

PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY



CINDY STELMACKOWICH | EYE WREATH | VICTORIAN HUMAN HAIR WREATH, METAL WIRE, GLASS
TAXIDERMY EYES | 29 X 26 X 9 CM | 2011

CINDY STELMACKOWICH

PATRICK MIKHAIL GALLERY



ANATOMY OF A DIAMOND JUBILEE: ELIZABETH | ULTRACHROMIUM PRINT | 36 X 27 INCHES | 2012

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CINDY STELMACKOWICH

EDUCATION AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2012-2014 "Situating Science" SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship, Contemporary Science Studies/History of Science and Technology
2011-2012 Helfand Fellow in the History and Visual Art of Medicine, New York Academy of Medicine, New York
2010 Ph.D., History and Theory of Art, Binghamton University, Binghamton, New York
1995 Master of Arts, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
1991 Bachelor of Studio Arts and B.A. Honours in Art History, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 Empire, NYC Armory Week, Pfeiffer Loft Project, New York, New York
2011 Cindy Stelmackowich: Dearly Departed, Bytown Museum, Ottawa, Canada
2010 In Mourning Of, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2009 The Disaster Series, Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, Halifax, Canada
2009 Anatomized, Bilton Centre for Contemporary Art, Red Deer, Canada
2008 Embalmination, Kristi Engle Gallery, Los Angeles, California
2007 Catastrophic Visions, ARC, Ottawa, Canada
2007 ANATOMIA, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2004-2005 Between Art and Medical Science, The Estevan Art Gallery and Museum, Estevan, Canada
2004 Medical Imprints, Ottawa Art Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2002 Dissected, Artspace, Peterborough, Canada
2000 Liminal States, Binghamton University Art Gallery, State University of New York, Binghamton, New York
1999 Amazons and Fabulations, The Shanghai, Ottawa, Canada

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2014 Bio, Art, and In-Between, RDA NY, Berlin, Germany
2013 Model Bodies, Dalhousie University Medical Faculty, Halifax, Canada
2013 Heart of the Moment, Ottawa Art Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2012 Juxtapcombo, NURTUREart Gallery, Brooklyn, New York
2012 Resurrection, Morbid Anatomy Library, Brooklyn, New York
2011 Prairie Snapshot: Prairie Scene, National Arts Centre, Ottawa, Canada
2011 Place and Circumstance, City Hall Art Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2011 Geo-Portrait of Sound, Daimon, Gatineau, Canada
2011 Catalyst: The Art Science Experiment, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada
2010 Science in Art, Canadian Museum of Science and Technology, Ottawa, Canada
2010 Triumph of the Therapeutic, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2010 Obsolete Concepts: The Books + Art Show, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, Canada
2009 IPS (In Plain Sight) Gallery, Montréal, Canada

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2009	Microcosm, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2009	The Collection's Cabinet, City Hall Art Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2009	Verticality, O'Connor Gallery, Toronto, Canada
2009	Anatomy: In Ruins and Remade, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2008	Verticality, Gallery 101, Ottawa, Canada
2008	Obsolete Concepts: The Books + Art Show, Toronto, Canada
2007	Science in Art, Galerie de l'UQAM and Department of Heritage, Virtual Museum Project
2007	The New: Part One, Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2006	Interactivity, Enriched Bread Artists, Ottawa, Canada
2007	Glass, Enriched Bread Artists, Ottawa, Canada
2002	Out From Under, Galerie d'art de l'Université de Moncton, Moncton, Canada
2002	Templates, 14th Biennial conference of the National Association of Women and the Law, Ottawa City Hall Art Gallery, Ottawa, Canada

SELECTED AWARDS

2014	Ontario Art Council Visual Arts Mid-Career Grant
2012	City of Ottawa "A" Grant for Visual Artists
2011	Bytown Museum, Artist Residency
2011	Ontario Arts Council Exhibition Assistance
2009	Mid-Career Artist's Award – Council for the Arts Ottawa
2007	Centre de production Daimon Photography and Digital Imaging Research and Creation Residency
2005-2006	Dissertation Year Fellowship, Binghamton University
2003	Canada Council "C" Grant for Visual Artists
1997	SAW Video Jumpstart Award

COLLECTIONS

Canadian Council Art Bank
City of Ottawa Fine Art Collection
Ottawa Art Gallery
York University, School of Arts & Letters, Culture and Expression
Private Collections

