

Lyles & King

Synthetic Bodies

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Opening Reception: June 29, 6-8pm

Technology is always an extension of the human body, even when it seems to be very mechanical and non-human. ... At this critical junction in human history, one wonders - can the human body evolve to solve problems we have created? Can the human body evolve a process to digest plastics and artificial materials not only as part of a solution to the climate crisis, but also, to grow, thrive, and survive?
—David Cronenberg

Lyles & King is pleased to present *Synthetic Bodies*, a multi-generational exhibition examining contemporary artists' celebration, and resistance, to our increasingly digital and dematerialized 21st century self. With works spanning six decades, the artists in the exhibition examine and embrace the idea of skin and the body literally, representationally, and metaphorically. In some cases, artists fully engage in digital space and techniques while others celebrate the embodied substance of materials in all of its corporeal glory.

Artists have long considered the ways in which modernity has pushed the body beyond the limitations of its fleshy organic matter. Cronenberg's career-long fascination with the horror of the human body as it merges, intersects, and breeds with inorganic materials is only one strand in this genealogy. As early as 1964, Paul Thek began developing his visionary *Technological Reliquaries* series that disturbingly encased meat-like forms into minimalist Plexiglas boxes. Similarly, Lee Bontecou's enigmatic abstract industrial assemblages from the early 1960s merge space age sensibility with a fascination for the human body and its monstrosities.

Sixty years later and we are steeped in the age of the Cyborg. Our increasingly tenuous relationship between genetic modification and integration of organic and inorganic material presents both ethical and biological concerns that have no clear resolution in sight. Even the very idea of mortality is increasingly viewed as a challenge, not just a mere inevitability, as prosthetic body parts and designer drugs have the ability to maintain the body alive long past its natural expiration date. As we all attempt to navigate the implications behind the daily deluge of explosive advances in Artificial Intelligence will have consequences far beyond anything we can currently imagine, we are truly at the dawn of a new reality.

The very concept of what is natural and how we conceive of the self and existence seems increasingly quaint in the age of the Anthropocene. Our understanding of reality now exists across multiple spaces simultaneously with avatars and augmented and virtual realities extending shared space far beyond the confines of our planet and into the vast and seemingly limitless architecture of the digital. One can no longer consider strict distinctions between the "real" and the "virtual", the finite and the infinite. *Synthetic Bodies* invites the viewer to consider that perhaps soon enough these blurred boundaries will extend to concepts of "human" and "non-human".