

**CHALLENGING THE HAND;
CRITICAL CONFRONTATIONS
OF FEMALE CRAFT AND ANIMAL
ARTEFACT IN POST-APARTHEID
VISUAL ART**

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DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that production and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the relationship of theory to practical research within the context of a Masters in Visual Arts studio degree. As such, it is aimed more at the artist than at the art historian and academic, even though it is framed as an academic, critical investigation of visual art practice. The methodologies, conceptual strategies and forms that I have applied in my creative research include but are not limited to sculpture, multimedia installation and the craft of tatting. I read these through Deleuze and Guattari's notions of 'becoming', as well as critical positions of female subjectivity such as the work of Luce Irigaray.

The animal artefact is introduced through applying Nandipha Mntambo's video performance, *Ukungenisa* (2009), as a case study of the visualisation of the interaction between theory and art practice. Like a movement through and through the text, the bull dancing with the red textile of the matador's cape (the *capote de brega*) in Mntambo's video performance is interpreted as akin to the act of making tatted lace with the hands, thus responding to the female craft of tatting as a metaphor for reading *becoming woman* and *becoming animal*.

Considered alongside the visual component of this submission, this thesis is a demonstration of ways in which the indefinite and most complicated union between theory and practice can function within the requirements of a postgraduate degree in visual art. More so, it reflects ways in which theory can be approached in a practical manner.

Starting from a position of forced separation at the commencement of this research, which produced a set of impasses and unproductive abstractions between studio work and a theoretical framing thereof, a reciprocal relationship has since emerged: theory as a notion of becoming in its relationship to my art practice, and vice versa. Now the one cannot seem to proceed in the absence of the other. Theory and practice have become interdependent. Through researching and applying the notion of 'becoming' and other critical theories of subjectivity to my creative research process, it took on a will of its own; it became a becoming in its own right.

Possible Keywords:

Visual arts, crafts, labour, becoming, subjectivity, Deleuze and Guattari, Luce Irigaray, animal (goat), Lucy Gunning, Nandipha Mntambo, sculpture, tatting, installation, video, performance.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis fokus op die verhouding van teorie tot praktiese navorsing binne die konteks van 'n Magister in Visuele Kunste studio graad. As sodanig is dit meer op die kunstenaar as die kunshistorikus en akademikus gemik, selfs al is dit 'n akademiese, kritiese ondersoek van die visuele kunspraktyk. Die metodologieë, konseptuele strategieë en vorme wat ek aangewend het in my kreatiewe navorsing sluit in, maar is nie beperk nie tot beeldhouwerk, multimedia installasie en die handwerk van “tattooing”. Ek lees dit deur Deleuze en Guattari se idees van 'Becoming', asook kritiese posisionerings van vroulike subjektiwiteit soos die in teorieë van Luce Irigaray.

Die dier-artefak word aan bod gestel deur die toepassing van Nandipha Mntambo se videovertoning, *Ukungenisa* (2009) as 'n gevallestudie van die visualisering van die interaksie tussen teorie en kunspraktyk. Soos die manifistering van 'n beweging heen en weer deur die teks, word die dans van 'n bul met die rooi tekstiel van die mantel (die *Capote de brega*) van die matador in Mntambo se videovertoning geïnterpreteer as verwant aan die aksie van spelknoopkant maak met die hande. Hierdie interpretasie reageer dus op die vroulike handwerk van spoelknoopkant as 'n metafoor vir die lees van 'Becoming woman' en 'Becoming animal'.

Hierdie tesis vergesel die visuele komponent (die uitstalling), en is 'n demonstrasie van die maniere waarop die onbepaalde en mees ingewikkelde verband tussen teorie en praktyk binne die vereistes van 'n nagraadse graad in visuele kuns kan funksioneer. Meer nog, dit weerspieël ook maniere waarin teorie op 'n praktiese wyse benader kan word.

Aan die begin van hierdie navorsing was die vertrekpunt 'n posisie van gedwonge skeiding tussen teorie en praktyk, wat krisisse en onproduktiewe abstraksies tussen die studio en 'n teoretiese beraming daarvan opgelewer het. Geleidelik het 'n wederkerige verhouding egter na vore gekom: teorie as 'n idee van “becoming” in verhouding tot my kunspraktyk, en omgekeerd. Nou is dit klaarblyklik onmoontlik vir een om in die afwesigheid van die ander voort te gaan. Teorie en kunspraktyk het gegroei tot interafhanklikheid. Deur middel van navorsing oor en die toepassing van die idee van “becoming” en ander kritiese teorieë van subjektiwiteit op my kreatiewe navorsingsproses, het hierdie navorsing 'n eie wil bekom, en sodoende 'n “becoming” in eie reg geword.

Moontlike Sleutelwoorde:

Visuele Kuns, handwerk, arbeid, 'becoming', subjectiwiteit, Deleuze en Guattari, Luce Irigaray, dier (bok), Lucy Gunning, Nandipha Mntambo, beeldhou, speelknoopkant, installasie, video, vertoning.

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The knots are made over the fingers and slipped onto the centre thread. The knot is made around this thread, and can move on this thread. We refer to this centre thread as the soul of the work. For this single thread will be the centre of all the knots in the ring or the string of knots that one is making to form the pattern. I use the practice of tating as a metaphor; the centre thread standing for the artist's hand, and the surrounding thread creating the knots standing for the art practice. When tating, these two threads only touch one another; although the knots and the soul cannot function on their own and are dependent on one another, they do not become one. The soul of the tating is pulled in the end to close off the ring of knots and to start again with a new ring. This ring is also made up of knots, but the thread has switched places: the thread that was the soul is now the thread making knots around the new soul, the thread that was the knotting thread.

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INTRODUCTION

Deleuze and Guattari's visceral philosophical notion of "Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible" as articulated in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) is a foundational aspect of this creative research project. My reading of their notion of *becoming* will be assisted and challenged by the writings of Luce Irigaray on the subject of female subjectivity. In her book *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray* (2006), Hilary Robinson states that Irigaray's writings can be applied towards new – or other – legibilities of artworks, providing ways of understanding that allow women as artists and as viewers of art to recognize their subjectivity as women (2006:18)¹.

Deleuze and Guattari, as well as Irigaray, regard art practices as valuable only for their potential to stimulate *becoming(s)* (Jones 2003:17). In the article *Becoming – hysterical – becoming – animal – becoming – woman in the Horse Impressionists* (2003), Ruth Jones states that an artwork can be viewed in the same way that Irigaray, and Deleuze and Guattari, perceive philosophy: as a practice that can bring about a qualitative change for the viewer as well as for the artist (Jones 2003:17).

My practice is based upon the notion of *becoming*, as I have made this philosophy and this way of seeing the visual art practice part of my own art practice and theory, as a method to inform my own *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* as a young, white, female artist in South Africa. This is not to say that I equate, or attempt to equate the female with the animal. To do so would be to perpetuate damaging stereotypes of associations between female/nature/irrationality versus male/culture/rationality. The critical frameworks and practical methodologies I have chosen in this research confront and challenge these notions and I engage this issue at various points throughout this discussion. In finding a practical

¹ I want to stress that I have used primary and secondary sources for both D&G and Irigaray. Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) and Hilary Robinson's *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray* (2006) are the two primary sources I refer to in this thesis. The key sources I have used are the two articles Part One is based on but also used these articles as case studies to assist my understanding and application of theory to my art practice. These two articles have also assisted in reading the primary sources as well as my understanding of what is meant by *becoming woman* and *becoming animal*; Ruth Jones' *Becoming – hysterical – becoming – animal – becoming – woman in the Horse Impressionist* (2003) and Nicole Archer's article 'Text(ile)s: How to Fabric(ate) Yourself a Body without Organs' (2004). I am aware of the gendered perceptions surrounding D&G's work, and the potential conflict with Irigaray's radical feminism, but that I hope to show in this thesis that D&G's philosophy can be made relevant to creative work generated from a critical, female perspective (i.e. my own practice).

application for the philosophy of *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* in my studio practice, I have employed tatting, a traditional (centuries-old) lace-making craft, as a physical act of artistic labour that can be read as an analogy for reading and understanding the visceral philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari as well as Irigaray's writings on this philosophy.

My desire to 'challenge the hand' will be assisted through the investigation and analysis of non-human² animal subject matter in contemporary South African art, by specifically looking at the work of the recognised young South African female artist Nandipha Mntambo. My analysis is informed by what Ruth Jones (2003:1) defines as *feminine becoming*³, with reference to Luce Irigaray's definition of morphology⁴ as the female artist's identification of a methodology in her art-making that embodies her *becoming*⁵ through artistic labour.

Therefore this dissertation is focused on the experience of a female visual artist (myself) exploring the tensions between practice, and theorising that practice. I reflect on my personal experience through the critical, philosophical and creative works of others than have resonated with me and assisted in the articulation of my position as an artist in contemporary South Africa. It looks at labour⁶ within the art-making process as well as the use of animal-derived materials in the artwork and art-making process. I argue that the artist's hand is challenged within the context of visual art-making in a postmodern, post-apartheid South Africa by three elements I have identified: first by its mediation of a *becoming* through using female craft⁷ as an indication of artistic labour; second by the animal as subject matter and material in the artwork; and third by an element that became apparent

² In future references to animal subject matter or materials, I will not include the phrase 'non-human'. Human beings are most certainly animals (primates) but having made this specific distinction at the outset, I will assume the reader will accept that further references to the animal here (as subject matter or their material derivatives) are not human, or even wild, but mainly those associated with agricultural contexts.

³ Ruth Jones defines *feminine becoming* in contemporary art practice as a method a female artist will employ to find form and materials which will most appropriately manifest her own morphology and therefore her own *becoming*.

⁴ Irigaray defines morphology as "the form or forms of an embodied subject, a combination of consciousness and sentience, which cannot be divided into mind and body, thought and matter or interiority and exteriority."(Jones 2003:1). She states that if woman does not explore her own morphology she will be in "danger of using and reusing that to which man has already given form(s), particularly of herself/selves, working what has already been worked and losing herself"(Jones 2003:1).

⁵ The notion of *becoming* will be discussed in relation to Irigaray, Deleuze and Guattari's theories on *becoming woman*, *becoming animal* and *becoming imperceptible*.

⁶ For the sake of length and argument of this thesis, the theory of labour will not be discussed in depth according to the analysis made by John Roberts in his book *The Intangibilities of Form* (2007). Although I am aware of the capitalist implication of production through labour, labour in this thesis will refer to the action of making art and it as an action that can or may facilitate a process in which the artist can mediate a sense of *becoming* through applying labour to the art practice as artistic labour.

⁷ The debate whether craft is an artistic facility is not an objective of this research, but rather craft as the possible identification of intensive and technical skill in the method of art-making and the vessel that can communicate the artist's presence in the artwork and art practice.

during my research, viz. that the hand of the artist is even more challenged by art theory and philosophy and its application to art practice.

The premise of this dissertation is to argue for the possibility that artistic labour within art practice facilitates a process as mediation between theoretical research and the creative practice that can be regarded as my own – and possibly other women artists – *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* process.⁸ The artwork cannot be expected to show what this *becoming* looks like, but rather that the artwork will conform to, and reflect, the process of the artist's *becoming* through her art practice.

In confronting animal subject matter in an artwork that is intended by the artist to speak about *becoming animal*, the use of animal material becomes significant. The use of animal material by a female artist in the art-making process, and eventually the artwork as product of creative labour, can be argued to embody an ontological significance that exceeds the artist's subjective intention with the artwork. In so doing, it challenges the hand. I further argue for a visibility of artistic labour within an artwork made with animal hide or other animal materials, as a kind of confession to the presence of the artist in the artwork and its material processes.⁹ This presence of the artist can be interpreted or seen in the artwork as the work reflects or infers the process and the artistic labour involved in its conceptualization and construction. The work therefore also reveals the method of art-making in a practice that employs the hand as critical and necessary element in her process. The notion of the *artist's hand*¹⁰ as being imperative to the artwork is thus questioned in this research: the title *Challenging the Hand* hints at post-human and post-modern nihilistic tendencies within art practice.

The purpose of determining the notion of *becoming* is to assert the position of the artist's subjectivity and intention with the artwork as vehicle and vessel for dialogue. I need to stress that the artwork can facilitate a movement in transferring the artist's intention with the work to the viewer; and is it also a vessel, like a vacuum or a space that holds this intended interpretation of the artwork for the viewer. The artwork itself becomes

⁸ Although I cannot speak for other women artists, South African or not, it is not unreasonable to think that as much as I have established a method in my practice through a critical reflection of the theories and examples discussed here, that this position may not be shared by other practitioners.

⁹ The presence of the artist refers to the question: Can the artwork confess to (or represent) the presence of the artist in the work?

¹⁰ For the purpose of this thesis, a reference to the *hand* or the *artist's hand* will indicate the artistic labour present in the art-making process and in the end product as artwork.

simultaneously a moving and static representation of possible dialogue between the artist and the viewer in the absence of the artist.¹¹ I recognise this *becoming* as a challenge not just to the hand, but to society, community and culture, embodying a desire for change.

My subjectivity is revealed or produced in my *becoming* through my creative practice, framed by a post-apartheid context, and mediated by the Irigarayan notion of morphology in this *becoming* process. Employing a traditional, labour-intensive craft skill in my practice, I perform and mimic labour demarcated as 'female' and 'domesticated'. Within my art practice, the method of making art is also a mimetic practice, as everything that I have experimented with and done so far can be regarded in some way as miming other practices and artists. Each artwork as end product of this process of artistic labour¹² is also miming experiments that happened within the process of my *becoming* through my practice. Through acknowledging mimicry as a characteristic of *becoming*, the artist's hand is further challenged by acknowledging the performative nature of this process. Animal materials are used within the art-making process for their ontological significance. As subject matter and/or material in the art-making process and as artwork, my engagement with these materials signifies a desire to *become* or to identify with the animal, firstly as organic material and secondly for symbolic significance.

One can argue that this phenomenon in contemporary art reveals a desire to return to a substantial action or gesture that can function as an origin to *become* form. I understand this action or gesture as an applied method within artistic practice in which the artist can experience a complete interaction with the action or the labour of making art him/herself. It is, in my view, a reframing of the hand in the context of art-making.

In my practice I have adopted the traditionally feminine craft of tating (which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 3). It is an intensive hand skill, and has come to represent my research project, as well as function as an analogy for applying theory to my art practice, and vice versa. It is also a testament of my own desire for a more intimate interaction with my art-making process - to physically use my hands to make something out of simple materials like thread and animal skin. This has led to my art practice becoming more focused on the method that is employed in making art and the critical significance of

¹¹ The connotation of movement with respect to the artwork as vehicle also becomes literally evident in my own kinetic sculptures.

¹² Labour as process within the art practice will be discussed in Chapter Three.

labour within my own creative practice. By applying tatting as feminine craft and as artistic labour - as a process of making art - the hand is framed and understood as tool or vehicle to mediate a process of *becoming* in the fine art practice. The hand as another basis to become from can be seen in John Roberts's book *The Intangibilities of Form; Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* (2007), where he states that the hand is what sets us apart from other animals. It is an "organ of manipulation and communication in ways that far outstrip the dexterity of the hands or paws of anthropoids, or non-human primates" (Roberts 2007:89). The utilisation of female craft that necessitates the artist's hand as a most valuable tool in the production and process of making art validates a process of *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* in the art practice.

Regarding performance-based strategies in my practice and the works I discuss, it becomes clear that the methodology an artist employs in her artistic labour can in turn be seen as a performance to enable her *feminine becoming*. As such, a performance-based method or form engenders a performative process. This methodology applies whether I am employing a traditional female craft towards creating sculpture, or performing in a video artwork, or reading the work of Deleuze and Guattari or Irigaray. The question is whether the art-making process can function as a method of *becoming* to articulate this subjectivity-in-process; and whether this *becoming* can then be regarded as a process of situating art practice within a particular context and social environment?

For the purpose of this dissertation, and for my own art practice, the interest in these questions pertains to the use of animal material in art practice and artwork. As a post-modern artist the purpose of my artwork lies within the kind of artistic labour it utilises, that enables me to read and deal with philosophy. My practice is based upon the notion of *becoming*, not only for personal application but for utilising my art practice to inform my own *becoming* as a young, white, female artist in post-apartheid South Africa. Investigating Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* is a way of situating my art practice and my identity in a post-human and, more importantly, in a post-apartheid discourse. My practice is informed by a reading of the text of *becoming* and of applying this reading to the discussion of Nandipha Mntambo's sculptural work and her video work *Ukungenisa* (2009).

I argue in favour of a method of art making that enables the artist's *becoming*, especially in cases where the female artist utilises a method that confronts and challenges her feminine role by using a craft designated as gendered and domesticated by a patriarchal phallogocentric economy.¹³ This position also provides a basis to move or *become* from, as this supposed inferiority of craft to the art domain is also a patriarchally conceived discourse. The female artist uses and re-uses this gendered and subverted craft as a mimetic strategy to assist her *becoming*, and in this process both her work and her *becoming* contribute to a critical reflection on, and revelation of, subjectivity.

This becoming as process, facilitated through art making, renders the space of art practice a liminal one, a space where the artist is in a process of becoming as the art-making process grants the artist this opportunity to function as a liminal being.¹⁴

Outline of research

I have divided this text into two parts. The first part describes and discusses the theoretical aspects of my research methodology. The second part analyses the application of this methodology in my own art practice.

The two articles that will be analysed and interpreted in Part One also functions as a case study on which I will base both my theoretical and practical methodology. In Chapter One, the notion of *becoming* will be discussed in relation to Lucy Gunning's video *The Horse Impressionists* (1994). Nandipha Mntambo's video *Ukungenisa* (2009) and three sculptural works by Mntambo will be discussed in Chapter Two as case studies for my conceptualisation of a reciprocal relationship between the philosophy of *becoming* and the processes of my artistic practice.

Part Two comprises Chapter Three and Four that will both individually mirror Chapter One and Two. Chapter Three will demonstrate the *becoming* notion I have applied in my own practice. Chapter Four will illustrate the way that notions of *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* may be used to express oneself as artist in the immediate context that one

¹³ The scheme in which craft has been coded as feminine or 'ethnic' has left it always to be distinguished as craft that is inferior to the hegemonic category of art (Adamson 2007:5).

¹⁴ The liminal being as 'liminalien' (Jones 2003:17) will be discussed in Chapter One.

finds oneself in, and perhaps even further afield. Chapter Four will also include a critical exegesis of my practical work that will be exhibited as part of the examination process, in the context of the positions and interests articulated here.

PART ONE

In Part One of this research dissertation I will use two articles to explore the practice of the *becoming* philosophy and philosophy as a practice. In Chapter One I refer to Ruth Jones' discussion of the video work of Lucy Gunning *The Horse Impressionist* (1994) in the article *Becoming-hysterical – becoming-animal – becoming-woman in the Horse Impressionists* (2003).

In Chapter Two I will refer to Nicole Archer's article "Text(ile)s: How to Fabric(ate) Yourself a Body without Organs" (2004) in the journal *Textile*.

I use these two articles for their practical application to the *becoming* philosophy. The use of these two articles also speaks of the mimetic practice¹⁵ as defined by Irigaray. It will be used as a model for investigating the role of artistic labour in the visual art practice. By doing this it becomes evident that the artist's hand is challenged within the contemporary art practice.

¹⁵ The concept of the '*mimetic practice*' will be discussed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER ONE

Ruth Jones's article *Becoming – hysterical – becoming – animal – becoming – woman in the Horse Impressionists* (2003) is a discussion of British artist Lucy Gunning's video work *The Horse Impressionists* (1994). It functions as the foundation on which I structure my argument in this chapter. The article is also fundamental in how it demonstrates a method of discussing Deleuze and Guattari's *becoming* philosophy, which I apply to a reading of in relation to South African artist Nandipha Mntambo's video work *Ukungenisa* (2009) and to my own art practice. This article not only demonstrates a particular way of approaching Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal*, but does so in conversation with the writings of Irigaray, to interpret the work of Gunning and facilitate a basis to illustrate it as a method of art-making that can be employed in contemporary art practice. As such, it is germane to the work of Mntambo.

