

The Externalisation of the Object:
A critical study of object categories in the work of Mike Kelley, Paul
McCarthy, Tony Oursler, Jason Rhoades and Ryan Trecartin from 1974 to
2010

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis. During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Smith'.

Date

02/12/20

ABSTRACT

This PhD critically examines the relations between objects in a selection of installations, videos and video installations by affiliated artists with a shared historical and geographical lineage in Los Angeles, including Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Tony Oursler, Jason Rhoades and Ryan Trecartin. The timeframe of this research begins in the 1970s and continues into 2010.

The title of this thesis is influenced by David Cronenberg's film *Videodrome*, and its memorable rendering of the idea of the externalisation of objects from screens (both physically and metaphorically).

Following an Introduction on the methodology of the thesis, the first chapter, titled 'Horror Vacui', proposes that the formation of what we can now see - through the work of Jason Rhoades and, an introduction to the work of Ryan Trecartin - as a new configuration of video installation was directly impacted by the transition of works/objects that are presented in the core chapters.

The body of the PhD is presented in four core chapters, each focusing on a particular 'type' of object, each of which has been 'invented' by the author through their sustained historical/theoretical research, and which is examined in the artists' works. They are: The Craft Object, The Gloopy Object, The Prop Object and The Suburban Object.

In addition to engaging with art history, historiography, and the history of exhibitions, this PhD considers the methodologies and theories of Critical Race Studies, Feminist New Materialisms and Object-Oriented Philosophies/Ontologies in order to examine and mould new applications for these approaches within an art theory/art historical framework. Each chapter discusses these methods of analysis alongside an analysis of how the type of object (The Craft Object, The Gloopy Object, The Prop Object and The Suburban Object) is constituted and externalised, and how it functions.

A new approach to considering the work of Kelly, McCarthy, Oursler, Rhoades and Trecartin is offered alongside a contribution to the expanding field of object-oriented research. This thesis forms a framework that can be used to speculate on a future trajectory for video installation and the physical, metaphysical and metaphorical relationship between the screen, the video and the object.

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Introduction

Origin:

In the summer of 2010, while driving to Venice Beach, I decided to stop by the Pacific Design Center in Los Angeles to see whatever exhibition they had on view that day. The exhibition I happened on, Ryan Trecartin's labyrinthine multi-level video installation *Any Ever* (2010), ended up being the starting point for this PhD. I walked around the video installation for about two hours and then drove in a daze to Venice Beach and sat staring into the ocean confused, confounded and completely overwhelmed. I couldn't tell whether I liked it or hated it, whether I was overstimulated or anxious. I remember knowing for certain that it did elicit a major response from me, and I wanted to explore that response. I was overwhelmed by the number of objects being cast out from the videos and into the gallery space. It was during my initial viewing of *Any Ever* that I also considered the idea of the externalisation of objects coming from the video or screen into the physical gallery space as a focus of my PhD. This sense of externalisation was influenced by scenes in David Cronenberg's 1983 film *Videodrome*. In particular I thought about the depictions of objects, bodies and guts protruding or coming out of the TV screens in the film. This in turn led me to devise the title of this thesis, 'The Externalisation of the Object'. I was also compelled by a connection or relationship of *Any Ever* to the type of object in Jason Rhoades' three-part series which includes *Meccatuna* (2003), *My Madinah. In pursuit of my ermitage...* (2004) and *The Black Pussy . . . and the Pagan Idol Workshop* (2005).

While I viewed *Any Ever* I was also reminded of the work of Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler because of their use of installation, video installation and the objects in their practices. References to Trecartin's practice from 2006-2016, including articles and reviews of his work, include discussions of how his work

aligns not only with Rhoades' practice, but also with McCarthy and Kelley's.¹ Specifically, in a 2006 *Los Angeles Times* article reviewing Trecartin's exhibition 'I Smell Pregnant' at QED Gallery, Los Angeles, writer Christopher Knight referred to Trecartin as coming from a 'parentage [that] includes the work of Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy and Jason Rhoades'.² In 2010, a review by writer Jori Finkel in the *Los Angeles Times* again referred to this lineage of artists in relation to Trecartin's work.³ In a *New York Times* review of *Any Ever*, critic Roberta Smith wrote about how Trecartin's use of garden furniture, couches, seating and other objects helped to create an atmosphere or experience that differed from traditional video installation configurations that focus on single projections in a gallery setting. Smith continued, 'As with the work of artists like Paul McCarthy, [...] these situations effectively break the grip of the black-box video theater and forge a new integration of video and installation art'.⁴

The 2016 exhibition 'My House', at the Presentation House Gallery in Vancouver, Canada, presented the work of Mike Kelley and Ryan Trecartin. Curator Tobin Gibson stated, 'I wanted to position [Trecartin] within a historical dialogue that highlights the lineage of performance, satire and critique in American video art'.⁵ In

¹ See: Jori Finkel, 'Ryan Trecartin takes over MOCA's Pacific Design Center', *Los Angeles Times*, 26 May 2010, available at: <<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2010-may-26-la-et-ryan-trecartin-20100526-story.html>> [accessed 13 May 2018]; Randy Kennedy, 'Sublime Jumbles, Reverently Reassembled', *New York Times*, September 14, 2013, available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/14/arts/design/jason-rhoades-is-getting-a-solo-museum-survey.html>> [accessed 13 May 2018]; Christopher Knight, 'Transformation caught on video', *Los Angeles Times*, 24 February 2006, available at: <<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2006-feb-24-et-galleries24-story.html>> [accessed 13 May 2018]; Roberta Smith, 'Like Living, Only More So', *New York Times*, 24 June 2011, available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/24/arts/design/ryan-trecartins-any-ever-at-moma-ps1-review.html?pagewanted=all>> [accessed 13 May 2018]; Jackie Wullschlager, "'Jason Rhoades, Four Roads", Baltic, Gateshead', *Financial Times*, February 27, 2015, available at: <<https://www.ft.com/content/b6328fca-be36-11e4-9d09-00144feab7de?>> [accessed 13 May 2018].

² Knight, 2006.

³ Finkel, 2010.

⁴ Smith, 2011.

⁵ Beverly Camp, 'Presentation House: "My House", Mike Kelley & Ryan Trecartin Use Satire in Visceral Reflections on Contemporary American Culture', *Galleries West*, 2016, available

her review of this exhibition, critic and writer Beverly Camp in *Galleries West* noted the history of video art in Southern California, commenting on the collaborative work of McCarthy and Kelley.⁶ In an article by Jackie Wullschlager in the *Financial Times* that focused on Rhoades' exhibition 'Jason Rhoades: Four Roads' (2013) at the ICA in Philadelphia, the author writes about the impact of Rhoades' work on the aesthetics of film props in Trecartin's work.⁷ In the *New York Times*, writer Randy Kennedy refers to Rhoades and the impact of the Internet on both his and Trecartin's work, stating, '[...] Rhoades's influence, direct or indirect, can be seen in the work of many younger artists in the United States, like Ryan Trecartin [...], who grew up with the tangled multiplicities of the Internet that Rhoades's early work seemed to prefigure'.⁸ Similarly, Chris Kraus, in the book *Social Practices*, makes reference to the impact that the Internet and installations by Rhoades have had on Trecartin's practice.⁹ Tony Oursler's work has been shown in group exhibitions or screenings with Trecartin's work, such as 'Clap' in 2011 at the Bard Center for Curatorial Studies in New York, which also included work by Paul McCarthy.¹⁰ This exhibition broadly considered the role of sound and repetition in artworks in the Hessel Museum of Art. Oursler, McCarthy, Kelley and Trecartin were included in the exhibition 'Number Six: Flaming Creatures' at the Julia Stoschek Collection in Düsseldorf, Germany, from 2012 to 2013.¹¹ This exhibition examined gender and fiction. Both Oursler and Trecartin were also included in a screening entitled *Warp*

at: < <https://www.gallerieswest.ca/magazine/stories/my-house-mike-kelley-ryan-trecartin-use-satire-in-visceral-r/>> [accessed 15 May 2018].

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Wullschlager, 2015.

⁸ Kennedy, 2013.

⁹ Chris Kraus, *Social Practices* (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2018), p. 195.

¹⁰ See: Bard College, Centre for Curatorial Studies, 'Clap', Bard College Centre for Curatorial Studies, 2011, available at:

<<http://www.bard.edu/news/releases/pr/fstory.php?id=2093>> [accessed 22 January 2019].

¹¹ Julia Stoschek Collection, 'Number Six: Flaming Creatures', *Julia Stoschek Collection*, 2012, available at: <https://www.jsc.art/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/PR_NUMBER-SIX_FLAMING-CREATURES_EN_2012_13.pdf> [accessed 22 January 2019].

Drives in 2013 shown at Electronic Arts Intermix in New York.¹² This screening broadly examined fictional narratives and science fiction tropes.

These articles, reviews and exhibitions at the time forged connections between the content and format of the work of Trecartin, Kelley, McCarthy, Oursler and Rhoades, drawing out connections in their practices. This PhD situates Trecartin within this historical lineage. This line of influence and the connection of objects in the artists' work was something I wanted to explore in more detail.

In Chapter 1 of this PhD, I explore the connections between Trecartin's and Rhoades' work that stem from my initial visit to *Any Ever*. I then examine a nexus of objects in the work of Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Tony Oursler and Jason Rhoades in Chapters 2 to 5. Each of these chapters defines one of the types of objects via a series of works by this group of artists who share a common geographical and historical lineage. These chapters are formed of a series of neologisms that offer an exploration of what I characterise as the externalisation of a typology of objects: The Craft Object, The Gloopy Object, The Prop Object and The Suburban Object.

The chapters of my PhD explore installation works, video projects and the relationship of screen to object to space in video installations as a way to examine tendencies or sensibilities that I saw emerging in the work of this particular group of artists. I was able to examine a particular history and use of objects as a way to question this tendency. My analysis of their work, and the alternative art-historical histories and frameworks explored, are informed by Critical Race Studies and Feminist New Materialisms, which are key theoretical lenses and methodologies for this PhD. They will be explored in more detail as this Introduction progresses. Each chapter of this PhD will foreground the object and consider the histories of the

¹² Electronic Arts Intermix, 'Warp Drive', *Electronic Arts Intermix*, 2012, available at: <https://www.eai.org/user_files/supporting_documents/0413_warp%20drive_pn_.pdf> [accessed 22 January 2019].

object and how an analysis of the object may lead to a different reading of the artwork. I think of this PhD as object led, meaning that the object is a focal point because it helps me foreground certain aspects of the artists' work to help to fill in gaps in the research on these artists.

The two centres of their work that are absent in the writing about it are gender, specifically maleness, and race, specifically Whiteness. These gaps are something I will address via Feminist New Materialisms, Feminist Critique and Critical Race Studies. Each chapter explores art history and histories of exhibitions in relation to these artists' work, and this, along with my deployment of these theories, helps me to offer alternative art-historical readings of the works examined in each chapter. The main research questions explored in this PhD are: How can foregrounding a type of object in this lineage of the artists this PhD examines bring about a new critical reading of their work? How can a genealogy of works from these artists be critically analysed through the lens of Critical Race Studies, Feminist Critique and Feminist New Materialisms? My analysis throughout the main chapters of this PhD is informed by Critical Race Studies, Feminist Critique and Feminist New Materialisms. My analysis of the artists' work and the role of gender and race, or maleness and Whiteness, comes from the commonality of these artists as white men. The methodologies, and the analysis that emerges from these methodologies, stem from a critique of the alternative feminist histories that intersect with these artists' work in Chapters 2-5, and their work allows me to propose a critique of gender and race, or maleness and Whiteness. This will be explained further in the following sections of this introduction. I re-interpret the work of these white male artists, and arrive at a different history, one which is informed by race and feminisms in order to work towards a further level of criticality.

About the Nexus of These Artists

The artists this PhD focuses on in Chapters 2-5 share a common geographical and historical background. They have collaborated with each other and share common histories. Most glaringly obvious in the context of this PhD is that they are also white heterosexual men. An overarching theme of this PhD is the nature of California, whose political, social, economic and cultural forces have impacted on the artists' work. California is neither a dream nor a dystopia. It has existed in a state of extremes throughout its history, from its frontier colonialist origins and the dream of westward expansion to the stereotype of the dream embodied in the counterculture of the 1960s and the dystopian horror of the Manson murders, and contemporaneously to its transformation into the fifth largest economy in the world.¹³ California and Los Angeles are central characters and forces in this PhD. The artists in this PhD were based in California, and there are references or allusions to the area in their work. This will be explored in the chapters of this PhD. I took two research trips to Los Angeles in 2012 and 2013 during the course of this PhD in order to conduct interviews with curators, writers and archivists who worked with the artists. I will describe in detail the interviews that took place as this Introduction progresses.¹⁴ During the research trips I examined archives and libraries at CalArts (California Institute of the Arts), LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions), the Getty Research Institute and LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art).

Los Angeles, as a city, as a character, has been written about in various forms of fiction and non-fiction. Joan Didion has perhaps best been able to capture the tensions and tenuous history of Los Angeles and California in her essays and books, such as 'Los Angeles Notebook' and *Where I was From*, with a lyricism and

¹³ Kevin Starr, *California: A History* (New York: Modern Library, 2005), p. 345.

¹⁴ Interviews during the course of this research were recorded, transcribed, or annotated at the time they were conducted. Interview details along with a consent form and interview information sheet templates can be found in the Appendix.

humanity that other writers strive to achieve.¹⁵ I find Didion's writing helpful to consider in relation to the histories of Los Angeles and California because her research methods and process of writing involve an engagement with the social, political and economic factors relevant to the area and their impact on the history of the area. This approach is something I utilised in my own research. Didion ends her essay 'Los Angeles Notebook' with a passage about the Santa Ana winds that are common in Southern California, as follows:

The city burning is Los Angeles's deepest image of itself: Nathanael West perceived that, in *The Day of the Locust*; and at the time of the 1965 Watts riots what struck the imagination most indelibly were the fires. For days one could drive the Harbor Freeway and see the city on fire, just as we had always known it would be in the end. Los Angeles weather is the weather of catastrophe, of apocalypse, and, just as the reliably long and bitter winters of New England determine the way life is lived there, so the violence and the unpredictability of the Santa Ana affect the entire quality of life in Los Angeles, accentuate its impermanence, its unreliability. The wind shows us how close to the edge we are.¹⁶

This quotation from 'Los Angeles Notebook' reveals much about the incendiary history and nature of the city. Conjuring images of the city itself actually burning additionally brings forward images of rebellions and uprisings, such as the Watts Rebellion in 1965 and the LA Uprisings in 1992. Moreover, the way Los Angeles functions, how it evolved socially, politically, economically and culturally, are questions that are addressed in the chapters of this PhD.

About the contradictions of California's history, which can be extended to those of the history of Los Angeles, Didion writes:

Yet California has always remained in some way impenetrable to me, a wearying enigma, as it has to many of us who are from there. We worry it,

¹⁵ See: Joan Didion, 'Los Angeles Notebook', in: *Slouching Towards Bethlehem: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1968); Joan Didion, *Where I Was From* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004).

¹⁶ Didion, 1968, pp. 161-2.

correct and revise it, try and fail to define our relationship to it and its relationship to the rest of the country.¹⁷

The work and histories explored in the chapters of this PhD stem from all of these clear contours and contradictions of California, and specifically of Los Angeles. Federal funding, defence contracts and large aerospace companies supported the state of California economically.¹⁸ Federal and defence budgets in the state were reduced in the late 1980s and into the 1990s, which fuelled mass unemployment, job losses and relocation during this economic downturn.¹⁹ Commercial and residential housing markets in Los Angeles in 1990 witnessed a significant drop amidst these wider geopolitical changes.²⁰ Reports by the State Finance Commission state that approximately 800,000 jobs were lost within the wider LA area between 1988 and 1993.²¹ These are some of the economic factors that contributed to the backdrop of the period. The 1992 LA Uprisings were precipitated by this state-wide drop in employment.²² This background history of the social and economic forces that make up California impacted on the artists discussed in this PhD and the work that they made.

It is significant to note the sinuous nexus and propinquity of the artists in this PhD, because it informs my analysis of their work. This PhD began, as I mentioned, with a trip to see Ryan Trecartin's exhibition 'Any Ever'. Trecartin was born in 1981 in Texas, and is now based in Los Angeles. He designed costumes and sets for theatrical productions when he was in high school. This mode of production carried on to his video work, in which he writes, directs and edits the videos and performs

¹⁷ Didion, 2004, p. 19.

¹⁸ Peter Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis: The Aerospace Century in Southern California* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 106-107.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Blair Badcock, *Making Sense of Cities: A Geographical Survey* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 150-168.

²¹ Steven D. Gold, *The Fiscal Crisis of the States: Lessons for the Future* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1995), p. 48.

²² The 1992 LA Uprisings and the importance of Rodney King will be expanded upon in Chapter 5 of this PhD.

various characters.²³ The video installations that constitute the work studied in Chapter 1 include his sculptural environments in the gallery space that mimic the sets seen in the videos. Trecartin's work is analysed in this chapter for its relationship to gender, race and linguistics. While Trecartin has not collaborated with or cited any of the main artists in the chapters of the PhD in his work, when viewing 'Any Ever' I was reminded of the similar sense of accumulation and being overwhelmed that Jason Rhoades' work prompted in me.

Jason Rhoades was born in California in 1965. He has cited Paul McCarthy as an influence, and this impact is explored in Chapter 1 of the thesis. Rhoades studied with McCarthy, who taught at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Rhoades was awarded an MFA at UCLA in 1991 and his first solo exhibition was the David Zwirner Gallery in New York in 1993; this was made possible in part via an introduction from McCarthy. Rhoades would later collaborate with McCarthy on a collaborative exhibition entitled 'Proposition', shown at David Zwirner Gallery (1999), and 'Shit Plug' (2002), at Hauser & Wirth.²⁴

Paul McCarthy was born in Utah in 1945. McCarthy began working in Los Angeles in 1970 and was influenced by the course Allan Kaprow was teaching at CalArts, which had at the time just been formed as an institution and was steeped in pedagogies for conceptual and performance art. McCarthy was brought to teach at CalArts by Judy Chicago, who started The Feminist Art Program (FAP) discussed in Chapter 2. Chicago was responsible for bringing McCarthy to various performances and courses at CalArts. McCarthy's performances, discussed in Chapter 3, are clearly informed by the methods of analysis and structures explored in the FAP.²⁵

²³ Kevin McGarry (ed.), *Any Ever: Ryan Trecartin* (New York: Skira Rizzoli Publications in association with Elizabeth Dee, 2011).

²⁴ Ingrid Schaffner, Martha Buskirk, Chris Kraus and Paul Schimmel, *Jason Rhoades, Four Roads*, ed. by Ingrid Schaffner (Philadelphia, PA: Institute of Contemporary Art and Domenico/Prestel, 2014), p. 14-15.

²⁵ See: Lisa Phillips and Dan Cameron (eds.), *Paul McCarthy* [exh. cat.] (Los Angeles, CA: Museum of Contemporary Art; New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art; Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2000).

During the course of my research I was interested in the connection between McCarthy and Mike Kelley, not only in their relationship to CalArts but also in their collaborative works. Kelley was born in 1954 in Michigan, and enrolled at CalArts in 1976. Kelley was introduced to McCarthy in 1985, and their first collaboration, *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup* (1987) is explored in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 studies their collaborative installation and video, *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction Release* (1992). Their other collaborative group exhibitions include 'Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979' (MOCA, LA) and Paul Schimmel's 'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s' both of which are explored in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.²⁶

Finally, Tony Oursler was born in New York in 1957 and graduated from CalArts with a BFA in 1979, at a similar time to Kelley, who graduated with an MFA in 1978. Oursler collaborated on early works with Mike Kelley, and they created various music- and performance-based work. Amongst the various collaborative written projects and performances I study in Chapter 5 is their collaborative audio recording that formed a central part of Oursler's *Phobic/White Trash* (1992).²⁷

Things and Objects

At the beginning of each chapter in this PhD is a list of things, or an inventory, that is influenced by the vignettes in the introduction to Rosi Braidotti's *The Posthuman* and the lists at the beginning of the chapters in Esther Leslie's *Liquid Crystals*.²⁸ This form of writing, by creating an inventory of materiality at the beginning of each chapter, allows me to situate the chapter, and the work discussed in that

²⁶ John C. Welchman, Isabelle Graw and Antony Vidler, *Mike Kelley* (London: Phaidon, 1999).

²⁷ Elizabeth Janus, *Tony Oursler* (Milan: MACRO; Electa, 2002).

²⁸ Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman* (Oxford: Wiley, 2013); Esther Leslie, *Liquid Crystals: the Science and Art of a Fluid Form* (London: Reaktion, 2016).

chapter, by foregrounding a specific materiality.²⁹ It is from this point that I begin to consider the transition from thing to object in the chapter. The ‘thingness of objects’, as Bill Brown would say, and the objecthood of the objects, is explored throughout each chapter of the PhD.³⁰

Similarly, and not unconnected, this has its origins in *Dinggedichte*, or ‘thing poems’, that formed part of Rainer Maria Rilke’s collection *Neuegedichte* (New Poems).³¹ These poems would focus on an object and attempt to communicate from the object’s point of view. Thing poems provided an objective embodiment of the object. John C. Stout, in *Objects Observed: The Poetry of Things in Twentieth-Century France and America*, writes about a fundamental tension between the thing to be captured in words and the linguistic processes aimed at re-contextualising it.³² Rilke’s thing poems are more objective than his earlier poems. By writing through the object, or through the internal qualities of the object, the thing poem formulates externalities or externalisations.³³ The thing poems oscillate from a human perspective to the perspective of the object and explore external writing and internal writing of the thing itself. The thing reveals itself between the balance of the external and internal qualities. This concept has been helpful for the way I have articulated the concept of externalisation in this PhD and started of each chapter with a list of things, then exploring the neologisms in the chapter.

²⁹ In the Appendix is an index of the words from the lists in each chapter with the frequency of occurrence noted in parentheses. The more frequently a word appears the larger the font incrementally.

³⁰ Bill Brown, ‘Thing Theory’, *Critical Inquiry*, 28:1 (Things), (Autumn 2001), 1-22 (p. 4).

³¹ Rainer Maria Rilke, *New Poems*, trans. Stephen Cohn (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2004).

³² John C. Stout, *Objects Observed: The Poetry of Things in Twentieth-Century France and America* (Toronto; New York: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

³³ For examples of poems see: N. M. Willard, ‘A Poetry of Things: Williams, Rilke, Ponge’, *Comparative Literature*, 17: 4 (1965), 311-324.

Bill Brown writes about the 'thingness' of things and objects when he formed his Thing Theory. He writes about how we look at things and how this renders them as objects:

As they circulate through our lives, we look through objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, or culture – above all, what they disclose about us), but we only catch a glimpse of things. We look through objects because they are codes by which our interpretative attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts.³⁴

Brown creates boundaries between what an object is and what a thing is. He says things are irreducible and reducible to objects.³⁵ This irreducibility is echoed contemporaneously in the writing of Bruno Latour and historically in the writing of Martin Heidegger, and in the context of Object-Oriented Philosophy, which I will explore as this section continues.³⁶

Similarly, in Elizabeth Grosz's essay 'The Thing' she writes:

The thing has a history: it is not simply a passive inertia against which we measure our own activity. It has a "life" of its own, characteristics of its own, which we must incorporate into our activities in order to be effective, rather than simply understand, regulate, and neutralize from the outside. We need to accommodate things more than they accommodate us. Life is the growing accommodation of matter, the adaptation of the needs of life to the exigencies of matter. It is matter, the thing, that produces life; it is matter, the thing, which sustains and provides life with its biological organization and orientation; and it is matter, the thing, that requires life to overcome itself, to evolve, to become more. We find the thing in the world as our resource for making things, and in the process, for leaving our trace on things. The thing is the resource for both subjects and technology.³⁷

³⁴ Brown, 2001, p. 4.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁶ See: Graham Harman, *Tool Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2002); Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans., Albert Hofstadter (New York: HarperCollins, 1971).

³⁷ Elizabeth Grosz, 'The Thing', in: *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005) , pp. 131-145 (p.125).

I find Grosz's elucidation of the subject of things particularly interesting. She is considered a Material Feminist, or New Materialist, writer and philosopher because she aligns the study of things with materiality and matter. She also approaches the study of things as a way to write about the materiality of technology. My study of things, objects and Feminist New Materialism (a branch of New Materialism which I will expand on as this Introduction progresses), alongside Critical Race Studies, forms the core methodology of this PhD. I will now address the study of things and objects before I explore further the scope of Object-Oriented Philosophy and the importance of Feminist New Materialism to my PhD.

Bruno Latour and Jane Bennett contend that objects interact with one another in their own particular ways, and consider that the role of subjectivity is another type of object. This perspective has been termed 'flat ontology', stemming from Manuel DeLanda's theories, and as 'posthuman', stemming from the writing of N. Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway.

In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour writes:

In the first denunciation objects count for nothing; they are just there to be used as the white screen on to which society projects its cinema. But in the second, they are so powerful that they shape the human society, while the social construction of sciences that have produced them remains invisible. Objects, things, consumer goods, works of art are either too weak or too strong.³⁸

Latour is also concerned with non-human entities, and refers to the thinking of Michel Serres, who writes about the concept of 'quasi-objects'.³⁹ Quasi-objects are objects that form in certain relations, drawing people into relations with nonhuman objects while being irreducible.

As Serres writes, in *The Parasite*:

³⁸ Latour, 1993, p. 53.

³⁹ Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

This quasi-object is not an object, but it is one nevertheless, since it is not a subject, since it is in the world; it is also a quasi-subject, since it marks or designates a subject who, without it, would not be a subject [...] This quasi-object, when being passed, makes the collective, if it stops, it makes the individual. If he is discovered, he is "it". Who is the subject, who is an "I," or who am I? [...] the collective; if it stops, it marks the "I".⁴⁰

Latour argues that objects are actants, and are more like participants than recipients. As an instance of this, Serres used the example of a ball and a game being played by a team of defensive and offensive members in order to write about quasi-objects. The passage above is, then, both a way to write about social construction and a way to write about human or social interactions. This begs questions of the team players and who is playing, and why the relations in the game with the ball are shifting. Quasi-objects configure and reconfigure human relations. This is extended in this PhD as a way to think about objects and a way of thinking about conditions, relations and the structure of social relations. The quasi-object is between subjects and forms a collective via their circulation, and it also mediates between subjects or quasi-subjects. The quasi-object is a social bond, according to Latour, and this is how he frames Serres' concept. Serres explains how a collective is formed not from a previously formed 'I' of the individual, but from the 'we' that is formed by circulations of the quasi-object.⁴¹

Philosophers such as Ian Bogost, Levi Bryant and Graham Harman have, since around 2007 and increasingly from 2011 onwards, been writing about a branch of philosophy known as Object-Oriented Ontology (often shortened to 'OOO').⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 225.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² This branch of philosophy had often been referred to earlier as Speculative Realism. This term was coined in April 2007 at a conference in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths College, University of London. The participants were Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman and Quentin Meillassoux, and it was chaired by Alberto Toscano. The term was, however, rejected by many of these philosophers. None of the group adhere to this label. Brassier and Meillassoux are not necessarily referred to as realist philosophers and Meillassoux has said he is more aligned with Speculative Materialism.

Such non-anthropocentric philosophies have been a part of recent artistic and curatorial practices.⁴³ These philosophers specifically write about granting status to objects.⁴⁴ They write about the autonomy of objects, and theorise about the ability of objects to extend beyond or transcend previously conceived of notions of realism by writing about how objects can both exist and not exist at the same time.⁴⁵ Since 2007, much has been written about OOO in its various orientations that engage with and deliberate on art/aesthetics and its impact on art criticism and contemporary curatorial practice.⁴⁶

According to OOO, 'correlationism' is defined as a way to denote whether or not it is possible to think being apart from thought, as conceived by Quentin

⁴³ For perspectives on this see: Christoph Cox, Jenny Jaskey, Suhail Malik (eds.), *Realism Materialism Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press with Centre for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, 2015). For information on exhibition and curatorial strategies that have explored these philosophies, see: Richard Flood, Laura Hopton, Massimiliano Gioni, Trevor Smith, *Unmonumental: The Object in the 21st Century* [exh. cat.] (London: Phaidon, 2012); Carolyn Christov-Barkargiev, *DOCUMENTA (13): The Guidebook* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012).

⁴⁴ Harman's philosophy has some points of similarity with Bryant's thinking. In Harman's *The Quadruple Object*, he writes about and develops Heidegger's theory of the fourfold and he goes on to develop this by theorising and defining a fourfold structure of objects. Harman theorises that his fourfold structure is a framework with which to consider encounters with everything or all things in the world – both real and fictional, and both tangible and intangible. Harman also uses this fourfold structure to think about objects' encounters with each other, because according to Harman we are just one more object amongst other objects. Bogost's version of OOO, or his metaphysics, is about how infinite universes can be found in or entailed in specific things. Harman's version of OOO, or his metaphysics, is about objects that are able to hold contradictory qualities at different times. The qualities of an object are able to change without the object ceasing to be that object. My thesis includes four main categories of object types, but is not a direct translation of the fourfold model. See: Ian Bogost, 'Why Time is on the Inside of Objects', *Bogost*, 2012, available at: <https://bogost.com/writing/why_time_is_on_the_inside_of_o/> [accessed 14 March, 2015]; Levi R. Bryant, 'Relations and Withdrawal', *Larval Subjects*, 2010, available at: <<https://larvalsubjects.com/2010/01/20/relations-and-withdrawal/>> [accessed 02 April, 2018]; Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2011).

⁴⁵ See: Bogost, 2015; Harman, 2011; Graham Harman and Jon Roffe, 'Propositions, Objects, Questions', *Parrhesia*, 21 (2014), 23-52 (p. 30), available at: <https://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia21/parrhesia21_harman.pdf> [accessed 03 January 2018]; Graham Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: a New Theory of Everything* (London, Penguin Random House, 2018); Andrew J. Mitchell, *The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015).

⁴⁶ See: Cox, Jaskey, Malik, eds., 2015.

Meillassoux. He writes that 'By "correlation" we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never is either term considered apart from the other'.⁴⁷ Bryant extends this to think about how relations can be internal or external. He writes about relations between entities, substances and objects.⁴⁸ According to Bryant:

No matter how deeply you look into the parts that make up the multiple-composition of an object you will never find the objectness of objects. Likewise, no matter how deeply you look into the qualities of objects you will never find the objectness of object. The objectness of objects or, as I call it, the "proper being" of objects, is something other than aggregates of parts and manifested qualities.⁴⁹

OOO is most commonly critiqued for rejecting human autonomy by speaking about objects, and for claiming that humans are just one type of object among other objects, while also asserting that humans tend to define objects, even within this remit.⁵⁰ Theories of Object-Oriented Philosophy provide a framework within which to consider the metaphysical relationship between objects, screens and the stage, and the conventions of this metaphysical relationship are significant to the way in which the objects in this PhD are understood to be externalised. In this PhD I am interested in working with these object-oriented positions and philosophies in an applied way in order to consider the way objects can be externalised. This framework lets me think through and about objects, but I am concerned with the concept of what the reduction of these objects to their material and relational moments disturbs or means. I am, however, interested in the dynamics between animate and inanimate things and their position in the world, which is something these theories address.

⁴⁷ Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Bryant, 2010.

⁵⁰ See: Peter Wolfendale, *Object-Oriented Philosophy: the Noumenon's New Clothes* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014).

Of the many criticisms of Object-Oriented Philosophies and Ontology, one is that they do not engage fully with feminism and race.⁵¹ However, in this PhD I am interested in the scope of, and ways to apply thinking about, exploring the tensions between objects and the various ways that these tensions can be examined. The metaphysics of OOO can help to bring about an understanding of how the objects in this PhD function. These Object-Oriented Philosophies have impacted on the ways in which I conceive of and theorise forms of externalisations of objects in this PhD.

Object-Oriented Feminism (OOF) and Object-Oriented Philosophies

One of the main themes of this PhD has been the study and examination of objects. The title of this PhD, 'The Externalisation of the Object', is in part about putting objects in the foreground as a way to offer a nuanced critical examination of specific artworks and theoretical ideas. I would like address recent critiques of these Object-Oriented Philosophies, mainly in the work of a group of scholars associated with OOO and a recently published collection of essays entitled *Object-Oriented Feminism*, edited by Katherine Behar.

Object-Oriented Feminism, or OOF, is thought of as an intervention. The thinking behind it emerged from a number of events and conferences held from 2010 to 2012.⁵² As a critique, OOF offers ways to rethink, reimagine and rework the politics and theories of Object-Oriented Ontologies/ Philosophies that often lack engagement with race, gender, sex, ethics and politics more broadly. Challenges to this rethinking have come from some scholars in OOO, although Levi Bryant and Tim Morton have embraced critiques of object-oriented thinking. If Object-Oriented Philosophies veer away from the human, and fail to approach ethics or politics, OOF is thus a way to think through this absence. Behar writes: 'People are

⁵¹ See: Katherine Behar (ed.), *Object-Oriented Feminism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

⁵² Behar, 2016, pp. 1-14.

not treated “like” objects when they are objects as such from the outset. By extending the concept of objectification and its ethical critique to the world of things, object-oriented thinking stands to evolve feminist and postcolonial practices to reconsider how the very processes of objectification work’.⁵³ OOF considers what a feminist ethics could be when applied to object-based theories and philosophies. OOF, then, addresses a wider political and ethical context, and how this impacts on the material world.

Katherine Behar, in her Introduction to *Object-Oriented Feminism*, writes about how OOF was formed as a ‘[...] feminist intervention or response to the debates and discourse surrounding recent debates on OOO and new materialisms, because these discourses consider [...] objects, things, stuff, and matter as primary’.⁵⁴ The term New Materialism broadly covers a set of theories about materiality, ontology and ethics of humans and non-humans. New Materialism is interested in the relationship between things, objects, bodies, humans, materialities and these interconnected relationships. Non-human materiality is questioned without a rejection of the human, and in certain ways there is an overlap with how OOO thinks of correlationism and flat ontology in both of these fields of theory.⁵⁵ Behar writes that the authors came together to question how to approach OOO and New Materialisms in a politically embodied way. Behar comments that OOF is an intervention that is intended to approach objects from ‘[...] the inside-out position of being an object, too’.⁵⁶ This strategy is in part used to think about ways that the authors in the collection open up the discussion about how objectification functions and thinking about objects and things in terms of ethical critiques in relation to feminist and post-colonial theories and artistic practices. This approach is adopted in order to examine how objectification functions. Behar comments that

⁵³ Ibid., p. 8.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁵ Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, ed., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

OOF 'turns the position of philosophy inside out to study objects while being an object oneself.'⁵⁷

The authors of the essays are interested in progressing thinking around feminist theory and the philosophy of things, as Behar would say. They do this in three specific ways: through politics, through ethics and by looking at entanglements between things via an analysis of erotics and humour. How they frame their interest in New Materialisms is interesting: they state that their interest is in the way Feminist New Materialism seeks to examine the boundaries between the human and the non-human in order to overcome an anthropocentric worldview. Further, they question how this is aligned with OOF's view of objects – whether these consist of organic or inorganic matter, and whether they are human or non-human. They are interested in how they can analyse artistic and curatorial practices in this framework, especially when artistic or curatorial practices question representational or non-representational relationships between objects.⁵⁸ OOF is then concerned with the internal resistant quality of objects, or how objects carry an internal resistance.⁵⁹ This is another way to think about feminist interventions into OOO, related to feminist interventions in New Materialisms. Behar writes:

Materialism and object-oriented thought are popular now, for a reason, and it is not because the linguistic turn rewrote distinctions like gender as seemingly irrelevant constructs. Rather, at this moment, paradigms like gender are all the more worthy of our attention because they are in the process of becoming something other than what we thought we knew. Increasingly, we understand them as secondary qualities of objects.⁶⁰

In the speculative and ontological turn to objects in the last ten years, objects turn away from us, they turn to us, we look back and around and through and along

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Behar, 2016.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

them. And OOF, at its core, opens a space for an intersectional approach to object studies, and to questions of the politics and ethics related to the wider framework of these object philosophies/studies and, more broadly, within specifically Feminist New Materialist theories. The aligned perspectives of Object-Oriented Philosophies and New Materialist philosophies address conceptions of human and non-human objects, and a shared exploration and understanding of what matter means.

Object-Oriented Philosophies and OOO influenced the way I approached the idea of externalising the object. This, for me, puts into focus how I frame the role of the object in each of the core chapters of this PhD. It is from this point that I then consider the wider ramifications of the object in each chapter. This framework provided me with a starting point for how to think about the object. The intersections of Feminist Studies and Critical Race Studies, Object-Oriented Philosophies and theories of Materialisms, have provided me with a foundation and framework with which to explore the works this PhD addresses. A mission of my PhD is to explore the potential of these intersectional methods, which allows me to critique the objects beyond simply recoding or deconstructing what is already there. These newer theories make it possible to conceive of the object-types that constitute the chapters of this PhD. The object-types that form each chapter make it possible to critique the work. The works' historicity and materiality make it possible to conceive of the new theories. In this PhD I enable or promote theoretical models, thereby reframing how certain artworks are understood.

Feminist New Materialism / New Materialism

Feminist readings of New Materialism and ethical and political subjectivities are a key element in the writing of Stacy Alaimo, Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway and Nancy Tuana.⁶¹ Their theoretical approaches are

⁶¹ Coole and Frost, 2010.

considered in Chapter 1, 'Horror Vacui', and in Chapter 3, 'The Gloopy Object'. Feminist New Materialists write about matter, and forge a pathway for ethico-political questions and post-anthropocentric subjects and subjectivities, or a post-human one. They also consider a materialist position and broach issues of agency. They focus on human and non-human relations. Bodies and matter and technological interfaces and mediations are part of their philosophical approach. The interdisciplinary scholarly turn toward matter and the theoretical approaches of New Materialism and Feminist New Materialism is one of the methodologies utilised in this PhD. This PhD considers how interdisciplinary philosophies can approach materiality and matter and their connection to human and non-human worlds.

Significant to note here is Kate Mondloch's 2018 book *A Capsule Aesthetic: Feminist Materialisms in New Media Art*, in which Mondloch considers the framework of Feminist New Materialisms and references the work of theorists such as Stacy Alaimo and Nancy Tuana, who are also referred to in chapters of this PhD. *A Capsule Aesthetic* focuses on new media installation art and technoscience. This differs from some of the concerns in this PhD, but her framing of Feminist New Materialist methods in relation to her study of embodiment, installation art and new media work is a fascinating approach to working with these theories and provides an interesting framework for these theories to be integrated with art-historical approaches and art criticism. Here, Mondloch is looking specifically at feminist theory and critiques of new media art: she explores human and non-human relationships, as well as the idea of material and immaterial agency.⁶² Mondloch uses the interdisciplinarity of Feminist New Materialisms as a way to write about the use of ethics and politics in this field. She writes that '[...] the persuasive ethical-political motivations of feminist materialism helps us to recognise the often-obscured critical-aesthetic potential of these artistic practices

⁶² Kate Mondloch, *A Capsule Aesthetic: Feminist Materialisms in New Media Art* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), p. 6.

and their spectatorship'.⁶³ I am influenced by the way she frames this, and I see the usefulness of these theories in examining installation and video installation work through the ethical and political life of objects and matter. Significantly, Mondloch writes about what it is to think about these theories through the works and to think about the works through these theories. This is an approach I have embraced in this PhD. Affirming my own feelings and efforts, Mondloch writes that her aim in taking this approach is: '[...] not to propose philosophy as a way to explain art, or art as a means to illustrate theory. Rather, I aim to explore how these instruments can work together, provoke each other, and even begin to unite in the interest of larger critical and intellectual projects'.⁶⁴ Older theories in New Materialism, and its intersection with OOO, have often been often critiqued for their lack of approach or engagement with race, or their lack of awareness of larger political systems or politics, and my research seeks to contribute to the growing awareness of the urgency of this debate.⁶⁵

Methodology, Critical Race Studies

Critical Race Studies is one of the main theoretical lenses and methodologies adopted in this PhD. Along with a reading of the alternative feminist histories that move in parallel with the works and artists this PhD focuses on is a reading,

⁶³ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ See: Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012); Michael Hames-García, 'How Real Is Race?' in Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (eds.), *Material Feminisms*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008); Sonia Hazard, 'The Material Turn in the Study of Religion', *Religion and Society*, 4:1 (2013), 58–78; Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, 'Outer Worlds: The Persistence of Race in Movement Beyond the Human' in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21:2–3 (2015), 215–218; Chad Shomura, 'Exploring the Promise of New Materialisms', *Lateral*, 6.1 (2017); Kim TallBear, 'An Indigenous Reflection on Working Beyond the Human/Not Human', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21:2–3 (2015), 230–235; Kyla Wazana Tompkins, 'On the Limits and Promise of New Materialist Philosophy', *Lateral*, 5.1 (2016); Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

throughout Chapters 4 and 5, informed by Critical Race Studies. In particular, this analysis focuses on the role of Whiteness- its invisibility, its visibility and its connection to American culture and identity.⁶⁶ This is how Critical Race Studies is employed and deployed in this PhD.

Furthermore, I am interested in how Object-Oriented Philosophies and Feminist New Materialisms sit within the context of Critical Race Studies as a method. I am interested in this in part because recent discussions in Object-Oriented Philosophy, and to an extent New Materialist philosophy, are limited, as they do not always deal with race – but they do expand the ways in which we think about the status of the object.⁶⁷ I will elaborate on the way that Object-Oriented Philosophy and Feminist New Materialist philosophy have informed this PhD as this Introduction continues.

Critical Race Studies forms an interdisciplinary field that offers a critical analysis of race and forms of racism. Theories that make up Critical Race Studies consider the role of systemic racism in different societies and institutional racism. Critical Race Studies offers an analysis of power structures, and this field provides a way of revealing the pervasiveness of racism. It also considers ways to analyse the impact of race, theories of race and the role of race.⁶⁸ Critical Race Studies, or Critical Race

⁶⁶ See: Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: an Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2001) ; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) ; Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015) ; Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 2015).

⁶⁷ For recent discussions which are limited in terms of race yet expand the idea of the object, see: Tristan Garcia, *Form and Object: A Treatise on Things*, trans. Mark Allan Ohm and Jon Cogburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Wolfendale, 2014. For recent discussions that are critical of the role of race and also expand on the idea of the object in these theories, see: Behar, 2016; Cox, Jaskey, Malik, 2015.

⁶⁸ Critical Whiteness Studies Group; Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, *Towards a Bibliography of Critical Whiteness Studies*, ed. Tim Engles (Urbana-Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, 2006), available at: <https://archives.library.illinois.edu/erec/University%20Archives/2401001/Production_webseite/pages/Research/06-07/CriticalWhiteness/Bibliography.pdf> [accessed 23 May 2018].

Theory as it is referred to in different geographical and institutional contexts, originated in the United States as a discourse stemming from the work of activists, writers, scholars and legal scholars. Its origins lie in the examination of how racism was part of a structure of the legal system and different governmental or private institutions, and it theorised ways to change this dynamic, which was based on white privilege and white supremacy, and which perpetuates the marginalisation of people of colour.⁶⁹

Instrumental in the analysis of the wider structural forces of racism and the progression of debates about race in America were Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado and Alan Freeman. Critical Race Studies was academised and consolidated in 1989 at the first annual workshop on Critical Race Theory at the St. Benedict Center in Madison, Wisconsin. The workshop was organised by Crenshaw and included numerous participants, including Angela Harris, Mari Matsuda and Patricia Williams.⁷⁰ Critical Race Studies was originally an offshoot of Legal Studies. The workshop and the subsequent rise of this field of study created a discourse and a dialogue and a language that extended to countries outside the United States from the 1990s onwards.

Currently, Critical Whiteness Studies have been increasingly gaining interest in scholarship from those studying or writing about Critical Race Studies and elsewhere across the arts and humanities. Critical Whiteness Studies is a field of scholarship that emerged from Critical Race Studies. Prominent writers and scholars who have examined the role of Whiteness and who have contributed to my analysis of the wider field of Critical Race Studies include Les Black, Richard Dyer, Ruth Frankenberg, Matthew Frye Jacobson, Michael Omi, David Roediger, Hortense Spillers, Vron Ware and Howard Winant. This is seen in the approach to Whiteness an analytical lens that is used in various chapters of this PhD. Scholarship and

⁶⁹ Kimberlé Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: The New Press, 1996).

⁷⁰ Ibid.

writing focusing on an American framework of the social construction of Whiteness have been significant for me in opening up or bringing to light an understanding of its impact on American culture and forms of American identity. Critical Whiteness Studies and its academisation in the U.S. from the 1980s onwards historically drew on the writing of W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, Nella Larsen and others. Recently, Critical Whiteness Studies has drawn on scholarship by more recent and contemporary writers such as Claudia Rankine. This field of study considers the invisible and visible structures that pave the way for white supremacy and white privilege and explore the question of identity.

Feminist New Materialism and Critical Race Studies

I am interested in the way that Karen Barad's theories, and the terminology that she uses in her writing, which stem from her knowledge of classical and quantum physics, have been incorporated by writers in the arts and humanities and by other New Materialist scholars, and the ways in which these terms impact on the discourse.⁷¹ Barad's 'intra-action' is different from the term inter-action. Intra-action is about human and non-human organisms and machines, and their emergence via their co-constitution.⁷² In Barad's intra-action, our non-human surroundings are relational and entangled. Barad would say that her concept of intra-action is between material and discursive analyses of the body.⁷³ Barad's intra-action is a concept that considers that objects and different forms of agency can be conceived within a non-hierarchical framework.

I am also influenced by Karen Barad's use of term 'entanglement'. In her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Barad describes entanglement in this way:

⁷¹ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not pre-exist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. Which is not to say that emergence happens once and for all, as an event or as a process that takes place according to some external measure of space and of time, but rather that time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future.⁷⁴

For Barad, entanglement is not just how objects react to other objects, but more about how objects differ from each other and how the boundaries of objects, and their properties and meanings, can shift. This theoretical lens can be applied to many other disciplines, and has been utilised over the last ten years in the arts and humanities and other related disciplines such as various social sciences. Barad's theoretical lens has been of particular importance to Feminist New Materialists and the intersection of their work with Critical Race Studies. This will be explored in the following section.

I am interested in some of the current thinking in New Materialist Studies that focuses on critical engagements with the ontology of matter that are foregrounded in politics, the possible future trajectories of the growing discourse surrounding these questions, and in this intersectionality of Critical Race Studies and New Materialisms. Feminist New Materialisms and Critical Race Studies have recently benefited from interdisciplinarity and intersectionality. Emerging and established scholars have been writing about New Materialism's lack of engagement with issues of race. Kyla Wazana Tompkins, in 'On the Limits and Promise of New Materialist Philosophy', writes about New Materialist theories through feminist, queer, and Critical Race Studies approaches. Tompkins argues that 'race remains

⁷⁴ Barad, 2007, p. ix.

underrepresented in the scholarship of New Materialism'.⁷⁵ This lack of representation is critiqued as relying on references to identitarian thinking or identity politics.⁷⁶ Feminist New Materialist and New Materialist theories, more broadly referred to as Material Feminisms, offer an approach to thinking about ways to make race visible, and ways to dissect how it is embedded within the production of cultural or social forms.⁷⁷ Scholars in this field whose work has impacted on my research include Chad Shomura, Mel Y. Chen and Dana Luciano.⁷⁸

There is a lack of representation in many New Materialist perspectives and approaches in terms of concepts of race, ethnicity and gender. Areas that are under-represented in New Materialist thinking include post-colonial and decolonial theories and Critical Race Studies. In terms of thinking of new pathways and future trajectories, I am influenced by ways of thinking about racialised bodies and how they matter within the New Materialist framework. Further, I am interested in how to go about filling or approaching these gaps in Feminist New Materialist and New Materialist thinking in order to form new pathways to identify how race, ethnicity and gender may be considered in this framework, and within scholarship in Critical Race Studies, as a way to consider the ramifications of what and who is included and excluded from these discussions. Significant to note here is the writing of recent scholars in this field who are working on the very matter that has influenced my research into this potential future trajectory. This includes Michael Hames-Garcia's writing on identity and queer studies and Jasbir Puar's writing on gender and sexuality;⁷⁹ in addition, Arun Saldanha has written on geographies of Whiteness.⁸⁰ And when writing about becoming, New Materialist scholars such as

⁷⁵ Tompkins, 2016.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Shomura, 2017.

⁷⁸ See: Dana Luciano and Mel Y. Chen, 'Queer Inhumanisms', *GLQ: The Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, special issue, 22:2-3 (Spring/Summer 2015).

⁷⁹ See: Hames-García, 2011 and Jasbir Puar's *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

⁸⁰ See: Arun Saldanha, *Psychedelic White: Goa Trance and the Viscosity of Race* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

Iris van der Tuin have considered how bodies, in a New Materialist framework, can be assemblages.⁸¹ Other notable scholars in this field include Kyla Wazana Tompkins, mentioned above, Chad Shomura and Mel Y. Chen.⁸² These scholars critique the way in which Feminist New Materialist thinking by Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz, for example, fail to encompass concepts of race.⁸³ This recent thinking and writing by the scholars mentioned above focuses on the lack of interdisciplinarity and the absence of an incorporation of race, gender, ethnicity and sexuality into this approach.

Future Pathways and Trajectories

The intersection of Feminist New Materialism and Critical Race Studies can be a critical tool for practising art history and theory. I subscribe to the way Karen Barad and Kate Mondloch advocate a transdisciplinary approach and intersectionality within these theoretical frameworks.⁸⁴ The main questions that I think are being considered in these fields by the scholars mentioned above, and the questions I investigate, concern whether New Materialist and Feminist New Materialist theories can address the way race materialises – the basis for this, how it happens and what happens to the way racialised bodies and matter are formed. Can looking at the way race is materialised offer new critiques within Critical Race Studies, and subsequently in the field of New Materialisms itself? Could these questions also be helpful to the debates surrounding Object-Oriented Philosophies, because, as mentioned above, Object-Oriented Philosophies do not always engage with politics? Additionally, I am interested in how these questions could offer ways to think about the potential for an anti-racist politics. If New Materialisms offer future speculations about realities in which the human is not at the centre, then what does

⁸¹ See: Iris van der Tuin & Rick Dolphijn, 'The Transversality of New Materialism', in *Women: A Cultural Review*, 21:2 (2010), 153-171.

⁸² See: 'Forum: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities', *Lateral 5:1* (Spring 2016), 'New Materialist Philosophy'; 'Forum: Emergent Critical Analytics for Alternative Humanities', *Lateral 6:1* (Spring 2017), 'New Materialist Philosophy'.

⁸³ Alaimo and Hekman (eds.), 2008.

⁸⁴ See: Mondloch, 2018 and Barad, 2007.

this say about Critical Race Studies and how we think about forms of systemic racism?⁸⁵

Installation, Screen, Video

Amongst the overwhelmingly significant body of writing about video installation and video art, some of the starting points for my research that helped me to form the relationship of the neologisms of The Craft Object, The Gloopy Object, The Prop Object and The Suburban Object, as well as the process of Horror Vacui, include Yvonne Spielmann's essay 'The Visual Flow: Fixity and Transformation in Photo- and Videographic imagery'.⁸⁶ Spielmann writes about narratives in video installations, arguing that video has formed as a type of art object. Her writing on video as an object, and this kind of discourse on the types of objects in installations and media-based works, has proven to be influential in terms of how I frame the relationships of video to screen and objects in the physical gallery space in this PhD. Crucial to my research into the role of screens in contemporary art is Kate Mondloch's writing in her book *Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art*, in which she writes about media installations and different types of virtual space and material space, and the importance of viewers as embodied subjects in the space of the gallery or exhibition. The difference between looking at, or on, screens is also key to her book. Writing about art objects in video she remarks:

Media installations, inasmuch as they are conceived and experienced as hybrid spatial and temporal art objects made with mass media screens, clearly exceed critical models that exclusively rely on outdated theorizations of material specificity or of a single medium. Instead, these works necessitate detailed consideration of their institutional and discursive contexts.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ See: Frost and Coole, 2010.

⁸⁶ Yvonne Spielmann, 'The Visual Flow: Fixity and Transformation in Photo- and Videographic Imagery', in Raphaël Pirenne & Alexander Streitberger (eds.), *Heterogeneous Objects: Intermedia and Photography after Modernism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), pp. 101-117 (pp. 106 -107).

⁸⁷ Kate Mondloch, *Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 4.

Erika Balsom's writing about the installation of film in her book *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* examines the exhibition formats of video installations, including multi-screen installations and the relationship of screens to the gallery or viewing space.⁸⁸ Vivian Sobchak's writing about temporality and forms of electronic media and space, in her book *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*, was helpful to my examination of the role of television in Chapter 4, 'The Prop Object'.⁸⁹ Sobchak writes:

Television, videocassettes and digital films, VCR, DVD recorder/players, electronic games, personal computer with Internet access, and pocket electronics of all kinds form an encompassing perceptual and representational system whose various forms "interface" to constitute an alternative and absolute electronic world of immaterialized – if materially consequential – experience and this electric world incorporates the spectator/ user uniquely in a spatially decentered, weakly temporalized and quasi-disembodied (or diffusely embodied) state.⁹⁰

Impacting on my research into projections, video installations and a sense of ontology is Marc Mayer's book *Being and Time: the Emergence of Video Projection*, that accompanies his exhibition of the same name in which he discusses the exhibition and forms of consciousness.⁹¹ This exhibition featured the work of Tony Oursler. Crucial to my research into installation histories has been Claire Bishop's book *Installation Art: a Critical History* for its suggestions of categories and ways to think about types of installations.⁹² Tamara Trodd, in her introduction to her edited collection *Screen/Space: the Projected Image in Contemporary Art*, writes about 'a quality of viewing intensity, [...] a new structure of spatial 'interiority'

⁸⁸ Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013).

⁸⁹ Vivian Sobchak, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2004), p. 153.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Marc Mayer, *Being and Time: Emergence of Video Projection*, (exh. cat.) (Buffalo, NY: Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1996).

⁹² Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: a Critical History* (New York, Routledge, 2005).

within the screen'.⁹³ Trodd's introduction suggested new modes of spectatorship, and this was an important way for me to think about how I articulate the process of Horror Vacui in Chapter 1. Amongst the scores of texts available on these topics, these particular ones presented ideas about video, screens and installations that resonated with me and helped to position these topics for me.

Chapter Overviews, Externalisations, The Originality of my Enterprise

In Chapter 1 of this PhD, entitled 'Horror Vacui', the work of Ryan Trecartin and Jason Rhoades is analysed. The works studied in this chapter include *Any Ever* (2010), by Trecartin and *Meccatuna* (2003), *My Madinah. In Pursuit of my Ermitage...* (2004) and *The Black Pussy . . . and the Pagan Idol Workshop* (2005) by Rhoades. In this chapter, Horror Vacui is presented as a process. I address forms of hoarding and collecting as a way to explore the sense of accumulation in this process. Significant to note here is Renee Winters' book *The Hoarding Impulse: Suffocation of the Soul*, that considers psychological frameworks surrounding hoarding and collecting.⁹⁴ Considering the wider psychological framework was helpful to the way I examined the role of hoarding in the process of Horror Vacui. In this chapter I begin with an exploration of accumulation, hoarding and collecting.⁹⁵ Alongside this approach I also consider Jean Baudrillard's models of collecting, collections and attachments to objects.⁹⁶ Moving forward from this research as a basis, I argue that the works discussed in this chapter encapsulate the concept of a 'worlding' that engages with performances of gender and race alongside a particular use of socio-linguistics. The process of Horror Vacui in

⁹³ Tamara Trodd, *Screen/space: the Projected Image in Contemporary Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 17.

⁹⁴ Renee Winters, *The Hoarding Impulse: Suffocation of the Soul* (Hove: Routledge, 2015).

⁹⁵ See: Fabio Gygi, Lecture, 'V&A/RCA History of Design Research Seminars' at the V&A Museum, London, 20 November 2014; Zoë Mendelson, *Psychologies and Spaces of Accumulation: The Hoard as Collagist Methodology (and Other Stories)* (PhD Thesis, Central St Martins, University of the Arts London, 2015).

⁹⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects* (London: Verso, 1996).

Rhoades' and Trecartin's work is examined as a way to explore how it can lead to a sense of the externalisation of fictional spaces.

The originality of my enterprise in this chapter consists in part of an analysis of these works within the framework of a worlding, which allows me to argue that they lead to a new experiential and participatory form of engagement. This chapter is influenced by concepts of a worlding within a New Materialist framework, such as Donna Haraway's articulation of it as the combination of narrative and material relationships.⁹⁷ Aligned with Haraway's approach is Helen Palmer and Vicky Hunter's use of a worlding as a way to discuss material relationships and non-human and human storytelling.⁹⁸ I build on this framework of worlding by extending it to include concepts of race and gender in Trecartin's and Rhoades' work. I extend and build on these frameworks in order to look at how psychological impulses, hoarding, collecting and accumulation contribute to the forming of a new configuration of video installation and installation in Trecartin's and Rhoades' work.

The analysis and research for this chapter was supported by visits to the archives of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in June 2012 and The Brant Foundation Art Study Center in March 2018. Interviews were conducted with writer Chris Kraus in person in London in January 2015 and curator Ingrid Schaffner in January 2014 in person in Philadelphia. I viewed Rhoades' work at the ICA Philadelphia in 2014 and at The Brant Foundation Art Study Center in Connecticut in 2018. I viewed Trecartin's work in 2010 at MOCA in Los Angeles.

