



# BODY

## EMBELLISHMENT

ELECTRONIC CATALOGUE

THE MINT MUSEUM | CHARLOTTE, NC

# BODY EMBELLISHMENT

Annie Carlano

Rebecca E. Elliot

Sarah M. Wolfe

## THE MINT MUSEUM

Charlotte, North Carolina



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## FOREWORD

Dr. Kathleen V. Jameson

## MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

Sarah M. Wolfe

## TEN TINY CANVASES

Sarah M. Wolfe

## STUDIO JEWELRY AND THE BODY

Rebecca E. Elliot

## FASHION, THE BODY, AND EMBELLISHMENT: CASE STUDY THREEASFOUR

Annie Carlano

## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# FOREWORD

It is particularly fitting that The Mint Museum is organizing an exhibition around the theme of *Body Embellishment* and its most imaginative expressions in current tattoo, nail art, studio jewelry, and fashion design. The Mint is at the forefront of institutions that challenge current definitions of art, craft, and design, and is a thought leader in the discourse about the interdisciplinary nature of much contemporary practice. Moreover, this project strikes through to the core of the museum's artistic vision to collect and exhibit the most innovative international work.

*Body Embellishment* is focused on twenty-first-century works that modify, expand, and otherwise transform the natural corpus. Groundbreaking scholarship has led to this exhibition and publication; *Body Embellishment* is the first museum show for many of the artists. Even for those more widely known, this is the first exhibition in which work of avant-garde tattoo artists, nail artists, studio jewelers, and fashion designers with a fascination for creating objects that modify the body in extreme ways has been presented together.

This exhibition catalogue is the Mint's first foray into digital publications. It demonstrates the museum's interest in twenty-first-century graphic design and underscores the museum's commitment to increased accessibility.

I thank Annie Carlano, the Mint's exceptional Senior Curator, Craft, Design, & Fashion, and her talented team, Rebecca E. Elliot, Assistant Curator, and Sarah M. Wolfe, Curatorial Assistant, for the originality of *Body Embellishment*, and for their cutting-edge scholarship.

The Mint Museum of Craft + Design Board of Directors' "Adopt-a-Design" program was an inventive and successful fundraising model. I deeply appreciate their ongoing creativity and generosity. The Founders' Circle Ltd. and U.S. Bancorp have provided additional funds for *Body Embellishment* along with several other valued community partners. I am grateful for our community's support of the Mint and this exhibition.

**Kathleen V. Jameson, President & CEO**

# MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

Skin is fascinating—it is the body’s largest and most visible organ. Ephemeral and changeable, skin is unique to every individual. Moles, beauty spots, wrinkles, freckles, and suntans naturally alter the epidermis and often tell a life’s story. Likewise, tattoos accomplish the same goal—permanently altering the body’s surface to indelibly record an image highly significant to the wearer (or more properly, collector, in the case of someone with several tattoos). The history of tattooing is millennia old, with records of skin decoration in nearly every culture. The artists featured in *Body Embellishment* hail from around the globe, and their work references a variety of cultures. Long associated with sailors, Maori warriors, rock stars, and even prisoners, the very word tattoo comes from a Tahitian word meaning “to mark.” Tattoos are in fact healed wounds—the dermis layer of skin is punctured and ink is inserted. As the wound heals, the pigment is permanently trapped inside the layers of skin (although over time the pigment does migrate deeper into the dermis, accounting for “faded” old tattoos). Whatever the image recorded, technique used, or cultural practice reflected, a tattoo is always a significant commitment for the collector.

“Tattoo” comes from the Tahitian *tatau* meaning “to mark”, but many wearers and practitioners of Maori *moko* argue the word also refers to the sound the traditional knives and chisels (or *uhi*) make when incising grooves into the skin. The highly sacred art is practiced across New Zealand even in the twenty-first century, although many *moko* designers occasionally use mechanical needles. Inia Taylor, a member of the Ngati Raukawa tribe on his mother’s side, uses hand tools made of bone to carve intricate designs on his clients’ faces, hands, and limbs. Inia “the Third,” as he calls himself, learned how to carve and sculpt traditional Maori designs as a child from family members and

### FIGURE 1

Stephanie Tamez  
Digital image of *Byzantine icon side piece* 2013



### FIGURE 2

Stephanie Tamez  
Digital image of *William Morris back piece* 2013



### FIGURE 3

Stephanie Tamez  
Digital image of *Rams chest piece* 2013



worked as an art director on several film sets. He also studied with the late Samoan tattoo master Paulo Suluape (1950–1999) and opened the first shop dedicated to *moko* in the world in 1988 (Moko Ink, Grey Lynn, New Zealand).<sup>1</sup> The elaborate, curved designs etched into the wearer's skin often represent family history, tribal affiliation, or deeply personal experiences. Growing international interest in *moko* and the intimate nature of the designs led Taylor and other designers to develop fundamental principles regarding respect for traditional customs; spiritual and physical care for the tattoo; and safety for the person receiving the *moko*, all to ensure integrity for the art form.<sup>2</sup>

Skin decoration also looks to the past in the work of New York City-based artists Stephanie Tamez (Saved, Brooklyn) and Anil Gupta (Inkline Studio, Manhattan). Tamez trained as a graphic designer in San Antonio before receiving her first tattoo in Switzerland from master tattooist Filip Leu. After a stint at San Francisco's Diamond Club, Tamez established herself as an expert in tattoos and typography inspired by historical woodcuts, textiles, and paintings. The crisp, clear lines of the *Byzantine icon side piece* (FIGURE 1) in *Body Embellishment* (modified from a Byzantine painting), the intricate flowers inspired by a print by William Morris (1834–1896) (FIGURE 2), and a woodcut-inspired chest piece featuring two large rams (FIGURE 3) exemplify the elegance and beauty of Tamez's work and her belief that because her clients will live with the works every day, they deserve high-quality artistry.<sup>3</sup> Her approach to tattooing is highly influenced by meticulous precision and an awareness of every inch of ink in context of the larger canvas. Anil Gupta received his first (and so far only) tattoo from Filip Leu and other masters in 2001. As a young man, Gupta had stumbled into the world of tattoo design as an assistant to a part-time tattooist in Mumbai and created his first tattoo in 1982.

**FIGURE 4**

Anil Gupta  
Digital image of *Blind Man's Breakfast* 21st century



**FIGURE 5**

Anil Gupta  
Digital image of *Vincent's Self-Portrait* 21st century



**FIGURE 6**

Anil Gupta  
Digital image of *Persistence of Memory* 21st century



As a medium, tattoo offered a great deal of freedom and creative exploration, and a course in graphic design and printing expanded Gupta's design knowledge. His work encompasses a wide range of styles and subject matters, but his undisputed specialty is full-color, miniaturized paintings. The images in this exhibition [Picasso's *Blind Man's Breakfast* (**FIGURE 4**), van Gogh's *Self-Portrait* (**FIGURE 5**), and Dalí's *Persistence of Memory* (**FIGURE 6**)], each no more than four inches wide, were engraved into clients' forearms using a single-needle machine, which allows for greater precision in the detailed work. Something of a philosopher and artist, Gupta states the act of forcing the ink underneath the skin—literally wounding the individual lying patiently in a padded chair at his studio—satisfies his desire for bravery, and the development of each new, tiny tattoo created using the original painter's full palette fulfills his goal of being an artist.<sup>4</sup>

Paris-born Filip Leu first learned the art of tattooing from his parents Felix and Loretta as a child in Goa, India, and began tattooing full-time in the family's shop in Lausanne, Switzerland, at the age of fifteen. His late teenage years were spent exploring tattoo history and technique from masters in India, Thailand, the United States, and most notably Japan. There he was introduced to the power of full-color body suits, a highly advanced art form in Japan for the last five hundred years. After studying with recognized masters in Japan, as well as tattoo king Don Ed Hardy (1945–), in the United States, Leu developed his signature style of vibrantly colored "suits" covering the wearer from neck to ankle, with Eastern themes such as dragons, koi, and human figures.<sup>5</sup> The ink, pushed into the skin with a large needle configuration (which nevertheless allows for a precise degree of shading and color work), works within the anatomical framework, following curves of muscles and limbs to present a unified, riotous canvas. Leu's work presented



## FIGURE 7

Filip Leu  
Digital image of *Tattoo on Dre* 2010



in *Body Embellishment* is one body suit (FIGURE 7) worn by a French man known only as Dre (getting a full suit over the course of several years is a very intimate experience, and the artists at Leu Family Iron deeply respect their clients' privacy).<sup>6</sup> The precise lines and bold color work create a powerful work of art that is appropriate for the large scale of the human frame.

Freddy Negrete is truly a legend in the ever-growing tattoo community. Like several of the artists featured in *Body Embellishment*, Negrete is largely self-taught—while incarcerated in Los Angeles-area juvenile halls in the 1970s he became interested in ink displayed by fellow inmates and decided to explore the medium. He built his first machine out of the materials available in prison (radio motors, toothbrushes, pens, guitar strings), and was nearly covered in hand-poked tattoos by the age of eighteen. His early imagery was frequently associated with Chicano gang symbols popular with his neighborhood clients: characters from Mexican history, Aztec gods, sugar skulls, and religious icons. Of necessity, this work was done with a single needle and simple black ink—as Negrete perfected his technique and expanded his imagery, the emphasis was on precise line work and exquisite shading (the style is most commonly referred to today as black-and-gray fineline, rather than prison-style or Chicano-style).<sup>7</sup> Negrete's most enduring image is his "Smile Now, Cry Later" design—two theater masks linked by ornate typography (Negrete calls it "cholo script", a typographic style common to graffiti and tattoos created by Latin American gangs), first drawn in 1974 and popularized on skin in the 1980s. Variations on these expressive faces are now an important part of every tattoo artist's repertoire, but each of those artists recognizes Negrete as the originator of the design.



Tattoos are a unique artistic medium. From the ancient, spiritually-laden ritual of receiving *moko* in New Zealand, to the painting- and print-inspired designs created by Stephanie Tamez and Anil Gupta, to Filip Leu's bold Japanese-inspired bodysuits, to Freddy Negrete's daring and simultaneously subtle black-and-gray fineline imagery, the design of a customized tattoo is deeply personal. Each artist featured in *Body Embellishment* is a master of the craft, many coming from a thorough background in design and often studying with experts in their chosen specialty. Although inked skin is increasingly common in the twenty-first century (approximately 51 percent of women and 49 percent of men in the United States have at least one tattoo), these designers have honed their work to break out of the underground and elevated tattoos to the realm of fine art.<sup>8</sup> By using the human body as a pliant, living canvas, the innovative designs discussed here interact with the world at large, introducing the inked and un-inked alike to excellent works of art in unexpected ways.

