

Making New Meaning through Art, Body and Metaphor

by

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Carole Chaloupka Burton

*Making New Meaning through Art, Body and Metaphor*

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**Abstract**

The thesis paper documents the role of metaphors in generating meaning through connection with the body, examined through the lens of my art practice. My research is informed by writing around body-based meaning-making (Lakoff, Johnson, Orbach et al.) and recent theory on the metaphoric and emotional nature of reasoning (Lakoff, Jackson). My examination is informed by a literature review including texts from cognitive science, linguistic philosophy, and neuroscience. I consider the deployment of my body within my art making in a study of how meaning is acquired in a whole-body process. Using a heuristic working method I relate these theories to the artworks produced including sculpture, video of performance, and photography. The thesis documents the process of making of artworks, and considerations of the body-based meanings that emerge. These reflections and artworks comprise a site of prospective new meaning-making for the viewer through my autobiographical and figurative art practice.

Keywords: art-based research, practice based research, embodiment, contemporary art, the artist's body, body-based meaning making, body knowledge, metaphor, figurative art, figurative sculpture, performance art.

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## **Introduction**

I am interested in the relationship between the body and the ways in which people make sense of, and assign meaning to their experiences. Across all cultures, language is rich with metaphors that reference our bodies' ability to communicate concepts and feelings. We "feel it in our gut", things "get on our nerves", we "come to our senses", get something "off our chest", or go "weak in the knees". Tremendous leaps in understanding of the complex nature of the body's sensory and neural processing have been made since Cartesian duality placed the thinking mind in opposition to the material body. However, binary perceptions still prevail in Western thought. We still talk of following our head *or* our heart, intellect is viewed as a brain process removed from the rest of the body, and rational thinking maintains its status as the primary way of knowing our environment and ourselves.

I have long suspected that the symbiotic nature of feelings, thoughts, emotions and physicality were far more significant than my Western upbringing had led me to believe. This is largely inspired by having witnessed several manifestations of illness within my family that seemed suspiciously connected to the person's emotional life, as well as having had many experiences of "knowing" things in "my gut" or "my heart" that could not be explained by rational means. A significant health scare for which I rejected medical treatment in favor of a commitment to heeding the messages of my body further strengthened my belief in the body as

an intelligent organism in its own right. This focus on my body's physical manifestation, its capabilities and its corporeality, inform my art practice and thesis research.

## **Background**

Through my sculptural and figurative art practice, I address a deep-seated compulsion to consistently represent and deploy my own body in my artwork. Throughout the process of this thesis investigation, I came to focus on how my "inner" bodily experiences such as feelings, emotions and thoughts could be represented in my figurative sculptural practice. My research turned to an examination of mind and body, including an investigation of the philosophical basis for the Western separation of these two concepts in Cartesian thought. Once I better understood the foundation of this divided way of conceptualizing the body, I looked to recent theories derived from neuroscientific and biological studies of the body, which helped me understand the physical relationship between how the brain processes the stimuli that are garnered through the senses. Most relevant are the linguistic and philosophical theories of the metaphorical and bodily basis of human meaning-making arising from such simple concepts as "warm is good" and "down is bad". These investigations focus on how fundamental embodied experiences are translated into metaphoric



thought processes and language. This has transformed how I view my art practice. Primarily through the work of linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson, my compulsion to deploy my body to create new meaning via metaphoric thought now finally makes clearer sense to me. In this paper I will examine how the metaphoric process maps the meaning of *known* concepts onto abstract *unknowns* to create new understanding. As Johnson and Lakoff demonstrate, most of the fundamental and basic metaphors underpinning our reasoning arise from the bodily basis of the human experience.

Lakoff asserts that reasoning is often an unconscious process that is not purely literal but metaphorical and imaginative, not dispassionate, but emotionally engaged. He states, “The mind is inherently embodied. Thought is mostly unconscious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical. These are three major findings of cognitive science” (Lakoff, 3). Johnson states, “a substantial body of evidence from the cognitive sciences supports the hypothesis that meaning is shaped by the nature of our bodies, especially our sensorimotor capacities and our ability to experience feelings and emotions...meaning is grounded in our bodily experience” (Johnson 12). Following this, two primary theories emerge:

- Human beings make meaning of their experience via the body’s constant monitoring of itself through a myriad of senses, emotions and processes, only some of which we become aware of through conscious thought.

- Much of our capacity to reason is the result of our ability to map body-based concepts to abstract concepts through the use of metaphoric thinking.

These assertions form the underpinnings of the research questions posed in this investigation:

- How is the theory of body-based meaning-making relevant to my art practice?
- How do conceptual metaphors emerge from embodied meaning in this work process?

## **Methodology**

Clark Moustakas elaborates on intuition and its role in heuristic research in

*Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications:*

In the intuitive process one draws on clues; one senses a pattern or underlying condition that enables one to imagine and then characterize the reality, state of mind or condition. In intuition we perceive something, observe it, and look and look again from clue to clue until we surmise the truth. The more that intuition is exercised and tested, the more likely one will develop an advanced perceptiveness and sensitivity to what is essential in discovery of knowledge. At every step along the

way, the heuristic researcher exercises intuitive clues and makes necessary shifts in method, procedure, direction and understanding, which will add depth, substance and essential meanings to the discovery process. Intuition is an essential characteristic in seeking knowledge (Moustakas 24).

Moustakas surmises: "...from the beginning, and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the methodology flow out of an inner awareness, meaning and inspiration. When I consider an issue, problem or question, I enter into it fully...I may challenge, confront, or even doubt my understanding of a human concern or issue; but when I persist in a disciplined and devoted way I ultimately deepen my knowledge of the phenomenon" (Moustakas 11).

This art-based research project is informed by scholarly texts relating to body-based meaning-making and conceptual metaphor theory. Using a heuristic working methodology, Kemmis and McTaggart's model of action research was applied upon completion of each artwork, entailing an ongoing review and reflection cycle that triggers the next action in an evolving process, usually carried out in four consecutive phases: develop, act, observe and reflect (Kemmis, McTaggart 82). This cyclical process does not end, but provides conclusions consisting of more ideas for action. This aligns with my creative process. Heurism, from the Greek *heuriskein*: to find, is defined as encouraging a person to learn, discover, or solve problems on his or her own, as by experimenting, evaluating possible answers or solutions, or by trial and error.

According to McNiff: “heurism connotes a method of learning in which knowledge is discovered through an inquiry based upon the examination of personal experience” (McNiff 53). In *Art-Based Research* McNiff asserts that: “In the popular mind art has been perceived almost exclusively as a way of expressing emotion, as entertainment, and now as healing. It has not been appreciated as a way of knowing and systematically studying human experience and other natural phenomena”. According to McNiff, acknowledging the subjective and introspective ways of knowing that art-based research facilitates is vital to the advancement of communicating information about the human experience. This is because, he explains, so many natural phenomena are not subject to exact quantification, such as human relationships, motivations, interpretations, experience, personal expressions, and the creative process (McNiff 50).

#### **Heuristic working methodology**

Moustakas states, “Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge or puzzlement in the search to understand one’s self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social – and perhaps universal significance” (Moustakas 15).

Hiles proposes that the promise of heuristic inquiry encompasses “a systematic way of incorporating the self into our inquiry methods, and, therefore, some of the most significant, exciting and urgent life events and extraordinary human experiences can be researched more closely” (Hiles 2001).

Having taken inspiration and assurance from the writing of Moustakas, McNiff, Hiles et al. of the validity of this research method and art making practice, and coming to better understand the metaphoric and bodily basis of meaning-making (Lakoff, Johnson, Gallagher et al), I trust the work that my body-based intuition guides me to. I feel strongly that the work that I make is a manifestation of my own attempts to make meaning of my experience through art, and as such to declare an intended affect and meaning for the viewer is to deny them opportunity to make their own meaning from their embodied experience of the work. I trust that I am not alone in my personal and subjective explorations due to the commonality of human experience. Though I use my own body, story and intuition in the creation of this work, I believe that it presents an opportunity for others to generate their own understandings through the creation of their own personal metaphors.

What is often called for in the search for meaning, is what Csepregi refers to as “the art of getting out of the way” by stepping aside and giving the work time to reveal its meaning (Csepregi 151). The links and observations that emerge are in

my experience often metaphorical, personal and neither linear nor logical. I document these later in the paper. Each artwork I produced during the course of my MFA research creation was the result of observation and reflection on the work preceding it, directing me to new lines of scholarly and material investigation, culminating in the body of work, *I am the Ghost*.

## **Literature Review**

### **George Lakoff and Mark Johnson: *Metaphors We Live By***

Having collaborated on several works and subsequently expanded their individual theories of meaning-making, linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson provide the basis for my investigation of body-based meaning-making. In *Metaphors We Live By* Lakoff and Johnsons' arguments center around the use of conceptual (and often body-based) metaphors as a basis for human understanding. In *The Meaning of the Body* Johnson argues for the acknowledgement of emotion in the bodily basis of human meaning-making. In *Metaphors We Live By*, primarily using language as evidence, Lakoff and Johnson credit the work of linguists Sapir and Whorf for their observations of how language can reflect the conceptual systems of its speakers. They also cite the tradition of research in human development begun by Piaget, and the work of

many in the field of ecological psychology for their ideas about the way our conceptual systems are shaped by our constant navigation of our physical and cultural environment (Lakoff, Johnson xii).

*Metaphors We Live By* lays out the premise that so much of our ability to reason - what we call thinking and understanding - is made possible by the ability to take basic bodily and physical experiences that are either universal, or culturally specific, and use them to explain new concepts. A very simple example would be to take the concept of warmth. The range of temperature that a human body must retain to sustain life is very limited and maintaining this is crucial for survival. In any culture that experiences cold weather, an unspoken knowledge will inherently exist that “warm is good” and conversely, “cold is bad” (even lethal). In its most simple form, mapping body-based meanings (cold is bad, warm is good) onto abstract concepts using metaphor is demonstrated in examples such as “a warm greeting”, or “a cold reception”. Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphorical concepts are not merely a matter of linguistics, but that human *thought processes* are largely metaphorical and that the ordinary conceptual system by which we both think and act is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (Lakoff, Johnson 4).

