

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

### **Sculptural Reconfigurations of the Kitchen Utensil A Poetic Chaos of Domesticity**

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**Sculptural Reconfigurations of the Kitchen  
Utensil  
A Poetic Chaos of Domesticity**



By Carole Griffiths

PhD

January 2023

# **Sculptural Reconfigurations of the Kitchen Utensil**

## **A Poetic Chaos of Domesticity**

*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements*

*for*

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I dedicate this PhD to my incredible daughters Caitlin and Ellen  
who now know that

'I am no longer burdened by the chaos of domesticity'.



## ABSTRACT

This practice research explores how the abstraction and re-figuration of utilitarian kitchenware generates conceptions of autobiographical domestic experiences using methods of creation such as sculpture, drawing, video, and poetry. The study considers the complex nature of 'inanimate' objects which includes analogies and metaphors drawn upon memory, loss, and autobiographical accounts of personal domestic experiences. The project uses a process of identifying kitchenalia to convey a variety of perspectives on what happens when 'things' are modified through making and re-presented in other contexts. The reconfigurable kitchen utensil is examined in order to develop new artwork based on the 'insignificant object' of the kitchen utensil. By integrating two fragments, part tool and part body forms, and by manipulating selected materials in an evolving assemblage new material objects and knowledge are created.

Memories have informed and shaped my practice, as well as contributed to the project's theoretical, and philosophical configurations. Memories have emerged through making and challenging past domestic rituals and habits. As an artist who uses home as a source of inspiration, interactions between items and surroundings, are constantly disrupted and exposed through reflection to present an evolving personal vocabulary.

To develop my understanding of the haptic, I have made use of Richard Sennett's book *The Craftsman*, which asserts that making 'provides insight into the techniques of experience'<sup>1</sup>. To support the idea of making through experience, I have consulted Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* and Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*. Merleau-Ponty's analysis of lived experience highlights bodily encounters where objects are known through our ability to move around them and manipulate them, whereas in Bachelard's phenomenological method, emotional experiences are triggered by memory and location, with a focus on the home. The physical act of creating and the experiences of home are used to accentuate what is seen and encountered through material objects, in this instance kitchen utensils. The study contributes to the wider field of sculpture and contemporary discourses about the home through a complex interrelationship of research and creative practice methods. This project provides a paradigm of empowerment through celebratory considerations of domestic circumstances, re-presenting the kitchen utensil as a new sculptural form.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, (Penguin 2009). 289.

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# Chapter 1:

## 1.1: Preface

My work presents autobiographical accounts of domesticity that speak of human forms and present ideas that are inherently both comfortable and uncomfortable through the gestural act of making. I manipulate materials to suggest events, memories, and past experiences, using making as a cathartic process for communicating with others. In this project, I delve deeper into how and why the sculptural item develops through shape and form to express human autobiographies.

To offer a background for the study I have outlined how the concepts of kitchen utensils have shaped the context and approach of both the reflective account of the thesis and the historical backdrop for the making. In 2010, I completed my Master of Arts in Visual Arts and realised that sculptural reconfigurations could be explored to convey self and being through personal autobiographical experiences from my past. It was at that point that I recognised the potential of exploring domestic objects and their uses. I began carefully to consider my relationship with domestic objects; objects that speak to me daily, and that are daily domestic companions. I thought about how these objects could be dismantled and transformed to create a new form. During this period, the context of these works of art became related to desire and domestic trauma. This deconstruction of the familiar resulted in innovative ideas which led me to further investigation of material processes and sculptural forms.

Another of the Other (2010) was a book I made to support my MA study in 2010. The book combined poetic text and drawings related to ideas about desire, body, and the autobiographical interrelationships between 'things' and 'experiences'. In response to the artist book that I was working on at the time, I created sculptural objects inspired and realised by disturbing and rearranging everyday domestic objects. These new forms of everyday objects suggested a gestural presence and functionality related to new forms 'of sorting out a human state of being'<sup>1</sup>. Following my MA final show, I was approached by writer Michael Stewart, who asked if I would be interested in making a body of work based on a series of poems entitled *Couples* in 2012.<sup>2</sup> This prompted subsequent

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<sup>1</sup>"Another of the Other" can be viewed on my website, it demonstrates the relationship between objects drawings and words during my MA practice in 2010. <https://carolegriffiths.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Amended-Another-of-the-Other.pdf>, 3. Accessed 10/9/2023.

<sup>2</sup> Nick Ahab, 'Words and pictures make an ideal match', *The Yorkshire Post*, 6 January 2012 prints an interview with the writer Michael Stewart who discusses the project *Couples* at, <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/arts-and-culture/words-and-pictures-make-ideal-match-1911893>. Accessed 23/5/2023.

research into home objects, as well as consideration of a poetic language of ekphrasis. To work with words aligned with sculpture appealed to my interest in developing visual discourses within my practice. I created several works in response to Michael Stewart's poems, in which the idea of mutual dualism, side-by-sidedness, in and out, on and off resonated with my personal domestic experiences. This included salt and pepper pots, a knife and fork, a plug, and a socket. There was an emphasis on opposites within the dialogue between the two, all of which were stimulated by the relationship of two things or two people. At this point in my practice, I was curious about what happens when items are replaced or rearranged. How are object-subject interactions reformed to create a personal new language in sculpture? What effects do domesticity, and my personal experiences have on this process? Most importantly, what materials and techniques could I use to re-form the selected items. I realised at the end of this body of work that I had only touched the surface of where I was at in terms of making and understanding the content of my practice. This practice-based project, on the other hand, opens up new possibilities by expanding my use of materials and developing new ways of transforming the body through objects of the everyday into unexpected forms.

In 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', Walter Benjamin writes: 'To experience the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look back at us'.<sup>3</sup> The words of Walter Benjamin underline the roots of this project, in which my fundamental experiment is uniting object (utensil) and body as a new reconfigured sculptural subject. In the first chapter of this reflective account of sculptural reconfigurations of kitchen utensils, I introduce theoretical underpinnings of embodiment, the creative process, drawing, and my use of poetic words. My practice techniques allow for a detailed analysis of the ready-made altered, the re-created object addressing new sculptural contexts of scale, size, and materiality. Through archival research, library research, artist inquiry, and an exploration of exhibition locations, the project provides an expanded understanding of my practices.

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Edition 1968), 188.

## 1.2. Methodology

In this section, I highlight the selected methods that have both informed my practice and helped contextualise the process. To create this body of work I have explored narratives of home and autobiographical domestic experiences through the manipulation and recreation of sculptural forms based on the kitchen utensil. The perspectives of structuring and encountering such experiences have been brought together by examining specific theories such as those of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gaston Bachelard. Further, I survey the work of Richard Sennett and Peter Dormer, who discuss various dichotomies related to making through the acquisition of craft, skill, and art practice. I have selected artists to help frame the research, with whom I conducted interviews or undertaken collaborative projects. Finally, I have considered ekphrasis as a form of language to enhance my sculptural reconfiguration.

Within my practice, I have frequently thought of object and subject as separate entities, but the purpose of this study is to present a reflective account of how and why object and subject are brought together by selecting a kitchen utensil, identifying its functionality, and adapting it to sit within a sculptural form, thus speaking back of domestic experiences. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi presents a creative flow theory that resonates with me as follows:<sup>4</sup>

creativity results from the interaction of a system composed of three elements: a culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognise and validate innovation. All three are necessary for a creative idea, product, or discovery to take place.

To begin the project, I considered my current places of making and how these could inform the processes of the research. Artist Doreen Garner considers how transference can occur between her objects and viewer. She states, 'I think three-dimensional works allow people to understand the ways their physical bodies are implicated within the narratives'. She further suggests, 'I hope that my work helps people to understand how deep the wounds go, and the necessity of acknowledgement in order to begin healing'.<sup>5</sup> Garner's point is implicit in my approach to body-related sculpture and personal narratives. However, to gain a better understanding, I needed to emphasise my creative intentions and investigate how my work communicates to the viewers through a range of materials, as well as how my work may be traversed as a sort of healing process through exposition. Making objects,

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<sup>4</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: flow and psychology of discovery and invention*, (New York:1997), 6.

<sup>5</sup> Doreen Garner, "Pushing Sculpture Forward" <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-20-female-artists-pushing-sculpture-forward>. Accessed 25/5/2023.

language formation, and reliving embodied experiences have equal value in my process. The term 'embodied' refers to the unity of mind-body-environment as we interact and experience others and materials in the world. The act of changing and influencing materials and situations is referred to as 'making' (in a broad sense).<sup>6</sup> I refer to the French phenomenological philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose main concern relates to the perception of the lived body and knowing of the world. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty places particular emphasis on the 'body' and 'objects' in his chapter 'The Synthesis of One's Body'. Merleau-Ponty states: 'I observe external objects with my body, I handle them, examine them, I walk round them, but my body itself is a thing which I do not observe, to be able to do so, I should need the use of a second body which itself would be unobservable'.<sup>7</sup> In the framework of this project, embodiment provides an awareness of the experience of creation with my body, as well as how knowing an object through haptic acts of making allows me to uncover domestic themes. To refine Merleau-Ponty's notion that the body is a 'thing' and that another body is required, I know my body and, using an object such as a kitchen utensil, I have identified functional parts to work with, that speak back at me of specific lived experiences within my domestic spaces. Such perceptions have related to the 'motif of things' which give way to an entangled perception thus 'to be a body, is to be tied to a certain world, as we have seen; our body is not primarily in space: it is of it'.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, this project has essentially been informed through two bodies of observation and selected spaces: my own body, the chosen kitchen utensils, and the home. My approach to the home space is that it is both a place of production and a place of memories and emotions; this has influenced the process as well. Bringing my most familiar environment, 'home,' and the objects of art that disclose the poetics of my narrative together allows for an embodied experience through creativity. The mechanisms of these perceptions are embedded in my practice, whereby consciousness of the physical world, the social world of our time and history, forces us to rethink the large concepts of intentionality, language, and rationality.<sup>9</sup> As such, through selecting objects the body can be felt. According to Sean Gallagher, Merleau-Ponty leads us 'out of the abstract cul-de-sacs where philosophy leaves us and returns us to what we already knew but lost'.<sup>10</sup> To highlight this further, philosopher Edmund Husserl's book, *Ideas: General Introduction to Phenomenology* presents 'consciousness of something', opening up the idea of merging objects and their meanings, 'intentional essence' and 'presentation'.<sup>11</sup> The idea of merging could occur through the dismantling, remaking, and reforming of the original everyday object. Husserl also talks about the material as being the

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<sup>6</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith. (Routledge, 1962).

<sup>7</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 104.

<sup>8</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 171.

<sup>9</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 172-177.

<sup>10</sup> Sean Gallagher, "Essay: 'Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception'", *Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy* 29 (2010), 184. Accessed 25/5/2023.

<sup>11</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Phenomenology*, (Routledge Classics, 2012), 269.

‘intentional essence’ and how it coincides with the ‘what’ which could be referred to as identity. Is this then what forms the ‘quality’ and the ‘consciousness of something?’<sup>12</sup> Igor Kopytoff defines the consciousness of something with ‘things’ as: ‘Biographies of things can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure. The cultural responses to such biographical details reveal a tangled mass of aesthetics, historical, and political judgments, and of convictions and values that shape our attitude to objects labelled ‘art’.’<sup>13</sup> So in terms of everyday objects such ‘things’ will inevitably influence my actions both physically and emotionally.

Throughout the project, I have also relied upon the theories of the French phenomenologist and poet Gaston Bachelard, and his seminal work *Poetics of Space*.<sup>14</sup> Many artists and art critics have been motivated by Bachelard's poetic writings to better understand the philosophy behind their work and research, particularly in connection to the house. Bachelard's prose and poems are primarily concerned with emotional reactions to the building. As a result, his investigation of spatial categories such as the attic, cellar, drawers, and so on fosters emotional experiences within a given space. An analysis of the ‘House’ within the context of *Poetics of Space* has enabled me to produce a better understanding of my visual language of space and the location of my work. Bachelard presents the ‘house as a tool for analysis’.<sup>15</sup> These tools flow into the poetics of the settings I want to exhibit as well as the experiences enriched by the act of making within a given homely space. This, in turn, offers a cohesive contextual knowledge to the project, making room for words and ideas for sculptures. Bachelard alludes to the house [as furnishing] us ‘dispersed images and a body of images at the same time’.<sup>16</sup> It is here that making has also become a process of innate experience and gives way to my understanding of the properties of materials which simultaneously expose context within my work. Through making forms, using scale and size to help formulate the sculptural objects my intimate moments of self-expression serve to expose ideas so that I can better understand my thinking and communicate the process to others through the work itself. To push and challenge the reconfigured kitchen utensils further, I experiment with different clays, such as porcelain and black clay, to uncover some new symbolic associations that speak of the home narratives I want to express. Through film and construction, fabric, and stitch, I also reveal a tactile transformation from the hard edges of a selected utensil to encompass the texture, surface, and materiality of the reconfigured work. To

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<sup>12</sup> Husserl, *Ideas*, 270.

<sup>13</sup> Igor Kopytoff, ‘The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditisation as Process’ in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 67.

<sup>14</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, with a new foreword by John R Stilgoe, trans from French by Maria Jolas (Beacon Press, 1958).

<sup>15</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, xxxvii.

<sup>16</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 3.

reinvent and reveal new socialisations of kitchen utensils, the interplay of translating ideas through the reparation and playfulness of appropriate materials explores different methods of construction.

Clay, for example, has a fragility and malleability that can disturb the original selected utensil. Through exploring everyday objects, and their familiar contexts I experiment with rearranged kitchen utensils. This is done through distortion to confuse or disrupt, and to provoke meanings. The anthropomorphic objects that I make combine familiar things such as kitchen whisks and spoons with body torsos or limbs, to reveal disturbing feelings of discontent. Through making and producing new works based on kitchen utensils, I am exposing the old (my domestic past) and presenting new awkward structures of part body and part object. I draw these concepts out throughout this thesis, and through the making of a body of work that is both familiar and unsettling. These gestural acts of making become new experiences for the viewer whereby the familiar is visible in commonplace objects.

To establish the newly formed sculptural work I also use drawing, printing, and collage as methods of thinking about the sculptures that I wish to make. The repetitive nature of drawing on surfaces and drawing through space, allows me to access memories and past experiences that can be reimagined through the drawn mark and making. The object that I am drawing and the object that I am making can trigger memories at the same time as allowing me to encapsulate them into a fixed form. In the book, *Stuff Theory*, Maurizi Boscagli suggests that 'Memory is set in motion, and the past "opened up" by an object and by the sensations produced on the body of the subject of remembrance. The subject is no longer the spectator of a past scene [...]: instead, the past happens to the present-day subject as a tactile experience'.<sup>17</sup>

This tactile experience is embedded within the physicality of drawing, the material, and making. Drawing generates gestural acts which become the encounters of what is already known, exposing the subconscious, and allowing for conscious beginnings. Merleau-Ponty proposes of embodiment that 'to look at an object is to inhabit it, and from this habitation to grasp all things in terms of the aspect which they present'.<sup>18</sup> My working practices utilise the embodied act of making and drawing to experience the physical characteristics of the observed object and domesticity. This process of drawing is a disruptive form of inquiry into both the kitchen as a space and place and the embodied making that occurs within it. Marsha Meskimmon states; 'Drawing describes both object and processes as interdependent; it's both/and is more than the activity of a clever wordsmith, it is an

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<sup>17</sup> Maurizia Boscagli, *Stuff Theory: Everyday Objects, Radical Materialism* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 193.

<sup>18</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 2009, 79.

essential element of its emergent production of meaning. Imbrication of matter and for, of material and meaning'.<sup>19</sup>

Understanding the origins and functions of my selected objects through the physical act of drawing helps me to reflect on my experiences and the emergence of my being. Artist Deborah Harty reiterates this by suggesting 'Lives have the potential to be caught up in the everyday, tracing, erasing and retracing habitual marks'.<sup>20</sup> In terms of active bodily encounters, these new works which are conceived through drawn ideas aim to generate interconnections between the body as an object, the utensil as an object and the self as a subject and, in turn, reveal new sculptural forms.

Throughout my PhD, I have studied the work of artists such as Louise Bourgeois, Martha Rosler, Mona Hatoum, and Rachel Whiteread. A review of their works is offered in Chapter 2: *Artist of the Everyday, Re-Made, Re-Presented*. There, I discuss artists whose work incorporates kitchen utensils into the content of their practice. The chosen artists for this examination provided a historical and contemporary framework for the research and my art practice. An investigation of the artists allowed me to have a better grasp of my own self-expression while also defining the scope of this research and its ability to provide new knowledge and understanding to the field. To add to these findings, I interviewed five carefully selected artists and crafts people Georgie Hopton, Perminder Kaur, Rachel Fallon, David Clarke and Eldi Dundee (see Appendix 1) to further clarify my research and assist me in reflecting on my ongoing work. The selection criteria were that they worked in a variety of media to create sculptural or crafted products, that they identified with domestic objects, and that they included autobiographical history into their work or thought process. Introducing discussions on methods of making and talking to artists allowed me to firstly situate my work in context, secondly establish the relevance of the domestic object and its uses within the arena of the sculptural field, and thirdly open up why and how autobiography feeds the context of sculptural works. The interviewees included were semi-structured and were conducted via Teams or Zoom mainly due to the lockdown and the inability to meet face to face.

Georgie Hopton<sup>21</sup> is a contemporary artist who divides her time between London and America to create artwork that is about pleasurable acts of making by combining the body, the organic, and the domestic. Hopton also embraces the craft of making and materiality to inform her practice. This

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<sup>19</sup> Marsha Meskimmon and Phil Sawdon, *Drawing Difference* (I.B Tauris 2016), 54.

<sup>20</sup> Deborah Harty, 'Trailing Temporal Trace', in *Besides the Lines of Contemporary Art: Drawing Ambiguity*, edited by E. B. Marshall (I.B. Tauris, 2015), 56.

<sup>21</sup> Phone interview with Georgie Hopton, 7th April 2020, <https://lyndseygram.com/artists/35-georgie-hopton/works>. Accessed 10/9/2023.



interview is embedded in Chapter 3, *Whisk Up--Grind Down*, where I start my experiments of making reconfigured sculptures of the kitchen utensil.

In an interview with Perminder Kaur,<sup>22</sup> I expose the diverse relationships between the large and the small, the material and the made. Kaur's artworks are characterised by playful installations on belonging and home. Her work with the familiar and selections of household objects leads to issues of private space within a public space. This assists in leading to an improved comprehension of the placements of my work, as well as the relevance of the locations in which I exhibit. Through this interview, I questioned the exhibition space and began to identify further discussion on the scale and size of the sculpture which became relevant in Chapter 4, *Testing Works, Finding Spaces, Placing Sculptures*, whilst situating and testing my work out in new locations.

Throughout the study, I reviewed prominent artists, in particular Chapter 2, to clarify both my reasons for choosing kitchen utensils as a trigger for making and why the selected artists also used kitchen utensils in their work. I pay specific attention to Irish artist Rachel Fallon, whom I was also fortunate to interview. Fallon's work considers the maternal and domestic through experimenting with a wide range of domestic objects and materials. Her blend of craft, performance, drawing, sculpture, and collaborative approaches echoes my intentions to address the domestic experiences of motherhood and materiality. Fallon's work embraces all elements of my intended practice and discussing domestic discontent allowed me to reflect a lot deeper in the direction of my work.

I interviewed Eldi Dundee<sup>23</sup>, a dual-national artist from New York who has spent more than half of her life in London. Her work combines painting, photography, assemblage, performance, installation, writing, drawing, and sculpture. Dundee curated a series of exhibitions within doll houses in 2021 during the pandemic and as I began to make smaller works due to the confinements of home, I was fortunate to have some of my small works displayed within one of her curated houses *The Cottage*. In the interview, we discussed scale and making at great lengths, which triggered a significant shift within this project and is integral to the final Chapter 5, *Art-House- Home of Dis/Content*, where all my work is made small to fit into a doll's house.

David Clarke, a silversmith based in London who uses found silverware cutlery to build new objects via the craft of making, was the first person I interviewed for this project. Much of his work is based on observations of objects and a distorting process that results in creative awkward sculptural reconfigurations of cutlery knives, spoons and forks.

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<sup>22</sup> Zoom interview with Perminder Kaur, 26th July 2021, <https://www.permindarkaur.com>. Accessed 10/9/2023.

<sup>23</sup> Zoom interview with Eldi Dundee, Zoom, 5th September 2022. <https://smallhousegallery.uk>. Accessed 10/9/2023.

I first came across his work during the initial research of this project and was curious about the idea of morphed utensils, meanings and making through craft. In a literary review I conducted at the beginning of the PhD I highlighted key texts, books, and artists which in turn opened a range of fundamental predispositions of skill for further questioning. This review examined the significance of skills and craft in the arts, as well as the connections between making, material, and experience. To move forward with the research project, I wanted to determine what interests me within the made object and what experiences it provides me through the physical act of making. I have always been intrigued by how things are produced, whether they are works of art or everyday objects. This is where craft, skill, and art intersect for me, and why David Clarke, himself a craftsman, became a crucial artist to interview, as well as to highlight the importance of understanding form through craft in 3D structures.

Peter Dormer, an author specialising in contemporary applied art and design, discusses the fundamental issues of craft-making and the discourse between craft and skill in his book, *The Art of the Maker*. He identifies central issues of the identity of the craft itself which distinguish traditions of craft and skill within the creation of art, and considers the complexities of the interrelationship between knowledge, understanding and judgment as they encounter materiality, tools, and techniques. The focus here is to consider whether an emotional and intellectual response can come from as well as being brought to, the physical process of making. Dormer uses the example of the work of the disciplined craftsmen of hand tools and cutlery in Sheffield. This hand-crafted method of making was a mechanical approach to the crafted objects, but the focus and method were to do it with fluency and an eye for perfection. The acquisition of such skills once perfected could then be used to further develop the object into something of 'beauty' or of 'interest' as well as being functional. Dormer also emphasises a need to 'embrace' skills and profit from rethinking craft as a necessity within the discipline and dualism of art and craft. He refers to these 'skills' in some cases as a set of rules. 'There are rules to learn and facts to acquire'.<sup>24</sup> He further suggests that you cannot 'understand it or know it until you can do it'.<sup>25</sup> This then suggests that an art object can move forward and shift within conceptual values which are informed by the materiality and handling of the skills acquired. The work created then produces a physical enquiry led through the development and handling of the material. This determination and discipline allow for making judgements and then further intellectual inquiry. I also make judgements by identifying the methods of practice through the material and this is done through testing and making mistakes which are a predominant form of practice in design, craft, and art.

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Dormer, *Art of the Maker and its Meaning in Art, Craft & Design* (London: Thames and Hudson 1994), 43.

<sup>25</sup> Dormer, *Art of the Maker*, 43.

Dormer's definitions could be seen as interchangeable skills within visual arts practice. In other words, craft becomes the discipline of practice. Many of the materials traditionally used in art practice are processes brought about through crafts. For example, before we can approach clay with a creative discipline, we need to understand its composition. A grasp of the material will give a technical proficiency which will lead to executing an intellectual and imaginative outcome. Clay is a material that I understand the most, it is the flesh and structure of clay as a material that best supports my anthropomorphic forms. To coincide with these theories of practice, in an essay written for Peter Dormer's *The Culture of Craft*, (1997), entitled 'Craft and Art, Culture and Biology', Bruce Metcalf considers some of the relationships between the craft of an object and an art object. Metcalf asserts that 'conceptual tools and vocabulary of the fine arts can be applied directly to any craft object, and vice versa'.<sup>26</sup> Metcalf identifies a connection between 'culture' and 'human nature' and outlines the intrinsic values between the craft maker and the artist. The difference here may be that the craft maker also needs to pay significant attention to the aesthetics of their creations. Here we may begin to identify with linguistic structures, to which I will return later. Metcalf writes of a 'dematerialisation of art' and continues with the mutation of any 'imaginable form' indicating that 'art consists primarily of meaning. Thus, objecthood is no longer a necessary criterion for art status'.<sup>27</sup> This statement raises the question of why the everyday object is predominant in the form of contemporary art practice. Art made by hand, or through skill, and technology constitutes a journey through the material to create an object, as Jean Baudrillard suggests: 'A *utensil* is never possessed because a utensil refers one to the world; what is possessed is always an object abstracted from its function and thus brought into relationship with the subject'.<sup>28</sup> Dormer identifies an association with skill, labour, and strategies to improve our philosophical approach to hands-on making in the arts.

The essence of these debates is the view that acquiring skills is more likely to enhance artistic judgement. In *The Craftsman* (2009) Richard Sennett puts forward the idea of material consciousness as an underpinning format that refers to the interrelationship of practice, materiality, and the functionality of human connections. These terms described as practice, materiality and functionality are presented in three domains: 'Metamorphosis,' 'Presence', and 'Anthropomorphic'.<sup>29</sup> Sennett suggests that engaging with material culture defines how we use it and what we do with it. He argues that materiality reflects elements of focus on attention to work and the creation of those objects being made. He illuminates this by highlighting learned experience, through practice and repetition. His

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<sup>26</sup> Bruce Metcalf, 'Craft and art, culture and biology', in *The Culture of Craft*, edited by Peter Dormer (Manchester University Press, 1997), 67.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Metcalf, 'Craft and art', 68.

<sup>28</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (London: Verso Radical Thinkers, 2005), 91.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, (Penguin 2009), 137.

definition of skill includes temporary, intangible, and transient objects. Can craft be seen as the acquisition of knowledge brought about by the perception of the form being created? Sennett discusses the 'curiosity' of the material as well as questioning the consciousness of things as independent of things themselves. 'Metamorphoses' within this context allows failure in practice, described by Sennett as an 'organic reconfiguration'.<sup>30</sup> He argues that 'Presence' comes with the maker's ability to correct and adapt. Through raising awareness of the intangibility of material in the contemporary world and by revisiting the importance of practice and skill in the making of the inanimate object it is possible to 'heighten our consciousness of the material' and to think about the value of an object.<sup>31</sup> In this way, the anthropomorphic displays the power of metaphor as well as a mechanism for producing symbols. So, in part of the framework of my own craft, skill, and art practice the 'anthropomorphic' is certainly a prominent act of creating, material selection, and finally gives the object on view a deeper meaning.

Throughout this study, I have looked for ways to utilise dialogues between making and domesticity by engaging with other artists working in the field or adjacent territories. I embarked upon collaborative ventures with the hope of challenging my perceptions and limitations and creating an arena for the generation of ideas and the understanding of certain solutions to problems thus, expanding my understanding of expressing ideas and thoughts through objects. Midway through the study, exploratory collaborative approaches evolved beyond working with other artists to open up dialogues related to objects with which people are connected and to explore the nature of such connections. In Chapter 4 I undertake a reflective account of exhibiting and testing out work in different spaces, and of my collaboration with other artists, exploring how collaboration impacts the work in situ, and how selecting spaces and places for exhibiting is vital to situating the work in context.

As part of my analysis, and as stated above, I have always been captivated by language, particularly poems. I have been writing short poems for as long as I can remember to communicate my ideas about life in general and my vision of the world around me. At the age of 18, I began to actively interact with poetic phrases, and the title of my sculptural work became a significant component of the piece itself. The titles grew longer and more poetic. I use the inclusion of text within my artworks to allow for a better understanding of those objects. The use of text adds another layer and a new dimension to the experience of the works. Combinations of text and object or image can open the poetic nature of the content of the objects. In ancient Greece, the term *ekphrasis* was applied to the ability to describe a

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<sup>30</sup> Sennett, *Craftsman*, 126.

<sup>31</sup> Sennett, *Craftsman*, 137.

thing in vivid detail. In some cases, along with these works of my project, I define the content by bringing in a poetic text of words drawn from my journal:<sup>32</sup>

The role of ekphrasis – and of art history itself – is to make the reader or the listener ‘see’ more than they saw before when they encounter the object next. That search for words to make us ‘see’ is at the heart of the creative struggle against how what we have learned can go stale, and it is an attempt to open to the new.

In this study, my descriptive writing processes were used in combination with haptic experience and the processes of making. The study considers the capacity of creative text to enhance the sculptural forms and to give them extra meaning and substance, and the capacity of text to entice objects into a state of ekphrasis as appropriate to the specific themes related to objects.

All of these methods of practice feed my desire to better understand the principles of object making and translate them into sculptural definitions of my own experiences, allowing me to have a personal and successful voice in my practice while also contributing openly to the wider field of sculpture.

Marina Warner's *Forms of Enchantment: Writings on Art and Artists* resonates with my interest in ekphrasis. There, she states that ekphrasis engages the viewer or reader by ‘looking closely at works of art, to see and feel how the artist is interpreting the world’.<sup>33</sup> There have been many artists that use and bring together poems and sculptures, or poem and drawings. For example, Louise Bourgeois’s series, *He Disappeared into Complete Silence*,<sup>34</sup> places words beside each drawing. In so many of Bourgeois’s works she documents her thoughts, memories and often traumas of her domestic past. Bourgeois states: ‘If a word strikes you, it is because it relates to a past experience’.<sup>35</sup> In this study, my descriptive writing processes were used in combination with haptic experience and the processes of making. Each object I choose comes with an array of words describing its functionality and, in some cases, its meaning. These observations are recorded in journals and sketchbooks and serve as catalysts for drawing ideas that evolve into sculptural pieces. *The Object As Poet* by poet and art critic Rose Slivka describes the idea of an object becoming a poet whereby ‘the object is seen and touched in the language of materials and is sounded and heard in the language of words’.<sup>36</sup> So my intention in this project was to open up the objects I make through both the materials I use and the words I write. I

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<sup>32</sup> Simon Goldhill, “What is Ekphrasis For?” *Classical Philology*, Vol 102, No 1 (January 2007), 1-19, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/521129?origin=JSTOR>

<sup>33</sup> Marina Warner, *Forms of Enchantment Writings on Art, and Artists* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2018).

<sup>34</sup> Louise Bourgeois, *He Disappeared into Complete Silence* is a suite of nine engravings with text. This can be seen in Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality, Louise Bourgeois, and a Story of Modern Art*. (Boston: MIT Press, 2005), 83-118.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Donald Kuspit, ‘Writing. Words As Transitional Objects, in *Louise Bourgeois*, edited by Francis Morris (London: Tate Publishing, 2007), 295.

<sup>36</sup> Rose Slivka, *The Object As Poet*, (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1977), 8-20.

attempt to entice objects into ekphrasis through my text, in response to the various themes associated with objects.

## Summary

The processes of making a new body of work brings together methods of practice that feed my desire to better understand the principles of object-making and translate them into sculptural definitions of my own experiences. This project uses a conscious approach to materials and methods of creation, as well as uncovering the importance of conveying manifestations of human connection and ambiguity. The research uncovers parallel links between skill acquisition and the anchoring of artistic perception inside sculptural works developed around kitchen utensils. Skill, craft, and art can sit within one consortium and can become fluid within the practice. My shifts and changes within the confines of technical advances and anthropological suggestions are determined both through visual culture and the world around me. Part of my enquiry relates to revisiting specific skills and crafts of art objects, and the transformative qualities of making by hand. I consider the historical frameworks of specific objects and identify with the materiality and roles the objects play through a sociological and anthropological exchange. Objects change as they are passed on through time, and meanings can become accumulative and inclusive of personal and emotional circumstances. In other words, they acquire a social and functional use, and the union between the handler and the object alters and evolves through remaking and through a better understanding of how and why we make.

Everyday things, materials, preparatory sketches, and text (ekphrasis) are featured equally throughout this project. The creation of a body of work allows me to have a personal voice in my practice while also openly contributing to the larger field of sculpture. The investigation looks into what has already been accomplished in the use of kitchen utensils by reflecting on selected artists. I interweave new elements by questioning scale and space, creating from scratch and embracing the domestic environment as a place for developing ideas based on autobiographical experiences that stimulate acts of production. Material experimentation and setting are underlined throughout, including exhibition spaces and my use of my home as studio space. My theoretical framework embraces phenomenology and critical works on the creative process. The artists discussed in this study either transformed the original shape or form of a household kitchen item into a sculpture, altered everyday objects to construct a sculpture, or magnified the original utensil through size. The objective of this research was to use my practice and push the idea of the kitchen utensil and its uses even further by completely remaking the kitchen utensil.

## Chapter 2: Artist of the Every-Day, Re-Made, Re-Presented.

### 2.1. Introduction

Having chosen the kitchen utensil as my object of investigation, I conducted a practice review alongside a literature review to better understand the relationship between skill, craft, and art. The literature review is presented in the Methodology section of Chapter 1. In this chapter, I explain how and why kitchen utensils appear in the works of selected female artists and relate this to my own work. This chapter focuses on sculptural portrayals of utensils by Martha Rosler, Rachel Fallon, Mona Hatoum, Louise Bourgeois and Rachel Whiteread. I was able to interview Fallon, and this interview informs the discussion of her work in this chapter.

Kitchen utensils play a significant role in our day-to-day lives, and it is important to note that these items which are familiar, functional, and domestic, present a common arena for investigation by female artists and feminist scholars. Household utensils have appeared through the centuries as crafted and functional objects used within the kitchen. Ritualistic in use, made for the purpose of preparation, serving, and eating of food, they are also displayed for aesthetic purposes. I investigate these specific artists' approaches to better grasp my own methodology, subject, and ideas. Martha Rosler's performance piece, Rachel Fallon's sculptural alchemy and dressed utensils, Mona Hatoum's industrial re-made works using culinary utensils, and Louise Bourgeois' hybrid forms of made and readymade are among the works I select. Finally, I consider Rachel Whiteread's works, which examine the interior and exterior of objects. There are differences in the context of these artists' works, and they all use the utensil in different ways. In conclusion, I analyse these artists' approaches to prompt me to think on a deeper level and better understand my own making and creative process.



## 2.2. Martha Rosler

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Figure 1: Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, Film, 1975. <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/88937>.

