



NORWICH
UNIVERSITY
OF THE ARTS

PROFESSOR RICHARD SAWDON SMITH

Infinite Surface

ORCID Reference: 0000-0003-2987-1961

Output Reference: NUA-RSS-01

Output Date: 2016

PROFESSOR RICHARD SAWDON SMITH

Infinite Surface

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

- 1 Supporting Statement 1-2
- 2 Research Process 3-4
- 3 Research Insights 5-6
- 4 Dissemination 7-9

1. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Output title	Infinite Surface
Output type	Multi-Component Output: M-Exhibition, Q-Visual Media
Output date	2016

Infinite Surface is part of an ongoing collaboration between Sawdon Smith and Jonathan Armour. It is a development of Sawdon Smith's *The Anatomical Man* (2013), a photography project in which he had part of the circulatory system, veins and arteries, tattooed onto his body. Since being diagnosed HIV+ in 1994, Sawdon Smith has visually documented his experience of living with the virus. The work references the Evelyn Tables at the Hunterian Museum and a range of theoretical analyses of the body and subjectivity, including Lyotard's theorisation of the *immense membrane of the libidinous 'body'*, and the notion of the moebian skin discussed by Lygia Clark. Research also involved different edits, lighting techniques, sound design and the mechanism used for the VR presentation of the work.

Sawdon Smith's external body surface was photographed using photogrammetry techniques within a 'cage' of 148 cameras to create a 360° digital, two-dimensional topographic image/map of his body. This image was processed into a three-dimensional model. Experimentation involved a series of body poses referencing historical medical models. The film charts viewing the inside and outside of the skin surface on a journey that confuses and conflates the two.

The work expands Sawdon Smith's exploration of body and identity, lived experience and representation. It raises awareness of HIV/AIDS, counters HIV stigma and was also innovative in using Virtual Reality technology to present a unique experience of the topography of the artist's body in the *InSideShow* exhibitions.

Infinite Surface was first exhibited at 'Indelible' at the Camden Image Gallery and at the Uncertain States Annual exhibition, both in November 2016. It was subsequently presented at numerous venues around the world as part of World AIDS day in December 2017.



Fig.1 Still from film (pelvic junction)



Fig.2 Still from film (right armpit)

2. RESEARCH PROCESS

The work references Mary Richards' writing about Ron Athey's performance work (2000), including the observation that in order to survive as a subject in a fractured body, one must destroy the boundaries of one's own subjectivity not just through pain but also by externalizing the internal. It was also informed by Didier Anzieu's ideas of the 'skin-ego' as an interface between inside and outside, between the person and the world, with the skin-ego's associated functions of containing and protecting the psychic apparatus much as the skin contains the body (1989). The work explores ideas in JF Lyotard's 'Libidinal Economy' (1974), and Lygia Clark's 'Nostalgia of the Body' (1994), including the notion of a 'moebian skin'.

Sawdon Smith's external body surface was photographed using photogrammetry techniques within a 'cage' of 148 cameras to create a 360° digital, two-dimensional topographic image/map of his body. This image was processed into a three-dimensional model by Ten 24 Digital capture in Sheffield. Experimentation involved a series of body poses referencing historical medical models. Sawdon Smith and Armour initially planned to 'unmap' the body by returning the 3D model to two dimensions within the film, resulting in a flat image of Sawdon Smith's skin. The film was created with Ian Whiston's technical support, by manipulating the 3D model and recording the process to chart a journey viewing the inside and outside of the skin surface. The sound of Sawdon's Smith's heartbeat and pulse were recorded at NUA's sound studio and combined with a drone sound to enhance the sense of surveillance of the inside of the body. Research also involved different edits of the film, lighting techniques, sound design and the mechanism used for the Virtual Reality (VR) presentation of the work, as well as the design of the *InSide Show* exhibitions.



