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## **Fiberarts**

*Laura Splan: Body of Evidence*  
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## CURTAINS

BY WHITNEY CRUTCHFIELD

## FiberARTS

CONTEMPORARY  
TEXTILE ART  
AND CRAFT

## Laura Splan: Body of Evidence

**SHOCKING, SEXY, AND UNCOMFORTABLE** are all words that could be used to describe the anatomical art of Laura Splan. Parts of her newest body of work, on view at the Museum of Contemporary Craft (MCC) in Portland, Oregon, evoke ideas of deceptive charm and gentle violence. Two of Splan's works, *Trousseau (Negligee #1)* and *Wallpaper*, are part of the MCC's Manuf@ctured: The Conspicuous Transformation of Everyday Objects (through January 4), an exhibition exploring artists' and designers' use of mass-produced objects as artistic material.

*Trousseau* is constructed from sheets of facial mask peel, a beauty product found in most pharmacies and supermarkets. Splan covered her entire body in the liquid, left it to dry, then carefully peeled it off in strips and assembled the transparent material into a delicate negligee. The inviting yet repulsive finished gown, complete with machine-embroidered details of scientific imagery, is installed on a dress form in front of *Wallpaper*, a seemingly conventional backdrop of pleasant Victorian patterns. Upon closer inspection and explanation, however, the viewer learns that the rusty red contours are actually handstamped in Splan's own blood, gathered from finger pricks over time.

Displayed together these two pieces imply notions of femininity, domesticity, and familiarity alongside confrontational ideas of indulgence, mortality, and body politics. Splan has used these concepts in her work for many years, often focusing on the opposition of beauty and horror, a duality that seems to occur naturally in the biological sciences from which she draws inspiration. Splan confronts the viewer "to challenge our constructed responses to these [scientific] images by triggering a double take in which the viewer re-evaluates their initial perceptions."

ABOVE: Installation shot and details of *Trousseau (Negligee #1)*, 2007; facial peel, machine embroidery; 40" x 12" x 24" (approx.); and *Wallpaper*, 2008; blood on wallpaper; handstamped; 86" x 96". Collection of the artist. Photos: Brian Foulkes. Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland, Oregon.

The artist's website is [www.laurasplan.com](http://www.laurasplan.com). The museum website is [www.museumofcontemporarycraft.org](http://www.museumofcontemporarycraft.org). Splan's work can be seen in *Specimen: Re-presenting the Natural World* at Paul Robeson Galleries in Newark, New Jersey, through January 29, [andromeda.rutgers.edu/artgallery](http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/artgallery); *Re/Formations: Disability, Women, and Sculpture* at Van Every/Smith Galleries in Davidson, North Carolina, January 16–February 26, [www3.davidson.edu/cms/x25464.xml](http://www3.davidson.edu/cms/x25464.xml); and *Reimagining the Distaff Tool Kit* at Gardiner Art Gallery in Stillwater, Oklahoma, January 8–February 4, [art.okstate.edu/departamental/events.html](http://art.okstate.edu/departamental/events.html).



To see more of Splan's sculptural work from the *Trousseau* series, visit [fiberarts.com](http://fiberarts.com).