

The Artist Will Be Present



PERFORMING PARTIAL
OBJECTS & SUBJECTS

Christopher Braddock

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Christopher Braddock

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except whereby explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

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ABSTRACT

The Artist Will Be Present explores objects as traces that stem from performed actions, and *my* body in performance. Part-sculptural objects, video and sound act as performance documents that expand on notions of the ‘live’ encounter. Interest lies in how we *get to* objects: *process* in variance to product or closure. And the question of how the body/s of the audience become participatory is at the forefront of these operations.

From this viewpoint the exegesis aims to broaden existing scholarship on performativity, liveness and the part-sculptural object, exploring the manners in which various cultural practices act to animate objects. I reconsider the Euro-American genealogies of performance/body art (Bruce Nauman, Lygia Clark, Ann Hamilton *et al.*) in relationship to contemporary art practices in Australia and New Zealand (Alicia Frankvich, Carolyn Eskdale *et al.*) through the lens of late 19th-and early 20th-century writing on sympathetic magical action. A legacy of cultural anthropology dealing with magic (that was privileged in establishing grounding aspects of structural linguistics) circulates around the British anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah whose thinking on persuasive analogy in ritual performance draws a crucial link between J. L. Austin’s performative utterance and James George Frazer’s notion of sympathetic magic. From such a perspective the operations of sympathetic mimesis—involving ambivalent similitude and contagion—are discussed in terms of performative and persuasive illocutionary force. This offers another model for articulating an authentic performative document as an encounter with the ‘live.’

A phenomenological method of enquiry, including Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the *chiasm*,—along with notions of mimetic incongruence—crucially tease out relationships between the live and the performance document and aim at resisting subject/object dichotomies whereby concepts of embodiment and indeterminate play between artist, objects and audiences are activated.

Applied to contemporary debates on performance and ‘objects out of action,’ part objects and images are transformed as partial ‘subjects’: metonymically part of larger wholes as trace (substitution) and contagious contact (liveness). What is lacking in the operations of sympathetic mimesis is precisely what ‘draws out’ the body/s of the

audience as they desire closure in object and duration. As these questions turn on the body of the artist/self and the audience/participant in performative installation practice, I offer an analysis of bodies in ritual exchange (donor/donee); subjects and objects as transformers: relations of *force* over form—liminal, reversible and redolent of lack—that emphasise encounter in difference to recognition. This is to speak of, in the words of Lygia Clark: “Tactile shocks to liberate the body.”

INTRODUCTION

The Artist Will Be Present makes a significant contribution to debates and practices of performance and its documentation. Firstly, the exegesis articulates a unique perspective to understandings of performative documents and to the active force of the part object via explorations of the histories and practices of sympathetic magical action. My aim is to broaden existing scholarship on performativity, liveness and the part-sculptural object via the framework of sympathetic magical action within an analysis of mimesis, similitude and contagion.

This approach elucidates relationships between various pre-modern cultural practices and performance as figured within modernity. To be more precise, firstly, my approach reveals the manners in which various cultural practices act to animate objects. Secondly, the exegesis probes the contributions made by art practice to such debates by exploring the Euro-American genealogies of performance/body art (Bruce Nauman, Lygia Clark, Ann Hamilton *et al.*) in relationship to contemporary art practices in Australia and New Zealand (Alicia Frankvich, Carolyn Eskdale *et al.*). Thirdly, the installation component signals a shift from the ambit of performance art documentation. In this regard—and cognisant of notions of animism, anthropomorphism and contagion—I explore objects as traces that stem from performed actions, and *my* body in performative utterance, where video documentation becomes a deferral of the subject/object encounter, or questions conditions of liveness. Important to the overall project is that I arrive at these partial bodily traces in video and sound via a distinctly atypical research pathway that positions the body of the artist as ‘donor’ within highly ritualised contexts of production outlined in anthropological material on sympathetic magic. This approach is, in the end, far more significant to the project than the ubiquitous art historical approach to the part object that privileges models of psychoanalytic enquiry.

My strategy brings to light the British anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah’s significant essay ‘Form and Meaning of Magical Acts’ (1973), in order to locate a gap in the scholarship between two fields of study. On the one hand, literature on the part object has activated a legacy of structural linguistics that employs the operations of metaphor and metonymy. In particular Rosalind Krauss and Yves Alain Bois employ Roland Barthes’ critique of George Bataille’s *The History of the Eye* in order to articulate a

‘formlessness’ characteristic of the part object; erosion as a metonymic part of a larger whole. On the other hand the operations of metaphor and metonymy are employed by a number of writers (Peggy Phelan, Jane Blocker and Kristine Stiles *et al.*) engaging with notions of performativity and the problem of how the ‘live’ moment is recorded, documented or archived.

Phelan, for example, points to metaphor’s role as securing reproductive value (substitutions). From this perspective, if metaphor ‘documents’ the live, metonymy is viewed as associative; working to displace the ‘document’ *in* the moment of the ‘live.’ Phelan and Blocker see metonymy as a kind of ‘somatic language’ where notions of performativity integrate mind and body in an understanding of being embodied *in* our bodies (Blocker 2004: 34).

It is with reference to the linguistic operations of metaphor and metonymy that Tambiah links J. L. Austin with James George Frazer. It is in highlighting this link, and applying it to contemporary debates on the rituals of performance and their documentation, that the exegesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in the field. To be more specific, in referencing Austin’s performative utterance in the context of persuasive sympathetic analogy, Tambiah sets in motion a connection to Roman Jakobson who, in turn, acknowledges Frazer’s operations of ‘similarity’ and ‘contagion’ (inherent in sympathetic magical action) as those of metaphor and metonymy. This exegesis employs Tambiah’s analysis as a way of contextualising part objects, and their ritual contexts, as metonymically lacking. In this regard the action-at-a-distance of sympathetic mimesis operates as a force-field of redundancy that performatively *draws out* audiences as they desire closure both in object and duration. This is the *force of the part object/subject* that questions the ethical and aesthetic consequences of the operations of fixed (scopic) representation, longevity and permanent collection.

For example, Tambiah employs a Zande case study (discussed at length in *6.3 The Force of the Pendulum*) in which a creeper is employed for curing leprosy (1973: 214). His example relies on the creeper’s falling leaves leaving behind residues that resemble a leper’s wounds and made into a paste applied to the wounded body. Insofar as the plant is employed therapeutically, a persuasive and forceful transfer is announced where the undesirable (the loss of the limbs resulting in death) is replaced by a desired growth in

the human subject.

The significance of this example is that Tambiah suggests a vacillation between literally ‘knowing’ that a creeper is a creeper and a bodily aphasia that forms a transgression in language; a crossing of the metaphorical axes (a plant’s growth formations and a leper’s sores) that forms a metonymic violation of meaning. Tambiah’s understanding of these operations position metonymy *in* the persuasive force of a performative illocutionary ‘act of doing’ that dominates formal aesthetics, and the *actual* condition of the body which resides *in* a context of ritual action. I relate these operations of sympathetic analogy to the body/s of the artist and audience as implicated in what film theorist and phenomenologist Vivian Sobchack calls a chiasmic structure of *reversibility* with implications for a carnally embodied understanding of perception (2004: 73-74).

To my mind what makes the creeper’s residue in Tambiah’s example so interesting is its partial and ambiguous morphology with respect to the body ‘represented,’ combined with notions of contact or contagion with the body. These characteristics—Frazer’s operations of similitude and contagion—are shared by many anatomical votive objects as they are by many ‘objects out of action’ discussed in the genealogies of performance and body art: not least, Marcel Duchamp’s small erotic objects such as *Feuille de vigne femelle* (*Female Fig Leaf*) (1950); Bruce Nauman’s body-part objects such as *Device for a Left Armpit* (1967); or the tiny bread dough ‘casts’ produced by Ann Hamilton of her mouth’s cavity in *Malediction* (1991-1992). More recently, these genealogies extend to New Zealand artist Alicia Frankovich’s *Flying Fox* (2008), for which her leg is seen jutting out from an upstairs window in Auckland’s Ponsonby district, or Carolyn Eskdale’s *Furniture Objects* (2000-2003) somatically hand-moulded and ambivalently indicative of our subjectively experienced bodies.

Put another way, I argue that these objects act as partial ‘subjects’ that are unlocatable as trace (substitution) and contagious contact (liveness). What is (metonymically) lacking in the operations of sympathetic mimesis is precisely what ‘draws out’ the body/s of the audience. It is this drawing out that makes all subjects and objects partial.

Representational unity and saturated ritual contexts (including predetermined putative intentions) would *undo* such a force. Along these lines I offer an analysis of the body of the artist in a ritual performative (and unlocatable) exchange (donor/donee) in variance

to some modernist tropes which have tended to view the artist in the more authoritative (and domineering) guise of high priest, shaman or magician.

In précis, I activate Tambiah's understanding of sympathetic magic as a way of discussing how the agents of artists, objects and audiences are complexly 'present' *in* the ritual mix. In this way I extend Tambiah's argument (which does not, in itself, deconstruct Austin) so that saturated ritual contexts are called into question and I articulate performance documents as deeply reciprocal and somatic; illocutionary gesture activated as sympathetic trace and contagion. In an application of anthropological findings to the arena of art history, the characteristics of similitude and contagion are compared to Krauss' emphasis on erosion (or reduction) in morphological ambivalence. Krauss' argument is lent ritual (performative) context in that Tambiah contextualises the *operations* of sympathetic magical action as primarily about forces of persuasion and conceptualisation in difference to issues of cause and effect.

As said, a principal motivation in my artistic practice is an engagement with bodily trace and 'contagion' relative to various processes of recording and repeating that seem appropriate to specific performative installations. To this end, my body, and the architecture of the installation, move through various operations that render them morphologically ambivalent (spatial ambiguities of the cast and mould, close-up views, dislocated sound tracks, endless duration, spatial and perspectival disorientation). At the same time my body shows the signs of strenuously prolonged action (or utterance) which, combined with its mimetic closeness, provokes a sense of contagious encounter and reciprocity *in* and *with* the body/s of the audience. In this regard, an interrogation of representational pathos and 'presentness,' while (simultaneously) presenting my body, offers a unique tension (an irresolvable one) that questions how modes of process (getting *to* objects) and performative documentation operate.

Finally, I intend a tension between the exegesis and practice-based components of this thesis. While I persistently embed reference to my own studio practice in the exegesis as it unfolds, I am less interested in a notion of exegesis that illustrates or describes studio practice. To this end I have resisted a point-by-point commentary on the progress of my studio practice. I am interested in a writing that is expansive, touching on a wide range of philosophical contexts. In this regard I raise as many questions and possible

interpretations as I proffer solutions. Insofar as an exegesis might contextualise an art practice, I aim to elucidate a few angles and approaches cognisant that they are few in a broad field of possible interpretations.

It should be of no surprise that I endeavour to resist saturated contexts (a theme that runs throughout the writing on the inherent partiality and ambivalence of the performing body). Moreover, I anticipate that viewers will experience the exhibition component of *The Artist Will Be Present* and not make reference, in their own minds, to the operations of sympathetic magical action. I say below that magic is most alive where one does not detect its action and that my proximity to magical discourse draws attention to the sharpness of a difference. This statement frames my method of analysis as a potential and deconstructive interpretation of an art practice.

By way of a summary of chapters, the *Preface* offers an overview of the installation component of *The Artist Will Be Present*. It prioritises practice at the vanguard in order to instigate some key concerns that the thesis will unfold. It introduces the ‘operations’ that I employ in an attempt to expand notions of the ‘live’ encounter. They are the vacillating characteristics of partial objects caught between the operations of mould and cast and my performing body, both viewed as ‘performative documentation’ that drives the moment of the ‘live.’¹ The Preface elaborates on various modes of ‘participation’ where I endeavour to engage the body/s of the audience in performative ways that signal these objects and subjects as never complete, always in a process of becoming.

In this light, *Chapter 1* gives an overview of the notion of performativity. It emphasises a relationship between interdisciplinarity and performativity. It sets forth a challenge to static sculptural paradigms through performative notions inherent in objects themselves and the spaces in which they are encountered. This chapter qualifies the term ‘performative documentation’ as stressing *processes* that resist privileged modes of making, viewing and interpreting art work where authorial credence is not questioned. I introduce the terms by which metaphor and metonymy are used throughout the thesis. This critical terrain, serving as the underbelly of this project, becomes further refined by the terms of performative utterance. Performative utterance is employed as another

¹ The term ‘performative documentation’ is used by Philip Auslander and is discussed in the thesis that follows (Auslander 2006).

means of stressing a *process* of enactment as an encounter between artist, objects and audiences.² Together with this, the atypical occurrences in many art contexts denote special, non-trivial and transformative contexts that are furthermore characteristic of magical action. Here the question of the *force* of performative iteration in resolving undesirable outcomes is critical to my unfolding argument.



ABOVE, 2008

Moreover, *Chapter 2* raises key concerns within a notion of performativity—namely embodiment, liminality, contingency and efficacy—and concurrently introduces some of the principal works discussed in the thesis as a means to elucidating *The Artist Will Be Present*. Among other works these are Melbourne-based artist Alex Martinis Roe’s *Ontological Leap* (2007), Nauman’s *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* (1966) and *Corridor* (1970) and Duchamp’s erotic objects from 1950-1954. This chapter introduces a phenomenological method of inquiry which focuses on the phenomena of experience as spatially and temporally embodied in the performative encounter between artist, objects

² I am indebted to Amelia Jones’ book *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (1998), discussed at length in this thesis, for this emphasis in which the meanings or readings of body art are contingent on the *process* of enactment.

and audiences. By way of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of the *chiasm*, various forms of visual reciprocity are discussed, such as live close circuit cameras and casts and moulds where the body/s of the audience and/or artist are the participating or casting agents. In this sense, the body is defined as both a subject (subjective reality) and object (objectifiable for others), and also simultaneously internally divergent with itself (Vasseleu 1998: 26).

Chapter 3 explores the notion of mimetic dislocation with a focus on the moving image. It rehearses an idea that will be reiterated at length by means of Marcel Mauss' 'poorly executed ideogram,' (1975: 68) that representational faithfulness *undoes* mimetic force. I outline how moving images might be encountered in the comparably haptic and intimate sense that I advocate for the part objects in the project. In this light the conditions of ambivalence inherent in partial objects is assayed alongside notions of physiognomic closeness or intimacy in viewing the moving image components of *The Artist Will Be Present*. For example, the montage techniques of Nauman and the Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein are analysed as a way of articulating a notion of mimesis and the 'optical unconscious' as a visual counterpart of metonymy in language. In this way the essential incongruence of mimetic images is discussed in terms of an evocation of processes inherent in works of art and their capacity for intimate contagiousness between bodies. This will be discussed in relation to sympathetic magical action as a process of substitution, an idea fleshed out at length in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 consolidates an emphasis throughout the thesis on the 'objectness' of performative actions under the term 'performative sculpture.' I utilise a link between body art and Minimalism in order to articulate the notion of a 'surrogate performer' also inherent in sympathetic magical exchanges. A gradual history of the fragmented body has implications for the viewer who is obliged to *view* differently in order to encounter a reciprocity between herself and an object. It is here that I introduce Frankovich's *Flying Fox* (2008) and *To Veer: A Sudden Change Of Opinion, Subject Or Type Of Behaviour* (2007), as well as Australian artists Laresa Kosloff's *Deep & Shallow* (2004) and Eskdale's *Furniture Objects* (2000-2003). These works are discussed alongside the work of Lygia Clark and her insistence on objects and subjects encountered in the body of the viewer. When these questions turn on the body of the artist/self and the audience/participant, they create objects and subjects as transformers: relations of *force*

over form—liminal, reversible and redolent of lack—that emphasise encounter in difference to recognition.

Chapter 5 reaches back into the histories of sympathetic magical action and defines the terms by which similarity and contagion are understood. This is researched by way of a group of late 19th-and early 20th-century anthropologists who contributed to the anatomical votive collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, in a period contemporaneous with Frazer's *The Golden Bough* outlining the terms by which sympathetic analogy might be understood. As such I introduce some primary research from lecture notes and journal entries in relation to specific artefacts from the Pitt Rivers in this and Chapter 6. Partly in response to Frazer, Mauss proffers the notion of the 'poorly executed ideogram,' which I critique and translate as the conditions of *forceful persuasiveness* and *ambivalence*. For example, I propose the poorly executed ideogram as a concept akin to the lifting of naturalism or modes of representation in Eisenstein's filmic use of the partial subject. The importance of critiquing Frazer is to expand upon his theories, typical of the Victorian era, with an understanding of performative contexts and beyond the scientific terms of cause and effect. Magical actions are therefore understood in the context of ritual action that engages with objectives of persuasion, conceptualisation and expansion of meaning. Chapter 5 sets this important dynamic in place as a model for discussing *The Artist Will Be Present* and other works mentioned above. In this sense magical language can be viewed as exploiting ordinary linguistic properties but in special performative contexts including those of visual arts.³ In this vein Tambiah, in both his "The Magical Power of Words" (1968) and "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts: A Point of View" (1973), argues for performative aspects of magical acts where properties are transferred to recipients (objects or persons) as the semantic basis of magical acts. This will elaborate on the idea of 'surrogate performers' and the possibility of 'action at a distance' discussed in Chapter 4. In referencing the operations of metaphor and metonymy in language, Tambiah sees rich implications for the metaphor as a device of 'selection and substitution' in the ritual action of magic while metonymy stands as a substitute; for the name of part of a thing. This process of substitution is the principle of contiguity in magical acts which allows partial objects/subjects to transform through redundancy, through that which is in excess. This

³ While he does not discuss visual arts, this view is based on Jesper Sorensen's *A Cognitive Theory of Magic* and will be elaborated on in the thesis.

pivotal relationship to magical action is more one of structure than content. In this respect the structure of magic is the structure of the artwork. These are the operations of formlessness and contagion inherent in magical action. As Simon O’Sullivan writes: “Art might be understood as the name for a function, a magical and aesthetic function of transformation” (2006: 52).⁴ Magic is most alive where one does not detect its action. In this sense, my proximity to magical discourse draws attention to the sharpness of a difference. While this historical background might seem overdue, I fancy this chapter as a hinge in the discussion that will bring the previous analysis to bear on the notion of morphological ambivalence in the context of the partial object/subject which is the focus of Chapter 6. If the reader seeks more clarity on the operations of sympathetic magic up to this point, she or he could always read Chapter 5 first.

Chapter 6 assays the driving force of the thesis where the previous writing laid the groundwork. Mauss’ notion of the ‘poorly executed ideogram’ in sympathetic analogy is compared to Krauss’ emphasis on reduction in morphological ambivalence (Krauss 1999: 71). The function of the poorly executed ideogram, which is to *produce* the person, is analysed against the aforementioned notion of surrogate performers. A crucial point here is that images are dispensable and, as such, underscore a power of *force* over form. It is in this sense that *representational completion would undo such a force*. Krauss’ emphasis on ambivalence, in variance to abstraction, is contextualised in her and Bois’ *Formless: a User’s Guide* project. I review their use of Barthes’ *The Metaphor of the Eye* (1963)—in turn a critique of Bataille’s novel *L’histoire de l’œil* (*The Story of the Eye*) (1926)—as a means of discussing visual metonymy as a device to destabilise representational unity. I advance this as a tool with which to elucidate performative action, or *doing*. As Stiles argues, this is to augment “...the metaphorical capacities of conventional static forms of art with the communicative function of metonymy...” (1998: 329). A ubiquitous tendency in art history/theory to critique the part object passing through the psychoanalytic theories of Melanie Klein is noted. Where such theories also establish relationships between parts and greater wholes common to metonymy, they do not always register the significance of performative contexts. It is here that Tambiah’s reassessment of sympathetic magical

⁴ See Simon O’Sullivan in relation to aesthetics and affects as what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari term the ‘harnessing of forces’: “Another way of saying this is that art is a deterritorialisation, a creative deterritorialisation into the realm of affects. Art might be understood as the name for a function, a magical and aesthetic function of transformation” (2006: 52). O’Sullivan does not discuss magical action beyond this comment.

action reiterates pragmatic contexts of production and notions of performative utterance, via the work of Austin. Jacques Derrida's critique of Austin and his writing on the supplement's relationship to the 'live' moment assists in clarifying the notion of performative utterance. In this context anatomical votives that operate within the traditions of sympathetic analogy are compared to Hamilton's *Malediction* at the Louver Gallery in New York from December 7, 1991, to January 4, 1992, and with Duchamp's *Wedge of Chastity* (among other works), as an application of the theory espoused above. These artworks share the characteristics of Mauss' 'poorly executed ideogram' in their combination of formless ambivalence and intimate attention with respect to the bodies that participated *in* them. These conditions of sympathetic analogy are what make the *Wedge of Chastity* so ironically faithful to, and so embodied an encounter between, Marcel and Alexina Duchamp. This approach offers a way of examining partial objects/subjects that incorporates performative contexts and asks how such objects/subjects operate in a contingent, embodied and haptic sense rather than in terms of scopic representation.

The Artist Will Be Present

PERFORMING PARTIAL OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS

Preface

0.1 EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION

THE ARTIST WILL BE PRESENT



0.1 EXHIBITION DESCRIPTION

THE ARTIST WILL BE PRESENT



BACK, 2008

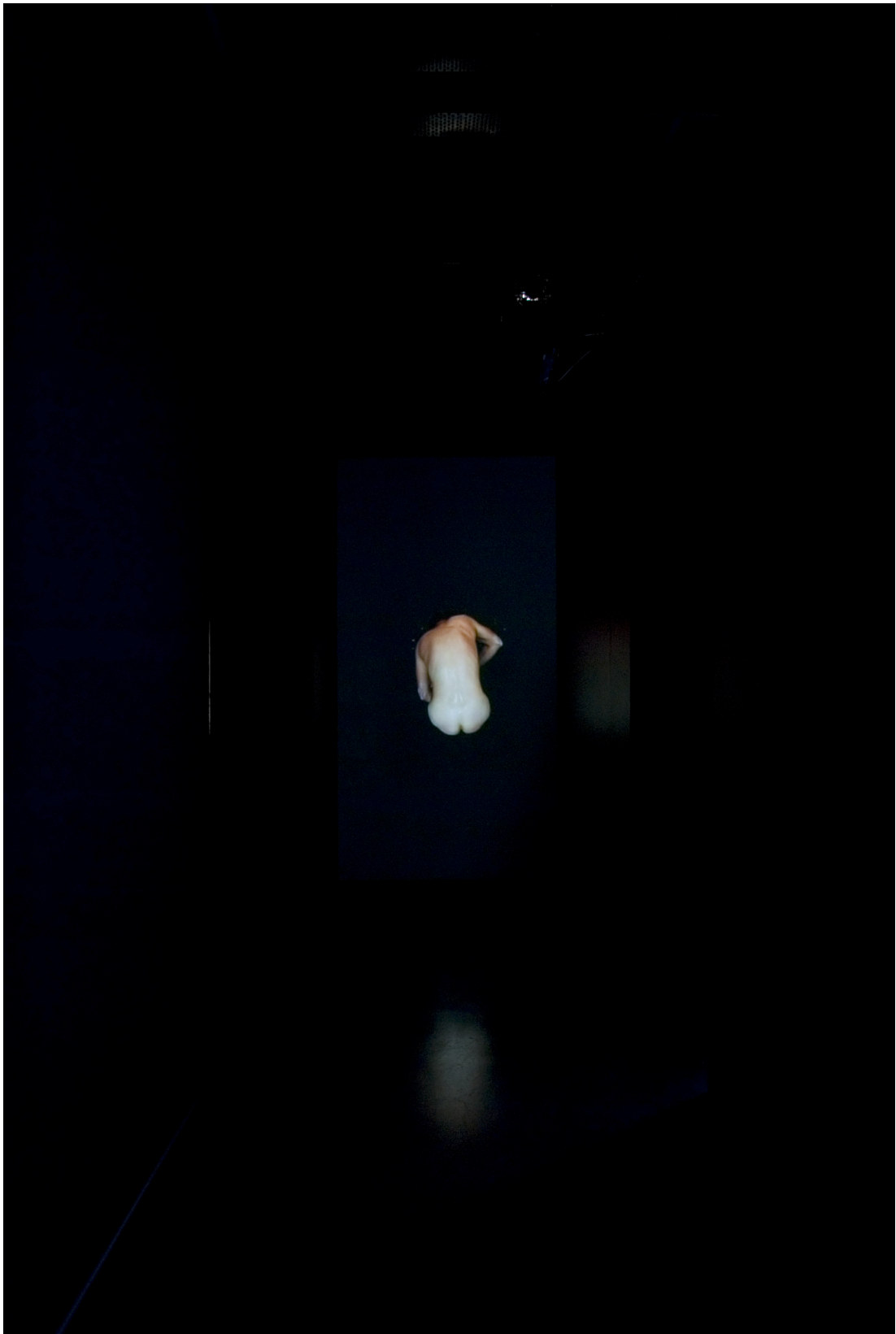
The thesis engages with the project's development over the 12 months of July 2007 – July 2008, as well as discussing significant background works.⁵ While the St Paul St exhibition stands as the 'PhD final project,' I choose to engage foremost in the development of the works for a couple of reasons. Firstly, a notion of the project as continually shifting and open to change is embedded in an overarching performative approach. In this sense there can be no 'final' exhibition but only one that marks a particular moment. Hence, there is always an inexhaustible (always of) potentiality in making work or writing. But more than this, a performative approach signals a here and now concrete finitude to what something is, but always partial and in process but meaningful or affective. This apparent contradiction—a play between the performative moment of the 'live' and its paradoxical reliance on the repeatability (iterability) of that moment—is key to *The Artist Will Be Present* as it unfolds (the title itself proposing an interrogation of the artist's 'presentness'). Secondly,

⁵ Two exhibitions mark this period both entitled *The Artist Will Be Present* as an ongoing project: July 2007 at the RMIT University SOAG Gallery, Melbourne (as part of its School of Art International Artist in Residence Program) and July 2008 at St Paul St Gallery, AUT, Auckland. These two projects will be referred to as *Cut 1* and *Cut 2* in the thesis.

the project persistently asks the question as to how to engage the body/s of the audience in ‘participation’ as a means of articulating the operations at work between artist, object and audience within a concept of performativity. Activating such modes of participation has been difficult and challenging. The Melbourne stretch of *The Artist Will Be Present* emphasised a physical encounter with the *Take* series of part objects while the Auckland stretch accentuates a visually haptic encounter of these object/s mediated by projected moving image. In the first instance (*Cut 1*), it was very difficult to engage audiences to actually pick the objects up (also in the knowledge that they were being videoed, this fact advertised for ethical reasons). I had always to revert to ‘training’ groups of students beforehand, asking them to front at the exhibition openings (posing as unsuspecting audiences) in order to try and prompt members of the viewing ‘public.’ Furthermore, I noticed that the part objects (the *Take* series) were becoming redundant. By this I mean that they risked reinforcing the very notions of scopic recognition that the project is at pains to resist. Certainly the trestle tables (*Cut 1*) were designed as sites of shifting research and expansion in difference to pedestals as sites of scopic recognition and closure; however any object on any surface risks soliciting aspects of the scopic. And the objects themselves, designed to reference but resist Modernist formalism, seem to me to risk reiterating exactly that which they attempt to critique in their closeness to Modernist abstractions (for example, little Henry Moore or Jean Arp sculptures).⁶ Maybe they were too close—too much of a knife-edge—to clearly stake out a position of encounter? These questions I leave open as a means of interrogating the nature of participation in performative contexts.

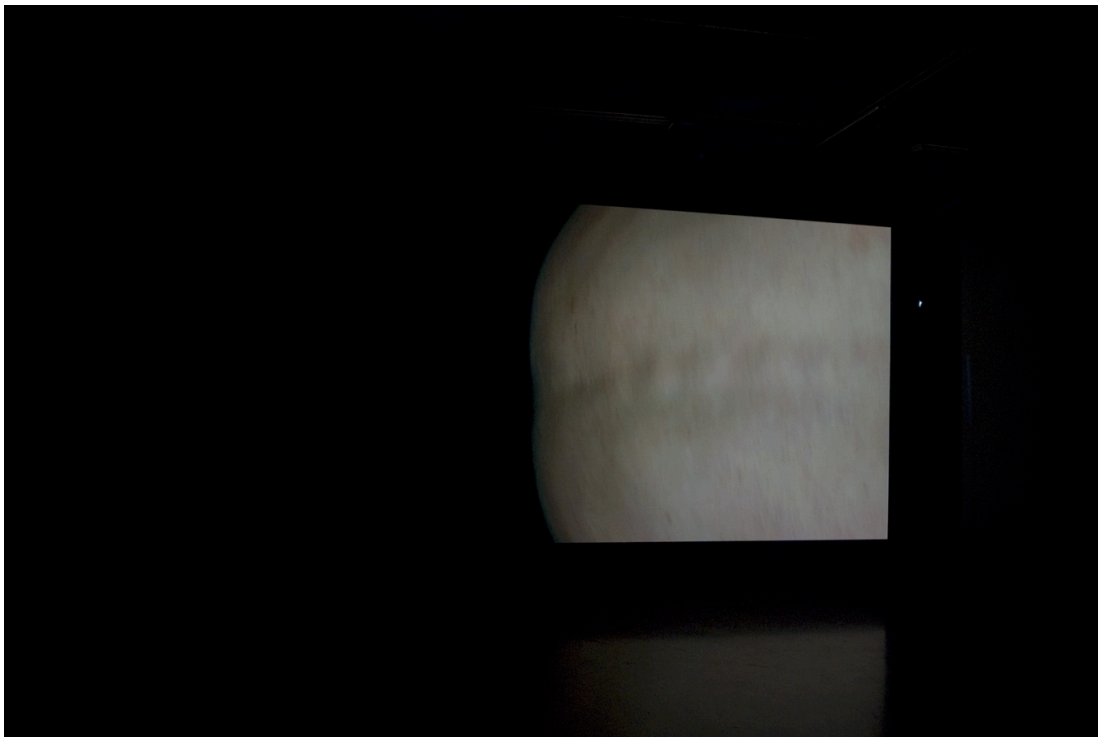
⁶ To ‘participate’ with the objects in the *Take* series is crucial in activating a sense of quotation and critique regarding Modernist morphological abstraction. They are not meant to ‘be’ little modernist sculptures, they are intended to play with this history but to walk a fine line in that playfulness. To have placed these objects on white pedestals or in vitrines would signify a physical detachment from them, activating an optical engagement rather than a somatic one. As I will argue in depth, in the tradition of the part object, they denounce formal Modernist abstraction in favour of the reductive quality of the part object.

CUT 2



ABOVE, 2008

Two large-scale and one small dvd wall projection occupy Gallery 2 of St Paul St entitled *Above*, *Back* and *Caress*.⁷ For *Above* and *Back* I film myself in a black-out studio doing an activity that is never fully disclosed to the viewer. The objects that I manipulate are never seen. Just as the activity is not fully understood, the views of my body are also partial. The camera is hung from the ceiling for *Above* while the camera angle for *Back* is a close-up rear view. Both points-of-view are designed to disorientate the vertical axis of the viewer's looking. I contort, bending over, grappling with some form or other between my knees. These two works employ sound tracks using two directional microphones that initiates a fourth sound work entitled *Over & Over* that plays in the foyer entrance to the gallery.⁸ The sound consists of breathing, and occasional slapping against the sides of my knees, which accentuates the energy and *doing* of the process as well as a sense of ambivalence about what kind of activity might be taking place. Such spatial dislocation shared by all the moving image works in *The Artist Will Be Present* increases a sense of fragmentation—of partial experience—endemic to the project.



BACK, 2008

⁷ *Above* (2008) (looped dvd, 41.24 minutes); *Back* (2008) (looped dvd, 59.54 minutes); *Caress* (2008) (looped Blu-ray, 22.46 minutes).

⁸ *Over & Over* (2008) (looped sound recording, 59.54 minutes).

Moreover, various videoing and editing techniques add to a sense of spatial disorientation and endless duration in the body/s of the audience. As already noted, *Above* is filmed with the camera suspended above my body with the vertical axis of its 16/9 format following the longitudinal axis of my body. For exhibition, the data projector is mounted vertically (right-hand-side facing upwards) so that the image both ‘floats’ and partially coexists with the viewer’s bodily orientation. Here the viewer can experience a sense of falling back as he tries to comprehend my body’s orientation. *Back* is also filmed vertically (locating my body’s vertical axis as it moves up and down), but projected horizontally so that the image of my body scrolls in and out of the viewer’s space not literally linked to his vertical axis. *Back* is a continuous loop achieved by cutting the end and beginning of each sequence against the black-out studio at a point where my body totally disappears from the ‘frame.’ *Above* has a two-second black phase-in-and-phase-out between each looped sequence. The works are projected larger than life-size to increase an experience that is ‘embodied’ as the projected images overwhelm the space in which the viewer stands.

The third dvd work, *Caress*, pans up-close (in macro function) the surface of five part objects from the *Take* series.⁹ Panning horizontally by hand, the slow quivering of my body’s movement (as slow as I can pan without stopping) suggests a ‘handling’ of the objects transposed (as will be argued at length below), by a ‘closeness’ of the moving image, into a fleshy and haptic filmic encounter as a form of intensely experienced and embodied ‘participation.’ This image, much smaller than *Above* and *Back*, locates a ‘closeness’ with the viewer in its intimate scale. The brightness and definition (Blu-ray) of the image suggests an almost forensic fleshy encounter. Whether it is an encounter with the inside or outside of a body is unclear. Together with this the intensity of the high-definition projection offers a spatial uncertainty. The viewer is unsure, in the first moments of viewing, whether the image rests *on* or *in* the wall. Both *Caress* and *Back* are projected on each side of the same dividing projection wall. Each bleeds to the edges of that wall where the viewer must decide on left or right points of entry before reorientating herself to viewing distances. As will be argued in 6.9 *The Force of the Moment*, this spatial (either/or, inside/outside) ambivalence will be related to the implosion of the mould in its chiasmic reversibility. In this respect the mimetic closeness and incongruence of *Caress* summons an in-between two space *in* the body/s of the audience.

⁹ *Take 1-18* (2007) epoxy clay, hand-held dimensions.



CARESS, 2008

As said, these three dvd works are filmed in a black-out studio and projected in a blacked-out gallery, soliciting body/s unframed by the conventions of the white cube. As my body, and the part objects (the *Take* series), slip in and out of 'frame,' it is only *those* objects/subjects that define the 'frame.' This is to say that in my absence the body/s of the audience are the active agents in this reduction of 'place.' In this way the body/s of the audience are further spatially disorientated (and embodied) in a form of reciprocity with and *in* the images.

Together with this there are a number of architectural interventions in the space. On entering the gallery the viewer will experience the space as never before: a new wall configuration that will surprise regular visitors. She will enter through a corridor that is 'empty,' while the sound of *Over & Over* will still be audible from the entrance foyer space from which she has just come. On turning a corner in the corridor she will view, at its end, *Above*, projected vertically and to the edges of the corridor space. Before reaching the end wall on which *Above* is projected, he will turn into other projection spaces in which *Back* and *Caress* are projected. These spaces comprise unexpected wall angles and more 'empty' space where projections might have been anticipated. *Over & Over* is still audible but more distant and dislocated from the moving images of which it is the sound track.

CUT 1



THE ARTIST WILL BE PRESENT, 2007



THE ARTIST WILL BE PRESENT, 2007

Two large wooden ply tables with wooden trestle-legs occupy the floor of the RMIT SOAG Gallery. The 18 part objects that make up the *Take* series rest in no particular arrangement

on their surfaces with viewers randomly picking them up, handling them and returning them in altered formations. These tables were designed to encourage interaction with the works as opposed to scopie recognition of objects on pedestals. These works are the result of pressing handfuls of epoxy clay against my body. Not the spaces between me and other things but the spaces 'in-between' my body. As a result they bear the blemishes, folds and impressions of hair that the process affords. A recurring response on the part of visitors on handling the *Take* series was an expression of surprise at being party to such a private encounter with my body sometimes described as 'closeness.' A viewer declared how she had enjoyed touching my body. She noted that only with a lover would she have experienced touching another with such intimacy or experienced a matching of her body with another's. As Anna Jackson writes in the catalogue for the exhibition:

You'd be forgiven if you suddenly become less than comfortable with holding the works. Realizing that the object you hold is the impression of the space under the artist's armpit may warrant you putting it back on the table in a hurry. For, at that moment, it becomes clear that each work embodies an intimate physical experience with the artist. And your participation lends this proposition meaning and makes these works relational objects. (2007: 3)

A dvd work entitled *Participate*¹⁰ recorded audiences handling and 'searching out' the *Take* series adjacent in the space. This work played on a small six-inch monitor by the exit, where an artist's statement might be located. I enjoy the idea that this size and location denotes this work as therefore 'not a work,' like the other 'big' wall projection, however I reckon it is as crucial as it signifies the body/s of the audience engaging with the part objects which is always never ending. I like the possibility that some viewers might even miss this work, or give it less attention, as 'documentation' when it is actually (as I will return to in detail) one of the 'performative documents' that drive the whole show; that never leaves the moment of the live as momentary.

¹⁰ *Participate*, 2007, (looped dvd, 13 minutes). This work has, in yet another earlier version of *The Artist Will Be Present* (May-June 2007 at Roger Williams Contemporary Gallery, Auckland) recorded the opening event of the exhibition and was then added to the project on the first day of the exhibition. In Melbourne (*Cut I*) I recorded *Participate* as a workshop in the Artist in Residence studio with RMIT students (11 July 2007) using the tables that would subsequently be used in the exhibition. This fitted with the expectations around the residency programme (to engage with students and work collaboratively with them). I thank them for their generosity and creative input to the project.



PARTICIPATE, 2007

Also in the exhibition, a large-scale wall projection played an earlier version of *Above* (2007).¹¹ This work is clearly located in the ‘artist’s studio’ due to the nature of the floor, while the activity and point of view of my body has remained the same for *Above* (2008) (*Cut* 2). That the audiences’ activity captured in *Participate* may be akin to what takes place in *Above* is left unstated. In this loose association there is a slow (and often unresolved) realisation, in the audiences videoed, of what the part objects that make up the *Take* series might be likened to. And if they are derivative of a body, how was this accomplished and in what circumstances?

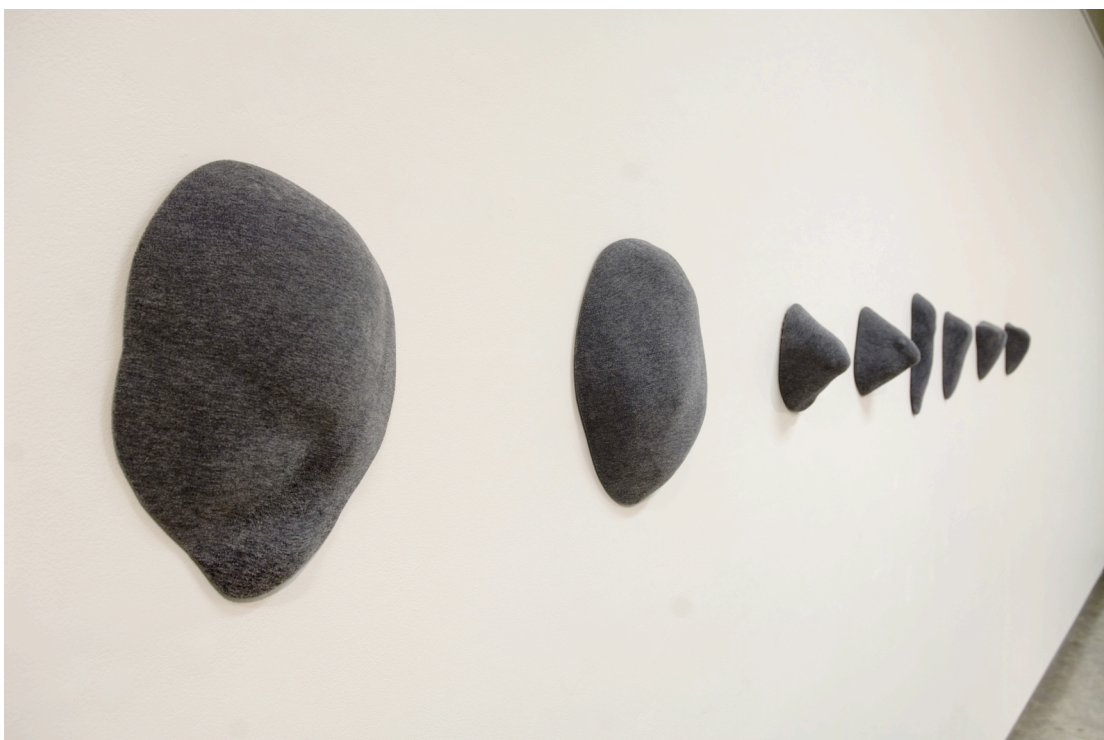
These partial objects/subjects are mimetic but not figurative and the question arises as to how one might name these things. What do they look like? Their character straddles the conditions of formlessness and intimacy due to their ambivalent formal nature and the undisclosed knowledge of their production. And there is also a question as to how they function as objects and moving images of participation. Viewers describe searching for a correspondence with their own bodies and in so doing engage in a reciprocity as they adopt their role as one of many *casting* agents.

¹¹ *Above*, 2007, (looped dvd, 28 minutes).

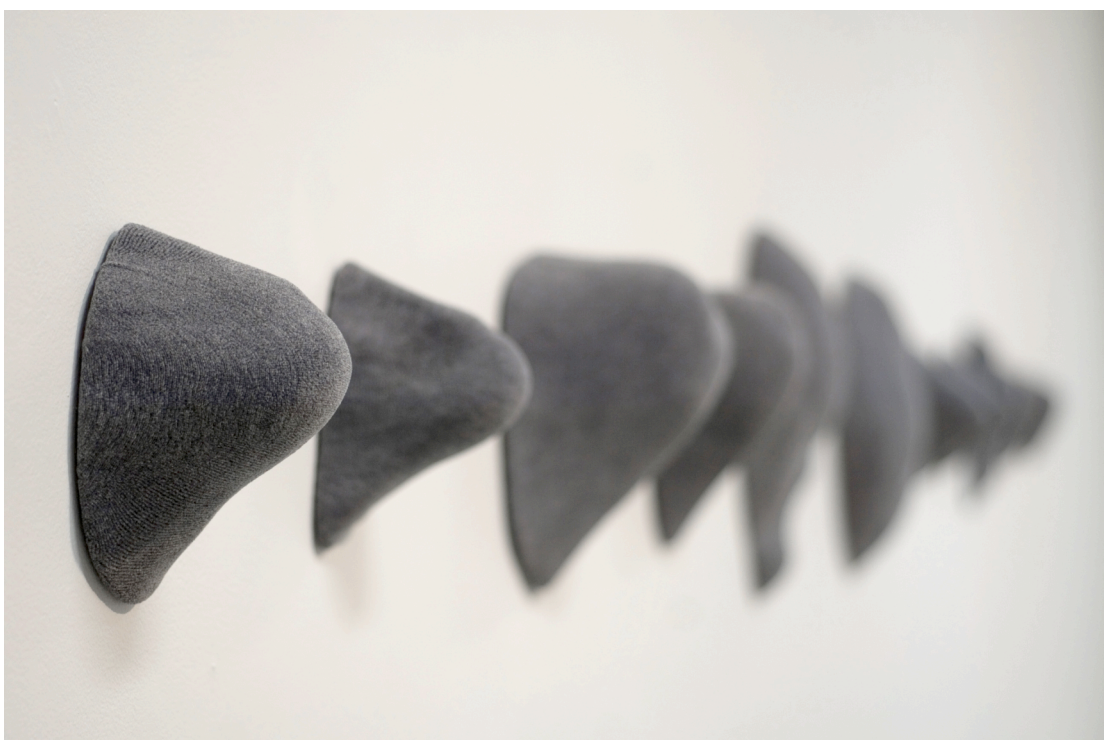
This activity of searching pivots on a lack of disclosure in the objects that prompt the experience. Furthermore, there is a sense of infection or contagiousness where the touching of the objects bears a *forceful* relationship to touching another. The difference between regarding the objects and handling them (*Cut 1*) is marked by a shift from the optical, and its concomitant associations with the remove and reverence of the artwork, to the tactile, triggering a sense of embodiment. The move to filming the *Take* series in startling and up-close proximity (*Cut 2*) marks a reappraisal of the optical as the ‘optical unconscious’ (discussed in Chapter 3), in turn manifest as a filmic embodiment of the body/s of the audience. These partial objects/subjects are viewed less as art objects than as propositions that gain value as they are ‘participated’ with—as translational objects that might be viewed as ‘surrogate performers,’ liminal and reversible, establishing relations between the individual and others and highlighting the differences between the artist’s and viewers’ bodies. As will be argued at length, this is to discuss the work’s social force and efficacy in its mimetic function as partial to the whole.¹²

At the risk of being overly descriptive I want to explain the genealogy of the dvd works as a component of the overall project entitled *The Artist Will Be Present*. I do this because their introduction has provoked a complex shuttling between the part objects in the *Take* series, their relationship to the partial view of my body in *Above* and *Back*, the video footage of people handling the works in *Participate*, and the up-close footage of these objects in *Caress*.

¹² As I will argue, aspects of nondisclosure in the partial object and partial subject, and a lack of completion or resolve, are crucial to an understanding of the overall project. These images are reductive as a part is to a whole. They will always disappoint an expectation for a resolved aesthetic resolution or narrative. Their simultaneous ambivalence of form, mixed with a marked sense of intimacy, strikes at the heart of their force.



SCULPSIT, 2006



SCULPSIT, 2006

From the outset, and prior to the moving image components, the project stemmed from a range of part objects that resulted from actions that were never recorded. These part objects resulted from impressions of my body into malleable surfaces such as clay, with the cavities created filled to overflowing with silicon (*6.5 Kilos of Phantasmagoria*, 2005),¹³ or poured with plaster and covered with fabric (*Push Me Pull You*, 2005 and *Sculpsit*, 2006).¹⁴ An earlier work, *Push* (2003), experimented with a series of 26 plaster blocks with impressions of my right hand and wrist.¹⁵ Caspar Millar noted at the time, with a dual interest in the artist as ethnographer (collecting gestures or sets of body citations) and the body's imprint and/or photograph in relationship to the death of its subjects:

The body's impression in plaster is originally tied to death: the last imprint, but reproduced in positive again as dead-head. Braddock's impressions remain concave and hard to read, a shadow of the body-part now absent. They might then be reminiscent of apparatuses of display: the recesses in which the body might lie. Your guess what bit of the body. It's often argued that photography assists in the death of its subjects. So are there a couple of layers here? In this shift from medium to medium the real becomes an allegory of death and a fetishism of the lost object, in this case, lost gesture. While these shifts are associated with loss of aura, photography's monumentalising and reproducing capacity displaces that cult-value. Furthermore, two means of reproducibility merge—cast and photograph—as agents of loss. (2003: 2)¹⁶

¹³ *6 kilos of Phantasmagoria* (2005) is made from the largest amount of silicon I can mix by hand in one go (while other works entitled *a-c from the Fleshly Worn series* (2004-5) are poured to the length of my body). The top surface of the pour marks the outer limits of the cavity created by my body's imprint and the surface of the overflow. My body's impressions—left and right knees—are then re-aligned when hung over hooks.

¹⁴ I installed *Sculpsit* (2006) fabric on plaster, in the background for the RMIT, Melbourne exhibition (*Cut I*). While it is not part of *The Artist Will Be Present* as such, I did this to offer Australian audiences some background context to my work. For *Sculpsit* I made impressions of all the hinged pairs of my body that I can bash into clay: the deepest impressions I can physically make—my left and right heels, knees, arse, elbows, wrists (inside and outside). These impressions are cast in plaster and covered with fabric. The forms appear as close approximations of my body but are not clearly identifiable. In that they are created by direct contact with the body they share a certain similarity with how the body is commonly viewed through clothes but also an ambivalence by virtue of their part body associations. In this sense *Sculpsit* operates between the conditions of similarity and contact with the body: not exactly a representation but an embodiment of the body.

¹⁵ *Push* (2003) plaster and provenance labels. This was a project for *pp37-45* (an artist-run project based in Auckland). It involved 26 impressions of my right hand and wrist in plaster blocks with accompanying provenance labels for each block. The provenance formats are adapted from the *The J. Paul Getty Trust & College Art Associates* site for describing a work of art.

¹⁶ At the time of publication of Millar's text for the 'pp' catalogue (before the installation was complete), I was to exhibit photographs of the plaster blocks—showing impressions of my hands—mounted on large-scale light boxes. At the last minute I changed my mind and

It occurs to me, a few years later, that my idea to photograph the plaster blocks (that never eventuated) comes close to the operations I now envisage in *Caress* where the ‘monumentalising’ of the digital moving image (that has no ‘original’) operates as an ‘agent of loss’ always to be filled by various participatory gestures *in* the body/s of the audience.



PUSH, 2003

exhibited the plaster props themselves in a long dotted line across the floor of the studio/gallery with accompanying provenance labels.



PUSH, 2003

Several people encouraged me to document my studio processes as background context to the sculptures. After experimenting with video documentation I was dissatisfied with the literal and descriptive quality of the footage. It was long, didactic in nature and extinguished any illusive and undisclosed qualities inherent in the part objects it documented. The footage also reinforced Modernist photo-portrait projects in the 1950s such as “David Smith Makes a Sculpture,” published in *Art News* in 1951, and akin to Pollock’s ‘performances’ photographed by Hans Namuth in 1950 and published in

Allan Kaprow's famous essay "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock."¹⁷ At this point the video experiments shifted sideways, entertaining a group of moving image works that might be read alongside the objects, not documenting their making, but a parallel practice suggestive of studio process 'as' performance. Where Pollock resisted (but acquiesced) documentation of his studio process, *The Artist Will Be Present* displays a self-reflexivity to a critical self-examination, and with a conceit for an audience who will not fully comprehend; where the ground rules are unclear in the viewing.



PUSH ME PULL YOU, 2005

¹⁷ See Allan Kaprow's "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock" (1958).



PUSH ME PULL YOU, 2005

In this context, *The Artist Will Be Present* promotes an ambivalent character of partial object/subject, manifest as sculptural part objects made by contact with bodies (in a performative sense by my body and the body/s of the audience), and as moving images in which a partial view of bodies and objects is created. Within an uncertain sense of spatiality, all the images embody an experience of the body rather than casting a representation: the processes capture an imprint of performative action in-between bodies where the auratic is relocated—transferred to the technology of process. In this regard I attribute value to the stuff that gets us *to* objects. As is characteristic of the *Take* series, the moving images are never fully disclosed. Where the objects' relationship to processes of seriality is marked in their number and the traits of the mould, the digital moving images locate the serial as endless repetition. That there is always remainder (redundancy) in the works is what marks their incompleteness. This denotes both endless duration and a lack of duration. What is more, as the objects' participatory decoding calls into question their completion, so too does a lack of disclosure and finality in the moving images call into question the replete authorial gesture. If the objects are termed 'traces of gesture' by which authorship is problematised, then so too are these moving images traces of gesture.

In this way, the notion that 'the artist will be present' is questioned against the terrain of a modernist fixation that the artist's intentions are necessary to the critical interpretation of works of art. The thesis will discuss a performative shuttling that violates a dichotomy between subject and object. I want that you never get to the object that is 'sculpture.' In this way, and as a kind of provocation, my body will be viewed as part object (in that I vacillate between the subject of the images and the object *in* the work), while the part objects of the *Take* series might be viewed as part subjects, catalysing the agency of participation that is the body/s of the audience. And in this respect the body/s of the audience might be viewed as part object/s (or part body/s) where their participatory action is not so much driven by intentional and directed 'viewing' inasmuch as 'drawn out' by the part subjects of the *Take* series. In this way meaning is extricated from privileged 'form' and situated instead as indefinite *performative force*. These are the operations of *force over form* that the project is at pains to call attention to by way of an interconnectedness of my body with the body/s of the audience.

While I admire arguments put forward by the likes of Phelan that reproduction betrays the very ontological nature of the 'live,' I want to interrogate this apparently reductive position by performative exchanges through sculptural objects and moving images rather than 'live'

bodily ‘presence.’¹⁸ I want to keep thinking through relationships between live actions (even if they are private ones recorded by the video camera), my body, objects and the body of the audience. I want to insist on a live art that gains currency through performative objects, that in their constant deferral and disappointment (also a condition of disappearance) with respect to the body/s that were once in contact with them—and the continual potential of participation—expands this notion of the ‘live.’



6.5 KILOS OF PHANTASMAGORIA, FROM THE FLESHLY WORN SERIES, 2005

¹⁸ See Peggy Phelan’s *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993).

The Artist Will Be Present

PERFORMING PARTIAL OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS

Chapter 1

1.1 PERFORMATIVITY



1.1 PERFORMATIVITY

The Artist Will Be Present is an interdisciplinary project both in practice and theory. In practice, the project employs a range of cross-media such as epoxy clay, pre-fabricated trestle tables, video and sound in an interdisciplinary emphasis commonplace in the visual arts. More specifically: the project employs object-based sculpture that can be read against the traditions of the part object (discussed at length in this thesis) and the device of the mould in articulating the body; it engages with the history of the artist's body, and viewers' bodies, as recorded by video camera; the project engages in activities of spectator participation, and in so doing, solicits complex discussions concerning relationships between artist, artworks and mechanisms of viewing. In discussing 'new media installations,' the notion of "...a tension between hybrid materials and heterogeneous spaces, on the one hand, and procedures of perception of thought, on the other..." (Parfait 2006b: 33) has become important in analysing viewers' encounters with the durational, and often repetitiously looped, aspect of video alongside objects and documentation emanating from performative actions.¹⁹ As such *The Artist Will Be Present* requires that the contexts of performativity, in which the objects and video projections operate, are defined and articulated.