In her book *Reading Art, Reading Irigaray* (2006), Hilary Robinson also refers to Gunning's *The Horse Impressionists* to discuss the mimetic practices at work in articulating new forms of subjectivity, with reference to Irigaray. Robinson states that subjectivity in relation to a cultural production has been central to Irigaray's work (Robinson 2006:25). She analyses Irigaray's explanation of the terms surrounding mimesis, and looks at the ways in which she distinguishes women's practices as cultural reproductions (Robinson 2006:18).

I argue here that a female artist (with specific reference to myself and Mntambo) may respond to the *becoming* process as a form of hysterical mimesis. That is, as a reaction to try and articulate her drive to embody her subjectivity. I propose that this hysterical mimesis, which functions as a retort, can be identified through art-making. The methods employed in this effort mediate the artist's process of *becoming*, particular those, I argue, that are fundamentally dependent on the artist's hands. The hand – and its labour – is thus the tool with which the artist facilitates her practice and her *becoming*. This method of art-making is not bound to any one discipline, but prioritise manual processes such as painting, drawing, sculpting, carving, knitting, weaving, embroidery, stitching – or tatting, in the case of my own practice.

Since knitting, weaving, embroidery, stitching and tatting are conventionally defined as female crafts, my critically self-conscious application of this female craft in my practice

makes it possible to conceptualize the process of *becoming* and the process of developing my own subjectivity as female artist and as individual. I relate this to Luce Irigaray's use of language as a strategy to disrupt phallogentric discourses and economies. By employing the hand as mediator of a creative impulse the female artist can be understood to be driven by a hysterical mimesis. For the labour of female craft mimes the gendered description thereof by a patriarchal economy. Thus the female artist is miming the gender division of labour¹⁶ and what is prescribed by the phallogentric patriarchal economy, as well as the subversion of craft to art. This gendered craft refers to domestication and is therefore a significant method, for by employing the hand as mediator the female artist can embark on *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* to articulate her subjectivity through her art making.

Becoming...

In her discussion of Lucy Gunning's video work *The Horse Impressionists* (1994), Ruth Jones suggests that the work comes 'dangerously' close to the Western traditional beliefs that women are closer to the animal kingdom and are more prone to a hysterical mimetic identification (Jones 2003:1). I offer an extract of her text here that provides a detailed description of Gunning's process and the resulting film, now transferred to video:

When *The Horse Impressionists* is subjected to Platonic analysis, it could be regarded as a classic example of dangerous, hysterical mimetic art work. Gunning advertised in a newspaper for women with an unusual talent: the ability to mimic a horse neighing. She interviewed and selected five women from the handful of responses that came back over six months. She particularly wanted to work with women who had developed this ability in a serious way as children and then retained it into adulthood. Gunning filmed them with a super8 camera whinnying in different public locations, such as a park or a street, an activity which would surely be condemned by Plato as childish and valueless; an exhibition of degrading, hysterical mimetic impulses which ought to be suppressed. The women in the video seem to be aware that such condemnation might be directed at them. They display embarrassment and shyness, covered up by laughter. One woman repeatedly walks in and out of the camera frame, revealing her discomfort about being filmed in this act. While the first reaction of the viewer is to laugh at the absurdity of women

¹⁶ For the sake of this argument I will not elaborate further on the subject of the gendered division of labour, although I acknowledge this division and its possible support to the discussion of labour.

behaving like horses, the image and the sound gradually compel the viewer to empathise with these women who seem to be sharing an incomprehensible language of their own, and also experiencing pleasure through its articulation. (Jones 2003:3)



Figure 1: Lucy Gunning, *The Horse Impressionists* (1994). VHS video dimensions: Running time: 7 minutes 30 seconds; acquisition date: 1995; © the artist; ACC23/1995

The reference to traditional western philosophical frameworks (Plato) raises questions about the extent to which contemporary art practices can stimulate and manifest a *becoming* (Jones 2003:1). Luce Irigaray defines this *becoming* as an infinite “means to fulfilling the wholeness of what we are capable of being” (Jones 2003:1). Integral to Irigaray’s project is the acknowledgement that the “process of becoming is sexually differentiated” (Jones 2003:1). Irigaray employs the word ‘morphology’ to indicate the form or forms of an embodied subject; it is a combination of consciousness and sentience that cannot be divided into form, mind and body, thought and matter or into interiority and exteriority (Jones 2003:1).

Jones further states that “if a woman does not explore her own morphology, she is in danger of ‘using or reusing that to which man has already given form(s), particularly of herself/selves, working what has already been worked and losing herself” (Jones 2003:1). For Jones a *feminine becoming* in contemporary art practice would therefore refer to ways in which a woman artist investigates and finds forms and materials which most appropriately manifest her morphology, her *becoming* (Jones 2003:1).

By exploring the interface between the two concepts of *becoming* by Irigaray and Deleuze and Guattari, in relation to Gunning’s video (figure 1.) Jones (2003:1) aims to deconstruct traditional psychoanalytic concepts of subjectivity. She argues that using these theorists’ notion of *becoming* will expose possibilities for art practices to work towards corporeal philosophies which pay attention to a gendered, embodied subjectivity (Jones 2003:1).

Irigaray’s writing evidences a critical strategy: to use language which ruptures the phallogentric economy such that it cannot function on its own terms, but instead needs to address the represented feminine ‘other’ (Jones 2003:3). For when a woman tries to represent herself in the phallogentric economy, Jones points out, she resubmits herself to a history of representations which portrays her as the lacking ‘other’ to the canon of masculine image (Jones 2003:3).

In reflecting on Plato’s definition of *mimesis*, Irigaray distinguishes between two types of *mimesis*: firstly *mimesis* as production, relating to the realm of music; and secondly *mimesis* as “already caught up in the process of *imitation, speculation, adequation, and reproduction*” (Irigaray cited in Jones 2003:3). It is this second distinction that is privileged throughout the history of philosophy and the effects and symptoms of which, such as latency, suffering, paralysis of desire, are encountered in hysteria (Jones 2003:3).

Irigaray’s ‘hysterical mimesis’ can thus be interpreted as a feminine ‘response’ to the privileged type of mimesis found in Plato, as a state which is maintained by the monitoring and censoring of art and music practices. This is done to regulate and ensure that they conform to the requirements of and reproduce the patriarchal state through the repression of dangerous, subversive sensual tendencies (Jones 2003:4). For Irigaray this highest form of mimesis (as defined by Plato), constitutes a repetition of sameness which privileges rational logos over sensuous experience and represses the feminine other.

Jones refers to Irigaray's (1985:131) concept in that the effect of this repression leads to hysteria, to be seen as a bodily response to the inability to locate oneself within the dominant discourse (Jones 2003:4). Irigaray sees Plato's 'repressed mimesis' as "the site where the possibility of a woman's writing may come about" (cited in Jones 2003:4).

This possibility for such form of strategic writing is not present, as Jones explains; for when a woman tries to engage in discourse she can only speak from a masculine subjective position. She thus states that it is not a "question of shifting this or that element to make room for a feminine voice", but that it is a matter of "redefining the entire horizon" (Jones 2003:4).

Irigaray assumes that the 'feminine role' mimes the productions and projections of the phallogocentric discourse through a strategic 'hysterical mimesis' that reveals that which was supposed to remain unseen, "the 'cover up' of a possible operation of the feminine in language" (1985:76) (cited in Jones 2003:4). Irigaray advocates this strategy as an initial phase in order "to convert a form of subordination into one of affirmation and thus to begin to thwart it" (1985:76) (cited in Jones 2003:4).

Jones reads the possibility of releasing a 'mimesis of production' through a "hysterical mimesis in visual art practice" in Gunning's *The Horse Impressionists* (1994) (Jones 2003:4). This reading is not only possible but perhaps even more germane in Nandipha Mntambo's video work *Ukungenisa* (2009), which I discuss in the next chapter. I draw special attention to Mntambo's mimicking of the matador, a traditionally male subject/protagonist in this video. My use of tatting in turn mimes a traditionally feminine craft which in fact originated from the method used by sailors to make fishing nets.

In *Mad Men and Medusas: Reclaiming Hysteria* (2000) Juliet Mitchell refers to Freud's belief that the symptoms displayed by hysterical women indicated some unconscious or unacknowledged 'event' in the patient's personal history, usually being of a sexual nature or a repressed desire that the patient felt unable to articulate. Freud concluded that for this hysteria to be evident would be to allow the hysteric to become conscious of and to verbalise the event of the desire in order to alleviate the physical symptoms (Jones 2003:5). Freud relates hysteria to the Oedipal complex (as the castrated and lacking other) and categorized it as a feminine disease (Jones 2003:5).

Theorists such as Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Peggy Phelan and Dianne Chisholm all perceive hysteria as a rebellion against the patriarchal order and thus the expectations it endorsed onto femininity that positioned 'Woman' as the lacking, the castrated other. "Woman is made hysterical, suggestible, by the discourse that she is forced to mime in patriarchal institutions." (Chisholm 1994: 265) (cited in Jones 2003: 5). As Jones observes:

Irigaray 'performs' an extreme feminine role in hyperbolic parody of the patriarchal positioning of the feminine figure as masquerade, as mimic, as seductress, as hysteric which: "run(s) the risk of resorting to a terrorism that destroys her 'self' along with the language that imprisons/excludes her...taking her reader with her"(Chisholm 1994: 264). (cited in Jones 2003:5)

This relates to the method that the female 'other' must employ to read Deleuze and Guattari's visceral philosophy of *becoming*. It is vital in understanding or conducting the analysis of *becoming woman* and specifically *becoming animal*. This method of revealing what the text implies with the notion of *becoming* is a methodology that can be employed by the female artist in art-making process as a practice-led research. It is important to situate the hysterical as originating from the Oedipal complex in referring to the mimesis and performance of the patriarchal discourse which pre-distinguished woman as the lacking other.

Chisholm argues that such performance may be necessary to make the female reader aware of what her sex amounts to: "a 'hole' within the phallogentric order which can only position one sex positively" (Jones 2003:5). Mitchell suggests that by assuming the feminine role deliberately, excessively and repeatedly until the false claims of the phallogentric economy to wholeness are revealed, it conceives the deploying of weakness as a power (Jones 2003:5). Cixous links the hysteric to the sorceress, and Irigaray links her to the mystic in an attempt to reposition the hysteric more positively as a rebel, an outsider who will not submit to patriarchal law (Jones 2003:6). Thus Jones concludes that Irigaray's project is a development of a language and a symbolism where woman can be represented positively, and that this project is to benefit women writers. She states that, in relation to the context of visual art practices there are various methods of exploring this notion of developing a language and symbolism. (Jones 2003:6). Thus it can be developed further into a new possible horizon that can offer new forms of dialogue between the artist and the viewer.

Peggy Phelan presents one possible response to the failure of Freud's 'talking cure' that can be related to visual art practices since it focuses on the material, the manifest and bodily performances (Jones 2003:7). In her book *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (1997), Phelan argues that psychoanalysis attempts to reorder the 'jumbled narrative' that hysteria presents, to submit the body to a chronological order (Jones 2003:7). However, the body, as she assumes, does not necessarily experience things in the same way as language since it has its own rhythms and memories expressed independently of the narrative it is confronted with (Jones 2003:7). Phelan thus questions the need to always translate symptoms into a narrative, even when that narrative might be expressed in a language which is appropriate to the feminine. This assumes that "talking is better than dancing, that language is more expressive than somatic utterances" (Phelan 1997: 54). (cited in Jones 2003:7).

Mitchell is critical of this suggestion that all hysterics are thus incapable of articulating the feminine subject. This assumes that the body is able to 'speak' because of the subject's weak social position, and suggests that 'oppressed people are uneducated and use their bodies instead of language' (Jones 2003:7). Mitchell holds that hysterical bodily performances are more closely connected with the inability to "express two or more conflicting ideas at the same time in a language which is sequential" (Jones 2003:8). Jones states that, in this regard, the visual artwork possesses an advantage over text because it can express various conflicting ideas simultaneously (Jones 2003:8).

***Becoming animal*¹⁷**

In Christoph Cox's essay 'Of Humans, Animals, and Monsters' (2006), published in the exhibition catalogue for *Becoming Animal* organized by MASS MoCA and presented in North Adams in May 2005 to March 2006, he summarizes the chronological development of Western thought on the relationship between human and animal. Cox traces this relationship from Greek mythology and ancient Hebrew and Christian traditions, to the writings of Plato who sympathized with the human for being an unfortunate combination of body and mind (Cox 2006:18). Cox continues further to the writings of Aristotle and his idea of "*scala naturae*", sorting nature and animals into a hierarchical structure to reach, according to Aristotle, perfection in the human male (Cox 2006:19). Aristotle also suggested

¹⁷ I am aware that the hierarchy of *becoming* as *becoming animal* can only follow in the process of a *becoming woman*; however, for the sake of this chapter's flow and clarity I felt it necessary to discuss *becoming animal* before discussing *becoming woman*.

that 'becoming other' will be *becoming woman*, since woman is the first deviation from man (Cox 2006:23). Cox also refers to the critical figures of the beginning of our modern era, Descartes and Rousseau, who insisted that the animal is no more than a machine or "automata", because the animal, according to them, lacks a soul (Cox 2006:20). He refers to Kant as well as to Darwin's 'natural selection' and lastly to Samuel Butler's theory that the evolutionary continuum links human beings to animals and also to vegetables and machines (Cox 2006:21).

It is important to recognize this historical chronology of the human and animal relationship as it places the *becoming* phenomenon of Deleuze and Guattari's 'Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible' in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), in the context of modern society and modern culture.

Deleuze and Guattari criticize the Oedipal family structure for the manner in which it is perceived as a microcosm of a broader hierarchical structure. They see it as a model limited from the outset, enforcing specific and conservative roles onto the members within this family structure by shutting down alternative models for being and *becoming*. Their rejection of psychoanalysis is thus to privilege schizoanalysis¹⁸ in challenging the familial social structures. This enables them to propose radical, post-familial concepts of subjectivity. They oppose the hierarchical evolutionary history of humankind that places man at the top of the animal kingdom and the assumption that 'modern' man is more evolved than 'primitive' man. Thus they employ a contradicting concept of non-hierarchical rhizomatic systems to point towards an alternative way of perceiving *becoming*. (Jones 2003:9).

For Deleuze and Guattari, the process of *becoming* can be imagined as a rhizomatic structure or complex system. *Becoming* does not progress or regress as a series, nor does it operate by

¹⁸ "The "schizoanalysis" invented by the authors is defined as "a whole scouring of the unconscious, a complete curettage (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 311). The thesis of schizoanalysis proposes that desire is a machine, in fact, interconnected machines—"desiring-machines." This assemblage of machines represents the real and constitutes the production of desire. Psychoanalysis is described as a belief in a structural ensemble of the symbolic and the imaginary that Deleuze and Guattari characterize as a mythical belief. They radically challenge the Oedipus complex and accuse psychoanalysis of "beating down all the connections, the entire arrangement" because it "hates desire, hates politics." The two authors reject the idea of any psychic reality: "There is only desire and the social, and nothing else." Schizoanalysis, with its schizophrenic process, a "political and social psychoanalysis" proposes to "undo the expressive oedipal unconscious, which is always artificial, repressive and repressed, and mediated by the family, to gain access to the immediate productive unconscious." ([Online]. Available:<http://www.answers.com/topic/anti-oedipus-capitalism-and-schizophrenia#ixzz25DUL0vhg>.)

filiations. They define it as more in line with infection and contagion which pass along lines of flight unconnected by a generic series. They refer to such infections as 'unnatural participations' that may cross kingdoms of entirely different scales (Jones 2003:9).

Deleuze and Guattari's interests are more focused on the *affects* of bodies, in what they do than in their generic make up (Jones 2003:9). In all cases of *becoming*, but more specifically in *becoming animal*, Deleuze and Guattari are insistent that these *becoming(s)* should not be considered a regression or an aberration. They call this form of evolution between heterogeneous terms 'involution' and perceive it as a creative process (Jones 2003:9).

Deleuze and Guattari make a definite distinction between *becoming animal* and the conscious imitation of an animal. For them a true *becoming* involves bringing the molecular elements of one's composition in line with the molecular composition of the animal (Jones 2003:10). *Becoming animal* persists in finding the right speed of composition, of emitting particles with the correct relationship between movements and rest which approximate that of the animal. In this doing the self becomes contaminated with the animal, and it causes the subject to break with familiar and conventional patterns and to exhibit unprecedented behaviour. (Jones 2003:10).

Who has not known the violence of these animal sequences, which uproot one from humanity, if only for an instant, making one scrape at one's bread like a rodent or giving one the yellow eyes of a feline? A fearsome involution calling us toward unheard-of becomings. (Deleuze & Guattari cited in Jones 2003:10).

Deleuze and Guattari hold that psychoanalysis frequently encountered the phenomena of *becoming animal* in both children and adults, but they reduced these *becoming(s)* to symbols or symptoms of a phallogocentric symbolic order (Jones 2003:10).

(Psychoanalysts) see the animal as a representative of drives, or a representation of the parents. They do not see the reality of a becoming-animal, that it is affect in itself, the drive in person and represents nothing. (Deleuze & Guattari cited in Jones 2003:11).

As mentioned previously, Cixous has previously linked the hysteric to the sorceress, and in the same way Deleuze and Guattari make the link between the philosopher and the sorcerer. This link suggests that *becoming(s)* are closer to magical practices than to a traditional philosophy of psychoanalysis (Jones 2003:11).

As Deleuze and Guattari make a clear distinction between imitating and *becoming*, they also recognise that the two go hand in hand, since one can transform into the other at any stage (Jones 2003:11). What was thus intended as an imitation turns into *becoming*, but on the other hand, as Jones (2003:11-12) points out, “a *becoming* can be broken mid-flow, a segment gets left behind, the speed is misjudged and ‘then nothing remains but the imaginary resemblances between terms, or symbolic analogies between relations’”. She cites Deleuze and Guattari’s rather amusing observation that “there is always the danger of finding yourself ‘playing’ the animal, domestic Oedipal animal... a mere poodle” (Deleuze & Guattari cited in Jones 2003:11).

Jones refers to this impossible distinction between the place where imitation stops and the *becoming* starts, as fascinating and risky. *Becoming(s)* are liminal in that they are neither this nor that, nor the relationship between the two, but the in-between, the threshold, the border (Jones 2003:12).

In her essay ‘Text(ile)s: How to fabric(ate) Yourself a Body without Organs’ (2004), Nicole Archer constructs her text as an imagined bullfight with the philosophers Deleuze and Guattari. The matador’s cape functions here as an analogy for a threshold; the in-betweenness of *becoming*. This strategy provides a productive method by which to interpret Nandipha Mntambo’s work. This is not only for the significance of the bullfight as a metaphor for *becoming*, but for Archer’s method of seeing the text as a text(ile) and this possessing a mode of seeing as understanding the rhizomatic plays of power that traverse us throughout all the movements of our daily lives. She refers to such visceral reading as revealing lines of flight throughout embodied modes of hegemonic systems (Archer 2004:165).

Deleuze and Guattari also stress that the field of *becoming(s)* can possibly turn into a “pure plane of abolition or death” (cited in Jones 2003:12). This might be the greatest risk of *becoming*, as Jones describes it, the risk that the subject may annihilate him- or herself completely (Jones 2003:12).

It is within this annihilation that I refer to the female artist’s (my own and by extension, Mntambo’s) method of art-making as critically confronting artistic labour within art

practice, particularly through the use of animal imagery and material derivatives (hides). Beyond using the animal as subject matter in a post-humanist context, it is the ontological economy of animal material in this process that enables a potentially expanded understanding of the work by the viewer and artist. This argument is supported by what Mntambo perceives as the “agency of the material” (Makhubu 2012:40). Nomusa Makhubu refers to Mntambo’s belief that material derived from animals, specifically cured hides, may also be powerful enough on its own to “evoke memory and awaken history in extraordinary ways” (Makhubu 2012:40) without excessive artistic intervention. This animal material is thus also more than just material in the art making process; it becomes a possible language, even a symbolic system that expands the interpretation of the artwork into the process of the artist’s *becoming*.