Curator Ingrid Schaffner has recently written extensively on Jason Rhoades' body of work and practice. Her exhibition catalogue *Jason Rhoades: Four Roads* is important to the body of writing about Rhoades and includes Schaffner's

⁹⁷ See: Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2016); Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

⁹⁸ See: Helen Palmer and Vicky Hunter, 'Worlding', in *New Materialism*, available at: <<https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/w/worlding.html>> [accessed 10 July 2018].

interviews, essays and archival research which informed this exhibition. Essays by Paul Schimmel, Martha Buskirk and Chris Kraus explore the material qualities, themes, concepts and connections to consumerism, mass production and capitalism in Rhoades' work. The catalogue also mentions cultural impacts and the impact of California and suburban areas on his practice and the objects he used.⁹⁹ In my interview with Schaffner we discussed the impact of craft and California on Rhoades' work, the concepts of Whiteness and maleness in his work and the impact of different artists, including Paul McCarthy, on Rhoades' work.¹⁰⁰

Important to the body of writing about Rhoades is curator Eva Meyer Herman's dictionary, or glossary of terms and words, titled *Volume: a Rhoades Referenz*. This book was a compilation of words used in Rhoades' installations or used by the artist to describe his work. This book highlights the artist's thinking process and influences and offers insight into the many themes and ideas that constitute Rhoades' installations by exploring language in his practice.¹⁰¹ I will build on this study of language by offering an analysis of socio-linguistics in Rhoades' work.

In addition to this body of writing is *Jason Rhoades' Black Pussy Cocktail Coffee Table Book*, by Alex Israel and Kevin West, that offers an analysis of the performances and concepts in Rhoades' practice. In the foreword to the book, West refers to the relationship of gendered words or language and connotations of words in Rhoades' installations, as well as cultural influences from Islam and the gendering of textiles and craft in reference to Rhoades' interest in macramé.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ See: Schaffner et al., 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Interview, Ingrid Schaffner, in person, Philadelphia, January 2014.

¹⁰¹ Eva Meyer-Hermann, ed., *Jason Rhoades: Volume, a Rhoades Referenz* (Nürnberg: Kunsthalle Nürnberg, 1998). For additional books about Rhoades see: Eva Meyer-Hermann, *Jason Rhoades: Collector's Choice Vol. 9* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 2009); Eva Meyer-Hermann, ed. Felix Zdenek, *Jason Rhoades: Perfect World*, (Koln: Oktagon, 2000); Ralph Rugoff, Paul McCarthy and Eva Meyer-Hermann, *Jason Rhoades: The Big Picture*, (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2012).

¹⁰² Kevin West and Alex Israel, *Jason Rhoades' Black Pussy Cocktail Coffee Table Book* (New York: Hauser & Wirth, 2008).

In an interview with Schaffner we discussed the lack of a critical examination of Rhoades' work. In particular, we discussed the lack of an exploration of gender and race, or maleness and Whiteness, in his work. We also discussed potential connections to Trecartin's *Any Ever* and she suggested that these were areas which could benefit from analysis.¹⁰³ I aim to extend the critique of Rhoades' installations to include an analysis of these issues in particular. I will extend these ideas by building on Rhoades' particular use of language and the narratives in his installations. I also offer an examination of the cultural connotations and impact of the work and the relationship of gender and race to the textiles and mass-produced objects in the installations.

In *Social Practices*, Chris Kraus writes about Rhoades' installations as being influenced and impacted by the structures of the Internet. Along with her writing about Rhoades she refers to Trecartin as '[...] the avatar of the internet age'.¹⁰⁴ I will expand on this by offering insight into how the influence of the structures of the Internet can be referenced to consider the ways in which these artists' installations are participatory structures. Connected to this is Domenico Quaranta's *Beyond New Media Art*, which has been helpful to my research for its discussions of web and Internet platforms.¹⁰⁵ Lauren Cornell's writing on Trecartin has highlighted aspects of the digital, the virtual and the real, and has highlighted the influence of language and interior design on Trecartin's videos and installations.¹⁰⁶ Both Lisa Åkervall and Nicholas Ridout have written about Trecartin's work, referring to it as 'sculptural theatres'.¹⁰⁷ Åkervall has written about fictional spaces

¹⁰³ Interview, Schaffner.

¹⁰⁴ Kraus, 2018, p. 195.

¹⁰⁵ Domenico Quaranta, *Beyond New Media Art* (Brescia: Link Editions, 2013).

¹⁰⁶ See: Lauren Cornell, 'Medium Living' in Kevin McGarry (ed.), 2011; Lauren Cornell and Ryan Trecartin, *Surround Audience: New Museum Triennia 2015* (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2015).

¹⁰⁷ Nicholas Ridout, 'Media: Intermission', in Michael Shane Boyle, Matt Cornish, Brandon Woolf (eds.), *Postdramatic Theatre and Form* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp.96-112; Lisa Åkervall, 'McMansion of Media Excess: Ryan Trecartin's and Lizzie Fitch's SITE VISIT', in *NECSUS*, available at: < <https://necsus-ejms.org/mcmansion-of-media-excess-ryan-trecartins-and-lizzie-fitchs-site-visit/> > [accessed 06 June 2019].

in Trecartin's videos, noting that the space in the gallery or installation is created in part via domestic interiors.¹⁰⁸ The incorporation of domestic interiors and furniture in installation works has been written about by Åkervall in 'Networked Selves: Ryan Trecartin and Lizzie Fitch's Postcinematic Aesthetics' and in 'McMansion of Media Excess: Ryan Trecartin's and Lizzie Fitch's SITE VISIT'.¹⁰⁹ Åkervall also refers to recent writing about subjectivity and self in writing about Object-Oriented Philosophies.¹¹⁰ Selfhood and the self is not only part of Åkervall's writing but is also a point considered in Brian Droitcour's writing about the impact of the self in modern technologies, platforms or webcams and the visual impact of this on the self in *Any Ever*.¹¹¹ In particular, Wes Hill has written about the use of online or offline narratives with the self and the viewer.¹¹² Maeve Connolly has expanded on this by writing about the spaces in the installation – the sound, objects and tone created, including the impact of viewing and navigation.¹¹³ Matthew Causey's *Postdigital Performance* refers to sculptural theatres in a similar way to Åkervall and Ridout, and he also defines his concept of postdigital performance, or postdigital practice.¹¹⁴ He writes that Trecartin 'draw(s) on the modalities of the digital, whether or not they are computational or analog, technological or organic [...] and that these practices [...] can be understood as thinking digitally'.¹¹⁵ I expand on this idea by exploring how analogue and digital aspects and the performative, or performance, is key to both Trecartin's and Rhoades' work. Tamara Trodd's

¹⁰⁸ Åkervall, 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Lisa Åkervall, 'Networked Selves: Ryan Trecartin and Lizzie Fitch's Postcinematic Aesthetics', *Screen*, 57:1 (2016), 33-51 (p. 48).

¹¹¹ Brian Droitcour, 'Past and Future Camera: Lizzie Fitch and Ryan Trecartin's New Movies', *Art in America*, 15 April 2016, available at: <<https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/news/past-and-future-camera-lizzie-fitch-and-ryan-trecartins-new-movies/>> [accessed 09 May, 2015].

¹¹² Wes Hill, 'The Automedia Zaniness of Ryan Trecartin', *M/C Journal: a Journal of Media and Culture*, 21: 2 (2018), available at: <<http://www.journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/1382>> [accessed 10 August 2018]

¹¹³ Maeve Connolly, 'Staging Mobile Spectatorship in the Moving Image Installations of Amanda Beech, Philippe Parreno, and Ryan Trecartin/Lizzie Fitch', in Amanda Beech, *All Obstructing Walls Have Been Broken Down* (Belfast: Catalyst Arts, 2014) [unpaginated].

¹¹⁴ Matthew Causey, 'Postdigital Performance', *Theatre Journal* 68:3, 437-441 (p. 432).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

articulation of forms of language in reference to tone and cadence in Trecartin's practice have been helpful in my articulation of the use of upspeak in *Any Ever*.¹¹⁶ The importance of scripts as Trecartin's starting point for his videos, as noted by Brian Droitcour, highlights the importance of language in Trecartin's practice.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Roberta Smith's review of *Any Ever* highlights Trecartin's use of alliteration and linguistic techniques.¹¹⁸ I build on these ideas by addressing Trecartin's use of linguistic techniques, acceleration of language, communication structures and formal aspects such as talking to the camera within the scope of socio-linguistics.

In Chapter 2, 'The Craft Object', the work of Mike Kelley and Jason Rhoades is analysed. The works studied in this chapter include Kelley's *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid and The Wages Of Sin* (1987) and the *Arenas* series (1990), and Jason Rhoades' *Sutter's Mill* (2000) and *The Creation Myth* (1998). I address the materiality of craft and the connections between types of craft-based artwork and the hierarchy of fine art and craft. My use of the term The Craft Object in this chapter refers to materials and processes utilised by Kelley and Rhoades. Both artists created the works referred to in this chapter with found, sourced and hand-made objects such as blankets, knitted materials, rag dolls, stuffed animals, cardboard, crochet and macramé. The term The Craft Object also refers to the status of the object/objects in the works on which this chapter focuses in addressing their identity and origins. This is explored through the history of the hierarchy between fine art and craft. The CalArts Feminist Art Program (FAP) archive is examined as a starting point, and a specific lineage of exhibitions of

¹¹⁶ Tamara Trodd, Lecture, UCL, History of Art & the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Art, 'Art in the Age of Real Abstraction, Ryan Trecartin's Abstract Realism', May 10, 2014, available at: <<https://artintheageofrealabstraction.wordpress.com/programme/>> [accessed 10 May 2014].

¹¹⁷ Brian Droitcour, 'Making Word: Ryan Trecartin as Poet', *Rhizome*, 27 July 2011, available at: <<http://rhizome.org/editorial/2011/jul/27/making-word-ryan-trecartin-poet/>> [accessed 18 Apr. 2015].

¹¹⁸ Smith, 2011.

craft-based works / the examination of historical exhibitions is analysed because it lays a foundation for the way Kelley and Rhoades worked with certain types of materials. The Craft Object is externalised in the work of Kelley and Rhoades via their personal narratives, histories of craft, the role of feminist artists and a lineage of artists who were working with fibre-based work and textile sculptures. The originality of my enterprise in this chapter consists in part of the analyses of Kelley's and Rhoades' work in relation to the lineage of craft-based projects, the work of particular craft-based artists and the evolution of the impact of this work on installation art generally and in particular on the relationship of installation art to the work of Kelley and Rhoades.

In this chapter I offer a re-appraisal of critiques of commodities and forms of labour in relation to Kelley's practice by writers John C. Welchman and Cary Levine. I also analyse critiques by CalArts artists/educators who were involved with the FAP. These analyses are supported by an in-depth interview I conducted in person with Ingrid Schaffner, Chief Curator of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, in January 2014, an in-person interview with Tom Lawson, Dean of The School of Art, CalArts, in December 2013 and my research at the CalArts FAP and Getty archives in December 2013.¹¹⁹ My interview with Welchman helped me understand that a core concern of both his and Levine's critiques was a Marxist approach to consumerism and the role of work and labour.¹²⁰ We discussed the existing body of writing about these artists by Welchman and Levine.¹²¹ His contribution to this body of critical and historical writing helped me to position my contribution to a

¹¹⁹ Interview, Schaffner; Interview, Tom Lawson, in person, Valencia, December 2013; CalArts FAP Archive visit, Valencia, December 2013, Getty Archives, Los Angeles, December 2013.

¹²⁰ Interview, John C. Welchman, Los Angeles, December 2013.

¹²¹ See: Cary S. Levine, *Pay for Your Pleasures: Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Raymond Pettibon* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); Cary Levine, *Mike Kelley: Arenas* (New York: Skarstedt Fine Art, 2011); John C. Welchman, *Art After Appropriation: Essays on Art in the 1990s* (London: Routledge, 2011); John C. Welchman with Mike Kelley, *Minor Histories, Statements, Conversations, Proposals* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); John C. Welchman and Mike Kelley, *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003); Welchman, Graw and Vidler, 1999.

critique of this writing and how I could address the gaps in the research and writing about the work of Kelley and Rhoades in the PhD. I build on Welchman's and Levine's critiques by expanding the focus on material histories, and I offer a deeper analysis of the intersection of these artists' work with that of feminist artists and with craft and specific histories of craft practices.

Among the important texts on Mike Kelley's work is Cary Levine's *Pay for Your Pleasures: Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Raymond Pettibon*. In this text Levine offers a Marxist interpretation of Kelley's and McCarthy's work, focusing on the issue of emotional labour. Both Levine and Welchman write about commodity discourse in their analysis of Kelley's work. Specifically, Welchman writes about this and appropriation, conceptual aesthetics and histories of 'appropriation-based art' in his book *Art After Appropriation: Essays on Art in the 1990s*.¹²² Welchman's survey of the artist, *Mike Kelley*, centres on his Marxist critique of Kelley's *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* (1987) and considers affective labour and the time involved in making gifts and a gift economy more broadly.¹²³ He writes that 'the hidden burden of the gift is that it calls for payback but the price is unspecified, repressed [...]'.¹²⁴ Welchman writes about mass production and commodity, which is aligned with Levine's critiques.¹²⁵ I build on these critiques by incorporating Joshua Simon's idea of 'the unready-made' in his book *Neomaterialism* as a way to think about the role of symbols, commodities and readymades in the work of both Kelley and Rhoades. In this chapter I will also write about the impact of, and intersection with, feminist and material histories in Kelley's and Rhoades' work. I build on this idea by examining the history of feminist artists' work, including that of Miriam Shapiro, Mira Schor, and Faith Wilding, and by examining a lineage of craft-based artists in order to explore the installation and material aspects of Kelley and Rhoades' work.

¹²² Welchman, 2011, p. 64.

¹²³ Welchman, Graw and Vidler, 1999, p. 26.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Welchman with Mike Kelley, 2004, p. 52.

In the exhibition catalogue *Mike Kelley*, curator Eva Meyer-Hermann interviews Kelley, asking him about the role of feminism and CalArts Feminist Art Program in his work. Kelley responds by saying he was interested in craft and was interested in commodity discourse rather than gender discourse in relation to his work *More Love Hours or Arenas*.¹²⁶ I will be offering a deeper analysis of the impact and importance of the CalArts FAP on Kelley's work, and I will address the lack of a deeper engagement with the history of the FAP and its artists in relation to his work. In Welchman's *Mike Kelley*, the impact of ideas of craft, commodity and labour are referred to for their affective value.¹²⁷ Welchman considers the role of craft in Kelley's work in terms of his use of materials, but does not provide an analysis of the role of the histories of the FAP and other craft artists.¹²⁸ I refer to formal applications of craft principles and notions of the amateur. I expand the critique of craft and how this can impact on Kelley's work, and I extend this analysis to the work of Rhoades. In *Art After Appropriation: Essays on Art in the 1990s*, Welchman comments that there is an 'absence of craft's formal location' in Kelley's work.¹²⁹ In contrast, I assert that there is a particular history of craft, and I examine this in relation to the work of Kelley, as well as Rhoades, as a way to explore the impact of the FAP and a historical lineage of craft as it impacts on the installation formats of both Kelley's and Rhoades' work. These material and formal considerations are worth pursuing because they can offer a deeper exploration of the materials and forms seen in both Kelley and Rhoades' practice. This chapter will also assert the impact of feminist practices on Kelley's work by bringing to light the gaps in critiques by Welchman, Levine, Ralph Rugoff, Elizabeth Sussman, and Robert Storr.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Mike Kelley and Eva Meyer-Hermann, *Mike Kelley* (Munich: Prestel, 2012), p. 369.

¹²⁷ Welchman, Graw and Vidler, 1999, p. 50.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹²⁹ Welchman, 2011, p. 173.

¹³⁰ Welchman, 'The Mike Kelleys', in Welchman, Graw, and Vidler, 1999, pp. 43-48; John C. Welchman and Mike Kelley, 2003; Cary S. Levine, *Pay for Your Pleasures: Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Raymond Pettibon* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); Ralph Rugoff, 'Mike Kelley/2 and the Power of the Pathetic', in Elizabeth Sussman et

In Chapter 3, 'The Gloopy Object', I analyse the work of Paul McCarthy and Jason Rhoades. The works studied in this chapter include *Hot Dog* (1974) and *Bossy Burger* (1991) by Paul McCarthy and *PeaRoeFoam* (2002) by Jason Rhoades. My use of the term The Gloopy Object refers to items such as ketchup, mayonnaise, loose meat or bodily fluids. The Gloopy Object suggests a tension between the material and the relationship of performance to the body. I address the materiality of performance and the role of the body within performance via the framework of Feminist New Materialism, and analyse the work in this chapter by exploring the discourse of hyper-abjection.¹³¹ The Gloopy Object is externalised via the framework of the hyper-object. In this chapter I draw from Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva's writing on the abject and material concerns in order to build on a framework of Feminist New Materialism.¹³² I expand on ideas brought forward by Nancy Tuana and Stacy Alaimo and Feminist New Materialist philosophy as it relates to stickiness, porosity or viscosity in order to examine what I refer to as the Gloopy Object in McCarthy's and Rhoades' work.¹³³

I offer a re-contextualisation of the two exhibitions 'Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979', (MOCA, LA) and 'Performance Anxiety', (MCA, Chicago). These exhibitions outline the role of performance and its relationship to the viewer and to installation work. The re-contextualisations of the exhibitions situate the theoretical underpinnings of the work of McCarthy and Rhoades in the context of Los Angeles-based performance art. My analysis is

al., *Mike Kelley: Catholic Tastes* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993), p. 172; Elizabeth Sussman, 'Introduction', in Sussman et al., 1993), pp. 5-55;

Mike Kelley, Robert Storr, 'An Interview with Mike Kelley', *Art in America* (June 1994), 90.

¹³¹ I will expand on this term in Chapter 3. I also cite Bethany Doane, 'Hyper-Subjects: Finitude, 'Sustainability' and the Maternal Body in the Anthropocene', *PhiloSOPHIA*, 5:2 (2015), 251-267.

¹³² See: Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge Classics, 2020); Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

¹³³ See: Alaimo and Hekman, eds., 2008; Nancy Tuana, 'Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina', in Alaimo and Hekman, eds., 2008, pp. 188-213.

supported by a historical examination of exhibitions in relation to an in-depth analysis of these theoretical frameworks.

The originality of my enterprise in this chapter consists in part of these analyses of McCarthy's and Rhoades' work, and offers a new approach to the vital relationship of the work of Los Angeles-based feminist performance artists to the work of McCarthy and Rhoades, and more broadly to the historical role of performance art in Los Angeles. These analyses are supported by a discussion and an interview by telephone with the curator of 'Out of Actions', Paul Schimmel, in March 2013.¹³⁴ Cary Levine's critique of McCarthy's performance works from the 1970s and into the 1990s focus on the role of the body, audience participation and audience reactions.¹³⁵ Levine also explores the role and impact of pop culture, the symbols and motifs of American fast food culture, the automotive industry and TV sitcoms in the narratives in McCarthy's video works and performances.¹³⁶ In *Pay For Your Pleasures: Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Raymond Pettibon*, Levine briefly alludes to the impact of the CalArts FAP to McCarthy's work and I expand on the significance of this impact.¹³⁷

The histories of performance in the Los Angeles area are central to the historical framework of this chapter. Linda Frye Burnham has written about performance histories and performance art in this geographical context, providing a comprehensive foundational historical overview.¹³⁸ Burnham has also written about

¹³⁴ Interview, Paul Schimmel, telephone and email correspondence, Los Angeles, March 2013.

¹³⁵ See: Cary Levine, 'You Are What (and How) You Eat: Paul McCarthy's Food- Flinging Frenzies', *Invisible Culture*, 14 (2010), 51-62; Levine, 2013; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), 'Press Release, Paul McCarthy/Humanoid, 6-24 January 1982, LACE,' LACE Exhibition Archive, online catalogue [accessed 23 January 2012]; 'High Performance: The First Five Years, 1978-1982', LACE, available at: <<http://www.welcometolace.org/archives/view/102245/>> [accessed 29 August 2011].

¹³⁶ Levine, 2013, pp. 119-127.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Linda Frye Burnham, 'Performance Art in Southern California: An Overview' (1980), in Carl E. Loeffler and Darlene Tong, eds., *Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade*

McCarthy's performances and the role of Los Angeles performance art. I build on this critique by examining the intersection of gender and feminist histories.¹³⁹ Eva Meyer-Hermann, who curated the exhibition 'Mike Kelley', has written extensively on both Kelley and Rhoades' work, and has also written about the influence of pop culture and references to it in McCarthy's video works and performances.¹⁴⁰ Peggy Phelan has written about feminist histories of performance art in Los Angeles and has examined institutions such as CalArts for their historical significance.¹⁴¹ Phelan has also written about socio-cultural issues in Los Angeles and how this impacted on the funding of the arts in the 1970s and into the 1980s.¹⁴² Meiling Cheng's research also focuses on the role of social and cultural issues in LA and how it impacted on the performance culture of the city by examining race, gender and ethnicity.¹⁴³ Amelia Jones, in the essay 'Lost Bodies: Early 1970s Los Angeles Performance Art in Art History', looks to archival research, interviews and histories of performances in order to examine the intersection of feminist performance practices and LACE, the FAP and the work of McCarthy by confronting the inclusion and exclusion in canons of performance.¹⁴⁴

In the catalogue for the exhibition *Performance Anxiety* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, that took place from April 17 to July 6 1997, curator Amanda Cruz writes about how the viewer and audience are implicated in performances.¹⁴⁵ Cruz also writes about the role of horror and pop cultural tropes in

of California Performance Art, (San Francisco, CA: Contemporary Arts Press, 1980), pp. 390-438 (p. 419).

¹³⁹ Linda Frye Burnham, 'Paul McCarthy: the Evolution of a Performance Artist', *High Performance* 8:1 (1985), pp. 37-41.

¹⁴⁰ Eva Meyer-Hermann, ed., *Paul McCarthy: Brain Box Dream Box* (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 2004), p. 70.

¹⁴¹ Peggy Phelan, *Live Art in La: Performance in Southern California, 1970-1983* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Meiling Cheng, *In Other Los Angeleses: Multicentric Performance Art* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

¹⁴⁴ Amelia Jones, 'Lost Bodies, Early 1970s Los Angeles Performance Art in Art History', in Phelan, 2012, p.129.

¹⁴⁵ Amanda Cruz, *Performance Anxiety* [exh. cat.] (Chicago, IL: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997), p. 14.

McCarthy's work, referring to this as 'absurd theatrics'.¹⁴⁶ Cruz, and the exhibition itself, questioned this more broadly and referenced the theatrical principles of Antonin Artaud and to McCarthy's interest in these in relation to his own performances by referring to audience interactions and reactions. Both Cruz and Philip Monk have written about the use of set props and costumes in McCarthy's and Kelley's practice, which will I expand on this in chapter, and will continue to expand on in Chapter 4 by exploring their role in the narratives and symbols in the works studied in this chapter.¹⁴⁷ Curator Paul Schimmel's '*Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949 – 1979*' (Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles) provided a historical consideration of the connection between objects in performances and the documentation of performance, featuring a text written by Kelley and McCarthy that is examined in this chapter in more detail. Ralph Rugoff's catalogue essay for *Paul McCarthy*, the first large survey of the artist's work, critiques the work *Hot Dog*, which I will analyse in this chapter.¹⁴⁸ Rugoff focused on the role of body, consumerism and references to pop culture in the work. Lisa Phillips has also written about McCarthy's work and the symbols of consumerism, pop cultural references and the role of the body in his performances.¹⁴⁹

Important to note here is Harriet Curtis's research into the relation between *High Performance* magazine and McCarthy's work, in which she provides a history of performance in LA, recognising the importance of feminist performance practices in Los Angeles.¹⁵⁰ The exhibition catalogue for *PeaRoeFoam*, with essays by Linda

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁴⁷ See: Cruz, 1997; Philip Monk, *Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy : Collaborative Works* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan with Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery at Harbourfront Centre, 2000).

¹⁴⁸ Ralph Rugoff, 'Survey: Mr McCarthy's Neighbourhood', in Ralph Rugoff, *Paul McCarthy* (London: Phaidon, 1996), pp. 30-87.

¹⁴⁹ Lisa Phillips, 'Introduction: Paul McCarthy's Theater of the Body', in Lisa Phillips and Dan Cameron (eds.), 2000, pp. 2-5.

¹⁵⁰ See: Harriet Curtis, 'Restaging Feminism in Los Angeles: Three Weeks in January (2012): Three Weeks in May (1977)', *n.paradoxa: international feminist art journal*, 34 (July 2014), 77-85; Harriet Curtis, 'Performance Legacies in Print and Practice: *High Performance*

Norden and Julien Bismuth, remains a comprehensive and detailed photographic documentation and historical exploration of this installation. Norden writes about the material qualities of Rhoades' work and the shift from the abject to mass-produced consumer products.¹⁵¹ I expand on the role of references to pop culture, products, consumerism and mass production in relation to both McCarthy's and Rhoades' work.

In Chapter 4, 'The Prop Object', I analyse the work of Tony Oursler, Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy. The works studied in this chapter include Oursler's *The Loner* (1980) and *Grand Mal* (1981); Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley's *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup* (1987) and Mike Kelley's *Day is Done* (2005). In this chapter my use of the term The Prop Object is proposed to refer to an object that enters and draws upon components of the theatrical dimension. This dimension is made up of sets and performance structures. The performance structures include scripts, narratives and re-enactment. This leads to a constructed reality of the worlds that are represented in The Prop Object. The sets in these works revolve around their relationship to television, the screen and/or to the projected image, in order to form a constructed reality. The theatrical dimension engages with the boundary between performance and theatre. The performance structures have fractured narrative elements in their scripts that are informed or based on the principles of theatre. The Prop Object refers to a variety of DIY cardboard or wooden sets, store-bought masks and an assortment of costumes. It also engages with re-enactment, and part of this is the re-enactment of the representations of trauma, as well as the psychological roots of repetition in trauma. The theatricalisation of trauma is something with which The Prop Object contends. The Prop Object in this chapter engages in different ways with trauma and psychosexual development. I address issues of trauma, repression and how this emerges in the work of

Magazine, 1978-1983', *Platform*, 8.1 (Spring 2014), 29-43; Harriet Curtis, 'From Painting to Performance: Figuring the Abject in Los Angeles Art', (review of 'L.A. RAW: Abject Expressionism in Los Angeles 1945-1980', *Art History*, 35:1 (2013), 224-226.

¹⁵¹ Linda Norden, in *PeaRoeFoam* [exh. cat.] (New York: David Zwirner Books, 2016), pp. 4-12.

McCarthy, Kelley and Oursler. The re-enactment of trauma and its relationship to television informs the way the object is externalised in this chapter. The work in this chapter is analysed through theories of trauma, hysteria, theatre, the invisibility of Whiteness and an exploration of the impact of television and theatre sets.

The originality of my enterprise in this chapter consists in part of these analyses of Oursler's, McCarthy's and Kelley's work and the importance of the role of trauma and re-enactment in their work, alongside a reading of these works through the lens of the invisibility of Whiteness. The analysis in this chapter is supported by in-person interviews with Stacy Wolf, Professor of Theater at Princeton University, in December 2013 and October 2014.¹⁵² In addition to this, an in-person interview with John C. Welchman in December 2013 supported my research into Oursler's work and his use of sets and staging.¹⁵³ I interviewed curator Claire van Els at the Stedelijk Museum in person in March 2013 when I visited the retrospective Mike Kelley exhibition there.¹⁵⁴ Screenings and viewings of McCarthy, Kelley and Oursler's videos at EAI (Electronic Arts Intermix) and Tate Modern also supported my research.¹⁵⁵

In *Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy: Collaborative Works*, the two artists review the many collaborative video installations or artworks that they have made together.¹⁵⁶ They also discuss the architecture of the installations, the audience participation, the relationship of video to screen to exhibition space, and this was helpful in my understanding of the scope of their collaborations.¹⁵⁷ Important to note here is Dan Cameron's writing about repetition, patterns, masks and props in McCarthy's

¹⁵² Interview, Stacy Wolf, in person, Princeton, December 2013 and October 2014.

¹⁵³ Interview, Welchman.

¹⁵⁴ Interview, Claire van Els, in person, Amsterdam, March 2013.

¹⁵⁵ See: Tate Modern, 'From my Institution to Yours: a Video Tribute to Mike Kelley', 31 August – 1 Sept 2012; Tate Modern, Tony Oursler, 'The Influence Machine', Feb 2013; Videos by Kelley, McCarthy and Oursler are available at Electronic Arts Intermix, New York.

¹⁵⁶ Monk, 2000. This book also covers the impact of artists such as Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci and Allan Kaprow on Kelley and McCarthy.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

work.¹⁵⁸ In this chapter I write about Kelley's *Day is Done*. The extensive catalogue accompanying its exhibition was a helpful source because of its many images of the performances and the full scope of the videos that constitute *Day is Done*.¹⁵⁹ The conference and panel discussion, 'Looking Forward', at PS1 MOMA, New York, in December 2013, was helpful in informing me about the relationship of Kelley's work to theatre.¹⁶⁰ Wolf's research considered the role of amateur theatre productions in relation to Kelley's work.¹⁶¹ I expand on this in order to examine the intersection of trauma, re-enactment and theatre in the work analysed in this chapter.

I analyse the work of Tony Oursler in this chapter, and the writing of Simona Lodi and Elizabeth Janus were key to my understanding of the scope of Oursler's practice and the specific works analysed in this chapter. Lodi's description of the role of mass media and technology in Oursler's work was helpful to my conception of the impact of televisual structures in the work analysed in this chapter.¹⁶²

Lodi writes that:

[...] the individual is not considered a primary element, identifiable and comprehensible in isolation, outside the system of relations that exist between human, social and technological and mass media elements. Human events are considered in the same way as natural events, observable from the outside in such a way as to leave out subjective and individual perspectives. The individual is thus the casual point of intersection of the social and mass

¹⁵⁸ Dan Cameron, 'The Mirror Stage', in Phillips and Cameron (eds.), 2000, pp. 57-63.

¹⁵⁹ Mike Kelley, John C. Welchman, *Mike Kelley's Day is Done* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

¹⁶⁰ Mike Kelley, 'Looking Forward', December 15, 2013, Ps1 MOMA, New York, December 2013, Panel with lectures by Elisabeth Sussman (The Whitney Museum of American Art), Stacy Wolf (Princeton University), and John C. Welchman (University of California, San Diego; chair Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts). Artists Rachel Harrison, William Pope. L, and Joe Scanlan; Interview, Wolf.

¹⁶¹ Interview, Wolf; Stacy Wolf, 'Mike Kelley's *Day is Done* and Community Musical Theatre' at Mike Kelley, 'Looking Forward', December 15, 2013, Ps1 MOMA, New York, December 2013.

¹⁶² Tony Oursler and Simoni Lodi, *Tony Oursler* (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1998), pp. 11- 14.

media structures that pass through him. Therefore, the works of Tony Oursler analyse how the image of the real world is spread through the media: this process presupposes the existence of a structure in which the logical relation between elements precedes its definition, as form precedes content.¹⁶³

Robert Blackson's writing about the terminology associated with re-enactment was helpful to me in my definition and exploration of the re-enactment of trauma in this chapter.¹⁶⁴ I found these articulations of terminology helpful in framing the often nebulous boundary between re-enactment, reconstruction and restaging in this chapter. The writing of Amelia Jones, Sven Lütticken, Rebecca Schneider and John Minkowski has been influential on my research into performance, theatre and re-enactments, including notions of time, historicity and duration.¹⁶⁵ Milena Tomic writes about re-enactment in both Kelley's and McCarthy's work.¹⁶⁶ I expand on her articulation of re-enactment as: '[...] not a layering of images pilfered from disparate ideological systems but a re-inhabiting of embodied scenarios, a literal re-entry into events in all their lived texture [...]', by considering the re-enactment of trauma in the works in this chapter and the ways that props, sets and theatre can impact on this type of re-enactment.¹⁶⁷ Interpretations of the role of psychoanalysis in McCarthy's work do not explore the specific connection of the re-enactment of trauma that is key to this chapter.¹⁶⁸ I deepen this analysis by looking at the role of

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁶⁴ Robert Blackson, 'Once More . . . With Feeling: Reenactment in Contemporary Art and Culture', *Art Journal* 66:1 (Spring 2007), 28-40.

¹⁶⁵ See: Amelia Jones, 'The Artist is Present: Artistic Reenactments and the Impossibility of Presence', *TDR: The Drama Review*, 55.1 (Spring 2011), 16-45 (p. 16); Sven Lütticken, 'Performance Art After TV', *New Left Review*, 80 (March-April 2013); Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Time of Theatrical Re-enactment* (London: Routledge, 2011); John Minkowski, 'The Videotapes of Tony Oursler', *Spheres d'influence* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985)

¹⁶⁶ Milena Tomic, 'Fidelity to Failure: Re-enactment and Identification in the Work of Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy', *Oxford Art Journal*, 36.3 (2013), 437-56.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ For analysis of trauma in McCarthy's work see: Kristine Stiles, 'Interview: Kristine Stiles in Conversation with Paul McCarthy', in Rugoff (ed.), 1996, pp. 8-29 (pp. 20-22); Amelia Jones, 'Paul McCarthy's Inside Out Body and the Desublimation of Masculinity'; in Cameron and Phillips (eds.), 2000, pp.125-133, and Anna-Lena Werner, 'Architecture as Frame for Trauma: Video Installations by Paul McCarthy', *Performance Research*, 16:1 (2011), 153-163.

trauma and performance in this chapter, in particular by building on ideas of theatricalisation and memory suggested by Jean Charcot and Sigmund Freud.¹⁶⁹ In the catalogue to the exhibition 'Tony Oursler', Janus observes that the artist's use of immersive and sculptural space as critical to the formation of his video installations.¹⁷⁰ Janus also writes about the narratives in Oursler's work and the creation of environments in his installations, referring to the kind of staging that occurs. I expand on this in order to examine the system of sets and narratives that coalesce in the works that I focus on in this chapter.¹⁷¹

In Chapter 5, 'The Suburban Object', I analyse the work of Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Tony Oursler and Jason Rhoades. The works studied in this chapter include Tony Oursler's *Phobic/White Trash* (1993), Jason Rhoades' *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)* (1993) and Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy's *Heidi* (1992). My use of the term The Suburban Object in this chapter refers to the way in which the works are products of their association with the suburban, or critiques of the suburban, and to differing extents use the device of fractured narratives in order to form an auto-critique of Whiteness. In Chapter 4 I expand on the invisibility of Whiteness and in Chapter 5 I discuss its visibility and how the artists under discussion form an auto-critique of Whiteness. The work in this chapter is analysed through the lens of the concept of Whiteness in the discourse of Critical Race Studies. The Suburban Object also addresses the social and cultural role of the American suburb and the formation of suburbs throughout the greater Los Angeles area. I address the role of the suburbs and its socio-political implications in the work of Kelley, Oursler, McCarthy and Rhoades. My analysis was informed by an in-depth study of the politics of the suburbs.

¹⁶⁹ See: Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, trans. Nicola Luckhurst (London: Penguin Classics, 2004); Georges Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (Cambridge, MA : MIT Press, 2003); Janet Beizer, *Ventrolinguized Bodies: Narratives in Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

¹⁷⁰ Janus, 2002, p. 38.

¹⁷¹ Elizabeth Janus and Gloria Moure, eds., *Tony Oursler* (Barcelona: Ediciones Poligrafa, 2001).

This chapter was informed by my telephone interview with the curator of 'Helter Skelter: LA Art in the 1990s', Paul Schimmel, in March 2013.¹⁷² This chapter was also informed by my in-person interview with the curator of 'Jason Rhoades, Four Roads', Ingrid Schaffner, in January 2014.¹⁷³ In individual interviews with Schimmel and Schaffner we discussed how the auto-critique of Whiteness can be a lens through which these works can be analysed, and how this particular analysis or critique has not been applied to this work to date. My research for this chapter was supported by a Wertheim Study residency at the New York Public Library in 2014. I also viewed archival material and installations by Rhoades at the Brant Foundation Art Study Center in Greenwich, Connecticut in 2018.

In this chapter I offer an examination of the socio-economic issues in the Los Angeles area during the period of the 1990s, including an analysis of the exhibition 'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s'. The Suburban Object is externalised by the sense of anxiety and dispossession which existed in parallel with the formation of Los Angeles' suburbs.¹⁷⁴ The originality of my enterprise in this chapter consists in part of an analysis of the work of McCarthy, Kelley, Oursler and Rhoades in relation to the way an auto-critique of Whiteness is used as a tool by these artists. By way of Critical Race Studies and critiques of Whiteness it becomes possible to argue for the work as a form of auto-critique.

I build on Maurice Berger's writing about Whiteness and the ways in which it is made evident in the work of McCarthy and Kelley in order to analyse how the

¹⁷² Interview, Schimmel.

¹⁷³ Interview, Schaffner.

¹⁷⁴ Ralph Rugoff's 1997 exhibition 'Scene of the Crime' at LACMA considered West Coast artists and conceptualism and included works by Kelley and McCarthy. This exhibition differs from Schimmel's 'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s', which is discussed in Chapter 5. It is however significant to note for its wider inquiry into Californian art, as is a subsequent book by Rugoff with Wollen and Vidler that looked at object-led analysis with forensics and conceptualism. See: Ralph Rugoff, Anthony Vidler and Peter Wollen, *Scene of the Crime* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).

works in this chapter help the artists to form and support their auto-critique of Whiteness alongside their use of symbols and imagery.¹⁷⁵ Helpful to this line of thinking was Joanna Drucker's book *Sweet Dreams: Contemporary Art and Complicity*, in which she explores Jason Rhoades' work *Cherry Makita*. Drucker refers to the symbols in the work, alongside his use of materials.¹⁷⁶ I expand on an analysis of Rhoades' symbols and materials in order to support the identification of how an auto-critique of Whiteness is articulated in his work.

This chapter concludes with an exploration of identity, race and Whiteness, drawing from the fields of Critical Race Studies and Feminist New Materialism. I examine ideas by Arun Saldanha, Elizabeth Grosz, Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, Rosi Braidotti, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Paul Gilroy and Claudia Rankine.¹⁷⁷

A Note on Structure

This PhD is formed of five chapters. Aside from being the starting point for this research, the sense of accumulation, oversaturation and intensity of the number of objects involved in Trecartin's and Rhoades' work is what led me to think about the role and impact of a process that I call Horror Vacui, which will be explored in Chapter 1. Chapters 2-5 explore a type of object in the work of Mike Kelley, Paul

¹⁷⁵ See: Maurice Berger, et al., *White: Whiteness and Race in Contemporary Art* (Baltimore, MD: Centre for Art & Visual Culture, 2004).

¹⁷⁶ Johanna Drucker, *Sweet Dreams: Contemporary Art and Complicity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 93-103.

¹⁷⁷ Arun Saldanha, 'Reontologising Race: the Machinic Geography of Phenotype', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 24:1 (2006), 9-24; Elizabeth Grosz, 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics', *Topoi*, 12:2 (1993), 167-179; Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, 'A Thousand Tiny Intersections: Linguisticism, Feminism, Racism and Deleuzian Becomings', in Arun Saldanha and Jason Michael Adams, *Deleuze and Race* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 129-43; Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 84; Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 153-168; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 37-38.

McCarthy, Tony Oursler and Jason Rhoades. Ultimately I selected artworks that make the most sense of the object-types I devised for any given chapter, in order to best extrapolate The Craft, Gloopy, Prop and Suburban Objects, respectively. In each chapter there is an exploration of the main artists' work within the framework of the type of object that the chapter focuses on. In each chapter other historical exhibitions are also re-contextualised, and other histories are brought into conversation again or analysed in a new light. The ambition of this research is to offer an alternative art history and new critical readings of the works or the types of objects within the frameworks I build in the chapters. The chapters often uncover other histories by exploring certain concepts or ideas within this specific remit, thereby offering a new contextualisation of the work of these selected artists. I selected The Craft, Gloopy, Prop and Suburban Objects because it was these types of objects that I saw permeating the artists' work. Chapter 2, The Craft Object, is the first of the object categories because I started my research journey with a trip to the CalArts archives and this chapter uncovers a lineage of material histories. One aspect of Chapter 3, The Gloopy Object, is a focus on performance histories of the artists stemming from Chapter 2. This lays a foundation from which to explore performance structures, that are part of Chapter 4, the Prop Object, and allows me to write about the invisibility of Whiteness. I then extend this in Chapter 5 in writing about auto-critique and Whiteness, or the visible structures of Whiteness, before I conclude the thesis and postulate ideas on the future trajectories of installation as a genre.

CHAPTER 1

Horror Vacui

Thing 1

Meccatuna

tangled, ceramic, wire, metal tubes, racks, mass, brightly coloured plexiglas, Lego, neon tubing, light, panels, aluminium, black stone, fibreglass, ceramic donkey cart souvenirs, camels, saddles, pearoefoam

Thing 2

My Madinah. In pursuit of my ermitage...

floor coverings, ceiling hangings, towels, lights, neon, donkey cart souvenirs, clutter, striped towels, brightly coloured towels, excess, brightness, light, surrounded, many, full

Thing 3

The Black Pussy . . . and the Pagan Idol Workshop

blankets, donkey carts, lights, neon, clutter, overwhelming, dreamcatchers, cloth, textiles, rugs, glass, macramé, steel, stones, hats, felt, hookah pipes, ceramics, white suit

Thing 4

Any Ever

tables, chairs, seating, screens, multiple screens, rapid, anxiety, high-pitched, sofas, messy, internet, virtual, posthuman, voices, hyper-real, hyper-speed, hyper-material

Introduction

In Latin, the term *horror vacui* means fear of emptiness, or fear of the void, although it has varied cross-disciplinary meanings in physics, psychology and art and design.¹⁷⁸ Historically, the fear of the void was an Aristotelian theory arguing against the concept of a vacuum occurring in nature, because to Aristotle the cosmos was finite, with borders.¹⁷⁹ *Horror vacui* was, as a result, linked to the notion that nature abhorred a vacuum. This led to the thinking that empty spaces

¹⁷⁸ Mads Soegaard, 'Horror Vacui', *Interaction Design Foundation*, available at: <<https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/horror-vacui-the-fear-of-emptiness>> [accessed 12 June 2018].

¹⁷⁹ John Thorp, 'Aristotle's Horror Vacui', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 20:2 (1990), 149-166.

fill up naturally. Various experiments in cosmology and physics formally ended this line of thinking, proving that a vacuum could be created in nature.¹⁸⁰ However, the concepts of filling the void and the fear of empty spaces continued in art and design theory.

When I refer to Horror Vacui in this chapter, I am referring to it as a process that has a particular function, which I will go on to define, that forges new experiential and participatory forms of engagement between the viewer and the installation. The works studied in this chapter include *Meccatuna* (2003) (Fig. 1.1-1.4, pp. 71-73), *My Madinah. In Pursuit of my Ermitage...'* (2004) (Fig. 1.5-1.9, pp. 76-77); *The Black Pussy . . . and the Pagan Idol Workshop* (2005) (Fig. 1.9-1.11, pp. 80-82) by Rhoades, and *Any Ever* (2010) (Fig.1.12-1.16, pp. 85-88), by Trecartin. The sense of accumulation, oversaturation and intensity of the number of objects involved in Rhoades' and Trecartin's work is what led me to think about the role and impact of a process that I call Horror Vacui. As I recounted in the introduction, viewing *Any Ever* led me to consider the concept of Horror Vacui in relation to the sense of overaccumulation and bombardment by images and objects in Trecartin's video installations. It is from this point that I then considered how I frame the concept of Horror Vacui in relation to both Rhoades' and Trecartin's installations.¹⁸¹

I will also adapt the New Materialist concept of a 'worlding' that, in this chapter and with these works, incorporates performances of gender and race alongside the use of socio-linguistics. This chapter will begin by examining the connection between Horror Vacui and forms of hoarding, collecting and accumulation. It will then expand on the process and function of Horror Vacui by considering its

¹⁸⁰ Sylvia Berryman, 'Horror Vacui in the Third Century BC: When Is a Theory Not a Theory?', in R. Sorabji (ed.), *Aristotle and After* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 1997), pp. 147-157.

¹⁸¹ About the role of accumulation in Rhoades' work, Schaffner notes, in her essay 'Systems, The Creation Myth': 'Mostly, however, information just accumulates – accumulation being fundamental to Rhoades' art – as scattered fragments and fuel to burn'. (Schaffner et al., 2014, p. 56), and accumulation is noted throughout Eva Meyer-Hermann's *Jason Rhoades: Collector's Choice Vol. 9* (Meyer-Hermann, 2009).

relationship to the New Materialist concept of a worlding as a way to understand how gender and race, as well as socio-linguistics, function in the works.

Hoarding, Collecting, Accumulation

Horror vacui is frequently written about in relation to design as an opposing force to minimalistic designs. It also refers to the desire to fill empty spaces with information or objects. For design historians such as Paula Baxter, Dimitri Mortelmans and Mario Praz, *horror vacui* is an approach involving leaving no blank spaces, thereby filling a space completely. *Horror vacui* thus indicates the desire or urge to fill an empty space with details, objects and things.¹⁸² The theoretical, as well as the social and psychological, basis for *horror vacui* is the starting point for the analysis of the sense of accumulation, oversaturation and intensity of objects in the works discussed in this chapter.

This historical basis of *horror vacui* has connections to notions of hoarding.¹⁸³ The sense of hoarding can be aligned with a sense of accumulation and oversaturation of objects, which is something the works in this chapter engage with.¹⁸⁴ Victorian interior design changed the way people related to the objects surrounding them. This, then, altered their relationships with accumulation. Curated collections of objects were a part of the Victorian domestic interior, and this was an assertion of

¹⁸²See: Dimitri Mortelmans, 'Visualizing Emptiness', *Visual Anthropology*, 18 (2005), 19-45; Paula Baxter, 'Thirty Years of Growth in the Literature of Interior Design', *Journal of Design History* 4: 4 (1991), 241-250.

Mario Praz, *An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration from Pompeii to Art Nouveau*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964).

¹⁸³ See: Barry Yourgrau, *Mess: One Man's Struggle to Clean up his House and his Act* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2015); John O'Connor 'To Hold on or to Let go? Loss and Substitution in the Process of Hoarding', *European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling*, 16:2 (2014), 101-113.

¹⁸⁴ I will begin with Victorian interior design rather than considering earlier collecting practices because the sense of home, space, a connection to objects, collecting and interior design is a focus of the writing by design historians cited in this chapter. This context is aligned with the way I analyse the work of Rhoades and Trecartin and their use of interiors in their work in this chapter.

taste and class and evidence of disposable income, and formed indicators of one's identity.¹⁸⁵ Shelves, walls, floor space and tables were always full with objects and things, thereby forming layers within the home.¹⁸⁶ For hoarders and, similarly, Victorian interior design ideals, the accumulation of things and objects can offer the ability to create a world constructed in a specific space.¹⁸⁷ This world formation, or construction of an altered reality, will be explored in this chapter in the section titled Worlding. The functional and dysfunctional way in which people relate to objects, and the irrationality of forms of hoarding and collecting in relation to accumulation and our relationship to objects, is central to the process of Horror Vacui in this chapter and will continue to be explored.

Hoarding can be a response to a basic desire or need to acquire things and surround oneself in one's home or personal space with things for various psychological reasons, forming a protective membrane from the external world in the home. The nature of Victorian interior design, as noted in a lecture by anthropologist Fabio Gygi, influenced my conception of the ways that Rhoades and Trecartin utilised interior design in their installations by working with store-bought furniture and objects. Considering these aspects of Victorian interior design will help me to contextualise how people relate to and deal with the consequences of their possessions. I will relate this to Rhoades' and Trecartin's installations as this chapter progresses.

In 2013, hoarding was officially included a psychiatric disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), which is a standard and widely used manual for and by specialists in mental health in order to classify and better diagnose disorders. Hoarding was included as an independent disorder within the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Fabio Gygi, Lecture, for 'V&A/RCA History of Design research seminars' at V&A Museum, 20 November 2014.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990).

wider category of obsessive-compulsive disorders.¹⁸⁸ This inclusion thereby engendered discussions of the politics surrounding mental health disorders, and how they are viewed by the public.¹⁸⁹ The terms and classifications employed in mental health have political ramifications. Being classified in the DSM-V can, for example, protect people from being evicted from their homes, a public policy consideration also noted by Gygi.¹⁹⁰

Amongst the work of writers and scholars who have written about collecting I am drawn to how sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard's *System of Objects* remains prophetic and prescient, even fifty years after its original publication. In one of the chapters in the book, Baudrillard writes about what it means to collect, observing what it means to possess an object.¹⁹¹ I argue that he writes of different 'worldings' as well. For example, he argues that a certain object refers to a certain world and that a sense of possession comes from a subject relating to the object outside of the original intention of the object. According to Baudrillard, when one owns an object there is an abstraction from function that takes place. Moreover, the primary relationship is to the subject. These types of objects make up a system of objects, as Baudrillard termed it, and in this system the subject constructs a world in which the object can relate to it differently from other contexts.

Baudrillard writes:

Every object thus has two functions – to be put to use and to be possessed. The first involves the field of the world's practical totalization by the subject, the second an abstract totalization of the subject undertaken by the subject himself outside the world. These two functions stand in inverse ratio to each other. At one extreme, the strictly practical object acquires a social status: this is the case with the machine. At the opposite extreme, the pure object, devoid of any function

¹⁸⁸ *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association-5th ed. (DSM-5)* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

¹⁸⁹ Gygi, 2014.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Significant to note is Zoe Mendelson's research project 'This Mess is a Place' (2014), about hoarding, forms of collecting, human relationships to objects and accumulation. See: <<https://thismessisaplace.co.uk/Research>> [accessed 07 Jan. 2015].

or completely abstracted from its use, takes on a strictly subjective status: it becomes part of a collection.¹⁹²

He theorises that objects are mirrors and they reflect unreal, or less than real, images back to the viewer, arguing that the affective emotional investment in objects is potent because this type of investment is not always possible in human relationships. The commodification of the object and its social and cultural forces are part of the process of Horror Vacui that is constituted in the works discussed in this chapter. Baudrillard would argue that this stems from the fact that the object is owned and possessed by the subject. This lets the subject see a reflection of themselves in the object, thereby forming a singularity. Intersubjective relations with objects and the integration of object and person can lead to the formation of a 'total environment' and to the 'totalization of images of the self that is the basis of the miracle of collecting'.¹⁹³ Collecting then becomes an extension of the self. Objects with exchange value that also take part in a form of ritual, display or collection can refer to the outside external social world, and this in turn also relates to human relationships. For Baudrillard, collections of objects cannot let go of their internal system, regardless of the external factors. Instead they reflect a tension between internal and external factors. The starting point of the discourse is always the self, extending out when the objects can engage with an external discourse. Baudrillard argues, however, that it is still primarily a discourse of the self. Baudrillard argues that the absent object in the collection is often what prompts a social discourse. He asks, 'Can man ever use objects to set up a language that is more than a discourse addressed to himself?'¹⁹⁴ Baudrillard is ultimately sceptical of collecting, arguing or proposing that the collector can never go beyond a discourse formed of delusion or over-abstraction of the objects. It is a regressive and limited state, and Baudrillard ultimately ends his chapter on collecting by saying there is something inhuman about collectors and something tenuous about

¹⁹² Baudrillard, 1996, p. 90.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 105.

the repetitive nature of collecting. The variations in the way people collect, gather, hoard and therefore relate to their objects is central to the process of Horror Vacui, as will be explored in the works in this chapter.



Figure 1.1: Jason Rhoades, *Meccatuna*, 2003.



Figure 1.2 and 1.3: Jason Rhoades, *Meccatuna*, 2003, detail.



Figure 1.4: Jason Rhoades, *Meccatuna*, 2003, detail alternate view.

Horror Vacui, Rhoades

The first group of works this chapter studies is a trilogy of installations by Jason Rhoades. *Meccatuna* (2003) is the first in this trilogy of installations that subsequently included *My Madinah: in pursuit of my ermitage...*(2004), and *The Black Pussy . . . and the Pagan Idol Workshop* (2005). Rhoades referred to this series as 'The Pussy Trilogy'.¹⁹⁵

For *Meccatuna*, Rhoades wanted to take a live tuna on a pilgrimage to Mecca as a ritual, and this idea could only be realised as a case of tuna cans being sent on the trip. As someone who does not follow or practise Islam, he was not able to take the trip to Mecca himself so he enlisted someone who was able to go who could photograph the cans of tuna as they travelled to Mecca, as documentary evidence. This process became a starting point for the installation, which was an assemblage and collection of manufactured objects. The *Meccatuna* installation was a Plexiglas one-third scale model of the Kaaba, built from Lego. It was constructed incompletely with Lego fragments so that it could be added to and assembled during the show. This active performative reconstruction of the installation is also a part of Rhoades' *Sutter's Mill*, which I will write about in Chapter 2, The Craft Object. The installation also had a collection of multi-coloured neon tubing tied to Plexiglas panels that displayed synonyms for female genitalia. The light was cast from the Plexiglas panels onto an aluminium object set into a bottom corner of the Plexiglas cube. This object was meant to resemble the Black Stone of Mecca. The installation also included a series of life-size fibreglass casts of donkeys, groupings of camel saddles, aluminium shelves, wires and a series of objects made with PeaRoeFoam, a mixture of peas, fish eggs, and foam beads which Rhoades used in various installations and which will be studied in Chapter 3, The Gloopy Object. On the many wires and electronics that are a part of this installation, there is a gold and black *Meccatuna*-branded, metal safety tested approval plaque. In *Meccatuna*, the series of objects, including lights, neon, ceramics and performative gestures,

¹⁹⁵ Schaffner et al., 2014.

began to accumulate. Significant to note here is the use of cultural and religious signifiers that do not characterise Rhoades' background. In this trilogy of installations there is a merging of religious narratives and constant references to female genitalia. As a heterosexual man, who does not follow or practise the religion of Islam, his approach of adapting religion and gendered terminology is open to critique. There is a lack of critical appraisal of Rhoades' work in general, and there is a particular absence of perspectives from writers or critics of colour who might be able to offer another lens on how this work can be considered as a statement on race, religion and gender.

In *Meccatuna*, the forms of collecting of objects of social and cultural importance, and the commodification of objects, including their branding, offered Rhoades a way of trying to explore the role of religion in the context of the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in America. I do not wish to comment on the quality or impact of the socio-cultural pertinence, or lack thereof, in this installation; however, I do think there is a way to offer a critical lens on the wider issues explored in this installation when placed in the framework of *Horror Vacui*, the hoarding, collecting and accumulation described in the previous section of this chapter. By exploring socio-linguistics and the way in which worldings incorporate race and gender I aim to offer further critical examination of this trilogy of installations by Rhoades. This will be explored as the chapter progresses.

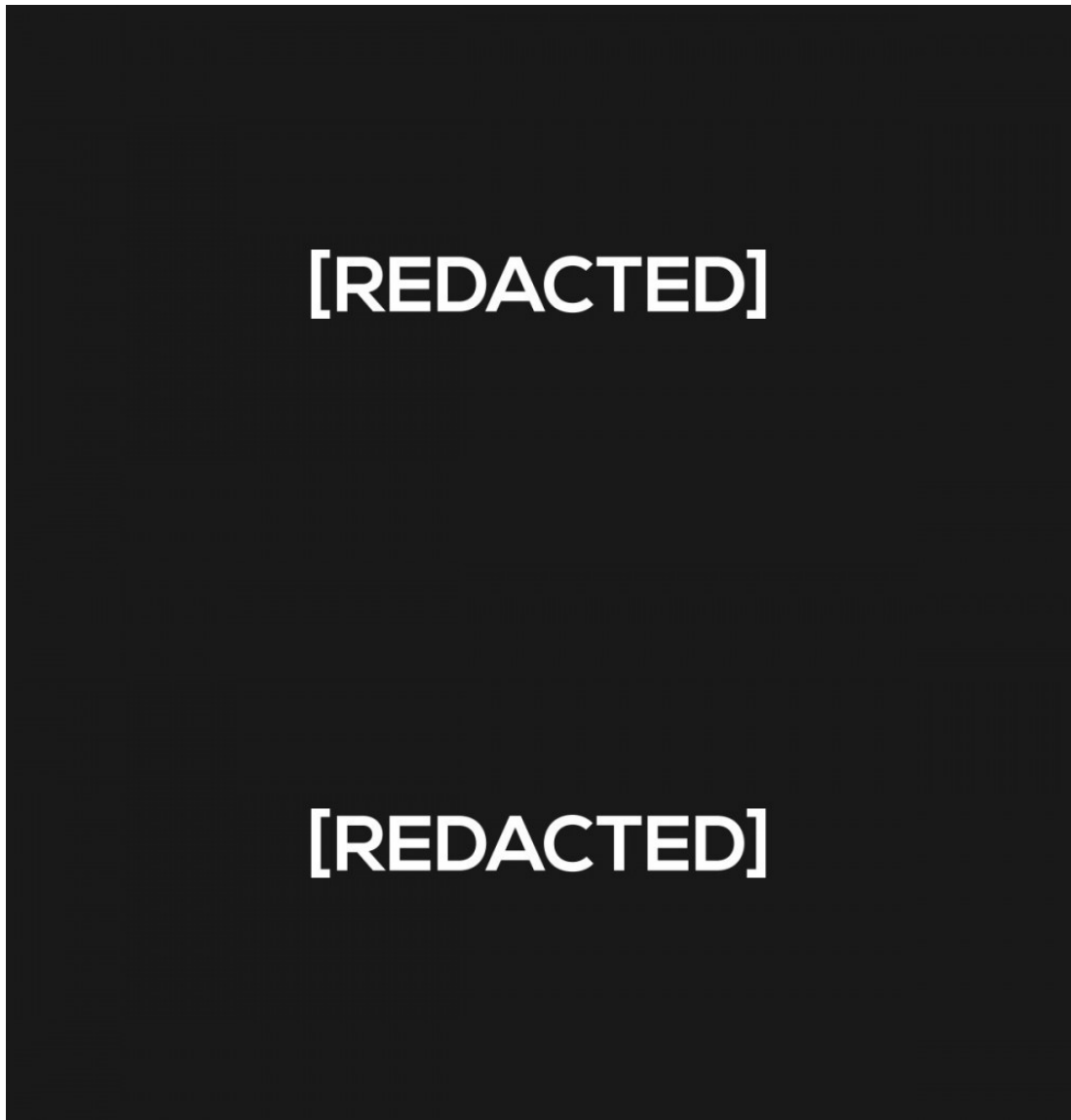


Figure 1.5: Jason Rhoades, *My Madinah. In pursuit of my ermitge...*, 2004.

