

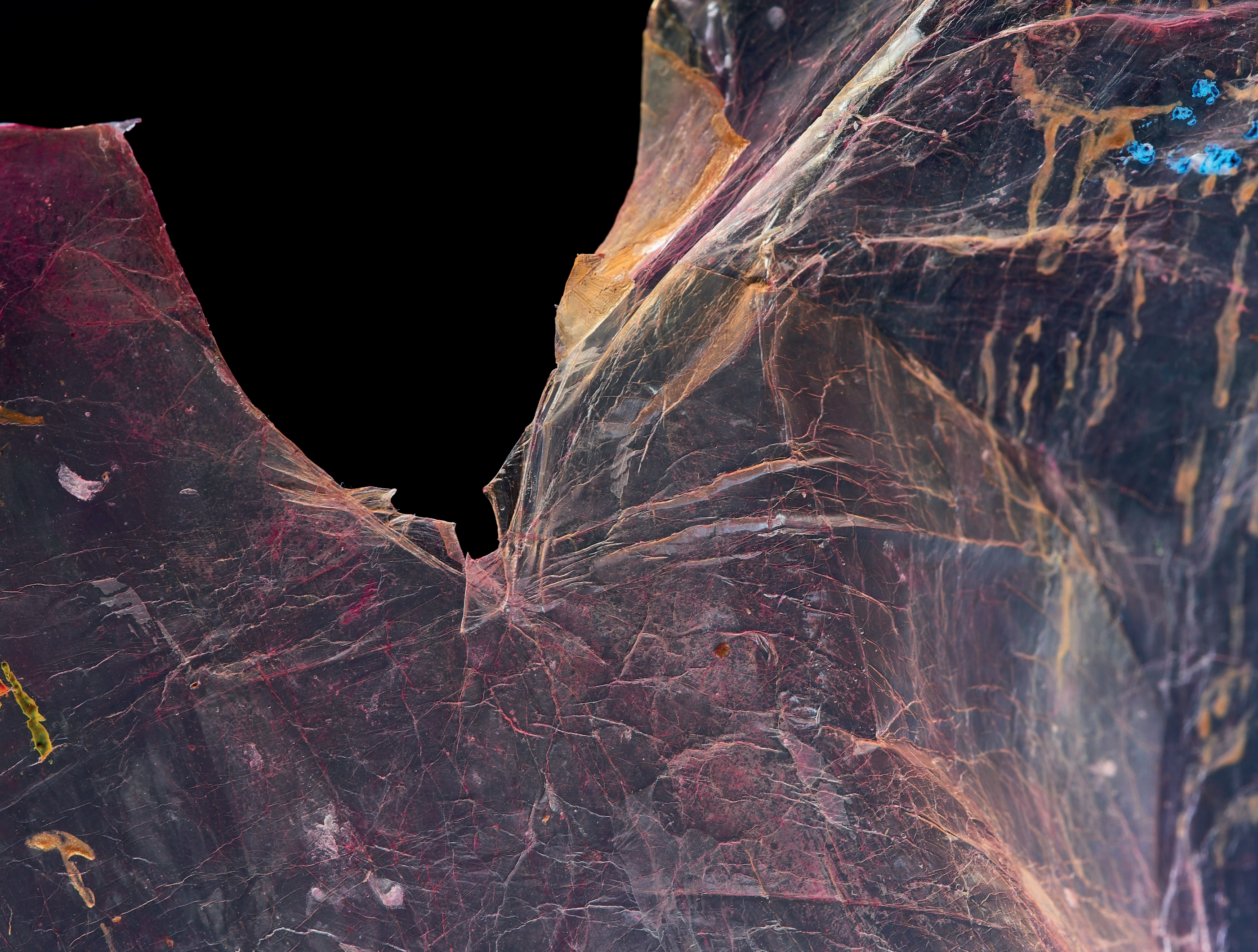
spectral matters
phantom pursuits

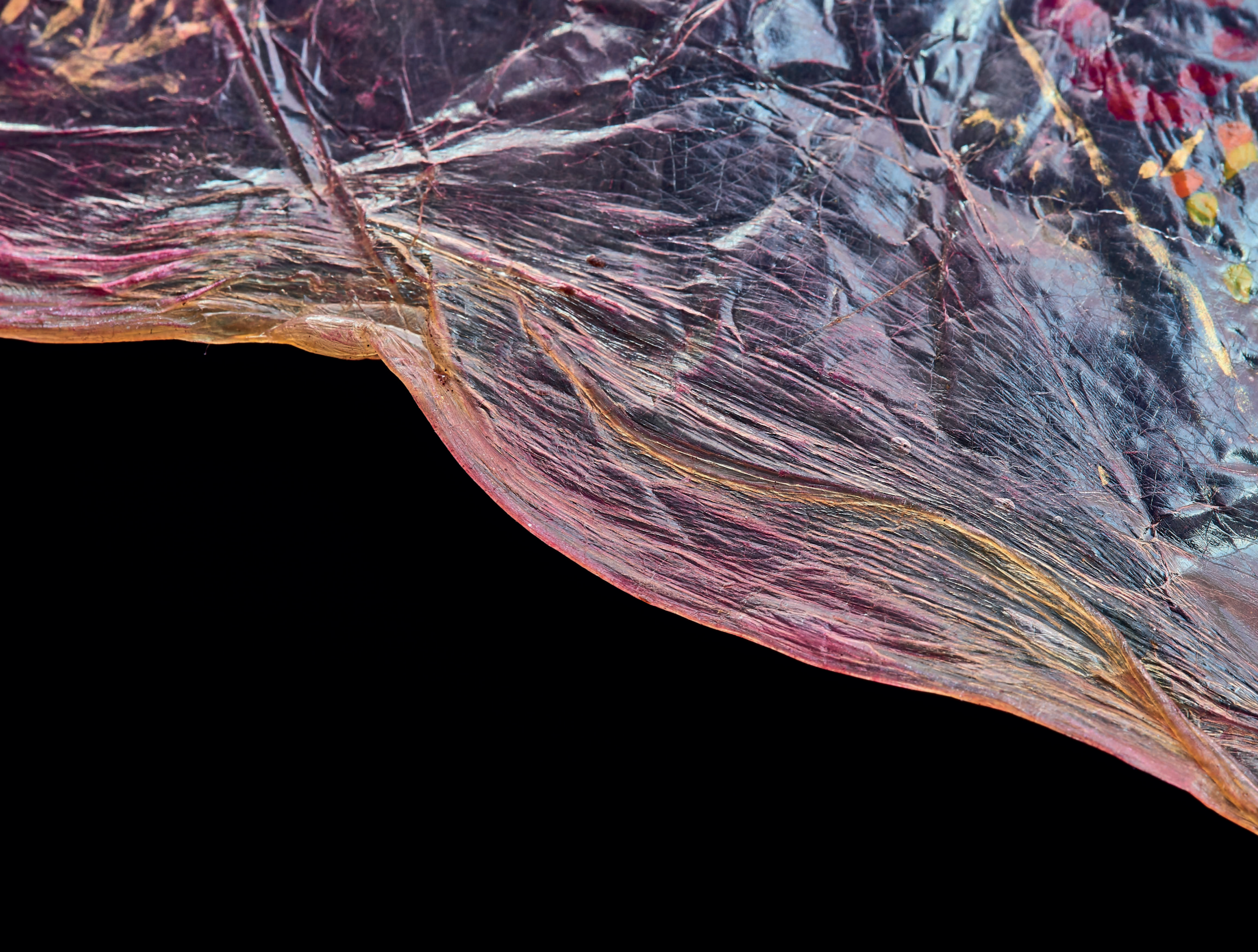
LEORA FARBER



spectral matters
phantom pursuits

LEORA FARBER





Storied Matter Spectral Legacies Agential Enactments

Stories

The artist, the yeast, the bacteria, the Wedgwood cup, the spoon and the tablecloth collaborate to tell stories. Formulated through the material and visual language of domestic matter, they are stories of how the violent histories of colonialism and apartheid continue to haunt the present.

They are stories of cold calculation and hot greed; of plunder and displacement; of bodies rendered disposable; of pillage, despoilation, appropriation, and exploitation; of lives made expendable and fungible. They are also stories of abundant contamination; of easy and uneasy co-habitations; of fixed historical hierarchies and binaries collapsing, mutating, and resurfacing.