This reading, conceived as being outside of the artist’s *becoming*, contains the possibility of an element in the artwork that the artist has not yet considered. The interpretation of the animal material as animal presence and absence in the artwork can be seen as a symbiosis or parasite economy in relation to the method of art-making employed in the process of artistic labour. The relationship between this particular materiality and the art-making process suggests a risk of confronting the notion of labour employed in these creative practices.

A tension is thus articulated between female craft and animal material, and speaks of its contribution to the artwork as that what the artist in *becoming* is unaware of. Archer refers to fabric as a surrogate skin but in the case of Mntambo’s work and my own, the animal skin as material becomes a surrogate skin for the artist’s subjectivity (Archer 2004:166). This aspect of tension that is outside of the artist’s *becoming* is thus challenging the artist’s hand as a pivotal and vital element in the artistic labour and therefore in the process of the artist’s *becoming*.

Becoming woman

Irigaray’s emphasis and philosophy on *becoming* has various points of similarity with that of Deleuze and Guattari. Each of them tries to rethink radically different and unprecedented ways of being in the world (Jones 2003:12). They define these ways of being not to facilitate a shift of obstacles, but to redefine the entire horizon. They see philosophy as a

practice that can bring about a change in their readers' lived experience, as well as in their own. (Jones 2003:13).

This is the reason why I am attracted to the use and the reading of the *becoming* philosophy, because it facilitates a practice that functions in a positive analysis of the way humans and individuals live. Even more so, it functions as a method of redefining art-making processes, as well as the need to facilitate a method of *becoming* in a process of situating the artist, woman or man, in their context and subjectivity formation. What makes this *becoming* philosophy even more significant is the way that it defines the need to explore and exceed boundaries and thresholds in the making of new horizon(s), as well as new horizons in the visual art practice and its relation to art theory. These possible new horizons also challenge the post-apartheid context in the way that art can be valuable for provoking change and process, as well as the refutation of conventional stagnation.

Deleuze and Guattari as well as Irigaray are concerned with subjectivity and wish to deconstruct the privileged autonomous masculine identity formed out of a phallogentric symbolic order. The issue of sexual difference is the pivotal point where they part their strategies of *becoming*. (Jones 2003: 13).

Deleuze and Guattari want to rethink subjectivity without referring to any symbolic order. They see *becoming* as the affirmation of the positivity of difference in a continuous process of transformation. This continuous process of transformation is regarded as the polarisation of masculine and feminine and for being only one dualistic position in a variety of binaries (Jones 2003:13). From this perspective, their philosophy of *becoming* can seem superficial, and not necessarily productive for female artists to apply to a rethinking of subjectivity towards determining their own subjectivity. It is therefore vital to read and use Irigaray's work alongside theirs, since she opens the rethinking of subjectivity in the politics of sexual difference. Irigaray stages the opposition between masculine and feminine as the central opposition upon which all the other binaries are founded (Jones 2003:13).

Deleuze and Guattari accept man as being the standard identity to which all other identities refer. They assume the autonomous masculine identity as antithetical to *becoming*, but "they want to look "beyond" gender dichotomies toward multiple, interconnected or 'polysexual' identities" (Jones 2003:13). They consider feminist theory as maintaining

majority thinking and reasserting binary oppositions which continue to support phallogentrism (Jones 2003:13).

Jones points out that there is a contradiction in Deleuze and Guattari's theory of *becoming*. On the one hand they deny that becoming takes place on a pre-given line of flight and that all *becoming(s)* are unpredictable (Jones 2003:13). They define that one does not reach *becoming* or the molecular, "as long as a line is connected to two distant points, or is composed of two contiguous points" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:293).

"A line of becoming is not defined by points that it connects, or by points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes between points, it comes up through the middle" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:293). For them a *becoming* is always in the middle, and thus the line of *becoming* has only a middle. This middle they describe as not being an average; "it is fast motion, it is the absolute speed of movement" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:293). They also state that the subject of a *becoming* is always a 'man' or occupies the position of a man, because man is 'majoritarian', thus 'molar' (Jones 2003:13):

...there is no becoming-man because man is the molar entity par excellence, where as becomings are molecular. The facility function showed us the form under which man constitutes the majority, or rather the standard upon which the majority is based: white, male, adult, "rational," ect, in short, the average European, the subject of enunciation. Following the law of arborescence, it is this central Point that moves across all of space or the entire screen, and at every turn nourishes a certain distinctive opposition, depending on which facility trait is retained: male-(female), adult-(child), white-(black, yellow, or red); rational-(animal). (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:292).

They define this as the central point, the point that has the property of "organizing binary distributions within the dualism machines, and of reproducing itself in the principal term of the opposition" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:292). Thus the "entire opposition at the same time resonates in the central point" (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:292). Deleuze and Guattari refer to the subject of a *becoming* as always being 'man' (or occupies the position of man) because man is a 'majoritarian par excellence' and all *becoming(s)* thus must pass from this position through a *becoming-woman* which they perceive as the "key to all becomings" (Jones 2003:13): "Although all becomings are already molecular, including becoming-woman, it

must be said that all becomings begin with and pass through becoming-woman. It is the key to all becomings.” (Deleuze & Guattari 1987:277).

Jones further shows that they declare *becoming-woman* as being true for all women as it is for men. They fail to explain, however, why all *becoming(s)* must take place through a *becoming-woman* except to say that ‘woman as a molar entity has to become woman in order that the man also becomes – or can become – woman’ (Jones 2003:13). Jones critiques this claim as being ‘dubious’, as it suggests that the *becoming-woman* is being used as “an intermediate void space which enables all other becomings” (Jones 2003:13). She concludes that it may be because of “an unacknowledged acceptance that all human subjectivity emerges first from the body of a woman” (Jones 2003:13).

This acceptance of the body of the woman as an origin of all human subjectivity is possible, if one considers Freud and Lacan’s theories of the Oedipal complex and the male infantile psychoanalysis. Tamsin Lorraine refers to the advantage of Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of schizoanalysis and destratification as a practice for fostering constructive change in which one does not need to pin down the content of one’s identity in order to set *becoming* into motion (Lorraine 1999:187). “Irigaray destratifies oedipalization by mapping femininity onto the social field. Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of becoming-woman is premised on the destratification from the man-standard”, Lorraine states (1999:187).

Jones further goes on to stress that instead of shifting or deconstructing the man-standard, Deleuze and Guattari’s theory reinforces it by exclusion of the possibility of *becoming* man (Jones 2003:13).¹⁹ In referring to how Irigaray describes sexual difference, Lorraine defines Deleuze and Guattari’s *becoming-woman* as a process that is sexually differentiated and that the project of *becoming-woman* will be radically different for women and men (Lorraine 1999:186). She further states that *becoming-woman* may require a risk of dissolution of identity if no action is employed to ‘stabilize a new form of subjectivity’ (cited in Jones 2003:14).

It is necessary to look at Irigaray in more detail now, to comprehend the process of producing a feminine subjectivity within an art practice by the female artist. Robinson, in

¹⁹ Jones refers to Tamsin Lorraine’s book *Irigaray & Deleuze: Experiments in Visceral Philosophy* (1999) for her critique of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory as a failure to acknowledge that the process of *becoming* is continuously sexually differentiated (Jones 2003:14).

Reading Art, Reading Irigaray (2006), proposes that Irigaray's writing can be used to "help us understand new, or other, or different legibilities of artworks, ways of understanding that allow women as artists and viewers of art, to recognize their subjectivity as women" (2006:18). Lorraine expands this observation:

Irigaray's notion of feminine subjectivity attempts to symbolize a standard for personal identity that is an open-ended system without specific content. In addition, Irigaray's notion attempts to support a new kind of subjectivity at the same time that it recognizes a need and a desire for personal identity... it provides a model that conceives of personal identity as mutually constitutive and continually transforming in interdependent relationship with others. (Lorraine 1999:187-188).

As Jones (2003:14) points out, Irigaray observes feminine desire within the current phallogentric economy as ruins, and as scattered remnants of a violated sexuality. Jones's response to this is that it is in the interest of the patriarchy that it remains stuck in this violated state or space (Jones 2003:14):

Feminine pleasure has to remain inarticulate in language, in its own language, if it is not to threaten the underpinnings of logical operations. And so what is most strictly forbidden to woman today is that they should attempt to express their own pleasure. (Potter 2001: 448). (cited in Jones 2003:14).

She points out that a woman therefore will wander randomly "in darkness" because she neither knows where to go, nor the source of her pleasure. She thus becomes a "liminal creature" because she cannot specify what she wants and does not know where she is going (Jones 2003:14).

The process of *becoming-animal* will then be different for female and male subjects. For women have been regarded through history as being closer to 'nature' and therefore to animals. This justifies assumptions that women are more irrational and less capable of logical reasoning, and that their civil duties should be limited because of these assumptions. The woman's hypothetical 'closeness' to the animal kingdom is threatening to the Oedipal family unit (Jones 2003:17). Here Jones refers to Cixous: "No matter how submissive and docile she may be in relation to the masculine order, she still retains the threatening

possibility of savagery, the unknown quantity in the household whole” (cited in Jones 2003:17).

Liana Borghi invented the term ‘liminalien’ for “a being who is neither this nor that” (Jones 2003:17). In her definition of the term Borghi mainly refers to vampires and science fiction characters, but she states that “they are only as alien as any of us are when attempting to stride the holographic edge of identity” (cited in Jones 2003:17). These ‘liminalien’ creatures are seen as being ‘border creatures’ that are unstable: “their contours are provisional” and they are thus seen as a threat to hierarchical social structures; but, as Borghi states, these creatures also offer great potential for *becoming* through “experimenting with multiple and diverse bodies” (cited in Jones 2003:17). Therefore it is possible to consider the female artist as a body in *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* to be in a liminal body, to consider her as a liminal creature and thus a ‘liminalien’. In a further move the artist’s studio, or the art practice itself, also becomes a liminal space.

Jones proposes that an artwork can be viewed in the same way that Irigaray, Deleuze and Guattari perceive philosophy, viz. as a practice which can bring about a qualitative change for the viewer as well as for the artist (Jones 2003:17). Deleuze and Guattari are critical about art practices that visualize aspirations to transcendence; they believe only in “very diverse problems whose solutions are found in heterogeneous arts” (cited in Jones 2003:17).

Thus to ask the question “What does *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* look like?” is partly contradictory. For it is a liminal phenomenon. A project to determine such an appearance would mean to take a snapshot of a moment or millisecond in the process of defining it in terms of what the *becoming* looks like. And even accepting that such a snapshot of a moment or millisecond can show what *becoming* looks like is contradictory, for even in that millisecond time space the process of becoming is already well underway or in motion. The face of *becoming* or its visual appearance cannot be that of a liminal creature of mythical appearance, like Mntambo’s *Europa* (2008) (Figure 2), nor a bestial body. But it is more a matter of analyzing the oeuvre of the artist to visualize what *becoming woman*, *becoming animal* might look like. Rather, it becomes visible when referring to the artist’s *process* of art making. When one considers the presence of the artist’s hand in this process of art making, the hand becomes the vessel of mediating the *becoming*. Attempting to depict or interpret a *becoming* in an artwork is thus impossible and is evidence of the artist’s hand being

challenged in the preoccupation with a distinct and visual ‘gestalt’ of the philosophy and art theory. This concept will be analysed further in Chapter 3.



Figure 2: Nandipha Mntambo. *Europa*. (2008).

Irigaray, Deleuze and Guattari regard art practices as valuable for their potential to stimulate *becoming(s)* (Jones 2003:17). In reference to Gunning’s *The Horse Impressionists*, Jones states that when a woman artist makes the *becoming-animal* of women the subject of her work, the risks are immense. The artist risks the affirmation that women are less evolved and positioned accordingly in a hierarchical relationship with men (Jones 2003:17).

The women in the video *The Horse Impressionists* are also exposed to the risk of humiliation and the potential risk of losing that which Jones refers to as whatever status they had as social subjects (Jones 2003:17). But if we consider taking the Deleuzian view that *becoming-animal* is not a regression and combine this with Irigaray’s view that the deliberate employment by women of the ‘feminine role’ is to “convert a form of subordination into one of affirmation and thus to begin to thwart it” (cited in Jones 2003:18), then *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* through the art practice could be regarded and read as a radical challenge to the visual art practice.

By using this method of analysing a practice and its products, Nandipha Mntambo's video *Ukungenisa* (2009) can be discussed as a performance but also as a process of *becoming* made visible, without undermining the female artist-subject whatsoever. The potential of visual art practice for mediating the process of transcendence in *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* translates into the female artist's subjectivity, her interconnectedness and her dependence on her social context.

The female artist's hand can thus be seen as a mediator of this transcendence and is challenged, in this regard, in invalidating its presence in the art-making process and the visual art practice. Irigaray refers to the process of becoming-woman in a patriarchal society as an inevitable cause of pain to the subject:

She is torn apart in pain, fear, cries, tears, and blood that go beyond any other feeling. The wound must come before the flame. But already there is delight and longing in this torment... Though the path she is cutting is a difficult one, she is impatient to set everything else aside and pleads to go on. (Deleuze & Guattari cited in Jones 2003:18).

Jones refers to this as an element of masochism present in the process of *becoming-woman*. She observes that it is much easier for a woman to stay within the confines of femininity as it is approved of by patriarchy than to *become* a woman in the Irigarayan sense illustrated in the quote above. For the woman, in becoming woman, will undoubtedly experience conflict with others, "family, friends, the State", and this will cause her pain as well as, hopefully, pleasure (Jones 2003:18). She states that it might be useful to turn to Deleuze and Guattari's re-reading of masochism for it is not defined as a destructive process but rather as 'an exchange and circulation' which can precipitate new *becoming(s)*. In their re-reading of masochism they do not advocate it in order to *become*, but they do consider it as being misinterpreted in psychoanalysis, as it only recognizes desire in terms of lack. Psychoanalysis describes an individual with 'conventional' desires as only desiring something that is lacking to her (Jones 2003:18).

In referring to *The Horse Impressionists* as a heterogeneous element, the *becoming-horse*, Jones introduces the work to the plane of desire, as it demonstrates an intensely embodied experience which cannot be interpreted by psychoanalysis and thus cannot be reduced to the Oedipal model (Jones 2003:18). Mntambo's video *Ukungenisa* (2009) can be placed alongside

The Horse Impressionists, in reading the possible annihilation of the artist in her *becoming* through exposing herself and her *becoming-animal* to the violence of the bull fight. This is the violence in the possible death of the matador and the animal (the bull), as well as the horror experienced by the audience in the arena as Mntambo enacts all three of these characters in her video performance (Elliott 2011:29).

In both Mntambo and Gunning's video works, masochism would not be the perverse desire to experience pleasure through pain, but it can rather be seen as the one element in the desire to *become* and that *becoming* may or may not bring about pleasure as an effect. This challenges Freud's belief that humans are always motivated by the desire to experience pleasure. Thus it suggests that the desire to *become* is primary, and the desire for pleasure is secondary, and pleasure is by no means an assured end product of *becoming* (Jones 2003:18).

Deleuze and Guattari place great emphasis on caution in the process of *becoming*. They state that it is necessary to pay attention to where you are and, like a cartographer, to map your relationship to the strata (Jones 2003:18). According to Irigaray's perspective, paying attention to where you are is inseparable from one's relationship to the horizon of one's gender. Thus if there is nothing for the female subject to refer to in her *becoming*, it is possible that she will stray and be drawn to the *becoming* of another (Jones 2003:19).

Jones draws attention to the fact that Deleuze and Guattari in their line of flight fail to recognize the mother as the origin of subjectivity. They aim to take the subject away from the Oedipal framework, but still their philosophy continues to ignore and deny the mother. The mother is a primal element of the Oedipal framework, and to follow their 'lines of flight' without addressing the mother's body as origin of subjectivity would be diminishing to female subjects and an extension of a masculinist philosophy (Jones 2003:19).

Jones concludes that *The Horse Impressionists* is a highly ambiguous artwork, for while it seems to comply with patriarchal beliefs that women are closer to nature and therefore to the animal kingdom, it employs this complicity to affirm a *feminine becoming* (Jones 2003:19). Jones therefore assists my conceptualization that it is possible to use that which was prescribed as discriminating to the female, such as female craft, and animal imagery in reaffirming a female subjectivity through deliberately miming this patriarchal heterogeneous convention of femininity in the art practice. This process can be realized through a performance such as *Ukungenisa* and *The Horse Impressionists*, or it can manifest by using a female craft and employing the hand in the art-making process.

In her conclusion Jones further states that, even though it could be read as light-hearted, *The Horse Impressionists* contains very serious connotations; it lingers dangerously on the borderline between fragmenting feminine subjectivity and reclaiming it. The work also indicates the potential for visual artworks to use visceral means to challenge culturally perceived limitations of embodied subjectivity, suggesting that all subjects, male and female, operate from a liminal position, as always between one *becoming* and another. Deleuze and Guattari's 'anti-oedipal' approach to subjectivity presents, as Jones defines it, a refreshing way to address *The Horse Impressionists*, from outside a psychoanalytic model, but it raises problems for a specifically *feminine becoming* (Jones 2003:19). Their philosophy will thus situate women in the line of danger, if one does not consider and use Irigaray's philosophy, for her attention to familial ties and developments to specifically feminine horizons of *becoming* (Jones 2003:19) and a space of origin to *become* from.

CHAPTER TWO

In this chapter I will discuss the basis for the *becoming* process as a reciprocal mediation between theory and art practice by referring to Nicole Archer's article 'Text(ile)s: How to Fabric(ate) Yourself a Body without Organs' (2004). When Archer wrote this article she was in the process of researching her PhD in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College, University of London, "extending her understanding of text(ile)s through her current investigations of 'uniforms' (sartorial and otherwise) as the modes of power with which they intersect" (2004:157).

Archer begins her article with a poetic analogy of the bullfight or *la corrida de toros*, and the role of the matador's cape in this event. Through applying Archer's concept of the matador's cape as a metaphor for aspects of the philosophy explored in Deleuze and Guattari's book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), I reflect on Nandipha Mntambo's video performance *Ukungenisa* (2009) and her sculptural work using Nguni cowhide as a case study for the artist's intent to implicate theory or philosophy in her art practice.

By briefly referring to Deleuze and Guattari's image of the rhizome, a system that reflects a tracing or mapping of one's *becoming*, I argue that acknowledging a direct interface between philosophy and art practice becomes a method to map the artist's *becoming*, and that this mapping can be facilitated by the hand, in the form of female craft in my own art practice.

The animal is introduced as material presence in visual art practice, and is significant for its embodiment of an ontological economy and uncanny representation of subjectivity in its relation to Deleuze and Guattari's *body without organs* in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). This provides a critical context for the post-modern animal in contemporary art and the interpretation that it may engender from a viewer, an interpretation that is not within the artist's control. From this position, I will argue my case of the tension and confrontation embodied in the artist's hand.

Nicole Archer's metaphor of the matador as a way of reading the text, as folds mapping the *becoming* notion of Deleuze and Guattari and the *feminine becoming* of Irigaray, could be argued as a productive method for the post-modern artist and philosopher. Nandipha Mntambo's artworks use animal material, viz. Nguni cow hides; and they literally resemble

Archer's reading of the text as the *body without organs* and the fabric as a surrogate skin, by rendering the body absent and abstract in the way fabric covers a body through clothing. In Mntambo's cowhide sculptures, this animal material can thus be argued to function as a surrogate skin, and the folds of the hide could be read as a rhizomatic mapping of the *becoming* process.

The non-human animal in *becoming-animal*

In Archer's poetic analogy of the bullfight (or the *corrida*), she writes from the perspectives of both the spectators and the bull. The reader experiences it all at once, sitting in the arena and dancing with the matador and his cape (the *capote de brega*).

“Ohh!” Upon entering the *plaza de toros*, we see that the arena is packed and tension is high. The fanatical crowd applauds incessantly - confirming the featured matador's (in)famous skill and the difficulties that any beast should expect when face to face with him. We sadistically look forward to the two's meeting. As we move to settle into the stands and take in our surroundings, a strange magic unfolds, and we are transported (as if in a dream) from the safety of our seats to the chaos of the bullpen. (Archer 2004:158).

