

AROUND THE GALLERIES

Where internal, external meet

By HOLLY MYERS
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The photographs by Naida Osline at Acuna-Hansen Gallery are small, elegantly composed and exceptionally creepy. They depict the human body, but as it might appear in nightmares.

In one image, the toes of a full-sized, greenish-colored foot protrude from a woman's mouth, creating a strangely fish-like profile. Another depicts two rows of teeth nestled between unidentifiable folds of hairy male flesh. Yet another presents a delicate white breast with a claw for a nipple.

All of the images are close-ups conveying a single, disfigured fragment of the body (no faces) positioned against a solid, neutral background. But for the refined lighting and dramatic use of shadow, they might resemble medical illustrations. Indeed, one gets the impression that Osline is cataloging something — if not actual diseases, then perhaps a collective set of psychological ailments.

It's stirring work, intelligently conceived and seamlessly executed, prosthetics and all.

While the majority are unnerving, the best are also oddly beautiful: an elbow embedded with what looks like a glowing green golf ball, for example, or a graceful pointed foot marred by a hook-shaped knob on the heel.

We place a great deal of day-to-day faith in the stability of "this too, too solid flesh." However, as anyone who's ever nursed a mosquito bite well knows, that flesh is hardly fixed but permeable, easily punctured, and prone to inflammation at even the slightest disturbance. In this work, Osline assumes a role much like that of the mosquito: prodding the boundary between the internal and the external and reminding us not to take the division for granted.

Acuna-Hansen Gallery, 427 Bernard St., Los Angeles, (323) 441-1624, through March 23. Closed Sunday-Tuesday.



Acuna-Hansen Gallery

ODDLY BEAUTIFUL: Naida Osline's "Unfilled No. 130," a photo of an elbow embedded with what looks like a glowing green golf ball, is part of the exhibition at the Acuna-Hansen Gallery in L.A.