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FINE ART SCULPTURE

THE USE OF THE BODY IN THE WORK OF HELEN CHADWICK

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is the use of the female body in the work of contemporary British sculptor, Helen Chadwick. She uses her own body in mixed media installations which raise feminist issues of identity. Her work could be described as cumulative self-portraiture which is a critique of the feminine in art, history and contemporary culture. A study of her work, which spans the last two decades of feminist theory, reveals the development of feminist theory concerning the representation of the female body in the visual arts. The body is central to the work of Helen Chadwick, "My apparatus is my body times sensory systems with which to co-relate experience", (Chadwick, 1986, p.109).

Feminist art practice can be divided into two generations, the first was concerned with introducing the experience and sensibility of being female into the visual arts. They produced icons of the female body. Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Table", 1971, New York, for example, consisted of a dinner table with place settings that resembled vaginal imagery set for the names of prominent women. The second generation of feminist artists turned to other disciplines such as feminist critique in literature and psychoanalysis, to produce a more complex critique of the production and evaluation of images of the female in art and contemporary culture. They pointed out the gap between the experience of being female and the idealised or debased images of women produced in the visual arts. These themes of voyeurism and representation dominate the work of Helen Chadwick.

Her work progressed from performance art which explored

these themes, to creating images of her body in installations.

The themes of voyeurism and the display of the female body dominate her work. She uses already established metaphors of female sexuality such as the female nude. Her work constantly addresses the representation of the sexual in art. She seeks to transcend the established definition of representing the female in art. Chadwick challenges phallogentric forms of representation.

This thesis focuses on the problems inherent in representing the female body. Is it possible to represent female identities from a female subjective, in the field of vision dominated by patriarchal codes of representation ? Will the intention of the artist be clouded by these codes of viewing ? Helen Chadwick does not simply present an imitation of series of tropes. She attempts to de-construct the logic of the framework in which the woman's body has been signified in history and contemporary culture.

Her work is autobiographical and a reflection of the on-going feminist debate of representation, sexuality, femininity. Helen Chadwick is an artist who confronts the problems of representation; she corporealises feminist theory and introduces autobiography simultaneously. The two strands of Helen Chadwick's work are; presenting herself through her own body, and creating imagery and new definitions of femininity. Her approach expresses a need to attack the boundaries that restrict the representation of the female body in visual art.

"Everytime the female body is put on display it raises the repressed question of what it is and what it signifies" (Pollock, 1992, p.210).

CHAPTER 1.

A FEMALE SENSIBILITY

Psychoanalytic theory is used as a means to both disrupt and identify the production of the current forms of sexual difference. Its use has enabled feminists to reclaim the body from the realms of immanence and biology, in order to see it as a psychosocial product that is open to transformation in meaning and function, as capable of being contested and re-signified. Psychoanalytic theory is used as a means to expose the mechanisms which construct images of women,

In relation to women it has been shown how as an image "woman" is recruited to service in a phallogentric way at the level of icon offered to and mastered by the gaze which is masculine and phallic, (Grosz, 1992, p.448).

According to Freudian psychoanalysis voyeurism and exhibitionism are two sides (that are active and passive respectively) of the same drive to look which he calls scopophilia. Voyeurism is associated with masculinity and exhibitionism with femininity. These are the gender dictated roles adopted by the sexes in the field of vision. In studies on narcissism he argues that man has the capacity to project fantasy onto the female in her role as object of the male gaze. Voyeurism offers the male pleasure in looking but negates the identity of the female. Identity crises encapsulate the disabling characteristics of femininity (Freud, 1914, p.131). It is under these conditions that the female body is displayed in the visual arts. The artist described images of women that were

alienated from the stereotypes that represented women in a patriarchal culture.

A theoretical analysis in the 1970's by Laura Mulvey applied Freudian psychoanalysis to the narrative structure of contemporary cinema. She argued that images of women are inexorably involved in a cycle of voyeurism and exploitation.

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance pleasure in looking has been divided between active male and passive female. The determining male gaze projects fantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed. Their appearance coded for strong erotic and visual impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-atness (Mulvey, 1975, p.11).

The images representing women that are produced under these conditions represent patriarchal culture's view of women. In Laura Mulvey's analysis "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), she asserts that in a patriarchal culture women are forced to adopt a male viewpoint in their production and consumption of images of women. In order for feminist artists to produce images of women from a female subjectivity it is necessary for them to disrupt the internal organisation of the visual field in which women are represented.

The strategy of Helen Chadwick's early work was described as "Contesting Alienation", (Cork, 1977). "In the Kitchen" was first exhibited in 1977 at the Chelsea School of Art. It consisted of four performers who were trussed in skeletal metal frames that were encased in P.V.C. and which were simulations of

archetypal modern appliances; a sink, an oven, a fridge, and a spin dryer respectively. The performers appeared expressionless and disaffected. The performance deals with the issue of the female body as a fetish object. Freud defines fetishism as that process by which an object becomes psychically invested with the value of the fetish. The fetishist disavows what he sees which is the absence of the phallus and in the place of this he positions substitute. Fetishism for Freud is a uniquely masculine phenomenon. Fetishization renders the object into an image of another genital object thereby sexualizing it and making it into an appropriate or worthy object. This describes a common male mode of objectifying the female body, (Freud, 1923, p.235). The kitchen "equipment" was equated with female sexual organs; the hot plate rings of the cooker became breast plates the spin dryer became a womb. In this installation Helen Chadwick is associating the function of the woman in a social capacity as a house wife with the function of the sexual organs of the woman's body.

Helen Chadwick remained in the category of "performance artist" in her second major work. This performance describes a woman's individual experience of alienation from her gender identity. The performance was set in a London Underground train carriage which was meticulously reproduced, and set on a dais in the centre of the Spectro Gallery, Newcastle. Helen Chadwick and Phillip Stanley were the performers of "There is absolutely nothing to worry about," (1973). A tape recording conveyed the sounds of the train and the thoughts of the man and woman, who sat opposite each other in silence, to the gallery audience. The two sexes adopt codes of behaviour that adhere to Freud's definition of scopophilia. The man adopts the active role of the voyeur who confers identity on the

woman. The woman adopts the passive role of an object for display. The woman, Helen Chadwick, is convinced that the man opposite is staring at her, that she is the object of his desire. She becomes rigid with fear and anger at this intrusion. Helen Chadwick's performance illustrates Freud's theory of scopophilia. John Berger's sociological study of the representation of women in the 1970's describes women as a sex that are alienated from their identity that is dictated by a patriarchal culture.

Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between man and woman but also the relation of Woman to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male : the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object of vision : a sight (John Berger, 1972, p.49).

In fine art as well as contemporary visual media the female body has been recruited as an icon to serve the fixed gaze of the voyeur. Helen Chadwick attempts to reappropriate the female body as a site for inscription, to be spoken through, and uses it to represent a personal female sensibility.

"Ego Geometra Sum" was first exhibited in 1973 in Belfast Art and Exchange Gallery. It is a narrative autobiography. She uses her own body in a process of self conscious exploration. She depicts her personal development as an artist.

Arranged in a circle in the gallery were a series of wooden geometric forms of objects that are landmarks in the artist's personal history and denote important junctures in her development. They resemble an

incubator, a font, a boat, a wigwam, a piano and a school board and plinth that represent the artist's development through infancy, childhood and education, until maturity which is depicted by the upright plinth. She used a sophisticated photographic technique in treating the objects; they were painted with a light sensitive paint so that the images of the artists body and objects relating to that period in her body's development, are embedded into the wood. The images appear to be part of the objects, encased in the forms. The images were specific to their host sculptures and were either more concrete representations of the objects referred to or images directly related to them.

Helen Chadwick describes the piece as, "my body as a growing child and a succession of everyday cultural objects that offer evidence of the passages of time, the effects and constraining influence of socialisation", (Chadwick, 1979, p.11). The body of the artist is posed in the forms that encapsulate important junctures in her past. The process of making the installation was an act of reconciliation with her identity as an artist; "art, like crying is an act of self repair" (Chadwick, 1973, p.11).

The poses she adopted in the images have the same rigidity as neoclassical nudes. In the title, she refers to Greek mythology. The geometric forms relate to Plato's pythagorean theory that a small number of regular geometric forms account for the construction of the entire universe. The context of the installation is the subjective depiction of the artist's past. She uses the reference to Greek mythology to indicate that her personal development was influenced by a higher order as well as a social order. She represents an individual identity that transcend the fixed sexual identity that is traditionally used to represent women.

This is acknowledged by the reviewer, "what we are and the way we see ourselves is largely shaped by our specific cultural forms and the structures that surround us as we grow up,..... the development that we seem to share,..... common denominators from a shared past" (Donnolly, 1985, p.28). Chadwick succeeds in creating an intimate relationship with the viewer without displaying her body as a sexual object, "important junctures and shifts in the artists personal history were pinpointed with out any sense of narcissism," (Donnolly, 1985, p.28). Symbolising the body as a "woman" not only means bringing a different kind of experience to the making and reading of images, it demands a conscious attempt to transform the condition under which these images are produced. "Ego Geometra Sum" argues the point of a fixed eternal femininity as the subject of the work. The artist's body represents an individual identity not a fetish object. She asserts that the production of images of the body in fine art are part of a culturally determined process, that is art.

