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sex objects

Feminist humour, moving sculpture, re-signifying 'the nude'

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the postgraduate degree of

Master of Fine Arts

at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

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ABSTRACT

My sculpture and performance-based practice deploys humour and movement to engage with knotted questions around sexuality and objectification.

Both contemporary and historical representations of the female nude in the traditionally male-dominated western canon all too frequently offer her body up, like a delicious pale dessert. The leaning, bending, swooning flesh is eroticised and yet also pacified. The vulva smoothed away. In contrast, heroic male nudes are more often eroticised in a way which emphasises their agency, power and control.

My thesis project contests the privileged position of the white male artist and viewer, examining sexuality, gender stereotypes, and power.

I use humour as a critical tactic to draw the viewer in, the honey to the sting, whilst also exploring the seductive potential of materials.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS/Preface

What relevance does 'the nude' in the western sculpture canon have in relation to contemporary attitudes towards gender and sexuality?

Must 'the nude' be figurative to be a nude?

What happens when I invert the stereotypical artist (male)/muse (female) relationship?

What happens when I combine movement with object making?

How does the presence of my, female, body affect the reading of the work?

Do I have to be serious to be critical? Is it ok to laugh?

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