PhEminist Skins of Resistance: Decolonising the female nude through practiceresearch with young women artists

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I certify that all the work presented in this thesis is that of my own.

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Abstract

The objectification of women's bodies through the Western art trope of the female nude debilitates and restricts young women's becomings in the contemporary art classroom. I critically explore the relationship between the colonial ideals of the art historical trope of the female nude and UK secondary arts education. This entanglement restricts their understanding of the creative process. In response to this context, this practiceresearch is a collaboration with six young women artists (the YWAs), aged 13-14, and emerges from a project conducted in my place of work.

Through a critical engagement with the materiality of learning, the life drawing process was activated to diffract heteronormative and raced colonial imaginings of the female body. Theoretically informed by phEmaterialism and specifically the work of Braidotti, Barad, and Deleuze and Guattari, a decolonising hooksian inspired pedagogy of hope was activated. By embracing material agency as vital to an embodied learning experience, this practiceresearch explored how the intra-action of bodies, both human and non-human, ignites spaces for intra-activism.

(Re)viewing the skin as a post human assemblage that grows, scars, wrinkles and sheds continuously through and with the world, supported a diffraction of the traditional constraints of the patriarchal and colonised lines of historical female imagery. By enabling young women artists to explore and question often difficult life experiences through creative explorations, the life drawing process was reimagined as a performative, collaborative and shared act of decolonisation. This practiceresearch aims to contribute to the emerging field of phEmaterialism, which blurs the boundaries between alternative embodied forms of critical engagement with creative pedagogical practice, education and the wider field of cultural studies.

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Orienting the Skin

Never forget this: your body does not end at the skin. Your contours are not constrained by physical appearance. Your morphological imaginary is fluid and changeable. Indeed, your tissues can absorb all kinds of fantasies. Your imagination generates more than mere mental images; its reach extends through your entire sensorium. Simultaneously visual and kinaesthetic, imaginings carry an affective charge. They can excite your muscles, tissues, and fascia, heighten or alter your senses. You can fold semiosis into sensation. Perceptual experiments can rearticulate your sensorium. And by imagining otherwise, and telling different stories, you can open up new sensible worlds. (Myers: 2014, n.p.n)
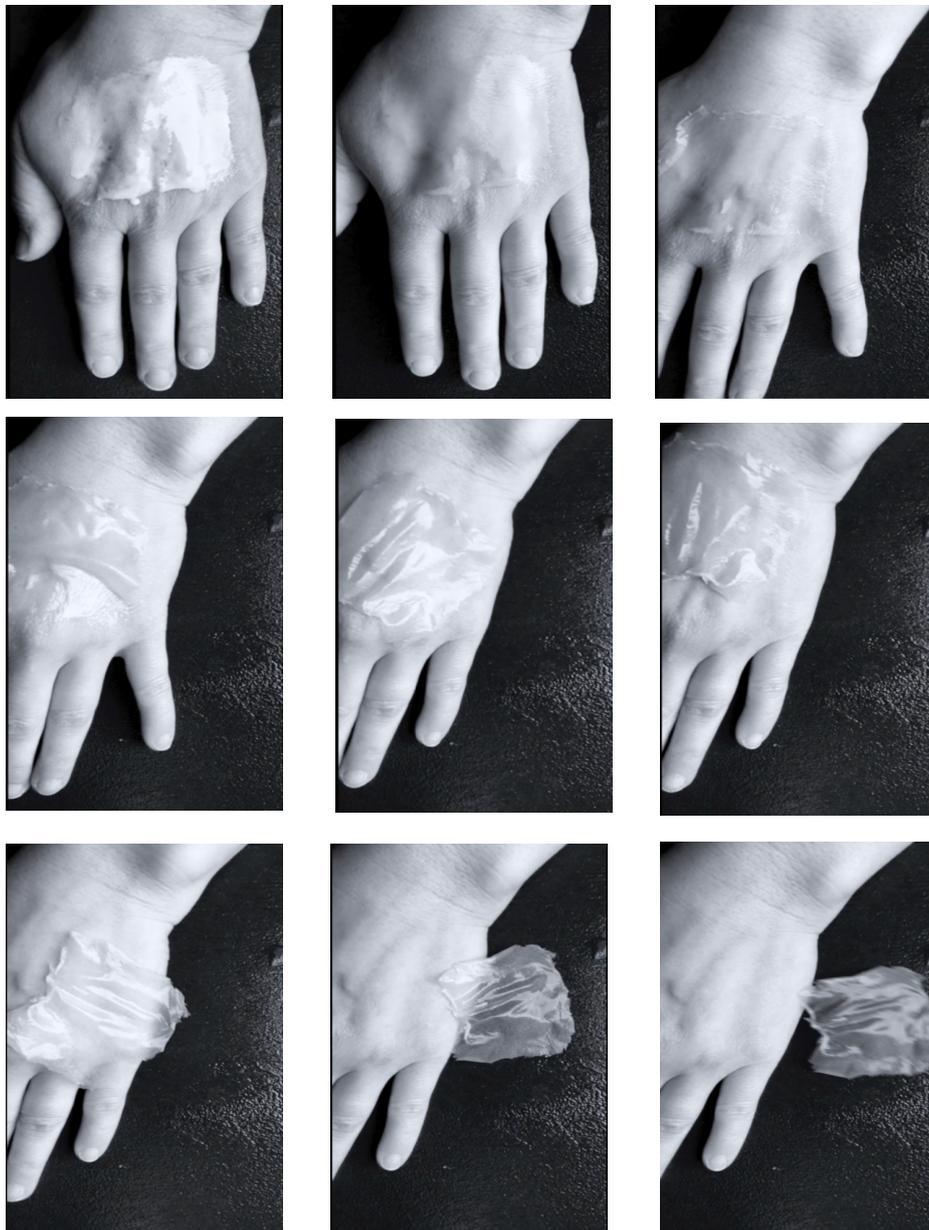
Figure 1: Stanhope (n.d.) Glue skinning process [photograph]

To try to embody these thoughts offered by Natasha Myers (2014) is to situate ourselves in the materiality of our bodies, of our skin. To put our skin into context, we have approximately 1.6 trillion skin cells at any one time. Thirty to forty thousand of them fall away every hour (Biga et al: 2018), and since starting my PhD I will have shed over a billion skin cells. You will also be shedding microscopic skin cells as you turn the pages of this thesis or scroll through on your keyboard. This physical fact is rarely pondered on a day-to-day basis but doing so offers a gateway into a post human world (Braidotti: 2013), a world that I have found inspiring and intrinsic to the multiple material practices that have supported this thesis. It is therefore with the skin and with the matter of creative practice that I wish to begin.

To situate ourselves within the matter of this practiceresearch we commence with what could be described as a pre-text to the thesis - a contemplation of the 'vibrant' material that is our skin (Bennett: 2010). Interestingly, the root of the word pre-text is 'praetexere' which literally means to 'weave in front of'. I draw on this metaphor of weaving to allude to the journey of the skin cell, which itself materialises through a process of weaving through our dermatological structures. The pre-text I offer is an immersive experience - 'Becoming Skin Cell' - which seeks to embody a daily journey, one that we are always in the middle of, forever commencing and ending. It is a journey of constant 'becoming' (Deleuze and Guattari: 2013). Encountering the skin in this way dissolves the humanist surface of the skin as an envelope to the body and instead delves deep into the epidermis to 'think through the skin' (Ahmed and Stacey: 2001). However, before we commence this exploration, I would also like to invite you to immerse yourself in a material engagement with the skin by making a glue skin. Glue skinning has become a vital part of the written element of this thesis. To make a glue skin I spread a small amount of PVA glue onto the back of each of my hands, and as I type, the glue dries capturing the lines of my skin and the trace of the movement as I tap at the keyboard as seen in 'glue skinning process' (Fig. 1). The repetition of this action, the initial coolness of the sticky substance (re)situates me within my body and constantly draws attention back to the ever-evolving embodied process that we are all a part of. Once dried, I pick at the glue skin, slowly releasing its grip on my body. It becomes a physical embodiment of the written thesis and a material resistance to the learnt colonial narratives that have sealed the female

skin through western art history. Perhaps you might also be tempted to make a glue skin as you listen to the 'Becoming Skin Cell' exploration?[1] to access a guided journey or move to the next page to entangle with this journey through a written text.
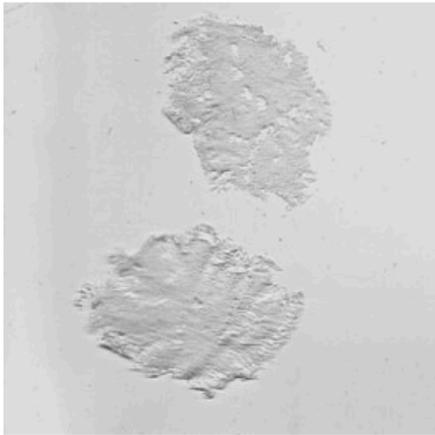
Shed skins
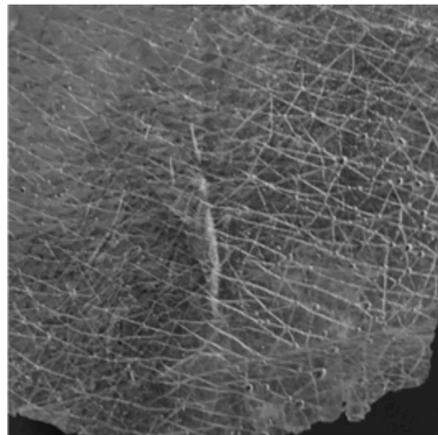
Glue skins: A post human process

BECOMING SKIN CELL
CLARE STANHOPE

Becoming skin cell

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[1] Becoming Skin Cell is available to watch on the CCE website: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/9-becoming-skin-cell.html
Alongside the Becoming Skin Cell film, there are further phEmaterialist explorations of the glue skin process such as Glue Skinning: A post human process https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/8-glue-skinning---a-post-human-process.html

Becoming Skin Cell: A morphological imagining

Make yourself comfortable in whatever space you are in. Spread a small amount of PVA glue on the back of your hand(s). Feel its coolness as you start to relax into your body.

Close your eyes

and

Breathe.

Feel the breath expand your lungs and breathe out. Connect to this rhythm; be aware of the coolness of the skin as air is pulled upwards into your nose. Then follow this air through your body and draw your attention to your skin connecting with your clothes as you breathe. Imagine your clothes dissolving and that you are suspended in a cool water, swimming where the sensation of the water embraces your entire form, a moment where you can feel your whole surface.

Suspend yourself in this imaginary water and draw your attention to the outermost limit of the self.

Sink inwards and let go of your bodily self. Feel your bones dissolve. Your flesh melts away and you become membrane, become a thin single line of cells interlocked through a structure mimicking rows of bubble wrap.

You are infinite.

Play with this feeling; stretch with this malleable matter until you sense each bubble-wrapped cell start to divide. As one cell remains to divide over and over again, the other part of you is pulled magnetically upwards. You are morphing. Biochemical changes are occurring; you are generating a fibrous protein (keratin) that slowly fills up your structure. Feel your boundaries swell as your movement continues to pull you up, up.

You sense change. You are morphing, stretching from your centre. Feel this expansion as your nucleus begins to degenerate. You secrete a gooey matter (containing lipids, cholesterol, free saturated acids and ceramides). Fluids shift around you and fill spaces between, they form a protective barrier as you feel the sense of being pulled ever upwards. You can feel the presence of the cell next to you, now multiply this sensation, sense your surroundings of millions upon millions of 'you', sense this stratified and squamous scaly frontier. You have become one giant organ, a sensing agentic multi-layered membrane.

You are pulled forward, ejected into the light. You are dazzled, surrounded in your multitude, you feel the rush of a breeze across your surface. The air caresses and cajoles you, it teases you, cools you. Rest for a moment and drink in the light, feel the energetic thrill of connection, being a part of something that is all at once you and more than you.

You are connected but also in the process of leaving. Your cell-like self is sloughing, shedding, awaiting and sensing the beginning of the next cycle. You depart and arrive. You are one and a multitude, you are in constant state of becoming.

Suspend your disbelief in the true state of your being. Revel in your accomplishment of being entangled in human and post human becomings.

Refocus. Change is afoot. Time pushes on, the feeling of the machine-like qualities of the self simultaneously and continuously rises beneath you, a constant rumble of shifting and morphing cells embarking on the same journey you have just completed.

Your journey could perhaps be terminated here. You are flat, dead in biological terms. How can this be when you still feel active? Draw your attention for a moment to the life that occurs between your cell structures. You stretch out - a cracked desert - seemingly dry, but what little do you know of yourself? Streams of micro-bacterial life surge between your nooks and crannies. Sense these collaborations; sense the micro-organisms that crawl

through and with you. You are part of a collaboration and intra-action; you are a more than human assemblage.

You pause, acknowledging your fellow travellers.

A force thrusts you into the air, you are suspended in space. Your connection is ruptured, and you float free, extending the surface beyond, you have diversified, dissolved, disintegrated. You are but matter, flecks of what once was treasured in its glory days as skin, pampered, washed and oiled. Now you are but dust that we each breathe in, 'so even the essence of our neighbours tints our blood streams' (Briscoe: 1997, 236).

Now it's time to re-centre. Draw in your particles, re-stabilise yourself, draw back your cells to form once more the layer you sense as your skin. Feel the blood, flesh and bones, revitalise your core.
Come back to your breath.

Come back to your body.

But ask, is this the same body? Imagine seeing our true lively selves, our shedding skins suspended around us like a biodome. We each carry our neighbours, we are all together and separate, both single and whole.

 Our imaginary boundaries are fleeting.

Figure 2: Stanhope (n.d.) Layered skins [edited photograph]

Introduction

The embodied positioning of the skin explored in 'Becoming Skin Cell' is a call to disrupt idealised images of the skin as a container for the body, a material through which narratives of gender, race, sexuality, ability, age and various ideals of perfection have been politically activated, by colonisation as well as artistically through Western art tropes such as the female nude (Connor: 2004; Benthian: 2002; Hobson: 2018a, 2018b; Gilman: 1985; Nead: 1992). Having been constructed through deep-rooted patriarchal notions of beauty and developed through histories of colonisation, the female nude has over the centuries perpetuated restrictive bodily ideals for women; ideals that are generally defined as white, able bodied, heterosexual, youthful and slim (Nead: 1992; Betterton: 1987; Grosz: 1994; Araeen: 2013; McClintock: 1995; Marsh: 2005). I became interested in how the patriarchal ideal of the 'perfect' woman's body, being smooth, ageless, and blemish free, is the polar opposite of the lively material nature of the skin, which is a material that is individual to each of us, that varies in pigmentation and marking and that can be altered through surgery or by being tattooed. But what I am most intrigued by is the very nature of the skin, its morphing qualities as it sheds, scars, wrinkles, sweats, sprouts hair, in a process that is in constant flux. This process is so far removed from Western imaginings of the passive 'perfect' female skin that it becomes a living paradox, situated between what is desired and what is actual. What is interesting about this paradox is that a space emerges between the two opposing factions, and with it an opportunity for resistance. To acknowledge the agency inherent in millions of skin cells in continuous travel through our dermis and epidermis is to review our bodies as a constantly morphing and fluid entity. If we could literally 'see' ourselves, our outer edges would blur, a fuzz of activity in collaboration with the world around, refusing to be controlled and sealed off by patriarchal and colonial restraints. This embodied approach to the skin inevitably invites stories of individuality, and potential for diversity across identities that I seek to activate through this research and 'gives visual form to the thought behind [this] research design' (Kovach: 2009, 40).

To activate the pedagogical possibilities of the skin is to think about its post human potential (Braidotti: 1994, 2002, 2011, 2013a; Haraway: 1991, 2016) for understanding how matter comes to matter (Barad: 2003) as a decolonial material. To support this materialist exploration, I employ

phEmaterialism (Ringrose, Renold, Hickey-Moody & Osgood: 2015) as the theoretical force of this project. This is a disruptive theory that entwines feminist, post human and new materialist theories together in education. PhEmaterialism materialised as a Twitter hashtag for the conference Feminist Posthuman New Materialism: Research Methodologies in Education: 'Capturing Affect' (Ringrose, Renold, Hickey-Moody & Osgood: 2015). Note the conflation of the '**F**' of **F**eminism with the '**PH**' of **P**ost **H**umanism and the capitalisation of the '**E**' to position education as integral to this methodology. This has since developed into an international networking group of academics, students and artists who are interested in phEmaterialism as a methodology that interrupts and 'reassembles' educational research. As two of the founding members, EJ Renold and Jessica Ringrose (2019) explain,

> Posthuman theorisations decentre 'mankind' exceptionalism–organised via the privileging of white, individual, rational, European masculinity, repositioning humans as part of, rather than sovereign over, a vibrant ecology of active matter… Critical posthumanism rejects racialised, sexualised, and gendered exclusions from humanity and prioritises indigenous and other forms of marginalised knowledge and meaning making'. (1)

This ethically led methodology, that destabilises humanist hierarchies and actively attends to the agency of matter and materiality as forms of 'meaning making', encourages a repositioning of the human as in collaboration with the world around. The skin comes to matter and make meaning in this practiceresearch through my place of work, the art, craft and design (hereafter art) classroom in collaboration with six year 9 students (aged between 13 and14 years old) who became known as the YWAs (young women artists). I argue that learnt constructs of Western beauty standards, as perpetuated through colonialism, materialise not only through idealised images of the female nude (Nead: 1992; Betterton: 1987; Benthian: 2002; Connor: 2004; Grosz: 1994), but also define what is considered 'successful' drawing in secondary school art contexts. I argue that this materialises in the narrow interpretation of drawing that is generally imagined as photorealistic (Maslen and Southern: 2011; Atkinson: 2002). I investigate whether, by creating space to interrogate the colonial ideals of the female nude through creative researching practice, a (re)imagining and reclaiming of the female body can take place. I further assert that decentring

colonial exceptionalism within secondary art education enables the activation of a pedagogy of hope (hooks: 1994, 2003; Freire: 1987, 1996, 1997, 2004) that can empower and enable the YWAs to reimagine their relationships with their bodies and their future possibilities. This assertion informs this phEmaterialist practiceresearch 'as both a reaction to humanism and an activation of new practices in educational research' (Taylor and Hughes: 2016, 2).

Calls for decolonisation

As the title of this thesis states, I explore ways of decolonising the legacy of the female nude, and more specifically the skin, to support the empowerment of the young women artists who populate the classrooms in which I teach. As I discuss throughout this thesis, the process of decolonisation is far from smooth. As Sium, Desai and Ritskes (2012) state, 'decolonization is a messy, dynamic, and a contradictory process' (ii), and this practiceresearch is an acknowledgement of that. Throughout this process I have been inspired both by the rich and diverse practices of indigenous researchers, as well as scholars who resist Western-centric notions of research practice and promote a decolonisation of institutions and knowledge formations (Chalmers: 2017; Kuokkanen: 2000a; Mithlo: 2012; Kovach: 2009; Chilisa: 2006, 2017; Mutua and Swadener: 2004; Wilson: 2008; Tuck and Yang: 2012; Zembylas: 2018). Although there are obvious and needed points of contact between these methodologies, there are also clear distinctions. As Kovach (2009) explains, '[i]ndigenous methodologies are rooted in 'tribal' epistemologies while decolonising methodologies derive from Western critical theory' (80).

To explain decolonisation in the context of this practiceresearch within the English secondary art classroom I attend to what Linda Smith (2021) describes as the 'collective memory of imperialism'. She explains how colonialism

> has been perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about indigenous people was collected, classified and then represented in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized. (Smith: 2021,1)

This symbiotic approach of classifying and representing indigenous people, in order to capture and control, has multiple layers and consequences (Tuck and Yang: 2012). What I am interested in is how this narrative, when fed back to the West, also restricts the population of the colonising countries, leading to 'internalized colonialism' Kuokkanen (2000a, 412). It is from this understanding of internalised colonialism that I explore how sexist and racist colonial histories infiltrate the contemporary art classroom. As an educator of white European heritage, I accept that

> We all perpetuate colonialism as people of gender, family status, race or normalised whiteness, consumers, and inhabitants of place. Everyone is enmeshed in the colonial fabric and we must all work to unravel it, but we must all do so based on who we are and how we are twisted into its netting. (Chalmers: 2017, 112)

To further understand the complexities of the 'colonial fabric' is to acknowledge the reach of the colonial endeavour into all aspects of the human identity. Anne McClintock (1995) in her influential book *Imperial Leather* situates the entanglement of race, gender and class as central to the imperial endeavour, while also reaching into and controlling all other aspects of identity,

> Imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity. The invention of race … became central not only to the self-definition of the middle class but also to the policing of "dangerous classes": the working class, the Irish, Jews, prostitutes, feminists, gays and lesbians, criminals, the militant crowd and so on. (McClintock: 1995, 5)

Working in a school with a diverse student population drawn from across the globe, including students whose heritage is in the former British colonies, as well as students (and myself) from a white Western heritage, draws attention to 'who' and how' we are 'twisted' into the colonial net (Chalmers: 2017, 112). Understanding that the (learnt) colonial endeavour infiltrates all aspects of our identity means this process of 'unravelling' (Chalmers: 2017) is far from simple and sometimes overwhelming, but to pull on the first thread of the 'fabric', whoever we are and wherever we are situated in this history, is vital.

Tuck and Yang's (2012) statement that to decolonise is 'not a metaphor', that it is a verb which needs action, drives much of my practiceresearch. On starting this project, the focus on decolonising curriculums in secondary education was not as acute as it is now in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent global demonstrations of the Black Lives Matter campaign in 2020. In the light of this series of events, the need to reflect and attend to British colonial histories in all aspects of our society has seen an upsurge in debate and calls to action across institutions. However, as Tuck and Yang (2012) observe, the word 'decolonise' has been overused in various Western contexts in recent years and has become a metaphorical claim rather than consolidated by formative action. They state that '[w]hen metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recentres whiteness, it resettles theory' (Tuck and Yang: 2012, 3). They go on to remind us that decolonisation is, and should be, an 'unsettling' process, a process that Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021) explain '[carries] undeniable potential to disrupt taken for granted assumptions and perspectives that order the world' (3). Therefore, creating a safe space in which to disrupt such assumptions and perspectives is imperative if we are to enable a future free from colonial constraints. Samia Nehrez, cited by hooks (1992), insightfully explains this more clearly,

> decolonization comes to be understood as an act of exorcism for both the colonized and the colonizer. For both parties it must be a process of liberation from dependency, in the case of the colonized, and from imperialist, racist perceptions, representations, and institutions which, unfortunately, remain with us to this very day, in the case of the colonizer ... Decolonization can only be complete when it is understood as a complex process that involves both the colonizer and the colonized. (1)

This positioning of being in the struggle *together* is where the power in this project lies, and is where a decolonial ambition is activated in order to incite change. This ambition is supported by creative pedagogy and as Smith (2021) explains, '[w]e are all inheritors of imperialism who *learned* well the discourses of race and gender, the rules of power, the politics of colonialism' (9; my emphasis). It is this from this point of *learning* that I activate this practiceresearch, as what is learnt can also be unlearnt or relearnt. This gap between known and unknown holds potential to disrupt

and trouble the colonial inheritance that is perpetuated in our curriculums (Arday, Belluigi and Thomas: 2021), and offers an invitation to question the Eurocentric perspective that has constrained the British education system and 'consequently impact[ed] the capacity to embrace and explore other cultural and global perspectives' (Arday, Belluigi and Thomas: 2021, 302).

The decolonial agenda of this practiceresearch

It is at this epicentre of Western knowledge formation in education that I position the decolonising agenda of this practiceresearch. I seek the potential for 'radical openings' (Zavala: 2013, 57) to 'unsettle' (Tuck and Yang: 2012) the colonial perceptions of the female body, specifically the art historical trope of the female nude, in the context of art education. As Smith (2021) astutely argues, the formation of the narrative surrounding the colonised 'other' was generally based on 'the experiences and observations of white men whose interactions with indigenous 'societies' or 'peoples' were constructed around their own cultural views of gender and sexuality' (9). It is in this continuous cycle of feeding on the racist and sexist colonial narratives of the female body that this project encounters the matter of the skin. The history of the female nude and the process of life drawing are used to decentre the presumption of a framework built from Western colonial canons of knowledge (Mignolo and Walsh: 2018), through the use of a decolonial lens that guides a way of '[u]nlearning and re-imagining how we construct, produce, and value knowledge' (Thambinathan and Kinsella: 2021, 4). I draw on the underlying principles of Chilisa (2020) to hold the 'the concerns and worldviews' of the YWAs as central to this research assemblage 'so that they understand themselves through their own assumptions and perspectives' (11). This means I also need to reflect on my experience as a white educator, educated through the same systems in which I now teach, working in collaboration with a diverse student population. This practiceresearch is therefore a collaboration with and unfolding of experience and I acknowledge that I am in the midst of a 'lifelong' learning process (Thambinathan and Kinsella: 2021, 3).

To create space for this 'unsettling process' (Tuck and Yang: 2012) specifically in the context of Western neoliberal education I seek support from educational and social activist bell hooks and her important work *A Pedagogy of Hope* (2003). The focus around 'hope' as a tool for making an 'anti-

racist choice' orients this practiceresearch towards accepting that this evolving project is not a conclusive answer to a set of problems, but a process of becoming (Deleuze and Guattari: 2013). As hooks (2003) explains, this commitment to anti-racist practice does not mean that 'mistakes' won't be made, but it is the ambition to create an open practice that when mistakes are made we can 'face it and make needed repair' (hooks: 2003, 61). Hope, for hooks, is therefore an orientation towards the future. It moves within colonial and patriarchal discourse but actively makes an anti-racist choice, facing problems as they arise and finding ways through. As she states, 'no-one is born a racist. Everyone makes a choice' (hooks: 2003, 53). This critically engaged teaching is embedded in working *with* people and communities to cut across 'Imperialist, white supremist, capitalist patriarchal values' (hooks: 2003, 1). As Camilla Stanger (2018) extrapolates,

> Under this hooksian framework, the future is not the precarious and risky place it is within a neoliberal discourse of education, in need of pinning down and securing through a string of qualifications; it is instead a space for possibility and (social and political) change. (53)

In this space of possibility, hooks (2003) aims to create a practice of freedom where all collaborators in the classroom space are supported through empowered becomings. She instils ideas of a 'classroom without boundaries' free from the white capitalist patriarchy (hooks: 2003, 13), arguing that radical possibilities can emerge in the move from disembodied, sterile learning environments that perpetuate white middle-class values, to emotionally charged settings.

To entangle phEmaterialism with a decolonising ambition is to attend directly to critiques of both new materialism and post humanism (Ahmed: 2012 and Strom, Dernilos, Franklin-Phipps, Kamrass-Morvay and Shakhnoza: 2021). Whilst the troubling of the humanist paradigm converges with a shared desire to dismantle dualistic hegemonic narratives, there are also critiques of those who are privileged by this discourse. New materialist and post humanist methodologies stand accused of reifying academic whiteness (Ahmed: 2008; Sullivan: 2021) by failing to acknowledge indigenous methodologies (Zembylas: 2018), that relate in large part directly to the new materialist claim for a 'return to matter'. Further criticisms suggest that the new materialist methodologies are situated in theoretical discourse and fail to actively engage in change making (Strom et al.: 2021).

By bringing together phEmaterialism and decolonial theory this practiceresearch contributes to the expanding field of phEmaterialism and acknowledges that,

> While this paradigm is still a Western approach, it is value-driven, with core values rooted in social emancipation and solidarity with oppressed people, and therefore, has more potential than other Western paradigms to be inclusive of other systems of knowledge, including non-Western epistemologies and ontologies. (Thambinathan and Kinsella: 2021)

Bringing the multiple approaches of phEmaterialism together with decolonial methodologies activated by a hooksian pedagogy of hope, is as Zembylas (2018) states

> more effective because they *pluriversalize* the task of decolonising … education curricula and pedagogies. Pluriversality acknowledges that there are multiple ways to enrich the translation of abstract ideas into particulars—policies, curricula, pedagogies. (264; emphasis in original)

It is this idea of activating a decolonial assemblage by drawing from multiple theoretical perspectives supports the creative activism pursued by this project. The project acknowledges the multiple ways that this can be approached and developed, and most importantly, as Zembylas explains, how the abstract moves into pedagogical actions that activate change.

Situating the practice

Creating space to decolonise and activate change in this phEmaterialist practiceresearch has evolved through employing creative methods to support conversations around often difficult and sensitive topics (Renold: 2018). Although they are relatively new as an acknowledged form of academic research at university level, which have only been developing seriously since the 1980s (Candy: 2006), practiceresearch methodologies have infiltrated a broad spectrum of subject areas including sociology (Law: 2004, 2006; Law and Urry: 2004; Rose: 2012; Pink: 2009, 2013; Back and Puwar: 2013; Lury and Wakeford: 2013), the creative arts (Jefferies: 2010, Nelson: 2013) and education (Osgood and Giugni: 2015; Renold: 2018; Hickey-Moody and Page: 2016). In academia this entwining of arts practice with research methodologies has evolved through the need to

trouble the linear narratives on which Western academia is built, whilst supporting the multi-sensory and multi-model practices that have for centuries been inherent in art making (Pink: 2009, 2013; Manning and Massumi: 2014; Renold and Ringrose: 2019). The vast array of creative practice and ways it can be employed is evident in the various terms that have emerged, including arts-based research (Barone and Eisner: 1997; Eisner: 1993), arts-informed research (Cole, Neilson and Knowles: 2004), practice-based research (Candy: 2006; Candlin: 2000; Frayling: 1997), art practice as research (Sullivan: 2005), practice led research (Haseman: 2010) practice through research (Manning and Massumi: 2014), sensory research practice (Pink: 2009, 2013) and embodied research and practice (Garoian: 2013) to name just a few. As seen in these examples, creative methodologies situate the practice through the word that joins them together, such as 'led', 'as' or 'based'. This connecting word becomes an important signifier of the relationship between the 'practice' and the 'research', capturing 'the nuances and subtleties of their research process' (Haseman: 2010, 145).

The diversity of terms in use highlights the nuanced approaches researchers explore when using creative research methods, but what binds all these iterations together is the underlying desire to challenge the humanist presumption of what constitutes academic theorisation, as well as the foundations of Western institutions (Taylor and Hughes: 2016). It is, however, also this in-between word that dichotomises the practice and research experience, positioning one element as separate from the other. Basing my practice in new materialist (Dolphjin and van der Tuin: 2012; van der Tuin: 2008; Barrett and Bolt: 2013; Hickey Moody and Page: 2016; Coole and Frost: 2010; Coleman and Ringrose: 2013; Coleman, Page and Palmer: 2019) and post human (Braidotti: 2002, 2011, 2013; Haraway: 1991, 2008, 2016) methodologies, I have been inspired by the feminist post humanist Donna Haraway (2003) in her conflation of 'natureculture'. This positions nature and culture as so tightly interwoven that separation is impossible, which I emulate through the removal of the space between 'practice' and 'research'. Positioning my practiceresearch as an ever-evolving assemblage that prioritises marginalised knowledge (Renold and Ringrose: 2019) situates my teaching practice, research interests and art explorations as in constant collaboration with the human and non-human elements that inform it. I learn, unlearn and relearn through teaching,

through making and through researching, but making is teaching, teaching is researching, and researching is making. This process is an entanglement of academia and secondary art education, a relationship that enables alternative ways of thinking and feeling, creating a phEmaterialist 'pheeling' space that searches beyond the confines of institutional structures (Renold and Ringrose: 2019).

The practiceresearch questions and theoretical framework

With these provocations surfacing the following questions emerged:

1. How does the Western art trope of the female nude produce and reproduce restrictive ideals of the female body?

2. How can practiceresearch, informed by phEmaterialism, create pedagogies of hope?

3. How can situating the skin as a paradoxical material support a decolonising pedagogical practice for diffracting the line?

To situate this phEmaterialist practiceresearch as an ever-morphing assemblage that supports the multi-faceted needs of these questions, the physicist and scholar Karan Barad (2003) offers particular inspiration through her theory of 'intra-action'. Intra-action dissolves the binary relationship between human and non-human entities. Shifting from *inter*-action between objects, Barad argues that human and non-human entities are affected through *intra*-acting *with* each other. She describes this more fluently in the following quote,

> The notion of *intra-action* (in contrast to the usual "interaction," which presumes the prior existence of independent entities/relata) represents a profound conceptual shift. It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the "components" of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful. A specific intra-action (involving a specific material configuration of the "apparatus of observation") enacts an *agential cut* (in contrast to the Cartesian cut—an inherent distinction—between subject and object) effecting a separation between "subject" and "object." That is, the agential cut enacts a *local* resolution *within* the phenomenon of the inherent ontological indeterminacy. (Barad: 2003, 815; emphasis in original.)

This entangled theory positions the relationship between objects as ontologically co-determining, therefore shifting thinking beyond the body as a hegemonic entity, to one which embraces the merging of the human and non-human. Hence, the skin in this instance is not viewed as an outer covering of the body, but one that is constantly in a process of intra-acting with and through the cells with microbes and bodily critters that crawl within its morphing structures. Situating the skin in a phEmaterialist framework allows a repositioning of all bodies as having agency to affect and be affected, creating a research assemblage that is always becoming and always in process (Deleuze and Guattari: 2013). 'Becoming' is an ontological theory that weaves through all Deleuzian concepts. In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari (2013) position 'becoming' as an anti-dualist stance, a counteraction to dominant Western philosophy, through a process which stresses that it is not the make-up of the parts but the relationship between the parts that is important. This shifts the focus to what happens *within* the process, rather than the end result, as potential for enabling change. As Barad (2007) asserts, 'there are no individual agents of change' rather a complex researching assemblage that is situated as more-than the sum of its parts (393).

To situate myself within the practiceresearch assemblage as always working through problematic histories I further employ the Baradian (2014) theory of diffraction. This is a transformative pedagogical practice that can break apart hegemonic assumptions, as Barad (2014) explains,

> Diffraction is not a singular event that happens in space and time; rather, it is a dynamism that is integral to spacetimemattering. Diffractions are untimely. Time is out of joint; it is diffracted, broken apart in different directions, non- contemporaneous with itself. Each moment is an infinite multiplicity. 'Now' is not an infinitesimal slice but an infinitely rich condensed node in a changing field diffracted across spacetime in its ongoing iterative repatterning. (167)

Taking this idea of diffraction not being a single event but an 'iterative repatterning' and applying it to the colonial trope of the female nude means there cannot be a singular learning event, but a repatterning of current curriculums. This process reverberates from the point of contact and creates opportunities beyond the focus of interrogation, in this case the female nude and the skin.

As Iris van der Tuin (2014) states, 'diffraction enables showing difference *differing* in the material – semiotically entangled reality of the living present' (236). The form this repatterning takes is unknown, as it is situated in material process which is integral to phEmaterialist process.

To develop phEmaterialist ways of diffracting Western arts practice, to 'repattern' art curriculums, I scaffold understandings of arts practice through the notion of lines. This is heavily informed by Rosi Braidotti's (1994) post human theory of the nomadic, which is positioned on

> axes of differentiation such as class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, and others intersect and
> interact with each other in the constitution of subjectivity, the notion of nomad refers to the
> simultaneous occurrence of many of these at once. (4)

Using this notion of 'simultaneous occurrence', a nomadic becoming, I develop ideas around nomadic lines as a tonic for the colonial lines that have not only informed our contemporary understanding of the world, slicing up continents and binding communities, but which have also sealed and repressed the understanding of the female body (Ingold: 2007). The nomadic line in this practiceresearch activates the lines inherent in our skin to resist the erasures of age, race, disability, gender fluidity and any other form of colonial repression. This is what Braidotti (2011) calls 'freeing the activity of thinking from the hold of phallocentric dogmatism, returning thought to its freedom, its liveliness, its beauty' (8). The nomadic line also inspires a diffractive approach to drawing, reimaging overly simple in interpretations of a line (Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016) to support a reimagining of the female nude through phEminist life drawing practices. This reviewing of how we approach life drawing and the skin situates the skin as a potential space for activism, one that destabilises the colonised lines imbued throughout Western art education to form a phEmaterialist embodied pedagogy of hope (hooks: 2003).

Research context

The Western art educational context of this practiceresearch was my place of work, an all girls[2] secondary school in Southeast London. I have been an art educator for twenty years and have worked in this school for ten of those years. The school has been a supportive and inspiring place to work and is an integral part of this practiceresearch assemblage, being part of the British education system. It provides the fabric through which I challenge neoliberal constructs of education and, in the art classroom specifically, the colonial legacy of the female nude.

This practiceresearch project took place during the autumn term: September to December 2014, over approximately seven weeks. Because it was undertaken in my place of work, I had very few of the access issues that can sometimes thwart academic research projects (George: 2007). However, although I did not have issues gaining access to a school, access is a 'process', as Delamont (2016) suggests, and gaining access to a group of students on a regular basis was challenging. Through a series of negotiations with the then principal of the school, that took into account timetabling restrictions (of both the students and myself), room constraints and the impact on students' other studies and early entry examinations,[3] meant that students from a Year 9 (aged between 13-14 years old) fine art group were offered the opportunity to participate. The six students who opted into the practiceresearch were representative of the demographic of the school, which Ofsted[4] (2012) described as a 'disadvantaged area' where

> ... the proportion of girls known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. Around 85% of girls in the school are from minority-ethnic groups, with the largest groups having Black Caribbean or Black African heritages. Almost half of the girls at the school speak English as an additional language … the proportion of disabled girls and those with special educational needs is above average. (3)

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[2] Although the name of the school includes the term 'girl's' I acknowledge that this narrow interpretation of gender doesn't reflect the diverse gender fluid reality of the students who populate the school.
[3] Early entry examinations are when students sit their exams prior to the end of yr. 11, the final year of secondary education in the UK
[4] Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. It inspects services providing education and skills for learners of all ages.

The diversity of the school and of the YWAs informed the complexities of this research, and as part of a decolonising practice, issues of race, disability and sexuality automatically come to the fore. However, the research group was not selected because of their specific identities, neither were these signifiers a focus for the explorations that form this practiceresearch, rather, experiences surfaced *through* the explorations with the YWAs which then informed how the research developed. Coleman (2009) describes this as a process that

> does not *begin with* the objective of investigating the girl's bodies in terms of gender, race, class and age, but rather it traces the actualisation of the virtual. As virtualities, social and cultural categories might be, and most probably will be, actualised, but this is not to be presumed in advance. (74; emphasis in original)

I wanted the YWAs to have ownership over their own narratives, not to have narratives placed upon them (Tejeda: 2008), or presumed in advance. To fully appreciate the complexity of this statement and acknowledge the importance of these conversations in the everyday practices of education I draw attention back to the 2012 Ofsted report. When considering the terms used in the report, the colonial legacy of Britain becomes clear and highlights deeply problematic issues with the terminology used in education (as well as across society). Peter Aspinall (2020), a researcher from the University of Kent, makes this summation,

> The uncomfortable mix of ethnic and racial terms in the overarching terminology used in Britain reflects the prevailing political ideology of the state. The country's history of racialized class formation and its management by the state has led to the use of terminology that organizes the population on the basis of racialized ethnicities. (806)

Although this practiceresearch does not attend directly to educational terminology, it does sit within the educational context where this terminology is applied. The 'uncomfortable mix' of terms that Aspinall's (2020) report highlights informs the structures of the school and the problematic categorisation of students. The racialised colonial legacy inherent in these terms is mirrored across aspects of British art education, such as in the absence of women artists in history books (Vickory: 2014; Pollock: 1999; Nochlin: 2015 [1971]), the bias toward Eurocentric narratives (Araeen: 1999;

Dash:2005, 2010), the whitewashing of information in our cultural institutions (Proctor: 2020; Frances-Presse: 2018), the very positioning of the word 'art' as a Western construct (Mithlo: 2012) and the ramifications of this on how we view wider society in terms of gender, race, sexuality (Nead: 1992; Johnson: 2008; Berger: 1972; Hobson: 2018a; Marsh: 2005; Leeds Craig: 2002) and so on. The entanglements of the colonial endeavour cannot be summarised proficiently here, but needless to say, this brief account helps to situate the complexity of the context of this practiceresearch and the need to activate a decolonising process through a phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope (hooks: 2003). The form that the hooksian inspired pedagogy of hope takes in this research assemblage is through the creative methods (or 'phEminist explorations'), that serve as a constant diffractive force running through this practiceresearch. The phEminist explorations as developed with the YWAs were various sessions which supported an investigation into the decolonising of the female nude. Feeding into this enquiry was also my own creative practice, which supported a material thinking through the ideas and histories encountered in this study and helped me to consider the potential of the skin as a post human material.

PhEminist explorations: A tool for empowerment

When developing the methods or 'phEminist explorations' of this practiceresearch as a tool for empowerment, I was careful to avoid the usual phrases employed in the context of an English secondary school, where empowerment is often referred to in terms of 'pupil voice' (DfE: 2014), and it is important to note that the phEminist explorations of this practiceresearch are positioned in direct opposition to this. Pupil voice is seen as a key tool to support students to speak 'authentically', a practice that finds 'ways of working with students that enable the full expression of multiple 'voices' engaged in dialogic encounter' (Simon: 1987, 375). This not only aligns with the focus of neoliberal education systems which favour verbal forms of communication, but also perpetuates the colonial narratives that dichotomise power structures, in this instance the teacher-student binary. The pupil is *given* a voice or empowered *by* the teacher, who 'knows the object of study "better" than the students and therefore has the tools to supports the emancipation' (Ellsworth: 1989, 308). As Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) emphasises, as a white middle class teacher she is not in a position to 'help' students from diverse backgrounds find their voice. She states,

> I brought a social subjectivity that has been constructed in such a way that I have not and can never participate unproblematically in the collective process of self-definition, naming of oppression, and struggles for visibility in the face of marginalization engaged in by students whose class, race, gender, and other positions I do not share. (Ellsworth: 1989, 309)

She goes on to argue that the term 'pupil voice' is therefore a whitewashing of multiplicities within student groups. The often 'contradictory' assemblage of the student is an intersection of gender, race, class, ability and sexual orientation. The term 'pupil voice' does not

> engage with the fact that the particularities of historical context, personal biography, and subjectivities split between the conscious and unconscious will necessarily render each expression of student voice partial and predicated on the absence and marginalization of alternative voices. (Ellsworth: 1989, 312)

In the context of the English education system, pupil voice also perpetuates the idea that verbal rather than non-verbal modes of communication are the main tool of empowerment.
The creative explorations of this practiceresearch therefore support a myriad of ways to communicate, including material forms of communication that educational institutions often side-line. The creative explorations speak to the silences in our curricula, they challenge the notion of what empowered pedagogical practice looks like and offer alternative ways of communicating experiences that are often difficult to articulate. As cultural theorist and political philosopher Erin Manning (2013) describes,

> Ask a dancer to describe in language the way he just moved and he likely won't be able to do it. The movement moved him at a velocity too quick to remember in a time impossible to grasp as such. Yet the dancer's movement remembers. The movement can move again into what the dancer "himself" cannot quite hold onto: movement-moving is active in a futurity virtually impossible to articulate except through movement. (138)

Practice, as described by Manning, can be verbally 'impossible to grasp'. The phEminist explorations of this research respect this emergent embodied entanglement, supporting the

empowered act of making as a tool to diffract working with and within humanist institutions. This practiceresearch doesn't sideline linguistic contributions, but it queers the hierarchies that humanist histories have supported.

Situating the YWAs

To consider ideas of pupil empowerment from a different perspective, I share here an ethical problem that arose during the writing up of the thesis. When considering ethics in traditional institutional settings, Beauchamp and Childress (2001) define the basic ethical principles as autonomy, beneficence, and justice. The context of most Western institutions is of white, patriarchal and humanist. In a phEmaterialist sense, therefore, words such as autonomy throw up potential difficulties, or what Donna Haraway (1994) would term 'knots'. As Cressida Heyes (2000) argues, the researcher must be aware of the power relations within the group and identify their position within them to avoid imposing a set viewpoint. The issue of autonomy came to the fore in two ways, first when I was trying to position the identities of the students as a group. Although this issue did not surface when physically engaging with the students, it did emerge in the more traditional element of writing of the thesis and needing to identify them as a group. And secondly in the use of pseudonyms for each individual YWA.

Although both of these issues came to the fore after the research project had concluded in school, because the research was situated in the school where I work, I was able to reconnect with the students. To address the use of a collective term for the group a conversation ensued which sorted through various gendered terminology. The use of words such as 'girl' and 'teen' was deemed to position them as too young. 'Adolescents' was not a term they used themselves and 'students' was described as too school based. To retain the group's identity as women, to activate a gendered response to a gendered issue, and to acknowledge they are not 'old', they chose the term 'Young Women Artists' (YWAs) to describe their collective identity. The term has an obvious link to the YBAs (Young British Artists) of the 1990s' London art scene, although this connection was not made by the YWAs themselves. However, the links were a serendipitous alignment. The YBAs stood for new ways of looking at art, they were sensational, entrepreneurial, and the Tate (n.d)

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describes the period as 'a complete openness towards the materials and processes with which art can be made, and the form it can take'. This 'openness' reflected the YWAs' attitudes towards the project and was an integral position of this phEmaterialist practiceresearch. It was therefore a good solution.

The second ethical 'knot' that surfaced after the practiceresearch had concluded in school brought into question the use of pseudonyms. As is the practice with most academic research in schools, participants are given a pseudonym to protect their identity. I had originally asked each YWA to assign themselves a pseudonym of their choice; this became problematic, however, when the research extended beyond the constraints of the initial project. The Tate Gallery were creating a series of films about their archive, one of which was exploring life drawing and they wanted to include the YWAs' research from this project as part of the film. I discuss this opportunity later in the thesis, but it is important to mention here that a mismatch arose between the pseudonyms assigned in the thesis and the real names attributed to the YWAs in the film. The school's stance when working with outside agencies does not require the use of pseudonyms, and the general practice is to use the first name of the student involved, omitting their surname to protect their identity and therefore comply with safeguarding regulations. When the Tate asked to include the work of the YWAs in their film, this worked well as it protected their identity whilst acknowledging the authorship of the contribution being made as well as recognizing the school. What became problematic was that because the YWAs' work was published online, the pseudonyms used in the thesis were not only redundant but more importantly raised the question of the ownership, and agency of the participant in the research assemblage itself. As Lisa Given (2008) suggests in The Sage Encyclopedia for Qualitative Research, 'Researchers have been criticized for the overuse of pseudonyms and engaging in a form of ethical paternalism for assuming that participants must be anonymized. Many research participants do not wish to be anonymous' (n.p.n). These issues speak directly to the complex ethical considerations that emerge through 'messy' methodologies (Law: 2006); they create frictions of 'withness' and open up a dialogue which is essential in educational research in discussing the relationship between autonomy and safeguarding.

This instigated a questioning of my practice and a renegotiation of the academic process I was working within, not only because I work with creative methodologies where ownership of work needs to be protected but most importantly to protect the wishes of the artists. The general rule of applying pseudonyms as described above is therefore not always appropriate when dealing with embodied and creative methodologies and alternative ways of navigating ethical considerations are needed. On discussing this with the YWAs the general consensus was that as their artwork was part of their contribution to this thesis, anonymizing it removed their artistic ownership of the work. However, the research project also includes more personal spoken contributions, and some of the YWAs did not want their real names associated with these elements. Therefore, a more fluid approach to the ethical considerations needed to be adopted, one rule would not fit all situations. Consequently, the art works I received consent to use are credited to the YWA using the artist's first name, thus falling into line with the Tate (2015) film and school policy. However, when directly quoting a personal experience that a YWA wanted to be anonymous, I employ the general term 'YWA', so as to respect their wishes and keep the flow of the text.

Following on from these ethical considerations, the YWAs each granted me permission to use the work shown in this thesis. All the art works in the thesis have been titled by the YWAs, and all photographs of the exhibition space or of the YWAs have also been signed off by them. If in a group photograph a YWA did not want their face to be seen, then a yellow circle has been used to protect their identity. Just as the art works and photographs have remained within the YWAs' control, I have also kept as close to their spoken language as possible, and the interview transcripts have only been amended if clarity was needed to keep the flow of the text. This means as you read through their comments you also get a flavour of how they speak and sound.

Disrupting the dominance of the word

When considering the ethical 'knots' (Haraway: 1994) between the art works and the YWAs, this also prompted a questioning of how the 'practice' of this practiceresearch is 'felt' in the reading of the text. As the creative explorations provide fundamental moments of rupture in this project, as a

practiceresearch thesis, it has been hard to bring the material encounters directly into a traditional mode of academic delivery in physical form. I take note of Donna Haraway's (1994) reflection that

> Reading, no matter how active, is not a powerful enough trope; we do not swerve decisively enough. The trick is to make metaphor and materiality implode in the culturally specific apparatuses of bodily production. (62)

To disrupt the dominance of the word and create opportunities to 'swerve decisively' into the matter of this project, I include hyperlinks that connect the phEminist explorations in the thesis to the Centre for Creative Explorations (CCE). The CCE, discussed below, is the website which activates the 'practice' of this practiceresearch. Small images of the CCE logo, when situated next to chapter subheadings (example seen above), indicate when creative content is also available to explore on the CCE website, hyperlinks are then situated in the footnotes. When specific projects are cited in the text hyperlinks are also provided in the footnotes.

However, to engage with the materiality of this practiceresearch in more visceral ways I invite the reader into my sticky process of making glue skins, a material resistance the colonised female nude, as introduced earlier. Where this physical entanglement is not possible for the reader, there are visual gestures throughout the textual elements of the thesis. Small images of the shed glue skins[5] that I have created during this practiceresearch fall on the pages as the reader encounters the text. They provide what Haraway (1994) describes as a desire for a 'knotted analytical practice', where '[t]he tangles are necessary to effective critical practice' (69). The glue skins weave a Braidottian-inspired nomadic line through the thesis, supporting 'an assemblage of forces, or flows, intensities and passions that solidify in space' (Braidotti: 2006, 201). Just as the very typing of these words communicates my ideas verbally, the glue skins seek to offer a non-verbal form of communication that at once embodies the concepts of this project and also queers and

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[5] Each glue skin can be seen on the CCE website: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/7-shed-skins.html

decolonises art history through envisaging an alternative form of life drawing (Hickey-Moody: 2016).

Entangled with these nomadic glue skins are images from the creative explorations and historical art works or other source materials. The images intra-act with the text in two fundamental ways. They either directly illustrate and give context to the analysis in the text when referencing historical art works, or attend solely to the power of imagery to uncover more implicit practices and offer space for the contemplation of non-verbal communication. In the case of the latter, the images have been grouped in blocks either within a chapter or in groups as stand-alone visual chapters. Whatever the intention of the images and wherever they appear within the text, all are given a full page spread to acknowledge the equal balance between the physical making and language of the project. If, however, the art works open up deeper forms of communication when viewed as a collaboration (i.e., when seen together rather than on different pages), then art works are placed on the same page to support the visual conversation.

What is integral to the agency of the images throughout the thesis, is that they encourage new ways of thinking through the phEmaterialist methodologies explored. Whatever the intended purpose of the images in the thesis, they are there not only to support a deeper understanding of the aims of this project, but more importantly to nudge us into resistance, as the title of the thesis asserts. Necessarily, the images do not sit idly by, they are part of the creative intra-activism with which this phEmaterialist practiceresearch project is imbued (Renold and Ringrose: 2019); they offer hope beyond words, hope that lies within creative encounters to 'reconfigure what counts as knowledge' in the English educational context (Haraway: 1994, 62). The images attend to the material happenings of this practiceresearch but are also a portal into the ecosystem that has evolved from this practiceresearch, they are not static to be looked *at* and passed *over*, rather they ignite an interest that leads us *into* a 'vibrant' community' where 'vital things will rise up to meet us' (Bennett: 2010, 3). Hence, the images in this thesis have various iterations, but to ensure these explorations 'make a difference' (Haraway: 1994), they also exist in the virtual realm of the Centre for Creative Explorations (CCE).

The CCE: The 'practice' of this practiceresearch
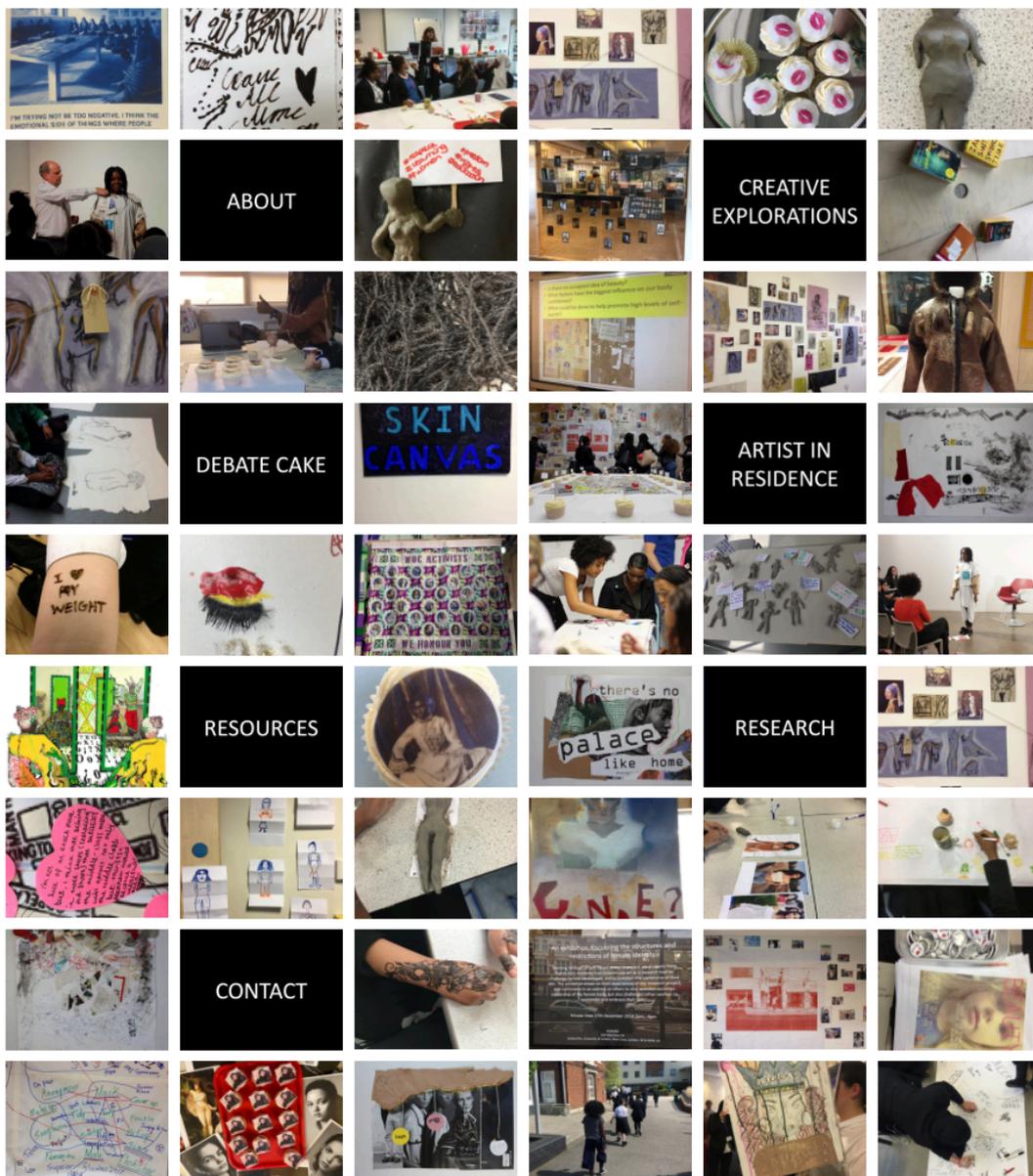
Figure 3: Stanhope (2022) The Centre for Creative Explorations web site. [Webpage]

Although the creative explorations are the 'practice' of this practiceresearch, it became apparent very early on that the matter of the project, the ideas and the creative explorations, had become tentacular and reached out beyond this specific project, developing in ways that I could not have predetermined. Therefore, constraining the creative explorations to the pages of this thesis became restrictive. This realisation led to the creation of the Centre for Creative Explorations (CEE), which now forms the 'practice' of this practiceresearch PhD (Fig.3). All the creative explorations of this PhD project can be viewed online via the CCE website[6]. However, the CCE is not just a platform for the material creations of this practiceresearch, rather it is, as Erin Manning and Brian Massumi (2014) state, a 'doing something with the doing', a 'thinking-in-action' (89). What became vital through this practiceresearch with the YWAs was the need to share the practiceresearch back into the school community, and subsequently through this sharing the CCE has grown to support various forms a creative activism and collaborations. The CCE became a malleable space that has activated the creative explorations of this project by supporting further collaborations and 'adventures' (Atkinson: 2018).

Although the subsequent explorations are not directly part of this practiceresearch, they evolved through it. I cannot position the 'practice' of this practiceresearch without this entanglement. It is a process that Dennis Atkinson (2018) explains as 'emerging from' but 'embedded within', a future oriented pedagogical process of 'that-which-is-not-yet' (2). It is this 'adventure' (Atkinson: 2018, 2), that excites this practiceresearch assemblage, activating the PhEminist Skin explorations through the adventures of future young artists. This means all the creative explorations on the CCE website are always 'doing' (Manning and Massumi: 2014). That does not mean they replicate; formed through a phEmaterialist methodology they further develop practices of collaboration that support student empowerment by bringing students, academics and/or artists together. Examples of creative explorations that have emerged from this PhEminist Skin project include: Hairytage, Body Mapping, and Shared Fragments (Fig. 4)[7]. Other creative practices that this project has inspired are: 'Debate Cake' (Fig. 6)[8] - a disruption of the usual classroom-based debate into a sharing

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[6] The Centre for Creative Explorations website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/pheminist-skins-of-resistance.html
[7] Hairytage, Body Mapping and Shared Fragments website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/explorations.html
[8] Debate Cake website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/debate-cake.html

Creative Explorations

Brining together students, artists, academics and the community
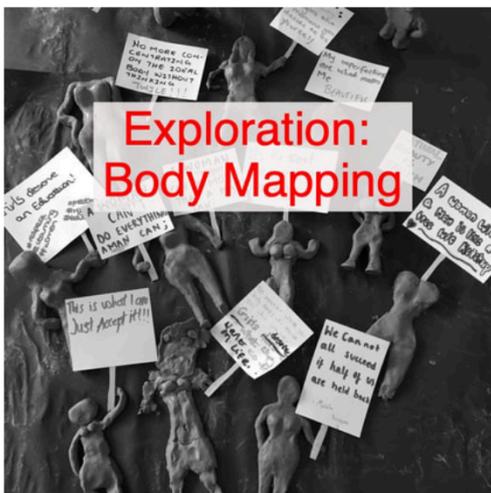
Figure 4: Stanhope (2022) Creative Explorations. [Webpage]

Artist in Residence

Supporting collaborations between artists and young people in schools

An overview:

Based in the art department at Harris Girls Academy East Dulwich, the residency encourages collaboration between artists (including all creative practices) and the students at HGAED. We invite creative practitioners who want to explore their practice in innovative ways within the context of the school and that hold young people at the heart of their projects. The residency offers interesting interventions in the CCE and the art curriculum, as well as reaching out into the community. See the links above to explore the diverse practices of the artists who have worked with us so far.

Figure 5: Stanhope (2022) Artist in Residence. [Webpage]

Debate Cake

A thinking through eating, drinking and making
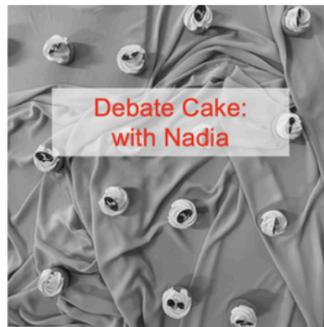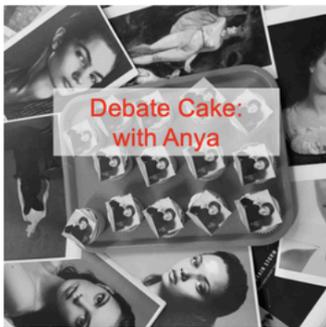
Figure 6: Stanhope (2022) Debate Cake. [Webpage]

Supporting research

Supporting creative academic research projects

Research:
Covid-19 and time

Research:
Mediating Presents

Research:
Racialising assemblages
and affective events

Research:
PROCESSIONS

Research:
Glitterworlds
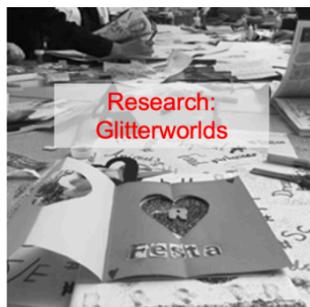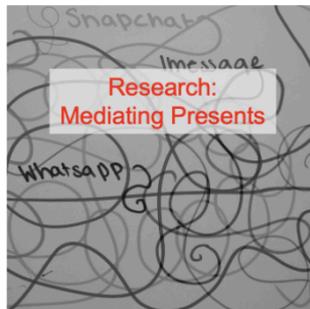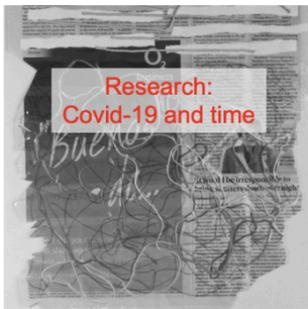
Overview

As part of the aims of the CCE we aim to bring students, academics and/or artists together
to explore issues that are relevant to the context of the school and the students.
The various research projects we have supported so far are seen below. Click on the images
above to explore each project further.

