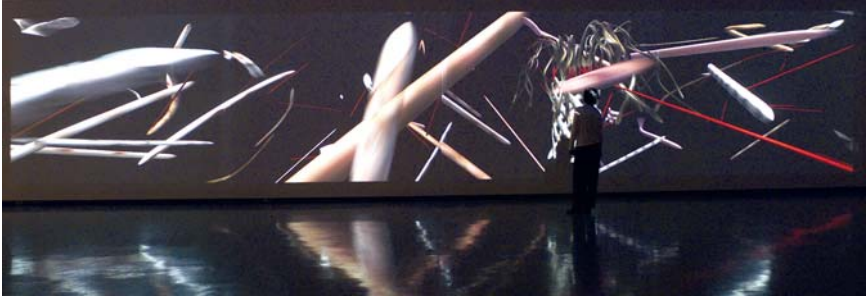


Reva Stone: Imaginal Expression

Surrey Art Gallery January 14 – April 2, 2006



Introduction

In the age of technology, how do we now imagine biological life?

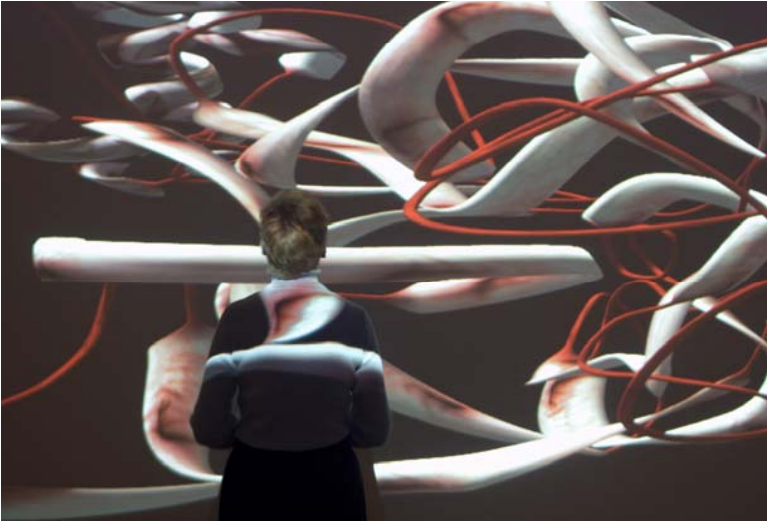
Imaginal Expression explores the possibilities of being post human. It merges the human body with technology, acting out a biological metamorphosis. *Imaginal Expression* is a viewer activated, computer-generated, real-time animated, 3D environment. Within this artwork, visitors will experience panoramic imagery of moving forms as though they were contained in an aquarium. These forms are simulations of protein molecules (cells that direct all biological processes). Their surfaces are wrapped with scanned imagery from the human body – flesh, hair, blood vessels, bruises and scars. These molecular components are moving in real time, as though alive – it is not a pre-recorded video repeating itself. Each visitor's experience of the artwork will be unique.

As the artwork senses people present in the Gallery, the molecular components may randomly begin to animate, move, tremble, form a molecule, mutate, or follow the movement of the visitor. When the visitor leaves, the molecule may also begin to degenerate.

Tools such as X-rays, CT and MRI scans create visual images of our body's interior down to its cellular construction. Hardware technology invades the body in the form of probes, artificial limbs and organs. Digital systems have also been developed to enable researchers to simulate and animate the behaviours of cells in different situations. Genetic mutation is also a product of technology that fuels both dreams and nightmares. Reva Stone's art practice critically investigates the tools of bioengineering, and their implications for our future.

Imaginal Expression is a compelling representation of living cells, a metaphor of our interconnection, biological life and technology. It also offers a metaphor for the inevitability of life and death, and the role that we, as individuals, play in directing the course of biotechnology.

Liane Davison
Curator of Exhibitions & Collections, Surrey Art Gallery



Artist's Statement

For more than 10 years I have been investigating the ways in which Western culture is engaged in the modeling, simulating, engineering and manipulating of biological life. Living matter is being revealed as increasingly mutable. I have responded to the technologization of living matter by works that seem to mutate, evolve, and respond with a life of their own. I situate my work at the increasingly blurred boundary between what is born and what is manufactured, what is animate and what is inanimate.

