

**University of Derby**

**Eccentric Abstraction: Investigations into  
the Transformation of Objects in Clay, a  
Physical Process of Emotional Repression  
and Absence**

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**Doctor of Philosophy**

**2016**

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# Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere thanks to:

My supervisor Professor Chris White for her unfailing patience, expertise and understanding.

John Tunley for his photographic expertise and for untangling my problems with Photoshop.

Steven Bell for his infinite patience and understanding in unravelling my extra-long convoluted sentences and for asking thought provoking questions.

Paul Marshall for his ceramic technical support, especially in the kiln room and for tolerating the objects which went into the kiln and the very sticky remains adhered to the kiln shelves.

Scott Green for his support with my practical work and for his expertise in helping me to install my solo exhibition.

Professor of Ceramics Sebastian Blackie for his support in the structural and chemical content of clay so that I could develop my firing programme.

Roger Davies for his technical support in the metal workshop.

Jeremy Falconer for his support in helping me to solve the practical issues of making my metal frames.

Steve Hill for reading what I had written and asking challenging questions.

And everyone else who has given me support over the last eight years of my PhD.

# Abstract

Abstraction, through the visceral awareness of material, provides an expression of sexuality, which can be distinctive in women's sculptural artwork. Lucy Lippard<sup>1</sup> hints that eccentric abstraction is an extremely potent erotic stimulus when expressed as a sensual sensation stimulated from material. This sensation is further developed in my practice as a sensual visceral awareness, which evokes a repellent aspect leaning towards the grotesque. This often imparts the viewer with a physical sensation of an intimate emotional intensity. This physical sensation experienced by the viewer can be described as *seeing a feeling* and is described by student Sara Chesterman<sup>2</sup> as how 'when people watch films they squirm. I think that the physical act of squirming is one of feeling one's own body, it is an act of distancing the sensual experience being depicted – a way of feeling your own body and sending messages to the brain.'<sup>3</sup> According to Jill Bennett<sup>4</sup> 'the squirm is in essence then, a moment of seeing feeling – the point at which one both feels and knows feeling.'<sup>5</sup>

This *squirm* can be a way of describing the trigger of an emotional response or physical sensation through material or recognition. My narrative is an autobiographical journey about my search for woman's identity and sensuality. Articulated through the manipulation of clay and personal objects (shoes), creating forms which build upon Lippard's identification of the 'extension of sensuous experience.'<sup>6</sup> As a result of the physicality of my process, with material that has a tendency to be soft and flexible with sensual implications of the sensory language of abstraction. I am drawn to the malleable nature of clay and I have coined the term *ribboned* from the ability of the clay to flow on impact with objects.

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<sup>1</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40.p. 40

<sup>2</sup> Sara Chesterman is a student of Jill Bennett, who has little surface skin sensation on her body and uses her brain to make sense of what she feels.

<sup>3</sup> Bennett, J. (2005) Emphatic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. p. 43

<sup>4</sup> Jill Bennett is Associate Professor of Art Theory and Director of the Centre for Contemporary Art and Politics at the University of South Wales, Sydney.

<sup>5</sup> Bennett, J. (2005) Emphatic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. p. 43

<sup>6</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40.p. 28

This distorts and stretches the impacted material to affect not just at the surface but spreads into the interior of the form to become twisted and deformed creating intense and complex textures. Clay intertwines with the shoes, to surround and fill their cavities resulting in a convoluted appearance, as a form of casting.

These physical manifestations of material are important in the physical containment and wrapping of objects (shoes). Exaggerated and distorted forms emerge following the act of destruction and transformation in the kiln. My theory is that these forms can be identified as female vessels, a central space in woman, created from the absence of my shoes. This erotic feature is central to my research, where distortion and exaggeration of form amplifies tension and movement in material as female awareness of the erotic, a language of sensuality.

The Eccentric Abstraction exhibition 1966<sup>7</sup> was a pivotal point of recognition for many women artists, working with this new malleable material. My research develops further on Susan Stoops<sup>8</sup> theory of the recognition of women working with abstraction together with bodily form, to supply women with an identity and a voice in their arts practice.

Abstraction of material articulates my repression and lack of identity in my marriage. In my practice this is expressed as a physicality of process, containment and distortion of material, which parallels the expression of hysteria, which I advocate in my research as a feature of women's emotional and sexual repression.

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<sup>7</sup> Held in 1966 at the Fischbach Gallery New York, curated by Lucy Lippard with accompanying essay Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40

<sup>8</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum. p.6

# Introduction

This investigation aims to extend emotional perception as a valued method of engaging with material. Touch is sometimes more relevant than visual perception as a method of discovery. This research explores how the sense of touch, a physical sensation of the body, can have an intrusive textural encounter with material to expose emotional perception to the viewer. I propose that to strongly emotionally engage with material I consider it is necessary for texture to have a sense of repulsion and intense distortion in order to be perceived as sensuous<sup>9</sup> forms and vessels as in my practice.

I suggest emotional perception has been undervalued as a method of perception in artwork,<sup>10</sup> because emotion may be associated<sup>11</sup> with women as they have been considered more emotional<sup>11</sup> than men. I illustrate this through the emotional condition of the hysteric.

The framework for this inquiry investigates the approach of some women artists to material and process through emotional expression of autobiographical and highly personal material; to express female identity through the context of 1960's Eccentric Abstraction. This research explores women's emotional expression in their artwork; I suggest it is an articulation of identity, which from a feminist point of view provides them with a voice. My choice of personal material is the interaction of the clay with the shoes, which are representative of my identity and their presence and absence support emotional interaction by the viewer.<sup>12</sup>

My practice is a narrative journey of personal discovery, from an autobiographical collection of shoes, an archive of photographs to a body of intimate porcelain forms distorted through process, observed as sensuous female vessels containing repressed sexuality. My body of work comprises eighteen fired pieces of porcelain, all identical weights (eighteen pounds of

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<sup>9</sup> To clarify, in this research references to sensual elements refer to tactility and touch and the term sensuous refers to physical sensation of material a feature of Eccentric Abstraction explored as the sensuous nature of abstraction.

<sup>10</sup> Emotional perception is discussed extensively in Chapter 4.

<sup>11</sup> Women and emotion is discussed throughout the thesis particularly in Chapter 3 and 4.

<sup>12</sup> The importance of the shoes is discussed in chapter 1 and throughout the rest of the thesis.

clay) supported by eighteen acrylic containers, set against a backdrop of eighteen photographic images of my shoes, shown in Figure 13.



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I have chosen to work with clay because of its ability to be manipulated and take on shape and texture from other objects and to flow and ribbon<sup>14</sup> on impact. My process of working in this practice based research is explained in detail in Appendix 2. Clay may start off as an amorphous bulk, a cylinder or block of raw material. But as artists we manipulate or in my case cause the clay to flow, stretch and impact with my shoes. The intensity of impact and rhythmical twisting of process causes energy to flow into the material. It is as if the emotional energy from my body flows into the clay to distort and exaggerate form as a physical process to create tension and movement, which is reliant on the soft manipulation of material. This movement in the clay I describe as distortion and the viewers of my forms often identified it as bodily flesh.<sup>15</sup> The traces left behind from the shoes after their

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<sup>13</sup> (2011) *Eighteen* solo exhibition at Derby Museum and Art Gallery

<sup>14</sup> Ribboned is a term and method of working which I have coined.

<sup>15</sup> Viewer's perception of bodily flesh is discussed in depth in Chapter 3.

destruction in the firing process impart a repulsive element of decay. This repugnant effect is observed (in Chapter 3 and 4) by the viewer as a sense of being both intrigued and repelled, which in turn produces an intrusive and deep emotional perception in my view.

My shoes are contained within the clay<sup>16</sup> and destroyed in the kiln as a process of transformation, a practice of creating absences illustrated in Figure 18; a physical process with comparable actions to the female hysteric, with implications of emotional and sexual repression. The absent spaces from the shoes create vessels, which explore the approach of 'woman the weaker vessel.'<sup>17</sup>



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<sup>16</sup> Clay is the soft malleable material as part of my process of making and porcelain is the hard state after firing.

<sup>17</sup> Fraser, A. (1984) *The Weaker Vessel*, London: George Weidenfield & Nicolson Ltd. p.1 (- a discussion of women's place in society during the 1600's.) It is the title of the book which I am referring to as a notion of woman as vessel, the weaker emotional vessel contained by hysteria.

<sup>18</sup> Porcelain Vessel - 2009 - 72 lbs of porcelain - Black knee high suede boots. After firing - the vessel has an inner and outer surface and a sense of the sexual and erotic.

Woman as vessel is a philosophical and physical idea explored through the object of my porcelain forms. The hysteric was seen as an emotional vessel contained through the physical action of her body. This is mirrored in my physical process of abstraction as I imbued distortion, tension and energy into my forms. My contained and distorted vessels illustrate Lacan's theory of the central space of woman as the centre of the world; the vagina is this central place, which contained the hysteric emotional conditions.

The wider context to this research for the sensuous distorted vessels is established in Post-Minimalism as the start of changes in a focus on women artists working with new soft materials and techniques, which led to the development of feminist contemporary artwork. The 1960s and early 1970s were a time of political change and introduced the development of the acceptance of women's art. Previously it had been difficult for women's art to be taken seriously in the male dominated art world; partly as some elements were considered of a domestic nature or seen as an absurd use of material. At this time women were striving to attain acceptance of their work and to be taken seriously and to achieve status in their art. A new artistic language with a new set of rules was developed by women artists during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Apart from Pincus-Witten's writings on Post-Minimalism, which were published in the 1970s critical discourse did not widely include the term Post-Minimalism until the 1990s connected it to the rise of feminism, which was confirmed in Stoops' exhibition catalogue.<sup>19</sup> Stoops broadly recognised the absence of the mingling of feminism and abstraction though she found this 'too problematic for critical consideration'<sup>20</sup> and was broadly missing from contemporary discourse. This research extends Stoops critical analysis and dialogue of women's abstraction of material, which is correlated to the physical body.

Post-Minimalism moved its focus away from the critical acceptance of the male dominated geometric form, towards a more liberal and inclusive view of art which encompasses emotional expression of experience, through material and process. Female artists had been

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<sup>19</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum, p. 7

<sup>20</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum, p. 7

infrequently recognised and often only accepted when they repressed the emotional and expressive nature of their work. Between 1966 and 1967 Chicago was 'struggling to deny anything in my work that could mark me as a woman,'<sup>21</sup> she fought against expressing her emotions and played down the expressive content of her work,<sup>22</sup> instead her work was dominated by the minimalist industrial materials of plastic and metal with a perfect finish, lacking the expressive touch of the artist.

The expressive use of material and process of Post-Minimalism is the framework for my exploration through autobiographical material. My thesis extends my practice of working with clay to investigate texture drawn from substances, which create tactility formed through a physical process. This is discussed using the theories of hysteria as an interaction with physical expression; intertwined with the critic and poet Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's tactile material, a *texture of emotion*, and theorist Roland Barthes *Punctum* of emotion. The examples used in this research from theorists and critics are not exhaustive of all available material, but I have selected those that I feel are most relevant to my ideas and practice.

A contemporary woman artist exploring texture and touch is ceramicist Bonnie Kemske's whose research features touch through both her own body and that of the viewer in her ceramic hug. I suggest that this tactility, as textural form stimulates emotional perception and this is illustrated in the thinking of Yujin Lee and Paul Duncum<sup>23</sup> as female perception arising from the tactile along with historian Nicholas Chare who explores the *sexing of material*, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

Women's consideration of material as an illustration of personal experience of identity I suggest is associated to feminism. One definition of Feminism is 'the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes,'<sup>24</sup> as a significant aspect of independence. There have been many other definitions of Feminism, but for the purpose of this thesis; the importance for me is women taking ownership of their identity and developing a voice for

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<sup>21</sup> Chicago, J. (1975) (2006) *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*, London: Universe, Inc p. 42

<sup>22</sup> discussed in Chapter 4

<sup>23</sup> Lee, Y. and P. Duncum (2011) *Coming to Our Senses: Revisiting the Haptic as a Perceptual System*, *International Journal of Education Through Art*, vol.7, no.3, pp. 233-244.p.235.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/feminism>

themselves, rather than having an aggressive stance against men. Influences from Feminism will have an effect on this thesis and will be discussed throughout.

In chapter 1, I investigate my work and myself as an artist. It is the implication of the malleable nature of clay, and the significance of its ability to ribbon and flow on impact with objects (my shoes) that reveal the sensuous experience of material; formed as texture from soft flowing clay to become hard and sharp edged porcelain after firing. Marks and shapes are left as imprints in the clay a tactile physical language of the sensual texture of material.

This sensuous aspect of material is investigated in Chapter 2 around the concepts of Eccentric Abstraction. This chapter looks in more detail at the significance of my practice in relation to Eccentric Abstraction and how the physical bodily feature of material can be extended to include emotional perception.

In chapter 3 I consider in more detail this physical approach to material and form, which evokes a visceral response communicated by the physical manipulation and transformation of material, a form of abstraction conveyed as an instinctive language of the sensuous. This is explored in my practice as female bodily sensuality and is conveyed through the senses as an intimacy of form, a sexually implicit communication found in the negative spaces formed from absence of the shoes. This sensuous sensation can be felt by some viewers as an extremely potent erotic stimulus to evoke a repellent aspect as a feeling of a squirm. This repellent feature in my porcelain forms is reliant on texture and distortion of form as emotional perception of material.

These first three chapters of the thesis develop a visceral approach to material; in chapter 1 My Work, Myself as an Artist, I explore abstraction, as a language of material, which has evolved in my practice, through the malleability of clay as distortion by the stretch and flow of impacted substance against objects (shoes). Chapter 2 explores The Significance of Eccentric Abstraction in regard to Lippard's physical sensation of material as a visceral response. Leading to Chapter 3 as Material and Form, Which Evokes a Visceral Response to Identity exploring womens visceral approach to their bodies. In Chapter 4 - Do the Forms Impart a Female Bodily and Emotional Reaction in the Viewer as a Response to Touch? relating to why the viewer is observed in the fourth chapter as identifying a female sensitivity and feels an emotional perception to the forms.

This emotional response is partly transmitted from my shoes, which are physically contained and texturally wrapped within the clay. The constraint of wrapping could be associated with fetishism, which can be concerned with covering as a layer of containment, 'to be almost completely covered by a second skin.'<sup>25</sup> The texture of material is also significant as 'the fetish can also be a type of material,'<sup>26</sup>an exaggeration of some sort. 'By the early nineteenth century, the term fetish had been extended to refer to anything that was irrationally worshipped'<sup>27</sup> and could involve 'an abnormal attraction to items of clothing such as high-heeled shoes.'<sup>28</sup> I am not suggesting that my body of work has fetishist tendencies, but the implication of texture and containment of material which expresses characteristics of the female body as identity together with the absence of the shoes to reveal uncomfortable sexually implicit internal spaces leaves this inference.

Historian Valerie Steele explores the Fetish in connection to fashion, the view of 'fashion designer Helen Storey argued that since all clothes carry gender messages.'<sup>29</sup> The declaration of being female through shoes or dress can allow a woman to generate a power in her difference to the male rather than being exploited. I suggest that it should not be about the notion of exploitation or submission but rather the focus on identity and a sense of added confidence brought about by the way we feel in what we wear. 'Fashion has never been simply about body parts, but about identity. (As our sense of ourselves changes so also do our clothes.)'<sup>30</sup> I would maintain though that it is also about what is underneath our clothes and many women either try to hide or emphasise parts of their bodies.<sup>31</sup> Louise Bourgeois in her poem *Mastery* writing about her feelings of trying to achieve states that 'I

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<sup>25</sup> Steele, V. (1996) *Fetish, Fashion, Sex and Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.169

<sup>26</sup> Steele, V. (1996) *Fetish, Fashion, Sex and Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.26

<sup>27</sup> Steele, V. (1996) *Fetish, Fashion, Sex and Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.5

<sup>28</sup> Steele, V. (1996) *Fetish, Fashion, Sex and Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.5

<sup>29</sup> Steele, V. (1996) *Fetish, Fashion, Sex and Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.42

<sup>30</sup> Steele, V. (1996) *Fetish, Fashion, Sex and Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.188

<sup>31</sup> This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 on p.89, p.90 and p.93.

want to show',<sup>32</sup> this could be a reference to wanting to exhibit her artwork or a more personal reference to wanting to be visible as a woman.

My focus on identity in my practice starts with my shoes and as a woman wearing high heels I feel more assertive and sexually attractive. Lee Wright observed how feminists saw the stiletto as an '*object of exploitation*.'<sup>33</sup> During the 1950's it was representative of the powerless female but from 1957 it became a feature of 'liberation' and the movement against traditional responsibilities.;<sup>34</sup> The stiletto<sup>35</sup> emphasised the female shape of her body drawing on the difference in gender between the male and the female. I have found women aspire in high heels to feel more attractive; however, these are not realistic in a practical life of domesticity, where comfort becomes more important.

My mainly domestic collection of shoes gave me a sense of security. French theorist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard describes how collecting objects help us in our '*relentless passage from birth to death*'<sup>36</sup> by surrounding ourselves with objects we can find an emotional sense of security, safety and a sense of belonging. It helps to assuage loneliness and give a purpose to our existence.

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<sup>32</sup> 'Freud Museum - Louise Bourgeois' writings in *The Return of the Repressed*, Freud Museum, London 8 March to 27 May 2012

<sup>33</sup>Wright, L. (1989) *Objectifying Gender: The Stiletto Heel*, from Attfield, J. (ed) and P. Kirkham, (ed) (1989) *A View from the Interior, Feminism, Women and Design*, London: The Women's Press Ltd. p.7

<sup>34</sup> Wright, L.(1989) *Objectifying Gender: The Stiletto Heel*, from Attfield, J. (ed) and P. Kirkham, (ed) (1989) *A View from the Interior, Feminism, Women and Design*, London: The Women's Press Ltd. p.13

<sup>35</sup> According to Lee Wright the stiletto heel is seen as exclusively female even when worn by the male, an entirely female image of an object. It is the meaning behind the wearing of certain objects that is important and at this point Wright is connecting the wearing of stilettos as a stereotype of female subordination. Wright, L.(1989) *Objectifying Gender: The Stiletto Heel*, from Attfield, J. (ed) and P. Kirkham, (ed) (1989) *A View from the Interior, Feminism, Women and Design* London: The Women's Press Ltd. p.8 The stiletto also was found to cause many medical problems connected to the change in posture from wearing these high heels; a posture, which is associated with female sexuality. When the stiletto shaped shoe was introduced in the early 1950s it was only associated with the feminine but later women wore the stiletto to break away from this traditional image in an aggressive stance as a '*modern*' woman.. Wright, L.(1989) *Objectifying Gender: The Stiletto Heel*, from Attfield, J. (ed) and P. Kirkham, (ed) (1989) *A View from the Interior, Feminism, Women and Design*, London: The Women's Press Ltd. p.13

<sup>36</sup> Baudrillard,J.(1994) *The System of Collecting* in Elsner, J. and R. Cardinal (1994) *The Cultures of Collecting*, London, Reaktion Books Ltd. p.16

The death of the physical form of my shoes demonstrates the emotional presence of loss and absence as an illustration of mortality symbolised in the destruction of my shoes. This is clarified through Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection as both loss and pleasure.<sup>37</sup> The loss of the shoes occurs through a process of transformation, which is crucial in forming the sensual forms, which both repel and intrigue the viewer. This conflicting impression originated in the unattractiveness of the shoes and the forms is pertinent to the expression of emotion and female identity. A focus on unattractiveness as a sensual aspect of material provides a sense of the erotic, which Lippard saw as based on - 'aspects of surrealism.'<sup>38</sup>

The characteristics of women's Surrealism are very different to the work of male Surrealist artists. Male Surrealists have been criticised for living 'in their own masculine world, with their eyes closed, the better to construct their male phantasms of the feminine...These masculine dreams play an active part in patriarchy's misogynistic positioning of women.'<sup>39</sup> Rudolf Kuenzli<sup>40</sup> sees male Surrealists as having a misogynistic view when confronted by the female body; they respond with a fear of their own 'castration, fears the dissolution of his ego. In order to overcome his fears, he fetishizes the female figure, he deforms, disfigures, manipulates her; he literally manhandles her in order to re-establish his own ego.'<sup>41</sup>

This dominated view of women by male Surrealists establishes the presence of sexual difference, which will be discussed throughout this thesis as 'the emotional distinctions between male and female. Men were considered to be 'rational' beings while women were 'emotional' creatures dominated by their feelings and biological roles.'<sup>42</sup> Whereas women Surrealist artists<sup>43</sup> have tended to challenge the ordinary and use material as a vehicle for

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<sup>37</sup> Kristeva's theory of abjection is discussed in more detail in Chapter 1 on p.39.

<sup>38</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.28

<sup>39</sup> Kuenzli, R. (1990) *Surrealism and Misogyny*, *Dada/Surrealism* 18 (1990) pp.17-26. p.18

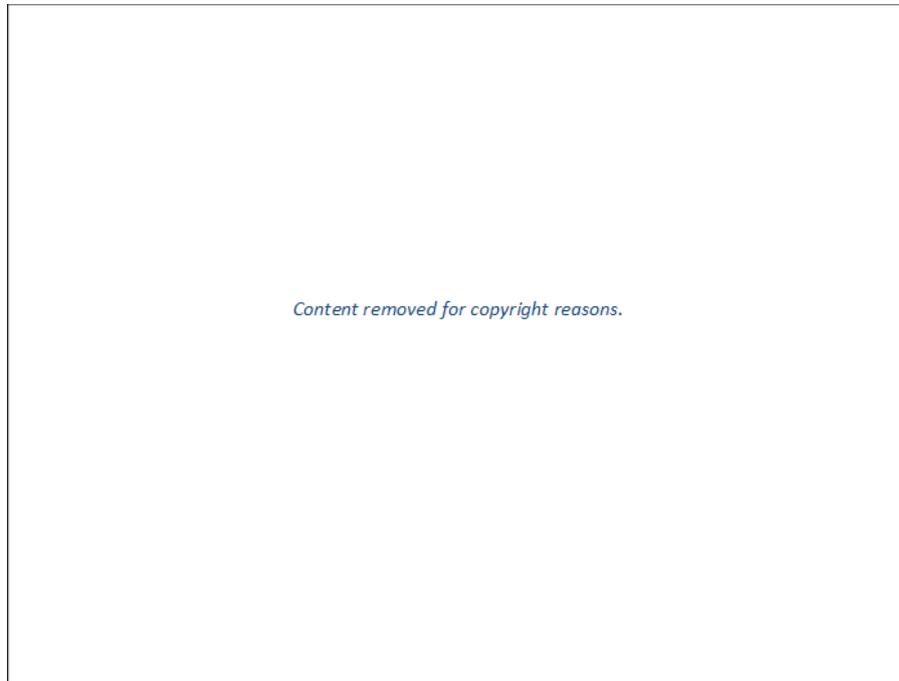
<sup>40</sup> Rudolf Kuenzli is Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of the International Dada Archive at the University of Iowa.

<sup>41</sup> Kuenzli, R. (1990) *Surrealism and Misogyny*, *Dada/Surrealism* 18 (1990) pp.17-26. p.24

<sup>42</sup> Bennett, N. University of Miami, Art History, Graduate Student  
[https://www.academia.edu/9094927/Barely\\_Disfigured\\_The\\_Subjectivity\\_of\\_Women\\_Representation\\_of\\_Woman\\_and\\_Surrealist\\_Art](https://www.academia.edu/9094927/Barely_Disfigured_The_Subjectivity_of_Women_Representation_of_Woman_and_Surrealist_Art) Accessed 24/04/16

<sup>43</sup> discussed in Chapter 1 and 3

transformation into forms that present themselves as distorted and fragmented parts of the body often with a grotesque and physically sensuous component. This is illustrated in Figure 44, Dorothea Tanning's *Rainy Day Canapé*, made of soft tweed material.



In my porcelain forms I have sought to develop this surreal aspect, which is found in the distortion and fragmentation of material, as a process of transformation of soft material to create a sense of the erotic as implicit intuitive responses to fleshy body parts. According to Katherine Conley surrealist work has a tendency to be 'enhanced by a heightened awareness of the sense of touch.'<sup>45</sup>

Physical process and the properties of soft material correlated to the theories of Post-Minimalism have drawn me to challenge through my practical work, the contemporary experience of making and viewing sculptural ceramics. To develop new ways of working with and experiencing sculptural forms as a personal approach to material and process. In Eva Hesse's work, her expression of personal experience is created through working with soft and flexible materials. She was one of the first to recognise the new materials of Post-

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<sup>44</sup> content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>45</sup> Conley, K. (2013) *Surrealist Ghostliness*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press. p.230

Minimalism as '*emotionally saturated*.'<sup>46</sup> These materials tended to be cheap, pliable and limp; sewn or laced together reflecting the traditions of female domesticity.

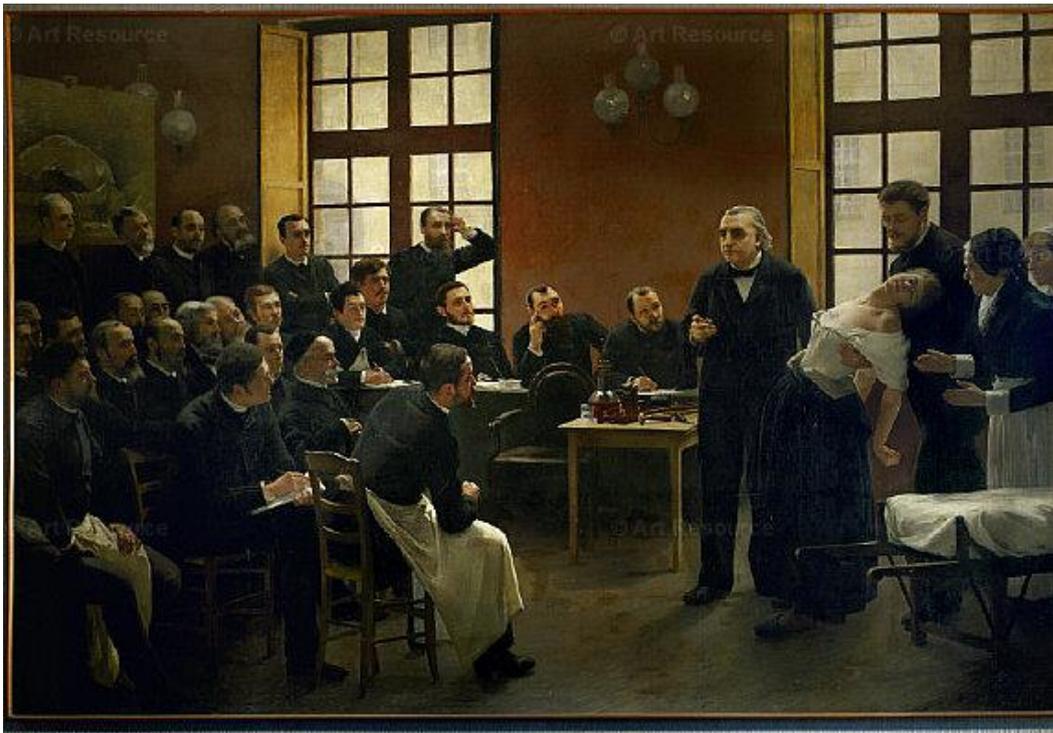
As a journey of exploration, through material and process this research touches on aspects of psychoanalysis. Hysteria is an expression of female emotion, released through the body without verbal expression 'communicating through the body messages that cannot be verbalised.'<sup>47</sup> Feminist, and writer on cultural and social issues Elaine Showalter describes how Feminist historian Carroll Smith – Rosenberg sees female hysteria as resulting 'from sex-role conflicts that emerged in the nineteenth century.'<sup>48</sup> This physicality of communicating emotion is an important feature of how I physically make my work; the repetitive movement of my body and the consumed energy are parallel to the disturbed outpourings of the hysteric. One of the themes in this research explores how hysteria illustrates female emotional expression and sexual repression. The containment and distortion of my material symbolises the female hysteric's repression and emotion as loss and pain. Hysteria was conveyed through physical action, an element of darkness in the way women were treated and the act of mute physical expression was documented photographically as a physical presentation of emotions, a nonverbal affect.

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<sup>46</sup> Pincus-Witten, R. (1971) Eva Hesse: Post-minimalism into Sublime, *Art forum*, vol. X, no. 3, p. 34

<sup>47</sup> Gilman, S. And H. King, R.Porter, G.S. Rousseau, E. Showalter,(1995) *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, London: University of California Press. p.286

<sup>48</sup> Gilman, S. And H. King, R.Porter, G.S. Rousseau, E. Showalter,(1995) *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, London: University of California Press. p.302



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Figure 49 shows how French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot displayed to an audience his female hysteric patient's intense physical emotion; if aware they would have felt extremely disadvantaged in the thrall of the male gaze.

The containment of the hysteric is conveyed in my practical work in the porcelain forms as an eccentricity of abstracted material of *woman as vessel*. It is this connection to the physical body, identified by Stoops (1996) which is linked to the abstraction of material and process.

This research contributes to a shift of knowledge in the bodily abstraction of material as a sense of sexuality and sensuality, which is established in Lippard's essay. I extend this thinking to include the material *texture of emotion* as explored by Sedgwick and I investigate how this relates to understanding material as a tactility of distortion. I further develop Stoops<sup>50</sup> theory of the recognition of women working with abstraction as a language of material; to impart women with an identity and a voice as a *tactile emotion*. Clay is my voice.

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<sup>49</sup>Jean-Martin Charcot demonstrating hysteria in a patient at the Salpêtrière hospital, 1887  
<http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/techniques/hysteria>

<sup>50</sup>Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum. p.6

## Chapter 1 - My Work, Myself as an Artist

Abstraction, as a language of material, has evolved in my practice, through the malleability of clay in Figure 55. Texture is generated as distortion by the ribboning<sup>51</sup> and stretch of the impacted substance against objects and the engagement of my physical body. This encounter with the flow of material<sup>52</sup> is central to creating exaggeration and tension, which penetrates to the very core of my porcelain forms.<sup>53</sup> This tension results in a distorted physical quality, which can express emotion and bodily sensuality.



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### Description of my Practice

Building on the Post-Minimalist approach to soft material I work with the plasticity of porcelain to develop a language of material based on an irregularity of texture, which is formed as a distinctive practice of collision, between clay and shoes to create irregular forms containing impacted vestiges of textile and shoes.

These forms are solid large pieces of clay enclosing the shoes; containing metal and other substances, which are not traditionally compatible to being fired in the kiln.

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<sup>51</sup> This term has been explained in the abstract

<sup>52</sup> I have explored this flow of material in my practice with two different types of clay interlocked as one form, this is discussed in the Appendix.

<sup>53</sup> The scientific understanding of material as part of future research is discussed in Appendix 4

<sup>54</sup> Convoluted and ribboning effect of porcelain

My procedure challenges the tradition of hollowed forms, of regular thickness; instead pushing boundaries to develop techniques of firing solid pieces to create substantial ceramic artwork.<sup>55</sup>

This body of work in Figure 58 *Eighteen*: consists of eighteen vessels, supported by eighteen acrylic containers with metal frames above with eighteen photographic images displayed behind each container. This timeline of shoe images depicts my journey through life<sup>56</sup>; a systematic documentation of the shoes I had bought and worn over many years. 'By destroying her shoes Jayne appears to be defining the present by containing the past'<sup>57</sup>.



The shoes reflect my physical presence, they are symbolic of me, but in the process of making *Eighteen* they have been destroyed in the kiln at 1280°, leaving only traces of the

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<sup>55</sup> My innovation, explores a mix of working with clay and object, I can find little mention of artists apart from Ceramicist Gillian Lowndes who mixed clay with found objects. Her objects were not completely destroyed in the kiln and stay relatively unaffected. 'Fire resistant nichrome wire would be wrapped around meticulously-worked and decorated clay to make disturbingly and menacing objects. ...From this time on ,wire became as important as clay in the finished objects and ultimately, it was replaced by unfired bristle, introduced into tiny holes in fired porcelain or stoneware.' Birks, T. (2011) Gillian Lowndes 1936-2010) A Remembrance by Tony Birks, *Ceramics: Art and Perception* no. 84, pp, 106-107. pp.107.

<sup>56</sup> A repetitive format arranged in the chronological order of the date of purchase. This ordered, rational arrangement suggests an archive showing the past existence of the shoes and was used as a resource to view the absent shoes.

<sup>57</sup> Dunning, L. (2011) Derby Museum and Art Gallery Interpretation Panels.

<sup>58</sup> (2011) My solo exhibition *Eighteen* at Derby Museum and Art Gallery

fabric integrated into the resulting porcelain vessels. As sensual porcelain convex forms, which evoke the female body; and the repeated hard-edged acrylic and metal shapes suggest traits normally attributed to the *masculine* and symbolise the shoe-box as contained. I explore these metaphors in a later section. The viewer does identify the female gendered quality of my forms as 'they make me think of female identity' ...'more female than male due to the rounder, folding quality of the clay and the concave nature of the absences of the shoes , as the twisting contorted forms do have a sense more of the female body.'<sup>59</sup> Comments from viewers interpret as 'the contortions exhibit female gender. A male 'gender' is less easy to ascertain, but evident in the 'enveloping' of the clay.'<sup>60</sup>

The Post-Minimalist focus on process and material is combined with the repetition of Minimalist principles, which are part of my creative process<sup>61</sup>, this repetition provides me with security, laying out my methodology; my feet are nine inches long, and two times nine equals eighteen. I also use eighteen pounds of porcelain for each form. The first pair of shoes in the sequence dates from when I was eighteen, the moment I celebrated the point I entered adult hood.

The eighteen acrylic, geometric structures act as containers to enclose a narrative of female autobiographical difference. The containers with their clear smooth surfaces lack any trace of manufacture. But they have a figurative association of scale to myself, enclosing and containing the personal remains of the shoes cremated in the kiln. Their height is related to that of my body, whilst their length and width reflect those of a shoe-box. The metal frame which is placed on the top of the acrylic container constricts and contains the intimate porcelain form, evoking the tension between masculine and feminine.

In my practice I physically struggle with my material (clay), it is physically difficult to handle and the sheer weight and volume takes a serious physical toll on my body. But this determined personal struggle achieves convoluted twisted forms as an expression of my

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<sup>59</sup> Sample description t from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants

<sup>60</sup> Sample description t from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants

<sup>61</sup> My process is explained further in the Appendix

personal  
results are  
forms  
female  
Figure 62.<sup>62</sup>

My choice of  
because of  
purity, not  
symbolic  
aesthetic  
blank piece  
traces left  
colour and  
against the

Porcelain has  
withstand  
the kiln; the  
vitrify to  
melting. The  
sense of  
becomes  
exposing a  
like quality.  
the feeling of  
curves of the



experience. The  
organic, unpredictable  
suggestive of the  
(body), illustrated in

clay, as porcelain was  
its whiteness, its  
because of any  
meaning but as an  
choice, to start with a  
of paper, allowing the  
behind with their  
texture to stand out  
white of the porcelain.

the ability to  
high temperatures in  
body of clay starts to  
almost the point of  
porcelain takes on a  
permanence and  
extremely resilient  
glassy edge, a bone-  
In contrast it evokes  
skin and resembles  
body: an experience

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<sup>62</sup> five- 1990's-Navy leather Ecco- flat slip on's

of intimacy with a translucent depth of milkiness, as an anthropomorphic sense of flesh illustrative of me.

## **The Autobiographical Context for my Work**

The foundation of this research and the making of this body of practical work are heavily influenced by a determination to achieve independence, self-respect and appreciation as an artist. My lack of confidence was exacerbated by an unpleasant end of a long unhappy marriage. My practice has helped me explore my identity and was a key to how I approached this body of work. The progression of the work mirrored my journey of discovery, conquering the fear of the unknown and learning ultimately that I was allowed to be me.

During the latter stages of my marriage I was persuaded by my husband and mother that I was mentally ill and should seek treatment. This was an approach which was intent on persuading me of my problem, rather than an understanding by them both that I could no longer fulfil the emotional support demanded by my husband, alongside a working role in my husband's business, and being a housewife and mother.

Only 17 years ago at the end of the 1990's while visiting regularly through my work a nursing home, I met a lady who staff told me had ended up there years before and had become 'institutionalised' and never left. Staff suggested there wasn't actually very much wrong with her, apart from that she didn't know how to live anywhere else. I have a strong memory of her sitting opposite the nurse's office door holding her handbag and waiting. She usually sat in the same place and would often tell me where I could find staff.

Towards the end of my marriage my husband sent me to a psychoanalyst to make me better, it was inferred that I was mentally ill as our marriage wasn't working and it must be me that had 'issues'. I think about this now when I read about Charcot's women suffering from hysteria and the harsh treatment of them, which is discussed in more detail on (p. 83) of my thesis. Hopefully now with the passage of time this means that there is improved treatment and understanding for those lost and those we don't understand. David Maisel's found copper canisters (p.137) contain the unclaimed and lost remains of unknown persons

from a mental hospital, they are so fragile and hold such intense beauty verging on the repellent; from traces of human decay. This containment and decay I use to illustrate the deliberately confined, lost and misunderstood women hysterics and is part of the rationale for me to explore these emotional themes within my practice and subsequent writings in my thesis. There but for the grace of God there go I.

During this period of my life, repetitive domestic tasks gave me a sense of security and the replication of the photographs and my forms in my practice balances my repetition of process as a reinforcement of this safety mechanism. This became part of my identity and is expressed through my artwork.

All experiences shape us and to preserve our identity we express emotions. I felt that I had failed to make things work, yet I also felt that I had worked hard to make my marriage a success, which was my one aim in life at that time.

This characterises how after my marriage I worked to explore new ways of 'being' and trying to stop the destructive cycle of domesticity and guilt. The shoes represented my identity and many were 'sensible' domestic styles. I initially examined my collection of shoes when I had health issues which meant that I found it difficult to wear some of my shoes because of severe back pain.

My work investigates my search for freedom and an individual identity. I was trying to distance myself from my past – in developing the work I developed myself, albeit unconsciously. Through this process I was attempting to disassociate myself with those 'dowdy' and rather unflattering images of my shoes. This perceived identity; I believe was revealed in the shoes which, at the point of destruction in the kiln, a death, enabled my past to be consumed. I describe how in my work, it is the parting with something that feels a part of myself, which has such a sense of loss in an emotional way but I also have a need to want to retain some element of this. There can be no comparison to the loss of a person, but the loss of a relationship can arouse a sense of such insurmountable pain and desolation, alongside an emotional longing for the return of something lost.

In a similar way to the loss of my youthful identity, though my attitude to these physical changes is complex as now I am older, I feel more confident with a sexual image in an older

body. My journey of discovery in my search for identity was largely about understanding how we make our own choices and actions and take responsibility for consequences from these accepted choices as the path to freedom.

In retrospect I can see how I wanted to make changes to my life. How as human beings we are 'equipped' with innate affective responses, which bias him to want to remain alive and to resist death, to want sexual experiences, to want to experience novelty and to resist boredom, to want to communicate, to be close to and in contact with others of his species.<sup>63</sup> This body of writing examines how my artwork expresses such hoped for changes as the transformation of my shoes into female vessels, where ironically, the least sexier style of shoe - a flat navy slip on; worn completely for practicality and work, a domestic lifestyle; underwent the most dramatic transformation in the kiln and in 'death' turned itself into the most obviously sexually implicit piece.

Does man see woman as a vessel and her vagina as a space to be filled by him to fulfil his needs and desires? Would man like to fill the woman completely with himself and his sperm as this has an element of control? Do I desire these vessels to be filled by man as they were filled by the object of the shoes? There is an element of sexuality in my work and this has associations to working through difficult and failed relationships, as an empty space and the exploration of myself as a female vessel encompassing emotional triggers. The importance of this central space as a female vessel is discussed in more detail in the thesis (p.32).

I have struggled emotionally to achieve and after installing my artwork in my solo exhibition (2011) I realised that I needed to get the floor cleaned but didn't want to ask for help. The only bowl that was available was small, hardly bigger than a pudding bowl, so with a small cloth I worked repetitively, tile by tile, and over two hours until I had washed the whole gallery floor despite physical pain. This was such a great effort and seemed a never ending task but it gave me a feeling of ownership of the whole space. When I looked at the completed installed exhibition I felt a huge sense of achievement. I had at some difficult

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<sup>63</sup> Tomkins, S. (1962) *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, New York: Springer publishing Company.p.27

stages found help but it had been my driving force, my inspiration and my hard work which had completed this artwork. I felt a sense of joy at my achievement on the opening night and this was reinforced by the supportive reaction of the visitors to my exhibition. I had pushed myself to follow my journey of discovery and now this text is exploring what informed my practice and the context for my thoughts and work.

## **Intimate Spaces**

My process creates the sense of fleshy tissue, which is intensified by porcelain's ability to *ribbon*<sup>64</sup> - instigating creases, crevices and folds. The porcelain spreads and flows around and into the shoes with the force of impact against the floor to form interior spaces with a sense of loss. The proportion of clay to shoes is significant and this is discussed in more detail as process in the Appendix on process.

The properties of the substance from which the shoes are made also make a difference to the internal spaces. My porcelain forms give a sense of having been opened up to take out the shoes and viewers have questioned me about this. They would like to see inside to explore what is inside, shown in Figure 66 with the anticipation of what is or has been contained. 'Some of the created spaces are quite contorted and exploration by eye is an insufficient exploration of the spaces. Adding a sense of touch could allow a very intimate and tactile exploration' of these inner spaces'.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> I have found that porcelain is more malleable than many other types of clay and is less likely to tear or split.

<sup>65</sup> Sample description t from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants



Some viewers found this sense of intimacy intrusive.<sup>67</sup> Gaston Bachelard<sup>68</sup> is one example of descriptions of the intimate inside of small spaces<sup>69</sup> as intriguing, as boxes, chests and small caskets when closed they take their 'place in exterior space.'<sup>70</sup> When opened 'the dimension of intimacy – has just opened up.'<sup>71</sup> A viewer responded to my forms that 'they spoke to me. The interior spaces had a strange allure that I wanted to somehow enter into.'<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Image from - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants

<sup>67</sup> Spoken comments from - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants

<sup>68</sup> The examples used in this research from theorists and critics are not exhaustive of all available material, but I have selected those that I feel are most relevant to my ideas and practice.

<sup>69</sup> In my practice I have explored intimate small interior spaces, ears and mouths. This body of work is referred to in the Appendix.

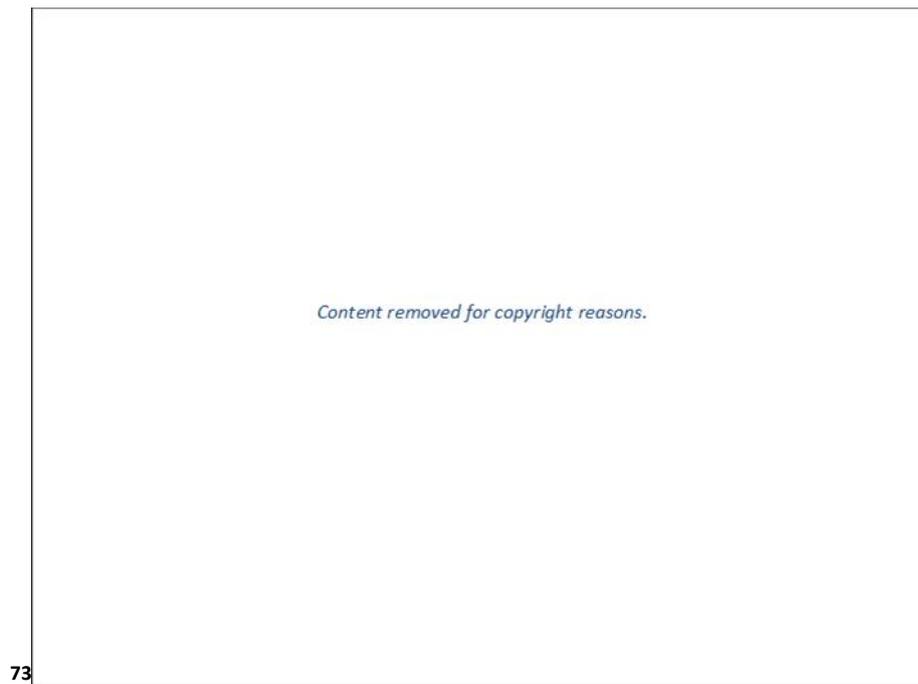
<sup>70</sup> Bachelard, G (1994) *The Poetics of Space*, Massachusetts; Beacon Press. p.85

<sup>71</sup> Bachelard, G (1994) *The Poetics of Space*, Massachusetts; Beacon Press. p.85

<sup>72</sup> Sample description t from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 -8 February 2016

## Sensuous and Sexuality of Material

This intimacy in my artwork, a sensual concave space communicating absence, signifies an empty void a metaphor for myself, creating a distorted vessel, indicative of visceral flesh. It is this visceral nature of material, which in my artwork communicates sexuality as the perception of flesh.



