

Translucent / Jae Hoon Lee

Mark Harvey

To be translucent is to operate with transparency, or, to diffuse the pathway of light. What we think we see might be what we see, though, it just as easily might not.

Perhaps to be a *body without organs* is to be transparent; as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari put it, on the one hand we believe we can't see our organs through our smooth slippery bodies[1], yet on the other, our organs can be clear as day if we choose to look awry. They add that the repression of our schizophrenic desires becomes clear through examining the breaks in the body without organs that is caused through *desiring machines*; our organs[2].

Multi-layered in its readings, the work of Jae Hoon Lee has for some time engaged with strategies beyond a textbook reading of Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs and desiring machines. In his previous works such as *Asian Beauty On Line (Online)* (2003) and *Body Scape* (2001) Lee has traversed the body by making machines that translucently play on what we see, as though we are looking at what we think are bodies *more true than true*.

Through digitising the body Lee has tugged at what we want to see - Jennifer Friedlander reminds us that when we look into something it is our desire that dictates what it is that we see[3].

Perhaps in *Asian Beauty On Line (Online)* we see pornographic 'Asian' women with patch-work skin, but if we allow ourselves to see these bodies through a more clinical eye we see what we don't want to see; their skin in reverse, pieced inside-out, out of order, with bits of many bodies, bits of many membranes. As with much of his previous work, are they beautiful, or gooey, these Asian hybrids as internet-bodies who look back at us as desiring machines?

In two installations, Lee's work for Window, *Translucent*, again plays on our gaze. Tried and tested is his method of digitally scanning the body, he has not only captured a female Caucasian body in *Andrea 2001*, but also a time-lapse version of a leaf's lifecycle through the period of a year in *A Leaf*.

Both works peer back at us, not just through the eyes of *Andrea 2001* but through their semipermeable membranes do they desire. We think we see one thing, but they think they see another, and because of this we can see many things in these works. In addition to this, Lee has concocted a hybrid leaf, an unending leaf, made of many leaves continually rising, an unending DNA strand not unlike the side-on view of the fractal pattern known as the mandelbrot.

His woman in-a-light-box is not only a scan of a moment in time but also perhaps the organs of a body scanning that which looks into it. A mythic ritual occurs between the works; entombed is *Andrea 2001* and ethereal is *A Leaf* as it passes up to the heavens. Perhaps we are provoked to consider the implications of a future of genetic modification? And still, perhaps *Andrea 2001* with her medieval-like mummification plays on the staidness of the institution (the University library, the art cannon), while *A Leaf* mimics the hierarchy and status so often imparted to these locations?

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1983, p. 9

Ibid., p. 285

Friedlander, Jennifer. 'How Should a Woman Look?: Scopic Strategies for Sexuated Subjects'. *JPCS: Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture & Society*, Volume 8, Number 1, Spring 2003.

<http://muse.jhu.edu>, p. 100

Links:

<http://www.window.auckland.ac.nz/archive/0410Invisible/default.php>

Downloaded from the ADA Article Library, 05 Feb 2012

This article is protected by a Creative Commons license

<http://aotearoadigitalarts.org.nz/articles/Reviews/64>