

**The Inbetweenness of Casting:
Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse and Rachel Whiteread**

BY

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THESIS

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SS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. CASTING HISTORY, MATERIALS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATIONS.....	5
A. Casting's Historical Associations.....	5
B. New Materials in Casting.....	11
C. Casting's Psychological Concerns.....	17
III. LOUISE BOURGEOIS.....	20
IV. EVA HESSE.....	26
V. RACHEL WHITEREAD.....	34
VI. CONCLUSION.....	43
FIGURES.....	45
CITED LITERATURE.....	58

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1. Auguste Rodin, <i>Mask of Camille Claudel and Left Hand of Pierre de Wissant</i> , ca. 1895. 32.1 x 26.5 x 27.7 Cm. Plaster. museerodin.fr.....	45
2. Louise Bourgeois, <i>Avenza</i> , 1968-9, Cast 1992. 52 x 105 x 96.5 cm. Plaster and Latex. Tate Collection.....	46
3. Louise Bourgeois, <i>Avenza Revisited II</i> , 1968-9, Cast in Bronze. 130.8 x 104.1 x 191.8 cm. Cheim & Reid and Hauser and Wirth ©.....	47
4. Bourgeois outside her New York apartment, wearing a latex suit she designed. Photography: Peter Moore. © Estate of Peter Moore/ VAGA, New York, NY, 1975.....	48
5. Eva Hesse, <i>Repetition Nineteen I</i> , 1967, Paint and paper-mâché on aluminum screening. Each 23.2 to 26.6 cm x 16.5 to 23.2 cm in diameter. Estate of Eva Hesse © 2018. Galerie Hauser & Wirth, Zurich.....	49
6. Eva Hesse, <i>Untitled Test Pieces</i> , 1967-68, latex and rubber tubing, 14 x 26 cm, cord 46 cm. and <i>Repetition Nineteen</i> , 1967, pen and ink on tracing paper. 22 x 30 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of the Eva Hesse Estate.....	50
7. Eva Hesse, <i>Repetition Nineteen III</i> , 1968, Fiberglass and polyester resin, nineteen units, Each 48 to 51 cm x 27.8 to 32.2 in diameter. Museum of Modern Art, New York.....	51
8. Eva Hesse, <i>Area</i> , 1968, Latex on wire mesh, metal wire. 51 x 8 cm. Photography John A. Ferrari©.....	52
9. Rachel Whiteread, <i>Torso(s)</i> displayed at Tate Britain during 2018 exhibition.....	53
10. Rachel Whiteread, <i>Untitled</i> , 1986. Pillowcase, hot water bottle, coat hanger and water. Destroyed. Rachel Whiteread©.....	54
11. Rachel Whiteread, <i>Torso</i> , 1988, Plaster. 8.9 x 16.9 x 27 cm. Tate Britain©.....	55
12. Rachel Whiteread, <i>Shallow Breath</i> , 1988, Plaster and Polystyrene foam. 185 x 90 x 20 cm. Tate Britain©.....	56
13. Rachel Whiteread, <i>Untitled (Pink Torso)</i> , 1995, Pink dental plaster. 10 x 17.5 x 27.5 cm. Tate Britain©.....	57

SUMMARY

This thesis examines casting as it is taken up by Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse and Rachel Whiteread and the implications of their in-between forms. As a method of making, casting allowed these artists to create works concerned with both interior and exterior relationships. Working in historical periods of transition, Bourgeois and Hesse diverge from the emerging popularity of Pop art and Minimalism choosing to retain the expressive elements of modernism. Contested notions of selfhood are exposed in the boundaries each creates through casting. The intentionality of choosing specific materials and the experimentation with chance and contingency allow casting to become a site of complex meaning production. Whiteread, working decades later, continues the revaluation of casting as a method capable of expressing both the tumultuous interior psyche and the rationalizing exterior world. I argue that material residue, the markers left in production, differentiates these artists from their contemporaries. As women working in a field traditionally associated with men, they reassert sculpture's engagement with social structures and concerns through an emphasis on materials and making.

I. INTRODUCTION

The art historian Timothy J. Clark has described modernism as an investigation of means and material properties taken to their limits.¹ As a rejection of stable forms, modernism embraced abstraction over figuration and privileged innovation in material process. The ideals incorporated into modern art concerned themselves with art's role in making visible one's relation to society. Our conflicted state, one brought about by our modern world, seeks to find balance between interiority and external demands. It aimed to portray the reality of discordant states (fullness and emptiness, interior and exterior, whole and fragmented) and the sources of one's self through various artistic mediums. These concerns while not new manifest themselves in the build up and loss of material boundaries throughout the 1960s. Hard and soft, industrial yet fleshy, opposing concepts and forms served as sites in which the conflicts of modernity could be explored. The internal investigation of the "sources of the self" in light of modern developments continue to be a site of exploration for the three artists at the center of this study: Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse and Rachel Whiteread. Though their artworks reveal more contemporary, post-1960 formal concerns with organic seriality, industrial materials, and shifts in orientation, boundaries and limitations, be they material, psychological, or conceptual are also compellingly present. In these works, the casting method becomes the site where the complex relationship between interior and exterior in the modern understanding of the self is explored, leading to new answers to old questions about how physical process and aesthetic residue create meaning. Casting facilitates a duality allowing for the exterior world to mark its surface while also maintaining the artist's intention and thus interiority. The layered method of the cast's surface and process encourages a deeper psychological reading, one rooted in the historical moment and in the desires and fears associated with this method of making. For Bourgeois, Hesse and

¹ Timothy J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism*, (Yale University Press, 2001), 8.

Whiteread casting's remnants and serendipitous marks can be read as sensuous markers reflecting the conflict ridden ideals of modernism. The tumultuous interior psyche and the rationalizing exterior world combine in the process of production, via mold and cast. The struggle present attempts to maintain an art grounded in human social life and the modernist recognition that shared meaning is always a negotiation between individual physical parameters and impersonal culturally-determined structures.

A thorough examination of select works brings forth the role of casting in the effort to maintain an aesthetic complexity in works of art for a contemporary audience who responded more to technological forms of making than the hand of the artist. This sensuousness is one rooted in the material's properties, one in which we as viewers can identify an inherent bodiliness. A primordial link connects casting to the historical past through seemingly organic textures of layered latex, molded fiberglass, and plaster. As art became ever more intertwined with industrial production and the marketplace, the artists I examine hold onto these handmade textures, reasserting the expressive power of sculptural forms. By maintaining this expressive quality within the work of art, these artists attempt to combat the flatness of the commodities that dominate everyday life in the United States and the United Kingdom. While Pop artists and others moved towards an embrace of the commodity, making art that welcomed manufactured goods, Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread maintain concerns over art's social role in a sensuous manner. Skirting clear of what Clark identifies in post-Abstract Expressionist works, of art that becomes "no more and no less powerful (here is my real fear) than that of the general conjuror of depth and desirability back into the world we presently inhabit--that is, the commodity form", the

works to be explored in this paper share this sentiment by holding onto interiority, boundaries and their conflicted engagement with the outside world. ²

In art, physical boundaries denote containment or delineation of form within a given space yet the casting process itself produces a specific boundary akin to the drawing of a line. In a cast, the boundary is the outermost line created through the process of pouring the liquid material into the receiving mold. It denotes an edge, a space where the physical world meets the solid form. Through the curing and hardening of the material, this line manifests as not only a distinction but also a protective layer. It keeps the cast confined to a finite and immutable form from what was once an amorphous material.

As a positive imprint of the negative space within a mold, the two form a cohesive union, briefly, within the casting process. At a certain point, the cast is wrenched from its shell, either destroying the mold entirely or leaving it bare. For sculptors working in this method of making, the relationship between the two has profound effects on the works themselves. Bourgeois and Hesse take up casting in the 1960s as a means of exploration. For them casting is experimental, open to chance and contingency but also meditative through its choice of materials. Bourgeois chooses to explore how casting allows for transmutation. The ability of a mold to create subsequent casts in latex, plastic and bronze facilitates a shift in material via an original singular form. Hesse, instead of transmuting materials, utilizes a mold's form first to create multiples cast from a single shape. She does so, however, not in an attempt to replicate an exact copy but to develop forms that share a shape whose determined boundary is constructed through a single mold creating a sense of union. They maintain a cohesion but diverge from one another in their individualized details. These are forms that celebrate the diversity produced by chance in casting.

² Timothy J. Clark, "In Defense of Abstract Expressionism" in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism*, (Yale University Press, 2001), 374.

When grouped together the nuanced forms make visible the differences between one another. Both Bourgeois's and Hesse's engagement with the medium expands the possibility of casting and the materials associated with it. They bring latex, fiberglass, and resin into the studio proper. Whiteread, a contemporary artist, continues this casting tradition into the present. Her artistic practice is almost exclusively devoted to finding molds instead of constructing them in her everyday surroundings. She, too, shifts the existing conception of casting to fit her needs. For Whiteread, the mold is found, and the cast itself serves as a negative impression of a solid object. Through casting, each artist embraces the meditation on material traces and process that the layered method encourages. The cast forms have a complexity inherent in their making. They are tactile, evoke the handmade yet also challenge that very assumption through the industrial make up of their materials. Unlike the commodity, Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread's sculptures address the modernist investigations of art through casting, negotiating between exterior form and complex interiors. Their approach to casting and sculpture create a meaning reflected through social life without giving in to the depersonalized object.