CHAPTER 1 : A FEMALE SENSIBILITY

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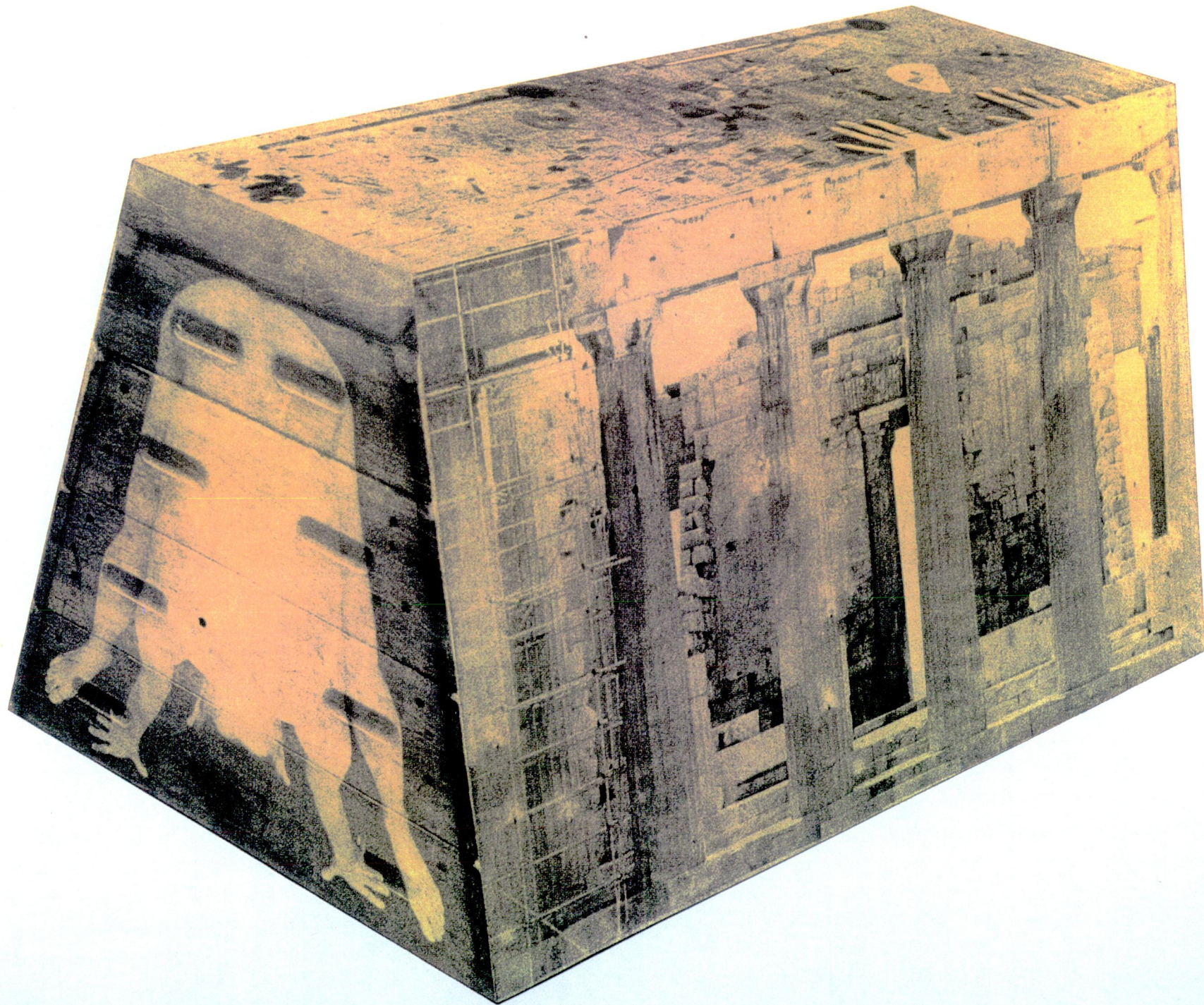
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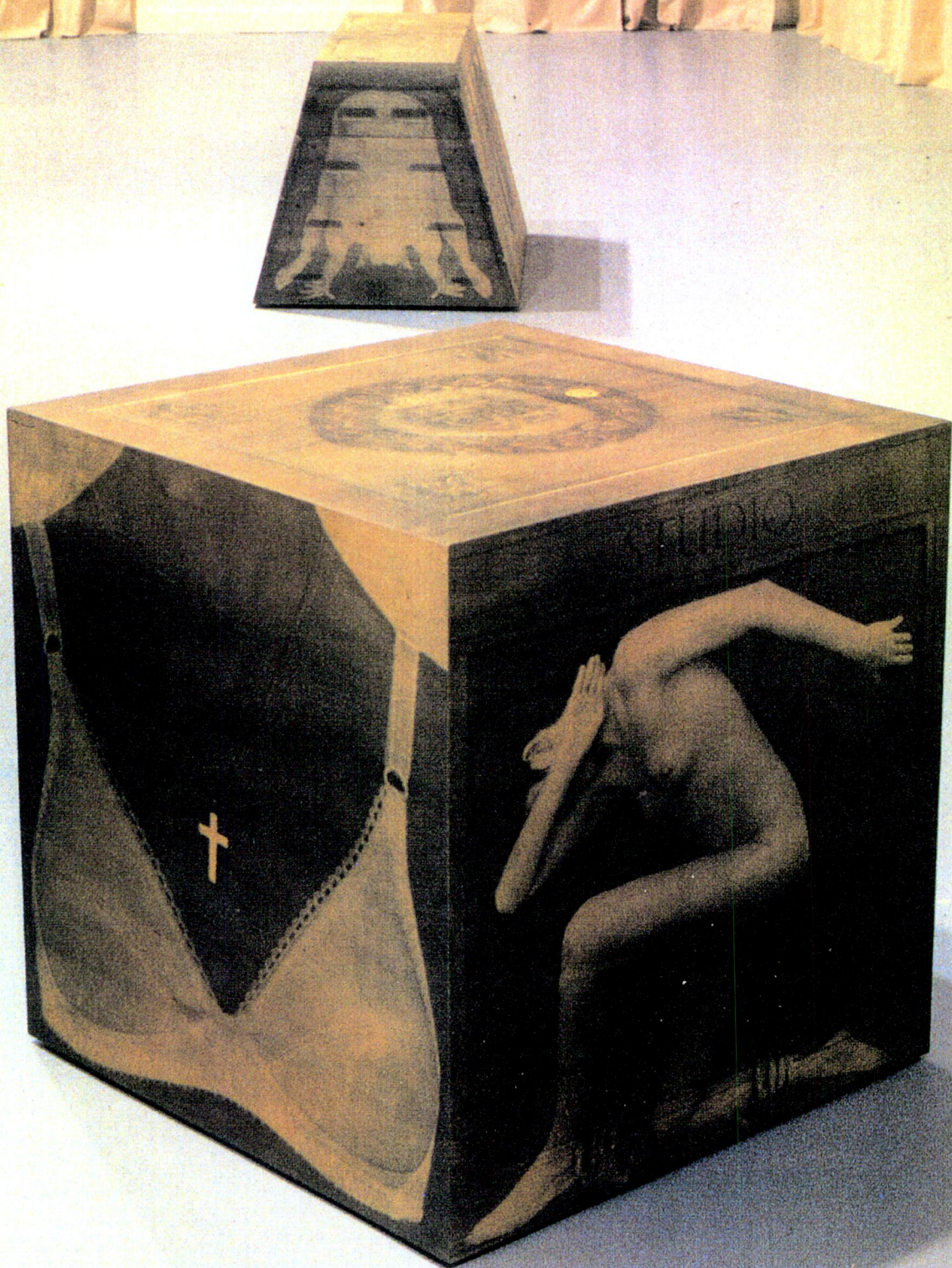
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CHAPTER 2.

SEXUALITY AND REPRESENTATION

The true artist is always the phallus. Women are simply the scenery onto which men project their narcissistic fantasies, (Mulvey, 1987).

Female sexuality is represented by the genre of the female nude in fine art. In this genre the female body is recruited as an icon that is mastered by a voyeuristic gaze which is masculine and phallogentric. It was a feminist project during the late nineteen seventies to provide a link between elite culture forms that are legitimised in their depiction of the female body, and those depicting sexuality that is "on the edge of illicit", (Pollock, 1992, p.205). The aim of this project was to establish that the female body is exploited to the same extent in high culture where it is represented as the female nude and in low culture where it is represented as pornography.

In 1984 in an installation titled "Of Mutability" (Institute of Contemporary Art, London) the artist appropriated fine art poses from Rococo, sixteenth century painting and seventeenth century Dutch painting. She re-appropriated historical tropes and re-represents them in contemporary media. There is a political strategy in her re-appropriation which concerns the marriage of a historical discourse of the body with contemporary theory that relates to voyeurism and the representation of gender identities.

In the female nude genre the female body is exploited to represent male erotic fantasy. The male artist projects fantasies onto the body of the female model. Basically, the relationship between the male artist and

the female model re-instates a relationship where the female is subordinated.

Genuis is creative, and our
guardians of morals, professional
and amateur rightly sense a
connection between lusts of the
body and this creative energy of
the mind and emotions
(Buillet, 1930).

The female model is frequently produced as erotic and always passive, firmly within male possession. Helen Chadwick appropriates both role's that of the artist, and the model.

During the nineteen seventies, a feminist art critic Linda Nochlin attempted to produce an image of the male nude that was equivalent to the breast-woman-apple metaphor which is familiar in Gaugin's depictions of Tahitian women. She created an image of an naked man wearing a beard and holding a banana. The figure of the man looked ridiculous because the "food-penis" metaphor has no upward mobility (Nochlin, 1971, p.440). The patriarchal codes that support our acceptance of an image of woman as an enigma do not exist to support the male heterosexual as passive. It is important to note that contemporary male artists reinstate a similar situation as their predecessors. American artists such as Eric Fischl and David Salle use the female nude in paintings of their erotic fantasies. They have merely evolved from depicting women as passive enigma, to the death and destruction of these women. "The conception of womanliness as a mask behind which a man suspects some hidden danger throws little light on the enigma" (Riviere, 1986, p.43). Helen Chadwick takes on the traditional role of the male artist who is a creator of myths about female sexuality. The question is can female sexuality be represented in a genre dominated

by patriarchal codes of representation. If the female nude is a construction of male fantasy, can it be used to represent female fantasy? She links contemporary techniques with historical emblems, archetype with autobiography.

One of the main objectives of contemporary feminist art in contemporary practice is to address the fixed nature of the sexual in representation and the fixed nature of sexual identity as represented by the female nude. The female nude is a fantasy, a projection of male desire. Feminist artists seek to disrupt the traditional roles of sexually coded viewing that represent women as passive exhibit and male as active voyeur. The intention of this work is to represent a female desire that exists outside phallogentric orders of representing the female body. The artist's intent is to create images that allow the female viewer to experience desire as represented by a state of flux. This allows the viewer to slip between being the desired object and desiring subject when viewing "Of Mutability".

The further question arises as to whether the artist is successful or not in this project. The patriarchal codes of viewing that dominate the production of images of female sexuality, dominate their identity as well. How much are our own identities formed by these depictions? "We learn ourselves through women made by men," (Rowbotham, 1973, p.40). She attempts to create new definitions of female identity by re-working traditional forms of representation.

Representation is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract, a difference then in the relationship to power, language and meaning, (Kristeva, 1982, p.39).

Chadwick attempts to produce the iconic equivalent of her sensations in the images of sexual desire in her third major work, "Of Mutability". It was installed in the three rooms of the gallery at London's Institute of Contemporary Art. The two larger rooms were separated by a lobby which was walled with mirrors. The smaller of the two rooms contained "Carcass" an eight foot tall glass tower which was three feet in diameter and layered with progressively decaying vegetable matter. The tower smelled foul, but was colourful and attractive. In the larger of the two rooms was installed "The Oval Court", as the title suggests the room was created to resemble a courtyard or walled garden. The walls were hung with computer drawings of architect's renditions of the Salomnic columns of the Baldachino in St. Peters in Rome. Each pair of columns culminated in an arch which had the artist's face weeping branches and passion flowers in place of keystones. In the center of the room, there was a construction resembling a "pool" which covered most of the floor area. There are twelve tableaux in the pool of the artist's naked body arranged in a mise en scene with animals organic matter and trinkets.

The images of the body in the "Oval Court" are made by lying the body and animals directly onto the machine and photocopying them. The "pool" is a raised dais in the middle of the floor. It is constructed of blue photocopies and resembles a "pool". The photocopies of the artist's body are then reconstructed in such a way to make a larger seamless image, so that the tableaux

are unified images. The artist's body is presented in a "long limbed idealised form". The various objects in the tableaux, animals, fish and plants, are all treated in the same manner. Marina Warner in her catalogue essay "In Garden of Delights" described the room as a garden,

whose natural properties like the bodies of the resurrected dead are apotheosized by incorporation into the artifice of eternity, anticipatory and celebratory rather than memorial and ironic (Warner, 1986, p.28).

The female body is presented as absorbed in orgiastic sensations of its own desire and construction,

I want to catch the physical sensations passing across the body sensations of gasping and yearning breathing fullness. The bodies are bearing their sexuality like a kind of Aeolian Harp. (Chadwick, 1986, p.39).

