Skim

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Abstract

This thesis dossier provides the theoretical structure to my art production and is presented alongside my thesis exhibition *skim* at McIntosh Gallery. This document is comprised of three parts: a comprehensive artist statement outlining the methodology and theories to my work, a case study of painter Cecily Brown, and photographic documentation of my studio practice. These components illustrate the research and material engagement with skin, corporeality, the abject, the grotesque, the formless, and purity.

Keywords

Skin, corporeality, the body in art, abject, grotesque, formless, painting, sculpture
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Introduction

This thesis dossier is presented alongside my exhibition of artwork, entitled \textit{skim}, at McIntosh Gallery, London, Ontario from August 10, 2018 to September 8, 2018. My research began with a need to address an ongoing anxiety about death, which quite frankly seemed far too large a concept to tackle regardless of my sincere curiosity in cultural ideas of mortality. My interest turned towards the more miniscule of deaths we perform in our lives; that is, the dying of cells in our body (and simultaneously the regeneration of certain cells) and the traces we leave behind. Hair, nail parings, spit, and dead skin cells drop from our bodies, as though we are Hansel and Gretel leaving crumbs to find our way back home. I thought of these pieces of our bodies we leave behind rather romantically and this sort of tenderness lends itself to the creation of skins and skin/refuse-related artworks.

Everyone has skin, everyone must negotiate this mediator between their interiority and the exterior world. This investment in skin and waste is demonstrated in a variety of mediums and materials, including painting, sculpture, print media, and detritus from art production. My production relied on theoretical research as shown in this thesis dossier and it is comprised of three parts: a comprehensive artist statement, a case study on the work of Cecily Brown, and photographic documentation of the artworks produced during the MFA program.

The first section is a comprehensive artist statement that gathers various sources of text that have stayed with me and provides clarity on the influences on my work as well as material choices I have made in the studio. In this section I begin generally with the facets of the human body, then tap into ideas of skin, including psychoanalysis and Didier Anzieu's
concept of the Skin-Ego, as well as the skin's function as body-image and figure.¹ In between the application of theory on the abject, the grotesque, ambiguity, and the formless, I speak about the materiality and methodology employed in my art production. To end the artist statement, I look towards metaphors related to the skin, thereby widening the lens to understand my work through.

The second section is a case study on the paintings of Cecily Brown. While my art process has moved beyond strictly painting, at the time of conducting this research I was still heavily indebted to the discourse of painting, and found Brown's work and methodology both similar and antithetical to my own. In this section I speak of Brown's strategy that engages both figuration and abstraction, and the influence of Francis Bacon's oeuvre on her practice. In looking at Bacon, I explore Gilles Deleuze's *The Logic of Sensation*, and work through the ideas of the figural and figurative in painting.² I then apply literature about the abject and the formless in visual arts onto Brown's work.

The third section provides documentation of work produced during the MFA program at Western University. It is organized chronologically and acts as timestamps for work prone to aging and deterioration. This segment concludes my thesis dossier as partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts.


Comprehensive Artist Statement

Mind & Body

You are having an in-body experience. Feel the pressure of the chair against your back. Your tongue fits into the roof of your mouth, the tip of it slides against the back of your teeth. You feel the weight of your arms; your belly pushes out as you inhale and the breath rushes down your airway. Do you smell the dried sweat on your upper lip or see your hair tremble as your heart beats? Can you feel your gut digesting? Does your skin tighten around each curve of flesh, or does it seem like the surface of your body is being thickly glazed? Can you imagine yourself thinking? Your eyes follow these words, synapses roaring away at these sentences, as your brain sits in its own juice inside your head.

In Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism, Elizabeth Grosz writes that

The body is a most peculiar 'thing' for it is never quite reducible to being merely a thing; nor does it ever quite manage to rise above the status of thing. Thus it is both a thing and nonthing, [sic] an object which somehow contains or coexists with an interiority... a unique kind of object not reducible to other objects.

Sense of Self

When you were a baby, your mother held you against her body. You were one with her being; you were unaware of being separate from her existence. Everything her skin touched was what your skin touched. But in order to become a distinct person, as an

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1 While this is not a real term, my idea is to provide a contrast to the concept of "out-of-body experience", thereby focusing on the physicality of the body.
individual acquire your sense of self, you must undergo a sort of "flaying" of this shared skin.³

In Freudian psychology it is believed that before you enter the linguistic stage (cognitive thought) you understand the world though your body. Your skin. Didier Anzieu's concept of the "Skin-Ego" is that the basis of the sense of self (bodily ego) is formed from sensations connected to the skin of the body. The Skin-Ego is a "mental representation of the experience of the body's surface used by the infant's emerging ego [sense of self] in order to construct itself as a container capable of containing psychic contents."⁴ The infant's bodily experiences of the skin are transposed onto the psychic plane, and to acquire a skin is to acquire both a bodily and mental skin.⁵ The body and mind are "both produced by and productive of one another."⁶ These thoughts on the skin became the launching point of my research, both in and out of the studio. In making paintings and sculptures that are not necessarily representational of skin, my intention is to evoke the sensation and complexities of skin as a border and mediator between interiority and exteriority. I investigate the ideas of the abject, the grotesque, the formless, and "purity".

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⁴ Lafrance, 23.
⁵ Ibid., 24-25.
⁶ Ibid., 26.
Skim

*skim* is a project about the skin and meditations on refuse and ambiguity. To skim is to separate, to remove. Often one skims off the whitish bubbles of fat and rendered protein from a pot of boiling meat. I think of skimming the slag from the top of molten lead in a crucible, the exposed surface already crusting over in the air. A discarding of "impurities". Taking off the top, to reveal below. There is also the proximity of the word *skim* to *skin*. I think of milk, especially Julia Kristeva's description of the "skin on the surface of milk—harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring" that touches the lip, inducing a gag reflex; a memorable imagery regarding the visceral and what can be skimmed. Can we think of the ways we push out unwanted material, ousting that which threatens us? And in acknowledging these actions, can we also come to terms with our "impurity"?

Skin

Odd to think that the piece of you I know best is already dead. The cells on the surface of your skin are thin and flat without blood vessels or nerve endings. Dead cells, thickest on the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet[...]The dead you is constantly being rubbed away by the dead me.

