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# thirtyseven<sup>o</sup>

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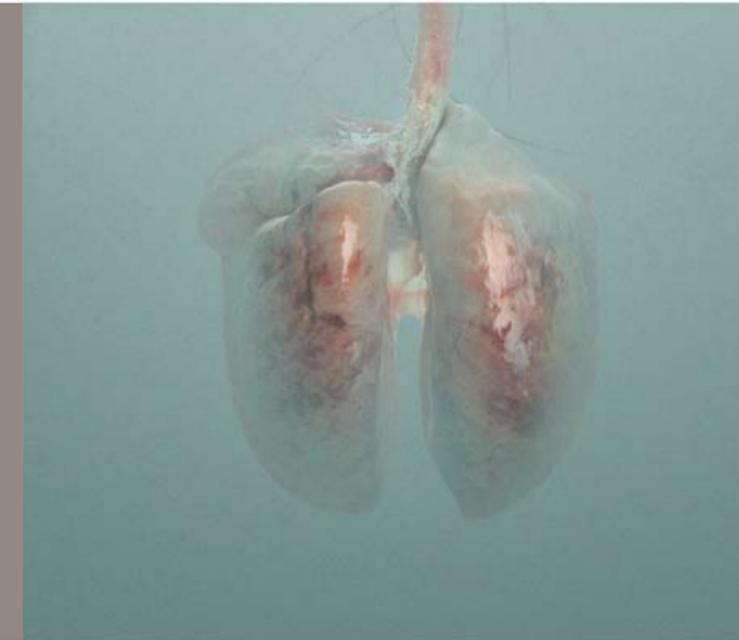


## PETA CLANCY

Further reading, see inclusion in Anne Marsh's forthcoming book on contemporary Australian photography.

## HELEN PYNOR

New works  
16.10. - 8.11.2008



# Visceral Voyeur

HELEN PYNOR

Ashley Crawford



OPPOSITE  
Helen Pynor, *Constipation* 2007  
from the series *red sea blue water*  
Type C prints on Fujitran,  
face-mounted on glass  
139 x 39cm

The organs seem to float in some viscous forensic fluid, held in stasis via prose inscribed in human hair. One imagines her studio as an alchemist's lair where the old world meets the new; traditional home remedies are stitched above hovering organs arranged in human scale hinting at a feminised Frankenstein.

Helen Pynor uses the term 'photographic sculptures' to give the physical component of the work an equal weighting to its imagery. While she began her career with photography, she moved on to sculpture, eventually melding the two forms. The haunting images are printed onto Fujitran film, resulting in a spectral translucency, and then face-mounted to glass, which again provides transparency and a rigid form for the images to hang onto. The resulting structures are then placed on the gallery floor, interacting with the viewer's space.

"As the content of the images is so visceral, for me it was important that people looking at the work could relate to it at a physical, visceral level," she says. "For this reason I wanted the works on the floor with viewers, rather than located on the wall in frames, which would give the work a more abstracted quality."

Pynor sourced the quotes in these works from a local history archive in the Stanton Library in North Sydney. "I did a public art commission for the library some years ago in which I researched the medical history of the area, including conventional Western medicine, home remedies (that would have been largely concocted and administered by women) and Indigenous medicine (a medical history that has been largely erased in non-Indigenous Australia). The quotes are all recipes for home remedies. The ingredients and methods they describe were common in their era for people of Anglo-Celtic origin, the recipes coming from Anglo-Celtic traditions."

Pynor believes that the recipes speak of an era we are rapidly in the process of forgetting, and hence they have a melancholic quality of loss. "And yet at the same time when they refer bluntly to 'back ache', 'head cold' or other ailments they speak to me very directly in the present moment, reminding me of the ubiquitous nature of our experience of living in bodies, and the unavoidable indignities and fragilities of our bodies."

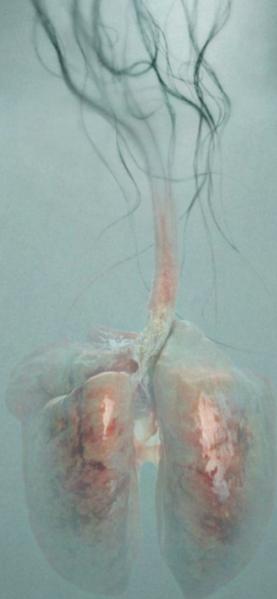
The balance between solidity and liquidity, or translucence and opacity, is a core aspect of Pynor's visual - and visceral -

*...the recipes speak of an era  
we are rapidly in the process of  
forgetting, and hence they have  
a melancholic quality of loss...*



Helen Pynor, *Ear Ache* 2007 (detail)  
from the series *red sea blue water*  
Type C prints on Fujitran, face-mounted  
on glass 139 x 39cm Courtesy the artist  
and Dianne Tanzer Gallery.

Head Cold  
Add a cast of the ...  
...  
Labels: ...



Poisonous Sores  
Put a ...  
...  
Labels: ...



Helen Pynor Installation 2007 from the series *red sea blue water*  
Photograph by Iris Fischer

LEFT  
Helen Pynor, *Head Cold* 2007  
from the series *red sea blue water*  
Type C prints on Fujitran,  
face-mounted on glass  
139 x 39cm Courtesy the artist  
and Dianne Tanzer Gallery.

RIGHT  
Helen Pynor, *Poisonous Sores* 2007  
from the series *red sea blue water*  
Type C prints on Fujitran,  
face-mounted on glass  
139 x 39cm Courtesy the artist  
and Dianne Tanzer Gallery.

vocabulary. In the past she has worked with the notion of the 'melting body'. "I love the idea of a floating world, hovering between solid and liquid, or opacity and translucency."

While Pynor herself seems far from a morbid or melancholy person, the work has a certain morbidity to it, a fascination, it seems, with mortality.

"I am interested in physical experience, in most of its forms, from sublime to poignant to pleasurable to ridiculous, and many of my works reflect this relationship to physical experience. I find physical experience such an important source of my knowledge and information about the world, my pleasure, the meaning I find in things, my relationship to others.

"Given this, I suppose it's natural that I would have a fascination with organic materials such as bodily tissues and hair. Although these materials come directly from life, they inevitably conjure up the spectre of death, especially when they are teased out and separated from the bodies they once were part of. I don't know where this morbid fascination comes from, except to say that I don't personally experience my contact with these materials as morbid. If they were rotting and decaying, for me that would be morbid. But while they are plump and fleshy, red and pumped with blood, they are somehow fertile, beautiful in a grotesque but fascinating kind of way, inspiring material for creative work, actually quite life affirming."

*"I love the idea of a floating world, hovering between solid and liquid, or opacity and translucency."*