If you look in a dictionary under "love," you find entries that mention affection, fondness, devotion, infatuation, and even sexual desire, but there is no mention of the way in which we comprehend love by means of metaphors like LOVE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE IS MADNESS, LOVE IS WAR, etc. If we take expressions like "Look how far we've come" or "Where are we now?" there would be no way to tell from a standard dictionary

or any other standard account of meaning that these expressions are normal ways of talking about the experience of love in our culture... We view language as providing data that can lead to general principles of understanding. The general principles involve whole systems of concepts rather than individual words or individual concepts. We have found that such principles are often metaphoric in nature and involve understanding one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience (Lakoff, Johnson 116).

Due to the fact that so many human experiences are neither concrete nor easily delineated (concepts such as emotion, feeling, ideas, time), metaphorical definition is used to “get a grasp” on the abstract, by metaphorically describing abstractions in terms of concepts that we understand in clearer terms, such as physical sensation, spatial orientation and objects (Lakoff, Johnson 113).

Johnson and Lakoff distinguish between *structural metaphors*, cases where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another, and *orientational metaphors* that do not structure one concept in terms of another but instead organize a whole system of concepts with respect to one another. The choice of the word *orientational* refers to the spatial orientation that most of these types of metaphoric systems arise from in the specific interaction of the human body in its environment; up-down because we are vertically orientated creatures, in-out because we perceive ourselves as containers with an inside and an outside and front-back because of the front and back nature of our physicality which causes us to project fronts and backs onto objects around us (Lakoff, Johnson 15). It is however noted that even such seemingly universal experiences can vary



culturally. For example, in some cultures the future is thought to be in front of us, whereas in others it is considered to the opposite because it is unseen, and hence, behind us as it is out of our field of vision. There also exist cultures where balance or centrality plays a much more important role than it does in others. These put less stress on the up-down conceptualization of experience (Lakoff, Johnson 25). Examples of spatialization metaphors and suggestions of how each metaphorical concept relates to our physical and cultural experience include:

#### Happy Is Up; Sad Is Down:

*Physical basis:* Drooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression; erect posture with a positive emotional state.

- I'm feeling *up*.
- My spirits *rose*.
- Thinking about her always gives me a *lift*.
- I'm *depressed*.
- I *fell* into a depression.
- My spirits *sank*. (Lakoff, Johnson 16)

#### Conscious Is Up; Unconscious Is Down

*Physical basis:* Humans and most other mammals sleep lying down and stand up when they awaken.

- *Wake up*.
- I'm *up* already.
- He *rises* early in the morning.
- He *fell* asleep.
- He's *under* hypnosis.
- He *sank* into a coma. (Lakoff, Johnson 16)

#### Having Control Or Force Is Up; Being Subject To Control Or Force Is Down

*Physical basis:* Physical size typically correlates with physical strength, and the victor in a fight is typically on top.

- I have control *over* her.
- I am *on top of* the situation.
- He's at the *height* of his power.
- He is *under* my control.
- He *fell* from power.
- His power is on the *decline*. (Lakoff, Johnson 16).

Lakoff and Johnson describe another category - ontological metaphor. These metaphors result from our experiences with physical objects in our environment and in particular, our own bodies. They describe the way in which conceptualizing events, activities, emotions and ideas as entities and substances allows us to quantify, locate and describe them (Lakoff, Johnson 26). The authors point out that it is easy to miss the fact that many statements are metaphorically based but would generally just be viewed as true or false statements of fact (Lakoff, Johnson 29). Using the examples of the phrases, "The odds are against us" and "We'll have to take our chances", Johnson and Lakoff point to the fact that these expressions, like so much of our language and thought processing, are in fact metaphorically based in this case referencing the "Life is a Gambling Game" metaphor (Lakoff, Johnson 52).

Another prevalent ontological metaphor detailed is *personification*: the metaphoric act of understanding nonhuman entities via the comprehension of human motivations, activities and characteristics, demonstrated in the examples,

“His *theory explained* it to me”, “This *fact argues* against the standard theories” and “*Life has cheated* me” (Lakoff, Johnson 34). Lakoff and Johnson point out that personification as metaphor differs depending on which quality or aspect of human behavior is being pointed to and using the following examples of the metaphorical personification of *inflation*:

- Inflation *has attacked* the foundation of our economy.
- Our biggest *enemy* right now *is* inflation.
- Inflation *has robbed* me of my savings.
- Inflation *has given birth* to a money-minded generation (Lakoff, Johnson 34).

Viewing inflation as a person, allows the metaphoric extension to “inflation as adversary”, which the authors point out not only presents a specific way of thinking about inflation, but also suggests ways of acting towards it. Starting to touch on the power of metaphor to make new meaning, the authors point out how viewing “inflation as adversary” can provide political and economic justification for governmental actions such as declaring war on budget cuts, target setting, and overhauling governmental structures (Lakoff, Johnson 40). The authors elaborate on a powerful example of metaphor making new meaning that can lead to action trajectories:

For example, faced with the energy crisis, President Carter declared "the moral equivalent of war." The WAR metaphor generated a network of entailments. There was an "enemy," a "threat to national security," which required "setting targets,"

"reorganizing priorities," "establishing a new chain of command," "plotting new strategy," "gathering intelligence," "marshaling forces," "imposing sanctions," "calling for sacrifices," and on and on. The WAR metaphor highlighted certain realities and hid others. The metaphor was not merely a way of viewing reality; it constituted a license for policy change and political and economic action...As Charlotte Linde (in conversation) has observed, whether in national politics or in everyday interaction, people in power get to impose their metaphors (Lakoff, Johnson 157).

Fundamentally, Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphorical thinking underpins our ability to conceptualize and therefore rationalize, and that the majority of our conceptual metaphors arise from our physical and bodily experience. They also investigate our ability to *make new meaning from new metaphors*. The authors assert that outside of the conventional conceptual metaphor system, imaginative and creative metaphors can create new meaning, expanding our understanding of our experiences. They propose that new metaphors provide the opportunity to make sense of our experiences in the same way that conventional metaphors do, namely by providing an intrinsic structure to meaning-making, whilst highlighting certain aspects of the concept and concealing others. A wonderful example they refer to is of a foreign student's (mis)interpretation of the expression "the solution to my problems". The student conceptualized a chemical solution full of one's problems with catalysts temporarily dissolving some problems and precipitating out others. The

authors cite the beauty of this metaphor in the way it presents problem solving as an ongoing process of adjustment and the acknowledgement of the fact that some problems never go away. Rather than the typical metaphor of “problems are a puzzle to be solved” this new metaphor posits the reoccurrence of a familiar problem as a natural phenomenon. It makes a temporary solution a success and creates a new reality around how problems are understood (Lakoff, Johnson 145).

New metaphors have the power to create a new reality. This can begin to happen when we start to comprehend our experience in terms of a metaphor, and it becomes a deeper reality when we begin to act in terms of it. If a new metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base our actions on, it will alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions that the system gives rise to. Much of cultural change arises from the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss of old ones. For example, the Westernization of cultures throughout the world is partly a matter of introducing the TIME IS MONEY metaphor into those cultures (Lakoff, Johnson 41).

One of the principal understandings gleaned from this text, is the realization that within my art practice I actively search out new metaphorical ways of expressing experiences, feelings, memories and emotions. Lakoff and Johnson’s explanation of the pervasiveness and power of conceptual metaphors and new metaphors in human meaning-making provided a framework for me to better understand my art-making motivations.

### **Mark Johnson: The Meaning of the Body**

“In short, this book is about the bodily depths of human meaning making through our visceral connection to our world” (Johnson xiii).

In *The Meaning of the Body*, Johnson follows on from his work with Lakoff and previous offering, *The Body in the Mind*, to examine the ways in which our bodily limitations define how we perceive our experience and how we make meaning. Johnson addresses aspects of embodied meaning and cognition such as feelings, emotions, and temporal processes in an investigation of the ways our bodily engagement with our environment makes thought possible. (Johnson 9).

Citing cognitive neuroscience and infant psychology, Johnson asserts that the origins of meaning begin with the body and its encounters with the world, and argues that locating meaning exclusively in language overlooks “...anything that cannot be linguistically encoded.” Johnson proposes closer consideration of “...aspects of experience that lie beneath words and sentence.” such as, “...felt qualities, images, feelings, and emotions that ground the more abstract structures of meaning”. According to Johnson, emotions are not “second-rate cognitions”, but form the affective patterns of our encounters with the world by which we monitor the adequacy of our interactions with our environment and make meaning of things at a primordial level (Johnson 17).

Acknowledging the meaning-making that occurs beneath our conscious awareness and "...beneath representational structures"<sup>1</sup> is of paramount importance to Johnson, and he asserts that the arts are an area in which we make and perceive meaning at an embodied level (Johnson 147). Johnson argues against meaning being something that belongs solely to words, claiming that linguistics is "...far too narrow and shallow to capture the ways things are meaningful to people. Any philosophy based on such an impoverished view of meaning is going to over-intellectualize many aspects of human meaning-making and thinking" (Johnson 8).

Following Dewey<sup>2</sup>, Johnson asserts that meaning-making is the result of experiencing our body's interactions and reactions to its environment, rather the act of merely describing these experiences within the limitations of linguistics. According to Johnson, the biological processes and neural activities in response to perception and stimuli from the body combined with the conceptual metaphor mapping discussed in *Metaphors We Live By* form the way in which we are able to perform abstract reasoning.

Johnson further develops the specific *bodily basis* of the conceptual metaphor theory as laid out in his collaborative work with Lakoff. For instance, Johnson

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson uses the term "representational" in reference to linguistic representation

<sup>2</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience* 1934.

explains that in addition to concepts whose meanings seem more obviously to depend on the experience of bodily *motion*, such as curved, straight, and vertical, so too does the abstract concept of time: “We (adults) conceptualize time via deep, systematic, spatial-movement metaphors in which the passage of time is understood as relative motion in space” (Johnson 28). According to Johnson, our body-based, experiential understanding of how objects move in space relative to our bodies is mapped, via metaphor, onto the concept of time. We metaphorically conceptualize the passage of time as though it were an object moving towards us in space (this is not, Johnson stresses, a literal comparison). This body-based understanding then finds its expression in language, as, for example, when we speak of “Tuesday *following* (or coming after) Monday”.

