

*Ali Darke*

*Professional Doctorate in Fine Art: 3rd year*

*Scenographies of the Inner World*

10 minute paper:

*Between Here and There:*

*Scenographies of a liminal world.*

***Good afternoon.***

My creative practice, informed by psychoanalytical and philosophical enquiry and contextualised within contemporary art, evolves through cycles of research and making and reflecting. Here I describe one recent iteration of this not always smooth process.

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

The subject matter came out of this “to-ing and fro-ing” questioning the interplay between subjective and objective perception, between artist and the work, the work and audience, self and other, and internal and external worlds. “*Between Here and There*” is a porous threshold, a vibrant, liminal space with the potential for alchemical exchange between things - an intersubjectivity.

This cycle began in July 2016, when I created the ‘Wild Woman’ during the Summer Lodge artists’ residency at Nottingham Trent University. She has since haunted my thinking. ‘The Wild’ was the theme of the residency, ‘The Wild Woman’s’ presence was drawn from characteristics of the Witch, the Wilder Mann from European folk lore, details of my own family history and a process of improvisation.



# SUMMER LODGE

*Wild thing, wild at heart, wild in the country, wild in the studio.:*

## *Witches*

In medieval Europe the Witch, as the outcast in society, had all that was considered abject projected onto her, accused of being mad, bestial, evil and satanic. Her image has been used by artists to embody a whole heap of human wickedness.

It is shocking to discover all over Europe, during the transition out of the dark ages into the so-called age of reason, the systematic slaughter of hundreds of thousands of women, tortured, hanged and burned. The sadistic torture of the women accused of witchcraft reveals an unparalleled misogyny.



*Agostino Veneziano, The Witches Rout: 1520*



*Albrecht Dürer, Witch Riding a Goat Backwards: c.1500*

## ***Goya***

Deanna Petherbridge, in her introduction to the exhibition, *'Witches and Wicked bodies'* at the British museum describes how in the 15<sup>th</sup> century the women accused of witchcraft were viewed as;

*'operating in the dangerous and contradictory realm of the in-between...they inspire terror by existing in the interstices of traditional categories, and.... punishment for subverting the natural/godly order of body and spirit, human and divine, good and evil, man/woman, human and animal.'* (2014, p.14)





Francisco de Goya, *Los Caprichos*: 1799

## ***Wilder Mann***

The photographic portraits of *Wilder Mann* by Charles Fréger show carnival characters inhabiting both human and wild worlds, always the outsiders, the feral outcasts. They have an ambiguous and transformational nature. These characters (of which there are numerous examples all over eastern and western Europe, felt uncannily familiar and curiously I discovered these rituals enacted in festivals in the region of Germany, where my Grandmother was born.

