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# Why the body

Jose Aldemar Muñoz Ñustes

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Supervisor: Mark Dunhill

## Thank you

Silvia Ñustes y Aldemar Muñoz,

Mark Dunhill, Maryann Ng'endo Kariuki,

Sophie Durand, Inês Rodrigues Neves

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## ABSTRACT

The following thesis is based on my artistic practice. I am interested and motivated by the recovery of that which is lost, as approached from the body. The impossibility of such recovery defines the methods of my doing and, therefore, explains how I approach this text. This paper portrays concepts and references to delimit that place impossible to access, develop what the 'lost' means to me and its relations with other authors from poetic prose—recognizing the impossibility to access as a language limitation of the entire self-experience.

With this in mind, this text navigates with the body's sensations through the failure to reach that which is lost. Throughout established concepts as tools, I weave together ideas and references into a net that hopes to surround these limitations instead of defining them.

That result is a series of text composition fragmented among metaphors, analysis, and ideas that converge, in the following chapter: *The things that we lost is a state of being*, *Concepts tool to build a writing body*, *The encounter of material and the body*, and *The content that emerges from the gesture*.

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Käesolev magistritöö põhineb minu kunstipraktikal. Mind huvitab ja motiveerib see, kuidas taasleida kaotust lähtudes oma kehast. Sellise taasleidmise võimatus määratleb minu tegemise meetodid ja selgitab, kuidas ma tekstile lähenen. Magistritöö piiritleb mõistete ja kujunditega koha, kuhu on võimatu ligi pääseda, arendab "kaotuse" mõiste tähendust ja selle suhteid muude poeetilise proosa autoritega – mööndes teemale ligipääsu võimatust, kuna enesekogemus on keeleliselt piiratud.

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Selle tulemuseks on rida tekstikompositsioone, mis jagunevad metafooride, analüüside ja lähenevate ideede vahel järgmistesse peatükkidesse: “Asjad, mille me kaotasime, on meie olemise seisund”, “Kirjutava keha loomise vahend”, “Materjali ja keha kohtumine” ja “Žestist tuleneb sisu”.

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## INTRODUCTION

The following text uses studio outputs to analyze the process. I attempt to link material, methods and the logic inherent to my artistic practice with concepts experienced within the context of my body. This thesis seeks to transmit my motivations and thinking process, feelings in my artistic practices. Building different ideas through sensations, new ways of seeing, the result of projects develops in this master and before around context. Although the relation between concepts, images, content, and narrative is not evident. The most direct way to explain how I write this text is departing from what my artistic practices pursue: recovering something that I can not define because it is lost. No definition explains the deep meaning that this loss has to me, but I make an effort to express it through writing defined for the parameters of a big field like subjectivity and emotions. Trying to understand how these ideas live together inside the body and how they can be shaped to establish the most precise dialogue with you is explored in this thesis.

'The 'void', 'affect' and 'cruelty' are key concepts of my practice. I define these terms under the lenses of different authors and visual references that introduce or address sensations of these concepts and content in this paper.

In chapters 0, 1, 2 and 3 I define the main concepts; contextualize these ideas using examples, my experiences from my artistic practice as well as other thinkers and artists' works such Louise Bourgeois, Leigh Bowery, Suely Rolnik, Migel Á. Hernández Navarro, Antonin Artaud, Warner Akizur, Rolan Barthes and Alan Badiou. In this thesis, I show my ideas and personal approach by interweaving references under the bodily sensations.

I wrote these texts following this foundation:

*The thing that we lost:* I intend to provide you with a starting point to understand from what place I am writing. A place is deliberately unclear and vague.

*Concept tools to build a writing body:* an introduction about 'affect'<sup>1</sup> and 'cruelty'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I. Rubens, Texto Babá. Transcrição da fala de Suely Rolnik [The drooling text. Transcription of Suely Rolnik's speech]. – Blogger 2016 (September), <http://blogdoivanrubens.blogspot.com/2017/04/o-texto-baba-transcricao-da-fala-de.html> (accessed 30 March 2021).

<sup>2</sup> W. Akizur, ANTONIN ARTAUD "EL TEATRO DE LA CRUELDAD" Akizur [ANTONIN ARTAUD "THE THEATER OF CRUELTY" Akizur], 22 May 2013. Video recording, 7 min 58 sec. Available: Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVtw51PaV4k&t=186s> (accessed 21 April 2021).

Within the framework of *The encounter of material and body*, and *The content that emerges from the gesture*, I locate different moments of my artistic practice in which I identify emotions, sensations and ruptures that converge.

These frameworks are led by visual references and historical contexts to express in writing what ideas are coming when to recover the lost.

In *the encounter of material and body*, the focus is placed on encounters as a ritual to go inside the body through the physical qualities of the materials to appropriate and give that undefined stage a place inward. Using the concept of 'affect' by Rolnik, I pursued context ideas through 'the experiences of a living being'<sup>3</sup>. This section will use primitive art and Bourgeois works as examples. Writing experiences to capture the state of loss from a ritual perspective. That seeks to provoke the reader a sensation of capturing the lost through as animals painting in the cave, from 'a protected place you can enter to take refuge (...)'<sup>4</sup> the words, *the nest*.<sup>5</sup>

The following part *emerging from the gestures* is addressing 'cruelty' as a method to dissolve the idea of I, to provoke the fierce determination to crack down the fake 'reality'<sup>6</sup> and stage the body. This writing explores the physical sensation of greek art sculptures and Bowery's garments from emotions and feelings. I experiment with this writing, rejecting all forms of thinking the body as definitive. Through visceral, that transmits the desire of living in the reader, hidden in the attempt to give a condition to the lost. Describing how gestures like movements in the bronzes or stones figure in greek sculptures or the provocative forms that Bowery wears embody and intensify the brutalities around the body.

