

# ‘My body talks, so does yours...’

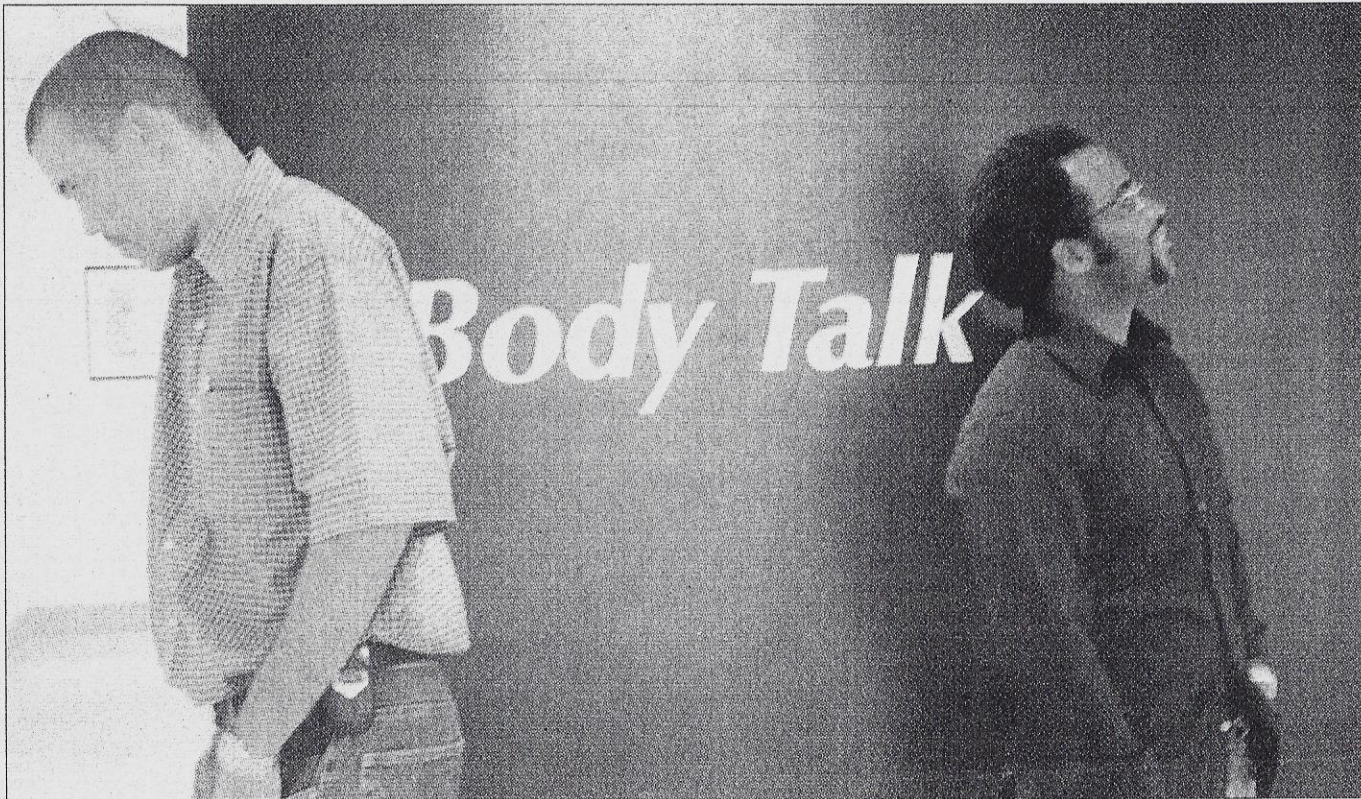
*The National Gallery explores the most intimate form of self expression in their newest exhibition, Bodytalk*

Story and photos by  
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Visiting Bodytalk – the newest exhibition at the National Gallery – is in itself a study of humankind’s most primal form of expression. Walk the evocative display and just try to keep from knitting your brow, pursing your lips, fidgeting, or smiling wildly.