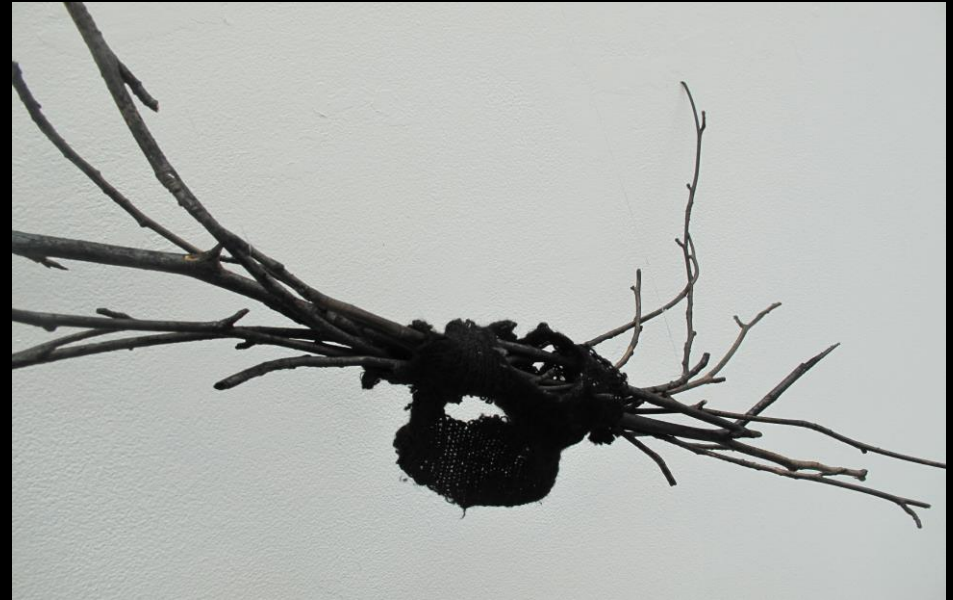
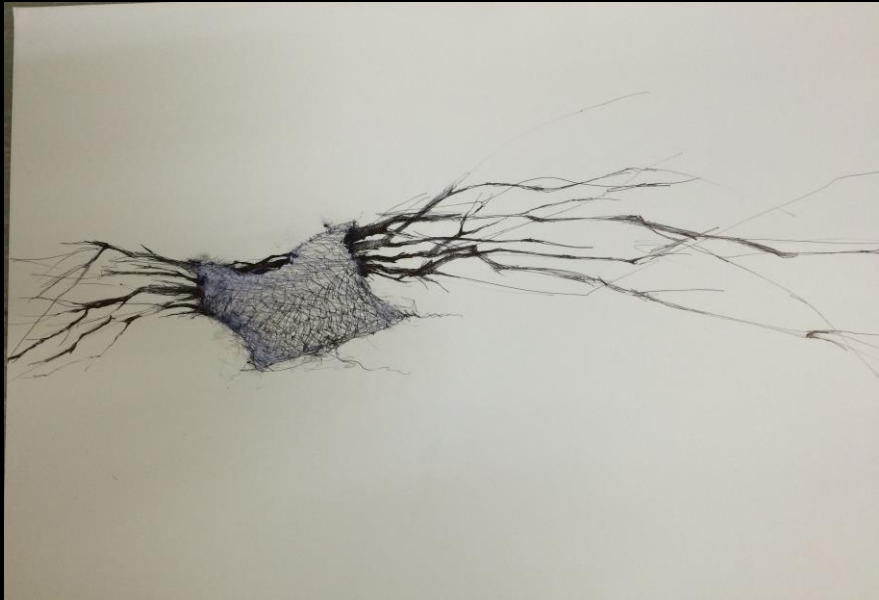
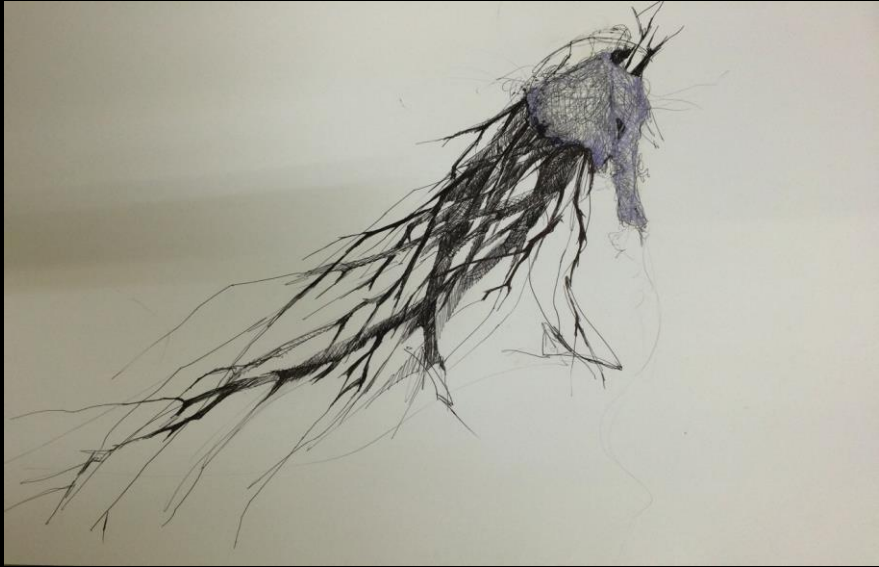


*Charles Fréger, Wilder Mann: 2014*

## ***My Wild Things***

The initial work I created at the residency '*My Wild Things*' did not get to the heart of the matter. What to do next?

