

Chapter 6

‘Simulacra’

Exhibition at the Substation on Wits Campus, 23 – 27 May 2005.

Simulacrum is a Latin word originally meaning a material object representing something (such as an idol representing a deity, or a painted still-life of a bowl of fruit). It is an image, a shadow, a reflection, a dream, a shadowy likeness, a deceptive substitute. The term ‘simulacrum’ possibly originates with Plato, who used it to describe a false copy of something – a mere pretence which alludes to something else, a mental or material simulacra of a person or thing.

By the 1800s the term developed into a sense of a ‘mere’ image, an empty form devoid of spirit, and descended to a specious or fallow representation. Ecclesiastes refers to simulacrum as never that which conceals the truth - it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true.

In the book *Simulacra and Simulation*, the French social theorist Jean Baudrillard gave the term a specific meaning in the context of semiotics. He extended the meaning from its common one to a copy of a copy which has been so dissipated in its relation to the original that it can no longer be said to be a copy. The *simulacrum*, therefore, stands on its own as a copy without a model. Baudrillard used the term to refer to a representation which bears no relation to any reality.

Such perspectives, of course, beg the fundamental question, 'What is 'real'?' The semiotic stance which problematizes 'reality' and emphasizes mediation and convention is sometimes criticized as extreme 'cultural relativism' by those who veer towards realism - such critics often object to an apparent sidelining of referential concerns such as 'accuracy'⁷³. However, even philosophical realists would accept that much of our knowledge of the world is indirect; we experience many things primarily (or even solely) as they are represented to us by our media and communication technologies. Since representations cannot be identical copies of what they represent, they can

⁷³ Gombrich, 1982, p.188

never be neutral and transparent but are instead constitutive of reality. As Judith Butler asks, 'What does transparency keep obscure?'"⁷⁴ Semiotics helps us not to take representations for granted as 'reflections of reality', enabling us to analyse them and consider whose realities they represent.

In occult literature, the word *simulacrum* is often used to designate an object intended as a representation of a whole, according to magic principles. For instance, a nail or hair can be used to represent the whole person it belongs to, believed to trap part of the essence of that individual and is used for rituals to represent the person. *Simulacra* can be inserted into a doll representing a person to evoke power over someone, to establish the binding bridge between the representation icon and the subject.

The exhibition comprises of sculptures and one video projection, produced over a period of two years for submission toward the MA Fine Arts degree. I chose to omit titles as they become too descriptive and allude to fixed interpretation, besides being a visual distraction.

I made use of the cube-like white space of the gallery, installing the works in such a way as to evoke a choreographed and lit stage-like environment, slightly theatrical. The specific use of lighting created a dramatised, disciplined yet silent performance. The pieces were presented in a non-conventional way, incorporating the space as sculptural and non-neutral. The exhibition is an installation – yet not. The works talk to each other but are also presented as singular pieces. (Fig. 12 and Fig. 13)

In his opening speech, Prof. Alan Crump stated that the exhibition is an integrated, perceptual structure or unity that is more than the sum of its parts, that it shows a Gestalt which is cohesive, related yet solitary, with each player speaking softly, sometimes loudly through evocative material, but also sometimes with menace and silent with bursts of extreme aggression. He explained the sculptures as being seductive, reductive but suggestive, secretive yet allusive, alluding to the emotive but at the same time neutral,

⁷⁴ Butler, 1993, p.ix

minimal but sensual – ungraspable but recognizable, dramatic and passive, introvert but extrovert – an environment of extremes of knife points and sensual female surfaces. The sculptures may remind one of aspects of the body: genetic codes, the double helix, spinal cord, cut skin, orifices and the organic, morphed to become ungraspable yet familiar. The boundaries between real and representation disintegrate.⁷⁵

