



intimate presences
affective absences
(or, the snake within)

LEORA FARBER



intimate presences
affective absences
(or, the snake within)

LEORA FARBER





Weeds that Whisper

Night in a yellow room. Holes everywhere: in the lamp, plug, bookcase, mug, in the dainty blue shoes which belonged to my daughter – white fish stitched to the tops, V for the tail, blob for the body, holes cut out for eyes. The chair in which I sit and the window through which I look at glinting light are both holes. Time is porous. The body too. Brim-full, we leak. Holes contain nothing, everything seeps. Form is an ellipses. What stays, sticks, is emptiness. It is what thrives after all the labour. Manifest content is ad-speak; substance a trick of belief. We need to know that what we do and make possess meaning, which is another word for shape. Ideas are things. How else could they be realisable? But what if nothing made is ever the sum of intention? What if the worlds we create are never the sum of things? Is it objects which truly matter, or what they refuse to yield? Looking at the world about me on a glinting morn, I notice the thin black gap which splits my writing desk, and the heap of books and notepads atop, pocked with shadows. I realise that my eyes are nested in sockets too. The head, a temple of the mind's eye. Fantasy? Reality? Both? What of the body? Where does reason or feeling lie?

'Know thyself,' the saying goes, as if self-knowledge were the mainstay and manifest, the first and last report. Are we any better for such resolve? What is lost when the head takes its toll? What of hands, skin, the great judder of life, the boundlessness of our narrow round? Is the skull the only vessel from which we sup, or is it yet another bauble? A conceit? A crudely hewn bowl, cleaved, punctured, impasto? "Alas, poor Yorick!" Hamlet groans as he peers at the skull of a friend in his hands.¹ It is unsurprising that, of all the bones in the body, it is the skull – reason's cradle – which we revere. The skull echoes what we make and what remains when we are gone. There, imagination lies; there, we plot and falter. Hollowed out and dry, fired down to its final station, a skull still possesses function. Living or dead, it is Hamlet's amanuensis, his mirror and echo. Within the skull lies a shallow sump. Life grows through gnashing teeth and sunken sockets. Nothing ends when we are gone. Everything starts... startles.

Why live in fear of holes when nothing exists without them?

As Lao Tzu observes:

Knead clay in order to make a vessel. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have use of the vessel. Cut outdoors and windows in order to make a room. Adapt the nothing therein to the purpose in hand, and you will have use of the room. Thus what we gain is Something, yet it is by virtue of Nothing that this can be put to use.²

We mould, cut, splice, and sharpen. We give voice with hands, but nothing made is made without nothing. No song, structure, expression, or feeling exists without application, some intrusive or excised force. We excavate in a vain attempt to find ourselves. From my pocket I pluck a torn sheet and read. "Man would sooner have the Void for his purpose than be void of Purpose".³ "Grace fills empty spaces but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it, and it is grace itself which makes this void".⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche reminds us of the dread we feel when confronted by nothing; Simone Weil reassures us that grace overcomes dread. Emptiness is utile, comforting. We cut up and cut out the void to make up a world, but hollows are not always reassuring. "Pots can show malice", Alice Munro tells us, "the patterns of linoleum can leer up at you, treachery is the other side of dailiness".⁵









For Auguste Rodin, "sculpture is the art of the hole and the lump".⁶ Before carved in marble or cast in bronze, Rodin's figures were modelled in clay. 30000 years in the making, clay is still the root matter at the core of human imagination and function. In *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*, Gaston Bachelard returns to clay – a pasty combine of "water and earth" – which he sees as "the basic component of materiality". For him, "an extensive examination of kneading and modelling" is necessary "for any description of the real and experienced relationships between formal and material causes". Through the "controlling hand" we learn "the essential dynamic genius of reality while working with a matter that resists and yields at the same time, like passionate and rebellious flesh".⁷ There is nothing innocent in this undertaking. For far too long, the manipulation of clay and its transfer to cast bronze and cut marble has been seen as a masculine, penetrative enterprise. But what of the Venus of Willendorf which long predates it? Consigned to anthropology? Is Rodin not a latter-day Greek conceit; a product of mind, of skull, that holds emotion captive?

