

**Shades of embodiment, unravelling the thread of life.
An exploration of the sacred associated with death and dying in a
historical and cultural context.**

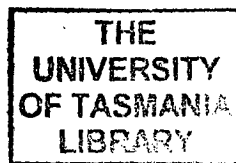
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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctorate of Philosophy

University of Tasmania March 2005

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PhD.
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Statement

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the theses.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aedy' with a stylized flourish.

Signed Alison Aedy

Statement

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Abstract

There are numerous variations in the ways of dying, and dealing with death and grief. The sheer universality of the experience produces the knowledge that we are all deeply connected and begs to question and define human nature and the human condition, which is universal across all cultures. Embodied in ritual or religious ceremonies of all ethnic groups, certain objects and materials are believed to contain a form of presence and, through mythology, spiritualism and symbolism, become metaphors of death and life itself. The project *Shades of Embodiment* materialises through a series of forms used to signify the body. The body is used because it houses consciousness and is the piece left behind when we die.

The concept that the 'sacred' and the body are embedded together is reflected in materials and rituals, created and used in concurrence with the body. This concept provides the framework of this study. Various cultural beliefs are interpreted through making and communicated through the sculptural work which transforms meaning into materiality as well as transforming materiality into meaning, through the use of binaries such as temporary and permanent, routine and ritual, natural to man made materials and, ultimately, life and death. A wide variety of materials have been explored including paper, wax, hessian, plastic, cotton and mud, as well as aluminium, lead, pressed tin and dust. Experienced together en masse each body figure is brought into a presence all its own. Together they become physical emblems of life itself, vessels for living. As objects, they are personal relics that resonate with the passage through daily life.

The scale of these figures echoes human embodiment: they are life size. They are like us in order to speak of our tenuous connection and disconnection with the thread of life, and to conjure uncomfortable associations with Freud's 'uncanny.' The placement of these body figures and the connections they manifest is reminiscent of catacombs, Egyptian mummies and the figures of Pompeii. The gallery space becomes a space between life and death, a psychological, private space. It is hoped that viewers leave their fear at the door and transcend their own dark space between. Religious faith may be lost for some, and yet presence may be felt through daily life, the places where a higher force should be. The installation, *Shades of Embodiment* reflects on this missing element in human experience.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisor and mentor David Hamilton for his never-ending support, and enthusiasm. Without which this would not have been possible. I am indebted to him for his commitment, his frank and forthright opinion and his knowledge. I would also like to acknowledge and thank Dr Deborah Malor, for many discussions, which helped me unscramble my thoughts, for her personal library loans, and her quick as lightening mind.

I am also indebted to, Professor Vincent McGrath for his firm criticism and his counsel, my colleagues in sculpture, and the staff at the School of Visual and Performing Arts for their continuing support. I would like to express gratitude to my friends, (you know who you are) and my family for all their support. Lastly but not least, I would like to thank and recognise my partner, Richmond Henty for being my patient model, for endless physical assistance in making and installation and documentation of the work, for delicious dinners and mostly for his belief in me.

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Introduction

The relationship between the body as dwelling and the objects found in museums is established through the concept that these objects are from the body itself, and having been made from or by the body, hold a sense of the sacred. For the British Empire it never seemed to matter when hoarding the exotic; the things from other cultures, whether the object/the artefact was dead or alive. Better if they were dead, because they were easier to handle. The unborn as well as the departed were victims for curiosity. The challenge lay in whether it was possible to reconstitute a sense of reality from dead matter. Such a relationship is exemplified within the walls of the world-renowned Pitt Rivers Museum situated in Oxford. It was the first archaeological and ethnological museum in Britain and, as a context to frame artefacts, the Pitt Rivers leaves an impression of a cross breeding between a vast garage and a hoarder's abode.

The original collection was donated to the University of Oxford by General Pitt Rivers and opened in 1884. It is housed in the back of the university's Natural History museum and, in line with evolutionary theory of the time, the Pitt Rivers collection was conceived as a logical extension of the natural history collections. After walking in from the street, visitors wait on stone benches for the great wooden doors to open. Like a stage set, an entry cut within the large ornate doors opens at midday, and access is gained into the Natural History Museum. Here in this well-lit hall, every known species is a taxidermist's apparition. The entrance to The Pitt Rivers Museum is subtle and low-key; just a small archway to the left of the back wall and, carved in the stone above the threshold, two words, 'Pitt Rivers.'

At last, after a pilgrimage across the world, it is just as I imagined, with so many voices in one space, a lost dark world. It is dark because the lights are low, and dark because it houses arcane objects: it stimulates the darker reaches of my imagination, a not necessarily pleasant experience, because in its own way, it is a glimpse into another world, one hidden from normal view. There is a sense of both of awe and trepidation, in taking a step back in time. The museum is an enormous rectangular hall, the floor a maze of cases. More cases mark the periphery and continue for three floors above, on balconies that overlook the dim stone floor. The cases hold

otherworldly goods, a bottle said to contain a witch, a dried tongue, a shrunken head. All of these transform us. For all the looking, awareness is the reward: somehow it is not close enough to press one's head to the glass and yet that barrier remains a comfort.

The Pitt Rivers boasts considerable authority on its collections, but the museum's wisdom and 'knowledge' are not always in order. A shelf is placed about half way up each case; objects above this line are mostly labelled with tiny print, a catalogue number, the donor and the year it was received. Sometimes a description of the objects may be found but often there are no records of what they are, where the artefact is from or what its function was. Bits and pieces of an 'other' life are simple fragments. Objects on the lower half of some of the cases are often partly covered in paper, boxed up or exposed and considered 'in storage' and not on display at all.

The manner in which the Pitt Rivers Museum displays its collection has a philosophical bearing on the wider aspects of collecting. It is a nineteenth century testament representing the beliefs of the day through its contents and its building. In *Hunters and Collectors*, Tom Griffiths speaks of museums in the nineteenth century as culminations throughout Europe of the '...enthusiasm for collecting, classification and encyclopaedic knowledge.'¹ In 1859, only twenty-five years before Pitt Rivers museum opened, new ideas as to the origin of 'man' or humankind were published in Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. This year culminated with simultaneous discoveries in archaeology, geology and human antiquity. Darwin's theory was used to promote a rule of progression where cultural stages based on technological differences were judged. In this system the Aboriginal culture was placed at the bottom of humanity and the culture of the British Empire was at the top.

Griffiths states that museums rapidly became ubiquitous across the world, jumbles of nature and culture showing the latest curiosities from what were believed to be lesser cultures.² Museums were entrenched in the morals of evolution; by what they exhibited and by steering and cultivating the public mind. They embodied the idea

¹ Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: the antiquarian imagination in Australia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p 18

² Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p.18

that in order to gain knowledge, objects had to be possessed, for reference and re-reference.

Today this history leaves us, as the inheritors of the shells of the Empire, with museums full of other people's things. Objects that in many instances present, hold or remain in possession of a sense of the sacred. What is of the essence here is a questioning of the meaning of life, of what lies within, at its core. We are often reluctant to ask such questions and the subject of death remains taboo because we don't possess the psychological tools to deal with this crucial phase in our journey. But it is precisely in this space, in between life and death or even between death and life that has the power to transform us. There are numerous ethnic variations in the comportment of dying, and dealing with death and grief. The sacredness associated with some objects, and the belief systems which lie dormant behind their manifestation have led to a personal journey to sight these objects and attempt to capture this sense in my own making.

What is grappled with in *Shades of Embodiment* is my knowledge of unknowing. In the first chapter of the exegesis, consciousness is discussed in terms of the space between life and death and how this relates to the body, which is the home of our consciousness and where each of us experiences our place in the world. We birth into the body, to experience living through it and eventually leave the husk of the body behind. The sheer universality of the experience produces the knowledge that we are all deeply connected and begs a questioning and definition of human nature and the human condition, which is universal across all cultures. In my work the sculptural process of casting is introduced to emphasise and serve as both a metaphor for translating our embodiment and as a practical process of making, which is repeated, much like the rituals of living.

Embodied in various ritual or religious ceremonies, certain objects and materials are believed to contain a form of presence, and through mythology, spiritualism and symbolism become metaphors both of life and death itself. The second chapter identifies beliefs around death and dying and speaks of the direct role of myth as a signifier of meaning. The sacred is discussed in connection with the body as being inherently intertwined with the materials and the rituals around which it was created. Communicated through making, *Shades of Embodiment* interprets these varied

beliefs from my own perspective. My response is based on both the physical remnants viewed in museums and information gleaned through reading about other cultural beliefs and the interaction with the process of making itself. Accounts of beliefs and rituals are often fragmented within themselves, as one person's interpretation of yet another's culture. This fragmentation, which remains in museums, is reflected as physical history and can be found in the objects themselves.

An exploration of the materials used in the investigation and how these translate into both forms and formlessness is then discussed in Chapter Three. There is also discussion of other artists' work in relation to my own. Use of the archetype, and questions of originality are discussed in the context of the act of casting and Freud's 'uncanny' and the double, relating back to the figures in my installation. It is concluded that, through looking at other cultures' approaches to death and dying what may be found is not just a way to come to terms with it, by accepting it for what it is, but rather the concept of being empowered by it, rejuvenated so this moment is transformed to become a celebration of life.

1. THE BODY, CASTING CONSCIOUSNESS

Consciousness and the space in between

What is the moment of death? To me, lack of breathing is a good indicator that someone is dead. My family was gathered around my grandmother's bed and when the focus had wandered from her, that's when it happened. My sister realised first that Gran had stopped breathing. Somehow, even with all of us present, she had slipped away. She was gone:

a quiet inner journey that I know nothing of. It has a movement and timing of its own. A breath then I wait and another breath then I wait and then I realise that the next breath didn't happen. 'It' happened sometime between when the last one 'did' and the next one 'didn't'. No one can exactly state the time of death.³

The time of death in contemporary society is legally and medically hazardous, a no man's land, a space in between which remains unresolved. In his article 'Time of death,' Benjamin Noys speaks of the new technologies of life support which have resulted in extending or rather, pausing a coma patient's life.⁴ Now there is a new kind of overcomatose patient, a person who holds the terrible position of 'a stage of life beyond the cessation of all vital functions,'⁵ an individual who exists beyond the traditional definition of death but remains both removed from life and death in what Noys refers to as a 'zone of indistinction.'⁶ As Noys points out, the development in life support technology has been followed by transplant technology. Comatose patients are a source of donor organs, and their families require proof that their loved one really has gone, therefore a new definition to clarify time of death is required. At the beginning of the twenty-first century Australia's current law describes death as: 'either irreversible cessation of circulation of blood in the body of the person or irreversible cessation of all function of the brain of the person.'⁷

³Jo Rowe, (registered nurse) panel at exhibition, *Death: The Last Taboo*, Sydney, Australian Museum, Further reference to panels in this uncatalogued exhibition will be: *Death*, 2003

⁴ Benjamin Noys, 'Time of death' in *Angelaki: journal of the theoretical humanities* vol 7 no 2, 2002, p 52

⁵ Noys, Time of death, p 52

⁶ Noys, Time of death, p 52

⁷ *Death*, 2003

Unfortunately this creates confusion, by relying on the former distinction that of 'the stopping of the heartbeat and the cessation of breathing.'⁸ Brain death occurs as a result of life support being withdrawn. This legal and ethical quagmire becomes a maze of indistinction and what Noys refers to as 'waverings' around death.⁹ The overcomatose patients are lost, abandoned between the terms life and death, neither of which is completed as a rite of passage, but rather remains suspended.

To me this begs the question; do we know if we're dying? When people are wracked with illness and in constant pain there is a sense that they have abandoned their bodies, and are gone, long before the body ceases to be. At other times we miss the crucial moment; we are minutes too late and the loved one is no longer dying but dead. When my father died, we rushed back to be with the body. He was so still and warm. For me, his presence was in the room, but not in his body, rather above it.

In recent times a well-documented phenomenon is the concept of near-death experiences. Many near-death survivors are certain that they have experienced what will happen to them when they die. In the book *Beyond Death*, Christopher Cherry's article speaks of the five different stages that are common in near-death experiences. These are: a sense of peace; then a separation; generally known as an out of body experience; followed by an entering into darkness or a tunnel; seeing light; and finally a move toward the light.¹⁰ This experience leaves the survivor with strong impressions of how death will be for them, no matter what they believed before. To me the person is a survivor because a near-death experience generally occurs when the individual was believed to be either dead or was in the process of dying. In a way, they come back from the dead, they survive to tell their story, and it changes them. As Cherry points out, the descriptions of the experience are scattered with tunnels, thresholds and passages.¹¹ The experience alters the survivor's view of their life and relates to a liminal state: it is a passage in between which transforms.