In return for supporting research projects we ask three things of academics, artists and/or
researchers:

Figure 7: Stanhope (2022) Research. [Webpage]

HOME   ABOUT   EXPLORATIONS   ARTIST IN RESIDENCE   DEBATE CAKE   RESEARCH   **RESOURCES**   CONTACT

Resources

Thinking through creative practice

Hope - Collaborative practice by Clare Stanhope

Overview:

Creative practice is a process that excites collaboration, invention and activism. Here we share resources that challenge us to think critically and that question the world around us, but most importantly bring hope for a better future. Here we share links to other **innovative resources, practices and think pieces**, with the intention that the more we connect the more we realise change can happen.

Our main intention through this sharing and reshaping of practice is to further **support the empowerment of young people** through them seeing their work on platforms other than the school. To realise the **value of their work** and how it can **contribute to wider societal conversations**. Examples of this can be found in some of the resources listed below and include the Making Sense and AGENDA resource. Other resources, such as the NSEAD anti racist resources have imagery developed by students at HGAED, in this instance the 'Hands

Figure 8: Stanhope (2022) Resources. [Webpage]

space where food and drink are eaten whilst debating issues through creative methods; 'Research' (Fig. 7)[9] - supporting academic creative research practices; 'Resources' (Fig. 8)[10] – supporting the broader conversation around creative activism and anti-racist education practices; and finally the 'Artist in Residence' (Fig. 5)[11] programme which supports a creative practitioner to engage with the school community by developing a project over one year. We are now in our third residency.

I therefore position this practiceresearch as always evolving; an entwined assemblage that constantly morphs to entangle with new possibilities. This intra-active force creates new understandings of what educational research looks like, and how creative activism can take root in the secondary art classroom. The CCE speaks to the phEmaterialist intention of 'fundamentally re-questioning what constitutes educational data' (Renold and Ringrose: 2019, 1), it is a means to activate the da(r)ta, of 'doing something with the doing' (Renold: 2018). Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) concepts of becoming and Baradian (2007) explanations of intra-action, the CCE is a place where the aims of this practiceresearch are 'put to work' (Dolphijn and van der Tuin: 2012) as a learning resource to provide entangled pedagogic encounters. Situated in the between space of academia, secondary art education, community, and the contemporary art world, is a diffraction of the neoliberal educational space, to disrupt the hegemonic structures, and to reimagine colonial heritage. As hooks asserts (1996) 'There must exist a paradigm, a practical model for social change, that includes an understanding of ways to transform consciousness that are linked to efforts to transform structures' (118). The CCE is a tool that supports the decolonising of the secondary art curriculum, not 'metaphorically' (Tuck and Yang: 2012), but as a process that actively works to dismantle it both in and outside the academy (Zavala: 2013).

Thesis structure

To respond to the nature of this practiceresearch as being always in process, each chapter is responsive to the practiceresearch questions posed whilst constantly being entangled in question

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[9] Research CCE website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/research.html
[10] Resources CCE website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/resources.html
[11] Artist in residence website link https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/artist-in-residence.html

three: How can situating the skin as a paradoxical material support a decolonising pedagogical practice for diffracting the line? The thesis is a folding and unfolding of the questions rather than a linear journey through each one in turn (Deleuze: 2006). Thereby I begin in the middle and address the main influences of the thesis as situated in question two: How can practiceresearch, informed by phEmaterialism, create pedagogies of hope? In chapter one I contextualise my evolving identity as a practiceresearcher within the context of secondary art education in England (Addison and Burgess: 2013; Atkinson: 2002, 2011, 2018). This positions the material matters of this practiceresearch and specifically aligns with question two. I discuss the friction in developing practiceresearch within a neoliberal academic institution where historically knowledge is manifested in colonial, heteronormative, linear narratives which are solidified in the separation and hierarchy of subjects (DfE: 2011, 2013; Gove: 2009; Araeen: 1999; Atkinson: 2011, 2018). I also explore my evolving artistic practice and how it entwines with and through my emerging identity as practiceresearcher. In chapter two I fold back to the first research question, visually exploring the Western art historical trope of the female nude (Nead: 1992; Betterton: 1987; Benthian: 2002). I offer a general selection of art works created between the 1500s and the 1900s, a time when European colonisation was shackling much of the world (Olusoga; 2016). The repetition of the types of body chosen in these art works and the poses of the women in the paintings provides a visual insight into the learnt narratives perpetuated by the female nude, which provides context for the YWAs' experiences of female identity that triggered this research. This visual chapter precedes further conversation in chapter three which acts as a literature review. This chapter explores the development of the regulation of the female body through gendered and racist discourse of art history. As this is a vast history, I focus on four main areas that concern this practiceresearch: the development of a western gendered and colonial understanding of the female body as perpetuated through art, medicine, psychoanalysis and colonialism. I entangle these colonial histories with contemporary media imagery (Hobson: 2018a, 2018b; Gilman: 1985; Nead: 1992; Benthian: 2002; Betterton: 1987) and again draw out the gendered and raced narratives. This chapter supports the later discussion which entangles these histories with the understanding of creative practice in the contemporary art classroom.

Chapter four returns to question two where I situate phEmaterialism as the decolonising methodology of this project. Through a discussion of the critiques of new materialism and post humanism, I critically entwine phEmaterialism with anti-racist and decolonial theories to situate the alternative pedagogies employed and the ethical considerations of developing a phEmaterialist practiceresearch (Renold: 2018; Puig de la Bellacasa: 2017). I then introduce the context of this practiceresearch, the young women artists (YWAs) who collaborated with this phEminist project, and the methods which were formed through four phEminist explorations: PhEminist mapping, using experience mapping to share individual experiences; PhEminist collaging, reacting to media images through art materials and processes; PhEminist disruptions of the female nude, an informal discussion of the female nude past and present, and a PhEminist life drawing class.

This then leads into an analysis in chapter five of how these histories segregated the female skin in terms of gender and race to construct an idealised female form, and how this emerged through the bodies of the YWAs in the contemporary art classroom. I specifically discuss this in terms of drawing and what I term the colonised line. I situate the drawn line through the Freudian (2005 [1905]) psychoanalytic theory of the castration complex, which is understandably crucial in learnt western narratives of the female body, but which interestingly, I argue, has also supported the gendering of art history and the desire for the perfect drawing (Ingold: 2007; Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016; Atkinson: 2002). To analyse these gendered histories of drawing, I discuss the first part of the PhEminist life drawing exploration to situate the colonised line (or what art historian Marsha Meskimmon and art educationalist Phil Sawdon (2016) define as a 'closed line'. I trace the colonised line back through the ages to the ancient Greeks to examine the ways in which drawing is still seen in the classroom today and the claustrophobic influence this history has on young artists creative becomings.

Over chapters six and seven I address question three: How can situating the skin as a paradoxical material support a decolonising pedagogical practice for diffracting the line? At the same time, I return to the second practiceresearch question, where I situate a phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope more specifically in the explorations undertaken by the YWAs (Renold: 2018; Renold and

Ringrose: 2019; hooks: 1994, 2003). Chapter six is a visual chapter exhibiting the YWAs' life drawings from the phEminist life drawing exploration and offers space to reflect upon the arguments made in chapter five, before unpicking how the colonised line can be redrawn through the use of a variety of strategies that I discuss in chapter seven. Chapter seven explores how the feminine skin of the female nude can be decolonised through creative explorations that activate the line that informs the phEminist skins of resistance as explored in chapters eight and nine. This discussion draws on the phEminist life drawings exhibited in chapter six, the phEminist media collaging exploration and a return to my practice of glue skinning to create multiple ways of diffracting the colonised skin to support a pedagogical assemblage of alternative becomings (Connor: 2004; Hickey-Moody, Palmer and Sayers: 2016; Deleuze and Guattari: 2013; Coleman: 2009). I analyse diffractive methods (Barad: 2014; Hickey-Moody, Palmer, Sayers: 2016; Renold: 2018, Hickey-Moody and Page: 2016) as a tool to disrupt colonial and patriarchal narratives of the female nude and diffract the colonised line or 'closed line' used in drawing (Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016). Chapter eight is the final visual exploration and is an opportunity to spend time with the images from the Perfect Exhibition. This then feeds into chapter nine which examines the culmination of the YWAs' practiceresearch through the collaborative act of creating an exhibition. The Perfect Exhibition situates phEminist ways of thinking about the female nude, life drawing and the YWAs' own future becomings to formulate a phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope. Through the intra-actions that occur in this space I situate the emergence of phEminist skins of resistance.

Chapter one

Becoming practiceresearcher

My experience of developing a critical praxis (Freire: 1996) that eventually evolves into a phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope (Renold and Ringrose: 2019; hooks: 2003), has been nurtured through creative researching practices that draw from all aspects of my life. My histories, experiences and encounters (personal and professional), all intra-act and agitate within the context of British colonial histories and the neoliberal English secondary education system in which I was educated and where I now work (Araeen: 2013; Addison and Burgess: 2003, 2013; Atkinson: 2002, 2011, 2018). In this chapter I begin to underpin how the process evolved, providing the context needed to attend to the second research question: How can practiceresearch, informed by phEmaterialism, create pedagogies of hope. Here I discuss the friction experienced by developing as a practiceresearcher in this context, where knowledge historically manifests through colonial, heteronormative linear narratives which are solidified through the separation and hierarchy of subjects (Addison and Burgess: 2003; Atkinson: 2002; Ringrose: 2013; Kelly: 2001; Francis 2006; Archer et al: 2010). I position my ever-evolving 'praxis' (Freire: 1996) as a decolonising assemblage (Tejeda: 2008; Deleuze and Guattari: 2013), a way of thinking through materials to agitate ontological ways of knowing and/or becoming (Deleuze and Guattari: 2013; Ringrose and Renold: 2019; Hickey-Moody and Page: 2018). It is an assemblage based in encounters, emergent and fundamentally still-in-process, a force to activate and empower young people to refigure their future possibilities. I discuss how this practiceresearch evolves from student experience with the student being central to the research. This grew from my MA research which developed critical pedagogies that blurred student teacher boundaries (Stanhope: 2011a) with the intention to reposition power structures to support and enable empowerment (Atkinson: 2002; Freire: 1987, 1996, 1997; hooks: 1994, 2003).

To deepen understanding of the phEminist explorations developed in collaboration with the YWAs that provide the focus for this study, I share some of my material explorations that fed into this PhD project - creative endeavours that supported a pedagogical praxis to disrupt patriarchal and colonial narratives of the female body. I then specifically situate this project and discuss how this

practiceresearch evolved from uncomfortable experiences of a life class held in 2011. This chapter therefore explores the wider assemblage of that which permeates the rest of the thesis, and subsequently provides the matter through which I pay attention to everyday experiences in the classroom. These multi-diverse experiences therefore sit both within this specific research but also extend beyond it, a continuous evolution of a practice that I position as 'hopeful' (Freire: 1997; hooks: 2003).

The neoliberal and colonial context of English secondary education

Neoliberalism is defined by educational feminist Bronwyn Davies and her co-author David Bansel (2007) as,

> the transformation of the administrative state, one previously responsible for human well-being, as well as for the economy, into a state that gives power to global corporations and installs apparatus and knowledges through which people are reconfigured as productive economic entrepreneurs of their own lives. (248)

Although I have a long history of working within a neoliberal educational context, it was with the change of British Government in 2010 that the educational landscape shifted dramatically. An emphasis on reconfiguring the education system to create one in which students are positioned as 'productive economic entrepreneurs' became the focus for the then education secretary Michael Gove. Gove's vision of a 'world class education system' which would 'equip [young people] to win the global race' (Gove quoted in Adams: 2013) emphasised academic competition and monetary success on a global scale. This emphasis on 'economic entrepreneurs' is what Jessica Ringrose (2013) identifies as a repositioning of the student as a unit of neoliberal success, where 'subjectivity is re-constituted in economic terms, where market values and commodification thoroughly saturate the construction of self and other' (3). Ringrose (2013) discusses how learners are deemed 'economic units (or machines)' whose endeavour should be the production of the future nation state. This shift towards learners as 'economic units' is prevalent in the changes to the curriculum made by Gove in 2013, in which he adopted linear examination routes deemed to be more 'rigorous' (Gove: 2014). This shift turned the curriculum into elements of consumption to

drive the student towards the desired outcome of monetary success, whereby the learner becomes a product of their individual ambition for transformation, reinvention, and self-perfection (Ringrose: 2013, 3; Francis and Skelton: 2005, 2). The changes to the curriculum manifested in the removal of coursework components to focus on the end-of-course examinations. This was posited as a more 'demanding, more fulfilling and more stretching' curriculum (Gove, quoted in Adams: 2013).

The neoliberal and post-colonial constructs of this revised English educational system focused attention on the dichotomies between 'academic' versus 'non-academic', which entails a perception of some subjects as 'soft' versus those that are 'hard', or to put it another way, subjects perceived to have economic value versus those that do not (Gove: 2009, 2014; Morgan: 2016; BBC news: 2011; Garner: 2014). This division of subjects into Cartesian ideologies of the masculine minded 'hard' academic subjects against the feminised embodied 'soft' subjects of the creative arts informed what was seen as valuable in the current educational system. It constituted the basis for continued attacks on arts subjects, from Gove's introduction of the Ebacc (2009, 2014), to damning statements made by the next education secretary Nicki Morgan, who suggested that taking an arts subject would limit future life (Morgan: 2016), which led to ten years of funding cuts (Harvey: 2016; Wheele: 2021). It is therefore no surprise that there has been a thirty-eight percent decline in arts GCSE entries and a twenty-nine percent decline in arts A' Level entries between 2010 and 2019 (Cultural Learning Alliance: 2019; see also NSEAD: 2017, 2018). It is now a privilege to take an arts subject at higher education and not only, as Addison and Burgess (2013) argue, is this a 'reactionary failure to acknowledge one hundred and fifty years of art education' (1), it also completely ignores the growth of the creative industries and the seismic shift in human and non-human technological advancements (UNESCO: 2013; Deloitte: 2020).

Colonial and racist narratives

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) was thus introduced with an emphasis on 'rigour' in the curriculum (Gove: 2014). The EBacc consists of English, maths, science, a language and a humanities subject, which Nicholas Addison and Lesley Burgess (2013) have argued is a replica of the 1866 Victorian curriculum, which 'regresses to a set of subjects designed to fortify the British

Empire' (1). Alongside this regression of subject offer is a more insidious and racialised focus where Eurocentric colonial narratives become more apparent. Colonisation is defined by Chilisa (2020) as

> a brutal process through which two thirds of the world experienced invasion and loss of territory accompanied by the destruction of political, social, and economic systems, leading to external political control and economic dependence on the West … It also involved loss of control of ownership of their knowledge systems, beliefs, and behaviors and subjection to overt racism, resulting in the captive or colonized mind.' (7)

The colonised mind was originally discussed by Franz Fanon (2021[1967]) who highlighted how historically marginalised groups have had their heritage stripped from them and replaced by Eurocentric world views. This process occurs not only through education systems in colonised lands (Chilisa: 2020), but also occurs in the coloniser's own education systems, by positioning Western systems of research as the dominant points of reference (Mirza: 1992, 2009, 2014; Araeen: 2013; Dash: 2005). As Braidotti (2013b) asserts, Eurocentrism is more than simply an attitude, it 'is a structural element of our cultural practice, which is also embedded in both theory and institutional and pedagogical practices' (2). Such practices were heightened when Gove restricted subject matter to what he deemed '"celebrate[ed] the distinguished role of these islands in the history of the world" and portray Britain as "a beacon of liberty for others to emulate"' (Gove, cited in Higgins: 2011). This meant texts that dealt with empire or shared diverse heritage became optional units in the curriculum and that black and Asian British history was side-lined in mainstream education (Leach, Voce and Kirk: 2020).

Teacher Standards (DfE: 2011) became imbued with the drive to teach 'British Values', and was another 'structural element' that embedded Eurocentric and colonial narratives more deeply in the English curriculum. When giving one of her first speeches as Chief Inspector of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman (2017) discussed British values as follows,

> The active promotion of British values' means giving young people a real civic education. The sort of education that teaches young people not just what British values are, but how

they were formed, how they have been passed down from generation to generation and how they make us a beacon of liberalism, tolerance and fairness to the rest of the world. (n.p.n)

The focus on 'not just what British values are, but how they were formed' stood out to me as a point of interest. To understand how these values were formed would surely mean attending to British colonial histories and needed a discussion around the residue of these histories that still pervades English curriculums (Mirza: 1992, 2009, 2014; Mirza and Meetoo: 2012; Youdell and Armstrong: 2011; Harris: 2004; Connolly: 1998; Shain: 2003; Wright: 2005; Phoenix: 2010). This was of particular interest to me as I had grown up in a small town in the greater Manchester region, an area shaped by the industrial revolution. I grew up well-versed in this heritage, my links to the cotton mills through my paternal ancestors' labours and therefore the plight of the working poor very much a narrative of my early childhood. Alongside these personal narratives, I was also educated on the rise of socialism, trade unions and workers' rights (Engels: 2021; Aitken: 1996, Hall: 1999). Regular visits to Quarry Bank Mill, a working cotton mill which is now maintained by the National Trust, physically embedded these histories through the deafening sounds, smells and stories of the harsh conditions of such labour.

This education provided me with a proud ancestry and clear moral indicators of political and social ontologies. It was, however, not the material substance of these histories that later came under scrutiny but what was absent from this education. The fact that the fabric my town was so proud of producing (cotton) was tied to the trans-Atlantic slave trade was missing from the narrative of the museum and from my education which left a gaping hole in the socialist foundations of my heritage. To put this gaping hole into context,

> In the first half if the nineteenth century it was possible for the slaves in the Southern states [of America] to spend most of their lives producing cotton that stoked Britain's Industrial Revolution. By the time of America's civil War in 1861 almost two million slaves laboured in the cotton fields, and New Orleans was linked to Liverpool by a ceaseless flow of slave-produced cotton. (Olusoga: 2016, 26)

Liverpool directly fed the cotton mills of the Northwest, including the mills in my hometown. As historian David Olusoga explains, ignoring these facts results in 'the whitewashing of British history', which 'amounts to a cultural blind spot about these chapters from our past' (26). The words of art historian Alice Proctor (2020) particularly resonate here, when she says, 'It is hard to hear that the things you have been taught and have taken for granted about your national history are not necessarily true' (11). This erasure of histories from our cultural narrative disempowers all of us by removing responsibility and subsequently affirms the colonial ideologies in these histories.

This promotes an historical 'blindness' where the erasure of history is perpetuated through the 'authority of tradition' (Buck-Morss: 2010, 70). Political power, which absolutely denies and refuses to lead this conversation, which is necessary if we are to come to terms with the country's colonial past, 'continues nostalgically to celebrate the glories of colonialism, and stubbornly opposes any attempt to transform Britain into a racially equitable post-colonial society' (Araeen: 2013, 109). This nostalgia is further evidenced in a YouGov poll (Dahlgreen: 2014) which suggested that forty-four percent of British people are proud of the history of colonialism and the British Empire, even though the history of the British Empire is not widely taught in schools (Stone: 2016). Consequently, when Gove (2009), former Secretary of State for Education, argued for the right of every child to access their 'cultural inheritance', the problem was to whose cultural inheritance he was referring? As Araeen (2013) states, 'It is common knowledge that what is being taught as art history in Britain is racially constructed in favour of the white race and at the expense of those who are not' (107). The curriculum which claims to diminish the chronological gaps in British histories, does so from a white perspective, being culturally selective, and in doing so further pushes the diverse and entwined colonial heritages to the educational side lines (Dash: 2005, 2010; Araeen: 2013; Doy: 2015; Olusoga: 2016).

While the question of exactly who our curriculums privilege is a fundamental one, and a shift of perspective is essential for a decolonising process, as Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021) argue, it isn't simply about shifting focus from the colonisers to the colonised. A deeper more entwined understanding is needed to reform the embedded views of colonisation, as they state,

> The critical pedagogy of decolonization consists of transforming our colonized views and holding alternative knowledges. While decolonization theories related to Indigenous perspectives are at the forefront … the oppression of colonization has broad implications. (Thambinathan and Kinsella: 2021, 2)

For Smith (2021), the broad implications of colonialism involve a 'process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels'. She argues that one of these levels is 'concerned with having more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices' (Smith: 2021, 22). In the context of art education, one example can be seen through the repetitive narratives that oppress certain bodies within art history, the broader implications of this also include the gendered, sexist, ageist, ableist, heteronormative narratives that are sedimented and perpetuated through this complex history. When we consider this history in the context of this practiceresearch and the students who populate my classrooms, then decolonisation is not simply about privileging the practices of global majorities[12] (Campbell-Stephens: 2021) as this approach also risks essentialising the experiences of indigenous peoples (Kuokkanen: 2000a). There is consequently much debate about whether decolonisation is even possible if the means to dismantle it are created by Western scholars using colonial, Eurocentric paradigms (Chalmers: 2017; Kuokkanen: 2000). As Audre Lorde (2018) affirms 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house'. To confront these issues there are calls for new paradigms to be co-produced in collaboration with indigenous scholars (Held: 2019; Rigney: 1999; Saini: 2012), and for paradigms to be radically reinvented, to quantify them within Western academic institutions (Santos: 2001).

Considering decolonial practices in reference to this practiceresearch, and the histories I have shared above, numerous questions arise. As a white British educator how do I pay attention to complex histories that I am still unlearning? How do I support students from diverse backgrounds, including students from white heritage as well as former British colonies, to feel empowered to

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[12] The term 'global majorities' is a collective term that acknowledges that people who have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities' are part of global community that represents approx. 80% of the global population. It is a term that seeks to decolonise Eurocentric academic language which centres around whiteness.

question these histories when they are in an educational system that actively shuts down such conversations? And in terms of art education, taking into account my own position of (re)learning much of my presumed knowledge from my own education, how can I ensure I am not perpetuating entrenched colonial narratives through my curriculums? To respond to such questions, a decolonising pedagogical process in the context of this practiceresearch must shift the traditional dominating stance of the teacher as 'imparter' of knowledge (DfE: 2011) to a co-constituted relationship, based on collaboration. This process of unlearning the usual dynamics of teacher-student hierarchies was activated during my MA in Artist Teacher and Contemporary Practice at Goldsmiths University in 2006.

An evolving praxis

Art educationalist Jeff Adams (2007) describes the development of a beginning teacher to professional teacher from the position of artist as a 'struggle'. For me the struggle came when I began to critically engage with the educational institution, wanting to find my place within it. On starting the MA, I had been teaching for two years, and had built on my PGCE experience, in which I had started to explore the possibilities of introducing contemporary practice in the classroom. The MA focused on the relationship between my teaching practice and my art practice. The 'Artist-teacher' is a term often employed to situate such a relationship (Adams: 2003, 2007; Hyde: 2007; Page: 2012a; Thornton: 2011; Brass and Coles: 2014; Hoekstra: 2015; Stanhope: 2011b), described by Thornton (2005) as an arts educator who makes their 'own artwork outside of their teaching' and who is 'committed' to this 'dual practice' (167). The reason I was drawn to this course was to revitalise my arts practice after working as a scenic artist where my role focused mainly on fulfilling the brief created by the set designer. I felt that to be an effective teacher I needed to reinstate myself as an artist. I was also inspired by the contemporary arts practice encouraged throughout my teacher training, which I saw as a tool to start disrupting the histories I have discussed above. As Adams (2003) discusses, the aim of such courses is to support and sustain creative practice so that 'teachers can improve their effectiveness as teachers by maintaining and refreshing their creative activity as producers' (185). My initial focus was just this, to be a 'producer' of art, however, as I progressed further on the MA course, I became increasingly

interested in how my art practice fed into the classroom in a more organic way; I was inspired by Etienne Wenger's (1998) ideas of 'communities of practice'. I began to create opportunities for working collaboratively and developed projects that actively promoted art as integral to education across subjects and pupil need, particularly in a school where the arts were valued only when they supported the school's data targets (Stanhope: 2011b).

As this pedagogical practice developed, I discovered the work of Irwin and de Cosson (2004), who formulated the term 'a /r/tographer', as 'a visual/textual methodology of living inquiry through the arts' (68). This extension of the artist teacher into researcher was coined 'A/R/Tography', and as Irwin (2014) explains, entwines the 'theoria, praxis, and poesis, or theory/research, teaching/learning, and art/making'. Irwin (2014) positions this resistance to the dichotomous and preferential treatment of theory over practice in educational establishments as one which asserts 'a more complex and intertextuality and intratextuality of categories' (28). I found this articulation empowering as it gave me the support structures to resist the labelling of the subject as 'soft' or non-academic and helped me to find my focus within problematic institutions. As Irwin and de Cossen (2004) suggest, this practice 'encourages thirdness, an in-between space that exists between and among categories' (28). It was through this early research, finding 'an in-between space' that my focus also expanded into researching the possibilities of blurring the traditional student-teacher relationship (Page: 2012a; Adams: 2007; Atkinson: 2002; Stanhope: 2011b). As Tara Page (2012a) suggests, 'I can only under-stand who I am as teacher, in relation to the learner' and becoming an educator in a neoliberal climate actively 'call[s] upon teachers and students to occupy particular positions in relation to one another, resulting in the acquisition of an identity labelled either 'teacher' or 'learner'' (70). As my research evolved, so too did the entanglement of teacher/learner identities, which opened-up interesting possibilities for enabling creative spaces that positioned the student as an agent of their own empowerment (Stanhope: 2011a). This was a direct reaction against the then new teacher standards (DfE: 2011) that perceived the teacher as the 'imparter' of knowledge, an embodiment of Freire's (1996) banking theory where students are seen merely as receptacles to be dutifully filled by the teacher.

As I have mentioned above, I had undertaken the MA course to reinvigorate my art practice and embed it in my pedagogical practice, but as I had also recently become a mother it was also to reassert my identity in this new role. At the start of the MA, my focus was around exploring these different facets of my identity as separate entities. The more I became embroiled in the MA course the more I tried to unpick and separate these identities of mother, artist, and teacher to try to make sense of each one. It took me the three years of the MA to finally realise that this wasn't possible. On reading Page's (2012a) account of her journey with her practice drew many similarities,

> For a long time I viewed my research, my travelling, my teaching and my art practice as separate but parallel paths that may have occasionally crossed, and depending on where I was and what I was doing, one went forward in leaps and bounds and the others stopped. However, more recently and through this process of self-reflection I realise, that there is no separation or fragmentation. All my paths or perceptions of self- be they teacher, traveller, artist, researcher, learner, are all bundled together and are overlapping and interrelated like a knot; I am each and I am all of them. (69)

Page's articulation of her journey repositions the 'struggle' that Adams (2003) highlights, and instead materialises through the acceptance of the intra-relationship there is between all parts of our identities (Barad: 2007). This understanding allowed me to view practice as an interrelated knot, holding all aspects of my life as an ever-evolving assemblage that fed into and nourished the other (Deleuze and Guattari: 2013).

Creative explorations: Life mapping[13]

Two material explorations that supported this journey to an intra-related praxis during my MA were: 'Moment Mapping' (Figs. 9 and 10) and 'The insignificant insignificant' (Figs. 11 and 12). In a series of small books I mapped the journeys of my days over the course of a year. In 'Moment Mapping' each page is a linear memory map containing a day's travel. Layer after layer of pages create a

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[13] Life mapping CCE website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/6-life-mapping.html

visualisation of my autobiography: going to work, cycling to nursery with my daughter, going shopping, to school or to college, interacting with people I encountered, strangers I passed on the street and so on. The 'insignificant insignificant' emerged in conjunction with Moment Mapping and is also a series of books created over a few months, but this time realised in written form. Lines of words capturing fragments of remembered parts of my day, such as seeing a bird fly by, hearing a snippet of a conversation on the bus, watching a dog run across the park, insignificant moments, but moments that also form substantial parts of our lives, and that cut across all aspects of a lived experience. Embodied drawings of my life.

Although this work contemplated the weaving of my daily existence, the making of 'Moment Mapping' and the 'insignificant insignificant' (Figs. 9-13) were very much focused on my relationship with my daughter, who was at that time just starting her first year at primary school (aged four). This led to an interest in the work of Mary Kelly (1999), in particular her piece entitled 'Post-Partum document' which mapped her relationship with her son in a similar way through a process of documentation. Nappy stains, food stains, all carefully collected and documented, contemplating early childhood development and the mother child relationship. Kelly (1999) explored these themes in terms of psychoanalysis, and specifically Sigmund Freud's (2005 [1905]) theories of the symbolic castration complex, which can be summarised in his belief that it is a boy's view that his father is his rival in terms of wanting to possess the mother and fulfill her desire. Through his prevention of incest, the father commits a form of symbolic castration on the son, whose attention is diverted to other women to replace his mother. Jacques Lacan (2006 [1966]) elaborates on Freud's theory of castration as follows,

> Clinical work shows us that the test constituted by the Other's desire is decisive, not in the sense the subject learns by it whether or not he has a real phallus, but in the sense that he learns his mother does not have one. (582)

When discussing this from a girl's perspective Freud (2005 [1905]) states that on realising she does not have a penis, a girl blames the mother and transfers her affection to the father. This translates into penis envy, which Freud (2005 [1905]) believes the girl never fully recovers from. The Oedipus

complex and the castration complex for the girl are resolved into one. The girls desire for the penis, Freud believes, is concluded in one way through motherhood; the baby becomes a symbolic equation of - penis equals child. Kelly (1999) further explains this as follows,

> According to Freud, castration anxiety for the man is often expressed in fantasy as the loss of arms, legs, hair, teeth, eyes or the penis itself. When he describes castration fears for the woman, this imaginary scenario takes the form of losing her loved objects, especially her children; the child is going to grow up, leave her, reject her, perhaps die.' (xx)

I found obvious visual connections to Freud's (2005 [1905]) symbolic castration theory within my practice, which I came to understand as expressing the fear of time passing, particularly my time with my daughter. Collecting moments as if they were objects was an attempt to trap memories before they disintegrated into the matter of my life, a form of memorialising through mapping the moments with my daughter before the inevitable and feared 'rejection'.

As I expanded my research, inspired by Kelly's (1999) feminist interpretation of Freud (2005 [1905]) and Lacan's (2006 [1966]) theories of the castration complex, I became interested in in Judith Butler's (2006) arguments about gendered performance and my own 'fabricated reality' as woman, wife and mother. Using textile techniques became a metaphorical tool to materialise ideas of 'fabrication'. I was interested to learn that the etymology of the word 'textile' in old French descends from 'tistre', which means tissue (Ingold: 2007, 61) and has obvious links with the body. 'Internal Mapping' (Fig. 14) explored these connections between gender and performance, material and metaphor, mother and child. From heat responsive fabric I stitched the route of my move from Manchester down to London, a journey that was the reverse of my mother's, forty years before. The M1 came to represent the ultimate 'rejection', my mother leaving a young family in London due to complicated circumstances and serious postnatal depression, and then my 'rejection' of her in moving back down to London; a cyclical gendered performance of loss. However, through the nature of the fabric, which disintegrated through warmth and touch, and the embedded signifiers of the word 'textile', the map became tissue, became flesh, the roads becoming arteries, a life blood to an embodied experience of mother and daughter. As this textile map morphed and changed

Figure 9: Stanhope (2009) One day from Moment Mapping series. [Series of 3 books]

Figure 10: Stanhope (2009) Book from Moment Mapping series. [Series of 3 books]
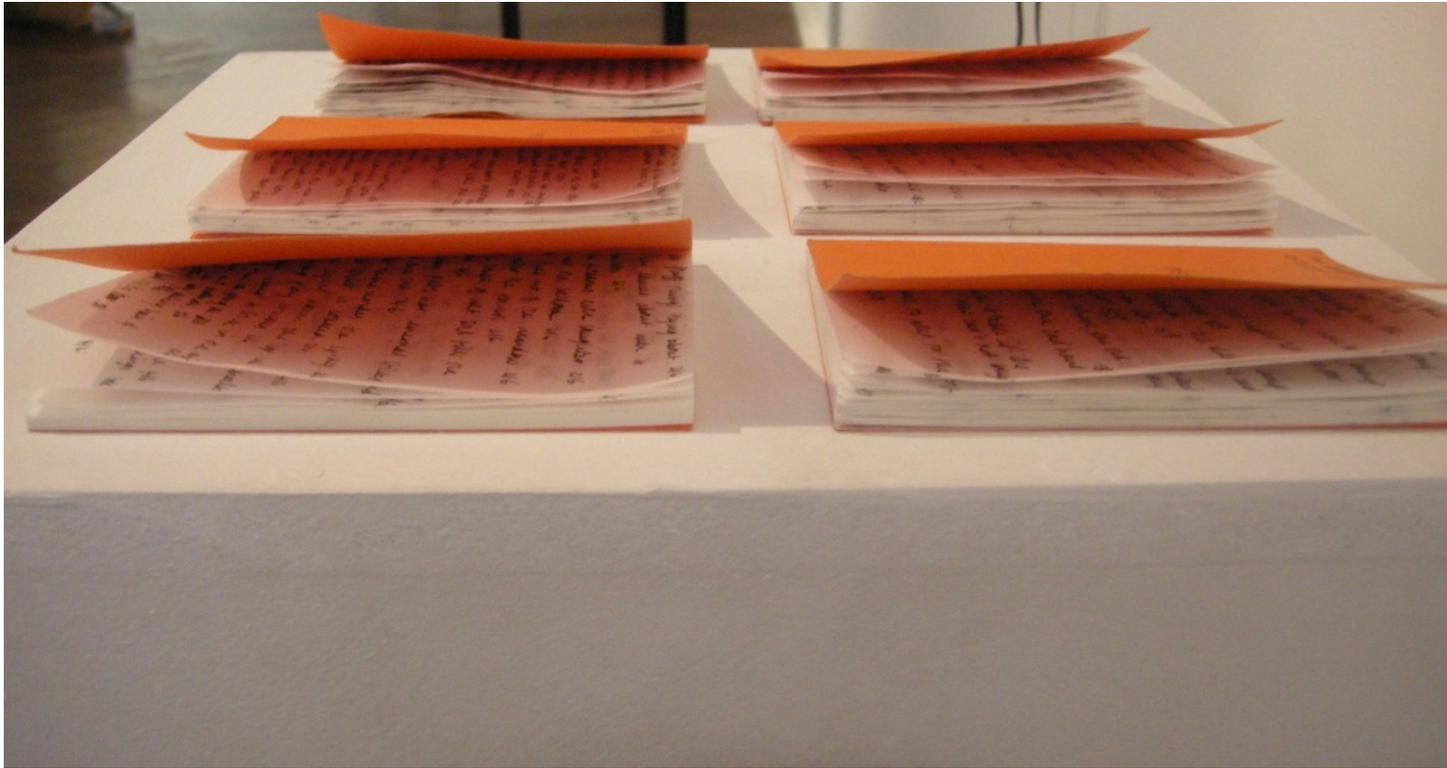
Figure 11: Stanhope (2009) insignificant insignificant. [Series of 6 books]
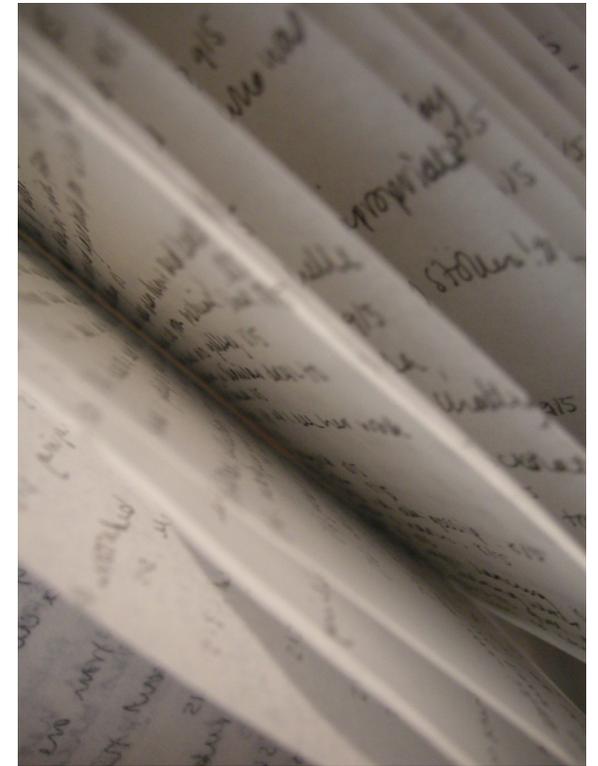
Figure 12: Stanhope (2009) Inside view from insignificant insignificant. [Series of 6 books]

Figure 13: Stanhope (2009) Installation view of insignificant insignificant and Moment mapping exhibition. [Sound and book series]
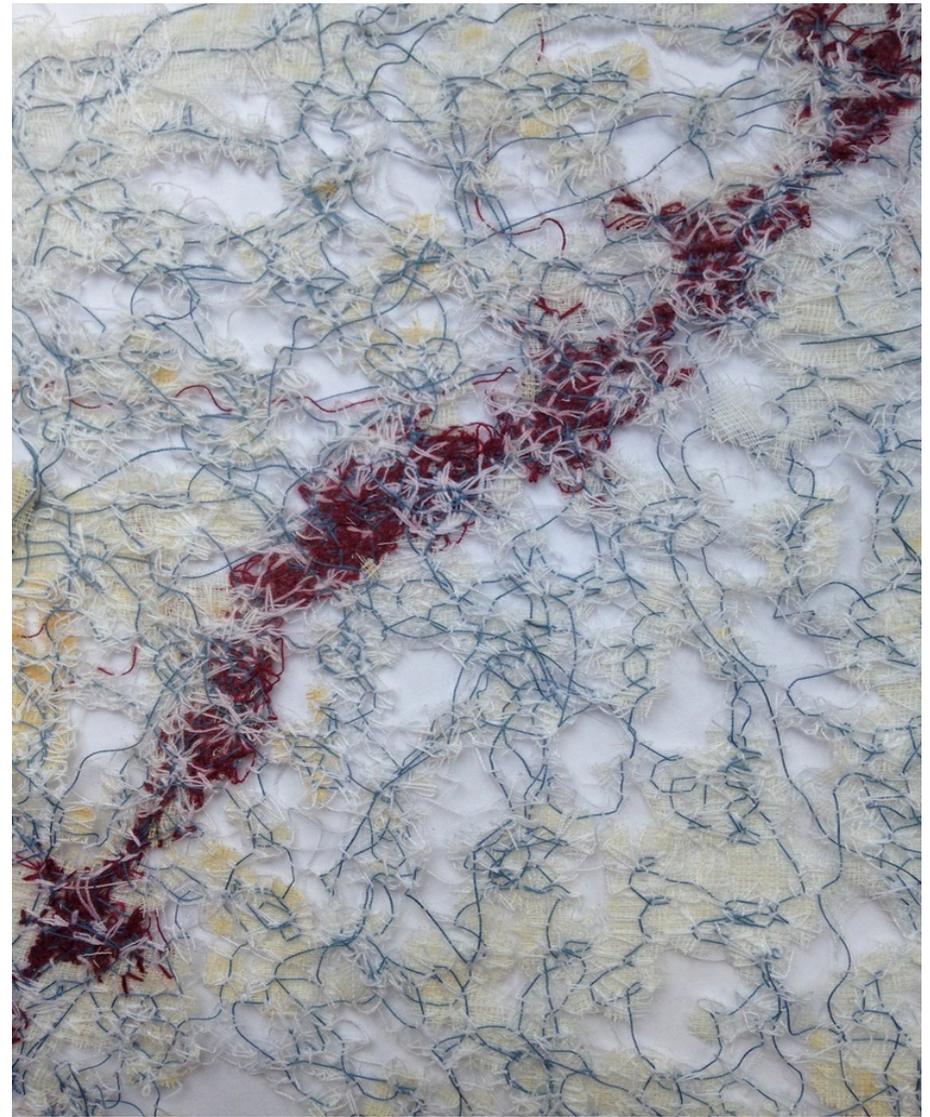
Figure 14: Stanhope (n.d.) Internal mapping 1 and 2. [Textile maps]

Figure 15: Stanhope (n.d.) Skin pricking. [Pin prick drawing]
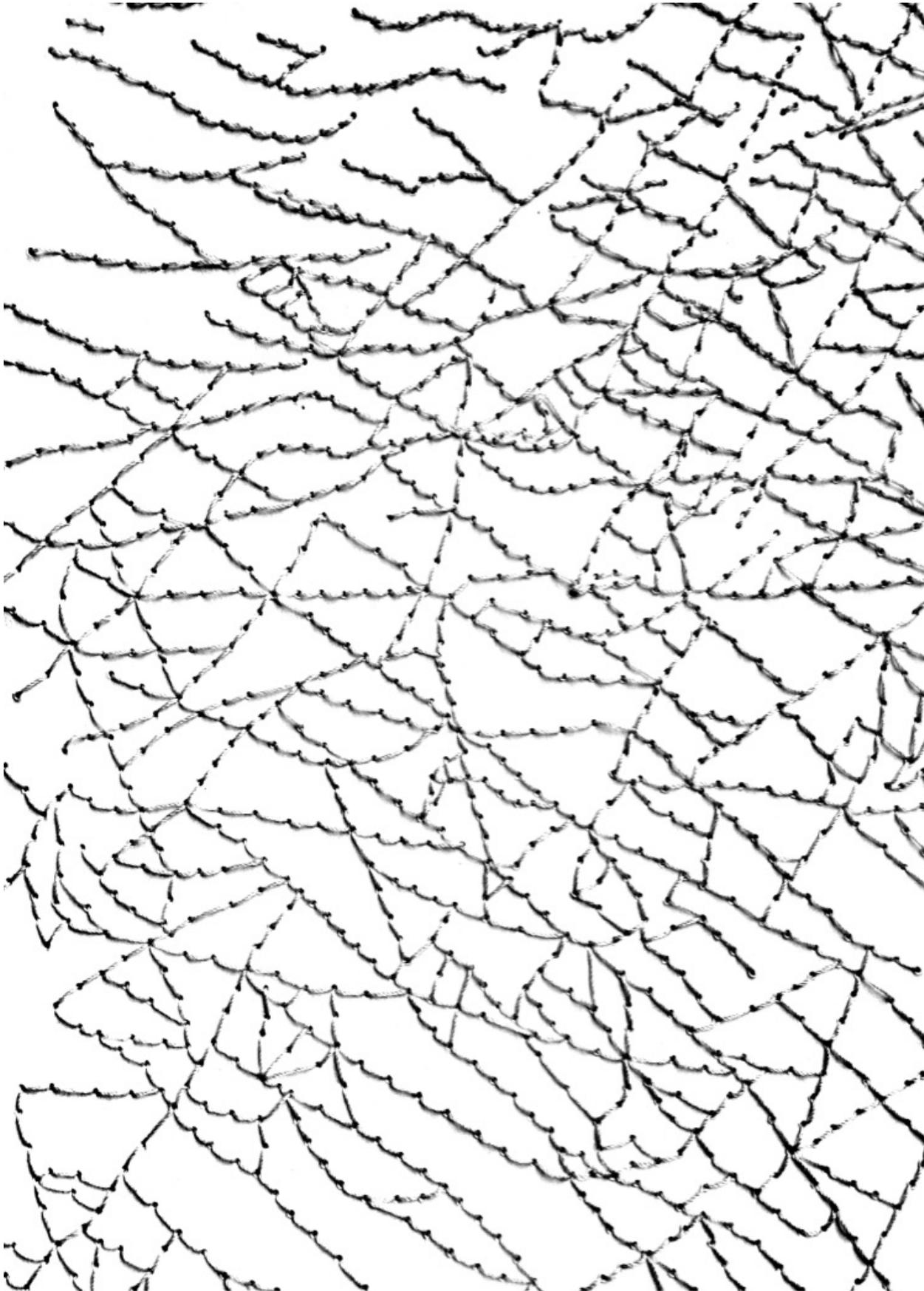
Figure 16: Stanhope (n.d.) Stitched skin. [Stitched drawing]

through heat and touch, I began to reconsider the conceptual nature of this work. I hadn't given the fabric much thought beside a visual motivation, drawn to the 'magic' of the material. But as the artwork evolved it suggested not only a diffraction of mapping practices due to the nature of the material's shedding, but also a diffraction of the body represented by the fabric. The bits of fabric constantly shed by this artwork, even now, years after I originally made it, shifted my thinking about the Freudian (2005 [1905]) gendered analysis of the female body and experience. The disintegration of the fabric simply altered the narrative. What felt like a trapped cyclical relationship defined by loss was disrupted by the fabric itself.

Each of the art works discussed above made obvious connections with western mapping practices as visual and physical forms of colonisation. This led to an initial questioning of how else the line has been used as a tool for colonisation (Ingold: 2007); links between mapped lines led to an interest in the lines inherent in our skin and the colonisation of the body. Interestingly, the etymology of the word 'line' also has its roots in textiles, deriving from the Latin 'linea' which originally meant thread. This constant pull of my practice back into textiles, a material Proustian rush that pulls the threads of cotton entwined in my heritage into my present practice is not lost on me. My heritage further entwined with the gendered fabrication of women's realities through textiles crafts; as Rozsika Parker (1984) states, 'few men would risk their sexual identity by claiming a right to the needle' (81). These complex histories were also exacerbated by a colonial lens which enforced hierarchies across global practices in terms of what is deemed 'fine art' or 'craft', enlightened or primitive (Kuokkanen: 2000a) and created a system of value that embeds racist and sexist ideologies. The use of thread, therefore, that inspired 'Skin pricking' and 'Stitched Skin' (Figs. 15 and 16), is a nod to these histories, both pieces a direct mapping of my skin, painstakingly stitched in dedication and as a memorialisation of the female skin. It is a mapping of a colonised territory, both personal and shared. It is a pricking of the surface that depicts both the literal skin through the materiality of the stitch, but also the trace and erasure of the skin through feminist histories. Living within a skin that has shared histories, that has been gendered and erased, but which is also very much alive and resists patriarchal confinement opens up the potential for what Linda Knight (2019) would call 'insufficient mapping'. This is a process that uses

the tools of colonial rule, for example the line, and the gendered thread of women's craft, to disrupt colonial forms of documentation and reimagine mapping from a visceral and embodied perspective.

Emerging possibilities of life drawing as a decolonising tool

The process of creating these art works highlighted the potential of being situated in the middle of these histories and using them as a tool for empowerment, but it was a life class held in 2011 (Stanhope: 2013) that highlighted how material process can activate pedagogical ruptures of known ontologies and gave rise to this PhD project. Two specific experiences emerged from this class. First, a student's realisation upon reviewing her drawings from the life class that she had been influenced unconsciously by gendered stereotypes of women's bodies. The student realised that what she had drawn was not the model from the life class, but an idealised woman, one that she associated with generic stereotypes from the media: large breasts, small waist, large hips (Stanhope: 2013). The embodied experience that occurred for that student in the classroom on that day was not something that I could have planned or 'taught'; this epiphany could only occur as a result of the student's direct collaboration with materials. This experience ruptured my pedagogical understanding of the life class, not as a process for learning but more importantly as a process for unlearning (Atkinson: 2018). As Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (2013) sum up in their introduction to *Towards a 'New Materialism' through the Arts*', 'art is a co-collaboration, not a form-matter synthesis and matter as much as the human has responsibility for the emergence of art. In other words, matter has agency' (6). It is the acknowledgment of the agentic possibilities of collaborating *with* the various matters of the research assemblage that creates possibilities for the 'new' and the pedagogical.

The second thing that happened during the same life class was the students' reaction to the model. During the life drawing session, some students felt such profound discomfort at being in the room with the unclothed model, that they ended up leaving the class (Stanhope: 2013). I initially read this discomfort as historical; the patriarchal residue imbued in the life drawing class, a space where the female body is a vessel, an object generally positioned by a male artist to be viewed by

men (Nead: 1992). The male gaze appeared to me to be the focus of this discomfort, and although this was certainly at play, what I failed to notice was the colonial legacy also entangled in this space. The history of erasure that has erased certain bodies from the art historical narrative of the female nude is also entwined in the life drawing space. My analysis at the time was infused with a white feminism (Ahmed: 2008; Lorenzo: 2009; Stanger: 2016), blinkered by my own generalised interpretation of the experience and failing to address the history of the various identities and experiences of the students within the space (Picowar: 2009). As hooks (2003) argues,

> We may unwittingly collude with structures of dominance because of the way learning is organised in institutions. Or we may gather material to teach that is non-biased and yet present it in a manner that is biased, thus reinforcing existing oppressive hierarchies. (45)

My own failure to notice my collusion with colonial histories surfaced in that 2011 life class (Stanhope: 2013) and brought into sharp focus the need for troubling throughout my practice, paying attention to unconscious bias (Picower: 2009; McGlaughlin, Weekes and Wright: 1999), white fragility (DiAngelo: 2018), and white privilege (Leonardo: 2002, 2009, 2015; McIntosh: 1997; Gillborn: 2005). As Mahoney (1997) explains '[p]art of white privilege … is not seeing all we have and all we do, and not seeing how what we do appears to those defined as "other"' (331). Or as Braidotti (2011) explains, what we are surrounded by daily 'escapes self-scrutiny in that it is so familiar, so close, that one does not even see it' (16). Whilst these histories and experiences of 'not seeing' bring with them uncomfortable feelings of guilt and perhaps shame, these are self-absorbed introspective emotions that do little to change anything. As Proctor (2020) powerfully argues, such emotions can be paralysing but they are not 'inherited', 'responsibility is' (11). Braidotti (2011) further explains,

> Being a European for me means inhabiting such historical contradictions and experiencing them as an imperative political need to turn them into spaces of critical resistance to hegemonic identities of all kinds … I chose to become nomad, that is to say, a subject in transit and yet sufficiently anchored to a historic position to accept responsibility and therefore make myself accountable for it. (35)

To make oneself accountable is a call to action from within. A destabilising of humanist history is, importantly, not a turn away from colonial histories, but a place from within which to resist; a pedagogical positioning entangled through an active process of un/re-learning.

Situated in the middle: Becoming nomadic

Braidotti's (2011) positioning of the nomadic became an important way to entangle with this active process whilst acknowledging its need to accommodate mistake-making and risk-taking in colonial and neoliberal educational structures. Nomadic becoming activates the uncomfortable autobiography of white scholars by resisting the 'breast-beating of critical thinkers squashed by white guilt' and constructs the nomadic subject as being in the middle of such relations whilst questioning it. Braidotti (2011) states that the nomadic subject,

> ...actively yearns for and constructs itself in complex and internally contradictory webs of social relations… The sociological variables (gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, health) need to be supplemented by a theory of the subject that calls into question the inner fibres of the self. These include the desire, the ability, and the courage to sustain multiple belongings in a context, which celebrates and rewards Sameness, cultural essentialism, and one-way thinking. (10)

The nomadic subject is therefore transformative, one 'that enact[s] progressive metamorphoses of the subject away from the program set up in the phallocentric format' (Braidotti: 2011, 12). Becoming through phallocentric humanist histories, at once part of them but also resisting them, means the process is absolutely embodied, an auto-biographical lived experience that is constantly under review. Our understanding of our identity from a nomadic perspective is both 'rhizomatic' and 'retrospective' with experience of race, class, sexuality, gender, ability, age, speaking to 'where we have already been and consequently no longer are' (Braidotti: 1994, 35). Barad (2007) discusses the concept of memory, stating that,

> Re-membering and re-cognizing do not take care of, or satisfy, or in any way reduce one's responsibilities; rather, like all intra-actions, they extend the entanglements and

responsibilities of which one is part. The past is never finished. It cannot be wrapped up like a package, or a scrapbook . . . we never leave it and it never leaves us behind. (ix)

For that reason, becoming nomadic is a constant process of critical engagement, immersing oneself back into past entanglements, as '[n]omadic cartographies need to be redrafted constantly' (Braidotti: 1994, 35). As Braidotti (2011) poetically asserts, the nomadic project is 'more like a weather map than an atlas, my cartographies mutate and change, going with the flow while staying grounded' (13). This idea of being nomadic while remaining anchored to our histories builds on Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) idea of the nomad as a move towards an interconnectedness which relies on communication from within the system itself. They state '[t]he only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, the intermezzo' (Deleuze and Guattari: 2013, 323). Being situated in the 'between' means to be enmeshed in that which is around you. As they further explain,

> *Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle. (Deleuze and Guattari: 2013, 27; emphasis in original)

This means accepting the position of being 'between', a transversal movement that brings all the complexities of my position in the institution together and offers them as a site for new becomings. As an educator working with young people from diverse backgrounds this positioning opens opportunities to reimagine historic binaries of gender, sexuality, race, class, disability and so on (Garner and George: 1999). The bodies of the teacher, the student and the institution become situated as in-process, becoming through their encounters *with* other bodies. This nomadic process where 'becoming is neither reproduction nor just imitation, but rather emphatic proximity, intensive interconnectedness' (Braidotti: 1994, 5), diffracts what is constructed as a linear educational system to one that is formed as an assemblage.

An 'assemblage' for Deleuze and Guattari (2013) 'is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections' (7). The assemblage

reviews the various educational bodies as a multiplicity, but not one that is purely situated in the flesh. It pulls through Spinozist (1994) narratives of 'not knowing what a body can do' and as Rebecca Coleman (2009) explains, supports the body as 'an assemblage on a plane of immanence of different organs, different moments, different elements and things … [a] body is not an entity but is a *process*, is always *becoming* through the connections it makes with multiple and different bodies' (33; emphasis in original). As suggested here, we do not exist in isolated exchanges; we are immersed in the world as we 'become' through these nomadic experiences with human and non-human bodies and through multiple experiences supporting multiple identities. To attune these histories in the art classroom to support multiple identities, both human and non-human, within a nomadic assemblage, I pull through decolonial practices and specifically orient this practiceresearch towards a pedagogy of hope (hooks: 2003).

An evolving pedagogy of hope

To begin to discuss decolonial understandings of this practiceresearch, I first turn to educational activist Paulo Freire's (1987, 1996) positioning of repression as the ingrained workings of oppression by the dominant force. Freire (1996) states, 'Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human' (26). This becoming 'more fully human' is a hopeful project, but not a manifestation of hope itself as a force that changes realities. As Freire (1997) more astutely explains, it is the guiding 'strength we absolutely need for a fierce struggle that will re-create the world' (2). The 'struggle' in this practiceresearch is to become 'more-than-human', to be more-than the sum of our past histories. Carlos Tejeda (2008) affirms that we must 'understand that the present is unintelligible … without a reading of the past' (27). I argue that rather than a singular, linear reading of history, there needs to be a fundamental diffraction of such histories to understand them not as a distanced act of reading, but as an embodied experience of doing. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, to confront controversial issues that are often ignored in mainstream English art curriculums (Araeen: 1999, 2013; Dash: 2005, 2010; Doy: 2013) means addressing the problematic constructions of historical discourse that have been funnelled through a white patriarchal and humanist lens. The erasure of certain histories creates what Tejeda (2008)

calls 'ontological orphans'. If we think of this phrase within a context of embodying histories, then the issues that emerged in the life class of 2011 become more acute as it is difficult to embody a past from which you have been erased. As Tejada (2008) asserts, the lack of 'approximate mapping of the past' creates vacuums in various communities that are 'disconnected from the genealogy of being in the world' (28). He argues that turning of the lens back on itself to constantly question what is being purported and by whom, is central to a decolonising practice. He calls this refusal to take knowledge as given suggests 'a forced dance', a movement through which both student and educator must construct their own 'truth' based on their individual experiences. The motivation here is to resist the assertion of a specific path through colonial pasts by drawing on material agency as integral to the learning experience, thereby opening opportunities to 'dance' *with* colonial histories *through* material encounters.

The uncomfortable histories emerging throughout this practiceresearch, and the realisation of the vastness of the colonial endeavour, can make it appear a hopeless task but as Freire (1997) states,

> hopelessness paralyzes us, immobilises us … I am hopeful, not out of mere stubbornness, but out of an existential, concrete imperative.
> I do not mean that, because I am hopeful, I attribute to this hope of mine the power to transform reality all by itself, so that I set out for the fray without taking account of concrete, material data, declaring, "My hope is enough!" No, my hope is necessary, but it is not enough. Alone, it does not win. But without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly. We need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water. (2)

The hope in this practiceresearch is inspired by the 'critically hopeful' practice of hooks (2003), which is not an abstract process, nor does it extol a pedagogy that disembodies itself from the historical context within which it is bound to work, instead it enables an environment where students feel empowered to develop 'pragmatic toolkits' (Tejada, Espinoza and Gutierrez: 2003). This pedagogical approach according to Lucia Buttaro (2010) 'challenges the dominant practices of schooling and makes schools concrete spaces for developing critical consciousness in the

interests of working class, indigenous and non-white peoples' (2), I also add women to this list, as well as non-gender conforming, queer and disabled peoples. This practiceresearch troubles the ontological understanding of human choice through the new materialist lens. What I acknowledge in this thesis are that the choices I make as an actively anti-racist educator are intrinsically informed by material encounters. This shifts choice into a space of activation with the world around us, rather than a hegemonic relationship based in human hierarchies. Choice here is a means to develop social action through creative activism (Renold: 2018; Renold and Ringrose: 2019; Cruz & Sonn: 2011; Lissovoy: 2010; Portilo: 2013; Tejada et al: 2003).

To create space for developing critical consciousness, and to position myself as being formed and informed through colonised environments, as being in the middle of uncomfortable narratives that I need to pay attention to, this is an acknowledgement that,

> does not mean [I] never make mistakes, that [I] never buy into race privilege, or that [I] never enact in daily life racial domination. This could always happen on an unconscious level. What it does mean is that when [I] make a mistake [I am] able to face it and make needed repair. (hooks: 2003, 61)

As a practiceresearcher, I like the analogy of repair in this statement, as it acknowledges that the basis for what has been created has inherent value. It may need to be altered, undone or redesigned but the base fabric is there to remake over and over. Manning and Massumi (2014) and Bolt (2004) explore the potential of the creative process to provide insights that are not always initially seen by focusing on the agency of the materials to provide this insight. Creative epiphanies often occur 'in the act' of making, a 'relational interconnectedness as resonance' (Manning and Massumi: 2014, 1). The focus being on how each element of an assemblage intra-acts and resonates with other parts, creating an ever-evolving interlacing relationship between *all* entities, human and non-human. It is through this ever-evolving creative process of becoming 'critically hopeful' (Freire: 1997) that such epiphanies can be activated to create space for change.

Conclusion

Thinking through the evolution of my history as a practiceresearcher is to unlearn attentively and make an 'anti-racist choice' (hooks: 2003), critically engaging with uncomfortable colonial pasts and neoliberal presents in secondary arts education in England. I use these experiences as motivation to acknowledge my responsibility not only to myself, but also to the institutions that I teach in and the students I encounter. I use the uncomfortable nature of this position to fuel and activate a 'hopeful' (hooks: 2003; Freire: 1996, 1997) practiceresearch. As a white British teacher, I have grounded this discussion in the Braidottian (1994) assertion that to become a nomadic subject is to be 'in transit and yet sufficiently anchored to a historical position' (34). I am not seeking to erase or ignore my colonial heritage but 'to accept responsibility and therefore make [my]self accountable for it' (Braidotti: 1994, 10). By the entangling of my personal and professional experiences with my place of work in a multi-heritage school, with the YWAs, I argue that pedagogies of hope can be formed. This practiceresearch actively unlearns, diffracts and supports empowerment in the ever-evolving space between these histories and encounters.

To begin to understand how this practiceresearch could support the decolonisation of the female nude and thereafter the self-empowerment of the YWAs, I first analyse the art historical context of the female nude and the colonisation of the female skin through the gendered and raced narrative of colonialism. To lead into the written investigations of this history in chapter three, the next chapter is a visual exploration of the colonised female nude where I offer a selection of the art works collected during the PhD process, which (although far from an exhaustive sample) are a representation of the Western art trope of the female nude. I offer this time for you, the reader, to pause and reflect on these images and what you notice. I have organised the images into three categories: standing, seated and lying down, as well as grouping paintings together to suggest the repetitive nature of the images, and how the learnt narratives that I discuss in subsequent chapters are embedded in this visual discourse. You may also wish to apply another glue skin at this point.