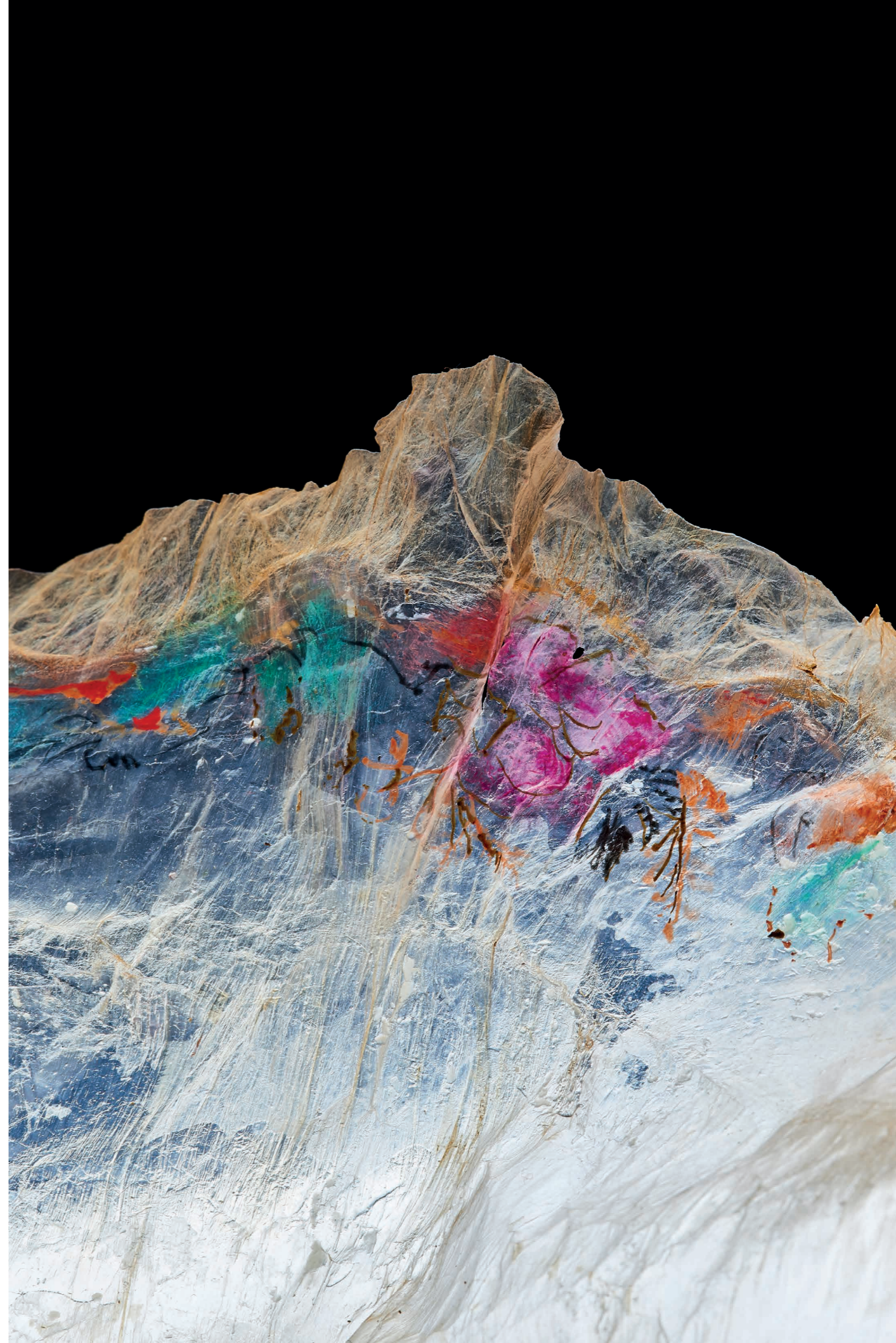
Storied matter is “a material ‘mesh’ of meanings, properties, and processes, in which human and nonhuman players are interlocked in networks that produce undeniable signifying forces”.¹ This ‘semiotic materiality’ applies to all matter, whether biological, synthetic or geological.

