



## SCENOGRAPHIES OF THE INNER WORLD

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## **ABSTRACT**

SCENOGRAPHIES OF THE INNER WORLD is a reflection on my progress as an artist through this focused time of my doctoral studies, documenting how art and research have become intricately woven. Through drawing, sculpture, installation and moving image, my practice has evolved responding to personal experience, memory and myth, and the evocative language of philosophy and psychoanalysis.

I have investigated a transitional space, mediated between internal and external perception - a hinterland between the mind and body where the unconscious leaves a trace. This residue of lived experience haunts the present and troubles the senses and through research in psychoanalytical theory, I have sought to deepen my understanding of these psychic processes.

I describe how ideas are generated from collecting discarded objects, and materials whose meanings are then transformed, elaborated or obscured by the creative process and mode of presentation. The object in psychoanalysis has revealed a matrix of inter-relationships between ourselves and others. The object's presence in the work of contemporary artists has enriched and challenged my ideas.

While thinking and making can inspire, performative embodiment has connected me deeply to my past. In researching my family history and the legacies of displacement and exile, my work has explored ideas of 'haunting', revealing loss, trauma and abjection: evocations transmitted across generations. These themes, each evolving out from the other, evoke a journey from the surface to the depths, from thoughts to feelings.

Concepts of psychic fragmentation and splitting have been a starting point to express the pathology of trauma. Often, hybrid bodies are vibrantly present, while also evoking that which dwells beyond the body. Testing the unsettling tipping points of absurdity and abjection I have trusted a process of free association and serendipity to discover the unexpected and the uncannily familiar.

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## INTRODUCTION

Evoking the Inner World of my title conjures all kinds of thoughts and spaces in the mind, that I set out to explore at the start of the Professional Doctorate. After an account of my previous education and professional work, I describe my transition from theatre designer to fine artist. I discarded the structure of a script or stage and found my own inner world to be limitless. This thesis charts the five-year journey to define the scenography of this internal landscape through my creative practice, psychoanalytic theory and contextualised within contemporary art. I reflect on the questions raised, the challenges faced, and the highs and lows of an exceptional and transformational experience.

Artists and psychoanalysts both delve into the labyrinth of the mind, to unearth things hidden, disguised, forgotten and buried. It is through each discipline that my investigation navigates towards a deeper understanding and engagement with the things I discover. My visual response to this process includes drawings, sculptures and installations, and performative work, recorded in film and photography. My thesis is divided into three interrelated parts, loss, trauma, and abjection. Each theme has grown out of the other and so there is a chronology to the report, and yet like psychoanalysis, the themes overlap, repeat and rewind, to constantly reveal new layers beneath.

Memories and impressions from experiences are the starting point for my work, and psychoanalytic theory helps me understand the motivation, process, and content of my creativity and enriches my ideas. The unexpected is often revealed a reminder of the unconscious workings of the mind. These surprises can direct me to the next wave of creative activity and investigation. Ideas can equally be ignited by the evocative language used to describe psychoanalytic concepts. A symbiotic relationship between theory and my creative practice has gradually evolved.

The child's transitional object inspired my first creative piece and led me to explore the role of the object in psychoanalysis and contemporary art. I discovered 'loss' at the heart of my inquiry. It was enlightening to analyse the contrasting ways artists create, transform, and involve objects in their work to express a nuanced relationship to the

experience of loss through their practice. I reflected on my relationship to the object's form, materiality, and presence as a conveyor of meaning.

Researching loss in psychoanalysis inspired me to look further into my family history. Through performative work, I discovered the traces of trauma, transmitted through generations. This work made me question the transitional body as the liminal border between self and other, and how it is exploited as a site of artistic expression. Psychosocial theories of the intergenerational transmission of trauma, and the ghostly hauntings of the past that trouble the present became central to my research.

This work affected me deeply and I describe a period of retreat to make more contained and intimate art. Through researching the after-effects of trauma expressed in artwork, I discovered contemporary feminist theory, which positions the intersubjectivity of a matrixial border-space at the origins of selfhood, and existential longing for connectivity. In considering the role of memory and memorial, I reflected on the ethical position of making art concerning the aftermath of trauma not suffered or witnessed directly. I investigate the expression of personal trauma through creative practice and art in response to the pain of others.

The third part investigates the theme of abjection continuing my research into the psyche's responses to trauma. Through drawing, my ideas developed in a flow of free association and unconscious thoughts emerged more readily. My imagery became less literal and an abstraction of form expressed something beyond the body, in excess of the subject; abject, intrusive, disturbing. Experimenting with fabric, domestic detritus and builder's debris, I created three-dimensional objects that expressed psychic fragments and alluded to the abject body and the home.

The final section is a reflection on all the professional opportunities I've experienced throughout the Doctorate, developing a studio practice, exhibiting, curating, attending artist residencies, and academic conferences. I describe how each has helped shape and develop my work as a researcher and an artist.

## PERSONAL AND CREATIVE CONTEXT

Over the summer holiday, before my art foundation course began, I worked backstage at the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester assisting the designer Peter Bennion. He had studied Theatre Design at Wimbledon School of Art and described a training and profession that would embrace all my interests – art, theatre, dance, music, literary analysis and a curiosity about the human condition.

I was not disappointed. The curriculum at WSA covered the broad spectrum of performance genres mostly in speculative design projects and some fully realized productions. I practised the technical skills of precision model making and drawing to design costumes and sets, drafting technical plans and storyboards to communicate ideas. Theatre design requires background research, so the theoretical component focused on the historical and contextual study of performance, costume and spatial design.

Throughout the course, I also attended evening classes at the London Contemporary Dance School and for my final dissertation chose to research the art of Isadora Duncan, looking beyond her notoriety to reveal a radical approach to movement and a unique contribution to the development of contemporary dance. I was becoming fascinated by mythology, fairy-tales and the workings of the imagination and unconscious mind. Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* offered an alternative, Freudian, interpretation. In my final year, I co-designed 'Slips', a production for Lumiere and Son at the ICA that re-interpreted familiar fairy-tales to reveal a more adult complexity and ambiguity.

My portfolio after graduating displayed work that was detailed and illustrative and as a result, I was commissioned to create illustrations for a series of short films of narrated fairy tales and later three series for the BBC children's program, '*Jackanory*'. I also illustrated children's full-colour picture books, and black and white pen and ink illustrations for publication. (Fig. 1)



Figure 1. Ali Darke, *Children's Book illustration*. 1982 - 1984

My 3D making and technical skills were employed in animatronic puppet design primarily for the Jim Henson Creature Shop for film and TV productions such as *Labyrinth*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Story Teller Series*, and *The Bear* (Fig. 2)



Figure 2. *Animatronic puppet, 'Labyrinth'*. Jim Henson Productions, 1985.

Over this first decade of professional life, I honed my technical skills, fulfilling the perceived expectations of the publishers for pretty illustrations, and the practical demands of animatronics, adapting to complex hierarchical systems and industries. However, I felt frustrated that there was little room for personal expression and so to follow my own ideas was compelled to further postgraduate study in Theatre Design at the Slade School of Fine Art.

The course took a traditional approach and was almost entirely studio-based. Treating the designer as Artist and Director, the collaborative nature of performance, practical considerations and budget restrictions were largely ignored. It was wonderfully indulgent, allowing our imaginations free rein to develop an individual aesthetic and visual language. My work was transformed; my drawing and painting style evolved becoming freer and more expressive of a darker interpretation.

The theoretical component was largely contextual research. Theatre designers are collectors and curators of images from diverse sources, the fine arts, photography, architecture, and history. For example, in designing *The Bacchae* by Euripides I researched both ancient Greek and contemporary views on performance, ritual, mythology, religious belief and philosophy. My interpretation reflected themes of the fear of madness resulting from the tension between desire, repression, and religious dogma. I had recently seen a Butoh company in which the mystical, ritualistic and extreme physicality of performance appeared both ancient and contemporary and influenced my conceptual approach.

My final speculative design of Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker* freely interpreted the original text by ETA Hoffman to explore traumatic and distorted memories of childhood. Alongside the historical context of the Enlightenment, I sought to understand mental breakdown and started to research psychoanalytic theory. Through works such as *Playing and Reality* by DW Winnicott, *The Divided Self* by RD Laing, and the *Drama of the Gifted Child* by Alice Miller I began to understand how events in childhood affect adult life. I was also fascinated by Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. This was my most personal work to date. My Grandmother was suffering from Alzheimer's disease and I witnessed her memory evaporate and her slide into mental confusion. With childlike wonder, she described the world around her as her father's



kingdom. The piece I conceived was as if seen through the eyes of an old woman looking back through the distorted lens of memory, at her transition from childhood to adulthood. Events, recalled as supernatural and magical, lead to a loss of innocence and psychotic breakdown. Themes that still recur in my work emerged to do with perception and memory, the liminal space between inner and outer reality, and anthropomorphism as a means to express unconscious fantasy. Like ETA Hoffman, my Grandmother was German and it seemed appropriate to make my design reminiscent of the illustrations from a book she read to us called *Struwwel Peter*. I was also influenced by the animation of Jan Svankmajer and the Brothers Quay. (Fig. 4)



Figure 3. Ali Darke, *Costume designs: The Nutcracker*, 1993

As our designs were not realised, the finished products for assessment were scale models, drawings, costume designs, and storyboards – and I, therefore, became preoccupied with the model as an artefact for display. (Fig. 4)



Figure 4. Ali Darke, 1:25 Set model, *The Nutcracker*, 1993

After graduating, I continued to work as a designer for contemporary and classical drama, children's theatre, short films, and musical theatre shows; performed in a variety of venues and site-specific spaces. I was often involved in the realization of sets, costumes, props and puppets and scenic painting. (Fig. 5)



Figure 5. Ali Darke, *Beauty and The Beast*. Midland Arts Centre, Birmingham, 1996

I carried on working after the birth of my first child in 1995 but hit a crisis when as my career expanded found I was often working away from home, at one point traveling between theatres in Birmingham, Nottingham, Croydon, Clwyd, and Watford. Theatre design cannot be undertaken part-time. I took a maternity break until my son was established in his school life.

I contemplated training as an Arts Psychotherapist and in further reading, encountered psychoanalytic theories of transitional objects espoused by D.W. Winnicott, attachment theory of John Bowlby, and the writing of Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson on child development. I was struck by the connection between transitional phenomena and the imagination, creativity, art, and culture.

In 1998 I was profoundly affected by the premature birth and death of my second son. I needed time to recover and turned down further theatre work. However, I was compelled to doodle images that initially had no particular purpose beyond an outpouring of my deepest thoughts. (Fig. 6)



Figure 6. Ali Darke, *Doodle for Elliot*. 1998

In 2001, Michael Pavelka, the Course Leader of the Theatre Design BA at Wimbledon College of Art, invited me to teach a first-year project. Each student designed a set of costumes for the given play or opera. A small selection was then chosen to be made up into full head to toe characters and finally presented in the theatre in a theatrical context. (Fig. 7)



I found that in teaching I needed to analyse the process of designing and appreciate the many ways students learn. I was influenced by the student centred, holistic approach to education espoused by the core staff team in Theatre Design. The PGCE in Learning and Teaching in Art and Design at UAL, allowed me the opportunity to reflect on my teaching practice within the light of contemporary pedagogic theory, challenging my philosophical approach to education and the nature of the subject.



Figure 7. *'The Visit; Student performance: WCA Theatre, 2012*

Much of my design work at this time was within an educational context. I designed productions at Mountview Theatre Academy assisted by their design students. I formed a creative partnership with the Director, Teacher, and Psychotherapist Anna

Sternberg, and together we formed the 'Theatre of Thin Air' – a company of young people aged 11 – 22 and assisted by WCA theatre design students. We created three productions, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, and *The Seagull* by Chekov. This work required a different approach to teaching, facilitating the student's creativity and ideas to work alongside our own. Surprisingly these were some of the best theatre productions I was involved in and the collaboration with Anna Sternberg was as inspiring as it was creative. (Fig. 8)



Figure 8. '*The Crucible*', by Arthur Miller, *Theatre of Thin Air*, 2012

In 2005 and again in 2007, I was invited to participate in a professional workshop organized by 'Theatre de Complicité' called 'Laboratoire d'Étude de Mouvement' (LEM). Both proved to be deeply affecting and transformative. Other participants included directors, performers, designers, artists, musicians, photographers, and writers. Developed by the French drama teacher, Jacques Lecoq, and the Architect, Krikor Balakrian, the LEM explores the dramatic potential of space, movement, material, and structure. The pedagogy is not a prescriptive technique but takes an experiential approach leading to creativity based on feelings, instinct, and intuition,

rather than intellectual reflection. Using basic materials, what the body discovers through movement is transformed into charcoal drawings, 3D structures and architectural forms that can then be put into motion, transforming the dynamics of space.

This improvised way of developing ideas is inherent to the rehearsal room but was a revelation as a means for designers to explore the body in space. I incorporated these ideas into my teaching practice facilitating workshops for Performance Design, Fine Art and Drawing BA and MA students across the UAL colleges. (Fig. 9)

It is interesting to look back and realize how I was beginning to use my own lived experience and the body as the material from which to develop ideas, and the theories of psychoanalysis to deepen my understanding of the process and discoveries.



Figure 9. *Student workshop, 'The Transformed Body in Space': CSM 2009.*

The PGCE course culminated in An Action Research Project for which I focused on the potential learning in this experiential pedagogy. The outcomes reinforced my conviction of the importance of holding a safe space open for experimentation, learning through trial and error, and the need sometimes to trust a process of 'not knowing', free-wheeling, serendipity alongside the alchemy of collaborative work.

In 2005 I became the 3<sup>rd</sup> year coordinator, tutor and a course examiner at WSA. In supporting each student to structure a bespoke final year that encouraged a personal ambition, their projects frequently pushed the boundaries of performance design and challenged my own and the course's definitions of what performance design and practice might be. From 2011 - 13, I became the Acting Pathway Leader, and although I learned an immeasurable amount, I was consumed by the demands of managing and delivering the entire program. I began teaching more modules, introducing the first year to scale model making through a design project that also explored the potential for spatial design to communicate metaphorical ideas. (Fig. 10)



Figure 10. Hiding Places, *Student project: WCA 2012*

At the same time, my practice was shifting its focus from fulfilling the demands of a professional design brief to express a more personal response, driven by *my* preoccupations, making small models and installations. I found it liberating and exciting to work differently – to change my approach to thinking and testing out of ideas, not always knowing where this will lead. For example, I have found I am more interested in drawing when it serves not so much as a tool for resolving design



problems or as a means of communicating with collaborators, but as a form of thinking – a doodling with intent.

In 2012, I participated in a group exhibition 'Resonate' at the Crypt Gallery and I chose to develop further some of the drawn images I had made after the death of my son, interwoven with memories from my childhood. I played with mixing found and miniature objects to explore a liminal, transitional space between fantasy and reality. Re-appropriating discarded things revealed an unsettling ambiguity. (Figs. 11-14)



Figure 11. *Ali Darke, Still Life. 2012*  
(leather glove, bird wing, wire, silk, glass dome)





Figure 12. Ali Darke, *Still Life*. 2012  
(bird skeleton, wire bird cage, cotton thread)



Figure 13. Ali Darke, *Shame*. 2012  
(bird skeleton, wire, nails, wool, cotton, glass dome)



Figure 14. Ali Darke, *Shame*. 2012  
(picture frame, glass, leather gloves, fur, ceramic doll, balsa wood)

With my growing interest in psychoanalysis and, to experience more directly and pragmatically, the relationship between art and the unconscious, I participated in a weekly, open group workshop at the London Centre of Art Therapy, led by the artist and Art Psychotherapist Hephzibah Kaplan. The work was produced spontaneously and fast, responding to the available materials and weekly prompt, be it a given theme or object to be incorporated into the work. This intuitive way of working, a kind of visual free association, revelled in a more visceral and abstract expression in paint and through creating objects from simple and scrap materials. (Fig. 15 - 17)



Figure 15a - b. Ali Darke, *Paintings, Art for the Heart*, 2014

The process was as meaningful as the final artefact. The results of this work have led to more ideas to explore from the realm of the unconscious and philosophies of the mind, and an intuitive and experimental creative process.



Figure 16. Ali Darke, *Wave*. 2014



Figure 17. Ali Darke, *Luggage Label*, 2014



## CREATIVE PRACTICE AND THEORY

### Part 1: LOSS

#### THE TRANSITIONAL OBJECT.

The first-year Show Case exhibition continued the transformation of my practice as a theatre designer to that of Fine Artist and I can see glimpses in the work of the themes, ideas, and questions that will occupy my mind. I created two installations in my allocated space in the gallery, connected through aesthetic language and each inspired by memories from my past. They evolved through a process of drawing alongside research in psychoanalytic theory. (Fig 18 - 19) I used old tattered domestic objects and materials to make the work, reflecting the fundamental psychoanalytic principle that the past unconsciously influences and distorts the present. The objects gave the installation a human, relatable scale. The ideas continued to evolve as I worked and through the creative process new meanings were revealed to me. Themes of loss, trauma, and shame became evident.

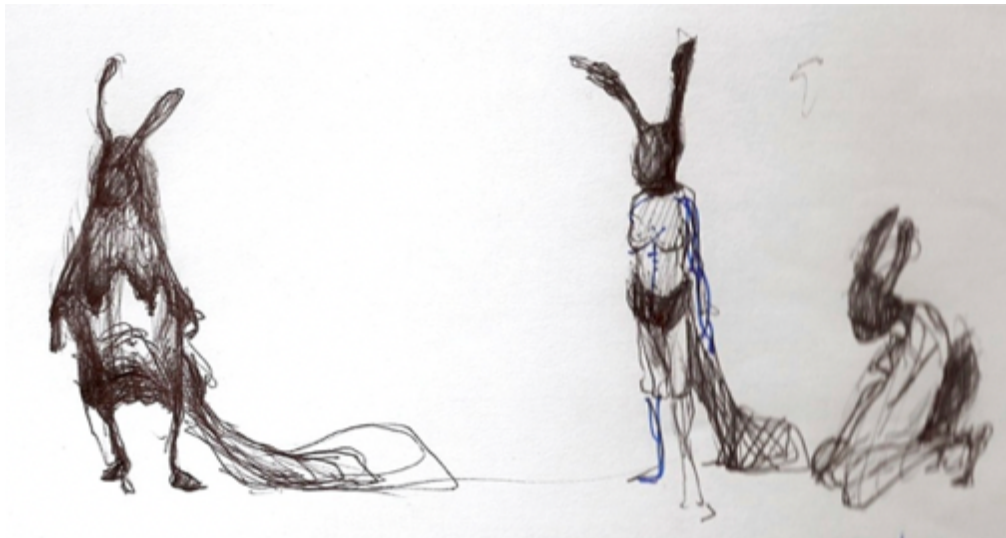


Figure 18. Ali Darke, *Sketch for Spilt Milk*, 2015



Figure 19. Ali Darke, *Studies in anthropomorphism*. 2015

Retaining traces of the theatrical scene, *Spilt Milk* (Fig. 20 - 21) formed a tableau of characters surrounding the aftermath and debris of an event – a milk bottle with its contents splashed across the floor. Despite such a seemingly mundane incident, unconscious family tensions can explode as if a catastrophe had occurred. I was imagining the effect this could have on the bewildered child. Using the character of a stuffed rabbit – my favourite toy, the characters portray varying degrees of anthropomorphic transformation. They are caught running, hiding or frozen to the spot, in the psychological masks that children might hide behind to survive the confusion of the adult world. I played with the concept of the transitional object and psychological transitional space where the inner life of the mind negotiates with external reality.

D.W. Winnicott (1896-1971) describes transitional phenomena as the psychological process by which a child differentiates from the Mother – a gradual toleration of the trauma of separation. The child's needs are met, and the child begins to anticipate – to conceive of the Mother at the point of need and, 'the Mother's adaption to the infant's needs, when good enough, gives the infant the illusion that there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant's capacity to create.' (Winnicott, 1971, pg. 12)



Figure 20. Ali Darke, *Spilt Milk*, 2015  
(mixed media)

A transitional object, such as a toy or comforting blanket, maybe used by the child to temporarily stand-in for the Mother's presence as a means of tolerating the anxiety of separation, and may become imbued with protective powers. This is a gentle awakening to the external world and the outside other.

This intermediate area to which I am referring is the area that is allowed to the infant between primary creativity and objective perception based on reality testing. (pg. 11)

The theory of transitional phenomena made me appreciate the potential impact of objects in my work and how this could be exploited to reveal things beyond their immediate appearance. In *Spilt Milk*, I was also expressing the traumatized and fragmented body, experienced as awkward - taking on the trappings of the domestic world. I was beginning to explore the interplay between the mind, the body and the world and the theoretical and philosophical debates that surround being an embodied subject.



Figure 21. Ali Darke, *Spilt Milk*, (detail) 2015  
(card, upholstery fabric, chair leg, fur, horsehair stuffing)

At the opposite end of my exhibition space lay a rotting broken chair, *Still-life*, collapsed on the floor. (Fig. 22) The damaged seat showed the wear and tear of bodily use, exposing rusty springs and stuffing, and with the wooden legs splayed suggested to me a gaping wounded body. I perched a skeletal rabbit-like character on an armrest – wearing a mask formed of a stork's beak. He reminded me of the imposter, the trickster – not the benign stork delivering the new-born baby of folklore, but a thief – a taker-of-life. I was re-appropriating motifs from previous work; birds, skeletons, furniture, and pink wool, here knitted into the form of a baby caught in the beak and trailing into the open wound of the chair. This impish act betrays the complex emotional response to the death of my second son – an internal struggle between the terrible burden of guilt that I had failed to protect him, and fury that I had been cruelly ripped open and robbed.



Figure 22. Ali Darke, *Still Life (detail)* 2015  
(wire, upholstery linen, wool, bird's beak)

I was playing with time, the past alive in the present - an absence and a presence. Whenever trauma is experienced associated feelings, memories, and imagery from the past return to haunt. If these memories are unbearable what is repeated, through pathological behaviours, are the resistances to remembering. Freud's (1914) theory of the transference of past behaviour to the clinical encounter is fundamental to his process of psychoanalysis; 'The patient does not remember anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but acts it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats it, without of course knowing that he is repeating it.' (p.150)

Both these pieces were an attempt to marry a psychoanalytic concept, personal experience, and creative practice. Although the feedback was positive - the work was 'skilful', 'moving', 'hauntingly evocative', it was perceived that I was illustrating my ideas. I was implying a narrative in the work, and more literal use of objects as if creating props for the stage. A stage prop has a particular life within the performance space, and like the stage setting, it requires the activation of the performer's presence. There is an expectation of unfolding events in which the prop plays a subordinate role.



Out of this context, the object as protagonist can tell a different story and I needed to explore the dynamic potential of an object's materiality and presence of, and in itself.

Over the summer following the first year, I participated in an artist residency organized between the fine art departments of the University of East London and the University of West Macedonia. I spent two weeks living and working alongside a group of international artists, in the beautiful but remote village of Psarades, which lies at the borders of Albania, Macedonia, and N.W. Greece. (Fig. 23 - 24)



Figure 23 - 24. *Psarades Village and Lake Prespes.*

We worked in an abandoned canning factory, full of decaying machinery. The building had become 'An Open Museum' with previous artists' work left in situ. We were encouraged to work in response to this site, its location, and the remaining artwork. Over the previous year, the factory had become a refuge for goats and the entire building was inches deep in goat shit. Swallows flew through the broken windows and nested in the ceilings. The building was alive! (Fig. 25)



Figure 25. *The Old Canning Factory, Psarades.*

I started working in an office space, taking the idea of using what I found around me. I began 'shovelling the shit', working systematically to create small piles - slag heaps – the refuse from some industrial process, that formed a miniature landscape. While working, despite the heat, sweat, and dirt, I became engrossed in the task, like a child playing. I constructed towers from rusty tins, nails, and other debris. I was storytelling - finding justification for my work in the unfolding narrative. But what was significant is that I was working differently, spontaneously, fast, unplanned – solving problems as they emerged. I loved this way of working with just the limited resources around me. I experienced freedom, with my inner critic silenced for a while. (Fig. 26 - 27)



Figure 26. Ali Darke, *The Uncanny Works*, 2015  
(goat shit, tin cans)



Figure 27. Ali Darke, *Three Tin Towers*, 2015

Winnicott develops his theories of transitional phenomena through a close analysis of the child at play, taking seriously the activity and mentality of playing. Transitional phenomena belong to the 'realm of illusion'. (Winnicott, 1971, p.14) In playing, the child draws objects or phenomena from the external reality into the service of an inner subjective reality, and these are invested with personal meaning. However, 'this area of playing is not inner psychic reality. It is outside the individual, but it is not the external world.' (p.51) He equates this liminal area of experience, which belongs and mediates the border between the subjective, and that which is objectively perceived, to that which 'throughout life is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion and to imaginative living.' (p.14) Creativity is born out of the experience of play, and Winnicott describes the development from transitional phenomena, to play, expanded to playing with others, and finally in the social context of cultural experience.

In the last two days, I found an old cabinet in an adjacent office. I turned it on its side and used the cavities to display things that I'd collected on my wanderings. I was thinking about these objects in a more poetic, enigmatic language, free from a fixed narrative. Each object was broken in some way, and I was exploiting their disfunction to show things emptied of life. I wondered if being lost in play over previous days had loosened my grip on needing to justify each element belonging to a story, and gave the objects a chance to speak for themselves. (Fig. 28 - 31)



Figure 28-31. Ali Darke, *Un-directional Forces Open Museum*. 2015  
(mixed media)





On my return from Greece, I wanted to continue working with discarded furniture. I thought about the network of associations to the home that could be explored within the domestic cabinet, an item of furniture first given pride of place in the 19<sup>th</sup>- century bourgeois family home for the display of precious china. Collections, knick-knacks, memorabilia, trivia; things personal and intimate were kept here too. I was also interested to question in practice and theory, my use and making of objects and the meanings this might generate. The research opened up a rich, interrelated and complex world of the object as viewed through psychoanalysis and philosophy and the sculptural object in contemporary art. In each discipline there emerges an essence surrounding the 'object of our attention', an elusive space, a doubt, a veil between our perception of the object and the reality of the object's being. Some sense of never fully

knowing, of a thing forever beyond our grasp, forever shape-shifting, and a pervading sense of a thing lost. And it seemed to me that it is in this space that something is happening, an alluring emptiness that entices our curiosity, our ambivalence, and anxieties. '...a work of art occupies a liminal position, with the containing strategies of its medium disposed in such a way that we are constantly aware of what must escape any containment. This awareness must be that of the artists as well: even at their most jubilant moments of inspiration, their muse is melancholy.' (Schwenger, 2006, p.15)

*Slipped Out* (Fig. 32-35) was the first cabinet I completed and was exhibited in ARTMASTERS, 2015, a group show, at the Truman Gallery, London. I had very little time to make this first piece and integrate this new research. I repeated the motifs of broken eggshells, and old shoes, while also introducing hints of domestic ritual with a neat pile of stained linen sheets. Placed with these objects were scale figures. I hoped to suggest an ambiguous narrative, the miniature replicas creating a fictional space for the imagination.

Spilling out from inside the lowest shelf was an assortment of tattered dusty black shoes –that reminded me of the iconic image showing vast piles of shoes taken from the bodies of Holocaust victims. As a reference to my family history (that I would revisit in later work), *stepping into the shoes of our ancestors* comes to mind. On the top of the cabinet, I placed an earlier work that tied these details together.



Figure 32. Ali Darke, *SLIPPED OUT*. 2015 (detail)  
(mixed media)



Figure 33. Ali Darke, *SLIPPED OUT*. 2015 (detail)





Figure 34. Ali Darke, *SLIPPED OUT*, 2015 (detail)



Figure 35. Ali Darke, *SLIPPED OUT*, 2015

The rabbit mask refers back to the stuffed toy from *Spilt Milk* and D.W. Winnicott's theory of transitional phenomena. In my previous readings of Winnicott, I had glossed over a crucial point which is now of particular relevance. I had concentrated on the object as the focus for transitional phenomena, but he explains that the transitional object is first conceived as a mental space, a 'thought' conjured by the child, between the mother's provision of care and the child's perception of a need. It is in these 'first-thoughts' that the origins of the capacity for thinking, of language formation, symbolisation, imaginative creativity, and intersubjective relational experience emerge. Creativity and play occur in this transitional potential space. I wonder if capturing these precarious 'first thoughts', before they become calcified in 'thinking', might be the access to that elusive quality in art that holds the aliveness and potency for others to engage with.

The task of the caregiver in this transitional theory, is gentle disillusionment, towards the child's gradual separation and toleration of an external reality. The transitional object is that which may 'hold' this space for the child who fears disintegration. This object's value is not questioned.

It is an area that is not challenged because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated.  
(Winnicott, 1971, p. 2)

My working practice was changing - I was beginning to trust this transitional, potential space without dutiful compliance to a text or director's vision - I had to rely on my instincts and responses to the material in front of me. I tried not to question or at first analyse why I was drawn to this and not that, especially if things did not always form a logical narrative. If questioned too soon, it seems mad, and my ideas are aborted. But changing habitual ways of thinking takes time and practice.

This experience of not questioning is taken up by the artist and psychoanalyst Patricia Townsend, in her description of 'a temporary delusional state that envelops the artist at a particular moment in the creative process. As ideas and images emerge, the artist sees them as the perfect answer to an unformulated question.' (2013, p.180) The artist

will shut out potential problems and only acknowledge these at a later stage of the work. She refers to Winnicott's transitional space and that in the illusion 'inside and outside coincide...at fleeting moments during this phase of the creation of the artwork, there is no felt distinction between the me and the not-me, inside and outside not only coincide they cannot be distinguished.' (p.181) She goes so far to suggest that this state is so near to delusion that art-making can seem precarious and unstable.

The psychoanalyst, Adam Phillips, examines the potential pathology when this fragile transitional space is threatened 'by breaks in the continuity, the distractions in a person's early development: gaps caused by the intrusions and deprivations and natural catastrophes of childhood.' (1988, p. 3) Phillips explains how the gap caused by neglect or absence, is experienced as traumatic because it is beyond the child's grasp to understand and is felt as a primitive threat of annihilation. He describes growth, 'as an ongoing task of psychosomatic integration.' (p. 2)

The two miniature characters, stuck in apparent helplessness - the bird unable to escape and the leaky boat with no water, expose an ambivalence and pretence in their predicaments. Flights from reality through psychological hiding, self-delusion or dissociation are a means of surviving trauma.

In 'Houdini's Box,' (2002) Adam Phillip's thoughts around our desire to escape are explored. When children play hide and seek, what is being played with is the terror of, and wish for, never being found, of being forgotten. The game has lost its appeal when it goes on too long and no one must get too far away. The 'odd moment of being found is the end of the game...the transgression is to disappear; to find a place where no one keeps an eye on you.' (p. 4) Themes of hiding and disguise will surface again in my work.

This tension between hiding and exposure is understood by Townsend (2019) as fundamental to all acts of creativity. There is an initial stillness, hiding in solitude, protecting first thoughts from the invasion of the other. But, the artist's need 'to be found (by the viewer) is the reason why the task of art-making is never-ending.' (p.116) Townsend adds to this the attempt by the artist to find themselves reflected in the work, and when this is achieved this particular round of hide and seek is over and the

game must start again. But, she suggests, the finding is never complete as no artwork can fully capture the inner experience.

These ways of thinking about the artists' need to continue to make new works are related to Winnicott's view of creativity as necessary in everyday living and as rooted in early experiences. To feel alive, we need to create the outside world for ourselves by imbuing it with our own inner experience. (Townsend, 2019, p.116)

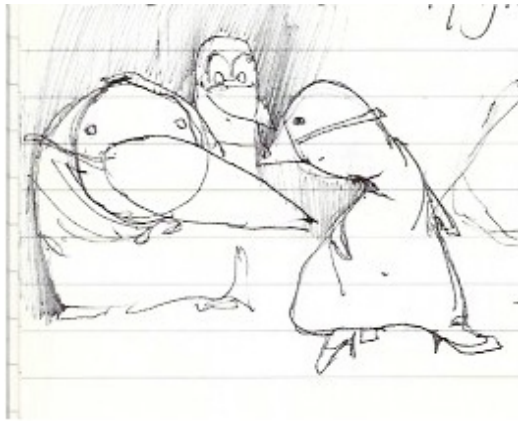
But the external world does not convey one fixed meaning and, even if unconsciously, we continuously search for identification, the desire is never satisfied.

I continued to explore flight into imaginary worlds in *Enroute*. I worked from sketches - finding that my drawing was developing from being a means to communicate design concepts, to a way of thinking in itself - a 'drawing-out' of ideas. The act of drawing slows down my analytical mind - it can be meditative and absorbing, free-associating, defying conscious logical thought. (Fig. 36-40)

Drawing (...) allows a model of representation that maps the fragmented simultaneity of thought, accessing memory, visual fragment and intangible imagination. Downs *et al.* (2007, p. X).



Figure 36-37. Ali Darke, *Doodles*. 2015



I stripped the cabinets of their varnish and painted them in a unifying matt black emulsion. The unreflective patina flattened them out and focused attention on what was within. Through simple changes, I was seeing how objects can be transformed to reveal new meanings beyond their appearance.



Figure 38. Ali Darke, *ENROUTE*. 2015 (mixed media)

I presented this work in the Lightwell Space at UEL for a work-in-progress seminar. Viewers recognised childhood trauma and shame expressed with humour and pathos, and how in the work I was showing an embodied experience of emotion. I was discovering how the body, its functions, and topography in space are embedded in the language of psychoanalytic theory. But, feedback suggested I was still relying on an illustrative style, interpreting my drawings as if they were designs to be faithfully reproduced in three dimensions. Understanding where drawing sits within my practice is an ongoing question.



Figure 39. Ali Darke, *ENROUTE*. 2015 (mixed media)

With the third cabinet, *Petrified*, I worked with no preliminary sketches; instead, responding to the horrific images in the news media of the destruction and human displacement, caused by the Syrian Civil War. This cabinet was the only one not to be painted black. I removed all but the bare bones of the framework on which I applied a layer of concrete and metal mesh. Concrete dolls and shoes spilled onto the floor - transitional objects violently discarded and destroyed, homes abandoned and lives traumatised by the onslaught of violence. Things petrified with fear. (Fig. 40 - 41)





Figure 40. Ali Darke, *PETRIFIED*, 2015



Figure 41. Ali Darke, *PETRIFIED*, 2016  
(wooden cabinet, wire mesh, shoes, plastic dolls, concrete)

## THE OBJECT IN CONTEMPORARY ART

My research into the ontology of the object coincided with the making of these first three cabinets but did not become manifest in the work until the final three cabinets started to take shape. The object in the world of contemporary art, in philosophical debate and psychoanalytic theory, seems to be coming out from the shadows of a purely human, singular subjectivity, to be valued for its essence and intersubjective potential to communicate, beyond our projections. Looking at the ontology of an object has unleashed new perspectives that confront my assumptions, and prompted me to question what kind of objects I want to make and what meanings an object might convey beyond my intentions.

The world of objects, however 'ordinary' is a trove of disguises, concealments subterfuges, provocations, and triggers that no singular, embodied and knowledgeable subject can exhaust. (Hudek, 2014, p.14)

I am working with and creating objects that I place back out into a world full of things imbued with a multitude of meanings. In contemporary art, the object seems to be a contentious beast that hides behind conceptual thought or wrestles with its status as a conveyor of meaning. Rehberg, (2010, para.1) when considering the art object, concedes that 'The art world has an enduring relationship with objects that vacillates between approval of their inescapable commodification and antagonism toward their fetishistic potential.'

In the New Museum of Contemporary Art's inaugural exhibition *Unmonumental: The Object in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, in 2007, the curators aspired to create a show that reflected contemporary sculptural practices.

