

## DONNA HAMIL TALMAN: DANSE ARDENTE

Carney Gallery  
Regis College  
235 Wellesley Street  
Weston, Massachusetts

Through December 19



*Danse Ardente 5*



*Danse Ardente 14*

**I**t's always exciting to see an artist take their art in new and unexpected directions. Donna Hamil Talman has done just that with this exhibition that follows an earlier fall show where her work not only "moved" across the walls of ARTSWorcester, but danced in its exhibition space as a result of having been screened onto silk draperies that seemed to bring its subjects alive.

Hamil Talman, who is represented at the Copley Society, where she won the juror's prize at the 2005 Fall Member's Show, has exhibited at numerous Boston and East Coast galleries. Until recently, her works gave the impression of having been chiseled off the walls of century-old caves thanks to her unique style of placing varnish over her photographs. Some of the images in her "Linking Back," "Lineage" and "Ancestor Portraits" series were indeed fossils shot at the Eyzies-de-Tayac national prehistoric museum in France, including works from the Lascaux Cave.

Her previous series, "DNA/Body," utilized similarly distorted images from x-rays of the artist - she has the autoimmune illness lupus, which may explain her intense exploration of the human body and its makeup - and others complimented with superimposed DNA code imagery.

The human body is still featured in the images of "Danse Ardente," but the impressions were not created with a tripod or an x-ray machine, but with the assistance of friends from a yoga class.

After their bodies were inked, they were picked up, carefully pressed onto paper, and then slightly turned to capture the impression of being in motion in the same way a photograph can be "tricked" into holding multiple images. "Pressing the body onto the paper is challenging because you have to put the ink onto the paper and get the body back off before it smudges," Hamil Talman said. "They are intimate moments for all involved." One can only imagine what it took to get the clearly identifiable bones of a ribcage onto paper.

It's as if Hamil Talman, who has thoroughly researched monolithic prehistoric images, has found a way of capturing the hereditary step between printmaking and photography. "My theme has always been the origins of identity," she said. "Then I got interested in the history of women and our connection to the historic past and alternative photographic processes."

While the yoga-inspired creative process is fascinating in its own right, it's only part of what Hamil Talman used in creating the "Danse Ardente" series. Samples of her own blood taken by a hematologist were smeared, photographed and converted to slide format, magnified with an electron microscope and photographed again; a pathologist supplied her with similar tissue slides



*Danse Ardente 12*

demonstrating inflammations that can occur in the body. Those were merged with the prior body print photos in PhotoShop, then delicately turned into a life-size black and white gelatin silver print with help from an assistant in her home basement.

"The paper is damaged easily," Hamil Talman explained. "You have to move it back and forth in plastic trays where it comes out black and white. No one has a sink big enough for the tones I want to get. Then I take them outside, lay them down on the back lawn, and use paintbrushes to get the special colors and tones I want."

When people see the end results, Hamil Talman said, most can't imagine the original photographic image. That was also the judgment by the curator of a modern gallery who was selecting entries for the Houston FotoFest. "She said, 'This isn't photography, this is contemporary art.'"

Brian Goslow