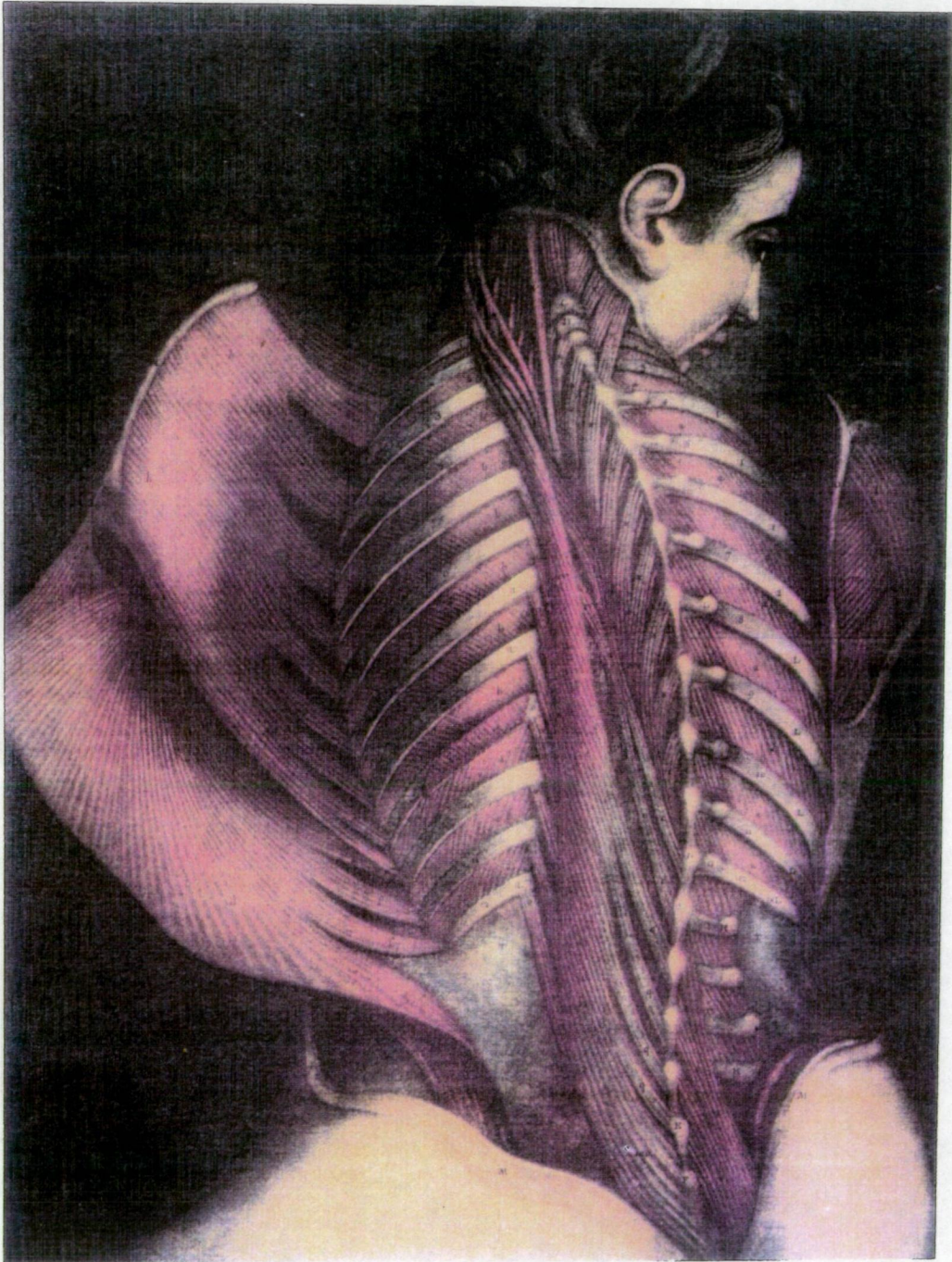


# Subliminal Mythologies of the Body



Jacques Dagoty (Ars Medica; 1985, 14)

By Rosemary Claiden  
B.F.A. (Honours)

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degree of Master of Fine Arts by Research. University  
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*School of Art*

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## ABSTRACT

### 'Subliminal Mythologies of the Body'

Rosemary Claiden: M.F.A. by Research candidate.

This thesis focuses on the ways in which costume can articulate the connections between the body and psyche. The work explores how physical sensation and emotional memories are linked across the landscape of the body.

The work blurs the boundaries between skin and costume. The skin itself resembles a garment; especially when peeled back to reveal the internal organs.

The focus is on the 'empty dress' in order to evoke the body even more potently through its absence. Clothing is suffused with the presence of the body; its scent, posture and traits. It in turn, affects the walk, gesture and gait of the body. Costume's intimate proximity to the body makes it a volatile conduit between the interior and exterior realms of the body and psyche. It can signal unconscious desires and fears.

The boundaries of the body are not sealed by the skin. The 'body image' exists beyond the physical body. Its borders are osmotic and can powerfully incorporate and expel surrounding objects, such as clothing (Grosz). A perception of body image reveals the inseparability of biological and psychical elements and the interweaving of body and costume.

As an extension of physical sensation, clothing is like a prosthetic limb; at the same time alien to the body and yet integral to the body image. Once devoid of their owners, both can appear to move of their own volition. By using clothing as a surrogate for the body, costume takes on the aspects of the 'phantom body'. It invokes mourning for what is no longer there and is suffused with the presence of its now absent owner. The empty dress provokes a sense of the uncanny by suggesting the absence of the physical body, thereby evoking fears of an inevitable mortality.

The research is focused on the female body. The paper describes mythological traditions that inscribe fears of mortality specifically across the female form, in a feminisation of the flesh. Sensual garments that veil a woman's body become tools of a fatal seduction. An unconscious fear of women has positioned them in a space of danger and desire, embraced in the 'femme fatale'.

The research considers the primacy of vision in intellectually possessing an object of desire. The installation subverts the safe distance of voyeurism and engages all the senses in a visceral reading of the work. Costumes have been constructed that resonate with the sensuality and mystique of the female form but must be entered and walked through to reveal unseen layers. The installation sets out a psychological striptease. The participants are involved in a metamorphosis that enacts the ephemeral nature of the body and costume. The visual language developed expresses a somatic intelligence which gives voice to the senses.



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# Introduction: Costumier

My research project focuses on the ways in which costume can articulate the sensory, psychological, and temporal boundaries of the body.

I see this exegesis as a parallel text to my visual work, which charts the ongoing interrelationship between ideas and practice.

I have chosen to approach the paper in three separate but interconnected sections.

Initially, I describe the concepts that surround and inform my work; from the origins of my concern with the 'empty dress' to psychological issues that have emerged through persistent analysis.

In the second section, I describe the progress of my own visual work through experimentation, criticism, and exposure to current art, literature and performance.

Finally, I site my work in relation to contemporary art practice and outline artists who have had a pivotal effect on my work.

## Section 1:

# Foundation Garment: Concepts that surround and inform my work

My fascination with the expressive potential of costume was triggered by work in my 'Honours' year (1994). Through my sculpture, I became aware of the relationship between my body and unconscious memories of open-heart surgery. The starting point was a fragment from Salman Rushdie's novel Midnight's Children. Doctor Adam Aziz is pervasively seduced by partial glimpses of his patient's body through a hole in a sheet; the 'phantasm of a partitioned woman began to haunt him' (Rushdie: 1981, 24).

For my artwork, I collected sheets from a hospital. Walking through the dark antiseptic corridors was in fact the beginning of my own journey towards understanding somatic memory. The surface of the sheets, their scent and stains, evoked a now absent body. Contact with these materials began to unravel my own clinical experience, rending away the veils of memory.

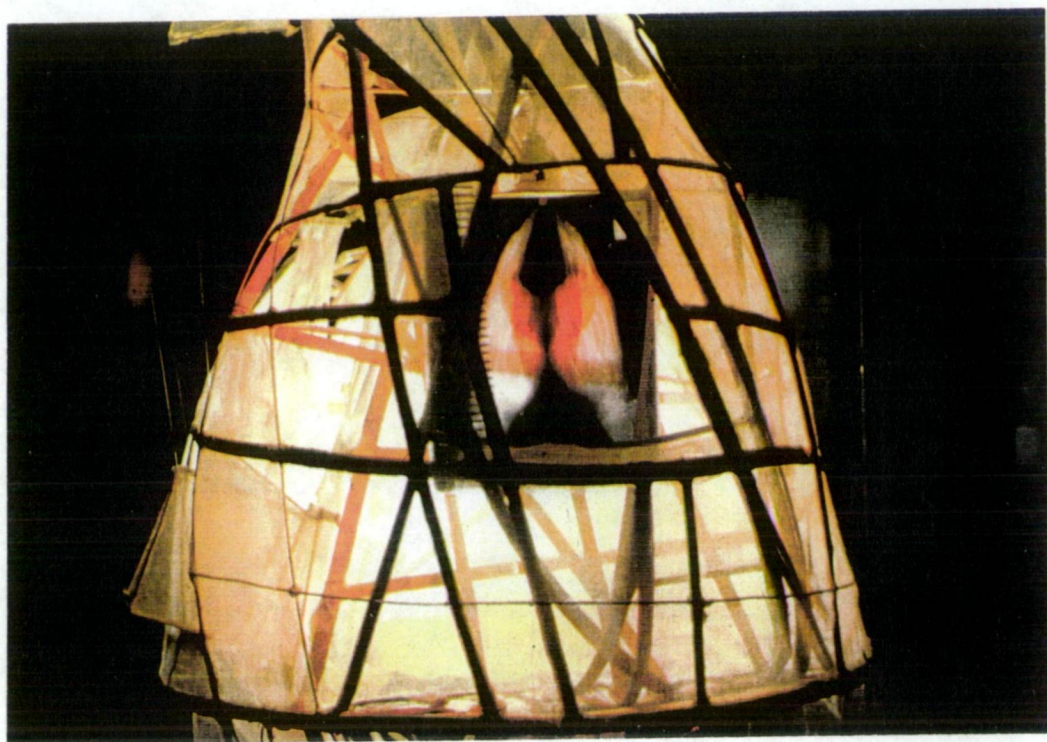
Although the starting point for the work was a tale of the allure of erotic concealment, working through the slits in a sheet reminded me of surgical procedures and scars left across my skin.

I wanted to discover how physical sensation and emotional memories are linked across the landscape of the body. My Honours work penetrated the skin, with light and x-rays, inviting the audience to explore the interior of the body and the heart.

My current work has enabled me to look at these relationships in more depth and to develop ways to use costume as an intermediary between the physical and psychical realms, connecting private and public worlds.

The extent to which a ruptured sheet can reveal and conceal layers of intimacy mirrors costume's ability to let slip physical and psychological ciphers. Fabric insinuates links connecting the visceral body with identity and memory.





Section of installation for 'Honours' exhibition 1994  
muslin, x-rays, nails, electric light, bamboo, mirrors  
2.5m. by 1.5m.

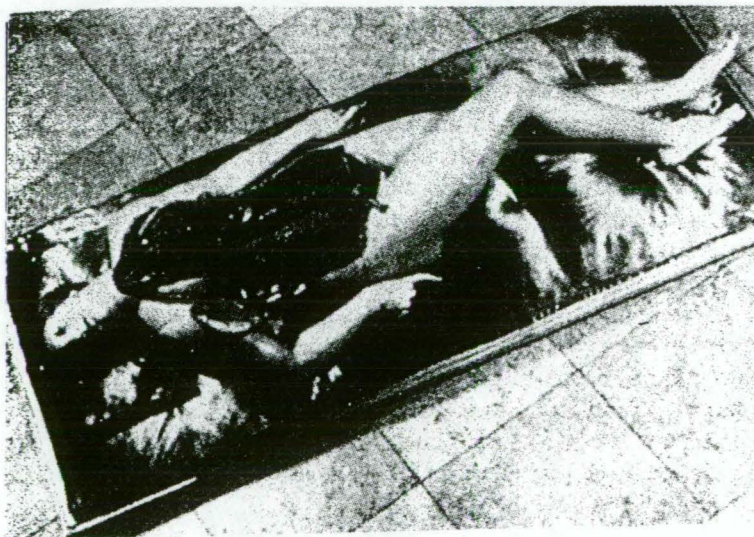
Dianne Fahey's poem "Wind" in The Body in Time, expresses some of these concerns.

...the sheet that knows your impress so well has held the sweat of your dreams.

...Halt sighs, an austere rustling this impersonal fabric has its voices too.

They tell you to live with your hands on the world,  
to wring and uncoil its bundled knots. Your body itself is a subtle knot silhouetted by pure air, its heat transfiguring cool envelopes you enter, white planes blankly receiving imprint, a few trace elements, till whisked away to be drowned then resurrected ... teased to life by the merest touch. (1995; 157-8)

Moving from the pressed sheet to the fitted garment, my work seeks to blur the boundaries between the skin and costume. The skin itself can resemble a garment especially when cut open and peeled back to reveal the internal organs. This ambiguity between clothing and nudity can be seen in early illustrations of anatomical Venuses. Women lie in seductive positions on luxurious couches; their insides laid bare in voluptuous detail; the mystery of woman under the surgical knife.



Anatomical Venus,  
Budapest, 1789.

(Showalter; 1992, 129)

In my work I intend to explore the links between sensuality and mortality; particularly the way in which they are inscribed as one text across the female form.

I have chosen costume to articulate these psychological and sensual narratives of the body. By shifting my focus to the 'empty dress' I am attempting to evoke the body even more potently through its absence. The missing body is the subject of speculation, the represented body, less elusive. The space can resonate with our own preconceptions of the person, behind the body, behind the masquerade.



Louis de Paor's poem 'Afterwords' expresses the tangibility of a now absent body.

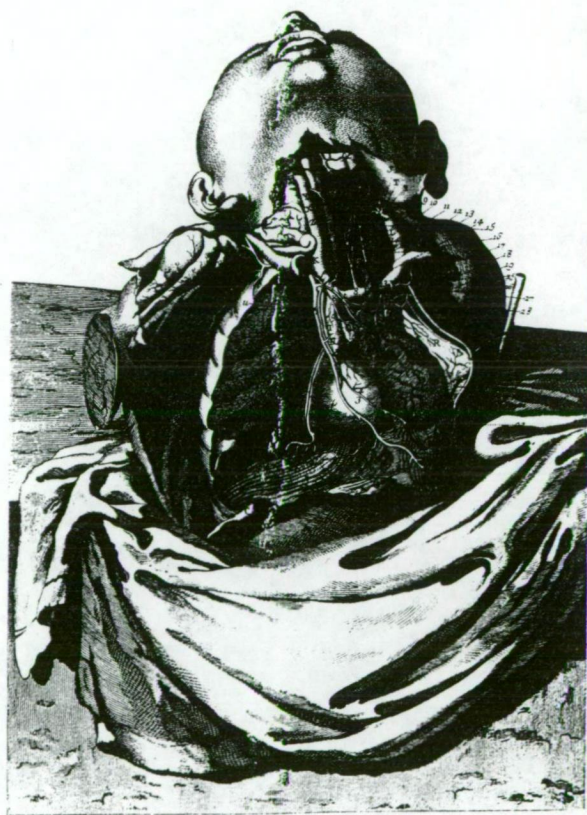
'Seven days after she left  
her scent is still on my hands,  
the air stands back  
refusing to take her place' ...

(1993; 12)

Clothing is suffused with the presence of the body; its scent, posture and traits. It, in turn, affects the walk, gesture and gait of the body, and how it is perceived. Costume extends the space of the body outwards whilst being linked to its internal moorings. Its intimate proximity to the body makes it a volatile conduit between the interior and exterior realms of the body and psyche, it can signal unconscious desires.

Anatomy.

(Diderot; 1978, 109)



Clothing is an extension of physical sensation that is incorporated into our 'body image'. In Volatile Bodies Elizabeth Grosz explores the concept of 'body image' revealing its crucial role in linking the body and psyche.

The body image does not map a biological body onto a psychosocial domain, providing a kind of translation of material into conceptional terms; rather, it attests to the necessary interconstituency of each for the other, the radical inseparability of biological from psychical elements... (Grosz; 1994, 85)

The boundaries of the body are not sealed by its skin .The body image exists beyond the physical body, involving the surrounding space, other people and objects, in particular costume.

The body image is extremely fluid and dynamic; its borders, edges and contours are 'osmotic'- they have remarkable power of incorporating and expelling outside and inside in an ongoing interchange. (Grosz; 1994, 79)

In Adorned in Dreams Elizabeth Wilson draws attention to the obscure boundaries between dress and the body and speculates on a subsequent sense of unease.

Clothing marks an unclear boundary ambiguously and unclear boundaries disturb us ... It is at the margins between one thing and another that pollution may leak out .... If the body with its open orifices is in itself dangerously ambiguous then dress, which is an extension of the body yet not quite part of it, not only links that body to the social world, but also more clearly separates the two. Dress is the frontier between the self and the non-self. (Wilson; 1985, 3)

The ephemeral skin of costume suggests not only the body but a phantom extension of it. Clothing acts like a prosthetic limb; at the same time alien to the body and yet integral to the body image.

Phantoms were named and explored in great detail by Silas Weir Mitchell. Schilder continued and supplemented this research, collating the psychological and physiological characteristics of phantom limbs.

The phantom in the beginning usually takes the shape of the lost extremity but in the course of the years it begins to change its shape and parts of it disappear. When there is a phantom of the arm, the hand comes nearer to the elbow, or in extreme cases may be immediately on the place of amputation. Also the hand may become smaller and be like the hand of a child. Similar phenomena occur on the leg. The position of the phantom is often a rigid one, and... it is often the position in which the patient lost his limb. It is as if the phantom were trying to preserve the last moments in which the limb was still present. The phantom follows its own laws. When the arm is moved towards a rigid object the phantom goes into the rigid object. It may even go through the patient's own body... (Schilder in Grosz; 1994, 71-72)



The patient must cope with a displacement in sensory experience and an apparent denial of the amputation.

The amputee allows two contradictory realities simultaneously: the reality of a living limb and the reality of its destruction. These two 'limits' occupy the same space and time, one the ghostly double of the others absence. (Grosz; 1994, 72)

Grosz suggests that the phantom is an expression of nostalgia for the whole body — 'a psychical attempt to reactivate a past body image in place of the present reality.' (1994, 73)

Phantoms are not limited to amputated limbs but can occur in any external or internal region of the body. Phantoms for example, have been experienced after the loss of breasts, eyes, rectum, larynx and penis — which can even simulate erections and orgasm. Grosz suggests that there has been a significant silence regarding the effect of hysterectomy and clitoridectomies.

Phantoms usually appear soon after amputations but can take up to two years to emerge fully. The body phantom is often distorted; 'missing' limbs may feel shorter; flatter; lighter or hollow and movement is often extremely impaired. Patients refer to a husklike, weightless and floating character'. (Grosz; 1994, 71)

Initially the phantom limb is more realistic and capable of feeling pain. Over time the sensations become more distorted.

As another example of the disjunction between the location of physical sensation and anatomy, Schilder discusses 'Zones of Sensitivity'. These relate to the phenomenology of bodily orifices which act as eroticised conduits between the exterior and interior realms of the body. He locates the subject's sensations about one centimetre from the opening. (Schilder quoted in Grosz; 1994, 75) In a similar way, feelings emanating from either internal organs or the body's surface are apparently experienced one to two centimetres below the skin.

Discussing his work in relation to social extensions of the body, Grosz points out that this is less true of the vagina which leaves the question of womens' specific body image unanswered.

The experience of the phantom limb with its inherent displacement of sensation, mirrors costume's ability to distort the body image. This suggests a parallel link between the body and clothing as exists between the biological and psychical elements of the body.

As well as distorting the site of sensation, phantom limbs are analogous to the uncanny, ghostlike presence of the empty dress. The empty dress can appear to act of its own volition. Like a phantom limb, it can appear to have a life of its own.

There is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we wear them ... they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking.  
(Woolf quoted in Felshin; 1995, 20)

The empty dress also suggests another point in time, when the garment was

occupied. Clothing can outlive its owner/s. (The body can be seen as another layer of apparel that is cast off on death.) Costume can provoke an uncanny sense of intimacy with its now absent owner.



'There is something eerie about a museum of costume. A dusty silence holds still the old gowns in glass cabinets. In the aquatic half light ... the deserted gallery seems haunted.' (Wilson; 1985, 2)

Are the memories benign or, like the forbidden contents of an Egyptian tomb, are there 'dangers in seeing what should have been sealed up in the past' (Wilson; 1985)

This sense of the 'uncanny' in familiar objects such as clothing, was attributed by Freud to repressed castration anxiety and its fetishistic defence.

Costume could mask the dreaded 'Vagina dentata' but still bore its dangerously erotic allure. As Camille Paglia states:

Eroticism is a realm stalked by ghosts. It is the place beyond the pale, both cursed and enchanted. (1991; 3)

In the 'Art of Fetishism' Foster describes these disarming experiences:

...animate and inanimate states are confused, things are subsumed by representations, once homey images return 'unheimlich' and a whiff or whisper of death hangs over the scene. (1992; 7)

The term 'fetish' was originally used in relation to witchcraft and later by Portuguese traders to describe the cult objects of West Africans. A 'fetish' was believed to possess supernatural powers and Marees compared 'Fetissos' to Catholic sacramental objects. (Foster; 1992, 7) Within her book, *The Masque of Femininity* Efrat Tseelon considers how feelings evoked by the 'uncanny' are clearly distinct from ordinary fear:

These feelings arise in situations which seem to confirm an animistic system of beliefs in realities of wish-fulfilments, secret powers, omnipotence of thoughts, animation of inanimate objects, the return of the dead... (1995; 101)

The power of the fetish lies in its ability to refer to an absent presence or sublimated emotion. In this sense, the phantom limb is the fetish of the body; it conceals the amputation, restoring the unity of the body image.

Tseelon locates the 'uncanny' not just in fear of castration but within the associations of the female body with imitations of mortality in our culture. She considers ways in which mythological traditions have positioned woman in a space of danger, desire and unconscious fears. The fetish is often applied to female attire and Tseelon discusses how woman has been used to signify the connections between adornment, attractiveness and death. Tseelon suggests that this is due to an association of man with mind and woman with flesh (1995; 23). Subsequently, the bonds between flesh, material corruption, decay and mortality provoke fear.