1.2 APPROACHES

The theoretical approach activates the disciplines of art history, anthropology, and performance studies. But these discipline categorisations, in themselves, present a myriad of possibilities. In what Jon McKenzie describes in *Perform or Else* as 'the theory explosion' from the mid 1970s, there have emerged a layered and interdependent number of theoretical approaches in articulating the notion of performativity: "'Cultural Studies,' 'Semiotics and Deconstruction,' 'After Marx,' 'Feminism(s),' 'Theatre History and Historiography,' 'Hermeneutics and Phenomenology,' and 'Psychoanalysis'" (2001: 39).²⁰ With few exceptions such categories underwrite the 'discipline' of art history/theory within similar timeframes.

¹⁹ See Christine Van Assche where she also employs the term 'hybrid works' with respect to new media installations integrating "...video into hybrid installations composed of objects as diverse as painted canvases, sculptures, artifacts, drawings, sound, etc..." (2006: 27).

²⁰ McKenzie's list is derived from the categories employed by Janelle Reinelt and Joseph Roach's 1992 anthology *Critical Theory and Performance*.

The point to be made is that the ‘theory explosion’ opens up ways of negotiating the notion of disciplinarity that is itself performative.

In a visionary move, McKenzie describes a shift from disciplinarity to performativity. He stresses that a notion of performativity rests on the methods of analysis together with its object of concern.²¹ He writes: “In theorizing performative efficacy, Performance Studies has mimed its object of study; our scholars have launched their own challenges to the institutional norms of research and teaching” (2001: 33). This is an important point with reference to the notions of disciplinarity in *The Artist Will Be Present*. My project performs across so-called disciplinary fault-lines in a number of ways. Firstly, as has already been mentioned, it engages in cross-media visual arts practice. Secondly, it roves across theoretical and philosophical terrain that serves its needs rather than adhering to specific discipline categories. This reflects a position that, as an artist, my influences are discursive but held together by common threads of enquiry. Thirdly, a PhD that engages reflexively in artistic practice creates an in-between liminal space that challenges the academy’s traditional split of practice and theory. In this sense the methods and style of the overarching project are themselves performative. To engage my own studio practice in the context of a text within the ‘academy’ is to subvert those academic tropes, or make them at least a little reflexive, in difference from reflective. It also activates a phenomenological methodology where elements of autobiography necessitate self-reflexivity. This underlines an important dynamic within *The Artist Will Be Present*, that ‘being a body’ is relative and where phenomenology’s emphasis on embodiment and the nature of experience contests the possibility of its representation.²² In this sense Steven Scrivener advocates a form of ‘reflection-in-action and –practice’ where “...description of the creative-production process should be the principle means

²¹ See Hubert Klocker where, in quoting Vilém Flusser, he refers to a “...theory of gestures as the ‘discipline of an emerging post-historical future.’ It is, in both theoretical as well as practical terms, a possible ‘discipline’ of the so-called ‘new human being’” (1998: 160). While Flusser employs the term discipline, I take his inference to be similar to that of McKenzie where post-historical describes a threshold moment in the face of an enlarged sense of performativity. See Flusser, Vilém (1993), *Gesten—Versuch einer Phänomenologie* (Bensheim: Bollmann Bibliothek), 236, which I have not referenced.

²² See Vivian Sobchack where she discusses her own use of autobiography and anecdote (following the amputation of her left leg) from the point of view of a phenomenological methodology (2004: 6-7).

by which students demonstrate that they are self-conscious, systematic and reflective creators” (2000: unpaginated www).²³

I see the overall project as situated in what Amelia Jones terms ‘body art.’ In her focus on work of the 1960s and 1970s she is,

interested in work that may or may not initially have taken place in front of an audience: in works... that take place through an enactment of the artist’s body, whether it be in a ‘performance’ setting or in the relative privacy of the studio, that is then documented such that it can be experienced subsequently through photography, film, video and/or text. (1998: 13)²⁴

This notion of body art incorporates objects that are the result of performative actions that may, or may not, have been carried out in public view. As such it entertains the live body’s documentation as ‘performative.’ From a different perspective Phelan makes the case that: “Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations...” She says this from the point of view that: “Performance’s being... becomes itself through disappearance” (1993: 146). She argues that the time or moment of live art cannot be repeated and that any attempt at reproduction makes the genre something other than performance. In difference to this position, I want to insist on a live art that gains currency through performative sculptures and moving images. While I understand the drive in Phelan’s text to underscore the problematic nature of performance to its modes of reproduction (often in order to survive and live beyond the ephemeral moment of its live production),

²³ I take from this an emphasis on reflexivity as a form of research method which Scrivener goes on to advocate. I differ from Scrivener in that I have not pursued the likes of a ‘creative-production project report’ outlining all the points in the project in studio practice that point to moments of change etc. While reflecting on some details of previous work I have concentrated on one major project over 12 months and embedded those reflections into a text which, I hope, has implications for visual art theory/history writing on the issues with which I engage. I find this approach (while I also employ first-person narratives at points), richer and less prescriptive than Scrivener’s.

²⁴ Jones introduces this argument in a previous essay where she says that her use of the term ‘body art’ in preference to ‘performance art’ “...is informed by an embodied, phenomenological model of intersubjectivity...” She also underlines the intersubjectivity of documentation, in a related way to Auslander (discussed above), where the specificity of a live situation “...should not be privileged over the specificity of knowledges that develop in relation to the documentary traces of such an event. While the live situation may enable the phenomenological relations of flesh-to-flesh engagement, the documentary exchange (viewer/reader <--> document) is equally intersubjective” (1997: 11-18).

I also believe it to be overly reductive as a way of thinking through relationships between live art, performative objects and the body/s of the audience.

The Artist Will Be Present—along with the artists discussed in this thesis—places particular emphasis on the ‘objectness’ of performative acts, either as my body or part objects virtually represented in dvd projections; relics of private actions, but always continuing toward another action through participation. This encourages, as Paul Schimmel writes in “Leap into the Void: performance and the object,” “...a reversal of the traditional precedence of the object over the act” (1998: 17). In this way the performative methodology that underwrites *The Artist Will Be Present* has challenged my sculptural object-based practice to always place objects in relationship to performance.²⁵ This is because the objects on their own fail me unless they are viewed as part of a process, both in their making and in their reception. Again, as Schimmel writes, this is to describe “...actions whose primary goal was the process of creation rather than the production of objects...” (17).²⁶ To this end *The Artist Will Be Present* employs the use of dark-room/projection where the various scales of moving image and the accompanying (but spatially dislocated) sound tracks involve the viewer in personal modes of intimate contact. Anne Cauquelin remarks that where the walls of the gallery are included as part of the medium,

to be shed light on, it is the space of the exhibition venue which is by the same token freed in order to enter into the object [and in this sense] space becomes ‘place’... it is part of the body enveloping it, as it defines it (the limit) and in return would be nothing without the enveloped body. (Cauquelin quoted by Parfait 2006b: 50)²⁷

While I understand Cauquelin’s emphasis on the fabric of the space, itself implicated in the work, there is a further discussion to be had in relation to the complex encounter with spatiality that performance negotiates where the gallery is one of the problematics

²⁵ To be clear, up until the beginning of 2007 I have always engaged in object-based sculpture. These are the first moving image and sound works I have made.

²⁶ On this point Jones, in referencing Walter Benjamin’s *Work of Art* essay (and in the context of discussing fragmentary and prosthetic forms emanating from the body), writes: “Thus there is a new potential for the production of subjects (bodies/selves) not as only static simulacra but also as in process, open to otherness in a way that promotes rather than suppresses ethical behaviour in relation to others and social spaces” (Warr and Jones 2000: 41-42).

²⁷ Van Assche’s “Historical and Museological Aspects of New Media Works” discusses various modes of projection, closed circuit, monitors as objects, sound components and flat screens as influencing viewers’ engagement with the works.

with regard to where performance happens. In this regard the gallery and a question of ‘place’ has been an ongoing issue, especially in videoing *Above*. The work has gone through three manifestations exploring the site in which my performing figure plays itself out: from my studio floor in the 2007 version (*Cut 1*), to experiments in a fully white-out studio, to shooting the work in a black-out studio for the 2008 version (*Cut 2*).²⁸ This last version solicits a body unframed by the conventions of the white cube (where previous versions in this series, such as *Back* (2007), had projected the white cube upon itself) where my body acts as a more free-floating agent and the body/s of the audience are spatially disorientated.

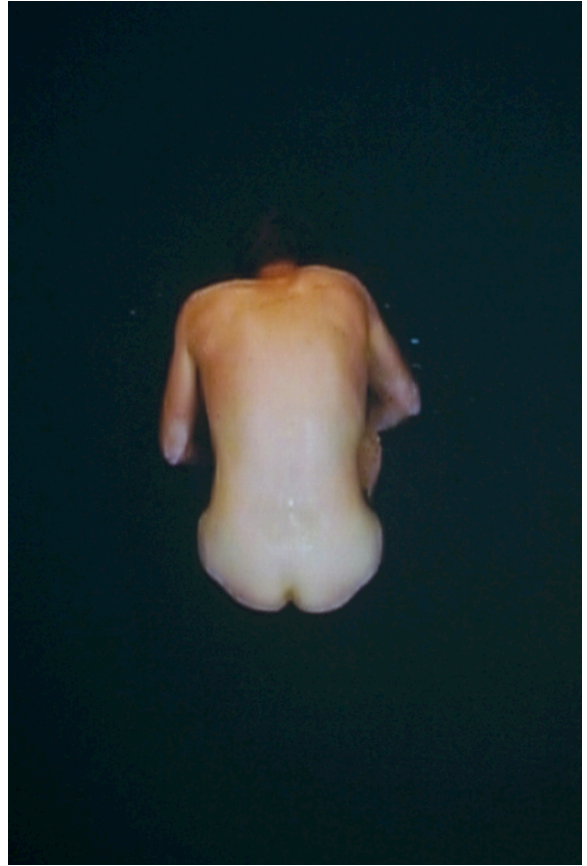
²⁸ The decision to film my body in black-out conditions was motivated by wanting to produce a body of work for the ‘final’ exhibition that read well in relation to one another. To this end the studio floor in *Above* (*Cut 1*) seemed incongruous with the white wall in an earlier version of *Back* (which was filmed against a white wall in my studio) and so I took the decision to ‘suspend’ my body in a kind of ‘placelessness’ that the black backdrop affords. It then seemed logical to locate the part objects of the *Take* series against the same black backdrop (*Careless*) as a way of locating them in lateral association with the partial views of my body.

As well as this, in eliminating the artist’s studio as the site of my performing body from the first version of *Above* (*Cut 1*), I am removing the site of the studio as that associated with the struggle of the Modernist ‘solo’ male genius. This is Jones’ concern in her analysis of Jackson Pollock, where she coins the term ‘Pollockian performative.’ She wants to “...interrogate the normative values inscribed in the trope of the artist genius epitomized by the modernist Jackson Pollock...” (1998: 103). In this context I am aware that deeply performative operations with respect to gender would open this thesis to, for example, critical approaches to gender identity in the work of Judith Butler. While this research direction is valued and acknowledged, it would require another thesis exposition to do justice to its complexity.

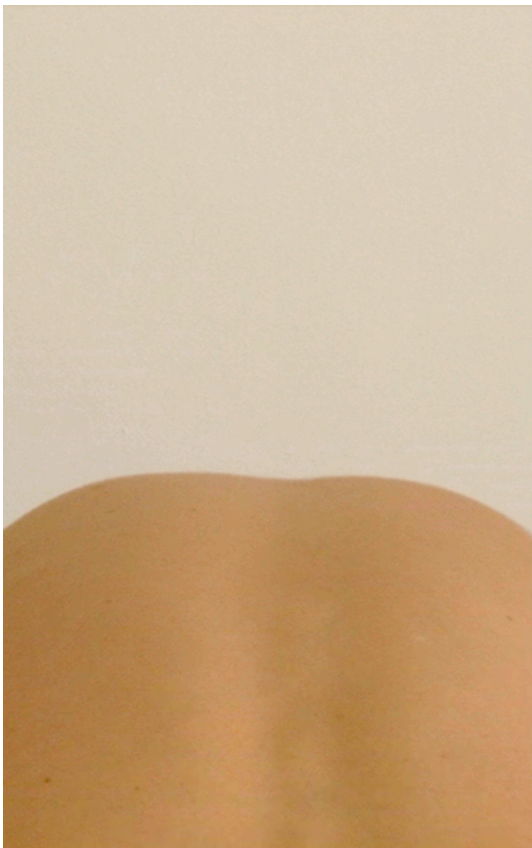
In a move from *Cut 1* to *Cut 2* the image of my body in *Above* (*Cut 2*) seems more diminutive and neutralised of heroism than it does in *Above* (*Cut 1*). I am signaling a fascination with my body as an ambivalent marker of an audiences’ unlimited reciprocity *between* bodies and an interest in the animism of things as it relates to the animism of the body. When *Above* and *Back* (*Cut 2*) are read alongside each other they become located in a more indeterminate sense of the ‘optical unconscious’ that references a primordial sensuousness that instantaneously flashes before the viewer (a notion discussed in Chapter 3 in the context of Walter Benjamin).



ABOVE, 2007



ABOVE, 2008

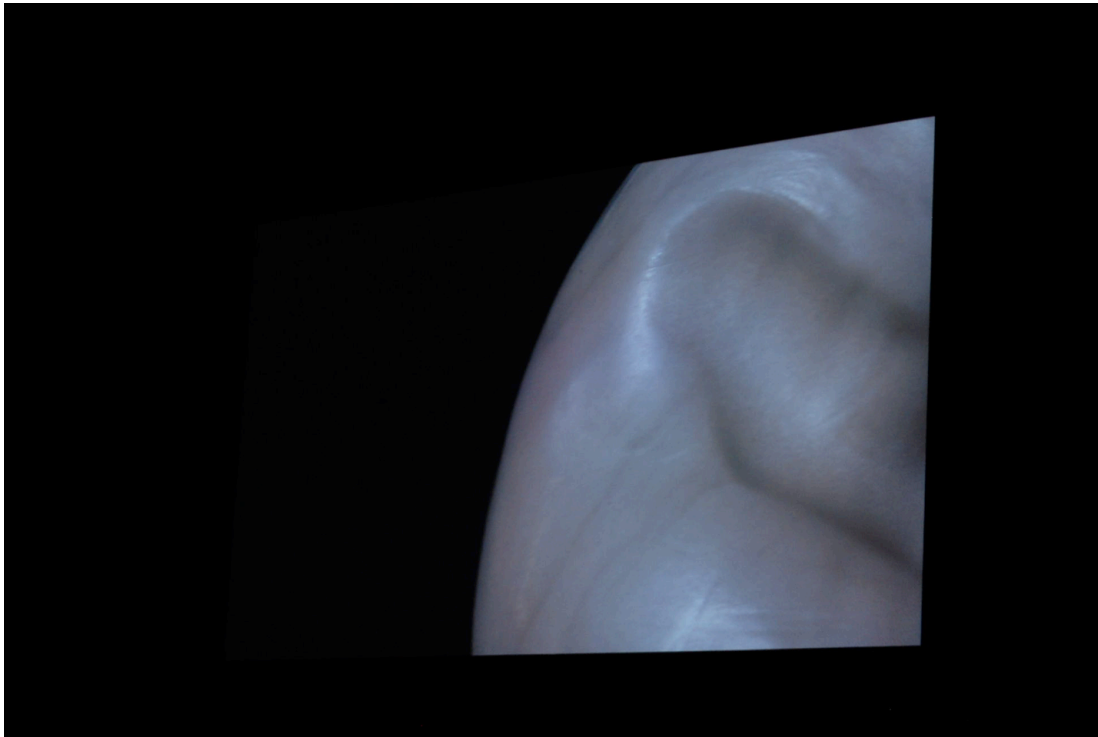


BACK, 2007

In relation to projected images in black-out conditions, Françoise Parfait proffers the notion that video and installation updates time. Here she means that video is an experience in the present, always to some degree embodying the viewer in the duration of its unfolding. The viewer is ‘caught’ “...in a configuration of a space-time to which he is not accustomed...” (2006b: 43). This is an important observation for *The Artist Will Be Present* in which both the suspended darkness of the blacked-out space and the looped technical performance posit the audience in an already reciprocal relationship with the work: her ‘spectator posture’ becomes orientated in a haptic and embodied way to the scale of the projected images and the undisclosed possibilities playing out within them.²⁹

It is in this sense that the wall configurations (*Cut 2*) orient and play with spectator posture. As the viewer passes through the first ‘empty’ corridor her expectation of ‘work to be viewed’ is momentarily thwarted. But this pause, in comparative darkness, is both a moving away from the sound of *Over & Over* and a rehearsal for the black-out moments in the moving images themselves, *Back* and *Caress*. Following the turn of the corridor she views *Above* at its end. This is a view constrained by the corridor’s dimensions and therefore intimate in scale. On turning into another projection space midway down this corridor he comes to a space within a space in which *Back* is projected. On entering, the wall configurations are angled with his body moving past and close to the wall on which *Back* is projected. He must therefore move away from the image in order to *find* a viewing position. She then moves into a third space in which *Caress* is projected, not on the anticipated wall in front of her body, but against the wall adjacent to her entry point, forcing her again to *find* a spectator posture. *Over & Over* is still audible but more distant and dislocated from the moving images of which it is the sound track/s. Her body has moved into spaces inside other spaces only to return the way it came. Here I aim at a chiasmic *folding in* of body/s (discussed a length in Chapter 2). The exhibition design also challenges conventional ways in which data projectors are positioned (normally reiterating an ideal and often single viewpoint for the spectator squarely in front of an image), questioning normative viewing positions and insisting that body/s move close to images in their initial encounters and relocate in relation to images.

²⁹ See Françoise Parfait’s “Installations in Collection” (2006) for an extended discussion on ‘spectator posture.’



CARESS, 2008

Concurrent with this, and following Parfait's argument, *The Artist Will Be Present* disappoints spectators in relation to expectations of image and narrative. The moving images of my partial body, and the slow close-ups of the (already) part objects, are all part of a larger whole creating a sense of loss and absence in which the viewer is invited to partake, "...in which memory, language and body fill the voids and complement the difficulties of perception and signification" (Parfait 2006b: 43). In this sense the repetitious nature of the mediums employed across *The Artist Will Be Present*—looped video, incessant sound and moulds—collude to evade desires for completion. They are at odds with a modernist ontology that, as Bois writes, "...requires an artwork to have a beginning and an end, and holds that all apparent disorder is necessarily reabsorbed in the very fact of being bounded" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 26). A degree of disorientation is intended here. The partiality of the moving images and the part objects, their close-up-ness by physical (*Cut 1*) and virtual (*Cut 2*) contact, as well as their lack of clarity with respect to the body/s they embody, provoke both perceptual and physical disorientation. Spectators ask: what exactly *is* this image/object and what is *my* role in this installation as subject and as object?

To speak of objects in relationship to performance conjures up all the possible accoutrements associated with the recording of 'live' performance. In this regard, distinctions between documentation of live performance and objects that emanate from

performative actions are porous. Put in simple terms (and to follow Phelan's argument), live performance is experienced as an ephemeral moment, and other than that immediate moment of reception/participation, it relies on documentation. However the 'objects' of performance discussed in this project index a range of encounters with the temporal: video footage of previous public and private actions and of sculptural objects as 'relics' of private actions. The virtual images and 'real' objects are all encountered and participated with on various levels of engagement. A notion of performativity does not therefore signal a diminishing of the art object but rather a re-evaluation of it.³⁰ This prompts Hubert Klocker, via the writing of Vilém Flusser, to articulate the object as gesture: "It then becomes a gesture that in the conceptual and performative work cannot only stand by itself, but can also lead one to a re-evaluation of the art objects" (1998: 159). Furthermore, Philip Auslander argues for a distinction in performance documentation between the documentary and the theatrical where the latter suggests, as is the case with *The Artist Will Be Present*, performances staged solely to be filmed with no meaningful prior existence presented to audiences (2006: 1). In introducing the idea of 'performative documentation' he proffers the notion of authenticity, rather than the idea of the photograph, and its indexical trace to the 'real' event, as what governs the 'performance' of documentation. And on this point he says that the relationship between the document and its audiences is crucial in establishing authenticity. This is significant for *The Artist Will Be Present* as I contextualise its operations as phenomenological where the body/s of the audience perceive the images as

³⁰ Such a re-evaluation of the objects that proceed from performative actions has received significant focus via the work of Joseph Beuys. See Paul Schimmel where he contextualises the objects that remain after Beuys's performances as relics "...turned in to a kind of Shroud of Turin, in that they embody meanings that are functions of their mystical history." And where he states that the objects then began to be re-made as objects associated with those past performances as a "...transformation of the relic into sculpture..." (1998: 83). And as Schimmel points out, this placed Beuys in conflict with some of the post-object tendencies of the Fluxus artists. He also remade *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), in which Beuys spent time with a wild coyote named Little Joe, five years after its first performance in which objects from the originating work took on the associated symbolic meanings of that past ritual (1998: 84).

See Robyn Brentano, via the writing of Constance Lewallen on Terry Fox's *Levitaton* (1970), where she refers to Beuys's work as a "...residue of a ritual action [that] could retain the aura of the event" (1994: 60n44).

See Klocker where he employs the work of Beuys in the same vein stating that the Beuys-Block installation at the Darmstadt Museum (that cannot be altered in perpetuity) distills the gestural nature of Beuys's work in relation to the power of the object. Klocker develops this into the argument that, for artists like Otto Muehl, Günter Brus and Rudolf Schwarzkogler, the photograph became the basis for their Aktionen and collages (1998: 188-192).

performative. As Auslander writes: “Perhaps the authenticity of the performance document resides in its relationship to its beholder rather than to an ostensibly originary event: perhaps its authority is phenomenological rather than ontological” (9).

In this regard, Chapter 2 discusses Martinis Roe’s, Frankovich’s and Kosloff’s performance-installations and videos that shuttle between live performance and artefacts that bear the traces of their bodies. In a different but related view, Eskdale exhibits small-scale part objects that ambivalently suggest body organs. Her objects overtly bear the traces of her manual manipulation, changing how we view them. Eskdale does not engage in ‘live’ performance but rather exhibits objects evocative of private and drawn-out actions which, in turn, opens up the terms by which performative actions might be articulated and places emphasis on the ‘objectness’ of performance. Like Eskdale, Nauman’s *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* acts as a trace of an action that never took place in public view. It fixes that performative action in an artefact that functions as evidence. But, more than documentary, the artefact is itself the work and document: *process* as product.

Continuing this emphasis on process, three key issues that Jones negotiates in her engagement with body art are “...a performative conception of the artist/self as in process, [that this conception is] commodifiable *as* art object, and [is] intersubjectively related to the audience/interpreter” (1998: 12).³¹ As such, her emphasis marks an interdependence between artist, subject and audience located within a notion of performativity in which the meanings or readings of body art are “...contingent on the *process* of enactment rather than attributing motives to the authors as individuals or origins of consciousness and intentionality...” (1998: 10).³² This describes not only a contingency between subject and object, artist and spectator, but also a more complex notion of a subject as intersubjective in a process of self-exposure.³³ Such an emphasis on ‘processes of enactment’ is important to Gavin Butt as he outlines in *The Paradoxes of*

³¹ All citations in this thesis that include emphasis are the original emphasis employed by the author cited unless otherwise stated as ‘emphasis added.’

³² See Jones where she emphasises the formalist notion of disinterestedness predicated on a clearly possible interpretation of an art object and its meaning when she writes: “The formalist insists upon the ‘disinterestedness’ of his interpretations, and such disinterestedness is predicated upon a pure relation between the art object and its supposedly inherent meaning (embedded in its ‘form,’ to be excavated by the discerning interpreter)” (1998: 35).

³³ Jones places particular emphasis on the work of Carolee Schneemann and Yayoi Kusama who, in photographing themselves, perform both author and object (1998: 10).

Criticism the problematics of a notion of ‘critical distance’ as a legacy of the Enlightenment’s positioning of the critic or theorist as a judicious authority and interpreter of art and culture. The book seeks out performative approaches to criticism that resist the critic as positioned (authoritatively) outside the ‘text’: “That is to say that the theorist, rather than being remote from that which he or she surveys, is... enmeshed in the very, perhaps even ‘creative,’ production of the cultural fabric itself” (2005: 3). This is part of an ongoing and contemporary move to resist privileged modes of making, viewing and interpreting in favour of the operations inherent in the ‘liveness’ of performativity as reciprocal and always in motion. In this light Jones’ main motivation is to “...*re-embody* the subjects of making and viewing art” (1998: 11).

Along similar lines, and in evoking a conception of art anticipated by the Russian literary and cultural theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, Robyn Brentano describes how performance art replaces “...the modernist notion of a work of art as a formal, bounded, material object, with its meaning already inscribed, with a more open-ended view of art as a transaction between artist, object, and perceiver” (33n38). She refers to Douglas Crimp’s essay “Pictures” in its reference to Michael Fried’s 1967 attack on Minimalism as linked to theatricality. As a number of writers have noted, this can be described as marking a shift from Modernism to Postmodernism.³⁴ This is to describe a space not only of interdisciplinarity but also one in which there is a contingency between artist, spectators and objects. It is what provokes Parfait to deduce that video installation more than ever before permits the spectator to ‘stand in the image’ (2006b: 63).

³⁴ There are numerous critiques of Michael Fried’s notion of theatricality. See Jones where she ‘rereads’ Minimalism via the works of Robert Morris and Tony Smith from a feminist phenomenological viewpoint prioritising interpretation as an ongoing process (1999). I will refer to this text again in section 4.1 *Performative Sculpture/the Object of Performance*.

See Susan Cross who reads Bruce Nauman’s work in reference to Fried’s “Art and Objecthood,” 1967, where she says: “With *Lighted Center Piece* (1967-68) Nauman seems to exaggerate and make literal Fried’s notion of a Minimalist work’s ‘stage presence’—the theatricality that the critic predicted would be the ‘negation of art.’ Nauman embraced what Fried had rejected—a ‘preoccupation with time... the duration of experience,’ and what Fried found ‘paradigmatically theatrical’ was the very concept that would in fact define the process and performance work that dominated the arts of the 1970s” (2003: 13).

See Klocker where he writes that Vito Acconci, Morris, Nauman *et al.* are “...a direct consequence of the performative gesture in the works of Pollock and Newman.” These were the kinds of artists Fried named as ‘literalists,’ “...in transfixing the moment of transformation from painting to object... as all encompassing... the spatial, the performative and the concept oriented...” (1998: 162-163).

In emphasising this idea of standing in the image as an encounter, O'Sullivan writes:

An object of an encounter is fundamentally different from an object of recognition. With the latter our knowledges [sic], beliefs and values are reconfirmed. We, and the world we inhabit, are reconfirmed as that which we already understood our world and ourselves to be. An object of recognition is then precisely a *representation* of something always already in place... With a genuine encounter however the contrary is the case. Our typical ways of being in the world are challenged, our systems of knowledge disrupted. We are forced to thought. The encounter then operates as a rupture in our habitual modes of being and thus in our habitual subjectivities. (2006: 1)

This is the kind of concept that Schimmel pursues in relation to objects that result from performative action when he states that the performative act offers "...the opportunity to unravel the systems and structures that provide a false sense of solidity in a world that is forever in flux" (1998: 119).³⁵

One of my underlying motivations for such an emphasis is that the charisma and value that can be attributed to the performative still remains the bastard-child of contemporary visual arts practice. While significant critique has emerged over the last few decades encouraging a less scopical form of viewing, it remains a canonical position in visual art history/theory.³⁶

Jones' main motivation in her analysis of body art is to unravel the systems and structures that allow us to interpret the objects of performance. In her analysis of Jackson Pollock, where she coins the term 'Pollockian performative,' her specific concern is to "...interrogate the normative values inscribed in the trope of the artist genius epitomized by the modernist Jackson Pollock..." (1998: 103). She notes that the artist is "...self-consciously performed through new, openly intersubjective contexts (including video or ironized modes of photographic display) which insist upon the openness of this and all subjects to the other" (1998: 67). She is interested in how

³⁵ See Adrian Heathfield where, in the context of Damien Hirst's *The Pursuit of Oblivion* (2004), summarises some of these underlying tendencies in visual arts practice as, "...from the lasting to the temporary, from the optic to the haptic, from the distant to the close, from static relation to fluid exchange. In this regard *Oblivion* is symptomatic of a profound impetus in contemporary art and culture toward the immediate, the immersive and the interactive: *a shift to the live*" (2004: 7).

³⁶ Phelan calls performance "...the runt of the litter of contemporary art" due to its nonreproductive leanings (1993: 148).

Pollock 'gets performed' by an innumerable number of interpretive contexts such as artist, photographer, critic, historian and, over any period of time, contemporary and historical (1998: 268n241).³⁷

Jones' words echo those of Barthes' celebrated 1968 essay "The Death of the Author" in referring to the text as creating meaning. As Barthes writes: "Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher the text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (2006: 44). And, in indicating a privileging of the notion of the reader over the author, Barthes writes: "The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (2006: 45).³⁸

³⁷ Like Jones, Schimmel emphasises that this notion of *getting performed* (Jones' term) also applies to the forms of mediated documentation that make certain performances visible and that construct their reception such as Namuth's photographs of Pollock as opposed to the actions of Pollock *per se*. Schimmel states in relation to Pollock that "...each gesture 'animates' the subsequent moves, producing a non-narrative linearity that focuses the viewer's attention on the performative dimensions of the act of painting." And referring to the notion of 'contact' Schimmel continues: "Although Pollock may have questioned this dimension in his work, his desire to maintain 'contact' (his word) with the canvas essentially transformed the artist's role from that of a bystander outside of the canvas to that of an actor whose very actions were its subject" (1998: 18). Schimmel is referencing the writing of Froman. See Froman, Wayne (1998), "Action Painting and the World-As-Picture," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (4), 472-73, which I have not referenced.

In the same essay Schimmel points to Kaprow's reference to the return to ritual, magic and life in Kaprow, Allan (1958), "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock," *Art News*, 57 (6), 56.

See Klocker as he references the same Allan Kaprow text and the importance of Pollock for establishing the possibility of 'Happenings' and 'Events.' Klocker notes Pollock's limitations in saying that: "Pollock, however, did not possess the creative means to evolve the new possibilities that would transcend the culmination of painting that he himself had formulated" (1998: 162).

See also Brentano as she quotes Harold Rosenberg in qualifying that when Namuth photographed and filmed Pollock: "What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event... The act—painting—is of the same metaphysical substance as the artist's existence. The new painting has broken down every distinction between art and life" (1994: 35). See Rosenberg, Harold (1952), "The American Action Painter," *Art News* 51 (December), 22-23, which I have not referenced.

³⁸ To emphasise the reader, the text's destination, as a place in which a text's unity might be found is to underline the importance of process over form. In an emphasis on performative processes in relation to objects, see Schimmel where he cites John Latham's *Skoob Tower* (1964) and references Latham's term 'event-structure theory' in the context of his students from St Martin's School of Art in London chewing up a library copy of Clement Greenberg's 1961 collection of essays, *Art and Culture* for which Latham "...distilled the pulp, poured it into a flask, and labeled it 'essence of Greenberg.'" As Schimmel points out, Latham "...used this demonstration to focus on the primacy of process over object..." (1998: 57).

Noteworthy in this discussion about authorial intention is McKenzie's final paragraph for the introduction of *Perform or Else* given almost entirely over to Derrida's remarks on Phillippe Soller's *Numbers*:

The text is remarkable in that the reader (here in exemplary fashion) can never choose his own place in it, nor can the spectator. There is at any rate no tenable place for him opposite the text, outside the text, no spot where he might get away with not writing what, in the reading, would seem to him to be *given; past*; no spot, in other words, where he would stand before an already *written* text. Because his job is to put things on stage, he is on stage himself, he puts himself on stage. The tale is thereby addressed to the reader's body, which is put by things on stage, itself. (2001: 26)³⁹

Again, as McKenzie writes, this is to say "...that the performative subject is constructed as fragmented rather than unified, decentered rather than centred... Similarly, performative objects are unstable rather than fixed... They do not occupy a single proper place *in knowledge*; there is no such thing as the thing-in-itself" (2001: 18 emphasis added).

To repeat: the notion of performativity therefore describes a performance in a continual process of becoming. It resists models of fixed meaning either in relation to an individual author's intentions or any other *prescribed* position. It resists silos of contained disciplinarity and performs relationships between practice and theory as a crucial factor in such a resistance. It also summons the possibility of failure or disappointment that are at the heart of *The Artist Will Be Present* As stated above, interest lies in how we *get to* objects (*process* in variance to product, given that—in the words of McKenzie cited above—there is 'no such thing as the thing-in-itself') where the making and the receiving (in modes of participation) can never rest in 'completion.' This is to say that, if the part objects in the *Take* series are only ever near 'completion' *in* the audiences that engage with them, this is always never ending. As Butt writes with respect to the practice of criticism (also employing the work of Derrida), this talks of an "...agency *within the very mode of critical address itself*" (2005: 6). This is an agency in encountering objects, divergent from a search for closed scopic recognition of a finite object, that entertains the very possibility of a

³⁹ McKenzie is quoting Jacques Derrida's (1981), *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 290, which I have not referenced.

failure of communication in what Butt terms “...thinking about the *event-ness* of the critical encounter” (2005: 7).⁴⁰

1.3 INTRODUCING METAPHOR & METONYMY



CHRIS BURDEN, *SHOOT*, 1971

The notion of *getting performed*, emphasised by Jones above, was underlined by Stiles as she critically demolished one of the early surveys of performance art by Henry Sayre entitled *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde Since 1970*. She alerts us, in her review of Sayre’s text for *Arts Magazine* to Derrida’s notion of ‘undecidability’ which (in quoting Sayre) describes “...the conditions of contingency, multiplicity, and polyvocality which dominates the postmodern scene” (1990: 39). In criticising Sayre’s use of the term ‘individual genius’ in relation to Chris Burden’s *Shoot* (1971) Stiles points to the crucial role of collaboration in performance art stating that:

His [Burden’s] participatory action required collaboration with the viewer-turned-coperformer and functions not only metaphorically but metonymically to remind the beholder of her/his mutual contingency and responsibility to life events. In short, Burden’s collaboration was an indictment of the viewer, historian, critic, in her/his various roles as consumers and producers of ‘the text.’ (1990: 41)

⁴⁰ See Gavin Butt where he references Derrida’s *Politics of Friendship* (1997) and the “...necessity of remaining open to the irreconcilable confusions of communication, to the errors and misrecognitions that it opens up” (2005: 6).

Stiles' inventory of the 'various roles as consumers and producers of 'the text' is to declare the innumerable and undecidable possibilities of contingency within a notion of performativity. Once again, this is reminiscent of Barthes' writing when he says:

We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single... meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (2006: 43-44)

The use of the word 'indictment' in Stiles' analysis of Burden's collaboration drives home the idea of responsibility that she is keen to emphasis. The viewers watching Burden's *Shoot* might have intervened and, in another non-art context, might have been legally obliged to do so, or, were legally obliged to do so at the time but did not. The fact that they did not underscores a profound undecidability in the context of performance and in a complex notion of contingency between parties within multiple sites of reception.⁴¹ This is not a moot point. As such, the conditions that define performativity might be applied to any interaction in everyday life. My having a conversation with someone could be analysed as a performative exchange. The point is that the rarefication that occurs in the art context self-consciously removes Burden's action from 'normal' circulation. Klocker calls this the 'enigma' when, in referencing Flusser, he describes "...the performative multi-dimensional component as 'enigma,' a 'puzzle that can be solved through decryption'" (1998: 160).⁴² And he goes on to say that this notion of the gesture is seen as a reaction to a "...tightening grid of communication and information channels, into which it has been interwoven by the

⁴¹ On this idea of audience responsibility as an ethical encounter, see Tim Etchells, director and writer for the performance group *Forced Entertainment* based in Sheffield, UK, since 1984. He discusses Chris Burden's *Shoot* (1971) in the context of witnessing. He states that Burden described his audience not as spectators, but as witnesses. As Etchells writes, "...to witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamental; ethical way, to feel the weight of things and one's own place in them, even if that place is simply, for the moment, as an onlooker" (1999: 17). Etchells employs the notion of the witness to discuss audiences that are implicated in the here and now of the moment and who may share some burden within a reciprocal sense of responsibility. With respect to Burden's *Shoot* he writes: "The art-work that turns us into witnesses leaves us, above all, unable to stop thinking, talking and reporting what we've seen. We're left, like the people in Brecht's poem who've witnessed a road accident, still stood on the street corner discussing what happened, borne on by our responsibility to events" (1999: 18). In this light, *Forced Entertainment* made a decision in their performance *Speak Bitterness* (1995) to gently light the audience so that the performers could engage with those watching as a more embodied form of reciprocity.

⁴² Klocker is quoting Flusser, Vilém (1993), *Gesten—Versuch einer Phänomenologie* (Bensheim: Bollmann Bibliothek), 91, which I have not referenced.

collective and thereby become objectified” (1998: 160). Klocker sees such a grid as the organising systems of libraries, archives and museums as well as less identifiable systems of reception such as interpretation and paraphrasing. And it is art’s enigmatic quality that “...remains the immanent guarantor of the preservation of the artist’s potential to liberate” (1998: 160). This is the kind of situation that Jesper Sorensen argues in *A Cognitive Theory of Magic* as ‘special and non-trivial’ with ‘manipulative and transformative’ results (2007: 32). He does so in defining the characteristics of magical action that I will return to in some depth. In précis, this maps out a genealogy typical of the structure of magical action where, removed from ‘normal circulation,’ the enigma, or puzzle, is solved through decryption that is manipulative and transformative.

In summary, in utilising the terms of metaphor and metonymy, Stiles refers to (but does not focus on it in her review), a line of argument in relation to performativity where the metonymic constitutes a crossing of the metaphoric axes of substitution. She will develop this argument more fully in “Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions,” where she equates metaphorical capacities with conventional static forms of art—those evoking scopic recognition—and the function of metonymy as a performative action “...acting in the space between a human viewing subject and the conventional art object...” (1998: 306) and therefore soliciting modes of haptic encounter in difference to the scopic. As previously mentioned, the rarefaction that occurs in the art context self-consciously removes action from ‘normal’ circulation and permits, in the words of Barthes, “...a counterdivision of objects, usages, meaning, spaces and properties...” (1972: 246).⁴³ Stiles also points to a disturbance between the terms by which artist, artwork and viewer might be understood as the metonymic process that presents objects as “...born in an event and where the artist becomes both a subject who produces an object, and the object itself” (1998: 306). This idea that the body in ‘live’ performative action can be understood as metonymic is shared by other writers such as Phelan and Blocker and will be discussed at some length in section 6.9 *The Force of the Moment*.

⁴³ Roland Barthes’ writing on metaphor and metonymy is outlined in detail in section 6.3 *The Force of the Pendulum*. In précis, metaphor plays a synchronic field of substitutions or repetitions constitutive of a (vertical) paradigmatic axis. Metonymy’s temporality operates the additive and dislocative syntagmatic chain. It is with metonymy, as Barthes suggests, that violations happen as chains of metaphors cross in the poetics of forced syntagms. For example, and as I explain below, the ritual of the Catholic Eucharist constitutes a number of metaphoric substitutions, two of which are eating a shared meal together and the eating of another’s flesh. This crossing of the metaphoric chains becomes what Barthes refers to as a metonymic forced syntagm.

In *précis*, Phelan points to metaphor's role as securing value and reproduction. In this sense, metaphor 'documents' the live (substitutions and repetitions). Metonymy is viewed as additive and associative; it works to displace the 'document' *in* the moment of the 'live.' And in the 'plenitude' of that moment "...the performer actually disappears and represents something else—dance, movement, sound, character, 'art'" (Phelan 1993: 150). In this respect, performance highlights an impossibility of being in the present moment other than by its reproduction or supplement. Blocker, on the other hand, sees metonymy as functioning as a kind of 'somatic language' where, akin to the experience of pain, performativity integrates mind and body in an understanding of being embodied *in* our bodies (2004: 34).

The notion of the metaphor as a figure of similarity, and metonymy as a figure of contiguity—where contiguity is understood as a disturbing vacillation of meaning due to profound crossing or contamination of the metaphoric axes—is important for this project. Working, if you will, backwards from Stiles' 1998 essay, I reference both Barthes' and Tambiah's analysis of Jakobson's opposition between metaphor and metonymy, who, in turn, references Frazer's principles of similarity and contact in the context of sympathetic magical action.⁴⁴ This is arguably the driving genealogy of the project. Firstly, it supports my belief that performative objects, a term that I will analyse in depth, have an ethical and pedagogical social *force* sufficient to cause debate and change, not necessarily as Stiles would argue as identifiable political change, but a more ambivalent reciprocity between subjects and objects that notions of performativity foster.⁴⁵ Secondly, it offers a means of contextualising my art practice that engages with

⁴⁴ Kristine Stiles does not employ Barthes or Stanley J. Tambiah as points of reference. So while I use her writing as a point of reference, my research pathway is somewhat different.

⁴⁵ This draws an important distinction between my practice and some of the motivations inherent in 'relational aesthetics.' I am less interested in those artistic practices that, as Claire Bishop describes, "...appropriate *social* forms as a way to bring art closer to everyday life..." (Bishop 2006: 10) and where she goes on to list things like drinking beer and organising a garage sale. My discussion rubs shoulders with Bishop when she outlines her three primary motivations in pursuing an art of participation which are: "...an active subject... empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation," questioning authorial control and thirdly, engaging in "...a perceived crisis in community and collective responsibility" (Bishop 2006: 12). Her third point reiterates Nicolas Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics' where he advocates a "...collective sensibility within which new forms of art have been inscribed..." (Bourriaud 2002: 13-14). He does so in the context of the challenge that is the Internet. And in keeping with this emphasis on an expanded mass media, Bishop is also interested in works such as Phil Collins'

morphologically ambivalent part objects and subjects in performative contexts. I employ the histories of sympathetic magical action, as it stems from notions of sympathetic mimesis, because it places emphasis, not on representational fixity, but on the force of performative utterance surrounding images within efficacious ritual contexts. Here, *operations* have a primary significance that is other than aesthetic. The history of sympathetic magical action, when understood outside the terms of cause and effect, offers a model for understanding fragmented objects and subjects that come into performative *contact* as disturbing intimacy and contagion. Thirdly, sympathetic magical action offers a way of contextualising the role of the artist's body in performance-installation. Particularly in the context of the ritualistic offering of anatomical votives, an emphasis on the body of the donor—its dimensions and characteristics—is crucial to the operations that position objects as 'surrogate performers.' This is another way of discussing how "...the aura of the human body clings to the work..." (Krauss 1999: 55) with a special emphasis on the use of the artist's body. And it might be in a shift from seeing the artist as donor (as I do for Hamilton's *Malediction* below in Chapter 6), rather than high priest or shaman, that such a distinction is most clear. The notion of donor implicates subjects and objects as embedded in ritual processes where the terms of contagion are drawn out as persuasion and transference of therapeutic power. I am not drawn to the notion "...that artists themselves exude magical force, and that their powers are worth considering..." as purported by Peter Eleey for the exhibition *Strange Powers* organised by *Creative Time* in New York City in 2006 (2006: 61). I want rather to position the artist in ambivalent ritual circumstances: 'in the mix' of getting performed. As will be discussed, the idea of anatomical votives as an exchange within specific ritual contexts (vows, witnesses, ceremonies) offers a model of reciprocity that is about participation *in* transactions. This is close to what Stiles means when she states that metonymic processes present objects as "...born in an event and where the artist becomes both a subject who produces an object, and the object itself" (1998: 306).

The Return of the Real (2005) involving a press conference for former stars of Turkish reality television (Bishop 2006: 17n10).

While I appreciate that these divisions are not cut and dry but often one of emphasis, I side with Jones, more than with Stiles or Bishop, in avoiding what Jones terms "...any putative 'intention' of enacting the body in a 'concrete social practice'" (1998: 246-247n237). Rather, I am interested as Jones underlines, in exploring social participation that is radical in its ambivalence, that is, not reduced to specific political or social studies projects. I will emphasise this distinction more fully in section 6.1 *Morphological Ambivalence in the Partial Object/Subject*.

1.4 UTTERANCES

The use of the term performative utterance draws upon Austin's notion of performative speech acts that Tambiah, in turn, references at length. This will be developed (in section 6.8 *The Force of the Utterance*) in relation to *The Artist Will Be Present* as understood in terms of a forceful and repetitious iteration, not in the more literal sense of speech itself or word, but in terms of a forceful impressing of my body into (theoretically countless) partial forms and continuous (unremitting) dvd footage of urgent and exhaustive (but undisclosed) action: *processes of making as the art object/object of art*. Likewise the bodily imprints and smears of Martinis Roe and Nauman will be viewed in the context of objects that alert us to urgent performative utterances that need to be read against complex and inexhaustive contexts of performativity. This is to emphasize the doing in language in difference to describing, an emphasis of process over content. In this light Kira Hall argues that the term performative is indebted to Austin who, "...objecting to the logical positivists' focus on the verifiability of statements, introduced the performative as a new category of utterance that has no truth value since it does not describe the world, but acts upon it..." (2000: 184).⁴⁶

In reiterating Richard Schechner's claim that performance is 'twice behaved behaviour,' Phelan asks "...what is the force of that repetition?" (1998: 9). And in the context of Krauss' writing on the original as operative through the copy, she states that to "...frame an act of 'behaviour' is to engage in a highly technological semiotics of movement; it is, in other words, to execute a rigorous mental 'behaviour' we might call 'reading the performative'... This mimicry and iteration is the place where performance and performativity intersect" (1998: 9-10). This is strongly reminiscent of Roger Caillois' emphasis in *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia* when, in the context of sympathetic magic he writes: "Mimicry would thus be accurately defined as *an incantation fixed at its culminating point* and having caught the sorcerer in his own trap" (1984: 27). And in language that is marked by its sculptural emphasis on casting that will be important to this project, Phelan concludes her chapter: "Such a recasting is a necessary part of what I hope this field performs, the rehearsal after the performance: twice behaved behaviour that erases the distinction between then and now, original and copy, past and present,

⁴⁶ For a discussion on the way in which linguistic anthropology has been strongly influenced by the notion of the performative utterance, see Kira Hall's "Performativity" (2000).

me and you” (1998: 18). Phelan’s inquiry ‘what is the *force* of that repetition?’ (emphasis added) is a question that I ask in discussing (as she mentions a few lines later) visual mimicry and its iteration.

In articulating the territory of performance, performativity and performance studies, Phelan eloquently solicits W.H. Auden’s elegy to W.B. Yeats, that ‘poetry makes nothing happen’:

Like Austin struggling and failing to find a speech act that is not performative, Auden tries to posit the notion that poetry, despite its anti-making, its resistant productivity, survives because it manages to fill its modest home ‘in the valley of its making,’ in the deep lozenge of the throat’s dark, almost formless cavity. (1998: 10-11)

Phelan is articulating a notion that performativity ‘happens’ as it speaks, that it is continually transformative and becoming: “This transformative becoming is the almost always elegiac function of performance theory and writing, if not performance itself” (1998: 11).⁴⁷ To articulate performance as ‘elegiac’ summons some of the connotations of mournful loss that will be discussed in section 6.9 *The Force of the Moment*; that the moment of the ‘live’ is only comprehensible through its absence.

⁴⁷ In referencing Austin and in qualifying a difference between performance and a notion of performativity, Richard Schechner points to “...the myriad contact points and overlaps, tensions and loose spots, separating and connecting these two categories” (1998: 362). He refers to the way in which performance art, Happenings etc., (and I add body art) expanded on the more conventional notion of performance as theatre, music and dance, encouraging a number of theorists “...to examine ‘performative behaviour’—how people play gender, heightening their constructed identity, performing slightly or radically different situations. This is the performative Austin introduced...” (1998: 361).



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The Artist Will Be Present

PERFORMING PARTIAL OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS

Chapter 2

2.1 THE FLESH OF THE CHIASM



2.1 THE FLESH OF THE CHIASM

Some key terms emerge in the literature surrounding a notion of performativity that are important to single out at this juncture and that will recur time and time again in the course of this project. They are terms such as *embodiment*, *liminality*, *contingency* and *efficacy*. These terms themselves tend to stem from a phenomenological method of analysis that is the linchpin of film and performance theorist Vivian Sobchack and (while she does not employ all these exact same terms) art historian of performativity Amelia Jones.⁴⁸

Sobchack states in her introduction to *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*:

Thus phenomenological inquiry focuses on the phenomena of experience and their meaning as spatially and temporally embodied, lived, and valued by an objective subject—and, as such, always already quantified by the mutable specificities and constraints of history and culture. In this sense embodiment is never a priori to historical and cultural experience. (2004: 2)

In this complex passage Sobchack isolates some decisive issues that this chapter develops in relation to the four key terms above. A phenomenological language of perception adumbrates the body—the incarnate subject—as experiencing phenomena in the continuously changing contexts of space and time, as indicated by Sobchack’s notion of the ‘spatially and temporally embodied.’ This is important for discussing the body’s role in performative acts because it necessitates a focus on installational space and performative duration. Then Sobchack states, ‘and valued by an objective subject.’ This seemingly tautological turn-of-phrase announces a compound shuttling in a language of perception that resists a dichotomy between a perceiving subject and a perceived object. And the rest of her sentence, qualified as it is by the ‘always already’ of the perceiving experience, suggests that this embodied notion of perception is always concomitant and in flux, never an isolated event.⁴⁹ This concurs with Jones’ emphasis in the previous chapter where she asks who gets performed, a question that cannot be answered in the ‘always already’ instability of perception. As Merleau-Ponty writes in *The Phenomenology of*

⁴⁸ Jones highlights a poststructuralist theory of embodied subjectivity and in so doing adopts a predominantly French phenomenological and poststructuralist line of argument from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, through Simone de Beauvoir, and finally to phenomenologically influenced feminist poststructuralist models of performative subjectivity with particular reference to Luce Irigaray (1998: 13-15).

⁴⁹ Sobchack continually returns to this irreducible statement that we are ‘objective subjects and subjective objects’ (2004: 9).

Perception, "...[phenomenology] is also a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins—as an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world, and endowing that contact with philosophical status" (2007: 133).

Merleau-Ponty's approach to phenomenology is constructive in this context as it stresses that perception is corporeal experience, as Cathryn Vasseleu writes: "Taking issue with the ideal viewpoint of the mind full of concepts, judgments and relations, Merleau-Ponty regards the specular as an essentially incarnate reality, bound to and produced within a corporeal and social context" (1998: 21). Merleau-Ponty's notion of the *chiasm* is a language of perception conceived of as *entre-deux*, or 'in-between two,' aimed at resisting relationships between the self and the world, the subject and the object (Vasseleu 1998: 21-25). The posthumously published *The Visible and the Invisible*, containing the paper "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," addresses problems that might qualify how the terms of embodiment, liminality, contingency and efficacy might be understood, as an attempt to delay (as indefinite) the operations at play between artist, objects and audience as indefinite. This stresses the importance placed on the encounter as a process always in becoming: the 'always already' of Sobchack's analysis. It is in this sense that dichotomous terms such as visible/invisible or interior/exterior are incompatible with Merleau-Ponty's view of embodiment as an 'indeterminate interplay' of each term (Vasseleu 1998: 24).



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It is in this sense that *The Artist Will Be Present* evokes a doubled absence of the body. When I say that the part objects in the *Take* series are made by pressing handfuls of epoxy clay against my body, how are these objects really to be described? These are not the spaces between my body, or between me and other things, but an ‘in-between two’ space. When caught in modes of participation (physical and virtual), this describes a kind of indeterminate play that makes for a doubling of the partial locating the space of the spectator in delay and disappointment: the pushing and pulling of process rather than representation. This is not to infer failure, but rather to ask in the deepest phenomenological sense, would you ever get to the other object or body/self?

2.2 CONTINGENCY

The notion of ‘indeterminate play’ is the ground by which contingency might be understood. Within a concept of performativity, subject and object are always contingent upon each other within innumerable (undecidable) contexts. But more than this a notion of ‘self’ is itself contingent on an interrelation of its constituent parts. This, for example, is a crucial point to Nauman’s *Corridor* installation at the Wilder Gallery in 1970. The work places me (the viewer) in an encounter with myself as vacillating between the subject and object of the work.⁵⁰ As I enter the narrow corridor space I see my body (filmed in live close circuit by a camera positioned above the doorway through which I entered) from the rear view on two monitors positioned at the far end of the corridor. As I move towards the monitors my back view moves away from me. As I reach the end of the corridor and turn to come back (there is no other exit than the point at which I entered) the filmed front image of my body faces, and follows, my back, becoming larger as I move away from the image but as I move towards the camera’s eye. I try to quickly turn my body in the narrow space of the corridor to catch a glimpse of me looking at my image, to see myself face-to-face, but the necessary speed required

⁵⁰ See Schimmel where he states that these corridor works were also a way of engaging the viewer/participant as opposed to the artist in experiencing the work. Nauman had been the ‘performer’ in earlier works such as when videoing himself for *Walk with Contrapposto* (1968) where he recorded himself walking up and down a corridor ‘set’ for an hour (1998: 91).

In relating this work to the pieces in which Nauman recorded his own body’s movement in his studio such as *Slow Angle Walk (Beckett Walk)* (1968) see Gaby Hartel who describes the way the monitor’s surveillance of the viewer replaces the artist’s own body, or that of the dancer. In this way Nauman’s “...own physical tension is transmitted to the viewer in the form of a muscular tension” (2006a: 213).

to gain such a glimpse can never be faster than my actual movement: I can never see myself looking. This is one of the enduring and significant works of the early 1970s in its encapsulation of a phenomenological understanding of a language of perception that is in constant motion with respect to the self. Seeing myself moving away from myself, or trying to catch a glimpse of me moving toward myself, only to be thwarted by my immanent physicality and perceptual restrictions, is a fine example of what Jones describes as intersubjectivity and its relationship to what Sobchack refers to as interobjectivity.