Bachelard recognises this "reverie ... born out of a working with soft substances", and its "special will for power, with the masculine joy of *penetrating a substance, feeling the inside* of substances, knowing the inside of seeds, conquering the earth intimately ... participating in a force that dissolves without recourse".⁸ The congruence of making and unmaking, creation and fantasy, is devastating – the production of a peculiarly 'man'-made image. This was not always the case. Things made with holes were not always violations. Grace remains. It is the fluidity and pliability of clay that allows for the articulation of matter – its vision, feeling, truth. A compound of earth and water, clay, and what it brings into existence, is also the compound of substance and emptiness. Form requires its negative; depth its hollow. Emptiness is palpable, which is why Tzu speaks of "the presence of empty space" and why Bachelard – preoccupied with "materialising imagination above the graft after culture has put its mark on nature" – lingers longer.⁹ Bachelard gives form a secondary role, because what compels him far more is "the union of water and earth ... an elemental experience with matter". Clay is like "mucus". It is a paste, *la pâte* – mesomorphic, viscous, "sticky, pliable, lazy, sometimes phosphorescent".¹⁰ For him, "Mud is the dust of water".¹¹ A question persists: are substance and void Siamese? Symbiotic? Does emptiness define form?

All sins are attempts to fill voids.

– Simone Weil¹²

We define only out of despair; we must have a formula...
if only to give justification to the mind and a façade to the void.

– Emil Cioran¹³

We cannot help ourselves. We cling to shapes. We sin. We define. We make up. In the making, we forget the void, without which nothing exists. In *The Secret Life of Chaos*, Jim Al-Khalili tells us that matter is the "scar" of a quantum universe, the face of a vacuum that "seethes" and "bubbles", that we are the sum of water, air, chalk, coal, "debris" of annihilated matter, "leftovers" of a world we make over.¹⁴ The humility of this insight is a reckoning. Gender, and the wars and fantasies waged in its name, was never the defining grid. Sculpture is not, necessarily, abusively masculine. Henry Moore learnt his craft from Barbara Hepworth.





Easier to build a hole than dig one. Holes are necessary. Inescapable. A black hole is never only black. It is not only darkness the void invites but grace too. Dread and grace are inextricable, the paradox at the heart of all things. My inclination is to accept and embrace a void – its palpability, germinal energy, sanctity. Definition clouds existence and misshapes it. The hysterical fervour with which we accord certainty to things, assign cause and effect, blocks out the unspoken, unseen, and unheeded complexities which inform inchoate being. In this regard, I am struck by Kim West's reading of Pierre Huyghe's exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery, London, titled *Umwelt* (Hermetically Open).¹⁵ Inspired by Umberto Eco's *The Open Work*,¹⁶ this paradox implies that nothing is ever sealed. Nature-system-things do not abhor a vacuum. Coherence does not exist. Identity is never whole, never continuous. Eco calls into question a definitive and unified universe. His doubt applies to everything, including art. Integration requires openness. Instead of art reintegrating its spectator – a familiar fancy – it allows for a discontinuous and partial relationship. If an artwork is hermitically open, it thereby allows us to accept our vicarious relationship to ourselves – our identity and continuity – through an engagement which challenges the conventions of integrity and wholeness. It is disconnection, rupture, a bubbling viscosity, which resists our sinful attempts to fill the void. We learn to accept the nothingness that gives structure and substance to being. We unlearn the ruse of coherence and know that things are cut out and cut away. We embrace the germinal void. In the memorable beginning to his seminal work, *The Empty Space*, Peter Brook notes: "I can take an empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across the empty space whilst someone is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged".¹⁷ The void – a stage, a vessel, a sculpture – generates possibility and allows for function. Our bodies are also vessels, stages, sculptures. They are compounds of matter and imagination, perforated lumps. We mistake our dependence upon a void when we project the substantive at the expense of a generative emptiness.