II. CASTING HISTORY, MATERIALS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATIONS

A. Casting's Historical Associations

The role of casting and its product have a long historical lineage dating back to Egyptian antiquity. Its basic elements include a mold, a malleable material and its subsequent cast shape. This mold can either be used for a singular finite cast or serve in a productive manner creating multiple copies of an original work. Casting allows an artist to render sculptures in a workable material and subsequently transmute them into an impermeable material like bronze. This transmutation is unique to casting, something that carving and assemblage are unable to achieve. Once the original is sculpted, the form can be cast a multitude of times. A mold, by its very definition, serves to replicate a given shape. The mold's negative form denotes the outer boundaries of the positive to be cast within. As discussed further below, Whiteread is one example of an artist upending this fundamental assumption about the mold through her casts of "negative" space, finding hollows and filling them up. She returns to the material concerns of modernism but explores the implications of making an interior solid.

Historically, plaster and metal casting have served as significant means of production for artists. The prevalence and persistence of the bronze cast remain today as a testament to the longevity associated with the material. Metal casting has and continues to necessitate specialized equipment and is often outsourced to a foundry where trained craftsmen produce casts to an artist's specifications. The lost wax technique, being one of the oldest forms of casting, dates to 3700 BC.³

³ Elizabeth Loggins, "The Story of Sculpture: From Clay to Bronze," (Sculptureworks, Inc). Accessed May 1, 2018. In lost wax casting a duplicate metal sculpture is created from an original. An original piece is either modeled in wax, or the original sculpture must have a mold made from it, and then a wax copy is cast. A mold of the wax model is then made out of either ceramic shell or investment. The encased wax model is put into a kiln where the wax is burned away revealing a negative of the original sculpture. Molten metal is then poured into the mold and after cooling the mold is removed and destroyed in the process.

Casting by design necessitates multi-step planning and execution processes with each successive stage directly impacting the aesthetics of the cast. When working in metals, preparatory molds of plaster and wax are needed before the final metal form can be produced. Mistakes in foundry work require it to be "destroyed and done again", but for Whiteread, Hesse, and Bourgeois alternative material choices and methods embrace the possibility of mistakes and their inherent aesthetic properties.⁴ The uncertainty in how the work will emerge allows for the serendipitous errors to become the stylistic elements they were knowingly or unknowingly searching for.

Time and its restrictions also play a significant role in the making process of cast sculpture, its very nature has a direct link to time's passage. With plaster, resins, latex, and synthetic materials, the window of liquidity and manipulation has specified sets of times in which the material is no longer able to be manipulated but has reached the final stage in the process, that of a hardened solid state. Specified terms such as pot time, gel time and cure time denote the incremental transformation of the material product from a liquid state to a hardened one. Artist's manuals urge its users to prepare only the portion workable during its *pot life*, the material's designated length of time when crystallization and solidification begin to take hold.⁵ Awareness of a material's *pot life* prevents waste by quantifying the amount that can be worked by the artist into a set time frame giving "an indication of how fast the system is curing".⁶ The *gel time* marks the interval between the aggregation of the catalyst and the start of noticeable changes in the material's viscosity. *Cure time* denotes the span between the poured liquid

⁴ Ina Cole, "Mapping Traces: A Conversation with Rachel Whiteread" (International Sculpture Center), <http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag04/april04/april04.shtml>. Accessed May 1, 2018.

⁵ Hubert Montagu Percy, *New Materials in Sculpture: cold casting in metals, glass fibre, polyester resins, vinamold hot melt compounds, cold-cure silastomer flexible moulds, cavityless sand casting, vinagel* (London: A. Tiranti, 1970), 55.

⁶ Ibid.

material and the finished hardened product ready to emerge from its mold. This process of making is so dependent on time (gel time, pot time, cure time, etc.) in a way that is unlike painting, carving or assemblage. It is a procedural passage in which physical changes manifest an instance where liquid turns into a solid, weighty thing.

Not since Rodin's work in the nineteenth century had casting, as a sculptural process, been such a fruitful site of experimentation and innovation when Bourgeois and Hesse began to engage with it in the 1960s. Alex Potts' chronology of the "Sculptural Imagination" defines the modernist sculptural period "as work produced after Rodin and before the shake-up," caused by 1960s artists such as Robert Morris and Donald Judd, but also Bourgeois and Hesse. He notes the "oddly uncertain status" works produced in this in-between period maintain, both now and in the work's own time.⁷ The timeline Potts provides for casting charts a development that jumps from a lengthy rumination on Rodin to a quick survey of Constantin Brancusi and Henry Moore to a more extended meditation on what he terms the "phenomenological turn" exemplified by artists including Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread.⁸ Minimalism, or literalism as Michael Fried terms it, insisted on "blankness" resulting in an "alienating and disquieting" response.⁹ The sculptural forms of Judd and Morris visibly reflecting the commodified industrial factories of production shifted their focus from "resonant or complex bodily responses to instead a provocation of critical opinions."¹⁰ Having embraced the literal objecthood of sculpture, their works were closer to the commercial sector than the tactility of the natural world.¹¹ The machine-manufactured pure

⁷ Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 103.

⁸ Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist*, ch. 3-6.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid, 194.

¹¹ Michael Fried's reaction to minimalist/ "literalist" works as theatrical draws a sharp contrast to modernist works. In "Art and Objecthood," (1967): 2. He states "Whereas literalist art stakes everything on shape as a given property of objects, if not, indeed, as a kind of object in its own right. It aspires, not to defeat or suspend its own objecthood, but on the contrary to discover and project objecthood as such."

forms served as a rejection of the overt expressiveness of prior artists. Instead of the traditionally carved or even cast sculpture methods, their aesthetic privileged the uniform seriality of predetermined forms. The minimalist aesthetic embraced the high polished steel forms reminiscent of industrial products in lieu of the internal relationships between boundaries and formal limits. By distancing their work from the interior/exterior relationships they lose a visceral connection that Hesse, Bourgeois and Whiteread's work preserves. Choosing instead to reinvigorate casting, and its expressive potential, each artist adapts the process to suit her needs. Working at a unique and important moment within the historical trajectory of sculpture, the individual works made are ripe with meaningful implications marked by the physical residue casting leaves behind.

Cast sculptural works partake in a process of making that is manifest in the visible residue on the cast's surface. Process emerges in the seams, pocks, air bubbles, and other byproducts that inevitably mark the form. An analysis of how these aesthetic markers become visible and what they impart to the work of art adds depth to one's understanding of form and material. Structuring my analysis around select works by Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread, women who engage with and alter the traditional method of casting, serves as a means of outlining a conversation about the psychological and physical meanings to be found in the relationship between molds and casts in the post-1945 period. What markers (physical, psychological, environmental, or bodily) develop as a result of the casting process? What new understandings do these three artists impart to the cast sculpture? The structure of casting, as a scaffold for creation, is utilized by each of the sculptors to be examined, asking the viewer to take note of and care about the visible idiosyncrasies of a work. Casting, in this form, attempts to maintain an emphasis on sensuous understanding in sculpture at a historical moment when the art

world had begun to embrace ever more tightly the desensitized machine-made aesthetic of minimalist sculpture by male artists. In a position between abstract expressionism and minimalism, casting as used by Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread finds a balance between the two.

In contrast to other forms of sculptural production like carving, casting leaves a visible residue of a relationship between two or more materials within the surface details instead of the residue of sculptor's tools. Casting is not the taking away of material to reveal a hidden shape; it instead fills a void, paradoxically making us aware of the hollowness of the mold post cast. As a method of making it is more procedural and sequential than carving, with many pours, reveals, seams, and parts to be joined. Casting is an effort to maintain sensuous complexity in works of art through lingering material traces imparted. Each artist takes casting as it is traditionally conceived and upends it, opening up the work of art to considerations of the relationship between mold and cast as a metaphor for notions of bounded relation in a social world—a world consisting of both materials and meaning that is made visible in the process of material handling. The cast forms show traces of touch in the final state, traces of the exterior world impressed upon the malleable material, but also the touch involved in the artist's labor.

The two primary casting methods are pressing and pouring.¹² Both offer the artist the unintentional slippage between the desired outcome and the effects of the environment upon the material. Pouring as a process contains within it various associations of decantation and movement. Almost alchemical in nature, it shifts from at one moment a liquid to at a later moment an inalterable solid. This process requires the physical presence of the artist's body to tip the viscous liquid into the mold. This essence of the body in the making transcends the limited experience of the act with implications visible within the final product. Layers, drips and

¹² Andrews, *Living Materials*, 60.

cold joints remind the viewer of the movements of the artist who created the finished form. Casting serves as a means of making which is at once both calculated and physical yet open to elements of chance. It becomes a meditation on experimentation particularly for Bourgeois, Hesse and Whiteread. They engage with the method in a manner which encourages unexpected possibilities. From the selection of a constructed container, a found vessel, or an enclosed mold the process of creating in this manner involves a sequential set of actions. Unlike painting or traditional carving, creating three-dimensional works via casting involves an outer and an inner with one invariably being discarded. This layering of materials and presence of the body in action is a fundamental element for certain artists of the postwar period, one in which expression and the body remain unified via the work of art.