In the following chapters, you will find a series of strategies developed by concepts that set up attitudes of writing and thinking of how to approach the poetic starting point that I will propose forward. That, as a result, cannot be seen as a traditional text sought to explain a point of view but shaping it through words. More as an entrance door, for dialogue, that attempts to establish a conversation with the artworks and thoughts of Bourgeois and Bowery. As study cases to reorganize and enable a sensitive, creative process in between the 'void' through the body. To frame these cases, this state of loss builds a writing body from inside

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<sup>3</sup> I. Rubens, *Texto Babá...*

<sup>4</sup> M.L. Bernadac, *Louise Bourgeois*. New York: ADAGP, 1996, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> M.L. Bernadac, *Louise Bourgeois*, p. 66.

<sup>6</sup> W. Akizur, *ANTONIN ARTAUD...*, 0 min 46 sec.

and outside of me. For instance, to create a text of fragmented sensations around an unreachable center.

Attempting to transmit from the logic of my practice: A writing that puts together words as a material to discover where the following concepts are alive as an act, intervening the subjectivity of the writer, I and you, the reader with visual stimulus in contrast to different historical references.

## 0. THE THING THAT IS LOST



(ill. 1) Yves Klein, Leap into the Void, 1960, Photograph, Gelatin silver print, 25.9 x 20 cm (10 3/16 x 7 7/8 in.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In the following text, I attempt to define from my perspective *what is lost*, the idea of the 'void' as traced by Jacques Lacan by Hernández Navarro has further developed and contextualized my definition. The texts aim and subsequent dialogue between the two to manifest a sense of the indefinable, enabling readers to generate their associations of *what is lost*. This is the context of the chapters *The encounter of material and the body*, *The content that emerges from the gesture*.

I have used poetic to jump into the form as a frame to address *what is lost* (ill. 1). The poetic form enables us to understand what is lost without dictating meaning or a definition that limits possibilities and locks meaning. The associations that are discussed in the poem have been created with this, the 'void' has been generated through the combination of words that maintain a sense of mystery towards the things that they describe. I tried to give the reader an introduction to my definition of the 'void'. Through the poetic use of language, I link this with the concept of the 'void' from Lacan, *Lacanian Sublimations*,<sup>7</sup> by Hernández Navarro so that a sense of the indefinable is manifested, enabling the reader to generate their associations.

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<sup>7</sup> V. M. Saint-Cyr, Creating a Void or Sublimation in Lacan, CAIRN.INFO MATIÈRES À RÉFLEXION. – Digital Magazine 2012, No 13 (February), <https://www.cairn.info/revue-recherches-en-psychanalyse-2012-1-page-15.htm?contenu=article> (accessed 26 April 2021).

Those things that we have lost have had contact with the skin before, in different ways, leaving;

wounds,

kisses,

blows,

diseases.

Vague signs of multiple shapes and natures that disappear with time. Vanished inside the body in confusing sensations;

What do these signs mean?

What are these signs for?

Where do these signs come from?

Moreover, how to react to them?

Therefore the things that we lost remain in between the skin.

I do not know what those things lost are. People? Memories ? Or just things? I can say that they live in forms that are indistinguishable from each but together inhabit/manifest/create/evoke an intense feeling that goes all over the skin, organs, bones, thoughts, ways of seeing.

The only way that I have found understanding of them is through doing something (DRAWING, MOVING, SEWING ) with my hands, where they become meaningful and poetic enough to recover them.

## TACIT, *TACTILE* ENGAGEMENT ENABLES MEANING TO BE MADE, RECOVERED

Touch makes the thing that we lost visible and 'validATES their existence'.

I transform them in s p a c e into a form or an image in my artistic practice. I approach the things we have lost through my multidisciplinary practice that combines techniques from theatre, textile practice, painting, drawing and sculpture, engaging them materially from different lenses and approaching them without bias seeking to transform them in space, into form or image.

Mixing material and technical methods enables structuring the complexity of these feelings; sad joy, Boring happiness, Tiring disgust, etc. Dissecting them or joining them within my textile works, the compositions of my performances and the marks that make up my drawings enable these feelings to be inhabited placing my body and the body of another within the space of this.

I am transforming the surfaces (fabrics, spaces and papers) using the skin to feel what I can not otherwise understand. Tacit engagement is the means through which understanding develops. Definition is not entirely one thing or another, or even two things; definition is not delimitable. As I see it, to frame what is *the thing that we lost* and what that means, I need more than words: attitudes, different flows and things that are fussy.

Finally, the thing that is 'lost' hides in the skin, coming together from the inside as an intense feeling, possible to be described through poetry. It can be just described, never really to be named. I attempt to enable a place to relate this thing that is 'lost' inside the body, with the concept of the 'void'.

With this in mind, I abstract some points of the Hernández Navarro article *Contemporary art between experience, the anti-visual and the sinister*.<sup>8</sup> I relate them with Jacques Lacan theories, where the concept of 'the 'void' is rooted. The articles frame the 'void' touching and developing ideas within art. My take on the 'void' uses these ideas by Hernández Navarro:

'the void is that real thing of the subject out of the languages,

The impossible of the subject,

What scape to be defined,

A blind point,

The empty center'

Theory and impossibility is a linguistic concern; it is impossible to reach definition both in theory and through language. Lacan says that we have lost this capacity to not define things; it's because of linguistics that this is the case. Impossible to arrive and surround, and it is because of what Lacan describes, Hernández Navarro contextualizes this and this, what I am defining as the '*Void*.'

The following paragraph is a short introduction to Lacan's theory of sublimation and a definition of the real. To provide more context for understanding the Hernández Navarro position and where I am writing:

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<sup>8</sup> M. Á. Hernández, El arte contemporáneo entre la experiencia, lo antvisual y lo siniestro [Contemporary Art between experiences, the anti-visual and the sinister]. – Revista Observaciones Filosóficas 2006, No. 3 (2<sup>nd</sup> semester), <https://www.observacionesfilosoficas.net/elartecontemporaneo.html> (accessed 22 April 2021).