Chapter two[14]

Visual exploration: The colonised female nude

Figure 17: Markart (1526) Five Senses. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 18: Mulready (1848-49) The Bathers. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 19: Gleyre (1867) Sappho. [Oil on canvas]
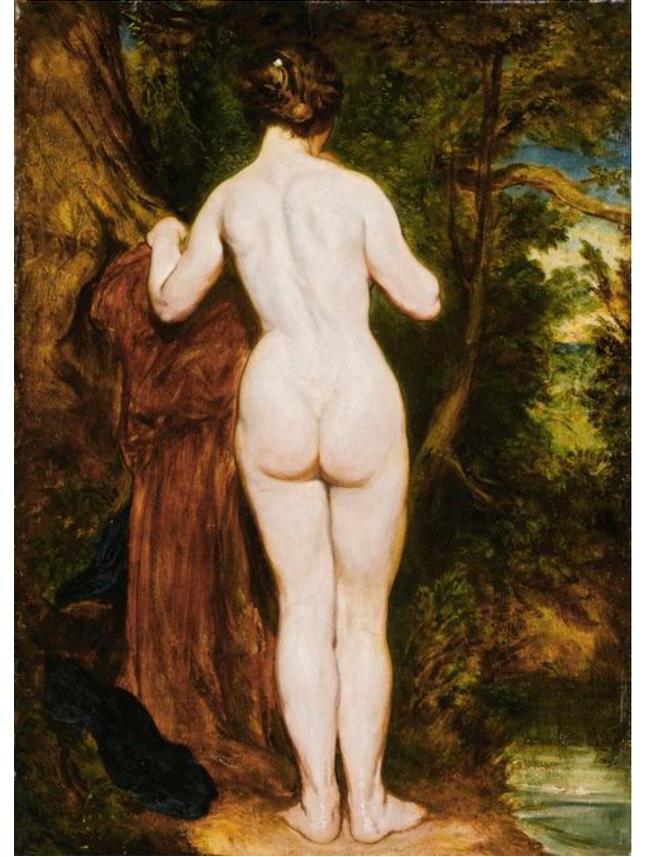
Figure 20: Etty (n.d.) Nude Bather by a Stream. [Oil on millboard]

Figure21: Maclise (1842) The Origin of the Harp. [Oil on canvas]
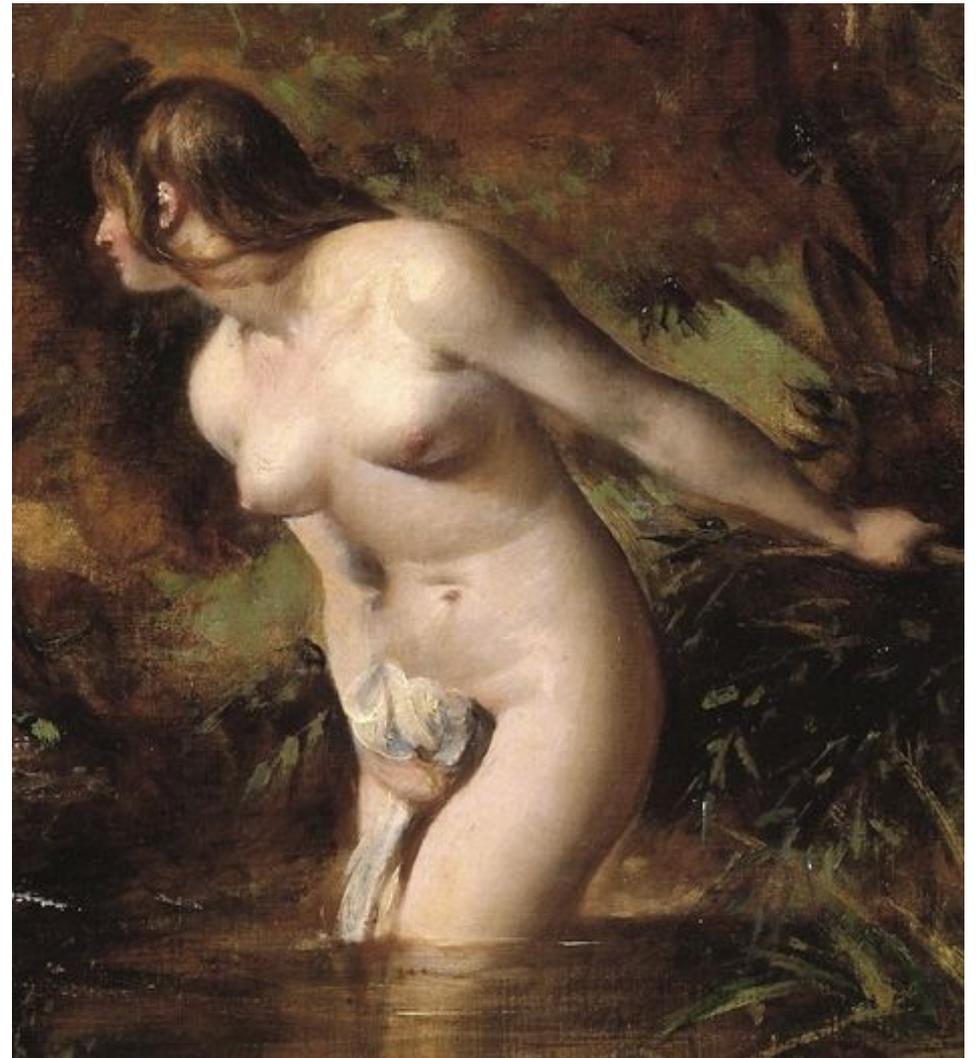
Figure 22: Etty (1846) Musidora: The Bather 'At the Doubtful Breeze Alarmed' replica. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 23: Poynter (1869) Andromeda. [Oil on canvas]
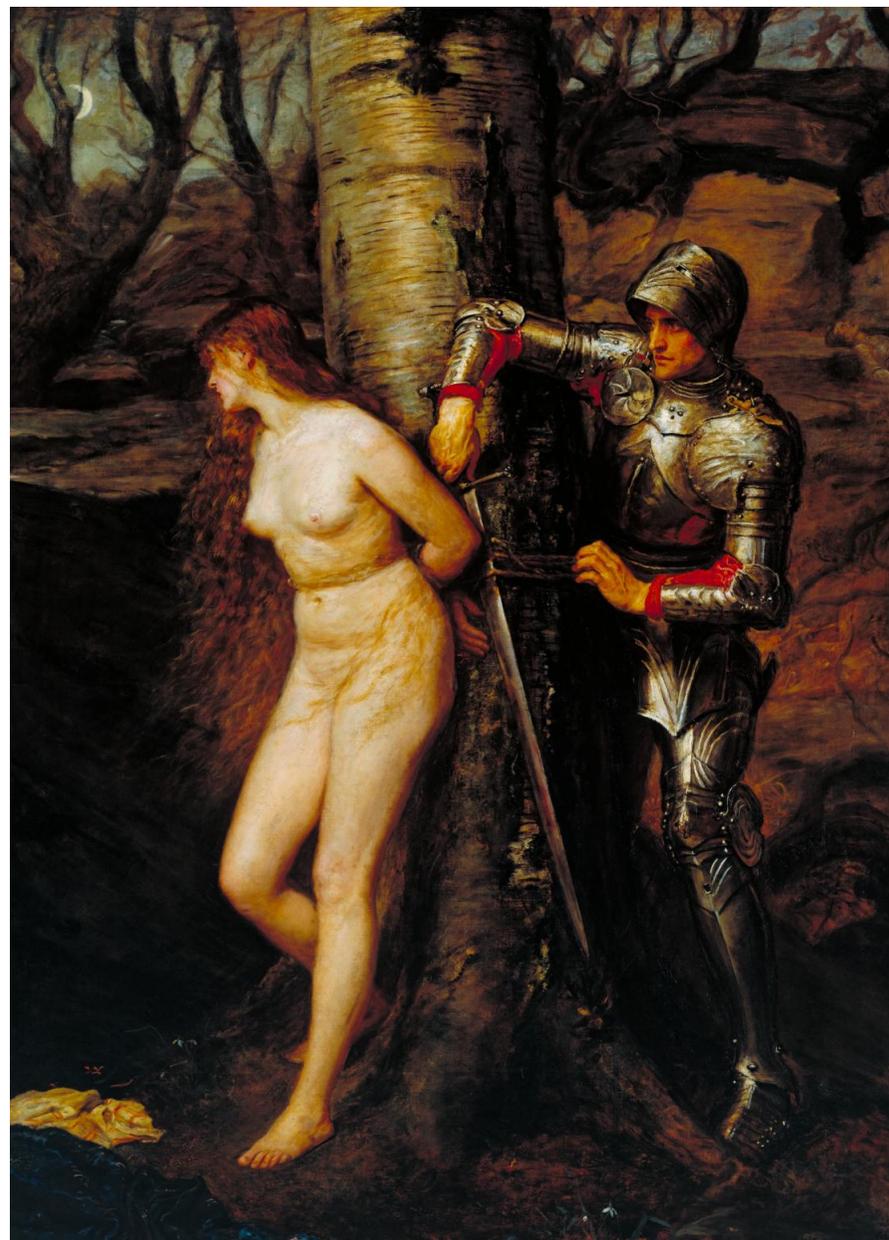
Figure 24: Millet (1870) The Knight Errant. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 25: Watts (1870-86) Thetis. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 26: Lord Leighton (1856) Venus and Cupid. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 27: Lord Leighton (1890) The Bath of Psyche. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 28: Moore (1869) A Venus. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 29: Gérôme (1861) Section from Phryne before the Areopagus.
[Oil on canvas]
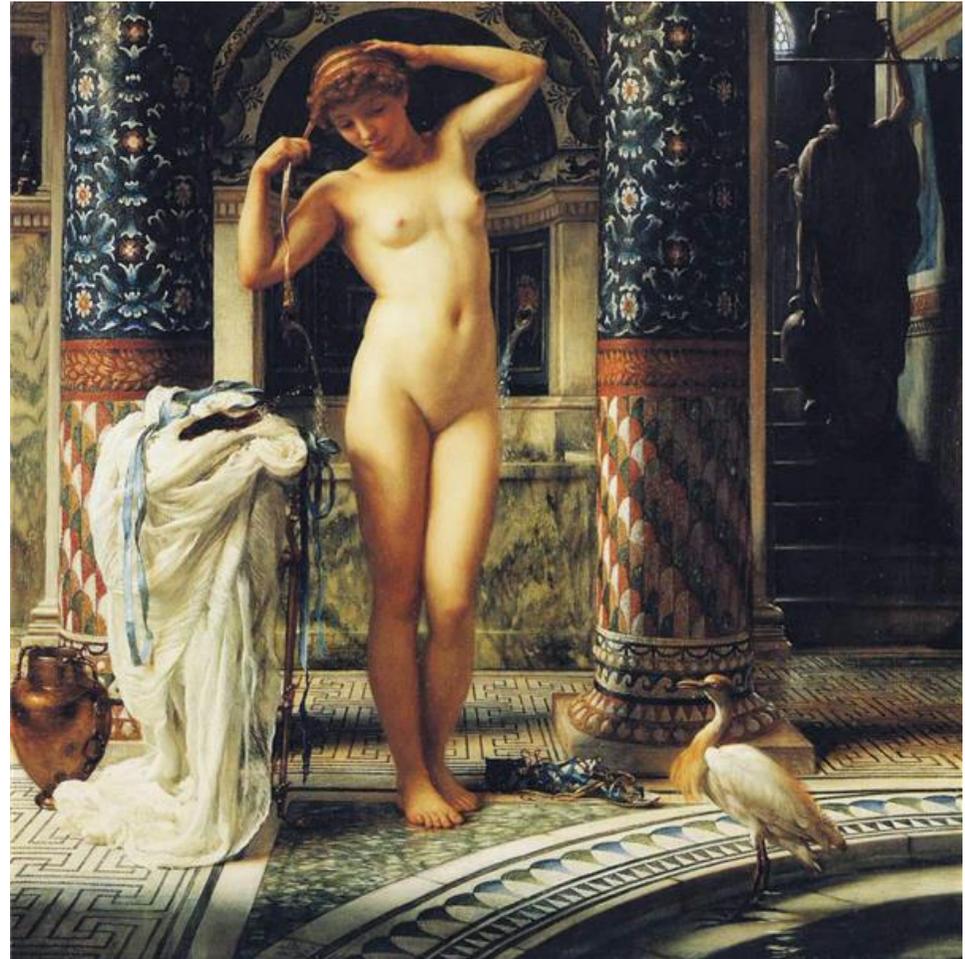
Figure 30: Poynter (1883) Diadumene. [Oil on canvas]

*Figure 31: Lefebvre (1872) The grasshopper.
[Oil on canvas]*

Figure 32: Lefebvre (1875) Chloé. [Oil on canvas]

*Figure 33: Lefebvre (1870) The Truth. [Oil on
canvas]*

Figure 34: Frost (n.d.) Bathing Nymph. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 35: Tintoretto (1555) Susanna and the Elders. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 36: Mulready (1852-53) Bathers Surprised. [Oil on wood panel]
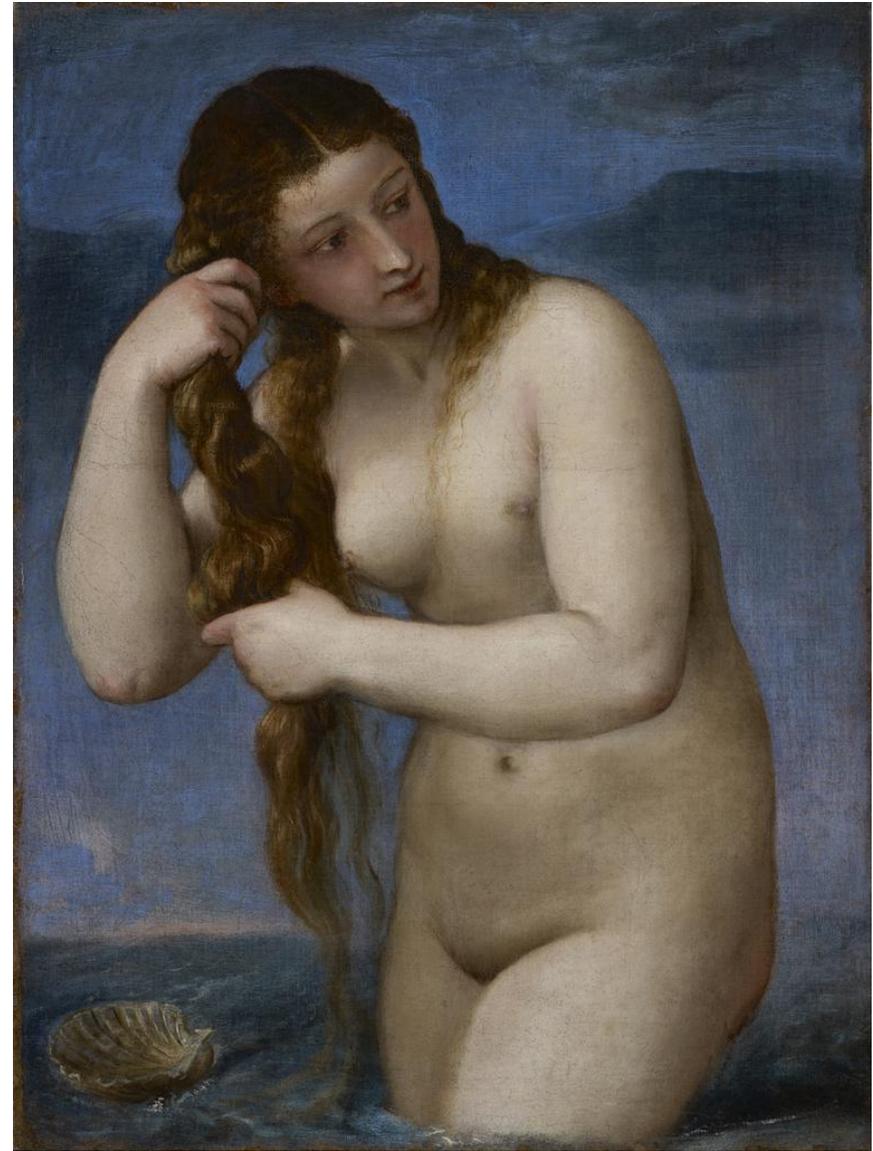
Figure 37: Titian (1520) Venus Rising from the Sea. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 38: Poynter (1906) Fishing, The Nymph of the Stream. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 39: Lefebvre (1882) Pandora. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 40: Chantron (1891) Danaë. [Oil on canvas]
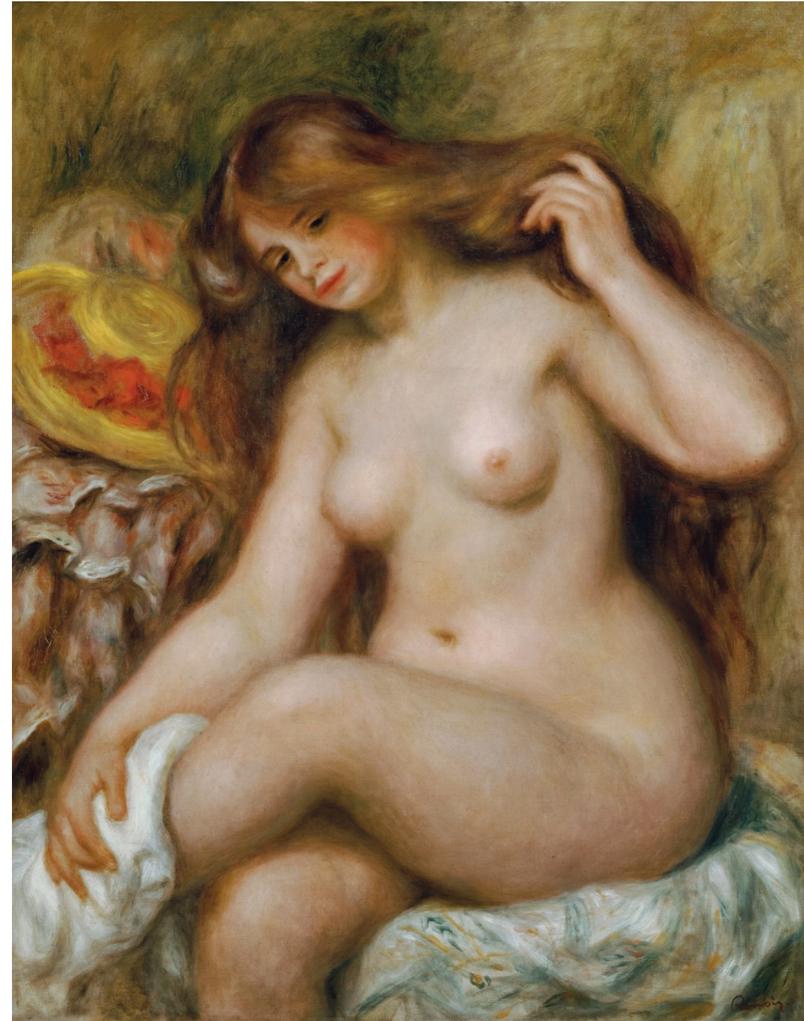
Figure 41: Renoir (1903) Bather with Blonde Hair. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 42: Etty (1840s) A Young Woman Reclining on a Fur Rug. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 43: Lefebvre (1876) Mary Magdalene in the Cave. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 44: Steer (1898) Sleep. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 45: Stothard (n.d.) A Nymph Sleeping. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 46: Titian (1565-70) Venus and the Lute Player. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 47: Bellucci (1700-05) Danaë. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 48: Giorgione (1510) Sleeping Venus. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 49: Titian (1538) The Venus of Urbino. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 50: Renoir (1915) The Venus of Urbino. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 51: Legros (1867) Cupid and Psyche. [Oil on canvas]

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Figure 52: Lefebvre (1874) Odalisque. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 53: Velazquez (1647-51) The Toilet of Venus. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 54: Etienne (n.d.) Female nude sleeping on her back. [Oil on fabric]

Figure 55: Pils (1841) Study of a Reclining Nude. [Oil on fabric]

Figure 56: Correggio (1528) Jupiter and Antiope. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 57: Delacroix (1825-26) Female Nude Reclining on a Divan. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 58: Delhumeau (n.d.) Nude Lying on a Chaise Longue. [Oil on canvas]
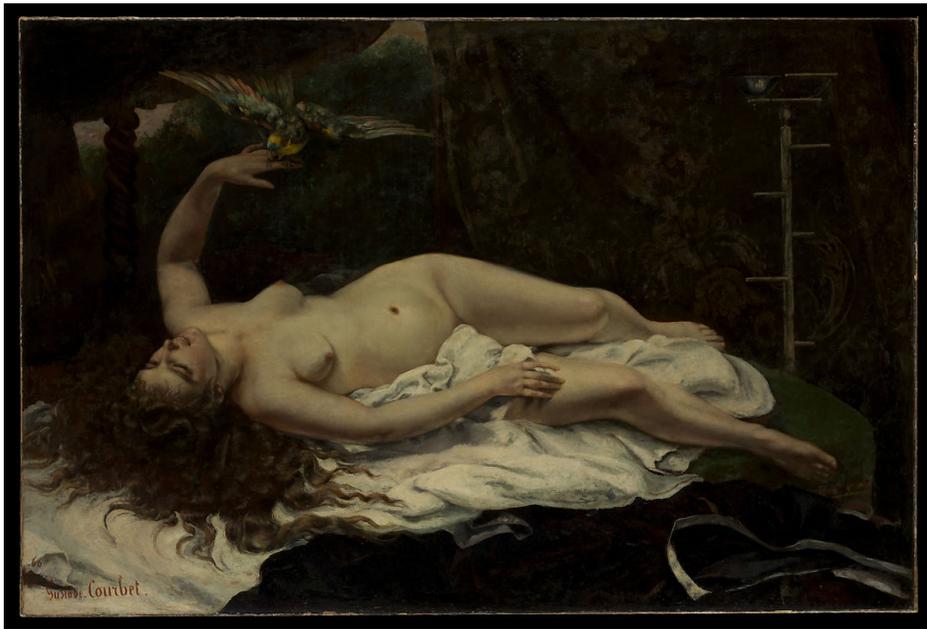
Figure 59: Courbet (1866) Woman with Parrot. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 60: Cabanel (1875) The Birth of Venus. [Oil on canvas]

Chapter three

The female nude - A colonisation of the skin

To contextualise the emerging material skin explorations discussed in chapter one, and extend both the historical colonial context that informs my evolution as practiceresearcher, and more specifically the YWAs' experiences of female identity that was the trigger for this research, this chapter directly addresses the first research question: how does the trope of the western female nude produce and reproduce restrictive ideals of the female body? The chapter functions as a literature review, exploring the regulation of the female body, and specifically the skin, through the art historical trope of the female nude (Connor: 2004; Bordo: 2003; Benthien: 2002; Nead: 1992; Betterton: 1987; Pollock: 2003). Although I acknowledge that the impact of colonialism across all identities is multi-faceted in terms of sexuality (Stone: 1997), age (Biggs: 2002) dis/ability (Thomas: 2002; Shildrick and Price: 1998) and class (McRobbie: 2009; Renold: 2018; Webster: 1992; Skeggs: 1997, 2004), here I focus on the historical context of the female skin first in terms of gender and then in terms of more insidious ideologies of race and colonialism (Bordo: 2003; Grosz: 1994; McRobbie: 2009). I further highlight how these colonial narratives emerge in contemporary media imagery and how the historical roots of the female nude continue to actively construct phallocentric narratives of the contemporary female body (McRobbie: 2009; Betterton: 1987; Bordo: 2003; Connor: 2004; Coleman: 2009; Flanagan and Booth: 2009; Thornham: 2007; Ahmed and Stacey: 2001).

The regulation of the female body through the colonised female nude

In early history the skin was given little significance, seen merely as a container or envelope for the body. Aristotle (384–322 BCE) believed the skin was a drying out of the flesh and therefore believed it had no sense of touch but was simply a surface that concealed the body's matter beneath (Connor: 2004). However, although during early Greek histories the skin remained ungendered, the body was very much under gendered scrutiny, as seen in Aristotle's summation,

> [T]he male stands for the effective and active, and the female, considered as female, for the passive, it follows that what the female would contribute … would not be seaman but material for the seaman to work upon. (Aristotle, cited in McKeon: 2001, 676)

So entrenched did these gender binaries become that 'devalued difference remained a constant in Western thought' (Braidotti: 1997, 64). Analogies became a visual way to further support these patriarchal ideals, as evidenced in the writings of the eighteenth-century German philosopher Hegel, who stated that, 'the difference between men and women is like that of animals and plants' (Hegel, cited in Bordo: 2003, 12). This historic positioning of woman further informed the aesthetic of a female body created by patriarchal and subsequently colonial narratives that sedimented the passive matter of the female body as a material to be owned, desired and manipulated predominantly by men (Allen and Hubbs: 1980).

The constraints to which ideal female bodies are subject have materialised through centuries of art practice in the form of the female nude (Nead: 1992). The Greeks were less interested in reality than in a 'representation of the ideal' (Lacey: 1988, 124). Gombrich (1989) for example, discusses Greek landscape painting in the Hellenistic period, stating, 'These paintings are not actual views of particular country houses or beauty spots. They are rather a collection of everything which makes up an idyllic scene' (77-78). In the same way, this piecing together of an ideal scene translated into the construction of the ideal woman. Leon Battista Alberti, a renaissance artist, based his idea of the perfect female form on classical mythology, derived from Aristotle's legacy that 'the chief forms of beauty are order and symmetry and definiteness' (cited in Nead: 1992, 7). To achieve this 'perfect femininity' Alberti used different body parts taken from various beautiful women, creating 'a compilation of meticulous measurement and appraisal' (Nead: 1992, 70). Albrecht Dürer, a German renaissance painter, 'believed that the ideal nude ought to be constructed by taking the face of one body, the breasts of another, the legs of a third, the shoulders of a fourth, the hands of a fifth – and so on' (Berger: 1972, 62). This fragmentation of 'only the most beautiful' female bodies (Nead: 1992, 70) has far-reaching implications. As Nead (1992) points out, classical beauty 'is frequently typified by Roman statues which are partial and incomplete'. She goes onto suggest that fascination with such objects lies 'partly at least, in their allowing imaginary reconstructions' (78) to take place. This classical segmentation of women's bodies has direct links with contemporary media images, which offer us a 'fragmented' view (Winship: 1987, 25), to promote a desire to fill in the gaps with the 'perfect' body. This carving up of the female form into separate entities to be

pitched not only against other women but also against the body itself, is unpicked by Nead (1992) as the source of the patriarchal regulation of women. She argues that,

> Through the procedures of art, woman can become culture; seen through the screen, she is framed, she becomes image and the wanton matter of the female body and female sexuality maybe regulated and contained. (10)

An example of this framing of female matter can be seen in Dürer's drawing, 'Draughtsman Drawing a Recumbent Woman' (Fig. 61). The model is viewed, dissected, behind a gridded geometric screen. Her body is reclining, revealing the smooth undulations of her skin as she offers herself up to the male viewer. In contrast to the woman, the man sits upright, investigating, penetrating her body with his eyes. The objects positioned on his side of the composition remind us of his virility, the sharp phallic shapes poised ready to shape and form the exposed skin in front of him. The woman's hand hovers in a masturbatory position; she signals her vulnerability for the sexual pleasure of the male viewer. The image is both sexual and medical in its reading. The woman is being examined, her skin penetrated by the male viewer in the image as well as by the male viewer of the drawing. A woman who subsequently views this image is, then, positioned as reading the image from a male standpoint. John Berger (2008) later builds on these arguments in his influential work 'Ways of Seeing', where he highlights woman's dual role as both observed and observer of the observed. The framing of this image, as Nead (1992) points out, regulates the woman, culturally objectifying as well as positioning her within the work as a scientific specimen. This drawing has connotations of both a life drawing class and a gynaecological examination, which implies the strong links between art and medicine.

The medical skin[15]

I draw on medical imagery here, as although art and medical illustrations are both based on aesthetic considerations, scientific images are given an objective rather than an artistic status,

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[15] Medical skin website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/medical-skins.html

Figure 61: Dürer (1525) Draughtsman Drawing a Recumbent Woman. [Woodcut]

which is seen as more subjective. For that reason, the scientific image holds more 'power' (Gilman: 1985, 205). The shift in how medical illustrations were perceived came about with Andreas Vesalius's (2014) De Humani Corporis Fabrica, first published in 1543. Vesalius represented a move towards seeing inside a body as a 'sole locus of knowledge' (Benthien: 2002, 43). Now the skin became a representational covering that needed to be removed to uncover this hidden knowledge. Biological discoveries during this time also produced a proliferation of medical drawings and sculptures. These art works provide insights into how the female skin and body has been understood in Western art and how this still influences images of women today (Connor: 2004; Benthien: 2002). The skin in medical illustrations at this time became very much the container of knowledge, and illustrations of self-flaying therefore proliferated in medical illustrations (Figs. 62 and 63). The male figure was often depicted in the act of self-flaying, revealing muscular forms and correspondingly, inner strength, not only demonstrating control by actively participating in the flaying, but also the mental strength to overcome the body in the pursuit of knowledge. What is striking in these images of the removal of the skin is the gendered difference, not in the presence of women but in their absence. As Benthian (2002) attests, 'female skinlessness' is deemed 'unthinkable' (89).

Writing in 1704, Jonathan Swift exemplified the medical understandings of these times in his satirical story 'Tale of a Tub': 'Last week I saw a woman flayed and you would hardly believe how much it altered her for the worse' (Swift, cited in Ross and Woolley: 1986, 84). This removal of skin also removed the woman's 'personality', he suggested, underlining the point that femaleness was driven mainly by the perception of the outside of the body, which he said was 'always to be preferred' (Swift, cited in Ross and Woolley: 1986, 89). Benthien (2002) explains that this situates the male body as being 'understood as the normal, the paradigmatically human body' (86). When women were represented in medical imagery it was primarily to show the reproductive organs, since any other depiction of the female form was considered 'erotically charged' (Benthien: 2002, 86) and this fetishisation of the female skin and underlying flesh positioned women as biologically determined by the patriarchal gaze. Benthien (2002) argues that such illustrations assume that,

Figure 62: Vesalius (1543) A flayed man holding his own skin. [Printed illustration]

Figure 63: Vesalius (1543) Portrait of the author. [Printed illustration]

Figure 64: Susini (1798) Venerina (Little Venus). [Sculpture]

Figure 65: Susini (1780-82) The Bolognese "Venerina," Anatomical Venus. [Sculpture]

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Figure 66: Moroni (1550) The Vestal Virgin Tuccia (Chastity). [Oil on canvas]

Femaleness lies only in the dark and muddy breeding ground in the depths of the body or in the smooth and beautiful sheath-façade that surrounds this body but not in the powerful and vigorous, though profane, intervening layers of muscle and tissue' (89).

Depicting women with their skin intact, lying on their backs with attention predominately drawn to their abdomens, allowed a patriarchal view of beauty to be preserved despite the gruesome subject matter. As seen in the anatomical Venus sculptures (Figs. 64-65), even though having their abdomens cut open to reveal their insides, the 'venuses' still manage to put on their makeup and have their hair styled. One renowned life-size wax figure, commonly known as the Medici Venus' (Fig. 65), is also seen wearing her string of pearls. This specific focus on the abdominal structures further associates the female body with bodily fluids such as blood and amniotic fluid and drives forward essentialist theories of women as primarily a source of reproduction.

The containment of the female body through the nude

The blurred and medically fluid body seeps into the art historical frame of the female nude and creates a problem and the need for patriarchal and colonial need for regulation and control. The female nude positioned as 'high' art, beautiful, pure and spiritual, the domain of the goddess sits in contrast to the fleshy and medically fluid form of the female body which is never far away. The naked body pulls the (male) viewer back into the sublime, sexual and leaky body and the earthly desire of the flesh. Kenneth Clark (1970), author of The *Nude*, details the journey of the nude figure in Western painting from early civilisation to the twentieth century. He reinterprets mind/body dualism as naked/nude, implying the struggle of 'man' caught between the fleshy sexuality of the naked woman and 'his' ascension through the higher 'perfect' form of the nude. Nead repositions this account of male desire arguing that this notion of the woman being either chaste and pure or sexually deviant has incarcerated the female body and that

…one of the principal goals of the female nude has been the containment and regulation of the female sexual body. The forms, conventions and poses of art have worked metaphorically to shore up the female body - to seal orifices and to prevent marginal matter

from transgressing the boundary dividing the inside of the body and the outside, the self

from the space of the other. (Nead: 1992, 6)

An image that visually depicts this 'shoring up' by Giovanni Battista Moroni, a sixteenth century

Italian painter, depicts Chastity as holding a sieve filled with water that does not leak (Fig. 66). The

sieve suggests the ideal 'hermetically sealed female body' (Nead: 1992, 8); the skin as armour, a

barrier containing the 'marginal matter' which protects men from transgressions. Grosz (1994)

argues that the construction of the female body as 'leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as

formless flow; as viscosity, entrapping, secreting' is to position the female flesh as dangerous, 'a

formless flow that engulfs all form' (203). Braidotti (1997) describes the feminine form as a fleshy,

earthly 'monster', that is there to entrap the male victim. The sieve that Chastity holds can be

interpreted as a hopeful container, a wishful dam that prevents such 'formless flow' from engulfing

heterosexual men. Although the conventions of art have sought to prevent the 'formless flow'

(Grosz: 1994) it is, as Nead (1992) suggests, paradoxical in that if the female body is

impenetrable, then although nothing is allowed in, also no bodily fluid can come out. Thus,

positioning this idealised woman as not only a virgin, but as a polluted body, a body at the

boundary between filth and purity (Braidotti: 1997; Nead: 1992).

Psychoanalytic Skin

Freud's (2005 [1905], 2018 [1905]) psychoanalytic theories sit in contrast to this, situating the

woman as bound by her reproductive body, therefore creating a further paradox, and increasing

the entrenchment of gendered ideas of the female body, essentialising it further into its bodily

container as a mother. Two of Freud's most well-known theories supported this endeavour: the

Oedipus Complex and the Castration Complex. As I discussed in chapter one, both theories

position the woman as 'lacking' in comparison with their male counterparts. The lack of a penis

therefore signifies that the woman is not the man who is the social and cultural signifier of Western

society. From the female child's perspective, her realisation that she does not have a penis causes

her to blame her mother and transfer her affection to the father. This translates into penis envy,

which Freud (2005 [1905]) believed could only be satisfied through motherhood; the mother

becomes the phallus through reproduction, and the baby becomes symbolically equated with the penis. The Oedipus complex and the castration complex for the girl is resolved into one. This positioning of woman is to situate her in sexual difference, to create specific boundaries between men and women. As Benjamin (2000) states in her discussion of Freud's castration theory in her paper 'The oedipal riddle',

> Separation takes precedence over connection, and constructing boundaries becomes more important than insuring attachment. The two central elements of recognition – being like and being distinct – are split apart. (240)

This splitting that takes place in Freudian (2005 [1905]) ideologies can be related directly to the patriarchal histories of Western art, in which women are separated through sexual difference. This has been the battle of many contemporary feminists (Butler: 2006, 2011; Irigaray: 2008; Wolf: 2002; Sumner: 2001) who refute these sexist and biological assumptions and whose work disturbs the reductive psychoanalytic and scientific narratives that I have discussed. In later chapters I will diffract these histories through a phEmaterialist lens, to further delve into the paradox of the female nude. I explore there the female body as situated in bodily transgression, a body that, as Mary Douglas (1966) argues, cannot be disentangled from other social and cultural boundaries. Bodily fluids, penis envy cured through pregnancy, all become bodily transgressions, and a catalyst for social deviation. Such deviance is regulated through the female nude, which systematically 'push[es] the limit, brushing against obscenity' (Nead: 1992, 25). To support these later discussions, I first explore how these ideologies around the ideal woman became embedded in Victorian morality paintings, a move away from the female nude, but deeply entwined with it.

Morality of the female skin[16]

In Victorian times, ideas about morality came to a paradoxical head. As Nead (1987) establishes, 'those repressive and hypocritical Victorians, publicly advocat[ed] strict codes of chastity whilst privately endorsing a massive system of prostitution and pornography' (73). The skin of the

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[16] Moral skins CCE website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/moral-skins.html

Victorian woman oscillated between patriarchal deviance as sexual desires and/or moralistic codes. As Charmaine Nelson (2005) summarises,

> sexual disguise used by Western artists to mediate the sexualisation of the female body as the nude/naked, to justify the unclothed body and transform it into the nude, allowing such representations to inhabit the realm of high art rather than pornography. (48)

This legitimised the consumption of the unclothed woman to support 'exclusive intellectual contemplation' (Nelson: 2005, 48). To attribute this sort of moral code to naked flesh was to bring the woman down from heavenly heights and situate her in the flesh, a space regulated by cultural, social and moral codings. This positioned women firmly and biologically in the flesh of their body determind by the boundaries of the home and domestic life. Lack of clothing in this sense became lack of morals (Nelson: 2005), which materialised in Victorian times through the depiction of the 'fallen woman'. These depictions warned about the fate of a woman who has fallen outside the strict moral codes of society. These paintings not only reference the patriarchal control of the time but, as with the female nude, they are a visualisation of colonial restrictions placed on the female body. As McClintock (1995) describes,

> the cult of domesticity was not simply a trivial and fleeting irrelevance, belonging properly in the private, "natural" realm of the family. Rather, … that the cult of domesticity was a crucial, if concealed, dimension of male as well as female identities – sifting and unstable as they were – and an indispensable element both of the industrial market and the imperial enterprise. (5)

The fallen women paintings therefore act as a warning against falling outside of imperial narratives of the 'cult of domesticity'. As seen in the tryptic titled 'Past and Present, I, II, III' by Augustus Leopold Egg (Fig. 67), the discovery of the woman's infidelity resulted in the ruin of her children and apparently her death, as seen in the final image. Sexual deviance, as seen in the paintings,

Figure 67: Egg (1858) Past and Present, I, II, III. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 68: Hicks (1863) Woman's Mission, Guide of childhood. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 69: Hicks (1863) Woman's Mission, Companion of Manhood. [Oil on canvas]

Figure 70: Hicks (1863) Woman's Mission, Comfort of old age. [Oil on canvas]

results in death, both of the pure ideal of woman and the woman herself. The moral codes of this time were propagated through art and as Nead (1987) explains, the impact of 'these paintings *actively* constructed meanings, values and morals' (74; emphasis in original) informing the patriarchal, and more insidious colonial, codings of the day. The development of domestic painting during this time therefore defined the home as 'the basis of moral and social order' (Nead: 1987, 76) and constructed women as either family oriented and respectable or sexually deviant. Nead (1987) offers George Edgar Hicks' (1863) 'Woman's Mission' (Figs. 68, 69 and 70), as an example of the gendered codes of Victorian sensibility being sedimented through the brush. Again, consisting of three images of the same woman in different points in her life. First with her son, second with her husband and finally with her ill and aged father. In all three images, the notions of the female being a moral and guiding mother, subservient and caring wife, and a loving daughter not only position the Victorian ideal of woman 'through her relationships with' men (Nead: 1987, 79), but also suggest that it was through this relationship that their 'moral status' could be upheld. The skin of the woman in the Hicks paintings is seen in its purest form – white, unblemished and as seen in the first painting, with a luminosity that almost suggests a transcendence. This is in stark contrast to the skin of the fallen woman in Egg's paintings. Either hidden from view in the first scene or obscured by darkness in the other two scenes. The female skin as explored in these paintings is bound by patriarchal desires, seen as a signifier of the morality of the female flesh. The skin in this sense also directs the viewer to idealise the woman as beautiful, young, able bodied, pure, heterosexual and dutiful, but also fundamentally white. As Nelson (2005) suggests,

> Patriarchal and colonial discourses of the body and sexuality, which dictated the paternalistic protection of the white female as the mother of the supposedly superior white race, also ensured that white women subjects were normally allocated to the realm of the nude, representing the 'higher' moral ideal. (48)

This historical representation regulates the white female body through patriarchal desire in terms of physical beauty and moral duty, but also paradoxically protects the white female skin, which is inherently coded as signifying beauty, superiority and moral ideals in opposition to the black body.

The raced skin [17]

Although I cannot do justice to the complex and often paradoxical histories of the racialisation of the black skin in European contexts, and that vast number of texts that more eloquently provides such overviews (Olusoga: 2016; Mirza: 1997; Adi: 2019; Fryer: 2018), I want to highlight the emergence of the racialised black skin as a way of understanding the contemporary ramifications of such histories on the perception of the female body through the construct of the female nude. Thus, I pull through specific moments that dichotomise the female skin in terms of its colour, and that scaffold historical understandings of western beauty. The roots of racialised bodies can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, with many Greek scholars, such as Homer, Herodotus, Ptolemy and Pliny writing about the African continent both through first hand navigation of the land, and also through bizarre imaginings that were both conjecture and myth (Olusoga: 2016). For example, Herodotus suggested that somewhere in Africa people had the heads of dogs; Pliny the Elder suggested that Ethiopians 'have neither nose nor nostril … Others ... have no upper lip, they are without tongues, and they speak by signs, and they have but a little hole to take their breath' (cited in Olusoga: 2016, 35). This particular text became all the more dangerous as it was reprinted around the time that the first Western traders reached the shores of West Africa. As such texts permeated the minds of Western travellers during the 1500s, so too did a desire for immaculate pure white skin. It was during the time that smallpox contaminated Britain when pure white skin was seen to signify beauty, power and wealth. Queen Elizabeth I inspired the heavy use of white make up to hide the pock marks that pitted her skin but paradoxically became a symbol of purity for a 'Virgin Queen'. This overt whitening of the already white face was a social and cultural politicisation of the skin in terms of class (with lower classes seen to have darker skins from working outdoors), and subsequently in terms of race. However, at this time, the focus was on what the skin's colour symbolised, rather than the race of the person. Medieval ideas about the meanings of colour were more prominent, and black skin became aligned with these earlier ideas as historian David Olusoga (2016) explains,

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[17] The raced skin CCE website link - https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/raced-skins.html

Blackness in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was associated with the night, the supernatural and the diabolical … The blackest everyday objects were described as being 'as black as a devil' … to call someone black in Shakespeare's England was to insult them, not by any linkage with race, but because the colour itself was pregnant with negative symbolism' (65)

Consequently, black skin evolved in direct opposition to the purity of white skin, specifically Elizabeth's perceived purity. Although it wasn't until the reign of Charles II that the British interest in trading human beings into slavery was fully realised, it was certainly instigated and already under way in Western Africa during Elizabeth's reign, and Elizabeth herself profited from the early slave-trading expeditions of Sir John Hawkins (Olusoga: 2016). When Britain fully realised the potential wealth that such trading could accrue, they took it to a global scale increasing tenfold a heightened awareness of white *pure* skin, in direct contrast to the black skin of enslaved Africans (Olusoga: 2016). The vast wealth accumulated from the sale of human bodies, through which Britain became a dominating colonial power, needed scientific and religious qualification to quell any protestations. Within the shores of England legislation around enslaving people was vague and often paradoxical (Olusoga: 2016). On the one hand slavery brought vast amounts of wealth into England, while England itself was considered a moral high ground where the air was considered 'too pure … for Slaves to breathe' (Olusoga: 2016, 118). To try to qualify the problematic 'moral' relationship with slavery, people invested in the perpetuation of slavery turned to religion for a solution.

The story of Noah's son Ham became synonymous with arguments in favour of the slave trade. The story goes that Ham betrayed his father and was subsequently cursed along with all his descendants to live a life in servitude. Although race is not mentioned in the bible, Ham's descendants became equated with the people of Africa and this link was often recited to justify the ill-treatment of enslaved people from the west coast of Africa (Olusoga: 2016, 56). Science also provided justification, of which the following is an example courtesy of Lorenz Oken (1811) from his Handbook *of Natural Philosophy*,

The Ape man is the moor. The interior of his body does not show through his skin, which, like plants, is characteristically coloured – he is black and cannot display his inner emotions by means of colour. The human man is the white. His inside shows through the skin because the latter is translucent, uncoloured. The person who is able to blush is a human being; the person who is not, is a moor. (355)

The black skin here is further removed from its human condition in servitude by becoming animal and consequently non-human. The skin becomes a malleable political tool, used to subjugate 'other' people of non-white complexions. Nelson (2005) explains this as a device to embed idealisations of female beauty as whiteness,

The black female subject has a strained relationship to the history of Western visual art: frequently represented, yet often as an abject sexual and racial body, the polar opposite of the idealised white female subject. With art produced after the European colonisation of Africa, we are dealing with aesthetic and material traditions invested in the racialisation of bodies and bound up with the hierarchisation of race and the concomitant idealisation of whiteness. (45)

With this aspect of colonialism, the black body, specifically the black woman's body is subject to a particular form of pathologisation, 'Conceived within the terms of racial denigration, black women's bodies were reduced to signs of sexual abnormality' (Nead: 1992, 74). Black women's skin became defined as ugly, overtly sexualised, erotised and positioned as the 'moral opposites of pure white women' (Leeds Craig: 2006; 163; also see hooks: 2015; Omolade: 1983). This manifested in scientific experiments on colonial others, trying to solidify the 'difference and superiority of the 'white race'' (Ahmed: 2002, 49).

The most notorious example of this is the exploitation of Saartjie Baartman, of the Khoikhoi people of South Africa, who was transported to London and Paris in 1810 (Gilman: 1985; Olusoga: 2016; Ahmed: 2002; McClintock: 1995; Hobson: 2018a, 2018b). More famously known as the 'Hottentot Venus' (Fig. 71), she was exhibited for her 'primitive genitalia', although the focus was mainly on

SARTJEE. THE HOTTENTOT VENUS.

Exhibited in London in 1810.

London Published as the Act Directs Sept 18 1810, by Deidrich Groer

Figure 71: Lewis (1810) Saartjie. The Hottentot Venus. [Etching]

her large buttocks (Gilman: 1985, 235). Scientific narratives developed physical signifiers during this period that racialised black women's body parts as malformed, hypersexual and therefore deviant. Even in death her body became a scientific specimen exhibited in L'Musee de l'Homme in Paris (Gilman: 1985), a literal racist manifestation of Durer's sketch as seen above and in stark contrast to the medical drawings and sculptures of white women, sometimes even perceived as still wearing their pearls. The black female body became a site of sexual deviancy, in this case controlled through actual dissection, with the body an object to be regulated and controlled through the display and classification system of the colonial museum. As Sara Ahmed (2002) states, 'It is not simply that the black woman's body becomes an object of knowledge: rather she becomes seen *as body,* and as a body that is excessive, sexualised and primitive' (53; emphasis in original). In this dichotomy, the black body is positioned as embodied flesh, naked, amoral, sexually deviant and ugly, in stark contrast to the female nude, a symbol of white femininity, a 'goddess' smooth, hairless, slim and protected through submission to the colonial, patriarchal forms of western 'high art'. In contrast with the morality tales of Victorian art discussed above, which were used to warn and protect (white) women from the desires of the flesh, 'black women were seen to need no protection or device to mediate their sexualisation in art' (Nelson: 2005, 49). The stereotype of the black female body as hyper-sexualised, primitive and savage emerged alongside visions of the 'exotic' Eastern body, this time perpetuated by colonial ideas of orientalism (Said: 2003). Both took root in the Western understanding of the female body, and became embedded in art history which perpetuated racist ideas that were in direct opposition to ideas about the white female body.

Post-feminist skin in contemporary media imagery[18]

Although the slave trade was abolished in English law in the 1830s (Olusoga: 2016), colonial narratives still promote specific understandings of women in terms of their gender and race. Within Western media imagery and in early twentieth century images, this continued through their absence rather than their presence, particularly in relation to ideals of beauty. Feminist research exploring the relationship between women's bodies and the image is vast, covering art (Nead:

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[18] Contemporary skins CCE website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/contemporary-skins.html

1992; Betterton: 1987, 1996; Grosz: 1994; Pollock: 2003) photography (Sontag: 1979; Lury: 1997), film (Doane: 1992; Mulvey: 2009; Stacey: 1994; Kuhn: 1995), and magazine imagery (McRobbie: 1999; Coleman: 2009) and is not something I can do justice to here. What I want to focus on in this section is how contemporary media images continue to construct a colonial narrative of the 'perfect' white skin (Dyer: 2017). With the advent of the camera in the 1830s (Sontag: 1979) colonial ideals of the 'perfect', previously understood through the painted surface and medical illustration as I have discussed above, became amplified through the shiny surface of this new and exciting photographic material. The foundation of this glossy photographic future has its roots deeply embedded in art history, and specifically in the rise of oil painting during the fifteenth century (Berger: 1972). What distinguished oil painting from other mediums was as Berger (1972) explained

> .. is its special ability to render the tangibility, the texture, the lustre, the solidity of what it depicts. It defines the real that you can put your hands on. Although its painted images are two-dimensional, its potential of illusionism is far greater than that of sculpture, for it can suggest objects possessing colour, texture and temperature. (89)

This obsession with replicating reality is based in the desire to the blur the boundary between images and life. This blurring was described by Berger (1972) as 'filling space and, by implication, filling the entire world' (89). This Western notion of 'filling the world' in the context of colonial history is uncomfortable to say the least, and created a narrative that has become a culturally bound 'traditional way of seeing' (Berger: 1972). Although Berger rightly highlights examples of how this traditional way of seeing has been disrupted through art movements such impressionism and cubism, it is this dominant view that still forms many of our cultural assumptions and 'still affects the way we see such object as landscape, *women*, food, dignitaries, mythology'. (Berger: 1972, 84, my emphasis). This residue of ideas about women's ideal form, expressed through the media of oil paint as white, youthful, slim, abled bodied and heterosexual, is perpetuated by the advent of the camera. The photograph becomes a replacement for the oil painting (Berger: 1972; Gyer: 1995) shaping our contemporary understandings of how to envision women's bodies.

Just as the smooth contours of translucent white skin in Western art history created an allure, an erotic patriarchal desire for the 'perfect', the photograph and the screen take this desire to a new level. The allure of the female skin in traditional paintings is doubled in the photograph; the image not only contains human skin, but the photograph itself has a skin. This latter is the thing that gleams, creating what Steven Connor (2004) describes as a 'magical preciousness' (59). The gloss of the photographic surface creates 'an ideal skin', which is again positioned in terms of whiteness. The white female skin in traditional paintings has morphed into a shiny white super-woman skin of contemporary consumer images (Connor: 2004; McRobbie: 2009; Gill: 2007) that can stretch and morph beyond the frame of the photograph or the cinema screen, through projections and social media platforms. All these platforms extend the skin, being able to enlarge it, project it, edit it, or share it anywhere, over any surface. This is a photographic example of Berger's (1972) suggestion of 'filling the world'. These larger-than-life images literally reach out and pull us in, touch us and hypnotise us. However, again in the context of colonial and patriarchal histories, the underlying inevitability is always that these skins are not achievable. They are to be worshipped, sought after and envied, but not achieved (Connor: 2004; Coleman: 2009, Stanhope: 2013). Connor (2004) discusses the shiny skin as a protective skin; it conceals and reveals little; constantly perpetuates 'sedimented meanings' (Felski: 2006) rooted in the history of the female nude. From models' oiled skin, to the leather clad imagery of pop stars, or even to the metal covered skins viewed in fantasy films such as Ex Machina, all these are impenetrable skins, a realisation of the success of the colonial endeavour. As Connor (2004) suggests,

> Like the modernist building faced in glass, the shining skin is able to hide in plain sight; hardened into pure objectivity, the shining skin eludes its own condition of objectivity by perplexing the act of looking that would make it an object. (54)

As Connor says, the 'shining skin' becomes a paradoxical assemblage. It can 'hide in plain sight', creating a relationship that is at once desired but which also 'perplexes' the viewer. It creates a narcissistic relationship that Connor likens to a mirror, with the viewer being able to look 'in' but never 'at' Connor (2004, 54). He sees these 'shining skins' as desired skins, future skins, as they ascend beyond mere mortal skins.

Hyper-sexualised skins

Self-perfection and self-desirability are two key aspects of femininity in this post-feminist world, which create what Butler (2000) calls a 'double entanglement' and what McRobbie (2009) explores as a 'feminism undone' (7). The idea that women, and particularly young girls, are 'gender aware' (Budgeon: 2001), media savvy and through participating in a hyper-sexual consumer society, become products of a successful liberated neoliberal narrative, is one that is still entrenched in colonial narratives, but like Connor's (2004) analogy of the modernist building, hidden in plain sight. The Sophie Dahl advertisement for Opium perfume of the year 2000 (Fig. 72) can be used as an example of this complicated assemblage, as can the Wonderbra campaign of the 1990s with Eva Herzigova. Both these adverts complicate the traditional dichotomy in which the woman is an object, subject to the male gaze, as the woman in these adverts is positioned as self-pleasuring. Eva invites us to look at her cleavage through her own self-pleasuring downgaze. Sophie Dahl looks lost in orgasmic pleasure and invites us to watch her self-fulfilled enjoyment. The images can be interpreted as empowering and sexy, a sigh of relief from neoliberal post-feminists who look at the image, get the irony and can self-pleasure in the 'hyper-culture of commercial sexuality' (McRobbie: 2009). McRobbie however, argues that such images perpetuate a capitalist, neoliberal consumer society within which we are all entangled, and which most importantly still privileges the male gaze one way or another. As Attwood (cited in Gill: 2007, 38) states in reference to the Opium advert, 'Sophie Dahl's body is …available for reading as an emblem of liberation, fun, self-pleasure and pride'. Nonetheless, as Gill (2007) counter argues,

> … it can also be read as a replacement of the traditional image of women as house-wife, mother and wife by consumption … Increasingly all representations of women in adverts are being refracted through sexually objectifying imagery… the yesteryear in which women were divided into safe, reassuring motherly figures located in the home, and young free sexy symbols in the workplace has given way to a style of representation in which every woman must embody all those qualities… this is the new super woman. (81)

It is difficult to critique this idea of a 'superwoman', which is a complicated construct in which sexual self-objectification is presented as a matter of 'individual choice and desire' (Retallack,

Figure 72: Yves Saint Laurent (200) Opium advert featuring Sophie Dahl. [Photograph]

Ringrose & Lawrence: 2016). Furthermore, as Coleman's (2009) critique suggests 'women's bodies are often both subjects and objects of images and do not exist as an entity that is secure and bounded from images' (3). The Sophie Dahl image positions the woman as both consumer subject and consumer object, a pure white able body that can self-pleasure through the consumer act of buying and reinterpret itself as a consumer object to be bought. What this image in particular re-articulates is the relationship between the high art of the nude and awareness of the skin. The whiteness of the body literally shines out of the image, the earthly desire of the flesh. It draws on art historical tropes of the female form in suggestive positions of self-pleasure (think back to the paintings in chapter two, specifically Figs. 48, 49, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60 and the Durer etching Fig. 61), also heightening connotations of blackness through the dark fabric that directs our eyes to the gleaming figure in the centre of the image, the line between purity and immorality starkly perceived. The gold accessories and red hair bear similarities to pre-Raphaelite imagery which situates the female as an allegorical figure, one that lives in myths and literature.

The nude figure in this contemporary media image pulls through the narrative of the female nude in art history, a narrative that is reserved for the goddess rather than the everyday flesh of a woman. This image, which can obviously be enjoyed by non-heterosexual viewers, is still predominantly a space for legitimate visual pleasuring of the heterosexual male (Nelson: 2005). Contemporary readings of this image may situate it as a liberating feminist image of self-pleasure in the twentieth century, but the undertones it carries of our gendered and raced histories are insidious. These complex colonial narratives not only become magnified by the sexually active and empowered constructions of the contemporary woman, but are also diffracted back through colonial histories when feminist voices call into question what is missing in these images. Just as art historical tropes of the female nude isolate a very specific reading of women from a patriarchal gaze, so too does the contemporary media image. However, this time it perpetuates both the colonial male gaze as well as isolating the sexually empowered female, which is limited to a very specific body type. As McDonald (1995) argues, only some women are included in these shining media images and 'by attending to media representations, we might easily forget that fat, ugly, disabled, or wrinkled women have sexual desire, too' (190). In opposition to this shiny white, young, heterosexual and

beautiful skin are raced skins, aged skins, queer skins, scarified skins, gender fluid skins, and disabled skins.

To go back to the shiny skin that is 'looked in', not only is it unrepresentative but the person doing the looking also never gets looked 'at' (Connor: 2004); the gap between the person and the image is then situated in difference. Difference in this relationship becomes invisible. As Thornham (2007) asks 'How does one speak from a position of absence?' (3). This standpoint creates a dichotomy, the image as an impenetrable shiny surface which reflects onto and into the vulnerable skins of those who view them. The shine is a newly formed space of humanist control, embedded in neoliberal consumerism, which Thornham (2007) describes as the '*slipperiness* of the image' (53; emphasis in original). The 'slippery' skin in this space is subject to the same control as the historical skin of women in paintings, but what makes these contemporary images 'slippery' is that they are filtered through a lens of female empowerment (Thornham: 2007; Pollock: 2003). What becomes problematic, and is reflected through the sheen and 'power' of such images, is the mirroring 'of our (idealised) selves', it is their 'capacity to evoke these other, buried images' (Thornham: 2007, 52), which are still 'constructed in oppression' (Thornham: 2007, 3).

The contemporary black booty and the legacy of Saartjie Baartman

The ramifications of the oppression and sexualisation of black bodies in western history are still felt in contemporary media imagery. This is what I want to highlight here, as these are felt in the experiences of the YWAs that I analyse below. There is a wide range of feminist critique of media images that explore the oppression and invisibility in the media of certain skins. This comes from Western viewpoints (Tuchman, Kaplan Daniels and Benit: 1978; Greer: 2008; Chapkis: 1986; Freidan: 2010; Gill: 2007; Carter: 2012; McRobbie: 2009; Zeilig and Searing: 2015), post-colonial investigations (Spivak: 1987; Grewal and Kaplan: 2000; Jamal: 2005), covers the racism in dominant beauty standards (Banet-Weiser: 1999; hooks: 1997, 2015; Leeds Craig: 2002, 2006; Hobson: 2018a, 2018b, Blackfeminisms: 2018) and includes research that discusses Asian (Parmar: 1987) and Islamic perspectives (Jeenah: 2001; Tarlo: 2010; Iqani and Schroeder: 2016). As discussed earlier, the black female body is historically inscribed as overtly sexualised, and in

contemporary media imagery this is often aligned with a black woman's 'booty', a contemporary

manifestation of the sexualisation and dehumanisation of Saartjie Baartman, the Hottentot Venus.

As Hobson (2018b) explains,

> the representational politics that framed the Hottentot Venus in the nineteenth century is
>
> specific to the era, but remnants abound in twenty-first century imagery concerning beauty,
>
> sexuality, and racialized gender. (108).

Racialised tropes that essentialise the black booty continue in contemporary media imagery, and

are exemplified in the contemporary music scene by the phenomenon of 'twerking' (Noble: 2008).

This is a dance move consisting of rapid up and down movements of the bottom, that highlights the

curvaceousness of the black 'booty', but perpetuates Western associations of sexual deviance at

the same time, rather than the history of the twerk which is far richer and more diverse than this

oversimplification. Hobson (2018b) critiques the twerk as culturally appropriated by white singers,

including Miley Cyrus, Iggy Azalea and Taylor Swift, for 'engaging in racial tropes that mobilise

black women's sexualities' (108). Hobson cites the example of the transition made by Cyrus from

the sweet innocent role of Hannah Montana to grown up sexually provocative singer. In her

'coming out' videos, Cyrus uses the black body to signify this shift through her association with

black deviance as a signifier for her own sexual maturity (Hobson: 2018a). Hobson also cites

further examples, in which white singers use the black body as a sexual signifier and to connote

the white body's becoming through its proximity to the black body. Beverly Skeggs (2004)

discusses this performativity and appropriation of race in her work *Class, Self, Culture*, in which

she questions how blackness 'sticks' to black bodies but white bodies have the capacity and

flexibility to 'perform' certain tropes of blackness. As in the example of 'coming out' videos, 'a

particular version of racial inscription thus becomes a mobile resource for some whilst being fixed

and read onto some bodies as limitation' (Skeggs: 2004, 1).

Skeggs (2004) draws on Bourdieu's understanding of power as a pedagogical construct taught

through his concept of 'habitus', which in simple terms is the repetition of socialised norms. It is

from Bourdieu's discussion of the 'mis-recognition' of power as ascribed rather than achieved that Skeggs (2004) extrapolates a reversed understanding, as she maintains that

> … those at the opposite end of the social scale are also mis-recognized as having ascribed and essential characteristics. They do not have to achieve immorality or criminality; they have been positioned and fixed by these values' (4).

This misrecognition of power ascribed in reverse is highlighted in the history of the female nude, in which the black body, positioned as morally and sexually deviant in contrast to the white female nude, is absent. In contemporary media imagery the coding of female racial inscriptions shaped by historical events are embedded in contemporary readings of the black body. This is then re-mobilised and used to empower the white body to throw off out-dated patriarchal stereotypical gender tropes as I discussed above. The role of the morally pure daughter, wife and mother, constructed through the *absence* of the black body now becomes so through its *proximity to* the black body. Gilman (1985) insightfully unpicks this relationship, highlighting that through the historic sexualisation of the 'deviant' black body, the central presence is always that of the white woman, who has the historical ability to use the black body as a palimpsest. Once this is established, the black body is no longer needed as a sexual signifier. As Hobson (2018b) claims 'Once again, we witness the theft of a black woman's body' (109). However, Hobson goes onto explore the retaking of black women's bodies, a 'pushing back' particularly in the contemporary music and arts scene, shared through the cultural frame of Twitter and Instagram. She proclaims that

> the booty don't lie" – despite the incredible lies told on the black booty – we can dance in the space of our own truths, reclaim our bodies, assert our beauty, and redefine our sexual selves on our own terms … for careful and painstaking reassemblage of missing parts and new interpretations. (Hobson: 2018b, 118)

Pulling through all these complex histories, it is time, as Hobson (2018b) argues, 'for careful and painstaking reassemblage of missing parts and new interpretations' (118). The missing parts, in terms of the black female body in art history, are visible through its absence. The black body's

absence can be situated through the presence of the white body. In contemporary feminist art practices, however, women's bodies of all races, sexualities, abilities and ages are being (re)drawn.