Within the scope of traditional casting materials and the high cost of metal casting, plaster, as a preferred material, allows artists to produce in the studio with ease and minimal cost. This accessibility made it an integral material for sculptors in the pre-modern era and throughout the modern period. Its malleability, one able to be molded and shaped without specialized equipment, allows for experimentation and initial thinking through of form in an unrestricted manner. Unlike hot metal, plaster requires little to no specialized equipment. The artist can work the liquid plaster, by hand, up until the final cure.¹³ Historically plaster served as an editing tool, a mockup of the work to be.¹⁴ An artist could chart the progress and development of a sculptural

¹³ Plaster is comprised of pulverized gypsum. Water is added to the dehydrated matter to create a pourable material. A chemical reaction occurs crystalizing the rehydrated gypsum. The crystallization results in friction within the material and causes the plaster to heat as it cures. It expands while hardening and contracts slightly just prior to reaching a completely finished state.

Rune Frederiksen and Marchand, Eckart, *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter: 2010), 381.

¹⁴ Frederiksen and Marchand, *Plaster Casts*, 7.

form and easily transmute and rearrange the various components.¹⁵ It allowed for individual parts to be joined together into the building blocks of the final work.

Conceptual implications of the nineteenth century associated the material with traits such as cheapness and fragility.¹⁶ Despite this, its ability to trace clean lines and capture details have maintained its allure in the studio setting. When wet it is fluid and adapts to not only the shape but also the texture of its mold when hardened. The material's versatility is countered only by its weakness in tensile strength. The importance of plaster casting in the historical past continues albeit in new materials through later industrial and artistic developments.

B. New Materials in Casting

Casting as process easily facilitates the use of new industrial materials. As a method, it encourages the expression of material-specific adaptive properties. Industrial polymer developments and increased accessibility introduced latex and resin applications into the artist's studio. Innovative materials still allowed works of art to maintain many of the concerns which surrounded the plaster cast form such as duplicity and reproducibility while simultaneously exploring opacity, strength, and translucency. In the twentieth century, glass fiber reinforced polyester resins entered into the artist's studio.¹⁷ They were touted for their ease in application and durability made possible by the marriage of glass fiber and polyresin albeit using inorganic, potentially toxic matter.¹⁸ These quasi-industrial means of casting required few materials and could produce relatively strong and lightweight forms. Eva Hesse embraced the translucency provided by fiberglass resin to cast many of her sculptural forms. The development of these new

¹⁵ Andrews, *Living Materials*, 33.

¹⁶ Frederiksen and Marchand, *Plaster Casts*, 10.

¹⁷ Percy, *New Materials in Sculpture*, p. ix.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

materials followed traditional casting procedures. Resin, as a liquid material, is reinforced with polyester or fiberglass sheeting but is still subject to the change of states fundamental to the method.¹⁹ It starts as a moldable fluid and becomes solid via a catalyst. In the mid-1960s, these unconventional materials (within the context of artmaking) took over as both lower in cost and more time effective for the artist. The transition of these materials from their industrial origins to the sphere of fine art making turned the once sterile scientific elements into sources of exploration capable of creating forms that lie between the manufactured and the organic. Hesse and Bourgeois, as artists working in the 1960s, refused to strip away from sculpture the sense of the body and the tactility of organic forms. Instead of giving in to the commodified form they retained a sense of boundary through the interior/exterior relationships of their sculptural works.

Bourgeois and Hesse kept the casting technique with all of its traditional associations, but instead of plaster or metal, chose very new industrial materials to make works of art that explored their formal and aesthetic potential. They were able to physically manipulate the materials and keep production (for the most part) within the studio. This process and its traces on the final works reflect the time and place in which they were made. Women working in sculpture in the 1960s used materials that were ready at hand to create works that were lightweight and required little specialized equipment. Casting's ability to record and imprint forms keeps a sense of the particular art historical moment. Hesse and Bourgeois manipulated and experimented with the process of casting and with the material's limits as well. The result produced wholly innovative and contemporary works which straddled the line between interior/exterior, abstract/bodily, and form/formlessness.

Instead of bronze or plaster, materials were sourced from polymer supply shops of the industrial sector. This crossover of traditionally "non-art" materials into the work reflects the

¹⁹ Ibid, 10.

ideals of the modern period. Take Constantin Brancusi's cast metal sculptures that attempt to pare down the irregularities of form with a hyper reflective polished bronze finish, the geometric form aligning itself aesthetically with the mechanically produced, or the assembled sculptures of David Smith in the post war period "as a modern alternative to traditional figurative sculpture" edging closer to the world of manufacturing.²⁰ Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread however, build off of the academic past and divert their trajectories towards a balance between the world of production and the gestural. Plaster and metal casting remained, but now latex, resin, and other synthetic polymers were viable options for casting as well. Artist handbooks such as *New Materials in Sculpture* by H.M. Percy, published in 1962, established in an easily digestible format the techniques and procedures for making sculpture out of modern materials.²¹ Plastics and industrial materials had inundated the home, the workplace, and the artist's studio.²²

Casting's association with bronze however, still remained strong through the 1950s. Henry Moore, an oft championed modernist sculptor worked prolifically in the medium creating large biomorphic abstract bronze forms, evoking the human body without overt representational features. Brancusi too, claimed a link to the body with his geometric sculptures, a "hodgepodge of sexualised male fantasies and modernist reflection on modernist form" as described by his contemporary William Carlos Williams.²³ Their metal cast forms are unlike the generative "mother" mold associations that can be extracted from artworks where malleable material and organic form are preferred. Casting's hold on sculpture as a process transitioned into the modernist aesthetic as a representation of the fraught modern psyche. The physical traces of the

²⁰ Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, 158.

²¹ Percy, ix.

²² Rachel Mustalish, "Modern Materials: Plastics," In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–).

²³ William Carlos Williams, quoted in Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 142.

casting process imbue the surfaces of works with complex meaning. Such works appear consistent with Charles Taylor's account of the notion of the whole self, a unified totality, and the requisite "reflexive turn [as] something which intensifies our sense of inwardness and depth...seen building up through the whole modern period."²⁴ The resonance of art is able to transcend the objectification of self and world by creating a felt visual link through the utterly tactile, pre-linguistic, material surfaces of cast forms. This inward turn, as Taylor identifies it, combats the instrumentalisation felt within modern culture. This interior examination of the self as a source of knowledge was often, as with the Romantics, rooted in nature and one's own uncontrollable inner depths. For philosophical thinkers, nature stood as an unstable source that in later thinking is countered by modernization and scientific developments. The breakdown in nineteenth and twentieth century was partly due to the development of an industrial society. For Taylor, "art still remains the unsubstitutable locus of epiphany, even though this is no longer conceived as expressive."²⁵ The "multi levelled modernist consciousness" as Taylor describes it, is decentered reacting against both romanticism and industrialization.²⁶ Casting's manifestations of textures, surplus, and edges speak to this art's resistance to the commodity's world of objectified, transactional relations through an insistence on communication of feeling across boundaries. The sculpture of Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread embrace the expressive possibilities of individual materials casting forms from an in-between position, concerned with both interior and exterior domains.

Rodin's Mask of Camille Claudel and Left Hand of Pierre de Wissant (c.1895)

exemplifies one way in which boundary emerged in the sculptural form prior to the 1960s (fig.

²⁴ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 480.

²⁵ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 479.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 481.

1). In this assembled cast plaster sculpture, the female head is visibly fragmented with seams delineating the joining of pieces to create the whole. Material and process are central but the sculpture is messy and ununified. The boundaries are visible but not closed, their contents leaking into the neighboring parts. Rodin's sculpture is fraught with a painful sense of modernist selfhood. What does it mean for Claudel to be sculpted by this towering masculine hand? Rodin draws attention to the constructed nature of selfhood and sculpture in a way that later artists such as Bourgeois and Hesse continue albeit in other forms simultaneously constructed with the physical and material nature of selfhood. They keep the concerns and bodily ties of Rodin but no longer subscribe to the heavy bronze forms previously associated with the medium. Bourgeois and Hesse reach back to physical boundaries as sites of psychological meaning but without the painful anxiety of the century prior. The surface of their forms are complex, even conflicted or seemingly vulnerable, but no longer fixate on the self as individual, as in Rodin's works, wherein pain and anguish registers on the recognizable human form. Their engagement is decidedly modern in its choice of material and surface detail, but now ideas about the relationship between self and world are expressed in the traces of the process. The experimentation with materials and forms gives way to a bodily form that is expressed through a sensuous tactile surface. Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread all build off Rodin's tactile approach to generate surface texture.

Thinking of casting as a vehicle for creating such boundaries within the works of Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread opens up a parallel exposition concerning the bodily to the Rodin example described above. What does it mean to have an outer limit in 1895, the late 1960s, and early 1990s, to be a thing among things whose form reflects the psychological distinctions between interior and exterior relationships? For Bourgeois, the boundary line is in flux. It is not a stable site but instead one from which to evaluate and develop subsequent forms.