Fig.3 Image capture of Sawdon Smith's body

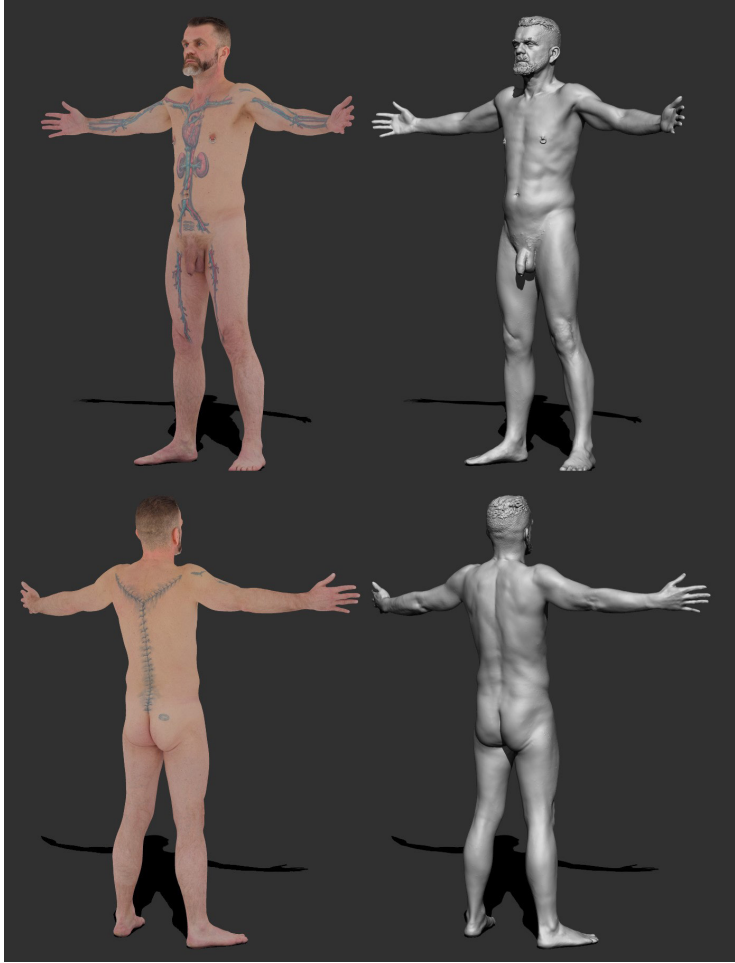


Fig.4 Three-dimensional model of Sawdon Smith's body



Fig.5 Face scan

3. RESEARCH INSIGHTS

The work raises awareness of HIV/AIDS and aims to reduce HIV stigma, negative attitude and beliefs about people living with HIV. It was innovative in using virtual reality technology to present a unique experience of the topography of the artist's body in the *InSideShow* exhibitions.

InSideShow is an exhibition and VR experience with a footplate treadmill for viewers to move the image, so they walk the landscape of Sawdon Smith's body. *InSideShow* included a full scan on the body printed on a curtain designed in the form of a carnival attraction, a display in *Ripley's Believe It or Not!*, to enter the VR exhibition space.

Infinite Surface 5'54"

Jonathan Armour and Richard Sawdon Smith
Technical production by Ian Whiston

The film is available at: <https://vimeo.com/496952094/c454041b0a>



Fig.6 Entrance to the *InSideShow* exhibition at Camden Image Gallery, London, November 2006

