

CONSTRUCTION

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CASSILS



**“I see the body as
a social sculpture”**

CASSILS is a Canadian transgender artist who makes their own body the material and protagonist of their performances.

Their art contemplates the history(s) of LGBTQI+ violence, representation, struggle and survival.

For Cassils, performance is a form of social sculpture: Drawing from the idea that bodies are formed in relation to forces of power and social expectations.

Their work investigates historical contexts to examine the present moment.



Cassils had undiagnosed gall bladder disease in their teens, which was unusual back in 1987.

Weight training was a key part of their recovery, and it became pathway to self-determination in both their art and their personal life.

In order to be official transgender, you have to have surgery or take hormones. Cassils believes that trans is not as something about crossing from one sex to another, but rather as a continual process of becoming that embraces indeterminacy, spasm and slipperiness.

Cassils has adapted their own female body into a series of powerful physical shapes that challenge any notion of binary gender.

In each of their artworks, they train their body for different performative purposes.



TIRESIAS

2011: Performance + Video Installation

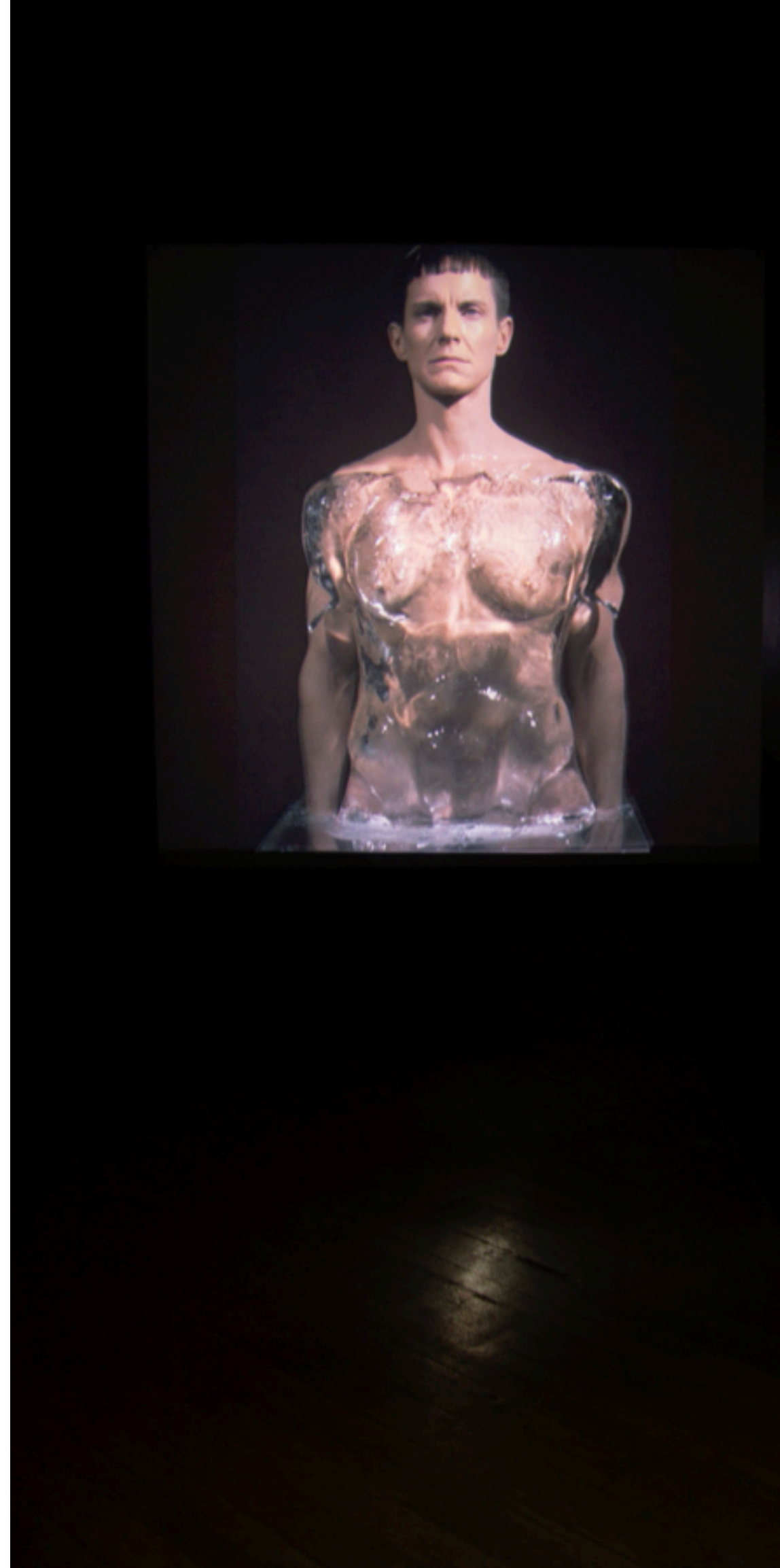
TIRESIAS // CASSILS

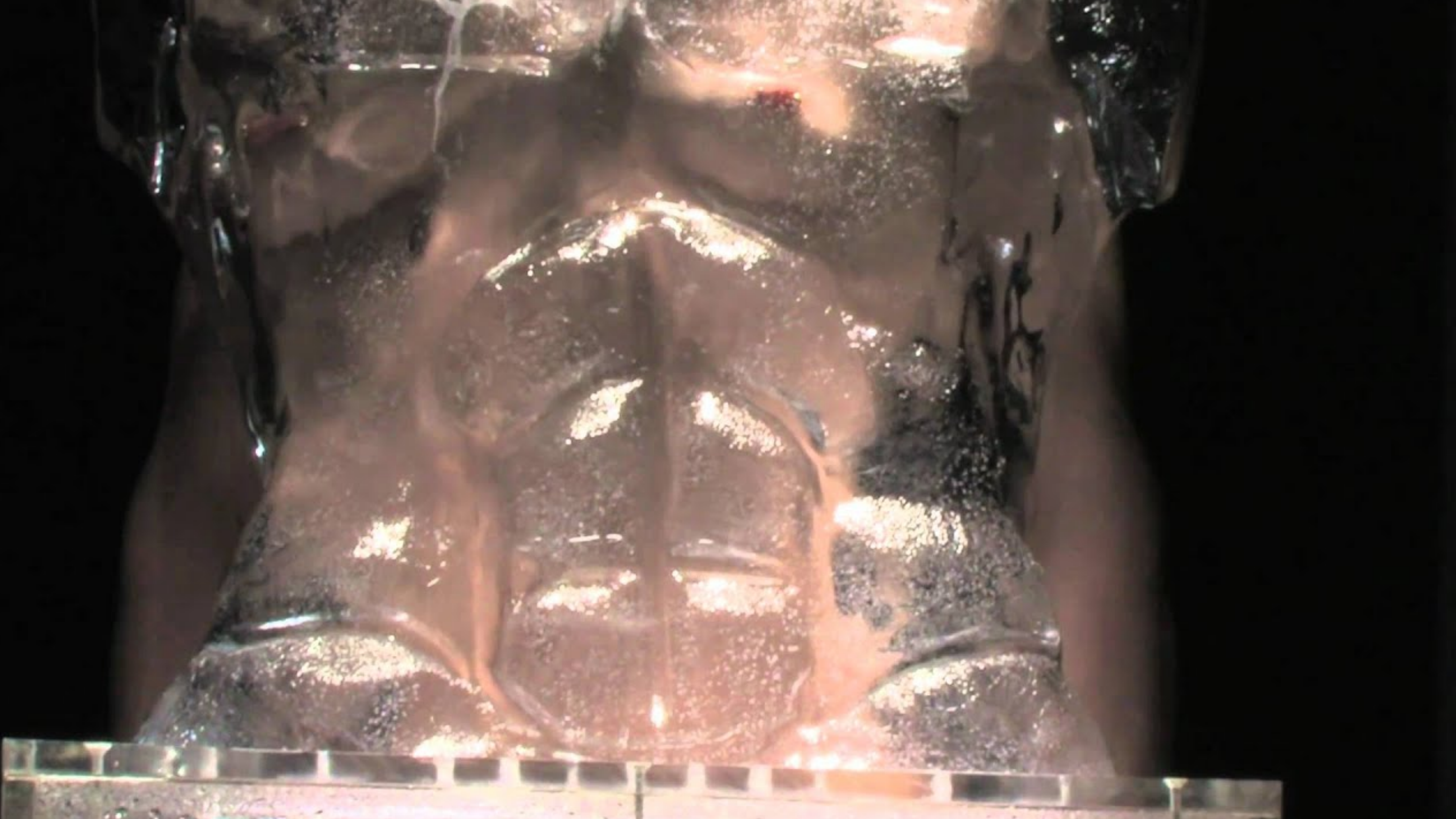


Tiresias is a durational performance in which Cassils melts a neoclassical Greek male ice sculpture with pure body heat.

The mythological figure of Tiresias, known as the blind prophet of Thebes, was transformed from a man into a woman for seven years. By pressing their body against the ice torso, Cassils demonstrates both the instability of the body and desire for a certain unsustainable physique. Recasting the myth of Tiresias as a story of endurance and transformation, Cassils performs the resolve required to persist at the point of contact between masculine and feminine.