Detecting a global trend towards the fragmentary and contingent in some of the strongest sculpture being made today, they are presenting work that reflects the extreme delicacy and fragility of life in the 21st century, "Unmonumental" is about a world in pieces and a parallel impulse in art making. Phillips (2007, p.7)



The illuminating commentaries in the catalogue point to work that has moved away from a celebration of the permanent. These contemporary sculptors have rejected the traditional materials and processes of carving and casting to work with matter that is provisional, and according to Smith (2007, p.184) 'structurally precarious'. In tracing a history of monumentalism in sculptural practice, from the grandiose memorial through modernism, and minimalism, Gioni (2007, p.65) identifies a monumentality in the installation art of the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century that points to a language of instant interconnection and spectacle. What he sees in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century work is a 'sculpture of fragments, a debased, precarious, trembling form.' Gioni describes practices with uncertain and fluid definitions of the object. Re-appropriating the processes of assemblage the artists place alongside found objects, artificial facsimiles, second-hand images, detritus, waste and natural things. Memorial in these artists' work is reframed from the monument to 'exist in a multiplicity of different temporalities.' (p.72) It is a view of history that challenges any single truth.

Hoptman (2007, p.138) believes the most interesting contemporary sculptors are the 'mixers, mashers, and sewers-together, the cobblers of irreproducible one-offs.' Implying, that in the commonality of fragmented assemblage there is no unified opinion. 'Style is just another collage element.' (p. 138)

The delicate, haunting work of Nobuko Tsuchiya, is one example of a sculpture showing fragility that seems to just hold together. I find her work exquisite and totally beguiling. A carefully placed construction of "almost" recognisable objects that suggests a function but defeats naming. These are parts of things, fractured, incongruent, yet nothing is random, everything is deliberately placed, we must pay attention to the details. Her materials appear used, but they are definitely not rubbish. (Fig. 42 - 43)

Mike Pinnington (2020, p.32) describes her work speaking of an inner world through combining and recombining physical and imaginative objects to construct a narrative embedded in the objects. 'Life's flotsam and jetsam stands in for memories, dreams and almost unknowable cryptically translated thoughts.'

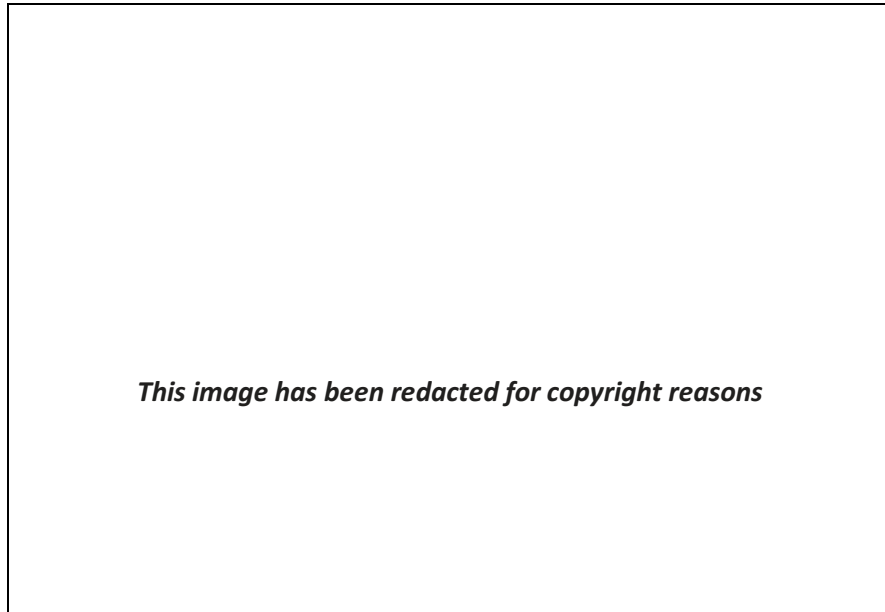


Figure 42. Tsuchiya, *11<sup>th</sup> Dimension Project*, 2011  
(mixed media)

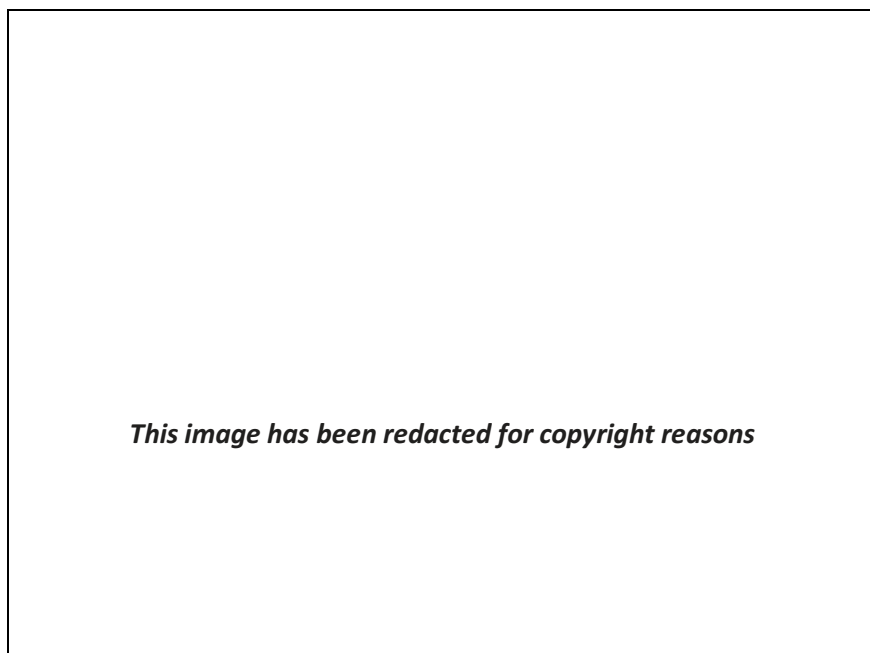


Figure 43. Tsuchiya, *Jerry Fish Principle*, 2005  
(mixed media)

Kristen Morgan works with unfired clay creating life-size facsimiles of everyday objects. The natural drying out and decay after construction gives the illusion of something ancient. Her work is both a memorial to the object and an abstraction through the process of degradation. (Fig. 44 - 45)

*This image has been redacted for copyright reasons*

Figure 44. Kristen Morgin, *Topolino*, 2003  
(unfired clay, wood, wire, cement)

*This image has been redacted for copyright reasons*

Figure 45. Kristen Morgin, *Carousel Horses*, 2006  
(wood, clay, paint)

## OBJECT RELATIONS

My work within the cabinets, themselves objects, onto and into which I project my phantasy, have become containers for other objects, and a web of interrelationships is alluded to and stirred up. It is with these thoughts in mind that I researched 'object relations' in psychoanalysis.

The assumption is that we start life as an un-integrated formless being, and in our helplessness, need the Mother's care to gently separate from the symbiotic blissful state within her body. The Mother is therefore, the primal object of each child's attention. With the Mother's sensitivity to her child's needs, she nurtures a sense of security– but inevitably her response isn't perfect. Within this imperfection, a child's vulnerability and conflicting emotional responses are aroused. In the battle between anger, love and hate, our perception of a benign or malignant world is formed.

Freud believed that the trauma and shame surrounding painful childhood memories, leads to their repression or denial - the pressure to suppress creates the unconscious drives recognisable in neurotic and pathological behaviours in adult life. Artistic practice is often cast as sublimation - an outlet for the uncontainable energy of the psyche. Melanie Klein (1882 - 1960), a Freudian child and adult psychoanalyst, placed the very earliest experiences of separation at the core of human frailty. She observed that while playing, children interacted with their toys with kindness, aggression or guilt. Her analysis of their behaviour pointed to the fundamental significance in the emotional development of this primal attachment to the (m)other, the external object of desire, and placed fear, anxiety, depression, love, guilt, and reparation at the centre of the earliest formation of the psyche.

In the very beginning, he loves his mother at the time that she is satisfying his needs for nourishment, alleviating his feelings of hunger...but when the child is hungry and his desires are not gratified, or when he is feeling bodily pain or discomfort...hatred and aggressive feelings are aroused and he becomes dominated by impulses to destroy the very person who is the object of all his desires and who in his mind is linked up with everything he experiences- good and bad. (Klein, 1999, p.307)

In defence against the anxiety of this ambivalent emotional landscape, and the organising of an as yet undifferentiated self and (m)other/object, the child splits the object as well as its brittle ego into good and bad parts. Unconscious responses follow this splitting; unbearable feelings of aggression and guilt are 'projected' onto and attributed to the other. Or they are 'introjected', which is the unconscious process of internalising unassailable fragmented parts of the self or other into the psyche.

Segal (2008) interprets Klein's theory of reparation, the hope of restoring the good object, as the 'basis for creative activities, which are rooted in the infant's wish to restore and recreate his lost happiness, his lost internal objects, and the harmony of his internal world.' (p.92) This complex matrix of 'object relations' are re-played in all further encounters and relationships – and in psychoanalysis are fundamental to the Freudian analytic encounter, where primal experiences are transferred and played out with the analyst.

And if Klein's writings offer a particular purchase on this imaginative exercise, it is because she ventures to describe the origins of subjectivity, the very process of its emergence. For the question Klein asks is, in effect, what is it like to be at the beginning of life? (Nixon, 2008, p.179)

The transitional space then is never fixed. The objects as they travel through carry multiple meanings and the potential for transformation. Abraham and Torok (1994, p.8) suggest that introjection is the driving force of psychic life. Enabling growth and 'psychic nourishment', (p.14) Introjection is vital for the lifelong process of acquisition and assimilation, and engagement with the outside world, 'encompassing our capacity to create through work, play, fantasy, thought, imagination and language.' (p.14)

While carrying out this research, I reflected on the work of three artists who each test the conceptual limits of the object. Through revealing the vibrant tension between what is real, imagined, found or recreated in their work, Louise Bourgeois, Cathie Wilkes and Cornelia Parker express their unique relationship with the world of objects.

I have continually revisited the art of Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010), and the wealth of material written about her enduring practice, and find something new, unexpected and inspiring every-time.



Throughout her long career, Bourgeois created multiple reincarnations of her identity as an artist working through different media and forms. Her work manipulates and shifts the tension between abstraction and figuration. Bourgeois was fascinated by and immersed in the theories of subjectivity and psychoanalysis in the hope of developing a deeper understanding of her own emotional life. Her personal experience of psychoanalysis and theoretical research became symbiotic with her creative practice. As Kuspit (2012, p.25) explains, 'one might say that thinking psychoanalytically gave her the alchemical ability to turn her leaden feelings of deprivation and emptiness into creative gold.' Her work expressed clear analogies to Freudian and Kleinian ideas of sexual repression, longings, aggression and anxiety. An exhibition of her work 'The Return of the Oppressed' curated by Phillip Larratt-Smith at the Foundation PROA in Buenos Aires in 2011 explicitly focused on the,

...constant presence of psychoanalysis as a force of inspiration and a space of exploration in her life and work...The Ghost of the father, echoes of infancy, autobiographical imagination, motherhood and hysteria, are all present in the exhibit. (Larratt-Smith, 2011, p.3)

She admitted that she was forever condemned to revisit traumatic memories from her childhood. Schwenger, (2006), believes there is something in the tension of existential grief for the primal lost object, perceived as an internal empty space, that inspires the creation of transformational objects. He describes an 'art of melancholia'.

The very dynamic of representation involves loss, an absent object preceding its replication in the medium. If this object is not always physical - for art's object may be a concept of the work to be executed - it is no less lost in the process of the very labour by which it was found. (p.14)

He acknowledges (p.14) that melancholia may not just be the price of artistic process but the artistic aim, the object. Through her creative experiments, Bourgeois searched for the three dimensional and metaphorical equivalents to the psychological states of fear, ambivalence, compulsion, guilt, aggression and withdrawal. Searle (2010) believed, 'Her art was one of transformations, of ferocious vulnerability and tender violence.' (p.14)

Her sculptural series *The Lairs* focus on early life experience and the beginning of subjectivity. These hanging, collapsed, and simple forms have a primal power of expression. The objects suggest womb like structures, nests, caves or underground burrows. There are holes through which the eye can penetrate. As Nixon (2008) suggests, in Kleinian psychoanalytic theory an object relation is formed 'at the interface of an inside and outside that do not (yet) exist.' (p.176) and the young child moves freely through this porous borderline. (Fig.46)

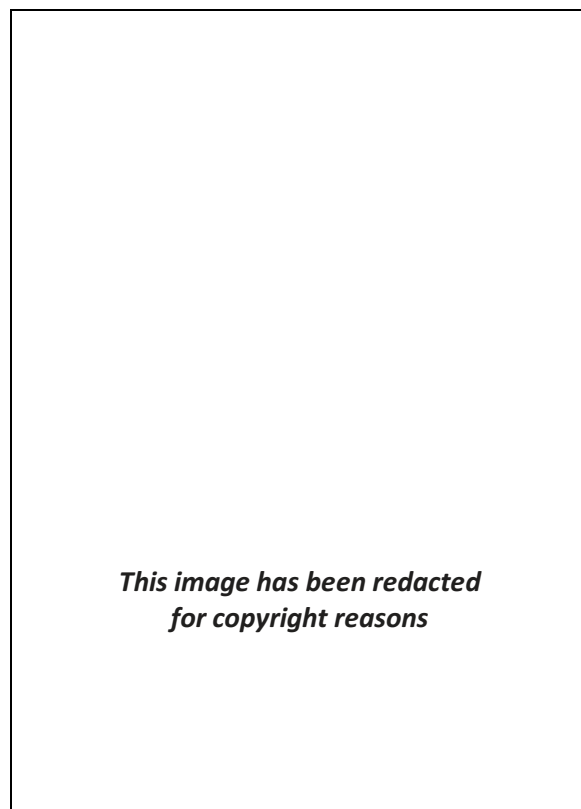


Figure 46. Louise Bourgeois, *Fée Couturière*. 1963  
(mixed media)

These structural ideas were prefigured in earlier drawings and paintings where Bourgeois presents the naked female body with the head and torso encased in a house – doors and windows suggesting viewing holes, entrances and exits. (Fig. 47) The image, a feminist critique on domestic entrapment, also shows the body, like a metaphorical object to communicate an internal psychological state. It is interesting for me to see the evolution of her practice from figuration in drawing to more abstract experiments in visceral form, that later assimilate and become part of assemblages.

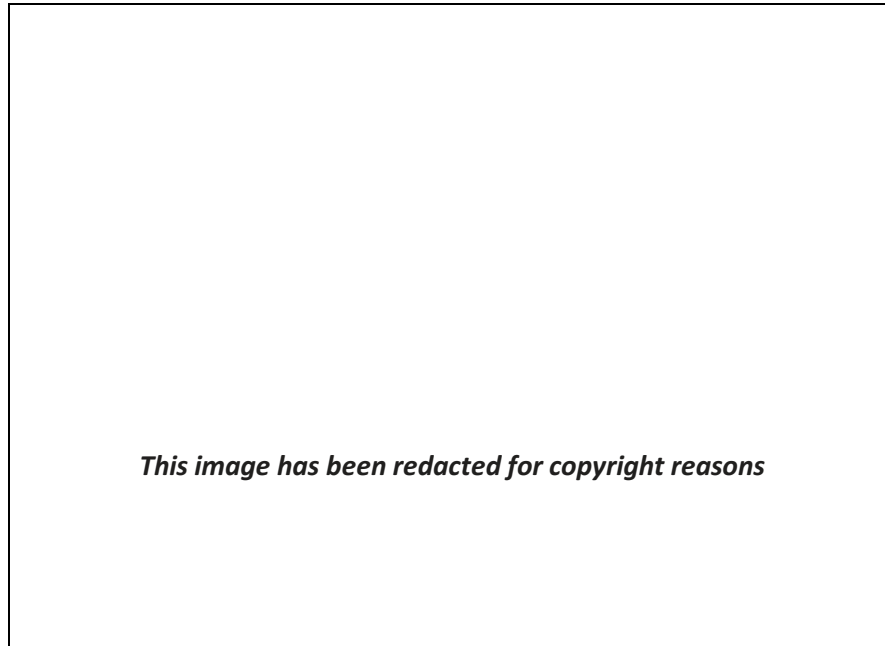


Figure 47. Louise Bourgeois, *Femme Maison*, 1946-47  
(oil and ink on linen)

In the light of working on my cabinets, I am particularly intrigued by the amalgamation of semiotics that appears in this later work. From the 1990s, she created a series of installation pieces called *The Cells*, (Fig. 48 - 52) which express a psychological world where past and present coexist. Their encasement in structures of interlocking doors, panels and windows, or more open, cage-like spaces, are reminiscent of the *Femme Maison* paintings and *Lair* sculptures, where permeability is implied. As Baere (2015) describes, there is an 'eroticism at play; the views oscillate between attraction and withdrawal, with hints of penetration.' (p.56) Here is also the potential claustrophobia and agoraphobia of the cell – a tension between entrapment and protection. The title offers 'multiple references to environments of isolation and containment suggested by the cell-like structures...prison, hospital, madhouse, convent.' (Morris, 2007, p.236) They point to a psyche that has internalized and transformed the complexities of the world of objects outside the body, to create a rich metaphorical visual language. But the work is never literal.

Griselda Pollock describes the wondrous mystery of the *Cells* -

If anything is truly psychoanalytical, it is the realization that there is always something beyond the obvious, something ungraspable. We may try to get in touch with the unconscious, but we can never know it. It's "excess" to

cognitive reason can only be traced into visibility in coded and displaced terms, as in dreams. (2015, p.64)

Within the Cells, are carefully placed domestic objects, that sit alongside more abstract forms that Bourgeois has constructed, alluding to autobiographical events, places and family relations. Spector (2015) suggests that Bourgeois conjures her past to 'eradicate it from her consciousness. The work thus exists at the intersection between repression and de-sublimation.' (p. 74) The work vividly confronts the viewer with her themes of latent aggression, childhood memories, family relations, home, architectural spaces, fear and anxiety, exposure and secrecy. In all the *Cells* the fragmented body is present. The Kleinian theory of part-objects, invested with the projected, split off parts of the psyche that are intolerable, come into mind.

In 2016 I saw the exhibition 'Structures of Existence' at Louisiana Museum of Contemporary Art in Denmark. Twenty-five of Bourgeois' Cells were exhibited - the scale of the work is human - each cell draws you into a space charged with the memories of home, family and psychological pain. But there is also the pleasure of being absorbed in the details, searching for clues, enjoying the intimacy.

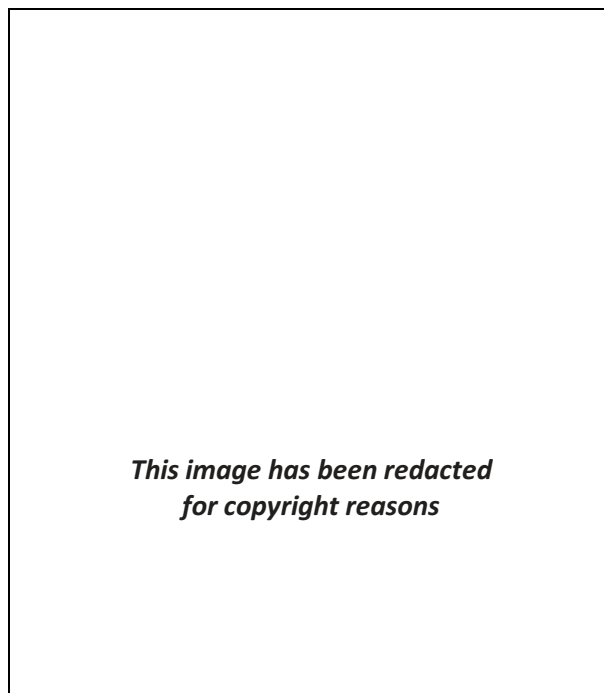


Figure 48. Louise Bourgeois, *Choisy*, 1993  
(mixed media)

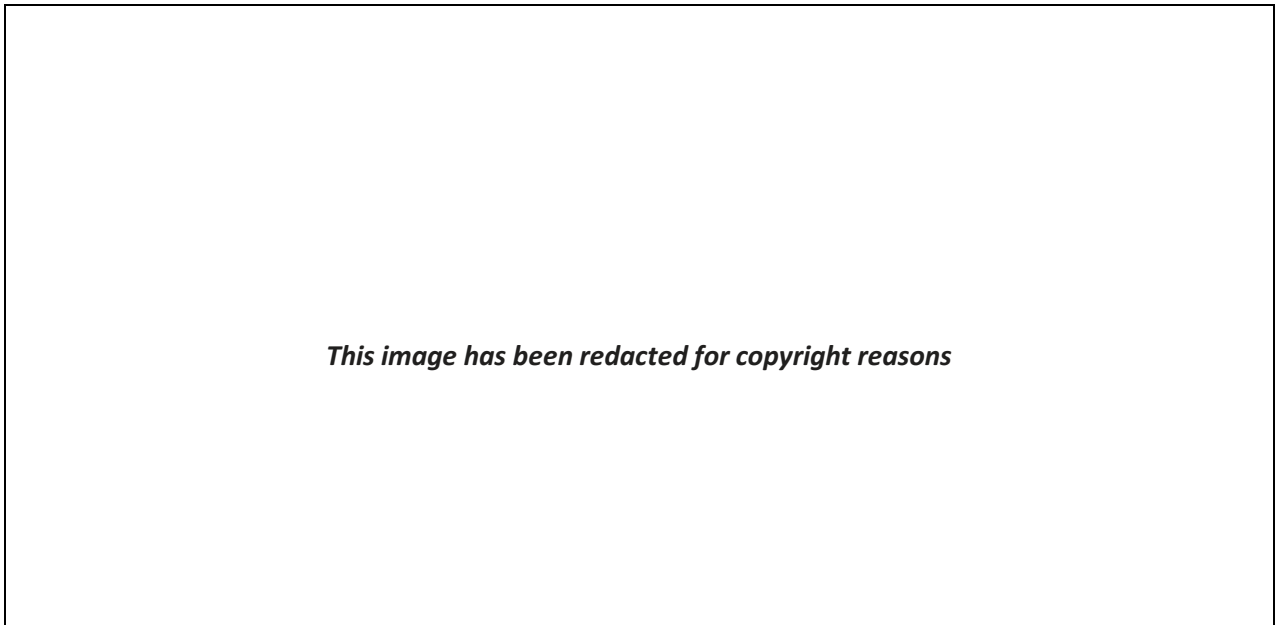


Figure 49. Louise Bourgeois, *Cell IX*, 1999  
(mixed media)

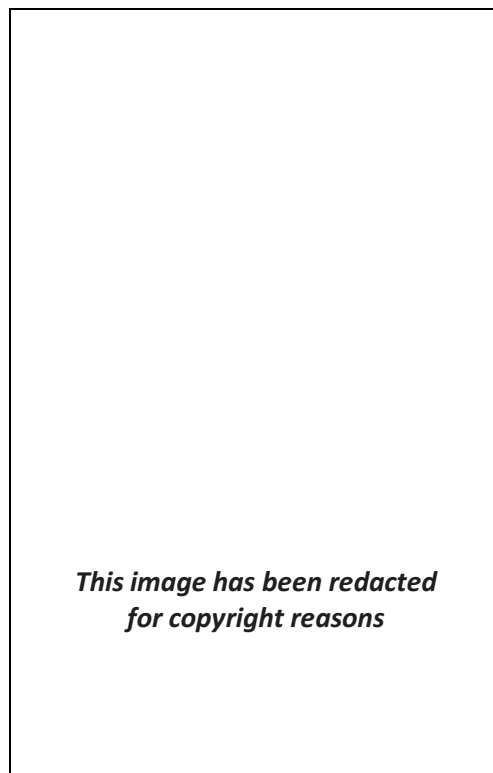


Figure 50. Louise Bourgeois, *Cell VII*, 1998  
(mixed media)



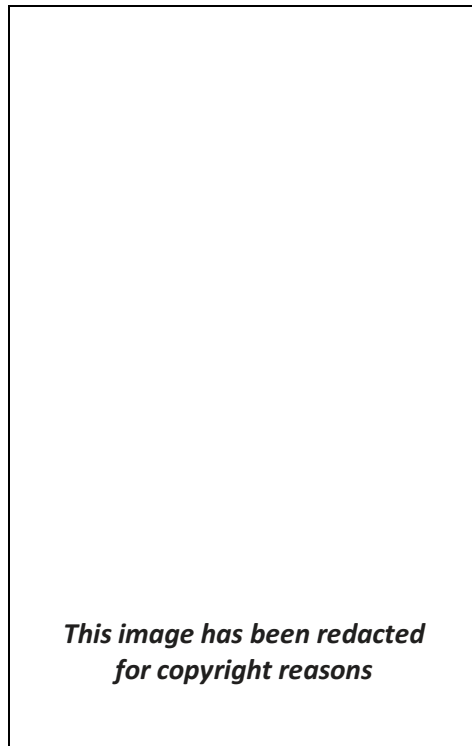


Figure 51. Louise Bourgeois, *Cell V*, 1991  
(mixed media)

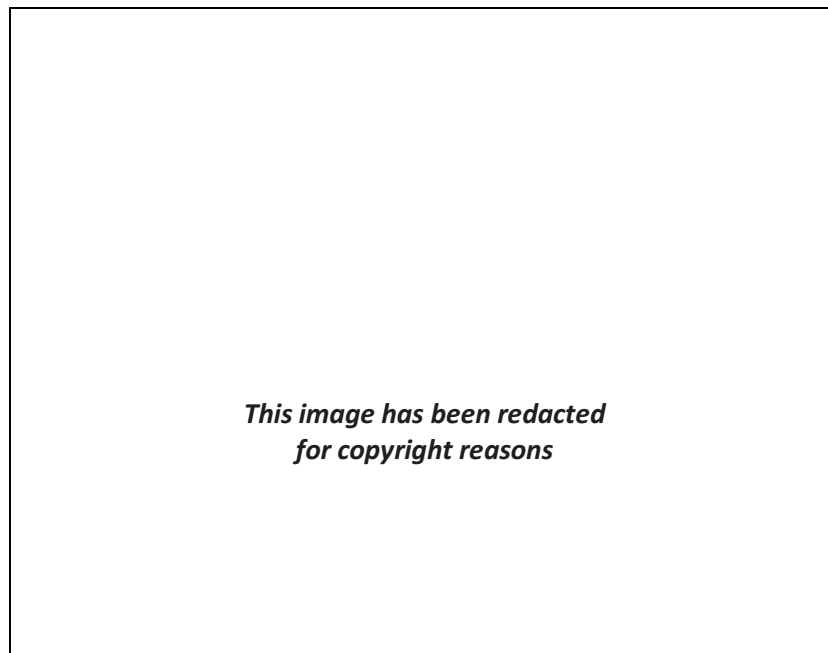


Figure 52. Louise Bourgeois, *Cell: Red Room (Parents)*, 1994  
(mixed media)

As Racz (2015) observes 'Bourgeois was interested in the links between one's physical home and psychological dwelling, and it can be argued that she remained at least partially trapped within the houses of her past'. (p.88)

Bollas (1992) describes an ever-evolving subjectivity, transformed through object relations, and lived out through an interrelationship between our projection into the world of object/other and introjection of the object into our psyche. This constant oscillation and negotiation between inner and outer worlds form a fluid and fragile identity;

As we constantly endow objects with psychic meaning, we therefore walk amidst our own significance, and sometimes long after we have invested a thing, we encounter it again, releasing its meaning...This is not a conscious intention but a profoundly unconscious instantiation of the self into the object world.' (Bollas,1992, p.13)

However, a purely psychoanalytical reading overstates the subject's encounter with the object and limits the art object's capacity to engage an in-between liminal space where it is not so much the subject's psychic drives as the object's evocative forces that coerce. This intermediary area echoes the porosity of the transitional space. Hudek's (2014) interpretation of Winnicott's theory describes the transitional object as 'more than a thing in itself', beyond the subject - a dynamic force in constant negotiation between inner and outer worlds and other object relations.

In attempting to communicate a specific memory or emotion through the presentation of objects, I should be aware of the object's inherent resonances. As Hansen (2008, p.18) says in his article *Things and Objects*, 'the power of things is that they refuse to conform completely to our intensions and interpretations, to become the means to an end – even when we have designed them ourselves'. The viewer also brings their individual sensibilities and meanings to the project. We surround ourselves with 'things' invested with our memories, and yet they remain stubbornly indifferent to us.

The toy, like the relational art object, is unpredictable; there is no telling when it will lose its aura and lapse into thingness, or, on the contrary change from mere thing to object of ceaseless wonder. (Hudek, 2014, p.22)

## THE VIBRANT OBJECT

So, although my ideas begin in the subjective inner world, the potential vibrancy of objects outside of my design may push my work forward. Most theories of the object have focused attention on the relational, entangled web of interconnections from a human viewpoint – emphasizing the significance of ‘context, interaction, linkage, and difference’ (Olsen, 2013, p.154) Relationality has remained the unchallenged means to understanding. Olsen goes on to say ‘Something rather crucial about things’ being may actually be lost if the principals of semiotics (and relational theories at large) are ruthlessly applied to them.’ (2013, p.154) He does not suggest discarding relational theory but proposes that according to Latour ‘relational theory has already performed its historical mission and is now burdening us with its own excess’ (2005, quoted in Olsen, 2013, pp.131-132) I am reminded of the ‘object,(m)other’ that remains elusive and outside our control and full knowledge.

Objects have a different glamour to them in the current moment and, as such, they are everywhere in art, and everywhere presented in a way that asserts their status as ‘objects’. (McClean-Ferris, 2013, para. 1)

This sense of the autonomy of the object resonates with ideas presented by the American philosopher Graham Harman in his captivating lecture, ‘Objects and the Arts’ delivered in March 2011 at the Institute of Contemporary Art. He is the leading figure associated with the metaphysical movement object-oriented ontology (OOO). Relational metaphors are embedded in the semiotics of language when we speak of things and it may be, as Harman suggests, that through artistic practice a new language and understanding can be explored. Growing out of the speculative realism movement in philosophy, object-oriented ontology aims to bring the things-in-themselves back into the discussion of reality – out of a relational view that cannot separate human from the world.

Harman (2012) claims that an object’s ontology exists beyond human analysis, beyond its matter, its constituent parts, or how we come to know it through our encounter. The reality of the object is withdrawn from us, is always in excess of what we can know of it, is something deeper than when encountered by humans. It is this

‘space’ beyond our conscious grasp, which Harman believes Art can elaborate. ‘We can only be hunters of objects,’ (2012) he says. I am seduced by the poetry of this mystery. ‘Artists, after all, are people who spend their time investing objects with meaning, so the notion that the objects themselves may have something to say naturally strikes a chord’ (Kerr, 2016)

The powerfully haunting quality in the installation work of Cathy Wilkes which I first saw at the Tate Liverpool in 2015, (Fig. 53) resonates with the thinking behind *OOO*. Her carefully placed figures and objects suggest the aftermath of some event. But nothing is easily read.

Wilkes’s objects behave in a sly combination that hints at narrative and then retracts it, resulting in a sense of suspension and emotional separation... Something here has been stolen, something the owner didn’t know she had, and the everyday items around her are made to stand in for and attempt to express what’s missing. (Smyth, 2008)

Cherry Smyth’s description evocatively recalls my response on walking amongst her objects on display. Wilkes’ lightness of touch is apparent. It is the things in themselves that carry weight. Her pallet is muted – objects and figures do not wrestle for our attention, each item however small is equally a potential clue. We cannot rely on our first impression or the mere appearance of things – here new associations and meanings are created. Byers (2012, p.31) describes how ‘The physical facts of her installations and paintings are in constant conversation with what cannot be visualized or even fully felt’. Her precisely orchestrated arrangements demand our contemplation. Wilkes has talked about her work as an encouragement to look, to pay attention, to visualize beyond the confines of the visible. Nixon (2015, p.2) describes the objects, spaces and interrelationships as a ‘resolution - of the elaboration of a nucleus of affects and ideas of dream-work (*Traumarbeit*) unravelled in three-dimensions’.

Our focus shifts over the figures, manufactured goods, and used or dysfunctional items. There is a sense of a fluctuating and fluid time scale that adds to the ambivalence of the object’s fixed point in the room and in relation to each other.

This 'back and forth of obfuscation and explicit functionality' Byers says (2012, p.31) relates to the ever-present ghost permeating the objects and the gaps between, as if something has been taken away.

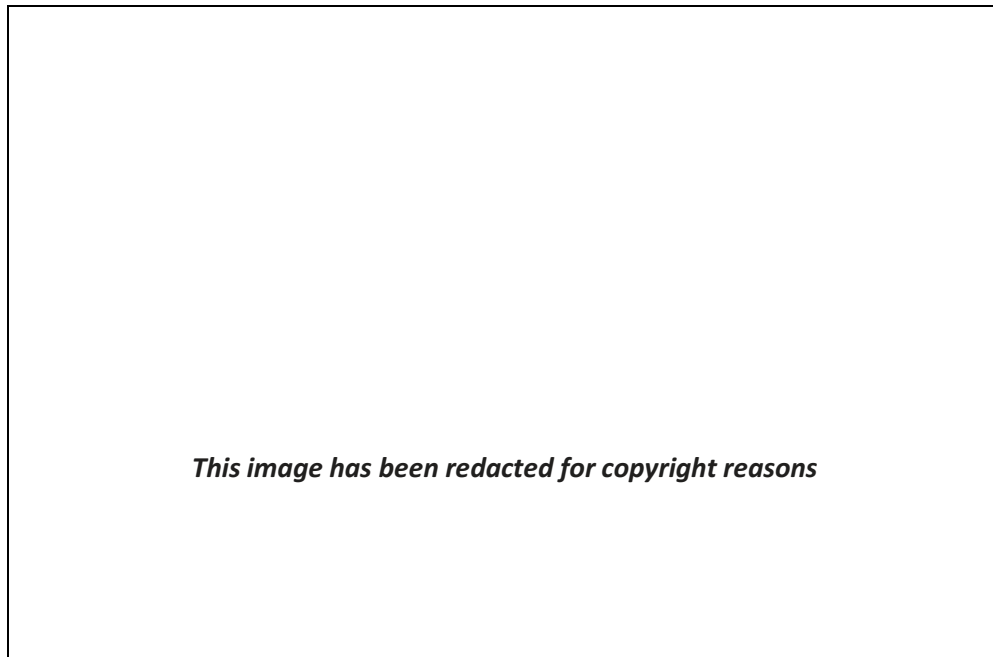


Figure 53. Cathie Wilkes, *Untitled*, 2015  
(mixed media)

I sensed the stillness of an absence, a lingering loss and noticed how visitors moved slowly almost reverently around the vast space of the gallery. Wilkes has said her work is inhabited by both the living and the dead and I felt visceral, unnerving disorientation.

There is both materialization and disappearance of physical things and a natural retreat from material reality. In her work the uncanny is apparent and an existential questioning in the air. (Kollektiv, 2009 p.4)

Object-oriented philosophy suggests that although all objects, including humans, enter into surface relations with each other, 'they retain a dark hidden core that is outside of all relation.' (Walsh, 2013, p.11)



## THE DOUBLE-LIFE OF OBJECTS

Cornelia Parker is an artist whose relationship to the object is fundamental to her practice. In February 2016 at the Freud museum Cornelia Parker and the psychoanalyst Darian Leader were in conversation, discussing her work under the title, 'Avoiding the Object (On Purpose)'. In her hands, the object is transformed, alchemically, metaphorically and visually to reveal another potentiality in its life, a hidden depth that adds to the complexity of the object's autonomy. Blazwick (2013, p.13) claims that Parker's work points towards object-orientated ontology as 'an urgent, relevant claim for the competency of objects to transform, without loss of their singularity at either a philosophical or an empirical level.' (Blazwick, 2013 p.13)

Her transformed objects reveal their properties beyond human need and history. She reminds us of the mutability of context and time and an ever-shifting world beyond certainty and human control. Materials and substances contradict their expected qualities by these altered states and re-presentations.

Parker works with found objects, distinct from the readymade by being unique and irreplaceable and already imbued with history. The reference to *found* implies that the object was once lost. When a found object is chosen a connection is already made with the subjectivity of an artist. But Parker does not rely on the fetishistic or sentimental in the found object, 'her genius lies,' notes Blazwick (2013, p.32) 'in the elasticity she brings to its semantic, historical and material properties.' She pushes the objects' metaphorical potential to the brink of totally obliterating its former being. Here is a tipping point – beyond which annihilation or absurdity threatens. As in Bourgeois' work, there is aggression and destruction in the process, but in Parker's work, it is less a tactile immediate process than a mechanical procedure that happens before the resurrection of the object can occur.