Referencing the often invisible role of the internal organs’ processes in defining our experience, Johnson notes, “Our emotional experience depends on neuronal and endocrine processes, although we typically cannot have a felt awareness of those processes. The result is that we feel a feeling, but we never feel our internal organs generating that feeling.” Using the example of fear, he expands, “The amygdala receives neural information about a certain stimulus and controls the release of hormones that create effects in many organs and systems, such as increased heartbeat, changes in respiration, and the activation of certain defense responses. We are not, of course, ever aware of the operations of our amygdala, but only of the systemic organic effects of those operations” (Johnson 6).



This perspective, of viewing the emotions as *physical* responses, had a profound impact on my understanding of emotion and is explored in my artwork referencing my breath and chest cavity such as in *My Beating Heart* and *I Remain* (see below). Prior to my examination of Johnson's theories, my concept of my emotional life was of something disconnected from my physical being. Johnson, and others who will be discussed, have provided me with my own new, powerful metaphorical understanding of my body as an entity of its own expression. I now view my emotions as the *physical* response of a *physical* being to stimuli, which direct me towards thoughts and actions that will benefit me. Prior to exposure to Johnson's work, I would have described my personal metaphor regarding emotions and feelings as, "wild horses", whereas now, I conceptualize them as "winged messengers". I explore this concept in my artworks referencing winged beings (see below). In this metaphoric shift, I regard feelings as signposts of what is meaningful, in excess of the "all-knowing" aspect of the thinking, reasoning mind. In short, this new approach has provided me with the ability to regard "feelings" as a way in which the body sends important messages beyond what is captured by the thinking mind, opening up new considerations of meanings contained within the message. Johnson states,

Emotions are complex, neural, chemical and behavioral responses to various types of stimuli that typically have positive or negative value for us. They are part of the process by which our bodies assess their state and make adjustments to maintain a homeostasis within our internal milieu. They include background emotions (e.g. energy or malaise, edginess or calmness), primary emotions (e.g. fear, joy,

anger, sadness), and social emotions (e.g. shame, honor, pride, jealousy)...under certain specifiable conditions, we have a qualitative awareness of our sensations and emotional responses. Such awareness is called a feeling” (Johnson 56).

In the context of this project, consideration of my emotional responses takes form in artistic exploration where I search for visual and linguistic metaphors to help me make sense of and communicate aspects of my personal embodied experience.

Johnson proposes an “Embodied Theory of Meaning”. Explaining this in terms of a pragmatist view of meaning he states, “Human meaning concerns the character and significance of a person’s interactions with their environment. The meaning of a specific aspect or dimension of some ongoing experience is that aspect’s connections to other parts of past, present or future (possible) experiences. Meaning is relational. It is about how one thing relates to or connects to other things” (Johnson 10).

Johnson’s theories have led me to conceptualize the incessant, bossy, and often confused “rational” mind as just one of the ways that the body processes its experience within its environment. In this text, meaning is made in response to the sensory input of our bodies’ fully integrated chemical and biological systems. This notion of the body as a system generating meaning has had tremendous

impact on my art practice. Johnson and Lakoff's theory of metaphoric and embodied meaning-making has shifted my art practice from a cognitive process, to a feeling and body-based focus. Johnson encompasses a wide view of meaning including spirituality in his discussion of how organisms respond to their environments. This includes complex social structures at the basis of conceptualization. These ideas strengthen my atheist appreciation for the beauty of the human experience. Johnson's thoughtful consideration of corporeality also has impacted significantly on how I consider the meaning of death in the studio work produced during this project, for example, the video performances *My Brother was Afraid of Ghosts*, *I Returned* and *I Leave it Here* (see below). In these works, I grapple with my feelings of mortality following the loss of my brother to suicide.

What we call a "person" is a certain kind of bodily organism that has a brain operating within its body, a body that is continually interacting with aspects of its environments (material and social) in an ever-changing process of experience" "In short, "mind" and "body" are merely abstracted aspects of the flow of organism-environment interactions that constitute what we call experience. When your body ceases to function as a living organic whole of coordinated activities and processed, you lose your "mind". Rather, it ceases to exist. If there is life after death, we can't know what it is like, but strong neuroscientific evidence suggests that it could not involve the kind of conscious experience and meaning making that is so distinctive of humans – unless of course this life after death involved the resuscitation of our human brains, bodies and physical and social environments (Johnson 12).

**Gabor Csepregi: *The Clever Body***

Former Olympic athlete and President of Ottawa's Dominican College of Philosophy and Theology, Gabor Csepregi's text *The Clever Body* brings together hundreds of references about the innate intelligence of the body from thinkers in a diverse range of disciplines from anthropology to dance. In line with Johnson, Lakoff, Gallagher, Orbach et al, Csepregi argues that:

The proper understanding of bodily intelligence is an indispensable condition for the discussion of the basic features of human existence. If we want to throw light on social relations, language, and artistic activities, or examine how we design and inhabit our living space, we cannot ignore how we experience our body. Therefore, the anthropological theories, which disregard the bodily basis of human life, are incomplete and contain serious flaws (Csepregi 9).

Csepregi discusses the body's inherent capabilities in this philosophical work regarding the human body with an approach that is, "not guided by the traditional dichotomy of mind and body. It is rather concerned with the dynamic and complex correlation between the human subject and the world – a correlation, in which sensing and moving, space and time, reason and emotion, capabilities and opportunities are not rigorously separated" (Csepregi 25). With section headings that include: disembodiment, autonomy, sensibility, spontaneity, the forming body, improvisation, imitation, the mimetic body, sympathetic communications, rhythm, aesthetic experience of movement, dance, surrender to the body, memory, the body as a temporal form, skill and habit, inventive style, imagination,

and motor imagination, this text touches on a broad scope of ways in which the body can be demonstrated to be an entity of intelligence in the totality of its innate capabilities.

In the present volume, I would like to show that the body is a mobile structure, endowed with some capabilities that we are able to dent or nurture, but unable to eliminate or create. Just like the heart in the organism, the living body is the source of an irreducible, autonomous, and creative dynamism, indispensable for the multiple relations we entertain with the world. I propose to describe and systematize in some detail the activities that benefit from the body's indwelling wisdom, consisting, above all, of delicate responsiveness and astonishing inventiveness (Csepregi 14).

Movement features heavily in Csepregi's analysis. He discusses the "ongoing and dynamic striving inhabiting our body" indicated by the natural impulse to get up and do something after periods of inactivity, such as children's impulse to run and play on release from lessons, or the writer's walks that intersperse their work. "To describe this propensity to move, we may use terms such as drive, desire, interest, or yearning. In all cases, we refer to a primal vital energy that impels us to act or respond. This dynamic striving is present at all levels of our active life: it manifests itself in the satisfaction of our most basic physiological needs as well as in our passion, perception, learning, and quest of knowledge, love, beauty, recognition, or harmony" (Csepregi 14). In my studio work, after an initial move to bring in the presence of my own body via photography, movement and gesture are incorporated through filmed performance as a means of expression. I use

actions such as exaggerated breathing, ritualistic gesture, digging, balancing and rocking to explore the ideas being considered in the work such as corporeality, death and grief (see below).

Much focus is given to the dancing body, the body in sport and the creative body in this text. In all cases Csepregi promotes the process of surrendering to the body's capacity. "The enjoyment of the dancer springs not only from the expression of an idea or a desire, and the disappearance of the usual tensions of everyday life, but also from the awareness of, and the trustful surrender to, the bodily feeling for the appropriate form" (55). He notes, "Great performances are achieved when the athletes, by adopting an attitude of unconcerned surrender, allow their bodily impulses and powers to organize the movements" (56). These observations align with the process of adapting my art making methodology to one of quieting my rational thoughts to allow my actions to arise more spontaneously from the multitude of feeling, sensing, moving and thinking faculties available to me through my body. In Csepregi's words, "Our movements unfold as a continuous and self-renewing dialogue between our body and the surrounding world" (52). This promotion of the body's ability to "sense what can and should be done" and "to think with our hands" (Csepregi 10), represents the primary impact of this work on this investigation into body-based meaning. It is a theme throughout my work, informed by my yoga and dance practices, especially evident in the stop-motion films including *Balance in Motion*, *Dancer and Fly* (see

below). Csepregi states, and I agree that, “Amid the continuous demands of external conformity we have somehow lost the capacity to listen to our feelings, convictions, or desires and to act in accordance with them. We prefer to rely on stereotyped formulations or protective conventions rather than to follow our inner voice” (68). This succinctly expressed, “art of getting out of the way” (Csepregi 11,51), is an expression which had significant impact on my understanding of this process, which Csepregi elaborates on,

All too often, especially during illness, the body is perceived as an instrument to manipulate or an obstacle to overcome. Early in life, we learn how to bridle its impulses, needs, and desires and, because so much emphasis is placed on self-control, we tend to ignore its subtle messages and resonances. If, however, we value and seek awareness, we then experience our body as a source of power and possibilities, a dynamic unfolding of original performances, a creative force that responds judiciously to any perturbation and explores new movement combinations (144).

### **Susie Orbach: *Bodies***

In the book *Bodies*, psychotherapist and feminist writer Susie Orbach challenges the Freudian view that bodily disorders originate and progress in the mind and argues for the body's right to be considered an entity in its own right. She incorporates neuropsychology as well as case studies from her psychotherapy practice to reveal how vulnerable our bodies are to negative stimulus, how the body has become a site of production and commerce.

Orbach argues for acknowledgement of the body as an instrument of its own deployment, an organism capable of expressing its own needs, often through the manifestation of illness and pain as expression (132). Like Johnson, Orbach refers to how the mind effects the body and vice versa in a complex feedback loop (131) and stresses her belief that we must learn to conceptualize bodies as entities that struggle to express their needs over the demands of our complex communities and social structures. Orbach's assertions about the how family "forms" the bodies of children to meet the lives they are perceived to be destined for was of interest to me in relation to my considerations of the impact of my own family environment in shaping my adult experience, which is explored in the body of work *I am the Ghost*. In this filmed performance in my parent's home, I interact with a rocking horse made by my father while I reflect on the impact of his influence on my childhood and adult experiences.

