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### An Art Exhibit That'll Get Under Your Skin

Last week at the opening of “[Borderline: Depictions of Skin](#),” an exhibition at the Garis & Hahn gallery on the Lower East Side, I was asked to think more deeply about skin and its place in the world.

The exhibit features mixed media work by [Gwen Hardie](#), [Cynthia Lin](#) and [Diana Schmertz](#). Each of the three artists presents different perceptions of skin in an attempt to force the viewer to “confront their own relationship between their body and the world,” as the press release puts it. My favorite pieces on display made me feel a little bit uncomfortable—and that’s a good thing.

When I go to an art museum or gallery, the works that make a lasting impression are the ones that stir up some kind of emotion inside of me—heartache, amazement, confusion or disgust. Standing in front of a photograph, installation or what-have-you, if I don’t feel something, I move on. At Garis & Hahn, I lingered on several paintings of interlocked hands by NYC-based artist Diana Schmertz. Her figures made me think of touching, of skin on skin, and I felt sort of squirmy. It was as though I had gotten a peek of something private, something I wasn’t meant to see.

I had the pleasure of meeting Diana at the exhibit and she shared her thought process behind three of her pieces.

1. *Something on the Other Side Of It*: “With the works that have piles of hands, as opposed to the circular moments of contact, I am conveying ideas about interconnectedness and perception, as well as, ideas of linear versus non-linear time. I believe the idea of interconnectedness is easily assessable. We are social beings and what we do effects other people and the environment we are a part of. The idea that each interaction stays with us and effects the rest of our experiences is also evident in the pile images.”

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2. *The Cause of Itself*: "It addresses the idea in western philosophy that something cannot come from nothing. Everything is a reaction to an action. Hence, it is believed nothing can be the cause of itself. This leads to the question 'What was the first action?' In this painting, the pile of hands has no beginning or end demonstrating a lack of knowledge or understanding of 'the cause.'"

## —About—



### Baze Mpinja

I'm a Brooklyn-based freelance writer and former beauty editor for *Glamour*, *Vibe Vixen* and *Suede*. I created this blog to examine beauty in the media, pop culture and real life. I hope you enjoy exploring these topics with me, and I invite you to share your thoughts and experiences.

#### CONTACT

#### PHOTO SUBMISSION

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3. *Container of Time and Space*: “These works are a mixture of ideas from my gridded works and the piles. I express the idea of interconnectedness by piling the moments of contact together and dissonance in the fact that each moment is mechanically separated into a geometric circle.”



In my daily life as a beauty writer, I tend to think of skin as just an organ that needs moisturizer or a blank canvas for makeup, which is why I really enjoyed the concept of “Borderline: Perceptions of Skin.” The exhibit as a whole is a reminder that skin is so much more.

Photos courtesy of **Diana Schmertz**

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