In the article, 'The Cultural Management of Death: Individual Fate and Its Social Transcendence' in *Essays on Mortality*, Clive Kessler discusses the Dutch

⁸ *Death*, 2003

⁹ Noys, *Time of death*, p 52

¹⁰ Kenneth Ring cited by Christopher Cherry in, 'Are Near Death Experiences Really Suggestive of Life after Death?' eds. Dan Cohn-Sherbok & Christopher Lewis, *Beyond Death*, London, Macmillan Press, 1995, p 147

¹¹ Cherry, *Beyond Death*, p 147

anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep's 1909 book "Rites of Passage", which examined life crises and rites of passage, such as birth, puberty, marriage and death. Van Gennep identified the underlying pattern found in the ritual process, in other words, the thread that weaves through significant life experiences. He proposed that rites of passage always consist of three phases, 'separation, marginality and reincorporation'¹². The importance of any one phase may vary between cultures, but clearly the three phases always occur, and rites of passage are basically universal. Kessler expands that Van Gennep realised that it is impossible to move directly from the first state of separation to the new state of reincorporation.¹³ The phases always include a neutral state. In the first phase of 'separation,' a discarding of all the recognisable marks of the old identity occurs. In the final phase a merging, a 'reincorporation' of the new identity takes place. But it is the middle phase which is of most interest to me, the transition between before and after which requires passing through a nowhere state, an in between, the phase of 'marginality' where the individual is neither what they were nor what they will be. This middle phase, as recognised by Van Gennep, is now generally known as the 'liminal' state, a transient state of limbo:¹⁴

for, in the liminal state, the individual, stripped of a previous identity and not yet invested with all the marks of a new one, exists not as any specific individual, bounded and thus also defined by the limitations of some mundane social status or position, but only abstractly, 'as a person in general.' without any specific identifiable qualities or features.¹⁵

In *The Sacred and the Profane*, Mircea Eliade describes how historically in many indigenous cultures initiation from childhood to adulthood is completed through a re-enactment of life itself.¹⁶ Firstly the adolescent must die, as adulthood is unattainable until they have passed beyond and in some sense abolished natural humanity. Initiation is condensed to an ambiguous mystical experience of death and

¹² Clive Kessler. 'The Cultural Management of Death' eds. Mira Crouch & Bernd Huppauf, *Essays on Mortality*, Sydney, University Of NSW, 1985, p 140

¹³ Kessler, p 140

¹⁴ Kessler, p 140

¹⁵ Kessler, p 141

¹⁶ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans, William R Trask, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959, p 187

resurrection, or of a second birth. These rites are believed to have begun by mythical ancestors and hence have a spiritual origin. By performing them the novice repeats a divine action. Initiation usually involves the threefold revelation of the sacred, of death and of sexuality.¹⁷ Humans pass from the womb into independent life and later from life to the grave. In tribal contexts there is a shamanic spiritual element to the ritual of self-entombment. It is a kind of 'rehearsal'. Traditionally rites of passage are expected to engender beneficial changes to external events, but only if the party is willing to consent. There is something noble in the willing embrace of death. Initiation is completed through the various stages of the 'rites of passage.'

Kessler's prime example of the liminal state is that of an adolescent who remains on the edge, neither a child nor adult, stuck in between. Kessler describes how these non-people become kinds of 'ghosts,' the word itself hinting at a deeper reading of Van Gennep's work and the liminal state and, through the meanings attributed to it, of the symbolic language of these rituals of transition.¹⁸ In the liminal state the individual is withdrawn, and separated away from the normal social culture; they are not involved in its continuity and in this way are not completely alive, instead becoming somehow dead. Without identity and routine they are much more open to the elements and susceptible to influential spiritual forces. They are at risk both to themselves and others as potential carriers of such energy. What Van Gennep identified, through looking at life's rhythms, is that they lead towards the meaning of death.¹⁹

It could be said that a liminal state is one of metamorphosis; a skin of identity is shed, change occurs and a new identity, a new skin, forms. The social process embraces this transition as a normal state by framing it as natural. This liminal state, the in between must not seem random. Transitions must be held as familiar, as part of the peculiar process of going and coming, of death and rebirth. Ritual itself effects a change of identity and status. It is exactly what it is represented as, the death of an identity and the individual's rebirth as a new identity.

¹⁷ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p 187

¹⁸ Kessler, 'The Cultural Management of Death' p 141

¹⁹ Kessler, 'The Cultural Management of Death' p 143

Symbolically the liminal state is both haunted and pregnant. *Shades of Embodiment* symbolise the liminal state, with a variation of figures that are both coming and going. Death and rebirth become models of the social process itself, as a series of passages. This is demonstrated through different rites being associated with specific age groups, like the passage between being a child and becoming an adult.

The concept that death is instrumental in comprehending life seems hard for some people to accept, as logically life and death seem opposed to each other. But in nature life and death are the same, identical: as soon as you are born you start dying, so living carries the certainty of death. It is the same thing. Time's loss is easy to ignore because it is hard to accept. Death is not experienced first-hand and then recalled, like any other life experience. It is approached as subject, and from a distance as an observation.

forgetting...is the great private problem of man. Death as loss of self. But what of this self? It is the sum of everything we remember. Thus what terrifies us about death is not the loss of a future but the loss of a past. Forgetting is a form of death ever present in life.²⁰

Getting on with it, whatever the task at hand, colludes with time and urges us to forget.

Consciousness and Casting Time

It could be said that memory is the stranger who's footsteps pursue us along the path, as a hidden threat, always following and sometimes once in a while, catching up. In *The Sublime Void, On Memory and the Imagination*, Henri Bergson identifies time and consciousness by suggesting that our duration is not one moment replacing another.²¹ He highlights that if it were, there would only ever be the present, not a continuous progress of a past that transmutes into the future, unendingly. Consciousness just keeps going; its preservation is infinite, piling up relentlessly. Like a shadow, our memory trail follows every moment, mostly living in our unconscious,

²⁰ Milan Kundera, cited by Lynn Gumpert, in 'The Life & Death of Christian Boltanski' *Christian Boltanski: Lessons of Darkness*, Chicago, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 1988, p 64

²¹ Henri Bergson, in *The Sublime Void, On Memory and the Imagination*, ed. by Bart Cassiman, Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum Voor Schone Kunsten, Catalogue of exhibition, 1993, p 60

and only sporadically reminding us of what lurks beneath the surface.²² The past remains present.

As Kessler notes in his 'The Cultural Management of Death: Individual Fate and Its Social Transcendence', Edmund Leach found that we manage to mix up life and death, these identical twins, in order to make one disappear. This trick only works by examining the concept of time. Leach states that time has dual roles.²³ There is lineal time that Henri Bergson refers to,²⁴ and cyclical time that is based on the framework of imposing a calendar year. It operates by dividing time up into units, measuring it daily and monthly only to return to it again, anew. As Leach points out, this action is echoed physically by clocks and even by the action of turning over the page in a calendar. In this sense it rolls around, the annual or regular celebrations like the New Year that offers the chance to begin again. Leach argued that the ritual of formally dressing up for special occasions removes us from ordinary time into periods of liminal time, endorsing the system of cylindrical time, which convinces us at least partly, that death does not happen.²⁵ Time remains elusive to us in another sense in that we are never fully present in the moment we are in now. Instead we look back into a past, which is long gone, or project ourselves into the future, to a controlled daydream of what will happen, of how things are going to be: but it is the elusive present, the here and now, which remain neglected.

Casting as translation

The duality of two in past and future, life and death is captured by Richard Stone when he writes:

...a cast of an object traps it in time, eventually displaying two histories - its own past and the past of the object it replicates. The perfect expression of this duality is the death mask. It captures all the physical accretions of the human face soon after that face has completed its living existence and before rigor mortis accelerates it towards disintegration. It remains in the world to remind us of the

²² Henri Bergson, in *The Sublime Void*, p 60

²³ Edmund Leach cited by Clive Kessler, in 'The Cultural Management of Death' p 144

²⁴ Bergson, *The Sublime Void*, p 60

²⁵ Edmund Leach cited by Clive Kessler, in 'The Cultural Management of Death' p 144

dead, as both a portrait and memorial, a replica and an object in its own right.²⁶



Fig.1: *Plaster cast*, 2003.
168 x 75 x 45 cm. All images
are the work of the author, unless
otherwise stated.

The process of casting involves placing plaster onto a form and allowing the plaster to cure. When hardened it is removed and the cast is realised as an object with an inside and an outside. The inner surface of the cast is embedded with the form, as a negative impression. In *The Sublime Void*, Bergson affirms that, if nothing else, we are a compression of history, not just from birth but from in utero, it is our whole past, the curiosity of our individualness that we dream and live by. This manifests continually to us through impulse, through tendency, and through the form of ideas.²⁷ When casting the body, the figure itself is used to produce another of its form. The body is alive and encased, not dead and entombed. But the feeling of being trapped echoes Freud's theories of the 'uncanny,' the primal fear of being

²⁶ Richard Stone, 'A cast in time' in *House: Rachel Whiteread*, London, Phaidon Press, 1995 p 52

²⁷ Bergson, in *The Sublime Void*, p 60

buried alive, or conscious in the womb. Spaces before and after life. On a base level it is isolation and surrender. A unique kind of dwelling. An eerie sensation of being both nowhere and somewhere simultaneously.

The plaster is wet and alive in a way, like birth, and as it dries it warms, then becomes hot before turning cold, hard and heavy like death. This chemical transformation echoes our own moving through a process from one state to another. The experience of being encased in this material is mixed. It is a feeling of both dread and calm, panic and finality. Physically suspended through the act of the body's impressions in the plaster, it is a recording of that moment. A piece of time. Evidence that someone was there. Consciousness is encapsulated briefly in the physical world.

The plaster hardens and begins to hold in place. Loss of feeling and sensations are difficult to locate. The blackness of being, under such a casing is inescapable. The body is trapped. The natural response is to escape. When the plaster is safely set, the person is pulled out from their private burial. However well greased and pre-planned the cast is, it is still an unnerving experience to have new skin shed. In some places on the body it is stuck, and the ownership of skin is returned with pain. The experience remains akin to being reborn, coming back into the light of day, dazed, sore and covered in embryonic fluid of petroleum jelly and plaster shards. Having been in an entirely new environment, the body has to adjust back into the larger world. The process is a kind of entombment or mummification, which is followed by a release. Echoing through process the cyclic act of life and death, in nature. Here the mould acts as a metaphor for life and death. It is at first warm and soft and then becomes cold and hard; the metamorphosis of the caterpillar into a butterfly, or the symbolic act of a snake shedding its skin.

The cast of a body comes to represent every body through the human form. Once the body has been taken out and excavated from its new home, its second skin, and the mould is viewed, there is a sense that the body is still there, still inside. An immediate presence and absence simultaneously through the physical cast. It is some body and yet the body is gone.

At what point do we form consciousness? In the action of taking a cast, a moment is captured, the space between, a space that occurs before life and after death, which

describes containment, like the coffin and the womb. In this way casting becomes a direct form of translating. Casting echoes the first forms of being human, the secret and primal - a vessel between two states. It is a mode of translation.

In Walter Benjamin's 'The task of the translator' in *Illuminations*, he defines the nature of translation: 'A translation issues from the original - not so much from its life as its afterlife.'²⁸ This statement speaks of the principle of a cast, in that a cast could not exist without the corporal, the flesh and bone that it echoes. A translation as Benjamin points out, must follow the original.²⁹ The cast is a translation, which refers to a specific meaning that is intrinsic in the original and reveals itself in its very translatability. The action of a cast is the highest tribute of all because it articulates the 'originals' meaning in a new form and regenerates the original by doing so. The new life that is bought forth through the act of translation by casting is twofold since fundamentally the translation expresses the shared relationship between languages. This concealed association is never fully realised, rather it is teased out through a concentrated form.³⁰ Using the body as a metaphor expresses life and afterlife and demonstrates that like language the original and the translation are fragments of a much larger whole.

Shades of Embodiment express this revealed relationship through the casting of the human body. By referring to the shared connection of every language and how they converge. As Benjamin states, 'Languages are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to express.'³¹ For Benjamin the goal of a translation is not to strive for ultimate likeness to the original, but rather for it to be changed, to have an added intention to it, allowing a supplement to the original that in turn through its nature speaks its own intention.³²

To translate a body through the casting process is to recall matter in materiality and evoke the materiality inherent in matter. It is a circular action directly alluding to physical and spiritual containment, body and mind, matter and spirit. It is both a

²⁸ Walter Benjamin, 'The task of the translator' in *Illuminations*, trans, Harry Zohn, New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1968 p 71

²⁹ Benjamin, p 71

³⁰ Benjamin, p 72

³¹ Benjamin, p 72

³² Benjamin, 'The task of the translator' p 71

person's body, somebody and yet it is universal, everybody, and it echoes the experience of being human as the body itself carries its own form of language.

Casts resonate with time's beginnings and the memory of the past, the archaic, the first man. They underpin the truth that we come from the earth, birth into a body, and return to the earth, from the clay to the body to the clay. Clay as flesh and corporeal essence. Throughout many cultures variations on Creation myths occur. In Ancient Egypt, the creator god Ptah conceived the world in his heart and by an utterance from his tongue ordered it to rise from the primordial mud. For the Hopi people, the Great Spirit animated life into clay idols. Babylonian man was made of clay mixed with the blood of a god, and in Greek myth Prometheus made mankind out of clay and wind. In the Christian belief system God made Adam from clay, in his own image. For the Jewish faith there is the story of the golem, a man made from clay who came alive through prayer and incantation.

In *The Sacred and the Profane* Mircea Eliade explains that every myth shows how a reality came into existence through acting out myths; humans attempt to approach the gods to participate in 'being.' The supernatural is connected to the natural and nature always expresses something that transcends it. Sacredness is manifested through the mode of being.³³ In this way 'sacredness' is entwined in the body, it is physically, psychologically and metaphorically part of it. My figures attempt to address the sacred level of myth, but it is precisely this level of myth that cannot be expressed in words. In this way the work speaks for itself.

