her subject matter, then we can see Chris Curreri's exacting lens as providing us with an uncompromising and analytical look at thresholds and entry points that punctuate the human body. His photography- and sculpture-based practice reveals the surrealist slippages in perception between that which is human and that which is not, between the abject and the dignified. His series of black-and-white photographs entitled *Kiss Portfolio* (2016) depicts two men kissing, closely cropped to reveal only their mouths and cheeks (and occasionally their fingers). Like the well-known Rubin vase optical illusion—where the viewer sees either a vase or the silhouettes of two opposing faces in profile, but never both at the same time—*Kiss Portfolio* offers an image of an emphatic kiss in one glance, and a form suggestive of sexual organs in the next. Like much of Curreri's photographic work, these pieces are small and intimate, inviting the viewer into a private moment and confusing them the instant they get too close.

Seem (2016) uses a similarly disorienting strategy, but instead depicts the left and the right eye of two different people, both of whom are upside down. The two subjects form a single monstrous face, appearing at once melded together and poised to separate without notice. In the space of the exhibition, the faceless sculpture *Medusa* (2013) stands nearby, casting doubt as to whether the two people will be melded together forever or whether, instead, her mythical powers of turning onlookers to stone might be neutered in the absence of her face, allowing the individuals the chance to separate themselves. Photography is known to capture and fix in place, but Curreri crafts images that reveal the limits of this assumption, suggesting a constant renewal and reconfiguring of ideas, mores, and sensibilities. *Untitled (Clay Portfolio)* (2013) consists of solarized black-and-white photographs of clay scraps being reprocessed into reusable blocks to create a dramatic metaphor for metamorphosis and infinite transformation.

Handle (2009), a series of colour photographs of a hand slipping inside the rim of an assortment of vintage red-glass vases, uses an innocuous gesture (perhaps the subject is preparing to clean the vase, or simply wants a better look at it) and repeated sleight of hand to "queer" a familiar object. In this gesture, Curreri reflects the power of the repressed gaze to disclose the social conditioning that underlies everyday encounters.

The act of looking is troubled again by *Lifecast* (2017), a heartbreaking photograph of the bust of a young boy with a tumour emerging from his neck, his head cradled by the gloved hands of an art handler. The image reminds us of biases toward standards of beauty and the wish to decouple the boy from the blight that threatens to kill him. Yet the art handler,

whose caring hands cradle both the head and the tumour at once, serves to attend to both polarities—beauty and blight—as present in one and the same vulnerable body.

Though neither artist's practice explicitly focuses on identity politics, both artists belong to social groups that struggle against definition by heteronormative and white-supremacist gazes. In Curreri's *Kiss Portfolio*, for instance, a state of queerness resides not only in the fact it depicts two men kissing but also in the experience of being uncertain about what, precisely, we are looking at. Do these images depict kissing mouths, or genitals of ambiguous gender? It is this uncertainty that serves to destabilize socially prescribed claims about the order of things. Likewise, Kang's *Mother* offers the viewer a visceral and generous parsing of the mother figure as one that expands beyond biological determinism to encompass the many mothers that make a body—including both human and familial mothers, as well as nonfamilial and nonhuman forms and social forces such as migration. The work simultaneously troubles the notion of a clear, fixed biology by incorporating materials and forms that are not human or easily defined.

While elucidating the simultaneous fragility and strength of the human body and the various ways it can be represented, Curreri's and Kang's work implies a network of connectivity and interchangeability between all things: orifices are swapped out for one another, guts reveal themselves outside the body, lotus root and seaweed stand in for flesh and bone. Their practices suggest that there's an unfixedness at play under the surface of hegemonic systems, as well as within characteristics we think of as innately human, beautiful, healthy, and enriching.



Kiss Portfolio, Chris Curreri, 2016
12.7 × 10.2 cm, gelatin silver print, Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery



Lifecast,
Chris Curreri, 2017
35.6 × 38.1 cm,
gelatin silver print,
Courtesy of
the Artist and
Daniel Faria Gallery

Chris Curreri's Becoming

SKY GOODDEN

"But I'm *not* a serpent, I tell you!" said Alice. "I'm a—I'm a—"
"Well! *What* are you?" said the Pigeon. "I can see you're trying to invent something!"
"I—I'm a little girl," said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the
number of changes she had gone through that day.