If we look in depth at the performance piece *Semiotics of the Kitchen* by Martha Rosler (1975), (Fig 1), we notice a relationship between the object and the handler. The objects become performative, the objects speak and open a dialogue between participant and audience. 'My art is a communicative act,' Martha Rosler says, 'a form of an utterance, a way to open a conversation'.<sup>1</sup> The objects within this performance are used as metaphors for the rage and oppression of women during this period and arguably speak a new language. In an essay written by Vanessa Thill, she describes Rosler's metaphors clearly: 'each object's action is repeated'.<sup>2</sup> Rosler utilises the language of the alphabet and the kitchen utensils to transform the implements into something other than the normal and suggests that they are formations of identity. At this time, female identity was perhaps related to housewife, mother, and domesticity. In the publication, *Positions in the Life World* on Martha Rosler's first retrospective in 1998, Silvia Eiblmayr refers to these shifting roles as 'characters'.<sup>3</sup> Eiblmayr highlights that this 'the system of language and signs itself constitutes the order of the Symbolic'.<sup>4</sup> The content is discussed further by Eiblmayr through 'the structures of power, domination and submission and their ideological

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<sup>1</sup> Martha Rosler, quoted in Michael Rush, 'Art and Architecture: A Pure Artist is Embraced by the Art World', *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/07/09/arts/art-architecture-a-pure-artist-is-embraced-by-the-art-world.html>, Accessed 26/08/2023.

<sup>2</sup> Vanessa Thill, 'Martha Rosler's Semiotics of the Kitchen', <https://oliviaheathblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/martharosler-by-vanessa-thill-2013>, Accessed 26/08/2023, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Sylvia Eiblmayr, in *Martha Rosler: Positions of the Life World*, edited by Catherine de Zegher (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 1998), 153.

<sup>4</sup> Eiblmayr, in *Martha Rosler: Positions*, 153.

ramifications',<sup>5</sup> which open a dialogue of economic, social, and political issues. These ideas relate to the idea of an object having significant meaning for 'the handler', and that function plays a huge part in the context of our relationship with a 'thing'. The objects in question are kitchen utensils and they have been used to display almost a code; in other words, language has been performed through the object. In Deyan Sudjic's book, *The Language of Things*, he also refers to objects as potential codes. The spoon, for instance, 'could be understood as a fragment of the genetic code—a code that can grow into any kind of man-made artefact'.<sup>6</sup> In Rosler's performance, she reinvents the objects to project emotions. Is it then that the alphabet is the code, and the objects are the symbols? 'The code is partly a reflection of how the object is made, but also of its symbolic meaning',<sup>7</sup> recognising the 'metaphoric through the literal'.<sup>8</sup> Thill introduces Ferdinand Saussure's theory of linguistic structures, the 'signifier' and 'signified', identified through the combination of objects and concepts.<sup>9</sup> The objects become the subject. In other words, the collective products of social interaction are essential to our response to the environment, culture, and happenings of both being and participating. How these thoughts act to determine the usefulness and dualities between object and subject is a question which is identified, first, through the change of how the objects are being used and, secondly, through what is being expressed.

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<sup>5</sup> Eiblmayr, in *Martha Rosler: Positions*, 153.

<sup>6</sup> Deyan Sudjic, *The Language of Things* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 35.

<sup>7</sup> Sudjic, *Language*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Thill, 'Martha Rosler's *Semiotics*', 1.

<sup>9</sup> Thill, 'Martha Rosler's *Semiotics*', 1.

## 2.3. Rachel Fallon

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Figure 2: Rachel Fallon, *La Befana: A Durational Work of Repetition Care*, 2016, <http://www.rachelfallon.com/new-gallery-2>.

The works by Irish artist Rachel Fallon encompass the daily, alchemical performance, the handcrafted, and the domestic. Fallon's work tackles issues of domestic security and defence, as well as the domain of motherhood.

Fallon's art incorporates domestic motifs to represent a duty of care within the home context. She expresses her issues through autobiographical accounts of parenting, caring for her mother, and food difficulties. This is evident in her use of kitchenware in her sculptural and performance work, where material choices and the use of culinary utensils add rigour and weight to the context of what is presented. Fallon's moulding and arranging of an object into sculptural forms are reminiscent of Joseph Beuys' assemblage and alchemical works, which feature ritualistic behaviours in their performances and sculptures. David Adams, in *From Queen Bee to Social Sculpture: The Artistic Alchemy of Joseph Beuys*, describes Beuys's unconventional methods of material mixing as:<sup>10</sup>

provocative uses of unfamiliar artistic mediums (for example, fat, honey, felt, iron, copper, horns, bones, gelatin, peat, blood, chocolate, conversation), his challenging arrangements of objects and artwork in gallery installations and vitrines, his creative blurring of the boundaries between art and life, his articulate theoretical statements on art and social reform, and his intense, wiry drawings which have intrigued, and puzzled, the international artworld.

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<sup>10</sup> David Adams, *From Queen Bee to Social Sculpture: The Artistic Alchemy of Joseph Beuys. Afterword to Bees by Rudolph Steiner* (Hudson, NY: Anthroposophic Press 1998), 190.

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Figure 3: Rachel Fallon, *La Befana: A Durational Work of Repetition Care*, 2016, <http://www.rachelfallon.com/new-gallery-2>.

During my interview with Fallon, I brought attention to some of the key pieces that address reconstructed cooking equipment, as well as some of her more performative pieces, like her work, *La Befana* (Fig 3):<sup>11</sup>

It's in a copper pot. It's a performance piece. It's actually involuntarily how it works in the gallery. Who wants to display it or wants to show it has to take on a role of *loco parentis*. So, they get a letter asking them to take this on. And in taking this on, they have to agree to feed and clean it. That means that in the mornings when they come in, they have to fill it half full of oat milk and it's this particular type of milk that my son drinks. And then during the day, that oat milk starts to go rancid. So, they have to change it. They have to clean it out, wash it and then refill it. And they have to mark that all on a chart. So, there is a charge that comes with a feeding chart and they have to say what they feel about it and whatever. And it is basically that idea. Giving over the idea of care to a gallery, that they have to look after it like a child in a way.

Considering Rosler's and Fallon's performative works, I was reminded of a short video entitled *Couples*<sup>12</sup> that I worked on with poet Michael Stewart in 2010 as mentioned in Chapter 1. I returned to film as an essential component of my inquiry and practice, as is addressed and realised later in this thesis. Fallon expresses her reaction to material and methods as follows:<sup>13</sup>

I have an attraction to a particular material, and it is very often a conversation with the material that then it reveals what is going on. It really is that back and forth. What I intended becomes

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Rachel Fallon, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Stewart and Carole Griffiths, *Couples*, (2010), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i79ONxm6aIY>. Accessed 15/09/2023.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Rachel Fallon.

not at all that. So, it is always in conversation with the materials, looking at the limitations and, you know, turning it round and problem-solving. That also becomes part of the thematic problem-solving of the work. It just becomes a methodology of channelling what is going on inside, in that bizarre sort of way. But it is quite a pragmatic way of dealing with it in a way.

The act of problem-solving through material is inherent in my own practice. I attempt to discover what I want to say and to open up the ambiguous nature of my thoughts via thinking through the manipulation of materials. I challenge myself to not use the object in its current state. I use culinary utensils to make new sculptures and expand sculptural languages as opposed to Rosler, Hatoum, and, to a lesser extent, Fallon, who use the items as they were originally produced.

I discussed Fallon's piece *All in The Mind* (Fig 4) during the interview. It is part of a larger body of work that investigates women's work and the intangible elements of creativity. In this project, Fallon investigates the motions of sewing and repairing with varying results. This work explores the relationship between sewing and mending and the traditional ways for women to earn money and

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fight for financial independence. The challenge for many female artists is often finding ways to sustain their practice and space (both physical and psychological) for making. We discussed this at length during the interview. I was intrigued by Fallon's use of knives and her use of crochet to construct with, or to dress the knives.

Figure 4: Rachel Fallon, *All in the Mind*. 2014.  
<http://www.rachelfallon.com/new-gallery-2>.

Both Fallon and I were familiar with sewing and crocheting from childhood (Fig 5) and, not surprisingly, we both draw upon our childhood recollections as subjects for work. The link between household utensils and sewing techniques is a rich strand within this study. Fallon highlights and discusses her crochet pieces further:<sup>14</sup>

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Figure 5: Rachel Fallon, *All in the Mind*. 2014.  
<http://www.rachelfallon.com/new-gallery-2>.

They are mostly crochet. Some of them are knitted so part of the breast is knitted and then the rest of it is crochet. Very early pieces, I think. I am really looking at those sorts of ideas, probably made them about 10 years ago when I was starting to look at intimate thoughts about childhood and about that sort of thing. So, I was just absolutely fascinated, and I still am kind of fascinated by cutlery [...].

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Rachel Fallon.

I think the thing about cutlery is it is quite personal. I am the youngest of seven. Oh, and my mother had an eating disorder when we were growing up, so she had an eating disorder all her life, so she would never actually really eat dinner with us. I had huge sensory problems with eating. So, things like, the weight of cutlery really disturbs me, or I like it. So, it is the things about things and colours of plates. I'm very freaked if it's not on a white plate. So, I've loads of kinds of sensory issues around food. And as a child, I had massive problems with food. But I think it is that sort of thing about the cutting up, then using the knife, the actual you know, how you use these utensils as tools really, and it was also very much, supposed to be that idea of nourishing. You are supposed to use them to nourish and yet they can be weapons as well. Yeah, my mother was fabulous at throwing knives. I think for me in that, you know, nurture and violence are a sort of paradigm.

Rachel Fallon's work employs craft techniques including crochet, and particular attention is paid to the knife, which is finely crocheted in white and lies awkwardly near the crochet dummy/rattle. It is depicted as something concealed within a familiar object yet softly revealed (Fig 5). I appreciate Fallon's work for its subtlety and interest with domestic and maternal realms. Her work presents conflict and, at times, trauma all of which appear to inform her material and process choices, allowing the work to speak of autobiographical encounters with the everyday object.

## 2.4. Mona Hatoum

Mona Hatoum was born in 1952 in Beirut to a Palestinian family and works as an artist in London. Hatoum's poetic and political work includes installations, sculpture, and video. Hatoum created visceral video and performance work with a strong emphasis on the body. She has, however, moved to large-scale installations in order to engage the audience in contradictory sentiments such as desire and aversion, fear, and curiosity. Many of Hatoum's sculptures transform everyday objects like chairs, cots and cooking utensils into unusual disturbing, or even threatening forms. Her installations generally combine a sense of fear with personal histories, drawing the observer in on both an emotional and intellectual level.

The retrospective of Hatoum at the Tate Modern in 2016 revealed her ongoing interest in the everyday. This exhibition presented Hatoum's use of the kitchen utensil, from its original state to its transformative reconstructions. On approach, the sculptures *'The Grater Divide'* and *'Homebound'* extrude rage, draw you in, and open a dialogue that relates to dissatisfaction. Hatoum's objects have been dismantled and rearranged to form a provocative reimagining of the familiar. Much of Hatoum's work appears to expose the discomfort of the home and explore the transition of the home from a secure to disturbing environment. This sense of disturbance is often created through a shift in scale of the remade manufactured domestic/everyday objects. It could be said that such objects suggest a lack of belonging and thus project instability, but what interests me about these specific works is their familiarity. In *'The Art of Displacement or Mono Hatoum's Logic of Irreconcilables'*, Edward Said proposes that the "familiarity" and 'strangeness' of such objects are locked together in the oddest way, adjacent and irreconcilable at the same time'.<sup>15</sup> He goes on to state, 'domesticity is transformed into a series of menacing and radically inhospitable objects who's new and presumably non-domestic use is waiting to be defined'.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly, Patricia Falguière suggests a 'disbelonging' in Hatoum's work.<sup>17</sup> She also refers to similar elements of dialogue in Rosler's work and states that they both appear to adopt and adapt acts of displacement through the familiar and change in the representation of the kitchen utensil. Falguière links the use of utensils in both cases as an 'entire panoply of domesticity'.<sup>18</sup> Such transformations are explained through the writings of artist Stephen Willats who views these acts of displacement and rearrangements as fundamental and creative. 'Transformation' in these cases could be, as Willats

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<sup>15</sup> Edward Said, 'The Art of Displacement: Mona Hatoum's Logic of Irreconcilable', in *Mona Hatoum*, edited Christine Van Assche with Clarrie Wallis (London: Tate Publishing, 2016), 83.

<sup>16</sup> Said, *'The Art of Displacement'*, 83.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia Falguière, 'Disbelonging', in *Mona Hatoum*, ed. Van Aasche, 59.

<sup>18</sup> Falguière 'Disbelonging', 66.

suggests 'the taking of an object and altering of its function, meaning and character effectively making it into another object. As a consequence of reforming the cultural system of references that surround the object is also changed',<sup>19</sup> revealing a 'new meaning and function'.<sup>20</sup> If we compare Rosler and Hatoum at this point, we can see a similar theme related to conflict within the cultural situation in which their artworks were made. Hatoum is a transformer of objects, and Willats proposes an emotional expression via the object, 'a corresponding change in his or her own consciousness, assigning to the object a new self-given function which is other than its predetermined role'.<sup>21</sup> Hatoum's work is strong and industrial in appearance due to the assembling of sharp components being fabricated out of steel, and then strategically placed within a given space. The familiarity of the domestic objects initially enables the viewer to engage with the sculpture and then leads to other more provocative and diverse thoughts. The assemblages and configurations bring together a physical appearance and aesthetic dialogue of the everyday object and allow for multiple meanings to evolve, offering a sinister and violent metaphor for home. These sculptures withhold the familiarity of the original creating an ambiguity. It could be suggested that they have been executed to change our perception of physical appearances and invite us into the insecurities of disturbance. It is here that the familiar becomes paramount to our understanding of a form. This is what draws us in and the reason we may become vulnerable viewers. Hatoum is enticing us into an uncomfortable world by the removal of the everyday objects out of private space into an open arena for exposure, revealing disharmony. For example, in Hatoum's *The Grater Divide* (Fig 6), a cheese grater has been enlarged.

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Figure 6: *Grater Divide*, Mild Steel, Mona Hatoum, (2002) <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/mona-hatoum-grater-divide>.

It is sharp and it should be handled with care. Hatoum has enlarged, manufactured it in steel, and it sits in a dominant position within a clean space void of any references to home. It, therefore, becomes

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<sup>19</sup> Stephen Willats, 'Transformers', in *The Object*, edited by Anthony Hude. Whitechapel Documents in Contemporary Art (London: MIT Press, 2014), 77.

<sup>20</sup> Willats, 'Transformers', 77.

<sup>21</sup> Willats, 'Transformers', 78.



a new object with new meaning displaying detachment and pain. It has also become a screen to hide behind, appropriately described in Marja Sakari's essay, 'Boundary Crossings: The Political Postminimalism', as being 'splayed as a violent symbol of division, partition and abrasion'.<sup>22</sup>

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Figure 7: Mona Hatoum, *Grater Divide*, Mild Steel, 80 3/10 × 1 2/5 in | 204 × 3.5 cm (2002) <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/mona-hatoum-grater-divide>.

Figure 8: Mona Hatoum, *No Way 11*, Stainless Steel (1996), <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/mona-hatoum-no-way-iii>.

This *Grater Divide* (Fig 6) appears like a Victorian freestanding dress screen (Fig 9). Often associated with intrigue and romance in the bedroom, Hatoum's transformation of the object persuades the viewer that all is not well. *No Way 111* (Fig 7) is a colander in which all the holes have been closed so that the original kitchen item can no longer be used. The electrified kitchen '*Homebound*' (Fig 8) has been skilfully composed with an installation of a table and electric utensils. The absence of the artist's making is what makes these specific works interesting. The constructed utensil in this instance is made of stainless steel, where a somewhat clinical approach to manufacturing appears to have been chosen. For example, stainless steel can appear soulless as a material, affecting only how one is exposed to certain realities, realities of known and constructed possibilities.

The identity of the household item is transformed into the dominant large-scale object which acts to establish the sense of a controlled disturbance. Talking about her work in an interview with John Tusa, Hatoum discusses some of the impact and meanings of the domestic and objects which are used within her work. 'It becomes a sort of threat as opposed to comfort and then makes you think about all the possible unpleasant things to do with home'.<sup>23</sup> The choice and transformations of the objects which demonstrate such raw emotions are evident through the materiality, assemblage, and enlargement. Hatoum further describes references to 'woman feeling entrapped by domesticity, a

<sup>22</sup> Marja Sakari, 'Boundary Crossings: The Political Post Minimalism of Mona Hatoum', *FNG Research* 5 (2016), 153.

<sup>23</sup> Mona Hatoum, Interview with John Tusa, 2006, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00ncz8t>. Accessed 10/9/2023.

condemned environment and the notion of the home denied.<sup>24</sup> She states, 'The use of the familiar and every day, is determined by the viewer's perception and interpretations. What I like to do with these works is to introduce a kind of disruptive element, physical or psychological element, which makes you question the whole environment'.<sup>25</sup> The tension between comfort and alienation is central to her work. Hatoum talks about the idea of 'destabilising' without which a conscious decision on the works cannot be produced and states, 'exposure of what normally suppresses conjures a sense of abjection, which has a destabilising effect on the viewer'.<sup>26</sup>

By aligning the concept of home to a war of emotionally charged oppression and experiences, Hatoum questions the stability of 'domesticity' 'home' and the 'every day'. Making sense through these ambivalent works could also be a reaction to her personal situations: 'the personal *is* political yet the personal also becomes universal, something shared by us all'.<sup>27</sup>

On first observation, *Daybed* (Fig 10) looks like the frame of a bed without the mattress. It clearly is

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Figure 10: Mona Hatoum, *Day Bed*, Black Finished Steel, 2008  
<https://www.artbasel.com/catalog/artwork/43916/Mona-Hatoum-bed?lang=en>.

either incomplete or displays discomfort reminiscent of a prison bed. In actuality, it is a one-piece cheese grater, sharp, raw, and disconcerting. All the elements of comfort have been removed. Its simplicity and familiarity are prominent. It is situated next to *The Grater Divide* in one space, where the two objects speak of social collisions, invocations of human experience, and narratives often related to her homeland Palestine. All the banalities of every day are exposed. 'This ostensibly simple work evokes a world of pain, discomfort, torture, and abuse'.<sup>28</sup>

The social and political dynamics of Hatoum's life have been embodied in the motifs of the everyday object. Dislocated from human interactions and creating domestic unrest, Hatoum's work is about the relationship with the familiar objects of kitchen utensils, beds, and other objects and their transformation through narrative of political conflicts of her domestic circumstances and emotional enquiry. These extraordinary menacing sculptures, enlarged, engineered not crafted, manufactured not formed with Hatoum's hands but composed of incongruous materials are transformed into ambiguous objects of the familiar. I have previously introduced my thoughts on making (see Chapter 1) and the importance of the physical act of making by hand, whereby the manipulation of materials impacts the aesthetics and quality of the work made, but I would argue that this is absent in Hatoum's

<sup>24</sup> Hatoum, Interview with John Tusa.

<sup>25</sup> Hatoum, interview with John Tusa.

<sup>26</sup> Hatoum, Interview with John Tusa.

<sup>27</sup> Sakari, 'Boundary Crossings', 152.

<sup>28</sup> Sakari 'Boundary Crossings', 153.

work. These sculptures could be seen to lack a sensitive approach to making. However, the narrative in Hatoum work is political so this is clearly an intentional move. In political occupation, making 'by hand' may have been impossible. In Hatoum's political histories the idea of 'scavenging' for everyday objects allows for such sculptural manipulations of steel, and therefore tell a story in their own right. As Hatoum does not appear to be overly concerned in the physical act of the handmade, allowing the objects that were previously manufactured to speak for themselves, she puts linguistic luminosity into the titles that allow for a sense of poetic language. The sense that craftsmanship has almost been extracted, leaves me questioning its content's reliability, leaving the works ephemeral. These fleeting responses to the world from within the home can, however, be brought to the attention of a larger audience through recognition of the familiar, presenting a controlled disturbance, summarising Hatoum's work as 'at home and alien at any place'.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Mona Hatoum, 'Making the Ordinary Anything But: Mona Hatoum on her Unnerving Sculptures, in 2005', *Art News*, August 11, 2005, <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/retrospective/making-the-ordinary-anything-but-mona-hatoum-on-her-unnerving-sculptures-in-2005-4773/> Accessed 3/2/2023.

## 2.5. Louise Bourgeois

The works of Louise Bourgeois are at the forefront of all that is in question in this study. There is an equilibrium between content, material, skill, the crafted, and use of the familiar. Bourgeois certainly embraces Richard Sennett's domains of the anthropomorphic, presence, and metamorphosis, highlighted in Chapter 1, above, and which I also apply throughout as a way of making sense and sorting out my process of creation. Bourgeois utilises components to make the sculptures speak, but how does this occur? Bourgeois seduces audiences through layers of possibility and if we consider the familiar, which in many of her works is the body and the everyday, we are automatically drawn in; we encounter the first layer, but then the symbolic motifs unravel. As a maker, Bourgeois presents the pursuit of transgressive desires and displacement through the subconscious. As Rosalind Krauss writes, Bourgeois 'displaces fantasy and desire from its traditional, psychoanalytically understood realm of ideality—something happens in the head (in the unconscious, in dreams, etc.)—and moves into the material domain'.<sup>30</sup> Much of Bourgeois' work appears to be hybrid and is formed of parts. Her work is often considered as anthropomorphic whereby some parts are ready-made in this instance the knife whilst other parts are made the body torso. This idea of combining part-object (the ready-made) with a sculptural shape is a form that is highlighted and referred to in Helen Molesworth's book *Part-Object, Part-Sculpture*. Molesworth characterises the idea of bringing objects and sculptural forms together as 'staking, [...] new territories in which repetition involves the body, not the machine; materials harbor traces of human touch; and the viewer is often caught in a web where the threads of the psychic and the phenomenological intertwine'.<sup>31</sup> Bourgeois, however, brings the object and sculpture together as one. The sculptures do not appear separate but are together to create an awkward familiarity of both body and utensil creating sculptural whole. Lived experiences are morphed by Bourgeois's autobiographical narrative. Bourgeois's works both respond to and offer this human connection. They display irreverent symbols, and sensitive considerations of construction and form.

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<sup>30</sup> Rosalind Krauss, in, *Part-Object, Part-Sculpture*, edited by Helen Molesworth (Columbus, OH: Wexner Centre for the Arts/The Ohio State University/The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 110.

<sup>31</sup> Molesworth (ed), *Part Object, Part Sculpture*, 19.

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Figure 11: Louise Bourgeois, *Untitled*, 2002.  
<https://artblart.com/tag/louise-bourgeois-untitled->

Figure 12: *Knife Figure*, Louise Bourgeois, (2002)  
<https://artblart.com/tag/louise-bourgeois-knife-figure/>

*Untitled* 2002 (Fig 11) and *Knife Figure* 2002 (Fig 12) provide an insight into some of the darker sides of how the domestic object, in this case, the knife and the whisk, are part-objects. The bodies are formed from stitches and fabric, maintaining a female domestic presence. There is a significant contrast between soft and sharp, construction and reconstruction, remnants of old and new bringing together elements of human experience. These solid consolidated dismembered torso forms are controlled structures into which the knife becomes embedded. Is this sharp object a replacement for the male, for thought, for displaying fear of the unknown? Or is damage done through human connections and conditioning? In an article written by Robert Nelson on *Knife Figure*, Nelson talks about the head being replaced by the knife. Nelson formulates the symbolism of the knife in relation to the body: 'Of all the organs in your body, the one most like a knife is your head because it contains language'.<sup>32</sup> This is where we can consider the connections between the functional, subject, and language. Nelson goes on to further elaborate this: 'When language and gesture are activated, the body becomes intensely engaging'.<sup>33</sup> Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological concepts of the body seem to coincide with Bourgeois's relationship to the body. Merleau-Ponty states; 'My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my comprehension'.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Nelson, 'Artist out on a Limb with Works', The Sydney Morning Herald, November 28, 2012, <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/artist-out-on-a-limb-with-works-20121127-2a5jx.html> 2012. Accessed 25/7/2023.

<sup>33</sup> Nelson, 'Artist'.

<sup>34</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 273.

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Figure 13: *Fallen Woman*, Louise Bourgeois, 1981. <https://www.a-n.co.uk/media/52441994>

*Fallen Woman* (Fig 13) deals with the uselessness of woman. It has the quality of a carved and formed pestle shape, but it is alone and can no longer function. Is the missing part the mortar? As Bourgeois describes this helpless object, 'you want to protect her. She is beautiful. But because she cannot stand, she has no purpose'.<sup>35</sup> However, the object could be regarded as having been transformed to take on a new function and suggests that the skill comes with how, what, and why the kitchen utensil can be worked within its original state. Such transformations open a new language, where the reformed object speaks anew. 'The fallen woman is in a state of shock and, well, stiffness. She's falling like an arrow; she is not falling in a heap; she is falling like a stiff person...she has no arms, and she falls headfirst'.<sup>36</sup> This is a woman fallen from grace. She has been used and now discarded, used to do a job perhaps? 'She's faithless. She's helpless. She's waiting for someone to pick her up. You see the arm of somebody coming, a hand comes to help her? She's nothing'.<sup>37</sup> Merleau-Ponty identifies fundamental connections between body and space suggesting 'the body [must] no longer [be] conceived [strictly] as an object of the world, but our means of communication with it'.<sup>38</sup> Bourgeois appears to be displaying transgressive desires through the assemblage of metaphorical representations. The use of the familiar object in her works is part of how Bourgeois reforms her sculptural intention where she brings in the everyday object with her crafted forms. Baudrillard opens this up by saying; 'Apart from the uses to which we put them at any particular moment, objects in this sense have another aspect which is intimately bound up with subject [...]'.<sup>39</sup> Here I consider the relationship between subject, and object which the 'crafted' object serves as a catalyst for further meaning. Baudrillard goes on: 'no longer simply material bodies offering a certain resistance, they

<sup>35</sup> Paul Gardner, *Louise Bourgeois*, (New York: Universe Publishing, 1994), 82.

<sup>36</sup> Louise Bourgeois, *a-n*, 3 March 2016, <https://www.a-n.co.uk/media/52441994/>. Accessed 25/12/2022.

<sup>37</sup> Louise Bourgeois, in *Louise Bourgeois*, edited by Paulo Herkenhoff, and Marie-Laure Bernadac, (London: Tate Publishing, 2007). 124

<sup>38</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 92.

<sup>39</sup> Baudrillard, *System*, 91.

become mental precincts over which I hold sway, they become things of which I am the meaning, they become my property and my passion'.<sup>40</sup> Bourgeois brings focus to the meaning of her work not only through what she makes but through words that she writes. Slivka provokes these ideas: 'While seeking the connection between object, person and language, the makers create an absoluteness for each. The perspective is one of surreal space, of interacting isolation-of stillness, of object, of person, of space, of word'.<sup>41</sup> As such these ideas of intertwining words and sculpture, utensils and body parts are a confrontation of reminders of something hidden within me; something not yet known.

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<sup>40</sup> Baudrillard, *System*, 91.

<sup>41</sup> Slivka, *The Object As Poet*, 13.

## 2.6 Rachel Whiteread



Figure 14: Rachel Whiteread, Early Works, Spoons, Fork and Knife, Casts. Carole Griffiths Tate Britain 27th December 2017.

In January 2018, I saw Rachel Whiteread's exhibition at Tate Britain, which celebrated 25 years of her practice. Her use of everyday objects ranges from the intimate in terms of size and tactility to the monumental, all of which are created through casting or constructing processes in industrial materials. During my visit, I noticed Whiteread's reimagining's of utensils and household objects as vehicles for experimental forms. By identifying with the physical properties of the object, Whiteread appears to go into some detail in expanding the boundaries between the readymade and the made. There is a connection between material and form in her first work to explore this method of making, using a spoon form. Her choice of display in a vitrine (Fig 14) appears to protect these playful object experiments. Whiteread describes her playful experiments as 'my works are very much connected with the body and with human touch', and goes to conclude, 'they are about an object being used'. These re-presentations become physical autonomies whereby functionality, the fitness of an object for non-aesthetic purpose, enters the realm of art by of visual expression'.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Rudolf Arneim, *Objects and Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 47.





Figure 15: Rachel Whiteread, *Hot Water Bottle Casts*, Carole Griffiths, Tate Britain 27th December 2017.

Viewing *Hot Water Bottle Casts* (Fig 15), which Whiteread refers to as 'headless, limbless babies',<sup>43</sup> becomes somewhat discomforting, transgressing into a philosophical and conceptual enquiry. There are traces of human conditioning here, which captivates my interest; the ambiguities of an everyday object that allow the viewer to engage with autobiographies and open thoughts and emotions, raised through elements of the familiar. The function of the everyday objects in this instance become void of all physicality.

Is it that Whiteread becomes more interested in the aesthetic autonomy of the everyday? Or does function play the same part in aesthetics of the useful object as subject matter does in painting and sculpture?<sup>44</sup> Linsey Young suggests Whiteread's work is 'rendered useless and leaves us with a sense of anxiety'.<sup>45</sup> There is a constant curiosity about the domestic space and objects evident through Whiteread's work. The lack of function appears to radiate elusive content, until you begin to identify with the objects as containers or 'abject objects' as Whiteread describes them.

<sup>43</sup> Rachel Whiteread, in *Rachel Whiteread*, edited by Ann Gallagher and Molly Donovan (London: Tate Publishing, 2017-2018), 162.

<sup>44</sup> Whiteread,, in *Rachel Whiteread*, 162.

<sup>45</sup> Linsey Young, in *Rachel Whiteread*, 162.

## Summary

Considering the works of Rosler, Fallon, Hatoum, Bourgeois and Whiteread indicates that functional components of an everyday object can develop new meanings in relation to the diachronic circumstances of its original function. Such metaphysical encounters produce synchronistic and phenomenological changes. The object's new role is inaugural within its new space and context. The production of alternatives and reconfigurations of the ordinary is significant to our understanding of and the symbolic meanings of the art of the everyday. Through transformation the banal and mundane kitchen utensil becomes unruly. 'Forms are creations of the mind',<sup>46</sup> so this then brings us to the question of the object, because if we adopt the idea of an object untouched there is no movement. If they are altered by utilisation, they then are brought alive with a degree of social behaviours. These ideas all suggest playful reminders of unruly possibilities relating to disturbing the everyday object. I have considered works by these artists to better comprehend and reflect upon my own practice. In my practice I explore materiality, craft, and objects, as well as skills in applying techniques to create new sculptural representations of kitchen utensils. Having completed the literature and practice review, I am able to further understand and apply the fundamental ideas and meanings of identifying appropriate materials, repurposing the functions of the chosen objects, and pursuing the project to embrace past domestic encounters. This could only have been accomplished by the more detailed consideration of the works of the artists covered in this chapter, and these artists reappear in subsequent parts of this project.

The critical analysis of both texts and sculptures discussed highlight the rhetorical tropes and semantic transformations of dialect between object and subject, enabling me to form a broader view of the value of remaking and transformation through material and touch. It is this gap in practice regarding the kitchen utensil that supports my research study. My desire to remake what already exists and to capture emotional context through autobiographical accounts of my domestic experiences is highlighted in Imogen Racz's *Art and Home*, where the author identifies with Bachelard's writings about how everything 'comes alive when contradictions accumulate' and furthermore outlines that objects 'might be familiar, or have familiar elements, but it is their coming together that encourages the viewer to 'hover' to conclude 'the known past that unfolds in the memory and an evolving present'.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Young, in *Rachel Whiteread*, 162.

<sup>47</sup> Imogen Racz, *Art and Home Comfort, Alienation and the Everyday* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2014), 85.

## Chapter 3: Whisk Up – Grind Down



Figure 16: *Whisk Up, Grind Down*. Solo Studio Exhibition: South Square Gallery and Studios.2019.

### 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the themes within my practice which underpinned a solo show titled *Whisk up - Grind Down* (Fig 16) that was held at the South Square Gallery Centre, Thornton from 5th April to 8th April 2019. The research and practice for this project at this point began to include locating both theoretical and historical contexts of the selected objects in order to allow for meaning and making to develop. In this chapter, I outline some of the starting points that led to my looking in-depth at making and the meanings of the functionality of a kitchen utensil in relation to my domestic experiences, which culminated in my exhibition.

During the initial research, it became apparent that meanings of mundane objects are related to autobiographical accounts of domestic experiences and domesticity. After examining the works of other artists, significant theories, and a variety of kitchen objects in my possession, I began to focus on repurposing inanimate objects to display the commonalities between bodily expressions and the

functionality of things. Bosgali talks about the memory and material of an object and states, 'Materiality incites remembrance with a complex circuitry of reminders and amnesia; the object in which memory lingers is lost and found again'.<sup>1</sup> My repurposing of the utensils allows for new expressions of bringing life to the lifeless (object) and its original functions, thus re-inventing daily expressions of human existence. This re-making of a sculptural form was intended to create a contemplative response within a new space, opening up a dialogue between myself and the viewer.

Through observational drawings and making, I questioned what would happen if I brought together the whisk with a torso, and if the pestle became the torso. Alongside that I wondered what would happen if I enlarged the objects or reduced them in size. Finally, what materials could be used to make the objects take bodily shape but remain domestic and familiar? These questions were explored through this body of work and were answered through making.

British sculptor Mary Martin states that 'both art and domesticity satisfy your sense of order in that you are controlling something. One is life and one is art'.<sup>2</sup> Much of what I make comes from what I have done, where I make it (mostly the domestic space) and how I feel. The works emerge from my familiar domestic environment and from my personal experiences. Judy Attfield describes this perfectly in her book *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* by referring to 'the object in itself, as raw material, found or functional thing in relation to wider sculptural and artistic concerns'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bosgali, *Stuff Theory*, 31

<sup>2</sup> Mary Martin, [Untitled], in Sophie Raikes, *Kissing Cousins: A Fellowship Project by Jane Simpson and Sarah Staton* (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2007), 26.

<sup>3</sup> Judy Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg Publishing, 2000), 4.



Figure 17: Alina Szapocznikow,  
*Human Landscape Exhibition, 2017*,  
Carole Griffiths



Figure 18: Alina Szapocznikow,  
*Human Landscape Exhibition, 2017*,  
Carole Griffiths

In 2018, I went to see the works of Alina Szapocznikow<sup>4</sup> at The Hepworth Gallery Wakefield (Figs 17 and 18). This exhibition entitled *Human Landscapes* helped draw attention to my own fascination with fragments or suggestions of the body. Szapocznikow attentive response to part ‘thing’ part ‘object’ seemed to question the ambiguous relationship between object and self. In a sense, this is the site where old meets new, where memories are blurred into dreams, and where objects can be exploited. Such exploitations are clearly linked to Walter Benjamin’s idea that the ‘origin’ of objects, in my case and in Szapocznikow work, is a ‘whirlpool in the stream of becoming’.<sup>5</sup> Interrogation of dreams and exploration of things create a form of ‘backtracking and looping’.<sup>6</sup>

Fundamental to this body of work is the idea of behavioural patterns and languages which can be transmuted from one object to another through the possibilities which come through remaking and responding to the material, forms, and structure. Jules Prown indicates this in his essay ‘Mind in Matter’, when he states, ‘that broader concerns and methodologies *not* be brought into play until the evidence of the artefact itself has been plumbed as objectively as possible’.<sup>7</sup> This is where practice research is imperative, the experiments of making are essential and therefore, ‘speculation’<sup>8</sup> can be considered.