In her most well-known piece, *Cold Dark Matter: An exploded View* (1991) (Fig. 54) she organized for the army to explode a garden shed in which she had placed the donated contents from the sheds of friends – old bikes, books, empty paint cans, garden tools and detritus collected from car boot sales. After the controlled explosion, she collected the fragments to reassemble, hung from the galleries' ceiling– a light bulb placed in the middle of the floating pieces creating shadows that further expanded

the image outwards into the space. Parker, quoted by Blazwick, (2013) describes that 'as the objects were suspended one by one, they began to lose their aura of death and appeared re-animated, in limbo...as if it was re-exploding or coming back together'. (p.50) The result is an echo of the event, a memory of a moment, recreated.

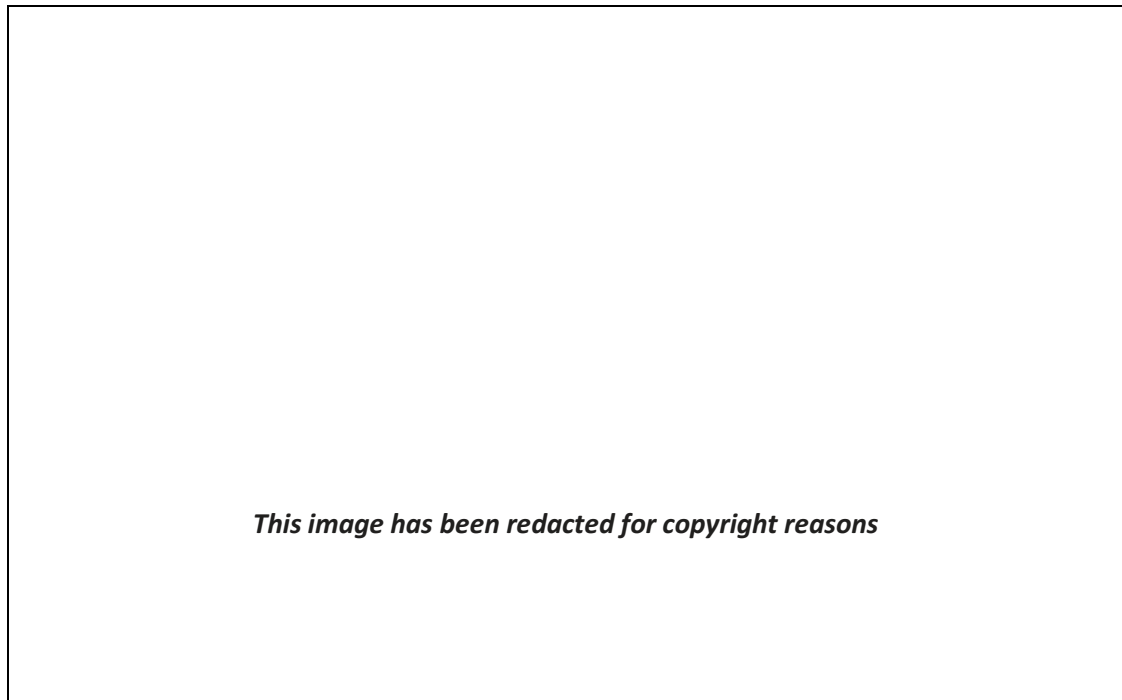


Figure 54. Cornelia Parker, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*: 1991  
(mixed media)

Suspension is part of Parker's language. In the echo and reverberation after the act is the pause – an unsettling transformation in progress – a kind of holding of the breath, life in limbo. Leader describes this resonance as the 'double life' of objects. 'These recuperations not only show objects in a new state but also introduce the idea of an object as a change of state.' (2004, p. 72) Here what is seen is the moment of change itself, of transformation suspended.

In other work, we see the before and after of the object's transformation simultaneously, in the process of inversion, the 'recuperation and reflection, the discarded and the double...this is more complex than a world of contraries since Parker is showing us how each object is not just opposed to its contrary but *contains* it'. (p.73) In showing us this shadow of the object, a new subjective relationship with

the transformed object is created – we are seeing not just the transformed conditions, but ‘objects in the very process of becoming objects.’ (p.74)

Parker creates an empty, negative space where the object once was. The lost object is not quite forgotten or destroyed but, in the shards and fragments is resurrected – this recalls the transformational potential of Winnicott’s transitional phenomena. He stressed that it wasn’t so much the transitional object that was transitional but the space – ‘not the thing but where the thing was that mattered.’ (Leader, 2004, p.75)

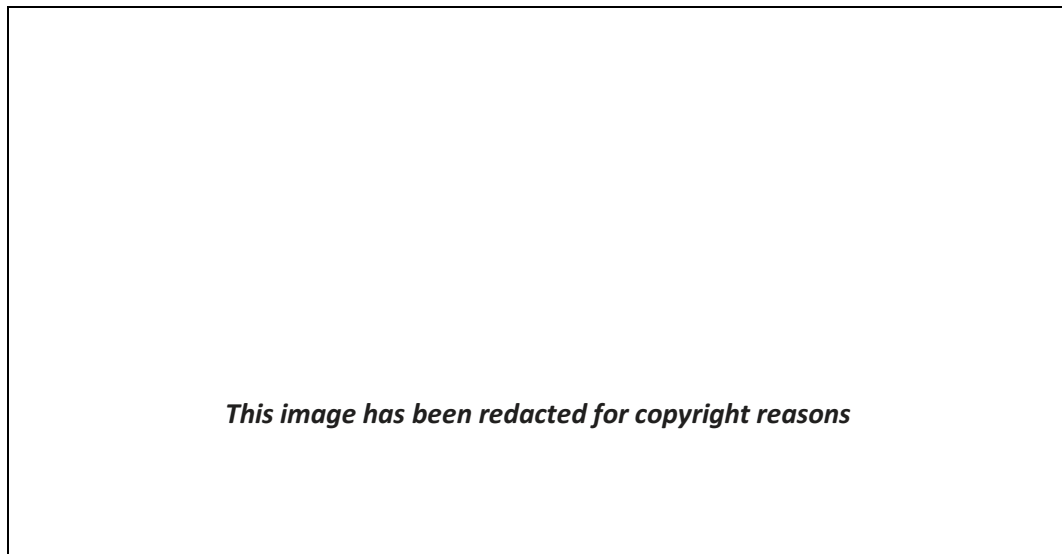


Figure 55. Cornelia Parker, *Thirty Pieces of Silver*, 1988  
(silver plated plates and cutlery)

In *Thirty Pieces of Silver* 1988 (Fig. 55) Parker collected silver-plated objects. ‘The aspirational qualities of silver plate are a manifestation of the desire for bourgeois respectability.’ (Racz, 2015, p.166) She then flattened them to ‘squash the bourgeois pretensions out of the objects,’ (p.166) with a steamroller and arranged the objects in 30 discs shaped groups, suspended from the ceiling. They appear to hover a few centimetres above the floor – a ghostly levitation. The biblical reference in the title alluding to money, greed, betrayal, to death and resurrection. Parker has said this piece points to materiality and its inverse of anti-matter. These objects have been emptied out, their projection in space removed, their function altered forever. The void invites speculation – ‘the way in which we absorb it through consciousness and mediate it through subjectivity and memory.’ (Blazwick, 2013, p.106)

In looking at these artists' creative engagement with objects, an exciting matrix of possibilities emerges. On the border of these encounters is an ineffable space, where the shadow of the object is cast. In their hands, these artists confront, fill, expose or transform this void. Through a mediation between the edges of self and the object/other subjectivity is enlivened. However, the concept of a 'me' negotiated through an experience of the 'not me', is troubling when I experience a sense of being haunted, colonised, or invaded by others. This dynamic is a constant process of discovery and mediation, present in the psychoanalytic encounter and all relations.

I was now working towards exhibiting the entire collection of cabinets. *The Tears of Things* was presented in the Safehouse in June 2016, a joint exhibition with a colleague, Richard Sharples. We named the exhibition, *Time and Again*. The gallery occupies an empty Victorian terrace house in Peckham Rye, South London, gutted and dilapidated, the building retains only traces of its domestic past, a site that resonated with my work. The research I had undertaken encouraged me to reflect further on the object of the cabinet itself, the frame acting as a mutable conveyor of thought. Retaining their former function for the display and preservation of precious domestic objects highlights what is placed on show, and what is excluded or slips out, exposing the psychological dramas of domestic life. There are both crafted and found materiel, a confusion of scales, shifts between fantasy and reality, the object and the thing, and the potential for the objects to be transformed in a new context. I created three more cabinets each exploiting these dynamics.

*CRACKED*, (Fig. 56 - 58) was filled with white china plates and jugs that I had ritualistically smashed and painstakingly repaired. This display case was exposing inherited trauma, on the bottom shelf remain piles of broken pieces, things beyond repair. I made no effort to hide the fine lines of the cracks and find their fragility and delicate patterns evocative. Although repaired the crockery is useless. Dirty liquid formed a black puddle on the floor, something uncontainable and shameful had leaked out. In feedback, the memory, repetition, and scars of past trauma were recognised, not only in the final image but through the painstaking process itself. Having the single motif of the repaired crockery, without more illustrative explanation had stirred multiple interpretations and had an emotional impact.



Figure 56. Ali Darke, *CRACKED*, 2016  
(wooden cabinet, plates, jugs, acrylic paint)



Figure 57 - 58. Ali Darke, *CRACKED*, 2016

In the fifth cabinet, *CORRIDOR*, I reproduced the staircase from my home in miniature, reminiscent of a doll's house. In this model the stairs and doorways lead nowhere - there are no rooms or resting places. Placing this model inside the furniture inverted the space. Reproducing my current home as a miniature is familiar but at the same time uncannily strange. 'The home both contains us and is within us.' (Racz, b2015.p.2)

I was invoking Freud's notion of the Uncanny, or the *unheimlich*, (unhomely), of the German original. The uncanny experience is the unsettling, weird shudder felt when a memory impression from the past, fleetingly disrupts the present, or a premonition of the future is glimpsed. As Freud wrote in 1919, 'the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar.' ( p.124) Freud himself struggled to define the uncanny, which, in the English translation loses an aspect of the original German, 'unheimlich', or un-homely. The homely in 'un-heimlich', includes the idea of a concealed or, secretive space, while also conveying something unfamiliar disturbing the familiar. As Vidler (1992) points out, Freud's use of the German word 'unheimlich' allows the definition to grow from its apparent opposite so that the element of something hidden returning is implied. The word uncanny brings a similar derivation from a word-opposite - 'canny' meaning knowledge or skill - defines the 'un-canny' as beyond knowledge; it carries the spectral with it. The feeling of uncanniness brings an insecurity and disorientation, a sense of being invaded by something out of place. It troubles time and space, and eludes definition. The uncanny, Royle (2003, p.16) tells us contains an essence beyond, outside, 'a maddening supplement, something unpredictable and additionally strange happening in, and to, what is being stated, described or defined.' And, he believes that psychoanalysis is itself uncanny, as it lays bare what is hidden, 'it brings to light things that perhaps should have remained hidden, or repressed.' (p.24)

The Home, Kuhn (2015) suggests, whether real or symbolically presented in art, acts as a kind of framing container. There are rich metaphorical possibilities inherent in the architecture of the home; of shelter and containment, walls of separation or imprisonment, windows looking out, doors to open, corridors and stairs to connect, hidden spaces, rooms for congregation and solitude, exclusion and inclusion. I am



reminded of Bourgeois' choice of old doors or wire mesh structures in 'The Cells' that offer the possibility of penetration and porosity.

Whenever the human being has found the slightest shelter: we shall see the imagination build 'walls' of impalpable shadows, comfort itself with the illusion of protection – or, just the contrary, tremble behind thick walls, mistrust the staunchest ramparts...an entire past comes to dwell in a new house. (Bachelard, 1964, p.5)

My ideas for this cabinet had begun in drawings, (Fig 59 - 61) but being unsure how to complete the model, I left it painted white. I exhibited the cabinet in a group exhibition 'Interior' in the AVA Gallery at UEL. In a work-in-progress seminar, it was criticised for lacking a 'collision', some tension that would bring the piece alive. In retrospect I can see some significant qualities of the drawings had got lost in the process of precision model making; the fracturing in one image and the distortion in the other.

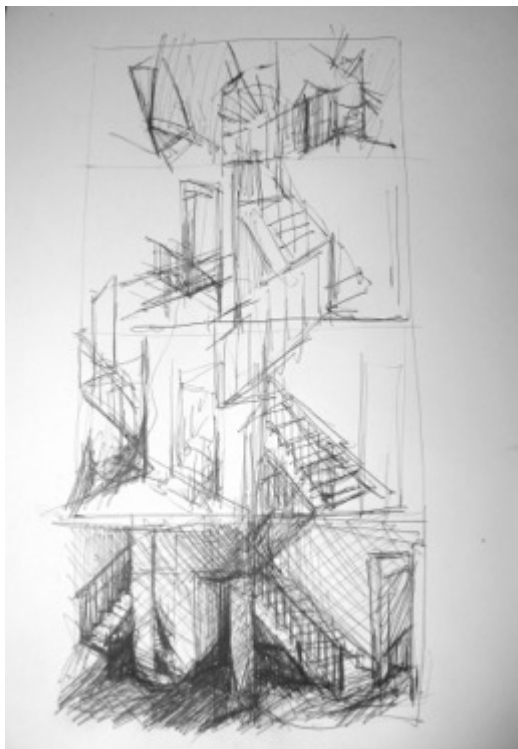


Figure 59 - 60. Ali Darke, *CORRIDOR*, 2015



Figure 61. Ali Darke, *CORRIDOR*, 2015  
(mixed media)

I sat with the cabinet unchanged for a long time. I wanted to re-introduce the sense of disintegration from the drawings. Eventually, I began scorching one half of the model. I added miniature suitcases and packing boxes - any inhabitants had fled, this was an inhospitable building. (Fig. 62 - 66) My solution might have been too literal, and adding the miniature objects moved it away from expressing something more enigmatic. But there is also resonance in the miniature house and the potential as an object for the subversions of the cultural associations of 'home'. Perry (2013) describes how the doll's house is often a gendered toy, a place for young girls through playing to assimilate domesticity. The doll's house is also associated with representations of 'social aspiration and domestic fantasies.' (p.77)



Figure 62. *My Staircase*, 2016



Figure 63. Ali Darke, *CORRIDOR*, 2015  
(mixed media)



Figure 64 - 65. Ali Darke, *CORRIDOR*, 2016  
(mixed media)



Figure 66, Ali Darke, *CORRIDOR*, 2016  
(mixed media)

The final piece *ONE WAY OR ANOTHER*, consisted of two cabinets co-joined by a rope, expressing emotional states through the volume and weight of the containers themselves. (Fig. 67 - 68) I was thinking about the ambivalent manifestations of despair, the dread burden of depression and the longing for relief. The first cabinet lay on the floor, half filled with muddy water. Weighing it down it kept the other cabinet in the air suspended by the rope hanging from a pulley in the rafters. Half submerged in the water was a miniature rusty bed and mattress. The other cabinet was empty, only the basic framework remained. I was using the contrast between the volume of one, and the emptiness of the other to communicate, searching for a balance between a relational visual language of representation, and abstraction to convey things that are not necessarily visible but felt.





Figure 67. Ali Darke, *ONE WAY OR ANOTHER*, 2015  
(mixed media)



Figure 68. Ali Darke, *TIME AND AGAIN*, 2015  
(Exhibition View)



The exhibition received very positive feedback and it was satisfying to see the year's work together in one place, as a collection. Although the cabinets had not been conceived as a site-specific project the atmosphere of the venue complimented their presence. The Safehouse highlighted my work's connection to the home, as the site of a physical and psychological dwelling place. We all carry the physical traces within our bodies of the spaces we have lived in. 'We hold these material and physical memories within us, and so when viewing sculpture there is an instinctive dialogue with these internalised tactile, spatial and haptic knowledges' (Racz, 2015, p.2) It was interesting to follow this with exhibiting the cabinets in the Professional Doctorate Showcase at UEL. The gallery has grey concrete floors and white walls, and although less atmospheric, the cabinets could in fact behave more like containers, and less like furniture. Their identity was less fixed by the location. Feedback in the seminar led to discussion about the challenge to find the right balance in narrative detail when using found objects and representational models, that does not overpower the more evocative potential in less illustrative work.

In August 2016, I revisited the village of Psarades, in North Western Greece for another two-week residency, at the invitation of the University of Western Macedonia. It is the most beautiful, haunting landscape, that has witnessed the horrors of war and more recently a steady stream of refugees attempting to enter Europe across the borders from Albania or Macedonia. The scars of conflict are visible in the many abandoned villages and embedded in memories of blood-shed, loss and displacement. The project that we were invited to take part in was connected to this history and specifically to that of a local landmark, the cave of Kokkalis, hidden deep in the mountains. (Fig. 69) This unmarked site has become mythologised in the local community as a symbol of valour in the face of repression. It had been a refuge and makeshift hospital for the rebel fighters during the Greek civil war. On the day of our visit to the cave, we heard first-hand the traumatic memories of a local woman's childhood. She and her mother had escaped to the mountains during a raid on her nearby village. Those who stayed to defend their homes or couldn't escape were captured and massacred. She told of their fearful return, to find the bodies of their families and friends hanging in the trees. She wept silent tears as she spared no detail of the horrors she had witnessed.



Figure 69. *Kokkalis Cave*, 2015

The intension was to create an exhibition in the cave, but after much debate the Communist party were concerned that we might not preserve the integrity of the site. Instead we gained permission to clear some rooms in the village's abandoned school building, still full of desks, books and debris. It proved a perfect location. Being removed from the cave gave our work less specificity. To avoid the heat of the day I rose early every morning to walk. I found an old rotten shoe in the grass and by the end of the first week had collected nearly 100, in various stages of decay, dumped on the roadside or in the surrounding fields and pathways. These discarded shoes bore the signs of the feet that they had so intimately protected. As single shoes, they were fragments, and evoked a sense of loss. I painted them blue, the colour of the sky and lake, and window frames. Hung from the ceiling, the shoes acquired a ghostly weightlessness, and faint drift. Shoes are meant to ground us - a tool for walking. They were no longer objects but had made the transition to things beyond their original identity. Each shoe having been singled out for preservation, became re-valued and a memorial. I was pleased with the results - the piece was evocative and simple and captured a *feeling* of absence without illustrating it. Each rotting shoe had its own history and the simple transformation of paint and hanging them provoked new associations. Being in the centre of the village we could invite the local inhabitants to come to an event and I received wonderful feedback - people were moved by the work. (Figs. 70 - 71)



Figures 70 - 71. Ali Darke, *Blue Shoes of Psarades*, 2016  
(shoes, paint, nylon fishing line)

## Part 2. TRAUMA

### TRAUMATIC TRACES

In July 2016, I was invited to participate in an art residency 'Summer Lodge', at Nottingham Trent University's Fine Art Department. At the end of the academic year the studios are cleared and the fine art staff re-inhabit the space working for 2 weeks alongside a small group of invited artists and some 2<sup>nd</sup> year student studio assistants.

A symposium held at the end of the first week, took 'The Wild' as its theme and could be adopted by the artists. The symposium information asked; *Wild Thing, Wild at Heart, Wild in the country, Wild in the studio. How useful is the idea of untrammelled wildness to the contemporary artist?* In preparation, I began researching the archetypal wild-woman; the witch – who as the outcast in medieval Europe had all that was deemed abject, evil and mad projected onto her. I also looked at the extraordinary portraits of *Wilder Mann* (Wild Men) by Charles Fréger. (Fig. 72- 75) These traditional costumed and masked characters, adopt a hybrid bestiality, and, connected to mythical beings are believed to roam the wilderness regions of Europe. Inhabiting two worlds they remain the outsider, the other, foreigners, beggars, fools, and the old, yet are rooted in the cultural sphere. They shape shift and subvert our expectations of gender and social identity, the living and the dead.

Sometimes the savage beast is put to death so as to be able to bring it back to life under the leadership of man – culture prevailing over savage nature.  
(Fréger, 2014: p.245)

I was intrigued to discover that these carnivalesque rituals are still performed in rural parts of Europe, including the Schwäbische Alb region of South Western Germany where my maternal Grandmother was born. These characters felt uncannily familiar! Mikhail Bakhtin (1965) claims that in medieval Europe these characters emerged to 'empower the oppressed', and overturn the normal social hierarchies to challenge the power of the church and state. The carnival costumed body adopts a universal character.



*These images have been redacted for copyright reasons*

Figures 72 - 75. Charles Fréger, *Wilder Mann*, 2014

The grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relation to time is one determining trait of the grotesque image. The other indispensable trait is ambivalence. For in this image we find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis. (Bakhtin, 1984, p.24)

In her history of witchcraft, Federici explains that Europe moved from the early middle ages when 'an animistic conception of nature that did not admit to any separation between matter and spirit' (Federici, 2004, p.141) and into the age of reason, losing the idea of the body as the receptacle of mystical powers. She claims, 'this is why, at the peak of the "Age of Reason" - the age of scepticism and methodical doubt – we have a ferocious attack on the body.' (p.141) The female body needed to be controlled as a machine for the reproduction of labour. It is horrific that all over Europe hundreds of thousands of women were massacred, over a period of less than two centuries. The torture, and sexual sadism of the women accused reveals an unparalleled misogyny. The woman as witch, was 'persecuted as the embodiment of the wild-side of nature, of all that in nature seemed disorderly, uncontrollable, and thus antagonistic to the project undertaken by the new science.' (p.203)

I started with sketches, paintings, and totems of burnt sticks. (Fig. 76 - 79)



Figures 76-77. Ali Darke, *Untitled*, 2016  
(acrylic paint on glass)



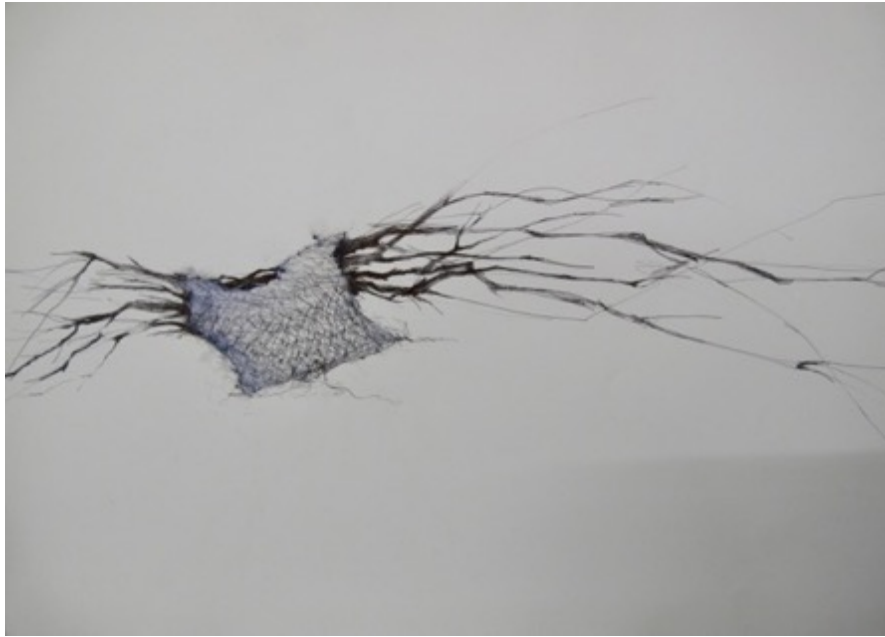


Figure 78. Ali Darke, *Totem 1*, 2016



Figure 79. Ali Darke, *Totem 2*, 2016  
(pen and ink)

A character was emerging that needed bringing to life, beyond the drawing. I resolved to embody this wild woman. Alongside the links with my German Granny Meyer, I should explain that my Mother would tease us, sometimes with such conviction I believed her, that she was indeed a witch. As daughters we fear we will turn into our

mothers. So, in this wild woman three generations co-existed. I was drawing on my own history at the same time embodying others, giving me permission to express something beyond my-self.

My Wild-Woman, shifted between two worlds, at the point of waking, when dreams are remembered and the unconscious hovers at the edges. I dressed in white night-clothes and used a duvet and pillow as props. Barbieri (2017, p.xxii) describes how costume can 'articulate an infinitely complex human nature through materiel and form'. Ritual dress is the 'materiel object through which the wearer becomes other than their everyday self...a threshold persona, a transitional being'. (p.xxii) I took details of witches from an exhibition at the British Museum, *Witches and Wicked Bodies: in art from the early Renaissance to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (Fig. 82 - 85)

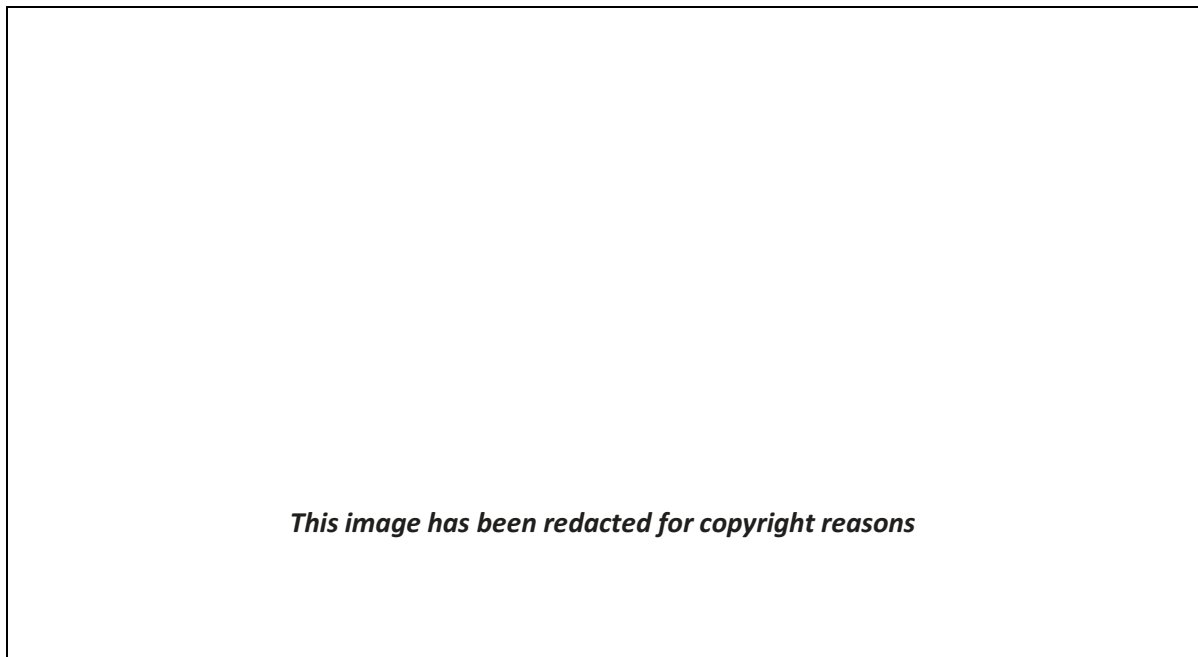


Figure 82. Veneziano, *The Witches Rout*, 1520

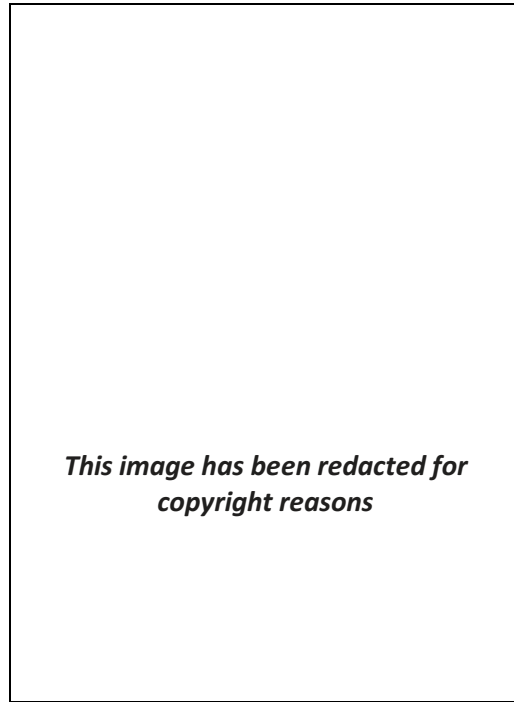


Figure 83. DÜRER, *Witch Riding a Goat Backwards*, c.1500

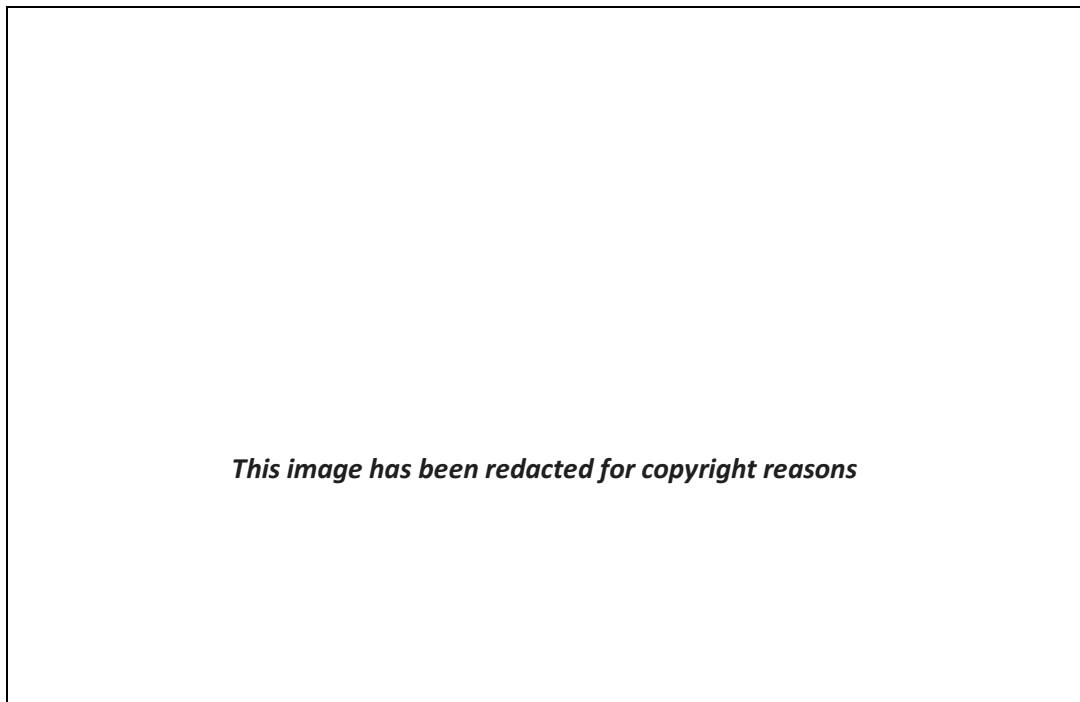


Figure 84. Francisco Goya, *Mucho Hay Que Chupar*, 1799

Figure 85. Francisco Goya, *Linda Maestro*, 1799

I was myself - an absurd middle-aged woman standing on a plinth, and in excess of myself, expressing something darker, more evocative, and troublesome. The static portraits resembled an anthropological study. (Fig. 87 - 98) In posing for the camera I felt vulnerable and dissociated. Roland Barthes (1981) describes his fascination with the power of photography to both anticipate the memory of the subject in the image while at the same time eluding to its passing - something transitional, a slippage in time. In writing about the experience of posing for the camera Roland Barthes states:

I am neither subject nor object but a subject who feels he is becoming an object:  
I then experience a micro version of death (of parenthesis): I am truly becoming a spectre. (Barthes, 1981 p.14)

In the final images black paint is slowly poured over the Wild Woman's head. I had looked again at the history of my maternal Grandparents. Both were German but my Grandfather was Jewish and my Grandmother Christian. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935, the anti-Semitic and racial laws of Nazi Germany, forbade inter-racial marriage, for the *protection of German Blood and German honour*. The proclamation was illustrated by a diagram that graphically demonstrates the fear of contamination of the German body by Jewish blood. (Fig. 86)



Figure 86. *DIE NÜRNBERGER GESETZE* (The Nuremberg Laws), 1935

According to these rules my Mother was designated a 'Mischling', in-pure, and had it not been for my Grandfather's foresight in arranging for his young family to leave Germany in 1936, they would for sure have been murdered in the Holocaust. My mother arrived in London in 1937, aged 5, to join her parents. Anxious to assimilate their daughters into English culture, they refused to speak German in the home. So, in denying her language she learnt fast that to be German was to be the enemy - she must disguise her identity and her pain. Her parents rarely spoke of their past, but, unconsciously, the trauma and shame of her heritage, haunted my mother's life, and as Eva Hoffman (2004) describes;

In the aftermath of the Shoah, the traces left on the survivors' psyches were not so much thoughts or images as scars and wounds. The legacy they passed on was not a processed, mastered past, but the splintered signs of acute suffering, of grief and loss. (p.34)

As the black liquid was poured over my head, this turned into a diabolical ritual, a punishment, a public humiliation. I was made hypersensitive to the surface of my body. Transforming the skin as Maria Walsh (2013) suggests, has psychic implications about the boundaries between internal and external.

The material marker of that boundary is skin, but the skin, like the psyche, is both porous and sealing and therefore a liminal site of complex exchanges between inner and outer realities. (Walsh, 2013 p.124)

The skin, the sensitive surface with which we feel and perceive the 'other' - senses our body's boundary. Nicola Diamond (2013) describes the dynamic function of the skin in forming a relationship between self and other, creating a 'border-zone'. A child learns to experience their own bodies through the skin, through touch, setting up the condition of experiencing one's own body as 'other'. Internal and external perception of myself on the plinth were becoming less defined, contained, 'safe'. There was a duality between the sensations of embodying the Wild Woman while simultaneously feeling self-conscious at being photographed.

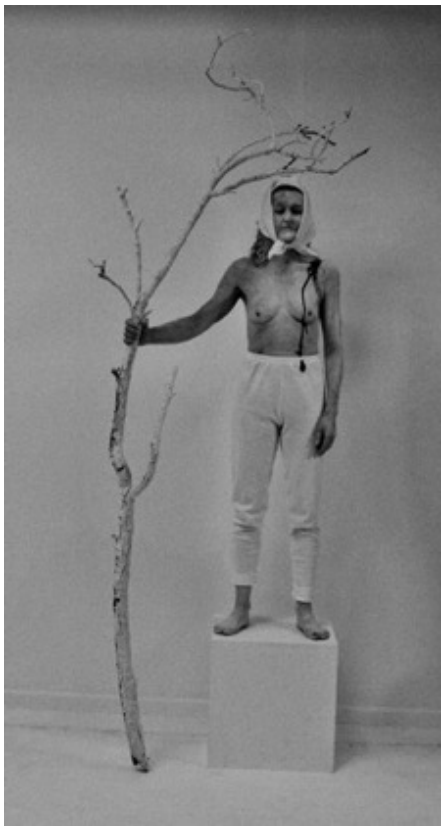


Figures 87 - 90. Ali Darke, *Wild Woman*, 2016.





Figures 91- 94. Ali Darke, *Wild Woman*, 2016.



Figures 95- 98. Ali Darke, *Wild Woman*, 2016.

## THE TRANSITIONAL BODY

Grosz (1994) describes a phase of 'infantile transitivity' which I find fascinating in relation to my experience on the plinth. She explains this as a phase in the child's differentiation, shifting between 'agent and spectator' or 'active and passive' roles in relation to the other, the child;

plays at both roles, giver and receiver, actor and audience, switching from one role to the other. This transitivity positions the child in a role of spatial reciprocity with the other, a space in which its position is attained only relative to the position of the other, yet where the position of the other is reciprocally defined by the position of the subject. (Grosz, 1994 p.48)

And thus, it is through the body that the child's being-in-the-world becomes a complex interplay of acting as both object for the other and self and an embodied subject for the self: the body is the agent by which all knowledge is gained and meaning created. This incorporates corporeal phenomenology to the theory of object relations, introjection and projection. Transitivity is also evident in relation to the flesh of the body with 'its capacity to fold in on itself, a dual orientation inward and outward...between touching and being touched, between seeing and being seen there is a fundamental reversibility.' (1994, p.100)

When thinking again about the transition from our beginnings, submerged within the body of the Mother, to an individuated self, it is clear that when these boundaries are violated, the positions of subject and object are manipulated, abused or subverted the consequences are unbearable for an integrated subject to withstand, trauma leads the fragile ego to be shattered, forever damaged.

