

**FOLLOW THE THREAD:
FABRICATED SOCIAL STRUCTURES WITH THE BODY AS TEXT**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that *Follow the Thread: Fabricated social structures with the body as text*, is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education Institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. le Roux', with a small flourish at the end.

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13 November 2020

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SUMMARY

Title

Follow the thread: Fabricated social structures with the body as text.

The broad focus of this study is on how, through inequalities in power in constructed human socio-political, socio-economic and legal structures, the value and dignity of human life is destroyed. The researcher as artist wished to represent these observations through visual metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche in an installation, "Follow the thread". The dissertation contextualises that work within the works of Sheila Hicks, Amita Makan, Magdalena Abakanowicz and Ana Mendieta, all of whom use organic materials related to ideas about life and death. The first three use fibres as a metaphor for life. Through the analysis of metaphors in the selected artworks, the allusiveness of these metaphors is examined to offer insights about their indirect, referential, and evocative nature. It is revealed in the study that the success of metaphors operating within the visual language is closely linked to their complexity, their range scope and multimodality, and their ability to provoke multivalent, layered interpretations of artworks.

My sculptural drawings that resemble fragments of the human body in the installation are a metaphor for the abuse of human dignity and for the disregard those in power have when life is reduced to bare life, rather than life appropriate to a legal citizen.

KEY TERMS:

Body; Bound; Fabric; Fate; Fragment; Structure; Thread; Value.

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LINK TO ONLINE CATALOGUE

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING THE STUDY

*Also she [Night] bore the implacable punishing Furies, and three Fates,
Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who at the hour of their birth give
Mankind their personal rations of bad luck and good for their lifetime.
Hesiod, Theogony, 207-209*

1. INTRODUCTION

The broad focus of this study is on how, through inequalities in power in constructed human socio-political, socio-economic and legal structures, the value and dignity of human life is destroyed. The researcher as artist wished to represent these observations through visual metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche in an installation. The nature of metaphor is often personally allusive so that this study in providing the academic support to the artistic representations ranges widely.

The primary focus on violations of the value of human life and dignity which the installation "Follow the thread" showcases, represented primarily by sculptural drawings of parts of bodies, goes back to the aftermath of the Second World War (1 September 1939-2 September 1945). The United Nations in 1948 pronounced that, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (UN, 1948). However since that declaration there has been no abating of the abuses of human rights and dignity throughout the world (Bagaric & Allan 2006). Now in the second decade of the twenty first century violations of human rights continue as the populist leaders (Pasquino 2008, Jacobsen 2018) in some countries respond to a whole range of crises from refugees (McConnachie 2017, Zannetti 2019) to the Sixth Extinction (Alston 2017). The salient example of the crisis in the West has been the massive refugee crisis following the wars waged for democracy. ¹

In this study the researcher's own work is contextualised within the works of four women artists who voice many of her own concerns. They are the American Sheila Hicks (b. 1934), the South African Amita Makan, the Polish Magdalena Abakanowicz (1930-2017) and the Cuban-American Ana Mendieta (1948-1985). These women artists have responded variously in their

¹ A cursory look at the wars, between 1990 and 2002 on the internet, shows close to eighty wars with some ongoing. See, for example: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/10-conflicts-watch-2020> or <https://ourworldindata.org/war-and-peace>.

artworks to socio-political events in the twentieth and twenty first centuries and particularly to attacks on the dignity of women.

"Human rights lie at the core of the liberal-democratic aspiration to secure equal treatment for all under the rule of law and they appear to combine humanitarian, juridical and political concerns almost seamlessly" states Jenkins (2004:80). Equal treatment of women in terms of the rights of humans came to the forefront of many countries' legislature in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Women's Rights Movement) and particularly in the twentieth (Feminist Movement) (McElroy 2001, 2002, 2008). The term "Women's rights" also includes the girl-child's rights. These rights may be summarised as autonomy, the right to vote, to own property, to hold a public office, to enter into legal contracts and be equal to men in terms of family law and to work for equal and fair wages. The rights and entitlements supported in the Feminist Movement particularly stress the right to be free from sexual violence, to have bodily integrity, to have reproductive rights and to enjoy education. Internationally, not every state and country recognises these rights (Farris 2017).

Research focussing on the way that human rights and dignity are violated is extremely broad and forms part of philosophical and politico-legal studies (Habermas 2010, Agamben 1998, Arendt 1951), international law and human rights studies (Quintavalla & Hine 2019, Donnelly & Whelan 2018, Donnelly 2013) and numerous disciplines in social studies (de Kort 2017). To give visual access to the highly abstract issues of human rights the researcher as artist represents the human body as the biological site and receptor of the experiences of violations of rights in her installation. The artworks are produced from thread, fabric and gelatine. The choice of media is related to a multiplicity of metonymies and metaphors which gave an impetus to the creation and development of the artworks. Metonymy is understood in Willerton's (2005:11) words, "Metonymy involves substituting some attributive or suggestive word for what is actually meant, as a means of showing associations between the word and its referent: crown for royalty, mitre for bishop ... ". Closely connected to metonymy in Rhetoric is the figure of synecdoche, again in Willerton's (2005:11) words, "Synecdoche involves using part of a thing to stand for the whole ... : for example, counting cattle as "forty head ...". Strictly speaking the installation associated with this dissertation shows parts of the body which must stand for not only the whole of the body and psyche but also for a cluster of socio-political and legal concepts. The sculptural drawings are synecdoches in this sense but are also metonymic as the use of thread as an attributive and allusive "word" shows the associations between itself and the referents.

The significant metonymy underpinning the researcher's installation is that of thread - the life thread. Thread in its widest connotative field has a multiplicity of referents. The primary idea of the researcher's artworks was the pictorial representation of the thread of life in the body (and its parts) which is very fragile and easily ended, signalled by the reference to the Greek mythological concept of the Moirai (the Fates) (Graves 1960). The first Fate, Clotho, spins the thread of life, her sister Lachesis measures how long the life will be as she metaphorically measures the spun thread and the third sister Atropos cuts the thread showing what the allotted length of the life is and in this she is described as *Inexorable*.

The synecdoche of the parts of the body represented in the sculptural drawings standing for the whole body in a visually affective way relies on the drawings to evoke recollections in the viewers' minds of actual representations of bodies which are not intact.

The sculptural drawings also rely on metaphor for their impact. By *metaphor* the current understanding is that it is "an ontological correspondence between two conceptual domains" (Al-Harassi 2003:85). It is no longer considered to be an added ornament to discourse and language but a basic conceptual scheme to order abstract thought and affective and aesthetic experience (Gibbs 2008). The metaphor which pervades this study is the comparison between a static object produced from threads (target domain) and the physical body (source domain) and the similarities between target and source are cued by the shapes the sculptural drawings are given to resemble parts of the physical body.

Metaphor is believed to arise out of humans' embodied experience and the connection between embodiment, cognition and language is well researched (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999, 2003, Kövecses 2005, Yu 2008). Gibbs (2008) explains a facet of scholarship on metaphor, attempting to contextualise metaphor studies within the broader fields of culture, human cognition and communication.

A trend in theories of metaphor is directed towards the production of "detailed theoretical frameworks that aim to describe the underlying nature of language, thought, and communication" especially in the field of cognitive linguistics (Gibbs 2008:4). That metaphor occurs not only in language by which we express our thoughts (as the ancient grammarians suggested) but in stationary representations and pictures, in moving images, in music and sounds, in gestures and smell and touch, thereby expanding methods of communication and the direction of thinking (Forceville 2008).

In art or multimodal metaphors the source and the target of the metaphor have a certain sense of the instantaneous, unlike language. "Perceptual immediacy" as Forceville (2008:463) calls it, is characterised by its specificity. Another significant feature of pictorial and multimodal metaphors which are perceptual is that the medium determines how the similarity between source domain and target domain is cued. Image metaphors carry a strong affective potential and they can often be more rapidly understood than a foreign or unfamiliar language.

But thread is also a reference to humanity's deepest past, its life history, when women first spliced, spun and wove with thread, as early as the Neolithic period (12,000 years ago) perhaps after pottery was produced. Knotting, knitting and twisting of fibres probably preceded weaving (Kuz'mina & Mallory 2007). The production of textiles was very important to the ancient world's economic activity whether by splicing or spinning (Gleba & Harris 2019, Barber 1991, 1994). The splicing and later the spinning of yarn is usually understood as a first step in textile production and might have predated the agricultural revolution.

The aspect of deep antiquity which is not a cause for celebration is the probable fact that *Homo Sapiens sapiens*, our species (appearing about 95,000 years ago) decimated all other human types over his long history (about 28,000 years ago), as is gradually becoming clear in the archaeological record (Timeline, 2006, n.p., Harari 2014). The history of violence against other creatures, human and animal is well entrenched over the last two and a half million years.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Thread and fabric in my artworks, through metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, are used to make reference to many concepts from several disciplines including mythology, archaeology, psychology, philosophy, history and fine art. Through the work I indicate, in a visual language, the impact of the emotional and literal experiences of the biological body in situations of discontinuity and fragmentation which might be called the fate of the person as she/he exists in the state of vulnerable matter. In the installation I used the guiding principle of the three Greek mythological figures of the Moirai or Fates, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos to structure the catalogue and to some extent the artworks. It is not possible to use the same framework in the dissertation as it is governed by other requirements (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit 2004) and presents the solution to an academic and intellectual problem which it poses in writing. The relationship between my artworks and the ideas they convey was possible to show in a

highly elliptical and abbreviated way together with the catalogue in the installation. However, the problem to be solved in the dissertation must be argued convincingly without leaving the reader to freely interpret a series of visual metaphors in 3-D.

The capacity of humans to interpret information has been extensively researched in relation to cognition (Kaplan 1990, 1992). Over the last fifty years numerous topics in cognition have gained prominence. One of these prominent concepts relates to metaphor (Fauconnier & Turner 2002). As Forceville (2009:18) says,

Conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) has ... amply sought to underpin the claim that humans' pervasive use of verbal metaphor reflects the fact that they think largely metaphorically.

Basic to the understanding of CMT is the fact that metaphors can be transmitted through a range of media. Multimodal metaphors are conveyed through a number of signalling systems (Bolter & Grusin 1999). Each mode can "cue, independently or in combination, metaphorical targets as well as metaphorical sources" (Forceville 2009: 21). Pictorial representations have been named visual metaphors when there is an intentional violation of the code of representation, where target and source may not be reversed (Kennedy 1992). Whittock (1990) expands visual metaphor to include metonymy and synecdoche, although he was especially applying the ideas to cinematography, this may apply to installation art too.

The theme of thread as a metaphor for life, so *life is a thread*, is an overarching idea behind the choice of materials, processes and installation of the sculptural drawings. (Even DNA, the code of life itself, has two strands or threads in each chromosome). Clotho's spinning of the thread after she has drafted the fibres from a bundle of flax (or hemp) mythologically perhaps reflects the biological creation of the human body and by synecdoche - life. Then in the deep mythological thinking of antiquity the thread is allotted a certain time of life, a thread of a certain length (Lachesis' job). Finally that thread is cut by Atropos who is Implacable. The numerous metaphors, metonymies and synecdoches which are teased out in the installation are discussed in Chapter Four.

1.2.1 Research question

The research question is, how do the discussed artists use the multimodal visual metaphors (metonymies and synecdoches) to create open-ended and multivalent artworks?

1.2.2 Research aim and objectives

By analysing art by the selected contemporary female artists and reflecting on my own work, this dissertation, has the objective of outlining my concerns about human value and how negative experiences of devaluation are "written" on the body and impact the psyche. Although, the experiences of all artists discussed, are subjective, personalised, and allusive, the notions of common grounds and similarities can be detected. The aim of the study is to discuss and present a corpus of work visually through metaphor, synecdoche and metonymy. This I do by using thread and fabric (in its versatility of applied methods) in the installation "*Follow the thread*" and accompanying examples in this dissertation. I draw some conclusions about the socio-political impacts which biological human bodies undergo from the socio-political and legal institutions of human civilization.

1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research design for the study aims to adequately answer the research question. The methodology used is supportive of that process.

1.3.1 Research paradigm

Everyone has a unique worldview, a set of basic beliefs about how the world is constituted and that perspective underpins their choice of research paradigm (Guba & Lincoln 1994). The particular epistemological position (Niglas 2001) or understanding of how things are connected on the macro and the micro scale, influences professional practice, behaviour and mode of research. This study has been conducted from an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism means constructing one's view from multiple perspectives (Henning, et al. 2004). This paradigm suited this study because I wanted to reflect both on my own work and that of the four artists chosen.

1.3.2 Constructivism

The constructivist philosophers John Dewey (1933/1998), Jerome Bruner (1915-2016), Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) are either cognitive constructivists (Bruner and Piaget) or social constructivists (Vygotsky). The social constructivists are responsible for outlining some important ideas about knowledge, reality, learning and importantly intersubjectivity. Constructivism is an explanation of how a person makes meaning out of

knowledge in his/her social context by interaction with the environment they find themselves in (Vygotsky 1978). Social constructivists focus on the enormous influence of culture and context as primary elements to guide understanding of what happens in society and how we as humans construct our knowledge through this lens (Derry 1999, McMahon 1997). For the constructivist philosophers human knowledge is created actively as we interact with others (intersubjectivity) (Denzin & Lincoln 2003).

For scholars such as Berger and Luckman (1966) all knowledge, even what we are inclined to take for granted as common sense knowledge of everyday reality, comes from social interactions among people. So when we interact with each other we do so on the basis of the belief that our respective perceptions of reality are closely related. Then as we take action on the basis of this understanding the shared knowledge of reality is reinforced. What meaning is given to reality is dependent on interpretation by the actors. Social constructivists also say that our human experience is ultimately personal and different people experience it differently (Denzin & Lincoln 2003).