Figure 1.6: Jason Rhoades, *My Madinah. In pursuit of my ermitge...*, 2004, detail.

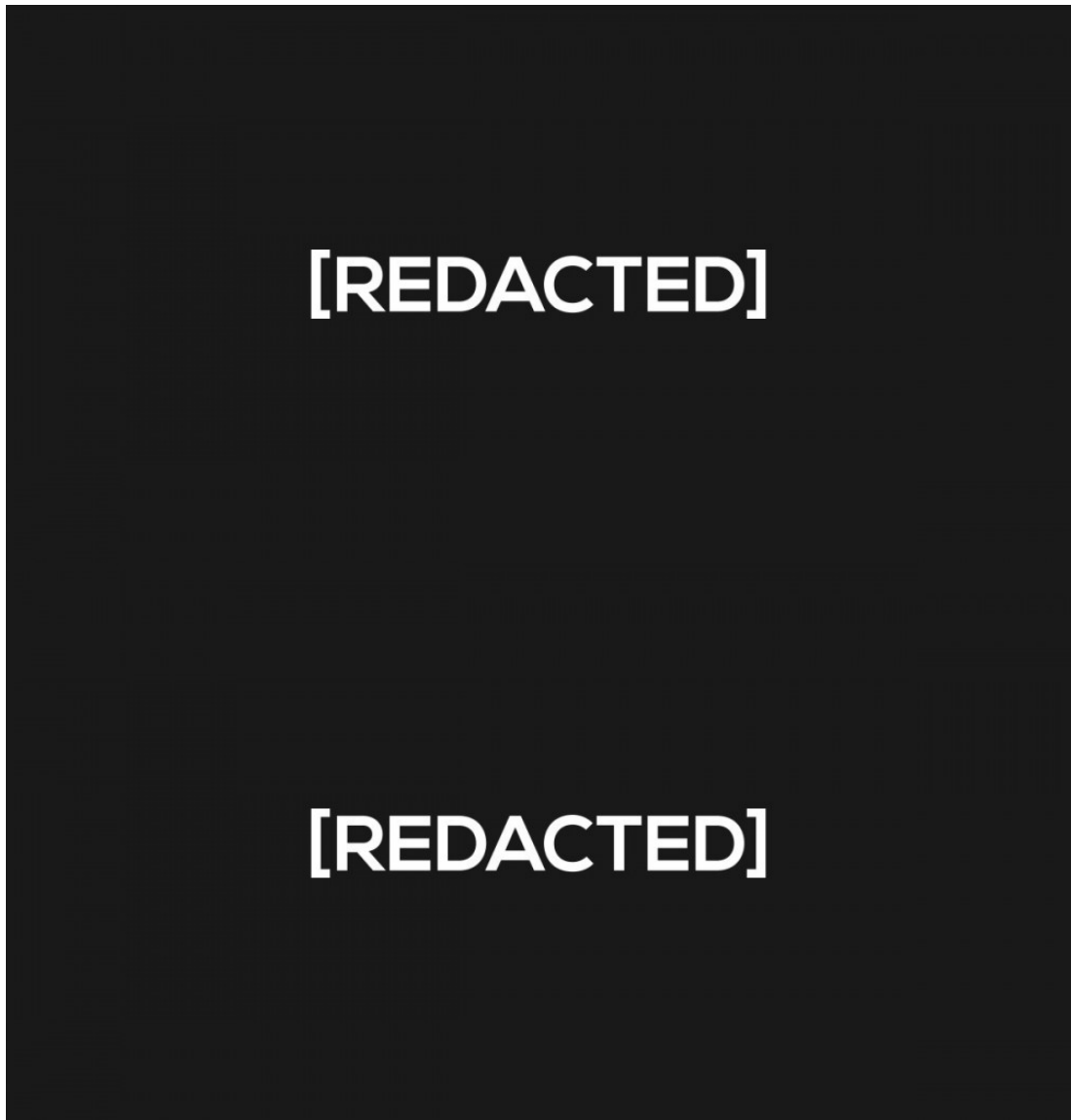


Figure 1.7 and 1.8: Jason Rhoades, *My Madinah. In pursuit of my ermitge...*, 2004, detail.

The installation *My Madinah. In pursuit of my ermitage...* was formed of 1,724 neon coloured lights (1724 being a reference to the year Immanuel Kant was born).¹⁹⁶ For Rhoades, the reference to Kant was an allusion to the word C*unt, in relation to his interest in collecting synonyms for female genitalia.¹⁹⁷ The neon signs also depicted synonyms for female genitalia, and they were hung from the ceiling throughout the exhibition space while the floor was covered in an assortment of striped and solid-coloured towels in blue, yellow, green, white and black. Also located in the space were wooden camel saddle stools and small ceramic donkey figurines, scattered throughout. Some of the figurines were used as incense burners. Rhoades sourced ceramic donkey cart figurines (that could be used as planters), which had been produced in occupied Japan, online. Goods exported to the United States from 1947-1952 were stamped with this indication. After sourcing these objects, Rhoades then had replicas produced at a factory in Mexico for his installations.¹⁹⁸ The role of production, consumption and made goods, or consumer goods, is a theme in his work. The concept for this installation, according to Rhoades, was a reconstruction of a mosque. *My Madinah. In pursuit of my ermitage...* was intended to be a sacred place, or, as Rhoades referred to it, a 'Pussy Mosque'.¹⁹⁹ About this use of words he comments:

[I was] linguistically harvesting these things. They have to be proven somehow. That's just a very simple relationship between – it's a strange thing, what euphemism, analogies, second word for something. Like in this cockney rhyming one - Sigourney Weaver = beaver. I like the way it interacts with us socially and sexually and intimately and yet kind of worldly. It places us in the world and it places us with language where we're situated.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Schaffner et al., 2014.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Jason Rhoades and Michele Robecchi, 'Interview: Michele Robecchi and Jason Rhoades', *Contemporary*, 81 (2006), 42-45.

With *My Madinah. In pursuit of my ermitage...*, Rhoades again works with narratives informed by Islamic rituals and architecture or religious sites, and consistently incorporates references to female genitalia. He also continues to work with branded and manufactured objects and goods. The utilisation of words and the sense of 'harvesting' words will be explored as this chapter progresses.

The final installation in the three-part series is Rhoades' *The Black Pussy . . . and the Pagan Idol Workshop*, which was a series of ten events and eventually took the form of an installation. The events were referred to as the Black Pussy Soirée Cabaret Macramé, and were held over the course of six months in Rhoades' Los Angeles studio at the beginning of 2006. The Black Pussy also refers to the venue that hosted events, the actual events themselves and the installation. The participants were meant to add to the installation by contributing a new word for his expanding archive of terms for female genitalia. Photographs of the events, which served as documentation, were incorporated into the installation and then later used to form images for a coffee-table book, extending the concept of commodification. Sounds recorded from the events formed a soundtrack that was also incorporated into the work itself. The events, or soirées, were intended to be part of the making of the work.²⁰¹ The installation comprised almost 200 neon signs displaying synonyms for female genitalia. The objects that make up this installation are balanced between mass-produced post-industrial consumer culture and the crafted or hand-made: the authentic and the fake. Hundreds of objects arranged on metal storage racks make up the installation, including rugs, hats, lights, Egyptian hookah pipes, small glass or ceramic sculptures, dream catchers and macramé wall hangings.²⁰²

²⁰² West and Israel, 2008.

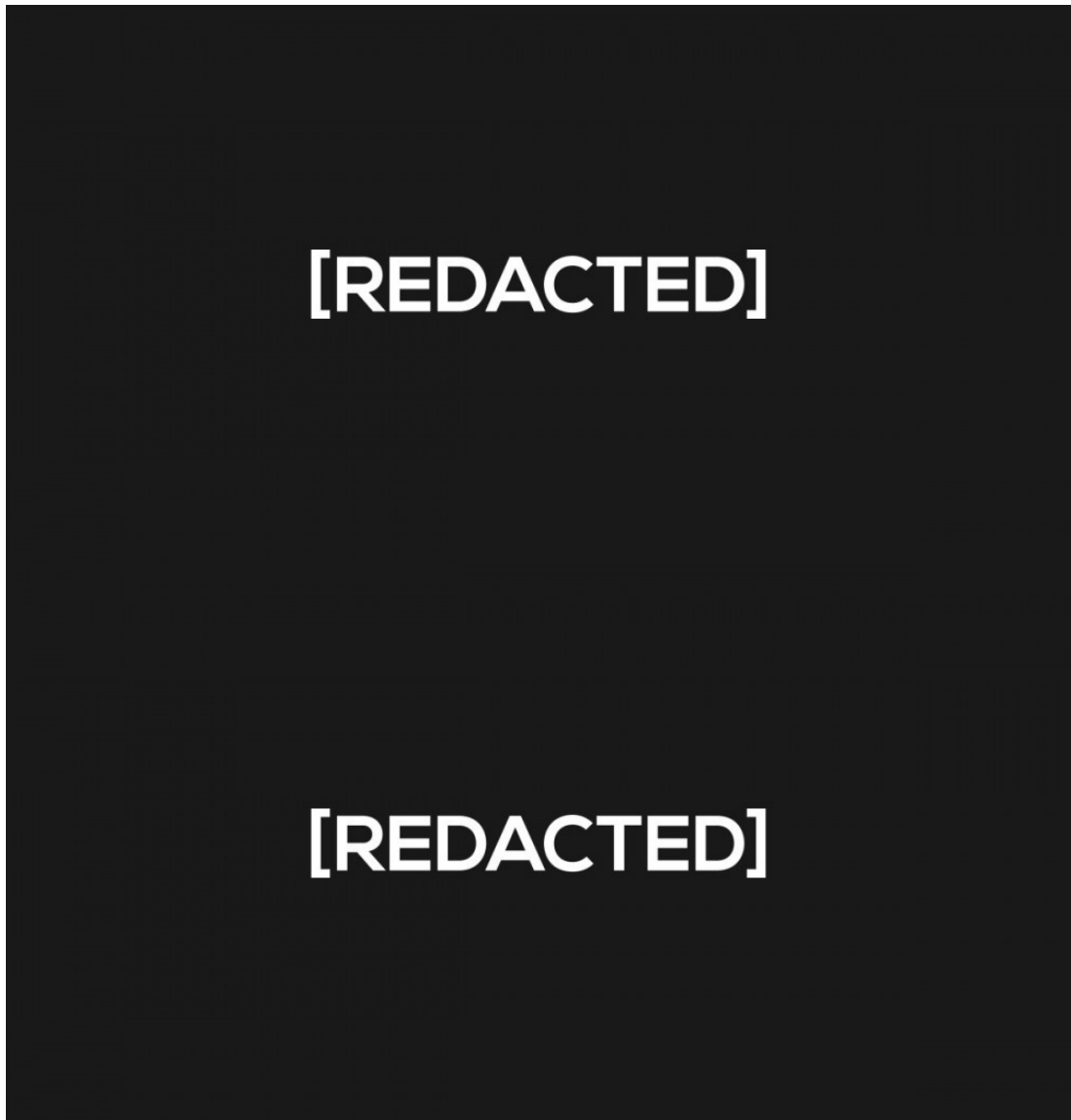


Figure 1.9: Jason Rhoades, *The Black Pussy...and the Pagan Idol Workshop*, 2005, detail.



Figure 1.10: Jason Rhoades, *The Black Pussy...and the Pagan Idol Workshop*, 2005.



Figure 1.11: Jason Rhoades, *The Black Pussy...and the Pagan Idol Workshop*, 2005, detail of event.

The density and intensity of materials found in *The Black Pussy . . . and the Pagan Idol Workshop* and the audio soundtrack created a multiple, fractured narrative. This multi-layered and fractured narrative is also evident in Trecartin's work; however, he enacts this via his use of audio and video elements. During the events that made up the installation, Rhoades performed in a white suit. The suit was later placed in the middle of the installation, soon after his death.

The use of the term 'The Black Pussy' in this particular series is intentionally vulgar, as writer Kevin West argues. West says that the term oscillates between power and vulnerability. The power of this phrase, according to West and Rhoades, connotes Black Power movements and the violence or vulnerability that comes from the fetishisation and eroticisation of Black women.²⁰³

In my opinion, and in my viewing of the work, as well as my viewing of the trilogy of installations, this use of religion (ie. religious fetishes) and the terminology of, and allusion to, female genitalia, specifically in relation to Black women, reads as extremely facile. Critiques of the work have been written primarily by men, and the catalogue essays in any official gallery-sanctioned texts are devoid of feminist critique. I understand from interviews and in-depth reading of certain texts that it could have been Rhoades' intention to explore notions of masculine heterosexuality, via socio-linguistics or the hoarding and collecting of words. Rhoades was interested in theories about historical narratives concerning pagan idols at the site of Kaaba.²⁰⁴ This became the basis for the title of the installation. Things being made, and destroyed, such iconoclasm, the roots of religion and commerce and the selling of objects at religious sites was of interest to Rhoades.²⁰⁵ In the *Black Pussy Soirée Cabaret Macramé* he began by asking participants to add a word to this growing archive of terms for female genitalia. Rhoades gathered

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ See: Lucas Zwirner and Dylan Kenney, 'Jason Rhoades Oral History Project', 2014.

²⁰⁵ West and Israel, 2008, pp. 12-14.

data and created a website, Pussy.is, that, when live, hosted the archive of the words.²⁰⁶

All three installations in the *Pussy* trilogy have homemade objects, bought objects and mass-produced objects. Some were handcrafted and locally sourced, others were produced at factories and some were referred to by Rhoades as 'hand-made readymade'.²⁰⁷ During the making of *My Madinah: in pursuit of my ermitage...*, Rhoades used hot glue with a contraption that would mimic ejaculation. During the events, Rhoades would use this contraption to excrete wax into the donkey carts, turning them into scented candles, which were then given as souvenirs of the events. Rhoades created an assembly line of making, with participants making their own candles, and he also incorporated this technique into producing something edible, using frozen yoghurt in the donkey carts for participants.

Macramé was a crucial element of this series. The title of the events was *Black Pussy Macramé Cabaret*, and was influenced by the suburban, community-based craft activity of macramé. The participants would be asked to enter the space where the event was held, and they would bind fibre used in macramé-crafted pieces displayed in the installation. This was literally a binding experience for the participants.²⁰⁸ *The Black Pussy* and the three installations as a whole incorporated performance, stages, craft and making, and was participatory, in the ways just described.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.12.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 12.



Figure 1.12: Ryan Trecartin, *Any Ever*, 2010.

Horror Vacui, Trecartin

Ryan Trecartin's installation *Any Ever* also included the basis for participation. *Any Ever* is a large-scale video installation that was curated by Helena Reckitt and Jon Davies, first exhibited at The Power Plant in Toronto in 2010. It was then adapted for a subsequent exhibition at MOCA Los Angeles, and a different iteration was exhibited at MOCA Miami and MoMA PS1. Made during the period of the 2008 financial crash, *Any Ever* is an installation formed of two parts and focuses on a series of seven non-sequential videos. The first part of *Any Ever* is called *Trill-ogy Comp* (2009), and includes three videos; the second part is called *Re'Search Wait'S* (2009-10), and includes four videos. The videos have patterns of recurring characters. The plots focus on overarching transnational corporate powers and narratives of digitisation in an increasingly corporatised and overstimulated world. The audio from the cast of characters or performers is noticeably sped up or accelerated. The recurring and revolving cast in the videos features Trecartin performing in costumes.



Figure 1.13: Ryan Trecartin, *Any Ever*, 2010.



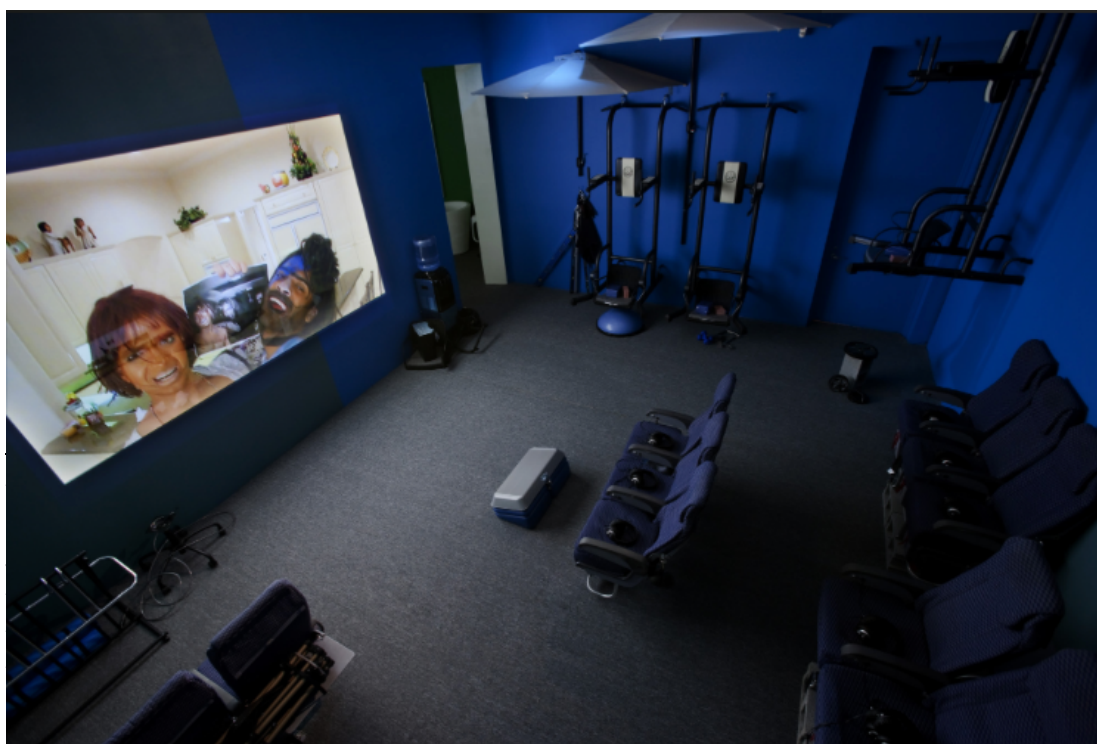
Figure 1.14: Ryan Trecartin, *Any Ever*, 2010, detail.



Figure 1.15 and 1.16: Ryan Trecartin, *Any Ever*, 2010.

The title, *Any Ever*, is a portmanteau of the words 'anyway' and 'forever' and this is evocative of the repetition or looped patterns in the video.²⁰⁹ Many of the scenes or dialogues are filmed in domestic interiors, where characters converse with each other while maintaining a frontal direction towards the camera.²¹⁰ Corporate and individual branding and consumerism is central to the scripts in *Any Ever*, which also alludes to speculative futures. Excerpts from the script include, 'I love learning about myself through other people's products'; 'I've been a CEO since birth'; 'Well, I live in a right to whatever reality. Just meditate on the idea of water'; 'I totally cry real tears, I just haven't designed them yet'.²¹¹

The videos are projected in rooms with ambient music, with seating consisting primarily of Ikea furniture. Objects such as sofas, cabinets, bags, blankets and drawers seen in the video or in the sets constructed for the video are placed on the carpeted or rug-covered floors of the installation. There is a sense of participatory viewership in Trecartin's exhibitions, which is in part mediated by the incorporation of domestic interior design in the installation.²¹² The objects in the videos are store-bought, and the emphasis of the furniture in the installation is not on the hand-



made object. This is seen in the use of objects and interior design in which the objects are externalised into the gallery space. Furniture from Ikea and objects from Home Depot create a type of domestic interior design aesthetic similar to that used by Rhoades in several installations, in particular *The Creation Myth*, as I will discuss in Chapter 2, The Craft Object.

Lisa Åkervall has written about the concept of the interiors in Trecartin's installations being based on the domesticity of home interiors and configurations of living rooms featuring mass-market furniture such as IKEA pieces.²¹³ In *Any Ever*, the interior gallery spaces are referred to as 'sculptural theatres' for viewers to sit in while experiencing the video.²¹⁴ About the term 'sculptural theatres', Åkervall writes, 'At first this term invites associations with sculptures and (movie) theatres; however,[...] the U- and L-shaped seating arrangements featured benches, pillows and a centrally mounted screen that recalled the classic family living rooms of the post-World War II American suburban middle class'.²¹⁵ This interior design aesthetic is meant to evoke a sense of home or of personal space, but it is purposely sterile, staged and industrial, achieving a more formal feeling. Åkervall writes, 'Trecartin and Fitch use the same furniture in their sculptural theatres as appears in their videos. As a result, the fictional space of the videos extends into the exhibition space and, conversely, the exhibition space is integrated into the videos' fictional space'.²¹⁶ Similarly, Kevin McGarry, in the essay 'Worlds Apart', in *Any Ever*, the catalogue for the exhibition, refers to Trecartin's installations as 'sculptural theatres', commenting that they are '[...] environments that resonate with and amplify themes significant to each movie. They actualise the virtual space of the work in the physical space of the gallery'.²¹⁷ This is a way to think about how *Any Ever* creates a relationship with the objects in the video and with the objects that are externalised from the video into the physical space of the gallery. The objects

²¹³ Åkervall, 2016, 35-51.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 36

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Åkervall, 2016, p. 48.

²¹⁷ McGarry (ed.), 2011, p. 112.

in the gallery space evoke staging and sets similar to those seen in the video, but what is created is an artificial domestic interior.

Maeve Connolly writes about the cramped interior domestic spaces in Trecartin's installations and the sense of claustrophobia encountered by the viewer. Connolly comments on how the characters in the videos gather and appear in the video's domestic interior spaces and the impact this has on the viewer in the installation when encountering or viewing the videos from physical versions of the video's domestic interiors.²¹⁸ Similarly, Nicholas Ridout, writing about the viewer's or audience's experience, refers to *Any Ever* as 'immersion as a theatrical experience'.²¹⁹ Ridout comments that interiors allow the viewer to navigate through *Any Ever* within a specific remit: they experience the installation as it is mediated via the constructed domestic interior spaces.²²⁰

There is a sense of the constant in Trecartin's work, resulting in the sense that it is unrelenting, similar to the more analogue sense of unrelenting objects, references and signifiers in Rhoades' *Pussy* trilogy. The characters in the videos have mistakenly been thought to be improvising; however, they have formal scripts which are written and performed.²²¹ There is an accumulation and repetition of identities and stories and narratives. In the videos, skin and hair are hyper-real, and other ethnicities and subcultures are formed via Trecartin's created landscape.²²² I will expand on this idea as this chapter progresses and particularly in the section titled 'Worldings'.

²¹⁸ Connolly, 2014.

²¹⁹ Ridout, 2019, p. 109.

²²⁰ Ibid., pp. 106-109.

²²¹ See: Lauren Cornell, 'Medium Living', in McGarry (ed.), 2011, pp. 55-57.

²²² With regard to the trajectory of Ryan Trecartin's video work, I think it is significant to note a historical lineage of the use of hyper-real skin and hair colouring in the video work of Nancy Buchanan, Tom Rubnitz and Alex Bag.

Åkervall writes about Trecartin and identity, commenting that the performance of self is a key aspect of his videos.²²³ Similarly, Wes Hill writes that 'Trecartin's scripted videos portray the self as fundamentally performed'.²²⁴ Åkervall defines the networked self as impacted by the use of screens, narratives, and the navigation of multiple screen installations, as well as the reliance on digital altered sound and video.²²⁵ In *Any Ever*, language, as well as the impact of reality television or social media platforms on the presentation and performance of the self, as noted by Åkervall, has also been observed by Brian Droitcour: '[...] characters sat in one place and delivered monologues [...] the videos [...] use the frontal directness of Skyping and vlogging, imagining the webcam's lens as a means by which selfhood leaks into otherness and vice versa'.²²⁶ About *Any Ever* Droitcour also comments: '[...] characters explore and transform their inner worlds by externalizing their imaginations'.²²⁷ Matthew Causey comments that *Any Ever* '[...] replicate[s] the digital and its constant state of connectivity and networked structures in order to draw on its potential for radical models of identity, culture, and community formation'.²²⁸ I will elaborate on the sense of community formation in the following section. In doing so, Trecartin creates a space in the installation which enables a participatory environment.

Worldings

The process of Horror Vacui involves viewers in becoming ontologically a part of environments in the analogue and virtual realms of Rhoades' and Trecartin's work. In suggesting this, I am influenced by the New Materialist framing of how a worlding can be a way to think about different reality systems; and this is what I think is being created in both Rhoades' and Trecartin's work. In order to define

²²³ Åkervall, 2016.

²²⁴ Hill, 2018.

²²⁵ Åkervall, 2016, p.36.

²²⁶ Droitcour, 2016.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Causey, 2016, p. 433.

how I am using the concept of a worlding, I will begin by exploring the ways that this concept has been re-contextualised within a New Materialist framework. The concept of a worlding is influenced by Heideggerian notions of the world and how it is revealed by things.²²⁹ Scholar Helen Palmer and choreographer Vicky Hunter define a worlding as a place or environment that is

[...] an active, ontological process; it is not simply a result of our existence in or passive encounter with particular environments, circumstances events or places. Worlding is informed by our turning of attention to a certain experience, place or encounter and our active engagement with the materiality and context in which events and interactions occur. It is above all an embodied and enacted process – a way of being in the world-consisting of an individual's whole-person act of attending to the world.²³⁰

Both Rhoades and Trecartin utilise socio-linguistics in their work. Tamara Trodd's 2014 lecture 'Ryan Trecartin's Abstract Realism' focused on the use of language in Trecartin's videos, including *Any Ever*. In particular, Trodd discussed the impact of reality television and American dialects used in the West Coast area on the tone, cadence and accelerated voices of the characters in Trecartin's videos. Stemming from this, I am interested in building upon the idea of 'upspeak' and how it relates to Trecartin's videos.²³¹ In Trecartin's *Any Ever*, the accelerated audio recording of the actors performing in the videos, alongside Trecartin's characters' use of the linguistic pattern of upspeak offers a specific use of language. Studies of this linguistic pattern has connected it to aspects of pop culture, reality television culture and American sorority culture, and it has been of interest to the fields of both sociology and linguistics because it helps to establish communal speech patterns.²³² These social structures are evident in the worlds that Trecartin's

²²⁹ Heidegger, 1971, pp. 163-184.

²³⁰ Palmer and Hunter, 2018.

²³¹ Trodd, 2014.

²³² For information on studies see: Robin Tolmach Lakoff and Mary Bucholtz, eds., *Language and Woman's Place: Text and Commentaries*, rev. and expanded edn. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Yana Skorobogatov, 'What's Up with Upspeak?' *Identities, University of California, Berkeley*, 2015, available at: <<https://matrix.berkeley.edu/research/whats-upspeak>> [accessed 06 March

characters inhabit in *Any Ever*. Upspeak refers to the way the cadence of the voice rises in pitch at the end of a sentence, with the final word in the sentence spoken higher than the other words.²³³ More recent studies of upspeak look at the way it has merged with Californian dialects and their use in American reality television programmes.²³⁴

Lauren Cornell, in 'Medium Living', writes about the scripts in *Any Ever*, noting the acceleration of voices and the use of symbols and products.²³⁵ Cornell cites the use of literary tropes such as prose or homophones in Trecartin's scripts and videos.²³⁶ Similarly, Brian Droitcour suggests that scripts and the use of language are central to Trecartin's work, a point echoed in Åkervall's writing in relation to the use of accelerated speech and voice in the artist's work.²³⁷ Rhoades works with the concept of harvesting words that form an excess. For Rhoades, the cultural and social signification of the collected words for female genitalia are key to the trilogy of installations, as is the performative act of harvesting them, or collecting them from participants. The words produce an accumulation: the overwhelming number of them helps to evoke the sense of hoarding and collecting and enables Rhoades to create a worlding in his work. For Trecartin, his use of accelerated audio and upspeak is key to his process of forming a worlding.

2018]; Miriam Meyerhoff, *Introducing Sociolinguistics*, 3rd. edn. (New York: Routledge, 2018).

²³³ Skorobogatov, 2015.

²³⁴ See: Susan Murray, Laurie Oullette (eds.), *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Heejung Kim, 'Culture and Self-Expression: Cultural Differences in Verbal Expression Lead to Distinctive Patterns of Cognitive Performance, Stress Responses, and Social Support', *Psychological Science Agenda, Science Brief*, American Psychological Association, June 2010, available at: < www.apa.org/science/about/psa/2010/06/sci-brief > [accessed 06 March 2018].

²³⁵ For example, a character named after the software programme Adobe is part of the script of *Any Ever*. Cornell, 2011, pp. 56-57.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²³⁷ Droitcour, 2016; Åkervall, 2016.

Erika Balsom writes about multiscreen projections, or 'environments', as a new form of displaying and storytelling non-linear narratives as a part of video installations.²³⁸ This sense of an 'environment', as Balsom notes, is relevant to Trecartin's work because it helps him create a worlding with non-linear narratives, multiple screens, multiple character identities and a range of interiors.

Worldings can offer a framework within which to analyse and think about the formation and constitution of the reality systems that Rhoades and Trecartin bring forth in their installations. They form assemblages of the many things that these installations consist of, and the participatory nature of the installations offers the viewer an ontological experience. Rhoades' installation may critique white masculinity in post-9/11 America and Trecartin's approach to gender and race addresses notions of the posthuman by using characters with fluid gender and racial identity. Trecartin's use of upspeak, as well as his use of pitch and fractured narratives, offers a conflation of human senses via these speech patterns and the way they are altered digitally. Trecartin constructs a world inhabited by androgynous or gender-fluid characters, using hyper-real skin and hair colours. This is a form of imagination as a radical tool and signals the emergence of posthuman characters. Curator Lauren Cornell has commented that Trecartin creates a '[...]posthuman, postsexual, and post-linear time'.²³⁹ She writes: '[...] transgender identity is metaphorically merged with the distributed flow of the internet: The fact that these characters are constant "transitions" is rendered normal [...]'.²⁴⁰ Åkervall has referred to Trecartin's work as approaching what she terms a 'posthuman sensorium'.²⁴¹ Åkervall writes, '[...] Trecartin and Fitch's videos create a posthuman sensorium by radicalizing and rendering spectacular a deconstruction of the human sensorium via media technologies; [...]'.²⁴² She also remarks that the

²³⁸ Balsom, 2013, pp. 157-165.

²³⁹ Cornell, 2011, p. 55.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 56.

²⁴¹ Åkervall, 2016, p. 36.

²⁴² Ibid., 2016, p. 41.

posthuman sensorium 'depict(s) humans whose entire sensorium appears to have been reconstructed by their interface with media technologies'.²⁴³

Any Ever actualises socio-cultural configurations. Trecartin and Rhoades materialise different forms of socio-cultural exchange and being. However, the worlds represented in the videos Trecartin makes offer a provocation to the binaries of gender. An alternative configuration of human society with collectivisation at the core is interwoven in the social structures in the narratives that make up *Any Ever*.

Rhoades' work is more heteronormative than Trecartin's, and ultimately this chapter does not offer a comparative analysis of the two artists' work. The participatory narrative and the rebuilding of the structure in *Meccatuna*, the act of linguistic harvesting in *My Madinah: in Pursuit of my Ermitage...* and the interweaving, and literal binding, of macramé in *The Black Pussy . . . and the Pagan Idol Workshop* forms an alternative version of forging a collectivised, social structure that is participatory. The processes in Rhoades' and Trecartin's work are similar in the way they elicit this participatory structure. Their installations offer different entry points into how to contextualise and analyse gender and race. It is this aspect that I see as a potential pathway for the future of video installation work.

Rhoades' trilogy of installations were made in the climate of the post- 9/11 American landscape. The installations were made between 2003 and 2005, prior to the mainstream use of Twitter and Facebook.²⁴⁴ The impact of social media, in terms of the navigation and the fractured quality of writing and searching online, can be seen in Rhoades' and Trecartin's work. Their work sits respectively at either

²⁴³ Ibid.; and the discussion of gender by Cornell and Åkervall has been impacted by the work of Judith Butler and N. Katherine Hayles. See: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990); N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 1999). For further articulations, see: Judith (Jack) Halberstam & Ira Livingston (eds.), *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995).

²⁴⁴ Facebook was launched in 2004 and Twitter was launched in 2006.

side of this technological cusp. While Rhoades's work is constituted of more analogue, immersive environments, Trecartin's works is arguably more encapsulated in the virtual and the screen. *Any Ever* addresses the relationship of viewers to the screen. The space of the gallery is made from objects from the videos, and the fictional space of the video is externalised into the gallery. There is a tension between the fictional space of the video and the extension of this fictional space in the gallery. The screen, and what it means to be a viewer in these installations and the performances, all become more permeable, porous and participatory.

The worldings presented in both Rhoades' and Trecartin's installations forge a new formation of political, cultural and social discourse around gender, race and the participatory nature of video, installation and video installation. They do this by exploring the role of American identity during the emergence of social media platforms. Both create immersive installations with narratives that emerge from the different worldings they present.

Conclusion:

Unlike the neologisms that I created in Chapters 2 to 5 of this PhD, such as The Craft Object, The Gloopy Object, The Prop Object and The Suburban Object, Horror Vacui is not a term that I made up in order to describe a type of object in Rhoades' and Trecartin's work. The term *horror vacui* is in fact borrowed from physics and art and design history, and this chapter situates particular works by Rhoades and Trecartin within the history and theories of hoarding, collecting and the accumulation of excess. Horror Vacui is a process that in this chapter is used to analyse Rhoades' *Meccatuna, My Madinah. In pursuit of my ermitage...* and *The Black Pussy . . . and the Pagan Idol Workshop*, along with Ryan Trecartin's *Any Ever*.

Horror Vacui is a constellation of The Craft Object, The Gloopy Object, The Prop Object and The Suburban Object. The works in this chapter incorporate aspects of the object categories. I like to think of this taking the form of elements or traces of these object-terms, such as different materialities stemming from histories of craft, to the impact of scripts or narratives, the role of race and gender, and the evocation of suburbia through domestic interiors.

This chapter began with an exploration of the histories and frameworks that have utilised the concept of *horror vacui*. It continued by using an examination of forms of hoarding and collecting as an entry point into the sense of accumulation that is a key aspect of the works discussed in this chapter.

A reading of aspects of Victorian interior design helped me to contextualise how people relate to and deal with the consequences of their possessions, and how people form relationships with their objects. These concepts, alongside aspects of interior design, helped me to form a bridge through which to analyse the concept of a worlding. A worlding, in the context of this chapter, is an ontological site or realm. This chapter offered a reading of Rhoades' and Trecartin's work within the framework of this New Materialist concept in order to analyse the role of gender and race in the worldings: I considered the participatory structures that create the worlds that are represented and inhabited: these worldings consider gender and race in the context of the posthuman, hyper-masculine or gender-fluid. Through the use of hoarding and archiving words, and the use of linguistic patterns, both Rhoades' and Trecartin's work in this chapter can be analysed for their use of socio-linguistics. With these frameworks I have been able to examine the performative and participatory nature of the works. This constitutes part of the originality of my enterprise in this chapter. Rhoades worked with participants to form active performative reconstructions of his work. Trecartin formed participatory structures in his videos between the characters. Both Rhoades and Trecartin formed immersive installations.

The commodification of the object and its social and cultural forces are part of the process of Horror Vacui that is constituted in these works by Rhoades and Trecartin. Trecartin's work considers the role of the corporate, in its use of store-bought objects, and the role of branding, capitalist structures and consumerism. Rhoades' work considers the role of the manufactured objects, branding and consumerism. Horror Vacui as a process offers experiential and participatory forms of engagement and viewing.

This chapter is in part influenced by a term that is derived from physics. I consider the process of Horror Vacui to present itself as an accumulation, resulting from hoarding, or collecting: a worlding, an over-saturation and a bombardment, which leads to a sense of terminal velocity in which all the types of objects reach their highest velocity. Velocity increases whether acceleration is constant or whether it increases over time. In the process of Horror Vacui explored in this chapter, I think the change in velocity has terminated. Chapters 2 to 5 of this PhD identify the collision that occurs after terminal velocity is reached. In Rhoades' work this functions differently from the way it does in Trecartin's work. It is this sense of the collision after terminal velocity that I was reacting to when I first viewed *Any Ever*, as I recounted at the beginning of this chapter. This collision was my starting point, and in Chapters 2-5 I aim to unearth the object to see what it is doing, saying, not saying or re-saying. The works studied in this chapter are the starting point for this PhD and this then leads me to begin to examine the intersectionality and transdisciplinary nature of the externalisation of objects that constitute the chapters of this PhD.

CHAPTER 2 THE CRAFT OBJECT

Thing 1

More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid

tight tapestry, organised mess of brightly coloured stuffed animals from thrift stores, knits, yarn, textures, buttons, afghans, dried corn husks act as pins holding the tapestry on the wall. controlled excess, assemblage, collecting, rejects, found, sewn together bound as a frame on the wall

Thing 2

Arenas

square formations on the ground. controlled scenes. staging the craft. brightly coloured tattered, stuffed animals from thrift stores are placed on blankets on the floor, in various scenes and in various groupings. they sit on square or rectangular blankets. they are in communication with each other

Thing 3

Sutter's Mill

a deconstructed mill is made of cold, tubular steel rods. performative, making and unmaking, stage set, narrative, rural craft, a river of clothing is cut through the platform of the mill. this is the steel, skeleton of a wood structure which would have made the original mill

Thing 4

The Creation Myth

a mess of paper, buckets, scraps of magazines, a sewing machine, TVs, cables, wooden trellises, tables and chairs. a studio scene of work. controlled explosion of objects. the making processes. ready-made and man-made objects being digested. a studio regurgitated

Introduction

In December 2013 I travelled to the neighbourhood of Valencia, a suburb forty-five minutes' drive north of downtown Los Angeles, to research the archives of the Feminist Art Program (FAP) within the California Institute of the Arts Feminist Art Materials Collection. From 1971 to 1976, the FAP was responsible for introducing

feminist theory and feminist criticism to California Institute of the Arts (CalArts).²⁴⁵ In its first year, twenty-five women artists participated in the FAP, which included seminars, workshops, exhibitions, talks and group critiques.²⁴⁶

At times with archival research, you enter the archive thinking that you will uncover something significant. Perhaps some morsel of information, or a sparkling subtlety of knowledge that no one has previously been able to find. I certainly approached the CalArts Feminist Art Program archive with the feeling that I was performing a special excavation in the archaeological site of the archive. As I mined through boxes upon boxes of materials in folders, the initial imagined seductiveness of my excavation faded quickly.

It faded fast because I began that archival research hoping I would be able to pinpoint a concrete event, moment or direct line of influence from the FAP to the work of the artists with which this PhD is concerned. Instead, I found more of a disparate fog or mist that crawled through Los Angeles. I discovered that the origins of the FAP's history could not be so easily traced through the archive, with the assortment of catalogues, images, printouts, memos and receipts that were presented to me. What became evident was that these materials were my starting point, a collation of traces of events whose influence spread across the Los Angeles area during the 1970s. This archival exploration laid the foundation that helped me analyse the wider milieu of the period surrounding the formation and eventual dismantling of the FAP at CalArts. This starting point led me to a lineage and history of craft and exhibitions of fibre or textile work which predated and impacted on the FAP.

²⁴⁵ Faith Wilding, 'The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts, 1970-75', in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (eds.), *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact* (New York: Abrams, 1994), pp. 32-49.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

It became clear to me during the archive visit that the FAP and its associated projects around the Los Angeles area were varied and wide-reaching. Mike Kelley attended CalArts shortly after the programme was dismantled. However, as this chapter will explain, projects and exhibitions around Los Angeles, and to a degree in the CalArts environment, were a part of the fabric of the institution and the wider arts culture in Southern California. I began considering the work and use of materials of other craft-based artists who created work before the formation of the FAP, because I could observe tendencies in the way they used materials that resonated with the work of the FAP. I could then begin to see a similar use of materials in the work of Mike Kelley and of Jason Rhoades, who, although not affiliated with Kelley, the FAP or CalArts, was imbricated within the crafts culture of California.

The history and role of the artists in the FAP is analysed, as this chapter progresses, in relation to the work of Kelley, and more broadly to that of Rhoades. Alongside the CalArts archive, from which materials provided insight into the nature and significance of the programme, including its broad-reaching national impact, I also track a specific lineage to a history of craft stemming predominantly from the West Coast of the United States that also reached the East Coast. Therefore, this chapter analyses a trajectory of specific exhibitions of craft-based works exhibited in America. It is important to introduce the tradition of these works within the cultural climate of the West Coast of the United States because it laid a foundation for the way Kelley and Rhoades worked with certain types of materials. This paves the way for a critical analysis of how this wider milieu of the period contributed to what I term The Craft Object of artists Mike Kelley and Jason Rhoades. The Craft Object is a type of object seen in Kelley's *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* (1987) (Fig. 2.2-2.3, pp.113-114) and the *Arenas* (1990) (Fig. 2.6-2.8, pp. 120-121) series and Jason Rhoades' *Sutter's Mill* (2000) (Fig. 2.10-2.12, pp. 124-125) and *The Creation Myth* (1998) (Fig. 2.13-2.17, pp. 127-129).

The particular type of craft and artworks covered in this chapter employed materials and processes in a very specific manner. Kelley and Rhoades worked with found and made objects, blankets, macramé, crochet and various volumetric or three-dimensional forms in many of their works. It is important to note certain exhibitions and works which could have laid a foundation for the use of these materials, and the shape and form not only of the materials but also of the exhibition layout, in Kelley's and Rhoades' work. It is also important to understand the perception of these types of work in the 1960s in order to analyse how Kelley and Rhoades created their works with similar materials during the 1990s and into the 2000s, paying attention to the debates about how and from where these materials and their form stem.

The originality of my enterprise is in part made up of the following analyses of Kelley's and Rhoades' work in relation to the lineage of craft-based projects, certain craft-based artists and the evolution of the impact of this work on installation art, and moreover on the relationship of installation art to Kelley's and Rhoades' work. By focusing on the material history of The Craft Object, I argue that these artists used materials in a way that stemmed from a specific lineage of craft artists. Material tendencies emerging from this lineage can be noted in the work of the FAP artists, and can then be observed in the work of Kelley and Rhoades. Therefore, this chapter offers a reappraisal of Kelley's and Rhoades' work by considering a particular history, and by looking at how this historical precedent and lineage contributed to their use of materials in their work. Doing this allows me to consider ways to rethink the status of the object in Kelley's and Rhoades' work. My contextualisation, definition and framing of The Craft Object will allow me to form a critique of the role of the commodity, the implications of craft histories, the installation format and the role of the FAP in these artists' work.

The Craft Object

When I use the term The Craft Object, I am referring to the material qualities, form, scale, installation and discourse involving commodity and labour in Mike Kelley's *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* and *Arenas*, and in Jason Rhoades' *Sutter's Mill* and *The Creation Myth*. My use of the term The Craft Object refers to materials and processes utilised by Kelley and Rhoades, both of whom created their work with found, sourced and handmade objects, including blankets, knitted materials, rag dolls, stuffed animals, cardboard, crochet and macramé.

The term The Craft Object is admittedly contentious, complex and ambiguous in nature. It refers to the status of the object/objects in the works and its/their identity and origins, and as such could be utilised to discuss works beyond the specificities of Kelley's and Rhoades' work. There is ongoing history of a hierarchy in existence between fine art (sculpture or painting, for example) and craft. I will explore this dynamic in relation to installation art by examining how the actual installation of certain fibre or textile-based work in galleries and/or exhibition spaces may have led to a slight dissolve in this hierarchy and perhaps even opened out and extended the context of the future of installation art. In order to discuss The Craft Object, it is important to trace its emergence genealogically. This allows me to consider specific material and process-based aspects of this particular history.

Feminist artists around Los Angeles helped to legitimise fibre and textile-based work and this progressed its classification as fine art.²⁴⁷ The impact of the feminist art movement on the legitimisation of fibre and textile as a material of fine art, and on its exhibition as installation art, is significant to analyse in relation to Kelley's and Rhoades' craft-based installations. However, this chapter does not aim to form a

²⁴⁷ Such as Judy Chicago, Arlen Raven, Faith Ringgold, Mira Schor, Miriam Schapiro, May Stevens and Faith Wilding. See: Norma Broude and Mary D, Garrard, 'Introduction: Feminism and Art in The Twentieth Century', in Broude and Garrard, (eds.), 1994, pp. 10-30, and Yolanda M. Lopez and Moira Roth, 'Social Protest: Racism and Sexism', in Broude and Garrard (eds.), 1994, pp. 140-155.

direct correlation between the lineage of artists in the history of craft and the FAP artists, FAP projects or with the work of Kelley and Rhoades. Rather, this chapter aims to flesh out and examine the cultural milieu of work which may stem from the history of craft during the 1960s and 1970s in the wider Los Angeles area and nationally.

Mike Kelley and Jason Rhoades worked with notions of craft differently in their respective practices. Kelley joined the Masters programme at CalArts from 1976 to 1978, coinciding with the closure of the FAP, which had by that time already received wide media coverage and national attention.²⁴⁸ Specific works by Kelley, such as *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* and *Arenas* have links to the lineage of both the craft and fibre/textile-based work outlined in this chapter and to the work of artists from the FAP at CalArts. During the time that Kelley first began studying, the FAP produced projects at spaces such as Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) and around the Los Angeles area.

The FAP hosted and produced projects around the Los Angeles area in various art spaces, which coincided with the wider feminist art movement in Los Angeles (and elsewhere).²⁴⁹ Its tangential projects, which heightened the visibility of the programme, included *High Performance* magazine (1978-1997) (Fig. 2.1, p. 107), Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) founded in 1978, Miriam Schapiro's *Anonymous was a Woman* (1974) and *Womanhouse/Womanspace* (1972-3) (Fig. 2.9, p. 152).²⁵⁰ These projects and exhibitions formed connections with various other arts-based organisations and non-traditional arts institutions. The FAP had achieved the task of reaching out to various other sites, and its members and core faculty, or founding members, had facilitated this.

²⁴⁸ Feminist Art Materials, CalArts Publications, Box B3 -FR19 Non CalArts Publications.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

²⁵⁰ Broude and Garrard (eds.), 1994.

Mike Kelley, in an interview as part of the 2012-2013 travelling retrospective of his work, discussed the role of CalArts, craft and feminism with curator and writer Eva Meyer Hermann. Meyer Hermann began by asking Kelley about '[the] cultural climate' at CalArts during the time Kelley was a student from 1976 to 1978.²⁵¹ Kelley comments, '[...] by the time I entered CalArts, the women's program was gone. I didn't know about it so it did not affect my decision to attend the school. [...] the Women's Building in Los Angeles was very much a separatist organization, so I was not personally familiar with what was going on there. [...] I really did not become very aware of their work until I graduated from CalArts in 1978 and got involved with the alternative space LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions), where some of the artists associated with the Women's Building and other feminist groups presented work or were on the committees'.²⁵² The key point to emphasise in this quote is that although Kelley attended CalArts slightly after the formation and dismantling of the FAP, he was exposed to the work from the artists involved with FAP by their projects in the surrounding Los Angeles area. This work by the FAP artists fitted into the milieu of CalArts and the wider Los Angeles area, and in the interview with Meyer-Herman, Kelley avoids discussing this impact. However, Kelley does specifically refer to LACE, a project space where he notes that he was more aware of the FAP work after graduating from CalArts. LACE and *High Performance* magazine shared the same building: the *High Performance* offices were located on the third floor of the building. The magazine and LACE collaborated often.²⁵³ It is also significant to note that *High Performance* and the LACE project space were crucial to the work of the Los Angeles art scene at this time. While at a residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Rhoades was inspired by McCarthy's work featured on the cover and prominently

²⁵¹ Mike Kelley and Eva Meyer-Hermann, 'Interview with Mike Kelley', in Ann Goldstein, Eva Meyer-Hermann and Lisa Gabrielle Mark (eds.), *Mike Kelley: Themes and Variations from 35 Years* (Munich: Prestel, 2012), pp. 366-7.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Phelan, 2012.

in the No. 29 (Fall 1985) issue of *High Performance*.²⁵⁴ Rhoades later studied at UCLA, with McCarthy as his teacher and mentor.



Figure 2.1: *High Performance* No. 29 (Fall 1985), detail of cover with Paul McCarthy.

In an interview I conducted with curator Ingrid Schaffner, she comments: ‘It seems that in terms of the feminist culture at CalArts, Jason would have been getting it indirectly by being so much a part of a culture of teaching in California and what was present and certainly he would have been getting it through Paul (McCarthy)’.²⁵⁵ In preparation for the large-scale exhibition of the main body of Rhoades’ work, ‘Jason Rhoades, Four Roads’, at the ICA, Philadelphia, which

²⁵⁴ Interview, Schaffner.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

travelled to the UK in 2015, Schaffner conducted research into the archives of Rhoades' estate. Schaffner comments that she located a study-guide or reader for an art history class, with slides, and she identified that the reader was given to McCarthy's students, including Rhoades at UCLA, as a supplement to their studio courses because McCarthy wanted the students to be aware of the wide breadth of work being made on the West Coast and in California. Schaffner comments, 'You could use this pigeonhole study guide to tell an art history through Jason's work - it's all there as far as I am concerned and this to me was a sort of template or cue to how much Jason (Rhoades) had absorbed of another art history'.²⁵⁶

Jason Rhoades experienced a different relationship to the history of craft from that which Kelley would have encountered. Rhoades' interest in craft became formalised in his undergraduate education when he attended the California College of Crafts in 1985 and then the San Francisco Art Institute, where he would have been attuned to the wider crafts culture in the San Francisco Bay Area at that time.²⁵⁷ Within the literature on Rhoades, the impact of crafts history or his personal history of craft within his background, including his education, and importantly his childhood education, is not explored in detail.²⁵⁸ Rhoades had a particular connection to craft, starting from his childhood, when he was part of the 4H Club. Based on the West Coast of America, this was a group in which young children and teenagers could study and work on projects about agriculture in rural settings. Schaffner comments, 'His 4H notebook charts him from age six to when he goes off to college doing 4H projects. This is where he learns all of his crafts and skills. You get to build a motor, you build a rocket, you sew, you do ceramics – all of this stuff he learned how to do as a kid in 4H'.²⁵⁹ Rhoades' relationship to craft stems, then,

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Interview in Jason Rhoades Oral History Project, 2014, and corroborated by Interview, Schaffner.

²⁵⁸ See: Meyer-Hermann, 2009, pp. 58-65; *PeaRoeFoam* [exh. cat], 2016, Eva Hermann and Felix Zdenek, 2000.

²⁵⁹ Interview, Schaffner.

from his personal experience and from personal narratives of his childhood in California and historical narratives of California.

In this chapter, I will offer a reappraisal of scholars John C. Welchman's and Cary Levine's critiques of Kelley's work, building upon them by introducing ideas relating to Joshua Simon's recent conceptualisation of the unready-made in his book *NeoMaterialism*, in which he refers to Jason Rhoades.²⁶⁰ My use of the unready-made allows me to de-historicise the object and enables a discussion of the curatorial affordances of craft exhibitions. I will continue by tracing the emergence of craft-based work genealogically. This chapter then asserts the terminology of materials in the history of craft in art and defines it as a means to establish the relationship of this history of craft to the work of Kelley and Rhoades. I will then analyse the history and lineage of craft-based artists and exhibitions and conclude with an analysis of the role of the FAP, and a re-contextualisation of critiques of FAP artists alongside critiques offered by FAP artists.²⁶¹

The Craft Object is a term I made up to describe a type of object that features in the work of Kelley and Rhoades: I use their works *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid*, *Arenas*, *Sutter's Mill*, and *The Creation Myth* to describe this type of object. The Craft Object is an object that incorporates a history of craft and politics, including the hierarchy of art and craft, material qualities, processes, volume, form, shape, installation and curation, in relation to the lineage of exhibitions and the FAP, as a way to show this process, or what it encompasses. This term allows me to analyse such objects and the works in a reappraisal of art history in a certain context in order to demonstrate how this framework can enable a different understanding of the work.

²⁶⁰ Joshua Simon, *Neomaterialism* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), pp. 39-59.

²⁶¹ Critiques by Levine, Meyer Hermann, Elizabeth Sussman, Robert Storr, Ralph Rugoff will be considered in the section 'The Feminist Art Program (FAP)'.

Objects that Perform their Materiality as Commodity

Joshua Simon's book *Neomaterialism* focuses on the contemporary conditions of commodities, and offers a theoretical discussion on the nature of commodity. Simon's definition of 'neomaterialism' and of the 'unready-made' object is one that focuses on artworks which perform their materiality as commodity.²⁶² Simon proposes that the unready-made is about exhibiting commodities as a product of waste, garbage, trash or clutter, and he proposes that a 'new objecthood' is therefore forming, as a move away from previous concepts of installation art.²⁶³ According to Simon, the exhibition format enables a way of understanding how the art object functions as commodity or, as Simon says, 'a form of seeing that allows an encounter with the art object as commodity'.²⁶⁴ He writes, 'In our prefabricated world, one can claim that all things are commodities: objects, land, air, garbage, debt, action, and so forth.'²⁶⁵ Within the context of a Marxist analysis the commodity consists of use value, exchange value and surplus value.²⁶⁶ Simon writes, '[...] while the ready-made uses display to make things from the world become art, the unready-made uses display to make what is shown as art testify to its existence in the world as a commodity. The undoing of the appropriation power of the ready-made is what allows us to see these things that come from the world as something else, namely, unready-mades'.²⁶⁷

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 56.

²⁶⁴ Simon, 2013, p. 22.

²⁶⁵ Simon, 2013, p. 38.

²⁶⁶ Marx writes:

'In order to become a commodity, the product must be transferred to the other person, for whom it serves as use value, through the medium of exchange. Finally, nothing can be a value without being an object of utility if the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it; the labour does not count as labour, and therefore creates no value'. See: Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1, A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 131.

²⁶⁷ Simon, 2013, p. 41. Examples of artists Simon notes in his book include Jason Rhoades, Rashawn Griffin, Gedi Sibony, Michael E. Smith, and David Hammons. About these artists' work, Simon notes: 'All these diverse instances accumulate to an understanding of the commodity itself as material'. Simon, 2013, pp. 55-56.

In Simon's definition of the unready-made, the object can 'give an object's account of what it means to be in the world. It is an understanding of the world on the part of the commodity as a historical subject, rather than on behalf of humans'.²⁶⁸ The unready-made, then, according to Simon, is an object which may have exhausted its role as a commodity within a market system, or it may be presented purely as a commodity. These objects encompass a departure from previous notions of appropriation because their status is imbued with concepts of waste, garbage, trash or clutter, and this is the starting point for how these objects assert their materiality and perform their materiality as commodities.

For Marx, human labour is invested in the commodity and it is also ingrained with a set of social relations. Marx writes:

[...]. So far as it is a use-value, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view that by its properties it satisfies human needs, or that it first takes on these properties as the product of human labour. It is absolutely clear that, by his activity, man changes the forms of the materials of nature in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered if a table is made out of it. Nevertheless the table continues to be wood, an ordinary sensuous thing. But as soon as it emerges as a commodity, it changes into a thing which transcends sensuousness. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than if it were to begin dancing of its own free will.'²⁶⁹

Simon refers to the idea that symbols behave like materials and that brands are commodities, with a shift of labour from production to consumption, amounting to an understanding of the commodity itself as material, and the materiality of the symbol.²⁷⁰ The recent debates surrounding Thing Theory and NeoMaterialism to some extent move beyond Marxist configurations of the object, with a shift from

²⁶⁸ Simon, 2013, p. 43.

²⁶⁹ Marx, 1992, p. 163.

²⁷⁰ Simon, 2013, p. 52.

historical materialism – a Marxist theory that considers how different epochs are defined by their material basis to NeoMaterialism.²⁷¹ In Simon's conception of NeoMaterialism, every artwork is primarily a commodity. And in order to understand objects we have to contend with this proposition. Simon considers the role of the commodity and its status as waste, garbage, trash or clutter after it is purchased.

Simon's concept of the unready-made can be used to re-contextualise Kelley's *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* and *Arenas*, as the following section will explore. Kelley's *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* is a large wall-hanging which consists of objects sourced from thrift stores or garage sales, including handmade dolls, toys, blankets, pot-holders and stuffed animals, sewn together.²⁷² The wall hanging is a cluster of brightly coloured knitted dolls and stuffed animals, such as a bright blue octopus, a green crocodile and a smiling walrus. Other knitted animals and dolls feature bright yellows, bubble gum pinks and bright blues. Black and brown crochet blankets, or Afghan rugs, are the backdrop that the items are stitched onto. Brown teddy bears made out of a pattern are located throughout. The thrifted animals and dolls are sewn in several directions. The two upper corners above the piece are adorned with bundles of dried corn husks, similar to decorations found at stores during the American Thanksgiving season, suggesting table settings at family dining tables during the holidays.²⁷³

²⁷¹ Recent debates since the early 2000s include those by Bill Brown, Graham Harman, Bruno Latour and Michael Serres, but the origins go back a little further to Heidegger, and ultimately to Marx.