It rises and dips and is redefined through her successive casts of a single form. Like Rodin's visibly affixed hand, the artist's presence is made apparent by Bourgeois as an extension of the body. For Hesse, casting can allow the rigidity of boundaries to soften into hand molded open vessels, vessels in which the openness of the container permits the boundary to spill out of the sculpture itself. Viewing two of her sculptures relationally, *Repetition Nineteen III* and *Area*, the openness of the former transitions into the flattening of the latter. Whiteread manages to make a visible boundary out of thin air. Unlike Hesse and Bourgeois, her use of space distorts logical associations and challenges the inherent properties of space, primarily its ability to contain and hold. The physical boundaries produced in all three of the artists' works are affected by the material they choose. Translucency and opacity affect the reading of the sculpture and influence how the viewer sees the self and body within and outside each piece. Casting by design is a practice which brings forth the liminal, the awareness of a position between boundaries. Instead of churning out kitschy replicas, the artists examined maintain an authenticity and specificity that matters. They draw attention to the limits, boundaries and residual traces challenging established traditions by straddling what Helen Molesworth calls the world "of both objects and bodies."²⁷ Their sculpture deals not only with modernist concerns but also embraces contemporary forms. The works of Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread call attention to their in-betweenness. For Bourgeois and Hesse, casting at a historical moment ripe with artistic movements (Pop, conceptual art, minimalism, etc), the cast form is charged with producing a visible record of the negotiation between self and society. The process of casting makes visible

²⁷ Not an objectification of the body per se, but an attention to an in-between space, what I take Molesworth to identify here, when discussing Whiteread compared to McCollum and Nauman, is her reevaluation "of the act of casting, removing it from the charge of inauthenticity or kitsch, seeing casting instead as a liminal practice." Helen Molesworth, *Part Object Part Sculpture* (Columbus, Ohio: Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, 2005), 211.

the interactions between boundaries. Whiteread also holds onto modernist elements through her reevaluation of “the act of casting, removing it from the charge of inauthenticity.”²⁸

C. Casting’s Psychological Concerns

The series of psychological concerns accompanying the cast object continue with worries of authenticity and ephemerality. Ephemerality in terms of materials becomes a concern which was not previously associated with metal and plaster casting. The production of latex and fiberglass works by Bourgeois and Hesse are subject to degradation inherent within the material’s properties. Whiteread adds another layer of ephemerality to the cast by using objects subject to commercial use, to discard and replacement. In addition, the literal possibilities of reproducing via a mold in unlimited quantities plague the method in a modernist art discourse that privileges originality.

The destruction of the mold in order to create its copy is termed a “waste mold.”²⁹ It describes the process in which the mold is destroyed in order to remove the inner form from its shell. This simultaneous destruction and generation activate a psychological dimension within the casting process. The destruction of the once physical scaffold becomes necessary to reveal the new form which emerges from it. By destroying and discarding the outer layer violence is invariably invoked. What does it mean for the "mother" mold to cease to exist after producing its inverted replica? General anxieties surrounding the characteristic multiplicity of molds, the unoriginal nature of reproducing copies of a singular form are halted through the use of waste molds. The aim of this method of casting is not a yield of replicas but instead a direct shift from one material to another. As I will discuss below, Whiteread’s sculptures utilize the mold in this

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Oliver Andrews, *Living Materials: A Sculptors Handbook* (Berkeley, 1988), 52.

castoff manner whereas Hesse and Bourgeois have taken slightly more emblematic approaches to the functions of a mold by disrupting the intended function of a mold/cast relationship. Hesse physically dissects and reassembles her molds, stitching them together into a wholly new sculptural piece. Bourgeois seemingly shifts from one material to another but continues to evolve the form in successive casts.

A cast by its inherent nature is an offspring from a mother form. It is the inner replica of the designated structure. If multiples can be cast how does one relate to each one in terms of originality and authenticity? While basically the same in overall shape and design, no two casts are actually ever identical. Minute shifts in methods of pouring, temperature, and curing result in a variety of nuanced details. Chance enters into the production of all casts. This element of chance becomes as central to the sculptures that Bourgeois, Hesse, and Whiteread produce as their structure. The renewed interest of the cast form within the modern era encouraged and welcomed the cast readymade as it emerges in the work of Whiteread. While the readymade that first entered the artistic lexicon via Duchamp's manufactured objects resituated into the fine art realm, blurring the lines between art and mass-produced goods, Whiteread's *cast readymade* is crucial to the contemporary period, making distinctions between the aesthetic original and the cast more difficult to determine.³⁰ As the twentieth "century unfolded...the cast readymade welcomed, of course, the resulting confusion about which object in the series was the aesthetic original, as it courted the loss of material specificity."³¹ Whiteread's casts, while molded from consumer objects, are not replicas but instead manifestations of space. Though dependent on the commodity world's objects, Whiteread's sculpture is unlike Duchamp's readymades, insofar as

³⁰ Rosalind E. Krauss, "Objet (Petit) a," In *Part Object Part Sculpture*, ed. Helen Molesworth, 84-118 (Columbus, Ohio: Wexner Center for The Arts, The Ohio State University, 2005), 89.

³¹ Ibid.

her cast readymade requires that the mold--the only link to the real world object--be destroyed in production.

III. LOUISE BOURGEOIS

Bourgeois' explorations with casting and materials remain relatively conservative compared to Hesse's and Whiteread's later engagements. Throughout her early career, individual materials and their properties become central to her forms. Her painted wood *Personages* of the late 1940s and early 1950s reflect the organic matter from which they came. In the 1960s along with a switch from carving to casting comes an orientation shift. Instead of the vertically positioned wood assemblages, cast sculptures like those in the *Avenza* series (1968-1969) (Figures 2-4) move to the floor, a shift into a horizontal position.

The "landscapes" as she has referred to these floor pieces occupy a lower visual realm. No longer associated with the upright body or totemic form, the base textures and materials shift her focus to one of tactility and expressive surface detail. Her interest in the processes and means of creating sculpture led her to cast. Forms such as *Avenza* emerge from this engagement. The early plaster and latex iteration of *Avenza* (1968-69) (fig. 2), one of many to emanate from this singular form, reflects such a departure from her earlier sculptures. *Avenza* and its related works in the series are bulbous and organic with an uneven surface texture. Their mottled roughness is the result of latex pours unevenly distributed. The form began its process in plaster. Modeling and shaping result in the various composite forms of the whole. Bourgeois utilized two sculptural approaches in 1960s: "the poured [latex] landscape that you actually cannot control, since it is poured" and the "sculptured and cut landscape, where the landscape is chiseled with a hammer and chisel."³² *Avenza* in its original plaster form falls in-between the two. The inherent properties of plaster, its malleable liquid form which hardens into a frozen state, allows Bourgeois to incorporate both chance and control. This material application and process lend the sculpture an

³² Louise Bourgeois, Frances Morris, Paulo Herkenhoff, Marie-Laure Bernadac, *Louise Bourgeois* (New York, N.Y. : Rizzoli, 2008), 126.

intense epidermal-like quality that is unrefined and distanced from the civilized uprightness of the *Personages* that came before. By reorienting the sculptural position from its traditional erect pedestal to a horizontal register, the work is imbued with a primordial quality, exuding an almost animalistic presence. Bourgeois's shift in orientation is a contemporary quality shared by minimalists and process artists. By removing the pedestal and the verticality previously implied with the medium, Bourgeois creates works of art that are engaged with the world around them.

Holding onto the modernist values of form, *Avenza*'s topographical elements can also be read as bodily growths with peaks and valleys protruding into space. The discordant elements of the sculpture produce a tension as interior growths jockey for higher positioning. What does it mean for Bourgeois to turn from her architectural inspirations of New York City skyscrapers to a landscape of organic matter?³³ Horizontality levels distinctions and encourages a viewer to see the work less as an object and more as an integrated symbiotic element within the space. This shift has been discussed by David Getsy as aggressively activating the gallery floor which carried significant semantic weight.³⁴ Displayed on the floor, *Avenza* becomes a mismatched part of the interior topography. It is neither wholly interior nor entirely exterior leaving the viewer in a conflicted state of relation. Much like the modernist conception of selfhood its individual elements are susceptible to the exterior world. *Avenza* provokes a feeling of struggle through the juxtaposition of containment (or lack thereof) and the departure from established sculptural norms. Its title further links it to the exterior environment, that of a specific marble site in Italy, a

³³ Mignon Nixon, *Fantastic Reality* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press: 2005), 124. Nixon cites Bourgeois's inspiration for *Personages* in the architecture that surrounded her. Working on the roof of her NYC apartment, the sculptures are evocative of the tall buildings lining the skyline.

³⁴ David Getsy, *Abstract Bodies: Sixties Sculpture in the Expanded Field of Gender* (Yale University Press, 2015), 114.

site where the artist worked in the late 1960s.³⁵ Yet *Avenza* is not a work whose material origins are unearthed from the natural environment and carved. It is instead a fabricated work with topographical links, keeping ties to environments both natural and manufactured.

Made by a female artist whose sculpture exists in a horizontal orientation, *Avenza* serves as a denial of the phallic vertical form. *Avenza* however, is no calm sleeping female form but a complex otherworldly prenatal thing. Having been described by Bourgeois as a grouping of udders, by some historians as containing opposing forces of phallic growths and vulvar openings in a single form, and as “bulges emerging from drapery,” a dichotomous relationship surfaces.³⁶ The ambiguity with which Bourgeois creates the simultaneously phallic and breast like forms reinforce the duality inherent in its production. We as viewers read them as bodily or sexual but the artist does not directly draw from the human form. The process, of individual latex pours laboriously applied, give the cast a fleshy quality. Following this analysis, the work can be compared to a host of bodily references: the inside plaster form as a rigid bone which props up the otherwise flaccid cast skin. The plaster interior holds the flimsy latex in a taut circular shape with the skin and support structure existing as components of a whole.

In “Bourgeois Prehistory, or the Ransom of Fantasies,” Anne Wagner examines the implications of the artist’s lateral move. Bourgeois’ sculptures during the 1960s reimagine sculpture “as product and process, as both evacuating body and defecation.”³⁷ It is an “utterly regressive and aggressive sculptural revisionism” that utilizes forms that are “pre.”³⁸ They attempt to bypass the limitations of western civilization by returning to a level of “sculptural

³⁵ Elizabeth Manchester, “‘Avenza’, *Louise Bourgeois*, 1968-9, cast 1992” (Tate Online), <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/bourgeois-avenza-t07781>. Accessed May 1, 2018.

