

CREATIVE WORKS

Anatomists' work song

If not in death
 where would we live?
 Wrap the night slowly
 draw the borders tighter
 round our cadaverous caverns.
 Woe to the scholar
 with insufficient vanity.

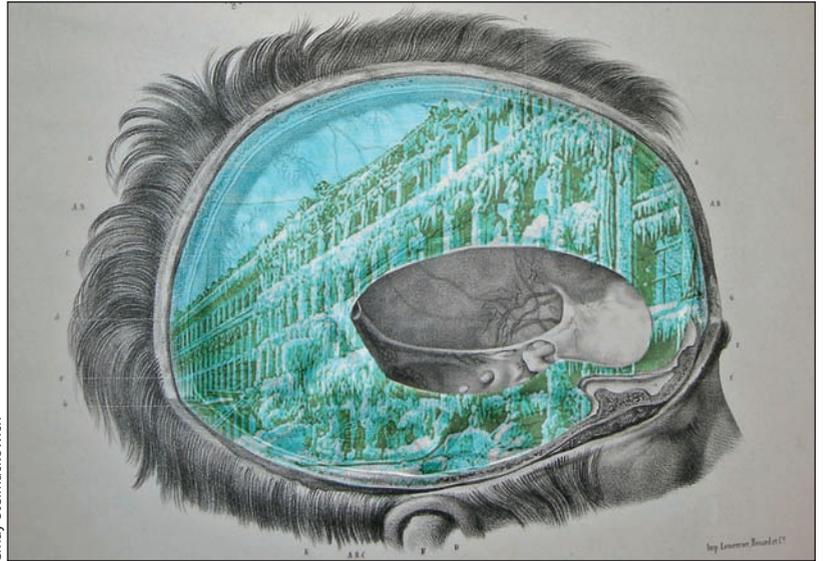
and so to work
 torn
 between scalpel and slab

Call me cartographer;
 sternum quill stenographer
 Implements of rumination
 ruin read for oracles
 a geography of fellows.
 I am conquistador of corpses
 chevalier de la chair inconnue
 tanned, salted and ripe for plunder
 chaste from forest to glade
 navigated, irrigated, in ruin remade.

If not for breath
 what could we give?
 Mind the cavity, cool the spade.
 Ponderous plumb, hook and gravity
 bind the finding fingers of
 the hand that made the hand that made.
 The rational apparatus
 the sick proficient sanity,
 the gift of cold calamity.

Call me animator;
 call them marionette.
 Split and sorted
 for posterity, for cybernetic sport.
 Reboot this dismantled frame and drift into
 wakefulness
 full into life.
 Whisper in your sleep, my specimen.
 Beg for the knife.

If not with memory
 why fill these cells?
 Spill into the spelunking shell,
 reliquary of delight and shrinking tales to tell
 how she rose, how she fell.
 Shrieks, peaks,
 for rattles, battles and for death knells.



Cindy Stelmackowich

Cindy Stelmackowich, *Burning of the Market-House at Kingston, Canada West — July 4, 1865* (2008) (detail). Ultrachromium print. 36 × 51 cm.



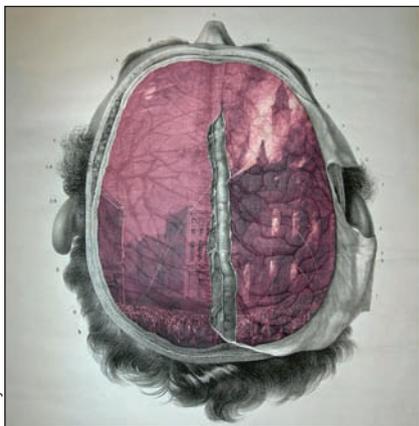
Cindy Stelmackowich

Cindy Stelmackowich, *A Frozen Fire in Montreal — c. 1800s* (2008) (detail). Ultrachromium print. 36 × 51 cm.

ESSAY

From plunger to *Punkt-roller*: a century of weight-loss quackery

Cindy Stelmackowich



Cindy Stelmackowich, *The Last Charge of Napoleon's Old Guard at the Battle of Waterloo, Belgium — June 18, 1815* (2008) (detail). Ultrachromium print. 36 × 51 cm.

Call me pornographer
 clasping fast to phantasm
 eros engaging ectoplasm
 lurid lens unfettered
 by membrane or morality.
 My mission subcutaneous
 dare not to undermine
 science
 my wholesome desire
 stroking toward
 scattered shrapnel of the sublime
 shivering glimpse even of the divine

I see vehicles
 of demise
 still life in profusion

I draw everything
 but breath
 and thus conclusion.

Kevin Matthews
 Poet
Cindy Stelmackowich PhD
 Artist
 Ottawa, Ont.

These images are from *Anatomy: In Ruins and Remade*, an exhibition at the Patrick Mikhail Gallery in Ottawa, Ont., Feb. 4–Mar. 4, 2009. Ms. Stelmackowich is an artist, curator and teacher whose artwork related to medical science has been exhibited across North America.

Mr. Matthews has performed his poetry in front of audiences around Canada — from hundreds to handfuls, and from symphonic concert halls to correctional facilities.

“People trust the quack with their lives who would not trust him with the loan of a sixpence. They seem to believe advertised testimonials as if they were guaranteed by a prominent physician, forgetting that many obscure prints can be got to write any falsehoods and back up any quackery under the sun. These lying testimonials are paraded in papers that ought to know better than to insert them, and the public believe in their statements as if they were scientific truths.”¹ — Dr. Nathaniel Edward Yorke-Davies, 1901

From *I Love Lucy*-style body jigglers, to heated “slenderizing” jeans and tens of thousands of fad diets, weight-loss quackery has dominated this past century’s snake-oil market. While the marketing of hope will always have its victims, with some of these products it is truly difficult to understand the mentality of the buyer. Did people in the late 1800s really find hand-drawn before-and-after testimonial pictures to be compelling? Was

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there really a large German market for the turn of the century’s *Punkt-roller*, the suction-cupped rolling pin? Were there armies of jiggling bodies in basements hoping their weight would bounce away?

Sadly, the answer to all of those questions is a resounding “yes”; preying on the vulnerabilities often associated with obesity has shown itself to be a lucrative business.

Unfortunately, it was not only unscrupulous business people preying on the vulnerable, sometimes it was medical doctors. Take for example Dr. Thomas Lawton. In his 1917 book, *The Lawton Method of Weight Reduction*, he reports, “I have reduced the weight of thousands of other people and can do it for you. Get that firmly in your mind — you are going to be brought to a normal, comfortable and vigorously healthy weight.”² What was his method? Believe it or not it involved



Roger Collier

This selection of the author’s mechanical “weight-loss” devices includes, in the foreground, the *Punkt-roller* from Germany, the Knead-Away (left), which was billed by Sears Roebuck as “the scientific way to remove fat,” and the “Redusaway” (right), which when plugged in vibrates and ironically blows hot air.