The sensitivity and fragility of the skin-ego create the potential for the body's surface to take on metaphorical and symbolic meaning in human behaviour, but also as sites of artistic expression. In May 2018 I presented a paper *Between Here and There*, at the 'Making Connections' ADI PGR Conference, in which I looked at artwork that

expressed notions of subjectivity using the surface of the body as a site for mediating internal and external experience.

Walsh (2013) describes Anthony Gormley's body sculptures as the 'motif of the crustacean Ego', (2013, p.127) impenetrable figures. His work is an investigation into the body as an object. The sculpture *Learning to See* (Fig. 99) is a cast of his own body rendered in lead, fibreglass, plaster and as he adds poignantly to the list 'air'. Gormley (2015, p.166) explains; 'it is not about action but about being. It both comes out of concentration and demands a form of concentration. It is an empty case indicating a human space in space'. A dark interior space is concealed, but the 'learning to see' of the title a reference to the internal gaze of insight.

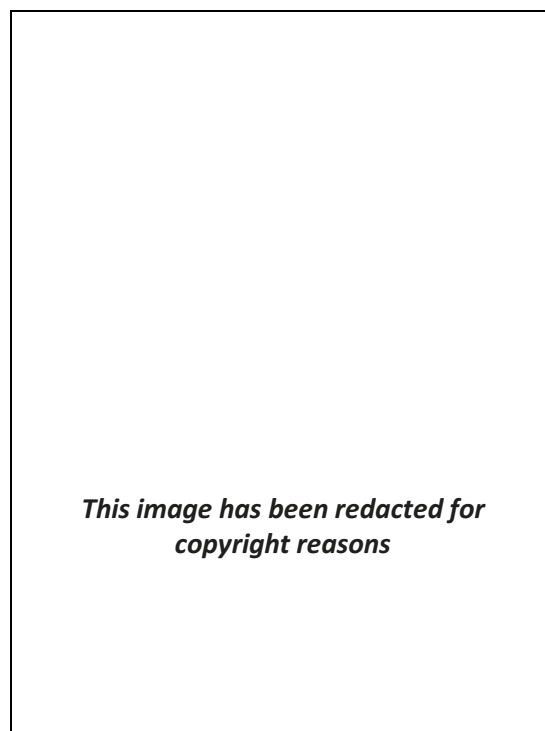


Figure 99. Anthony Gormley, *Learning to See*, 1993  
(cast iron)

Leader explains how Gormley expresses 'his fascination with negotiating and renegotiating the edge, in terms of whether it's within or without.' Edges, he says, 'are the relation between something and nothing, and they both define and release us.'

(2003, p.12) Later, Gormley's work metamorphose into the *Insider* (Fig. 100) figures, in which the volume of the body is compressed to an inner core, this contraction evoking not the dark interior void, but the '*irreducible residue of the body.*' (p.11) Gormley seems to be testing out the limits of being and nothingness.

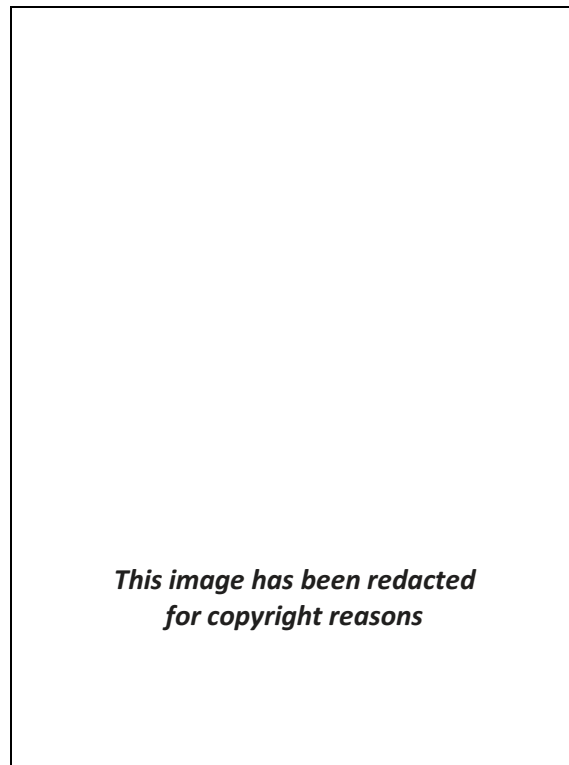


Figure 100. Anthony Gormley, *Insider*, 1998  
(cast iron)

In the *Domain* (Fig. 101) sculptures nothing is hidden, giving the illusion of a drawing in space, the hatched lines still create form, implying the body without bounding it. The drawn outline, that might define the body's boundary, or suggest a skin, here has been splintered into a fragile form in space. 'The skin has become a constellation rather than a continuous, unbroken surface.' (2003 p.12)

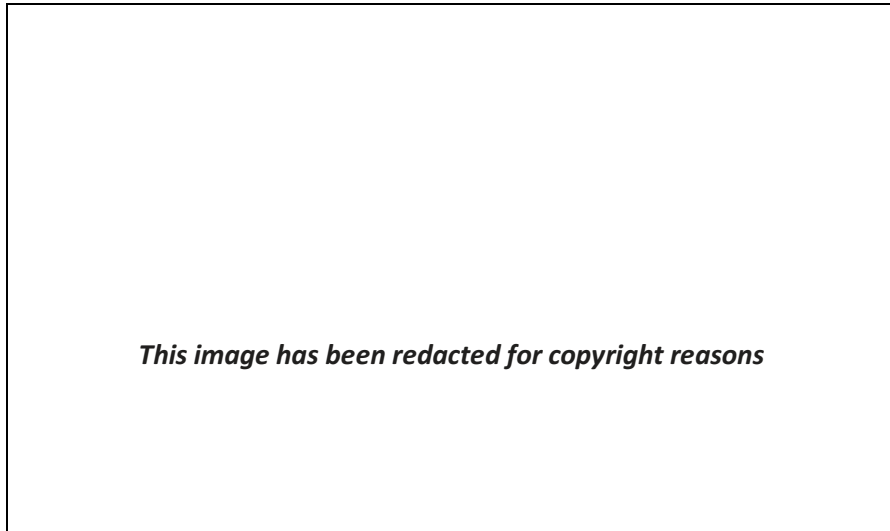


Figure 101. Anthony Gormley, *Domain*, 2003  
(steel wire)

In *Drift* (Fig. 102) (2007- 2014) Gormley's figures expand into the space demonstrating a porous liminality. Less grounded and weightless they speak more obviously of the psychic perception of our bodies in 'touch' with space than the physical body's limits. There is a confusion whether the structures are produced by the body, or the structures create the body. Internal and external exchange has become more fluid.

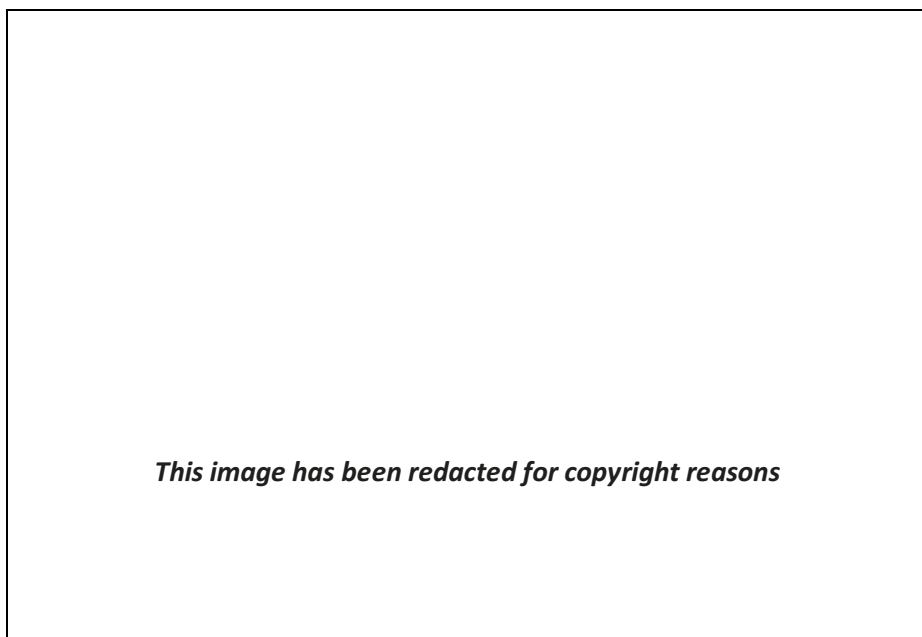


Figure 102. Anthony Gormley, *Drift*, 2007-12  
(steel wire)

I have always felt Gormley's figures to have a powerful, impenetrable presence regardless of their fragility which is curious. Even when the surfaces are breaking up and fragmented the figures remain individual and whole. They don't appear vulnerable or in need of the other - there is self-sufficiency even in their existential doubt.

In all of the work of Louise Bourgeois, her representations of the body become a vehicle for expressing deeply felt psychic phenomena.

Since the fears of the past were connected with the functions of the body, they reappear through the body. For me, sculpture is the body. My body is my sculpture'. (Bourgeois, in Bernadac and Obrist, eds. 1998, p. 228).

Towards the end of her life, Bourgeois used her extensive collection of fabric fragments and old clothes, through which the body can be inscribed with the traces and memory of embodiment, and touch. She made numerous cloth heads and body parts, covered in roughly stitched remnants, often barely containing the stuffing. They suggest wounds, scars and bandages. (Fig. 103)

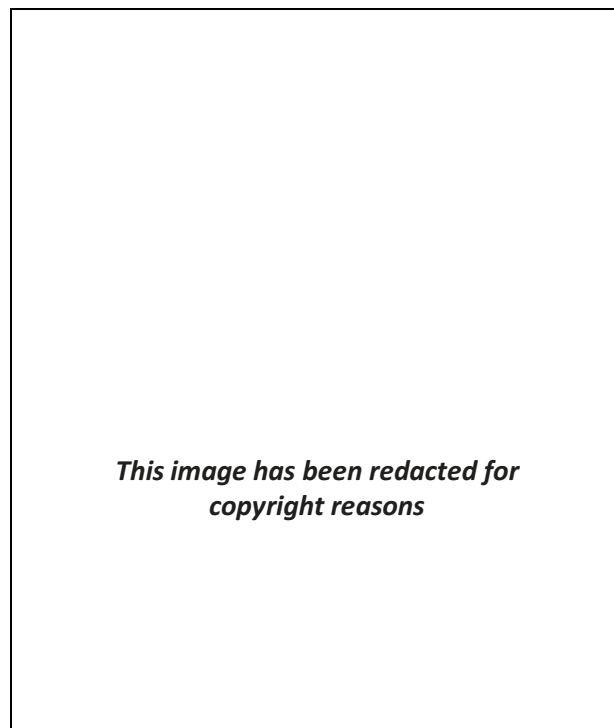


Figure 103. Louise Bourgeois, *Untitled*: 1998  
(mixed media)



As Potts (2007) remarks her different sculptural processes exploit their psychic implications, distinguishing between, 'carving and modelling, or shaping, on the one hand – which she conceives as destructive – and assemblage which she characterises as reparative'. (p.258)

These works suggest an attempt to repair a psychic 'trauma'. *Peaux de Lapins* (2006) in contrast expresses loss or trauma through an absence of the volume of the body. (Fig. 104) A wire mesh cage encloses fabric sacks hung limply from chains, their translucency lacks any substance. Their fragility evokes a withered body - all that remains when a body has left. 'Bourgeois' chiffons wrap the wound of absence; they carry the trace of the other and the other as trace. Here sensation and memory resurface.'

(Lorz, 2015, p.86)



Figure 104. Louise Bourgeois, *Peaux de Lapins*, *Chiffons ferrailles à Vendre*, 2006  
(mixed media)

In Bourgeois' compulsive repetition there is always desire for relief from the psychic pain that tormented her. As Pollock states emphatically, 'Psychic trauma knows no time. It is a perpetual present, lodged like a foreign resident in the psyche'. (2013, p.2)

Her understanding is that the unknowable, unspeakable nature of trauma creates a silent space in our narrative memory, but the 'perpetual haunting force' remains ever present. The art-working itself becomes part of this transformation but the art work can only ever speak of the shadow of the trauma, the traces.

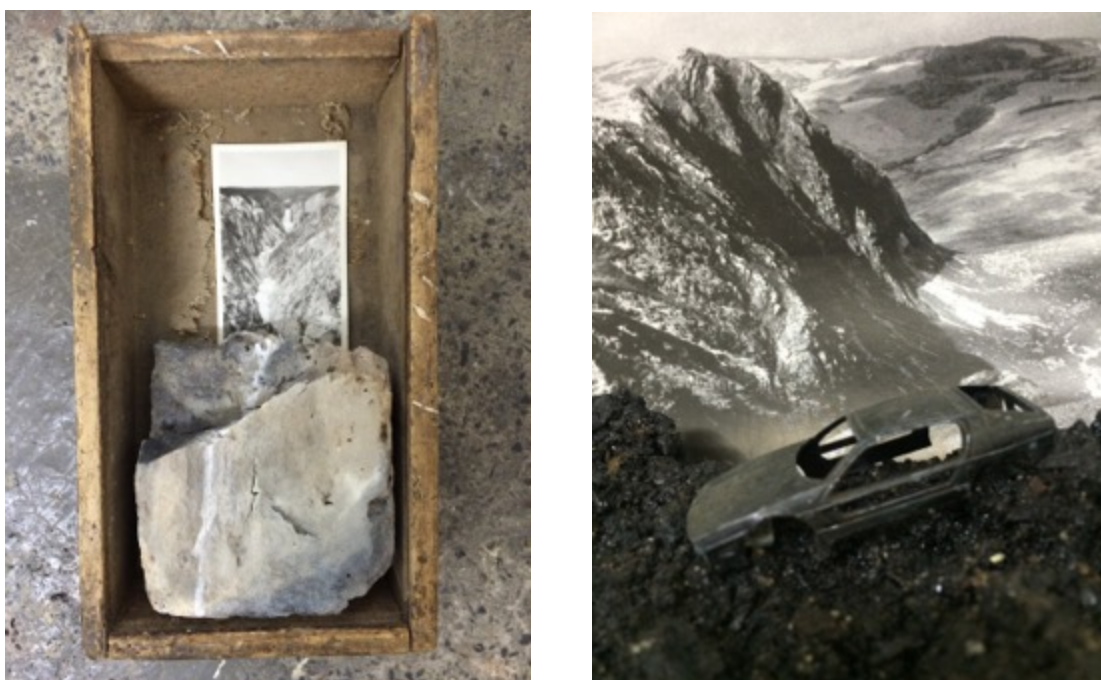
## RETREAT

It would be a while before I continued with the Wild Woman project. In retrospect I can see that I retreated back into the sphere of the mind, to create work that was more 'contained' and in some respects more manageable and intimate. I wanted to explore collage, layering images, objects, materials and models to see what resonated with memories and feelings. I brought together building debris, brick and plaster fragments, lumps of asphalt from a school playground, a collection of landscape photos, and some doll's house furniture. The work explored themes of childhood and the idea of the traces of trauma ever present - embedded in the psyche as recurring in dreams.

Associations shifted as I worked with the things in front of me. 'It is as though something fluid had collected our memories and we ourselves were dissolved in this fluid of the past'. (Bachelard, 1994, p.57) I thought back to my research about the potential of evocative objects to highlight 'the inseparability of thought and feeling in our relationship to things.' (Turtle, 2007.p5)



Figure 105. Ali Darke, *Test for the Glimpses*, 2017



Figures. 106 -107. Ali Darke, *Tests for the Glimpses*, 2017

To address a problem of storage I needed to work smaller. I had a collection of old boxes and decided that these could be the frames for the 3D collages. These boxes could allude to containment, entrapment, and dreams of escape. (Fig. 106 -107)

I had fixed on the title *The Glimpses* - thinking about those fleeting moments of recognition, flashbacks to a memory or dream - those uncanny 'déjà vu' experiences. Berger (1984) describes how artists find ways of viewing their work afresh – sometimes in the mirror to reverse the image, 'What they glimpse in the mirror is perhaps a little like the look of their painting at that future moment to which it is being addressed.' (p. 27) Time becomes momentarily confused. Uncanny.

I presented the collection in the Container Space at UEL for a work-in-progress seminar; the feedback was good, but I agreed that I had over worked the material. The early tests, had a vibrancy and tension that became lost with my tendency to "neaten the edges" and fix the image. There is a tipping point where the objects retain their individual identity but are transformed merely through proximity with the other – if

'over-worked' the final image becomes too formulated. In some of the images I had set the narrative too clearly maybe by fixing the scale and unifying the image. I could see that the tests were provisional - flimsy arrangements - and would be difficult to replicate for presentation. This was a challenge to solve in my work. (Fig. 108 - 116)



Figure 108. Ali Darke, *Glimpse I*, 2017  
(mixed media)



Figure 109. Ali Darke, *Glimpse II*, 2017  
(mixed media)





Figures 110 - 113. Ali Darke, *Glimpse III, IV, V, and VI*, 2017  
(mixed media)



Figures 114 - 115. Ali Darke, *Glimpse VII and VIII*, 2017  
(mixed media)



Figure 116. Ali Darke, *The Glimpses: Container Space*, UEL. 2018

Each piece held a deeply personal resonance for me that connected to specific memories. In feedback, this emotional intensity was observed - which by standing in isolation at eyelevel heightened the encounter. Stewart (1995) points out that in a miniature, a single-point perspective is allowed, and promotes interiority - in contrast to the public or social sphere of the monumental, the child-like miniature provides 'alternative or alienated views.' (p.81) And as Bachelard observes, the miniature offers the dreamer a whole world in which to fanaticise, he 'can renew his own world, merely by moving his face.' (p.157) The miniaturist has the illusion of possession over their world, and through the model can enter a new one. The miniature demands attention to the details, and the concentration 'detaches me from the surrounding world, and helps me to resist dissolution of the surrounding atmosphere'. (p161)

I had displayed them on makeshift stands which were clumsy and distracted from the boxes. In preparation for the Bow Arts Open Studio, I designed simpler steal leg stands for each box. The event was well attended, and the reaction extremely positive, provoking lively discussion about memory, dreams, childhood fears, and fantasy.

I questioned if setting myself the task of filling the boxes became a necessary component or a hindrance. I am used to working in the theatre scale model and hours of childhood spent in front of a doll's house, already sets in motion associations of designing for the performing body in space. I brought unconscious, habitual thoughts to the process and recognise how hard it is to break patterns of behaviour and ways of seeing.

## GHOSTLY VISITORS OF THE UNREMEMBERED PAST

Over the course of making the Glimpses, ideas for the next iteration of the *Wild Woman* evolved. I planned to create three short films showing manifestations of the *Wild Woman* to be projected onto the interior of three cabinets. She would perform endless cycles of futile labour suggesting the obsessive compulsion to repeat.

*Was Ist Diese Arbeit?* translates as *What is this Work?* A question addressing my insecurities and doubts about my art-working, Freud's theory of '*traume-arbeit*' - the



dream-work of our unconscious mind, and finally, the statement rendered in the steel arch above the entrance to Auschwitz, *Arbeit Macht Frei*; Work sets you free.

The work, in response to my mother's family history, was trying to understand the impact of their trauma. My Grandfather had been unable to persuade his parents to join him. They were murdered, shot in a forest at some point during their transportation to Auschwitz in 1943. The shadow of this trauma is traced in my psyche, emerging in my work consciously and unconsciously. An intergenerational transmission of past events haunting the present is evident. 'Loss of family, home, of a sense of belonging and safety in the world "bleed" from one generation to the next.' (Hirsch, 2012, p.34). The work would address this haunting, and research help me understand.

Between Mother and child, when maternal care is attuned and responsive to the child's needs a resilient sense of self can be nurtured and separation tolerated. However, the scars of trauma - psychic wounds that a Mother carries remain unavailable to the child and as Pollock (2013) explains, the child must grieve for a lost relationship. 'The subject identifies at the same time with a "dead mother" and traces of her trauma are thus invested within the subject itself.' (p.20) The past infiltrates and leaks into the future through this intersubjective transmission of affect, and loss is experienced as a phantom. As a young child, my mother would have experienced her parent's traumatic loss, and I am compelled to express some trace of this melancholy in my being, understanding it as a repeated search for an unlocatable, elusive and unspeakable loss that cannot be laid to rest. I have been told I do this with a dark humour.

Rendered in post-production to simulate old film footage, the flickering black and white films repeated on a loop, like recurring dreams. My *Wild Woman* returned as a comedic character, in night clothes, a witch-like hat, white makeup, a bird's beak mask and knitted scarf - recalling motifs from previous work. I used a blow-torch to burn the cabinets and cracked the glass.

In the film *WORDS* she writes the repeated line of the title *Was Ist Diese Arbeit?* on a blackboard, a punishment for some misdemeanour. The film *WOOD* shows her walking up and down the banks of a dump collecting sticks, and in *WOOL* she sits on a plinth, wrapped in and knitting a long scarf. (Fig.s 117 - 124)



Figure 117. Ali Darke, *Was Ist Diese Arbeit?* 2018  
(Exhibition view)



Figure 118. Ali Darke, *Words*, 2018  
(wooden cabinet, video)



Figure 119. Ali Darke, *Words*, 2018 (*detail*)



Figure 120. Ali Darke, *Wood*, 2018  
(wooden cabinet, books, video)



Figure 121. Ali Darke, *Wood*, 2018



Figure 122. Ali Darke, *Wood*, 2018



Figure 123. Ali Darke, *Wool*, 2018  
(wooden cabinet, video)



Figure 124. Ali Darke, *Wool*, 2018

I am always nervous presenting my artwork but felt particularly exposed and vulnerable showing this piece, partly due to its deeply personal content, and my presence being central to the work; but also, that I was showing film - a practice I know very little about. (I was frustrated with the ugliness of the projectors and if I could afford to would get mini black projectors which would have been less intrusive!) Although I struggled with the technology I learnt a tremendous amount and was pleased with the result - I had achieved what I intended.

Our seminar was held a few weeks after the event so I presented the films outside the context of the installation. The feedback was encouraging - suggesting I could develop a separate film piece out of the materiel. I was invited to exhibit the work 5 months later, in a group exhibition 'Fragments' at the Biscuit Factory in London. (Fig. 125) It is a fantastic cavernous space, with bare brick and concrete walls adding an industrial coldness to the atmosphere. I was surprised how well the projections worked in the natural diffused light of day, and under dimmed spotlights at night, allowing the textures and colours of the charred cabinets and broken glass to be more visible.



Figure 125. Ali Darke, *Was Ist Diese Arbeit?*  
FRAGMENTS exhibition view. 2018



The work brought a new dimension to the Wild Woman, encouraging me to question my motivations, and consider how trauma is transmitted to a generation that was not a victim or witness to the horrors of the Holocaust.

In December 2018, I attended a conference 'Ghostly Hauntings: Subliminal and unconscious messages from our ancestors', in which the notions of intergenerational transmission of trauma were discussed. The conference, aimed at CPD for psychoanalysts, described how when working with certain clients, a sense of ghostly possession and metaphysical phenomena can come to mind, reminding them of how within the psyche the past and future can collide in the present.

In every nursery there are ghosts. They are the visitors of the unremembered past of the parents; the uninvited guests at the christening.  
(Adelson, et al.,1987)

The conference was opened by the psycho-social academic Steven Frosh explaining his research that shifts between the individual psyche and the wider community to study the psychological repercussions for the generation traumatised by the horrors of the Holocaust to the surviving generations.

Central to Freud's psychoanalytic project that Frosh reiterates, is the principal that what is unbearable or too troublesome to keep in mind as an individual is shunned, repressed, introjected, hidden, buried or denied - all secreted into the darkest depths and recesses of the psyche.

There are somethings that are so tragic to lose that the loss itself is denied, even to the extent that knowledge of the existence of the lost object is itself repressed. This kind of melancholic object then remains as a psychic haunting: It is not known about, not recognised, therefore not grieved and consequently its loss acts as a present absence with continuing impact. (Frosh, 2013, p.12)

The unconscious lurking in the shadows, retains an energy that effects our conscious minds, inadvertently influencing behaviour, our language, our relationships; catching us out unawares. A careful listening and watching can recognise the slips and clues



and defences of the unconscious at work. Psychoanalysis and haunting go together. Psychoanalysis, he explains, intentionally stirs things up and demands that we confront and talk about the things we would rather hide. He describes these things as remainders, the things that are in excess from the past, cast out from conscious recognition.

They are the peripheral things, sniping from the side lines and the depths, harrying us as we go about our supposedly ordinary lives. We might think we are acting reasonably but behind this rational façade there is something else lurking, waiting to mess things up, to make claims of its own. (Frosh, 2013, p.3).

The clinical vocabulary of psychoanalysis describes the processes of transference and counter transference, projection and introjection, that occur between client and therapist that bring and re-enact relationships from the past into the present analytic encounter. As Frosh observes, 'Psychoanalysis is the science that deals with the permeability of personal boundaries in the face of unconscious events.' (p. 5). What he is describing has a 'horizontal' dimension - something passed between people in the here and now, that draws past events and relationships into the present - we are 'inhabited by the spectre of others, we are never free to be ourselves. Others occupy us.' (Frosh, 2013, p.12) These ghosts need to be set free from their purgatory. Thus, psychoanalysis and haunting demand a process of liberation.

Christopher Bollas (1987) describes this internal otherness as the 'unthought known'; 'Through the experience of being the other's object, which we internalise, we establish a sense of two-ness in our being, and this subject object paradigm further allows us to address our inherited disposition, or true self as other.'  
(Bollas, 1987, p. 51)

If this internalised other brings with it a loss - something projected, some trauma that acts like a shameful secret in the psyche and cannot be openly recalled, it behaves like a ghostly object that has possessed the soul. This melancholy internalised object/other, can never be fully known, and consequently can never be properly mourned, which means that it is somehow preserved in a half-life or living death. Each

burnt cabinet might present a Crypt for things that lurk and wander in the liminal landscape between life and death, past and present.

There is a haunting resonance in this - one that I experienced in 'performing' the Wild Woman - I was myself and other, I was in excess of myself, echoes of my Mother, my Grandmother, and unpredictably and somewhat disconcertingly, of my own future old woman. Encrypted materiel was re-incarnated and foretold the future.

The traumatic is at once out of time but ever inserting itself into other times as a promiscuously repeating excess of affective intensity. (Pollock, 2013, p. 9)

The psychoanalytic principle of pathology points to the primal wound of separation from the mother that remains vulnerable. It is through these fissures in the psyche that future traumas invade, re-opening the scars, and striking at the heart of our being. And as Pollock describes each trauma 'deepening these pathways and being themselves deepened by inherited affects. (Pollock, 2013, p.110). In explaining intersubjectivity, as the route of the intergenerational transmission of trauma Pollock suggests the possibility of a prenatal matrixial theory of connectivity - 'all human subjects' she proposes are 'formed in an intimacy with an unknown, co-affecting other, an unknowable, and humanising partner in difference.' (Pollock, 2013 p.17) This suggests a gentler severance and gradual acquisition of subjectivity that rethinks the phallogocentric notions of psychoanalytic theory, to describe a shared 'border-space' between a (m)Other and child, which is 'linked forever with aesthesis, with resonance, movement, rhythm, affect.' (Pollock, 2013, p.18)

At the point of maternal severance - at birth, the child is in a state where it's interactions with the mother do not distinguish between her conscious and unconscious thoughts and gestures. She suggests that subjectivity evolves from a 'primordial psychic interface' from which separation occurs, but in a way that maintains mutual pathways through which past experience 'leaks into and becomes embedded in the future at this intersubjective level. (Pollock, 2013, p. 22) She calls this a matrixial border-space, between the psyche of the mother and psyche of the child.

She believes that a connectivity through artistic practice and presentation moves some dimensions of the encrypted psychological wounding to be transformed - a space between affect and sign is created that allows for 'psychic play, for affective movement, for the transformation of potentially petrified, traumatic affect.' (Pollock, 2013, p. 65)

It is interesting to relate the dynamic of this matrixial border-space when looking at artistic endeavour that expresses trauma and the pain of others. In exploring my family's experience of the intergenerational transmission of trauma, I was prompted to question the ethics of an artistic practice in memorial of catastrophe that I haven't experienced directly. Hirsch (2012, p.2) asks; 'How are we implicated in the aftermath of crimes we did not ourselves witness?' When appropriating the terrors of the Holocaust and my family's experience as matter for my work, I feel the doubt of an imposter; how should I retell the stories without appropriating them. The original trauma truly belongs to my Grandparents. My Mother, was so young she wouldn't have understood the full implications of their survival, but she was affected deeply, evident in shame and denial, and the need to create her ideal English family. As Kelly-Laine (2004, p.6) observes, one way of dealing with exile is over-adaption. 'Learning the language of exile' means having to repair the loss of one's world, and accept being a "foreigner". 'Exile is the metaphor of the human condition: lost childhood is the irrevocable representation of being human.'

Hirsch has called the specific experience of received memories, events that occurred in the past but are transmitted intergenerationally, as 'post-memory', to describe how the generation after relates to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before. (p.5) The retold stories are so vivid they form new memories resembling the original in their affective intensity. Central to Hirsch's study of post-memorial work is how the artists she considers attempt to reactivate the distant political memorial by 'reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression'. (Hirsch, 2012, p. 33).

## ART AND TRAUMA

Pollock and Hirsch both examine the photographic work of the artist and Lacanian psychoanalyst Bracha Lichtenberg-Ettinger, to understand the nature and impact of transmitted trauma. Hirsch (2012, p. 216) describes her work as 'a visual aesthetics of return, characterised by fracture, overlay and superimposition.' A return to the image of the trauma is a frequent hallmark of post memorial work. She considers *The Eurydice Series*, images created by Ettinger between 1990 and 2001. Ettinger re-appropriates a photograph taken of her parents in 1937 on the streets of the Polish city of Lodz, prior to the Holocaust. Working repeatedly with this image by superimposing it onto a photo of her own childhood face - she creates two time-worlds co-existing - before the Holocaust and a time after. This projection of her image onto and into the spaces of the past absorbs some of that moment, a form of return journey through the photographic medium. This is then overlaid with a third iconic image taken by a Nazi photographer, of a group of naked woman and children herded together on the side of a bleak anonymous hill, awaiting their execution. As she points out this is not 'a space to which one would want to return; it is the antithesis of "home".' (Hirsch, 2012, p. 218).

To create the final artwork, Ettinger has taken the iconic image and transformed it through copying, enlarging, cropping, and finally tinting with purple ink. 'They illustrate the underside of return, the fear that violence will be repeated, that, as Euridice's backward look, return will prove to be deadly.' (Hirsch, 2012, p. 218).

I am reminded of the fear that ghosts who visit from the past may drag us back with them to some deadly place. Through these layered and transformed images she is showing how the before, during and after cannot be separated out - the pre-war photo from the family album, cannot be disconnected from the iconic, archival, anonymous image in the killing fields. By superimposing her own face within the final images Hirsch believes Ettinger (2012, p.221) enacts the 'irreconcilable stakes of memory and return.' By closing the temporal space in her composite images, her return brings larger historical awareness to the trauma. She becomes implicated in the historical scene and takes on something of the pain. I understand that by embodying the hybrid character of the Wild Woman, I do the same - present and past inexorably interwoven.

Pollock describes Ettinger's process and art work as a mode of aesthetic wit(h)nessing, the bracketed 'h' drawing attention to both the witnessing of the victim's experience but also the 'being with, being beside, sharing'. (Pollock. 2013) And Ettinger describes her work as a means of transforming the residue of trauma through the artistic process itself - through aesthetic transformation a navigation away from trauma could be negotiated. (Fig. 126 - 128)

Ettinger's appropriation of iconic images from the Holocaust has made me re-evaluate my own relationship to my family's history. My work as I have stated is not specifically about the Holocaust but a means of understanding my claims to feel something of the after-affects.

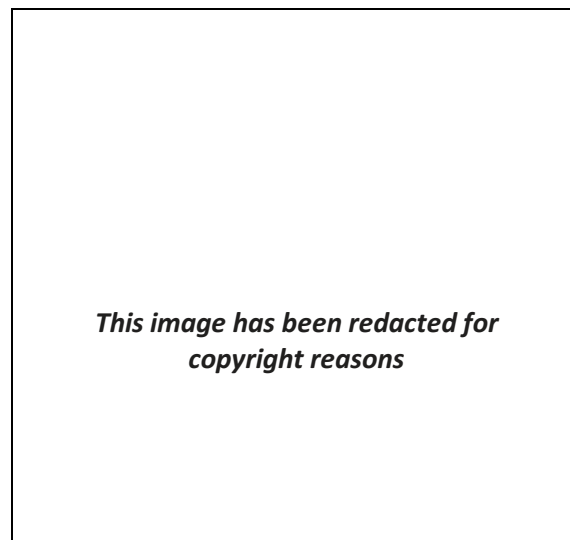


Figure 126. Bracha L. Ettinger, *Euridice No. 10*, 1996  
(oil, xerography, with photocopied dust, pigment and ashes on canvas)

Adorno's much quoted concerns regarding the limitations and ethical responsibilities of there being any meaningful language capable of talking about the Holocaust, claiming that 'to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric'. (Adorno, 1983, p.34) Whether poetry was capable of conceptualising the inconceivable; may be more questioning *how* Art can achieve this than whether any attempts *should* be made. Over-simplifying, glamorizing, trivializing, sentimentalizing or even exploiting the Holocaust have been some of the criticisms.

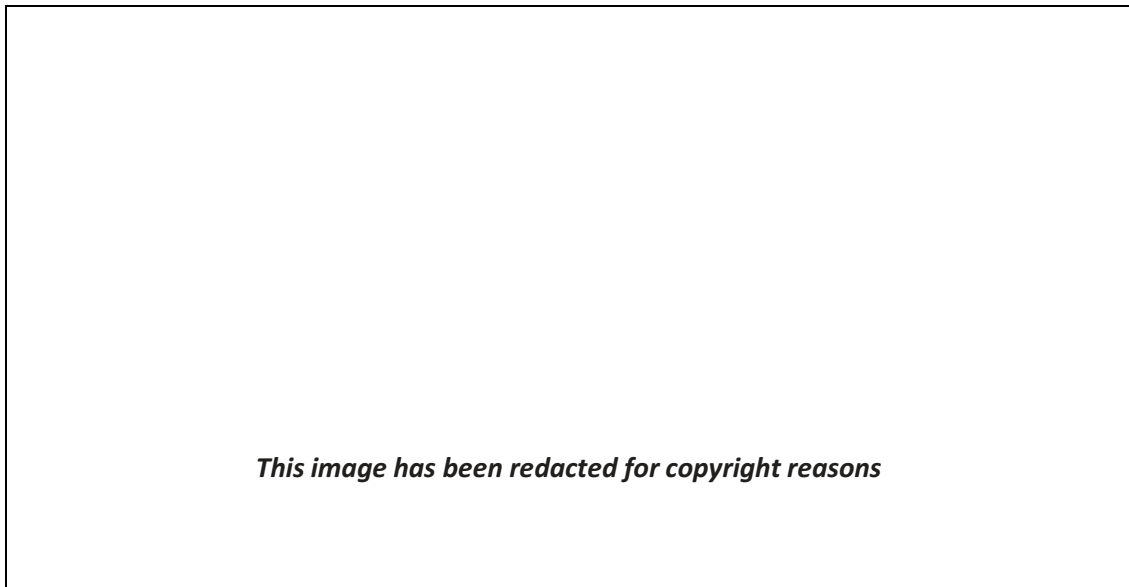


Figure 127. Bracha L. Ettinger, *Euridice No. 15*, (1996)  
(oil, xerography, with photocopied dust, pigment and ashes on canvas)

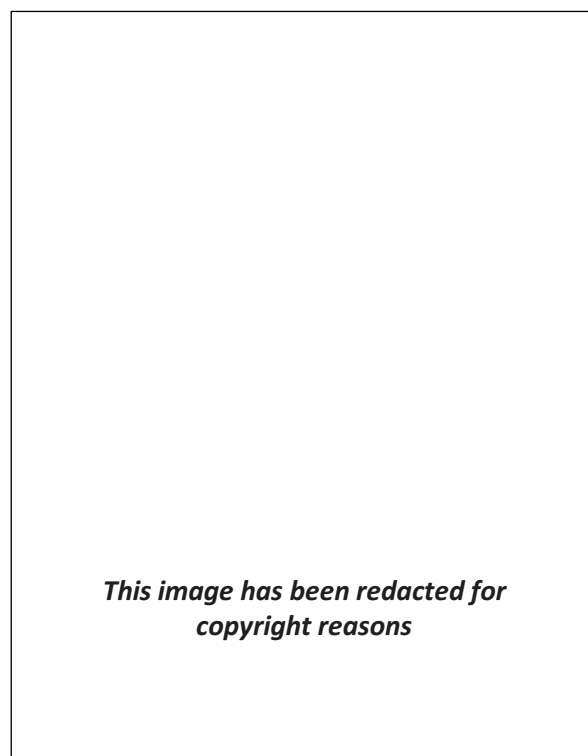


Figure 128. Bracha L. Ettinger, *Euridice No. 37*, (1991-2001)  
(oil, xerography, with photocopied dust, pigment and ashes on canvas)

The challenge for historians, archivists, writers and artists is to navigate through the sacred and profane dualities of The Holocaust in memorial work. On the one hand the desire and need to commemorate, to respect the notion of 'never forgetting', while simultaneously avoiding indulging exploitation or aestheticizing the real trauma. Post-memory, although originating in the inherited stories and familial knowledge is constructed and constantly re-calibrated through mediated images.

