

Body of Knowledge

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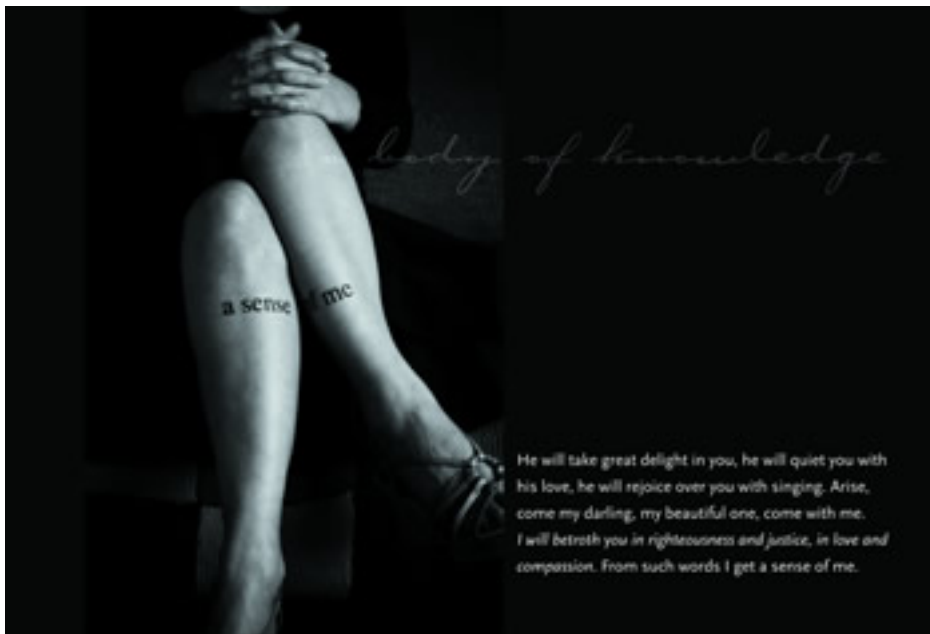
Suzanne Lau Gooley writes about a Melbourne exhibition of powerful photographs of positive women.

My lover used a needle twice, once on himself and then on me. Now I'm still alive when they told me twice I should be very dead. Though twice a day I have to take my medication. I have two children, too. Beautiful, beautiful twins. Life is all times two.

These poignant words form one of the stories of fifteen women in the Body of Knowledge, a stunning photographic exhibition held in March in Melbourne.

International photographer, Michael Coyne, playwright, Graham Pitts and Positive Women Victoria collaborated in this image and text project. From interviews with participants, Graham fashioned a short text to accompany each gigantic print, which shows a key phrase imprinted onto a part of the body.

Thirteen women are HIV-positive and two are non-positive, challenging the viewer – can you tell which of the women has the [virus](#) [1]A small infective organism which is incapable of reproducing outside a host cell.? Only two women chose to show their faces, gazing directly at the viewer. All the women are positively portrayed, with the intention on breaking down the myths and stigma about HIV.



The exhibition was the latest project based on Positive Women's strategy to use the creative arts to enhance the well-being of its members and to raise community awareness of women living with HIV. In five days, around 700 people viewed the exhibition, which was initiated by former director of Positive Women, Stephanie Moore and supported by the Australia Council for the Arts, Ography Design Consultancy and the Amazing Raymond of Tattoos without Needles.

In his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, Graham Pitts writes with respect and warmth for women living with HIV, for their wisdom and resilience. Graham has had a long association with Positive Women, having synthesized women's stories into the play "All in the Family", which was first produced in 2004 and also in 2006, when it was included in the Victorian VCE play list.



As a positive woman, I was deeply moved and uplifted by this beautiful exhibition, and I can't wait to see it again with other positive friends. I do not know all of the participants, but I am glad that more women have taken up this opportunity, and I am so grateful to Graham and Michael for giving our voices and stories life.

The exhibition will show at the Frankston Arts Centre until July 21.

- [art and culture](#)
- [Positive women](#)

Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/125>