The viewer should experience the three-dimensional composition by walking through and experiencing a silent performance, viewing the motionless drama or dance that has been choreographed. The staging of the objects and the evocative power and simplicity of shape work together to prompt the sudden reversal between reductive purism and sexual provocation. Each sculpture is a reaction to and has a converse reaction on the others. The scale of the sculptures varies from large to tiny, macro to micro. Even the forms present themselves in extremes: soft and feminine mounds or darker, menacing spikes. Surfaces have a fleshy gloss, a skin or the most delicate and warmest of surfaces. Textures have been used selectively; most surfaces are smooth and gleaming or slightly textured, marble-like, waxy or powdery and allude to metaphors and emotive experience. A pure flat yet soft white is used in many works, in contrast to a glossy, rubbery black. The use of powder in some of the works is like the ethereal, a residue of the sanding and smoothing process. The quality of textures appears everywhere: surfaces entice and repel using the language of simulacra. The use of colour is consciously restricted, as 'The true profundity of the beauty of black-and-white is disclosed only to those eyes that are able to appreciate the splendours of sumptuous and glowing colours with all their delicate shades and tints,' and so, 'in this sense, the absence of colour is the negative presence of colour.'⁷⁶

Orchestrated stage lighting was used to highlight elements and to throw stark, silent and sometimes moving shadows on the white walls, creating a play between light and dark in attempts to engulf and enhance. In comparison, Wafer's use of lighting on the *ova/s* is more frontal and flat.

⁷⁵ Crump, 2005

⁷⁶ Toshihiko Izutso as cited in Nooter, 2001, p.66

During the developmental process, I researched the works of Anish Kapoor, Sarah Lovitt, Ana Mendieta, Earth Art, Minimalism and Post-Minimalism and to a certain extent Jeremy Wafer's sculptures. All make use of similar 'elemental' (what I call basic shapes or what Jung would have called archetypal) forms. These forms seemed at the time to be the only 'art' that I could gain purchase from, an art that is stripped of the external, yet without losing its internal-ness: forms that stimulate both cerebral and projected physical participation from the viewer, simultaneously. The artworks are not about exposure, but about existence and significance. Writing or 'exposing' is akin to betrayal of the subtle, non-linguistic sensory modes. I feel strongly that the viewer's own interpretation is always valid, and need not be similar in any way to my own conception and interpretation of the works.

The origin/inspiration for all the sculptures and the video projection came from the visceral desire for simplicity and for investing a sense of purity, cleanliness, essence: distilling meaning and content, with no 'real' purposeful layering and embellishment, which I find an unnecessary means to obfuscate or disguise actual content or clarity and an 'easy way out'. I see no reason to accentuate the work in one particular direction, it will be open-ended. Content will arise of itself and I attempt and work with it. The process of achieving the sculptural forms was a not quite conscious decision, a 'gut feeling' that would give rise to the specific forms like rounded mounds and their physical opponents, curved spikes. They were compulsive, the only form I could construe at the time: a 'pure' form, a 'basic shape' that on completion may or may not be far more resonant than its initial conception. Ultimately, the sculptures exude an oddly gentle and meditative intensity through a formal message of the measured distillation of line, form and surface. The selective and reductive use of forms may not only be seen as simplification and clarification, but also as the 'minimal refinements of a complicated civilization'⁷⁷, they are not as simple as they seem.

⁷⁷ Byatt, 2000, p.80

The exhibition in general was labour-intensive, whilst appearing effortless and a seemingly weightless choreography. Mechanical precision does not seem to be evident in my process, but the result is still concerned with selective perfection. As with all handmade precision, exactness and repetition is labour intensive and any imperfections would be immediately magnified. There is however an element of expressive ferocity embedded in order. The sculptures are tactile and organic. The use of material is varied, depending on the effect/affect needed. Moulds are made for most sculptures, in order to be able to create variant multiples. The use of repetition with subtle difference is to emphasise form and content as well as a rhythmic means which, like a mantra, form allusive pattern, geometry or symmetry. The forms are comparable to molecular building blocks. Louise Bourgeois talks about a feminine geometry, which gives her art a sense of stability.⁷⁸

‘Insofar as I live the body, it is a phenomenon experienced by me and thus provides the very horizon and perspectival point which places me in the world and makes relations between me, other objects, and other subjects possible. It is the body as I live it, as I experience it, and as it shapes my experience...’⁷⁹. The sculptures all have a physical presence and allusions, yet at the same time they are cerebral. They allude to skin, to swellings on the body, and to ways of interrogating the body: either via the orifices or by cutting or through enlargement. They allude to bones, to the body in movement, to an abstracted body that is not specific, a phantom limb or humanoid part. The sculptures become symptoms of the body. The forms are mostly closed; a skin or integument as if stretched over, with the orifices providing glimpses of what may be inside. Even in absence, the body is somehow present as an ironically suffering mutating presence. The pieces are a balance between male and female: the soft, rounded, white clefted mounds and the sharp, thrusting, aggressive spikes. They are both sensual and sexual simultaneously.