The skin is the largest organ of the body, and the most visible. As Steven Connor, author of *The Book of Skin*, writes: skin is "bilateral, both matter and image stuff and sign." He continues with "The skin figures. It is what we see and know of others and

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ourselves. We show ourselves in and on our skins, and our skins figure out the things we are and mean: our health, youth, beauty, power, enjoyment, fear, fatigue, embarrassment or suffering. The skin is always written: it is legendary.\(^\text{10}\) It is strange to think of your body as separate sections, the way you are taught by anatomy books. The largest organ is always of a "body-image," even when thought of as a distinct part of your body. As Connor continues:

Unlike a member, or an organ, or a nail clipping the skin is not detachable in such a way that the detached part would remain recognizable or that the body left behind would remain recognizable as a body: a body minus. The skinned body is less a body even than a skeleton, which we find it easier to reclothe in flesh\[...\]The skin always takes the body with it. The skin is, so to speak, the body's face, the face of its bodyliness. The skinned body is formless, faceless, its face having been taken off with its skin\[...\] By being pulled away from the body, [the skin] has ceased to be itself. The skin cannot be thought apart of the body because, despite the fact that it has its obvious, specialized functions, its principal function is to manifest the complex, cooperative, partitive complexion of the body.\(^\text{11}\)

The skin separates your insides from the outside of your environment. There is a division between your close softness, the flesh hugging bones and pulling organs together. Think about your skin drooping as time goes on, the weight of itself pulling you closer to the ground, as though the earth beckons you. One day you may stretch until your body presses into the floor, like a ball of putty flattening.

Your sense of existing as an individual entity relies on the fact that there is a distinction between the self and the not self, the subject and the object. The skin of your body enables you to move through the world without spilling your innards over

\(^{10}\) Connor, 50-51.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., 29.
everything you interact with. This border between the interior world and the exterior is what I am interested in. What happens to our idea of self when this border is compromised?

The proliferation of borders and boundaries occurs not just on an individual level. The doors of our homes, the plastic wrap over last night's dinner, the fences around buildings, the demarcations between nations, the separation of work and play, the rearing of children with XX and XY chromosomes. The use of boundaries is a system of control, a system of power.

You are, in essence, comfortable in your own skin. To have to move outside of it, or to have the outside enter you, would cause a disruption in the safety. A physical tear in membrane is a psychological tear.

**Grotesque**

The majority of the works in *skim* began with representation of bodily and psychological membranes, including their traumas, faults, and potential to change. I am particularly interested in the grotesque body, the "open, protruding, extended body, the body of becoming, process, and change."\(^ {12}\) It is "never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body."\(^ {13}\) The grotesque body takes up too much space and opposes the "classical body, which is monumental, static,

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closed, and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism; the
grotesque body is connected to the rest of the world.”\textsuperscript{14} The use of latex and plastics in
this project was partially to materially create skins; surfaces of wet substances that, when
exposed to air, could be skimmed off, and partially to explore this notion of the grotesque
that is connected with everything else. The transparency of the thinner latex and plastic
skins belie what is underneath and surrounding, and as such, the environment becomes
implicit in the existence of my works. These materials are also not archival, as proven
evident in the \textit{Sad Sack} series (2017) and \textit{Untitled (Oval Scab)} (2017) and \textit{Untitled
(Circle Scab)} (2017). These works have aged. Their surfaces have dried out, cracked, or
completely flaked off. In other areas, the use of oil paints and solvents has created
chemical reactions that cause the surface to dissolve or become gummy. Most
importantly, these skins are not serving as protectors of any sort of interiority; they are
either flat or folded like in the \textit{Cotton and Cheese I \& II} paintings or empty and deflated
looking. In this way, these skins invoke a sense of having been flayed off a body.

\textbf{Abject}

"It is as if the skin, a fragile container, no longer guaranteed the integrity of one’s
'own and clean self,' but scraped and transparent, invisible or taut, gave way before the
dojection of its contents."\textsuperscript{15}

Meditations on the grotesque led to Julia Kristeva's fundamental text \textit{Powers of
Horror}. In relation to the Skin-Ego, you must abject the things which destabilize your

\textsuperscript{14} Russo, 325.
\textsuperscript{15} Kristeva, 53.
sense of self. The abject is simultaneously not subject and not object, and is, according to Kristeva, an integral part of a person's development.\textsuperscript{16} In order to develop a sense of containment and individuality, the child must "release the hold of" the maternal body so that it does not become abject by identifying with the maternal body.\textsuperscript{17}

\textit{skim} traverses between real objects that illicit disgust and refer to the abject, and the indeterminate nature of the created works. The abject affects both notions of the subject and the object, as Elizabeth Grosz writes:

Neither subject nor object, the abject makes clear the impossible and untenable identity of each. If the object secures the subject in a more or less stable position, the abject signals the fading of disappearance, the absolute mortality and vulnerability of the subject's relation to and dependence on the subject [...] The abject is an impossible object, still part of the subject: an object the subject strives to expel but which is ineliminable.\textsuperscript{18}

My project of \textit{skim} emphasizes what makes the abject so revolting, yet attractive: their ambiguity and threat to boundaries. Your skin is the intermediary between your insides and the outside world. It is when the inside and outside collide, when the mediator is jeopardized or indeterminate that you feel unease. This unease is linked to fear, as well as disgust.

\textsuperscript{16} Kristeva, 1.
\textsuperscript{17} Kristeva, 13.
Disgust

Disgust is one of the most elementary of human emotions to mark the transition from nature to culture.\textsuperscript{19} Disgust is meant as a protective measure - you cook your food to eliminate bacteria, you wash your hands, you do not shit where you sleep. Disgust is emblematic of ambivalences towards our bodies. You find disgusting the things that remind you of your animal origins.\textsuperscript{20} My intent is for the paint and latex skins to remind viewers of their own corporeality, and in that way, their own potential to decay and decompose. The painted skins are not rigid, they droop and wobble, and are limited by physics. Because they are skin-like, they seem to have a potential to touch back if touched, thereby closing the gap between viewer and object. This bodily disgust as a way of protecting the self has also evolved into moral repugnance, which may do more harm than good. Sara Ahmed writes in \textit{The Cultural Politics of Emotion}:

\begin{quote}
When thinking about how bodies become objects of disgust, we can see disgust is crucial to power relations [...] The relation between disgust and power is evident when we consider the spatiality of disgust relations [...] disgust at 'that which is below' functions to maintain the power relations between above and below, though which 'aboveness' and 'belowness' become properties, particular bodies, objects and spaces.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

Do you value that which you have skimmed off the top, or what remains underneath? As long as there are binaries, there are hierarchies. What were to happen if the edges, margins, borders blurred? The physical edges of my work are imperfect, and the paint oozes into each other. As well, I intend to make the line between sculpture and painting hazy with this project. In the exhibition, the notion of each piece as an individual element

\textsuperscript{19} Arya, 35.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 35.

will be dismissed through the decision to create an installation, where each element is part of a greater whole, with potential to grow in magnitude and simultaneously age.