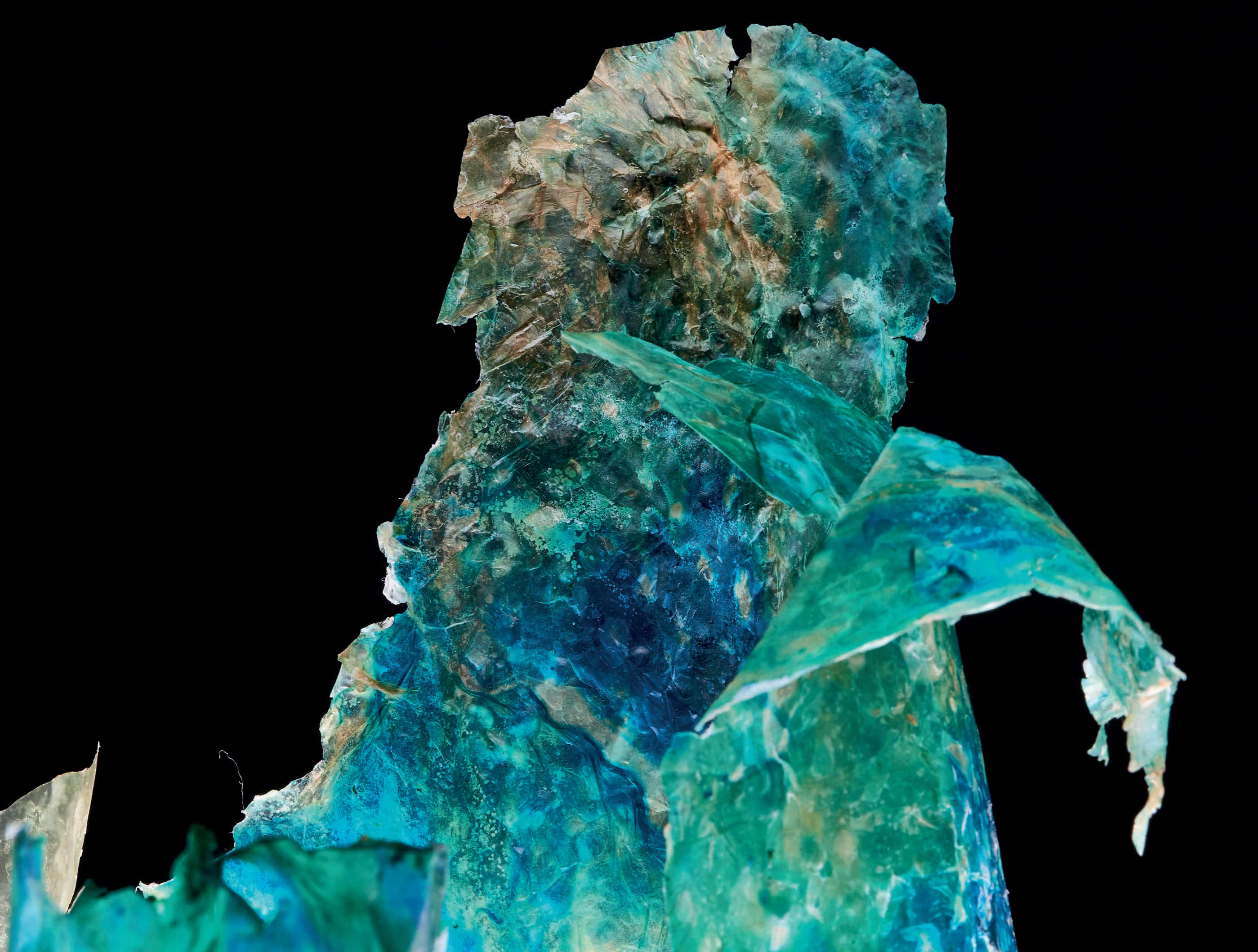
The artist, the yeast, the bacteria, the Wedgwood cup, the spoon and the tablecloth say that every locale is the nexus of the global; that everything is in a space of in-betweenness, that the middle is everywhere. They tell of domestic care and cares, of injury and hurt, fractures and fracturing, and lament that the price of beauty is the pain of loss. The story weaves, morphs and knots, it sends out tentacles to other stories which, in turn, become enmeshed, entangled.

“To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack independent, self-contained existence” says Karen Barad.² Entanglement is therefore ontological: “Beings do not pre-exist their relatings”.³ Rather, being is the product of what Barad terms *intra-action* and *intra-activity* between living, semi-living and non-living agents.