Similar bodily connections to material are poignant and reminiscent of how artist Louise Bourgeois expressed her *sensuous* forms. Bourgeois used sexuality in her work and 'her most famous and most photographed 'erotic'<sup>74</sup> work is her latex sculpture Fillette in Figures 73 and 76, which playfully confuses genders. Bourgeois utilities latex in her work, which has very different properties to clay in my practice, but the importance to this research, is that both materials are flexible and supple with the ability to be representational of skin and flesh. As new soft expressive material, established in Eccentric Abstraction, and identified

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<sup>73</sup> Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>74</sup> Showalter, E. (2007) Lumps, Bumps, Bulbs, Bubbles, Bulges, Slits, Turds, Coils, Craters, Wrinkles and Holes, Tate etc, Autumn 2007, issue 11, pp.54-59. <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/lumps-bumps-bulbs-bubbles-bulges-slits-turds-coils-craters-wrinkles-and>. Accessed 18/01/16

by Lippard where she refers to this type of material as intimating sensuous 'physical sensations,'<sup>75</sup>

*Content removed for copyright reasons.*

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<sup>75</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.34

<sup>76</sup> Content removed for copyright reasons.

## Women's Physicality of Expression

My shoes are contained within the soft clay: restricted. It is the symbol of restriction and containment together with texture, which suggests a bodily association to emotion, formed through intense physical action. The manipulation of my clay is a parallel act, to how the hysteric emotionally contorts herself in the ritual of hysteria<sup>77</sup> as an act of sexual repression. The physicality of containment, Hammond identifies as '...a very physical activity, involving the whole body and ultimately contributes to the abstract sensual sense of the finished piece.'<sup>78</sup> The action of wrapping by its very nature creates something inside. Porcelain clay is supple and by surrounding the shoes with this material it acts as a protection or insulation and when destroyed the shoes leave a space as a form of vessel. Thus abstraction as the physical combination of object and clay through firing generates sensual and sexual vessels, which are distinctive to my practice. In Moira Vincentelli's book on *Women and Ceramics Gendered Vessels*, she indicates 'the long-standing relationship between woman and vessel'<sup>79</sup> as a common metaphor for the female.

This female space, as emptiness, an exposed cavity, a hollow vessel; twisted and tormented, as a convoluted shape. A pure white porcelain vessel, containing imprints of the shoes and formed from their physical existence, a response to mental anguish, it is the shape of me inside the shoes; the importance in my artwork, is that I am that space.

## Female Vessel

The formation of the space exposes the texture and indentations in the porcelain; representative of a vessel, a symbol of the most central and intimate space of woman. Theorised by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, he describes woman as the centre of the world, the space inside her is important as she is different to man, she has no phallus, but

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<sup>77</sup> Hysteria as a concept is explored in detail in chapter 3.

<sup>78</sup> Hammond, H. (1984) *Wrappings, Essays on Feminism, Art and the Martial Arts*. New York: Mussmann Bruce Publishers. p. 82

<sup>79</sup> Vincentelli, M. (2000) *Women and Ceramics Gendered Vessels*, Manchester: Manchester University Press. p.254.

instead an innermost point, a vessel, exposed by the absence in my artwork, of the shoes (shown in Figure 80) creating an intimate space for reflection.



80

This aspect of *woman as vessel* is defined in my work as *emotional containers*, or as literary critic Lynn Sukenick terms the ‘receptacles of feeling.’<sup>81</sup> This idea in my practice of a container or receptacle, which contains emotion and is constructed of texture is identified by Sedgwick, as derived from a connection between texture and emotion; imparted by physical contact and the need to touch. I texturally constrain and wrap my shoes with the soft porcelain. The interior is exposed when the shoes are burnt away and this act of wrapping, a way of describing my process to use the material as a covering, a textural layer, is theorised by Sedgwick as a *texture of emotions*, which is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. This abstraction of flexible material, the porcelain as a process of envelopment in my practice gives significance in the exploration of the covering and texture of objects. This is related to how clothing functions and the importance of it to the body, as

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<sup>80</sup> Ten - 2000 - brown leather - Joseph Seibel sandals - for comfort but black dye stained my feet - bought in Ashbourne when sent away for two weeks as considered ill.

<sup>81</sup>Sidonie Smith Subjectivity, Identity and the Body, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. p.15 Sukenick, 19<sup>th</sup> Century notions of male and female epistemological differences p.37-38- note 51

the interaction between textile and flesh. The texture of pubic hair can be seen as a covering, like fabric becoming relevant to fetishism as discussed by Freud.

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<sup>82</sup> Content removed for copyright reasons.

In Figure 82 de Monchaux's work has a suggestion of the weaving of genital hair as a covering, an intimate female process. Reliant on the way the ribbons have been woven through an absurd collection of repeated metal components to provide an eccentric sensation of female genitalia. This sense of eccentricity, an absurd perception of the unfamiliar is discussed further in chapter 2 as how Eccentric Abstraction confronts the viewer and is reliant completely on sensation from the material of the artwork. Writer Anne Hamlyn has selected this artwork in her essay<sup>83</sup> as part of her discussion from a sensory point of view, of the way fetish as a covering can be attributed to the feel and texture of material, which can 'suggest, enhance, and draw attention to what it adorns.'<sup>84</sup> . I am suggesting that in order to communicate a level of sexuality in my artwork, this is reliant on the uncovering of the intimate space, the female vessel. This can also be seen in Freud's perception of how the foot or shoe can be seen as a fetish object. In Freud's work *Fetishism* the young boy is seen as looking up from the level of the shoes to:

fur and velvet are as we have long been suspected - fixation on the sight of pubic hair, which should have been followed by the longed-for sight of the female member; pieces of underwear, so commonly adopted as fetishes, capture the moment of undressing, the last point at which the woman could still be regarded as phallic.<sup>85</sup>

From Freud's point of view, the undressing gives rise to the discovery that the female has been castrated, she has no phallus. The clothing is associated to parts of the body, as a female gender difference and the importance is 'what lies beneath'<sup>86</sup> as the covering to the empty space.

As Lacan, expresses man's desire of this empty space, the inner space of woman, and the centre of man's desire that he wants to fill, it becomes *the Thing*. In Lacan's interpretation

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<sup>83</sup> Hamlyn, A. (2003) Freud, Fabric, Fetish, Textiles, vol.1, issue1, pp.9-27.front cover

<sup>84</sup> Hamlyn, A. (2003) Freud, Fabric, Fetish, Textiles, vol.1, issue1, pp.9-27.p.11

<sup>85</sup> Fried, S. (1927) *Fetishism* in (2001) *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XXI (1927-1931)* Translated by James Strachey, London: Vantage Books

<sup>86</sup> Hamlyn, A. (2003) Freud, Fabric, Fetish, Textiles, vol.1, issue1, pp.9-27.p.14

the man's focus is on woman as a vessel. Lacan goes on to describe how 'psychoanalysis makes the whole achievement of happiness turn on the genital act.'<sup>87</sup>



88

Lacan describes Freud using the 'simple relationship of man and woman'<sup>89</sup> as important in his thinking.<sup>90</sup> Lacan goes on to describe how 'das Ding' (the Thing) is still attached to whatever is open, lacking, or gaping at the centre of our desire.<sup>91</sup> For man, woman is the empty space, created around this hole,<sup>92</sup> seen as a vessel to be filled by man, the centre of

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<sup>87</sup> Miller, J.A.(ed) (1992) trans by Dennis Porter, *The Ethics of psychoanalysis 1959-1960, The seminar of Jacques Lacan Book vii*, London and New York: Routledge. p.300

<sup>88</sup> Gustav Courbet *L'Origine du Monde* (the Origin of the World 1866) which Lacan owned from 1953

<sup>89</sup> Miller, J.A.(ed) (1992) trans by Dennis Porter, *The Ethics of psychoanalysis 1959-1960, The seminar of Jacques Lacan Book vii*, Routledge, London and New York. p.84

<sup>90</sup>It seems that *the Thing* that Freud and Lacan describes is the centre of our psychic being how we feel and what we seek as central to our desires. For Freud he connects das Ding to 'the centre of psychic development' Miller, J.A.(ed) (1992) trans by Dennis Porter, *The Ethics of psychoanalysis 1959-1960, The seminar of Jacques Lacan Book vii*, Routledge, London and New York, p.104 and for Lacan 'to its presence at the core of human activity.' Miller, J.A.(ed) (1992) trans by Dennis Porter, *The Ethics of psychoanalysis 1959-1960, The seminar of Jacques Lacan Book vii*, Routledge, London and New York, p.105

<sup>91</sup> Miller, J.A.(ed) (1992) trans by Dennis Porter, *The Ethics of psychoanalysis 1959-1960, The seminar of Jacques Lacan Book vii*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 84

<sup>92</sup> Writer and curator Paulo Herkenhoff, a discusses in his essay *The Illuminating Darkness of How It Is* how in Lacan terms 'Like the vase, Woman signifies the hole out of which man can fill in his world.' Herkenhoff, P. (2009) *The Illuminating Darkness of 'How It Is'* from Balka, M. (2009) *How It Is*, London: Tate Publishing.p.74

the world symbolised in Courbet's painting in Figure 88. In my work the shoes filled the space, symbolised as the hole inside the woman.

This is very relevant in how the clay is formed around the shoes; the shoes determine the space within the porcelain. The absence of the shoes creates the empty space, not the clay itself. The importance is what is inside and the empty space becomes more important. The shape is directed from inside; in a similar way to how the twentieth century German philosopher Martin Heidegger<sup>93</sup> describes the potter creating the vase around the space inside.

Irigaray writes about this emptiness in woman, her inactiveness is visualised by the absence of genitalia 'her consignment to passivity: she is to be the beautiful object of contemplation. ... her sexual organ represent the horror of nothing to see. ...woman's genitals are simply absent, masked, sewn back up inside their 'crack'. '<sup>94</sup> This lack of genitalia could evidence a lack of sexuality, without obvious labia. I suggest this is a symbol of the lack of identity and sexuality on the part of woman. This I explore further in this chapter in relation to unattractiveness due to ageing, and disfigurement through illness<sup>95</sup> and in later chapters as containment and repression.

In contrast the presence in some of my artwork of the suggestion of vulva forms, are an expression of the presence of my sexuality. Artist Judy Chicago provides an example of using vulva forms to celebrate women's achievements and identity in her artwork The

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<sup>93</sup> Heidegger considered a jug, as a vessel that contains something. He sees the potter when making the jug as shaping the void within the jug rather than forming the clay into a jug. 'The jug's void determines all the handling in the process of making the vessel. The vessel's thingness does not lie at all in the material of which it consists, but in the void that it holds.' Heidegger, M. (1971) Translated by Albert Hofstadter, *The Thing in Poetry, Language, Thought*, New York and London: HarperCollins, p.70. The void inside the jug becomes more important, is this space empty? Yet it is not, it is filled with air. The content of the jug can be manipulated and once a liquid is poured into the jug the air is displaced.

Heidegger's theory is about how material is formed into objects, a process related to touch and how fundamental to touch is the phenomenological encounter. The way the body experiences an object within the world. The idea of the thing, the thing as the jug, its importance is what is inside it. Its shape is directed by the emptiness inside.

<sup>94</sup> Irigaray, L. (1985) Translated by C.Porter, *This Sex Which is Not One*, New York: Cornell University Press.p.26

<sup>95</sup> A rising current trend of showing Selfies on social media by women showing themselves without makeup, are they unattractive and does this affect their sexuality? The layer of makeup, as a covering, which changes the way that women see and feel about themselves. 'I wanted to create a film that showed how social media can set unrealistic expectations on both women and men. One challenge many face today, is that as a society, we're so used to seeing false images of perfection, and comparing ourselves to unrealistic beauty standards' Ford, E. *You Look Disgusting*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WWTRwj9t-vU> Published on 1 Jul 2015, accessed 31.01.16

Dinner Party, '39 settings commemorate significant women from myth, legend, and history, ... plates are painted with vaginal forms, some rising up in high relief, and are also customized with symbolic attributes of the women they honor.<sup>96</sup> This sense of the sexual it is not reliant on the physical abstraction of material to create a sense of the sensual. I suggest that this representation of sexuality in Chicago's artwork is a positive tribute to the celebration of these women and not as something to cause repression in the case of the hysteric, which I discuss in chapter 3.

My vessels contain emptiness, with a difficulty of accessing the inside. They are emotional containers and the manipulation of material becomes female orientated, expressing bodily sensuality between texture and flesh. These distorted forms, inner spaces, as female vessels, which can be observed as labial. This outcome has been observed by the viewer' some definitely do seem to have a gendered feel mainly of vulva, labia etc<sup>97</sup> and once I had recognised that my approach to material was achieving these female forms, this was an intended potential outcome.

## The Personal

A consideration of the personal is defined by the feminist theorist Teresa de Lauretis as '... produced not by external ideas, values, or material causes, but by one's personal, subjective engagement in the practices, discourses and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning and affect) to the events of the world.'<sup>98</sup> Her definition gives substance to how in my research, personal experience comes from how our body engages with the world around us.

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<sup>96</sup> Fineman, M. Table for 39The Dinner Party, Judy Chicago's iconic work of feminist art, stands the test of time. [http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/art/2007/04/table\\_for\\_39.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/art/2007/04/table_for_39.html) accessed 31/01/16

<sup>97</sup> Sample description t from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants

<sup>98</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum, p. 7

The body receives stimulation as a consequence of the physical movement of the body, as it moves around the object as a form of awareness of that object. This is highly relevant to how the viewer engages with my porcelain forms drawing them in closer to view the texture of the material, and to possibly touch as 'the hunger to experience through the hands.'<sup>99</sup>

This texture is formed partly from the imprint of the shoes, now lost leaving only remnants, traces and dust. By destroying my shoes I leave behind my past, which like the shoes no longer exists. My domestic<sup>100</sup> role is also left behind, and I become the artist. The autobiographical element of the work my shoes were collected over my adult life and express my identity as a woman struggling for confidence and independence.

My autobiographical narrative contains anxiety, which is replicated in my collection of shoes, to expose my earlier life and personality as not sensuous and lacking happiness. After the end of my marriage, I felt it was very difficult to part with the objects from my previous life and I tended to try to keep as much as possible. 'For it is invariably oneself that one collects.'<sup>101</sup> How I smile at this discovery! It makes so much sense that in my insecurity and my attempt to discover myself I would surround myself by objects connected to my previous life to make myself feel safe.<sup>102</sup> It is quite ironic that my artwork should be the result of a conflict of wanting to keep the shoes for security, but also wanting to move on and rid myself of the very things that portrayed my former unhappy life. So I transform the shoes and keep them in a new form, enabling me to display the new forms as works of art and as a collection of objects expressing a narrative of emotional loss.

## Abjection

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<sup>99</sup> Comment from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants

<sup>100</sup> I have explored in my practice the domesticity of bowls incorporating traces from my shoes; this body of work is included in the Appendix.

<sup>101</sup> Baudrillard, J. (1994) *The System of Collecting* in Elsner, J. and R. Cardinal (1994) *The Cultures of Collecting*, London, Reaktion Books Ltd. p.12

<sup>102</sup> I have investigated the differences between collection and archive, how a collection is more personal; connecting to personal security, nostalgia and memory with an emotional content. Whereas archives are about collecting and storing information and material from the past as a resource for others to view and comprehend.

Charles Shepherdson, Professor of English at the University of Albany, explores how the ideas of abjection and mourning are object-related, in relation to the inside and outside of the body. This is underpinned by Elizabeth Gross narrative of the openings, which cross these boundaries to the extent that Lacan sees all sexual organs, hollows and orifices such as mouth, eyes, anus, ears and genitals :

are structured in the form of the rim, which is the space between two corporeal surfaces, an interface between the inside and the outside of the body. These corporeal sites provide a boundary or threshold between what is inside the body, and thus part of the subject, and what is outside the body, and thus an object for the subject. This boundary must be traversed by the incorporation and/or expulsion of erotic objects. Objects are, in this sense neither fully contained within the subject's body nor ever entirely expelled from it. <sup>103</sup>

Am I actually discarding the shoes or simply transforming them and keeping them in a new more acceptable form? The form is more pleasurable to me as a sensuous object, as a form of abjection.

Some of the vessels in my work have a resonance to the vulva. The lips are unable to open by themselves, 'and their touching allows movement from inside to outside, from outside to in, with no fastening nor opening mouth to stop the exchange'<sup>104</sup> as a movement from outside to the inner space of the vessel.

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<sup>103</sup> Fletcher, J. and A. Benjamin (Eds) (1991) *Abjection, Melancholia and Love the Work of Julia Kristeva*, London: Routledge. p.88 'The erotogenic rim which locates the sexual drive in a particular bodily zone is a hole, a gap or lack seeking an object to satisfy it. Ideally, the processes of incorporating the object into the subject's body through its *rim*s' stop up the lack. But, as Lacan stresses, the object is not the name of a thing, an object, but describes a movement, an activity, the taking in or introjection of the object: it is the locus of the subject's absorption and incorporation of the object. Abjection results when the object does not adequately fill the rim. A gap re-emerges; a hole which imperils the subject's identity, for it threatens to draw the subject rather than objects into it.'

<sup>104</sup> Malabou, C (2011) *Changing Difference*, Cambridge: Polity Press. p.17

105



Gross's description of the containment of objects by the body follows similar threads to how my shoes were contained within the porcelain illustrated in Figure 105 before the creation of the empty space.

My vessels can be determined as sexual when compared to Malabou's description of how Irigaray sees,

woman, in philosophical space, is the matter that no other matter waiting for form can either touch or move, a matter limited to itself – 'a vessel'. The female sex (organ) is neither matter nor form but vessel, writes Irigaray in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, playing on the two meanings in French of the word 'vase', which means both a molded form and mud.<sup>106</sup>

This has similarities to Lacan's image of the vase in the way the clay is moulded around the central void to create emptiness.

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<sup>105</sup> 2009 - Image of 72 lbs of porcelain - Black knee high suede boots. Unfired still showing the boots contained. The vessel having an inner and outer surface and a sense of the sexual and erotic depicted in the porcelain form.

<sup>106</sup>Malabou, C (2011) *Changing Difference*, Cambridge: Polity Press. p.125 Note 21.



107

The labial connection to my forms seen in Figure 107 would at an earlier stage of my life have been too embarrassing to acknowledge. This intimate aspect outlines a personal narrative for me as a sensual being; formed during physical action, which coincide with my own sensuous and emotional development.

This personal change comes about by the rejection and destruction of my shoes, avoiding the need to throw away my personal objects, as a part of myself. Does the loss of my shoes represent discarding the past, or holding onto it? Is this expulsion or retention as the conflicting emotions of parting with but keeping my shoes?

I didn't want to keep the shoes, but it was difficult to part with them. Kristeva describes this process of separation and loss as pleasurable. 'Energy surges and discharges erotize the glottis, urethral and anal sphincters and arouse pleasure at the very moment substances belonging to the body are separated and rejected from the body. This acute pleasure

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<sup>107</sup> The vulval forms are discovered - 11 December 2009.

therefore coincides with a loss, a separation from the body, and the isolating of objects outside it.<sup>108</sup> *Abject* according to Ellman means to *cast out* and *abjection* refers, 'to the waste itself as well as to the act of throwing it away.'<sup>109</sup> *Abjection* I use as a description of the act of separation and rejection of the shoes, as a form of pleasure in their parting from myself. Destroying my shoes as part of my past brings a delight, as well as a loss and a separation from my past identity. A hesitant view of my self-image became clear in the documentation of my shoes and the process of casting out the shoes was an act of catharsis against the presence of my mainly previous domestic identity.

## **Domestic Repression**

I undertook a traditional role as a conventional homemaker, in which for years I set rules for coping with the stress of meeting the expectations of household responsibility. My struggle with discipline and chaos: I explore through material and physical process, which mirrors the effort I apply to my life, always pushing myself to accomplish and impose order.

This order is reflected in the rules and repetition, iterative processes; I impose on my creative process before I allow myself to follow the flow of materials, which dictate the shape of my final ceramic forms. These rules are compulsive and are very much a part of me. I had always adhered to my domestic role, first carrying out household tasks before I felt able to engage in more enjoyable activities in life. The sequenced images of my shoes, neatly placed in line, to retain a quality of this domestic order, also expresses a part of my disciplined personality.

It is beneficial to this investigation to understand and explore how women have expressed and dealt with their emotions, how domestic repression emerges because of physical and emotional actions, as women struggle for confidence and independence. Throughout this

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<sup>108</sup> Kristeva, J. (1941) *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Translated by Margaret Waller (1984) New York and Oxford: Columbia University Press. pp.150-151.

<sup>109</sup> Fletcher, J. and A. Benjamin (Eds) (1991) *Abjection, Melancholia and Love the Work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge: London. p.181

research I shall refer to both my own and other people's emotions and how they affect the theory and the making of work.

## **Emotional Interaction**

Paul Duncum supplies us with evidence to suggest that 'touch can be considered a mode of empathic viewing intended to reduce the emotional distance between the viewer and the viewed.'<sup>110</sup>

Thus, emotion becomes relevant for how objects are perceived and emotional interaction is further discussed by Yujin Lee and Duncum as linked to women in particular by referencing Professor Kristin Congdon, who sees that 'crafts created by women within the boundaries of domestic spaces, are often meant to be tactile as well as functional... crafts offer emotional engagement because the typical materials used are haptic in that they are as much felt as they are seen'.<sup>111</sup>

Emotional interaction in my practice is central to who I am, and drives me to realise an emotional connection to abstraction of material through touch to create texture as sensuality, and as the experience of material.

## **To Touch or Not to Touch?**

In my exhibition I investigate if the viewer wanted to touch. 'The temptation to touch the sculptures is very strong, not so much the external faces but certainly the contorted internal spaces created by the destruction of the shoes by firing.'<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Lee, Y. and P. Duncum (2011) Coming to Our Senses: Revisiting the Haptic as a Perceptual System, International Journal of Education Through Art, vol.7, no.3, pp. 233-244.p.235.

<sup>111</sup> Lee, Y. and P. Duncum (2011) Coming to Our Senses: Revisiting the Haptic as a Perceptual System, International Journal of Education Through Art, vol.7, no.3, pp. 233-244.p.235.

<sup>112</sup> Comment from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants

Other comments included: 'beautifully intriguing, brittle pieces that suggest tactile sensuality.'<sup>113</sup> Why do people want to touch? 'Because they are inviting me to do so in a compelling way'<sup>114</sup> and 'I want to touch the fragments to see /feel what is left of them.'<sup>115</sup>



116

### **Tension and Distortion of Material as a Language of Texture**

This strong affinity to touch is significant to my practice as my porcelain forms are not smooth, not perfect. Their roughness of texture gives an irregularity, which supplies a greater depth of interest. Texture is formed by repeatedly impacting the shoes with the

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<sup>113</sup> Comment from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants

<sup>114</sup> Comment from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants

<sup>115</sup> Comment from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 - research evening with invited participants

<sup>116</sup> Collision between clay and shoe

porcelain against the ground and shoe box mould, using gravity to cause the material to flow and spread into and around the shoes illustrated in Figure 116.

The shoes become embedded and burrow into clay during the energy of physical process from collision between object and clay, which creates movement, and a feeling of opening out. As the material twists and flows to absorb the tension of impact this provides the form with a sensation of distortion and exaggeration shown in Figure 117.



117

Clay as a material has a memory, it retains the shape of objects and as part of my process this property is used to generate these textured, convoluted, exaggerated and sensual forms from the imprints of my shoes.

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<sup>117</sup> September 2010 - Imprints and convoluted form – the shoes are contained and contorted. Suggesting the twisted distortion of the hysteric

## Autobiographical Practice with Shoes

My shoes as a material have a strong personal and autobiographical quality; collected from aged eighteen to my solo exhibition, at that point my whole adult life from 1978 to 2011. My shoes were stored in boxes and one day while trying to de-clutter and step away from the past, I surrounded myself with a collection spanning virtually my whole adult life. The shoes I saw as the memories and objects of my life. My original collection of shoes; always chaotic and disordered, were available for me to wear.

My choice of shoes often reflected the practical side of my life and was related to comfort rather than being loved and desired, although as part of my past they contained a sense of great nostalgia.

The photographs and stories behind the shoes give them a physical presence before I embed them in a sculptural form as an exploration of my female identity. The shoes are representational of me and through their destruction and absence I focus on the point of transformation when the shoes are present and then not at a position of change.

The absence of the shoes symbolises an emotional loss and this emotional articulation can subconsciously find its way into some women's artwork providing an emotional perspective of ourselves and representing our fears.

The idea of 'How it is,'<sup>118</sup> or 'how we feel', leads artists to create work to share experiences or ideas with the viewer, or even to work through the feelings and emotions that threaten to engulf them like overwhelming despair or pain. This mirrors my own journey, the destruction of the shoes recompense the shame I felt in looking at the dowdy images of many of the shoes, how they represented a past, I had courageously cut loose from.

This emotional articulation in my practice, adds value as a cathartic experience for myself and the viewer. The previous shabby appearance of the shoes and their destruction together with the texture, distorted and convoluted aspect of the vessels provides this

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<sup>118</sup> Balka, M. (2009) *How It Is*, London: Tate Publishing.

cathartic effect as a language of the sensuous, a texture of emotion, previously theorised by Sedgwick and discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

The porcelain as a sensuous new form is pure, purified during the process of fire, like a phoenix rising anew. In contrast old shoes are unpleasant, they have a tendency to be grotesque in the way they smell and decay through wear.<sup>119</sup> The shoes are sometimes transformed into ethereal, transient, delicate structures which often fall apart as they are removed from the kiln, lasting just long enough to be photographed in Figure 120. At other times the transformed material is harsh and solid with a few elements of fragility.

120



The shoes burn in the heat, leaving a negative space in the ceramic form together with traces and dust from; leather, metal and other materials, which were originally integral parts of the shoes. I deliberately collected the remains of dust and debris from the burning of my shoes as it was too painful to dispose of everything. The porcelain took on the imprint and traces of my shoes, creating vessels containing texture, associated to emotional

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<sup>119</sup> The shoes represent who I am and who I was. Their destruction as death, and the idea of renewal indicates the killing of my past to turn into a sensuous me.

<sup>120</sup> May 2012 - Ethereal traces of extrusion of material after destructive process.

experiences of memory and identity. In life it is the experiences of loss and doubt, which shape us.

## Transformation by Cremation

The ephemeral act of burning to create material absence, as transformation owing to fire provides something interesting and even appealing. I am fascinated with the texture and colour of what is left behind and how something so ordinary but emotionally charged is transformed into a new sensuous form.

This process of burning in my practice is similar to disposing of a human body by cremation, where according to Flohr Sorensen and Bille, 'the products of fire disposal ...the ashes of cremation are considered pure and clean, ethereal and honourable.'<sup>121</sup> The equivalent in my forms, of turning painful memories into an emotional encounter, with the sensuous transformation of material.

in this sense, a study of the materiality of fire, or any other aspect of material culture for that matter, is not *only* about the meaning of things, even though this is of course part of it, but also about the sensuous intimacy and relationship between person and object, or transformation of such, and here also the ephemeral nature of the flame. By emphasising presence, it implies a re-conceptualisation of materiality, which incorporates meaning with the intimate sensuous and emotional encounter or absence of person and thing in place, as two different, yet complementary, aspects of materiality, a vehicle for transforming presence into absence, the flame is both destructive yet constructive of a potent element in remembrance and in shaping the absent present, through ashes.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Flohr Sorensen, T. And M. Bille, (2009) Flames of Transformation: the Role of Fire in Cremation Practices, World Archaeology, 40:2, pp. 253 – 267.p.262

<sup>122</sup> Flohr Sorensen, T. And M. Bille, (2009) Flames of Transformation: the Role of Fire in Cremation Practices, World Archaeology, 40:2, pp. 253 – 267.p.263 p.265.

Thus, the transformational process changes the emotional significance of material through fire.



123

During cremation the temperature rises to almost 1800 degrees Fahrenheit for around two to two and a half hours. The organic body material is either burnt or evaporates and all that is left are bone fragments. (These remains are later ground into a dust and placed into a container.) This whole process takes about three hours.<sup>124</sup> It can take nearly a week to fire my forms as it's an exceedingly slow process to avoid any excessive stress on the clay, which would cause cracking and fragmentation, but similar chemical colours and traces are left behind as in Figure 123.

An average sized adult is reduced to between four to eight pounds of ash and fragments which is 4% of the total weight of the body.

The colour of the cremated remains varies. Gray to white coloration represents differences in the exposure of the material to heat. Yellow represents unburned trabecular bone (bone with an internal

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<sup>123</sup> Traces and remains showing the colours from chemicals (pink from copper)

<sup>124</sup> <http://www.funeralassistant.com/consumerinfo/Cremation.htm#Crem2>

latticework)(note 131). Occasionally, some fragments may be slightly yellow from zinc in the coffin (rare); green from iron (about 1% of cremations); or pink from copper in 'gold' wedding or signet rings, or other jewellery, dental fillings, or gold injections for arthritis (15% to 20% of cremations) ( note 132).<sup>125</sup>



126

I found similar interesting colouration of pinks, yellows and greens in my work; this is the result of the same basic organic chemicals found in my shoes. The kiln process is similar to cremation in the transformation of material from soft to hard and in the creation of the debris and dust. It is the unexpected beauty of colour and texture of materials which

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<sup>125</sup> Iverson, K.V. (2001) *Death to Dust What Happens to Dead Bodies?* Arizona: Galen Press Ltd. p.323. Note 131 -Murray KA, Rose JC: The analysis of Cremains: A case study involving the inappropriate disposal of mortuary remains. *J Forensic Sci.* 1993; 38:98-103. Note 132 - Dunlop, J.M: Traffic light discolouration in cremated bones. *Med Sci Law.* 1978: 18: p.163 – 73

<sup>126</sup> 2010 – Traces left behind. Green from chrome in the tanning process of leather.

remain, that draws my interest as the inner depths are brought to the surface illustrated in Figure 126.

Bachelard sees the energy of fire as all-consuming and penetrates to the centre 'but only heat penetrates.'<sup>127</sup> It penetrates the thick solid shape of my porcelain. 'This need to penetrate, to go to the interior of things, to the interior of beings, is one attraction of the intuition of inner heat. Where the eye cannot go, where the hand does not enter, there heat insinuates itself.'<sup>128</sup>

The interior of the kiln, where the process of firing takes place is also a hidden space where the heat creates the void within the porcelain. My eye cannot look and my hand cannot enter, the process takes place within the kiln in the heat and the fire. Fire is the element within my work which transforms and destroys my shoes turning them into ash, dust and debris. Viewers of my work observed how 'You could look at the debris/textures/colour shifts for hours.'<sup>129</sup>

## **Dust and Ash**

The destruction of my shoes has finality as a form of death. This destruction forms ash, described by writer Benjamin Busch as 'a product of fire and tragedy, a stain on the ground and in the wind. It is made through destruction of life down to its elemental carbon, our black core. Something has to die absolutely by the particular to become ash.'<sup>130</sup>

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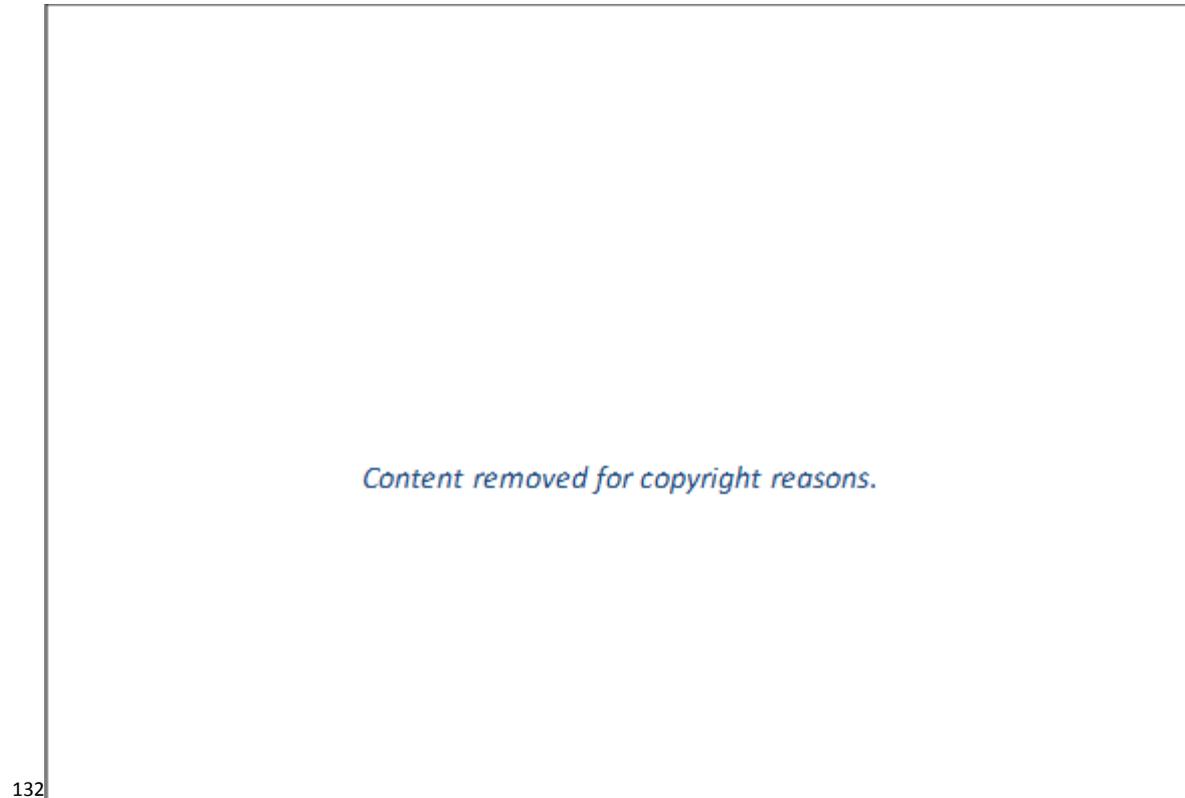
<sup>127</sup>Bachelard, G. (1987) *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, London: Quartet Books Limited. p.40

<sup>128</sup> Bachelard, G. (1987) *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, London: Quartet Books Limited. p.40

<sup>129</sup> feedback from exhibition at Derby Museum and Art Gallery

<sup>130</sup> Busch, B. (2012) *Dust to Dust*, New York: Harper Collins Publishers. p. 263

Dust and debris are all around us, part of our everyday life. Everything slowly wears away and breaks down as part of a natural process of transformation<sup>131</sup>. Dust to dust, we become dust.



This dust constantly accumulates around us as in Figure 132 and I find it poignant that dust is a focal point of my work, as dust is something I have spent so many years trying to eradicate in my domestic life. I constantly cleaned to remove the dust of our everyday life. Yet in my practice I have preserved the dust and remains from my shoes as something precious and interesting.

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<sup>131</sup> According to Joseph Amato (2000) (p. ix) house dust is made up of mainly dead insect parts, shreds of human skin and particles of fabric. Even our skin is shed to leave traces on places we rarely touch. 'I was leaving a thin snakeskin, coating my room as I grew out of the dead parts of me.' Busch, B. (2012) *Dust to Dust*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York. p.110

<sup>132</sup> Dust has been explored by artists such as Man Ray who showed this build up of dust when he photographed Marcel Duchamp's (large glass with Dust Motes) from 1920 after a year's worth of Dust collected in New York resembling a topographical landscape (gelatin silver print) (b/w photo). Content removed for copyright reasons.

The accumulation of dust due to installing my exhibition (2011) caused me to carefully wipe the floor with a cloth and bending down on my hands and knees rather than sweeping with a brush, so that this dust could be completely removed. I didn't want this dust to spread and move about to cling to the surface of the clear acrylic containers. It was important to me that the significant dust from the destruction of my shoes was not contaminated with the dust from the gallery and to ensure that the surface of the acrylic containers looked clean and dust free. Dust builds up and settles over time and is a measure of time passing, dust has been used to suggest grief 'the flinging of dust are parallel acts of ritualized mourning – exposing the frayed edges of grief and the tattered space of loss.'<sup>133</sup>

## **Narrative of Absence and Loss**

It was difficult to part with my past, but the absent shoes, now only exist as photographs. Susan Sontag describes how we take photographs as a form of nostalgia. The subject is given prominence by the attention of the photographer. 'All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.'<sup>134</sup> A moment or object frozen in time, the photographs of my shoes illustrate a moment of my own vulnerability and mortality.

Memento Mori is usually 'an object, especially a skull, intended as a reminder of the fact that human beings die, or a reminder of the fact that we also fail and make mistakes.'<sup>135</sup> I had thought that the memento mori could be the photographs of the shoes, but I now realise that it was the shoes, which act as the objects of memory. In photographer Briony Campbell's *Me and Dad 25th Aug.*<sup>136</sup> This image depicts such a contrast between life and death, the immobility of death against the living flesh and blood of the living, as absence

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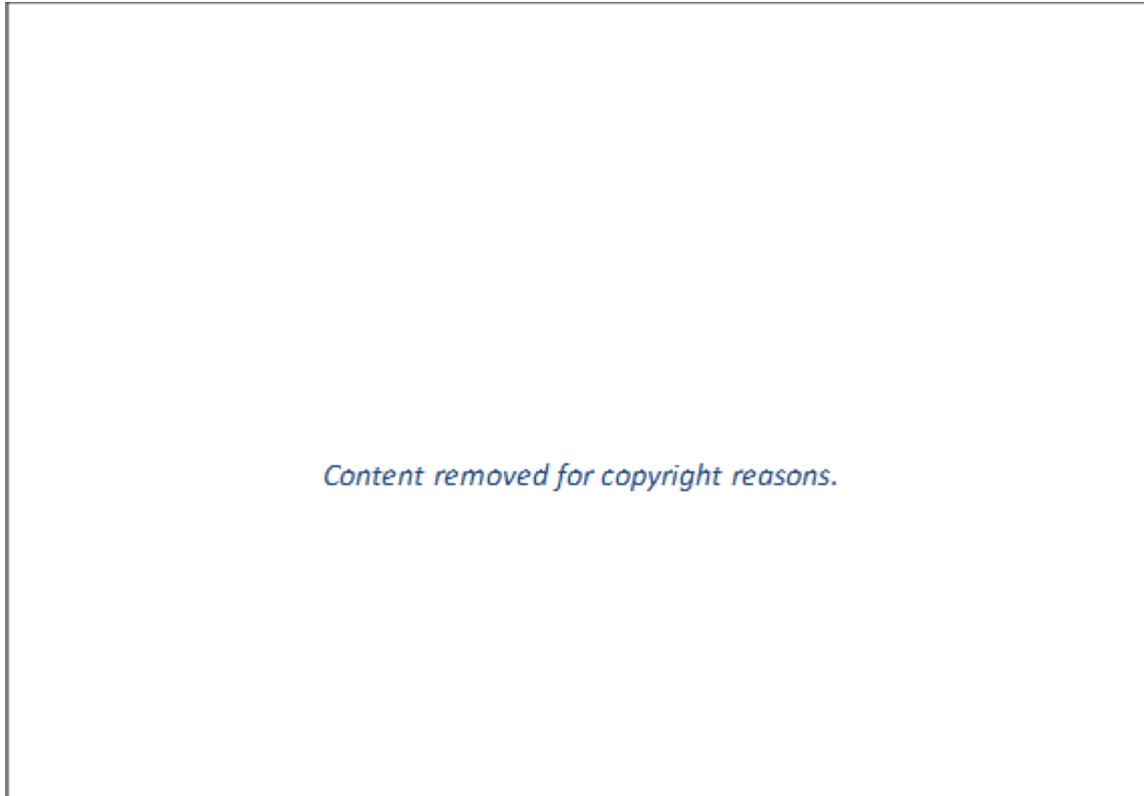
<sup>133</sup> Valoma, D. Dust Chronicles, Textile. The Journal of Cloth and Culture November 2010 Vol 8 Issue 3, pp.260-269. p. 263

<sup>134</sup> Sontag, S.(1977) On Photography, London: Penguin Books Ltd. p.15

<sup>135</sup> Bloomsbury(2005) Concise English Dictionary, second edition, A and C Black Publishers Ltd, London. p. 902

<sup>136</sup> Linkman, A. (2011) Exposures, Photography and Death, London: Reaktion Books Ltd. *from the Dad project* 2009. p.190

and presence. That last moment of two people holding hands, an emotional connection: 'most people experience loss and mortality as periods of heightened emotion.'<sup>137</sup>



138

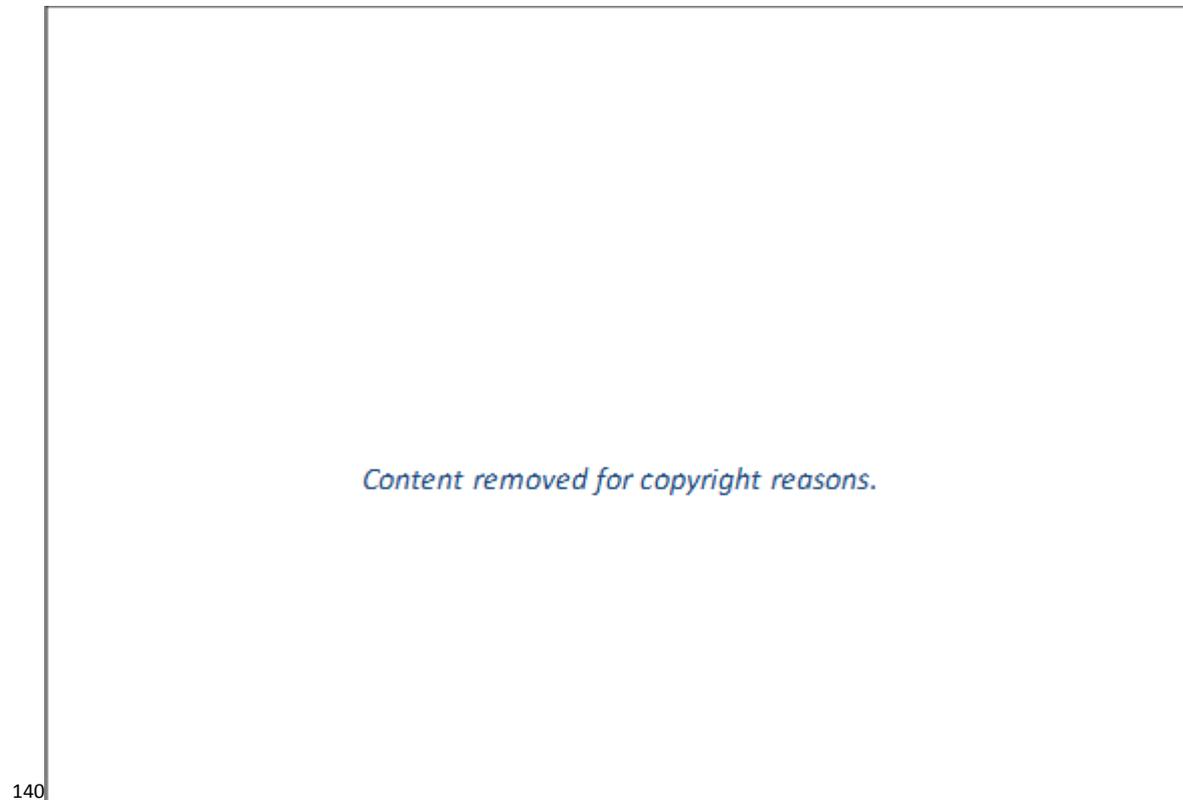
The image of the dead person in Figure 138 is evidence of their previous existence and for those who value these images; they suggest themes of loss, love, death and acts as a memorial. Author Audrey Linkman describes how the introduction of personal objects becomes significant to memory in the mourning process. Clothing and shoes are

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<sup>137</sup> Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>138</sup> 101 Briony Campbell, Me and Dad 25th Aug, from The Dad Project, 2009, digital image p.191

important items to the photographer Ishiuchi Miyako, where personal garments belonging to her deceased mother, still hold the shape of her body in Figure 140.<sup>139</sup>



The photographs of my shoes are important, as evidence of the way that the shoes took on the contour of my feet as an autobiographical record of an earlier time; they are symbolic of a previous existence and can be viewed as a memorial. The layout of the exhibition (2011) where the positioning of the acrylic containers reinforces geometric form and rigidity throughout their repetition, is reminiscent of a Mausoleum, contrasting with the convoluted, spreading and rippling shapes of the sensuous element of the porcelain.