'In the theory of sublimation, Lacan proposes three dimensions of being based on the functions and operations of the imaginary object: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real. The imaginary object is the obstacle between the subject and the other, understanding sublimation as the working law or parameter. The 'I ideal' [*Ichideal*] can come to be placed in the world of the object as the 'ideal I' [*Idealich*]. This is the center of the sublimation where the matter takes a position concerning the problematic other and addresses. Organizing himself based on the imaginary other. After several foundations and investigations about sublimation. I will conclude this short introduction when Lacan proposes a symbolic elevation of the imaginary object to the real 'dignity'.<sup>9</sup>

Which I completed addressing your attention with the defying of real by Lacan in psychoanalyst dictionary:

**'The real (Lacan):** The state of nature from which our entrance has forever severed use into language (...) a state in which there is nothing but need. A baby needs and seeks to satisfy those needs with no sense for any separation between itself and the external world or the world of others. For this reason, Lacan sometimes represents this state of nature as a time of fullness or completeness that is subsequently lost through the entrance into language. (...)<sup>10</sup>

With this in mind as a foundation, we can understand from a better angle Hernández Navarro's perspective in his analysis of 'passion of the real'.<sup>11</sup> He frames these ideas in contemporary practice, separating them in two lines: passion for the reality and passion of the real. He developed passion for reality as the transgression attitudes of the artistic context's rules to access the real world. For example, the artistic practice of contextual art (Paul Ardenne) and relational art (Nicolas Bourriaud). In the passion for the real, he introduces an

<sup>9</sup> V. M. Saint-Cyr, Creating a Void or Sublimation in Lacan, CAIRN.INFO MATIÈRES À RÉFLEXION. – Digital Magazine 2012, No 13 (February), <https://www.cairn.info/revue-recherches-en-psychanalyse-2012-1-page-15.htm?contenu=article> (accessed 26 April 2021).

<sup>10</sup> D. Franco, The Real (Lacan). – Introductory Guide to Critical Theory 31 January 2021, <https://cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/psychoanalysis/definitions/real.html#:~:text=Definition%3A%20The%20Real,there%20is%20nothing%20but%20need.&text=The%20Real%20works%20in%20tension,order%20and%20the%20symbolic%20order> (accessed 5 May 2021).

<sup>11</sup> M. Á. Hernández, El arte contemporáneo...

attempt to present the real of the subject, as a 'fracture' of the real that puts the things in their place. He proposes different directions for both lines but emphasizes the real under the concept of 'antivition'.

Based on this theoretical frame, I found parallels to Hernández Navarro's overviews with my artistic practice and the development of this text, trying to transmit feelings that are hidden in the process of doing as gestures of the real and reality. I pursue this as a silent esthetic of the trauma in my artistic outcomes which include this text. I attempt to go further to the trauma, to the 'real' effect in my impossibility to write to reach that place in silence. Moreover, I am trying to recover my own voice. Interviewing a reality beyond the art context and 'the 'real' of the subject but in a series of dynamics that switch between the I and the others.

Where in the next lines of this chapter and further, the real will be referred to as a The 'void.' Because the 'void' can transmit the idea as an image lest abstract the addresses ideas of the real outlined by Hernández Navarro in response to the perspective of Hal Foster:

'In what follows, I would like to suggest that the art that Foster sees as a "call to the Real" and an attempt to approach the pre-Oedipal through excess, obscene, and abjection, presents only one side of the coin. Faced with the strategy of the excessive, we can find a silent, hidden and disappearing art; an art that seems to leave aside the visual component, removing, reducing, hiding or making everything there is to see disappear.'<sup>12</sup>

What is shared with my perspective and that of Hernández Navarro claim another aesthetic approach from the same places the impossibility to define. The body is hidden to see in other ways the 'real' and in this text is manifested as 'the 'void'. In my opinion based in my sensations, the image of 'void' summarizes this following response of Hernández Navarro to Foster:

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<sup>12</sup> M. Á. Hernández, El arte contemporáneo...

‘If the Real is also the breaking point of discourse and the fracture of language, the place of the unnameable, where the word sinks and silence arises, where one must remain silent; the art that shows nothing, that is silent, that hides, reduces or makes the visible disappear, must also be, and consequently, an art of the Real.’<sup>13</sup>

Addressing some thoughts about the concept of *the real* now call as, from me as a writer, the 'Void' for rhythm, metaphors of a feeling, following the logic to integrated the body as a part of the text that I propose since the beginning a transform this text in contemporary art practices it self.

While this is mind, and my previous promises to describe the primary motivation of my practice, I want to locate you in the main point of this text as the 'void'. Not as defined as a sensation. I have thus established the first conclusion, for the reader, that this text is about trying to reach 'the 'void' through words. Failing as a starting point because it is impossible to highlight the 'real' in this text based on the previous frame.

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<sup>13</sup> M. Á. Hernándezl, El arte contemporáneo...

## 1. CONCEPT TOOLS TO BUILD A WRITING BODY



(ill. 2) Marina Abramović, Rhythm 10, 1973, Performance, 1 hour, Photograph: Dezan Poznanovic, presented at a festival in Edinburgh, From: Abramović, Marina, and Klaus Biesenbach.

In this section, I introduce and organize the concepts of 'affect', 'cruelty' to attempt to approach the ideas of 'the void' as outlined in the previous section. They work for me as tools to write from the rhythms of the feelings and sensations that the image can produce (ill. 2).

'Affect', and 'cruelty', are concepts that intersect in many aspects of personal interest and crucial elements in my creative process, such as:

Performance,

Other possibilities to see experiences through the body

## Life as a philosophy of connections

They represent a research base of feelings and emotions that arose during my studio process, with the input of new context and other thinkers to my repertory of interest in researching the body. In the following chapters, I attempt thinking of writing as a weaving action of references and historical context with these three concepts. I create a text simultaneously with the physical logics of my artistic practices. Writing becomes an object in the middle of forms between inside and outside reflections: essay, script graphics, alchemical texts.