BRUCE NAUMAN, *CORRIDOR*, 1970

With regard to such terminology, Merleau-Ponty employs the illustration of two hands of a body touching each other and signifying a reversibility of subject and object within the same embodied 'subject.' The hand that touches and the hand touched are both subject and object but simultaneously reversible, it becoming impossible to distinguish the polarities of subject/object (Vasseleu 1998: 26-27). As Merleau-Ponty writes this constitutes a 'touching of the touch,'

... when my right hand touches my left hand while it is palpating the things, where the 'touching subject' passes over to the rank of the touched, descends in to things, such that the touched is formed in the midst of the world and as it were in the things. (1968: 133-134)

This is how the subjective and objective reciprocity becomes described in terms of the 'inter.' A danger in advancing the terms of intersubjectivity and interobjectivity is that the nature of the 'inter' risks reinforcing a Cartesian dichotomy that Merleau-Ponty

endeavours to resist. As noted above, embedded in the notion of the *chiasm* is a language of perception based on the *entre-deux*, or ‘in-between two,’ that aims at resisting relationships between subject and the object.⁵¹ Given the ease with which discourse surrounding the ‘inter’ becomes polarised, it is significant that Merleau-Ponty’s final sentence for “The Intertwining” reads: “And what we have to understand is that there is no dialectical reversal from one of these views to the other; we do not have to reassemble them into a synthesis: they are two aspects of the reversibility which is the ultimate truth” (1968: 155).



LYGIA CLARK, *DIALOGUE*, 1966

Writing on the work of Lygia Clark, Bois and Krauss discuss her work *Dialogue* which can be seen to be investigating this problem of how a dichotomous structure between subject and object might be negotiated. They write: “*Dialogue* explores what the bodily ‘use value’ might be of a Mobius strip... the material of a sensory defamiliarization” (1997: 158-160). This work exaggerates the private/public nature of the encounter where two participants place their hands through the two loops of a semi-flexible mobius strip and so illustrate the complexities of Merleau-Ponty’s intertwining: “If the ‘dialogue’ is continued long enough, a moment comes where the impression is born that the hands are carrying out a kind of autonomous dance and that, in their false

⁵¹ Brian Massumi writes in difference to this notion of intersubjectivity concerned as he is with the idea that: “The individual is defined by its positioning within the intersubjective frame” (2002: 68). He sees it as a circular endgame that is destined to tautologically repeat itself, ironically “...all about a subject without subjectivism: a subject ‘constructed’ by external mechanisms. ‘The Subject’” (2002: 2). He argues instead for a notion of emerging and becoming.

symmetry, they are separated from the body” (Bois and Krauss 1997: 160).⁵²

In effect, Nauman’s corridor becomes a visual signifier of the notion of living flesh outlined in Merleau-Ponty’s *chiasm*. As Vasseleu writes:

Flesh is Merleau-Ponty’s term for the prototypical structure of all subject-object relations. In every instance of this relation, flesh defines a position which is both subject (a subjective reality) and object (objectifiable for others), and also simultaneously a subjectivity which is internally divergent with itself. In other words, flesh expresses the inscription of difference within the same. (1998: 26)

And as she goes on to write: “Flesh is not a grasping of being in its reversibility but the inscription of difference in a chiasmic doubling/crossing. The *chiasm* is flesh in its intertwining, reversibility and its divergence or non-coincidence with itself” (1998: 29). This is a difficult concept. Rather than being matter or mind or substance, Merleau-Ponty uses the term ‘element’ in the sense of water, air, earth and fire to describe his notion of flesh so that it rests “...midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea...” and goes on to qualify that this is not about facts as such but is “...yet adherent to *location* and to the *now*.” And he qualifies this as: “Much more: the inauguration of the *where* and the *when*, the possibility and exigency for the fact; in a word: facticity...” (1968: 139-140). In this way the viewers as subjects of Nauman’s *Corridor* become intertwined as both the subject and object of the art work, and simultaneously, non-coincident with themselves signified by the impossibility of the perceptual turn necessary to view oneself viewing oneself.⁵³ When Merleau-Ponty refers to not being able to see one’s own back—an overwhelming characteristic of Nauman’s *Corridor*—he notes that it is not about the ‘fact’ of seeing but that it is ‘visible by right’ and therefore “...falls under a vision that is both ineluctable and deferred” (1968: 137). This is why phenomenology is so apt a method of enquiry into the conditions of the ‘live’ moment and its relationship to the document. The flesh of the world insists on a

⁵² Guy Brett quotes Clark with respect to this work that a notion of the ‘collective body’ was “...the exchange between people of their intimate psychology. This exchange is not a pleasant thing. The idea is that a person ‘vomits’ life experience when taking part in the proposition. This ‘vomit’ is going to be swallowed by the others, who will immediately ‘vomit’ their inner contents too. It is therefore an exchange of psychic qualities and the word communication is too weak to express what happens in the group” (1998: 28-29 &n23).

⁵³ As Cross writes of the corridor works from this period: “Nauman’s installations trap the viewer in a confused position between action and nonaction, agency and compliance, doing and watching” (2003: 16).

spatio-temporal moment that is locatable in the ‘now’ of the event, yet this fact of the moment is always ineluctably deferred. And the camera—like the camera that views my body in performative action in *Above* and *Back*—provokes the question of who gets performed, making for a double nuance in the *inter* of the *intersubjective/objective*: the self simultaneously non-coincident and viewed as object by the camera which signifies the look of the other. And to complicate these operations further for Nauman’s *Corridor* work, this ‘signifier of the other recording subject’ is in closed (live) circuit⁵⁴ and therefore only perceivable by the one perceived, rendering her in perpetual dehiscence. It is in this sense that *chiasm* stands for “...the motion of perpetual dehiscence, in which perception is understood as being in momentum” (Vasseleu 1998: 30).

In asking how it comes about that we perceive, Merleau-Ponty states: “We shall understand this only if the empirical self and the body are not immediately objects, in fact only if they never quite become objects” (2002: 241-242). It is in this sense that *interobjectiveness* operates where the subject and object both simultaneously vascillate. This is a significant point for the discussion in Chapter 4 regarding the ‘objectness’ of performative actions because it reinforces the possibility that objects are never quite objects, fixed within a language of perception, and that such a realisation is heightened in the realm of performative body art. A notion of contingency in this regard is inscribed with a constant differencing in a chiasmic doubling/crossing (Vasseleu 1998: 29).

And it is in this regard that *The Artist Will Be Present* attempts an incarnation of the *flesh* of the *chiasm* which will always necessarily fail. For it attempts an indeterminate interplay between the part objects’ intimate impressions of one, in vacillation with the other, via means of participation. The moving images’ scale, and the sound of the struggle of their indeterminate making in *Over & Over*, embody the viewer with a physiognomic closeness that attempts to dissolve viewer and screen. In this way the blackness of the images’ backgrounds projected in the blacked-out gallery space lend a groundlessness to the images. As my body and the *Take* series (*Back* and *Caress*) disappear from view, the insistent and spatially dislocated sound track indicates that the activity continues out of frame. At these points the body/s of the audience are alone and noncoincidental with the process of making (the performative utterance) that continues in an adjacent

⁵⁴ See Christine Van Assche’s “Historical and Museological Aspects of New Media Works” where section two is dedicated to discussing the operation of the closed circuit video work.

spatiality. As Sobchack writes, the *chiasm* names “...the ground of all presence against which discrete figures of being emerge as such; it is thus the ground from which oppositions both emerge and fall away, in which they become reversible but noncoincidental” (2004: 294n218). These operations of absence and failure underscore a *contingency*, not between subject and object, artist and audience, but a resisting of those terms in preference for a profound liminal ‘intertwining.’

2.3 LIMINALITY



BACK, 2008



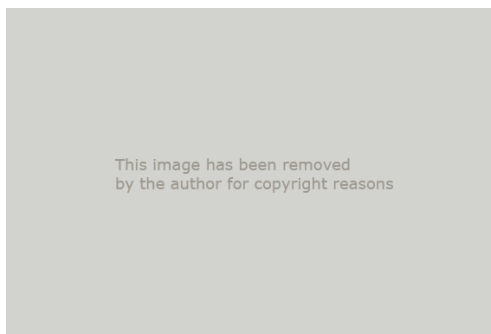
CARESS, 2008

Returning to the question of how I endeavour to theorise and contextualise *The Artist Will Be Present*, I make use of the manner in which anthropologists and folklorists, in their analysis of ritual processes in ethnographic case studies, have been a significant factor in the formation of performance studies. This has been more broadly articulated as a relationship between theatre and anthropology. In particular I utilise the notion of liminality defined as relating to sensory thresholds and as an indeterminate state, phase, or condition of ‘in-between two’ (Vasseleu 1998: 22).⁵⁵ As McKenzie writes:

Theatre provided anthropologists and ethnographers with a *formal* model for ‘seeing’ performance, for recognising its forms in society, for conceptualizing the ways in which social meanings and values become embodied in behaviours and events. In turn, liminal rites of passage gave theatre scholars a *functional* model for theorizing the transformational potential of theatre and other performative genres... separated from society both temporally and spatially, liminal activities allow participants to reflect, take part, and reassemble symbols and behaviours and, possibly, to transform themselves and society. (2001: 36)

⁵⁵ See also Phelan where she discusses, in the context of the origins of theatre as growing out of ritual practices, transformations where the initiate is “...suspended in an in-between or liminal state during the ritual practice itself” and the significance of Arnold van Gennep’s argument to this effect (2004: 17n13). She will argue this as a primary influence on Marina Abramovic’s live performances such as *Rhythm 0* (1974) and *The House with the Ocean View* (2002).

The notion of ‘liminal rites of passage’ becomes central to my project as I argue, from the point of view of sympathetic magical action, that these partial objects operate as a performative force due to their (formal) ambivalence as objects/images. And that, together with their intimate associations of contact (contagion) with the body, such objects (and their related ‘donor’ subjects) are best understood in the context of performative ritual. In this sense the concept of performativity can be defined as an “...embodied enactment of cultural forces [and as] a ‘liminal’ process, a reflexive transgression of social structures [and that] liminal performances are capable of temporarily staging and subverting their normative functions” (J. McKenzie 2001: 8).⁵⁶



UGO RONDINONE, *THE EVENING PASSES...*, 1998

This kind of emphasis might be applied to works like Ugo Rondinone’s *The evening passes like any other...*⁵⁷ (1998) in which the artist employs large stone-like white objects suspended from the ceiling, suggestive of human touch. These objects are exhibited alongside video monitors depicting endless scenes of an oncoming truck and a naked woman recurrently jumping up and down, together with a looped sound track with the words, ‘What could be better, nothing is better.’ Gaby Hartel writes about this installation: “By urging visitors to touch, look at and listen to, this art gives priority to their instinctive perceptions. So the viewer experiences his/her body as a source of knowledge, and becomes a participant in

⁵⁶ See McKenzie in “Genre Trouble: (The) Butler Did It” for a reading of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993) in the context of the performative studies field. McKenzie examines Butler’s citation of two 1980s anthropological texts, by Victor Turner (*From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, 1982) and Schechner (*Between Theatre and Anthropology*, 1985), where the concept of liminality is employed across a range of activities, rituals and theatre as constituting an ‘in-betweeness’ in performative genres (1998: 218, 223).

⁵⁷ The full title of this work by Ugo Rondinone is: *The evening passes like any other. Men and woman float alone through the air. They drift past my window like the weather. I close my eyes. My heart is a moth fluttering against the walls of my chest. My brain is a tangle of spiders wriggling and roaming around. A wriggling tangling of wriggling spiders* (1998).

this kind of ‘performance poem’” (2006b: 244). This is to stress perception through the body as an incarnate process of the *chiasm*.⁵⁸

ALEX MARTINIS ROE’S ONTOLOGICAL LEAP



ALEX MARTINIS ROE, *ONTOLOGICAL LEAP*, 2007

⁵⁸ This sense of liminality has been discussed in terms of the uncanny as a sensation of surprise and acute momentary embodiment. I have preferred to emphasise a sense of disorientation rather than the uncanny while acknowledging that the two terms share some commonality. For an interesting contextualisation of the uncanny in film, see Lesley Stern where she discusses Freud’s 1919 essay “The Uncanny.” While Stern does not employ the term liminal, the terms by which she discusses a moment of perceptual ‘jolting’ in the consciousness of the viewer is close to a sensory threshold and intermediate state of in-betweenness described above. In describing Freud’s surprise at seeing another passenger enter his train compartment only to realise that it was, in fact, his own reflection in the washing-cabinet mirrored door, she writes: “He presents us with a scene conceptualized as a frame within a frame. His perception involves movement, he is jolted, subjected to a shock. We might almost say that the movement involves transference, it is a movement between the viewer and the image” (1997: unpaginated www). Added to this is the notion of space and time transfigured through the action of the moment in the cinematic experience. This is liminality as it is suspended in space and time. Stern notes in the context of the uncanny: “We might also say that it is an instantiation of the cinematic body. That is to say, it is a body that simultaneously moves (through human agency) and is moved (mechanically, through cinematic means). It moves through space and time; space and time are reconfigured by the movement.” And later in the same essay in reinforcing the notion of the ‘moment’ in the film *Blade Runner* where Pris somersaults in front of Deckard landing on his shoulders: “Pris’ performance is not a demonstration of presence. It is an assertion that subjectivity, history, memory (manufactured or not) are lived through the body; but simultaneously it is an enactment of the momentariness of the body” (1997: unpaginated www).



ALEX MARTINIS ROE, *ONTOLOGICAL LEAP*, 2007

Martinis Roe earnestly performs before a Melbourne audience at Conical Inc. on July 28, 2007. Assimilating VALIE EXPORT's *Ontological Leap* (1974) and *Touching. Body Poem* (1970/1991) into her own work she stands dutifully in a box of sand.⁵⁹ Stepping back out of the box she holds up pre-prepared card-mounted photographs of her feet impressions, displaying them to her audience as if miming the presentation of applause or laughter queue-cards before a soap-opera set. Cut to the size of the boxes she then

⁵⁹ This performance-installation is entitled *Ontological Leap* and is a detail, within a separate section entitled (*EXERCISE*), of a larger performance entitled *Practical Illustrations of Body Configurations in Architecture*. As such Alex Martinis Roe refers to VALIE EXPORT's *Ontological Leap* (1974) while she is also conscious of works such as EXPORT's *Touching. Body Poem* (1970/1991). She says that these specific references to earlier artists' works are to some degree random in that she was trying to assimilate art historical methodology that uses examples to illustrate a point. In the interests of focus I have chosen not to dwell on the complex manner in which Martinis Roe 'quotes' history and its relationship to the terms of appropriation. While this is also an aspect of my own practice in the manner in which the part objects in *The Artist Will Be Present* 'quote' small proto-Modernist sculptures, this is not an idea developed in this thesis. Martinis Roe makes, for example, a distinction between the 'remake' and the 'derivative' artwork: "The section where I photographed my feet on the box of sand was the 'remake' but the piece with the clay and my fingers was meant to be a 'derivative' artwork of the *Ontological Leap* work. The idea of the 'derivative' artwork is meant to do away with the value judgements that would immediately arise" (2008). This aspect of her practice will have to wait for a future project. Another subset of her practice which I do not highlight is her focus on feminist histories where she states in relation to the EXPORT works: "Also her role in the history of feminist cathartic work was an important reason [for her inclusion in *Practical Illustrations of Body Configurations in Architecture*]" (2008).

places the photographs over the imprints of her feet. The photographs oscillate as negative and positive images, at once concave impressions as well as convex reversals not unlike the feet coming ‘out of’ EXPORT’s TV screens. In the originating work, EXPORT’s four pairs of feet each stand—imprinting—on the four glass screens of four TV monitors, as if we are looking up at people through a glass sheet on which they stand. But the images are reversed as we look down upon the screens that rest in a grided cross formation, on the floor, screens facing upwards. Retrieving the photographs and placing them to one side, Martinis Roe steps back into her footprints and, holding a camera up to her face in a downward glance, takes photographs of her own feet in the sand. Stepping out she repeats the exercise, finally leaving the card-mounted photographs of her feet impressions covering the actual impressions. What interests me is the attention she places on a relay between media (object, photograph and performance) in her quest to articulate the underbelly of the foot’s touch and weight so evident in EXPORT’s work. As well as this, Martinis Roe makes photographs that are almost exact replicas of the photographs by EXPORT called *Ontological Leap*. In this sense she is turning what she imagined to be her artistic process into a performance as a liminal relay between media and disciplines.⁶⁰ As Martinis Roe states:

I wanted to use one of VALIE EXPORT’s works in that section of the performance (*EXERCISE*) because of her use of repetitive process across different media... I also wanted to use a photographic series and convert it into a photographic performance. The main idea was to choose a work which took the conceptual logic of the performance-installation as a whole and extrapolate it over and over... the idea that you could keep going with the same idea because it was deconstructing representation... a kind of infinite project. The relationship with the *Touching. Body Poem* work... I guess you could say that I like to collapse the distinction between the real and the represented body because I think our identities are completely confused and made up of repetitions of the self both real and mediated. I was using the body interacting with the screen as an object, as a way of articulating this collapse between reality and representation. (2008)

⁶⁰ See McKenzie’s *Perform or Else* which, as stated above, proffers the idea of a shift from disciplinarity to performativity where a notion of liminality between disciplines is developed.



ALEX MARTINIS ROE, *ONTOLOGICAL LEAP*, 2007



ALEX MARTINIS ROE, *ONTOLOGICAL LEAP*, 2007

Martinis Roe's actions are only understood in relation to the ritual played out in front of her Melbourne audience. This is to underline an earlier emphasis raised by Jones that

the artist is "...self-consciously performed through new, openly intersubjective contexts (including video or ironised modes of photographic display) which insist upon the openness of this and all subjects to the other" (1998: 67). In this regard, her five performances over a two-week period at Conical Inc, presented the debris, or aftereffects, of her performance pieces before her audiences as 'performative documentation.' To reiterate Auslander's emphasis already noted above, it was her relationship with her audiences that authenticated the materials in her installation. And in this way the objects also form the focus of each performance event at intervals during the exhibition. One such artefact was a line of clay carefully manipulated, again in the presence of the audience, as a 'derivative' artwork based on EXPORT's *Ontological Leap*. At a particularly concentrated moment in the performance-installation, as if typing with head to one side, she smudges clay across the horizontal surface of a copy of a demolished wall of the gallery she has made as a temporary podium as well as across a TV monitor embedded in the structure. This 'relay,' as I have called it, questions the 'live' moment of performance as it insists on a 'derivative' play between the live, its historical sources in previous body art works, and (as will be discussed below in detail) its constant reiteration as repeated performances and as stage-set debris. I am intrigued at how Martinis Roe uses her body—dressed in black like a theatre stage-hand—as the catalyst, with and in front of audiences, to question how the live performance gets remembered: how her 'documentation' of previous performances are re-enacted as events. Is what she does more 'real' than the various kinds of 'documentation' that she references? How is her live body in its supposed 'authenticity' more real than the photocards she displays of EXPORT's work or the photographs she takes of her own feet? Her work, in this sense, is designed to expand and question the relationship between performance events and their documentation.⁶¹

In this questioning Martinis Roe utilises some of the traditionally enduring tropes of spatial liminality—mould and cast, positive and negative photography, the live body and the screen—as a means, in her words cited above, of 'deconstructing

⁶¹ These questions are similar to those raised in the draft document for *Perform, Repeat, Record: A Critical Anthology of Live Art in History* proposed by Heathfield and Jones: "How does live art get remembered? How does this remembering manifest itself in documents and in re-enactments of performance events? What is the nature of the performance event? Is it more 'real' than the various kinds of documentation (textual, photographic, videographic, filmic, re-stagings) through which it is passed down through time? Is the live body more 'authentic' than the body represented in photographs, film, or video?" (2007).

representation... a kind of infinite project... made up of repetitions of the self both real and mediated.’ This is where I will argue for the trope of mould and cast (positive and negative) in this work and that of Nauman, Duchamp, Eskdale and the *Take* series as evoking but never resolving its own loss or disappearance. At its most basic, an imprint—footprint—characterises both contact and absence: in order for the imprint to appear, the foot must lift out and move on. The presence of the body’s imprint therefore solicits notions of temporal delay: an indexing of past contact by touch as well as the present discovery and speculation surrounding the ‘original’ contact. In the catalogue essay for the 1997 Centre Pompidou exhibition *L’Empreinte (Imprint)*, George Didi-Huberman describes the imprint as a dialectical image, a conflation of contact and loss: contact with the loss of the loss of contact, forcing us to re-think models of temporality (19).⁶² For Didi-Huberman the mould becomes a metaphor for absence that might be inhabited or filled at any point. This is the ‘always already’ of the perceiving experience.

2.5 BRUCE NAUMAN’S SPACE UNDER MY HAND WHEN I WRITE MY NAME



BRUCE NAUMAN, *SPACE UNDER MY HAND WHEN I WRITE MY NAME*, 1966

⁶² This and subsequent quotations of George Didi-Huberman’s *L’Empreinte* are my translations. Bois and Krauss critique Didi-Huberman’s use of the term ‘dialectic’ in a related text (Bois and Krauss 1997: 67-73).

In 1966 Nauman made *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name*, a work that has significant resonance with Martinis Roe's impressing and smudging actions in *Ontological Leap*. In variance with *Ontological Leap*, Nauman's work acts as a trace of an action that never took place in public view, casting those actions in an artefact that functions as evidence after the event. These works present bodies *in absentia*.⁶³ Like Martinis Roe's manipulation of clay, *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* looks morphologically ambivalent in its description of the space between the artist and a (writing) surface, between himself and the world (Halbreich 1994: 91): it makes concrete a void between the body and an object. The work relies on the notion of bodily contact with wax, but not *any* body: Nauman's signature—that which lends authorial credence—moulded in a material historically associated with sacredness, healing and seals of authority. And from a sculptural paradigm the idea of temporality is lent to the work in that wax is a material designed to melt and be reconstituted. That these artists use *their* bodies as casting agents transforms a perception of moulds and casts, as dichotomous and divided along clear points of intersection, into one of liminal 'in-between two,' a fleshy subjective reality objectifiable for others and internally divergent. The body that formed these works cannot be said to be absent, but rather, to have fallen in an *entre-deux* state of liminality. In this sense the sculptures are part of, or suggest a metonymic desire (and therefore lack), of a larger whole (Storr 1994: 53-54).⁶⁴

⁶³ Another work also produced in this series in 1966 that could be used in this discussion is Nauman's *Wax Impressions of the Knees of Five Famous Artists*. Here Nauman's knee imprints are ambiguous by virtue of a liminal reversal common to moulds and the deception in the title itself. See Reihe Cantz who points out that the knee impressions are actually his wife's knees, Nauman having stated in interview that they were his own (1998: 44-45). As with Martinis Roe's feet impressions, the viewer is left searching to recreate the positive anatomy that once filled the void.

⁶⁴ This wording is close to Robert Storr's but I disagree with Storr who draws a distinction between Jasper Johns' use of body parts as 'symbolic or formal fragments' and Nauman's as a 'sculpturally and logically self-sufficient statement of the relationships between its components.' Storr writes that: "Rather than being part of, or the metonymic representation of a larger whole, *From Hand to Mouth* is a whole unto itself: a richly ambiguous but complete grammatical unit. This high concentration of meaning within a seemingly obvious shape is typical of Nauman's work..." (1994: 53-54). While it may be truer of *From Hand to Mouth*, it is not the case that works like *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* or *Wax Impressions of the Knees of Five Famous Artists*, form complete grammatical units. I have altered Storr's wording with regard to the 'metonymic representation of a larger whole' and said instead that the sculptures 'suggest a metonymic desire (and therefore lack), of a larger whole,' implying the opposite to that which Storr argues for Nauman. The metonymic axis of contiguity does not 'represent' as a 'complete grammatical unit.' Its force is all that is lacking and redundant to its partiality.

Reihe Cantz comments in relation to this and other works between 1966 and 1970—such as *Collection of Various Flexible Materials Separated by Layers of Grease with Holes the Size of My Waist and Wrists* (1966) and *Wax Impressions of the Knees of Five Famous Artists* (1966)—that: “Physical presence is precisely what is missing from these works, an absence achieved through various disillusive manoeuvres” (1998: 44). Such an absence is also a characteristic of some of Nauman’s films and videos of this same period. In works such as *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square* (1968), Nauman can vanish from view while his presence is indicated by the sound of footsteps or a bouncing ball.⁶⁵ This is the noncoincidence of image and audience previously described for my disappearing body (*Back*) and part objects (*Caress*) as well as a dislocation of sound and image that Cantz maintains as ‘disillusive manoeuvres.’ I do this to avoid over literalising the works (at each step trying to remove information in order to present parts of larger wholes where redundancy, or lack, is all those parts that are missing and, in turn, all those parts that we desire). Moreover, I do this to provoke an absence in the experience of both image and sound. Only my body and the body/s of the audience constitute the image due to its frame-less-ness and disorientated ‘presence’ in the space. In this way the body/s of the audience, in a deeply phenomenological manner, become spatially and temporally embodied in the performative encounter: become intertwined as both the subject and object of the art work as they stand, for that moment, on their own, or, filling the absent moment. This, for me, is another operation for questioning the instant of the ‘live’ performance. As will be argued below, via the writings of Phelan and Derrida, my body (as is the case with Nauman’s body in *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square*) becomes dislodged from the referent, from communication and its context: as in the words of Derrida, the nonpresent *remainder* cut off from its putative ‘production’ or origin (1988: 10). This radical non-presence can be located in experiencing my ‘live’ body in dvd projection (absent ‘in person,’ so to speak, and also absent, at moments of total black-out, from the audience’s space). It can also be located in the performative part ‘moulds’ of the *Take* series as I index past moments of contact with body/s (mine and audiences), their modes of participatory *encounter* manifest as close-up filmic projections importuning the body/s of the audience by way of a filmic closeness (*Cut 2*) which will be discussed in Chapter 3 in the context of Laura Marks’ writing on bodily haptic encounters in film.

⁶⁵ See Cantz who makes this observation (1998: 46).

2.6 MARCEL DUCHAMP'S *EROTIC OBJECTS*



MARCEL DUCHAMP, *FEMALE FIG LEAF*, 1950 & *OBJET-DARD*, 1951



MARCEL DUCHAMP, *FEMALE FIG LEAF*, 1950

Nauman's works have been compared to Duchamp's erotic objects between 1950 and 1954 that may derive from moulds in the casting process for his final work *Etant donnés*.⁶⁶ The 1950 *Feuille de vigne femelle (Female Fig Leaf)* may be the reverse mould of the female pudendum of *Etant donnés* while the *Objet-Dard* (1951) is said to be a plaster object formed from the leftover material cut away from a mould of the *Etant donnés*' breasts (Jones 1994: 91-92). The bottom portion of *Coin de chastete (Wedge of Chastity)* (1954) is made of dental plastic into which a wedge of galvanised plaster is forced. These three sculptures formed the group known as the erotic or sexual objects (Jones 1994: 90; Molesworth 2005a: 179-182; Pincus-Witten 1973: 41) to which can be added *Not a Shoe* (1950) bearing a striking resemblance to the galvanised plaster component in *Wedge of Chastity* four years later.

Like the Martinis Roe and Nauman works, the erotic objects allude to human anatomy but are ambiguous in their representation of it. All these objects share a mimetic partiality. It is the ostensible knowledge of their production—a past and part action—and techniques of visual reciprocity, such as the body as casting agent, that lends them a dual sense of formlessness and intimacy with the bodies that were once in contact with them. It is this indeterminate interplay of formlessness and intimacy where 'flesh expresses the inscription of difference within the same' that underwrites the partial objects and moving images of *The Artist Will Be Present*. In this casting process, where flesh is mould, there is no original while each appearance is unique; the participatory action of viewers (physical and virtual) further contributing to the flux of each appearance. In a similar light, digital media possesses no original, as Parfait observes, each one of its appearances is unique by virtue of specific architectural conditions, "...a more or less variable relation between a space, a time, materials and an electronic device" (2006b: 36).

In this way *The Artist Will Be Present* expresses an always changing flux *vis-à-vis* the 'object' of performance. *Above* and *Back* allude to studio process 'as' performance where

⁶⁶ I am less interested in a discussion of influence between Marcel Duchamp and Nauman but rather to observe similarities in their works that may have been synchronic. In comparing Nauman's *From Hand to Mouth* (1967) to Duchamp's *With My Tongue in My Cheek* (1959) Neal Benezra argues that Nauman is more influenced by Jasper Johns than Duchamp given that the first major Duchamp retrospective at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1963 was when Nauman was still an undergraduate and the most major English translations on Duchamp appeared in the 1970s onwards. In this light a comparison to John's *Target with Plaster Casts* (1955) might be a more apt comparison (Benezra 1994: 24).

the making overshadows the object, while *Participate* and *Caress (Cuts 1 & 2)*, in their different modes of participation, exaggerate the encounter in variation to scopic recognition of the objects. Like Duchamp's erotic objects, this is a way of activating the auratic nature of the body in objects as a form of embodiment.⁶⁷

2.7 EMBODIMENT

In analysing the perception of a six-sided white cube, Merleau-Ponty writes that: "...if the words 'enclose' and 'between' have a meaning for us, it is because they derive it from our experience as embodied subjects" (2002: 236). In this sense the term embodiment is characteristic of a desire to describe a body beyond the terms of scopic or purely visual representation, a notion of a body that is understood as reciprocally experienced by artist and viewer due, as will be argued in some depth, to the contexts of performativity in which the *experiencing* operates.

In *Body Thoughts* anthropologist Andrew Strathern, like many others, seeks to reject a Cartesian view (à la Descartes) that separates mind and body in order to highlight a concept of the body to the extent that 'embodiment' has become an identifiable term in cultural analysis. In a move reminiscent of the *chiasm*, the notion of dichotomy is replaced with notions of "...crossover or *interpenetration* of putative mental and bodily characteristics" (1996: 2 emphasis added). In a way that echoes a drive away from an individual's authorial intent noted in Chapter 1, this term may replace notions of the individual or person that tend more to indicate rights, identities, tendencies of will or self-definition, while embodiment seeks to investigate the senses and feelings of the here and now.⁶⁸

Strathern's most lucid definition of embodiment reads:

Embodiment has to do with the body, but it implies that it is something else, other than or added to the physical body itself, that *is* embodied, and such a 'thing'

⁶⁷ I will return to Duchamp's erotic objects in section 6.4 *The Force of the Wedge*.

⁶⁸ See Andrew Strathern for a good overview of phenomenological methods and the notion of embodiment in anthropology (1996: chapter 8). In referencing Merleau-Ponty he writes that: "Objects do not exist in any *a priori* sense but only *a posteriori*, as a result of perception... and perception is always embodied" (1996: 178). In a similar emphasis to Sobchack, and with reference to Thomas Csordas, he stresses a concept of the body as a 'mindful body.'

often turns out to be an abstract social value, such as horror or bravery. Embodiment thus has to do with values that in some ways are also disembodied or may be thought of separately from the body itself. Embodiment, in other words, is a term that belies itself by combining the abstract and the concrete together. (1996: 2 emphasis added)

While I agree with the idea of the term embodiment belying itself—particularly in the context of a constantly shifting notion of performativity described above—as a term that defies exact definition, I disagree that it might be thought of as separate ‘from the body itself’ as this would contradict Sobchack’s important point that embodiment is a fundamentally material condition of being that therefore brings about both the body and consciousness, objectivity and subjectivity, as irreducible (2004: 4).⁶⁹ And in stressing that this does not mean a perfect synchronicity of body and consciousness, as ‘objective subjects’ and ‘subjective objects,’ Sobchack quotes Gary Madison’s “Did Merleau-Ponty Have a Theory of Perception?”:

The perceiving subject is itself defined dialectically as being *neither* (pure) consciousness *nor* (physical, in itself) body. Consciousness... is not a pure self-presence; the subject is present to and knows itself only through the mediation of the body, which is to say that this presence is always mediated, i.e., is indirect and incomplete. (2004: 4)

This reinforces Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the *chiasm* discussed above that seeks an indeterminate interplay: the ‘in-between two’ of the *entre-deux*.

2.8 EFFICACY

A potential for performative genres “to transform themselves and society” voiced by McKenzie above, entails the possibilities of transformation as a result of personal and social contingency inherent in cultural performance. And here distinctions between disciplines of anthropology and art history/theory have generally perceived efficacy on differing trajectories. Anthropology has tended to uphold notions of efficacy that reinforce normative social structures while also consoling or healing participants, while art history/theory has tended to focus on performance as transgressive and resisting

⁶⁹ See Judith Farquhar and Margaret Lock’s introduction to *Beyond the Body Proper* where they express the hope founded in a materialist anthropology of embodiment to move beyond “...the impossible poles of a Cartesian social science. This is the domain of neither a cultural mind nor a biological body, but of a lively carnality suffused with words, images, senses, desires, and powers” (2007: 15).

normative social values (J. McKenzie 2001: 30). This has been significant, for example, for feminist discourses that challenge normative male gender roles or those that engage in institutional critique. In this regard, terms such as redemption are employed less frequently in art history/theory. Against this grain writers such as Brentano and Stiles suggest transformative possibilities.⁷⁰ Brentano refers to "...a redemptive belief in the capacity of art to transform human life..." (1994: 31) while Stiles states that:

Performance Art teaches that the body is an autonomous material object but equally part of a collective history in which people have responsibility. This ethical and pedagogical element is the powerful quality of performance that endows the best artists' actions with a social *force* sufficient to cause debate... over the nature of shared cultural, social, and moral values. (1990: 41 emphasis added)⁷¹

It is one of Sobchack's main objectives in her chapter entitled "The Passion of the Material: Towards a Phenomenology of Interobjectivity," to avoid a metaphysical transcendence that separates spirit and flesh, mind and matter, for a "...relationship between body and world [that is] transcendent 'in the flesh'—emergent from the common ground of the world's physical incarnation and temporalized materiality and in the immanence of the lived body's primordially material sense-ability and responsibility" (2004: 295).⁷² It is in evoking both aesthetic sensibility and ethical responsibility that she seeks out a reciprocal relation between aesthetics and ethics, "...that material objects in the world are not only *sensible* to our own flesh but how they also can make us devoted and *responsible* to the flesh of the world and others" (2004: 295).⁷³

It is in this sense that I will argue that part objects such as Duchamp's *Wedge of Chastity*, when viewed from a performative perspective, pronounce with illocutionary force an embodied and liminal statement of responsibility to the flesh of, in this case, Duchamp

⁷⁰ See Jones' *Body Art/Performing the Subject* which brought this to my attention.

⁷¹ Within this discussion McKenzie outlines a notion of 'resistant efficacy.' He points to Auslander's assertion in *Presence and Resistance* "...that postmodern performance does not attempt to oppose social norms and institutions but instead infiltrates them through subtle critiques and/or parodies of representational media" (2001: 43).

⁷² Likewise, Stern argues from a similar position when she states that Pris' somersaulting straight towards the viewer in *Blade Runner* is "...a refutation of the metaphysical postulate, an instantiation of the thoughtful body or the bodily ego" (1997: unpaginated www).

⁷³ Along similar lines, commenting on "...the *processes* of aesthetic creation and interpretation..." Butt suggests that the ethics inherent in the essays collected in his edited volume do "...not impose a model of criticism from without, but discover or produce one out of an engagement with - and a response to - the contingencies encountered whilst undertaking the act of criticism itself" (2005: 17).

and his second wife Alexina. As will be argued at length, this is to speak of a profound efficacy in the mimetic function of the partial object/subject.

In the same vein, it is the immanent materiality of the *Take* series, as compared to the touch of the cinematic experience, in *The Artist Will Be Present* that I want to argue as efficacious (and so too the interaction of body/s with materials for Martinis Roe and Nauman). Merleau-Ponty points to a sense of ethical responsibility *in* the other when he describes flesh as the narcissistic operation of seer/self as a "...field open for other Narcissus, for an 'intercorporeity.'" And in this context he extends the intertwining hands to the hand of another when he writes: "If my left hand can touch my right hand while it palpates the tangibles, can touch it touching, can turn its palpation back upon it, why, when touching the hand of another, would I not touch in it the same power to espouse that things that I have touched in my own?" And in this same sense he writes that this circling of the seer which the seer does not form but which forms the seer can "...animate other bodies as well as my own" (1968: 140-141). But, importantly, as will be discussed below, this ethical responsibility is not one tied down to intentions and social cause but one that is performatively 'ineluctable' in its relations between *me* and others. The surface of the *Take* series bearing the contamination (contagion) of my body (but not my body in its *entre-deux* spatiality) is strongly intimate. These part objects bear the marks of my skin and hairs, of a sense of pressure of my body against the world. These surfaces, aligned with the flesh of the body/s of the audience via various modes of participation (physically and optically *encountered*), reveal quite unexpected relations between bodies. Merleau-Ponty would say that the flesh of the *chiasm* is a thing among things but coincidentally what sees them and touches them and that this "...double belongingness to the order of the object and to the order of the subject reveals to us quite unexpected relations between the two orders" (1968: 137).⁷⁴ And in a footnote, the editor to the Northwestern University Press edition of "The Intertwining," Claude Lefort, incorporates a note by Merleau-Ponty inserted in the text which coincidentally describes for me the process of my making these part objects. He comments that this flesh is a question and response:

⁷⁴ To accentuate this point Merleau-Ponty writes that "...the body is lost outside the world and its goals, fascinated by the unique occupation of floating in Being with another life, of making itself the outside of its inside and the inside of its outside. And henceforth movement, touch, vision, applying themselves to the other and to themselves, return towards their source and, in the patient and silent labour of desire, begin the paradox of expression" (1968: 144).

The openness through flesh: the two leaves of my body and the leaves of the visible world... It is between these intercalated leaves that there is visibility... My body model of the things and the things model of my body: the body bound to the world through all its parts, up against it → all this means: the world, the flesh not as fact or sum of facts, but as the locus of an inscription of truth: the false crossed out, not nullified. (1968: 131n131)

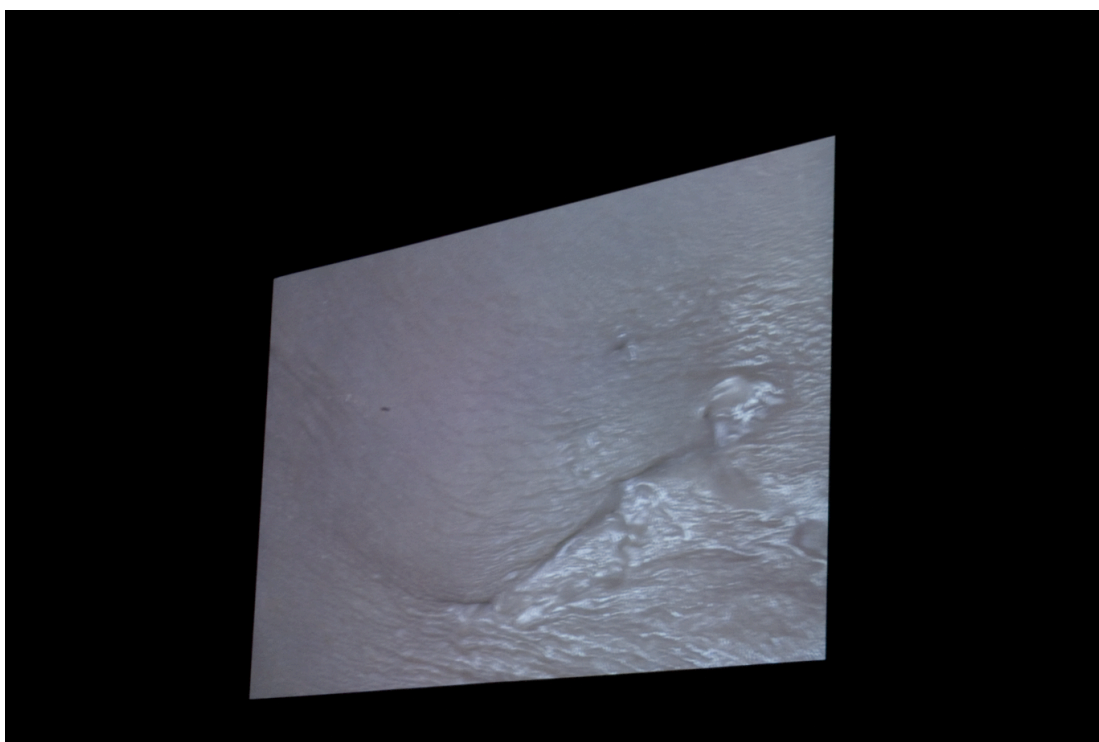
I love this slightly hesitant note (with pauses and arrows) in that it incarnates the *Take* series as vacillating between an object of my making and the subject of my body. But more than this, ‘my body model of the things and the things model of my body’ where ‘things’ are all the parts of the flesh of the world that are left out and therefore desired in our exchanges. The redundancy of all the parts that these part objects solicit will be analysed in depth in Chapter 6. Moreover, the intimate surface of these part objects transposed in up-close projections (*Cut 2*) presumes on a vision that is embodied in tactile space as the body/s of the audience are inextricably embedded in its visual field. In this way, as Jones writes, “...the body, then, is not just a simulacral, two-dimensional screen, but... a flesh-like screen, one that presupposes the depth and materiality of the body as subject” (2006: 67).



TAKE SERIES, 2007



TAKE SERIES, 2007



CARESS, 2008

The Artist Will Be Present

PERFORMING PARTIAL OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS

Chapter 3

3.1 MIMETIC INCONGRUENCE



3.1 MIMETIC INCONGRUENCE

Where the previous chapter sought to define how the notion of the *chiasm* is employed as the underlying methodology for this project, this chapter explores mimetic dislocation with a focus on the moving image. It outlines a notion central to Mauss' 'poorly executed ideogram,' that representational faithfulness *undoes* mimetic force. Such an emphasis underwrites an overarching concern in this thesis that partial objects and subjects adopt, in the words of Eduardo Cadava, an 'essential incongruence' (1997: 15).

Walter Benjamin's notion of the mimetic faculty is closely aligned with the idea that human language follows on from the sounds of living nature in the sense that onomatopoeia is a commonplace and sensuous form of mimesis (1986: 334). It is also closely aligned, more evident in *Doctrine of the Similar* than in *On The Mimetic Faculty*, with archaic magical correspondences and similarities.⁷⁵

This emphasis on the mimetic faculty's impact on the formulation of language allows for the possibility that, in the words of Anson Rabinbach, "...aural and visual elements of language are seen as the residue of the powerful natural and supernatural correspondences that predominate in the mental world of the primitives." And Rabinbach goes on: "This idea is also emphatically linked to Benjamin's conception of Messianic time as comprised of the fleeting 'instantaneous flash' as opposed to duration" (1979: 62).⁷⁶ This posits a notion of mimesis as fundamentally tactile and physical with less focus on narrative duration and representational fixity. In this sense Strathern writes: "Mimesis is the physical counterpart of metonymy in language... The most characteristic

⁷⁵ See Anson Rabinbach for a comparison of Benjamin's two texts, *Doctrine of the Similar* and *On The Mimetic Faculty*, both written in 1933. Rabinbach recognises in the former an exaggerated historical anthropological dimension, such as an emphasis on archaic magical correspondences and similarities, which is not as present in the latter (1979: 61).

See Strathern where he contextualises mimetic embodiment in referring to Michael Taussig's *Mimesis and Alterity*. Strathern summarises Taussig as pursuing themes, via the Cuna people of South America, where mimesis is described as "...the imitation of the other, both as a reaction and as an attempt at appropriation... It has emotional, artistic and magical roots..." (1996: 193). In this regard he goes on to quote Taussig as identifying "...the mimetic faculty as a human characteristic that grants to 'the copy the character of the original the representation the power of the represented'" (1996: 193). See (Taussig 1993: xviii).

⁷⁶ It is in this sense that Taussig recalls Theodor Adorno in "Über Walter Benjamin" that: "He is driven not merely to awaken congealed life in petrified objects—as in allegory—but also to scrutinize living things so that they present themselves as being ancient, 'Ur-historical' and abruptly release their significance" (1993: 1).

operations of its logic... take the form of movements of the body, turning to the right or left, putting things upside-down, going in, coming out, cutting, tying” (1996: 27). Sobchack underscores this emphasis on the physicality of mimesis when she sees “...mimesis as a corporeal activity that does not require the translation of conscious thought to be enacted or understood” (2004: 76n67).⁷⁷ Sobchack’s locating of mimetic activity as other than conscious may relate to Benjamin’s notion of the ‘optical unconscious’ in which ways of seeing that escape the scopic activate an expansion of the optical.

Benjamin’s notion of the ‘optical unconscious’ is one that declares some allegiance to psychoanalytic models as it rubs shoulders with a study of magic, the most celebrated instance being Sigmund Freud’s *Animism, Magic and the Omnipotence of Thoughts* where Freud argues that a system of contagious magic and associations of contiguity constitutes an over-valuation of mental processes when he writes that, “...it may be said that the principle governing magic, the technique of the animistic mode of thinking, is the principle of the ‘omnipotence of thoughts’” (1999: 85).⁷⁸ This, he argues, is an over-evaluation also found in neurotic patients. In relation to this Freud makes a caveat which I quote at length as it sets in motion seemingly anachronistic associations of the ‘magic in art’:

In only a single field of our civilisation has the omnipotence of thoughts been retained, and that is in the field of art. Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects—thanks to artistic illusion—just as though it were something real. People speak with justice of the ‘magic of art’ and compare artist to magicians. But the comparison is perhaps more significant than it claims to be. There can be no doubt that art did not begin as art for art’s sake. It worked originally in the service of impulses which are for the most part extinct to-day. And among them we may suspect the presence of many magical purposes. (1999: 90)

⁷⁷ Sobchack states this in reference to Taussig’s *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*.

⁷⁸ See Rosalind Krauss as she outlines Benjamin’s main concerns in the term ‘optical unconscious’ in his 1931 “Small History of Photography” and his 1936 “Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” essays. She raises the question as to whether “...the optical field—the world of visual phenomena: clouds, sea, sky, forest—*have* an unconscious?” (1993: 179). She asks this question precisely to test Benjamin’s notion of the ‘optical unconscious’ in relation to Freud’s notion of the unconscious.

And Freud footnotes a reference to Reinach's *L'art et la Magie* from 1905-12. He points to the possibility that "...primitive artists... did not desire to 'please' but to 'evoke' or conjure up" (1999: 90n93). He goes on to quote Reinach:

In modern times people often speak metaphorically of the magic of a great artist's brush or chisel, or more generally of the magic of art. This expression is no longer permissible in its proper sense of a *mystical force brought to bear by the human will upon other wills or upon objects*; but, as we have seen, there was a time when it was literally true—at least in the artists' opinion. (1999: 91n93)

Reinach's view of magical practice is typical of a Victorian rationalist explanation redolent with evolutionist theories of his time as will be argued in Chapter 5. I want to argue the opposite, that magical action can be understood as a performative 'force'—to use Reinach's term, and a term I will employ with regard to Austin's performative utterance—"brought to bear by the human will upon other wills" in the context of conventional normative understandings. I reference Freud and Reinach in order to flag my interest in reassessing attitudes in the late 19th-and early 20th-centuries to do with an over-evaluation of desires seen by them in the contexts of neurosis and primitivism respectively. In focusing on the latter, and through a re-evaluation of the operations of sympathetic magic, my project activates ethnographic and anthropological sources and their negotiations of so-called primitive or savage understandings of mimetic animism. Reinach's terms, 'evoke' and 'conjure up' suggest *processes* between agents that—when viewed outside the terms of cause and effect typical of the Victorian era—might be interpreted performatively with a strong emphasis on reciprocity between agents and a divergence within the 'self/body' so important to the last chapter of this thesis. It is with reference to these modes of mimetic animism that Jennifer Bean talks of a phenomenologically performative reflexivity that is so important to this project:

Mimesis stresses the reflexive, rather than reflection; it brings the subject into intimate contact with the object, or other, in a tactile, performative, and sensuous form of perception, the result of which is an experience that transcends the traditional subject-object dichotomy. Through mimesis the subject is not stabilized or rigidified by means of its identifications. Indeed, mimesis *redefines* identification as process, a *contagious* movement that renders indeterminate, fluid, or porous the boundaries between inside and outside. (2001: 46 emphasis added)⁷⁹

⁷⁹ See Sobchack who discusses this text by Jennifer Bean (2004: 89).

Michael Taussig in *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* describes a sensuousness in the photographic process where the "...capacity of mimetic machines to pump out contact-sensuousness encased within the spectrality of a commoditized world is nothing less than the discovery of an optical unconscious, opening up new possibilities for exploring reality..." (1993: 23). Rebecca Schneider, who references the same moment in Taussig's text, notes that this use of the 'optical unconscious' "...deploys a sensuality of mimesis, implicating the body of the viewer at the same time that that viewer is, by the tenets of perspectivalism, seemingly dissociated from that which is seen" (1997: 89).⁸⁰ In this way, the mimetic optical unconscious that Benjamin sought in the photographic image is important to the moving images *Back* and *Caress*. I aim, within a reflexive mode articulated by Bean above, to bring the body/s of the audience into a performatively intimate and tactile contact with these partial objects/subjects that transcends the traditional subject-object dichotomy. When encountering the overwhelmingly intimate detail of flesh, both on the detailed surfaces of the *Take* series and on my back, mimesis denies a stable identification of the images and redefines identification as a process of contamination; *contagious* movement, as Bean puts it, that confronts boundaries between inside and outside: my body and the body/s of the audience.

In this way technological advances in high definition macro filming (and projection) employed in *Caress* enlarge mimetic powers. In this context there is an irony in Benjamin's notion of the 'decline of photography' that is linked to his doctrine of mimesis that requires some discussion. As Cadava notes, Benjamin's notion of the 'decline of photography,' positions this decline as located in the technological advances in photography that renders it less mimetically powerful. This is because Benjamin locates an auratic value in the atmospheric or phantasmatic qualities of early photography that is diminished by technological advances. As Cadava writes: "It suggests that the most faithful photographs, the photograph most faithful to the event of the photograph, is the least faithful one, the least mimetic one—the photograph that remains faithful to its own infidelity. It dislocates—it *is* the dislocation, from within, of the possibility of reflection" (1997: 15). It is in this sense that Benjamin's doctrine of

⁸⁰ Schneider is arguing for these sensuous properties of mimesis as exploited and kept secret within commodity capitalism where the "...object in display plays on the sensuousness of the (dislocated) viewer, beckoning the viewer to enter (purchase) the object presented" (1997: 89).

mimesis "...presupposes a congruence between subject and technique that corresponds to, is congruent with, an essential incongruence" (1997: 15). This is to reiterate the idea that representational completion would *undo* mimetic force. Related to this is Benjamin's perception of similarity that is "...in every case bound to an instantaneous flash. It slips past, can possibly be regained, but really cannot be held fast, unlike other perceptions... The perception of similarities thus seems to be bound to a time-moment (*Zeitmoment*)" (1979: 66).

Having said this, Benjamin's 'decline of photography'—which itself can be taken to be a paradigm for a decline between the work of art and what it represents inaugurated by photography (Cadava 1997: 14)—can be seen, not as a diminishing of the mimetic faculty but as its transformation. As Susan Buck-Morss writes paraphrasing Benjamin's *On The Mimetic Faculty*, "...what appears... to be the 'decay of this capacity' of mimesis, may be, rather, a new stage in 'its transformation'" (1989: 267). Here Benjamin can be seen as equivocal, especially in his *Work of Art* essay. While he saw technological advances as hindering mimetic power, in relation to the development of film and cinematic experiences, he foresaw an enlargement of mimetic powers:

For the entire spectrum of optical, and now also acoustical, perception the film has brought about a similar deepening of apperception... With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. (1999: 229-230)⁸¹

This is to draw distinction between mimesis as 're-presentation' or 're-production' in variance with technical production by means of fragmentation of image, sound and duration. On this point Buck-Morss, with reference to Benjamin's *Work of Art* essay, writes:

It is in this way that technological *reproduction* gives back to humanity that capacity for experience which technological *production* threatens to take away. If industrialization has caused a crises in perception due to the speeding up of time and the fragmentation of space, film shows a healing potential by slowing down time and, through montage, constructing 'synthetic realities' as new spatio-temporal orders wherein the 'fragmented images' are brought together 'according to a new law.' (1989: 268)

⁸¹ Buck-Morss elaborates on this point of view (Buck-Morss 1989: 267).

The idea that these effects of framing and montage ‘reveal new structural formations in the subject’ is taken up by Taussig when he refers to the way in which Eisenstein, in the context of mimesis, understood “...the interdependence of montage with physiognomic aspects of visual worlds” (1993: 28). He refers to the physiognomic quality of Eisenstein’s film *The Old and the New* (1928) and the influence that Kabuki theatre of pre-modern Japan had upon the filmmaker.⁸² In referencing “The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram” in *Film Form*, where Eisenstein gives his estimation of the importance of Kabuki theatre for the future of film, Taussig refers to “...an unprecedented slowing-down of movement ‘beyond any point we have ever seen,’ and ‘disintegrated’ acting, ... performed in pieces detached from one another, acting with the right arm only, acting with the left leg only, acting with the head and neck only...” (1993: 29). In this regard, expectations of naturalism, and representation, were alleviated in favour of what Taussig refers to as exploiting “...the nature of magic” (1993: 29).

