A Feminist Critique of the Concept of Home in the Work of Selected Contemporary White South African Female Artists

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Table of Contents

Declaration 2

Acknowledgements..... 3

Abstract..... 4

List of Illustrations..... 6

Introduction…...…….…..... 9

Chapter One: Feminism, Patriarchy and the Home..... 21

Chapter Two: The Concept of Home in the Work of Selected Artists: Antoinette Murdoch, Bronwen Findlay, Doreen Southwood and Penny Siopis..... 39

Chapter Three: Immaculate Misconception 2011..... 96

Conclusion……....125

List of References.....130

Appendix 1: Transcribed Interviews.....134

Appendix 2: List of Interview Questions.....173

DECLARATION

This dissertation is based on my original research unless otherwise stated and acknowledged, and has not been submitted in any form to any other institution.

_____

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SUPERVISOR'S CONSENT

I have approved this dissertation for submission.

_____

Dr. Juliette Leeb-du Toit
Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I analyse and contextualise stereotypical notions associated with the concept of home, and what that constitutes, in the work of South African artists Antoinette Murdoch, Bronwen Findlay, Doreen Southwood and Penelope Siopis, each of whom displays a different perspective of the concept in their artwork. I further consider how these selected South African artists engage with the dichotomies surrounding issues of home and the gendered position assigned to women in this area. I address the strategies the selected artists use in bringing the realm of the private sphere into the public arena and how they transgress the boundaries of private and public spaces. In addition I consider how concepts of home are reflected in my own work and how they are informed by a feminist perspective.

The choice of white female artists as the subject of this research is a conscious one, in that I wish to avoid an investigation into cross-cultural gendered subjectivities which will inevitably become entangled with questions of race, politics and culture. As western feminist thought often tends to ignore the specific experiences of ethnic groups located outside western cultural experience, my focus on artists whose context is in part shared by my own is intended to provide an insider perspective.

In the context of this research, 'home' is defined as a traditionally acknowledged place where woman is identified in relation to domesticity and the family unit. The term 'home' is therefore partly applicable to a type of domestic environment regardless of its geographic and cultural associations. Home has been defined as a 'group of persons sharing a home or living space (whereas) most households consist of one person living alone, a nuclear family, an extended family or a group of unrelated people' (Scott and Marshall 2005:276). The home is regarded as a place of security where the most intimate of relationships takes place, but it is also an arena of complex human relationships associated with domestic, family, personal and cultural identity. The home is further regarded as a private space and as being somewhat inaccessible, as opposed to the public domain which is open to scrutiny.

The home houses a corridor of emotion, however, and may often become a place of entrophy. A subtle shifting and subverting of the conventions which society places upon women and men to conform to particular behavioural constructs will be deconstructed to

reveal the concept of home as a site where the boundaries between reality and illusion become blurred.

My own artistic practice is concerned with the deconstruction of the home as an idealised space and the façade that often conceals a dystopian reality that lurks beneath such idealisation. I share assumed cultural and class values with the selected artists and will critique the subject from a personal perspective, in part as a self-narrative. Within the context of this research, the term 'middle class' is defined as 'the class of society between the upper and working classes, including business and professional people' (The *Oxford English Dictionary* 1994:509).

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1a-c: *Womenhouse Exhibition,* 1972. Collaborative site specific installation coordinated by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro, Los Angeles, United States of America.

Figure 2: Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party,* 1979. Collaborative Exhibition. Collection The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn.

Figure 3: Louise Bourgeois, *Femme-Maison,* c. 1947. Ink on Paper. 9" x 3", Private collection. Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

Figure 4: Antoinette Murdoch, *Self-Portrait,* 2002. Dimensions unknown. Collection, Antoinette Murdoch.

Figure 5: Antoinette Murdoch, *Tuisteskepper (Homemaker),* 2002. Floor Installation. Collection, Antoinette Murdoch.

Figure 6: Antoinette Murdoch, *Te Kort Skiet (To Fall Short),* 2002. Steel, wire and tape measures, life size. Collection, Antoinette Murdoch.

Figure 7a-d: Bronwen Findlay, *Belongings,* 2008. Oil paint, found objects on canvas.
Dimensions 4288 x 2848cm. Collection, Bronwen Findlay.

Figure 8: Doreen Southwood, *Curtain,* 2005. Sheet metal, nuts and bolts, magnets. Dimensions unknown. Collection, Doreen Southwood.

Figure 9a-b: Doreen Southwood, *Shock Absorbers,* 2001. Red fake fur slippers. Floor installation. Collection, Doreen Southwood.

Figure 10: Doreen Southwood, *Anorexia Nervosa,* 2001. Cabinet and vases. Dimensions unknown. Collection, Doreen Southwood.

Figure 11: Doreen Southwood, *Black Hole,* 2002. Satin ribbon, wood and perspex. Dimension 180cm in diameter. Collection, Doreen Southwood.

Figure 12: Doreen Southwood. *Ribbon Pillar,* 2004. Satin ribbon, fabric roses and wood. Dimensions 400 x 100cm. Collection, Doreen Southwood.

Figure 13: Doreen Southwood. *A Friend,* 2002. Wooden Cabinet and magazines. Dimensions unknown. Collection, Doreen Southwood.

Figure 14a-e: Penny Siopis. *My Lovely Day,* 1997. Video installation and selected stills. Collection, Museum of Modern Art, Stockholm; South African National Gallery, Cape Town; Penny Siopis.

Figure 15: Penny Siopis. *Cakes Pie,* 1982. Oil on Board. 25 x 35 cm. Courtesy Sylvia Kaplan.

Figure 16a-c: Penny Siopis. *Queen Cakes* Detail, 1982. Oil on Canvas. 90 x 130 cm. Private Collection.
Penny Siopis. *Embellishments* Detail, 1982. Oil and found objects on canvas. 150 x 202 cm. Collection University of the Witwatersrand.
Penny Siopis. *Plum Cream* Detail, 1982. Oil on canvas. 201,5 x 149,5 cm. Private Collection.

Figure 17a-i: Linda Jones. *Immaculate Misconception,* 2011. Mixed media installation. Collection, Linda Jones.

Figure 18: Linda Jones. *Magazine Rack,* 2011. Covered with chicken skin and waxed roses, housing family photo albums. Dimensions 50 x 20 cm. Collection Linda Jones.

Figure 19: Linda Jones. *Rug and Waxed Roses* Detail, 2011. Dimensions unknown. Collection, Linda Jones.

Figure 20: Linda Jones. *Cabinet,* 2011. Containing personal diaries covered with chicken skin; decaying bread. Dimensions 125 x 50 x 30

Figure 21: Linda Jones. *Epidermis* 2011. Selected still from video. Collection, Linda Jones.

Figure 22a-c : Linda Jones. *Photographic Images,* 2011. Photographs of the home framed in antique frames. Dimensions variable. Collection, Linda Jones.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation represents a self-reflexive examination, embedded as I am within a white middle class South African context. In spite of years of feminist consciousness, I assert that the hierarchal relation between genders has not changed significantly. The notion persists that home and family belong to a woman's sphere, rather than being a joint responsibility. Some societal attitudes that currently prevail are that women marry and lead conventional home-centred lives, the home being the terrain where the woman's traditional roles of domesticity, nurturance and subservience are still expected to be fulfilled as a natural function of her womanhood. Women, white as well as black, 'were and to a large extent still are considered to be passive, domestic, subordinate to men and apolitical' (Arnold 1996:15).

The feminist movement is a political movement whose fundamental struggle has been to transform the patriarchal structure of society, in particular the power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men. According to Weedon (1987:2), 'power relations rest on the social meanings given to biological sexual difference and include the sexual division of labour, the socialisation of individuals in gender roles through such institutions as the nuclear family, educational systems and the media and the internalised norms of femininity which govern people's behaviour and identity'.

Yet despite the emergence of the Women's Liberation Movement during the 1970s and the increasing entry of women into the workplace, fixed conventions and traditions with regard to women’s role and association with home seem to remain entrenched even today. According to Scott and Marshall (2005:213), 'families and work have often been conceptualised as separate spheres, with women being linked to the home and men to the workplace...this was perpetuated by the sociology of the family being conducted as a separate enterprise from the sociology of work and occupations'.

The notion of family and domesticity, with the woman as wife, mother and nurturer, will be examined relative to patriarchal constructs that have upheld what is protoypically associated with woman’s labour and function and even to the concept of the feminine. Stereotyping, part of 'an ideological process which allows women to be interpellated by patriarchal ideology' (Gamble 2001:323), has been the subject of feminist discourse for

decades, many women artists referencing home with a view to challenging these stereotypes.

Among the seminal works that addressed the sphere of home are Judy Chicago's *Womanhouse Project (1971)*, a collaborative site installation that took place in an actual house in the city of Los Angeles in the USA. The *Womanhouse* exhibition was created in six weeks in 1971 and was then opened to the public between January 30 and February 28 1972. This project made a widespread difference in feminist artmaking and in all subsequent American art. The suburban home, the site of the installation and performance, created the awareness of women's concerns such as nuturance, sex, self-consciousness and rape. The aim of *Womanhouse* was to deconstruct the female role in the home. Judy Chicago's *Menstruation Bathroom (1972)* [Figure 1a]

Figure 1a

Judy Chicago
Menstruation Bathroom 1972
Womanhouse, 1972.
Collaborative site specific installation
Coordinated by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro,
Los Angeles, United States of America

was a mixed-media site installation which she described as 'very, very white and clean and deodorised – deodorised except for the blood, the only thing that cannot be covered up. However we feel about our own menstruation is how we feel about seeing its image in front of us' (Broude & Garrard 1994:57). Karen LeCoq and Nancy Youdelman performed a mixed-media site installation *Leah's Room (1972).*

[Figure 1c] based on Colette's *Cherie.* In this performance a woman continually applied layers of make-up, expressing, the artists said, 'the pain of aging, of losing beauty, the pain of competition with other women. We wanted to deal with the way women are intimidated by the culture to constantly maintain their beauty and the feeling of desperation and helplessness once this beauty is lost' (Broude & Garrard 1994:60).

Figure 1b

Sherry Brody and Miriam Shapiro
The Dollhouse 1972
Mixed-media 48” x 41” x 8”
Womanhouse 1972. Collaborative site specific installation coordinated by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro,
Los Angeles, United States of America

Sherry Brody and Miriam Schapiro created *The Dollhouse (1972)* [Figure 1b] for this exhibition. It consisted of a three-dimensional mixed-media construction 48" x 41" x 8". *The Dollhouse* juxtaposes the beauty, charm, and relative safety of the traditional home with the unspeakable terrors that actually exist there. *Womanhouse* became both 'an environment that housed the work of women artists working out of their own experiences and the "house" of female reality into which one entered to experience the real facts of women's lives, feelings, and concerns' (Broude & Garrard 1994:48).

Figure 1c

Karen LeCoq and Nancy Youdelman
Leah's Room 1972
Womanhouse, 1972. Site specific performance
within collaborative site specific installation
coordinated by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro,
Los Angeles, United States of America

Chicago realised another collaborative exhibition, *The Dinner Party (1974-79)* [Figure 2],

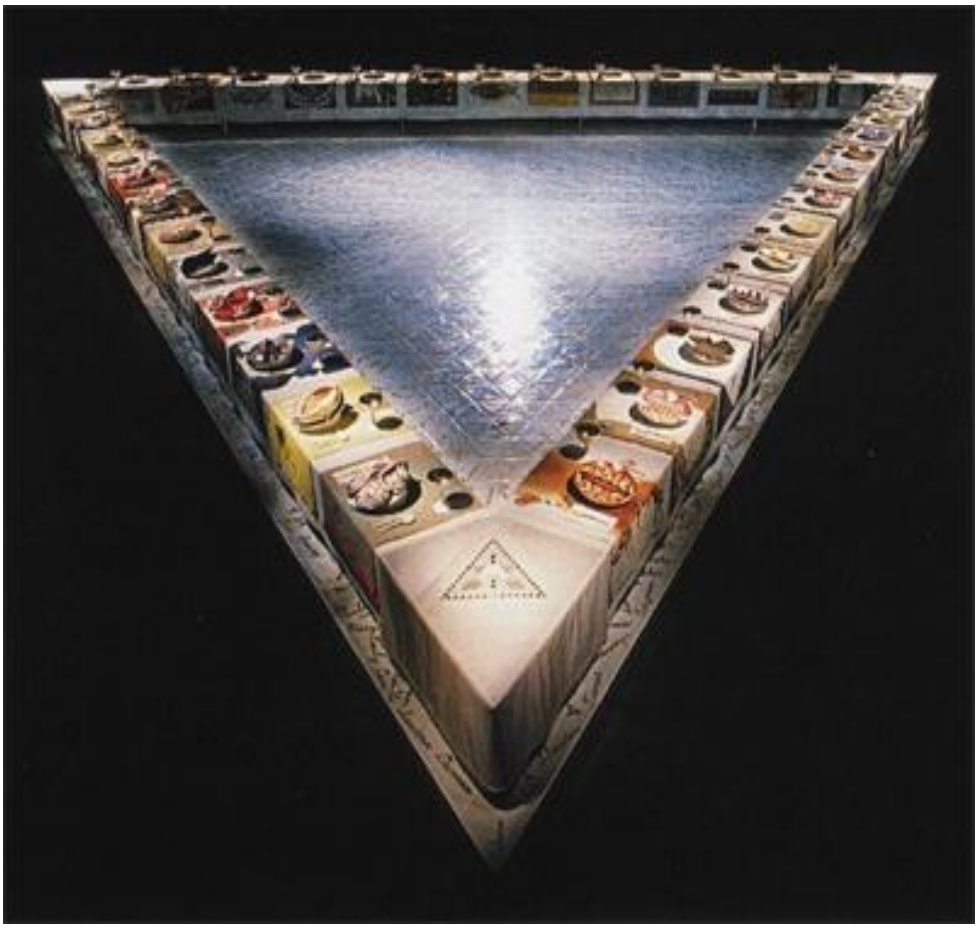


Figure 2

Judy Chicago
The Dinner Party 1979
Collaborative exhibition
Collection: The Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn

to celebrate the achievements of women who had been left out of history. She conceptualised the project 'as a reinterpretation of the Last Supper from the point of view of women, who throughout history had prepared the meals and set the table' (Broude & Garrard 1994:228). In this project women would be the 'honoured guests'. Chigaco settled on the 'format of a triangular table with thirty-nine place settings, situated on a floor inscribed with 999 women's names' (Broude & Garrard 1994: 226). The thirty-nine place settings each represented a historic or legendary woman. The components of this ceremonial meal included table runners, sculpted and ceramic plates, flatware, chalices, napkins and cloths. *The Dinner Party,* which had taken five years to realise, is the most

ambitious and widely known example of a feminist collaborative work. As women awakened to feminism, they began to redefine their relationship to each other and to society. With these collaborations, the shared insights of individual contributors built upon one another to effect social change. For artists who 'now defined themselves as feminists, the power of art as a transformative agent had never been more apparent' (Broude & Garrard 1994:226).

The work of prefeminist artist Louise Bougeois has also subsequently been recognised as being of critical importance to feminism. Bourgeois' intuitive and perversely metamorphic imagery was used to prop up old stereotypes rather than to challenge them. As Whitney Chadwick has observed of Bourgeois' *Femme Maison* paintings of 1946-47 [Figure 3] :

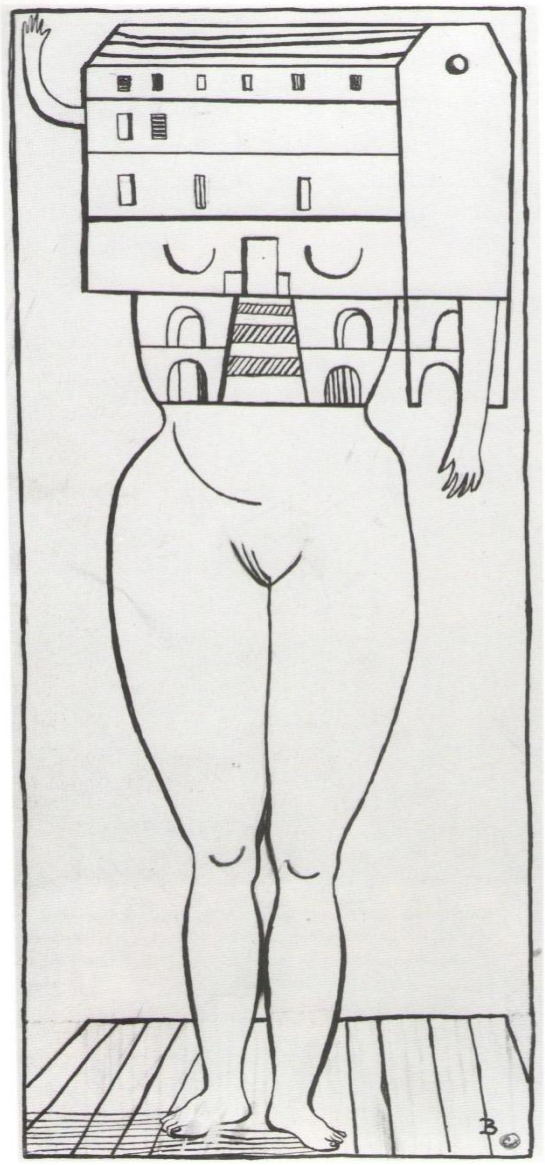


Figure 3

Louise Bourgeois
Femme-Maison 1947
Ink on Paper
Dimensions 9” x 3”
Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery
New York, United States of America

'Although Bourgeois pointed to the home as a place of conflict for the woman artist, critics read the paintings and drawings as affirming a "natural" identification between women and home' (Broude & Garrard 1994:20). Bourgeois' *Femme Maison* images of 1946-47 depicted the body of a woman with the torso adopting the shape of a house. At the time, these works were understood to have internalised the man-centred focus of the traditional woman.

Within the enclave of domesticity and the home, I question the way in which the selected South African artists I consider challenge and subvert stereotypical notions of home in their work. Although historically white women in South Africa were not actively discouraged from being artists, they entered a patriarchal system that did not endorse female assertiveness and independence. Those women, who questioned society and their role within the constructed ideal, were regarded as having transgressed societal expectations of acquiescent female behaviour. As Liebenberg (1994:8) states, 'the abundant presence of predominantly white women artists in the history of this country's art over the last century or so, did not redeem them from subjection to gender stereotypes’.

Theoretical writings important to this research have been located in both local and international sources. My literature preview indicates that whilst there is some source material locally available on the artists selected for this study, there is a paucity of data pertaining specifically to the research topic within a South Afican context. Consequently primary data has been mainly gathered by interviewing each artist. This field research took place in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Each interview was recorded with the artist's permission and subsequently transcribed. Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 are copies of the interviews and interview questions. In addition I accessed current literature on home by authors such as Tony Chapman in *Gender and Domestic Life: Changing Practices in Families and Households* (2004); Judy Giles’ *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (2004); H.Fraad, S. Resnick & R. Wolff in

Bringing it all Back Home (1994) and F. Borzello *At Home: The domestic Interior in Art* (2006).

A qualitative method of research, mainly empirical, art historical and feminist, has been used to examine the concept of home in the work of the artists selected for this study. According to Flick, Von Kardoff and Steinke (2004:3), qualitative research describes life-worlds 'from inside out', from the point of view of the participants. It thus seeks to contribute to understanding social realities and to draw attention to processes, meaning patterns and structures. Different methods include interviews and life history accounts which allow for 'experiences to be related to biographical life histories or to everyday professional practices' (Flick 2007: x). Qualitative research draws its conclusions from data or findings that are not gathered via statistical or quantifiable methods.

I examine what stereotypical notions of home continue to be enacted and consider the home as a micro-space that defines and articulates the domain from which role-play and, by extension, social identities and stereotypes are enacted. Home is also the space where all issues pertaining to personal identities are specifically articulated and expressed as an element of the broader context of identiy politics. I also centre on how home is gendered and how this can be deconstructed and what, if any, are the imbalances in power relations enacted in the home.

The cultural constructs that maintain the home as a gendered space are located in the idea that men and women are socially constructed within patriarchal society, where the way in which they behave is constructed and based on gender identity. According to Liebenberg (1994:9), 'the kinds of stereotypes women artists are subjected to are not only those within a cultural paradigm, but also those imposed by a largely white Western patriarchal consciousness'. This is supported by the fact that throughout history many women's lives have centred around their households and their roles as wives and mothers, a woman's status often being justified as the natural result of the biological differences between the sexes. As a result, women were also held to be less intelligent and less creative than men.

The rise of the feminist movement in Europe and America during the 1970s brought about a greater freedom for women to become self-sufficient individuals and created an awareness that women had played a much larger role in history than was previously assigned to them. When gender is used in feminist studies, it is almost always defined in

relation to 'sex', gender being the social or cultural construction of sex. The position of women artists within our changing society, the ideologies which have affected them, and the strategies of resistance and survival used by them are of particular significance. Within a South African context the issues surrounding women have been far more complex, due to ideological constraints and racial polarisation that drew women into politics of race rather than gender. Previously national politics marginalised female agendas. What is significant to many South African woman artists is 'not whether they define themselves as feminist artists or women artists, but that they function as artists...and prove that female and feminine creativity makes a significant contribution to the diversity of South African culture' (Arnold 1996:147).

I have also utilised Jacques Derrida's theories of deconstruction that first emerged in 1967, in particular his analysis of the hierarchies of binary opposition and his foregrounding of a mode of reading known as deconstruction. Royle (2003:13) asserts that all systems of thought, according to Derrida, are built upon a binary pattern that places concepts in opposition, and then privileges one above the other, thus producing meaning. The practice of deconstruction is dependent on a method of reading which no longer assumes that the 'text' has a single essential centre upon which meaning ought to converge, or even upon which the interpretation of different critics ought to converge. Within a South African context all of the above are specifically analogous to deconstruction, binary opposition, subjectivites and micro-resistance. These theories will be applied when studying the works of the artists selected for this research.

The literature surveyed in my study largely centered on feminist perspectives, enabling me to analyse and contextualise the persistence of stereotypical gender roles and the power and position of the discursive and social frameworks in which art is produced. In *Desire and Language* (1980:15) Julia Kristeva presents intertextuality as a concept which subverts the symbolic order by making meaning irreducible to single or stable units. In practice this means that every text is always understood in relation to a range of other texts. Intertextuality is a term employed by Kristeva to propose that meaning is always reliant on a range of contextual information. As with Derrida's notion of *différance,* the consequence of this approach is that interpretation is always in process, never quite finished or finite. While 'intertextual' here implies literary usage, the term 'text' is used here in its widest sense to denote any 'sign' or unit of meaning, so that a film, a piece of music or art, or even the 'self' may be read as a text.

Central to the feminist critique of binary thought is the issue of *différance.* Many feminists clearly share with postmodernism an assertion of *différance,* rather than binary opposition and exclusion. Specific theorists who argue in support of *différance* and draw on pyschoanalytical theory, such as Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixious and Luce Irigaray, will be referred to in conjunction with Derrida. *Différance* is a French word meaning difference,

deferral, and describes the process whereby meaning is 'rendered permanently indeterminate, leaving language to refer only to itself' (Royle 2003:71).

Believing that women's difference is both sexual and linguistic, Cixious attempts to deconstruct the binary opposition that constructs male and female. Her aim is to speak and write about a positive representation of femininity in a discourse that she terms *écriture féminine*. This is a particular form of writing which 'draws upon deconstruction and elements of Lacanian theory to weave texts of extreme complexity which might best be described as 'theoretical fiction' in that traditional distinctions between theory and fiction are deliberately ignored or transgressed' (Macey 2000:106). In this Cixious' theoretical position allows for a more deconstructive approach to the analogy between the feminine and home, in which she contests this fiction by challenging such assumptions.

What unites Cixious, Kristeva and Irigaray is the belief that there is an area of textual production that can be called 'feminine' and which exists beneath the surface of masculine discourse. This is a discourse of a positive representation of femininity known as *écriture féminine. Écriture féminine,* literally 'feminine writing' or 'writing on the body', is a discourse that is associated with subjectivity, sexuality and language. It is also strongly influenced by deconstruction and psychoanalysis. For Cixious, Kristeva and Irigaray, the semiotic is the source of *écriture féminine* in tune with the female body and drawing upon what is repressed on entry into the symbolic order, or the realm of masculine discourse.

In terms of this dissertation, therefore, Cixious' theory is relevant in so far as it examines stereotypical perceptions of femininity as exclusively domestic and maternal and as being among the only spheres in which a woman could achieve social recognition. However it is in her challenge to the latter that she addresses the ironies, ambiguities and constructedness of such theoretical fictions. Cixious, (Sellers 1994:35) believes that woman's difference from man is both sexual and linguistic, and her aim is to write about a positive representation of femininity in the discourse she calls *écriture féminine'.*

As Cixious portrays it, men as well as women can access a female mode of writing.
The significance of the theorists chosen for my study provides a vehicle for the articulation of the unspeakable within the sphere of my own work, enabling me to deconstruct and explore notions of a socialised percept of femininity within that of home and the domestic realm as well as a repudiation of this in the notion of alternate spaces or those that are not constrained by gendered or socialised constructions of femininity. In this I refer to Kristeva's theory of abjection. The abject according to Kristeva (1982:2) is associated with all that the subject perceives as being unclean and potentially polluting. These all serve to remind the subject that it cannot escape basic biological drives over which it has no influence. Some female artists appropriate the abject in order to challenge conventional representations of the feminine.

I shall use Michel Foucault's theories of micro-resistance to examine the unequal relations of power in both the domestic and social space. Foucault, philosopher and cultural critic, believes like Derrida, that power is situated in hierarchies. Everything according to Foucault (1977:170) is subject to levels of power, where nothing is natural but everything is culturally and/or socially produced. For Foucault knowledge is always a form of power and his theories thus profoundly influence the development of postmodernist thought. In terms of the latter and in relation to the work I examine and what I produce, Foucault's theories are significant in providing a critical framework that deconstructs and erodes the edifices of socially constructed hierarchal realms such as the home and the domestic. As Gamble (2001:234), states, Foucault also examined the operation of discursive power-formations on the female body, which he argued was subject to 'hysterisation'. Identified wholly with its reproductive functions, the female subject is thus confined to the private domestic sphere.

My research is further supported by Kristeva's theory of the abject, as described above, which for her is bodily expulsion of substances that the subject perceives as unclean and potentially polluting, such as bodily fluids and wastes. According to Macey (2000:1), 'at the same time, the experience of abjection establishes boundaries by facilitating the introduction of a distinction between the inner and outer'. My research will investigate the stereotypical perceptions of the home as a site of containment and cleanliness, a space with boundaries and borders, which, when subject to scrutiny, reveals a realm marked by liminal secretions and abjection. Thus (Kristeva 1982:4) it is ‘not a lack of cleanliness or health

that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'.

Kristeva is further concerned with sexual difference, arguing that the place of sexual difference is the semiotic, which precedes the child's initiation into symbolic order and language, the paternal zone. To her the 'semiotic' describes the pre-Oedipal stage of a child's development, a time of mother and child bonding, maternal rhythms and bodily drives. In *Desire and Language (1977),* she suggests that the 'masculine symbolic represses the semiotic or maternal drives, but the semiotic erupts into poetic language' (Gamble 2001:258). All language, according to Kristeva, is sexually differentiated: the masculine symbolic retains logical connections and linearity, and is challenged by the semiotic which contain feminine drives.

The significance of Kristeva's writings to my research, lies in attempts to interrogate the definition of 'abjection'. Taboos surrounding bodily emissions articulate more than revulsion against a lack of cleaniliness; the body functions as a metaphor for social structures. Abjection is thus no respecter of borders, reflecting rather the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. With reference to my own creativity abjection draws attention to the precariousness of my identity within the confines and constraints of the space called home.

Further theories relevant to my research are those of Luce Irigaray, psychoanalyst and feminist philosopher, who considers gender difference in language, contending that speech is never neutral, always marked by sexual difference. Irigaray maintains that throughout western philosophical tradition, women are the 'sex which is not one', which is also the title of her 1977 publication (Gamble 2001: 254). For Irigaray, psychoanalysis has constructed a monosexual culture in which the masculine is always the 'norm' and women are seen as the other. In her book *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974:21), Irigaray has continued her attempts to formulate an alternative to masculine philosophical thought, which, she argues, works to alienate women from themselves. Irigaray's ideas are acclaimed by feminists and serve for a theoretical post-feminism which constructs female identity as difference. Their obvious relevance to my dissertation is their scrutiny of the monosexual construction of female identity in particular social posits such as the home.

CHAPTER ONE

Feminism, Patriarchy and the Home

In this chapter I provide a brief historical background of the period to be covered (1980-2011), introduce the general critical perspectives I use, outline the sources I have consulted and introduce my main areas of discussion. I also examine Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida's critical approach to the deconstruction of meaning and the prevailing binarisms that are central to feminist thought and that have particular relevance to the role-playing and enactment expected of women in the home.

In my dissertation I represent, interrogate, juxtapose and construct conversations between three important modes of contemporary western thought: psychoanalysis, feminist theory and postmodern philosophy. I am not a neutral or disinterested participant in these dialogues, as my dissertation represents a self-reflexive examination, and I am embedded in a white middle-class South African context. At least two goals motivate my evocations.I a desire to grasp certain aspects of the texture of my social life as a white South African woman living in a contemporary westernised country and society. I also wish to satisfy my fascination with questions of knowledge, gender, subjectivity, and power in their interrelations. In part these goals arise from my own work - I juggle my different identities as artist, wife, mother and homemaker – while as a woman, I confront the omnipresence and centrality of gender and my lived experience of its structures of dominance and subordination.

The position of women living and working as artists in South Africa has always been a somewhat precarious one. The feminist movement is a global one, but in South Africa, women have had to confront the deep racial divisions created first by a patriarchal-colonial and then by an apartheid context. Prior to 1994, South African women were urged to make race and the struggle for democracy of prime importance. The 1980s saw the emergence of feminist consciousness in South Africa, but apartheid obliged most South Africans to see things largely in terms of national politics, while issues of gender receded into the background as apartheid effectively divided people along racial lines and suppressed the politics of gender while strengthening patriarchal power and attitudes. Discriminination against women was masked against races. According to Marion Arnold (1996:15), white

women received bad press from a challenged patriarchy while black women were warned that feminism was an unacceptable doctrine espoused by middle-class white women.

Throughout the 20th century South African visual culture evolved steadily against a background of simmering political unrest. South African women artists, with only selective knowledge of what the majority of South African women thought, felt or achieved, had difficulty combating the insidious effects of patriarchy within visual culture. Many women still think that 'male opinions are automatically correct', or that 'culture is gender-free'. Female points of view *do* exist, however, Arnold declares, and seeks 'to voice some of them' (Arnold 1996:i).

The existence of male dominance has in itself obscured the problematic nature of gender relations. In western culture, as in most other cultures, 'gender is a differentiated and asymmetric division and attribution of human traits and capacities' (Flax 1990:23). There are many important differences in any society between women and men, yet gender relations (insofar as we understand them) have mostly been relationships of domination. Typically, in male-dominated societies men have more access to and control over the most valued resources and social activities. For example, in a religious society men become priests, and women are excluded from the most important religious functions or are thought to pollute them. This dominance and the existence of gender as a socially constructed system have been concealed in many ways, e.g., defining women as 'a question' or a 'sex' or 'the other' and men as 'the universal or ungendered species'. Thus in a wide variety of cultures and discourses men are seen as free from or not determined by gender (Flax 1990:23).

Feminist theory has attempted to intellectualise and critique the subordination of women to men. The history of feminism was coincident with the Enlightenment, 'a period of heightened philosophical and intellectual enquiry which challenged the prevailing order of things in a range of discourses based on reason' (Rohmann 1999:115). Focused on rational thought and human progress, the Enlightenment upheld the existence of the self, a stable, reliable, integrative entity with access to our inner states and outer reality (Rohmann 1999:115). Enlightenment assertions on individual rights were largely addressed to men, but feminism was nevertheless indebted to the Enlightenment which created the model of humanitarian reform that inspired first-wave feminism (Gamble 2001:224).

Feminist theory seeks to transcend liberalism. Helen Eisenstein (1984:xv) argues that feminism draws upon three streams of thought: The first is the rights of man (considered in 17th and 18th centuries). These rights participation in public life, e.g., voting and holding public office. Women, however, were denied these privileges, were also isolated from theoretical and intellectual debates in the arts, and were mostly barred from art education in the 18th century. The second stream of thought is socialist theory, Marxist socialist theory, which grew from the realisation that political liberalism was hollow without the economic means to attain it. Economic rights, specifically the right to economic justice, were added to political rights in the 19th century. Equality of legal rights without other social changes perpetuated inequalities of status, for true social justice meant the third stream of thought was the discarding of socially disparate roles by feminism. According to Whitney Chadwick (1990:33), 'the modern division between public and private that underlies the formation of the modern family' coincided with a division between the public sphere of male activity and a private and female domestic realm.

The ideas of Rousseau on the desirable place of women in the social order became identified with the emergent modern world. His arguments are significant in that they support the separation of work-place and home underlying modern capitalism and are consistent with a long western tradition rationalising the separation and oppression of women in patriarchal culture (Chadwick 1990:34). Rousseau further believed that women lacked the intellectual capacities of men and he disputed their ability to contribute to art and civilisation, outside their domestic roles. He believed that women were naturally inferior and submissive, 'but he also put great emphasis on the notion that the sexes should be separated' (Chadwick 1990:34). The characterisation of women's art as biologically determined or as an extension of their domestic and refining role in society reached a climax in the 19th century, a period that saw the origin of the categories 'woman artist' and 'female school'(Chadwick 1990:36).

In the late 19th and early 20th century an examination of sexuality and sexual behaviour in its social and political context was a strand of social theory that considered the relationship of sexuality to society, of repression to civilisation, and of individual psychic formation to the creation and reproduction of the social order. Feminism drew on these traditions, 'transforming them because what is at issue is the winning of these rights for women' (Eisenstein 1984:xvi).

Feminist theory, though, begins as a self-consciously distinct field only in the latter part of the 20th century with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex (1949).* Feminist writers de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique (1963),* established a framework for renewed discussion of feminism in the 1970s. In this phase of the debate, the socially constructed differences between the sexes were judged to be the chief source of female oppression. Most importantly feminist theory concentrated on establishing the distinction between sex and gender and developed an analysis of gender roles as a mode of social consrtuction. Cudd and Andreasen (2005:1) assert that 'making intellectual sense of the subordination of women to men' has become a more encompassing project than its political analysis might suggest. Women are dominated not only politically and economically, but also sexually, physically, and in nearly every field of artistic or intellectual endeavour.

De Beauvoir's well known assertion in *The Second Sex (1949)* that 'one is not born a woman, but becomes one' encapsulates the idea that femininity and femaleness are social constructions. This became central to subsequent feminist politics and is fundamental to much social inquiry into the sexual division of labour, women's health, familial relations and popular culture. De Beauvoir (1949) also argues that gender differences are not rooted in biology, but are rather artificial constructs that work to reinforce women's oppression.

The beginning of change in western societies can be dated somewhat arbitrarily from the First World War (1914-18) in Europe and the end of the Second World War (1939-45). Western culture was in a process of fundamental change: the end of colonialism, the uprising of suffragists, the revolt of other cultures against white western hegemony, and shifts within the balance of economic and political power in the world economy. Since the end of the Second World War however, women have entered academia in larger numbers and now form a significant minority of intellectuals and theorists in many fields. Slowly but surely this has led to the recognition of male bias in the history of ideas and society and to the acknowledgement that maleness or masculinity was men made the norm for humanness or humanity (Cudd and Andreasen 2005:1).

According to Flax (1990:22), important North American transformations on the side of feminism include changes in the structure of the economy, the family, and the emergence of political groups with increasingly divergent ideas and demands on justice, equality, social legislation and proper roles of the state.

In effect the realisation of Enlightenment ideals emerged coincident with 20th century modernity.

Feminist theory has proven to be applicable across a wide variety of human thought and action, for it has shown that much of what we do, and how we conceptualise it, is affected by gender. On the other hand, feminist theory offers visions of liberation, of what life, persons, and society would be like without the subordination of women. Feminist theory has also 'encouraged historians to look again at the contributions of women to see whether the creators have been forgotten because of their gender rather than for their supposedly inferior ideas' (Flax 1990:23).