This analogy of seeing it through the eyes of the bull, the animal can also be seen an empathetic response towards the beast but it is through this violent interaction between the matador and the beast that she is able to link to - and engage the tension of Deleuze and Guattari's text:

The matador has arrived; our death has never seemed so strangely imminent. *Silence*. He plants himself in the centre and starts to taunt us. He repeatedly and provocatively extends thick, red, Baroque curtains and waits for us as they unfurl. We're given no time to think; to imagine what secret lies behind this sinuous borderline; no time to envision a route other than the one straight ahead. There is simply no time; and space is getting in the way. “*Toro! Toro!*” Disorientated and anxious, we see only red, and rush ahead in an attempt to break through this *thing* - this cape/page/text(ile) - that is seemingly obscuring the route to our desired destination: to our freedom, our becoming(-animal), to infinity. It is our first, near fatal mistake. As we pass him he whispers:

It is a regrettable characteristic of the Western mind to relate expressions and actions to exterior or transcendent ends, instead of evaluating them on a plane of consistency on the basis of their intrinsic value. (Deleuze and Guattari 1980:22).

“*Olé!*” We shrug off his hushed rumblings, thinking that we have triumphed by making it through his “text(ile)"/border, arriving safely on the other side. However, when we raise our eyes, we see that all we have done is re-inscribe ourselves in the same place we were trying to escape. He is still the sun suit of light and we can still see only red. We made it through to our destination, but have come no closer to the way out. (Archer 2004:158-159).

The bull repeats this action, trying to escape the cape, which represents a border and a possible freedom. Archer again quotes Deleuze and Guattari as if they are the voice of the matador: “Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it relies in binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature.”(cited in Archer 2004:160)

Archer adds that we are tracing the matador’s steps, and in doing this we are chasing the same shifting borderline (Archer 2004:160):

We realize that we’ll never uproot him in this fashion. These manoeuvres are exhausting and we already know how this ritual is destined to end: he will continue to dominate us until the fatal finale when he’ll pierce through our organs with his (s)word. If we are to escape this fate/this place, we need to stop “pursuing our own death” (Deleuze and Guattari 1980:133) and become immune to such cuts. His cape/the page flickers and conveys a kind of morse code: *For the question was not how to elude the order-word but how to elude the death sentence in envelopes, how to develop its power of escape, how to prevent escape, how to prevent escape from veering into the imaginary or falling into a black hole, how to maintain or draw out the revolutionary potentiality of the order-word (Deleuze and Guattari 1980:11).* (Archer 2004:160).

Archer refers to the matador’s waving cape as waving flags, and says that he knows that there are those who will see the signals in the text(ile)s for what they really are: ‘lines of flight’. She thus uses the text(ile)s as an analogy for the text, Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy of ‘lines of flight’ (Archer 2004:161). She goes on to state that recognizing these flows of information/power unfolding across the cape liberates us from the self-defeating task of trying to uproot the meaning of our predicament in the fixed, symbolic figure of the

matador (Archer 2004:161): “We immediately stop confusing our matador with the metaphor for the ring”, are referring to the ring as the arena which holds a law that pins us to the matador as its central point. Now we can “start to get the idea” that metaphors and matador die but “ideas do not” (Archer 2004:161). This links us back to man as being the standard and central point in the lines of flight, as discussed in Chapter 1.

As this optical space between ‘us and him’ starts to unfold, Archer explains that we can stop ‘playing the bull’ and, instead of tracing the matador’s steps and movement to find a way out, we *become-animal* and by doing this start to form a map with the lines of his text(ile). This map is created by using his ‘lines of flight’ because “he” is forevermore ‘the point’, and as Archer describes it, this ‘game’ must be played ‘on the line’ (Archer 2004:161):

There are only the endlessly flowing folds of the text(ile). There is no question, no top, bottom, or secret on the other side. There simply is no time; and space keeps getting in the way. A final communication: *Make a map, not a tracing... It [the map] fosters connections between fields, the removal of blockages on bodies without organs, the maximum opening of bodies without organs onto a plane of consistency (Deleuze and Guattari 1980:12).* (Archer 2004:161).

Up to this point the matador can be understood to be an analogy of the male standard and as an emblem of a patriarchal, phallogentric economy. Archer explains that the bullfight promises various possibilities, but mainly it promises a kind of divine magic:

The transportation through space-time into the past, or the realm of “old-world tradition,” the supernatural intersection of human and beast, and a spectacular glimpse of human triumph over boundless, wild chaos-mediated as revealed in the vibrant, lyrical folds for the (social) fabric. Through an endless series of dramatic, red and magenta curtain calls, these miraculous feats traditionally reach their crescendo; each pass, or *veronica*, of the bull through the matador’s cape choreographed to map the timeless, fanatic drama in which man asserts his centrality within the world by brutally employing the technologies that historically separate him from “beast”. (Archer 2004:161).

The domination of man as historically mediated through technologies refers to the domestication of animals and the use of animals to secure aspects of human survival, viz.

clothing, food, entertainment, companionship and science.²⁰ This element, reaffirming the domination of the man over the beast, will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Archer explains that, through examining how different cultures drape their homes in cloth, one can understand how the bullfight, the *corrida*, is firmly implanted in the human imagination (Archer 2004:161). In a South African context it is important to think of ways in which indigenous cultures drape animal skins in their homes, and how the Khoi-Khoen people use the animal skin to cover themselves in ritual trance dances, where especially the Shaman, going into a trance to communicate with the ancestors, transcends into the body of an animal and particularly into the body of an Eland (Morris 2005:5).

Archer goes on to describe the *corrida* as a dramatic, sumptuous, and provocative means to explore the limits of our relationships with the textile, and thus the Western traditional demarcations between man, beast, and technology which have historically justified man's dominance in the world (Archer 2004:162).²¹ To further expand on this function of the bullfight Archer refers to Garry Marvin's book *Bullfight* (1988):

The starting point of the event [the bullfight] is chaos and danger, and it is for man to impose order progressively. By organizing the activity of the arena, by establishing regularity as patterns where there had been chaos, and by controlling the [wild] bull, the man publicly demonstrates his separation from and his domination of nature, and thus asserts his humanness. (Marvin 1988:136) (cited in Archer 2004:163).

The analogy of the bullfight becomes an ideal position to critically unravel the very nature and authority of this "humanness". Although the *corrida* was designed to let the matador win and the beast to be conquered, it poses the question of the infallibility of the matador's dominance. It invites us to relish a world without symbolic order, a post-human world (Archer 2004:163). The cape becomes a form of technology that "connects the man and the beast" (Archer 2004:163).

If the matador's cape is conceptualized as a technology that can serve as a connection between the human and non-human, as Archer has stated, the cape can also be seen as a

²⁰ The five relationships (clothing, food, entertainment, companionship and science) that humans have with the animal are derived from the documentary film *Earthlings* (2005).

²¹ What makes the bullfight such a significant analogy is the fact that it is frequently figured within various forms of critical thought as the setting *par excellence* to physically locate the theory of human development (Archer 2004:162). This is advocated, for instance, by Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929), which bases the "human being" in *man's* progressive display of domination over "nature" (Archer 2004:162).

text(ile) which is an analogy for the text of Deleuze and Guattari's visceral philosophy. The interaction with the text is similar to the movements of the bull trying to get on the other side of the red textile, but this effort is insipid, for the other side does not exist as a destination. It is only a fleeting moment that entraps the animal in the fight to get to the other side of the cape as the matador tempts the animal to move with and against him.

This is how I have come to an understanding of Deleuze and Guattari's visceral philosophy. By referring to the metaphor of the bullfight, Archer's article has revealed to me a method that I can apply to reading their work and understand it as a process that can be used to connect my theoretical research and practical work.

When one considers all that has been said so far, it becomes clear that the artist is trapped within a space between art theory/philosophy and art practice. When understanding the text as a threshold that is ever moving, like the matador's cape, one can trace this as a map of the movement between theory and practice.



Figure 3: Nandipha Mntambo. *Ukungenisa* (2009). Single-channel video shot on HD, colour, sound. Duration 2 min 30 sec. Edition of 5 + 2AP. © Nandipha Mntambo. Courtesy of Stevenson, Cape Town and Johannesburg.

Through the investigation of Mntambo's performance *Ukungenisa* (2009) (Figure 3) we see this relationship between the artist and the visceral philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari embodied. The video as artwork is a testimony to this reciprocal interaction in the effort to communicate a process of *becoming*, and *becoming animal*. By relating Mntambo's performance to Archer's article, this artwork became the first work that could elucidate the *becoming* process to me, to an extent that it became clear what is meant by *becoming animal*. This understanding led me to investigate my own art practice, to find and adapt a methodology of theorizing about my own work, both theoretical and practical, as a reciprocal process of *becoming*.

Artists employing the philosophy of *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* attempt to make an artwork that will illustrate the *becoming* notion of Deleuze and Guattari. They do this according to what has been written and what is understood about what a *becoming* is or may be. Through an intensive investigation of the work of these artists, and also art critics' writings about these artists and their work, I have come to the conclusion that these artists want to know what *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* are, but even more so, what *becoming* looks like and how it can be facilitated in the realm of the visual arts.

The artists that I refer to indicate in their work an illustrative gesture of the *becoming* notion. A mimetic or descriptive interpretation of the *becoming* philosophy is observable in the artwork. I have already referred to Nandipha Mntambo's *Europa* (Figure 2). I wish to add the work of Jane Alexander to this train of thought, for it also relates to the hybridity and the monstrous; and it has the capacity, as Nato Thompson (2006:26) explains, to "transcend the South African political context and speak to the global human condition".

To this list I also add the work of international artists like Francis Bacon for his painting *Head Surrounded by Sides of Beef* (1954); Joseph Beuys's *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974) and *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965); Oleg Kulik's *I Bite America and America Bites Me* (1997); Marcus Coates's *Dawn Chorus* (2007); Lucy Gunning's *The Horse Impressionists* (1994) (Figure 1); and Patricia Piccinini's *The Young Family* (2002). This last sculpture, like many other examples of her work, also deals with the therianthropic body, hybridity and the monstrous.

"What does becoming animal look like?" Giovanni Aloï refers to Steve Baker's question in his journal article "Different Becomings" (2011). Baker posed this pivotal question in his book *The Postmodern Animal* (2000), in which he discusses the presence of the animal in contemporary art. To identify the *becoming animal* of our own being, whether it is as an individual, or in a relationship, in a society or a culture, is to recognize the 'fleeting' or moving position itself of *becoming*, and to acknowledge it as a positive progressive process that can be applied to the art practice.

The facilitating of the *becoming*, *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* as processes within art practice, and accepting that it is impossible to show or describe its appearance in one artwork, is to accept the interaction between the text and the art practice. This interaction

is the same as the bull's movement through and through the red text(ile). In her performance Mntambo reveals that, through this movement, she as female artist²² is already in a process of *becoming animal*, as she is retracing her movements and steps in the red soil of the arena as animal and as matador. The performance is significant for it does not show an actual bull, but in this subtle absence of the physical animal, the animal is observed to be present regardless, as vital and important an element as the matador in the symbolism of the bull fight.

Mntambo plays the non-human animal in the movement of her body and the steps she takes as red dust is flicked into the air; she also makes the non-human animal body present in the artwork in the waistcoat and cape that is made of animal hide. Here she recalls the non-human animal as a presence in the artwork, but she as artist and woman is not dominated by it. The viewer can still observe the artist as being present in the artwork, as well as the 'non-human' as liminal being in the process of *becoming*, and even the animal itself by virtue of the absence of the bull. The ontological significance of this does not erase the artist's presence from the artwork as it is observed by the viewer. The artwork testifies to the relationship that the female artist has to the art-making process and to the process that she has to facilitate in her art practice to productively apply a Deleuzian/Guattarian philosophical position to her practice.

An artwork can communicate both to a viewer and to the artist concerned the process of *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* in the physical presence of the artist, for instance in a performance or in an artwork where the artist is not physically present but the artwork testifies of his/her presence. The process of *becoming* is thus communicated through the presence of the artistic labour, and the hand of the artist that can be observed in the artwork as a means by which the artwork was made. This concept will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

The non-human animal in the *text(ile)*

The rhizome is... composed not of units but of movements of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overflows. (Deleuze and Guattari cited in Archer 2004: 164).

²² I refer here to the female artist as accepting that she is already in a process of *becoming woman* and that her *becoming animal* is thus the next process of *becoming*.

The rhizome, as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, has only a middle from which this ever-growing organism is expanding. They also refer to it as a non-static “thing” that can be the product of a “laborious process located in a recognisable striated space-time” (Archer 2004: 164). But what does it imply when the rhizome can be seen as a “thing” that is used to trace one’s becoming within art practice, and the method of mapping becomes a form of artistic labour within art practice? Then one would have to argue that the art practice is not fixed within a recognizable space and timeframe. This is simple to define, as I am referring to a continuous action when I refer to art practice. A method of making maps and tracing one’s movement through one’s practice would be possible, and one could accept that this continuous action would contain all the elements implicated in the process when an artist is making art.

Archer refers to rhizomes as being boundless, borderless, and deterritorialized flows of varied degrees and intensities (Archer 2004: 164). She states that we are always and everywhere able of “becoming-rhizomatic” and that “becoming-rhizomatic”²³ implies “losing our bearings and coming undone”, and realizing that we are a *body without organs* (Archer 2004: 164). She refers to this as stripping ourselves of any sense of self, origin, or organization (Archer 2004: 164).

To reassure one (for fear of losing oneself), Archer states that it is necessary to make maps that will “keep us recognisable should we ever need to remember “ourselves” after becoming part of “the multitude”.” (Archer 2004: 164). She goes on further to explain that it may seem odd to rely on maps if one wishes to lose oneself, but that these maps are not like the maps we know in contemporary visual culture; they are not about movement, these “maps *are* movement” (Archer 2004: 164, emphasis added). These maps have no coordinates, but are only “rife with folds” (Archer 2004: 164).

This is how Archer relates the text to the textile (clothing). She states that “in reading the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, we can start to see just how exciting the text(ile) can be – as it can provide a mode of seeing and understanding the rhizomatic plays of power that traverse us through all the movements of our everyday lives” (Archer 2004: 165). She refers

²³ I will only refer to *becoming rhizomatic* and *Body without Organs* in this stage of the thesis, for discussing it in too much depth will exceed the intended aim of the research question. The reason for referring to it will be concluded in this chapter and no reference will be made further in the text to the *becoming rhizomatic* and BwO.

to the reading of textiles that “envelop our bodies, homes, workplaces, third spaces” as text(ile)s that allow us critically to contemplate the bounded material systems that “literally architect our lives and that, like the highly symbolic text, try and harness rhizomatic, fluctuating power for the sake of grounding and fuelling whatever mode of hegemony they embody” (Archer 2004:165).

Archer explains that, rather than seeing the textile in terms of “infinite folds” that are traced by its movement, it is inclined to be understood in the unlimited conditions of the physical organisms or assemblages it is used to envelop. In this regard she refers to textiles as “surrogate skins” (Archer 2004: 166). ‘Surrogate skins’ are textiles that are “entrusted with the task of bolstering the determinant spatial terms of the symbolically constructed surfaces that they drape”, Archer explains (2004: 166). Through this definition of the textile as a “surrogate skin”, the cowhide sculptures of Mntambo become significant in their animal origins (and forms) that, I argue, construct a symbolic female body of the artist.



Figure 4: Nandipha Mntambo. *Meditations on Solitude* (2009). Cowhide, resin, polyester mesh, waxed cord. 156 x 120 x 60cm. Gordon Schachat Collection, Johannesburg.



Figure 5: Nandipha Mntambo. *Retrado de um lutador*. (2011). Cowhide, resin, polyester mesh, waxed cord. 176 x 146 x 80cm. Jochen Zeitz Collection.



Figure 6: Nandipha Mntambo. *The Spaces In-between* (2010). Cowhide, resin, polyester mesh. 150 x 160 x 50cm. Private Collection, Johannesburg.

What does the mapping of one's *becoming* imply when the animal is present in this action of making art? Do these folds of cowhide speak of a rhizomatic mapping? The answer to both of these questions, in my opinion, is yes; for it is used only as a material. As an ontologically significant material that speaks or can be interpreted as more than what the artist has intended (it embodies such an immediate animal presence in the artwork), it reveals however that there is a part of the artist's *becoming* that gets left behind with the artwork, which is now on its own. It suggests that the artist has freed herself from the process in this particular direction or dimension. The artist's *becoming* process may be understood as veined (like a rhizome root of a plant) such that the process does not stop at the product as artwork

but that it still grows and evolves. I argue here that it is especially the animal presence in the artwork that makes this conceptualizing of the process possible. Therefore it becomes evident that this metaphor for a *becoming* process can be used successfully, and I will discuss it further in Chapter 3. I point to the rhizomatic phenomena in my art practice through the method of tatting, and my hands making the lace using this method becomes an imperative mediation in the process of *becoming*.

The non-human animal and the artist

In his book *The Postmodern Animal* (2000) Steve Baker states that Deleuze and Guattari are among the most serious theorists on the question of the animal during the last few decades. He refers to their statement that “anyone who likes cats or dogs is a fool”, in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), as encapsulating something close to the orthodox position for post-modern artists and philosophers of the question of the animal (Baker 2000:166).

The post-modern artist and philosopher is theorized as fearless in many respects as Nietzsche defined “we fearless ones”, but the post-modern artist cannot come to terms with its fear of pets in a post-modern practice. Baker explains that this is because of its inability to leave animals alone, and the fact that this engagement with the animal is always a matter of bringing it into meaning. (Baker 2000:166). He says that this opposes “the way in which post-modernism tends to see itself; as a scourge of anthropomorphism, anthropocentrism and all other tendencies to reduce differences to sameness, the impure to the pure, the inhuman to the human and the strange to the meaningful” (Baker 2000:166). Thus where a characteristically post-modern dissolution of categories and boundaries may have been expected, the post-modern orthodoxy on the subject of the non-human animal turns out to follow conventional positions, as defined by the anthropologists Edmund Leach and John Berger, and these conventional categories and boundaries remain firmly in place (Baker 2000:166).

Berger argues in his essay ‘Why we look at animals?’(1977) that “the first metaphor was the animal” and that “the first symbol were animals” (Baker 2000:166). Berger firmly states that “No animal confirms man, either positively or negatively”, but here Baker argues that this view complicates this proper relation:

The practices of keeping animals regardless of their usefulness, the keeping, exactly, of *pets*... is a modern innovation, and, on the social

scale on which it exists today, is unique. It is part of that universal but personal withdrawal into the private small family unit... which is a distinguishing feature of consumer societies. (Baker 2000:167).

Baker defines the pet as a creature of their owner's way of life, as Berger refers to the animal as pet as completing its owner; the human, and that this completion offers responses to aspects of the owner's character which would have remained unconfirmed (Baker 2000:167-168). When placed alongside Berger's assertion that "no animal confirms man", it is clear that Berger does not think of the pet as a "proper animal" (Baker 2000:167-168). Baker refers to René Girard, who describes the position of the domesticated animal as its assertion of an ambiguous status. Girard states that:

"domestication had its origin not in economic motives but in the desire for a ready supply of sacrificial victims for religious purposes. Leading 'a quasi-human existence', the animals chosen for sacrifice were ideally positioned to mediate 'between the community and the sacred, between the inside and the outside'. The length of time initially taken to domesticate a particular species, and the unpredictable success or failure of that process, would have mattered little. All that was necessary was that the victim 'lives among members of the community' and be integrated into certain of their customs and characteristic habits." (Girard in Baker 2000:168).

Here a parallel can be drawn between the domesticated animal and the female artist.²⁴ The domesticated animal, as one leading 'a quasi-human existence', and as an animal chosen for sacrifice, was ideally positioned to mediate 'between the community and the sacred, between the inside and the outside'. The artist also mediates between a community, culture and society and the unspoken²⁵ sacred, which is situated between the inside and the outside of this community, culture and society. This element will be further discussed in Chapter Four in relation to my own practice. Suffice it to say here that in this relation of the artist mediating between the community, culture and society and the sacred, the artist becomes a *liminalien*.

