

UNIVERSITY NEWS

Where The Soul Meets Body

By Joey Hill on January 25, 2016

The UMKC Gallery of Art was abuzz with lights on Thursday, Jan. 21. Cutting through the icy chill of the night, the windows facing Sweeney Hall shone with soft magenta, green, yellow and blue lighting that reflected on the snow outside. The event was the opening of the Gallery of Art's newest installation, "Body-Mind Entente," a collaborative presentation by the Graduate Art History Association and local artists. The goal of the installation was to "contemplate the entanglement of the body and the mind within the world." The name itself refers to the political term entente, meaning an informal alliance between warring parties, though in this context the parties are the mind and body and how their interconnectedness can be represented. The result is a strange and obscure exhibition that oftentimes teeters on the thin line separating grotesque and gorgeous....

The second room of the gallery is an almost completely different space as far as artwork and aesthetic. The first thing visitors will notice is the sound: a strange noise moving between whispers and moans. When one looks in on the room they instantly notice the large projection of 20 young singers clad in black and sitting in a half-circle on a stage. They all hold microphones close to their mouths and are not singing at all but actually reciting a fragmented transcription of a conversation about the synaptic events in the brain with the neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux. This is a recording of a performance of Nene Humphrey's Everything That Happens from October of 2013. While the complete recording is a little over 20 minutes, sitting and actually experiencing it for the entire running time it feels more like 20 hours. The fragments of phrases take on a meditative quality while still remaining spastic and manic, as so much activity is happening audibly. This incredible combination of performance and outright musical brain scan is one of the big hallmarks of the exhibition and demands a full viewing from anyone willing to truly listen to their own head.

Body-Mind Entente is one of the best and most compelling exhibitions that the Gallery of Art has held. It's moving, it's bold and it's ruthlessly familiar with its portrayals of mind-body connectivity. It's a collection of images of places we've all known and been living in our entire lives, only there are no road maps – just ranges of altitude.

Body-Mind Entente is open at the UMKC Gallery of Fine Art from Jan. 21 to Feb. 2