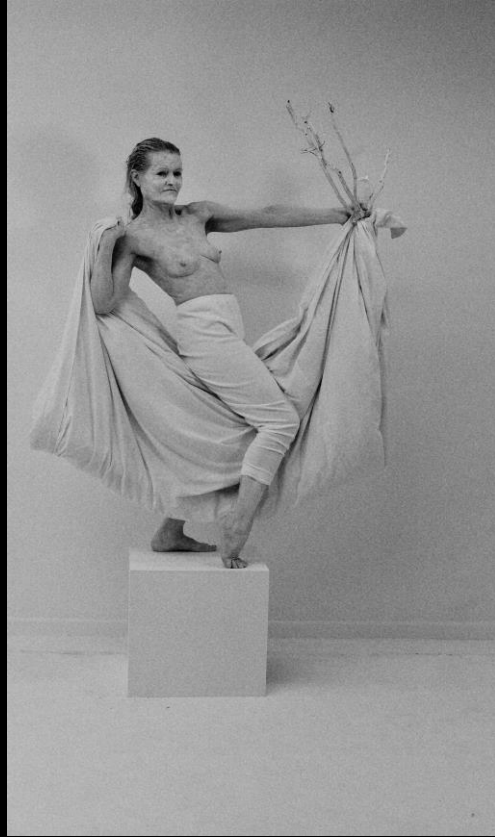
I needed to conquer my fear of failure and shame. In wanting to bring the wild woman alive, I decided to step onto the plinth and into the image. I would literally embody the subject "of" and object "in" the work.

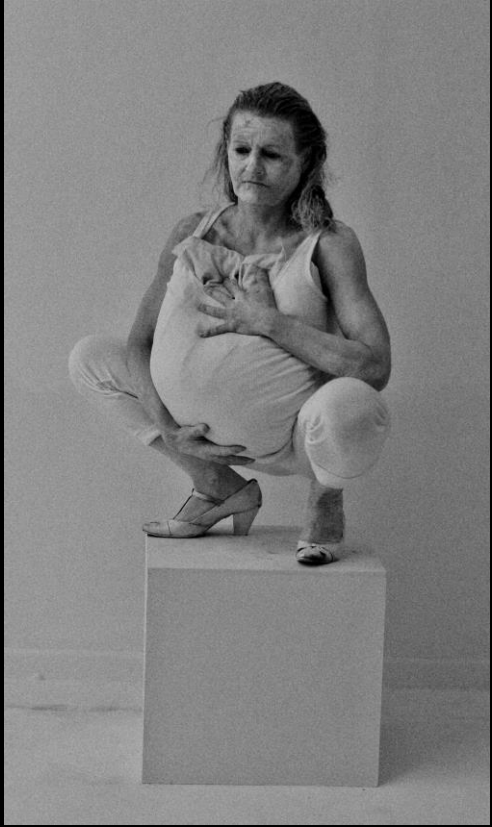


These ideas also referred to my past, as my Mother would tease us, sometimes with such conviction I believed her, that she was in fact a witch. As daughters we fear we will turn into our mothers

To evoke the borders of sleep or sanity, where the unconscious hovers at the edges – and one drifts between two worlds, my 'Wild Woman' wore night clothes and used a duvet and pillow, as props.

In her study of *'Costume in Performance'*, (2017) Donatella Barbieri describes how costume can *'articulate an infinitely complex human nature through materiel and form...in which the wearer becomes other than their everyday self...a threshold persona, a transitional being'*. (p.xxiii)







## ***Wild Woman 2***

I felt vulnerable and a weird 'ambivalence of presence'. Roland Barthes describes posing for the camera ...

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

In my final images I refer specifically to the history of my maternal Grandparents. Both were German, and my Grandfather Jewish.