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<sup>139</sup> Linkman, A. (2011) *Exposures, Photography and Death*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd. p. 181 This mourning process is explored in the photographs Miyako ...took of her mother's undergarments after her death. These 'Items of clothing or possessions can retain a powerful sense of the person who has died. They can capture the shape and smell of their former wearers and reflect traces of their habits and tastes.... Her old undergarments, which had lost the only value they had, as the familiar attire of their owner, seemed to me to be almost pieces of her skin. It was not a pleasant feeling to have them about the house after she was gone. Thus, just like her body, when they were no longer of any use.' Linkman, A. (2011) *Exposures, Photography and Death*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd. p.181

<sup>140</sup> Linkman, A. (2011) *Exposures, Photography and Death*, London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 100 Ishiuchi Miyako, Mother's #7.2001 gelatin silver print.183. Content removed for copyright reasons.

The photographic images as in figure 141 were presented in the second exhibition (2015), in the bottom of the acrylic containers below the suspended porcelain forms to reinforce the importance of the life and death, presence and absence of the shoes.



141

I find the documentary photographs of the shoes emotionally difficult to look at because many were worn entirely for comfort and were often not attractive or elegant – defining elements of how a part of my character was suppressed. This makes the style of the shoes important and the photographs give me an identity which I am now not comfortable with shown in Figure 142.

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<sup>141</sup> The photographic image is in the base - archived and contained.



142

Barthes' *Punctum* of expression helps to explain the interactions between material and emotion. Barthes describes the way emotionally we can become connected to something in a photograph which instigates a feeling, an emotion. In his text *Camera Lucida* he draws our attention to how a photograph emotionally affects us, with a detail in an image drawing us in, which he calls a 'punctum; for punctum is also; sting, speck, cut, little hole - and also a cast of the dice. A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me).'<sup>143</sup>

Barthes recalls how a photograph had affected him and the 'real punctum was the necklace she was wearing; for (no doubt) it was this same necklace (a slender ribbon of braided gold) which I had seen worn by someone in my own family.'<sup>144</sup> Barthes writes how, 'the photograph does not call up the past.'<sup>145</sup> The past cannot exist again, but proves what has existed. In my photographs the shoes cannot exist again, but the images show how the

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<sup>142</sup> 2008 -traces of wear and imprints from my feet, very domestic and embarrassing pair of shoes. I find the image uncomfortable

<sup>143</sup> Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage Classics. p.27

<sup>144</sup> Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage Classics. p.53

<sup>145</sup> Barthes, R. (2000) *Camera Lucida*, London: Vintage Classics. p.82

shoes were there in the past as evidence of their existence; a memory, recording what can't be repeated.

My research builds on evoking in sculpture rather than photography, the sensation of emotional reaction in the way we can be emotionally connected to something. In my practice<sup>146</sup> it is due to texture, as tactility of form, a visceral approach to material, which arouses the sensory experience, as the punctum or prick of emotion to objects.

## **Identity in Art Practice**

French Feminist H el ene Cixous explores identity as sexual, she states 'traditionally, the question of sexual difference is coupled with the same opposition: activity/passivity,' which I would relate to the opposites of hard and softness in my material.

Clay is my choice of material; it is symbolic that Pandora was formed out of clay, which shaped her as it would an object. As the first woman 'Pandora is not born, but formed from clay like a mere artefact. It shapes her... Thus 'the race of women' comes into being without any form of reproduction, either sexual or vegetative.'<sup>147</sup>

The whiteness of the porcelain is symbolic of purity and newness; the complete opposite to the view of Pandora by Greek philosophers. Without woman, however, there would have been no Greek society. In the classical period women were seen as provoking dissent and disharmony, as corruption to harmony, the other, whilst man was perceived as unity. This is defined by Vigdis Songe – Moller who suggests that 'woman stands symbolically on the border between existence and non-existence'.<sup>148</sup> This notion I symbolise in my work in the

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<sup>146</sup> Other artists working with direct representation of shoes, as objects, is not relevant to this discussion.

<sup>147</sup> Songe - Moller, V. (2002) translated by Peter Cripps, *Philosophy Without Women The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought*, London: Continuum. p.8

<sup>148</sup> Songe - Moller, V. (2002) translated by Peter Cripps, *Philosophy Without Women The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought*, London: Continuum. p. 19

presence and absence of my shoes, identity is bordered between being present and invisible.

My shoes took on my female identity (illustrated in Figure 149) as they gradually changed shape during wear and moulded to my feet, becoming *of me*; telling the story of various stages in my life. Some of the shoes contained warm and fond memories whereas others were those of embarrassment.



149

Some of the shoes were almost worn out but the nicer less dowdy pairs of shoes tended to be the least worn. This depth of wornness had little effect on the final outcome but supplied texture and detail, as sensory information, in the photographic images, which led to a sentiment of tiredness and sadness as characteristics of some of the shoes, a way of revealing unhappiness. 'I preferred the pictures of the shoes – empty worn, telling a story

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<sup>149</sup> 1990 Ecco, navy flat leather slip-on

by just their looks alone.'<sup>150</sup> Certain shoes reveal a suggestion of being comfortable rather than loved and desired, but on reflection this could just as easily be a description of how I saw myself as woman.

The shoes were like signposts from various points of my life. It was difficult to look at the completely functional shoes which got me through the day; then there was the first pair of elegant wedges from my late teenage years full of aspirations and hope. A pair of my sons PE pumps, which he grew out of but were my size and I used to wear for gardening. Keeping the shoes has a sense of hanging on to the past as an element of security.

My shoes, mostly had a domestic drab, and dowdy identity punctuated significantly by one pair of high heeled fake snakeskin sandals (1999) at a time of identity change around my divorce, which I wore occasionally for a sense of sexuality (from Next mail order - bought in secret - for feeling good!). As a woman, when wearing high heels, I feel assertive and attractive; this posture is definitely linked to feeling more positive and forceful. This feeling of attractiveness is lacking in many of the images of my shoes.

Another pair of shoes, 1990 Ecco, navy flat leather slip-on, was used for working with my ex-husband in his pharmacy, undertaking deliveries, dispensing and packing tablets. Symbolic of myself and were one of the most domestic pairs of shoes, but they had one of the most interesting sensual outcomes. The most sexual forms revealed a sense of a vessel, an orifice or an opening-out and this stemmed from how far the porcelain would penetrate into the depths of the shoes on impact.

On a personal level the photographs give a presence to the shoes, an emotional representation. I have chosen not to have my feet in the shoes, wearing them before photographing. The emptiness of the shoes gives strength to them, together with their battered appearance. Their continual wear meant the shoes soaked up the moisture of body fluids from my feet. This element of decay has been observed as well in the porcelain forms, a 'feeling of death, decay and decomposition. The skin tightening, opening and parting as snapshots of bodies in various states of decomposition.'<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> 21.9.11. Feedback from exhibition at Derby Museum and Art Gallery

<sup>151</sup> Sample description t from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 -8 February 2016

## Physical Sensuality of Material - Clay

So what is this physical sensation I am describing about my work? It is a tactile language linked to emotional experiences using the language of material and process triggered by feeling and correlated to the textured and convoluted form of the porcelain vessel in my practice. This physical sensation of material has a sense of tension and opening out, which generates a more visceral expressive form seen in Figure 153.

Traditional notions of *beauty* has little place in my work; it is more about death/destruction and during transformation soft/flexible material becomes solid. Recognition dawned that some of these forms were in fact interesting and related to the female body in a sensual and sexual manner.

The porcelain forms explore themes of the sensuous, as a physical sensation of the body, which enabled some viewers to experience an erotic intimate interaction with material connected to emotion and texture. 'Something in the juxtaposition between textures, lines and shapes spoke of the female condition: sexuality, allure, pain and suffering all manifested themselves. After the viewing I felt a strange sense of guilt for the response I had'<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Sample description t from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 -8 February 2016



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This emotional connection to touch is seen by Bachelard as he describes how space and memory affect how we experience and feel: 'The Poetics of Space resonate deeply, vibrating at the edges of imagination, exploring the recesses of the psyche, the hallways of the mind. In the house Bachelard discovers a metaphor of humanness ...into pondering the mysteries of fingertip memory.'<sup>154</sup> 'How does the body, not merely the mind, remember the feel of a latch in a long-forsaken childhood home?'<sup>155</sup> My porcelain forms draw in the viewer to want to touch them, containing the traces and fragments, which are clearly not representations of the shoes, but on closer inspection something more, something sensual and intimate with a tactile physical sensation. The tactile sensation of material as a visceral approach is explored in the next chapter in relation to Eccentric Abstraction as an experience of sensuality of material.

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<sup>153</sup> August 2009 - the porcelain is driven inside the shoes by the force of impact with the ground

<sup>154</sup>Stilgoe, J.R. (1994) Forward in Bachelard, G (1994) *The Poetics of Space*, Massachusetts; Beacon Press. p.vii

<sup>155</sup>Stilgoe, J.R. (1994) Forward in Bachelard, G (1994) *The Poetics of Space*, Massachusetts; Beacon Press. p. viii

## Chapter 2 - The Significance of Eccentric Abstraction to my Practice

The *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition in 1966 was a significant moment in art history; it was the start of a period when women began to work with abstraction of material. This was a key point in enabling them to become recognised as serious artists. My research explores how 50 years later, the abstraction of material is as relevant now as it was then. This period covers most of my life time and therefore my practice.

While a large amount of my research and my practice neatly fits into the framework of Eccentric Abstraction, a large amount falls outside of it. My research further develops and reviews this theory of abstraction by extending ideas of touch, texture, exaggerated and distortion of forms from an emotional point of view.

Feminist critic and writer Lucy Lippard explored *Eccentric Abstraction* in 1966 in her exhibition and related essay *Eccentric Abstraction*. Her main focus was on the flexibility and manipulability of new material. She recognised 'a certain tension is transmitted' energy is 'imprisoned in a timeless vacuum tinged with anticipation and braced by tension.'<sup>156</sup> This tension I take further into a deeper level of exaggeration and distortion of flexible material, which underpins this research. Through my practice it is the impact with object (shoes) by means of gravity and force, which creates tactile tension and texture.

### Tension and Distortion of Material

In 1954 Herbert Read discussed how 'the general form of the sculpture is built up from a multitude of tactile impressions; the features that seem to our normal vision to be exaggerated or distorted proceed from inner bodily sensations, an awareness of muscular tensions and reflexive movements. This kind of sensibility has been called haptic.'<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.28

<sup>157</sup> Read, H. (1954) *The Art of Sculpture*, London: Faber and Faber Limited. p.30.

I propose it is precisely this awareness of tension as exaggeration and distortion of substance, which is the basis for the abstraction of form in my work. The potential for touch becomes the vital factor in perceiving the tension and movement in the material. It is not about whether the form should be viewed optically or not as put forward by Clement Greenberg, but the presence of distortion and exaggeration as eccentricity in the form, articulated by touch, which is recognised by Read.

This physical approach is highlighted by Read as 'a sensation of the tactile quality of surfaces,'<sup>158</sup> which through touch allows us to experience the feel of different types of material surface. I would take this further by suggesting that it is not just the surface but the articulation of tension and distortion penetrating deeply into the centre of the material - object. This is explored by the authors of *Tactile Aesthetics of Materials and Design* - Hengfeng Zuo, Anthony David Hope, and Mark Jones. They identify the difference between the surface of material and the '3 D structure of the whole bulk of the material'<sup>159</sup> as material absorbs the sensation of tension.

Lippard's description of the perception of material, as 'experiences the strongest physical sensations'<sup>160</sup>, could describe the tension arrived at through the distortion and exaggeration of material in my work, but this depth of distortion is not completely evident in the *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition. Her description of physical sensations has a resonance to how I see the extreme contortions of my material, found in my practice but my observations of the artwork in the *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition show little evidence of this physical distortion.

Lippard in her essay briefly mentions texture but as 'finely textured,'<sup>161</sup> rather than an intense quality of texture found in my practice. This tension, a contortion extends to the very core of my porcelain structures, formed between object and clay. This tension is instigated by the impact between clay and shoes, transformed through firing, into a vessel, a

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<sup>158</sup> Read, H. (1954) *The Art of Sculpture*, London: Faber and Faber Limited. p. 71

<sup>159</sup> Zuo, H., Hope, T., and Jones, M. (2014) Chapter 3: *Tactile Aesthetics of Materials and Design*, In *Materials Experience*, Southampton: Elsevier Ltd. p.28

<sup>160</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.34

<sup>161</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.35

concave form. My research draws on Lippards' analysis of form related to fragments of the body, with her identification of sensuous abstraction supplying an erotic reaction. In my practice I explore this sensuous abstraction within my female porcelain vessels, containing an intimate tactile element.

## **Texture and Emotion in Material**

Lippard does not focus on an emotional aspect of Eccentric Abstraction, in fact she herself points out 'the absence of emotional interference,'<sup>162</sup> She 'stresses nonverbal response'<sup>163</sup> as important and for her I feel there is a focus on physical experience rather than emotion. Whereas this research, finds that nonverbal responses, as a mixture of bodily reactions can be perceived as emotion and is evidenced by Sedgwick. She brings together emotion and texture, observing tactility as a method of perception of emotion in material. Thus developing a connection between texture and emotion, in how, 'tactile plus emotional, is already there in the single work 'touching'; equally it's internal to the word 'feeling.'<sup>164</sup> It is this connection between texture and emotion through touch that I use in my practice in the perception of emotion.

'Even if they are not supposed to be touched, they are supposed to evoke a sensuous response. If the surfaces are familiar to ones sense of touch, if one can tell by looking how touching them would feel.'<sup>165</sup> Here Lippard responds to the anticipation of touch with a similar observation to Sedgwick, but in Lippard's view there is less of a link to emotion. Lippard, in my view sees the word feel as a physical meaning of literally to touch; ' forms to be felt, or sensed, instead of read or interpreted,'<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.39

<sup>163</sup>Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.39

<sup>164</sup> Sedgwick, E.F. (2003) Touching Feeling Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity, Durham and London: Duke University Press. p.17

<sup>165</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.36

<sup>166</sup>Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.39

In this practice I extend upon Sedgwick's association 'between textures and emotions',<sup>167</sup> by means of a combination of physical process with material and object to create texture providing significant expressive tactility for the viewer.

Being drawn to touch material can be an emotional experience and this is embellished when texture is enriched through distortion as eccentricity. Thus an intensity of texture, affected by the physical property of material together with the perception of emotion can heighten the awareness of eccentricity in form. My practice expands this link to texture and emotion by using an intense physical process to distort and manipulate form to its inner core, thus giving the viewer a sensuous experience of physical sensations of material. Sensuous is defined as 'perceived by or affecting the senses.'<sup>168</sup>

Sedgwick considers that texture is not always about touch, but about imagining the properties of material. She writes, 'textural perception always explores two other questions as well: How did it get that way? And what could I do with it?'<sup>169</sup> Observations of my convoluted and textural forms invite questions: why have I done that and how did it end up like that?

Sedgwick explores this association of texture to emotion and uses artist Judith Scott as an example. The physical closeness of Scott to her work, 'the sense of sight is seen to dissolve in favour of that of touch.

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<sup>167</sup> Sedgwick, E.F. (2003) *Touching Feeling Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham and London: Duke University Press. p.17

<sup>168</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sensuous> accessed 1/10/15

<sup>169</sup> Sedgwick, E.F. (2003) *Touching Feeling Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham and London: Duke University Press. p.13



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Not only the artist's hands and bare forearms but her face are busy with the transaction of texture<sup>171</sup>as Scott's emotional interaction with her sculpture, shows how touch can be more relevant than any other sense, as a complete interaction through the body shown in Figure 170 with the texture of material and its physical properties.

Cixous sees women's voice, which can be expressed through their bodies; a way to resist male dominated repression of women as 'women are body.'<sup>172</sup> Acknowledging I suggest Scott's interaction with her body relating to the physicality of material. This physicality of

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<sup>170</sup> <http://theideasteam.wordpress.com/> Textile artist Judith Scott has an emotional connection with her work. She is hugging her form and it seems to be a mirror image of her body. There is a complete binding emotional connection, giving the sculpture a bodily feeling. She appears to be almost trying to inhale the presence of the form for comfort. Do we share this emotion or are we just viewing the record of it? For me it feels as if we share the emotional connection with the sculpture, which I could express as a sensual experience of hugging someone that you are really close to. Sedgwick describes how though Scott has many disabilities and is isolated from language she has an 'obvious fullness of aesthetic consciousness her artist's ability to continue asking new, troubling questions of her materials.' Sedgwick, E.F. (2003) *Touching Feeling Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham and London: Duke University Press. p.24 Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>171</sup> Sedgwick, E.F. (2003) *Touching Feeling Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham and London: Duke University Press. p.22

<sup>172</sup> Cixous, H. (1976) *The Laugh of the Medusa* in Marks, E. and I. de Courtivron (eds) (1981) *New French Feminisms*, New York; The Harvester press Limited. p.257

expression echoes how I work with texture through physical processes. Some women artists use a more personal approach to material, which integrates a depth of emotion, conceived as emotional expression, which affects the process and outcome of their work.

## Women and Material

Traditionally,<sup>173</sup> women have been connected to material, particularly in their domestic use of material. Artist Harmony Hammond works with what she calls 'woman's materials'<sup>174</sup> such as cloth and hair, to create personal artwork, as she wants 'her emotions and experiences to be the basis of my art'<sup>175</sup>. This use of the personal I suggest instigates emotional interaction.

Whitney Chadwick reinforces this emotional interaction, expanding on Susan Stoops' introduction to her essay,<sup>176</sup> to reinforce how emotional content is derived from the highly personal drawing on 'the consciousness of gender and identity.'<sup>177</sup> My research draws on the highly personal, while in my practice bringing together this personal approach through abstraction, using personal objects (my shoes) to provide a physical combination of the tactile and sensuous.

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<sup>173</sup> Women up until 'the Suffrage demand for equal rights and opportunities (late 19th and early 20th century) and the ideology of the Arts and Crafts movement'(Parker, R. (2010) *The Subversive Stitch Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd. p. 201) were connected to the domestic use of material. This research has found that this didn't really change extensively until the 1960's.

<sup>174</sup> Hammond, H. (1984) *Wrappings, Essays on Feminism, Art and the Martial Arts*. New York: Mussmann Bruce Publishers p.9

<sup>175</sup> Hammond, H. (1984) *Wrappings, Essays on Feminism, Art and the Martial Arts*. New York: Mussmann Bruce Publishers p.9

<sup>176</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum.

<sup>177</sup> Chadwick, W. (1996) *Balancing Acts: Reflection on Postminimalism and Gender in the 1970s* In: Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum. p. 14

Lippard discusses with Stoops that in retrospect in 1966, she Lippard saw particular female qualities in art, one of which was 'sensuous, even sensual, abstraction.'<sup>178</sup> Thirty years after Lippard had written *Eccentric Abstraction*; she suggests that this sensuous tactile approach to material is the basis for how she considered and selected the women artists for her *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition. Chadwick suggests that women started to 'assert their differences from men, and to define these differences in terms of materials, process and form'<sup>179</sup> by using abstraction of material.

Abstraction as a feature of women's practice is reinforced by Stoops' <sup>180</sup>she discusses the importance of women artists having the opportunity to have an equal voice, through abstraction of the physical body, while working with material and process express their identity. In her exhibition essay, she 're-elaborate for viewers today a female identity...that knowledge sources are multiple and include the body, emotions, desires, memories.'<sup>181</sup>

My research builds on this connection between identity and a tactile and sensory approach. As a woman my practice is about my interaction with material, my physical body, expressing identity and sexuality through the interaction with my shoes. It builds on Chadwick and Stoops identification of the abstraction of material and form and how women use this abstraction to express female identity in their work.

In Hesse's work abstraction is linked to the personal in the way that she uses soft material repetitively related to the physical body. Lippard refers to Hesse's work as 'belied by an intensely personal mood.'<sup>182</sup> Lippard though didn't seem to comprehend in the 1960s the importance of the difference of women's practice; which is evidenced by Stoops as a mix of

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<sup>178</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) *From Eccentric to Sensuous Abstraction An Interview With Lucy Lippard* In: Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum. p.26.

<sup>179</sup> Chadwick, W. (1996) *Balancing Acts: Reflection on Postminimalism and Gender in the 1970s* In: Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum. p. 17

<sup>180</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum.

<sup>181</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum. p. 10.

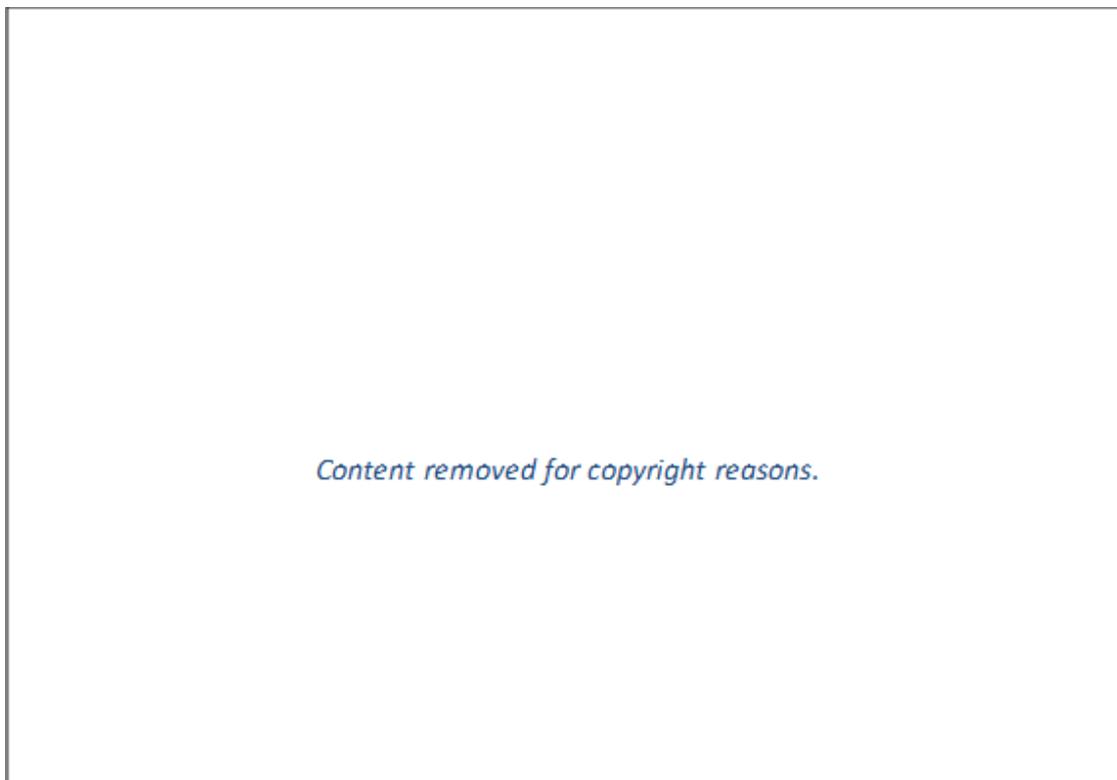
<sup>182</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.28

abstraction and the body, (Lippard later states in discussion with Stoops that the aspect of Eccentric Abstraction she was looking for, she realised was already persistent in mainly women's practice.).

Abstraction in my practice, suggests eccentricity, as the convoluted nature of the texture of my material as an erotic reaction. I instigate a response to texture through the rhythmic manipulation of material, which creates distorted, twisted and fleshy forms through the abstraction of material. This process reveals a sensuality of material as female bodily qualities of skin, which can be interpreted as an erotic perception.

Initially, it was uncomfortable to show such intimate material, but once recognised, I focused on realising how my vulva related forms fit within my research of women artists exploring identity through repression; using aspects of Eccentric Abstraction

## Women's Material Sensuality



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<sup>183</sup>Le Regard 1966 Latex and cloth <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/exhibition/louise-bourgeois/room-guide/louise-bourgeois-room-5>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

Lippard's essay *Eccentric Abstraction* identifies 'the highly tactile.'<sup>184</sup> In regard to the work of Louise Bourgeois, *Le Regard* in Figure 183, she describes how forms are 'often labially slit, or turned so that the smooth, yellow-pink-brown lining of the mould as well as the highly tactile outer shell is visible, her mounds, eruptions, concave convex reliefs and knot-like accretions are internally directed.'<sup>185</sup> This perception of the sensuous, Lippard finds 'is determined by the artist's own approach to materials and forms: at others by the viewer's indirect sensations of identification, reflecting both personal and vicarious knowledge of sensorial experience in general.'<sup>186</sup>

Lippard is reflecting here on the erotic nature of abstraction as sensuous form and material and the explicit qualities, which can be perceived. Thus material which is pliable and malleable such as clay often displays distorted and textural qualities, which can suggest sexuality through abstraction in a more viable manner than direct images. Lippard saw how:

There has been much talk about a 'new eroticism' supposedly languishing in the studios because it is too strong for public consumption, but I doubt that more pictures of legs, thighs, genitalia , breasts and new positions, no matter how 'modernistically' portrayed will be as valid to modern experience as this kind of sensuous abstraction. Abstraction is a far more potent vehicle of the unfamiliar than figuration, and erotic sensation thrives on the unfamiliar. <sup>187</sup>

My observation extends this view that erotic perception is more likely to be found in the unfamiliar, in the way that my porcelain forms can be unidentified as objects and without prompts it can be difficult to associate them with the shoes. Thus, the viewer's perception relies on the sensation of texture, form and an emotional reaction to the tension within the

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<sup>184</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, Art International, November, 10:9:28 p. 34

<sup>185</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, Art International, November, 10:9:28 p. 34

<sup>186</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, Art International, November, 10:9:28 p. 34

<sup>187</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, p.40

object as 'sensuous abstraction.'<sup>188</sup> It is this quality of the sensuous in my material, which together with texture and abstraction suggests bodily qualities of skin.

Hammond discusses how 'sexuality in art, has nearly always been presented from the male point of view.'<sup>189</sup> Whereas this research finds that women artists tend to link material to sexuality through abstraction, which was explored by Lippard as erotic responses to material. This erotic quality I suggest in my work appears as vessels, a sense of vulva related form, articulated as a physical sensuousness of material.

Therefore building on Lippard's focus on the sensuous experience, which I suggest is a visceral language - relying on the exaggeration, distortion and grotesque aspect of material. Lippard focuses on the erotic based on - 'aspects of surrealism'<sup>190</sup> - alongside the repetitive geometric elements of primary structures as an 'extension of sensuous experience.'<sup>191</sup>

This visceral element triggers emotion and an intensity of feeling, whilst Lippard uses the terms ugly, repellent and grotesque. The term grotesque is a more accurate description of the depth of the distortion of my forms, which is central to the creation of texture in this research.

## **The Grotesque and Absurdity**

Lippard recognises 'the often unnatural distinctions between ' beauty and ugliness.'<sup>192</sup> Beauty has little place in my work; it is more about death and destruction, thus inviting repulsion. By providing extremes or opposites of sensation, for example: ugliness and beauty, this I feel exaggerates the viewers focus on the extremity of what they perceive, leaning towards the extraordinary, the eccentric.

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<sup>188</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 10:9:28 p. 34. p.40

<sup>189</sup> Hammond, H. (1984) Wrappings, Essays on Feminism, Art and the Martial Arts. New York: Mussmann Bruce Publishers.p. 77.

<sup>190</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.28

<sup>191</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.28

<sup>192</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.34

This association with the mix of contradictions, the grotesque and the beautiful is imperative in the appearance of skin, 'it arouses both lust and revulsion in ways no other organ can'<sup>193</sup>. Repulsion tends to give a more emotional perception.

Skin-like qualities have a sense of smooth, warm, soft, female. My material starts smooth and soft and through the transformation of firing soft/flexible material becomes solid and hard edged, a vessel, containing a sense of vulva related form. Material with the tactile feel of skin is perceived as sensual and can be physically repellent.

My recognition of this repellent facet to my work gives a specific reaction to sensation as sensuous. Hesse in discussion with Cindy Nemser, found that she needed to focus on this ugly aspect within her work. She felt her work became over-worked or unresponsive when, 'it left the ugly zone and went to the beauty zone. I didn't mean it to do that'<sup>194</sup> Critic Robert Pincus-Witten leaves no doubt that Post Minimal art of which Eccentric Abstraction is a part is, 'experienced in viscerally empathic terms,<sup>195</sup> Thus where artwork is positioned on the extreme edge of sensation, i.e. ugliness. It is more likely have a stronger emotional perception and experienced as visceral. This is found in my practice in the intense tension of extreme texture.

The perfectly smooth surface, I suggest lacks this visceral and emotional perception. Don Potts' work, in the *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition (in Figure 198) is based on a finish, which was less about flexible material and process of many of the women artists. Lippard described his work as inviting 'touch but repel emotion by their almost maliciously perfect appearance,<sup>196</sup> she observed how ' he converts his materials into surfaces of such commercial precision.<sup>197</sup>

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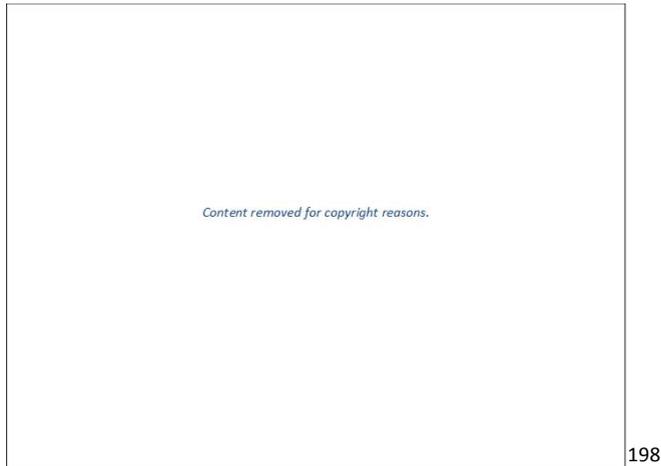
<sup>193</sup> Aldersey-Williams, H. (2010) The skin and All That Lies Beneath, *Crafts*, September/ October, pp.67-68.p.67

<sup>194</sup> Pincus-Witten, R. (1971) Eva Hesse: Post-minimalism into Sublime, *Artforum*, vol. X, no. 3, p. 32-44 p. 43

<sup>195</sup> Pincus-Witten, R. (1971) Eva Hesse: Post-minimalism into Sublime, *Artforum*, vol. X, no. 3, p. 32-44 p. 37

<sup>196</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.35

<sup>197</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.35



These precise surfaces for Lippard were smoother, principally found in the work of the participating male artists in Eccentric Abstraction. In contrast Hesse and Bourgeois work contains tension, as already discussed, leaning towards the ugly aspect, in contrast to the beautiful aspect of this precision. In my practice it is the tension, the repellent which supplies the sensuous, identified as visceral in this research.

Alongside these sensations Lippard describes an unexpected mix 'of this death premise with a wholly sensuous, life giving element. And introduces humour into the structural idiom'<sup>199</sup> as eccentric abstraction.

## **Absurd**

Eccentric Abstraction confronts the viewer, with ideas such as playfulness that rely on the perception of the unexpected, to convey an element of the absurd. Lippard sees that 'erotic sensation thrives on the unfamiliar,'<sup>200</sup> and 'incongruity, on which all humour, is

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<sup>198</sup> Don Potts, *Up tight, slowly*, 1966. Leather over wood, length about eight feet  
[https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=Don+Potts,+Up+tight,+slowly,+1966&biw=1366&bih=622&source=lnms&tbm=isch&a=X&ved=0ahUKEwio49KC6YjNAhUKJMAKHVt1DZ0Q\\_AUIBygC#imgrc=uQSpbhGkaL9ocM%3A](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=Don+Potts,+Up+tight,+slowly,+1966&biw=1366&bih=622&source=lnms&tbm=isch&a=X&ved=0ahUKEwio49KC6YjNAhUKJMAKHVt1DZ0Q_AUIBygC#imgrc=uQSpbhGkaL9ocM%3A) Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>199</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40 p.28

<sup>200</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.40

founded.<sup>201</sup> Brigitte Kalle<sup>202</sup> investigates 'this absurdity'<sup>203</sup> in Hesse's work. She describes this as, 'The moment of surprise that is imminent in farce that arises as a result of a completely different perception and point of view from that of the initial reception, while in folly there is always a sense of something that 'goes beyond understanding.'<sup>204</sup> Similarly, the destruction of my shoes is seen by the viewer as an idea, which is hard to comprehend. Initially, there is an interaction with form, texture and tactility, but on closer examination this extends to become a contradiction of for example, the repellent and beautiful, sensual content and minimalist form. The process of touch and tactility creates structure, which lend itself to an eccentric absurdity, formed out of personal objects, my shoes.

It is these contradictory qualities which I see as the evidence for the absurd in both my work and Hesse's. Kalle reinforces this with her descriptions of Hesse's work in, 'her play of organic versus inorganic, anthropomorphous versus strict geometry, repellent versus beguiling, coincidental versus calculating and so on.' 'The confrontation of erotic content and Minimal form.'<sup>205</sup> These contradictions so evident in Eccentric Abstraction cause the viewer to be both repelled and drawn towards the physical object.

Lippard describes this eccentricity as 'giggles of uneasiness'<sup>206</sup> like the sniggers associated with 'death, love, sex, excretion, any natural function too naturally exposed.'<sup>207</sup> This absurdity of form and material, I suggest, was incorporated into the work of mainly women artist's to give emotional sensations of the sexually implicit body.

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<sup>201</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.28

<sup>202</sup> Director of the Gallery of Contemporary Art at Kunsthalle Hamburg and curator.

<sup>203</sup> 'Coming from the Latin "absurditas," the word absurdity, which generally describes something that is incongruous, nonsensical and contradictory of all logic, has also the synonyms of folly and farce - two qualities found in Hesse's art.' Gassner, H. and B. Kalle and P. Roettig (eds) (2013) Eva Hesse More Than One, Hamburger Kunsthalle: Hatje Cantz. p.29

<sup>204</sup> Gassner, H. and B. Kalle and P. Roettig (eds) (2013) Eva Hesse More Than One, Hamburger Kunsthalle: Hatje Cantz.p.29

<sup>205</sup> Gassner, H. and B. Kalle and P. Roettig (eds) (2013) Eva Hesse More Than One, Hamburger Kunsthalle: Hatje Cantz.p.29

<sup>206</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 10:9:28 p. 39

<sup>207</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, Art International, November, 10:9:28 p. 40

## Chapter 3 Material and Form, Which Evokes a Visceral Response to Identity

Abstraction as a language of material relating to my practice as an artist has been explored in Chapter 1 and in Chapter 2 with reference to the theory of Eccentric Abstraction. In this chapter I will investigate the manipulation and distortion of material to interweave tension, as a visceral and erotic aspect of abstraction.

I suggest the outcome of this visceral approach to flesh can be perceived as emotional perception by the viewer (this is both male and female). Applied as a means of extending Lippard's 'sensuous experience' from a sensation of manipulated soft material to an emotional response to the manifestation of distorted female sexually implicit forms. This emotional tacit response to female form is seen by mainly male viewers and is discussed in Chapter 4. Lippard did not pursue emotional reaction<sup>208</sup> as part of Eccentric Abstraction; however I extend Lippard's view on the sensual sensation of material by expanding on my instinctual approach to material in my practice as a physicality of distorted material, which generates grotesque contortion as tension in my form. A textural<sup>209</sup> tension of material and form providing a meaningful language of sensuality as distorted female form perceived by the viewer as a sensation of emotional disturbance. This is communicated in my artwork and observed by myself and some viewers<sup>210</sup> as the perception of female vessels with a sense of the body, correlating to a sense of meaty flesh and features of skin.

My artwork expresses an instinctive responsiveness to material, (clay is a particularly sensual material, through its material quality to *ribbon* and flow around itself and objects and absorb texture and imprints becoming distorted through impact). This secretes a language of sensuality, an erotic sensibility, and extends to a both repellent and emotional perception. Some viewers disclose the sensation of an intrusive feeling, to touching the female vessels in my practice. I suggest this is because for those who perceive my forms as

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<sup>208</sup> Already considered in Chapter 2.

<sup>209</sup> The relevance of texture to contemporary criticism is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and discussion of texture as part of my practice is threaded throughout this thesis.

<sup>210</sup> This is discussed further in chapter 4.

female gendered, there is a sense of eroticism of texture and a physical response. As one respondent wrote 'on a deeper level the forms to me, have female rather than male characteristics.'<sup>211</sup>

## **Physical Sensation**

I have examined in my practice and research, how the properties of material can provoke physical sensations of touch and feeling, a sensual experience, which is pertinent to the action of the physical body to create tension and distortion. This is recognised in the Post-Minimalist experience of process and material, and has already been discussed in relation to Stoops (1996) to the approach of the physicality of material and process through abstraction. This physicality of process I correlate to the physical act of the hysteric, which becomes distorted through distress defining women's emotional and sexual repression as a process of abstraction by the body a symbol of crisis of female identity. Hysteria is not directly linked to Eccentric Abstraction but it is the sensuality of form, identified by Lippard, which I highlight as a physical component of female gendered contortions of material as abstraction.

The female vessel is symbolised in my practice (introduced in chapter 1); as the container for emotions. The hysteric is contained by the physical action of her body and the porcelain forms in my work are contained by the rigid containers (the somewhat masculine metal shoebox<sup>212</sup> illustrating the conflict between the male and the female form.<sup>213</sup>)

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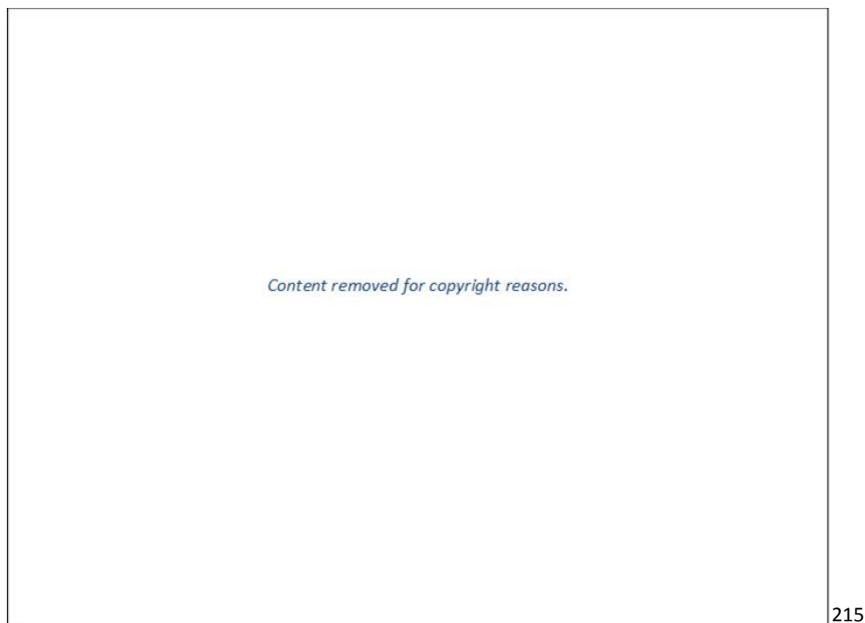
<sup>211</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 3 Fine Art and Design students

<sup>212</sup> Male gender in my artwork is represented as the repression and containment of the female vessels. This is illustrated through the hard and unyielding metal and acrylic of the geometric containers with a sense of minimalist form. This is discussed further in chapter 4.

<sup>213</sup> This is in large measure the result of my own conflict and journey to discover my own identity and is both a deliberate and unconscious outcome.

## Sexual Identity

French Feminist Hélène Cixous explores identity as sexual, she states 'traditionally, the question of sexual difference is coupled with the same opposition: activity/passivity.'<sup>214</sup> This inequality between male and female, Cixous sees as the passivity or non-existence of woman, which I translate into the physical properties of material. The opposites of hard and softness in my material and the absence of the shoes as an absence of sexuality. Bourgeois used themes of identity in her work, as emotional pain, sexuality and power together with the creative process of hysteria, mixing gender in her *Hysterical Arch* (in Figure 215) of female hysteria in the body of a male.



Does Bourgeois see the reversal of role for the male figure as a matter of sexual identity? By presenting her *Hysterical Arch*, she is highlighting issues of identity. I explore my identity as a woman through the physical containment of emotion of hysteria as a repression of sexuality correlated to emotional disturbance.

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<sup>214</sup> Cixous, H. (1994) *The Helen Cixous Reader*, London: Routledge p.38

<sup>215</sup> *Hysterical Arch* (1993) bronze with silver nitrate patina 83.8 x 101.5 x 58.4 cm  
<http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=100798>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

## Containment

French Philosopher Catherine Malabou asks 'can woman find her place.'<sup>216</sup> alongside how female hysterics struggled with their emotional position in society and I question how women search for identity against the feeling of being inadequate and restricted. In my practice the containment of the shoes in the clay symbolises the containment of woman as part of her sexual repression. To overcome this repression, woman needs to discover her voice and this is explored later in this chapter through Cixous.

In my research the hysteric's physical body is a vessel; the container for her emotions; representing the repression of female sexuality. In my practical work the porcelain vessels, which had contained the shoes can be seen as intimate spaces, sensual with labial associations. This containment is reinforced by Vigdis Songe - Moller in her exploration of 'sexual attitudes'<sup>217</sup> as she identifies how female identity is linked to 'what belongs to the body'<sup>218</sup>.

## Woman's Identity

The tradition of Greek philosophical thought, according to Songe - Moller, saw woman as not being equal which sets the 'beginning of the tradition that treats man as definitive of what it means to be human and the woman as Other.'<sup>219</sup> This inequality has continued in contemporary thought, as women struggle to find their identity and wellbeing and I take up this thinking again in exploring the treatment of the hysteric and how in the late 1800's women were diminished by Charcot as being seen as emotional beings without value.

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<sup>216</sup> Malabou, C (2011) *Changing Difference*, Polity Press, Cambridge p.122

<sup>217</sup> Songe - Moller, V. (2002) translated by Peter Cripps, *Philosophy Without Women The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought*, London: Continuum. p.xvi

<sup>218</sup> Songe - Moller, V. (2002) translated by Peter Cripps, *Philosophy Without Women The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought*, London: Continuum. p. xvi

<sup>219</sup> Songe - Moller, V. (2002) translated by Peter Cripps, *Philosophy Without Women The Birth of Sexism in Western Thought*, London: Continuum. p. xv

Rhona Jean Justice Malloy<sup>220</sup> discusses the nineteenth century view that there was a link between hysteria and a woman's reproductive system. This was acknowledged by Freud with a suggestion of an association of hysteria to the lack of fulfilment of woman's sexual desire as an inability to express sexuality.

