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This Domestic Sublime



An exegesis in partial fulfilment of a Doctor of Philosophy in Creative Arts

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Abstract

'My sculptural work starts with the materials, with a moment when matter, materials, objects or 'things', present a discrepancy, a paradox that contradicts my assumptions of truth or knowledge. In this case my work is a sculptural response to death, an interrogation of the forceful affect of the debris found at home, after my mother died.'

'This Domestic Sublime', is a research project that is presented in two parts: a creative body of work, that is an installation consisting of two hundred sculptural elements and a supporting thesis. The creative body of work conveys through material paradox an apprehension of mortality. In so doing, the installation contributes to the discussion of the sublime in art. The sculptural elements included in the body of work are made from debris found on a semi-rural site in Pohangina, New Zealand. These elements range in size from small egg shapes to the size of a garbage bin. The materials are preserved in resin, thus heightening the textural and visual qualities and the affects of attraction and repulsion of the sculptural elements. The final installation of the sculptural work invites a visceral engagement with the materials and mortality.

The work is appraised through a theoretical lens that balances the concept of the sublime with a contemporary understanding of materiality and the domestic space, a space that is aligned with feminine experience. Mortality is framed by the material research, processes and experiments and is presented by the poetic contradictions of debris and matter that made a connection with my mother, who had passed away.

This creative practice and theoretical exploration contributes to the discussion of the sublime in art, by addressing the unique poetic and material paradoxes of 'this domestic sublime'.

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Preface



Figure 1: Alison Lundy. Installation 'this domestic sublime', (2019).

It was early Spring, and a sharp New Zealand Sun was shining fresh light into the house. As I entered a bedroom, my eyes were drawn to a sparkling silver thread. Curious, I moved closer. The sparkling thread turned into a hair and I realized, with a painful start, it was my mother's. Three weeks earlier she had died in this room. It was this instant that began the creative research project. My attention held by the poignant force of this small insignificant piece of detritus.

I remember stepping back as my body physically and emotionally responded to an experience both painful and fascinating. First it was beautiful then disturbing, from silver thread, love, to disgust, piece of detritus, and loss. Somehow this vibrant and insignificant piece of matter both preserved my mother and paradoxically heightened a sense that she was gone. As this happened

'assumptions' I had about mortality were revealed and challenged. On reflection this lively 'thing,'¹ presented me with a sense of 'nothing'² A poetic contradiction.

Over the following months, there were times when other 'things,' domestic objects had the same surprising impact. These occasions provided the collection of debris used to make the sculptures.



Figure 2: Garden and house, Pohangina, New Zealand. (2010).

Of note were the things my mother had prepared from the garden now passed eating. The jar of preserved nectarines found at the back of a cupboard. Now out of date and growing mould, intense colours and textures floating in the juice behind glass. A rotting towel, that had blown off the deck discovered in a sodden heap beneath the hedge. Items from the 'anything goes,' drawer in the kitchen. Perished rubber bands, balloons, and wire wool, these ordinary materials acquired a vibrancy, after my parents' deaths, as the 'things' lost their familial and domestic utility. A range of objects were encountered across the domestic site. In the garage expanding foam, wire and coloured pigments, and from the garden

¹ The term 'thing' is defined within the main body of the text, based on Jane Bennett's interpretation in the publication 'Vibrant Matter'. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

² The understanding applied to the term 'nothing' within the exegesis is based on concepts developed by Jean Luc Nancy in his book 'A Finite Thinking'. This understanding is discussed in Chapter One. Jean Luc Nancy, *A Finite Thinking* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2003).

and on the verandah, windfalls, quinces, apples, eggshells, and ostrich eggshells, gifted from the neighbour's farm. The site operated as place and resource, a repository which supplied the materials for the sculpture.

Personal history also has implications for how the materials work. I have lived here and abroad and have been transient and settled from city to suburb, living in London from 1980 to 2001. The materials, objects, and 'things' that questioned my understanding and knowledge of mortality and home are informed by these experiences and background. The domestic space, I felt had a permeable and transparent perimeter, and this influenced the form of the sculpture, its presentation and style of preservation. My understanding of this space included the ideas associated with the materiality of home. This is, that things have unknowable depths, incumbent histories, human and material, both familial and global, potential narratives, taxonomies, common, Latin and Maori names, a tangle of materialities, relations and meanings.

Home is a place we associate with safety. It was also the place where I found the ordinary, enchanting and repellent materials that threatened instants of profound poetic paradox, and perhaps therefore the sublime.



Figure 3: Installation 'this domestic sublime', (2019), A. Lundy (detail).



Figure 4: A. Lundy. 'this domestic sublime', (2019)

Research Hypothesis:

That domestic debris, preserved in sculptural form, may convey a poetic and paradoxical sense of the subject's mortality in what we may understand as the domestic sublime.

Introduction: This Domestic Sublime

In his famous treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke defined the sublime as being pleasure perceived in terror. He argued that in confronting and trying to apprehend forces greater than ourselves, such as the inevitability of death, the state of sublimity was achieved. Whilst this phenomenon is often discussed in relation to overwhelming natural forces and landscapes, in the above mentioned treatise Burke argued that anything that caused awe, or in some way indicated the unknown could be considered sublime.

This thesis, expressed through a body of artwork and an exegesis, is primarily concerned with the sensations and philosophical positions associated with the apprehension of one's own death when confronted by the detritus associated with the death of a loved one. The project explores the idea that domestic debris, preserved in sculptural form, may convey a poetic and paradoxical sense of the subject's mortality in what we may understand as the domestic sublime. Philip Shaw, his introduction to 'The Sublime', published in 2006, suggests that when an encounter exceeds description, and leaves us in awe and without words, then we experience the sublime.³

It is important to pause here to note that, whilst the content of the artwork arises as a response to the death of a parent, the scope of this project does not extend to matters of memorialisation, or any other forms of cultural remembering. Further, while in many ways the artworks may nod towards notions of the uncanny as described by Sigmund Freud⁴, or melancholy in the Kristevian⁵ sense (add reference), the exploration is neither about 'making strange', nor the affectivity of sadness. Rather, the creative-research seeks to reveal the sublime moment in which the apprehension of one's own mortality may be understood in the banal debris found in a domestic New Zealand setting. Though the awareness of the debris' ability to present a contradictory experience of both beauty and fear was heightened after my mother had died, it is not her death nor her memorialization

³ Philip Shaw. *The Sublime*, The New Critical Idiom (New York: Routledge, 2006). 2.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, (1999). The "Uncanny". In S. Freud (Ed.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (pp. 217-256). London: Vintage. (Originally published in 1919)

⁵ Julia Kristeva. *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*. (New York Columbia University Press, 1992)

that focussed the work. It is the poetic paradox posed by the materials. Here, the 'this', of the title as a pronoun of proximity, helps to set out how the work tests the parameters of expression. It introduces the contradiction between the familiar of the domestic site and the unfamiliar of the sublime experience.

The artwork at the heart of this thesis is a presentation of the perceived limit of our life and ultimately the inevitability of our death. A truth which in actuality, is inexpressible and impossible to imagine. The means of presentation always remains inadequate before the task. However, art finds ways to indicate, point and gesture towards this sensing of mortality, 'the sublime'.

Jeremy Gilbert Rolfe in "Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime"⁶, describes a contemporary sublime that focusses on beauty and glamour and the association of beauty with good. My contemporary interpretation of the sublime is far different and focuses on the awe and terror of death that may be found in the ordinariness of everyday existence, this being the 'domestic sublime' of my title. Whilst my use of the term, 'the domestic sublime', pivots on a feminine perspective on notions of what constitutes the sublime, it is worth noting that my treatise is not an investigation of feminist tropes and does not centre on the performativity of gender as famously investigated by Judith Butler (add reference). For the purposes of this thesis I have instead referenced more contemporary feminist theorists, as will become apparent below.

In 'Gender and Romanticism', Anne K. Mellor uses the term "domesticating the sublime" to describe women's writing in the early nineteenth century. She argued that this writing destabilizes what she terms "masculine sublime".⁷ My use of the term 'the domestic sublime' differs from Mellor's notion of 'domesticating of the sublime' in that she speaks, not of a natural death such as my mother's, but of women's dramatic experiences of violation, while my work uncovers the domestic sublime in the banal and undramatic setting of a New Zealand family home. Where Mellor's work is informative for this exegesis is her proposition that theories of the "masculine sublime", may be destabilized by feminine experience. The theories, which Mellor describes as masculine are bound by traditions of patriarchy and originate for this research, in Edmund Burke's, *'A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful'*, (1757). Importantly, a number of philosophical concepts from the Eighteenth Century remain relevant for this sculptural practice. These include; paradox, the incommensurability of imagination

⁶ Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime*, Aesthetics Today (New York: school of Visual arts : Allworth Press, 1999).

⁷ Anne K. Mellor. *Romanticism and Gender*, 1993, 2013. Routledge. 85-106.

and reason, shock and the combination of attraction and repulsion. However, the contemporary lens provided by this work's materiality, shared domestic experience and connection to a sense of mortality on a semi-rural New Zealand site refigures the paradigm.

The French philosopher Jean Francois Lyotard, described the sublime in post-modern art as "presenting the unrepresentable" a description that acknowledges the contradictory nature of the concept and its aesthetic expression⁸. It was a statement that counters the painter Barnett Newman's contention that the sublime in modernist painting was the presentation of the non-presentable, the now⁹. Either way, more than twenty years after Lyotard made his statement, there is something about the sublime which is inexpressible and unrepresentable. What is important is 'how' this installation engages with the unrepresentable.

The intention of the project is that the two hundred sculptural pieces, ranging in size from a chickens' egg to a rubbish bin, should invite the audience to experience a connection with mortality. A sense rooted in domestic materiality, touch, the routine of home as well as feminine experience. The combination of the two hundred pieces, as related but separate elements, acknowledges the many instants of material paradox that contribute to the particular experience of 'this domestic sublime'. Preserving these experiences in transparent resin, was an aesthetic decision used as a means to convey the conundrum of mortality. Each element is cast using hobbyists' resin, a craft grade resin used in the home. They are exhibited on plinths made from plastic-coated wire drying frames and shelves. Set out in a rough rectangle that excludes the audience. The installation is deliberately set up so that the audience walks around the outside of the sculptures, only able to see the pieces closely from one aspect as we only experience mortality from one side. The lighting, provided by lamps from a domestic interior are placed within the rectangle, replicating the domestic environment and contributing to the process of what Barbara Freeman refers to as double practice¹⁰. Freeman suggests the 'feminine sublime' operates as a critical revision that is necessarily based in a 'double practice', that is to say, one which incorporates paradox. Freeman's notion of double practice, as applied in this artwork, indicates two or more levels of

⁸ Jean François Lyotard 1924-1998., *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime: Kant's Critique of Judgment, [Sections]* 23-29, Meridian (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁹ Alex Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*, Barnett Newman 'The Sublime is Now', 1948. Penguin Modern Classics (Penguin, 2011). 322-326

¹⁰ Barbara Freeman, "The Feminine Sublime : Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction", Publisher: University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif. 1997.

paradox and domestic materiality. The use of double practice, here, begins with the shared experience of familiar materials found in the home. In this case shared from mother to daughter. Then, it is the heightening or repetition of material paradox in order to displace or revise underlying patriarchal traditions that delimit what the sublime can be. In this way the work tests the parameters of what we understand the sublime to be. Double practice informs the aesthetic of the installation, as a serried, repeating, home-based connection to mortality. The lamps cast shadows that question the solidity of the materials and the transparency of the resin.

The important perceptions that underpin this body of work were those where materials actively expressed a poignant and poetic paradox. The resultant feeling of shock was in part, because insignificant matter made a vibrant connection to the sense limit of mortality. The intention was to preserve this experience, all the while aware that this action was in itself paradoxical. By using the process of double practice, the work addresses the feminine experience of daily routine bounded by the sense limit of mortality. In so doing, it suggests that 'the sublime' may be presented through an installation of many, preserved but separated, tactile and familiar, subtle elements.

Chapter one provides the theoretical framework and outlines the key concepts taken from traditional and contemporary theories that refigure conceptual parameters to argue for 'this domestic sublime'. As noted earlier, it begins with the theories of 'the sublime' as developed by the philosophers Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. These ideas were influential from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. In this thesis, the traditional sublime is considered alongside concepts from 'new materialism' and the 'feminine sublime'. Theories of 'new materiality' allow that 'things' and materials have qualities of action, with which we share an ecological engagement. The writings of Jane Bennett (2010), Estelle Barrett (2013) and Peter De Bolla (2002)¹¹ are here considered in relation to this concept of the new materiality. Likewise, the 'feminine sublime', acknowledges forms of the sublime that go beyond those definitions that rely on traditional notions of masculinity. This 'feminine sublime' has been discussed in depth by Bonnie Mann¹² (2006) and Barbara Freeman¹³ (1997) who describe a feminist framework that

¹¹ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt Dr, *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'new Materialism' through the Arts* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013, 2013). Peter De Bolla, 'Toward the Materiality of Aesthetic Experience', *Diacritics* 32, no. 1 (2002): 19–37, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dia.2004.0012>.

¹² Bonnie Mann, *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment*, Studies in Feminist Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹³ Barbara Claire Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction*, vol. [Pbk. ed., 1997] (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1997).

suggests 'othered' forms of the sublime; forms that transgress the patriarchal paradigm expounded in Emmanuel Kant's notion of *unicity*.

Unicity is a term that I will use throughout this exegesis and is the word that Kant uses to describe a subject's own sense of oneness as traditionally posed by the subject/object dichotomy. In the works developed for this thesis, the possibility of unicity is challenged by a position of potential plurality, of paradox. Unicity, as a concept has a relation to 'the sublime'. Kant uses the theoretical synthesis and construction of the 'I', i.e., the subject, to establish the possibility that reason, in confronting the overwhelming prospect of infinite or power, produces a sense of unicity. This concept is posed against this project's materiality. A position which acknowledges ideas of non-linear causality, plurality and material interaction. As such the chapter sets out a combinatory framework of influences and contradictions that open a small but specific door for this practice. The artists reviewed are Damien Hirst, Julian Bell, and Lisa McCosh. All three artists explore matters of the sublime in their work and points of difference, and confluence, with my artistic research are explored and discussed.

Chapter two looks at the development of the sculptural works physical materials and materiality beginning with earlier studio experiments and sculptures and focusses on the material combinations required to express poetic paradox. Vibrancy, vibrant or vitality are all terms used in the exegesis to acknowledge that debris as 'things' has an ability beyond the passive, to engage in effects that make things happen. The word 'thing' used here, is in line with Bill Brown's 'Thing Theory'. Where Brown (2001) writes "We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when the car stalls, when the window gets filthy".¹⁴ In this case, objects and materials stop working because a death of some sort occurs. Similarly, when describing a collection of rubbish, she came across on top of a storm drain, Jane Bennett noted that:

The items on the ground were vibratory- that they identified themselves as dead, inert in one instant, then in the next as live presence. Vital materiality then is "Thing-Power: the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act to produce effects dramatic and subtle."¹⁵

¹⁴ Bill Brown, 'Thing Theory', *Critical Inquiry* 28, no. 1 (2001 Autumn 2001):4.

¹⁵ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*. 7.



Figure 5: A. Lundy. *'this domestic sublime'*, (2019), (detail).

This exegesis applies this understanding of material vitality in connection with mortality and preservation to inform a discussion of poetic paradox. The materials have textural and visceral qualities that, it is argued, deliver contradictory affects. Vibrancy and vitality are at odds with preservation and decay. The term 'things' in this context follows and develops Bennetts interpretation. Here 'things', are materials or objects that because of death, have lost use value or function. However, they have acquired an unsettling vibrancy, such as my mother's hair. As such, this body of work posits that *'this domestic sublime'*, is an experience of material paradox, where many preserved instants, are co-constructed by active materials and 'things'. The works by other artists discussed in this chapter relate specifically to materiality and the process of making. Those referred to are Damien Hirst, Doris Salcedo, Marc Quinn, Cornelia Parker, Gregory Crewdson, Peter Madden. These artists' share unsettlements that connect to mortality, preservation and or the domestic site. Practitioners such as the Japanese artist, Riusuke Fukahori, who use resin, not to preserve but to simulate water, is therefore not looked at in depth. His work does not share the concern for material contradiction.¹⁶ Laure Prouvost was another artist whose work I examined, but in the end wasn't included.¹⁷ Though there is a shared concern for materials and

¹⁶ 'Picture Preview: Goldfish Salvation', The Independent, 5 December 2011.

¹⁷ Tate, 'Turner Prize 2013 Artists: Laure Prouvost', Tate, [turner-prize-2013-artists-laure-prouvost](https://www.tate.org.uk/turner-prize-2013-artists-laure-prouvost).

debris and interest in Kurt Schwitters' 'Merzbau' and aesthetic of assemblage and collage.¹⁸ However, Prouvost constructs a seemingly continuous world for her work, that even has its own symbolic vocabulary. This world is a between world, of language and things, but not specifically the material contradictions, the between of the sense limit of mortality and things.

The third chapter looks at the work's engagement with mortality by analysing the larger sculptural pieces. This engagement is based on domestic life, care and responsibility. Of note, then, the poetic paradox that linked domestic debris to mortality happened two weeks after the funeral, after the body had gone. The sense of mortality wasn't connected to a body, but in an instant when its absence was expressed by vibrant 'things'. This set the experience within a timeframe understood as one sharp, poignant moment, that stood out in the daily routine, cut from the domestic space and held aloft. It is a term that has been used in writing on 'the sublime' in art to establish a temporal space. Barnett Newman (1947), used this term to refine the discussion of his colour-field paintings and to describe the feeling of 'now'.¹⁹ The term, 'instant' is carried by many pieces of preserved domestic debris, a collection of 'instants' so to speak. An experience translated through the resin in the precise instant that it sets. Within the text, 'instant' is used to indicate a point of difference to works not based on an instant of paradox, and preservation, that engage differently with time. All the works discussed could be referred to using the term instance, however instant as it's used in the text is only applicable to a few of the other artists work reviewed here. Artists looked at in this chapter are Damien Hirst, Matt Collishaw, Cornelia Parker, Peter Madden, Fiona Pardington, Sophie Calle, Anne Noble and Sam Taylor-Johnson. The decision not to include works like those from Tracey Emin's recent exhibition 'A Fortnight of Tears', was because it was felt that the visceral images specifically focus on female grief, insomnia and mourning after the death of the mother. Emin's direct autobiographical content did not comparably engage with the sublime as presented by this preserved domestic debris.²⁰ Though Noble and Calle, both use images of the deceased parent, neither of them focus on the peripheral

¹⁸ Luke White, Claire Pajakowska, 'The Sublime Now Edited by Luke White and Claire Pajaczowska, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009,

¹⁹ Danchev, *100 Artists' Manifestos*. Barnett Newman 'The Sublime is Now', 1948. Penguin Modern Classics (Penguin, 2011). 322-326

²⁰ Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime*.

debris left by the dead parent as signifiers of one's own mortality and are therefore not concerned with a representation of the domestic sublime.

The fourth chapter considers the final installation. It looks at the sculptural elements that were cast from eggs and the implications of preservation and presentation. Here the exegesis outlines how the materials combine to present the contradictions of beginning/ end, and order/ anarchy. The contradictions that emerge at the mingling of decay, domestic ecologies and preservation, can be further understood by applying Hal Foster's notion of an archival impulse. Foster suggests that "archives made by artists as a gesture of alternative knowledge or counter memory might be described as an anarchival impulse" (2004).²¹ In this case, it acts as an alternative knowledge of 'the sublime'. Foster comments that at the heart of any archive is destruction or its threat.²² The chaotic or anarchic tendencies in this work are tied to the potential in 'things' to express action. Their capacity to disorder assumptions about the threat of 'nothing', even though preserved. Furthermore, the concept of material paradox is developed and repeated through the style of presentation and framing. The outer forms of the pieces and the objects that were exhibited repeat the domestic connection and contain the vibrant energy of 'things', as their original function is refigured. The artists that I refer to are, Bill Viola, Mayme Kratz, Richard Dupont and Fiona Johnstone.

Chapter Five, brings together the thesis argument and makes connections between the key components it addresses in each chapter. These connections, between concepts about the sublime, the works actual physical materiality and mortality, are critically positioned by the theoretical framework. A framework that supports the specific material paradoxes of the sculptural work. It interweaves an understanding of the theoretical strands from patriarchal tradition with contemporary ideas from 'new materiality' and 'the feminine sublime' and positioned by the materials and 'things' domestic provenance. A provenance that brings with it, notions of caring and responsibility unsettled by the sense limit of mortality. So that, it is argued, the specific poetic paradoxes of the work may negotiate a niche in contemporary art that is posed as 'this domestic sublime'.

²¹ Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October*, MIT press. 2004. 5.

²² Ibid Hal Foster 5.