Conclusion

Having discussed the colonial and patriarchal positioning of the skin (Connor: 2004; Bordo: 2003; Benthien: 2002), I have argued that these historical constructs have sedimented ideals of women's bodies in terms of gender and race and have been perpetuated through art tropes such as the female nude (Nead: 1992; Betterton: 1987; Pollock: 1999). The historical perpetuation of gendered and raced images has actively impacted and informed the hyper consumed media images of the post-feminist era (McRobbie: 2009; Bordo: 2003; McClintock: 1995; Flanagan and Booth: 2009; Thornham: 2007; Ahmed: 1998, 2002). These images are understandably complex manifolds which reach back into their historical roots to draw forward narratives that can re-embed sexist and racist prejudice. Having situated the historical context of the female nude in colonial ideologies, I move on to discuss the phEmaterialist methodology I activated to support a decolonising of these histories through a reimagining of the life drawing process.

Chapter Four

Finding a phEmaterialist home

Very early on in my PhD it was suggested to me that I should apply for a new materialist training school being organised by COST, a European network that supports co-operation in science and technology. COST was made up of three working groups, one of which was focused on creativity with a 'keen interest in the material, corporeal, processual and relational aspects of contemporary arts and creativity' (New materialism: n.d.). Attending this training school instigated a systemic shift in my research. As I discussed in chapter one, secondary art education in England has been ruthlessly diminished since 2010 (Cultural Learning Alliance: 2019; NSEAD: 2017, 2018), positioned as a 'soft' option and pitted against subjects perceived as more academically 'rigorous' (Gove: 2009). As Adams (2005) explains, 'with art education sometimes almost erased from the school curriculum or in constant status flux' the need 'to fight frequent ideological battles against the centralized prescription of "core" subjects' (24) is part of many art teachers day-to-day experience. On entering academia similar justifications were needed, especially, as I discussed in chapter one, in the positioning of arts based research projects (Haseman: 2010). With this as a backdrop, it is not surprising that when one of my fellow COST participants stated, in perhaps an overly sentimental endorsement, that finding new materialism was 'like coming home', their statement instantly resonated with me. I shared their palpable relief that the people in the room not only respected the agency involved in the creative process but held it at the centre of our understanding and connection with the world around us. On being introduced, subsequently, to a phEmaterialist network that pulled together new materialist and post humanist threads specifically to entwine with an educational context, I also felt like I had found a home.

Being situated in a phEmaterialist 'home' (Ringrose, Renold, Hickey-Moody and Osgood: 2015; Renold: 2018), I entangle the implications of the colonial heritage of the female nude, as discussed in chapter three, through anti-racist and anti-colonial thinking. This chapter assembles these theories to activate the second practiceresearch question: How can practiceresearch, informed by phEmaterialism, create pedagogies of hope? After discussing the various theoretical facets that inform phEmaterialism, I attend to critiques of new materialism and post humanism (Ahmed: 2008;

Strom et al.: 2021; Zembylas: 2018) to unpack the methodological positioning of this practiceresearch as a decolonising pedagogical practice. With this complex entanglement at the forefront of this practiceresearch I work through these frictions by activating the skin as an intra-acting agentic post human material (Barad: 2003) through which alternative decolonial narratives of gender and race can be explored. This leads to a discussion of the ethical considerations of developing such a phEmaterialist practiceresearch (Braidotti: 1994; Hickey-Moody and Page: 2016; Manning: 2013) in multi-racial classrooms, as a teacher of white heritage informed by decolonial and indigenous theory (hooks: 1994, 2003; Kovach: 2009; Smith: 2021). Having grounded the theoretical entanglement of this phEmaterialist practiceresearch, I then extend from my initial material explorations, discussed in chapter one, to introduce the methods, or what I term phEminist explorations. These are positioned as a phEmaterialist thinking-through 'crafty practices' (Renold and Ringrose: 2019). The 'doing something with the doing' (Renold: 2018) as a means to elicit opportunities for activism in the secondary art classroom.

Situating the conceptual flesh of this practiceresearch

Having a methodological structure that emerges from the process of thinking *through* materials is as Manning and Massumi (2014) state, 'to open philosophy to the outside' (vii). Based *in* the encounter, phEmaterialism is founded on the theoretical frameworks of feminism, post humanism and new materialism, disrupts the exceptionalism of 'mankind' that has been supported by the dominion of white, western, patriarchal histories and situates the human as part of 'a vibrant ecology of matter' (Renold and Ringrose: 2019; Haraway: 2016; Braidotti: 2013a; Bennett: 2010). This 'vibrant ecology' is part of a broad community of post human scholarship that Carol Taylor (2016) describes as a 'constellation of different theories' (6), a celestial body that provides a home for theories often sidelined by Western humanist structures. Post humanism includes scholarship that explores areas as wide ranging as alien phenomenology (Bogost: 2012); animal studies (Haraway: 2008); the non-human (Karkulehto, Koistinen and Varis: 2019); post human disability studies (Goodley, Lawthorn and Runswick: 2014); object-oriented ontology (Bennett: 2010); actor-network theory (Ferrente: 2017), ecological relationality (Colebrook: 2014; Weinstein and Colebrook: 2017) affect theory (Massumi: 2015); decolonial and indigenous theories (Zembylas:

2018) and queer theory (MacCormack: 2009). This list, which is far from exhaustive, provides a glimpse into the desire for theories intent on creating a space that, 'engages a radical critique of some of the fundamental assumptions underpinning [traditional] dominant ways of doing educational research' (Taylor: 2016, 5). Braidotti (2013a) explains that,

> The difficulties inherent in trying to overcome Humanism as an intellectual tradition, a normative frame and institutionalized practice, lie at the core of the deconstructive approach to the posthuman. (30)

Similar to post humanism, new materialism also aims to deconstruct the dualistic hierarchy of the mind/body dichotomy that permeates Western philosophical cultures. According to Dolphjin and van der Tuin (2012), new materialism emerged in the late 1990s, coined by Rosi Braidotti (1991, 1994, 2002) and Manuel DeLanda (1996, 1997, 2002). It is aligned closely with post humanism in its aim to rework and eventually 'break through' such dualistic tendencies to disrupt historic discourses, with a specific focus on the agency of matter (Dolphijn and van der Tuin: 2012, 97). What is exciting about new materialist discourse is the interdisciplinary nature of the theory, which has gained force across a multitude of theoretical and practical perspectives (Fox and Alldred: 2018), not in an additive sense but rather as a reorientation. Inspiring re-readings across various research practices including, but not limited to, the arts (Barrett and Bolt: 2010, 2013; Manning: 2013; Manning and Massumi: 2014), sociology, (Coleman and Ringrose: 2013; Coleman:2009; Van der Tuin: 2011), science (Barad: 2003, 2007, 2012; Braidotti: 2013a; Haraway: 1991, 2008, 2016), ecology (Myers: 2015; Schrader: 2010), politics (Alimo and Heckman: 2008; Bennett: 2010; Coole and Frost: 2010); and decolonial (Zembylas: 2018) and pedagogical contexts (Atkinson: 2018; Barrett and Bolt: 2010, 2013; Hickey-Moody: 2013, 2017; Hickey-Moody and Page: 2016; Renold: 2018; Sayers: 2016). These research disciplines have also supported the shaping and development of new materialisms. The active collaboration and inter-disciplinarity of the practices that inform phEmaterialism is refreshing, especially from the perspective of UK secondary education, where the historical separation of subjects, exacerbated by the introduction of the Ebacc, renders them an ontological hierarchy (Atkinson: 2018).

While working within the dominant post-colonial structures of Western societies to queer humanist pasts, a Deleuzian feminism not only weaves through the theory but also through the 'crafty' practices (Renold and Ringrose: 2019, 2) that often inform phEmaterialist work. 'Matter matters' (Barad: 2003, 803) through a phEmaterialist research assemblage in the between-ness where the entities of the research 'intra-act' to multiply pedagogical action. Barad's (2003) notion of intra-action, as I outlined in the introduction, cuts across the Cartesian framed object and subject, blurs the boundary between them and creates a co-constitutional relationship. In this context, intra-action supports the analysis of the creative process as a post human understanding of the 'sense in which practices of knowing cannot be fully claimed as human practices' (Barad: 2003, 829). Barad (2003) argues that,

> Practices of knowing and being are not isolatable, but rather they are mutually implicated. We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because "we" are of the world. (829; emphasis in original)

The humanist act of disembodying the student in the process of learning, of the separation of subjects into 'hard' and 'soft', or as I have just alluded, to try to position a making practice as separate to thinking, is paradoxical when thought through in Baradian terms.

Working with this 'mutually implicated' theory of knowing and being through arts practice creates a shift in how we approach the act of making. Acknowledging the agency of materials as 'with us' in the world, means the process of working with matter becomes central to the process of art making. As Deleuze (1988), drawing on Spinoza, concludes, this is a process where all matter has the 'capacity for affecting and to be affected' (123), both positively and negatively. The art process itself is such a merging. Barad's (2003) argument draws attention to how we cannot operate separately from the world, rather that we morph and change 'with' and 'through' both human and non-human objects, just as they morph and charge with and through us. Barad (2003) says that

> Phenomena do not merely mark the epistemological inseparability of "observer" and "observed"; rather, *phenomena are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting "components."* (815; emphasis in original)

She goes onto to explain that this idea of everything both being and becoming as phenomena offers interesting insights into the making process, both textually and materially,

> Phenomena are not the mere result of laboratory exercises engineered by human subjects. Nor can the apparatuses that produce phenomena be understood as observational devices or mere laboratory instruments … Apparatuses are not inscription devices, scientific instruments set in place before the action starts… Importantly apparatuses are themselves phenomena'. (Barad: 2003, 816)

Barad (2003) argues further that 'apparatuses are constituted through practices that are perpetually open to rearrangements, rearticulations, and other reworkings' (817). When we intra-act with the various matter of making, we materialise through the intra-actions and alternative possibilities can present themselves. As I discussed in chapter one, the initial impetus for this practiceresearch was embedded in a young artist's experience of 'inter-acting' with materials in a life drawing class. Hickey-Moody and Page (2016) discuss this process as,

> not only are we always with/in bodies, but we are always with matter. So, not only do we make matter and meaning, it also makes us; we are entangled, co-implicated in the generation and formation of knowing and being. (94)

Matter does not simply re-act to modes of human thought, but materialises through embodied intra-actions, affecting as well as being affected. Stephanie Springgay (2005) claims this process happens in the 'between', in the 'unknowing',

> Too often works of art are considered to be the traces left from the processes of meaning production, rendering art as a static object. Yet, the visual as a bodied process of knowing and communicating focuses our attention and emphasises the in-between and the un/expected spaces of meaning making, where art becomes an active encounter. (42)

The active encounter that occurred during the 2011 life drawing class discussed in chapter one is an example of the potential for phEmaterialist practiceresearch to create empowered spaces

where social activism takes root. This is a force that Renold and Ringrose (2019) term 'intra-activism'. This term, that sees the conjoining of Barad's (2003) theory of intra-action and activism, makes literal the 'way change and transformation are always in process, always unpredictable and always a matter of entanglement' (Renold and Ringrose: 2019, 1). It is the unpredictability of the research assemblage that provides a fertile ground for a 'vibrant ecology of matter' (Renold and Ringrose: 2019). Atkinson (2018) would describe this as 'a process characterised by the idea of the not-known and that-which-is-not-yet; *it is a process of adventure*' (2, my emphasis). This 'adventurous' practice lies at the heart of phEmaterialist ideology as it posits matter as actively working with and through bodies, in human/non-human/post human collaborations. It is adventurous 'rather than the monotonous repetitions of dead matter from which human subjects are apart' (Coole and Frost: 2010, 8). This positioning offers critical insight into working within educational structures and art historical tropes, particularly those of the female nude, that I seek to disrupt, not to erase these past histories, but to work with them to (re)imagine the very matter of the female body.

A 'return to matter': A disembodied perspective

Before the new materialist call to 'return to matter', it is important to acknowledge that the need for this initiative is, in its very proposition, a Western concern (Rosiek, Snyder and Scott: 2020). The current drive to be attentive to the material agency of the world around us is the product of hundreds of years of Western colonial history. Many global communities and indigenous scholars draw on their inherited knowledge to exercise an embodied way of working *with* the world and have done so for millennia (Kovach: 2009; Smith: 2021; Chilisa: 2020; Rosiek et al.: 2020). Now more than ever, with the onslaught of the climate crisis, it is imperative to acknowledge the importance of these environmental knowledges (Etchart: 2017). Therefore, to call for a return to matter in a creative sense, there first needs to be acknowledgment of how colonialism stripped indigenous communities through its 'legacy of assimilation which is tantamount to cultural genocide' (Genia: 2019, 27; see also France-Presse: 2018 and Proctor: 2020). Additionally, the word 'art' is itself a post-renaissance Western term that is resisted by many indigenous artists and communities (Berlo and Phillips: 1998; Mikkelson: 1992; Mithlo: 2012). Berlo and Phillips (1998)

explain the absence of a direct translation for the word 'art' in native languages comes from how creative practice is valued. They explain that 'in Native traditions the purely material and visual features of an object are not necessarily the most important in establishing its relative value, as they have come to be in the West' (Berlo and Phillips: 1998, 9). As Kuokkanen (2002a) further articulates,

> Indigenous peoples often have quite different views on "arts" and "aesthetics" from mainstream Western views. Although these terms may be new arrivals in vocabularies of Indigenous peoples' languages, they are not necessarily new phenomena. Many Indigenous artists emphasize that understanding of "arts" or "aesthetics" cannot be separated from other activities and daily life. (423)

Untold years of situating arts practice from global majorities as 'primitive', and the othering of societies deemed by Western theorists to be uncivilised (Said: 2003) has isolated Western knowledge formations. It is from this disembodied perspective that a 'return to matter' is sought. Whilst holding and being attentive to this knowledge, I return to the Western framing of matter, as this is where this project unfolds and where critiques of these methodologies need attention.

An uncomfortable body: Critiques of feminist new materialism and post humanism

The very essence of the word 'matter' is derived from the Latin 'mater' meaning mother (Harper: 2001b). The gendered history of this word is echoed in the essentialist grounding of Western philosophical thought that restricts the female body to a reproductive form. This maternal focus has permeated through the centuries and provides the uncomfortable position from which feminist philosophers have long fought (Grosz: 1994). Scholars such as Simone de Beauvoir (1997), Shulamith Firestone (2015) and Mary Wollstonecraft (2010 [1792]) argue that the gendering of the body through its biological limitations sets it in conflict with politics and culture. Social constructivists, such as Juliet Mitchell (1990) and Julia Kristeva (1980), are committed to the subjectivity of the body, and against issues of equality being driven by the biology of the body. They argue that it is the social systems within which the body operates that hierarchise and limit women's bodies.

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Early critiques of feminism, framed through a white middle class perspective, saw feminist scholars shift from taking the position of the universal 'woman', to theorising the lived body as central to knowing women's position socially, culturally and physically. As Elizabeth Grosz (1994) argues, the body is 'neither brute nor passive but is interwoven with and constitutive of systems of meaning, signification, and representation' (18). The gendered, raced and classed body explored by contemporary feminists such as Luci Irigaray (1985, 2007), Hélène Cixous (2005), Moira Gatens (1996), Vicki Kirby (1997), Judith Butler (2006, 2011) and feminists of colour Gayatri Spivak (1987a, 1987b), bell hooks (1987, 2000, 2009), Sara Ahmed (2000, 2004, 2017) and Heidi Mirza (1992, 2009), continue to highlight differences *within* the category of 'woman'. They address essentialism and challenge a white feminism that ignores the raced, sexed and classed body. Grosz (1994) cements this ontological framing by asserting that issues arise when one body is idealised or normalised over others, she says,

> Where one body (in the West, the White, youthful, able, male body) takes on the function of model or ideal, the human body, for all other types of body, its domination may be undermined through a defiant affirmation of a multiplicity, a field of differences, of other kinds of bodies and subjectivities. (Grosz: 1994, 19)

In art history the essentialising of 'woman' has taken on the function of the 'ideal' and the call by Grosz (1994) for 'a number of ideal types of body' (19) to which everyone can relate, challenges the dualistic humanist notions of the white Western patriarchal body and focuses on embodied difference. Braidotti explains in an interview with Dolphijn and van der Tuin (2012) that the necessary contradictions within a subject, such as woman, have to be acknowledged in order not to perpetuate a colonial humanist response,

> In feminist theory one speaks as a woman, although the subject "woman" is not a monolithic essence defined once and for all, but rather the site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory sets of experiences, defined by overlapping variables, such as class, race, age, life-style, sexual preference and others. (Braidotti, cited in Dolphijn and van der Tuin: 2012, 34)

It is, however, in attending to the matter of the female body and black feminist theory (Ahmed: 2010) as well as in entwining decolonising research practices (Zembylas: 2018) where the friction between these theoretical positions and post humanism and new materialisms come to the fore.

There are obvious connections between post humanism, new materialism and decolonial thinking in the dismantling of humanism and refocusing on the marginalised, both human and non-human. Although these methodologies trouble hegemonic mind/matter dichotomies, they have been criticised for 'failing to engage with whiteness', the 'centring European philosophers', focusing 'on the material at the expense of subjectivity' and engaging in 'theoretical creativity without action' (Strom et al.: 2021, n.p.n). Perhaps the most important of these critiques is that the erasure of 'onto-epistemologies that have been advocating for vital materialism for much longer than these perspectives have existed', and that therefore failing to engage with these critiques 'reifies' academic whiteness (Strom et al.: 2021, n.p.n). Zembylas (2018) consolidates these assertions, stating that 'post-human approaches advocating a move away from humanism might be seen as an alibi for further denial of humanity to these same people' (255). Such approaches need careful exploration. By calling for a return to matter, claims have been made that new materialist and post human theories perpetuate a humanist narrative in which difference is ignored. Zembylas (2018) calls for 'clarity' around the priorities of feminist post human and new materialist thought stating that,

> when certain people have never been treated as humans - as a result of ongoing colonial practises - *pos*t-human approaches advocating a move away from humanism might be seen as an alibi for further denial of humanity to these same people. (255; emphasis in original.)

This denial of humanity is also taken up by Ahmed (2008) who argues that new materialism is a 'forgetful' feminism, a white feminist materialism, and by its claim 'to return to matter, we might then be losing sight of how matter matters in different ways, for different feminisms, over time' (36). Nikki Sullivan (2012) further builds on Ahmed's (2008) critique of new materialism as a 'white materialism' by arguing that the new materialist vision of 'denaturalising boundaries' is an

abandonment of race. The argument here is that although new materialists seek to blur the boundaries between subject/object, nature/culture, human/animal these blurrings come from a nature culture divide. This negation of histories of race, or to use Peta Hinton and Lui Xin's (2015) phrase 'whiteness-as-humanness', new materialism becomes by default 'a materializing gaze that is already implicated in what it identifies or renders visible' (Hinton and Lieu: 2015, 135).

In terms of decolonial discussions, those who are rendered visible are hiding the trauma of those who have been erased. The violence of this erasure is veiled through colonial structures, the residue of which is still active today (Kuokkanen: 2020b). This argument, as I discussed in chapter three, is prevalent throughout the history of the female body in Western art history and contemporary media imagery, and to employ a methodology that also stands accused of that same issue may appear contradictory. However, it is from this position of contradiction that new materialism and post humanism offers interesting provocations, and it is within this contradictory space that I situate this project.

Reframing a phEminist body

Dolphijn and van der Tuin (2012) assert that new materialism supports multiple embodied perspectives, arguing that it is not a break away from the various aspects of feminist thought or materialist pasts referenced above but is a diffraction of all histories. This layering process creates a new orientation that reaches to past, present and future entanglements. Dolphijn and van der Tuin (2012) explain,

> A new metaphysics does not add something to thought… It rather traverses and thereby rewrites thing *as a whole*, leaving nothing untouched, redirecting every possible idea according to its new sense of orientation. (13; emphasis in original)

This traversal of philosophical pasts positions new materialism as an active theory, starting from a position of movement that 'alludes to cartography rather than classification' (Dolphijn and van de Tuin: 2012, 111). This suggests a process of exploration and collaboration that questions the inherent ideologies of *all* histories. Thus, new materialism is 'something to be *put to work'* (Dolphijn

and Van der Tuin: 2012, 103; emphasis in original). To be 'at work' suggests a desire to support change, to work with(in) past histories and with(in) various disciplines to seek alternative ways of thinking through the matter and materiality of the world around us. However, as a phEmaterialist practice situated in educational spaces that have been formed and informed by humanist histories, this is a complex situation within which to work. The task at hand should not be diminished and it isn't necessarily as straightforward as 'putting it to work' to decolonise our curricula. As Braidotti (2013a) lucidly points out, 'these [humanist] principles are so deeply entrenched in our habits of thought that it is difficult to leave them behind' (30). Sullivan (2012) goes further, arguing that 'it is not possible to simply abandon, throw off, or replace one's perspective with anOther's, at will' (306; emphasis in original). To elaborate on this point, Anne McClintock (1995) explains that relations between race, class and gender,

> are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like armatures of Lego. Rather, they come into coexistence *in and through* relation to each other - if in contradictory and conflictual ways. (5; emphasis in original)

In Baradian (2004) terms it is the intra-action of the 'contradictory and conflictual' relationships that exist between social and cultural histories within which this project sits, that also, paradoxically, provide the agency that is the matter of this practiceresearch.

Critiques by feminist scholars of colour of post humanism and new materialism, such as Ahmed's (2008) contention that to render bodies as matter within affective encounters propagates colonial narratives of the universal body, can be engaged with as a point of activism (Hinton and Lui: 2015). Taking up such critiques in art historical research can align such narratives with the erasure of diverse voices within contemporary curricula (Atkinson: 2011; Dash: 2010; Thornham: 2007; Araeen: 2013; Doy: 2013; Pollock: 2003; Parker and Pollock: 1981; Nead: 1992). Western art history can and should be accused of being a 'forgetful' subject, that needs reminding of the complexity of its gendered and raced colonial pasts. It is interesting that the new materialist strand of this phEmaterialist practice becomes *more* useful when the methodology itself heightens the

contradictory and conflictual process of thinking with issues of race. Hinton and Lui (2015) argue

that this is the 'potential paradox' of new materialist theories, one that provokes a perverse

ontology, as it 'reveals and troubles, in one and the same gesture, the iterative re-inscriptions of

human privilege – the sovereign subject – along with its racialised inscriptions' (141). The

suggestion of new materialism as a 'perverse ontology' (Hinton and Lui: 2015) can be applied here

to trouble Western art history and the current national curriculum in secondary arts education in

England. The uncomfortable spaces within the methodology are where its humanist pasts lurk and

make trouble, and it is also where a new materialist analysis 'confounds the nature of

abandonment itself' (Ahmed: 2008, 139).

By entangling decolonial theory within this project, I actively make trouble for the colonial pasts

inherent in the art trope of the female nude and the wider assemblage of this practiceresearch. It is

a statement of intent that acknowledges how '[w]e all struggle against different aspects of

colonialism for very different positions' (Chalmers: 2017), but central to this thesis is that

colonisation 'binds both the colonizer and the colonized into a structural power relation that comes

to define all things' (Smith: 2021, 191). The learnt narratives of the female nude that define

Western ideals of beauty and resonate in the contemporary art classroom are one element of the

structural powers that need to be dismantled; the colonised lines, as discussed in chapter three,

are another; the educational structures this project sits within are another; my histories and the

YWAs' histories another, and so on. Therefore, when positioning oneself in amongst this

uncomfortable assemblage there needs to be more support in place rather than less. Although the

frictions between post humanism and new materialism and decolonial and indigenous

methodologies are well versed, I draw once more on the claim made by Zembylas (2018, 264) that

to 'pluriversalize the task of decolonising' is essential in its dismantling and I therefore make a

hooksian (2003) 'anti racist choice' to assemble practices together in this fight. Zembylas (2018)

further explains this positioning in the context of higher education,

> Proposing a singular pathway toward dismantling the neoliberal order in higher education
>
> would run the risk of obscuring the tensions between decolonial and posthuman

perspectives and becoming complicit to the technologies of power through which a

reinvented humanism is appropriated in higher education. (264)

To apply this understanding in secondary art education is to highlight the tensions between the

methodologies and use this tension as the catalyst for collaboration *with* decolonial methodologies;

a move from a theoretical position to intra-activism (Renold and Ringrose: 2019). Supporting a

repositioning of colonial discomfort as an inherent and important factor in this Western educational

research project promotes a complex and entwined understanding of the world as becoming

through a multitude of forces, in this case creative phEmaterialist forces. Educational researchers

Alyssa Niccolini, Shiva Zarabadi and Jessica Ringrose (2018) consolidate these ideas,

> PhEmaterialism, in particular, strives to imagine and enact worldings outside of the
>
> preeminence, self-containment, and historical exclusions … Opposed to a humanist
>
> progress narrative that views tension as something to be overcome or eradicated, we see
>
> tension as an activating force that here intra-acted with the human and non-human bodies
>
> opening spaces for manoeuvring within difference. (325)

PhEmaterialism is therefore a helpful framework to think through the complex narratives of

historical arts practice and to extrapolate ways in which to 'manoeuvre' within educational spaces

alive with difference to activate initiatives that rethink ideas of Western forms of creativity. Ignoring

the critiques that are highlighted above would reify elite colonial whiteness, but engaging with such

critiques and activating phEmaterialism as a disruptive methodology, can provide the tools with

which we can begin to 'dismantle the master's house' (Lorde: 2018). To activate a collaboration

between phEmaterialism and decolonial practices within this practiceresearch, I oriented towards a

phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope (hooks: 2003), as discussed in chapter one. To expand on those

discussions I now assemble a phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope specifically through the material of

the skin and the matter of this practiceresearch.

PhEmaterialist skin methodology: A phEminist assemblage

To pull together all the conflicting elements of this practiceresearch I draw on a material that is itself based in patriarchal, colonial structures, but is also agentic and always morphing. The skin is used to situate this phEmaterialist methodology and as experienced at the start of this thesis and in chapter one, the skin emerges through my material investigations as an interesting material to think through (Ahmed and Stacey: 2001). It is a paradoxical material that holds the residue of the learnt, colonial narratives of the idealised woman (Nead: 1992), but also a material that that forms our largest bodily organ and can be (re)imagined through its vibrant intra-active qualities (Biga et al: 2018; Ahmed and Stacey: 2001; Connor: 2004; Benthian: 2002). The skin is a material assemblage formed both through the apparatus of historical patriarchal constructs and through future feminist practice. Skins can be read as 'phenomena', which Barad (2003) explains are produced through 'agential intra-actions of multiple apparatuses of bodily production' (817). The skin is such a phenomenon, a complex assemblage that is more-than the sum of its parts. Taylor and Hughes (2016) helpfully position a post human (skin) ethics as follows,

> it means recognizing skin not as a barrier-boundary but as a porous, permeable sensorium of connectivity with/in a universe of dynamic co-constitutive and differential becomings. (15)

This 'dynamic co-constitutional' shift provides a space for the formation of a phEminist skin, one that is politically activated to resist patriarchal and colonial narratives. It is a skin that has potential to diffract cultural differencings to imagine a post human space of collaboration (Haraway: 1991; Barad: 2003; Braidotti: 2013a); a messy practice, that excites risk and failure, that courts a Braidottian (2011) nomadic body, defined as 'multifunctional and complex, as a transformer of flows and energies, affects, desires, and imagination' (25). The nomadic skin is situated here as 'a threshold for transformation' for pedagogical imaginings of future selves.

Deleuze and Guattari's (2013, 7) notion of assemblage as a fluid structure of multiplicities, that 'necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections' can be applied to the skin as a methodology to examine the processes undergone by a skin cell, which is formulated through

layers of interacting matter, all aspects of the material becoming with and through each other at all

times, a constant emerging force. As political theorist Jane Bennett (2010) explains,

> Assemblages are not governed by any central head: no one materiality or type of material has
>
> sufficient competence to determine consistently the trajectory or impact of the group. The
>
> effects generated by an assemblage are, rather, emergent properties, emergent in their ability
>
> to make something happen. (24)

Rooted in collaboration *with*, assemblages embody the creative process, an unfolding rather than a

conclusion. This process of an unfolding assemblage is described by Deleuze and Guattari (2013)

as having 'no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo'

(26). This idea of always being 'in the middle', diversifies our lived futures as existing across time,

past, present and future. The skin, which is in perpetual motion, sheds, wrinkles, scars, dies and

regrows as a substance that is constantly in process of 'becoming' at all times. This suggests a

skin surface assemblage where 'multiple and diverse theories' can oscillate (Coleman: 2016, 236),

but also acknowledges the complexity of such an assemblage as being always *in friction* with

human-nonhuman-skin-race-gender-microbes-bacteria-colonial-neo-liberal-pedagogical

assemblages. In developing a phEmaterialist methodology inspired by the material of the skin, that

acknowledges both humanist pasts and phEminist futures, I found Coleman's (2016) suggestion of

a 'turn to surface' helpful in reading through various feminist critiques. Coleman posits the idea of

reading all feminisms, past present and future through a turn to surface thus collapsing linear time,

in favour of a diffractive reading. Coleman (2016) states,

> Surface is therefore a site composed through and on which multiple and potentially diverse
>
> entities or states may (be) assemble(d). In the case of feminist theoretical turns, a surface
>
> might be a site *on which* (various possible versions of) the past, present and future
>
> assemble and are arranged. (236, my emphasis)

Instead of positioning the idea of surface '*on which* … past, present and future assemble' I situate

the skin as a 'surface' *through which* past present and future is an everyday occurrence. The skin

is a surface assemblage that is in constant motion, that generates and regenerates in our present

and our future and through which the 'future assembles' (Coleman: 2016, 236). Haraway's (2016) ideas of 'kinship', or perhaps more pertinently, Niccolini, Zarabadi and Ringrose's (2018, 327) description of 'odd kin', whereby theoretical stances create 'conceptual tensions', further entangle in this surface assemblage. The 'oddkinship' within the skin is the tension between the human and non-human, the humanist past and phEmaterialist futures, or the acknowledgement that we are always a more-than-human-assemblage, living within an odd (s)kinship. The potentials within this forge new possibilities and future relationships, but also speak to a cohabitation *within* a 'zone of awkward engagement' (Tsing: 2004). The 'zone' that Tsing identifies as unpredictable is where the tension between the problematic production of intersections of race, class and gender as a post-colonial construct (Puar, 2011), entangles with the nomadic body, which Braidotti (2011) situates as intra-acting within 'one's own location'. She expands on this, explaining that

> Insofar as axes of differentiation like class, race, ethnicity, gender, age and others intersect and interact with each other in the constitution of subjectivity, the notion of nomad refers to the simultaneous occurrence of many of these at once. (Braidotti: 2011, 25)

The focus on the potential of the nomadic skin as simultaneously evolving matter, and as having the agential capacity to affect and be affected (Fox and Alldred: 2019), repositions the body in historical discourses and challenges the shallow representations and gendered binaries of the female nude.

Diffraction: Feminine skins to phEminist skins

Employing diffraction as a tool that challenges 'representationalism', is vital in terms of challenging the colonial skin of the female nude. Diffractive methodology was initially inspired by Haraway (1997, 2004) as an alternative to purely reflective ontologies. This 'physical phenomenon' has been further developed by Barad (2007), who explains,

> Diffraction is not reflection raised to some higher power. It is not a self-referential glance back at oneself. While reflection has been used as a methodological tool by scholars relying on representationalism, there are good reasons to think that diffraction may serve

as a productive model for thinking through nonrepresentationalist methodological approaches. (88)

As such, diffraction provides an opportunity for non-representational approaches to surface, it opens up ways to think *through* the skin (Ahmed and Stacey: 2001), and operates as a tool for exploring a way of thinking that 'queers boundaries and calls out for a rethinking of the modes of identity and difference' (Barad: 2014, 171). Diffraction, as a wave pattern experienced in light, water or sound, is when waves 'combine when they overlap and the apparent bending and spreading out of waves when they encounter an obstruction' (Barad: 2007, 28). The interesting moment in the pattern formation is when obstacles are encountered, for example, when two stones are thrown into a pond and the ripples from each stone collide, the pattern formation in this example moves from a position of *difference* between the two sets of ripples, to an active position of *differencing* the 'encounter' where the two sets of ripples meet and intra-act. To try to explain this in terms of the skin, if we take the surface image of the skin in its straited web-like structures, it is visually perceived as flat and motionless. It is within this perceived stillness that the skin is seen in its *difference* to others, situating it as raced, gendered or classed. To shift this view to a post human lively skin, as experienced in *Becoming Skin Cell* at the start of the thesis, supports the alternative view of *differencing.* Engaging with the skin as active, agentic and 'vibrant' (Bennett: 2010), a phEmaterialist skin cuts across didactic colonial narratives of difference. This differencing of the skin as a diffractive decolonising theory activates my argument through reforming the skin as a phEminist assemblage rather than a colonial feminine surface.

Haraway (1994) further explains diffraction as 'the noninnocent, complexly erotic practice of making a difference in the world, rather than displacing the same elsewhere' (61). It involves taking ownership of the body, rather than 'displacing the same' stereotypes of body norms; it is the ownership of the body from a feminist position that as Haraway (1994) suggests is 'erotic'. I interpret erotic here in a similar vein to the hooksian (1994, 194) notion of the 'erotic' as a source for shared creative 'energy'. Apply this notion of 'erotic energy' to a topic such as the female nude and the traditional discourse of sexual imaginings is diffracted from the traditional patriarchal gaze

(Nead: 1992) to instead 'invigorate discussion and excite the critical imagination' (hooks: 1994, 195). The structure of the skin is itself cartographic, it suggests multiple pathways, it speaks to surface and depth and multiple layers of simultaneous becomings. This disrupts binary striated narratives of black history and white history, man and woman, and so on. It supports being and becoming other, becoming fluid in our orientations and transient in our imaginings; it supports an 'erotic practice of making a difference in the world' (Haraway: 1994, 61).

Such an erotic practice can be elicited from Haraway's (1991) argument that the development of the cyborg is a rejection of the boundaries separating human and animal form, encouraging feminists to move beyond traditional definitions of gender and feminism. As explored in Becoming Skin Cell, we are already fabricated hybrids, we are already human and non-human assemblages. Braidotti (2010) further challenges the notion of what it is to be human and questions how the materialist shift suggests alternative dialogues 'around the changing roles and representations of the human body' (202). Living matter, stem cell research, advances in prosthetics and cyborg technological advancements all impact on and merge the human/non-human binary, creating a blurred landscape of potential (Braidotti: 2010, 201). How bodies are defined is more fluid and opens up opportunities for reimaging the patriarchal construct of femininity and the female body. Haraway (1991) further argues that the cyborg is 'post-gender', and it is the freedom and escape from patriarchal dominance that allows for liberation from 'hierarchical dominance' (150). Through this post-gender community Haraway (1991) rearticulates the future of the human, stating that we are all already cyborgs, 'chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism' (150). If we use this as a point of entry into how I am forming the assemblage of this practiceresearch as activating a post human skin, myself and the YWAs are already 'fabricated hybrids'. The skin offers a diffractive relational ontology, one that moves beyond our own parameters of the purely human, intra-acting with other human and non-human bodies, as the project emerges through creative encounters, moving away from the feminine skins of the female nude to the enabling of phEminist skins of resistance.

The making of a phEminist skin phabric[19] ⬭⬭⬭

Thinking about these ideas materially, the following art works signify a step towards a phEmaterialist 'crafty' practice, a material process of 'making research matter through creative and mobile methodologies' (Renold and Ringrose: 2019, n.p.n). This form of making acknowledges that '[e]very practice is a mode of thought, already in the act' (Manning and Massumi: 2014, vii) and builds on the material explorations shared in chapter one, where I began to explore various mapping practices to resituate the concept of a life drawing, initially through drawing (Figs. 9-13) and fabric maps (Figs. 14 and 16). It was through these initial fabric life mappings that the desire to create my own fabric that the glue skinning pieces evolved (Figs. 73-74), as a means to diffract gendered 'fabricated realities' (Butler: 2006). This triggered various shifts in perspective, offering a physically 'sticky' (Ahmed: 2002) metaphor for the colonial pasts I have been discussing, but also a runny, morphing substance that changes through intra-action with the atmosphere. The morphing substance of PVA glue became a material through which I could create a 'phEminist phabric'. The process involved applying glue to the skin to capture a life map of the body, encapsulating the mapped lines of our skin (Fig. 74), pulling previous mapping explorations literally into the flesh of the body.

The slow process of creating each glue skin and slowing peeling it away from the skin prompted a deeper investigation to the skin, and the journey of the skin cell. The process became a celebration of the porous and flaky skin, which I began to use as a tool to challenge centuries of regulation of the female skin (Nead: 1992), a history that I have already discussed in chapter three. The slow process of watching glue dry became an opportunity to hold conversations about the skin, and by sharing the process of glue skinning in the classroom, in lectures or workshops, and as part of exhibitions, the glue skins became not just an auto-biographical life map but an assemblage of multiple bodies as seen in the piece 'Skin phabric' (Fig. 75). Bodies that cut across various identities, race, sexuality, disability, and gender ultimately disrupt the colonial heritage of the heterosexual and racially coded female nude. The glue skin troubles boundaries and histories. As

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[19] All the various glue skinning explorations can be explored via the CCE website:
https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/10-pheminist-skin-fabric.html
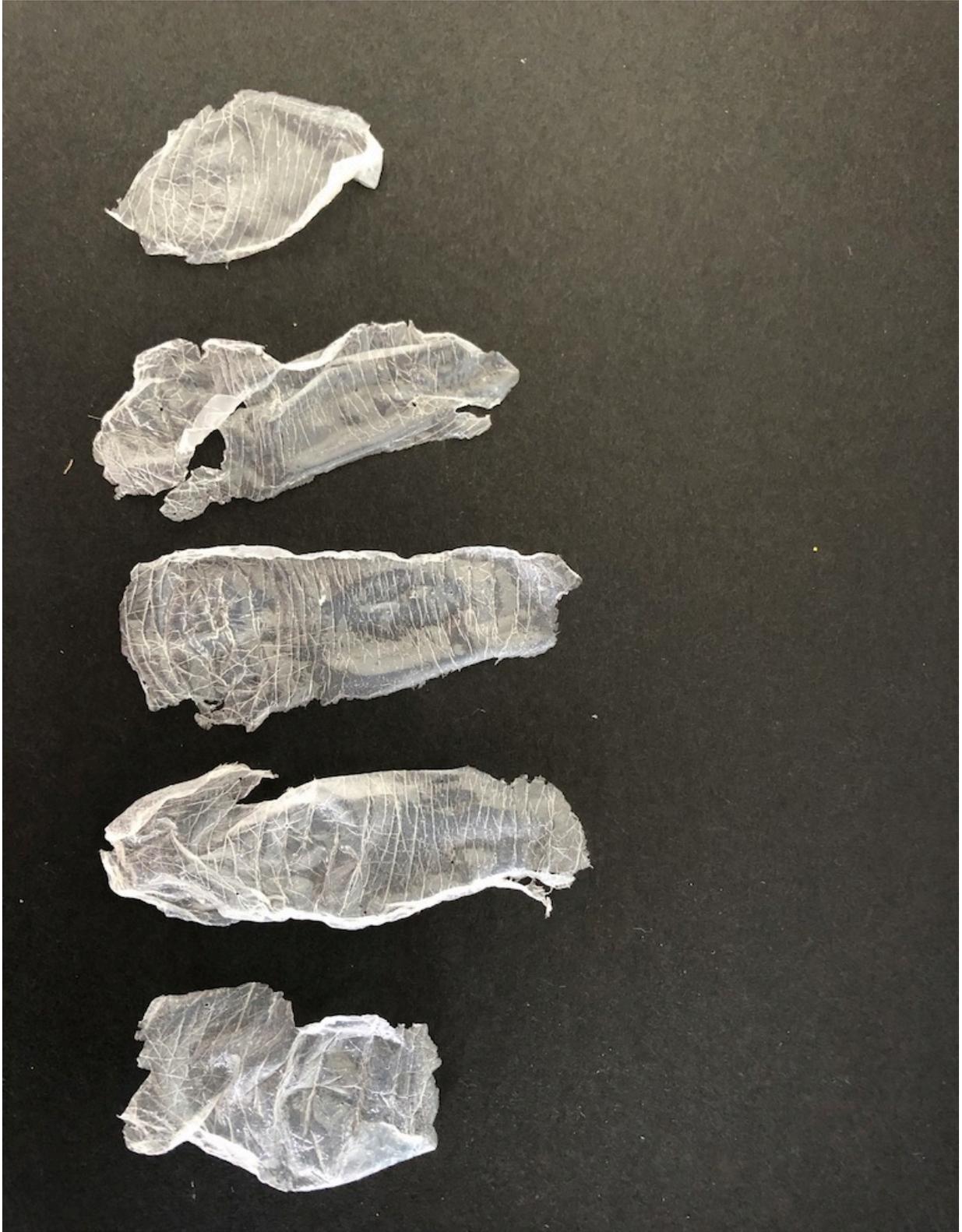
Figure 73: Stanhope (n.d.) Sticky fingers. [Glue skins]
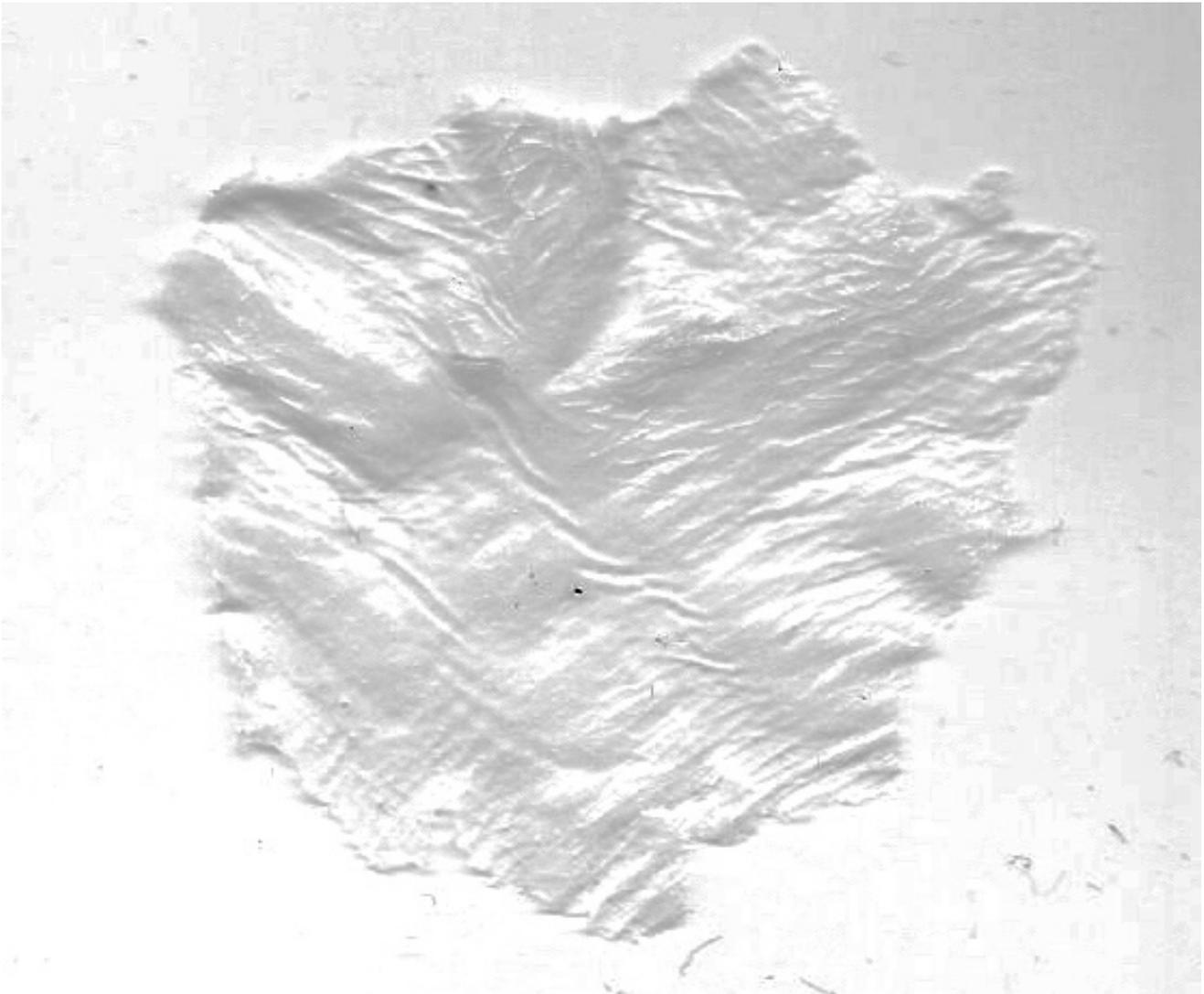
Figure 74: Stanhope (n.d.) Skin scan. [Edited photograph]
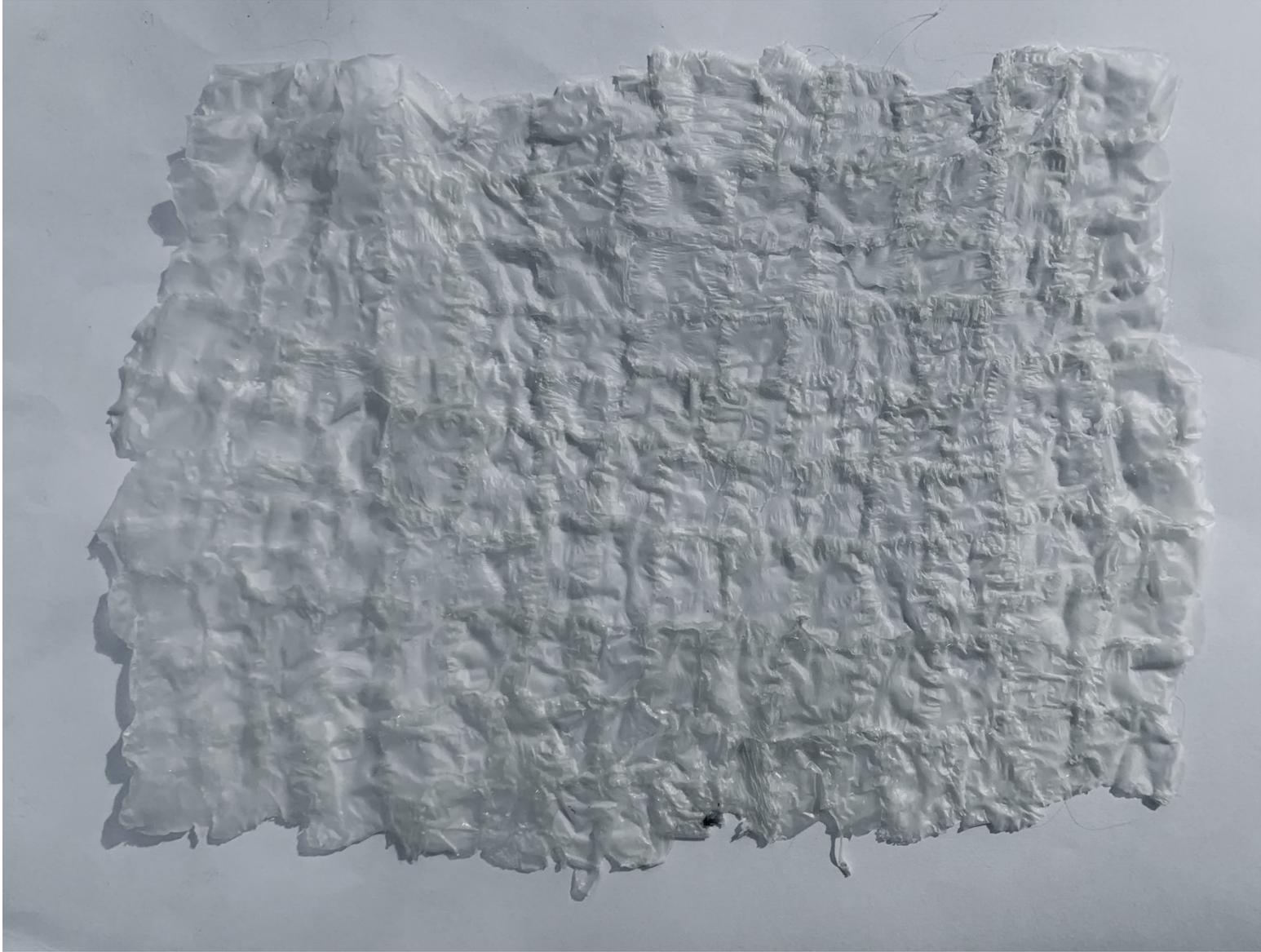
Figure 75: Stanhope (n.d.) Skin phabric. [Stitched glue skins]

Figure 76: Stanhope (n.d.) Diffracting the skin 1. [Edited photograph]

Figure 77: Stanhope (n.d.) Diffracting the skin 2. [Edited photograph]
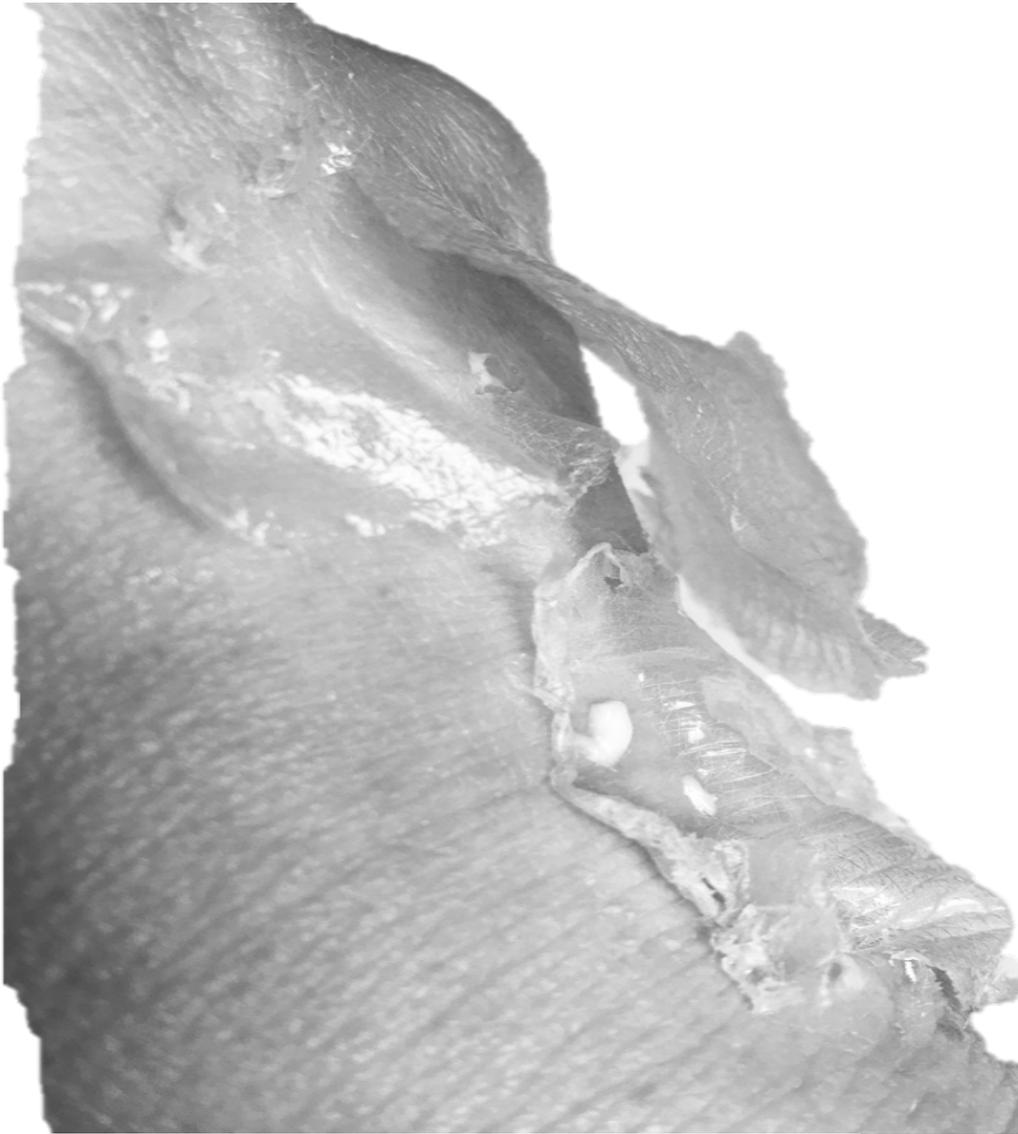
Figure 78: Stanhope (n.d.) Diffracting the skin 3. [Edited photograph]

Figure 79: Stanhope (n.d.) Diffracting the skin 4. [Edited photograph]

Manning (2012, 67) explains '[w]hat we call the present is composed of strands of pastness recomposing and perishing through it'. Our lively bodies are in constant re-compositions, constant flows of 'newness' and a 'reactivation' that Manning argues is a realm of 'invention'. Reading the glue skin as a phEminist life drawing opened up inventive ways of thinking about the act of drawing itself and led to a series of works titled 'Diffracting the skin' (Fig. 76-79). Glue skinning as a process of life drawing supports a process of unlearning that renders the glue skin a pedagogy of matter. It becomes an ethically led phEminist methodology.

Difference and differencing: An ethics of care

Inspired by my explorations with the glue skins, I began to consider what was ethically important in this practiceresearch from a phEmaterialist perspective. This being the bodies of the research, both human and non-human, having agency that both acknowledges and resists the humanist paradigms through which they are co-constituted. As Taylor and Hughes (2016) argue,

> post humanist research practices offer a new ethics of engagement for education by including the nonhuman in questions about *who matters and what counts* in questioning the constitutive role played by colonial dominant paradigms, methodologies and methods. (5; emphasis in original)

'Who matters' here is the collaboration between the various bodies that constitute this research, as discussed above. The predominant focus, however, has to be YWAs. Their intra-actions within this practiceresearch that are situated in 'shifting multiplicities' (Atkinson: 2018) and rhizomatic spaces of the 'unknown' (Haraway: 1994, 62), need ethical considerations that reside 'in one's response to the assemblages in which one finds oneself participating' (Bennett: 2010, 37). My 'response to the assemblage' of this research is to situate phEmaterialist ethics as an ethics of care. As Albert North Whitehead (1968) the American mathematician and philosopher, astutely put it, 'Have a care. Here is something that matters' (116).

What is interesting about the word care, is that its roots lie in anxiety; it is to grieve for or feel concern for something or one. It was not until the 1500s that the alternative meaning of to have a

fondness towards something emerged (Harper: 2001a). The discomfort of this research emerges from a concern with the colonisation of women's bodies in art education, art history and in contemporary media imagery (Nead: 1992, Connor: 2004). The complex assemblages produced by these histories, art works and images through young people's bodies (Coleman: 2009), which are reproduced in terms of hegemonic patriarchal and humanist tropes, is the very positioning of the ethics in this phEmaterialist assemblage. To care for, is as Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) states, 'an ethically and politically charged practice, and one that has been at the forefront of feminist concern with devalued agencies and exclusions' (42). Historically, to care has been seen as a mothering, feminine trait and is often embodied in professions such as nursing, childcare and teaching (Puig de la Bellacasa: 2017). It can therefore be linked in curriculum terms to the 'soft subjects' of the creative practices, as discussed in chapter one, and is positioned in opposition to the disembodied, neoliberal educational structures that value individualism over collaboration (Kittay and Feder: 2002; Puig de la Bellacasa: 2017). Thus, to suggest an ethics of care in this research, is a phEminist retaking of the 'devalued' essentialist feminine stereotype of the female nude and is 'caring with awareness of oppression' (Puig de la Bellacasa: 2017, 61). To position this research in discomfort is to care with awareness of oppression by making a hooksian (2003) antiracist 'choice'.

The slippery space between 'who matters and what counts' in this research, and importantly what is 'cared for', are fraught with both humanist paradigms and phEminist potential. It is good to be aware that '[t]o care can feel good; it can also feel awful. It can do good; it can oppress' (Puig de la Bellacasa: 2017, 1). There is a danger of resituating a white feminism, or paradoxically a colonial position in which one assumes knowledge of another's position. Taylor and Hughes (2016) encapsulate this point when they write that post human ethics are 'not about trying to see the world from inside someone else's shoes - which presumes individuated bodies' (15). To consider these implications through a phEmaterialist lens supports this practiceresearch as a theoretical framework which actively seeks to re-join the material agency of the matter of making. It involves revisiting the matter inside a Western viewpoint, to disrupt the western ontologies that have disembodied the process in the first place. This is perhaps why Renold and Ringrose (2019)

specifically discuss phEmaterialism as a theory that 'prioritises indigenous and other forms of marginalised knowledge and meaning-making' (1). It is the phEmaterialist lens that helps Western scholars navigate the conflicts within the relationship that they seek to disrupt as being already in-the-middle, already intra-acting with and through matter that matters.

Since I am entangled with these complex histories, it is dangerous to suggest that this pedagogical practice is liberatory or emancipatory. Emancipation, as described by Giroux and McLaren (1986, 227) is linking 'knowledges to power by bringing to light and teaching the subjugated histories, experiences, stories, and accounts of those who suffer and struggle'. When Dolphijn and Tuin (2012) state that the 'emancipation of mat(t)er is also by nature a feminist project' (93), it is by acknowledging the inherent difficulties within the matter in question, as to *how* and by *whom* it can be emancipated. As a white Western teacher, I am myself immersed in the political and social constructs from which I am trying to support others to become emancipated, and empowered. As Ellsworth (1989) insightfully argues,

> I cannot unproblematically bring subjugated knowledges to light when I am not free of my own learned racism, fat oppression classism, ableism, or sexism. No teacher is free of these learned and internalized oppressions. (307).

As a result, I am ethically in-the-middle of this complex not-yet-known assemblage and as Taylor and Hughes (2016) suggest, 'the obligations it [the research] gives rise to will not be known in advance because each and every encounter keeps the matter of ethics open' (16). Although my position is ethically 'open' the entanglements of potentially hopeful practices are, as Haraway (1994) would describe, 'knotted'. Haraway (1994) discusses this in terms of the tangled relationship between cultural studies, feminist, multicultural and antiracist theory and science studies, stating that, '[t]he tangles are necessary to effective critical practice' (69). Haraway likens this practice to the game of cat's cradle, in which string entwined between the fingers is passed between players. As Haraway (1994) states,

> Cat's cradle invites a sense of collective work, of one person not being able to make all the patterns alone. One does not "win" at cat's cradle; the goal is more interesting and more open-ended than that. (69)

Inspired by this analogy, I also need to acknowledge that this project is not a definitive proposal and certainly not one that is undertaken alone. The webs of my practice entwine with the colonial pasts that formed my education and the classroom space within which I work, contentious spaces that are 'knotted' and, without question, mistakes will be made (hooks: 2003, 61). This practiceresearch isn't about 'winning' or offering a set of answers to the complexity of the histories within which I am situated. As Sullivan (2012) argues, I cannot disembody myself to gain an objective stance, I cannot simply 'replace [my] perspective with anOther's, at will' (306; emphasis in original). Given that this is an affirmation of the hooksian declaration of making the anti-racist 'choice' (hooks: 2003, 61), to use Haraway's (2016) post human terminology, there is an acute need for 'making kin'. But as she asserts in a footnote,

> Making kin must be done with respect for historically situated, diverse kinships that should not be either generalized or approached in the interest of a too-quick common humanity, multispecies collection, or similar category. Kinships exclude as well as include, and they should do that. Alliances must be attentive to that matter. (Haraway: 2016, 207)

To be 'attentive' in this research assemblage, where bodies come together from various different communities, both human and non-human, the mercurial nature of such spaces means that we need to pay attention for 'mistakes' (hooks: 2003, 61) and for 'failure' (Brown: 2009) as a way not to be seen as conclusive but as a 'staying with the trouble' (Haraway: 2016). To stay with the trouble is not only to critique the colonial narrative that I seek to disrupt, but importantly to critique the critical pedagogies that I employ.

In secondary education diffraction becomes powerful when challenging 'the authority of tradition, a mental timidity, born of privilege or just plain laziness, that cloaks itself in the heavy bombast of cultural heritage and historic preservation' (Buck-Morss: 2010, 70). A rejection of a 'blindness to

institutionalised education' which positions the curriculum as a 'self-referential glance back at oneself' (Barad: 2007, 88). Which if we consider how many narratives have been ignored or erased in Western education curricula, and (as discussed in chapter one) in Western museums, is to speak from a position of privilege, which is inherently that of the white, abled bodied, heterosexual male. Therefore, when we apply this response-able pedagogy to historical bodies, specifically those of art history and the female nude, there is potential to (re)view and (re)take the feminine skins of patriarchal regulation and control (Nead: 1992) to (re)imagine future femininities. This involves (re)positioning the skin as a phEminist material, as a vibrant assemblage caught in a praxis of friction and differencing. Women's skin, which has been constructed by patriarchy as a non-porous and perfect surface, becomes a phEminist material that diffracts such patriarchal constructs, opening up the lived realities of the skin as an intra-acting leaky material that is always in a state of flux and becoming. The skin is in constant collaboration with the body and the world around, it is agentic and pedagogical as it moves beyond mere representation and pulls this practiceresearch into an assemblage fraught with the potential to disrupt colonial histories, at the same time as it has also been formed within them.

