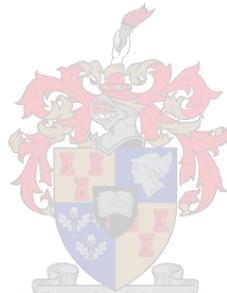


# **Investigating the Human Condition through the Sculpted Figure:**

Exploring the artworks of Jane Alexander, Camille Claudel, Rook Floro,  
and William Kentridge

by  
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*Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
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at the University of Stellenbosch*

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## **Declaration**

By submitting this thesis/dissertation electronically, 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 reproduction 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.

Manuela Holzer

March 2016

## **Abstract**

“*Investigating the Human Condition through the Sculpted Figure*” examines the expression of the human condition through the sculpted medium. This thesis will explore the notion of the shadow in the writings of Plato, Nietzsche and Jung. These philosophical texts will reveal the aspects of self-doubt, insecurity, and anxiety inherent to the human condition. These texts will also provide context and background to my own sense of autobiographical unease and anxiety in my practical work titled *Shadow Series*. Following the investigation of the shadow, a background on existentialist philosophy is explored through Jean-Paul Sartre’s writings, namely *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1947) and *Nausea* (1965). These texts provide context to the emotions of anguish, forlornness and despair, concepts that are inherent in my series of work titled *Nude Existence* and the *Shadow Series*. This section includes the work of four artists who have addressed similar themes in their artworks. The thesis will conclude with reflections on how these works grapple with the fundamental questions of the human condition, the human psyche and the use of the human form to express these narratives of singular and collective anguish through the sculpted body.

## **Opsomming**

“*Investigating the Human Condition through the Sculpted Figure*” is ‘n studie in die uitdrukking van die menslike toestand deur beeldhou as medium in die kunste. Die proefskrif ondersoek die idee van die skaduwee in die tekste van Plato, Nietzsche en Jung. Hierdie filosofiese tekste sal ‘n verskeidenheid aspekte van self twyfel, onsekerheid en angs as inherent tot die menslike toestand onthul. Dié tekste sal ook konteks en agtergrond verskaf tot my eie sin van outobiografiese ongemak en angs in my praktiese werk getiteld *Shadow Series*. Na die ondersoek na die skadu, verken ek die agtergrond van eksistensiële filosofie in Jean-Paul Sartre se skryfwerk, naamlik in *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1947) en *Nausea* (1965). Hierdie tekste verskaf konteks aan die emosies van angs, verlatenheid en wanhoop inherent in my series getiteld *Nude Existence* series en *Shadow Series*. Die afdeling sluit in die kuns van vier kunstenaars wie soortgelyke temas adresseer in hulle kunswerke. Die samevatting sluit af met nadenke oor hoe dié werke worstel met die fundamentele vraag na die menslike toestand, die menslike psige en die gebruik van die menslike vorm om hierdie narratiewe rondom individuele en kollektiewe angs deur die gebeeldhoude liggaam.

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## Introduction

My practical work aims to express emotions of anguish, forlornness and despair through drawing, sculpture and installation. The sculptures I create combine these qualities to create images rich in emotion and narrative, conveying depictions of internal turmoil, uncertainty, struggle and doubt. There are two main series of artworks in my practical work that I will focus on in this thesis. The first is titled *Shadow Series* and the second is the *Nude Existence* series. These two series differ in medium, colour and presentation, however, both aim to express an aspect of the human condition. The work presents the human form in certain positions, manipulating the extremities such as arms and legs, distorting facial expressions and using various materials, textures and surfaces. Both series aim to make the sculptures as expressive as possible to emphasize and highlight the emotions associated with the postures. The concept of an interior psychological landscape plays a significant role in the *Shadow Series*, and includes not only the physical manifestations of the shadow, but also the aspects and elements that we attribute to the *shadow*.<sup>1</sup>

In this thesis I will explore the writings of Plato, Nietzsche and Jung and their literal and metaphoric writings on the shadow. Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* is one of the first philosophical texts that makes use of the shadow. Plato makes use of the allegory to convey his idea of knowledge that favours truth over belief. The focus is on Plato's usage of the shadow and not on the greater allegory that also includes his discussion on the "theory of forms". For Plato, Forms are the eternal and changeless essences of which visible objects are merely poor copies. Just as the sun in the *Allegory of the Cave* is the source of light and life, the Form of the Good (or God) is the source of the immaterial forms. Thus shadows appear low on the hierarchy of Plato's episteme.

The second exploration of the shadow is evident in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2006) and *Human, All Too Human* (1996) where Nietzsche presents the shadow as an entity that engages with Zarathustra and the wanderer. The shadow is

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<sup>1</sup> To accommodate the various usages of the shadow throughout this thesis, the dictionary provides three definitions of the shadow that depict various aspects of the shadow. These will be briefly described here and further detailed in Chapter 1.

given qualities beyond the mere depiction of a silhouette and is given a voice of its own. The shadow plays a very small part in Nietzsche's oeuvre, but it is interesting to see how Nietzsche is criticizing Plato's hierarchy of knowledge. The shadow is speaking from the perspective of a discarded entity, present in the background, and yet completely aware. It is Nietzsche's personification of the shadow that is most significant for this thesis, not only that the shadow has a voice, but also that it has its own emotions, feelings, and experiences. This juxtaposes the notion of the shadow as a projection of my own fears and sentiments to the notion of the shadow as a foreign silhouette. The shadow as its own entity allows for interesting narratives, giving the *Shadow Series* an interesting dynamic.

The third and final exploration of the shadow is Jung's description of the psychological shadow within his book titled *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1989). For Jung, the shadow is a completely abstract concept that is used to portray the embodiment of aspects and ideas that one would not like to address about oneself. The shadow therefore remains in the subconscious, lurking, ever present, waiting to be seen, and only once it is seen, does it result in a traumatic experience, which could either be frustration, anger, or emotional outbursts. The shadow consequently becomes a casing for negative sentiments surrounding the self that one would like to not only disavow, but to completely repress. This has very interesting potential for art to engage/activate both the artist and viewer's shadow.

Plato, Nietzsche and Jung's writings on the shadow reveal deeper and darker aspects of self-doubt, insecurity, and anxiety within the human condition. Following these investigations I will present a background of Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist writings, namely *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1947) and *Nausea* (1965). These two texts are specifically relevant in their descriptions of the emotions of anguish, forlornness and despair. It is through Sartre's writings that I will investigate the *Nude Existence* series. The two texts by Sartre inspired the creation of this series and the works therefore make several direct references to the texts.

To gain a better understanding of the qualities discussed and elaborated on above, I will explore work by Camille Claudel, Rook Floro, Jane Alexander and William

Kentridge. These artworks will be visually explored and related to the concepts of the *shadow* and Sartre's expression of anguish, forlornness and despair.

In chapter 1, I will discuss several dictionary usages of the shadow, followed by descriptions of my *Shadow Series* and Plato, Nietzsche and Jung's writings. Beginning with the dictionary definitions of the shadow I will outline the three definitions of shadow. The first definition of the shadow focuses on the silhouette that results from the obstruction of light. To distinguish between the various definitions of the shadow in this thesis, this depiction of the shadow will be written as shadow. The second definition of the shadow is the personification of the Shadow whereby the Shadow becomes a companion. This depiction of the Shadow is written as Shadow, with a capital S. The third definition of the shadow is the embodiment of projected negative sentiments, such as anguish, despair and fear. This depiction of the shadow will be written as *shadow*, in italics.

In chapter 2, I will discuss the second body of work titled the *Nude Existence* series. This body of work is a collection of my sand castings that are inspired by the writings of the French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre described the emotions of anguish, forlornness and despair in *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1947) and *Nausea* (1965). Sartre describes anguish, the experience of realizing the great responsibility that accompanies our decisions. He describes forlornness as the emotion that one feels when one realizes that one is truly left to one's own devices. For Sartre, this existential realization means that we are forsaken, and alone in determining our fate. This also leads to what Sartre referred to as despair, which is the emotions that accompany the realization that there are some things which are completely out of our control.

In chapter 3, I will look at four artworks in relation to my own artistic practice, namely Camille Claudel's *Crouching Woman* (1910), Rook Floro's *Shell* (2012), Jane Alexander's, *Untitled* (1985-6), and William Kentridge's *Shadow Procession* (1999).

In conclusion I will summarize the threads between my work, the artists and philosophers discussed to demonstrate a practice-based research that aims to offer a greater understanding of my own artistic practice.

## **Chapter One - Shadow Series, Plato, Nietzsche and Jung**

### **shadow / Shadow / shadow**

The *Oxford Dictionary of English* provides three basic definitions based on the various ways that the shadow is incorporated in the English language. These definitions include both the denotative as well as the connotative meanings, which is also why the shadow is written differently to indicate which specific definition of the word is used. There are predominately three definitions that this chapter will use to investigate the various literary, artistic, psychological and philosophical uses of the shadow/Shadow/shadow in Plato, Nietzsche and Jung. This will also include a look into the incorporation of the shadow/Shadow/shadow in my own art work.

### **Defining shadows / shadows / Shadows**

shadow- The first definition of the shadow in the *Oxford Dictionary of English* is “a dark area or shape produced by a body coming between rays of light and a surface” (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003: 1620). The word stemmed from Old English and the explanation stated above was formed in approximately 1340. (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2014). This definition refers to the most commonly understood notion of the shadow as the absence of light. This definition of shadow illustrates the physical manifestation a silhouette through the absence of light. “A shadow is in itself a hole in the light” (Sorensen, 2008: 4). Shadows and holes can be explained in a similar way in that they are absences, non-entities, nothingness and things that are not there. (Casati, & Varzi, 1995: 1). Shadows also have a similar quality to holes in that they are inextricably linked to the source (i.e. the form that makes the shadow or hole possible). There is a symbiotic relationship between the form (i.e. substance) and the shadow (i.e. non-substance). The shadow or hole could also be described as parasitic as these absences could not exist without a host (Casati, & Varzi, 1995: 15). To distinguish this definition of the shadow from the other definitions, this form of the shadow will hereafter be written as shadow.

Shadow- The second definition refers to “an inseparable attendant or companion”. This explanation was only officially developed in the year 1859. (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003: 1620). The shadow consequently acts as an external partner or companion that is always there, always present. To distinguish this definition of the shadow from the other definitions, this form of the shadow will hereafter be written as Shadow.

*Shadow*- The third definition explains that the shadow is “used in reference to proximity, ominous oppressiveness, or sadness and gloom”. (Soanes & Stevenson, 2003: 1620). This description of the shadow also originated between the mid- to late-14<sup>th</sup> century. (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2014). This description emphasizes how the shadow is more pertinent in capturing and illustrating the psychological extension of the body. The shadow becomes the reflective side of the human psyche, which include sadness, anxiety, depression, anger, etc. The shadow is therefore an exteriorization or even distancing of internal feelings onto an external object. To distinguish this definition of the shadow from the other definitions, this form of the shadow will hereafter be written as *Shadow*.

After reviewing a basic understanding of the various definitions associated with the word shadow, the following section will elaborate on the various incorporations of the shadow/Shadow/*shadow* in my own work and in literature, philosophy and psychology.

### **Description of my *Shadow Series***

The *Shadow Series* is not only autobiographical in nature, meaning that it is a journey into my experience of these emotions, but also seeks to elaborate on the general experience of these emotions as either anguish, forlornness or dread. In an autobiographical sense, these deeper and darker emotions are rooted in my own sense of helplessness, shame, anxiety, depression and self-deprecation. It is these emotions that constitute my psychological *shadow*, which forms the basis of my artworks in both *Nude Existence* and *Shadow Series*. The aim of the series is to give a voice to the *shadow* in order to achieve a greater understanding of myself and the darker aspects of the human condition as they may arise.

In order to achieve this personification of the Shadow, I created the *Shadow Series* that comprises sculptures made from black plastic bags melted onto a steel armature. In my opinion, the black refuse bags are incorporated to effectively represent the dark, void-like quality attributed to shadows and silhouettes. The surface of the melted plastic not only reminds one of hardened lava or a charred body, but also demonstrates an evocative quality that often makes viewers feel uncomfortable. In other words, the texture combined with the sculpted human body often repel the viewer. This is the type of reaction sought after, since this reaction is closely connected to the concept of the psychological *shadow*. Figure 1 represents a close-up image of the texture that the melted plastic created.



Figure 1: Manuela Holzer, Detail photograph of: *Curling Shadow* (2014). Steel Armature and melted black plastic refuse bags. 87x 35x 15 cm.

The second aspect, that is important to note in the *Shadow Series*, is the recurring use of the human form. In all of the artworks I have used my own body as a reference point in order to reinforce the idea that the work is autobiographical. Sculpting my own body serves as a means of seeing myself outside of myself. Therefore the representation

of the body may reflect a sense of self to myself as an artist. Antony Gormley<sup>2</sup> emphasize the relationship between the usage of the body in art and the connection to identity:

I want to confront existence ... The optical and the conceptual have dominated in the art of the twentieth century and I turn to the body in an attempt to find a language that will transcend the limitations of race, creed and language, but which will still be about the rootedness of identity (Exhibition Catalogue, 2010: 2).

Therefore, the use of the body plays a significant role in unpacking and uncovering various facets of my own identity as it relates to the anxieties and fears that I uncover. In the *Shadow Series*, the aim is to create a sculpture than can be described as *my shadow cast outside of myself*. This cast shadow/*shadow* can be described as the antagonist or the darker half of myself manifesting in a sculpted human form. It is always presented in motion or mid-action. The sculpture is embodied by the shadow as an entity of its own. This is consequently why the second dictionary definition of the Shadow is in play, the Shadow as a companion, whereby it takes on a life of its own.

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<sup>2</sup> Antony Gormley was born in London in the year 1950. He is currently one of the leading figures in the international contemporary art scene. Gormley is most notably known for his sculpted figures that vary drastically in material and scale (Boström, 2004: 694).

The first artwork (seen in Figure 2) can be seen in the image below:



Figure 2: Manuela Holzer, *Curling Shadow* (2014). Steel Armature and melted black plastic refuse bags. 87x 35x 15 cm.