Freud argues that sexual desire is always dictated by gender. This theory is founded on the study of the female sex desires the absent phallus to obtain power and sexual maturity. The male voyeur substitutes the fetish for the absent phallus when viewing the female nude. It could be argued that the phallus is present in the form of the "Carcass", however, in "Of Mutuability" I would argue that the desire represented is autoerotic. In "This Sex Which Is Not One" (1977), Luce Irigaray claims voyeurism is essentially a masculine trait and that female eroticism is bound up with touch more than sight and woman's pleasure is autoerotic.

Helen Chadwich has allowed the viewer in "Of Mutability" to identify with a body that is in a state of flux, slipping from the one state to another, between being the desiring subject and the desired object. Her intention was to break the boundaries of visual representation that fix female sexuality as finite.

The design of the "Oval Court" makes references to Roccoco architecture. The room is described by Hilary Robinson as "A courtyard landscaped and embellished for pleasure and fantasy by some hedonistic but tastefully minded God" (Robinson, 1991).

The artist refers to Roccoco architecture because the serpentine forms and excessive decorativeness of the period were associated with femininity.

"It's a dizzy kind of dance and there's no room for function at all. It's a place that began as a dream confection made as a gift of supreme artistry. All the architects resources went into manufacturing a dream reality. The Roccoco is incredibly light and optimistic. It is not about power but about pleasure. It's a unique attempt at finding a spiritual path through a pleasure principle" (Chadwick, 1989, p.27).

The feminist doctrine of examining the relation of art, culture and ideology coincides with post-modern theory that announces the end of the "Enlightenment" narrative of Modernism.

"Modernism has opposed ornament in the name of function in architechure and autonomy in art, Adolf Loos associated ornament with crime and sexual deviancy", (Newman, 1986, p.61).

This complements Chadwick's mimesis of the female nude genre.

The allusion to Roccoco architecture helps to create a "fantasy" setting. In psychoanalytic terms fantasy and desire are linked.

Fantasy however is not the object of desire but its settings, the subject does not pursue the object or the sign, he appears caught up in himself in the sequence of images" (Laplanche, 1968, p.49).

The setting for Helen Chadwick's exploration of female desire is fantasy. This is why she presents the body in a Roccoco setting and in an "idealised form" (Chadwick, 1986, p.23). Chadwick displays in this work a psychic need to defy restrictions of all kinds, to break the bans on pleasure in her garden.

In "The Oval Court" Chadwick has revived certain historical tropes or metaphors in order to re-represent her body. Certain "mise en scene", with the artist holding a mirror while blindfolded and surrounded by fruit feathers and trinkets are direct references to Dutch "Vanitas" paintings of the seventeenth century. The reviewer Marina Warner recognises one pose as a direct imitation of "An Allegory of Venus and Time" (The National Gallery, London).

"Tableaux" and "mise en scene" are used symbolically with the artist's role as creator in mind. She is referring to the Renaissance, humanist paintings of the sixteenth century. Renaissance artist's elaborated theory from Aristotle's poetics; "ut pictura poesis - as in painting so is poetry". They asserted the highest calling of any art is to depict human

action. Renaissance artists used the body as a privileged vehicle for the depicting of "histories". The gestures of the bodies "histories" had to reveal in an instant the story being conveyed. The moment selected by the painter for visualisation was the "perpitua"; that instant in the course of action when all hangs in the balance. Chadwick's method of photocopying the body so it appears frozen in a pose achieves this quality.

"The bodies are bearing their sexuality like a kind of "Aeolian Harp" through which the sensations are drifting and playing. Each of them is completely swollen up with pleasure at the moment when it is about to turn away each has reached the pitch of plenitude" (Chadwick 1989, p.39).

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the Renaissance ideal of a discursive clarity embodied in the human gesture was subsumed within the decorativeness of Roccoco.

By the eighteenth century, however, symbolism had become increasingly esoteric and a matter of purely individual invention, (Burgin, 1986, p.87).

In the Roccoco the body gesture took the form of allegory. One particular pose that the artist adopts in the "Oval Court" refers to a painting from this period; "The Toilet of Venus", 1751, by Francois Boucher.

In contemporary feminist theory representation is held responsible for the perpetuation of stereotypes. For example in Griselda Pollock's "Whats Wrong With Images

of Women", (1975) she holds the image responsible for the misrepresentation of the female identity in art. She criticises cultural forms and institutions as apparatus for male pleasure, working on the viewer through management of fantasy and desire using the female body. Chadwick's mimesis of allegorical poses from Roccoco brings historical perspective to contemporary theory, she corporealises theory in a historical visual using contemporary media.

Helen Chadwick uses the device of the photocopying machine to represent the "body" and an image. "Physicality is reduced to surface, a mere echo of itself the corporeal imploded into dust", (Chadwick, 1989, p.43). Chadwick uses the image to transcend boundaries of representation. "In the callous intimacy of the reprographic process the body passes into transience", (Chadwick, 1989, p.43). The boundaries between artist and image are dissolved, as are the boundaries between living and corpse in the image. These boundaries are only transcendable in this form. By using the body as image, she introduces it to semiotic interpretation. The meaning of an image is derived from the authority that culture invests in it.

Images are fictions that produce distinct meanings both for the term 'woman' and through the inclusion of woman in their semantic field. They display specialised and historically signified rhetorics within iconical and ideological practise, (Pollock, 1990, p.202).

Feminist theoreticians such as Pollock have researched the theory of woman as signifier,

an image is not simply an icon dominated purely by a figurative element. To think of it as such would mean isolating one element from the totality of codes that make up the image. What I am describing is the feminist procedures of syntagmatic analysis of all the elements within one statement and the paradigmatic analysis of the relation of those elements to the sets or connotational groups upon whose existence any one item or technique relies for signifying at all (Pollock, 1990 p.202).

"Woman" is a sign within a signifying system. Even a subjectively produced image is not solely produced from the imagination of the artist. The imagination itself is subject to influence by codes of conduct and morality, "Psychoanalytic theory does not construct a realm of the subjective apart from social life". It is a theory of the internalisation of the social as subjective and as such has profound implications for any theory or ideology. Victor Burgin calls this "transindividual consciousness", (Pollock, 1990, p.204).

Helen Chadwick acknowledges that the boundaries she is attempting to transgress are boundaries of representation. The ideology that sanctions the interpretation of images of women as sexual objects reflects a patriarchal code of social behaviour. In this work the body is not simply given an ornamental role but the role of ornament is being redefined to bring to the fore previously repressed meanings.

The traditional locus for the "female nude" is in a natural setting. Helen Chadwick depicts herself in the "tableau" surrounded by nature, swimming with fish, gagging on fruit, clutching wheat and flowers. Marina Warner, in her catalogue essay, describes the artist in

a garden, "In Garden of Delights", (Warner, 1986, p.43) and refers to the solitary figure of Eve in the Garden of Eden. The title of the installation, "Of Mutability" is taken from the Gerald Manly Hopkin's poem, "The May Magnificat", (Oxford 1941).

"Fish and fleece fur and feathers sod or sheath or shell".

Her use of metaphor is similar to the Romantic poets' sensibility: "I want to catch sensations of gasping, yearning and breathing fullness" (Chadwick, 1986, p.39). This associates desire and bodily sensations, with natural processes. In the construction of the photocopy images of the body, the animals, and organic matter are all treated in the same manner, they have equal presence in the image:

Chadwick has constructed a mise en scene in which her body is at the intersection of two historical systems of meaning, the romantic subject of experience and the pre-romantic subject of allegory (Newman, 1989, p.61).

The subjective poetic use of metaphor gives the image authority,

"the solitary repressive ego harnessed to language is sovereign. This is a landscape on the brink of "I". In the realm of direct sensory experience" (Chadwick, 1989, p.58).

The artist is representing a female body that is exploring physical sensations of desire, physical, beautiful and bestial.

Central to the idea of the Garden of Paradise is the female body as a fundamental element of nature the embodiment of nature not in the sense of mother nature but in a projection of the self (Chadwick, 1989 p.58).

Decay is implied in the title "Of Mutability" and in the reference to Vanitas paintings, of the seventeenth century Dutch tradition.

"Nature morte, dead nature of still life includes the Vanitas as one of its species", (Warner, 1989, p.44). For example; Maria Von Oosterwyck's "Vanitas" of 1688, (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna). The figure is depicted with emblems of time, feathery, falling rose petals, bruised fruits, the same image is appropriated by the artist in the "Oval Court"

The antithesis of the idealised body in the "Oval Court" is the "Carcass", as a tower of decaying vegetable matter. She reminds us that physical sensation is only possible in terms of a finite mutable body. There is a contrast in the work between the idealised images of the body in the "Oval Court", and the decaying matter that represents the body in "Carcass". Images are judged against the world they reflect, reproduce, distort or falsify. The real is always present as the criteria against which all images are assessed. The "real" in this work is present in the body of Helen Chadwick and the "Carcass".

Helen Chadwick refers to this quote from Frida Kahlo, which expresses her attitude to her own body, "the vegetable matter of my bodies language", (Chadwick, 1986, p.54). The artist's continued reference to death and decay contest the notion of the fixed idealised form of representation of the female body.

Each of them is completely swollen up with pleasure at the moment when it's about to turn each has reached the pitch of plenitude before it starts to decay to empty, (Chadwick, 1986, 39).

The "Carcass" piece has dual qualities, it is both attractive because of its colour and activity and repulsive because of the stench of decay. The viewer is reminded of their own body as real, decaying flesh, and introduces the boundaries of time to the representation of the body. She implies the body is constantly decaying,

The spirit plunges optically downward and descends into the flesh, the flesh shines upward towards a transfiguration of its determined tendency to decay, (Chadwick, 1986, p.39).

The "Carcass" piece represents the essential elementary body tied to the confines of matter and time.

The artist's attempt to provide the viewer with iconic equivalents of sensation and to transcend the boundaries of representation is pushed to almost violent extremes. In one particular image the artist presents an image of herself as a two headed goddess clutching sheaves of wheat and holding an axe in place of her pubic area.

The artist's asserted intention was to produce images that allowed for the free play of women's fantasy over the scenes, to allow the objects in the image to evoke sensation rather than to be read in a fixed and literal way. She wants to show, not what female desire might look like, but what it might feel like. What kind of

fantasy, pleasure, or exploration of the self is offered through these images ?

One of the difficulties "Of Mutability" presents arises from the artist's conscious risk taking with the boundaries of the literal and metaphorical as she searches for the iconic equivalent of sensation, (Warner, 1986, p.48).

A noose binds the body, a hood masks the face, a spool unwinds from the intestine of the body of the artist. The artist intentionally introduces historic discourse to the imagery of sadomasochistic practices, to conjure sensation. "She's gagging with pleasure", the artist says of the figure of the "Oval Court". She is bursting out of the basket and fruit is bursting out of her" (Chadwick, 1986, p.39). The artist's defence from the accusation that these images depict violent abuse of women's bodies, is that they are subject to too literal a reading of the image. Jane Gallop asserts that there is a difficulty in reading the female body in the text; "there is a difficulty in accepting the female body as metaphor, a demand that metaphors of the body be read literally" (Gallop 1982, p.228). The artist must acknowledge that some images cannot be used as a metaphor for female desire when their stronger significance is of female objectification. Phallogocentric orders of representation cloud the artist's intentions and in fact can convey sensations of violence and control quite opposite to those she intended. Hilary Robinson asserts that the fact that Helen Chadwick's declaration that she has a "psychic need to defy restrictions of all kinds, to break the bans on pleasure in her garden" is "disingenuous", (Robinson, 1991, p.14). Is this a puritanical feminist reaction on the part of Hilary Robinson ? The artist

declared an intention to transcend barriers of morality. Her aim was to evoke physical sensation in the spectator of the piece.