Post memory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. (Hirsch. 1996 p. 662).

If the space between the image and its meaning is held open by the art work and permits an instinctual visceral response - a contact with the traumatic memory is possible but always at a distance - there being a space between self and image. 'As spectators of the imagery of traumatic memory, we might, at certain points, regard our affective encounter from an *outside* in terms of a contact with a concealed *inside*'. (Bennet, 2005 p.44). Bennet is suggesting the possibility of an art work that 'ultimately renders perception itself the object of inquiry' (2005, p. 43) Less about asking what is the meaning, or what trauma is being described, but more how does the art 'put insides and outsides into contact in order to establish a basis for empathy?' (2005, p.45) There is a link in these thoughts to the potential relational transformation in the matrixial border-space.

## ART AND THE PAIN OF OTHERS

The Colombian artist, Doris Salcedo, has devoted her creativity to the act of mourning and memorial. Born in Bogotá in 1958, she has lived through decades of Colombia racked by political violence, disappearances and atrocity. And as she explains;

This view point has confined my work into a fragile threshold, a threshold filled with impossible contradictions that will remain unsettled in each and every one of my pieces. (Schneider-Enriquez, 2017, p. xvii)



Salcedo's practice begins with the testimony of others - victims of traumatic experience she lacks, but to which she gives powerful aesthetic voice and makes public, political violence and its aftermath. I was deeply moved by her installation *Tabula Rose* (2018) at the White Cube in Bermondsey. (Fig. 129) Wooden tables stood in the North Gallery, isolated from each other, yet each with a poise and powerful, silent presence. Each had been smashed to smithereens and painstakingly repaired. Spicer (2018) describes their fragile beauty showing how carefully they have been repaired, fragment by fragment. 'But that they will never be quite the same again is the very point of the work...These are quiet acts of protest that prompt us to remember.' (Spicer, 2018)

At any moment, with the merest touch, these precarious structures might collapse into the countless pieces from which they had been reconstructed. Although still recognisable, they would not withstand further use and will never fully recover. They had been subjected to a brutal and complex cycle of destruction and reconstruction. A hushed reverence hung over the gallery. One didn't dare get too near, yet the detail required a close inspection. Salcedo, 'interlaces the work of mourning with acts of ethical protest.' (Enwezor, 2015)



Figure 129. Doris Salcedo, *Tabula Rasa*, 2018  
(wooden table)

Her sculpture demands an act of recognition and with careful scrutiny - reading the signs, as the normal capacity of vision to make sense of the world breaks down. 'Salcedo's work unfolds through gradual negotiation of metamorphosis.' (Bennett, 2005, p.65) The affect is not carried in a narrative or figurative image of atrocity, but lies in the pursuit of understanding the transformative and creative process acted on the materiality and surface detail.

Altering objects to their limit, beyond which form and identity would be destroyed, she demands that her materials express tragedy and its aftermath, 'and this commitment to materiality defines both her practice and the nature of her address.' (Schneider Enriquez, 2016, p.4) Her chosen objects bare the traces of those harmed by political violence. She fills, scrapes and joins them, embedding fragments of cloth, buttons or bones. Salcedo's work speaks 'of the uncertainty and precariousness of that life when neither a place nor a space exists for human beings.' (Schneider Enriquez, 2016, p. 59) In Salcedo's *La Casa Viuda (The Widowed house)* (1992 - 1995) the sculptures refer to a private familial space cruelly violated. (Fig. 130)

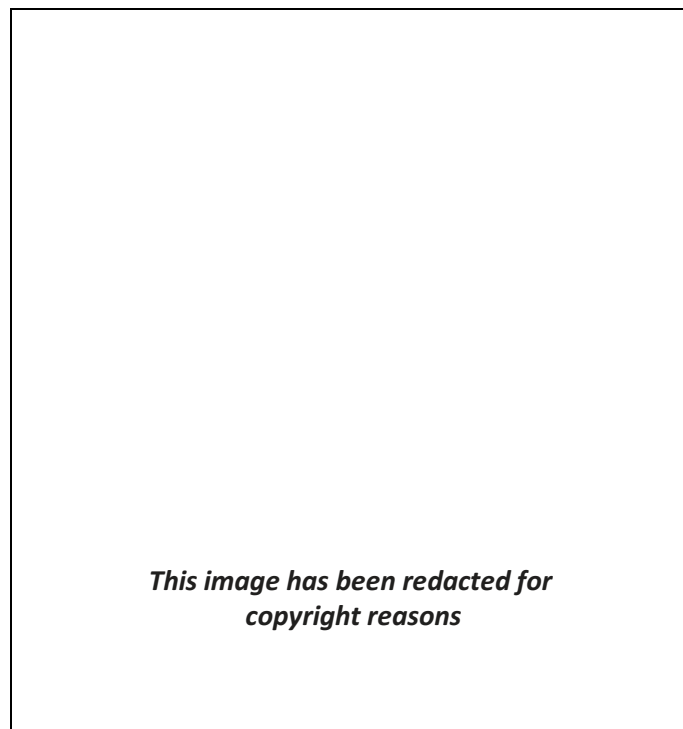


Figure 130. Doris Salcedo, *La Casa Viuda 1*, 1992-4

(wood, concrete, metal and fabric)

Salcedo's series of work, *Untitled*, (Fig. 131 - 132) made between 1995 and 2007, place contested space centre stage. The cupboards are filled with concrete, violated, weighed down, no longer a place for keeping things safe. They have been suffocated of life and something other has been forced inside, an entombed interior. I sensed a deep suffocating heaviness, vividly conveyed in their presence. Extracted from their familiar environment these objects will never return. Her sculptures show the burden of memory, and the long hard work of grieving on behalf of and alongside the victims. The pain of the other inhabits her present as an empathic trace.

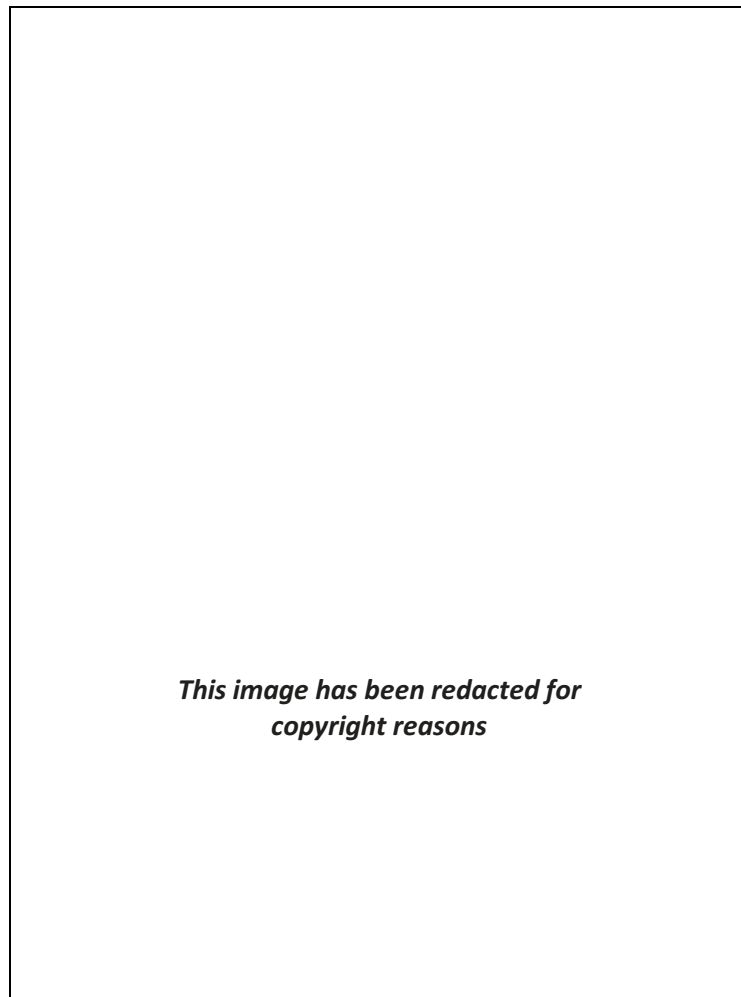


Figure 131. Doris Salcedo, *Untitled*, 2007  
(wood, concrete, metal and fabric)

Bachelard describes such furniture as the most intimate and personal of the home.

Wardrobes with their shelves, desks with their drawers, and chests with their false bottoms are veritable organs of the secret psychological life... They are hybrid objects, subject objects... A wardrobe's inner space is also *intimate space*, space that is not open to just anybody. (Bachelard, 1994, p.78)



Figure 132. Doris Salcedo, *Untitled*, 2007  
(wood, concrete, metal and fabric)

As the viewer approaches these wardrobes, Salcedo engenders both our physical and emotional memory, there is a sense of haunting - a possession - a deadness invades. 'Through our encounter we register a move toward a critical thinking of loss in this context; toward a way of seeing, that changes the terms of engagement.' (Bennett, 2005, p.69) There is a post-memory working here that demands our attention. An act of looking, allowing our thoughts to unfold out of the details of signification, and inspire our empathic wit(h)nessing.

### Part 3: ABJECTION

#### DRAWING-OUT THE UNCONSCIOUS

Working through these themes of loss and trauma in research and practice, and studying the art work of others, inspired me to experiment further to find a visual vocabulary where form, materiel and process communicate dynamically. I wanted to find the essential qualities of the felt experience and express this in my next work.

As my Mother's memories drift into the confusion of Alzheimer's disease, I am trying to piece things together from stories and impressions that I remember. I knew my Great-Grandfather Josef Meyer and Great-Grandmother Berta Meyer had been murdered, shot in a forest, at some point on their transportation to Auschwitz from Theresienstadt in 1943, but finding their photos and documents in the online archive of Jad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Jerusalem, shook me to the core. It was all too real. (Fig. 133 - 134)



Figure 133. *Josef Meyer, 1879 -1943*



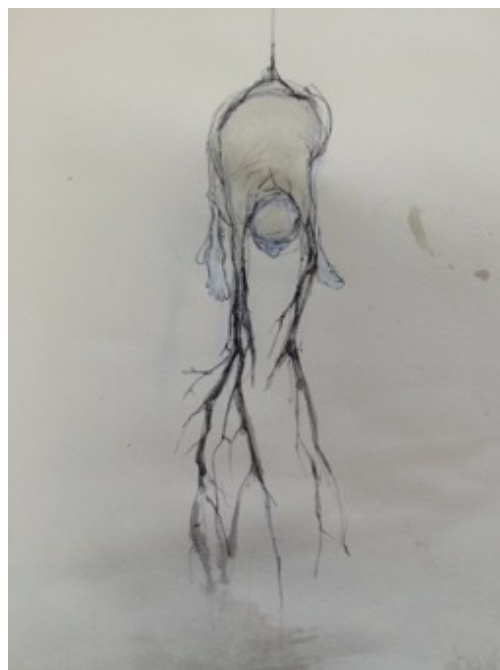
Figure 134. *Berta Meyer, 1879 -1943*

I started drawing, to re-engage with the thoughts behind the *Wild Woman*, linking images from dreams and memories that have become part of my visual vocabulary. I improvised with details I'd used before; bed clothes, mattresses, burnt branches, furniture, characters and landscapes. (Fig. 135 - 142)



Figures 135 - 6. Ali Darke, *Untitled*, 2019  
(pen, ink, watercolour)

The figures started to transform into more amorphous forms - bulges, fissures, bundles, stitched and knotted, weighty hanging things, spilling out of the cabinets. From the records I discovered that my Great Grandfather's family had been linen merchants in Bielefeld, North Germany. Continuing the *Wild Woman*'s association with a dream-world, I started constructing these bulges from old linen sheets and pillow cases. Like my *Rabbit* toy, I used a mixture of sawdust and fine gravel to stuff and give the forms weight.



Figures 137 - 140. Ali Darke, *Untitled*, 2019  
(pen, ink, watercolour)





Figures 141 - 142. Ali Darke, *Untitled*, 2019

The content of the drawings revealed things that I hadn't expected. 'The nature of drawing appears to inhabit an area that facilitates a level of ambiguity and a dynamic that promotes non-definition and the non-conclusive.' (Tracey, 2007, p.xx) Like dreaming, as drawings evolve from one to the next, seemingly incongruent elements come together, and lead me to the unexpected yet significant detail. Freud tells us;

It not infrequently happens that during the narration of a dream or during its analysis a fragment of the dream-content which had seemed to be forgotten re-emerges. This fragment which has been rescued from oblivion invariably affords us the best and most direct access to the meaning of the dream. (Freud, 1995, p.166).

This observation made me reconsider how I interpret my drawings - and understand that when I take them too literally I miss the subtle details that are the essential part. The processes of the mind when drawing seem to bypass more conscious thought, and allows an unearthing of unconscious matter. In her study of dream theory, Flanders (1993, p. 23) concludes, that the dream always retains an essential mystery,

and confronts our limits of knowable and 'the ambiguity which the project of a psychoanalysis attempts to frame and to fathom.'

## THE ABJECT BODY

What has emerged from my drawing-dreaming are images and forms that could be described as abject. The shapes that bulge beyond the borders of the cabinets are in excess - spilling out. I have avoided abject content - which makes perfect sense as the defining feature of all that is abject is our instinct to distance ourselves. There are feelings of disgust, shame, and the fear of contamination and exposure surrounding the abject. It lurks on the borders of all my work - but in these drawings is taking centre stage. In contemporary use the word suggests debasement, describing things that come from the lowest depths of depravity, but misses its original definition of things cast off or rejected. Julia Kristeva returns this interpretation to the word. Her opening paragraph of *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. (1982). powerfully introduces the concept.

There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable the thinkable. (Kristeva, 1982, p.1)

Kristeva brings to psychoanalytical theory, the process of abjection at the very first moments of an infant's psychic life - individuation from the primal maternal connection. The process of estrangement is assisted through the body's senses and functions; feeding, breathing, elimination, an ebb and flow of sensory exchange, that discovers and maps a border between self and other. 'It is a provisional, transitory sense of differentiation from the maternal: fragile, unbecoming and unknowing sense of self' (Arya and Chare, 2016, p. 2)

What is ingested into the body, and excreted to the outside, trouble any sense of secure physical and psychic borders. Thus, abject material becomes threatening to our being. One can see in the separation and primal rejection by the Mother, that desire of the other gets conflated with the abjection of things outside the body. Things

expelled from the body may bring about revulsion, but the abject can also inspire an emptiness, the dull ache and shame of the forbidden desire to merge. Kristeva (1982) describes the body's border - as between all that is alive and all that is deadly. The process of elimination is what keeps the body alive. 'There I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border.' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 3). There is fascination, revulsion, and phobia for the 'abjected' objects, which, recognised as parts of the self, become objects of shame - the very essence of one's self is cast as abject.

As a psychological 'condition' abjection forms a different schema within the psyche than repression or rejection, it is 'articulated by negation and its modalities, transgression, denial, and repudiation.' (Kristeva 1982, p. 6) There is a severance of the self, a splitting - an exclusion. Kristeva's language is poetic but tragic in its description of the abject, or the *deject* or *stray* as she describes the subject in the grip of abjection. A subject forever separating himself out, experiences his boundaries as fluid, and fractured, questioning his solidity, the *deject*-self is never felt as homogenous, 'but essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic.' (p. 8)

I can see aspects of the abject in all of the artist's work I have discussed. In Louise Bourgeois the abject is present, in the wounded bodies, fractured into parts, represented in forms and structures that encase or leak. In my understanding of those artists working with post-memory, the trauma they are haunted by is 'abjected' - separated from the self yet constituent of it. 'The abject is the violence of mourning for an "object" that has always already been lost.' (Kristeva, 1982, p. 15) Doris Salcedo's concrete filled furniture reflects the memory of violence that has defiled the subject - a part of the self is 'abjected' - the internal space is overwhelmed with trauma - these blocked, tomb-stoned-bodies, demand we stop and confront the unbearable horror that has been cast out. The abject, 'is a kind of arrested or abeyant signification: it occupies the gap between matter and meaning'. (Arya and Chare, 2016, p. 6).

It is fascinating then to address the work of Berlinde De Bruyckere. (Figs. 143 - 147) The emptied, hollowed out corpses, are figures from a liminal place between life and death. Nothing remains to define a self. Bodily fluids appear to have been drained out. This absence is a powerful reminder that the abject is not visible, yet threatens to

return, lurking in the corner of our eye. 'The corpse is the ultimate abject thing: the negation that is contained within the body and its ultimate destiny.' (Arya, 2016, p.107) The flesh here in its rawness is perhaps a disruption of the division between outer and inner, a body turned inside out - the abject made flesh. She takes the human, animal or hybrid body and shows us life with all its suffering and cruelty. The mutating bodies look suffering in the face and meet it with compassion. I find her work achingly beautiful.

The corpse seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. (Kristeva, 1982, p.4)

Her figures are headless forms, twisted in agony, on the point of collapse. Their pale translucent skin, created from layers of wax and fabric and pigment, show veins, bruising, sores and gaping wounds, reminiscent of the Martyrs, Saints and Pietas of the early Renaissance. But these bodies have no heads – no means of taking in breath or sensing their environment.

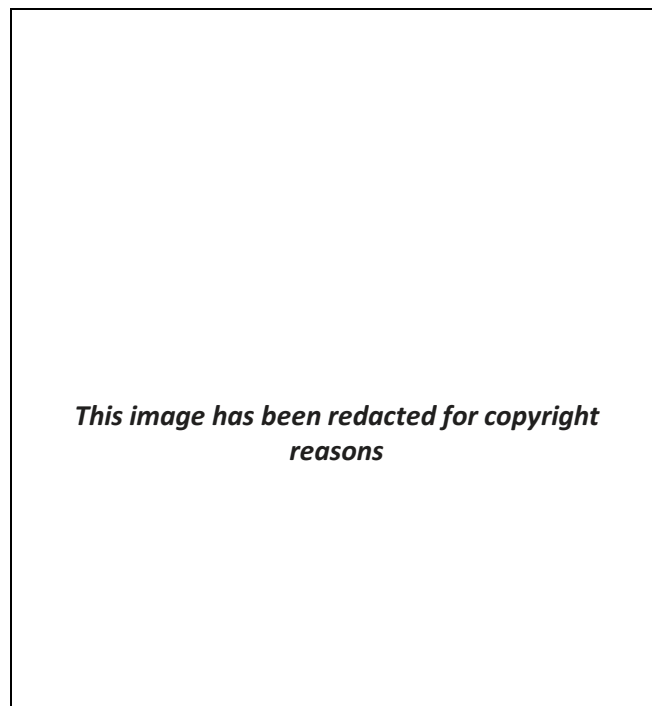


Figure 143. Berlinde de Bruyckere, *The Wound II*, 2011 (mixed media)

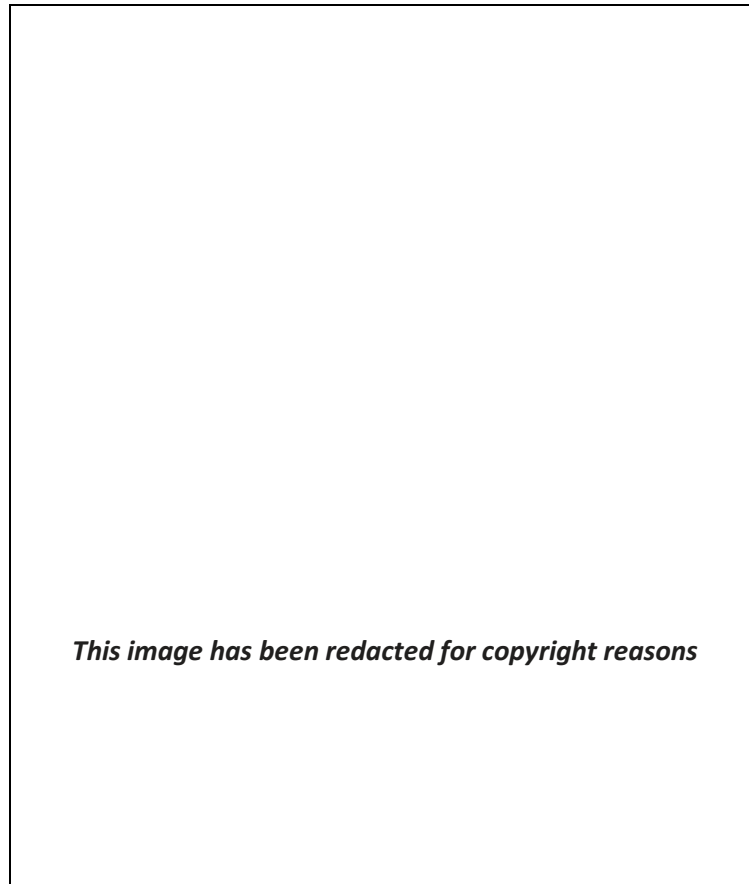


Figure 144. Berlinde de Bruyckere, *Marthe*, 2008 (mixed media)

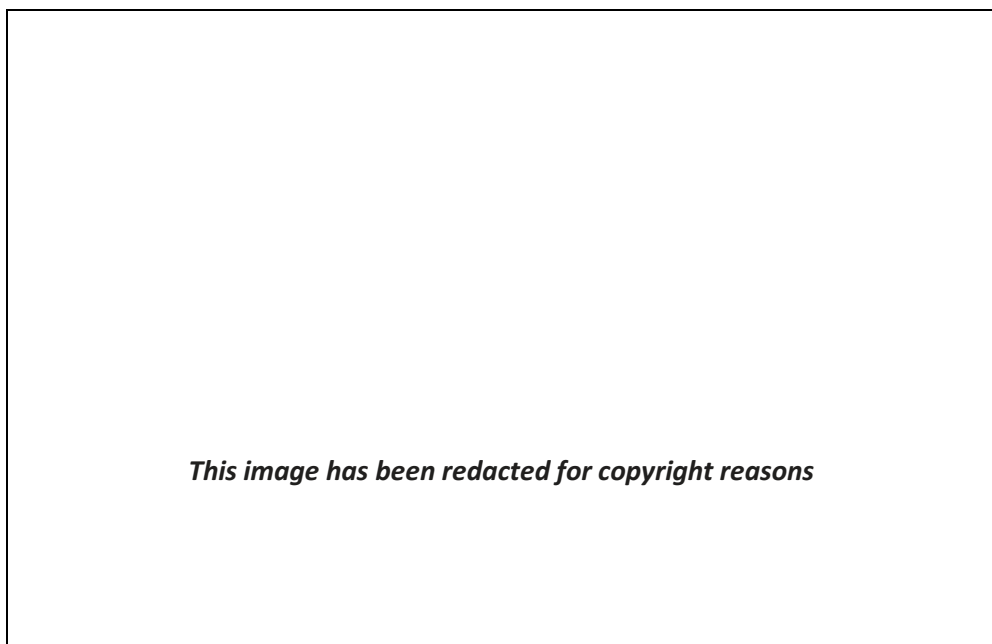


Figure 145. Berlinde de Bruyckere, *Kreupelhout*, 2012-13 (mixed media)

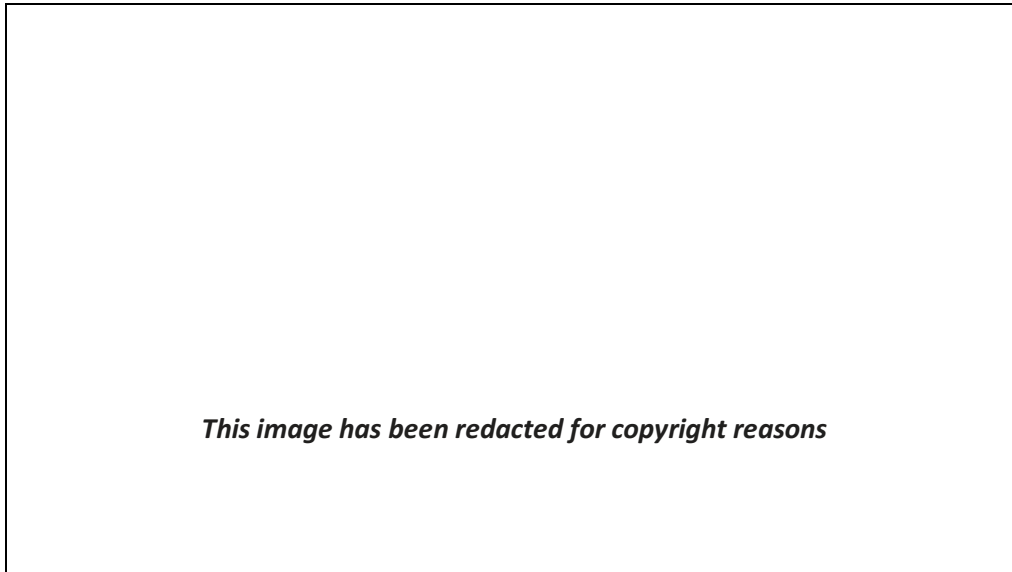


Figure 146. Berlinde de Bruyckere, *Quan*, 2009-10  
(mixed media)

In a letter to the artist, Philippe Van Cauteren writes;

Your sculptures are bodies that function like prostheses, compensating for the existential human shortcoming. They are intimate, vulnerable protagonists, which set out from a sensual cruelty to give tangible form to what makes a human being human. (Mengoni, 2001, p.11)

Her figures might be encased in cabinets, as if being preserved, or laid on a table awaiting examination, or hung from butcher's hooks – slaughter of the object is never far from the viewers mind. 'She unerringly explores the limits of the visual representation of physical and emotional pain'. (Devriendt, 2015)

Bruyckere presents us with the transitional porous flesh of the body that mediates self and other. I am reminded of Grosz's theory of 'infantile transitivity', an oscillation between object and subject, and the body's capacity to 'fold in on itself'. (Grosz, 1994 p.100) Bruyckere's forms reveal this paradox and we become hypersensitive to our bodies, and to what is in excess of human bodies and our mortality. We are faced with the existential questions of the nature of the body and soul. As Kennedy (2014) asks, is the body a prison, to which the soul is tied to pleasure and pain, with death the only release, or is there a possibility of something else, where subjectivity and an organising psychic structure provides the 'home for the soul'?

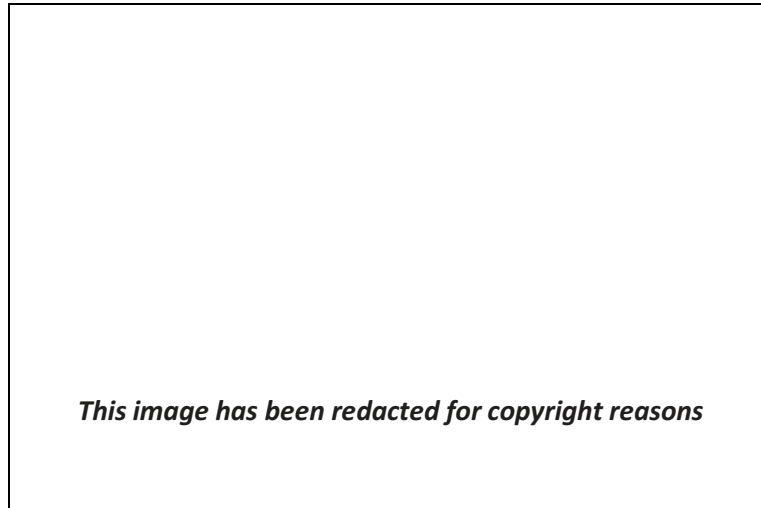


Figure 147. Berlinde de Bruyckere, *The Pillow*, 2010  
(mixed media)

Discussion during a work-in-progress seminar suggested that my work was most powerful when the tension between the domestic and the body was implicated. So, in taking on Kristeva's conception of the psychic and physical body-limits defined by what enters and leaves the body, I thought about the exchange of fresh and contaminated water, through the body, and filtered and directed by taps, drains, pipes, sinks, and plug holes through the home. I scavenged from builders' skips and flea markets discarded plumbing, along with doors, shutters, hooks, hangers, nails and broken tools - things that once serviced life in the home.

*THE DEGENERATES*, developed from this debris, into a collection of sculptural pieces. Degenerate Art (translated from the German: Entartete Kunst) was a label given by the Germany Nazi Party to any modern painting or sculpture considered morally suspect and therefore an insult to German sensibility. Such art was described as mentally depraved and monstrous - and viewed as a Jewish or Communist threat and contaminant. Artists deemed degenerate were sanctioned, forbidden to teach, or practice. Traditional art was promoted that valued cultural purity and exalted the ideals of Germanic myth, nature, noble valour and ancient wisdom. The Nazis control of art for propaganda, promoted the theory of degeneracy as abject to cleanse the culture of Jewish depravity.



I showed four of the sculptures at 'Deptford Does Art', a small gallery in South London, curating the exhibition with Suzi Morris, and Yaroslaff Soltan. We titled the show *Bring to Light*, stating that, to 'bring something to light implies not only exposing a truth by an unearthing, a dredging up, or an uprooting from the depths, but also the possibility of making apparent, bringing into the mind and materialising that which is intangible and resists representation, defies being and is possibly uncomfortable to behold'. It was a very successful show, not only artistically, but particularly as a working trio and we resolved to continue the collaboration.

I completed the full collection of *The Degenerates* to present in the Professional Doctorate Showcase, 2019, using the wonderful Light-Well space at UEL. The white walls, concrete floor, metal induction pipes and bright light invited thoughts of something clinical, scientific - things laid out awaiting examination. (Fig. 148 - 161)

I worked on *The Degenerates* in an intuitive way - trusting a process in response to the materials and objects I had gathered. I created hybrid bodies - animals, birds and human forms, collapsed, laid out or hung up like corpses. Each piece had a simple title, in keeping with their mode of presentation. I was pleased with the results, and surprised by my work. The general feedback noted their evocative, cold and mournful quality; and that the narrative was obscure and therefore intriguing. Their weightiness and heavy gravitational pull seemed to be an important element - especially as it was in conflict with the notion of flight present in the birdlike forms. I hadn't been conscious of this and it was exciting to hear interpretation beyond my intension that had drawn the viewer's emotional engagement with the work. However, I felt frustrated that some of the domestic elements were not transformed to reveal a quality beyond their appearance, something I still wanted to achieve. I was most pleased with *Draped*. A stuffed form folded over a hook on a shutter door with dangling stair spindles. It had resonances of the body and yet did not really resemble anything familiar. I noted that it was the last piece I made in the collection, in a hurry, and out of something else that had gone wrong. Maybe, as I didn't have anything in particular in mind as I worked something was created more intuitively.



Figure 148. Ali Darke, *The Degenerates*, 2019



Figure 149. Ali Darke, *Plugged*, 2019  
(wooden cabinet, linen, stuffing, tap, plug, plugholes)



Figures 150 - 151. Ali Darke, *Plugged*, 2019 (detail)



Figure 152. Ali Darke, *Stuffed*, 2019  
(cotton, linen, china plates, wooden spindle fragments, marble)



Figure 153. Ali Darke, *Pinned*, 2019  
(wooden table, hammerhead, nails, linen pillowcase, stuffing, )



Figures 154 -155. Ali Darke, *Strung*, 2019  
(wooden door, taps, linen pillowcase, string, stuffing, wooden spindle fragments)



Figure 156 - 157. Ali Darke, *Draped*, 2019  
 (wooden window shutter, spindle fragments, linen pillowcase, metal shelf bracket, stuffing)



Figure 158. Ali Darke, *Laid*, 2019  
 (linen pillowcase, surgical instruments, salt, marble, steel stand)

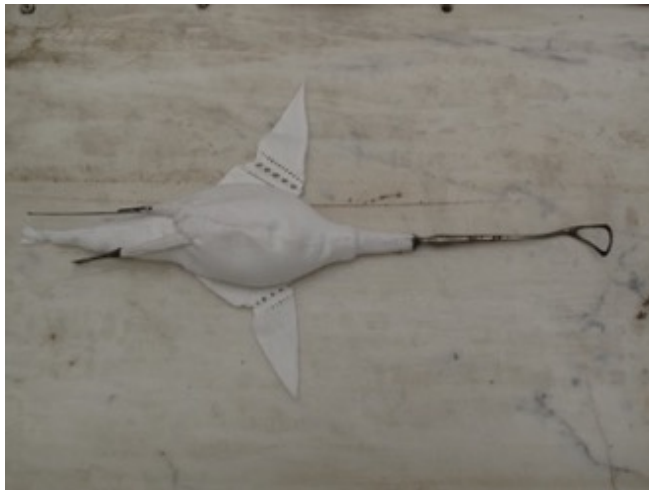


Figure 159 -161. Ali Darke, *Laid*, 2019

## THE ABJECT PSYCHE

The exhibition at UEL and seminar after afforded me the chance to reflect. I was becoming aware that these forms were attempting to express something beyond the body, in excess of the subject; abject, intrusive, disturbing.

An essay, analysing the paintings of Francis Bacon, *Bacon and the Body*, by the psychoanalyst Darian Leader resonated with what I had been trying to comprehend and make apparent in my work. (Figs. 162 - 163) He sees in Bacon's various painted figures, beyond their reflections, shadows and doubles 'the antinomy between the body image and something else that is present in the body yet which defies ready subsumption in the image.' - smudged bulges, blurs, and opaque masses; 'the glutinous residues - a series which is showing us how the body is the container of something more than itself, something which, in a sense, has no home, a cry which is exiled from the body and which searches, in Bacon's art, for a place.' (Leader, p. 95)



Figure 162. Frances Bacon, *Three Studies for a Self-Portrait*, 1981  
(oil on canvas)



*This image has been redacted for copyright reasons*

Figure 163. Frances Bacon, *Three Studies for a Self-Portrait*, 1944  
(oil on canvas)

I wanted to explore these notions of that which is *outside* and yet constituent of the self, that is felt in excess of the body and defies easy representation. Looking deeper into trauma and the psychoanalytical theory of abjection, repression and splitting, I came across a paper by the psychosocial academic and psychoanalyst, Dr Racula Soreanu, that touched a nerve. At the same time, I was noticing a shift in my response to psychoanalytic theory, that rather than employing it to justify or explain completed work, which closed down new thought, I was following a more intuitive process, that reflected a freer association of thoughts. 'Free-association happens in the form of linking across levels of sensoriality and signification, rather than merely in the form of linking several linguistic signifiers in a series.' (Soreanu, 2019, p.17) A symbiosis between theory and practice was emerging. In doing this, I found I didn't necessarily relate to the whole premise of an academic argument, but was giving myself permission, that when something in passing inspired an emotional or visceral response I could take it out of context and use it for my own ends! This has grown out of an increased confidence in my practice and understanding, and therefore a deeper engagement with the theory I was reading.

The paper in question; 'The Psychic Life of Fragments: Splitting from Ferenczi to Klein' (Soreanu, 2018) elaborates on the crucial psychoanalytic theory surrounding psychic splitting. Ferenczi, a close associate of Freud, was a Hungarian psychoanalyst who lived from 1873-1933. Contrary to Freud, he advocated an empathic response by the

analyst during therapy, developing notions of intersubjectivity. His ideas are being re-appraised and credited for their originality and foresight. Klein's theory of object relations, in which the polarised good and bad objects are split off through the processes of projection, introjection and projective-identification, build on Ferenczi's notions of the actual processes of intersubjectivity, both positive and pathological.