The sculpture consists out of black plastic bags that have been melted, shaped and moulded into the shape of a nude female figure. The sculpture is approximately a meter in height and therefore only half-life-size. The figure stands firmly on both feet with the knees slightly bent. The torso is slightly bent forward and the arms are wrapped around the chest with both hands hooked on the opposite shoulder. The head of the figure is curled in towards the chest, with the gaze resting on the feet. The coarse texture and the colour of the sculpture is the result of the melted plastic. Ideally the sculpture would be presented on a plinth, so that the viewer can fully gaze at the sculpture instead of looking down at the sculpture. The recoiled posture highlights the vulnerability of the sculpture as if responding to an external threat, whilst the shadow reveals that the threat comes from within. The sculpture is standing, rather child-like in posture and composure, highlighting the debilitating nature of these overwhelming emotions.

In this image (Figure 3), the sculpture is presented in a dark room with the sculpture carefully illuminated. The way the sculpture is lit emphasises the long shadow that the figure is casting. The sculpture (seen in Figure 3) highlights not only the shadow moulded in plastic, but also the literal shadow that forms as the sculpture obstructs the light. The presentation of the sculpture with an accompanying shadow adds a dynamic dimension to the sculpture that emphasizes the shadow and the psychological effects of the internalization of the *shadow/Shadow*.

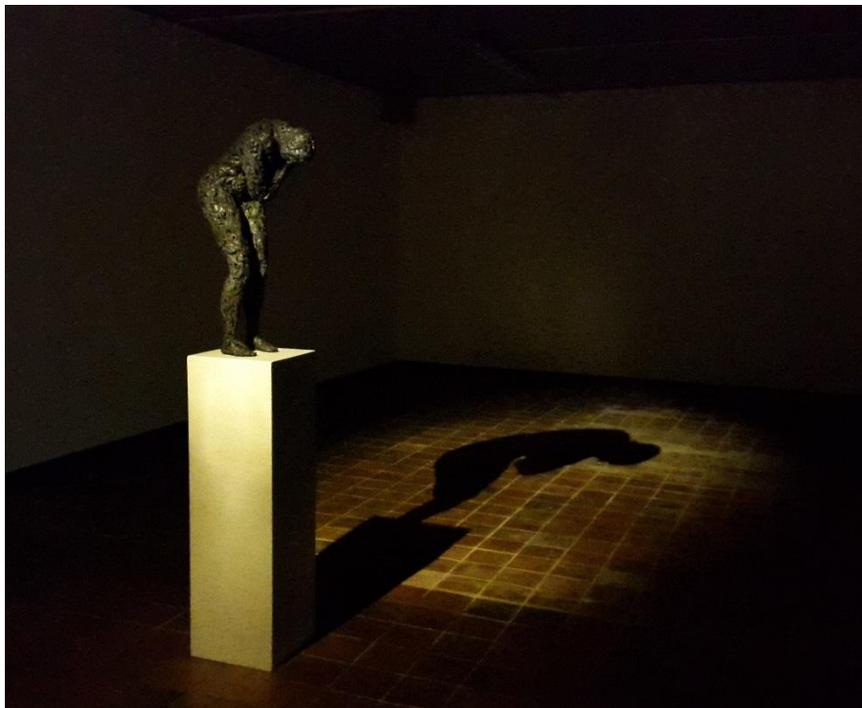


Figure 3: Manuela Holzer, Photograph taken at the Gallery of the University Stellenbosch: *Curling Shadow* (2014). Steel Armature and melted black plastic refuse bags. 87x 35x 15 cm.

The second sculpture (seen in Figure 4)<sup>3</sup> was inspired by a quote in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2006). This *shadow* character is described by Nietzsche as "...

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<sup>3</sup> The elongation and distortion in this work can be compared to Alberto Giacometti's work, for example *Walking Man I* (1960). Both sculptures have a rough and uneven texture, emphasizing the nightmarish qualities of the sculpture as it moves in a determined and steadfast manner, forward. The distortion of form implies a psychological distortion and disintegration.

thin, blackish, hollow and outdated [“überlebt”] (Nietzsche, 2006: 221). This sculpture is an attempt to not only capture and express those attributes of the internal *shadow*, but also to emphasise the distorted shape that the shadow assumes when a body obstructs light from a certain angle. This results in the elongated limbs which enhance the idea of the shadow’s presence as ‘thin, blackish, hollow and outdated’. The sculpture in this image is larger than human size and therefore overshadows our scale. In choosing these overly elongated limbs, I hope to emphasize the uncomfortable and disturbing qualities of the *shadow* as it hovers over one. The sculpture seems to be in the process of moving forward, as the left leg is stepping forward and the right leg is resting on the ball of the foot behind the figure. The legs are slightly bent at the knees and the torso is bent forward. The gaze of the sculpture is firmly fixed ahead. The arms are stretched behind the figure and slightly bent at the elbows. In the hands is a long draping blanket-like sheet being dragged forward by the figure. This blanket-like sheet is also created from melted plastic which flows down from the figure’s hands onto the floor. The aim of this sculpture is to highlight the nightmarish and frightening nature of the psychological *shadow*.



Figure 4: Manuela Holzer, *Stalking Shadow* (2014). Steel and melted black plastic refuse bags. 300x 150x 200 cm.

The third sculpture (seen in Figure 5) expands on the idea of the melted plastic sheet and reduces the three dimensional body to a two dimensional figure. The sculpture is presented with the entire outline of the figure stretched out across the floor. The figure is approximately three meters in length and a meter in width. The sculpture’s legs,

arms and torso are all presented as straight, with the arms running alongside the torso. The head of the sculpture is presented looking over the left shoulder. This sculpture is the portrayal of the shadow in the full sense of the word. The shadow is detached from the body and from its source. It is therefore the externalization of the self, a material shadow/*shadow* that echoes the features, proportions and dimensions of the physical self. The shadow takes on proportions relative to the position of the light source and the surface area onto which the shadow is cast. The shadow in this instance is presented rather differently than in Figure 2 and Figure 4. Whereas in Figure 2, the shadow sculpture is presented as recoiling inwards. In Figure 4, the shadow form is unwavering in its march forward. In Figure 5, the shadow is far more resigned to emotions and sentiments that it is experiencing, just as a wandering shadow would be if a wandering shadow could meander. The shadow is still portrayed as alert, in a sense aware of its surroundings, watchful of things to come, but is not inhibited as Figure 2 is. This shadow representation has its back turned to the viewer, emphasizing the closed-off nature of the shadow. The shadow does not easily disclose its true intent, nor does the shadow fully bare itself to the viewer. The sculpture is represented in the image (Figure 5) below.



Figure 5: Manuela Holzer, *Cast Shadow* (2014). Melted black plastic refuse bags. 50x 3x 170 cm.

The last and final sculpture (seen in Figure 6) also forms part of the *Shadow Series*.



Figure 6: Manuela Holzer, *Burdened Shadow* (2014). Melted black plastic refuse bags. 15x 5x 23 cm.

The sculpture (seen in Figure 7) is displayed on the wall. One can see that the small sculpture is walking on an invisible white plane that is created by the white wall. The image below demonstrates how the vast white wall creates a distortion of perception. The sculpture is presented in isolation, walking towards a destination that never appears in sight. In doing this, I hope to create a sense of distance and perspective, as though this shadow is out of reach of the viewer, but at the same time is still viewable from up close. The sculpture exists in isolation and carries its burden alone. As Sartre writes in *Nausea* (1965), "I for my part live alone, entirely alone. I never speak to anybody, I receive nothing, I give nothing" (16). Just like that, the shadow wanders alone with its own burden, the total responsibility of its predicament. This realization of the full weight of responsibility results in anguish, as is discussed in chapter 2. The realization and consequence of being responsible for our choices is the metaphorical burden that this figure carries.



Figure 7: Manuela Holzer, *Burdened Shadow* (2014). Melted black plastic refuse bags. 15x 5x 23 cm.

The *Shadow Series* closely describes various depictions of my thoughts and emotions. In exploring the three forms of shadow/Shadow/*shadow* I reflect on my internal fears in response to the external world around me. A background to the shadow/Shadow/*shadows* will be explored further in the philosophy and psychological texts of Plato, Nietzsche and Jung. This discussion will start with Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, followed by Nietzsche's response and criticism to Plato by lending a 'voice' to the shadow and the reappropriation of the shadow in Jungian psychoanalysis as the mainstay of fears and anxiety.

### **Plato and the shadow- *The Allegory of the Cave***

Plato famously used allegories to explain complex ideas through the incorporation of metaphorical narratives. These allegories serve as tools to understand abstract ideas with a strong visual component to allow for multifaceted depictions and descriptions of his ideas. As Martin Heidegger (2011) writes on Plato's usage of allegories, "There is thus an inner necessity to the fact that when Plato wants to say something fundamental and essential in philosophy, he always speaks in an allegory and places us before a sensory image" (13). The strong visual component of Plato's allegory is undeniable, especially in the *Allegory of the Cave*.

The *Allegory of the Cave* is found in Plato's *Republic*. The shadow is understood through Socrates' description where he describes a scenario with elaborate visual detail. Plato is describing a hypothetical situation that starts with several people chained by their legs and necks, facing a wall. They have grown up in front of this wall and lived all their lives in front of this wall. Behind the chained prisoners, across the chamber, is a ramp that leads up towards the outside and into the sunlight. Above the ramp is a roaring fire and in front of the fire is a raised walkway with a low wall. Various men pass along the wall carrying various statues and objects along the wall. The effect of this is a shadow play on the wall that the prisoners have been gazing at their entire lives. The echoed voices of the men passing over the walkway is heard by the prisoners and connected to the shadows in front of them. Thus the prisoners' perceived reality is that of personified shadow play, as they have never seen the light source or objects that cast the shadows. The chained people only perceive reality as far as the shadows are presented on the wall in front of them. Plato's shadows are therefore physical shadows that are cast against the wall.

One of the chained people is released to look around and at the fire. He can now roam the room and see what is creating the shadows on the wall that he previously perceived to be real. Consequently, the prisoner is perplexed and dazed. He later moves up the ramp towards the outside world and is confronted by the bright light of the sun. His eyes and mind struggle to adjust as he slowly starts to acclimatize to his surroundings. He slowly encounters the world for the objects that they are, and not as shadows cast against a wall created by the artificial lighting of a fire. After having seen the objects in the light of the sun, he eventually returns back into the cave to inform the others of the world outside of the cave and more importantly, of the sun. By returning into the cave, however, his eyes are filled with darkness and initially he has trouble adjusting. The prisoner then informs the others about what he has seen outside of the cave, starting with the shadows formed by the fire and ending with the sun (Bloom, 1991: 193- 6).

Behind this allegory is a very complex idea that Plato is trying to convey. Essentially, the *Allegory of the Cave* was Plato's way of explaining the different levels of truth. Heidegger (2011) summarizes and breaks down the allegory in four stages. The first stage refers to the chained prisoners and their relation to their shadows. As Heidegger

(2011) writes, “The prisoners see only shadows of themselves and their fellow prisoners, they see only what is set over against them. They have no relationship to themselves at all” (21). For Heidegger, this is symptomatic of the cave dwellers not being aware of their relationship to objects or even themselves. The cave dwellers consequently live in a world unable to see how any ‘interconnection’ exists between objects. This leads to a misapprehension of what they perceive to be real, including the objects and themselves. In the end, they have no understanding of the real objects or themselves, but only projections of the objects, their shadows. For Heidegger (2011), what the cave dwellers see as the world is emblematic of their whole world, but more importantly, “the prisoners do not even know that they are in a ‘situation’. When questioned, they always talk about shadows, which, however, they do not know as shadows” (23, his italics). Their worlds are encapsulated by the shadows. They perceive reality to be the sum total of their experience of the shadows. According to Heidegger, notions such as resemblance, correctness or correspondence do not exist in the cave, since the cave dwellers give themselves over to what it is that they encounter. What the cave dwellers perceive as reality can only be called shadows by those who know that they are merely the silhouettes of objects.

The second stage of the allegory, according to Heidegger (2011), refers to the liberation of man within the cave. The cave dweller is unshackled and begins to look around. He perceives the world differently and starts to differentiate between the shadows and the ‘real things’. For Plato, the cave dweller is stunned, even perplexed and would want to return to the shadows. Arguably, this is the only world that the cave dweller has ever known. Heidegger (2011) emphasizes that the “removal of the shackles is thus not genuine emancipation” (28). Even in Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave* there is failure in emancipation. Heidegger clarifies, “Liberation is only genuine when he who is liberated thereby becomes free for himself, i.e. comes to stand in the ground of his essence” (28). For Plato, the question then becomes as to how genuine liberation can take place. How can one genuinely be liberated from the world that is merely shadows, that is merely an outline of the objects, and not the objects themselves?

The third stage, according to Heidegger (2011), refers to the genuine liberation that takes place. This occurs when the cave dweller leaves the cave and encounters the

sun. For both Plato and Heidegger, freedom then has a different meaning, since the removal of the shackles does not necessarily lead to emancipation or liberation. Even seeing the fire is not enough for complete liberation, as seen when the cave dweller acknowledges the fire, he/she might still want to return to the former life, to return to experiencing the shadows. It is therefore not enough to just know the difference between the objects and the shadows that they cast. For true liberation to take place, Heidegger (2011) writes:

To become free now means to see in the light, or more precisely, to gradually adapt from darkness to brightness, from what is visible *in* the brightness to brightness and light itself, such that the view becomes an *illuminating view* [*Lichtblick*](43, his italics).

Heidegger's interpretation of the *Allegory of the Cave* essentially emphasizes the recognition of a relatedness between the viewers and their surroundings. The cave dwellers were unable to recognize their surroundings. The cave dwellers failed to even recognize their perceived realities as shadows, which means that they weren't aware of their status as prisoners. Even when the shackles were removed, the outcome was not necessarily freedom, as some of the prisoners longed to return to the world of shadows. Heidegger (2011) explains his understanding of the *Allegory of the Cave*: "Understanding the cave allegory means grasping the history of human essence, which means grasping *oneself* in one's own most history" (56, his italics).