In 1936 Meret Oppenheim created *Le Déjeuner en fourrure* – a cup, saucer, and spoon made from fur. Surreal, jarringly useless, she asks us to reconsider function. Is use the fate of all things? A shard of ancient pottery carries the memory of its use, but it is also a useful clue, a reminder that everything – whether useful or not – is nonetheless a fragment. The whole is always open. A framework is merely a boundary, a thing, the mirror and echo of nothing – "the presence of empty space".¹⁸ In 2020 (a year numerically symmetrical, tragically voided), Leora Farber returned to the fundamental question of existence and inexistence. Like Oppenheim, she chose to make vessels, bowls, cups, and plates. Like Oppenheim's work, hers is inutile. Farber is not crafting useful things. Hers is not homeware, yet it is the home, a domestic hull, that persists as the echo chamber for all we accrue and deploy. The home as a station and, as such, a point and place of transition – a colony, a place of occupation, an occupational hazard.

Home is an appropriated space; it does not exist objectively in reality [but as] a fiction we create out of a need to belong.

– Santu Mofokeng¹⁹

Restlessness lies within restfulness. The home is besieged. The things with which we fill them, while consolatory, are also the cyphers for our ruin. Things break and shatter; so do we. Munro returns: "pots... show malice, the patterns of linoleum... leer... treachery is the other side of dailiness". It is this unease that Farber experiences. Hers is a psychic disconnect, felt within that putatively most intimate of places – the home. Raised as a white child in









South Africa, at the height of apartheid and its white suburban confection, hers was a realm that glowered and leered with malice and unease from the mantelpiece and dinner table, in crockery made in England, their artistry and design plundered from China. There, in a dinner set stamped with its faux origin, lay the markings of empire, the insouciance of custom, the order of white power, and, along with it, the delicacy and enslaved quietude assigned to women.

However, her sculptures, inspired by her mother's crockery, are not made of clay. They are not colonial stoneware. Rather, they are organic moulds of yeast and bacteria which feast off a mixture of tea and sugar to produce 'skins' of sticky, glutinous matter – paste, *la pâte*. While they hark back to Bachelard's musings on clay, they explore quite another form of organic growth. "Matter has its own agency and properties", says Farber, "its own way of doing things".²⁰ Since 2017, hers has been an experiment with matter, its yield and pliability. Regardless of how fragile and strange – she cannot know the outcome in advance – Farber has, through her medium, chosen to recognise and embrace the precarity of the matter she grows in her studio. The growths are "viscous, visceral, slimy" when wet, their texture is akin to flesh. Moulded onto her mother's crockery then painstakingly drawn therefrom and left to dehydrate, the forms emerge as an event or performance. Nothing stays. Nothing is fired for all eternity. Subject to the elements, they glitter or brown. Their resolution cannot obviate failure. Instead, "one embraces failure as success, one works with failure as a principle". "Rituals", "intraspecies relationships" and "tainted, childhood memories" matter.²¹ These return to the artist physically, through the precarity of touch; in the infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering moments when the skin-membrane-filament is prised from its armature, left to morph.