1.3.3 Research approach

The research in this study is qualitative, as it “implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured” (Denzin & Lincoln 2000:8). The emphasis in the research undertaken was on co-constructed knowledge from the artworks discussed. An understanding can develop from what is investigated, namely the multimodal visual metaphors which are the artworks (Henning *et al.*, 2005:3). Schwandt (2000:192) explains interpretivist philosophies as,

... the idea of acquiring an ‘inside’ understanding – the actors’ definition of the situation is a powerful central concept for understanding the purpose of qualitative inquiry.

1.3.4 Research design

Using a specific research design enables the researcher to examine the artworks as evidence for investigation into the discussion aimed at answering the research question adequately. That question was “How do the discussed artists use the multimodal visual metaphors (metonymies and synecdoches) to create open-ended and multivalent artworks?” The particular kind of evidence was specified in this research as artworks. For Yin (1994) the research design is based on a logical approach to the evidence (not a logistical one). This study is qualitative to enable the researcher to closely examine the experiences of the artists under discussion as they use their artworks to express their understanding of reality.

1.3.5 Choice of artists

The artists whose works I chose to interpret are American Sheila Hicks (b.1934), Amita Makan (b.1967) South African, Polish Magdalena Abakanowicz (1930-2017) and Cuban Ana Mendieta (1948-1985). Amongst other reasons the organic features of the chosen artworks of these artists were considered important as was the striking quality of their visual metaphors.

Escalade beyond chromatic lands (2017) by the American artist, Hicks, is discussed considering the use of colours, organic materials and the concept of textile-as-text. Parrish (2017:166) says of Hicks' *Badagara White*, although abstract and architectural, she had, " ... 'cloud formations' and 'Japanese scroll paintings' in mind when composing her design, and the patchwork patterning also recalls aerial views of farmland as is found in her native Nebraska.". Her visual metaphors reveal her pleasure and delight in taking in, on an anthropological scale, the innumerable objects, stories, experiences she has lived in her extremely well-travelled life. Her view of fibre as language was the result of her work with her thesis advisor Anni Albers (1899-1994) (Parrish 2017). The idea of textile-as-text arises out of the work of the archaeologist Junius Bird's work (Hicks' co-supervisor) who discovered the largest surviving collection of South American *quipu*² George Kubler, the Meso-American historian also had a profound influence on her ideas about textile-as-text.

South African Artist, Makan who uses threads, fabric and embroidery that directly relate to memory and heritage, has been found to be relevant to this study and included because of similarities in my own work. She states (Sasol Signatures, 2020. n.p.) speaking of grief and loss that, "The threads infer mortality, a continuity of life, the transfer of DNA from one generation to another, but also the traumatic manner in which life can be terminated as with the cutting of a thread". Her strong sense of history and as a descendant from the Gujerati from India (who embroidered) impels her work. Thread is used to reference life and memory thereby guiding the metaphor in her work.

Polish Abakanowicz's use of organic materials in artworks to draw attention to the human condition, invoking memories of World War II in eastern Europe, are discussed. Her use of fibre as metaphor for the enduring quality of the human spirit echoes my own concerns. She uses thread and weaving for her figural sculptures showing the expressive powers of thread

² The quipu consists of strings with knots to represents numbers. This was a method used by the Inca civilisation to record calculations (Inca mathematics www.mathshistory.st-andrews.ac.za)

and weaving as metaphors for the individual in society overwhelmed by fate and history but nevertheless enduring.

Cuban Mendieta's performance-based works took place in the environment often incorporating other organic elements, even allowing erosion and decay. Her visual and gestural metaphors were recorded so they have a continuity and afterlife of their own. Her chief concern was expressed as a desire to return to the mother, Earth.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The artworks discussed in the case study, except those of Hicks, have not been experienced personally and I had to rely on images as sources of reference. This study may be enriched by viewing the original works.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: This chapter outlines the research question and the research design and methodology, including the names of the artists whose work is interpreted. It introduces the study. Chapter 2 is a literature review to support the interpretation of the artists' work viewed from the researcher's point of view. Chapter 3 constitutes the interpretation and analysis of the selected artists. Chapter 4 is an in-depth examination of the researcher's own work as presented in the installation, "Follow the thread". Chapter 5 is a presentation of the conclusions arrived at through the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (UN, 1948)

2 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to give a theoretical background to support the ideas and processes involved in the making of my installation, "Follow the Thread" and to help contextualise my work in the oeuvre of Hicks, Makan, Abakanowicz and Mendieta. Importantly, the literature examined represents an attempt to answer the research question which underlies this study - "How do the discussed artists use the multimodal visual metaphors (metonymies and synecdoches) to create open-ended and multivalent artworks?" As the target domain of my artworks in the installation, are bodies and body parts of humans who suffer because of the social, political and legal institutions of our civilization, the chapter opens with a discussion of biopolitics and Giorgio Agamben's (b.1942) "bare life" of an individual (Agamben 1998). There follows a discussion of multimodal visual metaphor (metonymy and synecdoche). Spinning and weaving are integral metaphors for my sculptural drawings, so that discussion follows. Next is the discussion of lines, threads and fabrics, germane to my work as well as the works of Hicks, Mendieta and Makan. After that there is brief discussion of language, communication and the body as a means of communication; there follows a section of Kristeva's ideas about the "chora" and finally the ideas of separation and fragmentation, all from a psychological perspective.

2.1 BIOPOLITICS IN THE LAST AND THIS CENTURY

In 2001 the *Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* was published (ICISS 2001) in the wake of wars in places like Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Rwanda. The aim of the report was to reach consensus on "[e]xternal military intervention for human protection" (ICISS 2001:vii) in the light of the sovereignty of states and the inviolability of their territory. At the same time it was acknowledged that "sovereign states have a responsibility to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophe – from mass murder and rape, from starvation" (ICISS 2001:viii). These same states are often unable to do so (Human Rights Watch, 2011) – in such a case the argument is that the "broader community of states" must assist (ICISS 2001:viii). In fact the report title is "Responsibility to protect". To

understand contemporary philosophical debates about international politics and make sense of the political landscape, it is worth quoting the ICISS (2001:8) on sovereignty as a key concept,

It is acknowledged that sovereignty implies a dual responsibility: externally – to respect the sovereignty of other states, and internally, to respect the dignity and basic rights of all the people within the state. In international human rights covenants, in UN practice, and in state practice itself, sovereignty is now understood as embracing this dual responsibility. Sovereignty as responsibility has become the minimum content of good international citizenship.

Political philosophers considering the events of last century and this in terms of treatment of citizens of sovereign states have some terrible examples of leaders making sovereign decisions which ban and exclude certain citizens to become living dead or for their lives to become expendable. Some examples include Nazi Germany, Turkish Armenia, Rwanda and Serbia.

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Giorgio Agamben (b.1942) builds his key arguments articulated in *Homo Sacer*, on the theories of Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), (Vaughan-Williams, 2009: 96). In an essay on Agamben as a political philosopher, Kalyvas (2005:106) explains,

By creatively combining and further developing Schmitt's definition of the sovereign decision, Foucault's notion of biopower, and Arendt's analyses of totalitarianism and the status of rightless and stateless people, Agamben probes the murky interstices of the norm and the exception, exploring that gray zone where the classical distinctions between *bios* and *zoe*, good life and natural life, *nomos* [law] and *physis* [nature], first originated only to be subsequently blurred, broken, and finally effaced. It is in this zone of indistinction that he finds the original manifestation and the true dwelling of sovereignty.

Agamben's now well-known book *Homo Sacer. Sovereign power and bare life* (1998) is the

philosopher's take at the end of the twentieth century on the biopower and biopolitics of the period. The possibility, through the manipulation of political technology to take charge of entire populations, is biopower and biopolitics refers to the style of governing which accompanies it. When Kalyvas notes who has been seminal in Agamben's development of the concept *sovereignty*, namely Schmitt (the German constitutional jurist), Foucault (the French historian of the connection between knowledge and power) and Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) political philosopher, he maps a trajectory of political change. The changes in attitude of governments towards their citizens between the First World War (1914-1918) and the Second World War (1939-1945) and its aftermath, the Cold Wars (1947-1953 and 1985-1991) is the historical material which brings Agamben to state that *bare life*, *zoë* and *political existence*, *bios* is the “fundamental categorical pair of Western politics” (Agamben 1998:8). The term, *bios* is used to indicate the “way of living proper to an individual or group”, while the term *zoë* refers to biological existence, “the simple fact of living” (Agamben 1998:1). According to Agamben (1998:11) “Western politics has not succeeded in constructing the link between *zoë* and *bios*, between voice and language that would have healed the fracture” in the way biopolitics is performed in the contemporary world.. He speaks of the twentieth century as the century of "concentration camps" in which people are without rights or states but have only their bare life. Building on Agamben's “central concept of *bare life* and the importance of the consequent implications within a political space”, Vaughan-Williams (2009:96,97) argues that “Agamben's reconceptualisation” of perceived “limits of sovereign power” leads to a “generalised biopolitical border” that challenges “assumptions of the modern geopolitical imagery”. According to Vaughan-Williams (2009:97,98), in the introduction to *Homo Sacer*, Agamben seems to agree with Foucault's reference to “the process by which biological life (*zoë*) has become included within modalities of the state power (*bios*) as the transition from politics to biopolitics”. Although Agamben believes that Foucault's thesis is incomplete because the “historical shift to biopolitics has not actually taken place”, as Foucault suggests, Agamben argues that “the production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power.”

For Agamben the “birth of biopolitics represents nothing less than the coming to light of the hidden foundation upon which the entire Western political tradition rests” (Heron 2011:37). Kalyvas (2005:108) states that Agamben does not aspire "to revive previously established discourses of sovereign power” instead Agamben looks at the “past of sovereignty in order to comprehend its present”. In this, Agamben argues that biopolitics does not mark the decline of

sovereign function but is an unparalleled extension of it (Heron 2011:38,39).

Benjamin defines divine violence as situated where the distinction between exception and rule are no longer possible, being “the dissolution of the link between violence and law” and the real content of law which functions in juridical creation. He approaches the connection between violence and law by comparing it to sovereign violence as being twofold, “in the sense that lawmaking pursues as its end, with violence as the means” establishing law without using violence at its instatement instead just the power of threat of violence, thus “intimately bound up with it”. Benjamin uses the term “bare life” as the “the bearer of the link between violence and law”. With the analysis of this figure an essential link between bare life and juridical violence is established (Agamben 1998:45). Where Benjamin uses the term "bare life", Schmitt speaks of "real life" to point to life, in which Agamben seeks to clarify the relation between this element of exception and sovereignty (1998:46).

Foucault used the term “biopolitics” to refer to “the way in which the biological features of the human species became the target for the political strategy (Vaughan-Williams 2009:79), where the “simple living body becomes what is at stake in a society’s political strategies” (Agamben 1998:5). According to Vaughan-Williams (2009:78,79), for Foucault “the relationship between history, power and the body” changes constantly along with different forms of power in which “biopolitical features of the human species became the target for political strategy”. Therefore the body is inseparable from politics by already being a biopolitical body (Norris 2005:15).

“The sovereign decision is always about what Agamben calls sacred life” which he sees as “a hybrid of political and biological life”, not totally excluded not fully included (Kalyvas 2005:108). Agamben proposes that the problem of human value occurs “when life becomes the supreme political value” decided by the sovereign (Agamben 1998:142). The power of the sovereign affects the “very constitution of life”, ruling “over brains and bodies, politicizing and policing human nature, producing, administering, and managing life itself” thereby in control of the value of a life. An example is the current treatment by the Chinese state of the Uighurs (Kirby 2020: n.p.). By politicizing biological life, the body is subjected to the rule of the sovereign power (Kalyvas 2005:109).

Plato in his dialogue *The Statesman* (2005) uses the analogy of a weaver who controls the pattern of a fabric to reflect on the art of ruling (Merrill 2003). During the process of weaving separate threads are combined to initiate a new object equated to a society consisting of individual members.

The activity of weaving mixes and intertwines threads. Kalyvas (2005:124) relates the idea of weaving to the nature of politics where different elements are combined into a unified fabric. The weaver relies on materials supplied through other processes such as carding and spinning. I liken this to the fate allotted by Lachesis, sorting and allocating separate threads to function as a whole. Thus, Lachesis relies on materials supplied by Clotho, just like the social weave relies on individuals to create the social fabric. The social situation or structure into which a person is born is fate beyond individual control. The fate of being allocated to a social structure under a sovereign, religious or cultural power may be disempowering for the individual due to a loss of autonomy.

Weaving does not allow “violation or transgression of rules that define and govern it” (Kalyvas 2005:125). The body which governs implements rules/laws to formulate a structure to avoid chaos. A ruler is not only an implement for drawing straight lines across a surface but is also “a sovereign who controls and governs a territory”, plotting courses of action, establishing territory and controls by laying down guidelines (Ingold 2007:160). Situations with set standards create order. The sovereign has the final decision on whether a situation is in order (Agamben 1998:16). In a bio-political system the final decision on how society is structured is within the political sphere of the sovereign who creates and guarantees the fabric of society by deciding which situations have priority. This structured standard is intended to produce order “so that the legal order has sense” (Kiesow 2005:251). By analogy, a social order can be said to be a differentiation between warp and weft to fabricate a structure. Each thread consists of possibilities and potentials to become ordered into the social fabric. Warp threads are implemented as guiding structure for weft threads to fill and create a surface (Chawla 1998:15). The social fabric binds the thread into becoming the object, subjected to external controls such as cultural, social and political rule. No social fabric is constructed from a single thread instead it is the combination that structures the social weave. This makes a singular body part of a constructed body, with group value. By becoming a citizen in a nation, group benefits and group losses become part of individuals' fate. In this construction the individual may lack autonomy in a system of inclusion and exclusion, binding and separating. With this, the unravelling of textiles and the multivalent references to thread are explored visually.