The fourth and final stage of the allegory, according to Heidegger (2011), refers to the return of the cave dweller. In Plato's allegory, the cave dweller faces a hostile welcoming upon his return, most likely resulting in the killing of the cave dweller who has seen the sun. In spite of this risk, he who has now seen the sun, returns to the cave to tell the others about his discovery, about the differentiation between what is real (seeing the objects), what is a shadow (a representational outline of the object), and how they are interlinked. The question then would also be why anyone would even want to return to the cave after having realized that they have been enslaved all their lives, that the world they thought to be true, is merely a representation and outline of the real objects. Heidegger (2011) writes:

It is clear from this that liberation does not achieve its final goal merely by ascent to the sun. Freedom is not *just* a matter of being *unshackled*,

not just a matter of being free *for* light. Rather, genuine freedom means *to be a liberator* from the dark (66, his italics).

Accordingly, the return to the cave is necessitated, since it is only through the return to the cave that the freedom is *realized*.

Heidegger's interpretation of the *Allegory of the Cave* provides a useful framework for understanding the nuances of the allegory. Clearly the allegory is multifaceted and rich in ideas. The role of the sun cannot be underestimated as the sun seems to present a universal theme throughout Plato's writing. "The sun is the offspring of the good" (Bloom, 1991: 188). Plato contrasts shadows and light, which means they are diametrically opposed to one another. Heidegger states that this difference between shadows and light is the transition from subjective to objective. It is with this that Plato differentiates between two different modes of knowledge, one being opinion and the other being knowledge, *episteme*. "When its object is something which is lit up by truth and reality, then it has intelligent awareness and knowledge" (Bloom, 1991: 188-9). It is based on this that Plato subsequently hierarchizes the different levels of truth and places the sun at the top of this hierarchy. In this reading, shadows represent the lowest form of truth, also known as *doxa* in Greek, which means opinion or belief. Opinions and beliefs are the lowest forms of knowledge to Plato since they oppose knowledge. Opinions and beliefs are unfounded, speculation and cannot be accurate. In contrast, Plato describes the sun as the highest form of truth, which Plato refers to as *episteme*, meaning true, objective and universal knowledge. In the end, Plato is explaining how the highest goal is truth.

The shadow aspect in Plato's writing can subsequently be seen as a means through which Plato strives towards *episteme*, i.e. knowledge. Adverse emotions would therefore fall under the category of irrational emotions, passions and appetites. In Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, the shadows on the cave walls emphasize how the shadows are void of truth, thereby rendering them subjective as unfounded beliefs. According to Plato, it is these unfounded beliefs that hinder the progression to *episteme*.

The greatest criticism to Plato's hierarchy of knowledge, shadows being the lowest and sun being the highest, is found in a very subtle argument in Nietzsche's writing. Nietzsche presents the shadow as both a companion, but also as the embodiment of negative feelings. Therefore, Nietzsche's usage of shadows is both the second and third definition of the shadow, which is why it will be written as *Shadow*.

### **Nietzsche and the *Shadow***

Nietzsche wrote rather cryptically about the *shadow*. As this argument unfolds, it becomes clear that Nietzsche's Shadow is a reaction to Plato's shadow allegory. Nietzsche incorporates the *shadow* using a connotative meaning of the shadow, and integrates the Shadow as a character in two instances in his writings. The shadow is written in two different ways in this section, since the shadow denotes the second definition – the shadow as companion – when the shadow is written as Shadow. The shadow also depicts itself as the manifestation of its own negativity – the third definition of the shadow – which is why the shadow is then written as *Shadow*, a combination of both the second and the third definition of the shadow.

Arguably, Nietzsche is criticizing Plato's hierarchy of knowledge whereby the sun as representative of absolute truth and shadows as opinions and unfounded beliefs. For Nietzsche, in his writings, he conflates the differences of Plato's light and shadow, essentially of the shadow as a lesser, insignificant and meaningless form. Nietzsche is criticizing Plato's hierarchy of knowledge by giving a voice to the Shadow.

The first instance of Nietzsche's writing about the *Shadow* is in *The Wanderer and his Shadow* (published around 1879) from the book titled *Human, All Too Human* (1996). The second appears in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (published between 1883 and 1891). Nietzsche's portrayal of the *Shadow* overlap in both instances through personification. The *Shadow* takes on human characteristics and interacts with the wanderer and with Zarathustra. I will first discuss how Nietzsche incorporated the *Shadow*, and then discuss the significance thereof.

In *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, the *Shadow* startles the wanderer by engaging him in conversation. The interaction is summarized as follow: The wanderer mentions that

he thought that the *Shadow* was a reflection of his vanity, which he realized was false when he engaged in conversation with his *Shadow*. The wanderer then states that he loves his shadow as much as he cherishes the light (Nietzsche, 1996: 394). Nietzsche is conflating the difference between the sun and the shadow. The wanderer says that he has neither preference for the light, nor for the shadow. Nietzsche, however, does not state what light and shadow are analogous to. The wanderer continues, reiterating Nietzsche's response to Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* by stating that the shadow and the light are not opponents, but rather have an affectionate quality similar to two hands holding each other. The *Shadow* responds that he hates the night and loves the world of humans because they are devotees of light, mirroring Plato's position. Nietzsche then retakes the discussion between the *Shadow* and the wanderer in the afterword.

When the wanderer meets the *Shadow* later, the *Shadow* admits that he has been slandered by the wanderer, to which the wanderer disagrees by saying that *Shadows* are better than human beings. The *Shadow* consequently responds that he has been called "importunate" by the wanderer, as the wanderer was initially annoyed during their first encounter. The *Shadow* goes on to state that "When man shuns the light, we shun man: our freedom extends that far" (Nietzsche, 1996: 394). The wanderer then refutes the *Shadow's* statement by stating that when the light shuns the humans, the *Shadow* abandons the humans. The *Shadow* consequently replies with:

It is often with sorrow that I have deserted you: it seems to me, who am greedy for knowledge, that much that is dark still adheres to man because I cannot always be with him. If the reward were a perfect knowledge of man I might even agree to be your slave (Nietzsche, 1996: 394).

The conversation ends with the wanderer stating that he does not want the *Shadow* to be his slave or to be like a dog. The *Shadow* in turn "blushes" with darkness and says that he has often been at the heels of the wanderer like a dog. The *Shadow* is continually speaking of how it is treated, how it is seen, and how it is dismissed. The *Shadow* is responding to the depiction and description that Plato has of the *Shadow*. The *Shadow* continually makes references to light and dark, but more specifically, references to how close the human and the *Shadow* are. How connected the human and the *Shadows* are despite their superficial connection, their annoyances with each other, and in a playful, quite cryptic way, they are closely connected than human is to

perfect knowledge, i.e. light. This interaction between the *Shadow* and the wanderer was still part of a more experimental passage in Nietzsche's writing, which was a prelude to *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (2006)<sup>4</sup>.

The second instance where Nietzsche incorporated the *Shadow* is in *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (2006). The interaction occurs whilst Zarathustra is traveling alone on a footpath, just as in *The Wanderer and his Shadow*. The *Shadow* calls out to Zarathustra. Initially Zarathustra is surprised to find that his *Shadow* is talking, even attempts to run away from his *Shadow*, but soon realizes that he is unable to outrun his *Shadow* (Nietzsche, 2006: 220-3). Zarathustra confronts his *Shadow*, and provides a description of the *Shadow* as a ghost who is "... thin, blackish, hollow and outdated [*"überlebt"*]" (Nietzsche, 2006: 221).

"'Forgive me,' answered the shadow, 'that it is I; and if you do not like me, well then, oh Zarathustra, for that I praise you and your good taste!'" (Nietzsche, 2006: 221). The *Shadow* has a self-deprecating attitude that certainly fits with the theme of the *shadow* as the portrayal of the negative view of the self. The *shadow* is the embodiment of those sentiments of Zarathustra, which Zarathustra clearly was trying to get away from. The shadow hid from Zarathustra at times but was always present. The *shadow* is undeniable, and as much as Zarathustra tries to avoid it, cannot evade it.

The interaction with the *Shadow* is a passing moment in Zarathustra's journey. So the question still remains, what does the shadow represent in Nietzsche's oeuvre? It can be argued that Nietzsche is responding to Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* as he seeks to redefine the interdependent relationship of the human shadow/*shadow*. The interaction of the shadow to Zarathustra is on one of dependency, one that gives voice to feelings of loathing and despair. Therefore, the shadow is described as a *shadow*, but Nietzsche also described the shadow as a companion, rendering it a Shadow. In *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's shadow is speaking as if it has already been discarded, and consequently speaks of Zarathustra not being able to completely free himself of the shadow, regardless of his intentions to do so. Nietzsche (2006) writes:

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<sup>4</sup> *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is a philosophical novel that portrays Zarathustra as turning traditional morality on its head. This text is very experimental and unique in style. This thesis will only use one aspect of this text, that is of the *Shadow* that interacts and engages with Zarathustra.

“When the devil sheds his skin, does his name not fall off too? For it too is skin. Perhaps the devil himself is – skin” (Nietzsche, 2006: 221). Nietzsche is expressing that it couldn't be possible for Plato to get rid of opinion as if it were merely possible to just get rid of the shadow/Shadow/*shadow*, just as much as the devil cannot change his very nature by changing his skin. Plato is not perhaps rejecting the shadow, but he is favouring the light at the cost of the shadow. Equally so with Plato's hierarchy of knowledge, where truth is the highest and opinion or *doxa* being the lowest, Nietzsche questions whether there is a possibility of even removing that lowest level that Plato compares to shadows. What would then happen if we were able to dispel with the Platonic shadows? The shadow for Nietzsche says, “Do I – still have a goal? A harbour toward which my sail turns? A good wind? Indeed, only the one who knows where he's sailing knows also which wind is good and which is his favourable wind.” (Nietzsche, 2006: 221).

The shadow is clearly speaking of how it can be orientated towards something if it has no beacon to guide it. Its only orientation can only be the light, or truth in the Platonic sense of the word. For the shadow to take its rightful place, it has to be orientated as a direct opposite of the light. The very reluctance of Zarathustra to acknowledge his shadow is the fulfilment of a Platonic ideal which is the dismissal of the shadow in favour of the light, i.e. a dismissal of opinion in favour of truth. Ultimately, the shadow cannot be denied, as much as Zarathustra tried to fulfil the Platonic ideal by only striving for truth and dismissing the shadows. As much as Zarathustra wanted to dismiss this idea, he had to concede that the shadow was his, that he was bound by the shadow whether he liked it or not. Nietzsche writes: “Thus spoke the shadow, and Zarathustra's face lengthened at these words. ‘You are my shadow!’ he said at last, with sadness” (Nietzsche, 2006: 222). Zarathustra responds and it is in his response that we find clear references to Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* that are far more surreptitiously done than one would expect. The first reference is the enchained, the ones who are captured down in the caves, forced to stare at the shadows and believe that the shadows are their truth, “Have you ever seen how captured criminals sleep? They sleep peacefully, they enjoy their new security” (Nietzsche, 2006: 222). This also harkens the sentiments of ‘ignorance is bliss’. The second reference to the *Allegory of the Cave*, is when Zarathustra suggests to the shadow to go to Zarathustra's resting place, which is the caves. The shadow says that he is weary, to which Zarathustra

responds. “Then go up to my cave! There leads the path to my cave. And now I have to run away from you quickly again. Already it’s as though I’m covered in shadow” (Nietzsche, 2006: 222). It is as if Nietzsche is locating this shadow towards its home, which is the caves wherein the shadow will find peace and rest. Nietzsche is not explicitly referencing Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*, but there seems to be enough to suggest that Nietzsche is very critical of Plato’s conception of epistemology, i.e. the hierarchical nature of knowledge.

With regards to the physical shadow used by Nietzsche, the *Shadow* in *The Wanderer and his Shadow* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* both embody all three denotative definitions of the shadow. Nietzsche is effectively incorporating the full scope of the definition of shadow in his writings. The first definition of the shadow is clear in his description of the shadow, especially when the shadow is described as “thin, blackish, hollow” (Nietzsche, 2006: 221). The shadow also fits the second dictionary definition of a Shadow. The Shadow is described as an autonomous character. He is able to converse and express thoughts and feelings. In other words, Nietzsche’s writing shows that the shadow is not merely an illustration of a mode of knowledge as found in Plato’s writings, but that the shadow has taken on a life of its own. Yet, the shadow in its nature is defined by who is casting the shadow or whom he belongs to. Therefore, the shadow is inseparable from the human character (i.e. Zarathustra or the Wanderer). This is seen when Zarathustra attempts to run away from the shadow, but the shadow continues to follow him.

The third definition of the shadow is also clear when the *shadow* speaks of its anxiety and sadness, but more importantly, of its doubts and how it feels that it does not have a direction, a goal or a home. In other words, the *shadow* does not have a stable and fixed reference point to orientate itself. The *shadow* gives voice to the insecurities and doubts which creates the impression that these characteristics are ever present, yet always at a slight distance, even a dissonance.

Nietzsche is counteracting Plato by describing an interaction between the wanderer and his shadow, and between Zarathustra and his shadow, as a critical reflection on Plato’s hierarchy of knowledge. Nietzsche counteracts Plato in a very subtle way. The Nietzschean *Shadow* illustrates in a sardonic way how unachievable it would be to

completely separate the light and shadow. How would this shadow subsequently respond, especially if Nietzsche lends a voice to this discarded *Shadow*?

## **Jung's Shadow**

Where Plato and Nietzsche incorporate the notion of shadow into their writings in epistemological ways, Jung uses psychoanalytical language to describe the shadow as a reflection of negative emotions and sensations of the human consciousness. When Jung uses the terminology *shadow*, he has a very specific application in mind. He states, "By Shadow I mean all the 'negative' side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficiently developed functions and the contents of the personal unconscious" (Jung, Vol. 7, para. 5; in Kerbelker, 1997: 16).