**Sarah M. Wolfe**

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Email message to author, 6 October 2014.
- 2 Because the process is sacred in the Maori community, the idea of non-Maoris receiving *moko* is somewhat controversial. Proponents of *moko* for all argue that, if the receiver has researched the process and approaches the spiritual underpinnings with respect, *moko* practitioners can perform the tattoo. Those opposed claim that because *ta moko* is sacred, individuals with no connection to or understanding of Maori history and culture cannot properly respect the ritual or care for the completed tattoo.
- 3 Interview with author, 9 May 2013.
- 4 The author visited the artist in his Manhattan studio in 2013, observing part of a session with a client and interviewing the artist. For two hours, Gupta spoke eloquently about his philosophies regarding life, art in general, and tattoos specifically.
- 5 Fabio Paleari. *The Leu Family's Family Iron*. London: Trolley Books, 2001.
- 6 Email message to author, 22 June 2014. The Family Iron Studio is a close-knit operation, with deep relationships between the artists (most of whom are members of the Leu family) and their clients, who come to the Swiss shop for long-term, large-scale projects, or multiple tattoos.
- 7 The name of the style was deliberately changed to make it—and tattooing in general—more acceptable to the general population. A middle-aged suburbanite or a business executive may have a deep passion for wearable art, but may find “prison-style ink” unapproachable or may shy away from an artist with supposed underworld connections.
- 8 Joanne Kaufman. “Keeping Their Art to Themselves.” *The New York Times*, 17 April 2013. Accessed 1 June 2014.

**FIGURE 1**

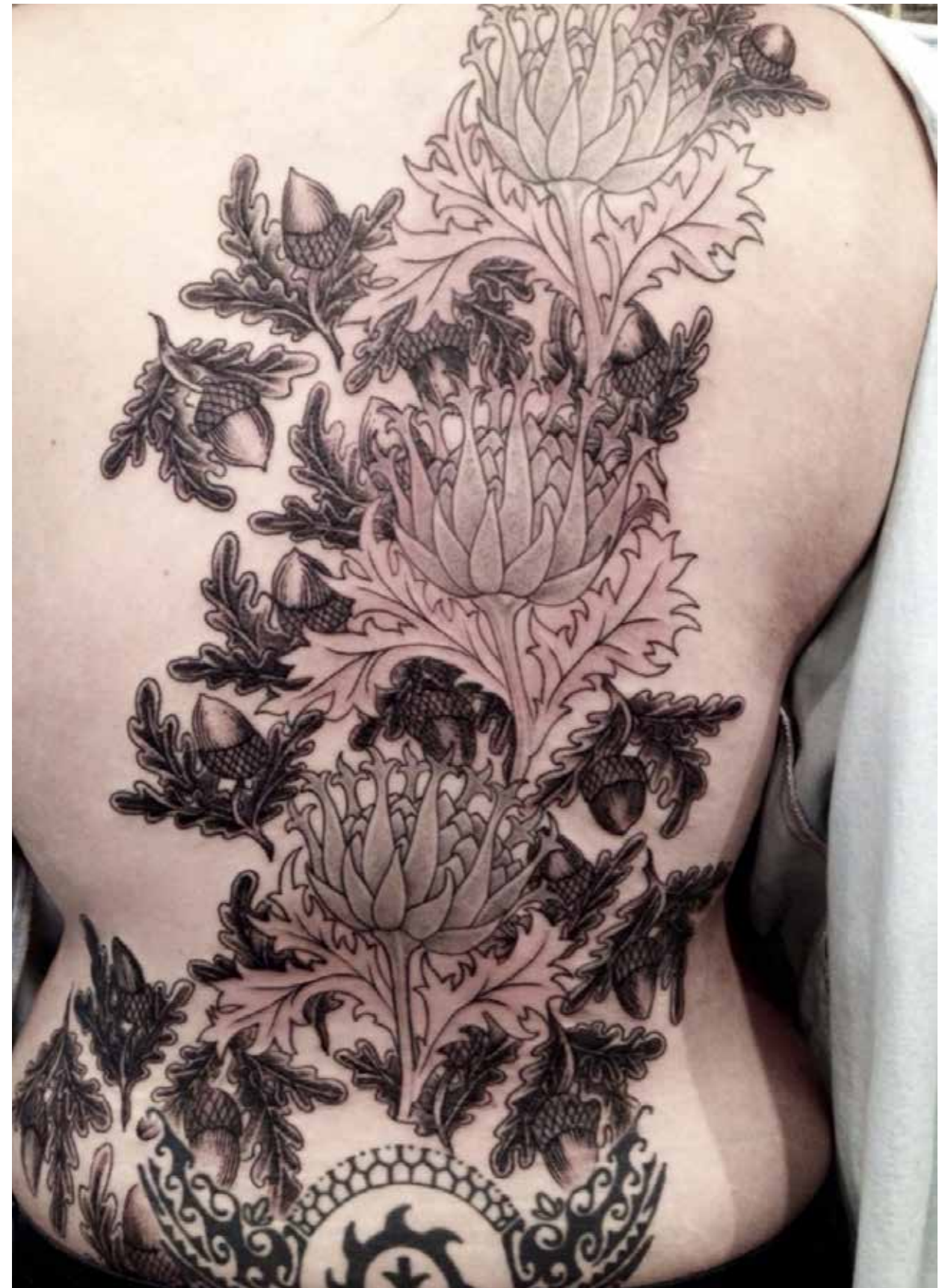
Stephanie Tamez  
Digital image of *Byzantine icon side piece* 2013  
Image Courtesy of the Artist  
© Stephanie Tamez, 2013





**FIGURE 2**

Stephanie Tamez  
Digital image of *William Morris back piece* 2013  
Image Courtesy of the Artist  
© Stephanie Tamez, 2013



**FIGURE 3**

Stephanie Tamez  
Digital image of *Rams chest piece* 2012  
Image Courtesy of the Artist  
© Stephanie Tamez, 2013





**FIGURE 4**

Anil Gupta  
Digital image of *Blind Man's Breakfast* 21st century  
Image Courtesy of the Artist



**FIGURE 5**

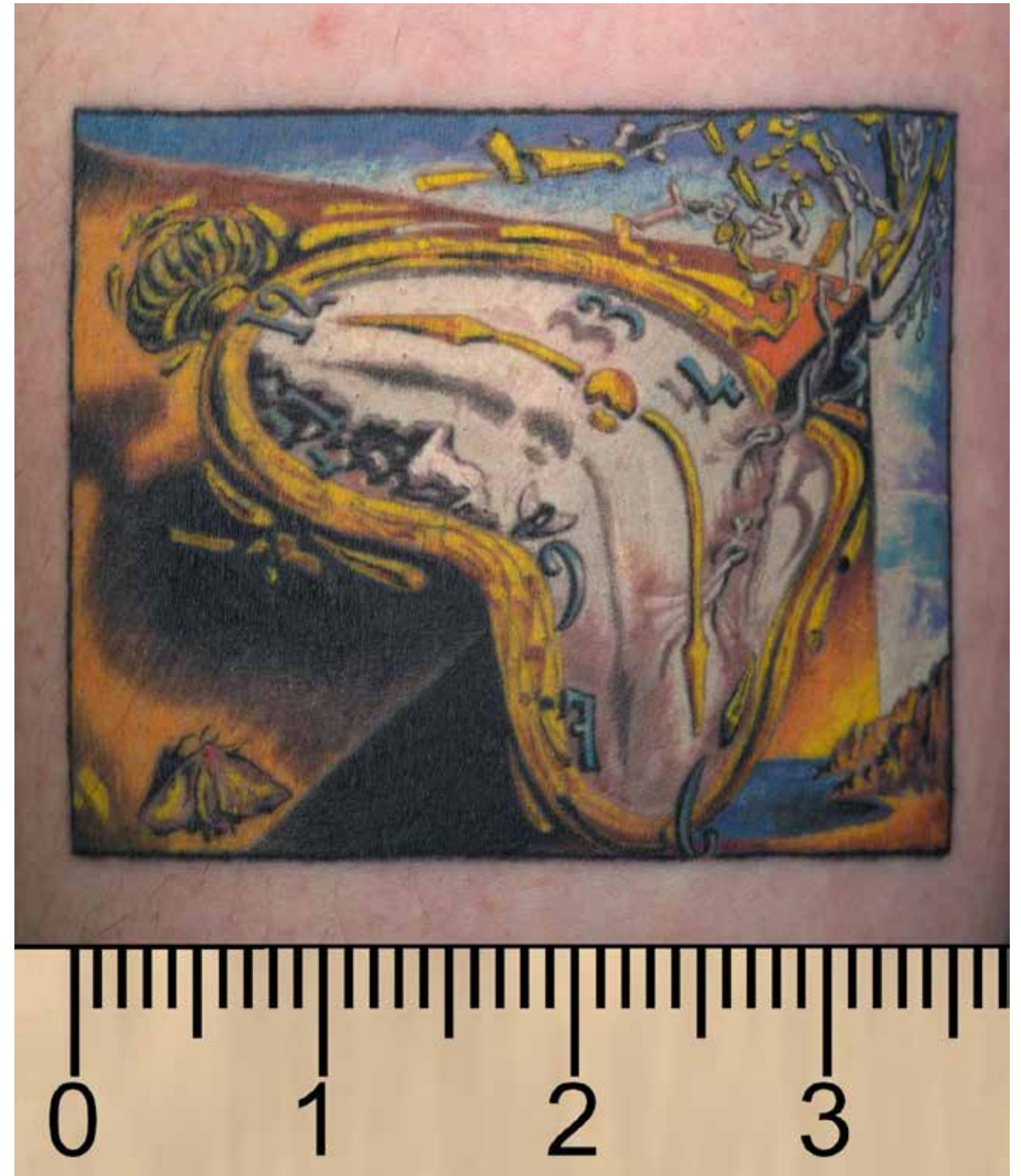
Anil Gupta  
Digital image of *Vincent's Self-Portrait* 21st century  
Image Courtesy of the Artist





**FIGURE 6**

Anil Gupta  
Digital image of *Persistence of Memory* 21st century  
Image Courtesy of the Artist



**FIGURE 7**

Filip Leu  
Digital image of *Tattoo on Dre* 2010  
Image © Bobby C. Alkabes



# TEN TINY CANVASES

“You don’t have enough stuff on your nails.”<sup>1</sup> So must begin any discussion of contemporary nail art—a phenomenon that has elevated the millennia-old tradition of embellishing fingertips from simple paint to elaborate fantasies that transform the nailbed into three-dimensional sculptures. This essay explores the transformation of plain fingernails into ten tiny canvases, vehicles to express personality, economic status, and culture. Precisely shaped, carefully painted, and expertly adorned, nail design is emerging as a true art form—from a trend popular among a relatively small number of women to a powerful industry featured in films, print work, fashion runways, international competitions, several museum exhibitions, and social media.

