Nude show document on changing culture, should not be missed

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ties and for the expanded interest which animates them. Margaret Evans Pregnan shows the awkwardly seated sitter sporting a gaze of beaverlme above her bulging belly and swollen nipples; by contrast, the courageous Self-Portrait suggests a vigorous, independent spirit in the decrepit body of the eighty-year old painter. As reflections on the dialectic of body and soul, these works have no rivals in this show.

The self-portraits of John Coplans on the same wall are more than a negation of the traditional aesthetics of the naked body; they strive to be in any inversion. Coplans photographs his aged, hairy body in statuesque poses, keenly exploiting his age-enhanced geometrical qualities. Repulive by any established standard of beauty, these pictures exhibit a sense of defiance impossible to ignore.

But if flawless immortals no longer hold sway in the realm of the nude, the fascination which engendered them lingers on. They have simply stepped down from the lofty abode of Mount Olympus to the less detached platforms of advertisement, beauty pages, movies and adult magazines. The simultaneous breakdown of certain inhibitions has exposed others. Though many of these developments involve imagery hardly classifiable as art, the exhibition includes material to document them.

With the traditional politics of the nude put in jeopardy, it is not surprising to find artists who attack its social and cultural roots. Robert Colescott, for instance, challenges the western, white ideal of beauty by transposing its classical images in a master beauty contest by François Robert.

The overall coherence of the present show leaves a bit to be desired. Some things don't fit very well — most obviously the prominent installation by the artist's collective TODT, rather intriguing in its own right but difficult to relate to either quality, nakedness or stripping. Quality varies, and there are several items which I would call merely, well, cute. But as a docum

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