## ***Mischling***

The 1935 Nazi Nuremberg Laws for the "Protection of German Blood and German Honour" forbid marriages between Aryans and Jews, and according to this diagram my Mother was officially a 'Mischling'. The more Jewish blood - the blacker the circle. The shame and trauma haunted her life.

# Die Nürnberger Gesetze

Deutschblütiger	Mischling 2. Grades	Mischling 1. Grades	Jude	Jude
<p>Großeltern Eltern Ehe gestattet Kinder werden Deutschblütig Ehe gestattet Kinder gelten als Deutschblütig Ehe nur mit Genehmigung zugelassen Ehe verboten Ehe verboten</p>	<p>Großeltern Eltern Ehe gestattet Kinder gelten als Deutschblütig Ehe verboten Ehe nur mit Genehmigung zugelassen Ehe verboten Ehe verboten</p>	<p>Großeltern Eltern Ehe nur mit Genehmigung zugelassen Ehe nur mit Genehmigung zugelassen Kinder werden Mischlinge Ehe gestattet Kinder werden Juden Ehe gestattet Kinder werden Juden</p>	<p>Großeltern Eltern Ehe verboten Ehe verboten Ehe gestattet Kinder werden Juden Ehe gestattet Kinder werden Juden Ehe gestattet Kinder werden Juden</p>	<p>Großeltern Eltern Ehe verboten Ehe verboten Ehe gestattet Kinder werden Juden Ehe gestattet Kinder werden Juden Ehe gestattet Kinder werden Juden</p>

### Zeichenerklärung

Deutschblütiger: gelten als Deutschblütiger an, wenn beide Großeltern Deutschblütiger sind.

Mischling 2. Grades: gelten nur bei bestimmten Eheverhältnissen an, wenn Großeltern Deutschblütiger sind.

Mischling 1. Grades: gelten nur bei bestimmten Eheverhältnissen an, wenn Großeltern Deutschblütiger sind.

Jude: gelten bei Mischen Ehen an, wenn beide Großeltern Juden sind.

Jude: gelten bei Mischen Ehen an, wenn beide Großeltern Juden sind.

### Sonderfälle bei Mischlingen 1. Grades

Mischling gilt als Jude, wenn er der jüdischen Religionsangehörigkeit angeschlossen ist.

Mischling gilt als Jude, wenn er mit einem Juden verheiratet ist.

Kinder werden Juden.

Mischling der aus verbotenem außerehelichen Verkehr mit einem Juden stammt und der nach dem 1. Juli 1935 außerehelich geboren wird, gilt als Jude.

Mischling der aus einer Ehe mit einem Juden stammt, die nach dem 1. 9. 1935 geschlossen ist: gilt als Jude, bei bereits bestehenden Ehen bleibt er Mischling.

### Reichsbürgergesetz vom 15. 9. 1935

1. Verordnung vom 14. 11. 1935

Das Reichsbürgerrecht ist in jedem einzelnen Falle von der Vererbung abhängig.

### Gesetz zum Schutz des Deutschen Blutes und der Deutschen Ehre vom 15. 9. 1935

1. Verordnung vom 14. 11. 1935

Sonderfälle eines jüdischen Vaters.

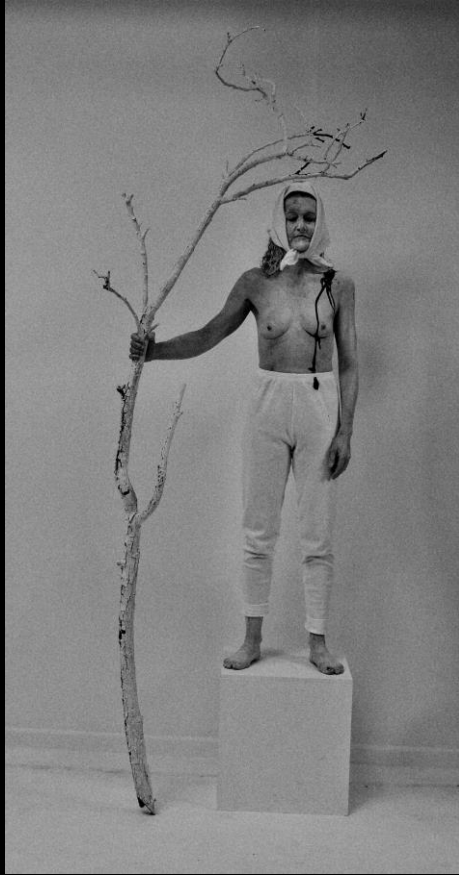
Reichsgesetzblätter I Nr. 300 vom 14. 9. 1935 Nr. 187 vom 14. 11. 1935