Although the current craze for elaborate, three-dimensional nail designs is a relatively recent development in the history of body modification, hand decoration was recorded as early as 3000 BCE in India and China. Upper-class women dipped their hands in a combination of beeswax, egg whites, gelatin, and vegetable dyes to turn the fingernails a delicate shade of pink. Social rank was denoted by the color of the lacquer applied to Egyptian nails—gold and silver were favored by wealthy but non-noble women, while royals like Cleopatra (69–30 BCE) preferred black or deep red.<sup>2</sup> A more polished (as opposed to merely tinted) look came into vogue by the nineteenth century, achieved by beauty-conscious ladies by rubbing various powders and creams into their nails and then buffing them shiny with a chamois cloth. The automobile’s rise in popularity around 1917 provided a more readily-available source for inexpensive, high-gloss paints. French makeup artist Michelle Menard (20th century) tinkered with the formula of these paints and created a glossy, removable lacquer which was further developed by the Charles

Revson Company (known today as Revlon) in the 1920s into the very first modern nail polish. The advent of Technicolor in the 1930s introduced film-goers to the vivid sets, costumes, and makeup devised by Hollywood.<sup>3</sup> Blood reds, feminine pastel shades, bold neons, and gothic black were popularized by stars including Rita Hayworth, Elizabeth Taylor, and Madonna. Nail art has become more and more elaborate and popular since the 1980s, when molded acrylic nails roared onto the market. Since then, air-brushing, glitter, gems, and sculptural elements have been introduced by nail designers to more elaborately extend the hand's silhouette.

Like any other artistic medium, nail designers seek to develop a signature style for themselves. Although each set of nails featured in *Body Embellishment* is created on artificial tips, many of the featured designers create much of their work on natural nails. Ami Vega (of El Salonsito in New York's Washington Heights) paints pop art-inspired designs by hand on clients' fingertips. In contrast, Naomi Yasuda makes use of a variety of materials such as lace, microscopic jewels, and metallic charms to create elaborate structures on extensions. Sophy Robson, one of the undisputed queens of contemporary nail art, paints couture logos, animal prints, and graphic prints onto long, sharply-pointed acrylics and completes the work of art with unusual materials such as gemstones, tiny charms, and beetle shells. Chicago-based artist Carlos Rolón/Dzine takes the notion of fantasy fingertip embellishment to new heights with his exploration of "custom culture" and his installation of *Imperial Nail Salon*. The childhood memories of his mother's in-home nail salon, merged with the practice of customization, results in a flashy group of elaborate nail sculptures, rings, and furniture.



**FIGURE 8**

Carlos Rolón/Dzine  
*Untitled (Kay Amore)* 2011



**FIGURE 9**

Carlos Rolón/Dzine  
*Street Kings of 125th St. (Mr. Dapper Dan)* 2011



**FIGURE 10**

Carlos Rolón/Dzine  
*Back Seat of my Coupe de Ville* 2011



“Custom culture” (or more commonly “kustom kulture” or “kustom graphics”) emerged from the hot rod subculture of Southern California in the 1950s; it originally referred to the art, graphic design, and fashions of those who built custom cars and motorcycles, but now encompasses a variety of subcultures contributing individual ideas of what is hot or not. Rolón’s installation *Imperial Nail Salon*, several components of which are featured in *Body Embellishment*, was inspired at once by his interest in street culture, his own experiences as a child at the Art Institute of Chicago and later at Columbia College in Chicago, and his mother’s humble salon in the living room of their South Side apartment.<sup>4</sup> The ultra-ornate artificial nails (**FIGURE 8**) and finger jewelry combine these memories and subcultures, and elevate what Rolón terms “nail culture” into a true art form. The artist also views the act of painting nails and attaching extensions as performance art; the Gucci-print chair in *Body Embellishment*, *Street Kings of 12th St. (Mr. Dapper Dan)* (**FIGURE 9**), was a custom-made “throne” for clients while they had an assemblage of miniatures, chains, and plastic tchotchkes glued onto their fingertips by professional nail artists at Rolón’s pop-up salon. The custom ornaments densely crafted from vintage pieces, gold leaf, and Swarovski crystals, rest inside their own boxes on a velvet-covered hutch (**FIGURE 10**)—combining the high and low, the personal and universal, and the garish and refined. Entering the art world through interest in street culture, Rolón’s work soon gave way to massive abstract paintings and self-taught techniques. His nail-themed projects emerged from the remembered sense of community in his mother’s salon and the understanding that nail designers had the same appreciation and passion for their medium as sculptors, painters, collectors, and curators.<sup>5</sup> The *Imperial Nail Salon* and the accompanying publication *Nailed* are determined to tell the story of that passion.

**FIGURE 11**

Ami Vega  
*Keith Haring Nail Set* 2014



Nail artist Ami Vega (aka El Salonsito in New York City) also riffs on popular culture in her designs, usually hand-painted in gel polish on her clients' natural nails. A graduate of Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts in New York City with a concentration in screen painting, Vega first became attracted to nail design as a teenager in the late 1990s. At the time, she considered it a fun hobby, but with the explosion of high-concept nail art in the last fifteen years, opportunities to expand her craft have increased. From inexpensive crackle nail polish on her own fingers, she has developed a unique signature of fashion- and art-inspired designs. The lively figures and bold colors of these talons, created especially for *Body Embellishment* and inspired by the work of contemporary artist Keith Haring (1958–1990) (**FIGURE 11**) go beyond ordinary polish. According to Vega, they are not so much a simple manicure as a work of art right at the wearer's own fingertips.<sup>6</sup>

Naomi Yasuda is currently based out of Brooklyn, but originally hails from Japan, where over-the-top nail art is the norm. Yasuda's work has appeared on the hands of celebrities such as Madonna, Lady Gaga, Kim Cattrall, and even Aerosmith frontman Steven Tyler; the tiny three-dimensional sculptures are created with a gel material to ensure the work lasts longer than an average manicure. Although she has experimented with painting, she prefers the intimate experience of decorating tiny canvases.<sup>7</sup> Fragments of gold chains, miniscule charms, and above all sparkle and glitz are hallmarks of Yasuda's work, whether for events, ad campaigns, or for the lucky few able to secure an appointment at her Williamsburg salon, Hello Beautiful. For Yasuda, no design, technique, or alternative material is too extreme—beautiful nails are like jewelry *on* the fingertips, and give the wearer confidence in their appearance.

British nail art queen Sophy Robson combines hip-hop themes, braggadocious color and sparkle, and even the work of other multi-media artists into provocative, flashy, and ultimately extremely wearable accessories.<sup>8</sup> In the last three years, her nail designs have appeared on a variety of hands, from Tom Ford's (1961–) Gucci runway to athletes at the 2012 Olympic games (Robson oversaw the entire nail team in the Olympic Village), in a variety of lengths and shapes. Her custom, hand-painted work is created with gel polish and further embellished with beetle shells, gemstones, lace, and even charms that pierce the extension. For the 2011 nail art exhibition *Nailphilia*, Robson cast an entire hand out of porcelain and encrusted wrist to nail-tip in Swarovski crystals (an homage to contemporary artist Damien Hirst's (1965–) provocative *For the Love of God*—Hirst “desperately inspires [her]”, she says).<sup>9</sup> *Crystalized* pushes the envelope on nail art, extending body modification from the fingertips to the entirety of the hand.

The nail artists featured in *Body Embellishment* have a variety of backgrounds, create in diverse styles, and have different experiences and outlooks on their craft. However, most agree nail design, whether on natural surfaces or artificial extensions, painted with polish or sculpting gel, and embellished with jewels or fabric, is much more than a trend—it is a true art form that has come into its own and is finally recognized as the elaborate medium it is.<sup>10</sup>

**Sarah M. Wolfe**



## ENDNOTES

- 1** Sindy Mark, *NAILGasm* documentary, 2012
- 2** Carlos Rolón, Luis Gispert, Yone, Jamel Shabazz, Fred Brathwaite, and Kim Hastreiter. *Dzine: Nailed*. New York: Damiani/Standard Press, 2012.
- 3** “A History of Nail Lacquer: Blood Red Nails On Your Fingertips.” Beautifully Invisible. 27 May 2011. Accessed 15 March 2013.
- 4** Rachel Wolff, “Salon Culture: Dzine Brings Nail Art to a New Level.” *ARTnews*, January 2013.
- 5** Email message to author, 5 December 2013.
- 6** Interview with author, 9 May 2013.
- 7** Mand Lewin, Adrienne. “Being Lady Gaga’s Manicurist.” *TODAY Beauty*. 30 June 2012. Accessed 22 April 2013.
- 8** The author first heard this word used to describe over-the-top, flashy nail art that was elaborate to the point of impractical for daily wear. While Sophy Robson’s painted designs, studded embellishments, and mass-produced nail wraps are extremely approachable, “braggadocious” conveys the sense of swagger her nails provide.
- 9** Email message to author, 24 May 2014.
- 10** Nail design occupies a curious position, combining elements of fashion, “fine art,” jewelry, and beauty. Each designer in this exhibition acknowledges that his or her work may be sometimes classified as a temporary beauty trend (after all, one can change one’s nail art as often as clothing), but the trajectory of nail history indicates customized design for the fingertips is here to stay.

**FIGURE 8**

Carlos Rolón/Dzine

*Untitled (Kay Amore)* 2011

Image Courtesy the Artist and Salon 94, New York

© Dzine, 2011





**FIGURE 9**

Carlos Rolón/Dzine  
*Street Kings of 125th St. (Mr. Dapper Dan)* 2011  
Image Courtesy of the Artist and Salon 94, New York  
© Dzine, 2011



**FIGURE 10**

Carlos Rolón/Dzine  
*Back Seat of my Coupe de Ville* 2011  
Image Courtesy the Artist and Salon 94, New York  
© Dzine, 2011



**FIGURE 11**

Ami Vega  
*Keith Haring Nail Set* 2014  
Image Courtesy of the Artist



# STUDIO JEWELRY AND THE BODY

**FIGURE 12**

Jennifer Trask  
*Revival Neck Object* 2012



To those accustomed to mainstream jewelry, *Revival Neck Object* (**FIGURE 12**), by Jennifer Trask, is a most unusual and striking piece of adornment. Gilded acanthus leaves, fragments of antique picture frames, are intertwined with stark white antlers and boars' tusks, forming a wreath that frames the wearer's face. Large, heavy, bold, and ostentatious, *Revival Neck Object* is no mere accessory to its wearer: it projects several inches out from the shoulders, altering the silhouette. Meanwhile, its materials combine the primal nature of bone with the refinement of the man-made and the rich cultural symbolism of gold. *Revival Neck Object* is truly a statement necklace; though at first glance unusual, its form and materials resonate deeply with the history of jewelry, amplifying the essence and function of all jewelry as body adornment.