Soreanu reconsiders Ferenczi's radical descriptions of the process of splitting and the subsequent psychic life of these split off fragments. She questions;

What is the "stuff" that the psyche is splitting? Is it the ego? Is it the psyche on the whole (including the ego, but also other agencies)? Is it a part of the ego where a particular introjection happened? Or is it even a part of the ego that an-other has successfully projected something onto? (Soreanu, 2018, p.422)

She explains the Ferenczian concept that considers the young ego's unbearable fear of disintegration, that leads to splitting off parts of the psyche as a means of self-preservation. Ferenczi was 'curious about how subjects survive in fragments through the action of intrapsychic forces, rather than how they are held together by the environment.' (p.422) This curiosity reveals a suspicion that some of the split off fragments, unavailable for projection onto the other, remain lodged in the psyche as dissociated deadened parts or parasitic elements; the Orpha, teratoma and other monsters of Ferenczian theory.

Ferenczi developed a metapsychology with which to explain his ideas - and it is this that intrigued and inspired my next iteration of work. He describes these psychic fragments with vivid medical analogies and poetic language to explain how they torment and become manifest in adult pathology as a result of trauma. I initially focused on one aspect of splitting that Soreanu describes as a 'terrifying fragment', conceived as an internal 'badness' - an over identification with an aggressor. Self-destructive pain is experienced as releasing some anxiety, in preference to suffering in silence. He uses a vivid medical analogy and one that 'is yet to reveal all its richness for understanding trauma and splitting.' (p.422)

Ferenczi compares the psychic place harbouring this parasitic entity to a “teratoma” - a truly horrific image. Teratoma are tumours made up of several different types of human embryonic tissue, such as hair, muscle, teeth, or bone; and can resemble a malformed internalised twin. The psychic equivalent,

...results from a splitting-off, in the form of a “doubling” of the ego but also from a deadening of the split-off fragment. This fragment is also susceptible of constituting a new psychic agency, which cannot be assimilated to the primary superego, but rather results from the “rendering unconscious” of a part of the ego. It is the “double” of the ego, which is “buried” in the unconscious. (Soreanu, p. 439)

I found the concept of a parasitic ego double secreted into the depths of the unconscious truly evocative and although I don't understand the full implications for the clinical encounter, this disturbing psychic schema has set off a train of thought and feeling I was compelled to explore through visual expression.

This work began at my second art residency at Nottingham Trent University - the Summer Lodge 2019. Equipped with minimal tools and materials, and no set theme, I took this paper as my starting point.

My application to the residency stated my intention; ‘I can get caught up in old habits of meticulous finish, working things out too soon, closing off the questions and shutting down experimentation. I would hope at the Summer Lodge, to challenge any assumptions of what might happen. It is unsettling to test the tipping point, allowing the work to remain ambiguous, not knowing what it is ‘about’, enduring loose ends; just asking questions without looking for answers, and welcoming feedback from others. When I dare the unpredictable is always exciting’. Darke (2019)

I began by drawing as a way of engaging with these psychic fragments and psychic space. (Fig. 164 - 167) Materially, I used debris from the fabric of a home - and to suggest the body, used stockings as a membrane to contain the fragments. I rummaged in builder's skips for bricks, drain pipes, plaster, dust, sand and old furniture stuffing, and proceeded to experiment with this limited palette.



Figures 164 - 167. Ali Darke, *Studies for The Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(pen, ink, watercolour)

It surprised me how much the body and its parts became apparent in the objects. Viewers saw severed and distorted limbs, organs and intestines, fetuses, and the brain. (Fig. 168 - 183) At the end of the two weeks, the objects proved hard to move without destroying them, so rather rashly, I decided not to bring them back to London. I broke them up and returned the debris to the skips. I wasn't sure what to make of the work, how to value the objects - were they worth preserving? They were essentially frail, only just holding together. I had made them in the spirit of experimentation and possibly touched that 'tipping point' I had set out to achieve - that gave space to ambiguity and loose ends. I knew what I had created was authentic and deeply personal and maybe was feeling the associated shame of revealing abject content - it was easier to dispose of the evidence than own it. I came to regret my decision.



Figures 168 - 171. Ali Darke, *The Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(brick, sand, stocking)



Figures 172 - 174. Ali Darke, *The Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(brick, sand, stocking, furniture stuffing)





Figures 175 - 177. Ali Darke, *The Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(brick, sand, drain pipe, stocking, furniture stuffing)





Figures 178 - 179. Ali Darke, *The Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(brick, sand, sink, stocking, furniture stuffing)



Figures 180 - 183. Ali Darke, *The Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(brick, sand, sink, stocking, furniture stuffing, plastic bag)

In the Autumn I had another group exhibition with Suzi Morris and Yaroslaff Soltan at the Belfry and North Gallery at St John's, Bethnal Green which gave me the chance to recreate the ideas of *Psychic Fragments*. The gallery occupies one side of the balcony, and belfry tower of a working but very dilapidated and cavenous church. It was a challenge to create a cohesive exhibition in these two spaces, that was not overwhelmed by the atmosphere. (Fig. 184 - 197)

I made pieces from a combination of debris as before - bricks, plaster, plug holes, stockings, linen pillows, sheets, furniture stuffing, sand and salt. They took on almost creature like qualities, and anthropomorphic emotion. These objects were less flimsy but lacked the dynamic quality of the previous work. Possibly, in trying to reproduce the sculptures I had lost the ambiguity of the originals. Working towards public display brings a self imposed pressure to make things 'finished and complete'.

I introduced another scotched cabinet with linen bulbous shapes emerging from between a pile of sheets and falling out onto the floor. This was a development of the original work rather than replication and had more presence and intrigue.



Figure 184. Ali Darke, *Study*, 2019  
(pen, ink, watercolour)



Figure 185. Ali Darke, *The Psychic Life of Fragments*, 2019



Figure 186. Ali Darke, *The Psychic Life of Fragments*, 2019  
(wooden cabinet, linen, sand, salt)



Figures 187 -188. Ali Darke, *Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(stocking, sand, horsehair stuffing, tile fragment, plaster, steel table)





Figures 189 -191. Ali Darke, *Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(stocking, sand, porcelain fragments)



Figures 192 -193. Ali Darke, *Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(stocking, sand, horsehair stuffing, metal clamps, ceramic fragments, plaster)





Figures 194 -195. Ali Darke, *Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(stocking, sand, horsehair stuffing, metal clamps, ceramic fragments, plaster)



Figures 196 -197. Ali Darke, *Psychic Fragments*, 2019  
(stocking, sand, horsehair stuffing, metal clamps, ceramic fragments, plaster)

My creative challenge is always to find the balance, the subtle and elusive tipping point, between precision and spontaneity. The 'symbolic' is grounded in the stage of the 'gesture-language', (Soreanu, 2018, p.19) when intimate connections are established, with enduring effects throughout life, between the body and that which lies beyond it. It is the sensitive transitional space and source of creative thought and action.

## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: 2014 - 2021

### 1. PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- **Exhibitions**

2020: Safe House, Maverick Projects, London.

*Beyond Walls.*

Exhibited: *Beastly I, Strange Fruit and The Nonsense of Things.*

2020: hARTs Lane Gallery, London.

*Passagiatina 2019: Atina Art Residency.*

Exhibited: *The leaves have lost their trees.*

2019: The Research Space, AVA Gallery, UEL.

*Professional Doctorate Group exhibition: Work in Progress as Research:*

Exhibited: *Psychic Fragments.*

2019: The Belfry and North Gallery, St John's Church, Bethnal Green, London.

*Beyond the Body: with Suzie Morris and Yaroslaff Soltan.*

Exhibited: *Psychic Fragments.*

2019: Il Cantinone, Atina.

*Passagiatina 2019: Atina Art Residency.*

Exhibited: *The leaves have lost their trees.*

2019: Lefkadio Centre, Greece. Supported by the Japanese Embassy in Greece.

*Yakumo Koizumi: Where Clouds are Born*

Exhibited: *Dead Time, Dead Weight, and In-sight.*

2019: Bow Arts, London. *Open Studios*

2019: AVA Gallery UEL, London.

*East London Artists: Professional Doctorate Showcase*

Exhibited: *The Degenerates*

2019: Deptford Does Art, London.

*Bring to Light* with Suzie Morris and Yaroslaff Soltan.

Exhibited: *The Degenerates*

2019: The Biscuit Factory, Bermondsey, London.

Exhibited - *Was Ist Diese Arbeit?*

2018: International Art Fair, Thessaloniki, Greece.

*Yakumo Koizumi: Where Clouds are Born*

Exhibited: *Dead Time, Dead Weight, and In-sight.*

2018: Bow Arts, London. *Open Studios*

2018: AVA Gallery UEL, London.

*East London Artists: Professional Doctorate Showcase*

Exhibited: *Was Ist Diese Arbeit?*

2018 Container Space, UEL, London.

Exhibited: *The Glimpses*

2017: The Crypt Gallery, St Pancras Church, Euston, London.

*Echoes from the Cave; Dialogues with a Time and a Place*

Co-curated with Carmen Aleman

Exhibited: *Blue Shoes from Psarades.*

2016: The Old School, Psarades, Greece.

*Kokkalis Cave Project - Directional Forces Art Residency.*

Exhibited: *Blue Shoes from Psarades.*

2016: AVA Gallery UEL, London

*East London Artists: Professional Doctorate Showcase*

Exhibited: *The Tears of Things.*

2016: Safehouse I, Asylum, London

*Time and Again*

Joint exhibition and co-curated with Richard Sharples.

Exhibited: *The Tears of Things*.

2016: AVA Gallery, UEL, London.

*Interior*

Exhibited: *Corridor*.

2015: Old Truman Brewery, Brick Lane, London

*Art Masters*

Exhibited: *Spilt Milk* and *Slipped Out*.

2015: The Canning Factory, Psarades, Greece

*Open Museum: Directional Forces Art Residency*.

Exhibited: *The Uncanny Works, On End* and *Washer Woman*.

2015: Platform 1, Wandsworth Common Station, London.

*Virus*

Exhibited: *Spilt Milk* and *Shame*

2015 AVA Gallery UEL, London

East London Artists: Fine Art Professional Doctorate Show Case

Exhibited: *Still Life* and *Split Milk*

- **Artist Residencies**

2019 Passagiatina, Atina, Italy.

2019 Summer Lodge: Fine Art Department, Nottingham Trent University.

2016 Kokkalis Cave Project, Directional Forces. Psarades, Greece.

2016 Summer Lodge: Fine Art Department, Nottingham Trent University.

2015 The Open Museum, Directional Forces. Psarades, Greece.

- **Commissions**

2019: *Wandering*.

Private Commission, UK

2019: *The Sibling Matrix*.

Image for book cover.

*A Group-Analytic Exploration of the Sibling Matrix: How Siblings Shape our Lives*.

By Val Parker. Published by Routledge.

2019: Website images.

Val Parker: Psychotherapist.

2018: *By Itself*.

12 photographic images in response to Music by Jasper Tygner.

- **Continued Professional Development : conferences and courses.**

October 2020 - June 2021: *Introductory Course in Lacanian Psychoanalysis*.

CFAR, (Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research)

July 2020 (Postponed to July 2021): *The Psycho Social Body Conference*,

Association of Psychosocial Studies. University of Essex.

Presenting paper: *Between Here and There*.

November 2019: *Psychoanalysis and the Uncanny*, Darian Leader.

Talk at the Freud Museum, London.

April 2019: *Hidden Persuaders*.

Symposium, at the Freud Museum, London.

March 2019: *Disgust*.

Forum for Philosophy, LSE, London.



October 2018 - June 2019: *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*.

SITE for Contemporary Psychoanalysis, London.

January 2019: *Surrealism and Psychoanalysis: Conquest of the Irrational*.

Conference attended at the Freud Museum, London.

December 2018: *Ghostly hauntings: Subliminal and unconscious messages from our ancestors*.

Conference attended at Confer, London.

December 2018: *Reading, Writing, Listening: A Symposium with Adam Phillips* - with Josh Cohen, Howard Cooper and Laura Marcus.

Conference attended at Confer, London.

September 2018: *Psychoanalysis and Exile: 1938 - 2018*

Conference attended at the Freud Museum, London.

May 2018: *Making Connections*:

ADI Post Graduate Conference, UEL. 10 minutes Presentation.

*Between Here and There: Scenographies of a liminal world*.

January 2018: *Thinking With and Without the Mother*

Symposium with Vincent van Gervan Oei.

Goldsmith's University, London.

November 2017: *Doing Day: Body/Brain/Archive*

Siobhan Davies Dance, London.

Experiential workshop with dance artists - Siobhan Davies, Helka Kaski and Matthias Sperling in dialogue with Manos Tsakiris Professor of Neuroscience at the Warburg Institute.

October 2016: *Siobhan Davies Dance Moving Conversations: Matthias Sperling and Guido Orgs: Now That we Know*.

Wellcome Collection, London.

September 2016: *The Eternal Recurrence; The Question of Fate in Psychoanalysis*.  
Conference attended at the Freud Museum, London.

September - December 2016: *The Body in Space*.  
10-week life drawing course.  
Princes Drawing School, London.

September - December 2016: *Projections: Psychoanalytical Investigation of women in horror films*.  
Six-week evening course, Freud Museum, London

July 2016: *The Wild*:  
Symposium as part of The Summer Lodge  
Nottingham Trent University.

February 2016: *Avoiding the Object (On Purpose): Cornelia Parker in conversation with Darian Leader*.  
Talk and discussion - Freud Museum, London

February 2016: *Intimacy Unguarded: Gender, the Unconscious and Contemporary Art*:  
Conference attended at the Freud Museum, London.

October 2015: *The Effectiveness of Symbols: Why do Symbols Have such a Powerful Influence on Human Beings?*  
Conference attended at the Freud Museum, London.

September 2015: *The Unconscious Today*:  
Conference attended at the Freud Museum.

February 2015: *Freud and Eros: Love Lust and Longing*  
Conference attended at the Freud Museum.

## 2. CRITICAL REFLECTION ON PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

I started the Professional Doctorate having worked as a Designer for Performance, and teacher of Theatre Design. My original intention had been to support my teaching career with academic research. I was not expecting the transformation of my creative and professional practice that has occurred during these years of study.

When designing set and costumes for performance my role was to align my visual ideas with the Director's interpretation, in conjunction with lighting and sound designers. I would then oversee their realization by costume makers and set builders in negotiation with the production and stage managers and within the budget constraints. Costumes and sets are then inhabited by actors and there is a letting-go of one's work to the life of the performance and the audience.

As a theatre designer I was reliant on a team to produce work, but as an artist I can create my own opportunities and continue to make work alone. I have found that exhibiting regularly provides a framework and commitment to reaching a resolution in order to present work to the public. In contrast, the art residencies have encouraged more open ended, experimental work. My practice has developed through both experiences, and assisted my move into a new professional context. There seem to be as many ways of sustaining a professional life as there are contemporary artists and I am still finding new and unexpected opportunities. My professional experiences so far have been through exhibiting, curating, and artist residencies, and I have attended courses and academic conferences to support my ongoing research.

But what I have had to develop first is a professionally disciplined studio practice. I have relished following my own thoughts through new working methods and come to appreciate a different relationship to this work. It is more personal, exposing and in many ways deeply satisfying.

## STUDIO PRACTICE:

An aspect of my professional activity that continues to challenge, is the experience of 'not-knowing'. I have become more at-ease with and embraced this 'not-knowing'. It seems an inherent aspect of the creative process to be tolerated and even welcomed as an opportunity. Theatre design has a structured set of questions to be resolved and a common understanding of the end product. In my current practice finding out and deciding what problems I want to solve *is* the question. In 'On Not Knowing: How Artists Think' (Fisher and Fortnum, 2013) various artists have been interviewed about their relationship to not-knowing. I found their thoughts illuminating. Fortnum, talks about 'a drive in the contemporary artist to make something that hovers on the edge of their conceptions of the possible and probable.' (2013, p.72) It seems that the optimum artistic quest is actually a process of prolonging the latent potential of 'intersubjectivity' between artist and thing, towards a time of knowing, for as long as it takes to create or conceptualize the object. Emma Cocker describes not knowing as 'a space of fleeting liberty or reprieve; a brief interlude of potentiality flanked either side by what is known or certain.' (Fisher and Fortnum, 2013, p.130)

This may be why the not-knowing phase is unsettling. Through my experience on the Doctorate I have become more confident in my ability to remain in situations that are indeterminate or newly encountered, 'it involves trusting that a response will be performed intuitively at the propitious time.' (2013 p.131) In creating *The Degenerates* (2019) I was able to work through ideas in drawing, without fixing the final form. I collected the detritus and materials and was more confident to allow the process to unfold experimentally, only knowing the finished forms in the last moments. I was not working towards any pre-designed object.

Although my studio practice permits a place of not knowing – having infinite possibilities can be overwhelming. There is a parallel here with the psychoanalytical theory of transitional phenomena, or the pre-symbolic sphere where thoughts are in the ether but have not yet been conceptualized - if the child is left for too long, the anxiety of disintegration can be intolerable. This is where in artistic endeavour, drawing can help me locate my thoughts. I am learning that these first ideas are just a beginning and not to get overly attached to them.

Gary Peters describes how,

‘The unknown is not beneath, behind or secreted with in the work, the unknown “is” the work to the extent that it turned out like this rather than that - Why? This incomprehensibility is not a mystification but, rather, the very “articulation” of the work itself as it emerges out of the logic of erasure that opens the space between one possibility or another.’ (Fisher and Fortnum, 2013, p.110)

I find it reassuring in ‘Creative States of Mind’, (2019) Patricia Townsend’s study of psychoanalysis and the artist’s creative process, to recognize myself in much of what she discovered. The ‘professional work’ occurs throughout the process. It may be less visible or public but is no less ‘valid’. However, it is in presenting the work to others, especially work in progress that an artist is forced to detach, stand back and reflect, and also be open to receiving feedback.

There is also the dilemma of knowing when a work is finished. Townsend describes a process of first internalizing an aspect of the outside world, which is worked on, transformed and ‘imbued with her own inner experience’ (Townsend, 2019, p.107) The resulting external form, provides the possibility of recognition of an aspect of the self in the work, and there is a psychological severance of sorts, which can be painful and has left me feeling vulnerable. This is accompanied by allowing others to create meaning bringing their own response and interpretation. Because the work is deeply personal there is a sense of exposure - I experience the ambivalence of wanting to hide and yet wanting to be recognized and found! Becoming a witness to my work outside the studio within the new space of a gallery has been a revelation, filled with emotion.

*I Do, I Undo, I Redo*, Louise Bourgeois’ installation for the Tate Modern Turbine Hall (2000) perfectly embodies the psychological processes of creativity. She describes the first steps of ‘doing’ - followed by the torment and destructiveness when things don’t go right, which lead to the un-doing, and the repairing as the re-doing.

‘One retreats into one’s lair to strategize, recover, and regroup. The Redo means that a solution is found to the problem. It may not be the final answer, but there is an attempt to go forward.’ (Morris, 2003, p.3)

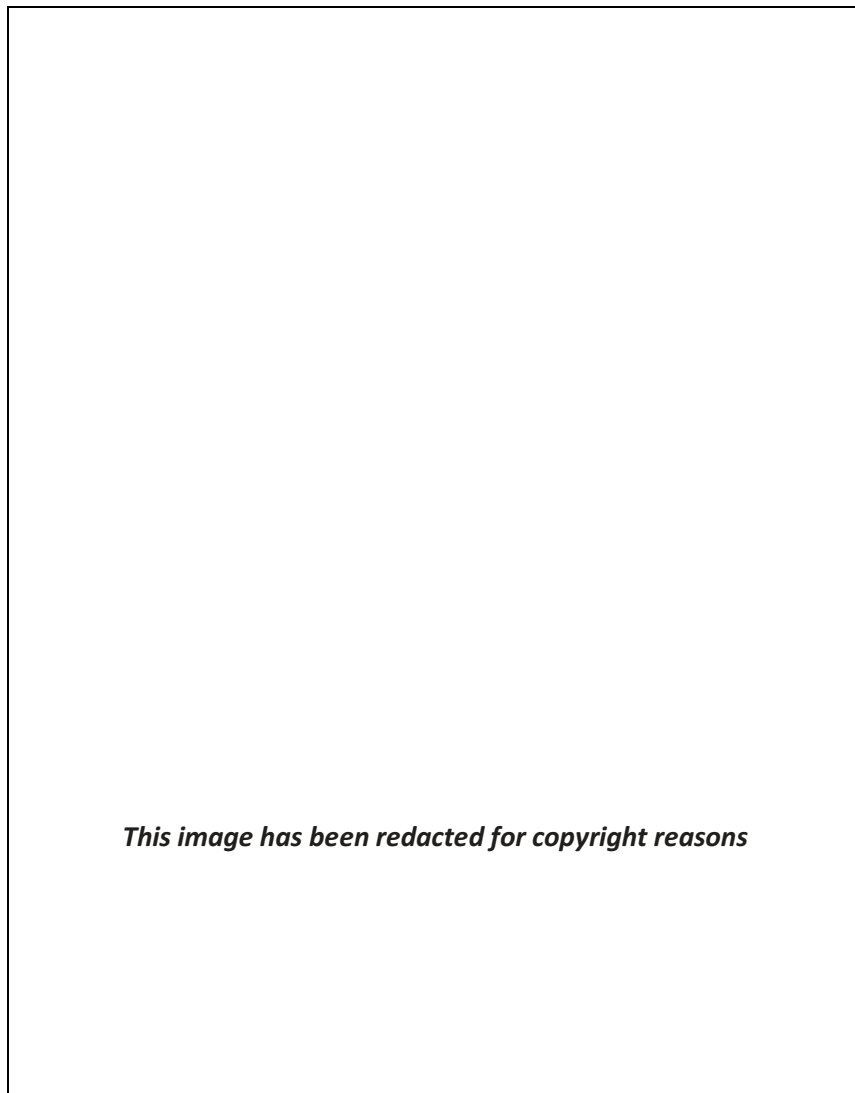


Figure 198. Louise Bourgeois, *I Do, I Undo, I Redo*, 2000  
(mixed media)

## EXHIBITIONS and CURATION:

It has been very rewarding to complete a project and create an exhibition. My work in theatre has proved invaluable in having the practical skills needed for installing work and experience in project management. I have really enjoyed working with colleagues to set-up the various group shows - from the initial ideas, through planning and to the final stages of negotiating spaces and installing the work. Curating the exhibition *Time and Again*, with Richard Sharples at the Safehouse Gallery in Peckham Rye, London, was a joint effort in planning and curating the event. I learnt from this experience the importance and challenge of publicity and I also realized how much I enjoy curating. This was my largest exhibition to date and I showed the complete collection of seven cabinets, the *Tears of Things*. I used the entire ground floor of the house, responding to the venue's layout and placing each cabinet to suit the architecture of the space. We were both exploring memory and loss through our work and created a cohesive and evocative exhibition.



Figure 199. *The Tears of Things, Exhibition View, The Safehouse: 2016*



Following my second residency in Greece, the artist Carmen Alemàn and I invited the 24 participants to re-exhibit the work in London. We chose the Crypt Gallery, as the underground brick tunnels and alcoves felt in keeping with the Kokkalis cave project. Over half the artists live overseas in Greece, Poland, Germany or the USA, so organizing the event was a complex undertaking. To ensure we represented the project appropriately and with sensitivity to the subject matter, we were in constant communication with the original organizer, Harris Kondosphyris. We managed the curation, budget, printing and publicity, and practical arrangements with the venue. We were responsible for the work that was delivered, liaising with the artists to understand how they wanted it displayed. Others travelled to London with their work. The show included painting, installation, sculpture, film, live performance, sound and music, reflecting the rich diversity of the original. We arranged the work to ensure a balance and flow as the viewer navigated the spaces. The artists were pleased with the results and we received excellent feedback. I learnt to trust my instincts and organizational experience, and Carmen was a wonderful collaborator.



Figure 200. Ali Darke: *Blue Shoes from Psarades*: Crypt Gallery. 2016

More recently I have collaborated with Suzi Morris and Yaroslaff Soltan, to curate and organize two exhibitions in London. It is hard to find affordable gallery space and although not ideal the two venues we found were free. The first was a small gallery

space, Deptford-Does-Art, in which we each chose 4 pieces of work to show. We recognized common preoccupations in our work and used this to create a unifying theme. Our work reveals what usually remains hidden, psychologically, physically and spiritually. We titled the show, *Bring to Light*, to reflect these ideas. The collaboration was effortless, creative and rewarding, with a constant negotiation of ideas and organizational responsibility. We each brought different experience and skills to the project. I have learnt a lot from Suzi's mastery of social media and publicity and we were supported by the gallery's own online presence.

We organized an artist's talk with the Gallery's Director which culminated in a lively and illuminating discussion with the audience.



Figure 201. Artists Talk, Deptford-Does-Art. 2019

The second show, *Beyond the Body*, was in the Belfry and North Gallery in Bethnal Green, London. The venue is a cavernous old church and was quite overwhelming- it is probably more suitable for dramatic, site-specific work that could engage with the evocative atmosphere. I was less satisfied with the presentation of my work here, which needed a more intimate space. But, I think we made the most of the experience and the venue and were fortunate to have a very positive write up about the exhibition in Artlyst.



Figure 202. Banner design, *Beyond the Body*, 2019



Figure 203. *The North Gallery*



Figure 204. *The Belfry*

The gallery participates in 'First Thursdays' - in which over 150 galleries in east London come together to run free events, exhibitions, talks and private views on the first Thursday of each month, organized and publicized by the Whitechapel Gallery. This ensured that our opening night was very well attended.

I am beginning to plan new curating projects, exhibitions and collaborations. A group of Professional Doctorates past and present are forming a 'collective'. We hope this

will become a mutually supportive network in developing opportunities and creating group exhibitions in the future.

## RESIDENCIES:

I have attended five artist residencies during the professional Doctorate, two in Greece, two at Nottingham Trent University Fine Art department , and one in Italy. Each has been a unique and extraordinary experience, with the opportunity of getting to live and know a different community and culture as well as providing space and time in which to experiment with new ideas and methods. Working alongside other artists, creating a community of practice, seeing different working methods and approaches is always inspiring. The residencies in Greece and Italy culminated in local exhibitions and performances and with only two weeks and limited resources the challenge was to work fast and spontaneously. The residency in Italy particularly encouraged the artists to engage with the local community, landscape, local history, and mythology.

At the Summer Lodge residencies at Nottingham Trent University there was no expectation of productivity or exhibition - artists could use the space and time as they wished. I found a freedom in spending this time away from my normal environment that permits more experimentation. I have created work on both occasions that was unexpected and exciting, opening up new ideas to take further.

## CONFERENCES AND COURSES:

To support my research, I have attended conferences and symposium - particularly about psychoanalysis and often about art and psychoanalysis. These events have proved to be invaluable in bringing the academic theory to life. Some of the speakers and discussions have been equally challenging and inspiring, presenting me with new concepts and subjects to study. The Freud Museum encourages a cross disciplinary approach to psychoanalytical theory and the conferences and lectures often occur alongside an art exhibition in the museum, focusing on a particular theme. It has been fascinating to hear psychoanalysts discuss art, such as Darian Leader and Griselda Pollock; artists discuss psychoanalysis, such as Sharon Kivland and Cornelia Parker;

and to discover those who practice both, such as Patricia Townsend and Bracha L. Ettinger.

To deepen my understanding of psychoanalysis I undertook a year-long introductory course at the Site for Contemporary psychoanalysis. The weekly sessions were organized in three-week blocks focusing on a different theme, again using other disciplines as well as clinical examples to enhance the theory. We were a small group of eight from very diverse backgrounds and with different ambitions - the discussion was always lively and thought provoking and I learnt an incalculable amount.

Writing, researching and contextualising my work throughout the Doctorate program have supported the growth of my confidence in articulating my thoughts about my work both through speaking and writing. I can see the benefit of this already in fulfilling the task of submitting applications for professional opportunities. I have recently written applications to present papers at conferences, and applied to participate in collaborative projects with academics from other disciplines. These activities are all contributing to the ongoing development of a rich professional life.

## **SUMMARY and CODA: April 2020 - April 2021**

The five-year journey of the Professional Doctorate is nearly over and in concluding this report comes the opportunity to stand back and review the experience holistically. I have become more confident in my practice and research, and particularly in articulating and presenting my ideas to others. I believe I am more open and less defended when receiving the feedback of my colleagues, able to hear their advice and tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty. What I also perceive is a gradual shift, in which my creative practice has become interwoven with research in psychoanalytic theory and enriched by looking at the artwork of others. My ideas can be inspired by experience, memory or personal history, and my understanding deepened by theoretical enquiry, but the genesis of the work may equally lie in the metaphorical and evocative language of psychoanalysis.

I have been challenged to question why I make what I do, and in researching my family history and the legacies of displacement and migration, have confronted the ethics of making art work in response to trauma that I haven't witnessed or been a victim of directly. I have been fascinated by the idea of 'haunting' to explore concepts of trauma, beliefs and identity transmitted across generations. In researching the notion of post-memory, I have discovered ideas at the borders of psychoanalysis and psychosocial studies which have engaged my empathy and understanding of contemporary issues of trauma, dislocation and exile. In coming to understand how intersubjective relations are reigniting psychoanalysis from a contemporary feminist stance, I appreciate how this might offer a positive way forward through a shared matrixial border-space and connectivity in creative activity.

What has become apparent in charting this odyssey, is a journey from the surface to the depths, from the mind to the body and from thoughts to feelings. The three parts of my thesis, loss, trauma and abjection have each evolved out of the other, revealing new territory of an internal world. However - it has not been straightforward as there have been cycles of retreats, and returns, that mirror the psychoanalytical process of repression, repetition, and revelation. The shift from mind to body has meant letting go of my firm grip on narrative to follow a more instinctive process, feeling my way rather than thinking it. What I have observed is a more bodily engagement with

materiel, and my ideas; trusting my instincts and allowing the work to be more enigmatic and vibrant.

I have always been sceptical of any absolute system, or dogmatic belief. My experience is that psychoanalysis is not a fixed ideology but has the kaleidoscopic tendency to shapeshift from one theoretical idea to the next. Just as I grasp a concept something else will intrude and disrupt my confidence. There is always another layer to uncover or alternative point of view. However, throughout the Doctorate I have been troubled by a fundamental contradiction between two conflicting concepts of the internal world of the psyche. On the one hand is the idea that subject to subject connection is intrinsically flawed, there is always a mistranslation from one to the other. Language, be it verbal, visual, conscious or unconscious is open to misunderstandings and miscommunication - it is always approximate. Therefore, we can never truly know the other. The primal loss is irrevocable. What has to be borne by the subject is 'the capacity to disappear inside itself.' (Baraister and Frosh, 2003, p.780) This internal 'black hole' however does allow the space for difference and at best keeps the colonisation by the other out. Sublimation provides some relief from the anguish of our loss.

Melancholy representation, however, does not pretend to give us access, only to awaken our longing toward what must always remain inaccessible, in the world and in us. It is this longing that so much art contains - not that toward which we long. (Schwenger, 2006, p.14)

On the other hand, there is the enigma that something hidden exists, behind the object, that is communicated by the parent to the child and rests at the core of the unconscious, so that there is always a sense of an unknown something - an unknown thought that haunts the mind. 'If this model has force, it is very difficult to imagine what a personal, inner space can be; however deep we go, we find the other already there.' (Baraister and Frosh, 2003, p.781) I oscillate between these two positions, desperately hoping there is *something* internal - however dreadful, yet fearing a reality of an empty space. However, if I am brave, the empty space promotes free association unfixed by interpretation and answers that close things down, and permits doubt and questions to keep things moving. Maybe the enigmatic energy of an enduring art practice is in chasing the shadow of the object within the black hole.

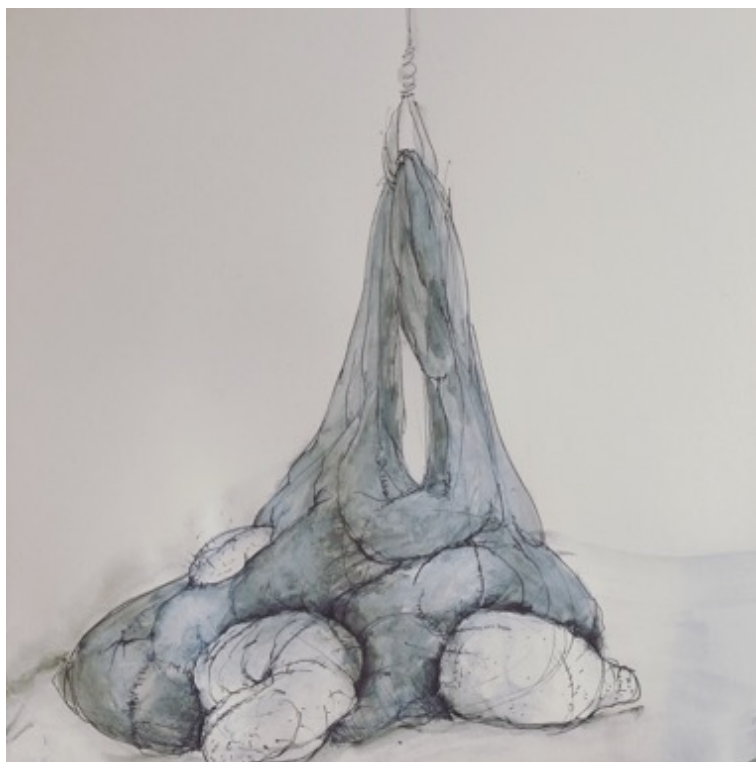


**CODA April 2020:** As I concluded this report in April 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic had spread world-wide and we were in the sixth week of the first 'lockdown'. This dramatically changed our lives and inevitably the impact filtered into my work. Any stable relationship with the world was challenged, politically, ethically, and emotionally. At first, in somewhat denial of this new reality, I was able to cycle to my studio, taking my permitted exercise outdoors and maintaining appropriate social distance, but a bad sprain to my ankle kept me housebound for weeks. New routines evolved. With my examination and final exhibition postponed for a year, time became less 'familiar', less urgent, baggier, with uncertainty a constant companion, the present moment more vivid. As the initial energetic panic waned I began adapting to working within and defining the 'new normal'. Before the start of the lockdown in March 2020, I had begun plans for the show-case exhibition developing work through drawing and 3D material tests. (Figs. 205 - 211)



Figures 205 - 211. Ali Darke, *Drawings: Untitled*, 2020  
(pen and ink, watercolour)









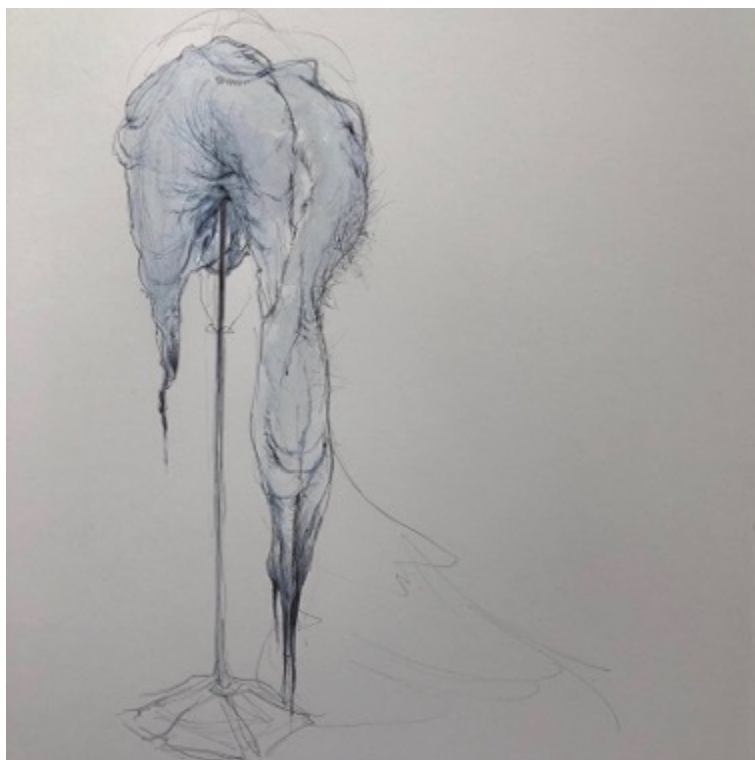
The results imagined forms that played with weight and movement; things suspended, hanging, draped or collapsed; their stitched, pinned and bulging forms expressing experiences of the emotional body. As I drew, I questioned how these sculptures might be constructed and displayed. There is a fine balance in this process between allowing an unfolding of ideas, creating the drawing itself as a product, while also keeping in mind the three-dimensional object that I will eventually create. Worrying too much about the end can inhibit the act of drawing to drive the work. As the ideas developed I saw that I needed frameworks for the objects; structures to suspend them from or build them around. I, therefore found an assortment of old metal shop display stands, originally intended for the presentation of clothes and shoes. (Figs. 212 - 213) It seemed resonant that these relate to the body and the notions of display, reminiscent of the domestic glass cabinets from previous work. These stands have informed the next set of drawings and further experiments with fabric, plaster and concrete. (Figs. 214 - 221)



Figures 212 - 213. Shop display stands.



