

## THE OTHER, THE AUTO-IMMUNE AND THE INSCRIPTION: System, Self and Skin

Marian makes interactive installations for interrogating and performing the human, that also foreground the female. She embodies and actualises her ideas and personal experiences and transforms them into aesthetic actions. With hands-on sensitivity, and the juxtaposition of old and new technologies, unexpected couplings are constructed and meaningful relationships emerge that re-adjust what it means to be a body and how it operates in the world.

Our artistic interests collide in multiple ways. A desire to expose circuitry, structure and process. With the use of pneumatic actuators and the sounds they generate with compressed air and their accompanying solenoid clicks. Our use of compressed air and flexible materials and membranes that conjure up associations with breath and skin. A fascination with the significance of online presence and distributed cognition. And an interest in skin as both material substance and as a site of contestation.

Her obsession with skin is for profoundly personal reasons. She has an auto-immune disease which, among other symptoms, causes progressive de-pigmentation of her skin. And with her current *"Needlework: live skin interface"* installation and performance, Marian enacts, exposes and imprints the workings of her auto-immune system. There is a correlation between the tattoo needle depositing pigment on her skin and the embroidery needle stitching thread into cloth. Skin and cloth simultaneously become recording substrates. An event and action whose theme is simultaneously an accumulation and an erasure. And rather than a performance for a particular duration in a gallery setting, it is conceived as an annual event to be repeated. The beginnings of a mapping system, creating a topology of a disease. Rather than resisting the pathology she co-opts its operation as a co-authoring system. The tattooing generating micro traumas that potentially trigger further immune responses. There is a soft cybernetic looping of action and reaction that goes beyond being merely representational. The body not simply as biomedical object but also as a political site of exposure and ritual transformation.

Conceptually, the skin can be seen as both a bounding of the self, as a sensing and processing site, and as an interface to the world. But for Marian it is also a site of contestation between her intentional artistic agency and the unconscious and autonomous agency of her over-reactive immune system. Skin as a lived experience becomes skin as a systems ontology. For Marian, skin is not so much a surface and limiting layer or boundary, but a processing site of invisible activity and surface discolouring. Entangled with the self, the auto-immune system is exposed as a machinic, autonomous, out-of-control. The body itself becomes an archive of erasure. Immune system, artistic intention and technical inscription loop. Disease, identity and image recursively (re)generate and redefine one another.

As an impressive emerging artist Marian has exhibited often, prompted critical acknowledgement, and has received numerous awards. Her installations integrate data structures, textiles and hybrid machines. Marian's recent artworks such as, "The Presence" and "Remote" are especially impressive interactive installations in their monumentality and operation. Their titles indicative of her concerns. Physical installations animated with computational code that exhibit other kinds of aliveness with her use of the ready-made, the hand-made and the off-the-shelf. Marian insists on an embodied practice, and on material instantiation. Nonetheless, what is generated in her arts practice is meaning that exceeds the particular body, its pathology, its performance and its installation apparatus.



STELARC, Performance Artist