Through things that are barely things, Farber grasps the ungraspable – the precarity of objects, an object-world, a world of things. The dialogue she generates between spectator and object is more murmur than declaration. Her objects are, as T.S. Eliot might say, fragments shored up against ruin – a futile endeavour at best.²² As impressions or residues they are fragile, ragged, broken, and torn. This is not because she seeks to emphasise the fallibility of things, but because fallibility is built into them. It is a part of their "material ecology".²³ The phrase is Neri Oxman's, founding director of The Mediated Matter Group at MIT. Oxman harnesses digital fabrication technologies, materials science, and organic design to make, and unmake, the world as we think and imagine it to be. Through the generative fold of organic and inorganic matter, she recovers a more enabling marriage of the human, non-human, and inhuman. Her vision, like Bachelard's, embraces "the real and experienced relationships between formal and material causes... the essential dynamic genius of reality".²⁴

Farber travels a similar path. In her journey, history meets geography; politics meets biology. Enfolded one into the other, the human story (now storied, layered) is biopolitical, a doubled culture. Her objects – deceptively slight, seemingly negligible, the husks of crockery – carry the spoor of corruption and corruptibility, or better, generation. This is because objects – plates and saucers designed and made in England, the patent stolen from China – are never innocent. Civilisations, and the values they conspire, live in the smallest of things. The record of power and oppression, dream and its extension, is a lived ideology, a material ecology. Beaker, bowl, chalice, mortar: Crockery is sacral as well as ordinary, consoling and violent.

Paradox is achingly present in all things. Tzu knows this well. It is the foundation of the *Tao Te Ching*, and the fundament of Farber's vision. Her works are sunk deep within the pit-dream-conspiracy of empire. Its governing principle, carried through Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, is biopolitical.²⁵ In choosing to amplify this intersection through domestic





objects (or rather, their impression and trace), she reminds us that the everyday and normative is anything but. In this regard she shares Munro's unease. Her sculpted impressions

hover in a liminal space of constant becoming. Slipping life and death; visibility and invisibility, materiality and immateriality, human and non-human, presence and absence; actuality and the imagination; being and non-being; real and unreal; form and formlessness; living, semi-living and non-living.²⁶

Hers, after Agamben, is an ever-morphing bacterial record of the "bare life" of things.²⁷ Hers, Tzu's paradox. Hers, Oxman's morphogenetic matter. Hers, Al-Khalili's scarred and bubbling chaos. Hers, Bachelard's passion and rebellion. Hers, Brook's stage of radical uncertainty. Hers, Cioran's definitional despair. Hers, Weil's sin-filled void. After Jacques Derrida, "every period has its ghosts (and we have ours), its own experiences, its own medium, and its proper hauntological media".²⁸ The splice of haunting and ontology, ghosts and things, void and substance, is Farber's matrix. It is why she thinks, feels, and makes. Her impressions, rather than casts, "create a semblance of presence, of immediacy, of touch, yet their delineation of absence... defines what they are".²⁹ Nothing is, other than what it is not. Hers are not copies but echoes of copies, gelatinous simulacra, fastened or withered by weather, or both. Nothing made is bounded. If failure matters, if failure is matter, it is because the organic refuses finitude. Farber's sculptures, however, are not only conceptual. They exist, and because they exist as mutable matter, they speak counterintuitively of the vanity of things. As husks, they are layered, impressed with paper tissue, then painted. The aesthetic gesture is self-present, and yet, hers is a cup that is not a cup, a formless form. Dissembling matter. Of her translucent and frangible things, she notes

they are materially corporeal yet simultaneously eerie and spectral. Ethereal and ephemeral, they appear to be in varying states of atrophy, and as such, may act as affective carriers of memory, possibly evoking (re)remembrances as well as bittersweet associations with familiarity, strangeness, safety, danger, comfort, dis-ease, intimacy, distance, vulnerability, trauma, complicity and loss.³⁰