2.2 METAPHOR, METONYMY AND SYNECDOCHE

Metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche are integral to my artwork and expression, both to

represent persons and the bodies of persons dismembered for various reasons and abjected materials from the social organisation to which they belonged. Hence the discussion of the topic of metaphor. Because as Grady (2007:219) expresses it, "aspects of our lived experience are associated with others, for reasons that reflect basic aspects of perception, thought, and possibly neurological organization" metaphor is discussed in relation to cognitive linguistics. Cognitive linguistics is a branch of linguistics in which both research and knowledge derived from neuropsychology and linguistics as well as cognitive psychology are considered. In the discipline of cognitive linguistics the understanding of metaphor is that "many of our concepts are grounded in, and structured by, various patterns of our perceptual interactions, bodily actions, and manipulations of objects" (Gibbs 2005: 90). Johnson (1987), Lakoff (1987), Lakoff and Johnson (1999) and Talmy (1983, 2000) are the researchers whose findings were foundational to broaden conceptions of the metaphor. The shift in the way metaphor was understood in the wake of studies in human cognition was facilitated, from the 1950s, by advanced non-destructive testing technology applied in a medical and scientific context. These advances include imaging techniques to show what happens in the brain when cognition occurs have led to further and wider understandings about language use and its structure. Cognitive linguistics was born in the 1970s (Grady 2007).

Metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche can be described as basic to human cognition, not only in language alone. Metaphor had been previously conceived and described (for the last two thousand years) as merely an ornament of language (Lakoff 1987), but that is no longer the case. Tsur (2017) goes further and suggests that poetic conventions are cognitive *fossils* as he theorises that poetic language and the varied literary forms it takes are necessarily impelled by cognitive processes. Metaphors, for instance, which were used to solve cognitive problems, gradually become mere conventions and are no longer related to the experiential and perceptual problems they were originally used for, cognitive poetics.

Metaphor is understood as Gibbs (2005:20) describes it,

Metaphorical concepts express fundamental mental mappings by which knowledge from one domain (i.e., the target) is structured and understood by information from a dissimilar domain (i.e., the source).

Metaphors and metonymies start from a standard or completely literal sense (source) and we extend them to a figurative sense (target) (Tuggy 2007). However, since antiquity, with its strong rhetorical focus on figures of speech as ornamentation to language, metonymy has been associated with ideas of contiguity and association when making a distinction between

metaphor and metonymy (Panter & Thornburg 2007). The name of one thing stands for what it is contiguous with or associated with in traditional definitions of metonymy, say "Luthuli House issued a report". Luthuli House stands for the ANC Government. But there are other metonymies, not only referential ones such as this example. There are predicational metonymies and illocutionary ones. This research focuses only the referential kind.

Panther and Thornburg (2007:242) provide a valuable summary of conceptual metaphor from a cognitive perspective,

- a. Conceptual metonymy is a cognitive process where a source content provides access to a target content within one cognitive domain.
- b. The relation between source content and target content is contingent,
- c. The target content is foregrounded, and the source content is backgrounded.
- d. The strength of the metonymic link between source and target content may vary depending, among other things, on the conceptual distance between source and target and the salience of the metonymic source.

A further important point to make about metaphor is that in art and pictures Kennedy (2008:458) says it can be substituted with a simile; "A simile is a comparison that can be turned into a metaphor without loss of logical status".

Synecdoche (part for the whole) has traditionally been classified as a subset of metaphor, very like metonymy (Wachowski 2019). However, in the cognitive linguistics research, the idea of synecdoche is differently categorised than in classical Rhetoric. Wachowski (2019: 62) makes a distinction between classical rhetorical descriptions in which the classical is understood as "all category members ... characterized by a limited set of essential features". According to the cognitive view, "category members do not have to share common attributes but instead, seem to be connected by a network of overlapping similarities". Kennedy (2008: 457) sums up the status for synecdoche in art as remaining in accordance with classical Rhetoric: "Synecdoche uses a part to represent the whole".

2.3 SPINNING AND WEAVING IN THE DEEP PAST

Hemp, flax and wool were the main fibres used by the Homo sapiens Neolithic population (Becker, Benecke, Grabundžija, Küchelmann, Pollock, Schier, Schoch, Schrakamp, Schütt & Schumacher 2016). However, the Neanderthals in the area of Abri du Maras in France near the

Rhône River were using the inner fibres of gymnosperms. To spin, the spinner must draft the fibres from a bundle which she then draws, stretches and twists into yarn (Keith 1998). Some of the very early human efforts to twist fibres (to weave baskets and bags) have been found at Dolni Vestonice in the Czech Republic, for instance, and go back to about 26,000 years ago (Adovasio, Soffer & Klima 1996). Flax (*Linum usitatissimum*) is believed to be one of the fibre (and oil) crops of Neolithic Near Eastern agriculture (Abbo, Zezak, Lev-Yadun, Shamir, Friedman & Gopher 2014). In Georgia at an Upper Paleolithic (30,000 years ago) site wild flax fibres were found and this seems to indicate that Old World hunter-gatherer societies pre-dating the Neolithic agricultural revolution were aware of the uses of flax (Mithen 2003).

Langgut, Yahalom-Mack, Lev-Yadun, Kremer, Ullman and Davidovich (2016) report on the discovery of well preserved wooden artefacts, spindles and distaffs made of tamarisk and date wood in burial caves in the southern Levant. These are estimated to predate to the fifth millennium, just before copper was starting to be used instead of stone for implements.

The spindles and distaffs were probably used to spin flax fibres either by drop spinning and/or supported spinning (accomplished by rolling on the thigh). One of the wooden spindles still has the whorl in place.

Splicing, spinning and weaving were astonishing technological inventions in humanity's most ancient forbears and that mysterious and time-honoured work of women, is honoured in ancient literature. For instance, in the ancient Indian *Atharva Veda* (1200 - 1000 BC) there is a personification of Night and Day as two sisters who are weaving a web, the nights being the warp and the days the woof. The close connection between Indo-European, Ancient Greek and the Ancient Near Eastern civilisations is well attested (Penglase 1994, Feldman 1996, Solmsen 1989) and the *topoi* about spinning and weaving were probably echoes of each other. In one of Europe's earliest poetic documents, the Greek poet Hesiod's (fl. 750-650BC) *Theogony*.³ the goddesses who are inextricably bound up with human life in its essence are the personified as the Fates/ *Moirai*, *Clotho*, *Lachesis* and *Atropos*.⁴ Both Homer (author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*) and Hesiod were profoundly influenced by the stories and ideas current in the Hittite Kingdom with its capital Hattusa in Anatolia of the Bronze Age (sixth millennium BC).⁵

³ *The Genesis of the Gods* (Hine 2005:4)

⁴ The *Moirai* are closely connected to the end of life in Homer's works.

⁵ Anatolia is the old name for Asia Minor given by the Romans. It is also called Asian Turkey, the Anatolian peninsula or the Anatolian plateau. It is a large peninsula in West Asia and is the westernmost protrusion of the Asian continent.

Travelling storytellers and singers freely exchanged ideas, stories, motifs, plots with their counterparts from all over the Near East and Cyprus.⁶ To date there has been no study of the minor characters in Hesiod's *Theogony* in relation to their exact counterparts in Hittite literature, but Bachvarova (2016) has begun to map the correspondences. The three Hittite Fates, the Hutena, namely Gul Šeš (Gulšeš or Gul-aššeš) might be examined in subsequent research.⁷ Of importance here, is the fact that in certain of the Hittite festivals prominence was given to "the human ability to turn products of nature into things of culture" (Bachvarova 2016:223). This suggests that the arts of spinning and weaving might have been recognised and celebrated, just as the arts of metallurgy and astronomy were celebrated.

Thread is a significant metaphor with its very wide connotative and figurative reach in the installation "*Follow the thread*".

2.4 LINES, THREADS, FABRICS –INGOLD AND KRUGER.

Ingold (2007:1) describes a thread as a surface called line: he speaks of "the comparative anthropology of line" by noting that walking, weaving, observing, singing, drawing and writing" all have one thing in common, namely line. Ingold (2007:41) makes a distinction between what he calls "two major classes of line" by calling them "threads" and "traces". He defines *thread* as a kind of filament "which may be entangled with other threads or suspended between points" in a physical space. He points out that, *threads* have surfaces of their own, albeit almost microscopic, thus not necessarily drawn onto the surface. Ingold (2007) refers to an essay published in 1860 written by the renowned historian of art and architecture, Gottfried Semper, (1803-1879) who argued that "threading, twisting and knotting of fibres were of the most ancient of human arts, from which all else was derived, including both building and textile". Alois Riegl (1858-1905) rejected the idea that the "line of art originated with thread". Ingold further states: "For Semper the prototypical line was a *thread*; for Riegl it was a *trace*". This *trace* is literally perceived as "the most basic component of all two-dimensional drawing and surface decoration" (Ingold 2007:42).

Ingold's argument that "threads may be transformed into traces, and traces into threads" and

⁶ Hesiod's family came from Aeolis (Anatolia or Asian Turkey) but he was born in Ascra, near Thespieae in Boeotia (Lambert & Walcot, 1965) after his father relocated to Greece.

⁷ The Hittite storm god Tarhun has been shown to correspond with Zeus in Greek mythology (Lurker 2004:71).

that surfaces are created “through the transformation of threads into traces” is a satisfactory one for the purposes of the "Follow the Thread" installation. Further Ingold (2007:52) says that surfaces can be dissolved “through the transformation of traces into threads”

Not only does line have the potential to be additive or reductive, it may rupture the surfaces themselves, such as in the case of a crack or a cut (Ingold 2007:44). Lines may suggest characteristics that relate to emotion. In my sculptural drawings, the fragile textural quality of the lines, express emotions of vulnerability. By using the threads in a seemingly random direction, chaos is suggested. In my exhibition "Follow the thread", the concept of line as a surface is applied by using thread as an agent for line, taking the surface characteristics and textural qualities into consideration while using it in varying densities to create an illusion of tonal value. I use the evidence bearing thread as line drawings in space to create volume. The volume is demarcated by the network of lines. In my sculptural drawings *thread* becomes a new surface taking on a hollow three dimensional shape.

Kruger (2001) argues that “the heritage of written text” is descended from textiles. She (Kruger 2001:13) remarking on the early theories of Kristeva, she notes that “... the literal relationship of the body to signification, is mentioned as extended from Jacques Lacan’s theories of language and the body. According to Kruger (2001:13) “Kristeva’s word for Semiotics and psychoanalysis provides a metaphoric lens for understanding the relationship between the textile-body and its text”. Kristeva’s theories, focus on the “relationship of the body to language” and “often demonstrate the intimate relationship between artistic production and human psychology” which is shaped by subjectivity as well as contributing to shaping subjectivity (Kruger 2001:35). In this way the metaphor of weaving and the language of textiles is an analogue for the body as part of the social structure.

In this metaphor, spinning and weaving is entangled with memories which are referenced throughout a system of beliefs and customs within the fabric of society and constantly referenced, revealed and reflected upon. The textile of the human body becomes a surface inscribed with this coded text which consists of signs and symbols referenced as agents for communication. Both textiles and the human body follow a thread of connection that is coded to reveal a so-called value of material matter.

2.5 LANGUAGE - LACAN AND KRISTEVA

Language is a form of communication which is “a series of divisions simultaneously introduced

into a flux of thoughts and a flux of sounds” with “the linguistic sign” corresponding “to a connection of these two amorphous masses” (Dor 1998:37). The linguistic sign becomes the text, likened to the body. This body is marked by gender, race and other aesthetics as part of material culture, coding the body with values ranging from similarities to differences. Such a body is an object of communication, of communicative receptors and reflectors. It is through the body that experiences are translated into the core consciousness of reality and being.

While the body relates to text, we also speak with our bodies. MacNeilage (2008:4) notes that the flow of air through the mouth is done in such a way as to “produce a unique acoustic pattern” involving various muscles. Karl Lashley (1890-1958), the psychologist and behaviourist observed that speech is not independent of words or sounds, but involves thought, hence mind (MacNeilage 2008). For the well-known linguist and cognitive scientist, Noam Chomsky (b.1928), language forms in the mind and is “available to the infant prior to use” (MacNeilage 2008: 6). This implies a developmental stage or a period of accumulation when the human is receptive to the flux of sensory information. The origins of consciousness gathered and communicated within and through the material body may be compared to a thread of awareness of the self spun from within and through this biological platform. The process of awareness is gathered and entwined much like a thread is spun, even before the use of language which eventually leads to social functioning.

Lacan defines the unconscious as a rupture or gap, structured like language (Homer 2005: 66), arguing that language becomes “the single paradigm of all structures” formulated by the signifiers becoming significant because of the unconscious structuring taking place in the mind. He compares this to the structure of language by taking body language into consideration (Evans 1996:81,100). According to Lacan, during the infant stage, the body parts seem fragmented until being introduced to the image or reflection. This image provides a sense of unification - the point of realisation that identifies the anticipated mastery of the body (Homer 2005:25). Lacan suggests that initially the image is confused with reality but is soon recognised as separate and accepted as a reflection of self (Homer 2005:24). This stage of reflection is what Lacan calls the *mirror stage*. This mirror stage not only reflects the realisation of the self-image as coordination of the body parts but evolves in the subconscious as a reflection of perceptions gathered through language as conveyed by others.