²⁷² *Half a Man*, *From My Institution to Yours*, and *Pay for Your Pleasure* were presented at the exhibition 'Three Projects' held by the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, May 4 to June 30, 1988. *Half a Man* was itself a project conceived of by Kelley that included a number of works such as *More Love Hours Than Can Ever be Repaid*, size 243.84 x 322.58 x 15 cm. Kelley said that *Half a Man* is concerned with craft and 'issues of gender-specific imagery and the family.' Mike Kelley, 'Three Projects: *Half a Man*, *From My Institution to Yours*, *Pay for Your Pleasure*', in Welchman and Kelley, 2004, p.14.

²⁷³ Discussed in Interview, Van Els and Interview, Welchman.



Figure 2.2: Mike Kelley, *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid*, 1987.



Figure 2.3: Mike Kelley, *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid*, 1987, detail.

Figure 2.4: Mike Kelley, *The Wages of Sin*, 1987, detail.

The Wages of Sin (Fig. 2.4, p. 114) is exhibited alongside *More Love Hours*, and is made of dripped and melted wax candles evoking an altar on a small wooden table. The candles are made of bright tones similar to those in the wall hanging.

John C. Welchman remarked that Kelley's 'post-appropriational work with craft objects offers a subtle exploration of the psychological binds of the gift'.²⁷⁴ Kelley and Welchman, in an interview in the book *Minor Histories*, discuss psychoanalytic theories about childhood experiences and children's connections to toys gifted to them, and the sense of guilt or expectation that arises out of a gift bought or made for them from their parents, citing the ideas of Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein and D.W. Winnicott in relation to Kelley's work.²⁷⁵ Kelley stated that '[...] what initially led to my interest in homemade craft items, [was that] these [were] [...] the objects already existing in popular usage that are constructed solely to be given away. Not to say that I believe that craft gifts themselves harbour utopian sentiment; all things have a price'.²⁷⁶

Kelley has said *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* was mainly concerned with notions of time, the gift, the value of owed time, labour, invisible labour and affective labour.²⁷⁷ In an interview with artist and writer Lynn Hershman, Kelley discussed how he began working with unwanted gifts or craft items as:

[...] a response to the discourse of commodity culture and commodity art that was really big in the early eighties, late seventies. And since these things were gifts, presumably, they were not designed to be sold. I found them in thrift stores. They were probably made by a family member, to give to another family member, supposedly they could operate outside of the economy or they were designed to operate outside of an economic system and so instead I thought, the kind of economy operating here is emotional economy. And so at first I naively thought that these materials could be discussed kind of or be seen in this kind of Marxist discourse but instead

²⁷⁴ Welchman, 2001, p. 171.

²⁷⁵ See: Mike Kelley, 'Three Projects: *Half a Man, From My Institution to Yours, Pay for Your Pleasure*', in Welchman and Kelley, 2004, pp. 12-20. For additional references to psychoanalytic theories such as these in Kelley's work, see also: Mike Kelley, 'Dirty Toys: Mike Kelley Interviewed', by Ralph Rugoff, in Thomas Kellein (ed.), *Mike Kelley* (Basel: Edition Cantz, 1992), p. 86.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-172.

²⁷⁷ Kelley and Meyer-Hermann, 2012.

everybody saw them as this kind of comment about feminist art or as being about kind of more psycho-sexual issues.²⁷⁸

Welchman continued, 'The piece focuses Kelley's retort to the 1980s debates on commodification and the redemptive value argued for appropriation, which sometimes saw its preliminary "taking" as the mere disguise of a "gift"'.²⁷⁹ Kelley's work was sourced from second-hand, handmade items: often soiled or dirty, having been gifted to children, they were surplus, junk or waste. Significant to note is the confrontation of stains, an accumulation from children playing with the dolls and animals that Kelley wanted to be visible in the work.²⁸⁰

Kelley was interested in ideas about a surplus economy and notions of unused time in relation to amateurism. It is important to note that although Kelley would have wanted to focus this critique of his work via Marxist commodity discourse, emotional labour and the economy of the gift, there is a place for a critique of this work within a framework of feminist craft-based work and the use value of the materials. This will be explored later in this chapter in the section on the FAP and Kelley's work.

Writing about *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid*, writer and scholar Cary Levine notes that:

The work highlights the economics of gift-giving, in which pieces of thread and fabric are invested with deep emotional content – affection, adoration, sympathy, appreciation – to be passed onto friends, family members, and acquaintances, who are then indebted to return the favour. Offering too much sentimentality for one person to take, certainly more than can ever be repaid, Kelley's heap of

²⁷⁸ Lynn Hershman and Mike Kelley, Mike Kelley Interviewed by Lynn Hershman, *American Suburbx*, February 2015, available at: <<https://www.americansuburbx.com/2015/02/the-late-mike-kelley-on-freak-culture-feminism-and-the-gender-unequal-art-world.html>> [accessed 10 June 2015].

²⁷⁹ Welchman, 2001, p. 171.

discarded craft items underscores the ubiquity of that system and the underlying social dynamics that sustain it.²⁸¹

Levine offers a Marxist interpretation of this work, underscoring the importance of the emotional labour invested in the materials and in the objects that were forsaken. Feminist artists in California were also working with craft materials, and interpretations of notions of labour during the FAP's existence and after its dismantling. Although Kelley was interested in the Marxist interpretation of his work, and was not as welcoming to the connection to feminist artists' work with craft, this chapter will continue to explore this type of work from this period and will examine why combining a Marxist critique with a framework of feminist craft-based work offers a way to re-contextualise Kelley's work.

When Levine, Welchman and Kelley refer to craft objects they are referring to the objects of craft. When I refer to The Craft Object in these works by Kelley, I am referring to the shift away from 1980s commodity discourse and the discourse on appropriation, and an engagement with a line of thinking more aligned with Simon's definition of the unready-made and Neo-Materialism. The Craft Object performs its materiality as commodity – unlike previous iterations of appropriational works. The Craft Object is involved in a wider feminist history of the use of these materials and their implications. It is this type of critique which is lacking in the mainstream published body of criticism of Kelley's and Rhoades' work. Levine, Welchman and Kelley focus on a standard Marxist critique without acknowledging that there is an intersection with a wider feminist use of these materials, in terms of form, volume and display as well as with notions of labour, time and emotional/affective labour.

²⁸¹ Levine, 2013, p. 87.



Figure 2.5: Miriam Shapiro, *Wonderland*, 1983.

In the essay 'Backlash and Appropriation', in *The Power of Feminist Art*, Mira Schor writes:

Casual sexism and ripping off feminists and artists often seemed to go hand and hand, as in the work of Mike Kelley. [...] his wall hanging of colourful afghans and toys, *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* (1987), seems derivative of Shapiro's earlier celebratory collage of lace, samplers and gaudy textiles, *Wonderland* (1983), yet Kelley's ironic and strategic use of childhood kitsch gained him a favoured place in the avant-garde while Shapiro's genuine, un-ironic embrace of kitsch as an aesthetic is consigned to the attic of modern art. But rather than acknowledge a possible debt to feminist art for his freedom to use toys and domestic textiles such as afghans as art materials and subjects, Kelley, also a CalArts graduate, is said to have jokingly termed his frieze of stuffed animals "my homage to Jackson Pollock". Thereby ensuring his place in the patrilineage.²⁸²

²⁸² Mira Schor, 'Backlash and Appropriation', in Broude and Garrard (eds.), 1994, pp. 249-251.

Schapiro also used thrifted and found items in her wall hangings: Norma E., Broude, 'Miriam Schapiro and "Femmage": Reflections on the Conflict between Decoration and Abstraction in Twentieth-Century Art', in Norma E. Broude and Mary Garrard (eds.), *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 315-329 (p.320). For writing by critics who align *More Love Hours* with Abstract Expressionism, in the sense of its large scale and in considering it as a painting or the messy knit and wax drippings as evocative of Pollock and thereby not citing feminist artists' impact, see: Rugoff, 1993, p. 171, and Sussman, 'Introduction', in Sussman et al., 1993, pp. 24-27.

I echo Schor's concerns in my overall analysis of Kelley's work, which incorporated materials that feminist artists had been working with at the time. Critics such as Levine and Welchman, and Kelley in his own words, tend to shy away from the connections between the use of materials. However, I believe it is significant to analyse these connections because it adds to the scholarship about the use of these materials and the history of their place in craft-based work, fibre-based work as well as with feminists' work in California at the time.

Kelley's *Arenas* series comprises eleven floor-based sculptures of found stuffed animals placed on or near well-used and visibly dirty or soiled handmade, crocheted or machine-made afghans and blankets on the floor. In *Arena #7*, each side of a blanket is surrounded by teddy bears and monkeys, seemingly in conversation with each other. Stuffed animals are a consistent theme in Kelley's work. Welchman comments, 'Kelley's assemblages are less about childhood per se than its mis-representation in mainstream culture'.²⁸³ Moreover, Welchman's and Levine's critiques of the *Arenas* series centre on concepts of commodity and gift exchange/ the commodification of gifted craft items.²⁸⁴ The guilt of the gift and the labour instilled in the gift are key to critiques of Kelley's work. The making process, the time and the emotional responses in the gift-giving process contribute to the guilt of the gift in relation to the concept of labour hours. These are the parallels between *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* and *Arenas*.

²⁸³ Welchman, 2011, p. 7.

²⁸⁴ See: Levine (ed.), 2011, and Welchman, 2004, and for more on what informs Welchman's ideas on the gift see: Marcel Mauss, *The Gift, the Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge, 1990), and for further elucidation on the role of the things and gifts within a Marxist framework, and the social relations and transaction of these see: Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).



Figure 2.6: Mike Kelley, *Arena #7*, 1990.



Figure 2.7: Mike Kelley, *Arenas*, 1990, installation view.

Figure 2.8: Mike Kelley, *Arena #7*, 1990, detail.

Kelley, Welchman and Levine also specifically offer critiques of *Arenas* based on Winnicott's theory of the 'transitional object', a toy or stuffed animal that assists children in their early developmental stages as they gain independence from parental figures.²⁸⁵ These objects, importantly, are often dirty or soiled, representing wear and tear, spit and drool marking the comfort children take from the objects. Dismissive of the wider influences, Welchman again refers to Jackson Pollock as a formal impact. Welchman refers to the *Arenas* series as coming from a '[...] lineage of floored production, stretching back to Jackson Pollock [...]'.²⁸⁶ The installation format of *Arenas* will be discussed later in this chapter, in relation to histories of craft exhibitions.

Jason Rhoades' works *Sutter's Mill* and *The Creation Myth* are about narratives, histories of craft and the personal relevance of craft to the narrative structures within his work. In curator Ingrid Schaffner's essay 'Jason the Mason', in the exhibition catalogue for the exhibition 'Jason Rhoades, Four Roads', she offered insight into the role of craft in his sculpture *Sutter's Mill*, which is a historic reconstruction of John A. Sutter's sawmill in California, where gold was discovered in 1848.²⁸⁷ The original mill was near Rhoades' childhood home. Rhoades' *Sutter's Mill* refers to the way in which the history of the pioneer period in California relates to notions of labour and craft.²⁸⁸ The process of building this work also incorporated performative aspects during the installation at ICA Philadelphia, in which it would be deconstructed, rebuilt and reconfigured daily. The performative aspects are indicative of labour and time; assembling, making and unmaking.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ D. M. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* [1971] (Oxford: Routledge, 1991), p. 2.

²⁸⁶ John C. Welchman, 'The Mike Kelleys,' in Welchman, Graw, and Vidler, 1999, p. 67.

²⁸⁷ Schaffner et al., 2014.

²⁸⁸ Curator Ingrid Schaffner makes a connection between Rhoades' sheds made of wood and other similar sculptures with *Sutter's Mill*, commenting that *Sutter's Mill* is the 'ghost' of *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (Cherry Makita)*, (1993), which is analysed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, 'The Suburban Object'.

²⁸⁹ *Sutter's Mill* was concerned with performative restructuring and the making aspect of the production process and this also alludes to the processes carried out at the original mill: of searching, finding, sifting through water and dirt for gold. See: Schaffner, et al., 2014, pp.72-81 and Meyer-Hermann, 2009, pp. 58-65.

Sutter's Mill is also part of a personal narrative, a personal history, with its reference to the children's book character Jason the Mason. This book features a pig who is a builder, and Rhoades' childhood nickname came from this illustration.



Figure 2.9 : Jason Rhoades, *Sutter's Mill*, 2000. For the exhibition 'Wahlverwandtschaften: Art & Appenzell', in Appenzell, Switzerland, August 15-October 31 1998.



Figure 2.10: Jason Rhoades, *Sutter's Mill*, 2000.

Figure 2.11: Jason Rhoades, *Sutter's Mill*, 2000, detail.



Figure 2.12: Jason Rhoades, *Sutter's Mill*, 2000.

Rhoades' work is very much about personal narratives and how this connects to the materiality of the object. He engages with craft in a different way to the way Kelley did, approaching it from a different history of its role in rural or suburban California. Schaffner refers to *Sutter's Mill* as 'a shrine to childhood'.²⁹⁰ *Sutter's Mill* is made of scaffolding, aluminium tubing and clamps. Two large blue plastic drums are placed at either end, away from the installation. The tubing sits on a wooden platform cut in two pieces. In the middle of the platform is a river of clothing and t-shirts. According to Meyer Herman, the stream, or river, of clothing consisted of 'knotted fabrics, rags t-shirts, around the installation were strewn protective installation equipment such as helmets, polishing or cleaning materials, and the piece was in '

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

constant production'.²⁹¹ This work also refers to Rhoades' childhood in rural California, and this childhood narrative is central to the work. Moreover, this work is about Californian pioneer narratives, childhood, making, construction and the construction of personal narratives.²⁹²

Prior to making *Sutters Mill* in 2000, Rhoades had constructed a wooden version in 1998 (Fig. 2.9, p. 125), inspired by a wooden watermill made during the Californian Gold Rush period in Northern California in the late 1840s, for the exhibition 'Wahlverwandschaften: Art & Appenzell', in Appenzell, Switzerland, curated by Harald Szeeman, August 15-October 31, 1998.²⁹³ *Sutter's Mill* had originally been part of Rhoades' 1999 exhibition 'Perfect World', and was subsequently exhibited as an independent installation in the travelling series 'Jason Rhoades, Four Roads' and at the Brant Foundation, and at other iterations of the exhibition.²⁹⁴ As part of the 'Perfect World' exhibition, *Sutters Mill* was built and reconstructed in a repetitive, continuous cycle: the exhibition had a specific area designated for polishing the metal poles. Solidifying the connection to his family childhood home was the placing of a photograph of Rhoades' family and their garden amongst pots and ceramics from the artist's home.²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ Meyer-Hermann, 2009, p. 125.

²⁹² Also see: Ken Johnson, 'Art in Review: Jason Rhoades', *New York Times*, 27 October 2000, available at: <<https://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/27/arts/art-in-review-jason-rhoades.html>> [accessed 18 May 2015]; Harry Thorne, 'Jason Rhoades, Four Roads', *Studio International*, 18 March, 2015, available at: <<https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/jason-rhoades-four-roads-review-bizarre-gleefully-vulgar>> [accessed 15 May 2015]; Meyer-Hermann and Zdenek, 2000.

²⁹³ Meyer-Hermann, 2009, pp. 123-126.

²⁹⁴ Schaffner, et al., p. 177.

²⁹⁵ Meyer-Hermann and Zdenek, 2000.



Figure 2.13: Jason Rhoades, *The Creation Myth*, 1998.



Figure 2.14 and 2.15: Jason Rhoades, *The Creation Myth*, 1998, detail.



Figure 2.16 and 2.17: Jason Rhoades, *The Creation Myth*, 1998, detail.

The Creation Myth is a floor-based sculpture that includes three sections which mimic human organs, starting from the 'head' of the sculpture to its 'rectum'.²⁹⁶ A mechanical element or contraption in the installation exhales large smoke rings during regular intervals, which Rhoades intended to represent the anus or rectum of the entire installation.²⁹⁷ The middle section is the 'digestive' area.²⁹⁸ The 'head' or 'brain' section includes thirty of the folding tables organised to form a pyramid. According to Rhoades' notes on the installation, this area also includes a section called 'constructed reality', which had wooden poles with photocopied images of source materials that was part of the artist's research for this installation, including maps of systems and images sourced from internet searches.²⁹⁹ There is a section of the installation in which cut wooden poles have been made into a pile of logs – this is referred to as the memory area, according to Rhoades' notes.³⁰⁰ The installation is made of approximately twenty-five orange Home Depot buckets, folding wood laminate tables and magazines. His use of craft evidences Rhoades' interest in the status of objects and their social relations. Schaffner comments, '[t]he thing with Jason (Rhoades') work is that the things are so *made*. The fact that there is a sewing machine in *The Creation Myth* [...] sewing the stomach'.³⁰¹

Important to *The Creation Myth* is the role of consumer products such as orange Home Depot buckets, extension cords and IKEA furniture and products, and the performative act of driving to these stores and buying items and opening boxes.³⁰² Julien Bismuth, in the essay 'The Real World of Hoists and Holes', writes that Rhoades was 'a prolific consumer when it came to his art, as can be seen by looking at the list of readymade materials for any of his large installations'.³⁰³

²⁹⁶ Schaffner et al., p. 58.

²⁹⁷ Meyer-Hermann, 2009, pp. 57-58.

²⁹⁸ Schaffner, et al., pp. 56-58.

²⁹⁹ Installation notes, in Jason Rhoades Oral History Project, 2014,

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Schaffner et al., p. 58.

³⁰² Video interview between Hans Ulrich Obrist and Rhoades, in Jason Rhoades Oral History Project, 2014.

³⁰³ Julien Bismuth, 'The Real World of Hoists and Holes', in *PeaRoeFoam*, [exh. cat.], 2016, p. 50.

Ingrid Schaffner refers to the readymade, stating: 'Rhoades understood the Duchampian urinal in relation to his use of certain buckets. Rhoades came to deem the five gallon plastic bucket as a "perfect sculptural object."' ³⁰⁴ Rhoades stated, 'it can sit around a farm [...] suburban house [...] as a tool... [...] its very much about the sculptural gesture of buying the objects and shopping and living in LA'. ³⁰⁵ As noted, Simon observes that the unready-made refers to symbols as materials, and the idea of production and consumption. Simon refers to Rhoades' work as part of a 'taxonomy of neomaterialist strategies, the new objecthood and unready-mades'. ³⁰⁶ Simon also refers to the fact that Rhoades' work incorporates store-bought materials, and included 'Ikea art and Ikea hacking strategies'. ³⁰⁷ The importance of the unready-made in an installation context lies in the way the exhibition format allows us to see these commodities in a different light alongside forms of immaterial, emotional and affective labour, rather than rendering the object as art, as it would have done with readymades. Both Kelley's and Rhoades' work can be re-contextualised with definitions of the unready-made in relation to the bought and found objects that are part of their work. They have overlapping and diverging approaches to these concepts. The orange buckets from the popular U.S. home goods store Home Depot which constitute part of Rhoades' *The Creation Myth* are not part of the circulation of commodities. The unready-made can then be defined against the readymade. This is why the unready-made is not a readymade. The Deleuzian stance on Duchamp is that the urinal doesn't yield a significant amount to the viewer, as there is no act of creation. It is the representation and re-contextualisation of an object, and we go to the gallery and reflect on social relations, or a lack thereof. ³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ Schaffner et al., p. 56.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Simon, 2013, pp. 55-56.

³⁰⁷ Ibid. Other artists Simon notes are Maayan Strauss, Andrea Zittel and Clay Ketter. See also: the exhibition 'Lebensraum - or IKEA at the End of Metaphysics', at NordNordiska Museet, Stockholm, curated by Daniel Birnbaum for Arkipelag, March 16- April 26 1998.

³⁰⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 10th edn. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

The commodity in Marxism depends on socially necessary labour time, such as working time. The Craft Object is about the differences and connections between craft and the art commodity. Readymades are exhausted in the context of the work of Mike Kelley and Jason Rhoades. Waste, garbage, trash or clutter is a commodity in certain works, for instance, or is turned into a commodity, and Simon thus extends the idea of the commodity because these things are exhausted as a commodity. Kelley is using exhausted objects. In Rhoades' work, he intends to use commodities and shifts the object so that it comes to function as an artwork in a different register.

The emphasis of the unready-made is not purely conceptual. With the ready-made, to use Duchamp's urinal as an example, you can understand it or get the joke without having to see it. Its use and exchange value are both dialectical: they are *both* of these values at the same time. Exchange value is foregrounded when selling, and when putting use in the foreground neither category is less important, but rather always present. When presented as art, it is different: as Horkheimer and Adorno write in 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', art is the ultimate commodity: we can enjoy use value and its worth. It is rare for the commodity to have both things present at once.³⁰⁹

I wanted to situate Kelley's and Rhoades' work within the context of commodity discourse and immaterial, emotional and affective labour and examine how the idea of the unready-made can help to build upon previous critiques of the artists' work. It from this context, of forms of labour, notions of time, making and the status of the commodity, that I would like to now focus on Kelley's and Rhoades' relationship to feminist art history, particularly in relation to projects in and around the CalArts area, including the wider Los Angeles area, in order to pave the way for an analysis of the way that this Neo-Materialist line of thinking intersects with the

³⁰⁹ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

political and socially-based hierarchies that are afforded to craft. I will also consider critiques of the political and social distinctions in craft.

History and Hierarchy: Craft and Art

In, *String, Felt, Thread: the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art*, Elissa Auther writes about the relationship of fibre-based work in the 1960s and 1970s in relation to the wider definition and remit of what constituted art in America.³¹⁰ She asks these questions: 'What does it mean to elevate the status of a material? Who assigns this differential status? And who polices it?'³¹¹ The question of who polices this hierarchy, and how craft is afforded its status, is a question that is at the core of the debates surrounding the relationship or the distinctions between art and craft. These questions are also important for the debates surrounding the works by Kelley and Rhoades discussed in this chapter.

As Glenn Adamson writes, 'Craft is more often conceived as a necessary "other", a useful disturbance that plays a necessarily unacknowledged role in modern art's critical apparatus'.³¹² The 'unacknowledged role' is in part due to the history of the hierarchy of craft and art, mentioned above, and specifically how this hierarchy works within the context of feminism.³¹³ The relationship of feminism to craft is explored in Adamson's *Thinking Through Craft*. In this book Adamson identifies and discusses a foundational text that studied the history of the relationship between feminism and craft. This text, Roszika Parker's *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, considers the role of feminism, class distinctions and the status of the amateur. Adamson comments on the way Parker questioned the role of feminism and the politics of amateurism, stating:

³¹⁰ Elissa Auther, *String, Felt, Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

³¹² Glenn Adamson, *Thinking through Craft* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. 139.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

[Parker] aptly characterised both the advantages and problems that feminists knowingly assigned themselves in taking up amateur craft as an artistic vocabulary [...] they acquired a ready-made alternative to art history, and gained a language of form that summoned up vast realms of women's experience. On the negative side, they found themselves confronted by the questionable notion that craft was inherently female, and by the negative aspects of that gendering.³¹⁴

Concepts of skill and labour in relation to the hierarchical classification of craft and art are not only key to the critiques of Parker and Adamson but are also central to Kelley's and Rhoades' work. While *Arenas* has different considerations, Kelley's *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* is concerned with time, forms of labour and skill. Rhoades' *Sutter's Mill* and *The Creation Myth* are explicitly about narratives, but also encompass forms of labour and skill. Kelley's recycled and re-used crafted items come from and refer to a different economy from those in Rhoades' work, as noted in the section above. However, The Craft Object of both artists' is involved in a wider discourse of craft, art and feminism.

Parker's *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* is concerned with the history of manual labour and class with regard to embroidery, in particular. Parker specifically references the emotional gestures that are inculcated in embroidery, and suggests that this 'indicated a life "unsullied" by manual labour [...] in that depending on your position or class, manual labour was or was not a part of your status and life. Embroidery held specific connotations as to who had the time to do or perform this type of craft'.³¹⁵ Echoing these concerns, the relationship between labour, class and craft is significant to both Kelley's and Rhoades' work in different ways. *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* and *Arenas* are concerned with notions of different forms of economies and labour in which objects are discarded, rebought, resold or re-gifted.³¹⁶ Making and the

³¹⁴ Adamson, 2007, p. 151.

³¹⁵ Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, 2nd edn. (London: IB Tauris & Co Ltd, 2010), p. 213.

³¹⁶ Levine, 2011, and Welchman, Graw, and Vidler, 1999.

process of unmaking and narratives of rural California are part of *Sutter's Mill* in particular.³¹⁷

Many of Jason Rhoades' installations contain narratives about a revisionist Californian history and the variations between Northern and Southern California. A key historical belief of the Californian pioneers was the idea of travelling West, adventure and gold-mining. Californian mill towns had a history of booming and failing. This is evocative of narratives within Rhoades' work.³¹⁸ Histories and narratives of the wider Los Angeles area have formed a part of his work. The divisions of the Northern and Southern parts of California and their various histories, the influence from Mexico and Central American countries, forms of hidden labour, a pioneer-seeking ethos and the social irresponsibility that makes up the history of California are key aspects of the Californian culture with which Rhoades' work is imbued.³¹⁹

The hierarchy of art and craft has been fraught with debates around the socio-political and economic relationship of women to craft.³²⁰ By 1978, a historically specific discourse about the hierarchy of art and craft had already been established, and was featured in an issue of the feminist philosophy journal *Heresies* which focused on a questioning of essentialist tendencies within feminist art.³²¹ Elissa Auther recognises a gap in 'recent scholarly reappraisals' of feminist

³¹⁷ Interview, Schaffner.

³¹⁸ Schaffner et al., 2014.

³¹⁹ See: Ibid, p. 13-36, 'Revving Up', by Ingrid Schaffner, and Jason Rhoades Oral History Project, 2014.

³²⁰ For additional information about the socio-economic relationship to craft (needlework and embroidery), women and unpaid labour see: Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London: I B Tauris, 2013); Roszika Parker and Griselda Pollock, 'Crafty Women and the Hierarchy of the Arts', in Parker and Pollock, 2013, pp.50-81; Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Aesthetics: the Big Questions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998); Melissa Mayer and Miriam Schapiro, 'Waste Not, Want Not: An Inquiry into What Women Saved and Assembled', *Heresies* 4 (Winter 1978), 67; Pennina Barnett, 'A Tribute to Roszika Parker (1945-2010)', *Textile: Journal of Cloth and Culture*, 9:2 (2011), 200-211; and the conference: 'The Subversive Stitch Revisited: The Politics of Cloth', 29-30 November 2013, V&A Museum, London.

³²¹ Auther, 2010, p. 98.

artists in the 1970s who appropriated crafts and fibre-based elements in their work and/or who were interested in addressing or subverting gender norms in relation to the hierarchy of craft and art.³²² She notes a concern about the 'perception that such work in the end reinforced the assumed natural equation between women and craft rather than dismantling it'.³²³ There is a tenuous connection between the distinction of art and craft in terms of how they are perceived, and their relation to the fine arts.

Terms

By outlining the key terminology used in craft scholarship, such as the terms 'art fabric', 'textile sculpture' and 'fibre sculpture', I am able to consider the importance of how certain craft-based work transitioned from being displayed on the wall to the floor, and how this work was more prominent in institutional settings, therefore garnering greater visibility and critique. Moreover, this shift, which is a curatorial one, expands the increasingly permeable boundaries between art and craft. This is all, as I proposed earlier, part of the history/genealogy of exhibitions and craft artists working with installations that moved from the wall to the floor and that used various types of forms and volume in their installations. The following analysis of Kelley's and Rhoades' work in relation to such a lineage of craft-based projects, certain craft-based artists and the evolution of the impact of this work on installation art, and moreover on the relationship of installation art to Kelley's and Rhoades' work, is part of the originality of my enterprise in this research. It is the particular type of craft, the specific artworks covered in this chapter and the fact that they employed materials and processes in a specific manner that is significant or telling. It is important to note in relation to their work that there were certain exhibitions that they might have seen/did see which could have laid the

³²² Ibid., p. 102.

³²³ Ibid., p. 97.

foundations for the use of these materials and the shape and form not only of the materials but also of the exhibition layout observed in their work.

As such, a consideration of the history of, and basis for, craft-based work and its relation to sculpture and curating is relevant because of the significance of the transition from wall to floor that was made at this historical juncture. A starting point for this discussion is the foundation for the terms used and the concepts of hierarchies that are a part of debates about fine art and craft. Definitions of specific terms will be useful when considering the types of materials covered in this chapter. This will make it possible for me to distinguish the types of materials and how they led to volumetric forms being exhibited and how this can be noted in the artistic tendencies of Kelley's and Rhoades' work.

In *Beyond Craft: the Art Fabric*, Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen declare that craft objects, textiles and fibre deserve to be discussed in relation to their autonomy in much the same way as art objects or works of art. Constantine and Larsen define 'art fabric' as:

[...] a construction, individually created by an artist. It may be woven on the loom or free of the loom or may be produced by knotting, knitting, crochet, or other techniques. An Art fabric is conceived and created by one artist whose personal involvements and expressive potentials are integrated with his skilful use of techniques and chosen materials.³²⁴

An additional clarification of this definition is that '[...] Art fabric exists in an almost protean state; its definition is neither rigid nor finite, but belongs to the rich and complex phenomenon that is art which goes beyond craft'.³²⁵ Constantine and Larsen are concerned with the structural and aesthetic characteristics of the art

³²⁴ Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen, *Beyond Craft: The Art Fabric* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973), p. 7.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

fabric as an art form.³²⁶ Their definitions of the art fabric revolve around the assertion that these materials are used in varying sculptural senses and the processes the artists use to make the works set it apart from traditional amateur craft status. In this context, artists are creating artworks using particular fibre materials.

It is also important to note the definition of the terms 'textile sculpture' and 'fibre sculpture'. Irene Waller, in her 1977 book *Textile Sculptures*, writes: 'It has already been noted that to some of the greatest of the three-dimensional work the word 'sculptural' is often applied, which would seem to indicate not only volume but total honesty of the artist's intent'.³²⁷ Waller then goes on to explain she is using the term 'textile sculptures' to hint at the evocative nature of the works, and to pay close attention to the concepts conveyed in the works about which she writes. Waller's book includes the work of artists Magdalena Abakanowicz, Claire Zeisler and Françoise Grossen, whose work will be analysed later in this chapter.

In the 2014 book *Fiber: Sculpture 1960 - Present*, Janelle Porter writes: 'Fiber moved from planar wall hangings to three-dimensional sculpture, from a weaving restricted in size by the loom to the monumental, gestural forms that developed off the loom'.³²⁸ Porter then questions how this developed, and what happens to the status of craft 'when fibre leaves the wall?'³²⁹ Kelley's work, in particular, will be examined in relation to the performative element of the earlier, historical work discussed in this chapter, as it transitioned from wall to floor and entered the realm of installation. This is useful and valuable because of how it sets the scene and identifies the terms and concerns. Rhoades' work will be analysed in relation to the form and scale of the history of textile sculpture. Again, it is significant that these differences in terms highlight the variations in The Craft Object, and to note that

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

³²⁷ Irene Waller, *Textile Sculptures* (New York: Taplinger Publications, 1977), p. 6.

³²⁸ Janelle Porter, *Fiber: Sculpture 1960-present* (Boston: DelMonico/Prestel; The Institute of Contemporary Art, 2014), p. 15.

³²⁹ Ibid.

Rhoades' use and particular historical engagement with craft differs from its implications in Kelley's work, a point that will continue to be raised and further explored in the following sections of this chapter.

T'ai Smith, in the 2014 essay 'Tapestry in Space: an Alternative History of Site-specificity', a contribution to *Fiber Sculpture, 1960 - Present*, identifies fibre art as specifically relating to tapestry artists.³³⁰ For this reason, I refer to the historical work in this chapter as 'fibre-based work', and I use the term 'textile sculpture' when discussing the transition of this work in relation to its floor-based display and exhibition format. My alignment with these definitions helps my analysis of this transition of wall-based to floor-based work, because I think this part of the analysis of the transition of applied arts to craft within a fine art context is central to the debates around all the work discussed in this chapter. It also serves as a way to focus on the institutional trajectory of this work and allows a discussion of how the work was exhibited and the shifts that the status of the artwork went through during this process. This also allows me to discuss installation art and how the actual installation of certain fibre-based work and textile sculpture in galleries and/or exhibition spaces during the period under discussion may have led to a slight dissolve in this hierarchy and perhaps even opened out and extended the context of the future of installation art.

Scholar Elissa Auther argues that 'Coinciding with the rise of installation has been the internationalisation of the contemporary art world and a related shift in curatorial practice that has further dismantled aesthetic hierarchies and art world boundaries previously limiting the way in which fibre could be viewed as a legitimate medium for arts'.³³¹ The analysis of fibre-based work and textile sculpture in this chapter is in line with Auther's assessment of the curatorial shifts that elevated the status of craft.

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 153.

³³¹ Constantine and Larsen, 1973, p. 172.



Figure 2.18: Claire Zeisler, *Pom Pom Yarn Ball*, 1972, detail with artist.



Figure 2.19: Françoise Grossen, *Inchworm*, 1971.

Figure 2.20: Barbara Shawcroft, *Grouping of 3 Interchangeable People*, 1967.

Lineage

There is a lineage of fibre-based works and textile sculptures (specific exhibitions, specific artworks and artists) from the West Coast and from America more broadly, which laid the foundations for the use of materials, processes and other craft-based objects to be exhibited as installation art, identifying and foregrounding them, or putting them into place. This lineage will help me consider how fibre-based work and textile sculpture was collected, fostered and exhibited in a series of specific exhibitions. In this section I will explore how fibre-based artists from the 1960s and into the 1970s (such as Claire Zeisler, Françoise Grossen, Barbara Shawcroft, Leonore Tawney, Dorian Zachai, Sheila Hicks, Alice Adams and Magdalena Abakanowicz) began experimenting with forms and the transition from the plinth to the floor.³³² The installation/exhibition of these works historically would have been at the forefront of a curatorial process which was extending the visibility of installation-based work.³³³

Historically, during the 1930s and into the 1940s, the wider area around San Francisco and towards Northern California fostered or nurtured fabric-based work, focused on the Contemporary Crafts Association and the Pond Farm Workshops.³³⁴ This is important to note because Rhoades was raised in Northern California and attended the California College of Arts and Crafts from 1985 to 1986, where he studied ceramics, painting and sculpture before transferring to the San Francisco Art Institute, where he completed a BA in Fine Arts (1986-88). He then pursued a MFA in 1993 at UCLA, Southern California, where he worked with artist and teacher Paul McCarthy.³³⁵

³³² See: Porter, 2014. and Elizabeth Bacon Eager, 'Fiber: Sculpture 1960–Present', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 8:2 (2015), 251-258; see also: Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen, *The Art Fabric: Mainstream* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985).

³³³ See: Eager, 2015, and Auther, 2010; the conference 'The Subversive Stitch Revisited: The Politics of Cloth', 29-30 November 2013, V&A Museum, London.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³³⁵ Schaffner et al., 2014.

In the early 1960s, sculptor and weaver Claire Zeisler began working with knotting and wrapping techniques to create three-dimensional, freestanding, floor-based works. Zeisler's use of various techniques that embraced the role of sculpture was influential.³³⁶ An important example of her work is the *Pom Pom Yarn Ball* (1972) (Fig. 2.18, p. 140), a multi-coloured floor sculpture.³³⁷ Zeisler worked with macramé, ropes and knotting or wrapping in order to create sculptural forms, making her work notable for its sense of volume.

In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, macramé knotting had become an international hobby, and it was afforded a very particular status of kitsch in the 1970s. Claire Zeisler and Françoise Grossen are credited with elevating macramé to the status of art. The status of craft was increasingly being elevated to enable it to be included in fine art contexts, and this impacted on the way this work was shown, curated and/or displayed.

Françoise Grossen, who was a MA student at UCLA from 1967 to 1969, was awarded the UCLA Art Council Award. Her work would have been highly visible and important to the UCLA arts community. Grossen created small macramé hangings knotted from hand-spun wools and she worked with large manila ropes re-purposed from shipyards and beaches.³³⁸ Some of the work she produced at UCLA included found objects, and her work contained unsymmetrical, unfinished or frayed ends. This was an important shift in the aesthetic consideration given to the use of macramé and crochet, because she was making anthropomorphic forms out of commercially available mass-manufactured materials.³³⁹ The concept of labour and working hours put into the ropes, stemming from their historical origins in shipyards, was evident in the work. This notion of the residual labour in the actual materials is key to Kelley's *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid* and

³³⁶ Constantine and Larsen, 1973, pp. 280-285.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 165 -166.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

to *Arenas*. The materials of labour that highlight the making process are also at the core of Rhoades' *Sutter's Mill* and *The Creation Myth*.

Barbara Shawcroft was one of the first craft-based artists to create textile sculptures by working with large three-dimensional forms. In *Grouping of 3 Interchangeable People* (1967) (Fig. 2.20, p. 141), she incorporated design and social commentary to form an installation and floor-based work of animal and human forms seated across each other.³⁴⁰ Although I do not wish to draw a strict line of comparison, similar qualities in relation to the display and exhibition format of this work can be observed in Kelley's *Arenas*. This also harks back to Zeisler's floor-based *Pom Pom Yarn Ball*, because both works were significant in highlighting the way textile sculptures were displayed.

The specific exhibitions and artists mentioned in this section were at the forefront of the way that fibre-based work and textile sculpture gained prominence in America for its experimentation with floor-based or installation-based formats. These artists were creating a lineage in their consideration of scale, volume, experimental forms and the use of various types of materials to create fibre-based works and textile sculptures. Kelley's and Rhoades' work is evocative of the materials, processes and installation arrangements, involving formal placement on the floor, as seen in the work of the artists in this section.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 60.



Figure 2.21: Lenore Tawney's Beekman Street Studio in New York, 1962.

Figure 2.22: Lenore Tawney, Installation of works, Gewebte Formen, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Zurich, 1964.



Figure 2.23: Installation view, 'Wall Hangings', 1968.

Figure 2.24: Installation view of 'Woven Forms', 1963.



Figure 2.25: Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Black Cloth*, 1970, detail as part of the exhibition 'Deliberate Entanglements', UCLA Art Galleries, 1971.

Figure 2.26: Dorian Zachai, *Procession for a Dead Love*, 1969, detail as part of the exhibition 'Deliberate Entanglements', UCLA Art Galleries, 1971.



Figure 2.27: Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Baroque Dress*, 1969.

Figure 2.28: Magdalena Abakanowicz, *BOIS - LE – DUC*, 1970.

Curatorial Strategies and Historical Exhibitions

Historically, a significant shift in the status of craft, as scholar Elissa Auther argues, can be noted in Lenore Tawney's solo exhibition at the Staten Island Museum in 1962, the first major exhibition of American fibre-based work. Tawney's work deviated noticeably from previous notions of tapestry and woven forms. This exhibition marked the beginning of a period from the 1960s onwards in which art fabric was collected privately and by public institutions.³⁴¹ Collectors and patrons at this time began acknowledging the status of fibre-based work as fine art. Moreover, this increased funding for larger-scale exhibitions devoted to fibre-based work, which further elevated its status.

For the Staten Island Museum exhibition, Tawney experimented with 'working off the loom and in three dimensions'.³⁴² She began to incorporate the idea of installations of fibre-based works occupying a three-dimensional space. This particular aspect of her work inspired collectors and curators to consider the various ways in which fibre-based work could be exhibited, which is one of the reasons why the status of this work was raised to join other art forms.³⁴³ In this way, Tawney's works moved away from other types of fibre-based work which were being exhibited at that time, and approached the definition of textile sculpture.

Tawney was later included in the exhibition 'Woven Forms' (Fig. 2.24, p. 146) at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York from March 22 to May 12, 1963, alongside artists Dorian Zachai, Claire Zeisler, Sheila Hicks and Alice Adams. These artists each created woven three-dimensional objects. The popularity of this exhibition, which travelled internationally, and the attention it garnered, highlighted the creation of large woven forms and the way they were exhibited off of the wall and situated in different parts of the gallery.

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. 45.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 276.

Significant to note, curatorially, is the 1968 exhibition 'Wall Hangings' (Fig. 2.23, p.146) that travelled around colleges, universities and museums across the United States, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Curators Mildred Constantine and Jack Lenor Larsen wrote about the 'inherent potential for volumetric form' in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁴⁴ In their curatorial projects they were concerned with exploring the way that wall-based and fibre-based works were transitioning to being created and exhibited three-dimensionally and in new forms or formats. They were at the forefront of the debates about how fibre-based works 'demand(ed) to be experienced aesthetically as Art beyond craft'.³⁴⁵ Much of the work in this exhibition was neither hung nor woven, which further helped to dissolve the hierarchy between art and craft. This helped to proclaim a certain curatorial stance with regard to ways of installing and exhibiting fibre-based works which could assert their relation to the wider field of art and separate them from the restraining notions of status.³⁴⁶

The 1972 exhibition 'Deliberate Entanglements' (Fig. 2.25 -2.26, p. 147) at UCLA was 'assembled to assess as art the recent conceptual, formal, and structural developments in fabric forms'.³⁴⁷ The exhibition travelled to seven museums and included a solo installation at the Pasadena Art Museum, California in 1971 as part of the 'Fibre as Medium' programme. The museum had a week-long colloquium focusing on the work of Magdalena Abakanowicz, who had originally trained at the Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw, in the 1950s. Abakanowicz's works were installations, or, as she called them, 'textile situations', into which the spectator is introduced and involved in various ways, including navigating around and alongside the installed work. Larsen and Constantine wrote about the navigation of the viewer in Abakanowicz's installations: 'He and the space are metamorphosed by his participation in the "object" created'.³⁴⁸ This quality is particular to both

³⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 68-76.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 78.

Kelley's floor-based works and Rhoades' installations. There is a sense of participation arising from navigation and immersion that is part of *Arenas*, *Sutter's Mill* and *The Creation Myth*. In Abakanowicz's work a shift is seen in how fibre-based work is displayed to create an immersive exhibition in which time, space and narratives are central.

These four exhibitions demonstrate the progression of fibre-based artists working with three-dimensional forms, how fibre-based work and textile sculptures were exhibited and how their work was shown off the wall and in the gallery space, as installations. The work experimented with incorporating larger scales, immersive installations and a sense of volume or large three-dimensional form. The work in these exhibitions was shown internationally and was part of a progression towards the collection of fibre-based work and textile sculpture by large institutions. There was increased funding for exhibitions, and increased international attention was paid to this work that transitioned from the wall to the floor. This curatorial format embraced and moved towards installation art. I argue that *The Craft Object* in Kelley's and Rhoades' work is influenced by this progression and the trajectory of these exhibitions.



Figure 2.29: Cover of the 'Womanhouse' exhibition catalogue, 1972, pictured from left: Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro.



Figure 2.30: Faith Wilding, *Crocheted Environment (Womb Room)*, 1972.

The Feminist Art Program (FAP)

The historical significance and importance of the nationally recognised Feminist Art Program (FAP) at CalArts formed a part of the wider artistic milieu of Los Angeles. Even if Kelley and Rhoades did not see specific shows in person, work and exhibitions by FAP artists were shown in and around the Los Angeles area. The associated projects of the FAP around the Los Angeles area were varied and wide-reaching. These projects around LA, and to a degree in the CalArts environment, would have been part of the fabric of the institution and the wider arts culture in California.

Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, both faculty members and artists at CalArts, co-founded the CalArts Feminist Art Program (FAP) in 1971.³⁴⁹ The FAP included seminars, workshops, exhibitions, talks and group critiques. As I noted earlier, in its first year twenty-five women artists participated in the FAP.³⁵⁰ The FAP was responsible for introducing feminist theory, feminist art and feminist art history and criticism to CalArts.³⁵¹

³⁴⁹ In 1970 Judy Chicago was teaching as a faculty member at Fresno State College, where she implemented studio critiques, workshops, discussion groups, and research because she wanted to create a programme for women artists. The following year, in 1971, she relocated to CalArts where faculty member Miriam Schapiro joined her as co-founder of the CalArts FAP. For additional information about the FAP and adjacent projects see: Miriam Schapiro, 'The Education of Women as Artists: Project Womanhouse', *Art Journal* 31: 3 (Spring 1972), 268-70; Faith Wilding, *By Our Own Hands: The Women Artists Movement Southern California 1970-1976* (Santa Monica, CA: Double X, 1977), pp.10-11; Faith Wilding, 'Gestations in a Studio of Our Own: The Feminist Art Program in Fresno, California, 1970- 71', in *A Studio of Their Own: The Legacy of the Fresno Feminist Experiment* (Fresno, CA: The Press at the California State University, 2009), pp. 98 – 99; Laura Meyer and Faith Wilding, 'Collaboration and Conflict in the Fresno Feminist Art Program: An Experiment in Feminist Pedagogy', in Jill Fields (ed.), *Entering the Picture: Judy Chicago, the Fresno Feminist Art Program and the Collective Vision of Women Artists* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 45-63.

³⁵⁰ Broude and Garrard (eds.), 1994.

³⁵¹ Wilding, p. 39.

Even though there were a number of similar projects and programmes being formed in the area, the FAP ended formally when its co-founders, Chicago and Shapiro, left CalArts, in 1973 and 1975 respectively.³⁵²

In the essay 'The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and Cal arts, 1970-75' in *The Power of Feminist Art*, artist Faith Wilding comments: 'The 1981, 10th anniversary show of alumni included only two women (neither of them members of the program) out of sixteen artists exhibited, and there was no sign of any of the ground-breaking feminist activity of its early history'.³⁵³ The 1987-1998 exhibition and catalogue *CalArts: Skeptical Belief(s)* at the Renaissance Society in Chicago, Illinois did not include significant projects from the history of the FAP, further echoing a sense of exclusion.³⁵⁴

My archival research indicates that there does seem to have been a growing and continuing interest in the FAP. Evidence in the CalArts FAP archives shows there have been panel discussions and projects about the FAP within the CalArts campus, specifically focusing on student or faculty initiatives and bringing to light, analysing and re-contextualising the work of FAP artists.³⁵⁵ For example, *The F Word* symposium at CalArts, co-sponsored by the School of Critical Studies, took place from September 28 to October 3, 1998. It consisted of a week-long series of talks, exhibitions and reading groups. *The F Word* exhibition was a group show by female artists influenced by the FAP and the Women's Design Programme alumnae. The symposium considered contemporary feminisms and the legacy of

³⁵² Broude and Garrard (eds.), 1994.

³⁵³ Faith Wilding, 'The Feminist Art Programs at Fresno and CalArts, 1970-75', in Broude and Garrard (eds.), 1994, p. 47.

³⁵⁴ Susanne Ghez and Catherine Lord, *CalArts Skeptical Belief(s)*. Newport Beach, Calif: Newport Harbor Art Museum, University of Chicago, (Chicago, IL: Renaissance Society, 1988).

³⁵⁵ CalArts, 'The CalArts Program that Transformed Feminist Art, 2007, CalArts Publications folder September Fall 2007; California Institute of the Arts, California Institute of the Arts Feminist Art Materials Collection (1971-2007), Series 2-3 Box 1:11-1:22 and Box 2:1- Box 3:4; Interview, Lawson.

the Los Angeles feminist art movement.³⁵⁶ Through the archive it is possible to see that there was continuing engagement with, and interest in, the FAP. The September (Fall) 2007 issue of *CalArts*, a publication for current students and alumni, referred to student exhibitions citing FAP as an influence and projects/workshops or exhibitions about the FAP that took place in 2007.³⁵⁷ The public programme and exhibition series 'Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A., 1945–1980', produced by the Getty Foundation and Getty Research Institute, was hosted at arts institutions across the city from October 2011 to April 2012 and included information about the impact and history of the FAP and specifically about the *Womanhouse* project.³⁵⁸

The artists and teachers associated with the FAP were and are nationally recognised. Moreover, CalArts intended the programme to remain active. The many strands of research, performance and art production at CalArts influenced the FAP, and the wider CalArts community was in turn influenced by the FAP projects, although this later influence was not often acknowledged.³⁵⁹ Highly successful in securing broad public visibility nationally for feminist art was *Womanhouse* (1972),³⁶⁰ a collaborative art environment. Artist and writer Mira Schor notes, in reference to a previous iteration of the FAP at Fresno State College, that at CalArts 'We were now exposed to a national audience, and we could see how our work related to a social and art world context'.³⁶¹ Another significant moment, which garnered wide national attention, was the 1971 special issue of *Everywoman* magazine and the March 2, 1972 special issue of *Time* magazine, with

³⁵⁶ California Institute of the Arts, California Institute of the Arts Feminist Art Materials Collection (1971-2007), Series 2-3 Box 1:11-1:22 and Box 2:1- Box 3:4.

³⁵⁷ California Institute of the Arts, California Institute of the Arts Feminist Art Materials Collection (1971-2007), CalArts Publications folder, September Fall 2007, CalArts, 'The CalArts Program that Transformed Feminist Art, 2007.

³⁵⁸ Rebecca Peabody, Andrew Perchuck and Glenn Phillips, *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011). See also: *Pacific Standard Time*, available at: <<http://pacificstandardtime.org/past/artinla/index.html>> [accessed 10 December 2013].

³⁵⁹ Broude and Garrard (eds.), 1994, p. 39.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

the title 'The American Woman', which discussed *Womanhouse* in detail, bringing this project to a very wide-ranging national audience.³⁶²

In the CalArts FAP archive, a memorandum from September 17, 1974 concerning a 'Proposal for the Future of the School of Art', outlines a merger of the School of Art and the School of Design and states that: 'By including the high arts and the applied arts as well as the crafts in one school' they could achieve a more structured programme at CalArts. The 'high arts' were defined as: 'Painting and Drawing, Sculpture, Environments and Performance pieces, Conceptual Art, Feminist Art Program and Graphics'. The 'applied arts' were defined as 'Graphic Design, Illustration, Product Design, Photography, and Crafts: Ceramics, Metal (jewellery), Fabrics (weaving, fabric design, etc.)'.³⁶³ Included in the pages of the memorandum on page 2, Paul Brach, CalArts Dean at the time, under point C, Feminist Art Program, noted that, 'Mimi (Schapiro) should be replaced by a woman who can continue some version of the program. It has brought us considerable national attention. In fact, if possible, there should be more than one woman on the faculty'. To that end, the Deans at CalArts formally requested that the programme should continue. They also acknowledged its impact nationally: national magazines covered the FAP and CalArts. Schor, artist and FAP member, notes that the FAP received national attention and was 'the subject of excitement and envy and curiosity at CalArts. Even students, male and female, who were hostile to the program could not ignore its existence or remain unchallenged by its aims'.³⁶⁴ From the internal memo and from the archival materials documenting the reports on the FAP by many national magazines, it can be confirmed that the programme was successful and the Deans formally noted that they wanted the programme to continue in a new iteration. From the evidence of its success, we

³⁶² Ibid., p. 38. See also: *Time*, March 20, 1972 (New Woman), *Iconographic*, 6 (1973), *Everywoman*, March 2, 1971, Feminist Art Materials, CalArts Publications, Box B3 -FR19 Non CalArts Publications.

³⁶³ California Institute of the Arts, California Institute of the Arts Feminist Art Materials Collection (1971-2007), Series 1, Box 1:2.

³⁶⁴ Schor, 1994, p. 249.

can also surmise that many people would have had exposure or access to or knowledge of the FAP, its related artists and its exhibitions and projects in the wider Los Angeles area and within the CalArts community.

Archival research folders in the CalArts FAP archives provide catalogues and exhibition guides from the many projects around CalArts and Los Angeles. It is significant to note that around this time feminist art-based workshops or projects were fostered in the wider Los Angeles area. These include the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW) in 1973; the Woman's Building in Los Angeles in the same year, and the Feminist Art Festival in 1974.³⁶⁵ Significant to note is that the archives of FAP also include documentation in the form of photographs and issues of national magazines which reported on Faith Wilding's crocheted environments. Wilding was primarily trained in weaving, as well as in other fibre arts. In *Thinking Through Craft* Glenn Adamson remarks on the similarities between Wilding's crocheted environments and Magdalena Abakanowicz's fibre environments (or textile sculptures), which were shown in museums around the Los Angeles area in 1971 and 1972. Wilding recalls visiting Abakanowicz's exhibition in Pasadena, where the former lived at the time.³⁶⁶ A specific connection can therefore be made between the role of certain fibre-based artists such as Abakanowicz and the work of artists from the FAP who would have exhibited work in and around the Los Angeles area and CalArts. A milieu was forming.

It is useful to consider the context in which Abakanowicz, Wilding and other fibre-based artists created work, because I believe this supports the possibility of a nuanced relationship between a particular group of fibre arts and textile sculpture exhibitions and associated fibre/textile artists and the work of Mike Kelley and Jason Rhoades. The relationship that I am suggesting here is that the artists in the FAP produced a variety of projects, providing both local and national visibility for

³⁶⁵ California Institute of the Arts, California Institute of the Arts Feminist Art Materials Collection (1971-2007), Series 2-3 Box 1:11-1:22 and Box 2:1- Box 3:4.

³⁶⁶ Adamson, 2007, pp. 154-155.

their work. They were in part influenced by other earlier fibre-based artists who exhibited work during the 1960s and 1970s, such as Abakanowicz. The projects at CalArts and from satellite spaces around Los Angeles became a part of the fabric of the Los Angeles art scene. Stemming from this lineage, I notice a use of materials coalescing. There is also a specific transition involving work being hung from the wall and then placed on the floor and into the gallery space, with experiments in volume, form and shape. This started with the exhibitions discussed here in the section titled 'Curatorial Strategies and Historical Exhibitions'. I see a continuity in the use of materials, however implicit or explicit it may be, between the historical, earlier work and that of the FAP and the later work of Kelley and Rhoades.

As noted earlier in this chapter, in interview with Eva Meyer-Herman, Kelley did not fully acknowledge the impact of the FAP on his work. In the same interview on the work made in the Women's Building, Kelley comments:

[...] many of the works produced in that context were by-products of consciousness-raising discussions related to prescribed material usage in traditional decorating, etc. Some of my works of this period are very related to this mind-set, the Birdhouse sculptures, for example. These works were made specifically to comment on my class status and on clichés of maleness. Building a birdhouse would be a typical masculine pastime in the suburb in which I grew up but was hardly the norm at CalArts. But these were not made as comments on feminist practice.³⁶⁷

Kelley has been clear that his artwork is concerned with the subversion of gender, and that his particular use of craft was neither influenced by nor informed by the work of feminist artists in and around CalArts at the time; however, there is an overlooked history of how fibre-based artists, and artists who created textile sculptures, used forms, volume and installation techniques, which arguably is aligned with the way Kelley was producing his work. Moreover, feminist artists

³⁶⁷ Kelley and Meyer-Hermann, 2012, p. 369.

connected to CalArts or wider feminist art circles in and around Los Angeles at the time worked with materials such as various knitted items and toys in a way that would have no doubt impacted on Kelley.

Kelley's work has been critiqued by Schor in terms of the way the artist used macramé, crochet, knitting, sewing, and needlepoint in his work without acknowledging the wider role of feminist artists and practices at the time.³⁶⁸

Significant to note is that both Mira Schor and Miriam Schapiro, artists from the CalArts FAP, were working with various fabrics, clothing and appliqué in the *Womanhouse* project and installation. FAP artist Faith Wilding, in the essay 'Monstrous Domesticity', writes of Kelley's craft works as a form of irony, and 'a mere reversal of gender signifiers', and 'without acknowledgment of its sources'.³⁶⁹ Wilding also commented on the role of craft in feminist work in the 1970s saying, 'much of it was highly critical of the institution of the family, and of the restriction of women to the domestic sphere – as well as questioning the division of labor, and the conditions of work itself'.³⁷⁰

There seems to be an aversion to acknowledging these histories in connection with Kelley's work by critics or scholars who have focused on his work, such as John C. Welchman, Kelley in his own words, Elizabeth Sussman, Robert Storr, Ralph Rugoff, and Cary Levine. Welchman, in the essay 'The Mike Kelleys', in *Mike Kelley*, and in Kelley's book *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*, as well as Sussman, in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue *Mike Kelley: Catholic Tastes*, write about or refer to similar influences to Kelley's work.³⁷¹ They position Kelley's work in relation to the history of the Vienna Actionists, abstract expressionism and punk

³⁶⁸ Schor, 1994, pp. 249-263.

³⁶⁹ Faith Wilding, 'Monstrous Domesticity' in Susan Bee and Mira Schor (eds.), *M/E/A/N/I/N/G: An Anthology of Artists' Writings, Theory and Criticism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 88, 93-94.

³⁷⁰ Wilding, 2000, p. 93.

³⁷¹ Welchman, 'The Mike Kelleys', in Welchman, Graw and Vidler, 1999, pp. 42-47; Welchman, ed., 2003, p 132 and Elizabeth Sussman, 'Introduction', in Sussman, 1993, pp. 6-55.

music, and they refer to the influence of conceptual practices and Kaprow's teaching at CalArts.³⁷² The impact of the FAP was not referred to, and any attempt at a feminist interpretation of his work was minimised or dismissed by these authors. Welchman's interviews with Kelley, in which they discuss the role of gender in the artist's work, are transcribed in *Foul Perfection: Essays and Criticism*. Welchman and Kelley refer to Kelley's interest in 'artistic gender-bending' and in the subversion of gender and 'male gender stereotypes' more broadly; however, they do not explore the impact of feminisms.³⁷³ Ralph Rugoff's essay in *Catholic Tastes*, 'Mike Kelley/2 and the Power of the Pathetic' and the 1990 exhibition 'Just Pathetic' that he curated at Rosamund Felson Gallery refer to the term 'pathetic masculinity', suggesting and defining it as an aesthetic in Kelley's work, as a subversion of masculinity which incorporates notions of failure, sadness, aloofness, detachment and weakness into the work.³⁷⁴

Feminism is referenced by these critics and writers specifically or only within the context of essentialism, which is utilised as a way to dismiss the impact of feminism on Kelley's work. For example, Sussman's brief reference to feminism in *Mike Kelley: Catholic Tastes* is: '[...] 'feminist art seemed to adhere to the same essentialist utopianism as male modernism'.³⁷⁵ Kelley himself similarly commented, in an interview with Meyer-Herman, about a gallery in Michigan (the state in which where he was born and grew up before he moved to California), 'The work shown

³⁷² For additional information on the impact of Kaprow at CalArts, see: Vivien Green Fryd, 'Suzanne Lacy's Three Weeks in May: Feminist Activist Performance Art as "Expanded Public Pedagogy"' *NWSA Journal* 19: 1 (Spring 2007), 23-38 and Suzanne Lacy, interview with Fiona Connor, available at: <<https://soundcloud.com/fiona-connor/suzanne-lacy-on-the-feminist>> [accessed 16 Nov. 2017].