⁷⁸ Bourgeois as cited in Storr, 2003, p.11

⁷⁹ Grosz, 1984, p.86

The exhibition comprised of the following works:

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|----------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. <i>9 Forms (white)</i> | Figure 14 |
| 2. <i>single white forms (9)</i> | Figure 16 |
| 3. <i>9 Forms (black)</i> | Figure 17 |
| 4. <i>3 Spikes</i> | Figure 18 |
| 5. <i>Black Suspended Spikes</i> | Figure 19 |
| 6. <i>Small pile of 'bones'</i> | Figure 20 |
| 7. <i>3 large 'bones'</i> | Figure 21 |
| 8. <i>Endless Column</i> | Figure 22 |
| 9. <i>3 protruding Mounds</i> | Figure 23 |
| 10. <i>small 'mesembs'</i> | Figure 24 |
| 11. <i>Toes 1</i> | Figure 25a |
| 12. <i>Toes 2</i> | Figure 25b |
| 13. <i>Video: 'Simulacra'</i> | Figure 26a&b |

The series of 9 white forms (Fig. 14) were the first works to be produced for the exhibition. They were displayed in a grid format, which was broken from its severity by hanging three of the nine forms overlapping a corner of the gallery and thus utilising and incorporating the space laterally. The forms were bathed in a soft light.

Anish Kapoor's small sculptural relief work *The Healing of St. Thomas* (Fig. 15) was a specific influence. This work has been visually reduced to the bare essence: a red gash in a stark white wall. In spite of its obvious simplicity, it is infused with meaning: not only the connotation the title of the sculpture, but everything a wound could allude to.

The *9 Forms* are in relief. They have a smooth texture like skin, and the polymer casting material is untreated. The white surfaces dissolve into the white wall. The original forms were sculpted in plasticine and silicone and Plaster-of-Paris moulds were subsequently produced. I mixed the polymer (Material One) with micro balloons, which enabled me to sand the forms and thus visually soften the surface as the micro balloons break and refract light. This is a technique I learnt in the shaping of whitewater boats, which require a

similar technique. Even though the forms might appear to be planned, they evolved organically and creatively and it took many hours to perfect this synthesis.

Because of the deliberate repetition of similar forms in this particular installation of the *9 Forms*, the works could become decorative, yet also a set of symptoms of the flesh. This repetitiveness could also refer to the bond between repetitive actions and traditional women's work and rituals. They become symbols of gestation and embryonic growth, of cells mutating, dividing and multiplying.

In my previous sculptures, works retained a definite figurative element, and I felt that even though the *9 Forms* do not refer in a direct way to the body, they could remind one of the body. The scale of the *9 Forms* corresponds to that of the human body: shoulder width, gently protruding belly, rounded haunch, belly button, vagina and cut, split or traumatised skin. The disparity between this trauma and the form's gently rounded solidity and allusion to fecundity creates a sense of unease, they are beautiful yet abject. Like all bodies the skin holds and covers a multitude of internal organs and energy – very different to the serene surface that is presented and revealed.

The boat-like and crossed oval forms were drawn without a grid or structure, but corresponding to the human body. 'The boat shape could also read as an abstraction that blends male and female genitalia – long and protruding like the penis, oval like a stylised female cleft.'⁸⁰

I researched the surgical cut or 'coupure'⁸¹ (surgical cut) (Fig. 16) by looking at trauma wounds, the way flesh behaves when cut or burst open.

Furthermore I sliced into the flesh of a dead chicken to see how the skin and superficial muscles look when split by a sharp instrument. Swelling in and around the cut area was also scrutinised. The findings were applied to the rounded ovals or mounds. The incisions become quite delicate and sculptural.