On Lacan’s thoughts on realisation as a reflection, Arbib (2012) comes to mind. In neuroscience and linguistics researchers seek answers to how the evolution of the brain

developed to acquire language. Arbib considers the development from basic communication to full language capability, focusing on the brain's mirror neurons that have the capability of recognising and imitating, thereby supplying the means to develop language and speech. This ability functions as receptor to directly reflect, much like a mirror. In the early 1990s Giacomo Rizzolatti (b.1937), a neurophysiologist and leader of the Parma team that discovered mirror neurons, noted that mirror neurons had the capability of imitation and response to emotions and actions. Mirror neurons “suggest the way in which actions and observation of an action mirror each other” therefore suggesting “a neural mechanism for social interaction” (Arbib 2012:122). This social interaction, according to MacNeilage (2008:7) suggests the body can influence “the evolution of the structure of the mind”, by developing mental representations that provide instructions in the form of patterns. These patterns start to formulate before Lacan’s mirror stage, so are deeply imbedded in the sub-conscious.

The theories of the feminist psychoanalyst and philosopher Kristeva about the semiotic chora and regarding the body as a receptor before a reflector of language were valuable in the preparation and execution of the installation "Follow the Thread". The connection between text and textiles with consciousness as experienced through the material body was facilitated in the artist's thinking as a result of Kristeva's work.

Sartre (1905-1980) (1992:132) speaks of ‘being-for-itself’ as the subject of consciousness. In the installation the artist relates this idea to the concept of material matter, the biological fact, where consciousness is initiated as a thread. Clotho spins the thread of life, from which the biological form is born. This thread is the *bare life*, which Agamben means by its possibilities and potentials and the conception of life in where biological aspects are given priority over the way a life is to be lived.

Lacan theorises that the initiation of consciousness moves into the domain of language, structured around the framework of the body. According to Lacan, this transitional phase starts in front of the mirror with the introduction to a reflection of self. In the words of Sartre (1992:326) “a point of view and a point of departure”. In contrast, Kristeva argues that consciousness structures a framework of reference before Lacan’s *mirror stage*, which would then be within the maternal body.

For Plato weaving is a metaphor for the highest form of political activity that is the “founding and instituting power that produces/ weaves the common life “(Norris 2005:126). In control of the fate of general popularity, the sovereign power fabricates the social structure. Sovereignty

is compared to weaving where the weaver constructs the fabric. Like weaving, sovereignty relies on pre-established materials or activities. “The sovereign weaver does not start from nothing, and weaving does not represent a radical break from the past” (Norris 2005:127). It is a pattern that establishes a culture of associated familiarity and structure.

Cutting or breaking a thread threatens to decay the structure by interrupting continuity and wholeness. This is the fate Atropos. This loss of wholeness creates anxiety about the inevitable fate. “[T]he pure event by which human reality rises as presence in the world is apprehended by itself as its own lack” (Sartre 1992:139). In this sense Kristeva speaks about contradictory compulsions making the body a place of conflict (Marvin 2001:1).

2.6 KRISTEVA - CHORA

Looking at the structuring of the subconscious, it is useful to consider Kristeva’s theories of the *semiotic chora*, regarding the body as receptor of consciousness. Kristeva associates the *semiotic chora* with the maternal body in which the infant starts to structure a framework of reference around the mother’s body (Oliver 2002:24). By focussing on the relationship between body and language, Kristeva’s theories on semiotics and psychoanalysis provide a point of view for an understanding of the “relationship between the textile-body and its text” (Kruger 2001:35). Kristeva maintains that subjectivity is part of social relations prior to the acquisition of language and “operative in the material body prior to the mirror stage” (Oliver 1993:19). Kristeva sees the *chora* as “a pre-social psychic space, where the symbolic separation from the maternal body has not yet taken place” and the sounds made by the infant are outward manifestations of the biological drives in the *semiotic chora* (Chapman 2005:169). The body is understood as a receptor before entering the mirror stage, a patterned domain where it also becomes a reflector of language. It is impossible to separate language from the sense of self, for it is firmly rooted in the body where the symbolic and semiotic intersect (Marvin 2001:7).

Kruger (2001:36) proposes that “Kristeva’s theories provide a working metaphor for the separation between text and textile” where the infant is “undifferentiated at first from the Mother’s textile” and “the body...from which texts are born”. For Kristeva, “consciousness is patterned on the relationship between ... the semiotic and the symbolic” and the subject needs this in order to function socially (Kruger 2001:37).

Kristeva describes the drives of the material body as compulsions that are fundamental yet contradictory therefore in constant conflict. The positive drive assimilates, gathers and binds

together. The negative drive separates, discharges and destructs (Marvin 2001:1). The conflicting compulsions make their impact on the psyche where they articulate what Kristeva calls the *semiotic chora*” (Marvin 2001:2). Signification and subjectivity are understood to be in a process of taking shape. This becomes a “turning point” where “carnal pulsations become available to a higher level of consciousness, thought and representation” (Marvin 2001:2).

Kristeva attempts to employ symbolic negation within the body by “putting material negation into the symbolic” (Oliver 1993:5). According to Kristeva the symbolic is initiated for the infant through the maternal body before language and subjectivity (Kruger 2001:36), therefore she places emphasis on the maternal body as formulating symbolism that is already present within the body to re-inscribe the body (Oliver 1993:87). “The symbolic marks the separation between the subject and the objects external to it” being a “precondition of the acquisition of language as a formal system” (Chapman 2005:169). This development of processes taking shape, after the DNA fibres have been expressed in a corporeal body, when the subconscious continues to add to this thread, is related to spinning in a figurative way.

Humans are born unable to survive on their own as they lack the abilities to nourish and protect themselves. Their fate is dependent on a community structure and they become part of a pattern, and the so-called social weave.

2.7 SEPARATION FROM THE MATERNAL BODY AND FRAGMENTATION

The abjected body as a contradiction to order and structure is a theme of Kristeva's. Guiding lines and straight lines suggest order and structure, which brings certainty and a sense of direction offering security and comfort to the mind. When these lines or threads are disrupted or fractured, the structure fails to be certain. The weakening of the structure creates anxiety and a sense of disempowerment. In this way loss and abjection may be experienced. We tend to avoid disruptions and threats to the bodily unit, therefore boundaries are created. The boundaries function as guidelines to avoid disrupting the sense of wholeness. Yet the organic processes of contamination place the boundaries of the body under constant threat of dissolution (Arya 2015:106). In this threat, the psychological resistance to the fragmentation and dissolution of the body is triggered by the underlying awareness of our inevitable fate.

According to Kristeva the separation from the maternal body is the first encounter with abjection. In this, a conflict arises when the infant is abjected from the maternal body. This conflict initiates psychological aspects of disempowerment. The separation from the maternal

body is likened to the separation between text and textile as a way of being abjected thus implying loss.

In an attempt to maintain or regain wholeness, contamination is avoided because of the fear of loss. The maternal body remains in the subconscious as a form of wholeness before the onset of contamination; we retain a subliminal recollection of this state of being before becoming expelled to the symbolic world of language. The separation from the maternal body creates the onset of yearning for the wholeness and starts a battle to maintain order because of fearing fragmentation without structure (Arya 2015). Abjection is seen as “the underside of the symbolic” being “what the symbolic must reject” therefore creating a border is essential for protecting the self (Fletcher 1990:89). It is because of fear of this contamination which may invade the body and speed decay, that these borders are created. The human body is prone to this decay and aware of it. As a result “we feel repelled by the forces of our corporeal roots” (Arya 2015:107) therefore fearing death. This awareness impacts on the psyche and is subconsciously perceived as a threat, thus feared as a constant and inevitable process of loss.

Lacan argued that the structure of the symbolic order is never complete (Homer 2005:65). The presumption of a previous state of completeness becomes the reference on which absence is based (Homer 2005:26). As a framework of reference, the maternal and semiotic is the presumption of a previous state, which Kristeva takes as a given within the *semiotic chora* and part of the maternal body within the mother textile.

Ruti (2012:18) writes that “the way in which the signifier cuts into, perforates, dissects or carves up the ‘substance’ of the body” is specific to “each subject’s relationship to the social” and dependant on the fate allotted within a social structure. In this way we are influenced socially as a subject of this structure or weave. With fragmentation there is loss and an emotion of mourning the perceived emptiness. This renunciation and loss fractures and fragments the unity of the body. The constant conflict between the symbolic and the semiotic, the active and the passive are brought to a knot entangled with contradicting compulsions on the one hand abjecting to avoid and protect from contamination and decay, on the other hand fearing the discontinuity that fragmentation brings. The mother textile and social weave ruptures with the conflict caused by the unravelling of each thread as a threat to the systematic decay.

2.8 CONCLUSION

At this point I would like to remind the reader that almost each living cell contains DNA strings

or threads. For me, line is like thread carrying evidence that is deeply interwoven in our everyday life and all we do. It is the metaphorical stitch that holds everything together and the line or thread that connects throughout.

I seek to correlate *bios* with warp threads and *zoë* with weft threads in order to point out the metaphor of structuring and fabricating a society, the basis of which lies in the laws of language. By comparing the political structuring of ordering, the body with thread and weave, I intend to interweave the mythological, psychological, the literal and the theoretical.

The literature employed in this study informs the expressive use of materials in the creation of art and discusses how this may function as an evidence bearing visual language. Literally and figuratively woven, interwoven and unravelled. This cycle reaffirms the birth of the individual as a thread, a bare life with possibilities and potentials. The possibilities and potentials are seen as pre-coded and categorised according to social fate. On the darker side, this thread arrives with a given surface allocated to populate within a structure yet haunted by the inevitable fate of contamination and decay.

The thread of evidence binds in theory and practice to formulate perspectives of a reality lived through the human body yet bound to the social. By thematically organising topics of the biological, social and the psychological body bound to fate, this discussion incorporates theories and fabric with language. The body as receptor and reflector of language connect text and textiles with the material body. The *bare life*, as biological fact formulates a consciousness around the body through which language structures a point of departure and as a framework that is constantly referenced.

Sovereignty is seen as the weaver of the fabric of society with the power of language that marks the social text, thus implying that the weaver or sovereign power, orchestrates the creation of a culture. Sovereignty as a governing body of the social weave initiate a new object intended for structure and order. By entangling thread, fabric and process as a visual language, the fate of the body is bound to the fabrication of material culture and a comment on the value of the human body.

The material body and its self image formulate the subconscious into a reflection of language and text, impossible to separate from the symbolic and semiotic relationship between objects and actions. The relationship between the body and language are explained as the textile-body and text which is symbolically coded even before entering the realisation of language. Language constitutes and structures thoughts and sounds with symbols and signs, much like

the inscribed body as part of material culture.

In accordance with Western thoughts of social order as based on Greek life concepts of *bios* and *zoë*, active and passive rights compare to weaving with warp and weft threads that create a social fabric. The difference between voice and language may trigger further thought on the allocation of active and passive rights, as is with the laws of language which also function socially as a method to reason this inclusion and exclusion.

CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY OF HICKS, MAKAN, ABAKANOWICZ AND MENDIETA

3. INTRODUCTION

The research question posed for this dissertation is, “How do the discussed artists use the multimodal visual metaphors (metonymies and synecdoches) to create open-ended and multivalent artworks?” To this end the case study of the four selected artists is presented. The artworks described and discussed in this chapter have been selected for their use of organic materials and associations with the biological, structured and absent body and the visual metaphors employed by the artists. The human body is ultimately organic and subject to decay, but the human spirit seems to go on. Each artist is contextualised in a brief biography. Then follows a brief discussion of the chosen works in the context of the larger oeuvre of the artist.

3.1 HICKS

Hicks, the American textile artist, was born in Hastings, Nebraska on the 24th of July 1934. Hicks started using fibre as a medium during the late 1950s (Gaze 1997:683). The multifaceted breadth and versatility in the career of Hicks reflects on her development as a creator of personal text-in-textile (Weltge 2007:83). Parrish (2016:169) says, that Hicks once wrote elsewhere: “I have a project related to linguistics. The idea is to take a single pliable element – in this case, of course, a single thread, comparable to a thread of language—and to demonstrate, as you might weave ideas around a theme, the most that can be done with it.”

So Parrish (2017:193) concludes about Hicks' work that, viewing language as a material, and thread as a language, lays the groundwork for proposing a second metaphor, one that compares textiles and translation. If fibre can communicate information, it can also translate it into other fibre structures and systems of meaning.

For the 2017 Venice Biennale Hicks exhibited her work along with various other artists in the Arsenale, an area sectioned off for this exhibition as the *Pavilion of colours*. Her installation, *Escalade beyond chromatic lands* (Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3), presents a colourful display of fibre based pieces. The specific work under discussion had been installed by combining separate pieces that include two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes while using the existing space to wrap and fill with fibre in order to become united with the space as an installation.

On entering the large space, the most prominent feature of the installation was the large cocoon-shaped cushions. The masses of rounded cushioned shapes had been stacked against the wall

creating a sort of insulation in which viewers seem small compared to the overwhelming scale of the work. The two-dimensional woven pieces hung on the sides of the colourful shapes, almost like curtains separating the work from the vast space. With one on each side a subtle barrier was created to demarcate a territory. Hicks used mainly bright pigments to colour the fibres, giving the work a lively warm feeling. The uneven texture of the fibres emphasised the organic nature of the materials. Overall, the organic shapes and texture of the installation pieces contrasted with the geometry of the installation space. The textural quality of the work was enhanced with the arrangement of mostly monochromatic colours placed together while the lighting supplied subtle shadows emphasising the textural variances.

A less noticeable addition to the installation incorporated the architectural structure. Hicks filled the cavities caused by cracks in the walls, with threads similar to those used in the woven pieces - almost like impregnating the architectural structure with bold colourful attachment. This linked the organic with the structured and the given space became one body of work. By considering the existing architectural structure, Hicks took the space on to be receptor to the work, similar to Kristeva's theories of the *semiotic chora* as the maternal body. By wrapping and filling the given features of the existing structure, new references were specific to the site and might be compared to similarities of a framework of reference that the infant builds around the mother's body.