Figures 214 - 217. Ali Darke, *Drawings: Untitled*, 2020  
(pen, ink, watercolour)

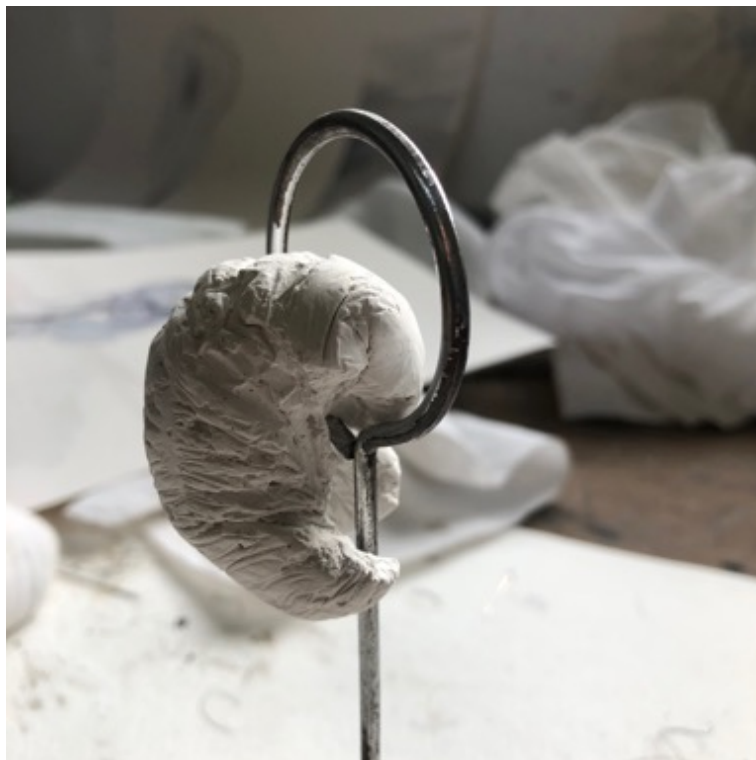








Figures 218 - 221. Ali Darke, *3D tests*, 2020  
(plaster, concrete, stocking, horse-hair stuffing, metal display stand)





It is at this point in the development of the work that lockdown and social distancing became part of life, with the steady death toll from the virus a daily dreadful count. A heightened fear of the invisible beast out there and the beast, raging within came out in my work. I created different textures, pox blighted skin, hairy growths, and bony forms to embellish the surfaces of these faceless, grotesque bodies. (Figs. 213 - 218) I adapted to working from home, without my usual materials at hand and work-space. I continued to draw and experiment with fabric and stitched samples, and appreciated the intensity of the moment as it unfolded through my work, with fear and uncertainty at its core.



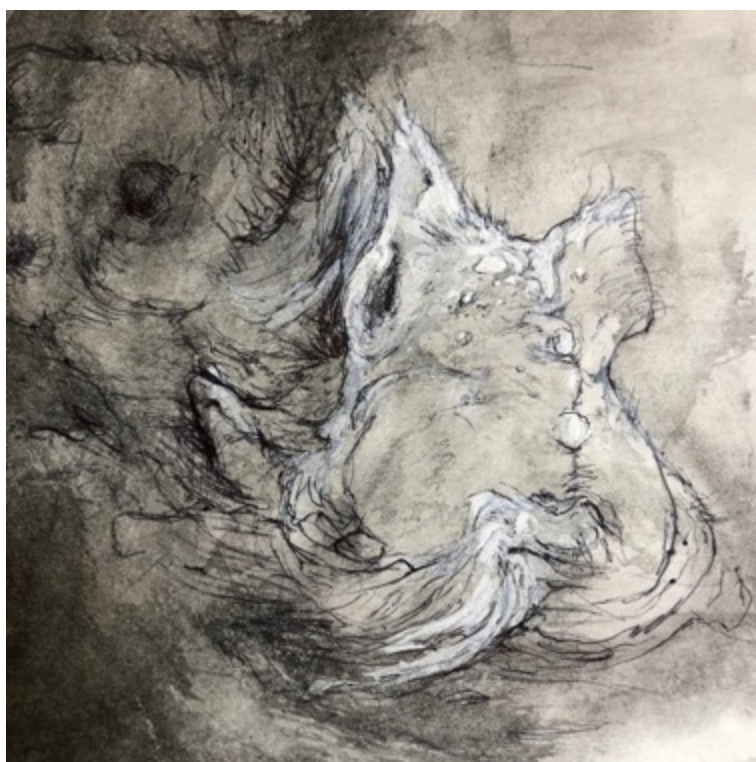
Figures 222 - 228. Ali Darke, *Pox: Fabric tests*, 2020  
(linen, fleece, cotton thread, horse-hair stuffing, fur)



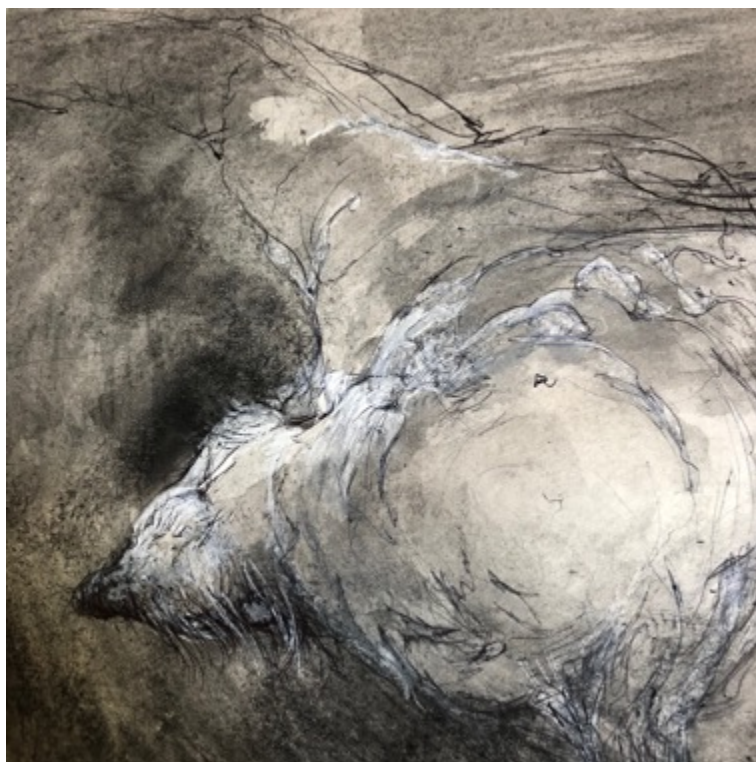




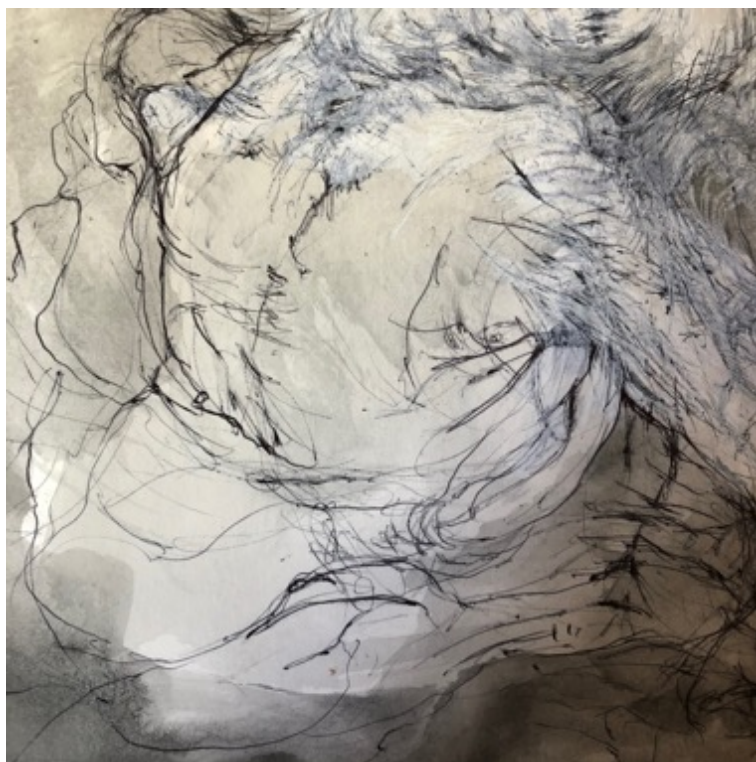




Figures 228 - 236. Ali Darke, *Drawings: Untitled*, 2020  
(pen, ink, watercolour)











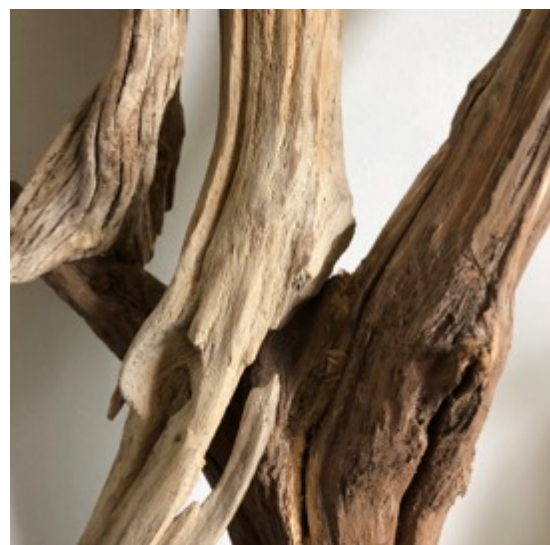


These monsters reflect deeply held terrors - blind, tortured, solitary, withering beasts - I oscillate between identification and rejection. As Mittman claims 'all "monsters" are our own constructions...through the processes by which we construct or reconstruct them, we categorize, name and define them, and thereby grant them anthropocentric meaning that makes them "ours". (2012, p. 1) Monsters are socially constructed, embodying the fears and fantasies specific to time and place. What is deemed monstrous is always other, not us, abject, and therefore as Weinstock explains, 'what is monstrous is always defined in relation to what is human.' (2012, p.275) Contemporary monsters he claims are less to do with a dreadful appearance than a cultural shift that places monstrosity in the intangible. 'A kind of invisible disease that eats away at the body and the body politic.' (p.276) He suggests that in the paranoia of contemporary culture, the monstrous manifests in the anonymous psychopath living among us, a corrupted faceless government, the revenge of anthropomorphised nature and ironically, considering our times, the virus that silently infects the body.

By virtue of its invisibility to the naked eye, not only does the virus have the potential to be everywhere and to bypass all boundaries, but the real concern is that we may already be infected without knowing it. The monster may not only be lurking without, but within, defying visibility until its horrific effects occur. (p.286)

Written eight years ago, this statement is chillingly prescient. Drawn in the early weeks of the pandemic, and as I develop my monsters into the three dimensional 'Beastlies', the viral horrors inevitably becoming manifest in the work. The virus has shaken our notion of any secure future and points to the posthuman. As MacCormack writes, 'It is not so much, what one is but *where* one is in the taxonomical hierarchy that matters and, indeed where one's matter is created'. (2012, p. 293) Our modes of perception as to what we *are* collapse and demand redefinition. 'Temporally the posthuman is past, present, and future contracted into immanent entity, emergent without arrival and fled before it is complete.' (p. 295) Monsters abide in this uncanny temporal collapse. Absolute knowledge in the posthuman is impossible, and teratology, referring here to the study of monster theory, brings a remembered historical past to the present 'while it seeks the future-now, upon which post human theory focuses.' (p. 295)

**CODA April 2021:** Over the spring and summer months of 2020 as my ankle healed, my routine included longer and longer solitary walks, trailing the Parkland Walk; a disused railway line running from Finsbury Park to Highgate, then on through Queen's Wood, round Highgate Woods, sometimes onto Hampstead Heath and back again. I became obsessed with the wonderful trees, seeing hybrid bodily forms in their gnarled and twisted limbs, collecting fallen branches and sticks. I discovered that Queen's Wood had been a burial pit for the thousands of Londoners that had died in the great plague of 1665-66. These woods grew over their decomposed bodies. My sticks took on a haunted resonance, a collection of arboreal bones. (Figs. 237 - 240)



Figures 237 - 240. Ali Darke, *Arboreal Bone collection*. 2020

During the pandemic, artists became more active online, adapting their work to fit social media platforms and virtual exhibition spaces. There was a pressure to explore these alternative ways of creating and presenting work. However, I was frustrated not to be able to exhibit in real time and space. In July 2020, I participated in a public discussion between six other doctorate artists as part of UEL's 2020 Research Conference, 'Research is Open' - this year being held online. Our debate, 'Virtually (Im)Possible' explored our responses to this dilemma. For some the virtual world was an exciting environment, but for others, particularly those of us creating in three dimensions, the actual texture, shape, and scale, the interaction of the work in a real space and time, is integral to the creation, display and final experience. I decided to follow up my conviction and organise a live event for October, when we hoped some restrictions might be lifted.

'Between Walls' was the title, taken from a short poem by William Carlos Williams. He describes a liminal space behind a hospital, a wasteland familiar to any post-industrial city. Hospitals are liminal places themselves, no-one chooses to stay for long, lingering only in sickness, moving on to recovery or death. Appropriate for this time. The poem ends with a glimmer of hope, found in the shiny green glass shard - a possible metaphor for an imaginative creativity. Between Walls was also how we were living, shut into our homes!

I collaborated with the fellow Doctoral researcher and artist Sue Withers, in the organisation and curation of the show; a particularly creative and inspiring partnership. We hoped to incorporate research events - talks, presentations, artist interviews and discussion throughout the weekend of the exhibition. The venue, Safehouse 1 and 2 in Peckham Rye (the Victorian abandoned terrace houses I had exhibited in before) reflected the catastrophic times we were going through, suggesting home was not always a safe place to reside. Due to social distancing rules we had to restrict our visitors to 10 per hour - creating an online, Eventbrite bookable system of timeslots. We recorded a presentation given by Dr Debra Shaw followed by a discussion restricted to just the exhibiting artists, on the subject of domestic male violence against women. Disappointingly, we had to cancel all the other events. This has however, set in motion a desire to continue an exploration of presenting research and practice.

Our press release stated...

*Between Walls* is an escape from the online and digital spaces into which we have recently been squeezed. We are resisting exhibiting in the virtual environment in favour of the real; real space, real time and real experience.

The ten artists invited to exhibit had all missed the experience of the physical exhibition, the necessity of material engagement as a form of research vital to the development of our artistic practice. It gave me the chance to test out the development of the Beastlies - incorporating the whittled sticks along with old linen sheets and pillow cases, found objects and the textures I'd been experimenting with.



Figures 241 - 242. Ali Darke, *Beastly I. work in progress*, 2020  
(Wire, chicken wire, furniture stuffing, linen, sticks)



I struggled with the internal structure and materials that determined how the sculpture held its shape or collapsed over the metal support, remaking it several times, testing different techniques. (Figs. 241- 244)



Figures 243 - 244. Ali Darke, *Beastly I*, 2020

(Wire, chicken wire, furniture stuffing, linen, sticks, metal display stand)

Searching for a resolution revealed to me a conflict of agency in these monstrous forms. Are they alive, captured in suspended movement or collapsed in death? Or could they be in a process of metamorphosis from life to death and beyond?

The word teratology derives from the Greek noun *teras*, meaning monster. In modern science it refers to the study of the causes, mechanisms and manifestations of gross foetal malformations - embryonic abnormalities in physical and mental development caused by environmental factors, diseases, chemical pollutants, or drugs. There is something chilling in the scientific etymology, naming these tragic fetuses' monsters. By othering, abjecting, we create distance from relating. I am reminded of the psyche's

teratomas, as described by Ferenczi, as parasitic fragments of the mind. Something shameful is provoked by these monsters that we turn away from - they are however the creatures of our own making, if they have agency we fear they may infect or seek revenge like the Minotaur of Greek mythology or the Golem of Jewish folk lore.

In the adjacent room I hung three black birds, above a fireplace. *Strange Fruit* was my tribute to the Black Lives Matter Movement and the collective shame of slavery.

(Fig. 245) I used whittled sticks to create bony heads, dyed pillow cases for their bodies and silver fish knives for their feet. The linen and silver fish knives a hint to the luxuries of the wealthy built on the lives and labour of others,



Figure 245. Ali Darke, *Strange Fruit*. 2020  
(Wire, linen, sticks, silver fish knives)

The exhibition was surprisingly well attended and the feedback positive. However, the buildings' inherent atmosphere can over power and dominate art work, upstaging its potential dynamic impact. I look forward to carry on with the creation of the *Beastlies*, and the opportunity to see them presented in different exhibition spaces.

Not much later, we entered the second lockdown and restrictions again prevented me going to the studio. I continued my obsessive whittling of the sticks into skeletal creature/bird heads and started sewing their small bird bodies from linen. At the same time, I was developing ideas for a film that had been gestating since the Wild Woman's last performative act.

These pieces of work, the birds and Wild Woman, were becoming interwoven as other images for the film emerged. I had been using my phone's video camera while out on my walks in the woods to record the birds, trees and water, not knowing how these might feature. A collage of thoughts and images, past and present, coalesced in the development of the ideas. I really had to trust a process of not knowing and naivety, believing I would eventually create something out of these remnants and bits and pieces.

Bracha L. Ettinger and her theory of a matrixial border space continued as a focus of my on-going research. She had studied Lacanian psychoanalysis in Paris, and her writing constantly referenced his complex theories. I decided to embark on a year's introductory course in Lacanian psychoanalysis at CFAR (The Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research). I hadn't appreciated that Lacanian ideas grew out of a close reading of Freud rather than a negation. Lacan tells us in his seminars to pay attention to every nuance of his work, which prompted me to go back to Freud's original texts - re-discovering ideas that I thought I understood well with a renewed wonder at their originality. Any schema of the psyche I had formulated, shape-shifting again to accommodate new concepts of the unconscious and conscious workings of the mind and how we recognise or indeed, misrecognise any sense of our subjectivity.

Lacanian focus on language has intrigued and puzzled me. His claim that the unconscious is the discourse of the Other, brings me back to the idea of a haunting at the centre of my being. As explained by Fink, 'we are born into a world of discourse,

a discourse or language that precedes our birth and that will live on after our death.’ (1995, p. 5) To communicate and enter into the universe of language we must acquire our Mother’s tongue, the system of semiotics, a chain of signifiers, created by the Other, which alienates us into the symbolic order of language. And Lacan goes further, to describe the unconscious as structured like a language - ‘the unconscious is nothing but a “chain” of signifiers’ over which the ego has no control’. Rather than finding subjectivity here, the unconscious, as understood by Lacan is itself ‘other, foreign, and unassimilated.’ (p. 9)

There is a desire that you take to be “your own” and another with which you grapple that seems to pull the strings and at times force you to act but that you do not feel to be altogether your own. (p. 9)

I have not aimed to illustrate these concepts within the film but am aware that they have filtered in through the choices I have made along the way, consciously and unconsciously.

My title, ‘Fremd bin ich eingezogen’ (A Stranger I came) is the first line of ‘Winterreise’ composed in 1828 by Franz Schubert. It is a cycle of 24 songs for voice and piano - sublime music that I have loved for years. The songs, set to poetry by Wilhelm Müller, tell of a man embarking on a winter journey, his motivation and destination ambiguous, an enigmatic restless quest at its heart, he appears to search the landscape for answers to his existential questions. This wanderer sings of his pain and romantic heartache yet any subjectivity remains mysterious. There is a fragmentation to the psyche of this man, a sense that he has been wandering for ever in some kind of self-imposed exile.

The word Fremd does not have a direct English translation that encompasses all the nuance of meaning. Stranger, but also outsider, foreigner, outcast, not related; the Fremdling is a foreigner in his own land - a wanderer with no place to call home, displaced and disassociated. The wanderer was a common character of the Romantic culture, European-wide, that resonates with our own times of dislocation and human migration. ‘Alienation’, Bostridge tells us, ‘is woven all the way through Winterreise,

that is a pre-echo of so much 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy and literature.’ Schubert was composing at the threshold of modernity.

I have listened obsessively over the months of lockdown to countless interpretations of the piece, from the earliest recordings to more contemporary, radical performances. The artist William Kentridge created an animated backdrop to a performance for the Aix-en-Provence music festival, incorporating images from his roots in South African landscape and political culture. ‘*Winterreise*, this production makes clear, reveals the human need for interpretation, for making sense of the outside world through the lens of our emotions.’ (2014, C. da Fonseca-Wollheim)

Another, a film production directed by David Alden, is set in an abandoned house, suggesting we are witnessing the internal, psychic landscape of the wanderer. But most radical is an inter-cultural reinterpretation and orchestration of *Winterreise* by Maximilian Guth and the Asambura Ensemble, which embeds Persian poetry (by Saadi, Rahi Moayeri and Mehdi Akhavan-Sales) within Schubert’s score and Wilhelm Müller’s poems. The results are illuminating and beautiful.

I describe these performances as they all underline the notion of the wanderer, that simultaneously suggests a psychological alienation in one’s own being, at the same time presenting the social outcast, migrant or refugee. When I began thinking about the film and re-introducing the Wild Woman, I was brought back to my family history, and earlier research of the transmission of trauma through the generations. I had researched my Great-Grandfather and Great-Grandmother’s enforced transportation from their home in Bielefeld, North Germany to Theresienstadt concentration camp, and found photographs of Jewish men, woman and children boarding the trains, laden with sacks and bags of their belongings, unaware of their fate. The Wild Woman carries such a burden, haunting a landscape as she haunts my mind. In performance, I again have the uncanny experience of embodying my ancestors and my own future old age. In that sense she is a phantom returning from the past to haunt the living while beckoning to the fates. Mother, Grandmother and even Great-Grandmother are present - it is unclear who is searching or looking or wandering, subjectivity is blurred. Past traumas return to trouble and disturb. My own acts of making suggest an

obsessional pathology, cutting, and stitching one hundred plus, linen and bony stick birds.

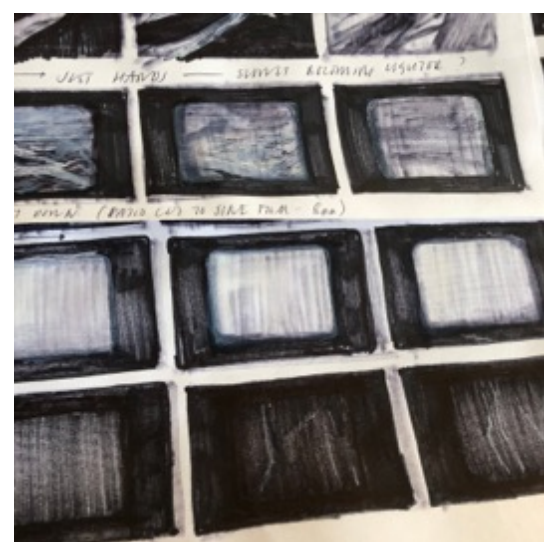
Bracha L. Ettinger's art working and psychoanalytical theory of the matrixial border-space, points to the domain of the post-trauma.

The matrixial sphere is modelled on intimate sharing in jouissance, trauma, and phantasy in the feminine/pre-birth sphere, and the womb stands for a psychic capacity for share-ability created in the borderlinking to a female body - a capacity for differentiation-in-co-emergence that occurs in the course of separation-in-jointness, where affects and mental waves are continuously reattuned. (2006, p.181)

Her theory positions creativity as a threshold between the art work, the artist and the viewer. 'The aesthetic is the trauma's transformed affectability in wit(h)nessing in/by art, beyond time and in different sites and spaces, yet it has ethical and even therapeutic consequences.' (2004, p. 66) Desire is potentially then for a deeper connection rather than for an object, a recall to an inside and an outside experienced as a shared border-space between two beings unknown to each other yet interconnected.

The images and sounds for my film have been created with minimal technical sophistication. I used my phone and SLR camera to capture video and record sound, a hand torch to light the Wild Woman and trees at night. I have then experimented with overlaying film onto hand drawn landscapes, and solarising the footage to suggest a mirroring of night into day. My Grandfather was a keen cine film maker, and I have used glimpses of them to capture a sense of the past - the gaze oscillates between another's eyes and my own as the artist. As in dreams any narrative, temporal or spatial logic is collapsed. I created a story board *after* having shot the film - to help with decision making in the editing process. However, from the film's inception I was sure it would be shaped by two halves, separated by two, loud gun shots and flashes that bring to stark reality the murder of my Great-Grandparents in 1943. I also knew I wanted the sequence of the film to be repeated on loop - an eternal recurrence.





Figures 246 - 249. Ali Darke, *Film story boards*. 2021

Freud's notion of the compulsion to repeat at the heart of traumatic experience brings with it the concept of a deferred response - *Nachträglichkeit*, belated, the original traumatic event only constituted by a later occurrence. *Nachträglich*, has the meaning of additional or secondary, temporally 'later', implying a movement from the past to the future, that something has been implanted into a psyche to be reactivated later. Freud gives the idea that there are two moments in the making of psychic trauma - the event which leaves a trace and its revival later. But, this can also be conceived as a movement from the future to the past, re-experiencing the original trauma over again. 'He (the patient) is driven to repeat the repressed matter as an experience in the

present, instead of remembering it as something belonging to the past'. (Freud, 2003 p. 56) In the compulsion to repeat Freud witnessed something beyond a desire for satisfaction or repair; a destructive impulse he named the death drive - an impulse 'inherent in every living organism to restore a prior state...a manifestation of inertia in organic life.' (p. 76) 'The goal of all life is death'. (p. 78)

Caruth points out that in the unconscious repetition, the voice of trauma speaks of 'the force of an imperative,' bringing an ethical dimension to traumatic experience, 'a command to see or hear that returns, along with the inability to assimilate or simply know.' (2016, p. 131)



Figure 245. Ali Darke, *Fremd bin ich eingezogen*. film still. 2021

I am still immersed in the editing of the film, the process revealing how some of these concepts, thoughts and emotional responses emerge in the piece. Theory and practice continue to have a dialogue each illuminating the other. As Ettinger claims, 'sometimes theory seeps in and anticipates approximations of what will become a future painting - an instigation that will retroactively be revealed'. (2006, p. 94) I am excited to see how my film will unfold in the final editing process, what impact it may have for myself and others.

When a world, internal and external, from which the artist has had to transfer and to which s/he has had to transmit, is shared with-in-difference via artwork, its presence is made felt the instant the work awakens its strange beauty, pain and languishing - a languishing that is both a yearning and an ebbing' (p. 149)

I aspire to engage through my work just such a shared border-space of difference-with-in, opening up the potential for connection with others.

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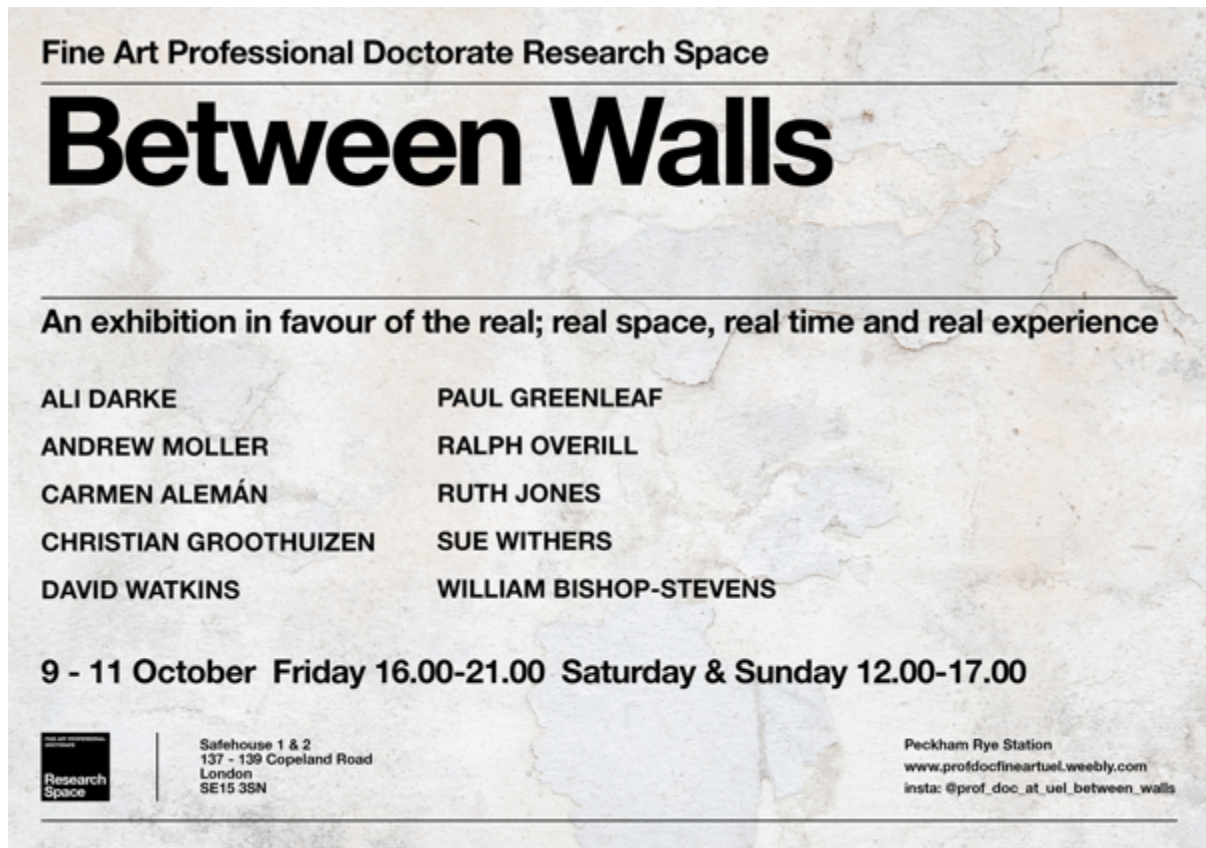
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## APPENDIX 1: EXHIBITIONS, AND PUBLICITY MATERIEL



Between Walls  
Safehouse 1 & 2  
137 - 139 Copeland Road  
London SE15 3SN

9 - 11 October 2020  
Open Friday 16.00-21.00 - Saturday & Sunday 12.00-17.00

*Between Walls* is an escape from the online and digital spaces into which we have recently been squeezed. We are resisting exhibiting in the virtual environment in favour of the real; real space, real time and real experience.

Exhibiting together through their connection to the Fine Art Professional Doctorate at the University of East London, each artist has missed the experience of the physical exhibition, a form of research vital to the development of their artistic practice. Loose

affinities exist between their individual interests and the works shown, but it is the necessity of material engagement which has truly brought this group together.

# hARTslane

25th January 2020 12-9pm (All day)  
17 Harts Lane, New Cross Gate, SE14 5UP

PASSAGGIATINA ART RESIDENCY IN LONDON  
from Cantinone Visocchi, Atina to hARTslane

*'Passaggi' can mean the passing from one place to another, or to one phase of life, or from a state of mind to another. It can be a transition.'*

©12-3pm: Artists talk about their inspirations for their work in Atina  
© 6pm: Launch of PASSAGGIATINA e-book  
©7:30-9pm: Artists Performances

**ARTISTS**  
Alexandra Santos  
Ali Darke  
Antonella Vismara  
Carmen Alemán  
Cassandra Mahoney  
Cleaver Bol  
Emma Roper-Evans  
Geraldine McEwan  
Gzillion artist  
India Roper-Evans  
Julia Maddison  
Marisa Polin  
Mary Crenshaw  
Massimiliano Battista  
Matt Scott  
Monika Tobel  
Natalija Jezova  
Nico Mahoney  
Ninja Riot  
Rachelle Allen-Sherwood  
Riitta Hakkarainen  
Theresa Caruana  
Vanja Karas  
Veronica Shimanovskaya

Artist Curators Chris Simpson and Jude Cowan Montague

[www.facebook.com/passaggiatina/](http://www.facebook.com/passaggiatina/)  
Instagram: @passaggiatina





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# Fine Art Professional Doctorate Research Space

**Exhibition 15-28 November 11.00 - 16.30**

**Opening 14 November 17.30-21.00**

Embracing the practice of exhibiting as research activity, nine artists from University of East London Fine Art Professional Doctorate show work in progress.

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**Will Bishop-Stevens  
Ali Darke  
Xiaolong 'Paul' Fang  
Paul Greenleaf  
Christian Groothuizen  
Andrew Moller  
Ralph Overill  
Kevin Warren  
Sue Withers**



University of  
East London

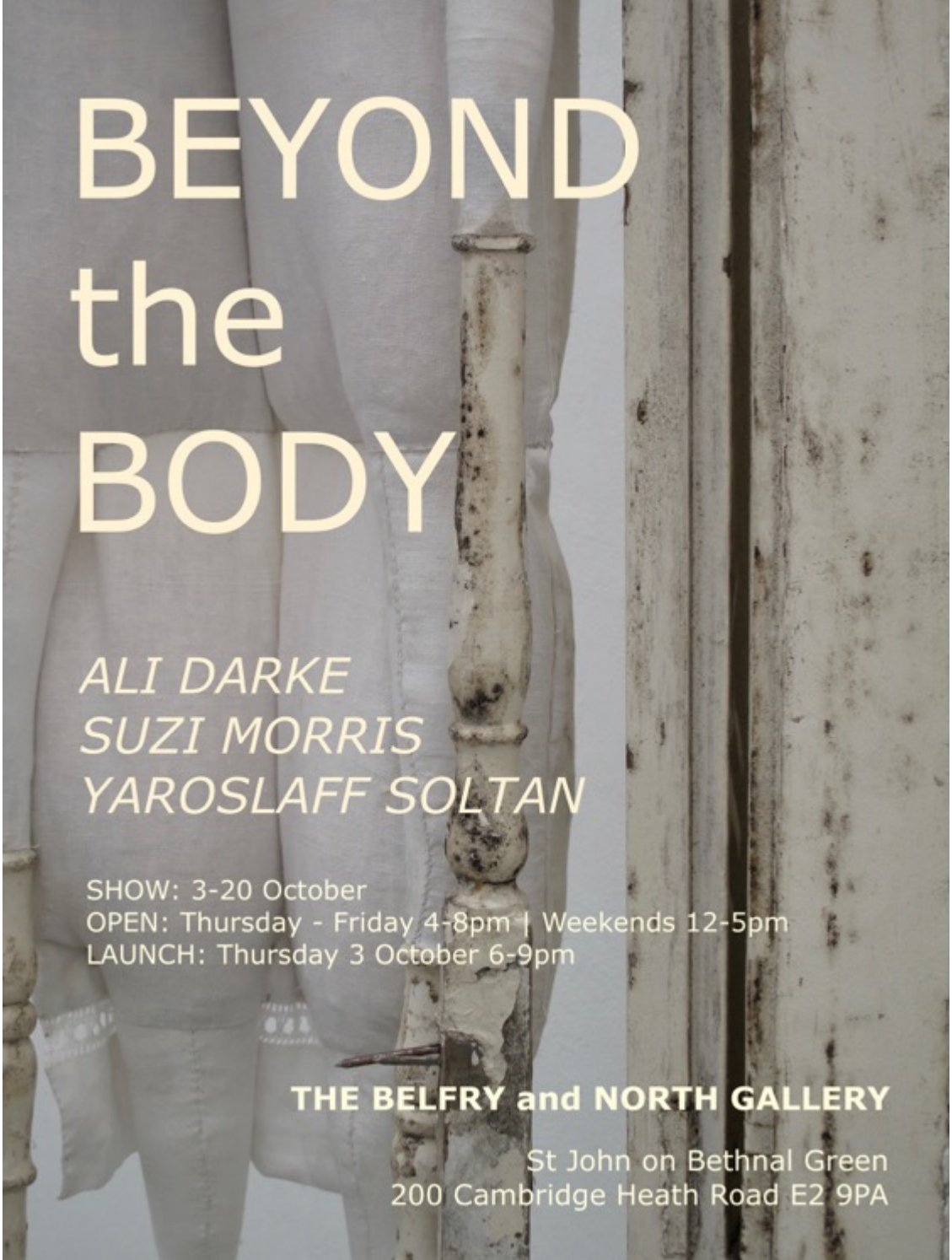


Way Out East Gallery + Project Space  
College of Arts Technologies and Innovation  
Architecture and the Visual Arts  
AVA Building, 4-6 University Way  
London E16 2RD

Cyprus DLR

[www.profdocfineartuel.weebly.com](http://www.profdocfineartuel.weebly.com)  
[www.uel.ac.uk](http://www.uel.ac.uk)

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# BEYOND the BODY

*ALI DARKE  
SUZI MORRIS  
YAROSLAFF SOLTAN*

SHOW: 3-20 October

OPEN: Thursday - Friday 4-8pm | Weekends 12-5pm

LAUNCH: Thursday 3 October 6-9pm

**THE BELFRY and NORTH GALLERY**

St John on Bethnal Green  
200 Cambridge Heath Road E2 9PA

## In the Belfry and North Gallery.

The exhibition of recent work by Ali Darke, Suzi Morris and Yaroslaff Soltan, reveals a shared quest by each artist to bring to light that which has previously remained hidden, un-known, or even un-thought through the creative process itself. They recognise in each other's work an evocation of the fundamental questions of absence and presence. To 'bring something to light' implies not only exposing a truth by an unearthing, a dredging up, or an uprooting from the depths but also the possibility of making apparent, bringing into the mind and materialising that which is intangible and resists representation, defies being and is possibly uncomfortable to behold.