SELECTED ARTIST TALKS AND LECTURES

2013	Nova Scotia College of Art & Design (NSCAD), Halifax, Canada
2013	University of King's College, Halifax, Canada
2012	Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada
2012	New York Academy of Medicine, New York, New York
2012	Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
2011	Bytown Museum, Ottawa, Canada
2011	Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
2011	Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada
2010	McGill University's Osler Library for the History of Medicine, Montréal, Canada
2010	University of Guelph, Guelph, Canada

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2010	Patrick Mikhail Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2008	Kristi Engle Gallery, Los Angeles, California
2007	CAA, College Art Association Annual Conference, New York, New York
2007	School for Studies in Art and Culture, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
2006	International Victorian Studies Association, Purdue University, Indianapolis, Indiana
2006	UAAC, University Art Association of Canada Conference, NSCAD, Halifax, Canada
2005	Culture and Expression, School of Arts & Letters, York University, Toronto, Canada
2005	UAAC, University Art Association of Canada Conference, University of Victoria, Victoria, Canada
2004	Ottawa Art Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2004	Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, Montréal, Canada
2003	University of Ottawa Visual Arts Department, Ottawa, Canada
2003	University of Ottawa Women's Studies Department, Ottawa, Canada
2002	Artspace, Peterborough, Canada
2002	A Dinner Party for Jane Doe, SAW Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
2001	University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada
2000	Uncommon Senses: An International Conference on the Senses in Art and Culture, Concordia University, Montréal, Canada

EXHIBITION REVIEWS AND CATALOGUES

2011	Bond, Diane, "The Big Hairy Workshop at the Bytown Museum," <u>Apt. 613</u> , (Ottawa), Nov. 18, 2011.
2011	<u>Ottawa Magazine</u> , "The Bytown Museum hosts craft-creepy Hair Workshop," Nov. 14, 2011.
2011	Parker, Judith, "Mourning Evidence – Artist Residency: Mining the Bytown Museum," Bytown Museum, (Ottawa), 2011. exhibition catalogue
2011	Martins, Tony, "Whispers of of-so-delicate death," <u>Guerilla-Gallery</u> , Oct. 26, 2011.
2011	Simpson, Peter, "Good Mourning," <u>Ottawa Citizen</u> , Oct. 22, 2011, C1. front page and video blog.
2011	<u>Carleton University Magazine</u> , "Dark Art," (Ottawa), Fall, 2011. front cover and 6-page feature.
2010	<u>Academic Medicine</u> , Vol. 86(2) (February 2010) and Vol. 85(4) (April 2010), front covers and artist statement.
2010	Bawagan, Juanita. "Cindy Stelmackowich: In Mourning Of," <u>The Charlatan</u> , November 23, 2010.
2010	Smith, Allison, "Mourning an Enchanted Forest," <u>The Wig</u> , Nov. 16, 2010.
2010	Bond, Diane, "Revealing Bodies, Revealing Books," <u>Apt. 613</u> , (Ottawa), Nov. 12, 2010.
2008	Matthews, Kevin, "Embalmination," Kristi Engle Gallery, (Los Angeles), 2008. exhibition brochure
2008	<u>ISSUES in Science and Technology</u> , Vol. XXIV, No.3, (Spring 2008), front cover plus pgs. 6-23.
2008	Lam, Olivia and Melissa Bennett, "Obsolete Concepts: The Books + Art Show," A Space Gallery, (Toronto), 2008. exhibition brochure
2008	Goddard, Peter, "At the Galleries: Obsolete Concepts," <u>Toronto Star</u> , (Toronto), May 17, 2008.
2008	Mizota, Sharon, "Bodies as History's Landscape," <u>Los Angeles Times</u> , (Sept. 28, 2008).
2007	<u>Canadian Journal of Communication</u> , Vol. 32, Nos. 3 & 4, (2007), front cover.
2007	Gessell, Paul, "Stunning Body of Work," <u>Ottawa Citizen</u> , (Ottawa), October 18, 2007.