The installation absorbed a lot of sound. Without the cushioning supplied by the installation, sound would echo in the large empty space. The internal space was transformed to an area of comfortable and absorbing warmth so the structural capacity of the building might be compared to the capacities supplied by the maternal body. The organic shapes and texture of the fibres contrasted with the initial geometrical shape of the building.

In Figure 3.1 below, two vertical columns may be noticed. Both these linear shapes were part of the existing structure of this installation space. In the foreground of the image, the narrower column has been covered with red fibre similar to the yarn used in the rounded shapes. The organic associations of the installation pieces contrast with the geometric fixed structure reminiscent to the intersection between the semiotic and the symbolic. The symbolism of this specific space has a long history of wealth and power for the Italian culture.



Figure 3.1. Sheila Hicks. *Escalade beyond chromatic lands*, 2017. Natural and synthetic fibres, Installation, 600 x 1600 x 400 cm.



Figure 3.2 Sheila Hicks *Escalade beyond chromatic lands*, 2017. Natural and synthetic fibres, Installation, 600 x 1600 x 400 cm.



Figure 3.2 Sheila Hicks *Escalade beyond chromatic lands*, 2017. Natural and synthetic fibres, Installation, 600 x 1600 x 400 cm.

Not permanently installed in one venue, the pieces may travel and be exhibited in different sites. Although the pieces are in essence similar, with each installation they may be reduced or extended depending on the given space. On every occasion of installation, the work may be perceived differently thereby suggesting individuality in similarity. Just like a single word that may be used in different sentences, changing the meaning within each separate context, the installation pieces are influenced by the context. The process of making does not end with the similarity found in each compound material object. Instead, individuality is supplied by the open-ended factors within the installation process. By changing the site of the installation each context varies in possibilities and potentials for how each installation may be displayed and therefore is not necessarily set to a strict compositional strategy. Such works might not have a specific moment of completion, just a muted theatrical sensibility that may extend but will certainly change with each repeated encounter. The artist and critic Kathleen Whitney notes that although this kind of art may include “fetishism of effort” with “intricacy and obsessive repetition”, it consists of a narrative that may be “extended into infinity” (Owen 2011:89). By combining process of production and installation as concept the work is rendered as open-ended.

The relationship between the organic body of work and fibre-based materials combined in an installation can be associated with the spinning of a new thread at each encounter where the context is influential in bringing this change and individuality. Within the context of each installation, the space becomes part of the text to the value perceived from the works. Just as language is a flux of thoughts and sounds spun into the thread of communication, Hicks's works are a combination of materials entwined and linked together as one piece.

3.3 MAKAN

Amita Makan was born in 1967 in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and obtained a MA degree in International Relations from Rhodes University in 1993. In 1994 she was awarded a British Council Scholarship for a Diploma in Gender Policy and Planning from UCL University College London. She lived in Switzerland for about four years and currently resides and works in Pretoria⁸, South Africa.

Makan often combines elements of her own history to create her work. She starts by using archival photographs, and swatches of fabric gathered from clothing (often her late mother's saris) in order to create her images. By creating something new from this fabric and photographs she combines "the archive and the relic" joining memory with the tangible and in this way linking history with the contemporary⁹. The tangible evidence is a reminder of heritage and identity woven together in one piece of work. Although Makan also addresses mourning and loss, it is in the abundance of memory associated with her use of fabric and threads that I associate with the thread spun by Clotho. I see this as a culmination of what may be perceived as heritage attached to identity.

⁸ www.art.co.za

⁹ <http://www.art.co.za/amitamakan/Amita-Makan-Nomalungelo-Catalogue.pdf>

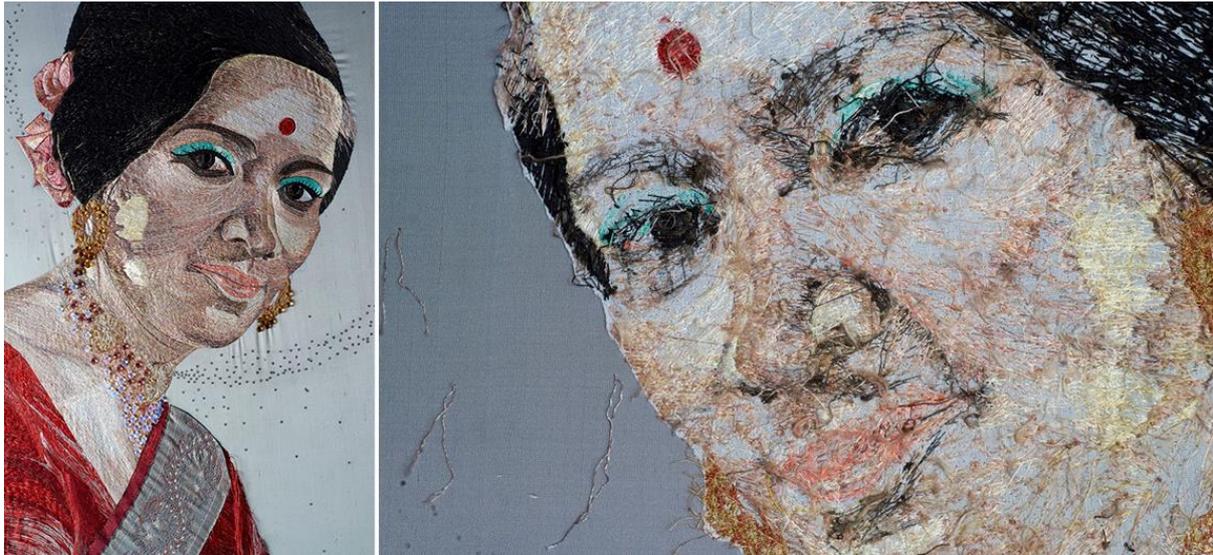


Figure 3.4 Amita Makan, *Loose Ends: A Story About My Mother* (2009). Fabric and threads, 106 x108 cm. Full view and detail.

A portrait of the artist's mother (figure 3.4) entitled *Loose Ends: A Story About My Mother* is a two-dimensional piece of art that may be viewed from both sides. In this work I find the particular beauty of being able to view the work from both sides and the use of thread as having a dual metaphoric purpose for the symbolic value to the cycle of life.

By painstakingly embroidering the image of her deceased mother who had Alzheimer's disease, Makan addresses the concept of memory and the associated unravelling of it which is directly related to Alzheimer's¹⁰. Firstly in a portrait itself, the memory associated with the particular person, is contained in the form of identification. In this case, the memory of the artist's mother also becomes a symbol of memory specifically because of her illness. Secondly the specific choice of materials, namely her mother's saris not only allude to attachment but also to memory. In the viewing of the portrait from both sides, a comparison may be made with memory as a memorial, such as a portrait and on the other side memory as a slightly chaotic reflection of the unravelling structure of memory.

For her exhibition entitled *Nomalungelo: Threads to Freedom* Makan created a series of female portraits which included the portrait of her mother, a portrait of Brenda Fassie, Miriam Makeba, Dorothy Masuku and self-portraits. All the portraits represent a moment in time connected to

¹⁰ <https://www.sasolsignatures.co.za/blog/hall-fame-amita-makan>

a memory and identity. More so than just looking at her choice of subject, I am specifically interested in her use of medium and technique. In her works the threads she uses, already contain evidence of a memory of sorts similar to my own works that have been constructed from threads that were once part of an item of clothing that used to be worn. By freeing the thread from the mother textile or item of clothing, the threads are reconstructed and reflect on a deeply imbedded memory like a form of heritage.

Makan's use of materials and her technique of embroidery, is associated with heritage, tradition and femininity. In a blog interview¹¹ Makan credits her heritage for her choice of using embroidery, commenting that her great grandparents were from the Gujarati culture where her "female ancestors would have embroidered" and her great grandfather being from the shoemaking caste, would have "used stitches to fashion cow hides into sandals and shoes". With the use of her mother's clothing and embroidery, emphasis is placed on memory and heritage in the works of Makan. Her use of the threads from her mother's saris as a visual synecdoche is striking as is her mother's face as 'part for the whole' a metonymy which has impact on the viewer.

3.4 ABAKANOWICZ

Magdalena Abakanowicz (1930-2017) was born in Poland and was a sculptor of the post second world war (1939-1945) period. She explored the human condition and socio-political histories in relation to her own experiences in Soviet-occupied Poland of the time¹². Although her earlier works, *Abakans* allude to the feminist trend of the time, she was not an activist in this field. I mention *Abakans* because of the exposure she gained due to her unique approach to the use of materials within the period when women artists promoted the use of traditionally perceived craft materials in order to question gender relations within the academy arts.

At an early age Abakanowicz was exposed to two contrasting aspects of fate beyond personal control. Firstly she was allotted the fate of being born into a noble family of wealth, living on a country estate where she had the privilege of growing close to nature. Next it was her fate to witness the violence during the Second World War when her family's estate outside Warsaw was seized by German war troops (Anbinder 1998:42) and her mother was shot. The family

¹¹ <https://www.sasolsignatures.co.za/blog/hall-fame-amita-makan>

¹² richardgraygallery.com

moved to the Baltic coast in due course because of the difficult socio-political circumstances caused by the “Communist takeover in Poland” and to avoid political harassment because of their privileged identity (Inglot 2004:23). Warsaw became the most ruined city in Europe after the war, making its reconstruction a common goal (Inglot 2004:25).

At the time when Abakanowicz pursued her degree at the Warsaw Academy, skills related to the applied arts were promoted by the “dictates of Socialist realism”. Weaving was one such skill aimed at being incorporated into everyday life (Inglot 2004: 28). At the Warsaw Academy, Abakanowicz was instructed in a “variety of areas of textile design” including traditional hand-weaving from Eleonora Plutyńska who promoted a traditional approach to fibre which “instilled in Abakanowicz a deep respect for materials” (Inglot 2004:28). As a weaver Abakanowicz defied the traditional rules of weaving by translating this humble craft into sculptures (Gaze 1997:161) emphasizing the structural dimensions of fibre and changing the aesthetic perceptions of tapestry and weaving (Inglot 2004:45). Abakanowicz preferred to use organic materials in an unmodified state and to create her sculptures in sets rather than individual pieces (Inglot 2004:47).

Abakanowicz’s figurative sculptures, visual metaphors about society's disempowered people, are powerful. According to Kleiner (2009:776) for Abakanowicz, fibre as material carries deep symbolism as the basic construction element of the organic world.



Figure 3.5 Magdalena Abakanowicz *Abakan Red* 1969. Sisal and mixed media, 300 x 300 x 100cm.



Figure 3.6 Magdalena Abakanowicz. *Crowd* 1988. Burlap and resin. Life size.



Figure 3.7 Magdalena Abakanowicz. *Crowd* 1995. Burlap and resin. Life size.

Along with her use of fibre as medium, the “toughness of the human spirit” is a subject for her figural sculptures which show the expressive powers of thread and weaving. Some of her installations, which have been created as masses of similar figures, resemble a unit. These similarities emphasise the literal associations with groupings of people in mass movement who might be on strike. The repetitions with slight variation in the figures suggest a structural order in society and the political levelling of all the population into a similar situation by the Communists in post-war Poland.

Abakanowicz revealed great interest in the relationship between the human and the environment¹³ seeing fibre as the basic element consistent with the organic world (Anbinder 1998:42). Her choice of fibre as fabric and medium for presenting the human body is a reference to the biological and to the individual as part of social structures. In the Abakan installation the huge mysterious fabrics call to mind many metaphors. As Brenson (1995: 58) says,

"Abakans" challenge any notion of clothing as a discrete category. They connect garments to skin, to hide, to bark, to cocoons ... , to tents ... , to the security and sexuality of a mother's robe, to the mobile home of a mother's belly. Like all of Abakanowicz's cycles, the "Abakans" lead outward, away from what they might appear to represent, into psychology and history, toward fundamental links between human beings and nature that are always waiting to be recognized and explored by the imagination.

Her *Crowd* installations consist of multiple figures resembling a mass of people that seems revealing of the human spirit. The mass movement references social groups as if under the power of an overriding concept - protest? anger? dejection? abjection? Disfigured and headless, these figures do not present an idealised human form neither do they reflect physical strength. They seem weak in their disfiguration yet not isolated. There is an element of monotony with the repetition even though they are not placed in neat rows. Their placement along with their disfigurations does not give the impression of an idealised formula to order. The context for the *Crowd* figures suggests it is beyond individual control. Much like past and present are connected through memory (Sheperdson 2008:123), thus containing a history or previous state, weaving becomes the social context for the thread where the individual becomes part of the social weave. This suggests humans as evidence-bearing threads

¹³ www.richardgraygallery.com

entwined into a social context or discourse.

For Abakanowicz the impact of the war extended beyond physical injuries to degradation of dignity and the human spirit. The “fragmented and mutilated body became a useful metaphor to express her own wartime memories” (Inglot 2004:77,78). Power relations revealed in history make their marks on the body and the psyche.

The first prominent series of works Abakanowicz created related to her name in the title, *Abakan* (Figure 3.5). In this series of works (created during the early 1970s) she used fibre - wrapping, stitching and moulding instead of weaving (Anbinder 1998:42). Her textile based sculptures gained recognition because of her unique approach to materials and eventually the human figure. During March 2007 the exhibition titled *WACK! Art and the feminist revolution* focused on the period between 1965 and 1980 in which feminist activism occurred in international art making. Curator, Connie Butler included women of many nationalities instead of exclusively American artists. Although Abakanowicz was never part of the feminist art movement, *Abakan* (Figure 3.4) was included in this exhibition because of cultural referents to earth and mother being relevant to art and feminism at the time. Her courageous inventiveness contrasted with the traditions of weaving demonstrated that issues of contemporary art may be well expressed in weaving (Inglot 2004:45).