Chapter One. Reviewing the Sublime

'What takes hold of us when reason falters and certainties begin to crumble?'²³

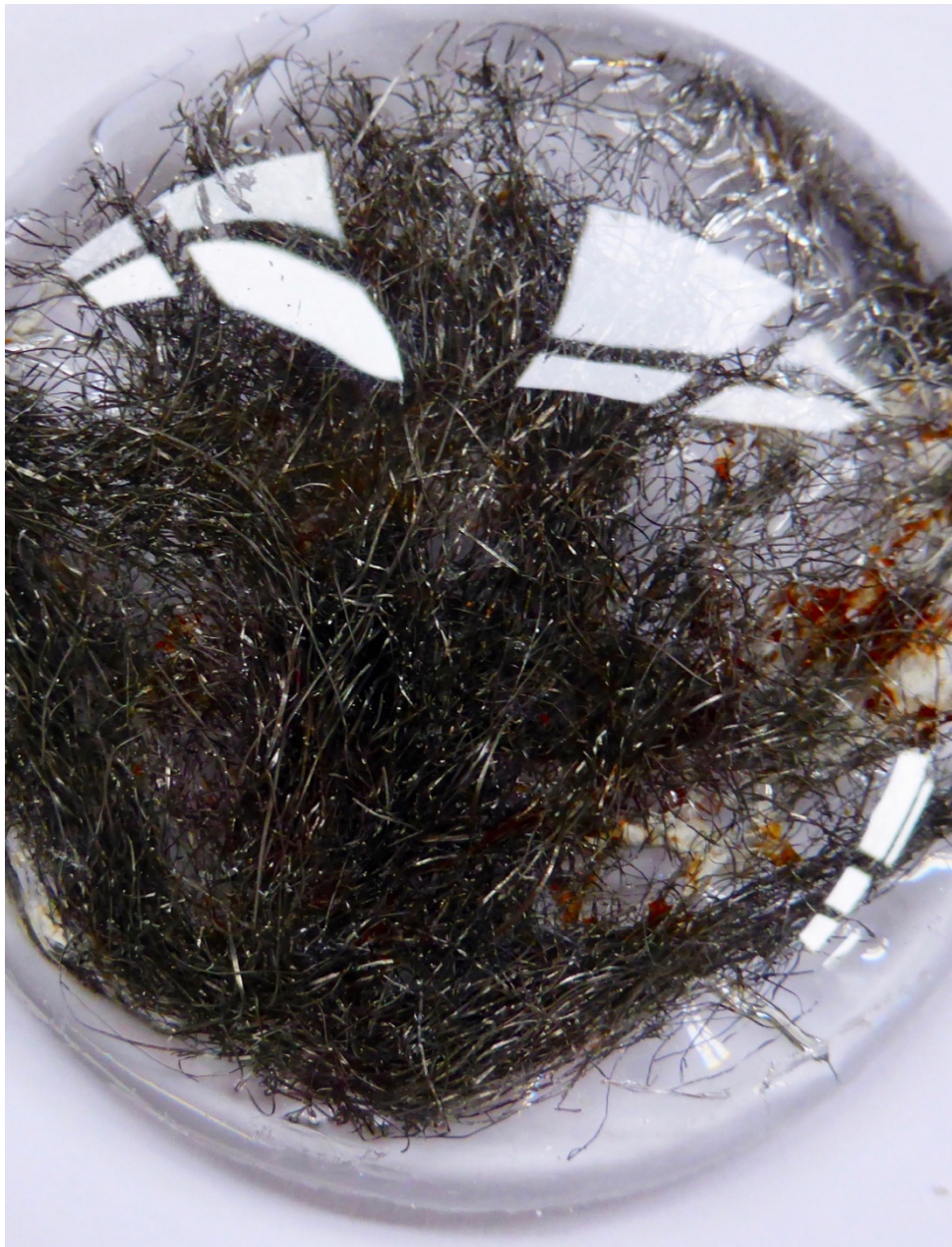


Figure 6: Lundy Alison. *Early casting experiment, wire wool, paint, resin*. 2016.

²³ Simon Morley, ed., *The Sublime*, Documents of Contemporary Art (London: Cambridge, Mass: Whitechapel Gallery; MIT Press, 2010). 12. Morley, in his introduction to 'The Sublime', sets out a broad range of responses that contemporary art has in speaking to the Sublime. This quote suggests something that is important for this sculptural project: the faltering of reason and crumbling of certainty.

Chapter One sets out a theoretical underpinning for 'this domestic sublime'. This title describes an encompassing concept, to connect domestic and ordinary matter to a sense of mortality. A sense that suggested a gap in the field of visual art research. Therefore, I propose that the poetry of the material paradoxes visible in the sculptural work presented in this doctoral thesis uniquely gesture towards the sense limit of mortality. It is this gesture, bound in material paradox that defines the gap in research. The thesis contends that this sculptural apprehension of mortality contributes to the exposition of 'the sublime' in art. The theoretical framework described in this chapter provides a particular admixture of concepts, from both patriarchal tradition and contemporary theory in support of the sculptural project.

To begin, as acknowledged in the introduction, Anne K. Mellor, coined the phrase "domesticating the sublime" in 1994, in reference to women's fiction writing (1800-1850). However, I begin with concepts relevant for this work developed during the age of Enlightenment. Setting out from Edmund Burke's philosophical treatise, 'A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful', written in 1757.²⁴ This discussion will argue that these traditional concepts are altered and affected by my sculptures' domestic materiality. Thus, acknowledging the current experiences and materialities found on the semi-rural, homesite in New Zealand. I use the term 'materiality' to cover both the actual physical materials and the cultural and social environs of the domestic site. My understanding of 'domestic' here is aligned with feminine experience, linked through the relationship between my mother and myself. When using the term 'feminine,' I acknowledge Barbara Freeman's definition set out in her work, 'The Feminine Sublime'. Freeman designates the feminine sublime, as one which, "contests fixed assumptions of sexual difference, and binaries, it questions feminine modes of expression, to posit a fluid "other" ungraspable in established systems of ideas associated with the sublime".²⁵ This designation of the 'feminine' sublime supports the sculptures domestic materiality and position of unsettled paradoxes in an 'othered' connection to mortality that critically positions this domestic sublime in regard to what we might term as Burke's patriarchal tradition.

Edmund Burke's treatise on the sublime, provides an initial set of prompts for the project's theoretical framework. These prompts offer points of continuity or

²⁴ Edmund Burke and Adam Phillips, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford [England]; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990 (1998 printing), 1990).

²⁵ Barbara Claire Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime : Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction*, vol. [Pbk. ed., 1997] (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1997).

departure for the work. The question quoted at the beginning of this chapter provides a point of continuity from Burke's treatise for this project. It is taken from the publication edited by Simon Morley, 'The Sublime'.²⁶ It describes qualities my thesis considers intrinsic to the sublime, in this case, the event where 'reason falters and certainties begin to crumble'.²⁷ The quote poses an experience Burke also ascribed to the sublime, where reason and imagination cannot overcome the contradictions, or paradox, in the artwork before us. A quality, which Burke suggests, is experienced as a feeling of pleasure (delight) in displeasure, in relation to pain and death. The following expands on this idea of pleasurable displeasure. Burke wrote:

*First that there are pleasures and pains of a positive and independent nature; and secondly, that the feeling which results from the ceasing or diminution of pain does not bear a sufficient resemblance to positive pleasure to have it considered as of the same nature, or to entitle it to be known by the same name; and it is very reasonable that we should distinguish by some term two things so distinct in nature, as a pleasure that is such simply, and without any relation, from that pleasure which cannot exist without relation, and that too a relation to pain.*²⁸

As we have seen, Burke called this form of pleasure in displeasure, delight. It is this description of pleasure in displeasure, that tallies with that sublime instant where my mother's hair presented a poetic paradox, where 'reason faltered and certainties crumbled'. An instant of apprehension, of the sense limit of mortality. Burke describes this sense limit:

*That whatever is qualified to cause terror, is a foundation capable of the sublime; to which I add, that not only these, but many things from which we cannot probably apprehend any danger have a similar effect, because they operate in a similar manner... Fear or terror, which is an apprehension of pain or death, exhibits exactly the same effects, approaching in violence to those just mentioned in proportion to the nearness of the cause, and the weakness of the subject.*²⁹

The idea above summarized here, is that the sublime experience is a shock caused by an encounter with mortality. It is felt paradoxically, as Burke's 'pleasure in displeasure'. We cannot with either reason or imagination explain, define or describe this experience. The means of presentation always remains inadequate before the task. However, art finds ways to indicate, point and gesture towards this

²⁶ Simon Morley, ed., *The Sublime*, Documents of Contemporary Art (London: Cambridge, Mass: Whitechapel Gallery; MIT Press, 2010).

²⁷ Edmund Burke and Phillips, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1990 [England] ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990 (1998). 12.

²⁸ Ibid. 33.

²⁹ Ibid. 119.

sensing of mortality. The unsettled and irresolvable edge is, in this case, found on a site of familiarity. Whatever brings us to this apprehension, in any age, is dependent on the environmental, social and cultural contexts. Summarized as the milieu that the artworks arise from. This thesis contends, that causes of the sublime here and now, linked to pain and experienced as a 'delight', can be expressed by debris found on a domestic site.

Burke goes on to write, when discussing causes of the sublime, and scientific proof, of "That great chain of causes, which linking one to another even to the throne of God, himself, can never be unravelled by any industry of ours.... When we go but one step beyond the immediately sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth".³⁰ It is worth noting that Burke's use of 'depth' in relation to the sensible qualities of 'things' and Christian belief, would be different to those of the present day. The cultural diffusion of secularity, added to contemporary understanding of materiality, provides a point of departure for this project.

In refining the ideas that support 'this domestic sublime' and therefore it's 'sensible qualities', I have used the term 'nothing' to describe the 'what' that shocked me. I have preferred this over the terms 'void' or 'abyss', which are commonly used to describe experiences of the sublime. In my experience these terms did not allow for the secular materiality of this work. There is no transcendence implied in this sculptural work. It remains grounded in its domestic materiality. A materiality which recognizes an equivalency of all the senses. Touch, taste and smell, were associated with the feminine in the Enlightenment and considered base. The senses attributed as masculine were sight and sound. The sensual qualities of this work provoke the sense of touch, thereby suggesting a version of the sublime that is earth-bound, visceral, textural and feminine. Thus, allowing a poignant sense of 'nothing' to be entangled in domestic debris.

The connection to the valueless and the profane becomes paradoxical because these materials were a part of my mother's life and she was valued and loved. This is not the abyss threatened in familiar representations of overwhelming natural phenomena. Such as a painting of a volcanic eruption or extreme weather event. Therefore, it presents a point of departure from more familiar notions of the sublime. Rather than a powerful natural phenomenon suggesting the unrepresentable aspect of death, we have a force presented by detritus. Jacques Derrida, in an essay on mourning and the sublime, written in 1996, describes the form of power, experienced in relation to a loved one who has died, as a paradoxical experience

³⁰ Ibid. 117.

of 'force/ without force'.³¹ This description of a paradoxical force, that is also forceless fits with the detritus and domestic positioning of this work.

I would add that this understanding of a contradictory force/ without force also aligns with the idea of 'nothing'. To elaborate on this idea of 'nothing' I refer to the concept of finitude from Jean Luc Nancy's 'A Finite Thinking'. I use it because it tallies with the contemporary experience of this domestic sublime, summarised here as an experience of the sublime which "abandons itself," or "offers itself up," to an instant of profound nothing. A nothing which is felt as finite. It is felt as finite because there is no imagined or believed-in future, with which the bodily sacrifice is made. Instead there is a connection – "through technics, or ecotechnics" – to finitude: "finite and unsacrificeable existence, which is offered up for sharing"³².

'Nothing,' with its finite secular intimations of a 'nothing' forever, describes that unsettled instant in these artworks where debris and mortality offer a sublime experience. Nancy's term 'technics' is understood as branches of learning relating to the arts, while 'ecotechnics' describes the relationship of the body to technology, interconnected within and without to the environment. Ecotechnics in this context refers to the material relations of debris to the body, specific to this work's domestic positioning and its connection to mortality.

However, it is important to note that it is not the 'nothing' that is key for this art practice, but the materials. As already suggested, each age throws up its own forms of presentation of the sublime. The exegesis proposes that these preserved domestic materials wrap a specific form of the sublime for this age. A sublime that is finite and exerts a contradictory force/ without force.

Bonnie Mann in 'Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment, Studies in Feminist Philosophy', suggests that the sublime is of its time and is presented by the materialities of its time. In summary, Mann acknowledges that the mixture of pleasure/displeasure set out by Burke is a quality of the sublime experience. But she adds that what presents this feeling to us now is dependent on our current cultural milieu.³³ I concur with this as 'this domestic sublime' is grounded in experiences of a site and materials understood through the lens of our time. Burke's treatise did not recognise a feminine sublime. Instead he speculated that the feminine existed in the notion of beauty and used

³¹ Jacques Derrida, 'By Force of Mourning', *Critical Enquiry* 22, 2.1996. 176.

³² Jean Luc Nancy, *A Finite Thinking* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2003).

³³ Bonnie Mann, *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment, Studies in Feminist Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).133.

that as its point of differentiation from the sublime, which he characterized as masculine. This assertion, I suggest, is based in the judgemental aesthetics of the Enlightenment that rely on reason and a notion of hierarchies of 'taste'.³⁴ Gernot Bohme, a German theorist, used the description "judgemental" to distinguish those aesthetics from those developed in the Twentieth Century, based in phenomenology. A theory which stresses the importance of an experiential totality of the senses; of touch, smell, taste, sight and sound in aesthetic apprehension, equal to reason and language. According, to Burke whilst beauty is purely pleasurable, the sublime goes beyond that. Burke asserted that certain aspects of nature presented an overwhelming force (masculine) that evoked feelings of awe and fear. In doing so, he theorised the characteristic feeling for the sublime (of pleasure/displeasure) as masculine. My artwork recognises the importance of the contradictory feeling of pleasure/displeasure for this creative practice. However, from its position now, I argue that the binary of 'feminine beauty'/'sublime masculinity' is contradicted by contemporary aesthetics. An aesthetics that recognizes the primacy of our sensual being. A primacy that is not reducible to the dichotomy of judgemental aesthetics. Therefore, this domestic sublime, grounded in the materiality of the home, suggests a particular pleasure/displeasure not based on an overwhelming masculine power. Instead it is as an anxious unsettlement, a force/ without force, where preserved domestic debris signals to the audience the sense limit of mortality.



Figure 8: A. Lundy. 'this domestic sublime', (2019), (detail).

Nature's importance (causing terror and astonishment) in conventional representations of the sublime, is reworked in the sculptures by using ordinary domestic materials. Rather than being overwhelmed by nature, the work's

³⁴ Gernot Böhme, 'Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics', *Thesis Eleven* 36, no. 1 (August 1993): 114-116.

response combines a domestic community of materiality's synthetic, man-made, and natural. Here fear and astonishment are experienced because the familiar materials, cast as detritus express a lively link to death. This contemporary understanding of material qualities, its vibrancy, comes from concepts of material agency found in Jane Bennett's theorization of 'thing power'.³⁵ Most importantly, for this exegesis, matter is understood as potentially active. From the feminine sublime, the quality of shared care and responsibility for the domestic site and its people, is acknowledged. Bonnie Mann writes "Certain kinds of sublime experience are both rooted in and disclosive of our relations of dependency on other persons and on places, of our vulnerability and injurability in these relations, and of the injurability of others."³⁶ This concept combining care and place, I associate with the familiarity of home. Where the unfamiliarity of 'nothing', mortality, breaches the relations of dependency to disclose our vulnerability. This vulnerability is expressed in an engagement with active sculptural elements that contain preserved debris. In understanding that the two ideas of vibrant materiality and care come together in the work, I also then understand that in doing so the subject/ object binary collapses. This is because the subject cannot distance or separate themselves with reason. As subjects we share with the objects and 'things' a caring, responsibility and agency in connection with death.

A number of contemporary artists have inverted Burke's understanding of nature's sublime qualities using similar transgressive moves. In looking at artists who have reframed representations of nature's power, I refer first to a work by Damien Hirst. Hirst has worked with the sublime in art, as well as its relation to money throughout his career. His recent work, 'Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable',³⁷ was exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2017. However, the work I wish to focus on, in relation to this thesis, is 'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living' (1991).³⁸ This work is discussed in Luke White's essay on capitalism and the sublime. In which White suggests that Hirst inverts meaning with an ironic manipulation of material, style, and references. So that the viewers' encounter with death is of nature mediated by the commercial system of the art gallery. However, my examination of this work as part of my thesis is because 'The

³⁵ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.

³⁶ Bonnie Mann, *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment*, Studies in Feminist Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 144- 145.

³⁷ Laura Cumming, "Damien Hirst: Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable Review – Beautiful and Monstrous," *the Guardian*, April 16, 2017.

³⁸ Luke White, *Damien Hirst's Shark: Nature, Capitalism and the Sublime* (Tate, 2013).

Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living'³⁹, as the title suggests, deals with precisely the sublime, as described earlier, as a paradoxical feeling of awe and wonder in the presence of inevitable death.

In viewing this work, the audience is confronted by a dead tiger shark preserved in a tank. The original sculpture measured 2170 x 54420 x 1800 mm. Both the size and relationship of scale are important for the work to give the impression that the shark is a real and natural threat. If the tank had been so small that it barely contained the shark, there would be no threat. There is the implied possibility of movement in the space of the man-made tank that the shark is both contained and framed in. Hirst's installation set out to bring the audience as close as possible to the impossible contemplation of their own death. For that to happen, Hirst had to balance the shark's appearance 'as if still alive', as if in 'nature', with the audience perceiving its paradoxical presentation. The concept of 'nothing', as it is understood here, emerges in Hirst's work, between the fear of the shark bringing imagined death, and our reasonable knowledge. Reasonable knowledge in this case has to account for the presentation, sourcing and origin of the shark. As Luke White suggests, the notion of the overwhelming power of nature is subverted in this context by the perceived power of capital. Capital is understood here as a powerful system that controls and governs our lives and the art world. Jean-Francois Lyotard theorised a capitalist sublime when he wrote in 1983: "Sublimity is no longer in art, but in speculation on art... there is a kind of collusion between Capital and the avant-garde. There is something of the Sublime in capitalist economy"⁴⁰. As noted previously, in his essay, 'Nature, Capitalism and the Sublime,' Luke White suggests "that the shark, in Hirst's work and elsewhere, is a figure which intertwines an aesthetic of terrible nature with the Capitalist Sublime".⁴¹

Hirst's work, though not sharing the domestic elements of my sculptural practice, has other similarities. For instance, the use of paradox to unsettle the traditional narratives of nature as a power, and simultaneously question the kind of relationship we have with mortality. Returning to Burke's association of the sublime with the power of nature, this power though present in the shark, is subverted by concerns of the 1990s.

To return to my own work, the sculpture shown in the image below (Fig. 9) subverts the expression of a 'naturally' patriarchal sublime in a number of ways. In relation to the power of nature, ordinary domestic debris is caste in an egg and

³⁹ Luke White, Damien Hirst's Shark: Nature, Capitalism and the Sublime (Tate, 2013).

⁴⁰ Jean- Francois Lyotard 'The Sublime and the Avant-Garde'. Reproduced in *The Inhuman*. (1983) Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁴¹ Luke White, Damien Hirst's Shark: Nature, Capitalism and the Sublime (Tate, 2013), 1.

elevated to the status of art. The material status challenged the traditional look of powerful nature, as the interred 'things' initially present as powerless. The sculpture's lack of capital value gives it a superficial similarity to the works of the Italian Arte Povera movement in the 1960's, as a critique of the capitalist sublime is implicit in its combination of materials. This is a mixture of ordinary objects (both man-made and natural) that together present a sense of 'nothing'. Therefore, an unquantifiable, unknowable 'nothing'—when presented by the domestic and ordinary, the small and prosaic—identifies a point of difference. It contrasts with those traditional patriarchal representations of overwhelming power expressed by the forces of nature, or the forces of capital, but the 'valueless' materials in my work are used to speak about the banality of mortality rather than a discussion of social inequality. Furthermore, 'Preserved Debris' expresses qualities that Burke ascribed to beauty. These qualities, being 'smooth, polished, comparatively small, light and delicate, domestic materialities, that I suggest offer an experience of sublime feeling', that is finite, forceful and forceless.



Figure 9: Lundy, Alison. Sculptural element (test installation). 2018. Rotted apple, funeral bouquet, plastic, ostrich egg, wire plinth (detail).

Seen above, fig 9, this sculptural element from the project's final installation reveals pieces of domestic debris, plastic, and dried rose-petals from a funeral bouquet. Preserved within the ostrich egg and washing bowl shaped resin and raised up on

the wire basket plinth, the interred materials were all sourced from the domestic environment.

Forms of knowledge, that guide reason and our current understanding, allow that powerful occurrences, once deemed natural, are now generated by man. Indeed, this knowledge has allowed us to create power, and powerful technologies made from tiny amounts of material, matter, and energy that can be catastrophic and deadly. Added to this, is the emancipation from the Burkean understanding of a powerful masculinity that naturally embodies characteristics of the sublime). The strict binary of masculine sublime and feminine beauty is no longer reasonable. Today, the power of nature is harnessed through technologies, and we now acknowledge the power of women (and others). Subsequently, it is my view that in art that presents the sublime, this binary can be unsettled, mingled and collapsing into itself.

In 'Preserved Debris', the combination of desiccated plant matter, plastic and wire wool, preserved within a resin egg, is unsettling. Not because these materials are overwhelming; it is because they are ordinary and preserved as art—and present death. The work attracts the viewer through the combination of transparency and texture. These qualities signal potential beauty and contradiction through the presence of apparent internal decay. As transparency implies clarity of vision, the viewer is pulled into the work, in order to resolve the perceived contradictions. On closer inspection, the paradoxes become starkly apparent: the eggs indicate renewal and rebirth, but these sculptural elements also include decay. The combination of attraction and repulsion work simultaneously on the viewer. These elements of domestic debris present an uneasy and disproportionate power of 'nothing' in relation to their size and homely provenance. The domestic space might be posed, in Burke's terms, as the antithesis of the sublime: safe; feminine; contained; small; pretty and beautiful; offering sanctuary from the extremes of nature. By using domestic debris to convey this experience of mortality, of 'nothing', the sculpture subverts the Burkean concept of powerful nature and places it within the sanctuary of the home.

In order to develop this positioning, of the domestic site, the discussion reflects on the English artist Julian Bell's, painting 'Darvaza' (2010), and his supporting essay 'Art and the Sublime'.⁴² Bell in his essay uses this painting, to argue for a set of clear parameters for the sublime in art. These parameters, I suggest are slanted towards patriarchal tradition, therefore this sculptural installation would be excluded based on his criteria. His essay is one that was published, alongside

⁴² Julian Bell, 'Contemporary Art and the Sublime' (Tate, 2013), 17-18.

others, by the Arts & Humanities Research Council of Great Britain, commissioned to encourage debate on the role of the sublime and its impact. I have already alluded to Luke White's essay, which was included in that collection. White's essay linked the Burkean aesthetic, that used images of powerful Nature to represent the sublime, with the incursion of capitalism into the art domain. These essays were offered as part of the London Tate Gallery's exhibition, *The Sublime Object: Nature, Art and Language*.

The painting, *Darvaza*, is of a naturally occurring gas crater in a desert, in Turkmenistan. At night the burning gases cast an eerie light and atmosphere. Bell's painterly interpretation of the Darvaza Gas crater is reproduced along with a photograph of the site. By comparing these two images, issues relating to conventional representations of the sublime were clarified for me. By looking at Bell's work, I identified three tropes that I address differently within my work. The first trope is that of the artist-as-traveller, in search of sublime experience, who journeys to a site deemed strange and exotic. The second trope is the understanding that the enlightenment notion of the sublime (with its aspect of masculinity) is overwhelming in scale and size, it is infinite. Finally, the third trope identified in '*Darvaza*' is the relation to nature, as powerful force. Using these tropes, simplified binaries were identified as foreign/ endemic, physically overwhelming (infinite)/small (finite), and Nature /man-made; that clarified points of comparison and difference for this project.