Two of the figures in the pool are blindfolded, one with a scarf, in a reference to "Vanitas", and another figure's head is hooded completely, apparently a metaphor for the blindness of extreme passion but with more sinister overtones for the viewer.

Hilary Robinson asserts that the immediate significance of this, for most women, in terms of sexual desire is one of powerlessness, and inflicted sadism. For Hilary Robinson, some of the sensations involved by the images in the "pool" were :

a woman in the role of the masochist. The sensations evoked by cornucopia were of hanging, vomiting, death, claustrophobic bondage". The woman's body distorted and implying a fascist form of external control rather than pleasurable tension (Robinson, 1991, p.14).

The problem exists in trying to find metaphors and equivalents that are not already pre-determined or that can be successfully appropriated. Helen Chadwick imagines that the context of the installation will subvert the more obvious meaning of these images, to a female subjectivity. She is representing multiple definitions of female desire that are multiple and not iconic.

Hilary Robinson accuses Helen Chadwick of not extending her imagination far enough towards the viewer. The problem was in finding metaphors of female desire that

have not already been appropriated to express male fantasy and desire. Helen Chadwick's intention, in the installation, was to allow the viewer to slip from desiring subject to desired object.

There are two arguments in defense of Helen Chadwick's use of sado masochistic images. Griselda Pollock in her 1991 essay, "Rethinking, Whats' Wrong With Images of Women", reexamines her original 1977 stance on the representation of female identities in images created by men,

The political identity of the women's movement has been formed in a large part by criticism of the representation of women that circulate through high culture and the media. These "images of women" are difficult to dismiss because of the potency of their formulations of femininity, their fascination and their pleasures. We recognise the gap between idealized or debased versions of "women" and the identities we ordinarily inhabit but in spite of the gap we cannot but acknowledge that to a certain extent our identities are formed through such images, (Pollock, 1991, 202).

It has become a project in contemporary feminist practise to examine the roles of these images as part of the overall project, which dominates Chadwick's work; de-centring subjectivity in the field of vision.

"To rethink masochism through the psychoanalytic mode of fantasy" (Nixon, 1992, p.49).

Mignc Nixon in her study of feminist artist Barbara Kruger's work argues that,

Masochism is feminised through the devalued gender attributes of passivity and submission and opposed to sadistic fantasy masked by putatively masculine qualities of agency and dominance (Nixon, 1992, p.49).

Kruger systematically destabilizes viewing, and demonstrates an acute awareness of the constructed status both of the image and of the identity. These frameworks then repeatedly enact masochism in the loss of identity and call upon the pleasure in loss of both female and male spectators as a basis for destabilising subjectivity, in the viewer. Masochism is used as one strategy for reframing the viewing scene.

This strategy is applied in Helen Chadwick's "Of Mutability". Indeed the project of de-centring subjectivity in the psychic reality, of fantasy dominates her work from this point onwards. In the "Oval Court" the masochistic images of the body have an unsettling effect on the viewer destroying the appearance of a unified, fixed, sexual identity. Robinson in her review of the work acknowledges that female desire must not be represented as monolithic (Robinson, 1991, p.14).

CHAPTER 2 : SEXUALITY AND REPRESENTATION

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CHAPTER 3.

IN HER OWN IMAGE

It has already been established that the desire expressed in "Of Mutability" is autoerotic. The artist makes reference to narcissism which was the subject of the Dutch "Vanitas" paintings of the seventeenth century.

John Berger dismisses the "Vanitas" depiction of woman as morally repugnant,

you painted a naked body because
you enjoyed looking at her you put
a mirror in her hand and you call
the painting vanity thus morally
condemning the woman whose
nakedness. You had depicted for
your own pleasure. This has the
effect of morally condemning the
woman as accomplice in her own
objectification
(Berger, 1973, p.51).

In terms of display narcissism is a device that is used to avoid objectification in Helen Chadwick's work; her display of the body. Michael Newman refers to the "Carcass" as the displaced phallus in the piece. The intention of the artist is to use "Narcissism" to avoid directing display towards the phallus but to explore her own body and desires as autoerotic.

Women throughout history have been critically placed in relation to their own image. Helen Chadwick's use of Narcissism is her way of reclaiming the body for her own use.

Narcissism is used in terms of avoiding fetishization. It is critically limited as an explanation of woman's

relation to images of themselves, in relation to presenting images of women as icons it is presumed that women will identify positively with these images rather than desire them as man does.

Women's relationship is their cultural ideals and therefore their own images is more accurately described as a relation of "Narcissistic damage" (Coward, 1984, p.78).

It is to counteract this "narcissistic damage" that Helen Chadwick uses her own body to explore the boundaries that confine the representation of women to close the gap between experience of femininity and the ideal.

Progress has to be made through self awareness, self understanding but one of the taboos has been an exploration of ones own body to understand the capacity for transience one has to move in the face of theory, (Chadwick, 1989, p.57).

In the catalogue "Of Mut ability", the artist quotes Julia Kristeva's dismissal of narcissism to defend her use of her own body.

Instead of feeling unhappy before your image which you cannot and must not lose go ahead love yourself, henceforth introspection becomes a right. (Kristeva, 1984, p.19).

Helen Chadwick's project is to explore the boundaries of the constitution of female desire. The "Carcass" like some of the images presented in the pool are both attractive and repulsive simultaneously. The images

solicit desire from the viewer but also disgust. This is part of Helen Chadwick's intention to blur the boundaries of female sexual desire. As has been established, male sexuality creates images that objectify the female body. Helen Chadwick seeks to arouse identification in the viewer, not to objectify herself.

Freudian psychoanalysis insists that the two sexes are defined as one body, in which the presence or absence of the phallus signifies ones psycho-social and sexual position. Similarly each of the different sexes desire is focused on the repossession of the phallus. Woman is presented as castrated and therefore desires the male phallus or becomes objectified as phallus.

Michael Newman (1989) suggests that the absent phallus could be in place in "Of Mutuability" in the form of the "Carcass" and that phallogentric codes of representation are in order in the piece; woman as nature, as space; man as culture, as form. However, in Helen Chadwick's installation, the "culture" dominating the room is Rococo, noted for its femininity, which deconstructs the oppositional and the privileged of the phallus in visual codes of representation.

Here the woman's desire is not presented as objectified despite Chadwick's use of accessories and references to Dutch Vanitas paintings where, "the woman hides behind her veil it is the absence of penis that makes her phallus, object of desire" (Warner, 1989, p.51).

After the infant undergoes the Oedipus complex she experiences the castration complex and is thereafter viewed as castrated. The attainment of full heterosexual maturity is coincidental the attainment of the phallus. Women invests the man with possessing the

phallus but cannot thus invest him without her wish to be desired. She becomes the woman men want in terms of phallic exchange, so desire centres around phallic exchange. Symbolically women are represented by men as fetishised because the male viewer attempts to make up for the sight of the lack of penis.

The question in Helen Chadwick's treatment of the female body is whether oppositional systems of sexual identification are in order regardless of whether it is the woman that is privileged. It can be argued that the installation which is wholly feminine, represents a female subjectivity. Chadwick's intention is to represent female desire outside those oppositional phallocentric codes of viewing. It has been argued that female desire is in essence autoerotic; not visually stimulated and therefore un-representable within phallic orders. Chadwick's desire is autoerotic and represents an interest solely in her own body.

CHAPTER 3 : IN HER OWN IMAGE

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CHAPTER 4.

GENDER AND REPRESENTATION

The problems that were encountered by Helen Chadwick in "Of Mutability" call attention to the overall problems of representing a female experience using the template of the female nude. Helen Chadwick encountered problems because the female nude is a stronger metaphor for male desire than female desire. The "spectator," Hilary Robinson, when reviewing the work reacted negatively to the female nude as an emblem of female experience. Nudity and the female body in art were originally seen as representing the patriarchal system in which women were misrepresented. Art that repeatedly condemns these generalisations is tedious. It is far more useful to focus on how the "body" is represented in visual language. Post modern feminist theory analyses representation in a,

careful analysis of the specific constructions of the feminine body as well as specific modes and sites of representation (Pollock, 1992, p.206).

The idea of a genuine female sensibility that exists underneath the layers of patriarchal codes of representation became redundant.

There is no pre-existing sexuality, no essential femininity and to look at the process of their construction is also to see the possibility of deconstructing the dominant forms of representation difference (Wallas, 1984, p.87).

It became possible to perceive that the function of representation is the production of sexual differentiation for which a certain body image, the female body, is the signifier

the issue here is whether we can transcend the idea that representations are symptoms of causes internal to them and learn to understand their active role in the production of these categories,
(Pollock, 1992, p.206).

Representation is one of the many social processes by which specific orders of sexual difference are ceaselessly constructed and reconstituted. Throughout Helen Chadwick's work she re-represents the female body in different forms attributing to it different identities. This is possible because of the idea that womanliness is a masquerade,

The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and masquerade. My suggestion is not however that there is any such difference whether radical or superficial, the voyeuristic masquerade is the male perpetuation and enjoyment of the visual manifestation of the feminine masquerade,
(Rivière, 1986, p.38).

"Woman" is a sign in a signifying system, according to Elizabeth Cowie,

The form of the sign the signifier in linguistic terms may empirically be woman but the signified is not "woman", the implication here is that images of woman do not represent "woman" in any genuine form but circulate an idea "woman" (Cowie, 1978, P.49).

Post modern feminists came to understand "representation", not as a mimesis of some ultimate reality but rather a way of reflecting cultures vision of itself. Representation thus epitomises culture's dominant ideology and is therefore inevitably politically motivated.

The artist attempted to disrupt the fixed social identity of the female body in "Of Mutability". The female body was represented in various states that suggested a variety of possible sexual experiences. In contrast to this the artist's intention in "Los Nymphos", 1987, (Tate Gallery, London), was to use the body to establish a specific identity, to re-establish the feminine gender as the dominant gender of her inheritance or as she terms it the "pre-history" of her body. The body is treated in several ways to represent the specific identities of the mother, daughter, and in an abstract form to indicate a psychic state of pre-oedipal existence.

The title of the work "Los Nymphos" refers to Greek mythology it translates as "Hill of Nymphs". In Greek mythology "Nymphs" were a form of mortal goddess who represented specific localities in a city and generally were wed to the founders of that particular city. Helen Chadwick, throughout her work refers to Greek mythology. The work itself consists of five flat wooden cameos that are hung on the wall of the gallery. Images of the artist's naked body posed with her mother in front of scenes from the city of her origin are projected onto the canvas, illuminating the cameos. The scenes are apparently shot from the balcony of the artist's house which is in the centre of the city. The intention of the work is to re-establish a pre-oedipal link with her mother, to heal the wounds of her separation from her mother and to redefine the sexual

identity of her background, family inheritance and the city of her origin.