Each artist, through their unique process and medium, be it paint, materiel or object attend to their preoccupations, and through the alchemical process of creation experience a transformation and discovery.

Ali Darke's sculptural installations expose the emotional and unconscious psychological workings of the mind on memory, to reveal a liminal hinterland littered with the residue of lived experience. Suzi Morris draws upon the inherent natural properties of paint to reveal in colour, form and space, a sublime vision, through imaginary ideas on the workings of the body. While Yaroslaff Soltan's fascination with the relationship between psychotherapy and alchemy in Jungian psychology, explores the transformation of material through his imagination to create his visionary sculptures.

While working together as Professional Doctorates in Fine Art, the three artists found elements within their individual practices that enriched the potential for alchemical exchange. Bringing their work together here continues a visual dialogue across this space.



# PASSAGGIATINA 2019

## ATINA ART RESIDENCY

18 AGOSTO - 01 SETTEMBRE

Lunedì 19 Agosto 8pm: ricevimento di benvenuto e informazioni a Palazzo Ducale. Tutti sono benvenuti

### ESPOSIZIONE ARTISTI A IL CANTINONE

Giovedì 29 Agosto - 19:00

Venerdì 30 Agosto (tutto il giorno) 19:00 le performance

Sabato 31 Agosto 09:00 - 13:00

Laboratorio d'arte libero al Il Cantinone. Tutti i cittadini sono benvenuti

Mercoledì 21 @ 10am: *Giocando con la Pittura*  
Con Theresa Caruana.

Venerdì 23 @ 10am: *Monotipo/monoprinta*

Con Mary Crenshaw.

Sabato 24 @ 10am: *Cianotipo*

Con Riitta Hakkarainen

Domenica 25 @ 10am: *Il disegno Cinetico*

Con Rachelle Allen-Sherwood

Lunedì 26 @ 10am: *Comunicazione, concentrazione e prestazioni*

Con Veronica Shimanovskaya

Martedì 27 @ 10am: *Scrittura creativa*

Con Emma Roper-Evans.

### ARTISTI PARTECIPANTI

Alexandra Santos  
Ali Darke  
Antonella Vismara  
Carmen Aleman  
Cassandra Mahoney  
Emily Gosling  
Emma Roper-Evans  
Fyodor Druzin  
Geraldine McEwan  
Gillian artist  
Julia Maddison  
Lisa McKendrick  
Marisa Polin  
Mary Crenshaw  
Massimiliano Battista  
Matt Scott  
Monika Tobel  
Natalia Jezova  
Nico Mahoney  
Rachelle Allen-Sherwood  
Riitta Hakkarainen  
Theresa Caruana  
Veronica Shimanovskaya  
Vanja Karas

III edizione curata da Chris Simpson e Jude Cowan Montague  
Collaboratori locali: Riccardi Orazio Paolo e Giulia Visocchi

[www.facebook.com/passaggiatina/](http://www.facebook.com/passaggiatina/)  
Instagram: @passaggiatina





# BRING TO LIGHT

ALI DARKE | SUZI MORRIS | YAROSLAFF SOLTAN

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SHOW: 30 MAY - 2 JUNE | LAUNCH: FRIDAY 31 MAY 7-10PM  
OPEN 10-6PM WED-SUN | ARTIST TALK: SUNDAY 2 JUNE 5-6PM

DEPTFORD DOES ART | 28 DEPTFORD HIGH STREET SE8 4AF  
[DEPTFORDDOESART.COM](http://DEPTFORDDOESART.COM) | [@DEPTFORDDOESART](https://www.instagram.com/deptforddoesart)

Deptford does Art is proud to present 'Bring to Light', an exhibition of recent work by Ali Darke, Suzi Morris and Yaroslaff Soltan. To 'bring something to light' implies not only exposing a truth by an unearthing, a dredging up, an uprooting from the depths, but also the possibility of making apparent, bringing into the mind and materialising that which is intangible and resists representation, defies being and is uncomfortable to behold. The connections between these three artists enrich the potential for alchemical exchange through a visual dialogue within the space.

BRING TO LIGHT  
30 May – 2 June 2019

Launch Night: Friday 31 May 7-10pm

Artist Talk: Sunday 2 June 5 - 6pm

Dan Greenham, co-director of the gallery and also an artist himself will host a panel discussion with the artists followed by a Q&A.

Ali Darke's sculptural installations expose the landscapes, inhabitants and dramas of an inner world. She is seeking to reveal the emotional and unconscious workings of the mind and finds a liminal hinterland littered with the residue of lived experience.

[www.alidarke.com](http://www.alidarke.com)

@ali\_darke

Suzi Morris draws upon the inherent natural properties of oil paint to reveal imaginary ideas on the 'unseen' workings of the body in her 'human landscapes'. Inspired by genomics and clinical virology, in 2017 she proposed the Viral Sublime as a new category and extension to knowledge within the canon of art history surrounding the concept of the sublime.

[www.suzimorrisart.com](http://www.suzimorrisart.com)

@suzimorrisart

Yaroslaff Soltan's works emerge out of a fascination with the similarities between psychotherapy and alchemy in Jungian psychology. He explores the transformation of material and imagination to create his extraordinary sculptures.

[www.yaroslaffsoltan.com](http://www.yaroslaffsoltan.com)

Gallery Opening Times: Wednesday to Sunday 10 - 6pm

Deptford Does Art, 28 Deptford High Street, Deptford, London SE8 4AF

[www.deptforddoesart.com](http://www.deptforddoesart.com)

FINE ART  
EXHIBITION

# FRAGMENTS



KAROLINA STONKIENE  
MARIE ROBICHAUX  
JOAO GILBERTO CIPRIANI  
NICHOLAS BALMFORTH  
HATTIE COLLINS  
NATALIA JEZOVA

ELINA LUCE  
ROB REED  
TEO GAZDAG  
ALI DARKE  
AARON DOIG

## THE BISCUIT FACTORY

100 CLEMENTS ROAD, BLOCK F,  
2ND FLOOR, SE16 4DG,  
31.01-05.02  
PRIVATE VIEW: 31-01-19 • 6PM-9PM





*THE GLIMPSES*

Container Space Gallery, UEL  
March 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> 2018



## Yakumo Koizumi (where clouds are born) / Λευκάδιος Χερν (εκεί που γεννιούνται τα σύννεφα)



YAKUMO KOIZUMI - WHERE CLOUDS ARE BORN · SUNDAY, 7 OCTOBER 2018 ·

16 visual artists from Greece and abroad, travel guided by Lafcadio Hearn, a contemporary Odysseus, presenting their visual journey through the places and countries Lafcadio lived, draining inspiration from his life and work.

Curating-organization : Maria Papatzelou, Visual artist

(with the precious help of mr.Takis Efstathiou)

PARTICIPANT ARTISTS ~ Zefi Athanasopoulou / Carmen Aleman / Lucy Gavriilidou / Ali Darke / Tati Douvana / Eirini Baka / Maria Kompatsiari / Lee Maelzer / Vena Naskrecka / Katerina Xipolitou / Athanasia Papatzelou / Maria Papatzelou / Dimitris Pikros / Zografia Popoli / Veronica Shimanovskaya / Rania Fragkoulidou.





# The Kokkalis Project

## The Crypt Gallery

Euston Road, London NW1 2BA | <http://cryptgallery.org>

Tube: Euston and Kings Cross. Bus: 59, 68, 91, 168, N91

**Private View on Thurs 9<sup>th</sup> March (6-9pm)**

**Exhibition open from 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> March (12-7 pm)**

In the summer of 2016, a group of international contemporary artists worked alongside each other in the remote village of Psarades in North Western Greece. They brought with them their individual sensibilities and cultural backgrounds and, responding to the history and geography, created an eclectic mix of painting, sculpture, installation, photography and film. Set in the beautiful mountains around the Lakes of Prespes, where the borders of Greece, Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia meet, this area has witnessed waves of migration, civil war and violence, leaving deep scars on the landscape and memory.

Carmen Alemán • Sofia Antonakaki • Magda Christopoulou • Ali Darke • Tati Douvana • Martha Iliadou  
Nikolaos Kamampatidis • Harris Kondosphyris • Natalja Kondratova •  
Konstantinos Koronaios • Bob Lawson • Joséphine Macri • Lee Maelzer • Olga  
Monachou • Vena Naskręcka • Dimitrios Oikonomou • Maria Papatzelou • Stravros Parcharidis  
Irene Pouliassi • Agisilaos Robolas • Iannis Robolas • Veronica Shimanovskaya • Nikoleta Tsantiki





## THE TEARS OF THINGS

Ali Darke

A psychological interior space is the liminal hinterland visited in this work. Here the subjective experience of the external world meets the unconscious workings of the mind and is transformed. Forming a collection, the staging of each cabinet presents a new perspective on this internal landscape. The framework itself becomes a mutable and fragile conveyor of thought. Ever shifting and elusive states of mind, experienced as both mental and embodied sensation, are presented. With hints of the cabinet's domestic origins for the display and preservation of objects, the relationship of the container and the contained is explored. A tension between what is let in, what is revealed, what is kept hidden and what seeps out heightens the psychological drama.



# INTERIOR

7-11 March 2016

**Private View**  
**10th March**  
**6-9pm**  
**AVA Gallery**  
**University of East**  
**London**  
**Docklands Campus**

With an understanding of Interior as individual, geographical, psychological and or political, five very different artists reveal

one or more of these aspects through a range of arts methodologies and practice.

Photograph courtesy of Anna Fairchild

Anna Fairchild  
Lucy Renton  
Mikey Georgeson  
Ali Darke  
Suzi Morris

*You're invited  
to the*

**PRIVATE  
VIEW**

**OCT 15  
6.30PM - 9.30PM**

**DAILY  
FRI - SUN**

**OCT 16 - 18  
10AM - 6PM**



**An inspiring exhibition brought to you by The Old Truman Brewery of the latest MA Fine Art  
Graduates, curated by Anna Fairchild**

Alison Darke, Anji Archer, Anna Fairchild, Asiya Clarke, Clare Thatcher, Jake Abrams, Jo Lovelock,  
Lucinda Burgess, Lucy Andrews, Lucy Renton, Mark Williams, Namik Ozturk, Natalia Jezova, Nerys Mathias,  
Sue McDougall, Suzi Morris, Veronica Shimanovskaya

F Block G4, Ely's Yard, 15 Hanbury Street, E1 6QR  
georgina@trumanbrewery.com - [www.trumanbrewery.com](http://www.trumanbrewery.com)

**ARTBLOCK**

**Art print Studio**  
LARGE FORMAT PRINTING SOLUTIONS

**ART MAP  
LONDON**

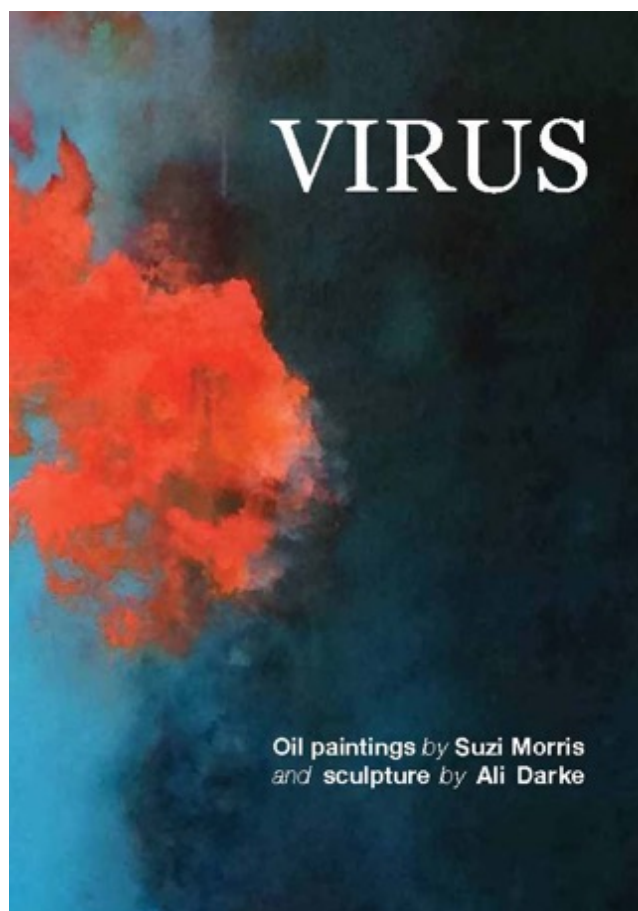
**ARTS  
THREAD**



**THE BREWERS PROJECT**  
ST. JAMES'S GATE, DUBLIN

**THE  
OLD TRUMAN  
BREWERY**





**Public Viewing**

**9th-12th July 2015 - 2 - 7pm**

**Platform 1: James Drive Wandsworth Common Station,  
London, SW12 8NL**

Oil paintings by Suzi Morris and sculpture by Ali Darke

Suzi Morris and Ali Darke are currently both working towards Professional Doctorates of Fine Art at the University of East London. It is a unique programme providing a critical dialogue that links the three strands of creative practice, professional practice and theoretical research.

These two very different artists have discovered a common thread in their work – the desire to make visible that which is unseen, to give form to unconscious states of being. Suzi interconnects knowledge from science and aesthetics in synthesising her research interests in viral processes and Ali brings into being the inner world of the mind.

Platform 1 Gallery brings their work together for the first time in a visual conversation.

## Reading Stones & Beyond The Body Two Shows – Jude Cowan Montague

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The stone tower of Saint Augustine is a dramatic setting for an art exhibition and has been host to some interesting shows by alternative London artists over some years. It's also convenient for many East Londoners, being close to Hackney Central. I would recommend a visit to see any show there, just for the chance to walk around this very specific location. From the top, there are great views of London. And each show is a chance to see how people respond to the space.

This is also a clock tower and this is a key aspect that Krinsky, Wyss and Eyre have drawn on the themes of time and materiality for their small group show. They are an appropriate group of artists to show together, producing thoughtful, crafted work, combining modern and traditional media.



Ali Darke Beyond the Body

Wyss revisits her obsessive printmaking, remaking, refolding, repurposing human bones through repetitive printmaking. As a part of her installation, we



get to see her copper printmaking plates for her bones piece that she has presented in diverse locations. The plates are laid on the floorboards in a pattern that uses similarity of shape rather than a position as an organising factor. A more theatrical piece, due to its location on the roof, is the thin copper sheet entitled Osmosis. This is fixed to the pole at the high point of the tower. Being up here in the sunset wind feels like onboard a ship, and indeed, on its first fixing, the copper blew out of place and flapped about in the Hackney air. Apparently getting the ladder up the spiral staircase was extraordinarily challenging. Wyss is not a fainthearted installer. She has dogged determination. She gets an idea in her head and follows it through, despite the physical challenges.

Eyre has a piece on the roof too, in steel, Baetylus which brings to mind a meteorite, those small pieces that often burn up in the atmosphere and become shooting stars. Eyre is concerned with human perception of stones. She emphasises those meteorites that make it through and land on the earth, and how they are thought to have come from the gods. Her video piece installed alongside the clock makes use of its proximity to the mechanism, and an out-of-sync striking of time adds to the mystery of the experience of watching her film of patterns, mechanisms. There is an underlying structure suggested which does not only reference science (the triangular structure of crystal) but also ancient chants, charms, magic. Wood. Stone. Bird. The mystery of the physical, natural world. Where do rocks come from? What is time? The attempts humans make as a social creature to interpret and have a relationship with these non-human elements and the inescapable experience of moving forward through time.

Krinsky has produced a sensible and effective way of working with the structure of the building which is challenging as it is not possible to harm its ancient structure for hanging pieces. She has repurposed the information hoardings fixings and created digitally printed scrolls whose pictures have been created using multiple media techniques, projecting photographs onto painted cells, photographing those, creating a designed piece with depth of colour and layer. Her work has developed through photographing the River Naab in South Germany whose water levels dropped during the hottest June on record. Her interest in documenting the changes to wetlands and waterways is expressed here, bringing the concerns of water management and environmental conservation to this urban location, so close to the new water lands freshly open to visitors. Not so long ago I lived on a boat here in Hackney and enjoyed the sensation being on the waters, close to wildlife, really feeling the slop of the canal beneath me as I slept here in the city. As the pressure of housing accelerates beyond breaking point, more and more are living on the rivers without sufficient infrastructure and support. It's unforgivable of the authorities to have created this situation which is pressurising young people and forcing them into a lifestyle which in turn puts more pressure on wildlife and our wet spaces on which so much birdlife relies.

And if they are there, they need better facilities. Krinsky may not have anticipated this kind of rant to be generated in response to her work, but it shows how her art is connecting to contemporary concerns. It's relevant.

An equivalent space is the Belfry at St John's, Bethnal Green. I'm lucky enough to have exhibited here myself with Miyuki Kasahara, an exhibition we called simply 'The Tower', a joint show examining stories of women in society who are outsiders, vilified for their own community. For this show Kasahara built a spiral staircase from thin wood on which I scrawled in ink words from the Pennine witch trials, having written a series of poems from the court documents. The space at St John's, with its high ceilings, lent itself to this site-specific, atmospheric, dark project and the current exhibition by Ali Darke also uses the space to significant effect, particularly for Yaroslaff Soltan's distorted anatomical pieces that aesthetically reference mummification. One figure hangs dramatically in the centre of the high space of the belfry. I was intrigued by his use of multiple forms, for example, the plethora of toes and by materialism that incorporates hair, wax and a urinate yellow.

Darke's approach to fine art has been developed throughout her career as a designer for theatre. The innovative use of materials, using what is cheap and to hand for effectiveness, is what she does well. She has worked quickly and effectively to make a long series of pieces inspired by the strangeness of the body in creating growths called teratoma that the body makes secretly which contain all pieces of the body. They may have bones, teeth, hair, all kinds of parts, hidden in a ball deep inside the system. In women, they often grow in the ovaries, and indeed I personally had cysts of this sort removed from my ovaries. I had been keen to see them (I still have my old wisdom teeth with their gnarled roots), but sadly this wasn't to be. Darke's pieces disturb and revolt in a pleasingly visceral manner, but have been assembled from what appears to be (mostly) broken bits of toilet and stockings filled with upholstery horsehair and fine sand.

Suzi Morris's paintings also explore the unseen, her recent series 'Bioinfotics' being informed by the recent flood of data from genome sequences. Her works are not so much immediately visceral as the work by Darke and Soltan, but with their pale and watery azure colours, evoke a sense of the heavenly among the exhibition's earthy (even subterranean) sculptures.

Top Photo: from left to right OSMOSIS Carol Wyss / BAETYLUS Susan Eyre / EPHEMERA SCROLLS Anne Krinsky from Reading Stones

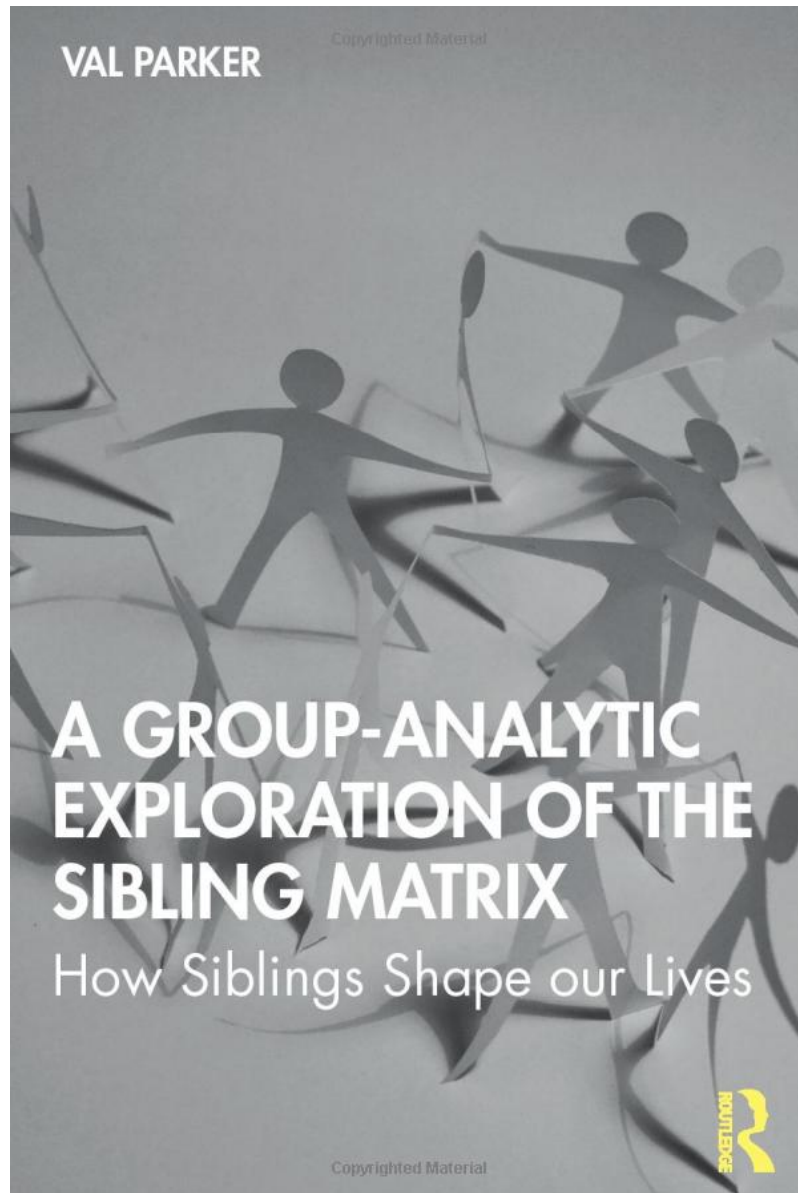
**Reading Stones – Anne Krinsky, Carol Wyss Susan Eyre (Reading Stones) St Augustine's Tower Gallery, London E8 1 HR**

**Beyond the Body – Suzi Morris, Ali Darke, Yaroslaff Soltan (Beyond the Body) 3-20 October The Belfry and North Gallery, St John on Bethnal Green E2 0PA**

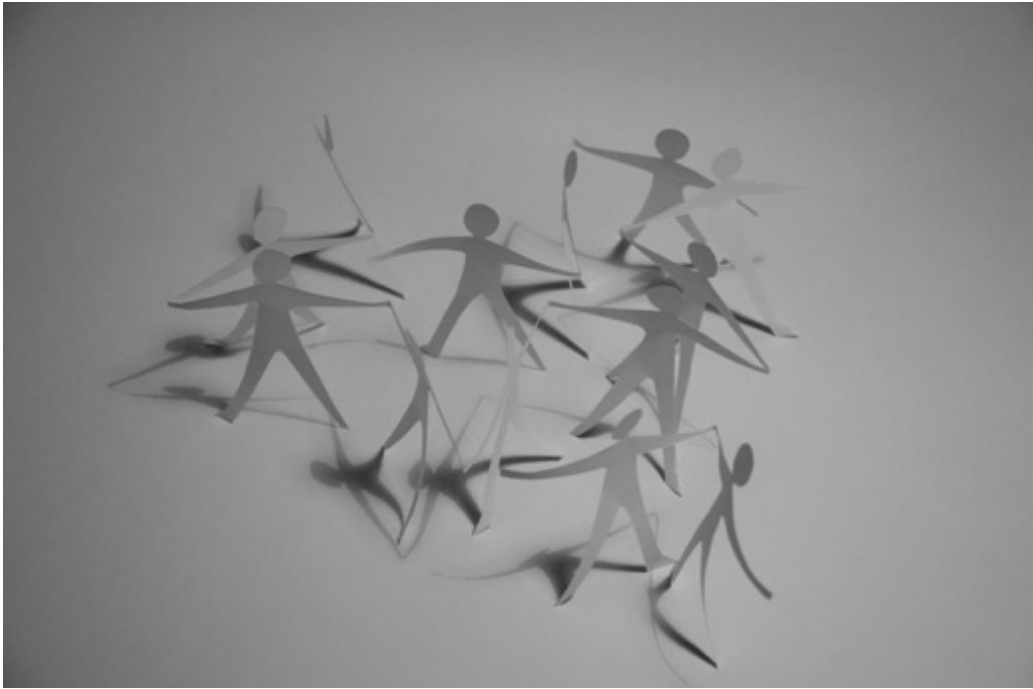
### APPENDIX 3: ADDITIONAL IMAGES OF CREATIVE PRACTICE



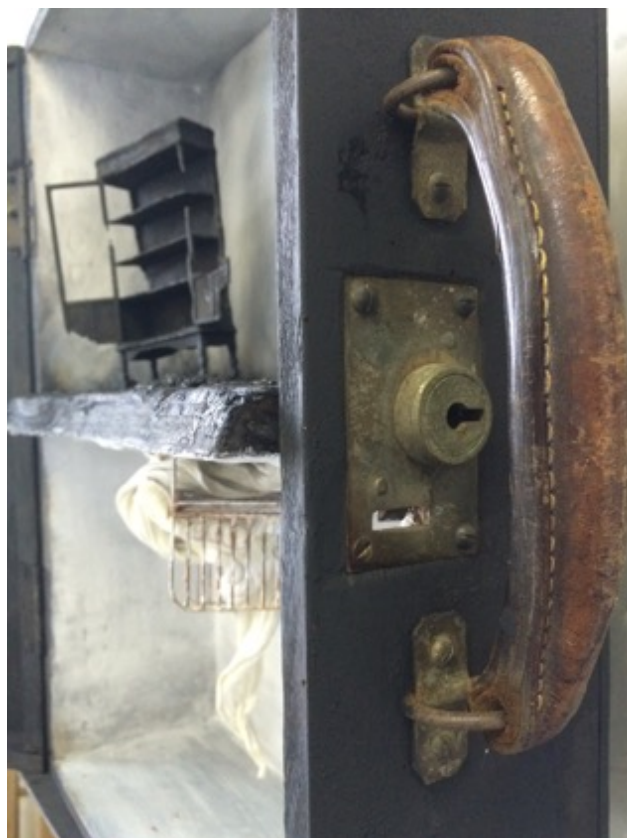
Ali Darke, *The Leaves have Lost Their Trees*: 2019  
PassagiAtina Art Residency Atina



Ali Darke: Book cover design 2019



Ali Darke, Images for website design *Val Parker: Psychotherapist*. 2019



Ali Darke: *The Wanderings*, 2018  
 Yakumo Koizumi (Where clouds are born)  
 Exhibition, Thessaloniki International Art Fair special project.





Ali Darke: *The Wanderings*, 2018



Ali Darke: *The Wanderings*, 201

By ITSELF: In collaboration with composer, Jasper Tygner, 2018







# Professional Doctorate Fine Art Showcase Exhibition

The Professional Doctorate in Fine Art has been running at UEL for over 20 years. It is designed for artists working across a range of media and methodologies who wish to make their practice the basis for doctoral study. Undertaken over three years full-time or five years part-time, the programme provides a critical dialogue linking theoretical research with creative practice.

**Opening**  
24/6/2021 4.45pm - 8pm

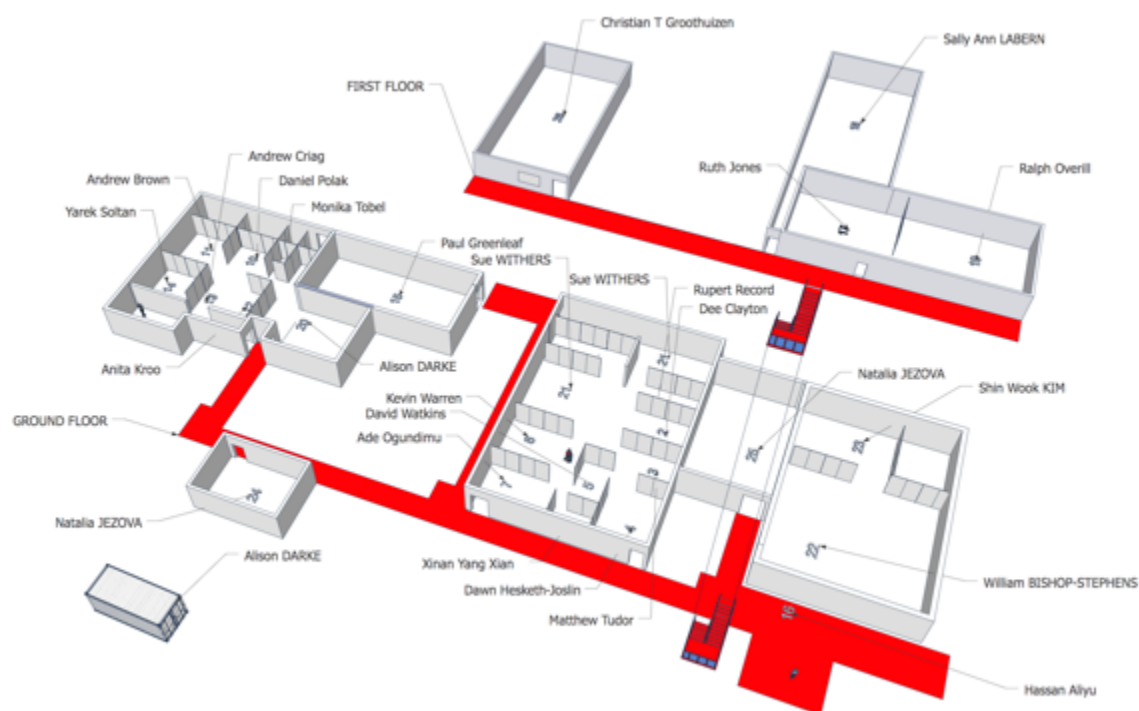
**Exhibition**  
25/6/2021 - 26/6/2021 9am - 2pm  
**by appointment only**  
RSVP [r.reed@uel.ac.uk](mailto:r.reed@uel.ac.uk)

**Will Bishop-Stephens**  
**Ali Darke**  
**Chris Groothuizen**  
**Natalia Jezova**  
**Shin Wook Kim**  
**Sally Labern**  
**Sue Withers**

Xinan Yang  
Rupert Record  
Monika Tobel  
Andrew Craig  
Daniel Polak  
Degard  
Andrew Brown  
Matthew Tudor  
Anita Kroo  
Jamie Limond  
David Watkins  
Ade Ogundimu  
Hassan Aliyu  
Dawn Hesketh-Joslin  
Ruth Jones  
K J J Warren  
Ralph Overill  
Paul Greenleaf  
Yaroslaff Soltan



**University of  
East London**



## EXHIBITION PRINTED HANDOUT

### ALI DARKE

Through drawing, sculpture, installation and moving image, Ali Darke's practice has evolved into a scenography of the inner world, responding to personal experience, memory and myth, and the evocative language of psychoanalysis.

A family history of displacement and migration has inspired theories of 'haunting' - echoes of trauma, loss and shame transmitted across generations. Psychic fragmentation has been a starting point to viscerally express pathologies of trauma, in materiality and form.

The work begins collecting discarded material, their meaning transformed, elaborated or obscured by the making processes, playing with their gravity and presence in space. Hybrid bodies vibrantly emerge, while also evoking that which dwells beyond the body.

Testing the unsettling tipping points of beauty, absurdity and abjection, she suggests a hinterland between the mind and the body where the unconscious leaves a trace. Trusting a process of free association and serendipity she discovers the unexpected and uncannily familiar.

website: [alidarke.com](http://alidarke.com)

instagram: [ali\\_darke](https://www.instagram.com/ali_darke)

email: [ali@alidarke.com](mailto:ali@alidarke.com)





## THE BEASTLIES

*linen, branches, wire, stuffing*



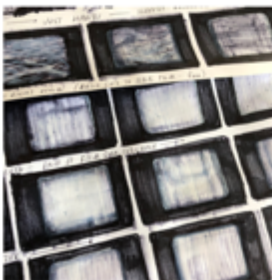
## DON'T LOOK AT ME

*display cabinets, blankets, tiles, pillow*



## THE PSYCHIC LIFE OF FRAGMENTS

*building rubble, tights, sand, stuffing*



## FREMD BIN ICH EINGEZOGEN

*short film and installation  
linen, sticks, salt*

*(in the Container space)*



Ali Darke, *Exhibition view: THE BEASTLIES*. 2021



Ali Darke, *BEASTLY I*, 2021  
Linen, sticks, upholstery stuffing, stocking, metal display stand

(exhibition photography by Andrew Moller)



Ali Darke, *BEASTLY II*, 2021  
Linen, branch, upholstery stuffing, salt, wadding, metal brackets



Ali Darke, *BEASTLY III*, 2021  
Linen, stick, root, upholstery stuffing, salt, wadding, stocking





Ali Darke, *BEASTLY IV*, 2021  
Linen, sticks, upholstery stuffing, wadding, stocking, metal stool, wood





Ali Darke, *BEASTLY V*, 2021  
Linen, branches, upholstery stuffing, salt, wadding, nails, wire, washing line



Ali Darke, *BEASTLY VI*, 2021  
Linen, branches, sticks, upholstery stuffing, salt, wadding, stocking, trestle table



Ali Darke, *Exhibition view: Don't Look At Me*, 2021



Ali Darke, *Don't Look At Me, (1)* 2021  
display cabinet, blankets



Ali Darke, *Don't Look At Me, (2)* 2021  
display cabinet, ceramic tiles





Ali Darke, *Don't Look At Me, (3)* 2021  
display cabinet, pillow





Ali Darke, *Exhibition View: Psychic Fragments*, 2021



Ali Darke, *Psychic Fragment*, 2019  
sink fragment, plug hole, stocking, builder's debris, sand, upholstery stuffing  
marble, metal stand



Ali Darke, *Psychic Fragment*, 2019  
Ceramic sink fragment, stocking, builder's debris, sand, upholstery stuffing, marble



Ali Darke, *Psychic Fragment*, 2019  
stocking, builder's debris, sand, upholstery stuffing, metal clasp





Ali Darke, *Psychic Fragment*, 2019  
sink fragment, plug hole, stocking, builder's debris, sand, upholstery stuffing  
marble, metal stand



Ali Darke, *Film Poster: Fremd bin ich eingezogen*, 2021

Film can be viewed  
<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/592987127>