In his essay, Bell argues for a set of aesthetic parameters that may present the sublime in contemporary art. I feel that in doing so, he provides an interesting and important polemic, that allows me to clarify my own stance. Bell is an educated man and has travelled overseas in order to receive a sublime experience—outdoors in 'nature', that others live with and are responsible for. By going to a place that is not his home, Bell experienced this feeling as a foreigner. Upon his return home, he painted '*Darvaza*' as a crater of burning gas, exoticizing the site from his home environment and place of safety. I would argue that Bell uses a representational trope linked to patriarchal notions of the sublime. The difference in my approach as an artist is that the binary of exotic or foreign other is not present. Instead domestic detritus, from a caring site of shared responsibility, becomes exotic through its relationship to mortality: collapsed and transgressed by the familiarity of the materials.

Bell's painting suggests a formidable landscape, it is large in scale. This aspect of his work reflects familiar romantic portrayals of the sublime. One such portrayal is the painting, '*Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*', by Caspar David Friedrich (1818). This painting shares the prospect for the viewer of a landscape

where nature threatens. Here, the male subject overcomes this circumstance by presenting a distinct sense of self, and a sense of unicity that privileges that subject.

Like Friedrich's painting, Bell's 'Darvaza', by exaggerating the sense of scale, threatens to pull the viewer inside the frame. Bell has manipulated the relations of scale to those that equate with traditions of the eighteenth century, such that the viewer is overwhelmed. The horizon line is pushed to the upper edge of the canvas and is curved, so that the size of the crater is exaggerated in relation to the earth. The planet's curvature would not be perceivable in reality. Bell has amplified the scale of the Darvaza site to enhance its power. This is a device that relies on an adoption of traditional tropes, size is power. Bell's representational use of scale to bring the subject to a sense of unicity sets it within Burke's description of a patriarchal sublime. In contrast, in my sculptural installation, the subject is required to identify with the multiple scattered elements. Ranging in size from a small egg to a rubbish bin and numbering approximately two hundred pieces. Therefore, providing unsettled, separate instants of poignant apprehension. Rather than the subject feeling unicity, the subject takes part and shares with the gathered sculptural elements, in a subtle recognition of death.

Vast size and unicity, as representational aspects of the sublime, are questioned by the artwork submitted in this doctoral project. As well as being a collection of many elements, that range in size, the pieces are spread out across plinths that have been repurposed from the domestic space. In contrast to Bell's painting, the sense of scale is inverted by the many relatively small 'things'. Gazing into these small sculptural forms, the inversion of scale suggests imagined worlds or landscapes. However, in these sculptural elements, instead of encountering a whole other world, an instant of finite 'nothing'—is encountered.

For an artwork to provide us with an experience of powerlessness or awe, it does not have to be big. Works of art that exemplify this concept are William Blake's 'The Ghost of a Flea' (1819-20; 214 x 162 mm) and Richard Diebenkorn's 'Ocean Park Series' (1970s; approx. 128 x 152 mm).⁴³ These images were all painted on small canvases (box lids), and arguably present a sublime experience in which we encounter awe and powerlessness. Instead of being actually 'physically' overwhelmed, the viewer enters into an engagement with the work, where vastness is intimated by the comparative proportions that operate within a small framework.

Returning to Bell's work, in 'Darvaza' he uses scale and size to represent an experience of an overpowering and uncontrollable action of nature. He also

⁴³ William Blake, *The Ghost of a Flea* (Tate, 2013),.

employed the technique of pouring paint so that it mimicked a primordial, liquid substrata, lurking beneath the Earth's crust. This pouring, as a 'randomising tactic',



Figure10: Lundy, Alison. *Test install, chrome bookshelf*, (2018), (detail).

invites an uncontrolled interaction between the surface of the painting and the paint—the variant thicknesses of paint are pulled down by the force of gravity, suggesting the basic gases and melted rocks of hell. Matter regresses to a simple mess of potential, a biblical return to 'nothing.' Bell talks about this as:

Inviting a relatively random process into the making of the image, I could feel that I was reaching out to touch something other in my studio – something not entirely self-willed and human – even as I had confronted something powerfully other, standing a previous evening by that flame lit cliff-edge.⁴⁴

The writer and critic, Jonathan Jones, in an article for the Guardian, 2012, calls this, 'randomising tactics'. He discusses it in relation to 'Julian Bell, Joseph Wright and Britain's 'Titian Triumph'', as a traditional painterly technique that evokes sublime effect.⁴⁵ The introduction of faux natural effects, or randomising tactics, is a component that has been widely used to represent uncontrollable nature. Bell's painting uses these traditional devices to represent a sublime that is 'other'—it is

⁴⁴ Julian Bell, "Contemporary Art and the Sublime". Publisher: Tate Gallery Publication, 2013.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Jones, 'Julian Bell, Joseph Wright and Britain's Titian Triumph – the Week in Art', the Guardian, 2 March 2012.

foreign and overwhelming. Bell suggests in his essay that there is a human contribution to this 'crater of doom', by retelling the story of the Russian scientists and other foreigners who allegedly lit the natural gases whilst searching for fossil fuels. Therefore, the Darvaza crater has man-made and natural elements. The site's naturalness has a contemporary element, for as Bell suggests, the hand of man lit the flame.

Figure 10 (above) shows how the sculptural elements depart from earlier representations of power and uncontrollable nature. Presented here are 'things' from the home set in resin. When divorced from their original function, they became foreign. In addition, while they are small, the relations of scale suggest a larger space. Nature and artificial material work together to co-construct the form and its paradoxes. This domestic sublime does not express the 'over-there' of Bell's foreign sublime, but one that is right here, with us, next to us, and a part of us. By preserving vibrant 'things' that have lost their original function and meaning, it opens up the possibility that we do not know them, which allows them to express an unknowable 'nothing'. By elevating ordinary debris on a plinth, it brings the 'things' up to eye level for consideration. The heightened affect of presenting ordinary 'things' departs from both Burke's and Bell's theories of the Sublime. Indeed, Burke writes, "But whatever powers are, or upon what principle they affect the mind, it is absolutely necessary that they should not be exerted in those things which a daily and vulgar use have brought into a stale and unaffecting familiarity".⁴⁶

The sculptures depart from patriarchal traditions of the sublime at this point. These materials at one point were all put to vulgar use and it is their connection to unaffecting familiarity which is key to understanding their vibrancy. A vibrancy acquired after a death, a vibrancy that means materials have the capacity to co-construct experience with us. Here mundane materials express a poignant vitality that contradicts a notion of mortality, as still. However, they only expressed this vibrancy after they lost their function in the home, after death.⁴⁷ For this project death altered the grounds of functionality. Furthermore, by inviting curiosity, there is a promissory note, that on closer inspection the contradictions will, with reason, be resolved. Reason and imagination cannot resolve these paradoxes, it is impossible to surpass or reach the sense limit of mortality, it remains unimaginable.

⁴⁶ Edmund Burke and Adam Phillips, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford [England] ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990 (1998 printing), 1990),

⁴⁷ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

Bell's painting, 'Darvaza', and the installation's sculptural elements do share an appropriation of 'natural effect'. Where 'randomising tactics' are a processual step in the sculptures construction. More specifically, the randomising tactic I used allowed the man-made resin (that sets at high temperatures) to affect the nature of the other materials.

Along with this randomizing process, additional affects were driven by the choice of mould or former. The materials of the 'things' used to shape the forms of the sculptural elements effected the temperature, resin and caste matter. This will be discussed further in the materials chapter. Suffice to say here that the outer shape of the sculptural elements is a point of difference for this domestic sublime. An approach that contrasts with Hirst's oversized glass container in 'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living'; a form of presentation (placing collections in glass boxes) that harks back to the 'cabinet of curiosities'. A form of colonial display, prevalent from the sixteenth century onwards, in which wealthy and titled individuals showed objects they had acquired on their overseas journeys. Bell, similarly, presents the othered and exoticized unknowable by using the motif of something foreign, outside and away from the home.

Bell's approach re-presents the traditional historic and painterly forms of the sublime developed during the enlightenment. However, in 'Darvaza', he has altered the traditional narrative by recording a phenomenon that resulted from man's search for fuel in the 1970s. Bell states: "As a painter- a dealer in surfaces, a literally superficial individual- I need to keep in mind some look that distinguishes what is sublime from what is not".⁴⁸

The sculptures in this project question the tradition of this 'distinguishing look', based in the visual and historical tropes associated with otherness, overwhelming power, and nature. Using Burke's theory, domestic debris would not have been worthy for consideration, as it was connected to the home space, the site of woman's work. Freeman's theorizing of a feminine sublime provides concepts which support this domestic form. As already mentioned, the domestic space, one of daily care and responsibility, is bound in double practice.⁴⁹ In my sculptural works, the materiality operates a double practice - the mundane 'debris', is caste within a shape that is itself everyday and the elements are presented again, on domestic objects. Thus, transgressing the bounds set out by

⁴⁸ Julian Bell, "Contemporary Art and the Sublime", Publisher Tate Gallery Publication, 2013. 18.

⁴⁹ Barbara Freeman, "The Feminine Sublime : Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction", Publisher: University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif. 1997.

the 'distinguishing look' of a traditional patriarchal sublime, through a double practice that reiterates its domestic materiality.

As the external surface of the resin conforms to the shapes of domestic debris, it is framed by ordinary things, an egg, as well as containing them. The outer forms of my sculptures do not have the representational history inferred by Hirst's minimalist tank (cabinet of curiosities) or Bell's excursions into sublimity within painterly tradition.

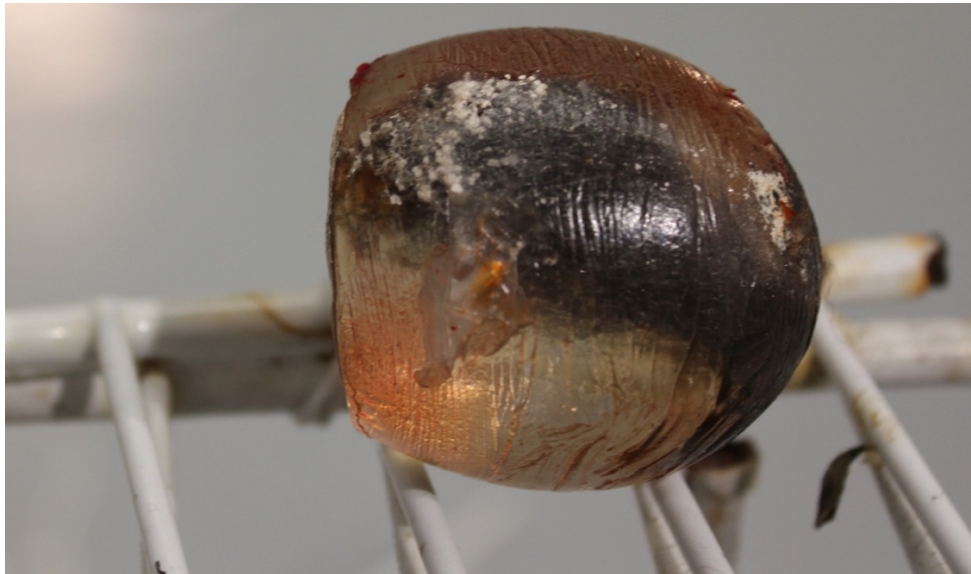


Figure 11: Lundy, Alison. *'this domestic sublime'*, (2019), (detail).

As discussed earlier, Burke uses judgments based on notions of beauty to define what a sublime experience entails. He set parameters for what could be judged as beautiful or sublime. Burke suggests that "the large and gigantic, though very compatible with the sublime, is contrary to the beautiful".⁵⁰ He goes on to suggest that objects described as small, bounded, shiny and smooth were beautiful.⁵¹ Looking at the small sculptural element pictured in the illustrations of my installation, they conform to a number of qualities associated with Burke's idea of beauty. The traditional distinction between what is beautiful and what is sublime presents a material paradox. These man-made materials contradict Burke's definition, I suggest, by presenting a sense of terrifying 'nothing', that in this age can be expressed by the small, the shiny, and on first sight, potentially beautiful. Scale and

⁵⁰ Edmund Burke and Phillips "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful", :Oxford World's classics, Publisher: Oxford [England] ; New York : Oxford University Press, 1990 (1998 printing). 143.

⁵¹ Ibid. 137.

size also provide another point of contradiction that has been explored in this sculptural practice. However, rather than focussing on scale in relation to the definition of beauty (as it is found in Burke's treatise), it is Immanuel Kant's theory of the infinite in relation to 'the sublime' that will extend the discussion.



Figure 12: Lundy, Alison. (detail installation). 2018. Dust, fibres, hair, peas, pigment, resin.

Immanuel Kant, in his "Critique of Judgment" (1790), proposed that there existed two forms of the sublime: one based on the inestimable quality of infinite (mathematical), and the other being the dynamic essence of nature.⁵² This projects sculptural relationship to the inestimable, is as the forever of finite 'nothing'. Already outlined in reference to Jean Luc Nancy's book 'A Finite Thinking'.⁵³ However, here the paradox and double practice of the feminine sublime are linked to this domestic form. Tradition would suggest that representations of the sublime express an infinite or boundless prospect. Here I present transparent but bounded forms, that through a set of layered contradictions, intimate the unbounded. This poetic paradox, rather than representing a literal image of unbounded fog, presents an infinity of finite

⁵² Immanuel Kant, "The Critique of Judgment"; Translated with Analytical Indexes by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1952.

⁵³ Jean Luc Nancy, "A Finite Thinking." Publisher: Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA. 2003

'nothing', through the double practice of combining debris, mortality and preservation. In Figure 12 (above), the eggshell, rotted peas and dust set in the shiny resin presents a set of unsettled, layered material contradictions. Combined with this, is the critical provocation offered by the sculptures' aspect of co-construction, a quality outlined in Jane Bennett's theory of vibrant materials, and here understood as the material's active potential. This action suggests that the sculptural elements made from detritus aren't passive objects. Therefore, they may co-contribute to an unsettling experience of mortality, that has a force/without force. Whereas, Kant's estimation of infinity, which underpins his theorising of the mathematical sublime, has the subject using reason to overcome the imagination's inability to account for an ongoing expanse of 'forever'. Thus, Kant's theory privileges the reasoning subject, with an experience of unicity. This concept of unicity does not account for current theories, that combined, allow for material co-construction and multiplicity. I would contend that the poetic paradoxes of my work's domestic sublime engage qualities of materiality and the feminine sublime that critically work towards a feeling of a finite 'nothing' forever, that does not privilege the patriarchal subject.

Vastness in this work is suggested by the layering of paradox, where an unknowable 'nothing' is co-created from within the safe, enclosed material limits of a domestic environment. Based on the contemporary understanding of a subtle paradox of force/without force, an unsettled relation emerges that critically inverts assumptions of scale and size. The poetic paradoxes maintain relations of scale and ordinariness that do not privilege the reasoning subjects' notion of the infinite. Furthermore, the prospect of finite life and infinite death are contracted into the same 'thing'. That is, an egg is presented as both the beginning of life and as a resin sculpture that contains things post-life—the imagination is invited to grapple with an unreasonable paradox. The symbolism is paradoxical because of the decay.

Mojca Kuplen, a philosopher on aesthetics, writes, in relation to Kant and the imagination:

This is where an aesthetic estimation of the amplitude of the 'thing', pushes imagination into free play, not determined by understanding. In failing to synthesize a sensible manifold and apprehending only a degree of elements there is a sense of failure, and displeasure.⁵⁴

The small egg element which is a motif in my installation, unsettles our ability to make an aesthetic estimation of its amplitude, because of its contradictory connection to

⁵⁴ Mojca Küplen, *Beauty, Ugliness and the Free Play of Imagination*, vol. 17, *Studies in German Idealism* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2015)

mortality. Furthermore, in the installation, the bringing together of related, but separate instants present a reframed sublime that is unerringly domestic. That is the domestic environment requires a day-to-day managing of the mundane and prosaic, which only allows 'instants' of sublime connection. In explicating the sculpture's manifestation of a domestic sublime, this exegesis argues a particular relation to traditional theories of the sublime from the eighteenth century, which it critically reframes through domestic materiality and feminine experience. Barbara Freeman states that the feminine sublime situates experience, where;

the female subject's encounter with, and response to, an alterity that exceeds, limits and defines her.... the feminine sublime is neither a rhetorical model nor an aesthetic category but a domain of experience that resists categorization, in which the subject enters into relation with an otherness-social, aesthetic, political, ethical, erotic- that is excessive and unrepresentable.... not a strategy but rather a crisis in relation to language and representation that a certain subject undergoes.⁵⁵

The moment of finding the hair on the carpet and its affective paradox, explored and transfigured by death, is tied to its specific 'domain of experience'. Particular to the work, is the ordinariness of the things that cause the jolt—it is not about power over death or reason controlling it. The sculptures positioning is, as an understanding of a "domain of experience," which is domestic and feminine. Feminine alterity, in this sense, shares with the domestic materials the crisis of unsettled paradox.

The Australian painter, Liza McCosh, makes a case for a material sublime in her essay, 'The Sublime: Process and Mediation'. Her essay is included in the book 'Carnal Knowledge'. A book that brings together theorists and art practitioners, of 'New Materialisms', who look at reality and materiality as a contemporary study of relations occurring between physical matter and its cultural, natural and knowledge-based connections.⁵⁶ Estelle Barrett a theorist of New Materialism, and co-editor of 'Carnal Knowledge,' uses the key term 'aesthetic experience', to describe research-based art practices, using materiality, that combine "tacit experiential knowledge with explicit exact knowledge".⁵⁷ It is important to note the stress Barrett places on 'sense activity' in research practices grounded in 'tacit and personal knowledge'. McCosh's painting clearly relies on 'sense activity', and her essay discusses concerns

⁵⁵ Barbara Freeman, "The Feminine Sublime : Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction", Publisher: University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif. 1997.

⁵⁶ Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt Dr, ed. "Carnal Knowledge : Towards a 'New Materialism' through the Arts" (London : I.B. Tauris), 2013. McCosh's essay was included in this publication.

⁵⁷ Estelle Barrett, 'Experiential Learning in Practice as Research: Context, Method, Knowledge', *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, no. 2 (2007): 115.

regarding experiential knowledge, similar to those outlined in this thesis; these being material vibrancy, and the idea of material's co-contribution to lived experience. Ideas that are also components of Jane Bennett's theorizing of vibrant materiality. McCosh uses these concepts to support the notion of an integrated subject that has a shared encounter with 'things.' I too share McCosh's understanding that material co-construction is antithetical to a Kantian sublime, where the subjects' recourse to reason locates power with the thinking subject in a subject/object dichotomy. McCosh's point of view also uses Bennett's concept of 'things', posited as having qualities that can thwart, change, and govern the artistic process and meaning. McCosh's painting processes allow the paint to take control, similar to the poured effect that Bell used in his 'Darvaza' landscape. McCosh, however, makes abstract paintings and allows the paint to describe the form. She outlines this co-constructive process as an engagement with materiality that occludes the subject/object dichotomy. Instead, she posits a shared, co-creative interaction that is unsettled and unsettling, that in theory, collapses the traditional dichotomy.

However, there are strategic differences between McCosh's practice and my own. McCosh makes no direct connection to death in her works or writing. In setting out her version of the sublime, she described her painting process and focused on what she describes as the 'co-creative' action of the materials. She contends that feelings of elation and wonder constitute experiences both of art and the sublime. Furthermore, in art, if this experience is brought about by a co-creation with materials, it is a material sublime. Importantly, she suggests that co-creativity challenges the subject/object dichotomy of Kant's mathematical view of infinity. McCosh has based her approach on the development of the phenomenological viewpoint. She writes,

Painting and other forms of creative practice rely on the interaction of matter to produce new form. The process of the sublime results from this material interaction and is the vehicle through which new insights are revealed to the artist. This material perspective positions the creative process as significant in the formation of new knowledge.⁵⁸

Accordingly, McCosh posits that the material sublime results from material interaction - a view we both share. I would add to this by saying that the interaction is understood as co-constructive, as set out in the introduction. However, there are also differences between McCosh's conceptual and material positioning and my

⁵⁸ Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt Dr, ed. "Carnal Knowledge : Towards a 'new Materialism' through the Arts" (London : I.B. Tauris), 2013. McCosh's essay included in this publication, theorized a material sublime. 127.

own. The materials, 'things', gathered in my work, are physical objects that contribute unique poetic paradoxes of the domestic everyday life and mortality. Such as, the rotten towel, floated serenely, but set in rubbish bin form. This sculptural element expresses material paradoxes of attraction/ repulsion, dullness/ liveliness, the materials are both bound by function and freed by its loss. Nevertheless, as artists, McCosh and I both use processes where the materials have a degree of autonomy in their interaction with other materials. While my works are a 'creative practice', this does not consequently mark them out as speaking to the sublime. It is the layering in of poetic paradox of vibrant 'things' that materially marks this expression of mortality.

In this chapter, a theoretical framework has been argued, which supports the thesis's contention that the work's unique sculptural apprehension of mortality may contribute to the discussion of the sublime in art. It set out a conceptual underpinning, by firstly recognizing ideas relevant to this discussion, developed during the age of Enlightenment, with particular reference to Edmund Burke's treatise. However, these concepts of the sublime are balanced with a contemporary understanding of materiality and the domestic space. The domestic space, for this project, is aligned with feminine experience, responsibility and care. Thus, acknowledging the unique experiences and materiality's found on a semi-rural, homesite in New Zealand.

In discussion, the sculptures' specific poetic paradoxes of preserved materiality, are used to identify alternative and 'othered' differences in its presentation of the sublime. Both differences, from tradition and from contemporary works, by other artists. These material contradictions it is argued define the gap in knowledge for the work. Importantly, identifying a specific sense of 'nothing', which is finite and secular, grounded in the domestic site. It recognizes those traditional concepts that continue to resonate, such as pleasure/ displeasure and the incommensurability of reason and imagination when faced with an apprehension of mortality. Therefore, the conceptual framework supports the creative research project of 'this domestic sublime' as a contribution to the discussion of the sublime in art.