**Borders, Boundaries, Boundedness**

Abjection hovers at boundaries, still operating as a threat to the individual. It transgresses "the boundary between life and death, with 'death infecting life.'"22 This hovering at the boundary makes the states of the object indeterminate, and it is this in-between state "that renders the object abject [...] the corpse is not abject because it stinks or starts to putrefy but because it is in-between categories, which makes the putrefaction abject."23 This movement is not just psychological; the abjecting person can affect physical spaces. As Imogen Tyler notes:

> Abjection is spatializing, in that the abjecting subject attempts to generate a space, a distinction, a border, between [themself] and the polluting object, thing or person. Abjection describes the ongoing processes of bordering that make and unmake both the psychological and material boundaries of the subject.24

The edges of the skins in *skim* are ragged and worn, easily torn or chipped away at. The surfaces acting as margins are fragile, and over time their ability to hold together will diminish. The installation of the works in the exhibition disrespects distinctions and boundaries - each element transgresses the space of the next. There is no beginning or end, much like the grotesque body.

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22 Kristeva, 4.
23 Arya, 27.
Ambiguity

Ambiguity makes you uncomfortable. In an attempt to control ambiguity, you have created categories. White/Black. Inside/Outside. Me/You. You wish to know exactly where the line is so you will not cross it. To be ambiguous is to be abject. It is not when you know exactly when something is not part of you (the cup of coffee, your dog, the sky) but when you are unsure - is the scab that you have removed from your knuckles still you? The fillings in your teeth? The bacteria in your spit?

I specifically made my works so that they can be interpreted as corporeal (where skin is always linked to a body-image regardless if a body is present) but are also not bodily. Where is the line? These works are bodily but also not. They are not referencing a specific part of the body, not a specific anatomical section of the skin, but they are undoubtedly visceral. The pink object from the Sad Sacks group was made to look like an ornate bonnet or shower cap, but can also look like the membrane of a dried bladder or emptied stomach. The shower cap is also another barrier, a way of protecting the head. I think of the caul, the amniotic membrane covering the infant's head.

The multiple plastic-like pieces in You Can't Take it With You (2016) straddle the line between solid and liquid, hard and soft, and take the shape of dead skin flakes or paper tissues. Sometimes they resemble delicate embroidered handkerchiefs, and other times they look like scrunched up used plastic wrap. This ambivalence in waste value is also heightened by the transparency of the material. In making the background and lighting become part of the viewing experience, the bracketing as singular works is weakened. You do not know where one piece begins and ends if the environment becomes part of it.

Mary Douglas in her book Purity and Danger writes that
all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolise its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind. Spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body. So also have bodily parings, skin, nail, hair clippings and sweat. The mistake is to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins. There is no reason to assume any primacy for the individual’s attitude to his own bodily and emotional experience, any more than for his cultural and social experience.25

If the margin itself is dangerous, any threat to it is further agonizing. In *skin* I work with the idea of an "imperfect" skin that has faced traumas. Thinking through diseases, penetration, and interruptions to the surface of the skin, I intend for the viewer to be affected viscerally.

Any injury to the skin accompanies a "threat to the integrity of the secondary fabric of the Skin-Ego."26 You like to think that you are resilient, and yes, your skin does fuse together, scarring in the healing process. But think of the shingles that ravage your nerves, the psoriasis flaring through your creases, the cancer that blooms everywhere the sun has touched you too fiercely. What happens when our physical skins fail us?

The scab is of the skin, but at the same time is different from it, creating an edge that, for some, begs to be picked at. It acts as a foreign object. As Connor notes:

> in marking the place of the injury, refusing to let it dissipate, the scab also transforms it. Since the scab is the mark of the injury, and not the injury

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25 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London ; New York: Routledge, [1966] 2001). 22 All citations are from the Taylor and Francis e-book edition. The author acknowledges how problematic Douglas' text is, especially when discussing ideas of purity and skin. The inclusion of the above quotation was an effort to show the antiquated and accepted notions of purity and perfection, as fraught as they are. For a better contemporary criticism on the pervasiveness of ideas of purity, please see Alexis Shotwell, *Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

26 Connor, 51.
itself, it transforms the injury to the skin into a mark left on the skin [...] A scab is a visual compromise between lesions and healing; it preserves the blemish or disfigurement to the smooth integrity of the skin's surface even as it affirms the skin's successful defence against puncturing or laceration.27

Didier Anzieu states that there are three types of representation of penetration when it comes to the skin and the Skin-Ego: a) a wound, fracture, wearing away at the surface, crushing, scratching, bleeding etc., b) modes or channels for things from the outside to move in or from the inside to move out (an orifice, like a mouth, etc.), c) something permeable and fragile, "something insubstantial or soft, without clear boundaries; something transparent; a withered, diseased, deteriorating or degenerating surface."28

In my works, I play with the "imperfect" skin - not the skin that is radiant with youth, sleek and poreless on the endless parade of advertisements, but the skin that has been jeopardized. Skin aged, discoloured like paper, and susceptible to the elements of the environment, and most importantly transparent or translucent, thereby betraying what it is supposed to be protecting.

The ideal, beautiful body has uninterrupted contours (no dimples, pits, puckers, dents, wrinkles, folds), and the ideal body would be hollow (no innards, no anatomy; a sublimation of materiality) with a taut surface "softly blown" as though "inflated with a gentle breath".29 Disgusting zones, disgusted moments are the tactical entrance points of

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27 Ibid.
the beautiful body's edifice. Folds, wrinkles, warts, "excessive softness," as well as overly large bodily openings, discharges of bodily fluids (nasal mucous, pus, blood), and old age are seen as "disgusting."\(^{30}\)

In the case of the fold, the skin is not damaged through 'excrescences' and 'accretions'; rather, as an intact surface, it is folded into itself. In this manner, it becomes an ambivalent 'growth,' traversing the guiding distinction of outside and inside, bodily surfaces and bodily depths. The fold arches the outer so thoroughly into the inner that the outer seems to loose [sic] itself into the inner.\(^{31}\)

I have used folds in my practice in order to take the flat peeled latex and turn it into sacks. By breaking the "skin-line" these paint bags point to that which is deemed disgusting. The folds also allow the veil-like materials to reference textiles and clothing. Ruching and pleating are elements in sewing in order to create ornamental areas on a dress. This decorative aspect complicates the associations with the abject.

