

KENDRA SCHELLENBERG

CURATED BY: LISA EDWARDS

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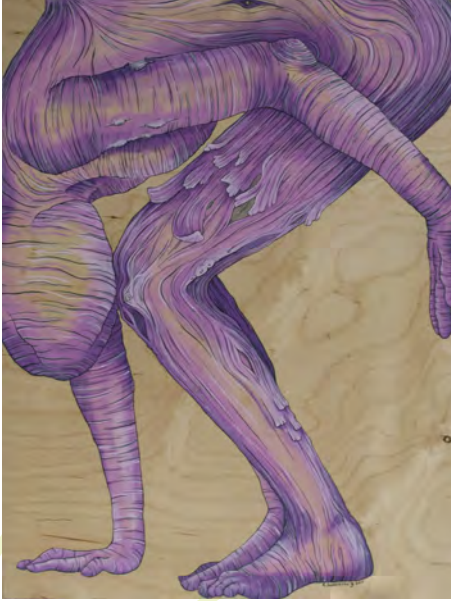
**ART
ON
DEMAND 5.1**

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“Taught from infancy that beauty is woman’s septre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison.”¹

The association between the female sex and an expectation of beauty is nothing new, but in our contemporary, media-saturated society it has taken on new and intensified forms. There is now a constant exposure to consumer images that set increasingly unrealistic standards of female beauty that negatively impact not only how we understand gender and femininity, but also how we view ourselves and our own bodies. As Naomi Wolf argues in *The Beauty Myth* (1990), the rise of the women’s movement and increased economic and social autonomy for women in the twentieth century went hand in hand with increased pressures exerted on women through the mass media to adhere to unrealistic standards of beauty. Now bombarded by images of female bodies that do not reflect the true range of human experience, the tendency is to internalize a desire for only certain types of bodies and to reject those bodies that fail to conform.

For *Art on Demand 5.1*, emerging, Abbotsford-based artist Kendra Schellenberg explores the relationship between womanhood and beauty—and the consequences of that relationship—in two related bodies of work, entitled



Object Spaces and *BoxBodies*. In both series, Schellenberg considers the connection between the body and identity specifically in relation to femininity and womanhood, and the ways that the interaction between the idealized body and objectification impacts the development of the self. Throughout her work, Schellenberg challenges socially accepted notions of the perfect body by combining elements of beauty and the grotesque, creating images that may “bother” the eye, attracting and repelling the viewer at the same time.

This exhibition includes four works from Schellenberg’s *Object Spaces* series, consisting of detailed drawings of semi-abstracted female bodies done in acrylic and ink on constructed, three-dimensional wood panels. Each of the female forms depicted in this series is a visual quotation, one that has been carefully traced from beauty magazines and *Sports Illustrated*

swimsuit editions. Using these received images as a starting point, Schellenberg translates these bodies into something that appears to be carved out of a natural wood matrix, mimicking the support on which her drawing appears. Wood knots and grains mingle with thorns and vines to create female forms that echo the highly sexualized images we see in media culture, but which also question how “natural” the association between womanhood and beauty actually is. Schellenberg deliberately leaves the wood screws and grain visible, just as she uses constructed wood panels that protrude from the wall and extend into the physical space of the viewer. In making her material more evident and visible, Schellenberg draws a parallel between the constructed nature of her images and the constructed materials she uses.

The related series *BoxBodies* consists of three large drawings that are again executed on constructed wood panels, in which the artist specifically explores the relationship between colour and associations of gender. Whereas the bodies in *Object Spaces* are clearly sexualized as female, in *BoxBodies* the artist has depicted three deliberately androgynous forms that she has rendered in blue, pink, and yellow. Each body is twisted and compressed, seeming to struggle to fit into the box shape of the wood panel itself, drawing allusions to the ways the wide, fluid spectrum of human sexual and gender identity is often forced to fit into strict binary categories. The choice of colours reminds the viewer that such socialization begins in infancy, when a



“blue for boys, pink for girls” mentality begins working on us before we are even aware of it.

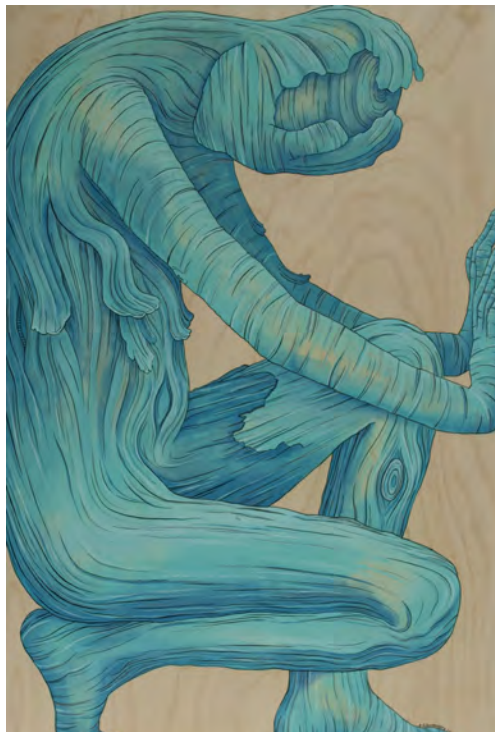
Schellenberg’s work prompts us to consider what it means to be feminine, and challenges us to rethink our own, internalized notions of the idealized body. By reworking familiar images and placing them in unusual contexts, she asks us to look differently at the sexualized images we constantly see in popular culture. In using exposed wood materials and rendering female forms in shapes resembling flora and fauna, she questions the assumed connections between nature and the feminine. Throughout her work, Schellenberg considers how we view ourselves, not only as women but as human beings.

- Emerge Curator, Lisa Edwards

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1792), 311.

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHY



Kendra Schellenberg is an emerging, multi-media artist based in Abbotsford. She is a graduate of the BFA program at the University of the Fraser Valley, where she graduated with a major in visual arts and an extended minor in creative writing. Her work addresses the broad themes of body and identity—more specifically their relation to femininity and womanhood.



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Cover Image: *Object Spaces 03* (detail), 2016, acrylic and ink on wood panel, 12 x 12 x 2.5 in. Inside Images L-R: *BoxBody Pink* (detail), 2017, mixed media on wood panel, 24 x 16 in. *Object Spaces 09* (detail), 2017, acrylic and ink on wood panel, 24 x 20 in. Back Cover L-R: *BoxBody Yellow* (detail), 2017, mixed media on wood panel, 24 x 16 in. *BoxBody Blue* (detail), 2017, mixed media on wood panel, 24 x 16 in. All images courtesy of the artist

Graphic Design by Janae Gartly