If the body in question is female
so then also is this place.
(Chadwick, 1987, p.51).

This is an autobiographical work with a specific narrative, it describes the artist's background.

Perhaps through palpable contact
we can trace a path back to the
pre-lingual delights of childhood.
Betwixt the maternal and the
filial, in the curious luminous
space of these cameos of light
into matter, a pre-oedipal reverie
can be established.
(Chadwick, 1987, p.57).

The spectator views the scenes from the perspective of the artist and the mother's home. This "balcony" is the hypothetical space from which the spectator views the work.

The shape of the cameo resembles the feminine "cartouche of a mother's pendulous body" (Chadwick, 1989, p.75) as the nude was the emblem of female sexuality so the "egg" is the emblem of the maternal and like the nude is a site for re-representation.

"The presence of an object asserts a fundamental status as both body and place at the archaeological site of my being" (Chadwick, 1986, p.75). The "egg" form represents the body in a pre-oedipal state of psychological development. According to Freudian psychoanalysis when the sexuality of the body is at the pre-oedipal stage it is undifferentiated. The body exists in a common ground in which passive and active are instinctual aims which alternate in both sexes.

The pre-oedipal state is one in which the body does not distinguish its own body from that of the mothers. As the infant goes through the castration complex individual sexual identity is adopted and consequently the female loses her ability to confer identity. In this work Helen Chadwick attempts to unify her adult identity with her heritage, in this state she refers to the body as a "re-membered body". "In this uneasy space between language and representation is a crease a territory in which the early self unfolds" (Chadwick, 1989, p.51).

The artist recognises that sexual identity is constructed by language and representation and thus can be re-interpreted. This reflects post modern discourse on the female body, for example Victor Burgin,

"dislocating the privilege view of the voyeur he writes of the phallogentric view and how this must be restructured. The possibility for this has in a showed pre-oedipal sexuality of man and women, the recognition of sexuality as a construct subject to social and historical change, the recognition of the body as not simply given in essence in nature but as constantly reproduced in revised discourse"
(Burgin, 1986, p.109).

The artist's intention in this work is to re-represent the landscape which is her heritage from this pre-oedipal state in which she has not lost the psychological power to reappropriate gender identity. The relationship between the body of the mother and the artist is explained in the narrative as reconciliation. Both women have suffered loss due to their gender identity. Chadwick psychologically and her mother maternally. The artist's mother lost her name and

inheritance, the house, in marriage. Chadwick claims to re-establish a maternal lineage through her re-representation of the bodies house and city. The dominant culture of the city is masculine. "Traditionally gender identities are conferred as; city and culture as masculine, and space and nature as feminine", (Newman, 1986, p.61).

The social circumstances of the mother's loss that are referred to in the narrative of the piece relate to a thesis by Elizabeth Cowie which states that women's sociological identity is as a sign within a signifying system.

Marriage is at once the cite of economic social and sexual practises. Kinship systems appear to be systems in which men exchange women, woman is the currency. Both the *token* of exchange and the sign of these relations and meanings (Pollock, 1992, p.207).

Helen Chadwick tries to reappropriate the gender identity of her heritage by placing the body in a pre-oedipal state, "let the monuments be eroticised" She reappropriates the gender of the city from a feminist perspective,

"the dome, the churches, breasts, the stomach of the Agora, the naval of the Aeropolis and the genitals of the Pnyx, as the buildings allegorise our bonds where flesh itself is petrified into living statutory the horizon opens to a "mise an scene" which eclipses the otherness in which the very gender of the city is called into question. (Chadwick, 1986, p. 71).

Just as male artists projected their desires onto the form of the female body so Chadwick projects female identity onto buildings that represent male culture, that are masculine forms. She has the capacity to reappropriate the gender identity onto these forms because it is recognised that gender identity is constructed through representation. Representation is one of the many social processes by which specific orders of sexual difference are constructed. Representation is a process that ceaselessly articulates and produces meanings as well as re-representing a world that already has meaning. The "body" in this work is presented in both specific; the artist and the mother body, and abstract; the city scape, forms. The artist reveals how the phallogentric codes that dominate the visual field can be restructured and by re-representing the body in a different state.

It has been established that gender is constructed by representation. Helen Chadwick took an iconoclastic approach to the body "Blood Hyphen", 1989 (Klerkenwell and Islington, Medical Mission, Chapel Vault). This installation questions the relevance gender identity of the body of Jesus Christ,

There is no pre-existing sexuality, no essential femininity and to look at the processes of their construction is also to see the possibility of deconstructing the dominant forms of representing difference in our social order,
(Willes, 1904, p.87).

She challenges accepted notions of gender that are constructed in and through representation.

The installation consisted of a red laser beam which was projected onto an area of the ceiling of the chapel which was illuminated with a slide. The slide image was of a cluster of human cells. The cell area was penetrated by a red laser which was a shaft of red light that ran from the wall to the ceiling. Christ's body was represented as blood flesh and spirit outside a recognisable body form. The laser was projected through a cut in the blind. The "cut" was used by Arte Provera painter Fontana who used the symbol of the "cut" throughout paintings to symbolise Christ's body. This is an example of a disembodied symbol of Christ's suffering. The laser and slide are not only artifice they represent the essential religious and symbolic aspects of the body of Christ and his gender identity.

The artist's questioning of the validity of the body of Jesus Christ is supported by references to Renaissance depictions of the body of Christ.

I wish to call attention to the artistic depictions that suggest that Christ's flesh was sometimes seen as lactating and giving birth as female. Over and over again in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries we find representations of Christ as the one who feeds and bleeds (Steinberg, 1983, p.75).

This is the artist's first departure from the use of the female body and the body form itself. The spiritual body of Jesus Christ has similar qualities to the body of "women" in society. Both are used as signs within a signifying system. The body of Christ is circulated as a sign to symbolise religious ideas, this bodily form is recruited to serve an ideal just as the body of "woman" is recruited as an icon to reflect patriarchal ideolog

the image is a field traversed by
desiring subjects, viewers,
through whom meanings come into
play only to be ceaselessly
displaced by others
(Pollock, 1990, p.219).

In certain Renaissance pictures the body of Jesus was regarded as androgynous.

Linking the beginning and the end of the knives cut the gash of the lance we trace a passage in the body of Christ from man to God. Christ's redemptive passion which culminates on the cross in the blood of the Sacred Heart begins in the blood of the penis. The compiling of Christ's last and first wounds become topical in the fifteenth and sixteenth century passion pictures that a trickle of groin from the breast back to the groin a blood hyphen between commencement and consummation (Steinberg, 1983, p.75).

This blood is redemptive because
Christ's pain gives significance
to what we all share with him it
is not a penis it is not even
sexuality it is the fact that we
can hurt that we suffer
(Bynam, 1986, p.3).

This reference brings historical discourse on the body to the modern problematic of reappropriating gender representation. In "Blood Hyphen" she successfully and directly communicates the symbolic aspects of the body that is freed from gender dictated form. The body is presented on a semiotic level.

The point at which all the traces and currents activated by the signifying elements in the iconic converge at the putative viewer who is the split subject of semiotics and psychoanalysis. The artist

acts as an iconoclast but not in the negative sense of the word but as a condition of re-representation,

the world of appearances is not the alienating trap as the iconoclasts would have us believe but the condition for the representation of emotion including grief and joy. On the modern controversy Chadwick forms the iconphile.
(Newman, 1986, p.61).

She can be defined as an iconphile because of the passion and directness she uses to symbolize the body. The body of Christ is a sacramental body and transcends mortal states.

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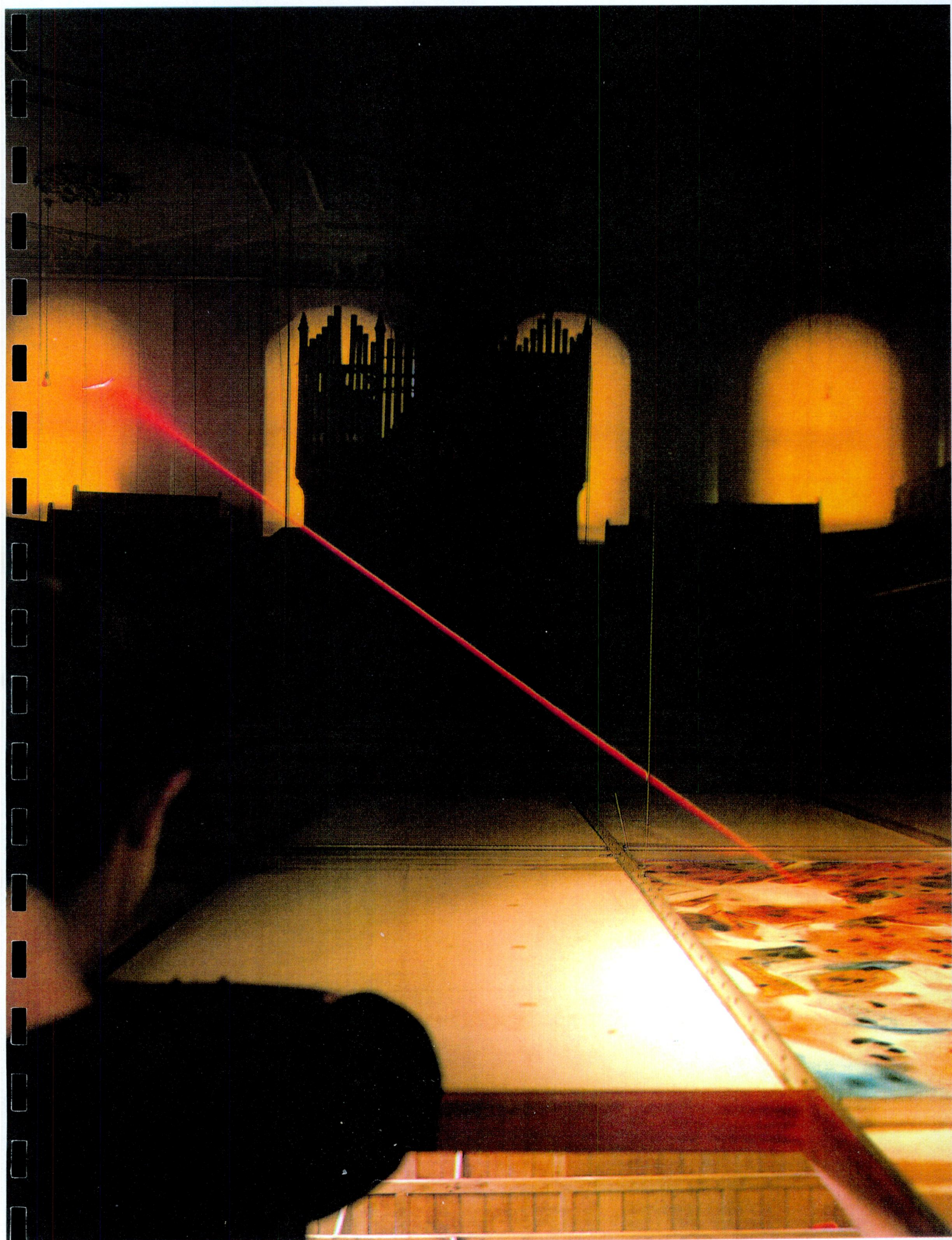
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GENDER PUZZLES

In 1988 the artist began a series of photographic works which were produced over a period of three years, "Meat Abstracts". In this series the artist abandons the use of the female body form completely. She transcends gender identity and attends to the internal organisation of the visual field in which the female body is represented. These images are a series of Cibachrome transparencies that are mounted on light boxes. These are still lifes, compositions of inner organs of the body or animal flesh, sometimes lain on leather or cloth. They represent the generic category of the body and make no reference to specific gender identities. By refusing to adopt the female body form the artist sets up an objective point, from which to observe the body that is outside phallogentric and oppositional codes of viewing the generic category "the body". The formal aspects of the artist's work are crucial in this transcendence of gender identity. She metamorphosises parts of the body under a certain kind of scrutiny.