TIRESIAS // CASSILS



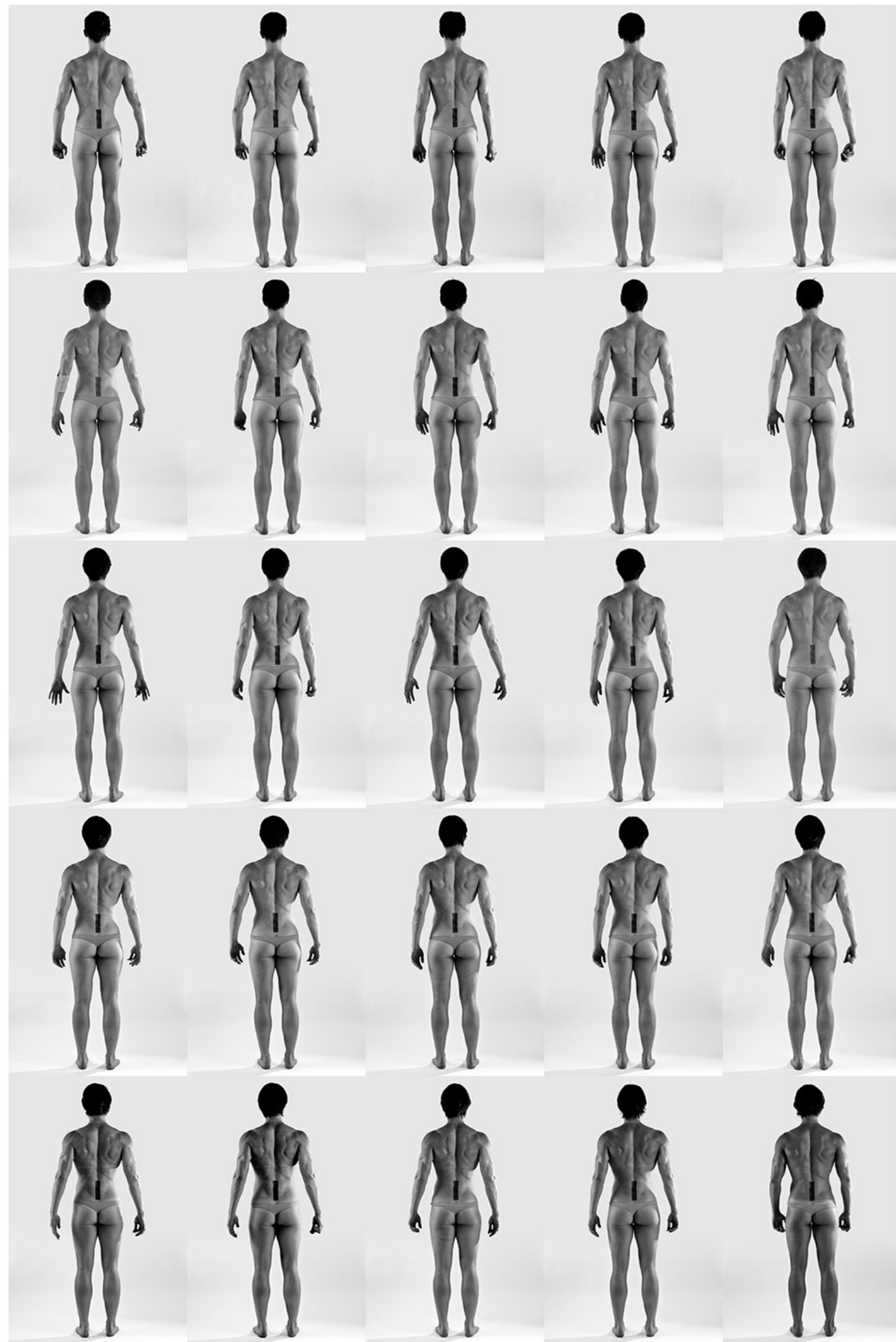




CUTS

2011-2013: Performance + Video + Photography

CUTS // CASSILS



CUTS: A TRADITIONAL SCULPTURE

is a six month durational performance of disciplined body sculpting.

Cassils reinterprets Eleanor Antin's 1972 *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture*, in which Antin crash diets for 45 days and documents her body daily through stark full-body photography. Cassils inverts Antin's process, using their mastery of bodybuilding and nutrition to gain 23 pounds of muscle over 23 weeks.

In contrast to the feminine act of weight loss in Antin's *Carving*, Cassils's *CUTS* involves transformation into a traditionally masculine muscular form.