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and through the Looking Glass*, 1865

We think of photography as something that happens in a flash, but it does indeed *become*. This is especially true of film, where the darkroom chambers the image; beneath its chemical bath, free from all confirming or condemning light, the image takes time to swirl into being, and any number of accidents and decisions can affect its final visage. This is true, too, of sculpture, which is wet before it's dry and invites mottling, collapse, and the endless reforming of its boundaries. Its body is baked into something firm by an oven—that, or neglect. Both photography and pottery come into being through any number of decisions, and luck. And in the moment when the clay hasn't set, or where the image is still churning into focus, we see meaning-making at its most present and alive.

Over the course of his practice, I have watched Chris Curreri wrestle with that mutable space between raw medium and fixed form, and play with the unfixing of identity or, conversely, the identity we compulsively map onto unfixed form. Whether fingering the dyads inherent to BDSM and fetishism culture, peering into caves, canvassing orifices, or framing formal wounds, I see Curreri increasingly moving in on the "fixing" mechanism and pulling it closer to the "breathing"

mechanism—the inhale and exhaust of saying something about oneself, saying something true.

While Curreri possesses a meaningfully iterative approach to his practice, working across installation, sculpture, photography, it is breathlessly *of a piece*. Understanding one body of his work means appreciating another that came years before it, and apprehending the risk in the one that followed. For our narrative purposes, we will alight on *Corpus* (2015) as a starting place. *Corpus* is a two-work series that Curreri composed while on a tour of the conservation lab at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto, where he photographed Gian Lorenzo Bernini's *Corpus* (1655) and Jacobus Agnesius's *Saint Sebastian* (1638) in repose on their conservators' benches. The saint's arms are flung asunder, the musculature of his wooden back made vulnerable as it's scanned for treatment. Meanwhile, Bernini's sculpture's head is turned against the pillow, his eyes closed, his shoulder hovering above his sleeping face. His legs are swaddled in packing blankets and ribbons of strap. Laid down like this, these idols turn human, their bodies no longer representing ideals. They are made accessible, defenceless, and returned to *works in progress*, their becoming reversed and incomplete.

Two years later, *Lifecast* (2017) whirled into being through a similar chance encounter. Here, a plaster cast of a young boy with a large neck tumour is cradled by two white-gloved hands. The tender grasp on this boy—eyes closed, head bent, as though keening into a supporting palm—can be identified as that of a caretaker (a curator at the Warren Anatomical Museum at Harvard University, as it turns out, though my first impression was that of a sculptor—or a medical professional). This image, not unlike *Kiss Portfolio* (2016), carries some agitation, even provocation, of the abject. We are, simply, unsure of what we're looking at—though we know it's a body not unlike ours. So fear and love exist in us, looking out, and we stutter to catch up. But what's so extraordinary about this photograph, and what sets it apart from the demonstrative exertions of the kissing series, for instance, is its imaging of the unconscious. The way the body exerts itself against us, sometimes; the way, with eyes closed, the tumour becomes a swell of feeling. The tender touch of a curator, his attention to the internalized and pained figure (a boy of ten or twelve, from the 1850s)—his nearness and distance from his subject.[1] This grasp radiates through *Kiss Portfolio*, as well as Curreri's collapsed sculptures, and changes everything we see.

The charge of this piece is rooted in its use of time. In *Lifecast* we comprehend a single gesture that ripples backward across generations—the hand reaching



Untitled (Clay Portfolio), Chris Curreri, 2013
14.6 × 19.7 cm, gelatin silver print, Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery

out, channelling the care that the curator mines while also mimicking that of a doctor before him. However, we also understand that Curreri saw this happen, acknowledged the moment and its fractal meanings, and acted upon that "decisive moment" we hear so much about in photography, Henri Cartier-Bresson's formative articulation of the photographer's power. We see Curreri see the hand reach out, and can conjure his decision to restage that moment more precisely, and to ring its multiple gestures across time like age through a tree. In this—a Matryoshka stacking of both casual and careful attention, these moments of absorption framed inside one another across centuries—in this, the inner workings of an artist become visible, and the process work (or, again, the work's progress) shudders through Curreri's practice with the lucidity and vulnerability of a confessor.

But of course no work stands by itself, and the reverberations one feels from *Lifecast* are thrumming across Curreri's entire practice. Often pivoting between sculpture and photography in a given exhibition, he indemnifies his mediums against the losses they could suffer alone, insisting on bolstering their forms and braiding their commentary. Curreri slips the cast of a traditional subject and scuppers the conventional frame of a finished work, courting unfixedness as both metaphor and material strategy.