The English artist Antony Gormley's sculptural work *Field* (1991) is a contemporary take on the creation myth of man from clay. These clay figures are made by many different hands, and vary in height and look, as a reflection of the making process. As a sea of independent characters, these rows of figures are placed on the floor, one next to the other becoming a visual 'field,' with holes for eyes that look toward and beyond the viewer. *Field* returns the viewer's gaze and awareness that the viewer is essential, but at the same time, only one of many. This public artwork has been recreated in several countries around the world, where communities have shaped their own 'field' of people. For Gormley this work accommodates 'the spirit of the ancestors; the primal population made of the earth, where mud takes on the

³³ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p 30

attributes of the sentence and the evocation of the unborn, those who are yet to come.³⁴

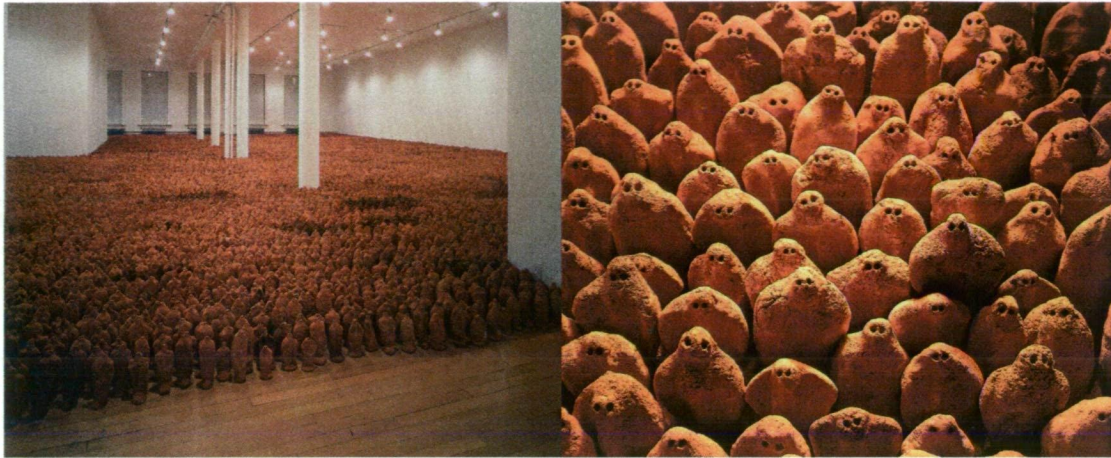


Fig 2, 3: Antony Gormley, *Field*, 1991, and (detail) clay, dimensions variable,

Collecting Death

In past times, the object's state wasn't important; it was the principle act of taking, categorising, recording, collecting, owning, and preserving these objects from the 'other' culture. Any culture that was different from the British Empire was seen not only as inferior, but deemed not worthy to look after its own welfare. 'Culture' was their traditional way of life, functional or sacred objects and the right to bring up children or even to stay alive. The treatment of the Aborigines in Australia is testament to this policy. The Empire believed it was doing indigenous cultures a favour by saving them from themselves, as they placed no worth and no respect for substance and all that was physical. The West continues to develop an ongoing fetish for material beliefs, often mistaking objects for essence. This mindset has not changed. The exotic is still hoarded. In these more politically correct times, museums are now repatriating objects in their collections to traditional owners and involving them as advisors to undertake the action most appropriate for these objects. There is now an active policy to work with indigenous groups as much as possible and to seek and explore common histories.

³⁴ Antony Gormley cited by John Hutchison 'Return (the turning point)' in *Antony Gormley*, London: Phaidon Press, 2nd edn, 2000, p 94

In contemporary western society private collection of the exotic is a cash transaction. If authentic African sculpture is the thing then dreams can come true for dollars, plus delivery. For cash the consumer receives the artefact as attribute, a physical declaration of acquisition and personal display, a trophy prestigious and distinct, 'belonging' to them and defining their unique personality from other groups or individuals. It defines the buyer and not the culture it came from and is in line with the western idea of ownership and identity which projects 'I am what I have,' affirming the endless need to consume. For collectors, aged objects are seen as authentic and meaningful and are given weight because they have stood the test of time. Their materiality is validated and sold as an ideal.

My research has become an investigation into 'otherness' and has lead to a murky area in the self, drawing me to particular objects that are related to death and dying. Personal interest in religious objects stems from a fascination with the belief systems behind them, what their makers believed. Widows' caps from Indigenous Australia and Malagan masks from Papua New Guinea are both used in rituals to do with death and dying. A Malagan mask is a helmet type mask that is made from wood embellished with shell, pigments, plant roots, cane and cordage and red fabric. Large ears protrude in arcs away from the face. Originally it would have been worn during a ritual to destroy memorial possessions of the dead. Through this action, the power of the dead over the living would be removed. The ritual assists souls of the dead to pass into the spirit world and through the action of the mask, the tribesmen translate into spirits. This mask is made to look frightening, and stirs the imagination, taking the viewers to unknown territory, the underbelly of their own psyche.

Tellingly, once the mask is taken out of its cultural context, regardless of how it is acquired, it both freezes and concentrates the culture. The original ritual and its deeper meaning are lost and becomes part of the continuum of our society. It is removed from its own, separated and loses its place in the process of culture from which it is drawn. These objects don't disappear, and they neither symbolise nor encapsulate a way of life. Removing an object from its world removes it from that space and that time. Placing the object in another culture situates it as a time memorial, but time does not stop. The traditions and customs of the society from

where the object came continues to change and move on, just as the society that the object is now placed into, goes on, changing and continuing.

In the Pitt Rivers collection there are plenty of shards and pieces that belong nowhere, homeless objects curiously unlabelled and unknown, living mysteries. The vast array of objects collected across the globe from many different cultures hint at what an object may mean. Magic is associated with 'other worlds' and is part of society all over the world. Humans see the natural world through cultural ideas arriving at meanings by using properties of nature, by taking parts of plants and animals, their idea of 'essence.' It is a shared or universal response.

In *The Predicament of Culture*, James Clifford discusses James Fenton's Poem 'The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford' which encourages the approaching of these things more personally instead of hoarding objects as culture and art. He poignantly suggests that maybe we could restore to them their original status as 'fetishes,' not examples of a foreign 'other' but of our own fetishes.³⁵ By returning authority to the object this action would primarily seize us as well as educate or be a sample of knowledge. The fact that some objects are so hard to classify is perhaps a reflection of our dark side, our unconscious, and the parts which to us as humankind are uncontrollable, unfathomable and beyond grasp.³⁶ These things are an opportunity for us to acknowledge that we do not control and possess our world. There is always the unknown both within us and without us, the 'push me pull you' of the universe. These objects become 'sacred' because they are not merely physical, they contain a sense of presence. A feeling, that begins to mirror our own consciousness. 'The sculptor of Alaska and British Columbia is not only the sorcerer who confers upon the super natural a visible form but also the creator, the interpreter who translates into eternal 'chefs d'oeuvre' the fugitive emotions of man.'³⁷ To somehow contain an essence in an inanimate object, a thing that is not living and breathing, is irrational, and yet if you stroll into nearly any museum there is such an object. Generally children perceive these objects straight away and declare them 'spooky.' Perhaps

³⁵ James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1988, p 222

³⁶ Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, p 222

³⁷ Levi Strauss cited by Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, p 242

what they perceive is that it embodies an energy outside of them, which seemingly is contained in the object. It is a separate alien, other.

The Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston, Tasmania, displays a range of indigenous artefacts from the Pacific region. *Pacific Encounters* range from practical to ritual and religious based objects. No provision is made for the objects, associated with rituals or religious beliefs; their sacred associations remain obscure as they are ordered through aesthetic value. It is a display of the tangible aspect of their making. The people who brought the objects back to Tasmania as souvenirs have been used to define the system of display through their collecting. These objects are a summary of the collectors' life experiences. Each case contains part of a donation. These personal collections can vary, some contain a range of cultural groups, others may represent one culture. The donor's aesthetic represents the donor, not the culture from which the object was derived.

As an observer of these objects, their power is not entirely lost in translation but seems to remain inherently intact in the fibres themselves. In the context of the museum, and its system of classifying objects, primary meaning can be forgotten. Instead, the object's aesthetic is given precedence, as the visual is easier to classify. It is extraordinary that these objects still have the quiet power to hold us, given that their spiritual contexts may not be understood by their keepers and often remain unacknowledged.

In *On Longing, Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic the Souvenir and the Collection*, Susan Stewart establishes that the function of a souvenir is to conjure up the past and bring it into the present. Comparatively within the framework of the collection, the past becomes an operation to validate the role of the collection. Contained by the collection, order rules beyond time and every object within that system becomes equal, losing its own history. In this way time coexists all at once. Classification within the collection grows over history and its primary role becomes aesthetic.

Lynn Gumpert, in *Christian Boltanski: Lessons in Darkness* describes the artist Christian Boltanski visiting the Louvre and coming to the realisation that the museum carries out dual functions; displaying art and presenting people's things, personal

objects of ordinary people who have died. 'When the objects are removed from daily life from their environment and meticulously displayed as if they were treasures they take on new meaning.'³⁸ These objects become transformed as a group memorial and represent many people. Evidence of the individual may remain but only vaguely, the individual becomes lost in the collective. Gumpert argues that for Boltanski the objects in a museum are dead, the museum becomes a place of death, preserving memories of things. Boltanski views this act of keeping as an attempt 'to gain time on our eventual deaths.'³⁹ The concept of the museum as a house of death sits well, given that the owners of the objects are long gone. The objects themselves, whether on display or in storage, also mirror the action of death, in that they are no longer used: they sit in their own glass coffins, sealed from life. The more preserved the objects become the less life they present.

Memory of surface, the outer appearance, resides and is enmeshed on every thing, all of matter. At The Pitt Rivers Museum, current museum strategy states that,

The artefacts themselves and the conditions in which they are kept have to be constantly monitored to ensure that light, temperature and humidity are controlled and that some insect population is not making a hearty meal of any of the collections. This is a constant battle, given the size of the problem, and skilled conservation is a vital component in the preservation of the collections for future generations.⁴⁰

Nothing is allowed to gather dust, deteriorate, change or decompose. The museum's position on objects is a mirror of our beliefs as a society; as a public institution its function is in a broad sense to protect, preserve and conserve threatened cultural practices. The museum upholds a separate set of values to other institutions or businesses within a community and is mainly seen as a superior custodian of culture. By denying nature and its cycles the museum endorses the western belief system. Museums attempt to preserve (an example or) examples of cultural artefacts as markers in time. The history of colonisation has left museums full of mysterious objects. My work would not be possible without these silent witnesses. In institutions

³⁸ Gumpert, *Christian Boltanski*, p 56

³⁹ Christian Boltanski cited by Gumpert, *Christian Boltanski*, p 53

⁴⁰ Julia Cousins, *The Pitt Rivers Museum, a souvenir guide to the collections*. Oxford, Pitt Rivers Museum, 1993, p 26

the focus remains on preservation, temperature control, keeping nice and renewing everything. The environment is seen as the enemy by providing an endless task to keep things in mint condition. In a sense my work opposes the museum's stand in that the body form's surfaces are intended to break away, and disintegrate in various ways.

An example in the museum context is generally an object, which is a model, a type, an ideal, and a representation of a particular culture. Just as museums frame examples of culture by displaying one object to represent a culture, each of the figures in my project is taken from the same mould and repeats the museum's example. These figures are all the same, and yet different from each other. Just as cultures are. My works are examples of someone, a representation, a translation that assumes to speak for all, an echo of the museum's function.

In *Hunters and Collectors* Tom Griffiths analyses the growing interest in history, in the 19th century where two distinct branches, evolutionary theory and the idea of progress, start to integrate. Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory became manipulated as a pawn to add more fuel to the fire in a frenzy to discover the new world. The dominance of Indigenous Peoples was seen by some as a logical process towards civilisation and labelled 'Social Darwinism':

The two dominant concepts of history in the nineteenth century were evolutionary theory and the idea of progress. They should have been in tension with one another. One eliminated purpose from nature, the other asserted a reassuring and predictable continuity. But, although they were formally contradictory, they came to be seen as synonymous.⁴¹

Griffiths expands that this 'ethic of conquest'⁴² rationalizes the hunting or control over indigenous peoples as progress. Cultures were collected like other threatened species. In the second half of the 19th century museums were quickly established across all corners of the Empire, as it was believed that many indigenous nations would disappear, and with them their culture. It was seen as an imperative to collect

⁴¹ Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p 10

⁴² Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors*, p 10

and record as much as possible. The main focus was on ideas of science and narratives, which analysed and systemised the beginning and development of 'man' and nature.

All the treasure of this historical hoard is still in our hands. These bits and pieces are fragments of lives that are past and gone. Still existing as relics, they bear witness to past events. The method used to gain possession of these artefacts, and most damning of all, human remains from all those years ago, now sit uncomfortably and remind us in the 21st century of less worthy times and ways. For nineteenth century Europeans hunting and collecting was a respected upper class pursuit. Great for gaining trophies and seeking knowledge. Evidence of these past actions remains today in cases, displayed for all to see.

Stewart describes how souvenirs of death hunt and haunt out the transformation of essence into substance, in parallel to the general role of a souvenir that transforms substance into essence. Most disturbing of all a souvenir of death denies the link of a person to their life and to their past. The souvenir finalises the removal of meaning from history:

Because they are souvenirs of death, the relic, the hunting trophy, and the scalp are at the same time the most intensely potential souvenirs and the most potent anti-souvenirs.⁴³ The action of a souvenir of death is the grizzly and dark conquest of the body and speaks of 'the end of sacred narrative and the interjection of a curse.'⁴⁴

⁴³ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic the Souvenir, the Collection*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 3rd edn 1994, p 140

⁴⁴ Stewart, *On Longing*, p 140

2. BELIEF / MYTH / SACREDNESS

Beliefs

Embodied through ritual or religious ceremonies, some objects become 'sacred' to their makers. No two cultures are the same in terms of practices and beliefs but there are areas of overlap. People the world over believe in life after death, in the survival of the conscious after the body has ceased to be. Individuals in all cultures consider that some part of them exists somewhere but the concept of afterlife existence varies from each culture.

In the West there is a superficial belief in material values that are 'skin deep.' Our material beliefs reflect on our bodies through constant pressure to maintain ourselves, and media offers the public wholesome bite-sized pieces of denial through television 'lifestyle' programs. 'Extreme Makeover'⁴⁵ focuses on the surface and form of a person's body and aims to drastically change identity through plastic surgery. The process shows the lucky person in their underwear and the viewer is taken through the plan of what will happen to the chosen one. The path to completeness may include breast reduction or enhancement, a face-lift, nose work, lipo-suction and various tucks. Three months of recovery is reduced to fifteen minutes and the show is wrapped up with before and after shots of the subject, to emphasise the metamorphosis. The message is clear. Fight illness, age and wrinkles, and instead chase eternal youth and beauty and deny the body's internal and external, physical and surface memories. In the West all vision leads to outside the self, there is no room for inward reflection as a foundation to comprehend the world.

Like the West, indigenous cultures also have a unique perception of material value but theirs is not a surface approach, rather it is one that is more holistic, a belief system that is based on the abstract as well as the concrete. The intangible as well as the tangible. To western eyes this (im)material culture conveys a sense of privilege at being part of something much greater than themselves. Although physical things are made, used, traded and have specific functions in religious rites and rituals, they are not essential, they are tools that evoke and reinforce beliefs. Objects do not hold the highest significance within the culture; every thing can be replaced, or re-made; because the object's value is not based purely on its

⁴⁵ American ABC aired on WIN television Australia, between January and June 2004

physicality. It is based on its ephemeral quality or its symbolism. At the Ching Ming, (Clear Brightness) festival in Sydney, families originating from the same village in China, meet annually to pay respect to their dead. 'Non-food offerings, such as joss paper and sticks are sent to the spirit world via burning. Paper effigies of essential goods such as clothing, shoes and money are also burnt.⁴⁶ This role within a ritual allows the spirits who have 'passed over,' to receive supplies in the next life. The value is inherent in the gesture and is bound to the ritual and processes of making itself.