In a way that is almost invasive Bodytalk captures the interest and emotion of its viewer. The exhibition is stunningly mounted and bridges the chasm between art and presentation – a problem many curators face when hanging such a show.

“There was a challenge in finding visual relationships between the pieces and hanging the show in accordance



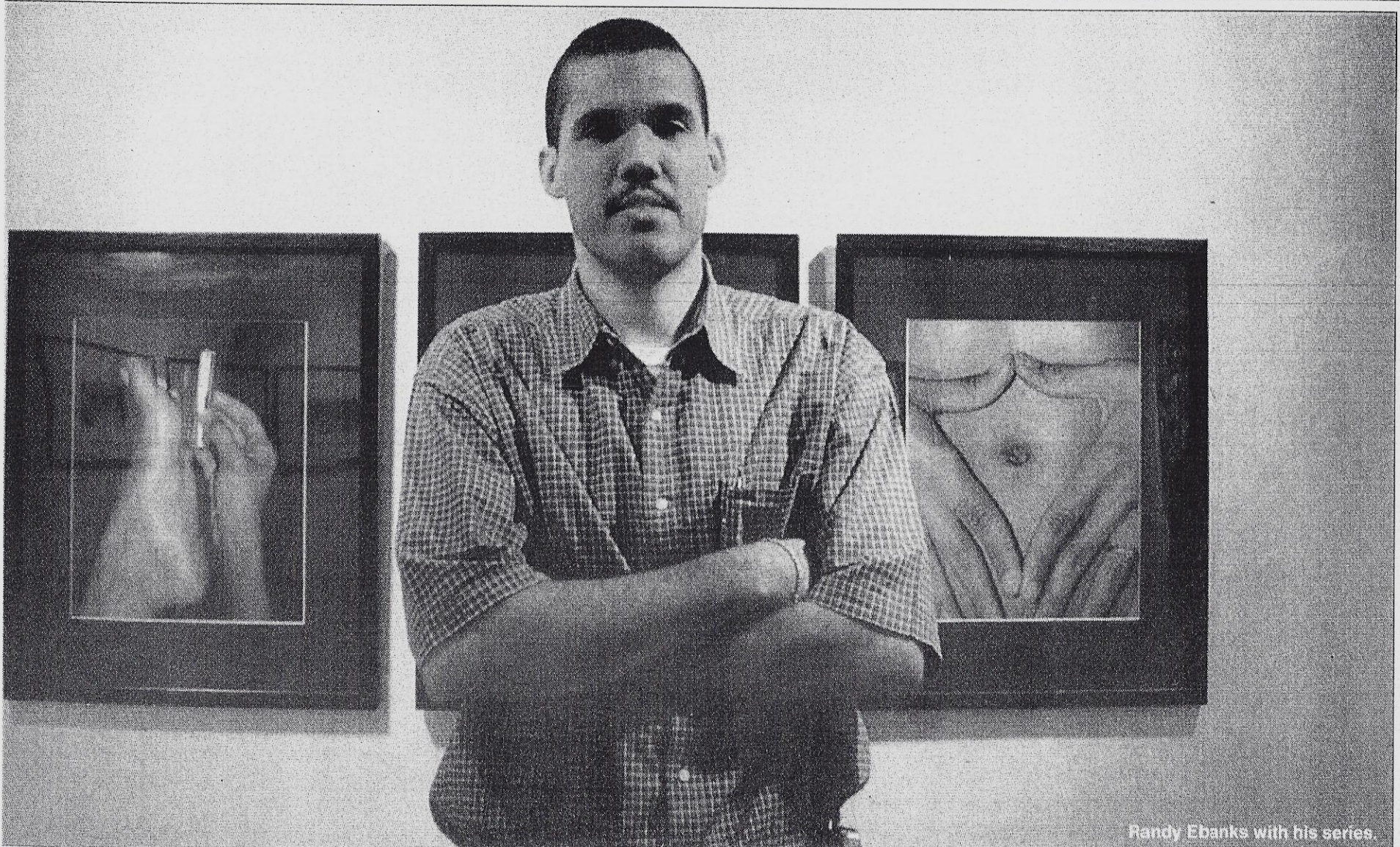
Artists Randy Ebanks and Kenroy Lumsden.

with them.” In deciding which pictures go where, I wanted to develop a narrative that complimented the theme.”

