

Canadian Art  
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## Body Building

KIM FULLERTON

Stephen Schofield employs a sculptural lexicon of truncated, penetrated and inflated objects that references and abstracts the human body. With simple materials, he creates surrogates for functional, sexed bodies that have limbs, orifices, skin and organs. It is work gestated in memory and imagination, in what can be remembered of another's body, a mimesis based not on representation, but on invention and reinvention.

In the new work, at the Pari Nadimi Gallery in Toronto, Schofield combines industrial-like materials with his trademark silk organic shapes hardened in sugar-water. The ready-made items found in his earlier work are gone. What remains elicits the pleasures and disturbances of everyday domestic space and erotic encounters, playing with inside and outside, doublings and pairings. These oppositions create double meanings and layered ambiguities, leaving room for various points of entry.

*Gideon* (2000) refers to the biblical character whose faith God tested, to the organization that places Bibles in hotel rooms, and to the Global Infectious Disease & Epidemiology Network. In the sculpture, a cylindrical cavity sports a phalanx of four legs tapering to brown-ringed teats, each pair frozen in independent motion atop what looks like a kitchen draining board. This coupling pushes out a fifth phallic or tail-like protrusion. The interior, where the hollows of the legs are visible as dark vortexes, is splattered red. The exterior – the skin – is pale, mottled and lumpy. Because we see inside and outside, *Gideon* reads in two ways, as both sinister and nurturing.

*Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* carries the same title as Robert Bresson's 1945 film. The wall-mounted work consists of two layered grids made of inflated silk tubing. The front, beige grid is solidly attached to a utilitarian support system of white tubing. Suspended behind is a smaller pink grid. It sprouts a surprising and highly erotic appendage that breaks free from the structure's frame, like a disorderly and wayward leakage. As in the film, Schofield plays with metaphors of spiritual and physical confinement and with the impingement of the interior on the outside world.

Sexuality is implicit in all of Schofield's work, without ever becoming its subject. *Its causent des systèm* shows two models representing the genes and chromosomes of human life. Sitting atop a support system that looks like chairs stacked on a table, the groupings of inflated forms are held in relation to one another by taut wires. Read as bodies, the tension between the models is palpable even though they barely touch.

In the current proliferation of technology-reliant media art, it's easy to forget that stillness and subtlety can have so much impact. Yet, rather than enveloping us in waves of electronic-light massage that threaten to dissolve the viewer/self, Schofield makes sculptures that embolden the body to move around them – seeking clues, messages and delights.