In *Kiss Portfolio*, Curreri fans out a portfolio of men kissing, their fingertips jammed between their lips like giblets, tongues forming labia, facial hair competing across chins and cheeks, a frothing font of movement.[2] Akin to what Eadweard Muybridge did for the running horse, slowing its movement through photography to analyze its form, Curreri shutters his lens on a fluid, intimate exchange and arrives at something formally astonishing. Two shapes collide to become one and take on the dimensions of abstracted, sensuous matter, stuttering and slipping across the series' eight variations. Fittingly, *Kiss Portfolio* is often accompanied by *Sixes and Sevens* (2017), a series of collapsed clay sculptures appearing still wet, slick with their own material coming.

Curreri's genre-bending solo show at Toronto's Gardiner Museum, *So Be It* (2015), twinned the "curving, bundled abstraction of musculature" of his sculptural installation, as critic David Balzer described it,[3] with a tender suite of photos picturing the clay remnants left over from a class he took as a student. It puts me in mind of a diary entry written by the sculptor Louise Bourgeois:

I would like
to be like water or rather like
milk—completely pourable
am right now more like
stone but like sand or
like a sauce full of
lumps—what does one do with the
lumps?[4]

I have traced Curreri's work backward and forward, which has afforded me one of the most invested relationships I've formed with a living artist, and revealed the very process I've been referring to—that of an artist enthralled with, and perhaps also fearful of, his own evolution. In his recent turns, I see Curreri increasingly grappling with his identities as both an artist and a queer man, and torquing the latent dualisms of abjection and exposure that surface for him in both roles. In one of his more recent bodies of work, *The Ventriloquist* (2019), he gives image to the discomfort and striving of self-exhibition, self-promotion; the potential rewards of laying oneself open; and the divulging that is required of him, professionally and personally, as each demands some performative volunteering and the taking of a stage.

Curreri articulates both exposure and enrapture, and in articulating these experiences so potently, and so poignantly, one briefly wears the sensation of being in his own head, looking out—and that of being in his own body, inviting in. Curreri's ability to pivot between these two states, interior and exterior, requires a nimbleness and self-investigation that is extraordinary, if only for the determination that must be required to maintain his hand on the tiller at the boundaries he violates.

Artists are not fixed; they become, too. And the place they arrive to is less a place at all than a state of mind. So, confidence can waver, the hold can slip. And the outward-facing aspect of the role—the self-promotion being an artist requires, the deliverance of personal confession and revelation, all for abstract consumption—all this can feel like a choice you're making, over and over again. I imagine that you choose to be an artist on the days where presentation is required. And, on the days you get to make art, it chooses you.

With Curreri guiding us, however, we can visit with that "mad love" feeling that makes these binaries fall away, even briefly. His work embodies that slick desire to fall into another's face, their skin, to see out from where they see. And while we may never quite slip our quiet cast, our exclusive pain, there might arrive a gloved touch, even if across centuries, to meet us where we are.[5]

Notes

1 Sky Goodden, "The Abject Intimacies of Chris Curreri," *Momus*, June 8, 2017, https://momus.ca/the-abject-intimacies-of-chris-curreri.
2 Goodden, "Abject Intimacies."
3 David Balzer, "Chris Curreri: Metamorphoses," *Canadian Art*, January 21, 2014, https://canadianart.ca/features/chris-curreri.
4 Louise Bourgeois, *The Return of the Repressed*, ed. Philip Larratt-Smith (London: Violette Editions, 2012).
5 Goodden, "Abject Intimacies."


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Guts, Laurie Kang, 2019
overall: 294.64 × 304.8 cm,
each photogram: 50.8 × 60.96 cm,
photograms, magnets, silicone,
Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka

Laurie Kang: Story of the Gut

JACQUELYN ZONG-LI ROSS

There's something fascinating and clearly grotesque about the way the *Cordyceps* fungus attacks and kills an unsuspecting insect's larva, invades its body, and sprouts out of its head. The orange, string-cheese-like fungus could easily be the stuff of science fiction—were it not that such things are already found, and not infrequently, right here on Earth.

Laurie Kang's work is full of these instances: brief moments of revulsion followed by a shock of recognition. What appear at first glance to be enlarged forensic X-rays turn out to be photograms of criss-crossing strips of tape, splashed darkroom chemicals, and scraps of mesh found around the artist's studio. Large surgical vessels filled with black slugs and apparent alien bile turn out to be hand-twisted clay and pigmented silicone filling the kinds of bowls normally used for mixing kimchi. Systems of human vertebrae are replicated in steel at architectural scale, and mundane foodstuffs—cabbage, lotus root, peach pits, and pears—are painstakingly sandcast in aluminum, bestowing on their edible and normally expiring forms the supernatural gift of immortality. In this way, evidence of the body and its aliveness are received, metabolized, and transformed, before being offered back to us with the naked vulnerability of portraiture. What do we look like to others, and to ourselves? And what can we learn about the body and its relationship to other bodies, in states of pleasure, repulsion, suspension, extension?