Orbach echoes Simone de Beauvoir's famous aphorism that "Women are made and not born" and suggests that bodies too, are made and not born (171). She discusses how our bodies and as such our perceptions of ourselves, are shaped by the culture we are raised in. She cites examples of how an English schoolboy of the 1960s would be instantly distinguishable from his German counterpart by his posture, clothing and the physical field his body occupied; Orbach states "Each boy's embodiment was constitutive of his sense of self. Bodies are first



formed in infancy and shaped according to the social and individual customs of the families they are born into, so that they reflect the kinds of bodies that are suited for the lives they will need to live” (10). This observation reflects my examination my ability to express myself through sculpture, and my heightened body awareness due to the presence of my father’s figurative carvings in my childhood home. Furthermore, Orbach observes how “John Berger’s prescient statement that (bourgeois) women watch themselves being looked at has been transmuted into women assuming the gaze of the observer, looking at themselves from the outside and finding that they continually fail to meet the expectations our pervasive and persuasive visual culture demands” (Orbach 108). I found this an enlightening perspective that resonated for me particularly relating to my experience of growing up surrounded by carvings of nude female figures, which I believe not only heightened my sculptural understanding of the female form, but made me hyperaware of the “male gaze” on the female body as referenced in feminist texts.<sup>3</sup>

### **Antony Gormley and *The Angel of the North***

I first became aware of the sculptor Antony Gormley and his work when I moved back to the North of England in 1998 as the area struggled to recover and

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of the “male gaze” was introduced into the vocabulary of second-wave feminism in the 1975 essay “*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*” by Laura Mulvey.

redefine itself after the loss of the ship-building and coal mining industries that had so long sustained the area's economy. Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council's commission of Gormley to produce the monumental sculpture *The Angel of the North* was an event virtually impossible for anyone in the Northeast, let alone Britain, to be unaware of. Standing over ten times life-size and twenty meters high with a wingspan of fifty-four meters, *The Angel of the North* inspired much criticism for its size and contemporary aesthetic. People worried that the giant sculpture would distract drivers on the busy stretch of motorway it overlooked, interfere with television reception, and spoil views of the surrounding countryside. There was a widely expressed opinion that the £800 000 sterling that it cost could have been better spent in the community, as well as a strongly voiced view that a statue of a miner to commemorate the mining industry that had long sustained local economy would have been a more suitable commission.

*The Angel of the North* was for me, as for many, my first noteworthy experience of contemporary art, and it still continues to captivate me fifteen years later. Living in the North East during *The Angel's* installation and the years that followed was a lesson for me in the power of art to transform and make new meaning. I witnessed as the initial flurry of reservations towards the work were silenced in the subsequent transformation of *The Angel* into a beloved and iconic

symbol of the North of England.<sup>4</sup> Gormley stated, "*The Angel* has three functions - firstly a historic one to remind us that below this site coal miners worked in the dark for two hundred years, secondly to grasp hold of the future, expressing our transition from the industrial to the information age, and lastly to be a focus for our hopes and fears - a sculpture is an evolving thing."<sup>5</sup> Viewing this through the lens of metaphor mapping in meaning-making, I believe that *The Angel of the North* was initially viewed as an imposition of "Southern" avant-garde values into the "down to earth" Northern landscape. During the initial stages of *The Angel's* commission and construction, a fitting metaphor might have been, *The Angel* as Intruder, a sentiment highlighted by the petition against the Angel's apparent "Nazi gigantism" (Vallely 1998). However, in the months that followed *The Angel's* completion, a transformation took place in the minds of the Northern people, perhaps somewhat in part due to the National and International attention *The Angel* brought to the depressed area. Said to be seen by one person per second due to its panoramic hilltop setting, viewable from the major North/South road and rail arteries, it is said that *The Angel* is seldom alone in daylight hours, a claim that I can attest to from my own pilgrimages to the site, including the filming of *I Leave it Here* (see below). Some of the new meanings mapped onto *The Angel of the North* might include, *The Angel* as Landmark, *The Angel* as Symbol

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<sup>4</sup> It is estimated that The Angel of the North is seen by 90,000 people every day or 33 million every year (*The Angel of the North: Facts*. Gateshead Council. Web. 5 Jan. 2015)

<sup>5</sup> Gormley, Antony. *The Body in & as Space*. Chicago Humanities Festival. Web. 5 Jan. 2015

of the North, *The Angel* as Symbol of Investment in the North, *The Angel* as Symbol of Hope for the Future, and *The Angel* as Sentinel.

The experience of witnessing the transformation of meaning in the minds of the Northern people, including my own, around *The Angel of the North* had a profound and lasting affect on my perception of the power of art, and greatly influenced my decision to pursue a sculptural art practice. Antony Gormley states, “The body is a language before language. When made still in sculpture it can be a witness to life and it can talk about this time now. I am interested in the body because it is the place where emotions are most directly registered. When you feel frightened, when you feel excited, happy, depressed somehow the body registers it”.<sup>6</sup> This statement elucidates Gormley’s interest in the connection between the body, emotion and sculpture, three areas of investigation that overlap with my own.

Gormley refers to a life-long obsession with the “sculptural declaration of human space in space at large” and states that he often uses his own body “as a test site”.<sup>7</sup> The body, its feelings, and its relationship to space represent recurring themes in his work and are often explored through the presence and absence of the body and use of positive and negative “charged” space. Gormley speaks of

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<sup>6</sup> Gormley, Antony. *The Angel of the North, 1998*. Antony Gormley. Web. 5 Jan. 2015

<sup>7</sup> Gormley, Antony. *The Body in & as Space*. Chicago Humanities Festival. Web. 5 Jan. 2015

the way that we project subjective certainties onto our environment, and sees this as a description of our own uncertainty of our position, “When we say, ‘in front of me’, ‘behind me’, left, right, up or down, those are coordinates that we project out into space at large because we are terrified of it. We’re terrified of the fact that space goes on forever and there are very, very few objects in it. We are aware that we inhabit bodies that are subject to gravity and that gravity gives us an illusion of fixedness, but it is an illusion.”<sup>8</sup> This statement resonates with the concepts put forward by Johnson and Lakoff, in the reference to the human need to assign meaning and structure onto the environment we find ourselves in. Gormley uses the body to attempt to make sense of space at large by considering the space contained within, surrounding, and activated by the body. Gormley states,

It’s my closest experience of matter. It’s a very simple thing to say but in fact that’s the truth. I regard my body as the vehicle through which all my impressions of the world come, and equally I want to use my body as the vehicle through which anything I have to communicate with the world can be carried...My body is the location of my being. (Ferguson and Nairne, 51).

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<sup>8</sup> Gormley, Antony. *The Body in & as Space*. Chicago Humanities Festival. Web. 5 Jan. 2015



Fig. 1 *The Angel of the North*, Antony Gormley 1998  
Image: Carole Burton

## **Kiki Smith**

The heuristic working methodology of the artist Kiki Smith has had a significant impact on my own art practice. In addition to this, many of the recurring themes in Smith's work overlap with my own interests in the form of art-based inquiry into relating to the body, universality, story and meaning-making. Smith's interdisciplinary practice is one that I aspire to, encompassing as it does, a vast array of media and form, including bronze, paper, glass, neon, ceramics, wax, cellulose, video and photography. Her heuristic, intuitive research methods and approach to art making are a source of much influence and inspiration in my own practice. Smith declares, "I think I chose the body as a subject, not consciously, but because it is the form we all share; which we all know from experience" (Haenlein 11).

Smith's bronze sculptures cast from molds of the female body have inspired my art practice at large, with the work *Standing* having particular impact in relation to this project. The sculpture, cast from a live model of an anonymous middle aged woman and mounted on a column at the medical campus of University Of California At San Diego, evolved heuristically and intuitively. Smith's original idea to place the figure atop a classical column changed when she located a dead tree on campus. Inspired by the vein-like paths caused by beetle trails and their evocation of the partially exposed veins and ligaments of the figure, Smith cast the tree trunk in concrete, including roots that reach into the pool of water in

which it sits. The project spanned over five years and during that time, Smith's focus shifted from the body to celestial happenings, which inspired the addition of several star-shaped pins in the formation of the constellation of Virgo, which puncture the figure's chest, and connect her to the sky.<sup>9</sup>



Fig. 2 *Standing*, Kiki Smith 1998  
Image: Stuart Collection - UC San Diego

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<sup>9</sup> Beebe, Mary. *Stuart Collection at UCSD: Kiki Smith*. Web. 18 July. 2013



Smith describes her work as "...very autobiographical. In the pieces about birth I was trying to reconcile an ambivalent relationship to being here on earth because the earth is a difficult place to be sometimes. Individually the pieces are about other things, but I know they're basically about me saying I have to learn to be here" (Haenlein 33).

Smith's approach to her work includes living in space that is as much her workspace as her home and work penetrates her life as her life does her work. Smith does not keep a studio and instead lives surrounded by her books, materials, artworks and inspirational objects and attests to not separating her art-working from her everyday life (Brown 10). Master printer Bill Goldsten explains: "If you were to understand the way she works...every fiber of her body is about art. She can't do anything but what she does" (Sollins 2003).

Smith's intuitively formed inquiries appear to define not only her art, but also her lived experience as a whole. She says, "I'm just trying to save my life. In my art and in everything I do. I'm very curious and my curiosity roams, but it's also specific. I want to learn about forms and how they contain meaning, which is fluid, and also about ideas and possibilities contained in objects" (Engberg 41). Smith's work has spanned decades in its exploration of the body from her earlier visceral, vulnerable sculptures and images of bodies, organs, systems and fluids, to more recent explorations of the body as a receptacle for knowledge, belief and

storytelling, often inspired by biblical and mythological narratives. Life, death and resurrection are addressed in her work. Smith's tenacious and relentless drive to explore and investigate through her art practice is directed by her intuition.

