

FAT ATTITUDES

review and photo by Tina Arroyo

Love, I felt wrapped in love, joy & warmth last night at the reception for FAT ATTITUDES: A Celebration of Large Women. Basking in the glow of the bodies surrounding me, I stood in the center of the room to take it all in. I turned myself 360 degrees & saw an abundance of large flesh around me. As if out of a dream I was surrounded by a variety of art, all featuring fat bodies, while smiling people moved around me in slow motion. Bits and pieces of their conversations floated by me. "Beautiful." "such strength." "So lush." Maybe it was my euphoria, but all I heard was praise and love for the work on the walls by artists who include Laurie Toby Edison, Laura Aguilar, Lynn Bianchi & Patricia Schwartz, to name a few. These works of art were stunning, showing large bodies in all their glory. The walls were graced by images from Laurie Toby Edison's acclaimed book *Women En Large*, and large scale black and white art from Lynn Bianchi's series "The Spaghetti Eaters."

Along with familiar images, the wall of the Macy Gallery at Teacher's College (NYC) displayed the work of less well known artists and even some first time artists. Neil Osbourne's "Leaves" called to me from across a crowded room. I maneuvered myself through all of the people to view a lovely round female body seated, her limbs moved just so, transforming her body to a nearly perfect circle surrounded by the yellow-brown leaves of autumn. Her pale skin was a soft and luscious contrast to the dry leaves that surround her.

The mixed media work of vocalist/artist Andi Bray states

triumphantly that she can be fat and beautiful, athletic, & talented all simultaneously. Her work attempts to show the world that there is more to her than her fat, and at the very same time, that her fat is an essential part of who she is.

Another photograph that had me entranced was entitled "Jody, 33," part of The Century Project by Frank Cordelle.

Frank is creating a body of work that includes photographs of women from ages 0-100. Jody is a large woman, whose expansive belly, arms and breasts are displayed for the world to see in front of a quilt with a star pattern that serves to crown her noble head. I stood transfixed as I stared into the eyes of this beautiful woman, so proud and defiant.

As if all of this celebration was not enough, we were treated to a sensual belly dance by super-sized performer Seleka. I was captivated by the movements of her large body, the flow of her belly and arms as she gestured toward the crowd. She flirted with and teased her audience, who hung on her every movement. There was joy and laughter filling the room while she tantalized us all. I found myself unable to control my own body as I moved my large frame in time, longing to create the same fluid movements with my hips and belly.



The exhibition, curated by artist Lori Don Levan, was a breathtaking collection of fat art, by some very talented artists & I consider myself honored to have been a part of it all. I can only hope that this exhibit travels, so that many more will be touched by the intensity of the work. 