Photography is ideally suited to this task because it offers pictures of fantasy located in credible spaces,

it addresses the demand for the legible and the visible while servicing in the less prosaic signifying systems of the unconscious with its multiple displacements, substitutions and playfulness" (Pollock, 1992, p.224).

Photography is a major scene of representation of sexual desire and differences. In this conjunction of the two economies of desire commodity and psyche,

entrance us through their mutual investments in and constant trading of subjectivity.

These "reveries" on the body, that transcend gender as a recognisable body form, are only acceptable to the viewer as photographs. Individual body parts are treated with the photographic techniques of advertising and pornography industries, which make the flesh appear shimmering and life like. "It was a vivid red, beautiful to the point of nausea" (Rees, 1988).

The mechanisms that are used in the objectification of the female body are revealed here by their application to raw flesh. These images are credible as the body because of the tradition of "woman as sign within a signifying system". The artist manipulates the visual field by setting the spectator up as a voyeur but without offering a specific gender identity for the voyeur to focus on. She returns to the field of spectatorship and representation that was first examined by Laura Mulvey in 1977.

The meat has light bulbs and electrical elements embedded in it, this gives it a sense of life.

The generic body is seen through a dialectic of inner and outer; the rawness of the flesh inside the body is presented as a secret of mystical foundation for its flowing outer surface" (McEvelley, 1992).

The seductive lighting gives the flesh an almost shimmering sacred quality.

The precursor to this series is a work called "Ecce", 1988. This consists of a decorative cartouche which is painted onto leather with an image of the human ear is projected onto it. The image of the ear is pierced in the centre by a red Tungsten light. By making this a projection the artist is revealing the process of the construction of imagery and introduces an episodic element to her material, the human body. The theme of this work is the random development of erogenous zones in the body.

It's difficult to define in precise terms the imprecision of amorous moods which consists of joyous impatience to possess a void" (Calivino, Mitosis, 1987).

These bodily parts are not fetish objects because no specific gender identity is suggested and therefore they do not replace the absent phallus. According to psychoanalytic orthodoxies, oral anal and phallic drives are not, biologically determined stages of human development but the results of processes of libidinal intensification which correlate to the acquisition of labile measurings for various body components.

"There is no limit to the number of erotic zones in and on the body nor any way of predicting which ones will dominate an individual's life" (Freud, 1992, p.40).

In this series, Helen Chadwick treats the body a psychological state.

This art can be seen as the latest progression of the artist's exploration of the body and as a disquieting depiction of the male social attitudes toward women

that descend below the skin. The focus on the body is not strictly materialistic,

pared down to the reciprocity of energy and matter that is 'living meat', selfhood is conscious meat, I am mc2, my man times the power of my light at its most bald this is our fleshhood, a red mirror tracing the continua of separation and union that is the exotic corollary of our being" (Chadwick, 1991).

The images themselves are large powerful and striking in their simplicity, *Enfleshings*, 1988 for example, an image of a piece of red meat in which is embedded a tungsten red light. The artist describes it as, "a red mirror tracing the continua of separation and union that is the exotic corollary of our being", Chadwick neglects mind / body dualism and portrays the body itself as the seat of consciousness, a fusion

the flesh becomes sacramental at once a celebration of life and a memento mori flesh universally layed bare (McEvilly, 1992).

The flesh implies a decay and finitude but Chadwick implies that it represents touch, that materiality is the pursuit of the enduring finite and that in that case the one acceptable materialism is libidinal. The inanimate flesh represents touch. Helen Chadwick takes literary inspiration for her depiction of the body as flesh,

flesh is our guide, the will of attraction, where our own life slides spirally downward sucked to the point of dizziness (Reyes, 1988).

These images however are intended to represent more than disembodied flesh. The artist relies on psychoanalytic theory which infers that the body is pliable,

in its very biological form is dependant on the acquisitions of psychical images for voluntary behaviour. Human subjects need the mediation of such a psychical image of the body in order to link their wishes and desires to their corporeal capacities making concerted action and rational thought possible (Grosz, 1992, p.38).

The flesh represents the inner body; the artist's ego. Psychology claims that the ego must be considered a "bodily ego"; an internal screen onto which the illuminated images of the body's outer surface are projected, tracing the subject's perceived corporeality.

She makes references to literary depictions of the body parts as metaphors "Quite Contrary" (1991) consists of a pigs intestine that is like a pink ribbon into an infinity sign with flowing locks of golden hair, set on a wooden block. The image has the sinister quality of a fairytale. "The body brought to book, the body's animal is brought back to life. Here let us fear where we feared to look" (Cork, 1991).

The images relate to a surrealism use of the body. "Nostalgia de la Boue", (1991) shows us the image of a crown of black hair around a sump of muddy water and in the image below it a matching wreath of brown and red earthworms that are arranged on a circle. The body form is not present in this image and represented as; earth, water, worm and hair. It could be referred to by the worm, the most abstract form. This image has a

similar quality of attraction and repulsion. Helen Chadwick interprets this burrowing movement of the worm and well image to represent an image of consciousness contesting the primacy of homo sapiens with the humbleness of the worm. This image resembles the surrealists use of the body images which have a disquieting effect on the viewer confronting them.

Eroticism 1990 is the second in the series three diptych. The artist addresses issues of sexuality and representation. This diptych is described as an "Amatory Vanitas" resembling an open locket. The two oval images are photographs, taken from above, of the "brain" on a velvet "bed". The "brain" is lit from the side by seductive purple lighting. The artist implies that there is a relationship between the two brains. These are images of the cerebral in flesh. The text accompanying the work she asks the question ?

Is this a single brain or two individualities ?, an open locket or a bed ? Is eroticism a reciprocal exchange between two or a blind narcissian projection of oneself towards an unseeable other ?

This is a challenge to Freud's definition of narcissistic women,

it is only themselves that such women love with an intensity comparable to that of a man's love for them (Robinson, 1991, p.36).

The use of a body organ in place of the external image allows the issue to be discussed without being clouded by gender identity. She implies that this issue

regarding the body is a psychological issue and not dependent on a gender identity.

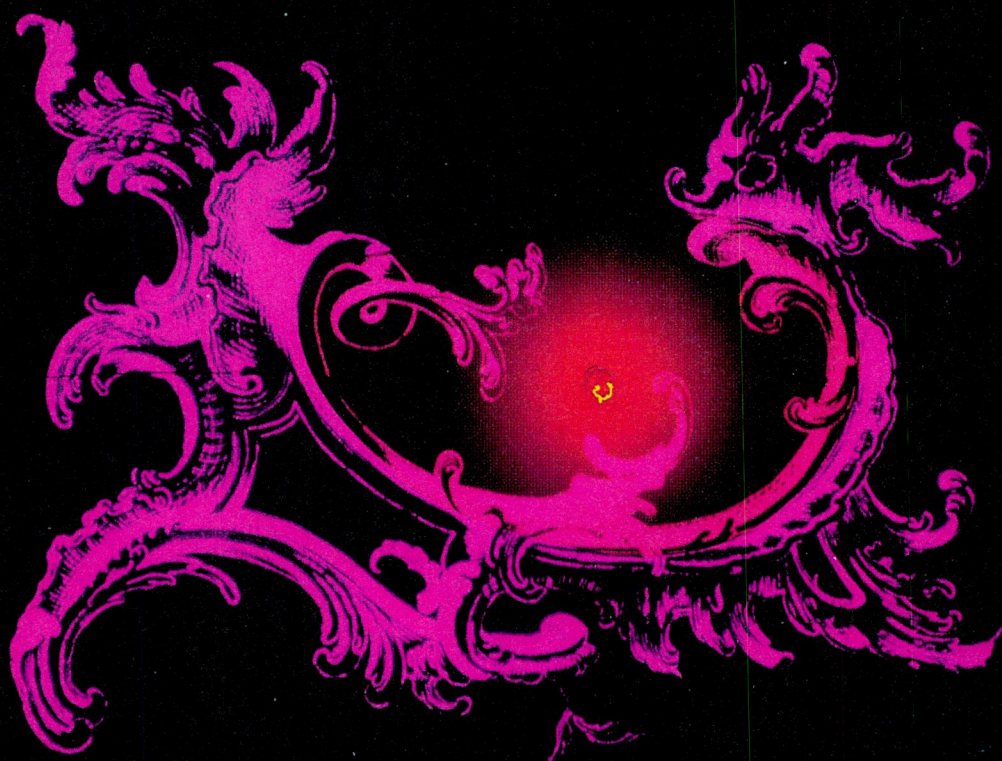
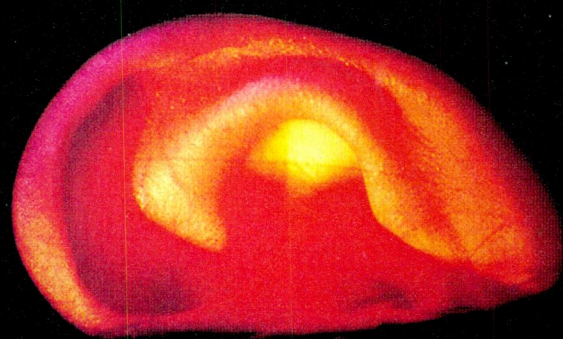
The ambivalence of desire is the issue in the "Philosopher's Fear of Flesh, 1990" in the text the question is addressed, why it is necessary for the viewer to read gender and automatically sex the body presented. The artist attempts to disorientate the focus of the viewer's desire. This diptych presents two images of the body, the stomach of a man and apparently a chicken body illuminated from inside. These images are set in an infinity sign and are presented as a hermaphrodite. The artist seeks to arouse the viewers desire but at the same time to trouble the viewer's focus so that they remain constantly oscillating in search of a resolution as to the gender identity of the body. In feminist terms the hermaphrodite offers the female spectator an unthreatening sexual identity.