One can even go as far as to describe the shadow as a personification of all those aspects and qualities that are deemed unacceptable by the conscious self. (O'Connor, 1985: 47; in Kerbelker, 1997: 16). According to Jung (1963), the shadow is the inferior part of the individual's personality that is embedded in the unconscious (417). Therefore, the shadow represents the repressed aspects of the individual that he/she is struggling to confront. Any idea of the self that does not comply with how one would like to view oneself is repressed and then embodied by the repressed *shadow*.

Jung's notion of shadow has no prescribed content, nor clearly defined scope of what is and what is not *shadow*. Jung employs the shadow as a generalization of those concepts that are deemed "unacceptable", be they feelings, impulses, and urges. In fact, anything that can be deemed contrary to the idealized version of the consciously-aware self. Jungian treatment illustrates that, "[the shadow] causes a cleavage and a tension of opposites which in their turn seek compensation in unity" (Jung, 1989: 367). All those rejected, and subsequently repressed aspects collectively form the shadow, that is recognized through symbols. Jung spoke of dreams, but in this case it is also applicable to artworks in so far as they could also elicit those reactions. So much so that they can "strain our psyche to the breaking point" (367). Jung adds, "The clash, which is at first of a purely personal nature, is soon followed by the insight that the subjective conflict is only a single instance of the universal conflict of opposites" (368).

Through the intense dialogue with Zarathustra, Plato's allegory articulates a narrative of hierarchies of knowledge, enslavement and illusion. Nietzsche consequently describes the complex and compelling relationships to his *Shadow*. Jung's psychoanalysis uses the shadow self as a way of describing our darker natures. In these complex ways, I hope to engage with many parts of the shadow, the *shadow* self and the Shadow character. I see my sculptures as embodying the walking, moving, fluid persona of the *shadow*. That one can reflect on my own autobiographical narrative, engage with the viewer about the shadow psyche and possibly elicit the viewer's own *shadows*.

Embedded in these investigations are sensations of anguish, forlornness and despair. These are lived experiences that are articulated through these materials. These shadow figures become the projection of my own shadow, the externalization of my own fears and doubts onto a shape determined by the silhouette of my own body obstructing a light source. The disproportionate sizes of all four sculptures (Figure 1, 4, 5 and 6) emphasize the varying degrees of impact that these feelings and emotions can have. That all three sculptures are presented in isolation from each other highlight the loneliness that accompanies these extreme emotions.

## **Chapter Two- *Nude Existence* series- Existentialism and Sartre**

The aim of this chapter is to link and discuss the theories of existentialism to my own sculptures. The *Nude Existence* series is a collection of sand castings that are inspired by Sartre's existential writings. This chapter will also highlight the main tenets of Sartre's existentialism, as well as the emotions relevant to this thesis, namely anguish, forlornness and despair.

### **Nude Existence series**

The *Nude Existence* series is an investigation into the fragmented body. This series of work is inspired by Sartre's *Nausea* (1965) and consists of various sand cast sculptures. The work is created by forming an impression in the sand and pouring plaster of paris into the cavity of sand. In order to create the impression, I use my own body and in other instances animal vertebrae and bones. The *Nude Existence* series is a study of the naked human body in relation to pressure, burial and vulnerability. These sand cast sculptures are relatively light in colour and reference coral-like texture as seen in the image below (seen in Figure 8).



Figure 8: Manuela Holzer, Detail photograph of: *Rupture* (2015). Sand and plaster of paris. 105x 98x 15 cm.

The overflow (rupturing) of the plaster around the cavity often take on these coral-like textures which contrast to the relatively smooth texture of the casts. Each of the faces, spines and body parts are life-size due to the fact that the sculptures were cast from my body. The faces, for example, are able to accentuate every detail, providing an unforgiving honesty and captures the body in its true nakedness (seen in Figure 9).



Figure 9: Manuela Holzer, Detail photograph of: *Rupture* (2015). Sand and plaster of Paris. 105x 98x 15 cm.

All of these sculptures are extremely fragile which speaks to a sense of emotional fragility and vulnerability. The process of making the work includes the immersion of the face and body into the sand. This creates a feeling of suffocation and burial. The impressions left in the sand captures the facial contortions of distress and even being overwhelmed. The sensations that accompany the sculpting process include the pressure, weight and texture of the ground. As a result, the plaster appears like sand or stone due to the textures adhering to the surface of the wet plaster. It is this ambiguity of soft and hard material that speaks to me of the vulnerability and force inherent in the work.

The sculptures (seen in Figure 10) are installed in such a way that the viewer is able to walk around the arrangement of fragmented forms whilst looking down onto them. In this installation I hoped to create a sense of recognition through the arrangement of work to allow for the viewer to imagine their own face and body pressed in to the sand.



Figure 10: Manuela Holzer, Installation view of Sand-cast sculptures. Sand and plaster of paris. 600x 500x 600 cm.

In the sculpture *Withdrawn* (Figure 11) the process of casting resulted in an unusual manifestation of the body. The foetal position is one where the leg is bent at the knee, reaching toward the chest of the figure with the thigh touching the right elbow. The back of the figure is hunched forward and the head is curled in towards the chest and the arm. The sculpture was inspired by a quote in Sartre's *Nausea* (1965), which reads:

I dropped to the bench, I no longer even knew where I was; saw the colours slowly spinning around me, I wanted to vomit. And there it is: since then the Nausea hasn't left me, it holds me in its grip (33).

It is in this instance that the character in the novel *Nausea* (1965) becomes aware of the responsibility of his existence. As will be explained in more detail later, the feelings of anguish, despair and forlornness in the novel are cloaked in the physical experience of the nausea through physical and psychological suffering.

The sculpture also creates the impression of a buried body due to the pressure that the sand has inflicted on the body that subsequently distorts the body's shape. The way the body parts penetrate the surface of the coral-like texture created by the sand also reinforces the idea of the buried body. The image is a metaphorical representation of the weighty and suffocating feelings and sensations that are associated with tension, repression and anxiety

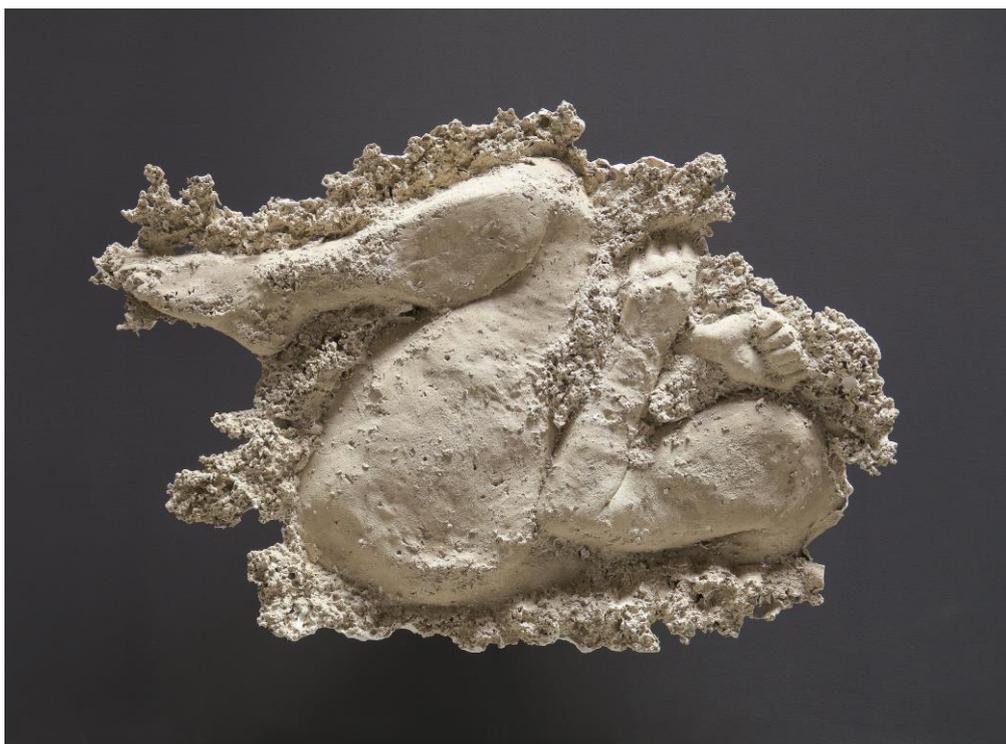


Figure 11: Manuela Holzer, *Withdrawn* (2015). Sand and plaster of Paris. 124x 88x 17 cm.

The second sculpture, *Rupture* (seen in Figure 12), is a combination of various body parts. The body parts presented are arms, hands and a face in the centre. The face in the centre has both eyes closed and shows the impact of the sand on the face through the facial expression. Around the face are several arms, recognizable through the elbows and hands. Looking at the sand cast, one might be uncertain if the sculpture represents the body of one person or several people. This gives the illusion of various people or bodies being buried under the sand with only a few sections protruding from the surface.



Figure 12: Manuela Holzer, *Rupture* (2015). Sand and plaster of Paris. 105x 98x 15cm.

The third sculpture, *Suffocation* (Figure 13), is slightly smaller than the first two sculptures. It consists only of one sand-cast face. In this sculpture only the right half of the face is visible. Due to the impact of the sand on the face becomes distorted, as seen through the angle of the nose, the eye-lids and the mouth. The process of sand casting forces the flesh in the cheeks to pull back slightly that emphasize the cheek bones. I created a range of cast faces from different angles. The sand casting of the face was inspired by a quote from Sartre's *Nausea* which read, "I would so like to let myself go, forget myself, sleep. But I can't. I am suffocating: existence penetrates me everywhere, through the eyes, the nose, the mouth..." (Sartre, 1965: 181).

It is this quote that inspired me to press my face into the sand and to physically emulate the sensations expressed in the quote. By pressing the face into the sand I was confronted not only by suffocation and darkness, but also the sand penetrating every orifice in my head. The outcome of this sand casting process captures the facial expression as can be seen in Figure 13.

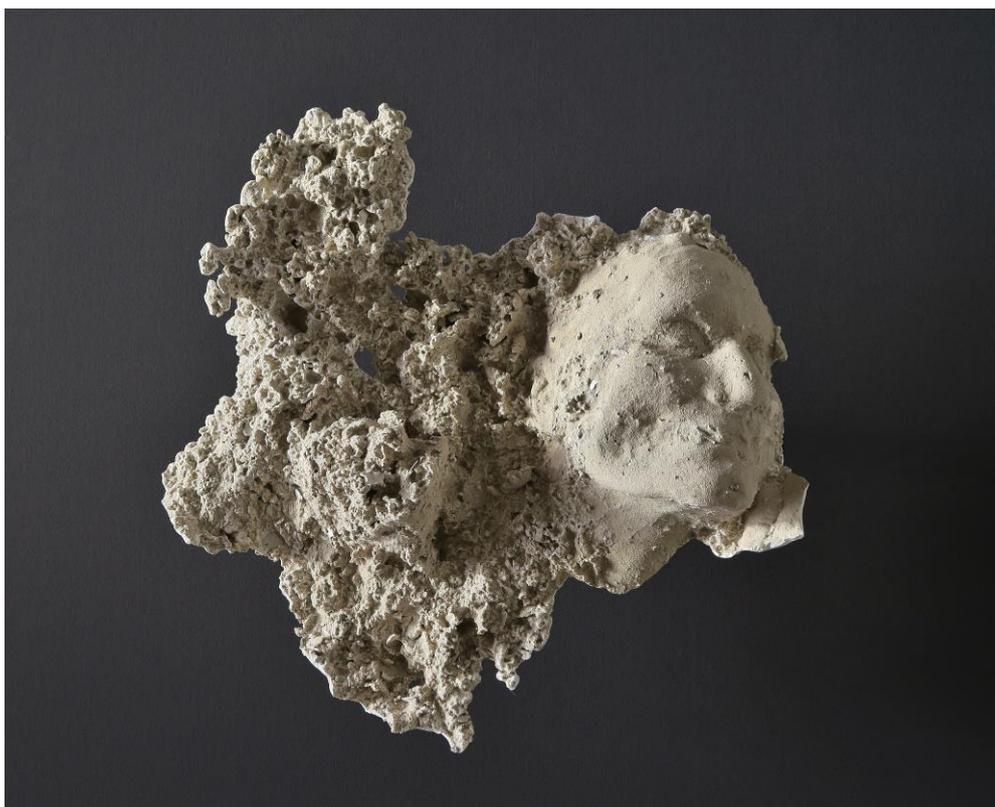


Figure 13: Manuela Holzer, *Suffocation* (2015). Sand and plaster of Paris. 43x 46x 6 cm.

The fourth sculpture, *Stripped* (Figure 14), is the result of casting an Eland spine in the sand. I cast the spine from both the front and the back in various sculptures. In this particular sculpture, I chose the side that emphasised the ribs, vertebra and hipbones. The series of spine sculptures were also inspired by a quote in Sartre's *Nausea* (1965), which reads:

I dreamed vaguely of killing myself, to destroy at least one of these superfluous existences. But even my death itself would have been superfluous. Superfluous, my corpse, my blood on these pebbles, between these plants, in the depths of this charming park. And the decomposed flesh would have been superfluous in the earth which would receive it and my bones, finally, cleaned, stripped, neat and clean as teeth, would also have been superfluous; I was superfluous for all time (184 - 185).

Sartre's quote speaks to the emotions of anguish, forlornness and despair in relation to the resignation to one's fate while being responsible for one's choices. The sculpture (Figure 14) focuses on the physical attributes of the body by emphasizing the spine and the ribs. It is as if they were discovered in the ground by an archaeologist or a

forensic scientist to uncover, decipher and examine after the flesh has decomposed. The potential narratives of the work is that these fragments are remnants of the past, the last vestige of a life lived. These forms can be seen as a symbolic expression of skeletal remains. The sculpture extends from the ribs into the cast sand. This emphasis on the physical attributes of the body can be seen in Figure 14.

