

*Like the biblical  
red seas, each  
image suggests  
reachment and  
violent destiny*

**I own an early work by Helen Pynor** (like most artists she would probably prefer I didn't speak of it, but I will); it hangs in my hallway, the last image I see before sleep catches me.

It is a simple image; in the foreground a dead hand, its skin parted

to reveal a network of veins, behind, a blurred, floating, blue image of a sexual embrace photographed off a television

screen. Its violent calm has echoed through subsequent works, but like such reverberations, the further it travels the

softer the form's image, the more skin is shed. The early allusion to water has, in *red sea blue water*, become a vast, unconscious ocean.

The water is deeper now, the currents stronger. One has been dragged under, though still weightless,

like a drowned man floating just beneath the surface.

Each of the seven panes is a glass-bottomed boat revealing a teeming subterranean life in a frigid twilight. I stare into the reflective surfaces and my interior is revealed to me like an x-ray.

Diagrams of essential organs frozen in their true bodily positions are unanchored; bodiless, deadly jellyfish with an internal source of light threatening and adrift. I, too, am unanchored; my grounding dissolves into the shallow depths of each image. Above each organ floats text written in tangled hair strands that spells out a

cure or balm for a specific disease or illness connected to the disembodied organ that hangs below. Like the biblical red seas, each image suggests redemption and violent destiny.

The ancients prophesied by reading the organs of sacrificed animals, today the medical professions, both East and West, use detailed maps of our inner structures, borne from millennium of fascination with the human body, to divine futures.

She has stripped away egotistical constitutions to disclose our visceral fragility, our being in the world. However, these are not images of surety, but the uncontrollable tides of existence – birth, illness, death and evolution.

Here in *red sea blue water* we are examined meat, but also the flesh of mysteries. We are trapped in reflections that reveal

some of the unknown of the meat, only to be cast adrift in the infinite amniotic silence that is the final response to life.

jan guy

Helen Pynor **red sea blue water**

Dianne Tanzer Gallery, until 12 May 2007