Chapter Two. Materiality for a Domestic Sublime

This chapter focuses on examining the physical materiality of the artwork produced during this thesis; specifically, the material experiments and materialities that developed and led to the sculptural forms and presentation. In this discussion of materiality, it is important to note, that the materials chosen for the sculptures were only noticed expressing poetic paradox after my mother's death. Death revealed the unexpected force of domestic debris. These materials, objects and 'things' should have remained in the background, as everyday rubbish, passive detritus. However, because of their connection to a death they were perceived as having active potential. My mother's hair, after her death, was a sparkling silver line, her hair and also rubbish, it was active and passive. A core concept of the sublime is paradox. A rose can be a weed, depending on its place in the garden. A rotten quince can be detritus, rich compost or a forceful element in a sculptural installation.

In the sculptural works', domestic debris is presented so that it expresses the 'materiality of this aesthetic experience', of the sublime.⁵⁹ Drawing on Kant's 'Critique of Judgment' (in which Kant looked at the differences between beauty and the sublime) Peter de Bolla, argues for the importance of the materiality of aesthetic experience. De Bolla suggests that by examining its materiality, art as a way of knowing becomes intelligible to us. The first line of inquiry is that of the affect of the artwork, as this is the material of aesthetic judgment, saying:⁶⁰

The particular quality of an encounter with art is our coming to understand what we cannot live, what is outside the domain of experience. Yet such encounters feel as if they open a terrain, give onto a clearing in which something like experience seems to happen. But not to us, not as part of a continuum of our senses of being, but through us, as if the work itself marks us, touches us. The materiality of this experience is clearly, in some sense, immaterial.⁶¹

In summary, this concept relates to those instants where materials, (such as rotted towel, hair, and plastic bag) present mortality, as an experience through us, that marks and touches us, but is, in some sense, immaterial. Using this understanding, the sculptural elements of this creative practice have the capacity to carry through the specific poetic paradox, a sense of 'nothing', which is immaterial. Affect, is the

⁵⁹ Peter De Bolla, 'Toward the Materiality of Aesthetic Experience', *Diacritics* 32, no. 1 (2002): 19–37.

⁶⁰ Ibid. De Bolla.

⁶¹ Ibid. De Bolla. 2002.

quality of these sculptures to emotionally and viscerally engage the viewer, with a sense of 'nothing.

My initial studio research looked into the combined affect of materials and 'things' that captured the poetic paradox of liveliness and sense of mortality. This chapter will outline the processes and thinking that developed in the light of these material experiments. In setting out the materials, I paid attention to material interactions that expressed contradiction, particularly with the resin.

Pictured below (Fig. 13), are examples from the earliest studio experiments. What should be noted in this image, is that the resin (hobbyist's casting resin) was already an important material. At this stage, it provided the qualities that allowed me to 'look at' the paradox of a domestic sublime. The aspect of the resin that I needed was its ability to be both transparent and to obscure. For instance, the material of the resin provided an important paradoxical quality. On one hand, it revealed itself in the process of appearing transparent, while on the other hand, it obscured 'nothing' by revealing the domestic debris. In addition to possessing these qualities of transparency (to reveal, and to obscure and conceal, simultaneously), the resin also brought material action that felt uncontrolled. This aspect of the resin's materiality was noted when its ability to change from fluid to solid was visibly recorded by the other materials. The vitality of the resin interacting with the debris and decay set mortality and liveliness in an unsettled paradox. Accordingly, the resin's qualities retained and contributed to the material relationship to death—the resin was perceived as active. For the resin to work, it needed to exhibit a co-constructive materiality.



Figure 13: Lundy, Alison. "Preserving Debris" 2016. Rotted fruit, hair, felt, bread, plastics, resin.

As Jane Bennett has suggested, objects that appear inert can also be perceived as having vibrant energy. On encountering rubbish in a gutter, she writes:

In this assemblage, objects appeared as things, that is as vivid entities not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (humans) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics.

This understanding that 'things', can express a vibrant energy is applied here. It is used to set out the relationship between the resin, and those instants where debris intimated a sense of 'nothing'. My response as an artist was to set these material instants of poetic paradox. As the contradictory experiences from home were delivered, because death was understood and expected to be final and passive. Then this assumption, of stillness, was shockingly challenged by active rubbish. So, the research looked for a combination of materials and processes that would embody action and passivity. The quality of resin - to deliver paradox - was noticed when walking through a department store. On the wall was a decorative panel for sale, that had been covered in resin. However, flaws in the casting and setting process made me aware of the resin as active, and this meant that its efficacy as a transparent surface failed. On noting its material contradiction, the research explored how best to use the resin's qualities with the domestic debris. The subsequent experiments involved observing and exploiting the materials' interaction and taking note of resultant paradoxes. Leading to the research methods, inviting and allowing flaws to occur during the setting process. For instance, the resin's qualities of transparency, smoothness, and shininess; were effected by specific reactive potential during polymerisation (setting temperature); which in turn, is effected by the moulds (material and form); and the interred debris. In this way, obscurity was indicated and contradicted, the resin was both there (failing to hide its action) and not there (transparent). As a consequence, the resin, in combination with the other materials, provided a range of poetic paradoxes. Its action brought contradiction, preservation and liveliness into the work. The resin was both transparent and yet clearly there.

Transparency implies something that is clear, obvious, and there to see. The research explored the material's ability to emulate those instants where 'things' both presented and obscured a sense of mortality. The material interaction needed to negotiate the contradictory aesthetic of presenting a sensed 'nothing' with 'things'. The early pieces (shown above in Fig. 13), show a material thinking process, as I experimented with the object and material combinations that delivered this unsettled paradox. I concentrated on solid 'thingness' of the resin, defined by the

outer form and the inner surfaces of the debris. It is interesting to note that the upright cylinder (Fig.13; centre-left above), that contains hair wrapped in builders-felt, allows the viewer to see the debris inside. However, it fails to contain the hair, and the cylindrical form appears too glass-like. Therefore, the resin, in this instance, maintains its functionality too well, and does not have the form of paradox that was needed.

From these experiments, knowledge was gained regarding how the materials functioning or failure to function created the contradictions of transparency/ obscurity and action/ passivity for the sculptural elements. These material paradoxes worked as a departure from tradition, and marks a difference to other artists' works, such as Hirst's 'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living' (1991), and Doris Salcedo's 'A Flor de Piel' (2014). The use of transparency in Hirst's work requires that the preserving material is not a point of paradox—the glass of the container, and the liquid medium that the shark is presented in, need to maintain purposiveness, their function. This is said, because when an early iteration of the installation failed to preserve the shark, the shark started to rot so the fluid became murky. Importantly, the work no longer inspired fear, or the terrible. This aspect is crucial, because for this work to enable its aspect of the sublime, the audience requires the shark to be as realistically alive as possible.⁶² If we become overly aware of the state of the container and the fluid, the shark stops menacing the viewer with unimaginable death. The shark needs to bring a sense of liveliness - it has to make the viewer imagine their own inaction, death. However, if the shark was alive in a tank, the requirements for the sharks well-being and the viewers health and safety would make the scenario too safe.

Transparency in Salcedo's work is a more difficult concept, as she deals with the torture and murder of young displaced peoples. In considering traumatic death in the installation seen above (Fig.13), Salcedo suspended rose petals in a solution, so that they remained in a state between living matter and decay. These were then sewn into a delicate shroud that was then placed on the gallery floor. Its skin like quality, and the folds created from decayed rose petals, similarly deal with the impossible connection between life and death. This shroud retains and implies the movement, softness and suppleness of skin that covers living flesh. However, unlike in my own work, Salcedo is not reflecting on the domestic space, as a place of the sublime, but a political environment. Obscurity and transparency are posed as paradox in her work in order to reflect on the missing bodies, presented here as a lively skin, without form trapped between life and death. In Salcedo's work, the process of suspension is implied, because the solution the rose petals have been

⁶² Luke White, "Damien Hirst's Shark: Nature, Capitalism and the Sublime", Publisher: Tate.

dipped in, is not included as a physical part of the work. The invisibility of the method of preservation suggests both the unseen politics of power that caused these deaths, and the young people whose bodies are now invisible and inactive. Conversely, I engage with the material paradoxes in an apprehension of death associated with family, on a known domestic site.

Bound up with the debris, the resin's shiny outer surface attracts and suggests clarity—inviting the audience in, it creates curiosity. Once the viewer is drawn into the work, they find that it does not sit as clearly, beautifully or usefully as they may have anticipated. The decayed matter becomes apparent. The work unsettles. The 'nothing' cannot be seen but is felt in the paradox created by the combination of materials. The test piece (shown below in figure 14) had at its centre a rotten quince, set in a small bowl. This image represents early experiments into how the material combinations of debris and resin explored affects of paradox. In addition, it can be seen that the combination of materials denies utility and future use. While the sculptural elements set in the once-fluid resin intimate vitality and movement, reason contradicts this. What happens is that although the materiality's paradoxes are clear, reason and imagination remain unsettled. In this case 'nothing' is presented and obscured by mundane 'things', not painterly effect.



Figure 14: Lundy, Alison. "Preserved Debris" (detail). 2016. Rotted quince, resin, metal bowl former.

Traditionally in art, as already suggested, representations of the sublime, painted nature as an obscure but powerful force. As seen in the painting discussed earlier, 'Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog,' by Friedrich. Another example can be found in the work by Joseph Mallord William Turner, 'Hannibal crossing the Alps,' 1812.^{63,64} The painterly effects of scumbling and dry brush techniques suggest turbulent mists and clouds, giving the encroaching storm an indeterminate mystery. The snowstorm obscures and overwhelms the characters in the painting, Nature in this aspect is an undefinable swirling mass. Both traditional form and this domestic sublime suggest an impending but obscure force that implies a sense of 'nothing.' However, in my

⁶³ Alison Smith, *The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner* (Tate, 2013), Tate, UK. Art Research Publications.

⁶⁴ "Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps", Joseph Mallord William Turner, Exhibited 1812', Tate, accessed 10 July 2018.

work the obscuring is not an effect of paint, but the affect and contradictory action of the physical materials and materiality's. What is shared is that we can never clearly ascertain or define this sensed 'nothing,' nor can we imagine what it is like to be 'nothing.'

Marc Quinn is a contemporary British artist who has worked with mortality and the sublime throughout his career. In 2015, he exhibited sculptures and painting/constructions (construction refers to artworks that combine aspects of painting and sculpture) under the title, 'The Toxic Sublime.'⁶⁵ Though we share a use of some toxic man-made materials in relation to nature, Quinn's work creates paradox by combining representations of nature with toxic urban materiality. He utilises painterly techniques, as well as contemporary processes of photography, and aspects of construction.⁶⁶ This brings duality into the work, as the two-dimensional perspectival depth, of the painting and photography, is juxtaposed with the object quality of the three-dimensional surfaces created by a metallic substructure. Quinn created paradoxes using large painted canvases stuck onto aluminium sheets. The paintings were begun by having a photographic image of a Caribbean beach printed onto canvas. Quinn applied synthetic and metallic spray paints to create a 'grungy' surface, that had London textures stamped into it. His obscuring in these images relied on an urban revisiting of a representational painterly sublime, however the sense of nature as all powerful is upended. Power is wielded in this case by man-made materials that corrupt our assumptions of powerful nature. Replaced in this instance with a dystopian image, of a ruined tropical paradise imposed on urban materiality, a contemporary mixture Quinn labelled a toxic sublime.

Quinn says, "I'm a city artist so I wanted to make an image of the sublime that was more urban, seen through the goggles of the environmental paradox that if you set off to see something, bit by bit your visit will ruin it. When people say we are going to destroy the planet: we aren't; we are going to destroy ourselves. The planet will find a new equilibrium."⁶⁷ Turner is an artist whose work Quinn admires; however, he believes that, "Art should reflect the time in which it is made," a position that I strongly agree with.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Simon Ings, "The Toxic Sublime: Marc Quinn on Our Relationship with Nature," *New Scientist*, 2015.

⁶⁶ "Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps", Joseph Mallord William Turner, Exhibited 1812', Tate, accessed 10 July 2018.

⁶⁷ Simon Ings. "The Toxic Sublime: Marc Quinn on Our Relationship with Nature," *New Scientist*, 2015.

⁶⁸ Simon Ings. 'The Toxic Sublime: Marc Quinn on Our Relationship with Nature', *New Scientist*, 2015.

Quinn uses colour and painterly techniques, that echo effects found in Turner's paintings, providing a link to tradition. However, he arrives at this point using spray paint, vibrant tropical colours, layered, sanded and scrapped back, into what Quinn describes as "kitchification."⁶⁹ It is man's effect on his environment, that is the obscure power Quinn wraps a sense of nothing in. He arrives at this by offsetting the painterly with the urban and metallic. Clarity and obscurity in this work operate quite differently, as he uses a three-dimensional toxic urban 'grunge' effect to obscure a two-dimensional tropical sunset. Mortality here is brokered by an environmental paradox, as he suggests through this work that our control of nature could lead to our demise. Quinn uses the imaginary perspectival space of the photograph/painting (nature) and the actual (reason) three-dimensional form of the urban site imprinted into the work to create paradox. A toxic sublime, similarly to this domestic sublime, brings the construct of the 'foreign,' into the fold of the known local environment. However, the scale of both the paintings and sculptures in the exhibition 'Toxic Sublime' remained within patriarchal tradition, outsized, and scaled up, thereby keeping Quinn's work within the conceptual boundaries defined by Burke.

As such, a point of difference for my work resides in its presentation, as an installation of separate and relatively small sculptural elements. This is what I would call a poignant force/without force. An approach that recognizes an 'othered' sublime experience, that is feminine in tone. This tone correlates to the apprehension of mortality found in the home and its environs. Where death breaks through to the subject in sharp visceral, material instants. Then vanishes as the routines, chores and familiar observances of the everyday require attention. Therefore, my installation presents those poetic paradoxical instants, in an art space, unobscured by the familiar routines of home. My thesis is that 'this othered domestic form' of experience, of separate poignant instants, is a valid sculptural contribution to the discussion of the sublime.

The materials' interaction does not allow one quality to establish a sense of unicity or power. This is because it is a gathering of separate material instants. Instead the paradoxes of the work maintain uncertain interactions. The 'randomizing tactic', where the resin and debris combines, is not controlled to the extent that the interaction is corralled to produce one effect.⁷⁰ As can be seen in Bell's painting,

⁶⁹ Simon Ings. 'The Toxic Sublime: Marc Quinn on Our Relationship with Nature', New Scientist, 2015.

⁷⁰ Jonathon Jones, "Julian Bell, Joseph Wright and Britain's Titian Triumph – the week in art", the Guardian. 2/3/2012.

where the flowing paint is controlled to produce the visual effect of lava or molten rock. Also, this controlled effect in the 'Darvaza' painting, relies on linear causality, not material interaction. Whereas in this project, the material interaction allows a material push and pull. This can be seen where the debris is not only cooked, but as it does, it has an effect on the resin.

In the early experiments for this body of work, I focused on the materials and how they responded to preservation within the hobbyist's casting-resin. By using quantities of resin above those specified and heat responsive moulds it created a volatile and unpredictable setting process. The resin reacted with the interred matter and the casting former, it cracked and discoloured. The outer former and the interred materials interacted and affected the resin (for example, see fig. 15 below). Moisture, grease, and oil were found to exude from the objects, as well as the filmy plastics in some cases. Fissures, cracks, pockets of air and discolouration also occurred in response to the heat and chemical bonding of the resin. Over a number of experiments, I used metal mixing bowls to see how the size of these containers effected the setting process. The result was that the metal containers amplified the heat generated by the resin, causing it to crack and discolour to greater degree. This, in turn, revealed the outer former's action in the process, as well as the resin's chemical response.

At this stage in the experimentation, what became apparent was that the outer former's vibrancy needed to be balanced. Higher temperatures caused the resin to become increasingly opaque, and fissured. The interred debris was obscured and therefore the material paradoxes were hidden by these extreme processes. This aspect of the research highlighted the importance of scale for the cast pieces, as well as bringing into focus the implications for any installation where the pieces range in size. The work's unsettlement relied on the 'things' co-producing the experience of mortality. My reference point for this was to reflect back on the material relations experienced within the domestic domain where banal pieces of matter were forceful and lively. As a sculptural material, resin operated as an interface that was simultaneously an integral part of the artwork (that preserved and randomised), and also a 'thing' in itself (that produced the paradoxical *material co-condition of this domestic sublime*).



Figure 15: Lundy, Alison. "Preserved Debris" (detail). 2016. Rotted bread, resin.

In connecting the sublime and materiality, Cornelia Parker, an English sculptor and installation artist, has similarly used domestic materials and debris throughout her career. In an essay co-authored by Luke White and Claire Pajackowska in the publication, 'The Sublime Now' the authors considered how the sublime was evoked in a series of her works.⁷¹ The essay, lists a number of paradoxes that Parker plays with by using domestic materials and mundane matter. In their discussion they identify something different to my approach in her treatment to the sublime, stating, "she defamiliarizes everyday objects by subjecting them to a cataclysmic transformation....and in one of Parker's most famous installations, *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*, (1991) a garden shed, and its contents were blown up..."⁷².

It is clear that '*Cold Dark Matter*', has a number of similarities in approach to my work, such as using domestic materials presented as a collection of multiple elements. There are crucial differences however: Parker intentionally puts the objects through an explosion, blowing them apart. This moment of change, where

⁷¹ Luke White Ph. D and Claire Pajackowska, *The Sublime Now* (Newcastle upon Tyne : Cambridge Scholars, 2009, 181-196.

⁷² Luke White and Claire Pajackowska, 'The Sublime in the Work of Cornelia Parker.', in *The Sublime Now.*, ed. Luke White and Claire Pajackowska (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 181-96.

she alters the object's form is not a change or loss of function brought about in relation to death. Instead, the effect of an explosion is fixed in Parker's installation, where she recreates and records a moment by suspending scattered materials on transparent nylon line, as if they are still moving outwards from a blast. Accordingly, Parker's work is transgressive, where it collapses the binary of power and powerlessness - the fractured flying shards of mundane material appear to continue to expand outwards, defying gravity. In contrast, in my works, rather than depicting one explosion outwards, the collected instants of debris become a series of poignant instants that are both attractive and repellent.

The framing for Parker's installation includes the title, a particular aspect her work, as this negotiates the materials contradiction of meaning. Providing a point of guided interaction for the viewer, 'Cold Dark Matter' ties the micro to the universe, and the domestic to the global, it conducts the audience approach. The fear here, is loss of the homely, a known haven of safety. However, there is also a wonder at its explosive, expansion. Parker's work expands outwards focusing on the infinite aspect of the materials potential. Fear in my work is the element in which the work holds to banal debris, containing its potential, presenting mortality. It is attractive and disturbing, focusing on the finite aspect of infinite 'nothing'.

A further example of an artist who uses aspects of domestic materiality to evoke the sublime is Gregory Crewdson. Crewdson is an American photographer, whose series of photographs titled the 'Twilight Series' has been described by Jasmine Benyamin, in an article for *Threshold* in 2001 as having the quality of the domestic sublime.⁷³ Tellingly, Benyamin summarises the discussion with the subheading, 'Gregory Crewdson's Gaze upon the Domestic Sublime'. The term 'gaze', for me, suggests the crux of the difference between our works: there is a voyeuristic element to his photographic series. It has the male artist/viewing subject looking into a tableau that he has constructed. The object/people within this world—part realist, part fictive—are isolated and strung out in suburban 'Lynch-like' myths, that Crewdson controls. The filmic quality of his photographs feels like an interrupted cinematic narrative, that drags the viewing eye around an overly focused surface of suburban detail. Future and past are held in the object details, while the constrained characters are sealed within the moment of the image. In this series of photographs, everything is controlled: the 'things', the set, the lighting and the focal depth. Crewdson's control contrasts with the domestic sublime of this project, where the things operate with vitality, and co-construct the paradoxes between domestic

⁷³ JASMINE BENYAMIN, '"STUFF": GREGORY CREWDSON'S GAZE UPON THE DOMESTIC SUBLIME', *Thresholds*, no. 23 (2001): 64–67.

environment, art and museum space. The difference between Crewdson's domestic sublime and this creative project is clarified by White and Pajackowski's discussion of the specific conditions of representability. White and Pajackowski discuss textual sublimity in the introduction to 'The Sublime Now':

If the sublime may derive from the encounter between an experience of the limits of representability, or what you describe as the 'sayable,' it is interesting to trace how these limits, boundaries, liminalities differ in different textual structures.... Each textual form has its own conditions of representability and therefore its own textual sublimity.⁷⁴

The textual sublimity of Crewdson's work is suburban, filmic, and focused by the lighting that he manipulates to suggest a twilight world. This is a representational suburban sublime, that relies on controlled processes (lighting, colour and focal depth), constructing a liminal image that isolates its people. Transformation in Crewdson's photographs is situated in a surreal and fictive in-between, where the narrative has halted. In my sculptural works, transformation relies on the material's vibrancy and the resin to set an oscillation and paradox between death and material vibrancy.

Synthetic resin is a material that has a transformative quality therefore it sets a condition of presentation (representation) for this sculptural work. That is to say, it can change from a liquid to a solid. This quality of altered state - a liquid to solid, going through chemical change - infers moments of lesser or greater stability. Therefore, resin became an appropriate material in this sculptural research project, as it retains a feeling for traces of this fluidity, inscribing an idea of movement into a static form: life to death, mortality to immortality; destabilising an understanding of mortality. This 'thing quality', vibrancy, embedded in the conditions of resin's being (the way that it sets and flows), unsettles the condition of the domestic detritus. So, presenting an 'unsettled setting', a transformative aesthetic approach to the sense limit of death.

This approach differs from Hirst's use of the preserving liquid used in his sculpture, 'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of someone Living' (1991), where it was required to imitate sea water as closely as possible. In contrast, I required the resin to be itself and reveal itself in action. In understanding this as a method—the process of acquiring 'thingness' is associated with an unsettled state, both conceptually and materially—there is an implication of movement that is contradictory: the sculpture is static, and mortality, at a basic level, is static as well. The vibrancy of the hair in relation to mortality, or the vitality of debris past utility,

⁷⁴ Luke White and Claire Pajackowska, 'The Sublime Now'. Newcastle upon Tyne : Cambridge Scholars, 2009. 7

applies a sense of perceived liveliness to 'things' that, with reason, we know should be still.

