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The Raw and the Resplendent: Kathryn Parker Almanas at Yellow Peril Gallery

Visceral, bracing, potent, Kathryn Parker Almanas's *Pre-Existing Condition*, currently on view at [Yellow Peril Gallery](#), is a collision of sensory extremes and formal nuances. In large-scale color photographs and small-scale collage works, the artist pictures and probes the physical body, both its corporeal effusions and existential implications. The result is an intensely vital, deeply disorienting study of being, sensation, and the intersection of inner and outer experience.



Kathryn Parker Almanas. *Vestige*, 2010, from the series *Pre-Existing Condition*; archival pigment print; in. Courtesy of the Artist and Yellow Peril Gallery, Providence, RI

Entering the first of Yellow Peril's two rooms, the viewer encounters *Bloatation* (2009), one of several evocatively titled photographs displayed around the room. Though impossible to identify, the swollen, globular form—framed, still-life fashion, against a richly hued backdrop—immediately suggests some kind of gaseous, grossly distended organ. On an adjacent wall, *Vestige* (2010) and *Sever* (2009) exude an immediate, paradoxical charge.

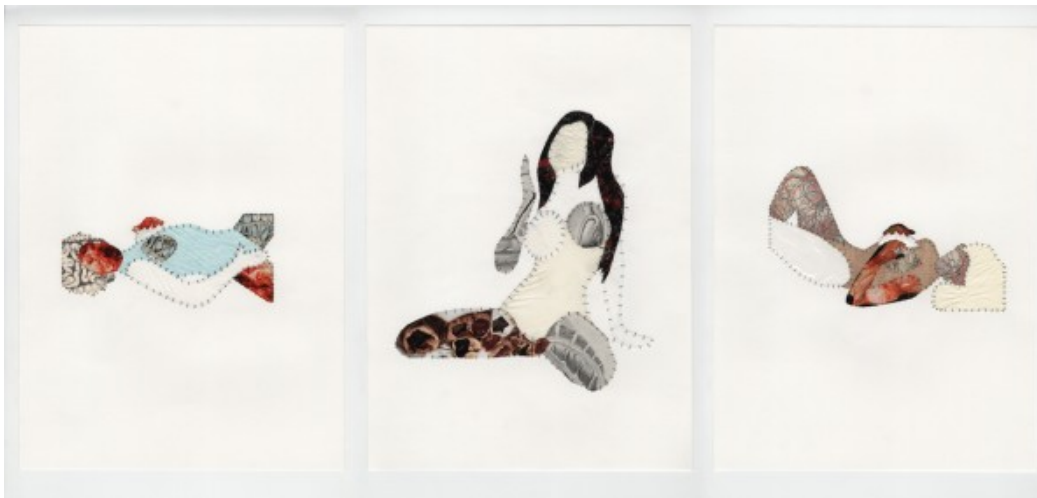
Like the other photographs on view, they register as exquisitely rendered visions of the indecipherably grotesque—repellent yet entrancing, gory yet beautiful. *Vestige* is redolent of carnage and bodily remains: a white, gruesomely stained drape foregrounds a motley assemblage of shredded, torn detritus. Fur? Fabric? This image, apparently so explicit, is suddenly ambiguous; its disconcerting contents seem to refract some inner morass of subliminal association and shape-shifting horror.

Almanas's work seems to arise from and delineate the deepest, most elemental dimensions of being—silent, invisible dimensions that, here, scream forth in all their emotional, corporeal force. Significantly, Almanas refers to her photographs as "visceral tableaux," and she entwines the conceptual and the formal, the classical and the contemporary, the intellectual and the emotional to provocative, revelatory effect. In her photographic compositions, material is not merely a means but an incarnation and formal technique is a language through which intentions and ideas come vividly to life. Similarly, the primal urgency that courses so powerfully throughout Almanas's images is inextricable from a sly, free-spirited playfulness.



Kathryn Parker Almanas. *Bloatation*, 2009, from the series *Pre-Existing Condition*; archival pigment print; 20 x 24 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Yellow Peril Gallery, Providence, RI.

Given the carnal aura of the artist's imagery, the viewer may be taken aback to learn that Almanas composes her photographs from benign, even homey, materials: jellies, fruit juices, pastry dough. As she writes in her accompanying artist's statement: "I play with how we recognize ourselves in textures and materials.... Sweet objects, that could potentially be consumed, act as surrogate body parts. The fleshy forms lie, hang, and nestle within these explicit scenes, both seducing and disgusting the viewer." To contemplate Almanas's work is thus to yield to a fascinating state of persistent, provocative uncertainty, wherein visceral reaction collides and interacts with conscious reflection. The viewer is fundamentally destabilized and utterly disoriented, and the very act of looking morphs into a charged and ambiguous exchange.



Kathryn Parker Almanas. *Three Systems of a Woman: Digestive, Reproductive, Nervous*, 2010; sections of anatomy book pages, sections of photographs by artist, medical bandaging and materials, suturing thread; triptych, each collage 13 x 11 in. Courtesy of the Artist and Yellow Peril Gallery, Providence, RI

The show, curated by Robert P. Stack, also includes several of the artist's finely wrought collages, displayed here in a room of their own. These small-scale works, composed of delicately sutured layers of appropriated medical illustrations, magazine pastry images, and the artist's own photographs, are quiet revelations of material beauty and penetrating subtlety. Mesmerizing unto themselves and fascinating in their relationship to the artist's photographs, the collages refine and intensify the artist's inquiry into body, psyche, and the experiential implications of both. They underscore the vital integration of material and meaning, concept and form, that suffuses Almanas's larger body of work—work that is, finally, a hypnotic concatenation of all that makes human experience so riveting, so confounding, so messily resplendent.

Kathryn Parker Almanas's *Pre-Existing Condition* is on view at Yellow Peril Gallery through August 11, 2013.