³⁷³ John C. Welchman, ed., 2003, pp. 10, 46, 53, 74, 32, 121, 125, 131, 132.

³⁷⁴ Rugoff, in Sussman, 1993, p. 172; The exhibition also featured the work of Chris Burden, Jessica Diamond, David Hammons, Georg Herold, Mike Kelley, John Miller, Cady Noland, Raymond Pettibon, Jeffrey Vallance, William Wegman, and Erwin Wurm. See: Ralph Rugoff, *Just Pathetic* (Los Angeles, CA: Rosamund Felson Gallery, 1990). Similarly, Eileen Myles in the book *Afterglow: A Dog Memoir* (London: Grove Press, 2018) also refers to Kelley and his work such as *More Love Hours* and *Arenas* as part of the pathetic masculinity aesthetic in the 1980s and 1990s.

³⁷⁵ Sussman, "Introduction," in Sussman, 1993, p. 27.

at the gallery [...] was primarily crafts-oriented and, in that sense, adopted a kind of essentialist position'.³⁷⁶ In an interview with the critic Robert Storr, Kelley commented without further explanation or discussion about feminist practices in Los Angeles, stating that the city was, '[...] one of the main centers of feminism and also one of the last holdouts of a huge movement of essentialist feminists, especially in the performance-art world. I was dealing with these people all the time'.³⁷⁷ These critiques and references are dismissive of the role and impact of feminist practices in Kelley's work.

Cary Levine's critiques of Kelley's work focus on gender and the way in which feminist artists such as Schor and Wilding missed, he argued, the complexity of Kelley's work in embracing feminist art history. Schor and Wilding were members of the CalArts FAP and were well-known artists working on various projects around the Los Angeles area from the 1960s to the 1980s. Writing about Schor's and Wilding's criticism, Cary Levine remarks:

[...] these criticisms overlook the exaggerated, grotesque nature of Kelley's manipulations, the fact that his work actually characterises the male artist who ordinarily co-opts femininity with impunity. *More Love Hours* was directed less at feminism per se than at high-art ideals, and the myths of masculine genius that both enable and are enabled by them.³⁷⁸

There is a disconnect between the way Kelley asserts that his artwork is not connected to the work of a wider group of feminist artists at the time and the assertion by him and by critics like Levine, who note that Kelley's artwork is an attack on gender roles and masculinity. Levine and Kelley fail to acknowledge the impact of the lineage, histories, materials, techniques and processes that were a part of the wider feminist art movement. This expanded art-historical framework

³⁷⁶ Kelley and Meyer-Hermann, 'Interview with Mike Kelley', by Eva Meyer-Hermann, in Goldstein, Meyer-Hermann and Mark, 2013, p. 368.

³⁷⁷ Robert Storr, 'An Interview with Mike Kelley', *Art in America* (June 1994), 90.

³⁷⁸ Levine, 2013, p. 88.

allows me to open out the trajectory and importance of certain installation techniques and certain types of artwork being produced during this period.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines and examines the political, social, and historical aspects of craft in the work of Kelley and Rhoades. The trope of The Craft Object, in the work of Kelley and Rhoades, is in part about the materiality of the knitted objects, handmade or store-bought stuffed animals, Afghan rugs and other objects of crafted materials found in thrift stores. The Craft Object also addresses the history of craft and fine art, stemming from a history and lineage of women who worked with certain materials and processes. Crafting is about the hours, the time, and the labour involved in a piece of work. It is also about the materials used and the narratives woven into the objects. The Craft Object, then, sits in a particular history, beginning with Kelley's and Rhoades' projects ranging from 1987 to 2000. Through archival research, interviews with curators, and research into the lineage of craft and art, I have been able to progress the debates surrounding the CalArts FAP and Kelley's work in particular. I have been able to add to the growing discourse on Rhoades' work, incorporating the strands of his personal narratives into the history of craft in his work. Moreover, I am making a connection to how craft, or, as I term it, fibre-based work or textile sculpture have been historically exhibited in the often porous boundaries of art and craft, which paved the way for this type of work to approach the realm of installation art.

I have added to the debates initiated by Simon, Levine and Welchman by extending the idea of what the unready-made is within Kelley's and Rhoades' work, re-contextualising the critical role of feminist artists' work in Kelley's practice and how notions of labour and commodity discourse function in both Kelley's and Rhoades' work. Levine and Welchman argue that Kelley's work is not rooted in craft; however, I have shown that there is in fact a connection to certain histories of

craft. Mira Schor and Faith Wilding acknowledge Kelley's connections to craft, and I have nuanced and deepened their analysis with evidence. Welchman and Levine focus on commodity and labour in Kelley's work at the expense of a consideration of materials. Feminist writers referenced in this chapter focus more on readymade materiality and craft. Simon's 'unready-mades' perform their materiality, therefore the notion of the unready-made allows materiality to be considered, alongside political critiques of commodity and labour, within the same model. Both Rhoades' and Kelley's work is in part concerned with notions of immaterial labour; it is not the labour power of industrialisation. Production and consumption is part of the discourse around commodities, labour and the gift economy.

Levine and Welchman both rightly acknowledge the role of commodity and forms of labour in Kelley's work. In relation to writing on the role of the FAP I think the histories of the FAP and associated projects, the milieu of the time, and the earlier historical lineage of the formal and curatorial considerations of fibre-based exhibitions is absent from critiques of Kelley's work. The critique of gender and re-claiming craft I think can be re-contextualised, given the history of the exhibitions and the FAP and its projects.

In this chapter, Rhoades' work was considered for its personal narratives and the relationship of craft to rural California. The milieu of Los Angeles at the time, including his interest in *High Performance* magazine, would have impacted on Rhoades's work. For Rhoades, the impact of California craft and the West Coast craft environment, the role of *High Performance* and the absorption of another art history is crucial to understanding *The Craft Object*.

The Craft Object is externalised in Kelley and Rhoades' work via personal narratives, histories of craft, the role of feminist artists' work and a lineage of artists who were working with fibre-based work and textile sculptures. *The Craft Object* considers the different narratives, histories, methods and feminised implications of Kelley's and Rhoades' appropriation or use of craft. The unready-made as a concept

can enable a different conception and add another layer of understanding of what type of object this is.

Through this lineage and specific exhibitions that took place in the period, we can see that particular fibre-based work and textile sculptures were shown both internationally and nationally. This work was increasingly fostered by institutions and curators. It was also important for its installation format, moving from the wall to the floor and into the exhibition space, displaying volumetric forms and heightening a sense of navigation. The exhibitions examined in this chapter are important to consider in relation to the way Kelley and Rhoades exhibited *The Craft Object* but also the way they impacted on installation art, and deserve to be thought of in relation to how form, volume, navigation and space were integral to the progression of installation art. Developing from the history of CalArts feminist performances and artists in this chapter, in Chapter 3 I will analyse and define *The Gloopy Object* and how this concept relates to the body, to performance and to the materiality of performance.

Chapter 3

The Gloopy Object

Thing 1

Hot Dog

uniform mass-produced hot dogs, mustard, ketchup, hot dog buns, white bread, bandages, body, stuffing, sticky, vomiting, over- abundance, forcing, aggressive, messy, wrapped, viscous, sloppy, intimate, naked, violent, stuffed

Thing 2

Bossy Burger

TV demonstration, rubber masks, bottles, condiments, ketchup, mayonnaise, milk, rolling pins, table cloth, table, quantities of food, fast, aggressive, over- abundance, over-consumption, messy, not contained, profusion, Tupperware, rubber gloves, costume, chef hat, chef jacket, white clothing, red apron, more ketchup, meal, dinner time, supper, bottles

Thing 3

PeaRoeFoam

foam, beads, pink, green white boxes, soap, empty pools, assembly lines, production, making, glue, gluey, mushy, contained, boxed, posters, photographs, small Styrofoam beads, a mass accruing, congealed, crunch contained, piles, bundles, buckets, cd's, metal tubing, clamps, branding, branded boxes, shrink wrap, industrial process, organic, inorganic, karaoke

Introduction

In David Cronenberg's 1983 film *Videodrome* (Fig. 3.1-3.2, p.168), scenes of guts, intestines and orifices were a starting point or metaphor for the object being externalised out of a screen (specifically in the film, a television screen) and into a physical space. In the film, male protagonist Max Renn develops an abdominal orifice – an opening in his stomach, into which pulsating fleshy videotapes are inserted. The film more broadly questions the societal symbolism and impact of the technological representation of television. The television in *Videodrome* is recoded as an object that induces and incites pain and suffering, as opposed to being a symbol of leisure time. Renn, in a series of scenes, begins increasingly to have auditory hallucinations followed by increasing visual hallucinations. In one particular hallucination, Renn witnesses a videotape that begins to move and pulsate.

Similarly, during another hallucination Renn's television set begins to move, ripple and pulsate, the television set reacting to Renn's touch. As Renn touches the screen, it becomes gradually convex, thereby protruding into the room, and Renn attempts to insert his head inside the television. Prophetic in relation to the current era of 'fake news' and 'alternative facts', *Videodrome* critiques the cycle and absorption of messages from unsubstantiated sources, the problematics of unverified independent sources of truth and the role of television as a form of entertainment. The process of the externalisation of the television screen into the room in the film was an image I had in my mind when I was viewing the works this PhD is concerned with. Various scene of guts or intestines from *Videodrome* protruding out of the screen was a starting point for my approach to framing and defining what The Gloopy Object is in the work of Paul McCarthy and Jason Rhoades.

When I use the term The Gloopy Object, one aspect of it that I am referring to is the use of various liquids and types of wetness, especially of food-based items such as ketchup, mayonnaise, loose meat products, viscous liquids and bodily fluids, that constitute the following performances, video pieces or installations: *Hot Dog* (1974) (Fig. 3.3-3.4, pp.187-188) and *Bossy Burger* (1991) (Fig. 3.5-3.9, pp.193-195) by Paul McCarthy and *PeaRoeFoam* (2002) (Fig. 3.10-3.20, pp. 199-207) by Jason Rhoades. Starting points for this chapter are an examination of abjection and of what constitutes a context of hyperabjection, stemming from Timothy Morton's definition of a *hyperobject*, as a way to think about and define the role of The Gloopy Object.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁹ See also: Doane, 2015.



Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2: David Cronenberg, *Videodrome*, 1983.

Timothy Morton, in his book *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, defines hyperobjects as those 'which adhere to any other object they touch, no matter how hard an object tries to resist'.³⁸⁰ According to Morton, the more an object tries to resist a hyperobject, the more glued to the hyperobject it becomes.³⁸¹ Morton defined this type of gluing as viscous and his ideas of viscosity and stickiness are influenced by Feminist New Materialist concepts, specifically by Nancy Tuana's concept of 'viscous porosity'.³⁸² Morton's book and his adaptation of the framework or metaphor for viscosity is indebted to Tuana's writing. I would extend this line of thinking to also incorporate Stacy Alaimo's concept of 'trans-corporeality'.³⁸³ The Gloopy Object also uses the idea of viscosity or gloopiness as a metaphor to support the analysis of the materiality of the works studied in this chapter. Towards the end of this chapter, in the section titled 'Feminist New Materialisms', I will return to and explore Tuana's and Alaimo's concepts of viscosity and stickiness, alongside other Feminist New Materialist thinking. In this chapter, I will begin by exploring theories of the abject as previously formulated and then generate the idea of The Gloopy Object; this then allows me to characterise Feminist New Materialist thinking as part of a climate in which The Gloopy Object is conceived in order to analyse the conditions by which it becomes possible to begin articulating this as discourse.

The Gloopy Object also considers the materiality of the performance in the work of Paul McCarthy and Jason Rhoades. The Gloopy Object has a connection between the material and the relationship of performance to the body. This chapter will explore the implications of the strategies and materiality of feminist performance in Los Angeles and the impact this had on the work of McCarthy and Rhoades.

³⁸⁰ Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

³⁸¹ Timothy Morton, 'Hyperobjects are Viscous', *Ecology without Nature*, October 2010, available at: <<http://ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.com/2010/10/hyperobjects-are-viscous>> [accessed 19 August 2014].

³⁸² Tuana, 2008.

³⁸³ See: Alaimo and Hekman (eds.), 2008.

This chapter offers a new perspective on the relationship of feminist Los Angeles-based performance artists to the work of McCarthy and Rhoades, and more broadly to the historical role of Los Angeles performance art. This chapter will then offer a re-contextualisation of two historical exhibitions, 'Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949 – 1979' (Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Los Angeles) and 'Performance Anxiety', April 17 – July 6 1997 (Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Chicago). These exhibitions outlined the role of performance and its relationship to the viewer. They also explored the role of viewers and performance in the medium of installation art. The re-contextualisation of the exhibitions situate the theoretical underpinnings of the work of McCarthy and Rhoades in the context of Los Angeles-based performance art.

As part of the originality of my enterprise, I will consider and expand on how the hyperobject is constituted by the abject object and provides the ground from which to offer a definition of the 'hyperabject'. With *The Gloopy Object* I am interested in how to consider the role of a hyper-abjection-based mode of artistic practice in McCarthy's and Rhoades' work. I will continue by elaborating on how a possible hyper-abjection-based mode of artistic production could be defined. Alongside the re-contextualisations of the historical exhibitions analysed in this chapter, I will analyse how a figuring of *The Gloopy Object* prepares the ground for conceiving of a radical Feminist New Materialist thinking.

Abject, Hyperobject, Hyperabject

In the body of art writing and criticism that focuses on the work of Kelley and McCarthy, their work has often been cited as following an abjection-based mode of production.³⁸⁴

³⁸⁴ See: Welchman, ed. 2003; Hal Foster, 'Obscene, Abject, Traumatic', *October* 78 (Autumn 1996), 107–124; Levine, 2013; Welchman and Kelley, 2004; Curtis, 2013, 224–226; Donald Kuspit, 'In the Anal Universe; the Para-Art of Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy', *New Art Examiner* 27:2 (October 1999), 24–27 (p. 26) ; Michael Cohen, 'Leap into the Void: Abjection and Survival in the Work of Paul McCarthy', *Flash Art* 26:170 (May/June 1993),

Critiqued as an ontological project, 'Formless: a User's Guide', curated by Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois, was exhibited at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris in 1996.³⁸⁵ The catalogue accompanying the exhibition included a discussion of the work of Mike Kelley.³⁸⁶ The final chapter of *Formless* references Kelley's drawings and sculptural works (more so than his performances) as an example of an abjection-based mode of artistic practice.³⁸⁷ *Formless* focuses on Kelley's use of bodily waste, stains, dirt, excrement, and a psychological connection to stuffed toy animals, as well as the role of psychoanalysis, in his work.³⁸⁸ Krauss notes that Kelley's work has the tendency to '[...] cast scatology in the familiar terms of "abject art", as gender (the hand-made toy a manifestation of woman's work) and degradation (the body's substances as filth) are joined in what is seen as an art of failure, an aesthetic of the low'.³⁸⁹ Kelley has argued that the critical term 'low' is a

60-62 (p.62); Jennie Klein, 'Paul McCarthy: Rites of Masculinity', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 23:2 (2001), 10-17; Thomas McEvilley, 'Art in the Dark', *Artforum* (Summer 1983), 62-71 (p. 65); Hal Foster, *Return of the Real: Art and Theory at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 157,159. Emphasis in original. Robert Rand Shane, 'Commodity and Abjection: a Psycho-social Investigation of Pop Culture Imagery in the Artwork of Paul McCarthy' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Stony Brook University, New York, 2009); Michael Duncan, *L.A. RAW: Abject Expressionism in Los Angeles 1945-1980, from Rico Lebrun to Paul McCarthy* (Santa Monica, CA: Foggy Notion Books, 2012), pp. 11-21; Jack Ben-Levi, Craig Houser, Leslie C. Jones, Simon Taylor, 'Introduction', in Jane Philbrick (ed.) *Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art: Selections from the Permanent Collection* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1993), pp. 7-15.

³⁸⁵ The roundtable discussion between Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Hal Foster, Benjamin Buchloh, Denis Hollier and Helen Molesworth, focused on the idea of formless and abjection as conflated concepts: 'The Politics of the Signifier II: A Conversation on the "Informe" and the Abject', *October* 67 (Winter 1994), 3-21. Examples of contemporary exhibitions which considered notions of abjection affirming the popularity of abjection as a topic include: 'Abject Art: Repulsion and Desire in American Art' at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1993, 'Rites of Passage: Art for the End of a Century', at the Tate Gallery, London, 1995; and 'L'informe: Mode d'emploi (Formless: A User's Guide)' at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1996.

³⁸⁶ *Formless: a User's Guide* included four sections of essays arranged alphabetically and which were inspired by Bataille. They included 'Base Materialism', 'Horizontalité', 'Pulse' and 'Entropy'. See: Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois, *Formless: a User's Guide* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; New York: Zone Books, 1997).

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁸ Rosalind Krauss, 'Informe without Conclusion', *October*, 78 (Autumn, 1996), 89-105.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

comment on the value of the work more than on the production, and he therefore relies on, or prefers to use, the word 'repression'.³⁹⁰

Influential to both Krauss and Bois, and to Julia Kristeva, who expanded on the notion of abjection in *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, is the exploration of the formless and abjection by cultural theorist Georges Bataille.³⁹¹ Rina Ayra describes Bataille's writing on abjection as exploring '[...] social expulsion, where the abject was what was rejected by mainstream society', as a reaction to the socio-political issues of the period it was written in.³⁹² Kristeva uses the lens of psychoanalysis in her framework of abjection. In unpublished writing, Bataille had explored ideas about abjection in the 1930s. Krauss has affirmed that 'it is Kristeva's use of the term, not Bataille's, that has been influential in the recent theorization of this concept in relation to contemporary artistic practice'.³⁹³

In *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, Julia Kristeva writes, '[...] it is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good

³⁹⁰ Ibid. pp. 101-102.

³⁹¹ See: Kristeva, 1982; scholar Rina Ayra, in *Abjection and Representation, An Exploration of Abjection in the Visual Arts, Film and Literature*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), writes about Bataille's abjection in the breadth of his writing and how it has been adapted to the frameworks of abjection articulated by Kristeva, Krauss and Bois. Ayra writes about how a concept of the formless stems originally from philosophers such as St. Augustine (in *Confessions*, c. AD 398) and Kant (*Critique of Judgment*, 1952 [1790]), but was further explored and popularised by Bataille. See: Georges Bataille, 'L'Abjection et les formes misérables', *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. II, (Paris: Gallimard, 1934), p. 217; see also: Kristeva, 1982, pp. 56, 64, 213).

³⁹² Ayra comments: 'Bataille's understanding of abjection does not involve psychoanalysis and is rooted in the socio-political where it accounts for the dynamic of rejection and exclusion in relation to the socially disenfranchised. Bataille understands abjection to be the absolute exclusion of abject things. He discusses how underprivileged groups of society, the labouring classes, and other marginalized groups are rejected as being excremental and as existing on the outskirts of society; Ayra, 2014, p. 72.

³⁹³ Krauss, 1996, p. 91.

conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a saviour [...].³⁹⁴ For Kristeva, subjectivity is organised around an awareness of the boundaries that separate the internal and the external, creating a unified body. It is dependent on corporeality. As a consequence of what the formation of sufficient types of subjectivity requires, anything deemed unclean or improper is expelled. According to Kristeva, the abject is a threat to subjectivity. The subject, according to Kristeva, is also attracted to the abject, and not simply or only repulsed by it/in fear of it. According to Kristeva, the things that are expelled are what constitutes the abject, or abjection, because they disrupt identity or the order of systems.³⁹⁵ For Kristeva, the abject is in part about the fragility of bodies, or how we think of bodies. She explains that the abject '[...] does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'.³⁹⁶ Kristeva uses the example of the maternal body as lacking in 'corporeal integrity', with the borders of the body shifting in stages.³⁹⁷ According to Kristeva, blood, milk, menstruation and other fluids are a way for the borders of the body to be violated. In this context, to abject means to cast off. It is taken from Freudian readings of castration: to remove, or *abject*, a part of the body. For Kristeva there is a boundary that separates inside from outside, or internal from external.

Returning to the example of *Videodrome* cited earlier, film scholar William Beard makes a connection between Cronenberg's and Kristeva's work, saying, 'The nexus of sex, disease, and death in Cronenberg is quite in keeping with Kristeva's typology'.³⁹⁸ The relationship of the boundaries of the body or the lack of boundaries in Cronenberg's film is often depicted in scenes of internal depictions of bodies, guts, flesh and blood being excreted externally into the outside world. In *Videodrome*, the male protagonist, Max Renn, experiences abjection via the transformation of the breaking down of boundaries, defining the body through slits

³⁹⁴ Kristeva, 1982, p. 4.

³⁹⁵ Kristeva, 1982, pp. 4-32.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ William Beard, *The Artist as Monster: The Cinema of David Cronenberg* (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 31.

in the body – pulsating and protruding objects entering and exiting the body.³⁹⁹

The borders of the male body and, as Kristeva would say, male subjectivity, are altered so that the internal and external boundaries of the body, of the self and the other, or of the human and non-human, are increasingly porous in definition.

Mary Douglas's book *Purity and Danger* considered the topics of purity and pollution, which were equated with morality and rituals in an effort to mitigate risk or danger, and the underpinnings of these themes in various cultural beliefs or social systems. She equated purity with clarity of boundaries or order, and pollution with confusion and lack of order. Douglas identified a need to make order out of pollution. Douglas also writes of dirt, hygiene, uncleanness and the body and how various societies or peoples deal with or view bodily fluids, secretions and excretions. She also examined how waste or trash are considered as impurities in different societies. Her analysis of natural disasters focused on their scariness or deviancy. This is a point that will be further examined later in this thesis, in the section titled 'Feminist New Materialisms', with the example of Nancy Tuana's term 'viscous porosity' and natural and cultural phenomena.⁴⁰⁰ In her book Douglas also writes about themes of internal and external powers. She uses an example of an individual with internal power as being not in, or rather out, of control – whereas external objects can be controlled and influenced. Douglas writes of external symbols having a part in inter-relational social structures. Internal powers, however, are dormant, or not overt, and therefore veiled or deviant. When Douglas writes about internal and external boundaries of the body she discusses this in the context of ritual. She suggests that the performance of ritual is a reflection of its society, and the body is a symbol of its society. The enactment of rituals on the body relates to or is based on the individual rather than inter-relational or group beliefs. Therefore it is more of a personal process.⁴⁰¹ Douglas writes about dangers or forms of danger in a culture or society, and she identifies this as a form of pollution. Douglas writes about the four categories of danger: 'danger pressing on

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰ Tuana, in Alaimo and Hekman, (eds.), 2008.

⁴⁰¹ Douglas, 2002, pp. 115-124.

external boundaries; danger from transgressing the internal lines of the system; danger in the margins of the lines, and danger from internal contradictions.⁴⁰²

Dangers that enter or exit are internal or external; bodies are a part of wider social political and cultural designators that relate to forms of identity or social structures like class or caste, in her examples.⁴⁰³

Julia Kristeva's ideas of abjection stemmed from Douglas's thinking. Kristeva stated that abjection is a 'revolt of the person against an external menace from which one wants to keep oneself at a distance – it may menace from inside'.⁴⁰⁴ Kristeva, in her writing on abjection, writes about food, and this is useful to the analysis of The Gloopy Object in terms of repression and repulsion. Kristeva, in *Powers of Horror*, writes:

Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. The spasms and vomiting that protect me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck. The shame of compromise, of being in the middle of treachery. The fascinated start that leads me toward and separates me from them. Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk – harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring – I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. "I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen, "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for "me," who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself out*, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*. That detail, perhaps an insignificant one, but one that they ferret out, emphasize, evaluate, that trifle turns me inside out, guts sprawling; it is thus that *they* see that "I" am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death, During that course in which "I" become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit.

⁴⁰² Douglas, 2002, pp. 123-124.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ Kristeva, quoted in Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas (eds.), *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 11.

Mute protest of the symptom, shattering violence of a convulsion that, to be sure, is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer to it, it reacts, it abreacts. It abjects.⁴⁰⁵

According to Kristeva, food abjection has a connection to a sense or stance of independence taken in childhood in retaliation to parental figures. It is, then, a way to form boundaries of the self. The various body fluids that Kristeva writes about, including vomiting, tears and forms of excrement, are equated with a type of birthing process and a release of bodily fluids, but the fluids excreted are still of the self, after being ingested and incorporated into the self before being expelled. Therefore you are, in a way, expelling yourself. The Gloopy Object refers to disobedience and pollution of the body or on the body.

I am interested in the possible connections on spatio-temporal scales with how the hyperobject can lead to a form of hyperabject. Hyperobjects, according to Morton, are at a macro scale in terms of how they can affect other objects or systems. He cites examples such as global warming or nuclear radiation and, as I mentioned before, he borrows from Tuana's term, or metaphor, of *viscous porosity*. This approach to objects at various spatio-temporal scales is influenced by Feminist New Materialist writers who have written about *viscosity* or *trans-corporeality* in order to analyse the effects of wide-ranging spatio-temporal issues, such as hurricanes, climate change or pollution.⁴⁰⁶ Morton has referred to abjection in the following paragraph in his chapter in *Hyperobjects* titled 'Viscosity'. Morton writes:

A baby vomits curdled milk. She learns to distinguish between the vomit and the not-vomit, and comes to know the not-vomit as self. Every subject is formed at the expense of some viscous, slightly poisoned substance, possibly teeming with bacteria, rank with stomach acid. The parent scoops up the mucky milk in a tissue and flushes the wadded package down the toilet. Now we know where it goes. For some time we may have thought that the U-bend in the toilet was a convenient curvature of ontological

⁴⁰⁵ Kristeva, 1982, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁰⁶ See: Alaimo and Hekman, (eds.), 2008.

space that took whatever we flush down it into a totally different dimension called *Away*, leaving things clean over here. Now we know better: instead of the mythical land *Away*, we know the waste goes to the Pacific Ocean or the wastewater treatment facility. Knowledge of the hyperobject Earth, and of the hyperobject biosphere, presents us with viscous surfaces from which nothing can be forcibly peeled. There is no *Away* on this surface, no here and no there. In effect, the entire Earth is a wadded tissue of vomited milk.⁴⁰⁷

In this sense, Morton is referring to the hyperobject or, as I would argue, hyperobject, as a way to observe a relationship to the inside and outside of bodies or objects and the boundaries presented. The hyperobject is constituted by the object object, and this provides a ground with which to explore what the hyperobject could be. With the hyper-object, Kristeva's abjection exists in the remit of the scale and scope of the hyperobject.

Morton writes about the art object while referring to the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre and slime. He refers to what he calls 'hyperobjective art' being made possible via the way that Sartre writes about slime.⁴⁰⁸ Morton writes, 'Viscosity for Sartre is how a hand feels when it plunges into a large jar of honey – it begins to dissolve'.⁴⁰⁹ In context, Sartre's well-known passage from *Being and Nothingness*, in which viscosity or slime is referred to, is as follows:

[...] The Slimy seems to lend itself to me, it invites me, for a body of slime at rest is not noticeably distinct from a body of every dense liquid. But it is a trap. [...] The slime is like a liquid seen in a nightmare, where all its properties are animated by a sort of life and turn-back against me. Slime is the revenge of the In-itself. A sickly-sweet, feminine revenge which will be symbolized on another level by the quality "sugary." This is why the sugar-lick -sweetness to the taste - an indelible sweetness, which remains indefinitely in the mouth even after swallowing -perfectly completes the essence of the slimy. A sugary sliminess is the ideal of the slimy it symbolises the sugary death of the For-itself (like that of the wasp which sinks into the jam and drowns in it). But at the same time the slimy is

⁴⁰⁷ Morton, 2014, p. 31.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 30.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

myself, by the very fact that I outline an appropriation of the slimy substance. That sucking of the slimy substance in myself. These long soft strings of substance which fall from me to the slimy body (when, for example, I plunge my hand into it and then pull it out again) symbolise a rolling off of myself in the slime. And the hysteresis which I establish in the fusion of the ends of these strings with the larger body symbolises the resistance of my being to absorption into the In-itself. If I dive into the water, if I plunge into it, if I let myself sink in it, I experience no discomfort, for I do not have any dear whatsoever that I dissolve in it; I remain a solid in its liquidity. If I sink in the slimy, I feel that I am going to be lost in it; that is, that I may dissolve in the slime precisely because the slimy is in the process of solidification.⁴¹⁰

There is a significant amount of feminist critique of Sartre's use of slime, the slimy and the viscous.⁴¹¹ I am particularly interested in the avoidance of Tuana's framework for viscosity in Morton's writing. It is from this critique that I would like to explore the aspects of viscosity and other related ideas embraced by Feminist New Materialisms that can bring about a more nuanced meaning of The Gloopy Object. This will be explored later, in the section of this chapter titled 'Feminist New Materialism'.

Morton is amongst other writers and philosophers, such as Ian Bogost or Levi Bryant, who also write about the inside and outside aspects or qualities of objects, referred to in the Introduction to this thesis. Morton elaborates, 'When the inside of a thing coincides perfectly with its outside, that is called *dissolution* or *death*'.⁴¹² Here, much of Morton's thinking stems from a lineage of Husserl's notion of the perception of objects in that, as Morton says, '[...] objects can't be exhausted by perception'.⁴¹³ Morton, in his book, extends these concepts to human and non-human conditions, while adhering to the metaphorical concepts of how objects are

⁴¹⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans and ed. Hazel Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1984), pp. 776- 777.

⁴¹¹ Julien S. Murphy (ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Paul Sartre* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1999).

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Morton, 2014, p. 36.

'[...] caught in the sticky goo of viscosity'.⁴¹⁴

In Kristeva's framework of the abject, she deviates from Lacanian thinking about the self, the 'I' or the role of subjectivity. Kristeva contends that identity is formed at birth via a connection to the maternal body. This begins her analysis of the boundary of the Symbolic and the Real. Kristeva's 'abject' is formed of the personal abjection of the maternal body and the wider social and political scale where, in the Symbolic realm, social practices must be abjected. Therefore, abjection is what challenged the Real. And in order to enter the Symbolic the abject needs to be cast out. For Kristeva, the body and its borders or boundaries are held in line via the abject, and hyperobjects approach the Real via their viscosity.

The hyper-abject is defined by the power dynamics between the materiality of the material and the human and the environment, set amongst larger macro scales. For Kristeva, the abject provokes a human relationship to the world; with the hyperabject, there is a more equitable power dynamics. I am trying to form another framework to talk about what The Gloopy Object is, because it is not just the body and blood and goo and milk. It could perhaps be thought of as a difference in degree rather than difference in kind, or it could be an intensification of that dynamic and a re-configuration of it. I will show in this chapter that the work of McCarthy and Rhoades (the Gloopy-led work) makes it clear that there is a need to push this context of the abject forward. In this chapter, and in the framework of The Gloopy Object, I would like to explore the relationship between the hyperobject and the hyperabject as a way to progress and advance the scholarship surrounding McCarthy's and Rhoades' work, as it is within this context that I find these artists' work most relevant to study.

In this section, I aimed to elaborate and explore definitions of what the hyperabject could constitute, as different to, or from, the abject. The Gloopy Object, as one that approaches a hyperabject mode, is concerned about macro and micro scales, or the inside and outside of boundaries. The Gloopy Object is in a land or context

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

of hyperabjection. The following section will provide an analysis of a particular history of performance art in Los Angeles and its relationship to the work of McCarthy and Rhoades, in order to build a context within which to understand the role of The Gloopy Object.

Performance in Los Angeles

Performance-based work in and around the Los Angeles area has been impacted on by the social and cultural histories of the city. Artists and scholars such as Peggy Phelan, Amelia Jones and Suzanne Lacy have written extensively on the role of performance art in the city.⁴¹⁵ Particularly relevant to the study of objects in this thesis is the writing of Meiling Cheng, who has commented on the tenuous connections of performance to theatre and how art-historical appraisals or critiques tend to over-focus on the role of Hollywood in Southern Californian performance art.⁴¹⁶ In an interview I conducted with curator of 'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s' and 'Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979', Paul Schimmel, noted that McCarthy's history of performance was highly influenced by experimental theatre and the cross-section of performance art in Southern California.⁴¹⁷ Schimmel also commented on McCarthy's interest in set design and masks, in order to subvert the very critiques of Southern California performance art that were noted above.

High Performance magazine was significant both curatorially and historically, a point also developed in Chapter 2, The Craft Object. The magazine was a platform for performance artists to write about, capture, archive and document their own

⁴¹⁵ See: Phelan, 2012; Amelia Jones, in Phelan, 2012, p. 129; Suzanne Lacy and Jennifer Flores Sternad, 'Voices, Variations and Deviations: From the LACE Archive of Southern California Performance Art', in Phelan, 2012, pp. 61-114; Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (eds.), *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), Suzanne Lacy, *Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics and Publics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁴¹⁶ See: Cheng, 2002.

⁴¹⁷ Interview, Schimmel.

work.⁴¹⁸ An aim of the magazine was to foster a way for performance artists to think about how and what to document in terms of the ephemeral qualities of their performance works.⁴¹⁹ Seemingly, its only remit was that it permitted no dance or theatre pieces. The magazine ceased production in 1997, and in 1998 an anthology was published.⁴²⁰ In the introduction to the anthology, Linda Frye Burnham and Steven Durland wrote about live art in Los Angeles in the 1970s and 1980s, discussing how it progressed from focusing on conceptual themes to ones that were increasingly about social and political issues.⁴²¹ More recently, in 2003, art historian Jenni Sorkin curated a LACE exhibition about the beginnings of *High Performance*, a platform which has had a lasting impact on the study of performance art in Los Angeles.⁴²²

Contrastingly, specific New York performance histories, or those of artists such as Yayoi Kusama and Carolee Schneemann, were based on their relationship to dance and Happenings.⁴²³ With its lack of commercial backing, combined with financial

⁴¹⁸ See: *High Performance* magazine records; 2006, M.8 Getty Research Institute: Special Collections.

⁴¹⁹ See: Jenny Sorkin, 'Envisioning High Performance', *Art Journal* 62:2 (Summer 2003), 36-51; Linda Frye Burnham, 'High Performance: Performance Art and Me', *The Drama Review, TDR*, 109 (Spring 1986), 15-51; Phelan, 2012, pp. 5-8.

⁴²⁰ Linda Frye Burnham and Steven Durland (eds.), *The Citizen Artist: 20 Years of Art in the Public Arena: an Anthology from High Performance Magazine, 1978-1998* (Gardiner, NY: Critical Press, 1998).

⁴²¹ *Ibid.* For further information on the East and West Coast differences in relation to performance art histories see: Phelan, 2012, p. 5. Peggy Phelan comments, 'The dominance of the East Coast in the story of US art history may well be rooted in fact that journalistic and other media outlets have been primarily concentrated in New York and Washington, D.C rather than the west'. And see: Lynn Herschman Leeson, 'Women Art Revolution', *Stanford University Libraries*, available at: <<https://exhibits.stanford.edu/women-art-revolution/feature/artist-curator-critic-interviews>> [accessed 10 July 2014].

⁴²² Sorkin, 2003. Paul McCarthy guest edited *High Performance* 13 (Spring 1981). Contributing artists included: Suzanne Lacy, Barbara Smith, Allan Kaprow and Valie Export. See: Phillips and Cameron (eds.), 2000, And see: *High Performance* magazine records; 2006, M.8, Getty Research Institute: Special Collections.

⁴²³ For example, Yayoi Kusama's anti-capitalist or anti-war performances such as *Anatomic Explosion*, October 15, 1968, at the New York Stock Exchange, and Happenings at the Statue of Liberty, 1968; See: Mignon Nixon, 'Anatomic Explosion on Wall Street', *October*, 142 (2012), 3-25; Mignon Nixon, public lecture, April 17, 2012, Princeton University, Institute for Advanced Study, entitled 'Sperm Bomb: Art, Feminism, and the

restraint, Los Angeles and Southern Californian performance art was arguably more experimental.⁴²⁴ The lack of financial support for the arts in Los Angeles during the 1980s resulted in part from severe cuts to the arts and humanities and to the National Endowment for the Arts during President Reagan's term of office. Particularly damaging was the restructuring of state arts funding such as CETA (the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) which was terminated in 1982. CETA was crucial to funding and fostering alternative spaces around the Los Angeles area.⁴²⁵ Spaces such as The Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art (LAICA) and Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) were established through the CETA programme.

It has been observed by certain artists and scholars that Los Angeles feminist artists developed less commodifiable art forms with their performance and installation works. Faith Wilding, discussing specifically the materials used by the FAP artists, explains:

Avant-garde practices such as Dada, Happenings, and Situationist tactics inspired us, and we began to combine these with production methods and materials traditionally used by women. This was part of a determined strategy to explode the hierarchies of materials and high/low art practices, and to recover positive values for denigrated or marginalised practices. Tampons, Kotex pads, artificial flowers, sewing materials, underwear, household appliances, glitter, lipstick, jewellery, old letters and journals, eggs, animal entrails, blood, and sex toys were used to reconnect the organic, artificial, sentimental and anti-aesthetic in our art.⁴²⁶

In an interview, artist Mira Schor commented:

American War in Vietnam'; See: Ramsay Burt, *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (New York: Routledge 2006); Hans Ulrich Obrist, 'Carolee Schneemann: When Vision Moves Freely', *Spiked* (2007), 40-49; Carolee Schneeman papers 1959-1994, Special collections, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California.

⁴²⁴ Phelan, 2012, p. 70.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴²⁶ Broude and Garrard (eds.), 1994, p. 35.

For us, our bodies were totally interrelated with a social construction of gender (even though the very term “gender” wasn’t used much back then either), and what we aimed for was social change, not a celebration of women’s biological “destiny”, so to speak. We considered the social to be strongly embodied, and vice versa, the body being socially constructed. Performance art was very important for many women artists in this country, and I think this was one of the most significant elements that marked the first wave of US feminist art.⁴²⁷

In relation to CalArts and the feminist art taking root, Suzanne Lacy and Jennifer Flores Sternland note that ‘[...] it is not surprising that artists coming from the social margins began to express their experiences within the dominant culture through performance art. The emerging discipline was porous and allowed for transgressive opportunities in form and content’.⁴²⁸ Lacy’s work in particular, along with much other work from the wider feminist performance community in Los Angeles, was about the connection of the personal body to the social body – and the ways in which it is subject to violence.

Meiling Cheng and Amelia Jones have offered critical reflections on how artists from marginalised nodes of the Los Angeles community were excluded from power structures.⁴²⁹ They argue that the strength of the Los Angeles performance community was in its fostering of ways to open out exclusions and the way that women disrupted power structures. They also argue that anti-war activism and an identity politics entrenched in class politics was a motivating factor for much Los Angeles performance art from the 1960s onwards.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ Mira Schor, ‘Painterly and Critical Pleasures’, *n.paradoxa* 19 (May 2006): ‘Mobile Fidelities: Conversations on Feminism, History and Visuality’, ed. Martina Pachmanová, available at: < <http://www.ktpress.co.uk/pdf/nparadoxaissue19.pdf> > [accessed 13 February 2016].

⁴²⁸ Lacy and Sternad, 2012, p. 77.

⁴²⁹ Cheng, 2002, and Amelia Jones, 2012, See also: Kellie Jones, *South of Pico, African American Artists in Los Angeles in the 1960s and 1970s* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2017). Artists Senga Nengudi and Marren Hassinger, who created work in and around the Los Angeles area, have noted they felt the feminist projects at the time in the city were exclusionary to women of colour.

⁴³⁰ Amelia Jones, 2012, p. 129.

In her writing on McCarthy, Amelia Jones has taken care to note that he had been particularly supportive of women artists.⁴³¹ In 1980, McCarthy, along with Allan Kaprow, edited a special performance issue of the journal *Dumb Ox*, which included a mapping of the history of performance and featured the work of a number of women artists, including Lynn Hershman and Carolee Schneemann.⁴³² The artistic mapping in *Dumb Ox* was similar in structure to McCarthy's class notes and syllabus from his teaching at UCLA. Curator Ingrid Schaffner, in an interview I conducted, pointed out that Rhoades would have come across this mapping or history as a student in UCLA and his archive includes McCarthy's class reader/syllabus, which points to the role and impact of feminist performance artists in Los Angeles.⁴³³ A network, or mapping, of artists that McCarthy was interested in was also a part of a 1976 publication titled *Criss Cross Double Cross*, that included contributions of text and images by performance artists such as Suzanne Lacy and Barbara Smith.⁴³⁴ This brings to light the impact this history or mappings and collaborative projects or publications at the time had on McCarthy, and how it also then later impacted on Rhoades as McCarthy's mentee and student.

Performance Exhibitions

'Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979' was curated by Paul Schimmel for The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA) and took place from February 8, 1998 to May 10, 1998. The exhibition was Schimmel's first large-scale museum survey of performance art, including not only US-based practices but also practices from Europe and Japan. With 'Out of Actions', Schimmel intended to question, and to form curatorial experiments around, the

⁴³¹ Ibid., p. 125.

⁴³² Ibid., p. 129.

⁴³³ Interview, Schaffner.

⁴³⁴ Gabriel Cifarelli, 'Second Life: Criss Cross Double Cross', *East of Borneo*, 29 June 2012, available at: <<http://www.eastofborneo.org/articles/second-life-criss-cross-double-cross>> [accessed 10 July 2014]; See also: Phillips and Cameron (eds.), 2000, pp. 248-249.

institutionalisation of performance art and how it resists or challenges forms of documentation.⁴³⁵ Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy produced a collaborative piece of writing that was made available for visitors to read at the exhibition; however, it was not intended to be printed in the catalogue. They wrote that the intention of the exhibition was to 'sway the construction of the history of performance art in the direction of a materialist art-historical reading'.⁴³⁶ They maintained that 'Museums continue to find it difficult to present work whose [...] form and subject are time, memory, perception, spoken language, sound, human action and interaction [...] This prejudice creates an object-oriented history of contemporary art. Many significant works of art do not reference the genres of sculpture and painting and are not meant to be seen within the physical framework of the museum'.⁴³⁷ Kelley's and McCarthy's argument centred on the idea that the ephemeral nature of performance art resisted documentation and could not be fully apprehended by looking at objects or by-products of performances. The catalogue for 'Out of Actions' captured and analysed the progression and development of performance art in the United States, Europe and Japan, and it did not include the FAP projects or performances discussed in Chapter 2. Michael Rush, in his 1999 article 'A Noisy Silence', comments that the exhibition was 'a specific slice through the history of art that has at its centre the conviction that performance, actions, Happenings, events, and activities associated with the act of creation had an enormous impact on the object that emerged from them'.⁴³⁸ The catalogue has been critiqued by Rush as not focusing enough on the actual performances that formed the work, with a lack of criticality given to the history of theatre and set design in relationship to many of the practices. This relationship of theatre and set design will be explored in Chapter 4, The Prop Object.

⁴³⁵ Paul Schimmel, Russell Ferguson, Kristine Stiles and Guy Brett, *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-1979* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), p. 120-132.

⁴³⁶ Welchman (ed.), 2004, p. 114.

⁴³⁷ Michael Rush, 'A Noisy Silence', *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, 21: 1 (1999), 2-10 (p. 2).

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

While there exists a body of scholarship about 'Out of Actions' the exhibition 'Performance Anxiety' remains relatively obscure. 'Performance Anxiety' was a group exhibition curated by Amada Cruz for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, and took place from April 17 to July 6, 1997. This exhibition aimed, or rather purported, to question the role of the viewer in performance and installation art and the potential implications of how the viewer could inhabit a performative role. In her catalogue essay, Cruz writes that she wanted the exhibition to 'Question traditional notions of what constitutes an artwork by making work that requires viewer participation – physical participation – encouraging us to be psychologically absorbed in their work'.⁴³⁹ She writes of the viewer as participant, how the body can be involved in the installation and how the mind can activate and cause a form of anxiety, producing a self-conscious, potentially awkward experience of looking. The installations and performances that were exhibited in 'Performance Anxiety', therefore, implicated the viewer in the work.⁴⁴⁰ For 'Performance Anxiety', McCarthy exhibited *Santa's Theatre*, a video installation in which viewers, or the audience, were asked to wear an assortment of fancy dress costumes such as reindeer, elf or Santa Claus outfits, which were also shown in the video. The video depicted the costumed characters performing sexually suggestive scenarios. McCarthy's work in *Performance Anxiety* is significant for its relationship to voyeurism and violence. Cruz also commented on the visceral and confrontational quality of McCarthy's work. These aspects of his performance work will be examined in the following section.

The Gloopy Object, McCarthy

Between 1972 and 1974, Paul McCarthy's performances focused on his use of his body, alongside numerous props and various liquid forms. The overarching qualities of the performances evolved into increasingly aggressive, psycho-sexual

⁴³⁹ Cruz, 1997.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.13

overtones.⁴⁴¹ Schimmel, in the catalogue for 'Out of Actions', notes that 'By 1974, he had achieved local renown for a series of brutally self-assaultive performances, including *Meatcake 1, 2 and 3*, *Hot Dog*, and *Heinz Ketchup*, that raised questions of propriety among his audience'.⁴⁴² For these performances McCarthy ingested raw meat, mayonnaise, ketchup, mustard and other condiments or liquids that mimicked semen and blood. Schimmel commented that his performances might take the form of a 'grotesque horror film that might be titled *American Popular Culture*'.⁴⁴³ McCarthy's performance work was influenced in part by the media and pop culture of Los Angeles in the 1970s and 1980s. Schimmel comments that this was in '[...] advance of the 1990s preoccupation with the grotesque and abject'.⁴⁴⁴



Figure 3.3: Paul McCarthy, *Hot Dog*, 1974, detail.

⁴⁴¹ Phillips and Cameron (eds.), 2000.

⁴⁴² Schimmel, Ferguson, Stiles and Brett, 1998, pp. 120-132.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.



Figure 3.4: Paul McCarthy, *Hot Dog*, 1974, detail.

From 1974 through to 1983, McCarthy performed nude or partially nude with a series of props that mainly included food items, buckets, jars, hot dog buns, hot dogs and his genitals. This progressed to the use of Vaseline, dolls and prosthetic genitals and phalluses.⁴⁴⁵ Schimmel commented that he thought of these materials, specifically the mayonnaise and ketchup, as kitsch. McCarthy's use of materials in performances have been critiqued as being at a distance or deviating from actual food condiments. The use of liquids or condiments and the mimicking of food items were the objects that helped McCarthy with the construction of violence and aggression in his performances.⁴⁴⁶ The condiments are not necessarily kitsch, but more representative of the suburban (as in *The Suburban Object* in Chapter 5). Schimmel's and Levine's critiques of McCarthy's use of these liquids and food condiments focus on their status as the stereotypical ingredients that make up American pop culture of the 1970s and 1980s. McCarthy's performances can be linked to the lineage of American Pop Art.⁴⁴⁷ The materials that make up these performances (hot dogs, hot dog buns, hamburger meat, ketchup, mayonnaise) are ubiquitous in American suburban kitchens, summer picnics or daily dinners. Cary Levine writes:

Like Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup can, the common foods that McCarthy features are emblematic of broad cultural values, edible icons of Americana that are not only mass produced, but symbolic of mass production and consumption themselves. Their symbolism both complements and complicates his work, allowing it to be understood as pointed social critique. Abjection is not only an end in and of itself, but a means of facilitating critique.⁴⁴⁸

In this way, *The Gloopy Object* is the soup inside the Campbell's soup can.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ Levine, 2013, pp. 119-127.

⁴⁴⁷ Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy*, 1964, is significant to note in relation to McCarthy's performances in the 1970s because of the role of the body and food products. In *Meat Joy* raw meat and fish was incorporated into the group performance. See: Harriet Curtis, 'Fifty years since Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy* (1964)', *Performance Research*, 20:2 (2015), 118-120.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 212.

McCarthy's use of The Gloopy Object functions, as Levine would argue, as a social critique of American over-consumption.

In an interview with James Rondeau McCarthy said:

[...] in 1973 I started using ketchup in performances. I was interested in the bottle as phallic with an orifice. The smell. Ketchup as food as blood as paint. Ketchup as an American family icon, processed consumption. I grew up using ketchup on everything; it is an American ritual passed on from father to son. [...] In the performances I did in America, I bought Heinz Ketchup. Then in England in 1983, I did a series of performances and I bought a bottle of Daddies Ketchup. The label has a man's face on it. Here was the commodity patriarch with a face and a body. [...] ...it's a portrait of the quintessential 1950s Dad.⁴⁴⁹

Lisa Phillips refers to McCarthy's work as a form of 'pop expressionism'. Phillips writes about the material culture of pop imagery or food products and signifiers of the food and describes the use of food as '[...] emblematic of American family life [...]'.⁴⁵⁰ Ralph Rugoff has written about McCarthy's performances such as *Hot Dog*, and has focused on the use of food items, bodily reactions and mass-produced food items or products. Rugoff also refers to the boundaries of the body as explored in McCarthy's performances of this period.⁴⁵¹ Levine and Amelia Jones also refer to the use of mass-produced or consumer products and the act of consumption, how this impacts on the body in the performances, boundaries, the collapsing of borders and the impact of the solo performances on audience members.⁴⁵²

In McCarthy's performances during the mid- to late 1970s, such as *Sauce*, (1974), *Meat Cake*, (1974) and *Tubbing* (1975), he often worked in smaller spaces or rooms

⁴⁴⁹ McCarthy, 'Interview with James Rondeau', *Paul McCarthy* [exh. cat], (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), p.182.

⁴⁵⁰ Lisa Phillips, 'Paul McCarthy's Theater of the Body', in *Paul McCarthy* [exh.cat.], 2000, p. 5.

⁴⁵¹ 'Survey: Mr McCarthy's Neighbourhood', in Rugoff (ed.), 1996, pp. 30-87.

⁴⁵² Levine, 2013, p. 120; Amelia Jones, 2000, pp. 125-31.

and paid attention to the role of the viewer in the performance. He worked with his body and the violence of his work was enacted in the form of force-feeding himself, making himself vomit, anal insertions and genital manipulation.⁴⁵³ The use of vocal and speech repetition and self-harm was key to his work at this time. *Hot Dog* was performed in McCarthy's studio in front of a small invited audience of friends and artists. This format of intimate performances was also a feature of Jason Rhoades' work, which was explored in Chapter 1, 'Horror Vacui'. *Hot Dog* encompasses, for McCarthy, the violence, aggression and confrontational quality of many of his subsequent performances from this period and influenced much of his performance work and video installations into the 1980s and onwards.⁴⁵⁴ *Hot Dog* was the first performance that used certain elements that were key to McCarthy's practice, such as blonde wigs, as seen in *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction Release Zone*, his collaborative video installation with Mike Kelley, studied in Chapter 5 of this thesis. The use of condiments, food items and allusions to bodily fluids in *Hot Dog* also became central ingredients for his future performances, including *Family Tyranny/ Cultural Soup* (1987) another collaborative video installation with Mike Kelley, which will be studied in Chapter 4, The Prop Object. For *Hot Dog*, McCarthy performed partially nude and in close proximity to the invited audience and began by shaving his body. He then shoved his penis into a hot dog bun and taped it in place. He progressed to becoming fully nude, and smeared food condiments on his body. McCarthy completed the performance by ingesting a large amount of ketchup and over-eating hot dogs. At the end of the performance, McCarthy wrapped the hot dogs around his mouth with a bandage.⁴⁵⁵

Artist Barbara Smith, who was mentioned earlier in this chapter as someone who participated in McCarthy's publication projects, writes about her experience of viewing the performance and the bodily reactions to the violence that McCarthy

⁴⁵³ Levine, 2010 .

⁴⁵⁴ Burnham, 1985.

⁴⁵⁵ Phillips and Cameron, 2000.

inflicts on himself, stuffing his mouth and vomiting and the difficulty the audience had in containing their responses, both physical and mental. Smith's account begins with her description of McCarthy stripping off his clothing and shaving his body along with small traces of blood arising from the shaving. Smith recounts:

[...] He stuffs his penis into a hot dog bun and tapes it on, then smears his ass with mustard. [...] He approaches the tables, and sits nearby, drinking ketchup and stuffing his mouth with hot dogs, more and more until it seems inconceivable that any more will fit. Binding his head with gauze and adding more hot dogs, he finally tapes his bulging mouth closed so that the protruding mouth looks like a snout. I struggle inwardly to control the impulse to gag. He stands alone struggling with himself, trying to prevent his own retching. It is apparent that he is about to vomit. I look around desperately to see if I would ruin the performance and our sense of stamina by simply leaving. Should he vomit he might choke to death, since the vomit would have no place to go. And should any one of us vomit, we might trigger him to do likewise. The terrible moment passes, and the piece continues. I don't seem to recall how it ended, but this discomfort that we all felt is the essential audience response to McCarthy's work.⁴⁵⁶

Smith's description of the performance highlights the ways that *Hot Dog* destabilises the boundary between the performer and the audience.

⁴⁵⁶ Barbara Smith, 'Paul McCarthy', *Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art Journal: Southern California Art Magazine* 21 (January-February 1979), 45-46; see also: Smith, quoted in Levine, 2013, p. 29.



Figure 3.5: Paul McCarthy, *Bossy Burger*, 1991, detail.



Figure 3.6 and 3.7 and 3.8: Paul McCarthy, *Bossy Burger*, 1991, detail.



Figure 3.9: Paul McCarthy, *Bossy Burger*, 1991, detail with Alfred E. Neuman mask.

McCarthy's *Bossy Burger* progressed from the lineage of *Hot Dog* and *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*.⁴⁵⁷ This was a video that featured bottles, jars, assortments of condiments and ingredients for a cooking demonstration featuring an excess of these ingredients. The role of the chef was performed by McCarthy: his main costume was a chef's hat, apron and an Alfred E. Newman mask. Newman was a character from *Mad* magazine, and this mask featured in many of McCarthy's subsequent performances or videos. The video was filmed on a set that had been constructed earlier for the television sitcom *Family Affair*.⁴⁵⁸ A counter and ordering area from a local fast food restaurant was used in the video.⁴⁵⁹

The mass-produced food and condiments used in the performance were meant to symbolise the abundance of American consumer culture, and functioned again as a social critique of American over-consumption. In an interview with Kristine Stiles, McCarthy commented: 'The splattering of the paint or the residue of ketchup as in *Bossy Burger* [or other pieces] seem to suggest that an act of violence has happened'.⁴⁶⁰ Both *Hot Dog* and *Bossy Burger* focus on over-eating, waste and excess. I am reminded of the history of eating competitions in America, notably 'Nathan's Famous Fourth of July International Hot Dog Eating Contest,' in which contestants are offered monetary prizes for eating as many hot dogs as possible, in a specific time period, with vomiting being a disqualifying factor.

⁴⁵⁷ The time gap between *Hot Dog* and *Bossy Burger* was seventeen years and the impact of television formats, cooking shows and the development in the types of sets used is important to note. McCarthy, in an interview in 1993, commented: 'There are times when my work has been compared to the Viennese Actionist school, but I always thought there was this whole connection with Pop. The ketchup, the hamburger, and also the movie world. I was really fascinated with Hollywood and Hollywood Boulevard. I started using masks I'd bought on Hollywood Boulevard. [...] Vienna is not Los Angeles. My work came out of kids' television in Los Angeles. I didn't go through Catholicism and World War II as a teenager, I didn't live in a European environment. People make reference to Viennese art without really questioning the fact that there's a big difference between ketchup and blood [...]'. See: Marc Selwyn, interview with Paul McCarthy, 'Paul McCarthy: There's a Big Difference Between Ketchup and Blood', *Flash Art* 26:170 (May/June 1993), 63-64.

⁴⁵⁸ Phillips and Cameron 2000, p. 127.

⁴⁵⁹ 'Interview: Kristine Stiles in Conversation with Paul McCarthy', in Rugoff, 1996, p. 64

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

In McCarthy's *Bossy Burger* and *Hot Dog* he refers to the consumption and production of ketchup, mayonnaise and other food items that can be considered for their role in American consumerism. The Gloopy Object interrogates this notion. The role of these products in American suburban life, the connotation of where and how they are consumed, are all part of what constitutes The Gloopy Object in McCarthy's work.

The Gloopy Object, Rhoades

The 'PeaRoeFoam' project was a trilogy of exhibitions by Jason Rhoades which took place in 2002. PeaRoeFoam itself was a fictional sculptural/building material and/or a fictional food source that was made by Rhoades from freeze-dried green peas (said to have been grown on his parents' farm in California), salmon eggs that would have been used for fish bait and Styrofoam beads combined with PVA glue.⁴⁶¹ Rhoades wanted the material to carry the narrative of a multi-purpose, fast-drying building material, which would solidify like concrete and could be used for construction. He also incorporated narratives of the material as a food source, such as at moments of environmental crisis.⁴⁶²

PeaRoeFoam is often strewn, scattered and displayed in nebulous blobs when it is exhibited. This references Bataille's concept of the formless, or *l'informe*.⁴⁶³ In the exhibition catalogue for *PeaRoeFoam*, curator Linda Norden comments that what she found most compelling about this exhibition was:

Its ability to convey a sense of the abject. The idea that there's something that seems base, but also processed – the material. Jason could get across an incredibly hyper-attuned sense of materials and stuff. [...] In *PeaRoeFoam*, the

⁴⁶¹ Interview, Schaffner.