I argue that death and beauty are two sides of the same coin. And that the woman serves the dual function of signifying fear and a defence against it. (1995, 101)

Tseelon proposes that the more repression operates, the more the role of the fantasy increases. This is evident in the ornate nature of female dress, especially since the eighteenth century. Clothing became inexorably linked with the female form at this time while men became more distant from their appearance. 'The woman became one with fashion and the qualities of fashion clung to her character. Like fashion itself she was believed to be ephemeral, changeable, illusory and extravagant.' (Tseelon; 1995, 23)

In The Psychology of Clothes (1976) Flugel describes the fall of sumptuous, expressive and decorative male fashion in the nineteenth century as 'The Great Masculine Renunciation.' (Tseelon; 1995, 22) He regards fashion as a self-renewing compromise between modesty and eroticism... a 'perpetual blush on the face of civilisation.' The consequences of a newfound male sobriety and lack of self-display may have been an increase in voyeurism and fetishistic fantasy, where men projected their repressed desire (latent exhibitionism) onto beautifully dressed women.' (Tseelon; 1995, 24)

Tseelon suggests that even though male fashions were eroticised in the past, only women were seen as implicitly using dress for seduction. She (woman) was portrayed as disguising behind false decoration, using her beauty and finery as a vehicle to dazzle men to their destruction. Primordial fascination with the mystery of woman is fused with unconscious fears. (Tseelon; 1995, 12)

Tseelon outlines the 'contours' of Western philosophy's approach to woman's character and appearance through the archetypal legends of Pandora, Eve, Lilith. Created as a punishment, Pandora was a beautiful woman with a lethally frivolous nature. She was unable to resist prising open a forbidden vessel and unleashing every ill and mortality onto humankind. Hope was left behind.

Created from faulty material, Eve had an inherent propensity to 'original' sin which brought death into the world.



As Adam's first wife, Lileth was evil by choice, demanding sexual equality and combined seducing men with strangling newborn babies. Sumptuous clothing and ornamentation were tools in her deadly seductions.

These often fatal seductions necessitated female modesty to quell the lethal cocktail of fear and desire.

One particular 'femme fatale' had a penchant for voyeurism that left her targets stone cold. In Greek mythology, one enticing glance from the sea demon 'Medusa' was lethal. Those who answered her gaze were turned to stone. Tseelon proposes that in an attempt to deflect the woman's menacing look 'man converts her desire to look into its opposite; a desire to be looked at.' The man projects his desire to look into its opposite; a desire to be looked at.' The man projects his desire to look onto the woman and she becomes the spectacle. (Tseelon; 1995, 20)

Freud interpreted the 'Medusa' myth as an allegory of the veiled woman (Showalter; 1992, 145) whose bare gaze and power to immobilise signified castration. 'The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something.' (Showalter; 1992, 145)

In *Sexual Anarchy* (1992) Elaine Showalter speculates on what really lies beyond the veiled woman; does she conceal the 'guillotine and man-trap behind her gauzy scarf'? (148)

Are the lascivious jaws of the vagina dentata gnashing around the psychoanalytical couch? Showalter suggests another reading.

She cites the work of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic*. (1992; 148) They describe the veil as a permeable border; 'an image of confinement and enclosure that is also extremely penetrable' (Showalter; 1992, 148) 'even when opaque it is highly impermanent while transparency transforms it into a possible entrance or exit.' (1992, 148)



Nature Unveiling Herself Before Science, 1895.

(Showalter; 1992, 146)

My own experience as a dancer working with the veil, has influenced my artwork; I see the veil as a way of emphasising the ambiguity and eroticism of the female form through a sense of mystery. The elusiveness of what is actually seen prevents the viewer from possessing and objectifying the body. I aim to subvert the primacy of vision in intellectually capturing an object of desire.

In her article 'The Clinical Eye' Mary Ann Doane suggests that vision is limited to the surface of the body which denies its interiority and character.

When it (the female body) is represented within mainstream classical cinema as spectacle, as object of an erotic gaze, signification is spread out over a surface — a surface which refers only to itself and does not simultaneously conceal and reveal an interior. (Doane; 1986, 154)

John Berger in Ways of Seeing (1972) looked at gendered vision. He proposed that woman is constructed as a passive object for the look of the active male voyeur.

Taking this further, Laura Mulvey's influential article 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative cinema' (Screen; 1975) uses Lacanian psychoanalysis to unravel the complex unconscious motivation of the spectator. Mulvey located the male gaze in the process of cinematography and the inherent pleasures of scopophilia, voyeurism and fetishism. The eye of the camera becomes a peephole device into sexual pleasure but at a safe distance.

Mulvey's work, however, concentrates on a particular kind of male gaze which cannot fully explore the cultural and gay/ heterosexual diversity of masculine spectatorship. It also leaves questions unanswered about how women view men.

In the chapter 'The Gender of the Spectacle' Efrat Tseelon considers what happens when the observer is observed. As an example, she considers the film *Monsieur Hire* in which a lonely male voyeur is eventually pursued by the object of his gaze.

'One stormy night, illuminated by the lightning, the woman realises that the man is watching her. She is initially startled but later enjoys and exploits it ... she comes to visit him ... she asks to see the window from where he observed her ... he drives her away with a scream.' (1995, 70)



My work subverts the safe distance of voyeurism and engages all the senses in a visceral reading of the work.



Children in a home for the  
Blind, Duren 1930.  
(Ars Medica; 1985, 65)

My sculpture takes the form of an installation and incorporates a synthesis of the senses. My 'costumes' are within a 'changing room' where the garments are not laid out to be observed but must be touched and walked through to reveal the next layer. An installation that envelops the 'viewer' can challenge the safe distance of spectatorship. You must choose whether to cross the threshold, not knowing what awaits you. The installation is a 'real-time' experience, in which vision is not isolated from touch, scent and sound. Engaging the senses in a transition, from the exterior to the interior of the body, can provoke not just psychological but physiological responses.

Luce Irigaray in This Sex Which Is Not One (1990) speaks of the primacy of touch, particularly for woman. Although vision is often perceived as ordering the senses, touch is the first sense to develop in the embryo. It predates any 'castration anxiety'

Touch shares with hearing the successiveness of impressions and in touch the surfaces of the toucher and touch coincide. (Grosz; 1994, 98). In her essay 'When Our Lips Speak Together' Luce Irigaray considers female sexuality as 'self caressing'; lips constantly touching each other. She stresses the interconnectedness of mind, body and expression. 'Between our lips, yours and mine, several voices, several ways of speaking resound endlessly, back and forth'. (1990, 209)

Irigaray claims that the visible requires the tangible but, that the tangible is quite capable of autonomous existence as there is no tactile equivalent to blindness. Oliver Sacks, however, does provide an example; in the rare case of the 'Disembodied Woman'. (1985:42-52). A woman loses her proprioceptive sense and is unable to move, feel or recognise her body.

Sacks considers 'proprioception' as a 'secret sense'; an unconscious sensory flow that connects, monitors and adjusts moveable parts of the body. If damaged, it can trigger 'positional phantoms' and negate the ability to recognise your body as your own. Sacks describes his 'disembodied' patient's response.

What I must do then, is use vision, use my eyes, in every situation where I used proprioception before. I've already noticed that I may 'lose' my arms. I think they're one place and I find they're another. This 'proprioception' is like the eyes of the body, the way the body sees itself. And if it goes, and its gone with me, its like the body's blind. My body can't 'see' itself its lost its eyes ... (1985, 49)

In my installation, I am exploring the sensory dislocations provoked by visual illusion and exaggerated by a reliance on tactile and spatial information.

I have constructed costumes that resonate with the sensuality and mystique of the female form. By entering and walking through unseen layers, my installation will hint at a psychological striptease. It will involve the participants in an erotic metamorphosis that enacts the ephemeral nature of the body and costume.



Installation emphasises the mobility of the audience; whilst seeing, touching and sensing they must move through the space. The elements inside are choreographed to allow their passage which may not at first be easily perceptible.

In moving through the installation, one embarks on a journey in which the progressive passage through the layers of clothing culminates in a 'de-materialisation' of the body. The body is the final layer which is shed on 'death'. This is suggested by the play of light and shadow and movement from darkness and density towards transparency and light. The body is rendered insubstantial — a ghostly presence.

I end this section with a poem of Pablo Neruda (1975; 167-169) which reveals the inseparability of body and costume and how eventually the body itself is shed.

'Ode to the Clothes'

Every morning you wait,  
clothes, over a chair,  
for my vanity,  
my love,  
my hope, my body  
to fill you,  
I have scarcely  
left sleep,  
I say goodbye to the water  
and enter your sleeves,  
my legs look for  
the hollow of your legs,  
and thus embraced  
by your unwearying fidelity  
I go out to tread the fodder,  
I move into poetry,  
I look through the windows,  
at things,  
men, women,  
action and struggles  
keep making me what I am,  
opposing me,  
employing my hands,  
opening my eyes,  
putting taste in my mouth,  
and thus,  
clothes,  
I make you what you are,  
pushing out your elbows,  
bursting the seams,  
and so your life swells  
the image of my life.  
You billow

and resound in the wind  
as though you were my soul,  
at bad moments  
you cling  
to my bones  
empty, at night  
the dark, sleep,  
people with their phantoms  
your wings and mine.  
I ask  
whether one day  
a bullet  
from the enemy  
will stain you with my blood  
and then  
you will die with me  
or perhaps  
it may not be  
so dramatic  
but simple,  
and you will sicken gradually,  
clothes,  
with me, with my body  
and together  
we will enter  
the earth.  
At the thought of this  
every day  
I greet you  
with reverence, and then  
you embrace me and I forget you  
because we are one  
and will go on facing  
the wind together, at night  
the streets of the struggle,  
one body,  
maybe, maybe, one day motionless.

## Section 2:

### Following a Thread

The progress of my visual arts practice.

'Fashion is the Avant-Garde of Circumstance' (Diana, Vreeland in Shozo; 1983, 19)

I have outlined the concepts that inform my work and have ended the previous section with a description of an installation that is the synthesis of two years work. As these ideas, however, have evolved through an interaction of art practice and analysis, I now return to the beginning, to retell the visual development of my project.

I began working with a red-haired violinist and as she fiddled, I wove costumes that could move with her as she pulled the bow down across the strings. I used copper wire and lilac pleated organza to encircle her body. The inverted crinoline-like structure resembled a sea creature with pincers. At the same time, I worked spider-like in the dark space beneath the art college stairwell, projecting images in the dark across suspended and fragmented organza surfaces. I experimented using architectural images, religious icons and slides of my Honours work.

I was trying to capture the image across a range of delicate, moving screens that extended the picture through 3-d space. These screens of silk and organza, then, could either become or suggest costumes. Under the staircase, I began to be able to identify and anticipate people's footsteps; I considered how sound could relate to the images.

At this time, the projectors were still visible and I began to think of the possibilities of using a moving image to cast more ephemeral shadows. I had read Marinetti's manifesto which included using 'light and movement to destroy the materiality of the bodies'. (Marinetti in Ross; 1984, 532)

Life drawing is an integral part of my work in trying to understand the body and movement. In one class, a dancer worked with us so that we considered our own

bodies and movement through space. The class included seven guitarists from the Conservatorium. In small groups, we drew sounds of the art college flexing with human movement, our marks depicting voices, steps, doors opening. Our group was beneath the stairwell and later the guitarists used the marks as a script to play music. It made me consider in more detail the connection between sound, movement and visual imagery.

For my first critique, I needed to bring together these experimental beginnings I arranged two performances involving the red-headed violinist and identical twin belly-dancers. The titian fiddler, wearing a sheer gown and without instrument, moved along a cat-walk flanked by four screens at varying depths. From a central position, I projected slides of my honour's figures across her body, using a dissolve and fade device to create a flux between images. Her arms were extended with poles, from which hung veils of muslin. As she moved her arms across, then away from her body, the images expanded and contracted, camouflaging her outline.

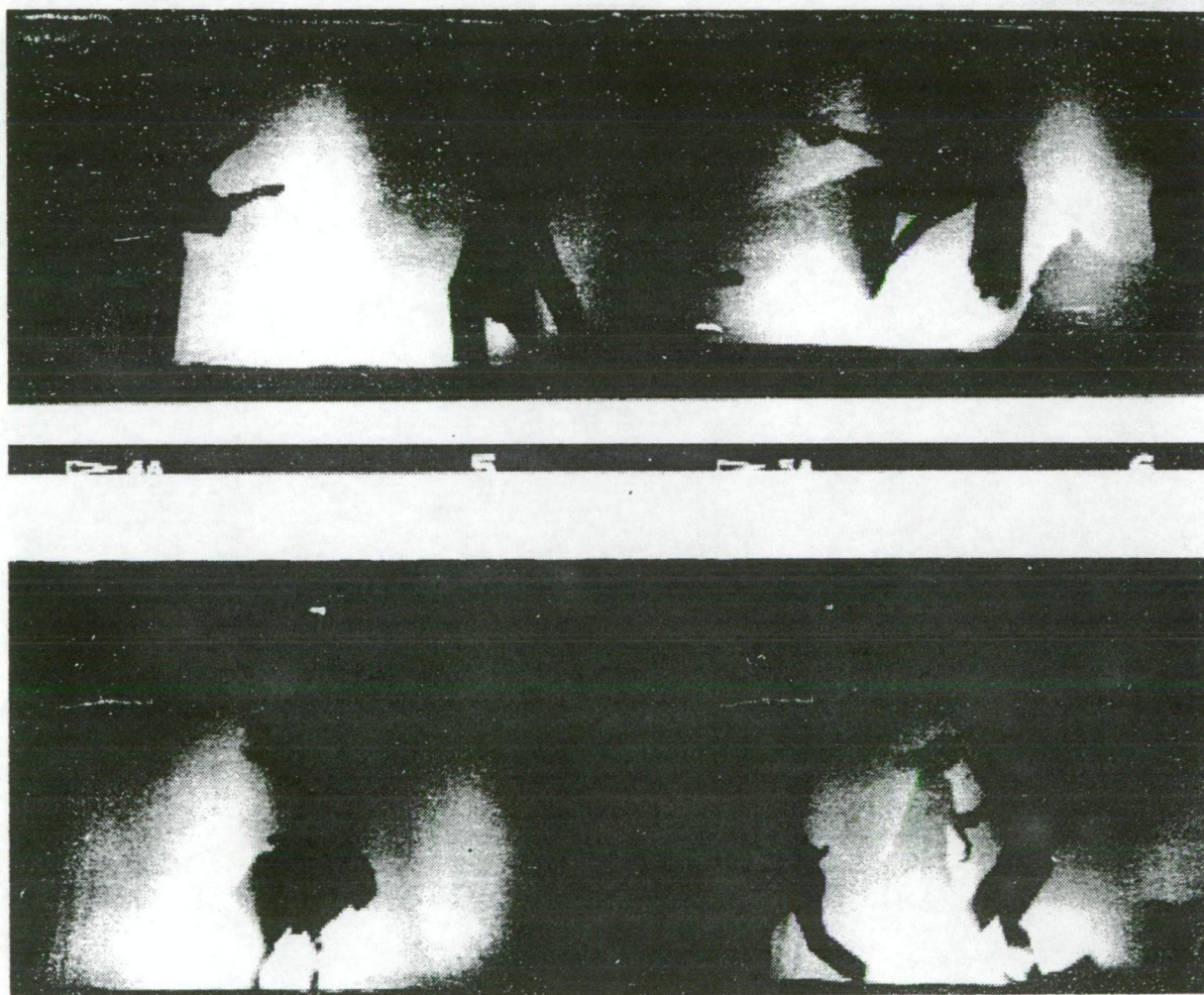
The twins performed a repetitive sequence with veils of 'mystique' that were gradually lowered to reveal their faces. I have always been fascinated by twins and their symbolic relationship to the idea of doubles and the 'uncanny other'. Across the veils, I projected images of the art school dissolving into images of religious architecture and sacramental objects. I wanted to play with the idea of giving a familiar space an unearthly presence. The dissolve/fade device allowed me to focus on the metamorphosis; the transition between familiar and unfamiliar worlds.

I also presented some fragmented costumes. One was made from multiple, swivelling screens of gold and dark organza, calico and thin suspension of copper wire. I experimented with the ways that the colour and density of a projected image changed across the different fabrics. I used curved screens and layers of metallic fly wire to build up layers of transparency. When the projector was turned off, the costumes lost their magic and returned to being a muted collection of tonal materials and mesh visors. I wanted to explore the transitions and their ephemeral nature.

In response to feedback I received at the critique, I considered using less specific and easily recognised images and carefully planned how to frame the work, focusing on which angle I wanted it to be seen from. Suggestions were made that the projectors could have been set in different locations, even hidden from view. I found it easier to

work with the veil myself than choreograph other people's movements but this left me unable to see what I was doing.

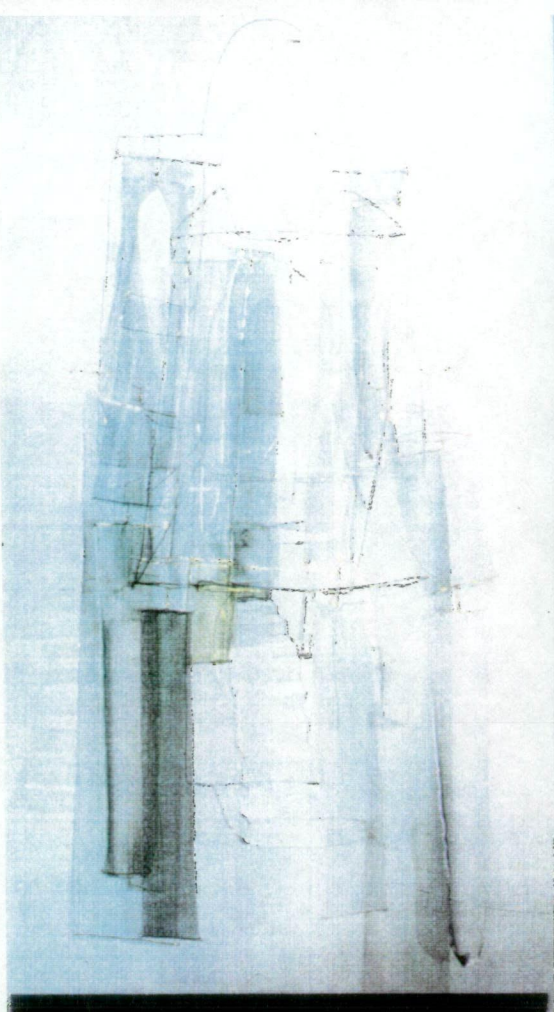
I looked at the work of Meryl Tankard with her projections across the bodies of dancers. I was able to see the production of 'Aurora' and was particularly interested in the scene 'Men Searching the Labyrinth' (Act 11, 1) in which the scale of the dancers' shadows was manipulated through light and movement.



Aurora, (Lansac; 1996, 17)

In my own work, I considered that what I had been trying to do was camouflage or completely hide the body. I wanted to see the veils move of their own volition. Around this time, I began reading about art of the 'empty dress' and exploring ways that it could suggest the connections between the body and the psyche. I also read a story, related to this theme by Peter Carey 'Peeling' in Exotic Pleasures





Performance costumes, used in critique, 1995.  
Copper, wire, organza, mesh, mirror, calico.

A mans anticipation of slowly seducing and undressing a woman is ruptured by her confiding intimate details of her life and work at an abortion clinic. He peels away her underwear and unzips a male body within a female skin. Beneath another layer, she begins to disappear completely. I began experimenting with a second-hand wet-suit , that had belonged to a man, to feel what it was like to slip inside someone's skin.

My next project was to be involved in a performance for the annual food sculpture night. This gave me an opportunity to experience what it was like to shed one skin and reveal another. 'Cafe La Touche' was based on an episode from 'La Cucina Futurista' a futurist dinner party in which every sense was assailed with edible provocations. Our performance entailed selecting incongruous tactile costumes. To this end we visited the subterranean wardrobe of the Playhouse Theatre. The racks of clothing and cacophony of wigs, gloves, hats, masks and props are kept in a cellar beneath the creaking boards of the stage. The diversity of the gowns reflects the myriad of plays in which they have been used and lives they have conjured up. Exquisite Egyptian gowns rub shoulders with polar bear suits, quintets of pink tulle, tin foil armour, feather boas and military uniforms. Our selection consisted of four brown zip-up grizzly bear suits and an equivalent number of blue satin sheer evening dresses. During the performance, eight audience members were blindfolded and served by bears that shed their skins to reveal blue satin gowns. The waiters served their blind customers with chocolate containing savoury surprises and enticed their nostrils with perfume, fresh oranges and fish. They were prodded with feathers and felt the shape of hot porridge. I found it a useful exercise in acting out intellectual ideas and trying to create a surprising and evocative synthesis of the senses. It did however make me aware that losing your sense of vision can make you feel extremely vulnerable in an unknown situation.

My initial approach in the first semester, had been to take a broad experimental approach to my work; combining sculpture with performance, music and life drawing. From my experiences, I was able to discover the crucial elements that I wanted to pursue, in particular the use of the empty dress to articulate the connections between the body and psyche.

In the second semester, I was involved in the city councils 'No Vacancy' Project with Peter Wilson. In six vacant sites, artists were able to exhibit their work to



the public I aimed for the project to be a parody on window shopping with automated costumes and mannequins suggesting an interior life. I wanted to contrast the ephemeral, diaphanous costumes on which I had been working with the cold, hard, menacing tools that Peter made. Although the project proved problematic and the resulting displays too complex, I learned a lot about sensor devices, surveillance techniques and lighting/shadow projections. Parts of the work that did interest me were the ways in which the costumes changed their appearance by day or night, revealing more or less of their interior. Following the project, I read Margaret Plant's 'Shopping for the Marvellous' (1993) which made me think about using glass as medium of both desire and restraint.