³⁶ Ibid; Bourgeois quoted in Ibid.

³⁷ Anne M. Wagner, “Bourgeois Prehistory, or the Ransom of Fantasies,” (Oxford Art Journal 22, no. 2, 1999), 5-23, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.cc.uic.edu/stable/1360632>, 11.

³⁸ Wagner, “Bourgeois Prehistory, or the Ransom of Fantasies,” 10.

pasts to be unearthed and recovered from sites where they lie concealed,” be it the casting process, the body, or the earth.³⁹ Wagner asserts that the intense bodily aspects of works like *Avenza* emerge from a desire to connect body and earth through pre-historical pasts, thus creating a new and in fact contemporary language of stylistic forms. She also questions the narrative that has been developed by Bourgeois regarding her works. Bourgeois’ self-promoted artistic narrative often drives interpretations of her works based primarily on her personal experience with the formal elements relegated to a secondary position. By honing in on the process and the multiple variations that emerged from *Avenza*, more pointed sculptural meaning can be derived. Wagner cautions the confidence historians place in the artist's statements and despite Bourgeois' prolific narratives, she too has stated that “an artist’s words are always to be taken cautiously.”⁴⁰ The physical sculpture, however, declares its process.

Despite its development of a new language, *Avenza* has not given up on characteristically modernist values. The sculpture’s form positions itself as a psychologically layered mass. *Avenza*’s liminality, as a threshold between the interior solid and the external world, exists in an in-between state balancing expressive elements with formal concerns. The latex cast acts as an identical cover of the plasterwork beneath yet a clear visual distinction is made between the surface texture of the exterior and the implied pure interior plaster form. When viewing, latex envelops the plaster hiding it from sight. The slight upward curl of the latex edges, which give the illusion of levitation, disrupt the expected stability and wholeness. This awareness of boundaries, edges, and interiors encompasses both the material processes and the subject matter itself. It is at once both a mold and a cast, masculine and feminine, an inner organ and an external terrain, human and animalistic, all presented together as a finished whole.

³⁹ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁰ Louise Bourgeois quoted in Wagner, "Bourgeois Prehistory, or the Ransom of Fantasies," 7.

What is fascinating about *Avenza* is the long-term use-value the basic mold provides the artist (See fig. 2). Bourgeois uses the cast in both a traditional sense as well as in an innovative manipulation of method. In an expected manner, that of sending it to the foundry for bronze casting, the work is transmuted into copies of itself in a metallurgic realm. Within the studio, Bourgeois casts the pieces in plastic and latex, materials whose use function is industrial but require little in terms of equipment and specialized technique. Through Bourgeois' casting and manipulation *Avenza*'s form is made into multiple editions of varying materials (latex, plastic, and metal). Its form is re-used and altered to become *Avenza Revisited* and *Avenza Revisited II* (fig. 3).

Avenza Revisited and *Avenza Revisited II*, reinforce the physical connection to the series of sculptures Bourgeois has developed. As in all other iterations of *Avenza*, the labor of pouring and then brushing on the viscous latex also becomes visible as we consider how the pools and drips of its outer edges came to collect there. If *Avenza* was Bourgeois' material exploration of a horizontally situated sculpture, *Avenza Revisited II* (1968-9) grows legs which elevate it off the ground into space. The sculpture uses the original cast form and adds to it. The original form is replaced by an animalistic object that rises to meet the viewer. Beneath the familiar mound of valleys and peaks are individual swirls that act as buckling legs.

A visible evolution, mimicking an organic growth, is evident in the transition between *Avenza* and this later iteration. Her exploration of the form itself feels evolutionary, with one cast building upon the previous. The material, however, is no longer evocative of the artist experimenting in the studio. Bourgeois has cast *Avenza Revisited* and *Avenza Revisited II* in bronze, the life of her mock-up having been sacrificed for the longevity inherent in the metal cast.

Bourgeois's continuous development that started with the compact floor bound landscape and transitions into a lanky-legged creature, eventually becomes a wearable costume for the artist. A latex cast, one of which formed the outer layer of the 1969 sculpture examined above, is detached from its mold and altered into a garment for the artist. Further animating the bodily possibilities of the sculpture, it completes its transformation from static sculpture to a "living" layer. In the 1975 photograph by Peter Moore, Bourgeois wears this *Avenza* cast as a "multi-breasted garment," the latex skin becoming a literal second skin (fig. 4).⁴¹ No longer floor bound, the cast version Bourgeois is pictured wearing becomes a mobile animate work. It succumbs to gravity's pull and hangs off the artist's body as a feeble flexible armor. Bourgeois' fascination with her cast, to the point of exhaustion, engages with it in an inherently personal and unique manner each time.

⁴¹ "'Avenza', *Louise Bourgeois*, 1968-9, cast 1992" (Tate Online).

IV. EVA HESSE

Working in the 1960s amidst the decline of abstract expressionism and the emergence of Minimalism, Eva Hesse, like Louise Bourgeois, sits at a historical moment of transition. Her work reflects the social circumstances of her time and remains expressive despite its embrace of industrial materials. Hesse's sculptures involve methods of production which utilize casting, building up materials and a re-use of her own forms. *Repetition Nineteen III* reflects her artistic practice and the ideals it chooses to explore (fig. 7). The sculpture is composed of nineteen individual forms arranged together in space to form a complex community. It is made by shell casting fiberglass resin onto a mold. Instead of layering the liquid casting material onto a solid form, as Bourgeois did, Hesse layers fiberglass and polyester resin into the interior of a constructed mold. In an act of inversion, she peels away the exterior to reveal the finished form beneath.

Repetition Nineteen III was produced not by Hesse herself but to her specifications by Doug Johns at Aegis Reinforced Plastics.⁴² Hesse deemed the initial set produced as too perfect, wanting to balance the manufactured with the handmade. Her deliberate sensitivity to a balance between the two poles of production, the multipliable copy and the authentic original, reflects the transitional art historical moment at the time. The forms of *Repetition Nineteen III* initially provide a sense of uniformity that gives way when they are examined more closely. The irregularities and individualized characteristics of the forms emerge when viewed relationally. Hesse manipulates the forms before they are fully hardened in order to create the nuanced pieces. The artist's touch is traced in the successive reworking of not only material but also design.

⁴² Doug Johns, "Eva Hesse Connection," *Sculpture by Doug Johns* (September 3, 2017) dougjohnssculpture.com/index.php/eva-hesse-connection-2/. Accessed May 1, 2018.

The sculptures share a basic structure with one another, a bucket-like shape. The bottom of each sits flush to the floor and a continuous wall creates an interior hollow with an open-air top. These are not sealed containers but receptive vessels. The slight variation from one cylindrical form to its neighbor make visible to the viewer the irregularity and uniqueness of each vessel. A crimp on one side, a leaning to the right on the other breaks this artwork free from mere seriality and instead invests the work with legible markers of difference. The pieces speak to each other through their diverging forms.

Championed for her use of unconventional materials Hesse would plumb the industrial supply stores of Canal Street in NYC looking for materials that could convey the complexity of process within her sculptures. Her aim of getting to "nonart, nonconnotative, nonanthropomorphic, nongeometric, non, nothing, everything, but of another kind, vision, sort, from a total other reference point," quoted in her exhibition statement of 1968, is visible in the complex works she creates.⁴³ Hesse looked for malleable manufacturing materials that could retain an imprint of the making process. Industrial latex, fiberglass sheeting, washers, and nets to be worked in a manner highlighting the possibility for irregularities. Manipulating the non-art materials chemically and physically brought forth an immediacy through expressive surface textures.

In her sculptures, Hesse maintains a truth to the materiality. She explores the inherent properties of fiberglass and resin, the textures and colors which arise from the means of assembly and production to their aesthetic ends. The industrial quality of the supplies although heavily tied to the world of chemical solvents and polymers is countered by the resulting form which leaves

⁴³ Eva Hesse, quoted in Cindy Nemser, "An interview with Eva Hesse," *Artforum*, vol. 8, no. 9 (May 1970): 62.

traces of the handmade. Misshapen, the organically grouped vessels of *Repetition Nineteen III* insist on the tactile.

In keeping with her truth to materials commitment, Hesse does not add any additional color to her sculptural works, instead the layering of the of the latex and fiberglass reflect the subtle hues of their composition. Hesse pushes her use of latex and fiberglass resins to their limits. By exploring the boundaries and thresholds of each material's properties, the varying proportions of compound to stabilizer, thicknesses, and application, Hesse creates a range of opacity and translucency.⁴⁴ Briony Fer has described the artist's layering of fiberglass and latex as a means to capture light, in one material trapping it between the various layers and in the other producing a creamy opacity reminiscent of light itself. The formation of "little bubbles" during the fabrication process of *Repetition Nineteen III* gave them an "inner glow" with the light passing through the "nubbly walls" altering shadows of its own and seeping outward.⁴⁵ The fiberglass forms are "characteristic of light when [it is] worked with like this—by Hesse or by Whiteread—not to be contained, to slip out, to leak, to emanate desire by default."⁴⁶ These are sculptures that embrace their composition and infuse the material characteristics with meaning, the artist deciding how thick to apply the materials and how opaque/translucent the form's boundaries are to be.