The collection of photographic images - interspersed with nuggets of lyricism by the artists - is singularly superior to what most people will have seen in the newer medium. Photography is perhaps the most marginalised of the visual arts – mainly because of the way it lends itself to computer regeneration – an idea that still furrows the traditional critic’s brow.

Even so, photography has birthed a new generation of new age artisans on the island that embrace their medium with the age-old craftsmanship of a rope-maker or potter.





Randy Ebanks with his series.



Bodytalk's roster of artists run the gamut in professional and art photography, names synonymous with excellence in the field of imagery; David Wolfe. Lucy Best. Nasaria Suckoo-Chollette.

Because Bodytalk has brought together some of the island's most cutting-edge photographers, the way in which the theme is depicted is never the same twice. It was about eight weeks ago that Coleman drew together this dynamic troupe of 20 artists and gave them a theme challenging in its contradictory nature. Leave it to the National Gallery to craft a

conundrum from what is considered the world's most simplistic form of expression. Leave it to an assemblage of the island's newest and most fearless

“So many different shapes and sizes, colours and contours, cultures and ethnicities.”

Nasaria Suckoo Chollette creative minds to make it really sing.

“While photographs may seem straightforward documents of the visual world,” states Coleman’s curator’s statement. “They

often carry strong symbolic content, both intentionally and unintentionally on the part of the photographer. From the simplest to the most symbolically complex depictions a range of issues emerge, including ones of personal identity, belief, culture, sexuality, gender, and political power. They may act to reinforce stereotypes or to help the viewer to liberate previously held assumptions.”

This explanation left the playing field wide open for the artists, who ran with the idea; charting territory in abstract, realistic, black and white, vivid colour and computer

alteration. Lucy Best’s *Legs I-IV* introduces the exhibition along with the curator’s statement and is a literal testament in black and white to the idea behind Bodytalk; showing two women in obvious conversation, the lower halves of their body in obvious communication. Lennon Christian’s *Seasons* is a bit more ambiguous. A single photograph is altered four times to evoke the feeling of the four seasons, producing at times brilliant colour and barren black and white.

Other pieces dealt less with the subject of the

CONT'D ON PAGE A14

## Walking Bodytalk

If a viewer can walk an exhibition and feel completely connected to the idea and the artists who have contributed, then the curator has done their job.

While the underlying idea and the works are the literal embodiments of an abstract idea like Bodytalk, it is the gallery and the way in which they are presented that really bring them to life.

“Body language influences the way in which we see ourselves as people, and the images had to be presented in a way people could relate to,” states curator Natalie Coleman.

Although Coleman has had extensive involvement in a host of other exhibitions, Bodytalk is her first solo venture. By all accounts, she has done a stellar job in taking her own idea and giving it walls, colours, words and a face.

“We need more ideas like this, more exhibitions like this,” stated Carl Brown in conversation with fellow photographer Randy Ebanks.

“If they keep throwing them out there, we’ll keep working with them,” stated Ebanks.

Four black walls give a feeling of boundary to the exhibition and keep the smaller scale photographs and meandering wall quotes from falling into obscurity. As visitors walk the exhibition, there is always one in sight to rein in the images for the mind’s eye. Light reflects off of vinyl printed artist’s quotes transferred onto the walls. A poem by contributing artist Vivienne Henry welcomes visitors to the exhibition and is illuminated with soft white light;

*Talk to me  
Utter not a word*