Woman needs to be heard 'where woman has never her turn to speak'.<sup>221</sup> According to Cixous woman should have a voice to express herself. 'I'm speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history.'<sup>222</sup> Women need to understand their bodies, their sexuality, take back 'her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal'<sup>223</sup> against the tide of social invisibility. Cixous sees woman as not taking ownership of her sexuality and her voice.

By looking at Cixous's views on sexual difference and the physicality of woman's body, I see in my practice the application of the physicality of the bodily senses as a vehicle for perception. The interpretation through my porcelain forms of skin and the body; as physical self-expression of the abstraction of clay, I find a voice for myself. I would infer from Stoops' essay that the language of abstraction is the opportunity for woman to express herself with an equal voice - through 'sensuality, volatility and humor'<sup>224</sup> using her bodily senses in a combination of female gender and abstraction.

I acknowledge that there are multiple views about the differences between man and woman but in this dialogue, it is about woman exploring her identity and finding her voice through self-expression of material.

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<sup>220</sup> Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia

<sup>221</sup> Cixous, H. (1976) *The Laugh of the Medusa*, in Marks, E. and I. de Courtivron (eds) (1981) *New French Feminisms*, New York; The Harvester press Limited p.249

<sup>222</sup> Cixous, H. (1976) *The Laugh of the Medusa* in Marks, E. and I. de Courtivron (eds) (1981) *New French Feminisms*, New York; The Harvester press Limited. p.245

<sup>223</sup> Cixous, H. (1976) *The Laugh of the Medusa*, in Marks, E. and I. de Courtivron (eds) (1981) *New French Feminisms*, New York; The Harvester press Limited p.250

<sup>224</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum. p.6

Philosopher Luce Irigaray states that 'Woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking'<sup>225</sup>. This confirms my findings of how women are more tactile in their approach to material and artwork. As an artist I tend to apply touch principally through process and manipulation of materials, with the softer supple qualities of clay, stimulating the formation of sensual texture and imprint.

## **Hysteria and Physical Expression**

This narrative of sensuality, generated in my practice by my physical action of twisting and distorting the porcelain forms to create an emotionally battered space, almost as if it is the anguish of physical action, expresses bodily similarities to the twisted torment of the hysteric, leaving an imprint of her tortured anguish, thereby demonstrating the emotional trigger of affect. Emotion is articulated by the parallel actions of the mind and body and the suffering of the mind is expressed by the physical action of the body. The hysteric sees her relief to trauma by 'the presence of internally derived aggression deleteriously turned on the self.'<sup>226</sup> Through her internal pain she finds relief in her physical actions.

To illuminate the importance of extensive physical action as a trigger of affect, I have applied the philosopher Baruch Spinoza's theory of affect (discussed in Chapter 4) of exploring the way the mind and body correspond in acting together as a physical action. I use physical action as a process to create the textured layers of the vessels so pertinent to my work, which in chapter 4 I discuss as pertinent to the perception of emotion by the viewer. Emotion is expressed through physical action, like the hysteric in her juddering movements and in parallel to my impact and manipulation of material.

'According to Charcot emotion was one of the primary causes of hysteria;' <sup>227</sup> which triggered the physical torment of the hysteric's body. Charcot observed that his hysteric patients had little ability for verbal expression; they expressed emotional pain through

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<sup>225</sup>Irigaray, L. (1985) Translated by C.Porter, *This Sex Which is Not One*, New York: Cornell University Press p.26

<sup>226</sup> Mills, J. (2006) Reflections on the Death Drive, *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, vol.23,no.2, pp. 373 - 383. p381

<sup>227</sup> Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia.p.12

physical action.<sup>228</sup> Malloy describes how Charcot used photography and performance as theatrical proceedings where the women photographed 'were encouraged to attend to the most intimate and interior facts of their bodies (pain and sexuality).'<sup>229</sup> An individual's identity in these cases, were over-ridden and quashed by the intensity of the thrall of the male gaze in Charcot's presentation of the female body in its throes of misery.

Showalter describes how this theatrical action was viewed as art:

Charcot emphasised the visual manifestations of hysteria and the hysterical body as an art object. His representations of gender were allied to aesthetic conventions about the female body, whether in painting, photography, or drama. Charcot not only borrowed from art in making the female body the focus of his investigation, but through his photographic atelier also contributed to the historical emergence of a 'regime of representation' in which according to the art critic Griselda Pollock, 'the hysterized body of woman...was made the object of pathological scrutiny and deciphered in terms of masculine gaze and speech.'<sup>230</sup>

Further evidence of how female hysterics were viewed as art objects, was suggested by George Didi-Huberman,<sup>231</sup> that the spectacle of these women, presented for the male gaze, to observe their pain 'a physician finds it next to impossible not to observe, as an artist, the luxurious pain of a body in the throes of its symptoms.'<sup>232</sup> These gestures of the body were watched, gazed at and recorded by Charcot intently as he focused on the emotional

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<sup>228</sup> This was all documented by photography while Charcot's women patients were under hypnosis. This was part of the '*visual observation* of Charcot's observation of the women's emotions 'such as fear, ecstasy, passion, surprise, pleasure and religious enthusiasm' (Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia.p.24) these were recorded and observed. Were these real emotions for the women as Malloy describes how Charcot, 'had no interest whatsoever in their inner lives.' (Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia. p. 27) According to Malloy, Charcot and his students were clearly aware of the sexual aspect of hysteria and used photography to record 'the erotic misbehaviour of their female hysterical patients in loving and lurid detail.'(Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia. p. 88 ('Gender' 392))

<sup>229</sup> Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia.p.26

<sup>230</sup> Gilman, S. And H. King, R.Porter, G.S. Rousseau, E. Showalter, (1995) *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, London: University of California Press. p.310

<sup>231</sup> Who was a teacher at the L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris.

<sup>232</sup> Didi-Huberman, G. Translated by Alisa Hartz (2003) *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpetriere*: Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. p. 4

expression of her physical body.<sup>233</sup> Hubberman reinforces this; in the description of how 'the 'nervous woman' would explode, jerked in all directions, in spasms, movements modestly called 'irregular' caused by 'something not quite right in the womb.'<sup>234</sup> This physical expression of the woman's body is seen here as an inappropriate expression of a woman's sensuality, exposing further this sensual behaviour as unacceptable to men.<sup>235</sup>

## Hysteria and Sexuality

From the time of Hippocrates up to and including the 1800's women who were considered an hysteric would have been given treatment by those physicians who advocated 'physical therapies for hysteria.'<sup>236</sup> Hysteria was seen as an ailment, which could be resolved. Pieter Van Foreest suggests part of 'the Western medical tradition of genital massage to orgasm by a physician... a standard treatment for hysteria, an ailment considered common and chronic in women.'<sup>237</sup> Here the production of female orgasm was seen as a medicinal remedy, a routine chore and thus releasing the male of the burden of such a job.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> There is a little mention in Malloy's dialogue of how Charcot looked to free the hysteric of her pain and that was not his primary intention. He was more concerned with the spectacle of the expression of the women's emotions. The women it seems aren't given the opportunity to express how they feel verbally precisely because they are women, but playing on their pain and sexuality. Sexuality for the female hysteric was unacceptable then to the male dominated society and the treatment of these women was completely abhorrent.

<sup>234</sup> Didi-Huberman, G. Translated by Alisa Hartz (2003) *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpetriere*: Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. p.71.

<sup>235</sup> In 'My God what does she want,' (Maines, R.P. (1999) *The Technology of Orgasm 'Hysteria,' the vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. P. 48) - man's needs are dominant, does he see female sexuality as something to repress, is he afraid of this sensuality? For him, is the domestic role more important? As he desires to fill the empty space inside woman but on his terms. Woman then feels inadequate and restricted at her inability to explore her sensuality and sexuality. Man sees woman as mentally unstable and she is confined, unable to express herself except by her outpourings of tortured bodily movement. Man sees her body as a sexual object, denying female sexuality, 'to deny women native erotic desires was to safeguard man's sexual adequacy. However he performed, it would be good enough. She would not – would she? – ask for more.' (Gay, P. (1984) *The Bourgeois Experience, Victoria to Freud, Education of the Senses*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. P. 197)

<sup>236</sup> Maines, R.P. (1999) *The Technology of Orgasm 'Hysteria,' the vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press p.71

<sup>237</sup> Maines, R.P. (1999) *The Technology of Orgasm 'Hysteria,' the vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press P.1

<sup>238</sup> Maines, R.P. (1999) *The Technology of Orgasm 'Hysteria,' the vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. p.66. The introduction of the mechanical vibrator around 1906 reduced the time required for manual massage. P.67

Charcot at the Pitie-Salpetriere Hospital experimented, 'with physical therapies for hysteria including the use of vibratory mechanisms'<sup>239</sup> to induce orgasm. This treatment for Hysteria linked to a sign of repression was an indication of women struggling with sensual and sexual identity. 'My God what does she want?'<sup>240</sup> The emotional disturbance which caused the hysteria from the repression of sexuality was studied by man as an illness to be cured rather than an expression of sensuality.

Hysteric women were considered to have a sensitive vagina which caused emotional conditions. Their sexuality was considered a weakness which had to be cured rather than what I would suggest as a sensual strength, which manifests itself in my artwork. Roy Porter writes how the 'female libido - so volatile, capricious, even rampaging... so why the peculiar sensitivities of clitoris and vagina, all too susceptible to physiological and emotional disturbance?'<sup>241</sup>

Malloy writes how nineteenth century opinion continued the link between hysteria and a woman's reproductive system. This was acknowledged by Freud as an association of hysteria to the lack of fulfilment of woman's sexual desire. Though Charcot found cases of male hysteria it was far more widespread in women. Marthe Noel Evans described woman as 'the other sex, the object of knowledge, and crazy, but also because she is body.'<sup>242</sup> This discussion of woman as body lends itself to seeing her as a sexual body which is reinforced by how Charcot describes his patients when exhibited to an audience with eyes closed as in a 'truly subordinate position the focus and centre of attention was not on her body but simply on the body.'<sup>243</sup> The cure inflicted on the woman was to put the womb back in its

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<sup>239</sup> Maines, R.P. (1999) *The Technology of Orgasm 'Hysteria,' the vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. P. 43

<sup>240</sup> Maines, R.P. (1999) *The Technology of Orgasm 'Hysteria,' the vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. P. 48

<sup>241</sup> Gilman, S. And H. King, R.Porter, G.S. Rousseau, E. Showalter,(1995) *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, London: University of California Press. p. 251

<sup>242</sup> Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia. p.95

<sup>243</sup>Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia. P.102 Marthe Noel Evans suggests in her research into the treatment of the women at Salpetriere while under hypnosis, 'these medical men felt they had discovered a wonderful toy, one they could play with, experiment with, do whatever they wanted with .' Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia. p.102 Malloy finds that French historian Alain Corbin wrote that the male audience saw these female hysterics as expressing their sexuality in a way that they 'found it tempting to confuse the manifestations of the illness with those of orgasm and with the provocative behaviour of streetwalkers' Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia. , p.110. It seems that

proper place by fumigating the womb with burnt substances such as hair of men, bitumen, sulphur, animal horns and gunpowder. The women were kept awake by pulling their hair both on their head and pubic hair while holding 'the neck of the womb open with a spring.'<sup>244</sup> This immense cruelty seems unimaginable now. Charcot used methods of isolation, physical therapy and electrotherapy. Would this be considered a form of torture today? Malloy considers how the medical treatments given to these women which were then regarded as acceptable such as 'the placing of hundreds of leeches on a woman's back or leeches on her vulva'<sup>245</sup>

## **Emotional Disturbances as Hysteria**

These women though, were seen as mentally unstable and to undergo in public these expressions of emotion for most must have been distressing and appalling. Under hypnosis it is not clear if they understood what was happening to them, but they must have been disturbed and felt exposed at the start and the end of these procedures. In 1898 Mademoiselle Georgette Déga produced a doctoral thesis on *The Prevention of Hysteria by Education*. During her research she noted that women told her that 'I was crazy,' showing how deviant they felt their enforced emotionalism to be.'<sup>246</sup> This suggests that women hysterics were aware how badly they were treated. It is not clear though how many of these women through social circumstance and desperation found themselves through no fault of their own in such a difficult situation.

Malloy reinforces the suggestion of how social injustice can lead to 'the idea of insanity itself-come to represent a force of social repression,'<sup>247</sup> how women's social situation led to

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hysteria was found by the male doctors as something a woman was guilty of, the conflict of her sexuality, her desires her womanliness.

<sup>244</sup> Didi-Huberman, G. Translated by Alisa Hartz (2003) *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*: Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. p.69

<sup>245</sup> Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia. p. 97

<sup>246</sup> Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia. p.34.

<sup>247</sup> Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia. p.13

them being seen as hysterics. Emotions<sup>248</sup> can overwhelm a person and the way these women hysterics withdrew into themselves was a way of dealing with their emotions.

I would conclude Charcot used his women patients as vessels to expose excessive mental pain and anguish as entertainment. He seems to be only interested in the external effects of these strong emotions on the women's bodies rather than the women's internal emotional state and how they felt inside. His treatments were recorded as invasive and one of his methods of working has been described by Malloy as 'the patients brought into his office and stripped naked; he would observe them, ask them to perform certain movements, while he would stare, meditate, and then have them led out.'<sup>249</sup> It seems he rarely spoke to his patients. They must have felt very vulnerable. Today this treatment would be questioned as abusive.

In my practice I explore the body as a vessel containing internal emotion, the opposite of how Charcot used his women patients as vehicles to record their emotions, expressed externally by their bodies and shows how men thought that women were seen as emotional beings without value of intellect. My research investigates female approaches to intellect, emotion and identity:

Thus, the belief that, say women are not capable of undertaking certain responsibilities because they are emotional creatures, and that they are emotional creatures because they are somehow closer to nature, are beliefs that are used against individual women because any individual woman is believed to have within her an essence of womanliness – those particular qualities – that she has in common with all other women.<sup>250</sup>

Women have been identified as more emotional, in the association to hysteria, an emotional reaction to situations or experiences. Schore discusses how research undertaken

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<sup>248</sup> When life becomes difficult I withdraw into myself and want to distance myself from difficult situations.

<sup>249</sup> Malloy, R J J (1994) *The Theatricalization of Hysteria*, Georgia: University of Georgia. p.82

<sup>250</sup> Robinson, H. (1995) *Reframing Women*, In: Robinson, H. (ed) (2001) *Feminism – Art – Theory, An Anthology 1968-2000*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd p. 535

by Pardo et al using brain-imaging techniques of the emotional cognitive processes, have been identified as playing an essential role in the orbitofrontal cortex. Pardo et al finds that 'Affect – laden images of object loss...increased blood flow and activation is recorded in the orbital prefrontal areas specifically (Pardo et al., 1993).'<sup>251</sup>

Schore also refers to more recent tests by Andreasen et al which corroborate this emotional activity in the brain and goes on to evidence the differences in brain activity between men and women:

Interestingly, the PET scan of females revealed orbitofrontal activity in both hemispheres, while males showed only unilateral activation, and more of the females than males experienced tearfulness during the imagery. An even more recent PET study also showed that women display significantly greater activity in this affect regulating structure than do men, especially in the right hemisphere (Andreasen et al., 1994). These data indicate gender differences in the wiring of the limbic system, and may relate to differences in empathic styles or capacities of processing non-verbal affect between the sexes.<sup>252</sup>

Reinforcing my view that females are more likely to be affected emotionally and particularly from non-verbal experiences.

I undertake a physical engagement with material that is evident in the convoluted surface of the fired clay. This is determined by physical process, the results are organic, unpredictable forms suggestive of the female body.

## **Crisis of Identity**

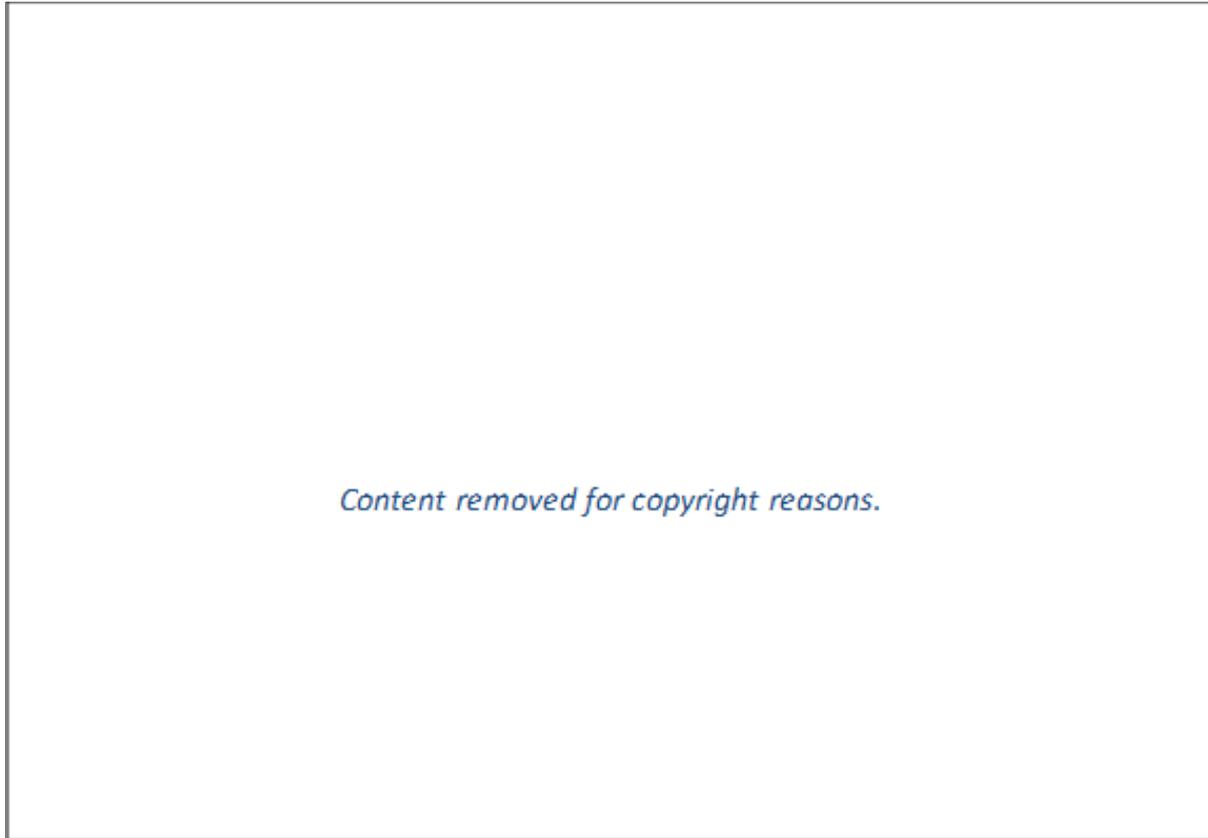
Qualities of the female body are explored by Kelly in her work *Interim* (1984 - 89) as the feeling of middle age. Culture can influence women to feel that their view of themselves is

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<sup>251</sup> Schore, A.N. (2003) *Affect Regulation and the Repair of the Self*, New York: W.N. Norton & Company, Inc. p.23

<sup>252</sup> Schore, A.N. (2003) *Affect Regulation and the Repair of the Self*, New York: W.N. Norton & Company, Inc. p.23

directed towards masculine pleasure and that age had created a need to redefine this identity. Kelly's images (in Figure 255 and 256) portrayed aspects of their lives that they now felt excluded from, through items of clothing as a crisis of identity<sup>253</sup> as 'being a woman is but a brief moment in one's life.'<sup>254</sup>



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<sup>253</sup> Is shown by Bronfen, E. (1998) *The Knotted Subject, Hysteria and its Discontents*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. p.410

<sup>254</sup> Bronfen, E. (1998) *The Knotted Subject, Hysteria and its Discontents*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. p.409

<sup>255</sup> Supplication, 1 of 6 panels Laminated photo positive, silkscreen, acrylic on Plexiglas named after one of the passionate attitudes that psychiatrist Jean-Martin Charcot attributed to hysterical women in the late-nineteenth century. <http://www.google.co.uk/imgres?q=mary+kelly+interim+supplication&hl=en&tbo=d&biw=1280&bih=709&tbm=isch&tbnid=oYPsE1k5h0mS4M:&imgrefurl=http://archive.newmuseum.org/index> . Content removed for copyright reasons.

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Kelly presented the labels of her images, with the same characteristic terms (see above) that Charcot used as an interpretive language to the hysterics phases, such as *Menace* (leather jacket), *Supplication* (shoes) *Erotisme* (lingerie). The work of Kelly provides me with evidence to reason that Charcot's hysteric women were not insane but troubled by being trapped in a society with cultural expectations that they felt they could not meet. In a similar way I struggled with the loss of identity as a woman in my marriage and then tried to build an independent identity for myself, which is documented by the photographic images of my shoes.

Freud verifies loss of identity, in his discussion of how the hysteric was unable to allow her conscious mind to experience her distress. Charcot's hysteric patients lost their identity through their distress, in his gaze at their body, they became an object. Photographer David Maisels' images of copper canisters containing physical ashes of unknown mental

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<sup>256</sup>Menace, 1 of 6 panels Laminated photo positive, silkscreen, acrylic on Plexiglas named after one of the passionate attitudes that psychiatrist Jean-Martin Charcot attributed to hysterical women in the late-nineteenth century <http://www.google.co.uk/imgres?q=mary+kelly+interim&um=1&hl=en&sa=N&tbo=d&biw=1280&bih=709&tbn=isch&tbnid=aAgl7E-> Content removed for copyright reasons.

patients, (described in detail in the next chapter) have lost both their gender and identity. The theme of loss of identity and the suppression of female sexuality is fundamental to my practice and is central to what many women have experienced, especially the female hysteric.<sup>257</sup> My struggle with identity is symbolised by the phoenix from the ashes of transformation of the original shoes representing the journey from a timid housewife to full on, shock new female sensuality in the sexually implicit porcelain forms.

Professor Julia Twigg discusses attitudes about ageing and the older woman in connection to fashion and how women worry about getting older and losing their identities connected to their attractiveness 'we all think that we lose the person that we were when younger and become somebody old. But we don't, and our clothes and the pleasures we take in them should reflect that.'<sup>258</sup> We stay that person inside even though we struggle with pressures from society and culture. Women's awareness of clothes and her view of herself, can act as a form of repression in how she feels she must conform. This needing to conform is discussed in Chapter 4 in the way that Bourgeois describes her feelings in her writings.

For contemporary woman it is the shopping of clothes and shoes which is as important as the, 'weaving of genital hair was to her primitive counterpart!'<sup>259</sup> Women tend to buy clothing and shoes to feel attractive and to be seen, I had one pair of *sexualised* high heels in my collection. Freud sees 'All women, that is are clothes fetishists.'<sup>260</sup> Some women tend to dress in similar ways to have an assurance, a similar identity.

In the passive form of allowing oneself to be seen, which is repressed by clothes, and on account of which, clothes are raised to a fetish. Only now we understand why even the most intelligent women behave defensively against the demands of fashion. For them, clothes take the place of parts of the body, and to wear the same clothes means only to be able to show

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<sup>257</sup>Hysteria in part contributed to the start of feminism as writers Cixous and Kristeva discussed the plight of women articulating their emotional feelings through their physical bodies.

<sup>258</sup> Twigg, J. (2010) How Does Vogue Negotiate Age?: Fashion, the Body, and the Older Woman, *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, December 2010, Vol.14, Issue 4, pp.471 – 490 p.478

<sup>259</sup> Hamlyn, A. (2003) Freud, Fabric, Fetish, *Textiles*, vol.1, issue1, pp.9-27.p.18

<sup>260</sup>Rose, L. (ed) (1988) Freud and Fetishism: Previously Unpublished Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, LVIII, pp.147-166, (provide the only record of Freud's paper, 'On the Genesis of Fetishism'.)p.156

what the others can show, means only that one can find in her everything that one can expect from women, an assurance which the woman can give only in this form.<sup>261</sup>

Here Freud provides us here with an understanding of women's awareness of clothes and why some women follow fashion. Some women wear fashion that doesn't necessarily suit them in order to feel a part of what other women are presenting. Freud sees clothing as taking the place of parts of the body. I consider that what we wear is evocative of our bodily identification and the concealment or emphasis of parts of our body. Bourgeois in Chapter 4 distorts and emphasises parts of the female body as an object of sexual or reproductive process.

There is a 'dilemma for the older woman of representing her femininity, her sexuality, her desire when she is no longer seen to be desirable'<sup>262</sup> and no longer able to reproduce. Clary Krekula,<sup>263</sup> discusses how women are influenced by society to be concerned with the texture of their bodies, whilst men are more aware of having a useful purpose.<sup>264</sup> 'The sociocultural context equates youthfulness, smooth skin, and thin energetic bodies with beauty and sexual attraction and simultaneously portrays older bodies as unattractive'<sup>265</sup> and 'are seen to be old sooner than men'.<sup>266</sup> In my opinion sexuality is related to attractiveness and mature women can feel they become invisible and may 'focus on display'<sup>267</sup> to hold on to a sense of her sexuality through clothing and shoes. Women's

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<sup>261</sup> Rose, L. (ed) (1988) Freud and Fetishism: Previously Unpublished Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, Psychoanalytic Quarterly, LVIII, pp.147-166, (provide the only record of Freud's paper, 'On the Genesis of Fetishism').p.156

<sup>262</sup> Kelly, M. (1993) Interim, Camera Australia, 43/44 p. 23

<sup>263</sup> Associated professor in sociology

<sup>264</sup> Professor in Sociology Clary Krekula found that 'it is claimed that men are judged on the basis of performance, while women are primarily evaluated according to outward appearances. 'As a result, it is said that women and men have different experiences of aging.' Krekula, C. (2016) Contextualizing Older Women's Body Images: Time Dimensions, Multiple Reference Groups, and Age Coding of Appearance, Journal of Women & Aging, 2016, Vol.28. No1, pp.58-67. p. 58.

<sup>265</sup> Krekula, C. (2016) Contextualizing Older Women's Body Images: Time Dimensions, Multiple Reference Groups, and Age Coding of Appearance, Journal of Women & Aging, 2016, Vol.28. No1, pp.58-67. p. 58.

<sup>266</sup> Calasanti, T and N. King (2005) Firming the Floppy Penis, Age, Class and Gender Relations in the lives of Old Men, Men and Masculinities, vol.8, No.1, July 2015, pp. 3-23. p.7

<sup>267</sup> Krekula, C.(2016) Contextualizing Older Women's Body Images: Time Dimensions, Multiple Reference Groups, and Age Coding of Appearance, Journal of Women & Aging, 2016, Vol.28. No1, pp.58-67. p. 59.

identities I suggest are therefore more reliant on appearance and Freud's mention of fetish<sup>268</sup> suggests a fascination with clothing and fashion, which can be an obsession for some women.



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## Female Identity as we Grow Older

Writer and political activist Susan Sontag in her essay *The Double Standard of Ageing* states that as women grow older they often feel 'such distaste and even shame',<sup>270</sup> this shame continues in contemporary discussion; particularly when 'deviating from age coded expectations'.<sup>271</sup> We tend to cover and hide the grotesque aspects of ourselves as we age our bodies fail. I normally cover my big toes in Figure 269 to hide the fact that they have failed to be attractive as the porcelain covers the domestic style of my shoes. 'The idea of an old woman in a bathing suit being attractive or even just acceptable looking is inconceivable. An older woman is by definition, sexually repulsive.'<sup>272</sup> 'Not just

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<sup>268</sup> Fetish is explored in the introduction.

<sup>269</sup> 2015-2016 image (March 2016) of my big toes where I have lost the nails due to a blistering auto immune disease.

<sup>270</sup> Sontag, S. (1972) *The Double Standard of Aging*, *The Saturday Review*, September 23, 1972, pp. 29-38. p.29

<sup>271</sup> Krekula, C. (2009) *Age Coding - on Age-Based Practices of Distinction*, *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, 2009, 4(2): pp.7-31

<sup>272</sup> Sontag, S. (1972) *The Double Standard of Aging*, *The Saturday Review*, September 23, 1972, pp. 29-38, p.36

unattractive, but disgusting;<sup>273</sup> 'a visceral horror felt at ageing female flesh.'<sup>274</sup> Thus for older women<sup>275</sup> in Figure 279, 'the more important sexual theme may be that of being cast aside.'<sup>276</sup> This does not mean that older women do not potentially want to be sexual and their desire may not have diminished as 'the time at which they start being disqualified as sexually attractive persons is just when they have grown up sexually.'<sup>277</sup> But for society it is not acceptable for them to be sexually active; 'men are 'allowed ' to look older without sexual penalty.'<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Sontag, S. (1972) The Double Standard of Aging, *The Saturday Review*, September 23, 1972, pp. 29-38, p.37

<sup>274</sup> Sontag, S. (1972) The Double Standard of Aging, *The Saturday Review*, September 23, 1972, pp. 29-38, p.37

<sup>275</sup> Women's identity and perception was discussed recently in a conference *Misogyny: Witches and Wicked Bodies* Wednesday 18 March 2015, *Misogyny: Witches and Wicked Bodies*, Create Feminism, Research Cluster – Middlesex University – together with the ICA – hosted by Dr Hilary Robinson.

The overriding feature was about how older women have been perceived throughout history and Artist and Curator Deanna Petherbridge found that women were conceived as being ugly and stupid containing seeds of corruption – how ageing was seen as disgraceful for women. According to Lynne Segal women aged culturally faster than men, with women showing weakness, as a frustrated sexual passion. She quoted Shakespeare from 1606 'what are these creatures so withered in their attire' Lynne Segal speaking on Wednesday 18 March 2015, *Misogyny: Witches and Wicked Bodies*, Create Feminism, Research Cluster – Middlesex University – together with the ICA – hosted by Dr Hilary Robinson. The feeling at the conference was that older women, living alone, destitute and isolated were more likely to be accused of being a witch. Reinforcing the argument I have been exploring about the repression of women. These older women were over 50, the age I am now.

<sup>276</sup> Calasanti, T and N. King (2005) *Firming the Floppy Penis, Age, Class and Gender Relations in the lives of Old Men, Men and Masculinities*, vol.8, No.1, July 2015, pp. 3-23.p.20

<sup>277</sup> Sontag, S. (1972) The Double Standard of Aging, *The Saturday Review*, September 23, 1972, pp. 29-38, p.33

<sup>278</sup> Sontag, S. (1972) The Double Standard of Aging, *The Saturday Review*, September 23, 1972, pp. 29-38, p.37

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Sontag's view in 1972 of how older women are seen as repulsive, is still pertinent to contemporary discussion according to Krekula, as it is still relevant to women to stay attractive 'as an indication of their value'.<sup>280</sup> Insecurities related to age over the ageing of female bodies is significant in some women's view of their identity.

I cover my shoes with porcelain as a process of transformation and the shoes are destroyed as waste products to reveal sensual female vessels as the exposure of hidden space.

Hamlyn describes how, 'women produce textiles to assist the process of concealment and revelation'.<sup>281</sup> This covering has been discussed in Chapter 1 from Freud's view, that the undressing of parts of the body to reveal a gender difference and the importance is what is hidden underneath. These hidden parts of the body as meaty flesh and soft tissue of skin are revealed as an implicit presence through the physicality of material in my practice. The

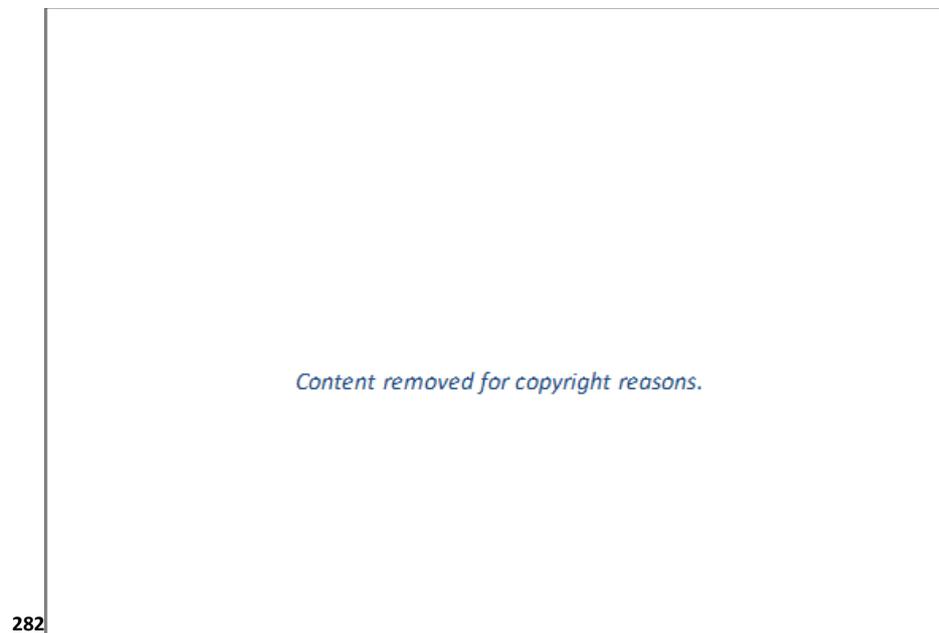
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<sup>279</sup> Image for Deanna Petherbridge's exhibition - *Witches and Wicked Bodies*, NGS Publishing <http://allmyindependentwomen.blogspot.co.uk/2015/03/misogyny-witches-and-wicked-bodies.html> Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>280</sup> Krekula, C. (2016) Contextualizing Older Women's Body Images: Time Dimensions, Multiple Reference Groups, and Age Coding of Appearance, *Journal of Women & Aging*, 2016, Vol.28. No1, pp.58-67. p. 59.

<sup>281</sup> Hamlyn, A. (2003) Freud, Fabric, Fetish, Textiles, vol.1, issue1, pp.9-27.p.18

discomfort related to the female body, is highlighted by changes to the texture of skin and the way the body physically ages or becomes disfigured through illness.



This grotesque aspect of aging has a symbolic resonance as a tendency to become physical features of our artwork as a visceral presentation of ourselves. Artists Hannah Wilke and Jo Spence, display the female body to show the mutilation of cancer and related surgery, which is shown in Figure 282 and 283. Using identity to show how the body is altered to become in Spence's words a *monster*.

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<sup>282</sup> Hannah Wilke. So Help Me Hannah. 1978-81.  
<http://www.espacioluke.com/2006/Octubre2006/images/Hannah/Wilke-78-2.jp>. Content removed for copyright reasons.



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I empathise and recognise the emotions and identities in Spence's photographic images in Figure 284 as I drive myself to achieve and often feel emotionally drained as a result. Sometimes the only possible solution to being a woman is a form of attack and at other times the sadness is overwhelming.

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<sup>283</sup> Jo Spence with monster on chest, made in collaboration with Dr. Tim Sheard, 1989  
<http://kimberleyemeny.wordpress.com/2012/09/30/the-art-of-il/> Jo Spence. Content removed for copyright reasons.



*Content removed for copyright reasons.*

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Domestic identity is so dominant in many women's lives that they are often consumed by it and struggle with guilt, feeling trapped when trying to be anything else. This internal struggle, a sense of guilt and an inability to stand up for oneself, can mean that there is little capacity for aggression<sup>285</sup>. This lack of aggression in my past relationships instead becomes a form of self-punishment. For example in my case the constant need to apologise.

The process of destroying my shoes symbolised as waste material; develops a means of survival of overcoming guilt, which according to Tomkins is the excretion of waste products:

The major mechanism for guaranteeing viability... this operates by a set of signals which inform and motivate the individual to incorporate into the organism the raw material from the environment which it must have to remain alive, and informs and motivates the individual to excrete the waste products of the assimilated material.<sup>286</sup>

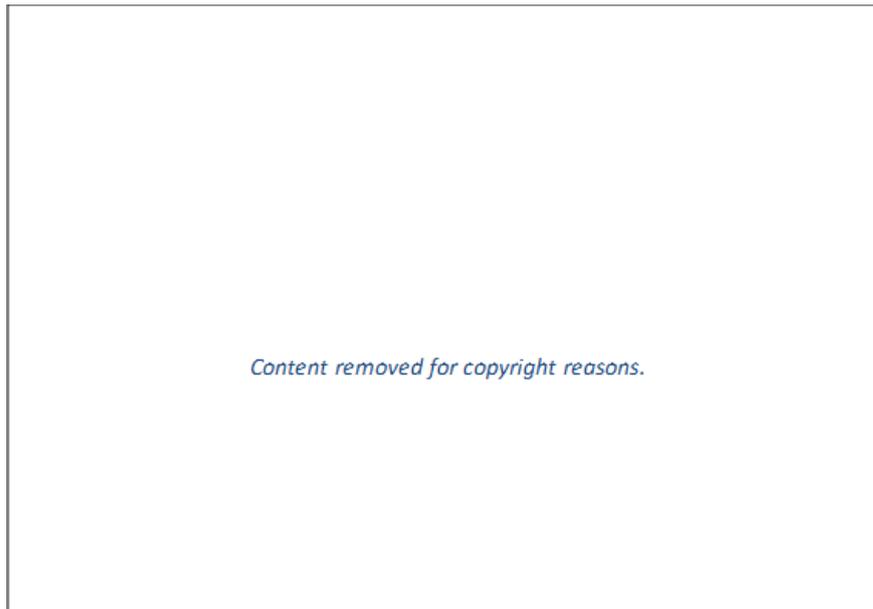
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<sup>284</sup>Jo Spence's photographic image - here she depicts herself in an emotional crisis of identity - Jo Spence / David Roberts, 1990, Cultural Sniper [http://www.studiovoltaire.org/docs/JoSpenceExhibitionGuide \(web\).pdf](http://www.studiovoltaire.org/docs/JoSpenceExhibitionGuide(web).pdf). Narratives of Dis-ease: Expunged, 1990, <http://spencerrowellresearch.blogspot.co.uk/2011/05/jo-spence.html>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>285</sup> Freud describes these feelings of guilt as related to the inhibition of aggression, his death drive, Storr, A. (1989) Freud A Very Short Introduction, Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.67 ('the destructive instinct we may suppose that its final aim is to lead what is living into an inorganic state. For this reason we also call it the death instinct.') as 'the sense of guilt giving rise to self-reproach, self-hatred, and self-punishment.' Storr, A. (1989) Freud A Very Short Introduction, Oxford: Oxford University Press. p.69

<sup>286</sup> Tomkins, S. (1962) Affect Imagery Consciousness, New York: Springer publishing Company.p.30

Some women artists use personal material from their physical body. Artist Paula Santiago (2009)<sup>287</sup> explores abjection in her work with the absence of the physical body in her tiny empty garments in Figure 289, which are smeared with her blood and stitched with her hair: waste products from her body. This is consistent with the waste products from the shoes being exuded out in the kiln as a form of abjection (discussed in Chapter 1 with reference to Kristeva).<sup>288</sup>



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Another artist using the theory of abjection in her work is Kiki Smith who explores the female body and its boundaries between the inside and outside alongside a precarious view of self-image. Smith explores in particular women's bodily functions, especially the leakage of bodily fluids such as menstruation. Women can find themselves feeling vulnerable around these natural bodily functions and lacking in self-image.

Guilt is a driving force for some women artists like myself, stuck in a cycle of domestic routine with a serious lack of self-worth and identity. Bourgeois is an example of a woman

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<sup>287</sup> Ratliff, J. (2009) Border Control: The Intersection of Feminism and Abjection in the Work of Paula Santiago, Southeastern College Art Conference Review, Vol. 15 No.4, pp.456-463.

<sup>288</sup> Theorist Jon Mills looks at Freud's Death Drive and how 'Death enters into every vital process, and this is certainly so between the dialectic of presence and absence, being and nothingness, abundance and lack.' Mills, J. (2006) Reflections on the Death Drive, Psychoanalytic, vol.23, no.2, pp. 373 - 382. p 377

<sup>289</sup> *Ch'ulel*, 2000, rice paper, hair, blood, wax, marble  
[http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=paula+santiago+artist&bav=on.2,or.r\\_qf.&bvm=bv.49784469,d.d2k,pv.xjs.s.en\\_US.MpiVkJF51mpA.O&biw=1186&bih=419&um=1&ie=UTF-.Content removed for copyright reasons.](http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=paula+santiago+artist&bav=on.2,or.r_qf.&bvm=bv.49784469,d.d2k,pv.xjs.s.en_US.MpiVkJF51mpA.O&biw=1186&bih=419&um=1&ie=UTF-.Content%20removed%20for%20copyright%20reasons.)

artist exploring her self-image whilst struggling with guilt, which is evidenced in her writings and illustrates doubts about her identity as a woman.<sup>290</sup> Artist Barbara Hepworth also struggled with domestic guilt alongside the need to make artwork. This social comment from the popular press is not about neglecting her children but the conflict of the demands of motherhood against the inner drive to be creative. A tension, which I understand well. 'For Hepworth, abstract sculpture was an escape from the turmoil of her life and her inevitable guilt at neglecting her children. But she was powered by a drive that was far stronger in her than motherhood: the need to work.'<sup>291</sup> My struggle with the domestic role in my life became the principal feature; symbolised through the conflict of identity in the mainly domestic image of my shoes and the suggestion that many of the shoes had an unattractive masculine intention, as the styles were domestically practical rather than alluring. The creation of a sensual and sexual identity in the porcelain forms went some way to erase the embarrassment I now feel about the repeated domestic narrative of my shoes. Repetition in my work reinforces this domestic narrative and the repeated performance of my domestic role was a form of defence and security. Repetition suggests to Freud the occasion of self-destruction and this self-destructiveness, is found in the repeated destruction of the shoes.

The role of repeated ritual as an emotional tool is certainly something I have used in my home. Bachelard describes how women repetitively inject care into their homes as:

a house that shines from the care it receives appears to have been rebuilt from the inside; it is as though it were new inside. In the intimate harmony of walls and furniture, it may be said that we become conscious of a house that is built by women, since men only know how to build from the outside, and they know little or nothing of the wax civilization.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Explored in detail in Chapter 4.

<sup>291</sup> Hudson, M. 14 June 2015 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/event/article-3119835/Barbara-Hepworth-s-amazing-life-work-revealed.html>, accessed 31/05/16

<sup>292</sup> Bachelard, G (1994) *The Poetics of Space*, Massachusetts; Beacon Press. p.68

This reinforces the domestic identity, which I have worked so hard to move away from. The home is often women's emotional place and it was certainly mine. Lacan saw the centre of woman, as an emotional place, and criticised in hysterics as the site of emotion.

## **Woman as Vessel**

In Chapter 1 I discussed Lacan's description of the formation of intimate spaces through Heidegger's image of the vase that is built by the potter around a central void. Lacan described this symbol of the Potter who 'creates the vase with his hand around this emptiness, creates it ...starting with a hole;' <sup>293</sup> the importance is the emptiness at the centre.

This inner space is created by the formation of the thing around the space creating a vessel which contains the emptiness. The absence of the shoes intensifies the emotional experience of loss to form this vessel containing the space; this central place in my practice is surrounded by material and becomes a sensuous vessel, which is identified as labial. My practice explores 'the notion of women as vessels of emotion and how female artists communicate emotional experience in their work as an expression of female identity.'<sup>294</sup>

## **The Grotesque and Contemporary Women's Surrealism**

Self-identity is used by some women artists, to initiate aspects of Surrealism by challenging the ordinary, transforming material into something unexpected and responding to the body, skin and texture to draw out the grotesque distortion of material as a physical sensuous

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<sup>293</sup> Miller, J.A.(ed) (1992) trans by Dennis Porter, *The Ethics of psychoanalysis 1959-1960, The seminar of Jacques Lacan* Book vii, Routledge, London and New York, p. 121

<sup>294</sup> Falconer, J. (2011) Essay *Eighteen* written for Derby Museum and Art Gallery June 2011.

element<sup>295</sup>. One viewer suggested 'they both aroused and repelled me. I wanted to caress the smooth curves and at the same time slice through my own flesh on the jagged shards that they contained. I wondered what they would look like coloured by my own blood.'<sup>296</sup> This physical sensation can be described as a *squirm*<sup>297</sup>, an emotional response to the physical sensation to material. Bennett's context of the squirm is a response by the brain 'felt not only on the skin but internally, as a deeper more invasive process.'<sup>298</sup> I would agree that this reaction takes place internally to the body and involves stomach churning sensations of actual raw feeling of physical movement such as a shudder.