⁸⁰ Koplos, 2001, p.116

⁸¹ Gallop, 1988, p.51

Light and shade creates depth: the cut, purely by the play of light, is darker and greyer and a subtle depth is achieved. The incisions also refer to orifices of the human body. One has the satisfaction of being enabled to scrutinize the penetration of an interiority, but one is not actually afforded to see more as the exposed inside becomes further swollen skin or integument. A medical examination is an attempt to investigate what is inside the patient's body. Thus the overriding theme of these works would be a cutting into rounded flesh to reveal what is hidden, inside, swelling. The sculptures allude to pain associated with the cut into flesh. The incisions also suggest sickness and pain and a scientific need to look inside possibly diseased flesh, or violence to the skin. The only other kind of incision into skin would be ritualistic, and this reference is particularly valid because of the deliberate regularity and repetition of these incisions.

The forms also allude to the feminine and female: a swollen 'coupure' into flesh, secret and not at all public. When such display is made public it could become vulgar, yet these forms are not meant to be offensive but serene, beautiful and quiet. For making something usually hidden 'public', be it the visual reference to female genitalia, or the cut into flesh-like substance, there is something jarring and unnerving. The aesthetic experience contains power in drawing viewers closer and perhaps luring them inadvertently into accepting difficult but necessary content. These sculptures are meant not to 'scream'; they reside in silence, becoming part of the wall. They are non-intrusive, soft, quiet and gentle.

A series of white forms were also exhibited as individual pieces. (Fig. 17) According to Prof. Alan Crump, these 'disks flit across the wall like amoeba with their open slits enticing scrutiny and entry. Something in the dead whiteness is in the process of gestation and mutation. The whites gyrate like swimming energies, chaos vs. the order of the stacked black pieces.'⁸² Either they float high on the walls of the gallery, or they were displayed in direct reference to the viewer's body. The horizontal works were hung at shoulder height and of shoulder width, and the vertical works were hung so as to

⁸² Crump, 2005

correspond to the belly or abdomen. The crossed white forms were displayed at an elevated level to afford the viewer vertical ascendancy. This verticality gave introduced a spiritual element. The three circular pieces were hung at eye height, and the incisions are presented as 'in your face' and thus corresponding to the orifices of the viewer's facial orifices: nostrils, eyes, mouth and ears.

The *9 Forms (black)* (Fig. 18) were made as a compliment to the quiet virginal sensuality/sexuality and purity of the white forms. I cast these sculptures in a black-pigmented industrial cold-cured urethane, mixed with black rubber crumbs. The colour is thus truly embedded throughout the work and not superficial. The works present themselves as gleaming, black and rubbery, hardy and lasting. Whereas the white forms reflect light, the black forms absorb it. They have a far stronger, more decadent and menacing presence than the white forms. The white pieces have a quiet or silent presence; the black forms are amplified and aggressive. The allusion to sexuality becomes more physical and tactile: black rubber and sexuality have connotations and allusions.

In presenting the exhibition, I decided to utilise the high vertical space and hang the works in a totemic tower in relief. The decorative pattern reflected by the sculptures in relation to each other and as a whole becomes dramatically defined due to the high contrast to the wall or background. The lighting had to be carefully balanced to create a focal point without losing detail. The 'coupure' or cut becomes less prominent but the overall Gestalt increases. The severity of the images does not belie the potential for multiple reading. The shapes allude to gleaming black polished African pots, and the implications of this are deliberate. The pattern in which they were presented also referred to repetitive scarification marks and museum exhibits of African objects like trade and monetary symbols.

Both the black and the white forms can be displayed in various configurations: multiplied or divided, changed, swapped, ordered, scattered and randomly. The viewer is encouraged to make the decision on how he/she would like to

hang the pieces, or the particular exhibition space could determine the hanging or placing of the works. Nothing is pre-determined, even though it might appear to be orchestrated and fixed.