Movement #1.
From Gut to Excreta

The human intestine contains tens of trillions of microbes and over a thousand different species of bacteria.[1] Our guts are responsible for digestion: for breaking down the things we eat into valuable vitamins and nutrients our bodies can absorb. Apparently this is quite the task, considering that the average person's gut flora alone can weigh as much as two kilograms[2]—enough to make the average person pause at the thought.

Spurred by a health-obsessed public's fixation on the "good bacteria" at work in the mysterious vacuums of our bodies, it seems there's not a newspaper or blog in town that isn't touting, at every moment, some promising new clinical study linking fermented yak's milk to a stronger immune system, sauerkraut to a faster metabolism, or kombucha to better mental health. And yet it could be argued that rather than relieve us of our bodily anxieties, such factoids have only increased our desperation for miracles. That the rise of this latest wave of clickbait happens to align rather neatly with the last twenty years' rapid developments in technology serves as a gentle reminder that, in the face of our ever widening access to the (virtual) good life, the enigmatic facts of our physical bodies remain to be reckoned with. When we rush order probiotic tablets from the internet into our waiting mouths, for instance, we do so because we want desperately to know and control what's inside—and because we still believe in a degree of magic.

In *Guts* (2019–), Kang's ongoing series of photograms, the silhouettes of kitchen sieves, orange peels, strips of fabric, and other household debris swim across watery purple fields. The pictures have an eerie, ghostlike quality, like jellyfish in an aquarium display lit up by UV light. Produced by laying three-dimensional objects atop photosensitive paper and exposing the whole assemblage to light, the resulting images are a chemical index of the edges of things and the accumulated angles of the sun. Records of an hour, or a day, of time spent in the studio labouring in a lazy, but wholly productive, way.

Metabolism is invisible, after all, and, like the inner workings of the gut, altogether miraculous. Kang's work is all about this kind of slow processing: be it visible or invisible, sociological or microbial. Open-ended, external processes involving light, gravity, chemicals, and decomposition are embedded in the very making of the work. This methodology is apparent in sculptural works like *Knot* (2019), in which photographic films, stripped violently of their backings and tied into messy, oversized bows, are left to absorb light and transform in colour on the gallery floor. The artist's role in these instances is simply to put the right materials—the right



Guts (detail), Laurie Kang, 2019
overall: 294.64 × 304.8 cm, each photogram: 50.8 × 60.96 cm, photograms, magnets, silicone, Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka

ingredients—together, leaving them to form or deform at their own pace, and according to their own material logic.

Kang's ingredients are not neutral, of course. Heavy-industrial materials like steel and airline cable are placed alongside the delicate peels of mandarin oranges eaten while working at the studio, and the scattered replicas of anchovies, lotus root, shiso, and cabbage leaves pay poetic homage to those humble staples of the Asian pantry that are more or less unremarkable elsewhere but largely exoticized in the Western market. These edible ingredients, when cast in aluminum, form a potent and multipliable unit: a singular entity made endlessly reproducible, scalable, viral, and adaptive. What our body cannot use of them, it disposes of.

Movement #2.
From Excreta to Outer Space

If the images depicted in *Guts* stand in for a chemical digestion in progress, the installation *Mother* (2019) reveals what can be rejected by our bodies, what refuses to break down. Oversized stainless-steel bowls are placed en masse around the gallery floor with the militancy of groundhog holes, each one revealing something vile and unidentifiable in its surgical hollow. Organ-like forms constituted from polymer clay, aluminum mesh, nylon, and sandbags bask in chemical pools of pastel-pigmented silicone. Anthropomorphic casts of ginseng and dried fish bladder wallow in green mung-bean powder. While familiar, the sheer quantity and oversized dimensions of the bowls, not to mention the relative mystery of their contents, seem to motion toward something other-than-human.