Research overview, consent and the phEminist explorations

Having situated the methodological position of this practiceresearch I now introduce the PhEminist Skins project, first discussing the process of consent and then the creative explorations that supported the phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope that I have outlined above. As I mentioned in the introduction, this practiceresearch project was situated at my place of work, an all girls' secondary school in South East London, where I hold the post of Head of Art. Subsequently the usual difficulties around gaining access to a school environment were not an issue. As the project explored issues around gender identity and race drawing on personal experiences, the potential for disclosures from students or students seeking help and support was heightened. Having sound knowledge of the schools support programmes and safeguarding procedures was critical to ensure the well-being of the YWAs, and fundamental to the process of gaining consent. Working in the

school made this process easier as the usual safeguarding checks, such as a DBS[20] check, or knowledge of the schools safeguarding policy, were things I already had or had access to.

The school also required parental consent to be gained for each of the students involved, but to ensure the students were actively situated as agents in the research process they were also asked to sign consent forms. This not only ensured they had a clear understanding of the initial aims of the project but that they also had autonomy over their contributions and could drop out at any time if they so wished. The life drawing session required a separate parental consent form due to safeguarding concerns of students drawing from an unclothed model. This was historically addressed by requesting a female model[21], which the school felt more comfortable hosting, and removed some of the perceived safe guarding risks associated with having a male model. When the life class was originally introduce in 2011, discussions were held with the then principle to unpick further safe guarding issues around hosting a life drawing class with a female model. The concerns of the school mainly oscillated around the objectification and sexualisation of the female body and deemed hosting a class would perpetuate such perspectives. These fears were also issues mirrored by some concerned parents who equated life drawing with pornography. Although anyone who has ever participated in a public life class understands how different these experiences are, the patriarchal history and colonial narratives around the female form have blurred the boundaries between the autonomy a woman has over her own body and the colonial history of the male gaze. As I discussed in chapter three, such presumptions are not without foundation, however, as this project sought to confront these very issues and instigate conversations around the decolonisation of colonial hegemonic perceptions of the female nude in order to create emancipatory practices, these concerns were allayed.

Although my working in the school made initial conversations introducing the project much easier to activate, the actual process of how the project would work in the busy context of the school needed negotiation. A key requirement from the school was that the project did not impact on the

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[20] DBS – a Disclosure and Barring Service enables employers to check prospective employees criminal history.
[21] As the life class was part of the yearly art curriculum, gaining parental consent was already an embedded process and the use if a female model was also already a pre-requisite as set by the school.

students lesson time outside of their allocated art lessons. In conversation with the then principle it was decided the research would take place during the autumn term: September to December 2014, over approximately seven weeks. Factoring in time to introduce the project to the students and gain consent from parents or carers and the students themselves, the project commenced during the last week of September 2014. To limit the impact on the participants' other lessons, and to fit in with my own teaching commitments, it was agreed that the sessions were undertaken on alternate weeks during the one-hour period[22] of the participants' allocated art lessons. With this time frame non-negotiable I planned for three workshops, a one-day life drawing session (which was an annual event and open to all the art students in the school) and individual one-hour interviews. This took the project up to mid-November leaving the remaining two sessions open for the YWAs to be able to decide how they wanted to develop their experiences further, if indeed they did. I initially proposed two one hour sessions for these creative discussions, but with the nature of all creative practice more time was needed as ideas flowed and became increasingly ambitious. As the single art lesson was at the end of the day it was easy to extend the sessions after school without it impacting other lessons. As a teacher in the school I had access to parent and carer phone numbers so could negotiate this on an individual basis without needing more formal discussions with the school. I also made preliminary arrangements for the possibility of an exhibition or event if the YWAs wanted to take such a route, which needed to occur at the end of term just before the winter break in December 2014. Due to time constraints I had already gained permission to use the 310 Gallery, a community space in the Centre for Arts and Learning at Goldsmiths University London, in case the YWAs wanted to take their ideas outside of the school, again this was optional and depended on what the YWAs wanted to say and who they wanted to say it to. Finally, I also factored in a group interview after the project had concluded which would take place in the January of 2015.

As the structure of this practiceresearch was open-ended, the process of gaining consent also had to reflect that model, being able to adapt and morph as the project evolved. Consent needed to be

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[22] Students had three one hour periods of art each week which were broken up into a one hour and a two hour session. The practiceresearch took place during the single one hour period.

regained as the project evolved and different opportunities came to the fore. As the YWAs did decide to hold an exhibition at the 310 gallery, consent to take them out of school was needed, both for the YWAs to set up and lead the exhibition but also for their fellow students to visit the exhibition. This included the schools trip application paperwork, risk assessments and letters of consent for parents and carers, this occurred towards the end of November 2014. Furthermore, when the opportunity arose to participate in the Tate film 'Drawing from Life - Animating the Archives'[23] the same paperwork exercise took place to once more gain consent. This time also including discussions around safe guarding issues of how the students and the school would be acknowledged in the film. As I discussed in the introduction, it was from this opportunity to participate in the Tate film that drew attention to the issues surrounding the use of pseudonyms in the thesis in light of their first names being used to credit their work in the film. This prompted the need to re-gain consent from the YWAs concerning named acknowledgments in the thesis and highlighted the need for a morphing and flexible idea of consent. It also drew attention to the disparities between different institutional settings and their understanding of safeguarding issues. The sometimes generic interpretations of what consent and safe guarding means in academic research, and how best to protect participants, needed to be reviewed. Going through the process of obtaining consent in the various ways outlined above has informed the need for more complex and flexible understandings of this process.

One final aspect of consent in terms of this practiceresearch was the matter and materials of the creative explorations. It had been outlined in the initial consent forms that photographs of the YWAs creative practices and voice recordings from the interviews would be taken throughout the project. It was however necessary for a more individualised and thorough process of consent for the creative matter to be gained after the Perfect Exhibition, as each piece of creative practice produced and each photograph taken during the Perfect Exhibition had a different relationship with each YWA. Therefore, every art work created by the YWA's, or images taken of them or their work during the Perfect Exhibition, as well as them naming their art works, was individually granted

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[23] The Tate film Drawing from Life - Animating the Archives can be viewed on the CCE website: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/drawing-from-life---tate-film.html

consent to be used (or not) in the thesis and on the CCE website. The YWAs therefore had complete ownership over their work and images.

Situating the phEminist explorations

The creative methods of this practiceresearch, or what I term phEminist explorations, are the material tools through which I support a phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope as an emancipatory practice of empowerment. Working with materials support the ethics of care discussed earlier. Alimo and Heckman (2008) explain that 'ethical practices – as opposed to ethical principles – do not seek to extend themselves over and above material realities, but instead emerge from them' (8). As this practice emerges from the materials, it is impossible to treat the explorations as linear entities. Each YWA intra-acts with each exploration as an individual and therefore there needs to be an 'openness to the needs' of all participants. What the YWAs learnt from the materials and how the materials intra-acted with the YWAs is unknown. As Renold (2018) highlights in their research project *'Feel what I feel': making da(r)ta with teen girls for creative activisms on how sexual violence matters,* 'messy' creative methods offer several ways of working. Renold (2018) discusses how through 'an invitation to feel, touch, share and transform' (19) the participants could articulate what is often very difficult to put into words, things that can be 'felt corporeally, but are too painful to talk about' (Renold: 2018, 14). Renold further emphasises that using creative methods supports the participants' ownership of the project, but also importantly their experiences. It can often be challenging to discuss difficult experiences verbally. Diffractive arts methods support a creative vulnerability (Haraway: 2016), that deprivileges the voice and seeks to support other ways of knowing. Renold (2018) details how these diffractive methods not only

> ...provide new onto-epistemological cartographies of the sexual discriminations and
>
> violences that infuse young people's lives, but also the potentiality for inventiveness
>
> through which they survive and sometimes transcend. (39)

This 'potential for inventiveness' occurs in the between spaces of the unknown, which means the concepts and directions projects evolve in chance encounters. As Renold (2018) discusses, 'It is near impossible to map why one concept, percept or affect might gather speed in ways that carry it

forward, while others dissipate' (42). Returning to a Spinozan idea of speeds and slowness in the context of this research assemblage, this means that each YWA will move at different times and at different paces. What clings to us as we emerge from the creative encounter is different for each of us. Therefore, I needed to be attentive to this emergent process when planning the phEminist Explorations of this practiceresearch.

The order the explorations developed in the context of this practiceresearch, as outlined in the Project Overview Map (Fig: 80), were: PhEminist mapping, PhEminist collaging, PhEminist disruptions of the female nude, and a PhEminist life drawing class. However, in terms of planning the explorations I wanted to allow for as much 'potentiality for inventiveness' (Renold: 2018, 39) as possible. As I mentioned above, apart from the initial phEminist mapping exploration and the phEminist life drawing class, which also had a set date due to needing to fit in with the Royal Academy outreach programme, the order and focus of the explorations were not pre-determined, especially the evolution of the project after the four phEminist explorations. The process behind what may appear to be a time linear structure as seen in the project overview map (Fig: 80), is actually a rhizomatic research model. As with previous practiceresearch projects (Stanhope: 2011a, 2011b) and the experience of working with material processes in the classroom for over ten years, I was acutely aware of the need for leaving 'gaps' in my planning. Often at odds with secondary educational structures, having a non-defined route through a project nurtures Atkinson's (2018) idea of the pedagogical 'adventure' or the 'that-which-is-not-yet' (Atkinson: 2018). To think through the possibilities of this project and to ensure I created a structure which supported an evolving and adventurous practice, I once again drew inspiration from the skin.

The image that sits alongside the project overview map (Fig: 80) is my initial understanding or 'skin map' of the project (Fig: 81). It is a photograph of a paper cut detailing a section of my skin (created at a similar time to the material explorations I shared in chapter one). As seen in the skin map the shapes create an intersecting irregular pattern, crazy paving pathways, which remove an initial start point. This opens up the potential to create various routes through the research, rather than an imposed linear structure. The skin map shifts our viewpoint from a linear Euclidian line, to

PhEminist Skins Project Overview

PhEminist Mapping Exploration
1hr Session (Lesson time)
September 2014

PhEminist Media Collaging Exploration
1hr session (Lesson time)
October 2014

PhEminist Disruption of the female Nude
1hr session (Lesson time)
October 2014

PhEminist Life Drawing
5hr session (Full day)
October 2014

Individual Interviews
Six 1hr lesson slots
November 2014

PhEminist Idea Mapping
5hrs over two sessions extending after school
November 2014

The Perfect Exhibition
1 day set up 1 day Exhibition
December 2014

Final Group Interview
2hr Session
January 2014

The artist teacher in the classroom and change in the student teacher relationship
C. Stanhope (2014a)

Not just a pretty picture challenging preconceptions of art and design education
C. Stanhope (2014b)

Beauty and the Beast—can the drawing support female students in challenging gendered media imagery
C. Stanhope (2013)

Tate film

Shared fragments

Artist in residence

Centre for Creative Explorations

Debate cake

Marriage

Body mapping

Time to talk

Supporting research

Figure 80: Stanhope (n.d.) Project overview timeline map. [Scanned image of project overview map drawing]

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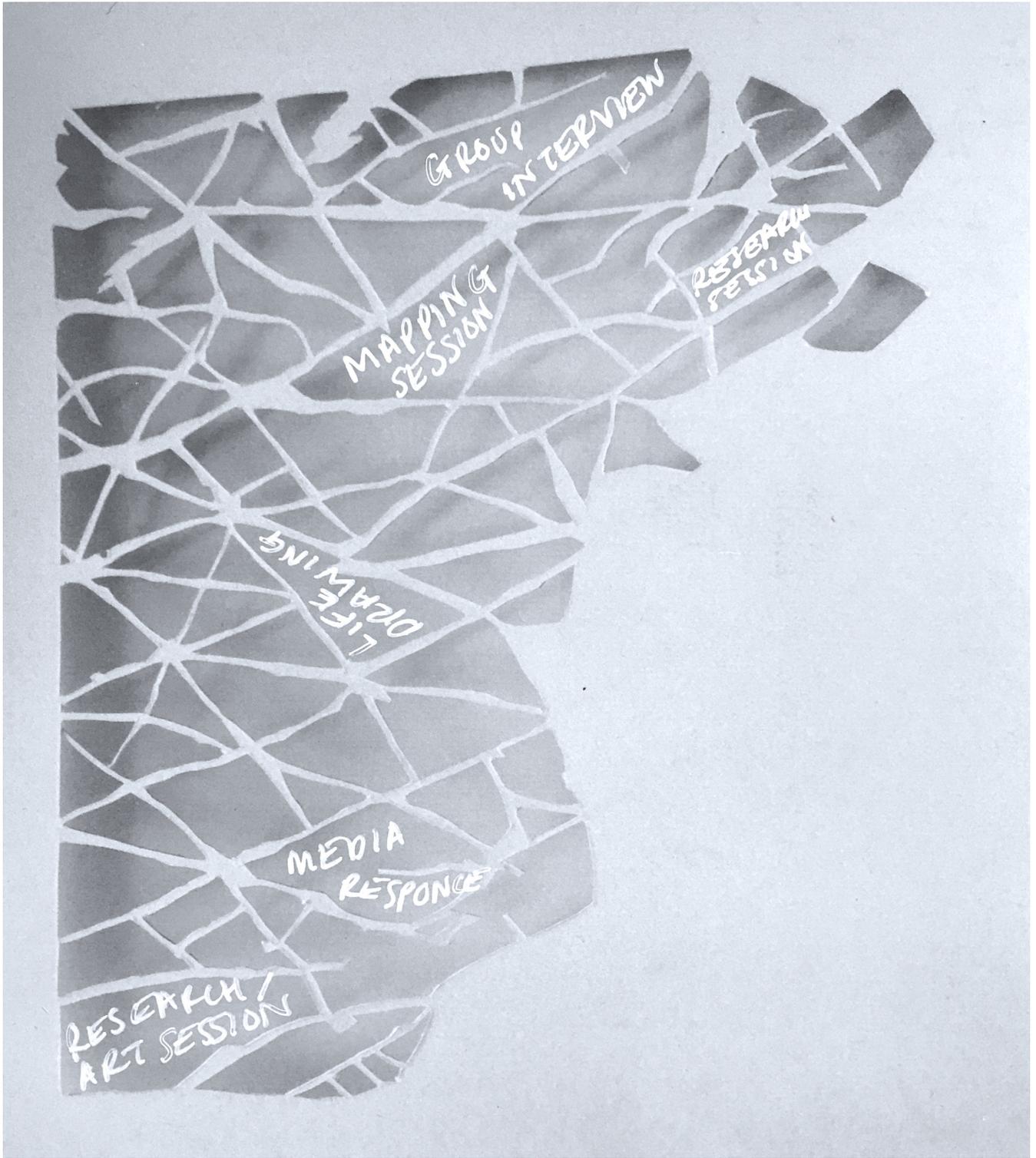
Figure 81: Stanhope (n.d.) Project overview as skin map. [Edited photograph of paper cut]

what Ingold (2007) refers to as a wayfaring line. Supporting an adventure of exploration, rather than a planned route with predestined stops along the way. What the skin map also suggests is the fleeting quality of the skin; a lived experience through the materiality of the ever-changing fabric through which we interact and entangle with the world. As Irwin (2014) states, 'Tuning one's skin to listen involves a sense of aliveness of a body relating to the world at a particular moment' (25). The skin map is an entanglement of moments, and its purpose, as Irwin discusses, is to listen to the aliveness of relating to the world, or in the case of this practiceresearch, to the YWAs. To 'pheel' how each exploration can support the YWAs on their journey, listen to their needs, ideas and suggestions *through* each of the explorations.

As you can see in the structure of the skin map, it offers gaps in which to place different elements of the research process. Shifting from a linear perspective to a topological approach, a nomadic map, that can be approached differently by whoever 'reads' it. It therefore opens up the practiceresearch to possibility and, importantly, is open to change depending on what human and non-human participants are involved. The gaps acknowledge the individual and shared histories that we all bring to a research project, our personal experiences, past research, moods and emotions which are in a constant state of flux and how we then intra-act with the matter and materiality of the creative process. This is also alluded to in the Project Overview Map (Fig: 80), highlighting the entwined process of my practiceresearch before this project and also the entangled nature of the CCE that emerged from this project.

I have purposely placed the project overview map and the initial skin maps together to both show the actual flow of this project and as a reminder of how the skin permeates through the thinking of this project. I am obviously not advocating the use of a skin map to rewrite how research is planned as this would become more of a time consuming tick box exercise than anything of practical use. But what the skin map highlights, and supported me in developing within this project, was the reminder to challenge embedded power structures through the process of how to approach the planning of the project. Having the skin map actively agitating next to the overview project map empowers a sense disruption but also of 'adventure' (Atkinson: 2018) with the institutional structures that I work. A shift from an outcome based project that moves in

predetermined steps from A to B to C and so on, to an exploration activated through the collaboration *with* the YWAs rather than one that is decided by myself, the researcher or the teacher (Stanhope: 2011b).

To work in this way is to work within an ethics of care (Puig de la Bellacasa: 2017) responding to the needs of the YWAs through their engagement with each exploration. Subsequently, when the media became the main point of discussion in the mapping exploration, and to support an unpicking of those emotions, I developed the media collage exploration. It is also important to point out that the flow of explorations was not linear in terms moving from the colonial narrative to a place of empowerment at the end of the project. For example, the media collage exploration started to disrupt and question set patriarchal narratives around beauty standards, but the subsequent life drawing exploration saw embedded ideals of bodies and drawing emerge again. The Perfect Exhibition didn't see a complete undoing of colonially embedded histories, but it began a *process* of disruption. Therefore, this practiceresearch is not a how to list, there is no beginning or end; it is just part of a process that is always emerging, forming and reforming and that hopes to diffract the hegemonic colonial narratives that suffuse our ways of seeing.

PhEminist mapping[24]

The phEminist mapping exploration was set up as a material conversation, a cartographic method of creating connections, mapping shared stories to support the emergence of a community (Wenger: 1998). This took the simple form of an idea mapping exercise on a large sheet of paper spread over a series of tables in the centre of the room, on which each YWAs responses were differentiated from one another with pens of various colours. I supported this initial exploration by providing a series of prompt words. The words were taken from the front covers of a range of women's magazines. These included: Body, Skin, Female, Femininity, and Beauty, which were the most repeated words on the covers of magazines that lined the shelf in the local shop. They are words that hooks (1994) and Ahmed (2004) would consider 'weighted words', words rooted in

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[24] PhEminist mapping website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/3-pheminist-mapping.html

oppressive power relations, which for hooks (1994) can also provide an opportunity for transformation through collaboration. These words became the trigger that elicited individual responses, that could then resonate and create connections across the group, a sharing of stories that created what hooks (1994) has described as 'an open learning community' (8). As this was the first exploration, it was important to build relationships of trust, especially with me, as the YWAs' teacher and a person who did not share their heritage (Fitzpatrick: 2013). To develop a practice that didn't perpetuate the teacher-student hierarchy (Page: 2012a; Adams: 2005, 2010; Atkinson and Dash: 2005), and to gain the trust of the YWAs as they shared their personal histories, I shared my thoughts with them in turn, and as the narratives flowed I also shared personal histories with the group. As hooks (1994) has explained, everybody (learners and teachers) is a 'unique being' (13) and supporting them in bringing 'narratives of their experiences, into the classroom' (21) creates an equitable space as 'everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labour' (140).

PhEminist media collaging[25]

Prompted by the PhEminist mapping exploration this session invited a physical response through an 'invitation to feel, touch, share and transform' (Renold: 2018, 19). The focus of the physical response was to use collage as a feminist research method (Coleman: 2009; Raaberg: 1998), a process born out of modernist strategies for 'subverting the dominant Western tradition and effecting a new consciousness' (Raaberg: 1998, 153). In this exploration the YWAs were asked to respond to a selection of media images in whatever way they chose. The images used were A2 sized boards left over from a MAC advert campaign and subsequently gifted to the department. Although MAC campaigns often subvert traditional ideals of beauty, by using androgenous models and queering heteronormative make-up application, the use of MAC images was not pre-specified, but rather a serendipitous opportunity that occurred at the same time as the research. All the materials in the art room were made available to the YWAs for their physical responses to the images, including paints, spray paint, varnish, pens, string and various papers. There were no

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[25] PhEminist collaging website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/4-pheminist-collaging.html

guidelines about what materials they should use, or about how they should use them. The only restriction was time, which was limited to the duration of the one-hour lesson.

PhEminist disruptions of the female nude[26]

Inspired by Nead (1992), this exploration was conceived as a way of retaking the colonial histories of the female nude and as a point of reference for the phEminist life drawing exploration. The aim was to support the YWAs in addressing the history of the female nude before experiencing life drawing, and to hopefully pre-empt the issues that had been raised in the 2013 life drawing class (Stanhope: 2013). As Nead (1992) explained,

> The female nude is a very powerful cultural tradition and the life class plays a central role in its formation; students who are aware of this tradition and the values that it propagates are enabled to work with images in an informed and critical way. (55)

The exploration therefore pivoted on an exploration of both historical paintings of the female nude as well as contemporary feminist art works that subvert the male gaze through creative practices. Although the session did scaffold the up-coming life drawing class, it was also shaped by the phEminist media collaging exploration and the YWAs' responses. The visceral responses to this exploration heightened the need for a discussion on the history of women in art. These experiences are discussed in depth in chapter seven, but it is important to stress here that the explorations intra-acted with each other and informed the process, as the YWAs reacted to each exploration. The explorations do not sit in isolation and were not predetermined or separate from previous or subsequent explorations.

PhEminist life drawing[27]

The phEminist life drawing exploration was part of an annual life class, supported by the Royal Academy of Arts outreach programme. The class was run by an artist in collaboration with a model

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[26] PhEminist disruptions of the female nude website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/contemporary-skins.html

[27] PhEminist life drawing website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/5-pheminist-life-drawing.html

and as an inner-city school, at the time we were eligible for a substantial discount. Because I had made use of this offer over the ten years prior to this life class, I knew the flow of the class very well and felt it would support the ambitions of this project in multiple ways. The class was open to all students studying fine art at GCSE and A' Level and provided a good starting point for the YWAs (and the rest of the students) to experience life drawing, as the class provided a safe and nurturing environment. It was a whole day (five hour) event that took place in one of the art rooms. With the furniture pushed to the sides and all students working on the floor, it provided a total shift in the usual set up of an art class, disrupting the neoliberal classroom space and opened up potential for developing a community of praxis (Wenger: 1998; Freire: 1996). Using an outside agency to run the class meant that I could also participate, building relationships with the YWAs through the shared experience of drawing and helping to further disrupt the teacher-student binary (Page: 2021a) as discussed in chapter one. The usual flow of the class supported a diffracting of the traditional life drawing process. Starting with an initial observational drawing with no set guidelines in general students produced very similar outcomes that demonstrated use of the colonised line, as discussed in chapter three. The drawing tasks then moved on to disrupt the initial idea of drawing through expressive techniques (Maslen and Southern: 2011), for example using story telling or verbal prompts to elicit a pose from the model, or by limiting the materials used or the way they could be used to create a drawing. This process supported my intention of subverting the traditional life drawing process by diffracting the colonised line that I argue helped shore up the female body (Nead: 1992). The other important element of this specific life class was the model's autonomy over their poses, which disrupted the male gaze in the space, and shifted the body of the model from object to subject.

PhEminist conversations

The interview process was one that involved both listening and activating, based on the materials and matters of the phEminist explorations – a diffractive process which 'overlaps' and entangles with the research 'the way waves combine when they overlap, and the apparent bending and spreading of waves that occurs when waves encounter an obstruction' (Barad: 2007, 74). Thinking with this idea of overlap throughout the research assemblage (i.e., the interviews intra-acting with

the phEminist explorations), resisted the question/answer format as a 'pipeline for transporting knowledge' (Ramji: 2009, 56). Instead, the interviews become a conversation, a phEminist conversation, that supported a 'human and more-than-human matrix of shared be/longings and doings' (Renold and Ringrose: 2019, n.p.n). This assembling and overlapping of ideas entangled with materials, entangled with other humans, entangled with histories, enlivens the possibility of a multi-faceted approach.

> Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither is reducible to the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other. Neither is articulated or articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated. (Barad: 2007, 152)

The matter and meaning of these phEminist conversations became mutually articulated through some of the phEminist explorations as well as through more traditional group and individual interviews. Material conversations were supported through the phEminist mapping exploration and phEminist disruption of the female nude exploration. Individual interviews were held after the phEminist life drawing exploration and a group interview after the Perfect exhibition. The individual interviews supported the YWAs in thinking through the phEminist explorations to review their process and experiences, and to offer them space away from the noise of the group to consider their place within the assemblage. The group interviews offered an opportunity for ideas to gather force together, or to responsibly engage in shaping the future (Barad: 2007). These conversations were not simply a data-gathering exercise but supported me in understanding how the research assemblage was evolving and what I needed to do to support it, a form of 'meaning-making-conversation' (Ramji: 2009, 56), or an interview praxis (Stanger: 2018). The interviews therefore feed directly back into the practiceresearch, both practically in terms of organising spaces and materials requested by the YWAs and through the evolution of further forms of exploration. As mentioned above, the phEminist mapping exploration elicited the need to entangle further with the media imagery and evolved into the phEminist media collage exploration. The interview process was a phEmaterialist reading that aspired 'to invoke other possible material realities that can have political and material consequences' (Taguchi: 2012).

From research participants to co-researchers

The phEminist explorations, as described above, provided a way of working that supported the YWAs as evolving practiceresearchers through the process of the project. Moving from 'research participants' at the start of the project to 'co-researchers' by the end of the project. When the YWAs embarked on this journey they collaborated together through the various explorations as supported by myself. As their relationships entangled to become a community of praxis (Freire: 1996; hooks: 1994) and their own ideas and interests emerged more strongly, I shaped and reshaped the phEminist explorations to meet their needs. As stated above, the phEminist mapping exploration informed the development of the phEminist media exploration. The creative discussion around the female body in the phEminist media exploration prompted a verbal discussion of the history of the female nude to support the YWAs in entering the life drawing space. The process of experiencing all of the phEminist explorations then supported the YWAs to co-collaborate and develop their own ideas towards what became the Perfect exhibition.

Building on a support structure that isn't linear, or ridged, that can be adapted and transformed is vital to a phEmaterialist approach to an ethics based in care. This is to attend to the needs of the YWAs in real time, to care as a process, not as form to be filled in. Because of attending to the YWAs needs as they arose throughout the practiceresearch assemblage, they had agency within the practiceresearch to push and manipulate from within thereby shaping the evolution of the various phEminist explorations and ultimately develop their ideas through the Perfect Exhibition. It is by being in the middle that a pedagogy of hope can be activated to enable empowerment, shifting the YWAs from research participants to co-researchers in the collaboration. Drawing together all aspects of their learning, and importantly unlearning, the YWAs assembled their own aims and ambitions, deciding what they wanted to say and to whom they wanted to say it. This became even more explicit after the close of the Perfect Exhibition when the YWAs used the creative methods they developed for the Perfect Exhibition to support creative conversations with their peers in other aspects of school life. Most notably during 'Time to Talk', the national campaign

for raising mental health awareness, when the YWAs recreated the Skin Lab[28] to bring their peers

together and discuss their concerns around body image. The phEminist explorations intra-wine

with the lived experiences of the YWAs bringing their experiences to bear on the histories

discussed through the practiceresearch. The more webs of connection are formed, reaching out

beyond the YWAs to their audience, to the school, the more the colonial histories that the research

seeks to diffract are held to account. Connections to a problematic history that as Braidotti (2011)

states anchors us whilst also supporting a reviewing of that history. As the connections and

diffractions work simultaneously together, the rhizomic nature of the assemblage builds, a

throbbing structure that enables further action or intra-activism (Renold and Ringrose: 2019). By

entangling all who work within the assemblage as co-conspirators enables the possibility of young

people becoming practiceresearchers on their own terms. Although this project could not support

the YWAs in evolving into independent practiceresearchers, mainly due to time constraints, the

legacy of their phEminist explorations has supported other students to do so. Examples of the

various explorations that have been developed by young practiceresearchers inspired by the

legacy of the YWAs can be viewed on the CCE website[29]. It is through the open 'adventurous'

structures that I have outlined above that support young people to learn from their peers, and this

importantly feeds into one aspect of the decolonising legacy of this project.

Conclusion

An embodied feeing of discomfort has emerged throughout this chapter, a discomfort that informed

the phEmaterialist methodology I have discussed (Renold: 2018; Niccolini, Ringrose and Zarabadi:

2018; Osgood and Guigni: 2015; Ringrose, Warefield and Zarabadi: 2018; Renold and Ringrose:

2019; Moxnes and Osgood: 2019). This discomfort emerges in the between spaces of our curricula

and UK secondary arts education, a space in which I work and where this research evolves. It is in

this uncomfortable between space however, that I argue phEmaterialism can support resistance

and empowerment (Braidotti: 2013a) by actively engaging with decolonial theory (Zembylas: 2018;

Smith: 2021; Tejeda: 2008; Tejeda et al: 2003; Thambinathan and Kinsella: 2021; Tuck and Yang:

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[28] Detail of what the 'Skin Lab' is can be found here: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/the-perfect-exhibition.html

[29] The various explorations can be viewed here: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/explorations.html

2012; Zavala: 2013) to 'pluriversalize' our tool kit (Zembylas: 2018). Therefore, by positioning this research in terms of the uncomfortable phEmaterialist body I am able to draw on the skin as a diffractive material. One that validates alternative readings of the body, both of the female nude of the learner, or in this case the YWAs. I have argued that a phEmaterialist approach provides a reorientation of the skin, one that does not erase the past but critically re-engages with those histories, to support alternative future becomings through a phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope (hooks: 2003). As Haraway (2016) suggests, it is vital that all methodologies employed are open to 'staying with the trouble', to enable a move into pedagogical spaces of differencing and to confront colonial tensions which are still at work in classrooms to this day.

Chapter five

Creative explorations - Mapping the problem with the YWAs

Having previously situated the connection between the colonisation of the female skin in art history and contemporary media imagery, this chapter focuses on mapping the experiences of the YWAs in relation to this history. The lived experiences they shared in the phEminist explorations, introduced in chapter four, are unpicked in this chapter initially through the phEminist mapping exploration, the first time the YWAs came together as a collective, and then through the other explorations (phEminist media collaging, phEminist disruptions of the female nude and phEminist life drawing[30]). The focus in this chapter is to explore the YWAs' perception of self in the context of the colonial history of the female nude and how this entangles with the (life) drawing process.

This process is triggered by the PhEminist disruption of the female nude which supported the YWAs' initial questioning of the various historical and contemporary art works and the legacy of this imagery. This materialised through further discussions which explore how this history infiltrates the YWAs' relationship with their bodies. I focus on three areas that became a sticking point in the discussions, a lack of confidence, how this lack of confidence is perpetuated through negative comments usually received by men or boys, and the further implications of this in terms of race.

To think of these histories and the context of drawing I return to the Freudian (2005 [1905]) psychoanalytic theories of the castration complex, which were pertinent in my own material explorations and are understandably crucial in the learnt Western narratives of the female body. In the context of the female nude, I specifically attend to Freudian perceptions of desire and analyse these theories with reference to the gendering of art history and the desire for the perfect drawing (Ingold: 2007; Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016). The perfect drawing is understood here as a desire for a photographic reproduction (Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016). It is this restrictive interpretation of drawing that I describe as the colonised line, or what Meskimmon and Sawdon (2016) term the 'closed line', and which I later diffract through decolonising creative pedagogies.

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[30] All the phEminist explorations can be found on the CCE website:
https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/pheminist-skins-of-resistance.html

PhEminist mapping exploration: Mapping the problem[31]

To support an initial conversation between the YWAs, I took inspiration from hooks (2003) who asserts the need for community explaining such practice as follows,

> As teachers we can make the classroom a place where we help students come out of shame. We can allow them to experience their vulnerability among a community of learners who will dare to hold them up should they falter or fail when triggered by past scenarios of shame – a community that will constantly give recognition and respect. (103)

The phEminist mapping exploration (Figs. 82-84) was the first time we had come together as a group, creating connections between the YWAs in a space where they could be vulnerable but also 'held up' by each other, was essential to their wellbeing and intra-actions in the project. The focus was an attempt to shift from the neoliberal isolated body, where the individual is held accountable for their own success and failure, to a phEminist body that builds on each other's experiences through a network of support. The initial sharing was triggered through the YWAs' reactions to a series of words I had chosen to ignite a conversation. The words were: Beauty, Skin, Female, Feminine, Body and Media. These were a representation of the words most-used on magazine covers in a shop local to the school, suggestive of a typical range of media imagery that the YWAs would see on a daily basis. However, I acknowledge that all words are political; they have a history, an etymology and as hooks (1994) suggests, 'words impose themselves, take root in our memory against our will' (167), they can trigger memories, associations, and nod to societal structures through the sediment of our colonial pasts.

The intention of the PhEminist Mapping Exploration was to support the group in communicating their experiences while removing the emphasis on verbal communication and I drew inspiration from a common educational method of the 'mind map'. The sharing of their initial responses therefore occurred through writing and drawing on a large sheet of paper (Figs. 82-84). This shifted the focus away from the verbal, which can be intimidating when entering a group for the first time.

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[31] PhEminist mapping website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/3-pheminist-mapping.html
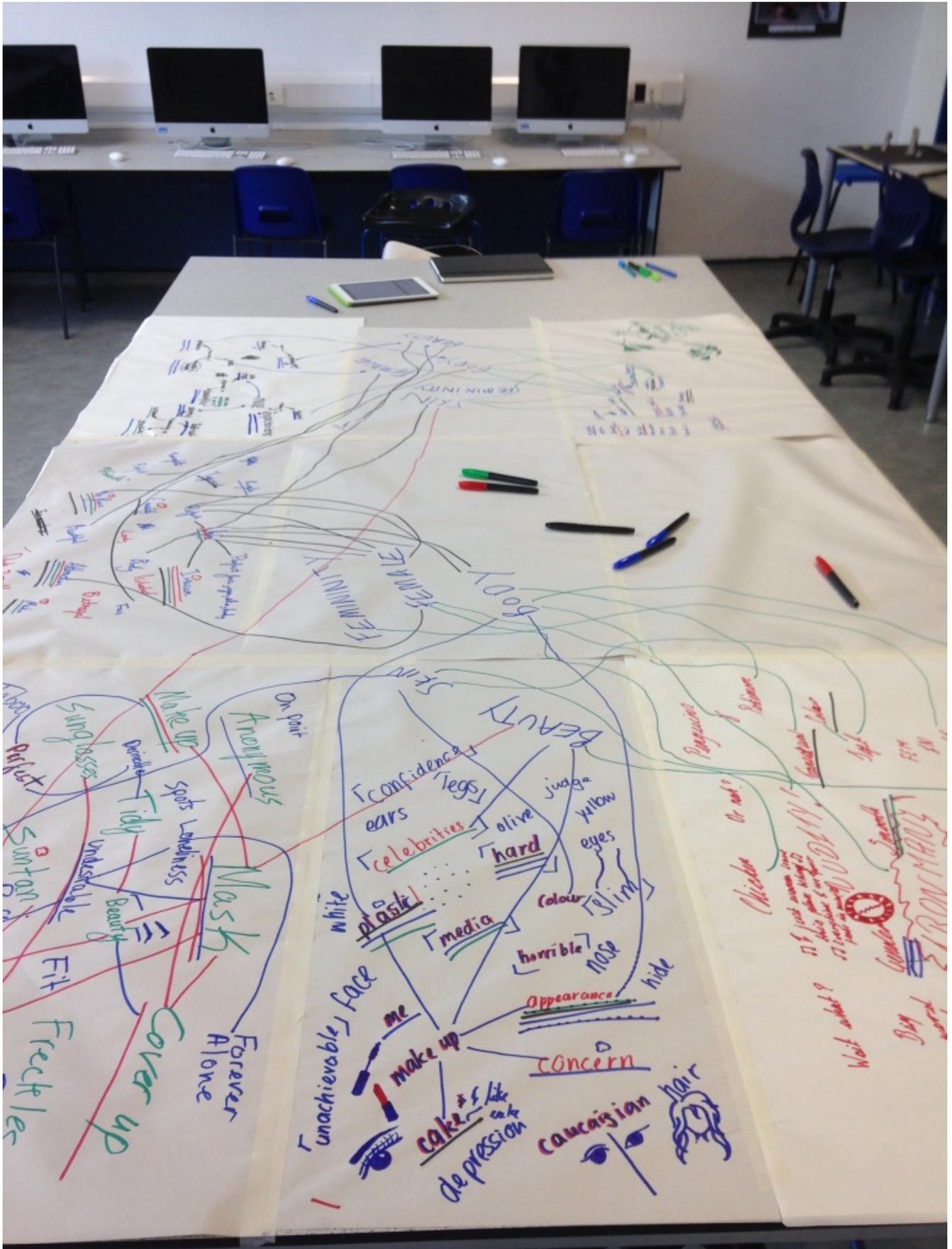
Figure 82: Stanhope (n.d.) PhEminist Mapping Exploration, drawing on paper. [Photograph]

Figure 83: Stanhope (n.d.) PhEminist Mapping Exploration overview. [Sketch book page]

Figure 84: Stanhope (n.d.) Sections from PhEminist Mapping Exploration, phEminist map on paper. [Photograph]

Offering single words to instigate a word stream removed any pressure to instantly expose personal stories. This meant that all the YWAs responses could emerge simultaneously, not as one experience shared before another. They then had the opportunity to read and respond to each other's responses and build on them further, highlighting, underlining, drawing connections between words or adding more words to the sheet.

As the YWAs moved around the table to read other responses, a camaraderie started to emerge as they realised that their experiences were not unique but had often been shared by the others. This realisation became a verbal cacophony as they worked simultaneously with the pens whilst verbally exclaiming 'I like this one!', 'Me too!' 'Have you seen this?', 'Who wrote this one?' A sense that they were not isolated in their experiences created, as Lienne stated, a feeling of 'relief',

Lienne: I felt a bit sort of scared to tell people my insecurities.

Clare: Everybody shared some quite personal things that day.

Lienne: Yes

Clare: How did you feel hearing other people's?

Lienne: I guess I felt relieved because each one of us had insecurities and I thought I had the most, and some might have had worse than mine.

This exploration confirmed the relevance of hooks' (2003) call for the creation of community to enable the YWAs to feel vulnerable whilst 'holding each other up'. As Manning (2013) argues 'there is no body that isn't always already collective' (27), and when we seek to isolate ourselves as individual entities, we shut ourselves away from the potential of 'life',

When life's process seeks to resolve itself in individuals by individuals and for individuals, the force of the collective gives way to the personal and the project of *a life* gives way to the bounded notion of *this* life. From the spiral of eternal return to the hierarchies of many-headed liberal humanisms, individuation of and for the individual alone brings about the death of the collective as a project for life and, with it, the imminent undoing of the force of *a life* coursing through individuation. (Manning: 2013, 28)

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An example of this 'undoing' is Lienne's experience and her fear at exposing her own insecurities to the group. What became apparent was that often insecurities are not shared even within friendship groups, and the silence between Lienne and her peers had meant that her insecurities became an 'eternal return', a hidden process, or silence.

Clare: When we get together as a group do you feel quite safe in the group?

Lienne: Yes, cos some of my friends are in there, and I was relieved to find out they had insecurities because knowing them they are quite confident, and I never knew they would have that kind of thing.

Clare: So, it's not something you talk about as a day-to-day thing?

Lienne: No

Clare: Do you feel people hide their emotions a little bit?

Lienne: Yes, I guess so.

Clare: Do you

Lienne: I hide my emotions a lot

The act of sharing through phEminist mappings was a disruption of this silence. The 'eternal return' became diffracted, a phEminist act in which Lienne realised she was not isolated in her experiences. To her surprise, Lienne realised that some of the insecurities shared by the YWAs could be 'worse' than her own. The act of self-isolation is, as Manning (2013) explains above, a product of both colonial structures and neoliberal educational structures, which as I discussed previously in chapter one, encourages individual success by pitting person against person in the race to be the best and to 'get it right' (Ringrose: 2013). The humanist structures of our understandings of bodies, art and education further exacerbate the neoliberal desire for individual success and speak directly to the feelings of lack that Lienne discusses in this task. Lienne has become, as Manning (2013) argues, 'bounded'.

This notion of being bounded materialised further in a discussion in which the YWAs noticed that their written remarks had mainly negative connotations. This realisation didn't, however, come as a surprise to Bethany,

I wasn't really surprised by what most people had said, like 'ugly' and 'insecure', it's what

most, I think, most girls our age all go through. That kind of like the media and just like other

people being, like, they might be prettier than you or they might be skinnier than you, and

just, like, being surrounded by other girls your age, or even older girls in magazines and stuff,

it's like a lot of pressure.

The 'pressure' that Bethany describes as 'being surrounded' by images of other girls that creates a

hierarchy of who is 'prettier than you' or 'who is skinnier than you' is visually apparent in the

Wordle (Fig. 85). The larger words, such as beauty, perfect, media, body, are surrounded by

smaller more insidious words, some of which perhaps hint at difference in terms of gender,

sexuality and race, but the majority of which suggest a darker undertone: ugly, horrible, lonely,

imperfections, betrayal, depression, dark-thoughts, kill, scars, pressure and undesirable. This

visual interpretation of the session alludes to the YWAs' general negative associations with their

own bodies which have come about through their relationships with other bodies that surround

them, both literally, with the bodies of their peers, and virtually with magazines. When discussing

the comments triggered by the word 'skin', there was a general consensus that there is a societal

expectation for women to 'be beautiful'. What they also highlighted was the dichotomy between the

lived imperfect body and the 'flawless' media or celebrity body.

> Christie: I wrote flawless. Because some girls have like freckles or a few spots and … it
>
> can like put them down.
>
> Tabitha: Soft. Because most girls skin is soft.
>
> Lily: Yes, soft and like clear from any imperfections and things like that.
>
> Nadira: Erm for skin I wrote scars, and like, like everyone has scars except like models cos
>
> they're like flawless.
>
> Christie: There are so many models and celebrities, and they all look flawless, for example
>
> like Rihanna or Beyoncé and you start to think, oh can I be like them one day, and you start
>
> to realise every time that you can't. But with Photoshop, you start to think, can someone
>
> look like that? And it starts to sink into your brain, and you start to believe it.

Historically sedimented Western perceptions of the female seep into this excerpt through words such as soft and flawless. Learnt desires became problematic here, as there was also a realisation that such perfection is not attainable. This results in a complicated relationship between resentment of 'flawless' skin and a desire for such a skin. The line between reality and fantasy becomes blurred through the use of techniques such as Photoshop, where you 'start to think, can someone look like that?'. Christie discusses how these images merge into our subconscious, how the desire for such skins 'sinks into your brain'. The YWAs are therefore positioned in relation with the images they consume, their becomings are regulated through the images, creating niggling concerns that they could, or perhaps should, be 'flawless'. What is also clear from Christie's statement is the cyclical nature of this relationship; the constant repetition of believing 'I can before realising 'I can't'.

At this point I want to extend the experiences shared by the YWAs in the Mapping Exploration and argue further how these experiences have come about through the colonial narratives created by the Western standard of beauty and the female nude. I draw specifically on three areas discussed by the YWAs during this session: confidence, tactics of self-preservation and race.

Becoming through the bodies of the YWAs: Confidence

One striking aspect of the conversation triggered by the phEminist mapping exploration was the shared lack of confidence of the YWAs in relation to their bodies. This lack of confidence was generally attributed to the pressure they experienced from media imagery, which can be seen in the written comments they shared on the phEminist map (Fig. 84). Words such as photoshop, flawless, celebrities and models are often repeated, and the beauty standards that the YWAs felt the media promoted became a sticking point. Flawless, beauty and perfect were all dominant words in the wordle image (Fig. 85). In one response, the media is depicted as death, a drawing of a hooded figure carrying a scythe accompanied by the statement 'Don't let the media kill your individuality'. Other comments included song lyrics, such as 'I just wanna leave this place behind, every time I see your face in mind' and again accompanied by a drawing, this time of a cracked mirror.

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Figure 85: Stanhope (n.d.) Wordle. [screenshot]

The experiences shared by the YWAs triggered by the mapping of words centred around their shared feeling of lack. To draw again on the discussion in chapters one and three of Freud's (2005 [1905]) psychoanalysis, gendered positioning in relation to lack is embedded in twentieth century theory. The consequent desire to rectify the feelings of lack then becomes problematic. Words such as betrayal, dark thoughts, isolated, ugly, loneliness, insecure lurk in the flurry of words that are scattered over the map. The way these feelings manifested for the YWAs in their everyday lives was filtered through feeling judged, either directly through the images they see in the media, as explicitly seen in the phEminist map, or indirectly through the learnt judgements of their peers as explained in the following conversation:

> **Lily**: Ermm, … like walking down the road you feel really insecure, like just people watching you, and kind of always thinking what do they think of you?
>
> **Clare:** Can you elaborate on these people who are these...
>
> **Lily**: Usually like ... sometimes feeling insecure walking past like big groups of boys if you are by yourself, I feel quite intimidated.
>
> **Nadira**: ermm, like in [the local area], like it's quite intimidating, coz you see like everybody else, and like you don't see their insecurities but you think that like, everyone can see like your insecurities and that like you're not perfect.
>
> **Clare:** So, you're saying that's with you all the time?
>
> **Nadira**: No not like all the time, but like when you are by yourself and there's big groups of people around and they can see like everything that is not perfect about you.
>
> **Clare:** Ok, so it's that thing about being isolated or on your own that you feel more insecure?
>
> **Nadira**: Yes
>
> **Lienne:** I agree just agree with both of them, cos being on your own, seeing others, you do really feel intimidated, I always feel that way when I see big groups of boys or girls and I feel like they are judging me when they see me. And picking out all the imperfections in me.

In this extract the learnt narrative of the 'ideal' woman, perpetuated through the female nude (Nead: 1992; Betterton: 1987; Berger: 1972) is exacerbated when the body is viewed through the gaze of others. The idea of walking past others elicits the feeling of an attack. Their peers not seen

as individuals but as a homogonous group, unanimously and forcibly 'picking out imperfections', dissecting the bodies of the YWAs in a precise reversal of the formation of the female nude as described by the renaissance artists Dürer and Alberti in chapter three, as a piecing together of perfect body parts (Berger: 1972).

Although this dissection is a visceral experience shared by all the YWAs, and there maybe individuals within the group as they walk past who do pass judgement, what is more apparent here is that what occurred at the time of these 'walk pasts' isn't particularly important. The embodied feeling of being judged or picked upon travelled with them. Therefore, whoever the YWAs walk past would elicit the same responses from them, as these 'felt' understandings of self are already a 'sticky' part of the YWAs' learnt identity (Coleman: 2009; Ahmed: 2004). They are learnt through the repetition of colonial and patriarchal ideals of gender, perpetuated through the art trope of the female nude (Nead: 1992; Betterton: 1987; Benthian: 2002). Interestingly, the YWAs all had the same reaction to the paintings in the phEminist disruption of the female nude exploration, which I come to discuss later in this chapter. The male gaze embedded in the paintings, promoting the same unachievable ideals of beauty, which they referred to in their contributions to the phEminist map, provoked in them responses similar to those they associated with the walk past. However, despite the YWAs being able to articulate the patriarchal positioning of the paintings, they found it much harder to resist the more toxic entanglement of shiny skin. As discussed in chapter three, Connor (2004) positions the shiny skin as impenetrable, the sheen like a mirror, an object that is impossible to look at, which can only be looked into. The shiny surface allows instantaneous 'looking into' whilst simultaneously looking back at yourself. The smooth and shiny skins of the women in the paintings appeared to reflect and exacerbate the YWAs' own insecurities, just as happened in the walk past. The discomfort of entrenched misogynistic narratives existed in a dangerous loop, veering between the shiny skins of the women in the paintings (or the media), the bodies of the YWAs and the bodies of their peers (or society).

In this context, they became reduced merely to a surface for others to judge. Colonial narratives of bodily perfection are held up as a constant reference point for others to judge and be judged by. In

this example the YWAs are not in control of their becoming, of their future; they are trapped. As Coleman (2009) suggests,

> The attempts to become [like] the body of the popular media image are understood not in terms of the girl's 'own' body but in relation to the body of the popular media image. The girl's body must become not through her 'own' possibilities and impossibilities but rather through the possibilities and impossibilities that are decided in advance and in relation to the body of the popular media image. (101)

Betterton (1987) also discusses this relationship between the body and the media. She explores how women look at other images and are therefore regulated either though compliance with a patriarchal gaze or as a 'narcissistic identification with the images' (219), which 'can only reinforce their own passivity (Coleman: 2009, 9). This complex relationship was hinted at when I pushed the YWAs to try and decipher exactly what happens to make them feel judged during the encounters of a walk past, which they found very difficult to verbalise, stating that they 'can't really explain'. This passivity was further discussed by the YWAs in their reaction to negative comments. They discussed how positive comments 'bounce' off, having little effect, whereas negative comments stick. As Nadira said, 'you will keep on thinking about it'. Echoing the research of Coleman (2009), who explored how insults would 'stick', affecting girl's bodies and memories, which were 'capable of being affected but not of affecting' (144). This repetition is what Coleman (2009) argues is the place of becoming, that the folds of experience are not linear (Deleuze: 2006). It is the repetition of events that moves through bodies, which can come to the fore at later times; negative comments become latent, awaiting validation from other negative experiences, and so the violence of this process continues.

Although it was clear that the YWAs made direct connections between media images and their understanding of their bodies, it is apparent from the experience of the walk past that this is not a dichotomous relationship. The YWAs could not separate the learnt colonial narrative in the images of the female nude from their experience when walking past their peers. As Coleman (2009) states, 'Images therefore do not reflect or represent bodies but produce the ways in which it is

possible for bodies to become. As such, there are no neat distinctions between bodies, images and experience' (66). She goes on to argue that it is in the 'intensity' of this experience that the bodies of the girls 'become'. To think of this relationship as being fluid, intra-acting and in 'motion' (Deleuze: 1995, 42), is to think in terms of a Baradian (2007) idea of 'phenomena', the 'entangled material practices of knowing and becoming' (56). This post human approach shifts the relationship from the outside to one 'intra-acting from within', a becoming through the YWAs' own bodies, as emerged through my conversations with them.

Tactics of self-preservation

As the discussion evolved, the YWAs began to share ways that they seek to disrupt such experiences, to gain control and for self-preservation. The following extract discusses the different tactics they employed to proactively remove oneself from negative situations,

> **Bethany:** Someone might come in school or like on own clothes day and wear something that people don't usually wear, and like they might get told that it looks bad and then say they don't care but then they will go home and cry, it's like you put on this kind of face to other people, to say that you are fine and that you don't care and you're your own person, but really you want, all people really want is to be accepted by other people.
>
> **Christie:** I sort of agree with everyone and like sort of like what Bethany said you put like a mask sort of to, like, hide your actual feelings that are beneath it. So, people don't see how you actually feel.

This discussion highlights how complex this assemblage is, and that although there is agency in this act of trying to 'fit in', to 'not stand out', and wear 'acceptable' clothes, it also embeds colonial ideals that they are actively trying to diffract. Christie described this as creating a 'mask' or 'putting on a face'. The mask becomes not only a disguise but also a defence. The mask ironically becomes both the colonial desired 'shiny skin' of Connor's (2001) media imagery and a protection against such desiring. Therefore, to wear a 'mask' or put a 'face on' is to become the shiny skin of the media image – reflective, emotionless, 'perfect'. This need for the YWAs to conceal their vulnerability, to remove themselves from the emotional fleshy state and preserve their existence as

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suspended in the sealed regulation of the shiny skin, is what Nead (1992) discusses as the thin line between colonially controlled perfection and the woman as the source of immorality. Paradoxically, we are in an abusive relationship when we adopt these masks, one that praises us for attempting to become the shining skin of the media images, but also vilifies us for attempting to become the shining skin of the female nude.

This toxic relationship, based in patriarchy, is particularly cruel when negative comments are received from men,

> **Lienne**: Boys they can say things, mean things, and I don't think that they are really thinking that we'll be hurt, cos words can really hurt, especially coming from a guy.
>
> **Bethany**: It's difficult when it [a comment] comes from a man than from a woman. That might be because we have been taught, not necessarily taught, but our environment has kind of made us think that we are only worth something if a man thinks we are worth something. So, if a girl says your hair looks gross, you're like well your hair looks gross too, it's only a girl so I don't care. But if a man says it to you then you feel like you have failed in some way.

As seen here, the mask easily protects when confronted with hurtful comments from a woman, but the sealed skin becomes porous when such comments are received from a boy or man, the mask slips, and as Bethany highlights this is then deemed a 'failure'. The learnt behaviour Bethany alludes to is suggestive of Butler's (2006) arguments on gender performativity, where she states that

> Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid and regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. (25)

As Bethany's statement shows, this congealed repetition, which normalises heteronormative and colonial ideals of gender, creates confusion. This idea of 'normal' was scrutinised as the discussion developed and the contradictions between what the YWAs wanted to 'feel' and what they

'automatically' felt became more apparent. From the following quote we can see how Bethany oscillates between conscious desired opinion to an unconscious learnt or 'automatic' opinion.

> **Bethany**: I personally don't think this, but I think femininity as a whole is kinda viewed like as women are meant to be weak and meant to be like, subservient to men and they are like fragile and they need to be looked after and they are often portrayed that way. They have to be housewives and they have to have kids. Mmm I often associate femininity with, even though I don't want to, I automatically just think of a weak woman, like a damsel in distress that needs help.

Bethany starts by saying 'I personally don't think this' but by the end of the quote contradicts herself stating 'I automatically just think of a weak woman'. Bethany wants to distance herself from this 'damsel in distress', she suggests her discomfort in not being able to have ownership of the word when she says, 'I don't think this but …'.

A Freudian (2005 [1905]) understanding of desire is embedded here through learnt repetitive phallocentric narratives that trigger Bethany's 'automatic' response linking women with weakness. The binary of the castration complex (Freud: 2005 [1905]) resonates through Bethany's analysis. As suggested by the art works in chapter two, repetition of the same narrative, the same poses and the same female body types have become the norm, and these inform Bethany's 'automatic' response. This normalised learnt response becomes toxic as it places the narrative of femininity and Bethany's body in a narcissistic relationship with each other, situated in representational dialogue (Barad: 2007) even when that relationship is unwelcome. This narcissistic relationship negates the gap between the two and affirms that the woman 'is the image' (Doane: 1992, 231), removing a binary relationship between subject and object, and becoming both of these things at once. Coleman (2009) extends Doane's argument in her suggestion that

> Narcissistic women are not *represented* in images but *are* images; there is no spatial or temporal distance through which a representation can be produced. There is no gap between body and image. (13; emphasis in original)

The removal of the gap between media images and the body speaks to the nature of Bethany's 'automatic' feelings. This highlights the insidious nature of colonial narratives and their inherent danger, as they are perceived as 'natural' indicators of identity. This is even more dangerous. Harmful ways of seeing are cloaked in ideas about what is 'natural' and become a fixed binary of difference. You either fit into this narrow ideal of beauty or you don't.

Becoming through the bodies of the YWAs: Race

Thinking once more with Coleman's (2009) critique of images as a phantasy 'destination' becomes even more problematic, when thought of in terms of race. As the dominance of Western beauty standards perpetuates whiteness as the main indicator of beauty in most media sources (Thornham: 2007; McRobbie: 2009, 2015), all other ethnicities become positioned as 'other'. To look at an example of how this standard of beauty can be embodied in contemporary life, I return to the phEminist map (Figs. 82-84), on which the YWAs wrote only three words that referenced race: white, Caucasian and olive. Considering two thirds of the group have African or Asian heritage, this omission is striking. As discussed in chapter three, '[t]he bodies of others hence became the means by which scientists attempted to mark out the difference and superiority of "the white race"' (Ahmed: 2002, 49). This hierarchy, in which non-European bodies are positioned in direct opposition to whiteness means an absolute exclusion of these bodies in any discourse around beauty, only surfacing as a reference point for whiteness. This narrative has direct links to its materialisation in the classroom. Indeed, one of the YWAs narrated her own experience of struggling with a raced skin to become more like the 'destination' colonial white skin, stating that 'in the Philippines people want to be lighter, which is kinda negative, cos like, a lot of girls are dark and trying to become something they are not'. In a later conversation she continues with this point, discussing her own insecurities,

> **YWA**: I've got insecurities about my eyes, because they are small and ermm, and I want to have big eyes, and when I see a person, I can feel like jealous, and that makes me feel insecure.

The dissection of particular body parts links directly back to the colonial imperative. As Ahmed

(2002, 52) explains, bodies not only become through a process of collecting body parts to be gazed upon (Saartjie Baartman) but also in reference and contrast to the 'purity' of the white female ideal. This colonial ambition still resonates in today's classrooms, as we see in the extract above, in which the YWA discusses her own eyes in comparison to the desirable colonial 'ideal' of 'big' eyes. She explained further how being surrounded largely by people who are white highlighted her own difference, made her feel like 'the odd one out' and exacerbated her perception of her insecurities. The impact of media images was another aspect of this relationship of being the 'other' in a largely white community, which unfortunately developed into mental health issues,

> **YWA**: For me as a young of 11-12, I was really influenced by the media. Cos of all these beautiful women and their bodies and I was a bit … back then, I resulted in trying to lose weight, and there was a point where I starved myself, and looking back at that, I can really tell how much influence the media had, it still does at the moment, but not as much after what happened before, I don't want that to happen, but it's hard not to be brainwashed.

The YWA was referring to a very personal situation, which was obviously more complex than she discussed here, and which speaks to much research around the negative impact of media images and the 'brainwashing' of young women (Zoonen: 1994; Ross: 2001; Buckingham and Bragg: 2004; Gill: 2007; Messenger-Davis: 2010). Much of this research argues that images can cause a complex range of emotions such as confusion, desire, envy and self-loathing. This is a complex relationship, as this reflection states, images are an important aspect of how bodies become (Coleman: 2009); the YWA's desire to not be 'brainwashed' by media imagery positioned her own body as entangled with images. However, as Coleman (2009) reiterates, the embodied entanglement of these adverse emotions are also part of the assemblage of 'becoming'. She asserts the need to shift the mode of thought from '"feeling bad" as an effect of images', to exploring 'the complex ways in which bodies and images are entwined' (Coleman: 2009, 26), arguing for a shift from the dichotomization of image affecting body, to an exploration of 'how bodies are experienced through images and … how these experiences limit or extend the becoming of bodies' (Coleman: 2009, 3).

The complex experience discussed by Coleman plays out in the YWA's story as the limiting experience she felt in being 'othered' by her community and by the media images she was exposed to, which was then 'extended' on moving to London. This move provided the YWA with diverse bodies through which to self-reference and created connections for her, where she wasn't 'the odd one out'. She subsequently gained more confidence.

> **YWA**: Erm, Since I've moved, erm I feel more confident, but in Northern Ireland, the majority of people were white, and I was like, I was like the odd one out, so back then I had this desire to be Caucasian, cos, sometimes I'd get made fun of cos of my eyes, my yellowish skin tone, so it made me feel uncomfortable, but living here where there is a lot more diversity , ermm, it's boosted my confidence a bit, and I'm happier.

Repetition can both enlarge negative perceptions of the body as well as reduce them. The teen body morphs as it becomes through the bodies it is surrounded by; it is fluid, and importantly, as seen in the extract above, has potential to fight back. The cyclical relationship described above becomes diffracted when situated through spaces of differencing. This is of course far more complex than simply moving to a place with more diversity, but it is important to point out that the YWA was able to position herself through her experiences and 'seeing' diversity in bodies, to make connections that embodied her reality. In terms of art history this positioning is not possible, and a diffraction of these histories is needed to make space for alternative perspectives and experiences to flourish.

The entangled history of the female nude[32]

The PhEminist conversations exploring the history of the female nude supported a discussion of various paintings of the female nude (Fig. 86) and the parallels seen in contemporary media imagery (Fig. 87). I wanted to explore the YWAs' reactions to these paintings of women, to discover if they made links with contemporary ideals of beauty, and how they felt about feminist art works that challenge the patriarchal positioning of how women are 'seen'. The main thread of the

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[32] Entangled history website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/contemporary-skins.html

conversation, and what provided the impetus to disrupt learnt notions of female beauty standards with further explorations, was the YWAs' lack of emotion for the traditional paintings of the female nude. The word 'normal' was used by several of the YWAs, acknowledging the learnt repetition of seeing images of nude women in similar positions on such a regular basis that they had become numb to such exposure. This is highlighted in the extract below, from the discussion of historical paintings.