Die Nürnberger Gesetze (The Nuremberg Laws): 1935

Black paint was slowly and deliberately poured over my head. I felt moved and troubled, passively accepting the humiliation – like a punishment – a public shaming.

In transforming the surface of my body, my skin, I hoped to express this emotional complexity. In *Art and Psychoanalysis* Maria Walsh points out, '*the skin, like the psyche, is both porous and sealing and therefore a liminal site of complex exchanges between inner and outer realities*'. (2013 p.124)

Through the skin we sense the other outside and perceive our interiority begin. It serves as the vital boundary, as the newborn child negotiates its primal separation from the mother. An emerging psyche's topography of the body is mapped in space as it touches and is touched by the other. Intersubjectivity's role in the formation of a sense of self is a complex and contested area of understanding in psychoanalytic theory.



Elizabeth Grosz describes this phase as 'infantile transitivity', a child's growing awareness of being both an object for the other *and* for the self, at the same time as experiencing the self as an embodied subject: the body she says '*is the instrument by which all information and knowledge is received and meaning is generated.* (1994, p.87)

The flesh of the body is thus the threshold upon and through which this transitivity is played out. '*Flesh is being's reversibility*' says Grosz, '*its capacity to fold in on itself, a dual orientation inward and outward...between touching and being touched, between seeing and being seen there is a fundamental reversibility.*' (p.100)

The fragility of this transition from the new-born's '*ever changing flux of experiences*' (p.3) to the perception of an integrated if fluid sense of self explains the potential for things to go wrong. The body thus becomes a dynamic stage-space.

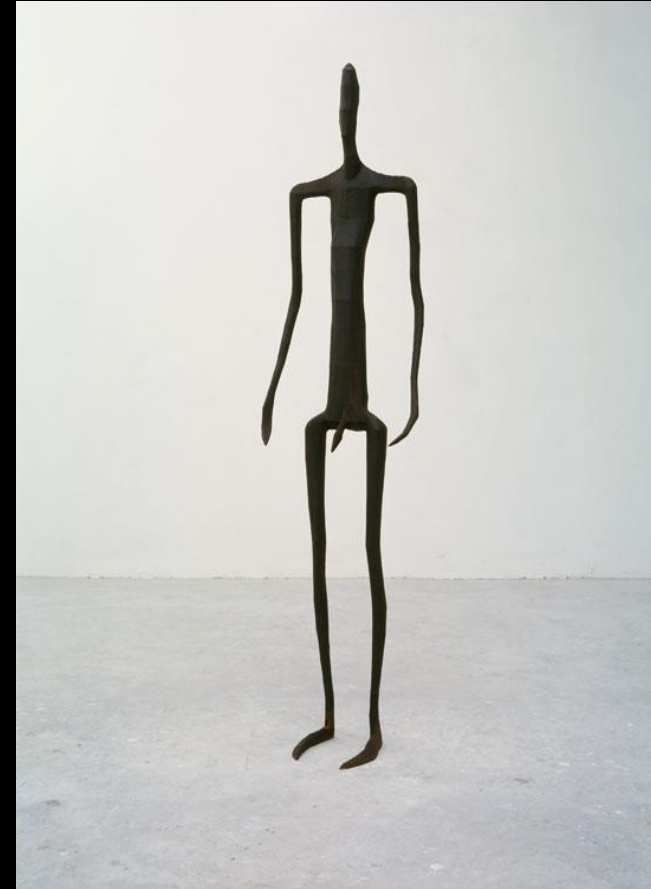
## ***Anthony Gormley***

In the work of Anthony Gormley and Louise Bourgeois, intersubjectivity is vibrantly woven, not only in relation between artist, object and viewer but in the very fabric of the art work.