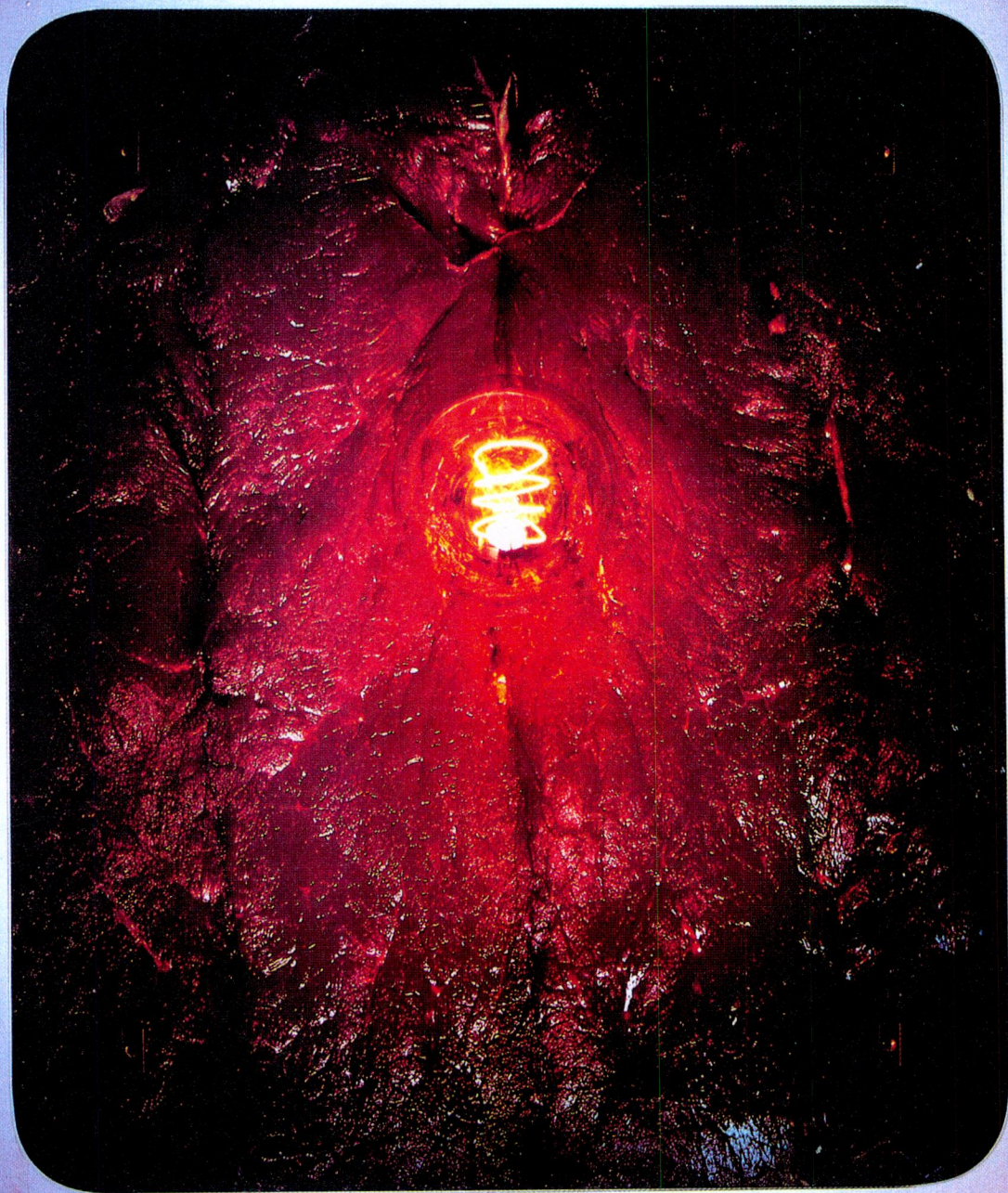
"The perfect symmetry of the figure of the androgyne positions the viewer at the convergence between the feminine and the masculine" (Burgin, 1986, p.80).

The androgynous position of the body offers a denial or transgression of the gender divide and as such implies a threat to the identity and the systems of social roles which define the viewer. This image acts as a mirror to question the identity of the viewer. The androgyne can only exist in fantasy, Victor Burgin argues that the consequent psychic oscillation would allow the viewer to revert to the autoeroticism of early childhood before the infant experienced the oedipus complex and adopted a specific gender identity. The hermaphrodite is a self sufficient body.

Marina Warner justifies the abstraction of the body in these images by calling them simulcra.

The simulcra quests for authenticity in the same way as in some abstraction; paintings own up to being nothing but paint and the picture plane accepts that it is there substantial and opaque so the simulcra makes a virtue of honesty.







CHAPTER 5 : GENDER PUZZLES

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CONCLUSION

The body of Helen Chadwick's work traces the development of feminist theory over the last two decades. The aim of feminist art is to trace the female subjective of the representation of the feminine in art and in contemporary culture in order to re-formulate new subjectives. Helen Chadwick is examination of the representation of the body market, history and contemporary culture deconstruct the idea of the female body as a monolithic entity.

Throughout Helen Chadwick's career she has constantly subjected the body to re-representation in a variety of media and from a range of psychological conditions, fantasy, presedipal for example. She uses the body as a means of self conscious exploration.

"The sense of isolation is emphatic, positing flesh-hood not as matter or of images but as a process a sequence of quantities of action. I cannot be fixed in absolute terms. I can only present myself as variable as event within the dynamic of place"

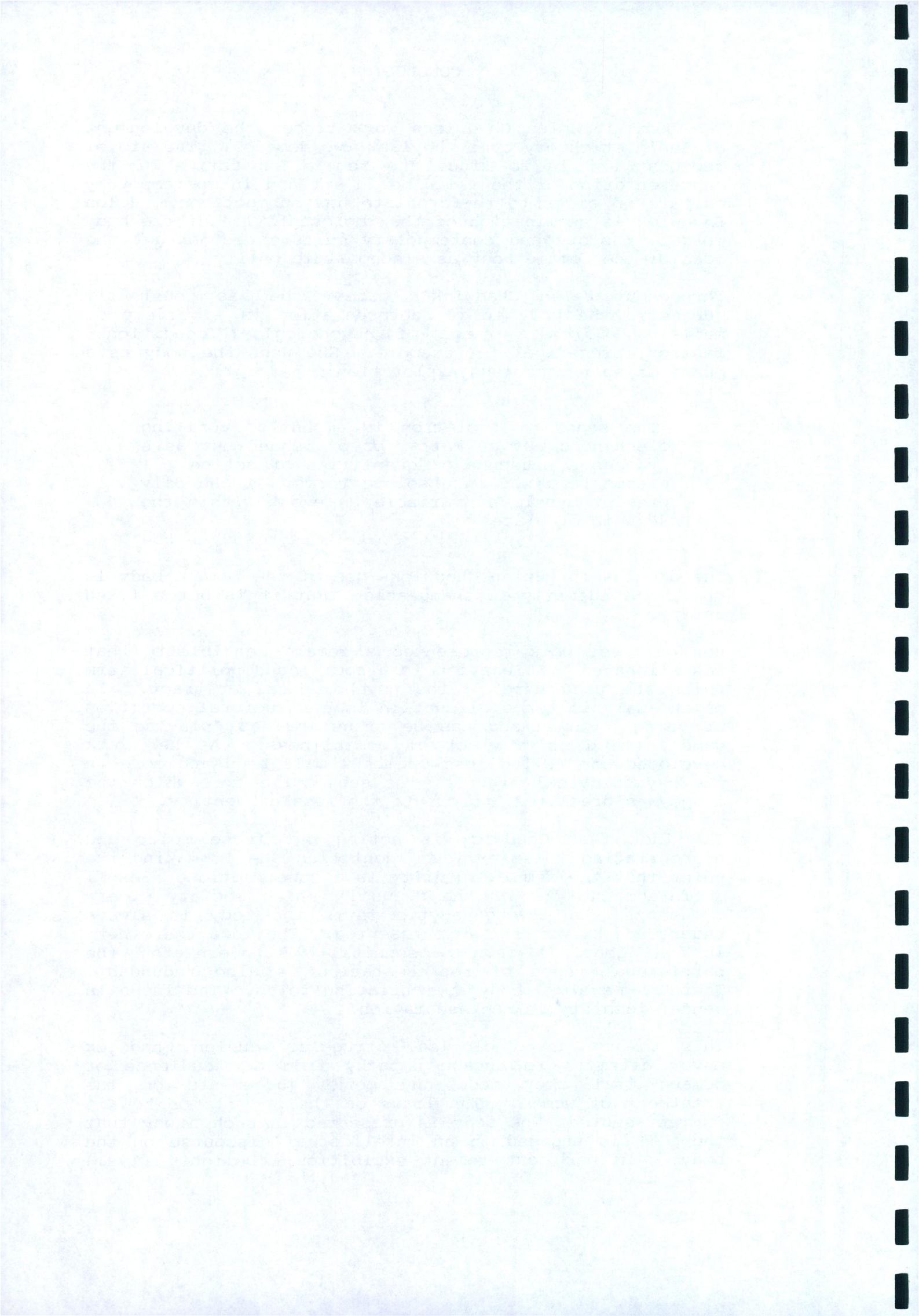
CHADWICK, 1989, P.55)

The premiss for Helen Chadwick's use of the female body is that it's identity is changeable, that it is not a fixed entity.

Her earliest work represented a female sensibility that was alienated. Alienation is a social and political term which she used here in the psychological abstract. In psychoanalytic terms alienation is a structural condition of being a woman and can be translated as "playing the game", which is the act of womanliness. As her work developed she relied less on the female body and more on the psychological state of the subjective from which the image was presented, to create the female identity.

The fact that Chadwick is acting out these roles and appropriating these various identities she is making the point that the female identity is a construction. Sexual difference is one of the means by which society orders identity. In psychoanalytic terms the body is always understood by how it is represented. The idea that there is a genuine female sensibility underneath the patriarchal codes of representation is also redundant. There is merely a body appropriating roles. The issue in gender identity is representation.

This is not an ideological struggle. Helen Chadwick never attempts to engage empathy from her audience or demand that they make any moral judgements on the treatment of women. The focus on the body is on how it is represented. The body is presented in such a way that the is engaged in an intellectual discourse on the body. In her most recent exhibition, "Delight" (1991)



the artist requested that the following quote be used as a premiss for her use of the female body,

"Is women allow themselves to be consoled for their culturally determine lack of access to her minds of intellectual debate by the innovation of hypothetical great goddesses they are simply flattening themselves into submission. Mother goddesses are as silly a notion as father gods. If a revival of these cults given women emotional satisfaction it does so at a price of obscuring the real conditions of life. This is why they were invented in the first place."

ANGELA CARTER, *THE SIDEIAN WOMAN*, 1979

As the appropriates different poses and different roles she is taking on both the role of the mode, as an image and of the artist. This way she examines the subjective of the creator of the image of women; for example in "of mutability" she adopted the subjective of a romantic poet. The artist makes the act of appropriation very obvious so that the real issue which is representation remains the predominant focus in all her work.