Add to this the artist's cool, minimalist aesthetic and affinity for industrial materials, reflective surfaces, gravity-defying magnets, and imperishable dried foods and it's no surprise that Kang's installations tend to solicit science-fiction readings from audiences. More than that, though, her work seems to illustrate something relevant to the current post-internet moment, being not so much "about" the internet as a thoughtful rumination on the various (analogue) impacts that digital culture has had on the way we communicate, move around in the world, and experience living in our own bodies. The sunbathed shadows in *Guts* are in one way analogous to screenshots, just as each gleaming, metallic bowl in *Mother* can be perceived as a kind of analogue pixel, the smallest unit of a monitor. The reflective, mirrorlike materials that abound in Kang's work extend the sensation—mirrors being, in a sense, the very opposite of a digital screen. In a moment of increasing polarization between the enthusiastic tech bros of the world and, for lack of a better term, the techno-fatigued, Kang's work cleverly references the digital while coyly refusing it.





Mother (installation view and detail), Laurie Kang, 2019

dimensions variable, stainless-steel mixing bowls, pigmented silicone, rubber, polymer clay, power mesh, paint can, *Cordyceps* fungus, steel machinery, peach pit, lotus seed, pewter, cast-aluminum ginseng, cast-aluminum cabbage, cast-aluminum peach pit, cast-aluminum dried lotus root, cast-aluminum Asian pears, cast-aluminum clay forms, aluminum mesh, sand bag, plastic wrap, copper chainmaille (made by Hanna Hur), reflective foil, plastic bags, copper garden mesh, mung beans, water, dried fish bladder, dried magnolia flowers, dried hibiscus, ground mung and adzuki beans, bronze, hats, Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka

What she gives us instead is far closer to a meeting between the dreamy, lo-fi aesthetics of *2001: A Space Odyssey* and a savvy millennial reprise of Donna Haraway's influential feminist text "A Manifesto for Cyborgs."[3] Kang's work is all about hybrids, after all: contrasting impersonal materials of an industrial scale with tiny, handmade touches and other human imperfections. "The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity," Haraway writes. "It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. . . . Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other. The relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination, are at issue in the cyborg world."[4] Imagine the delight on the future archaeologist's face upon discovering one of Kang's impeccably preserved bowls in the dusty side of a crater: a perfect time capsule of our species having ever lived, eaten, defecated, and even made objects with no discernable use-value ("art")! That so many of her sculptures present as fragments only speaks to the artist's rightful ambivalence about the entire project of representation, given the complexity of human identities and the modern insistence that human beings become ever more machine.

Still, the radical, futuristic vision of the hybrid remains. For Haraway, this future is embodied in the strong, female "cyborg monsters" of the feminist science-fiction genre, whom she sees as redefining the very boundaries of the binaries of man/woman, organic/inorganic, animal/machine.[5] One such oft-cited example is the character of Anyanwu in Octavia Butler's novel *Wild Seed*, a woman with supernatural, shape-shifting abilities who is seen transgressing the entire system of patriarchy and domination her oppressors have placed on her.[6] In conversation, Kang tells me she's always liked the way these kinds of paranormal abilities are framed in the science-fiction world as "gifts," allowing each trait to be seen not as an obstacle or disability but as a unique and beautiful advantage. I also like to think that such extensions need not always be so extreme as shape-shifting in order to alter one's experience and understanding of the world. That these extensions could also be entirely small, like how the action of placing a tiny speaker in a metal bowl to amplify its sounds bears strange testimony to the curiosity of human invention and extension. A bone in my mother's forearm was long ago replaced with a surgical-steel rod, and while this might seem terrible at first, I take comfort in the knowledge that, should she ever lose her way, all she would need is a couple of magnets to find her way back.

Movement #3.
From Outer Space into the Bodies of Others

A large part of our identities—of our hybrid compositions, of our wholes and parts—is little more than the crude by-product of survival. The movement of people, by way of immigration, emigration, refugeeism, and otherwise, is a case in point. We do not always have the privilege of choosing where to lay down our roots, which culture to burrow our heads into, or how we will be treated or perceived by others. All we have, at the best and worst of times, are our "gifts" and a human flair for adaptation.

In *Bloom* (2019), a hundred or more twisted black clay forms are pressed into bright-yellow mesh fruit bags and littered, wormlike, around the gallery floor. The viewer steps timidly around these works as if navigating the strewn garbage a raccoon has violently pulled out from a garbage can—a familiar, if somewhat uncomfortable, scene. Among the fruit bags, a dozen or so shiny metal paint cans are arranged, each filled with what appear at first to be the delicate orange stamens of lilies or little mounds of fragrant orange potpourri, but are later revealed to be dried *Cordyceps* fungus. Together these elements would have the psychological effect of a violent infestation, but for the delicate, handheld scale of the individual sculptures and the luminous light emanating from the mirrored interior of each paint can. Like so much of Kang's work, *Bloom* extends a magnetic invitation to the curious visitor to look closer, to look inside.