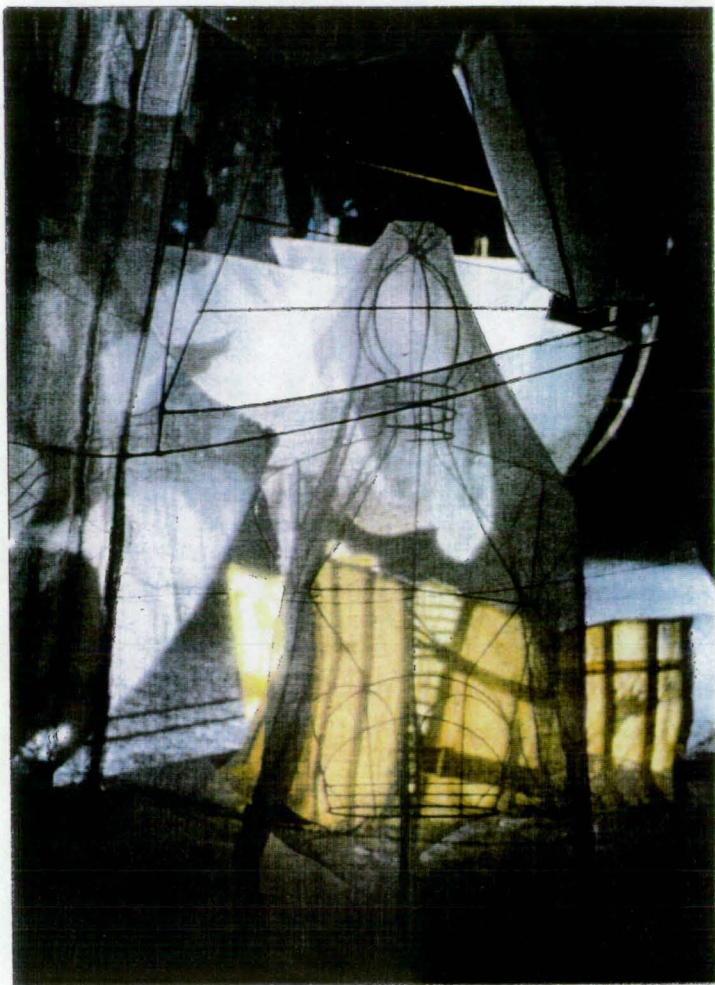
I began to use mirrors in my costumes to reflect the gaze of the voyeur. I transferred images of hands onto white satin garments to suggest their tactile nature. I sanded holes into the mirrored surfaces so that I could project images through the mirror and hide their source. I combined these elements in a three-dimensional satin sketch — 'The Changing Room' — presented at the second critique.

In presenting my earlier work, I had experienced difficulties in controlling the angle of viewing, proximity of the audience and boundaries of the space. To determine these factors, I constructed a suspended, red satin viewing tent that people entered one by one. Light glimmered in anticipation through the surface of the red satin skirt.

On entering the darkened space, you faced a larger than life female costume, tiered to reveal underlying layers. Its corset was made from cream and black satin, edged with copper. At its core was a pulsating neon crucifix, reflected and projected across mirrors. The garment created a cream satin wall that divided the interior. Beyond it were layers of satin with a projector hidden behind a mirror. The projected images were captured across the suspended screens of the satin costume and moved as people entered and left.

I began to think about constructing a labyrinth of interconnected changing rooms with oscillating lights and shadows. I needed to address the difference between the interior and exterior surfaces of my work so that upon entry the viewer could be surprised.

The 'Changing Room' was a temporary structure which had an innate ability to collapse. I needed to construct a safe, stable, wooden skeleton on which to hang the



Sections of 'No Vacancy'  
Installation 1995  
Shade cloth, corset, wire,  
mesh, projector, copper,  
muslin.

flesh and skin of my costumes. The work suggested a 'tableaux vivant' and I re-read 'Nights at the Circus' (1984) by Angela Carter to imagine her elaborate and evocative costume sets. The shape of the 'Changing Room' was too predictable and I thought of perhaps constructing it in the shape of a garment which could be entered, similar to Antoni Miralda's work. This also reminded me of Gunter Grass 'The Tin Drum' in which the layers of a peasant's skirt provide shelter and unseen consequences for a runaway man. The piece was a step towards tactility and being able to walk through costume.

At the end of the year, I planned a research trip to Europe to access more costumes, installations and set design.

In Barcelona I planned to visit the National Gallery, Contemporary Art Space, Textile Institute, and to journey to view the Black Madonna of Montserrat. It was, however, a chance encounter that was most valuable in provoking ideas for my installation.' Within the Gothic heart of the city, in the Museu D'Historia de la Ciutat, I discovered an installation based on the uncovering of Tutankahmon's tomb. The exhibition was laid out in the same dimensions as the tomb; leading the viewers suspensefully down a long corridor towards an antechamber. Against the low walls, the combination of Howard Carter's evocative script and Harry Burton's photography recreated the tension of entering the atmospheric chamber. The journey led into the internal rooms which housed the body; swathed in layers of cloth within concentric caskets. (See Section 1, p 7) For my installation, I thought of using a passage through successive interiors that could sequentially reveal hidden secrets. I also considered the Egyptian custom of including material objects for the afterlife, such as boats, treasures and garments and whether they could suggest an uncanny presence.

I was also able to view a retrospective Antoni Miraldi exhibition which included images of a giant walk-through dress.

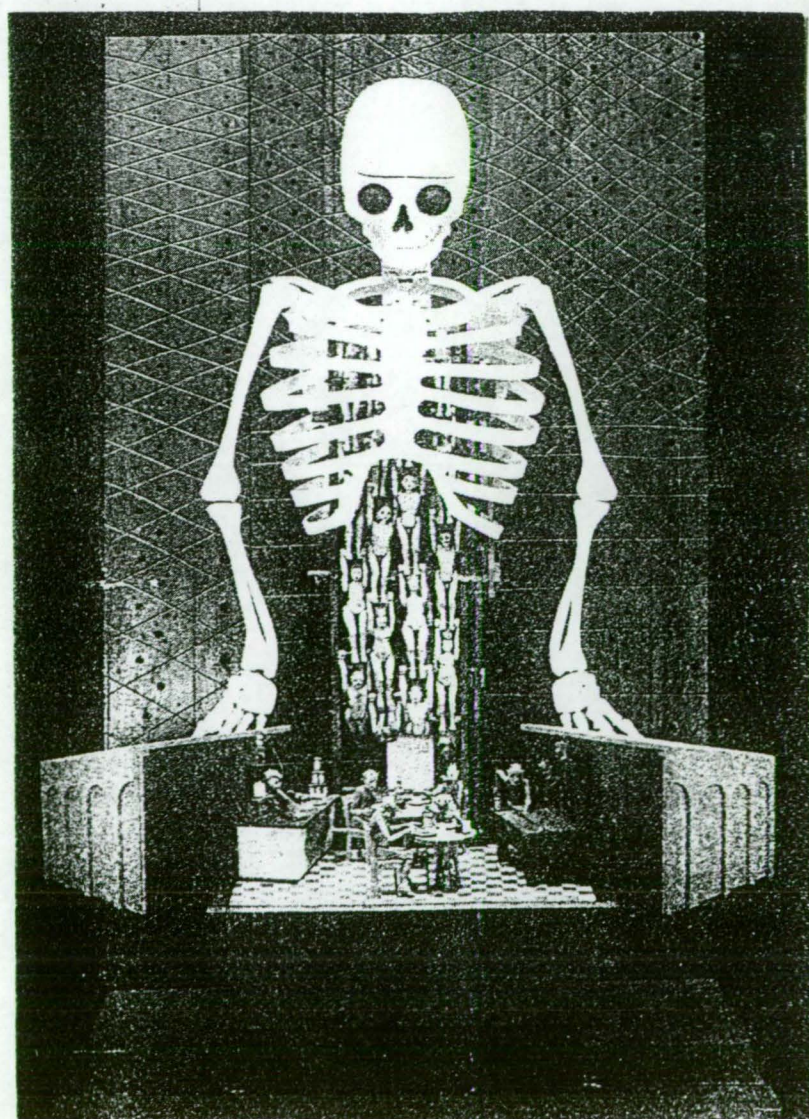
In London, I went to view the costume display at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The elaborate ornate and eclectic collection still, for me, remained a static experience with the gowns enclosed within glass; untouchable and devoid of scent.

The darkened interior of the Museum of Costume in Bath revealed a series of visually splendid tableaux vivant, encased in glass. Again, however, I found a purely visual experience less satisfying. I want to be able to touch the gowns and physically





Court Dress of  
Italian Brocaded silk, 1745.  
Museum of Costume, Bath.



'The Last Judgement'  
Paul Spooner.  
Carnival Mechanical Theatre  
Covent Garden, London.

imagine what it would be like to slip beneath their skin. I needed to hear more intimate detail of what it was like to fit inside the costume, how it would restrict or empower me, where was it worn and what happened to the person on that particular occasion.

Another crucial experience for my work was visiting and activating the Carnival Mechanical Theatre in Covent Garden. Its vivid and macabre range of automata turned the cogs of my own imagination. My costumes could potentially have a moving life of their own, all the better to project an imaginary owner. The Theatre itself contained 'magical' devices where bodies opened up to reveal miniature anthropomorphic figures with fiendish intent. Gowns parted to reveal copper sheathed lyre birds and compressed air tickled fingers pushed onto orifices.

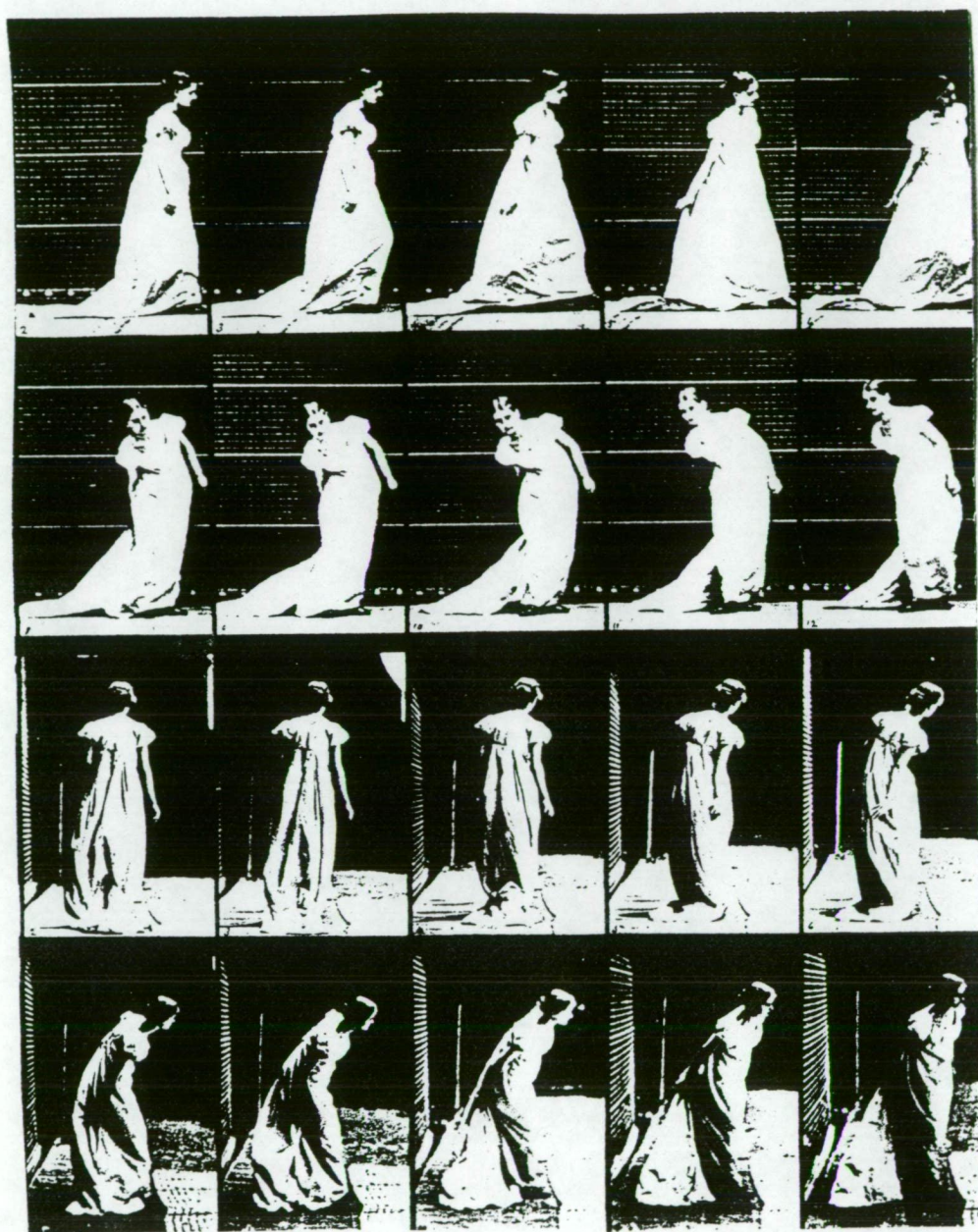
I also saw Mat Collishaw's work 'Enchanted Wardrobe' (1995) at the Camden Arts Centre. Behind the antique wardrobe's two-way mirror lay an alluring forest glade. As the viewer approached, a motion sensor switched off the light, confronting the person with their own reflection and loss of an imaginary world. I began to think of the potential of using two-way mirrors within my costumes but as part of an installation which allowed the audience to physically explore a fantasy world, not just be visually tantalised.

On my return to Hobart I visited the Folk Museum 'Narnya' and realised, ironically, that the costumes that I needed to see and touch were minutes from the art college. I was able to lift wedding gowns and view the underlying bustles and crinolines. I discovered a vast array of Victorian gowns charting the relentless march of time in their shifting necklines and bodices. Garments made from iridescent beetle's wings mingled with gossamer chemises and vice like stained corsets. I was able to draw patterns and squeeze through racks of velvet and embossed fabrics.

At the same time I began experimenting with kinetic devices from the Cabaret Mechanical Theatre. I also began to make optical devices such as zoetropes and praxinoscopes to create movement on a miniature scale. I used Muybridge's images of veiled women to animate the illusion.

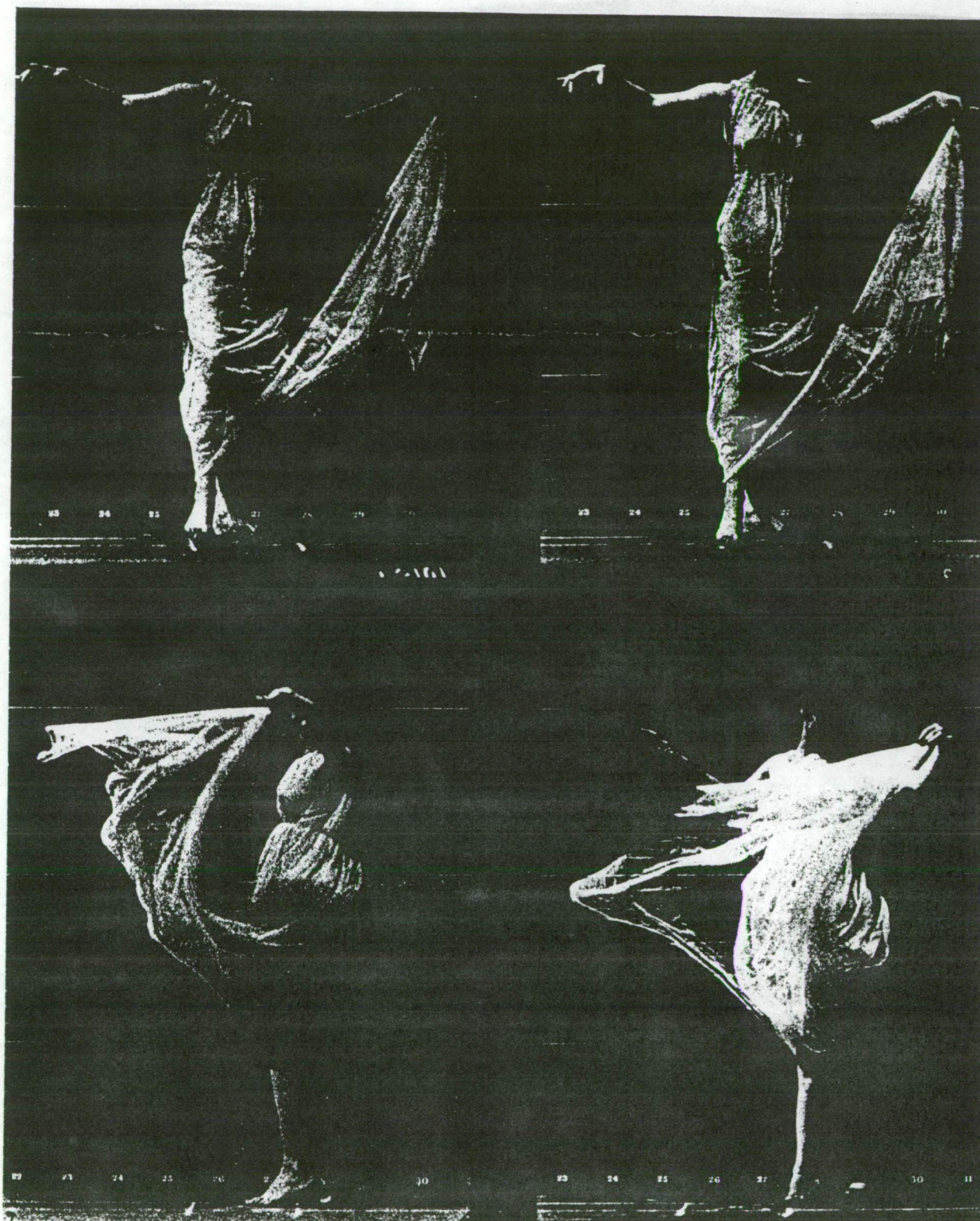
I looked at contemporary artists who had adapted Muybridge's ideas (see pages 26-27) particularly in relation to the empty dress. I was inspired by Heidi Kumao's work in adapting early cinematic devices.





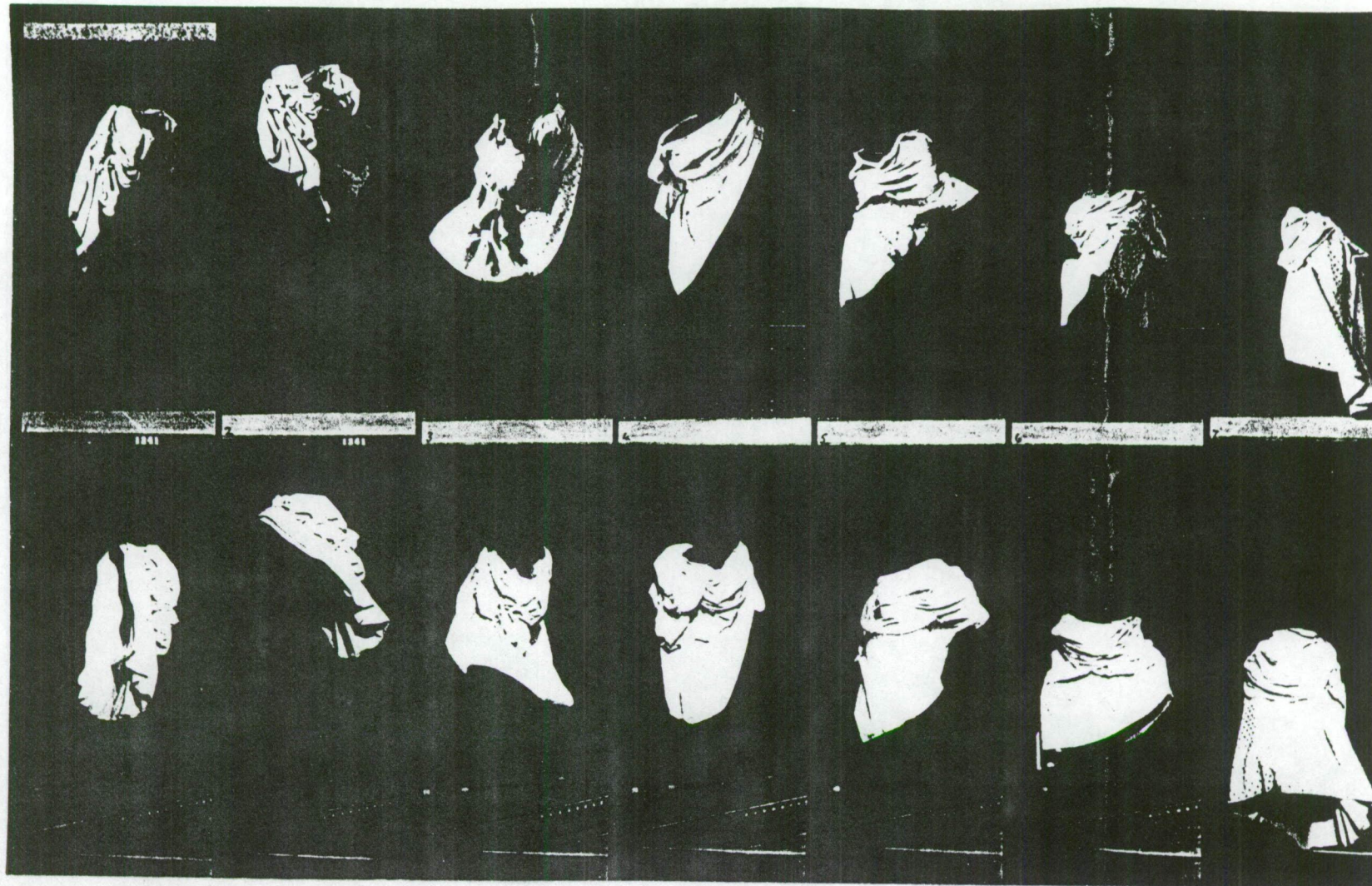
Animal Locomotion, 1887.  
Eadweard Muybridge, (Hass; 1976, 61)