<sup>4</sup> Alina Szapocznikow has continued to interest me since seeing her work at the Hepworth Gallery Wakefield, her surreal objects and relationship with material are represented in her words “All joy, all suffering, and all truth” (Szapocznikow 2016: 16-17).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Agata Jakubowska (ed.), *Alina Szapocznikow: Awkward Objects* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw Books, 2011), 45.

<sup>6</sup> Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who Run with Wolves, Contacting the Power of the Wild Woman* (London: Rider, 1995), 59.

<sup>7</sup> Jules Prown, ‘Mind in Matter; An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method’, in Susan M. Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (London: Routledge, 1994), 133.

<sup>8</sup> Prown, ‘Mind in Matter’, 34.

### 3:2 Selecting Objects



Figure 19: Balloon Whisk, 2019, Photograph Carole Griffiths.



Figure 20: Pestle and Mortar, 2019, Photograph, Carole Griffiths



Figure 21: Nigella Lawson Bowl 2019. Photograph, Carole Griffiths

I selected the whisk (Fig 19) the pestle and mortar (Fig 20) and a Nigella Lawson bowl (Fig 21) as universal objects, objects which are familiar within my domestic space, objects which are functional and formal. I began Looking at the hybridity of the body and objects which could become part of an entangled sculptural disruption leading to an anthropomorphic state, thus representing an extension of bodily function and expression. These utensils evoked the most appropriate functional and formal elements with which to experiment. I wanted to bring together the connection between these objects in their original space and how new objects evolve and react through social transformations. My intention was to negotiate emotions and symbolic references related to physical encounters of my own domestic experiences.

The whisk, pestle, and mortar are familiar everyday items. They are functional and we use them regularly without even thinking about their significance, and yet such objects have the potential to change everything in our daily life. Attfield describes everyday objects as ‘things’ that make up the totality of the physical world. She quotes the philosopher Henri Lefebvre: ‘The everyday is the most universal, and the most unique condition, the most social and the most individuated, the most obvious and the best hidden’,<sup>9</sup> offering an understanding that objects relate to the domestic and contribute to our position within a physical space. Interaction takes place between one body and another body, every day, everywhere possible in some form or another. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton put this clearly in their book *The Meanings of Things*: ‘In our everyday traffic of existence, we can also learn about ourselves from objects, almost as much as from people’.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Attfield, *Wild Things*, 7-11.

<sup>10</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton., *The Meaning of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981), 91.

I took time to question the actions of human behaviour, so through my art objects, representations of the body are still present and recognisable because without human interaction, objects stand still. Philosopher Vilém Flusser's work on the gestures of making supported my understanding and reasoning behind selecting objects with which to work. He suggests 'when hands find no object on which to impress form, impose a value, the world literally has no value for these hands'.<sup>11</sup> My aim is to capture these inherent moments through making, to let 'my hands research the objects' as a 'means to provoke them into resisting the pressure of the hand and so to force them to reveal their inner structures'.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.3. On Making

When I make sculpture, I utilise constant memories and observations, many of which refer back to a domestic position such as marriage, mother, homemaker. Whilst remaining quite guarded in revealing my whole self, there is a constant need to present, to let go of past moments and to open up a dialogue with an interested audience. In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart outlines this predisposition: 'we can see the many narratives that dream of the inanimate-made-animate as symptomatic of all narrative's desire to invent a realisable world, a world which "works"'.<sup>13</sup> I am interested in these defining moments, related to the complex relationship between objects, being human, and making. This is where material consciousness takes its position in the making process.

Octavio Paz in his book *In Praise of Hands*, writes, 'The handmade object is a sign that expresses human society in a way all on its own: not as work (technology) not as a symbol (art, religion) but as a mutually shared physical life'.<sup>14</sup> So, through making I ask myself how does the physical life relate to the familiar object and how does making enable my autobiographies to be exposed.? I reimagine the body, and or, the object in question, by using clay in the first instance. The consistency and malleability of clay is similar to that of dough, as are the kneading and slicing processes of bread making, and both allow memories of myself as the home/maker to flow freely into the medium. The arousing of senses is brought through making which in turn fuels my sculpture making and powers my productivity. The clay represents the flesh of the body and therefore offers life to the remaking of objects. Each mark made, and each constructed form, reveals an intimate connection with the material and bodily

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<sup>11</sup>Vilém Flusser, *Gestures* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press 2014,) 40.

<sup>12</sup> Flusser, *Gestures*, 40.

<sup>13</sup> Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic the Souvenir, the Collection*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1993), xi, xii.

<sup>14</sup> Octavio Paz, *In Praise of Hands: Contemporary Crafts of the World* (New York: McClelland and Stewart, Ltd., and the New York Graphic Society, 1974), 21.

activity. Throughout my practice, I consider which materials will work with this and that, what forms will only emerge from my hands, and what happens when I construct with tools. These are my intimate moments of self-expression, and I needed to lay them bare to better understand my thinking through making, and to articulate that process to others.

I spoke at length about the relationship between objects, materials, and making in an interview with artist Georgie Hopton. Hopton said:<sup>15</sup>

my genuine delight in the distinction between objects or things, as well as the act of looking, which cannot help but generate alternatives, feeds my appetite. I want more and more as I see more. And the more I look, feel, smell, and touch, the more I experience and the more pleasure potential I have.

We discussed the nature of clay and Hopton suggested that I must 'relate to the natural'.<sup>16</sup> I am reminded of Sennett's relationship to clay when he states, 'clay like meat, is good to think with'.<sup>17</sup> He then further remarks that cooked clay provides a medium for making through the suggestion of a narrative. The anthropological works of Claude Levi-Strauss, as cited in *The Craftsman*, present a fundamental relationship between the crafts of making and cooking.<sup>18</sup> This is very pertinent to my own connection with the activity between the two and the exposure of my own histories: 'The raw, the cooked, and the rotted'.<sup>19</sup>

It is this symbolism that is occurring in my use of techniques, materials, and processes all encountered through the unravelling of my thoughts. Each mark made and constructed form is revealed by an intimate connection with the material and bodily activity. Sennett describes this by referring to Immanuel Kant's remark, 'The hand is the window to the mind'.<sup>20</sup> Sennett writes:<sup>21</sup>

Material consciousness invests in inanimate things with human qualities, the humanising language bred in turn one of the great dualisms of modern material consciousness: the contrast between naturalness and artificiality'.

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Georgie Hopton.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Georgie Hopton.

<sup>17</sup> Sennett, *Craftsman*, 129.

<sup>18</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, quoted in Sennett, *Craftsman*, 129.

<sup>19</sup> Levi-Strauss, quoted in Sennett, *Craftsman*, 129.

<sup>20</sup> Immanuel Kant, quoted in Sennett, *Craftsman*, 149.

<sup>21</sup> Sennett, *Craftsman*, 96.



This is where the language of form can become the catalyst for opening up the connection between subject and object. 'The limits of language can be overcome through active involvement in a practice'.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 22: Carole Griffiths, 3rd February 2019, Air Drying Clay.

As a maker my gestural imprints are clearly marked in the objects that I make (Fig 22). This is where my body is at its most powerful and where it is the most impulsive. Making is embedded in my hands, and subjectivity is then revealed through moments of transient activities.

Material considerations are used in relation to sensory experience, the dexterity and flexibility of touch, and such tensions in the making perpetuate an intimate domain. Marina Warner's introduction to her book, *Forms of Enchantment, Writing of Art and Artists*,<sup>23</sup> surveys this domain, suggesting 'the mark of the hand is versatile, experimental therefore expressive'.<sup>24</sup> It is the power of the hands and the material which act as an integral whole of the sculptural intention. Throughout this study, my constant challenge becomes a collision between hands, the material and everyday objects which then

<sup>22</sup> Sennett, *Craftsman*, 135-136.

<sup>23</sup> I attended the book launch and conversation with Marina Warner of *Forms of Enchantment Writings on Art and Artists* on 8 October 2018. This book has aided my investigation into how collective thoughts and objects amass, become surreal, the hoarding, and the transitions of returning, restoring, and reinventing oneself.

<sup>24</sup> Warner, *Forms of Enchantment*, 23.

leads to meaning. It is passion that causes the 'cooking' (making), and it is my ideas of substance which are cooked through making in particular with clay.<sup>25</sup> 'Without 'fire' my work remains 'uncooked'. In an Interview with David Clarke, we discussed how artistic intentions that can be formulated within the kitchen space. We spoke of the great advantages of using the kitchen: 'I love the kitchen, this where the fire is, this where I like to be, the hob. I just love fire. The home is where I think. The studio tends to be where I finish off'.<sup>26</sup>

Object making, re-forming utensils, and re-living experiences through making have equal value in my position as an art practitioner. Daniel Miller observes, 'Material culture promotes framing, which provides for the maintenance of diversity, while keeping contradictory forces operating without coming into conflict'.<sup>27</sup> Themes of embodiment will be predicted through visual encounters within these works through the shifting of materials and finally through the intensity of making.

### 3.4. Pestle and Mortar

What is the connection between the pestle and mortar? A bowl-shaped vessel with a separate, object the pestle, an extended or stretched object large at one end to allow the weight of a crushing motion to be applied. The pestle's function is to manipulate, bend, push, round and round organically medicinal parts, or parts of anything; to loosen into particles, split, separate, squash. Through use we bash, scrape, hammer, bang, and slide around and around in this holding pot until the desired consistency is appropriated and then emptied, used, discarded, an action repeated. These compatible parts work in unison with a desire to crush. 'Objects do not exist in a vacuum: they are part of a complex choreography of interactions'.<sup>28</sup> Such gestural and performative actions allow me to consider whether one part is more submissive to the other. Investigating autobiographical accounts of a family split at this point seem to generate or indicate the components and activities expected by this object. Bee Wilson defines the pestle and mortar as a 'pleasure-giving device'<sup>29</sup> in her book *Consider the Fork*. These objects have become both a pleasure and a threat to me. Particular visceral parallels to conscious domestic experiences appeared to emerge through my drawings and observations, as well as the examination of some historical contexts of the Neolithic pestle and mortar.

Having considered *Bourgeois*, *Fallen Woman* in the last chapter, I went on to develop a stronger relationship with this two-part object. I pictured the pestle as a phallus and the container as a female

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<sup>25</sup> Pinkola, *Women who Run*, 97.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with David Clarke.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Miller, *Material Culture and Mass Consumerism* (John Wiley & Sons, 1997).208.

<sup>28</sup> Sudjic, *Language*, 54.

<sup>29</sup> Bee Wilson, *Consider the Fork, A History of How we Cook and Eat* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 205-206.

womb. These elements are suggestive of male and female interconnections. Jacobsen-Widding describes how domestic objects are often imbued with sexual meanings on the basis of their shape (male, erect: female, round and compact).<sup>30</sup> The objects I have created contain similarities of symbolism related to the functioning of utilities and the body parts of both male and female seem present. I wanted the two parts to relate to one another as they would not work as a morphed sculpture, so I kept them together as separate objects but in the same material.

Many objects used during Neolithic times present us with; 'physical resemblances to the male and female sexual organs (pestles as phalli, mortars/furnace vulvas/womb) which only become meaningful when brought into contact with each other in a manner that involves physical excursion (grinding, bellowing) both involve the transformation of natural things'.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 23: *Dream Amphora*, Jean Arp, 1941, (Hepworth Gallery, 17 February 2019).

This highlighted issues of the relationship between object and subject. How can I express and recreate awkward memories into awkward multi part objects? The vessel (mortar) is the holding pot, and the pestle tool is the weapon.

These preoccupations have been observed in the works of numerous twentieth-century artists. The carved stone *Mother and Child* (Fig 24). by Barbara Hepworth depicts an illusory nature of fertility, with mortar as a mother and pestle as a child. Then there's Jean Arp *Dream Amphora* (Fig 23) which reminds me of a phallus intersecting a vessel. My initial curiosity in these particular forms revealed the potential of the two-part object as manifested by my reworked shapes entitled *Grind Down*.

All the pestles and mortars created for this exhibition are made of clay, the first two (Fig 26,27,28) from terracotta air drying clay, which has kept the 'raw' state of the clay present. The rawness of this particular clay allows it to remain the same without becoming dried out and pale through the firing process: it embodies the metaphor of the raw and the cooked.<sup>32</sup> The first pestle and mortar (see Fig 27) became functional, whereby through grinding with the pestle, particles accumulated as a residue at the bottom of the mortar (bowl). This at the time felt like a pleurably aggressive act. I was not



Figure 24: *Mother and Child*, Barbara Hepworth. Pink Ancaster Stone 1934. Hepworth Gallery, 17th February, 2019.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Steven Mithen, Bill Finlayson, Ruth Shaffrey, 'Sexual Symbolism in the Early Neolithic of the Southern Levant: Pestles and Mortars from WF16', *Documenta Praehistorica* 32 (December 31, 2005): 103–10, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41571903> 107. Accessed 14th September 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Mithenm Finalyson and Shaffrey, 'Sexual symbolism', 109. Accessed 14th September 2023.

<sup>32</sup> Levi-Strauss, quoted in Sennett, *Craftsman*, 129.

sure what my intention was, but the idea of residue (clay particles) could lead to something further. I used the actions of grinding to create a poem:

#### Pestle and Mortar

Grind Me Down  
Pounding  
Lay Me Down  
Beat Me to a Pulp  
Around & Around & Around  
You Crush Me  
Place Me Down Beside You  
Still.<sup>33</sup>

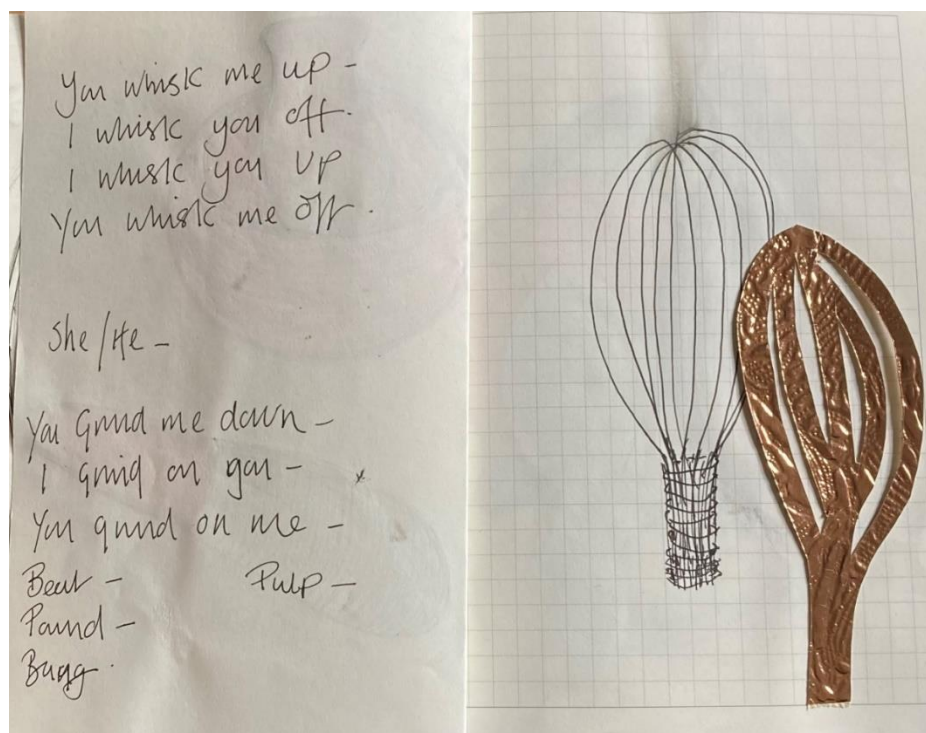


Figure 25: Carole Griffiths, Journal Entry Sketch Book.

Over time, the images and phrases helped me compose the poems that are often displayed beside sculptures in exhibitions, in this case *Whisk up - Grind Down*.

The circular movement of grinding emphasises a grasp around the end of the handheld tip. Movements of the hand, wrist and forearm are used to create the acts of making as well as the alchemical act of grinding with the pestle and mortar. Sennett refers to this as a 'culinary forte'.<sup>34</sup> To

<sup>33</sup> Carole Griffiths, *You Grind Me Down*, extract from journal 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Sennett, *Craftsman*, 167.

me, a culinary experience is fundamentally an alchemical act. I am reminded of my interview with Rachel Fallon, which I mentioned in Chapter 2, above, when we discuss her interactive performative piece *La Befana*. I also completely apply this technique later when I examine the film *Overlay* discussed further on in this chapter.



Figure 26: Carole Griffiths Experiment, Pestle, Mortar and Whisk, Terracotta Clay, 2019.



Figure 27: Carole Griffiths, *Grind Down*, Terracotta, Air Drying Clay, 2019

My interest in the prehistoric utensil emerged from a series of workshops I did in 2018. The emphasis was based on the Willendorf Venus (torso).<sup>35</sup> It was during this time I came across this Neolithic pestle and mortar. In this investigation, symbolism suggests that there is a dual sexual ideology of both the male phallus and female round and compact vessel form, thus indicating a distinct connection between body and domestic object. I found the echo of the past within the present extraordinary.

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<sup>35</sup> In 2019. In collaboration with Leeds Library and funded by the Wellcome Trust, I designed and facilitated a series of workshops over a three-month period. The workshops were designed to assist the community in dealing with body, mind, and image issues. The Venus served as a source of inspiration for the attendees' terracotta clay creations. Over a hundred people attended, and the result was a display of 100 Venus sculptures in the Library Gallery.





Figure 28: Carole Griffiths, Grind Down, 2019, Air Drying Terracotta Clay.



Figure 29: Figure 29: Carole Griffiths , Grind me Down, Fired Black Grog Clay

Looking at Figure 30, we can see that the stone-carved Venus shape pestle fits perfectly into the vessel (mortar) symbolising woman, motherhood, and birth. The vessel contains a funnel, which I believe was for tipping, emptying, and distributing the contents. I utilise this to recreate both items in clay, making them female and male. They perform well together but separately the pestle becomes ineffective and creates a sense of discomfort. The placement of each of them suggests a tense intimacy.

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Figure 30: Neolithic Pestle and Mortar, Nd, (online 17th January AncientPoint.com).

I then created the larger version (Fig 29), which I made through using black grog clay and then firing it. I wanted to capture the rawness and simplicity of a primitive pestle and mortar produced by hand as illustrated in Figure 30, including firing to allow for a stone-like quality. The pestle and mortar vessel shapes both grew, becoming less significant and less formed. In *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard writes, 'The female, like a living tower, hollows out the house, while the male brings back from outside all kinds of materials, sturdy twigs, and other bits, by exercising active pressure, the female makes this into felt-like padding'.<sup>36</sup> Reflecting on the work, I wondered if my bowl-shaped forms were also becoming nests, and if the vessel becomes the house formed of containers. Michael Rowe suggests, 'We live and move in a world of containers, we put things into containers, we contain things and we ourselves are contained [...] forms within forms'.<sup>37</sup>

Drawing and re-making the pestle and mortar became habitual, triggering a cleansing process of revisiting experience. I see the pestle and mortar serving a new purpose now, and I do not want these items to become obsolete again. As Bee Wilsons suggests, electrical technology has largely replaced the pestle and mortar, and the original is frequently relegated to a cupboard.<sup>38</sup> This shows an emotional interaction with the selected kitchen utensils and bringing them back to life in a new context. Further on in the project I remade the pestle and mortar but small, using the fleshy material of Sculpey. Sudjic disputes the notion that 'usefulness is inversely proportional to status'.<sup>39</sup> Can I resurrect my subversive submissive self by rearranging this Pestle and Mortar?

<sup>36</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 101.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Rowe, in *Ceramics Reader*, edited by Andrew Livingstone and Kevin Petrie (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 80.

<sup>38</sup> See Wilson, *Consider the Fork*.

<sup>39</sup> Sudjic, *Language*, 168.



### 3.5. The Whisk

The whisk sculptures opened autobiographical accounts of my domestic experiences both as a child and as a mother. I was able to evaluate the physical, visual, and tactile nature of how transformations can become metaphysical transactions between object and subject, and by examining the metaphorical functionality of one specific object.

In *Poetics of Space*, Bachelard quotes the work of phenomenologist Eugene Minkowski: 'If, having fixed the original form in our mind's eye, we ask ourselves how that form comes alive and fills with life, we discover a new dynamic and vital category, a new property of the universe: reverberation (*retentir*)'.<sup>40</sup>

The whisk is a practical and purposeful object that we use regularly without even thinking about its significance. They have developed over time from bound twigs to the most known version constructed from of between 6-12 steel loops. In my collection of antique whisks, I have two which have significant value in terms of form, action, and potential for reconstruction. The first is the rotating, mechanical eggbeater, a hard-edged metal object with a small wooden handle and turning mechanism, which requires both hands to work. The action is aggressive and difficult to control when in use. I also have the balloon whisk which is used in one hand and the other holding the bowl, this softer gestural action feels easier to control with more consistent results.

These cage-like forms are used to beat, blend, and push to create the consistency required to cook within the kitchen. Bachelard describes the 'coexistence of things in a space to which we add consciousness of our own experience as a very concrete thing'.<sup>41</sup> Both the form and functionality of the whisk suggest symbolic associations. Judy Attfield describes everyday objects as 'things' that make up the totality of the physical world. She quotes the philosopher Henri Lefebvre 'The everyday is the most universal, and the most unique condition, the most social and the most individuated, the most obvious and the best hidden'.<sup>42</sup> Following on from the interview with Hopton these conditionings related to Attfield's descriptions of things collected are discussed:<sup>43</sup>

All those things that you collect are tools for communication - they are your work box, giving access to more ways of communicating, adding more letters and words to your personal lexicon. Each different working process increases it more. It is so hard to articulate what it is you want

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<sup>40</sup> Eugene Minkowski, quoted in Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 2014, xvi.

<sup>41</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 203.

<sup>42</sup> Attfield, *Wild Things*, 7-11.

<sup>43</sup> Hopton Interview.

to say as an artist, and this must be a very large part of why we collect all these things and why you and I cannot remain true to one medium. There is an unconscious, if not real hope, that all these ways of working, or the mass of things will amount to clarity. Clarity of speech in the work.

Objects can relate to the domestic and therefore contribute to our position within a physical space. Interaction takes place between one body and another object, every day, everywhere possible in some form or another. As mentioned above, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton maintain that we may 'learn about ourselves from objects, almost as much as from people'.<sup>44</sup> However, we do not necessarily recognise the importance of such things as being related to ourselves. To draw the viewers' attention to this interconnection through the investigation of the whisk utensil presents depth and personal narratives within the domestic arena.

### 3.6. Whisk-Drawing

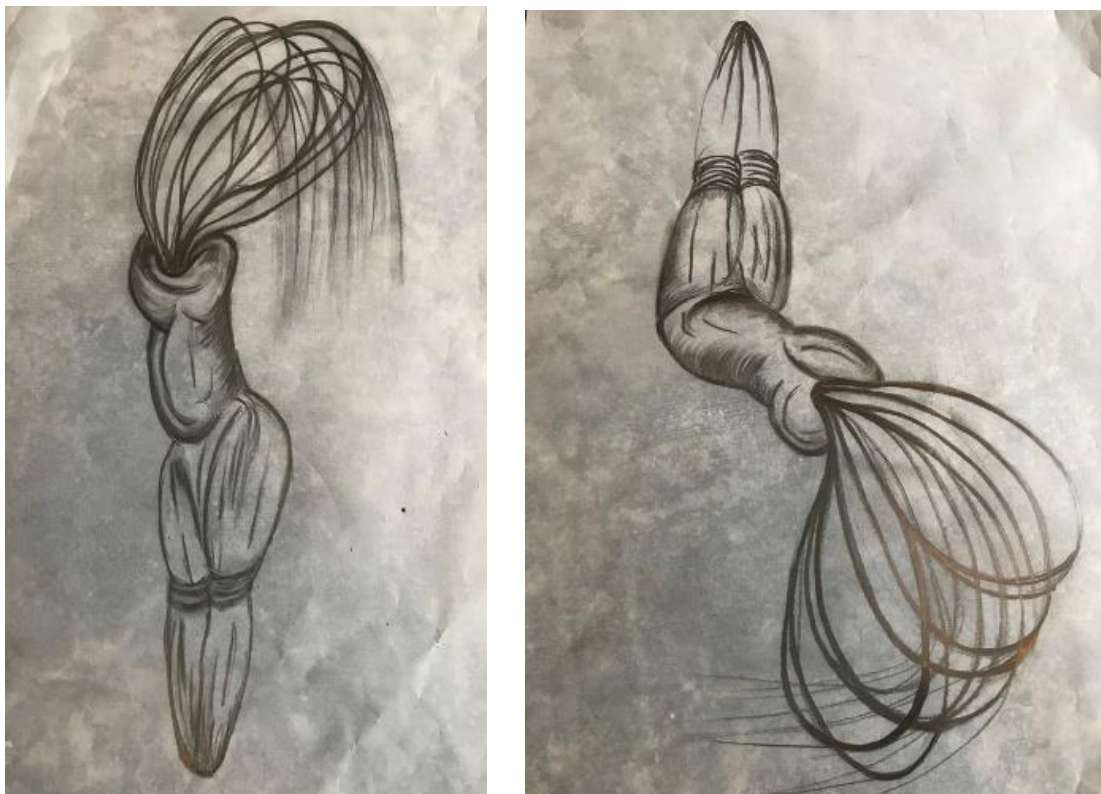


Figure 31: Carole Griffiths, Whisk Drawings (Pencil) 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton. *The Meaning of Things*, 91.



Figure 32: Carole Griffiths, Whisk Print using Clay, 2019.

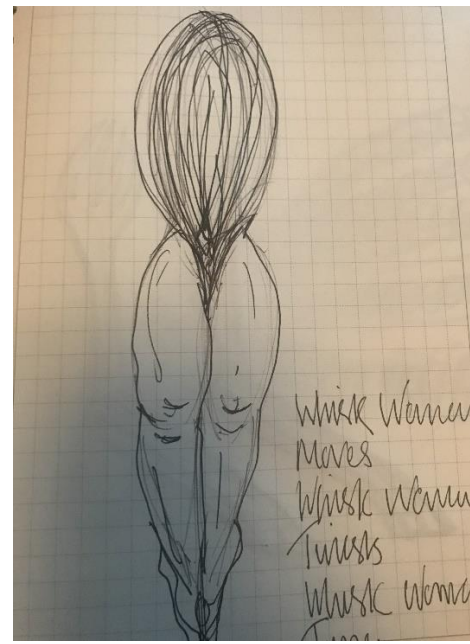


Figure 33: Carole Griffiths, Whisk Print, 2019

Through the making of my sculptures, I have provided a more tactile visceral response to objects that we typically dismiss. These domestic objects changed through the incorporation of metaphorical symbols and allusions offering these objects new identities. Drawing allowed me to physically disrupt the original utensils. In the kitchen whisk, for example, drawing allowed for the lower body to become the handle and then the whisk top to emerge as head, nest, cage, or vessel. By merging these two parts together *Whisk-Woman* was created. The observational drawings of whisks (Fig 32-34) have been aroused through my continuous interest in the everyday, and the repetitive marks I draw which have formed new sculptural reconfigurations of a whisk. These creative actions became embedded in my consciousness and therefore enabled me to build the sculptures.



Figure 34: Carole Griffiths, Whisking, Black & White Dry point, 2019.

These drawings are diaristic documents, my initial ideas, my words of expression, and my automatic responses. The discourse between object and subject is developed and articulated through a habitual act of drawing. I explore the possibilities and connections between the autobiographic and the bodily through observations of the utensil and ambiguous play on lines and marks drawn. This interplay allows me to observe all parts and all dimensions of an object and is a step towards making in three-dimensions. Such preparation is crucial to the fundamental strategies of making, configuring, splitting, and interconnecting significant components of the sculptural forms. Meskimmon and Sawdon ask, 'Drawing carries the memories of materials and surfaces, and each instance speaks to its origins: what kind of material (medium) is used on what kind of surface (ground or support)?'<sup>45</sup> To think about the sculptures I want to make, I draw, print, and collage. Drawing on various surfaces and drawing through space, connecting parts of drawings together, allows me to access memories and past experiences that can be reimagined. The physical act of drawing both triggers' memories and allows me to encapsulate shapes into fixed forms.

I often think of artist Bobby Baker's works on *Mother's Experience*, in which her marks and thoughts roam around the house as a visceral reaction to what has transpired, leaving a physical impression of what has occurred within her domestic space. Deborah Harty shares this discourse by suggesting 'individual marks are undecipherable and perplexing but when viewed in relation to one another capture our lived reality and as such speak back at us'.<sup>46</sup> Harty makes this clear in that 'the body is our means of interaction with the physical world and a source of all our perceptual experiences'. This is strengthened by Harty's reference to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach to the body:

<sup>45</sup> Meskimmon and Sawdon, *Drawing Difference*, 51.

<sup>46</sup> Deborah Harty, 'Trailing', 59.

‘perceiving as we do with our body’, he writes, ‘the body is a natural self and as it were, the subject of perception’.<sup>47</sup>

Louise Bourgeois's work also incorporates both the body and the home object in her *Femme Maison* series, discussed also in Chapter 5. The connection between the building and the figure conveys a sense of mind and body. These works frequently address the issue of women feeling trapped at home. But I am intrigued by the idea of sculpture developed from the initial experience of drawing, capturing the feeling of body within it. For me the making of sculpture essentially solidifies and removes the realism of an event, possibly making it more ambiguous, whereas drawings can convey the essence of what is happening. For me a drawing, is a way of capturing a moment in time. Tactile experience evolves through the physicality of drawing, the material, and making. Drawing generates gestural acts which expose the unconscious, allowing for my conscious beginnings. These haptic responses to drawing align with Merleau-Ponty's view of embodiment, discussed in Chapter 1, as a ‘habitation’ of subject in object.<sup>48</sup>

My work seeks to make sense of the embodied act of making through drawing, where experience emerges through the relationship between the observed object and domesticity. Understanding the origins and functions of my selected objects helps reflect on my experiences, in terms of active bodily encounters, and from a drawing I consider what material will form the sculpture, the matter, the mass within the drawn lines.

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<sup>47</sup> Harty. ‘Trailing’, 58.

<sup>48</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology* 79.

### 3.7. Whisk, Object, Making



Figure 35: Carole Griffiths, 17th January 2019, Rope, Wire Whisk, Chained rope.

My first whisk sculpture was made from wire and rope. (Fig 35) The wire became the armature to form the initial shape. I had in my possession some really good quality cream cotton rope. I had been looking at the craft of macramé, twisting, looping, chaining, attaching.<sup>49</sup> So, with my rope in hand, my intention was to create an object that can move, bend and yet still remain together as a whole. Steven Connors describes knots as ‘fissiparous fusing’s, conjunctive dissensions with no basis but their own self-generated solidarity’.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Macramé interests me as a technique, as knotting and forming objects. It can act as a covering, wrapping, it’s a controlling activity, where generally speaking no tools are used. In Steven Connors’s *Paraphernalia. The Curious Lives of Magical Things* (London: Profile Books, 2011), he states ‘Knots are often mnemonic, the taking up of a stitch in time as a stay against forgetfulness’ (110).

<sup>50</sup> Conner, *Paraphernalia*, 117.



By incorporating rope and knotting a form, a version of a versatile caged whiskered head was created.

I use this version of a whisk later on (see Chapter, 4 Testing Works) as part of a chair and whisk sculpture for an exhibition.



Figure 36: Carole Griffiths, *Whisk Woman*, 2019, Air Drying Clay, Black Rope.



Figure 37: Carole Griffiths, *Whisk Woman*, 2019, Earthenware Clay.



Figure 38: Carole Griffiths, *Whisk Woman*, Air Drying Clay 2019



Figure 39: Carole Griffiths, *Whisk Woman*, Whisk wired head and Shellac coating 2019.

This process revealed a shift within the making and the original experience, and I began to rethink the whisk. It was through drawing and experimenting that the whisk became a woman and *Whisk-Woman* (Fig 35-39) was formed.

The *Whisk-Woman's* material body has been made using clay. Hand rolling the body pieces, the scale was formed through the palm of my hands. (Fig 38 and Fig 39). During this process, a weird sense of



movement, of life, appears to occur. The whisk is animated through bodily manipulations of clay and individuality is emerging. Wire in comparison to clay is not as flexible it lacks the softness and fleshy earthy quality. It often feels impersonal, but its conflicting material properties gave me the opportunity to question form. I have occasionally embedded a wire whisk ready-made into the torso of the *Whisk Woman*, (Fig 38 and Fig 40), a purposeful decision made to retain the original function. In (Fig 40) an opening in the top of the legs part allows the sculpture to be hung in different locations. It hangs in a style that resembles a kitchen tool hanging on a rack.

Experiences are presented through the tensions between the process of making and the observed aesthetics of the chosen utensil. In Merleau-Ponty's Chapter "The Body as Object and Mechanistic Physiology" he talks about the consciousness of the body via the world in relation to objects stating; 'I know that objects have several facets because I could make a tour of inspection of them, and in that sense I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body'.<sup>51</sup> The limbless woman or fragments within these works could be seen as appropriating an attitude towards body and sexuality via the utensil. Joan Reilly identifies with the idea of such iconic forms teaching us how to 'desire the body'. In relation to *Whisk Woman*, it could be that this idea of a limbless woman 'enables her to fulfil the role of bride, wife, and mother. The anatomical votive, in particular, an image of the important parts, teaches her the parts that really mattered'.<sup>52</sup> I have addressed some of these thoughts when discussing the 'Pestle and Mortar' series.

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<sup>51</sup> Merleau- Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 94.

<sup>52</sup> Joan Reilly, 'Naked and Limbless', in *Naked Truths: Women, Sexuality and Gender in Classical Art and Archaeology* Edited by Ann O Koloski-Ostrow and Claire L. Lyons (London: Routledge 1997),165.