My work reflects this value; it is only through making an object that ideas are truly manifested. The essence of expression is found in the substance of the material itself. Materials reveal their nature, through a process of negotiating, through grappling, the material reacts: the nature of materials is such that they can often 'steer' the creative process in ways that are not apparent until the process is entered into. Often the path becomes clear through an instinctual, non-doctrinal way, the subliminal, the subconscious, and the shadowy presence of something unknowable within the known. The paradox and splendour of making is that it can only exist here in the real world; it is the actual fabric of this existence.



Fig 4: *Matter*, (detail) 2002.
Papier-mâché 176 x 74 x 28 cm

⁴⁶ *Death*, 2003

My beliefs seek a grounded understanding of both the unity and the diversity of humankind. An exploration of the oneness of the human situation and of the numerous and dramatically various forms it takes, from general to specific, which becomes interpretive. In some cultures the dead are believed to be able to have power over the living, appearing as ghosts. People feel a referred responsibility towards their dead, to do as they would have wished; this is out of a sense of love and respect but it is also out of fear, that if the spirit of the person is not happy then they may return to haunt us. As irrational as this seems it remains part of our psyche.

People continue to relate to their dead in numerous ways, through speaking, prayers, letters and offerings. In the West some people identify as being atheists but pay to greet their dead in newspapers. In *Ritual and Remembrance*, John Davies points out that by taking this action in the public space of the newspaper they advertise to their dead, as well as telling the living what they are doing. They are in fact speaking to the dead in the face of the living.⁴⁷ The notices are short; and desire something other than mere day-to-day conversation. They express and advertise the particular virtues of the dead; and insist, 'never forgotten' 'always on our minds' 'loved and remembered every day.'

The action asserts that in fact the dead are not dead at all, frequently acknowledging the relationship to which the remembered person is (not was) connected. Essentially these notices in the paper are conversations with the dead.⁴⁸ Poignantly 'deaths' are placed next to 'births' which leaves an inkling of some extraordinary realm, or porthole where people come in and go out or vice versa. In approaching this point of transformation, this rite of passage in either direction whether coming, through birth or going, through death requires a submission, a fragile state of dependence reflected in babies and often in the aged. The memory of the dead lives on. Those who don't believe in church will still visit their dead in the cemetery, taking flowers, tending the grave, spending time, telling news, evoking the dead person and refining their memory. In the West, the loved ones are particularly remembered on special dates, anniversaries, or birthdays.

⁴⁷ John Davies, ed. *Ritual and Remembrance, Responses to Death in Human Societies*, Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1994, p 24

⁴⁸ Davies, *Ritual and Remembrance*, p 24

In Mexico, the first and second of November are celebrated as the 'Days of the Dead.' The first day is for the spirits of children and the second day is for older spirits. In this two-day festival, the dead are believed to return to the earth and spend time with their loved ones. Day to day life is abandoned and instead time is taken to prepare for celebration. Markets sell colourful paper cutouts, bread for the dead and candy skulls. An altar in the home is made with offerings for the spirits.⁴⁹ These include symbols of dirt which represents the earth where life is, ash signifies death, water is provided to quench the thirst after the spirits' long journey, and their favourite food is prepared for the year-long hunger. By leaving yellow marigold flowers the souls are able to return to the earth by following the scent. Graves are also scrubbed and decorated with candles, which symbolise the light inside a spirit, and also with flowers and food.⁵⁰

Certain cultures believe that the spirit of the dead can be reincarnated into a new body, human or animal. Others believe in an afterlife existence in another place, a land of the dead. There also remains a belief in eventual physical resurrection of the flesh-and-blood molecules of the body. If we are willing to be honest, most people hold a combination of these views. People might believe that grandma rests where her ashes are scattered, but her soul is somewhere else. Some believe that it is possible for a ghost to haunt a place, a space, a person or even an object.

The earliest archaeological evidence for the deliberate disposal of the dead is at Qazfeh in Israel, one hundred and fifteen thousand years ago where people of the Neanderthal epoch buried their dead in caves.⁵¹ Burials with simple grave goods indicate that Neanderthal man was conscious of death and life. Throughout prehistory humans disposed of the bodies of their loved ones by a variety of means; cremation and exposure of the body to elements or even preservation. This reflected a diversity of attitudes and beliefs about death and what it means to die and is also a practical way of dealing with the body. While there is evidence that some animals are aware of death and even mourn their dead, humans are the only species who commemorate the event. This could be the act of simply placing the body in a grave

⁴⁹ *Death*, 2003

⁵⁰ *Death*, 2003

⁵¹ *Death*, 2003

or by the elaborate rituals associated with honouring the dead that can last several years. Western society is turning full circle and returning to rituals of the past. Cremation has become popular and in Australia just over half the people who died in the last twelve months were cremated.⁵² Ashes are now scattered in favourite spots, instead of sacred sites.

An example of a belief that overlaps some cultures is the concept of the *ex voto* in etymology, it is 'out of a vow' from Latin, meaning the object is an offering made in the pursuance or in the process of carrying out a vow. Its common use is found in physical representations, which are placed at shrines. These symbolic body parts are expression of faith. The body part is sacrificially symbolic of the part that needed healing. If a leg was infected, an *ex voto* leg was promised to the deity, in order to appease, so that healing could begin. Given as thanks and for sacrifice these parts would be left at shrines. Ancient Roman terracotta *ex voto* body parts are currently housed in The Pitt Rivers alongside silver *ex voto* offerings of body parts found in Jerusalem. In contemporary Mexico an *ex voto* may be both a drawing and a note.

In India they are silver low relief images of body parts. An account of *ex voto* body parts by Hira Singh, a lecturer from the Department of Sociology at the University of India, Delhi described a shrine in Velankanmi, which was dedicated to the mother of God. She was believed to have saved the lives of many men.

If one visits the place one can see different parts of the human body; eyes tongues, hands, legs nose ears, hearts and lungs, all have been offered. After spending time at the shrine one feels the simple and deep faith of the thousands of people who express it through these magic forms. There is also the helplessness of man left to himself.⁵³

The origin of this shrine is related to a legend of a merchant caught up in a storm. Fearing death, the crew made a promise to the deity that if they were granted safety, they would build a shrine in her honour. This is how the shrine is believed to have come into being.

⁵² *Death*, 2003

⁵³ Hira Singh, Pitt Rivers Museum, internal catalogue (computer based) viewed may 2003

In Australia there is a rich divergence of cultural sources. The country is home to many post-war migrants and various multi-cultural influences as well as the highly spiritual nature of the many Aboriginal cultures. In the exhibition, *Death, the Last Taboo* at the Australian Museum in Sydney, the act of mourning is portrayed as playing an important role in the healing of a community, after a death. In many cultures, stringent procedures are in place for mourning, and it's also the case in some Australian Indigenous communities. Objects associated with mourning are poignant, like the widows' caps, a cast of clay joined to the top of the head that was worn after a death.⁵⁴ Types of widows' caps varied from region to region and were known by different names as korno, mulya, mung-warro, pa-ta and yu-garda. Traditionally hair was cut; a net was put over the head and clay applied in layers. These caps could weigh between two and seven kilograms and were worn through the mourning period, which could be from five days up to six months, depending on the belief system of the particular Aboriginal nation. It is believed that additional layers of clay were added to display pronounced grief.⁵⁵

Of the two caps sighted at the Australian Museum in Sydney, one had hairs from the griever's head embedded in the clay and the other the imprint of a net, the surface and texture reinforcing the idea that a cast is a second skin. The constant weight on the head and the pain of removing the cap is thought to manifest and acknowledge the loss and grief of a loved one in a physical way. It is a ritual, which echoes a journey of loss, transformation and emergence. In this way, the physical cast comes to represent the cyclical act of life and death. There is a hint of irony in the knowledge that if these things had not been collected we would not know the widows' caps existed.

Ancient Egyptians' belief systems were based on the worship of Pharaohs who were all thought to be incarnations of the sun God, Ra. In Ancient Egypt, belief in the after-life led to the practice of mummification as an essential practice. Bodies had to be preserved, as it was believed that the 'ka' or spirit double would return to the body at a later date. If the body was not preserved the spirit could not be realigned for the continuance of the 'ka' in the afterlife. When Egyptians were entombed, they

⁵⁴ *Death*, 2003

⁵⁵ *Death*, 2003

were buried with many of their worldly goods to take to the after-life. Egyptian beliefs were based on the immortality of the soul, a reawakening of life after death.

The Egyptians built each of their pharaohs a tomb, so that the pharaoh's journey to the next life was the best possible. In the Ashmolean Museum, mummies from ancient Egypt were displayed along with the Shrine of Taharqa. Taharqa was the third of the line of Kushite kings whose power extended to the whole of Egypt, and who ruled as the pharaohs of the 25th Dynasty (712-657 B.C)⁵⁶

This shrine when closely examined still contains a sense of presence. The blocks of light coloured sandstone are carved with figures in low relief and have been fragmented and worn away with time. These images are similar to the contemporary media shots of leaders shaking hands. Only these images show the king with various gods. In turn the gods share their favour with the king, stating 'all life and power.'⁵⁷

The Christian faith is interesting in that although it became a western religion, at its heart it remains founded on eastern philosophical beliefs. In "World Faiths", S.A. Nigosian explains that of the many ancient civilisations that once dominated history, only Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamian, Greek and Roman civilisations left detailed records of their beliefs and rituals. An example of this is the Egyptian Book of the Dead, a vast collection of texts, which span five thousand years of Egyptian history, a key myth from the texts tells the story of the God, Osiris. Born to the earth god Geb and the sky goddess Nut, Osiris was to be king, but was murdered by his evil brother, Seth and his body was scattered over the land. Osiris's remains were collected and reunited by his sister Isis. Osiris was brought back to life and became the god and ruler of the Egyptian underworld. Here, in essence, is the concept of resurrection.

In the Catholic Church scriptures state that resurrection follows death. Christ was born again and rose to save all souls. In the metaphorical act of Jesus giving his body and blood to the people through bread and wine, lies the recognition that people needed something physical as a way of maintaining their belief; to make concrete something mystical. A ritual to embellish and reconfirm their faith.

⁵⁶ Ashmolean Museum, *The Shrine of Taharqa*, pamphlet, The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

⁵⁷ *The Shrine of Taharqa*

Somehow the 'essence' contained in that loaf of bread has become stale, and in the twenty-first century many people have become unconvinced, and do not believe; it is after all, only a wafer. Western logic and science tells us so. There is no love here. The ritual remains but is somehow hollow, as people seem to hold faith in the authority of science, a corpus of knowledge that details its aims, methods and outcomes in the proven with cold detached clarity.

The still living faith, of 'Zoroastrianism' and civilisations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Greek and Romans, left a legacy of established beliefs and rituals. Nigosian explains that the framework for many basic beliefs is found in Jewish, Christian and Islamic thought. These basic concepts include Animism, where every object, like every human being, is believed to contain an individual soul, or spirit. Polytheism, the belief that mystical beings with human characteristics rule different aspects of the natural world;⁵⁸ Henotheism, the concept of worshipping a single God, without denying the existence of other gods and Monotheism, the belief of only one God. Dualism has also been heavily borrowed by the western faiths and is the concept that two cosmic principles, generally characterised as good and evil, or spirit and matter, are in constant conflict.⁵⁹

Appropriated and incorporated from Zoroastrian concepts, we find the beliefs of God and Satan, Angels and Demons, Heaven and Hell, the Resurrection of the Body, and everlasting Life. Also borrowed was the idea of being judged at the time of death and the arrival of the Messiah. And yet other beliefs taken for use include the cosmic events during the end of the world and also the Armageddon battle followed by a millennium period. Zoroastrian ideas on all these topics contributed to shape current thought in western faiths.⁶⁰

In the Australian Museum's exhibition, *Death, the Last Taboo*, there were ritual objects, carved from human bones. These Buddhist relics were beautiful but weighed with the knowledge that they were essentially human, once parts of a person's body. In the Buddhist faith, human life is accepted as a transitory state, an extended moment of transition. This concept is revealed through using the remains of the

⁵⁸ S.A. Nigosian, *World Faiths*, Basingstoke, Macmillan Press, 1994, p 292

⁵⁹ Nigosian, *World Faiths*, p 292

⁶⁰ Nigosian, *World Faiths*, p 297

body in this way. Made from the skulls of the dead were some ceremonial drinking bowls, as well as a large set of Buddhist prayer beads carved from bones. Buddhist teachings state that death and rebirth do not only occur on a physical level, rather they happen in every moment of life. Choices and decisions lead to good or bad karma. When death does occur the spirit goes through several states of transition between death and re-birth. These are 'bardos.'

In *Books of the Dead: Manuals for Living & Dying*, Stanislav Grof explains that consciousness is believed to be possible in utero, in dreams, through deep meditation, and at the moment of death and after death, through visions that take place while the soul seeks rebirth.⁶¹ Grof cites the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, where the moment of death is felt as sensations in the body, as numbing, heaviness, or pressure. This is 'earth sinking into water.' Feelings are scrambled, and focus is towards strong emotion, like people loved or hated by the dying person. Sensations of cold are replaced with heat, called 'water sinking into fire.' Then all emotions are believed to leave suddenly, described as a sensation of being blown into atoms. This is 'fire sinking into air' that creates space and a state of openness.⁶² At the moment of death, Buddhists believe that the whole of existence emerges into an abstract form. All dualities like dark and light are whole. This is seen to symbolise the spirit's unending consciousness. At this transition, the spirit may be released from the wheel of life and transcend to a state of non-being. Equally, if the translation is missed, then the spirit eventually returns to rebirth. Buddhism, like all belief systems or faiths is founded on legends and myths. These work as tools to help people interpret their own life situations and assist them to make their own choices.

