

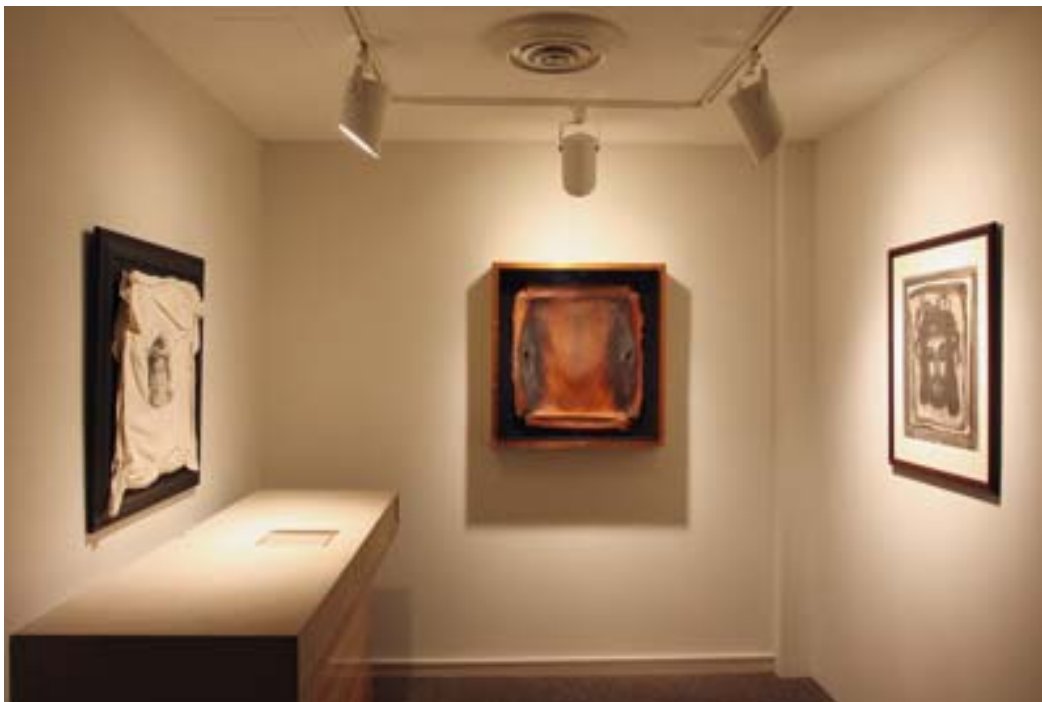
Wrestling with Veronica's Veil

Courtney Henson March 19, 2009 mocra.wordpress.com

After visiting *Good Friday* at MOCRA, I found attachments to several works — mostly those involving textile media or found objects and at this particular show, mostly dealing with the topic of HIV/AIDS.

A few days later, I found myself confronted with the story of Randy "the Ram" in *The Wrestler* and thinking back to *Icarian XI/ Leg Extension*. Between the workout scenes in *The Wrestler*, Randy's overly tanned skin and the allusions of him toward Jesus, I kept thinking back to the leather seat because of its original life as an overworked piece of equipment. The seat now transcends that life and has this residue that shows its hard work — the stains of those who used it have become its stigmata.

When contemporary art finds an even more contemporary reference, I feel it proves the power of the work of art. When Randy shows off his scars to his friend, Cassidy (played by Marisa Tomei), Cassidy quotes a line from *The Passion* and draws parallels to Randy as a type of Christ figure. Certainly Randy, with his long blond hair and Jesus tattoo on his lower back, emulates a figure who aims to redeem himself.



From left: Luis González Palma, "El Santo Sudario" (1989); Daniel Goldstein, "Icarian XI/Leg Extension" (1993); Georges Rouault, "By His Stripes We Are Healed," from the series "Miserere et Guerre" (1922)

The artwork by Goldstein similarly shows the struggles played out by the human body for the sake of becoming more godlike, at least by contemporary society's standards. The work is composed of a leather covering for a workout bench, the brand name Icarian. The covering was salvaged from a gym in San Francisco's Castro neighborhood at a pivotal time during the AIDS epidemic.

The piece is housed in a shadow box and displayed like a shrine. In this memorial, the leather is deeply scarred from use; years of sweat are seeped into its surface. There are creases and crinkles from where it was wrapped around the bench. The object is powerful in its stains of sweat, alluding to the story of Veronica's cloth. *Icarian XI/Leg Extension* seems to have the faint image of a portrait; as I write this, I find my reflection placed in its outline — reminding me of the importance of placing myself in the shoes of others.

I would entreat you to view two things this week: *The Wrestler* by Darren Aronofsky, and *Icarian XI/Leg Extension* by Daniel Goldstein at MOCRA.



Georges Rouault, "By His Stripes We Are Healed," (1922)



Luis González Palma, "El Santo Sudario" (1989)



Daniel Goldstein, "Icarian XI/Leg Extension" (1993)