Since feminism begins as a movement against oppression, the question of sexist oppression will now be addressed together with the nature of the sexism and of the oppression. The unique aspect of the oppression of women, as distinct from that of other groups, will then be evaluated. I will also examine how sexual difference and 'socially constructed differences of gender have been confused' (Cudd and Andreasen 2005:3).

Feminism is an 'analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it' (Linda Gordon in Eisenstein 1984: xiii). The first wave of feminism refers to the first concerted movement working for the reform of women's social and legal inequalities in the 19th century. The key concerns of first-wave feminists were education, employment, marriage laws and the plight of middle-class single women.

Liberal feminist political action brought about many important changes in the situation of women. Not only did it result in women's suffrage in the 1920s, but feminists also gained property rights for women, reproductive freedoms and greater access to education and the professions (Cudd and Andreasen 2005:7).

Second-wave feminism refers to the increase in feminist activity which occured in America, Britain and Europe from the 1960s onwards. Second-wave feminists maintain that, although important, political and legal equality were not enough to end women's oppression. Their view was that sexist oppression was not simply rooted in legal and political arrangements, but that its causes were all pervasive and were deeply embedded in every aspect of human social life, 'including economic, political, and social arrangements

as well as unquestioned norms, habits, everyday interactions, and personal relationships' (Cudd and Andreasen 2005:7).

Second-wave feminism also challenged the public and private dichotomy by scrutinising areas of human social life that were previously seen as political – such as marriage, motherhood, heterosexual relationships and women's sexuality. Rather than trying to reform existing political structures, second-wave feminists aimed to radically transform almost every aspect of personal and political life.

According to Linda Nicholson (1997:1), the political movements that came into being in the 1960s meant that a radical questioning of gender roles was not only initiated by isolated or marginalised groups but even received national attention. Feminism in the arts grew out of the contemporary women's movement, its first investigations relying heavily on sociological and political methodology. Early feminist analyses 'focused new attention on the work of remarkable women artists and on unequalled traditions of domestic and utilitarian prodution by women' (Chadwick 1990:8). They revealed how women and their productions were presented in a negative relation to creativity and high culture. These early feminists further showed how the binary oppositions of western thought – man/woman, nature/culture, analytic/intuitive – were replicated in art history and reinforced sexual difference as a basis for aesthetic valuations (Chadwick 1990:8). Qualities associated with 'femininity', such as 'decorative', 'precious', 'miniature', 'sentimental', and 'amateur', have provided a set of negative characteristics against which to measure 'high art' which up until then referred to the masculine.

At the same time the nature of patriarchal structures that oppressed women went virtually unmentioned, as women were expected to adapt themselves to male-dominated stuctures rather than the other way round. Beginning in the 1970s, and in part as a reaction to these developments, however, the view of female differences from men began to change. Consistent with de Beauvoir's writing (1949), woman was defined and differentiated with reference to man and these differences contained the seeds of women's liberation. Rather than seeking to minimise the polarisation between masculine and feminine, the differences sought to isolate and define those aspects of female experience that were potential sources of strength and power for women, and, more broadly, for social change. This trend is also reflected in de Beauvoir's argument (1949) that historical and contemporary constructions of gender treat masculinity as a positive norm and femininity as a deviation from the masculine ideal – thus making women the 'other' or the 'second sex'. Woman is defined and

differentiated with reference to man and not man with reference to woman. Woman is the incidental and other, the inessential as opposed to the essential, while man is the subject, the absolute, which in effect refuses woman any kind of historical subjectivity or agency (Giles 2004:23).

A belief in a female nature or feminine essence, which could be revealed by stripping away layers of patriarchal culture and conditioning, dominated feminist investigations during the early 1970s. The desire to 'reclaim women's histories, and to resituate women within the history of cultural production, led to an important focus on female creativity' (Chadwick 1990:9). It also directed attention to the categories – 'art' and 'artist' – through which the discipline of art history has structured knowledge.

Sexual difference has been shown to be inscribed in both the objects of art historical enquiry and the terms in which they are interpreted and discussed. If as Chadwick (1990:9) and others have argued, 'the production of meaning is inseparable from the production of power, then feminism (a political ideology addressed to relations of power) and art history (or any discourse productive of knowledge) are more intimately connected than is popularly supposed. Early feminist investigations challenged art history's constructed categories of human production and its reverence for the individual (male) artist. They also raised important questions about the catergories within which cultural objects are arranged. (Chadwick 1990:10).

When women artists were admitted to the art historical canon, it was under the banner of 'greatness' and as exceptions. Chadwick (1990:10) further states that ' isolated from the centres of artistic theory and from roles as teachers, few women have been able to directly bequeath their talent and experience to subsequent generations'. Attempts by women artists to juggle domestic responsibilities with artistic production have often resulted in smaller bodies of work and smaller works than those produced by male contemporaries. Yet art history continues to prefer prodigious output and monumental scale to the selective and the intimate. Finally, Chadwick (1990:10) asserts that the historical and critical evaluation of women's art has proved to be inseparable from ideologies which define woman's place in western culture generally.

As the inadequacies of methodologies based on the ideological and political conviction that women were more unified by the fact of being female, rather than divided by race, class,

and history, were exposed, many feminist scholars turned to structuralism, psychoanalysis, and semiology for theoretical models.

Feminism experienced a 'third wave' in the late 1980s by feminists who wanted to make women's diversity, and diversity in general, more central to feminist theory and politics. For example, women of colour maintained that their experiences, interests and concerns were not fully represented by second-wave feminism. Part of the reason was that, historically, second-wave feminism was largely represented by middle-class white women who tended to focus on the commonalities among women and their experiences of oppression without taking social circumstances into account. This engendered a 'false univeralism that addresses itself to all women, with insufficient regard for differences of race, class and culture' (Eisenstein 1984:xii).

In response to this trend, feminists of colour argued that women from different social groups – racial, economic, sexual, - experienced different types of oppression. In a South African context a sense of location within western culture is shaped and differentiated by race, class, ethnicity, gender and sexual preference. The West too is not homogeneous, as differences exist within Europe internally and between European and American culture. Nonetheless the 'existence of numerous particularities does not negate the possibility or meaningfulness of shared experiences' (Flax 1990:6).

The Domestic Space and Predetermined Roles

Women's experiences of and expectations about domestic roles, responsibilities and relationships have developed and continue to change over time. I will now look at the way in which women challenge traditional notions about gendered practices in the domestic sphere and at the way in which these practices require constant renegotiation.

In the early 1800s with the expansion of the middle classes, a new set of social expectations came into being. Over the centuries women became increasingly defined as keepers of the home, while men went out to work. The home was a private world where women had their base. In their roles as wives and mothers they had gained moral prestige, though not in public, and were able to wield considerable influence within the domestic sphere. Domestic rituals and conventions governing personal relations were as likely to be shaped by women's moral influence as by male despotism and, as a result the home gave

women their own sphere of influence. At worst it ensured that women were its prisoners, that they were subject to social demands and to the men of the family (Borzello 2006:10). The doctrine of separate spheres which the Victorians applied to the conceptual division of public and private, produced a particular way of life in which the public sphere became the domain of men. The private realm for men was not only idealised as a haven from the exacting world of commerce and politics, but was increasingly experienced as a place of constraint. As a result an ambiguous relationship to private and public space developed in that 'the public sphere was a space fashioned for men as a space where the responsibilities of the private sphere could be left behind, as a place of freedom and even immorality' (Giles 2004: 37).

Throughout western history women have had fewer rights and have been regarded as inferior and less important than men. The role of wife and mother dominated, and most women's lives centred around their households. A woman's status was often justified as being the natural result of the biological differences between the sexes. Women were also held to be less intelligent and less creative than men, so that 'for the greater part of Western history, the absence of women from the pantheon of great artists was accepted as proof of their lesser skills' (Grubb 1989:10).

One of the frequent themes in feminist writings is the effect of female biology on woman's self-perception, status and function in the private and public domain. To avoid confusion, it is important to distinguish this feminist inquiry from the anti feminist dictum that biology is woman's unfortunate and unchanging destiny. In claiming that one’s biology determines one’s destiny, what is meant is firstly that people are born with hormones, anatomy, and female or male; that females are destined to have a more burdensome reproductive role than males; that males will invariably exhibit 'masculine' psychological traits - assertiveness, aggressiveness, hardiness, rationality and be able and be able to control their emotions. Females, on the other hand, will exhibit 'feminine' psychological traits - gentleness, modesty, humility, supportiveness – and will remain 'womanly' while men remain 'manly'. The aim of feminists is to question this 'natural order' and to overcome the negative effects of biology on women and perhaps on men' (Tong 1997:3).

What is oppressive to feminists is not female biology, but that men have controlled women by assuming that their essential role is that of childbearers and childrearers.

Woman's place is integrally embedded in a patriarchal social life. To shift or disrupt it, as has begun to happen in recent years, is potentially to shift and disrupt personal identity and sexual mores, family, childrearing and customs – a spectrum ranging from religious ideology to political and economic structures. Eisenstein (1984:xiv) argues that this depends upon a model in which women occupy places previously closed to them, but that the structures of power have otherwise remained unaltered. Eisentstein's understanding of the term 'feminist' is visionary, even futuristic, in that it encompasses social transformation that, as part of the eventual liberation of women, will change all human relations for the better.

Although centrally about women and their condition, or state, feminism is therefore fundamentally also about men and social change. At the heart of feminism is an egalitarian impulse, seeking to free women from oppression by removing all obstacles to their political, economic and sexual self-determination - aims rooted in Enlightenment thought.

Because female and male seem to be opposite or fundamentally distinct types of being, we tend not to think of gender as a social relation. We attribute 'difference' to an individual's unique qualities where gender is viewed as a 'natural' attribute of the self; but we do not see gender as a consequence and symptom of particular, historical, and socially constructed cultures' (Flax 1990:24).

The notion of an 'idealised' womanhood clearly centred on woman's nurturing and homemaking roles. It is one of the means by which male-dominated societies controlled women by giving them well-defined but circumscribed roles in society with some honour and respectability attached (Walker 1990:273). Women who questioned society and their role in the constructed ideal, or who did not conform, were regarded as having transgressed societal expectations of acquiescent female behaviour. According to Griselda Pollock (1988:46), this bourgeois notion 'held that women's only fulfilment was childbearing and that women who lived and worked beyond this were unnatural, unwomanly and unsexed'. 'Femininity was exclusively domestic and maternal' (Pollock 1988:48).

Within a South African context white women of the more privileged classes in the early 1900s were not really expected to take a career in art too seriously. They were regarded merely as accomplished women who used their leisure hours productively. Involvement in the arts was considered a suitable 'pastime' for women. Even if a woman's commitment to

art was a serious one, she was expected to forsake her career and commitment to it for of marriage and motherhood. This socially constucted 'norm', instilled in young girls, directly or indirectly from birth, results in the norm appearing to be natural because it is a widely accepted custom. Any departure from this so-called 'norm', of course, appears unnatural within a patriarchal society such as South Africa. Arnold regards the situation in South Africa as one that affects all South African women, who struggled for their rights against the power of social attitudes in a patriarchal society (Arnold 1996:8).

Although sex-gender distinction is widely accepted, theories vary as to how gender is produced. Studies such as Sharpe's account of how girls become women stress the differential socialisation of girls and boys at home and in school (in Macey 2000:156). Judith Butler (Macey 2000:156), on the other hand, attributes gender to the process of 'girling' or 'boying' that begins when it is said of a neonate: 'It's a boy or it's a girl', and this is repeatedly reinforced by using performatives. Women and men actively participate in the process of gendering domestic space, e.g., by making explicit gendered choices when decorating a boy's or girl's bedroom. Western cultural values have an enormous impact on the decisions women and men make about the way a home should be organised (Chapman 2004:19). Patriarchy and capitalism continue to impact not only on the way domestic practices are defined in the home, but also on the way this affects their constant renegotiation by women and men.

Every culture constructs ideas about gender. These ideas in turn help to structure and organise all other forms of thinking and practice. Gender helps structure our ideas about nature and science, the public and the private, the rational and the irrational. Moreover, gender is a central constituting element in each person's sense of self and in a culture's idea of what it means to be a person. As Flax (1990:26) points out, 'adequate accounts of subjectivity would have to include investigation of the effects of gender on its constitution and expression on our concepts of 'selfhood".

Gender also partially structures how each person experiences and expresses himself or herself. There may be gender-based differences in how one forms, experiences and maintains intimate relations with others, or in how one resolves conflicts between the competing demands of work and family life. Flax (1990:26) also states that such differences not only reflect externally defined 'sex roles', but also evoke feelings that are part of the very fibre of the self.

Home as a Contested and Gendered Space

In the context of my research, the concept of home and its associations with the gendered roles and ideals outlined above are considered insofar as they have been challenged by feminism. The home is the space where roles, in a heterosexual context, between husband and wife are said to be negotiated. Spaces can also be dynamic, however, where emotions, relations and experience are concerned, 'to the extent that one could even question the concept of domestic space as a stable area within the fixed parameters of the home's architecture and societal structures' (Grobler 2004:6). Domestic space is a 'lived' space enlivened by the changing relationship between its inhabitants and the physical space they inhabit. The domain of the home, however, is encumbered by a range of social definitions, primarily due to its definition as a feminine space. Within the domestic realm of the home in a heterosexual relationship, a woman functions as man's complementary and even oppositional other. Conventionally she is allied to the private sphere (as passive), whereas the man is allied to the public sphere (as active).

The home is a specific macro-space that defines and articulates the domain from which role-play, and by extension social identity and stereotypes, are enacted. It is also the micro-site where all issues pertaining to personal identities are specifically articulated and expressed as an element of the broader context of identity politics. These issues are examined here in order to unravel matters of identity, gender and space that are confined and constrained within this concept of home. I perceive home to be a psychologically charged as well as a physical space. Chapman (2004:19) contends that 'home can be defined as a secure, private, physical retreat from the world; as a representation of identity; as a relationship and as a cultural object'. The term 'home' then is often fixed in the imagination as the place of our dreams and as a haven from the world (Chapman 2004:19).

The above definitions of home are all closely intertwined. To define a home merely in physical terms is clearly inadequate, because the home as a private, secure place is meaningful in that it impacts on the way householders construct their sense of identity. The home also represents a relatively private retreat from the public gaze where one can relax and be oneself. Definitions of home are also strongly affected by external social, cultural and economic pressures. For the purposes of my research, I wish to study the definition of home as a type of relationship and as an idea, a concept.

It has been said that women's lives have centred upon a 'holy trinity – husband, home and family' (Grobler 2004:8). Despite years of feminist consciousness, the hierachal relation between genders has still not changed significantly. The idea persists that home and family are a woman's sphere rather than a joint responsibility. Some societal attitudes that persist today are that women marry and lead conventional home-centred lives. The home is the terrain where the woman's traditional roles of domesticity, nurturance and subservience are still expected to be fulfilled as the natural function of womanhood. Arnold (1996:15) states that white and black women, were – and still are – passive, domestic, subordinate to men, apolitical. This contention is located in the perceived binarism between women and men where femininity is always seen as lacking.

When one considers patriarchy, it is a system that upholds male dominance whose authority is enforced through social, political, economic and religious institutions. All feminists oppose patriarchy, although they differ in their conceptualisation of it. Shulamith Firestone however, a radical feminist, perceives women's construction 'as a subordinate class arising from their reproductive functions, identifying the biological family structure as the primary site of women's oppression under patriarchy' (Gamble 2001: 293).

According to Pollock (1988:25), traditionally the 'spaces of femininity' were domestic interiors, the home as an interior space, where conventions applied and the illusions of this concept were upheld. Feminists argued that the home was the site of women's oppression because their passage to the public life of work was blocked by discrimination and the burden of motherhood and housewifery. The place of home did not necessarily fulfil the ideal of 'a safe haven' but could be experienced as lonely, confining, stifling, exhausting or even frightening (Chapman 2004:6).

The realm of the private, as well as its metaphoric and spatial manifestations, has all too often been set in polarised dichotomy to the public with the result that the private sphere has 'frequently been understood as a refuge from the modern, a repository of traditional values, a haven from the excitement and dangers of living in the modern world' (Giles 2004:4). It has also been argued that women have been rendered invisible in modernity or that modernity is antithetical to the values of femininity, so that 'the modern world is no place for women' (Giles 2004:4). To understand modernity as simply a masculine project effectively writes women out of history by ignoring their active and varied negotiations with different aspects of their social environment.

In all probability, 'feminism's greatest contribution to art has been precisely its lack of contribution to modernism' (Giles 2004:5).

Giles maintains (2004:6) that modernity is 'the practical negotiation of one's life and one's identity within a complex and fast-changing world'. Modernity, thus conceptualised, functions as a structure. It enables men and women to make sense of the social processes of modernisation in the light of the responses, visions and ideas generated by these processes. In the context of my dissertation, domestic modernity refers to the ways in which women negotiate and understand experience and identities within the complex changes that modernisation has provoked in the private sphere. It also includes woman's struggles against imposed structures that define what is acceptable behaviour for her. Furthermore, what might limit a woman's agency is not only the past that has to be dismantled, but also the present that may require careful negotiation, and the future that may appear vague and uncertain (Giles 2004:6). To suggest that all forms of domesticity are oppressive and non-negotiable is to ignore the diverse ways in which women and men respond to domesticity and the constraints of home.

Modernity in most cultural histories is identified with masculinity. Timeless feminine values of intimacy and authenticity are set against the masculine experiences of alienation and dehumanisation that constitute modern history. This positioning of women, home and the private sphere as beyond modernity not only denies women a place in the historical record, but also represents the feminine as beyond the complex meshing of modern phenomena (Giles 2004:9).

For women, finding an acceptable place amid rapid change entailed negotiating the contradictory impulses of modernity in order to create self-dignifying identities on a social and psychic level. Women were encouraged to see themselves as agents of modernisation and scientific rationalism in their domestic roles, but on the other hand were caught up in conceptions of home precisely as the antithesis of modernity. As a result, women negotiated ambiguous ways of seeing themselves and were sometimes pulled forward as agents of change but at other times were pushed back as symbols of tradition (Giles 2004:22).

The first half of the 20th century was a time when the home, with the nuclear family, became for many the centre of their lives, the locus of personal intimacy, the space where

leisure activities took place. At the same time the defence of the nuclear family - two married heterosexual parents living together with their children as a natural and inevitable structure existing from the origins of humankind was challenged and proved to be false (Gamble 2001:227).

Suburbia promises that everyday life can be lived safely and securely. Thus it engenders criticism from intellectuals whose investment in modernity tends to be an ideal that humans should transcend what is safe and conformist. The deadening routines of the home are set in opposition to the progressive march of science and industry which is constructed as masculine. Giles (2004:35) asserts that the planned developments of suburbia stand for rigidity, control, monotony, sterility and death.

Suburban domesticity was increasingly perceived as stultifying and degrading, and correspondingly women were regarded as sexually undesirable, passive and unthinking. The increasing democratisation of society and culture resulted in a critique of mass culture and suburbia as 'feminine' and therefore inferior.

Kate Millet, author of one of the founding texts of second-wave feminism, *Sexual Politics* (1970), asks how it was possible for patriarchy to continue in a world where women had education, financial resources and civil and political rights and were not visibly subject to direct coercion. The answer, she suggests lay in psychology (Eisenstein 1984:6). The social control of women in a 'free' society was not carried out through a rigid, authoritarian system of force. Rather it took place by means of engineered consent and conditioning among women themselves. From early childhood, they were trained to accept a system which divided society into male and female, with appropriate roles for each group and which allocated public power exclusively to the male sphere.

More specifically patriarchy has had a very significant influence in upholding power in marriage. Furthermore, as I have stressed before it continues to impact upon cultural understandings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Ideas of separate spheres, moreover, continue to influence notions of home life. Everyday domestic practices can 'reinforce established cultural ideas about masculinity and femininity' (Chapman 2004:20). This has resulted in the perception that feminine subjectivities arise not only from the physical spaces inhabited by women, but also from the social spaces in which women find themselves and the imaginary spaces they create for themselves. The spaces of femininity -

the domestic is the most dominant - are 'natural' places of women, but are 'the product of a lived sense of social locatedness, mobility and visibility in the social relations of seeing and being seen' (Giles 2004:17).

In the 1950s and 1960s social psychologists and sociologists persistently explained how women ought to be, rather than how they were, arguing that women had 'natural' inclinations toward domesticity and the roles of wife and mother. According to Eisenstein (1984:9), the historical development that women belong in the domestic sphere dates from the 18th century, as does the nuclear family, in which women were assigned their major duties. The interior of the home was regarded as the woman's place where she was encouraged to exercise her skills of creative homemaking. Kitchens were represented as her workshop, a space that should be streamlined and efficient. These perceptions were also located in Judeo-Christian writings. Medieval theologians believed that men were superior to women in strength, character and intellectual ability (Chapman 2004:55).

These ideas were also internalised by women and were perhaps even perpetuated by them. Eisenstein (1984:10) argues 'that women, by accepting their subordinate place, essentially made a secret bargain with men; they agreed to exchange private power in return for public submission. The power exerted by women in the 'domestic sphere over the lives of their children, and in the sexual arena of the marriage bed, was emotionally enough inducement for some women to keep themselves from claiming other powers – intellectual, economic, political – available to them in the public sphere' (Eisenstein 1984:10).

Until the advent of second-wave feminism, there were few alternatives to marriage if women wanted security, status and a measure of autonomy in society. To reign as mistress of their own homes was widely regarded as a mark of maturity and a position of power for middle-class women who were still precluded from many public offices. Moreover, the capactity to reign effectively was a marker of social identity and implicated gender. The 'true' woman was 'the married woman with children who ran her own home' (Giles 2004:71). Furthermore the middle-class wife was the conduit through which masculinity wielded authority in the home, in much the same way that imperialism allowed indigenous agents to act on its behalf in the colonies (Giles 2004:75).

For middle-class women, home meant certain standards of privacy, leisure, comfort and ease. The home, as a place of intimacy and family companionship, continued to be the

'central locus of the struggle for the meanings attributed to housework and became a key signifier of social identity' (Giles 2004:80). Yet women in the 1960s increasingly recognised that their dreams came at a price and that their housewifely skills, of which they were proud, were being increasingly scorned (Giles 2004:138).

If we are to contest these cultural and historical understandings of woman that link her with home, stasis and the everyday, with the private and, the traditional and with dependency, it is vital that their meanings should at the very least be questioned. Giles (2004:141) asserts that the homologies of the modern meanings of 'home' are organised around key oppositions - home/away, stasis/movement, everyday/exceptional, private/public, traditional/modern, dependence/independence, feminine/masculine'. Contemporary feminists have often deployed these oppositions in the emancipatory narratives that constituted the liberation proposed by second-wave feminism. In terms of the worlds of home and work, 'staying at home' was an undesirable option; 'going out to work' was the only valid route a liberated woman could take.

During the post-war years, western society sought stability in the dream of a renewed family life in which women and men occupied clear roles. Women, who had found a new independence during the Second World War, were now encouraged to see their place as domestic, deferential and dependent. Yet at the same time there was increased demand for women's labour in the workplace. These contradictions exacerbated fears that masculinity was under threat, a fear already prompted by women's encroachments into areas of male prowess during the war. The revival of domestic ideology emerged from misgivings that anything less would lead to the impairment of men's development as individual beings in a competitive society (Giles 2004:146).

The concepts of home, the domestic hearth, and the nuclear family as woman's sphere were recent historical developments and originated from the mid-19th century onward (Eisenstein 1984:20). The association of women with the private sphere and of men with the public sphere had hardened into a truism and an ideology. Domestic practices rest on a set of implicit cultural and economic assumptions about the way in which contemporary home life is practiced.

In the 19th century, patriarchy and capitalism combined to produce an ideology of separate spheres for men as 'breadwinners' and for women as 'homemakers'. Patriarchy had a very

significant impact on the conceptions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Patriarchy is deeply embedded in western ideology and has far-reaching consequences on power relations between women and men. According to Chapman (2004:20), patriarchy has had a very significant influence on power in marriage. Furthermore, it continues to impact upon the cultural understandings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in so far as the idea of separate spheres still influences ideas about home life. Everyday domestic practices and routines can reinforce established cultural ideas about masculinity and femininity. Yet there are signs that men and women, are challenging conventional notions of gender in the domestic sphere. 'Domestic practices are subject to constant renegotiation by women and men as society changes' (Chapman 2004:21).

Negotiation between the powerful and the comparitively powerless does not necessarily, or generally, lead to equality between men and women in the domestic sphere. To be the main 'breadwinner' of his family is a primary role of the 'normal' adult male in our society. Consequently, 'housekeeping' and the care of the children is still the primary function of the adult female in the 'utilaritarian' division of labour. Even if the married woman has a job it is, in most cases, not one which competes in status or remuneration with the jobs of men of the woman's own class. 'Hence there is a typically asymmetrical relation of the marriage pair to the occupational structure' (Chapman 2004:69).

The development of feminism in the 1960s reflected the progressive challenge to conventional attitudes about women's domestic roles, especially by better-educated women who recognised the possibility of gaining greater independence by developing a career of their own. Cultural values have enormous impact on the decisions men and women make about the way a home should be organised. Patriarchy and capitalism continue to impact on the way domestic practices are defined in the home, but also on how this affects the way domestic practices must continually be re-negotiated by men and women. Gendered domestic practices remain deeply rooted but, as Chapman (2004:97) says, 'they show that *both* men and women need to change attitudes if a higher degree of equality is to be achieved in the domestic sphere'.

CHAPTER TWO

The Concept of Home in the Work of Selected Artists Antoinette Murdoch, Bronwen Findlay, Doreen Southwood and Penny Siopis

Home and family have been the focus of research and fierce debate for successive feminist movements. Feminism addressess the inequalities enacted within the realm of the home, based both on the binarism between perceptions of the feminine and on the overriding power of patriarchy. This perceived imbalance is also due in part to the relinquishing of power by woman in this domain. Other than in prescribed role-playing that extends to labour and the enactment of motherhood, the female has in effect abdicated her authority in this realm and to a degree continues to uphold and fulfil socially expected roles determined by her male partner (in a hetrosexual relationship). More specifically, according to Chapman (2004:20), patriarchy, as shown above, has had a very significant influence on power in marriage and continues to impact upon cultural understandings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. The idea of separate spheres also continues to influence ideas about home life. What is perhaps more desirable, however, is open and variable relationships. Not merely as Chapman puts it - man the provider, woman the housewife and their dependent children but people living together in a chosen and perpetuated intimacy in a space where each can breathe and find her or his own destiny (Chapman 2004:89).

Feminism's position, however, at least until the 1980s, was problematic in that the perceptions outlined above shifted considerably in the late 20th and early 21st century. In the wake of post-modern realities and the new structures and relationships enacted in the home, not only are new partnerships formed, e.g.same-sex associations, but the home is also often headed by a single individual. As a result the contested terrain of the home as site of imbalanced relationships and expectations has in many instances disappeared as women grapple with modernity and the renegotiation of their identity. In resisting convention, people expose themselves to the disapproval of the majority, or to what is considered to be the norm in society. As Chapman (2004:120) contends, cultural pressures to conform to conventional roles dissuades the majority from the idea of choosing to be different. In view of these changes, the home for many has again been re-established as a haven of self-displacement and expression - a safe haven in which expectations are no longer anticipated and the home is redefined as largely conflict-free.

In my interviews with the artists selected, I have located varying perceptions of home. Most of the artists reject the narrow and fraught definitions debated by early feminism, but some of them also note that their challenge to former perceptions of the home stems from what they regard as the problematic notions of home they experienced in their own nuclear parental families. In effect, therefore gender is an important factor in understanding how households are organised, but it must also be remembered that, whether domestic practices are conventional or not, the tasks within them have to be carried out. Furthermore one must

to recognise that 'some issues require negotiation between partners across all relationships' (Chapman 2004:156).

Two artists selected for this research, Bronwen Findlay and Antoinette Murdoch, are located in Johannesburg. I could not pre-empt entirely what their responses would be, but, from the nature of their work I saw that there were specific features which I felt, engaged with or critiqued their notion of home. The artists selected were also chosen for the specific way they used objects and for their deconstruction of objects and materials.

Both artists were presented with the same body of questions (see Appendix 2). It was clearly indicated to each of them at the outset that I was critiquing home from a feminist perspective which maligned the context by perceiving it as a fraught and constrained space where roles (masculine and feminine) had to be negotiated.

In 2009 Antoinette Murdoch was appointed Chief Curator of the Johannesburg Art Gallery, one of the country's foremost museums. She was born in 1972 in Kempton Park, South Africa. After graduating from the Tecknikon Witwatersrand (now assimilated into the University of Johannesburg), Murdoch launched her debut exhibition at the Johannesburg Civic Gallery in 1996.

Murdoch is a young white Afrikaner Christian. A contemporary female artist, she was in full time ministry in the church prior to studying art. As an artist, however, she has sought to unsettle the reductive positions of feminist ideologies of gender and stereotypes to which she was subject. Insisting that her main motivation for making art is based on the fact that she is a committed Christian, and is not informed by any kind of camaraderie or sisterhood, Murdoch makes a bold attempt to redefine her position within the Johannesburg

art world. She retains some aspects of her upbringing and challenges others in terms of her newly acquired autonomy.

One of four daughters, Murdoch grew up in a devout Afrikaans family, where Afrikaner nationalism coupled with her membership of the Dutch Reformed Church, formed a powerful part of her background and upbringing. Steeped in Afrikaner mythography, notably on *The Great Trek* of history and legend, she thus prefigured her attempts to forge

a national identity based on the ideals of race, shared language, and familial bonding among Afrikaners.

In her work *Trane Trekkers (Tear Jerkers) (1996),* she presents assemblages of pure white wedding dresses hung in rows, baptismal gowns, rolled up handkerchiefs, garters, hats, bras, leggings and mini skirts, all obsessively and laboriously stitched, woven, folded and pressed together. Some are made from tissue paper, others of nylon and gossamer. They represent emblematic critiques of feminine attire as well as rites of passage that masculinity reinforces in terms of these roles. Yet they draw on or reflect the very creative processes that are ascribed to female creativity within the domestic sphere. Thus, while Murdoch does not reference the domestic directly in this work, the items and materials are in themselves linked to woman, home and femininity and to the exposed roles and enactments associated with these. Murdoch felt that it was essential to become an artist, in order to articulate central aspects of the process of wresting herself from the threefold confines of nationalism, religion and femininity attached to the home, and from her expectations in fulfilling these, all of which are patriarchally dominated in South Africa (Murdoch via email 23 May 2011).

Aside from her concerns with the feminine, Murdoch links the Afrikaans language (at least within the context of resistance to apartheid hegemony) with the social and political processes of renegotiating her identity in the 'New South Africa'. She reiterates the role that intransigent, male-dominated nationalist assumptions played in robbing South Africans of their sense of belonging; their claim to a national identity (Enwezor: Frieze Magazine November-December 1996, Issue 31). Enwezor's comments centre on a key facet of the patriarchy incipient in the construction of female identity in South Africa.

When asked if the idea of home and domesticity has in any way impeded her as a woman, Murdoch replied in the affirmative. In acquiring the independence she now enjoys, it was necessary for Murdoch to relinquish her formerly close adherence to the church, her marriage and the ideals pertaining to her familial home. Yet Murdoch's work engages the idea of home and the domestic as a form of riposte to the constraints and ideals she identifed in her upbringing. 'Having been brought up in a middle-class suburban home informed who I became', she observes. 'Although I made decisions against the norm, you can never escape your upbringing. We make art about who we are, whether directly or indirectly. My work is about the fact that I am a woman, a mother, a divorcée, white etc. It is about home, place and belonging' (Murdoch via email 23 May 2011). Yet her work is also essentially a deconstruction of these concepts.

In submerging herself in an artistic domain, Murdoch successfully manages to transform materials and objects with powerful associative qualities of home. Utilising plastic tablecloths, children's toys, tape measures and dress patterns, she foregrounds Afrikaner women's desirable home-making skills, their constraints and latent associations with the feminine.

In *Eksie Perfeksie (Just Perfect),* May 2002, Murdoch and Cape Town-based artist Doreen Southwood collaborated in an exhibition. Here Murdoch used her own body *(Self-Portrait 2002)* to challenge Western and South African conventions of representing women as simply objects of heterosexual male desire. Many South African women artists have used images of their own bodies to 'confront and question common constructs about female bodily perfection and values that underpin them' (Schmahmann 2004:51). Central to her work is Murdoch's challenge to the female ideal associated with an ideal weight and the ideal of what is found attractive in a woman, from a predominantly Western perspective. As part of this exhibition, Murdoch portrays herself as a paper doll. The 'doll' was accompanied by a loose sheet of paper depicting four outfits in which she could be 'dressed'. These outfits corresponded to everyday oufits from Murdoch's own wardrobe. Schmahmann (2004:55) draws attention to the fact that Murdoch had examined various paper dolls closely, taking cognisance of their formal and technical conventions. She reproduced her doll on the cover of the catalogue, thus ensuring that it was on a sturdy format to ensure that it functioned as an actual toy.

Self Portrait (2002) [Figure 4]

Figure 4

Antoinette Murdoch
Self Portrait 2002
Paper Doll
Dimensions Unknown
Collection: Antoinette Murdoch

is a work that is noticeably different to conventional paper dolls and the differences are an important part of the work. These paper dolls, usually made for little girls, normally depict images of women who are attractive and perfectly proportioned; the benchmark being what society sees as the norm. In this work, Murdoch worked from photographs in which she posed in a manner typical of paper dolls, 'yet her physiognomy is totally at odds with the long-legged and improbable slimness of female figures in such representations' (Schmahmann 2004:55). At the base of the figure, where one usually finds the name of the manufacturer, Murdoch has inserted her own details such as her name, and more importantly her height and weight. She terms these details 'small confessions' (Schmahmann 2004:55) and reflects that her work is very personal, revealing her weight and identity, aspects that most women would conceal from public scrutiny. This work forms part of a broader exploration of the kinds of conflict and trauma experienced by women when addressing societal expectations of them.

Another work included in the *Eksie Perfeksie (Just Perfect)* exhibition is *Tuisteskepper (Homemaker)* [Figure 5].

Figure 5

Antoinette Murdoch
Tuisyeskepper (Homemaker) 2002
Floor Instalation.
Collection: Antoinette Murdoch

This floor installation comprises cheap coloured plastic table-cloths from which house-shaped forms have been cut and built up into a house, revealing the negative shape in the plastic sheet that created the three-dimensional form. In this work Murdoch is referencing not only the homes inhabited by the privileged, but also the homeless, those dispossessed, outcast or exiled and without a place to situate themselves and any sense of belonging. This reinforces the privilege of home not as a contested site, but as a haven and a refuge. In departing from the gendered contestation of the home, Murdoch refreshingly enters into a more relevant engagement with the concept of home attached to personal and cultural identity

Measuring tapes also featured extensively on the *Eksie Perfeksie (Just Perfect)* show. *Te Kort Skiet (To Fall Short) 2001-2* [Figure 6] is a wedding dress woven from cheap white plastic tape measures over a steel framework. This work is life-size and is based on Murdoch's own dimensions. As Schmahmann (2004:56) states, 'corset-like in construction, it speaks not only of social constraints but also of the self-containment and policing of self.

Figure 6

Antoinette Murdoch
Te Kort Skiet (To Fall Short) 2002
Steel, Wire, and Plastic Tape measures, Life Size.
Collection: Antoinette Murdoch

Murdoch (cited in Schmahmann 2004:56) describes her position further: 'People measure and judge me, and I in turn measure and judge myself'.The paper doll that does not measure up, 'and actually subverts messages intrinsic to its genre, is a witty intervention into a discourse that is especially stereotypical in terms of the messages it conveys about female roles and identities' (Schmahmann 2004: 56).

Ironically while Murdoch comes from an ideal Afrikaner family where her parents remain happily married to this day, she cautiously exposes facets of this context that she did not want to replicate in her own life. Her life was very protected, in contrast to the 'real world' in which she found herself when studying in a tertiary environment and having 'to contend with a different reality, a disrupted family' (Murdoch 2011:2).

Married while still a student, the trauma of Murdoch's divorce shattered what she had been raised to believe was the ideal home and marriage.