In *Imaginal Expression*, three-dimensional protein molecules were constructed and then animated. In genetic science, protein molecules exist as visual representations through software that converts biotic code into three-dimensional visual images. My intention was to implicate the body in a complex interplay between representations of embodiment and ideologies underlying visualization technology.

I am particularly interested in how the developments in visualization technologies have led to the codification of the human body. This codification enables the reduction of the body to a digital archive in which the body and its experience are conceptualized as data rather than physical presence. In order to reconnect these extreme abstractions to their original human physical sources, the constructed molecules were wrapped with scanned imagery that referenced the living body—flesh, hair, blood vessels, bruising and scarring.

When the visitor enters the gallery space, a large, constantly moving “soup” of molecular components is seen projected on the wall. Real time animation based on inverse kinematic physics causes this motion to constantly change with no repetition. As the visitor is sensed in the gallery space some of the components may begin to coalesce into a molecule that follows the movement of the visitor.

This response is initiated by a computer visioning system developed as part of the software. In addition to responding to the movement of a viewer, a molecule also has the capability to exchange its fleshy covering with another molecule when the motion of more than one viewer brings them into proximity with each other. When a visitor leaves the space, that molecule will degenerate over time. As a result, the visitor participates in a continuous cycle of generation, mutation and dissolution.



About Reva Stone

For more than 10 years Reva Stone has been investigating western culture's drive to model, simulate, engineer and manipulate biological life. She says, "I situate my work at the increasingly blurred boundary between what is born and what is manufactured, what is animate and what is inanimate." She has worked with electronic technologies, interactive installations, robotics and most recently, responsive 3-D environments. Stone has exhibited her work internationally and is also active as a curator, a writer, an educator and a mentor to artists through MAWA, Mentoring Artists for Women's Art. Her work has received numerous awards and grants. She is based in Winnipeg. For more information on the artist and other artworks check out her website at www.revastone.ca

TechLab Residency

For the duration of her exhibition Reva Stone will be using the Gallery's TechLab as a studio space to develop her current project, *Exchange*, which explores a form of artificial intelligence. The project combines voice and face recognition software, video capture and graphics to create a work that appears to have sentience. Check the artist's schedule for when you can drop by, to meet the artist and view the work in progress.

Public Programs

- **Artist's Talk & Reception: Sunday, January 22, 2pm**

Reva Stone will discuss her current work in new media, focusing on the Imaginal Expression project. She will provide context for this project through an illustrated talk about her previous work. A reception for the exhibition will follow the talk, from 3–5pm. Everyone is welcome. Free.

- **Workshop for Teachers: Tuesday, January 24, 3:30pm**

Teachers will be introduced to the artist, the exhibition and the technology Stone employs in her work. Relationships between computers and intelligence and art and technology will be explored. This workshop is intended for teachers who are unfamiliar with or challenged by, technology. Course #425258 \$5 per person.

- **Family Day: Sunday, February 19, noon-4pm**

Explore, enjoy and create art together! Drop in for interactive and performing arts activities on the theme of the exhibition. The artist will be o-site to chat with visitors about her work. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Suggested donation: \$2 per child.

- **Roundtable discussion: Sunday March 12, 2pm**

This forum will encourage new media artists, environmentalists, scientists and technology specialists to examine issues surrounding the complex interconnections between nature, the human body and the technological world.

Acknowledgements

Imaginal Expression was made possible with the support of the New Media Institute of the Banff Centre, the Manitoba Arts Council, and the Canada Council for the Arts. David Kelly worked with Reva Stone to author the DirectX programming and C++ coding. Reva Stone's residency in the TechLab is made possible with a new media artist in residence grant from the Canada Council for the Arts. The Surrey Art Gallery thanks both the Canada Council for the Arts and the BC Arts Council for ongoing operation funding. Photos: Ernest Mayer.



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