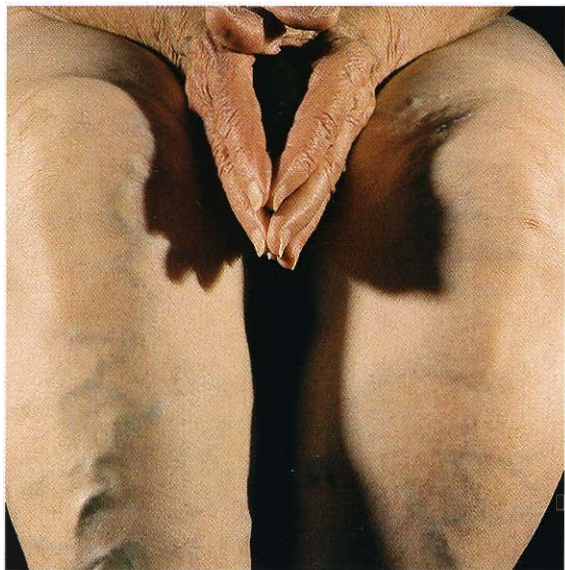




CHANTAL GERVAIS *Between Self and Other, Untitled # 1* 2005
Chromogenic print mounted on Plexiglas 1.78 x 2.08 m

Between Self and Other, Untitled # 4 2005 Chromogenic print
mounted on Plexiglas 1.22 x 1.22 m



colour and movement. Multiple images grow larger and dissolve, simulating the appearance of a computer screen saver. Cause and effect, however, is unclear. At times a delayed reaction occurs and the projection appears after movement has ceased. The precise point of contact is also obscure. Are viewers recorded from the front, from behind, to one side? Repeated experimentation is required, yet the specific mechanics of the work remain elusive.

In creating this work, Castonguay assembled a number of outdated slide and film projectors salvaged from such sources as schools, flea markets and eBay and retrofitted them with LCD screens, sensors and a small camera. The interaction between humans and technology, explored by the artist in earlier works, continues. However, while Castonguay previously placed the viewer in a position of control over the machines, in this work the role of human agency is not always clear. In art, as in life, actions may produce unforeseen consequences.

One of the consequences is the sense of playfulness and sociability that the work elicits. Interactivity is not limited to humans and machines, but extends to exchanges among visitors. A spirit of camaraderie disrupts the customary solitude and silence of the contemporary art gallery when complete strangers engage in a shared investigation of the projections. The appealing images and the spontaneous enjoyment the installation delivers become a gift from the artist. Although connections may be drawn to the artist's ongoing participation in the development and sharing of open-source computer software, a note of caution intrudes. Surveillance should never be this much fun. **DEBRA ANTONCIC**

Chantal Gervais

CARLETON UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY, OTTAWA

The body of work that Chantal Gervais has developed over the past 12 years is garnering increasing attention. "Between Self and Other: Recent Work by Chantal Gervais" features six large-format chromogenic photographs on Plexiglas. The catalyst for the work was a conversation with a woman who had seen Gervais's earlier series *Without End* (2003). Having recently undergone a mastectomy, the woman was deeply moved by the photographs of bodies in tension and transition. She subsequently proposed modelling for Gervais. All of the images in "Between Self and Other" result from collaborations between photographer and subject—each model having experienced changes in his or her physicality as a result of accident, illness or age.

As in her earlier photographic work, Gervais's focus rests on the body's inherent frailties. Where previously she accentuated the discolourations of bruises and scars, the latest images leave nothing altered from what the camera sees: all the blisters, scars and other outward signs of wear and weathering, including the inevitable ravages of time, are apparent in expanding flesh, greying hair and blue veins and capillaries visible below increasingly translucent skin.

The work is arranged in untitled triptych frames as well as single compositions. One triptych stretches the figure up the height of a two-storey wall in a posture reminiscent of a crucifixion. Each form appears in nude, vulnerable repose as if suspended in time and space. The gender of the subjects, though not completely concealed, is treated as something inconsequential—instead, Gervais concentrates on their shared status as bodies in transition. Larger than life, they are presented for contemplation in intimate states normally seen only by family members or caregivers. They slumber before the viewer's eyes, dramatically lit against blood-red fabric with their limbs disappearing into blackness. The heightened theatricality recalls depictions of religious ecstasy, as well as memento-mori still lifes. They evoke the last frame of a time-lapse film sequence, witness to the incontrovertible changes of living. Gervais proposes the body as the ultimate reminder that time wins out; no one escapes. Her compositions, however, manage to maintain the body's sensuous beauty. Thus, her gaze, while exhaustive, is nonetheless a compassionate one. **JOHANNA MIZGALA**