Another factor that constrained Murdoch was located in ‘Calvinism preached and practised by the Dutch Reformed Church, of which ninety percent of Afrikaners are adherents. Its significance in shaping and cohering Afrikaner identity cannot be overestimated (Wilson/ Thompson, www.afraf.oxfordjournals.org). The church views labour as honourable and humility as godliness and tends to stress traditional and usually patriarchal patterns of domestic authority and social order within Calvinist Afrikaner nationalism where the church and its patriarchal structures exerted profound influence within the family home.

Murdoch’s later decision to end her marriage and leave the church were linked. She had to be completely committed to the church, or not at all, in that she regarded the it as a constraining factor. Her formal break with the church seems to have encouraged her to confront stereotypical notions of ideal womanhood with a more candid eye than previously.

Amongst feminist theorists, Luce Irigaray, in particular, has been prominent in discussing religion. This is in contrast to some of her feminist contemporaries, who have regarded religion as irredeemably entangled within patriarchal structures and masculinist ways of thinking. She argues that 'the existing symbolic framework in the West does not simply associate masculinity with the divine but makes the ideal of masculinity the measure of all human aspirations' (Gamble 2001:165). This in turn lends legitimacy to cultural practices and social policies which privilege these male aspirations at the expense of other human desires associated with women. According to Gamble (2001:166), Irigaray's idea of the divine is a form of projection 'without which women cannot achieve a genuine sense of their legitimacy as women, apart from their relationship with men'. Irigaray (1985:330) herself alludes to God and the divine mystery. All that exists is really like Him and both men and women have been formed in His image. He recognises himself 'equally in each, male and female' (Irigaray 1985:330).

Religion generally continues to be understood in the somewhat narrow terms of Western monotheism and its corresponding structures which, until recently, have been largely male-dominated. Women have always had a part to play in this variety of religious experience, as Gamble notes (2001:167), but modern feminist methodology has developed a way of

showing how the 'male, male-identified structures and the male point of view have marginalised or excluded women from power or the means of making their lives independently or even equally meaningful'.

Initially in white Afrikaner culture it was held that a woman should give up her career when she married. The bride, when taking her vows, had to promise to serve her husband faithfully. Symbolic power is invisible and can be exercised only with the complicity of those who fail to recognise either that they submit to it or that they exercise it. Michel Foucault reflected that 'power is tolerable only on the conditions that it mask a considerable part of itself' (Feagin/Maynard 1997:72). The patriarchal discourse of power over women masks itself in the veil of the natural, indeed of the logical. Ideology is successful precisely to the degree that its views are shared by those who exercise power and those who submit to it.

Murdoch's conservative Afrikaner upbringing and subsequent marriage placed immense expectations on her as a woman. Within her familial home any sexual discourse was suppressed, in keeping with her parents' adherence to the dictums of the Dutch Reformed Church. As Murdoch (2010:66) explains, 'like so many other white South African children, my understanding of culture was white and exclusive. While it included the *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurverenigings (Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Associations),* it excluded visits to art galleries and the theatre'.

Murdoch's mother thrived on being the 'home-maker'. Murdoch (2011:2) states that she was the cook, the domestic, the everything: 'We never even had a domestic worker. She performed all the domestic duties'. Similarly within her own marriage, although she has a good relationship with her ex-husband, Murdoch was aware of the underlying expectations of her to perform 'womanly duties'. She feels that as a result she lost her identity completely (Murdoch 2011:6), the restrictions impeding her growth as a woman.

Murdoch refers to her parents' home as a desirable but also unrealisable prototype, a model that reinforced what a home could be, even though hers and her parents' home are completely different. Yet despite this, her experience of the parental precedent of home, she believes, has enabled her to accept the dysfunctionality of her present situation in that it represents a functional alternative that has allowed her to wrest herself from the control of religion, patriarchy and the nuclear family.

Initially Murdoch attempted to emulate her mother and, as a result, experienced intense trauma in her personal life at the age of thirty. She questioned her place in the world as a wife, mother and committed Christian with the result that she gave up her Christian faith and was divorced. Her leaving the church ruptured the family, causing her guilt and abortive efforts to be an ideal mother to her children. Despite this aspiration she never achieved what her parents did.

Murdoch experienced a sense of schizophrenia when confronting the discourse she encountered in the art world, as it conflicted directly with her beliefs and the church. Functioning in this schizophrenic role, she was both insider and outsider, and began to identify conflicting perceptions of her familial home. She became increasingly agitated by traditionalist ideologies about marriage and motherhood, not only those framing the beliefs of her church, but also many others located in her Afrikaner culture. Her father always refers to her thus: *'Sy is nie van ons kerk se mense nie'* (she is not one of our church congregation) (Murdoch 2011:5), reinforcing her otherness. With reference to her otherness and questioning her past, upbringing and associated values, Murdoch, eight years later, still continues to experience immense guilt. Yet this very outcome somehow bolsters her and is self-affirming.

Murdoch still displays an attachment to her faith, claiming that without it she would not have survived. The influence of the church is both a constraint and a confession manifest in her work. The deep-rooted traditions of Calvinism view the home as the seat of morality. Hence they embody a tendency to stress not simply theological or religious traditions, but patriarchal patterns of domestic authority and social order.

After her divorce most of Murdoch's constraints have receded. Her home has been restored and redefined as her haven – a safe place, a private space no longer subject to expectations or a regimen not of her own making. Though protective and territorial of her liberated home space, Murdoch unashamedly exposes the realities of her current context in her art work. She aspires to be like her mother, accomplished in all the 'correct' things in the context of the home, but she simultaneously resists the function of her mother and the role she attached to the physical well-being of her family. Yet Murdoch retains a more seminal outlook on her role as mother to and homemaker for her own children, conceding that while she cannot give them the desirable functionality that replicates her parental home, she can nurture and love them without reserve.

The home is conventionally regarded as a private space. Murdoch, however, apparently wants to make her home public (2011:7). Yet more so herself than her home, though the two are in effect indivisible. Like Tracy Emin, she decided to display herself, to expose herself to scrutiny, and to volunteer private and personal information about herself relating directly to her core and to her home. The statements that Murdoch makes with regard to herself and her home are somewhat paradoxical. Whilst displaying an intense demand for privacy she simultaneously states: 'I wish people would pay attention to my voice, that they would invade my privacy...I thrive on affirmation...I feel I don't get enough back' (Murdoch 2011:9). In this she resists patriarchy and deconstructs the home by bringing what is private into the public domain. And whilst not openly espousing feminism, she displays feminist tendencies within her work and private life. She even avoids sleeping away from home. ‘My home is a place where I know I feel safe; it doesn't hold the fear that other places or spaces hold for me’ (Murdoch 2011: 10).

Murdoch is an artist who through her work has reinvented herself and her idea of home. Home to her is a private safe haven and is completely opposed to the over-protective environment of her familial home. As a single mother of two children she has repositioned herself to accommodate her needs and those of her children, redefining her sense of home to suit her circumstances and entirely disregarding her parental home as a prototype.

As Chapman (2004:175) notes, 'many studies show that women feel a sense of 'release' when they lose the responsibility of maintaining relationships and undertaking principal caring roles'. Although Murdoch is still the principal caregiver, her family life is characterised in terms of flux and fluidity, a symptom of our postmodern condition. It is better to conceptualise domestic living in terms of 'practices' rather than in terms of definite and fixed roles.

The term 'family practices' implies 'a recognition that family life can be considered through a variety of different lenses and from different perspectives' (Chapman 2004:35). This point is made to stress that family life is hardly ever just simply family life and that it is always continuous with other areas of existence. This approach emphasises the point that domestic life is a process and not a fixed system.

Taking this into account Bronwen Findlay, on the other hand, is a single woman who lives alone. Perceptions of home and the way that domestic life is practised differs for single people because of their stronger reliance on friendship networks than may be the case among couples.

Findlay, born in Kranskop in December 1953, has had a distinguished career as a printmaker and painter and is known for her intensive engagement with the decorative and for her elevation of the ordinary. Often her works reference the home and the domestic sphere in contexts that are self-reflexive and personal. According to Julia Charlton (2007:13), Findlay challenges traditionally held assumptions about hierarchies and values by selecting autobiographical subjects and domestic settings that are often dismissively associated with the 'female realm'.

Findlay declined to answer the specific questions set out in my interview, rather engaging with questions of a more flexible nature related to the concept of home. When asked whether she viewed home as a place of constraint and entrapment, she responded that her home had always been the opposite of that. Findlay lives on her own, and her home and studio are almost an extension of her persona, the one flowing from the other. That is how she desires to live and work, dimensions invaluable to her. Findlay's enactment and self-displacement in the home rejects what is considered the 'norm' in society. She deconstructs the stereotypical notion of the home as a private sphere by openly sharing her home and studio with friends and strangers alike.

Space is very important to Findlay, whether it be in her home, studio or classroom, in keeping with Lefebvre's contention (in Grobler (2004:6), that 'space can be understood as not static, but rather produced together with its user or inhabitants'. The objects Findlay transports with her when teaching in an outside venue, even to the clothes she wears, all have significance for her. She went to Paris in 1987 for three months and took along pieces of her own fabric. As she says: ' I remember the first thing I did was take out some cloth and put it on the table in the room in Paris, to make it my space and my space from home' (Findlay 2011:4). To Findlay home is the place where she feels comfortable, where she can be herself and feel nurtured by objects that resonate their familiarity and attachment to her original home and place.

For Findlay women are not naturally assigned the domestic role in the home. Most of her

male friends, she says, often cooked for her while she painted. For Findlay home is not necessarily a gendered space, but one in which many women happily adopt a marginalised role, as if it were expected of them. Findlay's space, her home and studio, exude a sense of freedom replicating her sense of self - uncomplicated, generous and welcoming.

Whether women occupy a lesser status around the home than in the public sphere, had also not been experienced by Findlay. She remarks: 'I'm quite happy for people to come and see my work in progress or to watch me working' (Findlay 2011:4). Findlay works at ease in the public sphere and in the privacy of her studio. Initially practising as art teacher in a secondary school, she elected to paint in the classroom, conflating home, studio and the public domain and marking each with her presence.

Findlay's personal experience and environment are used predominantly as her subject matter as she 'maps her life story and ever-changing place in the world through her paintings' (Charlton 2007:13). Objects from her domestic environment play a central role as source material deriving from her home, studio and garage and including decorative textiles, linoleum floor coverings, ceramics and an array of found objects and artefacts that fill her spaces. The objects mostly have no intrinsic value, but are prized as repositories of meaning associated with the passage of time and her personal journey.

Findlay's home deconstructs the conventional home and the gendered conventions and traditions of women in the home that have been upheld and maligned in feminist art and theory. Findlay notes that it is only when she is away from the way she lives, as when she is with her sister and brothers, that she sees how totally different her way of living is.

(2011:5). The difference she describes is located in freedom and in the fact that her work and her life are interlinked with no given roles expected of her within the home.

Not so with her mother and sister. They, she says, are subject to routines, 'to things that have to be done', as opposed to her own lack of imposed or expected structure. Findlay compares her position to that shared by Penny Siopis. 'Penny also works with a certain freedom, but she comes from a different position to me. She has a husband and a son' (Findlay 2011: 5).

Findlay's familial home has had a considerable impact on her self-displacement in the

home and her fascination for collecting objects which began with childhood ‘treasures’ from her grandmother's farm – old things that were in the attic or in the sheds. She has subsequently accumulated objects from different places, such as junk shops, on walks and elsewhere, and her collection includes cups, saucers, doilies, tray cloths and other domestic objects. Many items resonate with symbolic properties and histories past, traces of narratives of other women and other times.

Findlay was nonetheless profoundly influenced by her mother and both grandmothers. She describes all three as ‘strong and independent, due to circumstance and not through any understanding or even knowledge of feminism or women's rights' (Findlay via email 2011). Her maternal grandmother farmed on her own in the Richmond area of Kwazulu-Natal. Findlay's grandfather died before she was born, but her grandmother continued farming until she was in her eighties. Findlay's happiest memories are of time spent on her grandmother's farm where, as I have said she collect various objects – 'things that had belonged to my mother and her sisters when they were children, photograph albums, books' (Findlay via email 2011).

Findlay's paternal grandmother was left to raise her children on her own after her husband died. She also took over her husband's pharmacy and became a business woman. To her (Findlay via email 2011), education and doing something with one's life were important. 'I don't think she ever felt that a woman had to play a different role to a man'.

Findlay's mother, on the other hand, had a very different attitude. To Findlay she typified the 1950s woman, her taste extending to ball and claw furniture; and her activities centred on ‘polishing and hoovering’ (Findlay 2011:8). Perhaps her lifestyle was also marked by the family’s frequent moves (Kranskop, Empangeni, Pietermaritzburg, Durban, Pietermaritzburg), or perhaps it was because she was a nurse and very practical in nature. Findlay was largely influenced by her parents, especially her father. He was obsessed by history and books which, she feels, influenced her greatly though 'the vacuum cleaning and polished floors did not’. (Findlay 2011:8). It was her father's love of history and family travels all over the country to look at Boer war sites and explore that left its mark on Findlay and there are often references to this in her work.

Findlay’s mother coped with the 'real world', whereas her father was an idealist. Furthermore Findlay notes that her mother kept everything together: 'I like to think that I

inherited a kind of 'get on with things' from her, although I do know that my interest in stories and history probably came from my father' (Findlay via email 2011). Findlay's family attitudes undoubtedly had a profound effect on her as a child and have continued to influence her in adulthood.

Findlay's work challenges the prevailing notion of domesticity she experienced as a child. In part, however, she references her familial home in what she elects to depict. Objects in her work are often associated with her family history and reflect her recognition in their familiar shapes and colours. Sentimentality and the decorative aspects attached to her objects are selected strategies of engagement and their use is often ironic and is overlaid by her insistence on the metaphoric power of the ordinary. Her home extends the parody of ‘home’ in a familial and contemporary reference located in a kitsch collection of plastic flowers and real blossoms. To her the display of objects in her home constitutes a considered play with reality, taste and authenticity, reflecting an interrogation of home and art-making as a process of encounter and referencing that results from a slippage between the present and the past, the real and the ideal.

Findlay uses saturated, bold colours and vigorous painting techniques to elevate the decorative and the ordinary in her work. She has no qualms about painting objects that would be labelled 'kitsch' or 'sentimental' by others, incorporating doilies, flowers, flowered prints and everyday objects from a range of sources into her work. This recycling of found objects allows Findlay to posit something new about the mundane, giving life and resonance to old and undervalued things, often transforming them into monumental icons. Kitsch, German for objects of 'worthless trash', 'rubbish' or 'gaudy', has been used in English since the 1920s to describe the tasteless products of commercial advertising, gaudy tourist souvenirs and works of art that pander to bad taste' (Macey 2000: 213). Kitsch can also refer to a knowingly ironic enjoyment and celebration of bad art and bad taste. But Findlay’s awareness of the 'kitsch' objects she manipulates in some of her work is persuaded by irony.

Findlay's primary interest lies in the materiality of paint, so that her subject matter is often subordinated to the viscous liquid, becoming embedded in it, often destroyed by it. This is nowhere clearer than in the painting *Belongings (2008)* [Figure 7a-d],

Figure 7 a

Bronwen Findlay
Belongings Detail 2008
Oil on canvas
Collection: Bronwen Findlay

Figure 7b

Bronwen Findlay
Belongings Detail 2008
Collection: Bronwen Findlay

Figure 7c

Bronwen Findlay
Belongings Detail 2008
Collection: Bronwen Findlay

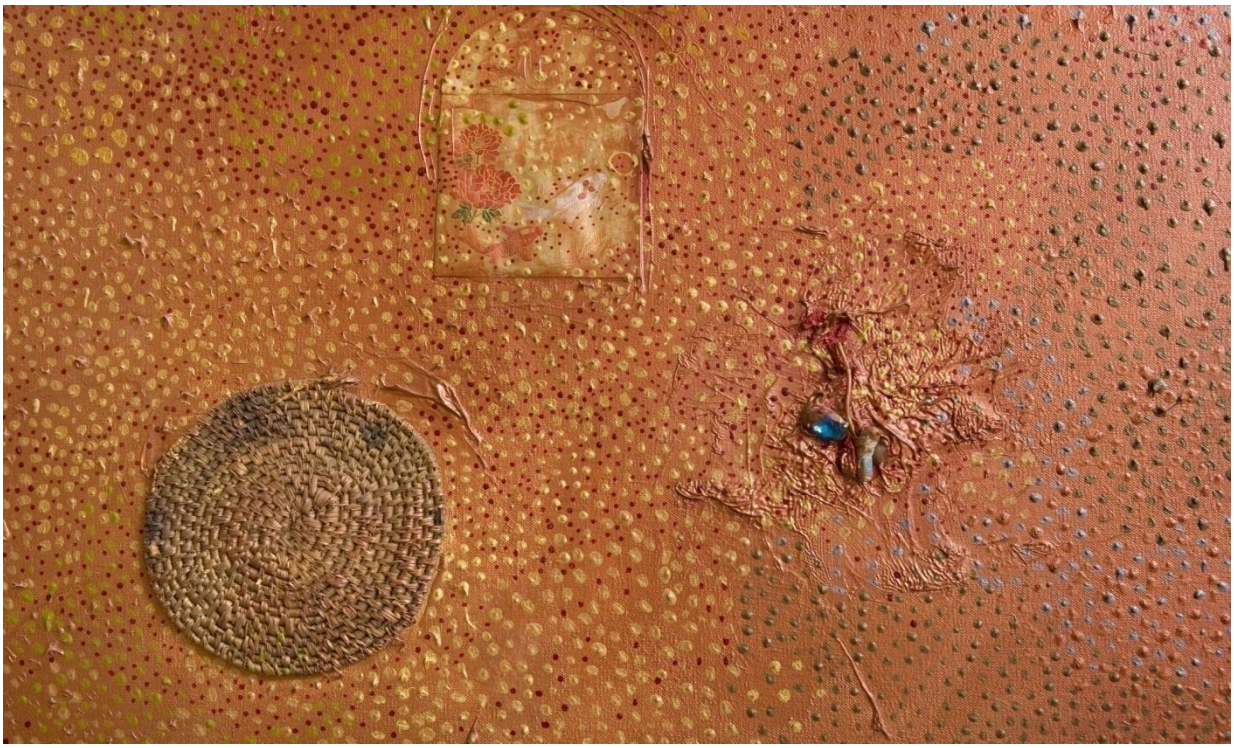


Figure 7d

Bronwen Findlay
Belongings Detail 2008
Oil on canvas
Collection: Bronwen Findlay

where teaspoons, a doily and a picture frame are lodged in the thick pink surface of the paint. The squashed petals and stem of a flower lend texture to the surface. In overlaying colour, Findlay produces surface depth, while texture is added by the remnant of the object. *Belongings* conveys a sense of possession as well as a sense of belonging. Findlay challenges conventional readings and her work explores issues of transience through irony, sentimentality and embellishment by transforming the ordinary. Some of the objects embedded in the painting *Belongings* are quite arbitrary. She comments: 'There are some rocks from Melville Koppies, there are dead Watsonias from my garden. But there are also more precious things like the Zulu beaded stick, and the crumpled up packet is from a small haberdashery store in Pietermariztburg from when my mother was young'

(Findlay 2011:6).In reference to *Belongings* Findlay states (via email 2011), 'that the title seemed appropriate as the painting is made up of things, even if these things are enveloped by and embedded in the paint. I scratched through drawers, unpacked boxes and looked around my garage to find things I wanted to use in the painting...there are buck droppings collected from my aunt and uncle's farm, bits of my hair collected after a hair cut, a tennis

ball broken by many throwings to my dog...the cover of a book of wild flowers of Natal, stones and grasses collected from Melville koppies'. The objects are 'things I've kept because they had some kind of association, but some are also without value, are in themselves not always immediately recognisable, but their status as emotionally-charged evocations of desire and loss is clear' (www.artthrob.co.za). The use of nature in her work alludes to the passage of time and moments of decay indicate the death and finality which permeate her work.

Sometimes 'the earth-like paint is more important than the objects, which are covered and changed by the paint. 'My collection of things often appear arbitrary but their juxtaposition and relationship to the paint and canvas and what happens to them after they have been selected, is considered' (Findlay via email 2011).

Findlay constantly negotiates a path between the conventional and the unconventional, as reflected in her life, work and accommodating reception of all persons and traditions. The results of Findlays's decorative instincts rarely sit comfortably. As MacKenny says, 'her take on matters ornamental is often ironic, a satiric over-the-top spoof or a deconstructive process' (www.artthrob.co.za). The unease that Findlay brings to her paintings is generated by her particular way of painting. She often uses paint as glue to adhere an assortment of things onto the canvas. Findlay states: 'I think that I'm really trying to record bits and pieces of my life. Its like holding onto things as well as letting them go. I want to make sense of the objects and experiences which make up my life and so I use them as a starting point, after which there is this tussle between 'things' and the paint. What I'm really doing is documenting and recording, keeping tabs on my surroundings and experiences' (www.artthrob.co.za). One of Findlay's peers, Jeremy Wafer, comments on her work : 'The paintings are clearly beautiful, but shot through with a painterly intensity which is not afraid to violently tear and disrupt and wrench the ordinary and settled' (www.artthrob.co.za).

Findlay's work is characterised by the inclusion of many signs of women's work associated with the home and domesticity such as cooking, sewing and domestic objects. Not wishing to be typecast as a feminist, she acknowledges that she was made aware of feminism as a student. Perhaps it influenced her subconsciously, but she did not position herself as a 'feminist' or 'woman artist'. When asked whether she thought women occupied a gendered position in the home and whether her work was influenced by this in any way, Findlay

responded that she was perhaps not consciously aware of her position. 'Maybe one slots into certain things, but she had have never felt bogged down or worn down by it' (Findlay 2011:6).

Findlay, then, has never been concerned about the constraints of gender. 'I've often spoken about my work as being concerned with the domestic and I suppose the domestic is concerned with gender. It becomes a sort of struggle question' (Findlay 2011:6). People who are unfamiliar with Findlay's work may consider that she just paints flowers and doilies. As she says, however, 'that's the wrong idea because that's not what I do. I think I sort of negate flowers and doilies in my paintings. I think I am wanting to make people see things differently. If you see a teacup and a doily, you see them without any irony, and its kind of something pretty or ‘old worldly’. I think I'm trying to take it as far as it can go. I'm preserving and destroying at the same time' (Findlay 2011:7).

Findlay’s response reflects the way in which the home is becoming a genderless space not peculiar to either male or female, but merely a space in which one interacts, where one is concerned with the home in its entirety and not just with certain areas of displacement as in the kitchen.

Findlay's earlier work made much use of doilies, cloth or images associated with the family home. She used found objects related to their displacement in a home context; referencing historical recall and memory. Yet she asserts that she is cautious when using these domestic objects, lest they be regarded as nostalgic or twee. Her intention is to extend her paintings beyond the 'pretty' conveyed in the way she uses paint and embeds her objects into it. Her work is also about 'the no-nos, patterning and decoration, and things that in my student years were not considered...they were more postmodern' (Findlay 2011:7).

Findlay has always revelled in using rich tones and bright constrasting colours. She compares her process in its intensity and repetition to lacemaking or other traditionally feminine forms of domestic craft. But there is something vaguely disturbing about objects smothered in paint as if her artistic practice were overriding the object world to which she is attached.

Findlay's source material is often 'the sorts of things that are no-nos. Like I have painted sunsets and cosmos, and I think to some extent the domestic stuff is a similar kind of thing.

With the cosmos I tried to do things to it that the art in the park people would never do' (Findlay 2011:7). Rather Findlay painted a picture using real cosmos, which she embedded into the paint where the flowers died. She called the painting 'Cosmos' because the title of the work helped to describe what it really was, and, in the process, Findlay was in effect deconstructing and parodying the kitsch cosmos paintings that abound in lower-middle-class homes.

According to Leeb-du Toit (2000: 3), Findlay seeks solace and strength in the comfortable signs of the known. The past and the discarded, the rescued and the previously owned have relevance in that they may not be personally experienced, but they continue to be vicariously shared and recorded. As Findlay remarks, she cannot merely stand up and paint a picture without any 'stuff', and the materials and objects she uses are extremely important, even if they do not appear so at the end. Such materials and objects function as precious signs of labour, time and expertise. Findlay's work can be described as a 'series of histories in an autobiographical journey of self-disclosure and reverence for life and being' (Leeb du Toit 2000:3).

Findlay enjoys painting from real objects but makes use of photographs as well. She paints using a combination of both sources (Findlay 2011:8). For Findlay going to places and exploring is also important: 'That is sort of like the opposite of home which is static' (Findlay 2011:8). But in bringing her experiences back into the home, either in vases or in her collecting, she relives past experience and it becomes in effect an extension within the home.

Findlay believes that the notions of home and the domestic cannot really be separated. 'I think it's all related' (Findlay 2011:9). She herself has never had to furnish a home in the conventional sense. 'I've never bought specific stuff for my home. This table was my sister's husband's grandfather's table and I said I needed a table so she gave it to me. It was my mother's sofa. These were chairs that I took when Mansfield High closed down and they threw them out' (Findlay 2011:9). According to Charlton (2007:13), Findlay enjoys the surprise of combining things that are not normally seen together. Her collection is displayed in her home and serves both decorative and functional purposes, creating a living environment rather like a three-dimensional painting.

When asked whether she thought her work offered a micro-resistance to bring about change in the concept of home and the domestic, Findlay replied: 'I suppose so, yes. I'm not making some militant statement by doing things as I am but there is certainly no way anyone can influence me to do other' (Findlay 2011:9). According to Leeb-du Toit (2000: 12), female artists in South Africa initially subjected their creativity to the thematic and formal traditions established in academic institutions dominated by male hierarchies.

Increasingly they have forged their own conventions and vocabularies and narrated their own stories.

According to MacKenny (www.artthrob.co.za), Findlay's work is often positioned as depicting objects that are attractive or abject and thus lacking in content or depth. As such people fail to note the viscerality of her handling of paint that allows for the transformation of the ordinary. Her ongoing insistence on personal material linked with family and home is characteristic of Findlay's autobiographical engagement with subject and form. As Charlton (2007:15) says: 'Her foregrounding of the value of memory, decoration and the ordinary, however, is matched by her equally consistent and vigorous assertion of the primacy of painterly concerns'.

When one considers Findlay's work, superficially it appears at times to be highly decorative. Yet on closer inspection something of the abject can be seen in her work, outside of her richness of colour and painterliness. This she achieves by embedding live flowers into the paint, which then die and become unrecognisable. She has even embedded dead animals in some of her work and used cuttings of her own hair. As Oliver (2002: 229) says: 'There looms within abjection, one of those violent dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable'.

The following two artists, Doreen Southwood and Penny Siopis, were interviewed in Cape Town where they reside and work. I have identified issues associated with home as an idea and home in relative works which will be discussed in reference to each artist.

Southwood, an Afrikaans-speaking white female in her mid-thirties, was born in Cape Town in 1974 and studied Fine Art at Stellenbosch University. Her work deals largely with issues of obsession and mental illness, striving to find the perfect balance between fear and

love, order and chaos. Kathryn Smith (2004:361) states: 'Southwood's engagement in her daily battle of maintaining a socially acceptable level of sanity is well documented, but while tempting, it is overly simplistic to read her work as completely symptomatic of this'.

Southwood's work revisits what it is to be a middle-class woman from an Afrikaans background with a tendency towards emotional insecurity and instability. As Sue Williamson (cited in Smith 2004:361) has pointed out, 'the theme of the maladjusted childhood of South African whites (caused by the fallout within family walls of the underlying stresses of living under apartheid) is a vein that has been mined before'. Yet Southwood brings to this fraught and sensitive condition both an insight which is the result of a candid acknowledgement of her volatility, and an innate aesthetic sensibility which is as adept at creating difficult but seductive works as it is at producing design and fashion items for the retail market.

When interviewed, Southwood acknowledged that part of being a woman is contradictory. (Southwood 2011:1), as the prescriptive roles that women enact on account of fixed and expected conventions and traditions in the home are something that she is all too familiar with. Although, in her own words, she finds it 'ridiculous' that gender roles still exist, she acknowledges the reality of what women have to deny in their lives – 'the fact that there is so much blood in their lives...at birth and everything. Its kind of like a training school...life as a woman especially in South Africa in the area I was brought up is a training school of living in denial' (Southwood 2011:1).

Southwood frequently makes use of materials that are assigned to women and the domestic sphere, such as satin ribbon, light bulbs, glass vases and women's magazines, to name only a few. She does not limit herself to work in any one medium and has produced sculpture, objects, prints and more recently video. Notably, though, when Southwood does work two-dimensionally, the work retains its object-like nature. Employing the skills of craftspeople such as glass-blowers and cabinetmakers, due to the scale of the projects she undertakes, Southwood is ambitious and not willing to compromise on the quality of the work she produces. With every aspect carefully considered, she notes that all her art is very easy to look at, 'all the surfaces are considered, the atmosphere, texture, the simplicity. It is really designed in a way...but then the actual content of the work is quite disturbing' (Southwood 2011:1).

A work of Southwood's *Curtain (2005)* [Figure 8] exemplifies the above.

Figure 8

Doreen Southwood
Curtain (and detail) 2005
Sheet Metal, Nuts and Bolts, Magnets
Dimensions Unknown
Collection: Doreen Southwood

The first step in making this work was to print an image onto the surface of a sheet of low-grade stainless steel. Southwood wanted to add colour to the work but also a subtle sense of texture or variation, so she 'played around by taking photographs of a mirror steamed up with heat and reflecting a piece of blue fabric' (www. michaelstevenson.com). The

image derived from this process was printed onto the metal as a backdrop for a floral-type pattern. The pattern was constructed using nuts and bolts – not bolted and screwed together, but held onto the surface by the force of magnetic disks positioned behind the stainless steel sheet.

For Southwood the pattern is reminiscent of a time and place in her childhood when she was living on a farm. The pattern is taken from a piece of curtain fabric that is reflects of the 'good taste' of her grandmother, showing a type of interior decorating that seeks to transform the given context, in this case a farm in the Free State, into a space that is opulent and aspirational. The curtain is important in the sense that it is a divider, letting in light or keeping it out, creating a barrier between public and private worlds. As Southwood says, 'you have this one house on the farm...that is just behind an iron curtain where everybody acts...sits in a certain way...and it's tea time...and it's not embracing the tactileness of your environment...it's kind of stealing from it' (Southwood 2011:2)

Southwood's works are autobiographical using various techniques to recontextualise the world and homes she knew so well. . As Paul Edmunds asserts: 'Plumbing the depths of her conservative, white, middle-class Afrikaner upbringing, Southwood unearths a nasty cycle of repression, abuse and the coping mechanisms offered her by this society where women occupy a silent and haunted interior' (www.artthrob.co.za. Issue 61, September, 2002).

Southwood is quite forthright about her upbringing, relating gender issues and positions of power that were enacted in the home. Every house she says 'has its own system that people kind of create to feel safe, because of this rhythm and the promise that things will be the same everyday, you feel safe...its like women and knitting. My grandmother did a lot of embroidery. Anything, the repetitiveness, the promise of the same thing over and over' (Southwood 2011:2). In reality these repetitive acts belied a life of tension, oppression and disllusionment.

Southwood's work in particular has been profoundly influenced by her upbringing, and by her familial homes – those of her grandmother and mother. As Edmunds (www.artthrob.co.za, Issue 61, September 2002) elaborates: 'Southwood's candidness about her own disposition leaves one trapped between doubting her sincerity and wanting to know more about a near stranger'. Her first solo show *Too Close for Comfort (2001)*, presented the viewers with this dilemma in a captivating way. The seductive surfaces of the

works lulled the audience into a sense of complacency that was disturbing in terms of the content of the individual works and the atmosphere of quietness and oppression that accompanied the entire exhibition.

One of the works on this particular exhibition Southwood called *Shock Absorbers (2001)* [Figure 9a-b].

Figure 9 a

Doreen Southwood
Shock Absorbers 2002
Red Fake Fur Slippers. Floor Installation
Collection: Doreen Southwood

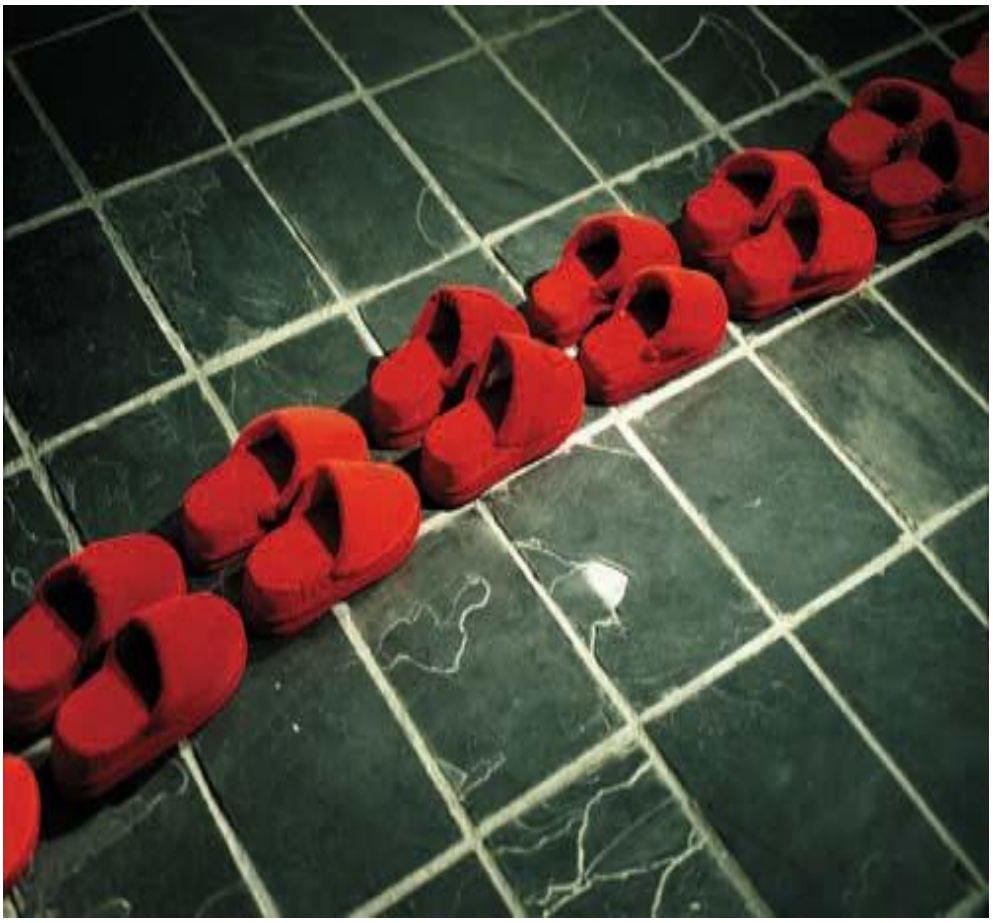


Figure 9 b

Doreen Southwood
Shock Absorbers 2002. Detail.
Red Fake Fur Slippers. Floor Installation.
Collection: Doreen Southwood

The work was presented as a snaking line of twenty-seven pairs of red fur slippers each representing a year in Southwood's life, ascending in size and suggesting a path of silent footfalls from infancy to adulthood. For Southwood, the work reflects on inventing reasons to remain within the space she calls home. The slippers represent home and belonging 'because if you can be in your slippers the whole day, it's so much fun because you don't have to go out into the world' (Southwood 2011:4). The slippers for Southwood reinforce the sanctuary, and her attachment to it. In Southwood's view, 'its really about cherishing and idolising the home environment' (Southwood 2011:4). Southwood currently lives on her own with her three dogs and three cats.

Simone de Beauvoir's most famous aphorisms, 'One is not born a woman, one becomes a woman' (1949) is an apt reflection of the feminist claim that femaleness is a consequence of biology, but femininity originates from within societal structures' (de Beauvoir cited in Gamble 2001:230) Femininity is thus a set of rules governing female behaviour and appearance, the ultimate aim of which is to make woman conform to a male ideal of sexual attractiveness. For Griselda Pollock (1998:48), this underpinned the bourgeois notion that women's only fulfilment lay in childbearing and that, where they lived and worked beyond this notion, they would be treated as unnatural, unwomanly and unsexed. Thus femininity was also exclusively domestic and maternal. It was only within these parameters that a woman could achieve social recognition. Southwood transgresses the societal expectations of acquiescent female behaviour by subverting these notions and embracing her womanhood and femininity outside these domesticated perceptions. She says that as a woman one need not take on the qualities of a man in order to have equality (Southwood 2011:3).