- By analyzing the idea of 'Affect' outlined by Suely Rolnik, I examine my work concerning the practice of Bourgeois, whose work attempts to seek origin.
- The concept of 'cruelty', by Anton Artaud through the monologue of Warner Akisur and Badiou, outlines what I am pursuing by working with the body as a tool and content:

the body as a proof of its time

the necessity to break the reality

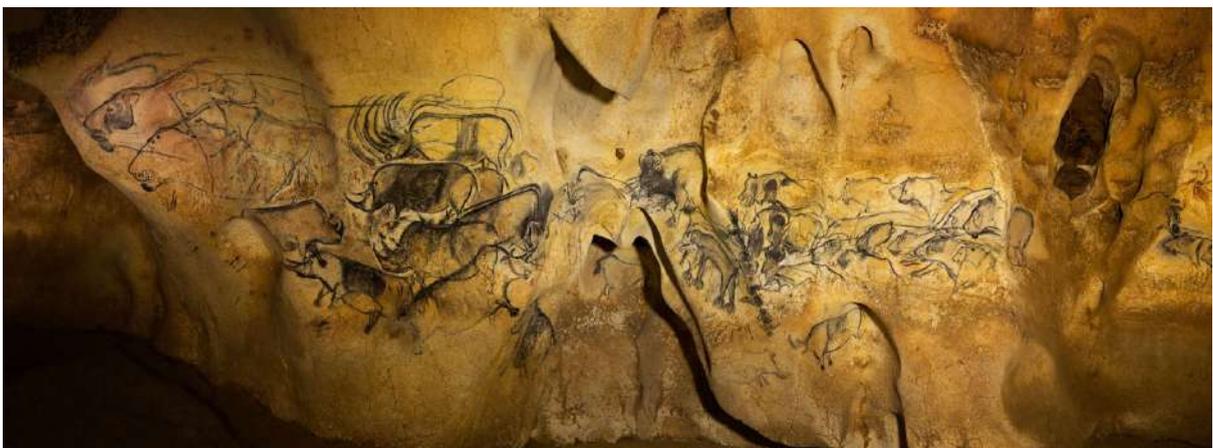
through the chaos

To contextualize my approach of Leigh Bowery work's and greek sculpture, this text is concluded by exploring the use of 'cruelty' to stage the body.

## 2. THE ENCOUNTER OF MATERIAL AND BODY



(Ill. 3) Louise Bourgeois, *Fée couturière*, 1963, Sculpture, 47 x 74 x 54.3 cm (18 1/2 x 29 1/8 x 21 3/8 in.), Plaster, Dia: art Foundation Photo: Christopher Burke.



(Ill. 4) Stephen Alvarez, *The Lion Panel* – a panorama composed of eight images. Later Paleolithic art mostly depicted herbivores, but Chauvet's artists often featured fierce predators.

In the following text, I will introduce the context and definition of the concept of 'affect'. Then connected the idea with understanding material and body as searching for an origin. Based on this, I establish a conversation with Bourgeois works and how, from my practice, I related her work to go back in the past to frame the 'void'. Subsequently, created a parallel of origin as a *void* with the primitive art in the caves to understand the 'void' as an 'affect' of capturing the none defined origin. Defined by Rolnik in her conferences *Deconstructs the Colonial Unconscious*.<sup>14</sup>

'Affect' is a concept that comes from Rolnik in her development around the proposal to reset *the colonial unconscious* – inspired by the research of *Ligia Clark's* artwork *Caminhando* (1963), [Walking] around the Moebius strip. Rolnik proposes thinking about seeing the world as topological surfaces made out of related bodies. The world through different capacities and senses. That has two sides as the Moebius strips that are inseparable: form and forces. In this text, I will focus on the capacities to approach the world through the experiences of forces. However, as a point of comparison, I will explain the experiences of the form, as a common point for our senses perspectives. That is a shape for our cultural background, which operated through the prescription of forms and the psychological affectation. But the subject is only a part of the subjectivity experience. On the other hand, the experience through forces is 'affect', resonating with our relational body (nothing to do with aesthetic relational). The forces inside and outside the body constitute single universes that encounter the capacity to resonate. That operated as a percept: a new way of seeing and feeling. And the other body or outside force operated as a living being that 'affect' as a strong emotion. Where the experience of subjectivity is outside of the subject. She explains there is a zone of the topic where the resonating body is affected by the forces of the world, for instance, the aesthetic experiences of the 'a-subjected' are new, strangeness is out of the 'language'.

With this in mind, I propose considering the encounter with the materials as a necessary experience to build a starting point. The origin of the 'void' where materials act as an external force with their universe. Universes combine their physical properties: smell, colour, texture, gravity, form. In that sense, the material is an external force that affects the body that also is a force. Another way to connect this idea of 'affect' through the power is to

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<sup>14</sup> S. Rolnik, *Deconstructs the Colonial Unconscious*. Symposium held as part of *Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today* in New York, Guggenheim Museum / Guggenheim UBS MAP, 16 December 2016. Video recording, 45 min 27 sec. Available: Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASMCTAHiVM> (accessed 23 April 2021).

understand the studio's space as the resonance zone. Building the resonated zone that Rolnik proposes through doing how the work with the material has also manipulated the subject and creates a new way of seeing. In the context of my artistic practice is an outcome that shows simultaneously inside and outside, body and materials. The result is the poetic starting point of and origin.