Figure 40: Carole Griffiths, *Small Shifts, Stand Still*, Porcelain, (2018)



Figure 41: Carole Griffiths, *Small Shifts, Stand Still*, 2018, Porcelain



Figure 42: Carole Griffiths, *Small Shifts, Stand Still*, 2018, Porcelain





Figure 44: Carole Griffiths, Exhibition, *Small Shifts, Stand Still*, below 'Futensils' Porcelain, 2018, Bowery Gallery Leeds.

Both material and structural aims influenced my decision to make either on a small or large scale. I frequently create small maquettes to determine how the sculpture will work. This process is necessary for determining the scale and size of a planned work. I also consider space and material costs, which can constrain my work. What is imperative is that my work includes my marks and handling (Fig 42 and Fig 43). The small version of the whisk became part of *Small Shifts, Stand Still*, and was made for an exhibition in 2018.<sup>53</sup> (see Fig 44). To take more control of the material and discover the ability to challenge, manipulate and create small forms this act of making small eluded to frustration and fragility, and a degree of intimacy with the sculpture. Using a porcelain clay demands sensitivity, the cream cheese consistency had a habit of drying out too quickly.

Making small became a challenge I wanted to address. Stewart suggests that 'the miniature represents closure, interiority, the domestic, and the overly cultural' while the gigantic represents 'infinity, exteriority, the public and the overly natural'.<sup>54</sup> At this point, I was testing out and exploring size and scale to see how it affected the resonance and purpose of the final sculptures. To establish a

<sup>53</sup> Carole Griffiths, *Now and Then*, Exhibition at The Bowery Gallery, Leeds 2018.

<sup>54</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 70.

better understanding of the object in relation to scale and size, I experimented with a giant piece of bamboo, cream tape, white satin fabric wrapping around the forms, with wire, and fabric stitching.



Figure 45: Carole Griffiths, Whisk and Fabric. Bamboo. Cotton. 2019





Figure 46: Carole Griffiths, handmade whisk head, bamboo, white fabric. 2018



Figure 47: Carole Griffiths, handmade whisk head, bamboo, white fabric, 2018

This large whisk became *Whisk Veil Splayed*. The size of the observed object changed from its original (Fig 39) to small (Fig 40) to oversized (5ft) (Figs 46-47). I noticed through making large that this piece no longer seemed an intimate object but had become a 'spectacle'. To me *Whisk Veil Splayed* does not invite the viewer in. It only allows them to look without touching, stand back and observe at a distance. In *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord states:<sup>55</sup>

The origins of the spectacle are the loss of unity of the world, and the gigantic expansion of the modern spectacle expresses the totality of this loss: the abstraction of all specific labour and

<sup>55</sup> Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 1994), 84.

the general abstraction of the entirety of production are perfectly translated into the spectacle, whose *mode of being concrete* is precisely abstraction. In the spectacle, one part of the world represents itself before the world and is superior to it. The spectacle is nothing more than the common language of this separation.

*Whisked, Veil, Splayed* (Fig 48) became a work based on my wedding dress from the 1990s, which was a bespoke ivory silk wedding gown. When I was revisiting the garment in a box, I had the idea for the giant whisk. I was planning to deconstruct the silk fabric and use it to build both the whisk head and the veil because it folded and moved like whisked cream. I had the idea to turn it upside down and integrate a whisk inside. I was not brave enough to tear the hand-sewn garment apart; the dress's sentiment was simply the expertise with which it was constructed. As a result, I looked for a muslin fabric that was more tactile, flexible, fluid and fragile. The selected cream muslin or fabrics replaces the ivory silk and reduces the beauty of the original fabric. This was probably intentional. The fabric ruches around the wire loops allowing for a whipped cream formation, giving the loops an active presence. This 'spectacle' evolved when it was installed in a hut in the grounds of Patching's Arts Centre in Derby where the sculpture developed a new personality by absorbing both the interior and exterior spaces around it. In the centre of the large whisk form, there



Figure 48: Carole Griffiths, 1994, Bespoke Wedding Dress Ivory Silk.

is an attached little version of a whisk and bowl held in place by a thread. The bowl is made from Modroc and coated with shellac and the whisk form made of clay. These two made sculptures were experimental. I used them to complete the installation. By placing the bowl and small whisk underneath the muslin splayed fabric, I referenced autobiographical concepts of attachment, the umbilical cord, and marriage. (Fig 49-51). This grouping together suggested a child born from the union of marriage—a presence established subtly through the idea. I am often thinking about how such rituals (such as marriage) might be developed through interactions between one another, between objects and environment. Jeannette Winterson's book, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* introduced me to some poignant words written by Virginia Woolf in *The Waves*: 'Like and 'like' and 'like' – but what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the things'.<sup>56</sup> Woolf's comments certainly resonated with this piece. These cultural exchanges shape my own domestic

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Jeannette Winterson, *Art Objects Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (New York: Vintage, 1997), 79.

experiences and past autobiographies where the intricacies of everyday life are revealed by my alterations of the kitchen whisk and then changed within a social space. The function of an object can only be revealed if you allow it, yet this has become a part of my creative process. Through the fluidity of material, in this case fabric, such symbolic vehicles elicit both pleasures and discontent.



Figure 49: Carole Griffiths , *Whisk Veil Splayed*, 2019, Bamboo, Muslin fabric, Plaster and Wire , Exhibited, Patchins, Derby





Figure 50: Carole Griffiths, *Whisk Veil Splayed*, 2019, Bamboo, Muslin fabric, Plaster and Wire, Exhibited, Patchins, Derby.



Figure 51: Carole Griffiths, Close up - *Whisk Veil Splayed*, 2019, Bamboo, Muslin fabric, Plaster and Wire, Exhibited, Patchins, Derby.

### 3.8. Hair Whisk

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Figure 52: African Fly Whisk  
<https://www.metmuseum.org>

Figure 53: Loop My Loop Helen Chadwick, 1981  
<https://www.artnet.com/artists>

Figure 54:  
Experiment  
with Human Hair and  
Clay, 2019.

I had been considering alternative materials to work from and had looked at some historical whisk types, where I came across a ritual African fly whisk (Fig 52).<sup>57</sup> It had a body carved from wood and plaited hair to form the whisk bristles. The hair was human, and the object intrigued me. I thought it might be interesting to create a 'ritualistic whisk'. I thought of Helen Chadwick's *Loop My Loop* (Fig 53) where she takes something natural, fetishized, and out of context to display remnants of femininity. Plaited, brushed, twisted, pulled, lifted, stretched, bunched, scrunched, split, and tied hair is an integral part of a woman's body. To make the whisk head, I used air drying clay and donated human hair (Fig 54). The experience with these materials was somewhat unpleasant. The head of the whisk did not work as it felt wrong to touch and wrong in form. I wanted it to twist and tighten but instead it frayed and strands seem to go all over the place. It is not something I would work with again particularly if it is not my own hair. This unfamiliar material of human hair was a challenge in the making, but it did allow me to develop the *Whisk-Woman* sculptures further. As a result of this tension, the whisk construction remains ambiguous, with perceived dichotomies emerging from both the body and the whisk head components. The combination of the whisk head and the human torso suggests

<sup>57</sup> 'Flywhisk (tahiri ra'a)'. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,  
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/313676>



metaphorical functionality. As a result, the anthropomorphic is generated, and the existence of the inanimate whisk comes to life through making. These thoughts were reinforced by a visit to The Hepworth Gallery in Wakefield to see the works of Magdalene Odundo, who uses the body as a vessel to embrace the whole idea of making. It is this ‘humanity we want to imbue in that thing we are making as an object’.<sup>58</sup> Odundo’s large torso pots open up to the idea of vessel becoming body.

### 3.9. Artists and the ‘Object Familiar’

After identifying and discussing various artists whose works are related to both my own work and the haptic body of everyday objects, I return to the idea of the home and its contents, which has been a recurring subject in both my work and the contemporary artists I investigated. These analyses all appear to deal with the idea of initiating a conversation about how we might process meaning through material architectures in our homes.



Figure 55: Own Whisk, Photograph Still.  
(Collaboration with Sally Robinson, 2017)

<sup>58</sup> Magdalene Odundo: *The Journey of Things*. Text by Andrew Bonacina, (Catalogue, Hepworth Wakefield 2017), 7.

In 2017, I produced a series of photographs with photographer Sally Robinson<sup>59</sup> based on my collection of vintage kitchen utensils. This animated antique balloon whisk (Fig 56) was intended to capture movement and bring the utensil back to life through bodily structures formed within the shadows. My research on the whisk, included Man Ray's series of photogram objects, one of which was the rotating whisk. Man Ray took the original 'eggbeater' (version of whisk) as a ready-made object and transformed it simply by its position and shadow, opening up into a new reality implying human as a machine (Fig 56). By entitling it *L'Homme*, he appears to be asserting his masculinity

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Figure 56: *L'Homme*, Man Ray, 1918 Photograph Print.

through this mechanical object. What is interesting here is how Man Ray uses the object and brings it to our attention through the title, shadow, and form of the actual object. This gives the object extra dimension and opens the space for visual contemplation as well as 'distinguishes the relationship between "truth" and "appearances" with the visual dimension of the artwork'.<sup>60</sup> Here there is a seemingly enigmatic enquiry enfolding through the unconscious at the same time exposing the 'double life of objects' and an inherent 'poetic function'.<sup>61</sup> Conley describes this process referencing Breton's roots of ghostliness, 'whereby a body substitutes for thing and a thing may take place of a living body'.<sup>62</sup>

In 1920, Man Ray reproduced this image and called it *La Femme* (Fig 57). This reprinted version has been described in several studies as a reaction to his marital difficulties at the time.

'He chose egg (i.e., woman) beater when he was having trouble with his wife Donna (Donna is a woman in Italian)'.<sup>63</sup> *La Femme*, appears softer and lighter, the shadowless mechanical whisk changes slightly by 'closing into a solid form'.<sup>64</sup> Through changing the light and tone, Man Ray suggests different genders. In Caroline Jones's chapter *The Sex of Machine 1998*, she suggests that 'the mechanized bodies are not only the social roles of gender but the biological roles of sex'.<sup>65</sup> This is significant when using such objects to represent symbolic motifs of self and as platforms for repurposing. Jones describes this as allowing 'the eggbeater to reassert

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Figure 57: *La Femme*, Man Ray, 1920, Photograph Print.

<sup>59</sup> Sally Robinson, a photographer from West Yorkshire, has worked on numerous projects with me based on both our fascination with Kitchen Objects. (Photographs taken for Catalogue Appendix 2).

<sup>60</sup> Jason Gaiger, *Frameworks of Modern Art – Art of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 83.

<sup>61</sup> Katharine Conley, *Surrealist Ghostlines* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press 2013), 22.

<sup>62</sup> Conley, *Surrealist Ghostlines*, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Arturo Schwarz, *The Rigour of Man Ray*, quoted in Sharon Halwes, 'Man Ray, Objects 1916-1921: The Role of Aesthetics in the Art of Idea' (PhD, Rice University, 1990), 91.

<sup>64</sup> Caroline Jones, *Picturing Science, Producing Art* (London: Routledge, 1998, 150.

<sup>65</sup> Jones, *Picturing Science*, 147.

an association with female machines of domestic life, but that association is clouded both by the echoes of *L'Homme*, which still cling to it'.<sup>66</sup>

I was pleased to find that Mona Hatoum (discussed in Chapter 2, above) had considered the whisk as a subject for her prints (Fig 58). Hatoum used the rotary (eggbeater) whisk as ready-made in lithographs. The positioned whisk seen through multiples seems to present a portrait of conflict and alienation. These immutable encounters with the object become activated through the way they are positioned, collated, and repeated. Hatoum places her composition of whisks to stand to and demonstrate control and order.

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Figure 58: Mona Hatoum, Untitled, 2018, Lithograph.  
<https://www.neweditions.com/mona-hatoum-untitled-whisks>.

This could allow for objects to take on a specific gender regardless of structure. Both Man Ray and Hatoum are using the functionality of the object to create an intensity of the mechanical body and its gestural possibilities formed or seen within a utensil.

To continue to make sense of my chosen object, the whisk, I had to unravel meanings of the mundane which related to autobiographical accounts of specific domestic experiences and domesticity. I needed to explore the commonalities between bodily gestures and the functionality of things. Roland Barthes links this idea of meaning to 'a mode of presence as memorial'.<sup>67</sup> The object *Whisk* has its own history, embedded firstly in its functionality and secondly in its form. The original meaning of the object is 'already complete'.<sup>68</sup> New meanings, as Roland Barthes states becomes: 'a reconciliation between [...] description and explanation, between object and knowledge'.<sup>69</sup>

In the *Femme Maison* series by Louise Bourgeois (see also Chapter 2), there is a distinct intention to morph body and everyday objects together using the house as a head, a limbless torso suggesting Venus, and what looks like whisked hair growing from the rooftops. 'Blithely they emerge from chimneys, or terrified, they watch from their beds as curtains fly from a nightmare window. A whole family of females proves their domesticity by having houses for heads'.<sup>70</sup> Thomas McEvilley describes Bourgeois' work as a way of 'blending, mixing, and recombining of body parts' which presents the idea of where 'subject meets body'.<sup>71</sup> Bourgeois's continued interest in restoration and reparation through the hybridity of part objects and body informed my search for objects which seem to speak of a new language created from my memories. Louise Bourgeois stated that, 'assemblage is different from

<sup>66</sup> Jones, *Picturing Science*, 147.

<sup>67</sup> Roland Barthes. *Mythologies*, (New York: Vintage Classics; Revised 193), 159.

<sup>68</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 22.

<sup>69</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 22.

<sup>70</sup> Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality, Louise Bourgeois, and a Story of Modern Art* (Boston, MA: MIT Press 2005), 53.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas McEvilley, in *Louise Bourgeois*, edited by E. B. Weiermair (Zurich: Edition Stemmler, 1995), 38.

carving. It is not an attack on things. It is a coming to terms with things. With assemblage or the found object, you are caught by detail or something that strikes your fancy, and you adjust, you give in, you cut, and you put together'.<sup>72</sup> It is here I consider Sennett's domains again as introduced in Chapter 1, which talk about the anthropomorphic as a process and as such combinations allow for hybrid forms to take shape. My work is becoming my own 'reparation' where the playful assemblages of things are merging within the body or within fragments of the body.

### 3.10. Preparing and Making



Figure 59: Carole Griffiths and Louise Cunningham, *Overlay*, 2019, Film<sup>73</sup>

Through observations and drawings, I ask several practical and experimental questions such as 'what would happen if I brought together the whisk with a torso? What would happen if the objects moved within a space through the idea of a mobile installation? and finally, what materials, actions, and processes could I use to make the objects become embodied in the formal but remain domestic and familiar?' I am reimagining the actions of making objects, getting to know objects, forming language, and experiencing all which have equal value in my position as an art practitioner. Themes of embodiment can be predicted through visual and physical encounters by the shifting of materials and finally through the physical intensity of making. This enables performative interplays between object

<sup>72</sup> Louise Bourgeois in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed. Morris, 261.

<sup>73</sup> Film by Carole Griffiths and Louise Cunningham, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEB4sj-r\\_rl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEB4sj-r_rl). Accessed 8/9/2023.

and subject and were unfolding the functionality of the whisk object. This drives the domestic experience and exposes my memories through a performative act within the space from a kitchen to the studio and vice versa.

In considering the relationship between the interplay of cooking and sculpting the process of whisking plaster is very similar to whisking cream: the bowl, the physicality of mixing, consistency, and the intention. The film *'Overlay'* (Figs 59 and 60) which I created in collaboration with filmmaker Louise Cunningham demonstrates this commonality.<sup>74</sup>

Utilising a bowl and whisk, I began to whisk the cream first, using vigorous hand rotation until the cream peaked ready to serve. Then in the same bowl and using the same whisk the plaster was sprinkled into the required water and whisked slowly to form the double cream consistency. So already it seems that the making activities have equal value. Both liquids are the same consistency, both activities present the intention to continue to thicken. These liquids can be then used for the purpose they serve; one for sculpting, one for eating, both either give pleasure or open up a unique conversation about the relationship between the functionality of the object whisk. The whisk is controlled by the vigorous mechanics of the hand, expanding the materials, doubling them, and thickening the liquid.



Figure 60: Carole Griffiths and Louise Cunningham, *Overlay*, 2019, Film

This proposes a deeper understanding of the 'relationship' between making and the emergence of a new language of its performative role. In Chapter 2, I highlight Martha Rosler's performance of subversive acts of the kitchen, prevalent in the 1970's. I also act out an interaction of the pleasures of

<sup>74</sup> Carole Griffiths, Film: *Overlay*, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEb4sj-r\\_l](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEb4sj-r_l) (2019).



making through whisking both with the cream and the plaster. I am interacting and executing the delights of producing both cream and plaster. These sensuous activities provide me with a sense of both the planned consequence and the haptic experience of listening to the sounds of mixing, as well as the commonality of materiality of both substances. I recall Rachel Fallon's work, *La Befana* (also discussed in Chapter 2) and see the whisking as my alchemical experiment helping me make sense of the material, the tools used and how such kitchen desires can be presented and challenged in a more pleasurable and celebratory way.

The predictable trajectories of the whisk perform this, reinventing the actions and repositioning creativity through active manipulation and revealing the possibly intangible fragilities related to fears, memories, and desires through combining homely and artistic acts. In navigating the kitchen as a studio where tools and making share similar methods, the unpredictable phenomenon of the mundane contributes to the exploration of making, re-forming re-inventing new objects. Georgie Hopton highlighted similar thought during our conversation:<sup>75</sup>

When I did the series of photographs with the vegetables, sometimes donned in a pinny, I was sending off the idea of the domestic goddess - a cliché of femininity and wholesome perfection. At the same time, I was mocking myself and the situation I found myself in - that of deeply enjoying my preoccupation with the kitchen garden, creating beautiful domestic scenarios and cooking.

Archetypes exist for a reason - and that of the Domestic Goddess stems partly from the irrepressibly seductive idea of home baked pies and never-ending nurture. There is something deeply pleasurable and sensual about growing a vegetable garden and cooking, whilst at the same time it's a road to consumption, which clearly, I am very compelled by.

I guess I am concerned when people don't cultivate their relationship with their objects and their home. I find it disturbing, so many insecurities in life, so many unknowns and so much pleasure, but fear and the thing of the domestic environments can be soothed by stuff, something in knowledge that people have made beautiful things, crafted things and that care, I find this really nourishing. heart-warming, interesting. This feeds me on a lot of levels, and it stimulates me at the same time as comforting me. As for cooking, when you make, using your favourite tools, your favourite wooden spoon to stir your sauce, favourite tools to get the pasta

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<sup>75</sup> Georgie Hopton: Interview.

out the pan with, because they do the job the way you want the job to be done. All of that has a silent rapport.

Rosler, Fallon, Bourgeois, Hatoum and Hopton open a dialogue in relation to the domestic space and domestic objects which allude to 'deep-seated psychic dramas played out in everyday interactions between self and world and self and others'.<sup>76</sup> These familiarities of lived domestic experience can be revealed through the kitchen utensil. In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart outlines this predisposition: 'we can see the many narratives that dream of the inanimate-made-animate as symptomatic of all narrative's desire to invent a realisable world, a world that "works"'.<sup>77</sup> I am interested in all the defining moments, related to the complex relationship between objects, being human, memories, and making, where material consciousness takes its position in the making process. When I am making sculpture, I remember domesticity in all its glory; memories and observations which refer to my domestic experiences as wife, mother, and homemaker. I certainly no longer consider myself a wife or a home-maker. I am an art-maker and mother.

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<sup>76</sup> Alex Potts 'Hybrid Sculpture', in *Louise Bourgeois*, ed, Morris, 262.

<sup>77</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, xi, xii

### 3.11. Whisk Woman - Wheel Woman

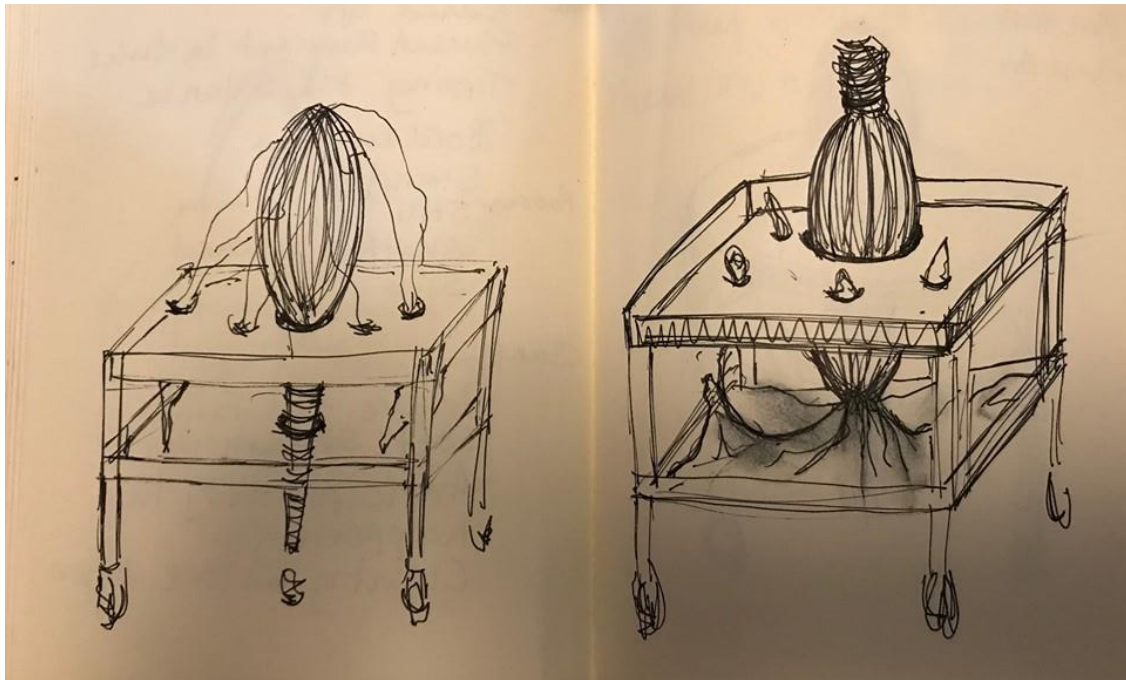


Figure 61: Carole Griffiths, Sketch Ideas for Whisk Woman Wheel Woman, (Pen & Ink) 2019

In *Overlay* (Fig 60), I started to unfold the functionality of the whisk to personalise my own narratives and domestic experiences, echoing Bobby Baker's idea of exploring the 'kitchen as a site for constant work, but also of memory and engaging fantasy'.<sup>78</sup> This allowed me to identify with the material and investigate the textuality of both the material and activity. I explored the idea of self-representation in a moveable installation: to keep the object mobile but transform it into a self-portrait and to present a theatrical experience of the domestic and of making, whereby tools can be made from tools. In an interview with the artist, David Clarke talks about using the familiarity of an object, in his case the 'spoon', to be 'proactively provocative' and this is realized through the material of the ready-made object and the new material which 'blurs' the forms to create the 'awkward, a characteristic of the human form'.<sup>79</sup>

*Whisk-Woman, Wheel-Woman* (Fig 61) brings together the interface between body and domestic space, which can be choreographed to weave in and out of time and space. The components that structure of the portable installation leave room for additions to the wooden trolley. These small areas give space where more can be done, to prepare it for a new space. This portable installation consists of a central figure, *Whisk- Woman*, then what surrounds her and what is placed on the trolley handle

<sup>78</sup> Lesley Ferris in, 'Daily Life 1, Kitchen Show', in *Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life*, edited by Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker (London: Routledge, 2007), 175.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with David Clarke 2020.

are stitched and knitted components. Stitch is an extremely powerful way to represent repair and bring together parts. I recall Louise Bourgeois's *Sculpture* (Fig 11, discussed in Chapter 2) of part-sculpture part-object, which is stitched and stuffed, and I am reminded of how Bourgeois integrates stitch in many of her works. I was often sewing and making clothes as a young child, and it is these reminders of marks made through stitch which are slowly being revealed and relived through my work. My search for materials and methods of making often resurface from my past. The feeling and the elements of touch, whether it is knitting fabric, or stitching, give form and context to the work. The displaying of pleasures of knitting, sewing, and acts of making have subtle references to childhood, attachment, and domestic past. The feeling and the elements of touch, whether it is knitting fabric, or stitch, give form and draw out context to the work made. These stimulants expose my domestic thoughts and playfulness with making.

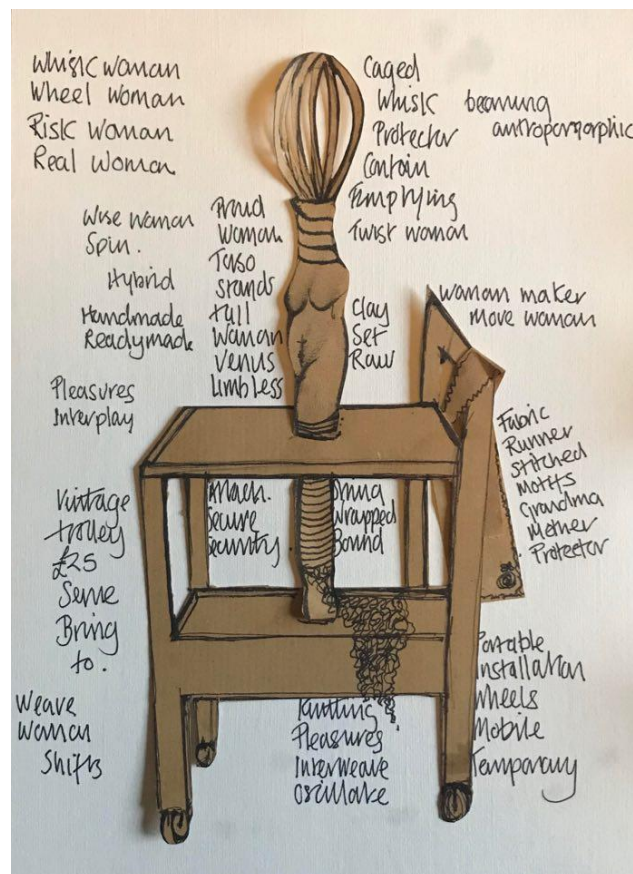


Figure 62: Carole Griffiths, *Whisk-Woman, Wheel-Woman*, 2019. Collage.

In *Whisk-Woman, Wheel -Woman* (Figs 62 and 65), the central figure is made of air-drying terracotta clay which retains its raw state without shrinkage. *Whisk-Woman, Wheel-Woman* is positioned to

stand tall, be proud, and present as the limbless Venus. The emerging unfinished torso protects and grows from the bottom form. Incomplete body forms, suggest growth and are reminders of the unfinished, leaving work still to be done; the mother in me always must work to be done. The whisk head is made overly large in relation to the scale of the torso. The whisk head dominated the body. I remain undecided about whether this work (Fig 65) was successful, and whether or not the handle representing the neck attached to the torso should be shortened and the whisk head smaller, and I may return to it at a later date. The limbless woman or fragments within this work could be seen as appropriating an attitude towards body and sexuality. Reilly's 'Naked and Limbless' suggests that the woman's limblessness 'enable[s] her to fulfil the roles of bride, wife and mother'.<sup>80</sup> *Whisk-Woman, Wheel-Woman* has navigated my home, exposed herself in a gallery, and has been wheeled occasionally to one side when duties required space. She then reappears and is wheeled back round. Merleau-Ponty talks about the phenomenon of the phantom limb being 'absorbed into that of repression' whereby 'the subject is entering into a course of action', he further suggests 'an existential attitude motivates another, and that memory, emotion and phantom limb are equivalents in context of being in the world'.<sup>81</sup> This work offers an autobiographical account through the whisk as an object and the portability of a trolley to give it a personal space.

Bobby Baker's work, *The Edible Family in a Mobile Home*, seems to share some similarities with this work, particularly related to the temporary and the mobile. Baker's other performances in her series the *Kitchen Show* (1991) display a domestic narrative associated with autobiographical experiences. In a review by Caroline Stacey cited by Elaine Aston, the kitchen is described as the stage whereby Baker presents 'her private self through twelve actions...from clearing out the cutlery drawer to rinsing spinach. These are strung together with female confidences, reminiscences, and send-ups of the apologetically appreciative middle-class wife and mother'.<sup>82</sup> She describes these actions as 'taking the lid off a woman's mind and making sense and nonsense of the routines of running a home'.<sup>83</sup> Thus, actions become part of the work, part of the installation, and allow for interactive and connective participation of ephemeral moments. The kitchen becomes a metaphor for 'surprising moments of sensual pleasures'.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Reilly, 'Naked and Limbless', 165.

<sup>81</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 99.

<sup>82</sup> See Elaine Aston, 'Transforming Women's Lives: Bobby Baker's Performances of Daily Life', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 16.1 (2000), 17-25.

<sup>83</sup> Caroline Stacey, quoted in Aston, 'Transforming Women's Lives', 21.

<sup>84</sup> Griselda Pollock, *Kitchen Show: A Reading* (Catalogue. An Arsadmin Project, Arts Council, 1991).



Figure 63: Journal Entry. Sketches of Whisk, Words for Whisk,

Wheel Woman: Spin Woman: Move Woman: Woman  
Maker: Weave Woman: Still Woman.

Whisk Woman: Twist Woman: Run Woman: Woman  
Baker: Sleep Woman: Wise Woman.

Figure 64: Carole Griffiths, Words from Journal 2019-2020.

The language of form and words (Fig 63 and 64) work together to open up interconnections of object and subject. 'The limits of language can be overcome through active involvement in a practice'.<sup>85</sup> My sculptures aim to extend a more tactile visceral response to domestic objects that emerge from my domestic space, and to which we generally pay little attention. Each sculpture I create re-constructs an object, giving it a new and expanded identity. I use a sketchbook to capture any thoughts related to home and the past. I identify the purpose of the selected kitchen utensil through words which often leads to a drawing formulating the sculptural idea.

<sup>85</sup> Sennett, 96.

The use of my kitchen and living space has come to act as a studio, which presents challenges, intrigue and questions related to the contexts of making and viewing. I consider presenting my work within the space where it was created, or I am interested in finding a space where it fits best and where familiarity remains. The unpredictable phenomenon of the mundane appears to contribute to and be at home with the context and site of domestic experience. This is further discussed in to develop new knowledge about the reconfigured and re-made every day object by expanding my capacity to make through the material qualities of sculpture to convey meaning. I examine this at length in Chapter 4. Testing Works, Finding Spaces, Placing Sculptures.

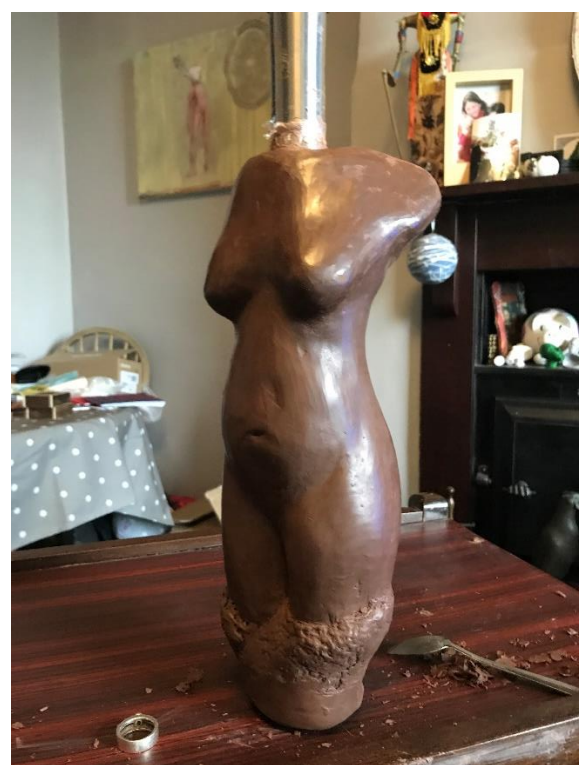




Figure 65: Carole Griffiths, Whisk-Woman, Wheel Woman, 2019.



Figure 66: Carole Griffiths, Whisk Woman in progress Air drying Clay.





## Summary:

In the *Whisk Woman* series, negotiation has taken place between the original object, material transformations, and my own conscious and unconscious thoughts. I have disturbed the original in order to open up new possibilities for a material presence. Familiarity is disturbed to enable imagination. 'The material object is posited as the vehicle through which to explore the object/subject relationship, a condition that hovers between physical presence and the visual image'.<sup>86</sup>

Challenging forms through remaking and valuing process over production enabled the construction of symbolic and metaphorical allusions. These reference social and cultural values, antiquities, and the manufactured domestic object. Attfield presents this dichotomy: 'When the ecology of personal possessions is embodied by the household as both a social unit and material accumulation of things contained in time and space, a feasible framework is formed to investigate how people form their identities through things'.<sup>87</sup> It is my act of making these works which has allowed me to weave in and out of given spaces leaving traces of the pleasures of making throughout the domestic sphere. My use of temporal processes such as film, drawing, and making sculpture with clay and other materials, are influenced by the navigation of old and new spaces as well as selecting everyday objects. Through the process of revisiting, rituals can become entangled within the presence of the object and subject. These familiarities, as well as the tactile visual discourses providing anthropomorphic reconfigurations, are conveyed here through an everyday object. Trauma, the everyday, the prosaic, and the pleasures of domesticity all contribute to a lyrical chaos of disarray. By questioning life through both familiar and new materials, I am able to push the sculptural forms further. I reveal new meanings and pursue a dialogue between kitchen as a studio and the unpredictable phenomenon of the mundane. As Griselda Pollock puts it, 'Kitchen is both the site and the subject, the resource, and the topic of a piece of art'.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Attfield, *Wild Things*, 31.

<sup>87</sup> Attfield, *Wild Things*, 157.

<sup>88</sup> Pollock, *Kitchen Show a Reading* (Catalogue, An Arsadim Project, Arts Council 1991).

## Chapter 4: Testing Works, Finding Spaces, Placing Sculptures

### 4.1. Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I began to think about how I should show my work. For example, I presented possibilities of using the house as an exhibition space. I previously highlighted a number of works that I had shown and shows in which I had participated that were related to the home space, all of which enabled significant shifts in this research project. A deeper knowledge of the contexts and placement of the works is addressed further in this chapter.

