



BY ANGAIL TUCKER
(SUN REPORTER)

IT SEEMS LIKE THE WORK OF angry Luddites: Twenty-seven cell phones have been strung up from the Contemporary Museum's ceiling. The phones aren't dead, though — their tiny screens are bright and flickering with videos of a woman's flesh: snuggles of her knees, feet, lips. It's hard to know what the woman herself, the French artist Beatrice Valentine Amrhein, is saying about the phones that make up her multimedia sculpture. Are they technological intruders? Or natural extensions of her own body?

Many of the pieces in *Cell Phone: Art and the Mobile Phone*, the first museum exhibit of its kind in the country, explore such provocative ambiguities. There's text-message animation and a cell-phone sound garden. There's a projected photo collage made up of images sent from viewers' phones.

"Cell phones have so much potential as sites for artistic pieces, as messages and communication tools," says Irene Hofmann, the Contemporary Museum's executive director and curator for the show, which opens this weekend. "Artists are commenting on this technology and subverting it."

More than mere networking devices, cell phones increasingly serve as platforms for self-expression for a wide spectrum of artists. The phones are becoming integrated into art forms ranging from architecture to poetry to opera, where they are used in ways that manipulate and transcend their intended functions.

New technologies have always been fodder for artists, Hofmann says. But rarely has there been an invention with so much expressive power as the cell phone, which comes packed with cameras, both still and moving, sound systems, and screens for text display, along with the ability to broadcast to a limitless audience.

Nor is there often an object that becomes culturally ubiquitous in such a short period, says [Please see MOBILE, 4E]

»»» **CELL PHONE: ART AND THE MOBILE PHONE** // Today through April 22 // Contemporary Museum, 100 W. Centre St. // 410-783-5720 or www.contemporary.org

Cell phones dangle (above) in Beatrice Valentine Amrhein's multimedia sculpture, and they pulse in "Cell Phone Disco" (left).