I will return to what Taussig means in his reference to magic in significant detail. For now, Eisenstein’s theory of a physiognomic effect in viewing film underwrites Sobchack’s endeavours to undermine general tendencies in contemporary film theory to emphasise the scopic rather than somatic experience of the viewer and refers to what Laura Marks refers to as ‘the skin of the film’ and ‘touch’ of the cinematic experience in the context of ‘haptic visibility’ (Sobchack 2004: 55-57).⁸³ Marks seeks, within the context of the digital age and a rethinking about optical visibility, to make links between bodily haptic encounters and opticality. She also stresses a closeness to the surface of objects in a new media cinematic encounter that is mimetic. As Marks writes: “Mimesis is a form of representation based on getting close enough to the other thing to become it” (2002: xiii). This contesting of our relationships to the optical and the haptic is interesting because it positions the body/s of the audience in what Marks describes as a loss of depth, “...we become amoebalike, lacking a center, changing as the surface to which we cling changes. We cannot help but be changed in the process of interacting” (2002: xvi). Again, I value this insight as it becomes another way of contextualising

⁸² Kabuki allows for a coincidence derived from the Japanese alphabet which Sergei Eisenstein saw as a language of hieroglyphs and ideograms—for example: a mouth + a bird = ‘to sing,’ and, a knife + a heart = ‘sorrow’ (Ebrahimian 2004: 67). And see David Bordwell who points out that Kabuki also “...grants various sensory channels an equal status in triggering spectatorial response” (2005: 125).

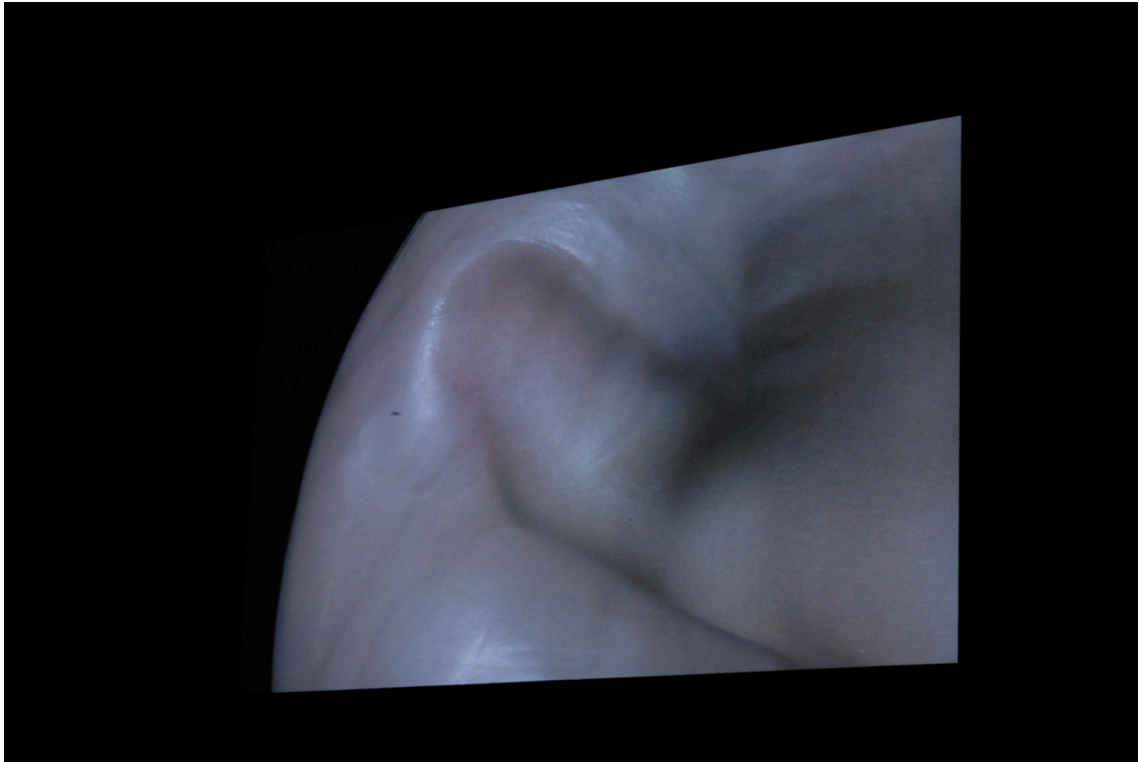
⁸³ In referencing Miriam Hansen, Sobchack refers to the way a “mimetic aspect corresponds to a level of physiognomic excess” (2004: 60).

Caress as a mode of haptic participation (*Cut 2*) that, in its intimacy, touches audiences with mimetic closeness. As is the case with *Back*, these moving images emphasise close-up surfaces intended to thwart optical reason, the balance of the viewer, and avoid literal figuration, all enhancing a possibility of embodiment. As Marks notes of the video works she focuses on:

Haptic looking tends to rest on the surface of its object rather than to plunge into depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture. It is a labile, plastic sort of look, more inclined to move than to focus... [inviting] a look that moves on the surface plane of the screen for some time before the viewer realizes what it is she is beholding. Haptic video resolves into figuration only gradually if at all, instead inviting the caressing look... (2002: 8)



BACK, 2008



CARESS, 2008

This reinforces Bean's comment that mimesis involves intimate contact as a contagiousness that is important to my unfolding argument. In this context I draw comparison between an ambivalence in the partial object and the ambivalent nature of the cinematic gaze outlined by Sobchack.⁸⁴ Her focus is to describe the embodied

⁸⁴ In arguing for the somatic effects of cinema, Sobchack refers to Benjamin's two essays, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* and *On The Mimetic Faculty*. She refers to Benjamin's concepts of 'tactile appropriation' in the former, and interprets his notion of the mimetic faculty as "...a sensuous and bodily form of perception" in the latter (2004: 55). She does this to argue for a phenomenologically inflected materialism evident in Benjamin's opus. In this context it should be noted that Benjamin traces a transformation from an archaic sensuous arena of similarity to a notion of non-sensuous similarity based in language. In *Doctrine of the Similar* he refers to a disappearance of a "sphere of life which once seemed to be ruled by the law of similarity," and in qualifying this as sensuous he writes: "From time immemorial, a mimetic faculty has been conceded some influence on language. That occurred, however, without foundation and without giving any serious consideration to meaning, or even the history, of a mimetic faculty. In the main, such considerations remained closely bound to the commonplace, sensuous area of similarity" (1979: 65, 67). In relation to the written and spoken text Benjamin draws out a doctrine of non-sensuous similarity: "Thus the nexus of meaning implicit in the sounds of the sentence is the basis from which something similar can become apparent instantaneously, in a flash. Since this non-sensual similarity, however, reaches into all areas of reading, this deep level reveals a peculiar ambiguity of the word 'reading' in both its profane and magical senses" (1979: 68). In this way Benjamin alerts us to a kind of primordial sensuousness (linked to the optical unconscious) that instantaneously flashes up. This is what Sobchack wants to argue for as a carnally sensuous reciprocity of the viewer with the cinematic

structures of cinematic experience that “...emerge carnally through our senses” (2004: 8). She argues that such an ambivalence,

has a precise phenomenological structure that is grounded in the non hierarchical *reciprocity* and figure-ground *reversibility* of ‘having sense,’ and ‘making sense’— meaning thus constituted as both a *carnal matter* and a *conscious meaning* that emerge *simultaneously* (if in various ratios) from *the single system of flesh and consciousness that is the lived body.*” (2004: 73)

As a means of contextualising ambivalence in the cinematic experience as a liminal reversibility of figure and ground, Sobchack also refers to Eisenstein, and with reference to Lesley Stern’s writing on the uncanny in film, she outlines the somatic effects of cinema.⁸⁵ She quotes Stern in saying that “...for Eisenstein, the moving body was ‘conceived and configured cinematically... not just [as] a matter of representation, but [as] a question of the circuit of sensory vibrations that links the viewer and screen’”⁸⁶ (2004: 55). Such a linking is couched in terms of a ‘self-doubling’ that was characteristic of Merleau-Ponty’s language of perception as an in-between two (*entre-deux*) outlined in the previous chapter. There is an emphasis here that what is seen on the screen differs from what was in front of the camera. In a Benjaminian sense, this embodies the repetition of the filmic process, its alteration to optical and acoustical perception, as something new that doubles and loops the viewer in an enlargement of mimetic powers. I suggest that this is similar to what Schimmel argues for in the repetitious acts of Nauman. Pacing around the studio for works like *Stamping in the Studio* (1968) Nauman

screen. See Rabinbach’s “Introduction to Walter Benjamin’s ‘Doctrine of the Similar’” (1979) for a critique of Benjamin’s notion that the origin of language lies in natural correspondences.

⁸⁵ Sobchack does not employ the term liminal in her text.

⁸⁶ See Stern in discussing the effects of the uncanny. Stern describes a space of ‘self-doubling.’ She quotes Leo Charney in discussing Jean Epstein’s writing on the concept of ‘photogénie’ in “Bonjour Cinema and Other Writings,” in *Afterimage 10*, where the concept “...suggests that rapid movement through space and time creates an environment of flux, ephemerality, and displacement that found its home in cinema” (1997: unpaginated www). Charney goes on to write that, “the object on screen differs from what it was before; the new context makes it a new object, even if it can be traced referentially to the concrete object that existed in front of the camera. *Photogénie* embodies repetition, yet the repetition is ineffably different. In mechanical reproduction’s reproduction of the physical universe, something new emerges” (Stern 1997: unpaginated www). As previously stated, I am pursuing a notion of disorientation rather than the uncanny, however Stern’s thinking on the uncanny, via Charney, pulls together some of the aspects I am aiming for in *Above and Back*: a repeated ‘unfolding’ of my body through space that creates flux and displacement where, even though the viewer becomes aware of a body, its repetition is ‘ineffably different.’ This is important for the discussion that follows where, via the writing on Phelan, the body in its performative ‘plenitude’ (Phelan’s word), like metonymy, becomes separated from its referent.

made works with actions and gestures that he found himself engaging in on an everyday basis in his studio. These early films and video tapes are the objects by which we view the performative acts in Nauman's studio. Schimmel writes: "For Nauman, the repetition of such simple actions had the potential to force the viewer into his loop. Eschewing narrative, he opted for a type of recognition that could ruthlessly wear down the viewer, for an engaging tension that would never be resolved" (1998: 91).

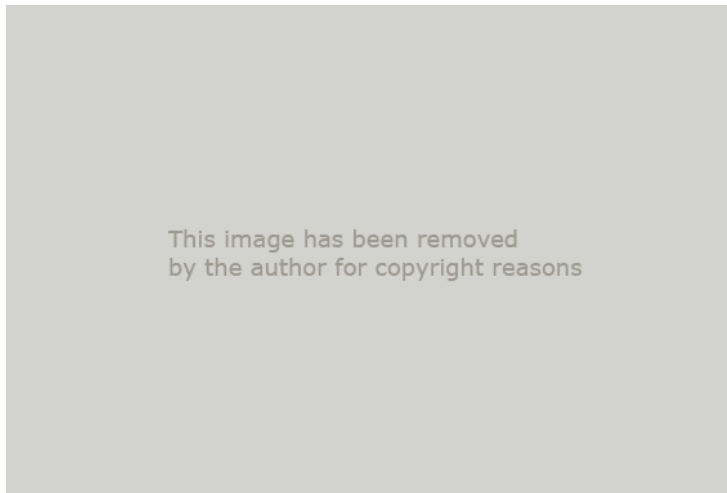


BRUCE NAUMAN, *STAMPING IN THE STUDIO*, 1968

As a 'circuit of sensory vibrations,' both Nauman and Eisenstein's montage theories interest me with respect to close-up framing and a disorientation in the viewing experience. This itself was a primary objective in Eisenstein's juxtaposition of images by montage (Ebrahimian 2004: 67).⁸⁷ It created a dynamic interplay between cuts from one

⁸⁷ I am less interested in a notion of juxtapositions of shots that was important to Eisenstein's overall concept of montage. As Sean Cubitt points out, his principle of the montage "...as it was being voiced in the 1920s was based on the dialectic model of clashes between shots" (2004: 106). In "The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram," Eisenstein described this in terms of montage as conflict from one shot to another as distinct from the idea of linkage. The idea of conflict would function as an explosion, "...as impulses driving forward the total film." The nature of the conflict could be manifest in a number of ways, not just through image. These included: "Conflict of scales. Conflict of volumes. Conflict of masses... Conflict of depths." And this also extended to: "Conflicts between an object and its dimensions-and conflicts between an event and its duration" (Eisenstein 1949: 38-39). And this later developed into conflicts between sound and image that was an overall theory of disintegrated actions as Eisenstein states: "The intensity of perception increases as the didactic process of identification proceeds more easily along a disintegrated action" (1949: 37). It was this sense of 'disintegrated acting' that most attracted Eisenstein to Kabuki theatre (Eisenstein 1949: 42-43). Shots in isolation from the montage effect are seen as 'merely figurative,' whereas associations between shots in an overall

image to another as manifest, for example, in Eisenstein's *October* where a rapid burst of two-frame shots of a machine gun suggests the rat-tat sound and where the image itself conveys the urgency of the sound (Thompson and Bordwell 1994: 141-145). In a related way, the moving images in *The Artist Will Be Present* adumbrate a resistance to a desire to decipher specific meaning in association with specific shots. As ways of disorientating perception (that might be comparable to the formal ambivalence in the part objects), they employ suspended camera angles (literally from above) and close-up framing. This, together with filming in a blacked-out studio, in turn projected in a blacked-out space as 'space between'—with its incessantly looped sound track spatially removed in *Over & Over*—makes for a concurrence of parts, with respect to the body that produced them, and in relation to the body/s of the audience.⁸⁸



SERGEI EISENSTEIN, *OCTOBER*, 1905

sequence was sought after (Cubitt 2004: 106). In particular, the notions of conflict between objects, their dimensions, and between sound and image have influenced my project.

⁸⁸ It needs to be noted that my reference to Eisenstein is at odds with his overall desire for a governable art form. Eisenstein did not seek an indeterminacy of meaning in his projects, but rather, what Cubitt describes as “a rhetorical unity of the film image” (2004: 109). I am aware that I am treating Eisenstein in isolation from a broader political context—as Taussig and Sobchack likewise do—where an organisation of ‘total’ cinema was designed as rhetorical persuasion, “...to persuade its audience of what they already believed, to impassion them with a power of shared belief in the vital task of saving the homeland once again from the brute enmity of the Germans” (Cubitt 2004: 268).

It is in this sense that Eisenstein makes the case for “...reducing visual and aural perceptions to a ‘common denominator’ [so that] *visual as well as aural overtones are a totally physiological sensation*” (1949: 70).⁸⁹ In this regard he writes:

For the musical overtone (a throb) it is not strictly fitting to say: “I hear.”
Nor for the visual overtone: “I see.”
For both, a new uniform formula must enter our vocabulary: “I feel.” (1949: 71)

Following the idea of ‘disintegrated acting,’ with respect to the dying daughter in *Yashaō* (*The Mask Maker*) when the Kabuki theatre visited Moscow, Eisenstein’s writes: “The whole process of the death agony was disintegrated into solo performances of each member playing its own role: the role of the leg, the role of the arms, the role of the head” (1949: 43). This reiterates Taussig’s observations above and is similar to Strathern’s approach cited earlier that mimesis is the physical counterpart of metonymy in language where the body parts and movements solicit mimetic partiality.



BRUCE NAUMAN, *THIGHING*, 1967

In this context a comparison to Nauman’s work between 1965-1970 bears a close relationship between the part body/part object casts and his short video sequences. This traces a genealogy from *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* to works like *Thighing*

⁸⁹ See Cubitt where he discusses Eisenstein’s reduction of image and sound to a ‘common denominator’ as well the influence of Kabuki theatre. He quotes Eisenstein as follows, “...the unique combination of the *hand movement* of Itsikawa Ensio as he slits his throat in the act of harakiri with the *sobbing sound* off-stage that *graphically* corresponds to the movement of the knife” (2004: 106).

(1967) in which he films himself manipulating the skin of his own thigh in a close-up cropped shot, to works such as *Stamping in the Studio* (1968) in which he walks about the studio for 62 minutes, at various points in and out of the frame. In each exercise the body is treated as, in the words of Cadava cited at the beginning of this chapter, ‘essentially incongruent.’ Each is strongly mimetic as, in the words of Bean above, their “...mimesis *redefines* identification as process, a *contagious* movement that renders indeterminate, fluid, or porous the boundaries between inside and outside” (2001: 46). In arguing a similar progression for *The Artist Will Be Present*, these are the modes of performativity inherent in the ‘looking’ that move between, on the one hand, the tactile and literal touching of the objects that themselves bear the intimate imprints of another’s embrace, and on the other, the reciprocal and reversible ambivalent viewing akin to the cinematic experience. In both, the notion of mimetic *partiality* will be contextualised as a condition of formal ambivalence: what we will see is what Mauss refers to as the ‘poorly executed ideogram.’

The Artist Will Be Present

PERFORMING PARTIAL OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS

Chapter 4

4.1 PERFORMATIVE SCULPTURE/
THE OBJECT OF PERFORMANCE



4.1 PERFORMATIVE SCULPTURE/ THE OBJECT OF PERFORMANCE

Where the last chapter concluded in suggesting a relationship between Nauman's part objects and his performing body, this chapter consolidates on the object of performance via Minimalism as a way of discussing a notion of 'surrogate performers.' One of Schimmel's aims, while discussing the impact of performance related activities on the objects that emerged from them, is to examine action-based work and its relationship to Minimalism's reductive tendencies (1998: 17).⁹⁰ He discusses contemporary dance's influence on "...the reductive vocabulary of 'performative sculpture' in the 1960s, as well as on objects of Minimalist sculpture" (1998: 88).⁹¹



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ROBERT MORRIS, *UNTITLED (BOX FOR STANDING)*, 1961

He refers to works like Robert Morris' *Column* (1961), a hollow column built to Morris' body dimensions in which he stood upright for three-and-a-half minutes until tipping himself over, or Morris' *Untitled (Box for Standing)* (1961). Krauss begins her chapter entitled "Mechanical Ballets: Light, Motion and Theatre" in her landmark *Passages in Modern Sculpture* with a similar intention, describing a Minimalist column made by

⁹⁰ Schimmel's other interests are abstract expressionism's heroic gesture and conceptual art's objectlessness in work between 1949-1979.

⁹¹ See Brentano who mentions the Judson Dance Theatre, in which Morris was involved, that collaborated with Anna Halprin, a San Francisco based choreographer using natural movement and everyday tasks as a basis for choreography in the 1950s (1994: 38).

For an emphasis on a chronology from dance choreography through Minimalism see Heathfield, where, in the context of live performance artists such as Jérôme Bel and La Ribot, he points to: "The correlation between performance art and 'the moving body' of dance [which is] rooted in the minimalist aesthetics of experimental choreographers of the 1960s and 1970s..." (2004: 11).

Morris for a seven-minute performance organised by the composer LaMonte Young at the Living Theatre in 1961. The curtain opens to an erect eight feet-high grey plywood column. After three-and-a-half minutes the column falls prone for the second half of the seven-minute duration. Only the column can be seen on the stage, prompting Krauss to call it the ‘performer,’ and comparing this work to Morris’ *Columns* (1961-73) of painted aluminium which he would exhibit in various physical states (horizontal or vertical) for museums and galleries (1977: 201-203, 236-240, 295n201). Twenty-two years later Jones addresses these concerns in a feminist phenomenological critique of Tony Smith’s *Die* (1962). She refers to Fried’s remarks on Morris’ work as ‘blatantly anthropomorphic’ with an implication of ‘an inner, even secret life’ (1999: 47). In discussing the relative size of *Die* in relation to the size of the viewer/s (a six-foot steel cube), Jones, again in reference in Fried, writes that “...paradoxically, this huge cube becomes a ‘surrogate person’” (1999: 48). This is the ‘performer’ that Krauss refers to in relation to Morris’ *Columns* prompting Jones to contextualise Minimalism (and body art which she views as a corollary of Minimalism) as a means of reflexive exchange where there is a contingency of the body/self on its environment as Merleau-Ponty’s ‘the flesh of the world’ in a process of anthropomorphism (1999: 46-47).⁹²

This history of the ‘surrogate performer’ is one way of contextualising performative tendencies as ‘inherent’ in objects. The fragmented body, as it diminishes a universally pre-given perception of the world, augments the possibilities of ambiguous or polyvalent perception. This passes through reductive tendencies in Minimalism that seek to eradicate artistic intention in favour of prioritising the innumerable interpretations by viewers. Experience, rather than being private and privileged, becomes fragmented and inestimable. As Sean Cubitt comments, “...it indicates a felt need for a cultural form that excluded subjectivity, and that placed truth outside the human, in closed, rule-governed worlds (2004: 237-238). And as Butt notes in addressing Fried’s contentions with theatricality, “...the body of minimal art’s beholder was—supposedly unlike that of

⁹² Jones notes that Fried rejects Morris’ work for its ‘blatantly anthropomorphic’ qualities inherent to Minimalism and the possibility of ‘an inner, even secret life’ (1999: 47).

This critique and opening up of Minimalist practice has been important to me in past works such as *Safe* (2001) and *Sanitate* (2004) where some of the basic tenants of Minimalism are engaged with (the use of reconstructed cake tins or ready-made tissue-box dispensers in serial formations) but are imploded, or corrupted, by symbolic associations of the body (in bodily imprints or exaggerated electric cabling). See Natasha Conland where she makes this point (2005: 5-12).

the spectator of modernist painting or sculpture—already *on* stage, implicated within the theatrical space of the work. Such work was ‘theatrical’ precisely because it depended upon the presence of the spectator in order to be complete” (2005: 9). These two comments propose a reduction of authorial intent with a concomitant increase in the value given to spectator interpretation as constituting meaning in art works.

To employ this trajectory—of the fragmented sculptural figure through Minimalism’s reductive tendencies—is useful but fraught, particularly (as I discuss in this chapter) due to tendencies in the literature surrounding Minimalism to obscure the body. In this regard there is often a tension aimed at putting the body *back in* Minimalism, characteristic, for example, of the writing surrounding the work of Eva Hesse.⁹³ Contemporary artists such as Frankovich, Kosloff and Eskdale offer ways forward on this trajectory and highlight a powerful sense of the performative object.

It was with *Passages in Modern Sculpture* that Krauss, prompted by Morris, placed a phenomenological interpretation on modes of Minimalist practice that ‘takes the relationship out of the work.’⁹⁴ Morris first advocated this position in his “Notes on Sculpture Part 2” in *Artforum* of 1966 when he wrote that: “The better new work [Minimalist] takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer’s field of vision. The object is but one of the terms in the new esthetic” (21).⁹⁵ Krauss advocated a movement from the interior armature of a sculpture—the internal component parts that give meaning to a work—to the surface of a work, in a sense, challenging a privileged, internal and *a priori* experience of the body: “But what if meaning does not depend on this kind of prior experience? What if meaning, instead of preceding experience, occurs *within* experience...” (1977: 27). And in referencing Edmund Husserl’s “The Transcendental Problems of Intersubjectivity and the Intersubjective World,” she relates this to a questioning of “...the notion of a self that is essentially private and inaccessible (except indirectly) to others” (1977: 28).

⁹³ See for example Anne Middleton Wagner’s *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner and O’Keeffe*.

⁹⁴ Krauss has more recently written on Minimalism from this point of view (Bois et al. 2004: 493).

⁹⁵ For a good essay on these issues see Maurice Berger who discusses Morris’ trip to Peru to observe the Nazca lines and his subsequent essay in *Artforum* in 1975. He traces Morris’ movement away from Minimalism and discusses his phenomenological leanings as predicated on a resistance to the static art object (1994: 18-33).

She argues this de-centering was predicated on the works of Auguste Rodin. His deliberate segmentation of the human form in *The Walking Man* (1877), striding forward with no arms, exaggerates the forwardness of its movement. His *Iris Messenger of the Gods* (1890-91) is without significant limbs—an arm and a head—in denial of the figure’s internal orientation and in favour of a more externally perceived signifier of flight: the sculpture, in its reduced form, resembles the form of a wing. This begins, for Krauss, a notion of the sculptural object, not as static but as temporal where an experience of the body is dependent on gesture and movement “...as they externalise themselves” (1977: 4, 28, 282).⁹⁶

4.2 ALICIA FRANKOVICH’S *FLYING FOX*

Akin to the infamous jutting leg of Rodin’s *Iris* is Frankovich’s one-hour performance *Flying Fox* in Auckland on the 24 January 2008. Frankovich’s leg was seen coming out of an upstairs office window clad in jeans and her signature shoe: an *adidas* hybrid between a running and gymnast shoe.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ In the same vein, and as a result of progressive reduction of form, Krauss argues that Constantine Brancusi’s *Sleeping Muse* (1910) moves progressively toward his *The Beginning of the World* (1924) where the head is not only separated from the body—severed from the internal armature—but its highly reflective surface drives out internal speculation and so resists notions of internally private and privileged meaning.

⁹⁷ I am aware in making this comparison that Rodin’s *Iris* also signifies a highly sexualised and yet truncated female body. From such a viewpoint, see RoseLee Goldberg who compares Rodin’s *Iris* with Hannah Wilke’s *What Does This Represent/What Do You Represent* (1978-84) from a feminist perspective. She contrasts Wilke’s posture of open legs, genitals exposed and toy gun in hand as a “...protest against ‘the male gaze’ and the ‘objecthood’ of the female body...” with *Iris*’ exposed genitals, normally exhibited just above the viewer’s face, and the artist’s signature engraved into the sole of her right foot. Her point is that, unlike Wilke’s presence in the image, “Rodin is nowhere to be seen, but his hands and eyes are to be left everywhere on the lady’s acrobatic torso” (2004: 178). In this way Goldberg suggests that live performance, or at least the image/document of Wilke’s body as contesting the objectification of the female subject as object, allows for more ‘direct rhetorical hits’ than the still sculpture. While I respect Goldberg’s writing I find this comparison slightly reductive in that *Iris*, as I am at pains to argue, announces a highly performative leaning in its fragmentation of the figure, not as static but as a temporal experience dependent on gesture and movement. *Iris* also bears the traces of the artist’s body in that process as externalised upon its surface, just as I will argue does Carolyn Eskdale’s *Furniture Objects*. While I might agree with Goldberg’s observations regarding an inherent sexism manifest in *Iris*, I think she creates an artificial divide in her comparison between the two works *What Does This Represent/What Do You Represent* and *Iris* as static and encountered. My view is that Rodin is *everywhere* to be seen but that one may be uncomfortable with the politics of his seeing.

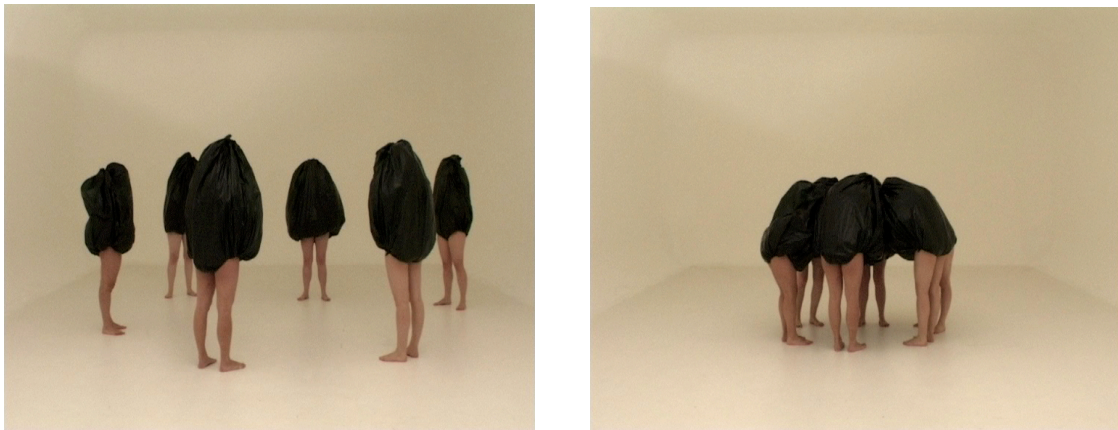


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While the invitation to the performance indicated that the event would take place in her father's upstairs office, on arrival audiences were confused to be left outside. Following a period of discussion we settled into looking at the leg and wondering how the work might 'develop.' With the exception of a few foot movements to avoid cramps on the artist's part, the performance stayed the same for the hour and the audience stayed in the driveway milling about and occasionally looking up for progress. Frankovich describes the work as soliciting notions of being half-in-and-half-out, not allowing entry, of setting up an event which will, by nature, fail expectations. She also views the live performative aspect of the work as necessary for the occasion but redundant in the sense of the work's outcome (Frankovich 2008). *Flying Fox* was never videoed and lives on as a photographic print exhibited exactly one week later at Starkwhite Gallery, Auckland. Frankovich is at some pains to outline her lameness: lame object, lame leg, lame gymnast. Frankovich is a failed gymnast and much of her work is in response to the traumatic events of 1992 when, while participating in the National New Zealand Championships, she found herself unable to perform. She walked out of the competition never to talk with her coach again and never to continue as a gymnast.⁹⁸ During our discussion she mentions her gymnast colleague Zoe Bell, who also presented at the 1992 National New Zealand Championships, and how Bell's career has leaped forward, in particular as Uma Thurman's body double in Tarantino's *Kill Bill 2*. This exemplifies Frankovich's sense of failure and lameness deeply entrenched in most of her artwork: a steady deferring of anything that might structurally function or represent a whole. This is a calculated deferral and redundancy that plays itself out in multifaceted ways: in the audiences' expectations around the event; in the object that is the photograph mediating

⁹⁸ See Rob McKenzie's "Alicia Frankovich" (2006).

the experience; and in the partiality of her presence manifest as this part object—the leg—jutting and disorienting in difference to *its* normative function and spatial axis. It is this redundancy that strikes at the force of *Flying Fox*. This is a denial of the body’s internal orientation and an erosion of the figure manifest in Krauss’ notion of morphological ambivalence discussed at length in Chapter 6.



LARESA KOSLOFF, *DEEP & SHALLOW*, 2004

In a similar vein, the work of Kosloff, who has collaborated with Frankovich,⁹⁹ analyses, in Kosloff’s words, “...how choreographed scenarios, repetition, and physical gestures might translate into signification” (2008: unpaginated www). *Deep & Shallow* (2004), a four-minute digital video, depicts a group of six women all wearing black rubbish bags fully enclosing their upper body, but leaving their legs naked and performing a series of movements in space. These partially disclosed subject/objects are reliant—due to their physical reduction and noticeable similarity with one another—on each other in a repeated formation of gestures that signify something *a priori* to experience. Once again I am arguing for a denial of the figure’s internal orientation in preference for the reductive vocabulary of ‘performative sculpture,’ not as static but as a temporal experience. Phillip Watkins makes a case for a kind of *a priori* abstraction and anonymity in relation to *Deep & Shallow* when he writes that “...the figures themselves are, it seems, *a priori* anonymous, abstract; all signs of integral difference made void through the masking of face and upper body.” And in terms reminiscent of Morris’ phenomenological resistance to the intentions of the author, Watkins notes that “...they

⁹⁹ See *The Velodrome Project* (2006) in collaboration with Alicia Frankovich, which was a one-day public event held at the Brunswick Cycling Velodrome in Melbourne, Australia (Kosloff 2008).

also suggest a denial of the assumed independence of individualism, becoming (particularly in the light of Kosloff's choice of cast) a multi-faceted self portrait" (2005 unpaginated catalogue).¹⁰⁰ The sense of reductive repetition in Kosloff's *Deep & Shallow* is key to a notion of tragic metaphor enhanced by the six-figured dance, and—when the work was curated by Juliana Engburg for *Make it Modern* (2005)—with the repetition of the identical work on a grid of six flat-screen televisions.¹⁰¹ To continue the Rodin analogy, *Deep & Shallow* might be compared to his *The Three Shades* (1880) in their repeated use of the figure of Adam from the same mould at the apex of the *Gates of Hell*. In its repeated use of the identical figure—suggestive in fixed three dimensions of the rotational movement or dance of the figure/s around the pivotal point of the gesturing outstretched hands held in close proximity—this work by Rodin announces the temporal dance of Kosloff's arcane figures, blurring distinctions between performative sculpture and the object of performance.

¹⁰⁰ To place this excerpt in context, here is a fuller quote: "The bagged figures that ritualistically enact nonsensical or arcane performances, acquire character and identity through their interaction with one another; a gestural give and take that we as observers read as significant in some way. But for all these distinctions, which increase the more you watch them, the figures themselves are, it seems, *a priori* anonymous, abstract; all signs of integral difference made void through the masking of face and upper body. Their uniformity, carefully considered by Kosloff, (to the extent that each participant was chosen on the basis that their physique matched that of the artist) rather than suggesting a gagging of individuality, creates a being prior to it, prior to consciousness itself even. Consequently the figures take on the pathos of tragicomic metaphor; a portrait of humanity, physically isolated and vulnerable, yet reassured and defined by the need for social contact and boundaries; they also suggest a denial of the assumed independence of individualism, becoming (particularly in the light of Kosloff's choice of cast) a multi-faceted self portrait" (Watkins 2005).

¹⁰¹ See *Deep & Shallow* 2004, dvd on six flat screen monitors, in Juliana Engburg (2005), *Make it Modern* (Melbourne: Deloitte Office).



LARESA KOSLOFF, *DEEP & SHALLOW*, IN *MAKE IT MODERN*, 2005

In this context Hamilton's 'body object' photographs, staged directly for the camera and presented as still images, declare a similar use of the fragmented body where, rather than an *a priori* experience of the body, meaning is announced *within* experience. Her *Body Object Series #11, Boot* (1984/1993) depicts Hamilton in a squarely framed photograph, left arm at her side and right arm extended horizontally and totally covered with a full length gumboot which extends up to and covers her shoulder. This very simple photograph takes on a strangely animistic appearance where her anatomy is altered to the point that we read her body's capabilities and inherent meanings differently.



ALICIA FRANKOVICH,
TO VEER: A SUDDEN CHANGE OF OPINION, SUBJECT OR TYPE OF BEHAVIOUR, 2007

Frankovich's installations inaugurate a similar sense of functional frustration and redundancy. Her *To Veer: A Sudden Change Of Opinion, Subject Or Type Of Behaviour* (2007), suspended between the walls of a Romanesque chapel on Lake Como, resembles an 'acromat' support system used by gymnasts when working on the trampoline.¹⁰² Held by

¹⁰² *To Veer: A Sudden Change Of Opinion, Subject Or Type Of Behaviour* (2007) was shown at *Corso Aperto* during the Advanced Course in Visual Arts, a workshop with the artist Joan Jonas held by

two people to each side of the trampoline, the acromat can be suddenly pulled taut in the event that the gymnast fails to correctly recover from a somersault.¹⁰³ For *To Veer: A Sudden Change Of Opinion, Subject Or Type Of Behaviour* Frankovich's body was wrapped and suspended in a dysfunctional 'acromat' of ropes and foam. When presented in its photographic form her body is, in Frankovich's words, cocooned, defunct, inactive and lacking (2008). But most interesting is her comment that, for the audience, the work is about a desire to activate the structure. I interpret this as a desire to undo undesired outcomes, to undo the failure at the heart of Frankovich's tangle. It is in this light that Brian Massumi writes that:

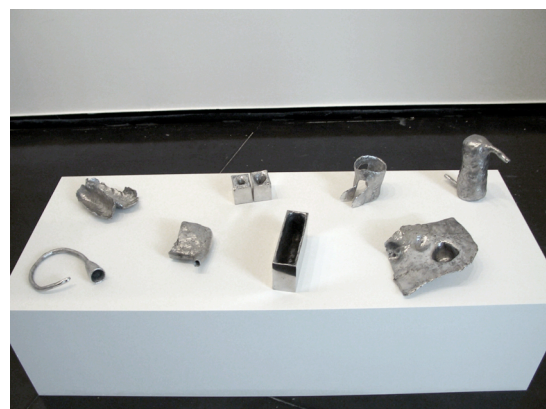
The charge of indeterminacy carried by the body is inseparable from it. It strictly coincides with it, to the extent that the body is in passage or in process (to the extent that it is dynamic and alive). But the charge is not itself corporeal. Far from regaining a concreteness, to think the body in movement thus means accepting the paradox that there is an incorporeal dimension *of the body*. Of it, but not it. Real, material, but incorporeal. Inseparable, coincident, but disjunct. (2002: 5)

In this sense Massumi advances Krauss' thesis, inaugurating the *passage* of the body through fragmentation and duration, to one of "...unfolding the body *contemporary* to its every move" (2002: 5).

4.3 CAROLYN ESKDALE'S *FURNITURE OBJECTS*



CAROLYN ESKDALE, *BODY POCKET*, 2003



CAROLYN ESKDALE, *FURNITURE OBJECTS*, 2000-03

Fondazione Ratti and curated by Anna Daneri, Roberto Pinto and Cesare Pietroiusti, on Lake Como, Italy, 2-21 July, 2007.

¹⁰³ The acromat was more literally referenced by Frankovich in the work *I'll Teach You about Parametres: 9 Overhead Safety Belt Systems, Acromat & Net* (2007).

With an emphasis on exhibiting part objects as a form of embodied fragmentation, Eskdale employs similar strategies when exhibiting her *Furniture Objects* (2000-2003).¹⁰⁴ Like Frankovich, but stylistically different, she invests her objects with a sense of functional frustration and redundancy. Her sculptures are hand-held in scale and exhibited randomly on table-like pedestals. They are not representations of body organs, or parts of bodies of which they are so reminiscent, but rather, objects that embody the sensations and feelings we might have toward those body parts. First made from clay and later cast in aluminium, Eskdale labours over the forms, fingering and manipulating them. She describes a process, when making the works, of meditatively thinking through, for example, the lung: “How does the lung feel in its unremitting inflation and deflation? How am I aware of different parts of my body and how might this manifest through my fingers?” (2007).

In this way Eskdale’s work is reminiscent of Gabriel Orozco’s *Mis Manos son Mi Corazón* (*My Hands Are My Heart*) (1991) in which he is videoed manipulating a ball of clay between his hands in front of his torso. This work presents a gradual process of making a ‘sculpture’ as one that is always in process. The very traditional material of clay plays with the notion of the clay model (or the substance an *objet d’art* might be made from), while the work as a performed process insists on a lack of closure. In this sense the process takes precedence over the aesthetics of the form. There is a very poignant ‘thinking through the sculpture’ as to how his heart might feel as manifest through his fingers. Together with this, Eskdale’s fairly random placement of her objects on pedestal/tables is reminiscent of Orozco’s *Working Tables* (2000) that, as will be argued in Chapter 6, invite a looking that is dispersed, suggestive of objects in limbo that might be, as her title suggests, like furniture re-arranged in some participatory manner.

¹⁰⁴ Some of Eskdale’s part objects that I discuss were exhibited collectively in *Oriface* as part of the Melbourne International Arts Festival (2003) curated by Juliana Engberg at the Australian Centre of Contemporary Art (ACCA).



CAROLYN ESKDALE, *RESERVE OBJECT*, 2001

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GABRIEL OROZCO, *MY HANDS ARE MY HEART*, 1991

Eskdale's objects were made between 2000-2003 with her journal notes at the time musing on the process of making them as "...a wandering of loose associations, remembered worried forms, openings, non functional forms, internal body cavities, almost devices... bearers of nervous action of the hands and the wandering mind" (2007). These notational comments are significant in that they position these objects as not functional (or representational) but as operational 'devices' that bear out some physiognomic affect albeit redundant to a specific biology of the body. She also titles the works individually in her journal (while these titles have never been individually assigned when the works were exhibited).¹⁰⁵ *Body Pocket* (2003) is the work she describes as closest to the feeling of how a lung operates. This work's mimetic incongruence with her actual lung—just as Orozco's is incongruent with his heart—is located in Eskdale's working processes which are sensuous and physically located as her moment's recognition of how a lung might *be*. The surfaces of these works attest to her nervous fingering so that *Reserve Object* (2001) leaves us with a well-handled embodiment of the body's continual intake and outtake of matter. I am arguing that these objects powerfully stand for all that is left out of their form, as a trace of how we experience our bodies in action. And that they *so* manifest Eskdale's body alerts the body/s of her audiences to relate intersubjectively with them as reciprocal and embodied. Moreover these works' direct correlation to our *insides* allows them to read as objects that are as much about that which we do not see but constantly externalise in our minds (my heart and my lungs) as a form of somatic thinking where my subjectivism becomes chiasmically objectified; my inside flesh as the flesh of the world. This is where *Ear Boxes* (2000) presents two objects (both equally mould-and cast-like) that activate what the channels (the insides) of our hearing might be like; their mimetic fragmentation conjuring a kind of primal sensation of hearing. The video equivalent of this work is Gary Hills' *As It is Always Already Taking Place* (1990) in which the artist stripped back 16 small TV monitors, revealing their objectness as forms, and displaying moving images of parts of his body on each screen, all nestled within a minimalist shelf housed in the wall of the gallery. The shiny surface of the monitors, as an equivalent to Constantine Brancusi's reflective metal and stone surfaces, resists the spectator's gaze and reveals the materiality of the objects.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ I have used Eskdale's individual titles for each work illustrated.

¹⁰⁶ Another video work which exemplifies these characteristics of disembodied fragmentation is Laurent Goldring's *Petite chronique de l'image (Short Chronicles of Imagery)* (1995-2002) in which eight video loops each depicting one naked body animate "...micro-movements repeated with slight variations, conjuring up spasms... The postures themselves refer more to the body as an organ



CAROLYN ESKDALE, *EAR BOXES*, 2000

This gradual history of the fragmented body has implications for the viewer who is obliged to *view* differently, in the words of Krauss, “...in order to *encounter* the deep *reciprocity* between himself [sic] and it [the object]” (1977: 283 emphasis added).

Schimmel’s term ‘performative sculpture’ reinforces this overriding sense of liminality inherent in the play between objectness and performativity, an emphasis of force over form, and in the case of Morris, performative force *literally* moving the object.¹⁰⁷

It is in this sense that sculptural objects begin to refuse an internally fixed sense of meaning just as phenomenology questions an internally universal and fixed perception

than as an organism articulated in readable and identifiable terms, as they are in the tradition of the nude” (Parfait 2006a: 142). This is a similar argument to Krauss but where ‘posture’ replaces an externally identifiable armature.

¹⁰⁷ Schimmel goes on to describe a genealogy from Morris to Nauman where “...proto-Minimalist object[s] document his [Nauman’s] role as both maker and participant” (1998: 90). Schimmel does not pursue this emphasis on reductionism beyond the quotes I have cited.

of the world and each other. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology "places the subject's body—its bilateral symmetry, its vertical axis, its having a front and a back, the latter invisible to the subject...at the center of the subject's intention toward meaning" (Bois et al. 2004: 495). The notion of intentionality is significant in that a subject's intentions have a bearing on how the world is perceived and account for discontinuities in perception. Part of the Minimalist 'manifesto' was to remove a sense of authorial intention in the sculptural object and have materials 'speak for themselves.' It was this context that prompted Krauss to state that Carl Andre's materials in his floor-bound pieces are "...perceived as expressions of their own being" (1977: 275). This comment underlines the importance of viewing artworks as surrogate performers. In the same light, Krauss evokes French novelists of the 1960s (but does not reference who exactly) as declaring, "I do not write, I am written" (1977: 270). In this same sense, Morris' essay "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making" contextualises this prioritising of materials as a form of automation where "...the process of making [comes] back from the finished work" (1970: 65). Both Morris and Krauss develop this notion that the making of the work somehow happens by coopting forces *in* the work. As Morris writes: "However it is employed, the automation serves to remove taste and the personal touch by coopting forces, images, processes, to replace a step formally taken in a directing or deciding way by the artist" (1970: 65). In this way Morris suggests that the materials, processes and objects *do* the performing.

Morris' words echo those of Barthes' "The Death of the Author" already referenced in Chapter 1, referring to the text as creating meaning, in his desire to replace his objects of the author's intent by introducing systems of automation.¹⁰⁸ In this respect Morris' introduction of a number of 'automations' were seen to depersonalise sculptural artefacts, or, to employ Barthes terminology, to make them *multidimensional*.¹⁰⁹ Important to the contexts of performativity described above, this is an emphasis on

¹⁰⁸ I repeat these quotes here simply because they are such pivotal quotations for the flow of discussion: "Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher the text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (Barthes 2006: 44).

¹⁰⁹ The sentence from which this term comes is: "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single... meaning (the message of the Author-God) but a *multidimensional* space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 2006: 43-44).

author/object/viewer where a complex scenario about the *process* of ‘reading’ is articulated. It asks the question as to *who gets* performed.

Like the performance-installation practice of Martinis Roe, Morris would change the configuration of identical units during an exhibition so that “...no single work could ever be seen to have a stable pre-given shape: an inner ‘idea’ that would function as its immutable core” (Bois et al. 2004: 494). In a similar way, the *Take* series of part objects is ‘scattered’ throughout *Participate (Cut 1)*. Mediated by video ‘documentation’ they are continually changed by ‘viewers’ who cease to submit even to that term.¹¹⁰

These observations to do with the de-centering of meaning in the artefact, and with a de-centering of the author in lending the artefact meaning, suggest that meaning is constructed externally in public or cultural space (Krauss 1977: 278)—as Barthes says, ‘drawn from the innumerable centres of culture’—as opposed to the private and privileged ‘self.’ In this respect it is helpful to think of the ‘finished work doing the making’ as indicating a privileging of the reader over the author.¹¹¹

This discussion is taken up by Schneider from the perspective of the ‘auteur’ in theatre where she describes a shift from ‘solo artist’ to ‘active agent’ in a “...slippage in genre boundaries together with a shifting of the site of art *onto performance understood as an artist’s act*” (2005: 41). She sees this as an ‘unbecoming’ of the solo performance by means of an ‘act-based’ art that is, in turn, recorded as a kind of archive that drives the ‘live’ moment. Schneider illustrates this point as “...a painter becoming a dancer (Pollock)... [or] a conceptual artist becoming a musician (Yoko Ono)...” (2005: 41). This could equally be applied to Morris, Nauman, Frankovich or myself as sculptors becoming performers (or, again for Frankovich, gymnast becoming artist). And this ‘act-based’ art is all the more exacerbated by the archive/object of the photographs and videos

¹¹⁰ Other ways of refuting authorial intent in Minimalism were to make objects from standard industrial pre-cut units, sometimes installed within given restrictions of a specific space so as to diminish any *a priori* compositional decisions. Artists outsourced their work to be fabricated by industry in order to further minimise authorial intent. These solutions mimicked aspects of mechanical reproduction and repetition common to their materials’ originating contexts of production in industry.

¹¹¹ To repeat an earlier quote from Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” essay that is apt at this point in the discussion: “The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination” (2006: 45).

(Morris' photograph of himself standing in a hollow vertical box structure entitled *Untitled (Box for Standing)*, Nauman's *Stamping in the Studio*, Frankovich's *To Veer: A Sudden Change Of Opinion, Subject Or Type Of Behaviour*, or *Back and Above* in *The Artist Will Be Present*). This cross-disciplinary emphasis—that might also be viewed in the context of Jon McKenzie's drive to see performance replace disciplinary classifications—resonates for me in works redolent with the 'liveness' of its making and encounter in perpetual quarrel with its material existence, or, in Schneider's words, sculpture that "...gestures toward its own excess..." (2005: 42).¹¹²

¹¹² I am aware that the term Minimalism and a fast trajectory into Postminimalism is complex and requires some clarification in the context of a notion of performative sculpture. A significant moment in addressing some of the core tenants of Postminimalism was the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* curated by Harald Szeemann in 1969 and touring first to the Kunsthalle in Bern and secondly to the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. The exhibition, subtitled *Work—Concepts—Processes—Situations—Information*, declares a re-evaluation or extension of core Minimalist values centered on anti-transcendence and anti-illusion. *When Attitudes Become Form* presented—what might now be considered as utopian idealism—a link between art and life that attempted to sideline the significance and/or necessity of object oriented art. Signaled are a complex array of practices including Process art, Arte povera, Performance, Body art, Installation and Site specific art. For discussion of *When Attitudes Become Form* see Blocker and Bois *et al.* (Blocker: 84; Bois *et al.* 2004: 534).

In this fast changing context Postminimalism therefore denotes a series of diverse challenges to the dictums of core Minimalist practices. But this is even to oversimplify the idea of 'core' Minimalist practices which constituted a situation of rapidly identified 'movements' and counter-positions. Even as the Jewish Museum in New York staged its 1966 survey of Minimalism entitled *Primary Structures* curated by Kynaston McShine, two other exhibitions critiqued Minimalism's non-emotive and geometric tendencies: Lucy Lippard curated *Eccentric Abstraction* at the Fischbach Gallery on 57th Street in September the same year and Joan Washburn organised *Abstract Inflationism and Stuffed Expressionism* at the Graham Gallery. Lippard commented that during the winter of 1966 "...she had been struck by the manner in which [Eva] Hesse and Frank Lincoln Viner were working both within and outside of the current geometric tendencies, and [she] began looking for other artists confronting the dialectic" (1992: 70). This describes a simultaneous institutionalisation and re-evaluation. Specific Minimalist criteria had been outlined by Donald Judd in "Specific Objects" published in the 1965 *Yearbook* and by 1966 Morris had published "Notes on Sculpture." By the summer of 1967 *Artforum* included Fried's "Art and Objecthood" in which he attacked relational and theatrical tendencies in Minimalist sculpture. The same edition housed further writings of Donald Judd, Morris and Robert Smithson who, by this stage, were already testing the boundaries of Minimalist rhetoric (Bois *et al.* 2004: 494-495). In endeavouring to place emphasis on the 'objectness' of performative actions in a context of emerging interdisciplinarity in exhibitions like *When Attitudes Become Form*, the background role of Minimalism and the manner whereby it became contextualised by art historians and critics is polyvalent. While Minimalism placed emphasis on performatively inspired notions of de-centering of meaning in the artefact and a de-centering of the author in lending the artefact meaning, it also created a blind-spot in relation to the artist's body so significant for those performative tendencies. Krauss' critique is interesting in this light as she is one of the only art historians from the U.S. to utilise phenomenology with its emphasis on bodily orientation, as early as 1977 in *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. See Jones on this point (1998: 256n261). Yet, in 1979, nine years after the death of Hesse, Krauss' essay "Contingent"—analysing Hesse's now famous hanging latex work of the same name that appeared on the cover of *Artforum* in May 1970—does not mention the body in relation to a

The notion of artwork as surrogate performer (or alternative body), and the example of Morris using his own body in a work such as *Untitled (Box for Standing)* can be linked, via an emphasis on body art and process-driven art characteristic of Frankovich's *Flying Fox* and Eskdale's *Furniture Objects*, to artists like Franz West. The reductive tendencies referred to by Schimmel locate Morris' *Untitled (Box for Standing)* as defining only part of a larger whole. On the one hand they concretely define an aspect of the artist's dimension, while on the other, they gain meaning only as an encounter with contexts of action and duration. This is what is so significant regarding the 'Minimalist' gestures of

work so malodorous with bodily associations. Despite commentary on *Contingent* in the context of the body in this period, Krauss critiques the work uniquely from a point of view of the question of originality in the context of the format of painting (1999: 96-98). I make mention of this as it highlights a preoccupation with optical and scopic recognition as opposed to haptic encounter. It also denotes an over-evaluation with a set of dominating disciplinary concerns as outlined in Jane Blocker's *What the Body Cost*. Blocker's focus is in legitimising female performance in the 1960s and 1970s within the categories of Conceptualism and Process-art. In contextualising *When Attitudes Become Form*, she develops the idea that female actions and performance are eclipsed in this period by a focus on the notion of expressionism as gesture specifically in the context of the sculpture versus painting debate: "They repeatedly argued for the performativity of the various art genres the show brought together—conceptualism, arte povera, and anti-form or process art—in order to legitimise them as the leading methods of artistic innovation, even as they distanced these methods from performance's necessary corporeality and attendant femininity." As Blocker notes, this view does not negate an interest on the part of the exhibition organiser, Harold Szeemann, who acknowledges performative practices in the catalogue, in that, "...the mass of their own body, the power of human movement plays an enormous role for these artists." Blocker argues that "...the feminine aspects of performance were shifted onto painting and then disavowed" (2004: 84-85). I am grateful to Blocker who chips away at some of the more mainstream narratives pertaining to Minimalism. As she cites Anna Chave's "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," she points to Chave's argument that Minimalist art reinforced Fried's modernism by simply investing in different ideologies of authorship and mastery. As Blocker writes: "She [Chave] writes bitterly that in the end Minimalism is not the interdisciplinary revolution that Fried predicted and against which he warned, but simply 'more of the same'" (2004: 23).

So when, in 1970, Lynda Benglis poured polyurethane into a gallery corner, titling the work *For Carl Andre*, she was contributing to such a friction surrounding Minimalist sculpture at the time: Benglis ironically pursues a call for process-driven attitudes to material as well as a call against formal considerations of balance and composition. But I say 'ironic' because her work was also a deliberate contrast to Andre's laying out in draft-board formation tonnes of weight of concrete bricks to fill the gallery floor (Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles in March 1967). While both sculptures employ industrial materials ready for use—concrete poured from standard moulds and foam poured directly into the corner—one is hard-edged and pre-determined in its formation while the other is fluid, less controlled, messy and carrying with it notions of leakage, seepage and flow. Such comparisons are also typical of the Postminimalist context in which Hesse's works are interpreted: the open geometric galvanised steel mesh cube of *Accession II* (1967) with woven plastic tubing, compared to Donald Judd's repetitious cube works. In this regard Hesse's work sits on a crossroads where Minimalist concerns evident in her work collide with other less pre-meditated, metaphoric and bodily motivations.

Frankovich's *Flying Fox*, or, as another example, Erwin Wurn's one-minute sculptures such as *Open your trousers, put flowers in it and don't think...* (2002). They are forcefully reductive of the whole picture but strongly and openly legible.



