

Kim Morgan:

Blood and Breath, Skin and Dust

SUSAN GIBSON GARVEY, CURATOR

This exhibition presents interdisciplinary artist Kim Morgan's research and artistic production using advanced technologies to explore materiality and the body. Informed by the experience of vibrant matter at the microscopic level these intriguing works offer encounters in human-scaled space and time, and an opportunity to bridge the gap between science, medicine, and art.

Morgan began exploring scanning electron microscopy (SEM) at Dalhousie University's scientific imaging labs in 2014. Through a HEALS Artist's Residency, she developed Blood Group, a permanent installation in Dalhousie's CHEB Building, using scanned images of blood provided by medical students, family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances from diverse backgrounds. Convinced of the expressive potential in using magnified images of blood and other bodily sourced materials to consider physical and socio-cultural realities, Morgan has continued to experiment with a range of materials and methods of presentation, expanding her imagery to include scans of body dust, lint, ashes, and skin.

Since early 2019, Morgan has been working with curator and conceptual collaborator Susan Gibson Garvey on projects specifically designed to engage new audiences in offsite locations. These have been workshopped, installed, and/or presented as pop-up interventions across Dalhousie's campus during the past 18 months. They have been reconfigured (or, if temporary events, recorded), and included in this exhibition, together with new and adapted gallery installations and objects.

Although this exhibition was proposed well before the advent of Covid19 in Canada, the same SEM technology used in many of the artworks has also provided those striking images of the coronavirus and its mutations in everyday media (often artificially enhanced with colour, even though electron microscopy only "sees" in monochrome). The pandemic has made us acutely aware of the role of medical science in understanding threats to human health, and of the social disparities that a virus spread exacerbates.

Informing the physical artworks are aesthetic and philosophical interests shared by artist and curator, particularly with regard to phenomenology, feminism, concepts of the informe, and aspects of New Materialism. Inevitably, given the bodily sourced material, the works may both attract and repel those who encounter them. Acknowledging our personal and collective capabilities and vulnerabilities, they offer occasions for thoughtful engagement in the matter of being human in the "mattering" universe.