Maria Walsh describes Anthony Gormley's sculptures of the human form as the '*motif of the crustacean Ego in the sense that these objects are intractably well-protected...they offer us surfaces that are impenetrable and immune to change.*' (p.127) '*Learning to See*', an early work, is a cast of his own body rendered in lead, fibreglass, plaster and as he adds poignantly - 'air'. Gormley describes how, '*it is not about action but about being. It is an empty case indicating a human space in space.*' (2015, p.166)



*Gormley, Learning To See: 1993*



*Gormley, Insider: 1998*

Darian Leader observes,

*'Gormley speaks of his fascination with negotiating and renegotiating the edge, in terms of whether it's within or without. Edges, he says, are the relation between something and nothing, and they both define and release us. And certainly, in Gormley's earlier work, the edge is what defines the outline of the form of the human body'. (2003, p12.)*

Gormley's later work, metamorphose into the 'Insider' figures, in which the volume of the body is compressed to an inner core, still impenetrable. In this contraction the *'irreducible residue of the body.'* (p.11) Gormley seems to be testing out the limits of being and nothingness.

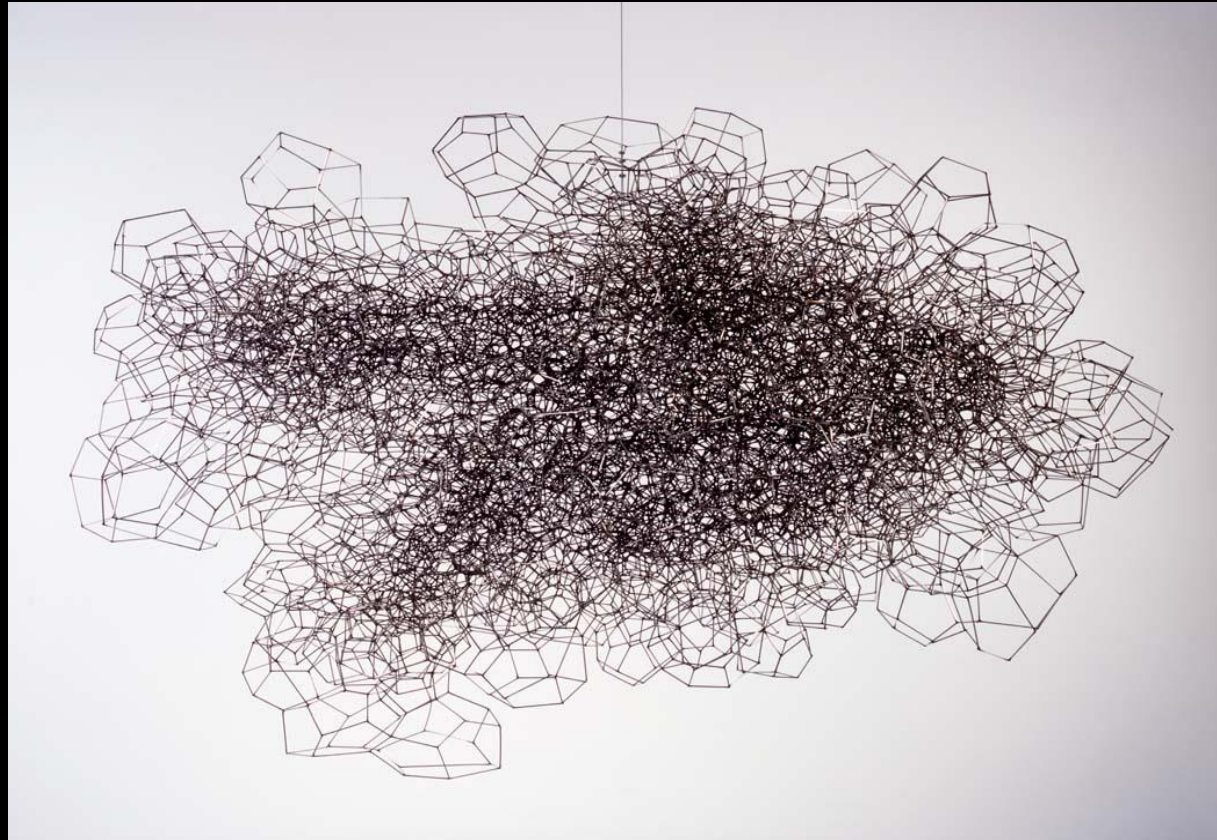




*Gormley, Domain: 2003*

### ***Gormley: Domain***

In the “*Domain*” sculptures nothing is hidden. Giving the illusion of a drawing in space, the hatched lines still create form, implying the body without bounding it. The drawn outline, that might define the body’s boundary, or suggest a skin, here has been splintered into a fragile form in space.



*Gormley, Drift: 2007-12*

## *Drift*

And finally, in *'Drift' (2007- 2014)* we see a series of figures, where Gormley has expanded beyond the surface of the form into the space around. Their mass seems less grounded, and weightless, and speaks more of the psychic perception of our bodies in 'touch' with space than the body's limits. Ambiguously, these structures might be produced by the resonance of the body, or the structures create the body. Internal and external exchange has become more fluid.

## *Louise Bourgeois*

In all of the work of Louise Bourgeois, her representations of the body, whether whole or fragmented, through absence, presence, or suggestion, become an expression of deeply felt psychic phenomena. These fabric soft sculptures, cloth severed heads, body parts and torsos are skilfully constructed. The hand sewn, roughly stitched seams which barely contain the stuffing suggest the wounds and scars of flayed flesh. The crudeness of the surface finish suggests hastily bandaged bodies or disfigured faces. As a psychic boundary we see an attempt to repair a trauma.