⁴⁶² See: Bismuth, Norden and Zwirner, 2016.

⁴⁶³ See: Krauss, 1996. *Formless: a User's Guide* included four sections of essays arranged alphabetically and which were inspired by Bataille. They included 'Base Materialism', 'Horizontality', 'Pulse' and 'Entropy'. See: Krauss and Bois, 1997.

sense is more of the firsthand experience of an agricultural-industrial process, a movement from the abject appeal of unprocessed, gross stuff to indeterminate product, fantastically packaged. You can picture it, smell it, but it stays mysterious.⁴⁶⁴

The first exhibition in this trilogy, 'PeaRoeFoam: The Impetuous Process & from the Costner Complex', took place at David Zwirner Gallery in New York. For this installation, Rhoades moulded large PeaRoeFoam 'meat kebabs' with long aluminum tubes stuck through them. For this iteration of the trilogy, Rhoades had cut a hole in the mouth of the child that is depicted on the many boxes of Ivory Snow washing powder. Viewers would have to stick their finger through the hole in order to access or touch the PeaRoeFoam material and this act is what the title 'The Impetuous Process' refers to.⁴⁶⁵ The title also refers to the near-constant transition of objects, materials and processes that Rhoades would use and re-use for his installations.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁴ Bismuth, Norden and Zwirner, 2002, p. 97.

⁴⁶⁵ As recounted by Rhoades in Jason Rhoades Oral History Project, 2014. Bismuth, Norden and Zwirner, 2002, pp. 50-53.

⁴⁶⁶ As recounted by Rhoades in Jason Rhoades Oral History Project, 2014. Part of the title 'The Costner Complex' refers to pickling jars and images of actor Kevin Costner from the exhibition 'Jason Rhoades: "The Costner Complex"', July 28-September 16, 2001 at Portikus, Frankfurt.

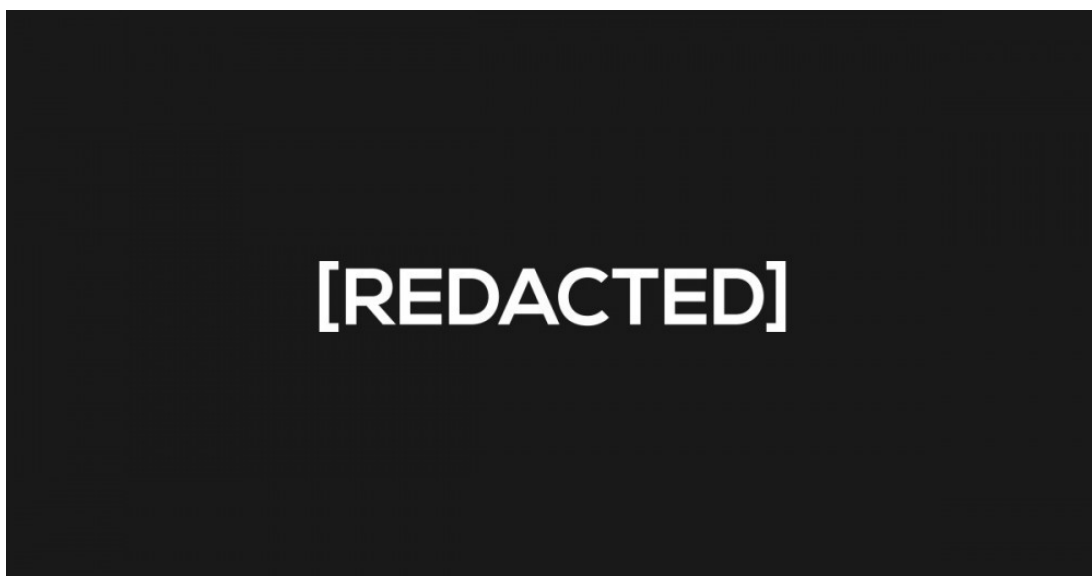


Figure 3.10: Jason Rhoades, *PeaRoeFoam*, 2002.

Figure 3.11 and 3.12: Jason Rhoades, *PeaRoeFoam*, 2002, detail.



Figure 3.13: Jason Rhoades, *PeaRoeFoam*, 2002, detail.



Figure 3.14: Jason Rhoades, *PeaRoeFoam*, 2002, detail.



Figure 3.15: Jason Rhoades, *PeaRoeFoam*, 2002, detail of performance at Tate Liverpool.



Figure 3.16: Jason Rhoades, *PeaRoeFoam*, 2002, detail of performance at Tate Liverpool.



Figure 3.17: Jason Rhoades, *PeaRoeFoam*, 2002, detail.



Figure 3.18: Jason Rhoades, *PeaRoeFoam*, 2002, detail.



Figure 3.19: Jason Rhoades, *PeaRoeFoam*, 2002, detail.



Figure 3.20: Jason Rhoades, *PeaRoeFoam*, 2002, detail.

The Ivory Snow soap box is a key narrative element in this trilogy. In the early 1970s, Procter & Gamble produced and ran an advertising campaign for Ivory Snow soap powder. The campaign was centered around the idea that the product represented purity. The image selected for the box and for the marketing campaign was of a mother holding a baby: she was portrayed by the actress Marilyn Chambers, who in the same year the advertising campaign debuted had starred in one of the first feature-length pornography films (which was screened at the Cannes Film Festival), *Behind the Green Door*.⁴⁶⁷ Chambers was subsequently fired from the marketing campaign and the boxes became collectables.

PeaRoeFoam, like McCarthy's *Hot Dog* and *Bossy Burger*, also refers to over-consumption in the American economy and in American pop culture. Rhoades noted that he called the pure white Styrofoam beads in *PeaRoeFoam* 'virgin foam', implying a freshly manufactured and non-recycled material: conversely, foam, of course, was an environmentally damaging material.⁴⁶⁸

David Zwirner, in the catalogue for *PeaRoeFoam*, describes the installation: 'During the exhibition you could walk from the main gallery to the storage room through a green door, symbolizing a passage between two realities of the gallery: the art-handling area and the showrooms [...]'.⁴⁶⁹ The inclusion of a green door, delivered from Rhoades' studio, was an obvious metaphor for the film *Behind the Green Door*. The different rooms and spaces in the installation created separate areas designated for the production or making process, as well as a space for the finishing process. Materials such as boxes of peas, roe and Styrofoam were delivered to the gallery on pallets which were also displayed in the installation. Portions of the *PeaRoeFoam* material were put in corners of the different spaces of the installation and left to dry, thereby forming sculptures.

⁴⁶⁷ Bismuth et. al., 2002, p. 4-12.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., p.8.

Linda Norden, in the catalogue for *PeaRoeFoam*, comments that the installations forced a specific navigation from the viewer or audience: '[...] You had to walk in certain order; you couldn't circumvent the piece, because it filled up the room. [...] There were defined areas [...] The whole thing was set up like a factory so that he was producing different things in different sections [...]'.⁴⁷⁰

The second exhibition in the 'PeaRoeFoam' series was titled 'My Special Purpose', and was shown at the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (MUMOK), Vienna. This exhibition featured *PeaRoeFormances* in which Rhoades made the PeaRoeFoam material on site and worked with a team of assistants to create large batches of the material in factory-like conditions. PeaRoeFoam was shipped to Vienna in bulk in industrial containers, which were included in the installation. Peas were exhibited in buckets and roe was displayed in packages. Shovels, boots, protective gloves and mixing equipment were sent from Rhoades' studio and were used in the exhibition during the series of *PeaRoeFormances*.

Rhoades also created a section of this installation titled *The Areola*, which featured a pink neon light and had a karaoke machine available for audience or viewer participation. *The Areola* explored the connotations with pornography and censorship relating to the mythology of Marilyn Chambers and Ivory Snow, and featured computers, chairs and printers set up to resemble a home office covered in images of online pornography and replica Ivory Snow boxes, printed and placed in the section amongst the PeaRoeFoam material. In an installation manual sent by fax Rhoades commented on the karaoke sessions, saying he wanted to 'milk out the sincerity of each participant and imbue the objects in the room with a particular spirit'.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷⁰ Norden, in Schaffner et al., 2014, p. 95.

⁴⁷¹ Jason Rhoades Oral History Project, 2014.

For Rhoades, the karaoke and singing was a reference to how workers pass the time in a factory. This section featured recorded songs from Rhoades' studio, as well as songs recorded on site featuring museum staff.

The third exhibition in the 'PeaRoeFoam' series was titled 'The Liver Pool' and was shown at Tate Liverpool. For this iteration, two large inflatable maroon-coloured liver-shaped pools, deviating from the design motif of the common American suburban kidney-shaped pool, were made in Rhoades' studio and then shipped to Tate Liverpool with thirty bulk units of PeaRoeFoam material. Rhoades and his assistants mixed the PeaRoeFoam material inside the empty pools. These *PeaRoeFormances* served as performative installations and parts of them were filmed to create video works. Rhoades, speaking as a narrator or motivational speaker, improvised during the performances. Tools, mixing equipment and materials were left in the pool after the performances. Shelving units from Home Depot were shipped over to the museum from Rhoades' studio and placed in and around the pools, storing objects and materials after the performances, thereby forming sculptures on the site. Aluminium tubes from the installation *A Perfect World* were re-used or re-purposed for this iteration of *PeaRoeFoam*.⁴⁷²

For Rhoades, The Gloopy Object, via the use of his PeaRoeFoam material, is a commentary on consumerism, production and waste, and these ideas inform his performative installations. The PeaRoeFoam's cultural function, according to Rhoades, was to reflect American consumerism.⁴⁷³ Both Rhoades and McCarthy work with concepts of mass-production with their Gloopy Objects.

Roland Barthes, in the essay 'Toward a Psycho-sociology of Contemporary Food Consumption', writes about the consumption of food and what it communicates and signifies. He writes:

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

[...] we are interested in human communication and because communication always implies a system of signification, that is, a body of discrete signs standing out from a mass of indifferent materials. For this reason, sociology must, as soon as it deals with cultural 'objects' such as clothing, food, and – not quite as clearly – housing, structure these objects before trying to find out what society does with them. For what society does with them is precisely to structure them in order to make use of them.⁴⁷⁴

The Gloopy Object is a cultural object in this sense and is related to over-consumption, production and consumerism via the frameworks of food items and mass-marketed products. If The Gloopy Object is one that approaches the hyperobject or hyperabjection, then it can potentially be a way to observe a relationship between the inside and outside of bodies or objects and the boundaries presented, in relation to the excess of the body and wider political, critical and aesthetic potential. If the most intense form of a hyperobject is in part about wider systemic systems, such as capitalism, then the hyperobject operates on a wide spatio-temporal scale. The Gloopy Object, then, is hyperobject because it refers to excess, the body and an excess of consumerism or production on a macro political scale.

Feminist New Materialisms

I am interested in reforming the idea of the abject object in relation to The Gloopy Object in this chapter. I have set the scene with the writing of Kristeva and Douglas. I am interested in progressing from the degree of earlier notions of the abject or abjection towards an intensification of this concept or dynamic, re-configuring it by incorporating or aligning with recent discourse or debates within the field of Feminist New Materialisms.

⁴⁷⁴ Roland Barthes, 'Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption', in Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (eds.), *Food and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 28-36 (p. 23).

In this framework, or in this definition, it is helpful to explore concepts of viscosity, stickiness and the inside and outside of objects as conceived of by Feminist New Materialists such as Nancy Tuana, Stacy Alaimo, Jane Bennett and others as they relate to The Gloopy Object and to McCarthy's and Rhoades' work so that it creates the conditions by which it becomes possible to begin articulating this as discourse. These ideas can be used as a way to further form a discussion around The Gloopy Object.

The writing of Feminist New Materialists is, in part, concerned with material practices, including interactions with nature. Recent New Materialist theories provide a basis for how to navigate and re-contextualise engagement with levels of macro and micro-politics and the various manners in which non-humans have their own agency. Deleuze & Guattari comment on the qualities of micro-politics by focusing on the scale of the components interacting in a network, and the nature of those interactions. While the macro scale may be more visible, a macro-politics of a two-person interaction is possible, as is the micro-politics of a large group.⁴⁷⁵

Stemming from this, the philosophical lineage of Feminist New Materialists builds upon Deleuze and Guattari's work and engages with the question of subjectivity. Deleuzian feminists such as Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz are examples of this approach. However, this subjectivity is a multiplicity, a post-human one. It attempts to step away from the twentieth-century psychoanalytic vision of the subject towards a more non-human one.⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, Feminist New Materialisms focus on more sustainable becomings and traditions that look into a human-nonhuman continuum that question matter and the role or impact of humans within a material world.⁴⁷⁷ This initiates a debate about New Materialisms while leaving future

⁴⁷⁵ Deleuze & Guattari, 1980.

⁴⁷⁶ Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook (eds.), *Deleuze and Feminist Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

⁴⁷⁷ Coole and Frost, eds., 2010.

possibilities relatively open.

Author Jane Bennett, in her book *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*, writes about a system constituted of human and non-human relationality towards things that can bring about sustainable futures.⁴⁷⁸ In a similar way to Bennett's analysis in her book, author Levi Bryant provides an example of the cycle involved in spillages in an eco-system. He considers how a spillage enters a water supply, moving on to contaminate wildlife, and how it eventually reaches humans, who eat this contaminated wildlife. Bryant is concerned with the way different systems, encompassing both human and non-human elements, are entered in various ways. Echoing Bennett's and New Materialist thinking, Bryant remarks, 'A body, as it were, is *sheathed* in a world'.⁴⁷⁹ Bryant aligns culture and nature in the realm of the way it interacts with the human.

In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett writes:

I have been trying to raise the volume on the vitality of materiality per se, pursuing this task so far by focusing on nonhuman bodies, by, that is, depicting them as actants rather than as objects. But the case for matter as active needs also to readjust the status of human actants: not by denying humanities awesome, awful powers, but by presenting these powers as evidence of our own constitution as vital materiality. In other words, human power is itself a kind of thing-power. At one level this claim is uncontroversial: it is easy to acknowledge that humans are composed of various material parts (the materiality of our bones, or the metal of our blood, or the electricity of our neurons). But it is more challenging to conceive of these materials as lively and self-organising, rather than as passive or mechanical means under the direction of something nonmaterial, that is, an active soul or mind.⁴⁸⁰

Bennett here analyses various notions of the agency of the components in the body and how systems function.

⁴⁷⁸ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 54-61.

⁴⁷⁹ Levi R. Bryant, *Onto-Cartography: an Ontology of Machines and Media* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 49.

⁴⁸⁰ Bennett, 2010, p. 10.

Stacy Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality and Nancy Tuana's concept of porosity revolve around the notion that things enter and exit a system or assemblage. Stacy Alaimo's *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* uses the concept of 'trans-corporeality' to indicate the inseparability of bodies and the environment.⁴⁸¹ Alaimo uses examples of the way everyday objects such as plastics enter our bodies. Other cases she mentions are environmental justice problems such as workers exposed to minerals and uranium in mining. Issues she treats in the book are close to the example of nuclear radiation that runs through our bodies. Some of these examples are very similar to the ones utilised in Tim Morton's *Hyperobjects*. Alaimo suggests that with *trans-corporeality*, human bodies and non-human natures are open to one another. Therefore, what we do to the environment we do to ourselves, through the pollution of water, soil or air.

From Alaimo's standpoint, bodies cannot be reduced to discursive constructions, or essentialist beings. She writes: 'one of the central problematics of *trans-corporeality* is contending with dangerous, often imperceptible material agencies'.⁴⁸² Alaimo's aim is to erase the boundary between inside and outside through these real-world examples. Alaimo cautions against the divisions and distinctions between human and non-human natures, contending that bodies don't 'exist before or beyond the material relations with their environments'.⁴⁸³ If the viscous or viscosity is about a sense of ooze, somewhere between a liquid and a solid, or a variant stage, then *trans-corporeality* is about permeability.

Part of Alaimo's theory is the concept of environmental justice. She argues that people are susceptible to environmental racism, and advocates more discussion about how this impacts on minority communities. *Trans-corporeality* is a theoretical

⁴⁸¹ Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

site, according to Alaimo, and it is a way to think about how the material world and the body can be thought of alongside one another. She writes about the need to entangle the material self with 'networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial'.⁴⁸⁴ Alaimo argues for an understanding and shifting of the discourse towards interrelated relationships.

Alaimo's notion of trans-corporeality enables a consideration of the human and non-human on the same plane of thought and how it interacts with social, political or material forces and with cultural lenses. Towards the end of her book Alaimo writes about environmental ethics and the post-human, saying it is 'not circumscribed by the human but is instead accountable to a material world that is never merely an external place but always the very substance of ourselves and others'.⁴⁸⁵

Bryant, in his book *Onto-Cartography*, relies heavily on and analyses Alaimo's theories. Bryant writes: 'The concept of trans-corporeality, similar to that of structural coupling and binary machines, underscores the way in which bodies are intermeshed with one another, mutually affecting and being affected by each other. Trans-corporeality teaches us of a world where things that seem to be over there and thus apart from us intermesh with us in ways that significantly impact our local manifestations and becomings.'⁴⁸⁶

Another concept that is helpful when considering the wider framework and theoretical stances of *The Gloopy Object* is Nancy Tuana's term 'viscous porosity', which is used to indicate how our bodies are open to various objects. In her article 'Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina', Tuana places human bodies at the centre of a wide range of phenomena caused by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and demonstrates how 'cultural' elements permeate 'natural' ones, a point which Bryant

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., p.145.

⁴⁸⁶ Bryant, 2014, p. 49.

also suggests.⁴⁸⁷

Tuana's concept of viscous porosity is a metaphor. She says that 'viscous porosity helps us understand an interactionist attention to the processes of becoming in which unity is dynamic and always interactive and agency is diffusely enacted in complex networks of relations'.⁴⁸⁸ Focusing on the natural disaster of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, Tuana writes about the embodiment of the levees that broke, the swamps and land around New Orleans and the embodiment of the people of the city. Tuana writes about forms of witnessing, and also about witnessing the world through Hurricane Katrina and how this can enable and reveal interactions between the social and the natural, nature and culture and the real and the constructed. She argues for feminist theory to embrace the interdisciplinary formats of Women's Studies by calling for the breaking down of boundaries of nature, social sciences and the arts and humanities as a way to form an interdisciplinary material feminism. Tuana also argues for the breaking down of boundaries between nature and culture in order to better understand our ontological status in the world. She says that viscous porosity '[...] serves as witness to the materiality of the social and the agency of the natural'.⁴⁸⁹ She uses the example of Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) as a material that is found in our daily lives in all the forms of plastic that surround us. This is an all-encompassing material that transforms flesh, according to Tuana. She writes:

There is a viscous porosity of flesh – my flesh and the flesh of the world. This porosity is a hinge through which we are of and in the world. I refer to it as viscous for there are membranes that effect the interactions. These membranes are of various types – skin and flesh, prejudgements and symbolic imaginaries, habits and embodiments. They serve as one of the mediators of interaction. My interest in the story of PVC has to do with skin and flesh.⁴⁹⁰

Important to note is that this viscosity, as a characteristic or as a metaphor, is not

⁴⁸⁷ Tuana, 2008, pp. 188-210.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁴⁹⁰ Tuana, 2008, pp. 199-200.

fluid or solid. It is thick and sticky with surface tension. It is pliable and is aligned with Alaimo's concept of the importance of permeability. As a metaphor, this allows it to extend out to concepts of inside and outside boundaries.

What both Alaimo and Tuana's theories perform is to erase the boundary between inside and outside through these real-world examples. In this approach, they move beyond traditional object-oriented approaches, which maintain that objects have a fixed interior and exterior. This interior/exterior binary comes from Graham Harman's decision to refute relational theories, such as Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory. New Materialist theories focus on transformations in the ways we produce, reproduce the material environment. The analysis of our daily interactions with material objects and the natural environment is also of importance. The place of humans within a material world is questioned as a way to shift the common or confining standpoint of an anthropocentric perspective.

Conclusion

The Gloopy Object is a term I made up to describe a type of object in the work of McCarthy and Rhoades. I use the works *Bossy Burger*, *Hot Dog* and the *PeaRoeFoam* series to describe this type of object. I began this chapter by considering a context of hyperabjection, one that stems from Mary Douglas's and Julia Kristeva's conceptions. I also considered the context of feminism and performance art in Los Angeles. This chapter then considered how The Gloopy Object relates to the body, performance and the materiality of performance.

As mentioned earlier, when I use the term The Gloopy Object, I am referring to the use of various liquids and types of wetness, such as ketchup, mayonnaise, loose meat products, viscous-like liquids and bodily fluids. The Gloopy Object has a tension between the material and with the relationship of performance to the body. This chapter offers a new lens on the relationship of feminist Los Angeles-based performance artists to the work of McCarthy and Rhoades, and more broadly to the

historical role of Los Angeles performance art.

My original contribution to knowledge in this chapter is built from the framework which I use to expand on notions of the hyperobject and the hyperobject. In this chapter, The Gloopy Object is externalised via the process by which the hyperobject is constituted by the abject object and this allows for an exploration of what the hyperobject can be. Alongside the re-contextualisations of the historical exhibitions analysed in this chapter, 'Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949 – 1979' and 'Performance Anxiety', I offer a way to examine the wider role of performance art and the interconnectedness with feminist performance art in this chapter. I offer an analysis of the role of the materials and the materiality of performance that was brought forth during that art-historical moment.

The Gloopy Object is formed of a hyperabjection-based mode of artistic practice in the work of McCarthy and Rhoades. When seen through the lens of the hyperobject, their abject objects reconfigure previous concepts of the abject. Considering the previous notions of abjection enabled me to form an analysis of The Gloopy Object; I was then able to explore the ground that forms a radical Feminist New Materialist iteration of thinking in order to build upon the ideas of the hyperobject and its critical, aesthetic and political potentials. The Gloopy Object, as a cultural and abject object, interrogates excess, over-consumption, mass production, American consumerism, disobedience, pollution of systems, continuity and discontinuity and the interconnectedness of networks. Scholar Bethany Doane's writing confirms that the hyperobject can be thought of a mode of artistic production: her work has been helpful to me as I was editing this chapter and came across her recent conceptualisation of the hyperobject and the Anthropocene.⁴⁹¹ For me, this represents the prospects for this line of thinking. Moving forward in Chapter 4, The Prop Object, I will consider the work of Oursler, McCarthy and Kelley in relation to sets, staging and the role of trauma in their works.

⁴⁹¹ Doane, 2015.

CHAPTER 4 THE PROP OBJECT

Thing 1

The Loner

paranoia, protagonists, hand-painted sets, cardboard, bright neon paint, rambling narration, somnambulism, found objects, daydreams, DIY, narration, crude

Thing 2

Grand Mal

hand painted brushstrokes, rambling narration, DIY painted sets, myths, hallucinations, dream space, layered sound, narratives, hypnotic, extreme consciousness, paint, bodies, cardboard, figurines, painted stakes, fables

Thing 3

Family Tyranny/ Cultural Soup

messy, gloopy, sticky, anxious, Halloween masks, plastic dolls, kitchen, mixing bowls, mayonnaise, TV food show, wood, hand-made set, tableaux, window frame, bowls, mixing bowls, colanders, cups, flour, dough, steel bowls, glass jars of mayonnaise, missing wooden spoons, special effects masks

Thing 4

Day is Done

high-school yearbooks, newspaper images, newspaper photographs, high-school yearbook sports team photos, costumes, high-school hallways, gym, classrooms, barber shop, stages, singing, music, scripts, vampires, devil, angel, farm-girls, kids, teenagers, screens, witches, mummies, ghosts, dance routines, mascots, white face paint, black eye makeup, black-and-white photographs, screens, goths, punks, jocks, fractured, special effects masks

Introduction

I first experienced the large-scale video installation *Day is Done* (2005) (Fig. 4.24-4.35, pp. 259-265) during the exhibition 'Mike Kelley' at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, which was on view from December 15, 2012 to April 1, 2013. I experienced it for the second time when it travelled to New York City and was shown at MOMA PS1 from October 1, 2013 to February 2, 2014. In viewing *Day is Done* twice, in two different cities and in two different museums, I found myself

retracing my steps and recounting my different encounters with this video installation, re-enacting my experience of it during my second viewing. At the same time that I was visiting *Day is Done* in New York, I was reading the book *Remainder* by Tom McCarthy, and I found myself thinking about re-enactment. The main protagonist or narrator in *Remainder* has been in an accident, the details of which are left vague and undefined. During a party, the protagonist sees a crack in a wall which triggers a memory of a building. It becomes obvious to the reader that the protagonist may not have actually lived in this building and this is a potentially false memory; however, the building becomes an avatar for his trauma or loss of memory, and he begins a long arduous process of reconstructing the building and events he remembers he saw at the building in explicit detail. Funding the re-enactments from a financial settlement after the accident, he hires a logistics expert to help produce them. Hired actors or performers re-enact specific everyday scenarios, including cooking and repairing a motorcycle, all in the internal landscape of his potentially false memories. The main protagonist, speaking to the logistics expert, Naz, muses: "Performers isn't the right word", "Staff. Participants. Re-enactors". "Re-enactors?" he asked. "Yes", I told him. "Re-enactors".⁴⁹²

For the main protagonist, re-enactment provides him with a powerful connection to his memories that makes him feel grounded and present. This feeling kick-starts a series of re-enactments of various banal events and moments. The protagonist begins to re-create anything he can remember and he begins to re-enact the re-enactments.

When speaking to an actor during auditions for the re-enactors he says, "We just want to chat for a while, fill you in on what you'll need to do."

"Okay," he said. "shall I sit here, or stand, or?..."

"Whatever," I said. "What we're looking for is this: you'd need to be a motorbike enthusiast. You'd have to be available on a full-time basis – a live-in full-

⁴⁹² Tom McCarthy, *Remainder* (Paris: Metronome Press, 2005), p. 85.

time basis – to occupy a flat on the first floor of an apartment building. You’d need to spend a lot of time out in the building’s courtyard tinkering with a motorbike.”

“Tinkering?” he asked me.

“Fixing it”, I said.

“What do I do once it’s fixed?”

“You take it apart again. Then fix it back.”

He was quiet for a while, thinking about this.

“So you don’t need me to act at all?” he asked eventually.

“No,” I told him. “Not act; just do. Enact. Re-enact.”⁴⁹³

The Prop Object

My encounter with the exhibition *Day is Done*, and the way I was confronted with re-enacting, enacting, acting and performance, influenced the formation of the neologism The Prop Object. The Prop Object includes Tony Oursler’s *The Loner* (1980) (Fig.4.1-4.3, pp. 236-239) ; Oursler’s *Grand Mal* (1981) (Fig. 4.7-4.15, pp. 241-244); Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley’s *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup* (1987) (Fig. 4.16-4.23, pp. 248-251) and Mike Kelley’s *Day is Done* (2005) (Fig. 4.24-4.35, pp. 257-262). *The Loner*, *Grand Mal* and *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup* were filmed on hand-made and DIY-constructed sets. Kelley’s *Day is Done*, apart from being created in a different time period, 2005, progresses to a larger-scale, multi-screen installation while maintaining elements of a hand-made or DIY aesthetic with a larger production budget. The Prop Object is an object that enters and draws on components of a theatrical dimension. The theatrical dimension engages with the boundary between performance and theatre. This theatrical dimension is made up of two parts. The first part of the theatrical dimension consists of sets and staging, and the second part consists of performance structures which include scripts, narratives and re-enacting. When I write that the theatrical dimension engages with the boundary between performance and theatre I am referring to scholar Mieke Bal’s various analyses of theatricalisation in video art and the way she explores boundaries of performance and theatre in her writing. Bal, in the essay ‘Memory Acts: Performing Subjectivity’, writes:

⁴⁹³ Tom McCarthy, 2005, p. 111.

Theatricality is a theme as well as a mode of this work. But its very thematic presence also changes the theoretical status of thematics. For, in all its promise of narrativity, no story is enacted. The theme's presence thus emphasises its own status as self-reflexivity.⁴⁹⁴

In the works discussed in this chapter the fractured narratives are self-referential, and refer to different traumas. The theatricalisation and re-enactment of these traumas is at the core of The Prop Object.

In her essay 'Setting the Stage: the Subject Mise-en-scène', Mieke Bal writes:

Performance, for me, was initially just a word, performativity a theoretical concept. Performance – the unique execution of a work – is of a different order than performativity, an aspect of a word - or work – that *does* what it says. Hence, performance is not to performativity what matter is to materiality, the concrete to the abstract, or the object term to the theoretical term.⁴⁹⁵

For Bal, performativity is doing something; performance is acting out.⁴⁹⁶ Bal notes further:

Theatre, light, and stage: might they have an intrinsic relationship to each other? And is that the 'message' of video installations? This is when my academic identity kicks in, and I begin to think about what it means to 'perform' a play or dance in an age of the theoretical over-extension of the concept of the *performative*.⁴⁹⁷

This is what performance is within a theatrical dimension, and it can be analysed within the work of Oursler, McCarthy and Kelley. Bal's framing of the mise-en-scène helps to indicate how the theatrical dimension has two parts. One part is formed of

⁴⁹⁴ Mieke Bal, 'Memory Acts: Performing Subjectivity', *Performance Research*, 5:3 (2000), 102-114 (p. 114).

⁴⁹⁵ Mieke Bal, 'Setting the Stage: the Subject Mise-en-scène', in Christopher Eamon and Stan Douglas (eds.), *Art of Projection* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), pp. 167-181 (p. 168).

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁷ Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 29.

sets/staging and the second part is the performance structures, which are formed of scripts/narratives and re-enactments.

The first part of the theatrical dimension, or the sets, in these works revolve around the relationship of television and stages to the screen or to the projected image in order to form a constructed reality. In this chapter, the impact of DIY sets and constructed stages in television, and their impact on the video works, is considered in the section titled 'Television, Sets, Screens, Staging *mise-en-scène*'. The relationship of set to stage to screen will be questioned. Bal's definition and framing of the *mise-en-scène* will also be part of this analysis in the same section of this chapter and continued in the section titled Re-enactment.

The second part of the theatrical dimension is the performance structures, which include scripts, narratives and re-enacting. The performance structures have fractured narrative elements in their scripts, that are informed by, or based on, principles of theatre. With video, you are in control – you can rewind and fast forward and you can arrange the material in a different order. The world is fragmented, and you can creatively manipulate time at will, chopping up narrative structures.⁴⁹⁸ The works in this chapter also engage with re-enactment, and part of this is the re-enactment of the representations of trauma as well as the psychological roots of repetition in trauma. This chapter will explore how this brings about a theatricalisation of trauma, which is something *The Prop Object* contends with. In this chapter. *The Prop Object* engages in different ways with trauma and psychosexual development, which will be explored in the works investigated in this chapter.

The term 'theatrical property' pre-dated the contemporary word 'prop', and referred to objects used in stage productions. During the Renaissance, theatre troupes were formed as co-operatives, and they pooled resources and objects,

⁴⁹⁸ Vivian Sobchak, 'The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Photographic, Cinematic and Electronic "Presence"', in Sobchak, 2004, pp. 135-164.

which became the general property of the troupe. These objects were later referred to as props.⁴⁹⁹ A prop can also be an object used for play and it can be a support structure. 'Propo', an exhibition in 2012 at Hauser & Wirth Gallery, Zurich, featured a collection of photographs of objects from the history of Paul McCarthy's performances. McCarthy commented:

Between 1972-1983, I did a series of performances which involved masks, bottles, pans, uniforms, dolls, stuffed animals, etc. After the performances these objects were either left behind or they were collected and stored in suitcases and trunks to be used in future performances. In 1983, the closed suitcases and trunks containing these performance objects were stacked on a table and exhibited as sculpture. In 1991, I opened the suitcases and trunks, photographing each item. The group of photographs in their entirety was titled PROPO.⁵⁰⁰

McCarthy's cataloguing of the props, the theatrical property of the oeuvre of his performances, is one configuration of the prop. The Prop Object foregrounds and reconfigures the prop. If one approach to configuring the prop is McCarthy's way – de-contextualising it from its performances or original assertions or considering the role of the prop in the performance, something various scholars have discussed in relation to Kelley, McCarthy and Oursler's work – then I would like to reconfigure it so that The Prop Object is not just about the props that make up the works, or videos. The Prop Object is reconfigured as the relationship of the boundary between performance and theatre, the use of sets to form constructed realities, and how this impacts on the relationship of the stage or staging to the screen, the role of the scripts, narratives and the re-enactment of trauma.

A critique of the invisibility of Whiteness, a topic extensively evaluated within Critical Race Studies, will be used to support this configuration of The Prop Object.

⁴⁹⁹ Margaret Harris, *Theatre Props* (New York: Drama Book Specialists/Publishers, 1975), p. 7.

⁵⁰⁰ Paul McCarthy, 'Propo' at Hauser & Wirth Zürich', Exhibitions, *Mousse Magazine*, available at: < <http://moussemagazine.it/paul-mccarthy-propo/> > [accessed 04 August 2018].

This is how The Prop Object comes into being in a different way when I name it as such. This is the claim I am making on behalf of these objects in the works analysed in this chapter. I am drawing attention to these things and outlining and giving them the name of The Prop Object, which lets it come into being, and this is part of my contribution to knowledge in this PhD.

This chapter also explores the relationship of television sets and the screen to the theatrical stage. From this I will explore the role of scripts and narratives in the artworks that constitute The Prop Object. This leads the way to an analysis of the re-enactment of trauma and the theatricalisation of trauma in the works. The originality of my enterprise consists in part of the analyses of how the process of the theatrical dimension, including the theatricalisation of trauma, is enacted in these artworks and how certain concepts in Critical Race Studies can offer a framework with which to analyse the process of The Prop Object. With The Prop Object, the idea of externalisation is mediated by a sense of things emerging from the television screen and set, including paranoia, anxiety and trauma. This chapter visualises externalisation by considering psychoanalytical objects emerging, or trying to emerge, from the screen as a consequence of repression or trauma.

The Invisibility of Whiteness

The works that constitute The Prop Object have different social contexts. In the essay 'The Matter of Whiteness', Richard Dyer writes:

[...] the racial imagery of white people – not the images of other races in white cultural production, but the latter's imagery of white people themselves. This is not done merely to fill a gap in the analytic literature, but because there is something at stake in looking at or continuing to ignore, white racial imagery. As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as

long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm.⁵⁰¹

The role of Whiteness in the differing social contexts that The Prop Object constitutes opens up the possibility of a wider critique that considers whether it makes itself aware of these contexts or not. The invisibility of Whiteness offers a lens through which to analyse The Prop Object, and it has been a lens or mode of analysis in literature studies. The invisibility of Whiteness is a critical tool that confronts the ways in which the white spaces of the worlds that occupy The Prop Object are critically analysed as non-racialised in the way they are presented in the works.

The narratives and scripts, as well as the sets, that constitute The Prop Object can be read via this lens of the invisibility of Whiteness. Scholars such as Dyer, AnnLouise Keating and Ruth Frankenberg have formulated definitions and articulated debates about this. In literature and literary studies, author Toni Morrison has also written about this concept in various ways, as I will discuss as this section progresses. The sociological perspective and framework that the construct of Whiteness and, moreover, the invisibility of Whiteness, offers can illuminate how Whiteness functions in The Prop Object. The invisibility of Whiteness in The Prop Object hints at the hidden markers of Whiteness in society. Furthermore, the role of Whiteness in these works is significant to them and the economic and social currency depicted in them.

Oursler's Catholicism and the narratives surrounding it in his scripts for *The Loner* and *Grand Mal*, McCarthy and Kelley's suburban cable public-access television show and familial dynamics in the narrative for *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup* and Kelley's white suburban high-school yearbooks and re-constructed scenarios in *Day is Done*, all embody specific types of Whiteness. Such structures and infrastructures

⁵⁰¹ Richard Dyer, 'The Matter of Whiteness', in *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (2nd ed) (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 1-40 (pp. 9-10).

underpinning American society have been analysed in Whiteness Studies and within Critical Race Studies. Ruth Frankenberg, in her book *White Women, Race Matters: the Social Construction of Whiteness*, writes that '[...] whiteness is inflected by nationhood, such that Whiteness and Americanness, though by no means coterminous, are profoundly shaped by one another'.⁵⁰² The Prop Object has narratives and scripts that can be explored for the role that Whiteness plays in them. They are constituted by and embody a certain American-ness.

AnnLouise Keating, in the article 'Interrogating "Whiteness", (De) Constructing "Race"', notes that the 'invisible omnipresence gives "whiteness" a rarely acknowledged position of dominance and power'.⁵⁰³ This invisible omnipresence is overtly, and sometimes not overtly, part of the works. A sense of the normativity of the dominance of Whiteness becomes reinforced in situations in which people of colour are absent in the settings of the schools, bars, public spaces, homes, workplaces and churches, as seen in the works discussed in this chapter. This will be analysed in more detail as this chapter progresses.⁵⁰⁴ The Prop Object represents the invisibility of an omnipresent Whiteness. In this chapter, the invisibility of Whiteness is foregrounded in order to critique how the white spaces function in The Prop Object as non-racialised, representing a specific economic or social currency and embodying a certain American-ness.

The Prop Object looks at the omnipresent, invisible aspects of white America, including Catholic narratives, and the dreams and stories that make up Oursler's works; the public-access television show and the trauma of the white family in McCarthy and Kelley's work and the high-school experience and its yearbooks,

⁵⁰² Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 36.

⁵⁰³ AnnLouise Keating, 'Interrogating "Whiteness", (De)Constructing "Race"', *College English*, 57.8 (1995), 901-918.

⁵⁰⁴ For an analysis of social settings and the exclusion of people of colour see: Elijah Anderson, 'The White Space', *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 1:1 (2015), 10-21.

proms, gymnasium events, American farmstead songs and nativity plays in schools in Kelley's *Day is Done*.

Author Toni Morrison offered a critique of Whiteness in relation to absence. In her essay 'On Herman Melville', which was included in the book *Black on White: Black Writers on What it Means to be White*, she equates trauma with the following excerpt from Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. The chapter in *Moby-Dick* that the excerpt is from is titled 'The Whiteness of the Whale'. It reads: 'This visible [colored] world seems formed in love, the invisible [white] spheres were formed in fright'.⁵⁰⁵ Functioning similarly, the invisibility of Whiteness in *The Prop Object* refers to personal traumas, and an omnipresence of Whiteness, deployed and depicted in a very different way, as I mentioned, to that in which Whiteness was critiqued in Chapter 2. Morrison writes '[...] invisible things are not necessarily "not-there"; that a void may be empty but not be a vacuum. In addition, certain absences are so stressed, so ornate, so planned, they call attention to themselves; arrest us with intentionality and purpose, like neighbourhoods that are defined by the population held away from them'.⁵⁰⁶ Here Morrison questions the role of Whiteness in literature, specifically referring to an erasure or absence of the African-American experience and presence in certain literature. The invisibility of Whiteness in *The Prop Object* contends with the ubiquity of Whiteness by not making explicit that these works are about a critique of Whiteness (which will be key to the analysis of the works in Chapter 5, *The Suburban Object*), but instead by contending with the presence of Whiteness, and the absence of the acknowledgment of it. This is a way that the invisibility of Whiteness functions in this chapter.

⁵⁰⁵ Toni Morrison, 'On Herman Melville' (1988), in David Roediger, *Black on White: Black Writers on What it Means to be White*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1998), p. 214.

⁵⁰⁶ Toni Morrison, 'Unspeakable Things Unspoken: the Afro-American Presence in American Literature,' *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 28: 1 (Winter 1998), 100.

When the invisibility of Whiteness manifests within The Prop Object it carves out a space of normativity that is not only exclusive, but also assumes a norm, and offers a less direct auto-critique of Whiteness. The invisibility of Whiteness in The Prop Object is part of what makes it a relevant way to dissect and talk about Whiteness. It is not acknowledged in the work overtly. It is not included in the artist's critiques or in other art-historical critiques of this work. Ruth Frankenberg, in her essay 'The Mirage of an Unmarked Whiteness', writes about moments when people are unaware whether Whiteness is visible or invisible.

The phrase "the invisibility of whiteness" refers in part to moments when whiteness does not speak its own name. At those times, as noted, whiteness may simply assume its own normativity. It may also refer to those times when neutrality of normativity is claimed for some kinds of whiteness, with whiteness frequently simultaneously linked to nationality.⁵⁰⁷

Television screens and sets, and their DIY nature, will be considered in the following section in order to examine how they impact on the works.

Television, Sets, Screens, Staging, Mise-en-scène

The field of media archaeology and other analyses of the intersections of art, technology, media and cultural studies have considered the television as an object. The television is a box. It is a design object. It is a piece of furniture that you look into. It is a domesticated object. It occupies different definitions of objecthood. In this environment, the television offers a private encounter, and the living room is redefined around this object.

During the 1950s and 1960s, when McCarthy, Oursler and Kelley were growing up, the television was an increasingly domesticated object. With the televisual, objects

⁵⁰⁷ Ruth Frankenberg, 'The Mirage of an Unmarked Whiteness', in Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Eric Klinenberg, Irene J. Nexica & Matt Wray (eds.), *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 72-96 (p. 81).

are manifested in a precise way and they are shown on the screen but interpreted as coming from out of the television, and this was mediated by the technology of the cathode ray tube.

In *The Joy of Sets: a Short History of the Television*, Chris Horrocks writes about the television as a material object. He observes: 'It occupies a dimension unlike any other artefact, because it inhabits a space between presence and absence: both a screen and a window'.⁵⁰⁸ Horrocks writes about histories of televisions and various interpretations of their cultural significance. He notes that 'The television's material form involved an extension of the object into the socio-cultural space it occupied'.⁵⁰⁹

In this chapter of my PhD the television is addressed as an object that is externalised into a space in which its role, functionality and aesthetics is questioned. The televisual space is an environment, according to Horrocks: 'The television appears in films as a symbol of social as well as personal dysfunction where it is introduced into an existing social arrangement in an attempt to restore or repair already existing discontents and frustrations'.⁵¹⁰ This is a way to think about the anxieties and trauma that are a part of The Prop Object. Horrocks also writes about various films, such as *The Ring* and *Poltergeist*, and how these films are similar to *Videodrome* in that they have scenes in which things are coming out of televisions. In his examples, however, the scenes he writes about include depictions of distinctly human forms, and bodies coming out of the screen. In *Videodrome* it is the intestines and guts that are externalised from the screen which are of interest in this thesis, as I explored in The Gloopy Object in particular. In *Videodrome*, the character of Brian O'Blivion, who is a pastiche of cultural theorist Marshall McLuhan, comments that the television begins to embody and represent

⁵⁰⁸ Chris Horrocks, *The Joy of Sets: a Short History of the Television* (London: Reaktion Books, 2018), p. 7.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 115 -116.

a human-like form. In the film the television is an object that represents the merging of illusion and reality. These qualities are also important to The Prop Object which, through the use of sets, scripts and narratives, dissolves the boundaries between illusion and reality – a theme that is seen in the film *Videodrome*, and one that is also common to the representation of television in contemporary media theory. Vito Acconci, in 'Television, Furniture and Sculpture: The Room with the American View', refers to *Videodrome* in writing about television screens, saying that 'the person functions as a "screen", a simulation, of self. Television confirms the diagnosis that the boundaries between inside and outside are blurred: the diagnosis that "self" is an outdated concept'.⁵¹¹

The Prop Object can be distinguished from a history of certain exhibitions in which artists have worked with television as a commentary on consumerism, or as a way to confront debates around surveillance and the media.⁵¹² The Prop Object deviates from this history but is informed by it. The Prop Object focuses on the format of the television set as a way to create colour palettes. The Prop Object is also informed by the narratives of television programmes. This will be explored in more detail in the following section, entitled Scripts and Narratives.

⁵¹¹ Vito Acconci, 'Television, Furniture, and Sculpture: The Room with the American View' in Doug Hall, Sally Jo Fifer, David B. Bolt and David A. Ross (eds.), *Illuminating Video: An Essential Guide to Video Art* (New York: Aperture, in association with the Bay Area Video Coalition, 1990), pp. 125-126.

⁵¹² Exhibitions such as 'TV as a Creative Medium', shown at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York from May 17 to June 14, 1969, are important to the history of video art in America. This was one of the first exhibitions to display solely video art, and is identified as integral to the development of video art. This exhibition featured the work of Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Frank Gillette and Ira Schneider. The literature on this expansive field includes: Roy Arnes, *On Video* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988); Stuart Comer, *Film and Video Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2009); Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Jeremy Butler *Television: Critical Methods and Applications* (London: Routledge, 2011); Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists: Cinema, Space, Site and Screen* (Bristol: Intellect, 2009); Sean Cubitt, *Timeshift: On Video Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991); Sean Cubitt, *Video Media as Art and Culture* (London: Palgrave, 1993); David Joselit, *Feedback: Television Against Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007); Michael Rush, *Video Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003); Ira Schneider and Beryl Korot, *Video Art: an Anthology* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976).

In 'Performance Art After TV', Sven Lütticken discusses the influence of televisual characteristics and formats on video art. He writes:

During the 1960s, performance art was not yet a common term for denoting the new forms of live art. The new theatricality was conceptualized in different ways: as event, as happening or, in Germany, as *Aktion*... But what are the specific properties of a television performer and of television performance? How has televisual performance infiltrated and shaped art since the early 1960s? And how do video and performance art intervene in the temporality of tv and the new, televisual modes of acting?⁵¹³

Mise-en-scène is a way to frame the relationship of The Prop Object to sets and staging and how a television performance, as Lütticken would define it, is enacted.

Mieke Bal defines mise-en-scène as follows:

Borrowed from theatre, *mise en scène* indicates the overall artistic activity whose results will shelter and foster the performance, which by definition, is unique. But in the video installation, where the performance on the stage may sometimes be barely articulated, it is primarily the viewer who is caught up on the stage and has to perform. This enactment by the audience, this performance in performativity, is the only way that artwork can actually not only be, but also do, work. In this sense, video art says, art is theatre, or it is not. Rather than standing for a disingenuous, inauthentic subjectivity that parades as authentic, theatricality is the production of the subject – its staging. In this sense, the concept of *mise en scène* sets the stage for the performance of performativity and, in turn, for the staging of subjectivity.⁵¹⁴

Bal writes of *mise en scène*: '[...] routine is slowed down, self-awareness is increased, and satisfaction is gained from going outside ourselves. Theatricality, offering a fictional realm of experiment and dreaming precisely because of its artificiality, remains unassaulted. It offers interactive images of that binding'.⁵¹⁵ The

⁵¹³ Lütticken, 2013, p.110.

⁵¹⁴ Bal, 2009, p. 171.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

Prop Object analyses subjectivity, illusions and imagined realities. There are both real and virtual environments. Kelley, McCarthy and Oursler were influenced by the turn towards television as a dominant new medium in America.⁵¹⁶

In a conversation between Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler published in *An Endless Script*, Oursler says he wants to get into the television set itself, noting that he was fascinated by videotapes and the technology of video because it 'seemed to fit my hyperactive state of mind. It was something that I could play back instantly, like an audiocassette [...] I think I was interested in getting into this space that was unattainable, that was reserved or another part of culture'.⁵¹⁷ Kelley asks Oursler, 'You mean television?' and Oursler replies, 'Yes actually getting into the box itself'.⁵¹⁸ They continue to discuss the ubiquity of television and also the limited access to production by ordinary viewers. Their interest is in the production, the staging of sets, and what makes up the television performance. Oursler reminisces about the children's television programmes he used to watch. He says: 'TV is a magical world that you cannot get into'.⁵¹⁹ Oursler and Kelley then discuss working with narratives, television melodramas and puppet shows, and the way this aesthetic and its production values borders with video art.⁵²⁰ Oursler's interest in low-resolution production values and how this was balanced with a sense of hyper-reality was important to the way he constructed his sets in the 1980s.⁵²¹ Oursler would cover an object with tape and the camera would capture it with a similar perspective or depth of vision as the wall behind it. Oursler, in interview with Kelley, stated:

⁵¹⁶ For information about this particular television history see: Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); David E. and Marshall J. Fisher, *Tube: The Invention of Television* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997); Mary Ann Watson, *Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience since 1945* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group 1997).

⁵¹⁷ Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler, 'An Endless Script', in *Interviews by Mike Kelley* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2005), pp. 201- 202.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid.

⁵²⁰ Ibid., pp. 215-17.

⁵²¹ Ibid., p. 219.

I realized that I could alter an image easily. I would put a little bit of paint or tape on something and the camera would read it in the same way as the wall behind it. That really interested me, that I could collapse space like that; space was completely malleable. That was the thing that I really loved about video right from the beginning.⁵²²

Oursler was interested in using graphic ideas from painting and adapting these to video in these early video works. Oursler would, according to Kelley, look at the monitor while he painted the sets for these early video works, altering the colour on the camera via camera controls. This manipulation of colour and light would be achieved by looking at the monitor while painting. Oursler, talking about his early video aesthetic, stated that he was less interested in the relationship to television and video work and was instead '[...] trying to take images off the TV screen and have them resonate with sculpture [...]'⁵²³ Oursler cites his interest in the histories of early film and Georges Nelly as an influence.⁵²⁴ Important to note is the impact of Bruce Nauman's work on Oursler in relation to the video monitor, sculpture and installation.⁵²⁵

Oursler has commented when speaking about his work that he was interested in the playfulness of pictorial representation and psychological states and fantasy images. He was interested in the ways that some filmmakers were able to perfect the theatrical effects that they were unable to create in the theatre, such as depicting people levitating or the occurrence of explosions.⁵²⁶

The Loner and *Grand Mal* have a particular relationship to the television screen.

Oursler refers to the idea of getting inside the box, and this process is mediated by

⁵²² Ibid., p. 202.

⁵²³ Ibid., p. 219.

⁵²⁴ Ibid., p. 203.

⁵²⁵ For an interview between Oursler and Nauman, see: 'Ways of Seeing: The Warped Vision of Bruce Nauman' in Robert C. Morgan (ed.), *Bruce Nauman* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). pp. 310-316.

⁵²⁶ Kelley, 2005, p. 203.

external sets. The sets he makes are the internal components of the television set, externally shown and filmed on his hand-painted sets. This process involved Oursler in getting out of the box and onto/into a stage, or a set.

In McCarthy and Kelley's *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*, the television set is externalised and in Kelley's *Day is Done* another type of externalisation occurs.



Figure 4.1: Tony Oursler, *The Loner*, 1980, detail with artist.



Figure 4.2 and 4.3: Tony Oursler, *The Loner*, 1980, detail.



Figure 4.4 and 4.5: Tony Oursler, *The Loner*, 1980, detail.



Figure 4.6 and 4.7: Tony Oursler, *The Loner*, 1980, detail.

In Tony Oursler's *The Loner*, the main character's narrative script (dialogue) centres on his adolescent, psychosexual obsessions and moments of paranoia. The psychodrama of the script and video focuses on specific moments in the character's storyline which deal with fixations, obsessions and fantasies. The Loner, or the main character, begins the video by confronting existential questions about his birth process. He says in the beginning that he knew he was a mistake.⁵²⁷ Throughout the narration, the viewer is told that The Loner is formed of an eggshell body, which cracked or was crushed. The character of The Loner is then seen as incomplete, physically and spiritually. The Loner in the video takes a variety of forms. Some of his forms are made with gum, or are made of cardboard, or are insect-shaped.⁵²⁸ At the end of the narrative, The Loner fantasises or dreams about a potential scenario in the future in which he gets married, and his prospects of happiness are pointed out as being elusive. Dreamlike states and fantasies are how The Loner builds his own reality system. The video concludes with the main character saying: 'There is a little bit of The Loner in everybody'.⁵²⁹ Social awkwardness in adolescence and in adulthood is part of the narratives and script in *The Loner*. In particular, there is a scene featuring people in a social setting, in which the social awkwardness of the main character within group settings is noted or commented on by the narrator. The main character is also portrayed as paranoid and as a hermit, referring to unrequited love. One scene features a car accident and the Loner makes comments about trauma. The script refers to his solitary life and time spent alone at home, the interior of which is depicted in the video as grey and mouldy. There are scenes of hallucinations and daydreaming that are repeated in the video, and an ambient, drone-like music is heard throughout. At one point the narrator comments that the Loner is 'reminded of something that happened a long time ago'.⁵³⁰ The Loner's repetition of his inability to recall events or memories is noted throughout the video. The narrator says, 'he studied himself closely: if

⁵²⁷ In the video *The Loner*, by Tony Oursler (1980) [on video and DVD].

⁵²⁸ Minkowski, 1985, pp. 4-5.

⁵²⁹ In the video *The Loner*, by Tony Oursler (1980) [on video and DVD].

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

beauty was in the eye of the beholder then so was ugliness'.⁵³¹ The closing credits of the video are recited by Oursler standing inside a cardboard television set. The world that is inhabited, and the social backdrop, in the video is entirely white: this can be seen as a less overt gesture of Whiteness, where Whiteness is the assumed norm.⁵³² There are allusions to the notion of a void and of spiritual and physical absences in *The Loner*, and these are also part of the narrative in Oursler's video *Grand Mal*.



Figure 4.8 : Tony Oursler, *Grand Mal*, 1981, detail.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² For an analysis of social settings and the exclusion of people of colour see Anderson, 2015.



Figure 4.9 and 4.10: Tony Oursler, *Grand Mal*, 1981, detail.



Figure 4.11 and 4.12 and 4.13: Tony Oursler, *Grand Mal*, 1981, detail.



[REDACTED]

Figure 4.14 and 4.15: Tony Oursler, *Grand Mal*, 1981.

In *Grand Mal*, Oursler wanted the video and narrative to focus on a young Catholic man experiencing a grand mal, an epileptic seizure. Oursler has defined a grand mal as an 'extreme state of consciousness in which all of an individual's sensations, emotions, beliefs and memories are "suffered" simultaneously, in a mass (for the profane) and a glut (for the sanctimonious) of misfired neurons'.⁵³³ The metaphor of the grand mal in this video represents Oursler's interest in apocalyptic moments, paranoia, anxiety and moments of existential crisis. The video offers fractured or fragmented narratives or narrations that are dream-like or hallucinatory sequences. Oursler's themes of religion, Catholicism, stories, myths, fear, horror, humour, sex and death feature in this script. The audio elements of the video include a layered sound and dream-like narration, influenced by the Theatre of the Absurd.⁵³⁴ The video focuses on the duality of life and the passage of death, as well as the experience of altered states of reality. *The Loner* and *Grand Mal* have similar aesthetics in their hand-painted, cardboard sets. At the beginning of the video the narrator says, 'Wake up, wake up – have a cup of coffee. What do you take, salt or sugar?'⁵³⁵ There is a scene of two sperm-like figures painted on a backdrop, conversing with each other about car accidents. The figures also attempt to recall their dream about friends who have passed away. Life, death and the afterlife are referenced in the script. There is also a scene featuring a painting of a saint-like image in a living room of a home, weeping tears. Another scene depicts painted cardboard snakes in a garden, alluding the Garden of Eden. The narrator can be heard referring to concepts of good versus bad. There are references to Catholicism in the script throughout, as well as images of a Christ-like figure with his feet dangling above crudely made cardboard spikes, and representations of dualities of good and bad, heaven and hell. There are scenes of hallucinations, similar to those in *The Loner*. The phrase 'We are lost' is repeated three times and there is a scene showing a car accident, echoing similar scenes of a traumatic

⁵³³ Minkowski, 1985, p. 5.

⁵³⁴ Kelley and Oursler, 'An Endless Script', in *Interviews by Mike Kelley*, 2005, pp. 205- 206.

⁵³⁵ In the video *Grand Mal*, by Tony Oursler (1981) [on video and DVD].

accident in *The Loner*.⁵³⁶ This video also has a similar anticipatory anxiety-inducing soundtrack, with harsh bass notes and drone-like sounds. Aesthetically similar to *The Loner*, with its use of hand-painted sets and cardboard, *Grand Mal* also shares with *The Loner* themes of trauma following car accidents, Catholicism, religious dualities and domestic interiors. The cadence and tone of the narration, as well as the tone of the music, is also similar. Whiteness is also represented in this video as an assumed norm.

In conversation with Oursler, Kelley recalls that Oursler worked on the sets whilst filming *Grand Mal* and *The Loner*. Oursler would look at the monitor while painting the sets. This would then shift the colour on the camera itself to affect the image. Mixing paints on camera using camera colour controls also helped to create certain colour effects, leading to the formation of unusual, hyper-real colours. The richness and layering of colours created fictional or dream-like sequences in the works, which was at times based on the artificiality of the sets.⁵³⁷

Oursler's *The Loner* and *Grand Mal* are visually coherent in the way they produce a representation of reality from the flatness of two-dimensional space through their sets. This also impacts on the role of the viewer, because it affects their experience of the video when looking at two-dimensional painted sets undergoing a temporal shift.

Scripts, Narratives

There is a specific sense of temporality in the scripts and narratives in *The Prop Object*. Through their use of duration, fracturing and repetition, the scripts and narratives of *The Prop Object* provide a particular experience of time. There is a specific variation in time, and in the passing of time. *The Prop Object* builds on this

⁵³⁶ In the video *Grand Mal*, by Tony Oursler (1981) [on video and DVD].

⁵³⁷ Kelley and Oursler, 'An Endless Script', 2005, pp. 201- 202.

and incorporates speech, narrative elements and mainly fractured narratives embedded into their scripts.

The scripts and narratives of *The Prop Object* focus on trauma, which is in part represented via notions of repetition, unfolding in the performances. Hans-Thies Lehmann, in *Postdramatic Theatre*, argues that '[...], experimental theatre becomes "shorter" under the influence of accelerated rhythms of perception: with pieces no longer being oriented towards the psychological unfolding of action and character, performance durations of an hour or less can often suffice'.⁵³⁸ Specifically, Lehmann is talking about experimental theatre, and how this format produces variation in performances where there is little psychological unfolding of a character.