Her unique approach to the use of materials in her *Abakan* series eventually developed into figurative sculptures. The processes involved in wrapping, stitching and moulding have strong metaphorical potential. This is especially relevant in this case study of Abakanowicz’s various figural groupings which become part of a series of works with the same title namely *Crowd*. Furthermore, the title and the mere suggestion alluded by a series, add to the reference of social structuring and repetition.

With the process of wrapping, she seems to imply that social groups are malleable or that something is concealed or protected. The method of stitching is commonly used to create attachment, either for unity or for healing. Stitching may be done in order to avoid a gap, separation or further decay.

Just as the process of weaving initiates a new object, that may be allocated a value of functionality, the social structure may allocate a value to the individual according to a so-called pre-established mould. With the replication of a mass of figures, similarity is the most prominent aspect of Abakanowicz’s installations. Are the similarities intended to suggest society and the blind following of a group? Only on close inspection the subtle differences

can be noticed, suggesting the individuality of members in social structures and perhaps challenging how this may be unnoticed.

With materials such as burlap, headless figures were modelled yet individually treated. By creating a mass of similar but headless figures, she commented on the notion of the human's "capacity to follow a leader or movement blindly, without thought". By treating each piece by hand, individuality was retained, thereby "emphasizing the individuality that remains, even in the crowd" (richardgraygallery.com). The roughness of the surfaces as well as the bleak colouring of these sculptures might allude to emotional scarring resulting from suffering - while it affects each person differently, it can go unnoticed.

The socio-political situation in Poland during the 1980s is reflected in Abakanowicz's *Crowd* series where she captures the sombre atmosphere of social oppression (Inglot 2004:99). By repetitively using the same mould to create multiple figures, Abakanowicz's installations of figural sculptures "serve as symbols of distinctive individuals lost in the crowd" (Kleiner 2009:1000). This matches what happens under all oppressive regimes - secular or sacred - a disregard for the value of the individual within the sovereign rule.

From visual observation figures 3.6 and 3.7 show seemingly identical oddly shaped figures. These headless figures have been placed standing positioned in the same direction, as if following the same point of view, although headless. I find it interesting that the lighting provides shadows from forward figures cast over the figures placed behind. I do realise that this effect may be enhanced or decreased depending on the photography of this work and the lighting in the gallery or space. Nevertheless I regard this casting of a shadow as a subtle reference to Western politics, where historical events may cast a metaphorical shadow over future perceptions.

Abakanowicz continued working with the human form throughout the 1980s in a variety of groupings (Inglot 2004:71). The underlying factors of oppression and subsequent disempowerment are conveyed in an artistic response to a grave political situation that seemed fated by destiny. Abakanowicz reveals this as evidence in her choice of subject matter and materials. She utilises the organic aspects of fibre to symbolise the aspects of the human body and its condition, laden with personal memories of history and the unequal power relations and points to the resilience of the human spirit and psyche in despite of the body's weakness and suffering. Her figural works, specifically from the *Crowd* series are a response to the dynamics of the body as affected by a socio-political situation.

Insecurities, fear, torture, senseless killing, cities razed by atomic bombs, mass migrations as a result of war spurred the artist to show the vulnerabilities of the human spirit in her replicas of the human figure. With fibre a relationship between the human and the condition of the body is established. With this medium Abakanowicz reflects on the psyche and the human spirit bound to the inevitable fate of the body, biologically and socially.

3.5 MENDIETA

Mendieta was born into a politically prominent family in Havana, Cuba in 1948. Because of the family's affiliation with the Communist movement in Cuba, Mendieta was exiled to the United States with her sister when she was 12 (Butler 2007: 265). The sisters were only reunited with their mother and younger brother after five years while her father remained imprisoned in Cuba (Blocker 1999:54). Mendieta was very young at the time to be separated from her mother. A sense of insecurity regarding uncertainties of the anticipated period of separation may have had an impact on the emotional state of a young girl.

Loss and abandonment emotions are experienced throughout life. Mendieta did struggle with those feelings. By cutting through the umbilical cord, the infant is separated from the maternal body thereby discontinuing their physical attachment; another severance can compound the first one. According to Kristeva, this first encounter with abjection is the source for the significance given to later losses and abandonments. Quoting from Mendieta's writing, Blocker (1999:80) comments that Mendieta had an overwhelming feeling of being cast out of the womb, and through Nature attempted to re-establish a bond and to unite her with the mother.

As an exiled adolescent, separated from her mother and motherland Mendieta's displacement and loss becomes a crucial aspect reflected in her work (Chadwick 1996:373) and seems to be made in direct response to her life, during which she continuously refers to separation and loss. Blocker (1999:80) suggests Mendieta means that she used her exile as a source of inspiration. "By abjecting the maternal body" the subject is separated from this body to "take up a relationship with the paternal" and the symbolic; this separation initiates an effort to recover (Kruger 2001:36). In her *Siluetas* (Silhouettes) series, Mendieta seems to simulate an effort to recover. Casting the earth as something that must be regained as the maternal source is like being "encompassed by nature" (Blocker, 1999:57).

In her *Siluetas* series, Mendieta traced her body "on fields, sand, earth, mud and tree stumps" often using gunpowder and fireworks "in an alchemy of erosion, explosion, or dissolution that

would reveal elemental connections between the earth, body and soul” (Frueh 1994:201) suggesting a return to the womb (Butler 2007:265). Mother Earth, the final womb, takes Mendieta or her represented body into herself.



Figure 3.8 Ana Mendieta, *Imagen de Yagul*, 1973. Performance still.

Imagen de Yagul (1973) marks the start of the *Siluetas* series. Yagul is a very important archaeological site in the Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico. All of these include earth-body performances (Butler 2007:265). In *Imagen de Yagul* (Figure 3.8) Mendieta conceals her body by placing flowers on herself. This image resembles a sort of shrine or grave, calling up the archaeological graves which show not the embodied corpse but bones. A rich connotative field is suggested not only by the locality of the performance - in a grave-like place full of stones - but also by the flowers associated with burial (and shrines) to mark the passing of a loved one. With her body still visible, Mendieta reveals a presence, though not identifiable. In other images from the *Siluetas* series she leaves only traces or imprints that suggest her presence but reveals only the absence.

These imprints or relief works in their organic nature allude to the decaying and absent body. The “imprinted forms” may gradually disappear as part of a natural process of erosion, decay

or some form of movement such as wind or water (Hawkins 2014:232). With this a tension is created as we are confronted with the inevitable decay presented by the presence and absence of a physical body. Boetzkes (2010:152) points out that Mendieta draws attention to the loss of presence by leaving only a trace after the performance. These traces are left behind in the natural environment, therefore taking their due course of decay similar to that of humans. Today it is in the photo documentation of the absence that we are merely reminded of these performative works. The traces remain present as temporary evidence while the documentation of them is always absent of the sensory and tactile presence. According to Schor (1994:258) “women’s transition from subjectivity to subjugation” is documented in the *Siluetas* series (1973-1980) with the use of photography. The documentation supplies images that “have the paradoxical functions of a memento mori - both a memory of life and an acknowledgement of its ultimate dissolution” (Ross 2006:393).

The repetitive activity of placing her body in the natural environment and then departing seems to show her yearning for a unity with the mother earth. Unity is not long-lasting as Mendieta departs, leaving only evidence that is bound to dissolve with time.



Figure 3.9 Ana Mendieta *Untitled* 1980. *Siluetas* series. Performance still.

In some images, such as *Blood and fire* from the *Siluetas* series, Mendieta’s arms form a unit

with the impression of the bodily shape (see figure 3.9). I associate the feeling of helplessness with the thought of arms and hands fixed to the body and not determined as operational limbs. Mendieta potentially reveals her underlying emotion of disempowerment because of her fate of cutting ties with all she knew as home, her family and country. The visual metaphor is strikingly vivid even as a photograph.

Mendieta's *Silueta* series consists of a collection of performative works that seem to become a style of communicating her loss and disempowerment. Often psychological experiences of disempowerment display as fear, anxiety, and loss and contradict the sense of certainty and structure. Mendieta's *Silueta* seems to exhibit the uncertainties accompanying this loss. The lifelong search for unity with the maternal seems to become an obsession initiated by abjection. The communicative aspect of the work is transported through time as documented evidence only. In this way she left her mark through traces of evidence without the tactile quality, thus so removed from the original and the real.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion to this chapter, the case studies of the artworks discussed are not only witness to personal experiences specific to each artist but reveal traces of the human spirit bound to a social context of life. Although all four artists have been cast under discussions from feminist perspectives by many theorists, the fate of discourse destined these perspectives and was not necessarily the artists' primary intent. By discussing these artworks under the mythological fates of life and destiny the metaphorical use of materials becomes the essence to the text of this visual language personal to each. Traces of the organic and the body have been used to reveal connotations to the relationship between the fates of life as biological matter ordered and structured in such a way as to dissolve into mere traces.

With traces of organic materials, Hicks constructed new and malleable work that seems to comfort and absorb, while Makan places emphasis on memory and the heritage with her use of fabric and threads. Abakanowicz moulds the organic into a muted state and Mendieta leaves traces that organically dissolve. In contrast to the harmony, comfort and warmth suggested in the artwork of Hicks and Makan, both Abakanowicz and Mendieta's works seem to reveal the textural rawness of the organic.

Abakanowicz responds to oppression and disempowerment by taking the condition of the human body and the organic aspects of fibre as symbolism relevant to social history of power

relations impacting on the spirit and psyche. The singular form of a human body in combination with fibre becomes a relevant reference to the biological while the repetition creates a grouping relevant to social structuring. The repetition of a singular component transfers to the context of grouping which implies a social context for the individual while suggesting the blinded following of a crowd as interpreted in Abakanowicz's *Crowd* series.

The separation from the maternal body is suggested through the works of Ana Mendieta in conveying a feeling of loss and abjection. Mendieta's *Silueta* series convey a personal response to abjection and separation from her mother and motherland where displacement and loss of physical attachment responds as an attempt to regain the maternal body and womb of the earth. The documentation becomes a secondary trace of evidence showing her references to nature with connections between the earth, body and spirit. The traces of evidence reflect on an emotion of disempowerment and loss leaving a void where dissolution is inevitable.

By following the thread of evidence, personal experiences of each artist in this discussion seem to communicate and reveal part their own fate while being relevant to the biological, and social as the fate of human life and destiny.

CHAPTER 4: PERSONAL METHODOLOGY – FOLLOW THE THREAD EXHIBITION

4. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss the materials, methodology and resulted installation of the sculptural drawings for my exhibition entitled *Follow the Thread*. With this fabric-based installation I consider human fate to express my concerns of human value and the impact of this experience contained in a body.

I explore the personal issues based on psychological experiences of disempowerment within socio-political structures, hence the biological body within the political body. I question the way in which societies and individuals have been affected by the struggle for autonomy, self-realisation and human dignity. My concern is with the loss of self-worth when bound and restricted by circumstances beyond individual control, and the impact on the psyche extending to the erasure of value of life. I see circumstances beyond individual control as an allotted fate. With the mythological fates of destiny, thread as material, becomes the metaphor for life.

For this reason I use thread firstly to symbolise the genetic line and the biological matter that I relate to the thread of fate spun by Clotho. Secondly the fate of Lachesis is related to weaving the structure which I symbolise with the duality of fabric and its transformation into sculptural shapes for the structure of the bodies, both personal and public. Thirdly the processes involved in the making of my works allude to the fate of Atropos. The process of unravelling physically and symbolically refers to decay along with fragmented pieces displayed as evidence and traces of a previous condition. The fragments of figures (limbs, faces, torsos) are systematically unthreaded from structure, methodically erased in my installation as a metaphor for the abuse of human beings and for the hollow and superficial attitudes to life.

I see self-worth as part of the psyche with a point of departure from within our own DNA which creates an analogy with thread spun from a variety of flux. From the variety of fibres used for the manufacturing and processing of thread, I compare this aspect to the genetic line that may be followed in the thread of DNA. With this analogy the structural qualities of thread, weaving and manufacturing of fabric and clothing compares metaphorically to the individual woven into a socio-political structure. Thread literally links and attaches parts to become a unit. For the purpose of material as expressive medium, it implies the connection from the biological to

the social, political and cultural structure which I reference through the body.

The body refers to the biological and personal identity feature, but also alludes to a social body. The social body implicates a social structure, weave or pattern therefore a culture. Metaphorically, the thread is bound and restricted by circumstances of the social weave. These circumstances I see as the fate allotted by Lachesis and compares to the social fabric woven from threads by the weaver. With this the body as thread becomes part of the social weave.

The weaver is related to the sovereign and ruling power and as participant in creating a culture. The body is marked with socially created clothing to conceal or reveal a coded social value. It is from the materiality of clothing that matters of state are revealed with raw materials taken into account as an economic power (Joslin 2015: ix). Seen from this perspective, fabric and the body are perceived as a form of visual communication.

During the creation process the shapes, material and method bind the concept by becoming the link between language and the body as text. Clothing as medium reveals many layers of communication while body language is taken into consideration from the sculptural point of view. By wearing clothes the body becomes inscribed with a perception and reflection of class, culture and gender. In this a relationship between language and clothing is located at the intersection between text and textiles (Joslin 2015:x). The biological human body is coded in DNA fibres and threads just like fabric and clothing are coded and classified according to the fibres and threads utilised in the manufacturing process. It is with these thoughts that I link the body and its text as a visual language.

I start by using clothing as a metaphor for society while paying attention to the individual thread as part of the fabric utilised in constructing clothing. Clothing and fabric are socially manufactured objects visually referencing a cultural language that consists of “a complex network of social and sexual relations.” (Masterson 2018:423). I see clothing as the most basic bodily protection from forms of shame and harm, all of which place the individual in a social structure. This metaphor implicates a system of beliefs that establish and demarkate social relations.