The three-part horizontal spike sculpture (Fig. 19) developed as a reaction and an alternative to the oval forms. These pieces were set to visually thrust into the negative spaces of the *9 Forms (white)*. The sculpture comprises of three parts. They have the same white horizontal, rectangular base, from which curved wooden spikes of various lengths protrude. The bases' surfaces are reminiscent of enlargements of the epidermis, the punctured and pockmarked look of pores or open boils, eruptions and swollen indentations. The scale of the flat horizontal forms corresponds to the exact length and width of my own body. Like most of the work on exhibit, the measuring system is determined by the physical canons of the maker. These forms were slightly elevated from the floor to achieve a weightless and floating impression. I inserted a series of light-coloured wooden spikes into the horizontal elements. These grow from very thin and short, to heart-height and thicker and all are slightly curved and leaning towards the same direction. In the exhibition, a spotlight threw spiky shadows on the wall, which in their turn interacted with the 'floating' white forms. Whereas the '9 Forms' are incised to reveal the inside, the spikes are aggressive, protruding and intruding into space, attacking and suggestive of violence. They allude to hair growing from inside the skin through the pores towards the outside, creating swellings that emulate hair follicles or volcanic hot lava or mud spring eruptions. In an attempt to evoke these elements, a certain empathic relief of pressure could be experienced. The male and female have amalgamated, as spikes are masculine, but thrusting out of feminine 'holes' or incisions. The contrast between the horizontal and the vertical also creates tension. Repetition is employed almost obsessively and the spikes become a thorny forest, fortress or thicket of vertical lines, forbidding, dangerous and unassailable.

The *3 Spikes* could also become useful objects and be employed as a barrier screen. There is a sense of movement and growth, as the spikes become longer with each subsequent form. The smallest spikes protrude, just visible from the holes in the horizontal forms, the middle spikes are slightly longer,

and the longest spikes protruding from the last horizontal form reach the exact height of my heart. Thus a physical conversation or interaction with the piece takes place.

The horizontal rectangles were originally sculpted in Plaster-of-Paris, then moulded in fibreglass and cast in Material One. The wooden spikes were carved from young poplar trees and sanded smoothly. Colour is kept to a minimum, as the materials remain left in their 'raw', untreated state and truth to material. In the exhibition, an area of white powder, namely marble dust, demarcated this three-part sculpture. After some initial hesitation, viewers began leaving traces and footprints in the white powder by stepping on it or deliberately disturbing it in some way, thus becoming actively part of the work and playfully interacting with it. A residue of the viewer is left that could be studied, evoking archaeology. The white marble dust also refers to the powdery whiteness of the *Toes* and video installation.

The counter piece to or inversion of the carved wooden spikes rising from the floor is a large installation-type work that is suspended from the ceiling of the gallery, again utilising the height of the exhibition space (Fig. 20). The work consists of 81 long black curved spikes protruding and dangling from a black square, creating an antigravitational forest of vertical hanging rubber bristles. The spikes curve in the same direction, their tips ending at the height of my heart. Dramatic lighting throws shadows against the corner walls, extending the environment that is created and produces depth. The shadows change and move as the black spikes are set in motion when touched or caught by a breeze. Because of the large scale, the work becomes a black menacing forest, an environment to move through, lie under and physically interact with, exuding a sense of danger and the extreme.

The spikes are composed of a multitude of soft black rubber tubes and sharpened wooden spears that have been polished with black stoep polish to a smooth surface, which gleams sensually, yet is highly aggressive at the same time. The atmosphere created is threatening: allusions are made to something alien yet fascinating, a medieval torture rack, weaponry, fear, and

voracity. The sculpture is silently awaiting its vulnerable victim. In contrast to the white quietness of the *9 Forms*, this work is a silent scream, a silently dominating malevolent violence. The deliberate use of repetition confirms the rhythmic, thrusting aggression. The spikes become a play on the words suspension and suspense, tense, and intense.

There are a variety of bone-like sculptures in the exhibition, ranging from very small to large. They are not necessarily 'bones'; this is too descriptive a word. The small heap of 'bones' (Fig. 21) against a wall pillar was developed first. Their intimate scale stands in contrast to the monumentality of the other sculptures and especially the *Endless Column* (Fig. 23). Whereas the small forms are stacked haphazardly, suggesting upward motion and movement, the *Endless Column* in contrast is ordered and sentinel.