The exhibition pieces discussed here have allowed me to develop my ideas through reflective analysis as well as giving a better understanding of the contexts and positioning of the works. The past five years have allowed me to test my sculptures out in different places and under an umbrella of different themes. The kitchen utensils 'remade' series of works have often been adapted to sit alongside other works, groupings, or in collaboration with other artists. This has enabled playful rearrangements which have extended my sculptural language. These exhibitions have primarily allowed me to get the work shown, test my work, and see how the sculptures fit and speak within different settings. I was interested in presenting to a wider audience with the intention of finding out how they interact and connect with the works. All the works emerge through the idea of a thematic context related to autobiographical accounts. Through these exhibitions, I have been able to identify and sift through key components of my work in order to establish a deeper reflective account of both the making process, the presentation of the works, and the meanings behind them.

The inclusion of my work within collaborative exhibitions allowed my works to expand in both dimension and context and prompted me to reflect upon how and where the works need to be displayed or changed due to further considerations of making, material, and execution.

Creative collaboration has been an opportunity for me to draw from discussions within various groups of practicing artists. By responding to a wide variety of themes in collaboration, I have re-established, repositioned, and articulated my autobiographical narratives within a wider social context. Some constraints within a collaborative approach, particularly with regard to themes and spaces, have prompted me to question both what I have created and where I feel my work is best exhibited.

This exposure has helped me to extend my thinking about spaces of domesticity and in particular about the unification of 'housing' works within an exhibiting space. In *The Production of Space*,

philosopher Henri Lefebvre, suggests that space can be acquired or selected through the enactment of social relations, and he refers to a space that allows creative flow and movements across, and through interactions of the people who inhabit it.<sup>1</sup> The idea of adding artworks as the products of relationships, between humans, spaces, and objects enables a range of potential creative contexts. This is especially relevant to my work as I see the use of spatial environments as essential to the process of remaking and repositioning domestic objects. This is highlighted again by Lefebvre:<sup>2</sup>

The long history of space, even though space is neither a 'subject' nor an 'object' but rather a social reality [...] must account for both representational spaces and representations of space, but above all for their inter-relationships and their links with social practice[...] Classification of objects certainly has a contribution to make to traditional history, especially when the historian is concerned with the ordinary objects of daily life, with types of food, kitchen utensils and the preparation and presentation of meals, with clothing, or with the building of houses and the materials and material it calls for. But everyday life also figures in representational spaces - or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it forms such spaces.

## 4.2 Collaboration

I have contributed to selected thematic exhibitions with *The Unlocked Collective*, *The Yorkshire Sculptors Group*<sup>3</sup>, and the *Bread Board Museum*.<sup>4</sup> In this section, I discuss how collaborations impact my work and how I utilised these opportunities to display my work for further development and understanding.

Collaboration is multifaceted and it can enable groups of artists to make use of a wide variety of processes, and contexts, through both a united and singular experience. This dialogue can take place between a collective of like-mindedness which sometimes is equitable and sometimes it could be simply a journey of artists working together on a common theme. For me, it is often a case of working on my own themes to fit within the collective theme.

My participation in shared exhibitions has resulted in composite discreet works placed together alongside others under one title. This idea of collaboration enhances a collective identity but still allows for individuality to be recognised. Through working with others within a collective, the content of my work has been pushed and challenged, and works have become the catalyst for further

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell), 70-73.

<sup>2</sup> Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 116.

<sup>3</sup> The Yorkshire Sculptors Group, <https://www.yorkshiresculptorsgroup.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> Bread Board Museum, <https://www.wandsworthfringe.com/whats-on-2021/breadboard-experiences-1>.

exploration. Through collaboration, my works are altered in response to specific themes within a shared space, adding new possibilities and a new dimension to those works. I am able to test out my works by positioning them in different spaces, alongside work by other artists.

I see a collective accomplishment as an opportunity to inspire future projects and disseminate them to a broader art community or shared communities. Investing in collaborative exhibitions gives me a sense of being in, and contributing to, a sense of responsibility, and creates engagement with new possibilities.

### 4.3 Reciprocal Encounters: Inside /Outside: 2020-2021



Figure 67: Carole Griffiths, *Reciprocal Encounters*. 2016 Version, Plastic cut forms dipped in silver leaf. Steel Stand

In 2016, I produced a series of works for an exhibition titled *No Future, No Hope* in Bank Street Arts Sheffield. This was a collaborative project with *The Unlocked Collective* which was established in 2014 and essentially started as a group of women in a book club. Most of us were artists, mothers, and educators, and it seemed appropriate to shift our discussions into a collective artists' group. We all

work in different disciplines and with individual themes and practices. Our ethos is to take a theme of historical interest and respond individually through a privately executed approach. The brief for this exhibition *No Future, No Hope* was to present works based on the group's representations of related archives in response to the breakdown of the steel industries in Sheffield. The main piece I produced for this show was *Reciprocal Encounters* (Fig 67). At the time I was preparing my proposal for a PhD, so this work was extremely significant. I had narrowed down the theme of my prospective PhD project to investigating the potential of kitchen implements to be reworked as art objects with agency and narrative representations of my domestic encounters. What better place to explore knives, forks, spoons, and scissors than in the City of Sheffield.

Part way through preparing for the exhibition the collective began to reveal and share our works, discuss our themes, and prepare statements and responses as well as consider further challenges and ideas. Although we worked separately to begin our projects, coming together seemed to give the work synergy. The group conversations begin to take form more cohesively when the show was up and open to the public.

Below is a statement about my contribution to the exhibition and although there are elements in this statement that may appear contradictory this is intentional:<sup>5</sup>

This work identifies how historic nuances of historical objects sit outside their original environment. In recognition of the archive pair of scissors, the knife, fork, and spoon I brought them back to life to represent change. I have remade them to react to a useless array of plasticity about the beautifully crafted. Many of these utensils sit behind our glass doors on display to remind us of what was. These transitional objects have been crafted to last, they are hand-made and then in turn become the new manufactured thing. With no significance. Such multiple uses and historical context emerge from the how, why and what they have become. The relationship between the construction and displacement is there to be questioned and in conclusion, rethink reduction of crafted standards and appeal to the throw-away.

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<sup>5</sup> *Unlocked Collective* no longer has an active website as it is paused for the foreseeable future when the group hopes to reform. However, during writing this thesis the website was visible and work with the group was ongoing.

When I started to think of *Reciprocal Encounters*, I thought of a structured washing line, a domestic platform. Then through research and making, the knife, fork, and spoon became obvious objects to work with. I made them out of plastic because this related to the world in which we live. However, I returned to this work several times and, on reflection, it did not seem complete. It felt unfinished and unresolved, and I always wanted to do something else with it, as the individual plastic pieces appeared flat, lacking in form.



Figure 68: Carole Griffiths, Large Plastic Fork, 2019



Figure 69: Carole Griffiths, *Reciprocal Encounters*:  
Exhibition: Invasive Species: Harlow Car Harrogate

In 2020, I was invited to exhibit a piece of work outside the grounds of Harlow Car Gardens, Harrogate North Yorkshire in response to the *Yorkshire Sculptors Group* exhibition, *Invasive Species* (Figs 67, 68, 69).<sup>6</sup> I had not intended *Reciprocal Encounters* to be displayed outside but thought being made from plastic and steel would probably withstand the outdoor environment. The size of the work was large enough to be noticed within the space. Each sculptor from the group selected a space that seemed to fit their work, through size and scale as this varied amongst the works. I had the opportunity to place

<sup>6</sup> The Yorkshire Sculptors Group, <https://www.yorkshiresculptorsgroup.org/exhibitions>. Accessed 20/8/2023.

mine beside an eating area. The space near the café would give the work a point of interest and familiarity, exposing its plasticity and displacement.

By establishing the positioning of the work and realising new meanings, the knife, fork, and spoon became more about the body. I needed to bring these plastic items to life. I melted and reactivated the objects to make them less banal. On looking at them from this point they became more gestural and suggestive. The body within these reformed utensils seemed to move and speak to me through the twists and turns. I considered that plastic was not an appropriate material to use. I cannot manipulate and feel the plastic in the same way as when I use clay or softer materials and it does not do what I want it to do. Although this was frustrating, I had to change what it originally did to move forward with the work. The knife fork and spoons were then coloured half in gold and half in dull silver to represent the stainless steel. It was at this point that I began to consider colour as an element of my work that was not previously considered. Georgie Hopton responded to my observations during our conversation: 'I have to explore colour in my work. You must find something very natural and basic, and it must help to not distract you in your intent, colour can be very distracting. Colour has a meaning; it immediately gives that sensation'.<sup>7</sup>

On the 19th of June 2019, after listening to a Radio 4 programme called *Origins of Stuff*, I made a note in my sketchbook about the fork and spoon and the metals they were composed of. A material scientist, Zoe Laughlin, explained the pairing of food with different utensils and how it influences taste while using certain forks. She noted that when used to eat, there was a significant difference between metals such as copper, zinc, and plastic cutlery, much of which left bitter or metallic tastes in the tongue. Laughlin stated that 'fundamentally you have not lived if you haven't eaten off 24ct gold'.<sup>8</sup> This led me to consider ideas of hierarchy in relation to utensils, and to question how my coloured selected materials could bring different meanings to the subjects portrayed.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Georgie Hopton.

<sup>8</sup> Radio 4, *Origins of Stuff* (The Fork, June 19th, 2019) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000611f>

After these reconfigurations, the knife, fork, and spoon hung as best they could like clothes on a line, forks in the road. Standing upright on the grass beside the garden café where they seemed to chatter in the wind and reflect in the sun. In 2019, I remade them but this time on a very small scale, returning to the handheld and concentrating more on the fragility of the relationship between these utensils. I remade a set of utensils out of copper. This was a difficult task of intricacy and control but resonated with my idea of delicacy, generating sensitive autobiographical interconnections of a smaller world as well as implicating the bitterness of the copper material on taste (Fig 70).



Figure 70: Carole Griffiths, Copper Spoon: L: 6cm, 2018.

I also made them in porcelain (discussed in Chapter 3) and Sculpey

(referred to in Chapter 5). In Louise Bourgeois' *Untitled* 1996 (Fig 71), I see structural similarities with

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*Reciprocal Encounters* whereby the steel structured frame seems to carry remnants of past of distressed and used hanging objects. In this instance Bourgeois dresses, blouses, and stuffed garments are suspended from cattle bones. As she stated, 'My garments and especially my undergarments always have been a source of intolerable suffering because they hide an intolerable wound'.<sup>9</sup> Through trying to recreate moments of intensity related to my disrupted domestic past the balancing of distorted utensils are disturbing their original functions by becoming 'signposts in the search for the past'.<sup>10</sup> Linda Nochlin's analysis of Bourgeois work discusses how she<sup>11</sup> relates to the self as subject and can appear absent yet present through objects bearing the stamp of bodily occupation, all of which simulates my own intentions and reconfigurations of the kitchen utensils on display.

Figure: 71 *Untitled*, 1996, Louise Bourgeois. (South Bank, 12<sup>th</sup> May 202).

These selected kitchen objects have been transformed and multiple meanings explored through returning and adapting, through reflection and addressing the many possibilities of material and making. In an interview with artist Perminder Kaur, we discussed at length the idea of working on a

<sup>9</sup>Quoted in Anna Leszkiewicz, 'The Secrets of Louise Bourgeois' Wardrobe,' *New Statesman*, 22nd February 2022, <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/art-design/2022/02/the-secrets-of-louise-bourgeois-wardrobe>. Accessed 10/12/2022.

<sup>10</sup> Leszkiewicz, 'Secrets'.

<sup>11</sup> Linda Nochlin, *Old age. Old age style: late Louise Bourgeois' in Louise Bourgeois*, ed. Morris, 190.



large scale and also making small sculptures. Scale and size can be discussed in terms of hierarchy and what seems to work best about the subject or space. Kaur describes her thoughts about this:

so, it's all about the work, it has to have a dialogue with the space. It has to be in conversation with the space, which is important. The work you do has to also have some relevance to the space. Whether it is about belonging to space or not belonging, there has to be something going on.<sup>12</sup>

I also discussed with Kaur the idea of how the space is inherent in the practice and the practice is inherent in the space and that both things have got to fit together somehow. Kaur responded to the idea of space as containing 'an element of surprise':<sup>13</sup>

Once it sits within the selected or required space the surprise is not what you expect [...] this can happen in the making process and when you look at things in different spaces and you just think, this would be a lot more interesting if I did this or that you change it. Also, it could be a major change, or it can be a subtle change. So, you can surprise yourself with that. This could mean the viewer is surprised. I suppose, as well it is something that you do not expect, and sometimes they can be the most significant part of your practice.

Kaur's element of surprise and scale allows for further reconfigurations and sculptural compositions. Kaur relates to this oscillation whereby size can change the status of the sculpture in a hierarchy dichotomy. During the interview, Kaur reiterated the difference between how things were made and scale. Part of the discussion on reducing a larger work highlighted how a smaller work could allow for further exploration around a theme:<sup>14</sup>

when I make something small it is easier because it can be quicker but when you work on something larger it can be a lot harder to work out. You have to consider more of the concept, the scale, and the working out is more planned and that means you can finalise the idea quite clearer [...] small is more spontaneous, I just make it and decide what to do with it.

I am constantly reflecting on the size and scale of my sculptures, and this is often tested out through exhibiting. My work can seem so much smaller in a larger space and so much bigger in a smaller place. Playing with size and scale in this instance can disrupt my work and often makes my intentions more awkward and some cases disjointed from the domestic space it was first made.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Perminder Kaur: (26<sup>TH</sup> July 2021).

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Perminder Kaur.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Perminder Kaur.

#### 4.4. *Wild Wings Fly*: South Square Arts Centre 2018

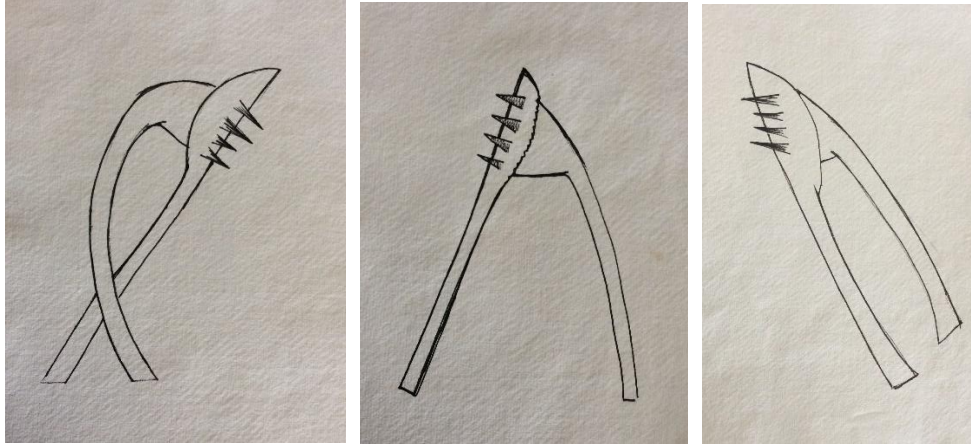


Figure 72: Carole Griffiths, Knife and Fork Drawings, Pen ,2014.

In 2018 I worked with *The Unlocked Collective* on a response to the novel *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte. This was another opportunity to test out and make utensils for my research project but through the catalyst and extracts of text. I worked through *Wuthering Heights* to establish how past drawings of interacted forks and spoons, knives slotting, pushing spoons, and wrapping around forks could be used in conjunction with selected words. (Fig 72).



Figure 73: Carole Griffiths A-Void, A Part, 2018, Ceramic, and mixed blue glaze.



Figure 74: Carole Griffiths *Unquiet Slumbers*, 2018, black grog clay fired.



Figure 75: Carole Griffiths, *Human Fixtures*, 2018. black grog clay,

I was interested in the relationship between couples, and the interrelationship between two objects, and set out to explore this through the complex nature of the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff. The tension between them is reminiscent of my own past encounters. These complex couplings were explored through the reconfiguration of a knife, fork, and spoon. The awkward duology between Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* echoed moments of despair, on-off love, separation, and suppressed thoughts of anger. This intensity could be determined through specific objects and spaces identified within the text. For example, in Chapter 3 of *Wuthering Heights* much of the action takes place in the kitchen, where Heathcliff is heartbroken. The narrator's use of complex adjectives appealed to me within the context of the text in particular the term '*human fixture*'. *Human Fixtures* reminded me of something that is present without being there, echoes of chattering within the confines of a located space. In this instance, there is a presence and a moment of panic in relation to absence. Actions are predominately exposed within the chaos of domesticity. The concept of *Human Fixture* (Fig 75) could be understood as being utilised in the same way that the phrase "part of the furniture" is commonly used:<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 10.

My human fixture and her satellites rushed to welcome me; exclaiming, tumultuously, they had completely given me up: everybody conjectured that I perished last night, and they were wondering how they must set about the search for my remains. I bid them be quiet, now that they saw me returned, and, benumbed to my very heart, I dragged upstairs; whence, after putting on dry clothes, and pacing to and fro, thirty or forty minutes, to restore the animal heat, I adjourned to my study, feeble as a kitten: almost too much so to enjoy the cheerful fire and smoking coffee which the servant had prepared for my refreshment.

The vessel, the knife, the fork, and then the spoon, are predominant features within my practice, and they often sit beside one another within a domestic space. These everyday objects encapsulate layered metaphors and analogies; 'between two', between the rough and the smooth, between the strength and fragility of material manipulation creating forms of human interaction through discovering and using different clays to make these interconnections. The reconfigured elements of the knife, fork, and spoon are often considered via the idea of the place setting (Fig 77) which also features in my work. Exploring entanglements of object and subject, and my interest in *Wuthering Heights* gave me insights into how forms can be configured through the objects and the manipulation of two types of clay. The first is black clay, (Fig 74, Fig 75) grogged and dark like the story, and porcelain clay (Fig 73,77) to represent fragility and sensitivity. The *Human Fixtures* (Fig 75, Fig 76) piece made



Figure 76: Carole Griffiths, Close up of Catherine and Heathcliff heads prior to firing. (2018)

from black grog clay displays an irregular surface to suggest the darker side of this relationship. The male and female elements are slightly attached but not quite, to the fork and the knife offering an analogy for how I viewed Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship.

Catherine's constant picking and prodding and Heathcliff's constant insular, dominant, and occasional aggression, resonated with my own domestic experience.

The words extracted from Chapter 2 in *Wuthering Heights*, 'you deserve *perpetual isolation* from your species for your churlish inhospitality,'<sup>16</sup> are reinforced through my use of porcelain.

The intention here was to portray the fragility of *Perpetual Isolation*, (Fig 77) whereby the centrepiece of dried harebells,

hands, and head are unattached and delicate to touch. Incorporated within the smooth surface

<sup>16</sup> Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, 9.

embedded text is scratched into the plate as a form of disruption. This disturbed the surface with words that resonate with part trauma of the text and my own memories.

Upon the heath, you draw me near

Entwined in time without no fear.

A line is crossed where the void begins.

To fall beside where the Lapwing sings.<sup>17</sup>

I often think of poetic words that support my work whether it is through the title of the works or within the statements that provide the viewer with context. These words present the social constructs of my past whereby poetry gives me a better understanding of summarising my experiences. The intention here was to open up new conversations about the everyday object hidden within the poetics of Emily Bronte's text simulating my own personal narratives. Words not only influence my thoughts but seem to sit well beside my sculptures.

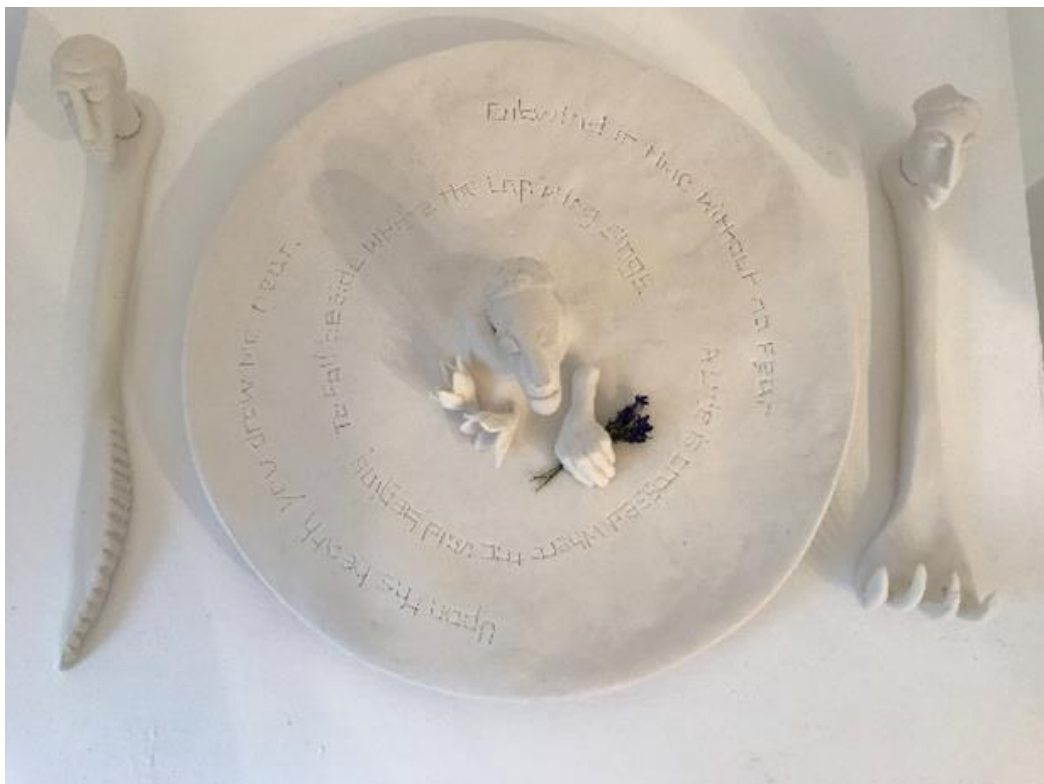


Figure 77: Carole Griffiths, *Perpetual Isolation*, 2018, Porcelain, Dried Heather.

<sup>17</sup> Carole Griffiths, Journal/Sketchbook entry 2018.



Figure 78: Carole Griffiths, *Perpetual Isolation "Upon the Heath, You Draw me in"*. 2018 Porcelain.

The word abyss is mentioned in the text, and I have considered it both in context and form within the making of my work. Firstly, I changed abyss to the word 'void' which through reinterpretation led to *A-Void, A-Part* as seen in Figure 73. Detaching the head from the spoon-shaped woman suggests how fragments of the body can be positioned together but present ideas of disconnection, where the void becomes the space between. The theme of spoon woman reoccurs in my work and has become a reformation of myself as other, mother, child, and ego. It is central to the idea of the void through separation and the idea of the empty womb, serving and letting go where every ending is the beginning of something new. Margaret Visser isolates the spoon from its other counterparts, knife and fork saying spoons can inspire affection as knives and forks cannot, they are unthreatening, nurturing objects.<sup>18</sup> Visser also suggests that spoons lack prestige. I aim to give this implement the prestige it deserves through reforming and manipulating clay to structure the constructs of bodily expressions. *Unquiet Slumbers* (Fig 74) is brought together with more tumultuous text, 'I have not broken your heart—you have broken it and in breaking it, you have broken mine',<sup>19</sup> imprinted into a larger void within a ceramic vessel made of black clay. Beside it, I have placed another spoon woman. In making this I cupped the clay in my hand to form a deeper scoop, which represents the end of Catherine and Heathcliff.

<sup>18</sup> Margaret Visser, *Rituals of the Dinner* (London: Penguin, 2017), 210.

<sup>19</sup> Catherine's words to Heathcliff, Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, 163.

The *Wild Wings Fly* exhibition allowed me to present these works within an intimate setting of a café.<sup>20</sup> *Plenty at the Square* is a welcoming space where people converse, contemplate, and where the table unites people with food and drinks. There is a resonance with rooms often mentioned in *Wuthering Heights*; in particular, the *parlour* and the kitchen are frequented by various characters who portray domestic discomfort, love, and turmoil.

Bobby Baker's *Kitchen Show* as previously discussed in Chapter 3 presents autobiographical accounts through physical actions, conducted in a private space in order to create a private monologue. Lesley Ferris describes this space 'as a site for sharing, telling, demonstrating, and enacting fantasies of chaos, and Ferris further analyses this by suggesting violence'.<sup>21</sup> The kitchen and the remembered woman are linked as sites of potential nourishment a private association made through narrative.<sup>22</sup> This idea of the traditional and familiar stage can break the boundaries of the hidden by opening up the house or by acknowledging the café as an intimate site to the public for further questioning. The house and its rooms such as the kitchen, and 'parlour', have become significant places for exhibiting my work, as such spaces allow for familiar contexts to be privately viewed.

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<sup>20</sup> South Square Arts Centre, plenty at the Square, Café is situated in Thornton Bradford. (Birthplace of Emily Bronte.)

<sup>21</sup> Lesley Ferris, 'Daily Life 1, Kitchen Show', in *Bobby Baker: Redeeming Features of Daily Life*, edited by Michèle Barrett and Bobby Baker (London: Routledge, 2007), 175.

<sup>22</sup> Ferris 'Daily Life 1, Kitchen Show', 175.



#### 4.5. Breadboard-Motherboard: Antique Breadboard Museum Putney: 2021

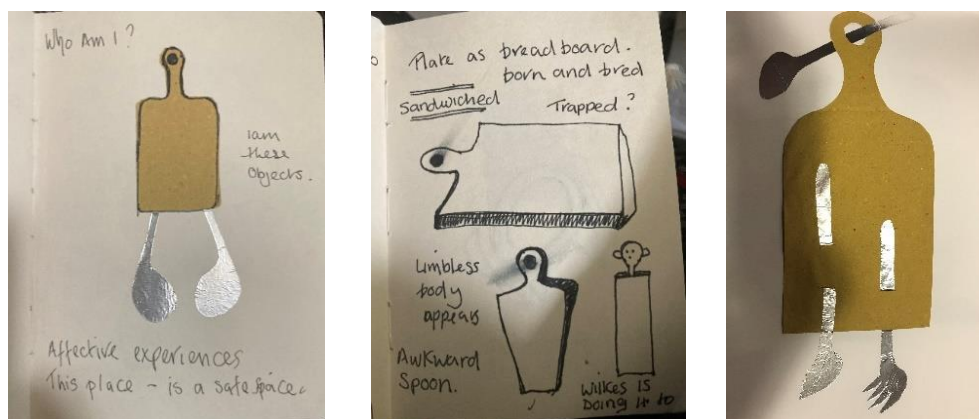


Figure 79, Carole Griffiths, Bread Board, Sketches and Collages from Venice Journal 2019.

The first wooden breadboard I drew was on my trip to Venice in 2019. I was often served food on one and it was here I became interested in the shape. The breadboard I encountered is American and reminded me of the torso, a fragmented form I have worked on over the past years. The elongated



Figure 80: *Untitled*, Cathy Wilkes, Venice Biennale 2019.

torso forms were also present in Cathy Wilkes's work (Fig 80) at the Biennale exhibition, and I then began to establish ideas that related to my 'affected experiences'.<sup>23</sup> During my Venice residency, the place setting was my primary research for developing and understanding concepts related to reconfigurations of the kitchen utensil. It was here I began to reflect and open a dialectic process of my project:

The way we eat represents perhaps one of the most profound and direct forms of human connections and expressions. This form of connection allows us to open up to the diverse world we live in. It encapsulates traditions and contemporary interactions of how we cohabit within the domestic space. These interesting stimulants can allow us to explore a canvas of objects and experiences that bring together fusions of creative thinking, familiarity, and cultural possibilities. A kitchen is a place where things happen as is the artist's studio.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The book I created for this fellowship, Carole Griffiths, *Are You Ready?* Can be viewed on my website; [https://carolegriffiths.co.uk/?page\\_id=188](https://carolegriffiths.co.uk/?page_id=188)

<sup>24</sup> Griffiths, *Are you Ready?*

The journal/sketchbook I produced documented many ideas which became catalysts for many of the works discussed in this project. (Fig 79). It also resulted in a publication and a Solo Show in South Square Café 2020. Figure 81 shows some of the layout in relation to the work on show and how it interacted with the space through a display of place settings.



Figure: 81: Carole Griffiths, *Are You Ready?* Exhibition At South Square Gallery (7th Feb, 2020).

During the 2020 pandemic lockdown, I contemplated how best to use my time. Having already identified the breadboard as an object that had metaphorical potential. I questioned how this would fit with my previous work, what it meant and how it could be relevant to ideas related to domestic autobiographies. To embody the 'kitchen' and construct narratives of belonging I used drawing to reimagine configurations of domestic space. The 'kitchen' and its constituent parts acted as metaphors, revealing notions of societal conditioning, and the activity of making is determined by drawing processes. The importance of the rituals of everyday experience can be generated through repetitive gestural habits of the 'home-maker' which speak of encounters of both my subconscious and the conscious world. Visser makes the point that rituals link past and present:<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Visser, *Rituals of the Dinner*, 19.

Ritual is action frequently repeated, in a form largely laid down in advance: it aims to get those actions right. Everyone presents knows what should happen, and notices when it does not. Dinner too is habitual, and aims at order and communication, at satisfying both the appetite of the diners and the expectations as to how everybody behaves. In this sense, a meal can be thought of as a ritual and a work of art, with limits laid down, desires aroused and fulfilled, enticements, variety, and patterning and plot. As in a work of art, not only the overall form but also the details matter intensely.

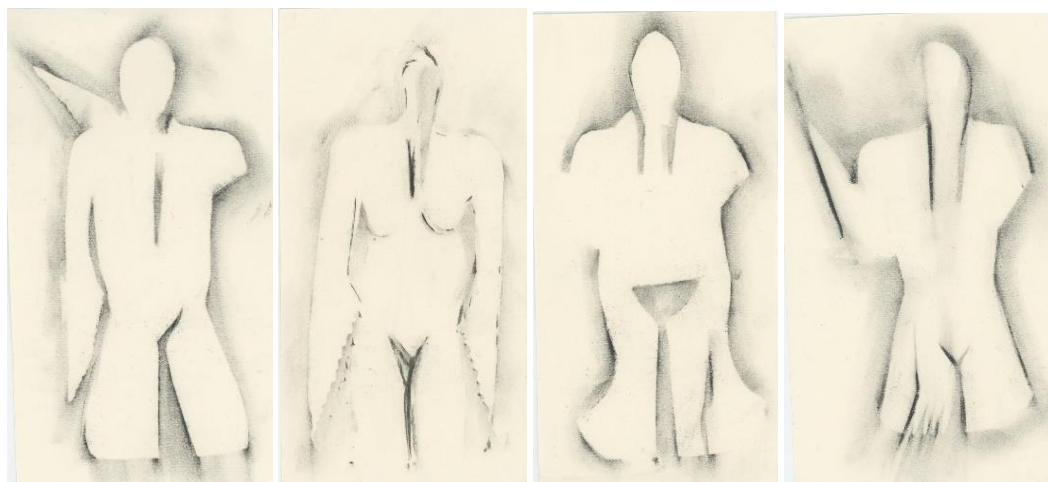


Figure 82: Carole Griffiths Mother-Board, Bread-Board Drawings. (March-May 2020).

I spent days and weeks drawing the breadboard and incorporating body parts as utensils with a focus on the knife and fork (Fig 82). This process of drawing as a disruptive form of inquiry informed a systematic investigation of gestural response and reaction to both the kitchen as a space and place and embodied making within it. This combination of the inclusive and sensory response of the performative activity of drawing and the language of object functionality allowed for a greater understanding of the felt and the seen.

To expand my understanding of this dialogue, I looked at Tim Ingold's anthropological approach to mark-making where he notes that 'drawing is not the production of image, it's the trace of a movement'.<sup>26</sup> I considered how this could be applied to daily activities within the domestic arena. It is essential to work on the drawings first before embarking on the breadboard sculptures. Michael Taussig in his book, *I Swear I Saw This*, quotes John Berger, 'drawing is like a conversation with the thing drawn—likely to involve prolonged and total immersion... is important not for what it records so

<sup>26</sup> Tim Ingold, 'Drawing with Tim Ingold', *Sensate*, October 2014, <https://sensatejournal.com/tim-ingold-drawing-with-tim-ingold>. Accessed 7/9/20123.

much as what it leads you to see'.<sup>27</sup> This led me to consider the idea 'bread board' as a platform for preparation, and a blank space to draw from and upon. The processes of making are documented to elucidate an inclusive and sensory response to the concept 'bread board' through the performative act of drawing, intended to expose layered notions of functionality and to inform the making of sculpture. Some of my drawing and making coincide with the revisiting of rituals and memories of family, chaos, and of sculptural experiences. I often use a wooden board to manipulate, kneed, and make clay sculptures. I often chop, slice, and build, and it is this interrelationship with preparation and display, food and clay that allows me to incubate new works. This contextualised thought gives the breadboard and its use a reference to the chopped and stitched body, the reformed and reconstructed part-body, and part-slab now embodies and articulates the entangled trauma of giving birth.



Figure 83: Carole Griffiths Mother-Board, Bread-Board, Sculpey Poundland Breadboard, (2020).



Figure 84: Carole Griffiths Mother-Board: Give Me My Daily Bread, Sculpey, Poundland Breadboard, (2020).

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Michael Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Mainly My Own* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 22.

[https://www.academia.edu/37261391/349867163\\_Michael\\_Taussig\\_I\\_Swear\\_I\\_Saw\\_This\\_Drawings\\_pdf](https://www.academia.edu/37261391/349867163_Michael_Taussig_I_Swear_I_Saw_This_Drawings_pdf). Accessed 7/9/2023.