By folding the substrate, I also complicate the surface qualities of painting. No longer just acting like a ground for the image, the folding and ruffling allows for ground and figure to collapse into a formless and physical composition. As Ayra writes, "form is maintained when figure can be discerned from ground, and subject from object, and so the formless implies the collapse of the two states."\(^{32}\)

\(^{30}\) Menninghaus, 7.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., 76.

\(^{32}\) Arya, 29.
Formless

George Bataille's theory of l’informe (the formless) is about debasing human form and base materialism. The formless deforms or make formless something, and implies a sense of the "derangement of form."  

[the impetus of the formless] is to begin the process of unraveling, where form and meaning is undone, boundaries are undone, and matter is left to exist in the unbounded potential that it harbours. The job of the formless is to undo the system of meaning and classification by blurring the distinctions between form and ground, inside and outside, and anatomical differences.

Formless, like the abject, the grotesque, and disgust, occupies indeterminate states. "The formless disrupts the envelope of containment and, similarly, abjection prevents the subject from being self-contained by posing a perpetual threat." The desire to debase, degrade, proximity to materiality, trajectory towards negation are all elements of the abject and the formless. In Formless: A User's Guide, Yves-Alain Bois writes, "Nothing in and of itself, the formless has only an operational existence: it is a performative, like obscene words, the violence of which derives less from semantics than from the very act of their delivery [...] The formless is an operation."

Concepts regarding viscosity and texture provide insight into our disgust with the slimy and sticky. The substances which I use in my artwork have this characteristic, especially in their wet state. The viscous or slimy inhabits a place between liquid and

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33 Arya, 128.
35 Arya, 125.
solid, and the thickness of the substances inhibits easy removal. The slimy spreads and pulls into itself anything that it touches. Substances which are "sticky, semi-fluid and quasi-obtrusively clinging" are especially revolting.\(^\text{37}\)

I work the inherent nauseous qualities into the pieces with latex manipulating the characteristics of paint. When the oils and solvents of the painted imagery react with the latex, a new sticky surface appears, shiny and dripping.

Bois speaks of the horizontal in relation to the formless. The horizontal is the space of the body, whereas verticality is the space of the optical.\(^\text{38}\) I utilize both axes in these works. Like other painters (Jackson Pollock, Lynda Benglis) I often begin on the floor, letting the paint or latex pool out, before peeling the dried films and working further on them on a vertical plane. In printing, the matrix is laid flat, and pressure applied from above, in a left-right motion that again highlights the horizontal quality of these works. When using mold-making materials, again the horizontal and physical limits of gravity are affecting the way the pieces turn out.

**Dirt and Purity**

You wash your hands before you eat, when you arrive home, after taking out the garbage. You vacuum and mop the floors - any dust that lives in your space has the potential to touch you, to transgress the boundaries of your skin and enter your body. You manage your dirt, the way you manage your debt. Some days your hands are raw from the scrubbing.


As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder. If we shun dirt, it is not because of craven fear, still less dread of holy terror. Nor do our ideas about disease account for the range of our behavior in cleaning or avoiding dirt. Dirt offends against order. Eliminating it is not a negative movement, but a positive effort to organise the environment.\textsuperscript{39}

To reflect on dirt means to reflect on the relations of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, and life to death.\textsuperscript{40}

In the rope piece, I poured latex into a seam of my studio floor. This seam had accumulated residue that I could not sweep away, including fragments of plaster, copper shavings, paint chips, and dust. I think of the mites that feed on the skin cells in that crack. In thinking about the seam in the space where I work, the seams on my own body come up.

The cast latex piece acts like a monument to the dirt that we cannot escape, try as we might to remain clean. Constant cleaning and tidying is an attempt to sustain a false purity. If we were to forego the idea of purity, what would happen? In her book Against Purity, Alexis Shotwell argues our obsession with purity is an artifice: "The metaphysic of purity is necessarily a fragile fiction, a conceit under constant but disavowed threat - to affirm a commitment to purity is in one move to glance at the entanglement and co-constitution, the impurity, of everything and to pretend that things are separate and unconnected."\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{39} Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo, 2.

\textsuperscript{40} Douglas, 18.

\textsuperscript{41} Alexis Shotwell, Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 16.
We are not born pure. In fact, "[we] are all already polluted. We have more micro-organisms in our guts than we have cells in our bodies—we are crawling with bacteria and we are full of chemicals. We are, in other words, continuous with everything here on earth. Including, and especially, each other." Shotwell's argument against the notion of purity is "against the rhetorical or conceptual attempt to delineate and delimit the world into something separable, disentangled, and homogenous [...] against the logic of boundedness."

Matrices and Material; Metaphors and Multiplicity
The matrix is where you began, small, surrounded by a sack before you were strong enough to create a new crust. In thinking about matrices, I am returned to the way words inform the creation of works. Judith Butler writes in *Bodies that Matter*:

> The classical association of femininity with materiality can be traced to a set of etymologies which link matter with mater and matrix (or the womb) and, hence, with a problematic of reproduction. The classical configuration of matter as a site of generation or origination becomes especially significant when the account of what an object is and means requires recourse to its originating principle.

The matrix is also where the soft tissue beginnings of teeth and nails erupt. The term matrix in printmaking is the form used to reproduce. When the matrix wears down, the print run is over.

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43 Shotwell, 15. Emphasis added.

Much of my work is created from a matrix or generated off something else: the floor, a mold, a copper plate. The idea of reproduction and multiplicity, a somewhat opposing notion to that of decomposition and decay, further complicates the materiality of the body and of these works. As Butler says, "to be material means to materialize." The potentiality of matter creates an oscillation between qualities of the living (composing) and the dying (decomposing).