The single modular form of the 'bones' developed on its own, through its own necessity and not some conscious decision. It was accidental that the forms could slot perfectly into each other and are thus reliant on each other in construction and formation. They are symmetrical and precise. The small 'bones' possess a certain weight and even seem to be weights to be lifted for exercise. This duplicity gives them a playful and humorous edge. Their grey colour is that of the cast iron which was left untreated. The connecting wooden 'bits' are also left untreated. This truth to the material is intrinsic throughout the exhibition: even though the content is often less obvious, the material is always bare and stripped to its essentials. The use of repetition gives the small bone-shapes a live quality, an ant-like scurrying and movement. As with most works on the exhibition, they also refer to elements of the organic and of growth.

The three large bones (Fig. 22) were produced after having made the small 'bones'. I sculpted the original form out of Plaster-of-Paris, and made a fibreglass mould. They are cast in Polymer or Plaster-of-Paris and areas of skin-like wax have been included. I used the same mould for the *Endless Column*, suggesting the various possibilities of the particular shape, endless

and playful. They were placed randomly on the gallery floor for the exhibition to break symmetry.

The 'bones' refer to the body in various ways: they 'curl up' like a body in pain, writhing, dance-like yet also playful. The wax emits a skin-like translucency. The shapes and random placing could also allude to bone throwing and divining. From the shape and position of the thrown bones, the 'head' diviner or 'bone-thrower' can foretell the unknown. In Africa, this method can be used in the treatment of disease or pollution and to foretell events. They could also allude to an ancient children's game using sheep knuckles called 'Nines'.

The *Endless Column* (Fig. 23) is a multiple-piece collection of stacked large 'bones', interlocking and precariously balancing and dependent on each other to form a tall and totemic column. They seem to defy gravity, yet need it too in their precarious construction. The regular repetition of elements is twisted like a vertical strand of DNA. A fascination with Brancusi's *Endless Column* resulted in this piece, yet it is organic, rounded, and less geometric than the original source. There is an interesting play between positive and negative space as the forms engage and create spaces in between. The forms have a smooth, white, powdery surface finish, with slightly yellowed wax disks inserted between each 'bone' form alluding to the cartilage of the spine, which has a protective and mobilising role to play.

The *Endless Column* alludes to the body in its rounded forms and references to the spinal cord. The wax plates are like the vertebrae's disks that carry the lateral movement of the spine whilst protecting, together with the vertebrae, the spinal fluid and the body's most vital and important bundle of hidden nerves. The interlocking bone shapes are like permutations of the protector of our brain, the spinal column and nervous system.

The dramatic use of spotlights resulted in an interesting play of shadows on the corner walls behind the work. Some of the shadows looked quite playful, animated and rounded, playfully reminiscent of Disney character Mickey

Mouse's big ears. The *Endless Column* could be dismantled into a completely different Gestalt.

A heap of small white forms (Fig. 25) were unobtrusively piled on the floor behind the *Endless Column*, surprising the viewer in discovery. This is the only work on the exhibition where direct reference is made to plant matter, as the forms are based on lithops. Interestingly, the name 'lithops' is derived from the Greek words *lithos* (stone) and *opsis* (like), alluding to the pebble-like appearance of the plants. The forms become universal/archetypal in their white smoothness and intimacy, and the allusions to plant matter are extended to the human body, especially as these forms resonate with the other works on exhibit. They seem to invite to be picked up and held in the palm of one's hand as an intimate discovery.

The three oval rounded white mounds (Fig. 24) protruding sharply as reliefs from the wall of the gallery evolved out of the idea to further develop the 9 *Forms*. These mounds were exhibited in a horizontal formation, with their tips thrusting forward at eye-height and thus relating to the orifices of the viewer's face. Multiple light sources were used to create an intense play of shadows. In scale, they correspond to the size of the protruded human abdomen, especially a pregnant and swollen belly, with the possibility of an organic hidden internal growth/life. The rounded forms jut out like a breast. The tips are intrusive, at or close to eye-height of the viewer, and may remind one of various orifices of the human body: an indentation like a navel, a navel with an inserted rounded wax sphere, and a small, eye-like slightly swollen slit or incision. The sculptures are minimally textured and powdery white. The eye-catching bumps of uncertain parentage swell from the white wall. The original form was sculpted out of rhino mould. I subsequently produced a fibreglass mould with different silicone 'plugs' for the various tips of the mounds. The sculptures were then hollow-cast in Plaster-of-Paris. Care was taken to shape a streamlined and perfected form. It should look as if it could cleave through water, indeed they have a fish-like quality about them. The repetition of the three mounds is deliberate, creating a rhythmic affirmation of subject matter. They appear to be duplicates from a distance, but on closer inspection each

form reveals to be marked by an orifice that becomes all the more significant because of its reduced form, isolation and simplicity. They become enigmatic bodies with slight differences.

