



Come Part Mental

Floria Sigismondi

Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto
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Reviewed by Adrienne Blattel

In order to find ourselves we must destroy ourselves. The human race craves the experience.
- Floria Sigismondi

In *Come Part Mental*, an art installation that ran this fall at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art (MOCCA), multi-media artist Floria Sigismondi deconstructed bodies, creating new “perfect” mail-order humans inspired by biotechnology and the human-technology interface.

The exhibition mainly consisted of distorted mannequins, each of which represented new combinations of the human body with animal DNA and other genetic-technological manipulations, predicting a grotesque yet not-so-distant future. Sigismondi seemed to taunt me into being shocked from the moment I entered the room: a first sculpture greeted me at the door with her pelvis thrust out like a runway model, but there was a large spike where her clitoris should be. Around the corner was AND-ie, which is DNA backwards. With four breasts designed for “extra pleasure” and decorative fins down her back, she was named after the monkey whose DNA was combined with that of a jellyfish.

Mannequins with hooves, ram’s horns, tails, and feather mohawks crossed the human-animal threshold. A woman with a video screen in her womb, and another with a baby dividing her upper and lower body spoke to Sigismondi’s horrific vision of a future where “copulation for reproduction will be a distant memory”. Mannequins in boxes recalled her Toronto and New York-based inspiration, exploring how we box ourselves in, how we live in boxes. Everywhere she challenged our notion of beauty, predicting that it will change as the hybrid human emerges.

Born in Italy, Floria Sigismondi began her artistic career as a photographer and then a video designer. Recently, she has designed terrifying and provocative videos for Björk, Tricky, Leonard Cohen, David Bowie, and Marilyn Manson. The upper level of the *Come Part Mental* exhibit displayed examples of her photography and ran a few of her music videos and short films. Some of these were sufficiently terrifying to send me back downstairs to contemplate the mannequins one last time. In particular, photographs from the Manson video included “Mouth Piece,” a portrait of a patient being tortured by a medical system

gone sadistic. I found it exciting knowing she had worked with these music artists but felt alienated by the aesthetics of many of the photographs.

Come Part Mental was Floria’s first major art installation. Overall I thought the exhibit was brilliant, and was happily uncomfortable when challenged by Floria’s controversial sculptures, with the exception of the upper-level photographs which just made me feel uncomfortable.

I especially appreciated the mannequins, whose elegance combined with their distortions made them a bit eerie. One mannequin sprouting a feather mohawk and wearing a gas mask even reminded me of last spring’s anti-globalization protests in Quebec City.

Come Part Mental was particularly impressive because I happened upon the exhibit randomly, wandering into MOCCA for the first time and not knowing what to expect. What I got was a world-class, provocative and (in my opinion) very hip and avant-garde art experience.

As I was about to leave the exhibit, I noticed a cart full of vials of coloured liquid. It turned out to be urine, because under Floria’s vision you can “pick your new eyes, your mouth, — how about no more sweat glands? You can even pick the colour of your urine. Your feces can smell of lavender. It’s here: designer shit!”

The perfect designer body lasts forever and fits in a box, all of which fits in our decaying world: “A world that is dying fast, as our bodies grow stronger.”