Bone and other animal-derived materials are the medium for the earliest known prehistoric jewelry. In Morocco, archaeologists have found shells with holes bored into them to make beads to wear, along with shavings of red ochre, dating back 82,000 years. Importantly, these are not only early examples of jewelry—they are some of the earliest indications of human culture in general. The desire to adorn one's body, to alter it from its given biological state, is evidence of self-awareness and the ability to think symbolically, thereby distinguishing humans from animals.<sup>1</sup> Body adornment, then, is fundamental to being human. As the anthropologist Ted Polhemus notes, analyzing the significance of such prehistoric jewelry, "the human body is by nature special; it is the only object that we cannot do without, the only object that is a subject as well. For this reason, it is in the center of [the] symbolic universe."<sup>2</sup> The body is the interface between the internal self and the social self of the outward world; it is a site of performance where one's identity is enacted and presented, through which symbolic ideas are expressed and on which social and cultural codes are inscribed.<sup>3</sup>

As something worn on (or even in) the body, jewelry plays a crucial role in this process; it is an extension of the body, a form of prosthetic device. Jewelry augments the body's role in human culture, communicating messages to oneself, to other humans, and perhaps even to the divine. As a genre of art, it is uniquely situated to both constitute and interpret aspects of human experience. While all jewelry relates to the body, the artists featured in *Body Embellishment* consciously exploit this potential, offering new visions of jewelry as a body extension and commenting on what it means to have a body, and how we relate to our bodies and the world around us. Today's studio jewelry artists, including Trask, build on the long history of body embellishment, sometimes honoring and sometimes challenging it, to make works that speak to twenty-first century concerns.

The studio jewelry in the exhibition is divided into four groups. The first comprises jewelry that is more formal than metaphorical in its sculptural concern with altering the body's outline. In the next category are objects that depict the human figure or parts of it, sometimes abstractly. Adding another layer of meaning are objects that augment the body and sense of self through forms that evoke the bodies of animals. Finally, the most radical interpretation of body embellishment includes works that reference more permanent manipulations of the body that intersect the body's surfaces, both internal and external, such as piercings, subdermal implants, and plastic surgery.



## JEWELRY AS WEARABLE SCULPTURE

**FIGURE 13**

Kathy Vones  
*Earconch* 2006



**FIGURE 14**

Nora Fok  
*This Is Life* 2008–2010



Contemporary artists such as Kathy Vones and Nora Fok use innovative techniques to create jewelry that alters the body's outline in new ways. Throughout human history, certain sites of the body have emerged as the most practical and symbolically meaningful sites for jewelry; most common are the earlobes, neck, fingers, wrists, and waist. *Earconch*, by Kathy Vones (FIGURE 13), offers a new possibility. The wearer's ear is inserted into the center of a wheel-like sterling silver frame that extends in a cone shape down her neck and shoulder, forming an otherworldly appendage that seems to grow from her ear and fills the open space between her head and neck. The cone is made up of delicate silver asterisks that move gently with the wearer; attached to some are onion-shaped silicone bulbs that shade from red to soft pink. *Earconch*'s title refers to the resemblance of the human ear to a conch shell and its colors, textures, and patterns are inspired by sea creatures, particularly sea snails, jellyfish, and octopuses.<sup>4</sup> Yet, because the reference to animals is not immediately recognizable, *Earconch* serves as an abstract sculptural form on the body.

Nora Fok uses nylon monofilament to create complex three-dimensional forms that, while large in scale, are easily wearable because of their light weight. Fok learned to work with this material from Caroline Broadhead (1950–), who pioneered its use in the early 1980s. But whereas Broadhead's forms are collapsible, Fok's knitted nylon holds its shape, thanks to a heat-setting process that she developed after fifteen years of experimentation. She also dyes the nylon to achieve vibrant colors.<sup>5</sup> Fok is inspired by the natural world and the mathematical relationships found in it, as well as the elaborate costumes seen in Chinese operas in her childhood in Hong Kong.<sup>6</sup> Her neckpiece *This Is Life* (FIGURE 14) is a tour-de-force that took two years to create. Inspired by the double helix of DNA, the neckpiece

The Light Surgeons: Tim Cowie  
(director), Martin Banks (director),  
Annie Kwan (producer).

Video profile of Nora Fok produced for  
the Jerwood Applied Arts Prize 2007

recreates that shape in thicker nylon strands whose joints are based on the human knee joint. The strands are embellished with 4,183 knit nylon balls in yellow, pink, blue, and green, and the result is an exuberant necklace that celebrates the human body by referencing its molecular structure.<sup>7</sup> *This is Life* can be worn either as a conventional necklace or around the shoulders and chest.

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## THE HUMAN FIGURE

The human figure has long been a subject for jewelry, and contemporary jewelry makers approach it with an awareness of its rich potential to comment on the human condition. Gerd Rothmann has been a pathbreaker in this regard. Since the late 1970s, he has been making jewelry from casts of body parts that directly reproduce both their form and the texture of the skin in pewter, silver, or gold, thereby serving as a document of an individual's existence on Earth. These works fit into two general groupings (with some exceptions): casts from the artist's own body, and commissioned works to be worn either by the person from whom the cast was made or by another person who has a relationship with him or her. In every case, Rothmann chooses to cast body parts that are significant to the subject and potential wearer. Often disregarding conventional sites for jewelry, he has cast armpits, navels, noses, and even more intimate body parts including nipples and testicles. Hands carry great meaning to Rothmann as an artist, and he has made a number of works cast from his own and his clients' hands. The necklace *Über die Sprache der Hände* (About the Language of Hands) depicts the side of his thumb and forefinger in three positions, all resembling sign language, as if spelling out an idea. Far from mere decoration, his jewelry is meant to stir wearers' emotions regarding their relationship to their own bodies and to the bodies of others with whom they are intimately connected.<sup>8</sup>

**FIGURE 15**

Mi-Ah Rödiger  
*Cochlea I* from *Chrome* series 2011



Mi-Ah Rödiger combines references to the human body, nature, and man-made objects to explore the way changes in sensory perception alter our understanding of things around us and ourselves. Her *Chrome* series combines casts of body parts in chrome-coated resin with beige-colored silicone tubes intended to tactilely resemble skin and blend into it when worn, in order to suggest both sensory organs and scientific instruments.<sup>9</sup> *Cochlea I* (**FIGURE 15**) includes a chrome pendant made by casting the right and left inner ear (the cochlea) and conjoining them, resulting in a bilaterally symmetrical, vaguely biomorphic, yet mysterious object. Emerging from chromed outlets on each of its sides are three silicone tubes that reconnect at its clasp. When worn, two additional tubes with chrome caps dangle behind the neck; these are intended to suggest earphones that could transmit a sound received by the central pendant. Rödiger's aim is to evoke a sensory instrument that would create a change in perception by disconnecting the senses from their surroundings.<sup>10</sup>

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## ANIMALS IN JEWELRY

**FIGURE 16**

Joji Kojima  
*Insecta* finger ornament from *Armor* Collection 2011

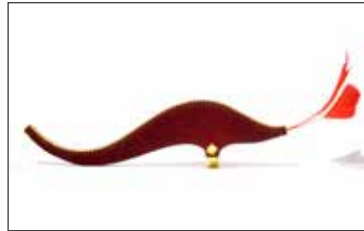


Just as allusions to the human body can give symbolic meaning to jewelry and make it a metaphorical extension of its wearer, jewelry that references animals can allow us to create hybrid selves. People have long used jewelry to try to appropriate the character traits we see in animals, and the idea remains relevant today as new research reveals that the differences between “us” and “them” may be much smaller than we once believed.<sup>11</sup> Joji Kojima draws inspiration from animals in several series of finger ornaments that rethink the idea of a ring to become body extensions more like claws or talons. His *Insecta* finger ornament (**FIGURE 16**) from his *Armor* collection is a segmented and riveted metal claw that fits over the finger and projects beyond it. Resembling medieval armor as well as an insect's exoskeleton, *Insecta* is both beautiful and slightly menacing. It suggests the potential to protect its wearer and even become a weapon. *Flamingo* finger ornament

**FIGURE 17**

Joji Kojima

*Flamingo finger ornament from Utopia Collection* 2012



**(FIGURE 17)** from Kojima's Utopia collection is less weapon-like but no less bold. Made from brass surfaced with red leather and tufted with feathers at one end, *Flamingo* projects above the finger and hand and extends its profile in a sinuous line, conveying the flamboyance of its namesake. Both *Insecta* and *Flamingo* enhance and empower their wearer's persona.

**FIGURE 18**

Ana Rajcevic

*ANIMAL: The Other Side of Evolution* 2012



Ana Rajcevic consciously addresses the human-animal relationship in her series, *ANIMAL: The Other Side of Evolution*, comprising eight objects that adorn the face and head, and blur the line between jewelry, fashion, and sculpture. All are handcrafted from white fiberglass and polyester resin, a material and color chosen for its resemblance to bone as well as the color's connotations of purity, divinity, heroism, and elegance.<sup>12</sup> Each is a different shape resembling an animal appendage. The object featured in *Body Embellishment* **(FIGURE 18)** frames the face, cups the chin, and projects from the sides of the head and several inches off the shoulders with triangular flanges that resemble shark fins or the body of a stingray. The wearer of this imposing object becomes something more than human, a force to be reckoned with. Rajcevic seeks to "reshape the human silhouette" to "challenge our ideas of 'beauty' and 'normality.'"<sup>13</sup> She draws from animal anatomy and the idea of mutation to create pieces that appear to be "natural properties of the human body, suggesting strength, power, and sensuality" in a creature that is "atemporal, supreme... beyond past and future."<sup>14</sup>

**FIGURE 19**

Jennifer Trask

*Germinate* 2010



Jennifer Trask uses actual animal bones, teeth, horns, and antlers in her jewelry to explore the interconnectedness of nature, including humanity, and what she sees as our tragic indifference to it.<sup>15</sup> Objects like *Germinate* **(FIGURE 19)** and *Revival Neck Object*

**(FIGURE 12)** force the viewer and especially the wearer to consider her physical body in all its strength, fragility, temporality, and relationship to nature's cycles. Trask's interest in exploring these issues grew from her experience of seeing an X-ray of her chest. Suddenly "the unseen, forgotten substance of ourselves [was] made visible," prompting the question, "What is written on our bones? Literally, and figuratively, what desires, ideals, motivations do we carry silently?"<sup>16</sup> For Trask, bones embody the history and essence of living things: they grow and change over time, registering illness, trauma, and minerals consumed, ultimately remaining after death. Bones can even embody sensations and emotional states, as in the saying "I feel it in my bones."<sup>17</sup>

On both *Germinate* and *Revival Neck Object*, these remnants of once-living creatures sit directly on the wearer's skin, and almost as directly on her collarbones and breastbone. *Revival Neck Object*, though wearable, is challenging and assertive, with its large scale and combination of antlers, boars' tusks, and antique wooden picture frame fragments that weigh upon the wearer's shoulders and chest. By combining these materials, whose forms visually echo each other, Trask alludes to the way wood also carries the life history of a tree, conveying the interconnectedness of life. The use of gilding connects the piece to the long history of gold as a favored medium for jewelry. Used on funeral masks, reliquaries, and ceremonial objects, its incorruptibility could beautify, preserve, and elevate what was otherwise subject to decay.