Although Hesse pairs materials and forms with specific qualities in mind, her repertoire of materials are susceptible to the decaying effects of time. This degradation is not sought after but is instead an inevitable end. Latex and fiberglass, two of Hesse's primary materials, are

⁴⁴ In letter to Dorothy James in England Hesse wrote "Last Friday 15 minutes before this place closed I bought liquid casting rubber and filler and separator. I experimented all weekend. It's a great media for me... Today (I used it all up over the weekend) I went to get a larger supply. Its possibilities are endless. I will cast my 19 pieces. Worked on little things during experimentation of different proportions of rubber to filler, thickness, etc. Can alter color also translucency." Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: New York University Press, 1976), 106.

⁴⁵ Lippard, 109

⁴⁶ Briony Fer, "Treading blindly, or the excessive presence of the object." *Art History*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1997): 268.

altered by the time and space of their environment, eventually yellowing and becoming brittle. Hesse's sculptures as they are seen today do not retain the pliable light material properties inherent in their conception. Their surface appearance has dulled and the materials have dried out. Oxidation has weakened their structural and material composition making the forms unstable. Light, in particular, and its prolonged exposure, disintegrates the material surface. There is an inherent vulnerability to the ageing of these materials. Since she created *Repetition Nineteen III* in the late 1960s it has darkened; time and the ephemerality of the materials has cast a patina. Hesse was aware of the fragility and eventual decay of the materials she employed in her sculptures yet she chose them not for those qualities but for their readiness at hand. Quoted in an interview with Nemser, Hesse expressed her concern over the longevity of the pieces purchased by collectors wishing to tell them "it's not going to last."⁴⁷ Though not a conscious element of the works, the issues of decay and ageing are prominent when looking at the condition of the sculptures today. Ephemeral and industrial, the sculpture's are caught between their intended form and the external forces acting upon them.

Hesse has created an organic seriality in which the handmade and irregular disrupts what would otherwise seem like a manufactured form. The sculpture's title (*Repetition Nineteen III*) identifies it as the third iteration of a set arrangement. Hesse's two prior explorations were composed of different materials. The first arrangement, *Repetition Nineteen I* is composed of aluminum screen, papier-mâché and paint (fig. 5). Its rigid forms vary in size but maintain an organic composition on the floor. The second iteration is a latex cast with industrial tubing emanating from its center hollow (fig. 6). Lucy Lippard described their appearance as a "luscious cream color with a very long translucent cord from their depths."⁴⁸ While the latex provided an

⁴⁷ Cindy Nemser, "An interview with Eva Hesse," *Artforum*, vol. 8, no. 9 (May 1970): 62.

⁴⁸ Fer, "Treading Blindly," 286.

opacity and cream color, Hesse continued her material exploration until she found lucidity and receptivity to light in the fiberglass and polyresin version of *Repetition Nineteen III*. Fer describes this shift as a “lurch between poles of opacity and translucency.”⁴⁹ This characteristic continuation of a form in a variety of materials is indicative of Hesse’s mode of production as well as that of Bourgeois and Whiteread. Continually in progress, the work of art goes through successive iterations of the multiplied forms creating an awareness of the medium and reinforcing the in-between nature of casting.

In Hesse's work the sequential development highlights the importance of material properties within her sculptures. The material is not merely a means of manifesting the conceptual idea of the work but is instead chosen in tandem with the piece itself. Hesse chooses to return to latex in later works, a material she rejected in her early mockups of *Repetition Nineteen*. Her continual search and exploration of the expressive properties inherent in various materials positions her works as a negotiation between the sculpture and its cultural meaning. Hesse eschews traditional sculptural expectations and evokes a dialogue between the development of various iterations in a series. Evidence of this conscious assessment of material comes through in the oscillation between latex and fiberglass. Her various drawings and writings reinforce her desire to make material and process an integral element of one’s understanding of the works.

Repetition Nineteen III is unconventional not only in materials but also in its display method. Like Bourgeois, Hesse moves away from the traditional notion of sculpture by placing the grouped forms directly on the gallery floor. This changes the boundary between space, art and viewer. Her desire to distance her work from the art terms of her cultural milieu results in sculptures that evade clear definitions. They are not anthropomorphic yet they are bodily. The

⁴⁹ Ibid.

manner of display creates a social interaction between the viewer and the work but also between the individuated forms themselves. Not quite fleshy but still reminiscent of the body and skin, the material (fiberglass and resin) evokes a feeling of both the clinical and the natural. It becomes challenging to refrain from anthropomorphizing the cylinders. They are individual things existing socially. Standing at 19 to 20 ¼ inches tall they are not surrogate bodies (perhaps babies) but they lean and slouch like bodies. As with Bourgeois's casts, *Repetition Nineteen III* blurs the limits of casting and its expressive potentialities.

Fer identifies a "knot," an invisible link, connecting *Repetition Nineteen III* to a closely associated piece *Area* (1968) (fig. 8).⁵⁰ The wire mesh molds which served to create the open containers of the former sculpture are manipulated and distorted to create *Area*. As the artist explained to Cindy Nemser in 1970 she "took the bottoms out of the containers, rubberized the forms and then sewed them together" into rectangles of latex on mesh stitched together with metal wire.⁵¹ What is most interesting about Hesse's recycling of forms, a "re-use of her own ready-made," is the psychological and cognitive shifts implied in altering the function of a mold, in taking away its ability to hold matter.⁵² Fer sees Hesse's refashioning of one piece into another as a personal readymade, one distinct from the commodity objects of other artists. For Hesse, the molds of one work already made exist as things in the world and in the case of these two works, are viable for reuse. In a similar vein to how Whiteread elicits a game of mental acrobatics from her sculpture viewing audience, Hesse here has reshaped one's conception of a mold and its cast. Casting itself is a state of being in between with the mold allowing for a transformation to occur within the confines of its interior. In Hesse's production of *Area* an inevitable violence is present through the disemboweling of a formed and extant mold. To take something intended as a

⁵⁰ Fer, "Treading Blindly," 270.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

vehicle of reproduction and redirect its function discards its initial intention. While re-using a mold is part of its function in principle, *Area* uses the mold “only to destroy itself as a mold.”⁵³ Her conversion of the hollow cylindrical “template into some other object, literally breaking a mould to re-shape what was originally, after all, a negative model, a gap to be encased, is a remarkable move to make.”⁵⁴ For the cultural milieu in which Hesse was working, particularly that of 1968 abstraction, her sculptures serve as markers of a structural moment for sculpture at large. In the layered complexity of her works, "the knot is a series of entanglements between visible and invisible, inside and outside, opacity and light" which emphasizes the liminal, in-between quality that seemed newly full of possibility.⁵⁵

Hesse describes *Area* as “the insides we took out” and its crudely sewn parts reflect the inherent recalibration of its original form. Instead of casting the finished form in fiberglass as Hesse had in *Repetition Nineteen III* she returns to latex. What was inferior for one formal structure becomes essential for another. The thick skin like quality of the material counters the earlier translucency of her fiberglass vessels. *Area*’s long rectangular stitched latex form sits predominantly floor-bound as if it were a body in repose. The top third portion hugs the wall as the remaining seven units stretch out onto the floor. There were originally to be nineteen of them, a one-for-one recycling of *Repetition Nineteen III* but Hesse told Nemser “it was a hot summer and I just couldn’t get the 19 done...I have a personal attachment when it comes from another piece.”⁵⁶ Her manipulation of the molds and subsequent creation of *Area* feels personal. Its surface maintains its individual marks and dents leaving visible traces of the handmade impressed within.

⁵³ Fer, "Treading Blindly," 271.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 268.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Lucy R Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, (New York University Press:1976) 122.

While markings are present in *Area*, the makings of *Repetition Nineteen III* are no longer discernible from its surface. The original mold is all but unrecognizable successfully creating a disconnect. The tactile quality of latex, its rubbery weight and skin-like associations make *Area* even more redolent of the bodily. It acts as an epidermal membrane having been discarded and shed. The negative model from whence it came has been flattened and laid bare. The empty containers of the open vessels have been dismembered and their containment dissolved. *Area*'s split orientation creates an L shape hugging both the wall and the floor. The simplicity of its form absorbs the space and becomes a part of its environment. Situated in such an orientation it occupies a physical in-between state serving as a threshold of both the verticality of tradition and horizontality of more contemporary rejections of hierarchy. Despite the flattening out, Hesse retains a sense of intimacy in *Area*. It has asserted its contemporary form but refuses to let go of its "painterly" surface panels whose gestural traces individuate and encourage contemplation of the recycled forms.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, 122.

V. RACHEL WHITEREAD

For Whiteread casting becomes a language that adapts its tradition to one that is “fast, loose, and fiendishly clever.”⁵⁸ Upon first viewing Whiteread’s work its retention of elements traditionally associated with casting stimulates the viewer’s experience. Her works are generally comprised of plaster forms which look like identifiable referents from the real world appearing as replicas of everyday things. It is not until one takes a closer, more extended look that an inversion becomes visible. For Whiteread, the history of the casting process and its height in the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries serve as an inspiration to her sculptural practice. In interviews, she has cited the excavation of Pompeii, the volatile states of volcanoes and their immobilizing force, and even the interior casts of the bodies in popular contemporary science exhibits as points from which she thinks about casting.⁵⁹ These entropic natural roots, ones that solidify or congeal a space/object, have led her to develop her own casting language and repertoire for material exploration. The nineteenth century process of bronze casting in Rodin’s work was deemed one of “life, death, and resurrection” wherein the object having been “destroyed through casting” lives again in bronze.⁶⁰ Whiteread’s domestic objects receive a similar resurrection albeit with some significant variations. While her method of casting involves single-use molds or waste molds wherein the possibility of replication is destroyed when removing the cast, it takes as its mold a found form instead of a constructed one like Rodin’s *Mask of Claudel*.