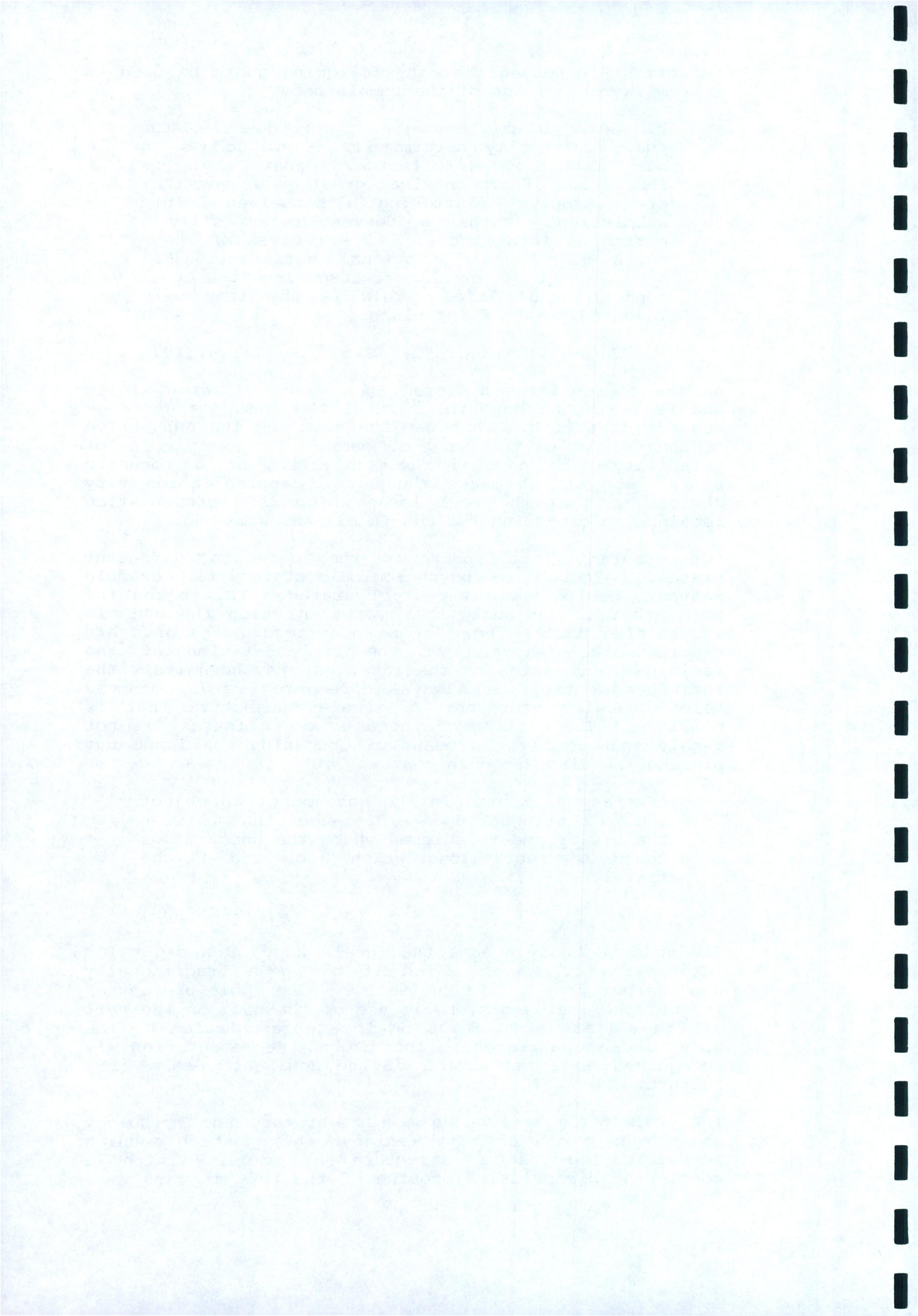
She constantly re-represents the body in different states. These are psychological states for example fantasy, desire and pre-pedipal states. This makes the point that the psychological state in which the body is represented dictate how it is understood. Feminist art examined the relation of the representation of the feminine in relation to the gaze. In psychoanalysis the feminine identity was always represented as fragmented. Helen Chadwick represents a female subjective that is complete. The setting of these works in fantasy is not merely indulgence or a means of obscuring the issue but placing the discussion in context

"Fantasy is rooted in the absence of an object and is contingent upon a distance, that between the viewer and the viewed where the unconscious comes to rest along which look and psyche travel.

(BURGIN, 1986, P25)

She uses the body greats the female body as a sight for inscription of ideas, which it has been traditionally used as but from a male subjective. The whole process of the metaphorical and symbolic use of the body on the part of the artist is to focus on the representation of the body in a patriarchal culture. Representation is recognised as a reflection of the dominant ideals of a culture.

The work makes references to art history and mythology she merges a contemporary feminist theory which studies identification as a structure of viewing with a continuing historical discourse of the body in fine art.

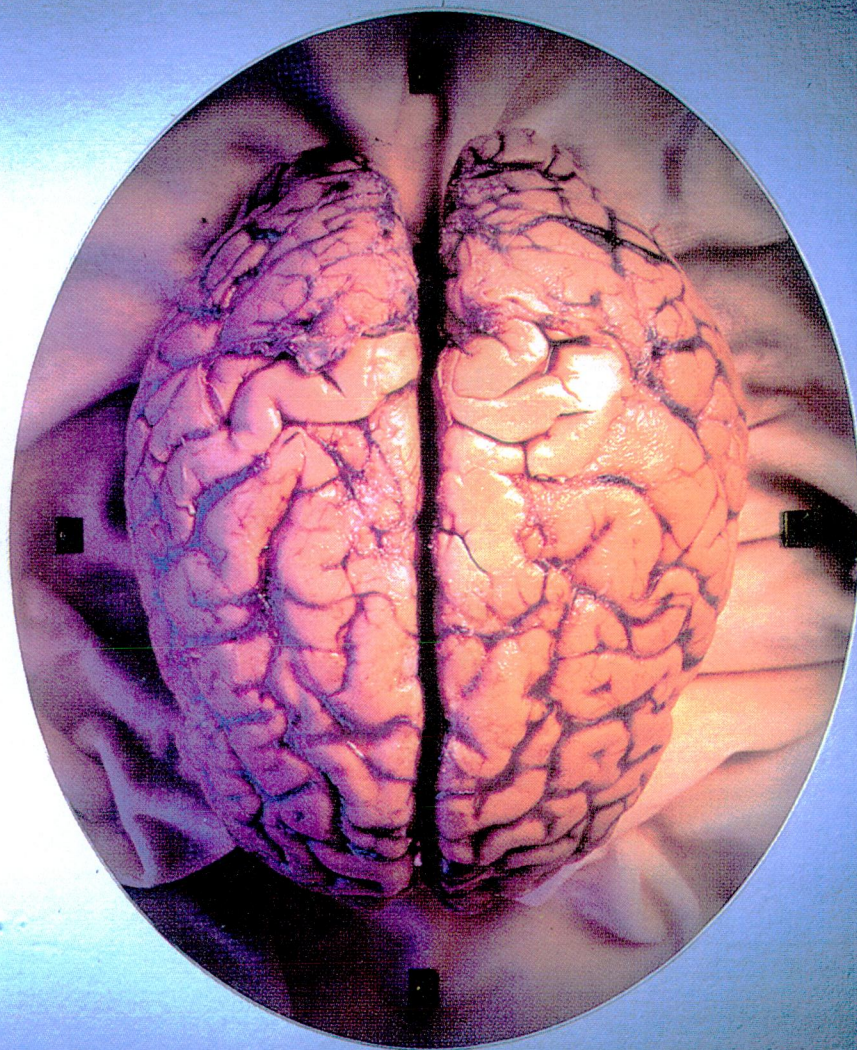
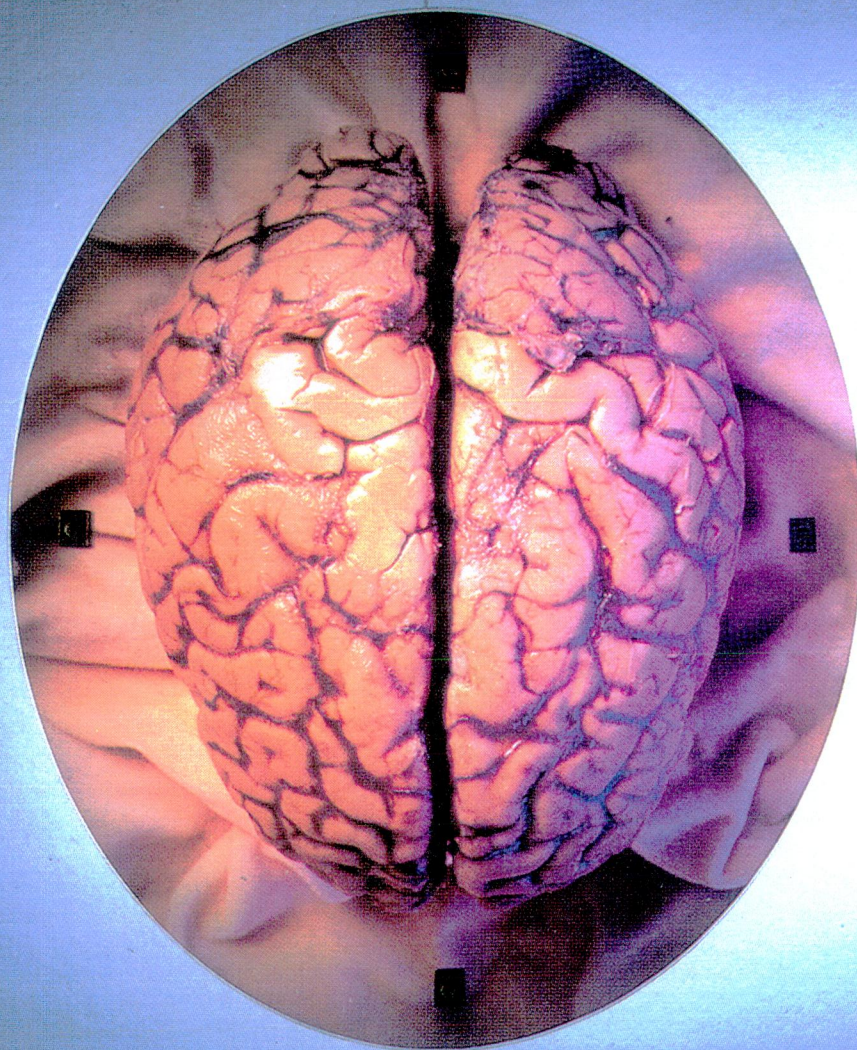


So that the viewer is introduced to the body as the site for inscription of ideas for centuries. She brings new insight to both disciplines.

The artist's conscious attention to surface and pattern as part of a set of formal contrasts would seem to be a move made against the hesitations of her own and other feminist artists and the pious self image of much feminist art. As her work developed and she departs from using the female form she opens up a more allusive space for the mapping out of the intimacies of female subjectivity. This is all within the confines of the artist's own body and always represented as self-portraiture. She focuses on the construction of the visual field in which woman is represented and thus reveals the construction of the feminine identity in patriarchal codes of representation.

In Freud and Lacan's theory in psychoanalysis the female body is constantly represented as "lacking". Helen Chadwick reproduces it as whole, within her own possession. Technically, the artist presents the body in sophisticated technical terms. It is a feminist project to attend to the construction of the visual field in which the female body is represented and to de-centre subjective viewing of the body. Helen Chadwick uses sophisticated techniques and imagery to manipulate the visual field in which the body is represented. In this way she challenges the gender identity of the viewer. This technical sophistication and manipulation of the visual field is part of the drive by contemporary feminists to examine identification as a structure of viewing techniques. She borrows from the surrealists manipulation of the viewer.

Her work becomes stronger when the boundaries of the female body are transgressed and the issues of feminism are highlighted. The body is presented flesh and the psychological state it is represented in. Representation, flesh and the artist's psyche become the real issues of the work. The especially interesting thing about Helen Chadwick's use of the body is the several perspectives she introduces on the body simultaneously in a single work.





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