

## **This is my body**

**--Solid Art Gathering : Philipp Kremer solo exhibition**

Text: Hsu Chu-Chun

Before Jesus Christ's crucifixion, during the Last Supper, Christ broke bread and drank wine with the 12 Apostles, saying "this is my body (Hoc est enim corpus meum)." From that moment on, as part of the established holy ritual, the flesh and body of Christ, drunk and eaten, have become the manifestation of God in an untouchable, Holy existence.

Being untouchable introduces depth to corporeal experience, in the sense that the God-given "coat of light"<sup>1</sup> prior to mankind's expulsion from the Garden of Eden reflects God's will of Christ's sacrifice for mankind, or points towards the boundlessness of history and time. "Hoc est enim corpus meum" is like a shackle, closing off discussions of corporeal experiences in the secular.

Philipp Kremer's *Gatherings*, on the other hand boldly portrays an alternate interpretation of the phrase: when the artist depicts through his works "Hoc est enim corpus meum", he does not mean to expose some inner meaning within the human body. Since the skin surface is the body's outermost boundary, the meaning of the body stops there, inferring not towards deeper significances nor carrying the burden of other references.

The artist deftly applies his medium of choice, namely the pigment and the canvas, reducing the human body to a series of monotone brushstrokes and color patches. Whether it's the intertwined bodies in *Couple*, or the conjoined torsos of *Gatherings*, one does not see a detailed profiling of bodily features by the artist, but only intentionally preserved brushstrokes—it's as if Kremer underscores through the materiality of brushstrokes on canvas and its characteristic relief, that nude paintings don't necessarily refer to any form of imagining towards the body, but is what it is: powdered pigments mixed in with acrylic resin. The artist even shows disregard for correct human proportions, showing oversized heads, disproportionate limbs, and enlarged organs, changing up the body parts in the painting to resemble a collection of lump masses.

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<sup>1</sup> In the article *Nudità*, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben writes that in order to explain the guilt of nakedness felt by Adam and Eve at the eating of the Forbidden Fruit, Christian theologians fashioned a "coat of light" which was not mentioned in the Bible: that before the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve wore this God-given "coat of light" and did not feel the guilt. The "depriving of the coat" thus was God's punishment towards mankind.

This recalls French philosopher Jean Luc Nancy's example of Jean Fautrier's painting *My Fair Lady* and his discussion of the nude in plastic arts, in which Nancy deems what makes the painting is "the thickness of matter". One sees "layer upon layer of painting, forming an image of the body", which not only visually but also physically, like sedimentary materials, "press against our eye". The gaze placed on the painting forms a "skin" on the image, resulting in the "representation" of the female body by the painting, its eye.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between the viewer and the painting exists on this "superficial" surface, and besides the pigment applied to the frame and the gaze towards the painting, the touching of skin surfaces is stripped of other implications.

Kremer in *Gatherings* and *Couple* exhibits a distinct mastery of the characteristics of paint and brush strokes compared to his predecessors, being more flexible in manipulating the characteristics of images. He is not merely satisfied with touching audiences through the thickness of the matter, only applying thin layers and allowing the image to set in a smooth skin surface, such as those on a computer or smartphone display, simultaneously swiping over each image with the fingertips and gaze. He uses doors, windows, laptop monitors, and even the mutual glances of the subjects in the orgies to cover his paintings with this all-encompassing visual "skin".

Especially in the exhibited *Gatherings* series of works, Kremer employs human bodies as "images within images". He paints the bodies in similar or same colors as the background, so that apart from human bodies featured prominently in the foreground, they recede into the background. He also leverages spatial composition as a framework to allow people within and without to share in sexual pleasure, locked in mutual gazes. This method precisely conveys the unique experiences of the orgy—intertwining yet gazing distantly at others intertwined, while also being subjected to another's gaze. Excitement, climax, and euphoria are experienced first-hand, as well as through others. The intimate skin-to-skin contact between each person, through the participants' mutual gazes, is expanded through the format of the painting and externalized. Each person as a subject for experiencing also becomes the object being seen, or even relegated to lines, brush strokes, and colors on the canvas, experiencing and witnessing all that is happening.

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<sup>2</sup> Federico Ferrari, Jean-Luc Nancy. *Nus sommes: la peau des images*. Bruxelles : Y. Gevaert. 2002.

Simultaneously being in the experience and seeing one's body objectified is seemingly impossible outside of out-of-body experiences in near-death situations. Yet Kremer is able to portray sexual pleasure as a state of "the little death", or *la petite mort*, capturing the moment of skin contact on canvas. In his hands the painting becomes a form of "body art", or *la peinture est l' art des corps*, in which only the "carnation", the skins, and the touching of skins exist, no longer serving as an "incarnation" of some abstract idea. In this way, the work of Kremer demonstrates that images constructed through mutual gazing on a flat surface in acrylic is the best singular expression of body experiences.

Kremer's paintings let *Hoc est enim corpus meum* become a declaration of liberation: that my body is not a vehicle of God's will, is no longer veiled in original sin, secrets, and shame, nor symbolizes a rush of taboo pleasures—the touch of the skin between individuals are merely like touching of objects, equitable, free, and a lighted hearted pleasure.