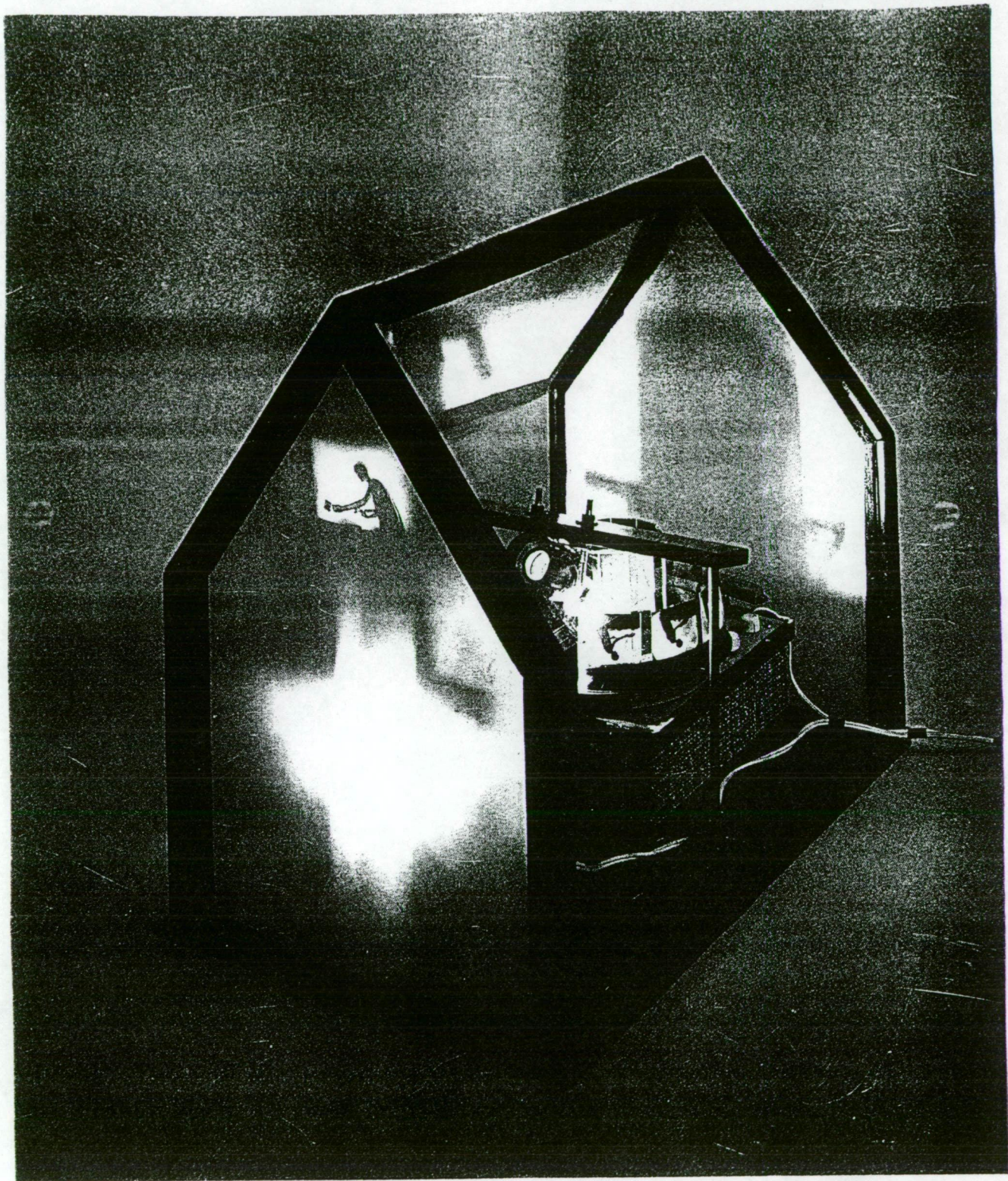
Animal Locomotion, 1887.  
Eadweard Muybridge, (Reynolds/Sheldon; 1991, 54)





The Other Series: After Muybridge, 1990.  
Kathy Grove  
(Reynolds/Sheldon; 1991, 58)





'Dusk'. 1990-91  
Heidi, Kumao  
(Reynolds/Sheldon; 1991, 83)



At this point, I was considering how to frame the entry into the installation the 'Changing Room'. I found an old wardrobe and removing part of the back, made it the entrance to my studio so that I could experience what it felt like to cross that threshold daily. I was inspired by C. S. Lewis' wardrobe; the threshold to Narnia with its femme fatale bearing Turkish delight.

An interesting anecdote was provided by Peter Hill. Within an English prison, the condemned man's cell was stark, the solitary piece of furniture being a wardrobe. On the day of his execution he was led to the gallows through the wardrobe, a strange perversion of C. S. Lewis tale of 'Narnia', in The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe. (1980)

The wardrobe can mirror the way that clothing gives access not just to the physical body but to intimate psychological secrets.

In the Poetics of Space Bachelard considers wardrobes as images of secrecy and intimacy.

'Wardrobes with their shelves ... are veritable organs of the secret psychological life' (1969; 78)

As the 'inner space of an old wardrobe is deep' (Bachelard; 1969, 78) so, it can be filled with a 'mute tumult of memories' (Milosz quoted in Bachelard; 1969, 79). Bachelard quotes Anne de Touville's poem to suggest that its doors are not always unlockable.

'On regardait souvent sa porte brune et noire Sans clefs!...C'était étrange!- On revait bien des fois Aux mysteres dormant, entre ses flancs de bois'

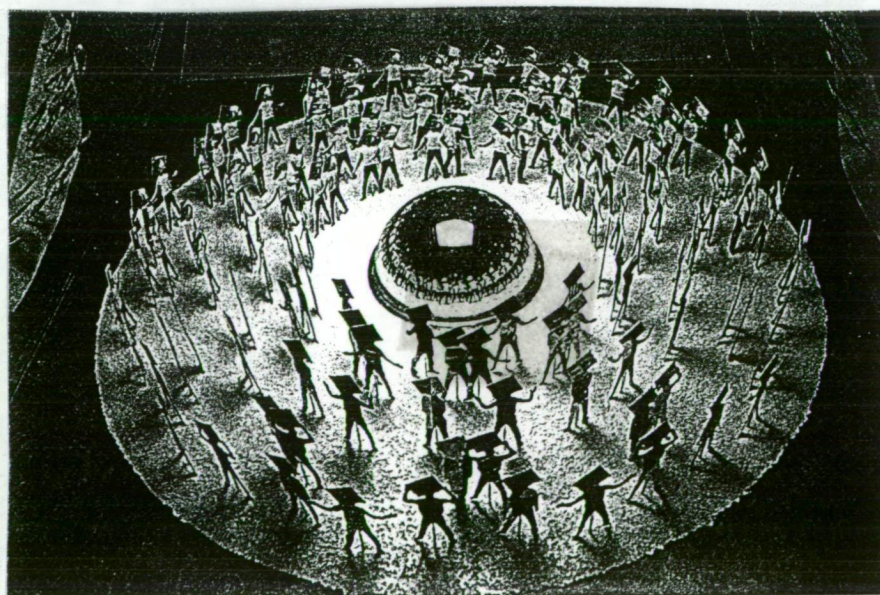
'Often we used to look at its brown and black door. No keys!...It was strange! Many a time we dreamed of the mysteries lying dormant between its wooden flanks. (1969:80)

I was also crossing thresholds between miniature and giant enveloping scales. I built marquets for the installation but found I couldn't make decisions without constructing life size walk through tactile models.



My next research trip was to Sydney to see the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras costumes at the Powerhouse museum. I am interested in the phenomenon of cross-dressing and how sexuality is rendered across clothing. The Mardi Gras exhibition was elaborate, exuberant, sensual with loud objects clamouring for attention. The costumes were out of the closet and explicitly projected sexuality. I realised through seeing the work that my own focus was more for mystery; of things partially glimpsed from the periphery, ambiguously veiled.

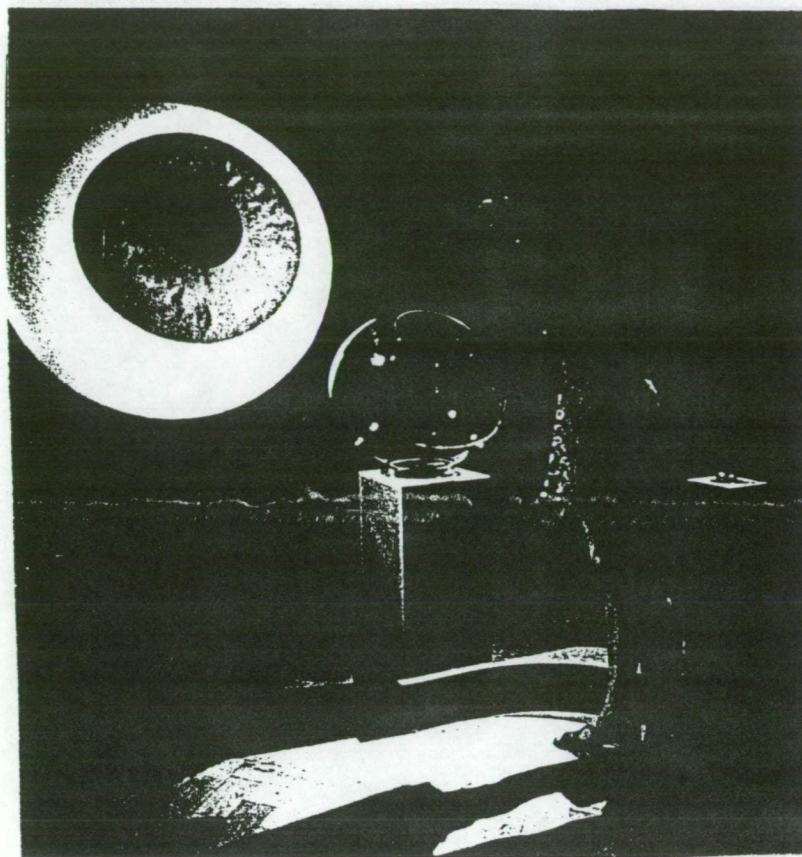
I was also able to see the 'Phantasmagoria: Pre-Cinema to Virtuality' (1996) exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney. The exhibition made links between the earlier notions of magic and enchantment in pre-cinema and current forays into virtual reality. I have become fascinated with optical devices such as the zoetrope and praxinoscope. I value the way that they breathe life into inanimate objects and project ephemeral images that suggest a fleeting trace of human presence. Toshio Iwai's work 'Time Stratum II' (1985) included 120 self-images with a giant eye, that rotated and danced under stroboscopic light to produce incredible illusions. Agnes Hegedus' interactive computer graphic projection 'Handsight' (1992)



Time Stratum II  
Toshio Iwai  
(Phantasmagoria; 1996, 28)

involved the viewer in tracing a visual journey through an invisible landscape by holding and guiding a 'blind' eye.





Handsight, 1992.  
Agnes Hegedus  
(Phantasmagoria; 1996, 11)

On my return to Hobart, I constructed a tunnel beyond the threshold of the wardrobe. I wanted to create a transition from dark, opaque layers to light translucent screens that could suggest a movement through clothing and ultimately the body.

In the entrance I hung a screen made from a black fur coat slit in two, attached to dark satin. The viewer would have to move through this layer to encounter the next; a red velvet dress extended outwards, parted in two. Both the fur coat and red dress were second-hand, imbued with their own scent and I was experimenting with wearing them out on occasions before using them in my installation.

It was not these second-hand garments but a size x small faded denim Levi Strauss jacket that added an unexpected layer to my work. I had intellectually and visually begun dealing with issues of clothing as 'memento mori' - a trace of human presence beyond death. A friend lent me his blue denim jacket, which I had worn in Sydney, released from the torrential rain and gloom of a Tasmanian late-autumn. The jacket was tight across my body, fitting a smaller man but I wore it remembering my friend when the temperature dropped and I drew his garment around me. I returned to Hobart. The night after the day of the Port Arthur Massacre, I found out that my friend had hanged himself. The events are inexorably meshed in my memory. That night I turned on all the lights in the house and was unable to even face looking at his jacket, let alone to touch it. Later, his two ex-lovers washed his body and dressed it in a dark

green silk shirt and black trousers. The last time I saw him he was surrounded by satin, his face discoloured, distorted. I began to realise the gulf between intellectually playing with an idea and feeling grief in your body. I had wanted to look for a language that expresses the senses but until that moment had been unprepared to understand the physical impact of death. It made me think of the Jewish tradition of tearing a piece of your clothing on a friend's death, as if part of your body had been severed. A Hindu speaker at the Port Arthur ceremony spoke of not grieving for the body as it is like a costume that is cast off on death.

In the following months, I constructed wooden screens in order to hang corridors of fabric that could envelop the viewer, I also made a miniature piece for the 'Something to do with Ears' sculpture exhibition at the Conservatorium (1996). (See Appendix) Called 'Velvet Ultrasound' the work suggested the absent form of a woman or violin. The interior praxinoscope lured the viewer through layers of veridian velvet. At the same time, I made a costume for the 1996 Art School Ball and was able to experiment with movement, dance and lighting, at the event.

For my third critique, I installed part of a 'tunnel' with the dark fur and red velvet layers masking a corset with a peephole device. Through the peephole, viewers could glimpse a veiled woman, rotating on a praxinoscope. A light aimed at the praxinoscope cast its fluctuating shadow across the far wall. I saw the crucial importance of lighting in animating the layers of costume. I received a suggestion to try wiring the costumes so that someone's movement and brushing of the fabrics would be amplified. Following advice, I also looked at the underground space beneath the Theatre Royal as a potential site for the installation. Beneath the red carpet of the stalls area, to the left, is a trapdoor that leads to a labyrinth of musty stone rooms - the original theatre and 'Shades' tavern. After exploring the space and anticipating the difficulty of transporting sculpture and lighting through a trap-door into a wet environment, I decided against the venue. The space was too full of its own memories, traces and scents to enable me to present my own message.

I eventually chose a more neutral space, without a dominant sense of architecture, scent or traces of human presence, I was then able to create my own environment and I had four weeks to negotiate the space.



Winning costume designed  
for 'Future Kitch' Art School  
Ball, 1996. Net, feathers,  
mirror, cream bombs, bra  
top, copper, steel.





I constructed a white gallery wall, as an initial facade; with the wardrobe as the threshold to an interior world. Inside the installation, I positioned the red dress as a lure to entice people across the entry point. Once through the wardrobe, I wanted the audience to immediately touch the garments, before they were fully aware of what they could visually perceive. The first steps are into a darkness and density of fur and soft fabrics. A sound is concealed within the coat and a lingering scent. I used some barely visible materials so that touch would come as a surprise. I choreographed how I wanted people to move through the space, so that tactility would be their cue to movement. By the use of a series of changed directions, perspectives and shifting reflections, I wanted to suggest the elusive and transitory nature of the body and costume. I have also used sound to suggest 'unseen' presences.

As the audience progressed through the layers, I wanted to evoke a sense of intimacy by their movement into unseen realms, where their own bodies become part of the illusion. Their movement triggered lights to give brief detail of visual surfaces of the costumes. The garments become increasingly fragmented and sheer to suggest a dissolution of boundaries and a movement through the body itself. Towards the end, people are blinded by light and enter a spacious realm of white diaphanous materials, imprinted with flickering shadows. I now move to the final section which places my work in relation to contemporary art practice.

## Section 3:

# Through the Wardrobe

## Where I situate my work in relation to Contemporary art practice

There has been a reluctance in the past to discuss costume as part of serious theoretical debate. In her article 'Dressing Down Dressing Up: The Philosophic Fear of Fashion' Hanson suggests this may be due to Western philosophy's attitude to the aesthetically impure body. As Llewellyn Negrin proposes in 'Feminism and Fashion: A Critical Appraisal'.

As a realm of disinterested pleasure the aesthetic is granted superior status to the merely physical pleasures of the senses. Fashion however, calls attentions to the physicality of the body and to its ephemeral nature. While it may seek to disguise the changing, always ageing human body, in its very transitoriness, it actually ends up underscoring the fact of mortality. (1996, 2)

However, since the 1970's, the 'body' has re-emerged in contemporary art and with the current increased concern with mortality, the 'empty dress' is poised to articulate both issues.

As Nina Felshin, editor of a recent Art Journal issue 'Clothing as Subject' points out there is currently a proliferation of the art of the 'empty dress' which is related to an interest in cultural identity. She suggests that this recent interest in clothing as a surrogate for the body is related to its role as a symbol of loss, particularly in the context of the A.I.D.S. crisis.

'It is hard not to read this art of empty clothes as a literalisation of loss or *momento mori*, a reminder of death.' (Felshin; 1995, 20)

I situate my current work within the recent proliferation of art of the empty dress.

Precursors of the art of the 'empty dress' can be found in the role of costume within the Art Nouveau, Futurist, Russian Avant-garde, Dadaist, Surrealist and Bauhaus movements. Felshin cites in particular Marcel Duchamps 'Nine Malic Molds' (1915-23), Salvadore Dali's and Rene Magritte's paintings (1930s/1940s) Jim Dine's paintings of bathrobes and 'Green Suit' (1959) Claes Oldenburg's clothing in 'The Store' and Joseph Beuys 'untitled' (1963) and ' Feltsuit' (1970).

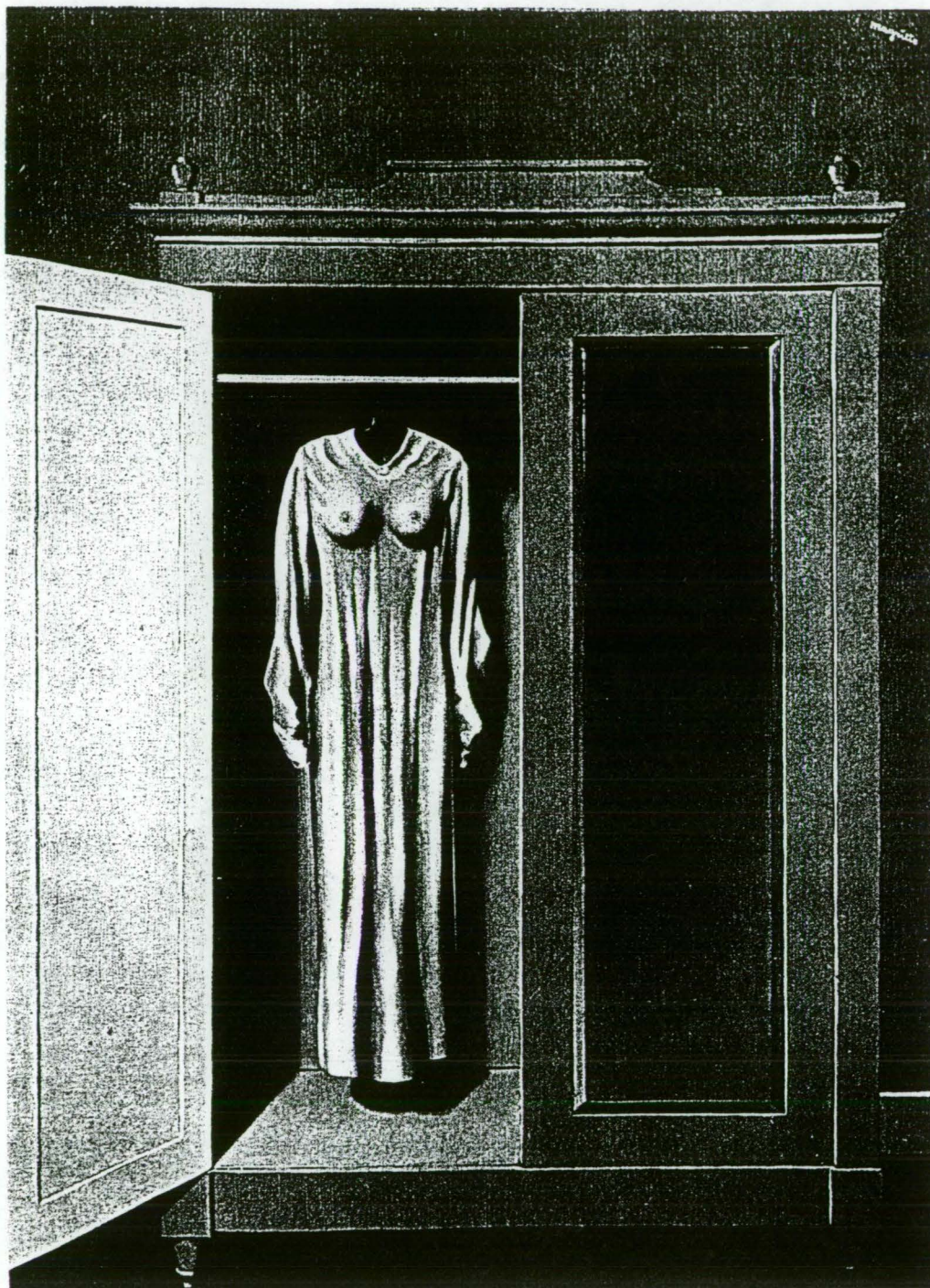
My own work relates primarily to the Surrealist and Futurist movements. Surrealism embraced fashions ability to create friction between interior and exterior worlds. Costume could reveal unexpected, hidden, unconscious desires. Mundane elements became extraordinary. The surrealists were influenced by Freud's notions of the 'fetish' and the erotic undercurrents in everyday life.

The insinuation of fashion's tissue between the naked and the profane, the nude and the profound, yielded a delicate membrane of vibration between Surrealism's abiding antipodes of art and life. (Martin; 1988, 9)

The Surrealists punctuated their work with the intimate eroticism of clothing. Rene Magritte's image evokes the dissolution of boundaries between the dress and the body. The garment hangs, imprinted with more than the memory of one body and perhaps in anticipation of the next. Meret Oppenheim's 'Suede Gloves' also suggests that clothing can take on more than just the impress of the body. The exterior skin of her gloves is fused with the interior arteries and veins of the hand, once semi-visible beneath their own skin.

The Futurist's were also fascinated with capturing traces of the body, although in this case, they were concerned with its movement through space. In my installation, I am choreographing the movement of another body through space. I want to provoke or allude to a sense of movement within the costumes. This can heighten a sense of the uncanny and emphasise the ephemeral nature of the body and costume, constantly in a state of transition.

As Marinetti stated in his manifesto (1910) 'movement and light destroy the materiality of bodies'. His work also relates to my interest in penetrating and dissolving the boundaries of the body.