Ghosted matter. Phantom hurt. Farber's sculptures are living organisms, petri dishes. Through depredation and decay she murmurs attrition's song, the song of *Ozymandias*. Hers is a study, at close range, of hubris. Hers is Percy Bysshe Shelley's "colossal wreck" reconceived in a minor key.³¹ Hers is a world "half sunk" with "wrinkled lip", wracked through with a depth charge – sonar – the thrum of emptiness at the heart of things.³² When I look at Farber's works, I see and sense a paradox that refuses steadfast contrasts. I see and sense not only trauma and loss, but grace. A vessel, after all, is also an ancient, sacral, and penitential gesture. If we make things in (and despite) our image, it is because they were never merely prosthetic extensions and useful objects, but also acts of prayer. A cup is a divination. The biopolitical carries both ideology and faith. It is true that faith can be a form of deceit, cankered at its root, but this occurs only when it is abused. Farber recognises this abuse in empire's civilising mission. She sees it in the inequality built into its furtherance. For her, race, class, and culture are never innocent. In her world, the ghost is hungry, predatory, malevolent. There is a treachery inside of darkness disguised as light. But this is not all, at least not to me. The subcutaneous – a hidden world exposed – is also a marvel. Bacterium is





also benignly germinal. The ghosts that haunt our present, which shape our future, are not only phantoms of hurt. If so, it is because grace forms the void inside us, and it is grace that can fill this void.

If Tzu, Bachelard, Al-Khalili, Brook, and Weil tell us anything, it is that the void is not to be feared. The ever-wise Mary Shelley expresses this view well: "Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos".³³ The void cannot be broached, harnessed, explained away. It is not subject to absolutes. It will not be named or contained. It knows no God. For all our belief, we cannot make-do without it. The void is meaning's foil; the soul's chant and gong. Chaos is another matter. It is a substrate of nothingness; a flayed, exposed, subcutaneous membrane between nothingness and being that is the source of invention, good or ill.

It is chaos which Farber harnesses; chaos that finds her caught at a threshold between worlds, values, judgements, pleas, hopes; chaos that allows her to embrace failure. There, in that unsettled and unsettling place, she creates sculptures as monstrous as they are filled with grace. Shelley understood this paradox when she galvanised her tragic creature, a product of science and despair. Unlike Oxman, Shelley stood at the frontier of the industrial world and its Satanic mills. Oxman, however, occupies its thither world, in which the apocalypse has arrived, the earth writ in Man's brutal and cruel self-image: anthropogenic, anthropocene, obscene. In this moment, Oxman seeks creative solutions for a human and inhuman complex. She seeks to breach the threshold and undo our nihilistic present and past. Farber shares this vision. Neither utopian nor dystopian, her world is not only a remorseless appraisal of lack and loss, but one which calls into being the grace that fills this void. Atrophy is the other side of grace, ephemerality the elixir of dross. The science is revealing. Farber's sculpted impressions of domestic objects are made from a cellulose-fibre,

produced by a symbiotic action made from the bacteria *Gluconacetobacter xylinus* and yeast which feeds off a mixture of tea and sugar. Situated at the interface between the liquid nutrient and the air, the biofilm grows to form a material that, when dehydrated, bears an uncanny resemblance to (disembodied) human skin.³⁴

The complex which informs the making is profound. After Bachelard, it is the echoing of "material imagination", the outcome and animus of "the Heraclitean flux" – a reverie.³⁵ Her impressions are not only the forms and indices of an embattled colonial culture, they are also rooted in the organic. Hers is art grafted to nature.

Symbiosis, an interaction that seeks advantage within differences, succinctly conveys Farber's mindset and practice. She sutures at the frontier of an insoluble divide. Her sculptures are a compound of nutrient and air, matter and its cradle. The production of human skin, its facsimile or likeness, signals the artist's immersive engagement with mortality – death as husk, life as germinal. It is at the fold of the two that the works emerge as echo and riposte. The project may seem macabre, but if we are inseparable from all we make, if nothing is immaculate, it is because everything carries its ghost. Her impressions are not lampshades made with human skin. Nothing monstrous lingers here. Human flesh is not the trophy of a sick mind. Rather, Farber returns us to Tzu's ancient wisdom, that humans are part of a greater inscrutable void; that life is a benign experiment, art its profound fulfilment.

There are... many purportedly refined objects that aim at elegance but succumb to bad taste, overburdened with needless decoration and meaningless frivolity.