I identify with one work by Julia Kunin titled the *Egg Board* 1990 (Fig 85). Emma L.E. Rees interprets this work as follows 'to use the board is to challenge women's representation of female desire inherent in the body's relationship to kitchen objects. To make an object of, 'opening' or 'absence' is

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created with a sense of humour, a 'serious sculpture', subverting and eroticizing the original function of the object'.<sup>28</sup>

My boards began to function as a frame and serving platform within, and on which, to revisit and organise part body and part object through the functions of a knife, fork, and spoon. Each component was strategically placed to create ambiguous ideas of place. Setting in place is a method by which to organise my thoughts through the fabrication of and adjustments to the fragmented body. The first two works (Figs 83 and 84) were formed of hands, arms, and spoons, made in Sculpey. The boards represent becoming a mother; a journey of loss represents the missing child. The material Sculpey was used at the time as not having access to a kiln during the lockdown and I needed a clay-like material to form the figurative parts. I also made several fabric-stitched pieces which brought out the memory of scarring marks on the cut body. Using these ideas to test out memories of

giving birth, each piece became part of the remembering. Through researching the breadboard, I discovered an actual *Antique Breadboard Museum* in Putney, London, and a book *The Vintage Bread Board* dedicated to the author Madelaine Neave's mother, who had spent a lifetime collecting breadboards.<sup>29</sup>

The museum of breadboards is a collection/exhibition within a home, located in a private living space of what could be a parlour, or a site repurposed to invite the public to view, discuss and engage with a useful and familiar object of the breadboard. On returning to the idea of the *parlour* as mentioned earlier I visualised this as a potential arena in which to display and share my work.

On the museum website, there were breadboards of all ages and styles and bread knives and bread forks that accompany them on the tables. I was intrigued by the idea, the space, and the collections as this curated space within a home presented a house of memory, hidden pasts, and collections of antiquity.

Figure 85: Julia Kunin. *Egg Board*. 1990  
[https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/about/feminist\\_art\\_base/julia-kunin](https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/eascfa/about/feminist_art_base/julia-kunin)  
 Accessed 15th September 2023

<sup>28</sup> Emma L.E Rees, *The Vagina: A Literary and Cultural History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) 127.

<sup>29</sup> Madelaine Neave, *Vintage Breadboards* (London: Prospect Books, 2019).





Figure 86: Carole Griffiths, Collections: 2021  
Antique Bread Board Museum.



Figure 87: Carole Griffiths, Exhibition, 2021, Bread  
Board Museum.



Figure 88: Carole Griffiths, Mother-Board, Bread Board, 2020. Calico, Red Stitch, Wire, Poundland Breadboard.

Placing my artwork amongst the craft makers of breadboards could prove revealing. I emailed Madeline Neave, the curator and owner, to inquire as to whether it would be possible to send her some samples of my work in progress. She responded to my work with keen interest through an email saying:<sup>30</sup>

It has occurred to me that there is innate sexuality in the shapes of traditional round bbs (pregnant woman & womb) and its accompanying knife (phallus with cutting action). Also, there is a symbiosis between the sexes whereby the man creates it, and the woman uses it, sometimes as a love gift from the groom, but more generally turners and carvers were men. I was intrigued by how you morph objects into anthropomorphic shapes. We do get very close to our 'mute companions of life, which is why bbs are so powerful, connecting people to their Lost loved ones I can safely say that they speak to us of motherlove and full bellies, hospitality and companionship, safety, and routine. bringing bread to the table.

Madeline Neave invited me to exhibit my works amongst the collection of breadboards carved, ornate, accompanying knives, and bread forks. Neave's collected, stored, and shared memorials of her mother's breadboards also echo the past remembering the homemade bread, bread knife, and my grandmother's round wooden breadboard which I have acquired. This exhibition site allowed my breadboards sculptures and drawings to sit alongside and merge with remnants of antiquities, the table, chairs, clocks, knives, and forks, and crafted wooden boards displayed on walls or in cabinets reminded me again of growing up with my parents who collected wooden objects. There was a sense of returning to the homes of my domestic past. The space is curious and feels comforting and welcoming all of which further develop my thoughts and ideas of this universal everyday object. I was able to project a symbolic function of a mundane object within a real place:<sup>31</sup>

Exhibiting Carole's contemporary sculptures alongside Victorian breadboards was both edgy and reassuring. The contrast between their functional simplicity and the ornateness of our collection showed how the breadboard has evolved. But they also formed a heart-warming continuity, that despite all the trends for sliced bread, then no bread, then artisan bread, the breadboard is still inspiring artists today as they did carvers of the past. It was also gratifying to see the connection between the woman and the breadboard in Carole's work. We happened to have an older breadboard in the reserve collection very similar to Carole's Poundland versions

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<sup>30</sup> Madeline Neave, email received: 28th October 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Madelaine Neave, email received Saturday, March 19th, 2022.

and were glad to donate it to her in the hope that its wear, score marks, and crack will continue to give Carole ideas.

I experienced the breadboard as an object with the potential for remaking provocative thoughts of past occurrences and I am inspired by the kitchen as a space to contemplate and investigate the body, self, and the pleasures of domestic experiences.

#### 4.6. Passages: 2021 Yorkshire Sculpture Group: Old Parcel Office Scarborough.



Figure 89: Carole Griffiths, *All of One Accord in One Place*: Modroc, Glue Pots, Dish Cloths, Old School Chairs. Old Parcel Office Scarborough,

*Mother-Board*, *Bread-Board* presents platforms to reveal staged relationships between the lived world, memory, and location. *Mother-Board*, *Bread-Board* sits in place to display a 'body' of ideas



and in part negotiates personal biographies. These holding platforms expose a hierarchy of 'Mother' passing through, seated.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 90: Carole Griffiths, *Experiment for All of One Accord in One Place*, Clay, 2020 .



Figure 91: Carole Griffiths, *All of One Accord in One Place*, Modroc, 2020.

Through spending time in the *Antique Breadboard Museum*, I was intrigued by motifs carved around the circular edges of the boards. Many of the words have religious references and I was able to make use of them within my own context. This led to another body of work (Fig 89) called *All of One Accord In One Place*.<sup>33</sup> These became extensions of previous motherboards and were initially made from clay (Fig 90). However, I had to remake them as I could not access a kiln. These *Mother-Boards*, *Bread-Boards* were made using wire form, Modroc, and empty glue pots to represent breast forms. I removed the knife and fork components to simplify the sculptures because I was considering the chair form for further works. I wanted these breadboard forms to be seated; part-chair part-body. They were also larger as I was playing with scale and form adapting my ideas slightly to respond to the theme. Each *Mother-Board* had its own chair to be seated upon (Fig 91) but during the curation of the exhibition, they needed to be elevated and the old chairs which were part of the history of the Old Parcel Office seemed to work better (Fig 89). I was interested in using antiquities or other furnishings to place works on other than the standard white plinth, in order to explore interrelationships between the past and the present, and between objects and artworks, thus potentially opening up to a diverse

<sup>32</sup> Statement: Old Parcel Office Scarborough.

<sup>33</sup> The title quotes Acts 2.1 in the New Testament. See <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+2&version=KJ21>.

audience of all ages. This contradiction provided some solace in that representations of identity, community, and culture may all be contested in the same space at the same time. These pieces were exhibited in a themed exhibition titled *Passages*, at the Old Parcel Office space in Scarborough in collaboration with the Yorkshire Sculpture Group. This large space is situated on the platform of Scarborough Railway, a space of old stone fireplaces, stone large windows, and remnants of workspaces. The title suggests the passage of time, and there are within this building traces of lived experiences. The artworks sit within the present time whilst simultaneously engaging with the past. The works from the Yorkshire Sculpture Group in these spaces bring new life and disturb what was. The work based on *Mother-Board*, *Bread-Board* has been consolidated into smaller works for the *Art-House Home of Dis/Content* which I discuss in further detail in Chapter 5.

#### 4.7. (Im)/Material Disarray: Walker House 22 Bond Street Wakefield: Snap Arts: 2019

I was interested in exhibiting at Walker House which was promoted as a salon-style exhibition space, a private and occasionally public space. In Walker House, the domestic is slightly removed from the original space but there are remnants of the past still present, such as furniture to put things on and old vitrines to display within, and hooks where private photographs and artefacts are removed to be replaced with another artists' work.

Working within these different spaces has made me think deeply about bringing my works out of my studio /home into the public domain. I am interested in how the works are changed by contexts, from being embedded amongst my artistic clutter of collections, memorabilia, and bric-a-brac to being placed in non-standard exhibition spaces. The cluttered objects in my home act as catalysts for new work but my home is not permanent, rather it is a temporary space where 'stuff' is being created that articulates my experiences.

In Marsha Meskimmon's, *Women Making Art* she describes 'Collections of objects displayed in cabinets, on altars, in retablos or niches, can form 'a compendium of symbols and indices that represent personal links to other times, locations and individuals,'<sup>34</sup> I often feel this containment and therefore it seems unfamiliar spaces could allow for the sculptures to take on a new form where a relationship between the private and the public are compatible and socialised.

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<sup>34</sup> Marsha Meskimmon, *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2003) 88.



Figure 92: Carole Griffiths, Untitled, 2019, Chair, Rope, and Wire.



Figure 93: Small Works: Spoon Woman, Knife, Fork, (black clay).

*The (Im)Material Disarray* became an exhibition of sculptural objects made from the detritus of domesticity and explored themes of domestic clutter related to the material objects that affect the way we inhabit private space within the home.<sup>35</sup>

Positioning my work (Fig 92,93) in this house allowed for object rehabilitation, and restored my sense of self, offering redemption through the remaking of the object through which I revisit the past and reclaim new memories. Contributing to exhibitions staged within the home setting allowed for thoughts of an object's function to unravel. Walker House is both private and public, and I was able to utilise this in-between space, where my sculptures can become more relevant, and autonomous, where domestic functioning merges within day-to-day life, and finally where the works can be viewed as both temporary and permanent. By breaking away from commercial or industrial public gallery

<sup>35</sup> Paula Chambers, Summary of statement in relation to show, 2019.

spaces, my reconfigured social objects of the kitchen utensil become more embodied within a part-private space.

I displayed collections of selected reconfigured spoons and implements within the vitrine belonging to the home at Walker House, as an archaeological collection. I am intrigued by seeing fragments of history in a museum and I like the idea of bringing these works together within another home-space to open up a deeper curiosity. It is my aim to unite the public, private, and domestic, as a place of comfort instead of a place of alienation. Gail Weiss describes a place of alienation as *intercorporeality* and further concludes: '[the experience of being embodied is never a private affair but is always already mediated by our continual interactions with other human and non-human bodies]'.<sup>36</sup>

The reconfigured kitchen objects that I made needed to sit or hang in order to disclose familiar exchanges within a space allowing for further reflection and questioning. I conceptualised the intimacy of 'house' as a site of negotiation, where the spatial structures of work become embodied by not only viewers but by the space within which they are situated.<sup>37</sup> In other words, these acts of an embodiment can present the body as already determined within a social context, and through my sculptural reconfigurations, it can be considered as a '*body as situation*'. This process of testing and repositioning the works can be thought of as a '*home altar*'.<sup>38</sup>

The house has become a significant platform for display, as another house space allows for the sculptures to be viewed in different ways. Bachelard states that 'house [...] is a sort of airy structure that moves about on the breath of time it opens up to another time'.<sup>39</sup> This, temporary rehousing allows for further contemplation, and Bachelard reiterates that 'house and space are merely juxtaposed elements of space, in the reign of the imagination they awaken daydreams in each other'.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Meskimmon, *Women Making Art*, 76.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Meskimmon, *Women Making Art*, 76.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Meskimmon, *Women Making Art*, 76.

<sup>39</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 74.

<sup>40</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 74.

#### 4.8. Separation: Exhibition Dye House Gallery. Bradford 2018



Figure 94: Carole Griffiths *Separation*, 2018 Dye House Gallery, Bradford.

The reconverted Old Mill in the Dye House Gallery in Bradford has become a white space, stripped bare where the only remaining feature is the beams that stand above a reconditioned exhibition space. Brian O' Doherty talks about the white cube as a transitional device that has bleached out the past and at the same time speaks of another world.<sup>41</sup> This space is removed from memory and feels cold, but at the same time is essential to establish the further depth of meaning of the works displayed. I had been testing out the tea strainer, the pair of scissors, and the colander as potential objects for responding to the theme of *The Split*, a body of work I had been working on in relation to the breakdown of a marriage. The call-out for the theme of *Separation* from the Yorkshire Sculpture Group seemed like the perfect opportunity to work on these ideas further.

Conflict can arise at the point of any action. An attempt to separate ourselves from any moment in time can lead to repetition and then returning. Separation could occur through infusion and

<sup>41</sup> Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube, The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Lapis Press 1986), 11.

consumption. Two parts split to avoid, in turn, creating a battle for unity. What then happens when this has taken place and all parts have been extruded and dispersed?<sup>42</sup>



Figure 95: Carole Griffiths *Dispersed*: 2018 Modroc, Card, Gum Tape, Lights Teabags.

I decided to work in plaster, latex, and cardboard. I had returned to the latex scissors that were first made for the Sheffield Exhibitions and through further exploration, I identified deeper meanings within the function of the object. The actions of the cut, to sit within or apart, gave way to the dialogue of 'we need to have that conversation' about separation within the patriarchal marriage. It is to leave and begin anew, to cut ties with the damage done and the conversations had. The tea strainer *Dispersed* (Fig 95) is based on the idea of dispelling and draining parts no longer required. This strainer I worked with was an antique and the main straining area was a funnel form (Fig 96). There is a reminder of the past and residue of dark black marks left by the strained tea. I recreate marks embedded in the surface and stained in the bags. The bags are only connected partially to the body, the main area of the strainer which has suggestions of the breast is made from card, Modroc, gum tape and tea bags it is lit inside with a light to give the perforated holes more presence. I revisit the *Dispersed* sculpture and make it small, adding



Figure 96: Antique Funnel Tea strainer.

<sup>42</sup> Statement for Separation: Yorkshire Sculptors Group. 2018-2019.



poetic words to bring it to life. The smaller version sits within the *Art-House-Home of Dis/Content* in Chapter 5:<sup>43</sup>

*Dispersed*

Body Tense

No Longer Useful

Residue Contained

Bags Emptied

Marks Made

The other opened strainer (Fig 94 far right on a white plinth) is made using the Nigella Lawson bowl (as mentioned in Chapter 3). The mixing bowl and barbeque tongs split between the two forms formed from plaster moulds of the bowl. The opposing strainer (Fig 94 below left on the smaller plinth) again a two-part bowl mould in plaster with no straining holes, held tight together with copper pipe. I explored the strainer as a metaphor related to the functions of the institution of marriage. I considered words of infusion, dispersed, dispel, strained, remnants and residue and it is uncanny analogies that trigger ideas. Meskimmon writes, 'knowing oneself and one's context are reflected in embodied ways of being. What we know, imagine, and believe is constitutive of our identities and these identities are processual, rather than fixed, [...] they are formed and re-formed through our participation in larger transindividual wholes'.<sup>44</sup>

The works produced for this exhibition related to being dispersed, sieving through, emptied, and removed. There are remnants of the past contained within the work but there are also empty spaces. Here once again, I consider the spaces in between the objects on display. Although this exhibition gave me the opportunity to place my work together for viewing, it felt clinical and far removed from its intention. The work became more about made objects on display and less about the deeper meaning. The work was isolated in context from the work of the collaborative group. It had lost its domesticity and became elevated rather than intimate.

I generally make my artwork within the home I live in, surrounded by past domesticity, memory objects, books of interest, and tools for making. My cupboards are full of materials and resources and the space I inhabit is a self-selected organised chaotic clutter. My house is a studio home. The stuff around me triggers thoughts and memories and allows for the work to emerge. Daniel Buren suggested that a studio is a place where the work originates, a private place, and a stationary place

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<sup>43</sup> Carole Griffiths, extract from Journal 2021

<sup>44</sup> Meskimmon, *Women Making Art*, 27.



where portable objects are produced.<sup>45</sup> At this point in my study, I was able to determine why the works made within my domestic setting of 'home studio' are often silently incubating. It is a space closest to its own reality. However, this brought forward a set of questions about what happens when the work is taken out of the context of its original environment of making. I was aware of and concerned with how meaning shifts in relation to context, and how these determinants can shift the viewers' experience. The collaborators I have worked with and the spaces I exhibited in, have been diverse, placing my work inside and outside, staging it within the confines of curation, or utilising the spaces for the work to be seen amongst other curiosities, has contributed to my understanding of the curious nature of what is seen and unseen, what is hidden, and is exposed.

I have understood how external spaces facilitate and enhance the meaning of my work. I need to show my works so they can be shared with and acknowledged by other people, but I must accept that they can be altered by the process of exhibition. I draw on Meskimmon to highlight these dichotomies: 'For human individuality, this means a movement of thought between the individual and wider collectives through which the power of a substance is mediated. Individual selfhood is not possible in isolation'.<sup>46</sup>

I would underline *movement, collective, and isolation*. Shifting the works into new spaces has given my work a new position or purpose. It has allowed for my work to generate even more ideas and meanings. Displaying or sharing with other artists or objects on different platforms has opened spaces of positive disturbance. I have embraced this constant flux and enjoyed some of the moments of disarray. The commerciality of the large public gallery has little capacity for authentic intimacy of the type offered by a domestic space, and thus, some of my work has seemed compromised in such spaces. Buren reiterates my concerns that 'the predictable cubic space, uniformly lit, neutralised to the extreme can conform to the banality of such spaces'.<sup>47</sup> I wish to present my work within spaces of familiar comfort such as houses, sections of museums, and unusual domestic spaces that bring an audience both young and mature to view, and where memories can be triggered through snippets of my familiarity.

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<sup>45</sup> Daniel Buren, 'The Function of the Studio,' *October*, vol. 10 (Autumn, 1979), 51-58.

<sup>46</sup> Meskimmon, *Women Making Art*, 127.

<sup>47</sup> Buren, 'Function of the Studio'.

## Summary:

This chapter contains details of a series of exhibitions to which I have contributed as part of this study between 2017 and 2022. I have used them to test out new works by exposing them to public view. In doing so, I have had the opportunity to scrutinise the work in new contexts. I have been able to refine my practice through these reflective opportunities and to rework and improve individual elements within my work to make sculptures that better reflect my intentions and ambitions. The process of exhibiting and then reflecting upon each exhibition opened central issues about space, scale, and context in relation to my ideas of the house and domestic. It is this nexus of concerns that is addressed in the following chapter. Walter Benjamin highlights these nuances: 'If we think of the associations which, at home in the *memoire involontaire*, seek to cluster around an object of perception, and if we call those associations the aura of that object, then the aura attaching to the object of a perception corresponds precisely to the experience'.<sup>48</sup> Object experiences altered by new material entanglements set out to produce a new memory connected with home and, in essence, with domesticity. Testing out these art objects in new spaces allowed me to find out how repositioning and altering contexts affects the artworks. Taking the familiar kitchen utensil and using it as a vehicle to engage with autobiography, ambiguity, and story-making can be enhanced through the space it is placed within. This component of the research and practice has enabled me to better assess the suitability of a showing space and how to respond to it. This opens a world of possibilities in which the audience can relate to the domestic arena, a space of intimacy, and a space in which individuals who view works may draw on personal memories. I am now able to test my findings within the setting of a portable dwelling, which is portrayed as *Art-House - Home of Dis/Content* in Chapter 5.

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<sup>48</sup> Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 337.

## Chapter 5: Art-House – Home of Dis/Content



Figure 97: Purchased House, 2020 eBay UK; Dimensions: W: 82cm H: 65cm.D:55 Plywood, Glass.

To support my practice, I have established the craft and skill of making, reviewed past works, underlined the interrelationship between the sculptural object and kitchen utensils, and used poetic texts to support the visual discourses between themes. In this chapter, I collect a body of work in a shelter, a site where the art becomes a movable curation and where my domestic experiences can be realised in material form. Throughout this final section I discuss the small-scale remaking of many of my sculptures created throughout this research project and their placement within a small model house. The sculptures made throughout the project have become important autobiographies that form an intimate collective of my thoughts. They include revisiting several past works and ideas related to coupling, works that represent mother and domesticity, and new works that emerged from memory and the act of remaking small. The collection was positioned in specific rooms within a second-hand doll's house which I named the *Art-House*. On completion of the works, the *Art-House*, became an exhibition space to house the *Home of Dis/Content*. These small new forms and structures enabled me to further contextualise my practice through making, and to explore the ambiguities of scale within a curated space.

I had reflected upon displacements between myself as maker, the audience, and the domestic objects. I identified how I could bring the sculptures together to highlight my autobiographical narrative, through staging a theatrical installation. The more I worked on individual utensil objects, the more I established the need to group, couple, or sometimes split them within a space or place. In *Playing at Home: The House in Contemporary Art*, Gill Perry highlights the significance of *the house* used by many

artists to capture a 'temporal experience'<sup>1</sup> of shifting through spaces within a domestic arena. Perry explores the idea of home as a space that invites you in and 'blurs the boundaries between public and private'.<sup>2</sup>

During my Venice Fellowship program in 2019,<sup>3</sup> I spent time contemplating the curation and content of Kathy Wilkes's (as discussed in Chapter 4) work in the British Pavilion. I considered how I would position my own works within an exhibition space, and how I would engage with the public. Wilkes described the way through curated rooms as 'repeatedly coming towards something, something you don't quite understand'.<sup>4</sup> Wilkes seems to insist that as a viewer you should be able to bring your meanings to the works into question. Wilkes does not want to reveal anything, but on reflection, during this fellowship, I realised that it is important to give viewers some way into the context of the works on view. There is often an intense desire on my part to leave open a narrative whilst also suggesting the subtleties of my history. I do not wish to expose my domestic life in detail, but by selecting objects and spaces to work from and within, the ambiguity and curiosity of both the familiar and the poetics of domesticity, can be suggested to the viewer.

My own house is a predominant feature in my everyday life. It functions as an object, a place to work and make, and place where relationships can be revealed through association. It acts as a space of habitual and ritualistic actions and nurtures my subconscious being. It is a space of alienation and loss, of domestic revelations and upheavals, and celebratory moments of contentment. These interconnections can occur side by side, together or apart, revealing and concealing each other. Bachelard speaks of 'a house that constitutes a body of images that gives mankind proofs or illusions of stability'.<sup>5</sup> However it can also give way to instability. It is these intimate desires which expose such nuances through capturing the contents of a 'protective armor'<sup>6</sup> of both 'cell and world' simultaneously. It seems a coherent move to bring such fragmented elements together to open up and consider how nurturing and celebrating the domestic experiences of the maternal are captivated and communicated through proximity.

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<sup>1</sup> Gill Perry, *Playing at Home: The House in Contemporary Art*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Perry, *Playing at Home*, 26.

<sup>3</sup> Griffiths, *Are You Ready?* Venice Fellowship: Book Publication, (Coventry: Coventry University, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Charlotte Higgins, 'Mournful and Melancholy: Britain at the Venice Biennale', *The Guardian*, 7 May 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/may/07/mournful-and-melancholy-cathy-wilkes-britain-at-the-venice-biennale>. Accessed 10/9/2023.

<sup>5</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 38.

<sup>6</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 71-72.

## 5.1. The Found House

At the door of the house who will come knocking?

An open door, we enter

A closed door, a den

The world pulse beats beyond my door.<sup>7</sup>

It was on a journey through junk shops that I came across a small handmade house, a doll's house. This brief encounter reminded me of home, perhaps a home of childhood memories, a detached house of marriage, of nurturing. I returned to purchase this doll's house, but unfortunately, it was sold. The idea of a house-making home for my small works became a significant shift in presenting my work. The search for a similar doll's house became my focus. The search led me to a larger house (Fig 97,98) which is now the *Art-House- Home of Dis/Content*.



Figure 98: Front View, Rear View of House.2020

The '*House*' includes an opening on three sides and four rooms at the front and three at the rear with interesting hallways and spaces in between. The wooden structure from around the 1950s includes glass windows, wooden floors, and an array of doorways (Figs 98). It has a lived-in quality, and each room has the potential for my exhibits, for new works to be made, and many possibilities. The rooms

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<sup>7</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 25.

do not suggest a kitchen or living room or bathroom they are just rooms, with a fireplace, a door and a window. The rooms allow for anything to happen through different viewpoints. This allows 3-dimensional access for the viewer to come close to the objects displayed. The detached house appears to be homemade from good wood and constructed on a sturdy platform with wheels to give it portability, allowing it to make space for something else perhaps, or move to a new space, all of which make it a flexible house with lots of possibilities.



*Figure 99: Different views of the purchased house*

On further analysis, the 'house' also reminds me of a house I grew up in the early 70s (Fig 100);



Figure 100: House I lived in Hamstead Birmingham.

therefore, I was drawn to it. The kitchen and dining room were always the most important rooms in my family home. These were rooms for cooking, eating, and talking. This has been replicated throughout my life. The kitchen/dining table fills my past and present with many resolved and unresolved conversations of passion, debate, hurt, laughter, making, and provocative thoughts.

The COVID 19 restrictions led me to revisit my ideas around exhibiting in galleries, as not only had the house and home become more and more significant within our collective experiences, but it had also enabled me to think more deeply about its significance and meaning. There was a

smallness and an enclosed feeling of home during this period, and I felt the need to respond to this. My house and home became even more of a sanctuary for making art and for drawing upon past experiences to better articulate the present. Having spent many months under the restrictions of the pandemic, returning to memories related to 'home' opened up ideas for curating my works, allowing for certain rooms/ spaces which bring out experiences of domesticity and mothering questioning places that should have been safe and places of comfort. This allowed me to consider a variety of possibilities. The more I was contained within the home during this pandemic the more I considered my relationships with selected kitchen utensils which speak back to me of body, function, and potential new language.

As a result, my home has become a house of studio, domesticity, and work. It has become a place of survival, repairing, and revisiting. I am burdened now by the intimacy and attachment of home. There is little escape in and between, and an almost blurred vision emerges. Through the act of making on a small scale, the intimacy of my reconstructed forms allowed for fragility, further exposing my inner thoughts and moments of intensity. I paid particular attention to the idea of 'Mother House/Artist Studio', moving between the manifestations of the relationship between myself as a mother, the investigation of materiality, and finally the making process.

The *Art-House – A Home of Dis/Content* uses the model doll's house and allows for the exploration of all my research to date to be brought together and considered in terms of content and context. The house exhibits small sculptures based on kitchen utensils which create a symbolic presentation of the pleasures of making and maternity. In Susan Stewart's descriptive account of the object doll's house,

there is a connection between privacy and boundaries of external factors. Stewart describes 'the realisation of body, the self as property, the body as a container of objects, perpetual and in uncontainable'.<sup>8</sup> This functional shelter curates the 'worlds of inversion, of contamination and crudeness'.<sup>9</sup> This certainly stimulates the intended content of the *Housing* of utensils. Stewart further highlights that such content can be 'controlled within the doll's house by an absolute manipulation and control of the boundaries of time and space'.<sup>10</sup> Thus within this study the doll's house acts a final testing place where such entanglements can be challenged and celebrated. In Ian Hodder's book, *Entangled*, he explores the idea of prior thoughts, language, and consciousness, stating: 'We hold and handle objects and become aware of perspective [...] Familiar things are absorbed into our sense of identity; they become recognized and owned'.<sup>11</sup> Hodder leads us 'to reflection upon reflection, creating pathways that stay with us'.<sup>12</sup> My model house has become another thing that generates feelings in relation to the objects made. I return to Rachel Whiteread's work in Chapter 2 and refer to the object house as a lived-in space with an absent space. This void is especially noticeable in the Whiteread's Doll's House project, *Place*, where 200 unfurnished empty doll's houses are displayed next to one another, giving the impression of an abandoned village through which Whiteread upends our comfortable expectations of a furnished home as these houses are everyday objects in which experiences shift from the original to the material, whether hollow or solid, visible, or hidden. These houses are everyday objects in which experiences shift from the original to the material, whether hollow or solid, visible, or hidden. The subtleties of creative experience transform art practice into a more comprehensive approach. As a result, everything in place can imply experience.

The doll's house I have purchased is not just an empty cabinet but an opening to pasts, nostalgia, part-objects, part-sculptures and questions the maternal materiality of domesticity through function and experience. The viewer can enter it visually but not physically, which creates an additional layer of intrigue. The new sculptural representations of the kitchen utensils can be observed from doorways and openings and viewpoints. The house presents an appropriated architectural vessel of home. Within the *Art-House - Home of Dis/Content*, there are already hints of the past, of someone's home, and it occurred to me that my small works may appear intrusive at first.

This definition of home and my desire to bring all the objects together in one place was the first sign of my returning to memories, rituals, and rooms when my world was small. Such a resurgence of the

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<sup>8</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 62.

<sup>9</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 62.

<sup>10</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 63.

<sup>11</sup> Ian Hodder, *Entangled, An Archaeology of the Relationships Between Human and Things*, 1st Edition (Oxford: Wiley and Blackwell, 2012), 38.

<sup>12</sup> Hodder, *Entangled*, 38.



past can be both generated by and made sense of, through making and placing. Through catharsing the contents and containment of the past, I am questioning objects, subjects, and display languages.

In Alyce Mahon's review of *Gender Politics and the Home* (2017), there are many references to the works of Louise Bourgeois in the *Femme Maison* series (Fig 101). Mahon recognises Bourgeois' utilisation of the environment as distorted in scale, and she questions 'the alignment of a woman with passivity'.<sup>13</sup> Such works are a constant reminder to me of how the idea of containing brings attention



Figure 101: Louise Bourgeois: *Femme Maison*, 1994 White Marble.  
<https://ocula.com/art-galleries/hauser-wirth/artworks/louise-bourgeois/femme-maison/> Accessed 10th September 2023

back to the idea of sheltering or protecting the female form. On viewing my purchased doll's house, staging the objects seems to connect within the constraints of the home. I saw my Art-House as a space to celebrate and acknowledge the domestic relationship between rooms and utensils. Artist Rachel Lachowicz states: 'Our mind, body, work, grooming, and leisure are all related to the ways we are seen as a product or a container'.<sup>14</sup> The tracing of memories can be curated through both the transformation of the kitchen utensil and the space they are positioned within. At this point in my study, there was a sense of the known and then the constant

unveiling of the unknown. This created a cabinet of intimate curiosity allowing for further depth of inquiry. Through the *Art-House*, I reached inside the space, to observe home as 'exhibiting' the feminine domain and social serving of exhibits that transcend through the very nature of a safe container of both the poetic and experiential. Bachelard highlights this in his text *Poetics of Space*:<sup>15</sup>

If I were to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace. Thought and experience are not the only things that sanction human values. The values that belong to daydreaming mark humanity in its depths...Now my aim is clear: I must show that house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts and memories and dreams of mankind.

I have a desire to rid myself of awkward memories and celebrate the 'baggage' of loss which defines and repurposes the reconfiguration of the kitchen utensils. Both can now be reunited within a familiar space we can call 'home'. In Esther Sperber's essay *The Poetics of Home: Between Psychological and Physical Structures*, Jacques Lacan is used as a clear reference on 'longing and desire as a lack of

<sup>13</sup> Alyce Mahon, 'Gender Politics and the Home', in *No Place Like Home*, ed. Adina Kamien-Kazhdan, (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2017), 31.

<sup>14</sup> Rachel Lachowicz quoted in Alyce Mahon 'Gender Politics and the Home', in *No Place Like Home*, 34-35.

<sup>15</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 6.

something we have lost and yet never had'.<sup>16</sup> In essence, I am identifying with the fractured self. There is a constant revisiting related to desire and reflecting on this within the domestic restrictions which are being revealed through the structure of my house as a portable shelter.



Figure 102: Marcel Duchamp, 'Box in A Valise' reproduced version. Henry Moore Institute. Portable Sculpture Exhibition. 2021.

In 'Box in A Valise' (Fig 102) Duchamp revisited his works and referred to it as an 'album of approximately all the things I produced'.<sup>17</sup> Michael Taylor describes Duchamp's *Box in a Valise*<sup>18</sup> as allowing the artist 'to be his own curator'.<sup>19</sup> This then becomes a transportable installation. Using similar artistic strategies, I want to provoke the relationship between public and private through scale and portability.

There is a sense of the aftermath of events that are being unravelled through this whole process; there is a disengagement of the original forms of the utensil which through careful deconstruction can align with disfunction, but through compressing, holding, forming, and splitting, these disconnections become almost homogenous. There is a point in my making where the two elements become one body. This is a provocative intention that determines the content and placing of the works suggesting double meanings. I am highlighting a sur/reality which is a symptom of both an emotional and an anthropomorphic nuance. The body is familiar and hidden metaphors are to enlighten the audience through the kitchen utensil parts.

<sup>16</sup> Esther Sperber, 'The Poetics of Home: Between Psychological and Physical Structures', in *No Place Like Home*, ed. Kamien-Kazhdan, 18.

<sup>17</sup> Dawn Ades, Neil Cox and David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp*, (London: Thames, and Hudson, 2021), 175.

<sup>18</sup> I visited *Portable Sculptures* at Henry Moore institute where I was able to see a version of *Box in a Valise* in person.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Taylor, 'Displacements as Subject and Matter'. in *No Place Like Home*, ed. Kamien-Kazhdan, 38.

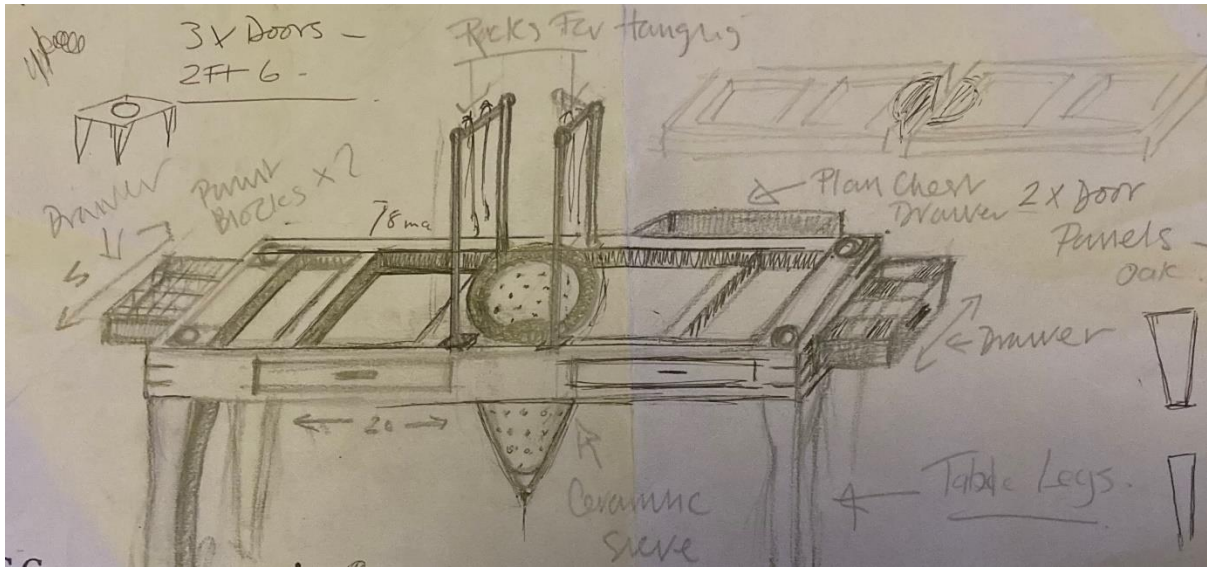


Figure 103: Carole Griffiths, *Table of Dis/Content* 2018, Drawing

It was my original intention to create a *Table of Dis/Content* (Fig 103) to display the works within an exhibition space. However, this appeared to be a flat surface, seemingly less intimate and rather obvious, easier to do, and less challenging. However, it should be acknowledged that laying a table is an act of curation.<sup>20</sup> It is both ritualistic and has played a huge part in my domestic experience. Thus, it could be argued that curation is habitual within the domestic sphere. I responded to the parallels between domesticity and making through the creative house, which represents the completed works in context.