Myth

In most societies, there is only a broad understanding of what is implied by the concept of myth. The simplest way to describe a myth is through its action. A myth is a story, which is shared by a group of people who find significant meaning in it. It is a story that is made long ago about an event in the past or even in the future. It carries meaning because it is remembered and is part of a network of stories. When a myth is retold as something that has happened, we begin to imagine it, to see it

⁶¹ Stanislav Grof, *Books of the Dead: Manuals for Living & Dying*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1994 p 13

⁶² Stanislav Grof, *Books of the Dead* p 13

happening. In this way it opens awareness, and in the process becomes to a degree more believable.

Myths are generally sacred stories, which mean that they are tied up with beliefs, with meanings. A myth seeks to explain the big questions; the creation of the world, life after death, and human nature. In *Other Peoples' Myths, the cave of echoes*, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty explains that myths are remembered because while they are not literally true, they hold an essence of truth. Myth reveals meaning. Myths survive because their meaning is still relevant in the present and they are essential in our own understanding of ourselves. In this way a myth is never merely told but rather interpreted in every telling. In myth, there is always a trace of eternal form, the archetype.⁶³ As Doniger O'Flaherty sees it, Carl Jung defined the archetype as shared by all human beings, which manifests itself in each particular culture. An archetype does not have inbuilt meaning but finds meaning, in other words, an archetype is an empty sign until it is given the flesh of cultural context. Without flesh it remains plainly narrative. Moulds used in my work are examples of archetypes, by operating as the framework for communicating meaning. Like archetypes, myths do not have meanings, rather they provide contexts for meaning to take place. In this way they do not explain themselves but symbolise themselves.⁶⁴

In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes speaks of myths as the everyday, the here and now occurring in the ordinary.⁶⁵ They happen to everyone, through rites of passage but also in the everyday, good things like jumping from a plane, or dancing in the rain, or through sorrow, the betrayal of a friend, or bad news. All these moments are full of ghosts that we can't identify consciously, but whose multiplicity we are aware of; we know that what has happened to us, has happened before to others, because we know stories. This is what a myth is, the stories that people have come to share, their dark insights. Great myths have the power to portray a human experience in which we are compelled to see ourselves, even across the barriers of culture.⁶⁶

⁶³ Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, *Other Peoples' Myths: the cave of echoes*, Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 1988 p 34

⁶⁴ Doniger O'Flaherty, *Other Peoples' Myths*, p 35

⁶⁵ Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today,' in *Mythologies* trans. J, Cape, ninth edn, London, Paladin, 1973 p120

⁶⁶ Doniger O'Flaherty, *Other Peoples' Myths*, p 162

Barthes explains that myth has a double function; it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes this double function on us. The signifier of myth is ambiguous; it is simultaneously meaning and form, full on one side and empty on the other. As meaning, myth has a sensory reality; it loses its history and its value, only to call it back again. This oscillation between meaning and form reveals myth.⁶⁷ Myths are in themselves translations, which are reinterpreted again and again and are successful through the use of a universal, archetypal meaning, beneath the expressional meaning. To understand myths we must return them to our own personal reality, as our own nature intersects with the myths preserved by culture. This provides a way of translating myths and essentially a means of translating reality, establishing a link to understand other people. As Doniger O'Flaherty points out, myth is in this way equally solitary and communal. It is solitary in that the events that myths share are private and still communal in that they are experienced by all of us.⁶⁸ Myths provide a conceptual system through which we may understand and thereby construct a universal reality. A thread of interconnection weaves between all great myths through the shared common experience of human kind. But the meaning of the experience and therefore the meaning of the myth changes constantly in time and space.⁶⁹ Myth, like life, is fleeting. To be born is to have a chance at death.

Sacredness

'He was born, at the moment of delivery, in the blood and slime that accompany all mankind into the world.'⁷⁰ This rite of passage describes a sense of the sacred, as birth is, holy and unclean. In *Formless: A User's Guide* by Yves-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, they examine Georges Bataille's philosophy and ideas. For Bataille, the sacred was 'wholly other', in other words a foreign body. Anything that comes from this foreign other, is sacred. Faeces, blood saliva and urine, semen as well as the nice, pleasant and celebrated. These come from the body, so raw material in any mode is a fact of the senses. Materialism divides in two. There is high materialism, (the form) which is life, and base materialism, (the formless) which is death⁷¹ Between the form and the formless there is what Bataille named the 'informe,' the

⁶⁷ Barthes, *Mythologies*, p 120

⁶⁸ Doniger O'Flaherty, *Other Peoples' Myths*, p 162

⁶⁹ Doniger O'Flaherty, *Other Peoples' Myths*, p 163

⁷⁰ Sandor Marai, *Embers*, trans, Carol Brown Janeway, Penguin Books, London, 1991, p 34

⁷¹ Yve- Alain Bois & Rosalind E Krauss, *Formless: A users guide*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1996 p 39

formless or as yet unformed which transgresses all boundaries and blurs distinctions between categories: human and vegetable, heroic and vulgar. This forbidden territory is both dangerous and erotic, and depends on the mingling of the monstrous and the exciting.⁷² All taboos, the forbidden and condemned are 'Base Materialism' in the formless. It is a double use of everything; an acknowledgement that just as every form has a positive action it also carries a negative: 'There are two uses for the mouth, speaking a noble one, is opposed to spitting, vomiting or screaming.'⁷³

The concept of the sacred being both repulsive and attractive is reinforced in *The Sacred and the Profane*, by Mircea Eliade, who communicates a complex theory of universal religious symbolism and describes that 'sacredness' is related to inhabiting territory, sites of worship, the house, and most poignantly the body itself. For Eliade, these sites are all complete universes and keep an opening.⁷⁴ The meaning or symbolism of the opening is as a threshold, to mark the passage from one mode of being to another. Examples of these openings in the body are the orifices of the mouth and the anus.

Where does anyone start, but in their own body? The body is the centre of consciousness, the core of where we begin as individuals; our skin is the border of where we end, and where other people begin. People have always built things using their hands and these act as a point of translation with the outside world moving outwards from the centre, the body. Baskets, bowls, and containers are all vessels, designed to function, to carry or hold food, liquid, babies or even the ashes of a body. In this way, containers contain. They can hold secrets and are metaphors for repeating ourselves. The body is the container of spirit, the essence.

Antony Gormley, the English sculptor is renowned for his figurative works, made by casting directly from his own body. Gormley addresses the idea that humans contain deep space,⁷⁵ but are also contained by it. In this way the body is the vessel for

⁷² Rosalind Krauss, cited by Mary Ann Caws in *Dora Maar with & without Picasso, a biography*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2000, p 79

⁷³ Bois & Krauss, *Formless: A users guide*, p 39

⁷⁴ Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, p 30

⁷⁵ Antony Gormley cited by John Hutchinson, 'Return: the turning point' in *Antony Gormley*. London, Phaidon Press, 1995, p 32

containment and speaks of both psychological and spiritual space within the self and the outer physical space of gravity. For Gormley, gravity is the thing that holds us to the earth. The skin is the border between these two worlds of the inner and outer. Gormley's figures reflect stillness, which allude to a pure form of containment, an eternal essence.⁷⁶ Gormley's truth is in his practice, in that he personally experiences 'being' in the casts themselves, as they are realised. In this way both he and the cast are becoming new at the same time. It could be said that every cast is a form of rebirth for the artist.

In the *Australian Concise Dictionary* conscious and consciousness is defined as alert and awake, aware of one's surroundings, one's own motivations, and thoughts. From my perspective it is more about awareness of existence; of self, an essence, nature, or spirit. Consciousness is a journey through mortality. A mish-mash of perception, experience, and attachment, through the body, and in the world. It is only through correspondences, where these things meet, that we are able to question existence. The states of consciousness and subconsciousness leave us a clue. To possess these states is to think and have thoughts, and it is through thinking, that the self is aware, in the sense that one is conscious, of both being in a body and being part of the wider world.

Being human is our attachment, and through perception of objects, by developing and sustaining relationships with objects; we are able to find meaning as a culture. There is a concept that objects can carry psychic energy when worn, held or used long enough, over time form a relationship between themselves and the body. The objects somehow become part of the self, through repeated contact with the body: 'The artefacts of our cultural heritage are like the consonants of a language, bare bones of meaning which depend literally upon the inspiration of our voices to receive their full expression and their sense.'⁷⁷ It is difficult to separate the closely personal and the common place. Neither of these may be simply or totally isolated from the other. As people, we are all deeply connected, and it is this connectedness that can help communicate ideas of shared experience, through the use of the senses and the body.

⁷⁶ Hutchinson, 'Return' 1995, p 32

⁷⁷ Greg Hilty, cited in Marianne Ryan, ed, *Double Take: Collective Memory & Current Art*, London, South Bank Centre & Parkett, 1992, p 18

In *Art and Illusion*, E H Gombrich explains that within a western cultural tradition we see what we want to see; we make assumptions about what we perceive; we react and stereotype what we perceive based on expectations, beliefs and experience. We learn to recognize through a process of refining. We register relationships between objects as well as individual elements.⁷⁸ So our perception is unique, in the sense that each one of us sees the world from a perspective slightly altered from everyone else's, we are individuals with unique cultural, social and personal experiences of the world, but all of us have similar bodies and the body is our feeler, our antenna of consciousness, telling us when we are uncomfortable, warm, awkward, or nervous. Information is gleaned through the precise instruments of the body. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue and hands are the intimate receptors for our senses.

For the article, 'Place, body and situation', Joseph Grange speaks of the body's main role being, 'to feel the world and to house the environment in our being'.⁷⁹ Our flesh acting as a form of receiver, feels the shape of all circumstances, and reacts through the body, suggesting that there is a dialogue between the body and the environment, a form of language. It is a thing that we forget as we recognize it. It can be a form of sub-conscious sense. According to Grange, 'Posture, orientation, feel and comprehension establish layers of meaning which, in turn, build up a sediment of perception which it is our duty to understand and not explain away'.⁸⁰

In the book, *Poetry, language and thought*, Martin Heidegger argues that through translation of old language, it is logical to trace that the idea of building is in itself to dwell.⁸¹ Dwell means both to think and to be; he argues 'We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are dwellers'.⁸² He describes the act of being, in the human sense, as a type of dwelling.⁸³ If I think of a location, from the spot I am in now, I can be there mentally, as well as here. In other words, we visualise action taking place, in order

⁷⁸ E H Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, London, Phaidon Press 1972

⁷⁹ Joseph Grange, 'Place, body and situation' in David Seamon & Robert Mugerauer eds, *Dwelling, Place & Environment*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1985 p 72

⁸⁰ Grange, *Dwelling, place & environment*, p 82

⁸¹ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, language, thought*.

trans, Albert Hofstadter, New York, Harper & Row, 1971 p 148

⁸² Heidegger, p 148

⁸³ Heidegger, p 148

for it to happen. It is through thought that movement transpires. This act of visualising thought is accepted as an ordinary and daily occurrence.

Heidegger states that there is a primal 'oneness,' a basic fourfold in the joining of all things, the earth, sky, God and humans. Because if you think of the sky automatically, you also think of the earth, God and 'mortals'.⁸⁴ In other words, humans ensure that everything is as it should be, we embrace the life/death/life cycle through living. It is in human nature to build, create, grow and explore, and by doing this, we re-invest in the nature from which we came. We are, in effect, feeding back into the cycle that is life. He argues that the action of creating a thing or building, transforms place into a location, and therefore room is made for this location through its own manifestation.⁸⁵ The quandary of living is that humans are always searching for the meaning of life, and we must continue to search. We do not realise that being human is a condition, this search for meaning is the drudgery of the human condition.

Heidegger's idea of dwelling then, speaks of how people construct intimate and tenacious relationships with their environment; everything that is both location and object. Grange argues strongly that felt from inside, we are unaware of our body, instead it is 'an open space'.⁸⁶ We don't notice our bodies as a habit, we are too busy thinking and unconsciously becoming immersed in our surroundings and deciphering impressions from everything to be uncomfortable in our own skin. The body's function is to feel and experience. In *Antony Gormley*, John Hutchinson explains that the word 'insight' is often used to translate the 'vipassana,' which is the name given to the Buddhist meditation practice that Gormley studied in India for two years. Hutchinson expands that this practice encourages unselfconscious awareness of the present moment. Ideas and sensations arise and disappear and detachment and freedom are generated.⁸⁷ 'I am much more interested in the space that the body is. What is that space that you inhabit when you close your eyes.'⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Heidegger, p 148

⁸⁵ Heidegger, p 149

⁸⁶ Grange, *Dwelling, place & environment*, p 82

⁸⁷ Hutchinson, *Return* 1995, p 34

⁸⁸ Antony Gormley cited by Declan McGonagle, in 'interview with Declan McGonagle' *Antony Gormley*, New York, Phaidon Press, 3rd edn, 2000, p 135

For Gormley, the body has a relation to the external space within which it exists, as well as to the inner space it contains. These views help demonstrate that humans are connected to the environment and it is through this unique connection that we house a form of spirituality. The body detects a sense of something being true, we have 'gut' feelings. Significance shows itself through slow stages of unravelling. A marriage of atmosphere and understanding. Grange proposes that, 'the human body as flesh is the cradle of spiritual being. All the elaborate metaphors of spirituality - nearness to God, banishment from the garden, the Pilgrim's long journey - are already engraved in our flesh which anchors our knowledge in the concretely real.'⁸⁹

The sacred and spiritual suggest transcendence of essence or soul. This is expressed across a very wide spectrum of religious allegiances and belief systems. For something to be sacred it is regarded as holy, worthy of reverence or sacrosanct; all of these words conjure up connections with religions, gods or God, the invisible, the formless. Whether it is conceived as soul, essence or an extension of the conscious mind does not matter. It is home, the body that counts. At death, the body is the thing we are left with, the proof of a person that was, the husk, the shell, the skin. It is the focus of loss.



Fig 5: *The Past Remains*, (detail) 2003. Mixed media. Dimensions variable.