Southwood's upbringing reveals that this was not the 'norm' within her familial home or in her grandmother's home. Although she is passionate about her own home, gender roles in homes associated with her family have negative associations for her. As she says: 'I do not love roles in homes' (Southwood 2011:4). She is referring here to the implicit gender roles, expectations and subsequent control over people within the home that is intrinsically her dilemma. The home represented a troubled site from which there seemed to be no escape for Southwood and circumstances in which there was no freedom from other peoples' control and expectations of her behaviour. (Southwood 2011:4).

Southwood's mother, after more than thirty years of marriage, still occupies the pivotal domestic role within the home. Her father represents the patriarchal domain, reflecting an established pattern which permeates South Africa. Her mother took responsibility for domestic duties and adopted the expected role of a domestic woman. The idea that women and men both have a significant say in the way that domestic practices are established would have seemed preposterous in Southwood's familial context. The patriarchal paradigm was an overriding factor that continues, even today. Patriarchy as I quoted earlier and capitalism, combine to produce an ideology of separate spheres for men as breadwinners and women as homemakers. Moreover patriarchy is deeply rooted in Western ideology and has far-reaching consequences on power relationships between men and women. More specifically it has a 'very significant impact on power in marriage and,

furthermore, continues to impact upon cultural understandings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' (Chapman 2004:36).

Southwood herself has refashioned her home into a safe environment, albeit a somewhat chaotic one. She alludes to home as an escapist realm, as escaping back into your prison, which for a woman is a contradictory way of living' (Southwood 2011:6). Home is at once a safe haven and at times imprisoning. Southwood's intense, obssessive personality is apparent in her work and in her adherent convictions about home. She confesses too, to having an obsession with gardening, which forms a part of her private, personal space. While she acknowledges embracing change over the years, she notes that 'the one thing that's been consistent has been my obsession with my home. Because you're the ruler of your own little world. Its a luxury to be able to turn your house into a prison...'to keep oneself in and others out' (Southwood 2011:6).

Her exhibition *Too Close for Comfort (2001),* featured a work *Anorexia Nervosa (2001)* [Figure 10],

Figure 10

Doreen Southwood
Anorexia Nervosa 2001
Cabinet and Vases.
Dimensions Unknown
Collection: Doreen Southwood

which was a collection of attenuated, decorative vases each intended to contain only a single flower. The vases, of different shapes and sizes, were housed in a tall narrow cabinet made of wood and glass all contained infinitesimal amounts of liquid. Although Southwood was commenting on the condition 'anorexia nervosa' as a self-inflicted illness , she was also intentionally referencing objects found in a home environment that are beautiful and remain contained and subject to scrutiny for their aesthetic beauty but are discarded when they decay.

The fine line existing between perfection and hysteria is addressed by Kathryn Smith www.artthrob.co.za.), who notes that 'it is not unreasonable to consider that perfection's closest bedfellow is very likely hysteria – not in the strict Freudian sense, but in the habits we develop to substitute for perceived inadequacies. But without the chaos of hysterical moments, we can't experience the sublime pleasure of a perfect one'. In *Eksie Perfeksie* (Just Perfect, 2002) Southwood and Antoinette Murdoch came together in a very successful two person show. Ultimately complementary, both artists' work showed a commitment to realising intent through tightly managed, considered and designed pieces where, especially in Southwood's work, evidence of personal labour was subsumed by industrial or commercial production processes. This show saw Southwood 'examining how it is we are continually measured up to 'perfection' which is presented as the norm' (Edmunds www.artthrob.co.za. Issue 61, September 2002).

In *Eksie Perfeksie,* Southwood and Murdoch shared a conceptual commonality: an acceptance of the fragility of the self as an 'imperfect fit'. Yet Michel Foucault, in questioning what constitutes the norm believes that as power is situated in hierarchies, so everything has levels of power, with everything culturally and/or socially produced. For Foucault, knowledge is always a form of power: 'He was particularly interested in knowledge of human beings, and power that acts on human beings' in this case a patriarchal system (Fillingham 1993:5). Yet knowledge is a form of power that both controls us and enables us to resist patriarchy through micro-resistance. Southwood by the

sheer scale and labour intensiveness of her works is implicitly resisting what is the socially acceptable 'norm' for a woman. She deconstructs the binary opposites subverting patriarchal practices.

In *Eksie Perfeksie* her work *Black Hole (2002)*, [Figure 11]

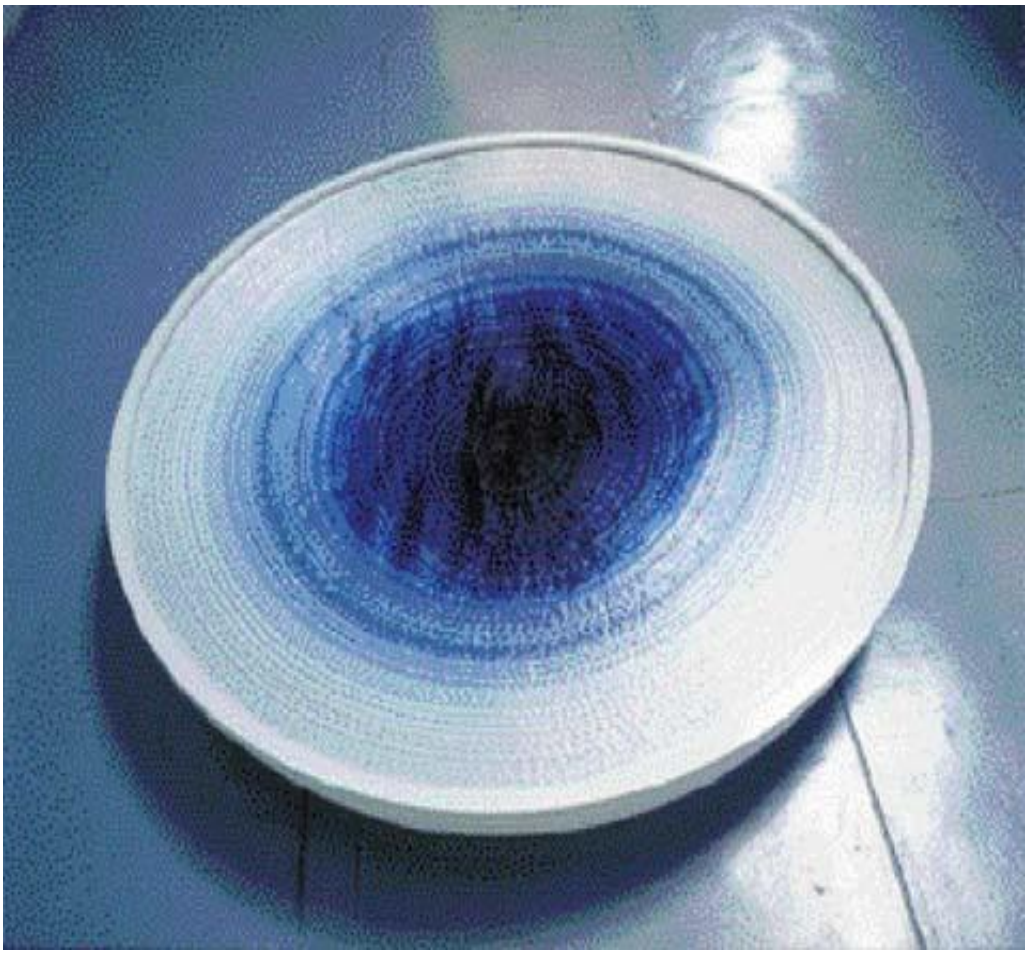


Figure 11

Doreen Southward
Black Hole 2002
Satin Ribbon, Wood and Perspex.
Diameter 180cm
Collection: Doreen Southwood

comprises a rather precarious black hole measuring 1.8 metres in diameter, made with satin ribbon, wood and perspex. It consists of a deep disc whose interior is filled with concentric rings of ribbon, stitched together and moving steadily from white at the outside to a blue-black in the centre, creating an illusionistic puddle or vortex of infinite depth. With reference to this work Edmunds (www.artthrob.co.za, Issue 61, September, 2002) remarks that 'the smooth transition from stability to disorientation is a slippery slope, made

no more secure by Southwood's obsessive method of constructing the piece. While the resultant pieces are less figurative than her previous body of work, the more abstract, oblique reference to her own instability and vulnerability is somewhat darker.'

Southwood's work is about perspective and distance, but realised in ways that manoeuvre traditional linear perspective to achieve metaphorical and emotional illusions that go beyond physical depth and volume. As Smith observes (www.artthrob.co.za.): 'In her intelligent and economic employment of commercial production processes she finds elegant and refined material solutions for intangible but irrefutable states of being that are so often the victim of highly sentimental kitsch'.

During the interviews undertaken for this study, it was quite serendipitous to discover that three of the artists interviewed had been powerfully influenced by their grandmothers in the past – namely Findlay, Southwood and Siopis. Southwood describes her grandmother as the strongest woman she has ever met, though her life was marred by tragedy. Southwood's grandfather was a dominant, powerful man to whom it was very important to be seen as the patriarch. Despite her grandmother's strength of character, she made the decision to remain within these patriarchal circumstances where men and women occupied separate spheres.

On a material level Southwood's grandmother was well cared for by her husband - the price one had to pay for enduring and submitting to him in his adultery. As a result her grandmother channelled much of her energy into flower arranging and ambitious embroidery projects as a form of distraction and, in so doing, acquired a posture that was rigidly self-contained.

In the generation when divorce and changing one's lifestyle was frowned upon, women were once protected by being married and finacially secure in their own home. Yet Southwood claims this was a false sense of reality and that her grandmother's home was about the 'real prison' where home was a place of captivity and where all one's energy was used up just by breathing. In this her grandfather reflected the control exercised by patriarchy, 'whose authority is enforced through social, political, economic and religious institutions' (Gamble 2001:293).

Southwood has been powerfully influenced by the homes of her grandmother and mother. This influence originates in Southwood's Afrikaner background and upbringing, much Afrikaner culture being patriarchal with emphasis on respect for elders.

In the daily life of most Afrikaners, the importance of the 'private living space' prevails on the one hand, where Afrikaner values, culture, identity and morality are designed and played out. On the other hand, there is the transactional space in which the Afrikaner experiences the post-apartheid South Africa. According to Van der Merwe (2009:69) (http://etd.uovs.ac.za.), 'the Afrikaner value system and established cultural customs and practices are in the process of changing and eroding'.

During the post-apartheid era dominant value judgement became fragmented; and ‘currently Afrikaners no longer have a single, dominant value judgement or meta-narrative' (Van der Merwe 2009:29). After 1994 the loss of this official identity has marginalised Afrikaners and plunged them into an existential crisis.

Although this is not openly espoused by Southwood, this is certainly not the case with Murdoch as can be seen from comments she disclosed during her interview.

Southwood's parents grew up in what she describes as 'horrendous circumstances' (Southwood 2011:7). The family was obsessed by materialism that revolved around issues of land and ownership. Her father disregarded family tradition and moved his family out from under the controlling, constraining environment under which they lived. Southwood says of her father that he 'felt it was too much. We eventually inherited two farms and just sold them because of the history' (Southwood 2011:8). Yet even though Southwood's father attempted to separate himself from tradition, her familial home remained a gendered space. The home, and by extension the farm and her grandfather’s uncompromising attitude as head of the household, became tainted by patriarchal domination.

Southwood speaks of her grandmother's and mother’s homes as having everything ‘in (its) place and a system of cleaning the home environment...Monday mornings...polishing is done; everything done routinely...but it also keeps women busy and away from male enterprise' (Southwood 2011:9). Even more extreme was that both her mother and grandmother had two kitchens – 'the one kitchen where nobody is allowed to cook, or touch. It's the 'show' kitchen. Then we have the kitchen where she cooks' (Southwood

2011:9). This is keeping up the façade of the private as a space of perfection and absolute cleanliness as opposed to the private reality of the utilised space that is secluded from the public gaze.

Southwood's grandmother also had two lounges, one of which nobody was allowed to enter. Southwood rejects this arrangement in every sense saying: 'What is that? People don't do that anymore...now you kind of enjoy your home.' As a result Southwood's home is her sanctuary which she compares to a store room: 'Everything in my life turns into a store room, in comparison to my mother's house.'(Southwood 2011:10). Her home is chaotic with many animals, but represents a lived space that reflects a lived chaos diametrically opposed to her mother's home. Southwood's mother is quite traumatised by visiting her daughter's home, saying: 'I can't actually come here'(Southwood 2011:10). Southwood acknowledges that much of what she enacts in her home is in reaction to her parental home and is metaphoric of her resistance to the patriarchal dominance, subertfuge, control and veneer of rectitude that concealed the trauma of imbalanced power relationships in her family.

When asked to describe her grandmother's home, Southwood refers to it as being 'very, very stately' (Southwood 2011:10). Her home is very Victorian and formal, very contained and Southwood always thought of it as being very male, very ordered with articulated feminine touches - a subversive Dionysian undercurrent to an ostensibly Apollonian order and rectitude. Southwood notes that when one entered her grandmother's home there was definitely a feeling of masculinility, all things being extremely ordered and linear and with very little warmth.

In comparison to the façade and veneer of her grandmother's home, Southwood describes her parental home as much more homely, more comfortable and very warm. Her mother loves 'cottagey things' and antiques, things with a history, while her father has literally taken things from the farm that were outside and placed these inside the home, things that have been in the family for many years. Their home consequently has a degree of warmth loved by Southwood, with a personal identity attached to it, and knowledge of people living there. In contrast her grandparents' home was a fraught and constrained space. Southwood also describes her mother as a strong woman who willingly remained within the domestic sphere and took care of her family.

With regard to the home as a private sphere as opposed to a public domain, an area exposed and open to scrutiny, Southwood responds in the following way: 'What defines the private for me is the place where people can see you and the place where you can't be seen, where there are no eyes looking at you' (Southwood 2011:11). She comments further: 'We can go to a home, where there is a place where there is no gaze and no one is judging you'. This is just part of being a woman: 'Women watch themselves being looked at...the home is very, very important. And the home is something that needs to be reclaimed as a safe haven. It is escapism...but it is so relaxing just to have your own space'.

The home becomes a contested, gendered space when subject to heterosexual occupancy and associated expectations. To Southwood, the contest arises when there is a real or perceived conflict of roles. The home becomes a fraught political environment depending on the relationship that can arise when the trivia of home management becomes a deferred battle terrain. Nor is this necessarily the case only in heterosexual relationships. In Southwood's experience (2011:12), ' friends of mine are a lesbian couple. It's so funny their roles...the one is like ‘don't touch my kitchen’. The other friend just wants to be the man, always wants to be the man, so she lets him (her) be the man'.

Southwood's work challenges notions of domesticity and home by taking elements and transforming them into tangible sculptures that are displayed in the public sphere. One such work *Ribbon Pillar (2004)* [Figure 12] is a large silk ribbon sculpture embellished with satin roses, connecting floor to ceiling.

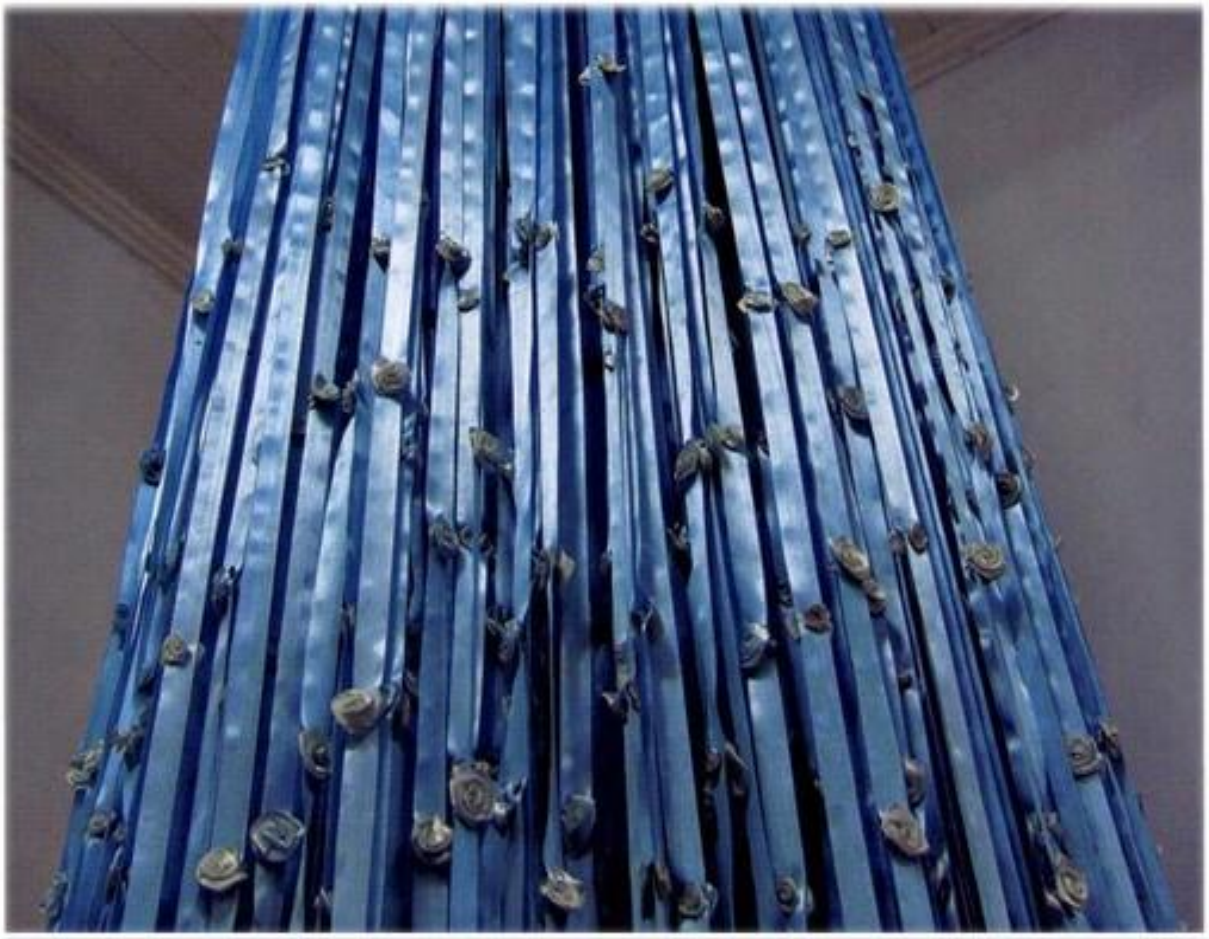


Figure 12

Doreen Southwood
Ribbon Pillar 2004
Satin Ribbon, Fabric Roses and Wood
Dimensions 400 x 100 cm
Collection: Doreen Southwood

The work is at once solid in appearance yet ineffable and fragile in reality. The ribbon used in the work is characteristic of that used by women in the home, for sewing or embroidery, as in satin roses. Another work which reflects issues of home is *A Friend (2002)* [Figure 13] which comprises a collection of women's Afrikaans magazines, namely *Sarie* and *Rooi Rose (Red Roses).*

Figure 13

Doreen Southwood
A Friend 2002
Wooden Cabinet and Magazines
Dimensions Unknown
Collection: Doreen Southwood

Southwood then took a *jongmanskas* ('young man's cupboard'), cut it in half to about fifteen centimetres deep, cut the magazines in half and filled this cupboard with them, revealing only the spines with the magazine's logo. *Rooi Rose* were magazines with red spines and *Sarie* magazines with black and white spines. Some of the spines showed references to the contents such as *My Inspirasie (My Inspiration),* while individual issues had themes such as *Gesond en Mooi (Healthy and Pretty)* and *Word jou eie baas (Become Your Own Boss)* – mediated aspirations available to women that nonetheless upheld their

aspirations to femininty. As Southwood says (2011:13), these are fairly recent issues, 'from the 1990s and 2000s, that still epoused femininity' as the only way women were meant to function.

Southwood has developed 'a range of astute, poignant and witty artistic metaphors that meld the phenomenologies of her creative processes and psychological condition in a near-perfect synthesis. The paradoxical integrity of surface is key, representing the ultimate material metaphor for the fickleness of outward appearances' (Smith 2004:361).

Southwood's work is also vaguely disturbing, like Findlay's. Both challenge the boundaries of femininity in their respective use of chosen media. The materials used are closely associated with home and the female domain and femininity. One cannot compare Murdoch's and Southwood's, but it was established that both artists found their homes to be the site where neither could be judged for who they were in the context of their space.

All three artists considered above have challenged their parental homes and the expected role-playing enacted there. Furthermore, all three artists have established professional careers, thereby gaining financial freedom and independence outside the home and domestic environment. Gordan (cited in Chapman 2004:174) emphasised the importance for single women of being financially independent, taking care of themselves, controlling their own destiny, and attaining emotional and mental independence.

Artist and academic Penny Siopis was born in Vryburg, Northern Cape, in 1953 into a Greek immigrant family of bakers. After a career in academia she currently lives and works in Cape Town and is affiliated to the University of Cape Town.

Her most recent work marks a re-engagement with the plasticity of paint, 'marrying the impasto of her early *Cake* and *History* paintings with a fluidity shot through with the emotive responses to issues of identity and estrangement' (Smith 2004:346). In addition Smith (2004:346) observes that Siopis is disarmingly approachable and open to different responses to her work, is passionate about her convictions yet refuses to be didactic about them. As with her art, when the accessible surface is peeled away one uncovers a tapestry of ideas, layered, intricate and integrated.

When addressing the concept of home, Siopis responds that her interest in home is also an interest in homelessness. As she remarks: 'I suppose home might be defined by what is homeless, by its opposite' (Siopis 2011:1). The idea of homelessness, dispossession, or exile has been associated with modernity by Chapman (2004:143). It is regarded as liberation, but with a high price. The term 'homeless' suggests absence of a sense of place. Siopis comments (2011:6) that since women are often not in their homes because they have to go to work, black women find themselves, located in the white domestic space. They are not in their own domestic space, but in the space of white people. Thus black women are bound to the domestic space whether in their own homes or in the homes of the whites they work for. They have lost a sense of place, and the concept of home can be defined more broadly for them, as for immigrants and migrants. So the concept of home is defined in more ways by migrants than by the indigenous population and home as a 'current dwelling', 'area of residence', 'country of origin' or 'continent of origin' can evoke a sense of belonging in them. Living in another country for a long time changes the manner in which the country of origin is imagined. Consequently, migrants develop multiple strategies to deal with their unusual situation. Second or third generation migrants often challenge cultural traditions in a new country.

The notion of homelessness can also be understood as spiritual, even as the dispossessed may experience a sense of unease or yearning because they do not feel anchored in the specific. Home may also be desirable, something sought but never necessarily found. One may experience a sense of homelessness and dispossession in terms of who you are, a restlessness that marks the post-modern condition and its lack of fixity and boundaries.

Much of Siopis' work has dealt with the idea of the home, especially her installations. The notions of diaspora and displacement that also feature strongly in her work, with reference forced or desired migration. The process of settling in an alien culture requires a degree of 'acculturation', which according to Chapman (2004:142) can be defined as a 'culture change that results from continuous, first hand contact between two distinct cultural groups'. The process of acculturation is likely to occur over several generations, with the original immigrant group finding the process more difficult.

Given Siopis' immigrant origins, the 'idea of home was something which was precarious, potentially precarious' (Siopis 2011:1). First-generation immigrants may resist the process of acculturation because they expect to return home later in life. In this sense, first-

generation immigrants can occupy a 'liminal' world which is neither 'here nor there'. Even in her film *My Lovely Day (1997)* [Figure 14a-e] the first line opens with Siopis' maternal grandmother uttering the words: 'That I should have ended up in this God-forsaken place' (Siopis 2011:1).

Figure 14a

Penny Siopis
My Lovely Day 1997
Selected Still
Video Installation
The video is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Stockholm;
The South African National Gallery Cape Town; Penny Siopis

Figure 14 b

Penny Siopis
My Lovely Day 1997
Selected Still
Video Installation
The video is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art
Stockholm;
The South African National Gallery Cape Town; Penny Siopis

Figure 14 c

Penny Siopis
My Lovely Day 1997
Selected Still
Video Installation
The video is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art
Stockholm;
The South African National Gallery, Cape Town; Penny Siopis

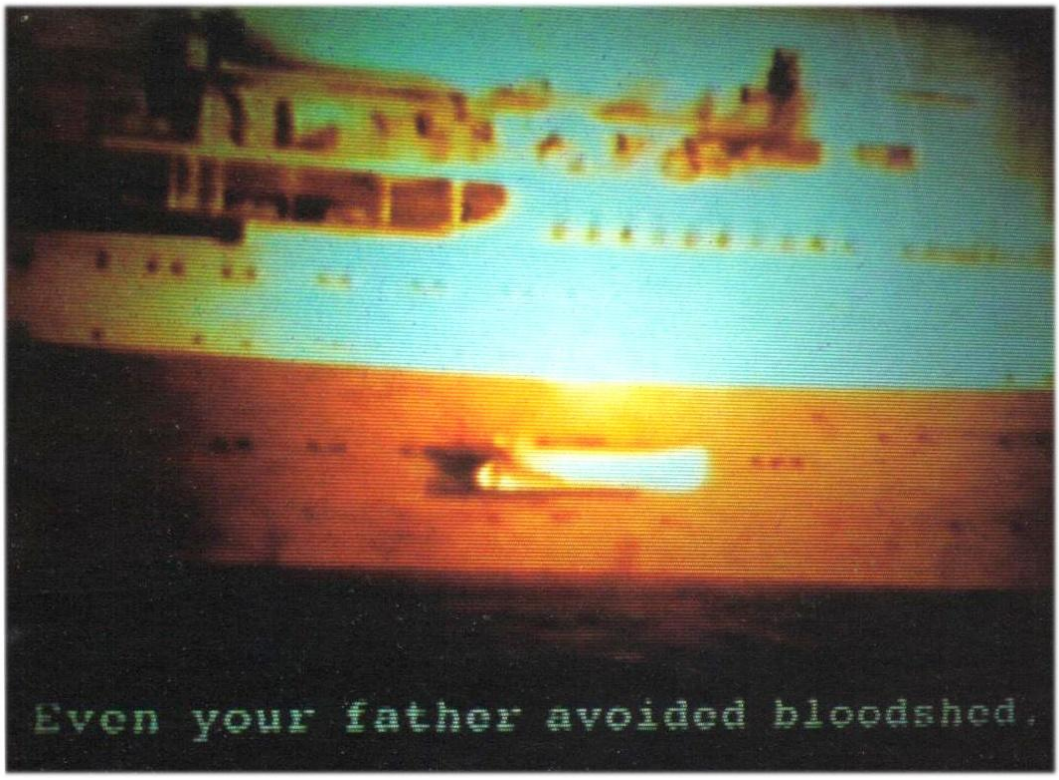


Figure 14 d

Penny Siopis
My Lovely Day 1997
Selected Still
Video Installation
The video is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art
Stockholm;
The South African National Gallery, Cape Town; Penny Siopis

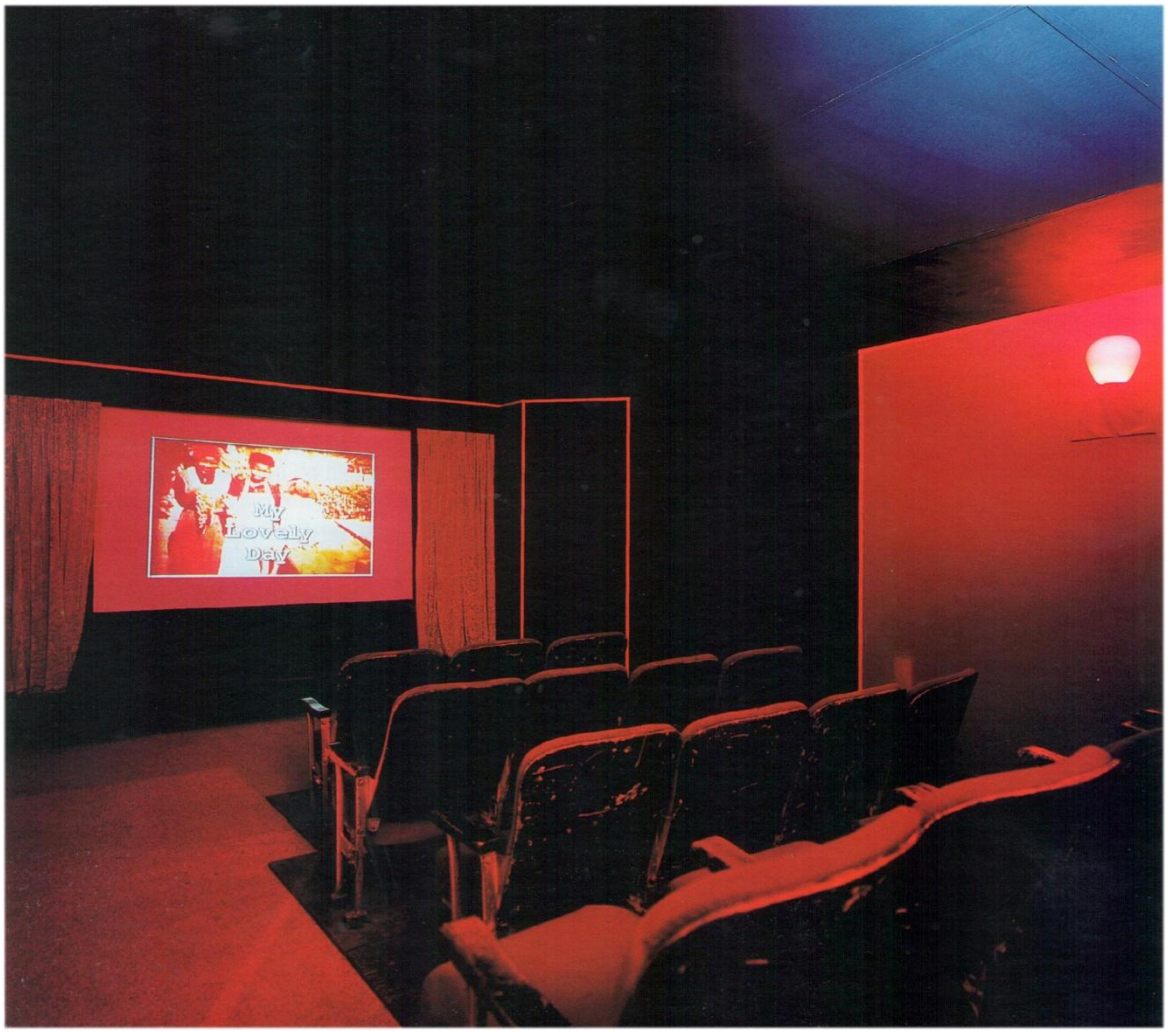


Figure 14 e

Penny Siopis
My Lovely Day 1997
Selected Still
Video Installation
The video is in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art
Stockholm;
The South African National Gallery, Cape Town; Penny Siopis

Her grandmother did not like the Northern Cape to which she was taken by her husband, but as Siopis says: The idea of home (is bigger) and it brings in a whole lot of questions of post-colonialism and displacement' (Siopis 2011:1). A first-generation Greek South African, Siopis is no stranger to debates on 'foreignness and belonging, autochthony and strangeness. Indeed, in post-apartheid South Africa – particularly for the citizen of 'foreign descent' – it has become all the more important to trace one's ancestry, justify one's

presence, one's history, with authenticating lineages, memories and political experiences' (Law 2002:14). These are often taken for granted – a sense of home, the security of knowing where one belongs and how one is defined (in relation to a group, culture or nation).

For Siopis the idea of home is consequently not as clearly defined as it would perhaps have been in the 1970s where it was clearly an idealised and contested space within a feminist frame. As she comments: 'It's more difficult for me to speak in a way that's kind of limited to a feminist discourse' (Siopis 2011:1). Feminism has become more broadly linked to post-colonialism, sexuality, discourses on sexuality and on marginality, and has come to be much more broadly integrated into discourses of resistance. The strong parallels between post-colonialism and feminism are evidenced in their concern with the politics of 'othering', marginalisation and the construction of a 'subaltern' or subordinated subjectivity by colonialism or patriarchy. Both post-colonial and feminist theories interrogate the notion of a standard code by rejecting the binary structures of patriarchy and colonialism in order to posit alternative centres (Gamble 2001:298).

Siopis engages with domestic associations in her work, as reflected in her early *Cake Paintings (1982)* [Figure 15].

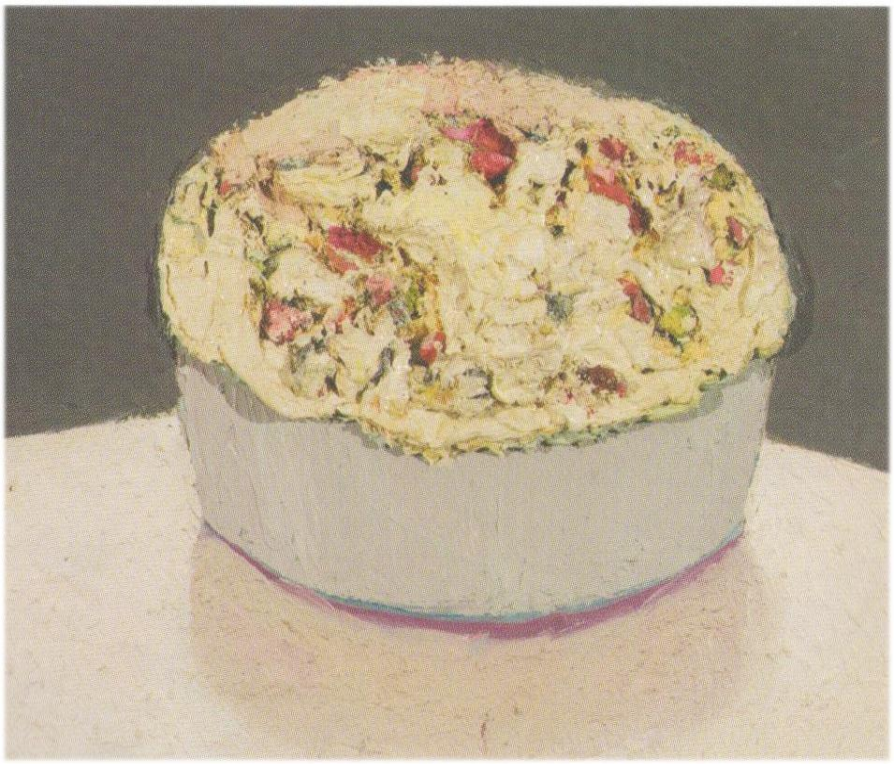


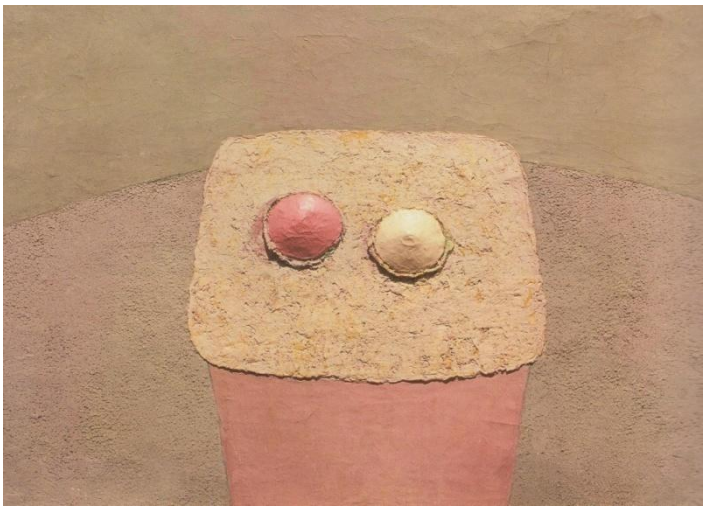
Figure 15
Penny Siopis
Cakes (Pie) 1982
Oil on Board
Dimensions 25 x 35 cm
Courtesy: Sylvia Kaplan

This trend was directly related to her own experience of home when, as a child, she watched her mother ice cakes. Another trend was directed around feminist discourses on the body. This focus is in keeping with Luce Irigary and Hélène Cixious who argued in support of difference and drew on psychoanalytical theory in order to maintain that the feminine subject differs fundamentally from the masculine subject. Cixious, as I showed earlier, believes that 'women's difference from men is both sexual and linguistic. She argues that if women's writing becomes *écriture féminine,* it can subvert masculine symbolic language' (Gamble 2001:205). Irigaray resembles Cixious in their linking of language and sexuality. Irigaray praises the 'otherness' of women's eroticism which, she argues, reveals feminine identity as plural and as offering the potential for the foundation of a feminine symbolic order which will allow women's difference to be celebrated. Cixious locates this in terms of '*jouissance* which is based on the pleasure of giving and is a female energy which cannot be fully incorporated into the symbolic order' (Gamble 2001:256). Siopis accomplishes this in her work by subverting masculine symbolism. In her *Cake Paintings* it is apparent from the luscious sensuality of the paint and subject matter that she explores the 'feminine writing' associated with subjectivity, sexuality and language.

