

## Body Concepts in Contemporary Art

During the last three years there has been an accumulation of exhibitions concerned with body concepts of contemporary artists in the USA, Canada, and the German speaking countrys. (Examples: Corporal Politics, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge Mass. 1992; Post-Human, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg 1993; Abject Art. Repulsion and Desire in American Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York 1993; Real Sex/Real Real/Real Aids/Real Text, Kunstvereine Wien, Graz, Salzburg, Klagenfurt 1994; Suture-Phantasmen der Vollkommenheit, Salzburg 1994; The Body - Le Corps, Kunstmuseum Bielefeld, 1994; Andere Körper-Different Bodies, Offenes Kulturhaus Linz 1994).

Within these body concepts we find references to figurative body images (supernatural, fragmented, deformed) of Surrealism and to the staging of the body in the 70s specially of women artists with a feminist context. Taken not as the revival of the same but rather as a symptom - as the return of the repressed - the new interest in body representations in very different media and techniques may be interpreted as a rethinking and reformulation of the precariousness of the perception of (the) body(s), the other and the self. The given instability of identity in perception today is confronted with new technical developments in the fields of Genetic engineering, medical treatment, virtual reality and the decentralization of wars and technical equipment, migrant movements etc.. Also there has been a reflection on the "gaze of the Other" and 'Difference' as a constituent of selfperception which has influenced the way in which artists stage body images.

In as much as the body is considered as a "scene of power", as an object of social discussion the body image is considered in contemporary art as a signal for a commitment in which the signs are interpreted in light of the symptoms. Whether these are affirmative or critical commentaries must be determined from case to case.