This ability to suggest both action and passivity, aligns with Bennetts' theory of vibrant 'things', set out in her essay, 'Thing Power and an Ecological Sublime'.^{75, 76} Here, the term 'thing-power' describes the things that 'exude into the scene a strange, inexplicable potency'.⁷⁷ Bennett concludes her description of 'thing-power' by alluding to 'the stubborn agency of matter that comes to the fore in the realm of what Julia Kristeva, using a more psychoanalytic vocabulary, called the 'object'.⁷⁸ This quote of Bennett's acknowledges a link between her theory of vibrant materiality and Kristeva's use of the psychoanalytic term, 'object'. I concur with Bennett's proposition, that vitality and agency expressed by domestic debris can be connected to ideas of the object. In both cases, movement is attributed to inanimate things. However, in this project's sculptural works, the action of moving from inanimate to animate is approached, but contradicted by the way the resin preserves. Suspending the work so that it oscillates, retains an unsettled relation to the object, being both attractive and repulsive, active and passive.

Kristeva's theory of abjection charts a disgusted and horrified relationship to death, through things which my experience did not settle on. My mother's hair was in turns, horrible, debris, and also indicative of love, light and vibrancy. The Kristevan object suggests a quality that is unswervingly disgusting. In her essay, 'Powers of Horror', in the chapter, 'The Improper/Unclean,' she begins with the description,

Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. The spasms and vomiting protect me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck.... When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk- harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail paring-I experience gagging.⁷⁹

This domestic sublime uses materials whose 'thing' quality is never wholly object. Here, the debris is raised up on plinths and preserved in resin presents the

⁷⁵ Luke White, Claire Pajakowska, 'The Sublime Now' Edited by Luke White and Claire Pajaczowska, Jane Bennett, Chapter 1. 'Thing Power and an Ecological Sublime'Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

⁷⁶ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.

⁷⁷Luke White, Claire Pajakowska, 'The Sublime Now' Edited by Luke White and Claire Pajaczowska, Jane Bennett, Chapter 1. 'Thing Power and an Ecological Sublime'Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. 25

⁷⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

⁷⁹ Ibid. Kristeva.

contradictory pleasure/unpleasure of attraction and repulsion that displaces and distances disgust. However, in accordance with ideas of the abject, the sculptural elements retain a quality that implies material liveliness after death. The origin of the term abject, comes from Latin, as the past participle of *abicere*, meaning 'to degrade', or 'lower'.⁸⁰ In this case, while the 'things' are debris and degraded, they are raised up on staging, and in interaction with the resin, they become attractive. The abject implies something that weights the line 'death infecting life'.⁸¹ A point of difference for this project's sculptural work as the materials are both vibrant and attractive, preserved and repulsive, is that the domestic sublime retains the paradoxical option of 'life infecting death'.

New Zealand artist, Peter Madden, similarly makes installations and sculptures using everyday objects. Madden uses imagery and symbolism associated with mortality. However, the vitality in Madden's work has different qualities from that expressed by the sculptural elements of this project. His work has similarities to Mark Quinn's discussed earlier, in which constructed contradictions between a two-dimensional photographic image and the three-dimensional sculpted form are used. Rather than the vitality of actual debris (which I have argued, exudes a liveliness having lost functionality), Madden's approach is to use illustrations released from a magazine narrative. He begins with collage and describes his installation/assemblages as sculptography.⁸² Like Quinn's constructions, they cross the boundary between painting, photography and sculpture by retaining elements of both two- and three-dimensionality. Madden's materials, though everyday are not unerringly domestic.

Madden's work references death, but the engagement is focused on the surreal, fleeting beauty of life. The layers of interaction in 'The flower that you hold in your hands was born today and already it is as old as you are', begins with collaged images from 'National Geographic'. These cut-out images of flowers, birds and butterflies offer an ironic reflection on how our connection to nature is achieved by visual colonisation (gaze). Nature, in this piece, is represented by collaged elements sourced from across the globe, found in a magazine that we leaf through while waiting at the dentist. Nature has already been fixed or preserved as an image; however, Madden frees the images from the magazine and creates a bouquet in a wooden cup. In doing this, he suggests surreal worlds. The vibrancy of domestic

⁸⁰ Abject vs Object - Grammarist', accessed 23 April 2016.

⁸¹ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

⁸² Madden at Pataka – EyeContact'.

debris is not a constitutive property of these assemblages, nor is a contradictory expression of powerlessness and awe sought in these works. These are not found objects that become vibrant 'things' in a relationship with mortality, but images of live animals and insects, turned animate to inanimate.

There is a delicacy and beauty inscribed with the painstaking haptic quality of the finely cut elements. The mastery shown in this control over the resulting surreal construction disallows a co-creative materiality, thing-power. Neither the multiplicity and oscillation of the feminine sublime, nor object infiltration, are invited into this work. The movement from representation to three-dimensional form has surreal charm and surprise. However, this work is not about an immediate apprehension of mortality. The work is playful even as it references concerns of ephemerality and disappearing flora and fauna. Madden spells this out fully in the title, 'The flower that you hold in your hands was born today and already it is as old as you are'.

There are similarities between Madden's and my practice, but the casting with resin is a difference. Of note, the shapes the resin is cast into, the outer forms, are also found on the home site. The use of these formers, moulds, is part of this project's process of double practice.

Resin, when used as a medium in art, is often used because the artist needs it to masquerade as another material or object. Material mimicry, or mimesis, is understood as making one material resemble another material or object. Resin enables mimesis because in fluid form, the resin takes on the shape of whatever it is poured into. My sculptural research however, as discussed so far, uses the resin's own quality of paradox - its thingness - without using it to mimic another material. For instance, in figure 16 below, there is clearly the shape of an egg, but it does not mimic an actual egg. The early casting forms for this work involved using eggs to achieve a shape. Other than that, the resin was left to interact with whatever debris was included. Like the hair, we are attracted and drawn in by what the forms might be. But then we are stopped because the 'thing' equivocates, and our



Figure 16: Lundy, Alison. "Preserved Debris". 2016. Egg forms.

expectations and assumptions of what it is, or should be, are questioned. Resin as a material preserves, but in the act of preserving, it ironically fails. It does not mimic, mirror or pretend to be another 'thing'.

This quality, to make a copy and to mimic, can be unpacked further by looking at mimesis. This is an idea that has been associated with aesthetics since the establishment of classical Greek philosophy. In my work, the resin's contemporary action is to deliver and maintain the layers of paradox. Originally, the term mimesis was applied to art that copied nature as closely as possible. This idea is contradicted in my work: the eggs are clearly not eggs. In his paper, 'Reason, Mimesis, and Self-Preservation in Adorno', published in 2016, Owen Hulatt explains how mimesis—as an aspect of this sculpture's materiality—is an area of critical difference in contemporary art works. In writing on mimesis, he suggests that:

In the latter days of Adorno's narrative account of mimesis, then, it has lost its central place in epistemology, and been largely relegated to an inverted, dialectically complex presence in the formal structure of artistic creation. Mimesis has almost entirely lost its original character of a death-drive urge to assimilate and merge with the consciousness's environment. Instead, mimesis now names the propensity of closed autonomous artistic work to obliquely name and critique the social structures external to that work.⁸³

Hulatt suggests that 'representation' has lost its direct connection to the 'death-drive', our desire to return to raw matter.⁸⁴ A drive Freud posited as innate and instinctive, it operates as a balance to the excitation of the pleasure principle. This drive is still present in art, but Hulatt suggests it is now approached indirectly. Of note, the materiality of these works, 'this domestic sublime', places its discussion within ontology. That is the 'nature of being', as a relation through materials to mortality. This creative project is not focussed by the epistemology of justified belief. Therefore, the work as a presentation of a connection to mortality, engages a balancing act between the 'death-drive', and pleasurable materiality.

Hulatt's account helps to unpack my work's material approach to 'nothing', its relation to passivity and the 'death-drive'. I would suggest that, although mimesis is contradicted in this work, the sense of mortality, the sublime, is tinged with this original drive. The outer form that the sculptural elements take is contradicted by the matter preserved inside. The resin egg that contains rotten food and a piece of perished balloon, combines birth and decay. The contradictory act of preserving

⁸³ Owen Hulatt, 'Reason, Mimesis, and Self-Preservation in Adorno', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 54, no. 1 (2016): 135–51

⁸⁴ Sigmund Freud and C. J. M. Hubback, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, International Psycho-Analytical Library: No. 4 (International psycho-analytical Press, 1922).

debris/ detritus, that is at turns lively and attractive, exposes the attraction of the death-drive. In the recourse to self-preservation however, the drive also repulses - a paradox presented in this project. The death drive is a drive towards an assimilation back into the environment, a desire to return to base matter. In this work it is of the home and shockingly prosaic and attractive. Preserved in hobbyist's resin it cannot dissolve, become base matter, which is what the drive requires. The drive is thwarted and invited. The resin itself, a man-made, toxic material, contradicts mimicry and representation, its transparency reveals the pathos and paradox of 'this domestic sublime'.

The contradictory quality of resin can be observed in the sculptural work of Rachel Whiteread. In her installation, 'Untitled (One Hundred Spaces)' (1995), Whiteread made one hundred casts of the spaces beneath assorted chairs. The viewer is made aware of, and simultaneously excluded from, a space that has become solid; its potential as a place for us is lost. In Whiteread's sculpture, the resin takes up space and denies us access. 'One Hundred Spaces' has material similarities with my work, but the affect is different. Whiteread, by denying us access to everyday spaces, makes us think about space in a way that we have not considered before—the feeling in these solid negative shapes is of spatial exclusion. Whiteread's resin is not cracked, and has been coloured by dyes that give these negative shapes an ethereal quality—they have nothing inside but their own solidity.

Transparency, as a component of this domestic sublime is intentionally flawed, marking the resin always visibly present. To encourage this characteristic, I experimented with the setting potential for the particular resin, and assessed the effect, both physically and aesthetically, on the interred materials.

Synthetic casting resin requires a monomer (a small molecular subunit) to become a polymer when a catalyst is added. This reaction, called polymerisation, produces the copolymer, acrylic glass. During this transformation, the molecular structure of the monomers joins together to become a polymer: the molecules move and realign, linked chains or groups of polymers are created producing a clear, solid resin. The speed in which this chemical reaction takes place causes the temperature of the resin to rise (the exothermic response). In addition, a by-product of gas is released. Polymerisation can also be referred to as the 'setting' of the product; while 'thermosetting' takes into account the temperature changes of the resin while it sets. In the development of my studio pieces, reaction times and the resin's thermosetting qualities create a point of departure and difference, from the work of other artists. This is because I actively exploited the resin's thermosetting potential, which is an inherent feature of the material. The ability of the resin to partially cook the objects and materials placed within it became an aspect of the work that I

anticipated as part of the process. Thus, I invited change during the process of 'preservation'.

The research also entailed noting which materials reacted in an obvious manner and those that did not. Following on, the decisions I made about individual pieces became dependent upon whether the material placed with the resin would be visibly altered by the thermosetting process. Some materials were cooked, while others, in particular, some thin plastics, partially disintegrated. To illustrate this point of 'denaturation/renaturing' in casting, when using a rubbish bin as a mould or 'former', a passer-by, thinking it was an actual rubbish bin, spat gum into it. The result was that the gum partially cooked, and retained aspects of its gumminess; but it was also altered to a point where it was caught in the act of becoming something else. This preserved moment then informed further studio experiments.

The particular resin that I use is not the usual resin used by other artists making large-scale pieces. By using a resin normally reserved for Marquette's and small works, a series of process-delivered differences were produced. This material distinction refines the mode of preservation, and contributes to the originality of this work. As mentioned, the first point of departure noted in my studio experimentation began with the thermodynamic potential of this hobbyists' resin, as it sets at a higher temperature. The resulting heat from the polymerisation of the resin effected and affected the combined materials, as well as controlling how I, as the artist, could interact with it. I was only able to pour small quantities of resin at a time, as the heat was cumulative and higher temperatures were dangerous. Consequently, it could take a day or more to complete a pour, and the reaction of the objects and materials during the pour was specific to this method. For instance, the objects contained in the resin responded to each pour: the level and heat of the liquid resin caused them to react to each additional layer of resin. This marked the work with a visible record of an unsettled process, as well as being a preserved instance - again bringing an unsettled paradox into the installation. The specific properties of the polymerisation of the resin were that it remained fluid for longer, retained air pockets, and captured movement. In this way, the natural properties of resin were revealed, rather than concealed. The perception of weight and time, as the resin was set in stages, affects assumptions of the resin's ability to preserve. Due to the longer setting time for the larger pieces, the floating and weight-related responses of materials became a point of difference for the work. Indeed, for the large-scale pieces, I was able to exploit these effects of cracking and discolouration. When creating the earlier pieces, I followed guidelines for the material. I realised that these were based on a requirement for the resin to look like glass—to mimic another material. By manipulating the polymerisation process of the resin, I was able to introduce flaws

to the resin. This lack of 'perfection' meant that the material could state its presence, on close looking, it can be seen that it is not glass.

In discussion, this chapter has focussed on the materials ability to co-produce poetic paradoxes that intimate an apprehension of mortality. Particular consideration has been given to the qualities and processes that result from using synthetic resin. As its use, to preserve the domestic debris, also allows its transparency to reveal and apply additional layers of paradox. The layers of paradox an aspect of the projects double practice, is a practice linked to the feminine sublime. The process of polymerization, setting, with its 'randomizing effects' is outlined as another point of difference for the work. Where the debris, due to the casting process, interacts and mingles, expressing active potential, even though held and set in resin. This potential, for unsettlement, is discussed in the light of the sculptural elements heightened textural and viscerally charged surfaces. Surfaces, which excite the sense of touch, a sense historically associated with the feminine and the base. This aspect of the work aligns with experiences of the domestic space, of touch and care. In addition, it is argued that the small size of the many pieces, gathered in the installation, present a quality of 'this domestic sublime'. A quality where the experience of the fear and unknowability of mortality, presents itself in sharp instants of material paradox. Instants, which then get subsumed beneath the everyday routine, until the next one comes along. The works provoke the bounds of tradition by presenting a material alterity that allows the small, the smooth, and the shiny to be forceful. It poses the experience of 'this domestic sublime', as a group of related, and poignant material instants that together negotiate an experience of mortality.

Chapter 3: Mortality

One cannot hold a discourse on the work of mourning without taking part in it, without announcing or partaking in [se faire part de] death, and first of all in one's own death.⁸⁵



Figure 17: Lundy, Alison. "Preserved Debris" (detail). 2017. Rotted towel, resin.

This chapter focuses on the experience and understanding of the apprehension of mortality. It looks at how the larger sculptural pieces, exhibited in the installation,

addressed this apprehension. The steps taken in the casting process guide the discussion in this chapter, as it negotiates the notion of mortality within 'this domestic sublime'.

The affect of domestic ecology and materiality of my experience as expressed in my artworks was unlike any other I had seen that dealt with mortality. Affect in the context of this work is understood as the instants of intensity, where a reaction is experienced in or on the body at the level of matter, domestic matter.⁸⁶ In addressing and researching the affect of these material led paradoxes, it is important to note that the death was of someone who was close.

At the beginning of this chapter, the quote from Derrida locates the sense of our own mortality with the act of mourning for someone.⁸⁷ This perspective is followed in the installation and clarifies the differences between this work and that of other relevant artists. It explores the way that attraction and repulsion are felt when mortality is experienced through someone that shared one's home environment. I might describe myself as being attracted to death in this case, in the hope that I might preserve something of the loved one; but also repulsed by the prospect of my own inevitable death. Instead of finding a preservable memory of my mother, I encountered the unsettled vibrancy of the debris. Initially, I did not acknowledge that the sculptures referred to death until these larger sculptures had been made, at least not to anyone but myself. Therefore, they present a point in the research project where I accepted that death was an aspect of the work, and that this paradoxically, was achieved through what I have described as familiar, vibrant materials.

In contrast to my works connection to mortality, the installations of Damian Hirst and Mat Collishaw referred to in this chapter, present death via the foreign, i.e., Hirst's shark or the unknown person in Collishaw's photograph. A difference, I suggest, that is materially expressed by their work. In both cases, death is foreign, othered, but the audience is invited to get close. Both Hirst and Collishaw use this quality of the unknown to heighten and exaggerate the shock affect, so that the encounter with mortality is delivered through what we might term 'the fear of the foreign'. I do not take this approach.

My concern for the ordinary materials, which speak to this domestic sense of nothing, was not as an intense shock. Instead, I experienced a poignant anxiety, where the 'force/ without force' of this feeling was fractured by the many instants and ordinariness of the things. Poignant here, specifically refers to the sharpness of

affect that the detritus expresses. The difference here, is that in this personal mourning, in wanting to 'hold', keep and preserve that person, we see our own death and pull back: we are attracted and repelled; and end up holding 'nothing'.

Two artists, who have engaged with this aspect of taboo in relation to death of a loved one, are the French artist, Sophie Calle,⁸⁸ and the New Zealand artist, Anne Noble.⁸⁹ Both use images of a dying or recently deceased parent to engage with the sense of absence, mourning and loss. The installation, 'Pas pu Saisir la Mort' (2006) by Calle, was presented as a film of her mother dying. This film invited the viewer to follow the moment where her mother passed from life to death. In being caught in this impossible moment, the audience experiences a vicarious passage towards death. However, as a film and a two-dimensional image, we are also aware that it is a document of a past event. In addition, as a double negative, it imbues the work with a sense of positivity, even as it works through the loss.

This different kind of paradox in Calle's work reveals the material difference that this project is exploring. The paradox of Calle's film installation is constructed by the materiality of the film: its recording in real time of the death, then looping the recorded death to play over again. The body caught between living and dying. As 'things', my sculptures present a sense of 'nothing' without an identifiable body. This project focuses on domestic materialities that invoke a contradictory sense of 'nothing', rather than specific photographic images which inherently record loss, because the recorded moment is always past. As part of 'Pas pu Saisir la Mort', other material objects were displayed, for example, Calle's mother's diaries. These added a performative element which, though not ever bringing back the lost one, still hold some evidence of her voice. In contrast, the co-constructive affective quality of my project's materiality reveals an unsettled 'nothing', where the body doesn't have a voice, but 'things' do.

Anne Noble photographed her father's body, laid out at home, on his bed in a series of black and white photographs. These still images are not about the moment between life and death, but about an act of mourning that places memory within the heart of the home. They record both the domestic environment, interiority and surrounds, and is quintessentially 'kiwi' - memory and identity are romantically bound within this work. Not fearful or sublime, but tender, a closely observed familial tribute to her father. Beautiful also, in the sense that these images do not bring an affective feeling of pleasure in displeasure. Neither of these works by Noble or Calle are intensely shocking. What is shared between their work and mine is a sense of

mortality that arises from a relationship that is close, and from the domestic environment. The differences for this project, begin because it is an installation, there is no recorded body, but instead three dimensional 'things.

Pictured below in figure 18, is the first large sculpture that was cast, combining two different formers: the rubbish bin and flat-pack box. Both the rubbish bin and the flat-pack are places which are used to contain and hold other materials. In this work, the objects and materials cast within the resin were gathered as I walked from the wash house to the garden. The plastic bags were retrieved from under the sink; the t-shirt, rugby ball and basketball were from beneath the hedge; and the clay was from the garage. These objects then sat in the studio, alongside one another. The sculptural elements gathered together displayed a series of material paradoxes linked by the domestic space and death. This piece explored the processes of material combination, and the ability of the materials to express an airless prospect. This piece was not included in the final installation.



Figure 18: Lundy, Alison. The first large piece caste combining two moulds. 2016. Plastic, clothing, clay, toys.

Standing back, the contrasting tactile and viscerally engaging surfaces invite curiosity, drawing the eye into and across the sculptural elements. Like those instants at home where the materials' vibrancy caught my eye. However, on moving closer to the piece, it can be ascertained that the former, mould was a bin, and that the

materials are used and useless—they attract and repel. By using the two different containers, I explored the potential of linked, but distinctive, exterior forms. In relation to death, this equated to the feeling where 'things', having lost their utility, revealed poetic characteristics. The materials express their active potential differently. As the plastic bag that contains rotting bulbs is pulled out from under the shelf and opened it is both containing and releasing the mush, it has tactile and olfactory potential. In the work, this potential is perceived through subtle synesthetic cues, even though the pieces are preserved. Synaesthesia is the ability we have to perceive simultaneously what a surface feels like, or what something smells like through the sense of sight. Therefore, I explored this in the larger pieces, by combining two moulds together. The materials are held in different forms at the same time. In the final installation this allowed the work to simultaneously reflect a range of energies and intensities, but always mediated by the move to preserve those instants.

Crucially, the objects that made the outer surface, the rubbish bin and flat pack, were destroyed in the act of casting (they were a subtractive element). What is left, is the transparent resin, shaped by these objects. The physical casting process required thinking in a series of steps, however the work's inherent contradictions stop the layers from being read as a linear narrative. Therefore, this first layer, step in the process of casting, is defined by its loss. This surface was also breached and disrupted by the things held within the resin. As the 'things' breach the surface, the debris affectively unsettles the expectation of preservation, with a visceral and textural re-engagement in the space. The basketball, rugby ball, plastic bags, clay, and cotton t-shirt can all be seen, both within and without the resin. Akin to that instant when, mowing the lawn, they were seen under the hedge as discarded toys, given to my sons by their grandparents. In the sculpture, they threaten to burst back into life, with their unsettled vibrancy. The debris breaks through the surface, but in places is coated with a thin veneer of resin. As Burke suggested, in the sublime instance, we also step back from the edge that we encounter. This thin, resin veneer allows the 'pleasure of displeasure', as a stepping back, it appears to protect us from mortality, 'nothing'.

Hirst's shark installation, 'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living' (1991), also engages the experience of the pleasure of displeasure. However, we use the outer layer or surfaces of the work to engage this feeling differently. The outer layer of Hirst's installation, the minimalist glass vitrine, safely allows the audience to imagine being inside the installation, with death, the shark. What is shared is the invitation, for the inquisitive, curious, gaze used for observing

specimens in a jar.⁹⁰ The element in Hirst's work, the engineered, metal and glass box, works as an 'art quote' with minimalist and post-modernist antecedents. Such as Donald Judd, and later Jeff Koons.^{91, 92} As well as a reference to the way museum collections began. In simple terms, it negotiates these links from the cabinet of curiosities to post-modernism via the minimalist glass box.