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## SCULPTING THE SELF

Whereas Trask's jewelry metaphorically connects the wearer to the physicality of the body, jewelry artists Norman Cherry, Christoph Zellweger, and Lauren Kalman have explored the idea that the most fundamental form of body embellishment is direct alteration of the

## FIGURE 20

Norman Cherry  
*Angiogenetic Body Adornment (Chrissy, Katherine, Shadi, and Emma)*  
2004



body itself. Ancient practices such as tattooing, piercing, and scarification are joined today by the aesthetic possibilities offered by modern medical practices including cosmetic plastic surgery. Zellweger asserts that, thanks to modern medicine, “the human body is the subject of design.”<sup>18</sup> In 1996, he coined a new term to describe modern humans: instead of *Homo sapiens*, or “thinking human,” we are now *Homo ipsi faber*, the human who creates him or herself.<sup>19</sup>

Cherry’s series of photographs, *Angiogenetic Body Adornment* (FIGURE 20), considers the potential of bioengineering to enable new forms of body embellishment. Recent biomedical research on angiogenesis, the ability of cells to grow new blood vessels, has enabled researchers to induce this action in cells in vitro, leading to the possibility of growing structures from living tissue on a biodegradable matrix that can be implanted in the body to restore injured body parts to full functionality and regenerate missing ones.<sup>20</sup> Cherry proposes that, as with plastic surgery, this technology will likely evolve from purely therapeutic uses to cosmetic purposes. Its ability to grow three-dimensional structures that are integral to the body is likely to be of interest to enthusiasts of BodMod (body modification) who currently alter their body’s surfaces and outlines through scarification and subdermal implants made from silicone or Teflon. Cherry’s series of photographs imagines what angiogenetic body adornment might look like; models are adorned with what appear to be growths on the forehead, wrist, collarbone, and navel. He used rubber, makeup, and Photoshop to create plausible renderings of body modifications that an individual might someday grow from skin, cartilage, and even bone with the help of a biomedical specialist.<sup>21</sup>



**FIGURE 21**

Christoph Zellweger  
*Hip Piece, #2401-0* from *Foreign Bodies* series 2002

Woman wearing *Hip Piece, #2401-0*



Since the 1990s, Zellweger has been exploring the aesthetic and ethical implications of prosthetics and plastic surgery through jewelry as well as sculpture and installation art. A key concern of his work is the conflict between humanity's inherent vulnerability and imperfection and its drive for perfectibility.<sup>22</sup> *Hip Piece, #2401-0* (**FIGURE 21**), from Zellweger's series *Foreign Bodies*, is an actual secondhand hip replacement transformed into jewelry.<sup>23</sup> Strung on a leather strap, it is worn at one's side, against one's hip, a slightly irritating format that reminds the wearer of the object's original purpose. The leather is a metaphor for skin that is literally penetrated by the hip piece, and together they suggest a "high end tool or ritualistic weapon," perhaps carried in a holster.<sup>24</sup> The series *Foreign Bodies* alludes to the idea that prosthetic interventions can serve to maintain health but also enhance the body's performance, and the line between the two goals is not always clear.

**FIGURE 22**

Lauren Kalman  
*Blooms, Efflorescence, and Other Dermatological Embellishments*  
(*Cystic Acne, Chest*) 2009



Kalman also addresses the "struggle between the unrefined body and the desire for perfection" evident in the parallels between jewelry and medical interventions.<sup>25</sup> Rather than making jewelry to be worn by others, Kalman makes conceptual objects that she applies to her own body, and then documents their presence through photographs or videos that she displays along with the object. *Blooms, Efflorescence, and Other Dermatological Embellishments* is a series in which skin conditions are rendered as gemstones set in gold and pinned to the body using acupuncture needles. At first glance the photograph of *Cystic Acne* (**FIGURE 22**), composed and lit like a medical image, appears to depict a body afflicted with the disease. Only upon closer inspection and upon viewing the corresponding object is the image's true nature apparent, and the "sores" are revealed to be gems. Kalman engages our dual sense of attraction and repulsion,

conflating the desirability of precious materials with the grotesqueness of disease. She argues that wearing jewelry is a way of trying to amend the body's imperfections by appropriating the desirable qualities of materials such as gold, which represents beauty, purity, and immortality.<sup>26</sup> Yet, she inverts this relationship through jewelry that represents disease and violates the boundary of the skin, as if to suggest that the abject, imperfect body is inescapable.

In the twenty-first century, we are more reliant than ever on objects that seek to beautify our bodies and extend their capabilities, whether they are cosmetics, medical devices, jewels, or even our smartphones. Today's most forward-thinking jewelry can certainly assist us in this quest, but it also asks us to think about what we are doing. It is this reflexive aspect that makes avant-garde jewelry so fascinating.

**Rebecca E. Elliot**

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**FIGURE 12**

Jennifer Trask  
*Revival Neck Object* 2012  
© Jennifer Trask, 2012





**FIGURE 13**

Kathy Vones  
*Earconch* 2006  
© Kathy Vones, 2006



**FIGURE 14**

Nora Fok  
*This Is Life* neckpiece 2008–2010  
Photograph by Frank Hills  
© Nora Fok, 2010





**FIGURE 15**

Mi-Ah Rödiger  
*Cochlea I* from *Chrome* series 2011  
© Mi-Ah Rödiger, 2011



**FIGURE 16**

Joji Kojima  
*Insecta finger ornament* from *Armor Collection*  
2011  
© Joji Kojima



**FIGURE 17**

Joji Kojima  
*Flamingo finger ornament* from *Utopia Collection*  
2012  
© Joji Kojima



**FIGURE 18**

Ana Rajcevic  
*ANIMAL: The Other Side of Evolution* 2012  
© Ana Rajcevic, 2012



**FIGURE 19**

Jennifer Trask  
*Germinate* 2010  
© Jennifer Trask, 2010





**FIGURE 20**

*Angiogenetic Body Adornment (Chrissy, Katherine, Shadi, and Emma) 2004*

Shadi: Photograph by David Withycombe, postproduction treatment by David Miles

Emma, Katherine, and Chrissy: Photographs by Norman Cherry, postproduction treatment by David Miles

Art © Norman Cherry, 2004



**FIGURE 21**

Christoph Zellweger  
*Hip Piece*, #2401-0 from *Foreign Bodies* series 2002  
© Zellweger

Woman wearing *Hip Piece*, #2401-0  
© Zellweger



**FIGURE 22**

Lauren Kalman  
*Blooms, Efflorescence, and Other Dermatological  
Embellishments (Cystic Acne, Chest)* 2009  
Photograph Courtesy of Sienna Gallery, Lenox, MA  
© Lauren Kalman, 2009



# FASHION, THE BODY, AND EMBELLISHMENT: CASE STUDY threeASFOUR

The human impulse to ornament the body is an ancient desire. Throughout the world, appealing natural elements such as seeds, flowers, vines, shells, minerals, gems, feathers, and animal parts were added to the corpus to affix both decoration and meaning. In certain cultures, the skin itself was embossed and incised through such as methods as scarification or was covered with color and pattern through a painted surface pattern or direct injection into the epidermis. Ornaments applied to neck, arms, groin, ankles, and elsewhere can signal an individual or group identity; concepts of beauty; social status; erotically charged symbols; or those associated with politics, spirituality, and religion. For centuries, such supplemental ornamentation of the body has also embellished the natural form by exaggerating its natural shape. In the preceding essays, the work of twenty-first-century avant-garde skin, nail, and studio jewelry artists has demonstrated the continuation of such corporal interventions. Further afield, coils of metal are layered to elongate the neck in cultures as diverse as the Padaung of Burma and the Ndebele of South Africa.<sup>1</sup> But the ultimate way in which humankind has modified, overstated, and inflated the body is through clothing—not just any type of clothing, but fashion. While the primary impetus for the creation of clothing is practical—to protect the body from the elements, the *raison d'être* of fashion is to enhance beauty, and add style and expression to the human form.

The twenty-first century did not invent 'radical chic.' There is a long history of fashions that embellish the natural contours of the body.<sup>2</sup> In Western dress of the late Middle Ages, fashions for both men and women attenuated the silhouette. Dresses had high waistlines coming up to just below the breasts, creating the illusion of a longer torso. Falling in vertical folds to the ground, the exorbitant amount of creased cloth forming pools around the woman further extended the perceived height of the wearer. Sleeves for both women

and men were voluminous, tapered at the shoulder but wide and long. To accentuate the exaggerated width of the sleeve they were sometimes a vehicle for additional decorative touches for example in the sleeves of the woman in the Arnolfini portrait by Jan Van Eyck (ca. 1390–1441), dated 1434.<sup>3</sup> Men wore shorter garb, exposing their *poulaines*, also known as *crackowes*, long leather shoes with pointed toes that extended the foot six to twenty-four inches.

By the end of the fifteenth century, innovations in fashion designs included both emphasizing the natural body and distorting its form. Tight-fitting bodices revealed the true shape of the torso but flattened the breasts; excessive bunched/ruched fabric of sleeves exaggerated the girth of the arm. The copious amounts of fabric that formed the lower part of a woman's dress, greatly expanding her girth, were held rigid by hoops, underskirts of various materials, depending on the climate and resources of the country or city. Such garments resembled petticoats reinforced with stiffening materials, and acted as armatures for the massive amounts of cloth. In Milan, this nether garment was deemed so egregious sumptuary laws of 1498 prohibited its use.<sup>4</sup> Edicts against avant garde styles persisted throughout the Renaissance, and served only to make the particular fashion trend more desirable.