> **Bethany**: I was kind of like, I didn't feel, I just felt kind of normal, coz I think I'm very used to seeing women portrayed in that way. Like in art and I guess media, but I think seeing a woman, naked or lying on a bed, it's kinda just expected, like it's not like 'oh my goodness she's naked let me avert my eyes', it's like 'oh, she's naked'. I see that all the time, everywhere, it just kinda felt typical.
>
> **Lily**: Yes, Ermm, I felt as if they were kind of normal, because you see, ermm, nude women quite a lot in art, and I didn't really, I didn't think it was all a bit strange or anything. I just didn't really mind.

The repetition of seeing similar images of women 'all the time, everywhere', has become normalised, has become 'typical'. It is through this continuous repetition that the YWAs discussed becoming hardened to such images, Tabitha states that

> 'I didn't feel any emotion cos I've seen so many different types of these pieces that I've grown used to it'.
>
> **Christie**: I felt, erm, quite comfortable looking at them, because like, it's all part of life, the drawings are females and it's been going on for centuries and many people have been doing over the past years, ermm, even till this day, so it's like part of our history.

As the positioning of women's bodies in this colonial narrative has been 'going on for centuries', and in consequence is seen as 'part of our history', the images were not considered unusual but in fact have become normalised. As Bethany highlights 'seeing a woman naked is just kinda expected'. The patriarchal and colonial repetition of these images have become the 'norm' of what

Figure 86: Stanhope (n.d.) PhEminist disruptions of the female nude: repetition. [Power point presentation]

Figure 87:Stanhope (n.d.) PhEminist disruptions of the female nude: comparison with contemporary media imagery. [Power point presentation]

is deemed beautiful. All the YWAs spoke of the women in the traditional paintings in terms of their attractiveness,

> **Lily**: I thought they were really beautiful.
>
> **Bethany**: the paintings in the first one they are like really so stunning and the women are so beautiful, I think everyone wants to be, people often aspire to be like that because they want people to look at them and to think wow, she's beautiful.
>
> **Lienne**: I guess the position looks attractive to the beholder, especially men, to emphasise their curves.

Bethany suggests that images manipulate her way of understanding what is valued. The valuing or devaluing of certain body types is imbued with ideas dating back to the Greeks who obsessed over the 'perfect' female form (Nead: 1992). Our understandings of beauty are also imbued with the learnt structures of colonial histories, as discussed in chapter three (Black: 2004; Leeds Craig: 2002, 2006; Hobson: 2018a, 2018b), a learnt process in which women are ranked in terms of race, heterosexual desire, ability and age (Nead: 1992).The hierarchy of beauty feeds into the way women are judged or judge each other, as Nadira relayed, 'I thought about how, people would think which one is more pretty and beautiful'.

Although all the YWAs spoke of seeing images of naked women on a regular basis as 'normal', some of them showed signs of discomfort during the session. This discomfort materialised mainly through fidgeting; bodies being made uncomfortable by other bodies, similar to the experience of the life class held in 2011 (Stanhope: 2013). When asked if the images made them feel uncomfortable in any way, Lienne raised a point about the composition.

> **Lienne**: I think the way they are positioned; I think they are telling the person, look at me and how beautiful I am, or something like that. It just looks more sexual.

Nadira also spoke about the composition and how the positioning of the women in the images suggested a patriarchal hierarchy,

Nadira: I think they were trying to say that females are submissive and like, like you can look down upon them, because most of them were like, lying down.

The composition actively sexualises the woman as there to be 'looked at' or to be 'looked down upon'. This insight into the positioning of women in paintings has been argued by Nead (1992) to be a debilitating consequence of art history. As I explored in chapter three, the female nude is a form of regulation, both of the subject matter and through the very act of painting itself,

> As cultural commodities, critics and art historians have relished oil paintings and the practice of applying paint to canvas has been charged with sexual connotations. Light caresses form, shapes become voluptuous, colour is sensuous, and the paint itself is luxuriously physical. This representation of artistic production supports the dominant stereotype of the male artist as productive, active, controlling, a man whose sexuality is channelled through his brush. (Nead: 1992, 56)

Nead (1992) give examples of artists who describe the act of painting as a conquest. She cites Kandinsky, who claimed that he 'battles' with the canvas, comparing it to a virgin to be conquered by his brush, an image highly suggestive of rape. This account is deeply problematic in that it reflects an embedded history of the artist and the muse (Berger: 1972). When we combine this with the desire to achieve the standard of beauty that has mesmerised audiences including the YWAs over the centuries, making them want to be like the women in the paintings, it highlights deeply misogynist narratives of how young women 'become' through such images.

When we think about this in terms of the 'magical preciousness' of the 'shining' skins of media imagery (Connor: 2001, 53-59), as discussed in chapter three. The heritage of this 'magic' trick lies in its evolution through the gloss of the oil paint which also hypnotises and proposes future possibilities that are not only unachievable but also deeply misogynistic. As with all magic it is based in illusion, but this illusion is powerful, even when it is understood that these 'shining' bodies have been photoshopped and present an unrealistic future. What is dangerous is that they have the power to promote feelings of envy (Connor: 2004, 60). Coleman (2009, also see Ahmed: 2002)

explores the way such images 'stick' and become an embodied point of reference. The YWAs are thereby positioned in relation *with* the images they consume, their becomings regulated through the images, creating a relationship whereby they 'are encouraged to want something that we should not want, and cannot ever really have' (Connor: 2004, 60); the requirement is that they should be 'flawless'. During the exploration, this positioning of the image as a 'destination' (Coleman: 2009, 101), began to realign for Bethany. Her perspective shifted from a linear process of wanting to become the image, to an emergent relationship of becoming *with* the image, a relationship based in questioning.

> I think we are like meant to see woman in a sexual way, like even young like men and women are kinda told that women are forms that you view, and that's how you view them. I think if you saw a man, like, posing like that on a bed naked, it would be a bit more shocking.

The traditional paintings were acceptable, as they represented the way we are 'meant' to see women and the gaze moves fluidly and easily over the surface. However, as Bethany starts to realise, if the image was subverted and a man was positioned in a similar pose, our eyes would jar against the image; it would 'shock'. This sedimentation of historical images normalises how we view images of women, it teaches a set way of being in the world, and the shock only arises when this is visually disrupted. Bethany's unpicking of the patriarchal structures in the paintings, supported an interesting intra-action with the traditional paintings of the female nude. There was a movement from discussing the images in binary terms of good and bad, to a questioning of the images themselves, which in turn elicited a more complex relationship. Bethany's 'becoming' through the image was palpable, an intra-action of not knowing 'beforehand what a body, or an image, can do' (Coleman: 2009, 43).

Another example of visual disruption occurred when we analysed contemporary work by feminist artists such as Jenny Saville, Shadi Ghadirian, Mona Hatoum, the Guerrilla Girls and Jo Spence (Fig. 88). The YWAs became notably uncomfortable when confronted with imagery that was not traditionally 'beautiful'; they fidgeted and shifted in their seats, eyes darting back and forth, the

Jo Spence, Monster
(in collaboration with Dr. Tim Sheard, 1989

Jenny Saville, Branded, 1992
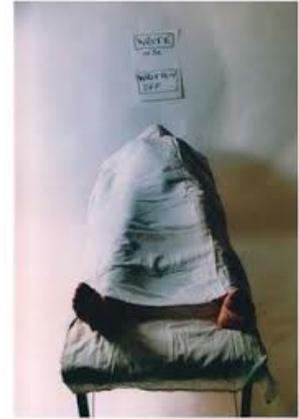
Jo Spence,
Write or be Written Off,
1988

Shadi Ghadirian, Like Everyday series, 2001

Mona Hatoum, Measures of Distance, 1988

Guerrilla Girls, Do Women have to be Naked to get into the Met. Museum? 2012

Figure 88: Stanhope (n.d.) 'PhEminist disruptions of the female nude: Feminist practice'. [Power point presentation]

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shock that Bethany had spoken about earlier was embodied through these images. But in the subsequent conversation the YWAs started to unpick these feelings,

> **Lily**: When I first saw these images, I think it was, I guess, quite ugly compared to the other ones, the way they are positioned doesn't really compliment the figure … I think the fact that, cos in the others the older ones [traditional paintings], I did find them beautiful, but they all had a similar kind of body, but I think this one [Jenny Saville], it's more interesting and I think it would be more interesting to draw, and I like the use of colour, in the picture.

In analysing the body through art, the focus shifts and other ways of looking become more important. As Lily suggests, the Jenny Saville image is more interesting in terms of its use of colour, the shape of the body contrasts with that in traditional paintings. Using art as a tool to diffract traditional images of women can cultivate alternative becomings for the YWAs,

> **Clare:** Do you think it makes any difference that the women in the traditional paintings are painted by men, and these images, the feminist images are women artists painting or using their own body?
>
> **Lily**: I think it probably does, cos I think the image would be kind of more powerful when it's the actual women's body.
>
> **Clare**: Why would it be more powerful?
>
> **Lily**: Ermm, cos of the fact that I don't think it's seen as sexual, as it's the own woman painting her body, the artist, I think, I'm not sure, can like pick which woman, erm, so their body would be more erm, nicer, in some people's opinion, but I guess the woman wouldn't really care.
>
> **Clare**: So, when we then looked at the feminist images what were your thoughts when looking at these?
>
> **Bethany**: I really liked some of them, like I think, it was like a bit different coz obviously they are trying to make a point, so they're like, it's not necessarily as nice or pleasant to look at but I think it I don't see why it shouldn't be, but I think it gives more of a message and it says more than the other pictures, it makes a stronger point, at least, I think. It should like, the Jenny Seville, that one, like someone would say oh that's really

ugly, but if you think about it, I guess it's just a slightly bigger woman, obviously she is standing kinda strangely, but I don't see why that has to be any more appealing than the other one, just because of the way she is posing or because of her size.

During the session the YWAs started to challenge the 'learnt' ideals of beauty and began to question how they view imagery. They also began to question the positioning of women in the paintings, and how when a woman paints herself, she has autonomy over her body. This then opened up a later discussion in reference to the life drawing session and how the model positioned herself within the space. This shift, I would argue, is a move towards a nomadic encounter. As Braidotti (2011) explains, nomadism 'is not fluidity without borders, but rather an acute awareness of the nonfixity of boundaries. It is the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing' (66). Bethany went on to 'trespass' across the boundaries of traditional art formations, exposing the contradiction in the positioning of men, stating that if a man was positioned in a similar way to the women in the images, it would be considered shocking,

> **Bethan**y: Because not as many people are used to that, they are used to men being strong and the dominant ones, and I think women can be like that too, it's just people who aren't used to that … *it's not what people are taught*. (My emphasis)

Bethany's point is extremely important. The realisation that these images are deemed beautiful and are normalised through what has been and still is *taught* is crucial in coming to realise that these standards can then be challenged. Nead (1992) analyses to the erasure of certain bodies in the canon of art historical paintings, arguing that beauty is a framework that certain bodies fit into, and any body that does not fit this framework is disregarded and rendered 'invisible'. This draws attention to the lived experience of women, and as Nead (1990) states,

> A gauge of social visibility ... The female bodies that have been omitted from the visual arts echo the lived experiences of the women within the dominant society and its culture of physical perfection. (60)

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I now move onto explore this echoing of experience in terms of how these histories emerge in creative practice. How does the 'power' inherent in such imagery (Gilman: 1985), which perpetuates female models' and viewers' colonial lack of agency, entangle with the life class and therefore the YWAs?

The orientation of the Life class

The silences in curricula, or the 'tyranny of invisibility' (Nead: 1992, 60), are most dangerous in terms of isolating the student body. Such silences occur in restricted access to the curriculum, either physically as seen in the nineteenth century with the exclusion of women as students in the life class (Pointon: 1990), or emotionally in the way that particular bodies are oriented towards particular kinds of knowledge accumulation. Historically, as indicated by the story of the potter's daughter which I describe in more detail below, the artist has always been seen as male. Consequently, women were denied access to the life class as participants and were rather positioned as models or as objects of the class. To think of the female nude as a molar identity according to Deleuze and Guattari (2013) is 'a woman as defined by her form, endowed with organs and functions and *assigned* as a subject' (321 my emphasis). The 'assignment' of subject in the life class is the dominance of the male gaze as a tradition of passing on a patriarchal doctrine, not simply a series of drawn images of a naked woman, but a discourse promoted by education, society and philosophy that spans the ages to the present day. As Nead (1992) elucidates 'the lessons in the life class basically amount to an aesthetic endorsement of patriarchal power' (54). These endorsements continue through the repetition of the 'traditions' of the space. As Ahmed (2010) argues, the fabric of everything is imbued with history,

> What passes through history is not only the work done by generations but the "sedimentation" of that work as the condition of arrival for future generations. History cannot simply be perceived on the surface of the object. (241)

To think of 'sedimentation' (Ahmed: 2010) as the process through which the life class is being 'conditioned' for future generations suggests an uncomfortable space for women to take up. As Ahmed (2010) explains, 'If orientations affect what bodies do, then they also affect how spaces

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take shape around certain bodies. The world takes the shape by presuming certain bodies as given' (250). The white male body of the artist is the 'given' in the life class. Even though there have been numerous women artists throughout Western art history, women have mostly been associated with the position of the model, as Nead (1992) explains,

> According to the mythology, the artist's female model is also his mistress and the intensity of the artistic process is mirrored only by the intensity of their sexual relationship. This sexual fantasy has been so prevalent in the narrativization of the lives of the male artists that its traces are now indissolubly attached to the image of the life class. (50)

It is through the repetition of this mythologised, sexist history that the 'orientation' (Ahmed: 2010) of specific bodies within the art narrative ... has erased many women artists from their rightful place in the history books (Pollock: 2003; Parker and Pollock: 1981; Nochlin: 2015 [1971]; Vickory: 2014). This further orients us towards the woman as the object of art rather than the subject.

Taking Ahmed's (2010) analogy of the table - what certain people do 'at' the table is crucial to his point of orientation, 'while bodies do things, things also "do bodies"' (245). As seen throughout chapter two in the visual exploration of the female nude, the women in the paintings are rarely in a position of power. Ahmed (2010) states that 'Our bodies take the shape of the repetition' (247), and this becomes visually clear when comparing the bodily positions of the female nude with those in contemporary media imagery, as explored earlier. Learnt positions of femininity are strewn throughout our contemporary age, perpetuated through both their presence and their absence, highlighting the longevity of these narratives, and directly impacting the perceptions and experience of the YWAs in the life class. When Ahmed (2010) argues that the table 'waits for some bodies more than others' (251) this can easily be applied in reference to the life class. Just as 'gender is an effect of how bodies take objects up' (Ahmed: 2010, 251) the life drawing room also determines which gender *becomes* object in the life class space.

If we consider the 'inheritance' of the male subject to be the role of the artist and that of the object to be the female nude, this 'inheritance' is even more dysfunctional when taking into consideration women of colour. As Nead (1992) argues,

> art may be taken as a reasonable gauge of social visibility in general and the images of the female body that have been omitted from the visual arts echo the lived experiences of women within the dominant society and its culture of physical perfection. (60)

If art is a gauge of social visibility, in a diverse classroom these histories are paradoxical in their absence. Not only are students regulated by entrenched colonial ideals of Western perfection, but if their bodies have been positioned 'beyond the field of vision' (Nead, 1992), they are left with no reference point at all. They are invisible in terms of both the object of the artwork and as the subject who creates the artwork. More importantly, they are also invisible in the curricula that reiterate these narratives. The student of colour is in a paradoxical relationship, bound by colonising lines in terms of bodily ideals but also rendered invisible by them. The space of the life class can therefore problematic, but it is also within these situations that the desire to reproduce the 'perfect' form becomes the phEminist tool with which to diffract such images. To challenge the colonisation of the female nude and subsequently the life class is not to erase these histories, but to situate them within a diffractive pedagogy that means to begin in the middle of these histories. As artist Mary Kelly (2003) explains, this involves a 'disentangling of paths that shows more clearly their points of intersection and draws attention to the fact that it is not obligatory to start over again at the beginning (72). Or to position this from a phEmaterialist perspective, how can this practiceresearch entangle *with* such histories to support a decolonisation of the female nude? Nead (1992) suggests that if students are educated in the basic semiotics of the nude, they can unpick and take ownership of the constructs of the images they create, and the life class has the potential to be an empowering space. But what I explore in this practiceresearch is not simply an understanding of the semiotics of the nude, but a reimagining of what life drawing is or potentially could be.

The colonised line[33]

To take up the challenge to decolonise the female nude I first needed attend to deeply entrenched pedagogic forms of art education that perpetuate the sexist and racist narrative I have been discussing, specifically the perception of drawing through what I term the colonised line. The colonised line in this practiceresearch is used to define a drawing practice taken from the Western art historical desire for verisimilitude, one that is deeply entangled through the art trope of the female nude and more generally the rise of oil painting (Berger: 1972) and Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) molar line. It is what I have sought to decolonise in collaboration with the YWAs through the creative explorations I discuss below. According to Deleuze and Guattari (2013) the molar line has 'rigid segmentarity' and is 'socially determined, predetermined and over coded by the state' (239). From this perspective, history is pinned down, owned and 'written from the sedentary point of view' (Deleuze and Guattari: 2013, 24). In 1435, Leon Battista Alberti defined a line in the following way,

> [p]oints joined together continuously in a row constitute a line. So for us a line will be a sign whose length can be divided into parts, but it will be so slender that it cannot be split. (Cited in Ingold: 2007, 39)

This immovable, static, historical line, is the tool with which 'the West has ruled its lines over the rest of the world' (Ingold: 2007, 2) and which I argue has also shored up the female body through artistic regulation in the form of the female nude. The colonised line – which is inherently straight – has geographically sliced the globe into the divisions that are seen today. In *Lines: A Brief History*, Tim Ingold (2007) writes that,

> the straight line has emerged as a virtual icon of modernity, an index of triumph of rational, purposeful design over the vicissitudes of the natural world. The relentlessly dichotomising dialectic of modern thought at one time or another, associated *straightness* with mind as against matter, with rational thought as against sensory perception, with intellect as against intuition, with science as against traditional knowledge, with male against female, with

[33] Colonised line website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/the-colonised-line.html

civilisations as against primitiveness, and – on the most general level – with culture as against nature. (152; my emphasis)

This perceived 'straightness' of the line is historically immobile, created by breaking up, dividing and ruling over land as well as bodies. Ingold (2007) traces the process by which the line became straight back to the geometry of Euclid, the early Greek mathematician. The Western idea of regulation through the Euclidian line is infused with the ideas and conventions of beauty as outlined by Aristotle not many years prior through his conflation of beauty and symmetry, which was discussed earlier in chapter three. These rigid lines of control supported the colonial linear narrative perpetuated through art historical tropes, creating dualistic hierarchies, male/female, white/other, ability/disability, heterosexual/sexual difference and youth/age. In these circumstances 'straightness becomes an unambiguous index of masculinity, as curvature indexes femininity', the straight line inevitably 'comes to connote a moral condition' (Ingold: 2007, 153), through the Victorian 'fallen women' paintings (Figs. 67-70) again discussed earlier in chapter three.

Such 'moral conditions' are learnt practices perpetuated through visual signifiers (Skeggs: 2004). In terms of the educational space, 'straightness' also refers to what Mick Maslen and Jack Southern call the 'left-brain dominant' space, 'structured to encourage and develop rational and linear, a, b, c, sequenced sense of order, logic and reason'. In such a space, the colonial lines of regulatory practice are seen in competitive testing, end grades over process and in situations where 'students are encouraged to collude with the system, by learning to answer teachers' questions with the 'right' teachers' answer' (Maslen and Southern: 2011, 12). Colonised lines in the classroom are formed by repetition of patriarchal narratives in the space of the institution. As Anna Hickey-Moody (2013) states, 'school systems and popular culture encourage young people to be particular kinds of subjects in the way art is taught' (1). The 'right' answer in a traditional Western art classroom is the perpetuation of the pastiche (Atkinson: 2002): the desire for the reproduction of the ideal 'perfect' image 'understood in terms of art history and aesthetics and ... vested with power to re-present reality' (Barrett and Bolt: 2013: 4). This is embedded in child psychologist Jean Piaget's (1967) Stage Theories of children's development, which were central for most of the

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twentieth century, which made the aim of drawing accurate representation. These perceptions of cognitive ability as linked to realistic drawing were part of Piaget's 'intelligence tests' 'based on the belief that the more detailed and realistic the child's drawing... the greater their level of intellectual maturity' (Anning: 2008, 94). Maslen and Southern (2011) argue that societal influences seep into the classroom space, and when the world is focused on 'perfect reproduction' compounded by 'technological perfection' and 'high definition', then such ideals also restrict the notion of drawing and what drawing should also look like.

Being situated in institutions that adopt these understandings of what a drawing is and means, where we learn to repeat what we already 'know', often means 'young people desire these forms of subjection' (Hickey-Moody: 2013, 1). The relationship between what is desired by the institution and the student in the classroom is complex. Like many of my arguments, the complexity is often due to the way these practices are infused with histories, and are so entrenched they become normalised. If we think of the repetition of what is normalised in art history and therefore the art classroom, we are walking into a very specific raced and gendered space in which colonial whiteness is actively replicated.

Desire, psychoanalysis, and drawing

To try to understand the Western desire for the perfect reproduction of an image, we can trace the first known drawing to a myth, told by an ancient Roman writer, Pliny the Elder. He tells of a heartbroken young woman, who at the departure of her male lover draws around the outline of his shadow on the wall. The line in this case is an outline that contains the lover's shape and thereby the young woman's desires Meskimmon and Sawdon (2016). Meskimmon and Sawdon (2016) state that the inscribing of the surface would become understood as drawing itself. What is interesting is that the drawing was then extended by the young woman's father, who was a potter, who filled in the shape with clay which he subsequently fired to create a relief. Although the drawing in this story is seen as an 'origin point from which art is derived' (23), it is significant that the first documented drawing by a woman is 'relegated to the status of support, or more precisely, the base matter from which higher forms of art would be created' (Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016,

23). Desire surfaces in two ways in this story, first, through a Freudian (2005 [1905]) perception of lack, in the woman's desire for her lover which is represented through his absence, captured in the drawn line, and then in the father's positioning of the drawing as lacking, and his additions to the shape to create a more realistic form. Secondly, desire is embedded in the drawing through the need for verisimilitude.

Desire is historically positioned in Freud's (2005 [1905]) psychoanalytical analysis as driven by heteronormative male pleasure. As previously discussed, Freud (2005 [1905]) ascertains that women always desire the penis, a desire that he asserts can be fulfilled by giving birth, with the child coming to symbolise the phallus. As Judith Butler (2000) further explains,

> But this "being" the Phallus is necessarily dissatisfying to the extent that women can never fully reflect that law; some feminists argue that it requires a renunciation of women's own desire . . . which is the exploration of that desire as the *desire to be nothing other than a reflection*, a guarantor of the pervasive necessity of the Phallus. (62; my emphasis)

In Freudian terms the drawing by the potter's daughter aligns with heteronormative desire. The drawn outline embodies the daughters desire to be the phallus, whilst positioning this desire in terms of lack due to the father's intervention in 'completing' the form. This highlights the point that female desire can never be sustained without the intervention of the man. When women are the focus of the image, desire becomes 'reduced to the body which in turn is seen as the site of sexuality and the locus of desire' (Kelly: 2003, 72). The male protagonist again removing all agency from the woman. The potter's daughter's drawing, therefore, becomes the 'desire to be nothing other than a reflection', a memorial of her love, an empty vessel. As I discussed previously, Freud describes the fear of castration materialising in the woman through the fear of losing her loved ones, particularly her children. In a Freudian analysis, the drawing then encapsulates this through the departure of the woman's lover and the metaphorical loss of her future child. Jessica Benjamin explains the castration complex in terms of separation, which provides a useful analogy for thinking about the colonising lines embedded in drawing,
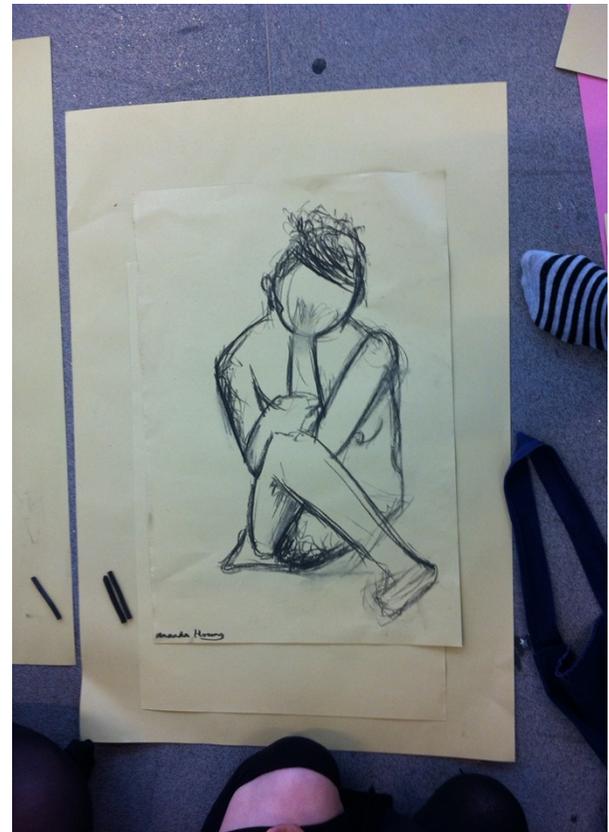
Figure 89: Stanhope (n.d.) Images from a life drawing class 2011. [Photograph]
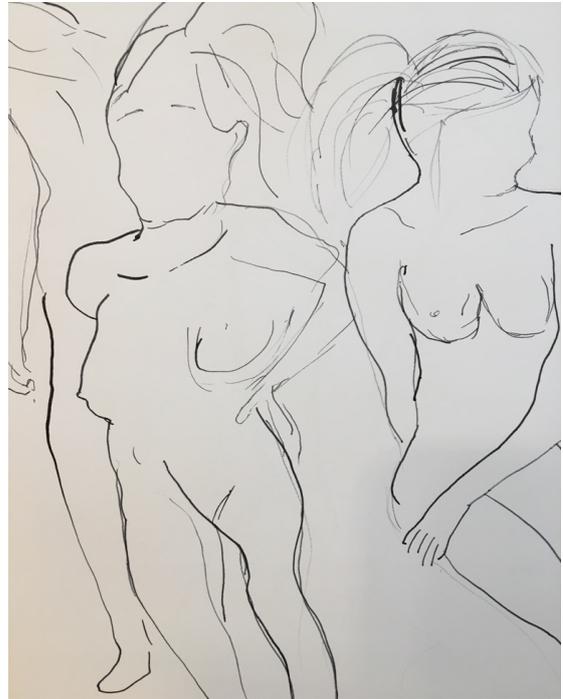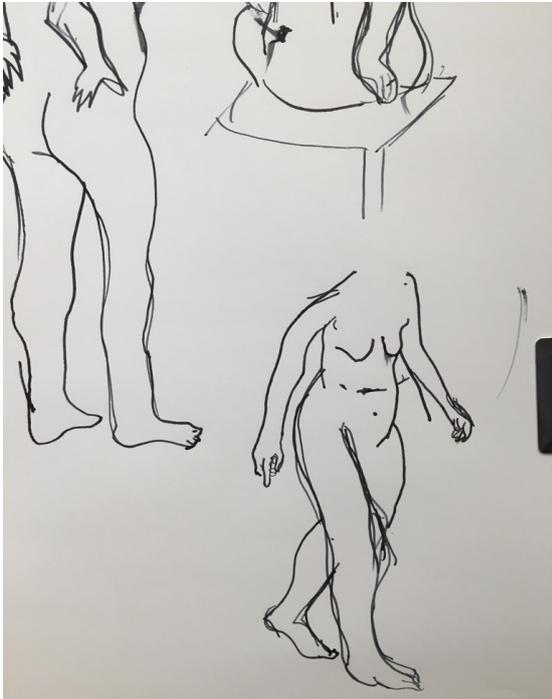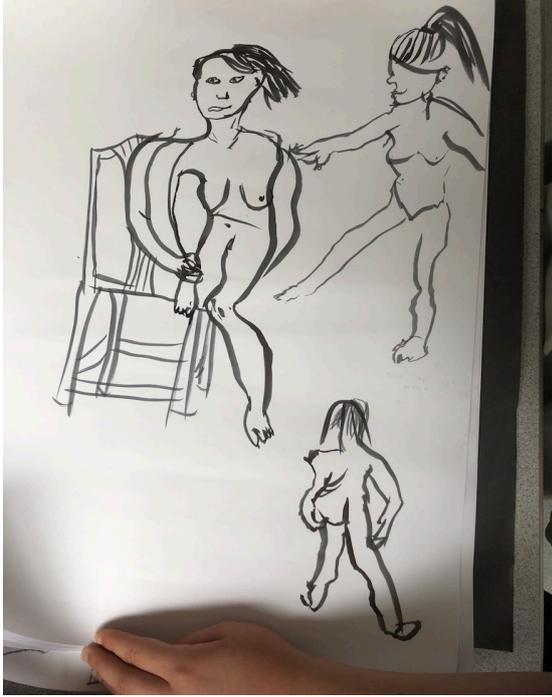
Figure 90: Stanhope (n.d.) Images from a life drawing class 2016. [photograph]

> Separation takes precedence over connection, and constructing boundaries becomes more important than insuring attachment. The two central elements of recognition – being like and being distinct – are split apart. Instead of recognizing the other who is different ... Recognition is thus reduced to a one-dimensional identification with likeness; … this likeness is sexually defined. (Benjamin: 2000, 240)

To see drawing as embedded in 'separation over connection', leads to judgement of a drawing being based in comparisons of 'being like and being distinct'. This binary coding, seen throughout the history of the female nude, can be further positioned in terms of drawing as sexually and racially coded through the rigid reproduction of colonial and patriarchal desires.

If we look at examples of students' first drawings from various life drawing sessions between 2012 and 2016 (Figs. 89 and 90), these representational ideals are highlighted. Very similar lines are repeated as our eyes pass along the row of drawings. All the drawings in the images involve an outline of the body, or what Meskimmon and Sawdon (2016) call a 'closed line'. This is a line that visually captures the model's shape and resonates with the drawing created in the story of the potter's daughter. Just as the potter's daughter captured the shadow of her lover in a myth created over two thousand years ago, the learnt desire to capture the shape on the page in the contemporary classroom is founded in the desire for representation. Such drawings, as seen in the life class images, are waiting to be 'filled in' with lines and marks that that can continue to draw out the learnt 'truth' of the object they seek to depict. Diminishing the artwork to a simple object of representation is, as Simon O'Sullivan (2006) explains, a 'non-encounter', and is simply an act of confirming what we already know about the world, or more importantly I would argue, what we have been *taught* about the world. But if we then think of the colonising line as beginning from a point of lack, or a 'non-encounter', it is not what is included in our curricula but what is ignored that needs attention.

The colonised line in the context of the phEminist life class was highlighted in the discussion with the YWAs when they spoke about their initial drawings from the PhEminist life drawing exploration (Figs. 91-95),

> **Lienne:** At the beginning I felt it was challenging as I was trying to draw everything I saw, make it very precise. Her body was very detailed, so I was kind of frustrated that I wasn't able to execute this certain area very well.

Presumably, Lienne's intention here is representation. As a form of art sedimented throughout art history, the containing line colonises not only the paper but the mind. However, as Barad (2003) suggests,

> Representationalism is so deeply entrenched within Western culture that it has taken on a common sense appeal. It seems inescapable, if not downright natural. But representationalism (like "nature itself," not merely our representations of it!) has a history. (806)

This 'entrenched' desire for representation was more fully explored by the YWAs in the PhEminist life drawing exploration, but their initial analysis can be seen in the following extract when Tabitha explains how an idea of what her drawing should look like already existed in her brain.

> **Tabitha**: I think the most challenging part is actually trying to get the right figures and make sure everything is accurate. So that it doesn't look too different from the model, or doesn't look like what you expected it to … Initially I thought that because my brain or brains in general have a specific idea of how things are supposed to be even if we're looking at a perfect thing or the right thing. So initially I thought that's how I should draw it. (Fig. 94)

We can see in this extract an example of what Maslen and Southern (2011) refer to as colluding with an educational system where 'competitive testing is the predominant norm' and the student desires 'the right answer' (12). This then binarises the process in terms of good and bad drawings. As Christie explained, she found the initial drawing difficult because she is 'not that good at drawing people', where Bethany describing it more in terms of failure,

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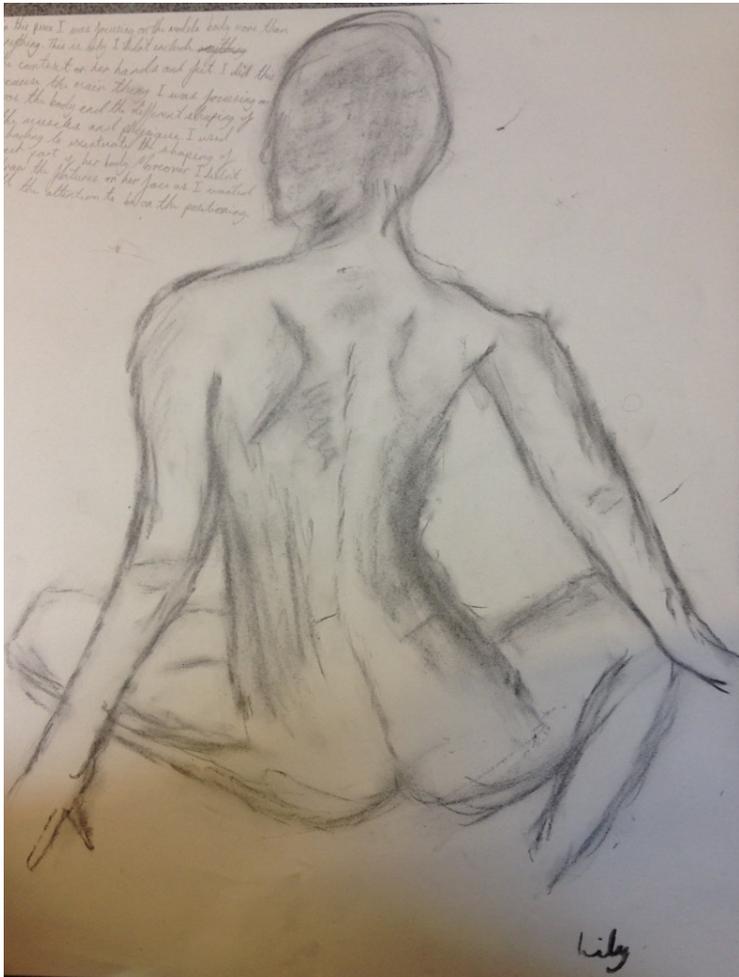
Figure 91: Lily (2014) Lily Life drawing: 1. [Charcoal on paper]
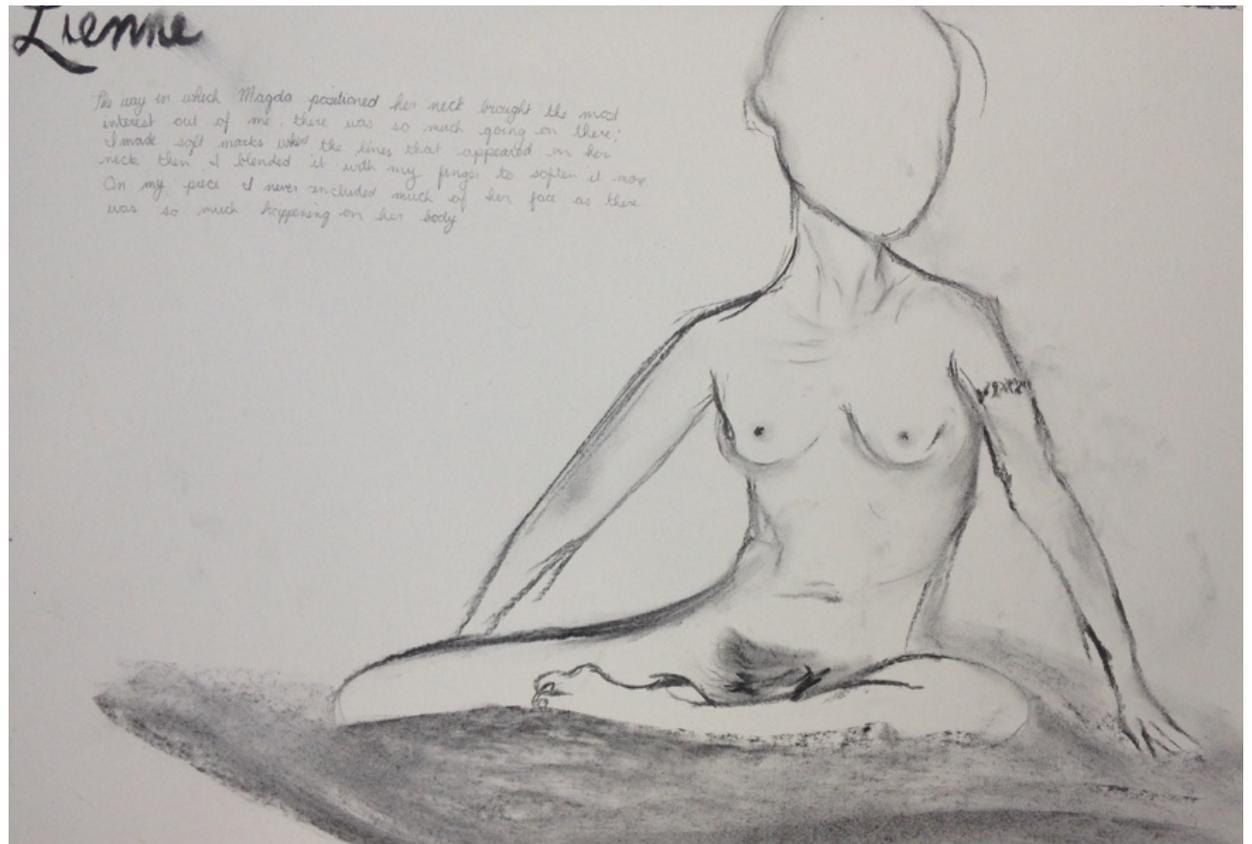
Figure 92: Lienne (2014) Life drawing: 1. [Charcoal on paper]
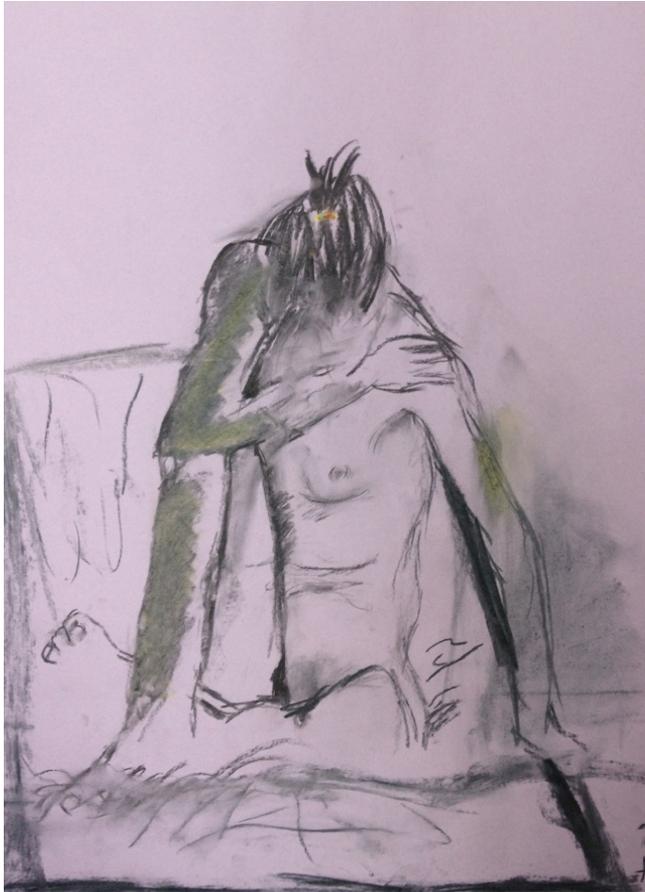
Figure 93: Bethany (2014) Life drawing: 1. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 94: Tabitha (2014) Life drawing: 1. [Charcoal on paper]
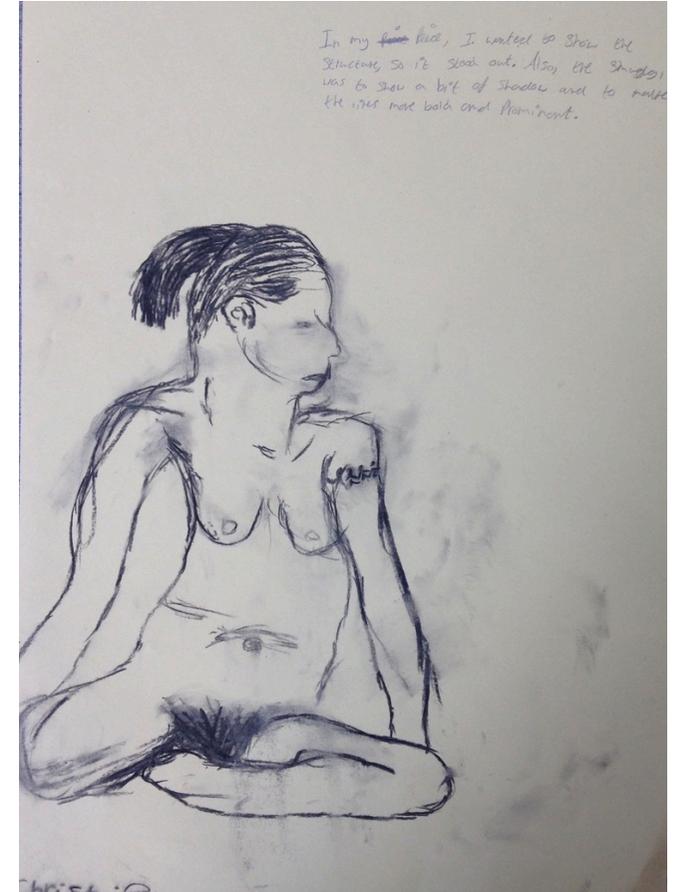
Figure 95: Christie (2014) Life drawing: 1. [Charcoal on paper]

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Bethany: None of these [drawings] are perfect, they are all kinda messy and confusing and something I wouldn't usually … be happy with them. Ermm I guess I was like when your drawing or anything, if it's not a woman if it's anything, especially painting figures you always kinda have something in your mind, how it should look, and if you don't get it perfectly, or if you, if you don't have it, if it doesn't look the same, like I feel, like I have kind of failed.

Bethany's desire to create a perfect reproduction of the model is apparent here, and the assembling of various learnt colonial narratives all come to the fore and provide visual examples of how the colonised line restricts understanding of the body into very specific forms of mark making as seen in these art works.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have been positioning the female nude as becoming, both in terms of art history and media imagery, through a complex assemblage with the YWAs. As discussed, the YWAs were caught between the desire to look like the images of women as perpetuated by Western art history, but also a need to protect themselves from such idealisations. By sharing their experiences, and hearing similar stories echoed by other YWAs, a defiance emerged and a desire to disrupt these experiences and perceptions of self. The YWAs actively started to deconstruct the learnt narratives perpetuated by the art trope of the female nude and questioned the historical notions of beauty they were so used to seeing. This enabled a shift in their positioning from being subjected to 'automatic responses' where they lacked agency, to active forms of resistance. To pull these histories directly into the art classroom I discuss how the drawing process is infused with humanist ideologies that idealise the Western notion of the perfect form. I unpick how this restricts the creative becomings of young women in our classrooms and that regulate our understanding of drawing and art education. However, I also argued that the shared experience of the life drawing class, if approached from a phEminist perspective, holds the potential to diffract the patriarchal desires that have sedimented and controlled the drawing process. The lines we create in the art classroom are historically bound up with the patriarchal and colonial narratives that perpetuate a

very narrow and specific ideal of what 'woman' is, but it is in this very space with these very lines that we can reconfigure how the lines are explored. I now turn to discuss how disrupting the colonial line in the art classroom can reverberate through the bodies of the YWAs and begin a process of diffracting their experiences with their own bodies. Resisting from within the traditional life drawing space can active a phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope.

However, before embarking on this discussion, chapter seven offers a visual exploration of the art works created by the YWAs in the PhEminist life drawing exploration. These drawings begin to diffract the colonised line and support the YWAs in (re)viewing not only drawing practice but also, in diverse ways, the body of the model. I offer these art works at this point rather than after the analysis in chapter eight or positioned throughout the chapter, to acknowledge their status as research in their own right, not as illustrations to the written content of this thesis. The analysis in chapter eight evolves from the humanist life drawing exploration, not the other way around. The layout of the drawings in the visual chapter varies; groups of drawings placed on the same page indicate drawing tasks that were linked together; for example, studies in quick succession are placed together to replicate the conversations that occurred between drawings in the life drawing space. Drawings on a full-page spread were created separately and are viewed independently from other drawings. The YWAs' drawings have been placed here rather than in amongst the words in chapter seven, to provide the reader with space to contemplate their works without distraction and to enjoy the lines created in between the cacophony of the written word. This also provides an opportunity to reapply a glue skin if you so wish.

Chapter Six

Visual exploration: PhEminist life drawing[34]

Bethany

Figure 96: Bethany (2104) Life drawing: 4. [Charcoal on paper]
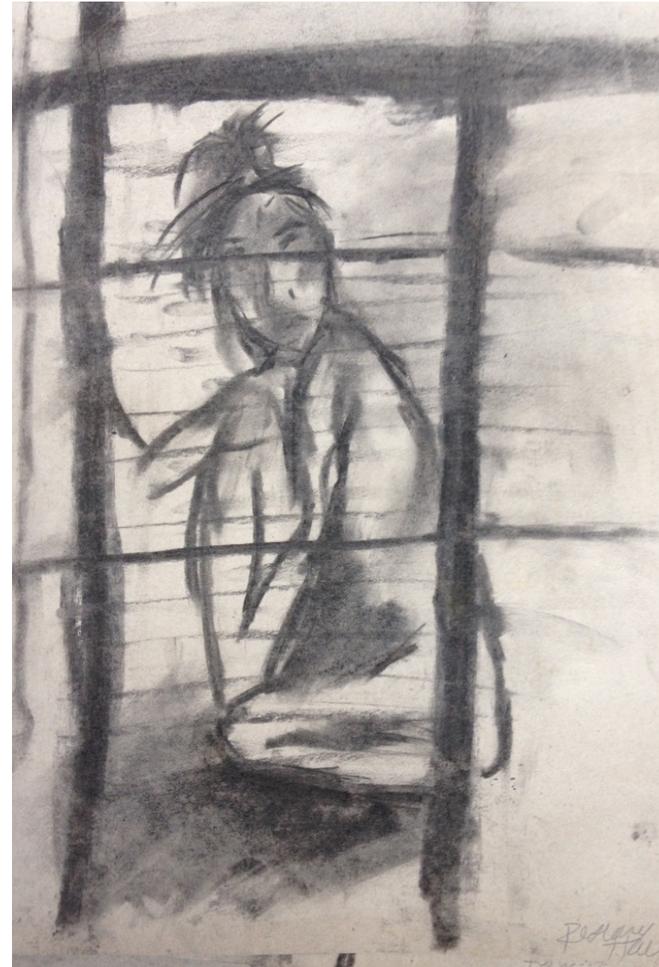
Figure 97: Bethany (2014) Life drawing: 7. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 98: Bethany (2014) Life drawing: 5. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 99: Bethany (2014) Life drawing: 9. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 100: Bethany (2014) Life drawing: 11. [Charcoal and chalk on paper]
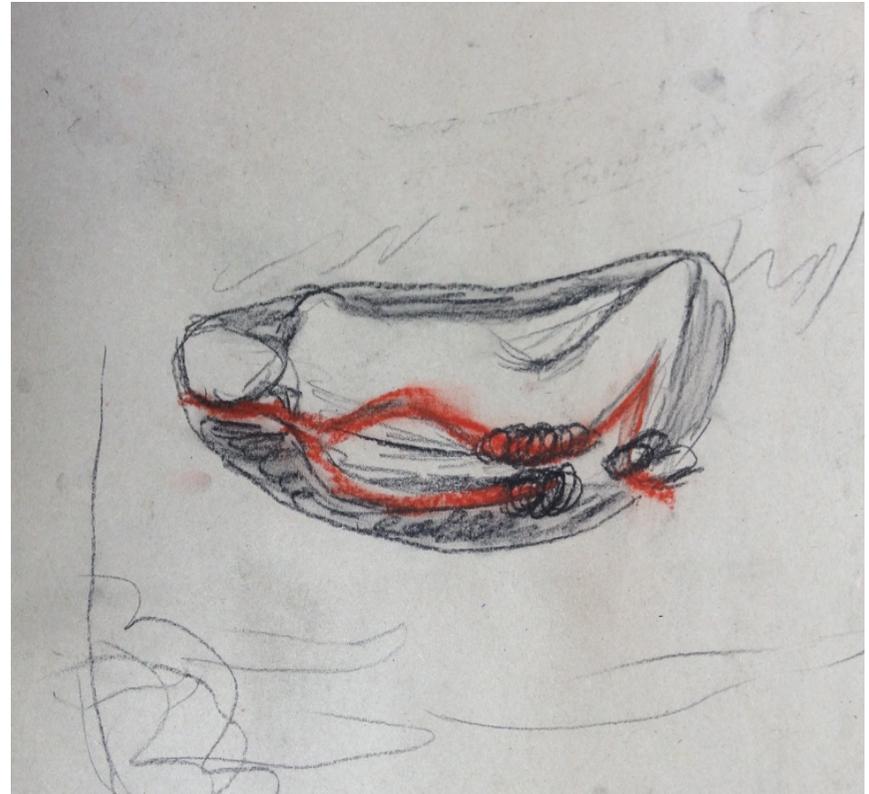
Figure 101: Bethany (2014) Life drawing: 10. [Charcoal and chalk on paper]

Figure 102: Bethany (2014) Life drawing: 3. [Charcoal and chalk on paper]

Tabitha

Figure 103: Tabitha (2014) Replica. [Charcoal on paper]
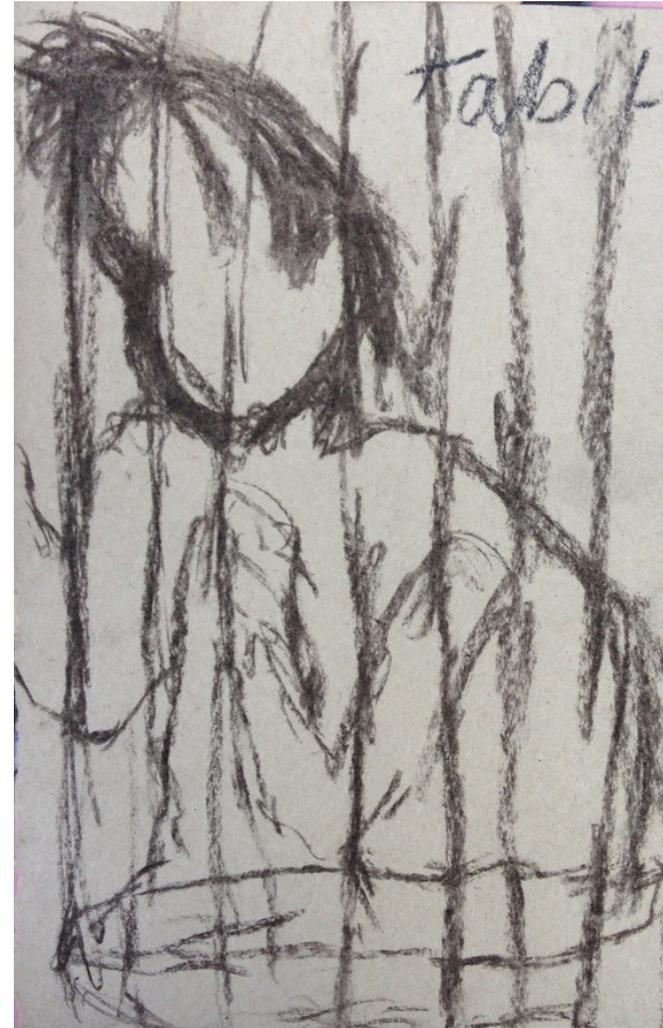
Figure 104: Tabitha (2014) Behind iron bars. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 105: Tabitha (2014) Tabitha 5. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 106: Tabitha (2014) Tabitha 3. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 107: Tabitha (2014) Power. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 108: Christie (2014) Christie 5. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 109: Christie (2014) Christie 6. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 110: Christie (2014) Christie 7. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 111: Christie (2014) Christie 3. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 112: Christie (2014) Christie 9. [Charcoal on paper]

Lily
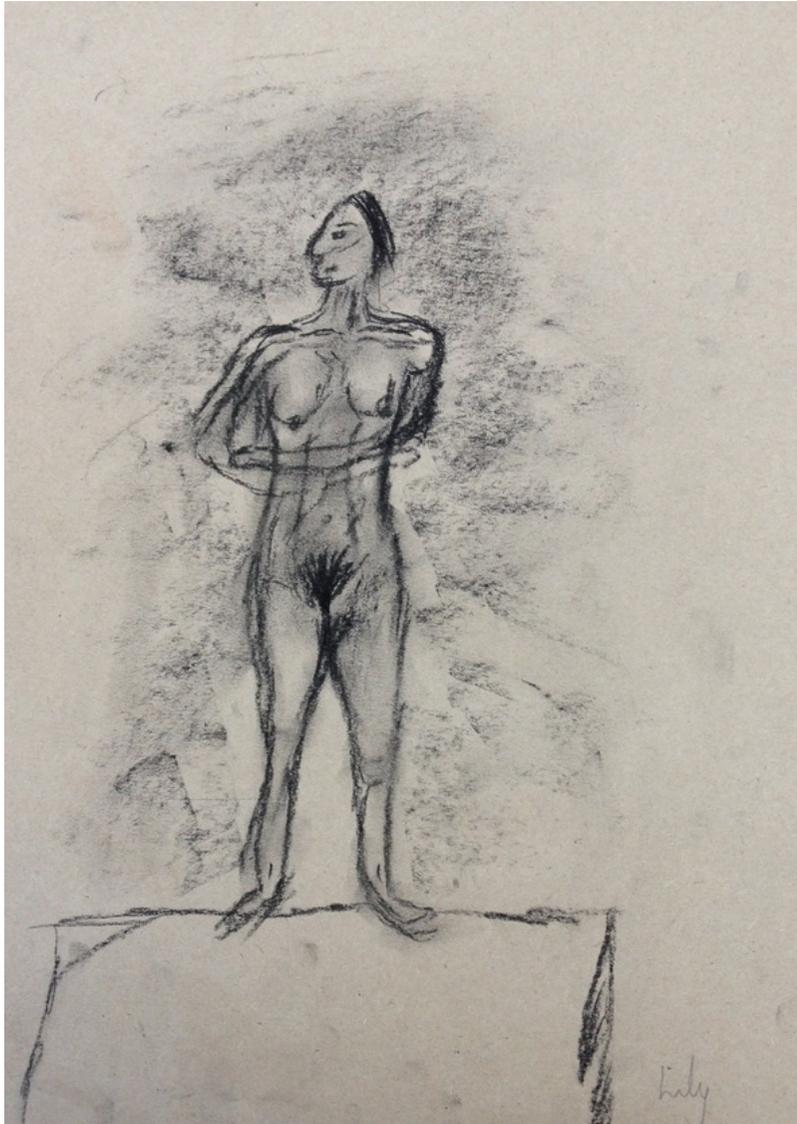
Figure 113: Lily (2014) Boss. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 114: Lily (2014) Life drawing: 2. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 115: Lily (2014) Melancholy. [Charcoal on paper]
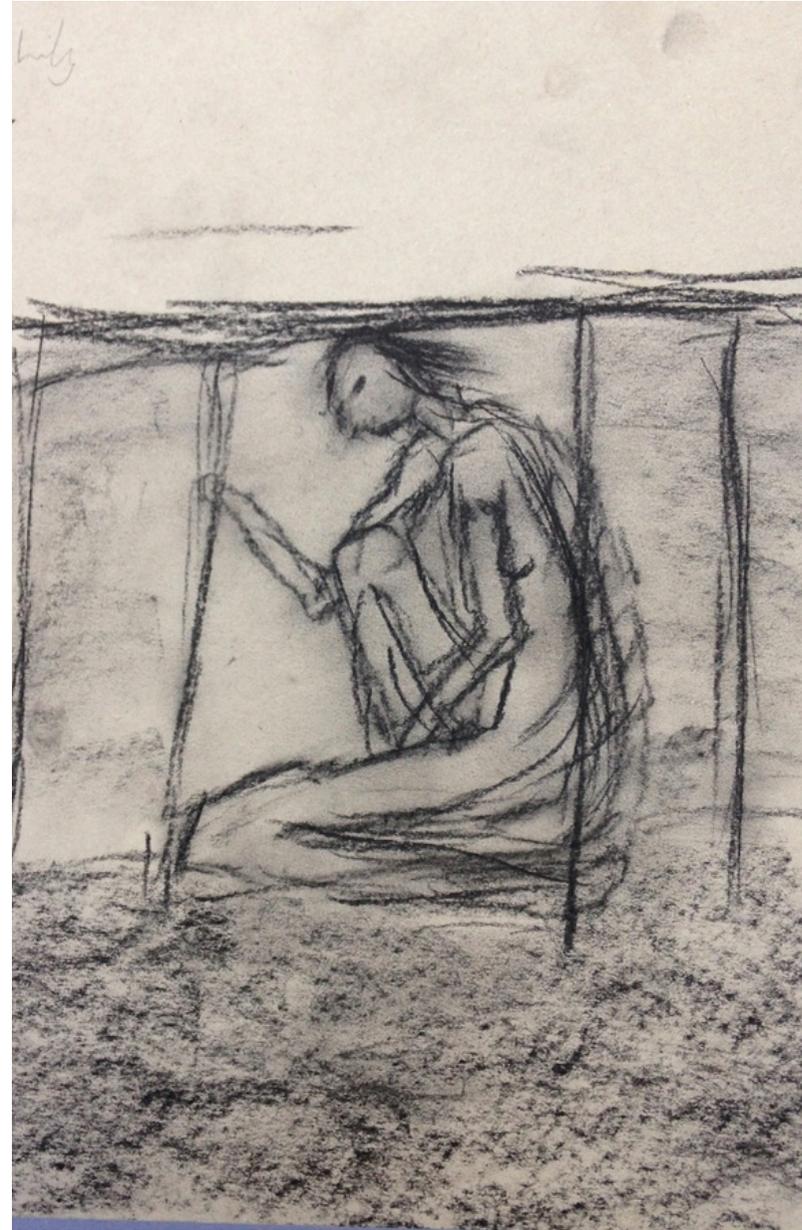
Figure 116: Lily (2014) Hawk [Charcoal on paper]

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Figure 117: Lily (2014) Wotsits. [Charcoal and chalk on paper]

Figure 118: Lily (2014)   Yellow creation of the night. [Charcoal and chalk on paper]

Lienne

Figure 119: Lienne (2014) Frustration [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 120: Lienne (2014) In hiding. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 121: Lienne (2014) Defeated version 3. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 122: Lienne (2014) Defeated version 2. [Charcoal and chalk on paper]

Figure 123: Lienne (2014) Strength. [Charcoal on paper]

Figure 124: Lienne (2014) Confidence. [Charcoal and chalk on paper]

Figure 125: Lienne (2014) Movement. [Charcoal and chalk on paper]

Chapter seven

Decolonising the skin through a decolonisation of the line

Having explored the impact of the colonial histories of the female nude in chapters two and three, and the impact of these histories on the YWAs and their creative outcomes in the art classroom in chapter five (Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016; Maslen and Southern: 2011; Anning: 2008), I now directly address the third research question: How can situating the skin as a paradoxical material support a decolonising pedagogical practice for diffracting the line? This chapter explores how a phEmaterialist methodology can decolonise the skin through a material decolonisation of the line. I position the colonising line or 'closed line' (Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016) and the phEminist nomadic line (Braidotti: 2011) in a co-constitutional relationship, as a diffractive pedagogy of hope (Hickey-Moody, Palmer, Sayers: 2016; Palmer: 2016; hooks: 1994, 2003). Building on the Becoming Skin Cell exploration at the start of this thesis through the 'crafty practice' of phEminist explorations (Renold and Ringrose: 2019; Renold: 2018) I discuss an embodied process that diffracts the narrow definition of the historical female skin and the colonised practice of life drawing. By retaking the sealed and regulated skin through a phEminist life drawing practice, I celebrate and explore the phEminist skin as a leaky, porous material that wrinkles, scars, sheds, and is lively with millions of non-human microbial 'critters' that crawl within it (Haraway: 2016).

This experience of the skin is used as inspiration to actively decolonise the female nude in the life class and emerges in three significant ways: the artist/model relationship and the impact of the implied colonial desire in the space of the life drawing class (Nead: 1992; Betterton: 1987), the decolonising of the line and opening up of the 'closed line' (Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016) that diffracts the ideals of the 'perfect' drawing, and finally an exploration of how life drawing itself can be reimagined through 'crafty practices' (Renold and Ringrose: 2019) to create space for hopeful becomings (hooks: 2003; Deleuze and Guattari: 2013).