Kang's father worked as a worm picker when he first arrived in Canada, scouring dark golf courses from dusk to dawn for the slippery bait prized by the fishing industry. The paint cans in Kang's installation recall the ones her father carried with him on that first job: one can full of sawdust for grip, and another one for carrying the worms he found. The worm industry was booming in Ontario at the time, and a cursory search of the Toronto-area classifieds indicates that this may still be the case. One current job posting advertises an hourly wage of $12.25 and the expectation that workers pick between eight hundred and one thousand worms per hour for forty hours per week. This is dirty, back-breaking work, the kind largely reserved for new immigrants and other marginalized members of our communities for whom there are few other options.

The symbol of the worm recurs throughout Kang's work, not only as a powerful reminder of this personal history but also as a catalyst for further thinking about states of otherness, transience, and invisibility. The worm, so popularly feared and reviled, emerges here as a belovedly abject supporting actor, an invertebrate lifesaver, a humble icon of ecological sustenance and interdependence. Kang's comparable interest in the figure of the

parasite (seen as both a harmful, alien invader *and* a model assimilator, depending on one's point of view) stems from a similar attention. Hers is a parasitic and rhizomatic practice that draws on all the parts of her identity, whether that be as an artist, a Korean Canadian woman, or a daughter; it borrows and burrows, it multiplies exponentially, it builds a robust network underground. As the postcolonial theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha has noted of the fragmented experience of living in and between cultures, geographies, and other sociopolitical realities, "The predicament of crossing boundaries cannot be merely rejected or accepted. . . . If it is problematic to be a stranger, it is even more so to stop being one."[7] So what, then, are we to do with this strangeness?

Contrary to popular belief, one cannot, in fact, chop any old worm in half and have it grow into two worms, though it is true that earthworms can sometimes grow back their tails, and that there is something called a planarian flatworm that can in fact regenerate its body from 1/300th of its former self.[8] Most of us are stuck with our bodies: stuck with a gut susceptible to tapeworms, and stuck here on this planet, even while we're free to imagine otherwise. The *Cordyceps* fungus is stuck with its body too, just as it is bound to its vampiric survival tactics. I would not dream of ever endorsing such a method of survival. But I do think that we might as well get over the grossness or perceived impossibility of it—and begin to recognize such things as a part of ourselves.

Notes

1 "Gut Microbiota Info: What Is Gut Bacteria?," Gut Microbiota for Health, n.d., https://www.gutmicrobiotaforhealth.com/en/about-gut-microbiota-info.
2 "What Is Gut Bacteria?," Gut Microbiota for Health.
3 Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," *Socialist Review*, no. 80 (1985): 9.
4 Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," 9.
5 Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," 37.
6 Octavia E. Butler, *Wild Seed* (New York: Warner Books, 1980).
7 Trinh T. Minh-ha, "Other than Myself, My Other Self," in *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 34.
8 Chelsea Toledo, "Animals Offer Clues to Regeneration," Live Science, February 15, 2013, https://www.livescience.com/27176-animals-clues-regeneration-nigms.html.





Bloom (detail and installation view), Laurie Kang, 2019
dimensions variable, mesh fruit bags, polymer clay, paint cans, reflective sheeting, *Cordyceps* fungus, Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka







Bloom (detail), Laurie Kang, 2019
dimensions variable, mesh fruit bags, polymer clay, paint cans, reflective sheeting, *Cordyceps* fungus, Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka

Kiss Portfolio,
Chris Curreri, 2016

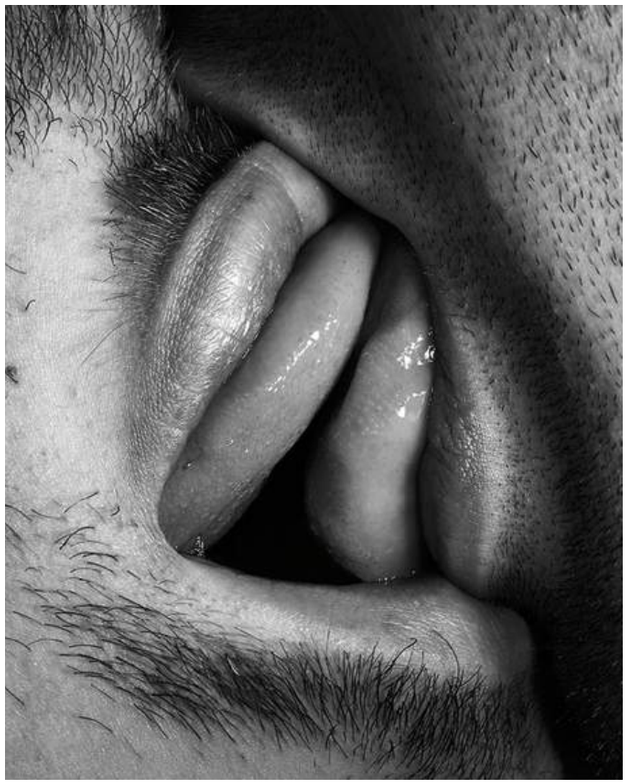
12.7 × 10.2 cm,
gelatin silver print,
Courtesy of the
Artist and Daniel
Faria Gallery