⁸⁹ Grange, *Dwelling, Place & Environment*, p 72

It is 'sacred' because it is what remains of that person as a relic of memory. Although the person is deceased, their form may still be gathered into arms and held. This form, the body at the point of transformation gently carries the reality that there is no certainty, no guarantee of permanence. We are stuck with our humanity, and fragility. The human body is the most highly charged place in our experience.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ W.T.J. Mitchell, 'What Sculpture Wants: Placing Antony Gormley' in *Antony Gormley* 3rd edn, 2000 p 169

3. SURFACE AND FORM, SEEING DOUBLE

Matter

The body is not only sacred because it houses our personality, and our experience but also because of its infinite inner realm. This oh so private space gives the gift, and ability to visit a place or person by closing your eyes, and journeying there. It is also the wonder of imagination, and the unknown depths of the unconscious.

We dream in images, Freud said. When the unconscious takes over, under the cover of sleep, we 'regress'; we develop backward, retracing those paths that had led us up to the higher orders of cognitive power in the manipulation of words or symbols back down toward an earlier, preverbal world of image-objects.⁸¹

Krauss explains that dreams have images because 'language becomes spatial.'⁹² The role of the form and the formless in the unconscious, work simultaneously: there is no either/or. The unconscious courts transformation of everything in its opposite but holds both these things at once.⁹³ In other words, all forces are one at once. In my work there are mimetic, reproduced originals of body forms, the same but different: a generic type that endlessly multiplies a series of signs. These figures become meaningful through borrowing the aesthetic operation of collections, which places objects with similar forms together, and by doing so seeks to reinforce and point out both their differences and similarities.

Krauss describes how the formless pushes past meaning to become the central communication through matter and the erasure of the physical form. Its loss of familiarity is the beginning, the birth of the formless.⁹⁴ In my work, moulds are used to cast originals in various materials, which act as 'matter.' Re-presenting flesh in unexpected ways. By experiencing these body forms as worn, disintegrating or incomplete, the materials act as tissue and skin, 'switching emphasis to spirit and notions of endurance that corporeality does not possess.'⁹⁵ As figures, they act as

⁹¹ Krauss, *Formless: A users guide*, p 103

⁹² Jean-Francois Lyotard, cited by Krauss in *Formless* p 103

⁹³ Krauss, *Formless: A users guide*, p 103

⁹⁴ Krauss, *Formless: A users guide*, p 104

⁹⁵ Stuart Morgan, *Rites of Passage, Art for the end of the century*, London, Tate Gallery Publications, 1995 p 65

visual traces of the human form. In this way the figures transform meaning into materiality as well as simultaneously transforming materiality into meaning by using the binaries of temporary and permanent, routine and ritual, and ultimately life and death. This is often physically expressed in *Shades of Embodiment* through the pairing of natural to man-made materials.

The resulting surface or 'skin' of these body forms is a reflection on the idea that the surface and materials of these figures are an interface, where something begins or ends. The skin is the perceptible border of the body, marking the edge, the in-between of private and public, the psychological and the physical. It is both an internal and external physicality. A reflection of the skin's role, which while containing, enclosing and surrounding consciousness, also carries out the task of maintaining separateness from others by a sense of distance. One is in it alone. Within the process of physical death, the cells of the skin mark the final breakdown in the body, until the finish, skin remains the vessel that contains change and transformation of the body from one state to another. In these figures it is both the surface and the form, which act as matter.



Fig 6: *Shade*, (in process) 2004.

...the skin on a body or the meniscus on water are physical manifestations of Antony Gormley's actual mystery: the edge between definitions; the place where surface begins or ends...today we find a comparable fascination with surface, with the skin as an envelope of the form. The skin is the visible appearance, the surface which establishes the boundary, the defining edge, the volume within and the space without...In all (this) work is an underlying but pervasive sense of flux, of objects changing in form, shape or appearance. The skin becomes the visible manifestation of this process.⁹⁶

Juxtaposed states are also reflected concerns in my work, however in my figures the breakdown of the surface relates directly to transformation, which is evident through the skin and remains apparent through the stillness that *Shades of Embodiment* evokes. This is reinforced because the figures often remain incomplete as hollow vessels and skins. The pieces left behind. 'To leave it incomplete is to venture into the psychology of destruction; it is also to raise the imagery of the vulnerability of bodies, their intense fragility.'⁹⁷



Fig 7: *Matter II*, 2003.
mud, cotton.
60 x 26 x 22 cm

⁹⁶ Stuart Morgan, cited by John Hutchinson in, 'Return' 2000, p 124

⁹⁷ Edmund de Waal, 'Christie Brown, Fragments of Narrative' *Ceramics, Art and Perception*, 2001 issue 46, p 70

My work attempts to express the space in-between life and death, a liminal state, hence, these figures are both coming and going in a material sense. They are neither in one state nor another but somehow caught, in a glimpse, in a moment of flux. These figures remain as fragments and are on the edge of transformation. This is shown through the subtle breakdown of the surface or more directly through the body remaining incomplete. Although these works hold stillness, they do not hold a sense of being whole in the way that Antony Gormley's works do.



Fig 8: Antony Gormley, *Learning to See III*, 1991. Lead, fiberglass, air. 1910 x 500 x 320 mm.

His practice differs at many levels; his body has been used frequently to create works and Gormley's figures are always complete, with hands, head, feet and backs. Echoing encasement, his works are often sealed with thick weld lines that travel centrally over the body, horizontally and vertically. Gormley's works holds a sense of both inward and outward stillness. They express totality, and unity. Gormley says his interest in the process of being cast stems from a childhood terror of claustrophobia and the desire to control and overcome this fear. For Gormley, being cast is a

'physical and mental rite of passage,'⁹⁸ which echoes initiations where adolescents are buried and are then reborn. My work is more about expressing the rite of passage itself; the process of a liminal state, the separation where identity is ambiguous and the body is neither what it was nor what it will be.

We are located between these two points of cohesion and separation, in a space of relationships that define life and death and what Bataille named 'informe' as mentioned. Krauss explains that for Bataille, entropy in 'the formless' is death itself, an essential operation, an inevitable natural process '...the steady ruin of energy in every system, a dilapidation that leads to an increasing state of disorder and sameness within matter.'⁹⁹ This concept of the formless is found in my figures; they are unprecious, gritty and real. Glance at them, and these figures could be viewed as waste, but this is a first reading, the viewer must look to and then beyond. All matter can be reduced into simple elements that are brought together when a form comes into being and pulled apart when a form ceases to be. The figures' 'matter,' the very nature of the material is essential. Whether the material is as solid as lead or as insubstantial as dust, it can be placed in a mould and 'becomes' through the act of casting.



Fig 9: *Shade II*, 2004. Pressed tin. 96 x 67 x 27 cm

Shades of Embodiment translates an interpretation of the essence of cultural beliefs associated with death and dying through the process of making. My translation of cultural beliefs is clear in that the addition or reduction of 'matter' in the body forms

⁹⁸ Hutchinson, 'Return' 1995, p 33

⁹⁹ Krauss, *Formless: A users guide*, p 109

speaks of the liminal state. In the repeated process of layering of paper into a mould, a reflection on the day-to-day rituals practised over again may be witnessed. There is nothing to hold onto, no permanence. Another example is the process of casting the human form in metal. First a wax figure is produced, this is invested (symbolising death) in another mould, and here the body enters a liminal state. It is unseen and separate. The wax figure is burnt out in the kiln for several days, so that where the figure was, is now hollow; there is nothing but empty space. Lastly the mould is taken out of the kiln and buried in a pit of sand. Liquid metal is poured into the mould. When the metal has cooled the mould is unearthed and broken open (birth). The new body emerges in metal.



Fig 10: The new body emerges, 2004.

My work has some similarities with Ah Xing, an Australian Chinese artist, who translates culture as being embedded in the individual. He achieves this by combining traditional Chinese patterns from porcelain in his ceramic casts of people. Here our process is somewhat related in that Xing is expressing meaning through materiality and materiality through meaning. Xing's current sculptural works are casts of people he knows. Busts and full figures are made from porcelain, lacquer cloisonné, carved bone, and fibreglass. The body is the canvas on which he embeds traditional Chinese decorative designs, such as dragons or landscapes. Initially these works appear to be an exploration of the surface through decoration, but on closer examination a darker side is exposed. Some of these objects are characterised through low relief. In his *Human Human – Flower and Bird*, (2000-2001) The figures

face is not painted over, like earlier porcelain works, rather the lacquer is altered to become part of the figure, to become embedded in it. Flowers and birds in red lacquer, are pivoted around the head and neck, hinting at a deeper correlation between the traditional pattern and the human form. In Xing's sculpture this relationship refers to the Chinese culture being embedded in the individual, and is visually both claustrophobic and arresting, while evoking silent witness to things that can only be imagined. His work continues to address parallel notions of traditional and contemporary, old and new, and permanence and fragility.



Fig 11: Ah Xian, *Human, Human- Flower and Bird*:
detail 2000-2001 Resin fibreglass cast, lacquer.
45 x 46 x 28 cm.

My work also reflects parallels, by using casting materials such as dust. This insignificant 'matter' refers back to the western attitudes and values of things and acts as a metaphor to describe the end of life. 'We end as a little heap of dust.'¹⁰⁰ The collected detritus of the everyday, the dust from a vacuum, contains all that can be imagined. Skin cells, hair, dust, paper fluff, dirt, fur, plastic, shards of things disconnected from their beginnings, which as a whole becomes matter, referring to

¹⁰⁰ Anacreon, poetry fragment, 500BC included in *Death*, 2003

the shadows of our distant past, the very basis of our beginnings. These materials are so insubstantial, so completely transient and ephemeral in the truest way, that a comparison between these inconsequential materials with more permanent man-made ones is unavoidable, and clearly speaks of the human desire to continue, ignoring the reality of death - that we are here one minute and gone the next.

Type form

In philosophy, a form is the structure of anything as opposed to its content, essence as opposed to matter. In *The Originality of The Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths*, Rosalind Krauss cites Auguste Rodin's *The Gates of Hell* as an example of a copy, and questions whether the method of casting can produce an original. Krauss argues that an individual is defined as a 'type' form and is endlessly produced as a 'generic' body because one figure is used in many ways. Krauss expands that, as *The Gates of Hell* was never completed, and Rodin was known for frequently changing figures around, and for changing his mind, there is seemingly no specific order of placement for this complex sculpture.

After Rodin's death, the French government, as the proprietor of Rodin's estate, decided to limit editions of Rodin casts. In this framework *The Gates of Hell* are a true original, the second copy in a set that is part of a limited edition. For Krauss the problem remains that as 'an original' it is not valid, as Rodin never completed this work. There are no instructions to confirm its status. Perhaps a glance at Rodin's vast amount of work could leave a clue as to an appropriate configuration of *The Gates of Hell*, which would suitably evoke his idea.

Krauss argues that collectively and unconsciously copies made later are different because they are not of the period and it is this shift that disrupts coherence. Krauss seems to disregard the fact that artists everywhere have often worked in this way, using foundries to produce their work, often years after they conceived or made the original, and this remains current practice for many sculptors today.



Fig 12: Auguste Rodin, *The Gates of Hell*: detail circa 1885. Lintel, plaster, 1.055 x 2.36 x 29cm

For Krauss the avant-garde's originality was the basis of art, the birth of the new, but regards Rodin's *Gates of Hell* as a deception. She argues that Rodin was regarded as the epitome of an avant-garde artist in that he was admired as a maker and inventor of the unique and the individual. So to comprehend that the figures used in the *Gates of Hell* are in fact derived from the same mould and reproduced many times, seems wrong. But not in the way Krauss suggests. In the presence of this work, viewers miss this technicality, it is not perceived. It may be one figure, but its pose and position remain fresh and original every time. The view that Krauss endorses becomes irrelevant as originality emerges from repetition and recurrence. Like Rodin, I have original moulds and from these produce various figures. If wax was poured into the mould, allowed to cool, removed and the process repeated without the figures being altered in any way, then the mounting pile of figures would be copies, as they would all be the same. But this new heap of copies brings new meaning, as they would now be both a stack of copies and a new work.

Like *The Gates of Hell*, each figure in my installation is individual in that their final forms are different from one another. In my case they are made from different materials or the materials are applied to form a structure in varied combinations,

resulting in figures that may vary greatly. All of them contain a trace of the original and in this way become mimetic, containing a sense of embodiment, an echo of consciousness. Each figure is separate but derives its essence from the original. These figures become supplements to human beings and translate the essence of something in different states. In a sense each figure in *Shades of Embodiment* is an archetype.

Archetype

The words archetype come from the Latin *archetypum* an original from the Greek from *arkhetupos* first moulded. An archetype then is a perfect specimen, an original model. Given that a cast is an addition, the mould from which the cast comes is the archetype. In the article 'Christie Brown, Fragments of Narrative' by Edmund De Waal, the act of creating figures is going beyond boundaries to something other. In some religions, it is not for human hands, but a power beyond. 'The bones of mythological utterance seem to be enmeshed with the images and ideas of both the creation of man from the clay and the subsequent attempts by man to ape that creation through the making of figures.'¹⁰¹ This way of making figures contains a sense of unease, of mimesis. It is the imitative representation of human behaviour. 'It is what the principal subject must not become by being separated from itself.'¹⁰²

In the act of creating figures it is the forming of a twin, in a sense the duplicate of a living person, the previous of an 'other' self. Freud's notion of the uncanny: the double, the dead, the strange and hidden rise again in mimetic figures.

For De Waal, a mimesis is not a copy of a form, instead copying is modelling, a skill which strives for anatomical proportion through the combination of a sharp eye and a steady hand.¹⁰³ De Waal expands that mimesis is found through the ages in the tomb figures of the Chinese Han dynasty, the Haniwa figures of the Jomon period of Japan and the Kouros figures of ancient Greek sculpture.¹⁰⁴ All of these figures are imbued with the spirit of the original, the captured essence of those they represent. In *Shades of Embodiment* the figures inhabit a similar space to funeral figures in that

¹⁰¹ De Waal, 'Christie Brown,' p 68

¹⁰² Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans, Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 1987, p 54

¹⁰³ De Waal, 'Christie Brown,' p 68

¹⁰⁴ De Waal, 'Christie Brown,' p 68

they are simultaneously generic, characters, and archetypes. The casting technique is used in my work to allow an individual to 'become' by taking physical prints of the body. These moulds are three dimensional plaster negatives, which can be assembled to reproduce the individual. A few moulds were made in this way by placing the person in different positions, like sitting, or lying whilst impressions were made from the plaster, effectively freezing them in space and place.



