

List of Works:

Kotoe Ishii, *Rubber*, 2009  
single channel video, 3:15min

Anna Leaton, *Untitled*, 2010  
single channel video, 4:16min

Sarah Martinus, *Soap*, 2011  
single channel video, 3:25min

# Come a Little Closer

Kotoe Ishii

Anna Leaton

Sarah Martinus

Curated by

Laura Castagnini

Come a Little Closer

25 October - 17 November 2012

Screen Space

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SCREEN SPACE

*Come A Little Closer* brings together performative works by three female artists who have filmed themselves 'up close.' The subjects interact with a range of objects- including soap, the artist's thighs, and novelty latex breasts- yet the videos ooze an unmistakable erotic tension, tinged with uncertainty. Visceral, ambiguous and demanding, *Come A Little Closer* plays in the space between our desire to look and inability to see.

The title of Kotoe Ishii's video "Rubber" (2009) references the squelching sound made in the video as the artist pushes her hands literally between her legs. The video begins with a shot of her thighs, symmetrically arranged. After a few seconds a pair of hands come into view, which for the next three minutes continually knead, probe and stroke her thighs. Ishii keeps the camera perfectly still throughout, the formal composition of the piece contrasting with the volatility of her actions to create a piece that simultaneously intrigues and disturbs.

Anna Leaton's piece "Untitled" (2010) similarly commences with a still image of the artist's body, this time a close-up of her chest. A small artificial 'breast ball' is brought into the frame and pushed against her body to cover her nipple. Leaton carefully slices the fake breast with a cutting knife before strategically placing the plastic onto herself and repeating the procedure. Breathtakingly violent and at times darkly funny, "Untitled" suggests a subtle critique of artificial female beauty.

In Sarah Martinus's work "Soap" (2011), the camera is zoomed in on the artist's hand. She squeezes, and from the space between her thumb and forefinger oozes a pale slimy substance. As the video continues we glimpse inside the dark slippery cave of her hand, and we are reminded of other bodily orifices. Through a magnified framing technique alone, Martinus has transformed mundane imagery of hand and soap into a grotesque feast for the erotic imagination.

*Come A Little Closer* is an experiment in form. Short video pieces, usually shown individually as looped images, are here presented one after another to create a narrative. The strategy of display dares the viewer to watch the images in their entirety, to push past the discomfort and to monitor their bodily reaction. The screening thus seeks to investigate the act of looking, simultaneously contributing to wider discussions about the nature of desire as mediated through screens.

Laura Castagnini, 2012

Kotoe Ishii is an artist currently based in Melbourne. Working with photography, video, and installations expressing expulsion and discovery of what have been repressed in a body. The work challenges traditional notions of femininity and decorum - replacing them with a physical investigation into identity and embodiment. Kotoe was born in Akita, Japan, and moved to Australia in 2001. Received Bachelor in Fine Art, Fine Art with Honours and Master of Fine Art at Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne. Over the past years Kotoe has exhibited at many galleries and screen spaces nationally and internationally. <http://kotoeishii005.blogspot.com.au/>

Anna Leaton is a Melbourne based artist working across the fields of photography and video art. She completed a Bachelor of Fine Art (Photography) at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2007 and has since exhibited in a variety of solo and group shows at Artist Run Initiatives and Public Galleries around Melbourne.

Sarah Martinus is a designer and artist whose conceptual practice crosses the boundaries between costume, video and performance. Sarah's work probes at where (particularly the female) 'body' ends and the world begins. She is interested in the space between bodies, the intimacy created by this, and the connection we hold between our fleshy carnal bodies. Sarah has shown her work in numerous group exhibitions (*4 Films, The Club; Wiesenburg, Sommerwerkstadt*) and performances (*Number Eight, SlutWalk Soli Party; About:Blank*) in Berlin, and in collaboration with Spill Collective has presented interdisciplinary projects at Federation Square (*DarkMatter*, 2009) and fortyfivedownstairs (*Sollipsis*, 2010). As a costume designer Sarah has worked for the Social Studio in Melbourne. Sarah holds a Bachelor of Design (Fashion) from RMIT University, Melbourne, and currently lives and works in Berlin.

Laura Castagnini is an independent curator and Master of Arts (Art History) candidate at the University of Melbourne. Her practice investigates feminist histories and presents an expanded notion of feminist art and its current articulations. She is currently developing (with Vikki McInnes at Margaret Lawrence Gallery) a discursive curatorial project about humour and feminist art, supported by the NAVA Curatorial Mentorship Initiative. Recent curated exhibitions include *Project 12: This is Not A Love Song* (co-curated with Anna Pappas, Anna Pappas Gallery, 2012) which explored the relationship between romance and popular culture, and *Re/Gendered* (Platform Artist Group Inc., 2010) a exhibition and performance project investigating gender fluidity.