Decolonising the skin: Reclaiming desire

To liberate the life class and 'unlearn' patriarchal desire, which has regulated women's bodies and colonised the line, desire needs to be reclaimed by moving away from the patriarchal desire that

has embedded a mythology of the model as mistress (Nead: 1992, 50), towards a phEminist desire (Braidotti: 2002; 2011; hooks: 2003). Inspired by the rhizomatic desire of Deleuze and Guattari (2013), Guattarian schizo-analysis (1995) and a Spinozan (1994 [1677]) philosophy of affect (conatus), Braidotti (2002) positions Deleuzian desire as,

> a notion of desire that no longer rests on the dualistically split subject of modernity, but rather on the intensive entity that is activated by eternal returns, constant becomings and flows of transformations in response to external promptings, that is to say sets of encounters with multiple others. (100)

Nomadic desire extends the ephemeral Deleuzian ideas of becoming with and through 'multiple others' and erotises it as a material that is socially activated through encounters, creating 'new possibilities of empowerment' (Braidotti: 2002, 99). When approached nomadically, the fertile ground of the life class evokes various material explorations which can disrupt the traditional relationships between the artist and model and also between the artist and the artwork.

Decolonising the female nude and reclaiming 'desire' as a process of becoming empowered (Braidotti: 2002), means a repositioning of the relationship between the model and the class. The presumption of the life class as an 'uncomfortable' space can be read in the following extracts from the YWAs' discussion of their experience of the PhEminist Life Drawing Exploration and how these initial perceptions changed during the class,

> **Bethany**: I originally thought it would be a bit uncomfortable to draw from someone naked, just standing in front of you. But when it was happening, I think it wasn't really uncomfortable as [the] model was so comfortable with herself. So, she made you feel more comfortable.
>
> **Lienne**: I thought going to the life drawing session was going to be very uncomfortable because you don't normally see somebody naked. During this session I was surprised because I felt comfortable, felt like a regular art lesson.

As seen in the extracts, the way women have been positioned historically through the male gaze in this space has created a preformed, embodied idea of what the experience of the life class will be. The discomfort is rooted in the hetero-sexualisation of the female nude, as previously discussed by the YWAs in chapter five, which creates a 'tension' (Niccolini, Zarabadi and Ringrose: 2018) within the body of the female nude as being at 'the internal limit of art and the external limit of obscenity' (Nead: 1992, 25). In the life class this tension split the bodies of the YWAs in two - at once the body of the male artist and the body of the model, or of a non-entity if the body is one that has been erased. The thought of the life class space is therefore fraught with feelings of discomfort.

As I explored in chapters one and two, this practiceresearch is activated in the discomfort or tension of colonial histories, and as Niccolini, Zarabadi and Ringrose (2018) state, '[o]pposed to a humanist progress narrative that views tension as something to be overcome or eradicated, we see tension as an activating force' (325). The life class is an interesting example of working with 'tension' as an 'activating force'. If the relationship *between* the model and the artist/s is diffracted and opened up to diversify the pre-perceived experience, there is an opportunity to resist re-embedding patriarchal ideas of desire, as seen in the extracts below.

> **Christie**: [The model] did speak sometimes, but how she would speak back to you, she talks in a friendly manner, that you thought she was a nice person.
>
> **Clare**: did that make you feel more comfortable?
>
> **Christie**: Yes

As highlighted above, the model, had agency in the life class space. She spoke to the students about the art works they were making, and a relationship between the model and the class was activated through these moments of conversation. By sharing her thoughts, the model created a shift from the traditional sense of a model-as-object to model-as-embodied-subject, someone who was 'a nice person'. Her confidence was another significant factor, which supported a diffracting of the desire in the space. When discussing the YWAs' discomfort in chapter four, I highlighted that these feelings were embedded in a colonial and Freudian (2005 [1905], 2018 [1905]) legacy of lack. The YWAS felt this legacy in their lack of confidence, as discussed in chapters one and five,

so for them to be in in a space with another woman who resisted the legacy held the potential for a profound pedagogical moment to occur.

Tabitha: I think [the model] herself helped me build my confidence in myself as she was very comfortable with how she looked. But it wasn't the type of confident like you want to show off everything, it was the type of confidence that I'm ok with what I look like and I'm not ashamed of myself. So, it made me raise my confidence as well because she was able to do that.

Christie: Yes, like, she had no shame about her body, and like everyone is not perfect, so I think she was really giving everyone advice and one of those lessons where we are all not perfect so don't worry about it.

Lienne: I guess it helped me to feel more confident in my own body. Because her body didn't really classify as what the media sees as a perfect body portrayed but she was so confident in herself. And that kind of raised my confidence a little bit.

Bethany: [The model] had a very interesting body, so she had like scars on shoulder, she had a tattoo, and it was interesting to see because her body was telling the story of what she's been through and like her life. And being used to seeing bodies that are very polished and neat and perfect in the media it was interesting to be reminded that everybody is unique, and everyone's body is unique, and they've been through different things and that kind of shapes the way they look physically and the way they present themselves also.

All these extracts highlight the impact of simply being in the life class space, which provided a diffraction of the female nude. A different 'story' was being told by the model, someone who they did not consider 'perfect', who had a body that was not 'polished', but who was confident in their skin, regardless of patriarchal and colonial beauty standards. The reality of the model's body seen through the skin, was in direct opposition to Connors' (2004) shining skins, skins that reflect an unrealistic ideal. The skin observed in this life class embodied a lively reality that held the power to support a pedagogy of hope. This powerful pedagogical tool is the embodiment of a hooksian 'education as the practice of freedom', freedom from colonial beauty standards. As Christie stated above, witnessing someone who had 'no shame about her body' made this a hopeful space and

enabled the YWAs to 'move beyond shame to a place that is humanizing. Shame dehumanizes' (hooks: 2003, 103). Thus, the dehumanising legacy of the female nude can be deactivated through a pedagogical practice of hope and freedom

> As teachers we can make the classroom a place where we help students come out of shame. We can allow them to experience their vulnerability among a community of learners who will dare to hold them up should they falter or fail when triggered by past scenarios of shame – a community that will constantly give recognition and respect. (hooks: 2003,103)

I would add to this statement that it is not only the teacher who has the agency to enable such a space, but the phEmaterialist entanglements that occur within that space. As Niccolini, Zarabadi and Ringrose (2018) state 'As phEmaterialists we seek to take seriously the affective-material life of the spaces we teach and research in, both how materialities activate thought and how thought activates materiality' (324). It is the material and bodily engagements in the colonial and patriarchal space of the life class that establish diffractive opportunities to work within such spaces. To pull through the Spinozan (1994 [1677]) concept of not knowing what a body can do, here it becomes a body that has the capacity to 'affect' and be 'affected by' the other bodies in the space. Massumi (2015) applies this theory 'as a way of talking about that margin of manoeuvrability, the "where we might be able go and what we might be able to do" in every present situation' (3). It is this focus on the experimental, the exploration of these spaces between that I believe are fertile ground for creating wriggle-room. Interestingly Massumi (2013) aligns 'affect' with 'hope', which when freed from the concepts of optimism and pessimism, 'places it in the present'. When situating this hopeful present in the life class, it is not a rewriting of history, it is a working within the margins of manoeuvrability, it is 'being right where you are – more intensely' (3). It is in this way that I understand my practice as a process of decolonisation.

Decolonising the line: Reclaiming life drawing[35]

The process of decolonisation, as suggested above, happens in the space between colonial history and hopeful futures. It isn't necessarily in the grand gestures of political statements, but in the small acts of doing, an irritation, a process of diffraction. The potential for decolonisation in the life class is in drawing. As a starting point for this exploration, Ingold (2007) provides an interesting observation about the drawing surface, suggesting that it is dependent on your view of the parchment as to whether it is a surface to be explored, like a 'landscape to be travelled or a story to be told, or a space to be colonized, or to the skin of the body or the mirror of the mind' (39). As Bethany mentioned above, the power of the model's body was that it spoke to her, it told a story, the skin was offered as a landscape for exploration rather than regulation. Ingold (2007) explains further that 'it is not enough to regard the surface as a taken-for-granted backdrop for the lines that are inscribed upon it' (39), but the lines, the body and the surface become with and through each other. Ingold likens this to the skin, which in the context of life drawing offers interesting opportunities as to the way one approaches the paper and drawing process. It also helpfully refers back to the previous point about the relationship of the artist to the model. If you approach life drawing from the point of view of the patriarchal gaze that sees the female as object and 'owned', the reading of the skin will be different than if you approach the surface as a landscape, and a space for exploration of the skin. The process of decolonising the female nude and subsequently life drawing is then to reimagine the surface of the paper as an exploratory space, a nomadic enquiry (Braidotti: 2011).

As discussed in chapter one, Braidotti's perception of the nomadic is that it is anchored to its historical roots but is also tantalisingly imbued with a sense of adventure, paradoxically situated in the material of the skin (Nead: 1992). Such rhizomatic meanderings of the skin's lines leads necessarily to Deleuze and Guattari's (2013) theory of lines and the rhizome, which supports Braidotti's (2011) theory of nomadic becoming. Deleuze and Guattari (2013) describe the rhizome, which in turn informs my rethinking of the colonised line, as follows,

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[35] Decolonising the line website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/decolonising-the-line.html

It is composed not of units, but dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither

beginning or end, but always a middle from which it grows and which it overspills … The

rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. Unlike the graphic

arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be

produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible,

modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. (22)

Although Deleuze and Guattari (2013) position the rhizome as being 'unlike drawing', I position the

rhizome as exactly that, a drawing that 'grows and overspills', as a process that has 'multiple

entryways' and can support phEmaterialist nomadic lines. To unpick the essence of what a

drawing can be I return to Massumi's (2013) Notes on the Translation in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

Massumi explains that the Deleuze and Guattarian act of drawing 'is an act of creation. What is

drawn … does not preexist the act of drawing'. I interpret this as the histories of art not being

erased, but as 'reversed' or 'modified'' (xv). Massumi (2013) expands further on the concept of

drawing by using the French word 'tracer', which he positions not only as connoting the English

verb to draw, but which also captures the essence of the French meaning, which is, 'to blaze a

trail' (xv). To 'blaze a trail' through the life class is to bring about diffractive possibilities where

traditional forms of drawing can be diffracted, and 'unlearning' can take place (Maslen and

Southern: 2011; Atkinson: 2002). Life drawing has the pedagogical power to diffract these

histories, it holds the potential of what Deleuze and Guattari (2013) call a 'line of flight'.

In the Notes on Translation, Massumi (2013) explains that the French word for flight, 'fuite', carries

meanings that vary from the English sense of the word, stating that it 'covers not only the act of

fleeing or eluding but also of flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance (the vanishing

point in a painting is a point de fuite)' (xv). I seek here to draw out the flowing and leaking line as a

phEmaterialist nomadic line. To puncture the colonised line of the historical female nude is to

rupture Chastity's sieve, not a

running away from the world but rather in causing run offs, as when you drill a hole in a

pipe; there is no social system that does not leak from all directions, even if it makes its

segments increasingly rigid in order to seal the lines of flight. (Deleuze and Guattari: 2013,

239)

The leaky reality of the female body challenges traditional Western paintings of the female nude, and as Nead (1992) argues, the female nude is the method by which alternative feminist narratives are 'sealed'. This sealing of the form was embedded through the repetition of specific narratives, and as the YWAs highlighted in chapter five, it was the model's overtly sexual poses that they found problematic. However, the simple act of changing a model's positioning holds the potential to create a phEminist 'leak'. As Griselda Pollock (1987) states, art 'is feminist when it subverts the normal ways in which we view art and are usually seduced into complicity with the meanings of the dominant and oppressive culture' (93). This form of diffracting traditional drawings, of creating 'run offs', opens up possibilities to challenge the 'dominant culture' and provides an alternative way of seeing. But to enable a diffraction of the traditional interpretations of the passive, hetero-sexualised female nude, models need agency and control over their bodies and autonomy over the poses. As such, the poses within this life class generally came from a prompt, such as a word or a story, and the model would respond physically to these prompts. As Tabitha explains,

> **Tabitha**: It was all just the model's idea of what she wanted to do, she thought of how she wanted to look, and when she was portraying the emotion or how she was posing, and she continued changing her pose whenever she felt like it was needed. She made sure there was a variety of different poses so some that were sad, one of them was happy. It wasn't always like, I'm trying to think of the other emotions, it wasn't too excited. It was a collective, I don't know what the word is, a variation of emotions. (Figs. 103-107)

The model's freedom to create different scenarios with her body meant that the YWAs were also freed from the colonised line that desires a reproduction. This resistance to colonial narratives supported the YWAs to envisage a nomadic body, one that was 'multifunctional and complex, ... a transformer of flows and energies, affects, desires and imagining' (Braidotti: 2011, 25). Reimagining their drawings as a series of 'flows and energies' resists the 'closed' line drawing that I discussed in chapter five with the story of the potter's daughter, in which she pinned down a line

to capture and possess its subject. When Bethany discussed one of her favourite drawings of the day, she articulated a freedom to manipulate her lines which shifted the reality of the art room,

> **Bethany**: I really tried to make it into a story kind of, like, I turned the table into like a window, because in the pose I felt she looked quite afraid, like she was hiding, so I wanted to play on that, like someone is looking for her.

The diffraction that occurred between the model's agency and this YWA's ownership of the drawing created an interesting place for adventure (Atkinson: 2018). Bethany also described the process of the exploration as moving from 'trying to get her just perfectly' in the initial drawing (Fig. 93), to having more 'fun' (Figs. 96-102),

> **Bethany**: Yes, I think, we started off with that one (Fig. 93), which I think just looks like straight up just drawing, trying to get her just perfectly. Like I rubbed it out a bunch of times, trying to make it look like her, but then I think as we progressed they look a bit abstract and a bit more, a bit more like fun, like it's not just a plain drawing, … all the later ones have a bit more energy and a bit more personality, I think, in comparison with the first one.

This shift in Bethany's drawing from the 'straight' drawing in which she aimed for perfection, fraught with tension, is released during the session into a playful drawing that encapsulates the diffraction of the colonised line, to a line that has 'a bit more personality'. When we perpetuate the desire of the first drawing, one that aims to achieve perfection, it is a repetition of colonial ideals in which various bodies are erased. It is what hooks (2003) terms 'undemocratic'. This idealised restrictive form of drawing aligns with hooks' argument around authoritarian practices. She explains that

> By undermining education as a practice of freedom, authoritarianism in the classroom dehumanizes and thus shuts down the "magic" that is always present when individuals are active learners. It takes the "fun out of study" and makes it repressive and oppressive' (hooks: 2003, 43).

The idea of 'fun' is at odds with the neoliberal learning process in which 'the pedagogical subject of

prescribed pedagogies is conceived almost completely in terms of productivity relating to economic ambition' (Atkinson: 2018, 198). Having 'fun' therefore, is what Atkinson (2018) would term 'disobedient', which he elaborates more clearly as follows,

> Disobedient pedagogies, in contrast to those prescribed by Government, adopt the Spinozan notion that we don't really know what a body is capable of or what thoughts are capable of being thought, coupled with the notion of the pragmatics and the ethics of the suddenly possible. Such pedagogies involve a continual inventive interweaving of ontology and ethics which, when confronting disobedient objects or aberrant ways of learning/practicing, may open up new possibilities for practice and new ways of understanding art. (199)

Employing phEmaterialism as a 'disobedient' pedagogy promotes 'new possibilities' of understanding the female nude and the body itself. As the Atkinson (2018) quote above emphasises, and as Lily explains below, being adventurous supports alternative ways of looking at art in general,

> **Clare**: did [your] way of looking change throughout the day?
>
> **Lily**: Ermm, yes, err actually I think it improved more, because she encouraged us to do that, to look at all the detailing, instead of just doing the outline of her body, by looking on the inside a bit.
>
> **Clare**: and did you enjoy that process?
>
> **Lily**: Yes
>
> **Clare**: what do you think you got from it
>
> **Lily**: Ermm, to think different perspectives about thinking in art.

Lily is emphasising here that it is through encouraging alternative ways of looking that there is the possibility of shifting our perspective. Life drawing cannot redefine historic gender stereotypes, it cannot instantly change how YWAs view their drawings or the female body, but we can start to diffract the deep-rooted codes of gender and challenge colonial identities to offer alternatives. Nead (1992) stresses that although,

> The female body is dense with meaning in a patriarchal culture ... these connotations cannot be shaken off entirely. There is no possibility of recovering the female body as a neutral sign for feminist meanings, but signs and values can be transformed, and different identities can be set in place. (72)

It is through working with past histories, by 'staying with the trouble (Haraway: 2016), that we can transform our learnt understanding of the 'signs and values' that underpin how we engage with images of women and subsequently our own bodies. Even though, all the YWAs spoke of the traditional female nude paintings as beautiful, when asked about their favourite drawing from the life class day, without exception they choose a drawing from the later stages of the class. Beginning to analyse their choices more closely, the YWAs explained:

Bethany: I think probably what, people or most people, including myself at first, kind of thought art had to be, like it has to be aesthetically pleasing, it has to be nice, and it has to make people, it has to look nice. But I think looking at other people's art and looking at different artists I have kind of seen how, a lot of amazing pieces they are not nice to look at, they are like, a lot of the time they can be quite uncomfortable, and oh I don't like that, but then if you look at it and try and study it a bit more you can realise that those pieces probably have a lot more depth and have a lot more to like give than like a beautiful model lying on a bed, just doing nothing, there's probably more story behind pieces like that, so it's quite interesting.

Christie: My favourite drawing was when we had to walk around the room, and we had to draw the four drawings one after one another. (Figs. 109-110)

Clare: … Why did you like those the best?

Christie: Cos I thought you had to be really quick, and it was testing you to see how you could do it, and then after a while, you had two or three minutes on each one, so you had to sketch it as best as you could.

The YWAs engaged more intensely with images that shared a story. Aggravating the underpinnings of the colonial line, creating space between the rigid 'straight' line (Ingold: 2007)

rooted in colonialism leads to the creation of diffractive, rhizomatic lines that celebrate difference. Such lines work with the body of the individual, as Tabitha explains,

> **Tabitha**: I would say that since you know that all bodies have different shapes, different sizes, different capabilities you try to put that into your drawing and not look at how the body is itself but how the person is in that body and try to mix their personality with the drawing or art that you are trying to do.

The drawings that evoke emotion pull us into the image, into the making process, so that the visceral nature of the experience resonates for much longer after the piece has been completed. This material reverberation holds within it the potential to diffract future drawings,

> **Bethany**: I think I found it [life drawing] inspiring as it has kind of influenced the way that I draw now, I think. Prior to the life drawing I was very specific, if I didn't like something, I'd rip out the page and try it again then rip it out. But afterwards the artist told us to stop thinking about it so much and to just draw what feels right, what you feel should be on the paper. I'm still a little bit picky but I think about it less now and draw what I think, what I feel.
>
> **Lienne**: Linking to what Bethany said I think after the life drawing session I tried to be more free with my artwork and not want my piece to look like accurate. I think it's helped build up my confidence more.
>
> **Lily**: I think it's [the drawing process] kind of reflective of how a person may feel about themselves, like they are trying to strive for perfection when really you should just accept you for who you are. I think it was kind of indirectly telling us throughout the process of the day to do that.

The drawing process here has the potential to reframe the colonial narrative of the female nude and diffract how young women frame their bodies and offer tools with which to disrupt colonial restrictions. As Lily discussed above, diffracting the idea of the perfect drawing in the art classroom can support empowered re-imaginings of the female body. This decolonisation of the line in turn creates opportunity for nomadic explorations of the self. Each expressive drawing technique is a 'minor gesture' that 'becomes a political enunciator, vibrating with the potential to interrupt the

conventional discursive-material-embodied practices' (Renold: 2019). The lines in the art classroom run much deeper than the paper they mark and as highlighted have the potential to become a tool for 'intra-activism' (Renold and Ringrose: 2019).

Diffracting life drawing through crafty practices[36]

Before I move on to discuss the YWAs' responses to the media collage exploration, I want to revisit the Becoming Skin Cell exploration and discuss this as a phEmaterialist life drawing. As the exploration elicited, the skin is formed of millions of skin cells that are continuously shed by the body, creating a 'vibrant' (Bennett: 2010; Renold and Ringrose: 2019) post human collaboration with the millions of microbial 'critters' that live in and on it (Haraway: 2016). To then think of this 'vibrant' body in the life drawing space not only creates a diffractive view of the colonial sealed body of the model, but also extends to *all* the bodies in that space. Viewing the skin through a phEmaterialist gaze means that everything in that space becomes part of the assemblage. Skin mingles with skin in an invisible dance, disrupting the patriarchal histories of the female nude, and thereby offers opportunity for alternative ways of seeing and being in the art classroom. This reviewing of the skin, which supports a diffractive 'reading back' (Smith: 2021) of past histories, does not erase and forget, it queers and draws out multiple stories. The Becoming Skin Cell exploration physically manifests itself throughout this thesis as a silent rupturing of the female nude – a phEmaterialist life drawing. As I sit and write, feeling the coldness of the glue being reapplied over and over, I am drawn back into the materiality of the skin. As I invited you to participate in the glue skin process you may also be experiencing this as you read these words. If so, we are constantly drawn to the sticky spots, a nudge to be attentive to the liveliness of our skin, a reminder that we are sitting in a biome of detritus, our skin cells leaving us in a constant process of flight. It is an embodied gesture that pays attention to the non-human companions that travel with us, an acknowledgement that we are already a post-human assemblage.

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[36] Becoming skin cell website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/9-becoming-skin-cell.html

The glue becomes a literal material life drawing of our body, which when shed captures the mapped lines of our skin. As it slowly dries it pays homage to the incredible journey of the skin cell. It is a mapping of the porous and flaky skin a rebuttal of the centuries of regulation to which it has been subjected. Through the shared process of glue skinning, the glue skins are an assemblage of multiple bodies, bodies that cross raced, gendered and sexualised divides. Thus, the glue skin also carries with it the heterosexually and racially coded colonial heritage of the female nude, but diffracts it, blurs boundaries and troubles histories. As Manning (2012) explains '[w]hat we call the present is composed of strands of pastness recomposing and perishing through it' (67). Our lively bodies are therefore constantly re-composing constant flows of 'newness' and 'reactivation', a state that she argues is a place of 'invention'. Situating the glue skin as a phEminist life drawing is to reimagine ways of thinking about the act of drawing itself. Life drawing in this instance becomes a pedagogy of matter, an embodied process that disrupts the historical skins of the constructed pure and unblemished female body through a retaking of the leaky, porous body as a nomadic phEmaterialist practice. Imagining methodological 'mutant' skins disrupts historical patriarchal approaches to the female skin as soft, chaste and ageless, queering the skin as a thing that wrinkles, scars, sheds, and is lively with millions of nonhuman microbial 'critters' that crawl within it (Haraway: 2016). What this phEmaterialist life drawing practice offers is the emergence of hopeful encounters, creating a 'margin of manoeuvrability' (Massumi: 2015) within the skin, which is celebrated for its leaky potential and activated through 'making kin' with its nonhuman critters (Haraway: 2016).

Diffracting the line through phEminist media collaging[37]

Thinking about the process of creating the glue skin as a life drawing gave rise to a consideration of the various phEminist explorations as another diffraction of life drawing. The PhEminist Media Collaging Exploration provided an opportunity to rethink and disrupt the colonial stereotypes of women as perpetuated by the media. Lienne discussed media imagery can be deceptive and how 'images can deceive the eyes'. Photoshop was often highlighted as the

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[37] PhEminist media collaging website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/4-pheminist-collaging.html
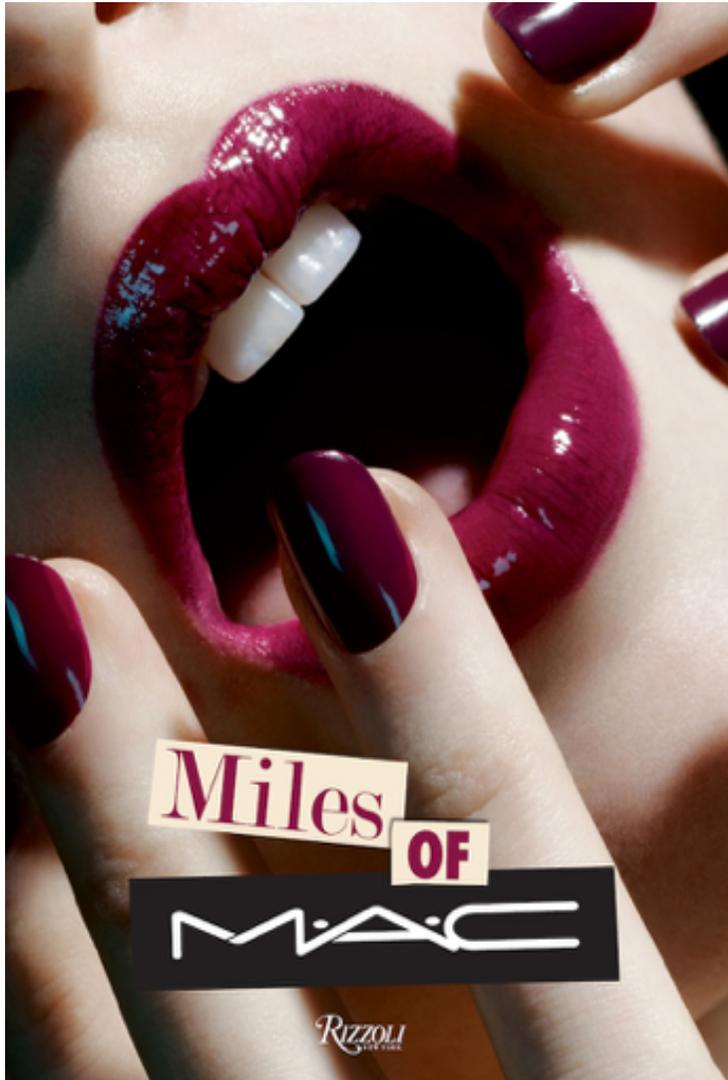
Lily

Figure 126: M.A.C (2013) Miles Aldridge for Miles of M.A.C. campaign (1). [Advert]

Figure 127: Lily (2014) Media collage. [Mixed media]

Figure 128: Lily (2014) Media collage section. [Mixed media]

Figure 129: Lily (2014) Media collage final (Terror). [Mixed media]

Bethany

Figure 130: M.A.C (2013) Miles Aldridge for Miles of M.A.C. campaign (2). [Advert]
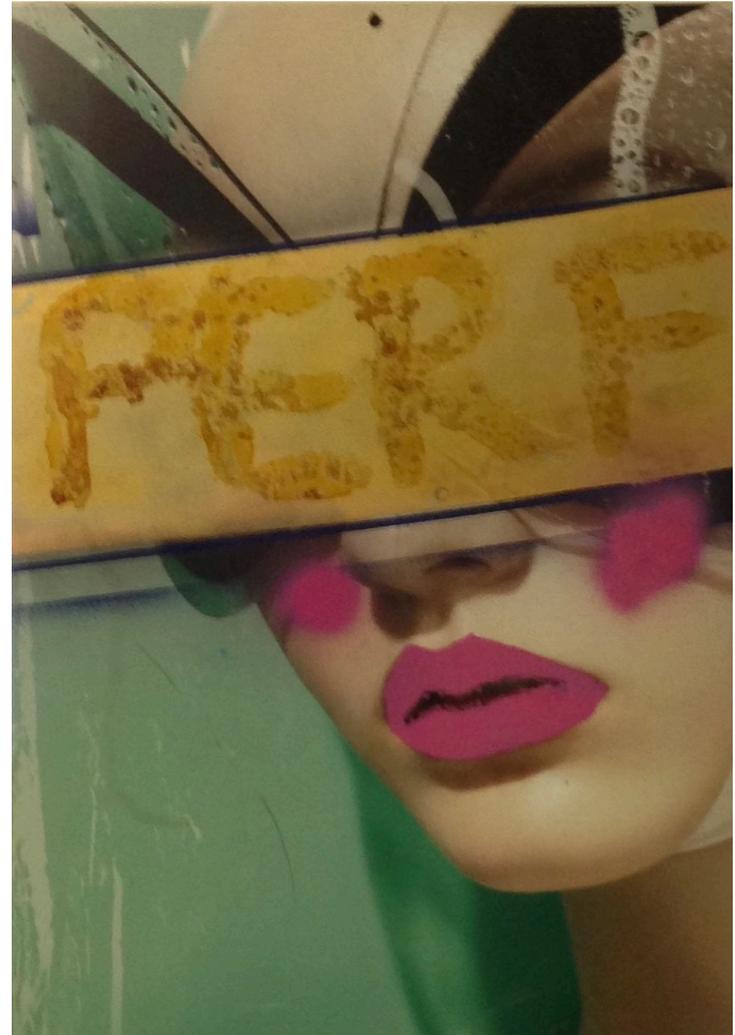
Figure 131: Bethany (2014) Media collage (final). [Mixed media]

Tabitha

Figure 132: M.A.C (2013) Miles Aldridge for Miles of M.A.C. campaign (3). [Advert]
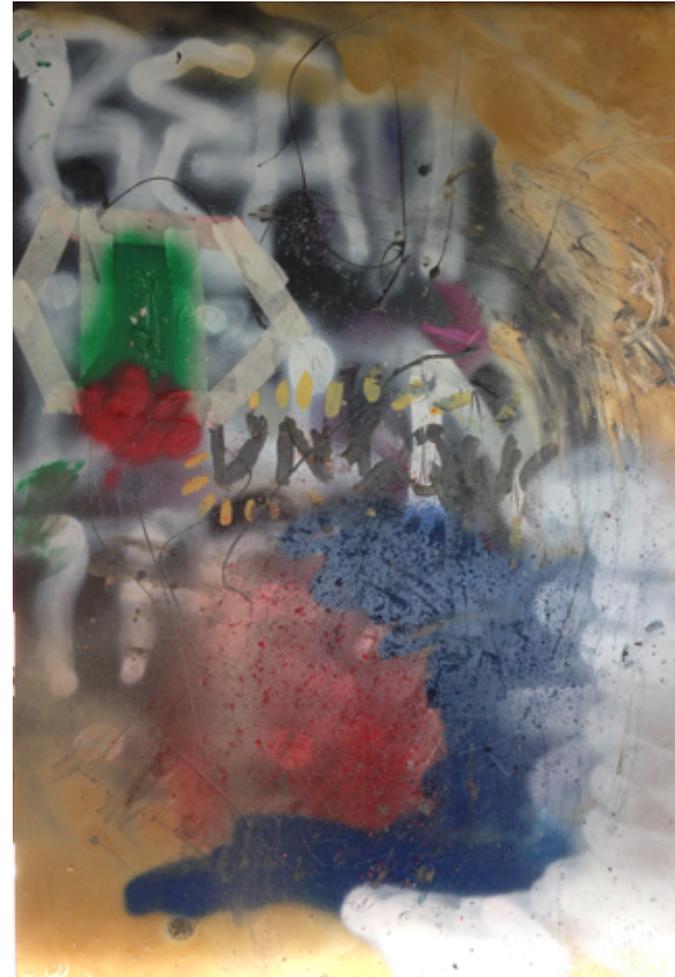
Figure 133: Tabitha (2014) Media collage (final). [Mixed media]

Figure 134: Miles Aldridge for Miles of M.A.C. campaign (4). [Advert]

Figure 135: Christie (2014) Media collage (Model 2). [Mixed media]

Figure 136: M.A.C (2013) Miles Aldridge for Miles of M.A.C. campaign (5). [Advert]
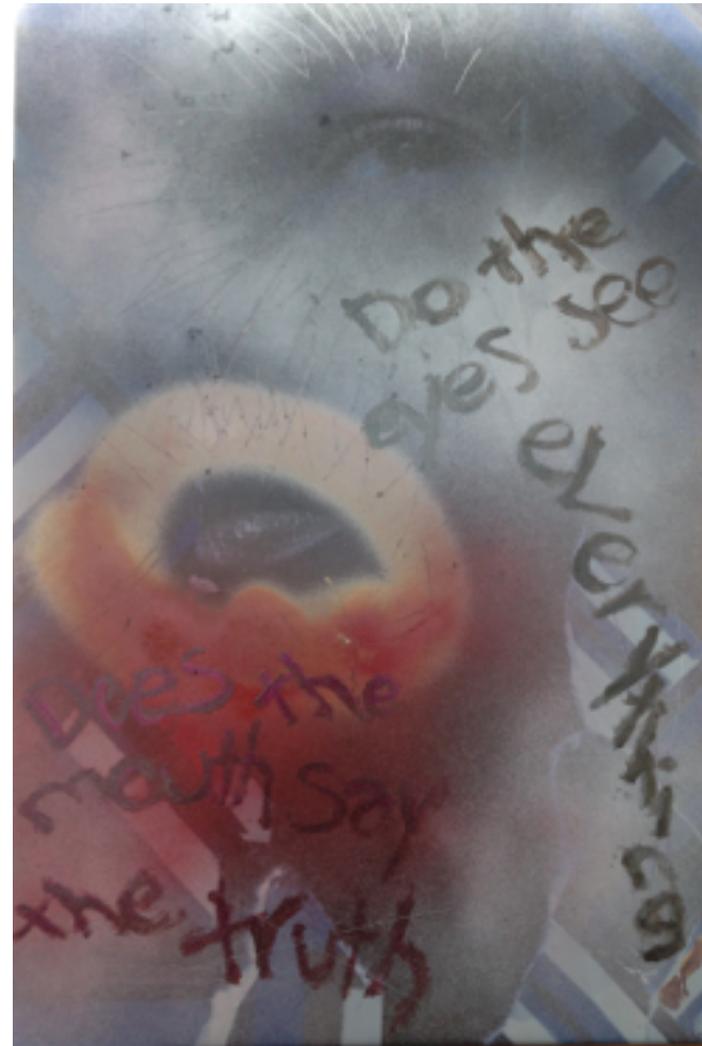
Figure 137: Lienne (2014) Media collage (Practice). [Mixed media]

Figure 138: Lienne (2014) Media collage (Final piece). [Mixed media]

Nadira

Figure 139: Nadira (2014) Media collage (Fray legs).
[Mixed media]

Figure 140: Nadira (2014) Media collage (section). [Mixed media]

tool through which women's bodies were regulated, where images 'of women are constantly altered so they can achieve the perfect appearance'. Lienne went on to say that 'in reality the person doesn't look like that. Images can blind a person from the truth'. The emotive language she used was visually apparent in her work. She obliterated the model's face with spray paint, leaving only the mouth exposed with the eye peering from behind a mottled pattern of paint spots. The mouth of the model is outlined in red, with scratches radiating outward, quick and angry, turning the mouth into an open wound. In a similar vein to Lienne, Tabitha and Christie also choose to obliterate their images (Figs. 133 and 135), leaving nothing intact. This removal of the image is what Kontturi (2013) would call a 'destratification against powers of representation' (23). When Kontturi describes her visit to the studio of artist Susan Nevado, she recalls the artist having sandpapered one of her artworks depicting layers of images of pin-up girls by sandpapering the piece. The girls that had once formed the focal points of the artwork were no longer recognisable. Kontturi (2013) explores this erasure as an act of freedom, stating that,

> the destroyed *artwork*, the object of recognition gave way to the *work of art*. The action of rubbing resulted in breaking the surface of the scraps, paint and varnish, and thus making them more porous, more amenable, more open to new connections. (23)

Instead of sanding the images, Lienne and Tabitha had obliterated the image with paint, but the resulting act of freeing the image from the usual stratified powers of representation is similar.

> **Tabitha**: At first, I used spray paints so I just sprayed so I couldn't see her face anymore.
>
> **Clare**: And why did you want to do that?
>
> **Tabitha**: If I couldn't see her face, it would show it was a blank empty state.

Both methods open the image up to 'new connections' or what Tabitha calls a 'blank state'. Whereas Lienne appeared to spray over her image in a reaction to her negative experiences, Tabitha's encounter seemed to emerge from an enjoyment of using the materials. By covering the image, Tabitha speaks of giving herself 'time to think'. When creating this piece, Tabitha worked outside the classroom, appearing physically confident in making the piece; her movements were assured, you could see she was not scared to take these risks even though this process was new

to her. She was experimental, dripping paint, masking areas, adding text to provoke thought. Lienne's artwork was the only one to ask a question, 'Do the eyes see everything? Does the mouth speak the truth?' (Fig. 137). When I questioned Lienne about the text and the making of the piece after the session, it appeared that the experience of reviewing the image she had created caused discomfort. As we probed deeper, it seemed the image no longer said what she wanted it to, and after consideration she wanted to remove the words she had written and replace them with just one: embrace. This turned the image from one that questioned the media to a direct statement that spoke to her personally. The matter of the making process reconfigures Lienne's experience and leads to other forms of encounter. As Manning (2009) explains,

> Bodies, senses, and worlds recombine to create new events. Such a technique of shapeshifting upsets the matter-form dichotomy, re-cognizing that formed matter is but a state in the mattering of form. To world is to take shape again, to reach-toward, qualitatively altering the very space of encounter. (212)

Lienne's initial desire to obliterate and challenge the image, revealing the lies and deception that she felt media images projected, is as Manning describes above a technique of 'shapeshifting'. On reviewing her image, Lienne decided she wanted to 'alter the space of encounter' and speak not only to herself but also directly to others.

> **Lienne**: [Embrace] has a deeper meaning for me, cos I don't appreciate my body, and I kinda want to tell myself to embrace what I have, and I guess try and tell people the same thing. Just with that one word.

Similar to Lienne, Tabitha's ideas also continued to grow after the exploration,

> **Tabitha**: Err at first, I was thinking that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but then I realised that it's not just beauty, it's being yourself.
>
> **Clare**: I liked what you were talking about when you said not everything is what you see; sometimes you have to look beyond the surface. What did you mean by that bit?
>
> **Tabitha**: Ermm, like most people just see [the model] as an image, they don't look how they may feel or their emotions toward other people, they just see if they are beautiful or not, it

means it describes them. And I thought you can't really determine someone by how they look; you have to talk about it or see how they really act.

This shift to thinking through the process of making is apparent here. What we think we want to say through an artwork often shifts *through* the making process, offering a deeper dialogue and giving space to an 'unrolling process' (Manning and Massumi: 2014, 89). This process is what Niccolini, Zarabadi and Ringrose (2018) describe as the 'give', a 'form of encounter between bodies' (335). To create these collages on top of media imagery is to work with the tension of colonial histories. As Niccolini, Zarabadi and Ringrose (2018) go on to explain,

> Calibrating give is a provisionary and embodied process of navigating tension. It carefully urges a material to move without causing rupture, damage, or snapping. Finding give is a process of being responsive to other bodies' limits and further connections. (335)

Being responsive to 'other bodies' with the 'tension' that runs through this thesis is an ethics of care, and what Haraway (2016, also Barad: 2007) calls 'response-ability'.

This response-able process is also clear in Nadira's work (Figs. 139 and 140), in which she continued to question sexuality and identity, concepts she had been considering since the mapping exploration,

> **Nadira**: I think it was about like ... If you see males dressing up feminine and stuff you think they are gay and stuff, and I was thinking about that, and if this man was now in [the local area] or something dressed like that he would get a lot of insults, and I was playing around with that, and then I wrote it [fag] and I didn't think it was appropriate so I tried to spray paint out.

It is through her entanglement with the material process that Nadira questions her understanding of sexuality. Response-ability is seen through the ebb and flow of Nadira's 'thinking-in-action' (Manning and Massumi: 2014), refining and censoring the marks she created. Ideas that have been given a material weight can be manipulated and changed. As Barad says, 'distinct agencies

do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-actions … that is *agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements*' (Barad: 2007, 33; emphasis in original). The text that Nadira painted and subsequently removed is an embodiment of Barad's idea of intra-action, where the work forms through 'mutual entanglements', in this case Nadira's experience in the local community. The removal of the text highlights the discomfort she felt with the weight of the word (hooks: 1994), the tension in the lines of the word 'giving way' to the material of the paint itself. Her censorship of her own word was an act of care.

Bethany also worked with forms of censorship, but in a different way to Nadira. Whilst Nadira used the act of making to work through her own process of censorship, Bethany's process was deliberate and planned. Bethany wanted to 'reflect the way the media censor women', and whilst the other YWAs worked out their questions through the making process, Bethany decided on her focus very quickly. She explained that,

> **Bethany**: The average size of a woman in the UK is a size 16, yet there are almost no women portrayed in magazines, or in music videos that are bigger than a size 10. This makes young women that should be completely healthy and normal, feel abnormal and unattractive.

The material process for Bethany was not an emotional response of splashing, cutting and slicing, as seen with the other YWAs. Bethany's use of materials was minimal, her process methodical and her workspace sparse and clean. This process was anchored in the language of the media,

> **Bethany**: I wanted to make it look quite clean, coz I wanted to kind of, I wanted to give the effect it could have been like an actual poster, like something that would be put up, I didn't want it to look too messy, I wanted it to be clean and neat and like they would put it on a billboard on like New York or something.

Bethany did not change the image, but placed a very considered black band to cut across the eyes of the model, arresting either her gaze or ours, with the word 'perfect' placed on the top. Bethany

used the materials as a form of satire, wanting people to question this media notion of what perfect means, by creating what at first appears a 'perfect' media image.

> **Bethany**: I'm kind of aiming for taking away that she's a person, like cos sometimes models and people like that might forget that they are people and they're just like objects like what we've been talking about, so I thought if I like, … blocked out her eyes trying to make it look like basically giving the impression she is not a person she is just a face.

The removal of the 'person' here is a response to the censorship of what Bethany calls the 'normal' person, she argues that 'young people … don't quite know what normal is'. This removal of the 'normal' speaks to the historic erasure of certain bodies, as discussed in chapter three, and again it is a legacy of colonial desires. Bethany's image sits within the tension, and rather than trying to 'overcome' (Niccolini, Zarabadi and Ringrose: 2018); an image that plays with these histories.

Conclusion

I have argued throughout this chapter that diffracting the colonial, closed line in the art classroom can reverberate through the bodies of the YWAs and begin a process of decolonising. The explorations were a diffraction of their experiences, causing them to (re)view and (re)define their bodies and that of women in general. The lines we create in the art classroom are historically bound up with the patriarchal and colonial narratives that perpetuate a very narrow and specific ideal of what 'woman' is and by default instils a sense of what a drawing should look like. Diffracting ideas of the 'perfect' drawing enables a reviewing and retaking of the 'perfect' body. By employing diffractive explorations, such as the media collage exploration, I have discussed how such practices, based in adventure, support alternative ways of creating and responding (Atkinson: 2018). As Hickey-Moody (2016) explains, 'with arts practices, engagements with chance, accident and error can enable material agency to shape work in ways that are explicit' (170). There has to be a willingness, while working in this way, to relinquish control and cut across the neoliberal framework of 'getting the right answer' (Maslen and Southern: 2011, 12). For many students this is at odds with the structures of education they are used to, and so the explorations discussed above are not only a diffraction of the structures perpetuated by the female nude, but also a diffraction of

educational structures, through the way in which they were asked to work. Excitingly, this can open up nomadic ways to resist past histories and imagine future possibilities, and therefore supports the empowerment of the YWAs by the YWAs themselves. These nomadic possibilities are what I turn to in the next chapter, through the Perfect Exhibition.

Figure 141: Stanhope (2014) YWAs outside the gallery. [Photograph]

[38] Perfect exhibition website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/the-perfect-exhibition.html

Figure 142: Stanhope (2014) Front window (Perfect?) at 310 Gallery. [Photograph]

Figure 143: Stanhope (2014) Entrance at 310 Gallery. [Photograph]

response
labels.

welcome
area.

auction area

tattoo
pens.

henna
tattoo

outside space
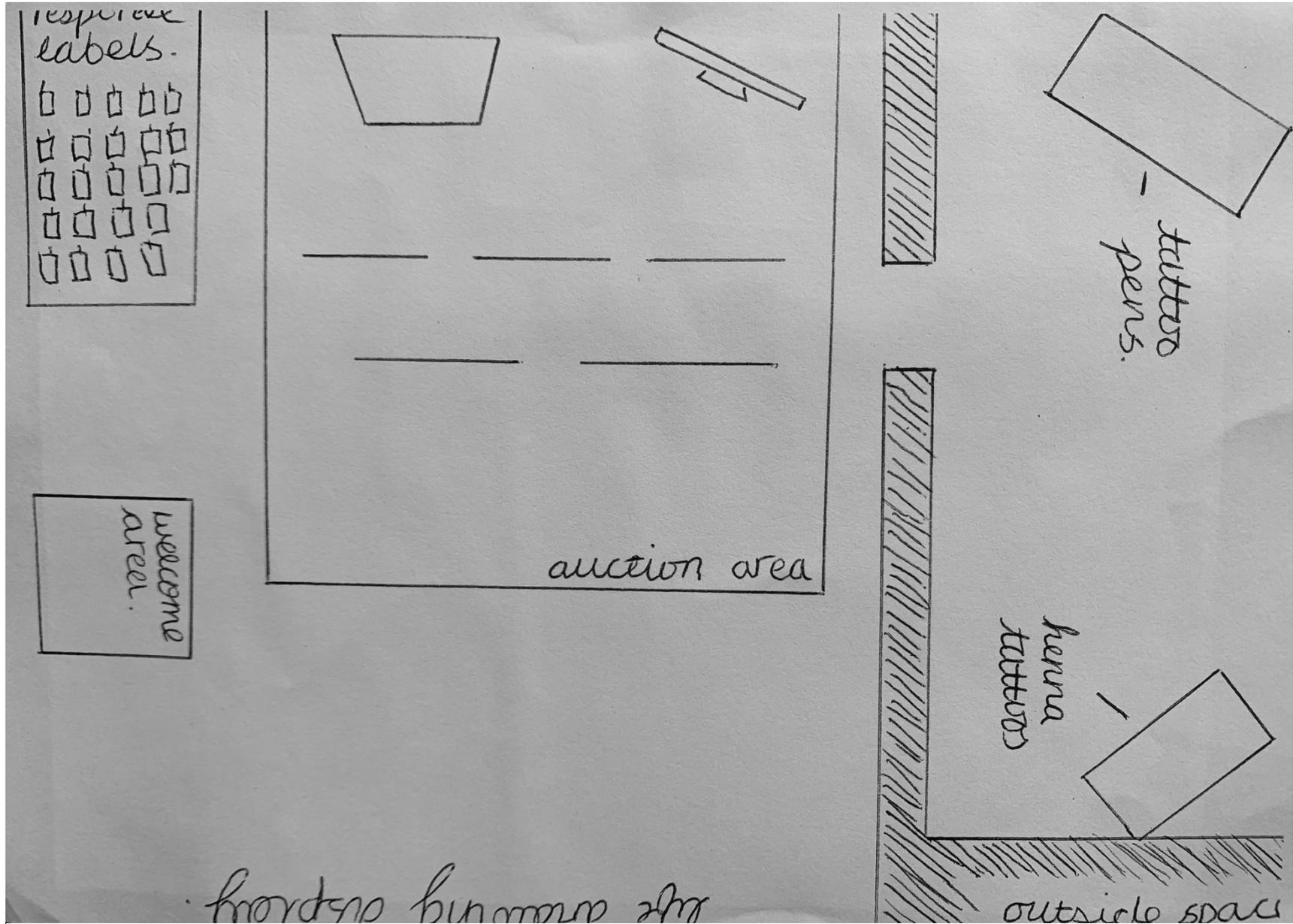
Figure 144: Bethany (2014) Floor plan of exhibition). [Pen on paper]

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Figure 145: Stanhope (2014) I love myself badges and Beauty leaflet created by Bethany. [Photograph]

Figure 146: Stanhope (2014) Life drawing display. [Photograph]
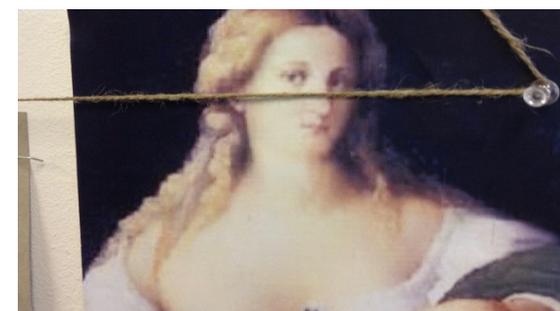
Figure 147: Stanhope (2014) Life drawing display and close ups. [Photograph]

Figure 148: Stanhope (2014) Bethany with the labels introducing the exhibition. [Photograph]
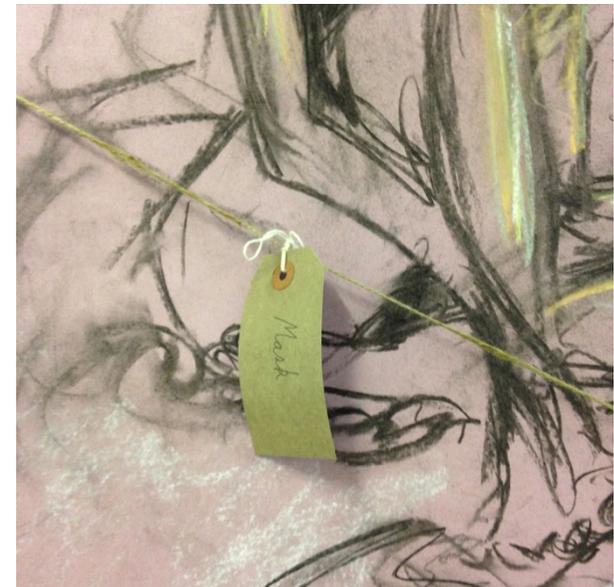
Figure 149: Stanhope (2014) Example of labels on the life drawing display. [Photograph]

Figure 150: Stanhope (2014) Nadira as the auctioneer selling Venus by Cranach the Elder (1532) and Tabitha as the Guerrilla Girl activist. [Photograph]

Figure 151: YWAs (2014) Skin Canvas sign. [Pen on foam board]
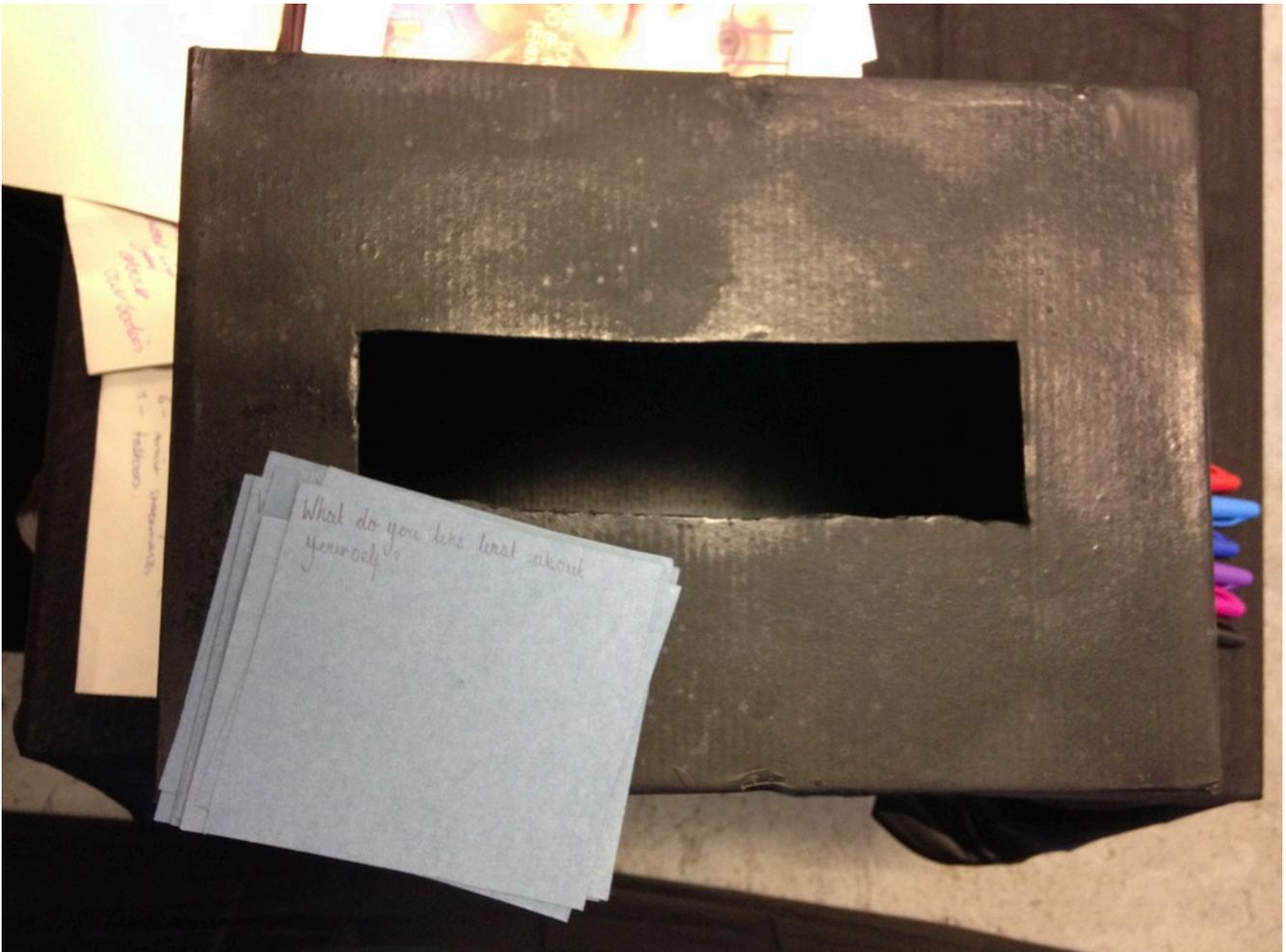
Figure 152: Stanhope (2014) 'What do you like least about yourself', response cards and deposit box [Photograph]
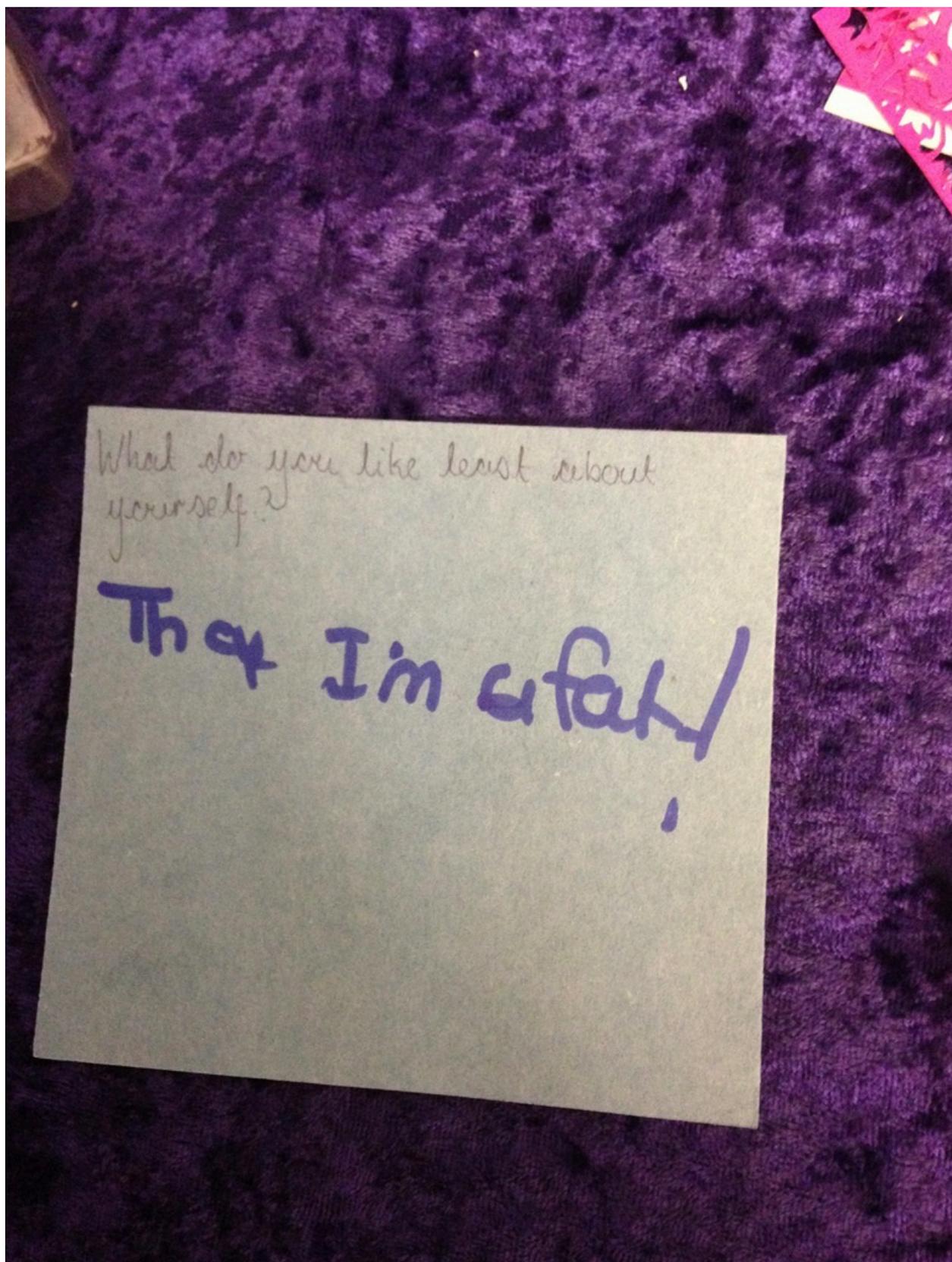
Figure 153: Stanhope (2014) 'That I am fat! 'a response from the audience. [Photograph]

Figure 154: Stanhope (2014) Tabitha tattooing affirmations. [Photograph]

Figure 155: Stanhope (2014) Nadira tattooing affirmations. [Photograph]

Figure 156: Stanhope (2014) Henna tattoo affirmation: I love my weight. [Photograph]

Figure 157: Stanhope (2014) Henna tattoo affirmation: I love my hair. [Photograph]

Figure 158: Stanhope (2014) Henna tattoo affirmation: I love being ginger. [Photograph]

Figure 159: Stanhope (2014) Henna tattoo affirmation: I love my shape. [Photograph]

Figure 160: Stanhope (2014) Henna tattoo affirmation: I love myself. [Photograph]

Figure 161: Stanhope (2014) Henna tattoo affirmation: I am special. [Photograph]

Figure 162: Stanhope (2014) Eat me! Don't eat me! [Photograph]
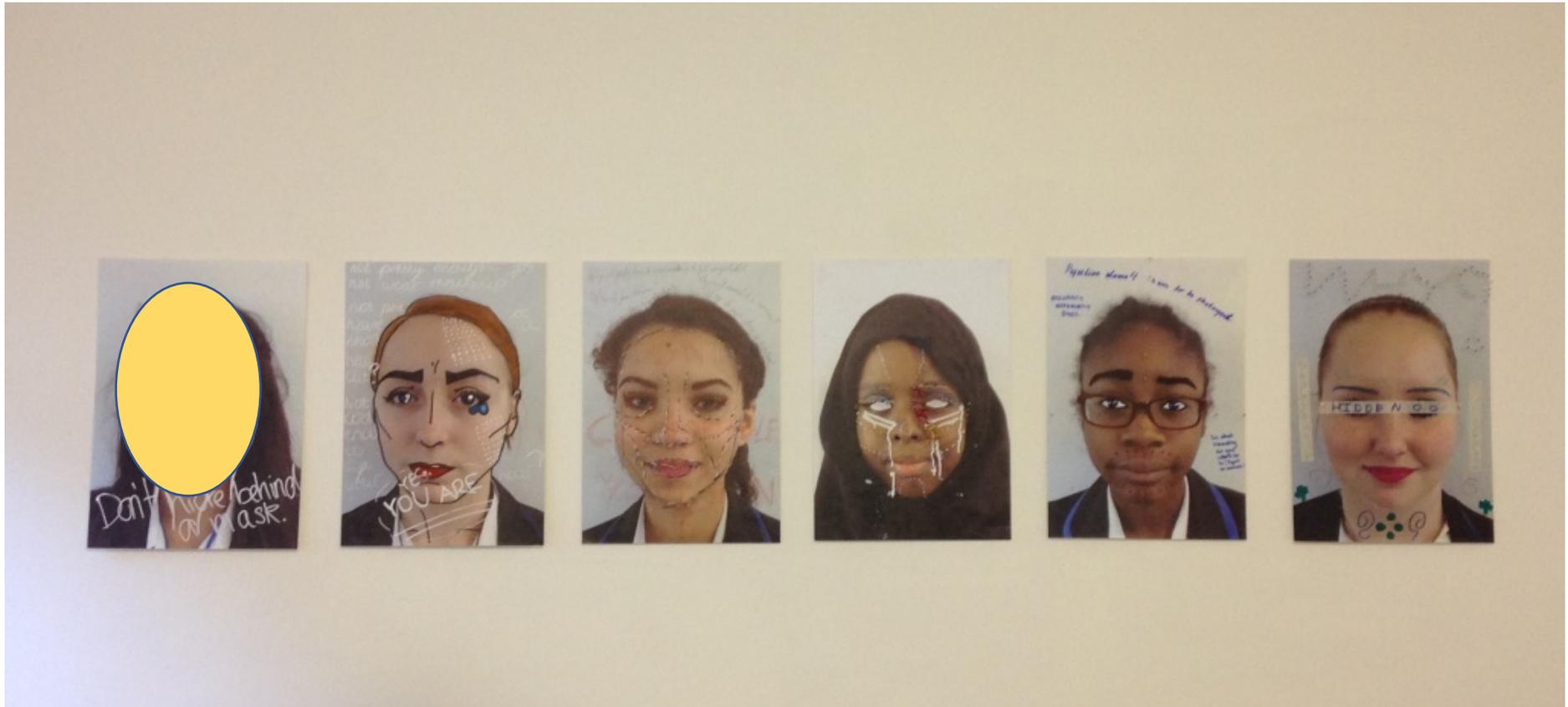
Figure 163: Stanhope (2014) Artist statements by the YWAs. [Photograph]

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Chapter nine

PhEminist skins of resistance - Perfect exhibition[39]

This practiceresearch has evolved through the pedagogic process of the artistic act, a process that Renold (2018) explains 'can summon new forms of voicing, thinking, feeling and being to emerge' (40). It is a creative process that doesn't presume to have a 'monopoly on creation', but what it does do is 'engender unprecedented, unforeseen and unthinkable qualities of being' (Guattari: 1995, 106). These 'unthinkable qualities' lay the ground for spaces of adventure (Atkinson: 2018) and hope (hooks: 2003). In this chapter I discuss how the YWAs developed phEminist skins of resistance to form diffractive 'hopeful' futures. I discuss their 'adventure', and how it is their phEmaterialist voices that speak through what became the Perfect exhibition[40], exhibited at the 310 Gallery, part of the Centre for Arts and Learning at Goldsmiths University of London, in December 2014. It was through the Perfect exhibition that the YWAs developed their own process for confronting colonial narratives and explored new pedagogical ways 'thinking through' (Manning and Massumi: 2014) the female nude and life drawing. The emergence of phEminist skins of resistance in this exhibition space supported a diffractive pedagogy of hope, one embedded in a process of intra-activism (Renold and Ringrose: 2019).