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- 2007 Gessell, Paul, "10 to Watch in 2007: Cindy Stelmackowich," Ottawa Citizen, (Ottawa), Jan. 6, 2007.
- 2007 Sibbald, Barbara, "Beyond Basic Anatomy," Canadian Medical Ass. Journal, 177 (11), Nov. 20, 2007.
- 2007 Guerilla, Issue 14, Vol. 4, (Winter 2007), front cover and artist statement.
- 2006 Gessell, Paul, "Unique bodies of work," Ottawa Citizen, (Ottawa), October 19, 2006.
- 2005 Bourgeois, Gail. "Medical Imprints: Cindy Stelmackowich," ESPACE, 70, Winter 2004-5, p. 35-37.
- 2004 Baert, Renee, "Medical Imprints," Ottawa Art Gallery, (Ottawa), 2004. exhibition brochure
- 2004 Eutenier, Anita, "Blinded by Science," Ottawa XPress, (Ottawa), August 26, 2004.
- 2004 Gessell, Paul, "Medical Imagery on Display," Ottawa Citizen, (Ottawa), June 24, 2004, p. F1.
- 2004 Tors, Vivian, "Multiple Diagnosis," Canadian Medical Association Journal, 171 (9), Oct. 26, 2004.
- 2003 Grande, John, "Out From Under: Cindy Stelmackowich and Susan Feindel," Arts Atlantic, 73, 2003.
- 2002 Fleury, C.J., Template #2: Bridging Visions, Ottawa City Hall Art Gallery, 2002. exhibition brochure
- 2002 Halkes, Petra, "Out From Under: Cindy Stelmackowich and Susan Feindel," Galerie d'art de l'Université de Moncton, Moncton, 2002. exhibition brochure
- 2002 Pittstop, Penelope, "Dissecting *Dissected*," The Arthur: Trent University's Newspaper, (Peterborough) Vol. 37, Issue 3, Sept. 23, 2002, p. 14.
- 2002 Langill, Caroline, "Dissected: A Body of Work by Cindy Stelmackowich," Artspace, (Peterborough), 2002. exhibition brochure
- 2000 La Centrale (Powerhouse Gallery), Textura (Montreal), 2000.
- 2000 Bourgeois, Gail, "Acts of Making and Embodied Margins: *amour-horreur*," n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal, Vol. 6, 2000, p. 53-59.
- 1999 Mavrikakis, Nicolas, "Le Corps Révolté," Voir, (Montreal), 6-12, May 1999, p. 52.
- 1999 MIX Magazine, Artist-Run Culture Listings, Vol.25, No.1, (Summer 1999), p. 11.
- 1999 Abma, Sandra, "Generations and Feminisms," CBC Radio (Ottawa), June 21, 1999.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2011 Research Consultant, Medical Sensations, Canadian Museum of Science and Technology, Ottawa
- 2003 Curator, Mindscapes, West Block, Parliament Hill, Ottawa, Canada
- 2001-2003 Board of Directors, Gallery 101, Ottawa, Canada (also in 1993 – 04)
- 2002 Curator, Fluid: Emerging Artists from Canada, Gallery 101, Ottawa, Canada
- 1999 Conference Organizer, Generations and Feminisms, SAW Gallery, Ottawa, Canada
- 1998 Curatorial Intern, Artists Space, New York, New York
- 1998 Visual Arts Consultant, The Canadian Consulate, New York, New York

TEACHING APPOINTMENTS

- 2003-Present Lecturer, Art History, School for Studies in Art and Culture, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
- 2003-2005 Part-time Professor, Visual Arts Department, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada

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1998-2001	Graduate Teaching Assistant and Sessional Lecturer, State University of New York, Binghamton, New York
1994-1998	Sessional Lecturer, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
1991-1993	Graduate Teaching Assistant, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada
1990-1991	Sessional Lecturer, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada

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Dark Art

Art and science meet in the work of artist-academic Cindy Stelmackowich. Contrasts abound as she churns up beauty from the abject. The resulting works show that attraction and repulsion can coexist. A look inside the atelier with journalist Paul Gessell and photographer Rémi Thériault.

Cindy's little shop of horrors is down a hall through a rabbit warren of artists' studios in an old Ottawa bakery. The building—now called Enriched Bread Artists—is something of a laboratory for creative minds. Among them is an anatomically obsessed artist, properly titled Dr. Cindy Stelmackowich, during her day job as a contract instructor at Carleton University.

Just past the entrance to Stelmackowich's studio there is, to the right, an assortment of human hair pieces called domes. Nearby is an old physician's examining table that has surely been party to more indelicate secrets than a church confessional. Another wall displays rows of antique black mourning lace that fashion-conscious Victorian ladies used to adorn their widow's weeds. Further into the room are photographic blows-ups of squirming little creatures known as cholera bacteria. The back wall reveals an image of a handsome young man, his eyes closed, his chest open, his organs tumbling into a ruby-red glass bowl below. Despite the gore, the man looks angelic, serene, even seductive. That's a Stelmackowich trademark: conjuring beauty from unexpected places. Turns out, the little shop of horrors is actually a beauty shop.