Siopis speaks of *jouissance* and the idea of exploring a specifically feminist language of sexuality and excess. *Jouissance,* meaning enjoyment in the sense of pleasure and in the sense of enjoying of rights and privileges (Macey 2000:210), is located by Cixious in the realm of female imaginary, which is based on the pleasure of giving. Writing for Cixious becomes a way of experiencing *jouissance* 'by re-establishing a symbiotic relationship with the imaginary and a pre-Oedipal feminine sexuality' (Macey 2000:210). So too for Siopis *jouissance* is located in the female imaginary where it is associated with a particular form of experiential painterliness exuding femininity and sensuality. It also happens to be aligned with the practice of cake icing and foregrounds feminine domestic activity.

Siopis' *Cake Paintings* are not necessarily directly related to home because she does not reference home as a particular space. 'It's more the idea of femininity and then you can extrapolate further the idea of femininity associated with domestic spaces...home as an idea is related to the construction of femininity' (Siopis 2011:2). In her *Cake Paintings* a platter of delicacies is elevated to the status of art and rendered in a thick impasto that resembles the icing practised by her mother. Siopis in effect transfers the confectioner's skill to the canvas in mouth-watering depictions of cakes and pastries. She claims never to have baked a cake, but the experience of watching her mother icing cakes informed her *Cake Paintings.* Siopis literally used the tools of the confectioner's trade, creating desirable surfaces that are tactile and visceral. She acknowledges that 'materiality is something that I find very fruitful as a means to critique things (which) I actually love and have great affection for and a strong experiential relationship to.'

When Siopis began painting she painted objects around her. They were simply the paraphernalia of her domestic environment. In *Queen Cakes (1982),* [Figure 16a-c],



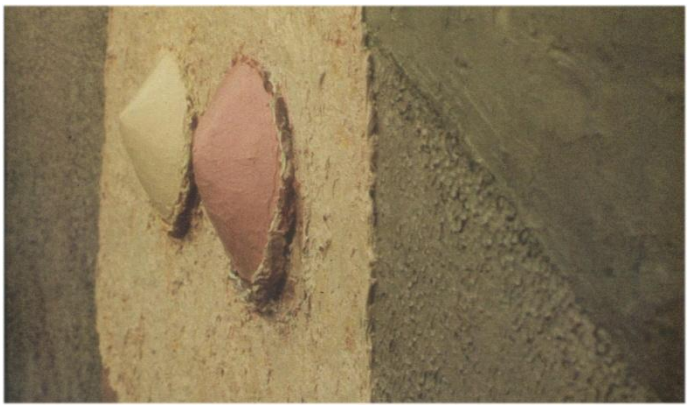


Figure 16 a

Penny Siopis

Cakes (Queen Cakes) Detail 1982
Oil on Canvas
Dimensions 90 x 130 cm
Private Collection

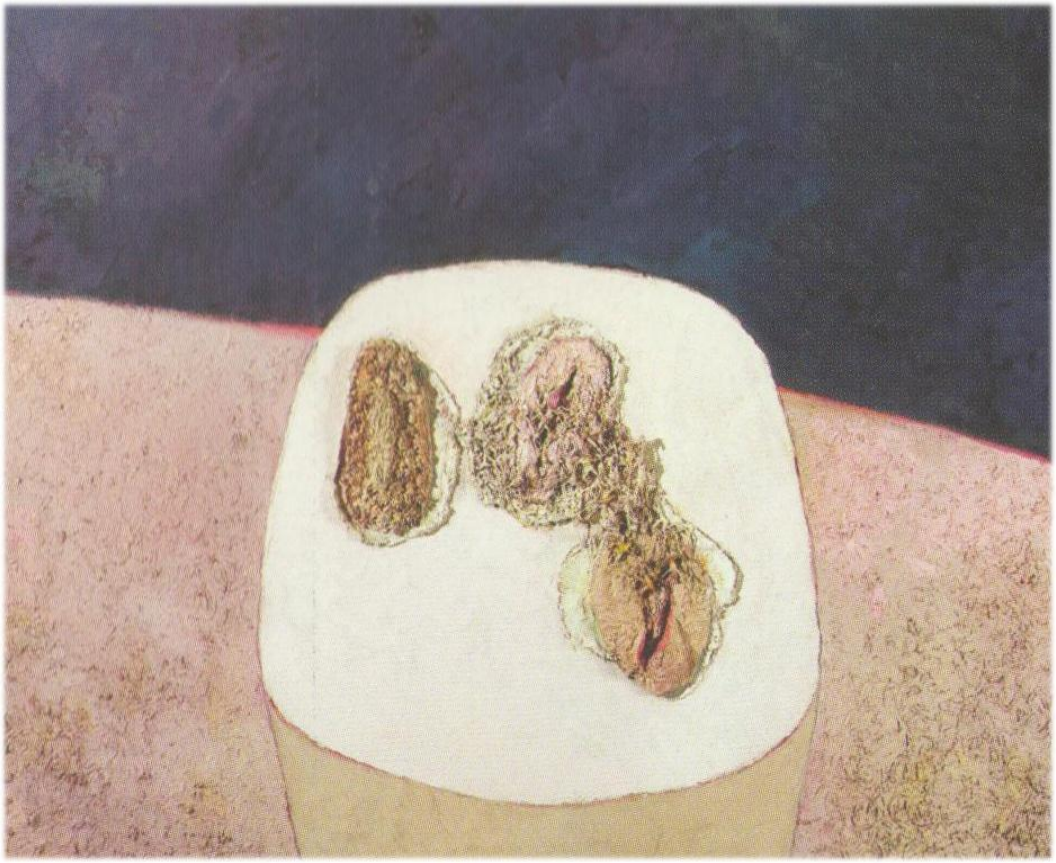


Figure 16 b

Penny Siopis
Embellishments Detail
Oil and Found Objects on Canvas
Dimensions 150 x 202 cm
Collection: University of the Witwatersrand

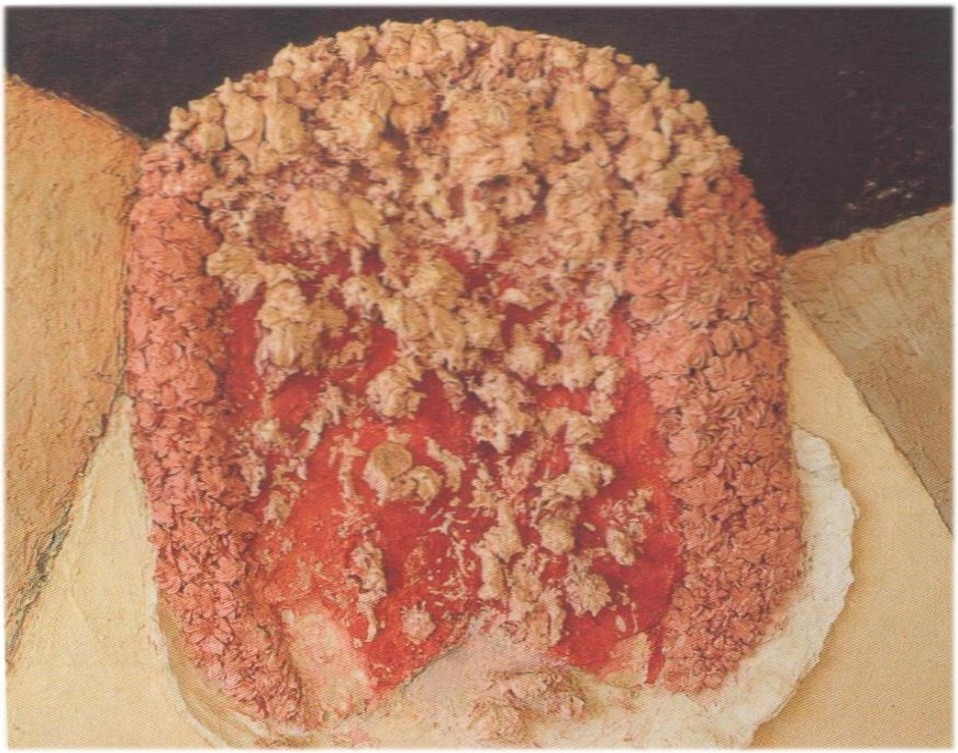


Figure 16 c

Penny Siopis

Cakes (Plum Cream) Detail
Oil on Canvas
Dimensions 201,5 x 149,5
Private Collection

Siopis created pink and white mounds that could not fail to evoke the relationship to female bodies, and specifically female breasts. These breasts are libidinal objects, both sexual and life-sustaining and sometimes stand as an image of the vital, literal, expressive power of the skin (Richards 2005:22). The transgressive nature of *Queen Cakes* disturbs the contrast between reproductive and erotic functions, stimulating the tense relationship between object, subjectivity and subjection. Siopis began to view cakes not only as organic, erotic and ritual objects, but also as a vehicle for using paint in a heavily textured manner, the table-plate surfaces were treated in terms of pattern.

As Richards (cited in Smith 2005:17) further states, Siopis was also interested in 'how heavily impastoed forms test gravity, often giving way under the paint and collapsing into formlessness. Collapsing form suggests the non-form we might associate with entrophy and decay'. In this Siopis signals her interest in what Julia Kristeva, as we saw earlier calls

the 'abject'. The abject, Kristeva states (1982:4) is 'something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and a real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us'.

In addition to founding the domestic and feminist reading of Siopis' paintings, cakes have a particular meaning in various contexts, e.g., those made for weddings, or birthday cakes with candles. Cakes in all their forms celebrate rites of passage, and their embellishment reveals our aspirations and desires. We light candles, we cut cakes, we wish. Cakes are our ritualistic objects for slaughter. Siopis' Greek background may be partly responsible for some of her attitudes and inclinations in the religious as opposed to the secular domain. Ritual is intrinsic to Greek Orthodoxy, with the lighting of candles and other liturgical rites. Siopis (2011:7) herself notes perhaps that some of these rites were enacted in her home, as at christenings, and the interior was transformed with drapes, candelabra and confectionery.

Siopis is an artist whose oeuvre takes womanhood and female experience as its primary focus. As Smith (2004:346) states, 'an umbilical cord of history, narrative and personal investment in collective concerns runs through her work, often manifesting as responses to the uncanny psychological spaces of memory, trauma and pleasure. A deep interest in psychoanalysis animates her creative project'. Inevitably the personal becomes bound up with the political and, as Smith (2004:346) adds, 'it is in this fertile and unstable space that Siopis finds enormous agency. Her remarkable video work *My Lovely Day* (1997), [Figure 14] has become something of a seminal interrogation of (in Siopis' words) 'an ongoing inner psychological state at a time when we South Africans were finally given the chance to think more fully of ourselves as individuals.

My Lovely Day is itself a domestic documentary of the lives of three women which overlap. Three generations immersed in dialogue at once foreign and familiar include Siopis herself, her mother and her grandmother. This work explores the acts of emigration, exile and displacement told through the footage from her mother's home movies and interrogates arrival and seeks out a home. Exile is 'a space of discomfort, of always being outside, even when a return to an originary home is made possible' (Law 2002:33). The video examines this idea of home and the Western concept of home asssociated with the nuclear family. As Siopis (2011:2) says, 'Freud's theories were based...on a nuclear family idea. So all these ideas have developed around a western...and mostly urban concept, but a

western concept of home, though now we have all sorts of other concepts of what home might be, and I think that's liberating'.

The concept of home linked to domesticity, particularly with reference to women, is intertwined. Yet credence should be given to the fact that homes can be separate. A domestic space is not fixed – the terms 'domestic' and 'the home' are interchangeable, although 'domestic space' is a more defined focus on the routine aspects of the home. As Siopis (2011:7) states: 'Home is not necessarily a place only where you have children or where you produce a nest...I think it's a place of belonging, which is important and I suppose that's why I'm interested in that relationship to homelessness or displacement, when you don't have a place to belong in a sense'. The issue of diaspora is particularly relevant to Siopis and her family, associated with relocating and re-establishing home, given that her father was Greek, her mother half-Greek and half-English and her maternal grandmother English.

Siopis' video *My Lovely Day* is a semi-autobiographical childhood memory or as Siopis (cited in Smith 2005:94) says: 'The memory of childhood is the substance of autobiography'. Only when we are old enough do we experience the loss of loved ones and explore our ideas of 'self' in relation to family and ultimately community. So the family is, like the community, as much an imagined abstraction as anything else. It provides the model for many forms and ways of belonging. It is a lived reality, a set of shifting maps for living itself.

For Siopis home has been both a contested space and a safe haven. As Siopis (2011:3) says: 'It's a difficult place...a home... in many ways because if you're an artist, in a sense it's your workplace and your domestic space... where you might be able to escape to your work. But I think as an artist one doesn't escape...because your life is your work and your work is your life...so the home is still always infiltrated with my work because of my interest in my work'. This raises the question of boundaries within the home that may also cause and create tension because of one's displacement in and use of the home as a place of creativity. The boundaries between the home and the workplace are no longer defined and become blurred. Domestic practices are subject to constant renegotiation by men and women as society changes. As Chapman (2004:20) states, 'the home is a 'structuring structure'...or a form of structuration...both enabling and constraining people and action'. In terms of a social context the home is a fraught space because it is contested. In this regard

Siopis refers broadly to the prevailing practice of women in Greek homes, where they are still expected to be in the home or at least primarily enagaged in domestic practice.

Given that feminism regards the home as a site of women's oppression because their passage to the public life of work was prevented by discrimination and the burden of motherhood and housewifery, the place of home did not necessarily fulfil the ideal of a 'safe haven', but could be experienced as a lonely, confining, stifling exhausting - or even a frightening – place. But as post-modern contexts change, contemporary family arrangements turn diverse, fluid and unresolved, and, at the same time, traditional domestic practices have to be abandoned completely.

Siopis is married with one child, now in his teenage years. He has grown up in an unconventional home, Siopis claiming that it was quite hard to keep being a good mother and to keep doing work. Siopis (2011:7) states: 'I feel I'm this person with a thousand hands having to juggle many roles at once, as an academic, an artist, a researcher, wife and mother'. But on another level she believes that her son has had access to a ‘kind of intense situation which was powerful for him...because from a very early age he understood that art wasn't something about technical facility, but about a deep intense experience' (Siopis 2011:7). Growing up in an unconventional home resulted in her son sensing feelings of not belonging and not being 'normal', or not doing what 'normal' households do. For Siopis he learned something else, which he would never have experienced in a conventional home, something which enriched him and created in him an awareness of less mundane lifestyles.

It is easier to subscribe to conventional domestic practices because the principles that underlie them are deeply embedded and are constantly reinforced through cultural, personal, economic and political life. Chapman (2004:139) asserts that challenging convention by practising different values often meets prejudicial and discriminatory responses from members of a dominant culture and from the state and its institutions. These challenges to convention create an increased awareness of cultural and sexual diversity in society. As Chapman (2004:139) further states, 'clearly these nations are multicultural societies which means that there are several cultural scripts on gendered domestic practices operating in unison and sometimes in opposition'.

Siopis herself did not grow up in a conventional home. She says (2011:7) that she grew up in a context in which there was no obvious question of racial segregation. Her own family

home was unconventional in various ways. Her mother gave singing lessons in the home and ran a family bakery business adjacent to their home. As a child there was much scope for play, play-acting, and self expression. Her mother believed her children should have freedom of expression, so the home was very much a lived space. As far as the children were concerned, this was quite an enlightened attitude for the 1950s-1960s. Siopis' mother, half-Greek, was not a conventional housewife and being very well positioned in society was a confident woman (Siopis 2011:7). She had a cultural awareness of her surroundings that was enlightened for the late 1950s-1960s. Such awareness was encouraged in Siopis from a very early age. Siopis' mother surrounded herself with beautiful objects and antiques, being an avid collector of things connected to history and narrative. For a growing Siopis, home was a warm, comfortable place albeit somewhat chaotic and unusual. She also attributes this to her grandmother with whom she had a very close relationship. Her grandmother was a literary, articulate woman, a non-conformist. She believed that to be an educated woman all one needed to do was read and travel. It is this grandmother who features in the video *My Lovely Day* and who was always very aware of her English heritage. One of the most significant problems migrants experience when moving from a home culture to an alien culture is that physical environments differ markedly. Conventional domestic practices in one culture can stand in opposition to those in another culture. As Chapman (2004:141) states, 'established gendered practices in the home are also a critical indicator of cultural differences'.

The components of *My Lovely Day* invoke the appearance of a cinema from the silent film era. It is the imaginative reconstruction of the cinema owned by Siopis' grandfather in Umtata. *My Lovely Day* recounts the story of three generations of women 'in the condensed time – space of hysterical memory; three lifetimes folded into a single day' (Law 2002:32). It comprises sequences spliced from home-movie footage taken by the artist's mother during the 1950s and 60s.

The video consists of images drawn from two generations of women whose relationship was at once close to, and distant from Siopis. As Siopis (2005:95) recalls: 'I wrote the story from memories of my grandmother's spoken words, but also from some old postcards she had written. I treated her phrases – so distinctive of my experience of her – like 'found objects'. *My Lovely Day* is also about self-representation. The 'voice' in the film is that of Siopis' maternal grandmother recounting to her grandchildren her emotional and literal journeys between Europe, Greece and South Africa in the early part of the last century. As

Siopis says (2009:24): 'The historical moment of the telling is apartheid South Africa, but her reference to social tumoil and catastrophe are those of earlier times – the 'exchange of populations' of the 1922 Greco-Turkish conflict, and the massive 'global' migrations following the two World Wars'. In her grandmother's mind South Africa was a 'savage' place, not unlike her husband's home on a remote Greek island where she was exiled. As Siopis says (2009:26): ' That my grandmother was British was a source of great pride to her. But her words 'I wasn't foreign, I was British' seem pathetic as they cut into a scene of a baboon hiding in the bushveld...towards the end of the film she goes back to her opening lines, musing on how she ended up in this 'God-forsaken place'.

Schmahmann (2004:26) points out that Siopis by allowing personal experience to guide the construction of *My Lovely Day*, presented another kind of 'truth' to that in official histories. Throughout her career, Siopis has been interested in the interface between private and public histories. As Schmahmann (2004:27) adds: 'If the personal is emphasised in *My Lovely Day,* Siopis' exploration of memory is simultaneously rooted in the social and political contexts that necessarily shaped her private history'. The memories which bind us to each other, to our families, to our homes ' are shown to be anchored by object-heirlooms – indeed by the very materiality of the film as found-object, as home-movie. Often such things are all that remains – of an event, a person, a life' (Law 2002:33).

Over the past two decades a striking body of work has grown out of domestic debris. As Siopis states of her vast array of collected objects (2009:36): 'I prefer 'things' to objects or trash because the associations are psychologically and semantically richer. I also like the way the notion of a 'thing' expresses feelings and thoughts we have no names for, like when we say 'the first thing that came to mind'. The 'things' that Siopis has accumulated over many years feature strongly in her *Installations (1999)* . They are literally traces and heirlooms of her early childhood home, from her son's first tooth, old toys and broken furniture to work she has exhibited before. *Installations* is interesting as besides referencing the home, it also deals with migration in a much broader sense, since some of the things were collected by Siopis' mother and came from different parts of the world and different contexts. As Siopis says (2011:11): 'What happens in the *Installations* is you see a personal object and then beyond you see what might get accumulated in the household or by a person, and those things are often reflective of a larger political context'. The *Installations* started with Siopis going through her mother's things and deciding what to keep and what to throw away. As she says, the objects really constitute her life through

objects which hark back to homelessness as well, 'you know through the sense of always moving' (Siopis 2011:11). According to Madchen, cited in Maart (2009:36), Siopis once said that objects could hook our emotions and become emotional prosthetics. Madchen adds that Siopis' remark is especially pertinent to the ways she uses ready-mades in her work. It seems that in newly liberated societies, in which the old reality eventually falls away, objects from the past hold special sway. They are relics from a world which, for better or worse, no longer exists.

Still life has remained a constant motif in Siopis' work, often serving to juxtapose and unify objects from Africa with those of European association (Law 2002:19). Over the years, these 'coagulated objects' have become three-dimensional. The surface of the earlier works, it seems could no longer restrain the objects on the surface and they gradually moved into installation (Law 2002:22). Each object may be considered as an index to a moment in the artist's life, an 'heirloom in its own right which bears witness to a lifetime of changing relations...referencing the influence of Siopis as a private individual and as a public figure (Law 2002:7).

Siopis' home has always in some manner been infiltrated, if not by her work then by the rituals of Greek orthodoxy. Growing up in a Greek orthodox home, Siopis (2011:7) relates stories of Greek christening rituals and how, when a child was christened, the entire lounge of one's home was transformed into a christening site, a performance that took place in one's home as an extension of cultural heritage. Many of the things that Siopis has collected over the years contain memories of such cultural performances.

In her work Siopis has sought to explore the relationship between memory and material objects. The objects used have often had strong associations with the home and with femininity and are imbued with such significance that they could be transfigured and at times used in an abject way. As Siopis herself says: 'I prefer to disturb boundaries between the personal and social significance of things' (Siopis in conversation with Achille Mbembe 2005:124). While her work remains a complex of personal and public narratives, the post-apartheid era and the 'millennial moment' are breathing life into other questions, to which her work powerfully speaks (Nutall 2005:136).

CHAPTER THREE

IMMACULATE MISCONCEPTION 2011

Immaculate Misconception (2011) is an exhibition of work presented in partial fulfilment of my MAFA degree. The degree required me to produce a body of work forming the 50% practical component of the degree. My dissertation formed the other 50%. My exhibition consists of multi-media, installation-based work. Photographic images, mixed-media, sculptural objects and video are used to grapple with my idea of 'home' – a micro-space that defines and articulates the domain from which role-play, and by extension, social identity and stereotypes are enacted. Home is also the micro-site where issues pertaining to personal identities are specifically articulated as an expression of the broader context of identity politics.

The artworks presented for my exhibition represent the continuation of a process which began in my B-Tech year at the Durban University of Technology. I view this process as a journey of self-discovery, which engages with issues of identity and in particular seeks to establish my identity as a woman.

My dissertation seeks to explore notions associated with the concept of home and what constitutes home, predominantly in terms of the conventionally accepted place where woman is defined in relation to domesticity, the family unit and heterosexuality. In my research, however, notions of conventional associations with home and the enactment within this space prove to be somewhat unconventional.

My exhibition is process-oriented and often the ideas are only conceptualised during and after completion of the works. Initially this conceptualisation evolved as part of the process of the work. In making the objects and in using found objects I attempt to portray the dislocation and displacement that I feel within my own environment. The objects and photographs I used had to be of significance to me and were mostly located in my own home. On a subconscious level I am always interested in invisible or submerged in contrast to pristine or conventional surfaces, or that which goes unnoticed or is not immediately visible. In the objects I explore, like the dead insects that I collect, I am interested in the process of decay. Things that would normally be discarded I almost nurture as I watch and document the process of decay.

It is also important that the objects I use are objects taken from my home environment and transformed into an installation. Through the use of ostensibly aberrant materials from the home, I question the boundaries conceived as 'high' and 'masculine' in modernist art practice.

In contemporary art practice the installation is a way of engaging with the space in which the work is exhibited, in order to activate the relationship between viewer, space, and work. According to Suderberg (2002:2), 'the installation engages aural, spatial, visual and environmental planes of perception and interpretation. The immediate, physical experience of the art work is important as an initial encounter, whereafter the work can be intellectually assessed'. The viewer's passage through this space will affect the reading of the work. The idea of entanglement within a space was addressed by Henry Lefebvre (1991: 38) to describe a dynamic relationship between subject and space. Since the viewer has to 'enter' the work in order to view the details, she or he becomes part of the work. The viewer's actual participation is indicative of the silent reading of the work, informed by the viewer's own subjectivity, bringing a multiplicity to the work through the viewer's own context, an accepted idea in contemporary art practice. Further, by placing the viewer in close physical contact with work that is uncomfortable, even threatening, the artist may be able to elicit a response to the work that is not diluted by logic.

In an era marked by fluid identities, mobility lifestyle and undefined relationships, installations allow us to connect with the world through a specific materiality, providing 'self-contained spaces that exclude the extraneous, reinforcing a singular and insular aesthetic' (De Oliveira 2003:4). Installations establish boundaries of separate spaces – islands of experience within which elements are choreographed, making movement within the site varied, limited and complex. Furthermore, installations may be haphazard accumulations of data, in which the passage decided by the artist is not always visible or predictable (De Oliveira 2003:6).

The installation becomes the arena for personal performance. The viewer is implicated within the work of art as a participant. In the three-dimensional space viewers become acutely aware of their bodies, as sensation reflects immediate awareness of the viewing as catalyst and receptor' (De Oliveira 2003:6).

Significantly installation art engages the viewer with the real - a form of hyper-realism in which the exclusion of the outside world and the transformation of space cannot be reconciled. Installation art is very much a collage of meanings. The conjunction of objects, and ideas made by the artist provides a rich synthetic field of relationships and generates allegory and metaphor. 'Installation art is a metaphoric process – the combination of object and context diverts original meaning and intent' (De Oliveira 2003:7). Installations that are not permanent or site-specific are destined to be 'works in progress', and depending on the intricacy of the installation, the artist might return to work with the installation repeatedly, so it becomes a performance that is replayed.

Many artists, and the ones that I have researched in this study work with aspects of the domestic space as their subject matter. The domestic experience reveals a complex interaction with one's environment. What informs my own work is my lived experience as a woman engaged in revisiting the constraints and enactment in the context of my home. Female artists engaging notions of domesticity and the home have commented on the structures that exist around them. They use and work with utensils and materials from the domestic sphere, recognising sewing as predominantly female practice. The act of stitching, for example, can subvert the convention normally associated with this practice. According to Parker/Pollack (1981: 65), embroidery, towards the end of the 18th century, was no longer considered a skill but had become a display of femininity. The act of embroidery both embodied and maintained the feminine stereotype. Furthermore, to rebel against needlework was therefore to rebel against femininity. Writer Olive Schreiner (cited in Parker 1989:1), asserts that 'the art of embroidery has been the means of educating women into the feminine ideal, and of proving that they have attained it, but it has also provided a weapon of resistance to the constraints of femininity'.

Within my own artistic practice and that of the particular use chicken skin as a medium, subverts the notion of conventionally assigned ‘women’s work’ in various ways. The method used to affix the chicken skin does not utilise the act of stitching, which would be the conventional method applied to the ‘upholstering’ of the furniture and other works relating to my exhibition. As previously stated the chicken skin is an aberrant material that requires a labour intensive process in order to achieve the end result. The skin itself is received in a raw, wet state. Through a series of processes the skin is then dried and applied to a variety of objects which all relate to the home and domestic space.

This process is undertaken within the confines of my kitchen, which subverts the notion of how this space ‘normally’ functions.

Home and the domestic are intertwined, as I have shown repeatedly, and are at times difficult to unravel. For myself as an artist, my approach has embodied a sense of antagonism towards the home. My perception of the home is that it represents an uncomfortable, even threatening, but familiar space where I feel constrained and often stressed. For me the home can be traumatic and disturbing and, in my own experience, is fraught with negative associations and even with a degree of animosity. This is perhaps because I was catapulted, at a very young age, into the position of carer and nurturer to my siblings and my father after the breakdown of my parents' marriage. My role was exacerbated in adult life, when I married and had children at a very young age. As a result I was unable to complete my studies and, as I reflect on my position now, I am prompted to think of what home represents and the constraints that I sense and endure there.

The home is the exterior to the fiction of appearance. On the inside, the home does not show the 'real' as opposed to the 'act', rather it becomes another performative space which may reveal emotional and psychological aspects of its inhabitants. According to Baudrillard (cited in Grobler 2004:38), 'humans reproduce systems of control and enforce codes of conduct by participating in the production of consumption exchange, without it being their intention to maintain these structures'. The system is not visible, but it influences behaviour. For example, when humans are subordinated to a rigid system of authoritarian control, or to implicit socially accepted parameters, they inevitably feel constrained and may react with violence towards family members. The experience within a domestic space can be seen as an interaction that takes place within structures of power. Our actions can be seen as supportive mechanisms in these structures or may represent the opportunity to subvert them.

The objects that I use in my exhibition *Immaculate Misconception* have all been transformed in some way. The installation consists of various items of furniture set up in a specific space that recreates a domestic space and can be likened to a home environment. All the furniture can be described as antique, or implicitly of some value. There are two antique boudoir chairs 'upholstered' in chicken skin and waxed roses [Figure 17a-i].

Figure 17a

Linda Jones
Immaculate Misconception 2011
Mixed Media Installation
Collection: Linda Jones

Figure 17b

Linda Jones
Immaculate Misconception 2011
Installation Detail
Collection: Linda Jones

Figure 17c

Linda Jones
Immaculate Misconception Detail 2011
Collection: Linda Jones

Figure 17d

Linda Jones
Immaculate Misconception Detail 2011
Collection: Linda Jones

Figure 17e

Linda Jones
Immaculate Misconception Detail 2011
Collection: Linda Jones

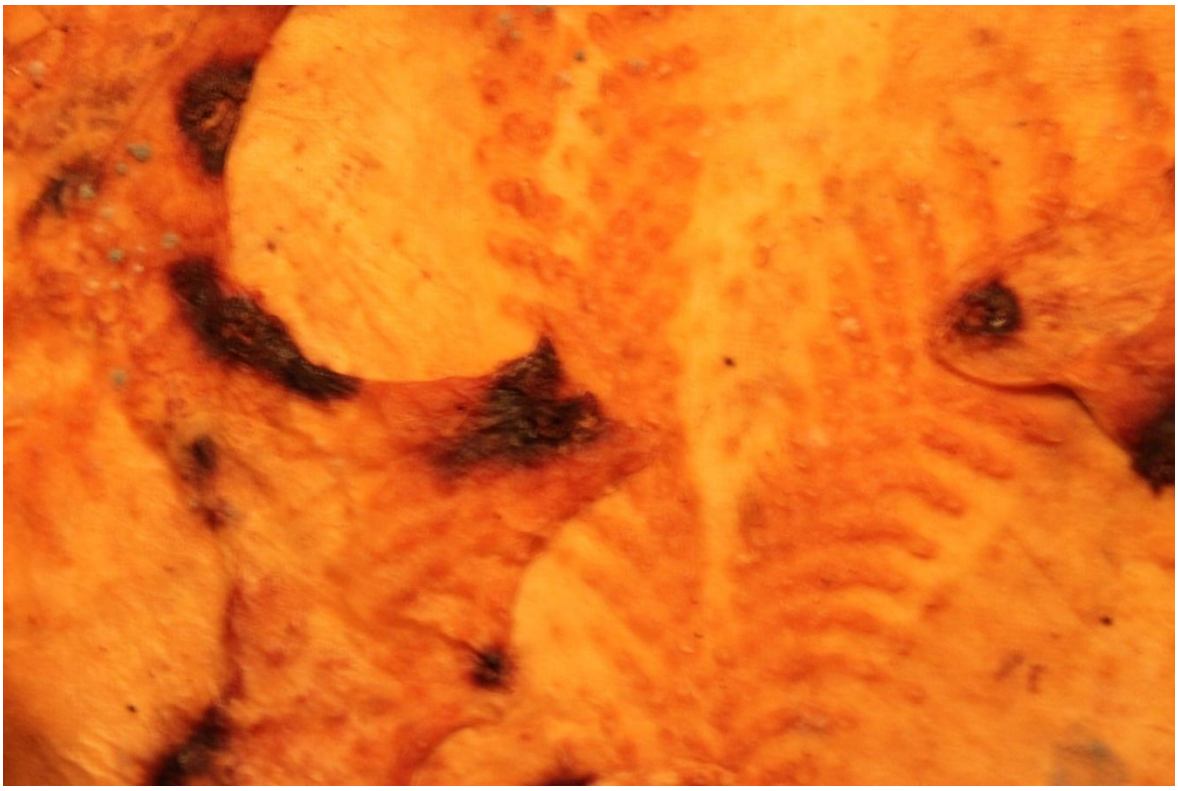


Figure 17f

Linda Jones
Immaculate Misconception Detail 2011
Collection: Linda Jones

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Figure 17g

Linda Jones
Immaculate Misconception Detail 2011
Collection: Linda Jones

Figure 17h

Linda Jones
Immaculate Misconception Detail 2011
Collection: Linda Jones

Figure 17i

Linda Jones
Immaculate Misconception Detail 2011
Collection: Linda Jones

The raw chicken skin has undergone a process of cleaning and curing. In its preserved state it becomes a functional aestheticised object but is also somewhat toxic due to the preservation it has undergone. Other items include a round footstool and a foot-rocker also covered in chicken skin and roses. A magazine rack [Figure 18], also covered in skin and roses, houses old photograph albums recalling moments from my childhood and is placed beside one of the chairs.

Figure 18

Linda Jones
Magazine Rack 2011
Chicken Skin, Waxed Roses, Family Photo Albums
Dimensions: 50 x 20 cm
Collection: Linda Jones

Between the two chairs is a table, completely covered in chicken skin. On top of the table is a lamp. The light from the lamp illuminates the yellow tinge of the skin as well as a bowl covered in mould. A used empty teacup is on the table, showing signs of standing there for some time, and speaks of abandonment. On the floor is a rug [Figure 19]. Scattered on the rug are more roses, which impede one's progress as you traverse the installation. Beside the other chair is a small Georgian table with a drawer, the inside of which is lined with chicken skin and has been filled with the dead insects that have I have come across at various stages, mostly unnoticed by others.

Figure 19

Linda Jones
Immaculate Misconception 2011
Rug and Waxed Roses Detail
Dimensions: Unknown
Collection: Linda Jones

To the left of the room stands an antique display cabinet [Figure 20], separated into two compartments by doors that can be latched but remain unlocked. In the top compartment is a series of my journals written over the years which have been covered in chicken skin – these contain my innermost thoughts and expose my vulnerability. Will the viewer overcome the desire and repulsion wanting to touch but never touching? The lower part of the cabinet is divided by two glass shelves, on which bread stands in various stages of decay. The bottom shelf houses more bread that is rotted and decayed.

Figure 20

Linda Jones
Cabinet 2011
Personal Diaries covered with chicken skin, Decaying bread
Dimensions: 125 x50 x 30 cm
Collection: Linda Jones

The use of skin in my work is a very important part of my artistic process. Skin is 'real' in the sense that it is not a material that seeks to mimic the real. It is something that can denote containment and restraint - skin covers a person or animal and it covers a surface. On the one hand skin is used 'as a stand-in for person, body or life - it is a *pars pro toto* of the entire human being - on the other hand making it so singular, it functions simultaneously as the other of the self and as its enclosure, prison or mask (Benthien 2002:13).

The skin houses a body and is also a protective covering. Strip it away and what is exposed cannot survive. It is an outer layer hiding what lies beneath – concealing and keeping secret, what is intended to be hidden from the knowledge or view of others. Skin chiefly exists to keep the inside in and the outside out. According to Richards (cited in Smith 2005:17) 'skin is typically fragile, it is vulnerable to internal or external violation and to physical sensation'. Not only is the skin the largest single organ of the body, it is also a primary surface. The chicken skin in my work is offensive because it transgresses the tacit line between what is, and what is not, representable. The curing and drying of the chicken skin causes it to become discoloured and depigmented; the texture changes and becomes tactile and visceral. The skin is transformed into something unyielding, marked by traces of feathers that have been plucked from it. The video *Epidermis* [Figure 21] endeavours to portray the process chicken skin goes through to become a hardened fatty material.

