"The Origin of the World / The Force of the Source / The Cause of the Vigor" is a three parts brilliant, two parts non sequitur (or maybe it's the other way around) group show at Samson gallery. The subject: "The vagina as base of creativity and joy." In practice this means Kirsten Stoltmann's glittery deadpan self-portrait photo *I Know You*, a giant close up of an amethyst (purple quartz) stuck in her vagina. It's like staring into the Bermuda Triangle — swallowing you up with bedazzling, intimate anatomy, humor, and just plain dumbfounding weirdness.

The exhibit's polestars are Gustave Courbet's notorious 1866 painting of lady parts called *The Origin of the World* and feminism (reconsiderations of the female nude; celebration of the body as source of grrrl power). So we get Tim Davis's photo of Courbet's painting (the real one, I'm told) with a glare of light on the pubic hair and Daniel Gordon's recreation of the painting as a funny, odd, rumpled (wounded?) paper sculpture. Then there's Kelly Kleinschrodt's green glass pyramid with a gray image — perhaps waves? — in the bottom.

This stuff doesn't bother with the erotic charge of Courbet's high-end smut. Instead it's vagina as icon, biology, curiosity, power plant, specimen, temple.

"THE ORIGIN OF THE WORLD . . . " :: Samson, 450 Harrison Ave, Boston :: Through March 30 :: 617.357.7177 or samsonprojects.com

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