*Bourgeois, Untitled: 1998*



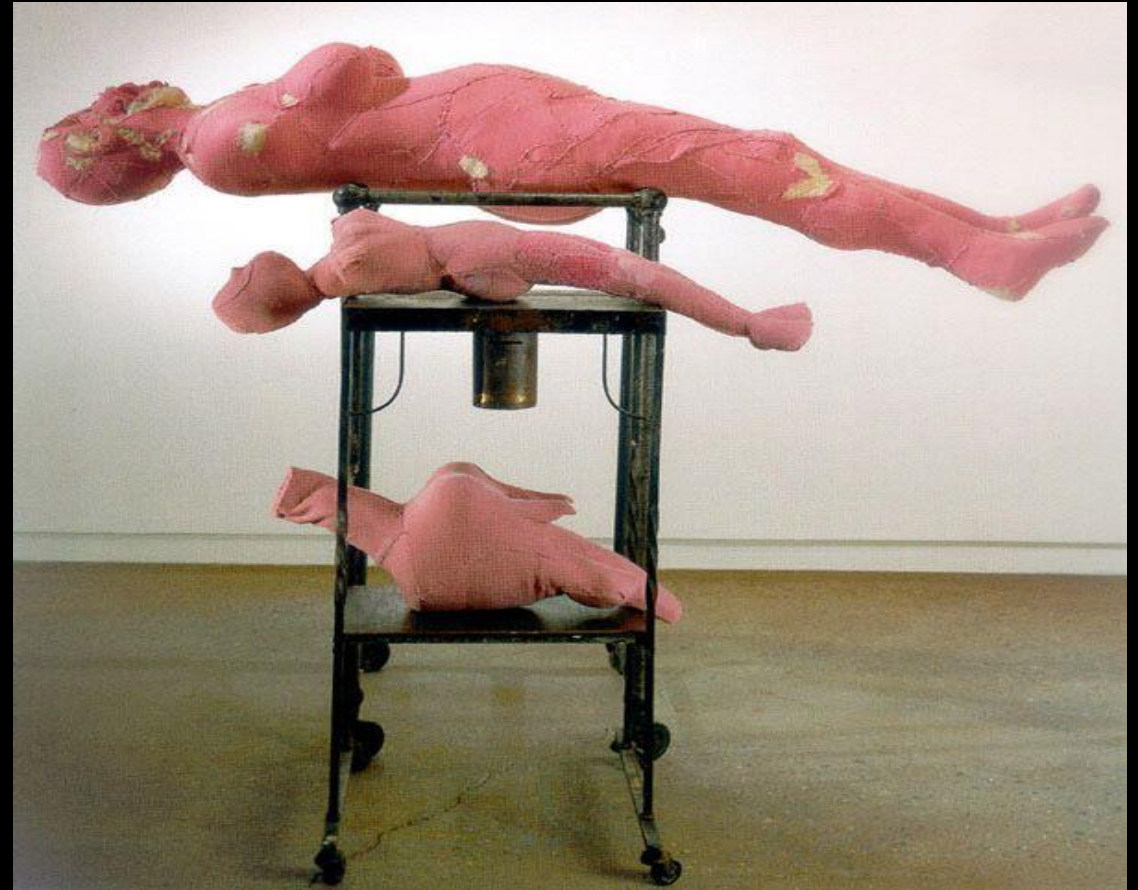
*Bourgeois, Temper Tantrum: 2000*

The Greek etymology of the word trauma stems from a physical wound to the body, a cut, with implications of violence and a violation from outside, penetrating the protective shell of the skin. Also, *trau* or “*tere*” from an Indo-European root means to rub or turn, with derivatives referring to twisting, boring, and piercing. Evolving to embrace trauma as a psychic wound implies a mental and physical pain that penetrates, torments and tortures. Notions of “boring into” suggest trauma is felt deep in the internal “body-scape” long after the surface wound has healed.

Louise Bourgeois’s parents owned a business repairing and restoring tapestries. Celant believes that for Louise Bourgeois, *‘fabric has been the locus of a desire to “repair” memory and the past. A recourse to weaving as a narration of self.’* (2010, p.14)



*Bourgeois, Do Not Abandon Me: 1999*



*Bourgeois, Three Horizontals: 1998*



## ***Bourgeois 2***

Along with repairing is Bourgeois' cutting, rearranging, and restructuring, to create new forms. For her, fabric always alluded to the thing beneath the surface, *'a subterranean, almost always carnal world'* (p.14) The skin *'functions as a basic parchment on which psychic incisions are inscribed* (Baraister, 2014, p.233)