– Soetsu Yanagi³⁶

Farber's sculpted impressions are anything but. Instead, they return us to the Ur of existence, wrought through history, yet in spite of it. Hers, after Nietzsche, is a going under and a going over, a journey that must pass through decadence – the ills of empire, biology, and design – in order to return us to a more nurturing culture. History hurts, but it also diverts, perverts, distracts, and hides. Within its maw, Farber reveals wonders that thrive despite suffering. Real and re-imagined, visceral and ephemeral, tactile and translucent, her objects slip the knot and burden of pain. They glint and hover, a benign bacterial haunting. They are "ghosts ... weeds that whisper... of the many pasts and yet-to comes that surround us".³⁷

Ashraf Jamal is a Research Associate in the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre, University of Johannesburg. He is the co-author of *Art in South Africa: The Future-Present* and co-editor of *Indian Ocean Studies: Social, Cultural, and Political Perspectives*. Jamal is also the author of *Predicaments of Culture in South Africa*, *Love Themes for the Wilderness*, the award-winning short fiction, *The Shades. In the World: Essays on Contemporary South African Art*. *Strange Cargo: Essays on Art* is forthcoming.

Written under lockdown 2020





Endnotes

- ¹ Shakespeare, W. 2003. *Hamlet*. Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman: 207.
- ² Tzu, L. 1979 [1963]. *Tao Te Ching*. Trans. D.C. Lau. Harmondsworth: Penguin Group: 67.
- ³ Nietzsche, F. 1956. The Genealogy of Morals, in *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. F. Golffing. New York: Doubleday Anchor: 299.
- ⁴ Weil, S. 2002. *Gravity and Grace*. Trans. E Crawford & M van der Ruhr. London/New York: Routledge: 10.
- ⁵ Munro, A. 2010. Royal Beatings, in *Selected Stories*. London: Vintage: 109.
- ⁶ Rodin in Weinberg, A. 1918. *The Art of Rodin*. New York: Boni & Liveright: 23.
- ⁷ Bachelard, G. 2006 [1942]. *Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter*. Dallas, TX: The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture: 13.
- ⁸ Ibid.:107.
- ⁹ Ibid.: 10.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.: 106.
- ¹¹ Ibid.: 109.
- ¹² Weil Ibid.: 24.
- ¹³ Cioran, E.M. 2012 [1949]. *A Short History of Decay*. Trans. R Howard. New York: Arcade Publishing: 35.
- ¹⁴ Al-Khalili, J. 2019. The Secret Life Of Chaos: Chaos Theory (Jim Al-Khalili) | Science Documentary | Science. *YouTube*, 16 November. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_yOueFMe7c&t=2169s&fbclid=IwAR07UUrTH0lieKOsHw274H8CbX67aE6OhN8YH4IZx9Xxb5s8SRyCPdLFZM&app=desktop.
- ¹⁵ West, K. 2018. Hermetically Open: Pierre Huyghe's exhibition at Serpentine in London poses the question: what is the critical value of the open artwork in the age of participatory media apocalypse? *Kunstkrityk*, 5 November. <https://kunstkrityk.com/hermetically-open/>.
- ¹⁶ Eco, U. 1988. *The Open Work*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- ¹⁷ Brook in Lan, D. 2012. The Suit: the show that sums up Peter Brook's theatrical odyssey. *The Guardian*, 25 May. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2012/may/25/the-suit-fits-peter-brook>.
- ¹⁸ Tzu Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Mofokeng in Knoetze, F. 2015. *Cape Mongo*. Master's Dissertation, Michaelis School of Fine Art. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- ²⁰ Farber, L. 2020. *intimate presences/affective absences (or the snake within...)*. Unpublished catalogue essay.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Eliot, T.S. 2006 [1922]. The Waste Land, in *The Oxford Book of American Poetry*, edited by D Lehman & J Brehm. New York: Oxford University Press: 351-61.
- ²³ Barandy, K. 2020. MoMA exhibits organic design and digital fabrication with Neri Oxman: material ecology. *Designboom*, 24 February. <https://www.designboom.com/architecture/neri-oxman-material-ecology-moma-02-24-2020/>.
- ²⁴ Oxman, N. 2019. Neri-Oxman: Bio Architecture on Abstract: The Art of Design (Season 2). Dir. Brian Oakes. Los Gatos, CA: Netflix.
- ²⁵ See Agamben, G. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. D Heller-Roazen. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- ²⁶ Farber, L. Ibid.
- ²⁷ See Agamben, G. Ibid.
- ²⁸ Derrida, J. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York/London: Routledge: 193.
- ²⁹ Farber, L. Ibid.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Shelley, P.B. 2002. Ozymandias, in *The Selected Poetry & Prose of Shelley*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions: 194.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Shelley in MacDonald, D.L. and Sherf, K. 2005. Introduction, in *Frankenstein*, edited by DL MacDonald & K Sherf. Ontario, Hertfordshire/Rozelle: Broadview Literary Texts: 12.
- ³⁴ Farber, L. Ibid.
- ³⁵ Bachelard, G. Ibid.: 6.
- ³⁶ Yanagi, S. 2018. *The Beauty of Everyday Things*. Trans. M Brase. London/New York/Johannesburg: Penguin Group: 5.
- ³⁷ Gan, E, Tsing, A, Swanson, H and Bubandt, N. 2017. Introduction: Haunted Landscapes of the Anthropocene, in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet.*, edited by A Tsing, H Swanson, E Gan & N Bubandt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 6.