In contrast, Mat Collishaw's large photograph '*Bullet Hole*', 1988, an image of a wound, is presented in a series of light boxes, on the wall. The light box is a format linked to viewing proofs in photography.⁹³ A shared interest between us, I would suggest, is that Collishaw preserves an image of a moment passed death. Photography uses chemicals to fix a past moment in time—a now dead moment. Framed within fifteen rectangular light boxes, they are both object and image, each fragment is its own element. This fragmentation of a single image is an aesthetic device that breaks the reading of the photograph from a distance. By fragmenting the image, an attraction/repulsion effect is set-up from afar, and curiosity pulls the viewer into a shocking encounter.

Collishaw and I both use multiple elements, however, the works deliver the fragmentation of experience differently. Both disrupt the viewer's initial perception by presenting a collection of separate elements. However, my work brought together multiple 'things', and set many instants within the resin. The affect and response specifically tied to the experiences of materiality at home, and the death of a loved one. The fragmentary paradox of the 'things' is brought about by combining loss (the lost outer former and a loss of utility) with finding a vibrant 'thing'. Collishaw divides a small, single photograph into an image that measures over three metres by two metres. His action cuts up one small image (one object) to disrupt the reading of the work. An image of a wound caused by a gunshot through a skull. Collishaw has no connection to the person who died because of this wound. The contradiction that he is playing with, is the privacy of this nameless person's death violated by the shocking public presentation of their wound, a wound that from a distance looks like a bloody orifice. Whereas, I combine the poetic paradox of things to express the fragmented nature of mortality mediated by familiar materials at home.

This chapter began with a quote by the philosopher, Jacques Derrida, in 1993. He was speaking at a conference in memory of Louis Marin, a philosopher and writer. Derrida honours his friend and elaborates on how Marin postulated a sense

of 'nothing' as it might be felt and thought in mourning. The term 'force' is used to describe the kind of power that operates in mourning, where the artwork stands for mortality sans body. Derrida suggests, that in the work of mourning for another, we also encounter our own death. Marin was a friend and colleague of Derrida's, who wrote on art history and the sublime, particularly on the sublime in the paintings of Poussin. Derrida elaborates:

For this force owes itself not to be. It owes it to itself not to be a being. It must thus now be on intimate terms with what is not force, with its own opposite, with the "without-force," a domestic and paradoxically necessary commerce being established between them. The greatest force is to be seen in the infinite renunciation of force, in the absolute interruption of force by the without-force. Death or rather mourning, the mourning of the absolute of force: that is the name, or one of the names, of this affect that unites force to be without-force, thereby relating the manifestation of force, as image, to the being without force of that which it manifests or lets be seen, right before our very eyes and according to our mourning.⁹⁴

As the resin indicated its work and force in the sculptural process, the destroyed and lost moulds/formers also reveal their work. The resin is shaped by the mould, and the mould has to be forced into pieces for the work to appear. The resin's solidity contradicts the ephemeral nature and fragility of debris. This resin layer equates to the instant where materials, post-death, proffered the possibility of really apprehending death, only to encounter a sense of 'nothing'.

The force of mortality and mourning expressed by the work for this project is negotiated by the 'without force' of preserved domestic debris. This particular affective poetic paradox, of preserved domestic debris posits 'this domestic sublime' because the materiality's co-contribute to an experience of mortality from a home. In this case, it is not the 'power' associated with patriarchal and traditional concepts that requires an 'othered' powerlessness. Where I use 'force' in its place, the niche that my work finds for itself, combined with its without-force, marks the sculptures' potential to present active/ passive materiality's of gathered poignant instants.

In Hirst's and Collishaw's artwork, the layer of preservation (formaldehyde in the first case and photographic chemicals and processes in the latter) does not explicitly reveal its' working. In contrast, for this project, the resin is obvious and its action obvious. The layer of preservation in my work, as an aspect of its domestic sublime, is revealed through the discolouration, cracking, and material qualities that emerged when the resin was pushed to its limits of temperature and quantity.

Further analysis of how the formaldehyde in Hirst's shark tank mimics sea water helped me to understand how the sense of mortality worked. In Hirst's installation, it was important that the shark appeared as life-like and terrifying as the tank would allow. For death to be 'impossible in the mind of someone living', the shark needed to appear alive, and stay in our imaginations for as long as possible. When the first iteration of this installation started to deteriorate, the work was considered to have lost its efficacy, so it had to be scrapped and re-made. When the shark deteriorated, the formaldehyde became less clear and the shark began to sag on its strings—losing its power and fearful aspect. For the shark to embody death, it needed to retain a form of menace, recognisable enough to instil the terror of imminent death. The form of menace that I worked towards in my sculpture uses the familiar, rather than unfamiliar. Using Derrida's quote, it is death—becoming 'nothing'—that is presented by the liveliness of the materials from the domestic domain. It is already around us, a part of, and in, the fabric of everyday life; becoming 'nothing' is already here. This prospect of menace may be unpacked further by referring back to the discussion on pleasure and displeasure. Burke posited that pleasure in the sublime arises as the enjoyment of terror, that is, the enjoyment of being close to death, but not too close.

This sculptural project does not represent Nature as overwhelming. Instead nature here is presented by bits of organic debris, such as plant or food matter. The resin being a man-made layer setting this instant. Together, the man-made and the natural elements pose a poetic paradox. This clarified my understanding of how nature and death combined on this site and in my work. Rather than using one unified powerful form like the shark to express layers of meaning, this project works with the force/ without force of many pieces of homely debris. An approach associated with the theories of new materiality and the feminine sublime rather than post-modernism. This link is focused by the materials applying layers of paradox, a feminist double practice. So, not language driven by a layering of signification. Instead this domestic sublime apprehends mortality through a material lens not that of signs.

Figure 19 below, shows the second of the larger sculptures and looks at the sculpture's ability to embody the paradox of presenting a sense of mortality. To meet the proposition, it was found that the preserved and discarded materials worked best if they broke the surface, or threatened to break the surface. In 'Preserved Debris' (2017), I incorporated a rotted towel found under the hedge, where it had been blown and lain for some time. When I first saw it from a distance, it was lying in a sodden heap in the shadows, it looked like something sleeping. As I picked it up, disturbed it so to speak, one end came apart and I realised I was holding the towel

my parents had used to dry the dog's feet. As it fell apart, the connection that it held to real actions and conversations unravelled in my hands. The materials action obscured my parents. We can only approach the reality of death from living in the world. As Derrida suggests, we connect with our own mortality, through the death and mourning of a loved one.



Figure 19: Lundy, Alison. 2017. Rotted towel, resin. (detail)

The unsettled vibrancy of the debris, the rotted towel, co-constructs the paradox of the withheld real knowledge of death, the unrepresentable real 'nothing' of the domestic sublime. After my mother's death, as much as the unusable scraps of rotted towel connected me to mortality, I experienced this because I am alive.

Using multiple pieces, that are spread out in a series of separate elements, is similar in approach, as already discussed, to some of Cornelia Parker's installations. This can be seen from her early work, 'Cold, Dark Matter' (1991),⁹⁵ to her more recent

work, 'Perpetual Canon' (2004).⁹⁶ A difference can be found in the ways the material is contained: both of our works contrast the powerful simple form of Hirst's shark. Parker explodes or destroys objects so that they become potential matter and aren't defined by their function. When she blew up a garden shed and its contents, the fragments spread outwards and expand as potential, escaping out into the environment, the universe, beyond the small world. They expand away from the audience, the pieces are not directly linked to personal loss, but to an audience's feelings of insignificance and transience in a vast expanding universe. This sense of 'nothing' is unified by the pieces being clearly related, having gone through the same process of explosion.

The containment in resin that my sculpture offers, presents small finite possibilities of nothing, rather than an expansion, out into universes, or multiverses. In her work, Parker presents the pieces of the exploded garden shed, plus its contents, hung on invisible thread from the gallery ceiling, suspended so that the pieces are radiating outwards, the individual bits appear to be flying freely. The pieces of debris in my work are combined as resin elements and remain in contact with the ground through the domestic plinths they are shown on. Parker organised for a shed to be blown up by the army. This destructive step in the process is then recomposed into a resurrection. As she herself, has said, 'I resurrect things that have been killed off'.⁹⁷

Comparing the processes of Parker highlights a number of differences. First, I do not destroy the domestic objects so that they become things. I encounter things that have lost their utility, but retain a relation to mortality which sets them, post-death, as still lively. The sculpture pictured above (fig. 19), holds and contextualises the vibrant towel pieces within the resin and former. This material reflection on the quality of 'nothing' acknowledges finite subjective perceptions, even though I am aware of the vibrant material's infinite dance. Finite perception means never truly ascertaining/knowing the qualities of the materials or mortality. This difference also reveals how the approach to the objects' loss of utility is also a point of distinction. Parker is engaged in the process of changing the material so that it loses utility. She runs over silver teapots and musical instruments, gets the shed blown up, and stretches silver teaspoons. Conversely, I encounter things that having already lost their utility, are caught between life and mortality in an anxious instant of unknowability that I try to preserve. Parker sets the materials 'free'. I address the apprehension of death a relation that we, as co-constructive subjects, have by holding the debris in resin.

Parker's work uses light within the exhibition space to cast shadows that call attention to the sculpture's origins of the real, ordinary and every-day. In 'Cold, Dark Matter', the shadows enhance the free flying, resurrected chaos of the material. In my preserved towel piece, the subtle shadows contradict the solid materiality of the sculptures. The indistinct and indefinite shadows are free in a way the 'things' are not. Parker has stated, 'I resurrect things that have been killed off. My work is all about the potential of materials – even when it looks like they've lost all possibilities'.⁹⁸ This approach has Parker putting the objects through a destructive process, blowing them up or crushing them. In my work, the destructive process is paradoxically the point where I also preserve the 'things'.

Parker pushes her work towards a transcendental sublime, she kills off the domestic materials' utility, so that the work can transcend upwards, outwards, towards some other imagined potential. In my domestic sublime, the debris does not transcend, rather, it is held in a paradoxical relation to art, the home and the subject. Its functionality was already lost in relation to a death; its vibrancy emerged at that point. My perception of the materials changed through my mourning, which I attempt to 'hold' (preserve). In so doing co-construct a relationship to 'nothing' with the debris. The towel sculpture above, both lively and preserved, presents the poetic paradox of this co-constructive instant, that approaches an awareness of mortality.⁹⁹

The New Zealand artist, Peter Madden (discussed earlier), uses domestic objects to reflect upon our understanding of mortality. Madden, however, uses one element to support the smaller cut-out pieces, and this relationship to one object gives a sense of purpose and unity to the sculpture. In 'The flower that you hold in your hands was born today and already it is as old as you are' (2016), the wooden cup holds the bouquet of collaged elements, and the floral, plant-like positioning on stalks repeats a trope that the audience can understand. There is not paradox, but a connection between the images of natural plants, birds and insects and the three-dimensional objects. Madden pulls the surrealist threads together based on a current interest in the environment; and allows the cup, the branches and the collaged pieces to retain and reflect normal use. The cup or vase still holds a symbolic plant, the branches are still branch-like, and the collaged butterflies, flowers and birds are supported by the branches.

What is being considered here, is the way texture and a sense of touch are brought into the work, in relation to mourning and mortality. Madden's work does

not play with the paradox of touching death—the sculpture's visual attraction and physical materiality does not have a surface that is experienced as tangibly repulsive. In contrast, fig. 20, below reveals a surface that has strong visceral qualities that, connected to death and mourning, call the sense of touch into the work. Reason and imagination are held in an incommensurable position. On the other hand, it would be quite easy to imagine touching Madden's collaged elements without repulsion. The fragility literally transposes an ecological understanding that nature is delicate. The mourning in Madden's work is for nature; it does not insinuate the viewer's concern for their own death, but points to our disconnection from nature. Conversely, the sense of touch invited by the physical materiality of my works, made in support of a domestic sublime, repulses and attracts by threatening to connect us with our own mortality.



Figure 20: Lundy, Alison. Detail- 2016. Plastic, clothing, clay, resin

In the images of my larger sculptures, the works' aspect of airlessness, linked to mortality, can be seen. The plastic bags, rotted towel, rugby ball and basketball are deflated or set so that they cannot expand, like lungs that cannot move. This quality of the work, to express airlessness, arises from setting the 'things' with crumpled and collapsed surfaces. In thinking through this aspect of the sculpture, Jeff Koons's 'Basketball and Tank' (1985)¹⁰⁰ in which basket balls are suspended in a tank of water offers both contrast and similarity. Having seen this work, I was aware of its connection to breathing and life. It is through this connection, I believe, that the work presents the sublime. However, I suggest Koons's sculpture invokes the transcendental sublime, using layered significations associated with post-modernism. Where meaning is arrived at through a series of significations that

remove the original object, the basketball from its air is lost, the balls sink, and then are re-floated. The tank, like Hirst's, references the actual use. In this case, the floating basketballs now indicate the ephemerality of life. His sculpture simply and beautifully floats basketballs in a saline solution; as the simplicity of minimalist art, then subverts this by using the ubiquity of the pop cultural associations of the basketballs.

Koons's version of the transcendental, I suggest, is related to the Kantian sublime: the subject grapples with an awareness of the infinite, the horizon and the brevity of life, presented by an air-filled ball. This means that as reason makes explicable the basic facts of the sculpture, air makes the balls float in water; the audience is also aware of the connection between breath, air and life. Beautiful and banal, the sculpture employs paradox and crucially, the horizontal line of the surface of the water.

In 'Preserved Debris' (2016), the basketball, plastic bags and towel are all deflated. The connection to breath is shared with Koons. However, a paradox is constructed by a crumpled lung, and mortality is contradicted by the materials' preserved poetic vitality. The paradox in preserving deflated lungs, as well as their failure to function as objects of play, is a layered set of contradictions. By allowing the lung objects to sit outside of the resin, their fragility and lost potential to breathe is visceral, and the surfaces become tactile. This sensual connection to mortality emphasises the abject shadow that informs this domestic sublime. The weight and scale of the lower block of resin does not allow the connected former and material to fly free. The sculpture does not use this link to transcendence. Instead, the work is grounded by its materiality in the domestic domain, offering mortality beside us.

Jeff Koons specifically mentions both death and breath in relation to his early Basketball works. I refer only to his works that balance the basketballs between air and water. Koons suggests that the basketballs in this series, where they float between water and air, are based on 'the ultimate state of being'¹⁰¹, with particular relation to breath. The basketballs are idealised in a way that the objects in my works are not. Koons's use of real water to float the objects allows that over time, they always sink; he therefore suggests they are pure, but not permanent. This brings associations of manifest impermanence and frail humanity. He has stated that it is 'probably for the purity of [the basketball], that it's inflatable, it relates to our human experience... to be alive we have to breathe. If the ball would be deflated, it would be a symbol of death. But it's inflated, so it's a symbol of life' (The artist cited in New York, Museum of Contemporary Galleries: 1988, Now, 2011, online audio transcript).

In my sculptures, equilibrium is paradoxical. It is achieved as the resin sets, preserving an imposed balance that holds the things as lively, but without air. Purity, also, is not an aspect of this domestic sublime: it is messy and purposefully adulterated, degraded in the mix. This adds to its paradox, as 'sublimar'; raised up upon plinths within a gallery, it maintains its unsettled character.

In 'Preserved Debris' (2017), even though the fragments of debris appear lively, they are held in the resin; they remain anaerobic and contained. A crucial aspect of this domestic sublime is that it remains held, anxious, unsettled and many. As the third sculpture in this series, this work uses a rotten apple, a plastic bag and gold dust found in the garage combining organic and inorganic toxic matter with a very small amount of precious metal. The gold dust had been in a trunk in the garage with a range of other pigments. Set aside by my parents to be used on projects at a later date and never returned to. This idea of potential after death was achieved



Figure 21: Lundy, Alison, detail-. 2017. Rotten apple, plastic, gold dust, resin

by using the pigments in a number of the castings. Its value, once I had combined it with the other materials, added to the contrast between materials—rather than 'gilding the lily', I 'gilded the compost'. Positioned so that the pieces of apple sludge and dust flowed from the bin to the plastic flat pack.

As the works developed, this last piece in the series contained the finest particles and least amount of debris. The increased size, using moulds that would normally be unsuitable for 'hobbyists' resin, allowed the work to engage a varied and expanded visual rhythm.

In the process of constructing these larger works, two moulds were used and combined, the upright piece was cast first. For the particles to appear to escape from one form to the other, the casting process worked against common-sense. The flat pack former with the dissolving apple, was cast before the rubbish bin form, which held the mass of the remaining fruit. Caught in the resin, this contradictory process, of combining end and beginning, so that the end came first clarified my approach to the domestic sublime. As a relation to mortality, a sense of 'nothing', it bound the experience within the parameters of a material co-construction, where the end is woven into the work from the beginning.

The artists I have referred to so far have used a range of forms, from the multiple to the singular. In the case of Cornelia Parker's work, multiple objects were all treated with the same process, so that though many, they were equally effected. The domestic sublime, presented in this case, does not rest within one simplified form or in related forms subjected to the same process of destruction. Instead, our access to a 'presentation of the unrepresentable' is gained through a transparent medium that retains the differences. With regard to 'Preserved Debris', its collection of gold dust, plastic bag and rotten apple, all found at home, hold disparate things within the resin. The materials are still vibrant after decay and loss of utility, with the end and beginning held in the resin. Therefore, unsettling the assumed linear narrative structure of; birth, life, death and the return to dull matter.

The tradition of vanitas painting was one that used symbolism of still-life to represent a stage of the linear narrative, where life turns towards death. Two artists, who have made works, using symbolism associated with nature morte, and the genre of Vanitas painting are the New Zealand Maori artist, Fiona Pardington, and the English artist, Sam Taylor-Johnson. Both use either photography or film to capture objects and materials on the cusp of decay. Pardington's still life, 'Still Life with Albatross Feathers with Pounamu and Coral Hearts, Ripiro Beach' (2014), will be discussed here. It is important to consider that for Maori, the concept of 'nothingness' is tied to everything. In 2016, Nathan Pohio, an assistant curator at

Christchurch Art Gallery, addressed the form of 'nothingness' in Pardington's work by contextualising it within the history and traditions of Maori culture. Pohio wrote:

For Māori nothingness is everything. Nothingness within the Māori world view is within the many fields of Te Po – the void, the night, the place without light, but also the place where once light did enter and creation, or life, began. With this in mind the potency Pardington invested in the photographic moment saw two universes merge, and something of the European art world that so many urban Māori artists grew up in was met by something that led her towards her Kāi Tahu heritage, which had until then been quietly kept in the background.¹⁰²

The image that Pohio discusses was an early work of Pardington's from the 1990s. What he does in this explanation is set out an understanding of how mortality and a sense of 'nothingness' has been developed in her photographic images. There is a synthesis of Maori values, Tikanga, with an urban, European art world. This synthesis also acknowledges an understanding of 'nothingness', engaging cultural and spiritual associations that are uniquely Maori. The spiritual and material complexity of Pardington's work combines a living history and belief in the power of taonga (highly valued objects or natural resources) with the European concept of vanitas through photography. Historically, vanitas imagery in art involved painting images of living things (like fruits and flowers) on the cusp of decay, combined with clocks, mirrors, skulls, and food. The objects in these vanitas paintings had specific symbolic meanings understood by audiences of the time. What is startling, is that the combination of these things is not contradictory - in this context, the image is settled and beautiful. Pardington brings the objects to life through a symbolic cultural entwining that happens through photography. This enchantment with layers of meaning in symbolic objects suggests an enriched 'nothingness' that alters the vanitas' narrative by embracing continuity through links to the past and the land. The photographic element, a valued copy, makes it a 'thing', a two-dimensional image that conflates the symbolism of the objects into a photographic taonga. The traditional Eurocentric subject/ object dichotomy, which understands objects as dull and passive is not the understanding of 'things', in Maori culture, nor that of contemporary theories of materiality.

The understanding that 'things' are passive is learnt and culturally sensitive. Dominant, colonial imposition of the traditional subject/ object dichotomy places the active subject in a position of power. This understanding of objects places their control with the subject. However, even in Eurocentric cultures, there are times and stages where materials are understood as active and co-constructive with the

subject. In childhood we experience 'things' as active, such as pet rocks, and the many stories and folk-tales that reveal interacting objects. Such as, the talking and dancing teacup in 'Beauty and the Beast', or the talking digger in 'Bob the Builder'. A shared concern between my approach to mortality and that of Pardington, is in combining and valuing the action of objects. However, the materials status of the debris in my sculptures and the finite connection to the sense of 'nothingness', does not incorporate Maori tradition. Instead, it focuses on the feminine and domestic position I take with regard for my mother and the home. An approach that unsettles fixed traditional symbols of the representation of death. When this fixed meaning is denied by domestic debris, custom and taboo present as poetic paradox. Rather than synthesising the contradictions, the sculptural elements keep them, as unsettled. Vanitas imagery is not obviously referenced, this was never a focus for the work. Shared also, is an aspect of preserving; however, the resin, in making itself evident, keeps paradox to the fore. In contrast, Pardington's photographs obscure themselves as paintings.

In Sam Taylor-Johnson's work, 'A Still Life' (2001), rotting fruit is used to disrupt the expected narrative structure in the time-lapse digital video, by focusing on the temporal aspect of decay. Even though Taylor-Johnson used video, and I use sculpture, there are shared concerns. In this particular piece, Taylor-Johnson recorded the temporal effects of decay on a bowl of fruit, with an unchanging plastic biro lying in front of it. The video is on a loop, so that the decay goes back to the beginning and happens over again. The bowl of fruit, lighting, and background reference the vanitas and nature morte genres of seventeenth century paintings. Preservation, as a space, is not a primary concern in this work. Instead, it refers to the historical and painterly cannons in art which looked at time, by painting objects that were on the cusp of change or decline. Taylor-Johnson's connection to mortality is intensely personal. She has had cancer twice, and both times been very ill. The focus on time, therefore, reflects of this relation with death.

During the course of the video, a ballpoint pen remains unchanged, and the supermarket peach to the front failed to decay at the same rate as the other fruit. As these inconsistencies are revealed by the speed of the time-lapse video, the work's aspect of anxiety relies on our perception of this temporal disturbance. That is, this experience of decay is dependent on the man-made medium of film and its technology. The collapse of time as we view the decomposition, which would usually take a matter of weeks, takes place in 3.44 minutes. This speed accentuates the changes in the colours and surfaces of the fruit, so that the evidence of the affect of physical decay is heightened. Our experience of decay is accelerated;

the speed of change that humans experience in a life-time now, is contradicted by the way our life span has been stretched out.