Among the studio's many surprises, none is greater than the dissection table covered with gleaming white ceramic tile in the middle

of the room. It's a replica that Stelmackowich, MA/95, had built to match some she saw in photographs from Germany's Nazi era. She wants to allude both directly and indirectly to that period and to "practices related to that history" in an art show someday. Why? Because that was a poignant period in medical science. "No matter how I use the table in my art, it will refer to science as having had negative resonance," she says.

Stelmackowich loves to bring new life to controversial or creepy old things, so we are simultaneously curiously attracted and repulsed. It forces questions.

Until the dissection table goes on public display, Stelmackowich is using it as a work surface. "I like the clinical look," she says. On this particular day, an elaborate Victorian-era hair wreath rests on the table. Human hair is twirled to form roses, lilies and other flowers. Stelmackowich added dozens of small lengths of wiggly wires, each topped with a button that looks like an eye. "I thought it would be interesting to have the wreaths look back at you," Stelmackowich says. Of course. Why have a hair wreath just sit there?



BEAUTY IN THE DETAILS Cindy Stelmackowich inside her studio at the Enriched Bread Artists' co-operative in Ottawa. The artist traffics in the macabre, finding beauty in bodily details and dated medical practices

"She really enjoys that push-pull," says Judith Parker, acting curator of Ottawa's Bytown Museum, where Stelmackowich did a residency earlier this year and where she has a solo show on now and continuing until January 8, 2012. The exhibit, called Dearly

Departed, looks at the visual and written language of 19th-century mourning.

The show is one of many commitments crowding Stelmackowich's calendar. She is teaching a Carleton course on feminism and gender issues in art while also doing research for the Canadian Museum of Science and Technology in Ottawa for a forthcoming exhibit on medicine and the five senses. Next spring, Stelmackowich will do a post-doctoral fellowship at the New York Academy of Medicine, an honour normally bestowed upon doctors and scientists, rather than artists. The fellowship will be followed by the 2012 publication of *Bodies of Knowledge: Nineteenth Century Anatomical Atlases, 1800-1860*, which incorporates much of her doctoral thesis from Binghamton State University of New York.

Stelmackowich's academic career and art practice have been a juxtaposition of science, medicine and art. She loves nothing more than to find an arresting anatomical drawing from an old atlas, photograph it, enlarge it and then Photoshop other objects into the picture. The final work is a startlingly life-sized digital print collage that challenges the viewer to look at the human body in new ways. The inside, with its trellises of veins and nerves, can be just as beautiful as a painting of a voluptuous woman in her bath.



Stelmackowich grew up in Melville, a small city in eastern Saskatchewan, the daughter of a teacher and a baker. It's one of life's fine coincidences that the daughter who spent years helping her dad bake bread is now following her creative impulses in an old bakery.

In school, Stelmackowich was equally enthralled by art and science, so she studied both for the first few years of her undergraduate degree at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. By third year, she had decided against spending her life in a laboratory and pursued a double major in fine arts and art history. Her electives included courses in cell anatomy and biochemistry, to keep up that side of her interests. In 1991, Stelmackowich came to Carleton to complete her MA. The doctorate from Binghamton came in 2010.

It was in the late 1990s that Stelmackowich started creating medically themed art in earnest. Laboratory beakers, test tubes and

other scientific equipment were turned into installations and sculptures. Most successful were the images harvested from old medical texts and then reworked the way a sculptor moulds clay.

The *Los Angeles Times* was definitely impressed with Stelmackowich's exhibition at the Kristi Engle Gallery in that city in 2008. The review described the work as "bizarre, haunting and beautiful." And, the reviewer added, sexually charged.



MOURNING GLORY Stelmackowich in her studio with a Nazi-era replica dissection table and a collection of hair domes, objects of mourning that were often made with the hair from an entire family. In exploring early mourning rituals,

"One stunning example is *The Wreck of the Underley off the Isle of Wight, England—1866* in which the bow of the careening ship slices into the body of a whale," wrote reviewer Sharon Mizota. "This tableau is embedded in the abdomen of a female torso whose flayed skin frames the scene like petals or skeins of spun candy. It's an image of penetration on at least three levels: the ship's collision with the whale, the dissection itself and the suggestive placement of the phallic ship inside a woman's body."