The term ‘intra-action’ which replaces ‘interaction’, de-emphasises the “constructed boundary between the ‘object’ and the ‘agencies of observation’”. Barad transforms the term ‘agency’ into “agentiality”, which she argues is a “doing” and “intracting;” an unfixed and non-anthropocentric process, and an enactment.⁴ Matter is understood as a “discursive production,” which means that the materialisation of bodies and the production of meaning are interdependent. Materiality becomes a way of thinking and working through the hauntings of colonial histories via storied matter. Such enmeshment contributes to a partial decentering of humanist thought in post-anthropocentric and post-humanist theory, as it calls into question clear-cut hierarchical binary oppositions between human and non-human; self and other; mind and matter; subjectivity and objectivity; rationality and emotion. Similarly, Donna Haraway emphasises the intertwining of the natural and cultural, organic and inorganic, material and immaterial. In Haraway’s lexicon, nature and culture become “natureculture”.⁵

Cultures resemble nature – they breed and proliferate, they are fragile, they flourish briefly in translucent beauty. Their colours stain the world a brilliant hue before they fragment, melt and dissolve.







Worlding

We imagine that stories are about the world. First, we have the world, then come the stories. But imagine a world emerging as story, or a story emerging as world.

The notion of the ontological primacy of the world gave rise to art as representation or mirror. The idea of a pre-existing world renders the artist, as it does the scientist, a neutral, detached observer; the world lies passive and available to his gaze, he dissects the model as he sculpts her. Her art, however, does not mirror the world but diffracts it. As Barad explains, diffraction patterns occur where a wave, when meeting an obstacle, creates new patterns out of that encounter; to diffract is to intersect.⁶

The artist, the yeast, the bacteria, the Wedgwood cup, the spoon and the tablecloth propose an intimate intersection between meaning and matter. They suggest that matter and discourse are integrally conjoined; they collaborate to make a world. This collaboration, as Helen Palmer and Vicky Hunter put it, is a form of 'worlding': "Worlding is a ... blending of the material and the semiotic that removes the boundaries between subject and environment, or perhaps between persona and topos".⁷ It involves "a radical dismantling of the boundaries between human and nonhuman agencies, the social and the natural, and above all between matter and discourse".⁸ But what about the contested field of the human, which is already haunted by this binary logic?

Now, in this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, we see the virus, neither dead nor alive but intent on propagating itself, prolifically narrating the inter-penetration of all things. And through its penetration of the fabric of human life, the corona virus has revealed those paradigmatic disparities and structures of violence that underpin the interlinking of both biological and discursive formations. While new materialist feminist approaches, such as those of Haraway and Barad, which combine post-anthropocentrism and post-humanist thinking, shift the focus towards matter and material bodies in their dynamic becomings, the discursive processes through which racialised, classed and gendered bodies are constructed also matter. In these material stories, historical flows and residues alongside the most microscopic particles of matter all matter.