Thread expresses the connection of human fate and vulnerability where a relationship subjected to decay is established. We are repelled by degenerative and decaying processes of the body which I associate with worn out clothing that ends up being discarded. I use discarded clothing to layer the symbolism along with the woven aspects constituted in the varieties of fibres used for the manufacturing and processing of thread. With the threads from discarded clothing,

sculptural drawings that resemble fragments of the human body are created. In this way both method and medium are used as a means to layer the work physically and conceptually.

When the raw materials and individuals are utilised to become an economic or political power, the value of the individual thread may dissolve into the social weave and classified amongst other threads simply as the fabric of society. With this erasure, the value of life may be disrupted. This disruption cuts continuity. The cutting of the thread, determines length by creating the end. As a method applied in my work, this disruption not only unravels but also creates fractures that result in fragments which are directly related to the erasure of value and seen as a form of loss to unity and wholeness.

The associative words for this exhibition are mainly verbs and adjectives that simultaneously target both the content and the processes of the work: threading, attachment, detachment, disentangled, disconnected, unravelled, discarded, scarred, fragmented, hollow, dissolved, evidential and mourning ground.

The process of cutting, ripping and unravelling the clothes may have brutal connotations that I compare with fabricated social structures objectifying the individual. When force is used, a form of violence is used to reflect on coercive power relations. Some methods of disconnecting the thread from the fabricated structure of the clothing become destructive. Although the basic need of protecting the body may be fulfilled by the fabric of material and society, it is the strength and status of the state of the body (political or personal) that has an effect on the psyche, thus ultimately the emotional state and value of life.

I see disempowerment as a form of loss of autonomy. I mourn this loss with my associations to black clothing. With this method involved in the making of the pieces, material and method bind the concept by becoming in unity with language and the body as text. Clothing is implicated as communicating socially coded aspects of identification. In this way the material and process become integral to the meaning of the work.

4.1 CLOTHO

For this exhibition, *Follow the thread*, material is used as a method of communication with textile becoming the text and thread becoming the line. Thread is gathered from the *mother textile* in order to be used as the most basic element of drawing, namely line. By sourcing the thread from a previous state, specifically clothing, the thread not only bears traces of a previous state but also carries the substance of origin (synthetic or natural fibres) which may be compared to DNA. Thread as the agent for line is a coded signifier, bearing evidence of origin

much like genetic coding. The thread is used as a binding factor linking the body as text to a visual language coded with evidence and supported in mythology and metaphor while bearing in mind that each thread has a surface of its own. My use of thread is to suggest the biological and genetic lineage.



Figure 4.1 Discarded clothing (2018).

Referencing Ingold (2007) who distinguishes between classes of line calling them “threads” (a filament) and “traces” (basic component of two-dimensional drawing), I use thread as a filament to create the surface with mark making traces as the drawing component. The thread is unravelled, cut or torn from the clothing (Figure 4.1). I consider the texture and intensity of these remains. These threads and fragmented remains are used as line, according to their density they function as tonal value. This section of the making process relates to the discipline of drawing with threads as material for drawing and medium of communication.

In Figure 4.2 below, various line characteristics may be noticed in these evidence-bearing threads. Some characteristics have stronger definition than the frailer threads. I bore in mind that threads have surface qualities and characteristics that I perceived and utilised as texture. Taking these characteristics and the defining aspects of texture into consideration, I gather a selection that may be from a variety of sources, before being combined into a line drawing.

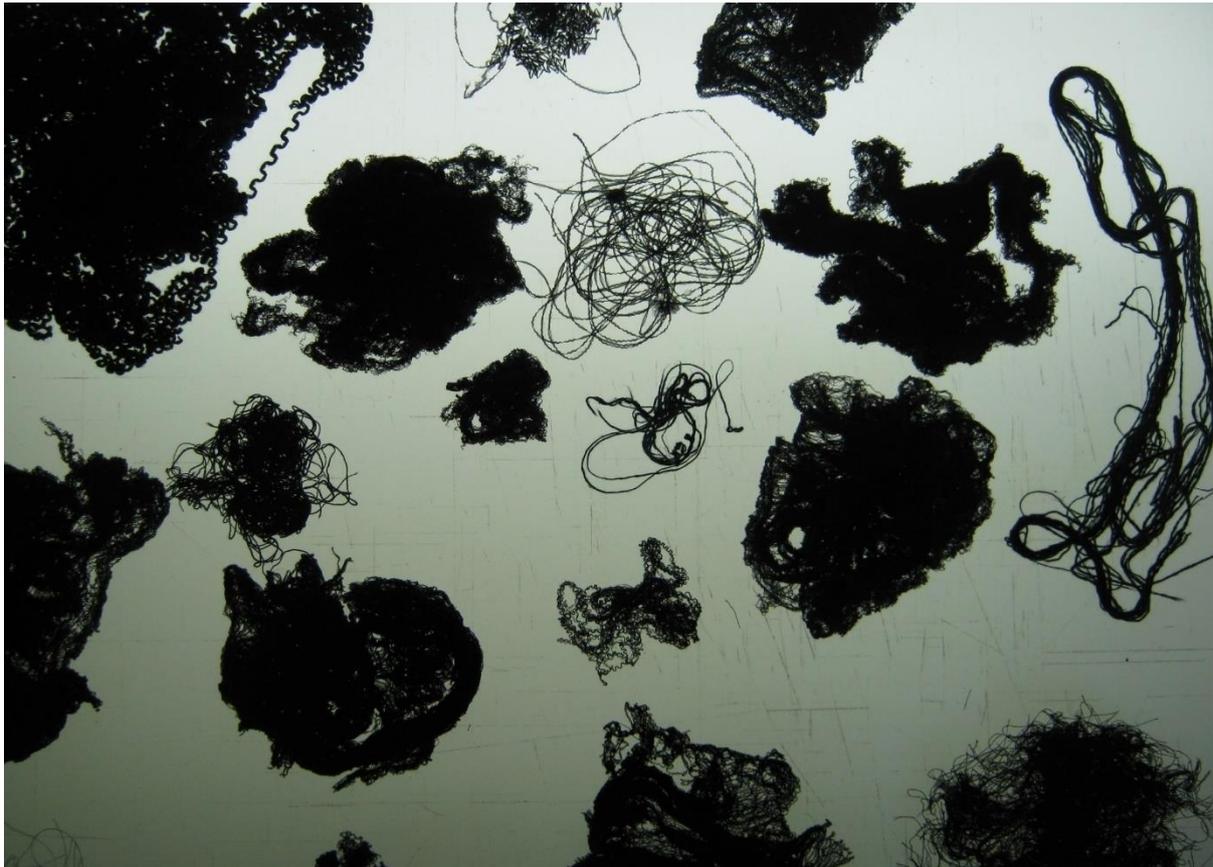


Figure 4.2 Threads (2018).

Thread as an agent for line, is used in a variety of densities to create an illusion of tonal value. With the thread as the carrier of traces of evidence, line drawings are constructed and become a surface, similar to that of the body. The construction of the drawing creates a surface and platform for the structuring of a framework for communicating the conceptual aspect of this exhibition. With this, thread is related to the biological aspects of the human body and as a biological platform, receptor of experiences that in turn builds a framework of reference within the psyche. The process of awareness is gathered in the semiotic *chora* and entwined with symbolism much like thread that is spun from a flux of sources. Within and through this

biological platform the framework is constructed and referenced, like a text for the subconscious. By creating surfaces from thread, volume is created, thus becoming sculptural. This results in sculptural drawings that consist of surfaces with three dimensional qualities of familiar human shapes and dimensions (Figures 4.3, 4.4 & 4.5).

This stage of the process initiates the realisation of fragmentation of recognisable shapes, but combines various threads in the construction of these shapes intended to be a reflection of the unconscious. The extracted threads not only carry evidence but become part of the properties of the line. With the evidence of the previous state, the thread is burdened with an irreversible fate that remains to be revealed with the end result.

By gathering discarded clothing and systematically taking them apart, I not only reveal the thread of the socially constructed item but also suggest the material body's conflicting compulsions of gathering and separating to shape signification and subjectivity. In my art making process I use thread taken from the fabric of clothing as the agent for line expressive of an underlying trace of origin and applied to reveal these traces. The lines seem scribbled in chaos, suggesting the body's conflict and emotion. With the most basic element of art namely line a text is manifested. Because these threads were once part of another fabric, their evidence cannot be removed completely, even though unravelled in such a way as to conceal recognition of previous status.

The framework of reference seems like a formulation of codes. This formulation unifies like a memory of recorded thoughts and emotions for later recollection as a personal code that resides in the subconscious. In textiles and clothing thread codifies the fabric. In turn the human body is coded in flesh. By removing the thread from the weave of fabric underlying traces of origin remain.

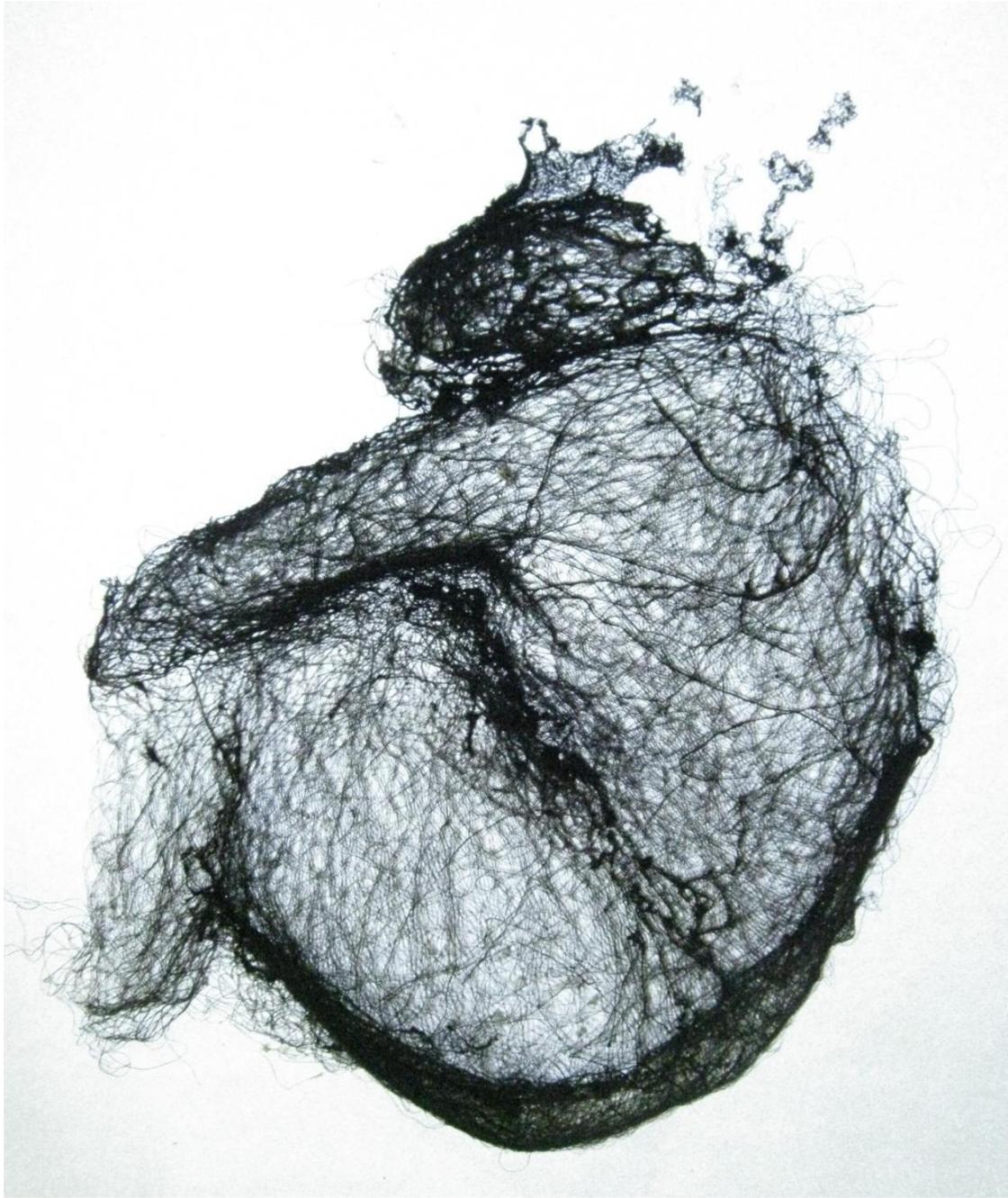


Figure 4.3. Figure in foetal position. Threads (2018).

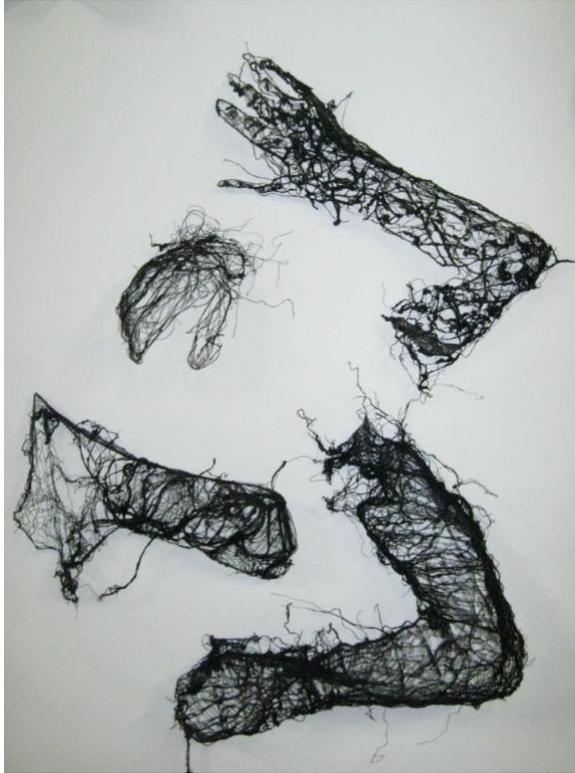


Figure 4.4 Dismembered and fragmented arms.