In Ursula K. Le Guin's essay *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, she argues that the first cultural object created was in fact not a weapon, but a bag. The most "human" thing to do is to "put something you want, because it's useful, edible, or beautiful, into a pack or a basket [...] a net [...] and then take it home with you, home being another, larger kind of pouch or bag, a container for people, and then later on you take it out and eat it or share it or store it up." The body has many bags too. I think of other metaphors for pouches: Anzieu's theory of the psychic envelope, and the matrix or womb being the first container for a human. The pieces that have been ruched and folded ornately into themselves reference Le Guin's writing. The skin shell people sit in - the surface painted and decorated in ways that point to the artworks own shifting and decomposition. Working with the textile qualities of these skins, I folded and stitched them together so they would gather together like pouches, emphasizing their materiality. Fabric like the clothing we wear or the coverings we use for warmth and protection are much like second skins, thus having a

45 Butler, 32.
relation to the body. The use of tulle adds a lightness that mirrors the translucency of the acrylic mediums and latex, allowing whatever is underneath to show through. The tulle is decorative yet has a function much like a net, capturing fragments of waste, acting as a sorting mechanism. The grate and screen-like material points to spatial structures that represent thresholds, of passages, and also point to the net-like beginnings of skin grafts. I have also thought about the use of colour, the pigment suspended in binder that either sits on the surface of these skins or becomes integrated into the material itself. The colour of an object is the colour of the surface; it is something that touches skin that is bound to skin: a second skin (layer/film) a veil.47

A Bag Emptied Out

skim is about the skins that hold you together, that shake your understanding of yourself. skim is dirt, is the relinquishing of boundaries, and is the rumination on the ambiguities that unsettle. By discussing theories on the physical and psychological, I have essentially shaken out this mixed-bag so that everything inhabits the same space: the delicate, the ragged, the surface and the depths, the bodily and the visual, the coalescing and the dissolving.

47 Connor, The Book of Skin, 151.


Case Study

Flesh/Flash

A pictorial orgy. A carnal torrent of torsos and blurred faces and twisting penises, seemingly stretching beyond the canvas. How many bodies do you see? Twenty? One? None? These fleshy morsels have titillated the art world for two decades. The figures in *Puce Moment* [Figure 1] are thick and pink as they merge into each other.¹ Like new born babies, they seem to be dripping and writhing in blood. The faces blur and morph into hunks of ambiguous flesh; they vary in size so that there is no reference of scale. In *The Girl Who Had Everything* [Figure 2], the flashes of black and pink collide with swatches of red, and the figures are less distinguishable.² At times you are not quite sure what you are looking at, and yet you cannot look away. Like looking at a crash, you rubberneck.

To say Cecily Brown makes paintings about bodies is not incorrect, but rather an understatement. For she also makes paintings about painting. As much as her entrance onto the radar of contemporary painting surrounded her loose and messy handling of pornographic scenes, her works hinges heavily on the histories and theories of painting. As a young, female, British artist, she relocated to New York in 1994 and trailing in the shadows of the successful Young British Artists, Brown found herself in magazines such as Vogue and Vanity Fair, and was in a roundtable regarding the renaissance of painting on the Charlie Rose show in the late 1990s. Articulate and lucid in her responses, Brown is generous in giving insight into her methodology.

Cecily Brown speaks to two main influences throughout her work: the body and the discourse of painting. In an attempt to understand the artist's development of these two ideas and how they relate to each other, I will be discussing her oeuvre, as well as focusing on her series based on the provocative photo in the Jimi Hendrix Experience album *Electric Ladyland*, and her *Combing the Hair* series. In addressing formal qualities, especially in the tension between figuration and abstraction, I will bring in comparisons to the paintings of Francis Bacon in relation to the theories of the grotesque and the abject. In light of my current studio direction, the interest in Brown came from a personal struggle with painting, especially in the negotiation between the figural and figurative presentation of the corporeal. Brown's work is not just representational; one could argue that her work is far from representation. But it is also about sensation: the sensation of having a body, of engaging in sexual acts, of the violence in existing with and as a body.

**Link to Francis Bacon**

While there are clear differences between the methodology and execution in Brown's work, the influence of Francis Bacon is evident. In both cases the figure is present, however distorted or grotesque it may appear. In his influential book on Francis Bacon's corpus, *The Logic of Sensation*, Gilles Deleuze covers three main analytical sections about the painter: the Figure, the Field, and the Contour. It is Deleuze's ruminations on the Figure that I find most compelling. The Figure is often isolated in Bacon's paintings, so as to "avoid the figurative, illustrative, and narrative character the
Figure would necessarily have if it were not isolated.\(^3\) Deleuze continues that in order to bypass the figurative (that which illustrates; is representational) painting can either move "toward pure form, through abstraction; or toward the purely figural, through extraction or isolation.\(^4\) Cecily Brown has chosen a middle ground between the two options; she utilizes abstraction and the figural simultaneously.

Much of the discussion surrounding Brown's paintings is on the interaction between the figural and abstraction. As Klaus Kertess puts it, "I had been looking at an abstraction that was not an abstraction and a figurative painting that had neither narrative nor visual coherence. What was it to be labelled? Figtraction? Abfiguration? Neither, of course, would do."\(^5\)

For Brown, it seems the categories between abstraction and the figure are not simply dichotomous. Brown has affirmed that she does not try to hide the figure in abstraction after she has placed it on the canvas, but rather creates a simultaneous process that enables both to exist. Albeit gestural and loose, her paintings are calculated. Brown is aware of the sort of interaction viewers have with her pieces. She states:

> [As] soon as I put a shoe in, or some toenails, then that can be misleading, because people start searching for the leg and it becomes a game. I don't mind the idea of looking at painting as a game -- it should be a pleasurable, even a hedonistic experience -- but I don't want the viewer to


\(^4\) Deleuze, 2.

become frustrated if the parts don't add up neatly. They add up to a painting, not to an image.  

For Brown, the sum of these parts does not offer the finality of an illustration, that is the legibility of recognizable shapes. There is muddled legibility, and a sort of coalescing that points towards the movement of formlessness, a concept I will return to later.  

Brown's work has an allover composition reminiscent of the Abstract Expressionists; her ideas regarding the medium alternate between Clement Greenberg's emphasis on the formal qualities of painting, and influences from historical Western painting, such as the work of Francisco de Goya, Peter Paul Rubens, and Jean-Honoré Fragonard. Her palette is varied as she moves from fleshy pinks and reds reminiscent of Phillip Guston's paintings, to grisaille backgrounds. A consideration of various sources of historical painting is evident in the oscillating between abstraction and figural shorthand and the physical states of the paint as well. As James Lawrence writes in a 2013 catalogue from the Gagosian Gallery: "The most persistent indications of transformation in her work correspond with the physical dynamics of paint: transitions between liquid and solid, elisions of opacity and translucency, and the concurrent rather than instantaneous nature of the result. The present tense of painting is sustained and porous."  

