

# Five Questions with Spencer Museum of Art Curator Cassandra Mesick Braun

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*This post was paid for by Spencer Museum of Art.*



(<https://www.thepitchkc.com/content/uploads/2021/02/exhib2187001.jpg>)

Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas has been busy finding ways to keep us all connected through art. One of the museum's newest exhibits *Healing, Knowing, Seeing the Body* (<https://spencerart.ku.edu/exhibition/healing-knowing-seeing-body>) is an exploration of our bodies and connection to one another—something all of us can relate to right now.

spoke with Curator Cassandra Mesick Braun about the new exhibitions this spring, what artists we can look forward to seeing, and more about the museum's plans.

## **We can't wait to get back out and safely explore the museum. What's new this spring at the Spencer Museum?**



(<https://www.thepitchkc.com/content/uploads/2021/02/addr17262002.jpg>)

Curator Cassandra Mesick Braun

We're featuring two new exhibitions that explore the human body and related ideas about health, care, and connection. *Healing, Knowing, Seeing the Body* (<https://spencerart.ku.edu/exhibition/healing-knowing-seeing-body>) reveals how artists, scientists, healers, patients, and others have come to understand the body through time and in different cultural contexts. There will be more than 150 works of art to experience! The second exhibition, *The Aorta of an Archivist* (<https://spencerart.ku.edu/exhibition/aorta-archivist>), is a sound and video installation by Dario Robleto that explores the history of recording our bodies. Together, these shows encourage viewers to celebrate their bodies and feel connected to one another.

## **We're all hyper-aware of our bodies right now. Even a single cough freaks us out. How can art about the body help us relate to a global pandemic?**

Both of these exhibitions were actually planned well before the pandemic, but the ideas they explore are especially relevant now. Themes include infectious disease, vaccination, inequity and disparity in healthcare, and the hope that healing offers. Many artists featured in the exhibition emphasize the importance of treating patients—and people more generally—with empathy and understanding, especially around issues of health and the body. Others celebrate the therapeutic benefits of art on mental wellbeing. In this moment of isolation, we hope the exhibitions will allow people to go out safely and have a positive experience through art.

## **What contemporary artists can we look forward to seeing as part of these exhibitions?**

Canadian artist Ingrid Bachmann (<http://ingridbachmann.com/>) has created a large-scale sound sculpture titled *Embrace* that uses soothing sounds, insulating felt, and conductive copper to encourage audiences to center, calm, and contemplate their own bodily experiences. Dario Robleto (<http://www.dariorobleto.com/>), a Houston-based transdisciplinary artist, was also commissioned to create *The Aorta of an Archivist*. His 53-minute film uses narration, sound, and images to ask what we can and can't know about our bodies. You'll find many other contemporary artists in the show, including Merritt Johnson, Sean Caulfield, Andrew Carnie, Holland Houdek, and Ruth Cuthand, as well as local artists like Mary Anne Jordan, Dylan Mortimer, and Gina Westergard.





(<https://www.thepitchkc.com/content/uploads/2021/02/exhib2187008.jpg>)

### **Are there any particular types of art we should be excited about experiencing in these new exhibitions?**

The art in these exhibitions is really diverse—there will be something for everyone! I'm especially excited about pieces that showcase collaboration, including a portfolio ([https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/collection-search#/portfolio/The%20First%20Time%2C%20the%20Heart%20\(A%20Portrait%20of%20Life%201854%E2%80%931913\)\)](https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/collection-search#/portfolio/The%20First%20Time%2C%20the%20Heart%20(A%20Portrait%20of%20Life%201854%E2%80%931913)))) of 50 lithographs by Dario Robleto that trace the quest to record the human heartbeat as a pulse wave. The prints were arranged in the galleries by Kansas Poet Laureate Huascar Medina. Some other highlights include a [color atlas](https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/collection-search#/object/60868) (<https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/collection-search#/object/60868>) of the human body from the 1600s on loan from the KU Medical Center, and a [series](https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/collection-search#/artist/27454) (<https://spencerartapps.ku.edu/collection-search#/artist/27454>) of imaginary medical implants and devices that merge aesthetics and function. There truly are works in every medium and from many different time periods, cultural contexts, and artistic traditions.

### **Tell us about some of the new programs or experiences we can look forward to in the coming months.**

There will be so many ways to engage! We're hosting a series of conversations called "Body Matters" with artists featured in our spring exhibitions that will take place on Zoom and are free and open to anyone who registers. There is also an interactive [virtual version](https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/virtual-exhibition/healing-knowing-seeing-body) (<https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/virtual-exhibition/healing-knowing-seeing-body>) of *Healing, Knowing, Seeing the Body* for those who want to dig deeper, or who aren't able to visit the galleries in person. You find more information about virtual events on our [calendar](https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/calendar#top) (<https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/calendar#top>) and [make a reservation](https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/plan-your-visit#reservation) (<https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/plan-your-visit#reservation>) to visit the galleries Thursdays through Sundays.



[spencerart.ku.edu \(https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/\)](https://www.spencerart.ku.edu/)

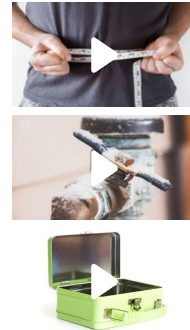
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