'I am not interested in materials; they are just a means. Which doesn't mean I don't respect my materials –plaster, for instance, is a substance that gives a great deal to those who employ it. If you pour your plaster, the plaster will begin to play, settling down from liquid to solid: it has its own life, independent of the sculptor. Plaster and cement move, offer no resistance, allow for dialogue.'<sup>15</sup>

Based on this comment by Bourgeois, I frame the idea of building an origin through lenses of 'affect', where the material is a force that interacts and plays as independent in the construction of outside subjectivity. I want to focus on Bourgeois's artwork to point out as one of many examples of her artworks as metaphors of a space of origin. Marie-Laura Bernadac groups *Fée Couturière* (ill. 3) next to a series of other works from the beginning of the 1960s as an *Organic Refuge*<sup>16</sup> from her book *Louise Bourgeois*. Lead by the visual experiences of the pieces, I am interested in how material presence affects my body, and takes my attention to the space inside the piece and what can I find inside:

Her Memories,

her father,

her mother, the English tutor,

his mistress

The sculpture bag shape suggests the possibility of a poetic game that takes something from the dark. *Fée Couturière* is the 'void', which hides various rhythms between the

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<sup>15</sup> M.L. Bernadac, *Louise Bourgeois*, p. 66.

<sup>16</sup> M.L. Bernadac, *Louise Bourgeois*, p. 65.

presences of these figures that go around a centre that comes from the past. Furthermore, past experiences exceed her cultural subject, which is force transforming her sensibility, pushing feelings and emotions to act against the materials, with the materials. The artistic process is a zone of resonance where the logic of the memory builds layers like the plaster and painting apply to the metal inside – the past as a space of origin. *Fée Couturière* does not have a conventional order to access; that reminds a logic of fragmentation in the act of recall. 'Hanging structure invites you to put your hand without knowing where the beginning is and where the end.'<sup>17</sup> Bourgeois transforms in metaphors her private life, her family in the interaction of materials that allow her to put them together. I describe a strange sculpture that combines words: a 'bagbone', 'brakeuterus', 'angerskin'. *Fée Couturière* is a secret cave through materials that build a space that retains the textures of bones. Open entrances attempting to go inside the 'void' with a symbolic object that creates origin linger in the definition.

In contrast to Luise Bourgeois, I am interested in materials and the sensation they can produce. Materials that can relate to the idea of the body and bring meanings as a discovering of what I attempt to see. Moreover, sensations appeal to the sense of touch that takes something out of me: a mark, trace, or hint of life. The direct contact and process with material give form to feelings and emotions inside the body that for me are the roots of the impossibility to define that I present in this comment by Bourgeois: 'It is not an image I am seeking. It is not an idea. It is an emotion you want to recreate, and emotion of wanting, of giving and destroying.'<sup>18</sup> That responds to a vital impulse about seeing the world under lenses of 'affect.' The material selected for instincts in my artistic process has its resistances and behaviors, as Bourgeois acknowledges in her comment about materials previously framed in these sections. For instance, the process for me and her is an experience of dialogue with intentions, thoughts, and feelings from both sides, materials and bodies. It is a space that is building aside: hand and textures and touch where the recovery starts.

Consequently, the following text establishes a relation between primitive art and Bourgeois under my fictional approach. Based on Bourgeois' comments and the documentary *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (ill. 4), I enable the reflection of the 'lost' like a ritual between body and material. I relate the sensation of finding a material for the first time and the 'affect' that this encounter can produce: speculating existential questions.

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<sup>17</sup> M.L. Bernadac, Louise Bourgeois, p. 70.

<sup>18</sup> M.L. Bernadac, Louise Bourgeois, p. 7.

As in the stone age, I think this stage of the artistic process, the encounter with material, is a return to an origin, a time before linguistics where, as metaphors of my sensations, first humans were doing marks and primitive paintings to understand their existences and relationship with the surroundings. Before, materiality was an essential part of the life of humanity; for example, weapons to hunt animals and skin them to cover the body, the encounter with the materials was not a space to go inside the body. Understanding the world around through a ritual act to put together sensations with meanings. Act of magic integrates the object of representation and essence of the stone wall support, showing something more alive. As in this description of Wener 'Herzog's documentary *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, that was a contextualizing the situations to see the paintings inside the caves, illuminated by fire:

'You can imagine people. Dancing with shadows is a strong image of human representations. Because the first representation was walls, walls and the black of 'shadows'.<sup>19</sup>

How powerful would it be to acknowledge A shadow and make them dance on a white wall next to horses and lions? The representations of forces external to the body for the first time. What is a shadow? Is it different to us? Is it an extension of the body? What is it? I am wrong. It was not a question; it was the time without words, just our eyes, hands and walls. The body against the wall with our hand or our shadows enabled self-knowledge.

The stone age is a metaphor to understand how the material was coming together to create that self-knowledge. Parallel to my artistic process comes from an animalistic instinct selecting in a similar way where my research looks for meanings and forms living inside the body and can be possible through the materials. A refuge in the middle of the impossibility to recover the 'void'. As Bourgeois hide in a shelter in her hanging objects, that talks about this acknowledgment of herself to recover from the past:

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<sup>19</sup> W. Herzog, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*. Sundance Selects, 31 August 2011. Video recording, 25 min 28 sec. Available: WatchDocumentaries, <https://watchdocumentaries.com/cave-of-forgotten-dreams/> (accessed 14 April 2021).

'When you experience pain, you can withdraw and protect yourself, but the security of the lair can also be a trap.'<sup>20</sup>

Her drawings, sculptures and installations are a space to see her concerns about the world as a prisoner or child. Bourgeois's statement the anger is the motor of her work presented in gestures like accumulating, tracing, pouring as animal a time 'beast', building her territory her language in between and fragmented in pieces that join in objects confusing in words. For the first time men inside caves and Borgeios in her past, self-knowledge inseparable of their surroundings such lions, other big predators, or her memories.

Her Memories,

her father,

her mother, the English tutor,

his

mistress

A terrific experience that danced in shadows and remained mysterious, impossible to define. Always coming as the first time, a feeling that I frame with this comment:

'The first time I entered the cave ... it was so powerful... every night I was dreaming with Leons and that was the same emotional shock for me, it was an emotional 'shock'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> M.L. Bernadac, Louise Bourgeois, p. 65.

