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“Hairy Bodies”

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While inspired by the queer subculture that adores large, hairy guys—bears—this provocative exhibition is less about fetishism than about creating a model of hirsute glamour. Ruth Eckland’s video casts a furry, big-bellied man in a slow-motion water ballet (with an electronic soundtrack that’s too ominous for its own good), while in his own pair of atmospheric, fairly static videos, Chris Komater treats hairy male shoulders to the loving photo-shoot breezes that usually accentuate a supermodel’s luxuriant mane. A series of vitrines contain Nick Dong’s pearl-encrusted sterling silver body jewelry designed especially for big bear-men. As shown in large color photographs, his deco-inspired codpiece channels the subliminally S/M sexiness of a Hollywood biblical epic. In a more abstract vein, Nayland Blake expresses the comforting nature of abundance with a massive, salt-and-pepper faux-fur blanket that hangs from an industrial strength towel rack, and Dean Smith uses iron filings and gold-leafed magnets to create fuzzy-wuzzy fetishes that are as formally beautiful as they are abject. Only two artists treat the topic literally. With a pair of ASCII-character portraits of big, naked bearded guys, Chris Vandemore accesses the queer staple of online forums, while Su-Chen Hung creates a hammock in which abundant piles of hair, collected from barber shops and beauty salons, acquire a palpable, corporeal heaviness—with the ethereal shadow of whiskers that have sifted onto the floor adding a poetically melancholy touch.

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