Biography

Leora Farber holds the position of Associate Professor and is the Director of the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre, Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Johannesburg. She currently works as an artist, academic, writer, editor, curator and post-graduate supervisor. She has co-curated seven exhibitions, published articles in numerous academic journals including *Critical Arts*, *Image & Text* and *Textile. Journal of Cloth and Culture*. Farber has guest-edited four special editions of *Critical Arts*, three editions of *Image & Text*, and has edited or co-edited four scholarly volumes.

HIGHER EDUCATION

2013 DPhil Visual Art, University of Pretoria.
1992 MA Fine Art (*Cum Laude*) University of the Witwatersrand.
1987 BA Fine Art, University of the Witwatersrand.

ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2007 to 2008

Dis-Location/Re-Location. Major exhibition featuring photographic prints, sculptural, installation, video and sound work. The exhibition travelled to the following South African national galleries /museums:
– The Albany History Museum, Grahamstown
– The Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum, Port Elizabeth
– The South African Jewish Museum, Cape Town
– The US Art Gallery, Stellenbosch
– The Oliewenhuis Gallery, Bloemfontein
– The Johannesburg Art Gallery
– The Durban Art Gallery.

2006

A Room of Her Own. Live performance and installation. The Premises, Johannesburg.
Designing for the Senses. Live performance installation. Rockefeller University, New York City.

2001

All You Can Be. Retrospective exhibition featured at the Aardklop National Arts Festival. Snowflake building, Art Circle, Potchefstroom.
Corpa Delicata. Sculptural performance and video installation. The Premises, Johannesburg.
Corpus Delecti. Video installation. Carinus Art Centre, Grahamstown.

2000

Endless Renovations. Three-person show. Joao Ferreria Fine Art, Cape Town.

1997

Instrumental. Thompson Gallery in collaboration with Read Contemporary Art, Johannesburg.

1997

Skinless. Gasworks Gallery, London.

1993

Seeing through the Body. Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2012

Pointure. Curated by Ann-Marie Tully & Jennifer Kopping. UJ Art Gallery Johannesburg.

2011

The Surface, the Underground and the Edges. Video programme shown as part of *Afropolis. Media. City*. Art. Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cologne; *Collaborations/Articulations*, FADA Gallery, University of Johannesburg; Michaelis Gallery, University of Cape Town.