'Homage to Mack Sennett', 1934.

Rene Margritte.

(Martin; 1988. 75)



Suede Gloves 1985.

Meret Oppenheim.

(Sterbak; 1991, 25)



Who can still believe in the of opacity of bodies, since our sharpened and multiplied sensitivity has already penetrated the obscure boundaries of the medium? Why should we forget in our creations the doubled power of our sight capable of giving results analogous to those of x-rays? ...Our bodies penetrate the sofas upon which we sit, and the sofas penetrate our bodies. (Marinetti in Ross:1984, 532)

In the 'Futurist Manifesto of Women's Fashion' (1920) Vincenzo Fani praises the speed, novelty and courage of creativity of women's costume. Ingenuity and daring are the most valued attributes, with traditional materials regarded as outmoded.

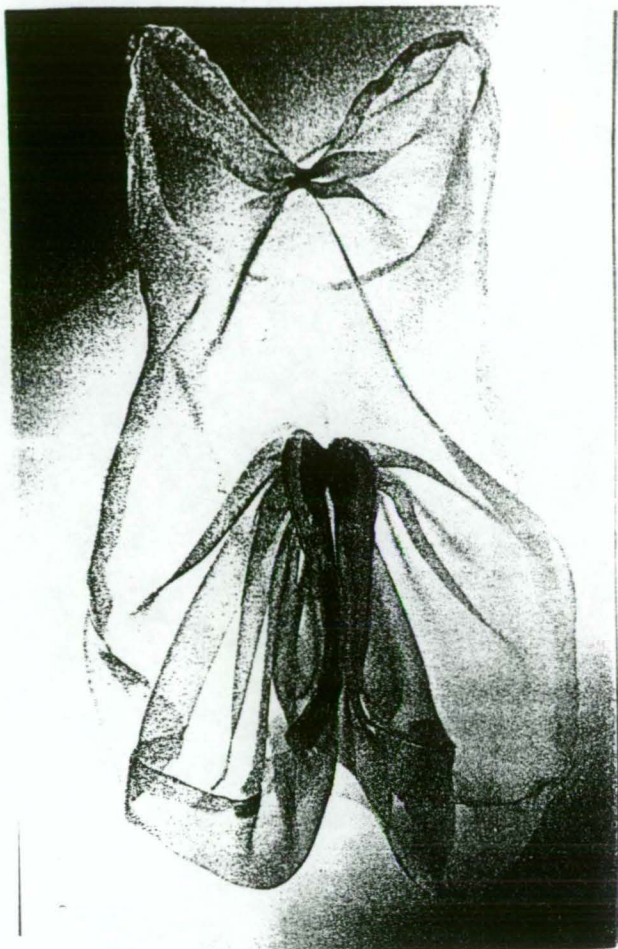
We fling open wide the doors of fashion ateliers to paper cardboard, glass, tinfoil, aluminium, ceramic, rubber, fish, skin, burlap, oakum, hemp, gas, growing plants and living animals. (Felshin; 1995, 40)

These ideas anticipate current forms of costume as sculpture, constructed from a myriad of found and incongruous materials. I admire the surprising fusion of electronic devices and sensual gadgets in wearable art.

'We will create illusionistic, sarcastic, sonorous, loud, deadly and explosive attire: gowns that trigger surprises and transformations, outfitted with springs, stingers, camera lenses, electric currents, reflectors, perfumed sprays, fireworks, chemical preparations, and thousands of gadgets fit to play the most wicked tricks and disconcerting pranks on maladroit suitors and sentimental fools. (Fani quoted in Felshin; 1995, 40)

Felshin reveals that contemporary artists using the 'empty dress' are predominantly women and gay men. Of the artists included in her article, the work of Elise Siegel, Leslie Fry, Mira Schor and particularly Magdalena Abakanowicz express similar concerns to mine.

Leslie Fry's work 'Lips Speaking Together' (1992) embraces female sensuality and suggests Luce Irigaray's ideas that women's sexuality is 'self caressing'.



'Lips Speaking Together', 1992.

Leslie Fry

Chiffon and zipper

12 x 9 x 5 inches.

(Felshin; 1995, 80)



'Dress Book' 1997.

Mira Schor

Mixed media on rice paper

63 x 15 x 7 inches.

(Felshin; 1995, 76)

Mira Schor explores notions of femininity and how they can be written across the body or slipped on and off like a costume.

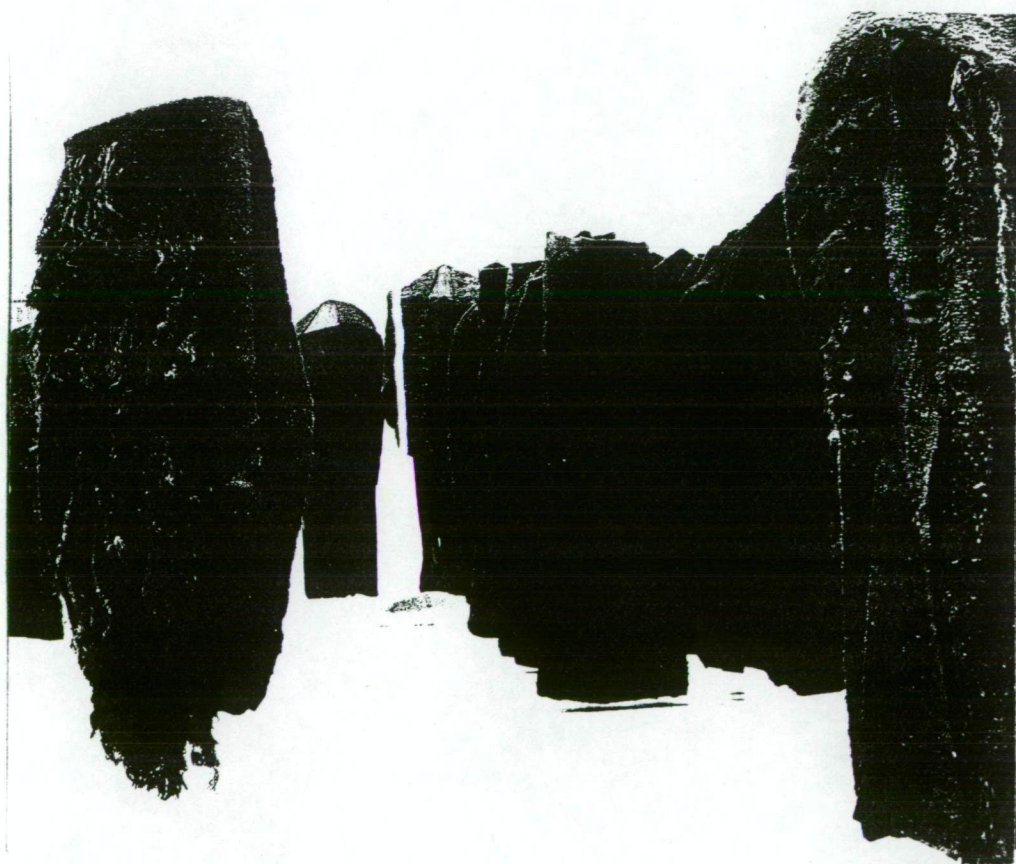
'The dress is a second skin, and in many contemporary artworks skin itself becomes another veil of costume.' (Schor in *Art Journal*; 1995, 76)



Elise Siegal's 'Portrait' series dissolves the boundaries between flesh and garment. Stitches suggest sutures, the fabric, skin.

Abakanowicz's monumental hangings are imposing and yet seem to initiate intimate contact. The dark interior spaces the 'Abakans' create conjure up the presence of the non-visual.

'They invite an experience in which vision has to be put aside. To enter the 'Abakans' and to remain inside them is to listen to darkness to feel the soft fabric as skin, to allow the sensation of interiority to become a condition. The interiors, or voids, of the Abakans are like independent organisms with realities of their own. Abakanowicz makes the invisible as essential — and as sculptural — as the visible.'  
(Brenson in Felshin; 1995, 58)



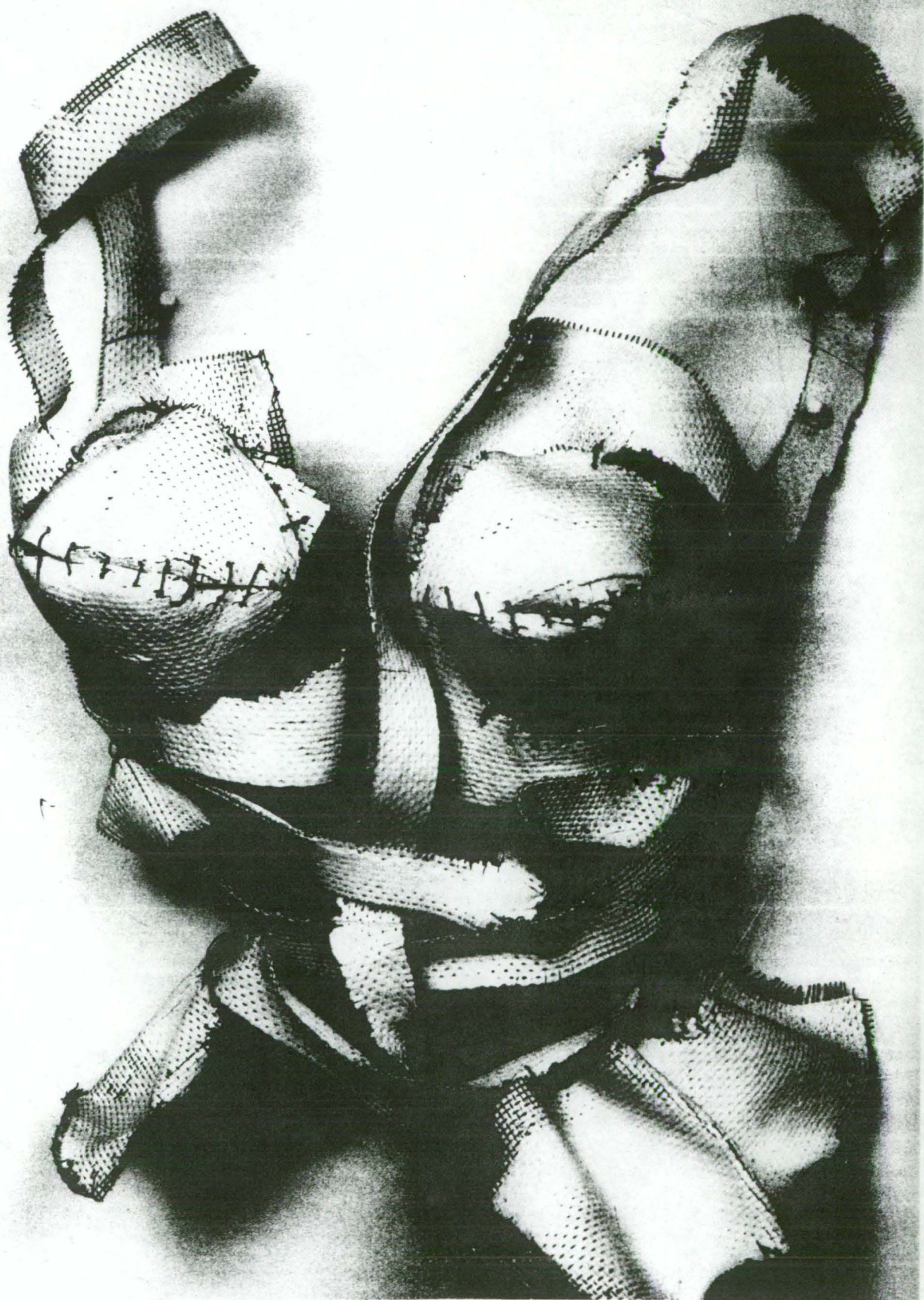
'Abakans'

Magdalena Abakanowicz

Sisal, height from 118 – 197 inches.

(Felshin; 1995, 59)





'Portrait b' 1992. Elise Siegel. Acrylic modeling paste and wire mesh

22 x 16 x 16 inches. (Felshin; 1995, 81)

Other contemporary artists who have had a pivotal effect on my work include the Canadian/Czech artist Jana Sterbak's works which are charged with danger and desire. Sterbak's images of the body are infused with an uncanny presence; inert objects are given an 'afterlife'. For example, a 'malevolent heart' leaches out radioactive fermium. She uses electromagnetic fields, electricity and automata to suggest unseen forces that breathe life into substance.

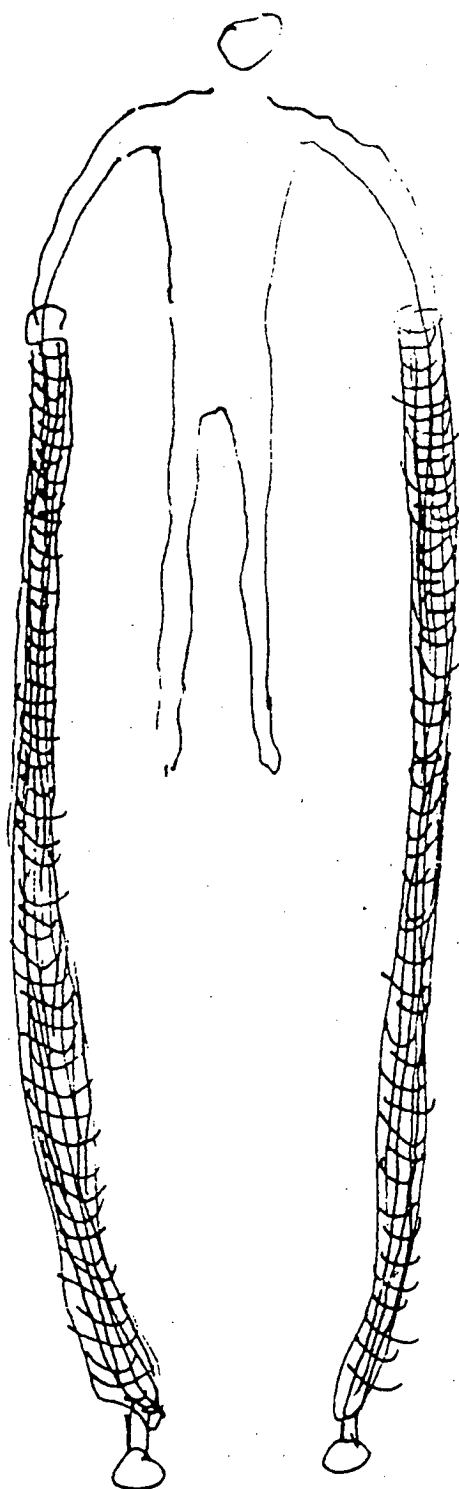
Sterbak's series 'Golem: Objects as Sensations' (1979-82) also uses transformed parts of the body as metaphors for human feeling. The work reveals her

interest in sensory hallucinations, such as phantom limbs and also queries where the boundaries of the body lie. A Golem — an artificial human — is part of Jewish mystical tradition, and is an integral part of Sterbak's work.

'In making the sensations/I build my insides/I make myself/I am at once Golem and its maker.' (Sterbak; 1991, 25)

Sterbak also approaches the body and its ability to suggest psychological states through garments. 'Vanitas: Flesh Dress for Albino Anorectic' (1987) is a garment made of slowly decaying flanksteak. (Colour Plate 2) It explicitly blurs the boundaries between flesh and costume, animal and human, interior and exterior worlds. The garment draws attention to the physicality of our bodies and inevitable mortality but also to an inherent creativity. We attempt to extend our bodies through space and time, but do not evade death.

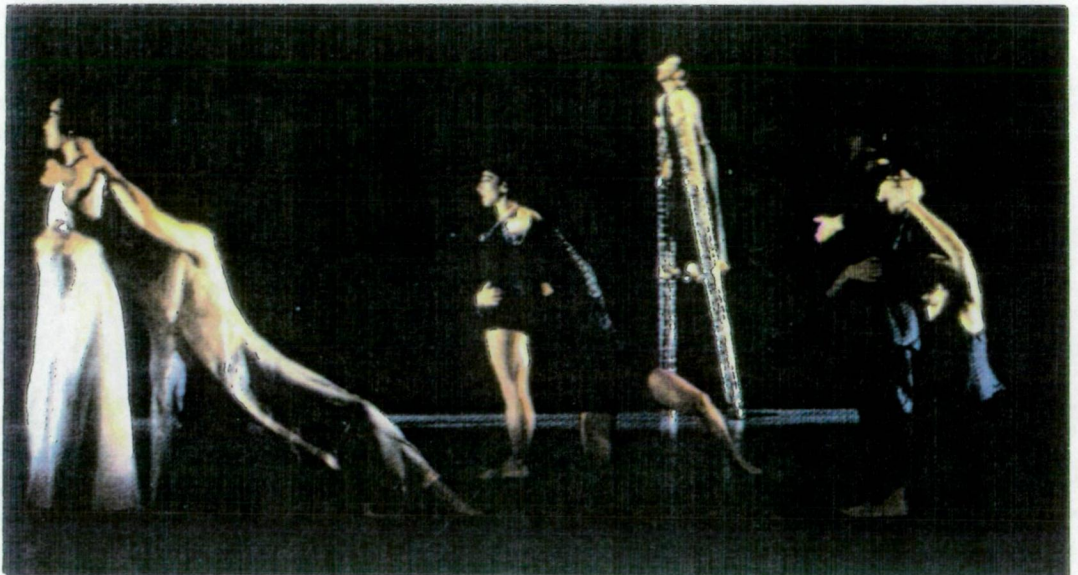
'Prothesis'. Jana Sterbak.  
(Sterbak; 1995, 132)







Jana Sterbak  
'Vanitas' Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic 1987  
(Vellietas; 1995, 8)

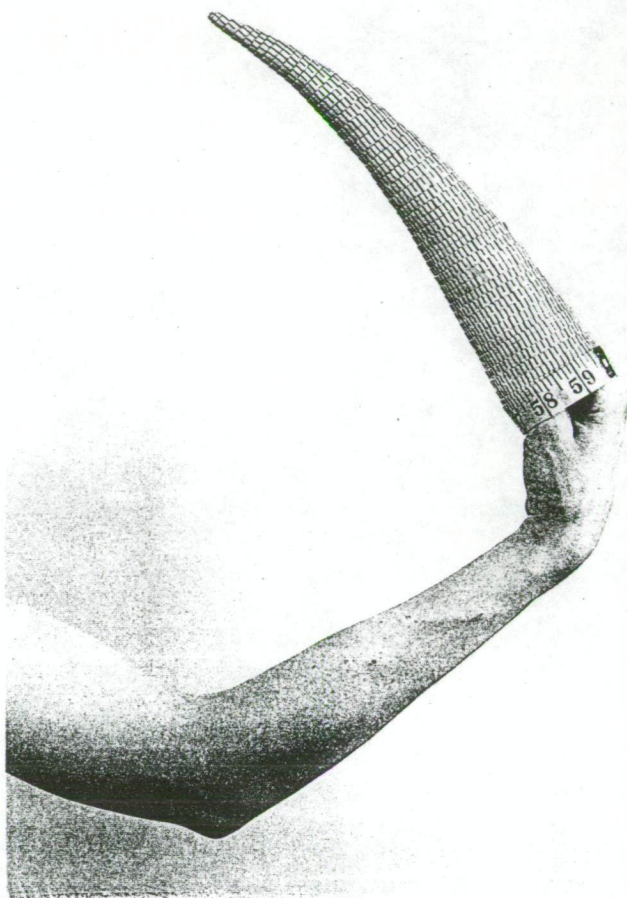


'Prothesis'(prop for dance) 1994  
(Vellietas; 1995, 133)



Mexican poet, Octavio Paz in *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1967) describes the inseparability of life and death, relating a concern for the latter as marking a passion for life in Mexico — 'a civilisation that denies death ends by denying life'. (Quoted in Tseelon; 1995, 5)

In 'Cones on Fingers' and 'Measuring Tape Cone' (1979) Sterbak extends the body with elegant if faintly menacing curled tapes. The incredibly sensitive human finger tips are encased and elongated in a manufactured instrument of measurement. The prosthetic cones add power and constriction. The nails that they obscure, are one part of the human body that continues growing after death, beyond our control.



Measuring Tape Cone 1979. Jana Sterbak

(Vellietas; 1995, 50)

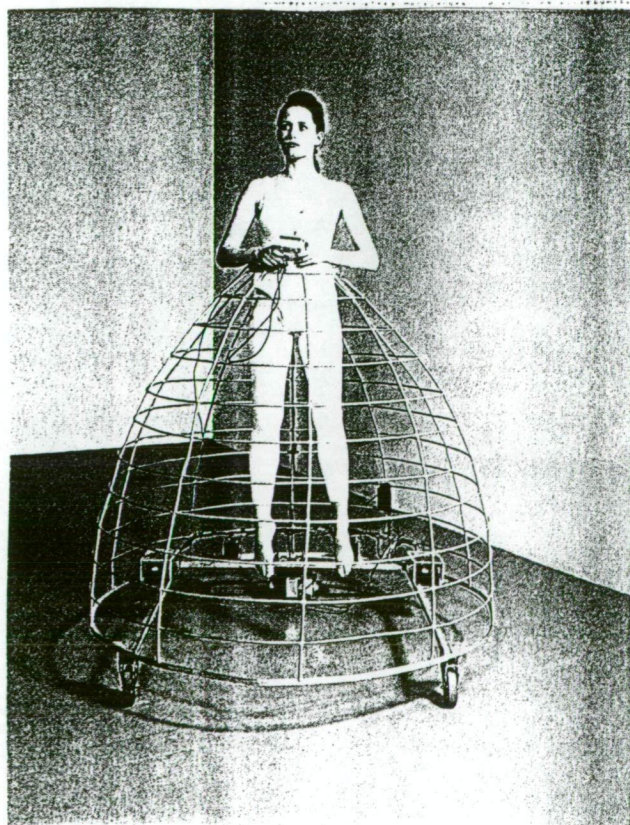
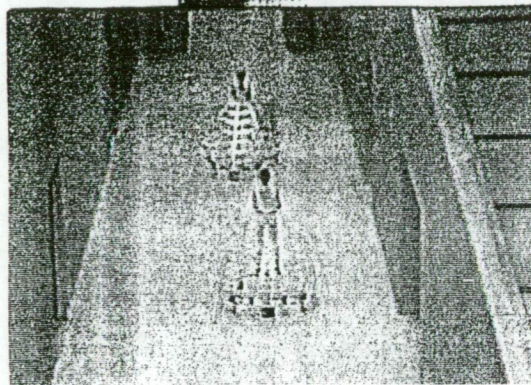
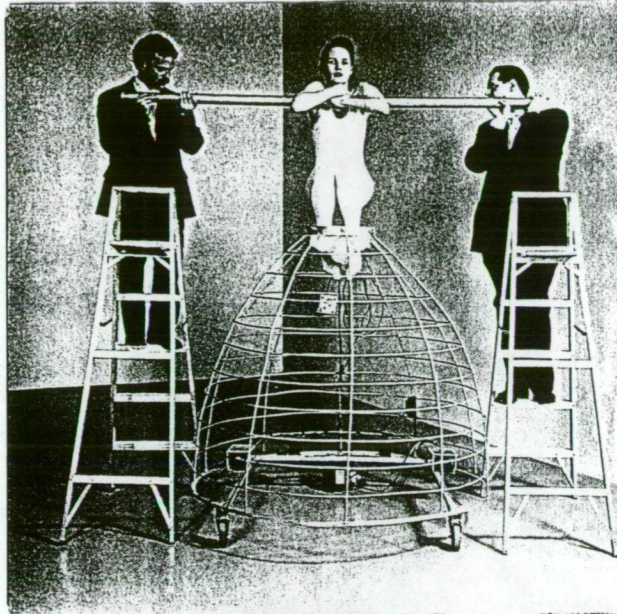
Sterbak addresses issues of control, containment and autonomy inherent in costume in 'Remote Control I and II. (1989) A woman is suspended within a giant, metallic, motorised crinoline. She both takes and surrenders control of her movements as the remote control device changes hands.

