





## Katonah Museum of Art

Judy Moonelis  
Jackson Heights, New York  
Resides in New York City, New York

Judy Moonelis finds her inspiration in the human body, using advanced medical imagery and anatomical illustrations to make connections between our interior life as biological entities and our exterior participation in the wider social and physical environment.

Moonelis's suspended installation, *Mirror Neuron Strands*, is a visualization of the "mirror neurons" that are associated with brain functions related to empathy and the social skills needed for survival. Modern imaging instruments have detected that specific neurons in humans appear to light up upon an individual's observing actions and emotions that simulate his or her own. Moonelis portrays these microscopic structures with hanging disks and ovoids of different sizes, interspersed with small circular mirrors and references to branching cells and synapses. Air currents cause the components to move and vibrate so that light flickers off the reflective surfaces, simulating the action of the neurons themselves.

Like the explorers in the film *Fantastic Voyage*, who shrink themselves to enter a human body, visitors who view Moonelis's complementary installation, *Evolutionary Wall II*, encounter organs, arteries, and neurons as mysterious and miraculous structures that govern movements, thoughts, and perceptions of the outside world. The artist allows the viewer to share her sense of wonder at the intricacy of the human biological systems. Based in part on Charles Darwin's first sketch of the evolutionary tree of life, her installation transforms those line drawings into a pseudo-natural history display that includes double helix-like strands, root forms, and hair – a feature common to the family of mammals.

Moonelis employs a range of working methods and media, featuring clay but also including wire, glass and mirrors, plastic, paper, paint, and artificial hair. She is drawn to clay because it is malleable and responsive in the way it records human touch and because it is an ancient material that is connected to the earth and to the origins of life itself.

Ursula Ilse-Neuman

*Mirror Neuron Strands*, 2007 – 2008  
Ceramic, glass, wire, metal mesh,  
metal foil, plastic, paper, acrylic paint  
96 × 84 × 96 inches  
Courtesy of the artist  
Made possible by a grant from  
Fairleigh Dickinson University



*Evolutionary Wall II*, 2005 – 2008  
Ceramic, synthetic hair, wire, plastic,  
needle, thread, paper, ink, glass, steel,  
copper, brass, "t"-pins  
95 × 98 × 27 inches  
Courtesy of the artist  
Made possible by a grant from  
Fairleigh Dickinson University