Looking at Looking  

Brown's work is ladened with the weight of references. While it is clear she is looking at historical 19th and 20th century paintings during the creation of her later  

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works, she also looks at newspapers, magazines and children's books; for Brown there is no hierarchy in her sources of imagery. In 2012 and 2013 she created a series of paintings, which includes *Name That Tune* (2012) [Figure 3], *Untitled* (2012) [Figure 4], and *Where They Are Now* (2013) [Figure 5] based off a photo in the 1968 Jimi Hendrix album *Electric Ladyland*. In this photo by David Montgomery, a group of nude woman, connoting groupies, are gathered together against a black backdrop. With no interaction between the figures, the women stare expressionless at the viewer. This viewer, regardless of wealth, class, or expertise in visual culture, is interchangeable; while historical paintings generally privileged the viewer's gaze as voyeuristic, the women in Montgomery's photo eradicate any expectation of intimacy.

In Brown's interpretations, the women's faces lose detail. Their facial features blur together, as do their limbs. It is difficult to distinguish one body from another, except for a stroke here and there of different colours that hint at a limb or a face that is separate.

Brown has played with the viewer's gaze time and time again. For the women in the 2013 series, the murky faces erase identity, placing emphasis on the physical body, but also conjure up the idea of a blurry photo. The blurring movement suggest an indeterminacy that implies a transition of sorts, a "moving towards the future without...

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10 Lawrence, “Time Laid Bare.” 10.
accepting that the past is finished" as Lawrence puts it in "Time Laid Bare."

Brown has articulated her expectations about the viewer's voyage through her paintings:

How can I paint the equivalent of what it's like to move through space, to move through the world, to be in a room, in a park, on the street? [...] I am interested in the unfixed nature of things. I want the work to have a trapped energy so that the paint seems to vibrate in place. I want the viewing of it to approximate the experience of being in the world.

This disappearing and reappearing is nothing new. Jerry Saltz, in a review of Brown early in her career, says "[bringing] together abstraction and figuration and adding sex is merely oil painting as usual." By introducing dynamic qualities of "eroding definition" taken from the histories of late 19th century and early 20th century painting Brown attempts to "present mood or emotion as felt experiences rather than descriptions... [she is] giving us something more real than mere definition: she gives us glimpses." While it may seem paradoxical, the viewer has to spend time with this glimpse. Brown has suggested that she wishes the viewer to look at the paintings for a while, so that there is a revealing of detail; a limb emerges and disappears, or a foot slowly turns into the hand of the next figure. It is a moment that eludes a static moment; the temporal aspect of the glimpse allows the subject to feel "more real than something

11 Lawrence, 16.
14 Lawrence, 13.
that's fully described." The multiple renditions of these similar paintings recall how Old Masters would obsess over the same subject matter again and again. Brown's choice of inspiration however, meshes low-brow pop culture with the practices of Classical Art, thereby infusing her work with irony. Even though in her rendering of the *Electric Ladyland* photograph the women's faces are obliterated, the sensation of their powerful, unwavering expressions still remains.

Referencing Edgar Degas' *La Coiffure*, Brown created two paintings in 2012 and 2013, called *Combing the Hair* [Figure 7] and *Combing the Hair (Miami)* [Figure 8], respectively. In Brown's paintings, the figures come in and out of recognizability, like a camera lens focusing. If it were not for the alluding titles and the more discernible head and mane of the long-haired figure in the top left corner of *Combing the Hair (Miami)* the reference would be obfuscated. The figures in Degas' *La Coiffure* and Brown's *Combing the Hair*, unlike the figures drawn from the Electric Ladyland photo, are in their own world. Lawrence writes of Degas that the "absorption of female nudes in works from the late nineteenth century often involve elision of figure and ground in an attempt to convey the emotional aspect." Brown uses this kind of absorption in the figures of her own work, but her "figures are seldom inert." They thrust themselves upon and into each other. The energetic pictorial movement in these

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18 Lawrence, 16.

19 Ibid.
paintings in a way contaminates and collides with the background, activating it in order to further fragment the bodies. In this way, the figures ignore the viewer's gaze entirely, without the sense of them passively put on display. Brown demonstrates her skill of looking at looking; that is to say, she is looking at how past painters anticipate the viewer's gaze and interaction with the figures of their works.

**Figure/Ground**

This elision of the ground and figure is an aspect of Gestalt psychology, and be helpful in advancing ideas of the abject and grotesque in Brown's work. Comparatively, the figure/ground relationship in Francis Bacon's work is important in his exploration of violence and sensation, as thoroughly discussed by Gilles Deleuze. There is an element of abject horror, according to Deleuze, when the Figure moves towards the material structure - the field of colour surrounding the Figure in Bacon's paintings. The Figure "has been a body...[and it] attempts to escape from itself by means of....in short, a spasm: the body as plexus, and its effort or waiting for a spasm."\(^{20}\) Brown actually wishes to avoid his work. In an interview with Robert Enright in 2005, she says "[My] early paintings are the most embarrassing, derivative, awful teenage Bacons you've ever seen. He was always the one I had to avoid."\(^{21}\) She continues that "Bacon painted flesh beautifully. You feel that he loves it. It's like flesh was this fragile organ within this nasty

\(^{20}\) Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. 15.

situation, which I'm more interested in, too [...] Flesh really is the thing that I've loved more than anything about oil paint.”

Brown's handling of flesh is not immediately abject, in the way we have come to understand the word in the art world. With Julia Kristeva's *Power of Horror* translated in 1982, and the Whitney Museum's 1993 mounting of *Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art*, the word abject became synonymous with the use of transgressive bodily fluids such as feces, blood, and urine, and with the inversion of interior and exterior and general referencing to the body. Brown's flesh does not subscribe to those typical aspects of abjection, especially in the paintings she made after 2000. Her later works utilize a mixture of colours that are aesthetically pleasing; in the same interview with Enright she speaks about her "crush on colours" and gushes about the use of lavender in her paintings. Her lush colour palette is beautiful, and simultaneously undercut by the graphic representation of the sensation of sex through her violent and athletic gestural paint application. There is a sort of "hysteria," to use Deleuze's term, in the violent amalgamation of figural parts in Brown's paintings, especially the more abstracted ones, which evokes a sense that the Figures are trying to escape from themselves and merge with the material field of the painting. In this way, Brown builds on the methodology of Bacon.