Stelmackowich was delighted with the Los Angeles rave. She was also delighted last spring when the National Arts Centre staged the multidisciplinary arts festival in Ottawa called *Prairie Scene*, which saw her work exhibited alongside that of one of her idols, Winnipeg's Diana Thorneycroft, whose art also aestheticizes the body in startling ways.

Evolving cultural attitudes toward the body, especially the bodies of women, infuse Stelmackowich's work in the studio and the classroom. In the first few lessons, of her fall course, Stelmackowich revisits feminist debates of the 1960s, an often-unknown era for 20-year-old students. She explains why women rebelled and how the rebellion was linked to liberation movements for gays and racial minorities. Then the class moves into the study of feminist artists such as Judy Chicago, the American creator of *The Dinner Party*, a much-debated installation honouring 39 women from history.

Another course she has taught is called *Envisioning the Body: Between Arts*

the artist found that hair has an ethereal presence in some ways. However, when it's off the head, it generates anxiety. "Hair can strike you in so many ways," Stelmackowich says.

and Science, on how art about the body intersects with science. Many science majors are attracted to the art history class. They suddenly become enthralled with the visual culture of biology or medicine.

Stelmackowich has lectured at Carleton since 2003. "She is incredibly friendly and accessible and approachable," says Brian Foss, an art historian and director for the School for Studies in Art and Culture. "She is able to visualize images with the kind of immediacy and sensuality that isn't distant, that students rightly find extremely engaging."

Foss sees Stelmackowich's work as evolving from the Renaissance, when artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo physically explored the inner workings of the body in order to give more life to their images of its exterior.

Stelmackowich enjoys leading student debate on the trend of exhibiting real corpses that have been plasticized and placed in poses borrowed from art history or the world of sports. An example is the physician and anatomist Gunther von Hagens' globe-trotting *Body Worlds*, public anatomical exhibitions of donated human bodies to educate the public about health and anatomy. Stelmackowich compares such shows to 16th-century public dissections by the likes of Belgian anatomist Andreas Vesalius. It was not until the late 18th century that cadaver dissection disappeared behind the closed door of the hospital, Stelmackowich explains, noting that in some parts of Europe, the exhibition of body parts remained an attraction at travelling fairs as late as the early 20th century

Exhibitions such as *Body Worlds* are considered exploitative and ghoulish in some quarters. So what about Stelmackowich's reworking of old anatomical drawings? Are they ghoulish? Andrew Morrow says no. Morrow, a former colleague at Enriched Bread Artists, paints sexually explicit, apocalyptic scenes that also conjure up beauty from unexpected places. The two artists have the same dealer. "I find the work quite academic and strongly motivated by a collector's impulse," says Morrow. "I actually find it quite pristine and cold."

Stelmackowich is more concerned with creating objects of beauty than of fright—she is more beautician than vampire. If viewers appreciate the aesthetics of her work, she is content, but she is delighted if people examine the issues raised by the layers of her work.

Pointing to the hair wreath on the dissection table, Stelmackowich declares: “I want to challenge myself and take this wreath somewhere else. It’s already strange. How can I make it surreal? How can I be fair to these aesthetics but, at the same time, place them somewhere where they can go up in all these conversations? To me, that’s the role of the artist. That’s also the role of the academic.”



FAMILY HAIR LOOM This work, called Eye Wreath, uses eyes made of hand-painted glass that are originals from the Victorian period. Taxidermists used them for ducks and birds. Stelmackowich sources period artifacts from flea markets to juxtapose them with objects from her own collection—such as a Victorian hair wreath made from the hair of an entire family—for an effect that is visually lush, yet surreal and ghoulish

Written by **Paul Gessell**

Photos by **Rémi Thériault**

This story was published in the **Fall 2011** issue. Bookmark the **permalink** or share the following short URL for this article via social media:
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I Went to University—and All



Tune In, Take a Trip



A Place to Roost



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One Response to *Dark Art*



Kevin Matthews says:

November 22, 2011 at 10:14 pm

thanks for this – a thorough,

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CINDY STELMACKOWICH | NAMING HYSTERIA | VINTAGE TEST TUBES AND LABORATORY GLASSWARE,
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