BECOMING AN IMAGE

2012–present: Performance + Photography + Sculpture + Sound

BECOMING AN IMAGE // CASSILS



In the live performance *Becoming an Image*, Cassils unleashes an attack on a 2,000 pound clay block in total darkness.

The spectacle is illuminated solely by the flash of a photographer, burning the image into the viewer's retina. *Becoming an Image* was originally conceived as a site-specific work for the ONE Archives in Los Angeles, the oldest active LGBTQ archive in the United States. Cassils now performs this work around the world.

"It represents senseless acts of violence against trans and queer bodies beyond the historical lens," says Cassils. The audience becomes both camera and witness to the beating, and the clay remains are then put on display.

BECOMING AN IMAGE

“This artist takes their body and makes it, works it, into something else, something that questions how we see each other, how we seek to manipulate ourselves, our bodies and our lives. It is deeply ethical work as it poses crucial questions around the aestheticization and commodification of our bodies and ourselves.”

RUTH MACKENZIE

HANNIAH WILKE





Wilke was born on March 7, 1940, in New York.

As the feminist and women's liberation movement began to take stride in the US during the 1960s, Wilke's early artistic research concentrated on the varied form of the vulva, whose explicit use in art was rarely seen prior.

As women were often forgotten in art history, excluded from its education, Wilke was committed to presenting vulval forms rather than phallic ones.

Wilke often experimented with her own nude form, in photography and performance art. In her work, Wilke created an awareness of the duality in her artworks of the sexualised form to her disregard to be viewed, dismaying the viewer, taking power away from the voyeur and giving more agency to the depicted – in this case the nude or sexualised female form.

“To diffuse self-prejudice, women must take control of and have pride in the sensuality of their own bodies and create a sensuality in their own terms, without referring to the concepts degenerated by culture”

A black and white photograph of a person's face, heavily pierced with various objects. The person is lying down, and their eyes are closed. The piercings include a large ring in the ear, a ring in the nostril, a ring in the upper lip, a ring in the lower lip, a ring in the cheek, a ring in the chin, and a ring in the neck. The person is wearing a dark, possibly black, garment. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

S.O.S.

Starification Object Series, 1974-1982:
Performatist self-portraits.

S.O.S. // WILKE



The series of performalist self-portraits, as the artist called them, originally consisted of 28 black and white photographs of the artist, each image recalling poses made by glamour models found in pin-up images and calendars, but scarred with chewing gum vulvar shapes she created.

Later, at a performance in Paris in 1975, Wilke asked the public to chew gum and return it to her so as to stick to her naked torso. Each piece of gum, after having lost its sweetness left with only the artificial and tasteless rubber, is stretched and folded into small scale vulvas.

As she decorates her body, Wilke questions how women are viewed as merely decorative, made to be attractive and adorned with makeup, and elegant or even sexy clothing, not to receive but to administer pleasure to others.

"I chose gum because it's the perfect metaphor for the American woman – chew her up, get what you want out of her, throw her out and pop in a new piece."



GESTURES

1974: Video Performance

GESTURES // WILKE



In the 30-minute video performance, Wilke faces the camera and moulds her face into various forms, exploring its plasticity and ability to mutate and adapt for the viewer.

Crossing the boundary from posing, where one is expected to smile and present oneself amicably, Wilke pushes into the uncomfortable as the video reveals an intimacy that the viewer does not feel privy to.

The face and therefore, the human within, can delve into multiple roles. This is especially relevant to women who do not occupy solely the figure of wife, mother or lover.





JORDAN
WOLFESON



Wolfson was born in 1980 in New York.

Wolfson is well known for his powerful and unsettling artworks that examine the conditions of contemporary life.

Pulling from a variety of sources, including advertising, the internet, and technology industries, the artist explores difficult and ambitious narratives.

"My mother is dead. My father is
dead. I'm gay. I'd like to be a poet.
This is my house."



(FEMALE FIGURE)

2014: Performative Installation

(Female Figure) // WOLFSON



(Female figure) combines film, installation and performance into an animatronic figure. As the sculpture gracefully dances to blaring pop-music, the whirrs and creaks from the figure's joints remind the viewer of its technological construction.

Simultaneously, Wolfson's voice projects from the figure: the phrase, "My mother is dead, my father is dead, I'm gay, I'd like to be a poet, this is my house," and the command to "Tell them touch is love," are just two examples of the disorienting VoiceOver.

There is no way to avoid sculpture's narration nor gaze. *(Female Figure)* creates a different kind of viewing experience that inherently incorporates the viewer into the troubling and provoking performance of the sculpture.





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