Irena Zantorska Murray describes this work in 'Domesticity and Diremption: Poetics of Space in the work of Jana Sterbak'

At one moment, the woman is in full charge of her destiny, liberated from the confines of the earth, manipulating space, shrinking it, expanding it with the touch of her finger. At the next minute, she is helpless aloft in air, with someone else manipulating space, her space. Her mobile shelter is no longer protective and liberating, it is containing and paralysing. (Murray; 1995, 34)

The irony of the deliberate surrender, relinquishing erotic control to then take it back and establish new territories reflects the ambiguity of dress.





Remote Control I and II 1989. Jana Sterbak (Aluminium, motorised wheels and batteries.) 150 cm height, 495 cm circumference.  
(Sterbak; 1991, Cat. no. 15)

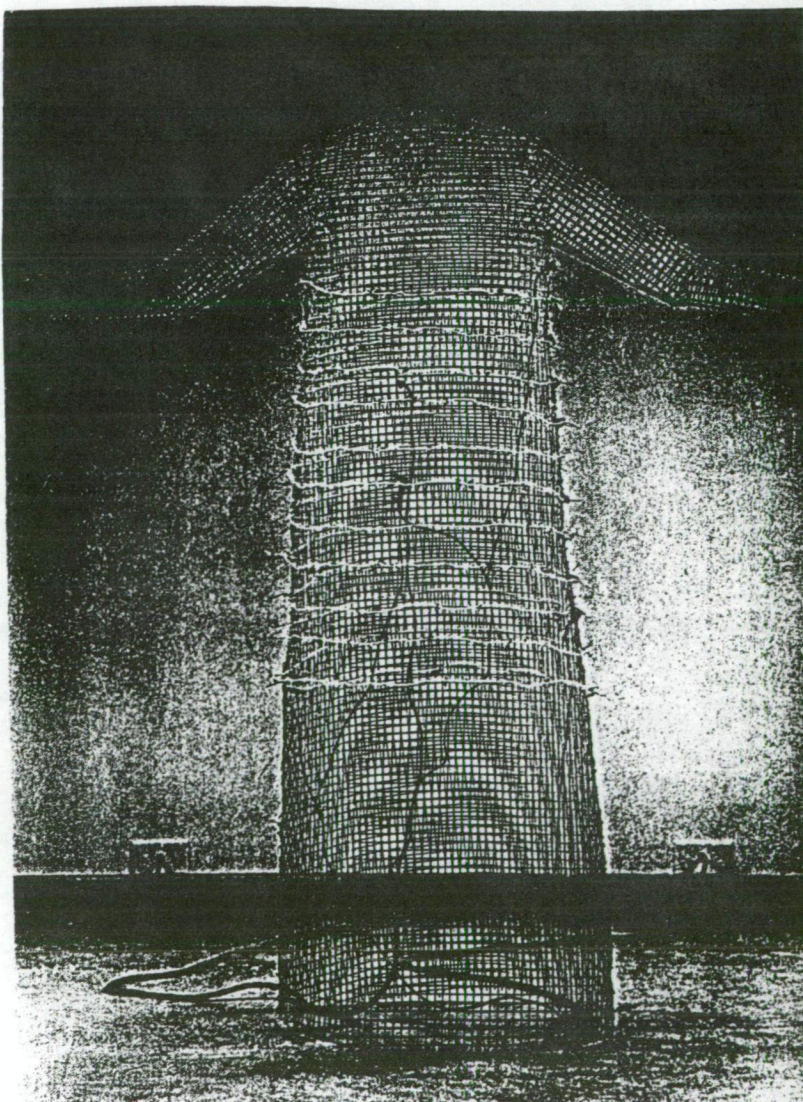


Sterbak uses the 'empty dress' in 'I want you to feel the way I do...(The Dress)' (1984-85) to enact a mythological revenge. The glowing, heating elements across the chest suggest the fate that awaited Medea's rival. The dress, activated by sensors, raises its arms in mock embrace. It becomes a wearable persona. Sterbak wants to feel what it would be like to slip under someone's skin, as easily as putting on their clothing.

'I want you to feel the way I do: There's barbed wire wrapped around my head and my skin grates on my flesh from the inside. How can you be so comfortable only 5" to the left of me? I don't want to hear myself think. feel myself move. It's not that I want to be numb. I want to slip under your skin; I will listen for the sounds you hear, feed on your thoughts, wear your clothes.' (1991, Cat. no.5)

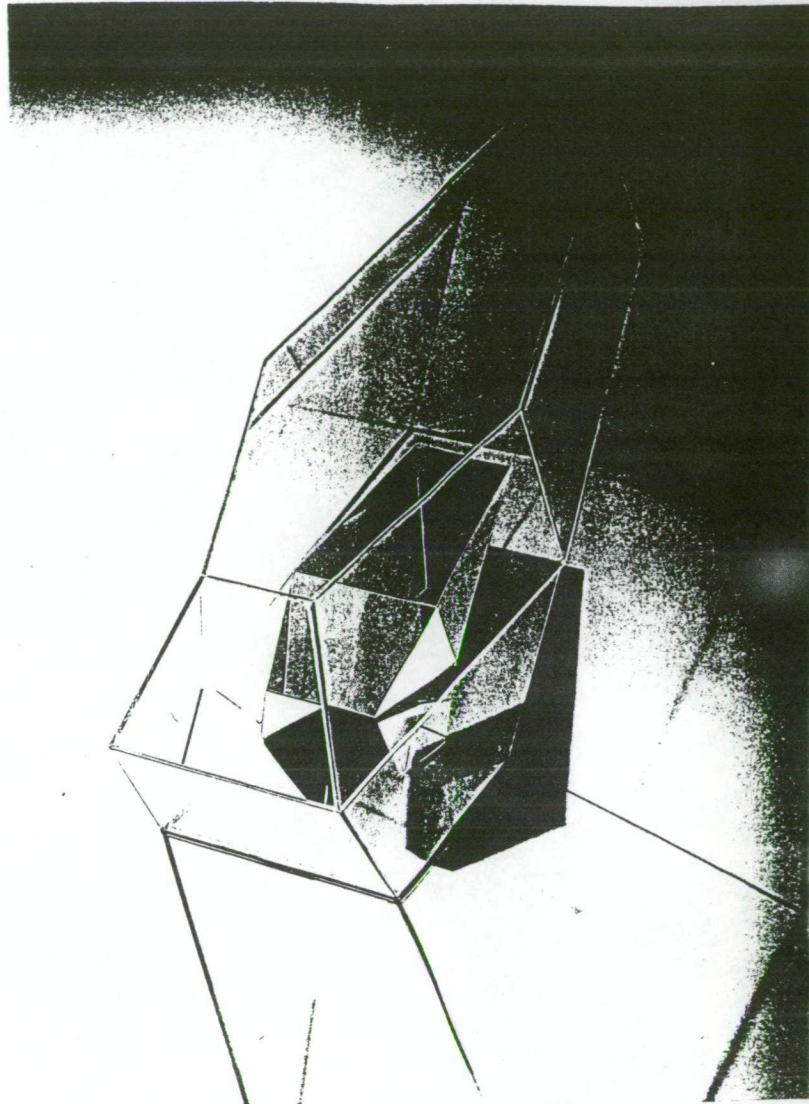
Sterbak's work penetrates deeper layers of psychological intimacy in a metaphorical journey through the garment, to the skin and beyond to the interior of the body. This exploration of space, within spaces is embodied in 'Inside' (1990)

'I want you to feel the way I do ... (The Dress) 1984-85. Live uninsulated nickel chrome wire mounted on wire mesh, electrical cord, power, slide projected text. 144.8 x 121.9 x 45.7 cm. (Sterbak; 1991, 5)





A larger casket of clear glass encases a smaller, interior one of mirror glass. The interior casket is impenetrable and only reflects our gaze inward. The transparent glass of the outer casket incites our curiosity, but must be broken to reveal its secrets. There might be hazards in revealing what is inside the sealed mirror coffin. The pristine exterior might enclose putrefied flesh or release undisclosed desires. As Irena Zantorska Murray suggests. 'In the dubious security of an absolute casket', our inner self roams the mirror labyrinths of the house of doubts ...' (Sterbak; 1995, 37)

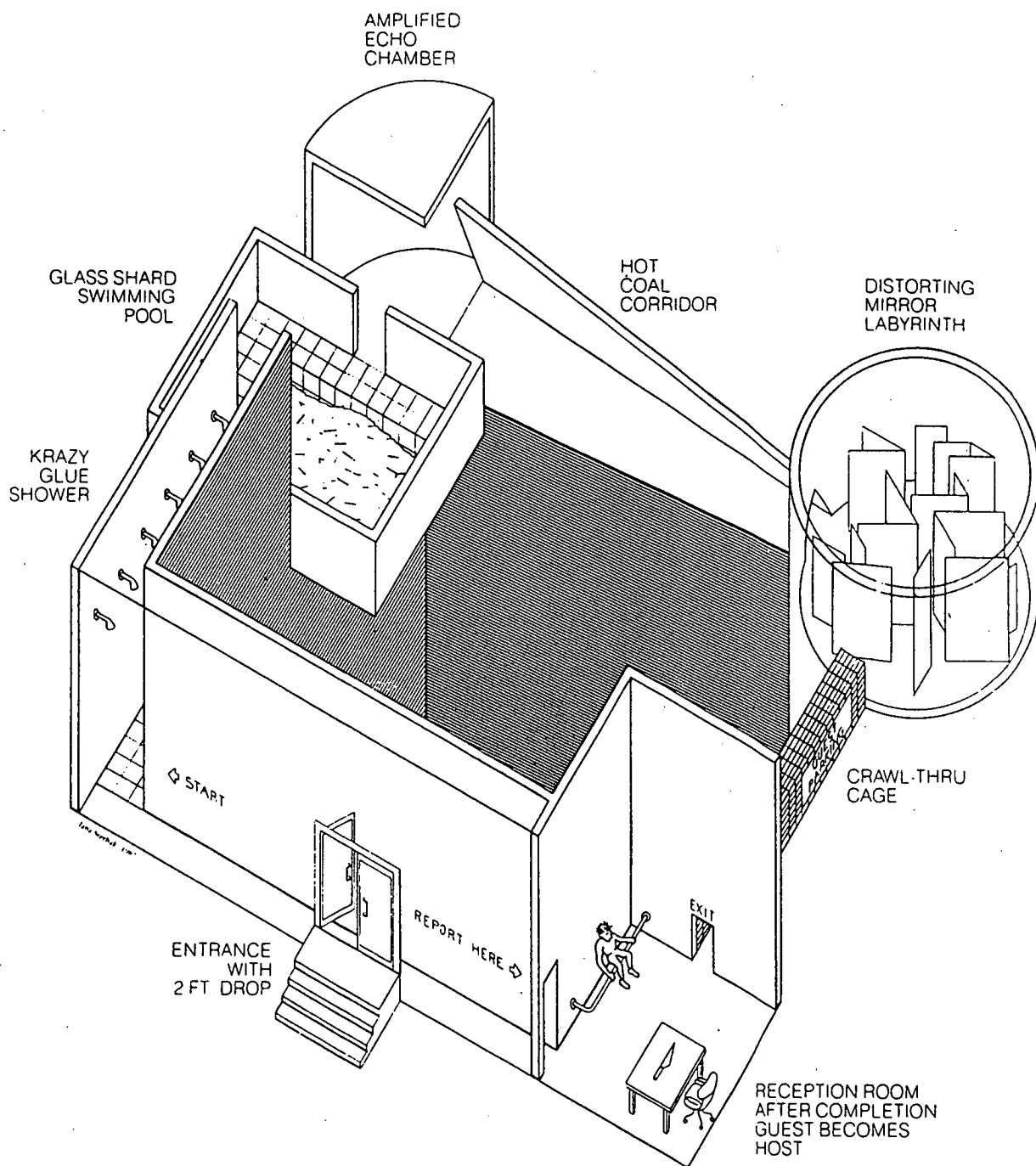


'Inside' 1990. Glass and mirror. 69.2 x 210 x 64.1 cm.  
(Sterbak; 1991, 16)

Jana Sterbak's path from the interior to exterior spaces incorporates not only costume and other prosthetic extensions to personal space but installations such as 'House of Pain: A Relationship' (1987). The 'life' size sealed house reveals no secrets of its interior. The visitor must choose to enter and then relies on his/her sense of touch to negotiate the fairly unnerving tactile sensations around the periphery. The experience would evoke different emotional responses to those of being a voyeur at a safe distance.

Lastly, Sterbak's recent performance piece 'Absorption' (1995) involves metamorphosing herself into a moth and systematically proceeding to 'eat' Joseph Beuys's suits. 'In 1970, nine years before my first wearable pieces, Joseph Beuys created the first of his felt suits. I became aware of this in 1986 and its existence has bothered me ever since ... At the beginning of the nineties I conceived a solution: the absorption of the suit.' Sterbak then advanced in moth form, to the 100 suits Beuys sold to worldwide collections.

Clothing cocoons the body and enacts a metamorphosis of different disguises.  
 Sterbak's 'moth', with its voracious appetite, turns the metamorphosis in on itself by  
 using one transformation as food for another.



'House of Pain: A Relationship' 1987.  
 Jana Sterbak  
 (Vellietas; 1995, 22)

The artist Joseph Beuys — target of Sterbak's appetite — has also had a marked effect on my work.

His work 'Stripes from the House of Shaman' (1964-72) was exhibited this year in Canberra (1996). The Shaman mediates between the physical and spiritual worlds; a concept that resounds in the ritualistic performance works of Beuys. The objects he selects and combines, resonate with the potency of the fetish. '...My intention is...to stress the idea of transformation and substance' (Beuys; in *Islands* 1996; 43) I looked at his work in relation to considering how to place thresholds in my installation. The 'House of Shaman' installation portrays themes of redemption and transformation. The wooden archway at the entrance suggests a transition from one world to another. When first installed in London, (1980) the work occupied two rooms, an inner sanctum entered through an outer room. In Canberra, the curator chose a more ambiguous border; the interior is visible but the viewer must still choose to cross the threshold. The two coats hanging inside powerfully suggest their absent wearer and conjure up the magic that might ensue if you slipped inside their skin. (*Islands*: p.44, 1996) The seal coat suggests the 'selkie' myth, a Celtic tale where humans transform into seals and vice versa. The seal coat is reversed to reveal its inner lining; skin and fur, and initially belonged to Beuys' mother. A rubber innertube with a valve, hangs from this coat which Beuys named a 'mechanical hare' (*Islands*; 1996, 44) and suggests a heart valve or lung.

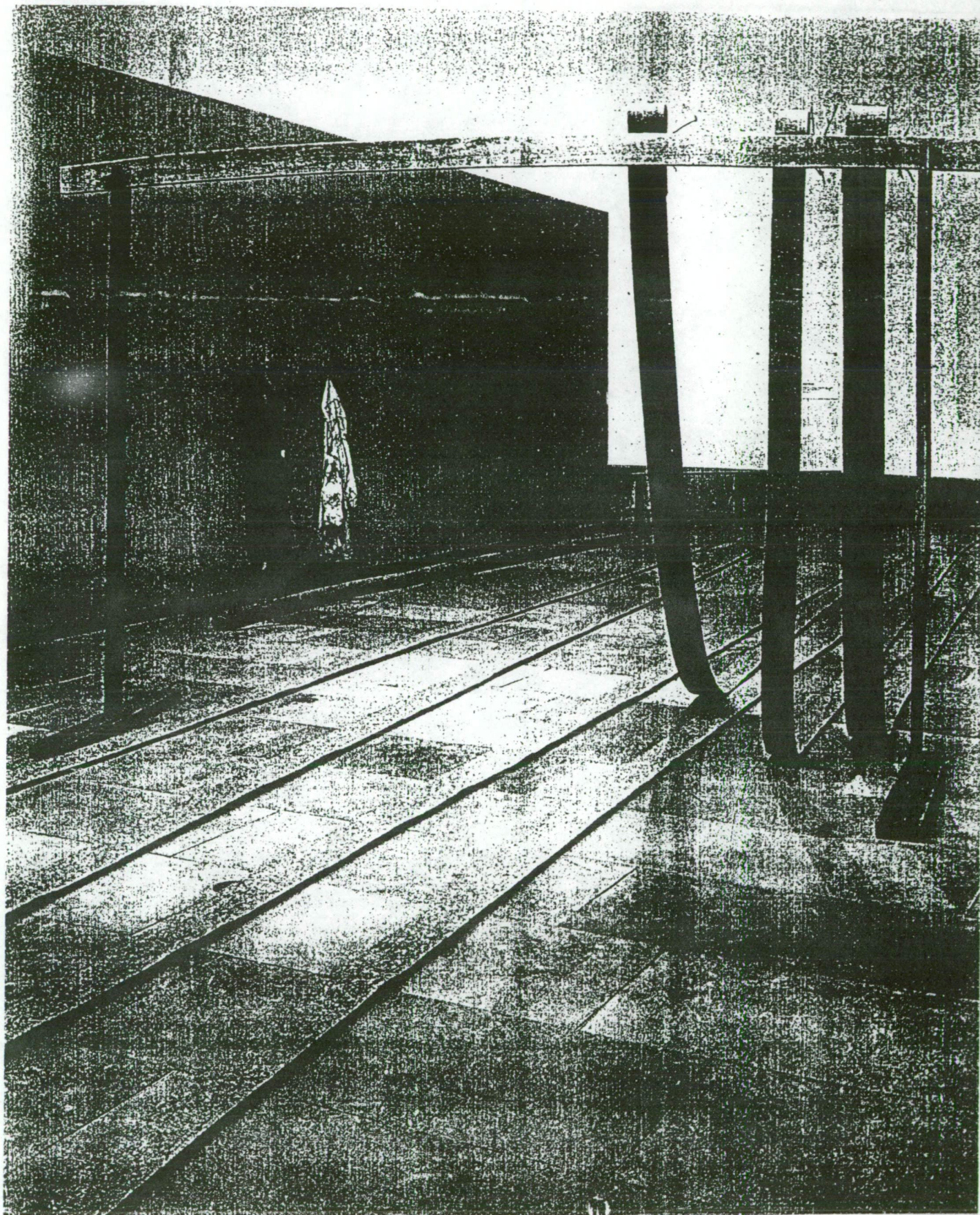
Michael Desmond describes the experience of walking through the installation.

To walk through the sculpture and follow the stripes is to experience the body and its relationship to space ... Beuys' felt pathways powered by their interaction with contrasting ingredients, and the heart-like 'battery' together with the rubber 'lung', make both an electric circuit and an elemental circulatory system. Passing through the symbolic body is the experience of life itself. (*Islands*; 1996, 46)

The Canberra exhibition also included a contemporary artist who has had a significant effect on my work, Christian Boltanski.

What draws me most to Christian Boltanski's work is the emotional impact of his use of intimate 'memento mori' to suggest the passage from life to death.





'Stripes from the House of Shaman' 1964-72.