FRANZ WEST, *PAßSTÜCK*, 1978-79



FRANZ WEST, MODEL WITH *PAßSTÜCK NO.8*, 1982-83

In this regard Klocker suggests that West's *Adaptives* such as *Paßstück* (1978-79) function between 'concrete legibility' and 'amorphous abstraction' where their value is not located in their sculptural completion, but rather in their animistic character embodied in actions (1998: 172). In this sense, the gesture of their users makes a process of performativity visible.¹¹³ As with *Participate (Cut 1)* this describes a process where the communicative act

¹¹³ In this text Klocker describes a 'general theory of gestures,' via Vilém Flusser, in which art is "...causally inexplicable and set in contrast with semantic analysis. According to him, [Flusser] the advantage of this procedures lies in the property of art to unfold the phenomenon under inspection only in the course of analysis, since the various levels of 'reading' bring different meanings to light. This gives rise to a multi-plicative effect which enriches the phenomenon and which is in keeping with the agitative spirit of the object under question" (1998: 160). See Flusser, Vilém (1993), *Gesten – Versuch einer Phänomenologie* (Bensheim: Bollmann Bibliothek), 91, which I have not referenced.

of handling or wandering about with the objects manifests as a thinking through them (adding value to them) on the part of the viewer (Klocker 1998: 175).

And along these lines, what was so striking in experiencing Frankovich's *Flying Fox* was the conceit on the part of the artist in inviting us to view her leg jutting from a first floor office window for one hour. This gesture, like Morris' *Untitled (Box for Standing)*, was so slim and formless and yet so open to interpretation; relying on us—her audience—to add value.¹¹⁴ As Guy Brett writes, while Lygia Clark sits on a similar trajectory as artists like Morris and Hesse,¹¹⁵ the Clark sculptures differ in reliance on the 'patient'—the term she employed for her viewer—to enervate their potential and give them context.¹¹⁶ In this context, as outlined by Manuel Borja-Villel, Clark was interested in a rejection of the art object in favour of the works as propositions that gained value as they were 'participated' with by the viewer, as translational objects establishing relations between the individual and others, or the individual and him/herself (1998: 14). In this sense Clark's work is described as sitting on a boundary between art and the clinic and develops the concept of the viewer as patient within a paradigm of therapeutic performance and ritual. Through her career she moved from seeing the visitor in the museum, as a participant who might change objects in the space, to inviting spectators to create or use an object from written instructions, or the artist herself initiating group experiments. The projects of the 1970s also involved students from the Sorbonne and were closed to the public (Borja-Villel 1998: 14). In effect, Clark engaged in a form of art psychotherapy in which viewers are positioned as 'patients.' *Objetos Relacionais* was one of her last works that encapsulated this ideal:

¹¹⁴ And, from a similar but different position, are the overtly functional qualities of works like Franz Erhard Walther's *Werksatz* (1963-1969), where objects, such as soft vests and mats, require little decoding on the viewer's part and form props, functional instruments, always requiring audience participation but nevertheless exhibited in, for example, shelving storage systems (Klocker 1998: 193). To compare the 'performative sculptures' of West and Walther is to ask to what degree the participants 'perform,' and in this sense, author these objects.

¹¹⁵ See Brett where he writes: "Lygia Clark's rubber *Obramole* anticipated such works as Morris' floppy felt sculptures and Richard Serra's rubber *Rosa Esman's Piece* by several years... her *Mascara Abismo* have parallels on a formal level to Hesse's softly-hanging netted weights, such as Hesse's *Untitled* sculpture of 1966..." (1998: 24).

¹¹⁶ As Brett writes: "One of the aspects of Lygia's model of reciprocity is its fusion of the roles of 'artist' and 'doctor'... At about the same time she began her 'Terapia' Lygia ceased to call herself an artist, preferring the term 'researcher' or 'psychologist'" (1998: 33).

Little plastic or canvas bags full of air, water, sand or polystyrene; rubber tubes, rolls of cardboard, sheets, stockings, shells, honey and many other unexpected objects were scattered around the poetic space she created in a room in her house and which she called 'the consulting room.' They were the elements of an initial ritual which the author set in motion in a series of regular sessions with each receiver. (Borja-Villel 1998: 14)

In this way, and with respect to the art object, Clark was interested in ritual as a means to avoid commodification and enabling the 'patient' to discover and remake his own physical and psychic reality where the artist induces and channels experience (Borja-Villel 1998: 14).

It is in this context that Brett's essay on Clark analyses a triumvirate of artist, object and spectator common to the terms by which a notion of performativity is described in Chapter 1, where authorship is handed to the patient/spectator; the objects are malleable and changeable, and the patient might change or initiate work within group dynamics. There was a progressive disinterest in the visual sense of the works: "The object was no longer out there but attached to the body, becoming not an object apprehended by the senses but a sensorial filter through which the world is experienced" (Brett 1998: 21).

As distinct from Clark's resistance to the notion of the exhibitable art object, *The Artist Will Be Present* sits in a more ambivalent position. In this regard the viewer's participation in *Participate (Cut 1)* is mediated by a six-inch lcd screen in a space occupied by further audiences and, as such, collapses distinctions between the real and the represented body. *Cut 2* transposes such modes of participation into a form of filmic encounter where the 'architecture' of the space also questions the role of the audience in relation to these part objects and my partial body. To repeat an earlier reference, this to speak of the flesh of the *chiasm* that "...defines a position which is both subject (a subjective reality) and object (objectifiable for others), and also simultaneously a subjectivity which is internally divergent with itself. In other words, flesh expresses the inscription of difference within the same" (Vasseleu 1998: 26). What the project shares with Clark is an insistence on the notion of objects as transformers: relations of *force* over form—liminal, reversible and characteristic of lack—that emphasise encounter in difference to recognition. This is to speak of, in the words of Clark: "Tactile shocks to liberate the body" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 158). The possibility that the body/s of the audience are transformed into the role of patient underscores a desire to have them

deeply affected (as therapy might facilitate) and therefore altered in the viewing. In Chapter 6 I outline, via the operations of sympathetic magical action, a concept of the donor and donee (and their operations of giving and taking), not as one of exchange, but where these agents are ‘drawn out’ by the ritual contexts in which they participate. In this way I aim to advance discussions such as those regarding Clark, above, in an attempt to undermine notions of doctor, priest or shaman as a kind of tragic subject in the center of the art work itself.¹¹⁷ I will tender a more reciprocal concept that avoids the kinds of directional intentions that still place the artist in a position of control within overly defined performative contexts. I will argue instead for the very impossibility of defining performative exchanges along these lines.

¹¹⁷ In this regard see Klocker where he references the work of Beuys, Hermann Nitsch and Rudolf Schwarzkogler as they “...employ the magical gesture by assuming the role of the shaman or the priest... They, as well as Monastyrskij’s Collective Action Group, claim that art has a cathartic and healing function and that the artist is an antithetical, indeed a tragic subject in the center of the art work itself” (1998: 191).

The Artist Will Be Present

PERFORMING PARTIAL OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS

Chapter 5

5.1 SYMPATHETIC MAGICAL ACTION



5.1 SYMPATHETIC MAGICAL ACTION

The preceding discussion has emphasised a fragmentation and reduction of the body that lends it a mimetic force open to innumerable interpretive contexts. It has highlighted the enigmatic and rarefied contexts of performance-installation as manipulative and transformative. This discussion raises questions reminiscent of late 19th-and early 20th-century notions of animism in which the relations of similarity and contagion are central. Crucial to the question of how a likeness might embody what it resembles was the notion that an object (and the substance from which it is made) might be viewed as an alternative body in its capacity to host qualities particular to the body that once came into contact with it. Victorian anthropologists Edward Burnett Tylor and Frazer formulated the terms by which such a theory of animism could be articulated within the wider arena of ‘magic,’ and in particular, ‘sympathetic magic’ and how this might be understood in so-called ‘primitive’ and ‘savage’ societies. Their rationalist explanation of magic is burgeoning with evolutionist theories of their time (Sorensen 2007: 10-11), and the typological system of museum display propagated by The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford underlines this notion of development.



PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, 1884 ET AL.



PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, 1884.58.111

Together with Tylor, anthropologists such as Henry Balfour, the first curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum, donated large parts of their collections to the museum, which, to this day, remain in strict typological ordering according to the wishes of Rivers.¹¹⁸ This can

¹¹⁸ Augustus Pitt Rivers (1827-1900) was typically Victorian in approach regarding museum arrangement. He was a founder of what has come to be known as the typological system of museum organisation (Chapman 1991: 135). Such systems call for the grouping of ethnographic and archaeological materials by perceived formal or functional similarities rather than according to place of origin or geographical system as is the convention today. Such systems were meant to

be seen in the large draw displays such as *1884 et al.* Closely aligned with the developing collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum are a number of journal and conference proceedings written by Tylor and Balfour from the late 1860s. These map out Victorian attitudes to the analogical reasoning central to an understanding of sympathetic magic. Together with these proceedings, Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915) is a key book that draws together the now famous conditions of sympathetic magic. Mauss' *A General Theory of Magic* (1902-03),¹¹⁹ acts as a critique of Frazer's work and it is this discussion that forms the backdrop to Taussig's book *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses*.

Inherent in Mauss' key notion of the 'poorly executed ideogram' are the operations of 'attention' and 'abstraction.' I translate these two key operations as the conditions of *forceful persuasiveness* and *ambivalence*. This is to ask how likenesses embody the body in ways that exceed the parameters of representation. As will be seen, a common condition of the anatomical votives and art works discussed in this chapter is the ambivalence—Mauss' 'poorly executed ideogram'—with which the body is represented. In this context *similarities* to the body are not understood as representations of the body. Likewise, the conditions of contact by which notions of contagion are measured is complex and Tambiah makes a significant reassessment in the late 1960s and early 1970s of the terms by which similitude and contagion operate. Mauss' understanding of the operations of 'attention' and 'abstraction,' as embedded in social conventions, while Tambiah does not reference Mauss, is vital to Tambiah's understanding of magical actions. Tambiah develops this idea in a model of magical action based on pragmatic contexts of production and performativity.

represent comprehensive histories of technology, "...one with what we would now recognise as an implicit Western European bias" (Chapman 1991: 137). For Pitt Rivers this was intended to show the 'progress' or 'evolution' of technology, a uniform character of changes in material arts and 'gradual progress' in technology over time.

¹¹⁹ Taussig notes that, while this work is attributed to Marcel Mauss, the original *Année sociologique* essay is credited to joint authorship of Henri Hubert and Mauss (1993: 258n214).



MARCEL DUCHAMP, *FEMALE FIG LEAF*, 1950

The motivation for discussing this seemingly anachronistic practice of sympathetic magic is to expand on ways of thinking about works like Martinis Roe's *Ontological Leap*, Frankovich's *Flying Fox*, Duchamp's *Female Fig Leaf* (1950) and Nauman's *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name*. These works, together with *The Artist Will Be Present*, share qualities of ambivalent formlessness and intimacy (similarity of contagion), they present objects as surrogate performers suggestive of the possibilities of 'action at a distance,' and they are all *embedded in performative acts*.

An understanding of sympathetic magical action embedded in performative acts offers a strongly phenomenological model of intersubjectivity and interobjectivity. The concept and practice brings with it a set of concerns signalled in Chapter 2—liminality, embodiment, contingency and efficacy—that offer a model for performative social transformation. The emphasis I place on sympathetic magic's mimetic principles confound and frustrate a desire for wholeness in aesthetic representation just as the metonymic is a forced syntagm in language. At the same time, incongruent mimesis enforces qualities of redundancy and repetition just as it redefines identification, in the words of Bean cited above, as a process of contagious movement. Magical action therefore offers a framework for discussing how these

partial objects/subjects operate as bodies; how they embody a trace of a body—as alternative or surrogate bodies—and how such action—not inert objects but *actions*—operates across a distance. And this notion of action at a distance becomes inextricably located in the terms by which performativity is understood in Chapter 1. This is a notion of action that operates across time in “...openly intersubjective contexts... which insist upon the openness of this and all subjects to the other” (Jones 1998: 67).

5.2 BACKGROUND: SIMILARITY & CONTAGION

Mauss cites Tylor’s *Primitive Culture* as one of the first to mention ‘sympathetic magic’ as a term that “...covers those magical rites which follow the so-called laws of sympathy. Like produces like; contact results in contagion; the image produces the object itself; a part is seen to be the same as the whole” (1975: 12). Mauss’ notion that a part is seen to be the same as the whole is useful as a means to understanding Martinis Roe’s footprints (as well as her ‘derivative’ play on historical sources), together with Nauman’s writing impression, as a metonymic representation of a whole. Far from being an accurate representation, the bodies that made these impressions solicit an absence of the whole by virtue of past contact.

In a paper given to a London audience of the *International Folk-Lore Congress* in 1891 Tylor—following the same laws of sympathy—introduces, from the ‘magician-doctors’ point of view, the possibility of curing diseases resulting from sympathetic likeness of one object with another as well as the possibility of sympathetic harm. Thirty-three years before Mauss’ book, and pre-dating Frazer, Tylor develops a much more generalised notion of animism than Frazer will develop: one where the conditions of similarity are not as crucial to the question of sympathy. In 1869, in a paper delivered to the *Weekly Evening Meeting of the Royal Institution of Great Britain*, he outlined a view “On the Survival of Savage Thought in Modern Civilization” in which objects can operate as substitute bodies, “...of the lower animism that diseases are caused by spirits possessing or attacking the patient. It is another principle that spirits may embody themselves for a time in any material object... Thus the disease-spirits may be persuaded to come out of the patient, and get into some object prepared for them” (8). And once again in 1870 in *The Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* Tylor noted that, to the ‘savage’ mind, things as well as men and animals have souls, the diseased-spirit is offered a surrogate ‘body’ in

which to reside: “To get rid of this spirit they seem to say, let us get it a new body to enter or pervade.” He refers to Burton’s description of “...the Central African habit of transferring diseases into bits of stick or rag, &c., which form what is called the keti or stool on which the noxious infection sits...” (376-377).

In analysing the principles on which a concept of magic might be based, Frazer devises two laws, one of similarity and the other of contact, that function under the general name of sympathetic magic. The first of these laws involving imitation or mimesis is underscored by the notion that “...like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause...” while the second, involving contact, assumes that “...things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act upon each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed” (Frazer 1978: 34). Frazer further clarifies his terminology to describe this law of similarity as homoeopathic while the law of contact he defines as contagious magic. Both homoeopathic and contagious magic stem from associated ideas of similarity and contiguity and “...both assume that things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy...” (1978: 35). Contagious magic is generally understood to involve an application of the homoeopathic and is summarised under the general heading of sympathetic magic.

Frazer defines the most common forms of contagious magic as “...the magical sympathy which is supposed to exist between a man and any severed portion of his person, as his hair or nails; so that whoever gets possession of the human hair or nails may work his will, at any distance, upon the person from whom they were cut” (1978: 42-43). His terms of reference are very generalised and he extends this notion to items of clothing and impressions left by a body, including the possibility of injuring footprints in order to injure the feet that made them. The “...native of South-eastern Australia thinks he can lame a man by placing sharp pieces of quartz, glass, bone or charcoal in his footprints.” And Frazer concludes this section dedicated to ‘Sympathetic Magic’ by referring to “...a maxim with the Pythagoreans that in rising from bed you should smooth away the impression left by your body on the bed-clothes” (1978: 44).¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Didi-Huberman gives Frazer’s contagious magic too wide an interpretation that favours the power of images over the notion of touch or contact. He is closer to Tylor than Frazer when he extends the principle to encompass seals, images on coins and stamps on communion wafers in the Christian context arguing for “...an economy of transubstantiation and of real presence” (1997: 49). In so doing he may be misunderstanding the fundamental principle of contact

5.3 INSIDE, OUTSIDE

Tylor backgrounds the idea of transferring diseases from human being to object within the general notion of animism where ‘savage psychology’ perceives a soul as sometimes visible and invisible and an individual “...who scarcely distinguishes his subjectivity from objectivity, hardly knows his inside from his outside” (1870: 371-372).

Such a focus on devices of symmetry and reflection are hinted at by Balfour in his journal notes for an address to the Oxford *Biological Club* of 1892 entitled “Some Aspects of Superstition: Sympathetic Magic.”¹²¹ He describes an intimate relationship between shadow and reflection as an ‘analogo-telepathy’ but within ‘confusing’ terms of reference as to how a likeness is understood:

... the doctrine of Animism, to capress [sic] the theory of the general possession of souls and spirits by all animate and inanimate objects—(tied to Sympathetic Magic). The intimate relationship between shadow, reflection, diram [sic] manifestations, and souls or spirits, is extended, by analogical reasoning almost universally to material images of representation of objects or persons; thus, it is supposed that there is a telepathic relationship between an object and its material image or likeness, acting by ‘analogy’ and, here it [sic] not an inordinately ugly and cumbrous [sic] term, we might ca... [handwriting unclear] a word ‘analogo-telepathy’ for this kind of relationship—It is firmly believed, and this not only by lowly cultured man, as I shall presently show, that the possession of a figure or representation of a person or other objects, gives the possessor superhuman power over that object, and, that any treatment of the image will be reflected in the body of the object represented, and, on this account it is a dangerous thing for a person to allow anyone to possess an image or representation of him, as it gives the possessor means of applying offensive magic to the person represented... (21-25)¹²²

outlined by Frazer. I acknowledge his catalogue in bringing together artefacts such as: ancient Roman funerary masks as fragmented objects that have been in contact with the body; Rodin’s fragmentation of the figure; and works such as Duchamp’s *Female Fig Leaf*. As such this is the only publication I am aware of that brings these juxtapositions together in the context of Frazer’s ethnographic research. However, while Didi-Huberman activates the spatial paradox of moulds in relation to Duchamp’s overall project (as Helen Molesworth does without acknowledging Didi-Huberman), he does not make the links to thinking about a part object such as *Female Fig Leaf* within a model of sympathetic magical action that is charged with performative ritual contexts. He does not therefore see the opportunity of this model in articulating an authentic ‘performative document’ as an encounter with the ‘live,’ which is so important to my project.

¹²¹ I wish to thank the staff of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, for assisting me so generously in researching these journal notes and other primary sources including a close hands-on inspection of their anatomical votive and charms collections.

¹²² The more generalised ways in which animism, and the specific modes of transference is discussed moves from Tylor’s non-specific inanimate object, to Balfour’s notion of ‘confusion’ in



PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, 1896.77.28 BALFOUR



PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, 1917.53.666-669 TYLOR

Balfour and Tylor were concurrently collecting anatomical votives that were accessioned into the Pitt Rivers collections and often displayed in framed groups bearing their names and date of gift. These include the single arm votive 1896.77.28 *Balfour* that Frazer used to illustrate his discussion in *The Golden Bough*, and a small arm and leg 1917.53.666-669 *Tylor* with a provenance of 'Italy or Spain' noted on its label. Together with these were groups of votives such as 1896.77.22-25 *Balfour* and 1917.48.40-46 *Balfour*.¹²³

In relation to these growing collections, Tylor and Balfour employ a group of polemical terms in an attempt to describe a mind that perceives an object as distinctly more powerful following certain conditions of similarity and contact. As said, terms such as symmetry and reflection are used in the context of a lack of definition between inside and outside, visibility and invisibility which results in a sense of confusion between subjective and objective representation.

a process of analogous telepathy, to Frazer's more specific examples of bodily remains or an impression made by the body: a tightening up the terms by which similitude and contact might be understood.

¹²³ These framed sets comprise small silver legs, midriff, arms, ears, eyes, hearts and a tongue. They are not specifically dated, apart from acquisition dates, with provenance details indicating Antwerp, Belgium and an unidentified Greek church in Jerusalem respectively.



PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, 1896.77.22-25 BALFOUR



PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, 1917.48.40-46 BALFOUR

Contemporaneous with Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Arnold van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* from 1908 theorised a notion of liminality that was to be significant for the future development of performance studies. Van Gennep's term 'rites of passage' denotes three categories that include rites of separation, transition and incorporation. For example, a funeral may involve rites of separation, a pregnancy a rite of transition, and marriage a rite of incorporation. These three categories are described in terms of liminality: "...a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation), in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated" (Van Gennep 1960: 11). The notion of liminality as transition is lent spatial significance in terms of an individual's movement across geographically neutral 'zones' or territories in classical antiquity. In relation to a notion of sacredness,

...the territories on either side of the neutral zone are sacred in relation to whoever is in the zone, but the zone, in turn, is sacred for the inhabitants of the adjacent territories. Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds. (Van Gennep 1960: 18)

Van Gennep argues that such states of liminality are found in ceremonies themselves and, by implication, are states of transition within an individual who passes through certain 'rites of passage' (1960: 18). The concept of reflexivity inherent in a passage through liminal states of being has, as already noted in Chapter 1 in reference to McKenzie, given "...theatre scholars a *functional* model for theorizing ... temporally and spatially, liminal activities [that] allow participants to reflect, take part, and reassemble

symbols and behaviours and... transform themselves and society” (2001: 36).¹²⁴ It is this sense of passage and liminality that I experience when passing in and out of Nauman’s *Corridor*. To use van Gennep’s terminology: separated from myself, I transition to a point of incorporation, only to separate again in the impossibility of seeing myself seeing myself. Likewise, the imprint that is *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* reunites its separation inherent in its morphed ambivalence by the effects of contact (contagion) with Nauman’s body.

It is in this context that I move from late 19th-and early 20th-century notions of ‘savage psychology’ to the self-reflexivity and liminality inherent in the *chiasm* developed by Merleau-Ponty.¹²⁵ I want to draw on the notion of a lack of definition between inside and outside, and confusion between subjective and objective representation, as described by Tylor and Balfour, as the territory of the intersubjective and interobjective crucial to the terms by which performativity is understood. And it is from such a perspective, in refuting a notion of binary and bifurcated structures in the cinematic experience, that I understand Sobchack’s alert to “...a *commutative reversibility* between subjective feeling and objective knowledge, between the senses and their sense of conscious meaning” (2004: 61).

Bois contextualises these phenomena of reversals in terms of Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*: “To turn an object upside-down is to deprive it of its meaning” (1997: 169). And he quotes at length Merleau-Ponty’s passage about seeing a face upside-down on a bed. In discussing how our perception is orientated to our vertical posture he states:

¹²⁴ See McKenzie for an overview of Victor Turner’s dialogue with Schechner in the early to mid-1980s in books such as Turner’s *From Ritual to Theatre* and Schechner’s *Between Theatre and Anthropology* and the importance of this discussion for the formation of performance studies as such (2001: 36). See also Phelan where she discusses of the origins of theatre as emerging from ritual practices. In referencing Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1* (1980), she suggests the “...possibility that life was ‘invented’ in order to respond to art, theatre, ritual and performance” (2004: 17). Her use of the term ‘invented’ suggests, like Foucault’s use of the term ‘sexuality,’ the emergence of a ‘consciousness’ between life and art, theatre, ritual and performance. In this essay Phelan, in reference to Thomas McEvilley’s “Stages of Energy: Performance Art Ground Zero?,” lists three historical traditions from which performance art might be said to have derived. These are the history of theatre, the history of painting—with particular focus on Pollock’s action painting—, and investigations of the body through shamans, yogis and alternative healing practices (2004: 21).

¹²⁵ Didi-Huberman tentatively lends Frazer’s theory a phenomenological bent where the powers of the imprint reunite the effects of contact and dissemination. Frazer’s theory initiates for Didi-Huberman a metonymic function or ‘emprise’, a (magical) holding of influence (1997: 50).

Without the consciousness of ‘mirror symmetry’ the subject would dissolve into space, and the world, anthropocentric for the Gestalt-orientated human, would be stripped of its qualities, made characterless, isotropic. We would lose our marbles there: signs themselves would become empty, flat; there would be smoke without fire. (Bois and Krauss 1997: 171)

In citing Caillois’ “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia” Bois argues that such visual reversals result in: “Nothing less than a ‘psychasthenic’ loss of the subject, a burlesque return to animality, a leaking away in the nondifferentiated” (1997: 170).¹²⁶ This description comes close to Tylor’s where, from a Victorian evolutionary standpoint, the savage mind—equated as it is to base animal instincts—experiences a psychasthenic loss of itself: a transference from human being to object (animism).



BRUCE NAUMAN, *FINGER TOUCH WITH MIRRORS*, 1966-67



MARCEL DUCHAMP, *FEMALE FIG LEAF*, 1950, ON THE COVER OF *LE SURREALISME*, *MEME*, 1956

¹²⁶ Caillois’ essay, where he makes mention of sympathetic magic in the context of Tylor, Hubert, Mauss and Frazer, is not far from such a standpoint as he writes: “The point is that there remains in the ‘primitive’ an overwhelming tendency to imitate, combined with a belief in the efficacy of this imitation, a tendency still quite strong in ‘civilized’ man, since in him it continues to be one of the two conditions for the progress of his untrammelled thought” (1984: 25-27).

Bois contextualises this loss of the subject in Nauman's use of mirrors and the body part where, in *Finger Touch with Mirrors* (1966-67), we see the artist's hands reflected in the two axes of horizontal and vertical mirrors evoking the negative and positive relation of inverted reflection. He concludes with Duchamp's *Female Fig Leaf* as signaling "...the indecipherable character of the cast [where] only the caption (itself comic) tells us what has been cast" (1997: 172). And I would add the photograph of this work used for the cover for *Le Surréalisme, même* in 1956 where the mould visually oscillates, with the quality of a black and white negative, between concave and convex image: we catch a glimpse of the body that was once the source (or the product) of the mould only to lose it back to negative image. This is the oscillating footprints of Martinis Roe's actions and the tension she places on a reflexive relay between media, object, photograph and performance.¹²⁷

5.4 THE PROBLEMS OF INTELLECTUAL RATIONALISM

An intellectualist and rationalist interpretation of magical action upheld by the Victorian anthropologists encountered major problems. One was the instance of Western sympathetic magic in their own society as this contradicted a theory of the evolution of civilised societies. As evidence of this problem, when Balfour indicates a sense of 'confusion' in the correlation between an object and its representation, he notes the possibility of the modern savage:

I refer to the confusion which exists regarding the relationship between an object and its image or representation. In the mind of primitive man—and the modern savage may well be regarded as in many ways strictly primitive [underlined in red] as well as socially (?) [sic] cultivated—there is undoubtedly an indistinct separation of subjective representations from objective realities. (1893: 12-14)

This dilemma was exacerbated by the researchers' clear oscillation between belief and disbelief in the material discussed. Tylor exemplifies this in his duplicitous attitude to sympathetic magic when he states that he was in possession of various artefacts that have "...disappeared mysteriously," suggesting that there is some element of belief invested in what he earlier described as the intellectual level of the peasant and savage

¹²⁷ See Krauss where she distinguishes between the terms of reflection and reflexiveness as she writes: "Reflexiveness is precisely this fracture into two categorically different entities which can elucidate one another insofar as their separateness is maintained" (1976: 56).

(1891: 389).¹²⁸ Another problem was the clear contradiction in what constituted ‘similarity,’ and by what terms ‘contagion’ might be contained. Accounts of magical action are riddled with contradictions that go beyond the terms of similarity and contact as advocated by their model of cause and effect.

With these problems in mind, Sorensen argues that a major difficulty in assessing a rationalist approach to magic is an emphasis on a theory that tries to explain ritual actions by mental causes (2007: 13). And if these mental causes are universally understood it makes it difficult to explain why magic practices still persist in contemporary society within an evolutionary framework of understanding. Rationalists navigate this difficulty, Sorensen argues, “...by recourse to a notion of evolutionary survivals of certain types of action due to ‘habit’—[which he states is] a most unsatisfactory explanation of the profound diffusion of magical practices in all societies” (2007: 11-12). Sorensen’s explanation goes some way in explaining the oscillation back and forth between credulity and disbelief as Tylor and Balfour interpret their case studies. It also goes some way to explaining an inherent contradiction in a series of recent exhibitions that address magical powers in New York City, Oslo and Auckland which I comment on in section 5.7 *A Recent Trend*.

5.5 CRITIQUING FRAZER

The limitations of Frazer’s conditions of similarity and contagion were initially addressed by Mauss, and later by Tambiah, whose main objection is that Victorian anthropology viewed “...magic as an attempt at science that failed (or more crudely a ‘bastard science’ in the manner of Frazer...” (Tambiah 1973: 218). Tambiah’s insightful essay offers a critical framework for the use of animism in this thesis. He advocates that magic ritual engages with objectives of ‘persuasion,’ ‘conceptualisation’ and ‘expansion of meaning’ (219). The implication of this reckoning is to alleviate any residual

¹²⁸ For example, in exhibiting an Australian ‘guliwill’ to the audience that has bits of hair and nail attached, Tylor argues that this is “...like the practices of sorcerers in our own time in the civilised world, [and] that there is some difficulty in separating the purely native part of it from that learnt from European superstition” (1891: 388). He then recounts another related story about a local wizard and alehouse-keeper who held a local magistrate—a strong advocate of temperance—in contempt and who stabbed and roasted an onion representing the magistrate. The magistrate was never ill but when his wife had an attack of fever: “...there was shaking of heads among the wise” (1891: 390). In this light he suggests a degree of empathy with the notion of sympathetic magic.

misgivings about the validity of causal relationships and their viability from a strictly rationalist perspective. This is important to my ongoing argument in that one of the perspectives I proffer is a reassessment of magical action as anachronistic, that is, to examine perspectives on sympathetic analogy and exchange in the Victorian era and apply them, albeit through a different lens of criticality, to the operations at work in Nauman's part objects and early video works and more recent artists like Frankovich. This follows Tambiah's thinking when he writes that, "...performative acts of a persuasive kind are by no means confined to the primitive: modern industrial societies also have their rites and ceremonies which achieve their effects by virtue of conventional normative understandings" (1973: 200).¹²⁹ It should be clear by now that I aim to employ sympathetic magical action as another tool in articulating a reciprocity of body/s in performance-installation and to highlight mimetic incongruence (in partial objects/subjects) as *forceful* precisely due to their lack (all those absent parts), which seek a persuasion and expansion of the undesirable as desired.

In a critique of anthropology's methodologies¹³⁰ not unlike that of the 'new art history' in a similar period,¹³¹ Tambiah questions how Evans-Pritchard's study of Zande witchcraft can ask, from a 'European' intellectual standpoint, questions of cause and effect with a view to empirical verification: "Magical acts are ritual acts, and ritual acts

¹²⁹ See Arnold van Gennep for a criticism of the terms by which sympathetic rites are understood and for a thorough bibliography on the topic up to his 1908 book (1960: 4-5).

¹³⁰ See Frederick Steier's *Research and Reflexivity* for a more recent appraisal of reflexive research methods in the social sciences for which Tambiah can be credited as an early advocate. Steier argues from a social constructivist approach that principles must be applied by researches to themselves and to their research when he writes: "That is, the research process itself must be seen as socially constructing a world or worlds, with the researcher included in, rather than outside, the body of their own research" (1991: 1-2). From this perspective, what we know comes via our own 'constructing processes.' Therefore issues of self-reference informing methodologies and general research processes are important. Steier asks how we develop methodologies from a social constructivist standpoint within a context of reflexivity. Self-reflexivity holds that our own assumed research structures and logics are themselves researchable, and by examining how we are part of our data, research becomes not self-centred but reciprocal.

¹³¹ See Rees and Borzello where they discuss (in the mid-1980s), developments in the discipline of art history and the emergence of the 'new art history' with particular focus on the issues that I draw attention to here. Namely an interdisciplinary approach influenced by the social sciences and a questioning of authorial intention that will allow for an understanding of the reciprocal *operations* at work within a notion of performativity: "The presence of the new art history is signalled by a different set of words – ideology, patriarchy, class, methodology, and other terms which betray their origins in the social sciences. Behind them lies a new way of thinking, one which sees art as intimately linked to the society which produces and consumes it, rather than something mysterious which happens as a result of the artist's genius" (1986: 4-5).

are in turn performative acts whose positive and creative meaning is missed and whose persuasive validity is misjudged if they are subjected to that kind of empirical verification associated with scientific activity” (1973: 199, 224).

It is in this sense that Tambiah argues that the performative aspect of magical acts “...by which a property is imperatively transferred to a recipient object or person...” (1973: 199) as the semantic basis of magical acts has been misunderstood by Western anthropology. To discuss magical practice on the basis of a scientific paradigm of analogy, as Frazer does, is to have asked the wrong question,

...whereas in science the use of an analogy is closely linked to prediction and verification... or of meeting standards of probability criteria, or standing up to tests of falsifiability and the like, the semantics of a magical rite are not necessarily to be judged in terms of such ‘true/false’ criteria of science but on different standards and objectives. (Tambiah 1973: 219)¹³²

5.6 METONYMY STANDS AS SUBSTITUTE

Tambiah’s 1968 Malinowski Memorial Lecture delivered at the London School of Economics and Political Science elaborates on Jakobson’s 1956 use of the operations of metaphor and metonymy in language. Jakobson indicated a link between these operations and Frazer’s principles of similarity and contiguity, the imitative and contagious (Tambiah 1968: 189). Tambiah sees the term metaphor as encompassing simile and analogy, “...a surrogate which has a dual reference to the original object and to the object for which it now stands” (1968: 189). For him there are rich implications for the metaphor as a device of ‘selection and substitution’ in the ritual action of magic in the “...transfer of an attribute to the recipient” (1968: 189). Tambiah goes on to say that metonymy stands “...for the name of a thing the name of an attribute or part of it... This is a case of the part standing for the whole based on the contiguity principle” (1968: 189). And this concept includes conveying meaning through redundancy in the enumeration of the parts of an object. This notion of redundancy might be understood as the ‘noise’ of that which is extraneous or excessive to a message. In this context metaphor establishes a field of

¹³² In addressing the terms by which similitude and contagion might be understood, Sorensen points to a lack of consideration for ritual processes among the Victorian rationalists: “In the attempt to explain magic as actions that are rational by reference to underlying mental procedures and beliefs, they disregard the very special status of these actions—that they are exactly ‘ritual’ actions—and thereby almost explain the phenomena away” (2007: 3).

possible substitutions or meanings. Metonymy, on the other hand, is generally thought of as a syntactical axis in that it establishes the possible concrete adjacencies of signifiers in syntactical units of meaning. At the heart of Tambiah's analysis of sympathetic magical action, while he does not employ these terms, lies metaphor as the axis of symptom while metonymy is the axis of desire. As will be further discussed in 6.8 *The Force of the Utterance*, performative utterances in specific ritualised contexts unleash persuasive and transformative forces working against innumerable undesired outcomes such as disease or the failure of crops. For Frankovich, wrapped and suspended in a dysfunctional 'acromat' of ropes and foam for *To Veer: A Sudden Change Of Opinion, Subject Or Type Of Behaviour*, her body activates a desire to undo the failure of Frankovich's gymnastic career. And Sorensen points to the significance of this approach in saying that, "...sacred and magical language should not be understood as a special type of language but rather as an exploitation of ordinary linguistic properties in a special performative or pragmatic context" (2007: 21). In this way Tambiah employs a "semantics of ritual" (1968: 190) to question Frazer's notion of analogical reasoning, bound as it was to the relations of cause and effect, and transforming those terms to that of affect with objectives of "...persuasion, conceptualisation, expansion of meaning..." (1973: 219).

In "Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions" Stiles employs the terms of metaphor and metonymy in the context of objects and their relationship to performative acts. She seeks an "...augmentation of the metaphorical capacities of conventional static forms of art with the communicative function of metonymy, wherein artists as 'receivers,' visualize worlds of experience experienced, showing themselves as connected to what society itself transmits" (1998: 329). Earlier she writes:

For by literally acting in the space between a human viewing subject and the conventional art object—as the mediator between the two—the artists who produced action paintings and later actions, exhibited the intersection where subjects meet object, where the artifactuality¹³³ of the object is born in the event, and where the artist becomes both a subject who produces an object, and the object itself. Such art exhibits how the metonymic process precedes the signifying capabilities of metaphor (objectified in representational objects). (1998: 306)

¹³³ Stiles probably uses this term in the context of Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the 'facticity' in the inauguration of the 'location' and the 'now' of the flesh of the world in the context of the *chiasm*. See Merleau-Ponty when he states: "Much more: the inauguration of the *where* and the *when*, the possibility and exigency for the fact; in a word: facticity..." (1968: 140).

In this context the very special status of performance as an altered communicative means enables the possibilities of contiguity or contagion to be activated. It complicates the metaphorical associations of the apparent body (I want to say superficial) in the object by compellingly ‘exhibiting’ the intimacy of the juncture where subjects meet object. This is manifest in the viewers’ expressed surprise at being lured into an unexpected and close exchange with my body in *The Artist Will Be Present* (both *Cut 1* and *Cut 2* within different modes of participation). I will critique Stiles’ viewpoint further in 6.7 *The Force of the Donor*. For now I reiterate that this is the kind of ritualistic space common to sympathetic magical action that Sorensen argues as ‘special and non-trivial’ with ‘manipulative and transformative’ results (2007: 32). This approach places Tambiah in a category of ‘pragmatic and performative’ explanations of magic (Sorensen 2007: 19-24). His model of performance and persuasion allows for thinking about the concept of magic outside the terms of cause and effect and introduces performativity as a means to understand magical action.¹³⁴

In the broadest sense, this is the importance of Nauman’s understanding of objects and influences their strong resemblance to objects *in process* and his body *in duration*. This is to widen the terms by which we can discuss notions of morphological ambivalence in partial objects and subjects. It is to discuss the possibility that those partial images might function as surrogate performers, and the concomitant possibility of action at a distance. Such functions and actions are tied to Tambiah’s conception of *force by persuasion*.

5.7 A RECENT TREND

(The following section is a review submitted to Eyeline Magazine. While it repeats (in minor detail) some of the previous discussion, I think it reiterates, with respect to three contemporary exhibitions, my interest, not in artists as magicians where rationalist dilemmas of cause and effect need to be justified, but in interpreting artworks, and contexts of performativity, from the point of view of sympathetic magical action already in operation.)

Over the past 24 months a number of exhibitions that address magical powers have emerged, notably in New York City, Oslo and Auckland. All of them employ magical

¹³⁴ Sorensen’s definition of magic sits within the realm of psychological and cognitive theories as follows: “Magic is about *changing the state or essence of persons, objects, acts and events through certain special and non-trivial kinds of actions with opaque causal mediation*” (2007: 32).

action in a way that negotiates their underlying motives regarding magic *per se*. In the knowledge of the forthcoming exhibition *New Spiritualism in Art* at the Centre Pompidou this year, I am intrigued at what this recent fascination in magic is about and what the underlying reasons are for its surfacing. Firstly, my hunch is that a suspension of disbelief in the face of conjuring and cursing camouflages a deeply 19th-century attitude to the powerful and transformative possibilities of magical action as discussed by recent writers such as Sorensen. This would be the complex terrain where superstitious or ‘primitive’ modes of operating emerge as a critical (but blunt) tool. Secondly, this view of magical action is adapted and made more intelligible with a correspondence to magic as an everyday language of persuasion. And thirdly, I discuss this recent liking for magical action as a way of combating a loss of subjectivity in what Conland calls a move “...from senseless intelligence to sensible esoterics” (2007: 20).

5.7.1 ARTISTS AS MAGICIANS

The exhibition *Strange Powers* organised by Creative Time in New York City (July-September 2006) takes as its overarching theme the power of art “...to invoke the invisible or to embody a presence... to transform our emotions, our experience, and even our beliefs,” writes the artistic director Anne Pasternak (2006: 4). *Strange Powers*—like the exhibitions *Future Primitives*, curated by Helga-Marie Nordby and Sylvia Kochanska at UKS in Oslo (April-May 2007), and *Mystic Truths*, curated by Conland at the Auckland Art Gallery (June-October 2007)—concentrates on the paranormal and artists “...incorporating the magical directly into their broader practice” (Pasternak 2006: 4).

Strange Powers co-curators Peter Eleey and Laura Hoptman, in separate essays, compare the role of art to the transformative power of magic. Eleey, using analogies to healing via the psychic healer in Euan Macdonald’s *Healer*, emphasises that while such a claim is empirically unverifiable, it underscores what we hope “...art can be and do” (2006: 59). In describing Barnett Newman’s insistence on the transformative power of art, Hoptman uses language such as “...an act of conjuring...” expressive of magical agency, and explicitly states that art’s creation is “...the result of primal, inchoate magic” (2006: 9). She drives the point home in stating that this art is meant to be magic, not about magic (2006: 10). This approach stems from a notion “...that artists

themselves exude magical force, and that their powers are worth considering...” as promoted by her co-curator Eleey (2006: 61). This is different from an artist such as Felix Gonzales Torres who was not trying to be the magician when he exhibited *Untitled (Placebo—Landscape for Roni)*, 1,200 lbs of candies individually wrapped in gold cellophane (1993). While Gonzales Torres does not feature in this line-up of exhibitions, his work may be analysed from a magical perspective in that it carries with it characteristics of sympathetic analogy. This would be the weight of him and his boyfriend as donors so embodied in the title and pile of candies as a ritualised votive offering that also implicates the body/s of the audience as they consume that offering. These are the powerful operations of traditional sympathetic magical action at work in everyday consumption. This distinction is a crucial one. Gonzales Torres can be analysed from the point of view of the structure of magical analogy while *Strange Powers*, *Future Primitives* and *Mystic Truths* often invest their artists with the content of magic claiming them as magicians.



FELIX GONZALES TORRES, FROM THE SERIES *UNTITLED (PLACEBO—LANDSCAPE FOR RONI)*, 1,200 LBS OF CANDIES INDIVIDUALLY WRAPPED IN GOLD CELLOPHANE, 2005

In this light Eleey and Hoptman’s insistence on the artist as magician is held at an ambiguously cynical arm’s length by some of the artists in these three exhibitions. For example, Mirinda Lichtenstein in *Strange Powers* employs a spiritual cleanser for the exhibition space, and Dane Mitchell hires a witch to create a portal to the spirit world for the duration of *Mystic Truths* indicated by a bronze plaque on the exterior wall of the Auckland Art Gallery in *Portal to the Spirit World* (2007). This kind of wholesale and arguably superficial borrowing of magical action is made possible by the fact that magic is a set of activities or actions rather than a belief system and in this respect the actions of magic might be borrowed and subverted in something of a vacuum and remain

recognisable as such. It is in this context that the curatorial approaches for *Strange Powers*, *Future Primitives* and *Mystic Truths* are driven by an ambiguous relationship to *being* magical.



DANE MITCHELL, *PORTAL TO THE SPIRIT WORLD*, 2007

And there is a parallel to this recent trend common to anthropological analysis of magic in the late 19th-and early 20th-century by the likes of Tylor as well as Frazer's famous *The Golden Bough* outlining the terms by which sympathetic magical practice might be understood. An intellectualist and rationalist interpretation of magical action upheld by these Victorian anthropologists was one that discussed magical action on the basis of a scientific paradigm of analogy, and in so doing, asked the wrong questions. Frazer linked magic to prediction and verification, or of meeting standards of probability. This emphasis on cause and effect encountered some major contradictions for the Victorian mind. One was the instance of Western sympathetic magic in their own society as this contradicted a theory of the evolution of civilised societies. This dilemma was exacerbated by the anthropologists' clear oscillation between belief and disbelief that, I want to argue, is also a characteristic of some of the curators discussed here. Tylor exemplifies this in his duplicitous attitude to sympathetic magic when he addresses the *International Folk-Lore Congress* in 1891 and states that he was in possession of various artefacts that have 'disappeared mysteriously,' suggesting that there is some element of belief invested in what he earlier described as the intellectual level of the peasant and savage (389). He then recounts another related story about a local wizard and alehouse-keeper who held a local magistrate—a strong advocate of temperance—in contempt and who stabbed and roasted an onion representing the magistrate. The magistrate was never ill but his wife had an attack of fever, prompting Tylor to write that "...there was

shaking of heads among the wise” (1891: 390), suggesting a degree of empathy with the notion of sympathetic magic.

5.7.2 CYNICISM OR BELIEF?

Eleey’s and Hoptman’s comments come close to Frazer’s and Tylor’s notion of misdirected science even though they fall back on the safety net of a “tension between scepticism and belief...” (Eleey 2006: 63) seen as the core of their agendas. Eleey is closest to Frazer and Tylor when he states: “A number of works, however, specifically offer evidentiary support for magical thinking, however possibly unconvincing” (2006: 62). Hoptman clearly states that the works in *Strange Powers* profess a belief in magic, but this profession is not one that relies on proof of the paranormal as this, she states, is unconvincing. It is a suspended assumption that conjuring, predicting and cursing might work in the face of the fact that they probably don’t that provides a vehicle for a belief in art as a transformer (Hoptman 2006: 10-11). While their language may not share the cultural condescension typical of the Victorian anthropologists, these curators clearly contextualise magic in terms of an ambiguous vacillation between standards of probability and their failure. While this approach is justified with respect to some of the artwork curated, I believe it is an inherently flawed approach as to why magical action is so interesting and persuasive as a structural model of analysis as cited above for Gonzales Torres’ work. It is not a question of whether magical action ‘might work’ that is valuable. To even approach this question is to start down a rationalist line of thinking that results in deadlock. Eleey redeems this situation to some extent when he describes “...an auratic economy in which the value of an artwork is weighted towards what it proposes, rather than its effect” (2006: 63).

It was along these lines that the anthropologist Tambiah objected in the 1970s to Victorian rationalism in that it viewed “...magic as an attempt at science that failed (or more crudely a ‘bastard science’ in the manner of Frazer...” (1973: 218). Tambiah advocates that magic ritual engages with objectives of ‘persuasion,’ ‘conceptualisation’ and ‘expansion of meaning’ (1973: 219). The implication of this reckoning is to alleviate any residual misgivings about the validity of causal relationships and their viability from a strictly rationalist perspective. It also follows that “...performative acts of a persuasive kind are by no means confined to the primitive: modern industrial societies also have

their rites and ceremonies which achieve their effects by virtue of conventional normative understandings” (Tambiah 1973: 200). And Sorensen recently points to the significance of this approach in saying that, “...sacred and magical language should not be understood as a special type of language but rather as an exploitation of ordinary linguistic properties in a special performative or pragmatic context” (2007: 21).

5.7.3 MAGIC AS EVERYDAY PERSUASION

The idea that magical action may have a correspondence with ‘conventional normative understandings’ is a way out of the rationalist deadlock described above. Eleeey hints at this for *Strange Powers* when he asks of us “...to be sympathetic to artists’ efforts to conjure this force from quotidian materials variously unremarkable...” (2006: 64). This is close to Tambiah’s ‘model of persuasion’ as opposed to measurable scientific outcomes. This is what Conland means when she curates a group of works for *Mystic Truths* with inherent Pop references chosen to signify the everyday, provoked by the exhibition’s epitaph ‘The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths,’ spelt out in Nauman’s neon street sign *Window or Wall Sign* (1967). And this iconic work is aptly messed with in Mungo Thomson’s reiteration of the Nauman phrase as a car bumper sticker that locates it once more in a place of popular messaging and one-liners. As Conland writes: “This is not a cynical gesture designed to undermine or test the potency of particular meanings and values, but to strip them back so they sit alongside the values of common utterance” (2007: 23).

For *Mystic Truths* Conland is much more cautious than Eleeey and Hoptman as she employs the notion of the oxymoron as a suspension of a necessity for belief or disbelief, while *Strange Powers* “...encourages a moment of belief for visitors—for many, a leap of faith—rather than a suspension of disbelief” (Pasternak 2006: 5). Conland writes that “...oxymora are exaggerated because they utilise rational understanding and persuasion by what is deemed irrational effect” (2007: 16). In this sense *Mystic Truths* avoids some of the reductive tendencies of *Strange Powers*.

5.7.4 SENSIBLE ESOTERICS & FORCE OVER FORM

Conland underlines a position on the part of her artists that is (intentionally) not easily discernible “...precisely so they can treat the mystical as idea and material, without owning any particular belief system... in standing back from belief or cynicism” (2007: 16). She observes that: “None of the works in *Mystic Truths* portrays an obvious position for the artist who handles this material—material which usually requires an element of belief. Although they tool the contents in the mode of experimentation, they do not give the impression of distance *per se*” (2007: 24). This ‘tension of the oxymoron’ is a space of non-judgement and opens a hole in the wall to anti-intellectualism, a willing suspension of rationality and contrary positions. This is what Conland beckons forth in the lines: “The results are a range of aesthetic responses from senseless intelligence to *sensible esoterics*” (2007: 16 emphasis added). She cleverly makes a flip between a tautological dysfunction in the rhetorics of Conceptual and Pop art practices of the 1960s (‘art is life as life is art’) and the possibilities of an oxymoron (bitter/sweet) that allows for greyness as a “...transit between certainty and uncertainty” (2007: 17, 24). *Future Primitives* curator Helga-Marie Nordby, in her text describing Daniel Jensen’s installation *Phantasms of the Living*, reinforces this position by calling for “...situations where untraditional perceptions of the world rule” (2007: unpaginated www).

To my mind the ground on which magical action can be taken most seriously is on the basis of *force over form*. That is to say that ritual contexts and the power of incantation (both understood in their everydayness) are more important than the representational form (or verification) of the magical act. This is why the Gonzales Torres’ work is so interesting: while its formal aesthetic (and content) would seem not to derive from a history of magic, its operational force is deeply ‘magical.’

In summary—in analysing these very recent trends in visual art for a “...retrospective mysticism and fascination for the supernatural,” as described by Nordby (2007: unpaginated www)—where I think the curators’ approaches are critically sharpest is when they make a correspondence to persuasive language of the everyday while searching out an underlying objection to intellectual objectivism almost in spite of the magical focus of their exhibitions (which in my view often treat magic superficially). Conland is interesting in this respect in her desire for a ‘sensible esoterics’ and renewed

interest in subjectivity. The vehicle of magic, while clearly a theme in these exhibitions, is secondary to this higher ideal.

The Artist Will Be Present

PERFORMING PARTIAL OBJECTS AND SUBJECTS

Chapter 6

6.1 MORPHOLOGICAL
AMBIVALENCE IN THE
PARTIAL OBJECT/SUBJECT



6.1 MORPHOLOGICAL AMBIVALENCE IN THE PARTIAL OBJECT/SUBJECT

In this section Mauss' notion of the 'poorly executed ideogram'—contextualising the characteristics of imperfect similarity with respect to the body 'represented,' and notions of contact or contagion, in sympathetic analogy—is compared to Krauss' emphasis on erosion, or reduction, in morphological ambivalence in the context of the part object. When Krauss employs the term 'morphological ambivalence' in relation to the work of Louise Bourgeois it is because Bourgeois' sculptures, like *Trani Episode* (1971), designate partial or fragmentary references to the human anatomy. The body is announced in a way in which a definition of morphology describes a partial rendering: "the form and structure of an organism or any of its parts," as well as "a study and description of word formation (as inflection, derivation, and compounding) in language."¹³⁵



LOUISE BOURGEOIS, *TRANI EPISODE*, 1971

The kinds of objects that tend to be discussed as part objects are those that solicit the problem of how they might be named. By this I mean that, in their fragmentation, they are suggestive of a larger whole while, at the same moment, lack a sense of representational fixity—or embrace a sense of formlessness—in determining exactly what that 'whole' might be. Or, as is the case with Martinis Roe's derivative play on historical models, as fragments that were never from a 'whole' and will never conjure up a whole to which they can return. It is this dearth of representational fixity that prompts Anne Middleton Wagner, in the context of Hesse's work, to ask the question, what does her work look like? (1996: 252). When I first read this question I was struck not only by

¹³⁵ See <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/morphological>.

Wagner's simplicity of enquiry but also at how it struck at the heart of Hesse's polyvalence. Or, as Briony Fer puts it in "The Scatter: Sculpture as Leftover": "Part objects focus attention on the body and on a bodily topography" (2005: 225). She refers to Hesse's *Untitled* (1968) where the artist placed part objects in glass vitrines: "They are both working parts and leftovers of other works, like relics without aura" (2005: 227).¹³⁶ What does Fer mean when she writes 'relics without aura'? Her comment reinforces, for example, the sensation of deferral and redundancy so evident in Frankovich's *Flying Fox* and *To Veer: A Sudden Change Of Opinion, Subject Or Type Of Behaviour*. It is also reminiscent of Eskdale's *Furniture Objects* spread out on pedestal tables. To exist as a relic without the auratic presence that would have been its function is not an apparent failure in the object but an invitation to resolve: an invitation for performative reinstatement that would undo auratic impotence.



EVA HESSE, *UNTITLED*, 1968

¹³⁶ From a slightly different perspective, Fer's point enlarges the notion of the part object to part of a larger body of work stating that parts and wholes are relative, in that everything is part of a larger whole. In addition to this Fer makes the point that the Orozco objects, unlike Duchamp's *Boite-en-valise*, do not make an inventory or archive of past works (2005: 223-227). In this sense Orozco's *Working Tables* are not collections in the Benjaminian sense as a "struggle against dispersion..." In difference to this, Orozco is about 'anticollecting,' where Fer writes, "...the accident by which it happens to be there" (2005: 231). Orozco, on the other hand, invites a looking "...that is spread out, dispersed, one that scans across the kind of surface—a table—that we think we know and that in some way is highly conventionalised but is culturally variable" (2005: 227). Fer compares Gabriel Orozco's *Various Models* (1992-1995) with Hesse's cabinet works as collections which constitute part of a greater body of work: "The fact that they have an ambiguous relationship to other works is partly the point: it is as if the things in her glass cases are in limbo in some way" (2005: 225).



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GABRIEL OROZCO, *WORKING TABLES*, 2000

Placed in such a context, the part objects and images in *The Artist Will Be Present* function as ‘bits and pieces,’ relics from private performative actions, expressly designed to embody a sense of process that upsets a propensity for uniquely scopic identification and for completion. The processes of their making and viewing are antithetical to the motivations that place such objects on pedestals and border up such moving images with figural and recognisable narrative sequences. This is at least part of Eisenstein’s motivation to disorient sequences by montage.