The idea concerning the tame domesticated animal, especially the pet, that the animal is an abnormal creature and thus a living betrayal of its proper animal potential or trajectory, is

²⁴ See Introduction and Chapter 1.

²⁵ Here one can think of the controversy that was engendered by Brett Murray's *The Spear* (2012).

the one idea that has steadfastly held its position. Baker refers to this as Deleuze and Guattari's view and notes that they declare that there are 'three kinds of animals':

"those they admire, which operate at the greatest distance from humans, in 'pack modes' ... what they call 'demonic animals'. The wolf is their most frequent example. The second kind they call 'classification' or 'state animals', those whose fixed symbolic meanings serve exclusively human interest. And then there is the most contemptible kind: 'individuated animals, family pets, sentimental, Oedipal animals each with its own petty history, "my" cat, "my" dog. These animals invite us to regress, draw us into a narcissistic contemplation' " (Baker 2000:168).

The horse, the bull, Nguni cattle and the 'boer' goat - the animals that are present and discussed in the various artworks and analogies in this dissertation, all fall into Deleuze and Guattari's second kind of animal: "'classification' or 'state animals', those whose fixed symbolic meanings serve exclusively human interest" (Baker 2000:168).

In my own practice I employ the 'boer' (farming) goat as an analogy for the industrialization of farming and as an extreme example of domestication. I also use it for the 'boer' goat's relation to the *scape goat*, and *Judas goat*.²⁶ The domesticated animal as livestock also enables the mimetic process of *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal*. The use of this non-human animal as subject matter speaks of confronting the phallogentric economy that opens the possibility for creating new horizons as Irigaray has defined in the process of *becoming*. The non-human animal material also confronts the human being in its ontological significance and because of the power it has to evoke memory and provoke histories in special ways that makes it stand out in terms of choice of material to make art with or to use in the art making process.

²⁶ The butchering industry reveals an uncanny reality of the Judas goat; a tamed goat that is kept at an abattoir, to lead the livestock to be slaughtered without itself being harmed, for the purpose of efficiency and meat quality. The goat's function is to replace human contact with the livestock while alive, for the human presence will cause the livestock to experience stress and this will affect the quality of the meat. The Judas goat as concept reveals various elements in the interaction between humans and animals but more so the element of being a direct replacement of human contact with that what needed to be done. The Judas goat as method causes the goat, as animal, to be used as a tool. One can thus argue that the goat becomes a metaphor for technology as it is an extension of the human hand.

PART TWO

This part of the dissertation comprises Chapter Three and Four, which will refer back to Chapter One and Chapter Two, respectively.

In Chapter Three, I argue for the possibility of the process of labour within art practice to mediate a process of *becoming* through using female craft of tatting. This form of creative labour integrates the philosophy of *becoming* with the art making process. This chapter will reflect on Chapter One, for the sake of perceiving the process of artistic labour within my art practice as a morphology that I have implemented into my own *feminine becoming*.

Employing tatting (feminine craft, artistic labour) in the context of contemporary art-making, can result in the hand as tool or vehicle mediating a process of *becoming* in the fine art practice. This is revealed through an investigation of labour and the position of the artist within this process. Tatting as a viable method of exposing the artist's hand as vessel for the mediation of a *becoming* process will be introduced by a brief historical overview of tatting as craft.

In my own practice I employ tatting as a form of textile and therefore a 'surrogate skin'. I want to illustrate that the artist, in a process of *becoming*, employs a practical methodology by using feminine craft to evaluate or territorialize her *becoming* in her culture and context. Visual art practice in post-apartheid South Africa, even almost 20 years after the first democratic election, still demands – and performs – a critique of post-colonial theory. For the female artist the realization of her position as artist in this context is ever distinguishing her subjectivity through her art-making process. Employing tatting as a feminine craft to make art is thus an analogy of reading the *becoming* philosophy within my own *becoming* in a post-apartheid context as young, white, female artist, and it functions as a physical metaphor in my art-making methodology.

Through investigating the *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* process it can be argued that the artist's hand functions as two possible mediations of the *becoming* process; on the one hand it challenges the phallogentric patriarchal division of labour, and on the other hand it facilitates a process to bring the artist into a *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal*.

The hand as mediation in the process of making art and the process of *becoming* is significant to Deleuze and Guattari's view of the art practice as being valuable for its potential to stimulate *becoming(s)*.

Chapter Four is devoted solely to my practical work, showing how the animal functions within my art practice. This chapter can be read as mirroring Chapter Two, in terms of how I perceive the process and significance of artistic labour within my art practice, and the work of the hand as mediating my *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* within this process. I illustrate this discussion with photographs of work in progress, myself in the studio (in the Visual Arts department at Stellenbosch University) and various visual experiments that led to the conceptualization of the artworks that will be exhibited for examination in October 2012. This serves to visually map my process and movements of my work and myself, between the traditionally private workspace of the studio and the more public gallery environment, and social spaces in-between. In so doing, I point to the increasingly liminal status of both these spaces and myself, and the continuous and reciprocal process of *becoming* that is engendered between myself and my work.

CHAPTER THREE

Jorunn Veiteberg states that craft has traditionally been produced for the use and enjoyment of the private and seemingly domestic space (Veiteberg 2005: n.p.) and as such, it is a widely accepted preconception that craft belongs in the domestic realm rather than in the aesthetically and intellectually ambitious realm of fine art.

A quick survey of current contemporary art practice reveals that artists as diverse as Pierre Fouché, Lerato Shadi, Hendrik Stroebel and Nicholas Hlobo have adopted and adapted various feminine craft skills to their respective practices, specifically those associated with needlework or weaving methods. While these skills speak to particular aesthetic interests, they undoubtedly signify more complex concerns such as a critical regard of questions of gender and subjectivity; DIY/anti-industrialization and a labour that is intense, personal and intimate. What happens then when this 'private' space becomes the space of art practice, or the space where the artist's *becoming* is partly facilitated through the labouring activity of producing artworks by the use of a feminine craft?

Craft: the labour or work of the hand in practice

Before I consider the contemporary implications of adopting traditional skills, it will be necessary to introduce the craft of tatting that I employ. In her book *Tatting: Technique & History* (1962), Elgiva Nicholls refers to the dictionary definition of the craft of tatting as "a kind of knotted work, used for trimmings and a kind of lace" (Nicholls 1962:7). The characteristics of lace are that of a combination of open spaces and compact texture, of transparent and opaque patterns, consisting of light and more dense pieces of work. Tatting, though, as Nicholls explains, does not conform to this essential definition of lace. She explains that it was once used as a representation of the finest lace that was worn at court by those who aspired to fashionability, and could be termed the "poor man's lace" (*Figure 7*) (Nicholls 1962:7). Other lace was seen as delicate and is still very time-consuming to make, but tatted lace became famous for its appearance, as it could imitate other, more expensive laces (Nicholls 1962:7).

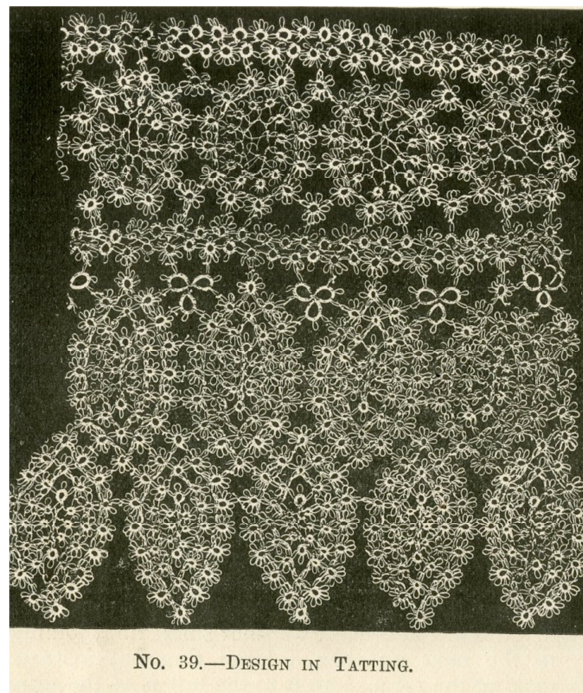


Figure 7: Tatted design, showing tatting's resemblance to lace.

In 1851 at the Great International Exhibition took place in Hyde Park, London, Mlle Riego de la Branchardière, widely accepted as the 'mother' of tatting, received four awards for the representation or imitation of finer laces, including the Prize Medal for "the Skill displayed in the imitation of old Spanish and other costly laces" (Nicholls 1962:7).²⁷ It becomes more clear in Chapter Four that the imitative or mimetic qualities of tatting speak to performance as action and process in art practice.

Making finer and more costly lace requires numerous tools, such as a pillow, pins, a number of bobbins, needles and thread, a net foundation, and diverse other accessories, according to the kind of lace that is to be made (Nicholls 1962:7). Tatting, or shuttle lace, as it is also called, only employs the use of a thread-carrying tatting shuttle (*Figure 10*) which is pointed at both ends. The person tatting winds the thread onto the shuttle, then works stitches as knots over the fingers and onto the thread, which forms the centre of the knots (Rhodes 2008: <http://www.suite101.com> > ... > Sewing/Needlework > Tatting/Lacemaking). As Nicholls declared, "all that was needed for tatting was the hand...the stitch is formed over the fingers; the shuttle merely carries the thread in a convenient manner" (*Figure 11*) (*Figure 12*) (1962:7).

²⁷ Mlle Riego de la Branchardière was responsible for the development of tatting as craft in the nineteenth century. She wrote eleven books on tatting, and was appointed as the 'Artiste in needlework' to the princess of Wales, teaching the royal families of both England and Germany (Nicholls 1962:11).

Tatting is frequently confused with crochet, but the only commonality is that the piece of work is made from a single thread direct from the shuttle or the ball that carries the thread (*Figure 10*). When knitting, for example, the stitches are supported on the needles; when crocheting, every new stitch is hooked onto the previous stitch (Nicholls 1962:8). In tatting, though, each stitch is an “independent progression”. Nicholls refers to it as “out of the air”, and “relying neither on mechanical support nor upon previous stitches²⁸” (1962:8).

Tatting is a method of making knots that are carried on a single thread (*Figure 8 nr.2*). I was taught to refer to this thread as the ‘soul’ of the tatted pattern. The knots made around the soul can move on it, and when making a ring of these knots the soul is pulled to force the knots closer to each other and to close off the ring (*Figure 9*). Nicholls refers to this as a distinct characteristic of tatting as a form of making lace. This is also the reason why tatted lace is stronger in its structure than other kinds of lace (1962:8).

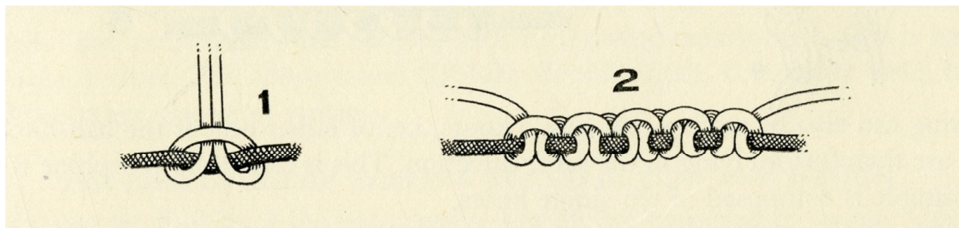


Figure 8: Illustration of the tatted knot 1. Illustration of the tatted knots on a single thread in a row 2.

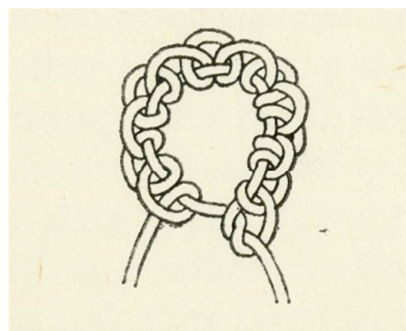


Figure 9: Tatting knots in a circle using only one tating shuttle.

²⁸ It is important to stress that the tatting knot has been referred to as a stitch. But in its appearance as knot it is important to see that there is no needle that is penetrating any surface like in the making of other laces with stitches. The making of the tatting knot is also being done by making two knots that mirror one another, visible in the illustration; (*Figure 8. nr.1*). Tatting books or patterns of tatting refer to the tatted knot as double stitch.

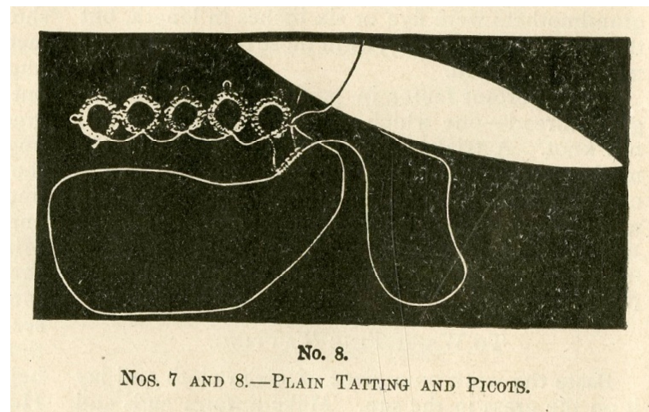


Figure 10: Tatting shuttle in the process of completing a knot in a circle pattern No. 8.

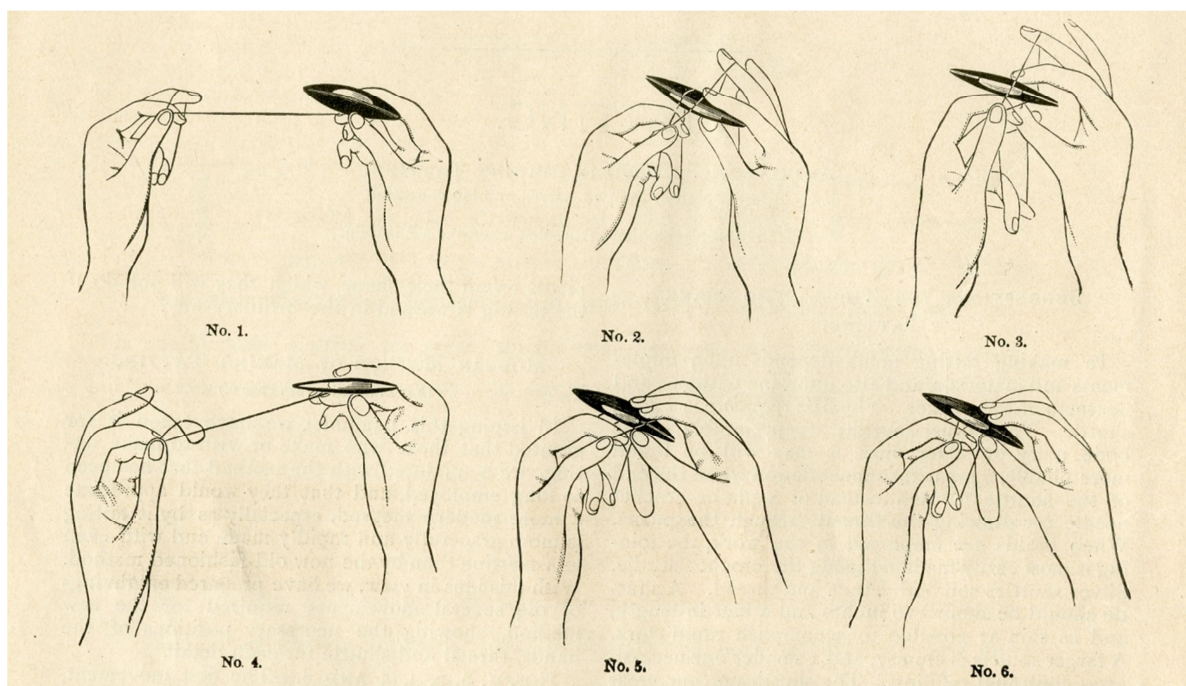


Figure 11: Movements of the hands when making a tatted knot using one shuttle.

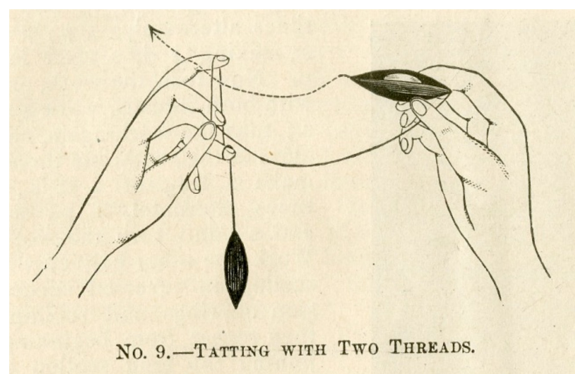


Figure 12: Illustration showing the hands tatting with two shuttles and thus two threads, thus making knots in a row illustrated in Figure 8.

The seventeenth century has been referred to as a period in which tatting as craft reached a peak in popularity and development, as is evident by the remains of the distinctive shuttles of this particular period (Nicholls 1962:9). Tatting was regarded as a royal accomplishment in both England and France in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In 1707 Sir Charles Sedley published a short poem called “*The royal Knotter*”, referring to Queen Mary of Romania, who ruled with her husband William III over England and Scotland from 1689 to 1702:

“... For here’s a Queen now thanks to God!
Who when she rides in a coach abroad
Is always knotting threads.”
(Nicholls 1962:9).

This poem, the first recorded reference to tatting in England, refers to the Queen’s friend Lady Hoare describing tatting as ‘the Queen’s homely habits’ (Nicholls 1962:9).

Tatting has been recorded as a “favourite pastime of the Ladies at Court who also used their shuttles as fashion accessories. For it was a requirement of the fashionable society of the time that a proper Lady should never be seen sitting empty-handed and idle. She either had to use a fan or her tatting shuttle to “show off” her hands and to make her appear “composed and graceful as well as industrious” (Jones, R s.a.).

These shuttles as fashion accessories were carried in little tatting bags, which were also ornately decorated and bejewelled. The tatting bags were carried everywhere from society parties and to the theatre. It was unfashionable for a lady to be seen without her tatting bag and shuttles. Artists painting the portraits of wealthy ladies were expected to show their hands as they were tatting, accompanied by their tatting bags. (Jones, R s.a.). In 1759 Sir Joshua Reynolds painted the Countess of Albermarle with her tatting shuttle in her hand (*Figure 13*). It was said that the employment of the tatting shuttle shows off the worker’s hands more beautifully and gracefully than any other instrument or tool of needlework. (Nicholls 1962:9).



Figure 13: Sir Joshua Reynolds. *Countess of Albermarle* (1759) oil on canvas. 126.5 × 101 cm

Another important figure in the evolution of tatting was George Elliot who, in her book *Scenes from Clerical life*, published in 1858, wrote about the popularity of the craft. It was seen as a fashionable hobby for the proper lady, “that delightful and feminine occupation”; and it was regarded as a craft that could be seen to, as Elliot put it, “guarantee domestic comfort, to be sought for in a prospective bride” (Nicholls 1962:12).

“A suitor of earlier days had to be satisfied if his bride-to-be could only produce a piece of tatting, on which domestic bliss rested more precariously. One hopes that this author’s large public were not unduly influenced by this point of view. In those days there was little else in the way of creative work permitted to women of leisure; the fact that their energy was misdirected was scarcely their fault” (Nicholls 1962:12).

It is important to stress the feminine implications of the tatting craft. Tatting was regarded capable of showing what was expected of the woman – ‘the proper Lady’ – at a time when her abilities were demarcated by, indeed confined to, domestic space. I exploit this historically demarcated role of the hand to function within my art practice, and as mediation of a *becoming*.