The gallery space of the Substation is divided in two. All the above works were all displayed in the large front section. The small back area was used for the sculptures *Toes 1* (Fig. 26a) and *Toes 2* (Fig. 26b) and the video projection *Simulacra* (Fig. 27a and 27b). The space was kept stark, dark and simple.

The wall-mounted sculptures *Toes 1* and *Toes 2* were produced by first moulding my own toes and subsequently casting them in sculptor's wax and finally joining two casts to form a mirrored image. This image was reworked to become more sculptural. I then made a silicone mould out of the final wax model, and cast it in a polymer mixed with micro balloons. This material creates an unobtrusive powdery white marble-like surface quality. It would be ideal to carve them out of marble, adding a post-modern classicism. The *Toes* were displayed at eye-height and each had their own spotlight. They represent the image that one sees of one's reflected toes when lying in a bath of still water. In *Toes*, the reflection has become solid and three-dimensional, and the surface line of the water is imaginary. The *Toes* appear to be, in their simplicity, pure, cleansed, motionless and quiet. They are confusing yet playful, a simulacra, alluding to every viewer's body and experience of memory of bathing and admiring one's own toes or body parts in the water. It becomes a game. The sculptures do not make perfect sense and while being delightful, they are slightly disjointed and abject too, especially as the small toe is submerged and thus absent.

The video *Simulacra* is projected on a larger than life scale close to the floor in a darkened room. It is a visual, personal and sculptural interpretation of a two-dimensional medium. I took close-up video footage of my own feet doing dance-like movements to an extravagant Shostakovich waltz and edited the footage using Final Cut Pro. Repetitive sound and vague noises accompany the final piece. The apparent simplicity of composition is centralised and

symmetrical. The use of colour is, again, powdery and white on white, and the creases and imperfections in the skin become more pronounced.

Feet are the lowest part of the body and in touch with the earth as opposed to the heavens. The foot's inherent sexual symbolism has been related to the ancient earth contact association with fertility and the genital forces of reproduction. The foot is also a symbol of humility because it touches and is besmirched by the dust of the earth. Feet are considered tactile and sensitive and an essential part of the anatomy with an emphasis upon sensuality, vulnerability and innocence. To many people, the footprint holds a personal emanation of the person who walked there. In Buddhism footprints, purported to be left by the Buddha, are revered in several places and in the footprints of Zulu women which are a sign of their fertility and weight. In this instance, however, the foot seems at first weightless and then transmuted. Dancing is usually associated with joy and festiveness, yet in this dance the feet are subjected to extreme motions and movements, sometimes suspended and weightless, sometimes crushing and painful, repetitive and purposefully slow yet without losing a certain elegance, rhythm and overall choreography.

The video concerns metamorphosed forms of the human body, a surreal dance or ballet is enacted, and texture. There are elements of balance and pain, yet also poignancy, delight and fun. As in the *Toes*, the mirror image is used to create an abject body, an amalgamation that reminds one of the body but also of transformed flesh, perhaps a de-feathered chicken, with vaguely sexual overtones. The feet mutate into flesh-like lumps in motion, an unnerving reconstruction, and an inverted reality – somewhat sinister, sexual and alien - as if something is to be born, humanoid but unanswerable. In this shock of transformation, sensuality becomes sexuality. The figurative slips away as soon as the mind searches for recognizable meaning.

This installation is a culmination of the rest of the works on exhibit, perhaps grounding or giving accessible meaning. Like the *Toes*, the video projection is the most intimate, personal and poignant of all the works on the exhibition. Both become self-portrait in their direct and symbolic use of one's feet.