Figure 4.5 Fragments of a torso and arms.

Various threads demand different methods of handling and processing. Weight for example has to be considered because of the hollow shape that the drawing is expected to uphold for an undetermined amount of time. In a way the clothing has been dissected for partial use of selected parts only.

During the experimental process, a variety of bonding and stabilising options were tested. Gelatine was found to be used in many types of glue. Because gelatine is produced from the body parts of mammals, it serves as a conceptually appropriate option. By experimenting with different consistencies and drying methods, the appropriate medium was established. The most suitable conditions were found to be specific to warm air which results in a hardened transparent bonding medium.

The method of gathering, selecting and bonding is related to the thread spun by Clotho. This is conceptually enhanced by literally using thread and explained as the biological reference containing the evidence that may be followed as the connective link. For this reason material confirms the conceptual use of medium as a method of communicating as a visual language.

4.2 LACHESIS

In this section the fate Lachesis holds sway. Firstly by using socially manufactured items of clothing, I reference the social weave along with its loaded and coded symbolic language. Secondly by disregarding the function within the *mother textile*, I extract threads to use in shaping the sculptural drawings. I gather from the source of the weave in order to construct new shapes that resemble fragments of human limbs, faces and torsos (part for the whole) so as to refer to the biological fate we all suffer within the social body. In this way the individual thread is objectified as fabricated structures that have an impact on its value, much like humans are allotted a fate beyond their individual control.

The processes, material and content of the work have the aim of vivifying what the connotations of the social fabric are for me: individuals may be objectified by a life experience that has an impact on their value and subsequent quality of a life. In this, I see the lack of autonomy as bound to the destiny of this structure, metaphorically binding the biological to the social. Autonomy, self-realisation and human dignity are lost concerns with the loss of self-worth as a result of being bound and restricted by circumstances beyond individual control. By methodically erasing autonomy, my installation becomes a metaphor for the way those in power have no respect for life and human beings are subjected to the rule of a mindless, cruel, punishing entities.

The drawings have been shaped to become three-dimensional surfaces with sculptural qualities. I used mainly my own body as reference to the dimensions, therefore they are life size. From a sculptural perspective, the pieces present as hollow fragments of the human body, by synecdoche. The surface texture has been created with various thread qualities which remain evident on close inspection.

The sculptural shapes are perceived as surfaces where the order and weave are taken as a point of departure for the metaphor of social structuring. Line and thread are used to demarcate a territory. In my work this territory takes the shape of recognisable body parts. The body represents the individual as well as the public or social body. With the use of thread as a guideline, a territory is indicated. Although guidelines are often not noticed as such, they “remain integral to many of the surfaces on or around which life in the built environment is conducted” and intended towards a previously established goal but may also be restrictive or constraining (Ingold 2007:160). With this the selection process is compared to the fate Lachesis.



Figure 4.6 *Masks*. Detail from *Follow the Thread* (2018).

With the use of discarded clothing as metaphor for the outcast in society, I transform the material in such a way as to lose the intended purpose of clothing the body, instead to resemble a body. The process of extracting and separating thread from fabric, is a laborious and repetitive activity exposing the tactile and sensual aspects of the material. By detaching and separating the thread, their line quality is exposed and reallocated in a fabricated structure resembling the familiarity of the human body.

In my sculptural drawings the shape constitutes structure. Threads are selected and gathered to mould together as one shape. The threads from different fabrics are often combined to structure a new shape, disregarding the previous state. I restructure the remains of the unravelled clothing and fabric into sculptural shapes resembling fragmented human body parts in order to suggest disempowerment in the social body. The torsos, limbs and masks feature as fragments of the human form scattered in a mass display.

The word *mask* refers to a concealment of identity, which in turn suggests the fate of the individual bound to the rule of social identity. In Figure 4.6 a grouping of masks resembles human facial features as hollow shapes with individual features that are only noticed after the initial group classification (Figures 4.7, 4.8, 4.9).



Figure 4.7 Individual Mask.



Figure 4.8 Individual Mask.



Figure 4.9 Individual Mask.

I juxtapose chaos with order. Chaos is suggested with the confrontational evidence of fragmentation and the use of threads scribbled in various densities. The shapes created are perceived as familiar, therefore relate to order. Shapes include tonal value from a drawing

perspective due to the line density. The density may allude to strength in quantity ratios.

The sculptural drawings are lightweight and firm, allowing each piece to be pinned to the wall. The pins used, are conventionally part of a sewing kit where they can be used to attach parts that are eventually stitched together. In the exhibition the pinning to the wall, not only holds the fragmented pieces in place, but is hardly visible. It may suggest the underpinning of social forces that use the threat of torture to hold the social structure in place.

4.3. ATROPOS

In this section the focus is on the thought of reaching the end of the line where renunciation and loss is associated with abjection and fragmentation. The fate Atropos who cuts the thread is applied to clothing. The clothes are abjected from my closet and deemed unfit to be worn again thus, reaching the end of the line as if they were people who could be abjected and their bodies and psyches fragmented. By using discarded clothing as a metaphor for the abjected and outcast, the threads are disconnected and detached from the fabricated structure through cutting, tearing and unravelling to suggest psychological experiences of disempowerment associated with this Atropos.

The process of unravelling refers to decay to symbolise an inevitable fate allotted by Atropos. The stability of form is threatened by this fragmentation and lack of wholeness which has an impact on the psyche. This removal may be compared to the separation from the maternal body and a form of abjection. The concept of separation from the maternal body or a social structure creates a disruption of familiar territory. The disempowerment is associated with uncertainties and conflict. I see the conflict as an internal experience which I intended to convey in a fractured disruptive use of material as well as literal referencing through shape.

This installation is based only on fabric because the threads have been separated from the cloth and removed from the structure, so the material becomes fragile and carries evidence of vulnerability. In this state, the threads have a history of a previously constructed weave and implied function. I compare this to the individual losing the strength of the mass when subjected to disempowerment, and so becoming vulnerable. This method of dealing with the material is used to express the psychological effects of disempowerment because of the loss of autonomy. The force used, reflects on the conflicting compulsions within the body and power

relations.

According to Ingold a sense of direction, certainty and authority is offered by a straight line yet “certainties have bred fractious conflict” and “authority has been revealed as the mask of intolerance and oppression” with directions ending up as “a maze of dead ends”. This makes the line seem disrupted and fragmented (2007:167).



Figure 4.10 Dismembered arms and hands. (2018).

The fragmented body subverts our conventional understanding of the body because it “takes on indeterminate form with ambiguous boundaries” which renders it vulnerable and unstable (Arya 2015:114). In this installation the fragmented limbs and torsos aim to emphasise the instability and vulnerability of being disempowered by fate (Figures 4,10, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15).

A decision was made to use only the black clothes because of the association of black with mourning. Symbolically black garments have also been seen as a renunciation of worldly vanities (Olderr 2012: 32). By using exclusively black thread and fabric, I intended to place

emphasis on emotions such as mourning which occur during grief for loss. The metonymic shapes of the fragmented body parts are made from thread, emphasising the fragility of the externalised concrete object. The surface texture is intended to be a reminder of disintegration and the anxiety associated with this anticipated fate. Parts of bodies also have a symbolic value and certain parts are associated with particular symbols.



Figure 4.11 *Hand. Threads* (2018).



Figure 4.12 *Hand. Threads* (2018).

A black hand may symbolise impending death or murder (Olderr 2012:32). A mask may be worn as a disguise or reminder of mortality in the sense of death masks. As seen in many of our references to the body in language and idioms, I selected specific body parts and omitted genitals and feet. Feet were not used because my works do not suggest a firm social standing or any form of stability. The loss of hands suggests helplessness, while elbows may allude to defence. The only reference to the head is in the masks of various densities depicting facial features.

The resulting fragmented body parts are the boundary between the revealed emptiness of the hollow shape and the surface. I use thread as line that creates a boundary between the empty interior which is visible, but becomes the division of space that resembles fragments and attempt to establish a territory of the human form. The body parts symbolise insecurity, instability and chaos as a form of loss, therefore they are fragmented hollow shapes made from unravelled chaotic lines. The methodology and fragments enhance the concept of loss. Each piece can be seen individually as fragile and vulnerable. As an installation chaos is suggested and becomes part of the vulnerability and loss.



Figure 4.13 *Torso*. 2018.



Figure 4.14 *Torso*. 2018.



Figure 4.15. *Torso*. 2018

These fragments are installed in such a way that a series of lines is implied whilst creating a pattern similar to an excavated archaeological site, in which fragments become layers of evidence. Because of our associations with fragmented bodies in an archaeological site, the loss of lives is implied and a mass grave or mourning ground is suggested. The arrangement of separate pieces in the installation, resemble an excavated archaeological site which points through its evidence to loss. The archaeological metaphor implies “uncovering the discursive strata or, in terms of the Barthesian /Kristevan ‘network’ the unravelling of the woven tissue” (Wagner 1995:137).

Because of the site-specific alterations of arrangement of the separate pieces, no exhibition of this body of work will ever be identical to another. Perhaps this may suggest a performative aspect to the silenced work.



Figure 4.16 Installation view *Follow the thread* (2018).

The considerations of installation art depend partly on the context or space it is exhibited in. The work is not fixed to a set composition instead it may change or be extended. On every occasion the separate pieces may be positioned differently but always as an installation. The

installation is entered as if viewing an excavation site where remnants become the evidence. The evidence is pinned to the wall and mapped out like a chaotic layered graveyard (Koff 2005). It is preferable to exhibit with the addition of a glossy floor in order to create the effect of a pit below where fragments continue to be layered. Conceptually the reflection has dual meaning as a reflection of the psychological effects of systematic fabrication of social structuring and as evidence leading to layers of depth.

4.4 CONCLUSION

With this fabric-based installation cloth and its structural qualities have been reduced to thread and have been associated metaphorically with the body. Threads have demonstrated the potential for being transformed into shapes as metaphor for the individual woven into a socio-political structure. Just as the weaver creates the pattern, systematically clothing society and moulding a culture, I have taken thread away from its functional value to translate into a line of visual text. The psychological impact of living in a society which has no respect for human life has been expressed as a loss of human dignity and value. The impact on the psyche is shown through the metaphors of the body and its fragmented parts. Thread has become a communicative text; textiles are transformed into a visual language related to these bodies. Aspects of threads, weaving and fabric consist of receptive and reflective, generative and degenerative properties metaphorically associated with the physical and psychological aspects of the biological and social body. The metaphor has been applied to materials and method to discuss the individual as a thread woven into a socio-political structure. Line as an aspect of drawing now becomes sculptural in contrast to building up a surface as often expected from sculpture. By combining methods used for drawing and sculpture my works become sculptural drawings, thereby placing my work within these two disciplines simultaneously. The thread has been reaffirmed as a sculptural medium through surface recognition and application to structure. By utilising thread as line, the density in surface translates as tonal value and assists this medium and method to be understood as a drawing.

The conclusion to this chapter is not the final conclusion to this work as interpretations may open another discussion if approached differently or separated and removed from context.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This study is an accompaniment to the installation I produced, "Follow the thread". The research question was, "How do the discussed artists use the multimodal visual metaphors (metonymies and synecdoches) to create open-ended and multivalent artworks?" To answer the question four artists' works were examined and my own installation was discussed. The conclusions to this dissertation run generally in line with the chapters of the thesis.

The broad context of the works in my installation was that of inequalities in power in constructed human socio-political, socio-economic and legal structures and the impact that has on the value and dignity of human life. Agamben's seminal works on the twentieth century's biopolitics and its relationship to the individual were a source of inspiration for the installation. For Agamben *bios* and *zoë* are a fundamental distinction made in the political life, the first being a life which is proper in the sense that it is conducted as a free citizen, the second is "bare" life, the simple fact of existence. It is this second condition in which all human rights are discounted which leads to the terrible abuses and tragedies experienced due to the relations between a sovereign state and its citizens.

Abakanowicz and my own works can be read as metaphors about the effect of political actions on humans, both the bodies and the psyches. The use of multimodal visual metaphors requires the viewer to interpret the works according to their own understanding of biopower and biopolitics. The metaphorical concepts which are expressed in the works are related to fundamental mental mappings so that knowledge from one domain, the target (sculptures) is structured and understood by information from a dissimilar source (bodies of humans).

Fibre as a language is a powerful metaphor running through the works of Hicks, Makan, Abakanowicz and my own works. Whether it is fibre, wool or thread, using it to comment on the experiences humans have in their societies, relationships and lives is a far cry from those earliest uses during the paleolithic and neolithic times. Yet, the connection remains. The need to rejuvenate the concept of spinning and weaving as belonging to the craft world, not that of art has been amply demonstrated in the works of Hicks, Makan, Abakanowicz and my own.

Ingold's (2007) line, metaphorically thread which makes a textile and a text and is compared to the body, is perceived as the connection established between the human as individual, entangled in a pattern of woven social institutions. The primary intent of this study has been to

demonstrate the use of materials in such a way as to make them metaphors for a great variety of experiences humans have, being both body and psyche and particularly as they are part of society. The primary place of mortality in our existence has always been a matter of speculation and mythology and is powerfully expressed in the images of the Fates. The terrifying fact of death is represented in my sculptural drawings as fragile, hollow fragmented bodies. For Mendieta in her performances she enacts dying, decay and the fragility of life. Her sense of having been twice abjected from the maternal chora, at birth and at exile carry a strong message about the transience of life. As the Greeks and earlier cultures too, they saw their lives in source and target domain - the patterned social fabric, safe but mortal - the shears of Atropos waiting to cut the thread and bring an end.

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