The history of tatting as a craft practiced and developed by royalty is clearly delineated in Nicholls’ precise and comprehensive analysis of the craft over two centuries, but the origin of tatting still remains speculative. Tatting must have existed in a much more primitive

form prior to its adoption by royalty and the socially aspirational (Nicholls 1962:17). The tatting 'stitch', as it is referred to in the craft domain, is a misnomer, since stitches are made with a needle and the tatting stitch is in fact a knot. Nicholls states that the tatting knot was developed from the early art of knotting, and so probably derives from *Macrame*,²⁹ which is known as the oldest form of lace. In its early development from *Macrame*, tatting was simply called knotting. The form of knotting with a thread-carrying shuttle came from Italy in the sixteenth century, where the craft was developed into a method employed in the making of mats and a specialised form of lace, yet Nicholls points out that this documented form of lace was still not true tatting as it only consisted of one knot. If knotting was tatting's ancestor, however, then the craft of Macrame might as well claim the ancestry of tatting as we have come to know it today. (Nicholls 1962:17).

The tatting knot has also had a long-established practical application in the art of seamanship. Two centuries ago, fishermen utilized large shuttles to weave heavy cord into fishing nets, and about a century ago sailors knew a variety of tatting knots to use on the sailing ships (Kelly s.a.: <http://www.victoriana.com/Embroidery/tatting.htm>) Nicholls speculates that Italian sailors called the skill of making this particular knot 'occhi', which is also the Italian term for tatting. The early name for a small tatted ring is 'oeillet', which in the English means 'eyelet', also a nautical term for a particular knot.

As evidence for this hypothesis, Nicholls points to the fact that the only material the sailor needed was a coil of rope and that he was familiar with the use of a shuttle for it was a tool used in the construction of fishing nets and hammocks (Nicholls 1962:17). Nicholls stresses the nautical origins of the craft by stating that that tatting is presumed to have been "born and brought up at sea" (Nicholls 1962:18), and suggests that this may also account for how this skill became widely disseminated all over the world, as the "conditions of movement from one country to another was ideal" by sea (Nicholls 1962:18).³⁰ This reasonably accounts for documentation of tatting in various countries like England, Germany, France, Italy, Australia and the USA, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century (Nicholls 1962:16).

²⁹ The word *Macrame* is derived from the word 'Maqrana', which is Arabic for 'fringe'(Nicholls 1962:9). Evidence of such lace was found in Upper Egypt, in tomb wrappings that were adorned with twisted threads and knotted fringes (Nicholls 1962:17).

³⁰ She reasons that lace-makers were "regional and guarded jealously the mysteries of their craft: sailors moved everywhere and could spread the discovery without damaging an established means of livelihood" (Nicholls 1962:9).

During my own investigation I read Anglo-Boer war documentation clearly showing that Emily Hobhouse taught Afrikaans women in the English concentration camps how to make tatted lace. I was personally taught the craft in 2010 by an Austrian exchange student to the Visual Art Department (University Stellenbosch), Barbra Imboeck. Since 2011, I have taught tatting to various enthusiasts interested to learn how to make their own lace, because of the beauty of the intricate and fine patterns that one can make using only a thread and a shuttle or two. Like other handcrafts, the work of tatting can be personal and meditative, or intensely socially engaging.

Pathologies of Labour in visual art practice

The labour in art practice necessitates a broader discussion on labour and work, for which I refer to Neil Maycroft's article 'Labour, work and play: action in fine art practice' (2005). Published in the book *The Labour of Art* (2005), Maycroft draws on the ideas of Daniel Willis concerning the nature of the difference in productive and unproductive forms of activities being labelled as 'labour' and as 'work'. This demarcation of such activities is applied as a basis for questioning various forms of creative practices. A particular characteristic of both labour and work is the objective and subjective utilization of time. This places a question mark over the status of the practitioner – the artist – who makes 'works' of art by employing intense labouring productive action in the art practice for his/her particular organization of time. (Maycroft 2005:2).

This leads to the conception that the artist's hand as a tool in the art practice faces another challenge: the utilization and organization of time. Willis refers to Hannah Arendt who made the observation that labour 'does not designate a finished object, product or durable object'. The focus in labour is more on the activities that make up the process of producing something, rather than on a finished absolute object. (Maycroft 2005:2). My understanding of the difference between labour and work is that labour equals unproductive activity, and work equals productive activity.

The utilization of a feminine craft gains added significance here with respect to my research problem, namely challenges faced by the hand. Is the hand used in the process of making art thus seen as labour, or is the hand being used to make a finished artwork as a product of work?

In these questions the signifying status of the artist's hand is imperative to the action of labour and of work. The artist's hand is engaged in a female craft in the artistic labour of making art, which enables it to function as mediator in a process of *becoming* for the artist. Employed in making an artwork, this same hand becomes challenged when the practice of art-making is considered a space of the artist's *becoming*.

An artwork produced by such a process raises the question of whether it is a product of labour or work. In the case of the hand being engaged in a female craft to make an artwork, the distinction between labour and work in the context of art practice becomes even more questionable. For craft is described in Glenn Adamson's book *Thinking through Craft* (2007), 'as being more usefully conceived as a process' (Adamson 2007:3). Thus the distinction or identification of an artwork that is produced by utilizing a female craft that illustrates Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *becoming* appears to embody various contradictions, as Willis (in Maycroft) suggests:

"As opposed to the labourer, the human fabricator (*homo faber*) works not in response to necessity, but in order to construct a 'world'. In other words, the activity of work has not just a practical goal, but also an imaginative one. Beyond their immediate utility, human artefacts help to organize and structure our existence". (Willis 1999: 241) (cited in Maycroft 2005:3).

For Hannah Arendt, these artefacts demanded a world that is permanent, stable and durable. But for Willis it is the durability and stability of the imaginary world that is produced by its presence that is significant. (Maycroft 2005:3). Thus the activity of 'work' conceives an imaginary world that is distinct and described by these absolute objects as a product of the actual activity of 'work'.

When one considers the labour of craft (in this specific case the craft of tatting) that I am employing in my art practice, it becomes clear that it can be interpreted as a metaphor for actively engaging the text of *becoming*. For the activity of making tatted lace can be seen as a process of mapping one's *becoming*. The movement of the shuttle over and under the thread and then again under and over (*Figure 11*), simulates the movement of the bull fight and reading the text as Archer conceptualized it in her article discussed in Chapter 2. In addition, the appearance of the lace has characteristics simulating that of a rhizomatic

structure (*Figure 15*) (*Figure 16*) (*Figure 18*). When I consider the movement of my hands and the process of making tatted lace that allows me to consider and contemplate the theory that I read during investigating *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* texts and finding a way to make it easier for me to understand, it reaffirms the nature of such a rhizomatic structure. For it allows for the process of thinking and considering while the hands are moving and tating, making little knots and little tatted rings, thus it can be seen as the hands are making a physical map of the thoughts being contemplated.

As Adamson stated, the labour of tating, in itself a distinguished craft, is an ongoing process. Arendt, Willis and Maycroft however, consider such an ongoing process as labour, a process that does not produce an absolute object. In this regard the female craft of tating and the hand as tool or a technology that facilitates the process of making lace, the hand is used in a process where it mediates the artist's *becoming*. The employment of the hand in this process of *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* reaffirms the process of *becoming* more than what an artwork as product can facilitate or illustrate.

The mimetic properties of tating to this process are significant in theorizing of the practical research approach on which my argument is based. In his book *The Intangibilities of Form; Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade* (2007), John Roberts refers to Immanuel Kant's perspective on mimesis that can be divided into two modes; *nachahmen*, meaning a mere form of reproduction, and *nachfolgen* which means transformation and creativity (Roberts 2007:16). This echoes Robinson's (2006:18) observation that when we look at the practices of contemporary female artists, we can observe two differing but also related sets of mimetic practice. The first set shows how the female artist has learned to look, to select, to craft, to compose, and thus how the artist has grown in seeking out a language that she has made her own. The second set shows her 'knowing interrogation' and 'critique' of practices prior to her own, her exposure to different elements within those prior practices, and the ways in which she has applied and commented on these various practices.

Robinson points out that these two sets of mimetic praxes raise questions about visual culture in general. The methods that artists use, or the nature of the mimetic practice, she says, varies in form from mimicry and mime to masquerade and the excessive mimeticism of hysteria (Robinson 2006:18-19). She further distinguishes between two forms of mimesis, viz. productive and non-productive mimesis. Productive mimesis is a process that produces new meanings and, as Irigaray refers to it, 'the possibility of a woman's writing' (Robinson

2006:26). Here in the productive realm the female artist is in a position to seek even further to find a method or form of expression within the art practice. The upshot of this process are then defined to be transformational and creative.

Referring back to Maycroft's definitions, can we call this product or process 'labour' or 'work'?

Non-productive mimesis, the second form of mimesis as defined by Robinson, is confined in the appearance and investigation of truth, a repetition and replication maintenance of prior practices (Robinson 2006:27). Thus I can refer to the theoretical methodologies and hermeneutic processes I apply to the method of looking at, analysing and interpreting of artworks, articles, and critical writings on the *becoming* philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, as non-productive mimesis.

This process is also facilitated within my art practice, in my studio and in the space where I experiment with different media of making art. These experimental objects, or rather samples, that the process of non-productive mimesis delivers cannot be seen as artworks, but they are vital sample products in the art-making process. Therefore these samples almost have greater significance to me and my practice than the completed artwork exhibited in a gallery. The end product, this artwork that is exhibited, is a testament to a process that has conceived and delivered it as an artwork, with all its attendant signifying factors that include, but are not limited to, value, time, integrity and so on.

The fact that craft is defined as a process makes it a significant methodology to mediate between theory and art practice. Craft as a process bestows an authority on the artist's hand. It is accepted as a vital tool in my art practice and in the process of conceptualizing the reciprocal relationship of theory to my practice. Understood in this way, the hand mediates the female artist's *becoming* by transcending the perceived role of the artist's hand to that of a critical vessel that carries the potential to physically map the integration of theory and art practice from its traditionally perceived role of being only considered in the studio.

These conditions for a *becoming* can further be understood as an integral part of an individual (personal) process of a female artist who is consistently creatively engaged and as such, is in the process of producing an oeuvre of artworks. Each artwork can be understood to be in itself an object, but not an absolute object, for each work follows on to the next and

refers, even if it is unconscious and unobserved by the artist, back to prior processes and experiments that produced these artworks. Throughout the artist's oeuvre each work can thus be seen as a product of a proceeding and continuing process of her *becoming*.

The artworks in the artist's oeuvre contribute to the internal imaginative world that her 'work' produces, but they also contribute to the external world of her art practice and to visual culture. This internal world can be understood to refer to the artist's personal and private space, the studio where she is making art and her personal social environment. When she moves from one space to another the process of *becoming* does not stop, it only deviates and changes. As she is working in the studio, her *becoming* is driven or worked into a process external to herself and her continuous alertness of this art-making and *becoming* that is happening within herself as artist. In the studio the outlet is thus the physical process and activity of work and labour.

Considering other characteristics of productive activity, Maycroft refers to Willis's argument that repetitive and rhythmic motions are more likely to be an indicator of labour than of work, for these repetitive rhythmic actions are characteristic of machines and the accommodation of people to machine production (Maycroft 2005:3). Tatting results in a repetitive motion, and one can thus make a parallel association to a mechanical movement and to a machine. When tatting, your hands move in repetitive actions of making the knots and building these knots up to form a pattern. Yet tatting as a craft has not yet been reduced to the mechanics of mass production. For the action of the hands are simple but so significant that it cannot be mechanized, as it has been done in other forms of needlework and crafts like sewing, weaving, knitting, crochet, embroidery and even other forms of lace making.

Returning to the ideas of Arendt, Willis goes further to consider other characteristics of productive activities. He argues that repetitive rhythmic motions are possible indicators of labour because they are a characteristic of machines and a relation that is compliant of people to machine production. He identifies repetitive actions in work as well as in labour, as work usually persists of periods of labour, and conversely most labour contains elements of work (Maycroft 2005:3). He proposes a general structure of these activities and adds a third dynamic to these diverse formulations of labour and work, which he calls 'play'. These activities are characterized as follows:

1. Labour corresponds to unimaginative productive activity;
2. Work corresponds to imaginative productive activity; and
3. Play corresponds to a deliberate unproductive imaginative/physical activity.

Willis states that labour may be intensely productive in short fractures but it is a tedious activity and its lack of a sustainable production makes it less productive than work. (Maycroft 2005:3). Work can only be sustained for an extended period. In turn, play is unsustainable due to the lack of productivity, but one who applies play to a practice is freer than an individual who applies the concept of work, for work focuses on necessities (Maycroft 2005:5).

“The uniqueness of work lies in its ability to trope cleverly the necessity of production into an imaginative undertaking that creates a world”, as Willis would have it (Willis in Maycroft 2005:5), although work and play can both ‘make’ and ‘make up’ a world that can be either made or be the product of both a materially and imaginatively significant territory (Maycroft 2005:5). Labour can only make a world, thus as an unimaginative productive activity it cannot make a world up (Maycroft 2005:5). As Willis states, “... Labour can be measured solely in terms of its output and efficiency” (Willis in Maycroft 2005:5).

Artists, craftspeople and other artisans are situated in the realm of ‘work’ by both Arendt and Willis (Maycroft 2005:9). But what happens when the artwork as a product of work in the art practice reveals the labour of art practice?

Maycroft observes a cultural experimentation taking hold that may be a symptom of a general cultural dissatisfaction over the last decade, the particular aim of which is the transformation of labour into work and the defence of work against the pressures to transform it into labour (2005:9). Artists, Willis suggests, “are most likely to reject the usual compensations offered by an economic system that rewards labouring more than work, in favour of less measurable returns”. (Willis in Maycroft 2005:10). He goes on to make an interesting observation concerning the nature of artistic production and what is produced from this creative and productive activities:

We should also recognise that one of the attributes of art, one ‘blessing’ bestowed on the products of the artist’s work, is also the ability to create ‘worlds’. In this way the work of art mirrors the work on art that produces it. Each of them – the fulfilling productive

activity and the product with which we actively engage to find fulfilment - have the ability to create a world where time deviates from universal clock time. This kind of temporal disruption (which is similar to that of the festival) can therefore be utilized to identify the presence of art. Once we have recognized this fact, we can begin to employ it as a means of art criticism. (Willis in Maycroft 2005:10).

Here we can consider the matter of the subject of action in visual art practice. Willis provides us with a means of thinking about the products of artistic practice in relation to the type of action or activity that produced the product. (Maycroft 2005:10). In terms of referring to an artwork made by the artist using a craft such as tatting, we can consider it as an artwork that strives to recreate the activity of labour by which the product as artwork is created and the process also being a product in itself. Thus this artwork made by a form of women's craft is the result of work, and it is a product that both makes a world and makes up a world.

Maycroft also advises us not to accept that all work results in artworks as products, though it can produce a similar 'product' both materially (though not always) and imaginatively significant and durable. The artwork as an event or happening may leave no material evidence of the action of work but it can still be regarded as significant and imaginatively durable (Maycroft 2005:11). He further states that "labour-driven 'art' is not art at all, either in terms of process or product" (Maycroft 2005:11). He explains that if such resulting products of labour are artworks then the process by which it was produced cannot be labour; it is a facsimile of labour and, as he describes it, "work masquerading as labour" (Maycroft 2005:11). With this statement he raises the question of the effectiveness of drawing attention to the reality of labour as a process or to the products of labour (Maycroft 2005:11).

I object to this subordination of labour, as I have experienced it to be a worthy process in the art practice, and as a method of applying a process to both theoretical and practical research. When referring to the hand as a tool in the art-making process and as mediation of a *becoming*, the artist's hand as tool and vehicle becomes challenged in this disregarding of labour, as it is a productive and essential activity within art practice, both theoretical and practical.

Maycroft states that we can consider other interesting ideas relating to the argument that those who 'labour' to produce art are not really labouring but in fact are working. He

suggests that evidence for this argument may be found in the environment of the production of art. This refers to the artist producing art in a gallery and the appearance of this labouring in this space being accepted or seen as a part of a performance. This labouring that is witnessed is, according to Maycroft, a 'work' producing not labour, despite the artist's protestations, but rather a facsimile of labour (Maycroft 2005: 12).

Again time is introduced as a determining factor of the art-making process, as Maycroft refers to the organization of time as "art/work time" or "labour time" (2005: 12). He states that, if the artist controls the labouring time (or as he refers to it "knocking off" and "obeying the need to respond to cyclical biological necessity"), then we are witnessing the "time of work superimposed on a representation of the time of labour" (Maycroft 2005:12). He further observes that this labouring may be meaningful to the artist as there is a significant endpoint, as it is a conscious project, a "made up world in mind", and an "overall self-consciousness concerning the meaning of the activity and the exercise of fine judgements within the productive activity itself" (Maycroft 2005:12).

Maycroft also states that other compensations expected from labour are public interest, adoration and financial compensation. Keeping all of these elements in mind it would appeal to the acceptance that what the audience in the gallery context is witnessing is in fact considered as 'work' and the activity of the production of art rather than the labour and the production of commodities³¹. (Maycroft 2005:12). Such as a performance of labour masquerading as work in the gallery performed during our Midyear group review exhibition in 2012 (*Figure 14*).

³¹ He counters this statement by referring to what can be expected to be found as one steps into a workshop, or factory, of the artist as entrepreneur and witnessing paid employees, imposed schedules, linear clock-time, surveillance, serial production. We are enticed to call it labour and not work and therefore what that labour is producing is not art but a commodity masquerading as art (Maycroft 2005:12).



Figure 14: Photos taken during the performance; drawing while tatting by using the gloves; *Technologies of becoming* (2012), in the US Gallery during mid-year review group exhibitions.

When one considers the labour in the context of art practice as a process that is facilitated by the artist's hand as mediation of the artist's *becoming*, the body of work as oeuvre becomes a mapping of this *becoming* process. The artist's oeuvre as rhizomatic structure, is a mapping of the process of the artist's *becoming* through art practice. Each artwork carries the process of the artist's *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* further as this mapping is growing in directions and dimensions. The hand of the artist is thus the mediating element within the art practice. And the *becoming animal* of the artist becomes evident by the process of labour.

For the *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* to be observed within the visual art practice, one has to consider the oeuvre of the artist, and not expect one artwork to show what the *becoming woman* or *becoming animal* looks like. I explore this in more detailed in the next (and final) chapter, with a discussion of works and processes that have produced the body of creative work that accompanies this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

*already the knowing animals are aware that we are not really at home in
our interpreted world* (Rilke) (Broglia & Birrell 2011:4)

How does the presence of non-human animal material in the artwork relate to the artist's *becoming woman* and *becoming animal*? Does this animal presence in the artwork challenge the artistic labour of the hand in the art-making process?

For the purpose of this thesis, produced as an exegesis of my own art practice over the past three years, my interest in these questions pertains to the use of animal material and imagery in the art practices of the South African post-apartheid context. This context is also one that can be broadly defined as post-modern and as such, this demands an artistic labour that engages with philosophy in a self-reflexive and self-critical way. I have come to understand my practice as a material embodiment of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *becoming*, not only in terms of a practical application in the studio, but towards a critically conscious consideration of my own subject formation – my own *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* – within and against the superficial identity designators of 'young,' 'white,' 'Christian,' 'female,' 'South African' and 'artist'.

The non-human animal in art

Cox notes that, for Deleuze and Guattari, "a life lived to its fullest is a life that actualizes as many capacities and powers as possible, a life that makes the greatest number of connections to other things and alters itself in the process. (Cox 2006:23). *Becoming-animal*, as Deleuze and Guattari defines the concept, does not imply imitation of the animal. It is, as Cox explains it, "about animal capabilities and powers":

To become animal is to be drawn into a zone of action or passion that one can have in common with an animal. It is a matter of unlearning physical and emotional habits and learning to take on new ones such

that one enlarges the scope of one's relationships and responses to the world. (Cox 2006:23).

In their article 'Art and the Animal Revolution' (2011), Broglio and Birrell define revolution as "to be out of time" and "to be out of history", and thus out of human history and human time (2011:1). In a deconstructivist mode this revolution is 'de-centered'; it is described as an "Other time, the time of the Other" (2011:1). This revolution is thus already an event that is "out of joint" (2011); it is as a Deleuzian continuous moment of '*becoming*'. Broglio and Birrell further state that this revolution unveils inhuman politics that de-center our liberalist humanist values. They also emphasize that artists work between worlds (2011:2), and that this work "takes on meaning and function in our human world as part of culture", as the "function of art has been for culture", for telling stories about the culture itself, and for "taking measure of itself and its directions...Art then is a product of and for culture and one that points to foundational concerns regarding what it means to be human" (Broglio and Birrell 2011:2).