Describing her relationship with her own intuition Smith says:

From when I was a child, my mother would say, "Trust your intuition, trust your inner voice, trust that." While I don't necessarily always trust it in my daily personal life, I do trust it in my artwork. Even if it makes me uncomfortable, even if I would like to be a totally different kind of artist, different from what I am, at the same time, I know this is what I have been given. Trust is extremely important. Things keep coming up and telling me to pay attention to them. (Engberg 41).

Smith's unflinching dedication to trusting her instincts and deeply personal questions she addresses result in objects that provide insights into a vast range of topics such as art making processes, history, mythology, archetypes, girlhood, womanhood, the subjugation of women, reanimation, transformation, meaning, our relationships with animals, the animal within us and the body. "I trust my work. It's a collaboration with the material, and when it's viewed, it's a collaboration with the world. What your work is resides in between those different spaces" (Engberg 19).

Smith is keen to ensure that she leaves the objects she makes open to interpretation in an effort to ensure her work is meaningful to others as well as herself: "I don't want to be so declarative like that. I'd rather make something that's open ended so that then it can have a meaning to me but also then

someone else can fill it up with their own meaning” (Sollins 2003). This description of Smith’s approach to meaning-making succinctly parallels my own.

## **Documentation of Practice**

### **Background**

Prior to embarking on this investigation, my art practice was primarily sculptural and figurative. At its core were small-scale, hyper-real representations of my body. I metaphorically liken the production of these figures to the experience of giving birth, as it often felt as if they already existed inside of me, and needed to come out. Once out, much like an infant, I could hold, look upon and share these tiny, naked iterations of myself, and feel more than a touch of relief to not have to carry them around anymore. I felt I could literally point to them and say, “That is what I needed to say, but didn’t know how to say it in words.” The desire to understand the *meaning* of my compulsion to represent myself in this way constituted a major influence in my decision to embark on the MFA program.



Fig. 3 *Sleep Little Virgin*, 2011  
16 x 10 x 12 cm  
Polymer Clay, Wire, Hair and Paper

### **Practice-based Research: Studio work**

A turning point in my studio work occurred during my residency on Toronto Island. An art-making experiment involved site specific work with body in the landscape, using a series of fragmented plaster body casts; imprints of my own body. I experienced strong anxiety about showing these traces of my own body that somehow felt much more like “me” than the small hyper-real sculptures ever had. These casts were produced spontaneously, in contrast to the detailed planning that my architectural and illustration training had advocated, I learned instead to allow my ideas to filter through my subconscious as I went about my day. Decisions would be made regarding medium, and where the work would be produced, and I would show up with my ideas and material at the decided on location. Often using music to quiet the chatter of my thinking mind, I would give over to a sense of faith in my body, and trust myself to make the work. I adopted this method out of necessity, but I have since come to appreciate, that this habit of surrendering to *movement* is a method of gaining access to non-linguistically coded knowledge and urges of the body to express itself outside the realm of intellectual reasoning. I liken it to Csepregi’s discussion of other artforms:

Dance, music-making, and aesthetic movement experiences imply an attitude that may be called renunciation: a relaxed and trustful surrender to our bodily impulses and intentions. The movements are not only upshots of specific intentions, but also responses arising from the formative powers of our body. As we move easily and effortlessly, we abandon ourselves to the body’s sense of rhythm that, without purposeful pre-assessment or planning, introduces new

patterns, and responds appropriately to the demands of the motor situation (Csepregi 108).

I employed such movement in both making the body casts and placing them in the landscape. I did not have a formulated plan and surrendered to the actions that presented themselves to me, trusting the meaning in my decisions. Despite the flowing nature of this method, I lamented the lack of time available to perfect my ideas before revealing them. Without realising it at the time, this was to lead to the underlying premise for this thesis, that art making is the result of an urge to invest bodily movement, often including the manipulation of objects, to make connections and assign meaning to experience. This occurs metaphorically. Using Johnson and Lakoff's premise of metaphorically mapping known meaning onto the unknown, I posit that the known preconception in this instance was "art *about* my body", and the new understanding that came about was "my body *in* art". This is not a literal statement, as my body was no more "in" the plaster casts than "art" is a vessel to contain it, but according to Lakoff and Johnson meaning-making is not a factual process:

Metaphors are basically devices for understanding and have little to do with objective reality, if there is such a thing. The fact that our conceptual system is inherently metaphorical, the fact that we understand the world, think, and function in metaphorical terms, and the fact that metaphors can not merely be understood but can be meaningful and true as well—these facts all suggest that an adequate account of meaning and truth can only be based on understanding (Lakoff, Johnson 186).

I believe that the action of making and showing these casts was a metaphoric attempt to bring my body into my artwork and so, create the new meaning: “my body is *in* my art”. This led to a new direction and embodied approach. I posit that the forms I made generate a visceral embodied response in the viewer, invoking their own for metaphoric meaning-making processes. As Kiki Smith explains, “I trust my work. It’s a collaboration with the material, and when it’s viewed, it’s a collaboration with the world. What your work is resides between those different spaces” (Engberg 19).



Fig. 5 *Imprint 4*  
2014



Fig. 6 *Imprint 5*  
2014

### **The Evolution of the “Angel as Connector” Metaphor**

As discussed earlier in the paper, Antony Gormley’s *The Angel of the North* has had tremendous influence on my understanding of the power of art to make new meaning through metaphor, and is of notable personal significance to me. During the course of my research, I came across an article written in response to the initial controversy that surrounded the installation of *The Angel of the North*:

An angel is a being which mediates between Heaven and Earth and this one, with its feet in an extinct mine and its wings in a sky silver with hope, joins the area's past with its future. Made from the materials of the wreckage of the old industry - it aspires to something transcendent. This angel is secular yet cruciform. It is made of manifestly heavy substance and yet it can fly. It is the stuff of incarnation, for the material of this earth is all that we have from which to construct our dreams (Vallely 1998).

At an early stage in my research, I focused on mind/body dualism and specifically, I sought a way to identify *connected* binary concepts. This notion of an angel being a connection between earth and heaven, past and future, hope and despair, sparked my imagination and presented me a short-hand way of thinking about the elusive “connection” between intrinsically connected binaries. The “Angel as Connector” metaphor was born. It formed the basis for the subsequent direction of my studio-based investigations.



### **Bringing my body and the “Angel as Connector” metaphor into the studio work**

In addition to the new paradigm of “my body *in art*”, another key development in my art practice occurred during my residency on Toronto Island. It was spent in the company of several photography, landscape and performance artists.

Exposure to their work and processes introduced a shift in perspective from “art is making”, to “art is doing”. More than any theoretical examination ever could, this experience allowed me to adjust my sculptural understanding of art making as a process that produced an object, to one encompassing actions, movement, performance and ritual.

The plaster cast installation on the island gave me new confidence to engage my body, and I once again found myself calling on the “surrender” method of producing work, which Csepregi describes:

The more our action is guided by our conscious will, the less we succeed. When we desperately try to ski or dance well, we make one mistake after another. It is, therefore, advisable to proceed in a reverse order. At the moment of action, we should abandon all attempts to consciously control our movements and trust the various resources of our body. In other words, we should get rid of all tense effort and purposeful planning, and not interfere with the infallible functioning of our body (Csepregi 148).

I created a series of short filmed performances and photographs in which I used my body to explore movement, balance and gesture whilst reflecting on the “angel as connector” metaphor. In these works I seek to

invoke kinaesthetic empathy in the viewer – a bodily sense of performing the movements in their own bodies. (Johnson, Gallagher et al.).



Fig. 7 *Angelic Reflections*, 2014  
Digital Image



Fig. 8 *Balance in Motion*, 2014  
Still from stop-motion film

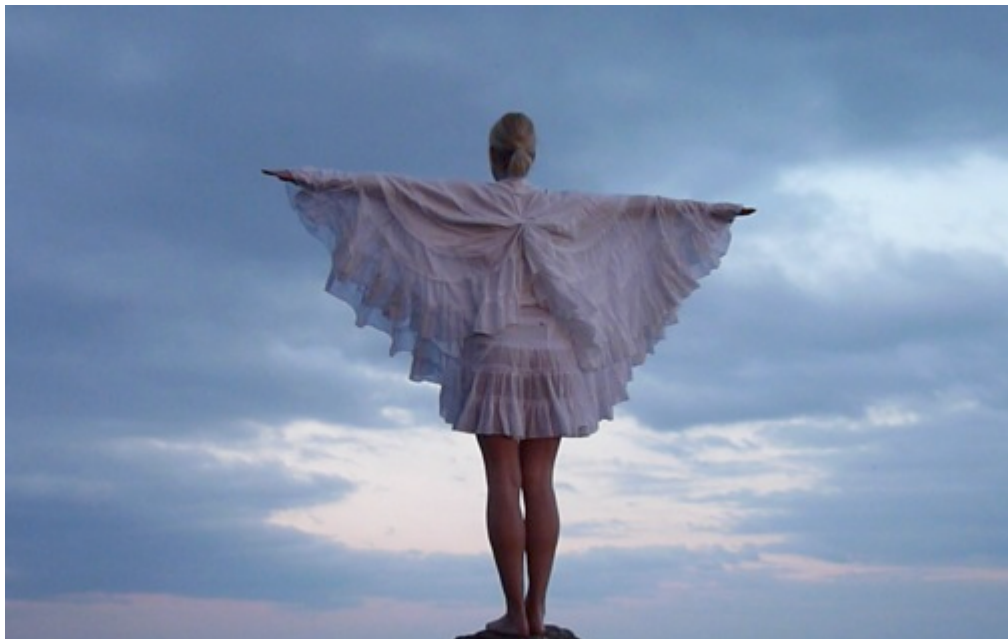


Fig. 9 *Angelic Reflections*, 2014  
Still from video performance

### **The Transformation from Angel to Ghost**

I made several short films documenting the expansion and contraction of my ribcage and the pulsating of my heartbeat visible at my sternum. I reflected on the meaning of these works and concluded that in them, I was pointing to and recording the fact that I was alive. This is expressed in the metaphor “breath is life”, leading me along a metaphoric and body-based contemplation of the connection between another notable binary: life and death.