As such, the term ‘part object’ denotes a part of a whole never recoverable and therefore might be analysed in relation to what it is not, what is left out. This is to induce notions of redundancy or lack, severance and shortfall. In their partiality, part objects imply a larger whole but it is in their lack of representational fixity that their force resides. It is this partiality that urges Hartel to invoke the words of Mallarmé in relation to the repetitive and partial images in Ugo Rondinone’s *The evening passes like any other...* (1998): “To name an object is to get rid of three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem... to suggest it – there’s the dream” (2006b: 244). Part objects and images have a function in *doing* or *producing* in difference to representing. Taussig stresses this point when he observes with reference to Mauss “...that in so many instances of sympathetic magic the copy, far from being a faithful copy, is an imperfect ideogram” (1993: 57). It is in this context that Taussig attempts to answer the question: how much of a copy does the copy have to be to have an effect on what it is the copy of? (1993: 51).¹³⁷ As will be argued, the concept of faithfulness is transferred from the notion of realistic replica, and clearly

¹³⁷ In relation to this question of why magically effective anatomical votives are not more realistic as replicas, see Strathern who discusses Taussig’s question as to why the Cuna use wooden figurines of Europeans as curing fetishes (*nuchas*), particularly when Cuna magical power resides in the substance and not in the outer form. The questions remain: why carve them at all? (1996: 193).

defined intentionality, to a complex set of performative contexts. These are objects contingent on the *process* of enactment. In this regard Clark's work is a useful example—if viewed alongside sympathetic magical action—of the extreme ambivalence with respect to the ‘use’ of objects, and their lack of realism, following many ritual acts. It is the *social conventions* of her ‘clinic,’ the ‘attention’ with which she affords seemingly mundane objects, that gives rise to the extremes in her practice. As with the notion of the ‘poorly executed ideogram,’ it is not about what it looks like, it is about what it *does*. Paulo Herkenhoff extends this idea, placing Clark in relation to a non-object as a non-artist:

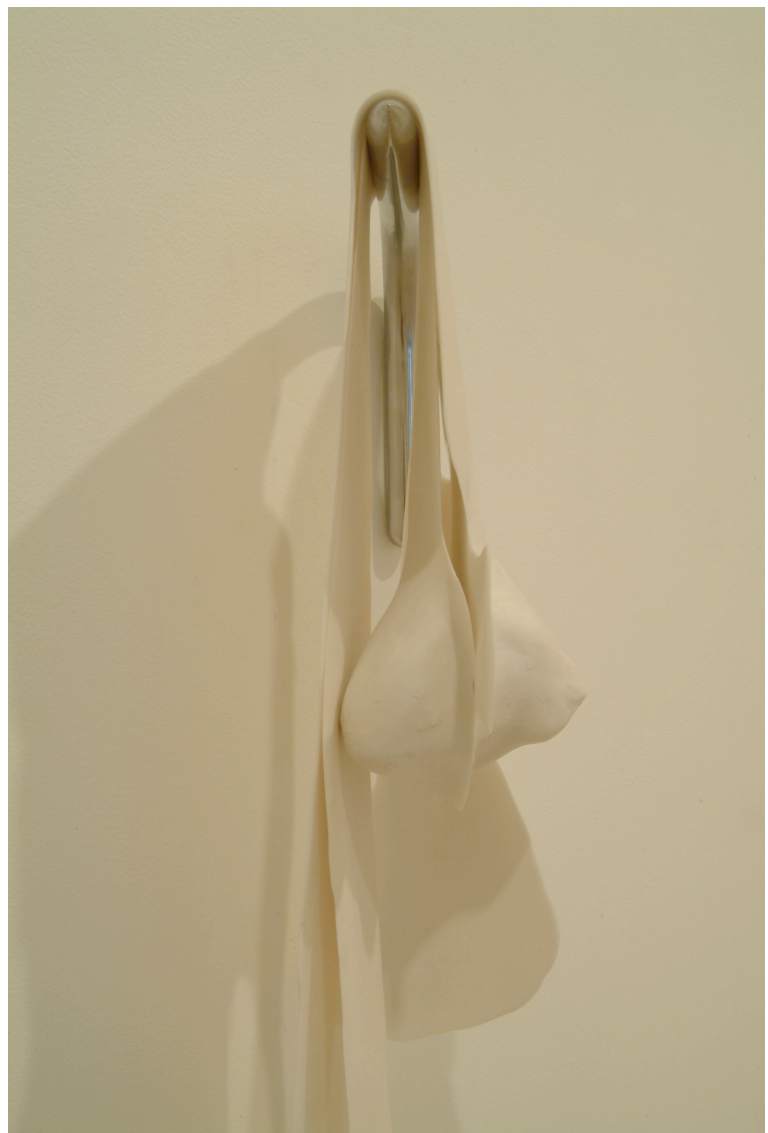
In constituting the collective body, Lygia Clark explores exchanges within a pattern of alterities. Finally, the artist's action, the Other, and the relational objects are engaged in a therapeutic action, overwhelming the limit between art and life. There does not exist, in this practice, any possibility of action on the field of the art system, whether it is the museum, the market, art criticism or art history. Lygia assumes the extremes of her project. It is then that she may declare, with coherence, to be a non-artist. Her relationship of alterity, through her cultural action (as in the theory of the non-object), to a comprehending of the Other as a necessary being and finally as a concrete subject. Canons of aesthetic language are no longer of interest to Clark, whether established or innovating, but only the relationships of individualisation. Clark having broken through the limits of art now submits herself to what ever the ethics of the cure impose upon her. (1998: 50)

Herkenhoff reinforces that, in the context of performativity, an encounter with the Other over and above the aesthetic nature of an object involves an ethic where efficacy is embedded in the *operations* of the performative utterance which can be transformative.¹³⁸ These are the conditions of ‘imperfect similarity’ and contiguity, or contagion, manifest in sympathetic magical action. It should be clear by now that I am not interested in describing artists like Clark as ‘magicians’ (with the concomitant associations of priest or shaman) but rather employing the structure of magical action as a way of elucidating the significance of the operations of force over form and its relationship to notions of partial subjects and objects in profoundly performative contexts. I am interested in how objects and images are defined *through* these operations as comprehending the other. In this light, and in describing my silicon cast works from *the Fleshly Worn series* (2004) Conland writes “...rather than casting a representation of the artist, the process captures an imprint of the performative action—between body and material.” And then, in

¹³⁸ See Butt who uses a very similar emphasis (2005: 17).

referencing a remark I made to Tim Wilson, *The New Zealand Herald* correspondent in 2004,¹³⁹ she continues:

...Braddock was asked to comment on his own body, not the symbolic but the actual, to which he replied, “I’m a means to an end, I’m a vehicle.” This off-the-cuff comment is revealing of Braddock’s personal religiosity, and his belief in the body as a container and repository of faith. In *Fleshly Worn*’s departure from the iconographic, Braddock reengages with the period of late Minimalist practice, best known through the work of Lynda Benglis and Eva Hesse, which saw the human body used symbolically to implode the very non-relational aspects of Minimalist art. (2005: 12)



C FROM THE FLESHLY WORN SERIES, 2004

¹³⁹ See Tim Wilson’s “Body doubles as silicon” (Wilson: B8).

My point at the time was that not any body, but one's own body, becomes implicated as a site of remedy for others; a relational and efficacious art of the body. In this context Mauss states: "The image is, therefore, defined only through its function which is simply to produce the person" (1975: 68). What does it mean to *produce* the person? Mauss is discussing, in the context of sympathetic magical action, the manner in which images are dispensable: "The mere mention of a name—even thinking it, the slightest rudiment of mental assimilation—is sufficient for an arbitrarily chosen substance—bird, animal, branch, cord, bow, needle, ring—to represent the victim" (1975: 68).¹⁴⁰ Mauss' remark emphasises a lack of value attached to what an object looks like, which concurrently augments the participants' role in determining the utility or the force of an object. This is the kind of emphasis that was common to a notion of performative sculpture discussed in Chapter 4. For example, Schimmel cites John Latham's *Skoob Tower* (1964) where the work was completed by the viewer standing inside and contributing their attention. The *Tower*, as such, becomes, not less significant, but only comprehensible with respect to the agency of the viewer. And it follows that the *Tower*, as a generator of meaning, is indefinably different for each viewer's encounter (Schimmel 1998: 55).

It is in this sense that Mauss goes on to note that an object's attribution, that which I am arguing is its performative status as a 'surrogate performer,' might change during the course of a ceremony, or that the objective of a ceremony might be divided between several objects. Mauss offers an example: "If one wishes to blind an enemy by passing one of his hairs through the eye of a needle, which has sewn up three shrouds, and then sticking holes in the eye of a toad with the same needle, the hair and the toad are both used in turn as *volt*" (1975: 68-69).¹⁴¹ As will be seen, I make use of Mauss' notion of the 'poorly executed ideogram' in various ways. Firstly, his concept of 'attention' augments Frazer's more superficial observations of similarity in acknowledging interpretation and intention on the part of any agent in ritual contexts. Secondly, his term 'abstraction,' which I am calling ambivalence with respect to representing bodies, is not about what it *looks* like but about what it *does*. In this sense part objects and subjects *do* in difference to

¹⁴⁰ Benjamin's *Doctrine of the Similar* makes the same kind of emphasis as pointed out by Rabinbach: "[Benjamin's] Mimetic activity includes thought, behaviour, language and even unconscious processes such as telepathy" (1979: 64n16).

¹⁴¹ The use of the term *volt* signifies objects that take on status as an alternative body. In this ritual the person's hair and the toad's eyes both assume the powers of contiguity and similarity respectively.

describe. Thirdly, Mauss makes a significant point when he argues that the terms of ‘attention’ and ‘abstraction’ are indivisible and will not benefit from separate analysis (1975: 73). One cannot divide modes of encounter from an object’s/subject’s form: contexts of performativity are mutually dependent and multifarious. This reinforces Butt’s view, mentioned earlier, that the critic is immersed in the field of affects of which she is an agent. In this sense Mauss stresses that the properties of similarity, contiguity and opposition¹⁴² are interdependent, “...these abstract representations of similarity, contiguity and opposition are inseparable from ideas of things, natures of properties which are transmissible from one being or object to another” (1975: 74).

To restate, intentionality becomes something to radically question, that is, the production of intentional subjects along with their supposed intentions. In alliance with this is the participants’ role in determining the meaning of an object always with unlimited potential: the *force over form* of the performative encounter determined by the agency of the body/s of the audience. It is in this sense that the partial objects in the *Take* series are only ever near ‘completion’ *in* the audiences that engage with them, which is always never ending. Again, this is why Mauss stresses the importance of performative action—‘the mere mention of a name’—over and above the importance of likeness in representation. It is important, as I will argue, that such performative action is understood as a function of *doing* something, as in performative utterance. Seen from this perspective, Morris’ *Columns* announce a performative utterance where their acting, in the sense of ‘surrogate beings,’ dominates form: *force over form*. This I see as akin to an emphasis on performatively inspired notions of a de-centering of meaning in the artefact and author (abstraction and attention) discussed in Chapter 4 in the context of performative sculpture.

This is not dissimilar to Morris’ co-opting of forces *in* the work where materials and processes *do* the performing. Mauss’ ‘poorly executed ideogram’ sets in motion performatively understood, and liminally co-dependent, forces *between* agents such as ritualists, donors, objects and contexts of production. And this suggests a potentially limitless set of associations. The terms by which performativity are couched in Chapter 1 advocate that pinning down specific intentions or interpretations once again restricts

¹⁴² The concept of opposition that I have not emphasised in the previous chapter acts as the corollary to similarity. If there is similarity then there must be difference.

the meaning of the performative. This is understated in Mauss' observation that objects can take on 'limitless' associations; knots being required to represent love, rain, wind, curing, war etc... (1975: 70).



ROPE & WAX ANATOMICAL VOTIVE, LIMASSOL, CYPRUS

This distinction is born out in Jones' disagreement with Stiles *vis-à-vis* intentionality. While Stiles adheres to the possibility of activist intentions having a bearing on specific events (within what Jones describes as assumptions regarding 'presence' and the 'real' event), Jones views performativity's radicalness in its *ambivalence* of engagement. And it is the limitless possibilities of that engagement (intentions included) that is important here. She references Stiles as she writes: "It is not through any putative 'intention' of enacting the body in a 'concrete social practice' that body art is potentially radical but, rather, through the engagements that it encourages—and, in fact, its *ambivalence* towards the social (its narcissism as well as its radical opening to the other)" (1998: 246-247n237).¹⁴³ So when Martinis Roe performs at Conical Inc assiduously manipulating clay across her deconstructed platforms, her fingers leave behind objects flagrant with performative 'attention' and 'abstraction' that are limited only by the sense of the engagements they foster. In a similar light, Nauman's *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name*, also overwhelming in its partial morphological ambivalence, *produces* the person in a manner that signifies each and every possible viewer's gesture. In this light, the objects are better termed 'traces of gesture' by which authorship and completion are problematised.

¹⁴³ This reiterates a distinction from 'relational aesthetics' that I outlined earlier in the section 1.3 *Introducing Metaphor & Metonymy*.

Here I want to emphasise the trajectories outlined in Chapter 4 where *The Artist Will Be Present* places emphasis on both the object's role as a marker of 'process,' always moving *towards*, but never resolved as product—in tandem with an emphasis on the viewer 'signing' the work. This is to reiterate that no single agent performs. To say again: one of my main aims is to offer a model of sympathetic magical action as a means of contextualising the traits of the part object/subject—its fragmentation and concomitant redundancy (meaning that from a myriad of possible fragments only a couple will be metonymically held to while the rest are 'noise')—within an understanding of performative rituals that are richly imbued with notions of contagion and continuity on the metonymic axis. This model underscores the significance of addressing part objects/subjects in the context of the agents that offer them 'attention.' This necessitates speaking of the partial object/subject in their 'in-between twoness': an object's mimetic incongruence inseparable from its 'attention.' As noted in the previous chapter, body art's performative objects, like those of sympathetic magical action, operate in altered and non-trivial contexts with manipulative and transformational possibilities (Sorensen 2007: 32; Stiles 1998: 306).

6.2 MELANIE KLEIN AND THE PSYCHOANALYTIC MODEL OF THE PART OBJECT

For the exhibition *Part Object Part Sculpture* at the Wexner Center for the Arts (October 2005-February 2006), curator Molesworth and Krauss, in separate catalogue essays, contextualise the phenomena of the part object within the theories of British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (Krauss 2005: 85; Molesworth 2005a: 194-195).¹⁴⁴ This is characteristic of much of the art historical literature surrounding the part object and its relationship to the body which has employed, as a primary point of reference, Klein's concept that regards the infant's projective identification with the mother as a "...process of splitting, projection and identification" (Likierman 2001: 159). This theory has been extremely valuable in addressing how these fragmentary part objects might function, not as a model of the unconscious, but as a fantasy world operating in relation to bodily instincts. Klein's theory involves the mother's body parts—those specific to the needs of the infant, such as the breast—forming the infant's subjectivity

¹⁴⁴ Molesworth also introduces D.W. Winnicott in describing Duchamp's original readymades as transitional objects (2005a: 197).

enabling a process of identification with the body as parts in relation to the whole. The breast is both consumed and rejected by the infant in a quest to understand the boundaries between the subject and object.¹⁴⁵ As Molesworth puts it, "...between inside and outside, between 'me' and 'not me'" (2005a: 197). The literature has, in turn, critiqued Klein's position, often from the stance of Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* which, as Krauss writes, is seen as a stance against "...the assumption that the experience of desire must always be a desire for meaning, that Oedipus is the drive for symbolization, for representation, for the summoning forth of the signified." As she goes on to write, Deleuze and Guattari's variance to Klein is that: "If the desiring machines

¹⁴⁵ This approach is used by Mignon Nixon as she employs Klein's case history of her four-year-old patient Dick in relation to, among other artists, Bourgeois. Nixon's motivation is to develop "...psychoanalytic feminist readings of aggression that are not grounded in concepts of essentialism or regression" (1997: 178). For Nixon, Bourgeois' "...desire to eat the father and to eat his words... turned into the desire for sculptural solutions or... object solutions—a sculptural solution being, in Bourgeois' terms, one that performs an aggressive or desiring operation on an object... the sculpture comes into being as the object of aggressive fantasy—as something to bite or to cut, to incorporate or to destroy." Nixon's footnote at the end of this sentence provides a balance—less evident in the essay itself—for these sculptural operations as "...fantasies of reparation, of restoring the object perceived to be damaged by destructive fantasies" (1997: 161n114).

For a slightly different emphasis and, in her quest to avoid readings of the Kleinian infant as a singularly destructive, schizoid being, see Meira Likierman who argues that these introjections are based on the 'good object': "Libidinal pleasure-states, and feelings of love and gratitude that are projected on to the nurturing breast, are then reintrojected to form such a core. Mental states and ego-parts can then cluster around this island of security, created with the help of the human provision received by the infant, and this gradually enables integration" (2001: 168). This emphasis on the positive aspects of Klein's theory suggests that aggression and disturbance is assimilated into the "complete person of his *loved* object." And Likierman concludes that: "With this thinking, the difference between adult schizoid states and the infantile schizoid mechanisms is finally clarified. The former represent a highly destructive process in a vulnerable, over-defended individual, whereas the latter express the aggressive protection of good experience that alone enables the creation of the ego's core" (2001: 169-170). While Likierman does not discuss art, I have a hunch that some of the art historical literature surrounding the part object takes Klein's theories too literally, to the point that the body of the mother is imagined in parts. This might be true of Molesworth when she says: "The breast stands alone, distinct and separate from the mother" (2005a: 194). I cannot adequately address this complex question as that would necessitate thorough studies in the field of Kleinian psychoanalysis. It is worth noting however that for Klein there is a distinction between the theorised part object and that experienced by the infant. As Likierman states: "...the mother has a role in a meaningful gathering of different fragments of her infant's response that go to make up his individual history. It is this that gives the infant a sense of one self that changes over time, rather than of different selves that emerge as no more than temporal fragments" (2001: 165). As Likierman explains: "She [Klein] had always noted that while infantile experience is piecemeal, and while the first introjects are part objects, they are not experienced as such in the infant's actual phantasy. On the contrary, the good part object is experienced as a total situation, and the power and fullness of experiencing it represents a whole to the infant. What is objectively understood as an isolated event, unintegrated into the perception of other aspects of reality, is not in fact registered as such" (2001: 169).

produce, they do not produce meaning, representation, form... what they produce is a flow for the next machine to process” (1999: 73). This is the logic viewed as inherent in the part object: an opposition to a drive for representation that seeks formal visual resolve, but instead seeks a deferral of meaning. These are part objects as parts of an ongoing desiring machine that produces in order to produce and so on and so on.¹⁴⁶ This view has been important in grappling with the absence of representational definition in the fragment of the part object and in addressing the conditions of formlessness or ‘morphological ambivalence’ (Krauss 1999: 71) characteristic of the part object.¹⁴⁷

Employing the theories of Klein in relation to the work of Bourgeois, Krauss locates the part object in its “...psychoanalytic dimensions as the goal of an instinct or drive... focused around so many separate organs and their needs and desires” (1999: 54).¹⁴⁸ In discussing the infant’s world of breasts, mouths, bellies, penises and anuses, she argues for a logic in the part object that is about a connection between agents rather than between ‘whole’ bodies or persons, and this she suggests is reductive rather than abstract (1999: 55).

In this context Molesworth observes: “It is tempting to see the three erotic objects of Duchamp as Kleinian part objects *par excellence*. All are fragmentary in relation to the ‘wholeness’ of both *Etant donnés* and the marriage of two fully elaborated adults” (2005a: 197). And with respect to Kleinian psychoanalysis she writes: “This psychic and physical play between interior and exterior creates an intense cathexis onto objects, as objects come

¹⁴⁶ As O’Sullivan writes: “We are moving towards a notion of the art experience, of art practice, whether it be making it, seeing it, or writing about it, as complex and expanded. No longer the static production, distribution and consumption of an object, but art practice as a process, as a ‘desiring-machine’, always ‘in’ production” (2006: 24).

¹⁴⁷ It has also been crucial to a feminist understanding of the body, that which Krauss describes (via Luce Irigaray) as “...the scandal of female transgressiveness simultaneously against form—a decentered, amorphous, nonphallic experience of pleasure—and against logos, or meaning” (1999: 74). See also Krauss’ *The Optical Unconscious* (1993) where, a few years earlier, she follows a similar argument in relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of Klein where she writes: “If the part-objects are rebaptised *desiring machines*, the threatened, paranoid body is now labelled the *body without organs*. This body, static, non-productive, is also the body without an image, the gestaltless body, or the body without form” (1993: 316).

¹⁴⁸ See Krauss as she locates the work of Bourgeois in the realm of the ‘part-object’ as opposed to the ‘partial figure.’ She summarises, as she did in her 2005 essay for *Part Object Part Sculpture*, and as she initially outlined her approach in 1977 with *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, a 19th-century preoccupation with the study of classical antique remains, provoking a romantic enthusiasm for the fragment which, in turn, led to a 20th-century conviction “...that it was the vehicle for a profound, sculptural truth. The body contracted into its most powerful synecdoches: the body as egg, the body as tree trunk, the body as spoonlike hollow...” (1999: 54). Where Krauss employs the term ‘synecdoches’ I might use the term ‘metonymy.’

to stand for persons and parts come to stand for wholes” (2005a: 197). This comment echoes Mauss’ emphasis in the context of those magical rites which follow the so-called laws of sympathy: Where “...a part is seen to be the same as the whole” (1975: 11).¹⁴⁹

Again, in relation to the work of Bourgeois, with reference to the notion of the part object, Krauss is at pains to draw a distinction between ambivalence and abstraction (1999: 71-74). She comments with surprise that Bourgeois’ work has been received as abstract in the sense of “a modernist and formalist logic” (1999: 55). Krauss nails her point as follows:

There is nothing ‘abstract’ about the part-object. But its logic, which spells the connection between agents—the desiring organs on the one hand and the yielding or withholding objects of desire on the other—rather than between individuals or ‘whole’ persons, is reductive: the mother reduced to breast. (1999: 55)

In a similar attempt to articulate such a notion of ambivalence, Molesworth outlines *Wedge of Chastity*’s characteristics as abstract, necessitating touch, small scale, erotic in nature and reproducible. Her use of the term ‘abstract’ is defined as without strict anatomic definition, a “...mixture of the bodily and the nonbodily, a merging of two entities that nonetheless maintain their autonomy” (2005a: 179). And elsewhere she states, “the presence of the body is felt but nowhere is it imaged” (2005b: 20).¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ I want to stress that I am not presenting a model of sympathetic magical action or animism in any kind of opposition to a psychoanalytic model. While Molesworth does not mention sympathetic magical action, her construal of partial objects underlines that such a model does not replace, or act as an alternative, to psychoanalytic models but sits in relation to it. As another way of wording this (and about another issue), Massumi writes: “As usual, it is not a question of right and wrong—nothing important ever is. Rather, it is a question of dosage” (2002: 13).

¹⁵⁰ Jones makes similar observations about *Wedge of Chastity* as she writes: “Its title makes explicit its relation to the thwarted dynamic of erotic union... its anatomy is baffling: While the softly molded dental plastic suggests human flesh, its shape is extremely abstracted and not directly analogous to female sexual parts. Nor is the wedge specifically phallic in shape” (1994: 90).

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MARCEL DUCHAMP, *WEDGE OF CHASTITY*, 1954

As a means of articulating these notions of formless ambivalence in difference to formal abstraction, Krauss employs Barthes' *The Metaphor of the Eye* (1963), a critique of Bataille's novel *L'histoire de l'oeil* (*The Story of the Eye*) (1926). She describes,

... a transgression of that formal logic [abstraction] which depends on the distinction of categorical oppositions, a transgression that thus produces the scandal of the erosion of form that is the *informe*.¹⁵¹ It is this erosion of form that conduces a sense of the 'abstract'¹⁵²—which is to say, the unlocatable—in Bourgeois' work. (1999: 71-73)

¹⁵¹ Mauss' influence on Bataille's overall project is a fascinating line of enquiry for which I do not have space to undertake at this point. James Clifford elaborates on the idea that Bataille's treatise *L'Erotisme* (1957) was heavily influenced by Mauss' seminars at the Ecole des Haute Etudes. He quotes Alfred Métraux, who was present at Mauss' seminars, in writing that Mauss' edict that 'taboos are made to be violated,' strongly influenced Bataille's introduction to *L'Erotisme*'s key chapter on transgression where Bataille writes: "Transgression does not negate an interdiction, it transcends and completes it." In this sense, Bataille's main focus, which was to "...valorize... transgression in all its various forms..." was key to Mauss (Clifford 1981: 545-546).

See also Krauss who alerted me to this connection and that the group called the 'dissident surrealists,' which included Bataille and Alberto Giacometti, were closely following Mauss' seminars (1986: 56, 56n31).

¹⁵² Krauss' use of the term 'abstract' is obviously not employed here as that relating to Modernist abstract formalism. I would replace the term as it stands in her sentence with the term 'ambivalence.'

But she states that this erosion of form is not the attack on matter that anti form¹⁵³ played out in relation to Minimalism, but “...the imposition of distinctions on the indistinctness of chaos—distinctions like inside/outside, figure/ground, male/female, living/dead. It is the transgression of these distinctions, the dangerous imagination of their collapse, that produces the *informe*” (1999: 71-73). In this sense the *informe* (formlessness) is understood as a privation of form (or differences such as figure/ground, or vacillation of difference).

This discussion is well summarised by James Elkins in reference to Krauss’ *The Optical Unconscious* as he outlines a notion of formlessness:

The *inform*... is a ‘disturbance... in the modality of *alteration*, of ambivalence,’ so that there can no longer be a stable distinction between figure and ground, or any pair of ‘alternating’ opposites. Nothing is secure, and forms and figures vacillate or shimmer rather than oscillate in a regular motion. The *inform* is a principle that works against the concepts of antimony, binarism, opposition, structure, and ultimately, figure itself. (1998: 106)¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Note that Krauss employs Morris’ anti-form to different effect, in favour of a notion of formlessness, eight years later in her chapter entitled “Horizontalities” in *Formless*. Here she argues that the strictures of Minimalism, the well-built, enabled forms to resist gravity, and “...what yields to gravity, then, is *anti-form*. Thus for Morris it was not the thematics of trash or mess or tangle—all of which are images of something in their own way—that was pertinent to anti-form, but the operations that would make the force of gravity apparent as it pulled form apart: ‘random piling, loose stacking, hanging’” (Bois and Krauss 1997: 97-98). Krauss explains how the felt works were cut on the horizontal floor and make sense as cut-outs in this position until hung from hooks on the wall: “Now scattered, the pattern would disappear; instead, the gaps would become the index of the horizontal vector understood as a force constantly active within the vertical field—a force that had been put in play in a move to disable the very formation of form” (Bois and Krauss 1997: 98).

¹⁵⁴ Elkins offers a very clear overview of Krauss’ intentions as she discusses the figure/ground relationship while utilising three approaches. The first is Lacan’s ‘L schema’ used to describe, “...not a system of opposites but a picture of ‘permanent circulation, continuous flow’ as the *objet petit a* constitutes the ego, which forms the sense of the Other which stabilizes the philosophic subject, and so on...” (1998: 105). The second is the concept of the *inform* as a surrealist notion for “...whatever works against the meanings generated by the various differences figure/ground, figure/not ground, and so on.” And further referencing Krauss, Elkins states that: “The *inform* works to ‘produce the absence of difference’” (1998: 106). The third approach is in Jean-Francois Lyotard’s *Discours, figure*, “...where Lyotard attempts to write a *theory* of the absolutely asystematic and alogical force that informs concepts such as the *inform*” (1998: 107).

See Sobchack who alerted me to the Elkins text (2004: 73 n63).

In its variance with dichotomous opposition, this stance shares some of Merleau-Ponty's ambition for the flesh of the chiasm and Benjamin's thinking on the optical unconscious. As Elkins writes, again with reference to Krauss: "...*The Optical Unconscious* is nomadic, always looking for alternate 'pulses,' 'beats,' and principles of 'bad form,' so that none keeps center stage long enough to be subsumed into a fully articulate system" (1998: 110).

This is Deleuze's 'real but abstract' that Massumi in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* writes,

...doesn't preexist and has nothing fundamentally to do with mediation... Here, abstract means: never present in position, only ever in passing. This is an abstractness pertaining to the transitional immediacy of a real relation—that of a body to its own indeterminacy (its openness to an elsewhere and otherwise than it is, in any here and now). (2002: 5)

The machine that abstracts in this way is an approach to thinking about art as "...less involved in questions of definition and more with notions of function" (O'Sullivan 2006: 22).¹⁵⁵ This is an emphasis Massumi strikes at when he argues for energy over matter, that which I continuously stress as force over form. And as O'Sullivan is at pains to underline, this denotes a field of performativity: "For the signification effect, or indeed the aesthetic effect, does not come from the object, but from the object being confronted by (coupled with) a beholder..." (2006: 22). Art's role here is a process that never reaches fulfilment and is constitutively experimental, "...a kind of blockage in the smooth running of larger institutional, and indeed global, coding machines" (2006: 25).

As a means of articulating a flow of events and their relationship to ritual contexts, Massumi employs a parable of the soccer match and sketches out the playing field as a force-field describing the players as part objects and the ball as a part subject. He does this by defining the ball as "...the focus of every player and the object of every gesture"

¹⁵⁵ In relating this to the desiring machine, O'Sullivan writes: "In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari characterise these desiring machines as flow producing and flow interrupting. A machine produces a flow, another machine coupled to this interrupts the flow, draws it off, and in doing so produces a temporary halt, an aggregate, an 'object' or frozen event" (2006: 22).

See Briony Fer who suggests a similar kind of operation when she writes that Hesse's objects in cabinets share "...a pursuit of circuits in which parts do not add up to a whole so much as circulate a perpetual motion" (2005: 228).

(2002: 73). He does this so that the player is not the subject of the play but the ball. As he goes on to say:

Since the ball is nothing without the continuum of potential it doubles, since its effect is dependent on the physical presence of a multiplicity of other bodies and objects of various kinds; since the parameters of its actions are regulated by the application of rules, for all these reasons the catalytic object-sign may be called a part-subject. The part-subject catalyzes the play as a whole but is not itself a whole. (2002: 73)

In this remarkable piece of writing the body figures not as a whole body but as a part body: a foot that kicks where the kicking is not an expression of the player inasmuch as a response to the ball ‘drawing out’ the kick (just as the body/s of the audience might be viewed as part object/s (or part body/s) where their participatory agency is not so much driven by intentional and directed ‘viewing’ inasmuch as drawn out by the part subjects of the *Take* series). And typical of the unlimited contexts in which performativity might be articulated, the players are drawn out of themselves, looking beyond the ball as they take in a myriad of external factors that might include, but are never exhaustive of, other players’ movements, the crowd, the extended TV footage:

Any player who is conscious of himself as he kicks misses. Self-consciousness is a negative condition of play. The players’ reflective sense of themselves as subjects is a source of interference that must be minimalized for the play to channel smoothly. When a player readies a kick, she is not looking at the ball so much as *she is looking past it*. She is reflexively (rather than reflectively) assessing the potential movement of the ball. (Massumi: 74)

And the rules and rituals of the game are constantly in variance as the game emerges and continues to evolve “...to the extent that circumstances arise that force modifications to the rules” (Massumi 2002: 72).



PARTICIPATE, 2007

Thus, *Participate* (Cut 1) ‘documents’ the *Take* series as *part subjects* ‘drawing out’ the actions from those ‘players’ as part objects, themselves drawn out of themselves, looking beyond the ‘objects’ and taking in a myriad of external factors. So too, *Caress* (Cut 2), with its up-close haptic ‘hand panning’ of the *Take* series, provokes a deeply (optically unconscious) reciprocal encounter. In the force-field of potential that is the gallery, the body/s of the audience figure not as whole body/s but as part body/s where the touching/participating/viewing is not an expression of the viewing inasmuch as a response to the artwork ‘drawing out’ the viewing. Such a relationship between filmic images and the audience is outlined by Sobchack when she describes the *filmmaker-camera embodiment relation* and the *spectator-projector embodiment relation*. As she outlines the complexities of the ‘viewing-view/viewed-view’ of cinema, she suggests that “...the *spectator-projector embodiment relation* is author of that expression of the film that they [filmmaker and audiences] *together* enable and enact in the contingency of their particular conjunction” (1992: 203).¹⁵⁶ It this kind of contingency that I am wanting to

¹⁵⁶ This notion of the ‘viewing-view/viewed-view’ describes the complexities of the instrument-mediated perception that film evokes. These relations involve the filmmaker who “...perceives an intended world *through* the camera [while the spectator] perceives *through* the expressive instrumentality of the projector an intentional perception *of* the film-maker/camera’s embodiment relation *through* which the intended world is perceived” (Sobchack 1992: 192). In this way, the viewer is aware of the camera as a mediating instrument but not of the camera

embellish in the position and placement of the walls and data projectors where the rules of the field of potential are expanded. In that one point perspective positions the body of the viewer in a 'normal' standpoint, a questioning of those lines of projection (the rules of the force-field) draws viewers out of themselves, looking beyond the work as they take in a myriad of external factors that might include, but are never exhaustive of, other viewers' movements, the wall projections relative to the space in which they circulate, the fading sound of *Over & Over*, the conversations etc... This disturbance which incites objects as subjects was at the heart of the previous discussion regarding Clark's *Objetos Relacionais* and West's *Adaptives*, where these objects, viewed as part subjects, take on an altogether different significance as provocateurs (surrogate performers). It is in this regard that Clark writes to Hélio Oiticica in 1968: "True participation is open. We will never be able to know what we give to the spectator author" (quoted by Bishop 2006: 18).

It is in this way that Massumi's parable focuses, not on a drama between individual players, but on a force-field of indefinable agents (such that Clark questions what we might *give* to the 'spectator author'). This is what Bois and Krauss alert us to in Deleuze's and Guattari's objection to Klein.¹⁵⁷ Her model, while being one of instability

itself. Yet, for the viewer, while this experience is 'not mine,' the embodied relationship between filmmaker and camera is perceived and signified as 'mine.' In this context the filmmaker and camera form an enabling 'common eye' (subject and eye) that is performed both reflectively and reflexively by both film and/or the spectator. It is in this way that the *spectator-projector embodiment relation* authors the filmic image as contingent on both filmmaker-camera and spectator-projector (Sobchack 1992: 197-203). In relation to my project, *Above* and *Back* introceptively combine filmmaker *and* the subject of the perceived world (as previously argued, I am ambivalently the subject and object of both the moving images and the 'moulds' of the *Take* series). This 'common eye' is deeply reflexive and the spectator's authoring—even as her body is forced to negotiate close-up and past images, spatially relocating in relation to the projector/s—is heightened in its somatic closeness with my body.

¹⁵⁷ The use of Deleuze and Guattari's critique of Kleinian analysis in their *Anti-Oedipus* features in a number of essays: see Krauss' "Sherrie Levine: Bachelors" where she discusses the desiring machines in relation to the Duchamp effect: "The bachelor machine of *Anti-Oedipus* constructs the relationship between the desiring machines and the body without organs, between the bachelor's world of production and the bride's domain of inscription... Each machine is a part object: the breast-machine, the mouth-machine, the stomach-machine, the intestine-machine, the anus-machine. As opposed to this the body without organs produces nothing; it re-produces. It is the domain of simulation, of series crossing one another, of the possible occupation of every place in the series by a subject forever decentered" (1999: 181).

See Krauss' "Hesse's Desiring Machines" where she discusses Eva Hesse's work as in relation to the part object and Deleuze and Guattari's three principles of repetition, continuity and desire (2002: 52).

of human form, in the end “...makes part objects into the agents of intersubjective relations, and thus players in a drama between persons, not between indefinable, protean organs” (1997: 156). In this regard Deleuze and Guattari emphasise an unconsciousness as unaware of ‘whole’ beings as such, where the objective of the infant is to receive and retransmit, and where a particular part object might be altered in the course of its function, “...from reception machine at one point of connection to transmission machine at the other... from which it follows that part objects are not representations of parental figures: they are parts of desiring machines” (Bois and Krauss 1997: 156). The importance of this observation is that it offers a model for analysing partial objects/subjects that talks of encounter as shattering customary ways of being, as art practice that is always a process *in construction*.

Deleuze and Guattari’s view of a sequence of connections between parts of machines may be considered in relation to Barthes’ view on Bataille when he states: “...he thus leaves us no other recourse than to consider, in *Histoire de l’œil*, a perfectly spherical metaphor: each of the terms is always the signifier of another (no term is a simple signified), without being able to stop the chain...” (1972: 242).¹⁵⁸ The connections between parts makes for an illocutionary performative force that is unlimited: always the signifier of another signifier. Mauss draws attention to this as he perceives that there are surprisingly few symbolic objects adapted for magical action, giving the example that, “...magical knots are required to represent love, rain, wind, curing, war, language and a thousand other things” (1975: 70). That the knots stand in for a myriad of possible associations points to the limitless potential of the chain of associations. These are the limitless contexts of contiguity that Mauss is beginning to advocate as he describes the “...arbitrary business of abstraction and interpretation...” (1975: 69).

For the terms by which Deleuze and Guattari discuss the way in which “...organic and inorganic matter surges through and around us in deterritorialised flows...” see David Joselit on the trajectory of Duchamp’s production as ‘bio-readymades.’ The ‘swarm’ for Joselit is “...a principle of combination situated somewhere between the undoing of structural logic associated with Bataille’s *informe* and the rule based permutations of Minimalism” (2005: 164).

¹⁵⁸ Bois and Krauss use this exact quote (1997: 155).

6.3 THE FORCE OF THE PENDULUM



ALBERTO GIACOMETTI, *SUSPENDED BALL*, 1930-31

In their chapter entitled “Part Object” for *Formless: A User’s Guide*, Bois and Krauss locate the notion of formlessness as described above, somewhere suspended between formal and non-formal characteristics. A sort of operational pendulum that swings from one point to another but without clear definition, or, later in their chapter, a rotational device that challenges the verticality of the body in its wholeness (1997: 155, 157).¹⁵⁹ These pendular and rotational devices operate liminally as a means of summoning the mimetic incongruence that results in a redundancy typical of the partial object/subject. Employing Alberto Giacometti’s *Suspended Ball* (1930-31) as a visualisation of the pendulum’s swing, and Brassai’s *Nu 115* (1932-33) as the rotation, they map out an ‘anatomical redistribution’ or, to employ Barthes’ term, a ‘round phallicism’ that while collapsing distinct sexual identity is also a way of eradicating categories and in so doing soliciting a kind of formlessness (1997: 152-161).¹⁶⁰ These are the kinds of anatomical redistributions that truncate and spatially disorientate my body in *Above* and *Back*.

As Bois and Krauss recount, Dali’s criticism of *Suspended Ball*, in his theorisation of what constitutes the ‘surrealist object,’ is that objects functioning on a symbolic level (unconscious desire, sexual perversion, erotic fantasy) cannot be sculpturally formal in

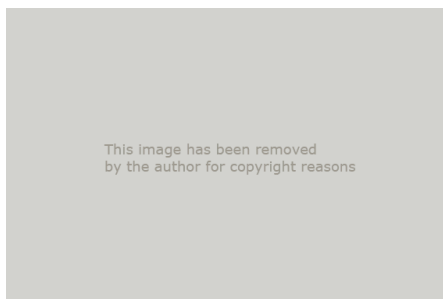
¹⁵⁹ The pendulum is an interesting choice of metaphor as one of the most formal devices for regulation. In what will become clear later, the crossing of these regulatory devices (the chains of metaphor as substitution) acts as a violation of meaning which is the force of the metonymic.

¹⁶⁰ See Krauss’ *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* for an earlier discussion of *Suspended Ball* in relation to Bataille and the notion of the *informe* (1986: 56-68).

their relationships. Dali seems to argue for objects that must be synchronistic, displaying surrealist modes of chance encounter. As Bois and Krauss write, "...it is in this tension between the 'formal concerns' Giacometti is accused of and Dali's own conviction that the baseness of unconscious desire demands an expression that must be 'extraplastic' that one can locate a struggle over the nature of the *informe*" (1997: 154). This is certainly to concede that 'formlessness' is unattainable; the 'extraplastic' in plastic form is tautological. It also places emphasis on the force and flow of desire over form; 'extra' to form. Elkins is very clear in this respect in reference to Krauss' *The Optical Unconscious* when he writes that:

Krauss' principal strategy is to pose modernism as an autonomous logical *system*, self-enclosed and apparently not in need of anything beyond its formal vocabulary, and then to put the principally surrealist 'optical unconscious' against it, as a way of thinking about seeing that takes account of the viewer's desires, blindnesses, and implication in the subject. (1998: 103)

Following Elkins' observation, and as will be discussed in the next section, the metomymical axis of contagion is a highly useful mechanism for discussing the axis of desire constituting all the parts of the whole that we will never attain.



BRASSAI, *NU 115*, 1932-33

Suspended Ball is compared to Barthes' structuralist analysis of Bataille's *History of the Eye* in which Barthes seeks to interpret the story, not as a series of characters and events, but as,

...an object - the eye - whose characteristics yield the 'combinatoire' from which the textual fabric is woven, both at the level of its language and in the dimension of its events. For the grid this object produces is constructed from the axis of shapes (the chain of globular forms that links eye to sun to egg to testicles) and an axis of fluids (a series of liquids that mutates from tears to yolk to semen). It is the crossing of these two axes at their multiple points, Barthes argues, that produces the precise images with which Bataille operates - such as when the sun, metamorphorized as eye and yolk, is described as 'flaccid

luminosity' - and gives rise to the phrase 'the urinary liquefaction of the sky.'
(Bois and Krauss 1997: 154-155)

In a footnote Barthes alerts us that his analysis refers to Jakobson's opposition "...between metaphor, a figure of similarity, and metonymy, a figure of contiguity" (1972: 245n242). When Jakobson in turn referred to Frazer's principles of similarity and contact in "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbance," it is in aligning similarity with metaphor and displacement with regard to contact and metonymy.¹⁶¹ This is to stress a disturbance (Krauss calls it an erosion) of the metonymic naming of the parts which Barthes constitutes as an 'exchange,' which undertakes to 'abolish' or 'vacillate' meaning (1972: 245). In this sense the axis of substitutions and the axis of adjacencies (metaphor and metonymy) is a means to discuss the conditions of formlessness and intimacy and are, moreover, the operations of similarity and contagion in sympathetic magical action.

The opposing axes described by Bois and Krauss are, for Barthes, two chains of metaphoric associations that share similarities and differences. The first has to do with form and content: "... (in French, the two words, *oeil* [eye] and *oeuf* [egg] have a common sound and a differentiated sound) and a content (although absolutely discrepant, both objects are globular and white)" (Barthes 1972: 241). Once in motion new metaphorical extensions are made possible such as a "...current French usage which calls the testicles of certain animals *eggs*" (1972: 241). The second chain of metaphoric associations constitutes,

... all the avatars of the liquid whose image is equally linked to eye, egg, and testicles; and this series is not only the liquor itself (tears, milk, egg yolk, sperm, urine), it is, so to speak, the very mode of the moist... it is all the varieties of the inundant which complete the original metaphor of the globe... (1972: 241)

And it is in the crossing of these two chains of metaphoric association, 'a transfer of meaning from one chain to the other,' that Barthes posits the metonymic: "...eye sucked like a breast, my eye sipped by her lips..." (1972: 245). And Barthes employs the term 'contagion' of qualities and actions that is to pull out the eyeball and play with it

¹⁶¹ See Jakobson, Roman (1987), *Language in literature*, eds Krystyna Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press), 113, as quoted by Taussig (1993: 262n210).

erotically or “...to bite into the bull’s testicle as if it were an egg or to insert it in one’s own body...” (1972: 245).

Bois and Krauss’ fictitious account of Barthes’ objection to Dali’s term ‘extraplastic’ as an impossible term places Barthes in opposition to the surrealist impulse for no apparent constraint. The structuralist account rejects ‘wildness’ or ‘freedom’ (Barthes 1972: 244) in favour of something more concerted, the syntagm, “...the connection and combination of signs on the level of actual discourse,” (Barthes 1972: 243n241) that which constitutes the chain of associative metaphors is constrained by what cannot enter its chain (Barthes 1972: 244). For Barthes, this evokes the qualities of literature’s technique, which allows for a liberation of contiguities (the metonymic) but only measured against the associative field of the syntagm (1972: 244-245). For this reason Bois and Krauss argue for the dilemma in articulating notions of formlessness, that is, its necessary positioning within formal constraints but liberated by the contiguities of the metonymic. As already stated above, it is in this sense that formlessness can never be discussed as a ‘pure’ term. As Barthes puts it:

This restraint, obviously generates a very powerful kind of information, located at a distance from the banal and the absurd, since the narrative is encompassed by the metaphorical sphere, whose regions it can exchange (whence its energy) but whose limits it cannot transgress (whence its meaning); according to the law which decrees that the Being of literature is never anything but its technique, the insistence and the freedom of this ‘song’ are therefore products of an exact art which is able at once to measure the associative field and to liberate within it the contiguities of terms. (1972: 244-245)

This notion is close to Tambiah’s use of positive and negative analogies written five years later resulting in a series of redundancies. As Barthes writes,

... all these associations are both the same and different; for metaphor, which varies them, manifests a regulated difference among them, a difference which metonymy, which exchanges them, immediately undertakes to abolish: the world becomes disturbed, its properties are no longer divided; to flow, to sob, to urinate, to ejaculate—these form a vacillating meaning... the violation of a signifying limit of space; it permits, on the very level of discourse, a counterdivision of objects, meanings, spaces, and properties... (1972: 245-246)

In this light, and as a means of elucidating Krauss’ distinction between abstraction and ambivalence, metaphor permits abstraction while metonymy resists the building of an

organic whole. As signifier leads only to another signifier, the whole is never built. Tambiah's notion of the metonymic function standing in as an attribute (a part) for the whole relies on the notion that redundancy is all the bits of the 'whole' not held significant in the part that *does* stand in for the whole. And Tambiah's use of positive and negative analogies are more complex than Frazer's initial calculation of 'like attracts like' (Tambiah 1973: 214). As an example, Tambiah discusses a Zande case study used by Evans-Pritchard in which a creeper is employed for curing leprosy: "...the creeper *araka* lose their leaves. These are replaced by a double row of bands, joined to the stalks, which little by little dry, split, and fall in small pieces just as the extremities of the hands and feet disappear in '*la lepre mutilante*'" (1973: 214).

Tambiah and Barthes do not reference each other, but seen from Barthes' perspective the two chains of metaphorical associations are those of the creeper's falling leaves and the leper's falling extremities. One chain pertains to growth while the other to disease that leads to death. We could continue each metaphoric chain with the creeper's spouting, the seed's germination, the penis' unfolding as erection, and so on. These associations are the same and different as metaphor 'varies' them (Barthes 1972: 245). The crossing of the chains of these syntagmic signs "...will seek from the two series not complimentary but distant terms..." (Barthes 1972: 244), that is to say, redundant terms. As Barthes describes, it constitutes an 'exchange' which undertakes to 'abolish' or 'vacillate' meaning (1972: 245). A ritual action applying dried *araka* creeper mixed with spittle to a leper's wounds would constitute an object violation of the metaphorical chains. Crucial to Tambiah's reckoning is that Barthes' abolishing or vacillation of meaning is lent the terms of a persuasive and forceful transfer where the undesirable (the loss of the limbs resulting in death) is replaced by the desired growth, an avoidance of death, and, in disagreement with Frazer, the action happens at the level of the symbolic, not causal action (Tambiah 1973: 215). It is in this sense that the metonymic axis builds the ritual in piecing together the parts while mimesis happens in the metaphoric substitution of creeper growth for leprosy cure.

This discussion is similar to a chiasmatic structure of reversibility discussed in Chapter 2. While Sobchack's project focuses on a sensual engagement with cinema "...as 'real' and 'as if real' *in the same breath*..." (Sobchack 2004: 73) her words echo Tambiah's emphasis when she writes:

Highlighted in these articulations—accomplished in and through language—is the very chiasmatic structure of *reversibility* that exists between and also subtends the body and consciousness and the body and representation. Whether perceived as an *ambivalent vacillation between* or an *ambiguous conflation of* the real and the as-if real of the lived body (matter that means) and representation (meaning as matter), this experience of the fundamental reversibility of the body and language is deeply felt—and often articulated—in these unnameable and undecidable descriptions... (2004: 74)

Sobchack is emphasising a chiasmic relation where a subjective sense of embodiment and an “...objective sense of representation are perceived as reversibly figure and ground...” (Sobchack 2004: 74). This is heightened in film as an ambivalence between a ‘real’ (literal) experience and an ‘as-if-real’ (figurative) sensual experience. By comparison, Tambiah’s concept of the Zande case-study vacillates between literal and figural associations: literal mimesis and figural undoing of the undesired. In this context Tambiah suggests a vacillation between a literal knowing that the creeper is a creeper and a bodily aphasia that forms a transgression of language.

For Barthes this is “...a technical transgression of the forms of language, for metonymy is precisely a forced syntagm, the violation of a signifying limit of space; it permits, on the very level of discourse, a counterdivision of objects, usages, meaning, spaces and properties...” (1972: 246).

Bois and Krauss mediate the dispute between Giacometti and Dali by offering the accused and complainant different models for voicing their concerns. For Giacometti, that of an operational pendulum always undoing itself with each swing, “...reconstituting the object’s ‘parts’ [and for Dali] a mechanism to resist meaning, to attack the illustrative or the thematic” (1997: 155-156). *Suspended Ball* is interpreted here as a mechanism to evade a discrete sexual identity in order to elude categorisation and cancel out specific meaning:

For the perfect sexual ambivalence of each of the elements of Giacometti’s sculpture—in which the labial form of the wedge is stridently phallic and the active, presumably masculine element of the work, in its cloven roundness, is yielding vaginal—is made to enter the same migration that occurs in *The Story of the Eye*, with one element sent mutating into the next. (Bois and Krauss 1997: 155)

Seen in these terms, *Suspended Ball* is interesting for what it is not; simultaneously not a phallus, not a cunt, not an eye, not a blade: it is visually redolent of a lack.¹⁶² In this way the work does not signify a closure of meaning but the possible plays of substitutions, none of which will be privileged.

Tambiah's criticism of Frazer is significant with respect to such a lack. In viewing Frazer's terms of similarity and contact as too restrictive and problematic in their application he opens the terms out to include positive and negative analogies as described above, and in so doing addresses lack on the metonymic axis: "...as transmitting a message through redundancy" in the enumeration of the parts of an object (1968: 190; 1973: 219). This notion of redundancy echoes the erosion inherent in the part objects that Krauss argues in her distinction from abstraction. Not a Modernist and formalist logic but a "...yielding or withholding objects of desire..." (1999: 55). To reiterate, redundancy is 'noise' in the sense that there is stuff available and not used that could have been used in transmitting a message. It could always have been some other part that would have changed the whole scenario and so on and so on.

6.4 THE FORCE OF THE WEDGE

The previous section discussed the force of the operations of the pendulum as a way of articulating mimetic incongruence as a characteristic of the 'poorly executed ideogram.' To analyse *Wedge of Chastity* along these lines would be to examine the inexhaustible contexts of performativity in which the object resides. This would attempt to discuss a myriad of associations characterised by but limited to: the nature of the object's title; its inscription; its alleged history of production by contact with a model and/or the figure of *Etant donnés*; its relationship to the fabrication of previous erotic objects (*Not a Shoe*); its reproduction in series; its reception by the art world and subsequent history of exhibition outside of the contexts of its 'original' intention as wedding gift; the photograph in Molesworth's 2005 essay which separates its union and exposes an interior which, perhaps, was never intended for public exposure; and all the subsequent texts on the work including this one and so on. To list the chains of metaphoric

¹⁶² See Maurice Nadeau's *The History of Surrealism* as quoted by Bois and Krauss, regarding the initial reception of *Suspended Ball*: "Now everyone who has seen this object function has felt a violent and indefinable emotion doubtless having some relation with unconscious sexual desires. This emotion has nothing to do with satisfaction, rather with irritation, the kind provoked by the disturbing perception of a lack" (1997: 152-154).

associations similar to that of Tambiah's for the Zande use of the *araka* creeper limits the exhaustive possibilities by which the *Wedge of Chastity* mutates, but nevertheless articulates some of the elaborate 'rites of passage' surrounding the object as it posits a number of desired outcomes in the face of the undesirable. In employing such an operation the *Wedge of Chastity* seems, then, a matrix of a new trajectory of objects which are in a sense the different 'stations' of the conjugal metaphor.¹⁶³

The first variation is that of the wedge and the phallus; this is a double variation, both of form (in French the two words *coin* and *coincer* stand for corner and the action of the wedge, while *coin* and *coup*, to corner and to hit or blow,¹⁶⁴ share both common and differentiated sounds) and of content (while discrepant, both objects fit together in absolute union) thus the associations of preserving as chaste, stopping, damming up, locking and protecting, run alongside those of union, coitus and intimacy. This is the first metaphor of the object.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ The structure, mostly at the beginning, of this account is paraphrased from Barthes where I replace his wording in describing Bataille's *History of the Eye* with mine associated with Duchamp's *Wedge of Chastity* (1972: 240-241).

¹⁶⁴ See Didi-Huberman who argues that the two words of the title (*Coin de chastete*) can be understood as a sexual illusion to the imprint, recounting Duchamp's use of the term 'coin' as a tool to hit or penetrate, while the term chastity is reflected in the nature of the gift and in "...the dialectic operation which suggests genitalia cast by some 'coin' [corner] of plaster... It speaks of the erotic impersonal power of the bond of interpenetration. It speaks of the essential nature of contact and the impossibility of distinguishing the two embracing parties" (1997: 159).