Art that involves the animal as subject (and material), Broglio and Birrell hold, functions as the medium artists utilize in order to "point" at and "cast bridges" across the "divides" to the "non-human" and animal worlds (Broglio & Birrell 2011:2), referring to the fact that art possesses a great perplexity that enables it to reach across space and time and to "invite" the animal into art with "hospitality". This "hospitality" means to let go of particular human values and characteristics that are valued as human, or for humans. The artwork thus becomes a medium that transcends stories of ourselves, our world and our culture to refer to an "earth" which Broglio and Birrell describes as larger than our own human world, a transcended world that defers reason, domination and control (Broglio & Birrell 2011:2).

Broglio and Birrell (2011:2) explain that art will address culture by turning away from culture, and thus gesturing to an "outside"; it will disrupt and change culture with its turning away from it (Broglio & Birrell 2011:2). Art that functions as a vehicle of transcendence suspends human values and therefore poses the risk of instability and unreason. Such a vehicle is thus not in the service of culture, and fits "awkwardly" as an object and in the gallery world (Broglio & Birrell 2011:2). But it will be in the service of a culture in *becoming*, a post-apartheid culture. Here one can consider Archer's reference to the textile as connecting the human and the animal (2004:163). It is thus within this realm that the animal material in my own artworks and those of Mntambo becomes significant. For it

is in the service of providing a stance or gesture to reflect on to the community, culture and society, as well as to actively respond it, and react against it. The use of animal material is also productive, for it is instantaneously interpreted as non-human, and seen as confronting the viewer at first glance as 'other'. It is an immediate aggravation to the viewer, and it signifies the commencement of a dialogue. When Broglio and Birrell discuss the role of the viewer in confronting animal art, specifically in relation to the animal gaze present in the artwork, they say that in this confrontation the "viewer is left within an equally dumbfounded position which echoes", Robert Walser's tale; "I have Nothing...What do you want from me, you good animal?" (Broglio & Birrell 2011:3).

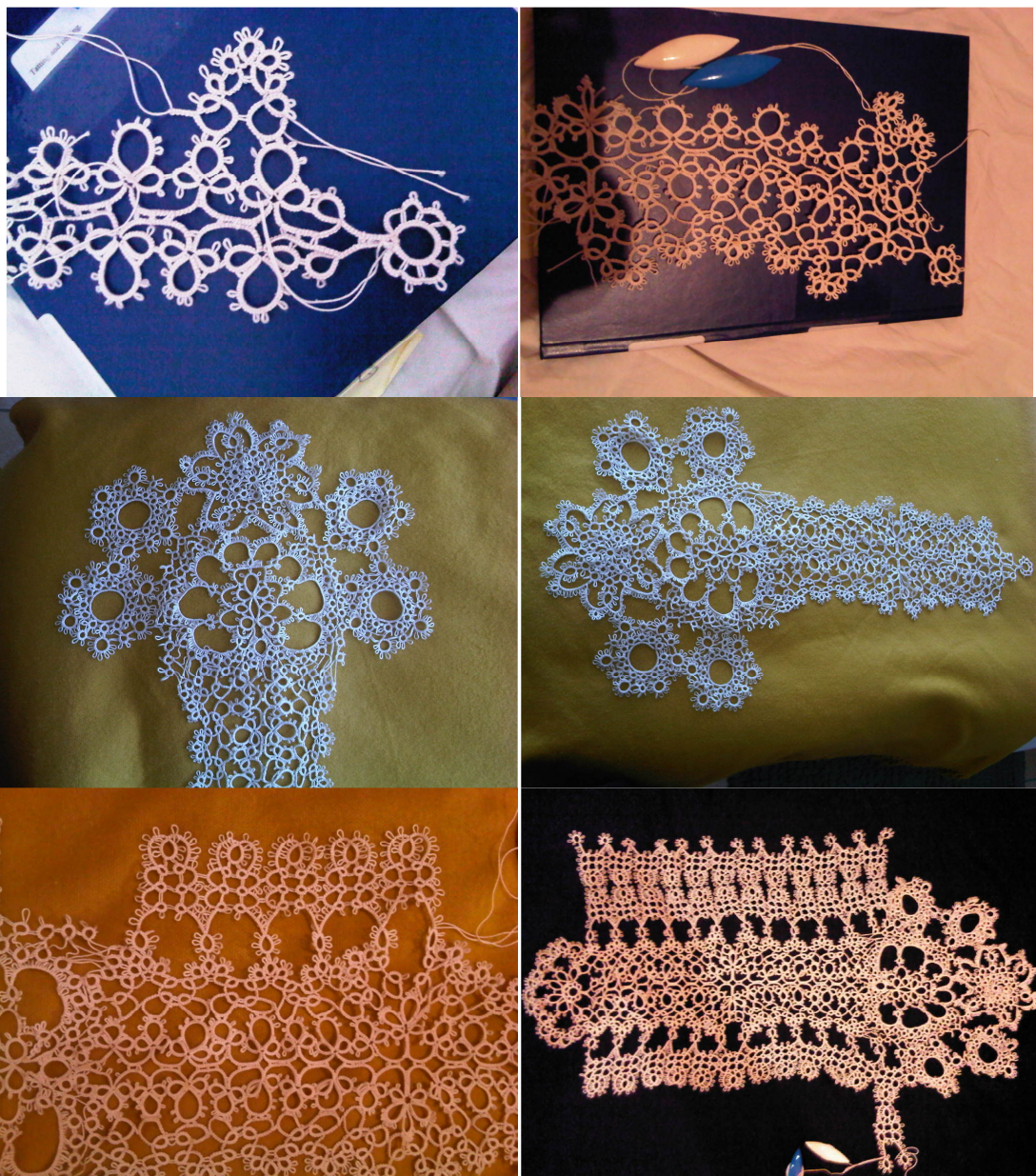
The presence of the animal in contemporary art, and in particular in South African visual art poses unique possibilities to interpret our *becoming* culture and multiple identity complexes in our post-apartheid context.

For this reason, the use of the *boer* goat as analogy for a post-apartheid art practice is to challenge the way we see the animal being used as subject matter in art. Referring to this animal holds deeper meaning for me, as the *boer* goat becomes more than just the non-human animal subject matter in my work. In my art practice I consider two elements at play, viz. the female craft of tating and the *boer* goat. I use tating for its bridging of my practical and theoretical research and the emphasis on using the hands in the process of making art and seeing this approach to the art practice as a methodology of *becoming woman* and *becoming animal*. I use the *boer* goat for its intrinsic symbolism and ambiguous meaning. I will discuss the use of the *boer* goat later in this chapter, as I consider it to be a reflection of the central process that I employ in my practice. But first, I will explain and discuss the use of the hand before developing the discussion of the use of the animal in my practice and its apparent proliferation in post-apartheid art practice.

The hand mediating *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal*

In the video performance; *Surrogate skin* (2012) (*Figure 20*) and *Limin-animal* (2012) (*Figure 22*) the tatted lace covering my face (*Mapping 1*) (2010-2012) (*Figure 15*) is an artwork I have been making since learning the craft of tating in 2010. As I have been making this tatted lace in the shape of a *boer* goat skin, and designing the patterns to aesthetically develop into an artwork, the act of making the lace and the movements of my hands led to

an understanding of how the artist can translate the use of the hand to a process of labour, that in turn can inform a theoretical understanding of art practice, and vice versa. In making the lace, I consider the way that my hands move to be similar to the movements of the bull in the bullfight, as visualized in Mntambo's performance *Ukungenisa* (2009) (*Figure 3*). I perceive the making of each knot as making a mark on a map that visualises my *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animals*. In this way each piece of tatted lace that is made is a further mapping of my *becoming*, and each piece of tatted lace is a piece of this map (*Figure 15*) (*Figure 16*) (*Figure 18*).



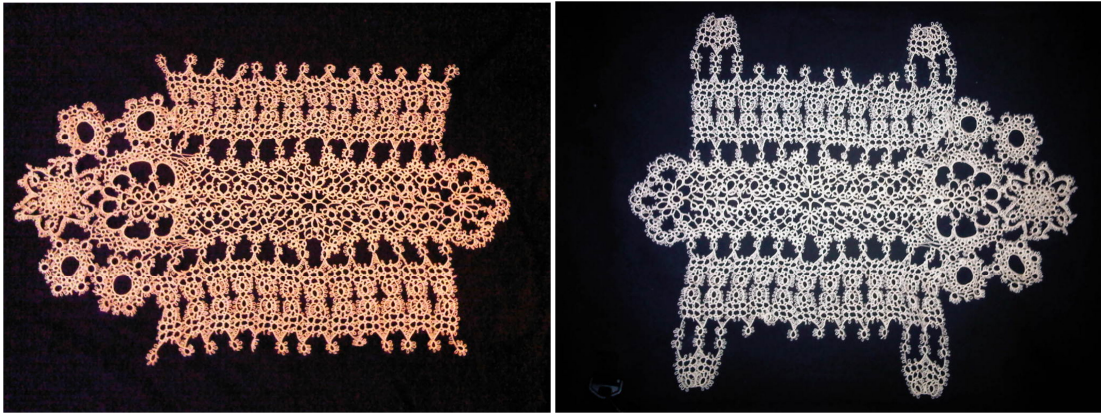
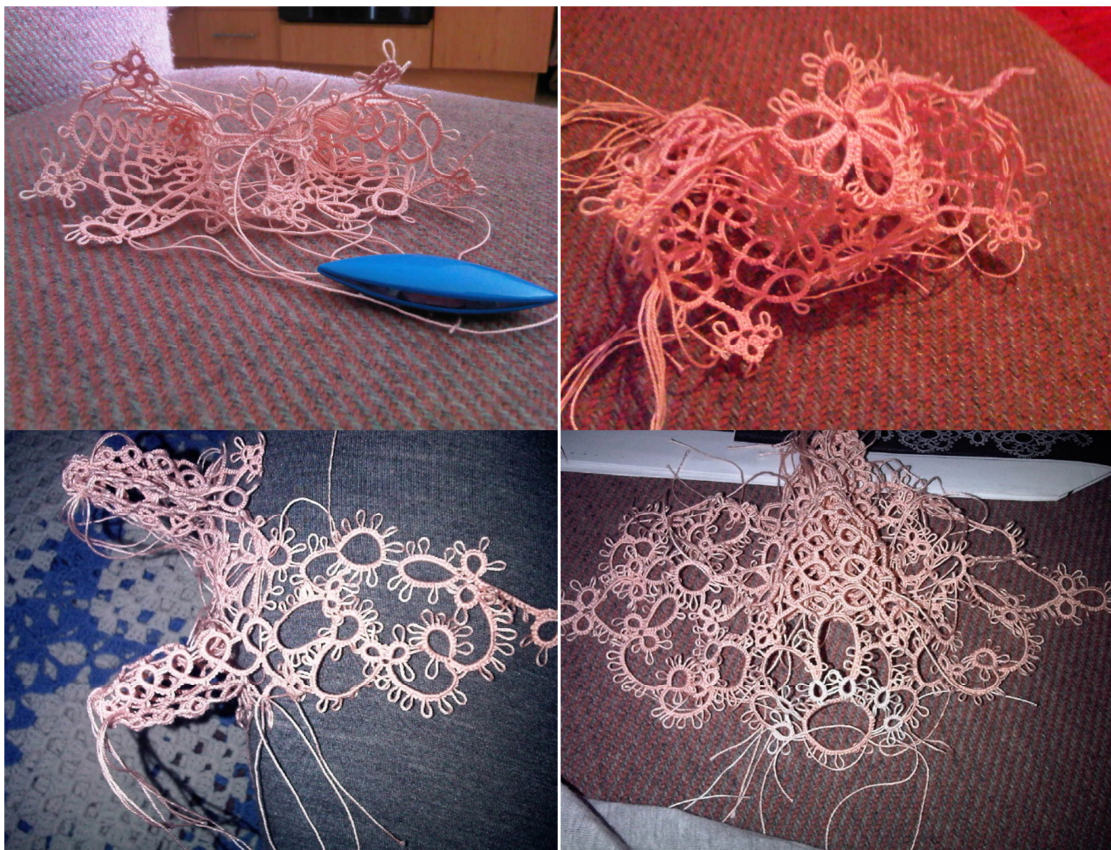


Figure 15: Photos taken with my mobile phone of the process of making the tatted lace (*Mapping 1*) (2012) which is used in the video performances *Surrogate skin* (2012) and *Limin-animal* (2012)



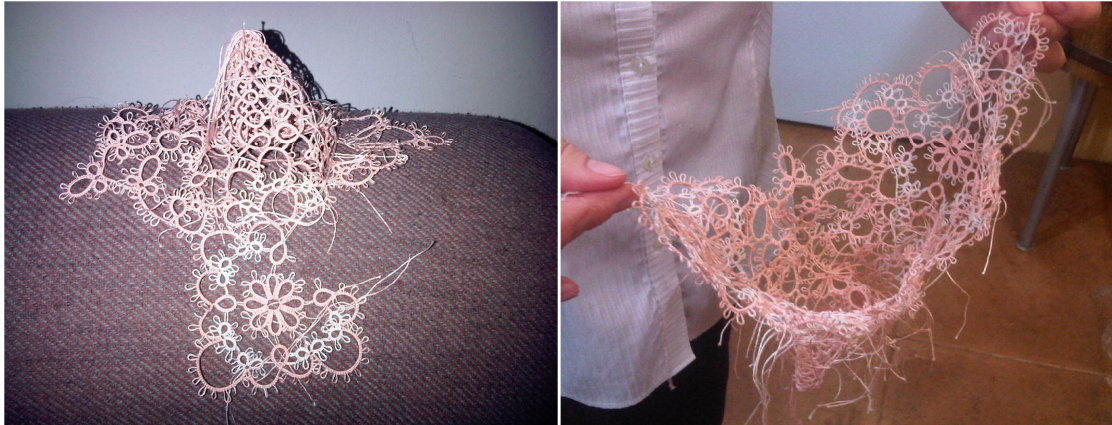


Figure 16: Photos taken with my mobile phone of the experiments to shape the tatted lace (Mapping 2) (2012) and make it into 3D sculptures. This tatted lace is in the shape of a goat's udder and was informed by an image of the anatomy of the udder, as in *Figure 17*.

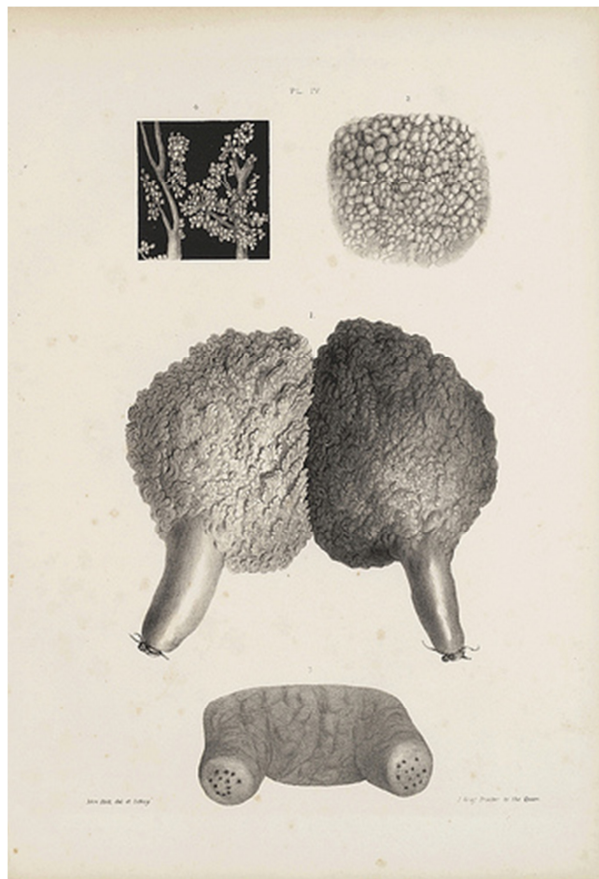


Figure 17: Illustration of the anatomy of the goat's udder.



Figure 18: Photos taken with my mobile phone of the experiments to shape the tatted lace (*Mapping 3*) (2012) and make it into 3D sculptures. This tatted lace is in the shape of a goat's womb and was informed by the illustration of the anatomy of the womb in *Figure 19*.

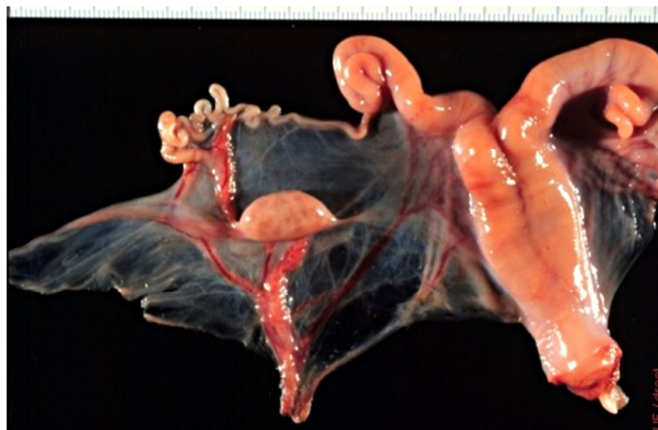


Figure 19: Photograph of the anatomy of the goat's womb.

When I did my research and read Deleuze and Guattari's *becoming* philosophy, the only way that I could understand it was to see the reading and the making of notes and summarizing parts of the philosophy as making knots like those which I would make when tating a piece of lace. I consider every element in my understanding or effort in trying to understand their notion of *becoming*, but also their philosophy as a whole, as making a mental tatted knot; and when returning to the idea or the note that I have made, it is a return to a tangible thing, even though the 'knot' that I have made is a mental construct. For it is possible to retrace one's mapping because the knots are all connected by the soul-thread which the knots are made on. This metaphor of the tatted knot as a mental knot enables the development of my research into a 'photographic memory'.

In this regard the two video performances *Surrogate skin* (2012) (Figure 20) and *Limin-animal* (2012) (Figure 22) in my examination exhibition speak of how the action of tating informed, and is still informing, both my theoretical research and my practical work. In these two performances the piece of tatted lace seems to grow and consume me as I am making it and as I am labouring in my art practice. This consuming is a metaphor for how my theoretical research informed my practical work, and how my practical work influenced the theoretical research. Although it appears as if the lace is consuming me, it is rather a relationship of symbiosis that is taking place. Where at first the lace is alien and the interaction with it is a confrontation in the form of a struggle in the performance *Surrogate skin* (2012) (Figure 20), as I have come to embrace the female craft of tating and began to see it as a metaphor for reading and understanding Deleuze and Guattari's *becoming* philosophy and how tating can inform my art practice, I have embraced both the labour of making lace and the use of my hands. This is why I feel that the question of how the hand is

challenged in art practice is important. For the realization of the simple movement and action of the hands in making art is vital when one can interpret it as a way to understand philosophy as a practice.

When I inspect other artists' work I have always tried to see or discover elements of the work that could communicate the labour of the hand in the process of making the work. For me this element that could translate that intense use of the hands always spoke of the artist's presence in the work, like a ghost or a spirit that stayed behind with the artwork after the artist has moved on to the next work. This idea becomes significant when one considers the oeuvre of the artist to be a mapping of his/her *becoming* process in the art practice. This is especially true when an artwork is thought of as a dimension or a direction in the motion of the artist's mapping of the process of *becoming-woman becoming-animal*.

This concept that each artwork is a dimension or direction becomes even more loaded and layered when the use of non-human animal material comes into play. For the non-human animal material allows the artwork to be interpreted even further than the artist has implied with the work. In terms of confronting such an artwork made with hide or any other non-human animal subject matter, the viewer becomes challenged in his/her own being, as the animal has different connotations for each individual, and it evokes different meanings and histories in each interpretation. This deepens the interaction with the artwork and the dialogue it provokes. These layered dimensions that each artwork contributes to the rhizomatic mapping of the artist's *becoming-woman becoming-animal* send the artwork into a space that is unknown to the artist. It is also a space that the artist has no control over; it is out of the artist's hand. The performance *Limin-animal* (2012) (*Figure 22*) speaks of this phenomenon, where the process of making art and *becoming-woman becoming-animal* is functioning on a threshold between control and no control. It shows how this process takes on its own will, or becomes alive as the artist is labouring in the art practice. Both the performances also refer to Ruth Jones's concept of hysterical mimesis, as discussed in Chapter One. It also reflects a possible annihilation where the artist is in danger of losing herself in *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal*.