The *Art-House* enabled me to refine my thinking about the symbols of the 'home-made' through my exploration of the kitchen utensil and its place within the house: a place of shelter, protection, and nurturing, and where rituals, memories, and narratives are to be brought 'home' to signify a celebratory and pleasurable experience of the maternal/mother artist. I brought together the idea of making small within a small space to remodel it as a portable but complex object. I made a new home within my home of archival content. Bachelard opens up the idea related to the physiology of the house through two principles:

- 1) A house is imagined as a vertical being. It rises upward. It differentiates itself in terms of its verticality. It is one of the appeals to our consciousness of verticality.

<sup>20</sup>Table of Dis/Content: The table has played an important role in my practice over the five years of this research, both as a platform for displaying my work and as a platform for incorporating sculptures. The plans are still in the works. During a trip to Stoke-on-Trent, I went to see furniture designer Jake Little Jones's 18-foot table made from a single piece of wood. I was fortunate to receive a miniature version of this 1/12 scale, which I plan to use as another small-scale sculptural object as well as part of a larger scale project in the future. Jake Little Jones' deftly crafted Table revisits the idea of where craft meets art. I hope to work with him again in the future.

2) A house is imagined as a concentrated being. It appeals to our consciousness of centrality.<sup>21</sup>

I draw on these familiarities which are intended to enable the viewer to take time to 'see the little things that cannot be seen altogether'.<sup>22</sup>

I allocated each room in the *Art-House* to capture significant moments of the old and the new, using selected utensils to bring out the chaos of my thoughts. Stewart describes the small (miniature) as a 'fixed form manipulated by individual fantasy rather than by physical circumstances'.<sup>23</sup> However, I see that they are both interrelated. To think of a small space to house the contents of the past in some sense is a reality of cultural, and historical content. Working small, through the hand-made, created a new experience using the contents of the home to make sense of the past and to acknowledge my thoughts and bring these out into the present. Perhaps there is a feeling of being a lot smaller in a world full of constraints and unknown curiosity. Stewart does highlight this by stating 'Worlds of inversion, of contamination and crudeness, are controlled within the doll's house by an absolute manipulation and control of the boundaries of time and space'.<sup>24</sup> How true this seems now. The house is the object, the contents become the subject and the language I speak emerges through the materiality of scale and size, and through the positioning of both object and subject.

The house has a feeling of 'the uncanny'. Freud states that in the uncanny, the distinction between imagination and reality is 'effaced'.<sup>25</sup> The mysteries of why the house I purchased was made and what went before suggests this fragile obscurity. The 'uncanny' is being unravelled through estranged familiarities and makes the objects somewhat uncomfortable. The uncanny objects placed in the *Art-House – Home of Dis/Content*, are the culmination of the sculptural anthropomorphism which I introduced at the beginning of the thesis (see Chapter 1). The objects made are placed to recognise this discontent. I display my series of events that embody emotions and negotiate a personal significance. In doing so I unravel past displacements and disturbances which constitute a temporary association with family, intimate moments, and often trauma and loss.

The house becomes a fragment of the body both internal and external. It is a home of disarray, where moments of the inanimate are animated, As Merleau-Ponty suggests; 'The body is bourn towards a tactile experience by all its surfaces and all its organs simultaneously and carries with it a certain typical structure of the tactile world'.<sup>26</sup> *Art-House -- Home of Dis/Content* is an external shell that gives

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<sup>21</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 39.

<sup>22</sup> Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, 178.

<sup>23</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 66.

<sup>24</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 63.

<sup>25</sup> Sigmund Freud, quoted by Esther Sperber in *No Place Like Home*, 22.

<sup>26</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 370.

home to the tactile small, reconfigured sculptures of lived experiences. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "my body appears to me an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task. And indeed, its spatiality is not *spatiality in position*, but *spatiality of situation*".<sup>27</sup>

Within the house, I am making connections and disconnections with realities, rituals, and memories, all of which become collective arrangements, representing the many domestic experiences I have encountered. The functional objects that have been selected reveal a sense of dormancy in the first instance as they hang on a hook or are shoved in a drawer. They have no relevance in the bigger scheme of things. The purpose of the new sculptures is to serve, to serve with, to serve on. My home has become a multifaceted place and space; it is simultaneously a domestic, work, studio space. I create a platform that portrays the creation and integration of past narratives, incorporating attachment and the intimate relationship between motherhouse, Art House, and Home Maker. The attachment to fragility related to emotion, pleasures, comforts, and a yearning for stability, is reinterpreted through the house to choreograph its staged presence and finally honour our view of making utensils special.

This new home, however playful and anecdotal, is my secret life exposed. The objects sometimes appear dark and strange; I cannot avoid this as it happens through the intimacy of both material connection and the subject revealed through the unconscious and yet conscious act of making. It is a space of my social autobiography. Stewart brings this to light by observing that 'a doll's house is a materialized secret'. It is about nostalgia and therefore becomes a 'peepshow'.<sup>28</sup>

Many dolls' houses erase all but the frontal view. Front doors are used as the main access to content, and most are viewed from a distance, whilst capturing a selective scene. In this house, the front four rooms of similar size make room for each object to be positioned and to interrupt the original space to make room for new narratives. The doll's house is a version of a property that appears metonymic to a larger property, capturing a place of the status of which interior worlds can be observed.<sup>29</sup> Stewart refers to it as a 'curio closet' of inversion, contamination, crudeness, control, and manipulation of boundaries of time, place, and space'.<sup>30</sup> Through this house I am able to change the perception of sculptures on view through the sur/reality of my lived reality, domesticated and yet contaminated and alienated. Stewart suggests that this miniature universe cannot be known sensually and is inaccessible to the languages of the body, but I set out to challenge this idea through the panoply of objects on view. My physical encounters with circumstances are being tested through the act of working small

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<sup>27</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, 114-115.

<sup>28</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 61.

<sup>29</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 62.

<sup>30</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 63.

and positioning in a small space. 'The profundity of things here arises from those dimensions which come about only through scrutiny'.<sup>31</sup>

During this time, I came across *Small House Gallery* on Instagram, calling for small works to be placed in various dollhouses.<sup>32</sup> I thought it would be interesting to submit some of my work after having already tested out some small sculptures in different materials. Following that, I grew more intrigued in curating small spaces, and in an interview with curator and artist Eldi Dundee, I discussed the concept of making small versus making large in depth. Her stance on this matter is resonant:<sup>33</sup>

Monumental art shouts: "This is Art! This is Important!" But is it really? And by extension, it's implying that the artist who made the gargantuan work is an important artist, and this place is an important place, and that whoever sponsored it or owns the work is the most important of all. (Though, in reality, the sands of time could erase them from any trace of public memory, anyway).

Encounters with smaller works are in some ways more rewarding. (if they're not overlooked completely as well). It's more rewarding to discover it if it's harder to notice, maybe? You've got this interplay of the nostalgia of ludic juvenilia, and the feeling of being let in on a special secret. Smaller works invite you to come nearer. There's more potential for intimacy and tenderness within the encounter - it's very one on one - especially if you're allowed to hold the small works in your hand and/or get to move them around a miniature world you're helping to create. You haptically pick up so much information about the art and artists through handling the art objects - whereas with a massive work, one can only get to know what a small section of the surface feels like at a time - if you're allowed to or able to touch it, that is - but you'll never be able to know its weight in relation to your own body without getting squished flat!

What I love about the *Small House Gallery* project is that I get the privilege and pleasure of treating other artists' small-scale art as found objects that I am allowed to assemble into miniature installations within these micro gallery spaces. I view it as a collaborative extension of my already existing assemblage and installation practice. (Or from another perspective, an assemblage/installation version of the collaborative working practices that stem from my earlier training in devising theatre.

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<sup>31</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Small House Gallery*, <https://smallhousegallery.uk/>. Accessed 15/9/2023.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, Eldi Dundee.

The doll's house is presented to the viewer as a small world and is considered as contributing to a language of space for the works to be housed. Making small sculptures has always been my starting point for making my larger sculptures. Often these small forms are referred to as maquettes. I am aware that in the past I only made them larger because this is often what was expected. In this study small making captures the essence of the intended narrative of my work. I questioned whether I need to expose my experiences by making a spectacle of both the works and of myself. Rachel Wells suggests that there is a link between the miniature as private and domestic and bringing the interior world to be viewed allows for an intimate relationship between viewer, objects, and maker. Wells suggests that making small provides 'the viewer with an unreality that appears mysteriously real'.<sup>34</sup>

Sculptural scale functions in relation to the objects' environment. In this instance, I refer to housing objects within a permanent home. The size of the small works is measured through the act of making them small and become more significant through the positioning within the spaces they fit best. Edmund Burke aligns this with 'beauty with smallness'.<sup>35</sup> I am capturing the attributes and functions of kitchen utensils whether made small or large. Wells further discusses the attributes of size through the following constraints. 'Size, as an attribute of an object, is bound up with its difference in nature from other objects, whereas measurement of scale focuses upon a difference in degree between at least two similar objects'.<sup>36</sup> Through making small the act of measuring would only inform the structures I make and therefore meaning may get lost through this process and consideration. Stewart discusses this as an experience that 'is increasingly mediated and abstracted, the lived relation of the body to the phenomenological world is replaced by a nostalgic myth of contact and presence [...] the memory of the body is replaced by the memory of the object'.<sup>37</sup> I am validating the act of making small now.

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<sup>34</sup> Rachel Wells, *Scale in Contemporary Sculpture: Enlargement, Miniaturisation and the Life Size* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2016), 38.

<sup>35</sup> Edmund Burke quoted in Wells, *Scale in Contemporary Sculpture*, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Wells, *Scale in Contemporary Sculpture*, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Stewart, *On Longing*, 133.

## Contents of House, Making Home

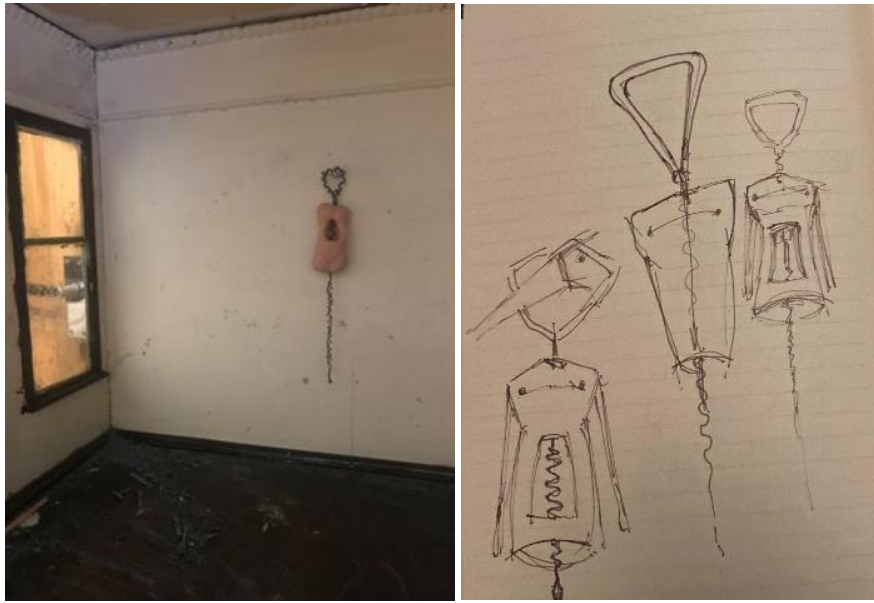


Figure 104: Carole Griffiths, *Corkscrew Woman*, without arms (Sculpey and wire) . Drawings from sketchbook 2021-2022

### 5.2. Corkscrew Woman

Testing out the small objects started in one room at the front of the house without any repairs or cleaning up. *Corkscrew Woman* (Fig 104) was formed initially from a small piece of Sculpey and twisted wire, her central body is exposing the mechanics of what is often referred to as the worm. This wire spiral forms the handle and is pushed through the exposed hole and continues to spiral down forming a structure of the body. Whilst making this piece I wrote:<sup>38</sup>

*Corkscrew Woman* can position herself in any room. She is constantly reminded of poison liquids which on observation remains heavily weighted both in body and handle. Triangle, shaped hanger, attached is empty of soul, the destructive nature of corking and drinking is exposed through memories of joy and entertaining remaining settled, but abuse and cruelty can be opened, screwing you up both as a child and a woman. I am growing with the acknowledgment that this creates trauma allowing for the unsettling actions of her function which hang still and remain secure within the space she exists. Everything hurts of all that has passed, spiralling out of control through changes within a space.

<sup>38</sup> Griffiths, Extract from Journal. 2020-2022.



*Corkscrew Woman* is a powerful construction as she appears to retain a mechanical function, her hands on the handle have become forks and she reveals the inner twists of a drilled-out stomach. This in turn reveals another opened vessel, and another viewing point. A banal object which has been repositioned and reimagined within a new space can question the viewer's expectations of it. *Corkscrew Woman* is a dominant force within her located space in the *Art-House -- Home of Dis/Content*. She could be seen as the main protector; her only alterations are on view in the opening of the stomach and the handles which have become a double function. There is an aim to maintain the familiarity of the object but to project a more symbolic function, in other words, transformative and almost social expectations can often trigger destructive and violent content. The spiral is present within the corkscrew, and this allows the object to spiral out of control, shifting and spinning to put stop to something. If we think about the corkscrews' function which is to open a bottle of wine, the context of the bottle of wine or fierce opening of a bottle of beer is a sensation of despair all too familiar to me within the confines of the home. Alcoholics have been ever-present in my house.

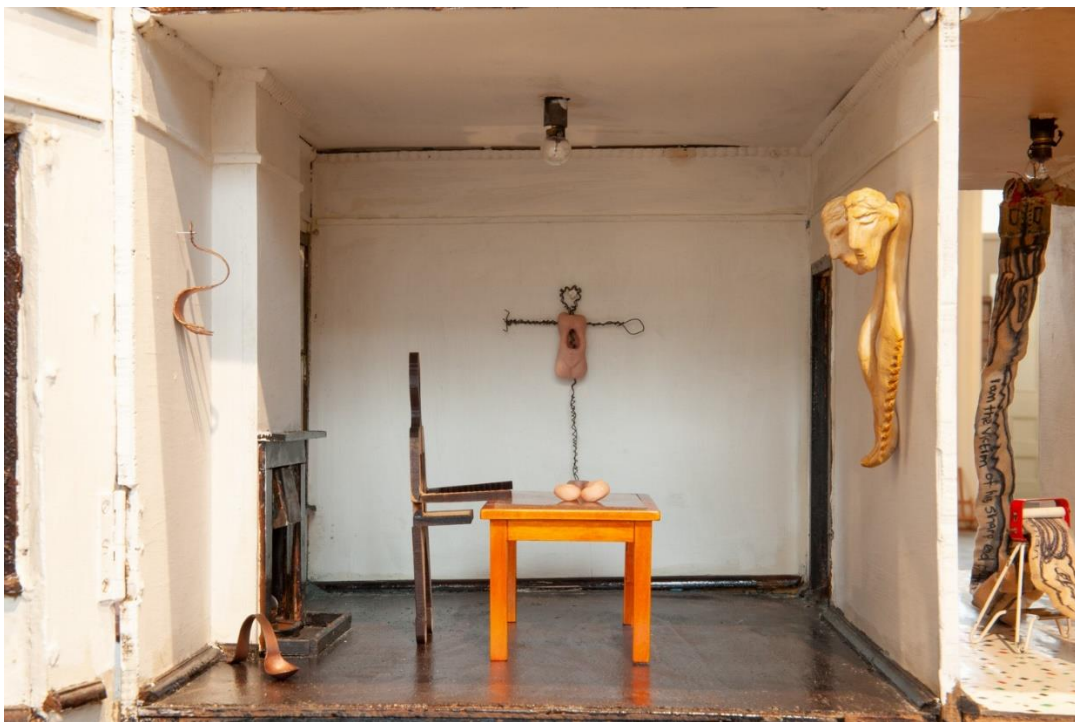


Figure 105: Carole Griffiths, *Corkscrew Woman* in position downstairs room of Art House *Home of Dis/Content*, 2022.

*Corkscrew Woman* however has come to represent a symbolic shift within this situation. Hanging in balance as an iconic figure of protector, she is the strength within the room that has undergone historical acts of violence. I am using her to rid myself of these memories. Her function is to unlock through the rigor of the twist and let go, get rid, empty, and put a 'stopper' back on.

### 5.3 Spoon, Fork Feet, Scissors, and Ironing Board.

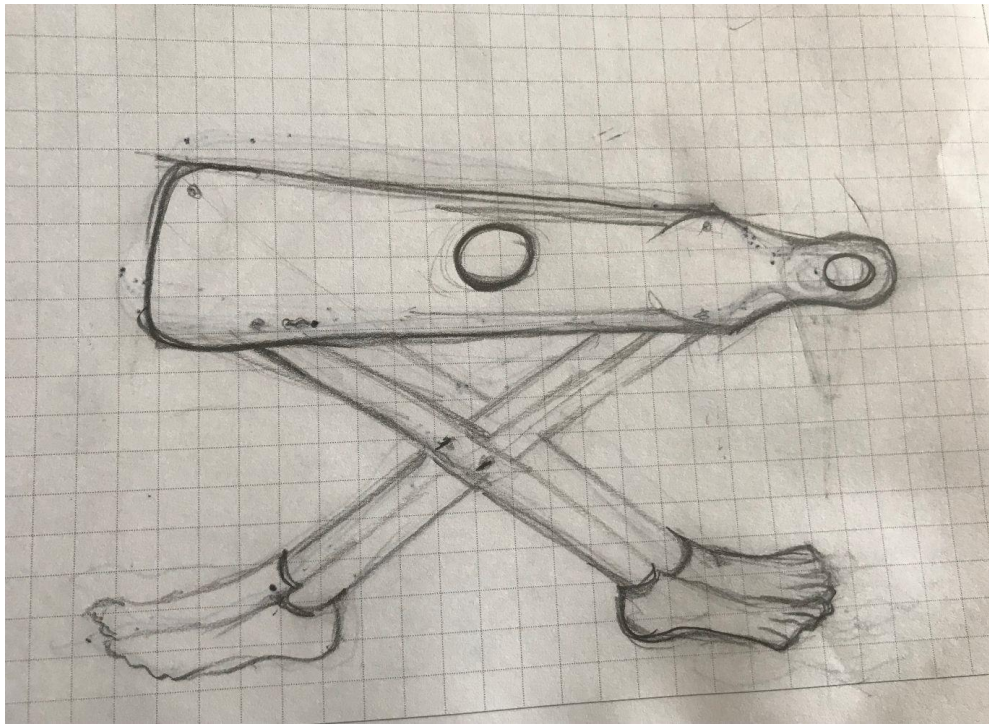


Figure 106: Carole Griffiths, Sketch of ironing board/bread board combination. 2020 Sketchbook Entry.

In 2016 I attended an exhibition entitled *The Body Extended – Sculpture and Prosthetics*. It was here that I started to consider the significance of the prosthetic limb. The limb of *Louise Bourgeois Leg* on an ironing board by Stewart Brisley (Fig 107) reminded me of part-body, part-sculpture which I mentioned in Chapter 2. The placing of an ambiguity of the real and unreal brings into question the uncanny through disturbance and awkwardness. It was here that I realised that the displaying of re-made works of domestic objects on domestic platforms would give a new dimension to these contradictions and seem to allow for the remnants of the body to be reconsidered. The ironing board holds the work in place allowing for the relationship between the body and the domestic to be questioned within a given space.



Figure 107: Louise Bourgeois Leg, 2002. Plaster, Ironing Board, Wood, [https://www.stuartbrisley.com/pages/33/00s/Works/Louise\\_Bourgeois\\_Leg/page:9](https://www.stuartbrisley.com/pages/33/00s/Works/Louise_Bourgeois_Leg/page:9)



Figure 108: Louise Bourgeois, *Woven Child* 2002  
[https://www.moma.org/s/lb/collection\\_lb/objbypib/objbypib\\_pib-12-13\\_sov\\_page-18.html](https://www.moma.org/s/lb/collection_lb/objbypib/objbypib_pib-12-13_sov_page-18.html)

Bourgeois has produced several works which refer to the prosthetic limb and her use of body parts (Fig 108) as a starting point for her works suggest 'celebratory rather admonitory'.<sup>39</sup> I also celebrate pieces of memory that present parts of my lived experience bringing together components that act out the bodily whole. I am also using body and parts throughout my work. Some of the parts are marked by stitch because I was stitched. Some are stuffed objects which complement swollen stomachs. I use clay vessels, plates, and utensils to act as fleshy functional body parts.

I am finding resonance with the concept of 'Prosthesis,' which is typically used to refer to a supplement for an appendage that has been lost, damaged, or is already gone.

Prosthesis in my work now relates to acts of entanglements that emerge from Hodder's ideas, where the bringing together of parts creates new representations of functionality.



Figure 109: Carole Griffiths, *Developed drawing* 2021 Pencil , Bread Board, Tea Strainer, Knife, Forks, and a Spoon.

<sup>39</sup> Kathryn Hughes, Louise Bourgeois, 'Lives and limbs: how prosthetics transformed the art world'. *The Guardian*, 15 July 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/jul/15/lives-and-limbs-how-prosthetics-transformed-the-art-world>. Accessed 5/9/2023



I use the idea of a breadboard in *Mother-Board, Bread-Board* works (see Chapter 4) and alongside the ironing board these everyday objects act as platforms to reveal staged relationships between the lived world, memory, and location. A prosthesis appears either on or within the boards and small versions of such works appear in other rooms. They do not function, but they are there to act as a reminder or a memory. The *Boards* (Fig 109) are created with the capacity to display a 'body' of thoughts and parts (utensils) manifested from recollections and my own personal biographies. They reveal a hierarchy of fragments with the torso sometimes dominating, or the stitched spoon woman lying on the ironing board, or utensils embedded in a breadboard.

I wrote:

The board prepares, a life where toxins agitate and where life meets death all on the same platform. This is where the knife is ever-present, and the spoon becomes a mother. The bowl is the vessel that represents the contained belly. Everything hurts. These brutal moments remain ever-present through significant scarring and are a constant reminder of my maternal beginnings.<sup>40</sup>

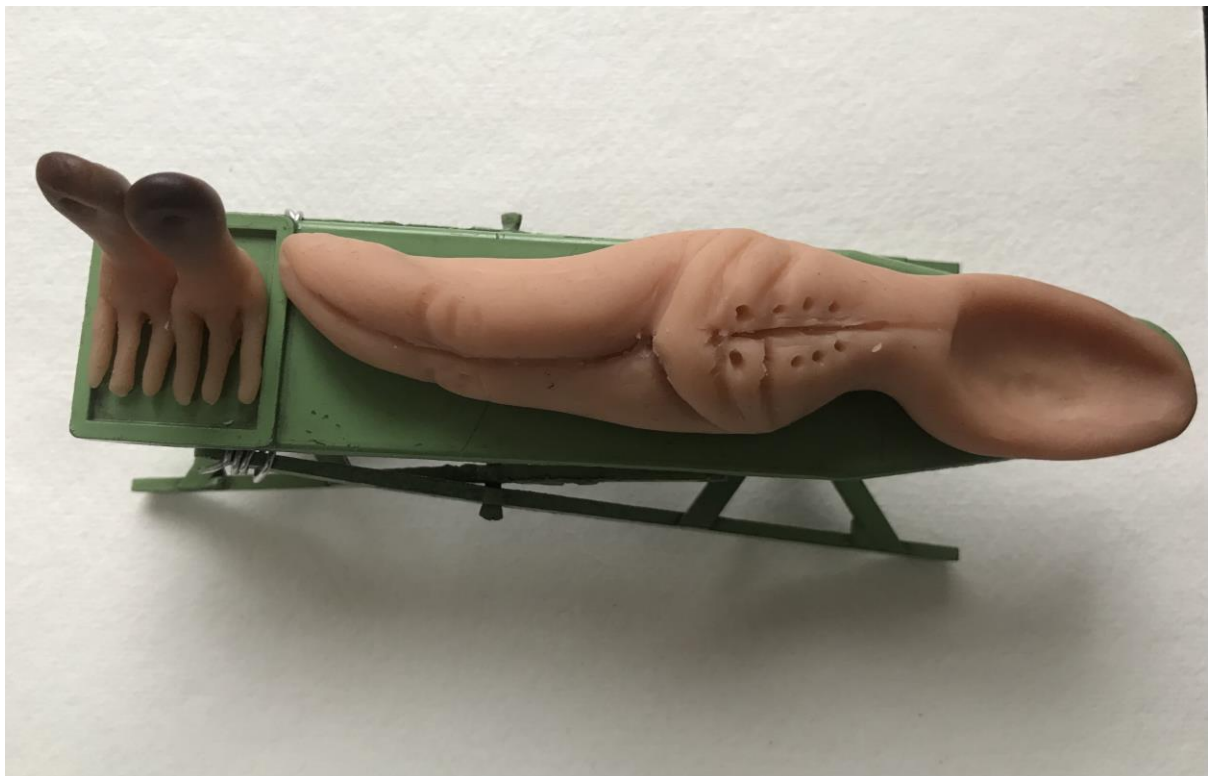


Figure 110: Carole Griffiths, *Stitched Woman* 2022, on Ironing Board. Sculpey, Vintage Dolls House Ironing board. (2022).

<sup>40</sup> Carole Griffiths, extract from Journal 2021-22.

Japanese artist, Yayoi Kusama's earlier works uses stuffed phallic objects for example in Figure 111,



Figure 111: Yayoi Kusama, *Untitled*, 1963, Stuffed fabric, steam iron, Paint.  
<https://www.imj.org.il/en/collections/578365-0>:

*Untitled*, where there are representations of the emerging body, partly buried within the ironing board. These stuffed and sewn body parts seemingly celebrate the craft of stitching and stuffing in an erotic and erratic manner. On eBay, I discovered a small vintage ironing board and placed my spoon stitched woman with fork feet on it. I am repurposing 'objects', unlike Kusama, whose stuffed objects appear to grow through a cluster that emphasises the body's interconnections with everyday objects. Kusama makes the forms useful by softening the egos of various characters. I am heightening the ego through personal references.

By contrast what appears to be happening in my works is a process of highlighting trauma and loss by embracing and acknowledging the act of making marks visible, through everyday forms. Herbert Reid's description of Kusama's work resonates with my own process of investigation. 'Now, with perfect consistency, she creates forms that proliferate like mycelium and seal the consciousness in their white integument. It is an autonomous art, the most authentic type of super-reality. The image of strange beauty presses on our organs of perception with terrifying persistence'.<sup>41</sup>

The *Art-House* and its contents have now become symbolic references of Venus as the mother's home, pulling in the small works to encompass states of desire, victory, love, and in some instances trauma.

The sculptures I make can seem unsettling, but such symbolic metaphors in relation to the kitchen utensils make the space a place of constant returning to what is real and remembered. It is through the body that I carry the burdens of the swollen belly, and birth and is often a reference to life and trauma. It is part of my past and present. So here I celebrate this through a 'metaphorical vocabulary'<sup>42</sup> evocative of the 'stuffed -filled memory object'.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Herbert Reid, in *Yayoi Kusama: A Retrospective*, edited by Stephanie Rosenthal (London: Prestal Publishing, 2021), 15.

<sup>42</sup> Marie-Laure Bernadac quoted in, *Louise Bourgeois & Pablo Picasso: Anatomies of Desire* (New York: Hauser & Wirth 2019).98.

<sup>43</sup> Boscagli, *Stuff Theory*, 31.



Figure 112: Carole Griffiths, *Scissors*, latex, and Wire, 2021.

Much within my making is unexpected and sometimes there is no alternative but to invade a work with sharp tools to illuminate suffering. I do love the knife, the scissors, and other cutting tools. For example, in (Fig 112) the small pair of scissors made of latex and wire inserted could bend within the sculpted form. These scissors were initially made larger (see Chapter 4) for an exhibition related to the idea of separation and therefore seem to fit as a reminder of past separations, particularly made smaller with a similar significance. The scissors in my works are often the aggressor, an intruder, or splitting of two, but also, they may become a protector and life saver through the tool and making.

In the book, *The Tiny and the Fragmented*, edited by S. Rebecca Martin and Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper, references to fragments are given as a physical trace of actions, or a record of events.<sup>44</sup> I explore the spaces and femininity of my past through re-appropriating meanings from the newly made kitchen utensils, to create fragmented sculptural objects of my past. These narratives become the life of the objects re-made. I look for the right materials to complement a harmonious aesthetic between the disparate object of part-utensil and part-body to sculptural objects made, all of which can be difficult due to the complexities of the original functions. The struggle to articulate bodily forms is entangled within the context of the functional implements. Ian Hodder suggests that 'humans and things' are intertwined and can be both same and different, further highlighting unexpected interactions which can occur in the interstices between. In relation to materiality, I see these symbols and embrace Hodder's idea to 'draw humans into a skein of tangled, sticky or tightly woven relations'<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> S. Rebecca Martin and Stephanie M. Langin-Hooper (eds), *The Tiny and the Fragmented: Miniature, Broken, or Otherwise. Incomplete Objects in the Ancient World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>45</sup> Hodder, *Entangled*, 59.

## 5.4 Rolling Pin as Object as Tool.

Martha Rosler uses a rolling pin in her film *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, discussed in Chapter 2, to illustrate how we spend our time and define our values as women. This clearly presents the domestic as a space of labour and oppression for women, but my intention is not to address this but to observe other contexts of the life of the domestic. Transforming domestic objects into contemporary art objects allows me to form and re-craft a familiar object that determines a new status or celebrates a woman's worth and cultural identity. I therefore present the pleasures of making which serve as expressive objects allowing for further exposure of origins. Rosler exposes these thoughts by stating 'I was concerned with something like the notion of 'language speaking subject,' and with the transformation of the woman herself into a sign in a system of signs that represent a system of food production, a system of harnessed subjectivity'.<sup>46</sup>



Figure 113: Carole Griffiths, *Mother-Board, Bread-Board*: 2021 Sculpey.



Figure 114: Carole Griffiths, *Mangled and Rolling Pin*. 2022 Cotton Fabric, Sculpey.

My rolling pin once a functional utensil becomes a sculpted object. It is used to blend the burdens of my past by flattening out and pushing away the pain, this gestural encounter connects me through and with the material. I frequently prepare slabs of clay to engrave, cut out, and form new sculptural objects with my rolling pin. In (Fig 113), there are two forms emerging. The first one is the shaped breadboard made into a seated arrangement of the body. The fork represents the child and is strategically pushed through the opening hole revealing itself as born. Breast-shaped milk bottles protrude subtly as part- body, part- vessel, a useful conundrum of parts. A once nude slab sculpted

<sup>46</sup> Rosler, *Semiotics of the Kitchen*.

becomes a chair all-encompassing, all revealing and staged to represent an autobiographic encounter of a disturbing chain of events. The second one functions as a scroll; (Fig 114) it is a remade rolling pin with a slot cut through it that allows the words or sketches to be stopped and captured within. It is connected to the bottom of the small mangle that has flattened the elongated garment containing elements of drawn utensils. Artist, Dr Paula Chambers, was invited to exhibit a small work within a room in the *Art -House, Home of Dis/Content titled 2Rooms*. Chambers employs a rolling pin as a slat in her series of feminist escape rooms. Her pink macramé rolling pin ladder hangs between two rooms featuring works by Professor Jill Journeaux, Nicola Turner, and Dr Peter Blagg.<sup>47</sup> Chambers describes her work as follows:<sup>48</sup>

The rolling pin is an object that has a colloquial narrative, it appears in comedy sketches as the object with which an angry housewife might attempt to beat her husband (along with the iron and the frying pan), and in language has entered into common usage as a domestic weapon. It is this contextual understanding of the rolling pin that interests me the most, that this object has become a specifically feminised tool for physical abuse, a weapon used by women to attack or punish men. Unlike a kitchen knife, or an iron, or even a heavy cast iron frying pan, it would be very difficult to actually kill someone with a rolling pin, but a sustained attack, or solid blow to the head, could certainly cause someone considerable pain and damage.

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<sup>47</sup> Details of the artists are seen in the Catalogue/Book, Appendix 2 Pdf which is a component of the *Art-House Home of Dis/Content* exhibition at Sunny Bank Mills, Farsley and supports this project.

<sup>48</sup> Dr Paula Chambers. (Appendix 2).



