Body Parts: abstract photography of the human form

October 9, 2015 - 10:15PM

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As I lay back on my Ancestral Land no.1 (2013), one of the exhibits at Body Parts, at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. *Photo: Tracey Moffatt*

Viewing the human body photographed in abstraction is an innately challenging experience. It is sensual and familiar, yet disconcerting and foreign. This contradiction is confusing and can bring forth ideas of disembodiment, amputation or misuse.

The exhibition *Body Parts* at the Art Gallery of NSW features a selection of works by Australian and international artists, spanning from the 1930s. The images portray fragments of the human form in metaphorical and abstract ways and transport associations with the human body from the familiar to the foreign.

"When the camera amputates the body, the parts that become the image can be simultaneously seductive and horrific. Often the separation of a part from its whole carries this dualism, it is an act that is both amorous and violent," London-based writer and artist Tom Melick wrote of *Body Parts*.

Dancer, New York City. *Photo: Lynn Davis*

It was not until the 1930s that photographers began to routinely take a stylistic, abstract approach to depicting the naked human form. Artists began to capture shadow play on limbs, fractured erotic gestures and compositions that focused on the body as pure form rather than a person.

Body Parts shows the evolution of abstract figurative photography from that era up to the present.

"Individually, the photographs present fragmented perspectives of the body. As a group, they come together in a riot of movement and stillness, luxury and abjection," the exhibition statement reads.

Including works by David Bailey, Robert Besanko, Jane Burton, Max Dupain, Tracey Moffatt and William Yang, *Body Parts* will be on at the Art Gallery of NSW until January 2016.

Read more: http://www.smh.com.au/national/clique/body-parts-abstract-photography-of-the-human-form-20151001-gjywqf.html#ixzz3o6bcs3Z8