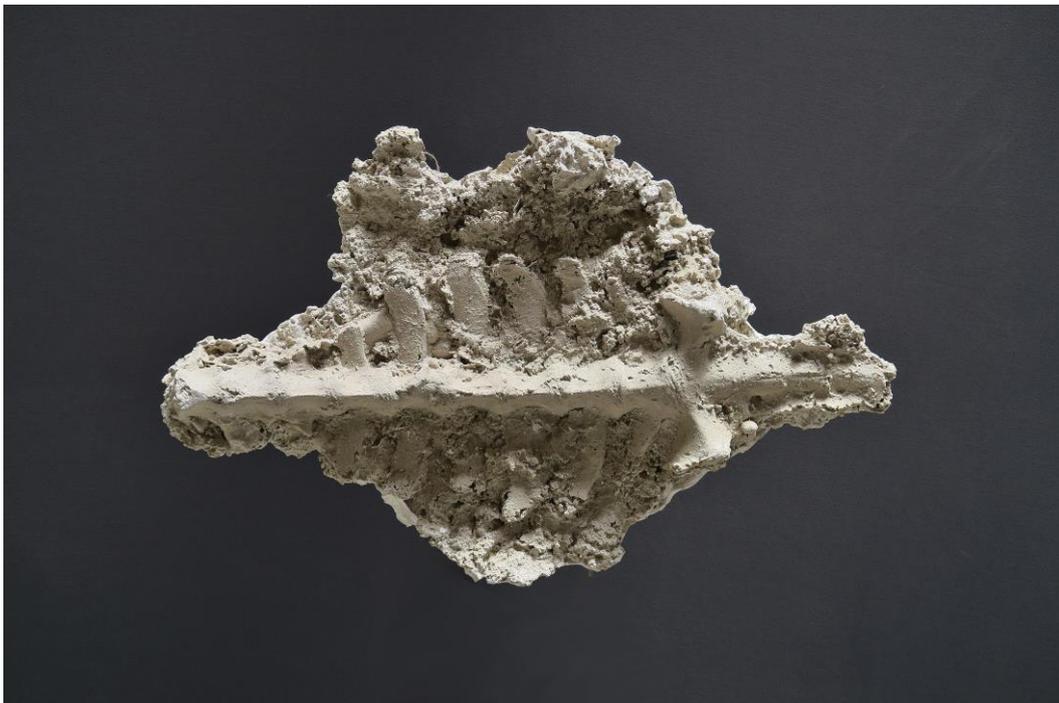


Figure 14: Manuela Holzer, *Stripped* (2015). Sand and plaster of Paris. 76x 51x 17 cm.

The installation of the *Nude Existence* series will be presented in such a way as to allow for the work to float. Presented in a dark room with spotlights on each sculpture, the floor is blackened so that the sand cast sculptures appear to hover in the darkness.

The next section will elaborate on Sartre's existentialism, which has only been mentioned in passing until this point. Yet, no great detail has been conveyed as to the extent that existentialism has inspired this paper, nor what these emotions purport.

### **Sartre's Existentialism**

Jean-Paul Sartre places the focus of his writings on the individual experience that emphasizes the individual's role within his/her decision-making processes.

Existentialism is a combination of Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger's ontology and how philosophy can purport a way of life. In Sartre's 1946 lecture, *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946), he gave a broader definition for existentialism. This lecture will form the basis of explaining Sartre's existentialism by placing emotions and the experience of those emotions at the forefront of explaining the human condition. Existentialism effectively touches upon how one should live, how one should approach life, and proposes a very informal morality based ethics. Sartre takes a very firm stance in the way one ought to live. It is in light of his ethical stance that Sartre elaborates on the emotions that form the foundation of this thesis, namely anxiety, angst, dread and forlornness. This section will therefore focus on the following three points. First, to explain how existentialism places subjectivity at the forefront of its philosophical approach. Existentialism is essentially grounded in the subjective experience and perspective. Second, to explain the prescriptive aspects of Sartre's existentialism, how one should live, how one should guide one's actions, and the importance of taking responsibility for one's choices. Thirdly, how the consequences of Sartre's existentialism inevitably leads to and explains the emotions of anxiety, forlornness and dread.

### **Subjectivity as central**

Subjectivity is pivotal to existentialism. Sartre even makes several references to Heidegger throughout *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1947). Sartre and Heidegger are both linked through their phenomenological background. Heidegger, just like Sartre, was also greatly influenced by the German phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl. The importance of the phenomenological tradition for both philosophers, is demonstrated in the technique of phenomenology: "the term 'phenomenology' expresses a maxim which can be formulated as 'To the things themselves!'" (Heidegger, 1962:50). Phenomenology, therefore, allows Sartre to isolate the individual experience and use that experience as the focal point in his investigation to devise a philosophical movement from the perspective of the individual.

Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1962), originally published in 1923, had tremendous influence on French and continental philosophy. The central point of his philosophical writings emphasized Being and *Dasein* [being-there]. *Dasein* is a very

problematic notion for Heidegger, since *Dasein* does not conform to any single definition, but is used as “a term which is purely an expression of its Being [*als reiner Seinsausdruck*]” (Heidegger, 1962: 33, original German included). In other words, he coined a term that encompasses the notion of what it means *to be* that includes experience, goals, desires, ambitions, emotions and called it *Dasein*. “*Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence – in terms of a possibility of itself” (33). *Dasein* is a very ambivalent term, but Heidegger prefers it that way, since it is non-committal to a single definition. To further emphasize and embed this point in Heidegger’s philosophy, he introduces the notion of *jemeinigkeit*, which is loosely translated as *mineness*. “The Being of any such entity is *in each case mine* [*Das Sein dieses Seiendes ist je meines*]” (67, authors italics, original German included). *Dasein* is concerned with its own Being, and therefore conducts itself as such. As Dreyfus notes (1991) “Heidegger first establishes that it is *Dasein* who is trying to make sense of being” (28), which is why Heidegger uses *Dasein* as the departure point for his investigation.

Heidegger’s study focuses on the question of what it means to be. Heidegger’s entire study tries to focus on the issue without placing a primacy on the *Cogito* as a conscious observer, or a first-person narrative. This is the biggest point of departure between Sartre and Heidegger. “Sartre insists that research on human reality should start with *cogito*” (Weimin, 2007: 258). Sartre is also concerned with the question of what it means to be, just like Heidegger, but examines the question from an individual perspective. The differences between Heidegger’s philosophical investigation and Sartre’s existential endeavour becomes clear in their respective viewpoints regarding the role of the *Cogito*.

The link between Sartre and Heidegger is as Rockmore (1995) states, “Sartre identifies his own atheistic existentialism with Heidegger’s view of human reality, or the idea that fundamentally human being exists” (84). Heidegger published *A Letter on Humanism* (1947) as a response to Sartre’s *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1946) in order to distance his theory from Sartre. Rockmore (1995) describes the response as follow: “In the ‘Letter on Humanism’, Heidegger’s criticism of Sartre, whose effort to compare or even ally himself to the master thinker is rejected as entirely misbegotten, is sharp, direct, and devastating” (96). The point of contention between

Heidegger and Sartre lies in the prioritization of existence and essence, which Rockmore even goes so far as to say, “has nothing in common with *Being and Time*” (97). For Heidegger (1962), “*The essence of Dasein lies in its existence*” (68, his italics), which Heidegger explains as, “The ‘essence’ [“Wesen”] of this entity lies in its ‘to be’ [“Zu-sein”]” (68). To reiterate, the notion of *Dasein* is the very foundation of Heidegger’s examination. Its essence is found in its existence, because without existence we cannot possibly be talking about being-there, or Being in general. Heidegger’s significance to Sartre and this thesis can therefore be neatly summarized in the following quote:

The two characteristics of Dasein which we have sketched – the priority of ‘*existentia*’ over *essentia*, and the fact that Dasein is in each case mine [die Jemeinigkeit] – have already indicated that in the analytic of this entity we are facing a peculiar phenomenal domain (Heidegger, 1962: 68, his italics, original German included).

Heidegger is essentially arguing for placing Being at the forefront of his philosophical investigation by emphasizing existence and the conditions of existence. Being is only concerned for itself and its own well-being. Heidegger, unlike Sartre, is not centralizing the cogito, which is why Heidegger’s *Dasein* has no narrativistic perspective. *Dasein* doesn’t speak in terms of *I think, therefore I am*, which also makes it all the more difficult to speak of Being and what it means *to be there* [*Da-sein*]. It is for that reason that Heidegger emphatically states that “*The essence of Dasein lies in its existence*” (68, original italics). As Dreyfus (1991) elaborates, “Heidegger calls this self-interpreting way of being *existence*” (15).

### ***Existence precedes essence***

The difference between Sartre and Heidegger becomes more apparent when Sartre writes, “existence precedes essence” (1947: 19-20). This difference might appear to be one of semantics, but as Barrett (1964) points out, Sartre is remaining within a Cartesian tradition, namely that, “I think, therefore I am” needs to be reconstructed to read “I am, therefore I think” (32). Existence is placed first and foremost. It is *existing* that determines *essence*. Sartre explains, in his own words, “We mean that man first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterwards defines himself” (1947: 20). It is this sentiment that allows Sartre to free the individual from

any and all constraints with regards to his/her subjectivity. This, however, also means that one is fully and completely responsible for one's actions and decisions. Sartre even asks whether this is where the resistance to existentialism comes from, "Can it be that what really scares them in the doctrine I shall try to present here is that it leaves to man a possibility of choice?" (14). The realm of choice here is not limited to everyday decisions, such as what to buy, where to go, what to do, but Sartre is opening up the possibility of choice to apply to our very existence. "If man, as the existentialist conceives him, is indefinable, it is because at first he is nothing" (18). Combined with Sartre's emphasis on subjectivity and the freedom of choice, existentialism opens for all kinds of possibilities. "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself" (Sartre, 1947: 18).

This is an essential point of existentialism, whereby one's freedom is overemphasized. Sartre uses this as the basis of his ethical approach. The key concept in Sartre's ethics is the word, *responsibility*. "Thus, existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to make the full *responsibility* for his existence rest on him" (Sartre, 1947: 19). This is what our actions, thoughts and behaviours should be geared towards. For Sartre, the fully ethical act coincides with the value in what we choose. This difference also establishes the dictum that existence precedes essence, since we do make conscious decisions, but what underlines those decisions and ultimately precedes those decisions is the important notion of 'will'. Even before we have started to make conscious decisions, we already have a 'will' which compels us to decide and to choose. This, for Sartre, means that any and all decisions are not isolated nor strictly of concern to the proprietor of the decisions, but in the end, affects everyone. Our decisions are never inconsequential, nor in isolation.

For Sartre, it is a result of this innate freedom and the consequence of being fully responsible for that freedom that gives rise to emotions such as anguish, forlornness and despair. It is in the face of that responsibility that gives rise to a very existential experience that is the focus of this thesis. It is a result of this freedom that Sartre discusses the subsequent emotions that are experienced in terms of the existentialist paradigm that emphasizes responsibility, freedom and choice.

## ***Anguish, Forlornness, Despair***

This thesis focuses on the portrayal of certain emotions in sculptural art. These emotions are also found and elaborated on in Sartre's existentialist theory. The three emotions are anguish, forlornness and despair that will first be explained and then elaborated on.

### **Anguish**

Anguish, for Sartre, occurs with the realization and the acknowledgement of the magnitude of the responsibility of a decision. Sartre (1947) explains:

The man who involves himself and who realizes that he is not only the person he chooses to be, but also a law-maker who is, at the same time, choosing all mankind as himself, cannot help escape the feeling of his total and deep responsibility (22).

This overwhelmed feeling of distress or anguish, in the face of the prospects that a single decision could alter the course of one's life with far reaching consequences, be it positive or negative, seems more than possible. For Sartre, it is even made worse by the fact that one does not know what the outcome could be, or will be. Without knowing the future, without knowing what all the variables are, it is in fact impossible to fully comprehend the consequences of one's decision. Therefore, the freedom to choose is important for Sartre. Sartre recognizes that this could even lead to inaction or even indecision when the decision is too important or too drastic to make. Yet, Sartre concedes, "That doesn't keep them from acting; on the contrary, it is the very condition of their action" (25).

### **Forlornness**

For Sartre, forlornness has a very specific definition and context to which it is applied. Sartre does use the notion of religion, specifically Judeo-Christian religion, but this notion can be extended to any form of higher power. By forlornness, Sartre (1947) means "only that God does not exist and that we have to face all the consequences of

this” (25). Forlornness is essentially that feeling that occurs when responsibility cannot be deferred to someone else, for Sartre, especially not to God. This over reliance towards a higher being to act ethically, to act morally and to act just is problematic. That is a deferral of the responsibility that accompanies our decisions. To act for the sake of an imperative that originates outside of one’s control. To this, Sartre responds with, “Man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet, in other respects is free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does” (27).

## **Despair**

For Sartre, despair is probably the shortest discussed of the emotions, which he describes as follow: “the term has very simple meaning. It means that we shall confine ourselves to reckoning only with what depends upon our will, or on the ensemble of probabilities which make our action possible” (34). Sartre is emphasizing that despair is the acknowledgement that there are some things that are just out of our control. That feeling of not having control or being fully in control of the situation, due to a variety of factors, inevitably leads to the feeling of despair.

All three emotions therefore rely heavily on the responsibility that lies with every single one of our decisions that rely solely on us. We are, as Sartre put it, “condemned to be free” (27). These emotions are the consequences of this freedom, especially in light of the magnitude of these decisions and the anticipation of the potential ramifications.

## **Sartre’s Nausea**

In order to demonstrate how these emotions may find expression in the form of literature, I will be looking at Sartre’s *Nausea* (1965). *Nausea* is the first and arguably the greatest novel that Sartre has written (Beale, 2010: 19). The novel was first published in 1938 and sparked great controversy amongst philosophers and readers. The debate was based on whether a fictional piece of literature could be acknowledged as a philosophical text. This is problematic as it is not a dry academic piece such as Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* (1969). *Nausea* was regarded by some

critics as autobiographical, but some also found it rather too subjective (Kumar, 1969: 10-11).

The fact that *Nausea* is a novel allows for the application of emotions such as anguish, forlornness and despair to rise to the surface. The novel was written from a first-person perspective, from the viewpoint of the main character, Antoine Roquentin. He is filled with these emotions of anxiety. The reader is able to experience the world through the eyes of Roquentin who is grappling with what is essentially the human condition, namely coming to terms with one's superfluous existence (Beale, 2010:34). Thus the strength of the novel is presenting the emotions as a personal experience, which cannot be demonstrated in an objective, philosophical, academic text. In other words, it is through an individual's experience that one can find the key to understanding how anguish, forlornness and despair manifest in one's consciousness (Beale, 2010:115).