This emotional response I would suggest is related in my practice as the way that the viewer feels an intrusive discomfort and is discussed in detail in chapter 4. This discomfort Chadwick sees in the way the body is manipulated (Figure 301 image by Penny Slinger) in contemporary women's surrealism<sup>299</sup> as related to 'contemporary women artists who employ strategies of disruption and/ or images of the body fragmented, deformed.'<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Women are presented as possessions by male surrealists and the women surrealist artists in the exhibition (Angels of Anarchy- Angels of Anarchy, Women Artists and Surrealism, 26 September 2009– 10 January 2010, Manchester Art Gallery -book-Allmer, P. (2009) Angels of Anarchy Women Artists and Surrealism, London: Prestel confront the viewer by taking ownership of their bodies and related objects in an articulate but personal expression against the conventional.

<sup>296</sup> Sample description from questionnaire - 30 November 2015 -8 February 2016

<sup>297</sup> Bennett, J. (2005) *Emphatic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. p. 43 This term has been explained in the abstract

<sup>298</sup> Bennett, J. (2005) *Emphatic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. p. 42

<sup>299</sup> Chadwick explores how the discussion of women and Surrealism has become the subject of academic research in courses and debates, at conferences and in publications.

<sup>300</sup> Chadwick, W. (ed) (1998) *Mirror Women, Surrealism and Images Self Representation*, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. p. 6

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Examples of women artists using the body as fragmented and deformed are Artist Ana Mendieta, who uses 'the body as trace...a raw feeling of separation, loss and longing of reunion resonates in ... art and her life.'<sup>302</sup> Also Bourgeois who states 'for me, sculpture is the body. My body is my sculpture.'<sup>303</sup> Women artists like myself are utilising their bodies through their 'personal, fears and anxieties.'<sup>304</sup> This bodily distortion is created in my practice through my physical action with clay and personal objects, which amplifies sensuality of material. This sensual quality of material is explored by Hamlyn in her essay as how 'the sensory connection ...to cloth cannot be adequately expressed in language.'

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<sup>301</sup> Penny Slinger with her photographs in 1973 I Hear What You Say and Read My Lips. [http://www.anothermag.com/loves/view/13592/Penny\\_Slinger\\_I\\_Hear\\_What\\_You\\_Say\\_1973](http://www.anothermag.com/loves/view/13592/Penny_Slinger_I_Hear_What_You_Say_1973), Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>302</sup> Posner, H. (1996) The self and the World Negotiating Boundaries in the Art of Yayoi Kusama, Ana Mendieta, and Francesca Woodman, in Chadwick, W. (ed) (1998) Mirror Women, Surrealism and Images Self Representation, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. p. 55

<sup>303</sup> Chadwick, W. (ed) (1998) Mirror Women, Surrealism and Images Self Representation, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. p. 13

<sup>304</sup> Chadwick, W. (ed) (1998) Mirror Women, Surrealism and Images Self Representation, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. p. 14

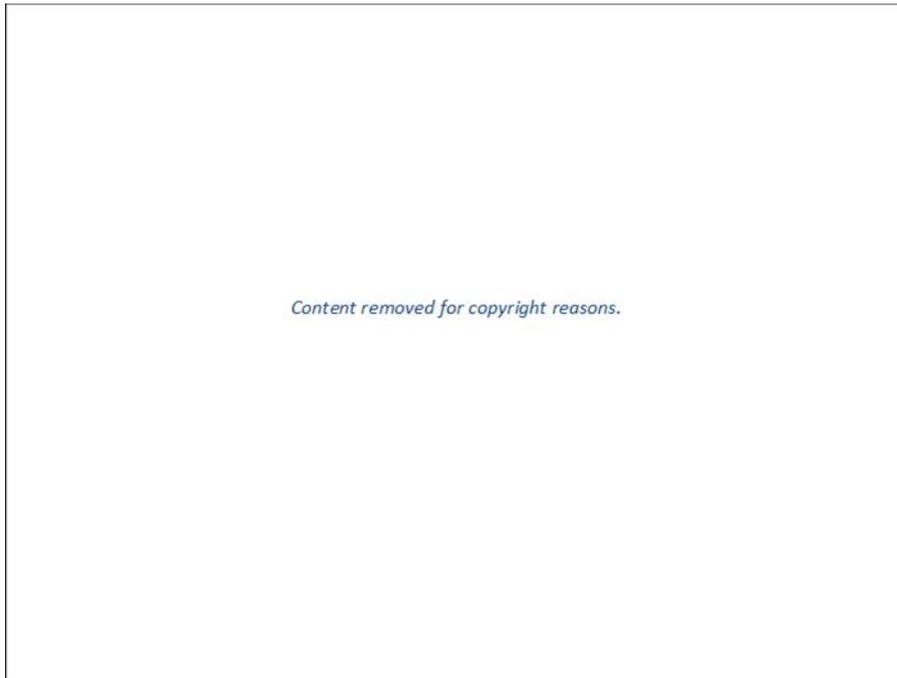


305

De Monchaux's work in Figure 305 contains a contrast of texture and tactility with sensual layers and intricateness of material imparting a sense of a physical *squirm*, a contrast between beauty and ugliness.

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<sup>305</sup> Cathy de Monchaux Erase 1989 Denim, velvet, steel bolts and PVC object: 310 x 88 x 90 mm, 0.9 kg Tate <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/de-monchaux-erase-t06915>. Content removed for copyright reasons.



I observe this as a visceral reaction towards the fragmented body as sexually implicit and often perversely made unpleasant; a highly tactile physical sensation. These women artists I have drawn on express their identity, through image or material that tends to be instinctive with elements of intrinsic repression. For example Dorothea Tanning's *Pincushion to Serve as a Fetish* in Figure 306.

There are features of the absurd found in these women's material sensuality. I would correlate this in for example Bourgeois' work, described by Lippard in her essay *Eccentric Abstraction*. Here Lippard describes Bourgeois forms as 'indirectly erotic'<sup>307</sup> and provoking 'the strongest physical sensation'<sup>308</sup> with an unexpected reaction as a 'near visceral identification with form'.<sup>309</sup> In chapter 2 I discussed this notion of the absurd, an eccentricity of form, a perception of the unfamiliar with an element of humour to explain further how *Eccentric Abstraction* confronts the viewer. The contradiction in my material,

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<sup>306</sup> <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/tanning-pincushion-to-serve-as-fetish-t07988> On display at Tate Liverpool Dorothea Tanning's *Pincushion to Serve as a Fetish*, 1965, The physical reaction of the hysteric is. *Pincushion to Serve as a Fetish*, is a good example of this, with its tactile soft velvet and hard metal pins demonstrating both fetishist qualities through material and orifices within the form and expressed on the outside of the body as well as felt internally. Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>307</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.34

<sup>308</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.34

<sup>309</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.34

shoes and clay can lead to an eccentric absurdity; a consequential interaction of material, which in my practice also increase the sensation of the sense of visceral flesh.

These pointers towards an instinctive approach to material and form in *Eccentric Abstraction* imply a sensation of the tactile; this is articulated by Lippard in her essay as artists preferring 'their forms to be felt, or sensed instead of read or interpreted. Sensual aspects are, perversely, made unpleasant... for a more complete acceptance by the senses - visual, tactile, and 'visceral' - the absence of emotional interference.<sup>310</sup> Suggesting a connection to the way that Lippard sees 'erotic sensation thrives on the unfamiliar,<sup>311</sup> but without emotional intrusion.

Lippard's use of the term 'erotic sensation'<sup>312</sup> substantiates the term erotic, as a viable means of description. Lippard's narrative of erotic as a 'sensuous abstraction'<sup>313</sup> is correlated to the sense of material. I suggest the notions of visceral, erotic and absurd affects together support physical manifestation of material as vibrations of intense perception.

My porcelain vessels are described as visceral, 'in the first place I relate them to the body – perhaps organs, they have some of the same effect as seeing organs covered in fat and membrane - even in a butchers shop. However some definitely do seem to have a female feel mainly of vulva, labia etc.'<sup>314</sup> This perception by the viewers show the forms as body related with vulval and fleshy attributes. This mix of the visceral and the absurd 'because they are very visceral and playful. They seem to take on organic form, almost like intestines or a foetus'.<sup>315</sup> It is this element of sexually implicit flesh in my practice, which can create erotic and absurd qualities to extend an emotional position of perception.

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<sup>310</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.39

<sup>311</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.40

<sup>312</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.40

<sup>313</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, Art International, November, 1966, 10:9:28, p.40

<sup>314</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 Invited Creative's

<sup>315</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 Invited Creative's

## Visceral Flesh

To touch on its own, is not enough of a response to my artwork. This visceral sense of bodily flesh provides the essence of a *squirm* or a repellent feel. Some viewers feel a need to touch; 'the hunger to experience through the hands'<sup>316</sup> but for some viewers this repellent feel can have an element of intrusiveness.<sup>317</sup> I suggest this stems from the fleshy feel of the material and the form itself. Thus there is the feeling of being drawn in, but tentatively as the surfaces seem hazardous 'looks dangerous'<sup>318</sup> or fragile. Together with the repellent feel of this visceral aspect there can be a fleshy feel 'like a truncated torso'<sup>319</sup> shown in Figure 320.

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<sup>316</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 Invited Creative's

<sup>317</sup> This is explored further in chapter 4.

<sup>318</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 2 Product design

<sup>319</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 Invited Creative's

*Content removed for copyright reasons.*

320

This recoil as a flinch together with being drawn inwards, closer to the forms is about touch but the response can also be an emotional one, 'my response was purely emotional, not rational'<sup>321</sup>. For some viewers they do not want to touch at all as 'they look disgusting'<sup>322</sup>. This reinforces my suggestion that some viewers recoil repulsively from the forms.

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<sup>320</sup> Fleshy feel of form - 1990's-best black Ecco court- hardly worn – photo credit Damian Hayes. Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>321</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 Invited Creative's

<sup>322</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 2 Product design

## Grotesque Vessels



323

It is this aspect of the grotesque shown in Figure 323, created through abstraction, which allows me to find a voice for myself within the porcelain, as a language of material articulated through texture.

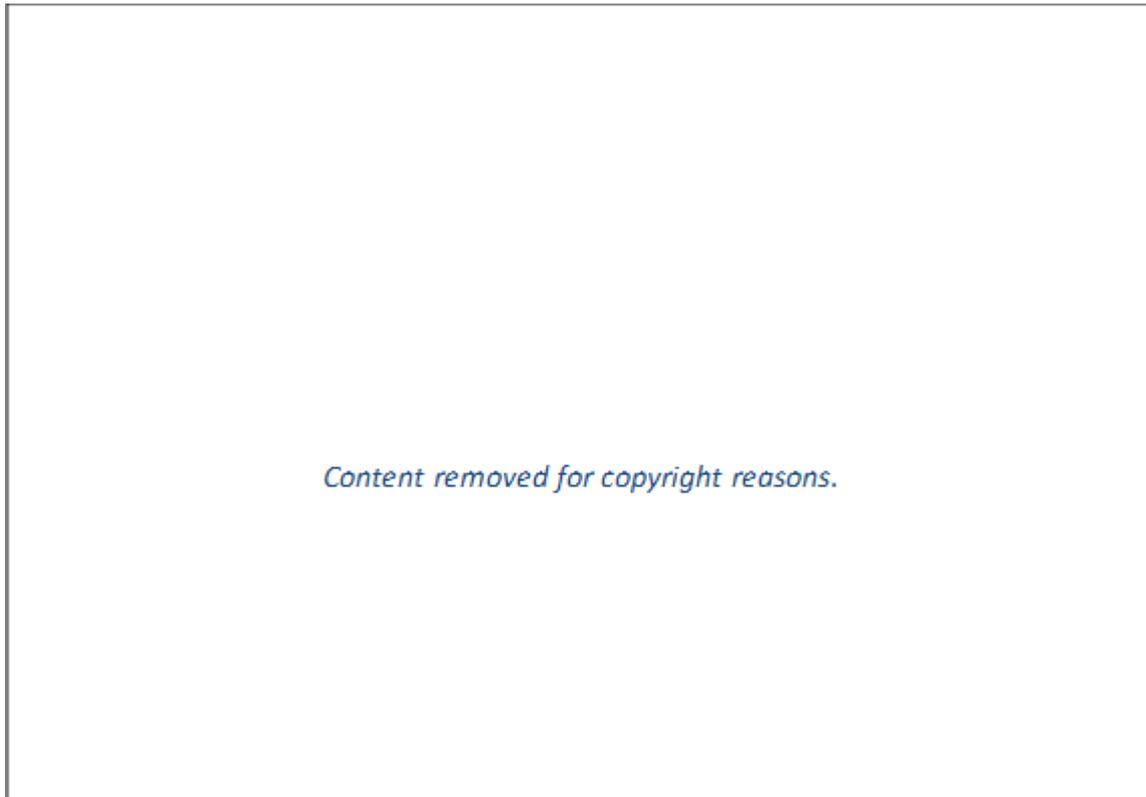
An element of repulsion through texture is present in Tamsin Van Essen's work *Medical Heirlooms* and is used to explore our cultural fixation with beauty and the perfect by applying disease and imperfection; to vessels, which convey 'the notion of the movement of the disease through the body of the jar, slowly deteriorating and crumbling'<sup>324</sup>. It is the texture and surface of the vessels which can be seen as having flaws and defects, and

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<sup>323</sup> The vulval forms are discovered 11 December 2009, porcelain from with traces,

<sup>324</sup> Van Essen, T. (2010) *Medical Heirlooms*, *Ceramic Review*, November/December, Issue 246, pp.44-49. p.46.

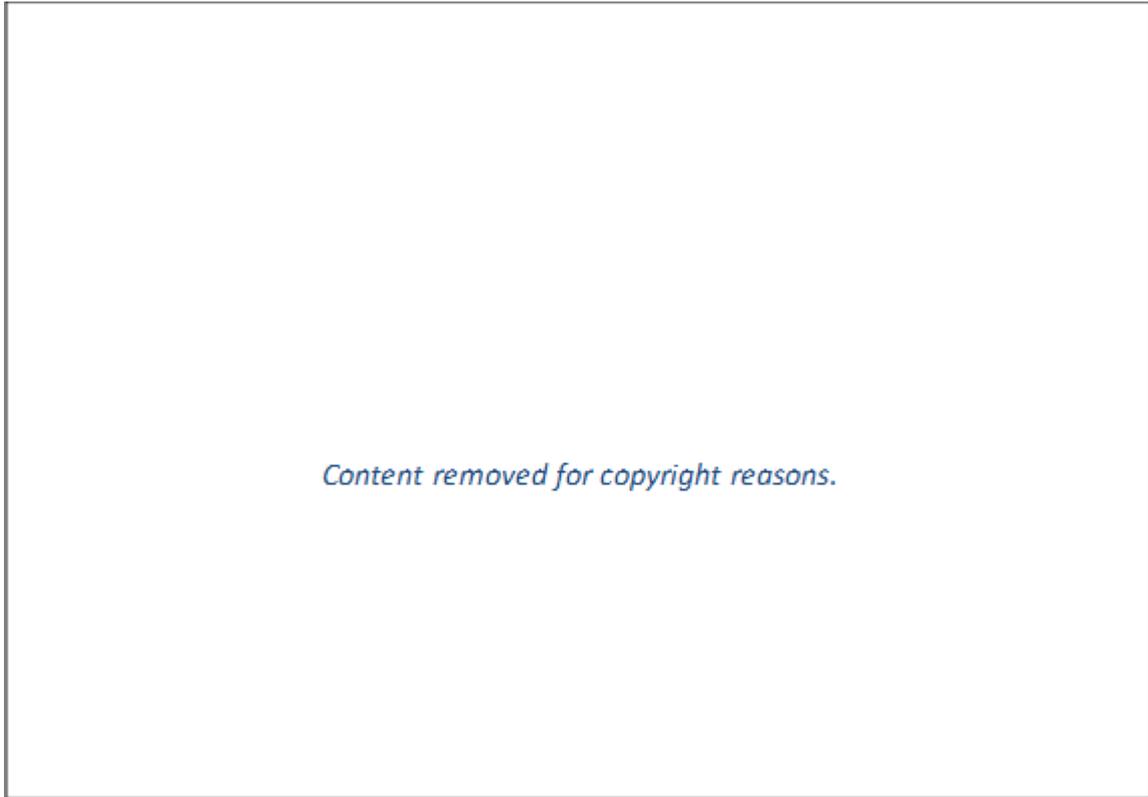
repulsion through their titles but the artefacts become beautiful on closer inspection. These vessels have a body related texture of revolting skin, which is acceptable when attached to pots(Figure 325and 326) and can be less comfortable in the full on abstraction, of my porcelain forms.



325

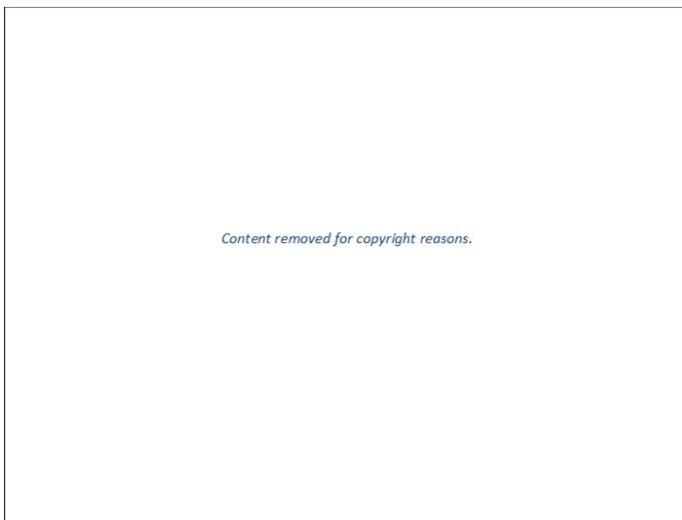
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<sup>325</sup> Tasmin Van Essen, Medical Heirlooms, Syphilis <http://www.vanessendesign.com/page7.htm>. Content removed for copyright reasons.



326

Artist Linda Swanson works with individual substances (chemicals) to create similar surface effects (Figure 327) to the traces formed from my objects after transformation in the kiln.



327

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<sup>326</sup> Tasmin Van Essen, Medical Heirlooms, Psoriasis (detail) <http://www.vanessendesign.com/page7.htm>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>327</sup> Linda Swanson Osmogenesis (detail) 2011, 6'x12'x14'h, bentonite clay, metal, water, wood, nylon [http://artaxis.org/ceramics/swanson\\_linda/linda\\_swanson.html#1](http://artaxis.org/ceramics/swanson_linda/linda_swanson.html#1). Content removed for copyright reasons.

Whereas my traces are formed from the destruction of actual objects (shoes) and integrated into the porcelain as three dimensional forms. Swanson's work according to critic and theorist Naomi Frangus is similarly process led and 'engages the body... transcends the retinal experience by inciting bodily responses including memory and gut feelings.'<sup>328</sup> Reinforcing my findings in this research that it is the engagement of the properties of material which gives perception, such as an intense feeling of repulsion, described in this research as a shudder or a *squirm* and reinforcing my approach to bodily abstraction of material. Chapter 4 builds on this visceral approach to material to relate to why the viewer can observe emotional perception to the artwork, whilst feeling a tactile reaction.

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<sup>328</sup> Frangos, N. (2014) Palpable Vision, The Work of Contemporary Ceramics Artist Linda Swanson, Ceramics Art and Perception, No. 95, pp. 52-57. p.52.

## Chapter 4 Do the Forms Impart a Female Bodily and Emotional Reaction in the Viewer as a Response to Touch?

The first three chapters of this research explicate the language of material, a physical response as not visual, not representational, but cause the viewer to have an experience of emotion. For Jill Bennet<sup>329</sup> artwork can produce a response in the viewer in the 'dynamic between the artwork and the spectator' as an 'engagement with affect and immediate experience...being a spectator of one's own feelings.'<sup>330</sup> This was emphasised in Chapter 3 where I illustrate how some female artists have explored their identity through material and presented this exploration from a visceral bodily and emotional approach of displaying how they see themselves. This has often been expressed from their view of themselves as *unattractive* emphasising how the flesh of the body physically ages or becomes disfigured through illness.

This chapter builds on why this instinctual impression expressed by some viewers of my work is observed as a female bodily perception with associations to the fragmented and folded clay, which can suggest an emotional perception to the artwork, provoking the feeling of a need to touch the forms. The viewers of my exhibition (2011) commented how they 'Want to touch'<sup>331</sup>. Viewers who perceive my forms as gendered tended to perceive female gender and their comments of this female quality in my view seemed to be associated to physical form in the twisted and folded clay.

This reasoning for my thesis has been considered by asking viewers<sup>332</sup> about my artwork, to provide qualitative responses for this discussion. These questions were distributed to four groups: Group 1 – mix of professional artists and professional creative's; Group 2 – BA/BSc. (Hons) Product Design Students; Group 3 – BA (Hons) Fine Art and Design Students (mainly

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<sup>329</sup> Associate Professor of Art Theory and Director of the Centre for Contemporary Art and Politics at the University of South Wales, Sydney

<sup>330</sup> Bennett, J. (2005) *Emphatic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. p.23

<sup>331</sup> Solo exhibition at Derby Museum and Art Gallery between August and October 2011.

year zero) and Group 4 – BA (Hons) Photography Students. There was a good response from all groups apart from the Photography Students who declined to participate. I received a total of 38 replies.

The initial responses from Group 1 shared a clear link between wanting to touch and an emotional response. This group was by far the most articulate and this was probably because the majority were experienced in articulating their creative perceptions.

Group 2 were split between wanting to touch and not. Those who did not want to touch were repulsed by the forms. Comments included: 'they look dirty'<sup>333</sup> and 'its green and sections are decaying and falling off'<sup>334</sup>. These references to mould, dirt and decay, were by six out of nine answers. Even of those who did want to touch, some responded to the mould, which others had found repellent as 'the twisted mould looks interesting but draws you in'<sup>335</sup>. It is revealed through my questionnaires that this group who wanted to touch also had an emotional response, 'sad destructive, full of emotions'<sup>336</sup> and 'sad, lost, memories of the past'<sup>337</sup> and 'tender, seductive and painful',<sup>338</sup> which suggests an emotional awareness. Those who didn't want to touch responded that they didn't have an emotional response to the work.

This desire to touch and the experiencing an emotional response was less well defined in Group 3, but this was complicated by the presence of two school children who were on work experience. Most of Group 3 wanted to touch (ten out of twelve). Out of these ten, six noted an emotional response. Of those four who didn't note an emotional response; two were the students from school, and their response to the emotional question was that they were confused, though they did pick up that the forms were textured. The two remaining wanted to touch and from the two that didn't want to touch, one was repelled by

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<sup>333</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 2 Product design

<sup>334</sup>Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 2 Product design

<sup>335</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 2 Product design

<sup>336</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 2 Product design

<sup>337</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 2 Product design

<sup>338</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

the forms, 'revulsion, the sculptures appear dirty diseased. The broken pieces are like flakes of skin, gross'<sup>339</sup>. Though there was not such a clear response from this group, those who were more articulate gave responses such as 'sensual, sensuous and visceral'.

I would infer that the overall feeling is that viewers do want to touch the forms but this is tempered by an intrusive or repulsive feeling. Responses from those who wanted to touch included reactions to texture: 'complex shape intrigues me ...as the advanced texture'<sup>340</sup>. Of the majority who wanted to touch, many also noted an emotional response. I would suggest that these two reactions are linked. This was particularly the case with those in Group 1, a more experienced group with regard to creative perception. The connection between an emotional response and tactility has been established in chapter 1 and 2 in this research through Sedgwick's theory of texture and emotion. I refer to this emotional response in Chapter 1 and 2 (Sedgwick) bringing together texture and emotion as a physical process of material related to the physicality of the body as an intense method of engaging with material. Sedgwick described artist Judith Scott's interaction of her body with the 'transaction of texture'<sup>341</sup> as perception of feeling, without the need for words. The responses in my research to texture or a sense of the visceral, I found, were also linked to the perception of the female body. The proportion of those surveyed in group one who had a female body related response were about 40% - 7 out of 18; and in group 3 25% - 3 out of 11; 'they have the impression of belonging to a person's body - I see areas like skin.'<sup>342</sup> Other viewers take this further to see those forms which are more intensely gendered as female vessels related as vulval, adding an erotic element. In group one this was 33% - 6 out of 18 but none in the other groups, which I feel is because a more experienced response is required.

Responses from many viewers, both male and female agreed that the work was gendered and the indication was that this was mainly a feeling of female form. 'To an extent - folded,

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<sup>339</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 3 Fine Art and Design students

<sup>340</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 2 Product design

<sup>341</sup> Sedgwick, E.F. (2003) *Touching Feeling Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham and London: Duke University Press. p.22

<sup>342</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

enclosed - smooth engenders gender'.<sup>343</sup> Some of the viewers' focused on the female gender of the shoes, but for those viewers who could perceive a deeper level of gender regarding the porcelain forms, there was a definite intimation of responses to 'physical appearance'<sup>344</sup> of material such as 'fold, curves and crevices'<sup>345</sup>, with a response to female genitalia. In Group 1, 7 out of 18 responses were perceived as gendered physically to the female body and particularly linked to the visceral or distorted aspect of form. In Group 1 33 % - 6 out of 18 viewers found that this suggestion of female gender revealed body related or visceral and vulval intimations. In group 1, 16 out of 18 almost 80% and the same percentage 80% in group 3, wanted to touch and from the viewers comments I suggest this is a tactile response to material, a physical manifestation of 'the physical shapes' and 'their physical appearance',<sup>346</sup> which I suggest is attributed to this tactile intimation of visceral flesh as 'they have an impression of belonging to a person's body – I see areas like skin outside.'<sup>347</sup> The same viewers responded to both touch and to emotion, this was observed in Group 2 where 50% wanted to touch and it was these same 50% who also had an emotional response. Those who didn't want to touch in Group 2 were completely repelled. Of these viewers who wanted to touch and had an emotional response they also saw a female gendered perception. From the descriptive comments I would suggest these responses are related to physical abstraction of form.

This material link to sensual abstraction is articulated through material which is pliable and malleable often displaying distorted and textural qualities, which can suggest sexuality in a more viable manner than direct images. It is the quality of sensuality in my material, perceived as touch, which together with the texture of my vessels suggest female gendered bodily qualities of skin. In my practice it is the malleable nature of clay, and the significance

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<sup>343</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>344</sup>Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>345</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>346</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>347</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

of its ability to ribbon<sup>348</sup> and flow on impact with objects, which has a sense of this sensual material.

Some viewers of my work have proposed that 'the metaphor for female genitalia is obvious – we touch as well as look to explore. But the desire to explore by touch is greater than that – it is a desire to experience (explore again!) what is unseen; to understand by experiencing!<sup>349</sup> This is not observed by everyone but there was a core group of viewers, (mainly in group 1) who observed a female gendered aspect linked to sexuality in my forms, as an observation of the erotic which I suggest is linked to visceral bodily flesh. These were mainly male viewers. A larger group saw the folds, curves and interior spaces of my forms as gendered female and associated this to the physicality of my material. Most viewers' perception is tempered by experience and I would suggest that as a whole for both of these groups it is the physicality of material, a visceral quality, as distorted abstraction of material, which provokes for them this intensely female gendered response. For others the sense of touch was more pertinent, but in some cases this was an intrusive physical sensation of being repelled; a feeling of disgust that leads back to the visceral sense of material.

When the texture of material is distorted and exaggerated this can amplify the experience of wanting to touch, to be drawn in, and to think about what this texture feels like, to the point of a repellent feel, grotesqueness or provoking the feeling of a squirm.<sup>350</sup> A tactility as texture, a vital factor in perceiving the tension and movement in material, as sensuality, which is explored through this research by looking at women sculptors working with abstractions of material.

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<sup>348</sup>The term ribbon or ribboned is coined by myself to describe my method of working in the distortion and stretch of impacted material, which affects not just the surface but spreads into the interior of the form becoming twisted and deformed creating intense texture .

<sup>349</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>350</sup> The physical sensation of a squirm, experienced by the viewer can be described as seeing a feeling and has been explained in the abstract. Bennett, J. (2005) *Emphatic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. p. 43

## To Touch or Not to Touch?

I propose that texture enhances the response to tactility in sculptural form. Sculpture is by its nature tactile, and visual observations are often not enough to satisfy curiosity.

I question the relevance of touch in sculptural forms. Is there a difference between the desire to touch and the curiosity about how forms may feel? Is there an inconsistency between curiosity about an object and is this different to a desire to touch? 'The objects have a very tactile quality that further exploration through touch would be rewarding...adds an additional dimension to experiencing the work rather than the purely visual.'<sup>351</sup> This viewer wanted to touch as 'looking at them doesn't satisfy my curiosity,'<sup>352</sup> demonstrating in my opinion that touch is a viable method of perception.

Curiosity is about wondering what happens if you touch objects, imagining what it would be like to touch textures, which may be repellent or perhaps sharp or fragile, is it safe to touch these and could this stop the desire to touch? This does not mean that curiosity about these deeply textural forms is any less valid as perceptions of tactility. My observation is that the more textured and convoluted the form the more likely the viewer is to be curious about what it would feel like to touch. 'Some smooth, sharp, fragile and hard - I want to feel them and poke my fingers in the crevices'.<sup>353</sup>

In fact some of the viewers were drawn to touch the more fragile and sharp edges to see how they felt. 'What does it feel like? How sharp is that edge? What is that texture?'<sup>354</sup> I was surprised by the response that some of the viewers found the act of touching intrusive, but they still wanted to touch and place their hands right inside the vessel shapes. This sense of intrusion led them to gently feel inside the concave forms, illustrated in Figure 355.

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<sup>351</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 3 Fine Art and Design students

<sup>352</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 2 Product design

<sup>353</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 3 Fine Art and Design students

<sup>354</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's



For those who didn't want to touch there was evidence of the contradictory extreme feeling of being repelled by the forms. They 'look toxic'<sup>356</sup>. Together this sensation of feeling intrusive or repelled, 'they repulse me'<sup>357</sup> both lead to the repulsive and grotesque sense that I have already described, as body related and a response to the physicalisation of what could be described as abstractions of female genitalia .

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<sup>355</sup> Monday 30 November a cautious sense of wanting to touch, almost intrusive by group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>356</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>357</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 3 Fine Art and Design students

## Current Thinking on Touch

Memory of the feel of material can have a similarity of language as the sense of physical touch. A person's past experience of touching an object can connect to the perception of how material or an object can be imagined to feel; particularly for someone who understands material and process; they can then feel a connection with the person who made an object from this sense of remembered touch. 'I recognised on some of the crimps the thumb-prints of the Indian, who made the pot. This little bit of data, specific to her body, was clearly transmitted to me over a thousand years of time. I felt a sense of wonder at this communication, unintended but given from her hand to mine.'<sup>358</sup>

The body as a vehicle for touch is also explored by You-Jin Lee, finding evidence for how 'visual arts practice inherently involves interconnected senses rather than a single sense'<sup>359</sup>. This is intrinsic to this research as I explore how through bodily awareness we do not use visual perception alone in our observation. Lee finds evidence for the senses of the visual and the tactile being interconnected but never equal. Advocating that, 'visual perception itself should be re-conceptualized as viewing based on use of the body, which encompasses and interacts with other perceptual systems'<sup>360</sup> Lee's insights have led me to suggest that tactile perception of sculptural form uses more than just visual perception and is reliant on how touch is connected to other bodily senses as a physical experience of the viewer's whole body.

Professors Marilyn Delong, Juan Juan Wu and Juyeon Park explore touch preferences in fabric. They found from 123 responses, that the 'most frequently listed properties they liked to touch were soft, smooth, and warm.'<sup>361</sup> This is interesting as they see objects as not about being 'merely functional; it must also be engaging on a sensorial and emotional level.'<sup>362</sup> They see this engagement through sensory information such as texture,

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<sup>358</sup> Bennion, J. (2009) *The Body: Intimacy and Intuition*, Studio Potter; Winter2008/Spring2009, Vol. 37 Issue 1, p36-39, p.37

<sup>359</sup> Lee, Y. (2010) *The Roles of Haptic Perception in Visual Arts*, Illinois: Thesis University of Illinois.p.5

<sup>360</sup> Lee, Y. (2010) *The Roles of Haptic Perception in Visual Arts*, Illinois: Thesis University of Illinois.p.29

<sup>361</sup> Delong, M., Wu, J. and Park, J. (2012) *Tactile Response and Shifting Touch Preference*, *Textile*, vol.10, issue 1, p. 45.

<sup>362</sup> Delong, M., Wu, J. and Park, J. (2012) *Tactile Response and Shifting Touch Preference*, *Textile*, vol.10, issue 1, p. 46.

reinforcing how I suggest that texture as part of perception is dominant in the experience of emotional and sensual sensations; an emotional response was had by many of the viewers of my forms: the 'pieces cry out for an emotional response - look like they are made to do that.'<sup>363</sup>

Zuo, Hope, and Jones explore texture and material selection in contemporary design practice observing how the sense of touch has been less explored 'regarding tactile interaction with materials ... how people describe their feelings of materials including their emotional response via the sense of touch.'<sup>364</sup> This reinforces my suggestion that emotional responses are valid in triggering responses to touch.

Zuo, Hope, and Jones also identify a difference between the surface of material and the '3 D structure of the whole bulk of the material'<sup>365</sup> giving credibility to my thinking that the importance of tension in material is in the penetration to the core of the whole object and not just contained in the surface. This tension in material I have discussed in Chapter 2 as distortion of material, a physical approach, which is highlighted by Read as the experience of the material surface. I extend this not just as engagement with the surface but the articulation of tension and distortion physically penetrating deeply into the centre of the material or object.

This physical approach as the combination of the flow of material together with the movement of the body is discussed by Tim Ingold in his lecture and book, *Telling by Hand*<sup>366</sup>, practitioners use the movement of their body in response to the flow of material, this 'couples his own movements and gestures - indeed, his very life - with the becoming of his materials, joining with and following the forces and flows that bring his work to fruition...they are lines along which materials flow and bodies move.'<sup>367</sup> This contemporary

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<sup>363</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>364</sup> Zuo, H., Hope, T., and Jones, M. (2014) Chapter 3: Tactile Aesthetics of Materials and Design, In *Materials Experience*, Southampton: Elsevier Ltd. p. 28

<sup>365</sup> Zuo, H., Hope, T., and Jones, M. (2014) Chapter 3: Tactile Aesthetics of Materials and Design, In *Materials Experience*, Southampton: Elsevier Ltd. p.28

<sup>366</sup>Ingold, T. (2013) *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, public lecture , 5 December 2012 <http://www.arch.umu.se/en/events/public-lectures/relational-architecture/telling-by-hand/>

<sup>367</sup> Ingold, T. (2013) *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, public lecture , 5 December 2012 <http://www.arch.umu.se/en/events/public-lectures/relational-architecture/telling-by-hand/>

discussion describes very well my process of working with the plasticity of my material as I impact the porcelain against the shoes and the ground, causing the material to flow and spread into and around the spaces inside the shoes.

Though Ingold discusses the flow of material and the action of the body, he doesn't distinguish between genders and their responses to such work. I am looking at how this physical sensuality of material has a visceral sense, originated in Eccentric Abstraction, which Lippard identifies as the tactility and sensuality of material. This abstraction of material, in my artwork leans more towards being gendered female in the way it is associated to the sensuality of material and the reminiscence of female genitalia.

Madalina Diaconu<sup>368</sup> explores how 'the artist may invent new materials, which are enjoyable or interesting for exploratory touch.'<sup>369</sup> The essence of Eccentric Abstraction is about working with objects formed out of new pliable malleable material, which in 1966 were considered new to the art scene. These materials held a tactility of touch, which is central to the discussion in this thesis. Does Diaconu not suggest that the 'pleasure of touch'<sup>370</sup> has an aesthetic significance as much as any other sense? I am investigating women's approach to the tactility of material as a form of artistic sensitivity to material.

## **Significance of Women's Contemporary Sculptural Practice in relation to Touch**

I have found a pattern of significance in the work of Bourgeois (1960s), Hesse (1960s), Dorothea Tanning's (1970s), Cathy de Monchaux(1990s), Judith Scott (1990s), Paula Santiago (2007), Kemske (2009), Tasmin Van Essen (2010) and Benglis (2015): over the time of this PhD research of how women artists engage with tactility in their work. As part of my exploration of other contemporary women sculptors I have visited exhibitions of Lynda Benglis (2010 and 2015), Eva Hesse Studiowork (2010), Louise Bourgeois, (2012,2014), and

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<sup>368</sup> Lecturer at Faculty of Arts, Charles University Prague

<sup>369</sup>Diaconu, M. (2006) Reflections on an Aesthetics of Touch, Smell and Taste, Contemporary Aesthetics, vol.4, p. 7

<sup>370</sup> Diaconu, M. (2006) Reflections on an Aesthetics of Touch, Smell and Taste, Contemporary Aesthetics, vol.4,

Angels of Anarchy, Women Artists and Surrealism (2010) where the predominant focus has been on the qualities of process and material. Perception of material as texture and form I believe is significant in the interpretation of wanting to touch. As part of my reflections of how contemporary women artists are working with material, I asked Lynda Benglis in conversation with Griselda Pollock in February 2015. 'How she felt her work was related to the sense of touch.'<sup>371</sup>

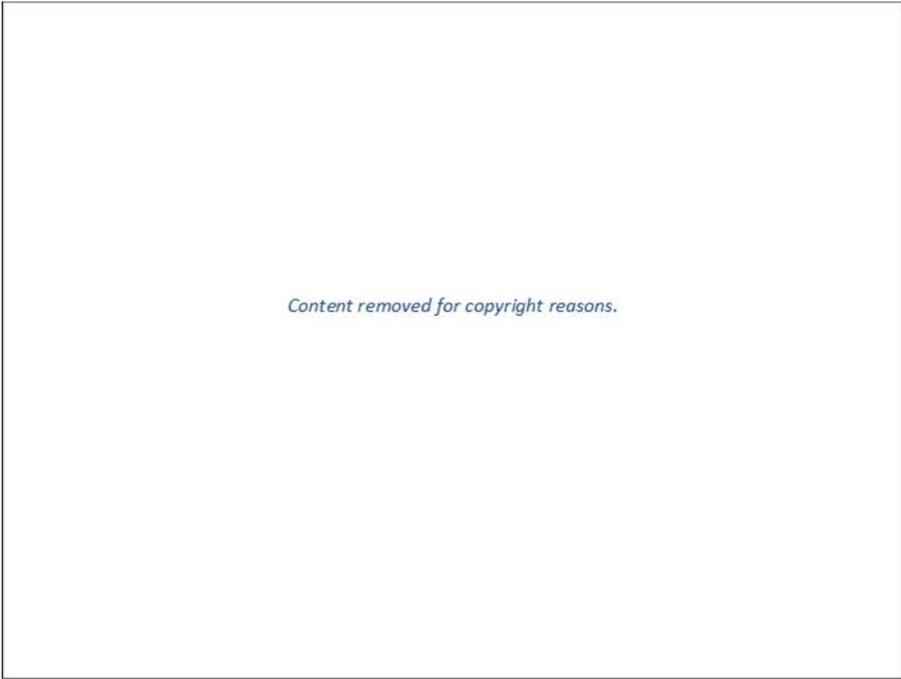
Benglis describes the importance of using her hands to create texture illustrated in Figure 373. Here she describes:

with my fingers mashed it into the plaster structure which I had created so that it could take the pressure of my fingers just pounding it. You know against whatever I had created. So what I was doing was making a kind of skin or puzzle on top of the form, but it looks like a form because of the highly textured. The skin kind of moves in space ... So very much I wanted my hands into it... Because I wanted that immediacy, and I thought of my hands making the path. So almost marking the handmade element, which was very processed, deliberately processed.<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Barbara Hepworth Gallery - Lynda Benglis in conversation with Griselda Pollock in February 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLzClRoGkv4>

<sup>372</sup> Barbara Hepworth Gallery - Lynda Benglis in conversation with Griselda Pollock in February 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLzClRoGkv4>



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373

Watching Benglis reply to my question there was such physicality in her body language as she formed the words and talked about how she used the touch of her fingers as part of her physical process mashing the clay into her form, to create texture. This texture I have identified as being the key to the abstraction of form. The immediacy of process and the physicality of touch give an eccentricity of form, which I believe Benglis refers to in how she sees her process. This evidence has supported my view, of how touch is very much a part of contemporary process for some women artists.

Another contemporary woman artist exploring working with touch is ceramicist Bonnie Kemske. Her research features touch through both her own body and that of the viewer. There are similarities to Kemske's and my work, we both explore touch through our process, and use our bodies in the physical act of making. Any similarity stops at this point, Kemske's process is a gentle act of casting by filling balloons with plaster and holding these containers of heavy liquid against her body in a *cast hug*, in a simultaneous act of touching and being

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<sup>373</sup> Linda Benglis, Deeply textured New Mexico Ceramics at Barbara Hepworth Gallery Friday 6 February - Wednesday 1 July 2015. Content removed for copyright reasons.

touched demonstrated in Figure 375 and 377. The viewer shares in this experience and comments when hugging the ceramic, 'The hug is about a closeness, of sharing an emotional charge'<sup>374</sup>.

375

*Content removed for copyright reasons.*

Whereas my work is more aggressive and harsh, but none the less engaging with emotion through texture of material. Conceived as an unforgiving physical process of collision between object, porcelain and ground. The impact creates a distortion of fissures and often sharp edges in Figure 376.

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<sup>374</sup> Kemske, B. (2009) Embracing Sculptural Ceramic a Lived Experience of Touch in Art. *The Senses and the Social*, vol. 4. issue 3 November 2009, pp. 323 - 344. p.341

<sup>375</sup> Bonnie Kemske, *Ceramic Hug* <http://www.artrabbit.com/events/event&event=8445>. Content removed for copyright reasons.



376

*Content removed for copyright reasons.*

377

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<sup>376</sup> No. 3 of Eighteen -2011 showing sharp edges of concave form.

<sup>377</sup> Bonnie Kemske, *Ceramic Hug* <http://www.arrabbit.com/events/event&event=8445>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

Herbert Read suggests that: 'Ideally each reader of this volume should be provided, at this stage, with a piece of sculpture to hug, cuddle, fondle'<sup>378</sup>. David J. Getsy<sup>379</sup> in 2008 discusses that there is a sense of a more metaphoric or abstract approach by Read to touch as a method of perception. In Kemske's contemporary *cast hug*, it is an actual emotional physical hug in which the viewer is encouraged to participate. I would argue that this is the start of seeing material as more tactile and leading the observer to feel the need to fondle material, which is illustrated in Figure 381. A quality discussed by Irigaray in Chapter 3 of how women are more affected by touch. 'Woman takes pleasure more from touching than from looking'<sup>380</sup>.



381

<sup>378</sup> Read, H. (1954) *The Art of Sculpture*, London: Faber and Faber Limited. p.72

<sup>379</sup> Getsy, D.J. (2008) *Tactility or Opticality, Henry Moore or David Smith: Herbert Read and Clement Greenberg on The Art of Sculpture, 1956*, *Sculpture Journal*, 17.2, pp.75-88.