In *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*, by Paul McCarthy with Mike Kelley, two separate tapes (*Family Tyranny* and *Cultural Soup*) were edited and shown together. The collaborative video was filmed over the course of two days on a set that McCarthy constructed in a public-access community television studio. Kelley performed the part of a rebellious, adolescent son to McCarthy's abusive father. The set that was constructed by McCarthy was made in order to parody popular television comedy shows (sitcoms), in a domestic setting.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁸ Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 137.

⁵³⁹ Cameron, Phillips, Vidler and Jones, 2000.



[REDACTED]

Figure 4.16 and 4.17: Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley, *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*, 1987, detail.



Figure 4.18 and 4.19: Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley, *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*, 1987, detail.



Figure 4.20 and 4.21: Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley, *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*, 1987, detail.



Figure 4.22 and 4.23: Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley, *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*, 1987, detail.

The final edited video is a series of improvised sequences of family dynamics interspersed with occasional scripted moments. The video also features a parody of a TV cooking demonstration in which McCarthy moulds and squishes wet glue-like substances onto a doll and into stainless steel bowls.⁵⁴⁰ *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup* is a pivotal work because it displays how, influenced by the use of sets and staging, McCarthy and Kelley increasingly made video installations part of their work into the 1990s and onwards. It is important to note, in relation to his production methods and his reliance on constructed sets, that McCarthy sourced unused, disused or formerly used sets from the film and television industry directly.⁵⁴¹

In the video *Family Tyranny*, McCarthy forcefully pours a pitcher of wet paint and plaster into a measuring funnel that is placed in the pierced mouth of a doll that is constructed of a stick and a circular head-like shape. Here McCarthy is mimicking television cooking shows in which a recipe is demonstrated. The performance takes place in a kitchen that once was a part of a television set as indicated by wood panelling, a couch, a table and kitchen furniture. McCarthy recites instructions thus: 'Do it slowly. Let him feel it; let him get used to it. They'll remember it. Don't worry about that, they'll remember it, they'll use it'.⁵⁴²

Mayonnaise is featured in close-up sequences and shots, and there is an anthropomorphised polystyrene sphere with a funnel attached to it. The character of the son is performed by Kelley. In the video Kelley's character tries to escape the home and is forced to engage in physical altercations with the character of the father, performed by McCarthy. The repeated phrases of 'Daddy come home from work again, Daddy come home from work', and 'I'm so sorry', are sung or spoken

⁵⁴⁰ In the video *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*, by Paul McCarthy with Mike Kelley (1987) [on video and DVD].

⁵⁴¹ Mike Kelley, Franz West, Catherine Bastide; Anne Pontégenie, *Mike Kelley/ Franz West* (Brussels: OneTwoThree; Vienna: Pakesch & Schlebrugge, 2001), pp. 28 -30.

⁵⁴² In the video *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*, by Paul McCarthy with Mike Kelley (1987) [on video and DVD].

by McCarthy.⁵⁴³ In increasing moments of frustration McCarthy's character refers to the son as a 'very bad boy'.⁵⁴⁴ The video offers limited additional narration or language, but there are repeated phrases and repeated actions of hitting a baseball bat on top of a kitchen work surface, the tapping and smashing of plastic containers, and a small doll with blonde hair is repeatedly smashed into a metal mixing bowl.

In the video *Cultural Soup* a particular shot, or scene, of a bowl and a metal sieve being tossed in a room constructed of a wood-panelled set features repeatedly. A boy doll and a girl doll are covered in mayonnaise, and the phrase 'nice little boys and girls' is repeated.⁵⁴⁵ The phrase 'the son begets the son and the daddy begets the daddy or the son begets the daddy and the daddy begets the son' is repeated.⁵⁴⁶ In both the videos that form *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*, the normative Whiteness of the familial relationships and morality depicted in American television sitcoms is portrayed and parodied. This gesture and reference to the normativity of Whiteness is performed via its scripts and sets.

The scripts and narratives are repetitive and fractured, and they enact a trauma. Repetition is key to the psychological and psychosexual roots of this mechanism of repetition. The use of enacting and acting, re-enacting and repeating are key, as exemplified in writing by Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer on hysteria and recollections or memories. They suggested that '[...] if properly dealt with, these recollections would not return for a second time [...] an image that was talked away will never be seen again'.⁵⁴⁷ This leads me to consider below how re-enactment and remembering, and the repetition of trauma, within the historical,

⁵⁴³ Ibid

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁵ In the video *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup*, by Paul McCarthy with Mike Kelley (1987) [on video and DVD].

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ Freud and Breuer, 2004, p. 297.

psychoanalytical roots of hysteria, is central to The Prop Object. This will be further explored later in this chapter in the section titled 'Trauma and Hysteria'.

Re-enactment

In a scene in Tom McCarthy's book *Remainder*, the main protagonist is speaking to a logistics expert, Naz, whom he had hired in order to plan or produce a series of re-enactments. The logistics expert says, 'I'm not so sure the theatre world is the right place to look for re-enactors'. The protagonist responds, 'You think so?' Naz then suggests looking at 'Community centres? Swimming pools? Supermarket notice boards?'⁵⁴⁸

The suggestions in the book about community centres and community notice boards is a point that informed an interview I conducted with Theatre Studies scholar Stacey Wolf at Princeton University. Wolf presented a paper at a conference on a retrospective of Mike Kelley's work held at PS1 MOMA in 2013. Wolf discussed the role of amateur theatre production and its connection aesthetically and methodologically to Kelley's *Day is Done*, and these concepts presented in her paper informed our interview. I was reminded of the concepts of re-enactment and the meta qualities of re-enacting the re-enactments in *Remainder* while I was viewing *Day is Done* at this retrospective.

The time, functionality and spatio-temporality of *Day is Done* implies movement - similar to the movement that takes place on a stage. The installations are also sculptural and architectural, and they are immersive, perhaps due to their fictionality. The viewer is both inside the scenes in the videos and inside the space of the installations. This relationship of the screen to the viewer is impacted by the viewer's navigation in the installation. A feeling of immersion for the viewer, both within the gallery or exhibition space and within the video in this multiple screen installation, is part of the *Day is Done* experience.⁵⁴⁹ Bal says that this type of

⁵⁴⁸ Tom McCarthy, 2005, p. 112.

⁵⁴⁹ For an analysis of the relationship of screen, navigation and immersion, see: Åkervall, 2016; Mondloch, 2010; Balsom, 2013, and Trodd, 2011. See also: Kelley and Welchman,

experience gives authorship to the viewer, writing that the 'mise en scène as a staging of subjectivity is itself the object being staged'.⁵⁵⁰ Bal writes:

[T]heatre and illusion meet in the field of the subconscious, at the construction site of identity where the subjectivity takes its shape and gains a content; where the personal and private, the intimate and secret are confronted with the public and exposed; where the convention as a rule and duty is negotiated and discussed.⁵⁵¹

The Prop Object operates on the threshold between the imaginative and the real. These are the external and internal aspects of The Prop Object. *Day is Done* is a 50-screen video installation, inspired by musical theatre and comprising a series of video vignettes, each titled 'Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction'. The videos re-enact hundreds of photographs of extra-curricular or after-school activities, such as church pageants, talent shows, dance or music recitals and school assemblies, taken from high-school yearbooks and small-town newspapers. Kelley used this source material and re-enacted it with new music and narratives about trauma, abuse and repressed memory. Characters include vampires, goths, cheerleaders, farmers and demons or devils. The reconstructions from Kelley's videos of these school events are often music-based or incorporate elements of musical theatre. Kelley commented:

I am interested in common socially accepted rituals of deviance, such as Halloween activities. Unlike traditional sports activities, for example, which could be considered propagandastic events designed to inspire in the general population the values of group cooperation and the competitive spirit of capitalism, these events serve no productive function other than being nonsensical escapes from the institutional daily routine. They carry within them a subtle critical subtext [...] ⁵⁵²

Day is Done, 2007, for essays on this relationship throughout and for a DVD of the full collection of videos.

⁵⁵⁰ Bal, 2000, p. 178.

⁵⁵¹ Bal, 2009, p. 25.

⁵⁵² Anne Pontégnie, ed., *Mike Kelley: Educational Complex Onwards 1995-2008* (Geneva : JRP Editions, 2008), p. 165.

Kelley's staged photographs and videos of school events and productions, based on the found source material described above, contain aspects of his own memories of school events from his own youth. For example, 'Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction EAPR 9 Farm Girl' features a young woman dressed in dungarees, a gingham top, a red bandana and a straw hat standing on a small-scale constructed ranch house set and singing and dancing. The lyrics of her song are as follows: 'Tijuana hayride. Animal sacrifice. Liberal conspiracy. Pick a mascot. Come strong cutie pie. Peeking through the biomorphic wig. At nature's mattress. Organic fuck pit. At Ray's Burgers. Two balls burgers. For a young buck. Empty surface facility. Used to mask the hurt inside'.⁵⁵³ The music in this video, and in the other videos as well, have elements of pop, R&B, school sports chants and yodelling. The choreography is a mix of jazz and contemporary dance forms, and mimics staged formal musical sequences. In another video, 'EAPR 28 Nativity Play', the popular format of a school Christmas play is re-enacted and other videos such as 'EAPR#2 (Party Train)' featuring school hallways, classrooms and gymnasiums mixed with dialogue and musical numbers. Other videos in the series feature scenes of high school gymnasiums and tropes of vampires and goths, with Halloween costumes and other fancy dress costumes worn throughout.

Professor Stacy Wolf proposes that the sets, overall production values, choreography and costumes in *Day is Done* are reminiscent of amateur musical theatre productions.⁵⁵⁴ *Day is Done* offers a DIY aesthetic in its constructed sets and costumes. The group of characters performs as if they were a troupe of actors in an amateur community-based theatre, and this, I think, is a key aspect of the series of videos that constitute *Day is Done*. Kelley has commented that he intends

⁵⁵³ For lyrics see Welchman and Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2007; In the video *Day is Done*, by Mike Kelley (2005) [on DVD].

⁵⁵⁴ Interview, Wolf and Stacy Wolf, 'Mike Kelley's *Day is Done* and Community Musical Theatre' at Mike Kelley, 'Looking Forward', December 15, 2013, Ps1 MOMA, New York, December 2013.

the videos to be shown as a whole; however, they can be viewed separately, and they are made with the ethos of a small troupe of actors in a musical.⁵⁵⁵

The Whiteness of the American suburban imagery from the source material is part of the representation in the video installation, highlighted by the normativity of Whiteness in the school settings and in the social settings.



Figure 4.24: Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2005.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.



Figure 4.25: Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2005.

Figure 4.26: Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2005, detail of cast in costumes.



Figure 4.27 and 4.28: Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2005.



Figure 4.29 and 4.30: Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2005, detail.



Figure 4.31: Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2005, detail of a photograph from archival amateur production with a photograph from Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction EAPR 9 Farm Girl.

Figure 4.32: Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2005, detail from Extracurricular Activity Projective Reconstruction EAPR 9 Farm Girl.



Figure 4.33: Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2005, detail from Extracurricular Activity Projective EAP.

Figure 4.34: Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2005, detail of photograph from archival amateur production displayed in the exhibition,

Figure 4.35: Mike Kelley, *Day is Done*, 2005, detail from Extracurricular Activity Projective EAP with detail of photograph from archival amateur production displayed in the exhibition.

In *Day is Done*, viewers navigate through a condensed maze of videos and small separate installations of the videos of fragmented narratives alongside objects depicted in the video. Sets and staging are integral to this work. Kelley commented: 'The viewer entered a darkened gallery to discover a spread of architectural fragments illuminated by moving videotape images'.⁵⁵⁶ He says he wanted the viewer to '[...] intuit some kind of narrative flow'.⁵⁵⁷ Kelley remarked that the work was similar to a musical in that it can be difficult to follow, but it doesn't require a strict linear narrative. However, musicals, or musical plays, as Stacy Wolf commented in a lecture at PS1 MOMA for the Mike Kelley exhibition, are chronologically ordered. Kelley refers to *Day is Done* as 'a kind of fractured feature-length musical'.⁵⁵⁸ In her lecture, Wolf noted that 'Each segment, or rather, each numbered Reconstruction, is made up of musical theatre's elements of music and lyrics, acting and choreography, costume and set design. Kelley is working with aspects of theatrical staging to develop large-scale complex performances'.⁵⁵⁹ Although Kelley uses the term 'reconstructions' for the videos in *Day is Done*, I think what they involve is a reconstructed memory involving repetition, which is part of how I define the role of re-enactment in this work. There is a constructed and an altered reality in the worlds that are represented in *The Prop Object* – or a remembered reality and a rendered reality that is part of *The Prop Object*. The theatrical dimension leads to the way in which *The Prop Object* creates its reality-scapes. *The Prop Object* is both illusory and tangible. *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup* is also a type of re-enactment of a public-access television show. Oursler's works have elements of re-enacting dream sequences or narratives as part of their scripts.

⁵⁵⁶ Kelley, 2007, p. 463.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Stacy Wolf, 'Mike Kelley's *Day is Done* and Community Musical Theatre' at Mike Kelley, 'Looking Forward', December 15, 2013, Ps1 MOMA, New York, December 2013.

Robert Blackson, in 'Once More ... with Feeling: Reenactment in Contemporary Art and Culture', has written about the different terminology associated with re-enactment, such as '[...] simulation, repetition, and reproduction'.⁵⁶⁰ Similarly, Rebecca Schneider, in the book *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Re-enactment*, questions the terminology, saying that there is a porous ground between the terms.⁵⁶¹ Their articulations of the terminology helped me to distinguish that The Prop Object specifically engages with the repetition of scripts and narratives and with the re-enactment of trauma. I will elaborate on the role of trauma towards the end of this section and into the following section. Blackson describes re-enactment as a '[...] transformation through memory, theory, and history to generate unique and resonating results [...]'.⁵⁶² Intersecting with this is Milena Tomic's writing on re-enactment in 'Fidelity to Failure: Re-enactment and Identification in the Work of Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy'. Tomic writes: 'to re-enact is to make something happen once more or many times more, to enter performatively into the very scene of the proposition instead of reproducing it as "mere" image'.⁵⁶³ For Tomic, this form of performativity is like a 're-inhabiting' or a 're-entry'.⁵⁶⁴ Both Blackson and Tomic write about authenticity and the live qualities and truthfulness of re-enactments. Howard Giles, in 'A Brief History of Re-enactment', argues that a sense of authenticity is lacking in re-enactment but there is a tension, or a longing, to convey authenticity. Giles writes, 'Although it can be argued that as a result, re-enactments can't be truly accurate so cannot be taken too seriously, they certainly offer many people their best opportunity to see, smell, touch, feel and generally experience the essential essence of past eras'.⁵⁶⁵ Stemming from this, and citing Giles, Amelia Jones, in 'The Artist is Present: Artistic Reenactments and the Impossibility of Presence', writes about the notion of the live

⁵⁶⁰ Blackson, 2007, p. 30

⁵⁶¹ Schneider, 2011.

⁵⁶² Blackson, 2007, p. 29

⁵⁶³ Tomic, 2013, p.443.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 441

⁵⁶⁵ Howard Giles, 'A Brief History of Re-enactment', quoted by Michael Ned Holte in 'Happening Again', in Phelan, 2012, pp. 3-60 (p.45).

or present moment and the recollection of re-enactment.⁵⁶⁶ There is a tension in the way time is perceived in re-enactments. In her book Rebecca Schneider writes that:

[...] the trouble with re-enactment, it seems, is its capacity to flummox those faith-keepers who hold that the present is fleeting and entirely self-identical, or who hold that the movement from the present to the future is never by way of the past, or who believe firmly in absolute disappearance and loss of the past as well as the impossibility of its recurrence.⁵⁶⁷

Schneider here questions how the viewer, or audience, experiences this sense of the past in the re-enactments. She questions 'the prevalence of presentism, immediacy, and linear time', and she refers to the relationship of temporality and time to re-enactment, suggesting that it is 'full of holes or gaps and art as capable of falling or crossing in and out of the spaces between live iterations'.⁵⁶⁸

These perspectives have helped me to identify that the role of re-enactment in this chapter is not related to its live form or centred on historical frameworks but instead is about both fictionalised scenarios and also elements of non-fictionalised scenarios from the artists' lives.⁵⁶⁹ The Prop Object is a not a fully historical restaging of an event or scenario. Through the repetition of sets, scripts and narratives the artworks re-enact traumas. As I understand it, re-enactment involves an element of repetition which is key to The Prop Object. Repetition is key to the scripts and narratives, and is a key mechanism of the re-enactment of the trauma. For Blackson, repetition is a central feature of re-enactments, to a limited degree. Blackson writes, '[...]Repetition is an exercise often stuck in the present. Its anticipatory action lends itself to habit and is rarely intended to inspire a keener sense of awareness or personal agency. For these reasons, all reenactments are

⁵⁶⁶ Jones, 2011, p. 16.

⁵⁶⁷ Schneider, 2011, p. 53

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁹ See: Kelley, 2007; Cameron, Phillips, Vidler, Jones, 2000; Janus and Moure (eds.), 2001.

repetitions, but few repetitions become reenactments [...].⁵⁷⁰ The Prop Object specifically engages with the re-enactment of trauma and it achieves this by using repetition in its scripts and fractured narratives.

Mechanisms of repetition are a key aspect of trauma studies. Bessel van der Kolk, psychiatrist and researcher on trauma, elucidates: 'the breakdown of the thalamus explains why trauma is primarily remembered not as a story, a narrative with a beginning, middle and end, but as isolated sensory imprints: images, sounds, and physical sensations that are accompanied by intense emotions, usually terror and helplessness.'⁵⁷¹ The fractured nature of narratives that is part of the processing of trauma is a key part of the scripts and narratives discussed in this chapter.⁵⁷²

Trauma and Hysteria

Trauma, and its relation to repetition and re-enactment, has roots in the canon of psychoanalysis. The study of the theatricalisation of trauma is central to understanding the role of The Prop Object. In the catalogue essay for the exhibition 'Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object', curator Paul Schimmel writes about the performative language of trauma. Schimmel considers this to be a sculptural language, and he writes that it '[...] includes visualizing dissociation through spatial and temporal drift'.⁵⁷³ This sculptural language of trauma is something that can be seen in the works that constitute The Prop Object. Schimmel, in the catalogue essay, is specifically writing about McCarthy's early

⁵⁷⁰ Blackson, 2007, p. 30.

⁵⁷¹ Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (London: Penguin, 2014), p. 70.

⁵⁷² For additional writing about trauma and psychoanalysis in the work of McCarthy see: Kristine Stiles, 'Interview: Kristine Stiles in Conversation with Paul McCarthy', in Rugoff, 1996, pp. 19-23; Amelia Jones, 'Paul McCarthy's Inside Out Body and the Desublimation of Masculinity', in *Paul McCarthy* [exh. cat.], 2000, pp. 125-31; Werner, 2011; Paul McCarthy in conversation with John C. Welchman, 'Risks Between: Trauma and Studio, Tape and World', in John C. Welchman (ed.), *The Aesthetics of Risk* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2008), pp. 314-46.

⁵⁷³ Schimmel, 1998, p. 243.

performance work, and the role of trauma within it. He is also commenting on the visuality of trauma. For Schimmel, these early McCarthy performances are 'Numbed, and repetitive, moving in and out of spaces, around and around tables, and other physical/speech acts'.⁵⁷⁴ Pace and temporality is created via repetition, and this brings an internal experience into physical expression. Stemming from the use of repetition as a device to re-enact a trauma, I will consider the role of hysteria and the impact of this on Trauma Studies and the theatricalisation of trauma.

Milena Tomic has written about trauma and re-enactment in the work of Kelley and McCarthy. Writing in particular about *Day is Done*, she observes that 'Fantasy becomes a space for working out intergenerational displacements, contested legacies, and pedagogical traumas of various kinds – even imaginary ones where the position of trauma victim is theatrically inhabited instead of authentically lived'.⁵⁷⁵ Tomic also refers to the repetition involved in trauma when referring to other works by both Kelley and McCarthy, in her phrase '[...] the reiterative mechanism of trauma'.⁵⁷⁶ The mechanism of repetition involved in the memory of trauma is key to the works in this chapter. Issues relating to psychosexual adolescent development and social awkwardness inform the scripts and narratives that constitute The Prop Object. Oursler's *The Loner*, via its script, and *Grand Mal*, via its title and script reference, explore the function and impact of trauma and memories. In both videos phrases and words are repeated which explore social awkwardness, car accidents, death, repressed intimacy, depression, and states of psychosis or hallucination in the storylines and characters. McCarthy and Kelley's *Family Tyranny/ Cultural Soup* engages with trauma when the central figures in the scripts and narratives repeat references to adolescent psychosexual development and moments of abuse. Kelley has commented about *Day is Done*, saying that 'The basic premise is that it's all based on trauma culture, and that's a

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁵ Tomic, 2013, p. 456.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 449.

contemporary motivation [...].⁵⁷⁷ For Kelley, re-enacting the images and rituals evoke trauma from childhood, social settings, social awkwardness and group dynamics.⁵⁷⁸ Kelley also referred to *Day is Done* as 'culturally shared group abuse'.⁵⁷⁹

Georges Didi-Huberman, for instance, in the book *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*, writes about neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot's work at the Salpêtrière Hospital. Didi-Huberman writes that 'The hysteric *puts on view*, and even acts out, exactly that which *she cannot accomplish*'.⁵⁸⁰ He continues by discussing how Charcot developed a 'tableau of hysteria',⁵⁸¹ and that hysteria imitated forms and movements associated with epilepsy, something that he would have witnessed during his work at the Salpêtrière. This framework of hysteria is also a part of the study of trauma in psychology and psychoanalysis.

Janet Beizer, in her book *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-century France*, has written about how hysteria has historically been used as a form of cultural discourse, and that it has conveyed various anxieties of the nineteenth century.⁵⁸² Beizer refers to the mythology of hysteria, writing about the mythology and metaphors of hysteria and the hysteric throughout France in the 1800s. For the purposes of my research, I am interested in the study of the theatricalisation of hysteria and forms of trauma. These conditions are connected to and concerned with memory and remembering, and subsequently with how re-enactment functions.

⁵⁷⁷ Art 21 'Day is Done', Mike Kelley, *Art21*, November 2011, available at: <<https://art21.org/read/mike-kelley-day-is-done/>> [accessed 12 January 2018].

⁵⁷⁸ Kelley's *Educational Complex*, 1995, was an architectural model of previous schools he had attended, including CalArts, where he was a MA student. Repressed memories and traumas were a component of this work, and for Kelley *Day is Done* expanded on this idea. This was discussed in Interview, Welchman and Interview, Wolf.

⁵⁷⁹ Kelley, 2007, p. 461.

⁵⁸⁰ Didi-Huberman, 2003, p. 89.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Beizer, 1994, p. 8.

Charcot's research into hysteria and Beizer's analysis of this condition also outline the role of trauma in hysteria, which is I think is central to how re-enactment functions in *The Prop Object*. Charcot hosted public lecture demonstrations at the Salpêtrière in Paris. These public lectures formed a type of theatricalisation of hysteria in which members of the public could be the audience for a patient's demonstration of their forms of mental illness.⁵⁸³ Charcot would hypnotise the patient, or ask them to perform their hysteria in some manner. Frequently, photographs of the patients would also be shown, often in moments of hysteria or depicting a particular episode of trauma. These photographs were significant for the medical community in order to discuss the wider symptoms and characteristics of the illnesses, but this also added to a sense of spectacle or fetishisation of mental health for the public. The display of hysteria and associated traumas would also be performed in Parisian cabarets, in which performers would mimic symptoms associated with epilepsy, or the grand mal, the title of one of Oursler's works. Performers would use fractured narratives and sequences to depict various noises or movements in order to display forms of hysteria or trauma.⁵⁸⁴ A culture of what it meant to perform and depict trauma was fermenting.

Freud's research and work on forms of trauma, hysteria and the unconscious in psychoanalysis was inspired by Charcot's teachings. Freud studied at the Salpêtrière Hospital, where Charcot was a professor. The Freudian concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, first used in the 1890s, was reworked and referred to by Lacan in the 1950s as 'après-coup'. In the 1980s and 1990s it was referred to as 'afterwardsness' by theorist and psychoanalyst Jean Laplanche; it is key to an understanding of the psychoanalytical roots of trauma.

Freud's theory of *Nachträglichkeit* suggested that when a traumatic event occurs a person is unable to work through it, or there is a retroactive deciphering of the

⁵⁸³ Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: the French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 379-380.

⁵⁸⁴ See: Jan Goldstein, 2001; Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness, & Politics in Modern France: the Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

original traumatic moment, event or instance at a later time in that person's life. The impact of the trauma can be re-enacted by subsequent traumatic experiences or subsequent iterations of the original trauma. Freud worked with this concept of *Nachträglichkeit* to think of personal histories and how they are reworked, revisited or re-enacted based on current experiences. Personal histories were part of how the trauma was experienced originally. The experience of the trauma and its implications can change over time or be revisited in different ways. In the unconscious, time functions in a different way and it alters the experience in the present, and this in turn affects the experience of the trauma. Personal histories are then altered in afterwardsness and their internal reality and the object relations of the internal reality are also altered.⁵⁸⁵

In an interview with Laplanche conducted by Cathy Caruth in 1994, both scholars shed light on the nature of afterwardsness. Caruth remarks in the interview: '[...] you have to take into account what is not known, both at the beginning, and later. What is radically not known'.⁵⁸⁶ The scripts and narratives in *The Prop Object* offer a similar experience to the way Caruth frames the concept of afterwardsness.

Laplanche, speaking about Freud, comments in the interview:

His theory explained that trauma, in order to be psychic trauma, never comes simply from outside. That is, even in the first moment it must be internalized, and then afterwards relived, revived, in order to become an internal trauma. That's the meaning of his theory that trauma consists of two moments: the trauma, in order to be psychic trauma, doesn't occur in just one moment. First, there is the implantation of something coming from outside. And this experience, or the memory of it, must be reinvested in a second moment, and then it becomes traumatic. It is not the first act which is traumatic, it is the internal reviviscence of this memory that becomes traumatic. That's

⁵⁸⁵ Gregory Bistoën, 'Nachträglichkeit: A Freudian Perspective on delayed traumatic reactions', *Theory & Psychology*, 24 (2014), 668-687 available at: <http://users.ugent.be/~scraps/docs/bistoën_vanheule_craps_-_nachtraglichkeit.pdf> [accessed 30 June 2017].

⁵⁸⁶ Cathy Caruth, 'An Interview with Jean Laplanche', (2001), available at: <<http://pmc.iath.virginia.edu/textonly/issue.101/11.2caruth.txt>> [accessed 02 February 2018].

Freud's theory. You find it very carefully elaborated in the "Project for a Scientific Psychology," in the famous case of Emma.⁵⁸⁷

Caruth frames the unknown aspects of afterwardsness, or reliving, remembering or re-enacting of trauma as a state of unknown or fractured beginning and end, alongside Laplanche's framing of afterwardsness, as a state of internalising, then externalising and then reliving the trauma. These theories of how trauma functions is something that is seen in The Prop Object, and defines how it is externalised.

Conclusion

The Prop Object deviates from the object as a prop used in the performance or video. Instead, The Prop Object is particular in that its remit straddles a boundary of illusion and reality, of theatre and performance, and is informed by the relationship between sets and scripts and narratives. It also engages with the repetition of trauma, and this is externalised via the role of re-enactment, or the re-enacting of trauma in the works in this chapter. The Prop Object brings to light the tendencies in this specific group of works by McCarthy, Kelley and Oursler which range from the 1980s to 2005.

The Prop Object in the work of Kelley, McCarthy and Oursler is in part about the relationship to performance and theatre. The Prop Object also engages with the psychoanalytical roots of trauma and the invisibility of Whiteness. Through interviews with scholars such as Stacy Wolf, and by creating the mapping of the theatrical dimension, consisting of sets and performance structures, I have been able to progress the debates surrounding trauma and the relationship of the sets, theatre and the role of the scripts, narratives and re-enacting, to the works in this chapter.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid.

My research adds to a growing discourse around these video works which in some cases have dealt with aspects of trauma but not with a connection to the role of a re-enacting of the traumatic event. Neither the role of Whiteness in this work nor a reading through the lens of Critical Race Studies have previously been engaged with in analyses of these works. The Prop Object is a term I invented to describe a type of object in the work of Kelley, McCarthy and Oursler. I use their works *The Loner*, *Grand Mal*, *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup* and *Day is Done* to describe this type of object. All of the works in this chapter used variations of DIY cardboard or wooden sets, store-bought masks and an assortment of costumes. The progression of the way in which *The Loner*, *Grand Mal* and *Family Tyranny/Cultural Soup* form and perform their scripts, narratives and aesthetics paves the way for the foundations of the video installation *Day is Done*.

My mapping of the theatrical dimension was made of two parts, the first being the sets and the other the performance structures. The sets include stages, and their relation to television was analysed. Bal's concept of the *mise en scène* was used to support the way that the theatrical dimension, as I call it, is informed by the boundary between theatre and performance. The second part of the theatrical dimension consists of performance structures, including scripts, narratives and re-enactment. The Prop Object is imbued with the sense of acting, to perform, to act out, to enact, to put into action and to re-enact. It questions what it means to enact or to re-enact the impact of the active performative restructuring of this action. I am situating The Prop Object within the emergence of Bal's discussion of performance and within the role of the trauma, including its repetition and re-enacting, because it helps to set the scene for the concept of the altered reality of The Prop Object. This also helps me to define how The Prop Object is different from the prop as object, illuminating how The Prop Object teeters on the precipice of the threshold of the real and the imagined. There is a rendered reality and a remembered reality that is part of The Prop Object. Personal histories are then altered in and as a byway of afterwardsness, and their internal reality and the object relations of the internal reality are altered.

This term, The Prop Object, and the mapping I have formed, allow me to analyse this object and the works in this context of the theatrical dimension in order to demonstrate how this framework can enable a different understanding of the artworks in this chapter.

By working with concepts suggested by Didi-Huberman in relation to Charcot's work and Freud's body of writing on trauma and *Nachträglichkeit*, alongside a discussion of the way re-enactment functions, I have extended this approach by adding the mapping I have formed, and this enables an analysis of the role of the theatricalisation of trauma. It also enables an analysis of how repetition and re-enacting are part of the scripts and narratives of the works which are informed by the staging of television, and the relationship of sets to filmed video sets. The writing of Bal and Horrocks has helped me to consider this role, and I have added to the discourse of the works in this chapter by forging connections to the role of the staging and sets, not only to the aesthetics of the works but also to the nature of television as a transition point between inside and outside, the internal and external reality of what is filmed and how it is staged and filmed on the video sets. This again invokes and recalls the concept of things coming in and out of the screen, as seen in the film *Videodrome*, noted in previous chapters. These objects function in different ways according to whether they are on one side of screen or the other. This tension is something that is part of The Prop Object. This begs the question: when everything is in the television, and if and when the television and its screen are hollowed out, then what happens? That is something that The Prop Object grapples with.

The Prop Object is externalised in Kelley, McCarthy and Oursler's work via foregrounding considerations and practices of repetitions and the re-enactment of fractured narratives of trauma, which, marked with the invisibility of Whiteness, are exposed and critiqued by writers in the field of Critical Race Studies.

The Prop Object goes from being understood as an object used as a prop to an object that enters an altered reality and realm in which the video works contend with sets and staging and performance structures. This enables an analysis of the role of trauma in the works and the omnipresence and invisible nature of Whiteness that underscores the works. This in turn leads to identifying and foregrounding a constructed reality of the worlds that are represented in The Prop Objects. The analysis of Whiteness in these works focuses on less overt gestures or positions and the ways that Whiteness can be portrayed as a norm. The next chapter, Chapter 5, The Suburban Object, will explore overt, visible forms of Whiteness and an auto-critique of Whiteness.

CHAPTER 5
THE SUBURBAN OBJECT

Thing 1

Phobic/White Trash

overlapping audio, shadowy figures in a room, projected faces, dark room narratives, a script being read, helicopters, suburbs, towns, nefarious underpinnings of a story, helicopters circling, isolation, paranoia, suits, anxiety, looping thoughts, ruminating, unease, tension, tense, confusion

Thing 2

Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)

a shed, made of cardboard, mess, guts coming out of the shed, objects, tools, nails, posters, machines, drawings, replicas of tools made of cardboard, tubes, a scene, a basketball hoop in a driveway, duct tape, cardboard, sloppy, notes, drawings, garage, clandestine, stories, foil

Thing 3

Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction Release Zone

masks, costumes, props, film set, remote, secluded, mountains, badly formed rubber masks, kitchens and bedrooms, beds, a sense of horror film set abandoned, childhood stories, childhood innocence, blonde wigs, personas, childhood books and stories, mountains, countryside, buckets, rubber skin, liquids, rubber torsos

Introduction

As someone who grew up on the East Coast of America, where the provision of public transport obviates the need to have a car in order to navigate the city, I understood that on the West Coast I would need to drive around congested four-lane freeways during my research trip to Los Angeles. Driving in the city provides a sense of the expanse of different neighbourhoods that make up the wider Los Angeles area. Writers such as Reyner Banham and Italo Calvino found navigating the city, and thereby the sense of spatial relations around Los Angeles, inscrutable, particularly via its freeway system. For Banham, driving was a methodology that he employed during the research for his book *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*. Banham writes, 'So, like earlier generations of English intellectuals who taught themselves Italian in order to read Dante in the original, I learned to drive in

order to read Los Angeles in the original'.⁵⁸⁸ Banham read Los Angeles as a city without a centre. The rapid growth of car use played an important role in the towns of the southern and western states of America, expanding at the cost of the eastern or northern urban industrial cities which were declining economically from the 1950s onwards.⁵⁸⁹ In Calvino's 1972 novel *Invisible Cities*, Los Angeles becomes central to a discussion of the boundless different ways in which cities may be composed. Calvino writes: 'When the forms of cities exhaust their variety, and come apart, the end of cities begins. In the last pages of the atlas there is an outpouring of networks without beginning or end, cities in the shape of Los Angeles [...] without shape'.⁵⁹⁰ Calvino suggests that the shapelessness and contradictions of the sense of space and place in Los Angeles affects the mythology of the city, the lived experience of its residents and the readings of it as a city by tourists or visitors.

Topographically, Los Angeles is a desert, with pockets of neighbourhoods divided by freeway exits. Aerial images of the city look much like decentralised nodes, or a data packet switching network. What many initially misconstrue as a sprawl is in actuality a carefully planned series of neighbourhoods which form the wider Los Angeles area, its neighbourhoods functioning as if they were separate suburbs connected by the expansive freeway system.

The topological structure of this chapter is influenced by the zoned suburban topography of Los Angeles in the West Coast landscape as an arrangement of networked power. Moreover, this chapter is a topology of Los Angeles through, and as such, its suburbs. A mapping of Los Angeles is also my model for an analysis of fractured narratives, a device utilised in the trope of The Suburban Object which

⁵⁸⁸ Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: the Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2009), p. 23.

⁵⁸⁹ Thomas J. Sugrue, 'From Motor City to Motor Metropolis: How the Automobile Industry Reshaped Urban America', *Automobile in American Life and Society* (Dearborn, MI: Henry Ford Museum and University of Michigan, 2005), available at: <<http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu>> [accessed 20 March 2017].

⁵⁹⁰ Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (London: Vintage, 2009), p.139.

is evidenced in/by Tony Oursler's *Phobic/White Trash* (1992) (Fig. 5.1-5.3, pp. 294-295), Jason Rhoades' *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)* (1993) (Fig. 5.4-5.11, pp. 300-305) and Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley's *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction Release Zone* (1992) (Fig. 5.13-5.18, pp. 310-312). The spatial and temporal mapping of Los Angeles allows me to write about this city by considering how it functions socially, culturally and economically. This mapping then allows me to re-contextualise socio-economic issues in the city during the 1990s, including as a central focus an analysis of the exhibition 'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the '90s'. This allows me to consider what has put Los Angeles in a position to impact on and form The Suburban Object in this chapter. The analysis of the idea of The Suburban Object helps me to add scholarship to the study of the role of Los Angeles and the political, social and cultural implications of suburbia and race in the works I focus on in this chapter. It proceeds with sections that further elucidate the role and function of The Suburban Object, followed by an examination of Whiteness in visual culture and a re-contextualisation of the exhibition 'Helter Skelter, L.A. Art in the 1990s'. It will then proceed by examining and studying the three works as a way to frame and ground The Suburban Object. The chapter will conclude with an exploration of recent theories surrounding Whiteness and Critical Race Studies, made possible by the analysis of the works that have enabled me to invent and consider the figure of The Suburban Object.

The Suburban Object

The works referred to in this chapter are all products of their association with the suburban, or critiques of the suburban, and to differing extents use the device of fractured narratives in order to form an auto-critique of Whiteness. This chapter also considers the effect Los Angeles as a city has had on the production of The

Suburban Object and analyses the paradoxes and contradictions in the social and cultural role of the American suburb.⁵⁹¹

In this context, I establish the idea of The Suburban Object as one that is defined in relation to an auto-critique of Whiteness and the role of suburban identity in the specific works discussed in this chapter by Tony Oursler, Jason Rhoades, Mike Kelley, and Paul McCarthy. The role of The Suburban Object is influenced by and refers to white suburban neighbourhoods and ideals, notions of masculinity and many of the stereotypes surrounding suburbia. The historical underpinning of the work in this chapter is analysed through the lens of the concept of Whiteness in the discourses of visual culture and Critical Race Studies, as well as concepts of suburbia directly related to the West Coast landscape. Lingering remnants and residues of suburbia, including the location of suburbs, daily life in the suburbs and the sense of isolation or dispossession, are a part of the ethos of The Suburban Object. The types of anxiety and violence, whether symbolic or real, in the suburb are also exposed as a way to form an auto-critique of Whiteness. This chapter will conclude with a section titled 'A Thousand Tiny Theories', that offers an analysis of current debates by scholars whose theories about identity and race are progressive, and this offers me a way to drive the analysis, as well as to help understand the constitution and formation of The Suburban Object.

As part of the originality of my enterprise, I will consider and expand on how auto-critique is used as a tool by the artists I focus on to comment on and make works based on suburbia and Whiteness. I will also analyse The Suburban Object vis à vis a social, cultural, economic and political analysis of Los Angeles, and I will offer a re-contextualisation of the exhibition 'Helter Skelter: LA Art in the 1990s'.

⁵⁹¹ Norman M. Klein and Martin J. Schiesl (eds.), *Twentieth Century Los Angeles: Power, Promotion and Social Conflict* (Claremont, CA: Regina Press, 1990).

Whiteness

This chapter looks at how and why an auto-critique emerging from white suburbs comes about in the 1990s during a period of social, political and economic uprisings. I would like to specifically refer to moments of social and political unrest throughout this chapter as uprisings, in opposition to the term riots.⁵⁹² I feel this is a salient distinction to make because the term 'riots' is often used to de-legitimise moments of protest or civil unrest.⁵⁹³ The historical background of Los Angeles as a suburb, and the role of auto-critique in the suburbs, enables my foregrounding of fractured narratives which brings about a critique of Whiteness. The neighbourhoods and layout of Los Angeles are fractured, separated and divided. The narrative structure of *The Suburban Object* follows a similar fractured pattern. I thereby argue that *The Suburban Object* is a product of auto-critique.

I do this by analysing the use of auto-critique and the concepts of Whiteness which form the basis for Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley's collaborative video installation *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction Release Zone*. Auto-critique and narrative structures of white suburban masculinity are considered in Jason Rhoades' *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)*. The auto-critique of Whiteness which is part of the script for Tony Oursler's *Phobic/White Trash* is analysed alongside an exploration of the role of anxiety and dispossession in the American suburb.

⁵⁹² The incendiary rhetoric of the 'riot' has also been used for its conceptual power. See, for example, The Situationist International: Frances Stracey, *Constructed Situations: a New History of the Situationist International* (London: Pluto Press, 2014).

⁵⁹³ For examples of this occurrence, including in the media, in which negative associations overlooking systemic issues and root causes are the focus, and for additional analysis into the use of the term riot or uprising, see: Shannon Campbell, Phil Chidester, Jamel Bell and Jason Royer, 'Remote Control: How Mass Media Delegitimize Rioting as Social Protest', *Race, Gender & Class*, 11 :1 (2004), *Race, Gender, Class and the 1992 L.A. "Riots"*, 158-176; Jasper Bernes and Joshua Clover, 'History and the Sphinx: Of Riots and Uprisings', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, (2012), available at: <<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/history-and-the-sphinx-of-riots-and-uprisings/>> [accessed 16 January 2019].

In the Introduction to this thesis, I wrote about the way in which Critical Race Studies/Theory has stemmed from legal discourse. Critical Whiteness Studies or Critical Studies of Whiteness, as a subsection of Critical Race Studies, has for several decades increasingly been gaining interest across the arts and humanities. Early on, in his book *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, Richard Dyer emphasised the importance of the study of whiteness as a racial category and advocated for an awareness of how racial imagery is defined, writing that it can and should include forms of Whiteness studies.⁵⁹⁴ Scholars and writers offer a comprehensive understanding of definitions and implications of Whiteness in an American framework.

Critical Whiteness Studies opens up, or rather allows for, a discussion and analysis of what whiteness constitutes. Artist and scholar Shawn Michelle Smith writes that '[t]he intersection of visual culture studies and critical studies of race opens up important ways to understand the cultural specificity of looking and of race as a visual cultural dynamic'.⁵⁹⁵ About this intersection Smith also states that she aims for these theories to '[...] move the discussion of race and the visual beyond an assessment of representations to consider questions about looking and the ways in which looking produces racialized viewers, not simply racialized objects of view.'⁵⁹⁶ Emerging from this, *The Suburban Object* in part reflects on this very question of looking and the concept of racialised objects of view. *The Suburban Object* is a racialised object.

The Suburban Object reflects not only on the construction of Whiteness but also on the ways that Whiteness has been coded and aligned with concepts of national identity. *The Suburban Object* dissects and explores whiteness in different ways,

⁵⁹⁴ Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 2.

⁵⁹⁵ Shawn Michelle Smith, 'Guest Editor's Introduction', *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.*, 39: 2 (2014), 2-3.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

but importantly, the concept of an inherently American identity or sense of American-ness is key to this neologism. The study of Whiteness, I would argue, is particularly important in an American context because it can offer a deeper understanding of race in America. The Suburban Object makes notions and concepts of Whiteness visible via auto-critique, and this process is also key to the formation of The Suburban Object.

In addition to Dyer and Smith, in *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics and Culture*, authors and editors Vron Ware and Les Black, for instance, examine the '[...] ways in which whiteness is brought into being as a normative structure, a discourse of power, and a form of identity'.⁵⁹⁷ They aim to examine the internal structures and symbolism of Whiteness without allowing its reification, hoping that this method will enable various applications of theories to extend the ways in which Whiteness is examined in various cultural contexts.

Similarly Ruth Frankenberg, in her introduction for the edited collection of essays *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, questions how '[...] whiteness is always constructed, always in the process of being made and unmade'.⁵⁹⁸ Frankenberg writes about the universality of whiteness and '[...] how white dominance is rationalised, legitimised, and made ostensibly normal and natural'.⁵⁹⁹ Intersectionality within Critical Race Studies looks to gender, class, nationality and sexuality in order to recognise that race is not the sole cause of racism or marginalisation. The Suburban Object contends with this normalisation of Whiteness. Frankenberg proposes that whiteness should be viewed as a cultural category. She, like Vron Ware and Les Black, emphasises the need to avoid reifying

⁵⁹⁷ Vron Ware and Les Black, *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics and Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p.13.

⁵⁹⁸ Ruth Frankenberg, *Local Whitenesses Localizing Whiteness, Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), p.16.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

whiteness, because racism thrives on the inferiority and superiority of cultural specificities.⁶⁰⁰

Such scholarship and writing, that focuses on an American framework of how Whiteness has functioned historically, has been significant for me in opening up a more nuanced understanding of the social construction of Whiteness in an American context. The scholars noted in this section have written about the desire to subvert Whiteness, with the aim of eradicating white supremacy and superiority. The subversion of Whiteness and its exploration as a form of identity, is performed, as I will propose, via *The Suburban Object* as auto-critique. The framing of *The Suburban Object* as a racialised object emerges from an auto-critique of Whiteness. The intersectionality of race, gender and culture offers a fuller, more dynamic understanding of issues of power and privilege. In order to explore the understanding of Whiteness in these works, I will begin by analysing the foundations of the historical and social contexts of its production.

Foregrounding and pinpointing Whiteness enables me to consider how it functions, which is vital to considering the historical background of the neighbourhoods that make up Los Angeles, because it helps to build a foundation which can be used to understand how whiteness functions in the city. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of how race and socio-economic or political structures are integral to *The Suburban Object*. This will form the start of the following section of this chapter and will continue into a re-contextualisation beyond the specific historical context put forward in the exhibition 'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s'. Towards the end of this chapter I will return to the issue of Critical Race Studies in order to propose that if the foregrounding of whiteness enables me to set the scene for the emergence of *The Suburban Object*, then it is this figuring of *The Suburban Object* which then prepares the ground for thinking

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

about a more recent iteration of Critical Race Studies, where Whiteness is about becomings, difference and minoritarian politics.

Suburbs

In the 1950s a large majority of the white middle-class American population gravitated towards the suburbs.⁶⁰¹ During the 1960s, the suburbs of Los Angeles were embroiled in the anxiety resulting from the Manson murders, and they were also engrossed in specific race-related uprisings. Writers, filmmakers and artists growing up during this period critiqued the atmosphere of Los Angeles during the 1980s and 1990s, capturing the post-war ethos of the suburbs, and what it was like growing up in those new versions of suburbia across America.⁶⁰² The architecture of post-war America contributed to the topographical fracturing of Los Angeles. Los Angeles is one of the most densely populated urban areas in the United States, and yet it maintains a sense of sprawl, isolation and disconnect.⁶⁰³ It is the suburbs' geographical significance that is in part responsible for the shaping of the social relations within Los Angeles. Historically, the spatial frustration of Los Angeles was based on frontier myths and the history of the railway, the car and the aerospace industries.⁶⁰⁴

When forming a sociology of the suburbs, numerous scholarly studies look at the core components of the expansion of suburbs, such as the dispersal of employment, shopping and forms of community, or lack thereof.⁶⁰⁵ The sociological characteristics of suburbs can dispel common misconceptions

⁶⁰¹ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Santa Barbara, CA: Peregrine, 1973).

⁶⁰² For an excellent analysis of the work of filmmakers such as David Lynch, and how they constructed a version of suburbia or small-town veneers, exposing the façade of suburbia, see Richard Martin, *The Architecture of David Lynch* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁶⁰³ Douglas Suisman, *Los Angeles Boulevard: Eight X-Rays of the Body Public* (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Forum of Architecture and Urban Design, 1989).

⁶⁰⁴ Didion, 2003.

⁶⁰⁵ See: Mark Clapson, *Suburban Century: Social Change and Urban Growth in England and the USA* (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2003); Scott Donaldson, *The*

about their formation.

For instance, the economics of Whiteness, and the lens onto the study of Whiteness that a focus on economics allows, can dispel misconceptions about dispersal and the formation of suburbs in Los Angeles. The history and sociology of 'white flight' and the development of the suburbs is important to *The Suburban Object*. This includes questions of who leaves a city for the suburbs and who is left behind.⁶⁰⁶

Surreptitious and discriminatory policies were, and to an extent still are, prevalent in suburbia. It is significant to note a series of historical policies here in order to pave the way for a deeper understanding of these discriminatory elements in the formation of the suburbs in America. A starting point for this analysis is the National Housing Act of 1934, which came into effect during the Great Depression. This in turn gave way to the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). The FHA was formed from 1965 to 1968, and is now called the Department of Housing and Urban Development. These policies and governmental departments set the standards for mortgage lending and housing practices in America. The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 is also central to the development of suburbs, in helping to produce a national roads network. It thereby contributed to the dispersion of the urban cores of American cities and created suburban 'sprawl'.⁶⁰⁷ The focus on housing, financial lending and an expansive road network lays the foundation for an examination of the politics and formation of suburbs.

Moreover, it can be concluded that these programmes led to specific financial lending practices that fostered, maintained and triggered the growth of the

Suburban Myth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); Roger Silverstone, *Visions of Suburbia* (Abingdon: Routledge 1997).

⁶⁰⁶ June Manning Thomas, 'The Cities Left Behind', *Built Environment*, 17: 3/4 (1991) Post-Suburban America, 218-231.

⁶⁰⁷ Alan Altshuler, John Pucher and James P. Womack, *The Urban Transportation System: Politics and Policy Innovation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

suburbs. The FHA was responsible for the practice of 'redlining', a term coined by sociologist John McKnight in the 1960s.⁶⁰⁸ Redlining is a discriminatory process which prevents minorities from obtaining loans, mortgages, and other forms of financial services. With regard to the FHA, redlining was a way to raise the prices of mortgages and loans to minorities.⁶⁰⁹ Therefore, it was a way to keep minorities relegated to certain areas and allow white suburbs to retain their homogeneity.

A research group at the University of Carolina that was initiated in 2006 has created a website, *Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California's Exclusionary Spaces (T-RACES)*.⁶¹⁰ The website/research project creates navigable maps of California's history of redlining, overlapping historical maps with contemporary maps of the city and making it possible to explore a history of redlining throughout California, in both the Northern and Southern parts of the state and specifically in and around Los Angeles. These were federal maps drawn by government surveyors, and the areas marked, or redlined, were predominantly minority neighbourhoods that were deemed to require less funding, and this paved the way for loans with higher interest rates marketed in this area. Neighbourhoods in various American cities would be colour-coded on a scale of best to worst respectively from green, blue, and yellow to red, with red being a hazardous area. The redlined areas marked on maps as red or yellow were used by mortgage or financial lenders to identify residents in these areas as credit risks, and therefore not financially viable for loans. Again, these areas on the maps targeted minority neighbourhoods, and the ethnic and racial demographic of the area would be considered in the mapping process. In an article in the *Washington Post* entitled 'Redlining was Banned 50 Years Ago.

⁶⁰⁸ Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁶⁰⁹ Alexis C. Madrigal, 'The Racist Housing Policy That Made Your Neighborhood', *The Atlantic*, May 2014, available at:

<<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/05/the-racist-housing-policy-that-made-your-neighborhood/371439/>> [accessed 7 August 2016].

⁶¹⁰ Richard Marciano, David Goldberg, Chien-Yi Hou, *T-RACES: a Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California's Exclusionary Spaces* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2006) available at: <<http://salt.umd.edu/T-RACES/>> [accessed 15 May 2017].

It's Still Hurting Minorities today', author Tracy Jan quotes a senior researcher from a community advocacy group, the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, who published a study in early 2018 about redlining. He says, 'Anyone who was not northern-European white was considered to be a detraction from the value of the area'.⁶¹¹ People of colour or minorities, people of Jewish or Catholic origin and immigrants were targeted by this discriminatory practice. This history of racial discrimination in mortgage lending, housing and real estate started in the 1930s and it continues to influence and shape the demographics of the suburbs today, thereby cementing systemic racism in America.⁶¹²

In his essay for the exhibition catalogue *Helter Skelter: L.A Art in the 1990s*, titled 'Inside the Consumer-Built City: Sixty Years of Apocalyptic Imagery', historian and writer Norman M. Klein writes about the cumulative effect of architectural layouts of the public spaces in Los Angeles that was evident by the late 1960s, and how this adds to a sense of disconnect between neighbourhoods in the city.⁶¹³ The following section approaches the history of Los Angeles with a re-contextualisation of this exhibition, offering a pathway through the socio-political and economic climate between 1960s and 1990s Los Angeles, leading up to the period of the early 1990s when the idea of The Suburban Object emerges.

'Helter Skelter: L.A. art in the 1990s'

'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s', took place at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), from January 26 to April 26, 1992. Curated by Paul Schimmel as his inaugural show as chief curator, the exhibition brought to the

⁶¹¹ Tracy Jan, 'Redlining was Banned 50 Years Ago. It's Still Hurting Minorities Today', *Washington Post*, 28 March 2018, available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/03/28/redlining-was-banned-50-years-ago-its-still-hurting-minorities-today/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.32acdc677047> [accessed 22 April 2018].

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ Norman M. Klein, 'Inside the Consumer-Built City: Sixty Years of Apocalyptic Imagery', in Schimmel, 1992.

forefront the work of artists Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, and marked a specific and particular interest in both Kelley's and McCarthy's work.⁶¹⁴ The wide range of different work and subcultures the exhibition represented contrasted with earlier cultural references which had defined Los Angeles during Minimal Conceptualism in the 1960s. Its relation to New York no longer defined Los Angeles, and a new generation of Los Angeles artists was brought to the attention of an international audience.

In his exhibition catalogue essay 'Into the Maelstrom: L.A. Art at the End of the Century', Schimmel writes, '[...] the cumulative image of LA that is repeated over and again [...] is that of a sprawling, empty wasteland – an endless vista of suburban subdivisions identified only by freeway exits'.⁶¹⁵ The neighbourhoods of Los Angeles have historically been confined and segregated, with their migrant labour hidden from view. Los Angeles has a long history of racially segregated, disparate neighbourhoods. In his essay, Klein had already referred to arguments that '[...] white flight and real estate booms have made these distinctions even stronger, reinforced by the expanded orbit of downtowns in each area'.⁶¹⁶ 'Helter Skelter' brought together artists from the particular geographical, historical and socio-political context of 1990s Los Angeles. This context formed the structure of the exhibition, which featured work by fourteen artists, including Paul McCarthy, Mike Kelley, Nancy Rubins, Chris Burden, and Raymond Pettibon, best known at the time for creating the logo and album artwork for the band Black Flag. Schimmel writes that, 'Apparent in much of the art in "Helter Skelter" is an obsessive anxiety, which may indeed be a reflection of the general sentiments of

⁶¹⁴ McCarthy exhibited *The Garden*, 1992, a sculpture made of artificial trees that were once a part of the set for the television series *Bonanza*. Two lifelike sculptures of men are hidden amongst the trees. Kelley exhibited an installation titled *Proposal for the Decoration of an Island of Conference Rooms (with Copy Room) for an Advertising Agency Designed by Frank Gehry*, 1992, a parody of meeting or conference rooms in workplaces.

⁶¹⁵ Paul Schimmel, 'Into the Maelstrom: LA Art at the End of the Century', in Schimmel, 1992, p. 18.

⁶¹⁶ Klein, 1990, p. 28.

the society at large'.⁶¹⁷ Schimmel noted in an interview that the works in the exhibition drew on sources such as cartoons, pop culture and pulp literature.⁶¹⁸ The title, 'Helter Skelter', most obviously refers to the Manson murder trial and to the Beatles song. Schimmel understands that the term 'helter skelter' is therefore evocative of the unresolved debates about the turmoil of war, gender discourse, drugs, cults and violence, stemming from the 1960s. The title of the exhibition provokes discussion about its connection to 1960s counter-culture and cultism that was not only part of Los Angeles but also of wider Californian culture. Schimmel was therefore wary of the potential connections that might be made between work made during the 1960s in Los Angeles and work in the exhibition made during the 1990s.

Apocalyptic sensibilities are characteristic of the writing style of 'LA noir' crime fiction. Klein writes that 'From the thirties on, many of the classic novels of dark Los Angeles centered around the consumer in a feeding frenzy, trapped in a setting where ungratified consumer desire has made murder or suicide its only remaining object'.⁶¹⁹ During the construction of the railways, rail-stops were designed to entice passengers coming off trains in downtown LA. This area was designed with specific streetlights to mimic film sets, lending itself to a 'noir aesthetic' popular in the 1930s. As a centre of the oil industry in the 1930s, Los Angeles and other parts of California flourished economically. Specifically, there was an influx of Mexican and Japanese immigrant labourers, and a disconnect existed between the various immigrant populations and the white population of Los Angeles at the time. Noir films and fiction of the 1930s and 1940s were focused on the white population of Los Angeles. A divide in the multiethnic makeup of Los Angeles came about with the development of the west side of the city, an area focused on consumerism and newly built shopping malls, known colloquially as strip malls. The city of Los Angeles has a history of re-building or demolishing key buildings in predominantly

⁶¹⁷ Schimmel, 1992, p. 19.

⁶¹⁸ Interview, Schimmel.

⁶¹⁹ Klein, 1990, p. 25.

Latino, Black and multiethnic neighborhoods. Klein writes, 'LA is a city of momentum, rather than maintenance. It is a city of erasure, and camouflage'.⁶²⁰ 'Helter Skelter' as an exhibition concept referred to a sense of decay, ruin or apocalypse in the various neighbourhoods throughout Los Angeles. It also alluded to decay and ruin being brought about via gentrification.

Klein cites the art direction of the film *Blade Runner* and critiques the film as a '[...] particularly white male nightmare'.⁶²¹ Klein comments, 'If you ask the white world about *Blade Runner* in 2019, they might compare it to chaos in a racial decompression chamber. Their memory would be filled with erasures and avoidances, like the mind of the cyborg. Nightmare depends on point of view'.⁶²² Klein is referring to the patterns of immigration, and the re-development of neighbourhoods as a trauma for the white population of LA, and he refers to a sense of amnesia as a consequence of the trauma. The sense of apocalypse for Klein does not emerge from the environment, but rather from the conditions of this trauma and the gentrification of Los Angeles.

Writer Chris Kraus, in the book *Video Green: Los Angeles Art and the Triumph of Nothingness*, suggests a disconnect between the experience of the city and the art that was being made there. Kraus writes: 'It is bizarre that here, in America's second largest city, contemporary art should have come to be so isolated and estranged from the experience of the city as a whole'.⁶²³ Schimmel argues that international critical acclaim was reserved for art made in the 1950s and 1960s in the Los Angeles area, and didn't extend past that period. He also notes that there was a tradition of art in this period that engaged with scale and light, like the work of James Turrell or Robert Irwin, for example. Schimmel comments that the work in 'Helter Skelter' and the essays in the exhibition catalogue were focused on and

⁶²⁰ Ibid., p. 26.