Lisa Baraister points out how fabric can convey the psycho-dramas of the 'skin-ego', *'the fantasy of the conjoined of self and other...through an experience of our contents being held together and not spilling out while nevertheless being "touched" in a way that is indiscernible as to where self and other peel away from one another.'* (2014, p.233)



*Bourgeois, Peaux de Lapins, Chiffons ferrailles à Vendre: 2006  
(Rabbit skins, rags and scraps for sale.)*

***Bourgeois: "Peaux de Lapins".***

Evocative emotion is expressed through an absence or memory of the body, in the piece "*Peaux de Lapins*". (2006)

In the enclosed wire mesh cage, hang various soft gauzy fabric sacs, suggestive of discarded skins or clothes, their translucency appearing to lack substance are empty, ethereal. Celant describes how '*The Cell suggests a room inhabited by ghostly presences that float above the ground as if the bodies have dissolved into a vaporous cloud of diaphanous fabric.*' (p. 82)

The notion of a skin-ego formed through intersubjectivity maybe renders the human existential quest as a longing for a return to connectivity, a relational project. However, the all-embracing other remains an impossible and elusive illusion, always and forever beyond reach and is the stuff of life's dramas, comedies and tragedies, love and loss, madness and melancholy.

THANKYOU!

The end ....any questions?