Men's upper bodies remained the focal point for tailored fashions in the 1490s, and their torsos continued to be exaggerated by designs that added girth by much fabric and in the North, fur. Their attire consisted of a shorter, padded doublet, and individual stockings. This left an open space and exposed genitalia. At first, a small piece of cloth covered their genitalia, but that was replaced by a most extreme fashion design, the codpiece. Made of a rigid fabric, it was essentially a "falsie" and used as a pocket. The earliest



codpiece designs were intended to contain and protect the penis, but eventually it became an outrageous/grotesque symbol of virility, oversized and curving upward.<sup>5</sup> Codpieces appear in portraits of noblemen and kings, Henry VIII of England (1491–1547) in particular.<sup>6</sup> This eccentric style persisted into the third quarter of the sixteenth century.

Horizontal expansion of the human form continued through fashion designs that made the body appear more rotund, and was a dominant trend throughout the Renaissance. By about 1525 boned bodices or stays, the precursor of the corset, appeared as court fashion in Spain and spread throughout Europe. This began a century-long intense body reshaping through constriction of the rib cage, decrease of waist size, and redirection upward or flattening of the breasts.<sup>7</sup> Florence and Venice were the main fashion centers and in both the flourishing of writings on aesthetics included commentaries about female beauty, which praised a more fleshy ideal body. An exaggerated girth was accomplished by the addition of padded doublets/jackets for men, and increasingly rounder skirts for women. For both, suggesting the body wounded, a bizarre fashion design of fabrics that appeared to be slashed, appeared in full sagging garments, allowing fabrics beneath to peek out, further contributing to an inflated look. This trend was possibly influenced by battlefield attire, if not exactly the street.

Fashion has served to modify the body through extending its parts but also through concealing them. One of the most peculiar body embellishments was the ruff, which emerged gradually from the standing collar of the early sixteenth century to the full blown sculptural neck piece of circa 1600. Fine fabric was starched and stiffened into a large neck ring that at its most extreme was shoulder width and chin high, creating a weird image of body decapitated, head on ruff.

Excess and exuberance were the guiding principles of fashion created for the court of the French King Louis XIV (1638–1715), which became the center of European fashion. A continued fascination with women's hips and derrieres led to further expansive developments of the female silhouette. Supported by undergarments akin to the Spanish farthingale and "bum roll," the skirt was now flatter in the front, with fabric from the over skirt gathering in puffy swags over the hips and at the buttocks, expanding backwards. Long trains further increased the space behind the wearer. Towards mid-century, and into the reign of French King Louis XV (1710–1774), an exaggeration of the hips by means of side hoops or *panniers* deformed the appearance of the natural body by elongating the hips. A woman's chest was still constricted by means of a bodice made rigid by means of bone stays, a fashion that by the 1770s evolved into the corset, or softer bodice without stays that constricted the torso through tight lacing. It pushed the breasts up and out, producing a most extreme silhouette, aggrandizing the natural body parts.

Breasts and buttocks were radically shaped by western fashion designs of the second half of the nineteenth century and continue to be so into the twenty-first century. By the 1860s the bodice is form fitting and the skirt becomes fuller at the back; by the 1870s the corset is elongated at the front, and bustles layered on top of petticoats covered with voluminous drapery disguise the derrière and turn woman into a near inanimate object like upholstered furniture. And while inventive fashion design modernizes into the twentieth century and throughout the 1930s, the architectural silhouettes of Elsa Schiaparelli (1890–1973), the New Look of Christian Dior (1905–1957), and the sculptural designs by Charles James (1906–1978), expanded and exaggerated the natural body.

Emerging from the minimalist trends of the 1960s, hippie chic, and punk, drastic changes in fashion design came out of London and Japan. Creating avant-garde historicism, Vivienne Westwood's (1941-) super sexy ensembles reintroduced the corset, hoops, and panniers, with an edgy street-informed intelligence. Three forward-thinking Japanese designers shocked the fashion world. Issey Miyake (1938-), more generally known for his extraordinary pleated one-piece works, expressed the body as canvas in his 1970 form-fitting garments with tattoo prints. Miyake's iconic bustier of 1981, made of iridescent cast plastic, is influenced as much by samurai armor as it is the corset.<sup>8</sup> That same year Rei Kawakubo (1942-) and Yohji Yamamoto (1943-) presented their collections in Paris, where both were ridiculed. Bodies were draped with swathes of beautiful solid sober cloth. The construction techniques of their fashion designs were incomprehensible to the western fashion elite, even though they were exquisitely tailored. It is ironic that Kawakubo's Comme des Garçons knitted black wool sweater design of 1982-1983, with large open holes, was panned by critics as looking like ragged clothes of war victims or the poor. It is now recognized as a masterwork of both *wabi sabi*, the Japanese concept of beauty as imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete, and deconstructivist fashion.

Such cultural misreading is perhaps more rare today. The internet, social media, and a global economy bring the world closer. Yet, it is precisely the tensions between different cultures and religions that are at the heart of the fashion design collective threeASFOUR. If not exactly on a mission to establish world peace, their own harrowing life stories motivate them to bring greater harmony to contemporary life. They use fashion and its presentation to bridge cultural divides. Their mantra is "unity."

Born 1 January 2005, threeASF0UR is three designers and one brand. New York based, they are Adi Gil (born 1974, Israel), Angela Donhauser (born 1971, Tajikistan), and Gabriel Asfour, (born 1965, Lebanon), their countries and religions of origin often embattled.<sup>9</sup> From a platform of discontent with the politics of governments determined to accentuate differences and separations rather than similarities and common ground, they message cultural connections through their fashions. Radical in concept and design, threeASF0UR are leading the discourse on what fashion means in the twenty-first century, how it can be made, and how it can impact social change. Invited to curate *In Salaam In Shalom* at the Beit Hair Center for Urban Culture, Tel Aviv, they showed their Spring 2012 collection based on printed fabrics they designed with Jewish and Islamic familiar symbols such as the Star of David, the *Hamsa* (good luck talisman shaped like a hand), the *Shofar* (ram's horn), along with prints from Jewish prayer shawls (*talit*) and Arabic head kerchiefs (*kaffiyah*). Drawn to fashion as way of making that is immediate and fresh due to the pace at which it changes season to season, their designs distort parts of the body and are about the body. Truly operating at the intersection of art, craft, and design, on the periphery of the fashion system (although they dip in and out of it, having worked for both Kate Spade and Gap), they eschew commercial terms of ready to wear and couture; they prefer the hybrid term *prêt-a-couture*.<sup>10</sup> They are a design studio, an international artisanal guild (interns come from all over the world), and a laboratory of experimentation.<sup>11</sup> In this way they are most closely aligned with Boudicca, the London based fashion artists, who are avant garde thinkers, spiritually grounded, and transdisciplinary.<sup>12</sup> What sets threeASF0UR apart is what Adi has called their “magic.” threeASF0UR is a cult.<sup>13</sup>

**FIGURE 23**

threeASF0UR  
*Temple* Spring/Summer 2014



threeASF0UR begin the design process with a concept. From their earliest collections, that central concept has been nature. Studying patterns and cycles in plants, animals, the body, the universe, and the sacred geometry that can be found therein, they develop a group of fashion designs that express a particular theme via the language of fabric and form. While that may sound simplistic, it is their uncanny ability to source and develop textiles, their intuitive talent with drape and embellishment, and their fierce determination to be relevant not just to the “client” but for the betterment of the world, that yield such original designs. Manipulating silk charmeuse and silk organza, for example, fashions from the Autumn/Winter 2005 collection illustrate threeASF0UR’s preference for curved hems and the spiral.<sup>14</sup> For their 2010 collection, in collaboration with Yoko Ono (1933–), they designed fabric based on several of Ono’s dot drawings, and created intricately constructed fashions with circle seams, and with an integral message of peace.<sup>15</sup> *Crop Circles*, the group’s Fall / Winter 2012 collection focused on the circle, with large spiral on the wall of The Hole (gallery) in New York, where it was presented. In homage to crop circles, the palette was straw and grain colors with contrasting metallic touches.

*Body Embellishment* features a selection of works from threeASF0UR’s most recent collections, MER KA BA, Topographic, and Tree of Life. Inspired by patterns found in sacred Islamic, Judaic, and Christian architecture, the theme of MER KA BA, Spring / Summer 2014, in its individual works and its performative manifestations, is universality and transcendence **(FIGURE 23)**. *Merkaba* is ancient form of Jewish and Sufi mysticism with even deeper roots. Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs *mer* (rotating light), *ka* (spirit) and *ba* (body) together describe a transcendent energy field. In the Kaballah, *Merkaba* is



**FIGURE 24**

threeASFOUR  
*Mosaic* Spring/Summer 2014



**FIGURE 25**

threeASFOUR  
*Notre Dame* Spring/Summer 2014



**FIGURE 26**

threeASFOUR  
*Sistine* Spring/Summer 2014



symbolized by two pyramids interlaced to form a three-dimensional six-pointed star. The Platonic Solids—the Star Tetrahedron in particular—are incorporated into the concept of the fashions and the environment in which they were originally presented at the Jewish Museum, New York, in 2013.<sup>16</sup> Mastering hand-sewing, fabric folding, experimenting with the pierced softness of laser cut fabric and the solidity of 3D printing, threeASFOUR incorporate such sacred geometry into each fashion design, emphasizing the interfaith theme. *Mosaic* refers to the pan-religious, but also to the source of some of the motifs the team studied, such as ornamental tiles and interlaced arabesques (FIGURE 24).

*Notre Dame* is covered in fragmented six-pointed stars, found in both mosque decoration and synagogues (FIGURE 25). That threeASFOUR has taken a traditional Japanese origami technique to create the motifs references additional cultures. Using origami, a tedious folding process done by hand, the curved pattern pieces wrap around the contours of the body. The upper body is distorted by short sleeves that have morphed into large circular shapes, like angel wings. The shine of the white dress, a result of the faceted origami shapes, suggests light, purity, and innocence. In contrast, threeASFOUR used origami to create their version of a twenty-first century “little black dress” (FIGURE 26).

MER KA BA fashion designs created with 3D printing technology push the idea of contemporary couture further.<sup>17</sup> Ever at the forefront of contemporary fabric design and textile technologies, it was inevitable threeASFOUR would add 3D printing to its tool box. Working with their collaborators they designed the individual fabrics produced

**FIGURE 27**

threeASF0UR  
*Revelation* Spring/Summer 2014



in Belgium by Materialise. Relatively thin, the resin textile pieces were draped on dress forms and shaped by standard sartorial methods. By fusing three layers of textiles, the white dresses have an organic, cocoon-like appearance (**FIGURE 27**). *Revelation* is the most transformative design of the MER KA BA collection, with its body embellishments of a tail-like appendage, and large protrusion at upper back, creating an otherworldly silhouette. The design evokes Kawakubo's *Lumps* collection of 1997, and her famous quip, "body becomes dress becomes body."