<sup>380</sup> Irigaray, L. (1985) Translated by C.Porter, *This Sex Which is Not One*, New York: Cornell University Press p.26

<sup>381</sup> Monday 30 November a cautious sense of wanting to touch, almost intrusive by group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

Kemske sees this interaction between the object and body as a 'heightened physical and emotional self-awareness'<sup>382</sup>, reinforcing what I am suggesting, that touch stimulates an emotional response, alongside physical interactivity, through the body as 'touch provides us with a form of communication for almost every emotion'<sup>383</sup>. This interweaves in my research, with notions of Sedgwick's *texture of emotion* and the material and process of Eccentric Abstraction discussed in earlier chapters.

Kemske's research has similarities to the *texture of emotion* in the way that texture in her forms has an echo to emotional feeling as touch in rounded sensuous awareness of body shape. Whereas the sensation of texture and abstraction in my practice is related to the formation of sexually implicit apertures and intimate spaces from the body, some folded and some sharp edged; an implication of intrusion to the sense of bodily flesh.

This abstraction I suggest is both due to the female gendered sense of form and the distortion of material, which expresses emotion as a sensuous perception. The symbol of female gendered repression through the containment of my forms is interpreted by a viewer as 'release versus confinement... a male desire to 'protect' at its best, to 'control' at a darker and more sinister level. '<sup>384</sup> The rigid containers exemplified by the masculine metal shoebox, illustrates male gender in my artwork as the repression and containment of the female vessels.

## Gender Shift

Containment as a male dominated gendered manipulation of material was relevant to Chicago's forms, which between 1966 and 1967 were dominated by industrial materials, plastic and metal, with a perfect finish with a lack of emotional content. Later, in 1975, she

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<sup>382</sup> Kemske, B. (2009) Embracing Sculptural Ceramic a Lived Experience of Touch in Art. *The Senses and the Social*, vol. 4. issue 3 November 2009, pp. 323 - 344. p.343

<sup>383</sup> Kemske, B. (2009) Breaking the Taboo, *Ceramic Review*, September/October no.239, pp. 34-37.p.36

<sup>384</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

described these masculine forms as 'containers for my hidden feelings, which flashed in the polished surfaces, shone in the light reflections, and disappeared in the mirrored bases.'<sup>385</sup> This work reflected her inner struggle to be accepted by and receive approval from the male dominated art world without reflecting the emotional content she wanted to express in her artwork.

Chicago describes how she was expressing 'our humanity and values as women *through our work*,'<sup>386</sup> in order to raise the status and power of female artists in the gap between themselves and their male counterparts. Today, women artists may take it for granted that their work will be accepted and that they can use materials and processes associated with issues such as domesticity, identity, gender and sexuality. Restrictions meant that it was not until well into the 20th century that women were able to undertake life drawing with the male nude.<sup>387</sup>

Chicago and many of her female contemporaries struggled to get their work recognised by the male-dominated art world of 1960s and 1970s America. However, as Lucy Lippard has identified, women artists began using personal expression and feminist politics to their advantage. These women artists laid the foundations for enabling contemporary artists like myself to pursue our practices by expressing the differences of our female identity.

As a gender shift of practice Chicago rejected the sterile male orientated geometric form of her work to express emotional content and subjectivity in *Pasadena Lifesavers* (1969) moving towards expressing her female side through emotional sensation and identity by painting layers of symbolic meaning through colour and form 'and boy, was she punished for it, banished from the art world straight away;'<sup>388</sup> and rejected by the male dominated art world. This gender shift towards expression by women artists started in the late 1960s to

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<sup>385</sup> Chicago, J. (1975) (2006) *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*, London: Universe, Inc. p. 43

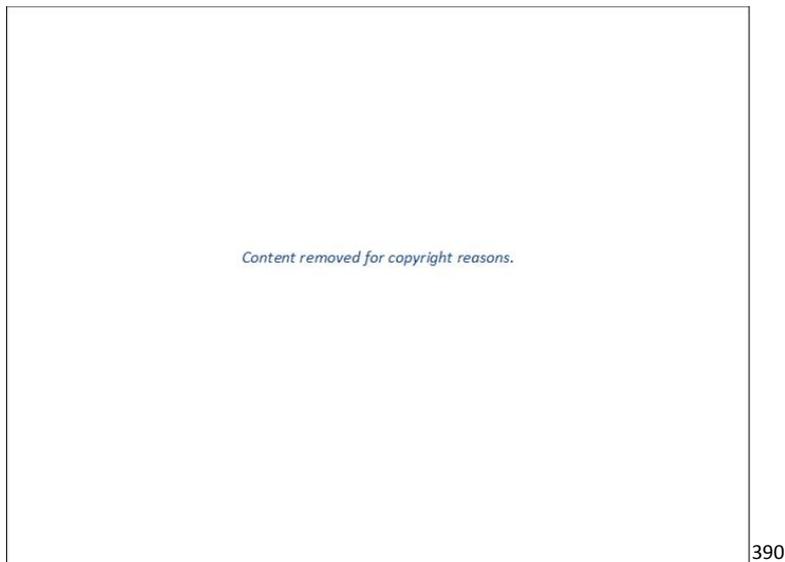
<sup>386</sup> Chicago, J. (1975) (2006) *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*, London: Universe, Inc. p.206

<sup>387</sup> <http://fineart.ac.uk/institutions.php?idinst=2>'The Slade was also the first English art school to offer female students equal opportunities to study from the life model' in the later 1900's but this was with the inclusion of a drape.

<sup>388</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) *From Eccentric to Sensuous Abstraction: An Interview with Lucy Lippard*, In: Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum, p. 29

progress towards more female inclusion in the art world but acknowledgement of feminism waited until the early to mid-1970s.<sup>389</sup>

The re-appraisal of female gender in this research is focused on the erotic expression of sensuous materials through sensation and emotion. Examples of this change towards utilising sensuous material are found in the work of Post-Minimalist Hesse and Bourgeois who have already been considered in this research. In Figure 390 Bourgeois' form engages with an erotic expression of sensuous material.



Hesse produces geometric form, with her own version of the Minimalist cube, Accession II in Figure 392, which was tactile and playful. She made expressive pieces,<sup>391</sup> which interweave

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<sup>389</sup> In the 1970s other women artists continued making work based on 'emotionally-saturated' materials and processes, which were initially found in their everyday domestic lives. For example, feminist artist Judy Chicago's *Womanhouse* (1972) included 'quilts and curtains, sewn sculptures, bread-dough pieces and a crocheted room.' Chicago, J. (1975) (2006) *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*, London: iUniverse, Inc p. 113

<sup>390</sup> Louise Bourgeois, *Avenza*, 1968–9, Plaster and latex. Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>391</sup> Nixon, M. (2002) *October Files Eva Hesse*, Cambridge Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. p. 212 According to Nixon, Hesse laboriously engaged with her material, through the physical activities of casting, threading and stitching. In common with Post-Minimalist process, which tended to be made out of flexible material and the final form, not obviously predetermined an important feature of the engagement of process.

material and geometric form together connecting Minimalism to the more expressive forms of Post-Minimalism responding to the physical tactility of material.

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*Content removed for copyright reasons.*

As discussed earlier, I believe in my research and practice I have further developed Susan Stoops<sup>393</sup> theory of the correlation of women working with abstraction together with the physicality of material. This research has focused on the physical encounter with material or objects; where the viewer can associate personal identity to the personal familiarity of material or object as emotional experiences of the artist. 'We may think that we have moved on, but moving on leaves imprints/impression of those our lives interact with.'<sup>394</sup>

This research reasons that the outcome of the viewer's physical engagement with material and process is a response to tactility, where the viewer's reaction is to be physically drawn in closer.<sup>395</sup> Post-Minimalism reveals surface detail and tactile surfaces as paramount,

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<sup>392</sup> Eva Hesse, *Accession II*, 1968, galvanized steel, plastic tubing - tactile version of the Minimalist cube <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=Hesse+1960s&biw>. Content removed for copyright reasons

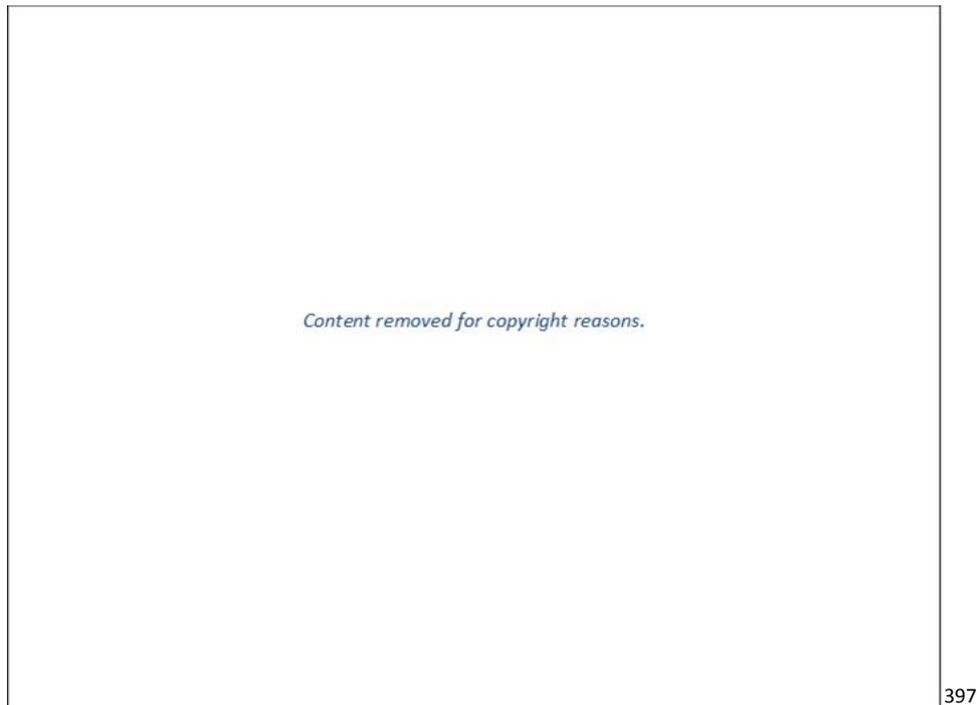
<sup>393</sup> Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum. p.6

<sup>394</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>395</sup> The position of the viewer's body in relation to the object across any direction creates the perception of the object in relation to the space. Morris in his *Notes on Sculpture Part II*(1966 cited in Harrison and Wood, p.831 Harrison, C. and P. Wood (ed) (1992) *Art in Theory 1900-1990, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. Writes about

drawing the viewer towards the form to look closer at detail and to touch. This encounter is redundant in Minimalism through the loss of surface detail.<sup>396</sup>

Post-Minimalism recognises the move of the three-dimensional object, reallocated out of the frame and engaging with the physical space as halfway between painting and sculpture demonstrated in Figure 397.



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how the small scale and surface detail of an object can draw in the viewer to an intimate distance taking away the space surrounding the object.

<sup>396</sup> The loss of surface detail of Minimalism is the key feature of this extended duration of the physical experience of viewing, creating what Fried refers to as '*theatrical*.' (Fried, M. (1967) *Art and Objecthood*: In (1998) *Art and Objecthood*, London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 153) When objects are repeated throughout the space; an increase of scale and removal of detail distances the engagement of the viewer's movement through the space around the object and thus extends the duration of viewing.

<sup>397</sup> Eva Hesse, *Hang-Up*, 1965-6 - the three-dimensional object is reallocated out of the frame, <http://faculty.etsu.edu/koterbay/contemporaryart5.html>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

Material becomes more important and this is manipulated by the artist's physical body. Phenomenology can explain the experience of objects by the body and the importance of touch.<sup>398</sup> Materials relevance to touch is a physical experience, which is explored in my practice as the sensory nature of the tactile understanding of the texture of material, which I believe is the significance of emotional perception.

By building on the view that personal association to physical perception of material increases awareness of emotional experience, this thesis re-works ideas about personal approaches to material and process by melding (objects) shoes in clay. My approach establishes emotional expression related to material and process, following the experience of tactility and texture of material. This is a female gendered manipulation of material in my practice and this research relates to some women artists' approach to candidly expressing their identity through personal association to material. Heather Pristash, Inez Schaechterle and Sue Carter Wood evidence that some women working with textile 'intentionally make some sort of personal statement with their work.'<sup>399</sup> Beth Fowkes Tobin and Maureen Daly Goggin observe how 'women's engagement with the material world is not only informed by a deep knowledge of the material used... but also women's manipulation of the material world is central to constructing social meanings'.<sup>400</sup>

## **Current Thinking on Women's materials**

This social significance and meaning of women's interaction with material is explored further by Nicholas Chare reinforcing this notion of meaning in material in exploring how

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<sup>398</sup> The French Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his book the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) discusses gesture and sensation as forms of expression. How we perceive ourselves and how the movement of the physical body experiences an object in a space as spatial perspective. Merleau-Ponty explains how the body experiences objects. 'Objects are really there for me, and their invisible aspects have reality precisely because I can move around so as to bring them into view and touch them.' (Moran, D. and, T. Mooney (ed) (2002) *The Phenomenology Reader*, London: Routledge, p. 425)

<sup>399</sup> Pristash, H. I. Schaechterle and S.Carter Wood (2009) *The Needle as the Pen: Intentionality, Needlework, and the Production of Alternative Discourses of Power*, in Daly Goggin, M. and B. Fowkes Tobin (eds), *Women and the Material Culture of Needlework and Textiles, 1750 - 1950*, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited. p.15

<sup>400</sup> Daly Goggin, M. and B. Fowkes Tobin (eds)(2009) *Women and Things, 1750 - 1950 Gendered Material Strategies*, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited. p.2

'artist's materials are, however, always invested with significance.'<sup>401</sup> He observed that these approaches to material are not being explored in depth, and finds this relationship 'between gender and medium are properly acknowledged and examined oversights and inequalities within art history will persist'<sup>402</sup> as 'medium is never gender neutral.'<sup>403</sup> My research explores this gap in gender and material. Building on how Chare sees the sexing of material as overlooked, I am reconsidering this gendered manipulation of material through touch as a sensual feel of clay through the manipulation of my shoes within that clay.

The tactile manipulation of material as gendered is discussed by Lee and Duncum as a female rather than 'gender neutral theory'<sup>404</sup>. This is evidenced in their research as the possibility of the non-visual, as perception arising from the tactile. They reference Constance Classen<sup>405</sup> who discusses the differences of gender as 'the notion of there being an archetypal opposition between male sight and female touch.'<sup>406</sup>

Lee and Duncum (2011) focused on women, in their discussion, this stemmed from the influence of a mix '...of phenomenology, feminist theory and women's art practice'<sup>407</sup>.

This link to phenomenology in my work is focused on the body and its relationship to the object, similarly to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's perception of 'tactile experience'...'it is not I who touch, but my body'<sup>408</sup>. These notions reinforce my thinking that this research around women's choice of materials is more likely to focus on touch through their body awareness.

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<sup>401</sup> Chare, N. (2009) Sexing the Canvas: Calling on the Medium, *Art History*, September, vol.32, no.4, pp.665-686.p. 673

<sup>402</sup> Chare, N. (2009) Sexing the Canvas: Calling on the Medium, *Art History*, September, vol.32, no.4, pp.665-686.p. 686

<sup>403</sup> Chare, N. (2009) Sexing the Canvas: Calling on the Medium, *Art History*, September, vol.32, no.4, pp.665-686.p.667

<sup>404</sup> Lee, Y. and P. Duncum (2011) Coming to Our Senses: Revisiting the Haptic as a Perceptual System, *International Journal of Education Through Art*, vol.7, no.3, pp. 233-244. P.240

<sup>405</sup> Is a cultural historian specializing in the History of the Senses *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (University of Illinois Press 2012)

<sup>406</sup> Classen, C. (1998) *The Colour of Angels*, London: Routledge. p. 6.

<sup>407</sup> Lee, Y. and P. Duncum (2011) Coming to Our Senses: Revisiting the Haptic as a Perceptual System, *International Journal of Education Through Art*, vol.7, no.3, pp. 233-244.p.234.

<sup>408</sup> Merleau-Ponty, M. (1970) Translated by C. Smith, *Phenomenology of Perception*, London: Routledge.p.316.

Professor of Film and Humanities, Kristin Congdon finds that 'certain materials are associated with female works'<sup>409</sup>. I have found that women are more engaged with materials linked to personal associations and these materials are more likely to be related to touch and texture with sensual tactile qualities. In my research these materials are clay and textile.

Congdon explores feminist approaches to art criticism, and finds that women's approaches are more likely to be personal as, 'she recognises that her reactions, associations, likes and dislikes, are connected to who she is as much as to what she is reading (viewing, hearing, etc.)'<sup>410</sup>. Congdon debates the presence of different female artistic methods to process, material and artistic criticism.

This personal sense of material Congdon reinforces as 'certain materials are associated with female works.'<sup>411</sup> This strengthens my suggestion that some women use tactility and texture of material to draw out emotional perception in their work. I believe that this emotional perception is drawn from the personal material and process that these women tend to select. Lippard saw a link through women's artwork with personal expression, created through manipulation of material through process. Lee, Duncum, and Elizabeth Adan,<sup>412</sup> identify that there is space for further research on touch and I believe that my research contributes towards touch as a female perception of material, which is reliant on texture.

In an email conversation with Adan, she confirms 'that, in relation to physical perception, yes, I think texture is a critical component of physical perception, though I would also say that both texture and physical perception are somewhat under theorized in modern and contemporary art. In relation to emotional perception, I think that texture can also play a

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<sup>409</sup> Congdon, K.G. (1991) *Feminist Approaches to Art Criticism* in D. Blandy *Pluralistic approaches to art Criticism*, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press. p.20

<sup>410</sup> Congdon, K.G. (1991) *Feminist Approaches to Art Criticism* in D. Blandy *Pluralistic approaches to art Criticism*, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press. p.20

<sup>411</sup> Congdon, K.G. (1991) *Feminist Approaches to Art Criticism* in D. Blandy *Pluralistic approaches to art Criticism*, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press. p.20

<sup>412</sup> 'The sense of touch has, until recently, been far less discussed' Adan, E. (2009) *Touching contemporary art*. <http://www.collegeart.org/pdf/CallforParticipation2008.pdf>

role.<sup>413</sup> Reinforcing how texture and tactility in my opinion are highly relevant in instigating an emotional response by the viewer.

My practice builds on considered opinion that emotion is recognised as a valuable method of perception. I am building on this position, particularly in connection to texture and tactility, as an insight into emotional awareness, perceived through physical self-expression in artwork. The work of Hesse has recently been linked to emotion (2013)<sup>414</sup>, particularly in connection to how she physically manipulates her material to create texture through the sense of touch.

### **Emotional Response by the Viewer**

In my questionnaire, all but one in group 1 gave an emotional response to my work. This emotional response by viewers to the porcelain forms; seem to be generated by their bodily structure, the process of transformation, the traces left behind and the formation of inner distorted vessels. The perception of emotion, in my opinion extends Lippard's view of physical perception, which is articulated in her essay as an abstraction of material, an erotic sensation, which is expressed as sensuality of material, and described as visceral perception. Sedgwick's thoughts on the texture of emotion considered in Chapter 1 and 2 extend Lippard's understanding of this sensuality of material, together with tangible texture, in the sensual perception of material. This emotional perception is established in my practice in the porcelain forms as a sense of eccentricity of abstraction imparting a perception of female sensuality in the vessels.

I have tried to separate out the words, emotion and feeling to explain the different meanings related to the conscious and unconscious mind, these are so tied into our normal language with a similar connotation that, it is difficult to separate them out. These differences can explain how we view and make work but the boundaries between the meaning of the words, emotion and feeling tend to blur.

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<sup>413</sup> Sat 21/03/2015 17:34 Re: Touching Contemporary Art Paper Elizabeth Adan eadan@calpoly.edu

<sup>414</sup> Gassner, H. and B. Kollé and P. Roettig (eds) (2013) Eva Hesse More Than One, Hamburger Kunsthalle: Hatje Cantz

The emotional element can be described as affect which is to 'move somebody emotionally.'<sup>415</sup> This activation of affect through 'sets of muscles and glandular responses located in the face and also widely distributed through the body, which generate sensory feedback which is either inherently 'acceptable or unacceptable.'<sup>416</sup> These physical responses to emotion are triggered by the stimuli of image or experience.

Professor of Sociology Ariel Ducey writes how the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio sees emotions and feelings as distinctly separate 'emotions are modifications of the body that are autonomous from conscious thought and attention. Feelings on the other hand, are 'largely constituted by the perceptions of a certain body state' or 'the perception of the body state forms the essence of a feeling.'<sup>417</sup> By exploring how the unconscious could relate to emotional expression I hope to outline how the emotional content in my work can be experienced.

## **Emotional Memory**

Freud explored memory as unconscious and conscious thought in his essay *A Note Upon the Mystic Writing - Pad*. This writing pad consists of two layers, celluloid and waxed paper. The writing is only visible on the celluloid when it is in contact with waxed paper, but is faintly always permanently present in the wax. He uses this analogy to compare the unconscious to the wax layer as 'the wax slab with the unconscious behind them, and the appearance and disappearance of the writing with the flickering-up and passing-away of consciousness in the process of perception.'<sup>418</sup> This has an analogy with how the perception of the porcelain forms, rely on imprint and layers, imparting an unconscious

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<sup>415</sup> Bloomsbury (2005) Concise English Dictionary, second edition, A and C Black Publishers Ltd, London. p.21

<sup>416</sup> Tomkins, S. (1962) *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, New York: Springer publishing Company. p.135

<sup>417</sup> Ducey, A. (2007) *More Than a Job: Meaning Affect and Training Helath Care Workers* In Ticineto Clough, P. (ed) (2007) *The Affective Turn, Theorising the Social*, Durham and London: Duke University Press. p.190

<sup>418</sup> Freud, S. (1991) *The Penguin Freud Library Volume 11, On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis Beyond the Pleasure Principe, The Ego and the ID and Other Works*, London: Penguin Books p.433 Freud laid the foundation for Tomkins' theory of the storage and retrieval process of sensory information which is explored in my practical work and discussed as how the viewer stored the sensory information in the unconscious mind as an unconscious act releasing emotion, drawn to visually touch the texture and surface detail, and wonder about the absence of the shoes.

component to the imprint of texture as emotion, which is always present and the basis for understanding without the need for words. Viewers of my forms were drawn to the 'objects, that have an interesting range of textures that invite touching.'<sup>419</sup>

Damasio sees emotion as an unconscious thought and I can relate that to my work in that emotion is felt through the texture of the material without conscious thought, as an emotional response to material. Whereas a feeling requires a level of conscious thought connected to the body and would be more related to the practical process in my artwork. Therefore, I suggest it is emotion that I am exploring in the perception of my artwork triggered by the effect of the tactile elements of my work rather than the feeling related to the process of making.

The viewing of the work is stored in the unconscious mind; emotion is released through wanting to touch the texture and surface detail. Viewing and storing this information is an unconscious act and is often emotionally charged. The conscious mind then releases those selected images as conscious feedback.<sup>420</sup> Personal objects discharge more of an emotional element and my view is that this is increased in my work through the distortion of material, which provides a sense of intrinsic repulsion. Thus I suggest it is the unconscious mind, which is more relevant to emotional perception, together with images of personal objects drawing the viewer into personal emotional experience.

## **The Personal**

Academic feminists Liz Stanley and Sue Wise 'argued that to omit 'the personal' is to omit the central intellectual and practical experiences of research'.<sup>421</sup> They have the 'conviction

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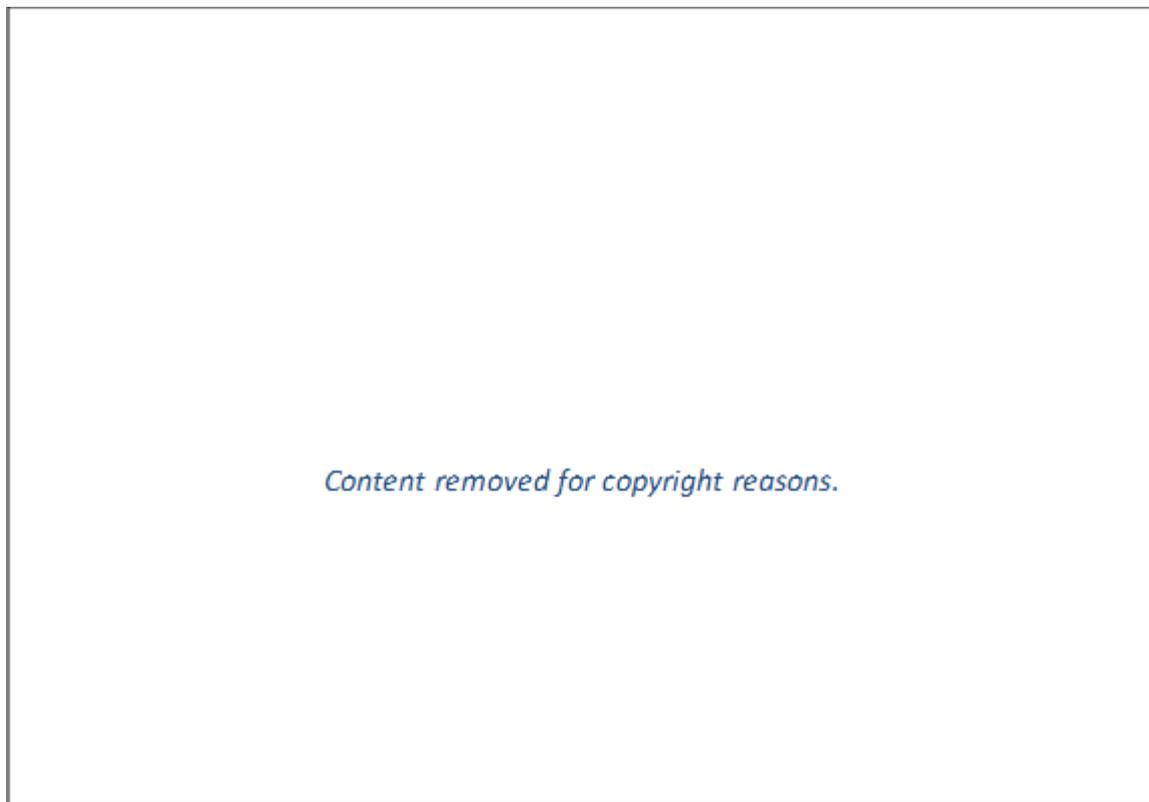
<sup>419</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 3 Fine Art and Design students

<sup>420</sup> Professor of Psychology Silvan Tomkins (1962) writes about how memories are stored in '...the storage process as , automatic and unlearned, from the retrieval process which we think is learned. Both are duplicating processes, but one is governed by a built-in, unconscious mechanism, the other by a conscious feedback mechanism. ' Tomkins, S. (1962) *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, New York: Springer publishing Company.p.16. Dealing with sensory information, which could overwhelm us if it all became available at once so retrieval is controlled by the conscious mind whereas the storage process is an unconscious process. When we view artwork we unconsciously store the images and experiences and it is our conscious mind which retrieves these when memories are triggered by what we see from these visual elements.

<sup>421</sup> Stanley, L. and S. Wise (1983) 'Back into the Personal' or :Our Attempt to Construct 'Feminist Research', in G. Bowles and R. Duelli Klein( 1983) *Theories of Women's Studies*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. p.197

that the essence of feminism lies in its re-evaluation of ‘the personal’<sup>422</sup> and the importance of the everyday. I discuss this personal approach in my research as becoming a more accepted part of academic discussion.

In my research I have shown how some women artists, practitioners and academics are concerned with the personal in their artwork. Doris Salcedo uses personal objects – shoes shown in Figure 423, which are encased behind translucent animal skins. They can no longer be touched, and are barely visible, representing women who have been lost. The shoes no longer have a function. They have been transformed in a similar way to my shoes, though they do still exist unlike mine. Their existence is important in representing their original owners whereas my shoes are absent.



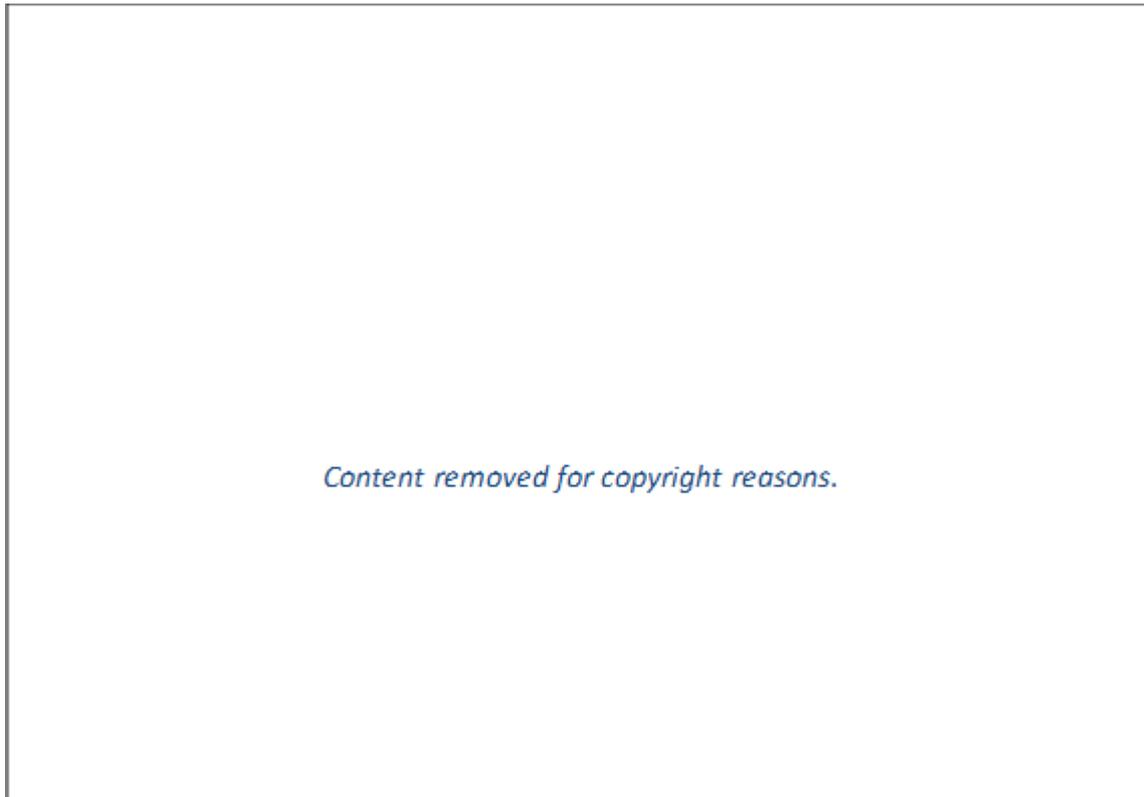
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<sup>422</sup> Stanley, L. and S. Wise (1983) ‘Back into the Personal’ or :Our Attempt to Construct ‘Feminist Research’, in G. Bowles and R. Duelli Klein( 1983) Theories of Women’s Studies, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. p.200

<sup>423</sup>Atrabiliarios, 1992-2004, shoes, animal fibre, and surgical thread,  
[https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=doris+salcedo+shoes&biw=1301&bih=592&source=lnms&tbnm=isch&sa=X&ei=jddqVbH8Aa-](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=doris+salcedo+shoes&biw=1301&bih=592&source=lnms&tbnm=isch&sa=X&ei=jddqVbH8Aa- Content removed for copyright reasons.) Content removed for copyright reasons.

The empty void of loss is symbolised in my work by the absence of the shoes in the porcelain forms, which is reinforced by the original photographic image of the shoes.

Absence of identity and physical presence is also relevant to the copper canisters found by David Maisel containing the unclaimed ashes of mental patients in his *Library of Dust*, mentioned in Chapter 3.<sup>424</sup>



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These patients were residents of the Oregon State Insane Asylum a state-run psychiatric hospital where the patients died between 1883 and the 1970's.

The cremation canisters are not personalised, but the containers are individualised by the process of decomposition and the reaction of the surface of the copper to external factors of flooding and the damp atmosphere of their environment, illustrated in Figure 425. We

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<sup>424</sup> Library of Dust Photo by David Maisel. <http://shape-and-colour.com/2008/10/10/david-maisel-library-of-dust/>

<sup>425</sup>David Maisel, Library of Dust, images of copper cremation canisters containing the remains of residents of the Oregon State Insane Asylum. Content removed for copy right reasons.  
[http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=david+maisel+library+of+dust&safe=active&tbn=isch&ei=\\_KKyU7nEE8mPOAXaj4DYCA#facrc=\\_&imgrc=H-8\\_7oYQjz4oLM%253A%3BBKtyuJ9zm-](http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=david+maisel+library+of+dust&safe=active&tbn=isch&ei=_KKyU7nEE8mPOAXaj4DYCA#facrc=_&imgrc=H-8_7oYQjz4oLM%253A%3BBKtyuJ9zm-)

know little about the lives or personality of the deceased, their identity has been lost. There is unease about the chemical reaction between the human ashes and their containers and how these forgotten repetitive canisters can be found beautiful in such tragic circumstances.

Karen Lang explores 'the proximity of the canisters' machine – made uniformity and their individual patterns of corrosion and efflorescence; of the dead and the living; of the order, accumulation and ever-nearing totality of the library and the disorder, accretion, and ever-molting divisibility of the dust; of the body of ashes of one patient and the bodies of ashes of others. The dust of people, of people judged mentally ill.'<sup>426</sup>

Maisel documented the copper canisters and preserved them as visual images, as the original containers are fragile and liable to further decay. The canisters themselves physically form an archive of the remains of the forgotten people who have died. As the canisters were originally numbered and of uniform shape with contents from the past, there is a similarity here to the way that I have numbered and dated my shoes.

The canisters have taken on a life or growth of their own and have similarities to the colour of chemical traces found in my porcelain forms. 'Corrosion indicates decay but in its efflorescence, it signals a life force'<sup>427</sup> in a similar way that the cremation of my shoes create unexpected forms and substances growing out of the transformation of matter; from the chemical reaction of fire to form an *absent presence*. Both the contents of these canisters and my shoes have gone through a process of cremation as transformation. It is this process of transformation, the 'effects of traumatic force, metamorphosis, alteration'<sup>428</sup> which can intrigue the viewer and the effect of the 'folded and misshapen'<sup>429</sup> forms in my artwork supply an emotional response.

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<sup>426</sup> Lang, K (2008) David Maisel's Library of Dust. X-TRA: contemporary art quarterly 11. 1 (Fall 2008): pp. 44-47. p.46.

<sup>427</sup> Lang, K (2008) David Maisel's Library of Dust. X-TRA: contemporary art quarterly 11. 1 (Fall 2008): pp. 44-47.p.47

<sup>428</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>429</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's



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The intimate experience of touch as a process leaves sensuous marks and imprints in these forms shown in Figure 430. In the same way that fire leaves traces behind after consuming something. However hard I try to eradicate the shoes they remain an important part of the work and an important part of me. I celebrate the absence and death of my shoes by exhibiting their mortal remains,<sup>431</sup> the traces, dust and ashes.

The remains from the cremation of my shoes, I consider precious and I have collected this in containers and this collection of the dust and the traces from my shoes are the remains of my lived experience as I present them to the viewer with suggestions of emotional associations, along with the photographic image. The emotional affect in a photograph is discussed by Thy Phu and Linda Steer: 'instead of representing emotions, photography might also provoke and stimulate them.'<sup>432</sup> I suggest that our emotions can be stirred when

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<sup>430</sup> 2007 - Clarke's little girl white sandals - worn a lot for working at Wirksworth festival and really good for wearing while on crutches with injured ankle.

<sup>431</sup> It is the powerful associations of objects to emotions and identity which ,,,, James Davidson explores how shoes can be seen as a house charm protecting the house from evil, by 'the placement of a single, worn-out shoe in a chimney is important,' as it discourages malicious spirits. These associations of objects to feeling safer or being protected could be linked to how we view objects and their emotional connotations. We give more prominence to such an object; such as the obscurity of the presence of a shoe found on a coffin lid. Davidson, J.M. (2010) keeping the Devil at Bay: The Shoe on the Coffin Lid and other Grave Charms in Nineteenth – and Early Twentieth – Century America, Published online by Springer Science and Business Media, LLC 2010. – International Journal of Historical Archaeology, December 2010, Volume 14, Issue 4, pp 614-649

<sup>432</sup> Phu, T. and L.M. Steer (2009) Introduction, Photography and Culture, November 2009, vol.2, Iss.3, pp. 235-240, p. 235.

we recognise similarities to our own experiences within photographs. The photographs act as triggers of recognition which can then provoke emotion.

## **Absence and Presence**

The occurrence of absence and presence in the photographic image is vital to this expressive context or emotional trigger. In the photographs of Miyako discussed in Chapter 1, the texture of material intensified the bodily presence of Miyako's mother, which could still be seen in the shape of her clothing. The addition of memory with the possibility of nostalgia or melancholy enhances the effect of layers of texture, of bodily substance and the *punctum*<sup>433</sup>; of how material and form can have strong associations with emotion, suggesting that texture can amplify an emotional trigger through touch. This need to touch is explored in Chapter 1 as the notion of Bachelard's 'fingertip memory' where objects are remembered as a feeling of touch by the body.

The intense texture revealed in Figure 435 exhibits provocations to touch, memory and material, which after going through a process of transformation, 'the material itself communicates through touch,<sup>434</sup> and is central to how in this research and practice emotional association can be endorsed as a link between texture and emotion. This physical contact is established by Sedgwick as being between texture and emotion; which she has theorised as a *texture of emotion*.

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<sup>433</sup> *Punctum* is discussed in Chapter 1 with reference to Barthes.

<sup>434</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

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## Emotional Associations

These emotional triggers between touch, memory and material are stimulated by a mix of mind and body. This is seen by the philosopher Baruch Spinoza, working on the theory of affects in which he explored how the mind and body correspond in parallel, 'the mind's power to think and its developments are, he proposes, parallel to the body's power to act.'<sup>436</sup> The mind and the body works in tandem helping to make clear how the physicality of the making of my work is tied in with my thought process - as the work is completed when it feels right. I work with my material by using touch and impact, manipulating the clay until it feels right. This is a physical process using my body to produce the flow and movement of porcelain against the shoes.

Emotional triggers can be understood by exploring the theory of affect. Tomkins describes how:

the human being is equipped with innate affective responses which bias him to want to remain alive and to resist death, to want sexual experiences, to want to experience novelty and to resist boredom, to want

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<sup>435</sup> Close up of texture of porcelain containing traces - photo credit Damian Hayes. Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>436</sup> Ticineto Clough, P. (ed) (2007) *The Affective Turn, Theorising the Social*, Durham and London: Duke University Press. p. ix Note

to communicate, to be close to and in contact with others of his species  
and to resist the experience of head and face lowered in shame.<sup>437</sup>

Tomkins description of the human responses of affect is pertinent to the narrative of my artwork. Particularly the transformation and change initiated through the shame I felt in looking at the drab style of the shoes I had worn daily and the link to my own personal identity. Women can approach growing older 'with such distaste and even shame.'<sup>438</sup> I have explored this in more detail in Chapter 3 discussing how ageing affects the body and the distortion and deep texture of my porcelain forms has a resonance to the ageing of skin.

This approach to change tends to look at psychological needs and how we explore our fears and conflicts. Congdon quotes Lippard in the different concerns of the female and the male, showing how the female is more concerned with such issues as 'adaptability and psychological needs.'<sup>439</sup> This has emotional significance in the way some women artist can explore aspects of their identity and personal fears in their artwork.

Bourgeois and Hesse are examples of how women artists express their fears and insecurities through their artwork and writings. Hesse used her material to express the personal experience of her body through illness, using 'synthetic materials allowed her to suggest organic tissue without directly representing it'<sup>440</sup> seen here in Figure 441.

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<sup>437</sup> Tomkins, S. (1962) *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, New York: Springer publishing Company.p.27

<sup>438</sup> Sontag, S. (1972) *The Double Standard of Aging*,  
[http://radpacs.weber.edu/images/R\\_Walker/RADT%203003/Section%207/7-H%20The%20Double%20Standard%20of%20Aging.pdf](http://radpacs.weber.edu/images/R_Walker/RADT%203003/Section%207/7-H%20The%20Double%20Standard%20of%20Aging.pdf) accessed 5/04/16

<sup>439</sup> Congdon, K.G. (1991) *Feminist Approaches to Art Criticism* in D. Blandy *Pluralistic approaches to art Criticism*, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press. p.20

<sup>440</sup> 2016 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, [https://www.sfmoma.org/artist/Eva\\_Hesse](https://www.sfmoma.org/artist/Eva_Hesse), accessed 10/03/16.

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## **Domestic Repression**

Bourgeois has written about how she uses her art to work through her frustrations and emotions. Her most evocative material which expresses this language is exhibited in The

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<sup>441</sup> Eva Hess, Untitled or Not Yet 1966 Net bags, clear polyethylene sheeting, paper, metal weights, and string 180.3 x 39.4 x 21 cm <http://www.slideshare.net/ayeakel/eva-hesse>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

*Return of the Repressed, (2012)*<sup>442</sup> where Bourgeois feelings were explored and is an example of how some women artists articulate emotion in their artwork through repression.

In my practice I symbolise hysteria by using physical process and containment to articulate repression as distorted, twisted and deformed in my porcelain forms, demonstrating how women artists like Bourgeois use the process of abstraction to express the repression of sexuality.

Bourgeois' psychoanalytical and emotional writings were expressions of her personal feelings, which I observed in *The Return of the Repressed* exhibition at the Freud Museum. Some of her forms exhibited were articulated through fabric body-shapes, with extended bloated forms of the female body shown in Figure 444, symbols of female repression with sometimes many breast additions or expanded enlarged, engorged shapes of the torso. My observations of Bourgeois' forms were of the female as a distorted object of sexual or reproductive processes, one form had a tiny head in comparison to the swollen body, suggesting little internal thought process and conveying a sense of oppression.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Louise Bourgeois, *The Return of the Repressed*, Freud Museum, London 8 March to 27 May 2012 Curated by Philip Larratt-Smith

<sup>443</sup> Navy blue stocking type material, swollen, with folded reproductive ends and a tiny flesh coloured head, lying horizontally.

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This I believe illustrates the prevailing attitude, of suggesting that 'if the universal subject locates man's selfhood somewhere between his ears, it locates woman's selfhood between her thighs.'<sup>445</sup> As part of my practice I have found it important to have a balance between feeling able to make work, without feeling guilt and recognising this as being an important part of female identity. It wasn't until after my divorce that I realised that guilt, self-doubt, and feelings wrapped and contained in the domestic and family role had overshadowed my desire for artistic development and personal emotional growth. My personal development has meant that only recently have I been able to allow myself to make artwork as an important part of myself against the tide of the domestic responsibilities and expectations of family.

Some women artists such as Bourgeois have articulated this emotional and repressed state through the expression of sexuality and an autobiographical connection to identity. Walking around the exhibition, *The Return of the Repressed* I was drawn to the emotions expressed in Bourgeois' writings of how she used her material and forms in her artwork. Her writing expresses her inner-most thoughts and feelings about how difficult it was to

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<sup>444</sup>Louise Bourgeois, *Temper Tantrum*, 2000, [http://anthropomorphe.blogspot.co.uk/2009\\_03\\_01\\_archive.html](http://anthropomorphe.blogspot.co.uk/2009_03_01_archive.html). Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>445</sup> Smith, S. (1993) *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press p. 12

sometimes even function. I can empathise with these feelings; my artwork is a way of working through difficult emotional experiences. Bourgeois writes:

‘ Act of making work as a form of psychoanalysis’

‘Direct access to unconscious’

‘Making art reduces tension and aggression’

‘Like psychoanalysis a source of self-knowledge’ she says ‘Art is a guaranty of sanity’

‘Drawing is the most basic psychological release’

‘The modern artist is caught in a dilemma in that he considers art as a psychological release and at the same time wants to have an audience’<sup>446</sup>

The hysteric in a similar way expressed emotion, through her physical body. Freud’s original theory of dreams according to Storr is based on the idea that ‘repression is the mechanism for banishing what is unacceptable to the unconscious.’<sup>447</sup> Freud's study of hysteria looks at the unconscious mind, unconscious memories, the mechanism of repression, and dreams becoming unconscious wishes. A ‘human need to order our experience and make sense of it’<sup>448</sup> is an important part of understanding ourselves and even subconsciously when creating artwork, feelings and experiences are expressed. Bourgeois used process, material and form to work through her feelings stated in her writings:

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<sup>446</sup> Freud Museum - Louise Bourgeois' writings in *The Return of the Repressed*, Freud Museum, London 8 March to 27 May 2012 Bourgeois in her writing expresses a sense of desperation and trying to stay in control while being treated for depression.