The analysis of 'A Still Life' reveals a difference in my use of resin as an approach to mortality. Where I set out to hold and share an unsettled space between life and mortality, Taylor-Johnson sets out a relation to death, where time and change has sped up. My elements gathering instants set unsettled debris from a domestic space, contrasts with the many fastmoving frames, continually looping in a frenetic semi-cycle from mid-life to death and around again. A difference here is her work's truncated cycle that omits a beginning. Instead of including a beginning in the vanitas tradition, 'A Still Life' begins where the fruit is at its best, and therefore keeps the audience in an occluded loop. In my work, my focus on the space is to regard it as an instant taken out of time, a single frame. As much as the ballpoint pen and the supermarket peach provide an element of anthropogenic immortality in Taylor-Johnson's work, it is the aspect of time that is significant.

The difference for my work, is the focus on place, time acts as a differential between the debris, resin, and the home space. A differential is the mechanism that allows the materials to co-construct the instant. In the detail of the third large sculpture, (fig. 22, below), the edge of the plastic bag is shown flowing through both forms, the apple debris and gold dust floating upwards, spread out in space. Time as the differential is marked, but is not my focus. The plastic bag is held between the two forms, this larger work offers the prospect of materials ability to change, disintegrate. However, this fluidity, preserved in resin, can never apprehend mortality. It stills the instant, like a freeze frame which we scan looking for the culprit.

In this chapter, the discussion used three larger works, to elaborate on the material engagement with an apprehension of mortality. It suggests that the pieces express a force/without force, that negotiates a connection to death, without an image of a body. This connection followed the three steps of the casting process, providing the three layers applied to the discussion. Each layer is explored for its potential to co-contribute to the poetic paradox of this sculptural connection to mortality. A number of other artists' works, were addressed by comparing with this processual analysis, addressing similarities, but also finding points of difference. In conclusion, the particular poetic paradoxes of this creative practice provide a unique apprehension of mortality.



Figure 22: Lundy, Alison. Larger sculptural bin element, rotten apple, plastic, gold dust and resin. (detail). 2017.

Chapter Four: Installation, Presentation and Preservation.



Figure 23: Lundy, Alison. (test installation). 2018. Rotted apple, grapes, resin, ostrich eggshell former. (test install shows ladder used as a plinth. It was decided not to use this for the final installation. Aesthetically and symbolically the ladder didn't work.)

Chapter four outlines the presentation and setting of the sculptural elements that contribute to the development and final form of the installation. As it does, it describes how the presentation, lighting, and plinths affectively engage the materiality of the work. It looks at the importance of presenting the sculptures on a continuous 'plinth', made from found and borrowed household items, including shelving units, and drying racks.

In terms of the spaces that the work might be shown in, the thinking was that they needed to offer a difference to the original domestic site. That is, spaces within public institutions, gallery spaces, spaces of power in terms of art and its presentation. The images of the work included in the exegesis were taken in an exhibition space beneath the 'Old Dominion Museum', Wellington, New Zealand. Due to time constraints at the project's completion this space was the one used for this installation. However, a consequent exhibition of the work, not in a basement space, retained the quality of lighting and the format for staging and placement of the elements. Over the course of the project a number of spaces had been trialled and lighting possibilities explored.

The lighting experiments led to the decision to use desk lamps placed on the floor and to angle them so that the work wasn't flooded with light. In trials, using exhibition space lighting and high wattage bulbs, the light was found to be too intense, direct and bright. The potential for serried contradictions was lessened. In particular, when using the in-house overhead lights they made the installation look like a museum collection. The final placement of the lamps, and low wattage meant that some areas of the installation were clearly lit and others caste in shadow. This approach was in keeping with the places where the materials were first encountered. The resin egg forms particularly benefitted from the light placed below the staging, as it bounced around and was reflected inside the curved forms.

To begin, however, the discussion looks at the use of eggs as a former or mould, as it is the shape that repeatedly brings the experience back to the fundamental paradox of apprehending mortality, whilst in life. As the most prevalent shape it forcefully/ without force, contributes to the atmosphere of the installation.

The elements which had eggshells as formers (moulds), were caste using ostrich and hens' eggs. These became linking and repetitive forms in the final installation, combining birth, the egg shape and death, the decayed debris. In doing so, the exegesis suggests, material contradictions of order and anarchy arise. In collecting the eggs one morning, I realised I was holding something that was connected to my parents, myself, my children, and extended family. The egg was a form where our lives met in the daily process of caring for the hens; collecting eggs was a part of the domestic routine. The first thought, however, in using this form, was

that eggs have no lid, no hinges or clasps: whatever is inside, is there from the start. Therefore, the chicken egg conundrum is unsettled by the chaotic potential of the debris. What became evident in discussion with others was the shock of encountering a form associated with birth, containing rotten or discarded material. A shock that worked with the contradictions of attraction and repulsion. Therefore, the egg form provided a familial and domestic connection, and the presentation of birth and death, beginning and end. The egg form also offered the conundrum of being a closed form (having no lid).

Combining birth and death together to express an existential position is an aspect of this domestic sublime, but other artists have also used this combination to express the paradox of mortality, in art. This existential position is explored by the artist, Bill Viola. A powerful example of this can be seen in his 'Nantes Triptych' (1992).^{103,104} In this immersive and overwhelming triptych, a large screen presents the birth of his son and the death of his mother, separated by the image of a man plunging into a pool of water. The central subject is submerged, in this instance, between birth and death. While the 'Nantes Triptych' does not present the ordinary materiality of a domestic sublime, Viola's work, inextricably links birth and death. My sculptures' domestic sublime expresses its inarticulate 'nothing' with domestic debris, preserved within the resin, as a collection of instants. In my final installation, the viewer goes from instant to instant, following my experience from home. Going about the home environment, I would come across pockets of poetic materiality, where a sense of mortality broke through the experience and rhythm of daily life. Unlike, Viola, who drowns between two huge screens, is engulfed by powerful filmic representations, I posit a poignant gathering of instants' - of poetic paradox.

Over the course of this project, I cast over two hundred elements using the egg moulds. This recurring form maintained a familial link for me throughout the project's schedule. However, the iconic status of the egg form needed to be disrupted by the resin and debris, so that the connection between the sculptural elements and ordinary domestic decay was never lost. I had developed the casting process (discussed in Chapter 2) in a way that allowed the grease to remain in the eggshell for different periods of time before casting—from one day to a number of weeks. In this way, the eggshell absorbed some of the grease, and depending on fragility of the shell, pieces of membrane and shell became set into the resin. For example, the cracking and imperfections that I managed to develop in the larger ostrich eggs occurred because the thickness of the shell absorbed more of the

¹⁰³ Tate, "'Nantes Triptych', Bill Viola, 1992," Tate.

¹⁰⁴ Rina Arya, *Bill Viola and the Sublime* (Tate, 2013).

grease. In addition, the closed aspect of the form, combined with the larger amount of resin, allowed the heat to build. These higher temperatures caused the resin to crack, as the moisture or grease trapped within found a point of escape. It was important for the sculpture that the vibrancy of the materials had an effect on these instants of preservation, so that the expectations viewers brought to the work were unsettled. A basic expectation is that whatever is inside an egg is fluid and not yet fully formed, and from this fluidity emerges something surprising and new. By casting as I did, using the domestic debris and resin, I invited a process that surrendered control to the materials, so that these expectations, assumptions and knowledge were disrupted.

Eggs have been used by artists throughout history, as a medium, as a subject, and as a symbol. From Piero della Francesca, Magritte, Dali and Faberge to current practitioners, it is a motif that carries ideas of transformation and potential. In this project, it was important to maintain the feeling of material contradiction, to remove the egg form, from simple symbolic association. Paradox was achieved by destabilising symbolic notions of resurrection or birth (once preserved the debris cannot be resurrected), artistic authenticity and power (the materials are ubiquitous and ordinary), and perfection (the serendipitous casting process invited imperfection), the materials and 'things' remain both passive and active.

The material action and interaction disrupt set meaning. Instead, the combined materiality engages poetic paradox. Therefore, the sculptural elements express paradox instead of order, even as they're preserved. Order is achieved where the symbolic and signifying of language identifies, categorizes and controls matter, objects and 'things'. Preservation provides stability and therefore categorization. Reason and imagination are incommensurable, when these egg forms contain domestic detritus. In using banal forms of storage and placement, a connection is made to objects that are used to order the home. These are utilitarian shelving and stacking units on which we usually place functional objects. An egg shape, made from resin containing domestic debris, displayed on a wire shelving unit unsettles, mixes and mangles attempts to order and find closure. In this way the work is anarchic.

The egg as a symbol lends itself to a myriad of meaning and potential, birth, re-birth and origin. An English artist, Gavin Turk has also used eggs, and frequently references eggs throughout his practice. Turk uses the form to focus on origins and originality. As Stuart Jeffries discovered in his interview with Turk:

For a while he became obsessed with depicting and making eggs, partly because he wanted to make us look anew at these ubiquitous objects, but mostly because it was an endlessly interpretable symbol. "It was the emblem

*of a philosophical problem. It's about the indeterminacy of origin. That's why my work is full of quotations - as though I'm a DJ recycling other people's work. I'm just doing what everybody else does, but more explicitly. What really interests me is the charade of creativity.*¹⁰⁵

In contrast to Turk, my purpose for using the egg form as a mould was that, when combined with debris, it expressed a series of unsettling contradictions. The egg connects to the domestic site, it connects both personal narrative and yet is recognizable as an image and form globally. As a form, it maintains for this project, an unsettled relation between the familiar of domestic decay and the unknowability, the unfamiliar of mortality. Turk's "charade of creativity" is not an aspect of contradiction that this project works with.

Further differences can be teased out by looking at a particular series of Turk's work, the giant eggs. The first of these was made in response to a request for a coffin design. This approach to mortality is both humorous and surreal, and the resulting egg was big enough to inter a human. Its scale has us not falling into an abyss of unsettled material chaos, but dealing with the language and ideas of authenticity in art. These fibreglass eggs were not made in response to poetic material paradox after a death (there is no unsettled multiplicity), but a play on language, oeuvre and oeuf. It asks, 'how can an artwork, its audience and the artist verify the point of origin, as original?'. The transparency of the resin in my work allows the viewer to see the vibrant debris, past death, within the form. This debris contradicts assumptions and knowledge of what usually is inside an egg. On the other hand, Turk's giant eggs exclude the viewer, they are not transparent. The surface is smooth, almost perfect, mimicking an egg, bar the scale. The materials vibrancy, in his work, doesn't unsettle the potential for meaning, instead the scale contradicts the egg as a symbol of originality. It is both ubiquitous and one of a kind, size-wise. The sublime is not the discussion at stake here: instead, anxiety and reason meet in an ironic joke, expressed with Turk's sense of parody and humour. What is shared here is that the egg is ordinary. In Turk's artworks, he uses an understanding of ordinary to question the canons of art.

The final forms caste for this project, were the ostrich eggs and washing up bowls. These eggs were sourced from family friends who had a 'hobby' farm next to my parents. Over the years, they farmed a range of exotic animals, and for a while had ostriches. Both my parents appreciated the bizarre prospect of seeing ostriches grazing, and on occasion, would exchange hens' eggs for one ostrich egg. More importantly, they ended up with three ostrich eggshells that sat in an old washing up bowl on the veranda. This domestic, but also exotic, collection had implications for

¹⁰⁵ Stuart Jeffries, 'Stuart Jeffries Meets Gavin Turk', the Guardian, 7 January 2004.

how a domestic space is criss-crossed by materials sourced globally. Our home contained materials and objects that, when separated from their country of origin, resonated differently from the plastic bags and washing-up bowl; yet were still part of the domestic environment. The connection between ordinary and extraordinary extended the affective force/ without force expressed by the sculptural elements. As an element contributing to the unsettled quality of things, the ostrich eggs were also normal, in that they were a part of the home.

One of the sculptures using cast ostrich eggs is shown below in figure 24. Interred within this form were the remains of a funeral bouquet, plastic wrapping and fruit; these were spread out over a bowl form. The bouquet was from the funeral of an elderly relative. It had been placed in the garden when the flowers started to

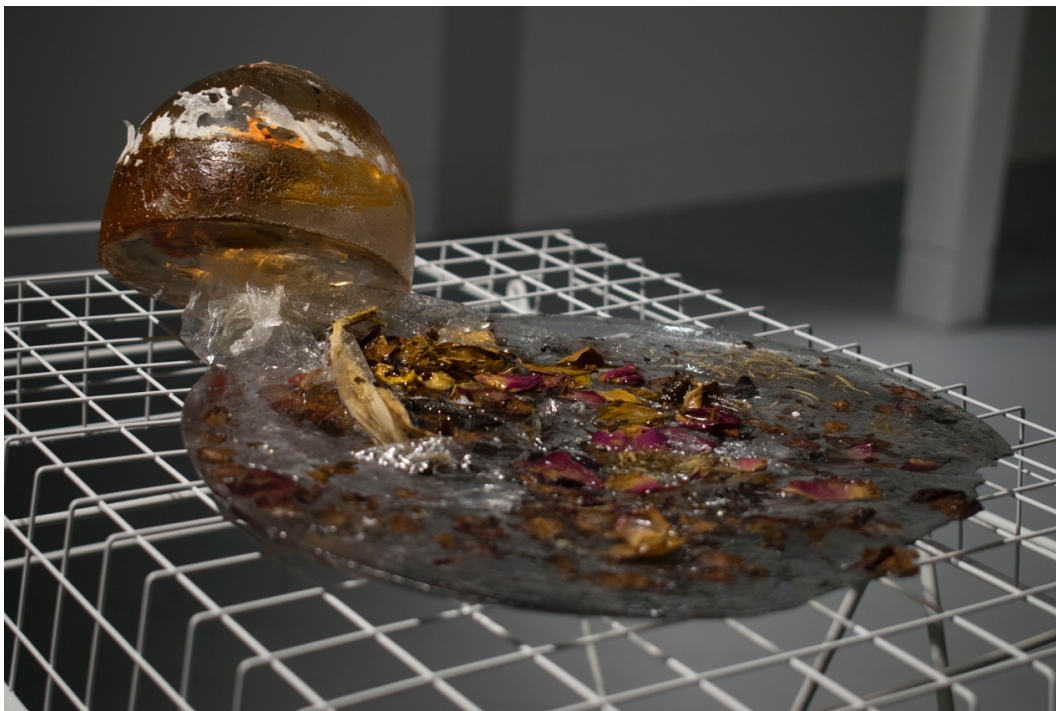


Figure 24: Lundy, Alison. (*test installation*). 2018. *Funeral bouquet, plastic, rotted fruit*.

wilt, and from there, it would have been removed to the compost. As I started to dismantle the bouquet and separate the elements, plastic and florist's oasis were revealed as part of the tribute; man-made materials were combined with the flowers. The 'deconstructed' bouquet reconfigured the range of material relations that are usually hidden in the wrapping. They presented me with a range of materials connected by mortality and the domestic site. Their material vibrancy and visceral energy, once preserved, contradicted the symbolism usually associated with a funeral bouquet, and the passage from life to death. The brittle plastic connecting

the egg form and bowl was both fragile and solid. Orange pigment and rotten flowers were interred within the ostrich egg. Anomalies appeared that contradicted the assumptions we have for a funeral bouquet. These revealed, rather than obscured, the liveliness of the materials, post-death. Unsettling and preserving, these sculptural elements subtly reframe a sense of 'nothing' for the twenty-first century.

In this installation, two kinds of order are considered: the preservation of 'things', and the staging, which placed the sculptural elements on plinths constructed from household objects. Due to the paradoxes, these ordering processes were also disordered.¹⁰⁶ The 'instants' that this collection of materials (as sculptural works and installation) allow, reflects the contradiction of ordering active material, ordering chaos. Here, chaos works on a number of levels. To make art is to order something, to frame and contextualise it. In order to present the unknowability of a domestic sublime, the sculptures order and preserve the chaotic debris. Preserving 'things' is an attempt to control a relationship with mortality and the void. It is a human, social and cultural response that seeks to negotiate some power over death and chaos by applying a sense of order, with reason. Even when we're preserving fruit to eat for the future, we are trying to control the chaos and flux of decay and change. The instant of preservation operated as a space of realisation: the sculptural elements physically and viscerally realised the paradoxical attempt to set the experience of a sense of nothing.

As it sets, resin applies an instant of potential order, this quality of order defines a point of difference for the work. Mayme Kratz is an American artist who works with resin. Similarly, she also uses found natural materials and debris, seed pods, skeletons, tumbleweeds, sourced from desert locations of Phoenix, Arizona. Kratz focuses on using organic and natural debris, not the plastics or synthetic materials that are included in my work. The shared concerns in our approach are some materials and process of preservation: as artists, we use resin to preserve the debris. However, the following extract, from a review of Kratz's artwork in Artlyst Magazine, reveals crucial differences:

Mayme Kratz creates art from the natural life of the desert that surrounds her Phoenix home and studio. Viewing collecting as a way of archiving memory, she assembles a variety of natural forms—tangled birds' nests, feathers, bones, seeds, snakes, and cicada wings—and captures them submerged in resin to create rhythmic, abstract sculptures and reliefs. "My collected specimens celebrate the endless cycles of change and rebirth in nature," Kratz has said.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', October, 2004, 3–

¹⁰⁷ Mayme Kratz - 73 Artworks, Bio & Shows on Artsy', 2017.

Kratz's work obscures the resin's contradictory 'thingness', its physical and solid transparency. In her work, the resin is used to construct an atmosphere. It evokes amorphous mediums, suggesting the natural beauty of watery or intergalactic environments. By taking on a non-specific atmospheric character, the resin's suggestive framing influences the viewer's reading. Kratz, adds dyes to the resin and paints the wooden support, so in combination with the resin the images suggest, night skies, or liquid depths. The organic found material is placed, in a careful circular pattern, and the material spliced to reveal a star formation. Kratz relates the circle with nature and the cycle of life. The resin is not foregrounded, it is controlled so that it's action in polymerisation and as a preserving agent is obscured. So, even though we use similar materials and as can be read in the quote below, the discussion of the sublime there are crucial differences in approach.

"This often unseen and unfelt layer is the one with which Kratz seeks to forge a connection: by moving deeper into nature and confronting the sublime, even at the smallest of scales, we "reach deeper into life, to the poetry of existence."¹⁰⁸

Reason and imagination work together in Kratz's artworks; it is possible to clearly align the material, concepts and emotional content without encountering the kinds of material contradiction evident in the sculptural elements caste for this project. The pieces illustrate her concerns to celebrate cycles of change and rebirth. Anxiety is not an unsettling element of these works. As the 'thingness' of the materials does not contradict the presentation to the extent that the supporting ideology, the cycle of life, is threatened. The resin quietly performs its function without calling to attention the process of setting. That is, the materials' and resin's 'thingness' does not question our relationship to natural life, archiving or memory. Its status as art object is not questioned either—the rectangular format is contextualised by the viewers knowledge of abstract painting. Kratz controls the placement of the materials, as well as the sanding and polishing of the resin. The interred objects are revealed as jewel-like, focusing the audience's attention away from the interaction and viscosity of the materials. These pieces are calm, contemplative and beautiful, the materials unerringly attracting the viewer and not repelling us. The elements of organic decay are preserved so that, on close examination, there is no possibility of re-animation—the objects are not suggestive of change from inanimate to animate. The presentation of multiplicity, that constitutes 'this domestic sublime', foregrounds a domestic and feminine experience. An experience that offers a subtle, but critically othered prospect, one that Kratz's work does not engage. Therefore, Kratz's

¹⁰⁸ 'Mayme Kratz | Dolby Chadwick Gallery'.

works though using similar materials, is very different from this project's exploration of materiality and the sense limit of mortality. Between these practices, there is also the difference between the outer form that the sculptural elements are moulded into by the eggs, bowls, bins and shirt boxes. These moulds contextualise the relationship to preservation, a lost outer domestic shape, that inscribes loss onto the works. Kratz's works, can be read as paintings. The rectangular framework does not interact with the resin or the interred objects in the same co-constructive manner of the sculptural elements for this project. The double practice, the repetition and layering of material paradox that is an integrative part of this installation is not a process that Kratz engages with.

Kratz does not allow the process of setting to effect the other materials. It fulfils a function (to act as a protective, transparent surface), and in doing so, conceals its 'thing' qualities. In this case, the resin's function is to invisibly preserve, and to act as a transparent, medium. Its clarity and perfection obscure its action; instead, the resin focusses the viewer on the objects set within it. Any ideological threads revealed by chaotic imperfections are strategically reduced so that the artist's remit, to illustrate nature, the natural cycle of rebirth and change, is not contradicted. This is not an interest in the poetic, but paradoxical quality of vibrant materials and a sense of mortality.

The resin, used for this project is synthetic and man-made, and is a relatively new material; also called plastic glass it is a product developed in the twentieth century, and used in the production of household products. When used in art-making, commonly painting, natural plant-based resin, such as amber, rosin and damar, have been used as a protective, transparent surface and in a solid state as jewellery for centuries. Plastic resin does not have the high art connotations that these other materials do. In this sense I use it because to do so allows me to question how my connection to the sense limit of mortality is negotiated through contemporary material process and experience. The resin's qualities I make obvious, and this point is important in regard to both Kratz's work and the artist I discuss next, Richard Dupont. In reflecting on the quality of a sculpture to maintain a material paradox in preservation, it was helpful to compare the use of transparency and detritus in the head sculptures of Richard Dupont. Dupont also intentionally invites a sense of contradiction into his work. In the sculpture which uses digital technology, polyurethane and detritus, Dupont states that he was looking for a feeling of anxiety.

¹⁰⁹ However, this anxiety is not brought about by the audience seeing the contained

¹⁰⁹ Martha Schwendener, 'Review: Richard Dupont's "Sobriquets," the Human Form From Scan to 3-D', "The show, at Tracy Williams, demonstrates how imaging technology shapes our conceptions of humanity.

rubbish, or being made aware of the co-constructive paradox of the materials. The resin here mimics a human form, importantly a head, as a repository of everyday rubbish. The casting process, based on a digital scan of Dupont's body, was controlled in such a way as to purposefully distort the head. This distortion was not caused by the interaction of the materials, rather, Dupont manipulated the algorithms from the scan to control this outcome.