*Nausea* (1965) is presented in the form of diary entries that are centred on the personal experiences of the character Roquentin. I will summarize the key moments in the book that are relevant to highlight how Sartre used the emotions of anguish, forlornness and despair. The novel begins with Roquentin settling in Bouville after his extensive travels overseas. He is attempting to write a book about a deceased historian, the Marquis de Rollebon. Roquentin comes across as a recluse, who prefers watching the world from a distance.

Writing the book on the Marquis bores him, therefore he starts to analyse himself and his experiences in the world. In the first few pages, Roquentin becomes aware of a sensation that he describes as the nausea. He starts to see people and objects differently, yet he struggles to articulate what may have changed. Roquentin starts to feel uneasiness and disgust toward the external world. Even looking at his own face in the mirror fills him with thoughts of revulsion.

Later, Roquentin suffers from a strong attack of nausea. "... I dropped to the bench, I no longer even knew where I was; saw the colours slowly spinning around me, I wanted to vomit. And there it is: since then the Nausea hasn't left me, it holds me in its grip." (Sartre, 1965:33). Roquentin seems overwhelmed by the people and objects that surround him. The way in which he describes the people around him is disturbing

and creates discomfort in the reader. Later on, the nausea eventually subsides and he decides to take a stroll along the streets of Bouville at night. While walking along the Boulevard Noir he describes the street as a “black hole”. “I have gone out of range of the street lamp; I enter the black hole. Seeing my shadow at my feet melt into the darkness, I have the impression of plunging into icy water” (p. 42). In the darkness he feels sheltered from the nausea.

Throughout the novel the smallest decision causes him anguish due to the implied responsibility of that decision. After a few days Roquentin receives a letter from his past lover, Anny. She writes to him in order to ask whether they could meet. Roquentin, is eager to see her, yet is simultaneously reluctant. The responsibility of choosing to meet her or not weighs heavily on his mind. In this sense he is filled with the anguish of the decision and he is simultaneously forlorn because only he must make a decision.

Halfway through the novel, Roquentin realizes the reason for the change in his mindset and the bouts of nausea. He starts to understand that it is the concept of his own superfluous existence that is making him uneasy. He not only realizes that he struggles to justify his existence but also that he is completely free. The implication of that freedom results in feelings of anguish, forlornness and despair.

One diary entry simply reads: “*I must not be frightened*” (Sartre, 1965:104, original italics). This is once again an example of Roquentin coming to terms with the anguish and forlornness that he has learned to face.

Once again a form of panic takes a hold of Roquentin. The anguish that Roquentin is feeling is so overwhelming that he starts asking himself questions such as: “Where shall I go? Where shall I go? *Anything* can happen” (Sartre, 1965:115). His heart is described as beating strongly. In his panic, he attempts to discern what is in his control and what is not by attempting to look at everything simultaneously. In my opinion, it is in this section that he is confronted with what is beyond his control. This fills him with a sense of despair. His imagination runs wild with frightening imagery of an underwater monster and doors opening by themselves. Roquentin describes everything as though it were not real and he is anticipating another attack of nausea. Roquentin starts to wonder if he is indeed a figment of the imagination (Sartre, 1965: 127).

Roquentin comes to the full realization of the implication of his existence when he is attempting to write more about the Marquis. He is filled with thoughts of what it means to exist and what comprises his meaningless existence. He opens his penknife and cuts himself until he draws blood. He expresses satisfaction that the pool of blood left behind has stopped being part of himself and his existence (Sartre, 1965: 145-6). Roquentin has deduced that everything is meaningless, including existence.

Later, he discusses his thought processes about existence with the Autodidact. Before the two men part, Roquentin once again has a strong attack of the nausea. He feels a whole body shudder and the voice of the Autodidact buzzes in his ear. Roquentin calls the nausea, “a blinding revelation” (Sartre, 1965: 176). The nausea attack has made him fully aware of his and the world’s existence. Later, Roquentin comes to the realization that the nausea which refuses to leave him is part of himself. The revelation of a superfluous and absurd existence continues as he sits in the municipal park where he is confronted with the presence of the root of a chestnut tree. He asks himself questions about existence: “‘But why,’ I thought, ‘why so many existences, since they all resemble one another?’ What was the use of so many trees which were all identical? So many existences failed and stubbornly begun again and once more failed- like the clumsy efforts of an insect which had fallen on its back? (I was one of those efforts)” (Sartre, 1965:190).

The overemphasis of the word nausea throughout the book serves to highlight the appearance of the emotions of nausea as a bodily sensation in relation to the existential experience of his freedom. The misapprehension of nausea as the physical feeling instead of the realization that he is responsible for his existence continually repeats throughout the novel. It is this physical nausea that is captured in the sand castings in the *Nude existence* series that is emphasized through the process of creating the moulds of my face. It is this revelation of infinite responsibility, which continually manifests as a physical reaction that can be described as either anguish, forlornness, or despair.

My sculptures represent an exploration in and of my own experiences of anguish, forlornness and despair. Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1947) and *Nausea* (1965) both provide the vocabulary to create a visual representation of not only those emotions, but also to personalize them in such a way that they are relevant to my own experiences. These sculptures are informed by Sartre's existentialist texts, but incorporate my own experiences of the world.

The installations of the *Nude Existence* series provide a way for the viewer to move through the fragments of the body and the various subtle variations of all the different faces that have gone through the moulding process. I approach the autobiography of psychological suffocation, the fragility and failure inherent to the casting process as a way to express the nature of my own human condition and heightened sense of existential dread. Faced with the enormity of doubt and fear in my own life- the notion of burying and pushing into the ground is one that brings form to indescribable feelings that Sartre would possibly call nausea that is elicits emotions of anguish, forlornness or despair.

## **Chapter Three- Claudel, Floro, Alexander and Kentridge**

The first two chapters of the thesis outlined the influences the shadow/Shadow/*shadow* and existentialism as seen in the writings of Plato, Nietzsche, Jung and Sartre on my own artworks. This third chapter will look at other visual examples that express similar themes of existential anguish, forlornness and despair through the use of the sculpted body.

There are a plethora of reactions, responses and variations to how people deal with or internalize anxiety, forlornness and despair. When looking at how I deal with the tensions, in the media, and the changing socio-political-economic landscape, my artworks attempt to glance into the way that I deal with those fears regardless of whether they are imaginary or real. These fears, legitimate or not, have caused me to retreat into an interior emotional landscape. It is this interior emotional landscape that is the canvas for portraying rich emotions, sentiments and feelings that are being conveyed to the viewer. It is because the viewers are familiar with these emotions themselves that they are able to identify with the themes in the artwork. Everyone is familiar with themes of loss, uncertainty, fear and the unknown. What seems most powerful is the feeling of not being able to do anything constructive in the face of large and persistent problems, the feelings of helplessness that may arise, and even forlornness (that we are abandoned and left to our own devices). Forlornness also means that there is no higher power to call upon to fix, solve or allay our worst fears. Especially when our fears are directed towards things that are completely out of our control, these include uncertainties such as doubts surrounding financial and political forces and factors.

The first section will focus on the artwork created by Camille Claudel, *Torso of a Crouching Woman* (1887). This section will include a discussion on the emotions of dread and anxiety by comparing the different applications of these rich emotions in Sartre's *Nausea* (1965) and Claudel's *Torso of a Crouching Woman* (1887). The differences as well as the similarities will be discussed in order to establish a meta-narrative concerning fear, angst and dread that comprises both the academic and

theoretical framework of existentialism in the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre and the practical and expressive sculptures of Camille Claudel.

The second section will focus on the artwork created by Rook Floro, *Shell* (2012). The usage of black materials also echoes the shadow theme that I have explored in this thesis. Hence the comparison is made with Jung's shadow whereby Floro's sculptures are described and seen as the portrayal of Floro's *shadow* in the form of the human body as an empty vessel that is filled with substance and significance.

The third and fourth sections will focus on two South African artists who have incorporated these complex emotions within their artwork to bring them to the fore. The two relevant artists are Jane Alexander and William Kentridge. It is the contention of this paper that anxiety, forlornness and despair are inherent to each culture. This also applies to the South African context. The intent of this section will be to illustrate how the South African context contributes towards a universalisation and generalization of anxiety, forlornness and despair, which in turn manifests in and through my own artmaking practice.

## **Camille Claudel and Rook Floro**

### **Camille Claudel**

The emphasis and significance of Camille Claudel's<sup>5</sup> artwork, for this thesis, lies predominantly with how her artwork was inspired by her emotions and experience of

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The fact that Claudel's artistic career was met with opposition was partly the cause for the images that she created. Claudel's art was a representation of her life in visual form. Her work was an expression of the human condition. She attempted to express love, destiny, desire and most importantly pain and agony. In other words, Claudel was able to capture what could be termed as the 'human drama' (Caranfa, 1999: 21).

In 1883 Claudel started working as an assistant to Rodin. Soon after, the two artists became lovers. Claudel also became his model, muse and confidante. Claudel and Rodin's artistic styles were and remain inextricably linked. She was not able to step out of Rodin's shadow throughout her artistic career (Van Uffelen, 2013: 7). The relationship between Rodin and Claudel, however, was problematic. Not only did her parents not approve of the relationship, but Rodin was also betraying his life companion, Rose Beuret, with the affair. Rodin and Claudel broke up after she had an abortion. The ending of the affair filled Claudel with agony that she expressed in the sculpture *The Age of Maturity*. In this sculpture she is represented on her knees reaching out to Rodin who is not only represented walking away from her but also portrayed wrapped in the arms of Rose Beuret (Burgon, 2012: 21).

events to inspire and influence her own art. Regarding the inseparability of Claudel's sculptures to her biographic background, Burgon (2012) writes, "Thus, by weaving threads of experience from her tumultuous life into her masterpieces, Claudel aimed to enhance her destiny and artistic merit" (2). It is for this reason that Burgon concludes, "Rather than simply imitate her surroundings, Claudel accomplished precisely what Schleiermacher describes as she captured the qualities of her inner life and carved them into visual form" (34). Paul Claudel, Camille's brother, was even quoted as saying, "A work by Camille Claudel ... is a sort of monument to inner thought" (Ayrat-Clause, 2002: 257; Burgon, 2012: 85).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a challenging era for female artists as the role of women at the time was one of servitude to her family and children. Even the artwork that women produced was supposed to reflect this femininity. In this sense Claudel was limited and stifled by her circumstances. She was supported by her father but not by her mother in her pursuit of sculpture. Showalter (1987) argues that the socio-political context and the male oppression of the 19<sup>th</sup> century caused many women mental breakdowns. This was because women were not allowed any intellectual or expressive outlets (147).

Claudel's sculptures place emphasis on personal, yet powerful emotions and experiences, which can be seen in the sculpture titled *Torso of a Crouching Woman* (1887). This sculpture is depicted in Figures 15 and 16.

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Considering the artworks that Claudel created after the affair ended, she was filled with anguish and forlornness. She was working through the emotions that were the consequences of her decision to engage in an affair with Rodin.

The last and final segment of Claudel's life that is of value to this thesis is her confinement in an asylum. Claudel was forcibly committed by her mother and brother in 1913, due to fits of hysteria and paranoia. Although Claudel and the doctors insisted that she was fit for release, her mother refused (Mathews, 2000:79). Claudel spent the rest of her life in the asylum and never sculpted again. Claudel died in the asylum in 1943. This tragic story is a reflection of despair, as Claudel, in this case, was a victim of her circumstance.



Figure 15 (left image) and 16 (right image):

Camille Claudel, *Torso of a Crouching Woman* (1887). Bronze, 35x 21x 19 cm. Collection: Paul Claudel.

The sculpture represents a solitary, fragmented female body. The sections of the body that are 'missing' are the head, the majority of the neck, the arms and the majority of the left leg. The remaining body alludes to the direction the absent head and limbs may have been facing. The sections of the body that remain reveal a pose that is similar to a foetal position. This position is a protective position, posturing the body to protect itself from any threat (imaginary or real). This particular position is most commonly associated with recoiling from either physical or emotional trauma. For Claudel, it can be interpreted that she is imprinting her personal experience, life, or reactions into her sculptures. Claudel's sculpture maintains a withdrawn pose, so too does the *Curling Shadow* (seen in Figure 2). That the body is even missing limbs that emphasize the fragility of the sculpture, or even the inability of the sculpture to defend itself. This fragmentation of the body and the lacking of limbs, in this work references classical ancient Greek and Roman figurative fragments. It also conveys the fragmentation of the body as indicative of physical or metaphorical emotional-trauma. Although robust, the sculpture gives the sense of literal and figurative 'falling apart'.

This can be read as a metaphorical 'falling apart' that is connected to a psychological vulnerability and fragility.

In Angelo Caranfa's book titled *Camille Claudel: a sculpture of interior solitude* (1999), Caranfa emphasises that the sculpted figure is deep in thought and seems to exhibit not only distress but also a calm and meditative melancholy. In his text, he quotes Paul Claudel's description: "... there I find... someone who seeks within herself a refuge against the danger, and not only against the past, but [also] against the present" (Caranfa, 1999: 76).

At the time of the creation of the artwork, the circumstances in Claudel's life greatly influenced her artwork: her tumultuous relationship with Rodin; her mother's disapproval of her choice to not conform to a woman's role, the dominance of the patriarchal world at the time and her exclusion at the *École des Beaux-arts*. The predominant emotions that Claudel experienced were continually in flux, vacillating between her internal conflicts and external life. Claudel's sculptures emanate from her own lived experiences which is an expressive vessel for Claudel to express her own internal conflict. Caranfa (1999) writes regarding Claudel's choice in using the female form, "reflects her understanding of the contingency and the fragility of existence" (104). These emotions encapsulate this fragility that is represented in her artworks.