Kiss Portfolio,
Chris Curreri, 2016
12.7 × 10.2 cm each,
gelatin silver prints,
Courtesy of the
Artist and Daniel
Faria Gallery



Kiss Portfolio,
Chris Curreri, 2016
12.7 × 10.2 cm each,
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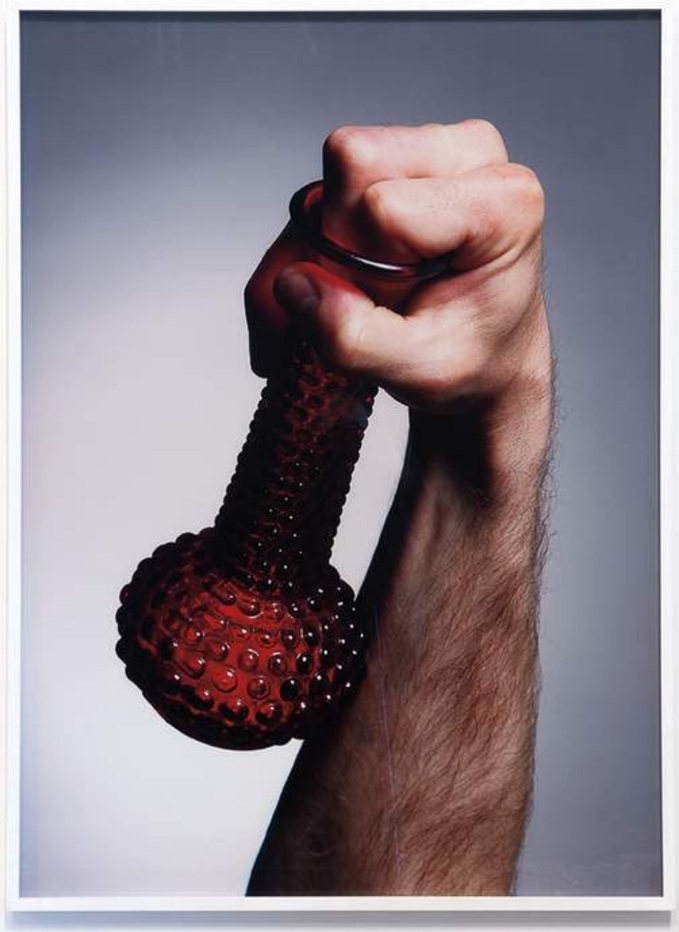
Unfixed, installation view of exhibition





Knot (installation view and detail), Laurie Kang,2019
5' × 1.5' × 2' each, unfixed, unprocessed photographic paper and darkroom chemicals (continually sensitive), Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka

Handle (at back), Chris Curreri, 2009
142.2 × 104.1 cm, chromogenic print, Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery



Handle, Chris Curreri, 2009

142.2 × 104.1 cm each, chromogenic prints, Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery







Guts (detail),
Laurie Kang, 2019

overall: 294.64 × 304.8 cm,
each photogram: 50.8 × 60.96
cm, photograms, magnets,
silicone, Courtesy of the
Artist and Franz Kaka



Mother (installation view),
Laurie Kang, 2019

dimensions variable, stainless-steel mixing bowls,
pigmented silicone, rubber, polymer clay, power
mesh, paint can, *Cordyceps* fungus, steel machinery,
peach pit, lotus seed, pewter, cast-aluminum ginseng,
cast-aluminum cabbage, cast-aluminum peach pit, cast-
aluminum dried lotus root, cast-aluminum Asian pears,
cast-aluminum clay forms, aluminum mesh, sand bag,
plastic wrap, copper chainmaille (made by Hanna Hur),
reflective foil, plastic bags, copper garden mesh, mung
beans, water, dried fish bladder, dried magnolia flowers,
dried hibiscus, ground mung and adzuki beans, bronze,
hats, Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka



Mother (installation view),
Laurie Kang, 2019

dimensions variable, stainless-steel mixing bowls, pigmented silicone, rubber, polymer clay, power mesh, paint can, *Cordyceps* fungus, steel machinery, peach pit, lotus seed, pewter, cast-aluminum ginseng, cast-aluminum cabbage, cast-aluminum peach pit, cast-aluminum dried lotus root, cast-aluminum Asian pears, cast-aluminum clay forms, aluminum mesh, sand bag, plastic wrap, copper chainmaille (made by Hanna Hur), reflective foil, plastic bags, copper garden mesh, mung beans, water, dried fish bladder, dried magnolia flowers, dried hibiscus, ground mung and adzuki beans, bronze, hats, Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka





Mother (detail),
Laurie Kang, 2019
dimensions variable, stainless-steel mixing bowl, pigmented silicone, cast-aluminum Asian pear, Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka

Mother (detail),
Laurie Kang, 2019
dimensions variable, stainless-steel mixing bowls, pigmented silicone, cast aluminum peach pit, power mesh, rubber, polymer clay, cast pewter, Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka



Mother (details),
Laurie Kang, 2019
dimensions variable, stainless-steel mixing bowls, rubber, cast-aluminum ginseng, Courtesy of the Artist and Franz Kaka





Medusa, Chris Curreri, 2013

53.3 × 58.4 × 30.5 cm, cement, Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery



Medusa, Chris Curreri, 2013
53.3 × 58.4 × 30.5 cm, cement, Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery

Seem, Chris Curreri, 2016
30.5 × 30.5 cm, gelatin silver fibre-based print, Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery







Untitled (Clay Portfolio), Chris Curreri, 2013

14.6 × 19.7 cm each, gelatin silver prints, Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery



Untitled (Clay Portfolio) (installation view), Chris Curreri, 2013

14.6 × 19.7 cm each, gelatin silver prints, Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery





Untitled (Clay Portfolio), Chris Curreri, 2013

14.6 × 19.7 cm each, gelatin silver prints, Courtesy of the Artist and Daniel Faria Gallery



Untitled (Clay Portfolio), Chris Curreri, 2013
14.6 × 19.7 cm,
gelatin silver print,
Courtesy of the Artist
and Daniel Faria Gallery

LAURIE KANG is an artist living in Toronto. Her work has been exhibited at Interstate Projects and Topless, New York; the Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Cooper Cole, 8-11, the Loon, Gallery TPW, Franz Kaka, and Carl Louie, Toronto; Remai Modern, Saskatoon; Galerie Antoine Ertaskiran and L'inconnue, Montreal; Raster Gallery, Warsaw; Wrocław Contemporary Museum, Poland; and Camera Austria, Graz. She has been artist-in-residence at Rupert, Vilnius; Tag Team Studio, Bergen; Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Alberta; and Interstate Projects, Brooklyn. She holds an MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY.

CHRIS CURRERI is a Canadian artist who works with film, photography, and sculpture. His work is premised on the idea that things in the world are defined not by essential properties but rather by the actual relationships that we establish with them. Recent exhibitions include *The Way We Are 1.0*, Weserburg museum für moderne Kunst, Bremen, Germany; *Sleeping with a Vengeance, Dreaming of a Life*, Ílitost, Prague; 2017 Canadian Biennial, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Unruly Matter, Daniel Faria Gallery, Berlin and Toronto; La Biennale de Montréal 2016, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; *Compassionate Protocols*, Callicoon Fine Arts, New York; Central China International Ceramics Biennale, Henan Museum, Zhengzhou; and *So Be It*, Gardiner Museum, Toronto. His films have been screened at Image Forum Festival, Japan; Festival Internacional de Cine de Mar del Plata, Argentina; and the Toronto International Film Festival. He holds an MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY.

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: Chris Curreri, *Seem*, 2016, 30.5 x 30.5 cm, gelatin silver fibre-based print, Courtesy of the artist and Daniel Faria Gallery

BACK COVER IMAGE: Laurie Kang, *Bloom*, 2019, dimensions variable, mesh fruit bags, polymer clay, paint cans, reflective sheeting, *Cordyceps* fungus, Courtesy of the artist and Frank Kaka, photo by Michael Love

Curator, Editor, and Writer, Preuss, Meredith, 1988

Book design, MacDougall, Naomi, 1979

Copyeditor and Proofreader, Arndt, Jaclyn, 1987

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