The hues used in *Puce Moment* (1997), *The Girl Who Had Everything* (1998), and *On the Town* (1998) are similar, and given what we know of Brown's process, speak to each other. "The paint on the surface of the canvas appears to breathe, making her

\[22\] Ibid.

\[23\] Ibid., 37.
paintings come alive with a human presence and, more significantly, with human sexuality. In Brown's work, paint literally becomes skin.” The bodily pinks and reds of the thick limbs and sections of genitals evocatively combine the carnal with the fleshiness of oil paint. These paintings can be seen as referencing George Bataille's theory of base materialism, a reconfiguration of the human body that moves away from that which is 'external and foreign to ideal human aspirations' (Bataille, 1985, 51) and towards the brute irreducible materialism of the anarchic body in its baseness. . . Base materialism also involved depicting the realism of the body which entailed recognising that the body was not an external static representation but was instead prone to breakdown, fragmentation and dissolution, where the body-part was used to explore questions of identity, sexuality and death.

There is a confluence of sex and death in Brown's work, especially in her paintings from 1997/1998. Particularly in Puce Moment, the orgiastic scene has similarities to a mass burial ground as the bodies pile on top of each other. In representing a celebration of the physicality of the human body, Brown portrays the most abject experience of life: the corpse.

Slip

Brown's process employs a sort of figural abstraction. Through the collapsing and melting of the figures into each other and their environment, the psychological figure/ground relation transforms. Brown speaks about slippages in her work; of wanting the figure to be present, but allowing it to slip away, so that the painting is not so fixed.

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24 Jeff Fleming, ed., Cecily Brown (Des Moines Art Center, 2007), 49.


She works on "how to catch that kind of slippage, how to almost court it." The language Brown uses in manipulating this slippage is consistent. She employs a type of pictorial shorthand, a sort of "Cecily Brown code," where she adds a mark that might allude to a fingernail, an eyelash, a gesturing hand if she feels the figure slipping away too much. She continues:

My ideal is to have the tension and intensity of an aggressively sexual image without actually having to describe that [...] I don't like it when people think there's something specific and final that they have to find [...] It's about looking and what you get from allowing the imagery to shift and change. There isn't a final destination.

Quoting Bacon, Brown voices her search for "the sensation without the boredom of conveyance [...] I've always wanted to be able to convey the figurative imagery in a kind of shorthand [...] I want there to be a human presence without having to depict it in full." This slippage and joining of the figure to the background causes a rupture in the expectation of boundaries of the human body. If we were to return to the original text of Kristeva, we can develop why ideas of boundaries are important to develop understanding of abjection. Rina Ayra, who has written books on the abject in visual culture, summarizes Kristeva's ideas:

The need for the boundary arises in order to keep the subject away from the potential source of disruption. Ordinarily that which is other to the subject can be objectified and distanced from the subject, thereby not posing a threat to its subjectivity. In cases of abjection, however, the

28 Ibid.
30 Ibid., 28.
source cannot be objectified and it threatens the subject with engulfment and dissolution.\textsuperscript{31}

According to Arya, for Kristeva the maternal body is the first instance of abjection; the infant rejects the mother in order to become the symbolic Subject (as a separate and independent person to the body of the mother). This abjection necessitates the formation of boundaries. There is dislocation from the viewer being unable to delineate the bodies in Brown's paintings; the figures are unable to "stand apart as autonomous subjects."\textsuperscript{32} That is to say, the figures in Brown's paintings are unable to be individual selves; they are continuous with one another, and continuous with the activity of the background. The hierarchy of figure and ground collapses into itself, and the figures, because they unable to stand as autonomous with defined boundaries, are under threat to become abject.

**Boundaries**

The blurring of boundaries is shown through the fragmentation of bodies in Brown's work. On Bacon's work, Arya quotes Olivier Berggruen who identifies two strategies of experimenting with the fragmentation of the body in visual arts:

one is predominantly anatomical, in which different parts of the body are given an unusual prominence, without compromising the verisimilitude of the anatomical model. Another, more radical one features the notion of 'assemblages' in which different body parts are taken out of context and reassembled in a seemingly random way.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{31} Rina Arya, “The Fragmented Body as an Index of Abjection,” 105.

\textsuperscript{32} Arya, 115.

\textsuperscript{33} Olivier Berggruen, *Picasso and Bacon: Painting the Other Self*, 2003, as quoted in Arya, "The Fragmented Body", 109.
In Bacon's assemblage, the idea of the grotesque is present in his work and his reconstruction of the human body. The horrendous, deformed figures in Bacon's paintings threaten stability in the human form. Rina Ayra writes:

Bacon enacts a shift from the depiction of a body that is frozen in appearance and fixed in time to a representation that captures temporality and change, what I describe as the natural body. He depicts the natural body with recourse to smudged contours and blurred boundaries — the body is in a state of liquefaction [...The viewers] see the body but experience sensations that evoke a sense of embodiment [in Bacon's work. The viewers] move from inner to outer.\(^{34}\)

Similarly, if we were to compare Brown's work to Bacon's, her figures evoke a type of grotesqueness as well, as their parts end and conjoin abruptly, without representing the full body in its original form. The body parts are twisted and entwined, resembling a monstrous pile of guts, fleshy and unstable, as though collapsing or melting into each other.

In Gestalt psychology there is a human tendency to search for groups and patterns within visual data. When a viewer experiences Brown's work, they search for the bodies: the mark that looks like an arm leads to a torso, the brushstroke suggests a shadow of a thigh. However, Brown does not give the viewer that satisfaction. In *Formless: A User's Guide*, Rosalind Krauss writes of the "perfect Gestalt," defining it as "a whole body from the outlines which nothing is 'missing.'"\(^{35}\) The figures in Brown's paintings are fragmented to the point that they no longer resemble a whole body. This view of the body


is jarring but Brown utilizes her abstract mark-making to add a sense of beauty; these bodily fragments are unhinged, overlapping, and seemingly devoid of gravity and the physical limitations of a body. Kertess speaks of hovering and of Brown's brushstrokes seeming to be free from gravity and in "limbo [...] in a realm of irresolution." 36 In this way, Brown's paintings do not give closure. 37

Conclusion

Cecily Brown's practice has moved through many ideas about the role of the figure in painting. The fragmented bodies in her work point toward the abject, the grotesque, and base materialism. In combining the fleshiness of the figural with the all-over composition of abstract painting, Brown has created a corpus that evokes transition and instability that meshes the figure with the ground, so that bodily boundaries are blurred. The artist's use of absorption, slippages, as well as an exploration of the grotesque body, and of artists like Francis Bacon shows a intricate painting practice. With a diverse range of influences including pop culture and historical painting, Brown's practice joins the rich history of Western painting with a contemporary sensibility.