¹⁶⁵ In a similar way Duchamp's titling of other erotic objects can be read along similar lines. The *Objet-Dard* (1951) is said to be a plaster object formed from the leftover material cut away from a mould of the *Etant donnés*' breasts (Jones 1994: 91-92). This view is backed by the provenance label in Philadelphia Museum of Art as follows: "The enigmatic moulded items in plaster and bronze displayed in this case allude to human anatomy and offer insight into the working process involved in the making of *Etant donnés*." While I do not comment on all the part objects united in the one Philadelphia Museum of Art display case, the museum's attributions are as follows: *Dart Object*, 1962 bronze cast of 1951 plaster; *Female Fig Leaf*, 1961 bronze cast of 1950 plaster; *Sink Stopper, Shower Medal*, 1967 bronze cast of 1964 plaster; *Study for Prière de Toucher (Please Touch)*, 1947, plaster. This idea of leftover, redundant materials, common also to Nauman's working processes, underscores the partiality of the object. Jones points out that the title is a pun on objet d'art, or, art object, and that the word *dard* is slang for penis in French, suggesting that the art object is the phallus, paradoxically carrying the firm shape of the flaccid penis: "The penis as the cutaway reminder [or remainder?] of the female breast holds an ironic position as signifier not of phallic plenitude but of formless lack: Here the penis is simply 'not breast'" (1994: 91-92).



MARCEL DUCHAMP, *OBJET-DARD*, 1951

It is however not the only one; a secondary series derives from it, constituted by all the avatars of the object's material substance. This would be found, for example, in the lower component's substance of dental plastic with its connotations of teeth, and by consequence, the vagina-dente; the substance of dental plaster acting as a persuasive analogy between a material used to cast teeth and that used to cast the pudendum equating oral and vaginal flesh and allowing for associations of biting, mouthing, slavering. One could extend this further by suggesting that the bronze of the masculine element signifies the artist as grounded in fine art's intellectual and commercial discourses, while the female element signifies the malleable and impressionable, but at the same moment the supposed violence of the vagina-dente.

Another chain of metaphoric associations would be previous artistic production and the object's repetition; the bronze element of the *Wedge* is close, if not identical, to Duchamp's earlier work *Not a Shoe* from 1950. That *Not a Shoe* is doubled in *Wedge of Chastity* as a reverse cast of a pudendum would follow Duchamp's fantasy of reversals (and a Freudian analogy of the shoe as a sexualised fetish object) in constituting *Not a Shoe* as therefore a phallus. That the *Wedge* is reproduced in an edition of 12, even if it is singled out as possessing a specific ritualistic role by inscription, reinforces the erotic

nature of the object by use of the mould as an agent of production and reproduction (Molesworth 2005a: 179-182).¹⁶⁶

Yet another chain of associations would be the wedding contract, matrimonial gift (operating in difference to editioning the work), inscription and Duchamp's relationship to his second wife Alexina. As Molesworth notes: "Perhaps Duchamp's desire to have *Wedge of Chastity* function 'like a wedding ring' was a desire for it to be read along standard social conventions, for it to be *legible*, as well as portable" (2005a: 193). Like a wedding ring, the small scale of the object suggests sites such as tables and mantels lending it an itinerant quality reinforced by Duchamp's comment that "We usually take it with us, like a wedding ring."¹⁶⁷ This migratory quality suggests objects that partake or are 'in waiting' for the ritual contexts that enliven them. But in difference to Duchamp, the *Wedge* does not replace wedding rings. As such, wedding rings operate as metaphors understood against 'normatively habituated contexts' (Sobchack 2004: 80-81) indicative of sayings like: 'Our love is like a never-ending circle, it has no beginning and no end.' Rings on wedding fingers denote a series of collectively understood parameters such as sexual unavailability. The *Wedge*, on the other hand, is a private (yet transportable) object that functions, in fact, as a false or improper metaphor; a forced extension of the terms by which wedding rings are understood. The *Wedge*, in other words, breaks with Austin's correct and identifiable set of ritual contexts. In this sense a comparison to Orozco's *Working Tables* is interesting. His objects, in the words of Fer, are about "...the accident by which it happens to be there" (2005: 231). Orozco's objects await the organisational propensities of the audiences who will (not necessarily physically) organise the work within infinite variables. And, as noted above, these objects are transferable from one work to another as well as multipliable even if they are singled out as possessing a specific ritualistic role. This is to describe a place of potentiality, a liminality not only with respect to the body, imaginary or otherwise, that

¹⁶⁶ In relation to other or previous artistic production, Molesworth states: "The cast objects are memory folds, fossils of psychic states. *Objet Dard* is a remnant of a work [*Etant donnés*]—or, better yet, of a process of making a work of art. *Female Fig Leaf* is the memory of a body—albeit a fictional one. Both are also images of absence" (2005a: 179-182).

¹⁶⁷ Jones states how Duchamp gave the first *Wedge* to his second wife Alexina with an inscription on the top, and quotes Duchamp as saying that: "We usually take it with us, like a wedding ring" (1994: 91). Likewise, Molesworth points out that the object is inscribed with the words 'pour Teeny 16 Jan. 1954 Marcel' as a wedding gift for Teeny Matisse. (2005a: 179).

came into contact with the object, but in relation to the notion of the overall opus of the artist (that is also common to Duchamp's work).



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MARCEL DUCHAMP, *WEDGE OF CHASTITY*, 1954

The chains of association move faster and faster as physical encounter with the object is entertained. Notwithstanding the object's plausible intimate exchange between Alexina and Marcel Duchamp, a sense of touch might be necessary to finding out about the sculpture, dividing it and peering into its pink recess offers associations of caressing, the moistness and warmth of internal cavities as well as their privateness and secretness. Significantly, the work is photographed for the first time in its separate pieces for the *Part Object Part Sculpture* catalogue. The importance of taking the object apart is evident when one finally sees inside it, having for years looked at the two connected parts joined together in various exhibitions and illustrations. But this action of prising open that which is secretive, in turn, *performs* the *Wedge* in ways that cross its very intimacy. This constitutes the crossing metaphoric chains of private, intimate sexual aid with published,

exhibited, public, touring art object; a crossing prompted by Duchamp as he edited the object.

The crossing of these chains of metaphoric association results in persuasive and transformative forces working against innumerable undesired characteristics, not least to be devoured, bitten off, at the mouth of the vagina, or to bite at the cunt or to plug its entrance forever. These are the possibilities of contagion that operate on the metonymic axis of lack and redundancy that is the 'real' *Wedge*: it is the phallus that is not a phallus and the artwork that is not an artwork; the force of this object residing in all that it is not, all the 'noise' of the absent parts.

6.5 ANATOMICAL VOTIVES



WAX ANATOMICAL VOTIVES, NICOSIA AND FAMAGUSTA, CYPRUS



WAX ANATOMICAL VOTIVE, FAMAGUSTA, CYPRUS

Having analysed the *Wedge of Chastity* in relation to the force of redundancy or excess that is characteristic of mimetic incongruence, my aim has been to establish the conditions of sympathetic analogy—in a lack of representational fixity—that make the *Wedge* so ironically faithful in copy and so embodied of an encounter between Marcel and Alexina Duchamp. These characteristics of the ‘poorly executed ideogram’ are manifest in the wax anatomical votives fabricated at the Papadopoulou Workshop, Nicosia, Cyprus.¹⁶⁸ They are fabricated in three main categories, representing the figure, body-parts and internal organs.¹⁶⁹ In a combined 1961 essay Rudolf Kriss and Hubert Kriss-Heinrich¹⁷⁰ describe these votives as not accurately copying the body but tracing aspects of the body’s substance and measurement where special orders are

¹⁶⁸ This practice is unusual to Cyprus given the prohibition for the Eastern Orthodox of sculpted figures of saints.

¹⁶⁹ Sheila Girardon suggests a causal relationship—a direct line of descent—from *votive donaria* of the ancients to contemporary usage and usage in the medieval period (1994:384). Frazer stems from this tradition but rarefies the factors at play to those of similarity and contact through a late 19th-century notion of animism.

¹⁷⁰ All my illustrations of anatomical votives from Cyprus are taken from this publication in which they are undated. My thanks to Ilse Marie Erle for the translation of this text.

available in the life-size, or weight, of the donor (136).¹⁷¹ The concept of attention is bound to both wax as a substance together with the intricate means by which bodies are approximated by means of measurement and mimicry.

In this light, Fife recounts practices at the time of St. Radegund in the sixth century where donors were instructed to measure:

...the circumference or length of the body with a string and then to offer a candle of that length, using the measuring string for a wick. The concept motivating this act is... that the body itself is brought as an offering in the wax candle and that through this vicarious offering healing could be procured. (1939: 249)

Fife also gives an example of a woman who had suffered many miscarriages and through the intercession of Saint Mary of Soissons, gave birth to a normal child. She offered in thanks "...a candle which corresponded to the circumference of her body at the time of her pregnancy" (1939: 249).¹⁷² This seems closely reminiscent of Terry Fox's *Levitatio* (1970) where Fox drew a circle with his own blood the diameter of which equaled his height, and to Tom Marioni where he "...recorded the length of his body moving from a crouch to a standing position in a series of pencil lines that traced the motion" at Richard de Marco's gallery in Edinburgh (Schimmel 1998: 111-113).¹⁷³ Seen from this perspective, Nauman can be viewed as an artist whose use of wax and the dimensions of his body in works like *Space Under My Hand When I write My Name* and

¹⁷¹ See Strathern in relation to a notion of embodiment as animating inert objects. Strathern references Thomas Csordas as noting that embodiment is being used to refer to human beings only, and not to material artifacts: "Yet we know also that such artefacts may carry powerful meanings as extensions of the human body or in being modeled on the human body (or vice versa). Hence, it is difficult simply to restrict embodiment to the living human being" (1996: 197).

¹⁷² And Fife offers another example where: "Epileptics were frequently healed at the grave of Bishop Gualterius of Pontoise after they had offered candles the length of their bodies" (1939: 250). In questioning the parameters by which similitude and contagion might be understood, the work of an artist such as Felix Gonzales Torres comes to mind. He describes a space of sympathy with his and his partner's bodies in approximating their combined weight in *Untitled (Placebo—Landscape for Roni)*, 1,200 lbs of candies individually wrapped in gold cellophane, 1993. This is not dissimilar to the pouring of the donor's weight in wax described above. Such material conditions, while not directly involving touch, embellish the objects with a dimension or aura not common to imitation—they connect, make contact, with the substance of the human condition.

¹⁷³ Schimmel also makes reference to quantifying the artist's own body in relation to Manzoni's *Artist's Shit* (1961) or *Bodies of Air* (1959-60) and a work in 1960 where Manzoni produced boiled eggs for the public to eat bearing the artist's fingerprints on them (1998: 47-49).

Wax Impressions of the Knees of Five Famous Artists combine to produce the person in various mimetic ways.



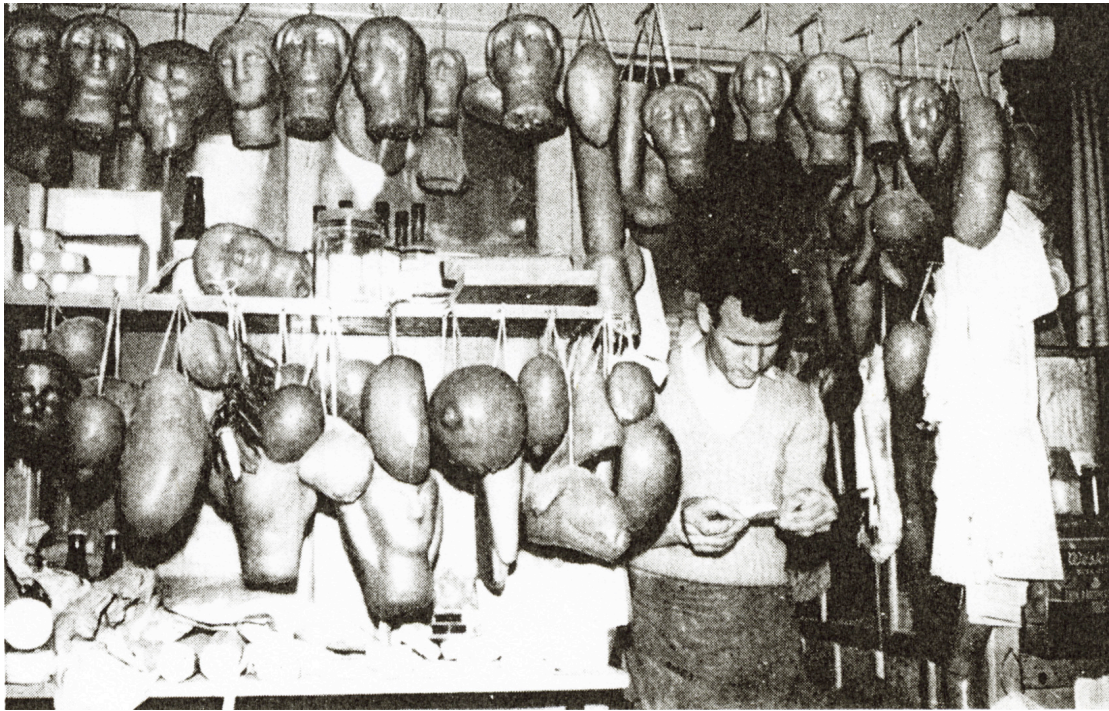
BRUCE NAUMAN, *WAX IMPRESSIONS OF THE KNEES OF FIVE FAMOUS ARTISTS*, 1966

Mauss' notion of the 'poorly executed ideogram,' while not referred to by Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, is reinforced by their contextualisation of these anatomical votives where it is the interpretation and intentions of a devotee that determines a votive's efficacy with respect to an act of healing. Together with this, the formal representational qualities of the votives are outweighed by their function. As Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich write: "There were a lot of undefinable lumps which could be seen as hearts, stomach, liver, kidneys or uterus and it is up to the intention of the donor regarding attribution" (1961: 136). This gives rise to ambiguous attributions for their illustrations prompting them to note,

... just like the wax votive, the silver votives have single forms like heads, breasts... fig. 69 has the same outline as the head next to it but does not show any engraved facial lines. Maybe here we have a piece that will get worked further after it has been ordered by the buyer but it could just depict a heart. (1961: 136)

This reinforces the notion that the devotee activates the object by her participation in the ritual context.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Likewise, the conditions of contact are difficult to measure. Again in discussing the wax anatomical votives of Cyprus, Rudolf Kriss in a later 1963 essay, points to a dilemma in the medieval period with such a broad application of the terms of contact when he writes that "...the belief systems have been quite folkloristic, so that everything that came in touch with a sacred object, place, image, human body or body part of a hero or saint, with a relic or with consecrated things like oil, water, host etc., became a medium and container for supernatural powers itself. Therefore the church had to fight with the toughest means against the habit of putting objects under the altar cloth. They would have been removed after Mass and used as magical means" (1963: 98).



THE PAPADOPOULOU WAX VOTIVE WORKSHOP, NICOSIA, CYPRUS

The point to be made is that these objects, employed as part of the rituals of sympathetic magical action, cannot be understood as inert objects of display in the sense of scopic recognition. That this is sometimes the case, as and when they are collected for museums such as the Pitt Rivers, removes these objects from their performative contexts by which they can be understood as embodying their donor with forceful efficacy. In relationship to this problem of an object's removal from ritual contexts, Klocker notes, in the context of the art object, the desire to possess by collection is central to the mechanisms of the 'information machines' in the Age of Enlightenment and Modernism, that lend these objects their recognition. He argues that the artist needs to resist the 'idealistic process of collecting' in order to retain autonomy. In a comment that is as pertinent to the anatomical votives described above as they enter the collection, Klocker writes: "The flow of communication would freeze and be robbed of the agitative capabilities which form the nucleus of its being" (1998: 159).¹⁷⁵ This is to underline that these anatomical votives are deeply contingent on their ritualistic operations involving the complex roles of producer, donor, shrine etc.

¹⁷⁵ I would add that while collections short circuit notions of performativity, they bounce them into another arena of performative interaction.



ALICIA FRANKOVICH, *FLYING FOX*, 2008



PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, 1985.49.113, MEXICO

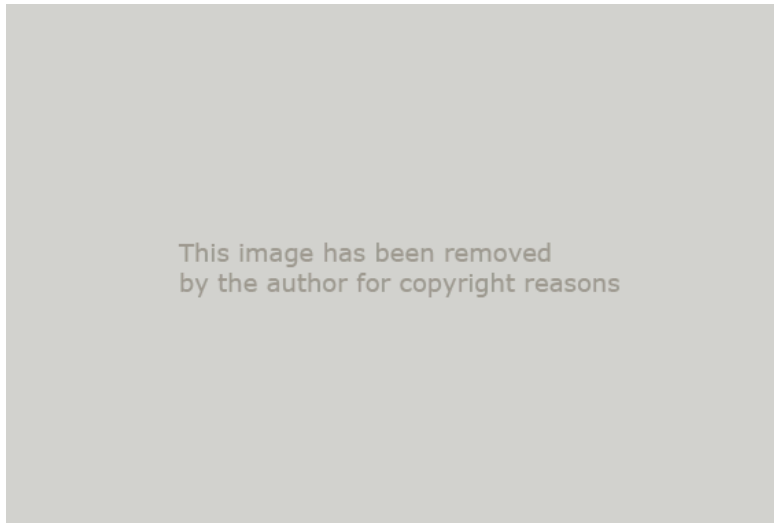
To sum up at this point, these anatomical votives are therefore very apt objects with which to articulate embodiment as an encounter with the body *as* process. Their formlessness, or partness, makes them always complexly contingent upon their contexts of production for any determination of their efficaciousness. In this sense interpretations and intentions—the attention—of all ritual agents including the donor are always open to disappointment and failure: *representational completion would undo such a force*.¹⁷⁶ This disappointment alludes to the axis of metonymy as the axis of desire. Here desire is the name for that which one will never have and what this object will never be for me.¹⁷⁷ That Frankovich did not appear for *Flying Fox*, other than her leg jutting from an upstairs window, indicates the power of the metonymic action crucial to her performative-object. Her leg metaphorically stands in for a whole episode in her life as (failed) gymnast—the substitutions of ballet/sports shoe and the leg ‘frozen’ in aerial cartwheel—while the rest of her (unseen body) is the redundancy charged with potential like all of Massumi’s soccer players not in contact with the ball. Or, put another way, *Flying Fox* brings into play two axes of metaphoric substitution, the artist and gymnast, where the crossing of these metaphoric chains forms the metonymy of a forced syntagm.

¹⁷⁶ As Francis Sparshott notes, representations as vicarious efficacy do not necessarily belong to classifications of art within classical lines where imitative play or disengaged communication sits at the heart of artistic resemblances. Sparshott establishes such conditions within mystic lines of representation. Here, “...*operations* and products have a primary significance that is radically other than the aesthetic” (1982: 372). He goes on to state: “A magical image is not as such meant to be contemplated or appreciated... An aesthetically insignificant image would do equally well if it happened to do the job... what matters is what will actually control or embody the force in the relevant way” (1982: 375-376).

¹⁷⁷ This is where Krauss is coming from in terms of “...the desiring organs on the one hand and the yielding or withholding objects of desire on the other—rather than between individuals or ‘whole’ persons, [as] reductive...” (1999: 55). Krauss is employing Lacan’s ‘objet petit a’ as a primordial relation of my being in the world that defines my being as a lack attempting to fill or complete itself by an object of desire constitutive of the ‘objet petit a.’

See also Krauss’ “Objet (petit) a” where she discusses a relationship between Klein and Jacques Lacan where the ‘objet (petit) a’ is seen as a continuation of Klein’s theories. Lacan’s mirror stage describes a moment when, confronted with its own reflection, as whole and coherent, the infant adopts a sense of ego and structure, calling “...this system of visual identification the ‘imaginary’” (2005: 85). The part object takes a letter as a ‘signifier.’ The subject is always a function of the signifier. So the erotic object acts on the ‘imaginary’ axis as an ‘objet (petit) a,’ as “...extensions of the infant’s image bank...” Here Krauss suggests that: “In shaping the infant’s self-image, the ‘objet a’ seems to point to the developing subject, in a relationship that semiology terms ‘deictic.’” And her crucial sentence that ties her theory to Duchamp’s erotic objects: “The deictic function of capturing the subject thus marries the corporeal part object to the sculptural fragment with all its associations to casting” (2005: 88).

6.6 ANN HAMILTON'S *MALEDICTION*



ANN HAMILTON, *MALEDICTION*, 1991-1992

Ann Hamilton's performance *Malediction* might be interpreted from the point of view of the 'poorly executed ideogram.' Seated with her back to the viewer, the work included a repeated action which involved the artist retrieving mouthful amounts of bread dough from one pile, briefly masticating the dough until it resembled the contours of her inner mouth and, carefully retracting the object, placing it on an adjacent pile in a large wicker casket from the turn of the century used to transport bodies to the morgue.¹⁷⁸

These bread dough casts of Hamilton's inner mouth cavity constitute a complex fragment of a larger whole. To discuss these partial objects requires that they are seen as contingent on the duration and repetition of the performance's ritual, the substance of the work, and their morphed ambivalence together with a certain partiality in the figure of the artist. Their casting process develops over the duration of the one-month performative installation, slowly repeated every day until the basket was filled halfway. Their substance of bread dough, combined with the artist's saliva, is suggestive of Mauss' concern for substance as a transmitter, through some means of contagion, in

¹⁷⁸ I have only commented on an aspect of the whole performative installation entitled *Malediction*. Other aspects involved viewers walking through wine soaked rags, a wall of stacked bed linens and a sound track reciting sections from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" and "The Body Electric." See Joan Simon where she points out that the Louvre Gallery, NYC, was initially the R & K Bakery on Prince Street, thereby adding to the work's site specificity common to many of Ann Hamilton's projects. Simon emphasises the oral significance of *Malediction* where the soundtrack of Whitman's poems, combined with the mouth moulds, are "...dispersed into the air as the actual internal skin of the body's cavity..." (2002: 121-125).

specific ritualistic contexts. The small-scale, malleable part objects refuse an internally fixed and outwardly perceivable armature. Such flagrant *lack* challenges an inside/outside, figure/ground relationship so that the objects, and the subject from which they flow, are somehow unlocatable and formless: *not* a body-part, *not* an internal organ, they embody an eroded space that lies liminally in-between felt experience and speculation. Together with objects like Nauman's *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* and the *Take* series, these objects concur with Taussig's observations of anatomical votive figurines. In fact, Taussig's notes on Nordenskiöld's pictures of Cuna curing figurines (1993: 51) draws a remarkable parallel with the Hamilton and Nauman works. Like these figurines, the objects produced from *Malediction* may not resemble a mouth, nor does the object produced from the space between Nauman writing his name and a surface resemble the movement of a hand from left to right. Without knowledge of provenance, performance or ritual informing us of what they are meant to 'represent,' the 'mouths' and 'moving hand' gesture might fail a realist test. This is the technical transgression of language where metonymy is the forced syntagm that Barthes describes as violating the signifying limits of space (1972: 246).

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ANN HAMILTON, *MALEDICTION*, 1991-1992

Mauss' concept of 'abstraction' is achieved by the ambivalence (theoretical and formal) of these bread dough forms that are left post-live performance. They exemplify a sensual yielding of the body that remains open-ended with respect to representation. The objects are caught between the act of production, in the ritual of the performance, and their subsequent display or collection. Moreover, Mauss' concept of 'attention' finds purchase in the substance of bread dough as inextricably linked to digestion and nourishment. Again, an application of Taussig's notes is appropriate, but this time in relation to magical action designed to keep men faithful (using their semen and pubic hair) engaged in a ritual on a Colombian sugar plantation in 1972. It incorporates the partner's head and pubic hair mixed with his semen taken from one's vagina after intercourse (without orgasm to keep the sperm as pure as possible), placed in a bottle with alcohol and buried in the ground outside the couples' house. Taussig says of the ritual (in stressing that both likeness and contact operate in a fused fashion) that they suggest profound forms of material bodily contact as well as "...indices of sexual attachment, impregnation, and the making of children: it becomes virtually impossible to separate their being *signs* from their being ontologically *part* of the sexual partnered Other" (1993: 55). Correspondingly the work of Hamilton suggests profound forms of material contact as well as the point that bread and saliva not only act as signifiers of nourishment, but are ontologically part of her sustained and nourished being in the performative act.

Along these same lines, Mauss places emphasis on an object's substance as transmitted through contact in specific ritual contexts: "The Magicians prepare images from paste, clay, wax, honey, plaster..." (1975: 53) to which could be added the more obvious body-part remains of hair, nails etc. He goes on to state that: "Magic performed over the residues of meals... follows from the idea that there is a continuity and complete identity between the remains, the food consumed and the one who has eaten—the latter being substantially identical to the food partaken by him" (1975: 65). In this respect, the intimacy with which Hamilton invests that pile of bitten bread dough solicits a range of emotions particular to contact and touch, inviting leading questions: could she use another person to perform the role or does the artist need to perform the work? An answer lies in Taussig's consideration that what makes this copy 'faithful': the material

conditions of the artist's mouth—*her* skin, *her* bite, *her* saliva.¹⁷⁹ It is in this sense that these partial objects *produce* the person and, in Mauss' terms, there remains a continuity between these remains and "...the one who has eaten—the latter being substantially identical to the food partaken by *her*" (1975: 65 emphasis and gender changed).¹⁸⁰

6.7 THE FORCE OF THE DONOR

The agency insisted upon by a notion of the artist's body as donor circumnavigates some of the problems associated with the notion of the artist as doctor, high priest and shaman with its propensities for directing (authoring) the intentions of ritual. The artist as donor incorporates an embodiment of herself *within* the operations of the ritualised space and other agents (donors, donees, audiences) who intermingle in the ritual. To this day in cities like Padova, and churches such as S. Antonio, anatomical votives are chosen by those donors in supplication, or in thanks, for healing of particular body parts (a leg for a broken leg, breast/s for breast cancer etc.).

¹⁷⁹ Heathfield makes an important point in relation to my emphasis in this thesis on objects that bear the marks of contagion via the artist's body. He describes this process as "...*incorporation*, whereby the artist's body, its adornments, its action and its residues are not just the subject, but also the material object of art" (2004: 11).

¹⁸⁰ This topic of substance has a lot more mileage. For example, why does Nauman go to the effort, when making a work such as *Wax Impressions of the Knees of Five Famous Artists* (1966), of replicating the look of wax in another medium (like resin) and reiterate the deception in the title of the work? One answer lies in the substance of wax with deeply held mythological significance as linked to seals of approval and religious ritual as much as to the studio methodologies of cast and mould in sculptural practice. In these ways, just as bread dough for Hamilton is linked to sustenance and nourishment, wax might be historically linked to an approximation of the body's substance. For an interesting analysis of the substance of wax, see Fife where the substance of wax follows categories of mimetic function, sacredness and economy: wax might be employed in mimicry of a particular accident because beeswax resembles flesh or skin; sacredness because of the history associated to candles and light and that popular tradition in Europe dictates that bees "...were created by a special act of God to furnish wax for the ritual of the Church linked to the idea that bees were created from the wounds of Christ..."; and economy because of its availability, malleability and re-cycling qualities, a substance easily heated and poured into moulds but always capable of melting, never fixed, always transient (Fife 1939). For my own practice, a material such as silicon operates as a technologically mediated substance both out of the body and in the body. Its use in, for example, breast implants and in the production of sex toys—as well as being a substance immediately identifiable in many high-tech moulding processes (the Postmodern plaster-of-Paris)—locates it as a contemporary substance of mythological status. When viewers handle works made from silicon there is a profound indexing of all these connotations. It also leaves an oil residue (and artificial smell) behind on the body/s of the audience that they carry away with them.



PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, 1912.92.209-299, PERU, BOLIVIA



PITT RIVERS MUSEUM, 1985.50.141, PERUGIA, ITALY, BREAST

Mauss offers a view of economic exchange between donor and donee that frames a notion of gift giving by the terms of the law of contagion and one that is applied to

exchange in anatomical votives.¹⁸¹ He writes in relation to the gift giving of *taonga* by Maori in New Zealand that: “What imposes obligation in the present received and exchanged, is in fact that the thing received is not inactive. Even when it has been abandoned by the giver, it still possesses something of him. Through it the giver has a hold over the beneficiary...” (2002: 15). This is a concept related to ‘action at a distance’ discussed in Chapter 5 that “...things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act upon each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed” (Frazer 1978: 34). Mauss perceived Maori as adopting an exchange system where gifts were ultimately either reciprocated or returned and which he further outlines as the obligations to ‘give,’ to ‘receive’ and to ‘reciprocate’ (Mauss 2002: 13, 50-55). Derrida critiques Mauss’ *The Gift* with its emphasis on economy, exchange and contract as speaking “...of everything but the gift...” (1992: 24). He points out that if the gift is to be *really* a gift it must be forgotten both by donor and donee. And this is a radical forgetting where “...the gift not only must not be repaid but must not be kept in memory, retained as symbol or a sacrifice, as symbolic in general” (1992: 24). And this points to the impossibility of gifting. As soon as a gift is acknowledged as such it ceases to be a gift: “If the gift appears or signifies itself, if it exists or if it is presently *as gift*, as what it is, then it is not, it annuls itself” (1992: 26-27).

A significance of Derrida’s critique is that Mauss’ interpretation of gifting would always position the donor as having specific intentions that relate, in turn, to specific obligations. The question with respect to the donors of anatomical votives, and of Hamilton, is who or what does the giving? These anatomical votives are the focus of every donor within the force-field that is the shrine. But the votives on their own, like Massumi’s soccer ball, are not enough as they need this field of potential; the ritual that is embedded in institutional possibilities. This is to say that these part subjects catalyse the ritual but are themselves parts of larger wholes. Larger wholes in the sense of what is lacking in the specific diseased part—a desire to undo the undesired—and of all those other parts that we desire in a ‘wholeness’ of being (this would be the successful outcome in the Kleinian sense when the adult has brought together those disparate parts of infantile projection into a mature and defined ego). From such a standpoint the

¹⁸¹ In his writing on Maori *taonga* Mauss does not use the term law of contagion. This is my addition in relation to his *A General Theory of Magic* cited above. See Miranda Green for a discussion about anatomical votives as gifts that retain an attachment to the person who produced them in terms of relationships of debt (1999: 67-91).

anatomical votives *move* the donors and congregations. The donors are the objects of the votives within the force-field that draws them out. It is in this sense that performance (the body art project) plays with the rules of that force-field, transforming the gallery for Hamilton into an unlocatable space of transition (bakery, morgue, workhouse, museum) or transforming the gallery into darkness (*Cut 2*) as theatre or no ‘specific place.’ Performance and the live body of the artist disrupts, always having the potential to mutate. And since the votives’ (think Hamilton’s bread dough casts and the *Take* series) effects are dependent on the corporeal presence of a diversity of other bodies and other votives of assorted kinds, these catalytic object-signs may be called part subjects, making each donor its part object.¹⁸²

This *drawing out* of the donor is the force of an endless series of givings and takings, the context for which cannot be saturated. The donor’s agency, like that of Hamilton’s, engages them in deeply performative and intertwined reciprocity with other donors who add their part objects to the same shrine and congregations who witness these multiple displays of part *subjects*. In this respect the body of the donor/artist is offered in an ambivalently performative sense. In other words, to tie the donor’s agency down with specific intentions would, with respect to Derrida’s thinking on the gift, annul the force that draws them out. Just as when Massumi’s soccer player focuses on the ball and misses, the donor must look *past* the gift where her participatory agency is not driven by intentional and directed ‘giving’ inasmuch as drawn out by the part subjects of the votives.

This discussion is transferable to other contexts such as the Catholic Eucharist, itself not inapplicable to Hamilton’s ritual. The communion wafers as the part body/s of Christ assume the role of part subjects as they catalyse the ritual. Their partness solicits a desire for all the parts of the ‘body of Christ’ that are absent in individual subjects and as community, in the sense of the ‘always lacking’ community of believers. The wafers are the focus of every communicant within the force-field that is the church and the celebration of the Eucharist. The communicants are the objects of the wafers. And the performative utterance (in liturgical cantation and part objects/subjects) would be the force over form that is transubstantiation. It would be a rationalist outlook that would insist on a physically and scientifically proven transformation from the material

¹⁸² The end of this passage is paraphrased from Massumi’s *Parables for the Virtual* (2002: 73).

substance of bread to flesh (such a physical transubstantiation is what I recall being brought up to believe as a child), and one predicated on cause and effect. Instead the sympathetic and ‘magical’ action of the Eucharist is manifest as a transformational and manipulative affect (held by conventional normative understandings as a minimal play of contiguity that allows for a crossing of these lines of metaphorical substitution: eating a shared meal together becoming metonymically violated as the eating of another’s flesh and, as such, at the limits of understanding in a ‘counterdivision of objects’) that is deeply persuasive and conceptualising. In this regard the Eucharist and the force that is transubstantiation is, in the words of Tambiah (while he does not reference the Eucharist), “...an analogical *cum* performative act...” (1973: 226).

And given the nature of photographic documentation, itself interpreting only part of a larger performed event, and in Hamilton’s case, not depicting viewers, it is easy to forget Jones’ third notion of an intersubjective exchange with audiences. Once again, to muddy the subject/object paradigm, Hamilton acts as a partial object where the viewers (the crowd) are continuously locked out of any formal exchange with her as a paradoxical indication of their intimate participation with the private act at hand.

Dave Hickey quotes John Shearman’s *Only Connect: Art and the Spectator in the Italian Renaissance* in relation to Hamilton’s deliberate lack of acknowledgement, or denial, of the viewer as he enters her installation spaces and moves around. Hamilton is in most cases focused on the repetitive labour at hand. For *Tropos* (1993)—as was the case with *Malediction*—she is seated at a wooden table in the middle of the Dia Foundation space in lower Manhattan burning words out of books, the floor around her completely covered in shaved horse hair. For Shearman, this lack of engagement heightens in the viewer a sense of privileged access:

Raphael’s Tommaso Inghirami introduces a paradox. Can it be right to interpret a spectator-subject relationship when the subject is explicitly described as unaware of anyone but himself? There are a number of very beautiful, very imaginative portraits of this kind, that is, of the creatively distracted like Inghirami or of the utterly absorbed reader such as the scholar in Correggio’s picture in Castello Sforzesco, or of the man lost to the world altogether, in a state of reverie, as in the extraordinary Moretto in London. In such portraits the reverie is descriptive not of a generalised state of mind, as it might still be in an idealised image, but in a space of particularised character—that happens, it seems, because the context of the state of mind is emphatically particularised in other ways, such as lighting,

texture, environment, and not least by a descriptive affinity with the spectator. But I find that in such cases, when the viewer is made to feel that, in a sense, he ought not to be present, he is all the more aware that he is, that his position and affinity are particularly privileged. Also, these portraits engage us all the more because they, preeminently, redefine the question, What is represented? as What is supposed to be going on? (Hickey 1994: 133 quoting Shearman)

As with the operations at work in *Above* and *Back*, where the viewer is positioned ‘outside’ the image, he is all the more aware of a privileged affinity to the image. Shearman also alerts us to an ambivalence in Hamilton’s *performed* representation. It is in this sense that I argue her absence makes her so much more tangible, just as the metonymic operations that produce her mouth and hands make us so desire that which is redundant or lacking.

From this perspective the partial subjects Hamilton ‘produces,’ and the artist as partially revealed object—together with her audiences partially restricted encounter—might be contextualised from the point of view of magical ritual acts. From such a standpoint I evoke Tambiah’s comments on a Trobriand spell that coalesces both metaphor and illocutionary force by summoning the taytu yam to toss out foliage like a spider spinning its web:

The spider covers up, the spider covers up...
The open space, the open space between thy branches, O taytu the spider covers up,... Shoot up, O head of my taytu... Make mop upon mop of leaves, O head of my taytu... (1973: 222-223)

In this example the metaphor (a visual similarity between the spider’s web and the fruitful growing of the taytu yam foliage) meets with a ritualised performative force of the spell in order to persuade (conceptualise) growth. Tambiah goes on to say:

The objects manipulated are chosen analogically on the basis of similarity and difference to convey meaning. From the performance perspective, the action consists of an operation done on an object-symbol to make an imperative and realistic transfer of its properties to the recipient. Or, to put it differently, two objects are seen as having resemblances and differences, and an attempt is made to transfer the desirable quality of one to the other which is in a defective state. (1973: 222-223)

Seen from this viewpoint, the objects Hamilton manipulates, in the words of Tambiah, 'are chosen analogically on the basis of similarity and difference to convey meaning.' To paraphrase Tambiah: from a performative perspective, Hamilton's actions consist of producing object-symbols in order to make an imperative and realistic transfer of properties to various recipients: herself, her audience and, within an even greater sphere, those who have previously passed through the space. She performs her casts, over and over, producing *part subjects* charged with notions of nourishment, digestion, patience, tenderness and speech and places them in a wicker casket used to transport corpses. She sits in a space burgeoning with the silence of that exploited workforce of immigrants, women and children who laboured at the turn of the century in SoHo's sweatshop clothing industry. Hamilton makes an attempt, by a complex process of similarity and difference, to 'transfer the desirable' qualities of nourishment and speech 'to the other which is in a defective state': bread dough, following repeated mastication, *takes the place* of all those dead. The metaphorical associations, in the sense that they are complimentary, are those of bread dough, mouth, saliva, bread buns, women's labour, and so on. But Hamilton's performative actions present not just these complimentary but also distant terms, constituting an exchange which undertakes to vacillate meaning (Barthes 1972: 244-247). In this regard she is an ambiguous and over-determined *part object*. She is indeterminate as she is many things (Eucharistic communicant, labourer, artist at work), while a minimal play of contiguity allows for a crossing of these lines of metaphorical substitution.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Along similar lines but from a different viewpoint, see Strathern who discusses the way in which: "Ritual action relates to the roots of language by reenacting in bodily ways meanings that may otherwise have lost their embodied reference" (1996: 27). In referencing Pierre Bourdieu's *Outline of the Theory of Practice* (1977) (who is, in turn, referencing Mauss), he notes that this scheme transfer is central to the notion of 'habitus.' Strathern quotes Malinowski's example (1935) of a Trobriand garden magician mimicking the action of yams growing. As he says "...the belly of my garden swells,' he transfers the scheme of pregnancy in the human body over to the scheme of garden fertility, thereby setting up a correspondence that reenergizes both contexts. What is involved here is not just symbolic action based on metaphor, but also the bringing together of two separate spheres, which thereby become cosmically fused. The terms *metonymy* and *mimesis* are intended to grasp this process." And he goes on to quote Bourdieu as stating that he is describing 'the socially informed body' with all its 'senses' (1996: 28). "In those senses the physical and the moral are fused as in the phrase 'sense of duty...'" which Strathern refers to as the mindful body of Lock and Scheper-Hughes, adding the concept of *mimesis* "...as one of the means whereby the mindful body shows itself in the realm of practice" (1996: 28). This presents another way of articulating a crossing of the metaphoric chains of references as 'cosmically fused' while also stressing a socially informed sense of ethics, or sense of duty, that Stiles and Jones are at pains to emphasize, albeit from different perspectives, within a context of body art and performative-installation.

Stiles argues that the rarefication of such performative events self-consciously removes artists from circulation as metonymic figures in action—something ‘incorporeal and intangible’ as she argues for metonymy as action “...enabling one to perceive the contiguity of relations between two things.” And she goes on to note that: “When such connection includes human relations, it may have the effect of reducing human actions ‘to a less complex and usually more concrete realm of being.’ These qualities are of particular relevance to the function and structure of the altered communicative means of live, performed art.” And a little later she writes that: “Such art exhibits how the metonymic process precedes the signifying capabilities of metaphor (objectified in representational objects)” (1998: 306).¹⁸⁴ I want to expand on (and disagree with) this argument in that, as a metonymic figure, Hamilton is precisely *more* corporeal and tangible (and of the moment) as part of the whole: *all* mouth and hands like Massumi’s soccer players are *all* legs. And the redundancy (formlessness) that lies at the heart of this vacillation is all those parts of her that are left out. This vacillation (contrary to Stiles) cannot ‘precede the signifying capabilities of metaphor’ in that one cannot have a horizontal metonymic axis of contiguity without an implied vertical metaphoric one (this would be a structural rule without context; the grammar of a sentence without syntagms, rules for a wedding without performing the ceremony).

It is in this sense, and in the context of the ritualistic offering of anatomical votives, that Hamilton’s body as donor—*her* mouth and hands as part objects—when transformed as part subjects (in the form of the small votive bread-dough moulds) operate as ‘surrogate performers.’ Surrogate because they stand in for all those parts of her (and others) that are left out. It is by this performative ritual, in which the objects and Hamilton’s body point to the moment of their production—and the possibility of their reproduction as repetitive moulds—that these part subjects *produce* the person in an operation that

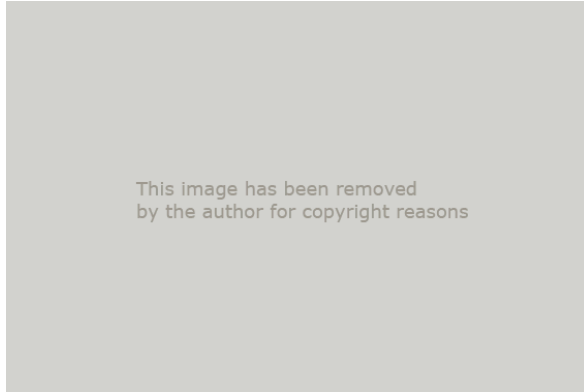
¹⁸⁴ To repeat the rest of this quote already used above as it is important in this context: “For by literally acting in the space between a human viewing subject and the conventional art object—as the mediator between the two—the artists who produced action paintings and later actions, exhibited the intersection where subjects meet object, where the artifactuality [sic] of the object is born in the event, and where the artist becomes both a subject who produces an object, and the object itself. Such art exhibits how the metonymic process precedes the signifying capabilities of metaphor (objectified in representational objects)” (Stiles 1998: 306).

transfers desirable qualities (nourishment, voice, honouring) onto a defective Other.¹⁸⁵ This transfer is a way of articulating an ‘authentic’ relationship between donor and audiences in what Auslander terms ‘performative documentation.’ The significance of Hamilton’s body in *Malediction*, and her production of anatomical votives, is accentuated by two other installations where she employs this votive tradition more literally and with less resonance. For *Offerings* (1991) and *Accountings* (1992) Hamilton cast multiple wax heads modeled on those she had found in the church of São Judas Tadeu in São Paulo (Simon 2002: 112). Both installations displayed the wax heads in museum-like vitrines. For *Offerings* Hamilton created an installation in three stories of a disused house in Pittsburgh for the ‘Carnegie International 1991,’ where, from the top third floor, the slightly heated vitrine containing the wax heads meant their gradual melting and dripping through to the ground floor where viewers entered the installation. For *Accountings* the heads remained static in their glass vitrine at the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, surrounded by walls bearing a repeated soot pattern applied by Hamilton and her coworkers with burning votive candles. In my view these works utilise references to anatomical votives with less resonance than is the case with *Malediction*. I say this because of the manner in which *Offerings* and *Accountings* take the objects out of a performative circulation of exchange between object/s artist and audiences where Hamilton’s partial body offers a model of reciprocity. In other words, for *Offerings* and *Accountings* she has taken out the live component where her body—as donor—establishes a metonymic force with the body/s of the audience. For *Malediction*, Hamilton herself is performatively implicated in an event where she operates as both a subject who produces an object, and the object itself.¹⁸⁶ This is to emphasise Mauss’ conviction, and more so

¹⁸⁵ See Joan Simon where she reads *Malediction* in terms of a ritual practice of repetitive labor where the artist is “...a guardian sitting with and honoring the dead” (Simon 2002: 124). While Simon’s line of thinking emphasises a redemptive role of artist, objects and audiences that I am arguing towards in this project, she does not, to my mind, address the crucial significance of Hamilton’s reference to anatomical votives even though they are explicit in these works and implied in *Malediction* (2002: 113-120).

¹⁸⁶ I understand that for the installations *Offerings* and *Accountings* Hamilton may be employing the wax heads as deliberately removed from their ritualistic sites of production and installed in museologically charged ways. In this sense the removal of these anatomical votive heads from their operations of exchange, and their melting through the body of a building in *Offerings*, may be the point of these works. Nevertheless, my insistence on the body of the artist as donor—where there is a close and intimate relationship between the dimensions and substances of Hamilton’s body, the substance of bread dough, and her continual and unremitting action in apparent isolation from the audiences who circulate in the ritualised space—makes *Malediction*’s reference to the anatomical traditions more than just a reference. By this I mean that she moves

Tambiah's, that the notion of sympathy resides both in a debt to interpretive contexts of ritual and modes of partial mimesis. Their ambivalence is intentional in order to *keep the force-field*—those performative contexts—*alive*.



ANN HAMILTON, *OFFERINGS*, 1991

In this regard, Hamilton's bread dough mouths lend themselves spectacularly well to an analysis of the partial object/subject along the lines of sympathetic magical action in the context of what Tambiah calls performative illocutionary force. As part subjects they do not describe anatomy, they are performative sculptures that are about *process*. It matters little what they look like, they are about what they *do* and what they symbolically *utter*. And to reiterate Jones' position on the body, these objects (and including Hamilton as partial object), can be seen as a "...locus of a 'disintegrated' or dispersed 'self,' as elusive marker of the subject's place in the social, as 'hinge' between nature and culture..." (1998: 13). In this sense illocutionary force effects changes, not in terms of rational systems of cause and effect, but in terms of conventional normative understandings as deeply persuasive and conceptualising. Rather than answering what magic is I have, like Tambiah, embedded "...it in ritual... seeing it as an analogical *cum* performative act..." (1973: 226).

6.8 THE FORCE OF THE UTTERANCE

Tambiah turns to Austin's *How To Do Things With Words* in describing ritual acts and magical rites as performing an illocutionary act. That is in the order of utterances which have "...a *certain conventional force*, a performative act *which does something* (as implied in promising, ordering, apologising, warning etc.)" (1973: 220). He does this in the context

beyond an appropriation of those rituals where she *becomes* embodied in the very performative forces and meanings of those traditions.

of one of Austin's primary examples of a performative utterance as that of marriage vows where the words 'I do' do not describe anything but do something:

Utterances can be found, satisfying these conditions, yet such that

- A. they do not 'describe' or 'report' or constatae anything at all, are not 'true or false'; and
- B. the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not *normally* be described as, or as 'just', saying something. (Austin 1962: 5)

He goes on to give examples such as: "I do take this woman to be my lawful wedded wife"—as uttered in the course of the marriage ceremony." And continues with the explanation that:

In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it. None of the utterances cited is either true or false... When I say, before the registrar or altar, &c., 'I do', I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it. What are we to call a sentence or an utterance of this type? I propose to call it a *performative sentence* or a performative utterance, or, for short, 'a performative.' (1962: 6)

Necessary to Tambiah's notion of persuasion is that an "...illocutionary force and power by which the deed is directed and enacted is achieved through use of words commanding, ordering, persuading and the like..." (1973: 222).¹⁸⁷ But important to my application of Tambiah is that these utterances could be articulated without words as performative acts. As Tambiah states, it is also possible "...to enact a performative act without uttering words at all..." (1973: 221-222). In a crucial footnote, Tambiah widens the frame of reference by indicating that an interrelation between the media of speech and object manipulation might take different forms: "These kinds of relations are not

¹⁸⁷ For a different but related emphasis on the power of performatives, see McKenzie who notes that Judith Butler opens *Gender Trouble* by citing Sedgwick's reading of J.L. Austin. He quotes Butler as follows: "Performative acts are forms of authoritative speech: most performatives, for instance, are statements which, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding power... The power of discourse to produce what it names is linked with the question of performativity. The performative is thus one domain in which power acts *as* discourse" (1998: 224). This is to reiterate Tambiah's emphasis on the 'illocutionary force and power' of performative utterances. It also presents another way of contextualising my emphasis in sympathetic magical action where performative utterances, within the terms of similarity described above, have the power of discourse to produce what they name.

necessarily exclusive, and any complex rite may express all relations not only between these two media but between them and others as well, such as music, dancing, use of diagrams, food prestations, etc” (1973: 223n221).¹⁸⁸ It is noteworthy that Tambiah repeats the term ‘force’ as cited above: the ‘illocutionary force and power.’ This is the ‘mystical force’ that Reinach questioned in 1905 and it is apt at this point to repeat his emphasis that ‘primitive’ artists did not desire to ‘please’ but to ‘evoke’ or conjure up, and to remark on its closeness as an idea to that of Tambiah’s conception of force as a mode of persuasion as derived from Austin’s performative utterance. Hamilton of course is not far from the 19th-century ‘savage’ that did not know his inside from his outside. This is where a re-evaluation of those Victorian rationalist views transforms magical action as a model for questioning the body’s subjectivity in relation to other body/s.

It follows that a notion of performative utterance might be contextualised in many ways. In *The Artist Will Be Present* several factors achieve a pronounced form of utterance. These incorporate the repeated pulling and pushing of material against my body, the continuously looped dvds, and the repetitious and cathartic sound-track of *Over & Over*. These operations, similar to Bois and Krauss’ pendulum swings and rotations, provoke a physiognomic quality akin to that of Eisenstein’s film making, the vocabulary of the ‘I feel’: a slowing down and disintegrating. The significance of referencing Eisenstein is that these moving images evoke a sensate doing with the body—gesture always as verb—that dominates over and above narrative content by means of reductive utterance. While Sobchack does not reference Austin, she underlies this emphasis in her writing on the effects of cinema when she states that “...cinema simultaneously represents experience through dynamic *presentation* (the always verb-driven and ongoing present tense of sensory perception that, through technology, constitutes and enables the film for us and for itself)...” (2004: 74). This is underscored by Austin when he writes about ‘a performative’ that: “The name is derived, of course, from ‘perform,’ the usual verb with the noun ‘action’: it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something” (1962: 6-7).

¹⁸⁸ In this footnote Tambiah qualifies that an interrelation between the two media is not necessarily always speech and object manipulation but may be, for one example among others, “‘complimentary,’ and ‘linked,’ for example, the words being ‘metaphorical’ and the actions ‘metonymical’” (1973: 223n221). This is close to Stiles’ suggestion that static forms are conventionally metaphorical while the actions inherent in live performance are metonymical.



UGO RONDINONE, *ROUNDELAY*, 2002-2006

Ugo Rondinone's *Roundelay* (2002-2006), a 360-degree total-surround six-screen dvd projection has been contextualised in similar terms by Hartel. Two figures, a man and a woman, "...walk the architectonic labyrinth of the urban desert of Beaugrenelle, in Paris" (2006b: 246). The figures are fragmented with a variety of wide through to close-up images, but some from the rear, some at their shoes, creating a repetitive rhythm that Hartel characterises in the words of Samuel Beckett as 'endowed with missing pieces.' These are not the conventions of film narrative but a circular and disorientating experience that heightens our normal experience of the everyday yet cathartic experience of walking, inducing Hartel to reference Eisenstein as she writes: "Such are the foundations that help liberate the imagination, so that we can 'hear the movement' and 'see the sounds'" (2006b: 246).¹⁸⁹ This sense of 'hearing the movement' and 'seeing the sound' is foremost in my mind when spatially separating the sound component/s of *Above* and *Back*: these moving images play in (comparative) silence while their sound track/s form the related (but dislocated) *Over & Over* located in the foyer entrance to the gallery. This is not about the violence of making the form between my legs and hands, or the pressure required to literally move the material, but the "...violence of repetition and its structure of 'the beat,' felt as a series of explosive endings always abruptly propelled into motion again" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 163). In Austin's terms, not of just saying, describing, reporting or constating, but performatively doing (1962: 5, 7).¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Also relevant to Eisenstein's sense of slowing down and disintegrating is Friederike Pezold's *La Première Déesse Electronique de Monde* (*The World's First Electronic Goddess*) (1970-1982) featuring five stacked video monitors each depicting, in slow motion and without sound, a mouth, breasts, arm, pubis and feet. Closely associated with the Rodinian fragmentation (discussed above in the context of Frankovich's *Flying Fox*), this silent work evokes a sensate experience, once again of hearing the movement and seeing the sounds (Lageira 2006: 239).

¹⁹⁰ Duration and its unbounded quality is a key point here. Bois writes in *Formless* that "...the modernist ontology requires an artwork to have a beginning and an end, and holds that all

There are a number of objects and related actions that can be contextualised in terms of the performative utterance. For example, when Krauss describes Richard Serra's *Hand Catching Lead* (1969)—a three-minute film of the artist's hand attempting to catch a sequence of falling lead strips—in terms of a "...relentless persistence—of doing something over and over again..." (1977: 244), while she does not employ the notion of performative utterance, she prioritises the *force of the doing* over form.¹⁹¹

6.9 THE FORCE OF THE MOMENT

Peggy Phelan argues that "...the performative speech act shares with the ontology of performance the inability to be reproduced or repeated" (1993: 149). While she does not use Austin's example, she says this because the 'I do' is to do something at that live moment. To repeat that performative utterance is to describe or denote that moment in

apparent disorder is necessarily reabsorbed in the very fact of being bounded" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 26). The quote I have used—"the violence of repetition and its structure of 'the beat'—comes from Krauss' analysis of James Coleman's *Box (ahhahreturnabout)* (1977), where she discusses Coleman's film as emphasising "...movement itself as a form of repetition, of beats that are separated by intervals of absolute extinction, even while the urgency of the rhythm promises the return of another and another." And "...this field of visual representation is doubled aurally by a voice-over that emphasises both the drive of repetition ('go on, go on, 'again, again,' return, return)..." (Bois and Krauss 1997: 162). And in discussing the viewer's own body "...automatically 'contributing' to the filmic fabric..." she writes that "...it also means that the frequent projections of the sound of breathing - expressed in the sound track as 'ah/ah', aha/ah', 'p-a-m/p-u-m' - is giving voice not just to the boxers' bodily rhythms but to those of the viewer as well" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 163).