Skin

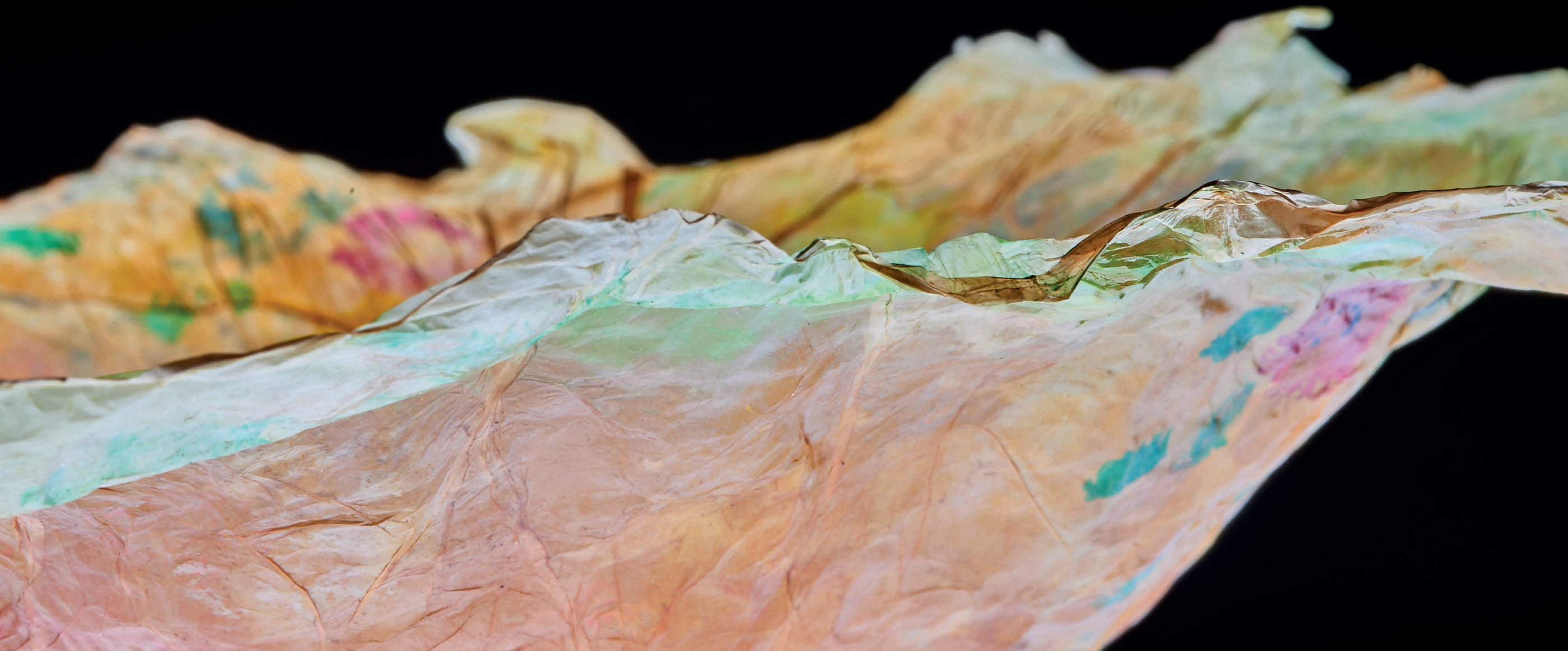
We perceive the object as an object, as something that 'has' integrity, and is 'in' space, only by haunting that very space; that is, by co-inhabiting space such that the boundary between the co-inhabitants of space does not hold. The skin connects as well as contains.

Orientations are tactile and they involve more than one skin surface: we, in approaching this or that table are also approached by the table, which touches us when we touch it.⁹

Her medium is a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast. The culture feeds off tea and sugar to form a gelatinous, cellulose-based fibre that floats at the container's air-liquid interface. Her work grows like a skin in the liminal interface between nature and culture, breathing life into both. When dehydrated, the cellulose fibre skin bears uncanny resemblance to traces of human skin – sloughed off, shed, discarded. Skin is a contact zone, a site of pleasure and pain, a porous barrier, an “archipelago of meaning, experience and memory”;¹⁰ it is a “milieu” – “a place of mingling, a mingling of places”.¹¹ It is the earliest interface through which we encounter otherness, and difference, the point of exchange and connection between our interior psychic lives and our exterior social world.¹²

Thinking about skin allows her to imagine a dynamic way of re-thinking human (as) nature. Skin – that deeply loaded signifier of race, of desire, (de) gradation and derision, of typologies and hierarchies of ‘the human’ – is the lived residue of historical violence, a paradigm through which differently valued lives are marked by the register and tonality of supposed difference. Skin is abject, it dissolves categories, it exists at the border of being. Working with this uncannily skin-like material, she feels a loss of bodily boundaries, of ego and individuality; a sense of enmeshment with the material as matter; she is, as Julia Kristeva describes abjection, “at the border of [her] condition as a living being”.¹³







Care

She nurtures her cultures with loving anxiety. She feeds them, she hovers over them, she bathes them, she warms them, she dries them, she tends to them, watching them closely for signs of mould or contamination from other organisms at every stage of the process. She thinks about them during the day, wondering if they are growing. She is *response-able* to them – a term Haraway uses to describe a process of opening oneself to others, to become an agent, to care. And as she cares for her cultures, they cease being alien or other; they become familiar.