2010

Transgressions and Boundaries of the Page. Africana room, JS Gericke Library, Stellenbosch University; Gallery of the North-West University, Potchefstroom; FADA Gallery, University of Johannesburg.

2008

Skin-to-Skin. Curated by Fiona Kirkwood. Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg.

2007

Second Skin. Curated by Ellen Lupton. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei; Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei.
Skin-to-Skin. Curated by Fiona Kirkwood. Textile 07 Kaunus Art Biennial, Latvia.

2005

Reconciliation. Curated by Elfride Dreyer. University of Pretoria.

2004

Through the Looking Glass. Representations of Self by South African Women Artists. Curated by Brenda Schmahmann. Albany History Museum, Grahamstown; King George VI Gallery, Port Elizabeth; Durban Art Gallery; South African National Gallery, Cape Town; Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg.

2003

Translocations/How Latitudes Become Forms. Translocation Channel, Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis.

2002

In No Particular Order. 16th Recontres Video Art Plastique, Centre d'Art Contemporain de Basse-Normandie, France.

2002

Skin: Surface, Substance and Design. Curated by Ellen Lupton. Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York City.

2001

Art 2001. Contemporary Art Fair. Business and Design Centre, London.

2000

Two Icons: The Atom, The Body. Curated by Kathryn Smith & James Sey. MuseuMAfrica, Johannesburg.

1999

Body as Commodity. Nexus Contemporary Art, Atlanta (with Marc Quinn & Nan Goldin).
Emergence. Curated by Rayda Becker. Albany History Museum, Grahamstown; King George VI Gallery, Port Elizabeth; Durban Art Gallery; Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg.
Art 99. Contemporary Art Fair, Business and Design Centre, London.
The New Anatomists. Gallery 1010, The Wellcome Institute, London.
The Exquisite Corpse. Jibby Beane Contemporary, London.
Three Artists: Three Continents: Artists in Residence at UTK. Ewing Gallery of Art and Architecture, Knoxville, Tennessee.

1998

Art 98. Contemporary Art Fair. Business and Design Centre, London.

1997

Art 97. Contemporary Art Fair. Business and Design Centre, London.

1997

The Gramercy International Contemporary Art Fair. Gramercy Park Hotel, New York City.

1996

Colours: Contemporary Art from South Africa. Curated by Alfons Hug & Sabine Vogel. Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin.

1995

The Body Politic. Curated by Colin Richards. Johannesburg Biennale, Gertrude Posel Galleries.
Inside – Outside. Curated by Julia Charlton. Johannesburg Biennale, Johannesburg Art Gallery.

WORKS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Sanlam Corporate Collection
Johannesburg Art Gallery
Sasol Wax Collection
Unisa University Collection
The Trinity Session
Sanlam Corporate Collection
Johannesburg Art Gallery
MTN Art Institute Digital Art Collection
Tatham Art Gallery
Gertrude Posel Art Galleries
Technikon Witwatersrand (now University of Johannesburg)
Pretoria Art Museum
Oliewenhuis Art Gallery
Pretoria Technikon (now Tshwane University of Technology)

Contact: leoraf@uj.ac.za
www.leorafarber.co.za
Email: leoraf@uj.ac.za
Instagram: leoranfarber
Twitter:@Leorafarber
Facebook:https://www.facebook.com/leora.farber.1
Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/in/leora-farber-864bb132

Photography; Anthea Pokroy
Design: New Found Form

The financial assistance from the University of Johannesburg Research Committee is gratefully acknowledged.





**VIAD
FADA**

VISUAL IDENTITIES
IN ART AND DESIGN
RESEARCH CENTRE
Faculty of Art, Design
and Architecture



+27 (0)11 559 1210
www.viad.co.za
www.facebook.com/viad.fada

Rooms 119A & 120, 1st Floor,
FADA Building, University
of Johannesburg, Bunting
Road Campus, Auckland Park,
Johannesburg, South Africa, 2092