Creating phEminist skins of resistance

The process by which the YWAs decided an exhibition would be the best option came through a phEminist nomadic desire to share their research with others. This act of sharing is an activation of hope through 'eternal returns, constant becomings and flows of transformations in response to external promptings' (Braidotti: 2002, 100). What they had made through their various creative explorations, that supported them in creating alternative pedagogies that challenged their experiences of the body, as discussed in the PhEminist Mapping Exploration, now become an 'external prompt' to support others to find opportunities for transformation. The transformative nature of this decision to share was reflected in the journey of one YWA in particular,

---

YWA: I guess, what I wanted to do before I started this project was to change my mind of the way I thought of myself, and not anybody else.

Clare: And how did you think you could do that?

YWA: I don't know, I guess just think differently, I was hoping to be influenced by what other people said, to alter my thoughts.

She went on to say,

YWA: I wouldn't really want anyone to see this show, cos I wouldn't want them to know my insecurities just in case, someone who dislikes me uses them against me. I guess I just want myself to know it.

This YWA's initial reasons for taking part in the project are self-reflective and based in the various complexities of her past racialised experiences, that she had discussed earlier in the PhEminist Mapping Exploration. Her feelings of shame are evident, which in the words of hooks (2003) 'dehumanises'; it isolates and individualises experience as a problem to be dealt with *alone*. What became interesting to witness here was the YWA's move through these 'flows of transformation' as she began to unpick how she had evolved through the very process that she originally felt could be used against her, that of sharing,

> YWA: … Initially I was aware that people had insecurities, but I never really thought they would be worse than mine. So, sharing as a whole group has increased my confidence slightly about myself.

Sharing as a tool to diffract individual experience became an important aspect for all the YWAs and having experienced this through the project they now wanted to share beyond themselves as individuals and as a group.

Intra-action through having fun

To do this they wanted the audience to intra-act with the exhibition rather than to be passive on-lookers. They wanted the audience to also experience the 'affect' of this shape-shifting research (Renold: 2018), and for the YWAs the key to this was for the experience to be 'fun'. hooks (2003)

perceptively argues that '[h]umor is vital to our efforts to bond across race. Laughing together intervenes in our fear of making mistakes' (63). This bringing of joy into the work connects not only across race (hooks: 2003), but across all aspects of the various identities in the group; through class, gender, age, and ability. Importantly it diffracts the weighted presence of the colonial histories in which the YWAs were situated. Being able to bring joy to the exhibition diffracts the emotions I have discussed throughout this thesis, those of discomfort, shame, of not fitting in, and ultimately the neoliberal sense of failure. Joy is a hopeful force, and as Bethany states, basing the experience in a positive emotion has deeper pedagogical impact than lecturing people,

> **Bethany:** … you could go in there [and] say this is bad, this is bad, you should be like this, you shouldn't be judging people, but I think people usually respond better to, like, positivity. So, if you say, you are amazing and other people are, remember that people are going to respond better than if you're saying, what you're doing is negative you need to be more positive. It's better to, like, turn it around, so people might change how they see things and how they see themselves.

This idea of 'turning something around' to enable change was also discussed by Lily. She spoke of her initial reactions to the feminist images we explored and how when first viewing them she found them 'repulsive', but that questioning her reaction created 'a margin of manoeuvrability' (Massumi: 2015, 3) for digging deeper,

> **Lily**: The idea of ermm, what I was saying about questioning yourself when you see images, that at first you have negative thoughts on … and why you think those ways, why you automatically think that way instead of thinking more into depth about the images.

To question 'automatic' reactions repositions this as a place for intra-activism (Renold: 2018), somewhere to support people in questioning their learnt shame,

> **Bethany**: I think, if we can get some people to maybe talk about, like, it's difficult for people sometimes to say what's good about themselves, cos people like, fear they might sound full of themselves. But I think it's important for people to say what they like about themselves. So maybe if we get some young people, I don't know, like people in the group to talk about, …

what they know they're good at, what they know they like about themselves, and that might make people try and apply that onto themselves, or maybe see others in that way. Like rather than looking for negatives, look for positives, and if you can do that in yourself, you can do that in others.

Bethany suggests here that perhaps through conversation *with* people, positive self-acknowledgement could be supported and might have the potential to diffract people's learnt perceptions of themselves. Hopefully, this could then create a domino effect when looking at other people and forming judgements.

As Freire (1997) argues, 'The struggle for hope means the denunciation, in no uncertain terms of all abuses … As we denounce them, we awaken in others and ourselves the need, and also the taste, for hope' (106). The process of putting the show together, intra-acting through shared practices awakened the need for hope, a hope that seeks to name the world in order to transform it (Freire: 1996, 68). To offer an example of such a renaming, I again turn to Renold's (2018) research where they highlight such a moment in the formulation of the (d)artaphact named the 'ruler skirt'. The ruler skirt was made from a series of rulers, that the girls marked with comments they had received outlining moments of sexual harassment. The velocity of the 'bodies' in this context sparked joyful connections. The 'thing-ness' (Bennett: 2010) of the rulers triggered a pouring forth of ruler associations linked to patriarchal dominance of ruling, being ruled by, being ruled over, being over ruled (Renold: 2018). The formulation of the skirt is as Renold (2018) describes 'explosive', unruly methods can be transformative (Hickey-Moody and Page: 2016; Coleman, Page and Palmer: 2019), and embodied methods move in unexpected ways and lead us on adventures unknown,

> What had once been a phallic object used to violate girls' bodies was now pulsating with the capacity to change and transform. Crafted from experience, the ruler-skirt became a d/artaphact that in its multiplicity (there are over 20 rulers in the skirt), returned fluidity and movement to the stiff reality of enduring and normalised sexual violence. And with each

step, as the rulers glisten in the light, and swish and slap together, they call us into action.

(Renold: 2018, 45)

The physicality of the material, the 'swish and slap' of the ruler, 'speak' in other ways, a call to action is voiced by the non-human object which is used complexly to regulate and control the subject through which it is then subverted. The adventurous ruler in this assemblage is a measure of the potential of human-nonhuman bodies colliding in 'vibrant' 'explosive' 'ethico-political methodologies' (Renold: 2018, 51). I now turn to a discussion of how the physicality of life drawing 'spoke' in other ways to the YWAs and how this formed a pedagogical process imbued with hope.

Mapping the exhibition space

Having decided on an exhibition as a process for sharing and prompting conversation, the YWAs began mapping the exhibition space (Figs. 164-169) to explore ways in which they could disrupt Western narratives of the female nude whilst instigating conversation around self-empowerment. As the exhibition space at the 310 Gallery is divided into two main rooms, the exhibition also became framed around two different but connected spaces; a space for 'reflection', that was 'generally more serious' and where people could 'have time to think' and share how they 'felt', and a room 'for people having fun' where they can 'express themselves' but still 'question thoughts'. As can be seen in the maps, various ideas were suggested, but the main theme surfaced around the idea of wanting the audience to 'embrace their insecurities'. Specific ideas about how to do this also evolved through the mapping. These included holding 'talks' to discuss 'how you are perfect', or talks about the traditional female nude art works, talks that questioned 'why the person created the piece in that way' and 'how they felt' about this. One of the maps 'encourages people to share their insecurities' but if they felt uncomfortable with this, then 'we could talk about ours'. This acknowledgement of the tension in sharing personal vulnerabilities, but also being prepared to share their insecurities if the audience were not comfortable to share their own, exemplifies the empowering nature of the practiceresearch process. The YWAs came to see themselves as ambassadors, having been through this experience and found ways to diffract their experiences meant they felt ownership over their insecurities and could lead their peers in also diffracting and
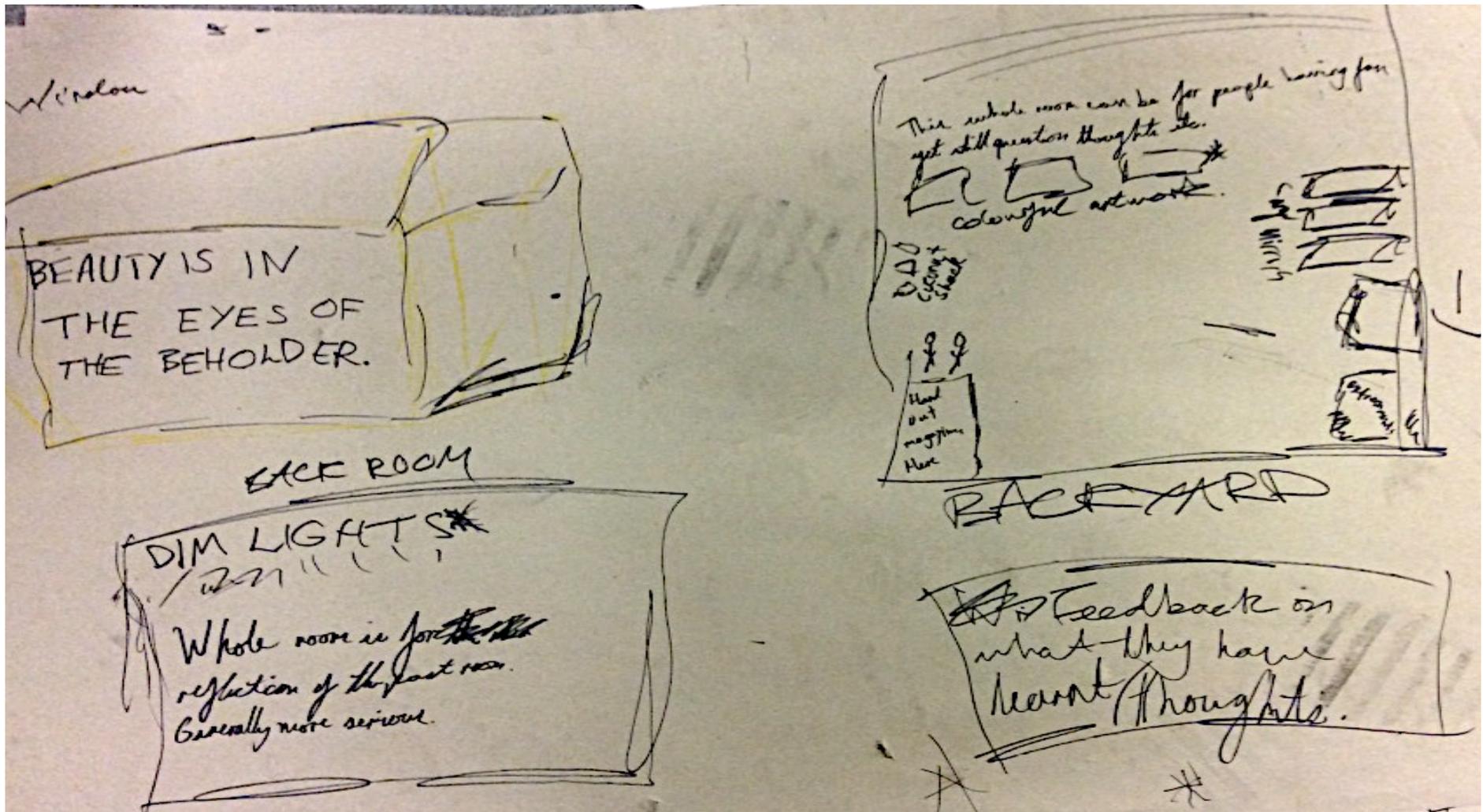
Figure 164: YWAs (2014) YWAs' exhibition mapping 1. [Pen on paper]

Figure 165: YWAs (2014) YWAs' exhibition mapping 2. [Pen on paper]

Underline: _out side_

have time to think and before they could leave a message on a piece of paper on the door wall.

back room

have a talk about how you are perfect and how to embrace your in securities. Put on a short mute play and sit in a circle and say something positive about some. Show the effect of what photoshop does to us and people around us.

have our work hung up as you walk past. _Path_

front room

have stalls with mini-games and an art stall so people can express their emotions/feelings. Have food and drink for the people. Play music wanted to the theme or the games.

window   sign about the Project   door

Figure 166: YWAs (2014) YWAs' exhibition mapping 3. [Pen on paper]

Food

talk about why
the person created the
piece in that way. Why
did they do that.
Does it show the things
they wanted to have
How they felt

We could make the
people write or draw
down what perfection
may look like or
what comes up in their
mind when we mention
the subject of the project

All our art

Figure 167: YWAs (2014) YWAs' exhibition mapping 4. [Pen on paper]

Door | Beauty today | Am I pretty now?

What I hate about me.

What others think when they first see me?

♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ ♀

What I wouldn't change about me.
(Each time you knock one off you say what you love about yourself)

All in wigs

Food

House of mirrors
Sunny

Newspaper article
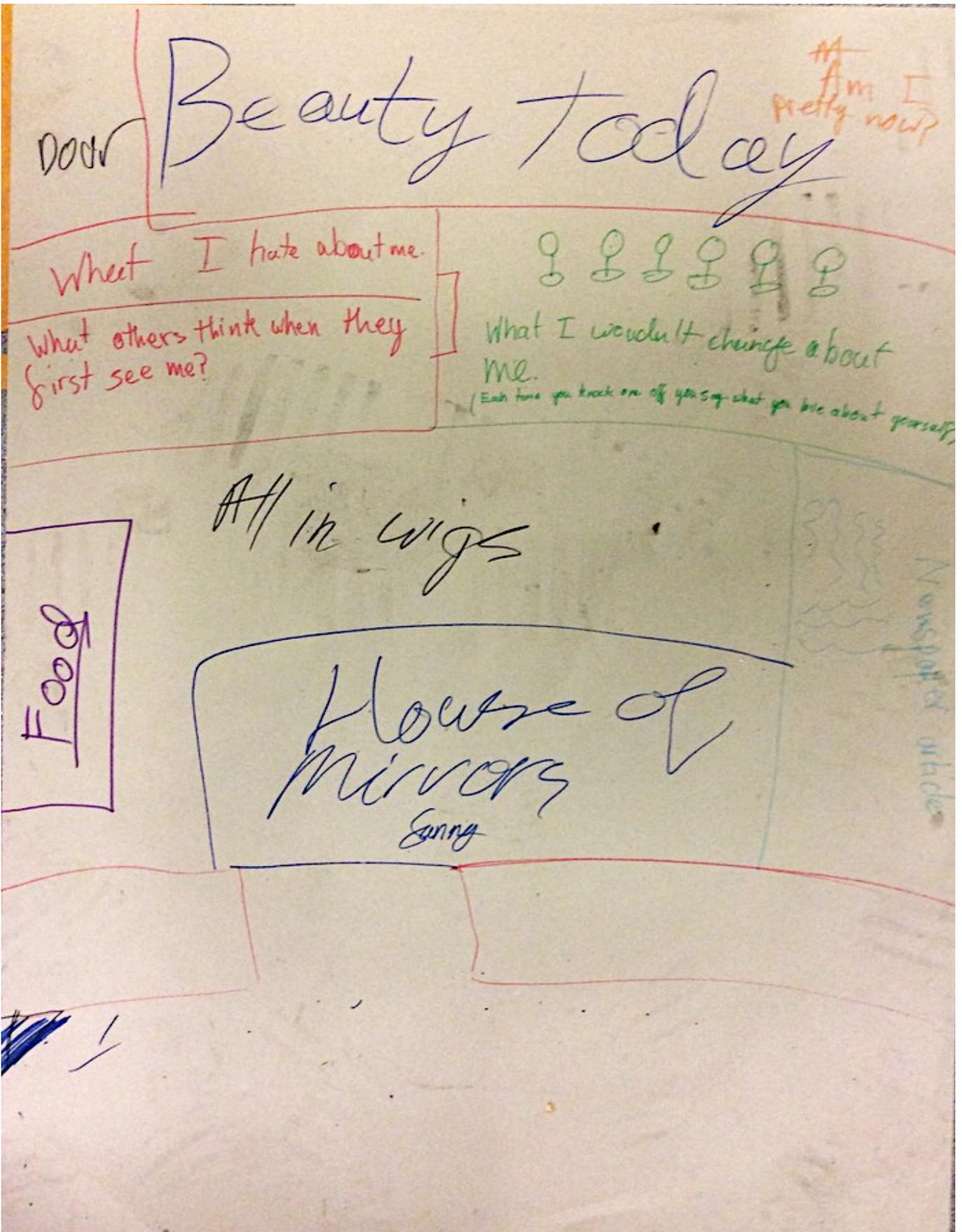
Figure 168: YWAs (2014) YWAs' exhibition mapping 5. [Pen on paper]

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Figure 169: YWAs (2014) YWAs' exhibition mapping 6. [Pen on paper]

troubling their experiences. As Coleman (2009) states, The past does not work here as an experience to correct or become opposite to. The future is not the *continuation* or *survival* of the past and present into the future but it is a conditioned or qualified, durational rhythm involving them. (191; emphasis in original)

It is this involvement *with* past experiences, a diffraction of, rather than a move away from, that supported the empowered actions of this exhibition. It was among these hopeful histories that the YWAS' futures were being reconfigured through intra-activism. Intra-activism came in various guises in the Perfect Exhibition, mainly through wanting the audience to actively participate in their own personal nomadic 'becoming' (Braidotti: 2002; Deleuze and Guattari: 2013). Various suggestions were explored on the exhibition maps, such as asking the audience to write their opinions about the exhibition, or about themselves, or asking the audience to share what they 'hate' about themselves and what they 'wouldn't change'.

The need for written feedback was also prevalent in their thoughts, a huge shift from some of the earlier conversations where they actively shut down any form of critique. But the main thread of the exhibition kept returning to the notion that it needed to be 'fun'. Learning through fun became key to the structure of the exhibition. One idea was to have stalls like a fairground, with 'mini games' or an 'art stall' where people could make something. A few of the maps mentioned a coconut shack and a 'house of mirrors, or a mirror where the audience could write affirmative comments on their reflection. A 'show' was also suggested. In one of the maps, this performative element was to be realised by holding an auction. The auctioneer would be asked to sell a painting of the 'type that have women in a submissive pose' and someone would interrupt, shouting 'Stop! Don't sell that painting!' This idea is highlighted as providing 'DEEP SPEAKING TIME' (capitalisation in the original) to discuss self-perceptions. Another performative suggestion was a 'short mute play' where the audience could sit in a circle in which they would be asked to say something positive. Food was also constantly mentioned and in one of the maps was given its own area, suggesting its importance. As the pace at which the YWAs created these maps increased, their confidence built as ideas tumbled forth. As one idea was spoken, another would then build

upon it, until a rhythm emerged in which it felt as if the words were becoming something more than simply representing ideas. The 'hopefulness' in this encounter was tangible, a hooksian (2003) drive towards a future; a hopeful 'futuring' in which the YWAs were in charge of their own becomings.

Renold (2018) discusses such encounters as a 'glimpse of when semblance makes an appearance. Something 'more than' the representation of words' (42). Renold (2018) goes onto to explain this process as moving from traditional 'data' collection to becoming 'da(r)ta',

> The process of how data became da(r)ta, that is for experiences … to be expressed in ways that enable them to shape shift and 'expand in all directions', can only be speculated, never known. It is near impossible to map why one concept, percept or affect might gather speed in ways that carry it forward, while others dissipate. (42)

This shape shifting is, as Bennett (2010) explains, part of the '[t]he effects generated by an assemblage are, rather, emergent properties, emergent in their ability to make something happen' (24). This drive to make something happen was exacerbated by time, as with most school-based projects time is always in short supply. The planning that happened during the exhibition-mapping session took place in one hour, and the fleshing out of the main ideas were therefore decided in the gallery the day before the exhibition opened. This heightened sense of time excited and energised the space and the sound and movement of YWAs chattering, stapling, sticking, singing, and practicing their various parts quickly evolved into the Perfect exhibition. The YWAs managed to include many aspects that they had discussed in their exhibition maps as can be seen on their final map of the space (Fig. 144).

The room for 'deep reflection'

To introduce the exhibition, Bethany was tasked with being front of house. She was in charge of welcoming visitors and explaining the flow of the exhibition space. Her speech can be viewed on

the CCE website[41]. The first room shared their life drawings, with traditional art history paintings of the female nude scattered in between, disrupting the format of their drawings. To begin the process of questioning the legacy of the female nude, the audience was invited to write a comment on a packaging label to hang on the string which cut across the life drawings (Figs. 146–149). This disruption of the display by the string both made connections between the images, highlighting the tension created by the tautness of the string, but also cutting across (Barad: 2003) and rupturing the images through the shared narrative voiced through the labels. This amounted to a re-labelling and questioning of bodies, where art 'make[s] felt an effect' (Massumi: 2013, 37).

As mentioned in the exhibition maps, the YWAs included a performance piece which was inspired by the Guerrilla Girls whose work had been discussed in the PhEminist disruptions of the female nude. They are a collective of anonymous women artists who hide their identity by wearing a gorilla mask and whose aim is to highlight inequalities in the art world. The performance was developed by Tabitha and Nadira, who had both suggested a performative element in their exhibition maps. Tabitha's idea of an auction house selling off a famous painting of a female nude became the focus of the performance. Nadira took the role of auctioneer and Tabitha, wearing a gorilla mask, became a phEminist activist who stopped the auction to reclaim the female body as a phEminist political act (Fig. 150), again this can be viewed on the CCE website. The life drawings provided a backdrop to the performance, which the audience were in process of diffracting through their questions and thoughts. This act of labeling was disrupted by Nadira, who started the auction process. The audience became part of the performance as potential buyers, and Nadira began asking for bids on the painting. Tabitha, incarnated as one of the Guerrilla Girls, crashed into the room wearing a gorilla mask, and demanding the auction be stopped. The excitement and energy in the room, meant the interruption broke the murmuring of the audience, and silence fell as they listened to Tabitha's statement:

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[41] A film showing the audience entering the gallery space, the introduction by Bethany and the performance by Nadira and Tabitha can be viewed on the CCE website: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/the-perfect-exhibition.html

Stop the auction!

The way females are portrayed in society is wrong!

Most of you don't even look in a mirror without pointing out your flaws, but why?

Why is it that we cannot embrace who we are?

Accept yourselves, you should be looking at paintings that are looking at women who show who they are, not who they are supposed to be.

Don't hide yourselves, be true, be honest, be you!

There was a unanimous round of applause as Tabitha concluded, a yell of cheers in recognition that they were all in agreement with her passionate statement, in what was indeed a 'risky initiative' (Guattari: 1996, 120). The act of performing in front of their peers was not taken lightly. Although there was some discomfort in the audience, a bit of shuffling, a few chuckles, Bethany, Nadira and Tabitha held their audience. As suggested in the exhibition maps, this room became the trigger for 'deep reflection', and a space to question the experience of the female body (as positioned through colonial heritage) through 'trial and error experiments' (Guattari: 1996, 120) that supported 'adventurous pedagogies (Atkinson: 2018). Once the introductions and performances were complete, the audience were invited to move into the back room where the discussion continued at a more personal reflective level in what was deemed the 'fun' room.

The fun room

The fun room consisted of four areas: an area for the PhEminist collages; the YWAs' artists statements (Fig. 163) which consolidated how they felt 'about the whole situation'; a food table (Fig. 162) offering both healthy and sweet treats; and Skin Canvas (Figs. 151-161). Skin Canvas was a tattoo parlour, a diffractive collaboration between the YWAs and their audience. Funneled into Skin Canvas, creating a tool for resistance, were all the YWAs' previous explorations diffracting their insecurities, their experience of gender, race, sexuality and the wider issues of the female nude and contemporary media imagery. The purpose of Skin Canvas was to share this diffractive experience with the audience. Each audience member was invited to write their insecurities on a piece of paper (Figs.152-153), the tattoo artist would then read the insecurity and

through a discussion of what had been written, and by sharing the experiences they had gained from the collaboration, would turn the negative comment into an affirmation (Figs. 154-161). For example, someone who had said 'I don't like myself' would have this phrase reversed in the henna tattoo so that it became: 'I love myself' (Fig. 160). Once the statement had been applied to the skin the audience member was invited to rip up their statement, symbolising what Bethany described as turning a negative into a positive. The act of having these conversations, of ripping up the paper and having a trace of the conversation imprinted on the skin, brought the audience directly into the action, to experience the 'affective and embodied practice of creating through and with experience' (Renold: 2018, 49). This act supported empowered and hopeful redefinitions of the future for both the YWAs and the audience. The audience moved from viewing and reflecting on the life drawings in the main space, to having live drawings created directly on their skin. The tattoos became a physical diffraction of life drawing, a visceral and embodied life drawing. Or as I came to describe them, phEminist skins of resistance, a direct form of political intra-activism (Ringrose and Renold: 2019).

Transformative phEmaterialist pedagogies of hope

The YWAs' intra-actions throughout the process meant they had agency in this space, they had something to say and together they created a space in which to say it. They had all invested in the project; there was a tangible excitement about sharing that with others. To begin with, their peers were invited to come, and although the show was open to the public, the was no great expectation that people from outside the school would visit the exhibition. However, as the day unfolded, and their classmates left to get back to school, the YWAs actively sought their audience. They were buoyed by the reaction of their classmates, the intra-action between bodies, performance, writing, and the tattoo parlour all mingled and became more than the materials and the YWAs. The exhibition's momentum created a wave of confidence. The YWAs gave out their mock newspaper and the 'I love myself' badges in the street (Fig. 145). They invited the public in; they spoke to people from the university, and they tattooed the skins of members of the public with affirmative statements, statements that would linger and thus continue the questioning long after the exhibition

had closed. The visceral experience of the Perfect exhibition is what Manning calls a dance of attention. She explains,

> What emerges as a dance of attention cannot be replicated. It is not a thing, a form. Attention dances in the between of diagrams in-forming. Attention is its own emergent choreographing. We feel attention's dance, but it is not of us or even for us. It Is *with*, in the milieu. It is what we connect to when we feel the procedural pull of the event's magnetism, it's overcoming of posture, form, figure, its outdoing. It is how we feel the work working. For when attention dances, the ground begins to move, and in the moving, we are moved. (Manning: 2013, 142; emphasis in original)

The dance that Manning suggest has the potential to move and to be moved is a process whereby colonial narratives of the female nude are retaken, reassembled and reactivated. But this isn't the only aspect of movement, as Renold (2018), drawing on Barad's (2003) use of intra-action and applying it to the educational research assemblage, explore how meaning making comes to matter through creative process, to actively 'move' the perception of the participants in the research assemblage,

> Instead of viewing young people as either needing to be transformed or rerouted from the inside-out or outside-in we start from how they and we are always already entangled in shifting and dynamic human and more-than-human assemblages. (Renold: 2018, 4)

In using phEmaterialist methods, as Renold (2018) discusses above, shifts the perception from young people 'need to be transformed' through an extrinsic process done to them, to supporting them in developing tools for intrinsic self-transformation. Through the exhibition, as Lily and Tabitha state below, they were able to tell other people that even though they are young, they understood issues in the media, in art and in their own sense of becoming,

> **Lily**: I guess what was the whole aim of the thing was, was to like, show like, women through art, but I think it was nice because we are younger, and we are not like clueless about what goes on in art.

> **Tabitha**: I wanted [the audience] to understand that not all, like, that us young people,

ourselves, like Lily said, … that we can see it as well, and if they can't see what, ermm, how women are portrayed these days it that means there is something wrong, and they should be able to, err, look at it from our perspective as well as their own.

They felt empowered to challenge the stereotypes of women and to suggest alternative routes, not just to their peers but also to their elders. They wanted to be heard by the older generation, to get an acknowledgment that this is also our fight and our problem, and that this is what we are trying to do about it.

> **Christie**: I wanted people to get like a picture of themselves, that they don't always have to be like the people in the media, they can just be themselves.
>
> **Clare**: And do you think they got that from your exhibition, do you think that came across?
>
> **Christie**: Yes, I thought it was quite obvious, because you saw the traditional drawings and they were like perfect, and then you saw a few of our pieces, they weren't like, it's hard to explain, but I don't know how to put it in words, but it was quite obvious though to get the message.
>
> **Bethany**: I think, for me, it wasn't trying to like, I think it's not really an issue of awareness. I think everyone knows there is a problem with how women are portrayed, I think it's less awareness and more, like showing people how important it is to change … I want it to stress the importance of how women are portrayed rather than just say this is a problem. Cos, I think a lot of people know it's a problem *it's just people forget to care about it.*

Bethany wanted the audience to engage with the issue, she wanted them to 'care'. This focus on care, and more importantly self-care, creates the hope that through this process individual empowerment can be activated, thereby disrupting the colonial and patriarchal narratives confronted in the exhibition.

PhEmaterialist nomadic lines

The process and the exhibition affected individual YWAs in different ways. However, I was also interested in how they were supported throughout this process to deconstruct the colonised line

and form nomadic phEmaterialist lines. As they had spoken about the importance of the life class in informing a shift in their drawn lines, as well as repositioning the woman's body in paintings to creates more empowered and autonomous compositions, I wanted to understand the YWAs' views of the tattoo parlour they had called 'Skin Canvas', and discuss with them whether they saw this as a feminist deconstruction of life drawing. I was interested in whether they considered their phEminist art practices to be 'art'. Had their perceptions of traditional notions of life drawing and the female form shifted?

Clare: In terms of … when people were coming in and getting their skin tattooed, I wondered if you saw that as a form of life drawing, would you say that was an art form?

Tabitha: I think it could be art, there's like different views on it, art is not technically drawing all the time, and that method was taking the views of someone else and being able to express it on a body part.

Lienne: I don't think it's a form of life drawing, but I think it links to what we were doing.

Lily: I think it might not be life drawing, but from a model's perspective, it might be their mentality before they are doing it, taking pride in how they look and the fact they are different. It links to your mental thoughts.

Clare: How you feel about your body?

Lily: Yes

Bethany: In my opinion, I don't know that I would necessarily, like wouldn't call it a piece, like I wouldn't say that's a piece of art work, but at the same time, art is about expressing and that was in itself an expression like 'I like myself' so I guess it could kind of classify as art in a way that you are expressing something through, it's just through a different kind of medium, it's not through paper, it's not through painting or charcoal, like it's on the body. So, it's interesting, I don't know, I wouldn't class it as a piece of artwork, but at the same time it expresses feeling like, it expresses the same things a life drawing could.

Lienne: I feel it is more of a statement.

Clare: Could that then be art?

Lienne: In some ways I guess it's interesting, but I don't necessarily want it to be 'art'.

Nadira: I think it's like a sort of art, but its temporary, so it's like, once you see it and in a few

days, it's gone, so in a way, it's a kind of art, but it's not 'proper' art.

From the dialogue above, those foundations are still in flux, but Lienne's comment 'I don't necessarily want it to be art', creates an interesting relationship between desire and resistance; desire to make a statement, but resistance to conforming to embedded ideals of what art is supposed to be. It highlights the need to 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway: 2016). This practiceresearch is not a culmination, or as I said at the start a 'how to' guide, it is a 'nomadic vision', one fraught with 'complexity', as Braidotti (2011) asserts,

> Complexity is the key to understanding the multiple affective layers, complex temporal variables, and internally contradictory time and memory lines that frame our embodied existence. In contrast to the oppositions created by a dualistic mode of social constructivism, a nomadic body is a threshold of transformations. (25)

The YWAs sit at the threshold, their bodies multiple in their becomings, with and through all that is around them - the sediment of hundreds of years of patriarchal and colonial desire is not simply removed, but is diffracted. As seen in the Perfect exhibition itself, the female nude is diffracted through various multiplicities, through various intra-actions, and the bodies of those intra-acting with such assemblages are transformed. The transformation is about shifting focus to the potential rather than the outcome.

Keane discusses the artistic process as one that 'organizes itself around discovery rather than the accumulation of knowledge'. It is a researching assemblage that is in constant pedagogical flux, 'constantly re-entering all modes of interaction between body and environment and learning' (Keane: 2013, 51). Apply this to the movement of a phEmaterialist researching assemblage and the pedagogical flux reveals the agency of the bodies' becomings within the spaces between, rather than separated from it. This idea of researching movements being imperceptible is perhaps better visualised through Keane's (2013) observation that the art research process constructs 'purpose from all that melts into air' (50). The intangible qualities of practice research to which Keane alludes are what the making process embodies and brings to light. The between spaces become pedagogical and imbued with agency, the forgotten senses come to the fore, and 'in other

words, mind over matter is replaced with a notion of mind formed by the materiality of cognition' (Keane: 2013, 53).

Conclusion

The transformative capacities of contemporary arts practice that I called upon to rethink the experience of life drawing have been explored in this chapter in what became the culmination of this practiceresearch through the Perfect exhibition. The creative becomings of the YWAs throughout the project evolved into a shared exhibition space that disrupted, challenged and reclaimed the colonial and patriarchal history of the female nude to reimagine what life drawing is and can be. Situating this practiceresearch in the spaces between secondary education, academia, the art world and the community supported and empowered the YWAs to create a call for action that reached out beyond the walls of the classroom. Being between these various spaces opened up possibilities for hopeful phEmaterialist intra-activism (Renold and Ringrose: 2019), inviting members of the public as well as their peers and to join in creative conversations that not only shared the YWAs' experiences of the project but prompted a further troubling of the colonial histories they confronted in the exhibition. The YWAs achieved this in various ways. One of these was by sharing of their life drawings, which diffracted the colonised line, and another was their invitation to the public and their peers to relabel the traditional art works of the female nude and share thoughts around the life drawings on show. A third troubling was witnessed in Nadia and Tabitha's performance piece, inspired by the Guerrilla Girls, that retook the body of the female nude represented by a traditional painting of Venus by Cranach the Elder (as seen in fig 150), and a forth involved the questioning of media imagery through their phEminist media collages.

All of these aspects of the exhibition built towards the YWAs need to support a conversation that would not end once the audience left the gallery space but would trouble the very skin of each audience member who came to see their exhibition, and this evolved into what they titled the Skin Lab. By working through the various problems of the life drawing space, the YWAs created their own version of a life drawing, not how a life drawing *should be*, but what a life drawing *could do*. The life drawings they created moved far beyond my earlier conceptualisation of the colonised line,

to not simply by diffracting the marks made on a piece of paper, but by literally drawing on the skins of their audience, making meaningful marks that challenged the long history of the female nude with which this project has been entangled. The act of tattooing affirmations onto the skin of individual audience members, not only made a space for conversation during the exhibition, an opportunity to share experiences and question perceived beauty norms, but also left a reminder on the skins of audience members long after the exhibition closed.

The simple act of bringing people together through material gestures is a powerful thing, and it was from these simple acts that this practiceresearch assemblage continued to evolve. Through collaborating with multiple bodies, both human and non-human, this practiceresearch has revealed the potential of creative explorations to ignite political activism beyond the original endeavour (Renold: 2018). How such projects evolve cannot be predicted in advance, creative acts constantly shift, merge and morph, disrupting the foundations of colonialism and neoliberalism that dichotomise and weaponise difference. Therefore, what is most exciting as I come to the conclusion of this practiceresearch is the power and potential of creative acts to reveal and trouble the perceived surface of what is considered the 'norm', and through such troubling create the potential to imagine alternative futures, a future owned and controlled by the young people who are engaged in the process.

Conclusion

'It's just people forget to care about it' - A phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope

Throughout this practiceresearch I have drawn on phEmaterialist (Renold: 2018; Renold and Ringrose: 2019) and anti-racist methodologies of hope (Freire: 1996, 1997; hooks: 1994, 2003), to disrupt dominant sexist and racist representations of the female body that have been formed through colonial and patriarchal histories of the female nude (Nead: 1992; Betterton: 1987; Hobson: 2018a, 2018b). Key to this investigation has been understanding the colonial regulation of the essentialised 'perfect' woman, but specifically how this has affected young women's understanding of their bodies, and how such constructs manifest in the learnt narratives of Western drawing through the colonisation of the line (Ingold: 2007; Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016). Basing the methodological practice in the materiality of the skin diffracts hegemonic narratives of the colonially sealed skin. The skin therefore provided a phEmaterialist base for resistance that supported the creative intra-activist narratives of this project (Renold and Ringrose: 2019). Developing a phEmaterialist pedagogy of hope, I draw from diffractive pedagogical practices, using creative explorations to rupture sedimented understandings of the female nude. I have discussed how such explorations mobilised the agency of materials and ignited connections between young women artists (YWAs) empowering a retaking of their future selves through creative intra-activism (Renold and Ringrose: 2019). The YWAs worked within these spaces, with their raced and/or gendered experiences of their skin to develop their own diffractive practices, reclaiming their relationship with their bodies and creating shared space for others to feed into.

Research questions revisited

Question 1: How does the Western art trope of the female nude produce and reproduce restrictive ideals of the female body?

I found that the insidious racist and sexist narratives perpetuated through the art trope of the female nude and contemporary media imagery materialises in the contemporary art classroom in a complex and paradoxical relationship. This relationship constantly reinforces Freudian (2005 [1905]), 2018 [1905]) ideas of lack, and racist histories of colonial essentialism, complicated by the post-feminist empowered neoliberal dream of the 'super woman' (Gill: 2007). This 'super

woman' magnifies art historical demands for the female nude to be white, heterosexual, abled bodied and youthful, but more insidiously positioned as to be desired through individual choice (Retallack et al: Zarabadi and Ringrose: 2016). This relentless exposure to the media's enticement to 'have it all' (McRobbie: 2009, 2015), and the idealised 'perfect' woman that reveals and also erases, is mirrored through repetitive semiotics that subsume the YWAs existence. The shiny surface of the photograph has become a tantalising talisman, a photographic simulation of the 'truth' which ignores specific groups of women, and subsequently materialises as discomfort in the classroom, not through what is seen but through what is erased. Students exist in a complex relationship with this simulated talisman, both through unrealistic imagery and through the absence of specific bodies in the images.

Indeed, these paradoxical and often unobtainable narratives have serious implications, as discussed in the phEminist mapping exploration, in terms of mental health issues, self-harming and eating disorders (Messenger-Davies: 2010; Buckingham and Bragg: 2004; Gill: 2007). It also became apparent that the experiences shared by the YWAs in relation to body image and lack of self-confidence had been dealt with in isolation. This is the result of a neoliberal target-driven environment that individualises students as economic competitors and positions them against each other. The relief shared by the individual YWAs when they realised their insecurities resonated across the group was apparent, particularly when one of them stated that she was surprised others in the group had had 'worse' experiences than she herself had experienced. This often-toxic post-feminist neoliberal environment has created the need for the YWAs to wear a 'mask'. As Christie stated, 'you put like a mask sort of to like hide your actual feelings that are beneath it, so people don't see how you actually feel'. The mask became a defence, one that they could wear to emulate the desired bodies in media imagery, but also to shield themselves from assault. As Butler (2006) argues, this creates a 'performative' state of being.

This positions the YWAs in a paradoxical and highly judgemental environment, in which they are taught to 'perform' through historical narratives that have controlled women's bodies for hundreds of years. In the art classroom this manifests in the need to get the 'right' answer (Maslen and

Southern: 2011). The right answer, learnt through the colonial narrative of the female nude is the need to reflect Western society, to copy and reproduce idealised and aesthetically perfect imagery (Maslen and Southern: 2011; Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016). This learnt narrative is evidenced in colonisation of the line (Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016; Ingold: 2007).

Question 2: How can practiceresearch, informed by phEmaterialism, create pedagogies of hope?

Pedagogies of hope (hooks: 2003) are explored throughout this thesis through the knowledge that the creative act can elicit responses often hard to articulate (Renold: 2018). A phEmaterialist methodology (Niccolini, Zarabadi and Ringrose: 2016; Renold and Ringrose: 2019) positioned within the matter and materiality of the world as co-collaborators led to insights that informed process-driven explorations, rather than data-driven targets. Through this approach, the practiceresearch evolved through a state of unknowing and most importantly unlearning. It was a space of adventure (Atkinson: 2018) where the destination was forever shifting. Putting the whole adventure in the hands of the YWAs was integral to this practiceresearch; through their experiences and creations this project evolved and emerged through the agentic power of the creative encounter.

Employing creative explorations diffracted the usual hegemonic and neoliberal desire for individualised outcomes to create webs of connection between the YWAs, and supported the decolonial development of the entire project. As discussed throughout the thesis, the YWAs engaged in four explorations, each of which opened up material encounters in relation to the colonial histories of the female nude that the project was seeking to disrupt. Each exploration offered various creative suggestions to unpick the weighted, 'desired', colonised line and support the YWAs in creating new forms of phEminist lines. The YWAs cited the life drawing class as pivotal in their retaking of the female nude in two fundamental ways: first through the diffraction of mark-making to resist learnt ideas of the colonised drawing; and secondly through the (re)positioning of the model. When the model was given agency and control over her own body, the poses undertaken were empowered, and supported narrative and storytelling rather than

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historical patriarchal ideals of the passive and sexualised female nude (Nead: 1992). The model's body thus shifted from being an object of patriarchal desire (Freud: (2005 [1905], 2018 [1905]; Lacan: 2006 [1966]), colonised and owned, to supporting phEminist narratives (Braidotti: 2006, 2011; Grosz: 1994; Renold and Ringrose: 2019). Retaking the female body from patriarchal compositions not only liberated the drawing process from idealised forms of perfection (Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016; Maslen and Southern: 2011), but also inspired the YWAs, who saw in the model a confident, empowered, 'normal' woman. Furthermore, the knowledge gained from the life class highlighted the connection between diffracting the colonised line and the rupturing of the 'perfect' (Meskimmon and Sawdon: 2016; Braidotti: 2011), in terms of both the 'perfect' drawing and the 'perfect' body and skin.

Using phEmaterialism as a methodology to situate this practiceresearch in the middle of the colonial histories, and diffractive tools to create art works that challenged the male gaze, created space for change, and ultimately a sense of hope. This hope, which lay within the material encounters to disrupt the learnt narratives that have become normalised over centuries, meant that alternative decolonised futures became available to the YWAs, futures that they would be able to control. Hopeful becomings lay in positioning the practiceresearch as a process of adventure (Atkinson: 2018), already in the middle of problematic histories, in a space that could elicit a 'making oddkin' (Niccolini, Zarabadi and Ringrose: 2018). Being open to the adventure of the assemblage, resisting the neoliberal desire for predetermined outcome-based projects, meant that the YWAs had control over what they wanted to say and who they wanted to say it to. Hopeful futures in this research assemblage included the empowerment of the YWAs by the YWAs, and their desire to share their experiences with others. These hopeful explorations materialised into the Perfect exhibition. The colonised lines seen in the initial stages of the life class through what Meskimmon and Sawdon (2016) describe as a closed line, that are embedded in colonial ideals of the female body, were diffracted as the YWAs' evolved various creative practices. Drawings became Guerrilla Girl inspired performances; lines became labels supporting a shared dialogue that critiqued past imagery; painting became phEminist reactions to media imagery; food became a tool to subvert dietary requirements, and the skin turned from being a surface to be looked at to an

agentic material to draw *on* rather than draw *from*. Historic ideas of life drawing moved from constructions on a page to hopeful statements on the decolonised skin.

Question 3: How can situating the skin as a paradoxical material support a decolonising pedagogical practice for diffracting the line?

To support a process of decolonising extremely complex colonial narratives of the female body within arts educational discourse, I focused on the skin as a phEmaterialist methodology to diffract the line. The skin provided a paradoxical material that has been colonised throughout Western art history, smoothed, erased, sealed (Nead: 1992; Connor: 2004), whilst also being an embodied material that is always in flux. As explored at the start of the thesis in Becoming Skin cell, the skin is far from the idealised form that colonial histories would like it to be. The friction within this relationship gave rise to possibilities of diffracting the colonised skin and the colonised line of the life class through the very material that history has sought to control.

Question three was the underlying framework upon which this entire practiceresearch has evolved. The skin as a paradoxical material has fed into all the discourses that have informed these explorations. The discomfort has reverberated through the colonial histories of art, through my upbringing and educational experience, and most importantly in the classroom that I now teach. It is not by erasing or rewriting these histories, but *within* them, that the power lies to diffract and (re)view future possibilities. The possibilities and journeys yet to be commenced are constantly alluring, 'a way of thinking that attends to the forms and folds of living skin at the same time as it takes the shape of such a skin, as it forms and re-forms, unfolds and refolds' (Ahmed and Stacey: 2001). It was by employing the skin as a material that is in a constant state of flux that this project gained momentum. And embracing the skin in its wonderous already post human assemblage was another step towards redefining the lived experience of young people. In this sense, the skin became materially hopeful. Taking the skin as a hopeful metaphor for future possibilities, I return to the physical nature of our relationship with our skin. As Briscoe (cited in Connor: 2004, 48) states, '[g]rains of skin, human dust, migrate in eddies and we breathe them in, so even the essence of our neighbours tints our bloodstreams'. I use this quote to suggest that we are all, always in

collaboration with others, we are more connected to each other than we often acknowledge. In this instance, the skin moves beyond the boundaries of race, blurs the dichotomous patriarchal regulations of Western beauty, and utterly diffracts the colonised line along with notions of a perfect, sealed skin.

PhEmaterialist hopeful futures

Despite the adventurous emergent encounters explored in this practiceresearch, the neoliberal dynamic of the educational institution remained intractable. The research was powerless to overturn embedded patriarchal and colonial narratives in art history. It is evident, however, that every project contributes to an ever-increasing phEmaterialist assemblage, which means that hegemonic, colonial histories are under threat. More importantly, every project creates further creative connections. The tentacular nature of phEmaterialist practiceresearch is ever evolving, and the hope within this project is not just contained in the explorations discussed in this thesis, but also by the various encounters that continued to evolve after the Perfect exhibition.

Two such tentacular encounters occurred; one through a day held by the national campaign to raise mental health awareness, 'Time to Talk', and the other through the Tate gallery in London. The 'Time to Talk' day was being used in school as a platform to get students to engage with the seriousness of mental health issues. The YWAs saw clear links between the 'Time to Talk' day and their idea of the 'Skin Canvas'. They used this as a creative tool to support other students in discussing their mental health in the school setting. The power of this creative act, a way of engaging in a 'fun' but serious way that has been extremely important to the YWAs in the exhibition, found its way out and into the space of the school itself. The confidence they had gained through the process of the project now supported them in taking their idea to a wider audience and directly supporting students at the school. However, their wish to share their experience with a wider audience could not have materialised in any greater form than the second opportunity, which arose through the 2015 Tate film 'Drawing from Life – Animating the Archives'.[42]

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[42] The Tate film Drawing from Life - Animating the Archives can be viewed via this link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=7IZu2JcFjiA

The initial encounter that led to this opportunity had occurred during the 2011 iJade conference, at which I delivered my paper 'Beauty and the Beast: Can life drawing support students in challenging gendered media imagery?' (Stanhope: 2013). Rebecca Sinker, Curator of Digital Learning at the Tate, happened to be in the audience and spoke to me about her current role in developing a film about the Tate archive, around life drawing. She contacted me a few years later, when my practiceresearch had evolved significantly as a result of the collaboration with the YWAs, and she shifted the focus of the film to incorporate the YWAs and their research. Being asked by a major institution to share their thoughts and artwork further supported the YWAs in diffracting learnt narratives about the female body. Sharing and making connections with each other, their peers and local audiences, led to their practiceresearch reaching an international platform. At the time of writing, the film has had more than nine thousand views.

As discussed, the practiceresearch assemblage creates its own momentum; it evolves through its own potential for future intra-activism. However, to ensure I did 'not forget to care' as Bethany had so insightfully mentioned, specific action was needed, in light of the YWAs practiceresearch in terms of the art and design curriculum. During the interview for the Tate film, the YWAs spoke about how they felt life drawing should be employed more generally as a tool to support young people,

> **Bethany**: Just that, it was kind of an empowering experience, and I think, I just think it would be a good idea to get this to happen more frequently for art students, or maybe not just art students. But it's a good idea and it's a very helpful experience to go through. So, I think it would be a good idea to try and get this life drawing experience to happen in more schools maybe.

> **Lienne**: I think it would be useful to study what we have studied, specifically for girls… I think because girls are more concerned and more conscious about their body and their size and I think it would be nice if a lot of girls were educated and I think it would be nice if they went through the process that we went through.

> **Lily**: Like what Lienne said I think it would be important for younger girls to go through the process. Nowadays it's so normal to not like your body and accept it that if you do like it,

you're like oh they're a bit (someone interjects- vain) overly confident. But some people spend their whole lives trying to accept their body and love their body, and I think if you teach young girls to do that from a young age, they'd be happier growing up.

It was, as Lienne and Lily state, the potential of education, in this case the process of life drawing, in which the YWAs saw potential for a pedagogy of hope; that if we use the process of learning to unlearn and to decolonise our thought processes and our bodies, there is hope for the younger generation.

Life drawing continues to be used as a diffractive tool and support students who have an opportunity to engage with it. However, that is just one element. More interesting, in terms of the practiceresearch, were the YWAs' reflections on the exhibition and how this supported them in feeling empowered, a diffraction of the traditional educational setting to one where they themselves were 'in charge',

> **Bethany**: I think the exhibition was successful, I kinda like how we were in charge of it, obviously you [Clare] supervised, and we had help from Holly [the art technician] as well and we all worked together, but I like how we had creative freedom over a lot of it, it didn't feel like we were helping set up an exhibition, it felt like our own display of our work, and I really liked that.

> **Lily**: Yes, I think it went really, yes it went well. And I enjoyed the [life drawing] wall, I liked the fact that we showed the comparisons between traditional art and what we did, like more modern, and not only did we make comparisons but people coming in could create their own opinions and freely say it and write it down, I liked that.

> **Clare**: Christie you weren't at the exhibition, but you saw the setting up, and the ideas

> **Christie**: I thought it was going to turn out really good, because like we didn't have like certain, it's hard to explain, as we didn't have any boundaries, we could create what we wanted and we could go and put it there, like and see the difference between the traditional and like our pieces.

The usual institutional 'boundaries' were shifted in this practiceresearch, by giving the YWAs space for 'creative freedom', to support others to 'create their own opinions and freely say it'. As I discussed in chapter one, these questions have always interested me. However, it was doing this practiceresearch that initiated more direct questions about to support such projects, in particular to ensure opportunities for young people to feel empowered and enabled to diffract and rupture societal norms. How do I make this process a part of the learning environment in my department? How do I make it a process that will form a crack, a crease, a wrinkle, a fold, or a knot that can hope-fully disrupt the residue of colonial patriarchy? The possibilities imbued in this process are a constant inspiration. As an educator of white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, able bodied heritage, there is an ever-present need to think through the neoliberal educational space, to unlearn patriarchal and colonial narratives by 'staying with the trouble' (Haraway: 2016). One way that I try to ensure that I do this as a phEmaterialist practiceresearcher has evolved through the Centre for Creative Explorations.

The expanding assemblage of the CCE[43]

Although this practiceresearch has drawn to a close for the purposes of a thesis, Bethany's resounding call to 'not forget to care' has stayed with me. It is this need to 'stay with the trouble' (Haraway: 2016) that now evolves through the Centre for Creative Explorations (CCE), which (as discussed in the introduction to the thesis) is a research centre based in the school where I work. The CCE has become more than simply a space for the emergence of the creative activism developed through this project, it has become a place of constant entanglement. Having a space that sits inside, but also apart from the art department has created an opportunity to meaningfully 'give back to community members in ways that is useful to them' (Kovach: 2009, 82). This has evolved through the creative explorations that succeeded this project, each time supporting further unlearning, diffracting and decolonising of the hegemonic colonial powers that still permeate our educational institutions. Each further exploration is an acknowledgment that the work of this thesis is not complete, that where mistakes were made, I actively seek to 'make repair' (hooks: 2003).

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[43] Debate cake website link: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/debate-cake.html

The projects hosted by the CCE exist in a middle space between school, academia and community, so the potential for intra-activism is rich. As I mentioned in the introduction, there have been three projects to date: Body Mapping, Hairytage and Shared Fragments[44]. The various ways these projects have collided with pedagogical practices in the neoliberal classroom space have been immense; feeding into curricula, supporting other researchers to access the school, developing projects with the students, and importantly supporting young artists to lead their own practiceresearch projects. Other methods have also emerged from the PhEminist Skin project, in particular Debate Cake[45]. Inspired by the YWAs Skin Canvas, Debate Cake brings people together around a table to share food and drink whilst debating difficult topics through creative means. Every debate cake is different and can be adapted by the person leading it. Whoever leads the debate decides on the drink and choses the image (that is printed onto edible icing paper) to sit on top of the cakes. A literal 'taking in' of the ideas being shared through the eating of the cake. As this is a method that can be applied in a short time span and that works in any research context, it has been used by students to extend their research for their coursework projects (see Anya's Debate Cake), to explore ideas out into the community (see Nadia's Debate Cake), as well as visiting artists (see Heather's Debate Cake) and academics (see Shiva's Debate Cake).

Supporting students to develop projects and publish their work through the website enables them to use their practiceresearch in job applications and personal statements. This is an active 'giving back' (Kovach: 2009). The reach of these projects has also become tentacular, reaching out beyond the site of the CCE. Just as the phEminist skins exploration entangled with the Tate, the Body Mapping exploration and Hairytage exploration have entangled with another research assemblages, AGENDA, a national 'resource for educational practitioners who want to support children and young people (age 7-18) to make positive relationships matter in their school and community' (Agenda: n.d.; see also Renold: 2019a). Both these projects have creative explorations

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[44] All projects can be viewed on the CCE website: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/explorations.html
[45] All Debate Cakes can be viewed on the CCE website: https://centreforcreativeexplorations.weebly.com/debate-cake.html

developed by young women artists from the school feeding into an important national conversation around positive relationships, and it is with great joy that I say this.

The CCE operates as a catalyst to support an ever-growing number of practiceresearch projects developed by young creative activists in the school, through various collaborations with their fellow students, artists in residence, academics and the wider local community. However, all the projects that have taken place in the CCE since the 'Perfect' exhibition, and that have run alongside the development of the written element of this thesis, all draw their strength from the investigations explored in these pages, and they all (projects that have evolved since the PhEminist Skins project) have tentacular roots in this practiceresearch. I owe a great debt of gratitude to the YWAs for joining me in this ever-unfolding journey. It is on this hopeful note, that by positioning this practiceresearch within the wider assemblage of the CCE, that this conclusion does not thereby conclude, but continues to engage with the multiple possibilities of working with phEmaterialist methodologies that spill out, venture forth, entangle and knot in the lively nature that is a hopeful practiceresearch assemblage.

Concluding comments

This practiceresearch embarked on a journey to (re)discover the skin as a PhEminist material, a contentious site restricted by its colonial raced and gendered histories but also a material imbued with post human potential. A material always-in-process and in direct opposition to the colonial narratives that have regulated and sealed it over centuries. By situating ourselves back in our bodies, becoming skin cell, we can (re)appreciate the agency of our flesh, a materially changing organism. Using this as inspiration in the classroom diffracts ways of (un)learning and supports an openness to all forms of knowledge making, human and non-human. Unlearning through a phEmaterialist hopeful pedagogical practiceresearch provides potential to make space, to create 'elbow' room and a 'margin of manoeuvrability' (Massumi: 2015). It only takes the smallest of cracks, the tiniest prick of inspiration to start a process that becomes self-perpetuating, materially driven and which constantly forges new opportunities for intra-activism. Running through adventurous phEmaterialist practices is the understanding that this can be a knotted process, one

that is not straightforward or unproblematic (Braidotti: 2011). It is, as I have discussed throughout

this thesis, a process that needs constant 'repair' (hooks: 2003). It is an uncomfortable process of

being in the middle of such histories, but a process in which each small diffraction, each moment of

unlearning feels like a victory

PhEminist Skins of Resistance: an evolving assemblage
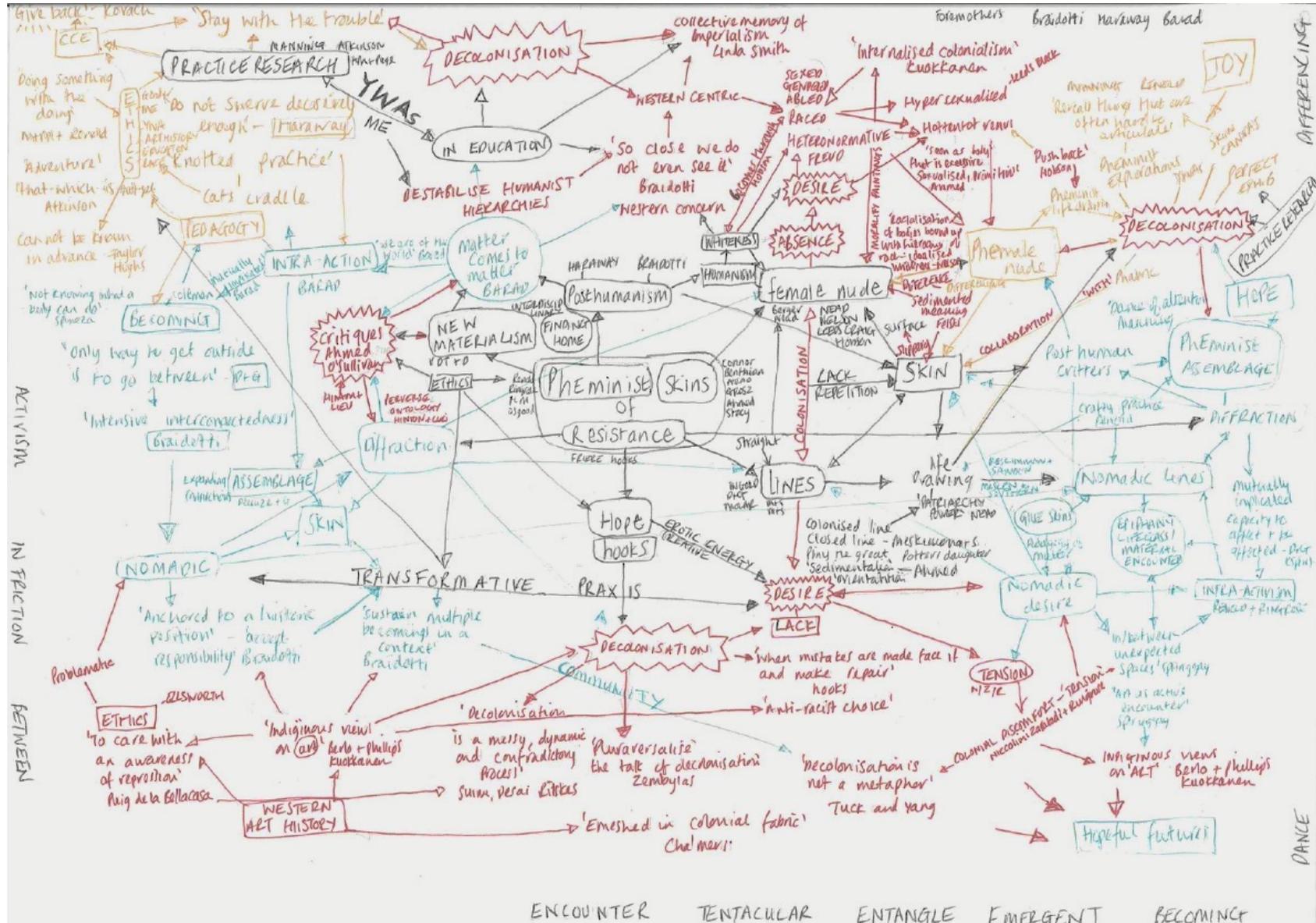
Figure 170: Stanhope (2022) PhEminist Skins of Resistance: an evolving assemblage. [Pen on paper]

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