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Crossing the boundaries: Stelarc's artworks and the reclaiming of the obsolete body

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Abstract

Stelarc, the performance artist, has since the middle of the twentieth century, harnessed technology to enable an ongoing challenge to the physical body. Embracing ever evolving technology, Stelarc provokes the art world with a series of works that he claims demonstrate the body as limited and obsolete. The body positioned as limited enables Stelarc to seek the transcendence of the same body through the use of the body/technology symbiosis in the form of medical instruments, prosthetics, robotics, virtual reality systems and the Internet. Acknowledging that this body/technology symbiosis has brought with it changes in embodied and disembodied experiences, this study reclaims the “obsolete” body as the lived experiential body by exploring Stelarc’s contradictions both in his rhetoric and his performance. The established contradictions substantiate the body as corporeal and embodied and as necessary to exist in and make sense of our surrounding world.

Stelarc; body; technology; obsolete; transcendence; prosthesis; virtual reality; embodied; disembodied; corporeal; performance art; contemporary art.