The two video performances, *Surrogate skin* (2012) (*Figure 20*) and *Limin-animal* (2012) (*Figure 22*), speak of the external process of making art and my conscious alertness to this process manifesting in an immanent transformation and a creative conceptualization made physical through theoretical research and theorizing about the action of making art within

the art practice. This relates to the process of labour, work and play that translates into a formation of a world within both theoretical research and my art practice.



Figure 20: Photos taken during the filming of the performance *Surrogate skin* (2012) showing the narrative of the video performance.

In the video performance *Surrogate skin* (2012) (*Figure 20*) the tatted lace is at first an alien organism, and then advances to being accepted as a part of my identity. This reflects on how the labour of this female craft, or even the artistic labour within my art practice, has gradually changed from being alien to becoming a vital or prolific part of my subjectivity. The performance reflects on the presence of the hand in the artistic labour and the ways in which the process of making art enables the artist to explore parts of her subjectivity that are revealed through this labouring of the hands. Although my hands are not tatting in this performance, but instead at first struggling with the lace and later fitting it onto my face, the movements of my hands relate to the concept of the hand of the artist as mediating the process of my *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal*. In Chapters One and Three I have argued that an artwork cannot show what *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* look like.

The video performances *Surrogate skin* (2012) and *Limin-animal* (2012) adhere to this argument, for these performances show what the process of *becoming* through the labour of the hands can look like. For me making these videos and performing in it was a practical and physical manifestation of how I have perceived the use and adaption of tatted as artistic labour in my art practice and as metaphor for a methodology to integrate theory and practice. The performance *Surrogate skin* (2012) was conceived one evening at dinner with friends: as I showed them the piece of lace so that they could see how far I have come in the process of finishing it, we started putting it onto our faces and began taking photographs of ourselves playing with the lace (*Figure 21*).

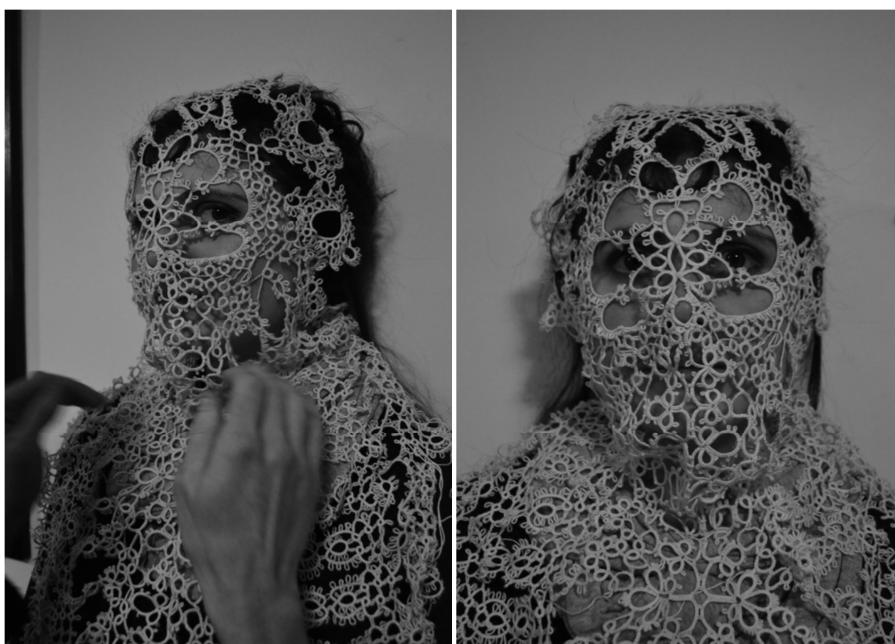


Figure 21: Photographs taken during a dinner party with friends.

The video performance *Surrogate skin* (2012) (*Figure 20*) was inspired by the process of labour in making the lace and playing with it in the company of other artist friends. The video performance as an artwork, and thus as a product of the work when filming as well as editing it, is a product of play and of the labour of the hand in making the piece of lace, and shows the reciprocal relationship of theoretical and practical research.

When considering the title of the video performance *Surrogate skin* the piece of tatted lace transcends into more than a textile covering my face, it becomes a 3dimensional rhizomatic system. Here one can interpret the 3dimensional surface of the lace (also seen in *Mapping 1* (*Figure 15*), *Mapping 2* (*Figure 16*) and *Mapping 3* (*Figure 18*) as being a rhizomatic system that contains an impregnated space. It becomes a vessel in containing is space that is also a

liminal space. This conceptualization of the artwork *Surrogate skin*, *Mapping 1*, *Mapping 2* and *Mapping 3*, gives a more feminine approach to Deleuze and Guattari's masculine conceptualization of the rhizomatic system. *Mapping 1* (2010-2012) is in the shape of a boer goat skin but is also use in the two video performances *Surrogate skin* (2012) (*Figure 20*) and *Limin-animal* (2012) (*Figure 22*), it is thus referring to the non-human animal but is used to cover myself with in the performances. It accepts my bodily shape and becomes a veiling textile that is concealing, but also revealing the content it is encasing. This adheres to a mimetic strategy that is assisting my *becoming woman- becoming animal* in a critical reflection on, and revelation of, my subjectivity as I have taken on the craft of tating to facilitate the hand as mediation between theory and my art practice.

The video performance *Limin-animal* (2012) (*Figure 22*) illustrates my process of *becoming*, as I employ a practical methodology by using feminine craft to evaluate or territorialize my *becoming* in my culture and context. As an artist in a post-apartheid context, I am in the position to distinguish and explore the formation of my subjectivity through my art-making process. In the performance I expose the female craft of tating to be accepted as a viable methodology in seeking out my own language in which to express myself and speak of my own art practice and my subjectivity by territorializing my *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal*.







Figure 22: Photos taken during the filming of the performance *Limin-animal* (2012) showing the narrative of the video performance.

The location of the performance *Limin-animal* (2012) was on a game farm near my hometown of Polokwane in the Limpopo Province. The setting was a burned piece of bushveld, with smoke blowing in the wind. It happened on the specific location an indentation in the earth made by the movements of the game on the farm, during the search for a viable site. In summer, when it rains, they roll in a mud pool. In winter, the pools dry up and they instead roll in the dust, marking their territory.

The location instantly became more than just bushveld; it was a physical area of animal activity and thus perfectly suited as a signifier of my experience in performing the *Limin-*

animal (2012). For this performance to reflect on the process of *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* in my art practice and not to attempt the impossible of literally showing what becoming animal looks like, the whole process of filming the performance became a significant element in thinking of art practice and making art as being a process. The location led the performance to be altered as I felt it necessary to include an action of bathing in the dust and marking the territory, as this marking speaks of a mapping of my *becoming*. I felt that bathing in the dust will also help to leave my scent behind for the game to discover; it is a part of myself that I have left behind with the artwork. I also experimented with the shaking of my head, to simulate the action when an animal would wave its tail or shake its head. These are two palpable non-human animal references I have made in the performance in referring to the *becoming-animal* process.³²

This performance refers to the mediation of the hand in the process of *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* through art practice. It also refers to the way in which the presence of non-human animal material in an artwork comes to challenge the hand and ultimately dominate and transcend the artist's intention, for its material presence is in excess of the work's aesthetic and intellectual framework

In the performance, the animal is directly introduced by the dress that I made from nguni, sheep, goat and springbok hide for the purpose. After the bathing in the dust the dress also appears to 'come alive' and move around me to cover my whole body. The elements of tatted lace and the non-human animal become alive in the performance and seem to overpower me, making reference to the process of *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* in being on the threshold between control and no control. This refers to the idea that at some point the artist becomes a mere spirit or presence in the work and the artwork takes on its own direction in the mapping of the artist's *becoming*. For the artwork is not a static object but a thing that has an energy of its own when considering it as a direction or dimension in the artist's oeuvre as a rhizomatic mapping.

³² As we were packing up after filming the performance, nyalas approached us and stood under the acacia trees waiting for us to leave so they could come and inspect their territory where we had been.

The Goat

The dominant animal reference in my art practice is that of the goat, and more specifically the *boer* goat. The goat itself has prolific connotations that can be critically engaged, but what specifically interests me about it are concepts of the Judas goat and more so, the scapegoat, as well as the numerous possibilities for the play on the words that make up its name: the *boer* goat. I have encountered this animal numerous times, as I have sat among them and studied their behaviour and their interaction with me in their space.

I make specific reference to the female *boer* goat in my art practice. It is her reproductive ability, which is central to the livestock farming industry, that are two of the reasons that I am attracted to this animal and use references to it in my art practice.

The *Boer* Goat

The *Boer* goat breed was developed in South Africa, where it is bred solely for meat production. The term 'Boer' refers to the descendants of Dutch immigrants who settled in this country from the 17th century onwards. 'Boer' can also mean 'farmer', which is apt since most of the Dutch settlers were in fact farmers. The *boer* goat is also considered to have superior quality meat, they have high fertility levels, and they have a genetic disposition to birth twins. On account of these reasons, farming with them is considered to be extremely lucrative (Cutrer 1995:n.p.).

I also use the animal in my artwork because of the fertile punning possibilities inherent in its name, and its controversial and racial reference to the white South African, especially the white South African male.

The 'scapegoat' and art practice

The dictionary definition of a scapegoat is 1) a person made to bear the blame for others, 2) a goat symbolically laden with the sins of the Israelites and sent into the wilderness. The term originated from escape + goat, translated from Biblical Hebrew as *azāzēl*, goat for Azazel, mistakenly thought to mean "goat that escapes". (Sinclair 2001:1343). Since I identify myself as Christian, the Bible forms part of my frame of reference, and it is a vital

part of my subjectivity. The way that I have come to think about the goat is in terms of its sacrificial use in the Old Testament.

Chapter 10 of the apocryphal Book of Henog tells how God had banished Satan from the heavens, and how he received the name Azazel as he was ordered to go into the desert. Azazel and two hundred angels who had sinned against God were ordered to dwell in the desert, the uninhabited wilderness, until the day of judgement when they would be sent to hell. In Leviticus 16:7-10 it is said that Aaron had to take two male goats, the one would be a sin offering for God and the other to bear the lot for Azazel:

Leviticus 16: 5; “He shall take [at the expense] of the congregation of the Israelites two male goats for a sin offering... 7; He shall take the two goats and present them before the Lord at the door of the Tent of Meeting. 8; Aaron shall cast lots on the two goats – one lot for the Lord, the other lot for the Azazel *or* removal. 9; And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the Lord’s lot fell and offer him as sin offering. 10; But the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel *or* removal shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over him, that he may be let go into the wilderness for Azazel (for dismissal)... 21; And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over him the all the iniquities of the Israelites and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat [the sin-bearer], and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is timely (ready, fit). 22; The goat shall bear upon himself all their iniquities, carrying them to a land cut off (a land of forgetfulness and separation, not inhabited)! And the man leading it shall let the goat go in the wilderness.”
(*Amplified Bible*)

Using this biblical reference of the use of the goat as sacrifice and bearer of human transgressions, non-human animal material and subject matter became a key signifier in my art practice. I have conceptualized the *boer* goat as a sacrifice that is sent off into the unknown wilderness of post-apartheid art practice. It is within the process of making art and mapping my own *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* that I experience the artwork becoming a scapegoat, and the labour of my hands functions as a vital element within this process. As I am labouring through using my hands, in tatting, drawing, writing, typing, sculpting, performing and making work, it is as if I am laying my hands upon the head of the goat to confess that which I want it to bear for myself. This load that I am inflicting upon the artwork is what working with the material and being in a process of *becoming*

woman and *becoming animal* have awakened in me. The products of my practice are external, tangible objects that transcended the subject as I give meaning and thus power to this material.

The non-human animal material becomes a bridge between my art practice and my position of being a young, white, female (and Christian) artist within a post-apartheid context. The use of the animal also enables the viewer to experience and to interpret the work in ways that are different from my intentions with it, different from the burden that I have transferred onto it. This interpretation of the viewer is also an extra load that the artwork has come to bear as it is sent off into the unknown by myself as artist.

The concept of the artwork being sent off into the unknown speaks of the unknown territory that is out of my control, and the changing post-apartheid context that is a culture in a process of *becoming* in itself. Broglio & Birrell hold that art is a product of culture and for culture that awakens and speaks of basic concerns of what it means to be human (2011:2). With this reference in mind, seeing the function of art practice to be a scapegoat that is sent into an unknown space where concerns and issues can be confronted becomes significant. For seeing this as the yoke of art practice in a post-apartheid context is to allow it to gain an agency of the possibility for provoking change and growth. With this I do not insinuate that the artist has to become an activist but rather an individual that has to submit to her art practice as a space that can reveal an element that could challenge community, society and culture.

The *Scapegoat* (2012) (*Figure 23*) is the only kinetic sculpture in my exhibition that is made with real boer goat hide. All the other work is made of domestic animal hides that can simulate the brown head and white body of the boer goat. These hides are cured, but the boer goat hide was only salted and dried over the shape of the steel construction, as shown in *Figure 23*. I specifically used this process since the hides of the boer goat still retain the smell of the animal, and I wished to include that innately animal element in the exhibition.

This kinetic sculpture moves around the gallery by rolling and switching over to reverse when its path is obstructed. Confronted with an obstruction, the sculpture will roll away until it meets another obstacle and the process is repeated. The artwork becomes a moving vehicle that facilitates the movement of transferring the artist's intention with the work to

the viewer but it also simulates the movement of the bull in the bull fight as it is confronting the threshold of the matador's cape.



Figure 23: Photos taken in the process of making the kinetic sculpture *Scapegoat* (2012) and during the mid-year review.

This sculpture functions as an analogy for the scapegoat in the context of post-apartheid art practice. I have taken it by hand to a space (the gallery) in which it has to dwell. This space, although very familiar, will become unknown to me as it is interacted with and interpreted by the viewer. *The Scapegoat* (2012) (*Figure 23*) is a work that I intend to change over time. Indeed I have no real control over this process, by virtue of the fact that the organic material will age, and the mechanical movement will subject the work to wear and tear. This further extends the idea of leaving it to be on its own and to dwell in the unknown.

In coming to the conclusion of this chapter I will return to the function of the hand in mediating the process of my *becoming woman* and *becoming animal*. The return to the hand will be translated in the performance *Technologies of Becoming* (2012) (*Figure 24*) which took place in the gallery space during the mid-year postgraduate exhibition, and which will also take place during my final presentation. In this performance I am tatting a piece of lace, wearing special gloves I have made with goat hide, that contain pieces of charcoal attached to the fingers. So, as I am tatting, I am drawing by a method of mark making.



Figure 24: Photos taken during the mid-year review group exhibition of the gloves and making then in my studio.



Figure 25: Photos taken during the process of drawing *Boer bok1* (2012) (detail) and *Boer bok2* (2012), taken in my studio.

This performance speaks of the artwork as three-fold: the drawing which is seen as a product of work, the performance of tatting and drawing as a labour that is taking place within the gallery, and thirdly the performance as both a product and process of making art. The gloves were invented through the process of making art and labouring in my studio, as a tool which allows me to translate onto paper the movement of my hands as I am tatting. They are a recording technology, as well as a creating technology. I have also used these gloves in translating the movement of my hands in the drawings *Boer bok1* (2012) (*Figure 25*) and *Boer bok2* (2012) (*Figure 25*).

This translation of the labour of tatting into mark making also have transcended into my own language which was born out of the process of the hand in mediating the reciprocal relationship between theory and art practice. With adapting the feminine craft (tatting) to my art practice and as methodology of making art I have created a language that exceeds the use of speech and written word in an Irigarian sense. It has become a language that is a pathway to my *feminine becoming*.

CONCLUSION



The thread created by the discussion of the complex functions of the hand, both practical and metaphorical throughout this thesis can be understood to have been tatted into a ring and is pulled close to form a circle and the conclusion of this text.

By reflecting on the text of Deleuze and Guattari's visceral philosophical notion of "Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible" as articulated in their book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) it became the foundational aspect of my creative research project both theoretical and practical. I turned to articles and various artists' work in a search for a text or visual example of what the philosophical text of *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* means and may look like. The two most explanatory articles I found I have used as case studies in Chapter One and Two.

In Chapter One I referred to Ruth Jones's article *Becoming – hysterical – becoming – animal – becoming – woman in the Horse Impressionists* (2003) for its discussion of British artist Lucy Gunning's video work *The Horse Impressionists* (1994) and application of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *becoming* and Luce Irigaray reflection as well as interaction with this *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* philosophy.

I have used Nicole Archer's article "Text(ile)s: How to Fabric(ate) Yourself a Body without Organs" (2004) in Chapter Two for it was a reading that explained and made me see how to interact with the text of Deleuze and Guattari's visceral philosophy in a way to understand it. For this illustration of reading the text as though I was a bull in the arena with the matador and the text being the red cape he is tempting me with I saw how I could use Nandipha Mntambo's video performance *Ukungenisa* (2009) as a visual case study for

interpreting the reading of Deleuze and Guattari's text and so find a method to incorporate my theoretical research into my art practice.

By encountering Jones definition of the *feminine becoming*, where she is referring to Luce Irigaray's definition of morphology as where the female artist has to identify a methodology in her art-making that embodies her *becoming* through artistic labour, it affirmed my obsession with tatting as female craft. The artist's hand as the most elementary element in the process of making tatted lace presented the hand as a mediating vessel in this reciprocal relationship between theory and art practice.

Chapter Three explores Neil Maycroft's article 'Labour, work and play: action in fine art practice' (2005) as the foundation for investigating the artistic labour as process in the art practice being facilitated through applying tatting as female craft that gives testimony to the artist's hand as facilitator in the *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* process and as mediator between theory and art practice. The conceptualization of the artist's oeuvre that can be seen as a rhizomatic system reflected onto the appearance and metaphorical structure of the tatted lace I was making in my art practice. By adapting this craft of tatting as process of making art and labouring in my creative practice, the movement of my hands was observed to be mimicking the movement of the bull in the arena. This movement was thus transferred into mark making by creating special gloves I referred to as *technologies of becoming*, as this method of drawing and conceptualizing about the process of *becoming woman* and *becoming animal*, transcended into a new language I have created to express and reveal my own subjectivity.

The hand tatted metaphorically the practice (the thread creating the knots) around the text/thread/the sole. The text being the sole of the knots that are the practice, change places in the exhibition accompanying this thesis, as the art practice is the sole and the text being the knots tatted around it.

Through a critical analysis of my own research problem, that of how the hand is challenged in practice-led research situated in a post-apartheid context, I have concluded that the hand is safe as long as it is considered as mediating vessel within the artist's *becoming woman* and *becoming animal* as process that is taking place within the artist's own art practice. The hand is considered as a tribute to the artist's presence in the artwork and the labour of making art in the art practice. By investigating the hand in female craft and non-human animal material

as artefact, it is revealed that the artwork can speak to a post-apartheid context and to a culture of *becoming*.

By accepting the oeuvre of the artist as a mapping of her *becoming woman* and *becoming animal*, the role of the non-human animal material in the artwork is transcended further than the artist intended because of the reader/viewer's response and interpretation of the non-human animal presence in the artwork. In this respect the hand is both challenged by the non-human animal presence in the work and by the mediation the hand provides to the female artist in mediating a *becoming-woman* and *becoming-animal* through the art-making process. This challenge is not destructive, but it is rather a reciprocal process that has to be negotiated in the tension between theory and art practice. The artist has to acknowledge her responsibility to her art and to the philosophy or the theory she is investigating. She should not see the one as an illustration or description of the other, but rather look deeper at how the text is read, and thus see what method employed in her art making can facilitate such a reading.

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