Figure 21

Linda Jones
Epidermis 2011
Selected still from video
Collection: Linda Jones

In consumer culture we are encouraged to read skin, especially feminine skin, as something that needs to be worked on in order to be protected from time or the severity of the external world. We must ensure that skin retains its marker of gender difference in its soft feel' (Ahmed/Stacey 2001:1). Skin is also temporal in the sense that it is affected by time. It manifests the passing of time in the accumulation of wrinkles, lines and creases and in its disintegration. Skin is also spatial in that it expands and contracts. All this is true of human skin, but it my experience that dried chicken skin also undergoes certain changes. At times the chicken skin is more pliable and fatty than at others, making it more difficult to work with.

The waxed roses, dead and distorted, have changed colour, but they are not the same as artificial roses which seek to imitate the real. The distortion changes reality as the roses are extremely fragile and easily broken. All the works are fragile and ephemeral, reflecting an allusion to self, displacement (my perceived role within the home) and perhaps my own invisibility.

On the walls surrounding the furniture are various images [Figure 22a-e], which have been placed in antique frames.

Figure 22a

Linda Jones
Home 2011
Photographic image in antique frame
Dimensions: Variable
Collection: Linda Jones

Figure 22b

Linda Jones
Home 2011
Photographic image in antique frame
Dimensions: Variable
Collection: Linda Jones

Figure 22c

Linda Jones
Home 2011
Photographic image in antique frame
Dimensions: Variable
Collection: Linda Jones

Figure 22d

Linda Jones
Home 2011
Photographic image in antique frame
Dimensions: Variable
Collection: Linda Jones

Figure 22e

Linda Jones
Home 2011
Photographic image in antique frame
Dimensions: Variable
Collection: Linda Jones

They are interior images photographed in my own home and two images of myself and of parts of myself that have been photographed looking into a mirror. The frames used are a conscious choice which traditionally contain family portraits or family images showing household's ancestry. By framing my images in this particular way I subvert the notion of the 'ideal nuclear family'. These are usually posed family portraits comprising fathers, mothers and children from one or more generations, smiling happily at the camera. Traditionally these portraits are immensely seductive in their portrayal of the 'ideal happy family' and subtly reinforce notions of patriarchy.

Over a period of time all my work becomes subject decay. The over-ripe fruit, the mouldy bread, the chicken skin and even the roses (because of their fragility) disintegrate and are lost. Objects which decay all serve to evoke the fragility of human existence and the brevity of our stay on earth: they reference the inevitable decay of animate objects and

things and the transience of earthly pleasures. In this sense we become aware of our own mortality. Heidegger called human existence *Dasein* or 'being-there', implying not only presence in but also involvement in the world. The basic aspect of *Dasein,* Heidegger said, is care, the fact that we, unlike animals and inanimate objects, are aware of and concerned about our place in the world and our own mortality (Rohmann 1999:172). This awareness leads to anxiety, the dread of nothingness in the world we were 'thrown' into. Yet it also reveals an endless range of possibilities are available to us.

Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, discussed earlier, can be applied to the decay I mention and to the initial repulsion towards my objects and materials. On the one hand the first response to my work may be to regard the objects as beautiful or desirable, but on closer inspection this will turn to disgust and repulsion. The abject is not simply what is dirty or polluting, but it is subversive. It is the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. According to Betterton (1996:117), Kristeva defines the abject as collapsing the border between inside and outside, self and other, the integrity of one's clean self. Hence Kristeva's writings are associated with making art which scorns social taboos and opposes traditional, repressive notions of identity (Kristeva 1982:4). The abject is that which is intolerable; anything that threatens. Furthermore Betterton (1996:117) states that the disgust we feel at bodily wastes is not the product of their uncleanliness, but horror at the unsettling of boundaries, the threat to our identity, the loss of our integrated self.

The chicken skin too gives off a distinct odour and seems to 'perspire', at times rendering it difficult to 'upholster'. This will be repugnant to many viewers. On one hand the upholstering of furniture and other objects with chicken skin arouses a curiosity within the viewer, but on closer inspection leads to feelings of repulsion. The latex objects also have a smell that is not pleasing, rendering them 'improper' and 'unclean'. There are two things operating within my works, the actual physicality of the materials on one level and the metaphysical on another level. My works are a memento mori highlighting the nightmarish truth that each of us is at one and the same time parasite and host in the endless cycle of growth and decay.

The process of decay in my work is documented photographically. In this way part of the work is 'preserved'. Items of rotting food are photographed at various stages become another body of work in itself. Through the lens of my camera I keep 'alive' what has completely decayed and is lost. No two objects or subjects are processed in the same way.

The use of mnemonics is pervasive in the home. At times the photographs provide the only link to what has passed. Just as the curing of the chicken skin is an important part of my artistic process, so too is the taking of photographs.

It is important that I be the person who takes the photographs and is involved in every aspect of my work, no matter how labour-intensive it is. According to Macey (2000:1), 'the abject is also evoked by the ritual ceremonies of defilement and purification that repeat and reinscribe the universal tendency to regress to the archaic level'. In focusing on the abject as a subversion of order and boundaries, I also challenge aesthetic conventions that e underpin ways in which the female body has been represented in Western art' (Feagin/Maynard 1997:62).

Part of my artistic process has been the issue of space – both literally and figuratively. Within my own life and work, space has been central. The constant inaccessibility of space in which to work in my life has led to feelings of dislocation, resulting in a sense of loss and vulnerability. Attempts to reclaim and renegotiate a space of my own is indicative of the ongoing constraint within my home environment. Within the context of home I view space as psychological, physical and metaphysical, and the negotiation of space operates on these three levels. Some of the spaces are inaccessible – private places within myself to which no one has access.

The home represents for me a place of constraint and containment which has led to feelings of living in a liminal space. Despite the fact that I have a comfortable home and experience the comforts of a white middle-class family, in my home there are no signs of my creativity nor is it enacted in the home. The home has almost become a scapegoat because of mourning, in a way, the loss of self. The displacement within the home has disrupted and subverted my enactment in the home due to the loss and vulnerability that I experience because of various interruptions and a series of events that I have had to deal with in the process of doing my Master's degree. Being prone to depression too, has rendered me incapable at times of doing any art work. I have nowhere to place my creative roots and establish boundaries for my own creative space.

The home represents to me the place of routine and continuity, designated roles as well as the complicated issues of being stifled – all are time-constrained. The negotiation of space is mostly a tenuous situation. Working with the materials that I do, especially the chicken

skin, enables me to position my own visibility (via abjection) as a counter to the invisibility and lack of recognition I experience within my home environment. The washing and cleaning of the chicken skin is almost a kind of cleansing ritual, representative of the ritual and routines that take place in the home; but because this is viewed as 'unnatural' it ruptures the place that I occupy. The video *Epidermis* that forms part of my exhibition demonstrates this rupture, as the making of this work takes place in my kitchen, where I am engaged in the process of washing and treating the raw chicken skin and then stretching it onto boards and leaving it to dry in a place where it must remain unseen.

Some women tend to lose their individuality within the home. They become like the objects that are part of the domestic space they occupy – invisible, functional, familiar. Perhaps there is also an aspect of mourning for my own life, as well as the lives of other women. This is not regret, which is a useless emotion, but is a necessary grief for paths not taken. At times it leads me to experience feelings of being bound and trapped by the choices I make. Then too, despite being constrained one has feelings of homelessness – nowhere to base or place yourself.

It is as though I experience multiple identities within my home context. There are the expected, desirable, and fulfilled roles of being wife, mother and housewife. Then there is my other identity – that of artist. Rohmann (1999:192) posits that 'identity refers to a person's continued sense of self, based on consciousness and the personal attributes and external relations she or he identifies as defining. Hegel located human identity in social activity: our consciousness of self arises from our interaction with others, a process which is both competitive and collaborative.

My creativity continually seeks to find a 'voice' and it is through the creative process of my work that I 'speak'. My work endeavours to subvert the conventions of the home as a place of safety, security and also as a contested territory. The home is considered to be a place where some kind of support should exist, where mutual choices are made and where one is nurtured and developed. Yet frequently it can also become a place where there is a grappling that necessitates, especially for a woman, the need to interrogate the feeling of containment and restraint impeding her.

According to Walker (1990:273), one of the means by which men control women in male-dominated societies is by giving them a well-defined but circumscribed position within society to which some honour and respectability are attached. Feminist artists challenge

patriarchal practices, engage in a politics of identity and deny traditional media which is constructed by patriarchy. Theirs is a commitment to challenging and deconstructing traditional feminine roles. Toril Moi (1987:209) says: 'Patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, in order precisely to make us believe that the chosen standards for 'femininity' are natural'. Post-feminism seeks to destabilise fixed definitions of gender and to deconstruct authoritative paradigms and practices. The term 'femininity' implies a social process in which the female sex is attributed with specific qualities and characteristics. Femininity, as defined in Western culture, is bound up very closely with the way in which the female body is perceived and represented. Men are judged by their social status, intellect or material success, whereas women are commonly defined in terms of their appearance and relationship to men.The visual becomes important in the definition of femininity, 'both because of the significance attached to images in modern culture and because a woman's character and status are frequently judged by her appearance' (Betterton 1987:7). The construction of feminine stereotypes and the construction of female sexuality are interconnected. This is not to say that femininity is determined by biological sex, but rather the reverse, that sexual identities are formed within prevailing codes of femininity.

I question the notion of femininity in my work, by challenging desirable roles and relationships for women in current society, and by using the materials used in my art which are aberrant and may be associated with the abject. According to Gamble (2001:298), femininity governs female behaviour and aims to make women conform to a male ideal of sexual attractiveness. Masquerading as 'natural' womanhood, this is actually something imposed upon the female subject, in spite of the fact that the pressure to conform to the feminine ideal is internalised to the extent that women effectively tailor themselves to fit in – hence the existence of an immensely profitable fashion and beauty industry. Furthermore Gamble (2001:230) posits a post-feminist twist in this debate, stressing the pleasure of creating self-aware, even parodic feminine identities.

From my own perspective and experience, some women to adjust themselves to their husband's needs before their own, so their own independence and sense of self becomes diminutive within the relationship. Although Cixious and Kristeva have postulated femininity as a theoretical area which represents all that is marginalised within the dominant patriarchal order, the term describes a position which can be occupied by any subject, female or male. The significance of the theorists chosen for this particular study

provides a vehicle for articulation of the unspeakable within the sphere of my own work, enabling me to deconstruct and explore notions of femininity within the home and the domestic realm.

At times it seems impossible within a heterosexual relationship for some women to appropriate the expected roles of femininity; hence the need for masquerade. According to Macey (2000:245), 'masquerade is not uncommon in feminist theory, and is often used to protest against masculine stereotypes of femininity. Germaine Greer, for instance, writes: 'I am sick of the masquerade...I'm sick of belying my own intelligence, my own will, my own sex'. Persona is Jung's term to describe the social mask behind which most people live (Macey 2000:295). It is a form of compromise between the individual and what society requires of her or him. Macey (2000:295) postulates that the persona is also a collective phenomenon, a socially acceptable presentation of the ego, and that an inappropriate persona may make individuals seem gauche.

I do not intend to evoke a specific or literal interpretation of my work. I rather seek a response, whether of disgust, repulsion or empathy, which considers the plight of many women who are still far from the freedom of controlling their own lives. The loss and grief that have been my experience, are a significant part of my life and growth. They have led to celebration: a celebration of my path to discovery. As producers of art many women operate under contradictory pressures. Approval in the art world is more readily obtained by unmarried women, who, free of the demands of husband and children, can best emulate the conditions of practice of the male artist. Art is not only a part of social production, but is itself productive in constructing world views and identities by which people live.

The scope for women to shape their own realities regarding their personal lives and the nature of their art production is still somewhat limited. As Arnold says (1996:77): 'Fundamental to a feminist approach to art is the assumption that a woman's life and her art cannot be divorced'. The feminist's imagery, of what she notices in life and uses as subject matter, is infiltrated by her personal history and her experience'. When one considers the work of artist Louise Bourgeois, for example, it is largely derived from her personal history and from her experiences as a woman, daughter, wife and mother. The home becomes a catalyst for memory, the situation in which the range of human relationships and feelings, from the primary to the complex, takes place. Thus 'the house becomes our most intimate self and points us the spectrum of our experiences.

The enclosure of the house, a room, or a staircase may either provide protective refuge or become a trap' (Bourgeois 1994: 22).

In endeavouring to determine my own 'voice', my creative process allows me to 'speak' and it seems as though a profound transformation takes place. I liken this to a rite of passage. The ritual process of washing the wet chicken skin and carefully laying it out allows this rite to take place. In a rite of passage something is extinguished: if not yourself, in your bodily being, then something you are, a position in which you are fixed, from which you have drawn your identity, to which you referred your experiences for some coherence.Then either from choice or from something over which you have no control the position disappears, the identity is no longer your own. You have entered a 'liminal period' from which you emerge transformed. 'Liminality' is 'an intermediate phase initiation in which initiates are sanctified or pose a threat to mainstream society because of their ambivalent social position' (Scott and Marshall 2005: 365).

Within the sphere of my own work I am conscious of the fact that I have left myriad subliminal fragments in many places. I know that in a sense the idea of home is variable and is not necessarily linked or connected to finality. For myself the concept of home is the space that I occupy at a given moment in time. It is the particular space where I have a sense of belonging and can be myself without expectation or judgement.

CONCLUSION

The domain of home is burdened by social definitions. It is mainly defined as a feminine space. In Western culture rational thought is valued above emotion. In the dualist world view, masculinity claimed for itself technology, reason and culture. Femininity was seen as secondary and woman took upon herself domesticity, emotion and nature. One of the key issues in feminist theory has been the issue of woman's voice in male language. To what extent is it possible to enunciate a truly different position when you are already within structures that mark your difference? For feminists considering their own position as 'speakers', this has pointed a double-bind - to elect for silence by taking up the traditional and 'appropriate' feminine place in patriarchy or to adopt a position of power colluding with patriarchal discourse (Meskimmon 1996:8).

Women can easily be reinscribed by token gestures without actually changing the structures which marginalise them. This 'reinscription' is a very important issue in the case of women artists and their work. Meskimmon (1996:8) states that 'to be a woman is already going against the grain. It is a profession whose history is dominated by men and thus the standard notions of professional practice tend to be masculine'. Some women artists who have studios within domestic spaces are viewed as less professional, and possibly less committed, than male artists without domestic responsibilities. This situation necessitates a feminist intervention into the masculine structures of seeing and knowing.

Women's place in society is 'defined by boundaries, ground rules and social maps that are socially ingrained' (Meskimmon 1997:4). Being a woman defined as the 'other', I perform the ascribed roles or rebel against them, appropriating the acts of masquerade. Foucault challenged conventional truth, power, history and morality, asking more than he answered, seeking a reconsideration of our cultural assumptions. He argued that power was an attempt to impose order on a world in flux and that it was exerted in systems of knowledge and social institutions (Rohmann 1999:142).

The limitations imposed by the boundaries of home are such that being inside the home may be an oppressive experience. Although the home is held to be a safe and secure environment, of intimacy and belonging, it often can become the space of raging arguments and a place of private torture.

The trajectory of this dissertation was that the concept of home was, 'the familiar is not necessarily the known' (Lefebvre 1991:15). The feelings of discomfort in places of familiarity, when the ordinary becomes threatening, are associated with feelings of antagonism towards the home.

The principle aim of my research was to interrogate and analyse the stereotypical notions associated with the concept of home. In the context of my research home is the traditionally accepted place where the woman is defined in the context of domesticity and the family unit, i.e., the heterosexual nuclear family. The complexity of women's roles in the private and public spheres is vastly complicated by racial politics and the selective use of ideological and cultural conventions by dominant groups. Weedon (1987:2) states that these power relations rest on perceptions of biological sexual difference and include the sexual division of labour and the socialisation of individual gender roles through the nuclear family, educational systems, media and the internalised norms of femininity governing behaviour and identity.

The artists selected for this study all engage with issues of home, gender and identity to a greater or lesser degree. By the beginning of the twentieth century, middle-class households in Western societies generally accepted the principle that men should take responsibility for earning money, while women should take responsibility for running the home. Therefore the woman performing domestic duties in the home is doing so to uphold middle-class values. These roles were legitimated by the establishment of a set of cultural values that highlighted the differences between men and women in terms of their personal attributes, interests and capabilities.

My hypothesis was that the idea persists of home and family belonging to the woman's sphere, rather than being a joint responsibility, and that stereotypical gendered roles continue to be assigned to woman in the home today. Home is conventionally regarded as a place of safety and security, a sanctuary and a safe haven. But ironically it also frequently becomes a place of repression and entrapment. As feminists have argued, home was a place of oppression for women because their route to public life was impeded by discrimination, motherhood and housewifery (Chapman 2004: 6). Home was not necessarily as I have said elsewhere, a 'safe haven' but could be experienced as lonely, exhausting, even a frightening.

My research makes it clear that there is no apparent solution to the intricacies of home. Subjects are affected by their relationship to spaces. 'Domestic space' and 'the home' are interchangeable, with domestic space focusing on the more routine aspects of the home. The 'ideal' home is therefore an illusion that must be upheld. Yet the 'ideal' is unattainable and serves only as a model for encouraging modes of behaviour in society which place women within a particular framework.

The conclusion I reached after interviewing the artists selected for my study was that the concept of home was a subjective experience. Interesting in my research were the responses and attitudes of the artists to the questions I posed. The questions were open-ended and the interviews thus became organic, with the artists responding openly and candidly about their own and their familial homes. It emerged from these responses that three of the artists had been deeply influenced by their grandmothers, whether maternal or paternal. These influences appeared to have had an indirect bearing on the artists' own practice and on their concepts of a home environment. Murdoch was the one artist who referred only to her immediate family.

Within the context of my research, I desired to conduct a comparative study between Siopis, Findlay and myself - as the 'older generation' – and between Murdoch and Southwood as the 'younger generation'. My aim was to determine whether or not feminism had influenced our artistic practice differently. I found that my matrix was irrelevant, however, as each artist in her own way subverted domesticity by bringing it into the public domain. As Faludi (1991: xv) states, 'the greatest achievement of feminism in the last two decades, is the change it has brought about in female consciousness'.

In terms of the home and the nuclear family, all the selected artists were single, with the exception of Siopis and myself, who have children. Siopis has a son and I have two sons. Murdoch, who is divorced has two daughters. Siopis and Murdoch both acknowledged the difficulty they have experienced as women and artists in their endeavours to establish their careers. One of the key issues in feminist theory, as noted previously has been women's voice in male language. To what extent is it possible, as I wondered before to enunciate a truly different position when you are already within structures which mark your difference?

A post-feminist approach in contemporary third-wave feminism argues for a focus on issues of individual autonomy, for diversity of representation and for an individual-based empowerment for women. A post-feminist vision of the home is created as a place where women can 'freely' decide to return if and when they choose not to pursue a career. According to Kulcsar (www.americanejournal.hu/vol7no2/kulcsar) accessed 15 November 2011), this idea goes along with a new traditionalism, i.e., the repositioning of women in the home which is a safe haven and from where they have alleged freedom to leave if they choose. Post-feminism allows women to be who they want. Kulcsar further argues that new traditionalism is made to seem like a choice, but is not, since for women the home the 'natural' choice. Essentially post-feminism does not end hierachal relations of gender, but it reiterates patriarchy in society. It is gender repositioning, i.e., it changes one ideal femininine image or representation for another.

In contrast it might be argued that what post-feminists regard as 'free choice' is inevitably not a free choice but a controlled one manipulated by the media. This means 'that our preferences are not entirely our own, they are formed by social instituions around us' (Kulcsar, www.americanejournal.hu/vol7no2/kulcsar accessed 15 November 2011). Thus through the media femininity becomes regulated and socially prescribed. It is important to share the same world within and without the home. Whilst this has taken place in many spheres of life, there are still others in which gender roles divide and persist.

My own position and body of work articulates a subjective place within the home space. My work and sense of self involve conflicting experiences within the home. Domestic practices are subject to constant re-negotiation by men and women as society changes. The home is a form of 'structuration' which enables and constrains people to action (Chapman 2004:20). Patriarchal ideology has had a significant impact on power in marriage and, furthermore, continues to impact upon cultural understandings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. As Chapman (2004:97) states: 'Gendered domestic practices remain deeply rooted and this shows that *both* men and women need to change attitudes if a higher degree of equality is to be achieved in the domestic sphere'. Concerning the relevant artists interviewed for this study, I established that whilst there is no apparent solution to the complexities of home, their route (within their artistic practice) to the public sphere was less inhibiting than I myself have experienced.

Finally, I would like to encapsulate my position by observing that I have searched for myself in the mirror of other people, learning that I, as a woman, am defined as 'other' and must perform or rebel against my ascribed roles, caught as I am in a masquerade. Who am I? The question is already too complex to answer. My forged identity is in constant flux, modulating to the constant play of history, culture and power (Meskimmon 1996: xv).

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APPENDIX 1

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

Interview with Antoinette Murdoch (AM)

Johannesburg Art Gallery

11 March 2011

Interviewer: Linda Jones (LS)

LJ: From what you have read of my questions, you will note that I'm critiquing from a feminist perspective. May I ask if you are married, single, or divorced?

AM: That is actually very relevant to my work. I am divorced and that definitely comes out in my art work. I'm divorced with two children aged 10 and 12. I was thinking about what you were asking about the home and I was thinking about my personal position in terms of the home. We (ex-husband) have got an awesome arrangement, where the children are with me one week and with him one week. And then with me one week and with him one week. We actually have an incredibly good relationship. We live in the same security complex and from week to week, even when he's got the children, I still see them on a Tuesday and a Thursday and the other way around, he still sees them on a Wednesday and a Friday whether he's got them or not. I'm sure we will see later on when the children get older, but so far because they are in the same community they come home to the same place every night. The psychologists say it's a very balanced arrangement. It's a European thing but in Africa there is hardly anyone who does it. It's called shared residency, but hardly anybody does it in South Africa. The courts still favour the mother to be the primary care-giver, so they didn't even grant it in our case. We didn't have money to take it to court and fight, so we just took the ruling as that I'm the primary care-giver, and he sees them every second week. We made the arrangement between ourselves that this is how we are going to raise our children.

LJ: My research examines the concept of home, both as an idealised place and a contested space. How do you position yourself in terms of that, and what would be your response if I said to you what is the concept of home?

AM: Maybe you can just tell me what you think the concept of home is so that I can position myself.

LJ: What I am aiming to do in my paper is almost a comparative study between two artists of my generation and then two younger artists.

AM: Who are these other artists?

LJ: I'm interviewing you and Doreen Southwood, and then Penny Siopis and Bronwen Findlay. They are my peers.

AM: Bronwen Findlay was my external examiner for my paper actually.

LJ: I view the place of home as not necessarily that place of 'home-sweet-home' and I am wanting to look at the façade, at what takes place behind the façades we put up

in order to maintain what society thinks home should be.

AM: Okay, well in my case I grew up as one of four daughters. Happily married mother and father to this day and a really happy home. I can honestly say without any façades or whatever. Sure we were the products of an apartheid society so we grew up oblivious of the world out there. It was a very protected environment. An Afrikaner family you know, but it was genuinely happy. Then stepping out of that into the world, we have managed still to keep quite happy, but a disrupted family non the less, with the divorce and everything. It was quite a traumatic experience for me in my life because I was so used to living the ideal family life. And now I'm thrown into what is not the ideal. It's disrupted because I only see my children every second week. I'm answering very personally now, I really don't mind, because I say that it actually is what my art is about. It's about personal confession. This is the kind of stuff that I lay on the table all the time in terms of my art. But if I am being too personal with my answers you must tell me that you want a more theoretical approach or whatever the case maybe.

LJ: No, it's absolutely fine.

AM: Now I'm in this disrupted family unit where I only see my children every second week and every Tuesday and Thursday of every other week. I work a full time job, which my mother never did. She was the home-maker. She was at home for as long as I can remember. When my youngest sister got a little bit older, she took a half day job, but for all intents and purposes when I was at home she was there. She was the cook, the domestic, the everything. We never even had a domestic worker. She really did all the domestic duties. Then I went through the biggest trauma when I turned thirty. That's when I got divorced, that's when I left the church, that's when my whole life changed completely and utterly. It was to a large extent because I was trying to be my mother, and I realised I can't be my mother because that is not who I am. I was a Christian. I gave up my Christian faith at the time and one component of it was that as a Christian, I believed I should stay at home and look after my children. I was having to do all the hard labour that is involved with that. I was also teaching part-time and spending time with other mothers and their children as in tea parties and stuff like that. I just came to a point in my life where I just couldn't do it anymore. I thought what am I trying to do? This is not who I am so why am I doing it. And at the time I was doing it because of my Christian faith and my upbringing. Those two things just influenced me and then I literally changed 180 degrees. I just made a decision to leave the church and to look for a full time job. And my career has gone from strength to strength until where I am now. I'm talking about eight years that this whole process took place, and I still can't believe where I am now. Now I am, this full time working mother like I say, who sees my children every second week. I've got to come home at night, I've got to feed them. I can't cook at all, at all. So I just improvise these meals where I buy a chicken from the Spar and some salad, and that's what we eat. Or I grill something – I'm the 'griller'. I grill everything. Its all I can do, but its the biggest thing to me to go home at night and to think what are we going to eat? And to juggle what I'm doing here with what has to happen there (home) and homework and everything is, I would say, is a huge conflict. I adore my children, I absolutely adore my children but I'm definitely not the kind of mother who...I've never been broody in my life. I definitely do not want any other children. So its a conflict in me. My relationship with my children is not one of conflict. In actual fact we relate, I think, with one another much better than I ever did with my own mother. We have a much more

casual open relationship but it is
a conflicting thing in my head you know, juggling all these balls

LJ: You left the church, but did you actually give up your faith?

AM: Yes, absolutely. I was previously in full time ministry as well, so I was really involved in the church previously. So I felt that I had to make all of these changes and to me it was... everything I do, either I do it fully or I don't do it at all. I don't do things in half measures and I just felt that to be a half-baked Christian – I mean even the bible says if you are lukewarm I will spit you out; if only you were cold or warm, but because you are lukewarm I'm going to spit you out – the bible even says that. And I just knew that I had to completely distance myself from that. Now and for the longest time I didn't even care, I didn't even try to investigate alternatives. It didn't matter to me at all. I feel I'm at the point in my life where I need to seek some form of spirituality now, I don't know? I'm actually quite negative about it. But who knows? You know the last eight years of my life have been so liberating that it's very hard for me to think that I must go back to a form of organised religion. Obviously I know that it doesn't have to be that, but do you really want to hear about my faith?

LJ: I identify quite strongly with that occurrence in your life because I'm a Christian and I have struggled forever. I feel at times that I'm walking a tightrope. At times within my work I almost feel schizophrenic because I'm this person here (in the home) and this person there (in the art world).

AM: I think that was for me as well, that sense of schizophrenia. The art world and Christianity, I wouldn't speak for other faiths, they don't sit comfortably next to each other, they don't. My original studies were through Wits Technikon. You arrive at Tech and you're given this naked model to draw and it goes against your grain completely and utterly. I had these arguments with lecturers about that - but I can't do this! And then eventually, slowly but surely you get used to it so you almost become...

LJ: Become de-sensitised?

AM: Yes, you become de-sensitised and more de-sensitised and more and more and more. Then you look at shows here like Tracy Rose has on here now...vaginas and penises and everything. I'm so de-sensitised at this stage of my life that nothing shocks me anymore. So yes Christianity and the art world don't go together well. But if you read some of the earlier things that are still on the internet about some of my earlier work, I think it states very much that I am a Christian and at the time that I was a Christian I was actually making art from that point of view in terms of making work. There's scriptures that even in your vows in a Christian marriage that you commit to serving your husband. It says husbands love your wives and wives serve your husband. All they have to do is love us and we have to serve them. I'ts utterly ridiculous.

LJ: The notion of home is attached to femaleness which in turn is attached to heterosexual marriage. How does your husband define home?

AM: There's great similarities between us. He's also an artist. He did some significant work in the 1990s, but he's pretty much given up making art. So I think there are a

lot of similarities. I think we have similar values. He however, still believes in Jesus although he doesn't call himself a Christian anymore. He occasionally still takes the children to church. I don't, obviously, so in terms of religion I actually think they are getting a balanced view. We don't just say that this is how you're going to do it. Him and I would rationalise and debate with our children why we believe the way that we do. So I think there's differences but similarities. The homes are exactly the same because of the way they are built, they are exactly the same. So I think that all contributes to the children's comfort and their stability definitely. Maybe we are screwing them up completely and we'll hear from their psychologists one day, I don't know, but so far it seems to work.

LJ: The rise of the Feminist movement in the 1970s brought about a greater freedom for women. In what way do you think this has influenced your work? Being married and a Christian how did that affect your work?

AM: My work is who I am. I sincerely believe that any artist, if you're a green Martian that what you produce will be from that point of view and obviously the work that I make is from the point of view that I'm a white woman in 2011 in South Africa, living in the suburb of Randburg with two children – all of that informs what my work is about. So there are some things that have changed from the Christian thing to the non-Christian thing; the being married thing to the not being married thing, so obviously from before I was thirty and after I was thirty there were certain shifts. But I think a lot of things were also the same and I think that's what caused the conflict in me. If I have to specifically have to refer to the Feminist movement in the 70s then obviously all of us have read the material, all of us. I think South Africa is still at least forty years behind because to a large extent, well let me say from my community, the Afrikaner white community, there are still so many of us and I have to include myself in that, who does the stereotypical domestic thing inspite of the fact that in America in the 70s there was such a huge shift – I don't think that shift has really significantly taken place here.

LJ: Do you think that there is a greater awareness though, today?

AM: Absolutely. I would hope that education has made some difference. I mean even if you look at black women in South Africa today, which is taking it completely outside of my own group, black women are probably more oppressed than white Afrikaner women in this country. I call it new conservatism. There's a new conservatism with our new government and things have completely and utterly, radically changed. But there's a certain conservatism. It's like the minister of Arts and Culture last year had a big hissy fit Zanele Holole's photographs of nude lesbians. How can we have a minister of Arts and Culture who cannot deal with an issue like that in this day and age, and that just shows this new conservatism. The kind of censorship, the kind of restrictions that our black government now is imposing, is exactly what our Afrikaner government did thirty years ago, exactly the same. It's ironic, the more things change, the more they stay the same. I think we live amongst people here with Nontu (and other members of staff)... I have a fabulous staff of black women and it just kind of happened that way. There's a couple of black guys as well, but predominantly black women where we are all on the same playing field, we are all liberated, we all have similar values and things like that, but its in this world, the art world. There's a world out there (outside the realms of the art world) who are shockingly still unliberated and I was caught partially in that thinking, that I had to fulfill that role. I was caught there.

LJ: Do you feel freer in yourself as a result of all that you have been through up until this point?

AM: Absolutely. This is where the last chapter of my paper (masters thesis) talks a little bit about self-censorship. I did my show in 2007 which was my masters show where I did those things that look like light bulbs, where I said a lot of things in that show that I felt I had to say, but I still held back certain information because for the protection of my parents. I actually use the word 'fuck' in one of my works and I found myself doing it in very subtle colours, actually that's the only one I did with the same colour; colour on colour like orange so that from a distance or unless you really go up to the work and try to figure it out. They are all supposed to be not completely readable, but this one was the most unreadable because I found that I had censored myself, that I still...I think It's very difficult to shake your entire upbringing; all the interrogation...it's very difficult.

LJ: Inspite of years of feminist consciousness, the home is the terrain where women's traditional roles of domesticity, nuturance and subservience are still expected to be fulfilled as the natural function of her womanhood. If you think of the idea of home and domesticity, has it in any way impeded you as a woman?

AM: Yes, absolutely.

LJ: You speak about your mother as being the stereotypical ideal of where women should be?

AM: My mother is such a wonderful woman, she really is. I'm not just saying that because she's my mother, she really is a wonderful woman. We have a conflicting relationship now because of my not believing and her being very strong in her faith. But I think it's only natural for a little girl who sees a loving wonderful mother and want to be like her, and modelling yourself on her without even consciously choosing it. I never thought I did. I first spent a year in ministry (in the church) and then I went to go and study art that's completely different to what my mother did, so I really thought not consciously but there was always this... my family have always referred to me as the black sheep, not in those words... my dad always used to say 'sy is nie van ons kerkse mense nie', which ironically is this self- fulfilling prophecy. It was always with a degree of humour, but they always pointed out that I was different, so I saw myself as being different and when I went into this marriage it was different. I wore a green dress for the wedding... you know like we're artists. I did the whole thing differently. We were very young however, but because you want to have sex, you've got to be married. So we were twenty-two, both of us and I did things differently, but as I went into my I had a nervous breakdown. I couldn't explain it. I have major psychological problems and it's another thing that I bring to the fore in my artwork. You will see that there's an artwork that says I'm bi-polar and I am bi-polar, and I'm telling people that I'm bi-polar. But I know that people judge you for being bi-polar, and I've got panic and anxiety disorder. It happened when I got married. Psychologists explained to me that it can be triggered by any trauma which can be positive or negative and in that case it was a positive thing. I couldn't understand it, but there I was coming from a stable as can be household, Afrikaans family. Here I was all of a sudden marrying this guy, we had no money, and doing our higher diplomas. We were living in a matron's flat in the hostel. We had absolutely nothing and we started moving from apartment to apartment,

because there was always like a reason... We were three months in one place, two months in another place, and I was just completely and utterly traumatised by this change. And it was just negative things. There were negative aspects to it, the moving around and everything. There was also the wonderful thing of being with the man I loved and blah, blah, blah. But it was all just too much for me, so that changed me completely and within that process... within all of this how different it was from my mother. I obviously sub-consciously felt when I got married that I had to fulfil that role, that domestic role and it screwed me up completely.

LJ: Did your husband have these expectations of you?

AM: Maybe not consciously. He was also an art student, also completely liberated. From the beginning we spoke about these things and I told him from the beginning that I am not going to cook every night. We had a very open, understanding relationship. But Alex was one of four boys, Italian boys, whose mother did everything for the father and four boys. So sub-consciously he had certain expectations of me. I couldn't believe how his mother did everything, everything for those boys. She didn't even expect... I mean in our household the girls always helped my mother in the kitchen and to clear the table and stuff like that. They did none of that, she did everything. So, yes it definitely stunted me because I was then married for ten years. Eight years married and two years separated – altogether ten. Between age thirty and thirty two that's when I got rid of all of that and moved forward with my life. Within eight years I went from being a part-time school teacher to having this position. (Head curator of Johannesburg Art Gallery). I had to get divorced in order to achieve that, I had to. It was absolutely... and I can't complain that I had an oppressive husband or manipulating or you horrible person, not at all, not at all. But it was all there and I couldn't do it. And now I still can't have a relationship, I just can't have a relationship eight years later. I can't have a relationship because I'm petrified of losing my own identity again, because that's what happened. I lost my identity completely. And again without a husband that was a horrible man or manipulative in any way.

LJ: Do you think that this awareness has resulted in women becoming more theoretically informed about power relations and the way in which gender is socially constructed? I think more simply, how do you engage out there in terms of your work perhaps from a feminist perspective? Would you consider yourself to be a feminist?

AM: We'll be here for another three days if we have to discuss feminism. There's all the different schools of feminism, so I'm not going to sit here and associate myself with one type of feminism per se, but I most certainly associate myself with their liberation of women you know, and that I will state categorically. And that I most certainly bring to other people's attention because we still function in a society, I've said this already, so I'm going to repeat myself now, but we still function in a society where women are treated differently in the workplace, most certainly, most certainly. I experience it on a daily basis. My superiors treat me differently to what they treat other heads of institutions.

LJ: That was one of the questions I was going to ask you. Do you feel that you are treated differently because you are a woman in this position?