*Torso of a Crouching Woman* (1887) and *Nausea* (1946) can both be seen express the human sense of anguish, forlornness and despair in formally different, but conceptually similar ways.

Sartre's existentialism provides a theoretical framework that can be used to analyse and explain the emotional sentiments in Claudel's sculptures. The similarities are the expression of emotion and the disturbing bodily experience.

*Torso of a Crouching Woman* (1887) is a 'mutilated' version of the earlier work titled, *Crouching Woman* (1885). The sculpture *Crouching Woman* (1885) can be seen in Figure 17. Claudel's work is largely autobiographical and has drawn from personal

experience to create her artworks (Dupré, 1988: 16). This disembodiment can be read as a conscious decision to literally take the body apart, limb from limb.

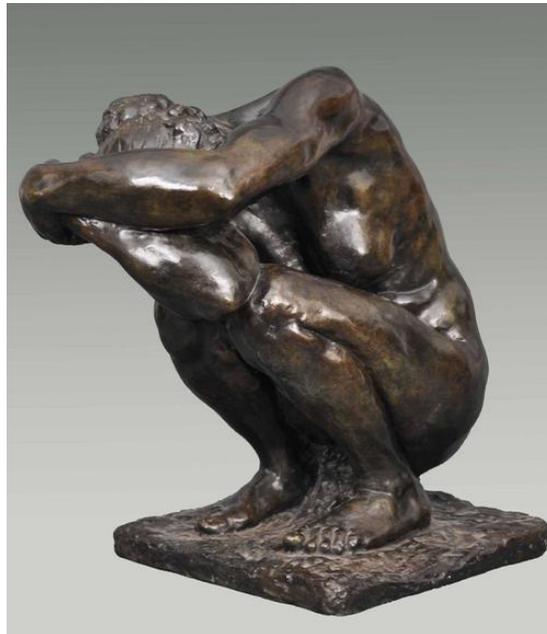


Figure 17: Camille Claudel, *Crouching Woman* (1885). Bronze 36x 23x 26 cm. Private Collection.

In Sartre's *Nausea* (1965) we also find a vivid description of pain and suffering. One is confronted with horrifying imagery that becomes more disturbing as the narrative unfolds. This narrative foreshadows the important existential questions, namely, what is our response when we are confronted with the nagging realization that we truly are in charge of our live decisions. For example, in *Nausea*, when Sartre (1965) reveals the daily life of Roquentin:

On the surface I was doing my accounts, automatically. Underneath were stagnating all those unpleasant thoughts which have taken the shape of unformulated questions, of mute astonishments which no longer leave me either by day or night. Thoughts about Anny, about my wasted life (246-7).

Sartre's use of a diary as a literary device was also selected by Sartre to better illustrate "Roquetin's struggle with his inner crisis" (Malhotra, 1969: 39). The described scenario allows the viewer a glimpse into the internal sufferings of the main character. In similar ways we can interpret Camille's sculpture as a diary entry- a visual articulation of her life and torment.

In the novel, Antoine Roquentin is in fact responsible for his choices. This leads to forlornness, whereby we truly are responsible for our choices and left to our own devices. In the face of these choices, a sense of bodily dislocation and fragmentation-of loss of limbs and disembodiment are central to both works.

Sartre's title, *Nausea* (1965), speaks to the definition of nausea as "a feeling of sickness with an inclination to vomit" (Stevenson, 2010: 1183), "a feeling of loathing or disgust" (*ibid*). This recoiling figure is central to both narratives of physical and emotional nausea, such as the physical manifestation of 'nausea' and emotions associated with existential anguish, forlornness and despair. The fragmented and 'mutilated' body gives voice to this sense of self repulsion, internal nausea and dread.

Antoine Roquentin in the *Nausea* (1965) reflects the need to inflict physical pain as a way to assert individual control over circumstances.

My saliva is sugary, my body is warm: I feel insipid. My penknife is on the table. I open it. Why not? In any case it would be a change. I put my left hand on the pad and I jab the knife into the palm. The movement was too sudden; the blade slipped, the wound is superficial. It is bleeding. And what of it? What has changed? All the same, I look with a feeling of satisfaction at the white paper, where, across the lines I wrote a little while ago, there is this little pool of blood which has at last stopped being me (145-6).

This need to cut himself is an attempt to make sense of the anguish and dread that the main character is feeling in the need to reassert control. The sculpture by Claudel does this in a similar manner; the sculpture is a representation of a fragmented woman. This means that Claudel, similarly to Antoine Roquentin, is metaphorically harming the body as a means to express existential anguish and dread when she presents the figure as fragmented and curled over.

## **Rook Floro**

Rook Floro<sup>6</sup> is also incorporating his internal conflicts to create several exhibitions and instalments. *Metamorphosis of Flux* is an exhibition of live performances and sculptures that illustrates his internal conflict. The exhibition aimed to express his struggles in choosing and pursuing his own identity and sense of paradoxical existence. The sculpture I choose to discuss in this thesis is named *Shell* (2012), which can be seen in Figures 18, 19 and 20.



Figure 18: Rook Floro, *Shell* (2012). Silicone and hot glue. 50x 80x 160 cm.

The sculpture is represented kneeling with both hands and knees supporting the weight of the figure. The head of the sculpture is faced downward, towards the hands of the figure. In some images the sculpture appears to be gazing at its own shadow. The arms are slightly bent at the elbows, which emphasises a gravitational pull

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<sup>6</sup> Rook Floro was born in Bangkok, Thailand in 1987. He completed his undergraduate studies in multimedia design at the University of Silpakorn. After completing his undergraduate degree he moved to Birmingham, England and obtained his Master's degree at the Birmingham School of Art in 2011. His style and approach to sculpting is very unique and in many ways stylistically represents the opposite to the very classical sculpting styles and materials of Claudel. Floro has greatly influenced my artworks, in as much as he has remained faithful in the portrayal of the human form, yet experimented in the postures and materials that he incorporates (*Shadow* by Thai artist Rook Floro, 2012).

towards the floor. From the head of the figure, along the back down to the feet, is a seam that reveals the hollow nature of the sculpture. The hands in the work give the impression of the figure being 'stuck', or sucked into the ground. The pose implies one of falling, vomiting, even defeat. This sculpture elicits strong emotional reactions, since it portrays a figure literally stuck in place. It cannot escape its predicament as if it has fallen to the ground and cannot get back up. This conjures up emotions of helplessness, which for many is a terrifying prospect. The sculpture presents a figure that has stopped trying to get up and seems to have resigned to its fate.

As the title suggests, the figure appears as a literal and metaphoric shell. The hollow form implies an emptiness and emotional/physical vacuum. The sculpture appears as a body that has collapsed and is warped. This disfigured and hollow body suggests a sense of physical and emotional fragility as seen in Figure 19.



Figure 19: Rook Floro, *Shell* (2012). Silicone and hot glue. 50x 80x 160 cm.

In addition, it can be seen that the use of dark materials reinforces the notion of the shadow self. Rich textures are created through the incorporation and manipulation of

plastic materials that contribute to the fragility and vulnerability of the work. At certain points the sculpting-material is extremely thin and fragile. It reveals a level of transparency emphasizing the fragility of the work (as seen in Figure 20).



Figure 20: Rook Floro, Detail photograph of: *Shell* (2012). Silicone and hot glue. 50x 80x 160 cm.

Floro explains that the sculptures are an externalization of his interior personal world. He aims to embody his struggles with defining his own existence and identity (Shadow by Thai artist Rook Floro, 2012). This is a literal representation of a shell-of-a-man, a shadow-of-a-man, or even an exoskeleton-of-a-man. The over exaggerated posture with the head bowing down in resignation emphasizes the disjointed sense of self that one experiences. Pinar (2012) even described the work in relation to the sense of leaving a part of oneself behind when one is being inauthentic: “This work is a comment upon how every time a person tries to become someone they are not, they lose their true selves bit by bit leaving behind a part of them” (Pinar, 2012).

Floro is explaining loss through his sculptures. He has left a part of himself behind in the pursuit of his ideal identity. This work represents unwanted and repressed weaknesses, ideas and desires that deals with self-acceptance, rejection and vulnerability. The form and substance of the work embodies both literal shadow and psychological *shadow*. Floro uses dark materials, silhouettes and presents the body in an elongated form by exaggerating the anatomy. This enhances the distortion of the emotions and anxiety he feels. Floro explains that he is confronted with his own *shadow*. His *shadow* is embodied in this sculpture in the sense of the Jungian *shadow* which is the expression of doubt, anguish and dread (Rook Floro, 2011). This autobiographical struggle with the human condition is understood through his use of

gesture distorting the human to create a narrative of anxiety and uneasiness. The focus of this thesis lies with the feelings and emotions that are evoked and represented. The helplessness of the figure as it is stuck in the ground, forlornness as it is abandoned, and despair, as it realizes that there are forces that it is powerless over. The sculpture embodies those existential emotions very accurately, since those emotions are also reactionary to the very freedom that we have. For Sartre, it is always in the face of that freedom that we are overwhelmed and rendered incapacitated.

Floro makes use of different 'alter-egos' to represent different internal struggles that he faces. He gave each of these 'alter-egos' names, such as Flux, Corvus and Blastard. The first is Flux, who epitomizes Floro's struggle of pursuing a perfect identity, while feeling the need to accept his true, flawed, identity. Alternatively, Corvus represents Floro's grappling with his social anxiety. Blastard, however, embodies the artist's coming to terms with his obsession with lust and love (Shadow by Thai artist Rook Floro Artist, 2012).

Relevant to *Shell* (2012), Floro is attempting to embody an aspect of Flux that represents Floro's yearning for an ideal identity and yet feeling the need for self-acceptance, a theme that is relevant to this thesis. *Shell* (2012) represents a shattered, and fragmented man. This is conveyed through the fragility and warped nature of the figure (Pinar, 2012).

Questions and doubt into his own identity and expectations allow Floro to confront his own shadow. As Jung writes, "In so far as analytical treatment makes the 'shadow' conscious, it causes a cleavage and a tension of opposites which in turn seek compensation in unity" (367). Just as Jung became aware of the notion of the shadow through his own self-examination and investigation of his dreams, fears, and thoughts, so does Floro become aware of his own *shadow* in his articulations of the alter-ego and shadow character.

For Jung (1978), "the shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly – for instance, inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies" (417). The shadow subsequently becomes a vehicle for the exteriorization of negative

sentiments directed towards the self. The shadow becomes the personification of all that is unacceptable to the subject. The shadow is embedded in the unconscious. “The shadow is that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality...” (Jung, 1989: 367). *Shell* (2012) can be seen as both a physical manifestation of a shadow, and as a metaphorical representation of Floro’s *shadow*.

Floro’s social anxiety, the quest for perfection and his questions surrounding lust and love allow him to explore a confrontation of the various aspects of his own personality and struggles of identity. Anguish, forlornness and despair are also clearly identified in his works as he struggles to come to terms with who he is, and reconciling the various aspects of himself. Each portrayal denotes a decision and each decision is already heavily laden with responsibility. It is this responsibility that is accompanied by anguish, forlornness and despair.

### **Jane Alexander and William Kentridge**

The South African context has influenced art in very significant ways, whereby the subject-matter is very specific to the South African landscape. The diverse cultures and languages allow for a melting pot of ideas and ideologies, yet there are still several historical tensions that still play out in provocative ways.

### **Jane Alexander**

Jane Alexander<sup>7</sup> creates sculptures and photographs that reflect the tension and anguish in the human body. Her work combines elements of the macabre with the everyday to illustrate the duplicitous nature of being. Her artworks were created during the transition era between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. This era had dire and lasting consequences on the psyche of South Africans. These consequences are best described by Njami (2002) as:

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<sup>7</sup> Jane Alexander was born in South Africa in 1959. She is currently one of the most prominent contemporary South African artists and is currently lecturing at the University of Cape Town. Her most well-known piece is titled *Butcher Boys* (1985-6). Although she is not considered a resistance artist, she was inspired and influenced by the political and social climate of the country (Jane Alexander, 2015).

A history that haunts consciousness and human beings. That leaves each person suspect in the eyes of others. That means that people no longer know exactly who they are and what it is they are supposed to expiate. Impossible not to feel guilty, impossible to have made a common cause with those one was exploiting... Apartheid is a living breathing wound with which each must learn to live (12).

The extent to which Jane Alexander is a product of her time or even influenced by her time is a very interesting question. Alexander isn't an overtly political artist, but, as Njami (2002) describes, "she began as a sculptor, using a three dimensional art form to give shape to her inner conflicts" (14). It is these inner conflicts that are the focus of this thesis. Alexander's inner emotions reverberate through her sculptures. It is the ordinariness of these extraordinary emotions that create the conflicting imagery between the macabre and the everyday. Alexander is able to mesh these contrary notions in such a unique way that they appear natural and normal.

In sculptures such as the *Butcher Boys* (1985-6) and '*Untitled*' (1985-6) (seen in Figure 21), Alexander sought to explore her underlying emotional tensions, which emphasize how routine these emotions of anguish, forlornness and despair are. Alexander's sculptures are not as overt as Floro's *Shell* (2012; seen in Figure 18 and 19) in their portrayal of anguish and despair, but her sculptures portray the emotions in a far more subtle and nuanced way. It is because of this nuanced approach of Alexander's sculptures that her artwork is truly terrifying to the viewer. Alexander is portraying the human figure in a relatable way with ordinary features, (as opposed to Floro's otherworldly representation of the human form). In doing so Alexander includes elements that would make the form appear malevolent. Alexander is portraying the notion of 'ordinary people capable of committing atrocities'. The majority of her sculptures all present the human form with a noticeable malady by blending animal horns, split skin, growths and deformations. Alexander explores the anguish, forlornness and despair that is associated with existentialism to effectively encapsulate Hanna Arendt's<sup>8</sup> idea of the banality of evil, i.e. the ordinary mundaneness of evil acts and deeds. Njami (2002) summarizes the effect of Alexander's sculptures:

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<sup>8</sup> Arendt's notion of the banality of evil is described by Swift (2009). "Her message is that the mundane, the banal, can have a profound effect on the world. In the controversy that followed the publication of her book, [*The Human Condition* (1958)]. Arendt tried to capture this peculiar and paradoxical quality of a depthless evil by analogy with a natural process" (99)

It is totally natural, then, that this world as shifting as sand, as complex as truth, should engender nightmares befitting the anguishes and convulsions accumulated down the preceding century. Unfathomable, indecipherable nightmares befitting the immensity of those aborted lives, of an ungraspable future. It has always seemed to me that Jane Alexander's work was directly linked to those nightmares, with all the hideous beauty inherent in our inner worlds (13-4).