Felt, wood, coats, animal skin, rubber tube, copper, quartz minerals. 1500 x 600 cm

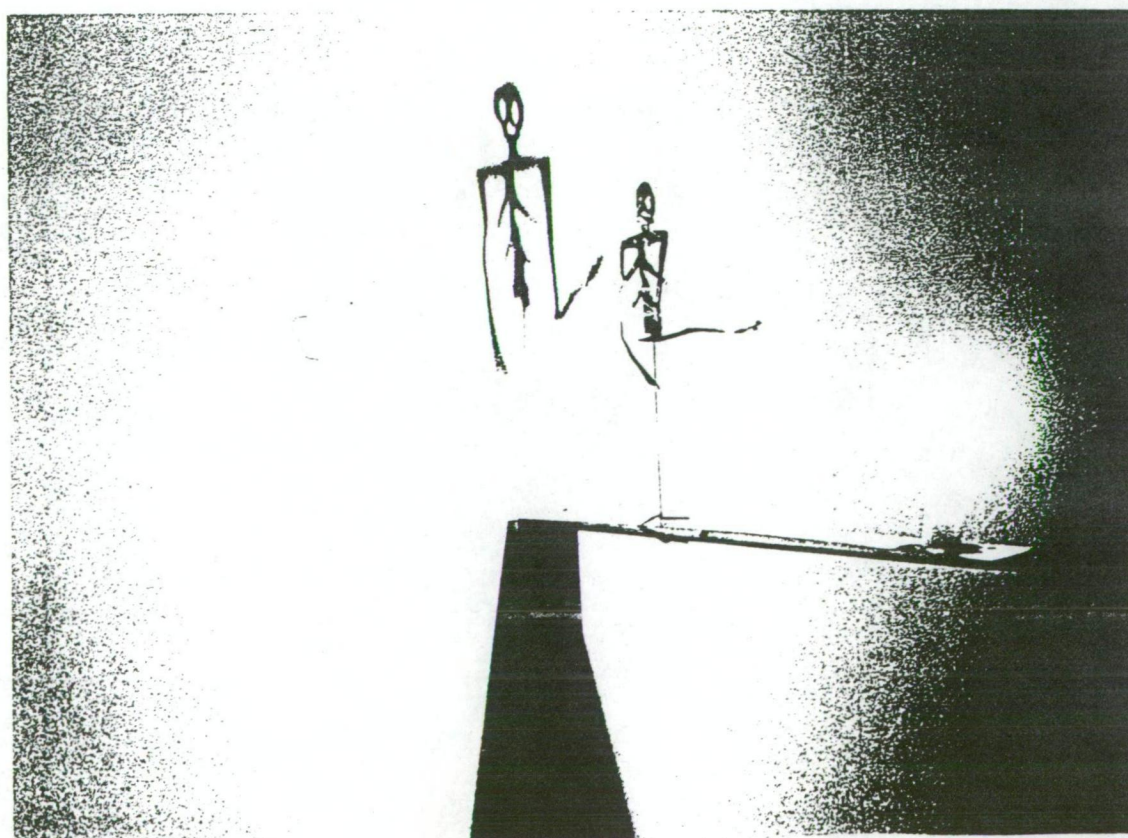
(Islands; 1996, 45)



Boltanski references the absent body through clothing; the ultimate memento mori. In 'The Clothes of Francois' (1972) Boltanski documented and classified an entire child's wardrobe. In 1974, he photographed a woman's belongings shortly after her death 'Inventory of objects that belonged to a woman of Bois-Columbes' The rendering of clothing, devoid of colour and texture, in simple black and white images suggests a paling of memory.

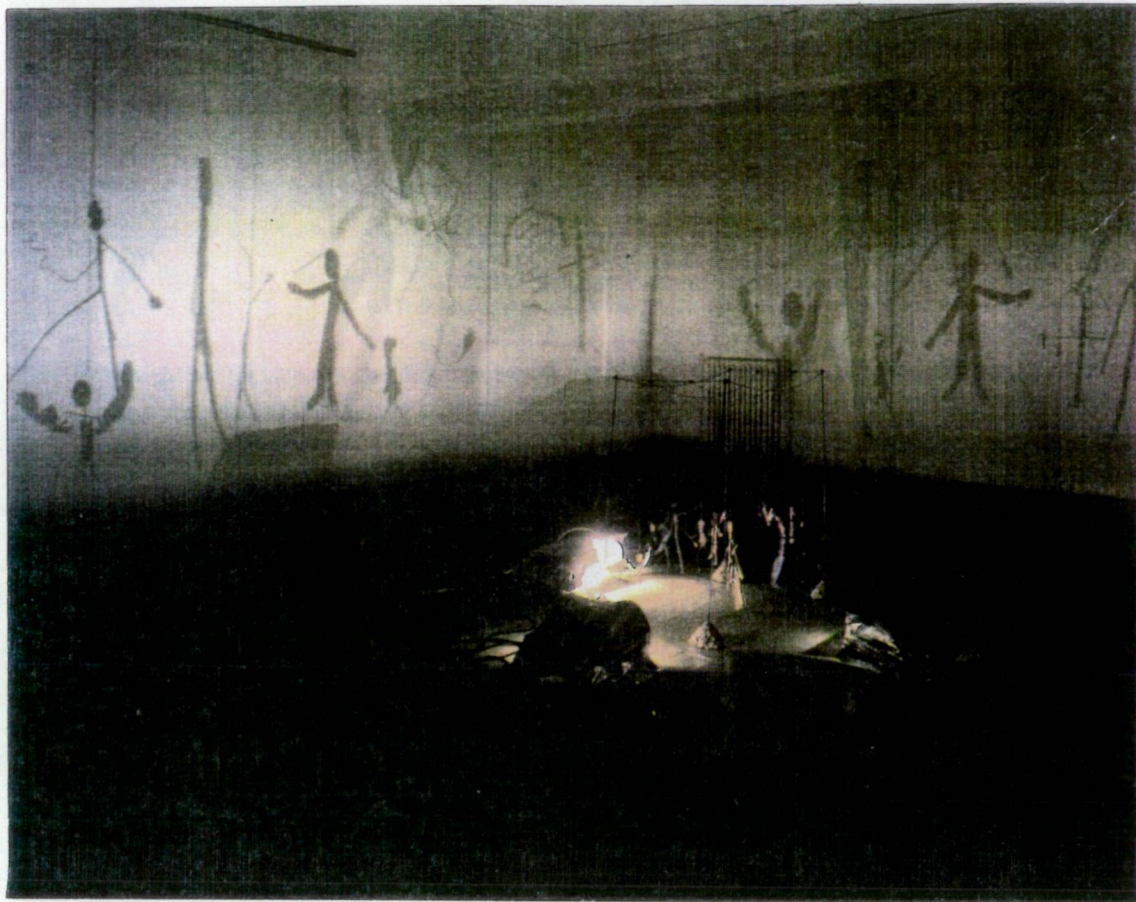
A later work 'Reserve Lake of the Dead' (1990) compelled visitors to navigate timber walkways across a sea of garments and now absent bodies. (See also colour plate, following page 'Lost: New York Projects Dispersion'). Boltanski states ' I think it is very important to put the spectator in certain conditions and to build places where he does not feel at ease. My dream is that somebody would enter my exhibition and say to himself 'Oh no, it's not here, I've made a mistake. That is when emotion takes place.' (1989, 27)

The use of light and shadow in Boltanski's work has affected the lighting decisions I have made for my installation. In 'Les Bougies' (Candles)(1987) Boltanski creates animated shadows from delicately twisted pieces of metal and naked flames. The shadow is essential to the body and is connected to it like a phantom limb, subject to distortion. Only phantom figures, such as ghosts and vampires have no shadow or



'Bougie' 1987 (Candle  
Copper, tin, figurine.  
12 cm high.  
(Boltanski; 1988, 79)





Christian Boltanski  
 'Les Ombres' (Shadows) 1984  
 Wood, cardboard, tin, cork, projectors, fan, transformer.  
 ( Boltanski;1988, 76)



'Lost: New York Projects Dispersion' 1995  
 Discarded clothes, dimensions variable.  
 ( Boltanski;1985, 52)

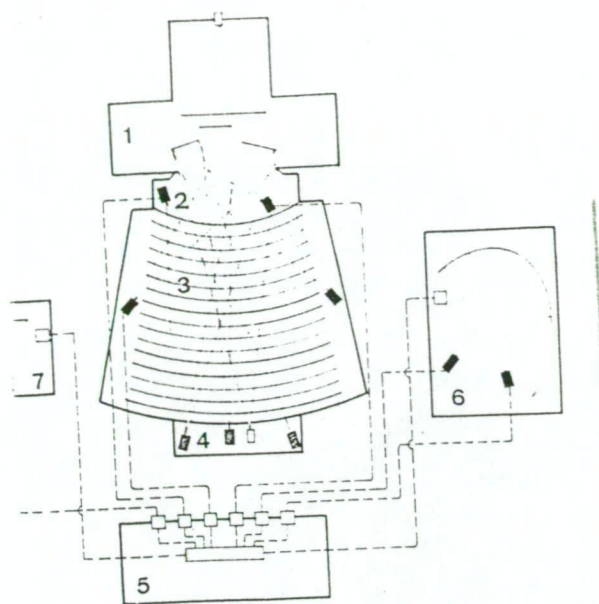


reflection; they are separated from the visceral body and life. The 'shadow' represents the darker side of the human psyche, dependent on the body but also to project itself in unrecognisable form. (See 'Shadows' previous page.)

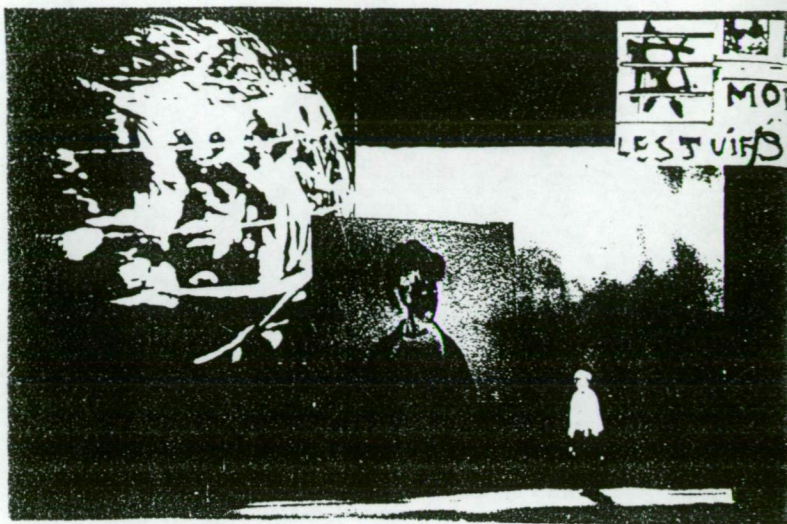
As well as using light and shadow in my installations to dematerialise the body I have explored using mirrors and projected images to create illusions.

Scenographer Josef Svoboda's work is particularly appropriate for my installations as it involves people moving through an illusionary space. Svoboda has created theatres of light, using light as a veil to define space.

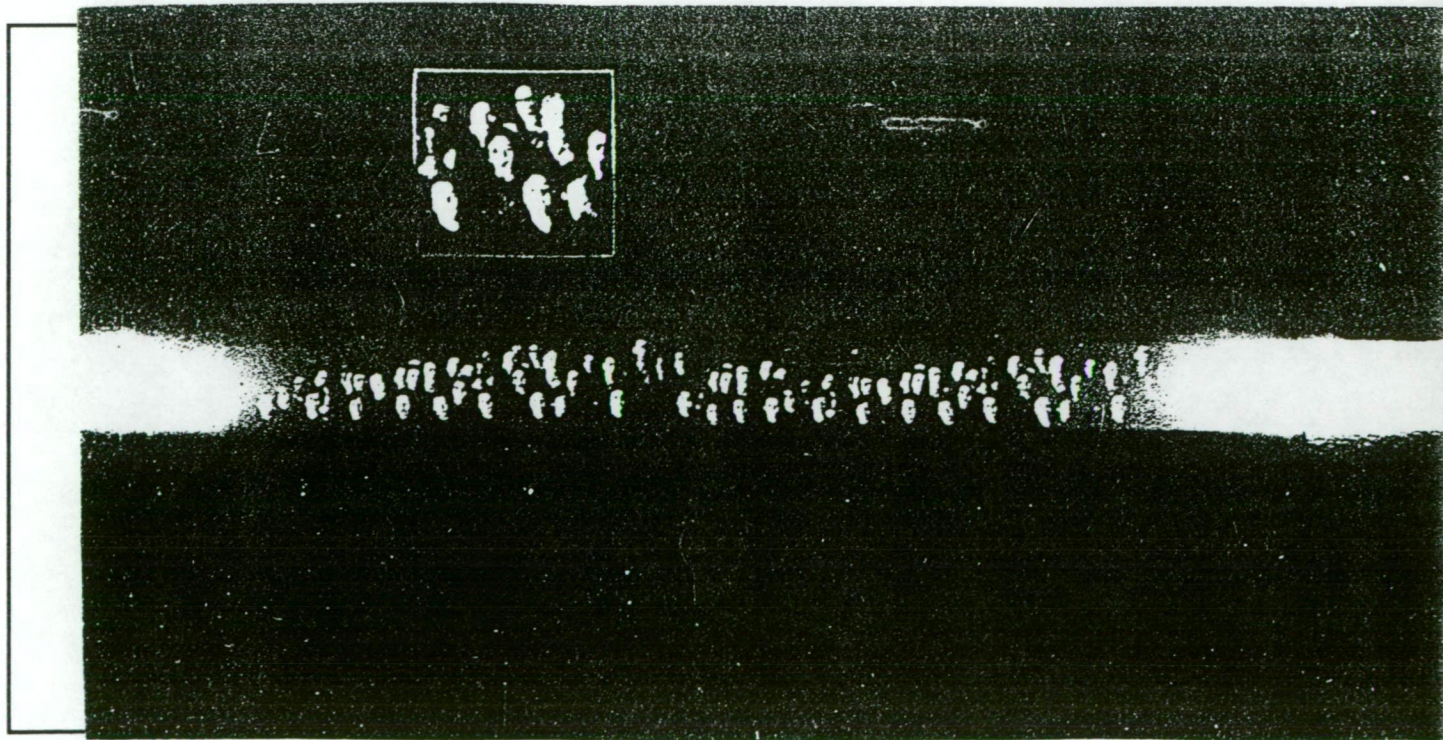
His work has also included using mirrors with different degrees of transparency to reveal and conceal actors ('The Wedding' 1968). Svoboda's designs, also involve projecting the live actors own image across screens, to suggest a parallel point of time. ('Intoleranza' 1965)



'Intoleranza' 1965, groundplan.

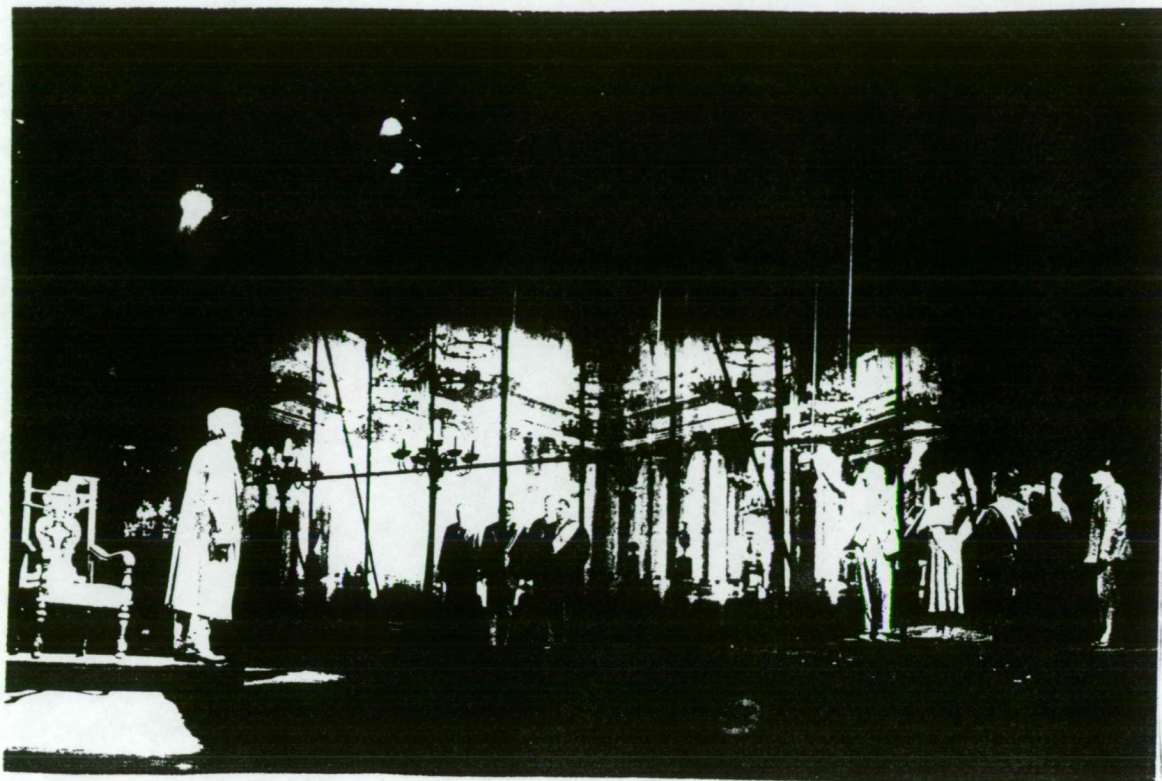


'Intoleranza' 1965. Josef Svoboda. Multiple projections, multiple screens.

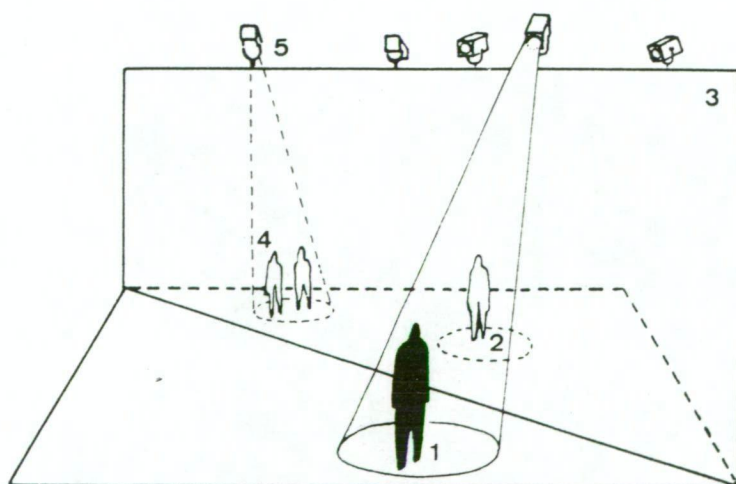


'Intoleranza'. Live chorus on stage, their live video image projected above and their imminent 'drowning' indicated by rising beams of light. (Burian; 1971, 104)



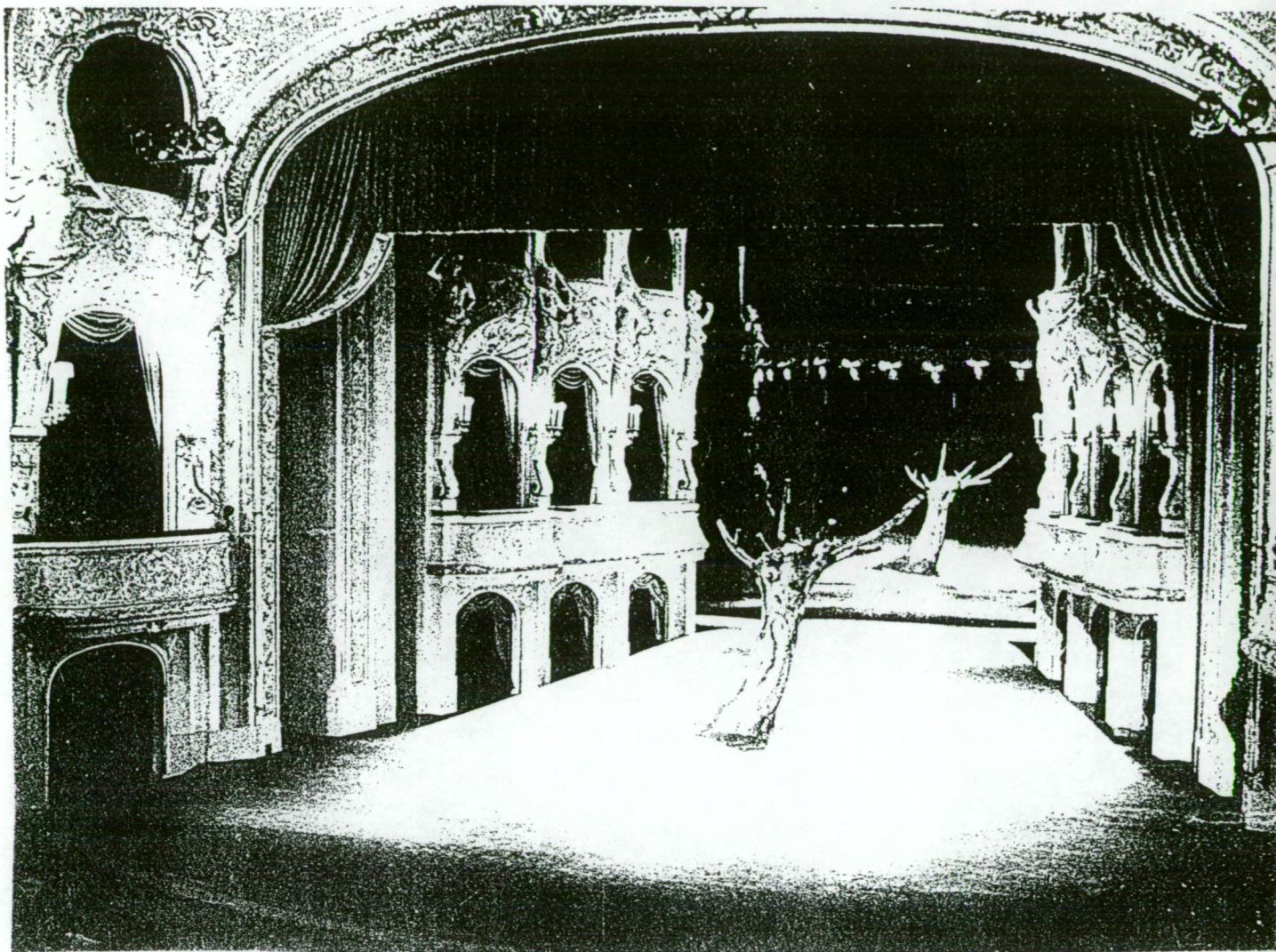


'The Wedding' 1968. Real actors appear behind the mirror.  
(Burian; 1971, 45)

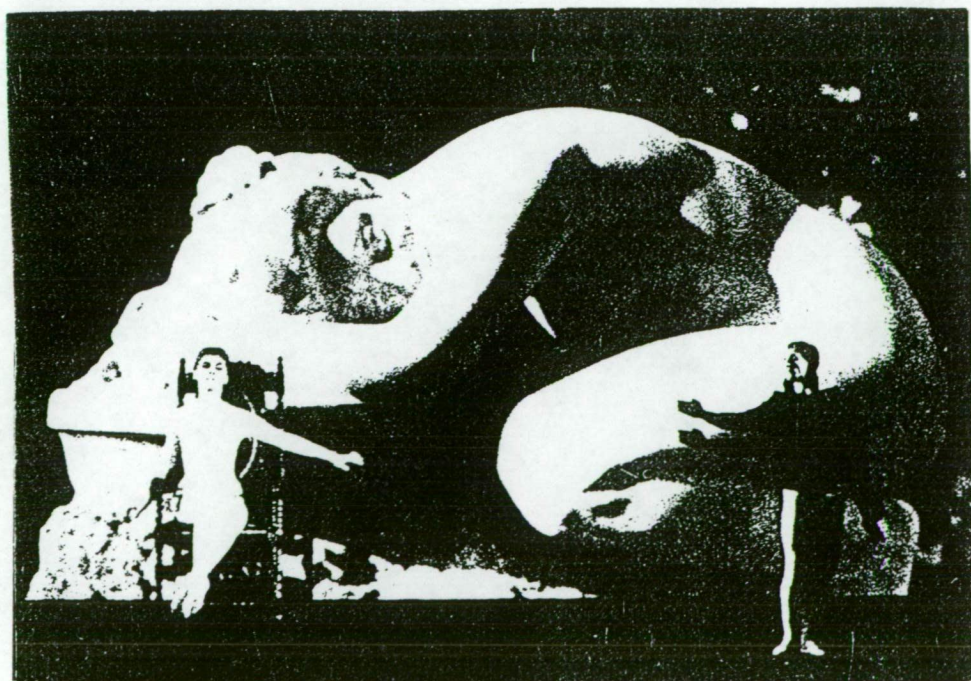


'The Wedding' 1968. Frontal diagram.  
1. Actor 2. Reflection of actor 3. 50% mirrored screens  
4. Actors behind mirror 5. Lighting.