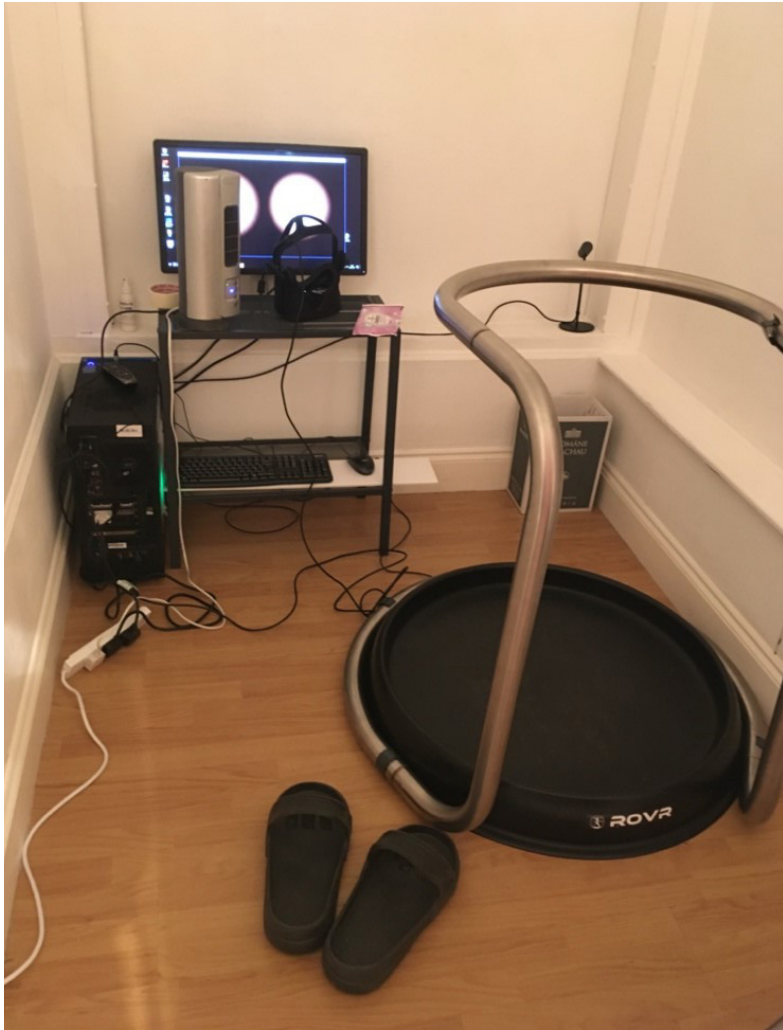


Fig.7 The Virtual Reality set up, including the walkpad, for the *InSideShow* exhibitions



Fig.8 *Infinite Surface* exhibited through the VR experience of the *InSideShow* exhibition

4. DISSEMINATION

Infinite Surface was first shown in London at two venues:

'Indelible', a group show at Camden Image Gallery, London, November 2016

'Uncertain States Annual 2016', Mile End Art Pavilion, London, November 2016

At 'Indelible', Camden Image Gallery and the Queer Festival (2017), the work was presented as part of *InsideShow*, an exhibition and VR experience with a footplate walkpad for viewers to move the image, so they walk the landscape of Sawdon Smith's body. *InsideShow* included a full scan on the body printed on a curtain designed in the form of a carnival attraction, a display in *Ripley's Believe It or Not!*, to enter the exhibition space.

The presentation of the work in some venues displayed an 'R' rated version that didn't show the genitalia.

Subsequent exhibitions/ presentations of the work:

2017

Screened as part of the queertech.io online exhibition January 2017 <https://queertech.io/artwork/infinite-surface/> (accessed 19 March 2021)

Melt, Brisbane Powerhouse, Brisbane, Australia 25 Jan – 5 Feb 2017

Missumma Festival, Midsumma Horizon, Melbourne, Australia, 4 Feb 2017

Blindside presents Play, Federation Square, Melbourne, Australia Jan-Mar 2017

Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival, The Factory Theatre, Sydney, Australia, 4 Mar 2017

Now, Where Are We? 1967 – 2017, The Strand Gallery, London June/July 2017

Screened as part of presentation by Sawdon Smith: 'Sideshow: Immersion into the 3D Body', Association for Photography in Higher Education Conference 19-21 July 2017, Norwich University of the Arts, UK

Queer Festival 2017, Dartington Hall, Devon, Sept 2017

Queer Artists – In Your Face, Salisbury Arts Centre, UK, Sept – Nov 2017

Screened as part of presentation by Sawdon Smith: 'Immersion into the HIV Body: Politics of Representation, A Personal Perspective', Maison de la culture Frontenac, 'Témoigner pour agir' Montreal, Canada 2 December 2017

Infinite Surface was screened at the following venues worldwide as part of HIVideo World AIDS day on 1 December 2017

Europe

- Athens (Greece): Alexander Sauna. Megalou Alexandrou, Athens
- Belfast (UK): Bean Bag Cinema. 5 Exchange Place, Belfast (Rainbow Project)
- Berlin (Germany): Ludwig Gallery, Berlin
- Derry (UK): Foyle Centre. Orchard Street, Derry (Rainbow Project)
- Falmouth (UK): Falmouth University, Penryn Campus
- Leeds (UK): Leeds Aire Studios. Kirkstall Rd, Leeds
- Manchester (UK): The Penthouse at Paradise Works, Salford, Manchester
- Norwich (UK): Duke Street Lecture Theatre, Norwich University of the Arts, Norwich
- Paris (France): La Mutinerie. 176 Rue Saint-Martin, 75003 Paris (start time: 6pm) www.lamutinerie.eu
- Rome (Italy): Spallanzani Hospital (Conference Suite), Rome

Africa

- Bloemfontein (South Africa): Performing Art Centre of the Free State, Bloemfontein

North America

- Los Angeles (US): Tom of Finland Foundation.
- San Juan (Puerto Rico): Puerto Rico Museum of Contemporary Art, San Juan

2019

Screened as part of presentation by Sawdon Smith: 'From The Damaged Narcissist to The Anatomical Man to The Unknowing', Norwich Contemporary Art Society, The Forum, Norwich, UK 3 September 2019

2020

Digitalized Perspectives, MK Gallery, Portland State University, College of the Arts USA 9-30 Jan 2020



Fig.9 'Uncertain States Annual 2016' exhibition flyer



Fig. 10 Exhibition of *Infinite Surface* at 'Uncertain States Annual 2016' London, November 2016



NORWICH
UNIVERSITY
OF THE ARTS