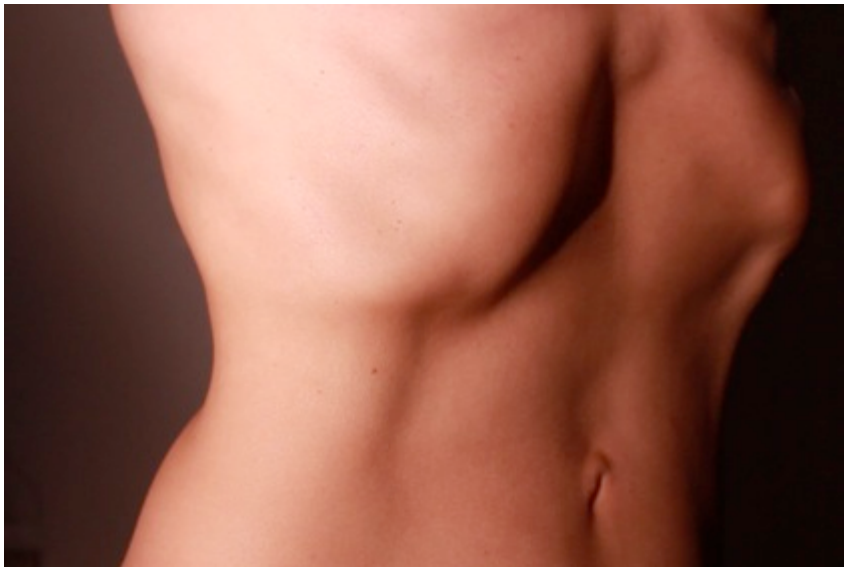


Fig. 10 *My Beating Heart*, 2014  
Still from video performance

I found myself returning to the lakeside site of the “angel as connector” performances, this time not with angel wings, but in a flesh-colored body-suit. I knew only that I wanted to reference the vulnerability of my flesh and its aliveness in what felt like somewhat an act of declaration. It was -10 degrees,

the wind threatened to push me off the jagged shoreline boulder, but I was ALIVE, still breathing and defiant. The meaning of this gesture, however, was not clear to me; it took some post-production reflection to bring the embodied meaning into the realm of linguistics.

Johnson states, “My hypothesis is twofold (1) aesthetics is not just art theory, but rather should be regarded broadly as the study of how humans make and experience meaning, because (2) the processes of embodied meaning in the arts are the very same ones that make linguistic meaning possible” (Johnson 209). I reflected on this filmed performance in a search for its meaning. Many were suggested to me but none of them rang true. As is often the case, it was when I stopped actively searching that the meaning of this work of art came to me. It came to me in a word: Defiance. “Defiance?” I thought, “How does this connect with angels and death?”

“To speak of the artist as working intently and as being guided by an overall conception of the work is not to say that she must be capable of articulating from the start what the finished product will sound or look like. Nor must she be able to say where she is headed each step of the way. That sense of the whole lying behind or beneath artistic decisions may only register intuitively” (Jackson 37). Intuition does not access an unknowable well of meaning within, it merely describes the process of allowing the many forms of bodily

knowledge such as the physical, emotional and sub-conscious access to memory, to surface and be recognized. Johnson explains,

These meanings cannot just pop into existence (arise in our consciousness) out of nothing and from nowhere. Instead, they must be grounded in our bodily connections with things, and they must be continually “in the making” via our sensorimotor engagements. There is a continuity of process between these immanent meanings, and our reflective understanding and employment of them (Johnson 25).



Fig. 11 / *Remain*, 2014  
Still from video performance

**Body of Work: *I am the Ghost***

The birth of my daughter's twins in the U.K. coincided with a critical point in the development of this project. I deliberated very hard on the wisdom of taking time out to return to the U.K. at such a crucial point in my research. However, it became clear that I needed to relate the experience of becoming a grandmother to babies born overseas to the premise of this project. I strongly felt that I could not address the *meaning* of the experience until I could assimilate it in a bodily way. I needed to hold those babies to my own chest and take in their tiny bodies with my own eyes before I could properly comprehend their existence. I rationally *knew* that they had been born, I'd seen pictures including live video chats but regardless of this, it didn't *feel real* until I could truly embody the knowledge of these two new members of my family. Johnson states that, "Reasoning is not the manipulation of abstract, meaningless symbols according to purely formal syntactic and logical rules. Rather, reasoning is our intelligent-animal way of working through the implications of situations in pursuit of an embodied understanding that allows us to function successfully, more or less, within the problematic situations that we inhabit" (Johnson 97). In the instance of the twins' birth, I felt strongly that the only way I could embody the knowledge of their appearance in the world, was to verify it with my own body; the "implications of situations in pursuit of an embodied understanding" in this instance called for me to board a flight home. As is turned out, returning home was also exactly what

was required for me to make sense from the confusion I was experiencing regarding the meaning and direction of my recent work.

***My Brother was Afraid of Ghosts:***

The person you are cannot survive the death of your body. As controversial and distressing as this claim might be, it follows directly from the embodiment of mind. Let us be quite clear about what precisely my claim is: If there is anything that survives the death of your body, it could not be the you that we know and love. For your experience is made possible by the working of your (human) brain, within the workings of your (human) body, as it engages its (human-related) environments. Any you that survived bodily death would lack your memories, your experience, your emotions and your grasp for the meaning of things (Johnson 281).

Seven years ago my younger brother took his own life. Despite having dealt with several family losses in the preceding years, nothing could have prepared me for the magnitude of grief resulting from the tragic and gruesome death of my closest sibling. Finding meaning in such an event must surely present an insurmountable task, and yet, it is our nature to try to do just that. Within hours of returning to the U.K. and breathing in the familiar scent of the air, the previously elusive meaning of my defiant gesture at the lakeside in the film *I Remain* became painfully obvious to me. The “angel as connector”, the “signs of life”, these metaphors and corresponding actions in art, all spoke to my unarticulated, ongoing attempts to make sense of and find meaning in the death of my brother.



Anyone who has ever mourned the loss of a loved one knows that words alone cannot fully convey the deeply painful experience of grieving. As Johnson states, the notion that only words have meanings ignores the multiple ways that we as intelligent animals make meaning. It excludes anything that cannot be linguistically described and “it denies the status of meaning to most of the meaning-making that occurs beneath our conscious awareness and beneath representational structures. On this view, the last place one would look for meaning is in the arts” (Johnson 209). Johnson argues for the central role of emotion in how we make sense of our world asserting that there is no cognition without emotion, even though we are often unaware of the underlying emotional aspects of our thinking. He stresses the importance of emotions as one of the primary ways we monitor the quality and acceptability of our ongoing interactions with the environment. He states, “Emotions are not second-rate cognitions; rather they are affective patterns of our encounter with the world, by which we take the meaning of things at a primordial level” (Johnson 18).

In the film *My Brother Was Afraid of Ghosts*, I enacted gestures and actions referencing mortal vulnerability (through my near-nakedness in *I Remain* and by wearing a “ghost suit” in this instance). I also embody the “angel as connector” by imitating of *The Angel of the North’s* expansive, outstretched arms. Also common to both of these performances is the gesture of defiance; in *I Remain* against the elements in the powerful biting wind, and in *My Brother Was Afraid of Ghosts*, I

climb up onto an unknown gravestone and in doing so defy convention, and metaphorically, death. However this gesture also speaks to my ongoing *survival* of the abusive and troubling family history that ultimately led to my brother's suicide. In *My Brother Was Afraid of Ghosts*, my image fades in and out, ultimately disappearing after performing the rituals in the preceding works: embodying "the angel as connector" (in this case as I contemplate what connects the living to the dead), and the deep breathing that signifies my aliveness in the face of the death. Performing these actions created new meaning for me. Key is an acceptance that no remnants of my lost loved ones are "out there" for me to connect with (through the angel). All that is left is the memory of people kept alive in those who remain. The dead live on inside the living. "I am the ghost".

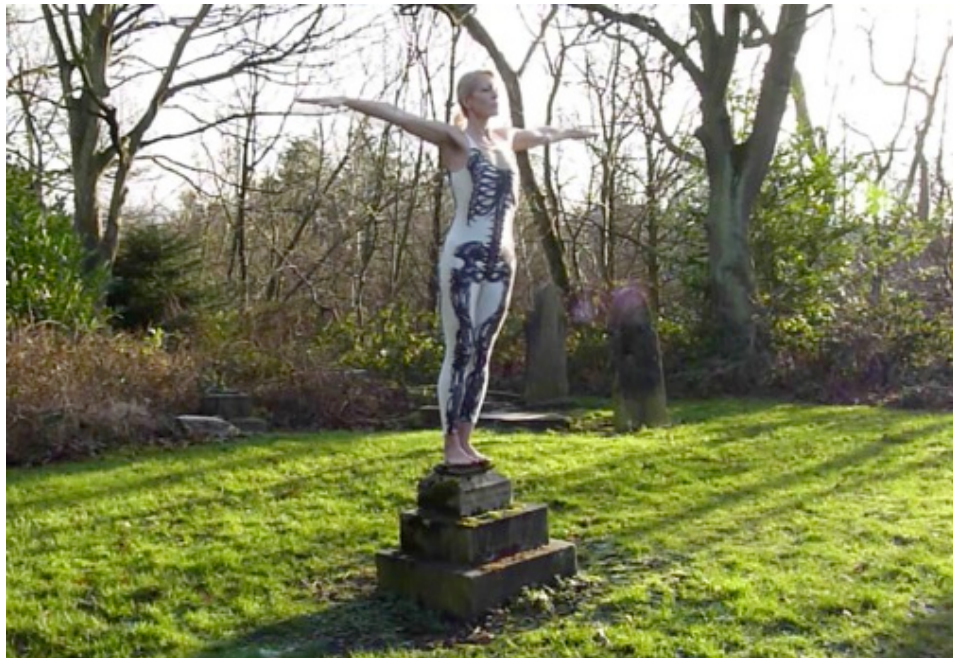


Fig. 12 *My Brother Was Afraid of Ghosts*, 2015  
Still from video performance

### *I Leave it Here*

Below is an excerpt from a written reflection on my relationship to the site and object that constitute *The Angel of the North*:

*The Angel of the North* came to symbolize a border to me, that once crossed meant I was safely distanced from the city that held so much pain and loss. Six times in the next few years I drove North past *The Angel* to bury my people, Father, Grandparents, Aunt, Nephew, Brother.