**FIGURE 28**

threeASF0UR  
*Bahai* Spring/Summer 2014



The complexity of the 3D patterning, and the intricacy of the construction, makes *Bahai* a true marvel (**FIGURE 28**). Fractal hexagons in sequenced Fibonacci sizes, are put together to create an exquisite metaphor for the entire MER KA BA collection, engulfing the body with the harmony of the spheres.

Finding their theme for Fall / Winter 2014 literally in the world itself, the Topographic collection is based on topographical maps. The curvaceous lines denoting land masses from an aerial perspective have connections to the way threeASF0UR design pattern pieces. The concept of the body as a "wonderland" permeates this off-white collection of laser cut nylon and cotton fabrics. Ever searching for new sites to debut their collections, threeASF0UR chose a virtual one to present Topographic. Instead of a live runway show a video was made in which model Lily McMenamy walks through a fractal fantasy world.<sup>18</sup>

threeASFOUR

*Fractal Video* 2013

Concept & Direction: threeASFOUR; Model: Lily McMenamy;

3D animation / Visual Effects / Editing: Alex Czetwertynski;

Sound: Mike Stroud / RATATAT; Cinematography: Brian Gonzalez;

Choreography: Maria Hassab; Hair: Helena Moke & Allie Smith;

Makeup: Andrea Helgadottir

**FIGURE 29**

threeASF0UR

*Topographic* from the Topographic Collection Fall/Winter 2014



**FIGURE 30**

threeASF0UR

*Seaweed* from the Topographic Collection Fall/Winter 2014



Two fashions from this collection caress the body with what look to be glacial formations, or snow drifts (**FIGURE 29 AND FIGURE 30**). According to the designers, other natural elements such as wood grain and clouds inspired the collection. The body itself, ligaments, and thumb prints were referenced in hand sewn details of coats and ensembles. Other creations are more enigmatic, such as this ensemble which features a soft oyster-shell-like top with slashed laser cut leggings (**FIGURE 31**).<sup>19</sup>

While threeASF0UR take pride in their place as artists who make fashion interventions in society, they are also pragmatic. Making each work by hand in their artisanal studio is not a sustainable model. Embracing the business of ready to wear, their latest collection still pushes the envelope, still has the integrity of their message, but adapted to a mass market. Tree of Life continues the group's celebration of mother nature in new laser cut fabrics of bold abstracted designs (**FIGURES 32 AND 33**). Textile magicians, the patterns they created can be read as tree branches or even ligament structures, with layering creating a skeletal effect. Tree of Life includes menswear and unisex fashions that are easy to wear. The shape of the garments comes from traditional dress of many cultures reinvented for our twenty-first century lives.

**Annie Carlano**

**FIGURE 31**

threeASFOUR

*Topographic Cape* from the Topographic Collection Fall/Winter 2014



**FIGURE 32**

threeASFOUR

*Branch* from the Tree of Life Collection Spring/Summer 2015



**FIGURE 33**

threeASFOUR

*Untitled* from the Tree of Life Collection Spring/Summer 2015





## ENDNOTES

- 1 Harold Koda, *Extreme Beauty: The Body Transformed* (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), pp. 28–29.
- 2 There are several factors that influence fashion design in general and in its avant garde manifestations: prevailing concepts of beauty, eroticism and fetishism, leading artistic movements, cultural zeitgeist, economics, religion, and politics. The periodical *Fashion Theory The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, Berg publishers, London, is a leading academic source on cross-disciplinary interpretation of clothing across time and cultures.
- 3 I am referring here to the woman's over sleeves; the contrast with the tight sleeves below further underscores the oversized scale of the outer sleeves as depicted in the painting, in the collection of the National Gallery of Art, London.
- 4 Gabriella Butazzi, *Costume in Lombardia* (Electa Editrice, Milan, 1977), p. 30.
- 5 It was recently suggested that the codpiece developed because of the pandemic of 1495 onwards of syphilis. See C.S. Reed, "Occasional Medical History Series," 'The codpiece: social fashion or medical need,' in *Internal Medical Journal* 2004; 34: 684–686. To see an accurate reproduction of an early codpiece based on historic examples, worn by BBC journalist Stephen Smith, consult his video interview with Florentine Fashion Historian Roberta Orsi Landini, BBC News Magazine (online) 17 March 2014.
- 6 See the portrait after Hans Holbein the Younger in the collection of the Liverpool Art Gallery, for example.
- 7 For a thorough and fascinating history of the corset, consult Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (Yale University Press, 2001). For the history of French corsets and construction details see Hubert Barrère and Charles-Arthur Boyer, *Corset* (Editions du Rouergue, 2011).
- 8 Robert Mapplethorpe's photograph of Lisa Lyons wearing the bustier and a long skirt, 1982, is well known.
- 9 "Born" is how they describe their beginnings on their web site. They have all worked together in a collective since 1998 when they co-founded As Four with Kai Kuhne. Kai left the group in 2005. That same year work by threeASF0UR was included in the exhibition, *Glamour*, at The Museum at FIT, threeASF0UR perfume debuted at Colette, Paris, and they participated in a Denim installation at Deitch Projects, Art Basel Miami.
- 10 Email message to author from Gabi Asfour, 31 October 2014.
- 11 Author's observations from a studio visit on 7 August 2014, where students and young designers were busy cutting patterns and preparing muslins for the Spring 2015 collection.
- 12 Boudicca is the dynamic fashion design duo Zowie Broach and Brian Kirby. Intense intellectuals, they have been exploring the meaning of contemporary fashion beyond the physical through performance and imaginative usage of early photography, among other approaches. I am indebted to them for their time during a studio visit 9 May 2013, and to Zowie in particular for our many phone conversations about body embellishment and 21st century culture. For a critical study of Boudicca see Zoë Ryan, *Fashioning the Object: Bless, Boudicca, Sandra Backlund* (The Art Institute of Chicago, 2012), pp.55–75.
- 13 Please consult the threeASF0UR website or Facebook page for biography and bibliography.
- 14 For a brief discussion of this early work consult Sandy Black, editor, *fashioning fabrics: contemporary textiles in fashion* (Black Dog Publishing, London, 2006) pp.72–73.
- 15 The presentation of this collection was based on Yoko Ono's performance art of 1977, *Cut Piece*. The idea for the collaboration between Ono and threeASF0UR was suggested by Sean Lennon. *Letter to Jane: Interview with threeASF0UR*, Imagine Peace archives online, 20 May 2010.
- 16 The exhibition *threeASF0UR: MER KA BA*, was presented at the Jewish Museum, New York, 1 October 2013 – 2 February 2014. The multimedia installation included nine dresses, the 3D printed designs, a collaboration with artist Bradley Rothenberg and Joris Debo of Materialise, a mirrored environmental design by architect Christian Wassman, 3D-video animations by Alex Czetwertynski, and music by Raz Mesinai.
- 17 Iris van Herpen was the first contemporary fashion designer to exploit 3D printing. She also worked with Materialise. threeASF0UR are the first New York based fashion artists to work successfully with this technology.
- 18 *Fractal Video* 2013. Concept & Direction: threeASF0UR; Model: Lily McMenemy; 3D animation / Visual Effects / Editing: Alex Czetwertynski; Sound: Mike Stroud / RATATAT; Cinematography: Brian Gonzalez; Choreography: Maria Hassabi; Hair: Helena Moke & Allie Smith; Makeup: Andrea Helgadottir
- 19 An exhibition of works from the Topographic collection was held at the Columbus College of Art and Design's Canzani Center Gallery, Columbus, Ohio, 23 October 2014 – 8 January 2015.

**FIGURE 23**

threeASFOUR

*Temple* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring/Summer 2014

Photograph by Randy Brooks

© threeASFOUR, All rights Reserved, 2011



**FIGURE 24**

threeASFOUR  
Mosaic from the MER KA BA Collection Spring/Summer 2014  
Photograph by Randy Brooks  
© threeASFOUR, All rights Reserved, 2011



**FIGURE 25**

threeASFOUR  
*Notre Dame* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring/Summer 2014  
Photograph by Randy Brooks  
© threeASFOUR, All rights Reserved, 2011





**FIGURE 26**

threeASFOUR

*Sistine* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring/Summer 2014

Photograph by Randy Brooks

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**FIGURE 27**

threeASFOUR

*Revelation* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring/Summer 2014

Photograph by Randy Brooks

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**FIGURE 28**

threeASFOUR  
*Bahai* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring/Summer 2014  
Photograph by Randy Brooks  
© threeASFOUR, All rights Reserved, 2011



**FIGURE 29**

threeASFOUR  
*Topographic* from the Topographic Collection Fall/Winter 2014  
Photograph by Brian Gonzalez  
Model Lily McMenemy  
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**FIGURE 30**

threeASFOUR  
Seaweed from the Topographic Collection Fall/Winter 2014  
Photograph by Brian Gonzalez  
Model Lily McMenemy  
© threeASFOUR, All rights Reserved, 2014



**FIGURE 31**

threeASFOUR

*Topograhic Cape* from the Topographic Collection Fall/Winter 2014

Photograph by Brian Gonzalez

Model Lily McMenemy

© threeASFOUR, All rights Reserved, 2014





**FIGURE 32**

threeASF0UR  
Branch from the Tree of Life Collection Spring/Summer 2015  
Photograph by Jeffrey Hagerman  
Model Grace Bol  
© threeASF0UR, All rights Reserved, 2014



**FIGURE 33**

threeASF0UR

*Untitled* from the Tree of Life Collection Spring/Summer 2015

Photograph by Jeffrey Hagerman

Model Grace Bol

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# EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

## TATTOO

**Anil Gupta.** American (born in India), 1952–  
**Inkline Studio.** New York, New York, 1995–  
Digital image of *Blind Man's Breakfast* 21st century  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Anil Gupta.** American (born in India), 1952–  
**Inkline Studio.** New York, New York, 1995–  
Digital image of *Vincent's Self-Portrait* 21st century  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Anil Gupta.** American (born in India), 1952–  
**Inkline Studio.** New York, New York, 1995–  
Digital image of *Persistence of Memory* 21st century  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Filip Leu.** Swiss, 1967–  
**Leu Family Iron.** Lausanne, Switzerland, 1982–  
Three digital images of *Tattoo on Dre* 2010  
Courtesy of Bobby C. Alkabes