¹⁹¹ In referencing Krauss' critique of Richard Serra it needs to be noted that, in difference to Krauss, I am placing emphasis on the body and manner in which bodies afford performing utterances in a particularly haptic and felt sense. While Serra's work can be interpreted in such a way, Krauss uses it to argue a repositioning of sculpture in resistance to that of formalist painting. She argues that this quality of repetition, also employed by Judd and Stella, was a strategy to escape an American perception of European art as composed: a rationalist system built on an *a priori* logic of balance and composition (which was almost certainly a mistaken perception of artistic practice in Europe at the time by Judd and Stella) (1977: 244). The point I am making is that, while Krauss frames these performative actions as a systematic recording, archiving and listing, which prioritises *process* as the medium, she does so with little regard for a notion of the performative body. She sees Serra's work as a tenacious positioning of the discipline of sculpture against European formalism. In relation to this discussion, see Blocker as she argues that the body is eclipsed by an over-evaluation of the importance of disciplinarity when she writes that "...the feminine aspects of performance were shifted onto painting and then disavowed" (2004: 84). In this context the exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* pointed to Serra's lead splashing in Leo Castelli's warehouse as a confirmation of painting's splash in three dimensions and therefore subsumed by the notion that actions of spilling, splashing and hand-making have currency in a disciplinary sense, as opposition to painting's hegemony, but not in relation to experiences of the body.

what Austin termed a constative utterance. From this viewpoint repetition destroys performativity in the strict manner in which Phelan adheres to the unrecorded, unrepeatable moment of live art's enactment. This is a problematic observation as it ties a notion of performative utterance to the possibility of a 'pure' moment. But Phelan's text is complex and I am in danger here of oversimplifying her argument which is rich with nuance. On the one hand, Phelan stresses an unconditional uniqueness of live art that, if saved in any reproductive technology, is at odds with performance's fundamental ontology of disappearance. On the other, her overarching concern with performative writing underscores her quest to see a way through to finding a form of documentation/reproduction that is itself performative. To paraphrase Phelan, but replacing her emphasis on *writing* with mine of *making* performatively: the challenge raised by the ontological claims of performance for the *object* is to re-mark again the performative possibilities of the *object itself*. The act of *making* towards disappearance, rather than the act of *making* toward preservation, must remember that the after-effect of disappearance is the experience of subjectivity itself.¹⁹²

And Phelan brings Austin's linguistic analysis to bear on the 'grammar of the body' where she declares a move from metaphor to metonymy. She employs an argument similar to that of Stiles where the body of the performer works to disrupt the associations of similarity inherent in the metaphor when she writes:

For performance art itself however, the referent is always the agonizingly relevant body of the performer. Metaphor works to secure a vertical hierarchy of value and is reproductive; it works by erasing dissimilarity and negating difference; it turns two into one. Metonymy is additive and associative; it works to secure a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement... In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of 'presence.' But in the plenitude of its apparent visibility and availability, the performer actually disappears and represents something else—dance, movement, sound, character, 'art.' (1993: 150)

When Phelan positions the body of the performer as metonymic she suggests that this body fails to reproduce the referent, indicating an "...inability to secure the relation

¹⁹² Here is the full quote which I have paraphrased in relation to a method that aims at disappearance rather than preservation: "The challenge raised by the ontological claims of performance for writing is to re-mark again the performative possibilities of writing itself. The act of writing towards disappearance, rather than the act of writing toward preservation, must remember that the after-effect of disappearance is the experience of subjectivity itself" (Phelan 1993: 148).

between subjectivity and the body *per se* [and in this sense] performance uses the body to frame the lack of Being promised by and through the body—that which cannot appear without a supplement” (1993: 150-151).

The spectator’s gaze, in Phelan’s analysis, functions, as the supplement might, to secure and displace the ‘floating signifier’ of the performing body (Phelan 1993: 150). It is this violation of representation that constitutes the performer’s body as metonymic. This is similar to Tambiah’s comment on the performative action of the Trobriand spell discussed above where metaphor works to secure an analogy of similarity (by substitution) between a spider’s web and the growing foliage of the taytu yam, while the metonymic utterance conveys a difference of contiguity and displacement. But in the plenitude of the ‘illocutionary force’ (the power of the forced syntagm) a transfer of properties (of growth) is made into desire.

As a significant key to this discussion, Derrida’s critique of Austin’s performative utterance in *Signature Event Context* analyses an absence of an identified referent with respect to iterability, or repetition. Derrida’s primary problem with Austin’s theory is with Austin’s insistence on saturated ritual contexts—the manner in which things are said, their correct intentions, and the appropriate agents for a specific ritual—that are present and ‘correct.’ Furthermore, Derrida’s problem with Mauss’ notion of the gift stems from a similar concern that one cannot saturate the reciprocal contexts in which gift giving takes place. In this framework Austin argues that performatives—outside their ritual contexts—are unrepeatable and that they become constative in their repetition thereby forfeiting their performative status. This seems close to Phelan’s argument that the performative cannot be reproduced as it becomes something other than performance.¹⁹³ In difference to Austin, Derrida’s view is that it is precisely their iterability that makes performatives possible. Here the unity of the signifying form (and force) of the ‘I do’ in the marriage ceremony (to evoke once again Austin’s example), is made possible by the structure of possibility of all previous and future utterances of the ‘I do.’ As Derrida writes,

¹⁹³ Here is the full sentence that I have summarised: “Performance’s only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance” (Phelan 1993: 146).

...this unity of the signifying form only constitutes itself by virtue of its iterability, by the possibility of its being repeated in the absence not only of its 'referent,' which is self evident, but in the absence of a determinate signified or of the intention of actual signification... (1988: 10)

Derrida does not want ritual to be viewed as a structural determinate of every mark but rather, as a possible occurrence (1988: 15). This is similar to Massumi's argument discussed above, that the rules and rituals of the (soccer) game are constantly in variance as the game emerges and continues to evolve as circumstances arise that force adaptation of the rules. Derrida goes on to say that: "This structural possibility of being weaned from the referent or from the signified (hence from communication and from its context) seems to me to make every mark... the nonpresent *remainder* of a differential mark cut off from its putative 'production' or origin" (1988: 10). Elsewhere in "...That Dangerous Supplement..." Derrida presses the point that what I am calling the *force of the moment* is only legible through its absence: "A terrifying menace, the supplement is also the first and surest protection; against that very menace. This is why it cannot be given up" (1976: 154).¹⁹⁴

In this sense the supplement is both "...total absence and total presence" (Derrida 1976: 157) and it is this radical nonpresence that Phelan locates in experiencing the live body of the performer and that I also wish to locate in the performative object of the mould (Hamilton's mouth cavity, Nauman's space under his hand, the spaces 'between' my body) as 'nonpresent remainder.' In this sense the remainder is supplementary to representation just as the mould is supplementary to the cast. It articulates all the moments of presence by virtue of its always readiness to (inadequately) produce an 'originating' moment of contact. Analysing Mauss' concept of the 'poorly executed ideogram' through the lens of Derrida's critique transforms it as an impossibly locatable ideogram. This is why Wagner says of Nauman (while she does not reference Derrida), that his body mould works look "...like remainders (and reminders) of some obviously absent form" (2007: 121) and why she goes on to say that works like *Device for a Left Armpit* (1967) "...serve as supplements to a body that otherwise would be lost or wayward or, in some cases, simply incomplete" (2007: 125). This work leaves a strong impression of the 'effect' of something like an elbow, its weight when leaning on to a

¹⁹⁴ See Jones who traces these points also with reference to Derrida's "...That Dangerous Supplement..." (1998: 34-35).

surface, yet its cavity is, somewhere, the cavity *of* an armpit. At the same moment, the functional quality of the ‘mould’ is open for scrutiny such that the *implosion* of the mark is exposed. Perhaps Derrida’s words might be applied to *Device for a Left Armpit* (and the nature of moulds) as “...the communication of an original movement... an operation and the production of an effect [which is] tantamount to communicating a force through the impetus of a mark” (1988: 13). And as indicated in Chapter 2 above, the part object that is the space under Nauman’s hand as he wrote his name is neither signature nor the hand that wrote it. Instead the empty space that is so impossible to describe (the in-between-two of the chiasm) is lent material form just as Nauman’s body in the video works (*Walking in an Exaggerated Manner around the Perimeter of a Square*) reveals itself in its absence.¹⁹⁵



BRUCE NAUMAN, *DEVICE FOR A LEFT ARMPIT*, 1967

For Phelan, Stiles and Blocker (albeit from slightly differing positions), the use of the body in performative utterance causes such a vacillation of meaning. It is the overwhelming ‘presence’ of the live performer that alerts us to her disappearance. In this sense, and to evoke Barthes once more, the body constitutes a “...violation of a signifying limit of space [functioning as] a counterdivision of objects, meanings, spaces, and properties...” (1972: 245-246).

¹⁹⁵ These are Cantz’s observations while he does not discuss phenomenology or Derrida’s writing on the signature (1998: 49). In Chapter 2 I used these observations about Nauman’s works in relation to the *Take* series and the moving image work *Back* in *The Artist Will Be Present*.

In summarising my main objection to at least part of Phelan's argument I want to highlight that there is never a 'live' moment as it is *already* encountered. It would be 'impossible' or 'undecidable' in Derrida's questioning of the 'now.' In her contrasting the notions of preservation and disappearance, she would make the live moment the 'original' and it is only because of the supplement that the original can be discussed, albeit always already contaminated. Here Derrida writes that "...the indefinite process of supplementarity has always already *infiltrated* presence, always already inscribed there the space of repetition and the splitting of the self" (1976: 163). So the problem lies in the opposition of preservation and disappearance (which is also the problem of the 'inter' discussed above). Every presentation is made possible on the grounds of disappearance and something must be preserved for disappearance to happen.¹⁹⁶ Once again, as Derrida writes, "...this operation of supplementation is not exhibited as a break in presence but rather as a continuous and homogeneous reparation and modification of presence in the representation" (1988: 5). And as Adrian Heathfield and Jones put it:

The supplement, precisely that which exceeds signification and promises but forever fails to deliver presence, critically dismantles this reliance [on the 'live' moment] by exposing its limits. All live art plays with or relies on the paradox of the supplement (the way in which the live body promises something 'more' than representation but always already fails to give that which can secure meaning (the real, or immortality) once and forever). (2007: 3)

¹⁹⁶ See Blocker's summary of Jones' argument for the revolutionary power of the body in *Body Art: Performing the Subject* where she underlines this perplexing instability of presence as she writes: "Jones asserts the discomfoting impossibility of presence in body art (even when the body is there, it cannot be grasped), its undermining of cultural assumptions, its inherent loss" (2004: 8).



THE ARTIST WILL BE PRESENT, 2007



CARESS, 2008

This notion of *making toward disappearance* is crucial to *The Artist Will Be Present*. My ‘liveness’ is always the record of a private action where that action, and the object of my action, are undisclosed. So too are the partial subjects of the *Take* series ambivalent and undisclosed in their encounter both physical (*Cut 1*) and sensuously filmic (*Cut 2*). They are not my body parts but are somewhere located as an in-between two-ness. The inside/outside implosion of the moulds—as they vacillate between an object of my making and the subject of my body—translate into the mimetic closeness and incongruence of *Caress* as it summons a chiasmic reversibility *in* the body/s of the audience. By way of the interesting ‘problem’ of the ‘performative document’ that I am at pains to underline, these objects constantly inculcate (in the sense of driving an issue home by constant repetition) the ‘live’ moment of my flesh’s pressure—that which slips away—within a process endemic with the language of repetition. With regard to the record of the live moment, Schneider writes that:

The paper, frame, and photo of the action all represent to the viewer that which the viewer missed – that which, standing before the document, you *witness yourself missing again*. And yet, in missing you are somehow more available to this ‘excess’ of the object than you would be in a situation of ‘presence.’ (2005: 42)

The Artist Will Be Present exacerbates this turn of events by recording ‘performances’ that took place in private. While this exaggerates a privileged position on the part of audiences (makes their ‘presence’ even more palpable and reciprocal), it also problematises the category of the ‘live’ by never offering up the ‘presence’ of my body, by always indulging in the ‘disappointment’ of the document, as Jones says of the supplement, “...promising but failing to deliver ‘presence’” (2006: xix). These kinds of operations bring Schneider to the view that the witnessing of the event—understood in the most polyvalent terms as “...audiences of persons, objects, documents, photos or testimonies that stand as witnesses...”—is the ‘site’ of the event as a retelling: “Thus the media undoes the media, resists the very mode of its manifestation, and pitches itself toward re-enactment in a variety of forms *always alternative* to the event itself” (2005: 42-43).¹⁹⁷ It is with the same emphasis on objects whose role goes beyond that of scopic recognition that Schimmel locates Nauman’s performative sculpture *Light Trap for Henry Moore, No. 1* (1967) recorded on film. As Schimmel writes: “In this work Nauman parodies Henry Moore’s figurative drawings of the early 1940s, not as static objects for contemplation but as traps that captured the movement of light. Making circular motions with a flashlight, Nauman formed figures in space whose traces were frozen in photographs.” And in emphasising the importance of documentation as an *object* that follows performative acts, he goes on to state: “Even at this time he [Nauman] understood the deceptive nature of documentation” (1998: 90). It is in this sense that I want the up-close ‘documentation’ that is *Caress to perform* the *Take* series. Furthermore, in other works like *Uncovering a Sculpture* (1965), as described by Robert Riley, Nauman “...tests the viewer’s ability to discern scale, material, and meaning from the cinematic presentation of an enigmatic object” (2007: 175). This work is a 54-second black

¹⁹⁷ In a similar vein, Heathfield emphasises practices that image/document the artist’s body and confuse an objectification of that body as either the subject of artistic authorship or the object of aesthetic representation. This is the case with the moving image works *Above* and *Back* in *The Artist Will Be Present* where my body is imaged/documentated (any clear division between the two is not possible) as it performs the *force* of the making. Yet the object of that making, and my body as the making agent, remain undisclosed and in constant energetic flux. In this context it is worth continuing Heathfield’s quote in full: “The physical entry of the artist’s body into the artwork is a transgressive gesture that confuses the distinctions between subject and object, life and art: a move that challenges the proprieties that rest on such divisions. Performance explores the paradoxical status of the body as art: treating it as an object within a field of material relations with other objects, and simultaneously questioning its objectification by deploying it as a disruption of and resistance to stasis and fixity.” And with a clear nod to the importance of a phenomenological approach that endeavours to articulate the complexities of the ‘in-between two’ of this subject/object relation described above in my Chapter 2, he goes on to state: “The body’s entry into the frame ensures that the artist’s exploration of the meanings and resonances of contemporary embodiment will be received in and through an intersubjective, phenomenal relation” (2004: 11).

and white silent 16mm film of a close-up of a piece of textured material being rolled back to reveal a sculptural form underneath in the centre of the image. The manual hand-rolling from left to right assumes a kind of panning device that moves the screen from comparative blackness to the image, albeit distorted in its close proximity. Similar operations are at work in *Caress*. While the work's enigmatic object is stationary the viewer is left uncertain as to which moves (the object or the camera) and, together with the image's up-close mimetic fragmentation, it implies a 'documentation' that is *manually* haptic and partial. I understand this as deeply phenomenological in the sense that it constitutes a viewing that is carnal and about *how* the body perceives.

6.9.1 THE FORCE OF THE SIGNATURE

Derrida concludes *Signature Event Context* with a discussion on the nature of signatures and their relationship to the present and to their source. He expands a notion of signature to encompass written and oral utterance. In this context Nauman's space under his hand, Martinis Roe's fingertips upon the surfaces of clay and video monitor, and Hamilton's 'oral' utterance as part subject retain, as Derrida writes, "...[their] having been present in a past *now* or present which will remain a future *now* or present, thus in a general *maintenant*, in the transcendental form of presentness" (1988: 20).¹⁹⁸ And what marks the signature out is the impossibility of its pure reiteration—that is the difference of the utterance at every 'live' moment—while its very function relies on it being repeatable—iterable—in variance to Austin's determination of a noniterable performative utterance. This is, in effect, a deconstruction that acts as a double gesture, "...a *reversal* of the classical opposition and a general *displacement* of the system" (Derrida 1988: 20) that Phelan describes as metonymic. As Derrida writes, "it must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production. It is its sameness which, by corrupting its identity and its singularity, divides its seal [*sceau*]" (1988: 20).

It is in this regard that the 'signatures' inherent in *Malediction*, *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* and the *Take* series utter/write in the form of the supplementary mould,

¹⁹⁸ See Phelan where she discusses Derrida's critique of Austin in "Signature, Event, Context." Phelan states that: "For Derrida, performative writing promises fidelity only to the utterance of the promise: I promise to utter this promise. The performative is important to Derrida precisely because it displays language's independence from the referent outside of itself. Thus, for Derrida the performative enacts the now of writing in the present time" (1993: 149).

the ‘nonpresent remainder.’¹⁹⁹ This has already been described (somewhat inadequately) as traces of gesture. By this I mean that the complete presence (physically and of intentional mind) of the signatory is something to be (conventionally) expected. But in these works the artist’s trace has become the subject, necessarily detached, as noted by Derrida above, ‘from the present and singular intentions of its production.’²⁰⁰ And in this way, as Jones notes, “...the ‘body’ in body art exacerbates its own supplementarity...” (1998: 107) and that performance exposes “...the body itself as supplement, as both the visible proof of the self and its endless deferral” (1998: 34-35). The body itself as supplement, together with an ‘infinite chain’ of supplements including any form of documentation, form a continuous (chiasmic) reparation of presence. This is where Phelan’s argument—while being such a significant contribution to the analysis of the ontology of performance—is too reductive, as she aligns metonymy with supplementation, but does not say so exactly. In her argument, more sophisticated than Stiles’ but based on similar objectives, metaphor is aligned with representation and substitution and to a possibility of ‘complete’ presence, while metonymy is employed as that which violates its presence in the moment of the ‘live.’ Phelan nails this viewpoint when she writes that: “In employing the body metonymically, performance is capable of resisting the reproduction of metaphor...” (1993: 151).²⁰¹ The problem I perceive with this discussion is that it risks reiterating the binary that the supplement deconstructs, reinstating a metaphysics of presence and an artifice of representation. The point to be made is that the temporal nature of the metonymic is only identifiable through reproduction, due to its iterability. This is the body of the artist as trace of its own presence. In this way all these partial subjects/objects mark out the impossibility of their ‘pure’ reiteration at the point of their originating ‘live’ moment—the writing hand, the mouth’s utterance, the touching/pressing body—while the very function of the mould relies on its being iterable and physically present in the world. And crucial to *Space Under*

¹⁹⁹ Together with this notion of the nonpresent remainder is the fact that *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* has been destroyed and the photograph in this thesis, taken from Cantz’s *Bruce Nauman: the True Artist*, is the only illustration I can find.

²⁰⁰ While Cantz does not discuss Derrida he is perhaps thinking along similar lines when he writes, with reference to Willoughby Sharp’s interview with Nauman in 1970, that these works from 1966-1970 that bear the imprint of Nauman’s body act as an index, “...a trace of the author which exhausts itself in reference to him” (1998: 40). Cantz’s interests rest in the notions of masquerade and withdrawal in Nauman’s work from this period (1998: 51).

²⁰¹ Phelan goes on to say that the metaphor that concerns her is the metaphor of gender, that “...the metaphor of gender presupposes unified bodies which are biologically different” (1993: 151).

My Hand When I Write My Name, *Malediction* and the *Take* series is that their possible interpretations rely on their iterability manifest in the mould/cast routine of reproduction while these works are, in fact, unrepeatable ‘mono-prints’ formed by always changing (live) bodies. All these artists discussed shuffle between their performing bodies and material form (bread dough, video, resin, epoxy clay etc.) which emphasise an immanent materiality important to encountering their bodies *in* the body/s of the audience. This emphasis on the materiality of the mould/cast visually manifesting the ‘iter’ accentuates their ‘having been present in a past *now*’ and therefore the physical impossibility of their pure reiteration. In a related manner, the moving images’ material surface, for which I also argue a fleshy tactility, via the writings of Sobchack and Marks, conjures the body’s surface. It is in this sense that the deconstructive characteristic of moulds, and the reproductive understandings of digital media and their uncertain relationship to an ‘original,’ provides, again in the words of Derrida, “...the means of *intervening* in the field of oppositions it criticizes and that is also a field of nondiscursive forces” (1988: 21). These are forces outside or other to language and its metaphoric substitutions, but (as Derrida says elsewhere) “...without which language would not be what it is” (1978: 27).

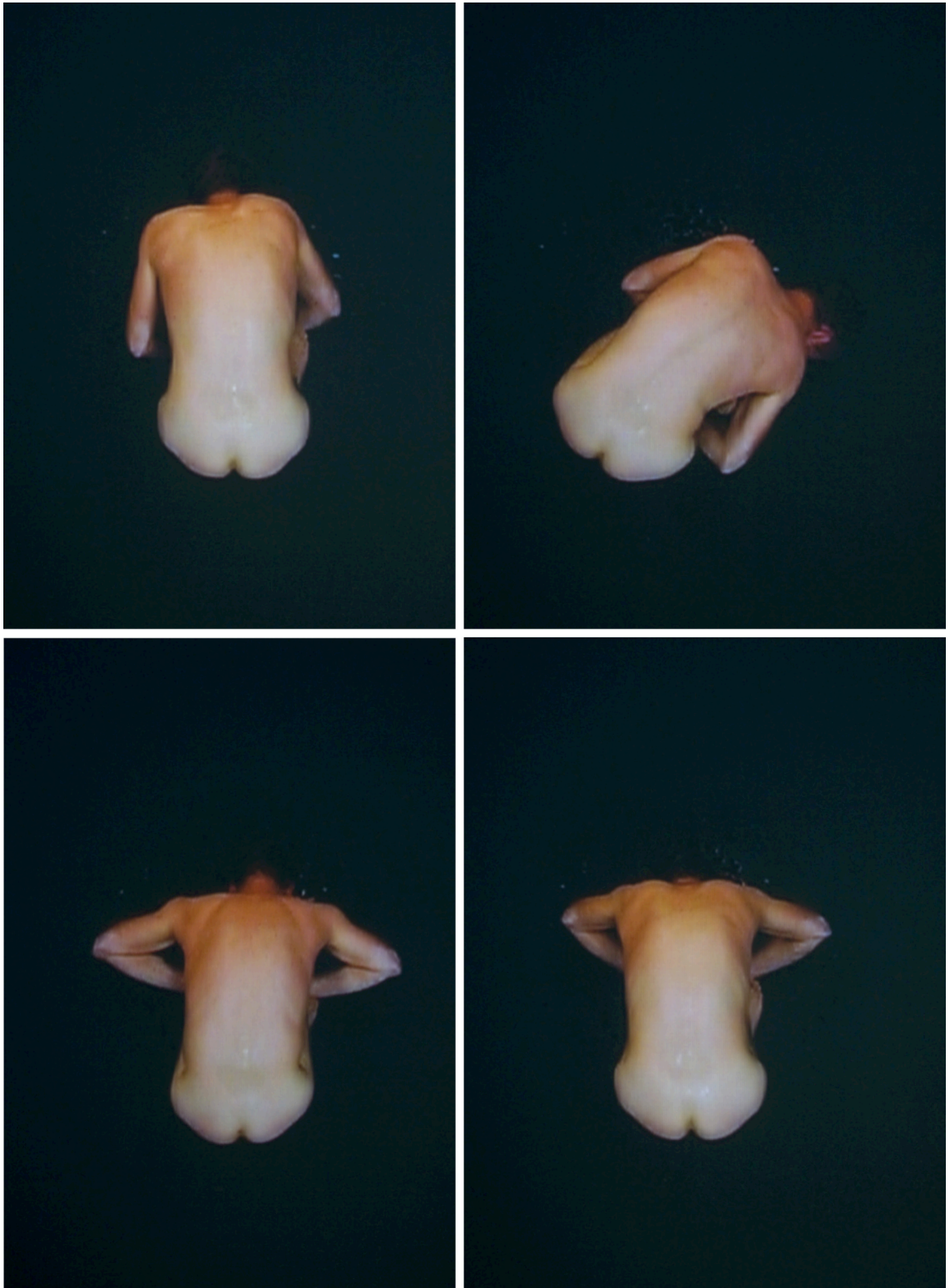
In a slightly different emphasis on *producing* the body outside of language, Blocker contextualises the performative as ‘somatic language’ where she states that: “The language I am after is not a language of words; it does not describe the body but rather performatively produces the body, puts it into effect” (2004: 33). For Blocker, somatic language’s metonymic form is perceived by touch which she contextualises in pain, via the writing of Elaine Scarry on *The Body in Pain*.²⁰² As Blocker notes, “...when Scarry writes that ‘physical pain has no voice,’ what she describes is the subordination of the body to language. I would argue that it does indeed have a voice, but one that textual language does not normally recognize” (2004: 36).²⁰³

While I am not particularly engaged with the notion of pain, as it integrates mind and body through performance (Blocker 2004: 34), I take from this idea the significance of

²⁰² See Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* which I have not myself referenced.

²⁰³ Blocker argues that this problem of how to hear the body’s voice is one particularly open to female understanding in that patriarchal philosophy has overlooked the body in a mind/body split.

acting *in* the body, of the struggle that is always the verbal action *in* becoming that *The Artist Will Be Present* distinguishes from representations *of* the body. I am interested, from Blocker's perspective, in my own experiences of performing *Above* and *Back* in front of the video camera. Even though the works are continuously digitally looped, I perform each 'performance' as a continuous duration until I cannot do it for much longer. I do this to augment the physical struggle of the performance, so the audience gains a sense of my body's effort as it sweats and reddens in the process. This insistence on the live duration means that mistakes (a glimpse of the clay ball I carry and manipulate) cannot be edited out, obliging me to repeat the performance over again. Part of my tiredness is due to the fact that the particular 'take' recorded is not the first I have done that day. I have recorded each work about twenty times and chosen a final version with the least number of 'errors.' Of course I would hesitate from suffering the gym for this length of time and, more significantly, doing the same repetitive and back-breaking exercises over and over that these works demand. During these 'performances' I try to suspend my consciousness of my body in a way I might do to endure pain or perhaps a long yoga pose. I try to postpone thinking *about* my body and strive to exist *in it* for the duration of the work. I am always surprised at how bruised and sore my body becomes due to this deferral that, in 'real' life, I would not undertake. I'm interested in how the struggle of my body—in the relentless sound-track and in the returning bodily performance/s—makes itself felt in the body of the audience as utterance in distinction to description.



ABOVE, 2008

Moreover, Blocker's notion of somatic language incorporates the body/s of the audience as pain might be shared in the second person. As she writes, "...somatic language talks back. In that sense, it is spoken in the second person and in the imperative; it implicates the viewer in performances where the body is shared" (2004: 35). When my body is understood in these terms, its liveness is catalysed by the part subjects of the *Take* series (and the partial moving images of them and my body) that draw out its potential. And the body/s of the audience as part objects are drawn into an impossible exchange where the demarcations of donor/donee (subject/object) give way to undetermined reciprocity. It is from this perspective that liveness is the impossible gift of being alive. Liveness is what could not be present, what we could not recollect nor had a record of what had been done.

6.9.2 THE FORCE OF THE MOULD

The previous sections articulate how seemingly 'inert' part objects like the *Wedge of Chastity* or Hamilton's bread dough objects, or the the *Take* series *et al.* might expand notions of the 'live' encounter. That through their erosion of form they should catalyse all those parts absent to them. These are the operations of magical mimesis within performative ritual contexts where these part objects are transformed as *part subjects* catalysing (drawing out) the body/s of the audiences in a reciprocal exchange that is always one of encounter. With respect to these concept of erosion and formlessness, and in relation to the mould, Krauss describes Nauman's sculptures that cast the underside of things as "...the path of implosion or congealing, and the thing to which it submits this stranglehold of immobility is not matter, but what vehiculates and subtends it: space itself" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 215). Krauss is discussing works such as *Space Under My Steel Chair in Dusseldorf* (1965-68) and *Platform Made up of the Space between Two Rectilinear Boxes on the Floor* (1966). She observes of these furniture and architecture orientated casts by Nauman that, without titles, we have no idea what they are, "...the congealing of space into this rigidly entropic condition also strips it of any means of being 'like' anything" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 215-216). I would add that *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name*, also completed in 1966, shares the implosion of the other works and augments the discussion by means of the effect of contagion by human contact upon the object and the near total absence of the well built industrial metaphor common to

Minimalism.²⁰⁴ My point is that *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* is even better suited to Krauss' ongoing argument that: "What Nauman's casts force us to realize is that the ultimate character of entropy is that it congeal the possibilities of meaning as well" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 216). *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name*, cast between hand and flat surface, offers an ambivalence that *truly* demands its title for clarification. This is the kind of work,

... which understood the very specificity of the trace itself (the 'this') as a form of entropy, a congealing of the paradigm. Once more it is to join the proliferation enabled by the mould or matrix to the X that congeals the very possibility of space even as it marks the spot. (Bois and Krauss 1997: 219)

When Krauss says the 'congealing of the paradigm' she refers to the congealing of the axis of substitutions: 'a' is 'a,' there is no field of substitutions. In this way, Nauman's literal titling is a play between language's literalism and the possibility of illusiveness outside the force of language. To my mind, while I appreciate this playfulness, Nauman undoes something of the violation of the limits of space (the forced syntagm) that his objects sustain without his titling. I was conscious of this dilemma in titling the *Take* series. Were I to opt for titles like 'the space between the inside of my wrist and the underside of my chin,' I would have obviated to a large extent the viewers' searching for a correspondence with their own bodies.

²⁰⁴ The background to this observation is complex in that Krauss employs two models for anti-form's attack on Minimalism and its insistence on the well built industrial metaphor, rational tectonics and material strength. These two models revolve around the terms 'explosion' and 'implosion.' In this context she credits Nauman with an attack "...far more deadly than Morris' 'anti-form'..." The latter she observes as an "...explosion or dismemberment... of the fabricated object to release its material components from the corset of their construction..." (Bois and Krauss 1997: 214-215). She refers here to works such as Morris' felt *Untitled* (1967-68) where the structural logic of the felt sheet, cut in the studio on the floor's horizontal axis, is then scattered (dismembered or exploded). Nauman's attack, on the other hand, takes the path of implosion where an inversion of the spatial characteristics of the mould, rather than a dispersion of fragments of matter, offers a sense of congealing immobility. I part with Krauss' observation only in minor detail in that works like *Space Under My Steel Chair in Dusseldorf* does echo at least some of the functional character of Minimalist objects if the task of anti-form was, in the sentiments of Morris' *Artforum* essay of April 1968 offered by Krauss, "...to shatter the constructed object and disperse its fragments" (Bois and Krauss 1997: 214).



MARCEL DUCHAMP, *FEMALE FIG LEAF*, 1950

In relation to Duchamp's *Female Fig Leaf*, Jones approaches the same logic inherent in the mould when she describes a 'non' genital crevice. While stating that the *Female Fig Leaf* is related to the female genitalia of *Etant donnés*²⁰⁵ in that it is the reverse mould of the female pudendum, Jones describes this "...as the (non)genital crevice of the nude itself... [marking] the reciprocity of the convex and concave, and potentially of male and female genitalia themselves" (1994: 91).²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ I personally fail to see how any of these objects were employed in the manufacture of *Etant donnés*. The cunt of the work bears little resemblance to the opposite impression of *Female Fig Leaf*. *Etant donnés* has an open, violated wound, not particularly representative of female anatomy. But if the erotic objects were not directly related to the fabrication of *Etant donnés*, and neither are they cast directly off the body, I suggest they are made to approximate the charge (aura) of contact (contagion). Should this be the case, and I wager it is, Duchamp goes to great effort in creating facsimiles of objects with the characteristics of magical mimesis.

²⁰⁶ Jones notes Rachel Blau DuPlessis' discussion of these erotic objects as "...marking not the reverse of what an actual woman's pudenda would look like, but a strange crack - more like the imprint of buttock than of female genitalia." She quotes Blau DuPlessis as follows: "He has opened the cunt to find the ass" and goes on to note that this distortion is due to the bizarre anatomy of the nude figure of *Etant donnés* (1994: 263n111).

In a similar vein, while not as cogent, Didi-Huberman writes that the heuristic nature of the mould allows Duchamp "...to refine [a] fantasy of organic reversal which underlines all of his anthromorphic theory. This notion accesses a spatial paradox of obstructed openings... [that] allows a theory of appearances elaborated by Duchamp in the *Grand Verre*... (from this point one could argue that in the *Female Fig Leaf* the female genitalia appears for the same reason that it appears in negative" (1997: 158). The reversal, in effect, becomes a visual signifier of the notion of 'touched' or 'contacted,' and by implication, history and delay. That which Molesworth refers to as memory and loss (2005a: 199-200). It also contributes to a lack of representational fixity which is a state of the liminal and in which the viewer is obliged to 'fill' the cavity within a model of performativity.

And as previously noted, Nauman's work, like the *Take* series, announces a bodily contagion left on the surface of the 'cast.' As in Derrida's writing on signatures, these part subjects, while indexing the language of the mould as 'reproducible,' concomitantly index their inherent unreproducibility.²⁰⁷ And where the contagious flesh of the artist's body is so evident on the surface of these works (as an absence that the body/s of the audience might 'try' to encounter) there is a collision between an assumed industrial mechanics of the mould/cast function and live art's repetition of bodies that always already disappear. In this way performativity is never stable (there is never a 'reproduction' if one engages phenomenology or performativity) but it is precisely its iterability that makes performatives possible. To repeat, it is in this sense that these part *subjects* are a manifestation of the 'nonpresent remainder.' This is the supplement that never breaks with the 'liveness' of the moment but is "...a continuous and homogeneous reparation and modification of presence..." (Derrida 1988: 5) in the 'performative document.' Molesworth talks of Duchamp's erotic objects' reproduction in a way that echoes these concerns of proliferation:

That he [Duchamp] would quickly edition them, reproduce them, or, perhaps more precisely, *repeat* them intimates that there is no closure, no complete working through, no act of reparation that finalizes our pendulum swings from love to destruction; there are only countless small gestures and acts of reworkings. (2005b: 197)

It should be clear by now that I am interested in a series of partial *subjects* (casts, moulds, looped video, sound *et al.*) that, while understood against a terrain of mechanical reproduction as their inherent process, bear upon their surfaces moments of fleshy 'liveness' that are only fathomable in relation to their iterability. Molesworth emphasises

²⁰⁷ See Krauss in relation to the 'index' where she discusses Duchamp's *Elevage de poussière* (*Dust Breeding*) and the photograms of Man Ray—both as objects that result from dust accumulated on a prone surface over several months or physical imprints transferred by light reflections onto photo sensitive paper respectively—as impressions that act as "...a kind of physical index for the passage of time" (1986: 203). In reference to André Bazin's "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," Krauss argues that the impressions (linked as they are to photographic processes), by virtue of their process, are indexically linked to the object itself in ways that exceed representation. This is useful for my ongoing argument that the conditions of contact or contagion in the mould/cast operation solicit a proximity to the represented by way of its very process. As Bazin argues, this is true no matter how fuzzy or distorted the photographic image. In this sense the *force of the process* overrides the demands of representation which is a condition evident throughout my discussion. And in a direct reference to physical imprints, Krauss writes: "The image created in this way is of the ghostly traces of departed objects; they look like footprints in sand, or marks that have been left in the dust" (1986: 203).

these formal (mechanical) devices in relation to bodily repetition when she writes that “...biological and industrial models of repetition are porous to one another.” And she goes on to say: “Bodily repetitions both emanate from and are governed by the space of fantasy and desire...” (2005b: 25). In her assessment of Duchamp’s erotic objects, Molesworth suggests that moulds and casting, unlike assembly line reproduction, “...offer us repetition of a bodily and psychic nature produced by the reproductive technique of casting, a process redolent with metaphors for memory and loss” (2005a: 179-182). And earlier she underlines that “repetition generates the unique” (2005b: 20).²⁰⁸ In this way, while she does not reference the notion of the supplement, Molesworth infers that it is the very iterability of reproduction that drives our desire for the unique moment of the ‘live.’²⁰⁹ While Molesworth does not discuss Nauman’s works, her writing in relation to the significance of the process of casting is apt, particularly

²⁰⁸ Molesworth’s argument rests on a rejection of mainstream art historical assumptions that the readymades introduce “...the forces of mass production into the realm of art...” (2005a: 188). She attempts to re-write the Duchampian legacy, not so much from the perspective of the mass-produced readymade, but from that of Duchamp from the 1950s: preoccupied with handmade objects underscored by the dynamics of reproduction and replication. (2005b: 19). Her position relies on the handiwork and editing of the three erotic objects bleeding into a bodily interpretation of the handmade readymades produced, first by Ulf Linde from 1960, and then Arturo Schwarz in 1964 (Duchamp had already editioned the three erotic objects by the late 1950s) (2005a: 185, 189). Her argument relies on the idea that the former editing (in reproduction) of the erotic objects produced an environment, or precedence, for the latter replication of the readymades. Significant to her approach is that, by this stage, more or less all the ‘original’ readymades had been lost and Schwarz’s replicas, overseen in every detail by Duchamp, enlisted craftsmen to manufacture editions from blueprints developed from earlier photographs (2005a: 185). In this light the coincidental attention to reproduction and the handiwork evident in editions of erotic objects and readymades moves Molesworth to make a link “...between the erotic objects of the body and the allure of the commodity object and further that Duchamp’s sculptural practice is shaped by the relays between such different stages of desire.” And as she goes on to say, the most significant distinction is that the original mass-produced readymades “...offer the problems of reproduction and manufacture... while the handmade replicas of the readymades... offer us the problem of repetition and desire of and for lost objects...” (2005a: 192). She puts some store in a distinction between handiwork and casting as opposed to that of the assembly line, that the former process is “...analogous to erotic or bodily modes of repetition...” while the latter relates to industrial production akin to the concerns of Minimalism (2005a: 192; 2005b: 19). As specific examples of this argument she cites the *Bottle Rack* of 1964 which betrays the marks of replication by hand as do all the editioned readymades. It is not a bottle rack straight off the assembly line. The edition of 12 *Fountains*, made one evening at the direction of Duchamp and Schwarz on an assembly line from a mould, in the words of William Camfield as quoted by Molesworth, relate more “...to sculpture than to readymades, given its slight but perceptible modulations of surface which suggest its origin as handicraft sculpture rather than an American assembly-line production” (2005a: 188n112).

²⁰⁹ This idea is lent further criticality by David Joselit on the trajectory of Duchamp’s production as ‘bio-readymades’ (2005: 161). The ‘swarm’ for Joselit is “...a principle of combination situated somewhere between the undoing of structural logic associated with Bataille’s *informe* and the rule based permutations of Minimalism” (2005: 164).

where Nauman's work employs his hand as an everyday but primary means of touch: "...bodily, psychic, and industrial modes of repetition are mutually contingent upon one another as the desire to repeat the pleasurableness of the erotic encounter transmogrifies into the repetition of the workday" (2005b: 25).²¹⁰

The importance of understanding casting in the realm of process in variance to product is underlined by Didi-Huberman when he says that: "The imprint touches us with what proceeds it, that contact finishes, almost fatally, with the thought of separation, of mourning, of absence. So the imprint does not so much *produce* itself as much as it is in process..." (1997: 181).²¹¹ In this sense, for the imprint to occur, the body that made the contact must have disappeared causing a slippery play between contact and distance, "...shattering our rapport between the future and remembrance in a kind of delaying act... the Now and the Former [Maintenant et l'Autrefois] reunite themselves in a new and disconcerting [inédite] formation..." (Didi-Huberman 1997: 181-182). This is a temporality that invests in the undecidability of temporality inherent in action painting or performance: a temporality of deferral of actions; the work as a radical absence in the trace of the gesture. What is specifically of note with regard to many of the works discussed in this project (*Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name*, *Female Fig Leaf* and the *Take* series) is the role reversal where the mould *is* the work and the absent bodies assume the roles of the casting agents. For to fill these crevasses would not reproduce the bodies that made them and not reproduce the central and vertical armature of the figure important to a formal holistic understanding of the figure in space.²¹² To evoke the terms used by Balfour, these moulds and absent bodies present a shadow of the reflected image as an image of 'analogo-telepathy' (1892: 21-25). In this way the artwork as 'impression' signifies the body's appearance—an action at its 'origin'—and the disappearance of the body. This is to describe action or sympathy 'at a distance': those magical rites that follow the so-called laws of sympathy: like produces like; contact

²¹⁰ Molesworth cites Hesse's *Accession II* and states: "These artists are obsessed with returning, with repetition, like machines and like creatures ruled by the contradictory rules of eros. In each instance they return to a particular gesture... repeating the gesture as a way of making a thing that is as much about repetition as it is about anything else" (2005b: 25-26).

²¹¹ The end of this quote is as follows: "Pour qu'une empreinte de pas se *produise* en tant que processus..." While Didi-Huberman does not discuss Nauman's works, he pulls together a triumvirate of concerns focused around the notion of contact under the auspices of a play between desire and grievance. They are: contact with material; with flesh; and with disappearance (1997: 11).

²¹² See Rosalind Krauss' *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (1977).

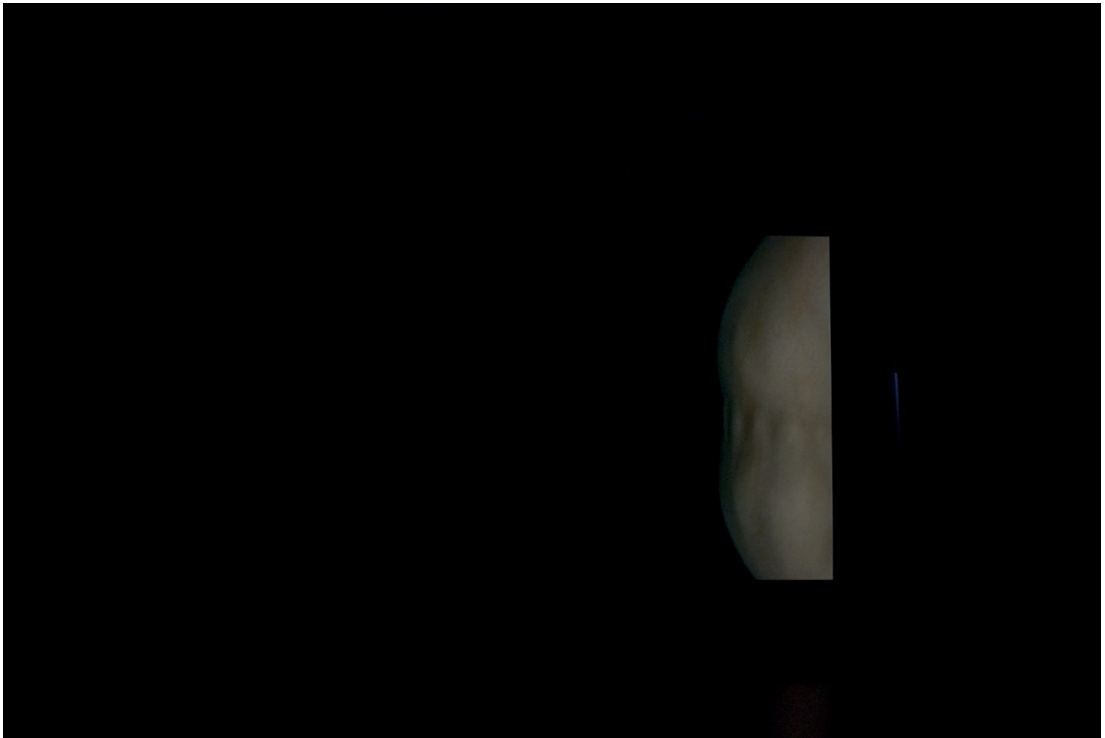
results in contagion. Crossing space and time, these are the remainder and reminders of some absent form. The image has a power in the moment of its revelation that Benjamin refers to as a ‘time-moment’ (as referenced in Chapter 3 in relation to mimetic incongruence) where relations between past and present are dialectical. In this respect, Buck-Morss begins *The Dialectics of Seeing* by quoting Benjamin on the notion of origins; that the term “...does not mean the process of becoming of that which has emerged, but much more, that which emerges out of the process of becoming and disappearing” (1989: 8n1). In this context the act of repetition is the medium of redundancy: closure can never be achieved and this is the triumph of the process.

It is in this sense that the mould, and its relationship to a fleshy contagiousness, can be contextualised by means of the reversibility of the chiasm. The profound difficulty inherent in naming (or describing) objects like *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name*, Hamilton’s mouth casts, *Female Fig Leaf* or the *Take* series is that they congeal time and space ‘in-between two’ in what Sobchack describes as providing “...a reversible *ground* for the *figure* of the other” (2004: 294). Here, the ‘twoness’ of the complex procedure signified in my making the partial objects in the *Take* series is always non-locatable and profoundly liminal. Moreover, the moving images that never reveal the ‘object’ of their making signify a slippage between my role as subject and object of the work. Concomitantly, as audiences participate with the *Take* series and/or their moving images—both intertwining a fleshy intimacy—they look *past* the gift that is the work adumbrated in a force-field of potentiality.

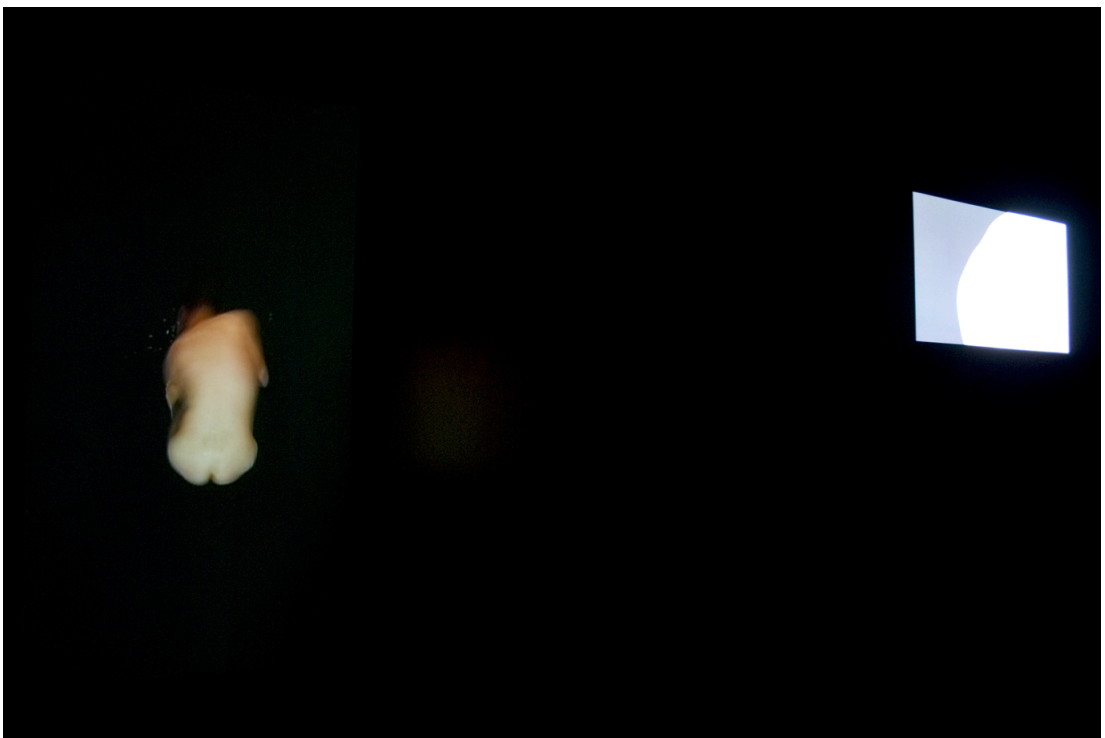
CONCLUSION

In appealing to expanded notions of the ‘live’ encounter, *The Artist Will Be Present* focuses on how we *get to* objects; it prioritises performative *operations* and *processes* in difference to artefacts as objects of scopic recognition. To this end, I try to question the category of the ‘live’ by never offering up the ‘presence’ of my body, by always facilitating its loss. This engagement plays out as ‘performative sculpture’ and as moving images of my body always intertwined between the viewed object and the authorial subject. In this way I attach significance to acting *in* the body and to the struggle that is always an action *in* becoming, that I hope the *Take* series and its ongoing relationship to the

moving image works (*Above*, *Back* and *Caress*), and the sound work (*Over & Over*), distinguishes from representations *of* the body.



BACK, 2008



ABOVE & CARESS, 2008

A series of ‘operations’ (pendular devices that swing or vacillate, always ambivalent to stasis) importune this questioning. They are moulds and casts that bear a contagiousness with respect to the body/s that participate *in* and *with* them, and my live body—performed in private—also offered as a ‘performative documentation’ that drives the moment of the ‘live.’ These operations are supplementary to the force of the moment and, as such, signify its disappearance while simultaneously ensuring the iterability of that very liveness. These dual operations present these part objects/subjects as metonymically redundant (as part of a whole) and the performing live body of the artist as partial subject/object *acting* metonymically. If metaphor plays a synchronic field of substitutions constitutive of a paradigmatic axis, metonymy’s temporality operates the additive and dislocative syntagmatic chain. It is with metonymy, as Barthes suggests, that violations happen in the poetics of forced syntagms. Metaphor ‘documents’ the live (substitutions and repetitions); metonymy is the crossing chains of substitution that violate their meaning in the momentary liveness of the body and its immediate (simultaneous) loss. This would be the ‘nonpresent remainder’ that, in its metonymic *under*performance—always manifesting as parts for the whole where redundancy is the ‘noise’ of all we do not have but desire—stresses the significance of *force* over form.

The ‘supplementary’ nature of the ‘moulds’ that make up the *Take* series (which vacillate between objects of my making and the subjects of my body) always elude the body/s of the audience that *try* them, and often surprise viewers in their intimate fleshiness: I serve myself up in this ‘object archive,’ inviting audiences to touch me but never reach me. These moving images in their ceaseless digital repetition index the ‘body of the artist’ *at work*, always in a *process* of performative utterance underscored by the incessant soundtrack of breathing and making (*Over & Over*). Their imagery, sound and spatial configuration simultaneously escape their own and audiences’ concurrence. To my mind these objects are only ever near ‘completion’ *in* the audiences that engage with them physically (*Cut 1*) and in a haptic opticality (*Cut 2*), which is always never ending. Such an archive, like Derrida’s writing on the signature, marks out the impossibility of its *pure* reiteration—that is the difference of the utterance at every ‘live’ moment—while its very function relies on it being repeatable—iterable—(in variance to Austin’s determination of a noniterable performative utterance in a saturated ritual context) of every moment of presence by virtue of its (always) readiness to (albeit inadequately) produce an ‘originating’ moment of contact. It is on these terms that I endeavour to

allude to the so-called ‘live’ moment, to reinforce the impossibility of its pure iteration, and, like Derrida’s writing on the gift, the impossibility of the gift of time.

I have wanted to open up a space to reconsider aspects of late 20th-century art (from Minimalism, through artists like Nauman, Clark and Hamilton *et al.*, towards performance) through the lens of late 19th-and early 20th-century writing on sympathetic magical action. A legacy of cultural anthropology dealing with magic (that was privileged in establishing grounding aspects of structural linguistics), circulates around Tambiah. Here, a notion of sympathy resides both in a debt to contexts of ritual and modes of mimesis. In this respect the ambivalence associated with partial objects and subjects is what *keeps the force-field*—those performative contexts—*alive*. Hence, sympathetic magical action, in the context of performative illocutionary force, offers another model of articulating an authentic performative document (in its necessary ambiguity and contagion) as an encounter with the ‘live.’

As such, comparison to anatomical votives and ritual contexts activates a notion of force-fields that performatively ‘draw out’ participation to the point that what we call subjects and objects are affects of this drawing out; hence their partiality. From this standpoint I tender a reassessment of part objects/subjects in their similarity (ambivalence) and contagion (performative attention) and suggest that artists like Duchamp, Nauman, Hamilton, Frankovich *et al.* indulge in magically ritualised acts that are deeply performative and based on desires to undo that which is undesired. In this context, as indicated above, Nauman’s *Space Under My Hand When I Write My Name* might be contextualised as Balfour’s telepathic analogy: action at a distance that is a shadow of the reflected ‘live’ encounter that is its *life force*; without which it ceases to exist.

It is along these lines that the histories and practices of sympathetic magical action, and its relationship to mimesis, make foremost not representational fixity, but the force of performative utterance surrounding images within efficacious ritual contexts. At this juncture *operations* have a primary purpose other than aesthetic. The principles of anatomical votives (when embedded in ritual contexts) offer an instructive context in which to explicate Krauss’ notion of morphological ambivalence in concurrence with a body art that negotiates a ‘liveness’ that is radical in its reciprocal engagements but

ambivalent toward putative ‘intention.’²¹³ This wording is based on Jones’ endeavour in *Body Art: Performing the Subject* to avoid a ‘concrete social practice’ in favour of a productive *ambivalence* towards the social and its radical opening to the other (Jones 1998: 246-247n237). And in the contexts of performativity, the ‘attention’ offered *in* participation will always seek unlimited potential. This augments discussions in art history about part objects and widens their terms of reference, insisting that they become cognisant of the complex subject/object *interrelationship* to which approaches of phenomenology and performativity aspire.

In this context, sympathetic magical action (at a distance) offers a model for thinking about fragmented objects and subjects that engage with performative *contact* as disturbing closeness and contamination/contagion. Now performative objects (re-named part *subjects*) in relation to the artist’s body and the body/s of audiences have an ethical and pedagogical social *force* (manifest necessarily as an ambivalent reciprocity between subjects and objects). In this regard the body/s of the donor/artist/audience—their dimensions and characteristics—are key to the operations that position these *agents* as ‘surrogate performers’ *in* the ritual mix; as Marcel Mauss would put it, *producing* the person; *producing* the ‘live.’ To tie any one of these *agents* down would annul the force that draws them out. In all the works discussed in this thesis the artist’s trace has become the subject, necessarily “...detached from the present and singular intentions of its production” (Derrida 1988: 20). And in this way the body intensifies its own supplementarity and incessant deferral, raising the question as to whether the artist will be present.

²¹³ As Derrida writes, “...the signifying form only constitutes itself by virtue of its iterability, by the possibility of its being repeated in the absence not only of its ‘referent,’ which is self evident, but in the absence of a determinate signified or of the intention of actual signification...” (1988: 10).

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