<sup>21</sup> W. Herzog, Cave of Forgotten Dreams, 17 min 43 sec.

### 3. THE CONTENT THAT EMERGES FROM THE GESTURE

In the next section, I introduce the concept of 'cruelty' by reflecting on Barthes's text *The Death Of the Author*. Later, I reviewed how this is connected with Bowery's works to compare greek sculpture compared to Bowery artwork. I lastly related to my artistic practice to understand the necessity of 'cruelty' to stage the body.

In his book *The Death of the Author*, Barthes stated that writing starts when the author begins to die. Barthes exposes the need of the author's death in order to make the text alive, allowing the reader to 'exist' inside the text.<sup>22</sup> In this thesis context, I placed the idea of the literary author the same as an artist. For me, Barthes' concept intersects with Bowery's approach, who also disappears to reflect the other as a mirror. But how can dying within a practice be related to the body? I say with 'cruelty'.

'**Cruelty**' is composed of two authors' approaches based on their convergence in the body through the perspective of 'cruelty'. The first author is Badiou's in his book, *El Siglo* [the century],<sup>23</sup> where he analyzes Fernando Pessoa and Bertold Brecht works. He connected 'cruelty' as a matter of literary and artistic production from the political situation of Europe at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Based on the writings examples of Pessoa and Brecht and their contexts, he presents a point that touches Barthes point, my postures about working with the body as a research subject, and Artaud methodologic theory. In the mention examples, 'Badiou's expose the violence as a national symbol that explodes, dissolves or constituted personal subjectivity; otherwise, the disappear of the 'I':

'Deep down, 'cruelty' is the moment when the complete dissolution of the self must be decided. 'Cruelty' is necessary, say Álvaro de Campos and Brecht, so that we and the idea become one and nothing limits 'us' self-affirmation.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> R. Barthes, *Image, Music, Text: The Death of the Author*. London: Fontana, 1977, p. 142.

<sup>23</sup> A. Badiou, *El siglo: Crueldades* [The century: Cruelties]. Transl. P. Horacio. Buenos Aires: Manantial, 2005, pp. 147–150.

<sup>24</sup> A. Badiou, *El siglo*, p. 150.

Based on this quote from Badiou, I reflect on the necessity to disappear inside the artwork to let others exist. To transform the body in media and content research matters. The Badiou overview of 'cruelty' as the topic of the XX century similarly exemplifies the postures of the theatrical theory of Artaud about 'cruelty'. Artaud proposes a theatre attitude to impact the audiences and print a universal truth inside them. I explore this posture as a definition and concept to analyse others' work. Adding as a theoretical reference the monologue the actor and director Akizur explained in monologue performances, where I make the following paraphrase as the definition of 'cruelty', based on his speech.

A fierce determination to destroy false reality, he used the term 'cruelty' to distinguish the essence of human existence. All true art must embody the underlying brutalities of life to renew itself.

'Cruelty' is a rigorous discipline and a rigorous method of showmanship. 'Cruelty' is rejecting all forms to incite chaos.

It is lucidity and extreme awareness.

'cruelty' is that desire to live this whirlwind of life.

It is an impulse of the spiritual essence.

It is to break the dependency on the text and develop a unique language between gesture and thought. This language that emerges in space is about creating a physical mind of the word.

Take this in mind; I see 'cruelty' as the dissolution of 'I' that transforms the body in a stage of others to impact them to make them active participants in the spaces of art.<sup>25</sup>

In this regard, I will establish a conversation between my ideas about Leigh Bowery as a cruel artist and some of his comments and context. He was an artist of 'cruelty', in my opinion, using his body as the central 'thing'.<sup>26</sup> Contextualizing his practices in the middle of

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<sup>25</sup> W. Akizur, ANTONIN ARTAUD..., 7 min 58 sec.

<sup>26</sup> J. Jaeger, Jack Jaeger Leigh Bowery interview. Interview, 4 July 1994. Fort Aspere: Zapp Magazine. Video recording, 5 min 16 sec. Available: Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eh-z0EccD7A> (accessed 19 April 2021).

the punk movement in the UK that put the works of Bowery in the limits of the 'non-conformity, anti-authoritarianism, anti-corporatism, a do-it-yourself ethic, anti-consumerist, anti-corporate greed, direct action and not selling out.'<sup>27</sup> Dissolving the idea of I, Bowery works testify the anti-body of that time. Following Badiou's ideas, 'The real always ends up offering as proof of the body.'<sup>28</sup> In that sense, the punk movement allowed Bowery to dissolve society's categories. In Bowery's works, the 'void' is laid on the impossible or undefined quality of himself through performances and outrageous fashion looks with a strong corporal and material presence. For example, in his *Look 25* (ill.5): a nazi



(ill. 5) Fergus Greer, Leigh Bowery, Photography - performance, Session IV, Look 25, August 1991.

uniform on top of a leather suit with protuberant breasts and an extra-padded deformed leg, forming a sort of pillar. The face is also covered seductively, finishing with a high ponytail. A sculptural body that shows the process of 'cruelty' to disappear among symbols and sensuality without a limitation between a person and an object.

Bowery created a new idea of the body through the flourishing of fashion and music. Score ruptures, among performances, style featuring different types of body fluids, breaking ideas (Ill. 5) about cultures, genders and formats of art. To better understand my point, I quote this comment of Bowery's interview by Jack Jaeger where he asks about piercings as an idea of a violent person.

Bowery: 'I don't really like making pieces to be approachable or anything like that, but for me (...) has just been a way of first of all recognizing my body and claiming my body and transforming it sort of difficult things that have been a little bit painful, has been like a kind of passage(...).'<sup>29</sup>

He explained what's meant to have a piercing and its means to dress up as an act of recovery. With his multidisciplinary approaches or clothes claiming a space of singularity or

<sup>27</sup> Punk subculture. – Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk\\_subculture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punk_subculture) (accessed 30 April 2021).

