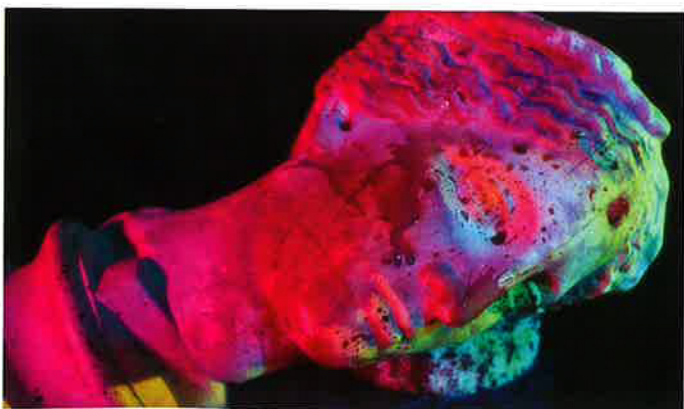


## Julie Weitz

YOUNG PROJECTS

Beyond a glass front door, metal chains dangled breezily over a carpet of pink eggshell foam, which sprang back buoyantly from each footstep, absorbing its sound. Velvety black walls led beyond a wall of mirrors into the soft, gently throbbing darkness of the gallery's main room. A deep, almost sepulchral pulse seeped in from adjoining rooms, resonating with spooky syncopation, accompanied here and there by the jingle of spectral bells, a phantom trumpet. Six projections and three works on flatscreens, angled in odd directions through the space's irregular rooms, were doubled in the mirrors' reflections. A narrow crevice off the foamy foyer led to a pillowy nook where a screen showed a brain lit with shifting colored lights and splashed with splooges of light and dark paint as it spun within a black void. Headphones buzzed with ghostly layered recordings of the artist's steady whisper, which passed from ear to ear, creating a euphoric discombobulation. The voice recited excerpts from philosopher Henri Bergson's writings on cortical substance and consciousness, body and being: "What is the precise meaning of the word *exist*?" Julie Weitz's installation *Touch Museum* attempted to touch, physically and metaphorically, upon the



relationship of sound to the body, to reflect upon the ethereal psyche caught in the sensations of corporeal flesh.

The installation drew upon the phenomenon of autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR), a somewhat controversial perceptual phenomenon characterized as a pleasurable tingling sensation in the head, scalp, back, or peripheral regions of the body in response to visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or cognitive stimuli. ASMR has birthed thousands of online videos showing fingers gently tapping, a hand softly brushing hair, a close-up of a mouth whispering, all made to inspire this chaste but powerful sensual pleasure. Regardless of the phenomenon's scientific standing (which is still under study), Weitz's invocation of these sensations in her darkling installation resulted in a tangible meditation on perception.

Entering an adjacent room, one found oneself enveloped in a total darkness that reduced all sensations to those generated by the spectral audiovisuals projected onto several staggered veils hung from the ceiling, which gave the projection the appearance of three-dimensionality. The room took on the erotic charge of a darkened cinema. Two chairs, plunked down in the empty expanse of dark carpet, situated the viewer below three videos projected overhead. (Two of these were reflected in mirrors flanking the projection, further disorienting the viewer.) Hands, mannequin and human, caress and smear vivid paints. In *Aftermath* (all works 2015), smoke billows and strung chains shiver across a dozen classical busts illuminated in changing hues as a woman's hand massages their stone faces with viscous paint. The mannequin hands bang against and dumbly rub busts of iconic Greek and Roman deities; yellow smoke plumes from a hole drilled in the center of a beatific, classical face. While the busts themselves hint at a Western sculptural tradition of an Apollonian order, Weitz presented them as objects touched by a disorderly Dionysian force. In *Net Search*, throughout which disembodied hands tear and scissor through neon fishnet and examine bits of stone shards lit by colored gels that give the objects a gloppy fluorescence. In *Ancient Hand*, on another screen, a hand encased in cracking mud moves like that of a statue come alive. Sculptures, paint, and video were here collapsed.

Tucked away in a back chamber of the shadowy gallery, *Self-Portrait Hair Caress* comprised two fake hands (almost disembodied but for the camouflaged black sticks that extended from their wrists) projected onto a screen from behind. The hands caress the artist's long corkscrew curls. The intimacy of the show's mazelike space and unearthly sounds allowed this simple gesture to take on a strange, almost illicit sensuality—a horror movie in which no one is murdered but physical suspense radiates throughout. This deprivation chamber triggered discernible sensations in at least one viewer, causing him to, at least momentarily, put aside the scrutiny of scientists and the general public alike and succumb to the palpations of wraithly hands running their fingers along the edges of consciousness.

—Andrew Berardini

Julie Weitz, *Aftermath*,  
2015, HD video, color,  
sound, 7 minutes  
40 seconds.