The work by Alexander is often seen as part of the shadowy world of dreams, or a connection point where nightmares and science fiction meet (Njami, 2002: 16). Most see and describe them as malevolent, "creatures that are not quite human, yet there is a strong implication that they once were human" (Powell, 1995:15). I would even argue that Alexander presents them in such postures and poses that render them harmless. Alexander blends the seemingly strange with the innocuous. It is the seamless blending of these contrasts and opposites that allows for the banal everydayness and nightmarish extraordinariness to coexist. The figures, such as the *Butcher Boys* (1985-6) and *Untitled* (1985-6), for example, aim to express the unspeakable, untranslatable and uncomfortable part of our inner emotional world (Njami, 2002: 17).

The sculpture *Untitled* (Figure 21) was created in the years 1985 and 1986 and represents a nude male figure that is seated in a wooden chair. The man is bald and the head is slightly turned to face left with his black eyes looking towards the left. His mouth is not only closed, but seems to have been 'erased', barely leaving any discernible lips. The lines around the mouth reveal a faint sign of a frown. Around the neck of the sculpture is a belt. This belt has been draped around the neck in such a way that the belt buckle reaches just under the right pectoral muscle and the other end of the belt falls over the left pectoral almost in contact with the sculpture's groin. Both elbows are firmly paced on the armrest of the chair with the hands lightly resting on the ends of the armrest. The buttocks and upper thighs of the figure are firmly seated in the chair. The knees are bent at a perpendicular angle and both feet rest on the ground. The figure's skin is light in colour with various blackish spots (similar to dark bruises) found all over the body, including the groin. This can be seen in Figure 21 below.

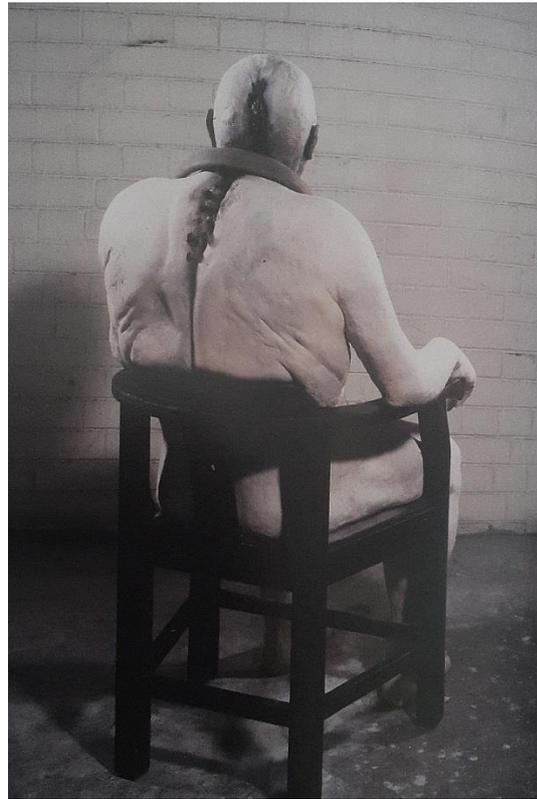
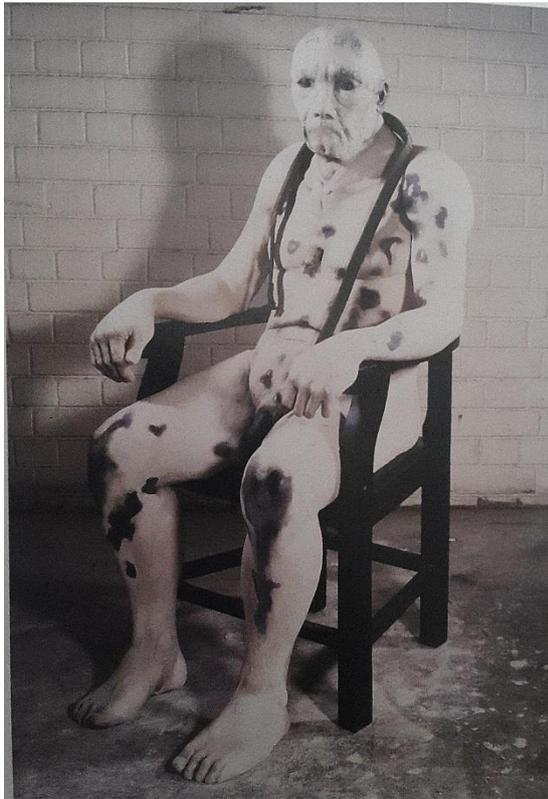


Figure 21 (left image) and 22 (right image):

Jane Alexander, *Untitled* (1985-6). Plaster, oil paint, bone, found wooden armchair, leather and rubber strap, life size. Private local collection.

The back of the sculpture, however, does not show any dark spots. A few skin folds can be seen where the chair and the back of the figure meet. On the back of the sculpture the skin pushes back to reveal the spine and a section of the brain. A close up can be seen in the Figure 23 below. Alexander is granting the viewer a glimpse of what lies beneath the surface. Contrary to what one would expect, it is this unusual presentation of what truly makes us human. The sculpture is presented in such a way that we see what one would expect to see: the spine of a human being. The opening in the back initiates a physical rupture that reveals the implication of deeply disturbing psychological, social and political ruptures.



Figure 23: Jane Alexander, Detail photograph of: *Untitled* (1985-6). Plaster, oil paint, bone, found wooden armchair, leather and rubber strap, life size. Private local collection.

This piece, in relation to *Nude Existence* series (Figure 14) reference rupture death, violence and destruction. It is unnerving and unsettling in the way it is presented. The inner turmoil and everydayness speak to the normalization of these emotions, the blunting of these sentiments, and how we have the potential to grow accustomed to them.

## William Kentridge

William Kentridge<sup>9</sup> incorporated the shadow when he created the *Shadow Procession* in the year 1999. In this artwork many figures are seen migrating from the left to the right side of the screen. Many of the people walking through the screen are mutilated or hurt. The shadows appear as not only injured, but often distorted and disfigured as

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<sup>9</sup> William Kentridge was born in Johannesburg in 1955. He is arguably known as one of the most prominent figures in the South African art scene. The artist uses various techniques and media including, sculpture, drawings, video, puppetry, projection and performances. The artist states: "I have never been able to escape Johannesburg, and in the end, all my work is rooted in this rather desperate provincial city." He has lived his entire life in the city and is therefore greatly influenced by the city's history and surroundings. Kentridge continues to state that: "I have never tried to make illustrations of apartheid, but the drawings and the films are certainly spawned by, and feed off, the brutalised society left in its wake" (A feature on an artist in the public eye: William Kentridge, 1999.)

they awkwardly move along the screen. This can be seen in the video still represented in Figure 24.



Figure 24: William Kentridge, Video still from the film: *Shadow Procession* (1999). Animated film, 7:00 min. © The artist.

Many of the figures, for example, are represented walking with crutches and the majority of their lower legs missing. Other figures are represented as being hanged, or their heads removed from their bodies in an unnatural manner. Many of the people represented in the projection are seen carrying or pulling heavy burdens in the form of other people, cities, chairs, bodies, children, guns, sacks, animals and other weighty loads. This can also be seen in the video still of the *Shadow Procession* represented in Figure 25.



Figure 25: William Kentridge, Video still from the stop-motion animation: *Shadow Procession* (1999). Animated film, 7:00 min. © The artist.

The usage of the shadows have a very interesting role in the Kentridge narrative. It has a historical significance to him that he has experienced since infancy and has successfully incorporated into his artwork. For Kentridge, this ambiguity of the shadow is best explained when he speaks of the malleability of the shadow (cited in Guercio 2007: 62):

The child who plays with shadows delights not just in seeing the image of a creature on the wall, but also in watching and grasping the illusion, in learning how shadows of hands can be transformed into animals. This awareness of how we construct meaning, and this inescapable need to make sense of shapes, [is for him] very central, indeed essential, to what it means to be alive – to live in the world with open eyes (Stuart-Clarke, 2012: 35).

Kentridge incorporates the shadows as a medium of narration where fantasy, the surreal, the sublime and the real all merge into one. The characteristics of a shadow allow Kentridge to play with the contents of his narration. Many different facets and aspects blend into a cohesive model. It is these connotative aspects of the shadow that allow Kentridge to manipulate the shadows into not only characters, but also tools, implements, landscapes, cities, etc. “A shadow has no weight, no texture, no sound, no smell of its own” (Stuart-Clarke, 2012: 37; Baxandall 1997: 60). It is not only the shadow itself that fascinates Kentridge, but also the surface upon which the shadow is cast. It is only because of the surface area upon which a shadow is cast that one

can even discern the shadow. Stuart-Clarke (2012) describes the relationship between the shadow and its surface material as “a strange composition of both the object that casts it and the ‘alien surface’ on to which it is cast” (Stuart-Clarke, 2012: 37; Baxandall 1997: 60). The surface onto which the shadow is cast gives additional textures, tones and distortions which allows the shadow to not only be presented as an obstruction of light, but also gives it a tactile quality with texture.

Kentridge’s *Shadow Procession* (1999) invariably invokes images of Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*. Just as Plato’s prisoner is released from his bondage to journey out of the cave, so too does Kentridge’s *Shadow Procession* track the journey of his characters. The indeterminacy of the shadows are not fixed in a time and place, nor are they a true accurate reflection of events, transforming from images to ideas. Kentridge is presenting images that aim to inspire ideas that are not prescriptive, but in a way that emphasize what emerges from the viewer’s experience. To quote from the Kentridge lecture that highlights this gap between the Platonic idea of opinion on the one hand and truth on the other:

It is in the very limitations of shadows that we learn...It is in the gap between the object and its representation that the image emerges, the gap we fill in—in the shift from the monochromatic shadow to the color of the object, from its flatness to depth and heft, allowing us to be neither prisoners in the cave, unable to comprehend or conceive, nor the all-seeing philosopher returning with all his certainty, but allowing us to inhabit the terrain between what we see on the wall and what we conjure back behind our retina (Scopa, 2012).

Kentridge is alluding to the fact that what we think we are seeing, isn’t always what we are actually seeing. Equally so with the belief that we can present an accurate depiction of historical events that include forced relocations, genocide, stories of human suffering, etc. The subtle argument in Kentridge’s *Shadow Procession* (1999) emphasizes the fallible nature of representation and memory.

In my own *Shadow Series*, the sculpture titled *Burdened Shadow* (Figure 6) reflects a similar figure to the figures seen in the Kentridge’s projection where they are toiling away, carrying a heavy weight. In both instances, the burdens they are carrying are both the physical weight, but also the emotional burden that goes with providing for a family, for being responsible for taking care of others, and so forth. In both *Burdened*

*Shadow* and *Shadow Procession* depicts the burden that comes with responsibility. All the figures are moving forwards on their journey, traveling out of Plato's cave. They are supposed to be moving towards truth and a greater understanding. It is this journey that lends to the existential themes of despair, since the shadow figure becomes the embodiment of their own struggles. The shadows seem to be rather helpless against the onslaught of circumstance and takes on the full brunt of that responsibility.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis, as the title suggests, contends that the human condition, as expressed in the writings of Sartre, Plato, Nietzsche and Jung, is revealed through the textures and gestures inherent in the sculpted human form. The body takes on and exaggerates both the existential state and the *shadow*. These works reveal powerful narratives using the body as a means to demonstrate the internal and external forces that inform the human condition.

There are two strands of thought that run throughout this thesis. The first strand explores the theoretical framework that focused on the internal struggles of the human condition. These internal struggles have been addressed by examining the concept of the shadow as a vehicle for exhibiting existential anguish, forlornness and despair. The shadow can essentially be traced back to the following three dictionary definitions, which allows for expressive freedom and creativity when depicting the shadow. The first definition of the shadow emphasizes the physical manifestation of the obstruction in light. This definition highlights the physical silhouette that one encounters as merely the outline of the body cast against a surface area. The second is the depiction of the *shadow* as an inseparable companion that follows one around. The third definition of the *Shadow* focuses on the projection of the psychological attributes onto the shadow that pertain thoughts and emotions. Chapter 1 unpacked the various ways the shadow has been incorporated in literature, psychology and philosophy and carefully inspected how the shadow has been used, respectively in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, Nietzsche's shadow in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Human* (2006), *All Too Human* (1996) and lastly, in Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1989).

The second strand expands on this notion of the psychological shadow in existentialist philosophy. The theoretical framework is provided by Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism* (1947) and *Nausea* (1965) to explore the emotions of anguish, forlornness and despair. Anguish is the realization of the magnitude of the decision we are about to make, the realization of how important that decision, but most importantly, that we alone can make them. Forlornness, on the other hand, results from being truly

responsible for one's choices. That we truly are left to our own devices. Despair arises with the realization that there are certain things which are out of our control.

It is both these strands, existentialism on the one hand and the *shadow* on the other hand, that are the unifying theme of this thesis. This thesis focused on investigating the human condition through the various artworks that have incorporated the sculpted figure. This thesis unpacks the exhibition of the human condition in the expression of the human form by contrasting and comparing my artwork with other artists who have addressed similar themes. Claudel, Floro, Alexander and Kentridge depicts an existential struggle that has incorporated the human form. It is these concerns and articulations of the human condition that relate and echo throughout my own artistic practice. My own experience of anguish, forlornness and despair has informed my sculptures to varying degrees. I hope this way to contribute to this vocabulary of the sculpted human form through my own work in both the *Shadow Series* and *Nude Existence* series. In doing so, my process argues for the continued relevance of the body in expression of the emotions, such as anguish, forlornness and despair.

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