Fig 13: *Fibreglass moulds*,
2002-04
Dimensions variable

Once a mould is made, the figure is then cast using different materials, which imply different conclusions. Some figures are deathly, some figures are ghosts and some figures are foetal. In creating figures my own unconscious is given reign as 'making' allows me an acknowledgement and a release from primal fears, the things I myself cannot name. In this sense it becomes cathartic. Through manifesting these figures a gap appears, a space 'in-between' in which I am able to connect with my own dark side, my double, in order to comprehend my own humanity, which is at once both being a person and being part of a larger whole. These figures are mimetic, in that they are made in order to comprehend existence and contain as De Waal confirms 'a

trace and pulse of the mythic at work, something that is always on the cusp of danger.¹⁰⁵

Doubling

De Waal goes on to say that '...creating figures that are, in some way, a meditation on the act of creation itself...moulding concerns itself with absence as well as presence - a mould survives beyond the copies it produces and yet only really comes into being during the act of moulding.'¹⁰⁶

Freud believed that 'the uncanny' was the dangerous parts in us that whisper; the parts that should be buried down deep but have somehow surfaced. To Freud the uncanny stems from the notion of doubling something where the relationship between the replica and the original is a false resemblance, for while they look the same, their marrow is not. The feeling of uncanniness stems from the recognition that doubles are, at one and the same time, the extreme opposite of oneself and yet the same. This perception connects the states of being alive with the state of death. At the heart of the uncanny is a weirdness that seizes that which was once most familiar producing the double as a representation when it takes the form of repetition, and of the inevitability of return. The uncanny weaves the space, necessary to truly perceive...

...what is known of old and long familiar. The effect of doubling comes from assuming likeness from resemblance, the loss of self from an over-identification with another or from the repetition of features, character traits... For Freud doubling and repeating are guarantees against extinction, an insurance against the destruction of the ego which he relates to primary narcissism. Although repetition does not immediately connote the uncanny, we are invited to consider the feelings of unease we experience when everyday occurrences become repetitive.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ De Waal, 'Christie Brown,' p 68

¹⁰⁶ De Waal, 'Christie Brown,' p 68

¹⁰⁷ Bird, 'Dolce Domium,' p 112

In *Cultural Semantics, keywords of our time*, Martin Jay explores the source of the uncanny explaining that it is derived from the German, *das unheimliche* something that must be secret which translated, sits uneasily as 'unhomely.' Referring to the fear of castration in the past or future, the uncanny is related to a discordant longing to return home. On a base level it refers to rejoining the mother's body.¹⁰⁸ To experience a sense of the uncanny is troubling and oddly satisfying which involves, as Jay points out, an involuntary repetition that expresses in displaced form Freud's later-named 'death instinct.'¹⁰⁹ This doubt shaped by the uncanny relates to the boundaries between our living selves and our dead. 'The uncanny is most generally and most intensely experienced in relation to death, the body and the fears and fantasies of a return to life; spirits, ghosts and monsters.'¹¹⁰ It is not a coincidence that these fears replay life and death. Assisting to sort out meaning, a way of coming to terms with coming and going, presence and then absence.

The Supplement

John Bird has observed that, 'The casting process itself repeats the play of presence and absence. Traditionally the mould is discarded and the cast is left as the 'supplement' to the original.'¹¹¹ The action of casting produces a supplement, this being an addition or an extra amount. In the context of casting it is an addition, a new thing but not an 'extra'. Jacques Derrida in *The Truth in Painting* defines supplement as something that is not independent from the original, but continues to echo the original's essence. A supplement is a double. It is the direct relationship between the original and the 'supplement' that allows it to exist and release an unease associated with it as both foreign and familiar in presence.¹¹² It is menacing by its continual referral to the original and the reality that it is physically an unattached new form. The original object is complete and whole within itself. This other is a 'supplement.'

According to myth, the Shroud of Turin in Italy is believed to hold an image of Christ. This piece of linen has an imprint of the body of a man on it. Evidence of crucifixion wounds embellish the belief that the shroud is the burial cloth of Christ. The body

¹⁰⁸ Martin Jay, *Cultural Semantics, keywords of our time*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1998, p 158

¹⁰⁹ Jay, *Cultural Semantics, keywords of our time*, p 158

¹¹⁰ Bird, 'Dolce Domium,' p 112

¹¹¹ Bird, 'Dolce Domium,' p 120

¹¹² Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, p 54

was wrapped up in the cloth; the cloth was imprinted with the body and merged together as a kind of print. It is loaded as an image because of its nature, and became the marriage of the body and blood of Christ. The literal memory of life. In this way the shroud becomes an icon, through the action of representation. A translation in itself. A supplement that holds the essence of the Messiah. Much like a death mask holds an image of the dead.

Supplement - the role of the death mask

A death mask is an encapsulation. As a cast, the mask captures expression immediately after death and suspends that moment forever. As objects they are unsettling. As the body deteriorates, the mask remains as a true record of appearance, rather as a photograph survives more or less intact whilst over time the physical appearance of the subject portrayed alters. As Roland Barthes observes in *Camera Lucida* we take photos to commemorate events, to remember people. Time passes and all we have left are those photos. Instead of representing life they become signs of death.¹¹³ There is a correlation between the operation of a photograph and the death mask's presence. Presence and absence physically unite in this one object.

This contrasts with the use of the mask in masquerade. The purpose of a masquerade mask is to pretend to be what one is not. By becoming a character of make believe through the mask, we both conceal or disguise true identity and provide both the audience and the participants with a new, fake reality. Here the mask transforms the masker. Yet the transformation is only temporary. After the performance the masker returns to their original identity.

Masking can do two things: on one hand it hides the masker's true identity and on the other it introduces a new element or identity, through the mask. In contrast the death mask seeks to render and record identity, suspending it in one moment forever. Masking is in itself an act of transformation, but where the action of a mask seeks to transform the wearer symbolically and for a limited time, the death mask attempts to capture the wisp of departure. It is at once the ghost of process by remembering the physical on the cusp of transformation, the liminal state from life to

¹¹³ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard, New York, Hill & Wang, 1981, p 14

death. In this way the edge is defined as a death mask, as a cast it is taken directly from the skin, the container of life.

Following this line of logic, could a coffin be, in a sense, a kind of death mask? Death masks as casts are faces materially transformed, 'containing' life yet reminding us of our mortality. Lead lined coffins were used to contain the body; mostly they were used for people of wealth or status. Lead has been known to sterilize the body by poisoning the microflora and slowing decomposition...

... as the necessary prelude to rebirth: in a sealed vessel the transformation of 'the prima materia' takes place. From a psychological perspective, Jung has suggested that the alchemical sealed vessel, the old style coffin is comparable to the state of introversion that acts as a container for the transmutations of attitudes and emotions.¹¹⁴

When the sight of a coffin is experienced, it visually and emotively affects the viewer, becoming a symbol of death while also being a reflection of the future. A reflection on the meaning of death is as inescapable as death itself. While the death mask secures all the corporeal details of the face shortly after its last breath, it continues to occupy reality as a likeness and cenotaph, a copy and a thing in its own right. When a death mask is viewed, the fact that it details a face, binds us to it.

Through the act of looking the mask is recognised and related to as human, and in this way it becomes a reflection of our own mortality. These experiences and feelings cannot be separated from who we are, because like gazing into a mirror, the reflection is always our own. And while the coffin is physically buried it remains symbolic of the body. For when a person dies, and although their body may no longer exist in completeness, society insists on putting their symbolic 'body' in a box. Which may only be part of a head, a leg or hand. These salvaged parts of the body that are left are used and the rest of the coffin must be weighed down with sand so that it feels like a body, a sense of the right weight proportionally for the person that was. It is for the benefit of the bereaved, so belief can be maintained that the person remembered is still with their loved ones.

¹¹⁴ Hutchinson, 'Return' 2000, p 55

If love is an experience for the living, why then is the lack of a physical body in death so confronting? There is a sense that without physical evidence, there is no proof that a person was real, that they were here. Perhaps this is why the coffin echoes a death mask and mimics the body. Echoing it in shape and form. Keeping all in cold comfort.

The act of masking also acts as both a physical manifestation of 'the uncanny' as well as a trigger for those ideas in the viewer, in much the same way as a 'figure' sculpture forces the viewer to double-take when confronted by the work.



Fig 14: Duane Hanson, *Tourists II*, 1998.
Mixed media, dimensions variable

To look again is to confirm that it's not real and is not breathing: 'We indulge the fancy that as we turn away a feather might stir, a breath rustle, an eyelid flutter, and the idea contains a genuine shiver of the uncanny.'¹¹⁵ Duane Hanson, the American sculptor, was the first in this genre to make hyper-real bodies, clever life size doubles of people, which force the viewer to ask, what is real? Placed inside the art gallery, his work *Tourists II* (1988) shared space with living people. Many gallery goers

¹¹⁵ Susanna Greeves, *Ron Mueck, Sculpture*, Museum of Contemporary Art cat. Sydney, Museum of Contemporary Art, 2002

simply ignored this couple, believing them to be real and looking at artwork, like everybody else. These overweight middle-aged tourists seem bored, fed up, weighed down with bags and cameras, detached in their sightseeing. Just existing.

Australian sculptor Ron Mueck's human figures also transform what it is that distinguishes animate and inanimate matter. These works are so convincing in their mimicry of life that reality seems to be suspended. The figures seem so alive, questioning the senses, and urging the viewer to touch, to confirm the eye's belief of breathing flesh and blood. These bodies whisper internal narratives, and speak of rites of passage and as figures convey a sense of the uncanny. Mueck captures universal experience, not as a theme but rather a translation of a real event. In the context of a gallery space, and because of the scale of some works, viewers can find them repulsive or uncomfortable and become wary, as an intruder in a private moment. Their very humanness or animality reflects back at us as our own hand in glove, the snug fit of mind and matter, and the genuine human experience of consciousness, of inhabiting a body. These works manifest the discomfort and awkwardness of simultaneously belonging and never belonging, just as we do. Like Hanson, Mueck's figures present believable personalities, people who have individual perspectives, thoughts and feelings, caught in a moment, off guard.

My practice overlaps both these artists in that their work raises questions about 'matter' and 'essence.' These figures come to symbolise being human in that they achieve empathy through the use of the body.

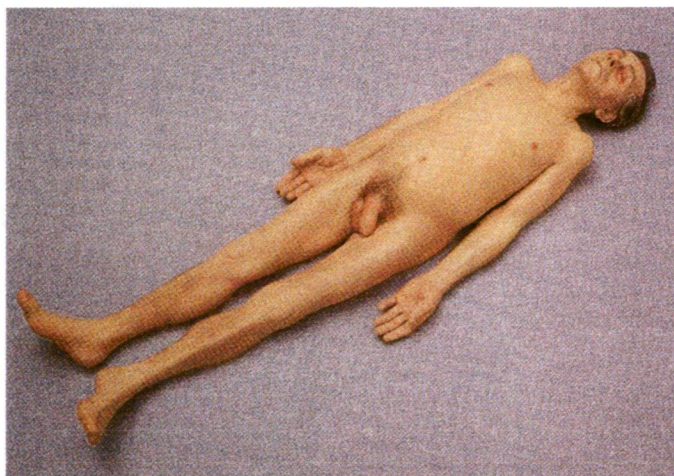


Fig 15: Ron Mueck, *Dead Dad*, 1996-97, silicone and acrylic, 8 x 4 x 15 inches

In Mueck's *Dead Dad*, (1997) an older man lies naked and still. He must be asleep. These are private moments that have been stumbled across by the viewer. The figure is a quarter of the size of real humans, and scale is used to manipulate both the intensity of emotional embodiment and to keep the viewer at a distance. As the viewer, there is the sense of feeling protective towards him, echoing the maternal instinct, to pick him up and hold him. In experiencing 'Dead Dad' there was a particular resonance, through its physical size: the figure referenced a small child, a doll, vulnerable and fragile embodying the simple truth of being human, and facing our own mortality. Mueck questions what is of the essence in clarifying true life? What is the shade of embodiment? For me, it is the body.

Conclusion

My work is about expressing a hesitation, the space between transforming materiality into matter and matter into materiality, a physical expression of liminal space. A sense of the sacred is bound up in the body as dwelling, it is matter, flesh, and bone. This relationship extends beyond the body to objects, and is established through being made from or used by the body. A state of embodiment occurs over time through both ritual and the everyday, and it is this connection with the body that holds a sense of the sacred.

Personally, I believe transformation does occur in the space between life and death; it may be seen as a purely physical perspective where the body is returned back to the earth from whence it came, recycled, to allow other life to begin. It may also be spiritual, a reflection of the many beliefs in which people have taken solace for thousands of years, a consolation that there are other levels of existence, a higher force which guides us. The concept of God seems separate from me and yet I still feel a presence through daily life, the places where the gods ought to be. *Shades of Embodiment* reflects this missing part.

After a journey through many cultural beliefs, and seeking objects from many cultures, comprehension has been gathered through the process of making. From the depths of the Pitt Rivers museum, where consciousness has been accumulated, we have almost come full circle, to the Academy Gallery at Inveresk.

In darkness, the gallery with its low ceiling is reminiscent of a cave, where our ancestors first buried their dead, or a womb where life begins: these are spaces between, housing bodies from the imagination. By exhibiting these works in darkness the viewer is taken out of their comfort zone, the unconscious appears at the periphery reminding them of the lurking things, 'the uncanny,' and the memory of shadows. Each body form is lit individually or in groups, which compels the viewer to take a closer look. By framing the body forms in this way, a moment is created that evokes a sense of the sacred.

On the walls there is a series of drawings of body forms. Glimpsed in the dark, these appear fragmented in some way, both coming and going. As black and white images,

the light and shadows reveal themselves. The drawings are intrinsically linked with the body and materiality. The various materials that the body forms are invested and speak in many ways. The paper skins propped against the wall remain light and eternal. The rag and mud figure on the ground is simply still. The plastic body forms, leaning out from the wall and looming above the viewer appear as shades; a foetal figure on the ground has peeling skin of wax and hessian, and is caught between, in a position of both birth and burial.

