



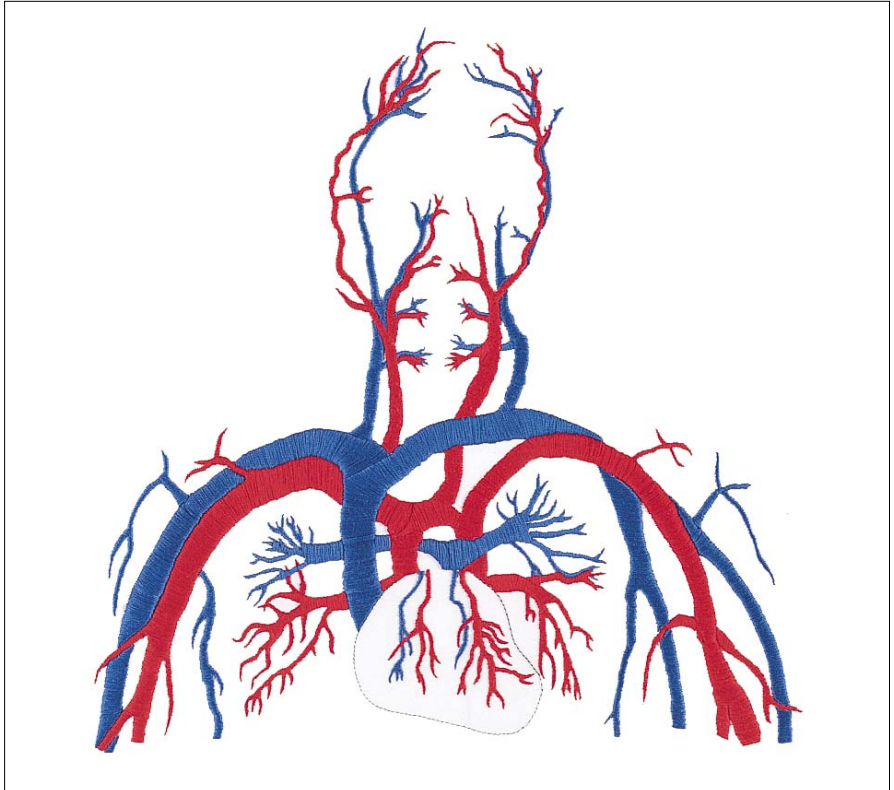
Lifeworks

# Fabricating the body

Students and practitioners of medicine may mistake Sarah Maloney's "Circulatory System" for an image lifted directly from one of Frank Netter's atlases of human anatomy. But a closer look reveals that the branching vessels are neither drawn nor painted like most anatomical drawings. Instead, all of the works exhibited in "Corpus" — Maloney's contribution to the New Brunswick Trilogy featured from Jan. 31 to Apr. 14 at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton — are either knitted forms or images embroidered on lengths of silk.

Sarah Maloney describes her artistic project as an attempt to make the "invisible arts" visible. Just as anatomical drawing would have been considered an essential part of the artist's training but never the final achievement, the "feminine arts" have always been seen as important for the production of clothing and household objects but not as high art. By bringing these two arts into the gallery, Maloney forces viewers to see them outside their utilitarian contexts and as esthetic modes in their own right.

Challenging the conventions of anatomical illustration, Maloney rejects



Sarah Maloney, *Circulatory System*, 1998-99 (detail).

"My work is about identity and how it is constructed within and without the individual."

the use of the male body as standard: her works are life-sized, but based on the

proportions of a five-foot woman. She also moves beyond traditional representations of the female body as an objectified figure and looks below the surface, turning the body inside out. The slow process of knitting organs and skeletal parts imitates the process that occurs within the womb during pregnancy and recasts it as creative, rather than passive.

Hanging from stainless steel armatures, Maloney's soft forms (the vertebrae, a brain and feet) look like human body parts dangling from hospital equipment and like clothing draped from fashion display racks. The implication is that both medicine, with its machines revealing our insides, and fashion, whose dictates shape us from the outside, play a key role in determining how we view our bodies and ourselves.

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## One thousand words



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Weighing children at Forest School in High Park, Toronto, June 13, 1917.