'Waiting for Godot' 1970. Mirrored rear wall of stage.  
(Burian; 1971, 158)



'Laterna Magika' 1958. Kinetic screens, projections.  
(Burian; 1971, 85)



Visual illusion is one tool in my work to question where the boundaries of the body lie. I also consider tactile and sensory cues. Ann Hamilton's sensually evocative pieces have influenced my use of scent and tactility in 'The Changing Room'. Ann Hamilton's conceptual art engages the senses and links the physicality of our bodies to intimate emotional experiences. In an interview in Artweek she states 'Behind my work is the belief in the importance of work that comes through our skin' (Hamilton quoted in Solnit; 1990, 20)

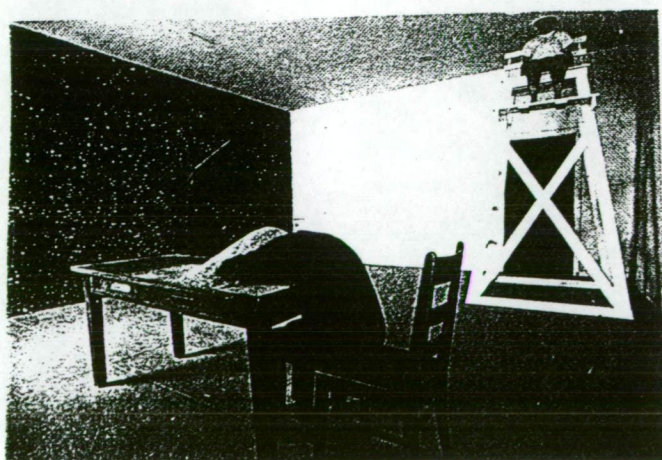
She suggests that sensations that 'seep in through the feet' voice a different kind of intelligence that is more personal than intellectual perception. The sensory opulence of Hamilton's work has included the odour of sheep dung, floors covered with honey, the rush of water and surfaces that shift and splinter under your feet. In her vivid 'tableaux vivant' she places inanimate human figures that at times perform laborious, mechanistic tasks or are placed in unnerving positions. I am interested in the ways that she has denied vision to accentuate a visceral reaction.

In 'The lids of unknown Positions' (1985) her prop-like actors were denied their sense of vision. One actor was symbolically suffocated; their head, ostrich-like, hidden in a pile of sand. The other's head protruded through the ceiling in mock decapitation.

Once denied the 'gaze', Hamilton explores the effects of a lack of vision on the body's sensual capacities. An adjacent wall was covered with mussel shells. David Pagel describes the experience in Arts magazine.

Next to the corpse-like figures the violated shells conjured a Bataille-like nightmare of sightlessness, in which the edible flesh that had been plucked from the shells shifted positions with the eyeballs missing from Hamilton's passionless actors. (1990;59)

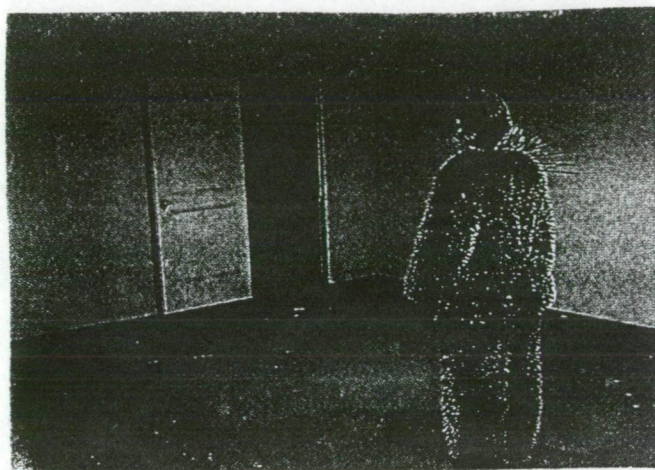
'Lids of Unknown Positions' 1985.  
Actors, mussel shells, sand, table,  
ladder.  
(Pagel; 1990, 58)





In an earlier work 'Suitably Positioned' (1984) Hamilton deflected the penetration of the gaze with a thick suit made from thousands of porcupine like toothpicks. The surface refuted touch as well as concealing the body and encasing it in a paralysing condition.

Links between tactility and vision, somatic and intellectual intelligence carry great weight in 'The Capacity of Absorption' (1988).



'Suitably Positioned' 1984.

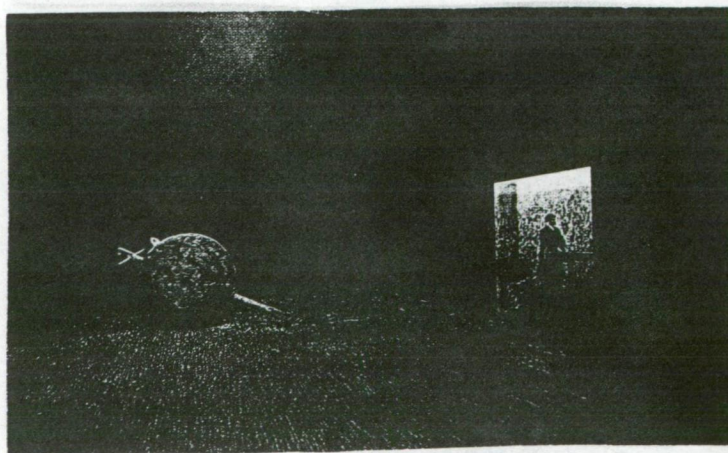
Actor, garment, toothpicks.

(Pagel; 1990, 58)

In one room, a seated figure's jacket trails serpent-like to form an umbilical link with a huge ocean buoy, etched with a phrenology diagram. To map the brain involves tracing the body through its unravelling skin or costume, but how accurately can it be read?



(Shermeta; 1991, 34)



'The Capacity of Absorption' 1988.

Multi-media

(Pagel; 1986, 76)



In this year's Sydney Biennale, (1996) I saw one of Anne Hamilton's latest works nicknamed the 'Flirtin' Curtains'. The work was situated in a tall, white gallery and included twin revolving black curtains lined with fine white material that were suspended from circular arms on the ceiling. Their joint spinning was not synchronised and the curtains enacted a dance; stopping, starting and reversing direction, their black folds sweeping around the floor enveloping the viewers inside. From the outside, there was a play of people being revealed and concealed as if contained in a giant zoetrope. Anne Hamilton spoke of the breath of air that their movement created. Behind the curtain, glimpsed fleetingly from their interior, was a tiny video screen with a loop showing a prosthetic arm grasping at shadows. The work combined the 'real' time tactile experience of being enveloped in the movement and breath of the giant skirt with vision of a prosthetic, past; repetitive movement sealed in time, beyond glass. Like a prosthetic limb, grasping at shadows, the miniature encases a different form of memory. Distant from real experience it harnesses a sense of nostalgia. Our visual senses have to grasp what our bodies cannot handle.

This work suggests the importance of Susan Stewart's work for Hamilton. Her book On Longing (1984) discusses experience of the gigantic and miniature in relation to the sensual experiences of nostalgia, longing and desire. In the miniature our human scale may minimise touch but initiates control. In contrast, giant structures envelop us in a real-time experience that is not so readily contained. Even our perception of time shifts according to scale.

In her article 'Theatre Without Actors — Immersion and Response in Installations' Toni Dove discusses ways of immersing the viewer in a narrative space that can provide a sense of movement through time.

Initially she worked with computer-programmed slide projectors and video projected across three-dimensional screens before moving towards virtual reality.

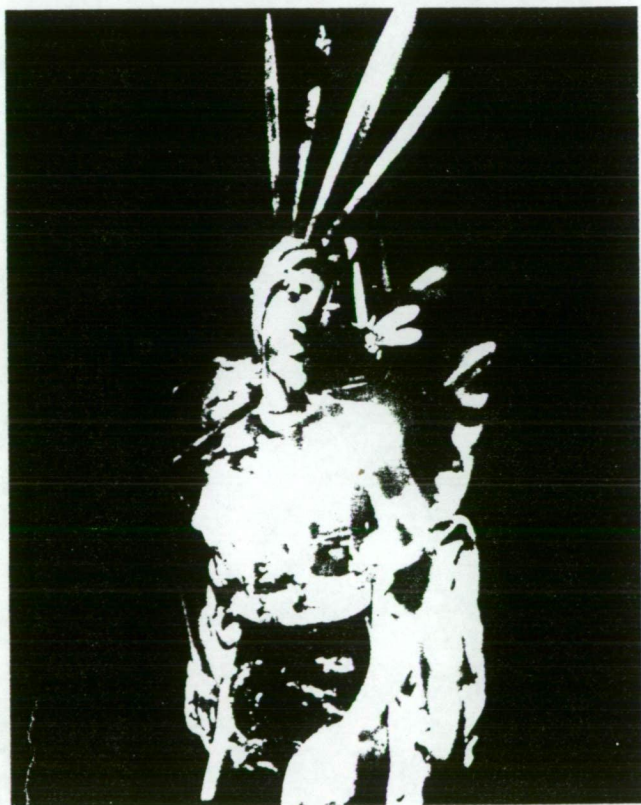
"The illusion created was of a movie sprung free from the screen to occupy a space along with the viewer audience.' (Dove; 1994, 281)

Dove is also concerned with where human faculties end and electronic prostheses begin. She suggests that virtual reality is a side effect of a culture of alienation in which the presence of the body itself is being challenged.

'The buried narratives of the medium are continually returning not only to the experience of loss and longing but also to a sense of numbness or displaced physical sensation and dislocation. There is a deep anxiety about loss of boundaries.' (Dove; 1994, 284)

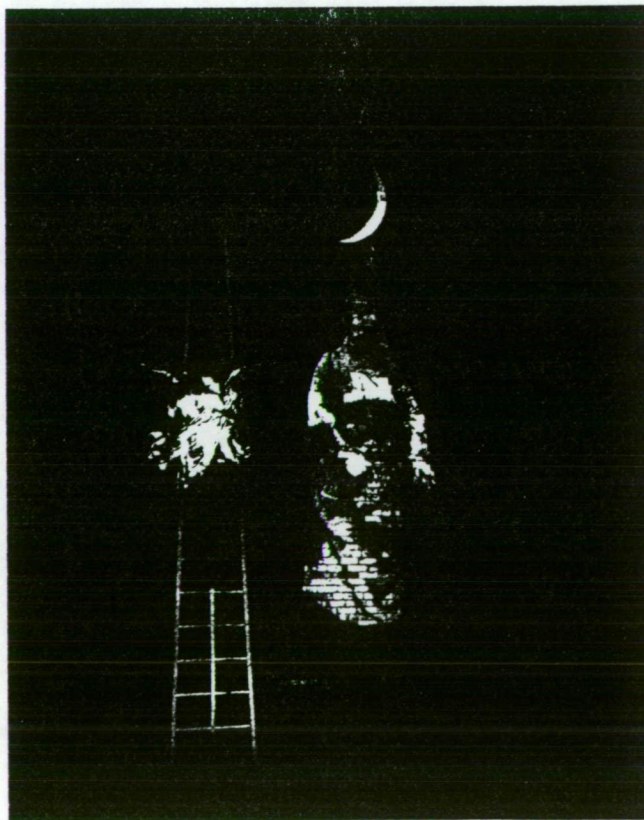
My own work involves the absence of the body but in an attempt to conjure up its presence even more potently, through the empty dress.

In contrast to navigating a virtual world sheathed in bodysuit, helmet and gloves, I want the audience to experience their own tactile sensations and be aware of their own body's movement through space.



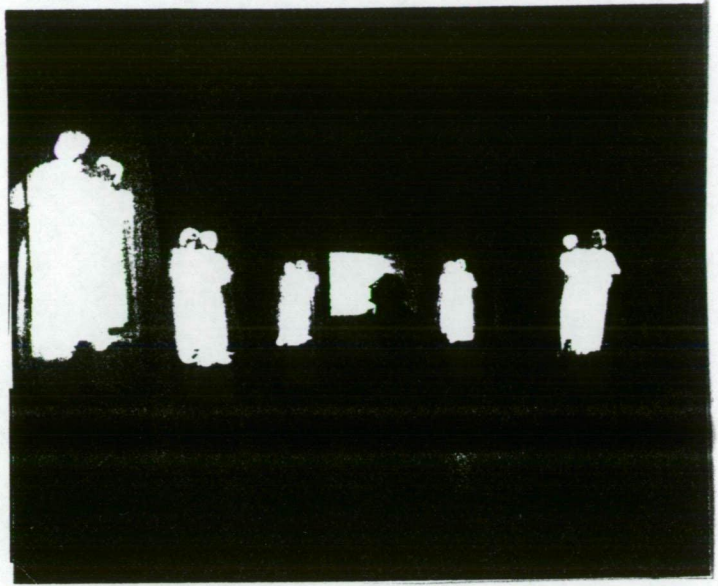
'Mesmer — Secrets of the Human Frame' 1990 18 x 22 x 6 feet.  
Toni Dove  
Slide projection, sound installation.  
(Dove; 1994, 281)

As above, projection on net and brick.  
(Dove; 1994, 282)





'The Blessed Abyss — A Tale  
of Unmanageable Ecstasies'  
13 x 20 x 15 feet (1992).  
Toni Dove  
Slide animation, video  
installation, dancers.  
(Dove; 1994, 282)



Conclusion:

Cummerbund



Issey Miyake cape.  
'Body is to Spirit as Cloth  
is to Body'  
Laurence Wieder in  
Shozo (1983; 118)



Only after constructing the installation did I realise that I had become the 'absent body'. I had worn the 'empty dress', taken on its history and contours. The garments I had not directly worn, also bore my presence as I had imagined, shaped, cut and been cut by and concealed myself within them. I had lived and breathed in the installation for more than one month, tracing and re-tracing my steps across its entire length, breadth and height.

I had worked alone in this cool, tranquil room, the students gone, the gallery closed, it had felt like my own intimate space.

I had then invited the audience into this space, to walk into and through my body and psyche.

I had become the witness; aware of friends, strangers and examiners who passed through my space, touched my clothing and were enveloped in my garments. The more layers the viewer revealed and penetrated, the more

ambiguous I planned the journey to become. My own intrigue with the mysterious traces of other lives imprinted in costume had triggered the installation. Now, the position reversed, I had intimate knowledge of the clothing, fabric and space. I knew the recent history and could no longer feel the same surprise and trepidation. I was aware of my own intentions but it was only through physically assembling the work that I crossed from imagination to navigating a space and experienced what I had believed to have known.

I selected specific costumes to suggest a movement through the body. The initial more recognisable, second-hand costumes led into increasingly fragmented, skeletal corset structures that concealed flickering lights. The latter, interior section reflected a progression past costume, through the skin and visceral body into a realm of the psyche - a place of ephemeral shadows, of white light and



peripheral movement.

I chose costumes and suspended fabrics that initially enveloped the audience in a black, dense area. These led into a red passage and ultimately through to a white space. The dark, black entry suggested moving into unknown real realms, beyond sight; the beginning of a journey in which everyday skills are rendered obsolete.

A black, fake fur coat hung immediately through the wardrobe, dense, scented with bergamot, a clock ticking in its side pocket. The coat was split in two and suspended on a sheet of black satin. It was hung high to suggest a larger than life absent body and so that the face of the spectator would brush against its surface. I chose this costume for initial entry as it had a black, dense, sensual exterior that protected against the elements and could conceal interiors. It was a woman's coat which second-hand, carried its own scent and marks of absent owners. I had found the coat amongst a rack of tawdry fox furs, fake leopards and dead

minks at the Salvation Army Family Store. The room reeked of camphor and melancholy. Inside it was hard to decipher individual scents, only outside could I distinguish the coat's unique personality. I determined to wear it to experience what it felt like to be inside it, how it smelt, how my own body moved within it and how people would react to me.

It was a coat that encouraged touch, its pelt suggested an animal side to woman's sensuality which could be tempered or exaggerated by my actions. My own body subtly changed the coat, leaving its scent and traces of my movements. I wired one of its arms to reach forward with red cuffs to entice the spectator. A split between the two sides of the coat revealed distant glimpses of a scarlet interior. I required the right balance of desire, menace and curiosity to lure with the sensual but to hint at the confronting unknown beneath the feminine exterior.

The floor length, scarlet velvet dress



glimpsed through the darkened interior could only be reached through a web of hanging black chiffon. I wanted to gradually unveil the intense colour of the dress and slow the passage of the audience towards it. People had to swim through the transparent, sensual layers, more touched than seen.

I chose red to confront and excite the viewer. Red stimulates the heart in times of danger or passion. The colour of blood, it mimics the visceral body, skinned.

I discovered the dress in an antique shop, drawn to its scarlet hue. The store's changing room, hidden behind tapestries, with large mirrors, velvet drapes and a solitary chair triggered ideas for my installation. I tried on the dress, it was incredibly tight and re-shaped my body to its own contours. It was almost impossible to remove the dress. It was more difficult to exhale but still felt wonderful. I wore it to a party, aware that the dress was speaking more loudly than I was. The dress

restricted my appetite and I tore at its seams. It was more intimate than the fur coat, being closer to my skin and when I eventually slit it up the centre, it reminded me of my own body and the incision of open-heart surgery.

I hung both halves of the red dress on grey satin, the layers separated by suspended films of red chiffon, fire projected across them. The red velvet had mirrors attached to reflect the gaze of the voyeur and a peephole device directed outwards through the skin of the garment. The sleeve and hem of one garment was wired to suggest the presence of an invisible body. A mirror behind the dress captured the image of the spectator approaching then being enveloped by the dress.

The red passage suggested movement through the red skin of the body and lay before an area of white light and flickering shadows. The audience met an invisible mesh barrier and had to turn sharply to the left, between disorienting



mirrors and fabric. Their hands met a cream lace under-dress suspended high. Their only passage through remained the midst of the skirt, its sex, folds lifted, an inviting darkness beyond. At this stage, I still wanted to use a recognisable, second-hand garment but one which was more transparent in nature and formed an intimate layer close to the skin. I found this petticoat at a market stall, it was very old, belonging to the seller's grandmother. It had a very distinctive aroma, cloying and sweet and I decided not to wear it but to leave its scent intact. My own scent lay as a trace between other fabrics.

Passing through the skirt involved a different physical movement, ducking low beneath its folds, blinded by lace, your nose held captive in the fabric before confronting your own image in a mirror.

Having passed through successively more intimate layers of clothing, I now wanted to suggest to the audience a shedding of the body itself, like a snakeskin. I wanted the costumes to

become more ambiguous, fragmented and to suggest the unclear boundaries between the 'self', costume and surrounding space. The following structures were part garment and part boned corset, hinting at their underlying skeletons.

At this point the audience reached a dark, moving wing-like shadow on a partition above them. Turning, they saw an intricate corset with long , interconnected folds of skirt beneath. The complete image was presented in a mirror but as the viewer moved through the skirts, the garment revealed itself in two halves, the corset behind, more distant. Movement triggered a light sensor, spilling light across the fabrics. The skirt was made of a rich silver tapestry, with snakeskin designs on the under surface. I wanted the skirt to move around the waist of the spectator. The corset itself was made of similar snakeskin material, with mirrors inset like peacock eyes to reflect the gaze. The garment moved in sections around



copper bones and fractures in mirrored surfaces and fabric revealed a flickering flame beyond. The costume was hard, dangerous to wear, an armour turned inwards.

To the left, within peripheral vision was a brilliant light and moving shadows. Beyond a black veil, the viewer was blinded as they entered the final white chamber. Immediately the person was surrounded by billowing folds of white chiffon. Some pieces were suspended from the white satin and copper-boned corset structure that loomed above the heads of the audience. I chose white to imply the inner realm of the psyche, light in contrast to the black entry. The fabric was scented with sandalwood. To the right, a revolving praxinoscope strobed light across the hanging structures and cast a shimmering skeletal shadow across the chiffon. I used animated devices to accentuate movement. The movement was to imply the relentless pace of time, implicit in both fashion and mortality. The

audience chose their own pace through the installation but were still tied to the same inevitable time that continuously drove the praxinoscope. The device contained Muybridge's images of a woman slowly turning, picking up the hem of her dress, endlessly searching and repeating her actions.

In the white area, the sound of my own heartbeat was strongest as the audience confronted their own image in a large mirror. I wanted the audience, having walked through my own body and experience to look at their own image, 'free' of disguises.

The installation made me realise my own relationship to female sensuality and the 'uncanny other'. I like to wear the sensual materials that I used, such as, fur, silk, velvet, chiffon, satin and lace. These fabrics embrace and enhance female sensuality but I also hint at the elusive female psyche that lies beyond these surfaces. The 'uncanny other' was the other side of myself that was revealed through bringing the costumes to life.



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