

Look at This Body



THE ICKY STICKY WONDER

Adelphie He

Jess Bateman

Kate Marshall

Yumemi Hiraki

Good Grief Studios

62 Argyle Street

Until April 30

Price Range \$69-\$1800

There is a tiny, white creature perched on the windowsill of Hobart's Good Grief Studios. They're kneeling on a cloud of wool, staring at themselves in a mirror. It's an intimate moment of self-reflection, usually reserved for behind closed doors.

This is artist Adelphie He's sculpture, *Friends on the Wonderland* (2023).

In the opposite corner of the room, a naked woman sits on a clay stool.

The woman untangles her hair while her skin ripples and folds for onlookers to see. But the woman is not really there; she is engraved into a mirror in Yumemi Hiriaki's self-portrait and sculptural work, *Ofuroba* (2023).

To the left of the tiny creature, three provocative oil paintings hang neatly in a row. Jess Bateman's works: *Worm*, *Bloom* and *Openings* (2023) feature an unsettling contrast of images painted on dark red backdrops. These thought-provoking works portray the feminine body, blooming orchids, raw chicken wings and headless people.

Behind a black curtain lays another universe entirely; in this pitch-black room, three textile sculptures bubble, ripple and suck like reactive masses of skin. Kate Marshall's *Playing at the Edges* (2023) features soft sculptures that glow from within with a soft, warm light.

Exhibition *The Icky Sticky Wonder*, showing at Hobart's Good Grief Studios this April, explores women's expressions of the feminine body and experience: the beautiful and the grotesque.

The Ritual of Bathing

Japanese artist Yumemi Hiraki's, *Ofuroba* (2023), meaning "the bathing place," sits in an intimate nook of the gallery. Fired clay items dimpled by Hiraki's fingers scatter across the floor: a stool, a washcloth, shampoo and conditioner. In front of these pieces stands a rectangular mirror with a woman engraved on its surface. She is naked, bathing and untangling her hair.



Making *Ofuroba* (2023) was a way for this artist to explore her relationship with her body and culture. Hiraki was curious to see how she would feel in displaying her naked body through her art.

"As an Asian female, exploring these topics is very taboo...talking about sensuality, sexuality, intimacy, is something that you don't do in public," explains Hiraki.

"I'm finding who I am, culturally, while always withholding the tension of being in this "between" space... I'm trying to find myself, but also trying to be authentic to my cultural self."

Looking at *Ofuroba* (2023) not only does the viewer see Hiraki in the mirror, but they also see themselves. Through this work, Hiraki asks her audience: what is there to be ashamed of? And what is there to hide?

Permission to Touch

Behind a black curtain, inside a dark room, lays Kate Marshall's soft sculpture series: *Playing at the Edges* (2023). The smallest of these works sits to the right of the space; its bulbous shape is covered in blisters: some see through, others solid.



To the left, a mountain-shaped structure wears puckered crevasses on its surface. The third sculpture clings to the wall. Its billowy folds, reddish hues and round edges make it reminiscent of a beating heart.

"In philosophical and social contexts, the body has been undervalued, particularly bodies of minority groups, as things that are limiting us and making us vulnerable, compared to the spirit and mind," Marshall explains.

For Marshall, *Playing at the Edges* (2023) was a way to re-imagine her relationship with her body. In this series, taboo is transformed into beautiful as crevasses appear as vulvas, bubbles appear as blisters, and folded fabric appears as folds of skin.

In *Playing at the Edges* (2023) the artist creates a dimly lit, contemplative space for her viewers to explore and celebrate the body.

Exploring the Self

Jess Bateman's paintings: *Worm, Bloom and Openings* (2023) hang in a uniform row along the gallery wall. At first, these paintings appear unassuming with their small size, but experiencing this series is much more than a casual viewing.



Each work features a mystifying contrast of elements: a naked woman and a worm, flowers and raw chicken wings, an embrace between two headless people and a vulva. This strange pairing of imagery unsettles the audience and propels them into an endless search for meaning.

"I want my works to evoke a visceral response from the viewer - whether it be pleasure, disgust, intrigue...I tend to use images that allude to a tactile or sensory experience." Bateman says.

In Bateman's painting, *worm*, a woman is lying on her side with her naked vulva facing the audience. This work imbues an uneasy feeling as the woman's head is enveloped in darkness. While she's lying in this vulnerable position, we can see her, but she cannot see us.

Bateman's paintings are like a beautiful puzzle. In confusing the audience, they inspire many interpretations of the work, allowing the viewer to explore their own psyche.

A Search for Identity

Perched along the window sills and positioned on the ground of Good Grief Studios is Adelphie He's installation, *Friends on the Wonderland* (2023). He's work features a series of small-scale, imaginative worlds made of fluffy, white wool.



In these cloud-like universes, it has just rained, but instead of water, hundreds and thousands coat these woollen islands in a rainbow sprinkle where little creatures blush, smile and play.

To experience these miniature works, the viewer must lean in or crouch down. Only then will they notice the surprises embedded into the work. Some are silly, like the phallic creature who wears a pink sprinkle on its head like a nipple. Others are more earnest, like the creature kneeling on the ground, investigating its reflection in a mirror.

He's work, while humorous, has a way of sensitively touching on the human experience. As this creature looks at its reflection, it's as if they're asking, *"Who am I?"* This sincere moment speaks to an often lonely and universal search for personal identity. In looking at this work, the viewer can't help but feel empathy for

He's creature and, perhaps, a little less alone in their own journey through life.

Perspectives on Femininity

The Icky Sticky Wonder invites its audience into the inner worlds of four artists from diverse backgrounds. Its works offer a raw, uncensored and layered expression of living and feeling as a woman. This exhibition contributes to a greater conversation on femininity and gender in a beautifully sensitive, joyful and thought-provoking way.