Whiteread lets her works emerge into their own respective “homes.” She refers to her way of making as “mapping, a process of making traces solid,” solidifying a form in its

⁵⁸ Helen Anne Molesworth, ed. *Part Object Part Sculpture* (Columbus, Ohio: Wexner Center For The Arts, The Ohio State University, 2005), 25.

⁵⁹ Ina Cole, “Mapping Traces: A Conversation with Rachel Whiteread,” *International Sculpture Center*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

particular moment.⁶¹ The idea of the sculpture's form, one which maintains its connection to the body and the material are joined in the conceptual process from the very beginning, each one suiting the other.⁶² Her curiosity about materials and continual research into casting methods are balanced in her approach to new works.

As with Bourgeois and Hesse, the body and casting maintain their intimate link in her series of *Torso* (1988-1999) sculptures despite not being physically present. Cast from rubber hot water bottles Whiteread explores a variety of materials in an intimate scale (fig. 9). All three use casting to emphasize the material properties best suited to the medium. Allowing for manipulation and disruption of one or many steps, the results are like a "sampler in a pattern book."⁶³ Each material is sampled, catalogued and chosen for its aesthetic addition to the overall conception of the sculpture. In the torsos, Whiteread used dental plaster, plaster, resin, concrete, silver leaf, and wax among others with their full range of materials explored in terms of their luminosity, density, transparency, and texture, varying from cast to cast. In her early exploration of the hot water bottle form, she played with the association of a rubber vessel as a symbolic part of the body. Whiteread describes these proto-torso works, produced during her time at Slade School of Fine Art, "filling them with water and sewing them inside pillowcases and things (fig. 10). They'd look like clothes, but also like pregnant women or vulnerable men with their genitals hanging out under their shirts. I always had that interest in filling something up and making it change its essence, but later on I figured out what kind of materials to use."⁶⁴

Culturally specific, the hot water bottle is for Whiteread's audience a household item of interaction. It provides warmth for the user and is often placed under bed covers. The hot water

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ann Gallagher and Molly Donovan, *Rachel Whiteread* (Tate Publishing: 2017), 132.

⁶⁴ "Rachel Whiteread: 'I've Done the Same Thing over and over,'" *The Independent* (2 Sept. 2010).

bottle is also associated with the alleviation of mild ordinary pains through its direct application of heat to various parts of the body. The molds which supply Whiteread's forms are these mass consumer goods. Their domestic use resonates with everyday life throughout a Western context. This small scale keeps them connected to the consumer object, something that can be held, contained, used and even owned. Its malleable fleshiness is made most apparent when almost but not quite fully filled, a state which Whiteread's casts immortalize. Capturing this transitional state of an object is emblematic of the in-between forms made by Bourgeois and Hesse in the 1960s. For Whiteread, these are casts of items used in a setting open to vulnerability and as such the casts themselves despite their solid form have been made vulnerable to the exterior world. The sculptural forms produced emerge as utterly tactile bodily objects. The inherent shape of her real-world referent fills to a plump curved rectangular form with dimples and recessions. Just as Hesse and Bourgeois attempt to maintain a sensuous quality through industrial materials, Whiteread working in the wake of minimalism and post-minimalism wants to emphasize process and its sensory details to speak to the soul of the object within modernity.

The inaugural cast from the series is *Torso* (1988) made of white plaster and exhibited alongside *Shallow Breath*, (a cast of the underside of a bed) at her first solo show (fig. 11 and 12). These works speak to the domestic interior as an environment, a counter to the white cube gallery in which they were displayed. This sense of an intimate interior imbues these inanimate objects with the ephemerality of bodies. In subsequent casts, Whiteread drops the main descriptive title (*Torso*) in lieu of the equalizing non-referential *Untitled* as the primary identifier. By grouping the individual works as variations on a theme, Whiteread no longer needs to create the cognitive link between sculpture and body part. When displayed together as they recently were in her Tate Britain retrospective, each is individuated. The repetition in her work

makes the formal elements of a commodity object central capturing the essence of the form itself. They are not sterile casts mechanically churned from a singular source but instead a visible trace of the artist working through material concerns.

Looking more closely at a later iteration, *Untitled (Pink Torso)*, highlights the interior contours of the rubber vessel transmuted into the boundary lines of the sculpture (fig. 13). The identifiable shape confounds viewer expectations with its solidity. Hovering above the presentation plane, its cast form disconnects it from use. No longer a vehicle for warmth, *Pink Torso* is a solid mass made of specialized dental plaster giving it a gum like hue. Inconsistencies traditionally seen as imperfections in the casting process are here valued. The splotchy coloration, a result of the material's curing, allows for the appearance of depth with parts shadowed in white while others maintain a sharper pinkness. The sculpture's surface texture with visible air bubbles closest to one end highlight its curves and dips and remind one of the processes of casting. It becomes difficult to see it as anything other than a torso once the title is known, despite recognizing its original form of a water bottle. Viewed together some have dimples, others are full and plump as they rest inside a glass vitrine as if protected newborns in a nursery wing.

However, these healthy hopeful infants according to the artist are more akin to a "headless, limbless baby."⁶⁵ Despite its contemporary object reference and the more macabre dismembered infant body, the plaster cast roots itself within a historical lineage originating in antiquity. Etruscan, Greek and Roman sculptures attacked by time, only to be unearthed hundreds of years later during the Renaissance as semblances of what they once were, are displayed in their severed state throughout cultural institutions worldwide. Whiteread's torsos mimic the relics of the bodies past using a contemporary manufactured source. Limbs and heads

⁶⁵ Ann Gallagher and Molly Donovan, *Rachel Whiteread* (Tate Publishing: 2017), 13.

long gone, the torso as the most compact section of the human body remains. It is the most resilient part of the body as well as the most contained. The outer flesh envelops the bodily fluids and organs within. Whiteread's solidification of the hot water bottle's interior space, its fluids and bodily stuff, disconnects it both from its use as an ordinary object and from the body as living organism. Her torsos are lifeless compact evocations that reference the body in an inert and static way. Both ephemeral and permanent, the torsos stand in for the universal body but remain susceptible to the fragility of the plaster, wax, and resin they are cast from. Fer's description of them as "stand-ins or bodies by proxy, intimately related to her other works that lean against a wall, like the plaster *Shallow Breath* (1988), or slump, like the rubber *Untitled (Amber Bed)* (1991)" focuses the viewer's attention on their placement and relationships to one another.⁶⁶ We as viewers are forced to come to terms with an object whose familiar form is no longer stable and encouraged to investigate its surface details. The familiarity is alienating and as such casts doubt on the viewer's senses of perception.

Whiteread's *Shallow Breath*, a plaster and polystyrene sculpture, is created from a found object-turned-mold as well. The sculpture subverts the object readymade by using it as the casting base. Unlike the torso series, this cast is not the interior of a form. Instead, its form is a solidification of the space between a wooden bedframe and the floor. The sculpture is propped leaning at a slight diagonal off the wall unlike the horizontality of its original found state further connecting it to the human inhabitant who once rested upon it. It is not replicated as a mere copy but instead inverted into a relative of the original.

In *Shallow Breath*, the means of production are made visible despite the form's deceptive cognitive signification. It exudes its materiality with its edges showing remnants of the casting process. Consciously left visible, the leftover plaster emerges out of the mold's rigid construct.

⁶⁶ Gallagher and Donovan, *Rachel Whiteread*, 132.

Viewed frontally the sculpture has five parallel indentions which mark out a designated space within the outer edges of its rectangular form. The impression of two beam slats, which bisect the verticality of the form at both its top and bottom, frame the soft inner bulges. Formally the sculpture feels ordered and symmetrical through its logical division of space. It is the leftover bits, however, that break from the rationality and makes visible the unexpected elements of chance. The raised and imperfect surplus plaster frames the boundary line of the frontal plane. These subtle accumulations of plaster clumps reflect the pressure and pull of the once soft material. In it, gravity's transient touches are made permanent during the fabrication process. These elements allow the viewer to retrace the life of the sculpture and how it came to be made from the real-world object to the distortion of that very thing. The sculpture's human scale and its point of reference create tension within the work. While materiality reveals the thingness of the sculpture, its referent source layers on personal pasts and human emotions.

This doubling of space, or better yet, solidification of air results in an uncanny relationship to the perceived object. The solids of the object lose all sense of permanence and form while the invisible once open space is filled with matter thus making form physical. Unlike an indexical approach, *Shallow Breath* chooses to display this formerly intangible space. The gap is cast. Looking more like a mattress than the negative space from whence it came the four post holes act as clues to its origins; they function as a link to the now absent everyday object. The physical process of lifting, reorienting, framing and filling the underside cavity of the bed counters the rest implied in the form's original function.

The implications of choosing to utilize a bed, a domestic object rooted in the personal, creates an uncanny reference to the human body. A bed resonates not only with domestic furnishings but as a site of vulnerability, rest and death. Much like the earlier comments on

casting as a life cycle, this is an everyday object loaded with associations of rest and action. As an intimately interior furnishing, Whiteread's conscious implementation of its form and her subsequent re-orientation of it disturbs the notion of rest. This is no longer a bed which could provide comfort or reprieve but now stands in as an anthropomorphic manifestation. It is stiff, inert, and also dead in a sense.

