

By [Summer Dawn Hortillosa / For The Jersey Journal](#)

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Can the quest for beauty end in ugliness?

**“REvulsion,”** a new group exhibit at the New Jersey City University Visual Arts Gallery, explores how the human body is perceived with striking - and sometimes unsettling - works. Curator Panida Suwannawisut, who is graduating with her BFA in 2014, says the show was born from a project for a gallery management class.

“It’s amazing how easy it is to reconstruct our bodies. We put on makeup or use clothes to change our appearance. We want this constant change. Changing our body is possible, cheap and accessible,” said the 22-year-old. “But sometimes we can take it so far that it goes terribly wrong. Sometimes people need to see that and reflect on what they want to change - is it good or better?”

Some of the pieces directly comment on body modification, such as painter Michelle Doll’s “Reduction,” a self-portrait with Doll peeling skin off her face to reveal the raw flesh underneath. “The paint strokes are rough and vigorous and you can see the angst she’s feeling trying to take off her skin,” said Suwannawisut.

The show also features Amy Stienbarger’s prosthetic sculptures, Naimar Ramirez’s faces constructed from textural prints and Amy Swartele’s eerie taxidermy pieces featuring animals morphed with human faces.

Other participating artists are Toni Burrows, Tracy Phillips, Sky Kim, Patti Jordan, Maria Liebana, Lauren Carly Shaw, Seunghwui Koo and Jen Ueda. Suwannawisut said aside from exploring body image and modification, the show also challenges ideas about art in general.

“Art doesn’t have to be pretty,” said Suwannawisut. “It doesn’t have to be extremely ‘contemporary’ to the point that you can’t really understand anymore. Works can be visually striking and disturbing ... As artists, we can’t be ‘pretty-pretty’ all the time. We have to be able to cross the border. Sometimes we have to go across the line.”

“REvulsion” will be part of the Jersey City Artists Studio Tour only on Saturday, Oct. 5 from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Visual Arts Gallery at New Jersey City University, 2039 Kennedy Blvd. Its opening reception will be Wednesday, Oct. 9 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. The show runs until Nov. 7.