The experience of an embodiment of human dwelling is proof, if ever proof were needed, that all in life is not straightforward: that the world of scientific belief in which we clothe ourselves today does not necessarily hold true in all cases; that our primeval instincts can be evoked and played upon in appropriate circumstances; that while we may call ourselves irreligious or non-believers, for most of us there exists another spiritual world to which we may not freely or publicly admit, but which at the same time has an influence upon us. My works tap into this vein.

It is here, in our bodies, the heart of 'matter,' where we are able to develop and sustain relationships with the physical realm in order to find meaning in the spirit of the sacred.

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168 x 75 x 45 cm

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clay, dimensions variable.

Source: *Antony Gormley*

London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1993, 32 & 70.

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papier-mâché.

Fig 5: *The Past Remains*, (detail) 2003. p 37

mixed media, dimensions variable.

Fig 6: *Shade*, (in process) 2004. p 40

mixed media, dimensions variable.

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mud, cotton.

60 x 26 x 22 cm

Fig 8: Antony Gormley, *Learning to See III*, 1991. p 42

lead, fiberglass, air.

1910 x 500 x 320 mm.

Source: *Antony Gormley*

London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1993, 23

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Pressed tin.

96 x 67 x 27 cm.

Fig 10: *The new body emerges*, 2004. p 44

Fig 11: Ah Xian, *Human, Human- Flower and Bird: detail* 2000-2001 p 45
resin fibreglass cast, lacquer.
45 x 46 x 28 cm
Source: postcard.
National Gallery of Victoria: Melbourne, Australia.

Fig 12: Augustis Rodin, *The Gates of Hell: detail* circa 1885. p 47
lintel, plaster.
1.055 x 2.36 x 0.29cm
Source: Jarrasse, D. *Rodin: a passion for movement*.
Paris: Pierre Terrail, 1992, 68.

Fig 13: *Fibreglass moulds*, 2002-04. p 49

Fig 14: Duane Hanson, *Tourists II*, 1998. p 54
Source: Livingstone, M. *Duane Hanson: The Saatchi Gallery*.
London: The Saatchi Gallery, 1997.

Fig 15: Ron Mueck, *Dead Dad*, 1996-97. p 55
silicone and acrylic.
8 x 4 x 15 inches,
Source: Macritchie, L. 'Rude Britannia,' *Art in America*, vol 86, no 4, 1998, 37.

Appendix

Shades of Embodiment installation images
photographed by Richmond Henty



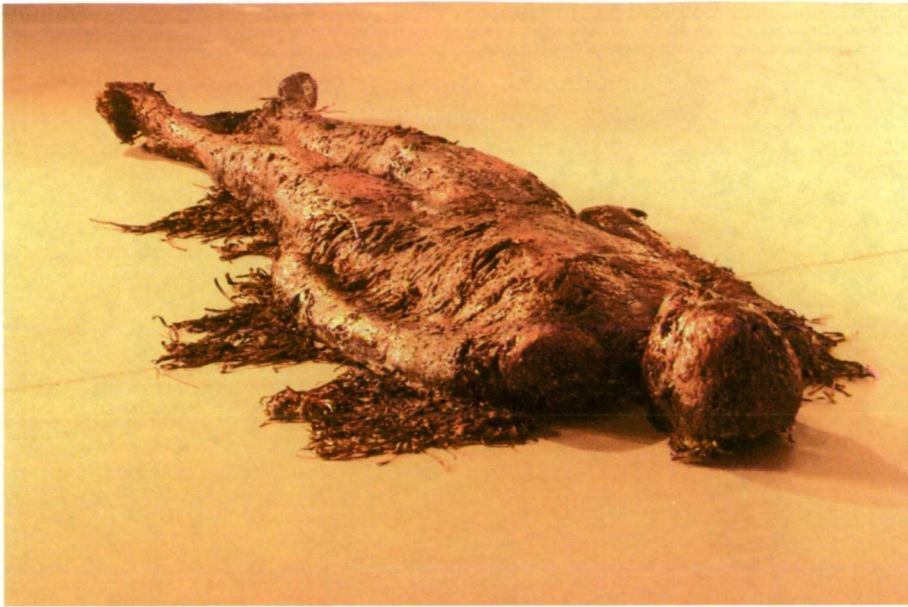
Husk
Paper and conte
145 x 75 cm
2005



Threads
Paper and PVA
Dimensions variable
2004



Threads II
Paper and PVA
Dimensions variable
2004



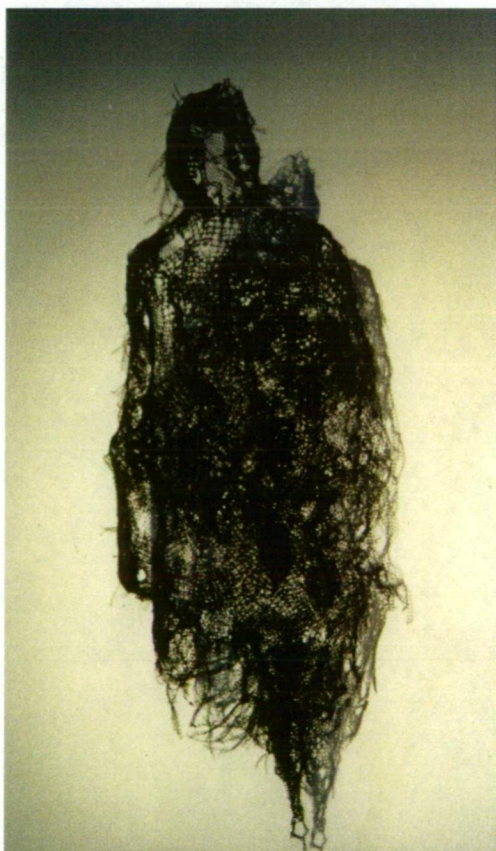
Matter
Shredded paper and paint
200 X 70 x 45 cm
2005



Rebirth
Wax and hessian
120 x 69 x 62 cm
2004



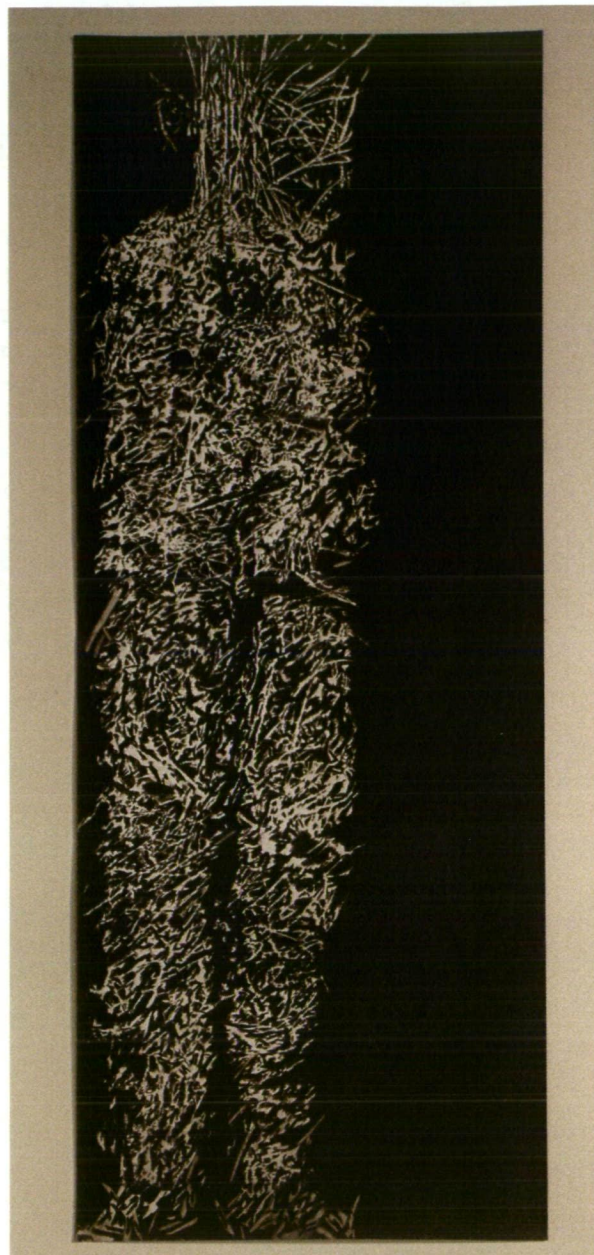
Shades I-IV
Nylon
Dimensions variable
2004-05



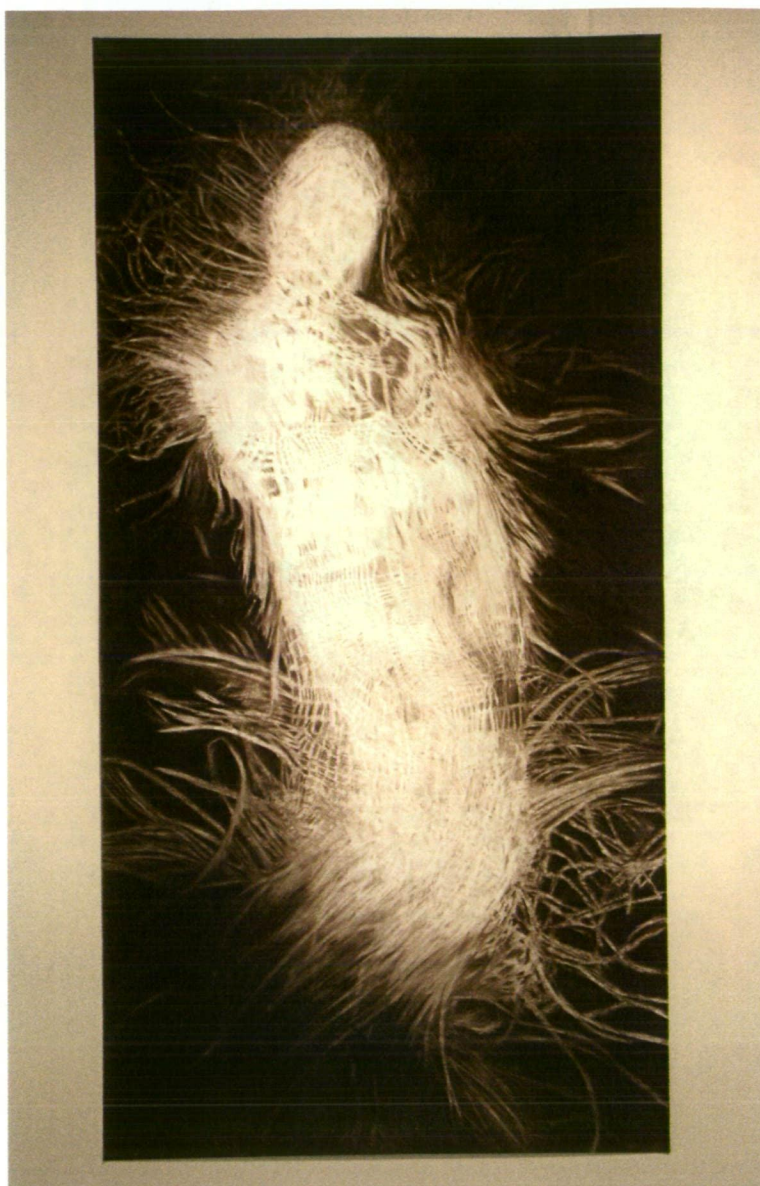
Shade II (detail)



Inbetween
Aluminium and paint
84 x 71 x 23 cm
2004



Matter I
Paper and conte
189 x 74cm
2003



Shade V
Paper and conte
100 x 200 cm
2004



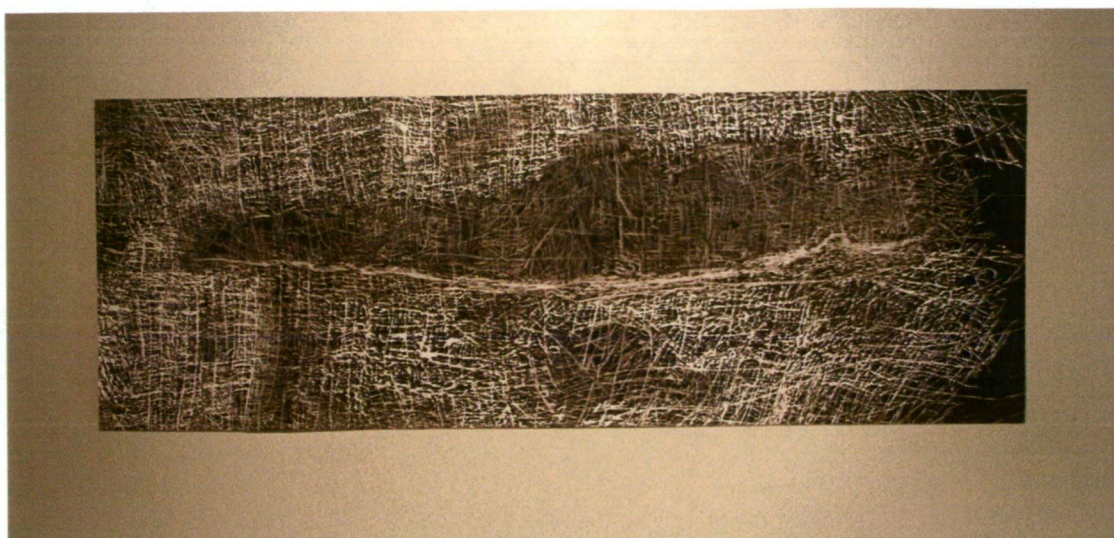
Shade VI
Pressed tin
200 X 60 x 28 cm
2005



To return
Dust
Dimensions variable
2005



Being
Lead and wire
200 X 75 x 35 cm
2003



Thread of Life
Paper and conte
240 X 75 cm
2003



Residual
Cotton, mud and glue
200 x 45 x 13 cm
2003



Installation view
Mixed media
Dimensions variable
2005