Her manifestation of that generally unseen space brings the psychological fears hidden underneath out into view. What is hiding underneath the bed is now solid and further obscured, but instead of shadowy darkness, it assaults the viewer with its creamy bright plaster form. The most intimate fears of the interior are inverted, reoriented and made public for display. Whiteread wants us to experience the immaterial as an object through her process of making the negative a positive. Moving beyond relational qualities *Shallow Breath* absorbs them. By confronting the viewer through a literal reproduction of the invisible she forever contains that space. David Batchelor has described casting's process as the "memory of a lost moment" in a manner similar to Roland Barthes analysis of the photography's memento of death.⁶⁷ The sculpture's title, *Shallow Breath*, links it to a faltering bodily action and draws upon the ephemerality of selfhood. This marks a return to modernist concerns of the individual in relation to the external social world. Whiteread's insistence on making visible the poetics of casting, the material qualities it brings forth and the traces of the past combine with her contemporary cultural milieu to produce works that engage both the past and present.

There is a lightness and contemplative nature to the forms Whiteread produces which emerge through the opacity and luminosity of the materials themselves. In hopes of eschewing a reductive reading of her sculptures, I have been trying to address how she uses casting beyond

⁶⁷ David Batchelor, "Rachel Whiteread. Liverpool and Madrid," *The Burlington Magazine* vol. 138, no. 1125 (1996): 838.

the traditional sense to allow the residual bits of life to enter into the forms. Shelley Hornstein has described Whiteread's doubling process as "best understood through the experience of the object, that is, the material object she makes for us to experience."⁶⁸ The disorienting familiarity of the thing she casts, however, invokes a sense of Freud's theory of the uncanny. *Heimlich* is defined as something that is concealed from the self, it is familiar but can also be intensely private. The uncanny/*unheimlich* is then the negation of canny/*heimlich*. It is Freud's name for the uncomfortable feeling which is inadvertently revealed: "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known and long familiar."⁶⁹ Hornstein notes that "therefore, Freud argues that *unheimlich* or the "uncanny" is that which is concealed, but also that which is known and familiar."⁷⁰ These two opposite interpretations overlap, double, acting as one.⁷¹ The coming to light of this private/hidden space is precisely what Whiteread's negative casts evoke.

In addition to Whiteread's interest in making visible these social and psychological boundaries, much of her work maintains elements redolent of Minimalism. Its simplicity and material emphasis serve as a link, but it moves beyond the hard inertness of materiality praised in Minimalism and instead fuses those elements with lingering feelings and residues of process. *Shallow Breath* brings forth associations with the body through its texture, repose and death, going beyond mere objecthood. Whiteread's casts are not mere commodity replications but instead meditations on the "soul of the object."⁷² A soul solidified but not closed off entirely to the world.

⁶⁸ Shelley Hornstein, *The Art of Rachel Whiteread*, Edited by Chris Townsend (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 56.

⁶⁹ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," 1925 translation in *The Collected Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 17 (1917-1919), trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 220.

⁷⁰ Freud, "The Uncanny," 220.

⁷¹ Hornstein, *The Art of Rachel Whiteread*, 56.

⁷² Anne Wagner in conversation at *The Humanities Institute, UIC*, re. Tate Britain Show, 2018.

If Bourgeois and Hesse moved sculpture to the floor, to the horizontal position, Whiteread has reasserted its verticality for the contemporary viewer. But because it is both tactile and bodily, it is also a rejection of the traditional phallic association of sculpture. Casting facilitated a new language for artists, particularly in the 1960s context onwards. Whiteread, like her predecessors grabs hold of the material qualities and explores their limits. Taking from the manufactured world she makes sculptures that remain complex sites of meaning production. In dialogue with modernism, minimalism, and her contemporary peers her works mark a continual progression of casting's capacities. The historical moment of *Torso* and *Shallow Breath*, the late 1980s, are a moment in which the re-evaluation of philosophical approaches to the self and society have returned to the cultural dialogue.⁷³ Whiteread's works revive the formal concerns explored by Bourgeois and Hesse marking a continued expression of the complex state of bounded cast sculptures.

⁷³ Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self, The Making of Modern Identity* is published in 1989 marking a reflection and inquiry into contemporary life.

VI. CONCLUSION

After examining the cast forms produced by Bourgeois and Hesse in the 1960s and those by Whiteread decades later in the late 1980s, it is apparent that their unique methods of making and expressive forms are intertwined with the cultural concerns of their historical moments. Experimentation with materials, testing their aesthetic limits through layering and innovative application allowed these artists to create sculptures that embody both modernist and contemporary concerns. All three share an artistic style that maintains the nuanced details and bodily references of selfhood in relation to an evolving art historical form. The conflation of discordant elements, the industrial material yet organic final forms, serial works that maintain their individuality, and their social engagement with the world, emerge as markers of their complex states. Casting, as employed by all three, is itself a process of metamorphosis and shifting boundaries. Bourgeois, Hesse and Whiteread's treatment of casting transforms the process from earlier established notions. Their tailored approach to the process and medium of making succeeds in keeping sensuous bodily characteristics such as an awareness of interiors, boundaries, and limits within the forms themselves.

They used casting to make boundaries visible, the liminal space between the interior and exterior world, ones in which social relationships of placement and arrangement create complex stagings. Bourgeois' huddled forms vying for verticality while stuck in a horizontal state encouraged viewers to sense her sculpture as a bodily landscape, its peaks and valleys cast in a skin-like material. The relationship which Hesse's two sculptures offer differs from Bourgeois' translation of material casts, she uses the forms in *Repetition Nineteen III* as social bodies whose interaction and differences define them. These industrial material forms keep the handmade, having physically been handled, touched, and squeezed before the material hardened. From

Repetition Nineteen III, Hesse returns to the rubber molds--metaphors for established social forms--and dissects them only to visibly stitch them together becoming flattened incapable of escaping one another. The mold itself has been unraveled, its edges becoming a solid plane. Whiteread's found mold, which confounds the boundary between air and solid form, champions the liminal border. For her, the psychological space and physical space become one.

Taylor's account of the long standing crisis of modernity finds its visual counterpart in the concerns of the works examined. The anxiety over fragmentation and an attempt at showing a way forward is posited through casting. The mold as a mother produces its casts, with the remaining surface details acting as scars of modernity with the edges of each cast becoming an epidermal layer between the sculpture and the outside world. This outermost layer, the skin, holds the potential for sociality as the site of social relationships. These bodily metaphors used to describe the process of casting and the bodily suggestions, which the sculptures conjure in the viewer, point to an art that is grounded in a negotiation between inward expressions and the evolving external world.

FIGURES



Figure 1, Auguste Rodin, *Mask of Camille Claudel and Left Hand of Pierre de Wissant*, c. 1895



Figure 2, Louise Bourgeois, *Avenza*, 1968-9, cast 1992



Figure 3, Louise Bourgeois, *Avenza Revisited II*, 1968-9, Cast in Bronze



Figure 4, Photograph taken in 1975 by Peter Moore of Bourgeois wearing a cast of *Avenza*



Figure 5, Eva Hesse, *Repetition Nineteen I*, 1967, Paint and paper-mâché on aluminum screening

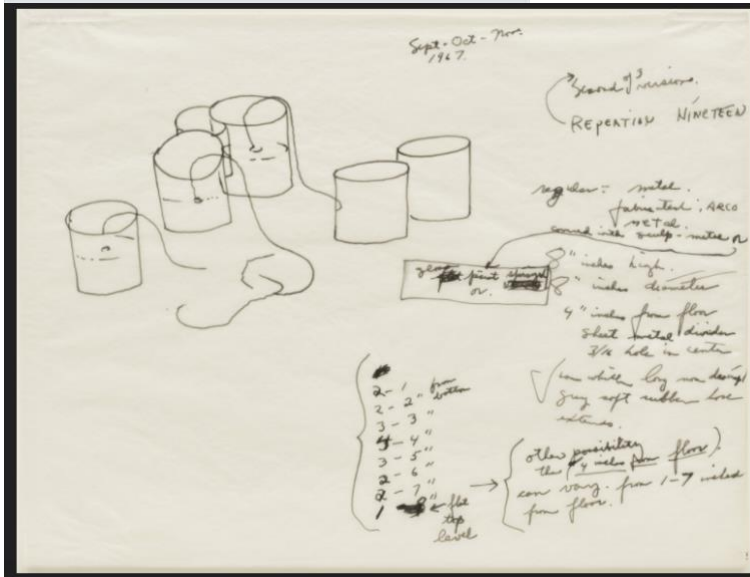


Figure 6, Eva Hesse, *Untitled Test Pieces*, 1967-68, latex and rubber tubing, 14 x 26 cm, cord 46 cm. and *Repetition Nineteen*, 1967, pen and ink on tracing paper. 22 x 30 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of the Eva Hesse Estate



Figure 7, Eva Hesse, *Repetition Nineteen III*, 1968, Fiberglass and polyester resin, nineteen units, Each 19 to 20 1/4" (48 to 51 cm) x 11 to 12 3/4" (27.8 to 32.2 cm) in diameter



Figure 8, Eva Hesse, *Area*, 1968, Latex



Figure 9, Rachel Whiteread, *Torso(s)* displayed at Tate Britain during 2018 exhibition



Figure 10, Rachel Whiteread, *Untitled*, 1986



Figure 11, Rachel Whiteread, *Torso*, 1988, Plaster



Figure 12, Rachel Whiteread, *Shallow Breath*, 1988, Plaster and Polystyrene foam



Figure 13, Rachel Whiteread, *Untitled (Pink Torso)*, 1995, Pink dental plaster

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