Having once again fled from the North East to Canada, I would happily let my memories of so much of my time there fade until I lose certainty whether the memory is a manifestation of my actual or imagined experience. But that is not my fate. I am bound to this place still, this time by the grown daughter that I leave there, the two grandchildren she is growing in her belly, and the many friends that I came to rely on during those difficult years. *The Angel* now serves as a beacon for me, a real place and a solid object to orientate myself by, but also as a place within my psyche: a symbol of transformation, hope, and connection. Somewhere in a part of my inner experience that doesn't deal in objective realities, I hold an imagined memory: I see myself kneeling at the rusty foot of *The Angel*, this monumental being connecting earth, sky and body. I have dirt jammed under my nails and I have buried something, something painful that I must leave behind, here, where I will always know where to find it (2014).

I knew without question that I would visit *The Angel* whilst I was in England. In a similar manner to needing to assimilate the meaning of the twins' birth through my body, I needed to feel the cold solidity of *The Angel* through my hand, to understand what this emotionally charged object now meant to me after moving away. Before this research project, I would categorized my urge to visit *The*

*Angel* as sentimental. Now I view this desire as an attempt to make meaning *through my body*; meaning that may or may not translate into language, but is meaningful nonetheless. The desire to touch the sculpture represents a tactile confirmation of the object's reality via the senses, which Csepregi notes is a common response to art objects, underlined by the need for restraining ropes and "Do not touch" signs in galleries and museums: we acquire knowledge and meaning through touch. "Sculptures are not only made by the touch but also for the touch," writes Csepregi, "Unlike the detached and distant images hanging on walls, sculptures belong to our own life space and, as such, create a spontaneous intimacy with our body...We feel a curious desire to follow, through the gentle movements of our hand, the contours of the three-dimensional human figures" (Csepregi 82).

The decision to make an artwork at *The Angel* seemed obvious. I already identified an urge to bury something at the foot of the sculpture in my writing. Adhering to my "body-trust" working methodology, I let the question of *what* I wanted to bury there percolate until the answer came to me, in the form of a dove.

Cultural and religious symbolism are special cases of metonymy. Within Christianity, for example, there is the metonymy DOVE FOR HOLY SPIRIT. As is typical with metonymies, this symbolism is not arbitrary. It is grounded in the conception of the dove in Western culture and the conception of the Holy Spirit in Christian theology. There is a reason why the dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit and

not, say, the chicken, the vulture, or the ostrich. The dove is conceived of as beautiful, friendly, gentle, and, above all, peaceful. As a bird, its natural habitat is the sky, which metonymically stands for heaven, the natural habitat of the Holy Spirit. The dove is a bird that flies gracefully, glides silently, and is typically seen coming out of the sky and landing among people. (Lakoff, Johnson 41).

Religious belief aside, it would be hard to imagine growing up in Western culture without having been exposed to the Christian metonymy of “dove for holy spirit”, and I believe that this cultural representation formed the basis for the creation of my personal metaphor regarding the image of a white dove. Each of my small life-like sculptures contains a small white paper dove within its chest, an action that I take in response to my compulsion to “give them a soul”. As an atheist, the concept of a soul is a metaphoric to me. For me, “dove is soul”, and “soul is life”, and “soul is a being’s essence”.

I draw several potential meanings from my impulse to bury a paper dove at the site of The Angel. So much personal significance is attached to this object, that part of my psyche cannot really conceive of it as “just” an object. Csepregi touches on this, “An affective quality is embodied in both living and non-living things: sadness, aggressiveness, or gracefulness may be perceived in a tree, a bird, or a cloth left on a table. Artists are particularly sensitive to these expressive qualities” (Csepregi 45). My perception of *The Angel of the North* is, among other things, that of a sentinel, and as Jackson explains, “What changes

throughout the course of an art-centered experience is precisely the relation among its elements; that is, what is changed is the object's meaning. To speak of meaning and perception turns out to be misleading, for they, as we have seen, are inextricably intertwined. To perceive is to perceive meaning. The term affords no other reference" (Jackson 112). I perceive of *The Angel* as a sentinel to the people of the North East, I perceive of it as a connector between the earth and "the heavens", past and future, and as Gormley stated, a "place to focus for our hopes and fears".

The *physical* act of burial was integral to the action. Burial often signifies the end of something, although of course, in most cases this is not the factual truth. Metaphorically, the concepts "buried means hidden", or "buried means put away for safe-keeping" also factor into my comprehension of the meaning of this undertaking. The artistic endeavor of burying a small paper dove in the ground at *The Angel of the North* enabled me to engage several seemingly unrelated meanings, among them: "I buried a dove at *The Angel* to give it a soul", "I buried my pain at *The Angel*", "I buried my soul at the foot of *The Angel* because part of me doesn't want to leave the North East" and "I placed my brother's soul at the foot of *The Angel* where I knew it would be safe, because I do not want to carry the weight of it anymore".

Johnson and Lakoff describe ritual, such as my placement of white paper doves,

as a means of giving structure and significance to our activities, minimizing chaos and disparity in our actions through repeated, coherently structured actions, which may or may not be metaphorical activities. They suggest that the metaphors we live by, both cultural and personal, are partially preserved in ritual.

Our personal rituals are not random but are coherent with our view of the world and ourselves and with our system of personal metaphors and metonymies. Our implicit and typically unconscious conceptions of ourselves and the values that we live by are perhaps most strongly reflected in the little things we do over and over, that is, in the casual rituals that have emerged spontaneously in our daily lives. (Lakoff, Johnson 234).

I view the actions undertaken in *I Leave it Here*, as a body-based effort to literally *bury* the pain of my brother's memory: the "ghost inside me". The decision to again don the skeletal "ghost suit" evokes how the dead "live on" inside those who remember them. The "ghost suit" emboldens me, for although I do not believe in ghosts in any rational sense beyond the dead existing in "living memory", I have assigned the suit a metaphorical meaning of "protection": "wearing the ghost suit means protection while convening with the dead". Perhaps this could be explained thus, "I am the body that carries your ghost. Do not harm me". Johnson and Lakoff surmise, "The idea that metaphor is just a matter of language and can at best only describe reality stems from the view that what is real is wholly external to, and independent of, how human beings conceptualize the world—as if the study of reality were just the study of the

physical world. Such a view of reality—so-called objective reality—leaves out human aspects of reality, in particular the real perceptions, conceptualizations, motivations, and actions that constitute most of what we experience. But the human aspects of reality are what matters most to us” (Lakoff, Johnson 147).



Fig. 13 *I Leave it Here*, 2015  
Still from video performance

### ***I Returned***

My father was a sculptor. His favourite medium was wood. I grew up surrounded by his carvings, honed from sweet-smelling trees. These objects punctuated my childhood with embodied meanings such as, “the carvings are my father’s legacy”, “the carvings make my father special”, “the carvings contain my father’s



essence”, and “the carvings are too precious for children to touch”. Yet my young hands were regularly overcome by the urge to handle these forbidden forms. My fascination with the sculptures was twofold: firstly I wanted to understand their meaning through a tactile, bodily experience of their “volume, density, palpability, weight, and inner vitality” (Csepregi 139). Secondly, I tried to find closeness to my father through these objects he created so intimately. In my young mind a metaphoric premise surfaced: “understanding the carvings means understanding my father”. This premise still endures. Johnson asserts that, “The many bodily ways by which infants and children make and find meaning are not transcended and left behind when children eventually grow into adulthood. On the contrary, these very same sources of meaning are carried forward into, and thus underlie and make possible, our mature acts of understanding, conceptualization, and reasoning” (Johnson 33).

During my visit to the U.K., I photographically documented my father’s sculptures. Beyond documentation, I did not know what meaning this process would generate, but I knew it would be emotionally charged due to the upsetting nature of my family history. My aging mother exists in a perpetual state of prolonged grieving. To her, the carvings are imbued with my father’s memory and infused with such deep meaning that they remain in position, just as he left them when he died fifteen years ago. Cherished objects, according to Minkowski, “do not merely symbolize or recall a segment of our life: we do not simply supplement our

perception by memory images. Our past is truly present in them and animates them” (Minkowski 119). In a similar way to which I describe orientating myself physically and emotionally through *The Angel of the North*, my mother orientates herself through the objects that crystalize her remembered relationship with my father, helping her keep alive her ongoing emotional relationship with his memory. I thought her attachment to them overly emotional, until I experienced the grip of grief, fear and anger that overtook me following the first of my two visits to photograph the carvings. I realized that some of them were missing and I thought them stolen. My body was seized with such strength of reaction that I experienced physical and emotional responses akin to mourning. This alerted me to the fact that these objects are in fact also deeply meaningful to me.

“Possessions are proof, concrete evidence of all that has disappeared; to rob a man of what he has is to rob him of his past, to tell him that he didn’t live, that he only dreamed his life” (Vizinczey 321).

To call the attachment to these objects sentimental would be to completely overlook the means by which human beings assign meaning to their experience. Both my mother and I conceptualize that the sculptures embody the trace of my father’s hand, his own embodied understanding of form, his existence, and his essence. Metaphorically, to touch the sculptures is to touch the memory of my father. I believe that the dead live on through the embodied memories of the people who recall them, but also that we assign associated meanings to objects

and events in which we have invested meaning relating to that person. The metaphoric concept, “the carvings hold my father’s essence” is both subjective and deeply meaningful to me. They represent part of my inner landscape. I envision them existing inside of me in some ethereal form, metaphorical “parents” perhaps, to the sculptures that are born of my own hands. Lakoff and Johnson contextualize this personal process of embodied metaphoric meaning-making, “A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of our lives. Self-understanding requires unending negotiation and renegotiation of the meaning of your experiences to yourself (Lakoff, Johnson 233).