AM: I do and it’s ironic. My superior treats me very differently very often. But again,

those men are so indoctrinated. They are so indoctrinated that for them to change... I had a huge argument with him one day because I was crying. We had this argument about the fact that I was crying. My behaviour wasn't appropriate for the workplace. I am not to cry – that is not appropriate behaviour, but a man can walk into the boardroom and slam his book on the desk, be very angry and shout at everybody but that is appropriate and acceptable. But it is not appropriate for me to cry. I happen to cry when I'm angry. Whether that is because I'm a woman... I know men like that, but it's mostly associated with women...sort of emotional behaviour. We had a huge argument about this and I pointed out to him that you cannot discriminate against me because I happen to express an emotion in a certain way that you don't express that emotion. So as much as we would like to believe that there has been major shifts and major changes... maybe in America, not here. I can't say for America because I'm not there, but you would probably find there are very conservative areas of America. Maybe in Manhattan...because I've met some very strong women too. Ironically there's one woman, a black woman, dresses in business attire and we had this psychological group meeting and I brought this up because this incident had taken place that week because I was very upset. And she was as cold as ice, and she said my mentor taught me that you to go to the bathroom, wipe your tears and go back into the boardroom and nobody should ever know that you shed a tear. And you behave as though it didn't affect you at all. She came to me afterwards and said that we shouldn't have to change who we are, shouldn't have to adapt to a so-called 'man's world'. Why should we? Why should we have to change? But there have been times in this institution and I've been here for two years now where I've cried when I've addressed my staff; where I have said that I think you are disrespectful towards me and cried when I said it. And I believe that I have a good relationship with my staff, and there have been eyebrows raised because of my methods, but my crying has nothing necessarily to do with the fact that I'm a woman, its got nothing to do necessarily with the fact that I'm bi-polar and depressed and whatever else. It's who I am, deal with it. I am most certainly competent.

LJ: In terms of your work do you feel that it was more difficult to get ahead as a woman as opposed to a man in the art world?

AM: You know I can't really say that because, only because, now there's this pressure on the government and private companies to employ women or black people. But I would like to think that I got this job and all my jobs leading up to this job on pure merit and that I was the best person for the job. And I will continue to believe that for my own self image. But the reality is that we are being given opportunities that we weren't previously given. I overheard some gossip about me getting this job; it was some artist interrogating my boss about why I got this job and he actually said that it's because she's the best person for the job. So you know I hope that it really is the case. But we certainly can't whine about it because they certainly favour appointments for women and black people. So how good or how bad that is I'm not always sure because I know many incompetent people get jobs whether they're black, indian or coloured; women or men or whatever they are, they are the people at the moment that get jobs for the wrong reasons. But I can't complain that I was held back in terms of that.

LJ: I the terrain of home remains a gendered one, in your opinion, do women occupy a lesser status around the home, than within the public sphere?

AM: Yes absolutely. Although I can't say that for my own situation as it is so different, but I know black women that I'm very close with and in this environment, and where I was previously employed at The Artbank, that their status... in fact there was this one girl that worked with me at The Artbank. Everything seemed to be fine and she also married an artist, a very well known, black young artist. Everything seemed to be in place before the marriage, you know they seemed to be equal. The moment she had a baby everything changed, everything. She was reduced to the baby sitter. She is devastated because she was working in the corporate world. She was working with me at The Artbank and now she's reduced to being the baby sitter at home. Unfortunately we live in a society where women occupy a lesser position. It seemed like while she was just the sex object that was fine.

LJ: The home is regarded as private yet you seem to openly want to make it public. Do you see that as an act of transgression?

AM: This you'll also pick up in my paper (thesis). More so me than my home, I have decided like Tracy Emin to put on display, to open up for scrutiny, because I just got so frustrated with the silent whispers. You know a lot of us create art... I mean the majority of artworks you've got to analyse what it says, what it's all about. I just came to a point of frustration with my own voice that...the last body of work I'm just going to say what I want to say. I want to say this now and I'm going to say it. So I opened myself up and volunteered a lot of information about myself so its not about...well ultimately it is about the home, its about my personal state with a lot about the relationship with my ex-husband, with new boyfriends, so I guess all of that does go back to the home. To me relating very much to Tracy Emin there's... you know I once told somebody a secret and they had gone and told everybody else the secret and from that day on I just decided I'm not going to have any secrets, then I can't be hurt by people, by telling them my secrets you know. So that's how I feel about my art as well and about who I am. If people see it and they don't like it or identify with it, then so be it. So, I guess my private space isn't very private. But I'm very protective, very territorial about home in the sense that it is my place. My panic disorder is very much related to the unknown. My panic attacks are very much associated with the unknown. Like if I have to go and sleep over in a strange place then I get very, very anxious as a result of it. So my home is a place where I know I feel safe; it doesn't hold the fear that other places or spaces hold for me.

LJ: Would you agree that your art work offers a a micro-resistance which in some way brings about a change for women. The point I'm trying to make for myself personally is that I don't want to be regarded as a woman artist. I would like to be Linda Jones, artist, and not be defined by my gender.

AM: Yes, so would I. I would most certainly say that I hope that my work has a tiniest little voice in making some change. I guess I should be very positive and say that I'm sure it does but, and that's why I'm so frustrated with this small little voice that artists have in general, that I just wanted to shout it out, and I don't think my exhibition was successful in that regard because I had hoped to provoke certain responses to certain pieces that I made and I didn't get those responses. People seem to engage with art on a very non-responsive level, or maybe it was simply not good enough. It didn't achieve what it was supposed to achieve. I mean Zanele Mahole certainly got a response. At that point in my career I was thinking I would like any response, even if it was a negative response you know. But that last show I didn't get any reviews; I was enormously frustrated because this was the one show that

would make people angry or make people speak up or shock somebody, and it just didn't you know...Which I spoke about in my last chapter, so you can read about that. I want to shout from the rooftops, I want people to know and hear and to listen you know.

LJ: Do you think that men artists have it a little easier than women?

AM: Absolutely, absolutely. No question about it. Even here in the gallery every day I have to fight, fight, fight for what work we are going to submit to the committee for purchase. And the proposals come in and its James Webb, Paul Emmanuel, Philip Boshoff, William Kentridge and Paul Edmunds, and open any Art South Africa and count in one issue... I promise you 75-95% of the issue consists of male white artists. Still, okay, black men are coming up. Black women, there are hardly any. I'm excited about the fact that Nadiba and Zanele are two of our new bright stars, but inspite of the fact that 80% of people studying art today in most institutions are black women...they go home and have babies after they have completed their studies and we never hear from them again. So absolutely yes, male white artists and it not just hear in South Africa... pick up any international art book. So we have a long way to go, a long way to go.

LJ: In what way do you think your work challenges or subverts patriarchy?

AM: You will see from that last chapter as well that I made, like Tracy Emin very specific work about men in my life, lovers and things like that. I did like Tracy Emin does, you never know if she is making fun of them or if she's exposing them, or there's that kind of work that I've made as well where I expose men's frivolous sort of behaviour towards me. I made a piece where there were these quotations which were all quotations that I had taken from specific men saying specific things to me but they sounded very generic. Like 'you're the most beautiful thing I've ever seen', 'I love you more than life itself'...whatever. Those kind of statements, and put them on felt and put them on a wall. I took a whole bunch of men that I had been involved with at the time, names and surnames, printed it out as stickers and gave the instruction that if you recognise the statement that you said to the artist, then take the sticker and go and put your name under it – claim the statement. It became quite interesting because there were two or three guys who, obviously not all of them came to the exhibition but there were two or three guys, even my ex-husband had claimed a statement that I didn't associate with him, but chances are that he had said something like that to me because it's so generic. But it was just interesting that nobody claimed the right which means how unthoughtful they were when they actually told me that particular thing. And then it just became a joke and people just stuck stickers everywhere.

LJ: I read a comment somewhere on Tracy Emin's work where they said, and what I find interesting about it is that they concentrated on Tracy Emin and what she was doing and not actually on the artwork itself. Do you feel that happens to you?

AM: I wish, I wish people would pay attention that much, no seriously we don't. In Britain she's like the Queen in terms of the tabloids, and she's like a celebrity there. We don't have something like that in South Africa, except for William Kentridge. We don't really have people being regarded as celebrities, not as much as there. Like I say, I wish people would pay attention to my voice, that they would actually invade my privacy but nobody cares. I wish people were more reactive... I thought

like with this Tracy Rose exhibition that someone would have reacted by now... I wish people would respond. Maybe I should be a performing artist because I kind of thrive on affirmation... I feel that I don't get enough back.

Interview with Bronwen Findlay (BF)

Artists Studio – Johannesburg

12 March 2011

Interviewer: Linda Jones

LJ: What was your response when you received my questions?

BF: Oh, I just skimmed through them and thought I can't answer these, you must answer them for yourself. You must come and see my studio and my space and you can position me wherever you want to by asking me other questions, not those. Because I think you already know a bit about me now.

LJ: But you don't, and I may be wrong, but I feel that perhaps you don't want to be specifically positioned?

BF: I don't actually. I've never thought of myself like as a feminist artist, but I've always thought that if other people see me as that I'm quite happy to be placed somewhere and to be justified by placement. But I think some people define themselves by those specifics.

LJ: Because it almost boxes you in.

(JL: Do you know what Linda is focussing on?)

BF: From the title of the dissertation and the bits from previous emails, I think yes.

LJ: I'm working with the concept of home as a concept. As a place where it can be a place of constraint and entrapment and not so happy, happy.

BF: My home has always been the opposite of that. I think that... I remember some little kid when I was teaching standard six at a school. My classroom was also sort of like my home and I had this huge beautiful classroom, with huge bay windows and I just had some of my things from home in the classroom and this one little kid used to come and help me tidy up every morning, arranging my things, and he said 'but ma'am the way you live and the way you work is the same. You're not like other teachers, you don't stop and you don't start suddenly doing things differently'. I thought that was so perceptive. Because he came into the art room and it wasn't like another art class was starting, it was just like it flowed into it and I think in a simple kind of way that's how I like to live. To live and work, well, equal to each other.

LJ: Something that just flows from one to the other?

BF: Wherever I've worked I liked to make a sort of home there as well. That's why I sort of find it quite strange all these bits of part-time teaching that I'm doing now. My office has always been important to me. Or my space that I have at work, or even just the corner of a classroom where I'm working. The stuff that I bring with me or

the clothes that I wear or whatever is all part...

(Well I was going to say how do you demarcate that space and how do you permeate that space through objects that are textures,textiles and things and then yourself within that.)

BF: Well I think that thing with objects as well,because I know when Mark Read came to now look at my work he's always like talking on his cell phone or revving up his Land Rover or in a hurry. But popping in to say yes like that and he said where do you get your inspiration and I started telling him and I thought well I actually need to start thinking about these things more clearly if I am to deal with gallerists because I just think it's obvious, but maybe it's not that my source material comes from my surroundings and my surroundings I create. So it's also like that.

(If I had to ask you where your,what was youe familial home like and its associations for you because that's where you first get an understanding of what that space is and how it is articulated)

BF: I suppose so. I suppose things really came from my grandmother's farm and the things of history that was there, the old things that were maybe in the attic and in the sheds. She'd lived there all her life. My mother was a 50's lady, ball and claw and polishing and hoovering you know, different to my way of living. I think if she were alive she would appreciate all this now and like the way that I lived at the end. I think the way that she moved into her role as a wife and a mother was very different from the way that I live.

LJ: Do you think in some way your work challenges or reinforces this whole notion of domesticity?

BF: I suppose it does in a way because I'm not just placidly going about painting teacups because I like teacups. It’s kind of like... I suppose I'm working with some kind of irony when I do use those objects. And it’s more loaded than it just seems to be on the surface.

(But what is that layering attached to them? As you said it’s not just a teacup because that would have an immediate reference to the domestic, to the functional etc. What attracts you to the collecting of different teacups? What makes you choose one over another?)

BF: It often has to do with a kind of history and recognising familiar kinds of shapes and

colours and everything else.

(So a sort of historical reference.)

BF: And I think I sort of like that mix of time as well. I like things that come from a different era to be fused with things that come from now. I mean just even... I think in lots of ways my paintings have become more about flowers, but they're not just about flower arrangements. I mean people ask you what you're painting and you say flowers because it’s easier just to answer like that. They have a totally different concept of what I do. Just going back to the previous question to just the fact that in

my lounge you see a whole lot of plastic flowers, but you will also see real flowers. I suppose even the way I have things in my home I'm playing around with reality and authenticity. With fiction. That sort of fantasy and whimsical stuff comes into it as well.

(They are also points of reference too. You said with irony; that's also sort of your position)

LJ: Are they deliberate interventions?

BF: I think sometimes I just work intuitively and then I stand back and I then see what I've and then do it some more in a deliberate way. I mean I've always like... I've often set a project for first and second year students called 'one thing leads to another'. I give them one thing and then they have got to go and find an association, and I always think that's the way I work. I start working and then other things happen; I don't pre-claim. It's quite interesting I have one person that comes to my art classes who has kept saying from the beginning that 'I want to learn how to do it properly, you're not teaching me how to do it properly'. I mean those pictures on the floor... she is now squashing flowers through my printing press and all that yellow is the pollen and the sap. She's now loving it. She is understanding that you can have a nice time making things. I often work and re-work. That's the way I start; I don't pre-claim. I sort of know in my head what I am thinking of doing, but I don't know what the outcome is going to be. You know some people claim and then I think aren't satisfied ever, whereas I let it develop on the canvas as I'm working.

LJ: Does it start off as an idea in your head?

BF: Yes, an incomplete idea and then I complete it on the canvas as I'm working.

LJ: Because of the stance that I'm come from, I'm using feminism as the underpinnings for my paper. Do you ever feel that you are at a disadvantage being a 'woman artist'?

BF: When I first started exhibiting I think that maybe it was fashionable to have exhibitions that were women's art, but I used to get so irritated. I don't know if that answers anything. But I think now I would have a more mild approach to it and think its women's art, it doesn't matter. I didn't want to be particularly be identified as a woman artist.

LJ: As a woman do you find that you come across difficulties in the art world in getting your work out there?

BF: I don't think so. I don't push myself. I don't know if that's because I'm a woman, but I have never marketed myself properly. I probably should have done that long ago. But I haven't ever wanted to that before. But now I'm going to be quite pushy. And I suppose it's also because I had other jobs. I was a teacher and a lecturer, whereas now I want this to be my job because I'm getting old now. Its the time now to do it. Other things that are important to me defined a lot of what happened in my work as well. I mean I think you learn a lot about making your own work if you teach other people, but it is energy sapping.

LJ: Would you say from your comments that you have made a kind of home for

yourself whether it's in your office or in your studio. I am working very much with what is the private and what is the public. Do you find for yourself that those two actually merge?

BF: Yes, they do. I went to Paris twenty five years ago for three months. I remember taking cloth from here, I mean I didn't take a lot. And I remember the first thing I did was take out some cloth and put it on the table in the room in Paris, to make it my space and my space from home.

LJ: So home is very much your space and the place where you feel comfortable, where you can be yourself and be nurtured?

BF: Yes.

LJ: Why do you think women are naturally assigned the role of the domestic in the home? What has been your own experience? The naturally assigned role to the domestic. What is your view and have you experienced this?

BF: I haven't. Most of my friends who are men come here and cook for me while I do other stuff. They come and make food for me while I paint.

(But for you the domestic space is not necessarily gendered?)

BF: No, it's not. I see people who fall into that role happily, as if it were expected of them but it's never been part of my life or it's never been something that I've had to confront I suppose. Never had to deal with that. I suppose you have.

LJ: I ask because I'm trying to do a bit of a comparison between women of our generation as opposed to younger artists today. Do they experience the kind of things I have experienced. I find it very difficult being married and being a mature student. It has been incredibly difficult... that journey has been incredibly difficult. So many of my questions may be a little negative.

BF: Even though I haven't experienced it, I know where you're coming from. But I am talking about myself.

(So in fact your journey is to try and wrest this new discovery of your creative self and the demands that makes on you in relation to what has been your expected and predictable role both as wife, mother, tied to home.)

LJ: I feel in this space (Bronwen's home and studio) it's such a free space and you that you have such a sense of freedom just in your home and in your space. You are very welcoming to anyone who wants to come and have a look.

BF: Oh yes, I know what I was going to speak about – that private public thing. I mean I'm very happy for people to come and see my work in progress or to watch me working, and it might also be because when I first left varsity and became a teacher often I had to work in the classroom, even if it was after hours. So my easel would be up at the back of the classroom and the kids all saw it. Whereas somone like Virginia MacKenny, and I'm not saying it in a negative way, but she would cover her work with a sheet and wouldn't let anyone see it until it was complete and she

was happy with it.
Whereas the process of working for me is I actually quite like my art class ladies to come and look at my work and even though they are not artists, they can say what they think. I like to get responses as I'm working or even explain what I'm trying to do as I'm working. It's not just about the finished product for me

(Yours is process painting)

LJ: Do you think your work deconstructs that whole idea of home?

BF: I don't think intentionally, but I think it probably does. I don't think I'm intentionally thinking that I'm going to deconstruct my idea of home because I don't even think of it in that way. It's also only when I am away from the way that I live, like when I'm with my sister and brothers that I see that mine is totally different.

(What would you describe as that difference?)

BF: I suppose its got something to do with a kind of freedom. Just the fact that I can make my work my life. There aren't roles that are expected of me. So my sisters and mother...even if you aren't intending to, you just have to do certain things whereas I don't. You are going to interview Penny (Siopis) as well aren't you. Well Penny also works with a certain freedom, but she comes from a different position to me. She has a husband and a son.

LJ: That's why I find it so interesting to interview you, I think because you are so completely different to the other artists that I'm going to be interviewing and have interviewed. There aren't all these attachments as it were. You don't want to position yourself, but you don't mind if I position you?

BF: I don't mind if you position me at all. You can do exactly what you like with me.

LJ: Have you specifically chosen this way of life for yourself?

BF: No, it just happened. One of my students who was studying feminism at UDW came to me one day and asked me if I was a feminist because I had decided to never get married. So I said no, I didn't get married because no one ever asked me. Nothing for me is a specific choice. It all just flows and happens. I mean I think its the same with the way my paintings work. I don't ponder over it. So I've made my own life and I'm quite pleased that I have made my own life because I think I'm the type of person that might have tried to sacrifice a whole lot of stuff for somebody else and I have not had to do that. You can't have everything. Life could go one way or another way. You've got to do what you can do and make it work for you. So its working for me but it's also just something to do with chance, not really about just big decisions. I just think everything seems so flexible, just the way... I mean I'm sort of happy that things sort of happened to me in a way. I taught at Mansfield Boys High school, which wouldn't have been my choice for teaching and then I ended up loving it. It was really a rough school but it closed down after seven years and I was moved to another school, and then I went to UDW. Then I got lots of part-time work here (Johannesburg), so I've been exposed to hundreds of different ways of being and of teaching and of people, and I feel grateful for that. But I've done things with the kids, I've done things with my life. With the university students as well. Things sort of happen for a reason. I mean I applied to teach at the

Wits School of Art just to get a sessional post but I didn't get it. Anyway then I got one in education. I think I've been lucky to move between fine arts and education. So I've always managed to find some kind of work. I want to make enough money to live my lifestyle, with a little bit of teaching, but mainly working (painting).

LJ: I'm just interested in the particular painting... just some of the things that you have used like the spoons and the picture frame and the doily?

BF: Maybe the title is quite interesting because I called that painting 'Belongings'

(Its possession as well as a sense of belonging)

BF: Yes. Some of the things are quite arbitrary, things that I have picked up when I've walked in the veld. I think there's some rocks from Melville Koppies, there are some dead watsonias from my garden. But there are also some more precious things like the Zulu beaded stick. And the crumpled up packet is from a small haberdashery store in Pietermaritzburg from when my mother was young.

LJ: would you say that you were ever particularly influenced by feminism?

BF: I mean I'm sure I was aware of feminism as a student and it probably influenced me in some kind of way, but it’s not as if I made it a life struggle or something. But I mean obviously it was in the air.

LJ: Do you think women occupy a gendered position or assigned role and how does this influence your work?

BF: Okay, I probably think that some women do, but I sort of don't. Maybe one does, maybe one does without consciously knowing that one does. Maybe one does slot into certain things, but I've never felt bogged down or worn down by it.

(I think that would apply if one is in a relationship that predetermines that role for you just in terms of exigency, that you'll cook while he paints the walls...)

BF: I suppose I've never had to be bothered by it. I've often spoken about my work as being concerned with the domestic and I suppose the domestic is concerned with gender. It becomes like this struggle kind of question.

(Its becoming a genderless space not peculiar to either, its just a space in which you interact in)

LJ: But don't you think it’s a space, well it wouldn't apply to Bronwen, that has to be negotiated between two individual?

(Yes it could be, but we're speaking of the home as a whole not just certain areas of displacement as in the kitchen)

LJ: Why have you chosen the domestic as references?

BF: I suppose I didn't specifically choose it. You know when I was a student at Maritzburg varsity I alternated between painting flowers and painting slaughter pictures. I painted a lot of meat as well then. So I think it was more... I think when I

did the slaughter pictures it was about ritual and about death. But then when I have painted flowers it can also be about life and death because I've often also used things that have decayed and not going to last forever, and I have captured moments. So maybe it's got something to do with time. In a way my paintings are about the specific things that you have spoken about, but in the end paint takes over and they are as much about paint as they are about objects. Even when the objects like in 'Belongings' are buried in paint... that's a little bit like excavation in a way. Things are part of the canvas and are buried or revealed, and are living or dead.

(Your earlier work used a lot of doilies or cloth, or images associated with the family home, found objects related to their displacement in a home context, that sort of recovery in your work... You said referenced the historical recall and memory.)

BF: I think I have to be careful about using those things so that it doesn't just become nostalgia or twee, and I think I sort of try to go beyond that because I think its something that can be seen as something pretty. It went beyond that mostly by the way that I use paint. It becomes buried in paint or if I'm making patterns with them, because my work is about patterning. It's all about the no-nos, patterning and decoration. And things that in my student years were not considered... well they were more postmodern. I think people that don't know me or know my work think, oh she just paints flowers and doilies, and that's the wrong idea because that's not what I do. I think I sort of negate flowers and doilies in my paintings. I think I am wanting to make people see those things differently. If you see a teacup and a doily, you see them without any irony, and it's kind of something pretty or old worldly. I think I'm trying to take it as far as it can go. I'm preserving and destroying at the same time.

(Your rupture of those objects, but they're still referencing memory...)

BF: Well, I'm probably knocking the domestic a bit.

(Quite dismissive, quite assertive but at the same time given your home context displacement where you also use objects with irony you're sort of overplaying the kitsch and the predictable and you're deconstructing it by its excess, embedding them in paint)

BF: You know my source material is often sort of things that are no-nos. Like I've painted sunsets and cosmos, and I think to some extent I think the domestic stuff is a similar kind of thing. With the cosmos I tried to do things to it that the art in the park people would never do. Like I got one painting and put real cosmos into the paint and they died in the paint. I called it 'Cosmos' but it didn't look like cosmos but the title helped describe what it really was. But it was more real, because it's a real cosmos.

LJ: Is the real important for you?

BF: Yes, very. By the real... if I'm painting subject matter I try to understand it in as many ways as possible, if I'm painting an object or if I'm using the object itself. So it's very much based on observation, but not other people's observation, just my own. There is no way I can just stand up and paint a picture without any stuff. So the stuff of the artwork is terribly important even if it doesn't seem so in the end.

And maybe I try to see in as many different ways as I can when I'm painting. I remember also when I was a first year student at Tech one of the lecturers staring at me when I was drawing this chair and asking 'but do you see chairs like other people?' I don't know why I'm telling you these anecdotes... I remember when I did art at school, we had a dear old art teacher, she had a still life set up and I remember I painted all these bright colours and the others all painted bright colours too, and she got furious with them and they said but Bronwen used those colours and she said Bronwen sees those colours and you don't. So I think it's all about referencing in a way.

(What objects would you say still from the domestic sphere has a particular resonance for you, or that reference home?)

BF: I don't really think of them as objects... I've been painting flowers and plants a lot and I always have, but I've gone back to doing things with them more recently, just looking at this painting now.

(And would they attach to nature or culture?)

BF: I quite like to know... maybe both. And they are South African, they are flowers from here. I find some source material just in the very ordinary things that maybe I use and find in my home already, or growing on the side of the pavement, or that I've used for twenty years and painting again. I just find they are as important as the objects that I surround myself with as well as that I use in my paintings.

(In terms of your own domestic home in which you were nurtured as a child in relation to the present, are there any echoes, resonances that you maybe find that you are unconsciously seeking as a refrain?)

BF: When I think of my parents, my father was obsessed by history and books. Those kind of things I think influenced me a lot. The vacuum cleaning and the polished floors did not. But I don't think the polished floors and the ball and claw furniture was ever even my mother's decision, it was just something that was part of convention at the time. But my father's love of history and taking us all over the country to look at Boer war sites or this or that probably left a mark on me and just the fact of exploring and going to different places... I really like using bits of thatin my work as well. Those proteas that are over there are from the Drakensberg when I went there recently. Then I come home and usually like to use the real object and I also work from photographs and I combine both. I document everything. I take millions of photographs and they are always important to me. So going places and exploring is also important and that is sort of like the opposite of home which is static.

(But you're bringing that experience into the home, either in vases or in collecting. But it's you coming back into the space and bringing that experience with you.)

LJ: Do you think its possible to separate this idea of home from the domestic?

BF: I suppose you can't really separate them... no I think it's all related. But I think you can question what home means and what domestic means. But I think they are closely

associated.

(What does the domestic mean for you...Linda?)

LJ: Well for me the domestic means drudgery. If I'm really honest that is what it means for me. But when I come into Bronwen's home its... the domestic has almost been used to excess and I find it quite beautiful. But your home is very clearly an expression of yourself.

(Without subscribing to convention that's a very important thing... whereas your whole personality and as you said earlier its a parody on certain aspects of the domestic but in that it reinforces that selection of what the place is as individuated. Its very rare, very unique.)

BF: I've never had to furnish a home. I mean I've never bought specific stuff for my home. This table was my sister's husband's grandfather's table and I said I needed a table so she gave it to me. It was my mother's sofa. These were chairs that I took when Mansfield High closed down and they threw them out.

(Its again your found objects, your historicising. A combination and collation of memory.)

LJ: You said you were'nt going to go and look up Foucault and Derrida. Would you agree that your work offers a micro resistance in some way to bring about change with this whole concept of the home and domestic?

BF: I suppose so, yes. I'm not making some militant statement by doing things as I am but there is certainly no way anyone can influence me to do other.

(Deconstructing the notion of what you attach value to and why. Its in fact debunking the notion of what acquires value and why)

LJ: Would you consider the home to be a gendered space?

BF: Do you think if you looked at my work you would know it was painted by a woman?

LJ: No. When I work, I work a bit like you - intuitively. I'm not consciously working in a gendered way, but I have very definitely been placed in a particular framework. So this paper is part of the outcome of that. I was definitely seen as a woman artist in relation to my work. I have been asked am I a feminist.

BF: I don't think that works are that gender specific anymore. But I think that is something of the past

LJ: Getting involved in exhibitions are you always approached to have an exhibition or is it you approaching galleries?

BF: I think it’s a bit of both. Things just seem to fall into place. I don't really have a strategy.

LJ: Do you think your work challenges patriarchy?

BF: I don't know. Maybe it challenges conventions more. This is the sphere (the home) of my life that gives me power. This is my strength. I know what I'm doing and I'm confident about it.

Interview with Doreen Southwood (DS)

Artist's Design Studio – Cape Town

15 April 2011

Interviewer: Linda Jones (LJ) and Juliette Leeb du Toit (JLDT)

DS: My whole life is a contradiction. I think part of being a woman is contradictory. If study art, it's a base in place, where it is a type of school where you learn about the economics, social environment, the psychological; it informs the rest of what you are doing. I'm very happy I studied art. I studied at Stellenbosch. I come from a very, very...my dad studied at Stellenbosch, my brother studied at Stellenbosch so... I didn't want to, but oh my word was I unhappy, but I'm the youngest and I'm the girl – we are two kids. My parents are very... my background is very colonial; its actually quite horrific. And it was quite intense and all my work is about that. But it's also been a personal journey for me you know, where in the beginning as an

art student I was very aggressive in my approach in that I always thought it was so ridiculous to have these gender roles. That is literally taught you know, and you take it on within communicating back. Whatever you want as a child... you know that you have to act in a certain way – that is how it is taught. Its taught within the line of what is allowed and what isn't allowed, or the emotions given back to you... and it is quite severe in that way, so going to university and studying art specifically and looking at what women did, how they did it. Reading about... I remember 'Womanhouse', Georgia o'Keefe, Judy Chicago and how intense it was. It was in the 60s I think? They had these bathrooms and everything was about blood and how women have to deny the fact that there is so much blood in their lives... at birth and everything. Its kind of like a training school... life as a woman especially in South Africa in the area that I was brought up... a training school of living in denial completely.

JLDT: The sort of prescriptiveness in terms of a woman's role and for you was nurtured in the home. But you didn't really react against it initially?

DS: I think it's kind of like my art. All my art is very easy to look at. Its kind of very pleasant and it's got a softness to it and a very kindness to the viewer... pleasantly... The surfaces are considered, the atmosphere around the work is considered, texture, the simplicity. It's really really designed in a way where its not a creative expression, its more designed... that's just my interpretation of it. When something is designed, that's just how the commercial environment works. People feel very comfortable around it, they feel so empowered. If you go to a lawyer and the offices are beautifully designed, you feel very confident. But then the actual content of the work is quite disturbing. But it takes time to see it and actually look at it. One work that I made which I thought was quite successful and it's called 'Curtain'. And its very much about living on a farm, where you literally live in a world where people are so in touch with the earth and they are so enjoying it and they get a lot out of it, spiritually, physically; every single thing... the language around... the society, everything. And then you have one house on the farm that is this place, that is just behind an iron curtain where everybody acts... and sits in a certain way... and

its tea time... and it's not embracing the tactileness of your environment... and its kind of stealing from it. And that work is very much about that. I like to work with one idea, one simple idea. I like to be able to communicate one idea. I think to communicate one idea is the hardest thing... because the school system taught you school projects, where every single thing needs to be considered. And making art is the opposite of that. Getting it to be as strong with having literally that one little strand left. That one little strand that says everything. That is what my interest in art is and in clothing as well. The simplest possible way of having something look like the 60s, but its contemporised.

LJ: Did you get an opportunity to read my questions?

DS: Yes I did read through them.

LJ: We are going to just use them as a framework.

DS: I can see why you were interested to interview me because its very much what my life is about and my interest.

LJ: If you would like to just talk about that.

JLDT: Could we ask a little about your background because I know you come from an Afrikaans background. Anglophile or not necessarily?

DS: I don't know because of my upbringing... I wasn't brought up you are in a stern Afrikaner environment. It was more a kind of a classest thing, which is disgusting and that made it even worse because you... this world is looking to create a standard. You know if people develop a uniform for a school, they have created a standard and everything that doesn't look like it, is not the uniform. So it's the same thing, as soon as you have reached the standard, you've got the power. Its more about a power thing and the whole gender thing as well. It's all sort of about power. Also about a coping mechanism where... when you look at racial theories and ideas the standard is white. If you're white, you are a man and a woman. But if you are black, you're a black man and a black women. So it's very much a thing about that standard and everything around it. It was about being born into it by parents. But then my parents also gave me the most in terms of questioning it where where we were born into it and so forth but... we so ordentlik??? There is a system in every house... and simple things like, oh my goodness did you do that and that at this and this time...tea is a this time. Every house has got its own little system that people kind of create to feel safe because of this rhythm and the promise that things will be the same every day. You feel safe. It's such a simple way of being, it really is. Its like women and knitting. Like my grandmother did a lot of embroidery, but I think its medication for her.

LJ: Like a therapy?

DS: Anything, the repetitiveness, the promise of the same thing over and over. Its like running.

LJ: Would you say that's not really a true reflection of home?

DS: For her it's a reaction. It's not really a true reflection. In other words its people living a lie. Definitely. I think I became interested in my work and my personal stance is very much about that it is actually fine you know. It's that kind of equality with indifference thing, but I think it's very powerful so you do not necessarily need to be male as woman; act as if you were a man as a woman to be their equal. I will be a woman because I'm feminine and I love femininity or I love decoration or I love... It was just because you were taught that its less than the fact of working with your hands in a certain way that is more valuable than this. It's like the old idea of bronze casting... that is why I was very interested in casting things in bronze and making it look very feminine and painting it so that it looks like porcelain, hiding the fact that it's a hard metal and so strong and because I've got the right to do that. But still I want to work with bronze and use an element of it.

LJ: Would you say that feminism had an influence on the way that you work?

DS: Oh absolutely. I really liked a lot of it at varsity.

JLDT: That's when you were first exposed to it?

DS: Yes very much. Yes I have been exposed to it in so many ways. I've kind of just acted in a strange way about it... thinking that I have to scream louder and actually its not about that. I don't like to be too aggressive because I think everything has its value... I mean we all enjoyed the Gorilla Girls. I actually know a girl who forms part of them. Sue Williamson's daughter, she was part of their club when she lived in New York. That suits her personality... is so intense and that is so her person and so not me. But my own work, I don't know...I think the world systems changed. There's a new powerful thing. To be kind to people is quite important and a gentle way of being and respect. Its shifted... we don't live in an environment... we are very, very lucky to live in South Africa because it kind of gives your brain a better understanding of living in the midst of respecting the differences between people.

LJ: My dissertation is on the concept of Home. What is your response to that?

DS: I love home environment. I made this work called 'Shock Absorbers'. Its like these little red slippers and it's from a certain time...I took very small red shoes from when I started wearing shoes up to when I was twenty seven. There were twenty seven pairs and the sizes rose as the sizes of my feet grew, in little red velvet. Its just about inventing reasons to stay at home. These little shock absorbers, because if you can be in your slippers the whole day its so much fun because you don't have to go out into the world.

JLDT: They represent home and belonging.

DS: I realised that I have so many pairs of slippers. I just love my slippers. It really is about cherishing and idolising the home environment. My brother never had that. He would not have enjoyed the home that much. I loved that little world. I just love my home up until today. I would say (to myself) this weekend I'll stay home for two days; I could not leave my home and I don't know men who easily do that... I love it. But I do not love roles in homes, that is a different thing. The home is a sanctuary; it's beautiful. The home is what you make of it. But if I think if I didn't have that exposure to these roles and associations I would not have developed it.

JLDT: But tell us about that. How do you perceive those roles and negative associations.

DS: I think it's the system of it, the expectation of it and its control of people within the home, which is really a problem...because then you never have an escape, you never have a place where you are not controlled by another person's expectations of what you should do. My mother after thirty two years of their marriage still after they ate. They retired about seven years ago and it was quite an interesting process where she decided she doesn't want anything, just the two of them and the animals. We are all very big animal lovers. She's going to clean the house herself, which was a first for her. She just wanted complete simplicity and then she ended up working so hard she was in a state. She didn't realise that my father... now its changed and she does not wash dishes, he washes the dishes. It was good because they were enabled by the system in South Africa where people were doing that. She just did everything. It wasn't considered, it wasn't discussed, it was just expected. Now they had to sit down and re-consider. She said 'I can't live like this'. I think if its discussed then its equal. The roles within history is continued. It's like these advertisments you see on TV where they say that men in the 50s couldn't do anything; they were so not empowered. They couldn't even get their own food from the kitchen... that's continued, even today and that is shocking... I love my home environment.

LJ: Do you live on your own?

DS: Yes I do. I love my house. I have three dogs and three cats, they're my babies. I've created this home for them in Rondebosch. I lived in the city for ten years, then the last few years decided to move out of the city and get a garden.

(Peripheral conversation)

DS: 'Mother and child' was my first art work of myself and my dog. All my sculptures are bronzes and made to look like very fragile material. I use titles like 'The Dancer' 'The Swimmer'. Also kind of historic names for sculptures and for bronze sculptures and a certain era of painting by certain males. I like to consider history as well. Everything is liquid and its what you decide to make solid around you that will define your world. I think with art is that you can see that everything has been considered within this liquid state. Because you don't have control over the work once you've made it, It's not yours anymore. I think it's very important to consider that.

JLDT: But given that you say you live alone and yet you have qualms about those expectations, that can rupture that sense of it being a nest and environment etc. Is that projection for you in terms of your parental home?

DS: I've been in very long relationships. I've had five, three year relationships. I have this thing that's kind of odd...I obviously have issues I don't know; I can't commit I don't know what it is. I always choose other things... I always end up being the 'mommy'...'mother Doreen. It's awful.