The cellulose fibre requires extremely *care-full* handling. This is an embodied relationship: her interaction with the material comprises unsettling yet pleasurable sensual intimacies and corporeal entanglements. She carefully presses the wet material out on a flat surface, removing creases and folds. She caresses the moist skin as she smooths it over the object. She delicately whittles into it with carving tools, strokes it with soft paintbrushes to create intricate patterns on its surface, and rubs it with coconut oil to make it soft and pliable. She coaxes colour and form from a live palette. She feels vulnerable, because she does not know what will emerge from this process. The colour bleeds. The skin tears. The live cloth fragments. The material shapeshifts – when it is wet outdoors, the skin absorbs excess moisture and becomes flaccid; in cold weather it becomes brittle. Both parties struggle to retain the shape and form of the original object. After repeated attempts to make the material conform to her wishes, she realises that, in order to work symbiotically with it, she needs to relinquish her autonomy as artist-maker. The material has its own agency; it is “not a fixed essence” but a “substance in its intra-active becoming – not a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency [...] a stabilizing and destabilizing process of intra-activity”.¹⁴ Its “unbounded life”¹⁵ proliferates beyond her control. She is a participant, a collaborator in an organic, unscripted, ever-unfolding *intra-action*.

The process of painting or drawing patterning onto the skins is laborious, detailed, and time-consuming, yet meditative, serene, pleasurable. Her mind ‘wanders’ as she works. She thinks of those domestic activities historically considered as the work of white ladies of leisure – needlework, lacemaking, still-life and china painting – and other domestic pursuits that cut across class and race, such as the invisible forms of housework where traces of labour are repeatedly erased. She adds layers of ‘tissue’ to the skin by bonding thin layers of paper serviettes with the skin to create textures and patterns. She scrapes and peels away layers of tissue as she works. She works with a scale and temporality that she cannot see. She ‘feels’ her way through. There cannot be any impulsive or rough movements: to remove the impression, she has to precariously coax it from the object. While doing so, she holds her breath in anticipation of what might emerge. She comes to accept ‘failure’ as fruitful; the fragment, the part-object says far more than the whole.

Her art is a material engagement. It is a labour of love. It is precarious work. It is a poem. It is critical theory. It is a new terminology. It is a burden she takes upon herself. It is a lament. The primary sense is that of inward grief.



Kinship

Haraway celebrates the making of kin, a web of connection and care between actants based on shared values, kindness (but not kind) and co-dependency rather than blood and inheritance. This family is not akin to the universalist myth of The Great Family of Man – the violent reproduction of colonial modernity based on Linnaean taxonomies of species. It is a multispecies assemblage, a co-relation which is based on flows of reciprocity and exchanges, where manifold agents interact and participate in the creation of worlds that are also homes. This is needed in order to “stay with the trouble” – the acts of genocide, waves of extinctions and the climatic ravages wreaked by colonial modernity. “The task”, says Haraway, “is to make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present”.¹⁶