<sup>28</sup> A. Badiou, *El siglo*, p. 150.

<sup>29</sup> J. Jaeger, Jack Jaeger..., 4 min 22 sec.

commercial, a cruel posture that doubted the dynamics of the art world, the fashion industry at that time. The body of Bowery presented chaos that was denying and affirmed the spheres of art, him and daily life. With fierce determination or extreme positions, like many describe him. Bowery Looks, performances, and life is a 'cruelty' example that stages many circumstances in touch with society using his situations and questions, as a public field.

Bowery: 'I still feel not entirely in charge of my body, I don't feel as though I own it exactly, it feels like maybe it belongs to my parents or the government, every time that there is something, that's very body-based. I kind of feel more in touch with it in a strange way the more 'connected'.<sup>130</sup>

To whom does he want to feel more connected, him or others? The comment quoted in the previous paragraph is an example of Bowery's impossibility to entirely recognize himself, a lost body that attempts to provoke, a lost body that attempts to encourage and print something in the spectators and society. The statement of chaos, a form that presses the bottoms in others as a premise of 'cruelty' that Werner explained, interpreting Artaud. For example, his performances, convulsive acts, and body form move the spectator to react from the inside. Effect of he performs in different ways, at the same time: through his clothes, his actions, his voice, for example, Wigston performance, a music piece where Bowery gives a bird to his wife. And it was further developed with an addition of vomiting in her mouth. Crossing the limits of all his gestures. The discipline of 'cruelty' It is a frequent exploration that never settles any point, on the contrary, puts all in danger.

Bowery: 'Well, I enjoyed exploring different ways of expressing myself, and I settled on some clothing and makeup and so on, some time ago, and I just been trying out different ideas rather than say do a painting on canvas or sculpting with clay. I put all these ideas onto myself.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> J. Jaeger, Jack Jaeger..., 4 min 46 sec.

<sup>31</sup> R. Cowley, Gilbert's Fridge (Gilbert's Late) - Cynthia Payne, Leigh Bowery, Sadie Nine, Queen B, 1990. Interview, 8 February 1990. UK: Tyne Tees Production. TV series, 18 min 07 sec. Available: YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pV3-YDO2Zic&list=PL4GNJ4TC9T8IFOZSW2g208yvojieOhnuOq&index=23> (accessed 19 April 2021).

Even when this comment contradicts the invitation of Barthes to destroy the author, to allow the cohabitation of others on the other hand, I see this self exploration also as a destroyer of the author. By magnifying himself until disappearing another and undefined label that also allows the inhabitation of others. His body was a sculpture in the context of 'cruelty', physicality staging an anti-ideal of the body.

With this in mind, I found Bowery's works as live sculpture with Greek sculpture art. 'Cruelty' in the body is represented in the material presence of both Bowery's artworks and greek sculptures.. The inside forms break through the contours of Bowery, proposing a strange being that transforms him into a combination of objects and human traces. 'The urge to categorize: if you label me, you negate me.'<sup>32</sup> Bowery's forms and garments express a universe in an expansion that was breaking the content in the ideas of the body. Dissolve not just him but also the spectator that disappears in the relationship with the scale and forms. This extreme physicality is present in all his works. I will attach some examples in photography at the end of this chapter (ill. 6, ill. 7, ill. 8) called *Looks*; all of them are extracted from the catalogue book of Fergus Greer *Leigh Bowery Looks*<sup>33</sup> :

I relate the *Looks* as examples of movement, weight and tactility with greek sculpture (ill. 9, ill. 10, ill. 11), especially with the ones that touch mythical figures or punishments religion. They have a 'cruelty' sense of destroying reality to dissolve the I in ideals around the body. They also have this magnetic presence that seems to come from inside them. Creating a movement that is expectant also until created the illusions of movement. 'Expanding as well the human experiences through the obsessions with the human 'body'<sup>34</sup>. I attached some examples at the end of this chapter in parallel with the looks of Bowery, where we can see they were staging this human impossibility through the form. The cruel act of breaking the reality to shock effect by corporality in movement and outrageous gestures evokes an emotional response.

I connect this with my process through my interest in movement and body regarding the research of the form. 'Cruelty' has become a tool that allows me to think and combine media to present impossible realities of the body, transferring them to other surfaces to think

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<sup>32</sup> L. Cochrane, Sex, sin and sausages: the debauched brilliance of Leigh Bowery. – The Guardian 13 august 2018, no.6, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/aug/13/sex-sin-and-sausages-the-debauched-brilliance-of-leigh-bowery> (accessed 5 April 2020).

<sup>33</sup> F. Greer, Leigh Bowery Looks. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2002.

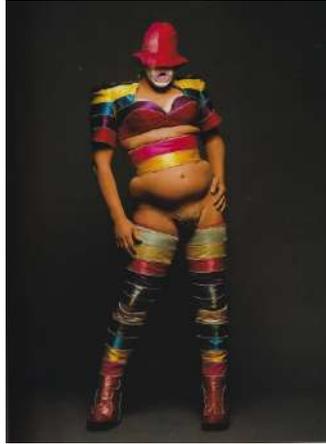
<sup>34</sup> A. Sooke, Treasures of Ancient Greece - The Classical Revolution ep. 2. TV Series, 15 April 2015. Direc. D. Vincent. London: BBC Production Village. Video recording, 29 min 34 sec. Available: Daily Motion, <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6ul0qo> (accessed 14 April 2021).

about them as bodies. Through theater techniques and disciplines I study movements that build up gestures in my drawings, paintings and textiles practices and my understanding of emotions. The technical aspects of my practices, such as the body dance training from different disciplines, embroidery drawing, 'cruelty' become in repetition filter emotions and situations until they dissolve me as suggested by Badiou and I observe in Bowery. An act of 'cruelty' that transforms embroidery beats of shining stones in flesh or body floats. In my case, the careful development of the technique allows me to transform visceral feelings or strong confusions into alluring and delicate forms, dance movements, or objects. To disappear as Bowery did to recover and allow the space of the body to cohabit relations with others.