The materials and objects have been placed within the head, and this debris does not mingle, the things aren't co-constructively active, as the materials presented in my work are. Similarly, the surface of the resin is not threatened by the outbreak of the debris, like it is in my work.

In Dupont's 'Collection Head 10', the head has been cast as a container of identity, and combined with the head's specific distortion, the sculpture addresses our ability to see ourselves in an age of technology. Dupont's use of detritus is internalised and sealed off. While the rubbish illustrates an aspect of identity inside the head, it is the distortion of the head that Dupont focuses on. Using distortion that is registered both retinally and physiologically, he creates a form of contradiction: the heads only appear normal from one viewpoint, and this is how he sets about inducing anxiety in his audience. Furthermore, the heads are scaled up, beyond 'head-size'. This is another difference in our approaches. Although I have pushed the use of the hobbyist's resin beyond the product recommendation, I have not increased the scale of the moulds so that they are beyond human-scale. The moulds I use are of real things, at a real scale, from the domestic domain. Again, Dupont's casts are digitally constructed from an algorithm fed into a computer, in a technological reframing. When the audience encounters these sculptures it is through the outer form of a male head. The moulds I used are objects collected from the home, next to the debris that is cast within them. This reframing, positions a contemporary experience of mortality that is poetic and paradoxical. A position that recognizes an experience of materiality that defines relationships of care and responsibility in a domestic space.

In a trial installation (pictured below in fig. 25), anxiety was investigated at the material juncture of ordinary detritus, preservation and mortality. As the debris threatened and broke the surface of the resin, its visceral and textural engagement was in combined action with the resin. Scale and identification operate differently here, compared to Dupont's work. In my work, the pieces of rubbish interact during the process, contributing to the quality of paradox. In contrast, Dupont's heads focus on the anxiety of the subject; the form of a large, male head is reframed by technology, transparent and filled with rubbish. In his sculpture, the resin remains

discrete and transparent, the distortion achieved technologically, using computer aided calculation, rather than with the active qualities of matter.

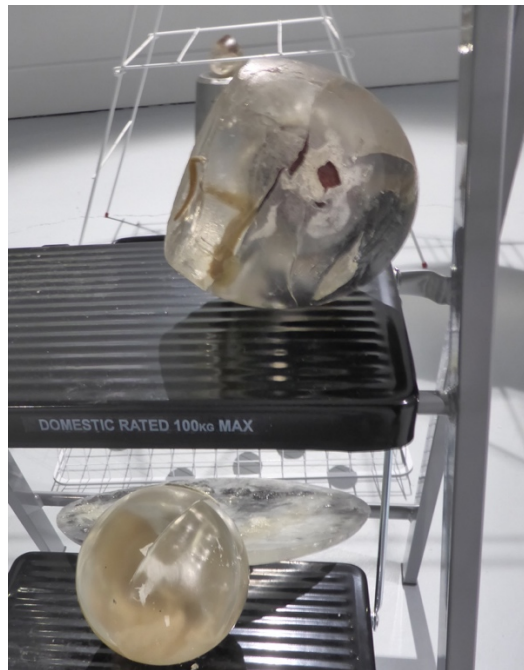


Figure 25: Lundy, Alison. (test installation). 2018. Rotted fruits, chewed gum, fabric, and pigment.

As much as there are material similarities between my work and others', my research explored a gap in knowledge, using domestic materials and preservation, in an approach to mortality. It asked the audience to understand 'things' as active, by focussing on the poetic paradox of materials. For the proposal to maintain its connection to the domestic environment, the presentation of the work needed to purposefully maintain this link. Throughout the project, I explored a range of plinths, supports, and modes of presentation on which to show the cast elements. The early trial installations experimented with a range of plinths, but the most effective were the wire shelving units taken from my parents' home I then supported these on a variety of home-based objects, such as step-ladders, drying racks, and buckets

The plinths were an aesthetic response which incorporates the process of double practice, aligned with the feminine sublime, and feminist theory. While the plinth/display platform has a place in art, which contextualises the work within a gallery/museum system, the form that I used also needed be of the daily and domestic environment. This is to maintain the unsettled concerns and materialities between the home, the work, and a gallery system. Usually, the plinth in an art context is a discreet, white, rectangular box that pretends not to be there. In

presenting the sense of nothing that I had experienced at home, I required the platforms or plinths that I presented the pieces on to reinforce the same poetic paradox. In this respect, this aspect of the work is double practice, as these 'are from the home'; now activated by being outside the usual functional space. Their usual function is contradicted by the sculptural elements, displayed, rather than stored. The format, a closed and connected ring, allows the audience access to one side of the installation. We only approach mortality from one side. The installation, rises and lowers depending on the heights of the wire frames. This means that the pieces are presented at different levels, some can be looked down on and others are above eyeline. However, this presentational flow, never results in the kind of powerful dominance exerted by traditional painted representations of the sublime, that are unified by a single focal point, placed above the viewers eyeline. Instead, here there are multiple instants where the eye may rest or not. The viewer is not dominated, but shares in an unsettled flow, a domestic and feminine experience that is horizontal, not transcendental.¹¹⁰ Patricia Yaeger refers to processes that some woman writers employ as an invention of a horizontal sublime, where they relinquish the confrontational power of the traditional patriarchal sublime moment. This work employs a similar material strategy in its presentation, however in this case it evokes the home and a connection to mortality.

In early examples looking at the impact of presentation, and its affect on the sculptural elements of this doctoral project. Here, the smaller egg pieces are suspended on wire or contained in tubes. Hanging the eggs places a focus on weight. When there were multiple sculptures presented in this way, they resembled large water droplets. When presented inside the tubes, they became proto-organic, resembling disturbing science fiction flower parts—interesting, but not conveying the sense of anxiety I was looking for. In both cases, the presentation and form deflected meaning away from the home site, so that the sculptures became a version of something else: water droplets or quasi-organs. Therefore, the collection was laid out and presented so that it could remain connected to the domestic environment, and retain a sense of lost utility. Using the domestic materials to display the work, allowed the contradictions to be maintained and repeated.

A New Zealand artist, who has worked with similar materials and objects, is Fiona Johnstone. The two works of Johnstone's I will be referring to here are in the vanitas and still life tradition. As already discussed, Vanitas imagery in art involved painting

¹¹⁰ Patricia Yaeger, *Toward a Female Sublime* : Chapter 9. Ed. Linda S. Kauffman, *Gender and Theory : Dialogues in Feminist Criticism* (Blackwell, 1989) 202.

images of living things (like fruits and flowers) on the cusp of decay, and objects that indicated the passing of time and the nearing of death. The objects in these paintings had specific symbolic meanings understood by audiences of the time. In her work, Johnstone shares with me an interest in materials and objects that make a connection as debris, to mortality. One of the differences, however, is that Johnstone says that she is looking for a kind of redemptive beauty.¹¹¹ In looking for beauty, the co-constructive element of preservation that the resin brings to my work does not happen in Johnstone's work. This may be because it would destabilise her commitment to making something beautiful, as serendipity and material interaction foreclose control by the artist. Beauty is not looked for in this creative project, it is a consequence of the material paradox, the pleasurable/ displeasure of preserved debris.

Lighting is also shared as a concern between Johnstone and myself, as we both use domestic lamps and desk lamps. Nevertheless, in my work, the lighting operates as a framing from home, that has followed the 'things' into the gallery space. Rather than being what the work is about, the lighting frames its 'aboutness'. The lighting is placed on the floor, rather than overhead. It was found that overhead lighting made the installation feel like a science display. Keeping the light on the floor repeats the grounded connection to materiality rather than transcendent light from above. This can be understood much like the decisions that are made regarding the kind of frame a painting is placed into. For example, the choice of either an ornate gold-leafed frame or no frame can influence the viewer's experience of a painting. Johnstone, on the other hand, is interested in the lighting itself and its obsolescence. This interest was focussed by the lights and lamps she found in second-hand shops. Though I use discarded material, it is presented so that its vibrancy and 'thingness' points the work towards a contradictory and lively mortality. As seen in 'Still Life: A short history of domestic lighting, the spent forces of capitalism and some low hanging fruit' (2013), Johnstone's nostalgic turn finds unconventional beauty in the cheap domestic past, arranged along glass shelving units. The interesting paradox in this work is the still life label - light is energy, it is not still, and it is also a source of life. In Johnstone's 'Still Life', an important difference to my work is that the light is vibrant, not the 'things'. As a collection, 'Still Life' has a thrift shop aesthetic, with a political edge, that asks us to reflect on the desire to buy the next object, when what is already there might be seen as both useful and beautiful.

¹¹¹ FIONA JOHNSTONE', ANTOINETTE GODKIN (blog), 4 March 2014, <https://antoinettegodkin.co.nz/>. Fiona Johnstone was born in Marlon in 1959. She was raised in various other small towns and military camps in different...".

Johnstone's second work discussed here, 'Vanitas 1 (Setting the Table)', uses a collection of found vases and fabricated man-made flowers that mimic different orchid types. Johnstone has linked this work to the imagery found in vanitas paintings. I have already referred to the artist Sam Taylor-Johnson¹¹², who also uses symbolism associated with the vanitas tradition. However, Taylor-Johnson used the moving image to rephrase her approach to death and time. Johnstone's 'Vanitas 1' also poses a question about time, but by using recycled plastics, it voids the prospect of decay in order to refocus the genre as an ecological question. As a collection of closely related objects, while it preserves a record of different flower varieties, the traditional symbolisms associated with vanitas imagery are not in evidence. The connection to mortality (that works through attraction and repulsion) is not a quality of this installation, as the objects remain attractive. There is no indication of the kind of vibrancy associated with 'things', as these objects also remain functional. The fake flowers, which clearly mimic objects of beauty. Paradox only intervenes when we find out that the flowers are made from mundane recycled plastic.

Other than this paradox, the flowers retain their purposiveness; therefore, reason and imagination are not incommensurable.

The contradiction that Johnstone's work suggests is also situated in the title. Our expectations of vanitas imagery is of an image that holds an instant, never to be revisited. In 'Vanitas 1', the objects are copied flowers, made from plastic, acrylic paints and recycled P.E.T. They are rare exotic blooms made from base, reused material. These contradictions are not felt, however, as the work is clearly beautiful. It is only when we tie the title and the materials listed together, that the layers of meaning emerge. The use of plastic in this work does not contradict its function in the making; it is only on reading the title, that recycling and its ecological concerns for the fragility and beauty of our environment, become clear.

My approach to installing the work was to neither abandon, nor set, a serried apprehension of mortality. The sculptural elements, as a combination of 'things', is already paradoxical; and I chose to present them in relation to where they were found in the domestic site (that is, a loose mapping from the house, to the garden, and then the garage).

This chapter argues that the material elements that make up this creative project maintain their poetic paradoxes, in the outer form of preservation- the egg, and in its staging and presentation. By gathering the sculptural elements together

¹¹² Martin Gayford, 'Ordinary and Sublime; New Shows by Mark Wallinger and Sam Taylor-Wood Each Offer Only One Outstanding Work. But These Thought-Provoking Pieces Alone Justify a Visit, Says Martin Gayford', *Daily Telegraph* (London, England), 2001.

on the wire drying racks and shelving units from home, it offers a double practice. The installation in its final iteration, uses this method of presentation to repeat the subtle material paradoxes found in the home. To keep and repeat the contradictions between order and chaos. It organizes the plinths in a closed rectangle so that the audience cannot view or access the sculptural elements from all sides. A poetic metaphor for the experience and negotiation of death after the passing of a close, loved family member. A physical and affective presentation of an apprehension of mortality, the barrier between life and death, that this 'domestic sublime' negotiates.

Conclusion



Figure 26: Lundy, Alison. *'this domestic sublime'*, 2019.

This creative research project has investigated the potential in preserved domestic debris as a sculptural installation to evoke a poetic and paradoxical sense of mortality. It has been argued that this sense of mortality, as posed by the preserved detritus has contributed to the discussion of the 'sublime' in contemporary art. The impetus for the project began because a piece of domestic debris presented in itself a sense of mortality. An experience where unsettled material contradictions were felt as sharp but subtle, active and passive, attractive and repellent, finite and domestic and as a force/ without force. I was intrigued by the extraordinary affect that an ordinary piece of detritus, such as my mother's hair, could evoke. Consequently, I became attuned to other pieces and gatherings of debris that made a similar connection to death. These encounters with mortality were explored through the sculptural qualities of domestic materiality and the processes of preservation and presentation. As such, this project speaks to a niche in contemporary art as 'this domestic sublime'.

The sublime in art was described in this exegesis as an aesthetic gesture or artistic pointing towards the sense limit of mortality. In setting out the theoretical underpinning for this notion, the exegesis acknowledged the writing of Anne K. Mellor. Where Mellor theorized the concept of the "domesticating the sublime," an

idea she used to describe practices that destabilized the “masculine sublime”.¹¹³ This exegesis used the description traditional or patriarchal traditions of the sublime exemplified by Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). The discussion found concepts from the Eighteenth century relevant to this practice and referred to ideas from Burke and Kant. These included; paradox, the incommensurability of reason and imagination, the ability to deliver a poignant shock, attraction and repulsion. Furthermore, the exegesis argued that the contemporary lens provided by the work's materiality and inclusion of feminine and familial experience from a semi-rural New Zealand site provided poetic paradoxes specific to this project.

Chapter One posited a theoretical admixture in support of the sculptural works engagement with ‘the sublime’. It set out why contemporary ideas from ‘new materiality’ and ‘the feminine sublime’ combined with traditional patriarchal concepts provided the theoretical underpinning for this project. In doing so it looked at works by a number of artists, whose work have also made connections to mortality and the sublime. This exegesis argued, that it was ‘how’ the installation engaged with the sublime and its material contradictions which negotiated a gap in knowledge. The contemporary theories provided a supplementary framework that supported the works materiality where it diverged from expectations associated with the patriarchal sublime.

What the physical materiality of the installation did was to present the audience with an apprehension of mortality. It adapted the notion of paradox, a traditional characteristic of the sublime, in a critical and divergent serried combination of material contradictions. Therefore, it was the domestic materiality and presentation that critically expressed qualities ‘othered’ by patriarchal tradition. These qualities of domestic scale, plurality, material vibrancy, familiarity, feminine experience, touch and texture were presented through a double practice created by the material contradictions specific to the work. In describing the poetic and paradoxical experience of mortality associated with the installation, the term ‘nothing’ was used instead of ‘void’ or abyss. This preference reflected the works secular materiality, and my experience of death, in other words, ‘nothing’ on the site was grounded in tactility. Together with this notion of ‘nothing,’ this domestic materiality was presented as a force/ without force.¹¹⁴ Therefore, the chapter put forward a combinatory framework in support of the

¹¹³ Mellor, *Romanticism & Gender*. 1993.

¹¹⁴ Jacques Derrida, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas, ‘By Force of Mourning’.

sculptural projects specific poetic materiality that addressed a gap in knowledge as, 'this domestic sublime'.

Chapter two focused on the physical materials that were used in the construction of the work. Here, the discussion looked at how the actual material paradoxes were developed through the process of polymerization setting. It analysed early studio work and the materials ability to express contradictions such as preserved and vibrant, attractive and repulsive.¹¹⁵ Then it compared the affects of the material combinations, such as the cooking of the debris, or cracking of the resin, to explain the choices and processes that led to the look and feel of the work. This attention to materiality acknowledged qualities of 'thingness', where matter is understood as active and affective.¹¹⁶ The exegesis argued that these affective qualities, viscerally and emotionally engaged the viewer. The resin and detritus interacted during the process of polymerization and so co-produced the tactile and visual experience. An experience where hobbyists resin delivered amongst other qualities a 'randomizing tactic' during setting that allowed the work to present the unsettled potential of the detritus. The exegesis argued that the resin was used in the work to express inherent contradictory qualities of the domestic sublime. The specific characteristics of the sculptural elements were described and analysed alongside other artworks. This was done by describing points of difference, such as transparency and obscurity, scale, multiplicity, attraction and repulsion, where the effects of preservation had actual material impact on the feel and look of the work. The exegesis argued that the sculptures created an unsettlement that both obscured and threatened to reveal an apprehension of the sense limit of mortality, an immaterial 'nothing'. This use of the resin's transparency is compared to transparency in works by other artists, in this case hobbyists' resin was used as vibrant material and as a mode of preserving that was identified as a point of difference for the project. The method of preserving created other differences, the small scale of the pieces, which together make up the installation, invited a poignant force/ without force of 'this domestic sublime'.

The sculptural work provoked the bounds of patriarchal tradition by presenting a material alterity of the small, the smooth, and the shiny. It posed the experience of 'this domestic sublime', as a group of related, and poignant material instants that co-contributed to the aesthetic experience. Therefore, the argument developed through this exegesis positioned the work as one that combined the

¹¹⁵ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Bennett.

paradoxical qualities of 'othered' domestic materiality, to present the sense limit of mortality.

Chapter Three of this exegesis focused on the experience and engagement with death. It established the works encounter with mortality as domestic and familial that was linked to the home environment. As mortality is not presented by an object, thing or image which is deemed as foreign. This chapter began with a quote by Jacques Derrida that linked the death of a loved one to one's own death.¹¹⁷ It looked at how the larger sculptural pieces addressed this apprehension, by following the steps taken in the casting process. In making the connection to mortality it was noted that the affective quality of materials became apparent after my mother's body had gone. When the body had no voice, in an instant vibrant 'things' gained theirs.

The characteristics of the domestic and familiar 'things' lent poignancy to the instants expressed by the work. Poignant was used for its original sense, associated with the rapier used in fencing, as a sharp pang or shock. This sharp pang is still one of pleasurable displeasure, delight as we step back from an edge which threatened us with unimaginable knowledge. The term instant was also defined in terms of this practice as an experience, that stood out in sharp relief from the daily routine. These qualities of the sculptural elements were considered against a sense of mortality in other works of art associated with the outrageous or overpowering. In contrast, the debris from the home site revealed itself to be both familiar and unknown.

As it unpacked the three steps in the casting process, this exegesis developed the discussion of familiarity by looking at the interactions between the materials. The moulds, which created the forms, were also domestic objects and destroyed in the process of casting. This chapter also discussed the sculptural work in terms of Vanitas and still-life imagery. As modes of aesthetic expression, these styles have historically been used to depict the temporal aspect of the relation to mortality. However, this project retained a focus on a connection to place and the home environment rather than to the passing time. The installation presented an aesthetic apprehension of the sublime where the poignant unfamiliarity of death is experienced through bonds of care, the familiar, the banal and ordinary materials of the home.

The fourth chapter of this exegesis focused on the final installation. It looked at the implications that presentation and preservation had on the works expression of paradox, where beginning/ end and order /anarchy were brought together. It was

¹¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas, 'By Force of Mourning'.

argued that the paradoxes inherent to this installation offered a material gesture that operated as a form of alternative knowledge of the sublime.¹¹⁸ The egg form, exemplified this approach, as an impossible container that had no lid but contained vibrant materials that contradicted the symbolism of birth. This approach was discussed and compared to other artists also using the egg form.

As this project combined many sculptural elements and a range of materials it challenged the concept of unicity as it is applied in traditional representations of the sublime. Instead, it exhibited a form of multiplicity and double practice, where related, but separate elements co-construct a series of affecting paradoxes. The audience was invited into material relations of poignant unsettlement. As the ordinary materials revealed forceful instants of something extraordinary, that was without force. 'This domestic sublime' presented an encounter that asked the audience to care and share with the detritus an apprehension of mortality. Walking around the installation, viewers were drawn into any number of instants that made up a layering where the familiar was also unfamiliar. This layering, the double practice, was continued as the outer moulds of the sculptural elements, then the wire plinths and lighting repeated the domestic trope. The work unsettled assumptions that would fix 'this domestic sublime' as either a unicity or multiplicity. It is argued that the vibrancy of the materials destabilized meaning that the act of preservation and staging implied, therefore the installation evaded and invited order. Preserving 'things' is an attempt to control a relationship with mortality, the sense of 'nothing'. It is a human, social and cultural response that seeks to negotiate some power over death and chaos by applying a sense of order through reason. However, the chaotic potential of the preserved detritus unsettled the basis for knowledge. This work explored the material paradoxes that engaged the sense limit of mortality and proposed a sublime that valued a shared domestic materiality. So that the incommensurable relation of reason and imagination was aesthetically expressed by ordinary and banal 'things'. The presentation, placement on connected wire plinths and lighting from the home continued the process of double practice. This was done by connecting wire shelving units and drying racks, vibrancy was therefore taken up by this alternative form of presentation. Domestic lighting that was placed on the floor, was understood as a framing for the work which repeated an ambience of ordinariness. Together the plinths and lighting reiterated the home environment, and the subtle poignancy of 'this domestic sublime'.

This sculptural work has explored the aesthetic potential of preserved domestic debris, or 'things', to poetically convey the paradox of pleasure in

¹¹⁸ Hal Foster, 'An Archival Impulse', *October*, 2004, 3–22.

displeasure, to poignantly and subtly evoke the fear and anxiety of a force/without force, that is both attractive and repulsive as an expression of the apprehension of mortality. The discussion began by defining the theoretical framework, an admixture that combined traditional theories of the sublime with contemporary concepts from 'new materiality' and the 'feminine sublime'. This created the conceptual niche for the work. Having described this conceptual underpinning, the discussion moved on to the actual physical materiality of the sculptural elements. It described and analysed the development of the works interactive, co-constructive and vibrant materiality. This was important because these qualities of the 'things', are key to the installations material contradictions. The discussion then tied in the sense of mortality from the domestic site to its particular material paradoxes. Finally, preservation and presentation were considered and developed as part of a process of layering and double practice that informed the aesthetic of this project.

This creative research practice uniquely presented a sense of mortality and a sense of 'nothing(ness)' in 'this domestic sublime'. In so doing it addressed a gap in knowledge, expressed by the particular poetic paradoxes of the works materiality.

The 'hair', that began this project was important because it intimated a poetic sense of mortality, a nothingness expressed by a piece of detritus. It made me aware of the materialities, relationships, care, responsibilities and the paradoxes that surround the debris that inspired 'this domestic sublime'.



Figure 27: Lundy Alison. 'this domestic sublime', 2019. Detail.

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