⁶²¹ Ibid., p. 30.

⁶²² Ibid., p. 31.

⁶²³ Chris Kraus, *Video Green: Los Angeles and the Triumph of Nothingness* (Cambridge, MA: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 26.

concerned with darkness as a metaphor for 1990s Los Angeles in opposition to the previous art-historical references to light/space/scale in work that was made in the city during the 1950s and '60s. The work in the exhibition has been critiqued as referring to adolescent identity, anti-social attitudes and dispossession.⁶²⁴ From the 1960s to the 1990s Los Angeles had to reinvent itself as a reaction to its inherent tradition of a lack of history. Los Angeles does this in part – and *The Suburban Object* does this in part – by depicting the history of Los Angeles as shaped by a particular provincial context. There is tension, anxiety and a particular role for Whiteness in Los Angeles throughout its history, and especially from the 1960s to the 1990s, when in the context of the works considered in this chapter. This history ultimately culminates in the 1990s, when these works were made. There is a convergence of Whiteness, anxiety and topography which is imbued within the idea of *The Suburban Object*.

Schimmel's and Klein's essays both refer more to the political and social aspects of 1990s Los Angeles. There was a particular economic downturn, starting from the late 1980s, which Klein argues is '[...] reminiscent of the early thirties, at the start of the depression and the opening of the noir tradition'.⁶²⁵ The Watts Rebellion in 1965 and several high-profile shootings of African-American residents and police raids of African-American and Latino neighbourhoods led to what Klein argues is the most apocalyptic public image of all – the videotape of the Rodney King beating.⁶²⁶ *'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s'* took place during the timeframe of the Rodney King trial. Days after the exhibition closed, the Los Angeles uprisings occurred, when the city underwent six days of looting and rioting following the acquittal of the officers who were later convicted of assaulting King. The video of the original attack from 1991 had already been broadcast on national and international television and the trial and case was a part of Los Angeles and wider American culture at the time. April 29, 2017 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of

⁶²⁴ Schimmel, 1992, p. 43.

⁶²⁵ Klein, 1990, p. 25.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*

the Los Angeles uprisings. Understanding the scope of the Los Angeles uprisings helps to establish a framework for the historical, social and economic context of the city during the early 1990s. The uprisings occurred after the acquittal of four white police officers who had beaten the civilian Rodney King, who was hospitalised. The veracity of the footage captured and the subsequent anxiety and tension that escalated in the days of violence and looting after the acquittal culminated in fifty-five deaths and an estimated \$1 billion in damages.⁶²⁷ The anxiety and tension in Los Angeles race relations stems from historical strife and animosity between the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and communities of colour in Los Angeles.⁶²⁸ The footage of King was distributed worldwide, becoming the first viral recorded live video of police brutality. Significant to note is that there were marked racial tensions between the Black and Asian communities leading up to the 1992 uprisings.⁶²⁹ Until the LA uprisings occurred in 1992, the Watts Rebellion, from August 11 to 16, 1965, had been considered the worst instance of violent uprising and civil unrest in Los Angeles. Los Angeles' minorities were relegated to the eastern or southern parts of the city, which included the Watts and Compton neighbourhoods. Discriminatory housing and real estate practices formed many of the suburbs of Los Angeles. Redlining and other forms of real estate speculation would cause a division between white and minority neighbourhoods. Policy issues are key not only to understanding the sociology of the Los Angeles suburbs but also to understanding the roots of how social change was prevented or stifled.⁶³⁰

⁶²⁷ Alex A. Alonso, 'Rebuilding Los Angeles: A Lesson of Community Reconstruction' (Los Angeles, CA: Southern California Studies Center, University of Southern California, 1998), available at: <<http://www.alexalonso.com/academic/1998.Alonso-RLAreport-final-001.pdf>> [accessed 27 October 2020].

⁶²⁸ Police officers and law enforcers, in the early 1980s, used the chokehold to subdue predominantly African-American suspects, a tactic that led to deaths. This tactic was replaced with the use of metal batons. This type of baton was then used in the beating of Rodney King.

⁶²⁹ Cheung K. King, '(Mis)interpretations and (In)justice: The 1992 Los Angeles "Riots" and Black-Korean Conflict', *MELUS*, 30:3 (2005), 3-40.

⁶³⁰ Proposition 14 in 1964 was one of the main factors leading to the Watts Rebellion. This proposition overturned the Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963 that was intended to prevent racial and ethnic segregation in Los Angeles, and was created to curb discriminatory practices by landlords or within the public housing sector. In 1964 the California Real Estate Association promoted Proposition 14 as an amendment to the California constitution in an

The Kerner Report of 1968 is significant to note in this context.⁶³¹ The government report was produced by a commission after a series of race-related uprisings across cities in America, including the Watts Rebellion and uprisings in Detroit. The Kerner Report produced an analysis identifying 'white flight', a term describing the departure of white people from cities for the suburbs. The report included an analysis of the discrimination suffered by minorities with regard to housing, employment and education. The report did not lead to social or policy changes; however, it did bring to national attention the division and discrimination that formed and constituted suburbs. During and after the Watts Rebellion there continued a long and documented series of unlawful arrests and racial profiling in the LAPD. Los Angeles has a history of geographical division and discriminatory practices leading to an absence of diversity in the suburbs that make up the city.

A significant event before the L.A uprisings was the murder of Latasha Harlins, a Black teenager who was suspected of shoplifting and shot to death by a South Korean shop keeper, intensifying the racial tension between the Black and Asian neighbourhoods of the city. During the uprisings, the store in which the murder occurred was burned down and looted. Interpretations have been offered about the murder of Harlins and the leniency in the sentencing of her murderer, that potentially contributed to the strife that led to the Los Angeles uprisings.⁶³²

The opening sequence of Spike Lee's 1992 film *Malcolm X* includes an audio recording of a speech about democracy and racial inequality by the civil rights leader, interspersed with imagery from the videotaped footage of Rodney King.⁶³³

effort to overturn the policy of the Rumford Fair Housing Act and therefore allow discriminatory housing practices. The debates around Proposition 14 went all the way to the Supreme Court in 1967, and it was eventually repealed.

⁶³¹ Julian E. Zelizer, 'Introduction', *The Kerner Report, The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

⁶³² King, 2005.

⁶³³ The footage was filmed and broadcast on national and international television and images were shown in newspapers. The quick dissemination of the video and images from the video predates the term 'viral' and was shown in the time of traditional television broadcasts.

Examples like this demonstrate that the 1992 uprisings and racial strife in Los Angeles were a very significant aspect of the city, and also significant nationally, prompting responses to it in pop culture, film and music of the time.⁶³⁴

Ralph Rugoff commented that 'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s' avoided 'the politics and aesthetics of race and class'.⁶³⁵ However, the catalogue for the exhibition features writing that refers to race, class, adolescence and dispossession in Los Angeles during this period. The catalogue achieved this by including fiction, non-fiction and poetry by ten writers, including Charles Bukowski, Michelle T. Clinton, Dennis Cooper, Harry Gamboa Jr., Amy Gerstler, Rita Valencia and Benjamin Weissman. The contributions focused on histories of L.A, references to gentrification and the impact of white suburbs on the city and violence in the city.⁶³⁶ These are also key aspects of the idea of The Suburban Object. And I have placed this in the context of the wider social, economic and cultural underpinnings of what was occurring in Los Angeles at the time.

Phobic/White Trash

Tony Oursler's *Phobic/White Trash* is an installation which features a narrative script featuring Mike Kelley's and Tony Oursler's recorded voices. The audio was recorded during 1992 in both New York, where Oursler was based, and Los Angeles, where Kelley was based. The script and the audio recording have two distinct characters who are continually interrupting each other's dialogue and narrative flow. This fractured narrative was intended to foster a sense of anxiety in

⁶³⁴ Examples include television shows at the time such as the topical sitcom *A Different World*, or the sketch comedy show *In Living Color*, both programmes made with inclusive casts, responded to the events. Responses were also seen from less inclusive programmes such as *LA Law* and *Melrose Place*. Music and music video responses from came the group En Vogue in their song *Free Ya Mind*, and Tupac Shakur's *Keep Ya Head Up*, which was dedicated to Latasha Harlins. For other references see: *LA 92*, Daniel Lindsay and T.J Martin, National Geographic Documentary Films, 2017; *Let It Fall: Los Angeles 1982-1992*, John Ridley, ABC Studios, 2017.

⁶³⁵ Ralph Rugoff, 'MoCA's Helter Skelter and the Art of Our Times - Apocalypse Noir', *L.A. Weekly* (January 31 – February 6, 1992).

⁶³⁶ Schimmel, 1992.

the viewer.⁶³⁷ In the installation, the central focal point, alongside the audio, was two male figures or human-scale dolls. Similar types of figures or dolls were used in Oursler's work throughout the 1990s in various installations, and were referred to as 'dummies'. The two figures, dolls or dummies in *Phobic/White Trash* were standing opposite each other and wearing black suits. The two characters had faces projected onto the white textile portion of their heads. Viewers would have been able to see a projector on the ground in front of the dummy, projecting the image of the face/head.



Figure 5.1: Tony Oursler, *Phobic/White Trash*, 1992.

⁶³⁷ Janus and Moure (eds.), 2001.



Figure 5.2 and 5.3: Tony Oursler, *Phobic/White Trash*, 1992, detail.

Phobic/White Trash's script references the 'sprawling, chaotic, intoxicated and escapist landscape of suburban America'.⁶³⁸ Kelley's portion of the script is formed of a series of short, fractured narratives. They induce a sense of anxiety and they often begin with non-sequiturs and build into a dramatic, stifling, exclamatory and ultimately confusing and unresolved conclusion. Throughout the audio for this installation, Kelley's script often serves as the tense counterpart to Oursler's slow burn of anxiety.

Oursler's script focuses on a series of short narratives recounted by white characters who have been involved in altercations – characters who are running or being chased by the police. This script is a violent compacted narrative of violence and anxiety in the suburbs. The American dream and the American suburb are invoked in both of the scripts for *Phobic/White Trash*. In an interview with scholar Elizabeth Janus, Oursler recounts that the two scripts were meant to shift between internal and external worlds.⁶³⁹ The two voices of Kelley and Oursler set different tones and have different effects. Kelley's script is meant to evoke and produce tension and anxiety. Contrastingly, Oursler's script focuses on the imagery and emotional state of the suburbs.

Violence, trauma, anxiety and tense psychological states are the central components of the scripts for *Phobic/White Trash*. This work is produced from, or as, fractured narratives. The narrative script of *Phobic/White Trash* refers to the scale, sense of space, voids and isolation of the American suburbs.

Kelley's character says:

Now there's a group of fellows and they like to dig. And the digger of the group likes to dig down as deep as you are tall. And you enjoy crawling into

⁶³⁸ Billy Rubin, 'White Trash/Phobic', in Denis Gielen (ed.), *Tony Oursler/ Vox Vernacular* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), available at: < <https://www.tonyoursler.space/articles-by-billy-rubin/> > [accessed 23 January 2015].

⁶³⁹ Elizabeth Janus, 'Towards a Psychodramatic Grammar of Moving Images: A Conversation with Tony Oursler', in *Tony Oursler*, 1998, pp. 119-126.

the hole. It feels good to be in this dark cool earth. But then the hole collapses and you're buried in the hole. And only your head is sticking out above ground. And the rest of you is held, compressed in by the earth. And you can't move. And all the fellows are laughing and pointing at your head sitting on top of the ground. And they won't dig you out. So you're stuck. And you're stuck and you're screaming and you're screaming "Dig me out of this hole!" But they won't. And finally they start to dig you out.⁶⁴⁰

Kelley's character repeats at the end of his script: 'You can't move, you're stuck, you can't breathe, you can't get out.'⁶⁴¹

Oursler's character narrates:

The camera sees a suburban sprawl. There's a helicopter shot. We slowly arc through the air and we can see swimming pools and rooftops and eucalyptus trees and cactus. Tennis courts and driveways, kids on bicycles. It's night, and the streetlights create halos at their bases. Shadows are cast, electricity is doled out from house to house creating patterns on the landscape, glowing there. The camera moves in closer and closer to one particular house at the end of a cul de sac. The camera floats down gently, gently, to the level of the second story of the house and begins to drift around facing the interior of the house, it rotates a number of times. We see some dark rooms and some rooms are lighted. There are characters there. We cannot hear anything, but can only hear mumbled sounds coming from the interior. The sound of a television, the radio, voices talking in a fragmented angry fashion. There we hear footsteps. Now a crashing. The voices raise higher. Screaming now. We can hear them now wailing. We hear a low thud followed by a moan. And then the crack of hand striking flesh. More footsteps, we see shadows cast across the darkened rooms as figures move past the doors. Cracks of light opening there, a silhouette. Someone has just entered the room. We are outside looking in. Cut.⁶⁴²

The concept of the suburban household and the suburban lifestyle is one that is imbued with a sense of anxiety, noted in the narrative scripts for *Phobic/White Trash*. This is also a core theme and aspect of The Suburban Object. In the essay

⁶⁴⁰For the script see: Tony Oursler, Elizabeth Janus, Mike Kelley, *Tony Oursler : White Trash and Phobic* [exh cat.] (Geneva: Centre d'Art Contemporain, 1993).

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

⁶⁴² Ibid.

'The American Suburb as Utopian Constellation', Jan Nijman writes about the disillusionment and clichés of the suburbs, commenting on the growing population of people moving to and growing up in the suburbs. He argues that from 1960 onwards, the suburbs became 'often segregated on the basis of socioeconomic status and ethnicity precisely because suburbanization has become so massive'.⁶⁴³ American suburbs function as enclaves, separate from more diverse cityscapes: they are isolated in terms of race and class divisions. Similarly, In *Visions of Suburbia*, Roger Silverstone writes of suburbia as 'an emergent architectural space, a set of values and a way of life. It is about suburbia as a material environment, as a range of practices and as a slew of images and ideas'.⁶⁴⁴ This anxiety is imbricated in both real and fake, actual and false anxieties. It is a reaction to the threat of various types of violence, whether this is physical or symbolic. This sense of fear and anxiety was part of noir fiction representing Los Angeles in the 1930s and is a part of a more contemporary suburban mindset – representing enclaves protected from the aspects of society and the city perceived to be nefarious. Silverstone writes:

Defenses are constructed, against otherness in whatever form, and rehearsed daily in the public media, as tabloids, soap operas, and confessional talk shows chew their way through the dilemmas of the day. At the same time, and from time to time, suburban culture itself erupts, and the lava of mod and punk flows across its surface scarring and clogging pores until it is itself consumed by the relentless juggernaut of mass commodification.⁶⁴⁵

Analysing the historical roots of the term 'white trash' can also help to examine the role or relationship of Whiteness to The Suburban Object. The term 'white trash' is indicative, as author Nancy Isenberg would say, of the overwhelming American need to label groups of people other than oneself as other. In her book *White*

⁶⁴³ Jan Nijman, 'The American Suburb as Utopian Constellation', in Roger Keil (ed.), *Suburban Constellations: Governance, Land and Infrastructure in the 21st Century* (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2013), pp. 161-169 (p. 167).

⁶⁴⁴ Roger Silverstone, *Visions of Suburbia* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 3.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Trash: the 400-Year Untold History of Class in America, Isenberg comments on 'the mutable labels we give to the neighbours we wish not to notice'.⁶⁴⁶ The term white trash (or waste people, in its original iteration) historically referred to social outcasts, outside mainstream American society, who were marginalised and stigmatised and predominantly resided in more rural areas.⁶⁴⁷ When considering the sociology of race, there is a complicated relationship between the way that groups of people are labelled versus how those in these groups themselves makes sense of and then perpetuate a label. Isenberg and other scholars focusing on Critical Race Studies/ Critical Whiteness Studies, such as Ruth Frankenberg, would argue that dispossession and having no cultural power to shape political discourse in America is how certain forms of racism endures. At the time *Phobic/White Trash* was made, the term white trash was common in American culture. Isenberg writes, 'Before the end of the 1980s, "white trash" was rebranded as an ethnic identity, with its own readily identifiable cultural forms: food, speech patterns, tastes, and, for some, nostalgic memories'.⁶⁴⁸ Oursler is perhaps working with this more contemporaneous version of the term in relationship to the American suburbs' sense of isolation, dispossession and anxiety. Ruth Frankenberg examines the borders and roles of Whiteness and the terminology of white trash. She writes about a range of groups, especially European immigrants who strove to be called white when they were seen as outside of the bounds of Whiteness. Frankenberg also wrote about self-designators, saying: 'whiteness turns out on closer inspection to be more about the power to include and exclude groups and individuals than about the actual practices of those who are to be let in or kept out'.⁶⁴⁹ The power dynamics and sociological indicators of terms such as 'white trash', alongside dispossession, are core components of the auto-critique of Whiteness in the work of Oursler, Kelley, McCarthy and Rhoades. I will examine the auto-critique of Whiteness in Jason Rhoades' work in the following section.

⁶⁴⁶ Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash. The 400- Year Untold History of Class in America* (New York: Viking, 2016), p. 321.

⁶⁴⁷ Isenberg, 2016, pp. 269-270.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁶⁴⁹ Frankenberg, 1997, p. 13.

Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)



Figure 5.4: Jason Rhoades, *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)*, 1993.



Figure 5.5: Jason Rhoades, *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)*, 1993, detail.



Figure 5.6: Jason Rhoades, *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)*, 1993, detail.



Figure 5.7 and 5.8: Jason Rhoades, *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)*, 1993, detail.



Figure 5.9 and 5.10: Jason Rhoades, *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)*, 1993.



Figure 5.11: Jason Rhoades, *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)*, 1993, detail.



Figure 5.12: Jason Rhoades, 'Descriptive Schematic for Cherry Makita', 1993.

The narratives that run through Jason Rhoades' *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York (CHERRY Makita)*, 1993, differ from the sense of anxiety or dispossession in Oursler's *Phobic/White Trash*. Curator Ingrid Schaffner refers to Rhoades' *Sutter's Mill*, discussed in Chapter 2, as the 'ghost' of this installation.⁶⁵⁰ This installation, then, functions as the fleshed-out, pulsating, full embodiment of the basic, shell-like structure of *Sutter's Mill*. Made possible in part by Paul McCarthy's liaison with his gallerist, Rhoades' first solo gallery exhibition took place at David Zwirner Gallery in New York, shortly after his UCLA graduation.⁶⁵¹ This early work by Rhoades was made of carboard, sheetrock and raw lumber. The work was meant to resemble a standard suburban garage. One of the many narrative strands in the installation that encompasses this work is that of Rhoades' persona of a suburban

⁶⁵⁰ Schaffner, et al., 2014, p. 72.

⁶⁵¹ Interview, Schaffner.

mechanic. As Schaffner writes, 'the piece is missing the emblem of a car, a symbol so inherent to Los Angeles [...] The free-standing garage part is bursting with an impenetrable mess of hardware store materials, tools, equipment – a junkyard Fabergé egg'.⁶⁵² The suburbs that make up Los Angeles are infiltrated with an indulgence in American car culture. Rhoades' narrative strands in this work allude to the unhealthy excess resulting from the need for cars in order to navigate California. The corruption of the American Dream and of the suburban ideals of what the American Dream represents, is also key to this work.

The readymade objects in the installation included the lighting fixtures, cords, batteries, motor oil, tubing, fire extinguishers, aluminum trays, towels, an assortment of tape, vacuum cleaners and posters / pin-up calendars. The handmade objects in the installation included crudely arranged aluminum foil in the shape of hammers, drills and other tools and cardboard boxes that were intended to mimic toolboxes, with the word 'screws' hand-written on them.⁶⁵³ In her essay for the exhibition 'Jason Rhoades, Four Roads', Schaffner writes about the presence of a gun under the door of the garage, hidden precariously. In the middle of the garage was the 'Makita' drill. Schaffner notes: 'Hanging from an engine hoist on a short chain, the *CHERRY Makita* practically snorts with testosterone, bigness, drive – all dangerously amplified by the densely layered fragility of the installation itself'.⁶⁵⁴ The word 'cherry' refers both to a pristine car and a euphemism for virginity. Rhoades' use of euphemisms was explored in Chapter 1, 'Horror Vacui'.

Outside the garage door hung a symbolic hand-made cardboard basketball hoop, a common feature in many suburban homes and parks. Schaffner argues that the aluminum foil tools and the 'Makita' drill serve as 'critical tools' for Rhoades to

⁶⁵² Schaffner, et al., 2014, p. 39.

⁶⁵³ Schaffner et al., 2014, pp. 40-41.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid.

situate the narrative focus of this installation.⁶⁵⁵ In his installation notes, Rhoades wrote that he envisioned *CHERRY Makita* as 'a tomb', 'a monument to the eternity (sic) [...]The garage tells the story of the one who was there'.⁶⁵⁶ According to curator Ingrid Schaffner, as recounted to me in an interview, narratives of Rhoades' rural and suburban upbringing was a common thread in his work.⁶⁵⁷ These locations, and the narratives of growing up and living in rural or suburban areas, is referenced in such installations as *Jason the Mason and the Mason Dickson Line* (1991), *P.I.G. (Piece in Ghent)* (1994), and *My Brother/Brancusi* (1995). These installations include food items and products, tool kits, carpenters' tools, domestic interior furniture, animal sheds, clothing and product design, all of which were intended to be overt indicators of objects in rural or suburban areas to which Rhoades had a personal connection. Rhoades' explanations of these installations in his notes indicate that he was exploring rural and suburban themes in his work via his use of these objects.⁶⁵⁸ Fictional narratives are crucial to Rhoades' installations. Schaffner writes that *CHERRY Makita* 'presents a number of narrative threads that coalesce into the true-enough story of an honest and hardworking young man'.⁶⁵⁹ Rhoades' notes and sketches about the installation have two specific narrative strands. The notes and sketches are titled 'Descriptive Schematic for Cherry Makita' (Fig. 5.12, p. 306) and were displayed on the wall where the installation was exhibited.⁶⁶⁰ One strand, according to the notes, is about an imagined trip to Egypt to see an artifact reminding the central character of a 'Makita' drill which he lost. The notes then indicate that this imagined trip inspires the character to go to art school and to start using 'blue collar' and construction-based materials in his work.⁶⁶¹ The second narrative strand is about a Formula One racer who loses his

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁷ Interview, Schaffner. Rural and suburban installations such as *Jason the Mason*, 1991, or *My Brother, Brancuzi*, 1995, were also discussed.

⁶⁵⁸ Interview, Schaffner; Schaffner et al., 2014.

⁶⁵⁹ Schaffner et al., 2014 p. 41.

⁶⁶⁰ 'Descriptive Schematic for Cherry Makita' viewed at ICA Philadelphia and archived copies at the Brant Foundation Art Study Center archives, 2014 and 2018.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

money and then retires to 'America in semi-suburban surroundings', where he begins to make counterfeit money and deal in cocaine.⁶⁶² As recounted in 'Descriptive Schematic for Cherry Makita', counterfeiting equipment, paper money and drug paraphernalia was drawn and referred to as part of the objects in the character's home. These objects were then strewn around the installation in a direct reference to the narrative strands presented in the notes.⁶⁶³ This installation, and the notes and drawings for it, focused on overt references to fictional narratives of suburban homes, the American Dream, car culture and illegal drug culture.⁶⁶⁴ Rhoades' exploration of The Suburban Object is grounded in his auto-critique of these fictive ideals and stereotypes. Paul McCarthy's and Mike Kelley's auto-critique of Whiteness will be studied in the following section.

Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction Release Zone

Heidi (1992) is the title of a video that was filmed on a constructed set (that included sections from previously made television programme sets) that was later exhibited as part of a video installation titled *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction Release Zone*. The video installation displayed the video itself, and also included rubber and masked dolls, puppets and body parts, backdrop paintings and props used in the making of the video. This work is based on Johanna Spyri's 1880 children's novel, *Heidi's Years of Wandering and Learning*, which is often referred to, and published, simply as *Heidi*.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid.



Figure 5.13: Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction*, 1992, installation view.

Figure 5.14: Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction*, 1992, detail.



Figure 5.15 and 5.16: Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction*, 1992, detail.



[REDACTED]

Figure 5.17 and 5.18: Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction*, 1992, detail.

The aesthetic of McCarthy and Kelley's *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction* had similarities with the constructed sets, sets from television shows, wigs and masks that formed McCarthy's installation *The Garden*, which he exhibited in 'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s'. These materials are also central to many of the collaborative works that McCarthy and Kelley created that were explored in Chapter 4, The Prop Object.⁶⁶⁵

The video is formed of six chapters. In the video, the characters of the Grandfather and Heidi are portrayed by McCarthy and Kelley. Peter, a friend of Heidi's, is a character who also appears throughout the video. These characters are all based on the Spyri novel. In the novel the central character of Heidi is sent from the city to live with her grandfather in the Alps. The different locations and the people represented in them, the references to the bible and purity are critiqued in the video. The chapters are titled 'Rural Gothic', 'Frankfurt Frankfurt', 'Kinship Study (Tim)', 'Ornament and Education', 'Sickness and Decoration' and 'Pickle Barrel'. The video includes scenes of nude puppets and implied sexual and physical abuse. Wigs, masks and puppets are used throughout. There are scenes of a domestic kitchen being used for food preparation. Scenes of sausages being stuffed into a puppet's anus feature repeatedly. In another scene, papers or documents are thrown around the home and then require organising. There is a scene in which the main characters lie on or under a crocheted blanket, followed by scenes in which violence is inflicted on Heidi and Peter. The phrase 'Heidi is young, Heidi is happy, Heidi is innocent' is repeated.⁶⁶⁶ The script includes limited dialogue and occasional narration from a character named Tim, voiced by McCarthy and Kelley. *Heidi's* script and scenes were formed of fractured narratives, and rely on the trope of parody and horror.⁶⁶⁷ McCarthy and Kelley's video installation parodies the core themes of Spyri's novel, which are represented as dualities. These include nature versus culture, country versus city and health versus sickness. A parallel between

⁶⁶⁵ Philip Monk, 'A Twisted Pedagogy', in Monk (ed.), (2000), pp.10-15.

⁶⁶⁶ In the video *Heidi*, by Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley (1992) [on DVD].

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

this work and *Phobic/White Trash* is the use of dual fractured narratives. Part of the narrative in the novel *Heidi*, which is then parodied in the video, is the idea of an idealised family, and of area and place as a rural/suburban entity. The concept of horror and violence, in horror-evoking sequences, are used in the video as a means to subvert the ideal family structures and locations depicted in the novel. Philip Monk has noted that *Heidi*, in particular, is imbued with a sense of horror in the work.⁶⁶⁸ These are the key aspects of how the idea of The Suburban Object engages with the modes of representation of white suburbia and, in particular, male white suburbia.

Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction is an overt critique of the role and narrative articulation of Whiteness as purity or as an ideal in Spyri's novel. McCarthy and Kelley confront the representation of Whiteness in the Alpine location of Spyri's work as representative of notions of purity. In their video, McCarthy and Kelley parody the format and sets of American television sitcoms in order to critique the representation of both the idealised white families in the shows and the characters and family structure in the Spyri novel.⁶⁶⁹

Heidi was included in the exhibition 'White: Whiteness and Race in Contemporary Art', curated by Maurice Berger, that took place from October 9, 2003 to January 10, 2004 at the International Center of Photography in New York City. In the exhibition catalogue, Patricia J. Williams writes: '[...] whiteness is a kind of cultural canvas upon which American existence is depicted in myriad artful visions of the possible. Whiteness is the site of privileged imagining, the invisible standard'.⁶⁷⁰

Heidi re-contextualises the original story by turning it into a grotesque, amplified narrative. Curator Maurice Berger commented that 'McCarthy and Kelley's desire to retell the *Heidi* story through the style of the popular media accentuates the

⁶⁶⁸ Monk, 2000, p.11-12.

⁶⁶⁹ See: Berger et al, 2004, pp. 63-64.

⁶⁷⁰ Patricia J. Williams, 'Preface', in Berger et al., 2004, p.19.

video's ability to challenge the image of the happy, complacent white family perpetuated by film and television'.⁶⁷¹ McCarthy and Kelley's video installation offered an auto-critique of the ideals and myths of purity and of suburban family structures. In the following section I will build upon some of the theories and thinking stemming from Critical Race Studies and Critical Whiteness Studies in order to offer a nuanced reading of *The Suburban Object* in the work of Oursler, Rhoades, Kelley and McCarthy.

A Thousand Tiny Theories

Picking up on the distinction I made earlier between an earlier approach to Whiteness and Critical Race Studies, and emerging from the idea of *The Suburban Object*, I now look at the concept of white suburban identity, national identity and the structural formation and role of Whiteness in visual and socio-cultural critiques. Moving forward from the debates, definitions and writing informed by the scholars noted earlier in this chapter, I would like to acknowledge recent or current debates about how identity is progressive and changing. These current debates, informed by the work of a specific set of writers and scholars, allow me think around forms of identity in Critical Race Studies and Critical Whiteness Studies. This radical re-thinking of theories presented by scholars such as Elizabeth Grosz, Rosi Braidotti, Arun Saldanha, Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin may not only offer a pathway into a discussion or analysis of identity, race and Whiteness in relationship to the idea of *The Suburban Object*, but may also suggest new frontiers and pathways into the next iterations of writing and thinking surrounding Critical Race Studies. Therefore, this section aims to progress the debates and scholarship brought forward in the earlier section of this thesis, which offered an overview of the literature in the field of Critical Race Studies and, as part of this, Critical Whiteness Studies.

⁶⁷¹ Berger et al., 2004, pp. 63-64.

The more radical theories presented in this section offer ways to think about identities and race using the starting point of drawing from, engaging with and critiquing Deleuze and Guattari's frameworks for becomings, difference and minoritarian politics.⁶⁷² Scholars such as Saldanha, and Feminist New Materialists such as Elizabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti, have critiqued and re-conceptualised these frameworks and have responded directly in their writing to the following passage by Deleuze and Guattari:

If we consider the great binary aggregates, such as the sexes or classes, it is evident that they also cross over into molecular assemblages of a different nature, and that there is a double reciprocal dependency between them. For the two sexes imply a multiplicity of molecular combinations bringing into play not only the man in the woman and the woman in the man, but the relation of each to the animal, the plant, etc.: a thousand tiny sexes.⁶⁷³

Saldanha offers a re-thinking of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* and writes of 'a thousand tiny races'.⁶⁷⁴ He suggests: 'Every time bodies are further entrenched in segregation, however brutal, there needs to be an affective investment of some sort. This is the ruptural moment in which to intervene'.⁶⁷⁵ He continues, 'Race should not be eliminated, but proliferated, its many energies directed at multiplying racial differences so as to render them joyfully cacophonous'.⁶⁷⁶ He critiques the thinking of Paul Gilroy and other writers who argue that the concept of the transcendence of race needs to be expanded and re-thought.

Saldanha writes:

What is needed is an affirmation of race's creativity and virtuality: what race can be. Race need not be about order and oppression, it can be

⁶⁷² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1987), p. 274.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁶⁷⁴ Saldanha, 2006, p. 13.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20- 21.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

wild, far-from-equilibrium, liberatory. It is not that everyone becomes completely Brownian (or brown!), completely similar, or completely unique. It is just that white supremacy becomes strenuous as many populations start harbouring a similar economic, technological, cultural productivity as whites do now, linking all sorts of bodies with all sorts of wealth and all sorts of ways of life. That is, race exists in its true mode when it is no longer stifled by racism.

Saldanha writes that the 'molecularisation of race would consist in its breaking up into a thousand tiny races'.⁶⁷⁷ He argues that his idea of a thousand tiny races is possible since 'racism is a material, inclusive series of events, a viscous geography which cannot be "signified away"'.⁶⁷⁸ This conceptualisation is part of a signifying system that makes possible the subjectivities of the multiple.

While Saldanha writes of Deleuze and Guattari and concepts of race, Elizabeth Grosz offers a way to re-think difference or theories of sexual difference in a thousand tiny sexes, offering a new approach to Deleuze and Guattari's original concept. In Grosz's essay 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminisms and Rhizomatics', she writes about concepts of difference and otherness in Deleuze and Guattari's work through a feminist lens.⁶⁷⁹ She says difference can be understood as the converse of identity. She argues for a difference that is not connected to identity.

Whether in relation to racial difference or in terms of sexual difference, then, the idea of multiplicity has been developed into proposals of 'a thousand tiny races', by Saldanha, 'a thousand tiny sexes', by Grosz, and the concept of 'a 'thousand tiny intersections' by authors Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin.⁶⁸⁰

In a 'A Thousand Tiny Intersections: Linguisticism, Feminism, Racism and Deleuzian Becomings', Dolphijn and van der Tuin offer a rethinking of Deleuze and Guattari's writing about race and sex through an intersectional approach. They propose 'a

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶⁷⁹ Grosz, 1993, 167-179.

⁶⁸⁰ Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2013, pp. 129-43.

thousand tiny interactions’ as a way to think or re-think intersectionality. They write: ‘The main driving force behind intersectionality has been an attempt to deal with racism and sexism, and with the ways in which an anti-racism might be sexist, and an anti-sexism racist’.⁶⁸¹

Similarly, as a proposal for minoritarian politics, Rosi Braidotti writes about multiplicity, transversality and becoming that is grounded in particular locations. Braidotti argues: ‘Nor can you dispose nomadically of a subject position that you have never controlled to begin with, I think, consequently, that the process of becoming-nomad (-minority, -woman) is internally differentiated, and it depends largely on where one starts off from. The politics of location is crucial’.⁶⁸² Braidotti says: ‘For real life minorities, however, the pattern is different: women, blacks, youth, postcolonial subjects, migrants, exiled, and the homeless may first need to go through a phase of “identity politics” – of claiming a fixed location. This is both inevitable and necessary because, as I have often argued, you cannot give up something you have never had’.⁶⁸³

These texts and debates foreground the lack of engagement with race, and Critical Race Studies, by Feminist New Materialists that was explored in the Introduction of this thesis.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, in their book *Commonwealth*, and Paul Gilroy, in his book *After Empire*, similarly provide analyses of how identity is not only manifold but also at times, perhaps in its best sense, is progressive; we move from a relationship with self that at once adopts, and adapts to, our societal identities toward what Gilroy calls ‘the politics of conviviality’ – identity that is fashioned in a way that is more community oriented.⁶⁸⁴ About the concept of conviviality, Gilroy

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² Braidotti, 2011, p. 84.

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁴ Gilroy, 2010, pp. 153-168.

writes that 'It introduces a measure of distance from the pivotal term "identity", which has proved to be such an ambiguous resource in the analysis of race, ethnicity, and politics. The radical openness that brings conviviality alive makes a nonsense of closed, fixed, and reified identity and turns attention toward the always-unpredictable mechanisms of identification'.⁶⁸⁵ Hardt and Negri see little problem with racial identity – they discuss both Malcolm X and the Black Panthers – so long as that identity is acknowledged as integral to early affirmations of the self (which is often not the case), but then expand it to encompass a wider sense of the 'I' – a quest for humanity beyond limited strictures of the self.⁶⁸⁶ I happen to like these perspectives, despite the fact that they may never be settled. In *Commonwealth* Hardt & Negri continue to question forms of racial identity and write about Gilroy's desire to shift the discourse about 'black politics toward an abolition of race'.⁶⁸⁷ They continue to critique Gilroy's steadfast position on racial identities and how he advocates for the destruction of the concept of race. They say that in order to do this you would have to consider race:

[...]Not just as an object of thought but also and more important as social structures and institutions of hierarchy, segregation, and domination. The abolition of identity implies, once again, the abolition of property and sovereignty. Only a project of liberation that destroys not just blackness as an identity of subordination but blackness as such along with whiteness and all other racial identities makes possible the creation of a new humanity.⁶⁸⁸

Hortense Spillers offers a further critique of the methods Gilroy employs in his quest for liberation from categories in his book *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*. Spillers writes:

Against Race opposes the notion of 'race' as a strategy of group formation and identity. It also concludes that the antidotes to be applied to the poisons of 'race-thinking' and race ideology consist in

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., p. xi

⁶⁸⁶ Hardt and Negri, 2011, pp. 37-38.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 336.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid.

the efficacies of 'travel' and the substitution of a cosmopolitan model and outlook for the myopias and illusions of 'race' and the 'nation/state/territory'.⁶⁸⁹

Dismantling and deconstructing racial categories is something Whiteness Studies engages with, and is important to note in the work of Saldanha, who writes: 'Race then refers to the cultural representation of people, not to people themselves [...] race cannot be transcended, only understood and rearranged'.⁶⁹⁰ This current re-thinking around how to frame and think about identity and race progresses the existing scholarship in Critical Race Studies and Critical Whiteness Studies. It also helps to think about Whiteness, suburbs, national identity and the constitution of The Suburban Object. This radical re-thinking of the basis of Critical Race Studies allows me to extend a critique of the way that Whiteness and forms of identity function in the work of Oursler, Rhoades, Kelley and McCarthy.

There is a bridge between the earlier scholarship and the more recent and current scholarship in offering ways to think around Deleuze-Guattarian concepts. This scholarship presents a progressive and evolving site that fosters new ways to write about and think about identity, nation, and race. In the context of The Suburban Object, these overarching notions and ideas are evident in the auto-critique that forms the narratives of the works this chapter studies.

⁶⁸⁹ Hortense Spillers, 'Uber Against Race', in *The Free Library, Institute of African-American Affairs (IAAA)* (2001), available at: <<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Uber+Against+Race.-a078537868>> [accessed 03 February 2017].

⁶⁹⁰ Saldanha, 2006, p. 9.

Conclusion

The Suburban Object is a term I made up to describe a type of object in the work of Oursler, McCarthy, Kelley and Rhoades. I use their works *Phobic/White Trash*, *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction* and *Cherry Makita Garage Renovation New York* to describe this type of object. The Suburban Object is an object that incorporates a history of Los Angeles. An exploration of the political, social, cultural and economic aspects of the formation of the suburbs in Los Angeles offers a way to progress an analysis of the impact of specific policies on the historical development of the suburbs of Los Angeles. These aspects are also a part of the idea of the Suburban Object. This term allows me to analyse this object and the works in the particular context of Los Angeles in order to demonstrate how this framework can enable a different understanding of the work. I have added to the critical discussion of the exhibition 'Helter Skelter: L.A. Art in the 1990s' by considering the wider political, social and economic impact of the policies impacting on the city and the social and political unrest occurring around Los Angeles, from the Watts Rebellion to the Los Angeles Uprisings.

Through research into the history of the city and the policies involving race, housing, zoning and the formation of the suburbs in Los Angeles that provoked and produced suburbia, I have been able to progress the debates surrounding the impact of Whiteness in the Suburban Objects. I have been able to add to the growing discourse by incorporating a nuanced reading of Whiteness, race and identity in relation to Whiteness as a category.

The idea of The Suburban Object and the objects that embody it and articulate it deploys the use of fractured narrative, in a different way and for a different purpose, because in each of the artworks presented in the chapter the use of a fractured narrative is masked, hidden by another storyline. *Heidi: Midlife Crisis Trauma Center and Negative Media-Engram Abreaction* works with the Spyri story

and merges in a masked personal narrative of the father and son dynamic. It is scripted, rather than being a standard personal narrative. It is more like a constructed narrative masquerading as a personal narrative. This is a common theme in McCarthy and Kelley's work on collaborative projects. Oursler and Rhoades use the device of the autobiographical narrative to establish their engagement with their storylines, and these narratives are also presented as fractured. Both of these types of narrative, such as the masked personal narrative or the autobiographical narrative, help the artists in this chapter to form their auto-critiques. Oursler addresses anxiety and phobia, McCarthy and Kelley explore trauma and abuse and Rhoades critiques the underbelly of suburbia. These narratives serve the function of both establishing intimacy with the viewer and qualifying the author's experiential authority in his search for this particular form of Whiteness. These narratives are presented in a personal and anecdotal manner, and narrative is often viewed as a mode of communication that leads to a deeper form of engagement. These narratives provide a qualitative dimension to our understanding of Whiteness. This strategy can forge a new kind of understanding that can be helpful in elucidating issues of race.

The idea of *The Suburban Object* is about the inherently American concerns of the epistemology of race imbricated in the dialectic of Whiteness. Parody of the subject through over-identification and Whiteness as a form of auto-critique are both key to *The Suburban Object*. The fractured narratives in the *Suburban Object* parallel the fracturing of the layout and topography of Los Angeles, outlining the trauma of changing attitudes in the suburban experience. Creating a pathway, or framework, with which to comprehend the shifting terms of Whiteness is essential to understanding the role of race itself in America.

The very act of recognising Whiteness as a category works against the invisibility of Whiteness as race. Aiming to foster creative responses to the idea of Whiteness, writer Claudia Rankine questions how '[..]whiteness [can be] so distinct [that] it's a

form of social identity and so problematically tied to supremacist illusions that it can't be redeemed?' Rankine asks: 'What would it mean to redeem whiteness?' ⁶⁹¹

In this chapter, The Suburban Object is externalised via the auto-critiques of Whiteness which centre on anxiety, dispossession and the fear of the lack of autonomy at a societal level that have been manifested in many different social, political and economic arenas in Los Angeles.

⁶⁹¹ Claudia Rankine, 'On Whiteness and The Racial Imaginary Institute', Holmes Lecture, Lewis Center for the Arts (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2017).

Conclusion

This thesis, 'The Externalisation of the Object', has offered a critical examination of a series of objects in the installations and video installations of a particular group of artists which includes Mike Kelley, Paul McCarthy, Tony Oursler and Jason Rhoades. These artists have a shared historical and geographical lineage. This geographical lineage stems from California, and from the city of Los Angeles in particular.

Throughout the four core chapters of this PhD, I have explored specific works by these artists in relation to four neologisms that I created for four specific types of objects. They are: The Craft Object, The Gloopy Object, The Prop Object and The Suburban Object. These neologisms helped me to explore and critically examine the works discussed in each chapter within a specific remit. The manner in which objects came out of the screen or were externalised, both physically and metaphorically, in David Cronenberg's film *Videodrome* was a starting point for my research process. My remembering of the film occurred when I was viewing Ryan Trecartin's *Any Ever*, which, along with a series of installations by Rhoades, was studied in Chapter 1 as examples of Horror Vacui.

This PhD has offered a coalescence of art-historical and theoretical perspectives. Each chapter of this PhD explores art history, historiographies and/or histories of exhibitions. My theoretical research has focused on examining Critical Race Studies, Object-Oriented Philosophies and New Materialist/ Feminist New Materialist Studies. I have added to the transdisciplinary and intersectional discourse of Object-Oriented Philosophies, New Materialist theories and Critical Race Studies with my deployment of them to enable alternative art-historical readings and non-normative art historiography.

I have argued that object led research puts objects in the foreground as a way to offer new critical readings. The object categories are meant to be generative:

rather than defining or offering a classification, the object categories allow me to consider the wider analysis of the works and social, political, cultural and historical implications. In this thesis the object categories are specific, however they can be transferable in order to build a framework that can be used to speculate future trajectories of video installations and the physical, metaphysical and metaphorical relationship between the screen, video and object.

Chapter Overviews

Chapter 1 explained how collecting, collections and interiors are a means to understanding the connection people have to objects. I then argued that the use of language, accumulation and interiors creates a 'worlding' in the work of Trecartin and Rhoades. I have argued in this thesis that this leads to a new experience of gender and race in the work. I argued that a framework of the theory and concept of a 'worlding', as based in New Materialist thinking, helps to explore the role of immersion, navigation and socio-linguistic patterns that are crucial to the works.

Chapter 2 looked closely at the role of the CalArts FAP, feminists practices and a lineage of craft and fiber art. I argued that this lineage helps to offer a new insight in the work of Kelley and Rhoades because it pays attention to material culture, materials, form, volume and nuances the study of craft in their work. I argued that a Marxist framework can be expanded and nuanced stemming from previous scholarship in order to consider the role of commodity, production and consumption in the works. This chapter also explored the role of gender and Feminist Critiques of the work stemming from a history which didn't fully consider or acknowledge the impact of the feminist histories and lineages presented.

Chapter 3 progressed from the feminist histories presented in chapter 2 and expanded on the role of performance, the body and abjection. I argued for a way to consider how the idea of the hyperobject as a progression of the object object could be considered in the work of McCarthy and Rhoades. I expanded on and

offered a reading of scholarship in Feminist New Materialisms in relation to wider ideas in this chapter.

In chapter 4, I examined the role of the sets, scenes and theatre in the work of Oursler, Kelley and McCarthy. I argued that re-enactment of trauma is critical to the works in this chapter as is the invisibility of Whiteness. I explored the role of normativity of Whiteness. The invisibility of Whiteness is a subset within the wider field of Critical Race Studies and paved a way for me to then explore another facet to this thinking in the role of auto-critique in chapter 5.

In chapter 5, I explored the role of auto-critique of Whiteness in the works by focusing on the overtness of it, and the dominance of it as an ideal. I expanded on the wider social and political issues of the time period in which the works were made as it related to the idea of the suburban. I also expanded on and offered a reading of scholarship in Critical Race Theory in relation to ideas surrounding race and identity.

Diffraction

Diffraction is both a metaphor and a methodology that is articulated by both Donna Haraway and Karen Barad.⁶⁹² Barad remarks that she wants to explore '[...] the role of human and nonhuman , material and discursive, and natural and cultural factors in scientific and other practices'.⁶⁹³ This is the beginning of Barad's framing of her diffractive methodology as an approach that gathers insights in a transdisciplinary manner. I think this could be a potential method to enact thinking about Object Oriented or Object led research.

⁶⁹² See: Donna J. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan@_Meets OncoMouse™ : Feminism and Technoscience*, (London/New York: Routledge, 1997); Karen Barad, *Meeting The Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁶⁹³ Barad, 2007, p. 25.

This is because the methodology, metaphor and approach of diffraction enables ways of theorising or thinking about how human and non-human bodies matter.⁶⁹⁴ Barad writes about diffraction in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, cited earlier. She suggests that diffraction is a term that is not only used in physics, saying that she wishes to use it as a: 'Metaphor for describing the methodological approach that I use of reading insights through one another in attending to and responding to the details and specificities of relations of difference and how they matter'.⁶⁹⁵ Barad notes that diffraction occurs as a physical phenomenon in classical physics and in quantum physics. In classical physics it relates to waves, and in quantum physics it is about groups of waves, as well as individual waves and the variation in the conditions in which they encounter things.

The writing of Donna Haraway, and that of the theorist Trinh Minh-ha on identity and relationality, have both used the notion of diffraction to help form a figurative framework with which to write about forms of consciousness.⁶⁹⁶ Barad was initially influenced by Haraway's use of this term, because Haraway outwardly refers to it.⁶⁹⁷ Barad comments that '[...] diffraction can serve as a useful counterpoint to reflection: both are optical phenomena, but whereas the metaphor of reflection reflects the themes of mirroring and sameness, diffraction is marked by patterns of difference'.⁶⁹⁸ A potential question that could be posed is: What is the effect and release into culture of these patterns of difference? Barad writes: '[...] diffraction not only brings the reality of entanglements to light, it is itself an entangled phenomenon'.⁶⁹⁹ Diffraction can be what is examined or analysed, and it can also be the frame within which the analysis is carried out. Barad uses it to 'produce a

⁶⁹⁴ See: Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of how Matter comes to Matter', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28:3 (2003), 801-831 (p. 823).

⁶⁹⁵ Barad, 2007.

⁶⁹⁶ Barad, 2003.

⁶⁹⁷ Haraway, 1997.

⁶⁹⁸ Barad, 2007, p. 72.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

new way of thinking about the nature of difference, and of space, time, matter, causality, and agency, among other important variables'.⁷⁰⁰ For Barad, the method of diffraction enables an engagement with various theories and strands of thinking and how these things can be understood and thought through one another in an effort to foster and forge creative, critical analysis and thinking, and new pathways of thinking through different bodies of knowledge and different theoretical differences. Barad refers to the importance of intersectional and transdisciplinary approaches.⁷⁰¹ She writes about the importance of Critical Race Studies in New Materialist thinking and the importance of incorporating different bodies of thought. This is needed in order to smudge the peripheries and borders between these theoretical frameworks, ultimately leading to an understanding of how to comprehend the inclusion of what matters and the exclusion what is not allowed to matter, or how social, cultural, political and material qualities can help to find ways in which, as Barad would say, 'matter comes to matter'.⁷⁰²

In terms of the United States and the issues that I raised when I began my PhD, the contemporary approaches, concerns and arguments of Critical Race Studies and Feminisms have become even more pressing than they were when I began. This PhD forms a reciprocal relationship between things and objects. Critical Race Studies, Object-Oriented Philosophies and Feminist New Materialisms are a structure of thinking that allows the object-types that I invented to come into being. These theories are a tool that allows me to invent and critique the object categories defined in this thesis, and their potentialities. At the same time, my attention to their historicity and materiality also make it possible to conceive of the continued urgency of such a task.

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁰¹ Ibid., p. 93.

⁷⁰² Barad, 2003, p. 823.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Consent Form*The Externalisation of the Object*

For further information:

Nina Trivedi

+44(0)7917835829

Nina.Trivedi@network.rca.ac.uk

Supervisor:

Dr. Chantal Faust

+44(0)20 7590 4483

(Date)

I *(please print)*.....have read the information on the research project *The Externalisation of the Object* which is to be conducted by *Nina Trivedi* from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be conducted in accordance with the Information Sheet, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the project at any time, without penalty, and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing. I understand that .

I consent to:

Being interviewed by Nina Trivedi on the phone, in person or via email.

I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented. Any images in which I can be clearly identified will be used in the public domain only with my consent.

Print Name:.....

Signature.....

Date:

Complaints Clause:

This project follows the guidelines laid out by the Royal College of Art Research Ethics Policy.

If you have any questions, please speak with the researcher. If you have any concerns or a complaint about the manner in which this research is conducted, please the address the RCA Research Ethics Committee by emailing ethics@rca.ac.uk or by sending a letter addressed to: The Research Ethics Committee of the Royal College of Art.

For further information:

Nina Trivedi

+44(0)7917835829

Nina.Trivedi@network.rca.ac.uk

Supervisor:

Dr Chantal Faust

+44(0)20 7590 4483

(Date)

Interview Information Sheet
The Externalisation of the Object

Dear Potential Participant,

I am a research student in the department of Critical and Historical studies at the Royal College of Art. As part of my, I am conducting a research project entitled The Externalisation of the Object. You are invited to take part in this research project which explores a series of object relations in the work of Mike Kelley, Jason Rhoades, Tony Oursler, Paul McCarthy and Ryan Trecartin.

If you consent to participate, this will involve:

Taking part in an interview either via email, in person or on the phone

Participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw at any time and there will be no disadvantage if you decide not to complete the survey. All information collected will be confidential. All information gathered from the survey will be stored securely and once the information has been analysed all questionnaires will be destroyed. At no time will any individual be identified in any reports resulting from this study.

If you have any concerns or would like to know the outcome of this project, please contact my supervisor Chantal Faust at the below email address.

Thank you for your interest,
Nina Trivedi

Complaints Clause:

This project follows the guidelines laid out by the Royal College of Art Research Ethics Policy.

If you have any questions, please speak with the researcher. If you have any concerns or a complaint about the manner in which this research is conducted, please the address the RCA Research Ethics Committee by emailing

ethics@rca.ac.uk or by sending a letter addressed to: The Research Ethics Committee of the Royal College of Art.

APPENDIX 2

Index of Words, 1

This is an index of the words from the lists at the beginning of each chapter with the frequency of occurrence noted in parentheses. Additionally, an index of all of the words in all of the lists is included in Index of Words, 2. The more frequently a word appears the larger the font appears, incrementally.

Chapter 1 Horror Vacui

aluminium (1) anxiety (1)
 black (1) blankets (1) brightly (2) brightness (1)
 camels (1) cart(3) ceiling (1) ceramic(3) chairs (1) cloth (1) clutter (2) coloured
 (2) coverings (1)
 donkey(3) dreamcatchers (1)
 excess (1) felt (1) fibreglass (1) floor (1) full (1)
 glass (1)
 hangings (1) hats (1) high-pitched (1) hookah (1) hyper-real (1) hyper-speed (1)
 hyper (1) internet (1)
 L ego (1) **light (4)**
 macrame (1) mass (1) material (1) messy (1) metal (1) multiple (1)
 neon (3)
 overwhelming (1)
 panels (1) pearoefoam (1) pipes (1) plexiglas (1) posthuman (1)
 racks (1) rapid (1) rugs (1)
 saddles (1) screens (2) seating (1) s o f a s (1) souvenirs (2) steel (1) stone (2)
 striped (1) suit (1) surrounded (1)
 tables (1) tangled (1) textiles (1) **towels (3)** tubes (2)
 virtual (1) voices (1)
 white (1) wire (1)

Chapter 2 The Craft Object

act (1) afghans (1) animals (2) assemblage (1)
 blankets (2) bound (1) brightly (2) buckets (1) buttons (1)
 cables (1) chairs (1) clothing (1) cold (1) collecting (1) coloured (2) communication
 (1) **controlled (3)** corn (1) craft (2) cut (1)
 deconstructed (1) digested (1) dried (1)
 excess (1) explosion (1)
 floor (1) formations (1) found (1) frame (1)
 ground (1) groupings (1)
 holding (1) husks (1)

knits (1)
 machine (1) magazines (1) making (2) man-made (1) mess (2) mill (3)
 narrative (1)
 objects (2) organised (1) original (1)
 paper (1) performative (1) pins (1) placed (1) platform (1) processes (1)
 ready-made (1) rectangular (1) regurgitated (1) rejects (1) river (1) rods (1) rural (1)
scenes (3) scraps (1) sewing (1) sewn (1) sit (1) skeleton (1) square (2) stage (2)
 steel (2) stores (2) structure (1) studio (2) stuffed (2)
 tables (1) tapestry (2) tattered (1) textures (1) thrift (2) tight (1) together (1) trellises
 (1) tubular (1) TVs (1)
 unmaking (1)
 various (2)
 wall (2) wood (1) wooden (1) work (1)
 yarn (1)

Chapter 3 The Gloopy Object

abundance (1) accruing (1) aggressive(2) apron (1) assembly (1)
 bandages (1) beads (2) body (1) bottles (2) **boxes (3)** branded (2) bread (1)
 buckets (1)
 bundles (1) buns (1)
 cd (1) chef (2) clamps (1) cloth (2) condiments (1) congealed (1) **contained (3)**
 costume (1) crunch (1)
 demonstration (1) dinner (1) dog (2)
 empty (1) fast (1) foam (1) food (1) forcing (1)
 gloves (1) glue (1) gluey (1) green (1)
 hat (1)
 industrial (1) inorganic (1) intimate (1)
 jacket (1)
 karaoke (1) **ketchup (3)**
 lines (1)
 making (1) masks (1) mass-produced (1) mass (1) mayonnaise (1) meal (1) messy (2)
 metal (1) milk (1) mushy (1) mustard (1)
 naked (1)
 organic (1) over-abundance (1) over-consumption (1)
 photographs (1) piles (1) pink (1) pins (1) pools (1) posters (1) process (1) production
 (1) profusion (1)
 quantities (1)
 red (1) rolling (1) rubber (2)
 shrink (1) sloppy (1) small (1) soap (1) sticky (1) stuffed (2) Styrofoam (1) supper (1)
 table (2) tubing (1) Tupperware (1) TV (1)
 uniform (1)
 violent (1) viscous (1) vomiting (1)

white (3) wrap (2)

Chapter 4 The Prop Object

angel (1) anxious (1)
 barber (1) black-and-white (1) black (1) bodies (1) bowls (4) bright (1) brushstrokes (1)
 cardboard (2) classrooms (1) colanders (1) consciousness (1) costumes (1) crude (1)
 cups (1) dance (1) daydreams (1) devil (1) DIY (2) dolls (1) dough (1) dream (1)
 effects (2) extreme (1) eye (1)
 fables (1) face (1) farm-girls (1) figurines (1) flour (1) food (1) found (1) fractured (1)
 frame (1) ghosts (1) glass (1) gloopy (1) goths (1) gym (1)
 Halloween (1) hallucinations (1) hallways (1) hand-made (1) hand-painted (1) hand (1)
 high-school (3) hypnotic (1)
 images (1)
 jars (1) jocks (1)
 kids (1) kitchen (1)
 layered (1)
 makeup (1) mascots (1) masks (3) mayonnaise (2) messy (1) missing (1) mixing (2)
 mummies (1) music (1) myths (1)
 narration (3) narratives (1) neon (1) newspaper (2)
 objects (1)
paint (6) paranoia (1) photographs (2) photos (1) plastic (1) protagonists (1)
 punks (1)
 rambling (2) routines (1)
 screens (2) scripts (1) sets (2) shop (1) singing (1) somnambulance (1) sound (1)
 space (1) special (2) spoons (1) sports (1) stages (1) stakes (1) steel (1) sticky (1)
 tableaux (1) team (1) teenagers (1) TV (1)
 vampires (1)
 white (1) window (1) witches (1) wood (1) wooden (1)
 yearbook (2)

Chapter 5 The Suburban Object

abandoned (1) anxiety (1) audio (1)
 badly (1) basketball (1) bedrooms (1) beds (1) blonde (1) books (1) buckets (1)
cardboard (3) childhood (3) circling (1) clandestine (1) coming (1) confusion (1)
 costumes (1) countryside (1)
 dark (1) drawings (2) driveway (1) duct (1)
 faces (1) figures (1) film (2) foil (1) formed (1)
 garage (1) guts (1)

helicopters (2) hoop (1) horror (1)
innocence (1) isolation (1)
kitchens (1)
liquids (1) looping (1)
machines (1) masks (2) mess (1) mountains (2)
nails (1) narratives (1) nefarious (1) notes (1)
objects (1) overlapping (1)
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Family Tyranny (Modeling and Molding)

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Heidi

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Grand Mal

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The Loner

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K-CorealNC. K (section a)

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