**Freddy Negrete.** American, 1960–  
Digital image of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* 21st century  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Freddy Negrete.** American, 1960–  
Digital image of *Praying Sugar Skull* 21st century  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Freddy Negrete.** American, 1960–  
Digital image of *Smile Now, Cry Later* 21st century  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Stephanie Tamez.** American, 1963–  
**Saved Tattoo Studio.** Brooklyn, New York, 2004–  
Digital image of *Byzantine icon side piece* 2013  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Stephanie Tamez.** American, 1963–  
**Saved Tattoo Studio.** Brooklyn, New York, 2004–  
Digital image of *Rams chest piece* 2013  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Stephanie Tamez.** American, 1963–  
**Saved Tattoo Studio.** Brooklyn, New York, 2004–  
Digital image of *William Morris back piece* 2013  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Inia Taylor.** New Zealander (Maori), 1967–  
**Moko Ink.** Grey Lynn, New Zealand, 1988–  
Digital image of *Ta moko done with uhi on face*  
21st century  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Inia Taylor.** New Zealander (Maori), 1967–  
**Moko Ink.** Grey Lynn, New Zealand, 1988–  
Digital image of *Ta moko done with uhi on legs*  
21st century  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Inia Taylor.** New Zealander (Maori), 1967–  
**Moko Ink.** Grey Lynn, New Zealand, 1988–  
Digital image of *Ta moko done with uhi on hand*  
21st century  
Courtesy of the Artist

## NAIL ART

**Carlos Rolón/Dzine.** American, 1970–  
*Street Kings of 125th St. (Mr. Dapper Dan)* 2011  
Wood chair, velvet, Gucci bag fabric, enamel  
Collection of the Artist

**Carlos Rolón/Dzine.** American, 1970–  
*Untitled (Black Widow)* 2011  
Plastic, found object, enamel, 24 karat gold leaf,  
velvet and Swarovski crystals  
Collection of the Artist

**Carlos Rolón/Dzine.** American, 1970–  
*Back Seat of my Coupe de Ville* 2011  
Wood, velvet, mirror, Swarovski crystals, 24 karat  
gold leaf with custom lighting and chandelier  
Collection of the Artist

**Carlos Rolón/Dzine.** American, 1970–  
*Nine Custom Middle Finger Rings for Ex-Lovers*  
2011  
Vintage jewelry, 24 karat gold leaf  
and Swarovski crystals  
Collection of the Artist

**Carlos Rolón/Dzine.** American, 1970–  
*Two Custom Middle Finger Rings for Ex-Lovers*  
2011  
Vintage jewelry, gold plating, fabric,  
24 karat gold leaf and Swarovski crystals  
Collection of the Artist

**Carlos Rolón/Dzine.** American, 1970–  
*Untitled (Kay Amore)* 2011  
Plastic, metal, 24 karat gold leaf, velvet, acrylic,  
glitter, water, and Swarovski crystals  
Collection of the Artist

**Sophy Robson.** British, 1970–  
*Crystalyzed* 2011  
Fiberglass hand, Swarovski crystals,  
embellished acrylic nails  
Originally exhibited and commissioned for  
*Nailphilia* (2011) curated by Ryan Lanji  
Collection of the Artist

**Ami Vega.** American, 1982–  
**El Salonsito.** New York, New York, 2011–  
*Keith Haring Nail Set* 2014  
False nails, gel polish, fluid acrylic paint, hard gel  
Collection of the Artist

**Naomi Yasuda.** Japanese (active in United States),  
1984–  
**Hello Beautiful.** Brooklyn, New York, 1999–  
*Hand-painted nail set* 2014  
Full-set of hand-painted artificial nails  
Collection of the Artist



# STUDIO JEWELRY

**Rebecca Annand.** American, 1986–  
*Contortionist Rorschach Bracelet* 2009  
3D printed photopolymer, hand-dyed  
Collection of the Artist

**Rebecca Annand.** American, 1986–  
*Cameo Yoke II Neckpiece* 2010  
3D printed photopolymer, hand-dyed  
Collection of the Artist

**David Bielander.** Swiss, 1968–  
*Blue Python* neckpiece 2011  
Titanium and silver  
Collection of Susan Beech

**Norman Cherry (designer and photographer).**  
British, 20th century–  
**David Withycombe (photographer for Shadi).**  
British, 20th century–  
**David Miles (postproduction worker).**  
British, 20th century–  
*Angiogenetic Body Adornment (Chrissy, Katherine, Shadi, and Emma)* 2004  
Four digital images  
Courtesy of the Artist

**Nora Fok.** British, 1953–  
*This Is Life* neckpiece 2008–2010  
Knitted dyed nylon with nylon rods  
Collection of the Artist

**Nora Fok.** British, 1953–  
*Eremurus robustus (Foxtail Lily)* ring  
from *Nylon Botanicas* Collection 2005  
Knitted dyed nylon  
Collection of the Artist

**Lauren Kalman.** American, 1980–  
*Blooms, Efflorescence, and Other Dermatological Embellishments (Cystic Acne, Chest)* 2009  
Object: gold-plated silver, acupuncture needles, pearls, diamonds, garnets, rubies, nickel-plated brass insertion tools, hammer, mdf, faux leather, frame; Photograph: inkjet print on luster laminate  
Collection of Rotasa Collection Trust  
Photograph courtesy of Sienna Gallery, Lenox, MA

**Lauren Kalman.** American, 1980–  
*But if the Crime is Beautiful...Hood (6)* 2014  
Object: faux (plastic) pearls  
Photograph: giclée  
Collection of Susan Beech

**Joji Kojima.** American and Japanese, 1987–  
*Insecta finger ornament* from *Armor Collection* 2011  
Brass, gold  
Collection of Valerie Steele

**Joji Kojima.** American and Japanese, 1987–  
*Raspberry mask* from *Hotel Gluttony Collection* 2011  
Resin, brass, crystals, leather  
Collection of the Artist

**Joji Kojima.** American and Japanese, 1987–  
*Flamingo finger ornament* from *Utopia Collection* 2012  
Brass, leather, gold, feathers  
Collection of the Artist

**Jeong Ju Lee.** South Korean (active in United States), 1965–  
*Whizzing I Brooch* 2009  
Sterling silver  
Courtesy of Porter-Price Collection

**Rowan Mersh.** British, 1982–  
*Neckpiece* 2009  
Cotton, alpaca wool, silk  
Collection of the Artist

**Ana Rajcevic.** Serbian (active in England and Germany), 1983–  
*ANIMAL: The Other Side of Evolution* 2012  
Fiberglass and polyester resin  
Collection of the Artist

**Mi-Ah Rödiger.** German, 1981–  
*Cochlea I* from *Chrome* series 2011  
Silver, “metallized” resin, silicone rubber, tourmaline  
Collection of Susan Beech

**Mi-Ah Rödiger.** German, 1981–  
*Crystal Chain* 2012  
Silver, Australian hematite, animal horn, resin  
Collection of The Mint Museum. Museum Purchase with funds from the Charles W. Beam Accessions Endowment. 2012.56

**Gerd Rothmann.** German, 1941–  
*Über die Sprache der Hände* (About the Language of Hands) 2007  
Gold  
Collection of Susan Beech

**Sam Tho Duong.** German (born in Vietnam), 1969–  
*lemitcA-VD2* 2012  
plastic (recycled Actimel® yogurt containers), mixed stones, nylon  
Collection of Susan Beech

**Jennifer Trask.** American, 1970–  
*Germinate* 2010  
Bone, antler, teeth, pre-ban ivory, steel, brass, diamonds  
Collection of Susan Beech

**Jennifer Trask.** American, 1970–  
*Revival Neck Object* 2012  
Wood, gesso, 23.75 karat gold leaf, antlers, boars’ tusks  
Collection of the Artist

**Heather White Van Stolk.** American, 1968–  
*Honey-Suckle Torque* 2006  
Sterling silver, gold, oil paint  
Collection of The Mint Museum.  
Gift of Susan Beech. 2008.47

**Stephanie Voegele.** American, 1983–  
*Back Pearl Adornment* 2010  
Object: silicone rubber, pigment  
Photograph: digital image  
Collection of the Artist

**Kathy Vones.** German (active in Scotland), 1979–  
*Earconch* 2006  
Silicone and sterling silver  
Collection of the Artist

**Amy Weiks.** American, 1981–  
*Lick No. 2* neckpiece from the *Lick and Drool Series* 2009  
Hand-dyed terrycloth, polyfill, cotton thread, glass seed beads  
Collection of the Artist

**Christoph Zellweger.** Swiss, 1962–  
*Hip Piece, #2401-0* from *Foreign Bodies* series 2002  
Secondhand hip replacement (surgical grade steel), leather  
Collection of Susan Beech

**Christoph Zellweger.** Swiss, 1962–  
*Excess 3330* from *Excessories* series 2012  
Blown and sandblasted glass, string  
Collection of Susan Beech



# FASHION

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Temple* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring / Summer 2014  
Bonded silk organza, laser-cut  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Mosaic* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring / Summer 2014  
Bonded cotton, coated black cotton, laser-cut  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Notre Dame* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring / Summer 2014  
Bonded black silk organza, origami pleating  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Sistine* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring / Summer 2014  
Bonded white silk organza, origami pleating  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Revelation* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring / Summer 2014  
3D-printed ivory resin, laser-sintered nylon  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Bahai* from the MER KA BA Collection Spring / Summer 2014  
3D-printed ivory resin, laser-sintered nylon  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Topographic* from the Topographic Collection Fall / Winter 2014  
Nylon, laser-cut  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Seaweed* from the Topographic Collection Fall / Winter 2014  
Coated off-white cotton, white nylon tulle, laser-cut vinyl  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Topographic Cape* from the Topographic Collection Fall / Winter 2014  
Coated off-white cotton, laser-cut  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Branch* from the Tree of Life Collection Spring / Summer 2015  
Cotton piqué, laser-cut bonded cotton  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Untitled* from the Tree of Life Collection Spring / Summer 2015  
Cotton piqué, laser-cut bonded cotton  
Collection of threeASF0UR, LLC

**threeASF0UR.** United States, 2005–  
**Gabriel Asfour (designer).** Lebanese, 1966–  
**Adi Gil (designer).** Israeli, 1974–  
**Angela Donhauser (designer).** Tajik, 1971–  
*Fractal Video* 2013  
Concept & Direction: threeASF0UR  
Model: Lily McMenamy  
3D animation / Visual Effects / Editing: Alex Czetwertynski  
Sound: Mike Stroud / RATATAT  
Cinematography: Brian Gonzalez  
Choreography: Maria Hassab  
Hair: Helena Moke & Allie Smith  
Makeup: Andrea Helgadottir

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Body Embellishment* intends to present the most current inventive work being carried out throughout the globe in a variety of esoteric genres. To do so we had to take the road less traveled and take risks. We owe much to those who believed in us, those who agreed to be a part of the subjects of this project, and those who contributed their advice, talent, and support.

## For embellishing this project we thank...

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**FIN**