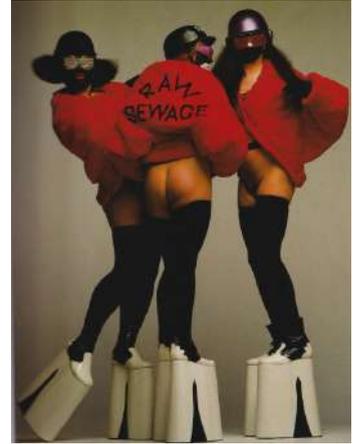
Considering this, I believe that 'cruelty' is necessary to stage the body when you work in a direct relationship with the body as a media or content. The departure point is something attached to the flesh and express body in any kind of media. For example, the previous artist Luise Bourgeois, Bowery media. You can feel the body in all of them, a kind of empathy that goes through the skiing until the bones. But I say that you need to be cruel, as Badiou, Artaud and Akizur propose as an artist and cruel as a spectator. Take whatever perturb you the most and do not ask any question. As an artist you just do ask. To transform the perturbing into something else with careful observation and holding all the forces that the recovery can bring. I work with special detail in gestures that take out personal content and private life. Cruel because you have to die must be dissolved in operations until there is nothing there. As a spectator, you must be cruel to open yourself to be affected by the details and gestures that, hopefully, will create a sense of an inner world. Cruel enough to not read the tags, to not look for authors and explanations, to face your reality inside of another body.



(ill. 6) Fergus Greer, Leigh Bowery, Photography - performance, Session IV, Look 22, August 1991.



(ill. 7) Fergus Greer, Leigh Bowery, Photography - performance, Session II, Look 03, July 1989.



(ill. 8) Fergus Greer, Leigh Bowery, Photograph - performance, Session III, Look 15, August 1990.



(ill. 9) Statue of Athena Parthenos, 170 B.C., Stone Sculpture, Overall: 457 × 130 × 94 cm, 3500 kg (14 ft. 11 15/16 in. × 51 3/16 in. × 37 in., 7716.1 lb.), Marble, Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.



(ill. 10) The three Graces, Sculpture, Roman copy of Greek statue C2nd B.C., 1.19 m (46. 8 in.), Louvre, Paris.



(ill. 11) Praxiteles, Hermes and the Infant Dionysos, 4th Century B.C, Sculpture, 2.15 m (7 ft. ½ in.). Archaeological Museum of Olympia, Greece.

## CONCLUSIONS

In essence, this thesis was a great teacher to me about compromise, self-control, and trying new ways of practicing art. Building up this paper has helped me overcome my impossibility or fear of writing and realize that it is not something that I am appealing to. It is more complicated to reach what I want to say in words. For me, words seem quite definitive and limited when I try to express a deep commotion that takes place inside my body. I only feel that I can have sense through movements and a mixture of materials. I think I refuge and look upon and origin deep on me in this creative space.

It was a big step to name that sensation as the void and created a connection between the meaning of the void and my thoughts. In essence, this thesis developed the void as a space for me in this text, almost as a healing process. Resulting in exciting forms of analogies among concepts and references that I was leading toward the physical sensation. To me, they were tools and materials that I cut, arranged, and put one to another to see what I was trying to say.

This thesis makes me realize that art is in the place of life for me. I can not be different from my pieces, and I can not think differently as happened there. Art has essential participation in the process of healing and, to me, always connects other words with humanity. Art in the same sentences that healing is something that I have been trying to avoid. As I mentioned before, it is a word that already has many connotations, sometimes reductive or put in it in other places that seems less worthy than the field of art. Take the essential possibilities and process of constructions of others from the sensitive landscape of our place. The void inside the body, unable to engage me fully, invests with the material and its expression possibilities from the place of the flesh being itself. On the other hand, commitment becomes confusing and repetitive in the writing structure. My references and what they have to say become something that allows me to keep the conversation among other patches.

I try to commit to the artist that I select to help me express that I was taking him from his voices: based on their comments or sources that give the direct speech of what they were saying concerning their arts and thoughts. What I want to do is enable my voice in this writing process. Both of them talked from places that I am still working in, the emotions that

do not stop coming over again with different faces and different forms but always from the same places. Luise Bourgeois helps me to recognize emotions as the fuel of my necessity to find forms to express that that is repetitive and unique and at the same time but, again, impossible to word. Her forms to me, more than deformations or hybrid bodies, become the transmutation forms. I only feel honest to talk about her works from the way they affect me.

I clearly could see what the place of 'I' of 'me' in my process: a blind point that becomes in the entrance's door to access that hidden reality for me impossible to explain but possible to shape. Nevertheless, 'I' is never the topic or a goal in my works in a literary sense is not about me. The body is the stage where my own life can become in the life of others when I just realized that I also feel the same. I can see the world as a mirror and the other way around. I discovered something in Bowery's artworks: she uses life as material and a statement to take all the labels around him about others down.

My work is never about 'me'; 'me' is about life as a symbol of what we share through the body. How I can dissolve myself to be us: it is a philosophy that encloses the drama of cruelty in a world that is all about our person. The process that words can not reach without sounding like something else: a narcissist, a victim, an eccentric, and an artist.

'Artist' is a word for a role that I feel comes with so much pressure, or at least to me, and it has been so difficult to assume.

After my thesis, I don't have a clear panorama of the next step. I do not believe that I can still do my practice as always having a writing process around it to complete the way that I used to operate and my purpose. Now I feel a significant interest in understanding other perspectives related to the body. In a way, deny it and transform it in everything: soul, spirit, God. How are those things existing? I feel it's essential to look at them because it seems that they are kind of lost in the only secure thing that we have as a common ground, the body and its sensations.

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