<sup>447</sup> Storr, A. (1989) *Freud A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford p.49

<sup>448</sup> Storr, A. (1989) *Freud A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford – check p.93

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<sup>449</sup> 'Freud Museum - Louise Bourgeois' writings in *The Return of the Repressed*, Freud Museum, London 8 March to 27 May 2012

I found my domestic role hard to escape from and domestic pressures can make it feel impossible to express oneself as an artist. I felt a sense of empathy that Bourgeois seemed to be struggling with personal pressures, which meant that she found it hard to function as an artist.<sup>450</sup> She used making her artwork as 'a form of exorcism, a means of relieving tension and aggression.'<sup>451</sup> Yet at the discussion I attended in Edinburgh<sup>452</sup> this aggression was identified by writer and academic Mignon Nixon and other members of the panel as being related to political intervention, for example Bourgeois' experience of war. I asked the question if the panel thought that Bourgeois had struggled with the complexities of being a wife and mother as well as struggling to be an artist. The opinions of the speakers seemed to suggest that Bourgeois was driven by very different political responses to aggression, rather than my interpretation of a domestic and autobiographical reaction to her personal situation of making art as a woman artist against the constraint of domesticity. Yet earlier in 2011 Nixon discusses Bourgeois' writing as containing 'a symptom of the repressive patriarchal authority she defies in the defence of her own integrity, Bourgeois produced an unparalleled portfolio of writings on a question that psychoanalysis itself for too long failed to address: What makes women mad?... In a household with three little boys, the cultural taboo against maternal aggression is persistently violated.'<sup>453</sup> I don't have a clear answer of

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<sup>450</sup> 'The depression is lurking

when

when I am alone

all the time if I do not do anything. I become cold

I begin to fight it off

doing what

prepare hot tea to drink

prepare hot water bottle. I would like to go to bed under my covers but I would be ashamed to do that during the day.

People ought to work all day..'

'The past is eating up the present' Freud Museum - Louise Bourgeois' writings in The Return of the Repressed, Freud Museum, London 8 March to 27 May 2012

<sup>451</sup> Larratt-Smith, P.(2011)Introduction to Louise Bourgeois: The Return of the Repressed, Argentina: Proa p.4

<sup>452</sup> Future Bourgeois Panel Discussion. The artist Phyllida Barlow, the writer Elisabeth Lebovici (EHES, Paris) and Professor Mignon Nixon (Courtauld, London) consider the current state of research on Louise Bourgeois in this panel discussion. The Fruit Market Gallery, Edinburgh. Friday 21February 14

<sup>453</sup> Nixon, M.(2011) L., by in Larratt-Smith, P.(2011)Introduction to Louise Bourgeois: The Return of the Repressed, Argentina:

why there should be this inconsistency of view, other than to suggest that it is still not entirely acceptable for women to be conflicted around their domestic roles and the feelings of a loss of identity.

Cixous defines women as losing their identity through suppression of sexuality. She describes the hysteric where 'she is given, images that don't belong to her, and she forces herself, as we've all done, to resemble them.'<sup>454</sup> Women try to take on a social and domestic role and looking back this describes completely how in my marriage I took on roles and forced myself to fit into them even though this meant that parts of my character were suppressed or undeveloped; derived from the expectations of male patriarchal society.<sup>455</sup> This sexual difference is reinforced by Cixous who describes the 'opposition to woman cuts endlessly across all the oppositions that order culture. It's the classic opposition, dualist and hierarchical. Man/Woman automatically means great/small, superior/inferior'<sup>456</sup>. Our overall strength as female is that of ourselves as an individual and independent being. As women we should be responsible for our emotions, for Teresa Brennan,<sup>457</sup>

'Femininity is not a form of social identity, either imaginary or symbolic, but is closer to a moment, a possible modality of energy, a transformation of affect that emerges in the relation between subjects. This is why femininity can be tied to the problem of affect, energy, and the transmissibility of emotion. 'We should investigate the assumption that individuals are the sole and self-contained points of origin for their emotions'.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Cixous, H. (1981) *Castration of Decapitation?* Translated by Annette Kuhn, *Signs*, Vol. 7, No. 1(Autumn, 1991), pp. 41-55. p.47

<sup>455</sup> Discussed by Smith how in patriarchal society, men are positioned as superior. Historically, women lose their individual identity – made apparent in the taking on of their husband's name - as they assume the role of family carers in the community. A woman who rejected this role, 'to become sexual' was identified as '*corrupt and grotesque*' Smith, S. (1993) *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press p. 16

<sup>456</sup> Cixous, H. (1981) *Castration of Decapitation?* Translated by Annette Kuhn, *Signs*, Vol. 7, No. 1(Autumn, 1991), pp. 41-55. p.44

<sup>457</sup> Schmidt Distinguished Professor of Humanities at Florida Atlantic University

<sup>458</sup>Shepherdson, C. (2008) *Lacan and the Limits of Language*, Fordham University Press, New York. pp.99-100

This I believe is based on energy, of how women are driven from an emotional stance; showing how emotion is strength particularly for women, even though they have been criticised historically for being emotional. I believe that women need to be intellectually stimulated or physically creative otherwise it is hard for them to feel fulfilled. I am driven by emotional factors and I have observed that this is part of being a woman. An overwhelming domestic identity, which can compromise intellectual and sexual fulfilment, is based on the way 'women had to repress activity to secure feminine identity'.<sup>459</sup> This can lead to repression as an inability to define oneself. Brennan argues that women can experience a lack of fulfilment; when their individual identities or 'ego's relation to reality and the effects of being unable to act upon it,'<sup>460</sup> I believe that as women we need to be emotionally driven in order find creative and intellectual fulfilment.

In Chapter 3 with reference to Malabou, I discussed if there is a place for woman. The female hysteric struggled with her position in society and one of the fundamentals of my work, is to question can I find a place for myself?

Malabou sees a danger that women stay trapped in 'the non-place of woman, caught between home and work life, between femininity and maternity.'<sup>461</sup> Irigaray writes, 'the maternal-feminine remains the place separated from its' own place deprived of 'its' place.'<sup>462</sup> This suggests to me how women can still feel deprived of a place for themselves, with little possibility of working as perhaps an artist, a feeling which I believe is shared by Bourgeois, in her writings.

This repression, Freud identified in his nineteenth century female patients of how 'not men, not full subjects and never quite reconciled to their situation...Women suffer not only from reminiscences, but from the difficulties of being women.'<sup>463</sup> This difficulty of being a woman and the ability to express sexuality, Freud explored as part of mental wellbeing

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<sup>459</sup> Brennan, T (1992) *The Interpretation of the Flesh, Freud and Femininity*, London: Routledge. p.82

<sup>460</sup> Brennan, T (1992) *The Interpretation of the Flesh, Freud and Femininity*, London: Routledge. p.91

<sup>461</sup> Malabou, C (2011) *Changing Difference*, Polity Press, Cambridge p.122

<sup>462</sup> Malabou, C (2011) *Changing Difference*, Polity Press, Cambridge p.123

<sup>463</sup> Luckhurst, N.( translated )(2004)*Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer*, Penguin Books Ltd, London p.xx

which he saw related to symptoms of hysteria, 'compromises between a sexual wish and its suppression. Sexuality has become, as it would remain for Freud, both the cornerstone and the stumbling block of mental life.'<sup>464</sup>

According to French Feminist Simone de Beauvoir women find it hard to be viewed as equal to men as 'at no time in her life does she succeed in being both effective and independent.'<sup>465</sup> For woman to be seen as capable in her own right, she has to overcome consistent social injustice as de Beauvoir states 'one is not born, but rather becomes, woman'<sup>466</sup> and compares these difficulties of being a woman to the normality of woman compared to that which in man is considered normal 'she wants a normal and complete woman's destiny.'<sup>467</sup> In my view woman still finds it necessary to achieve at a higher level than her male counterpart, and be above the ordinary in order to find her voice.

I have given emphasis in my practice to woman being contained and the physicality of hysteria. This containment brings about repression, expressed as hysteria, the suppression of sexuality and identity is addressed in my practice through the conception of female vessels and the containment of the shoes in the clay.

The absence of the shoes permits the realisation of the vessels, which I suggest, provides erotic associations.. These negative and contained spaces supply the vulval quality of female vessels with fleshy aspects. This voluptuous component was observed in my forms by group one, this was 33% - 6 out of 18 as, 'the contortions exhibit female gender'; these comments were mainly male and were followed by the feeling of guilt or they felt 'disturbingly confessional'<sup>468</sup> that they had felt this. I did wonder if this sexual response, that I had also identified was felt by others, but they didn't want to admit to have responded in this way. Those who did, however, indicated that they almost didn't respond. This sexual factor I suggest is a response to the abstraction of material in a manner already

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<sup>464</sup> Luckhurst, N.( translated )(2004)Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breur, Penguin Books Ltd, London p. xxvi

<sup>465</sup> De Beauvoir, S. (1988) *The Second Sex*, Translated by H. M. Parshley, London: Pan Books Ltd. p.722

<sup>466</sup> De Beauvoir, S. (1988) *The Second Sex*, Translated by H. M. Parshley, London: Pan Books Ltd. p.330

<sup>467</sup> De Beauvoir, S. (1988) *The Second Sex*, Translated by H. M. Parshley, London: Pan Books Ltd P.415

<sup>468</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

identified by Lippard and I propose a reaction to the sensation of distorted meaty flesh-like effect of the vulval vessels in my practice.

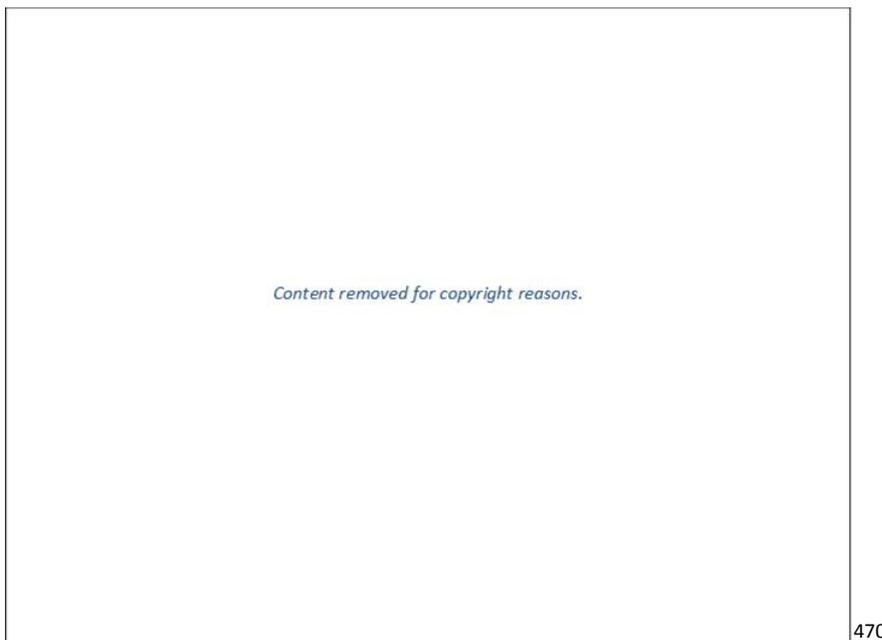
I consider that this visceral sensation is intensified by the deep texture and distortion of my porcelain forms to create a repugnant sense, an intrusive physical manifestation of material in contrast to the desire to touch by the viewer. This is explored in this research in relation to personal objects (my shoes), transformed through the process of abstraction to create recognised characteristics of Eccentric Abstraction; the sensual perception of material with erotic associations of the female body.

In order to find my voice in this chapter I have discussed emotion as a valuable method of the physical perception of material. This is reliant on the consideration of touch by the viewer and the intrusive nature of the contained vessels, which create emotional perception from a position of women's domestic repression.

## Conclusion

In this research I have considered emotional perception as an outcome of physical manifestation of material pertinent in some women's artwork. This is established in my practice by the perception of the viewer as a physical reaction, which I describe as a wriggle of uneasy discomfort, a *squirm* of 'seeing feeling'.<sup>469</sup>

The framework of this study has been Lippard's essay *Eccentric Abstraction*, in which she didn't identify emotional perception of material and form. However in my practice I have explored the physical sensation of material of *Eccentric Abstraction* and extended this to include emotional perception by the viewer. I have done this by investigating the transformation of objects in clay, as a physical abstraction of emotional repression and absence. I have found that the containment of the shoes was a symbol of my emotional repression.



Their absence provokes a new sensual form, which opens out into contained female vessels illustrated in Figure 470, which I believe is a demonstration of the sensuous

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<sup>469</sup> Bennett, J. (2005) *Emphatic Vision, Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press. p. 43

<sup>470</sup> An example in my forms of a vessel shape, No 1, 1970's - wedge flip-flops - gold/white - bought as teenager. Photo credit Damian Hayes. Content removed for copyright reasons.

quality of my material and some viewers have responded to this as a perception of female genitalia with intense emotional perception.

These sensuous forms, recognised as internal intrusive female vessels, are underpinned by Lacan's theory of woman as containing a central space, with elements of a sensual and sexual nature, which I have discussed in Chapter 1. These female vessels express a female tactile language associated to the emotional experiences of women's repressed identity. This expression of self-identity is observed in Paula Santiago's forms.

*Content removed for copyright reasons.*

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<sup>471</sup>Paula Santiago 2007 garment is an expression of self-identity and is made out of personal materials of hair and blood. [http://comercio.marco.org.mx/comercio/index.php?page=shop.product\\_details&flypage=flypage.tpl&product\\_id=117&category\\_id=3&option=com\\_virtuemart&Itemid=3](http://comercio.marco.org.mx/comercio/index.php?page=shop.product_details&flypage=flypage.tpl&product_id=117&category_id=3&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=3). Content removed for copyright reasons.

The garment above in Figure 471, is overwhelmingly reliant on the physical texture of material, and is made up of the Santiago's own hair and blood, which provides the viewer with a sensual and emotional response of being both repelled and intrigued.

## **Touch as an Emotional Response to the Physical Manifestation of Material**

In my practice it is the sexually implicit nature of form, which communicates an emotional response. The porcelain<sup>472</sup> is comprehended as an instinctive language of material, an emotional perception by the viewer reliant on texture and traces from impact with the shoes.

The viewer's response to my forms suggests a sense of connection between wanting to touch and intrusive emotional repulsion. I reason in Chapter 4 that in contemporary discussion (2009 - 2016) there is more awareness of *emotion* as a worthwhile method of perception. This was established earlier by Sedgwick where she recognised texture and emotion using the example of artist Judith Scott's body, busy with the 'transaction of texture'<sup>473</sup> as she embraces her sculpture. More recently in discussion with Adan (2015) she highlights that 'texture and physical perception are somewhat under theorized ... in relation to emotional perception, I think that texture can also play a role.'<sup>474</sup> It is emotional perception that I articulate in my artwork and theorise its importance in this thesis. The replies from my questionnaire to my practical work reinforce the value of emotional perception, as all but one in group 1 gave an emotional response to my work. This reaction was to both the forms and photographs but more significantly related to the forms as 'it demands attention and breeds curiosity.'<sup>475</sup> The sensuous texture of material, traces and the intrusive nature of the vessel shaped forms were found to be significant in the perception of emotion. As the emotional response to the porcelain forms seems to be

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<sup>472</sup> I describe clay as a soft malleable material as part of my process of making and porcelain is the hard state after firing.

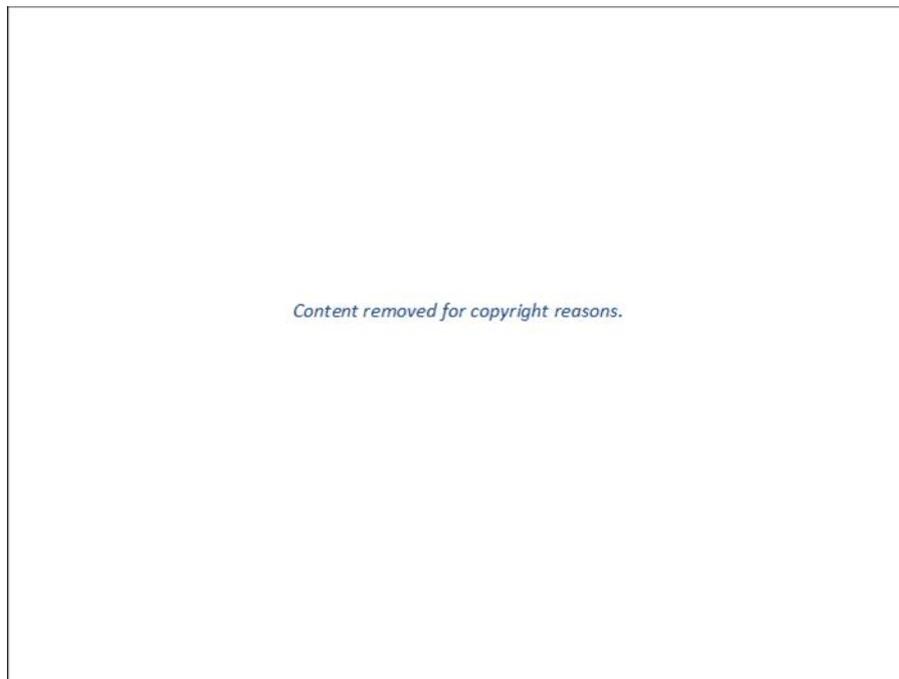
<sup>473</sup> Sedgwick, E.F. (2003) *Touching Feeling Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham and London: Duke University Press. p.22

<sup>474</sup> Adan, E. Sat 21/03/2015 17:34 email - Re: Touching Contemporary Art Paper eadan@calpoly.edu

<sup>475</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

generated by their 'physical structure',<sup>476</sup> their 'transformation through destruction',<sup>477</sup> 'their inner spaces'<sup>478</sup> and the traces left behind. These findings contribute evidence towards emotion as a valuable method of demonstrating perception.

The texture and material of Bourgeois' forms was identified by Lippard as *indirectly erotic* and prompts an intensely sensuous experience (discussed in Chapter 2). There is a similar resonance in the texture of my porcelain forms as they both have a fullness of texture implicit of body tissue.



However, Bourgeois' forms lack the aggressive tormented physical action of twisting and distortion, this can be observed in the Figure 479 as it is more solid and holds less tension than in my forms.

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<sup>476</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>477</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

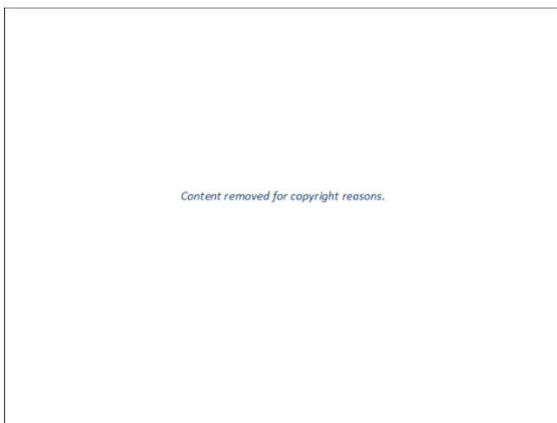
<sup>478</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>479</sup> Louise Bourgeois Soft Landscape 1963 Latex and plaster <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/exhibition/louise-bourgeois/room-guide/louise-bourgeois-room-10>. Content removed for copyright reasons.



480

In the Figure 480 I illustrate the *ribboning* effect from the flow of my impacted material, together with distorted and twisted negative spaces. Created from the transformation of the absent shoes, extending the *emotional* effect of the distorted physical manifestation of material as meaty flesh.



481

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<sup>480</sup>No.17, 2007 - Clarkes little girl white sandals - worn whilst working at Wirksworth festival while on crutches with injured ankle. Form shows tension and twisted distortion of ribboning effect , which is lacking in Bourgeois forms.

<sup>481</sup>Louise Bourgeois: Double Negative. 1963, latex over plaster, <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=Louise+Bourgeois:+Double+Negative.+1963,&biw=1280&bih=929&source>. Content removed for copyright reasons. Content removed for copyright reasons.

The essence of the body in Bourgeois' forms is notable in their textured, aged and fragmented feel of internal organs in Figure 481.<sup>482</sup> Art historian and critic Briony Fer describes them as having 'the quality of an inside of something'<sup>483</sup> and relates this to Merleau-Ponty's description of being able to 'instantly visualize the parts of my body which are hidden from me...even with respect to parts of the body which I have never seen.'<sup>484</sup> This illustrates the sense of our body, which we physically feel though we cannot see for ourselves.

I believe we envisage the shape and texture of internal parts of the body; through our continuous physical motion. Physicality and movement across the margins of orifice and rim of our bodies allow us to imagine the deepest instinctively felt emotions to the extent that we can feel these parts become convoluted and ripple within us as a deep sensuous sensation. I draw on similar physical motion in my process as I twist and turn my material repeatedly to create convoluted, folded and distorted form as the implicit sense of sexuality.

The instinctive bodily vessel shapes are formed through transformation during my process of firing as a process of cremation, which provides absence and loss as *abjection*<sup>485</sup>; crucial to the emotional reverberation of my forms. The absence of the shoes intensifies the emotional experience through loss and decay. I have established this from the comments from my viewers as observations of 'decay, negative spaces and loss.'<sup>486</sup>

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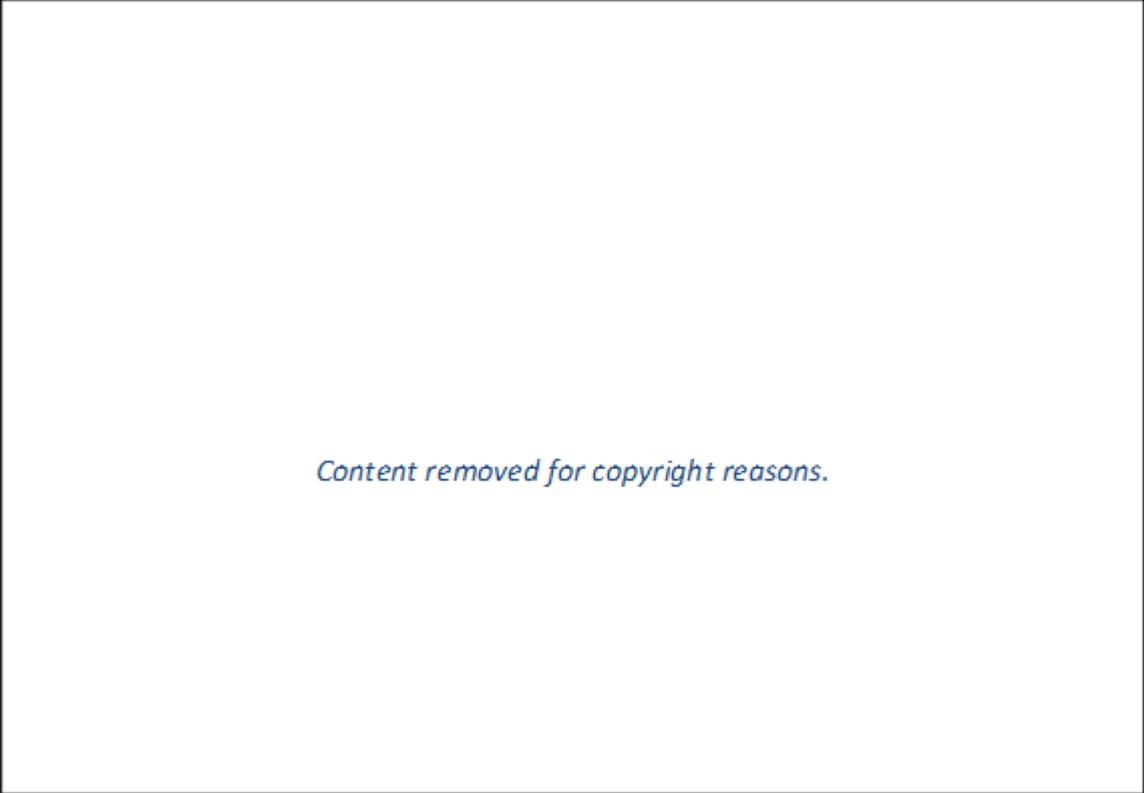
<sup>482</sup> This can be observed in Louise Bourgeois: Double Negative. 1963, latex over plaster in note 11.

<sup>483</sup> Fer, B. (1999) Objects Beyond Objecthood, Oxford Art Journal, 22.2 pp. 25-36. p.32

<sup>484</sup> Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962) Phenomenology of Perception, London: Routledge. p.149

<sup>485</sup> *Abjection* by Kristeva is discussed in Chapter 1 and mentioned in Chapter 3.

<sup>486</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's



*Content removed for copyright reasons.*

487

## **Physical Sensation of Material to Create Emotional Perception**

For some viewers and myself this intimate emotional perception is extended as an encounter with female body parts, which I would suggest is correlated to an intense physical process of the abstraction of malleable material and form. Fer describes the malleable action of Bourgeois' materials, (an example in Figure 487 Portrait, 1963) as it 'does not so much bear the mark of touch - it is not modelled - as act out its previous liquidity, of wetness, of bodily secretions'.<sup>488</sup> My work is not modelled either but contains the element of malleable action as I twist and turn the material with my hands between each impact with the ground. I would argue that at some stage in the casting process of Bourgeois' forms, touch would be a crucial element in her manipulation of material.

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<sup>487</sup>Louise Bourgeois: Portrait, 1963, latex, cast from a mould of a plaster torso. <http://totallyhistory.com/louise-bourgeois-artwork/>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>488</sup> Fer, B. (1999) Objects Beyond Objecthood, Oxford Art Journal, 22.2 pp. 25-36. p.32

So far in this conclusion I have provided the reasoning of the abstraction of malleable material to create physical sensation of form, which I have found in my practice to have effectively shown a sense of the female body, with a consequence of emotional perception. This sensation of material is conceived through transformation to create distorted 'female' vessels which in my practice illustrates the instinctive physical action of the hysteric.



489

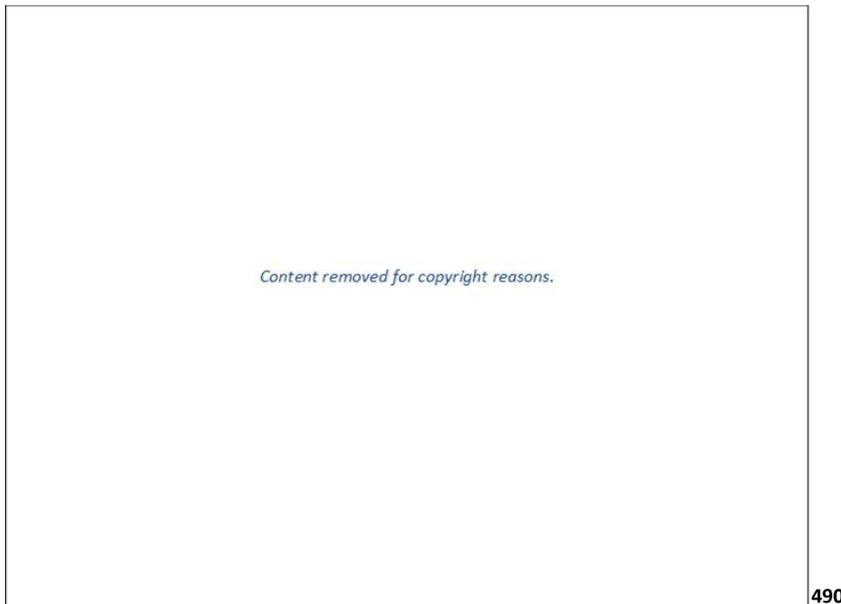
The contortion of the hysteric's body as an emotional response, I perceive as woman, a container for her inner anguished emotion. My manipulation of soft material is responsive to distortion and twisting described as *ribboning* in my practice, which enables the creation of intense texture illustrated in Figure 489. These softer supple qualities of material that I

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<sup>489</sup> September 2010 - Imprints and convoluted form – the shoes are contained and contorted suggesting the twisted distortion of the hysteric.

have illustrated expose a tactile significance taking on texture and imprint through impact with object, illustrating violent hysteria.

I consider this abstraction of form to impart a female bodily response to the physical visceral sensation of form as a language of material. This is seen in Bourgeois' use of material language in her soft flowing material *Soft Landscape II* in Figure 490 as the sensory nature of abstraction and in my *ribboned* porcelain forms.



## **The Presence of Distortion and Exaggeration of Form Increases Emotional Perception**

The originality in my research is found in my approach to texture as distortion of material expressed as fragmentation of the female body. This abstraction of form extends from the starting point of the material of *Eccentric Abstraction*<sup>491</sup> as the perception of physical sensation of material. I suggest this physical sensation is a sexually implicit feeling of bodily flesh, identified from my own observations and that of the viewer, built on distortion of

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<sup>490</sup> Louise Bourgeois *Soft Landscape II* 1967 Plastic <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/exhibition/louise-bourgeois/room-guide/louise-bourgeois-room-10>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>491</sup> The starting point of my research was Lippards *Eccentric Abstraction* as the manipulation of soft material to create an abstraction of sensuous material.

material to extend to an intimate emotional depth of perception from the viewer. As 'they're both seductive and painful... because they seem to be meant to be misshapen, or rather shaped as they are.'<sup>492</sup>

The potential for touch as intense texture conveyed to the centre of the form becomes the vital factor in perceiving the tension and movement of material. It is not about whether the form should be viewed optically as put forward by Greenberg, but experienced by the sense of touch, a potential for the sensation of what form feels like as tactility. Read recognises tactility as activated by physical distortion of form as a sense of inner bodily senses (discussed in Chapter 2 and 4) as an emotional response to the physical manifestation of material. I have taken Read's theory of exaggeration and distortion of form as the starting point to extend the feel of tension in the twisted and distorted physical sensation of my material. Its outcome is the perception of intense emotion by both the viewer and myself. Extending Lippard's deliberation of the sensuous experience of material in *Eccentric Abstraction* to include emotional perception<sup>493</sup> as a condition for sensitivity to the deeply textured, folded and convoluted forms in my practice. This distortion and exaggeration is also the prompt in my artwork for the Interpretation of the implicit sense of fleshy tissue as eccentricity of form; a method of abstraction amplified by deep instinctively felt reactions of the physical manifestation of a recoil, a *squirm*; a form of intimacy, with an intrusive feel.

### **Sexually Implicit Material Connected to the Female Body**

My forms are not purely representational of the female's body and I would conclude that there is great significance in the physical feel of abstracted material especially that which has personal qualities from my shoes. This serves to intensify the sense of uneasy discomfort, leading to intense emotional perception which in my practice has a sense of the sexually implicit. The physical convolutions of material demonstrate a primeval reaction to the contortions of anguished bodily flesh. This is illustrated by one male viewer who had a conflicting powerfully violent reaction to the replicated tormented bodily form of wanting to

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<sup>492</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>493</sup> As already discussed Lippard did not include emotional perception as part of her discussion in her essay *Eccentric Abstraction*.

see the sharp edges and the pure white of the porcelain contrasted with the deep red violent stain of his blood He then felt guilty for the intensity of his reaction.

Alongside a perception of female genitalia these reactions are deeply emotional and provide my research with the evocative sense of deformed bodily fragmentation, recognised by Chadwick as an aspect of women's surrealism (discussed in Chapter3). Some viewers did not respond to this unspoken sexually implicit essence of the body and focused more on wanting to touch. But there are enough responses in my findings for me to be able to endorse my opinion that it is the tacit sense of body parts which stimulate an emotional affect in the viewer from the textured sensuality of material equated to eroticism of skin. This response is a *squirm* of physical sensation to material, which for some viewers can be an intrusive barrier to touching the forms as a recoil or a flinch; 'slightly unsettling, scary.'<sup>494</sup> This lack of a sense of niceness, is an embedded approach to material in my practice and produces a much more intuitive and emotional perception in the viewer through this *squirm* of sensation. For some this *squirm* is an erotic perception 'the metaphor for female genitalia is obvious'<sup>495</sup> and is found in the abstraction of the textured and convoluted vulval nature of material in my porcelain forms. My position is that emotional perception in my forms is reliant on the physical sensation of a *squirm* as a new approach to abstraction through the physical manifestation of material.

Fer (1999) describes Bourgeois 1960's forms as containing 'excessive, body materiality'<sup>496</sup> and 'visceral bodily qualities'<sup>497</sup> of 'overtly sexual latex membranes.'<sup>498</sup> This embedded tacit perception of sexually implicit bodily qualities; in my artwork I convey as erotic fleshy female genitalia created by the flow of the physical manifestation of material. This physical sensation of material was I believe why

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<sup>494</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

<sup>495</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 mix of professional artists and professional creative's

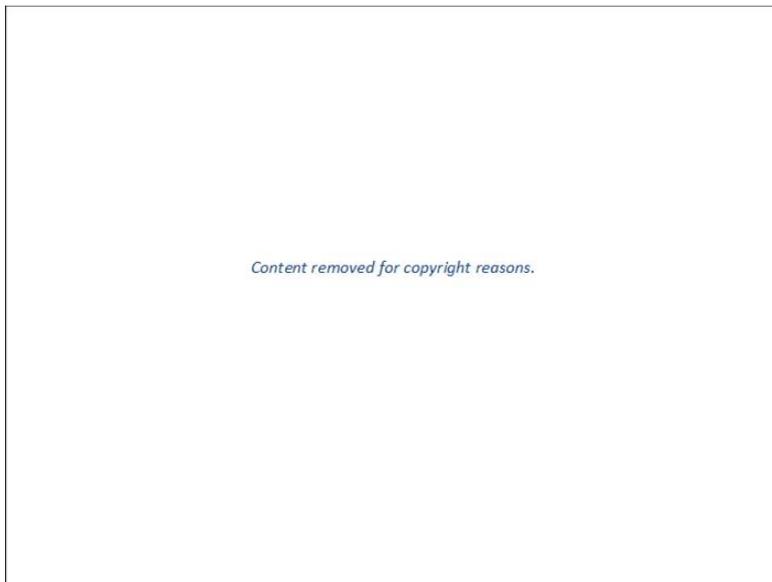
<sup>496</sup> Fer, B. (1999) Objects Beyond Objecthood, Oxford Art Journal, 22.2 pp. 25-36. p.27

<sup>497</sup> Fer, B. (1999) Objects Beyond Objecthood, Oxford Art Journal, 22.2 pp. 25-36. p.27

<sup>498</sup> Fer, B. (1999) Objects Beyond Objecthood, Oxford Art Journal, 22.2 pp. 25-36. p.28

Lippard selected Bourgeois' work for the *Eccentric Abstraction* exhibition. Fer describes how these forms 'seemed deliberately to inscribe an erotic's of the body.'<sup>499</sup>

According to Fer, Lippard identified that artists who were working with sexually implicit material were 'many of them women'<sup>500</sup>. Lippard had written later in 1975 that the 'emphases on female experience, are positive, not negative, characteristics. It is not the quality of our femaleness that is inferior, but the quality of a society that has produced such a viewpoint. To deny one's sex is to deny a large part of where art comes from.'<sup>501</sup> Thus women's personal experience is recognised by Lippard and she suggests that mainly women use a sense of body related forms in their artwork. I build on this to suggest that women use methods of articulating visceral flesh to express identity as a concern about their view of themselves through the physical sensation of material in Figure 502.



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<sup>499</sup> Fer, B. (1999) *Objects Beyond Objecthood*, Oxford Art Journal, 22.2 pp. 25-36. p.29

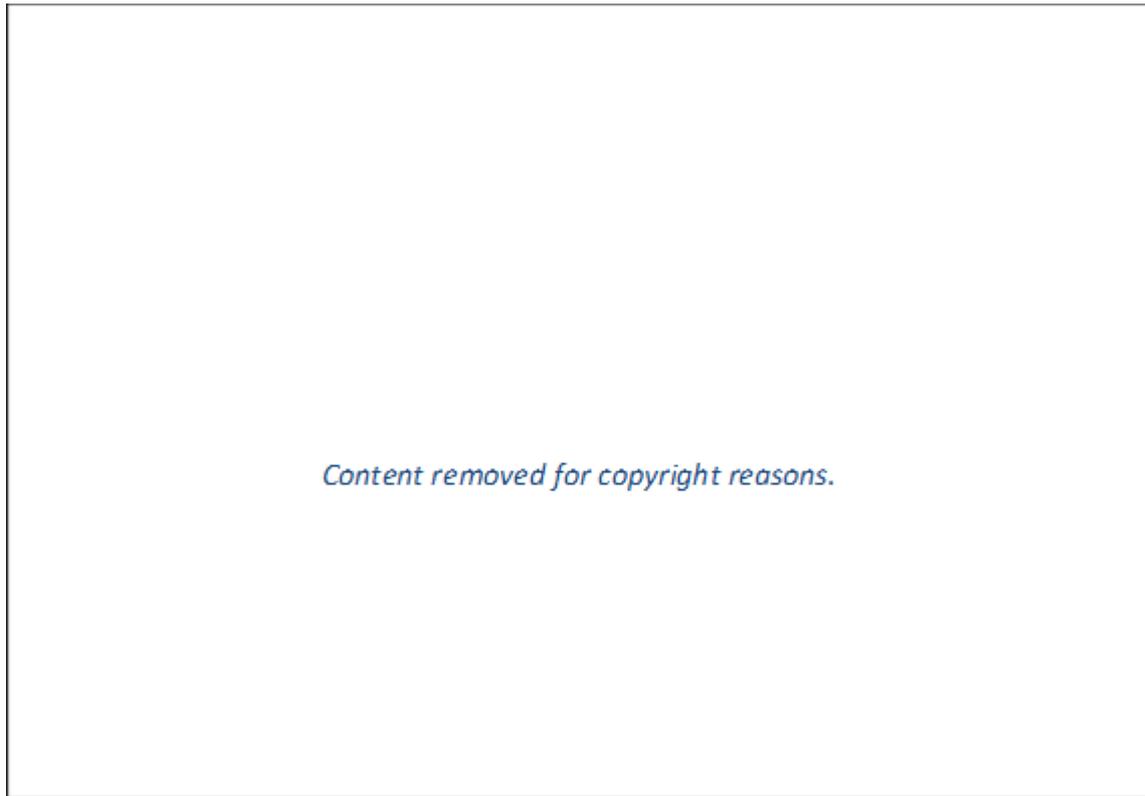
<sup>500</sup>Fer, B. (1999) *Objects Beyond Objecthood*, Oxford Art Journal, 22.2 pp. 25-36. p.28

<sup>501</sup> Lippard, L. (1995) *The Pink Glass Swan; Selected essays on Feminist Art*, New York: The New Press. p.83

<sup>502</sup> Louise Bourgeois *Harmless Woman* 1969 Bronze, gold patina <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/exhibition/louise-bourgeois/room-guide/louise-bourgeois-room-10> here the image of the female form is without a head to think or limbs to perform tasks. Those parts of the body which would mean that she had a function other than sexual, without these she is harmless. Content removed for copyright reasons.

## Visceral Approach to Flesh as Female Identity

In chapter 3 I explored some women artists' visceral approach to their bodies as a negative view of tortured flesh and unattractiveness in their pursuit of identity. Examples of this repugnant or uncomfortable expression are Wilke's ceramic vulvas; a hidden place of intimacy, which Wilke disturbingly exposes to the viewer in Figure 503.



<sup>503</sup>Photographer Lee Miller's image of an amputated breast is intensely disturbing, not only the photographing of a piece of flesh removed through surgery but the presentation of the breast as a piece of meat to be consumed in Figure 504.

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<sup>503</sup> Hannah Wilke Untitled, late 1960s Terracotta sculpture [http://www.andrearosengallery.com/exhibitions/counter-forms\\_2013-10-12/1/checklist/207](http://www.andrearosengallery.com/exhibitions/counter-forms_2013-10-12/1/checklist/207) According to Stoops Wilke's forms are 'A formal imagery that is specifically female ... always related to my own body and feelings'. Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum p.80 Stoops finds that this work 'insist on the feeling of the flesh.' Stoops, S.L. (1996) *More Than Minimal: Feminism and Abstraction in the 70's*, Waltham Massachusetts: Brandeis University and Rose Art Museum p.81. Content removed for copyright reasons.



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504

Women artists such as Bourgeois (discussed in Chapter 4) and myself have found inadequacies within ourselves. I was unable to be anything else but domestic and my repression is illustrated by the containment of my shoes. I don't think that there is any doubt that women have been repressed through history without the ability to be intellectually or creatively fulfilled. Whether this is through their own insecurities or through subjugation by male dominance, is a question which could be answered at another time. Repression as an aspect of identity can lead to a mix of negative self-body image and the driving force to find a positive identity. This has certainly been my experience.

Writer and curator Phillip Larratt-Smith discusses how 'the body, with its functions, dysfunctions, failures, and rich panoply of sensations, does not lie'<sup>505</sup>. I believe that it is these physical sensations from the body which Bourgeois and women artists like myself

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<sup>504</sup> Lee Miller, *Still Life - Amputated Breast on Plate* c.1929) photograph of an amputated breast neatly laid on a plate as if for consumption, complete with knife, fork and chequered place mat .Photographed in Vogue offices,( she was a model for Vogue). <https://pagophila.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/untitled-severed-breast-from-radical-mastectomy-by-lee-miller-1930.jpg>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

<sup>505</sup> Larratt-Smith, P. (2011). *Louise Bourgeois: Louise Bourgeois' writings in: The Return of the Repressed*, Argentina: Proa p.13

interpret through our artwork. Bourgeois said that “the fears of the past were connected with the functions of the body” and therefore ‘they reappear through the body,’<sup>506</sup> relating her body to her sculptures. I have also observed this in the way that Spence has presented her body as part of her artwork, a visceral response to unattractive flesh from an emotional point of view; focusing on the way the body physically ages or becomes disfigured through illness. The aspects of our bodies, which we are emotionally uncomfortable, have a direct resonance; observed within my practice as a sense of repugnance articulated through form. It could be as small as my hidden big toe nails; the ‘guilt and depression,’<sup>507</sup> which Bourgeois describes in her writing (identified by Larratt-Smith) or the all-consuming repression of the hysteric. These physical sensations of the body I propose pour out as autobiographical emotional responses to situations and some women’s sculptural response is to use themselves as their material. This autobiographical reaction was not identified by Lippard, but it is deeply ingrained in my practice. The shoes are autobiographical and their absence releases the feel of my deeply lined, distorted and textured vessels with a repulsive feel of ageing flesh and together with my maturity this feels appropriate for me to suggest a resonance to the porcelain as an echo of ageing skin.