JLDT: Mothering within the context of the relationship?

DS: Yes and I always want to discuss how things are going to move forward...now what

about your career... and it's so strange I turn into this complete, very caring, but controlling. If you actually plan everything and you're this obsessive person... my brain just goes and goes and when someone is in your immediate space you apply that to them...and the poor victim...

JLDT: In a way that's also part of an expected role as a woman, that you see to the family, the home.

DS: Totally, and it's really absurd and I hate to see it in other people. But I think I also somehow apply it to myself. But I think that if it's a choice and you enjoy it, it's fine. But when it becomes a very controlling thing... It's definitely a delusion where you have to feel safe, otherwise you feel like you're losing control. It's ridiculous but it's how things become in the house. That's the home's influence on people.

LJ: Do you think your responses in your own relationships were due to your upbringing?

DS: Absolutely. Now your emotional well being is linked to a timeline, like a sum of all these experiences and then everything comes out and then you feel so vulnerable because you've opened up your heart and then your brain goes into a system that you've forgotten and goes and reapplies that. I think it's very important that people have two homes...

(Peripheral conversation)

DS: I really turn my home into a safe environment. Its a type of escapism, escaping back into your prison, which for a woman is definitely a contradictory way of living. And I'm obsessed with gardening, I just love it. And I've changed over the years but the one thing that's been consistent has been my obsession with my little prison. Because you're the ruler of your own little world. It's a luxury to be able to turn your house into a prison.

JLDT: Prison – the connotation attached to prison is largely negative.

DS: It is, but it's very much about being a woman. Prison... I mean it as a joke as well.

LJ: Do you think your work plays around a bit with irony, with the way that you live and work?

DS: Very much so. Everything that I do is very contained. These containers... (very thin vases)... 'Anorexia Nervosa' very much containers of little bits of fluid... and its little bits and little bits of fluid and objects of beauty and what you see as beautiful.

(Peripheral conversation)

DS: These are objects in your home that you find beautiful. I also did a thing... I went to an old age home and interviewed fifteen women on their most precious objects (its called 'Precious Objects') in their room after a life of being on earth. They lived their grandparents lives in terms of experiences and stories, their parents, their own in terms of their youth, and now their children and grandchildren. And they have gone from so many homes to this little room. Which object is the most precious and why? And usually that little story tells you everything about the person.

JLDT: And what did you find?

DS: Everything was always linked to history or achievement. The funny thing is a lot of these ladies had absolutely no idea. The one thing that they had the longest there was always, always tragedy involved. Because you know how we repeat or yearn or re-live and re-enact our most intense emotions which can be good or bad. Its always about the most intense emotion, and that you carry with you in your home inevitably. It was very intense but I learned so much. But they have to live with it contained because they still have to function. That's why a young child can scream so much because it has less to contain and it's so free.

LJ: You mentioned earlier a bit about your grandmother. Did she have a great influence on you?

DS: Definitely. She was the strongest woman I've ever met, incredible woman, but also tragedy. Her husband was a very powerful man... so important to him to be so powerful, but it was disgusting. She used her strength to stay with the monster instead of fighting the monster...instead of using her strength to change within the society to move, because you needed a lot of strength to stay with this monster. He's interesting, an interesting man but this intense, intense person. He was not ever faithful to her. She was well looked after. She was obsessed with flower arranging and embroidery. She channelled herself. She would embroider the most ambitious things, free-hand. It must take so much to be so contained, focussed and even your posture is considered every second.

JLDT: You see it's also part of that generation when things like divorce and changing your lifestyle wasn't done because you were partly protected just by being married.

DS: But that is very much the real prison where you just use all your energy to sustain just breathing in and out.

JLDT: You mentioned that he was powerful. In what way?

DS: It was in the male sense of being powerful and important.

LJ: In the patriarchal sense?

DS: Absolutely, absolutely.

(Peripheral conversation)

DS: Our parents grew up in horrendous circumstances. My whole family... everything was about land and ownership. It was his achievement because he wanted to have that level of control over the family. My dad decided I'm not going to expose my children to this. Its ridiculous, we don't live in a mafia state. And so they moved to Cape Town which was very good. He just gave up everything for the family just to take us away, which is very important to start his own life from nothing and put us into different worlds. My dad is very spiritual because everything is a reaction to one's upbringing, but some people would just become like that or some people would become the opposite. Its really just about decisions. I don't know, what do you think? What defines a person's future?

LJ: So he almost changed the pattern?

DS: Yes, he definitely did. He most definitely did. It's odd that in one family he was the one who changed the pattern and the other two siblings were the ones who continued in the pattern. They pursued the whole idea of ownership of land and the one sister continued to have very abusive relationships with men. Reinstating that... so it really is a conscious decision. Change is not fun. It's like birth or you literally feel like you're losing your arms because all you know needs to change.

LJ: Even though he changed the pattern, would you say there was still a gendered space?

DS: Oh absolutely. My mother always refers to my father as 'Koning Billy' (King Billy). Here comes 'Koning Billy'. But he still did what he did and I still respect him for that. You can imagine he grew up with this man as his father. My grandfather is a very intense human being. I've never met anybody like him. He literally was an intense lawless person. I think that is why its so difficult for me to feel safe if I don't have... he was intense. He would literally if somebody... say if the neighbour on one side did something... they had an ongoing battle, then one day he just had enough and he'll drive there and shoot everything on the farm and the houses and then get in the bakkie... it's really lawless; it's like the wild west. Then the phone would ring... the shame of being a Southwood in that area, you've no idea... oh my word. It's such an Afrikaans environment, you can't really hide your surname. He was a bully. I remember once I was in primary school, one boy brought the Sunday Times, he was on the front page saying 'Bully from Viljoenskroon' and I was yes, okay, just leave me. Its funny but we just cut our ties. My dad felt it was too much. And we eventually inherited two farms and we just sold them because of the history. It was just too intense. The blood that was alive there. It's just like another level. I think it's fine if you come from a background where people were just slightly patriarchal, but it was very, very intense. So it was decided lets just do this. Its quite intense because we have the family graveyard, but my dad is like that and I respect him for that. Its where my grandfather will probably die and its been in our family for many, many years and just to let it go.

LJ: The patriarchal, hierarchal thing with men, has that influenced your work, even subconsciously?

DS: I think it definitely does because if I think of myself just as a person and in the way that I function... now that I'm getting older definitely realise I feel safe if my dad comes and helps me. I thought that was long dead and its obviously still very much alive. I went through a stage of just give me the drill and I'll drill the hole because I can do it. I can cast and sit with dremels and grind and its fine. You know I can do it. But it's not like that now... I don't know. I think it's still very much linked to a contradictory way of living.

LJ: Like a paradox.

JLDT: It's also a reassuring act, don't you think, in part as well?

DS: Do you think there's a cycle of being a woman, because women are much more intense beings. Their brains work in such a different way. There's a lot of activity always in every little section that we consider. It's as if we consider the positive and

negative spaces more than a man. Where a man can only focus on one area, whereas you have to teach yourself to do that and I think it makes women really, really powerful beings. But it's just not the system that looks after the world, unfortunately. The simplicity of the way that men act within their male roles is definitely reassuring as well as creating the illusion of safety for a woman. Anywhere there's fear, there's illusion, so if you have to feel safe... if you feel safe its only because you didn't feel safe before. So what is being empowered; you know it can be so many things, it can literally being content but why... what did you have to get away from to feel content. It's such a cycle. I think there's so much going on that we are not ever, ever aware of. That's the nice thing about making art, making objects literally is like making it tangible. Making something that is really a question, tangible and packaging it in a certain way, where it looks at certain emotions. I always think of why do I make objects, because why don't I go into writing or a performance art thing. It's because of my background and the idea of adornment in homes, in the home environment. My grandmother's home and my mom's home. Everything has got its place. The system of cleaning that environment ...Monday mornings...polishing is done on Thursday afternoons... I'm very truthful within what I do. But it also keeps women busy and away from male enterprise.

JLDT: How would you describe your grandmother's home or your mother's home, your family home?

DS: It's a big joke in our family. Me and my dad are similar. My mom's obsessive I promise you. My mom's got two kitchens. The one kitchen – nobody is allowed cooking in it or touching it. It's a show kitchen. Then we have a kitchen where she cooks. Hiding life, that obsession of cleanliness, removing traces of humanity, of being alive; creating these dead spaces. We tease her...going mad to be sane.

(Peripheral conversation)

LJ: Did your mother work at all or did she stay at home?

DS: My mom was very much a woman... she's a strong woman. Her upbringing was... she always felt unloved because her mother until ten at night. She had a nanny She kind of over compensated... when I forgot my sandwiches behind, then I would be called to the principal's office to go and collect my sandwiches – she actually drove back into town to drop off my sandwiches; she's amazing. One thing I adore about my parents, they very much set in their ways, but they are very much interested in change. My dad's mantra since I was a little girl is at the end of each year what have you changed and what you are going to change in the next year and if you haven't done it, then you haven't grown. You have to otherwise you're going to repeat the things of your fathers.

(Peripheral conversation)

My grandmother's house also had the kitchen behind doors. The one lounge that nobody ever, ever goes into.

Interview with Penelope Siopis

Artist's Studio – Cape Town

16 April 2011

Interviewer: Linda Jones (LJ) and Juliette Leeb Du Toit (JLDT)

LJ: It hasn't gone exactly the way I planned. There are these questions that you have to do, and you find that it almost takes on a life of its own.

PS: But that's positive, it's good. And that's one of the great things of having real live people to talk to.

LJ: I'm doing a feminist critique of the concept of Home in the work of selected contemporary white South African female artists. In the context of this research, Home is traditionally been accepted as a place where the woman is defined in relation to domesticity and the family unit. In my dissertation I intend to explore the work of artists who might both reinforce or challenge these theories. What would be your response to this whole idea of the concept of home? And domesticity?

PS: Are you thinking about it in how it has been constituted in feminist discourse?

LJ: Yes.

PS: My interest in home is also an interest in homelessness. I suppose home might be defined by what is homeless, by its opposite. That's just a broad sort of trigger when you mention home, but that would be more broadly political than how feminism might be considered in this context. I suppose a lot of my work has dealt with the idea of home, specially the installations. That also was which related to the idea of homelessness, like migration say. So there was that sort of idea of home as something which was precarious, potentially precarious. So even with my film 'My Lovely Day', the idea of my grandmother...the first line is 'that I should have ended up in this God forsaken place. She didn't like the Northern Cape, but actually it's a bigger idea of home and it brings in a whole lot of questions of post-colonialism and displacement and things like that. So for me home...it's difficult to define as I might have defined it say in the 70s where it was clearly an idealised and contested space within a feminist frame. Now its more difficult for me to speak in a way that's kind of limited to a feminist discourse. Feminism has also become a broader discourse linked up with post-colonialism, sexuality, discourses on sexuality, discourses on marginality. It's actually been much more broadly integrated into discourses of resistance, so you know whereas in the 70s it might have been much more defined in relation to patriarchy and that was for me clear so that home...the obvious thing for me would have been the use of domestic type associations as say in the 'Cake Paintings'. That was clearly directed to my own experience of home as a child and watching my mother ice cakes. So there was a relationship there. But the other part of the relationship was sort of more direct feminist discourses around the body... Luce Irigaray, Héléne Cixious and people like that. *Jouissance*...this idea of exploring a specifically feminist language of sexuality and excess. That would have been the 'Cake Paintings'. They wouldn't be directly related to home. In

a way that would...I don't reference home as a space. It's more the idea of femininity and then you can extrapolate further the idea of femininity associated with domestic spaces perhaps. You know that would have been one of the ideas of home as a concept...well you are talking about it as a concept, but not so much a place. Home as an idea is related to the construction of femininity. Because home is quite complicated now when we talk about the home in a context like South Africa, but not only South Africa. I mean family and domesticity, I'm not sure again nuclear family, what kind of idea of family are we talking about? One of the things of the notion of home is that it has actually been challenged from a Western concept...North America, European idea, English idea of home which would be a nuclear family notion even to a Freudian idea. Freud's theories were based, basically on nuclear family idea. So all these ideas have developed around a Western concept and mostly urban concept, but a Western concept of home, but now we have all sorts of other concepts of what home might be. And I think that's liberating, quite frankly.

LJ: In your own experience, in your own personal life, if you don't mind me asking what does it mean for you, because you're a wife, you're a mother. What does it mean for you personally?

PS: Experientially? I think that's an interesting question and its an important question because it seems like its just personal. But of course nothing is just personal but I think its certainly something I've wrestled with and I've wrestled with the idea I...its been difficult having a child but its also been completely fantastic having a child. I often regret moments I did not spend enough time with him. But I had to not spend enough time with him if I was going to develop my work and pursue my intellectual creative ambitions. So that's the one thing, that's practical, that I didn't spend enough time with him...it has its consequences. On another level he's been a stimulus to my work. So that's an important aspect of it. But he's also been the stimulus for Colin's work, so it depends what...there's a gender specific... I don't know how gender specific it is. One has children, they affect you. Sometimes with both Colin and I have particularly drawn on his life or image in specific ways. Colin not so much, but I certainly have. And he's certainly been part of my art works since from the day he was born. Literally he emerges visually into the works. He was critical in what would have been the early 90s in works when I was very interested in psychoanalysis. Obviously you use your child as a critical aspect of that was interesting for me, but generally in psychoanalysis. So he's been...its been difficult to have a child and do work. He's also been one of my primary influences in the work. Something I've also been criticised for, is how can you use your child but it doesn't bother me.

LJ: Do you consider the home to be a gendered space. A space that is highly contested or is home a place for you that is a safe haven?

PS: Personally?

LJ: Yes, personally.

PS: Its been contested and it's a safe haven. I think it is a bit like that for me. Its actually...it is a difficult place, a home in many ways because if you're an artist in a sense its your workplace and your domestic space...where you might be able to escape your work. But I think as an artist one doesn't escape. I mean my son was interesting the other day because he was talking about...he's just finished fourth

year at Wits Fine Arts...so he said he was just having a break, he needed a break and relaxing and stuff. So I said to him, well I suppose better also have a break. But he said mom you never have a break because your life is your work and your work is your life. And it's true in a sense, so the home is still always infiltrated with my work and with my interest in my work. So that caused a bit of tension sometimes because of your displacement and using the home... and the boundaries are not defined. I mean I remember there was a documentary on my work, made on my work and there was this scene which was very telling actually. I'm painting one of the history paintings and this little child, Alexander, but he's little and I'm painting away and he says 'mummy this is dirty' and I say that's, oh yes that's fine, I'm painting. It was quite hard to keep being a good mother, if you like and keep doing work. But on another level I think he had access to a kind of intense situation which was powerful for him. He's now and I can see it in him now, that he seems to understand quite complex ways of the world, because from a very early age he understood that art wasn't something about technical facility, but about a deep intense experience. And these things are important philosophically, emotionally and everything else. So I think he picked this up pretty early. He kicked against it after a while...thinking you guys are always busy, you're always doing your work. You're always, working, working, working. We don't have braais and we don't do this and we don't do that. We're not normal people. But you know he learned something else actually, which he would never have experienced in a conventional home. So it wasn't a conventional home we had. So that 's quite important to say

JLDT: But when you say conventional home, are you relating that to your parental home?

PS: No, because I never really had a conventional home either. But Colin's home was seen to be conventional in a way. But I suppose I'm thinking about my friend's homes, as I grew up. They didn't for instance...most people didn't have work infiltrating the space, some kind of work. You know their fathers might have been doing the garden; mothers might have been doing some kind of hobby, but there was no...I didn't know other people really who had this sort of experience, like Colin and my home. My own family home was unconventional in different ways. It wasn't so much about it being professional, although my mother did teach singing in the home and they also had a business which was right next to the home, the bakery business. So she was in and out of the bakery, so were we. So there was always an idea that the home wasn't really a conventional space. Also my grandmother lived with us; some old Greek granny came and lived for a short time. There was a child who didn't have parents who stayed with us. So it was quite an unusual family in that sense. My father was always off gambling somewhere. My father was definitely not the head of the family and my mother was like the head of the family...if there was ever any head of the family. She was extremely organised and did everything and you know it was different. My father was Greek and struggled with English. My mother was very well and easily positioned in society at that time, so she was very confident. So was my father confident, but he was a bit of an outsider. My mother was not an outsider, my mother felt very comfortable being in herself in that social context. So in that sense it was different. If I speak to Colin about or other people about my family you know they... the only other person that I know would have had quite a different family would have been say, Jo Ratcliffe, because she is a friend of mine and I know about her family...but it's a bit unorthodox in that sense, even for a Greek family. My father was Greek, my mother was half Greek. We certainly didn't conform to other Greek families at all.

JLDT: So your mother was half Greek?

PS: Her father was Greek, her mother was English. So she was...it could have been a conventional Greek home if my father had been assertive in that way or if they had chosen it, but it wasn't that. Also, I mean I'm not saying that culturally that other so called conventional families did not have this, but we were kind of flooded with cultural stuff. Certainly from my mother's side and also my grandmother. My grandmother was a pianist and my mother used to teach singing and had a bakery and ran a business. She was I suppose in many ways a professional woman, so at that stage it would have been sort of the late 50s and 60s, so it would have been quite unusual. So for me home was...but home as a child I always felt comfortable largely probably because of my grandmother's presence. I had a very close relationship with my grandmother and she was always at home, so in a way home was always occupied with this kind of warm presence. She wasn't demonstrative like my father, very affectionate and demonstrative. My grandmother was very literary and very verbal. The English grandmother...and she was funny and when I did 'My Lovely Day', of course that's her voice as I remembered her. But you can see how interesting she was. She was telling me specifically about this world, what a terrible place this was...and catastrophes everywhere. She told me all the things my mother would never want a child to hear. My mother was probably the most conventional. I had an unconventional father, an unconventional grandmother. My mother was more conventional, but not so conventional as lots of other mothers would have been. She certainly wasn't subservient.

LJ: Would you say that your grandmother had more influence on you than your mother in that sense?

PS: Yes I think so. My mother wasn't that nurturing actually. I mean she was busy... everybody who knew her, and all my friends who knew her thought she was wonderful and she was wonderful. But I think she had to keep some kind of order in the household. It was a very chaotic place in some ways and everybody did their own thing, the children as well. And I was extremely rebellious so...mostly to my mother. My grandmother said don't go to school, don't bother, that's just parrot fashion learning, you don't want to go there. You should go and read and travel. To be an educated woman you should just go and read and travel. So I had all these conflicting influences...my father also saying 'ah no you don't have to do this, society is too restrictive...you must just decide what you want and do whatever you want'...sort of very open-minded. So that's why I rebelled against my mother because she was the one trying to keep a reasonably straight line and getting through school. But on another level I always felt they didn't help me in any way. I was being extremely rebellious, and my father was just thinking it was great. I was this spirited, rebellious child...could do what I want. My grandmother would say, she'll do what she likes and my mother would think there's certain things in the world...you have to conform. But then I had a brother who was two years older than me and another brother two years older than him. The oldest brother was very successful, brilliant, head boy at school and all the rest of it, and then went to Oxford. He's a judge now and ended up living up in Australia. But the middle brother got lots of attention from my mother...I think because he wasn't always well. He suffered from asthma so my mother was always looking after him. Any extra time she had she would give him the attention, so I suppose that was something quite complex in the family dynamics.

JLDT: When you say you were rebellious, was it mostly challenging authority?

PS: Yes, very cheeky. The classic sort of...my father and I had a very easy relationship right from the start. But I think also it was a way of trying...I think in retrospect some of the attention. So I started off doing very, very well at school, was top of my class and then I started doing very badly at school, deliberately, and my mother... the more badly I did, the more cross she got with me. 'You know you don't have to be like this'...but actually I felt she should have given me more care in a way. She would sit down and help to do homework with my brother, but she never would with me...oh you will be fine, cheeky little bold girl. And then of course going to university, I remember the nuns saying to my mother that she'll never cope with university, she doesn't do any work...whatever. If she doesn't do any work at school she'll never do any work at university because its self-motivated. Well, I went to university and absolutely loved it. Suddenly I did extremely well...not prescribed, no rules, and so I did really, really well and it was surprising to me. I think even to my mother...but I think my mother had always thought I had this absolute commitment to art which is true. Because when I was a child I was very, very naughty, but the only times I was quiet was when I was drawing and I obviously had a talent.

(Peripheral conversation)

LJ: In your own experience, do you think the home is a fraught place, a constrained space?

PS: I suppose it's difficult to know...but I think in terms of a social context it is a fraught place because it is contested. Gender roles...all this sort of stuff. It is.

JLDT: Do you sense that in the present?

PS: I was thinking more broadly of homes in Greece, where women are expected to be in the home, making the food and I'm thinking of situations which have been interesting for me in South Africa...like even though women are not in their homes because of, generally speaking, having to go to work...so there are all sorts of complicated things. Black women themselves, how they are located in the domestic space. They aren't even in their own domestic space. They're in white people's spaces, generally speaking, so its difficult to talk about the home in that way. I think it's always easier just to be very specific about what kind of home. I know your general question is the home, but of course within that are different points.

LJ: Well, I'm talking specifically about the nuclear family in South Africa.

PS: I think with gender roles I wouldn't say that there's a situation of women having to do the cooking or washing up in a modern urban context...not in the group of people I would mix with. I don't know about other contexts. But most women are now educated in one form or another. Many of them are professionals, so they work ...so the home is not contested in that way around gender roles, but I still think there are questions around children, having children and that is actually one of those complex facts that most men do not stay at home looking after the children. Most women do have to...some women do have to and their lives are usually limited, if not compromised.

LJ: Do you think the woman is still considered to be the primary care-giver?

PS: Yes, she is. Certainly I know when Alexander was little and I would have to go to exhibitions abroad and travel...it was amazing, even people at the university would come to Colin and say, shame how are you coping with looking after the child...are you doing alright? Well when Colin was away, nobody came up to me and said, oh shame Penny, how are you coping with looking after the child...it was my natural position. I was supposed to do it. They thought he was wonderful that he had looked after the child and so there are still those kind of expectations. But I do think when it comes to having the child and the early stages of looking after the child maybe an issue. But there are all these sorts of things which are...but it is something that can be inflicted with different values in different contexts and that's the difference.

(Peripheral conversation)

LJ: Do you think it's possible to separate this whole idea of home from domesticity itself? I ask because I find that it just seems so intertwined and yet I would like it not to be, if that makes sense?

PS: I think you can separate them. One can separate them. I think home is not necessarily a place only where you have children or where you produce a nest or whatever. I don't think its necessarily that. I think it's a place of belonging, a sense of belonging, which is important and I suppose that's why I am interested in that relationship to homelessness or displacement, when you don't have a place to belong in a sense. And I think with all the gender changes...people produce homes which are not related with children or the nuclear family at all. But I think its a place of belonging and situatedness, in some sense that you have a rootedness, some kind of rootedness and that's a home. That's how I would see it.

(Peripheral conversation)

JLDT: The issue of diaspora, which is also attached to that of relocating, re-establishing and then the frames of reference attached to that.

PS: The issue of diaspora in the relationship to home because...in our family certainly. My father went back to live in Greece. He never gave up his Greek citizenship. My mother went and lived in Australia. The issue of diaspora is really important in what my idea of home would be and at the same time...in Vryberg where we lived we had the house and the bakery and there were lots of people living...all the workers in the bakery lived in the compound. And that was the late 50s, early 60s which was quite interesting. I grew up in the context which there was no question, no obvious question of racial segregation, because I would go to Alfred...Alfred was one of the chief bakers, and I would go and have breakfast with Alfred in his bed. They would look after me so...there was a lot of intimacy between twelve to fifteen bakery workers. It was unusual in that way. There was a community people already. I remember waking up to them singing in the morning as they would start working and it was very warm and a great sense of home. But it was not necessarily the house...but the house didn't make the home in an obvious way, it was the community of people, the atmosphere.

(Peripheral conversation)

PS: I didn't have much experience of stability in the home like – stability meaning when I'd go home my mother would have cooked a nice meal or something. That wasn't really like that. My grandmother was always there; there was that aspect of a certain character who was always associated with the home. But we didn't have any rules. We didn't have to go to bed at a certain time, so I didn't have too many boundaries, which was probably a problem. It would have been better to have more rules in the household, but it was definitely a space of intervention. We, like all children would play, but my grandmother would play with us. My grandmother also liked changing the house a lot, so did my mother. So suddenly the living room would be something else. That was quite important in a sense. My grandmother was like that even when she was a child.

JLDT: How would you describe your familial home?

PS: There were lots of things and I think...I suppose they were extravagant people. My father was extravagant with clothes and things. But he was as quick to throw them away. He wasn't very precious about things. My mother loved objects. Lots and lots of objects, so there were always beautiful objects around. Ceramics, old porcelain things, antiques, lots of antiques. Lots of music, so the house was full of old records and we all had record players as children. There was a lot of scope in the house for play and play-acting, and intervention and expression. She definitely thought that children should express themselves so the home was a lived space. It was always busy and people coming and going. My mother was very sensitive to the context of objects. So for instance she would give us a long story if she found a beautiful porcelain figure...this comes from her, this comes from there. So there was a lot of that. And in terms of other things...both my parents had tons and tons of clothes. My mother had lots of shoes and lots of jewellery and I remember being intrigued by their cupboards.

JLDT: How would you describe your current home, especially now that you have moved from Johannesburg to Cape Town?

PS: Here we are in Green Point, in an apartment which is quite conditioned by the people previous design of the place. So its got a much more modern feel. Our old Melville house in Jo'burg had a rambling kind of feel and it changed according to needs. And here we just moved which changed our lives significantly. And our big problem was trying to look for a place with a studio and couldn't really find it. We found a place that has a beautiful view of the sea. So its got a gorgeous view of the sea. It has a space where we could have our animals; there's a little garden. We have three cats and a dog. And now we have a different life, so now we take the dog for a walk on the promenade. And we're very excited by the sea, because I suppose coming from Jo'burg you don't have the sea. The apartment is completely different. There's very little space to hang anything on the wall. We taken a whole lot of angels...we had a whole lot of angels. Tons and tons of angels, so we couldn't bring all of them with us. So there's a little space that's meant to be for wood next to the fireplace...we just put some angels in there. But a really, really limited stock of angels. But it is also quite nice in a way...shedding a whole lot of things and producing another kind of way of being, actually. The home, our home feels very like it is a bit of a haven now to...it’s easy to manage. So it doesn't become a hassle. Lots of space in Jo'burg but not lots of space here, but enough space. It’s beautiful

the doors are always open. I love openness and a sense of space. What we got was what we loved and decided it was a new life so all the objects, the installation objects are still in Jo'burg in storage. And some are here in our garage, we've got a huge double garage. That's the new home.

(Peripheral conversation)

LJ: So your collection of objects was influenced by your mom?

PS: Yes, very much. Because my grandmother had a very different attitude to objects. She had this attitude that you must just get rid of everything...they just burdened you. But that was from her own experience of being displaced. She lived all over the place, all over the world literally...in 'My Lovely Day' there's a part where she speaks through the text about my grandfather getting rid of his jewels. She was burdened by them. She thought possessions were not worth having. But my mother was a great collector of things and very discriminating about things...she gave every object its due. And she kept things a lot. In the installations themselves there's a lot of my mother's things literally... the shoes she wore when she got , married, a little pair of Egyptian shoes...lots of her things. And then she would collect souvenirs when she travelled abroad. She would bring me lots of dolls from all over the world, so there's lots of dolls. So yes, she's very much part of the installations.

LJ: I've looked at home as being a private space as opposed to the public domain, which is an exposed space. That doesn't seem to really apply in your case would you say?

PS: You know, generally I think I've a slightly more open attitude to these things. I mean I do like privacy but I don't feel I have to protect it. I seem to just have it when I want it, whereas Colin is much more anxious about keeping his privacy so... he doesn't like to mix home and work. Even his office, he's more private... whereas the students will come here and they love seeing all the goings on. I don't feel vulnerable because they see things in process. You know I don't have to be... so I've always been quite open in my studio, whereas lots of my art friends would not do that. Their studio is sort of sacrosanct. Colin is amazed that people can just walk into my studio while I'm busy working. My home growing up was a very generous space, lots of foods, lots of easygoingness, lots of noise. In some ways I suppose it was unusual then. In those days it was considered to be a bit kind of chaotic, where now people might think its a good way of having a home and children growing up.

(Peripheral conversation)

My mother being assertive in the home also...if she was in the kitchen doing work, it was because she wanted to be there not because she felt obliged to be in the kitchen. She found that empowering. She didn't find that a chore.

JLDT: If you had to select three or four works of your oeuvre...as particularly referencing home?

LJ: 'Melancholia'. Would you say that, that references home in any way?

PS: It does...my interests when I was working on it were less about home but it does

reference...I suppose I used memories of laden tables and things and then...using them to speak about what interested me then much more was really the idea of overlaying symbols in a kind of theoretical context that was important then. This piling convention, upon convention, upon convention. The use of Dutch painting, Baroque painting and all these different signs and putting them all together in a way that was quite an important part, and of course I was interested in that in relationship to the conventionalised depictions of hysteria and melancholia itself. So that was important in 'Melancholia', although I would acknowledge that in fact yes, that it did have some relation to earlier...overlaid, fullness, over-ripe things. But for me the over-ripe thing was more critical, became the critical project. Even now I work with things that I have both affection for and which at the same time can be the material or the focus of critique. There's not like there's critique here and object there, of critique. They're sort of entangled in a way...so surface is a critical idea for me. Surface in painting, surface in objects. Materiality is something that I find very fruitful as a means to critique things, because its something I actually love and have a great affection for and a strong experiential relationship to. It is a dialectical thing and I keep those two things in some kind of tension and so my interest in form and formlessness, one can put it down to Pattay...and he intrigues me. That interest in Pattay and other writers and literature generally, would actually come from a very powerful experience I myself have of engagement with materiality as something which is beyond just a means. It’s not just a means to producing an image in and of itself.

(Peripheral conversation)

The works are rich in different aspects. Some aspects get pulled out more, then other times other aspects get pulled out more, and I think that's how it kind of works really. But I think the 'Cake Paintings' reference home quite a lot through the cake icing thing and that for me is quite a specific thing, of watching my mother ice cakes for the bakery. I think the lattice work and lace of the 'Cake Paintings and the lace of some of the paintings had some...there's some relationship there. I think there's connections in lots of the work, but it depends what one wanted to pull out. Its interesting that I used the cake icing equipment because you know I had to do it to get those things. Before that I had never iced a cake ever. Even with ink and glue I didn't learn it...well nobody taught me, it was through experience of engaging with materiality in a way which is quite strongly relational, which is powerfully relational. So I think there's something quite primary about my interest in materiality which probably stems from childhood and the expansiveness of the home, the sensual surfaces. The transforming, transfiguring things definitely comes from the home. So the 'Cake Paintings', 'Melancholia' within a more complex way, the 'Still Life with Watermelon' which was before 'Melancholia' is more...there's laden tables at the back. There's one table that does reference a round table from my mother's home. These objects definitely. The Installations definitely. And they definitely are literally traces of that early home which is quite nice. Its also interesting because it deals with migration in a broader sense because some of the things my mother collected from different parts of the world and came from different contexts. What happens in the Installations is you see a personal object and then beyond you see that what might get accumulated in the household or by a person, and those things are often reflective of a larger political context. So I kept a Mandela plate which is quite a key part of the installation as well. So 1994 that marks a particular moment, it also marks me as buying and collecting it. I also have a whole set of Mandela medallions. I've got Alexander's dummy. These sorts of

things are very personal things and the dummy with the ribbon...there's lots of things. Like the little doll he was given when he was born in Park Lane Clinic. There's a lot of things that are in those installations which actually are markers of my life in relation to my mother's probably mostly. How the Installations all started, I had to go and pack up my mother's things, so I literally packed up her things. So when I went to Australia the emotional charge was packing up all her things and putting them in piles...that was my method basically putting them in piles seeing where what would go. All old letters here, all newspaper cuttings here. Of course you see your life through your mother's life. Your mother's kept all these things about you or the family and her own family. You see her deeper history and her projection into her current history and what she envisages of the future or whatever. She was a good keeper of things of posterity but you know things that I would have to throw away and did throw away. So I made this piles of things...all books, all letters, all newspaper cuttings and all little objects. There was a pile of miscellaneous that just got bigger and bigger because that is also about somebody's life...what exceeds the categories that one has in one's life. You have a cupboard for your clothes, you have things in the kitchen the home is kind of organised in a way where you categorise things all the time and it struck me that when looking at my mother's objects there was this pile of miscellaneous that just exceeded categorisation. And that struck me as something that very psychologically and emotionally charged. That also speaks to the fact of displacement, and things don't fit into the home, no matter how unorthodox the home, it still had a sense that things would fit into it. The Installations as really a language of form started by me going through my mother's things and having to decide what to keep and what to throw away and that was basically her life through objects. And her life through objects harked obviously back to the home and harked back to the homelessness as well, you know the sense of always moving. The Greekness, the Englishness, the Africaness. The fears, the moments of joy. The reason you keep funny things... sentimental interesting reasons. So yes the Installations definitely. I think the Installations will be useful. I think in a funny way they also relate to 'My Lovely Day' the film that marks home in a very specific way as a sort of wandering place. My grandmother talking talking about home, this God-forsaken place, then referring to Kimberley at the end...no wonder your father didn't settle.

APPENDIX 2

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Schedule

In the context of this research, Home is defined as the traditionally accepted place where the woman is defined in relation to domesticity and the family unit.

1. This research is examining the 'concept of Home' as an idealised place and the illusion thereof. What are your comments on the idea of 'Home-Sweet-Home'?

2. In your experience, does the terrain of Home remain a gendered one? A place where stereotypical notions are perpetuated?

3. If the terrain of Home remains a gendered one, in your opinion, do women occupy a lesser status around the home, than within the public sphere?

4. What, if any, are the imbalances in power relations enacted in the Home?

5. What are the conventions with regard to our perception of Home, and in what way do social constructs influence the way in which women are perceived in relationship to the Home?

6. Inspite of years of feminist consciousness, the Home is the terrain where a woman's traditional roles of domesticity, nurturance and subservience are still expected to be fulfilled as the natural function of her womanhood. As an artist and as a woman what has been your experience in this regard?

7. As a woman, have you experienced problems establishing yourself as an artist?

8. The rise of the feminist movement in the 1970s brought about a greater freedom for women to become self-sufficient individuals and it created an awareness that women have played a much greater role in history than was previously assigned to them. In what way do you think this has influenced your own work?

9. Do you think that this awareness has resulted in women becoming more theoretically informed about power relations and the way in which gender is socially constructed?

10. In what way do you/ do not engage with these issues in your own work?

11. From your perspective do think it's possible to separate the idea of Home from the domestic?

12. Why do you think women are naturally assigned the role of the domestic within the home? What has been your own experience?

13. The Home is regarded as a private space and somewhat inaccessible, as opposed to the public domain, which is an area exposed, and open to scrutiny. In what way do you negotiate this internal space as a place of containment, and how do you transgress the public and the private?

14. What elements of your work are used, whether consciously or subconsciously, in bringing the realm of the private into the public arena?

15. The imbalances of power, in this research, will be analysed using Derrida's theories of deconstruction. All systems of thought according to Derrida are built upon a binary pattern that places concept in opposition, and then privileges one above the other, thus producing meaning. In what way does your work deconstruct the concept of Home?

16. In what way do you engage with the complex dichotomies surrounding the issues of Home and the gendered position assigned to women in this area?

17. The site of a highly contested space, the Home is a place of complex issues where roles have to be negotiated. How do you engage with these issues?

18. Foucault, philosopher and cultural critic, believes that everything is culturally/socially produced. According to Foucault, knowledge is a form of power……..power is not an object that can be seized, held or lost, but a network of forces in which power always meets with resistance. Do you believe that your work engages with issues of micro-resistance to bring attention to unequal relations of power within a patriarchal society, and thus bring about change?

19. Binary opposites privilege one above the other – within a patriarchal society such as the one we live in, man is privileged above woman. In what way does your work challenge or subvert patriarchy?

20. Despite your career and commitment as an artist, do you feel that the woman's domestic role within the home is still something of an assumption?

The remaining questions will be contingent on what is said in the interview and applicable to the individual artists. The interview questions are flexible and meant to allow the interviewees to give their own thoughts on the topic being researched.