**Video: *I Returned***



Fig. 14 *I Returned*, 2015  
Still from video performance

Great fiery soul of the rocking-horse, you soul rocking the boy's heart on a sea of induced waves, churning the playroom air into a tumult as if over the renowned battlefields of the earth, you proud, credible, almost visible soul. How you shook the walls, the window-frames and familiar horizons into movement as if future storms were already tearing at these provisional structures which could seem so invincible in the long, dreary afternoons. Ah, rocking-horse-soul, how you carried one off and away into some inexorably heroic sphere, there to perish in heat and glory with one's hair in the most frightful disorder (Rilke 60).

At my parents' house, embodied meaning flooded through all my senses: the dusty smell of my mother's clutter, the sound of traffic from the near-by motorway, the metallic taste of the tap water, the overwhelming collection of memory-infused objects and the whole-body experience of being in this emotionally charged space. "Wherever we are, in a small room or in the middle of the ocean," asserts Csepregi, "we are constantly exposed to a particular atmosphere. Even though we do not always notice it, the contact with an atmosphere is just as much a fundamental feature of our existence as are consciousness and language" (Csepregi 42).

I returned a second time to my mother's home to photograph the carvings, alone with them for the first time since my childhood. Without my mother's watchful gaze, I handled the carvings freely, which I had not done since secretly in my youth. Handling them now signaled a meaningful change in status; no longer the child at risk of punishment, I felt acutely aware of my rising up through the generations; one day these objects would fall to my charge. Handling these objects of my childhood with the confidence of adult hands triggered an embodied understanding of my changing familial status even more so than the act of holding my grandchildren for the first time.

The rocking horse is a particularly meaning-charged object. Before his death, my father told me that it was mine, but with nowhere to put it at the time it remained

in my parent's home. No amount of suggestion will persuade my mother to part with it. This evokes a metaphor for me of "rocking-horse as hostage". Trapped amongst the clutter of my mother's materialized memories, my steed gathers dust where no child can benefit from the beauty of its face, the sturdiness of its flanks.

To finally be alone with this deeply meaningful object was for me akin to being temporarily reunited with a lost loved one. My hands anticipated the sleek slide across the glossy surface, my caress seeking to comfort both myself and my imprisoned stallion. I riled against its neglected state, unable to wipe off the offending dust fast enough. More so than any other object, the rocking horse embodies the metaphor "to touch the carvings is to feel my father's essence". I find an interesting reversal of Johnson and Lakoff's definition of the metaphor, "emotional effect is physical contact" demonstrated in the examples, "His mother's death *hit him hard*. That idea *bowled me over*. She's a *knockout*. I was *struck* by his sincerity. That really *made an impression on me*. He *made his mark* on the world. I was *touched by* his remark" (Lakoff, Johnson 51). I propose the reverse metaphor in "physical contact is also emotional affect". "A caress, of course, can have various motives and meanings: its affectionate gentleness may be perceived under the aspects of reassurance and comfort, or exploration and discovery. But whatever is expressed, the rhythmic contact of the hand with the body of the beloved person is prompted by the affective component of the tactile

impression” (Csepregi 32). Alone to interact freely with the rocking horse, a powerful emotional reaction arose in me, it manifested physically through crying, tightness in my chest and a heightened sense of my father’s memory. I was overcome, despite my adult size, with the desire to ride the rocking horse.

“Such a surrender to the body’s ability to detect meanings and values occurs whenever our movements naturally adjust themselves to the characteristics of the objects or the tasks” (Csepregi 54). In riding the horse, I embodied the girl I once was in the form of the woman I now am. I embodied the grief of my father’s death, and my troubled family story. I created the metaphoric meaning that in riding the rocking horse, I claim it, an act that I found emotionally soothing. In her paper, *"In Sickness and in Health?: Psychoanalysis and Psychosomatics"* Turp discusses the role rhythmic movement can serve in creating comforting metaphors for containing the past, a concept that I have found to be true in my running practice and experienced whilst riding the rocking horse,

I have endeavored to show that vigorous and rhythmic body movements - for example, those involved in dance, swimming, walking, climbing and sport - have the potential to re-create and stand as metaphors for comforting and containing experiences from the past... Thus I have argued that the usefulness of such activities not only includes but also transcends their capacity to contain anxieties which might otherwise prove overwhelming...it seems to me that both the comfort provided by the physical activities themselves and their imaginative elaboration in counseling contributed in some measure to the client’s move towards greater psychological well-being (Turp 13).

In the post-production of the film *I Returned*, I felt the need to share some of this personal meaning with the addition of narrative. Although it is my practice to not be overly prescriptive in the “intended” meaning of my work and rob the viewer of the chance to “fill it up with their own meaning”<sup>10</sup> I felt compelled to add narration to this piece. Voicing my story of this piece imbued it with much deeper meaning for me, and I experienced a feeling that I can compare to the metaphoric “birthing” of my sculptures. The story is “out of me” now, it is out in the world where I can physically look at it if I want to, contemplate its meaning, and invite viewers to make their own meanings from my embodied act of grieving through touch, movement and storytelling. Ludwig Wittgenstein refers to the correlation between bodily movements and verbal expressions: “How curious: we should like to explain our understanding of a gesture by means of a translation into words, and the understanding of words by translating them into a gesture. (Thus we are tossed to and fro when we try to find out where understanding properly resides)” (Wittgenstein 41). Johnson might add that gesture and words are *both* embodied ways in which we make meaning.

We need, first, to appreciate the pervasiveness of embodied meaning-making at the corporeal levels of our experience. We must see how our bodies, our brains, and our environments together generate a vastly meaningful milieu out of which all significance emerges for creatures with bodies like ours...we need to see how our “higher” abstract conceptualization and reasoning are grounded in this embodied meaning-making. This requires us to explore the continuity that exists between our mostly nonconscious experience of embodied meaning and our seemingly

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<sup>10</sup> Kiki Smith (Sollins 2003).



disembodied acts of thinking and reasoning. Finally, we need to see how recognizing the bodily grounding of meaning leads us to a new understanding of thought, knowledge and symbolic interaction that challenges many of our most cherished assumptions about the mind (Johnson 31).

## **Conclusion**

This project adds my voice to the growing discourses of embodiment, metaphor and the deployment of the artist's body in contemporary art practices. The project also contributes to the discussion of art-based research methodologies, and may prove relevant to practitioners in other creative fields with an interest in body-based meaning-making. As such it also adds to the growing understanding of different ways of learning, communicating and researching.

The artwork produced during the course of the project stands alone in its own right in the context of a contemporary interdisciplinary art practice, but also serves as a form of empirical research within the context of art-based research. It is my hope that the work produced also speaks to the field of contemporary art in relation to body-based meaning making and the use of the artist's own body.

My research has had a profound affect on my understanding of body, meaning and art; I will continue to explore these themes in my art practice and life in

general. This multi-disciplinary investigation confirms in my longstanding suspicion that language and reason are only aspects of how we communicate and make meaning. As a creative and very body-centric person, this vindicates my life-long feeling that language is limited in what it can convey, and “truth” is a often subjective in nature and a term based on our attempt to impose human structure and meanings. I strongly agree with the call from Johnson and Lakoff for a new philosophy of meaning that traverses ideas of objectivity and subjectivity with an experientialist theory based in an acknowledgment of our bodily experience as the basis of our ability to reason and determine what is true and meaningful to us as individuals and as a species.

We make and enact meaning through our bodies’ capacity for movement in gesture, action, the vibrations we use to make sound, manipulation of our environment and in art making. Our ability to make meaning is based on the extents, limits and needs of our human bodies. I agree with Johnson and Lakoff that a better understanding of these ways of finding meaning in our environment and experience would provide insight into the metaphors behind “truth”, “justice” and “morality”, with the potential to increase tolerance of other points of view, cultures and species. Our sensing, reasoning and emotional faculties function symbiotically. A better understanding of this could enhance appreciation of the beauty and miracle of our corporeal bodily existence, in the short time that it is ours to ponder.

As Johnson and Lakoff propose, a more thorough comprehension of the means by which we make meaning through metaphoric concepts facilitates a more conscious choice of the metaphors that we live by. “Metaphors that are imaginative and creative are capable of giving us a new understanding of our experience. Thus, they can give new meaning to our pasts, to our daily activity, and to what we know and believe (Lakoff, Johnson 144). An example of such would be the replacement of the dominant “time is money” metaphor in favor of one infused with a different kind of meaning to structure our lives around. I propose the following: “life is an art”.

Through this project I have investigated how I use my own body, with consciousness and clarity, as a way of uncovering meaning in a process of art making. I conclude that art making results from our embodied faculty for movement and expression, often including the manipulation of objects, in the attempt to make connections and assign meaning to experience. Through a process of learning to quiet the voice of my rational mind in an attitude of surrender, I have transformed my understanding and creative methods. I actively seek new metaphorically mapped understandings of my experience. However, I do not do this for myself alone; in these actions also lies the embodied urge to connect with other people who might find new and embodied meanings of their own.

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## Appendix

### Epilogue

The exhibition of the artwork afforded many new opportunities for meaning making. Photographs of my father's carvings and carving tools were included to illuminate a relationship between his work and my own. This inspired many questions from viewers, each unique and as such, demonstrative of each viewer's unique process of making meaning. The photographs of my father's tools were hung in the corridor between the main gallery space and the projection room to connect the two spaces. Many people spoke of their emotional reaction to these images and the film *I Remain*, which seemed to invoke meaning around the power of personal objects to hold the essence of a person.



Fig. 15 *I am the Ghost*, Carole Chaloupka Burton 2015  
Exhibition image



Fig. 16 *I am the Ghost*, Carole Chaloupka Burton 2015  
Exhibition image

The use of plinths of varying heights also inspired many queries, to which I explained that the plinths referenced my experience of my father's carvings being forbidden and out of reach to me as a child. A small side table was placed in the projection room, with a photograph of my father with his hand on the rocking horse. This was done to underline the perception that in touching the rocking horse as I do in the film, I am connecting with my father's essence, and refers not only to the connection to the memory of the man through his sculptures, but also to the power of touch to create powerful, body-based meaning.



Fig. 17 *I am the Ghost*, Carole Chaloupka Burton 2015  
Exhibition image



Fig. 18 *I am the Ghost*, Carole Chaloupka Burton 2015  
Exhibition image