## **Woman Finds her Voice**

My overriding domestic role for many years reinforced my view that women were domestically and sexually repressed. Feminism hasn’t always been central to my thinking and my emotional journey was a configuration of discovering independent intellectual thought and developing an identity for myself. This investigation into the physical act of making work, in which I illustrate the hysteric’s repression, has led me to understand the importance of feminism in women’s search for an individual identity. Feminist Germaine Greer raises the issue of women’s independence. ‘Today’s growing girls are obsessed by

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<sup>506</sup> Larratt-Smith, P. (2011). Louise Bourgeois: Louise Bourgeois’ writings in: *The Return of the Repressed*, Argentina: Proa p.13

<sup>507</sup> Larratt-Smith, P. (2011). Louise Bourgeois: Louise Bourgeois’ writings in: *The Return of the Repressed*, Argentina: Proa p.14

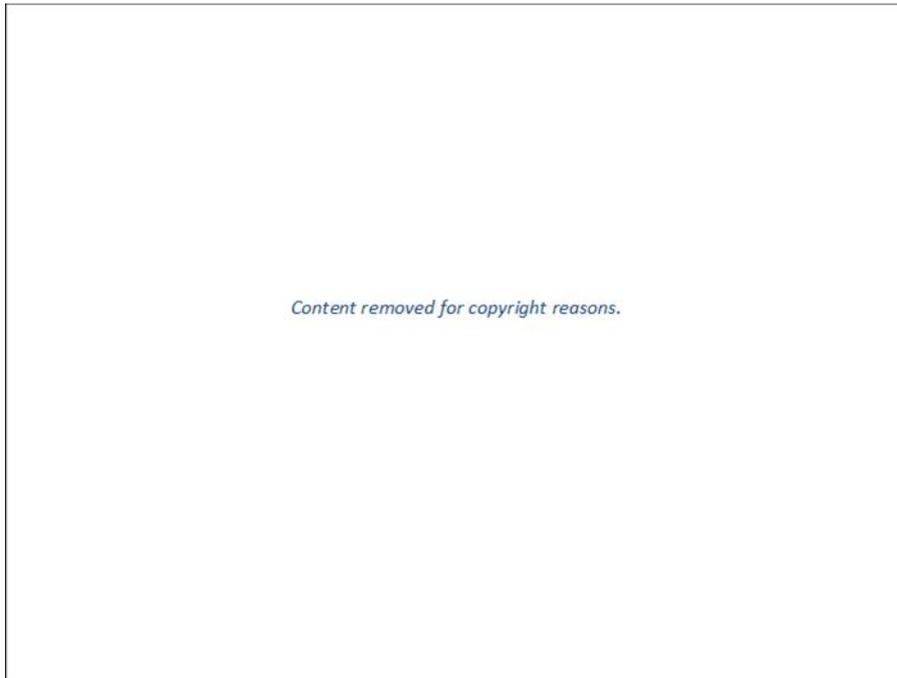
supermodels who are ever more extravagant versions of the surrealist stereo-type, whose gorgeous heads might as well be replaced with clumps of greenery, for all the thinking they are allowed to do. We can't blame men for this, can we?<sup>508</sup> She raises the question; as women should we blame ourselves for feeling repressed by men's actions. The feeling of repression in this research is important as instigation for both myself and other women artists to impart the necessity to find a voice for ourselves within a resonance of physical eccentricity.

Feminism has had a direct influence on the way that women have approached material and process and this could be investigated as an extension of this research. In rejecting the convention of normality and exploring feminism illustrated as the *squirm* of sensuality I have gained my voice as a woman artist through my practice. My emphasis has been based on the expression of my identity in the manipulation of soft material, as 'physical sensations',<sup>509</sup> which have an erotic as well as emotional expression of sensuous material from a personal tacit perception of female sensuality.

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<sup>508</sup> Greer, G. (2007) Double Vision, <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/mar/05/art.gender>, Accessed 24/04/16.

<sup>509</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) Eccentric Abstraction, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40. p.34



Artist Nicola Constantin in Figure 510 uses soft and intimate material in her shoes. These are less about abstraction but contain eccentricity in the inclusion of casts of nipples with inherent sensuality.

I have explored Hysteria as a method of creativity and Lippards *Eccentric Abstraction* as a process of identifying physical sensations of material though the two are not directly related. By illustrating hysteria as a contained, repressed and controlled feature; a vessel for emotion I have shown my identity as repressed and through autobiographical expression liberated my identity. I have also looked at the way some women artists have interacted with softer and personal material developed from the theories of *Eccentric Abstraction*.

My outcome is a theory of emotional perception through the physical manifestation of material by using my working process of the transformation of form, which is illustrated in my porcelain vessels as the physical process of repression and absence. I have explored emotion as a trigger for my creativity and linked this back to the emotional outbursts of hysteria. I have fostered a productive association with the viewer to provoke emotional perception as a tacit instinctive feeling of a *squirm* equated to bodily flesh. This is realised

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<sup>510</sup>Nicola Constantin Peletería Humana Shoes made of silicone with casts of human nipples <https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=Nicola+Constantin+Peleter%C3%ADa+Humana&biw>. Content removed for copyright reasons.

from the textured physical manifestation of material illustrated in Figure 511 and requires the viewer to interact with my work as the fleshy tissue of a woman's body; vessels of skin and organs expressing the sexually implicit.



511

My theory of *emotional perception* is grounded in my process of abstraction as bodily fragmentation. The intense distortion of material is intrinsically portrayed as an intrusive discomfort of *seeing feeling*.

Emotion is stimulated by the intensity of the *squirm* sensation, which is in turn enhanced by the viewers intrusive deliberation of touch. This extends from the transformation of the shoes into a sensual physical manifestation of female sexually implicit vessels. These consist of fragmented tortured bodily flesh and promote extreme emotional sensation. One male viewer envisaged his blood from a broken shard contrasted against the whiteness of the porcelain. This intensity of emotional perception is reliant on inherently disturbing responses to textured material through the intrusive discomfort of seeing feeling, a *squirm*

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<sup>511</sup> January 2010 – The absence of the shoes created female vessels intensified by the extreme *ribboning* effect of the flow of the porcelain as a physical manifestation of material.

sensation as an emotional encounter of touch. A primeval reaction, a sensual visceral response to implicit sexual flesh as female genitalia.

## Future Research

My practice originally started with my response to the autobiographical effects of my emotional awareness of the destruction of my shoes as loss and the process of moving on both in life and in my practice.

My work has now taken on another route, as the perception by others of their emotional response to my forms. I didn't expect the viewer to have such a strong emotional response and this has informed my thinking for future pathways of research.

One outcome of this thesis is the consideration of my forms as sexually implicit, a consequence and extension of Lippard's 'sensuous experience'<sup>512</sup> of material in my practice. This sexually implicit response has been experienced in a more extreme manner by a small group of male viewers, as an intense emotional reaction to the visceral nature of the fleshy forms. A contradiction between a sense of soft flesh and the intrusive sensation of the sharp, jagged and hard edges of my fired porcelain.

One of these male viewers felt 'they both aroused and repelled me' and 'my response was purely emotional; not rational.'<sup>513</sup> These male viewers felt guilty for their intense emotional response as 'disturbing, sexual, confessional.'<sup>514</sup> 'The forms are not representational – purely forms identified as those parts that you don't want to admit to.'<sup>515</sup> This made me think about these reactions in the context of them possibly not wanting to admit to a response that they didn't feel was 'acceptable' or followed accepted normality, and they

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<sup>512</sup> Lippard, L. (1966) *Eccentric Abstraction*, *Art International*, November, 1966, 10:9:28, pp. 34-40.p. 28

<sup>513</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 Invited Creative's

<sup>514</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 Invited Creative's

<sup>515</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 Invited Creative's

didn't want to be perceived as seeing an over sexualised object as this reflected on them as observers, so they felt they should have adjusted their response to a more cultural norm.

This leads me to question what is the cultural norm of viewing the female body? Anna Chave in her essay to accompany the 2010 exhibition *The Visible Vagina*<sup>516</sup> explores how during the 60's and 70's some women artists criticised the male approach to viewing the female body in artistic terms by inscribing 'the female body as a way of staking... a claim made in defiance of a visual regime wherein the female body served mainly as an object designed to requite the libidinal and other needs, wants and whims of the straight male viewer.'<sup>517</sup> They explored from a feminist view 'women's erotic experience.'<sup>518</sup> This led to a debate according to Chave during the 80's and 90's over whether sexually explicit material was exploiting these women artists and if 'meaningful distinctions could be made between the allowably erotic and the indefensibly obscene.'<sup>519</sup> Could the male gaze (in my thesis I have discussed this with regard to Charcot and his hysteric patients) 'be foiled somehow?'<sup>520</sup>

How and perhaps why did these male viewers of my porcelain forms have such an intense emotional response and then feel disturbed and guilty? In my thesis my outcome was to identify this sexually implicit sense<sup>521</sup> as reliant on intense texture and distortion perceived as visceral flesh a repellent and grotesque response. Chave identifies in Bourgeois work -

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<sup>516</sup> Naumann, F.M. (2010) *The Visible Vagina*, Fine art, LLC, David Nolan Gallery, Inc, New York, January 28 - March 20, 2010.

<sup>517</sup> Chave, A.C. (2009) 'Is This Good for Vulva?' *Female Genitalia in Contemporary Art* in catalogue for *The Visible Vagina*, Francis M. Naumann Fine art, LLC, David Nolan Gallery, Inc, New York, January 28 - March 20, 2010, p. 13

<sup>518</sup> Chave, A.C. (2009)– 'Is This Good for Vulva?' *Female Genitalia in Contemporary Art* in catalogue for *The Visible Vagina*, Francis M. Naumann Fine art, LLC, David Nolan Gallery, Inc, New York, January 28 - March 20, 2010.p.17

<sup>519</sup> Chave, A.C. (2009) 'Is This Good for Vulva?' *Female Genitalia in Contemporary Art* in catalogue for *The Visible Vagina*, Francis M. Naumann Fine art, LLC, David Nolan Gallery, Inc, New York, January 28 - March 20, 2010.p.19

<sup>520</sup> Chave, A.C. (2009) 'Is This Good for Vulva?' *Female Genitalia in Contemporary Art* in catalogue for *The Visible Vagina*, Francis M. Naumann Fine art, LLC, David Nolan Gallery, Inc, New York, January 28 - March 20, 2010.p.19

<sup>521</sup> Earlier in her essay Chave quotes Bourgeois as stating that people were talking about her work as having 'erotic aspects...but they didn't discuss the phallic ...nor yet the vulvic...if they had I would have ceased to do it.' I have written about the vulva associations in my practice but like Bourgeois I don't label them as such when my forms are exhibited and I prefer the viewer to make their own correlations.

*Le Regard* an erotic form as being grotesque and Chave suggests that this could be a 'strategy for putting the straight male viewer off his sexual feed, so to speak.'<sup>522</sup>

Yet it is this grotesque sense which is recognised in my forms by these male viewers and at the same time a contradiction to their intense erotic response. One male viewer suggested that this response was like 'looking at a pile of dead and decaying body fragments and the guilt of something that shouldn't be sexual but it is.'<sup>523</sup> I have explored the intrusive sensation of being repelled and yet wanting to touch in the sharp and hard edges of my porcelain forms. I would like to discuss further this contradiction of the grotesque as an implicit sexual response and explore if it happens in other artwork.

In Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva, exhibition *Making Beauty* at the Lakeside at the University of Nottingham, 20 August - 30 October 2016, her work is described as visceral and most of the material of her forms are made from the insides of animals, a tracery of sinew and tissue from caul fat of cows and the stomachs of sheep, cows and pigs. The only really visceral aspect I found is the faint smell, from the hanging, floating translucent tracery of layers, which reminded me of the smell from fat and tissue from a joint of meat. These forms though have a sense of beauty, delicacy and craftsmanship that is far removed from the repellent visceral fleshy body parts reminiscent of a butcher's shop and far removed from my porcelain forms. It is the level of craftsmanship which takes this work into the beauty zone with the loss of the visceral sense of its original material. As Hesse stated for her work, it becomes less interesting when it leaves the ugly zone.

The repulsion of my visceral fleshy forms has a resonance to aged skin of the older woman. The experience of ageing is deeply rooted in appearance and older women may feel invisible in later life. Hogan explores 'representations of ageing are particularly important to older women because their experiences of ageing (and ageism) are deeply rooted in appearance (Bordo 1993). In particular, the perception of their aged bodies makes them invisible in later

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<sup>522</sup> Chave, A.C. (2009) 'Is This Good for Vulva?' Female Genitalia in Contemporary Art in catalogue for The Visible Vagina, Francis M. Naumann Fine art, LLC, David Nolan Gallery, Inc, New York, January 28 - March 20, 2010.p.20.

<sup>523</sup> Feedback from questions of viewers of my artwork -group 1 Invited Creative's

life and can affect their social status and access to resources and opportunities (Shilling 2011).<sup>524</sup>

Chave<sup>525</sup> observes that it is 'increasingly accepted that everyone looks at everyone else and may take some degree of pleasure - not only from looking but also from being looked at.'<sup>526</sup> The older woman is invisible according to Hogan and if she is not visible then she is not able to take pleasure in being seen and it is no longer acceptable to be or feel, sexually attractive. There is then a contradiction of the male viewer observing, the sexually implicit and the repellent aspect of visceral flesh of my forms and feeling guilty for doing so. This revealing of sexual identity providing a voice for older women and women who have been oppressed. To be more visible is the focus for my work for the future. A voice for women artists according to Mona Hatoum<sup>527</sup> is about artwork creating 'an awareness of certain issues, a questioning in the mind of the spectator of certain assumptions.'<sup>528</sup> Like myself, Hatoum wants her work to have a strong 'physical experience to activate a psychological and emotional response.'<sup>529</sup>

36,070 words

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<sup>524</sup> Hogan, S. (2015) Interrogating Women's Experience of Ageing: Reinforcing or Challenging Clichés? The International Journal of the Arts in Society: Annual Review, Volume 9, 2015, pp. 1-18. p.2.

<sup>525</sup> According to Chave the 80's and 90's saw a *drier, more* theorised approach by women artists as a feminist discussion of the body. Later approaches concentrated on sexual violence and abuse on women and girls around the world.

<sup>526</sup> Chave, A.C. (2009) – 'Is This Good for Vulva?' Female Genitalia in Contemporary Art in catalogue for The Visible Vagina, Francis M. Naumann Fine art, LLC, David Nolan Gallery, Inc, New York, January 28 - March 20, 2010.p.23.

<sup>527</sup> Mona Hatoum exhibited at the Tate Modern, 4 May - 21 August 2016

<sup>528</sup> Chave, A.C. (2009) – 'Is This Good for Vulva?' Female Genitalia in Contemporary Art in catalogue for The Visible Vagina, Francis M. Naumann Fine art, LLC, David Nolan Gallery, Inc, New York, January 28 - March 20, 2010.p.27.

<sup>529</sup> Hatoum, M. (2016)In the Tate Modern Room Guide Guide, Mona Hatoum

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Burstow, R. Anthony Caro: a re-formed character.

## **Video**

(2000) *Last Word Feminine Touch*

Bragg, M. Christian Boltanski, Phaidon.

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(2004) The Art of Helen Chadwick, England: Illuminations. 709.42 CHA/ART

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Furlong, W. (1979) Feminist Issues in Contemporary Art, Margaret Harrison in Conversation with Lucy Lippard, Audio Arts

Tate Modern presents the first major survey of the work of Louise Bourgeois since 1995. Elaine Showalter writes 'Louise Bourgeois' at Tate Modern 10 October 2007 - 20 January 2008. Works by Louise Bourgeois in for Tate Collection Louise Bourgeois' commission for the Unilever Series in the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern 12 May - December 2000

Dust has been explored by artists such as Man Ray who showed this build up of dust when he photographed Marcel Duchamp's (large glass with Dust Motes) from 1920 after a years worth of Dust collected in New York resembling a topographical landscape (gelatin silver print) (b/w photo).

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**Appendix 1:** Table of Responses from Questionnaire - Artwork was exhibited at the University of Derby, between November 2015 and February 2016.

Question	Group 1 Yes	Group 1 No	Group 2 Yes	Group 2 No	Group 3 Yes	Group 3 No	Group 4 No participation
Touch?	16/18	2/18	4/9	5/9	9/11	2/11	0
Emotional response?	17/18	1/18	4/9	5/9	7/11	4/11	0
Gendered?	14/18 13 Female	2/18	3/9 2 Female	6/9	8/11 6 Female	3/11	0
Female body?	7/18	11/18	0/9	9/9	3/11	8/11	0
Sense of visceral / vulval?	6/18	12/18	0/9	9/9	0/9	9/9	0
Examples of words used to describe forms	Sexual, confessional, physically intimate, contortions, scary, sexuality, female condition, visceral, physical, memories, loss, slightly unsettling, violence, tactile, intriguing, tortured, destructive, remains, complex, decay, negative spaces, real, fragility, vulnerable, emotional loss, sad and liberating.		Sad, destructive, full of emotions, mouldy, strange, pointless, weird, surreal, complex, interesting, textured, soft, abstract, lost, memories of the past,		Gross, Moss growing from sweat and skin cells, sensuous, tactile, curiosity, abnormal, natural, fragmented, sad, sensual, organic and bold.		0

**Questions**

1. Would you like to touch the sculptures?
2. Why would you?
3. Why do you think that?
4. Do you think the forms appear gendered?
5. Does the artwork make you think of male or female identity?
6. Why is this?
7. Do you have an emotional response to the work?
8. What words would you use to describe the work?

Total responses 39.

Group 1 - Invited Creative's

Group 2 - BA/BSc. (Hons) Product Design students

Group 3 - BA (Hons) Fine Art and Design students

Group 4 - BA (Hons) Photography Students

Further comments are incorporated into the body of the thesis as quotes.

## Appendix 2

### Process of Research and Development of Practice

#### Rules of Process Developed for Making Porcelain Forms

My eighteen pairs of shoes are documented and dates of purchase are recorded. My feet are nine inches long, and times two feet equals eighteen, this provides the inspiration for using eighteen pounds of porcelain for each form. The first pair of shoes in the sequence dates from when I was eighteen. Eighteen pairs of shoes, eighteen pounds of clay - weighed on the same scales, every time using the same firing program – see below.

A metal shoe box mould was used during the final point of impact, which helped to form the feeling of opening out.

#### Type of Clay Used

Porcelain has a much higher level of plasticity which generates more movement and flow against the still solid shoes. Imparting energy and movement into my forms was always an imperative. The ability of porcelain to be fired at high temperatures in my work produces a glassy bone like finish resembling skin and flesh. Extended and slow firing imparts strength and resilience to large pieces and reduces the likely hood of cracking and fragmentation.

#### Colour of clay

Porcelain stays pure white at whatever temperature it is fired and only changes colour due to contamination by other substances. At higher temperatures the surface can start to melt but stays white. The importance is not so much the temperature that the clay is fired at but the heat work done over a long length of time. In my practice I use a long build and hold this length of penetration of the heat provides a greater vitrification. I prefer oxidised firing in an electric kiln the colour of the porcelain stays whiter. Porcelain in a reduction firing tends to have a blue tinge.

I found that clay containing grog (this adds strength to the clay, by the addition of ground particles of fired clay) led to a restricted flow and movement of the material on impact with material and surface. The darker clays didn't provide the clean white background to the traces.

**August 2008** - Clay with grog was used to see if the clay would survive the firing in the kiln better as a solid form, shown in the metal shoe box mould - see **Fig 1**, below in documented in the shoebox mould. This was successful but the texture and imprint wasn't as obvious and the flow of material happened



Fig1



Fig 2



Fig 3

less as there was little ribboning and stretch of the material. The ground of the form didn't give enough contrast to the traces and it felt too solid and heavy. See **Fig 2** below after firing. **Fig 3 October 2008** - what should the shoebox mould be made of? This shows the forms in standard red clay. After firing the form has fragmented into several pieces.



Fig 4



Fig 5



Fig 6

In **Fig 4 - October 2008** - Beautiful green traces from the chrome in the leather of the shoe - but the ground of the dark clay doesn't contrast enough as the traces of colour blend into the clay. In **Fig 5 - October 2008** - Opening the kiln door and finding the traces left behind after firing. The porcelain is much more successful than the dark clay in providing a background to show the colours of the traces. **Fig 6 January 2009** - Do I combine the shoes in the clay in two separate forms as above or as one? The combination of the pair of shoes in one form works better to create stress and tension in the form.

The clay needed to be very slowly dried (trapped air and water particles weakens clay) at room temperature and any protruding fragile pieces needed to be supported by small pieces of kiln bricks which needs to be continued through the firing process. After the firing program the kiln needs to stay closed until the inside is cool and reaches room temperature. The firing can take about a week. Firing temperatures see chart. I bought kiln shelves so that I could be messy as the extrusion from the destruction of my shoes meant that the remains tended to leak on to the kiln shelves even with the protection of the white powder (alumina hydrate – this has a melting temperature of about 2000 degree C)

**2008** - Much of first year was spent exploring the weight of clay to use in relation to the shoes and setting this system. I explored different weights of clay compared to the volume of the shoes - the maximum weight of 72 lbs. Then I tried to find the weight my feet as the lowest. This proved to be very difficult to answer, my physiotherapist suggested 2.2 lb for the weight of a foot, but this would not have been enough clay to work with. 72 lb was just manageable but I realised that though the outcome was interesting the shoes became too embedded and the clay was the dominant feature rather than the shoes or their presence as an absence. Eventually I settled on 18 lbs (2009) as this was a good ratio between the volume of shoes and the clay as the surrounding material. A combined amount of clay for each shoe as 9 inches long and thus 2x 9 equals 18. I looked at separate pieces of clay for each shoe but the tension in the material was increased when both shoes were straining and twisting within the clay. The material the shoes were made from makes a difference to the traces and the ability of the shoes to stick to the clay.

**2009** - The development of the documentation of the shoes as photographs was a major problem as my photographic skills just didn't match what I wanted to achieve. After months spent trying in various locations such as the photographic studio, I had to admit to defeat and worked with John Tunnley and his camera to take the photographs. I set up the shoes and pressed the shutter but John worked his magic on the technical part of the camera work. This followed by many months of learning with John how to work on the images in Photoshop and carrying out procedures to produce images of a set height and width to match my body height and still keeping the shoes to the scale of full size. The images were originally going to be a full panorama of eighteen pairs of shoes, but when I visited the Derby Museum and Art Gallery to see the space for the exhibition, I realised that this just wasn't going to work in the gallery space.

**Chart to Show the Properties of Different Clays**

Type of Clay	Temperature Fired Degree C during my process	Colour	Comments	Recommended Degree C by University Technician or factory	Quality of manipulability and flow (ribbon)	Likely hood to split or fragment when fired with objects (metal)	Firing program degree C – 25 degree per hour to 250. 50 degree per hour to 1260.
Special Porcelain	1260 cone 9	White	Reduction gives a more bone like quality. Work clean as clay can be easily contaminated. Metal causes dark black stains in surface during firing. ( this does not spread ) Thick and solid pieces are strong only thin areas are fragile. Contains – china clay, feldspar or flint, and silica. The feldspar and flint have coarse particles which provide lots of airspaces – this I suggest helps in the flow of the material. Very dense and tough after firing.	1260 More heat work takes place in the long length of time of build and hold – perhaps equivalent to 1300	High	Low	1260 – Soak 45 minutes.
Super White Stoneware	1260 cone 9	Cream	Reduction - a blend of white stoneware clays.	1260	Medium	Medium/low	Soak 30 minutes
Terracotta	1200	Terracotta	Contains more iron , (Terracotta with grog cracks badly and is not suitable)	1150	Medium	Medium	1260 – 45 minutes soak
Brick Clay from London Brick Company Bedford	1150	Red terracotta	Contains lots of iron oxide which gives the red colour after firing, after 1200 – 1500 starts to melt /turn to glass. Factory fires to 1000. Contains grog.	1000	Low	High	Taken to 1000

Chocolate Black clay	1250	Very dark brown/chocolate	Contains 30% grog. Top temperature 1200, Oxidation. Black iron and Manganese.	1160 – 1180.	Low	Low	Taken to 1200
Smooth Stoneware (grey)	1260 Cone 9	Grey	Naturally occurring clay – dug and mixed together – Blend of naturally occurring fireclays	1260	Medium	Medium	Clay not suitable for this firing program
Magma Crank	1260	Cream / pale brown	Stoneware clay with added grog 30 percent, coarse textured. Good for wedging	1260	Medium	Low	Soak 30 minutes or 50 minutes for larger pieces.
Craft Crank (different manufacturer )	1260	Cream / pale brown	I have fired this twice and added porcelain in second firing. Colour becomes more toasty brown on edges. Contains grog 30 percent.	1260	Medium	Low	Soak 30 minutes or 50 minutes for larger pieces.

### Process of Firing

The firing program was developed over a period of time to help the clay to withstand the stresses of the kiln, in substantial solid and irregular shaped pieces of large volume.

Firing program unless stated – 25 degree per hour to 250 then 50 degree per hour to 1260.

**September 2008** – Firings to 1260 15 degree per hour to 300, 25 degree to 1260 hold 30 minutes (his program was developed during my MA)

**July 2009** using same firing program but with a 45 minutes soak for porcelain this means that the powdery nature of the traces are more firmly melted into the surface and less dust is left behind. The colours are still as intense.

## Timeline of Practice, Research and Projects

Year	Project	Description	Image	Reflection
2010	Working towards the presentation/containment of the porcelain forms and photographs for exhibition.	Consolidating the process and practical research. Photoshop development continues ready for printing.		A time of development and confirmation of ideas.
2011	Making final pieces and undertaking solo exhibition	Eighteen – consisting of eighteen porcelain forms, eighteen shoe box forms, eighteen acrylic containers and eighteen photographs of the shoes.	 <p>Positioning the photographic image against the wall. The same width as the acrylic container and in relation to my body height. The metal relates to the size of a shoe box and contains the porcelain forms.</p>	<p>The solo exhibition at the Derby Museum and Art Gallery was a tremendous experience and provided a rich wealth of perception and a process for reflection.</p> <p>I later (2013-2016) built on the idea of the photographs and positioned them in the base of the containers with dates of the lifetime of the shoes.</p>
2012	Practice continues with series of tiny sculptures based on lost earrings.	The remaining earring was worked into porcelain (1oz) and then fired. I then cast the fired porcelain in bronze. These were contained in an ear proportion metal box as part of the process.		The forms tend to lack the ethereal nature of the ear and mouth pieces and this was due to the tiny scale of the earring which had less impact on the form, though the material from the earrings left interesting traces.

2012	Practice continues exploring tiny casts and forms.	Casts of inside my ear and mouth – working with interior spaces and the intimacy of scale. (1oz of porcelain). These were contained in a ear proportion metal box as part of the process. Developing the feel of small spaces and what can be contained within them – the intimacy of insides. Body related and visceral. Looking at the inclusion of text in the practical work.		This is extremely intriguing to some viewers but for some they are unable to engage with the forms or find them completely repellent. Selected for the Derby Museum and Art Gallery intervention project in the Ceramic Gallery between March 16 and March 17.
2012	Reflection and written work / research takes over	After my solo exhibition was a time for reflection, research and observation.	As part of the documentation process I started making handmade books with JB.	This is ongoing
2012 – 2013	Next developing handbag series using nine pounds of porcelain for each handbag with nine forms.	Some of the forms have a more accentuated vessel form and the ratio of clay to object is slightly less.		The handbag seems to leave more traces and there is more variety between the traces, possibly as some of the handbags had objects left inside.

2013-2015	Practice continues throwing porcelain bowls and integrating remains/traces from shoes.	I have learnt to throw bowls a skill that has eluded me for many years and by filling the bowls with traces of the shoes they are no longer a domestic usable object. The bowls were all made out of 9ozs clay. I also made a series of plain porcelain bowls of different sizes. The throwing of bowls became addictive. A small collection of these bowls were for sale at Derby Museum and Art Gallery (2016)	 	The scale of the bowls thrown kept getting smaller. Sizes ranged from 9 cm to 4 cm. I also tried some Raku fired ones but due to the stresses of temperature in this process they were not all made out of porcelain to diminish cracking.
2015-2016	New body of work integrating magna crank and porcelain.	The magna crank form is fired first and then the porcelain is worked onto the form. Then fired again. The porcelain becomes firmly attached to the Magna Crank.  This was 36 lbs of Magna Crank to 18 lbs of porcelain.		These forms focus on the flow and ribboning of material alongside the ratio of weight of clay. This project will be taken further. I tried smaller ratios of clay but they were not as successful.
2013 – 2015	Writing in earnest, alterations and re-reading for meaning.	This is on-going.		This is on-going.

2015 – 2016	Research questions distributed to viewers.  Final writing up and proof reading.	The feedback led to reflection and the consolidation of some of the research.  Working towards completion.		The feedback provided a rich source of comments though some of the student feedback was disappointing.
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#### Exhibitions and Arts Practice

2008-2015- volunteer curator and member of visual arts panel

31 July 2008 - Artists Talk Programme -*Sculptor Jayne Falconer on Ronald Pope* at Derby Museum and Art Gallery - ( Replaced Doctor Robert Burstow - he cancelled due to family commitments ) Joint collaboration of an exhibition based on Ronald Pope's public sculptures between, University of Derby, Derby Cathedral and Derby Museum and Art Gallery.

2008 -2009 December – January Derby Open

2008 - 2012 Sessional lecturer University of Derby – in Year Zero and BA Fine Art

2009- Present University of Derby Project Coordinator for exhibitions and curator

28 May 2009 Day course on PhD - Vitae Part-time Researchers' Workshop at Northampton University of Northampton.

2010 Permanent work on exhibition at the Enterprise Building, University of Derby

November 2010 - June 2011. The Researcher Curator Programme, AHRC-funded and organised by the University of Nottingham 2011 Curator for Format International Photography Festival at University of Derby

7 January 2011 Presented at New Horizons Research Conference, University of Derby, - Gender, Subjectivity, and Post-Minimalist Form

2011 Solo exhibition - Eighteen, at Derby Museum and Art Gallery

2011 Nottingham Open

2012 – Present, Member of Vickers Community Arts Foundation Committee

2012 Exhibitor Street Arts Derby

2012 – 2013 Staff Exhibition, Curator and Artist, University of Derby

2013 Curator for Format International Photography Festival at University of Derby

2013 Become Member of Royal British Sculpture Society

2013 Exhibitor Street Arts Derby - Ear and Mouth pieces

2013 Exhibitor at Wirksworth Festival

2014 - 2015 Chair of the Wirksworth Festival Board and Member of Visual Arts Panel as Curator, Selector and Organiser of Wirksworth Festival

2015 Curator for Format International Photography Festival at University of Derby

2015 - 2016 Exhibition Eighteen for Natures Connections and Research for PhD at University of Derby

2016 - 2017 Intervention in Ceramic Gallery. 2 x tiny porcelain pieces in place in cabinet 1, till March 2017 together with bowls being sold in shop

### Appendix 3: Eighteen Porcelain Forms



photo Damian Hayes

<p>1</p>		 <p>1970's - 2011</p>	<p>1970's - wedge flipflops - gold/white - bought as teenager.</p>
<p>2</p>		 <p>1980's - 2011</p>	<p>1980's - fabric slippers bought in Corsica</p>

3			1980's - wooden scholls
4			1990's - sons white pumps with name tape - worn for gardening and decorating

<p>5</p>		 <p>1990's - 2011</p>	<p>1990's-Navy leather Ecco-flat slip on's</p>
<p>6</p>			<p>1990's - Navy leather Ecco boots - used for working with husband and later for doing Fine Art Degree</p>

7				<p>1990's-best black Ecco court- hardly worn worn</p>
8				<p>1997 - Brown leather joseph Seibel flip flops - comfy</p>

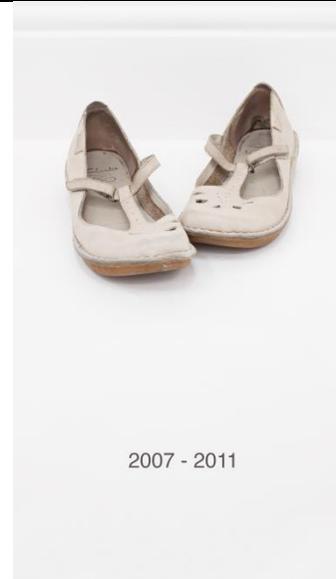
9			<p>1999 - life changing - elegant high heeled sandals - for feeling good</p>
10			<p>2000 - brown leather - Joseph Seibel sandals - for comfort but black dye stained my feet - bought in Ashbourne when sent away by ex husband for two weeks as considered ill.</p>

<p>11</p>		 <p>2001 - 2011</p>	<p>2001 - beige leather loafers comfy/practical</p>
<p>12</p>			<p>2002 - black pumps - cheap for canal boat holiday. Later used for decorating.</p>

<b>13</b>		 <p>2003 - 2011</p>	<p>2003 - clarks black leather sandals - comfy and practical</p>
<b>14</b>		 <p>2004 - 2011</p>	<p><b>fourteen</b> - 2004 - black leather sling backs - worn for degree show private view</p>

<p>15</p>		 <p>2005- 2011</p>	<p>2005 Clarks beige suede sandals with fringe</p>
<p>16</p>		 <p>2006 - 2011</p>	<p>2006- liked the wacky look and texture of pattern - comfy and felt good in them - bought on way back from a weekend in Wales</p>

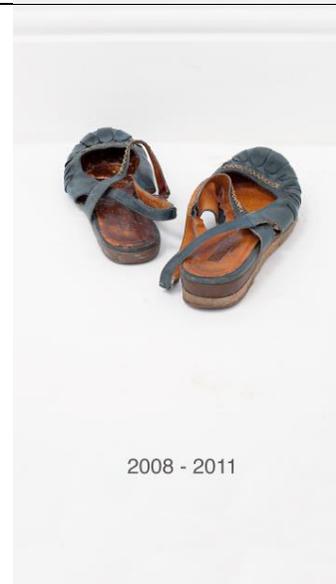
17



2007 - 2011

2007 - Clarkes little girl white sandals - worn a lot for working at Wirksworth festival and really good for wearing while on crutches with injured ankle

18



2008 - 2011

2008-pikolinos - torquoise leather sling back - had to be made higher on right foot because of back pain - the elastic wore thin, because of the extra weight on the sole.

## Appendix 4

### Scientific Understanding of Material.

#### Porcelain and its Physical Properties for Visceral and Hysteric Forms

Porcelain has a reputation for being a difficult material, 'a swine to handle is a sentiment that any maker who accepts the challenge of this material can testify ... bad tempered malleability... in the kiln, it has a malevolent memory entirely its own.'<sup>530</sup> It is the physical properties of porcelain, that of its plasticity and vitrification that I discuss here as part of my practice.

The flow and spread of porcelain, its plasticity is described by Ceramicist Penny Smith as 'liquid sensations created by the physical properties of a substance that enable it to flow'<sup>531</sup> I use this plasticity in the flow of clay between impact with object and ground. In my process this enables the ribboning effect, which produces intense distortion of my forms.

The plasticity of clay is determined by the property of layers that 'are separated by a thin layer of water molecules which are linked to neighbouring layers via hydrogen bonds. These are weak but still significant forces. They are weak enough to allow the clay sheets to slide past each other when some force is applied but strong enough to keep them in position once the force is removed.'<sup>532</sup>

Plasticity is dependent on particle size and this fine particle size in the composition of porcelain i.e. the smaller particle size in quartz (when milled) improves porcelain's material flow. The addition of Bentonite increases porcelain's plasticity which is discussed in more detail later.

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<sup>530</sup> Smith, P. (2003) Perceptions of Perfection, the Paradoxes of Porcelain, *Ceramics Art and Perception*, no. 53 2003, p.90.

<sup>531</sup> Smith, P. (2003) Perceptions of Perfection, the Paradoxes of Porcelain, *Ceramics Art and Perception*, no. 53 2003, p.95

<sup>532</sup> Breur, S. (2012) The Chemistry of Pottery, <https://eic.rsc.org/section/feature/the-chemistry-of-pottery/2020245.article>, accessed 13/12/16

Over many years I have developed a system of firing for my large solid pieces of clay of up to around 100lbs in weight. I use extremely slow firing in an electric kiln to minimise stress to the clay body and to ensure more water molecules that are left behind after drying are removed.

Nan Smith writes about slow firing techniques for larger sculptures to avoid cracking and describes this as:

The clay object undergoes chemical and physical changes during the firing cycle. When bisque firing large-scale works, heat rise must be gentle and slow through critical points: 0–212°F, when water of plasticity becomes steam; 650°–750°F, when chemically combined water escapes; 900–1100°F, when quartz inversion takes place (this is a structural change in the clay where the silica/flint changes from alpha to beta quartz). The quartz crystalline structure actually changes by expansion and contraction. Cracking will eventuate if this 200° range is passed through too quickly—more than 200°F in one hour. It is best to go slowly through quartz inversion in the glaze firing as well.<sup>533</sup>

I have found that my much slower firing schedule used to remove most of the water molecules which is preferable as my clay is particularly thick and irregularly shaped. This means that a gentler expansion and contraction of the molecules takes place with less internal movement and friction meaning there is less stress, cracking and fragmenting during the firing process.

#### **The Firing Schedule for my porcelain.**

15 degrees per hour up to 300 degrees C

25 degrees per hour up to 1280 degree C

Hold 45 minutes.

For much larger pieces above 20 lbs of clay weight I used a hold of 90 minutes after achieving peak temperature.

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<sup>533</sup> Smith, N. (2015) Archive Article: Controlled Drying and Firing—Large Scale Sculpture and Tile, *Ceramics*, December 2015, <http://ceramicartsdaily.org/ceramics-monthly/article/archive-article-controlled-drying-and-firing-large-scale-sculpture-and-tile/> accessed 13 December 2016.

Generally, the top firing temperature for porcelain is 1300 -1400 degree C.<sup>534</sup> However, the technical specification of my material<sup>535</sup> is a maximum of 1280 degree C. At higher temperatures I found a blistering effect could happen where the material bubbles.

My future research would look at firing to a top temperature of 1300 and 1400, though a shorter hold time may be needed at these temperatures and possibly the exploration of a different type of porcelain.

The primary components of porcelain are clays, feldspar or flint, and silica, all characterized by small particle size.

The principal clays used to make porcelain are china clay and ball clay, which consist mostly of kaolinite, a hydrous aluminium silicate.

These raw materials in different proportions are combined to give properties of vitrification as porcelains strength and permanence.

Composition of porcelain a base formulation for a hard-paste porcelain body could be one quarter each of kaolinite, ball clay, silica and feldspar.<sup>536</sup>

China clay or kaolin usually provides porcelain with its plasticity. 'Ball clays are highly plastic and are used in conjunction with less plastic clays (kaolinite) to improve plasticity and workability. Used alone, ball clay is susceptible to excessive shrinkage when dried or fired.<sup>537</sup> This would mean that my large solid forms would be more susceptible to cracking and fragmentation with a high percentage of ball clay, but the addition of Bentonite helps to overcome this.

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<sup>534</sup> <https://www.bellevuecollege.edu/artshum/materials/art/Husby/FiringTemperatures.pdf> and <http://www.ceramicartdaily.net/PMI/KilnFiringChart.pdf>

<sup>535</sup> Special Porcelain from Valentine Clays

<sup>536</sup> <http://www.potteryhistories.com/page58.html> accessed 13 December 2016.

<sup>537</sup> <http://www.potteryhistories.com/page58.html>

'Ball clay is much finer and thus more plastic than kaolin... Bentonite is much finer than ball clay (the ultimate particles are much smaller). It is incredibly plastic; adding only 2 % to a recipe can dramatically improve the working properties.'<sup>538</sup>

'Feldspar, or feldspar-rich materials are added to ceramic bodies to act as a flux to assist the melting and fusion of the other components.'<sup>539</sup> Feldspar consists of aluminium silicate and a hard quartz acting as fluxes in the body of porcelain. 'The feldspar fills the voids between the silica and clay particles and cements them into a strong mass. Containing oxides which liquefy and slowly dissolve some of the clay and silica to form solid density and strength.'<sup>540</sup>

This solidification of melted glass into a solid form; a vitreous phase starts from 1050 °C.<sup>541</sup> 'Fluxes reduce the temperature at which liquid glass forms during firing to between 1,835 and 2,375 degrees Fahrenheit (1,000 and 1,300 degrees Celsius). '<sup>542</sup> The grains of the clay body bind together during the liquid phase.

Silica is a compound of oxygen and silicon, the two most abundant elements in the earth's crust. Its resemblance to glass is visible in quartz (its crystalline form), opal (its amorphous form), and sand (its impure form). Silica is the most common filler used to facilitate forming and firing of the body, as well as to improve the properties of the finished product. Porcelain may also contain alumina, a compound of aluminium and oxygen, or low-alkali containing bodies, such as steatite, better known as soapstone.<sup>543</sup>

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<sup>538</sup> [https://digitalfire.com/4sight/education/formulating\\_a\\_porcelain\\_282.html](https://digitalfire.com/4sight/education/formulating_a_porcelain_282.html) p.5

<sup>539</sup> <http://www.potteryhistories.com/page58.html>

<sup>540</sup> [https://digitalfire.com/4sight/education/formulating\\_a\\_porcelain\\_282.html](https://digitalfire.com/4sight/education/formulating_a_porcelain_282.html) p.2

<sup>541</sup> <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022309311003796> accessed 14 December 2016

<sup>542</sup> <http://www.madehow.com/Volume-1/Porcelain.html>

<sup>543</sup> <http://www.madehow.com/Volume-1/Porcelain.html>

The grains of quartz in silica supply 'an aggregate framework for the fired matrix (like gravel in concrete)'<sup>544</sup>

I used 'Special Porcelain' from Valentine Clays. This is 'a high quality porcelain containing finer white clays with a Bentonite addition with a firing range of 1220°C - 1280°C.'<sup>545</sup> I fired at the higher end of the range as I prefer the texture to start to become glassy and this loses the matt finish from lower temperatures and starts to melt and flow giving the sensation of skin, which I look for in fired forms. This vitrifying sensation of porcelain has a strength and permanence, compared to dry porcelain clay which has little strength before firing.

Vitrification is the solidification of a melt into a glass rather than a crystalline structure (crystallization) ... A process where clay is fired hotter and hotter, it reaches a point where, if cooled from there, it will produce ware of sufficient density and strength as to be useful for the intended purpose. A clay that has been fired sufficiently dense and strong for the purpose intended is said to be 'mature.'<sup>546</sup>

Porcelain when fired doesn't just melt, but importantly for my practice:

The feldspar creates a liquid phase in which some of the kaolin (and Quartz) dissolve, but also in which the kaolin crystals transform into another form of different shape, mineralogy and amazingly, of a higher melting temperature. This crystal-matrix bonded by feldspar-glass on a silica- skeleton creates the incredible hardness and toughness that porcelain can have.<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> [https://digitalfire.com/4sight/education/formulating\\_a\\_porcelain\\_282.html](https://digitalfire.com/4sight/education/formulating_a_porcelain_282.html) p.1

<sup>545</sup> <http://www.valentineclays.co.uk/product/special-porcelain>

<sup>546</sup> [https://digitalfire.com/4sight/glossary/glossary\\_vitrification.html](https://digitalfire.com/4sight/glossary/glossary_vitrification.html)

<sup>547</sup> [https://digitalfire.com/4sight/education/formulating\\_a\\_porcelain\\_282.html](https://digitalfire.com/4sight/education/formulating_a_porcelain_282.html) p.10

Research by S.R. Bragança and C. P. Bergmann has shown 'a significant improving in porcelain strength and thermal strength was obtained by using smaller particles.'<sup>548</sup> They concluded that 'Although the cost of milling is increased to reduce quartz particle size, it can be compensated by its implicit advantages and quartz particle size must be milled to smaller size, and particle size distribution must be carefully considered.'<sup>549</sup>

It is these properties that were important for me to experiment with during the development of my forms, to balance the hard with the softness and the malleable flow of the clay.

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<sup>548</sup> S.R. Bragança and C. P. Bergmann, November 2006, Effect of quartz of fine particle size on porcelain properties, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul LACER/UFRGS, [https://www.ipen.br/biblioteca/cd/ptech/2005/PDF/18\\_07.PDF](https://www.ipen.br/biblioteca/cd/ptech/2005/PDF/18_07.PDF) accessed 13 December2016

<sup>549</sup> S.R. Bragança and C. P. Bergmann, November 2006, Effect of quartz of fine particle size on porcelain properties, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul LACER/UFRGS, [https://www.ipen.br/biblioteca/cd/ptech/2005/PDF/18\\_07.PDF](https://www.ipen.br/biblioteca/cd/ptech/2005/PDF/18_07.PDF) accessed 13 December2016