37 Ibid.
Bibliography


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Documentation of Work Produced

Untitled (First Skin), 2016, acrylic, polymer medium, latex house paint, wire thread, approx. 36" X 30"
Untitled (First Skin) (detail), 2016
Untitled, 2016, acrylic, polymer medium, latex house paint, gesso, graphite, salvaged wood stretcher frame, 40” X 36”
"Untitled, 2016, acrylic, polymer medium, latex paint, gesso, graphite on salvaged wood stretcher frame, 44” X 40”"
Untitled (What Doesn’t Belong to You Anymore), 2016-2017
Acrylic, polymer medium, latex house paint, gesso, graphite, salvaged wood stretcher frame, stretcher frame 40” X 36”, paint skin installation dimensions variable
Untitled (Oval Scab), 2017, oil, rubber latex on plastic, 48” X 72”
Untitled (Oval Scab) (detail), 2017

Untitled (Round Scab), 2017, oil, rubber latex on plastic, 50” X 51”
Untitled (Tuna Melts, Tourist Shirts), 2017, oil, rubber latex, thread, 10" X 54"
Untitled (Tuna Melts, Tourist Shirts) (Unfolded Layout), 2017
*Untitled*, 2017, copper piping, papier mâché, rubber latex, silicone caulking, packing peanuts, saliva, approx. 48” X 72”
You Can’t Take It With You, 2017, paper, resin, papiermâché, plastic tarp, plaster, rubber latex, packing peanuts, detritus in clear vinyl, dimensions variable

Sad Sacks, 2017, acrylic medium monoprints, 6” X 3”, rubber latex coloured with acrylic, 37” X 9” and 33” X 6”
Sore, Sorry, 2017, oil, acrylic on latex house paint, each approx. 35" X 28"

Sore, Sorry (diptych) 2017, oil, acrylic on latex house paint, each approx. 35" X 28"
Softly Blown, 2017, oil, rubber latex, thread, 10" X 35"
Deluxe Mango Callous, 2017, oil, rubber latex, thread, 12" X 25"
Hock (Unplaceable Loss), 2017, rubber latex, acrylic, thread, 24" X 7"
*Cotton and Cheese I*, 2017-2018, oil on rubber latex, 17" X 37"

*Cotton and Cheese I* (detail), 2017-2018
Cotton and Cheese II, 2017-2018, oil on rubber latex, 34” X 48”
Surfaces, Services, 2018, copper tubing, tulle, cast rubber latex, acrylic, synthetic bristles, thread, approx. 38” X 34”
By the way, 2018, tulle, acrylic, detritus, rubber latex, 41” X 34”
Untitled, 2018
Copper tubing, acrylic monoprints pulled from etched copper plates, plaster, rubber latex, approx. 28" X 24"
Untitled (detail), 2018

Wall Wounds (proof mock up), 2018, etching, aquatint pasted onto wall, dimensions variable
*Untitled (Rope)* and detail, 2018, rubber latex cast from seam of studio floor, 17' long
Curriculum Vitae

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Western University
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Faculty of Arts and Humanities Dean's Entrance Scholarship
Western University, London, Ontario, Canada
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Faculty of Arts and Humanities Chair's Entrance Scholarship
Western University, London, Ontario, Canada
2016

Print Media Open Studio Prize
Open Studio and York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
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Jeannie Thib Printmaking Award (shared)
York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2014

Joseph Drapell Award (for Painting)
York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2014

bp Nichol Prize (for Poetry)
York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2014

J.P. Bickell Foundation Award
York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2014

Willowdale Group of Artists Painting Award
Willowdale Group of Artists and York University, Toronto,
Ontario, Canada
2013

J.P. Bickell Foundation Award
York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2013

Nominated for the Hermitage Museum Young Artist Program for
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York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2013

Young-Rahn Woo Memorial Award
York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2012

**Related Work Experience**

Graduate Teaching Assistant
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Research/Studio Assistant (Research at York)
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2013-2014

**Solo Exhibitions:**

*Dulce & Detritus*— Gales Gallery, York University,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2014

*The Threshold* — Special Projects Gallery, York University
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2013
Selected Group Exhibitions:
*RBC Canadian Painting Competition* (forthcoming)
The Power Plant, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2018

PLUS Art Festival (Organized by Keep Six Contemporary Art)
Gladstone Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2018

*Inward Outward* (Curated by Regan Benner and Madelaine Tripp)
Artlab Gallery, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada
2018

*Artist Proof Sale*
Open Studio, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2017

*Common Goods*
Forest City Gallery, London, Ontario, Canada
2017

*Sleight of Hands*
Artlab Gallery, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada
2017

*the first to go will see the last three go before*
SEATELLiTE Project Space, London, Ontario, Canada
2017

*TEAM UP!* (With the Toronto Printmaking Coalition)
Graven Feather, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2016

*Afterimage* (Curated by Katie Marie Bruce and Phoebe Todd-Parish)
Peter Shoebridge Art Studio, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2016

*DEAD MACHINES* (With the Toronto Printmaking Coalition)
Red Head Gallery, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2015

◆◆◆ EURO SPA ◆◆◆ (Curated by Nicole Clouston and QuintinTeszeri)
325 Weston Rd, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2015
**SPACE CASE**  
D-Beatstro, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2015

*Everything & Nothing* (Curated by Amanda Boulos)  
Creatures Creating, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2014

+ & x *Edition and Multiplication*- Annual Printmaking Exhibition  
Gales Gallery, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2014

*FIRST PROOF*- (With the Toronto Printmaking Coalition)  
Oz Studios, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2014

*Parallax* - York University Senior Painting Exhibition  
#Hashtag Gallery, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2013

*VS. Separate* - Annual Juried Art Show by Visual Arts Student Association  
Graven Feather, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2013

*Kunst-o-Rama* - Visual Art Open House  
Goldfarb Centre for Fine Arts, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2013

*Transference* - Annual Print Media Exhibition  
Gales Gallery, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2013

*Painting Area Show*  
Gales Gallery, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2013

*Senior Painting Exhibition*  
Special Projects Gallery, York University, Toronto, Ontario  
2012

*Grow a Pair* (Two-Person Exhibition)  
Gales Gallery, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2012

*Kite-Specific* (Curated by Barbara Balfour)  
The Japanese Paper Place, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2012

_Psychopomp_ - Visual Art Open House
Goldfarb Centre for Fine Arts, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
2012