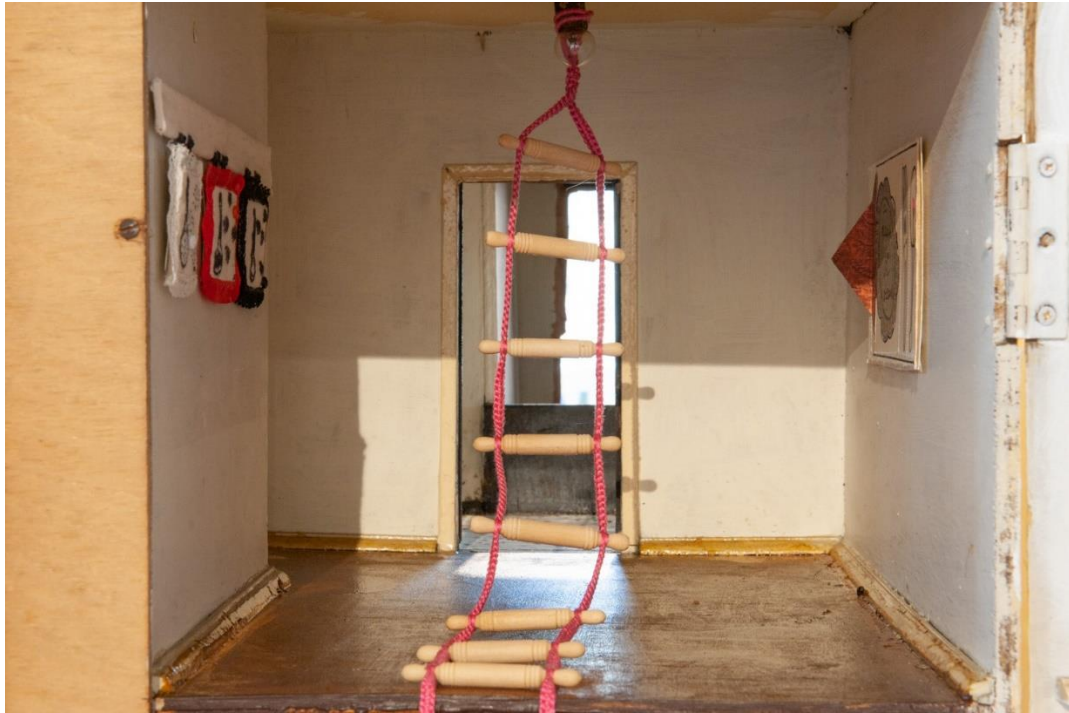


Figure 115: Paula Chambers, *Feminist Escape*; Carole Griffiths, small Version made for 2 Rooms of Art-House -- Home of Dis/Content (2022)

## 5.5 Knife, Fork, and Spoon.



Figure 116: Carole Griffiths, *Knife, Fork, Spoon*, 2022, Coat Hanger, Sculpey.



Figure 117: Carole Griffiths, *Sugar Grabbers*, 2022, Sculpey.

The knife, fork and spoon are important in my work, becoming an extra layer within the selected objects. This is often because I recognise their function within my own self. The fork acts as a go-between object, subject, and language within is given space. It could be seen as the fork in the road, a destination, or an implement to prod and pick up. It has a grasping mechanism it can dig deep, stand when pressed, and mark materials through drawn lines. It is multi-functional. It could symbolise a child and each prong suggest a splitting off parts of a whole but still attached. The knife is the violent counterpart, but also a protector, a tool used to cut, slice, mark and hurt. A perceived object of male, but I take ownership of this as I use it for both the cutting of clay and slicing bread. As a bread knife, its bevelled marks stimulate the material and can act as a saw, sounds of bread cutting on the breadboard are ever so familiar. Both my parents were always making bread, kneading it, slicing it on the breadboard, and dividing it. I can still smell the fleshy dough baking. I re-enact this process with the clay, through kneading, and using the knife as its partner. The spoon is the mother, maternal vessel, server, a feeding, and collecting implement. In Margaret Visser's book *The Rituals of the Dinner* she presents an analysis of Freud's interpretation of these everyday objects. 'A Freudian analysis of the knife, fork and spoon 'gives the spoon the

female role in the trio; the fork, if I understand the writer correctly, is a male child of the knife and the spoon, and, like a little Oedipus resentful of the knife and jealous of the spoon'.<sup>49</sup> Visser also describes the spoon as the most comfortable, safest, and versatile implement of the cutlery trio. She also refers to the spoon as lacking in prestige. In my work I aim to give the spoon the equality it deserves within the trio of the cutlery set. They are either sitting together or apart, they are independent of one another and are able to be functional in both making and eating, memory, habit, or ritual. As previously stated, Jill Journeaux created three collaged drawings of place settings in *2Rooms*, which are small works based on larger works related to archival place settings, (Fig 118) and where the idea of laying the table is both habitual and ritualist. Journeaux employs one-word texts within these drawings, allowing the viewer to observe and perhaps consider the table as set for a family meal as a place of unease. The table settings elicit personal familial memories as part of a wider discourse around cultural memory. Journeaux states:<sup>50</sup>

Thinking back to when I was child family mealtimes were regularly punctuated with moral exhortations; some subtle, others rather blatant. Growing up I learnt that not all the notions that my parents and the community they lived in and held dear were pertinent. Hence my idea for a small series of works around the idea of a dish of lies. The dinner table not only presented food but also asked me to swallow and to digest ways of being that no longer pertained. It is only now in my sixties that I can clearly see the dishes that were proffered and their effects upon me.



Figure 118: Jill Journeaux, *Place Settings Drawing and Collage* 2021-2022.

<sup>49</sup> Visser, *Rituals of the Dinner*, 211.

<sup>50</sup> Jill Journeaux, Exhibition and Catalogue Book. (Appendix 2).

## 5.6 Whisk Woman, Wheel Woman, Wise Woman.





Figure 119: Carole Griffiths, Top Left : *Whisk Woman Wheel Woman* – Sculpture: : Top Right: Wax: Above: Bronze. 2021-2022.

*Whisk Woman, Wheel Woman, Wise Woman* is based on the kitchen utensil I have explored most in this study. In the *Art-House – Home of Dis/Content*, I use them as the Mythology of the Three Fates: Clotho (the spinner) Lachesis (the allotter) and Atropos (the unavoidable) with a contemporary twist. They are self-portraits of different phases in my life, each representing the thread of being. They blend in with the landscape of the home and are able to weave, shift, and spin through time. These uncanny anthropomorphic sculptures depict different strands of my journey. Their cage-like forms are transformed into everyday bodies. To clarify this, ‘body worlds are internally structured perceptions, in which social expectations, beliefs, and associations merge with materially informed perspectives of the inhabited body’.<sup>51</sup>

Every day, in some form or another, interaction occurs between one’s body and another object, but how do we recognise the significance of these interactions and interrelationships? By identifying with a kitchen utensil as both body and meaning, these sculptures attempt to present personal narratives through the various stages of a woman’s life: preparing, making, nurturing, and transitioning from the

<sup>51</sup> Martin and Langin-Hooper (eds.), *The Tiny and the Fragmented*, 145.

domestic arena to an outside space. These 'figurines' have become very significant within this project:<sup>52</sup>

Figurines have material entanglements, for they are connected to an array of other things, such as miniatures, as well as full size artefacts, locations, social institutions, values and so on. Like human images anthropomorphic figurines are not just representations or an epiphenomenal outcome of social process. They have agency and are active in social dynamics: besides having material presence they are creations of their social worlds.

My whisk works had been made using a variety of materials throughout this project which I discuss in detail in Chapter 3. I decided to consider how to make them strong enough to dominate the space by revisiting bronze casting techniques. I approached bronze caster Kabir Hussain from *Walnut Works Butley-Mills Studios Suffolk* and began working on the small figures. I created them in Sculpey at first but had to remake them in wax to work better with the lost wax process and avoid making a really small mould (Fig 120). Making such small 'figurines' was a challenge in and of itself. I began to understand the purpose of my using bronze through reading several chapters of *Tiny and Fragmented*, and it became clear that I needed to consider the hierarchy of objects as 'Bronze was, and is, a material whose power was derived from a whole system of social relations and hierarchies'.<sup>53</sup> The *Whisk Women, Wheel Woman, Wise Woman* in bronze not only became the central works but also working in wax to produce bronze is a process now that I will explore more .

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<sup>52</sup> Martin and Langin-Hooper (eds), *The Tiny and the Fragmented*, 145.

<sup>53</sup> Martin and Langin-Hooper (eds.), *The Tiny and the Fragmented*, 145.





Figure 120: Carole Griffiths, *Art-House -- Home of Dis/Content* front view 2022 On display Sunny Bank Mills Farsley Leeds.



## 5.7 Summary: Housing the Contents.

Through context of the repurposed doll's house sculptures, I am able to negotiate a relationship between the changed realities of my domestic space, which feeds through into the objects, and how they are displayed. The tension of lived experience is acted out through the intensity of making and challenging through the small scale and my chosen space of display. This *Art-House* contains a survey of autobiographies and my positions within a maternal world of practice. I create a house within a house.

The House and its contents have now become symbolic references of *Venus* as the mother's home, including the small works to encompass states of desire, victory, love, and in some instances trauma. I am mindful of Judy Chicago's *Woman House* (1971). The installation and performance art space were organised in collaboration with female artists from the local community by artist Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, founders of the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts. The exhibition was open to all visitors, but only women attended the opening. The *Woman House*<sup>54</sup> featured a variety of themed rooms such as the Nurturant Kitchen, Crocheted Environment, Leah's Room, and so on), all of which were based on ideological and social roles that women were (and still are) subjected to. The installation was presented with the intention of empowering each woman to articulate her experiences and seek appropriate subject matter for her artworks within a space for women. This project expressed women's dissatisfaction with patriarchy and raised awareness about women's issues during this time period. I am drawn to the *Nurturant Kitchen* in particular, where utensils are integrated into the space, bringing this aesthetic experience to the audience as a lived life. To bring my small objects to be questioned, to speak of new meanings and resonance with those who see them are my quiet musings on domestic experiences, my themes about my woman house.

There are over 20 items placed within the house and on observation and on reflection they appear to look like souvenirs, tokens, or a collection. An interesting take on making small and placing within this House, is that it references cabinets and display units. Further research reveals that there has always been an interest and fascination with the displays and content within a doll's house, of the miniature, collecting small objects. Small objects have portability. They can be held in the hand and stored easily. 'They facilitate the creation and perception of a small, coherent world. Smallness facilitates taking in the whole gestalt all at once'.<sup>55</sup> The detail of the life-size or larger objects is not necessarily what needs to be exposed through the small it is the small space in which they are exhibited that gives way to an

<sup>54</sup> Judy Chicago, *Woman House*, (1971), <https://judychicagoportal.org/projects/womanhouse>

<sup>55</sup> Brenda Danet and Tamar Katriel, 'No Two Alike: Play and Aesthetics in Collecting', in Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects*, 232.

idea of the exaggerated and the spectacle. It is a hidden life exposed through the positioning of the objects within the rooms of the house. Stewart suggests this 'gathering' involves the accumulation of possessions within the context of identity is where 'small rituals are observations of how to make our world our own'.<sup>56</sup> Baudrillard states, 'The environment of private objects and their possession – of which collections are an extreme manifestation- is a dimension of our life that is both essential and imaginary. As essential as dreams'.<sup>57</sup>

A souvenir is generally defined as a memory of a place, of a person. I remade some of the objects from the past in order to unite them as a body of work. The idea of a souvenir or token seems to possess the same value as an object from which an experience is provided or presented, so these 'collective souvenirs' can be entwined within the same context as a body of work. 'Collections are used not only to express aspects of one's direct experiences: they are also used to express fantasies about the self'.<sup>58</sup> The container of which the intended display of the doll's house also acts as a platform for exhibiting in the same way that a gallery acts as a space to exhibit. 'The collection relies upon the box, the cabinet, the cupboard, the seriality of shelves'.<sup>59</sup>

The works are therefore determined by these boundaries, just as the self is invited to expand within the confines of domestic space. 'For the environment to be an extension of the self, it is necessary not to act upon and transform it, but to declare its essential emptiness by filling it'.<sup>60</sup> This then defines the boundaries of private space by emptying that space of any relevance other than that of the subject. I add the new objects which contribute to the subject. To support this nuance, Stewart states:<sup>61</sup>

Whereas the space of the souvenir is the body (talisman), the periphery (memory), or the contradiction of private display (reverie), the space of the collection is a complex interplay of exposure and hiding, organization and the chaos.

In *Stuff Theory* there are many references to the idea of how the object and subject are entwined. There is often an association with the functional object, the memory of the objects, and the materiality of the object and these manifestations become the embodied encounter of self. The object is there to trigger a memory: 'Memory is set in motion, and the past "opened up" by an object and by the sensations produced on the body of the subject of remembrance. The subject is no longer the spectator of a past scene [...]: instead, the past happens to the present-day subject as a tactile

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<sup>56</sup> J. Clifford, "Collecting Ourselves" in Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects*, 259-60.

<sup>57</sup> Jean Baudrillard, quoted in Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting Objects*, 261.

<sup>58</sup> Russell W. Belk and Melanie Wallendorf, 'Of Mice and Men: Gender Identity in Collecting', in Pearce (ed), *Interpreting Objects*, 322.

<sup>59</sup> Susan Stewart, 'Objects of Desire', in Pearce (ed), *Interpreting Objects*, 256.

<sup>60</sup> Stewart, 'Objects of Desire,' in Pearce (ed), *Interpreting Objects*, 256.

<sup>61</sup> Stewart, 'Objects of Desire', in Pearce (ed), *Interpreting Objects*, 256.

experience'.<sup>62</sup> This tactile experience is passed through the physicality of the material and making. In *The Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf explores the idea of memory supporting the objects of tokens in relation to the self and body: 'her objects keep memory in their forms in the absence of a perceiving subject'.<sup>63</sup>



Figure 121: Carole Griffiths Views of the Art-House -- *Home of Dis/Content* Sunny Bank Mills Farsley 2022.

Exhibiting the *Art-House – Home of Dis/Content* at Sunny Bank Mills Farsley allowed me to observe and reflect on the viewers' perception of the small for the first time. I am now aware of the importance of scaling down and the range of possibilities that can emerge from this. Both humans and figurines have the ability to actively participate in embodying corporeal identity, whether through living bodies or crafted bodies. By scaling down the human figure, viewers' expectations are challenged, and interactions are stimulated.<sup>64</sup> By bringing the works together I can now make a new whole. 'What is private or hidden becomes publicly exhibited what is small or confined becomes exaggerated, grand, or grandiose'.<sup>65</sup> My *house* has become a performative space that frames the assembled objects to present self-portraits of historical and contemporary repair. These collections of remade objects

<sup>62</sup> Boscagli, *Stuff Theory*, 193.

<sup>63</sup> Boscagli, *Stuff Theory*, 190.

<sup>64</sup> Martin and Langin-Hooper (eds.), *The Tiny and the Fragmented*, 162.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography," in Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine (eds), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 1991), 409.

become a chronicle of 'recovery', encapsulating behavioural implications, and are positioned to sit within a site for an artistic rendering of a fragmented and multifaceted self-conception.<sup>66</sup> *Home* is no longer a place of conflict it is a place of making.

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<sup>66</sup> Julia Watson, "Visual Diary as Prosthetic Practice in Bobby Baker's Diary Drawings," *Biography* 35, no. 1 (January 1, 2012): 21-44, <https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2012.0005>. Accessed 5th July 2023.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

I have spent the last five years focused on making art that investigates and articulates the emotional backdrop of my own domesticity. I have sought ways to express these experiences in sculpture by reimagining the familiar and defining methods and language relevant to my intentions. I have worked with a variety of materials, including clay and plaster, latex, and shellac. To embrace the skill and craft of sculptural practice, I have revisited additional techniques such as the lost wax bronze process to enrich various works. In addition to making, I have employed drawing approaches to examine, reimagine, and investigate the nature of the domestic kitchen and its utensils. I have used domestic craft activities such as sewing and knitting to develop my own language in poetic form to support several of the works based on the idea of ekphrasis. I have applied interchangeable making methods across materials, for example whipping and kneading. I have used film to capture the haptic acts of making at the same time, and I have thought through making and I have thought about making. My archival and library research has both grounded and expanded my thinking and making. The five interviews that I have conducted as part of the study have informed and challenged my thinking and expanded my knowledge of how artists think and make, and their contributions have been invaluable.

I have produced several series of works and exhibited as outlined in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. The culmination of my study and practice in the *Art-House -- Home of Dis/Content* is discussed in Chapter 5 in detail. The *Art House Home of Dis/Content* developed into an unexpected portable self-contained sculpture using small scale making. The exhibition brought together the strands of my research into one form which includes many small sculptures, drawings and poetic texts. As discussed in Chapter 5, *Art-House -- Home of Dis/Content* is a complex multi-layered autobiographical narrative that references other modern and contemporary artworks and reveals gendered experiences of the domestic. The portable house now has many new possibilities as a potential curated space, not only for my own work but for those artists who have an interest in the domestic space and also of working small.

My deeper understanding of scale in relation to autobiographical narrative has allowed me to no longer be burdened by the notion that I must make grandiose comments in response to what I know and wish to share. I have become better aware of how my work is viewed in relation to other well-known earlier histories, and how this allows the spectator to be stimulated by their own memories as well as their own interplay between what is seen and felt and what is not seen and felt.

This study contributes to knowledge in the field of art practice by:

- articulating my thinking processes as a maker who aims to express a domestic experience through the physical process of sculpting.
- offering new perspectives on the relationship between homemaking and the domestic context and art making and the studio home.
- extending thinking about size and scale in relation to autobiographical sculpture.
- rethinking the gendered space of the kitchen through object making.
- adding to the body of thought around the house which has been a notable strand of exploration and discourse since the 1970s; and
- demonstrating that the remaking of the ready-made can transform a sculptural idea into new contexts whereby the uncanny becomes more awkward through the anthropomorphism process.

Further research and practice can be undertaken to better understand other spaces of the house. For example, I have focused on the kitchen and its contents throughout and even within the *Art-House -- Home of Dis/Content* I do not consider the living room, bedroom, bathroom, dining room as important yet I know that these rooms could clearly open further thoughts. I would use the same process that I used in this research project to form a deeper context. However, my object selection may expand to include more furniture items. I am interested in expanding my practice research through identifying new everyday sculptural forms that are removed from their original space, my living studio, or places we call home. Repositioning the sculptures in other spaces of home would offer a primary step for further autobiographical encounters. An example of these new encounters would include archival objects that are on display in museums and heritage houses or homes I visit. This is to arouse curiosity by engaging with other made objects from the past, possibly even archaeological objects.<sup>1</sup> I envision my work continuing in historical settings and exhibition spaces that are out of the ordinary commercial realm of fine art in order to inspire thought and our understandings of social space, which expose cultural and gendered interactions. Producing the works for the *Art-House -- Home of Dis/Content* has added a new dimension to my practice and research allowing me to reconsider the exhibition space: what I form and craft with my hands is mine; when it speaks to those who see, it becomes theirs.

Working full-time in higher education and completing the PhD was difficult at times, and the two-year pandemic limited my opportunities to visit galleries, and archives, research exhibition spaces and discuss works face to face. However, without the constraints imposed on me, I would not have

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<sup>1</sup> Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, highlights this in depth.

changed course and created all my objects to fit into a self-curated space now known as the *Art-House Home of Dis/Content*. As a result of making on a small scale during this study, I now wish to have small works recognised in the sculptural forum as important as larger works; an equitable acceptance of such practice is required.

Lock down and the need to shelter meant that I shifted my making into my home and used the external studio that I have as an exhibition / finishing space. It became a space for installation, an interactive viewing space when exhibiting was problematic. The first showing of *Whisk Up, Grind Down* demonstrated the repurposing of my external studio space. Secondly *Art-House -- Home of Dis/Content* evolved into a personal curated portable space that could be set within the home or become an exhibition within an exhibition, as seen in Sunny Bank Mills. A place where I can invite other artists to negotiate and consider the significance of the small scale. These theatrical exhibiting arenas have invited viewers into a new space of home studio, home space, and intimacy. All of which enabled me to self-curate, control the positioning of my works, and further develop my understanding of the impact of the contexts of production upon the art works I and other artists make.

This thesis has allowed me to investigate phenomenology in relation to the entanglements that arise when utilising a utensil and the body within sculpture making. Aligning Merleau-Ponty with Bachelard provided a holistic perspective to the visual discourses that emerged during this period. This has allowed me to communicate with clarity about the origins and making of my work. This study contributes to the ongoing discourses around sculptural practices and domesticity.



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## Appendices.

Appendix 1 : Ethics Certificate [Certificate-94958](#)

Appendix 2: Catalogue- Art House Home of Discontent 2022





Art House Home  
of Dis/Content  
By Carole Griffiths





## Some words on Art House-Home of Dis/Content

After being confined for many months by the 2020 Covid pandemic, returning to recollections of 'home' provided new opportunities for arranging my sculptural works, reflecting on rooms and spaces that bring forth experiences of domesticity and mothering, questioning areas that should have been safe and places of comfort. This allowed me to evaluate a wide range of options. The longer I was confined to my home during

the pandemic, the more I thought about my interactions with specific kitchen objects that communicate back to me of body, function, and through the act of making small. Art House Home of Dis/Content is more than just an empty cabinet; it is a portal to the past, nostalgia, part objects, part sculptures, and a reflection on the maternal materiality of domesticity through function.

The viewer can enter the house and observe the new sculptural representations of the kitchen utensils from doorways and openings and viewpoints. The house presents an appropriated architectural vessel of home. Within the Art House-Home of Dis/Content there is already a suggestion of shadows of the past, of someone's home, and it occurs to me that my small works may seem intrusive in the first instance. This definition of

home and my desire to bring all these new sculptural objects together in one place is the first sign of my returning to memories, rituals, and rooms when my world was small. Such a resurgence of the past can be both generated by and made sense of, through making and placing. I am questioning objects, and subjects, for display catharsising the contents and containment of my past.

Carole Griffiths 2022

'The ironing board holds the work in place, allowing the body-domestic relationship to be questioned within a given space. I bear the burdens of a swollen belly and birth through my body. These reconfigured small sculptures frequently depict life and trauma from both my past and present.'



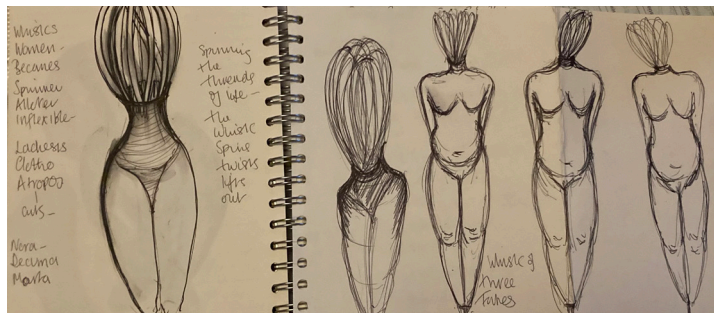
*Mother- Spoon, Ironing Board, Fork Feet*





spoon woman  
rests silently  
upon the slab  
body of dough  
cut  
stitched  
scarred

"Whisk Woman, Wheel Woman, Wise Woman is named after the kitchen utensil I have spent the most time with. I use the whisk as the Mythology of the Three Fates in the doll's house: Clotho (the spinner), Lachesis (the allotter), and Atropos (the unavoidable). The whisk women are self-portraits from various times in my life, each representing a thread of my life. They blend into the house space and can weave, shift, and spin through time. These strange anthropomorphic sculpture shapes come to life through the act of remaking."

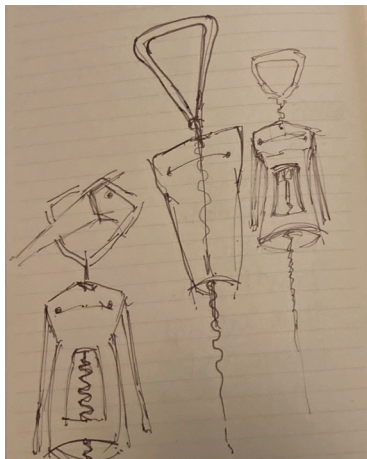


*Whisk Woman Drawings*



*Whisk Woman Wheel Woman Wise Woman (Bronze)*





*Corkscrew Drawings*



'Corkscrew Woman can position herself in any room. She is constantly reminded of poison liquids which on observation remains heavily weighted both in body and handle. Triangle, shaped hanger, attached is empty of soul, the destructive nature of corking and drinking is exposed through memories of joy and entertaining remaining settled, but

abuse and cruelty can be opened, screwing you up both as a child and a woman. I am growing with the acknowledgment that this creates trauma allowing for the unsettling actions of her function which hang still and remain secure within the space she exists. Everything hurts of all that has passed, spiralling out of control through changes within a space.'





*Cork Screw Woman (Sculpvey and Wire)*





*Dispersed (Modroc, teabags, gum tape)*

The '*Dispersed*' tea strainer is based on the concept of dispelling and draining parts that are no longer needed. The strained tea, however, has left a residue, and marks are embedded and stained in the bags. The bags are only partially connected to the body. Female forms that developed during the recreating process were influenced by an old antique funnel-shaped strainer whereby the main area of the strainer has breast suggestions.

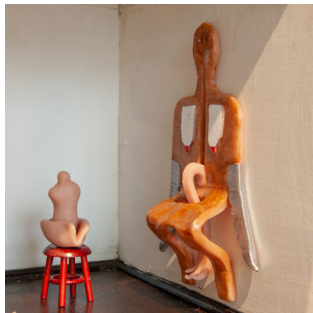
body tense.  
no longer useful.  
residue contained  
bags emptied.  
marks made.

*'My human fixture and her satellites rushed to welcome me; exclaiming, tumultuously, they had completely given me up' (Emily Bronte)*

'Human fixtures reminded me of something that is present without being there, echoes of chattering within the confines of a located space. In this instance, there is a presence and a moment of panic in relation to absence. Actions are predominately exposed within the chaos of domesticity. I used the idea of Human Fixture in the same way I would look at the expression being "part of the furniture.'







Grind Me Down  
Pounding  
Lay Me Down  
Beat Me to a Pulp  
Around & Around & Around  
You Crush Me  
Place Me Down Beside You  
Still.















## Mangled

'Mangled' is a work that combines sketches and words of layered concepts created over a 5-year period of making, pondering, and preparing work relating to the poetics of domestic disorder. The ambiguity of selected words formulated autobiographical drawings seeping into fabric and flattened through the mangle.





A Mangled Life  
Lays Flat along the Open Paths,  
Where Bled Lead Lines  
Warp the Wefts of,  
Mangled Moments Made.  
These Blended Burdens Bend,  
Through Sketches Swell.  
With Raw Repairs Revealed  
Remembered, Tested, Taut.



2 Rooms





To enhance the curation of the small gallery and gain a better understanding of the complexities of seemingly contradictory juxtapositions of domesticity and ritual through making small. Artists Dr. Paula Chambers, Dr Peter Blagg, Nicola Turner, and Jill Journeaux were invited to create a work of art that emphasised the critical context in which such transformations can cause a kitchen object to become a trigger of domestic experiences by invoking unruly memories.

## Dr Peter Blagg

Peter Blagg is a working artist and educator who teaches the BA (Hons) Graphic Design and Illustration degree programs at Leeds Arts University. Peter finished a practice-based PhD in 2020, during which he created a series of research-based pop-up exhibitions at locations like The National Science and Media Museum and Leeds City Art Gallery. His work investigates the connection between design communication and The Uncanny. Considering how seemingly innocuous parts of the design may alienate their users. He is fascinated by commonplace objects, functionality, hybridisation, doppelgangers, absurdity, and mass production. All of this is investigated through the use of discovered things as sculptural materials.

*'My work is constructed from discarded objects and materials, junk from the streets, things dug up or found in the trash. A found object has lived a life already and this shows in its patina. I am fascinated by humble and functional objects such as spectacles, furniture legs, teapot spouts, handles, and even bicycle inner tubes. These items are silently industrious in performing their tasks. They often remain hidden from view or are simply ignored through everyday use. When assembled in curious ways, the significance of these overlooked things changes to create new objects that require looking at.'*

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*Image: Brush Woman (2022)*

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*Image: 1. Domestic Goddess, 2. You Have Served Your Purpose, 3. Alone She Stands Again Silenced (2022)*

## Nicola Turner

Nicola Turner Is a practicing Fine Artist and Illustrator and has been a lecturer in Fine Art for sixteen years in various Further and Higher education establishments.

*'I have been fascinated by miniatures since I was a child, from creating secret matchbox worlds and stories, reading 'The Borrowers,' to collecting small objects or treasures that I could hide from my three other siblings!'* Miniatures have remained an integral part of who I am, and they are frequently featured in my own artworks. The small has an intimacy and beauty that you can hold in your hand, wear around your neck, put in a pocket,

*dangle with a charm, and carry with you wherever. The miniature's scale and space allow for a distinct narrative. escape, fantasy, and storytelling all of which have enchanted me. This piece is based on a small utensil set, a recognised domestic object inside its kitchen surroundings. I created a set of three tiny hankies using colour-coded lace stitching, and three selected utensils to represent the ideas of 'serving a purpose,' 'the domestic goddess,' and 'having your cake and eating it.' .The consequences of being 'the other woman' an affair or the 'object' of desire.'*

August 20, 2022

## Dr Paula Chambers

Paula Chambers is an artist, academic and arts educator. She has exhibited widely including most recently, 'Working Girls' at The Whitaker, Rawtenstall, and 'Not at Home' at The Art House, Wakefield. She has chapters published in *Feminist Visual Activism and the Body*, and in *Feminist Art Activisms and Artivisms*, and has had articles published in *Performance/Research Journal* (special issue On The Maternal) and in *JourMS*.

### Rolling Pins

*'A rolling pin is perhaps one of the simplest tools associated with food preparation. In its most basic form this object is just a cylinder of an appropriate size and dimension that can be held by an average size person whilst being wide*

*enough to undertake the task required of it. The earliest evidence of rolling pins as tools specifically used for food preparation is from around 800BC, but it was not until the late 18th century that commercial production of rolling pins was established. It can perhaps be assumed that the invention of the rolling pin (if invention is the right word in this context, perhaps discovery would be more appropriate), coincided, or followed very shortly after, the invention, or discovery of making dough for breads and pastries. The modern rolling pin comes in many styles and materials, in glass, marble, hard plastics, as well as in the original wood. With free rotating handles, hollow to allow for cold water to be added, and embossed to enable the production of*

patterns on pastry. The rolling pin is an object that has a colloquial narrative also, it appears in comedy sketches the object with which an angry housewife might attempt to beat her husband (along with the iron and the frying pan), and in language has entered into common usage is a domestic weapon. It is this contextual understanding of the rolling pin that interests me the most, that this object has become a specifically feminised tool for physical abuse, a weapon used by women to attack or punish men. Unlike a kitchen knife, or an iron, or even a heavy cast iron frying pan, it would very difficult to actually kill someone with a rolling pin, but a sustained attack, or solid blow to the head, could certainly cause someone considerable pain and damage.'

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*Image: Feminist Escape Route (2022)*



*Image: Place Setting Series (2020)*



## Professor Jill Journeaux

Jill Journeaux is Professor of Fine Art in the Centre for Arts, Memory and Communities, Coventry University. She is an artist and researcher with interests in the representation of physical, emotional and psychological realities through autobiographical narrative. Her key areas of practice research are the female body as an experience of inhabitation and the crafts and artifacts of domesticity as content and process for fine art practice. She realises her practice through drawing and stitching, examining the space between art and craft, and the relationships between the decorative and the domestic. Jill Journeaux is director of Drawing Conversations.

*'Thinking back to when I was child family mealtimes were regularly punctuated with moral exhortations; some subtle, others rather blatant. Growing up I learnt that not all the notions that my parents and the community they lived in and held dear were pertinent. Hence my idea for a small series of works around the idea of a dish of lies. They dinner table not only presented food but also asked me to swallow and to digest ways of being that no longer pertained. It is only now in my sixties that I can clearly see the dishes that were proffered and their effects upon me.'*

## Size Matters! The small-scale sculptural works of Carole Griffith's Home of Dis/Content: By Dr Paula Chambers

Size matters! Say sculpture to anyone at all and they will probably imagine an object at least tabletop sized if not bigger. Galleries are full of large-scale and imposing sculpture, whole rooms are taken up with space hungry installations; sculpture, it would seem, demands our attention through its substantial physical presence. But sometimes these installation and room sized sculptural works have small-scale elements intended to draw to viewer's eye to the intricacies of detail, to process,

material or narrative elements that might otherwise be in danger of being overlooked. Carole Griffith's *Home of Dis/Content*, a re-purposed dollhouse occupied by palm sized sculptures, is simultaneously an artwork in its own right, and a scaled down space in which this series of very small sculptures have been purposefully installed. In conversation, Carole has made it clear that these small sculptures are not miniature versions of her larger works, although many do indeed share similar

visual and material qualities to previous works produced at the expected scale, these are works conceived and produced at a scale that invites closer looking. The individual sculptures exhibited as part of *Home of Dis/Content* each invite our attention in a manner more reminiscent of forensic inspection than the usual stance of admiration at a distance undertaken by gallery goers. One has to bend and peer, to peek through tiny windows, to look again from a vantage point physically only a hand's breadth

away. An object produced in miniature somehow evades categorisation, is it jewellery, or another type of object intended to be worn or carried about the body? An amulet or good luck charm, a trinket, knick knack, memento or souvenir? Susan Stewart (1993) writes of the miniature that there is an essential theatricality to objects produced at this scale and as such, we project action upon them so that they become a stage that opens to reveal a secret life.

Although the scaled down exhibition space of Home of Dis/Content is recognisably a dollhouse, with all the usual trappings of domestic space, the sculptures that occupy this particular space do not reference objects of children's play, these are serious sculptural works produced at this scale with the intention of prompting a specific act of looking by the viewer. In each room a scene is presented which is meant to be viewed with focused attention. Objects produced and presented at this

scale bring to light the importance of the small details of life. The effects of miniaturisation present in any dollhouse tests the relationship between materiality and meaning, the miniature implies interiority, a closer relation to the body 'the hand being the measure of the miniature.' (Stewart, 1993. p.46).

Despite the association of dolls with childhood play, particularly feminine childhood play, the miniature objects that occupy a dollhouse are not supposed

to be played with, 'The dollhouse is consumed by the eye' (ibid. p.62). Yet the sculptures exhibited as part of *Home of Dis/Content* do so much more than the kinds of miniature objects produced at scale usually found in dollhouses, Griffith's palm-sized sculptures imply a narrativity beyond the confines of feminine play, they occupy their scaled down gallery spaces uneasily, as if they recognise the temporality of their exhibition stay. If, as Stewart identifies, the miniature object reveals a secret

life beyond the ordinary, then the works that comprise Griffith's *Home of Dis/Content* both comfort and trouble our understanding of the sculptural object, of the gallery and domestic space, and of our relationship to the miniaturised objects of childhood play.

Stewart, S (1993) *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, The Gigantic, The Souvenir, The Collection*. Durham and London. Duke University Press

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Christian Wood, Graphic Designer : For the design and layout of  
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## Certificate of Ethical Approval

Applicant: Carole Griffiths  
Project Title: Sculptural Reconfiguration of the Kitchen Utensil: A Poetic Chaos of Domesticity

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

Date of approval: 26 Jun 2021  
Project Reference Number: P94958