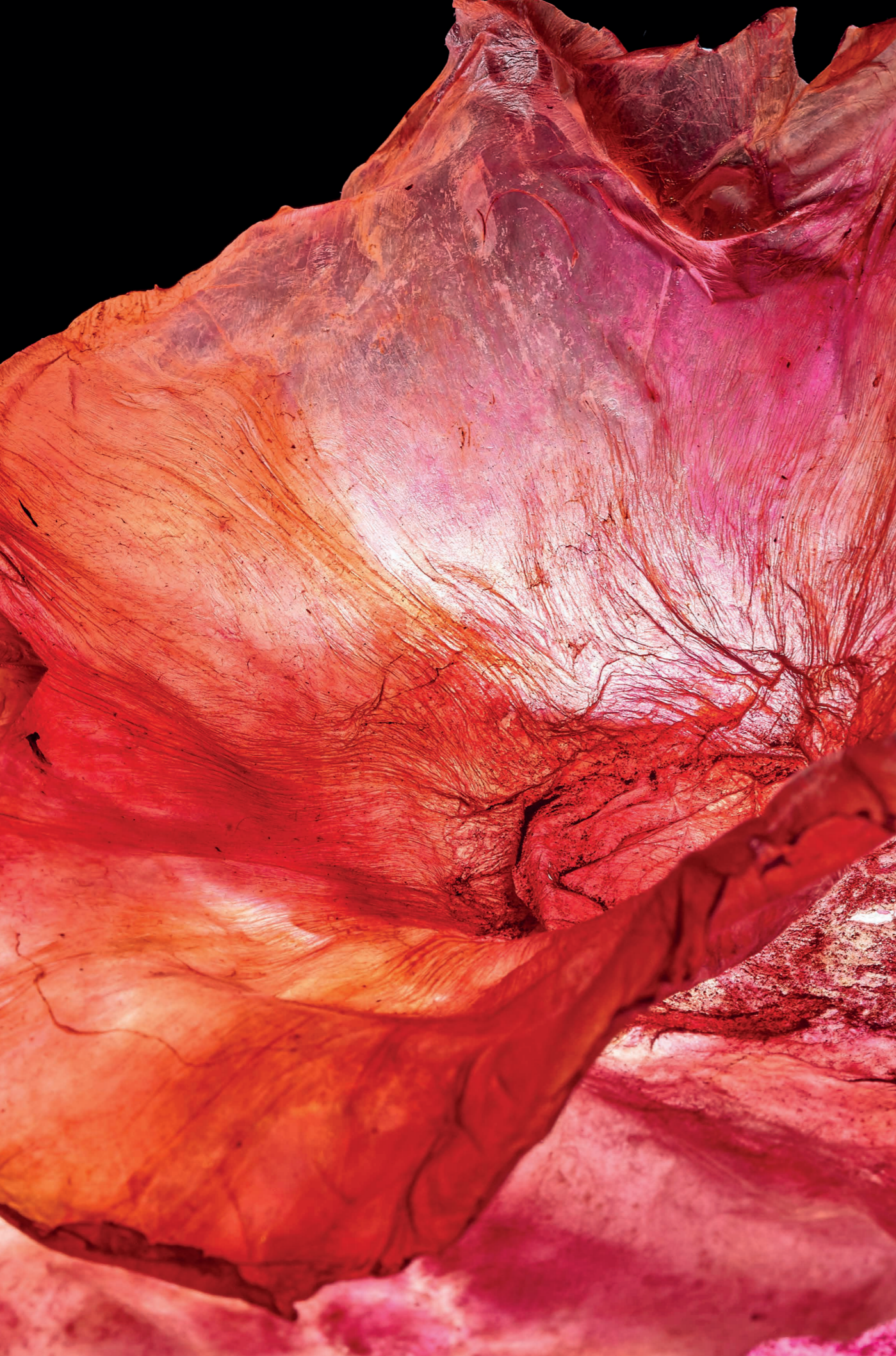
However, while Haraway’s notion of kin is appealing, it does not directly take into account the complications of relating across lines of difference that are historically inscribed and perpetuated as structures of power in the thickness of the present. It could be said to perpetuate a certain disavowal of the particularities of history as well as contemporary experiences of difference. For, as Rosi Braidotti asks, is it possible to decentre the human in post-humanist discourse, when certain people were not considered as humans in the same way to begin with? How can the human be taken as an all-inclusive category when ‘the human’ is a normative category that indexes access to power? In humanism, the standard by which the human was defined is the white, western, heterosexual, urbanised man – a category determined by what it includes as much as by what it excludes.¹⁷

If post-humanist thought seeks to break down barriers between human and non-human, Braidotti continues, “to what extent are these discussions wiping out all the critical debates on differences, on fragmentation, on marginalisation and forms of othering”? As she observes, marginalisation, class segmentation, and new forms of labour oppressions are still prevalent, “they are still being carried by the same empirical social subjects that have been historically the representative of negative difference – sexualised, racialised, naturalised others”.¹⁸

Braidotti proposes that what is needed is a critical post-humanism – a discourse which does not assume that the post-human is post-power, post-class, post-gender. She offers another kind of political ontology that embraces “one matter ... shot through with intersectionalities ... new differentiated transspecies alliances differentially orientated [so as to be] capable of metastability through careful negotiations”.¹⁹ Braidotti envisions “a new humanity that is postulated on fear, the humanity that emerges from the tragedy of the Anthropocene”; one that acknowledges that “‘we’ are in this together, but ‘we’ cannot be considered a fixed category”. In her words, “humanity is a ‘missing people’ it is something we need to reconstitute; multiple humanities in transspecies alliances capable of becoming worlds in a variety of ways ... diversity, complexity, hybridisation thinkable within a monistic philosophy are all within our reach”.²⁰

It is with Braidotti’s words in mind that she approaches her work, looking for ways in which modern world stories, with their legacies of racial slavery, colonialism and apartheid, can be engaged with through a form of embodied materialism that is finely attuned to difference. For her, situated in the context of post-colonial South Africa – a society which is characterised by cultural and physical displacement – working through the past is a way of working through the present: the sense of uncanniness that her impressions might evoke may be related to processes of re-invention or refiguring of oneself – “processes that are shadowed by a recalcitrant and disorientating memory of place and space that must be worked through for newness to emerge”.²¹



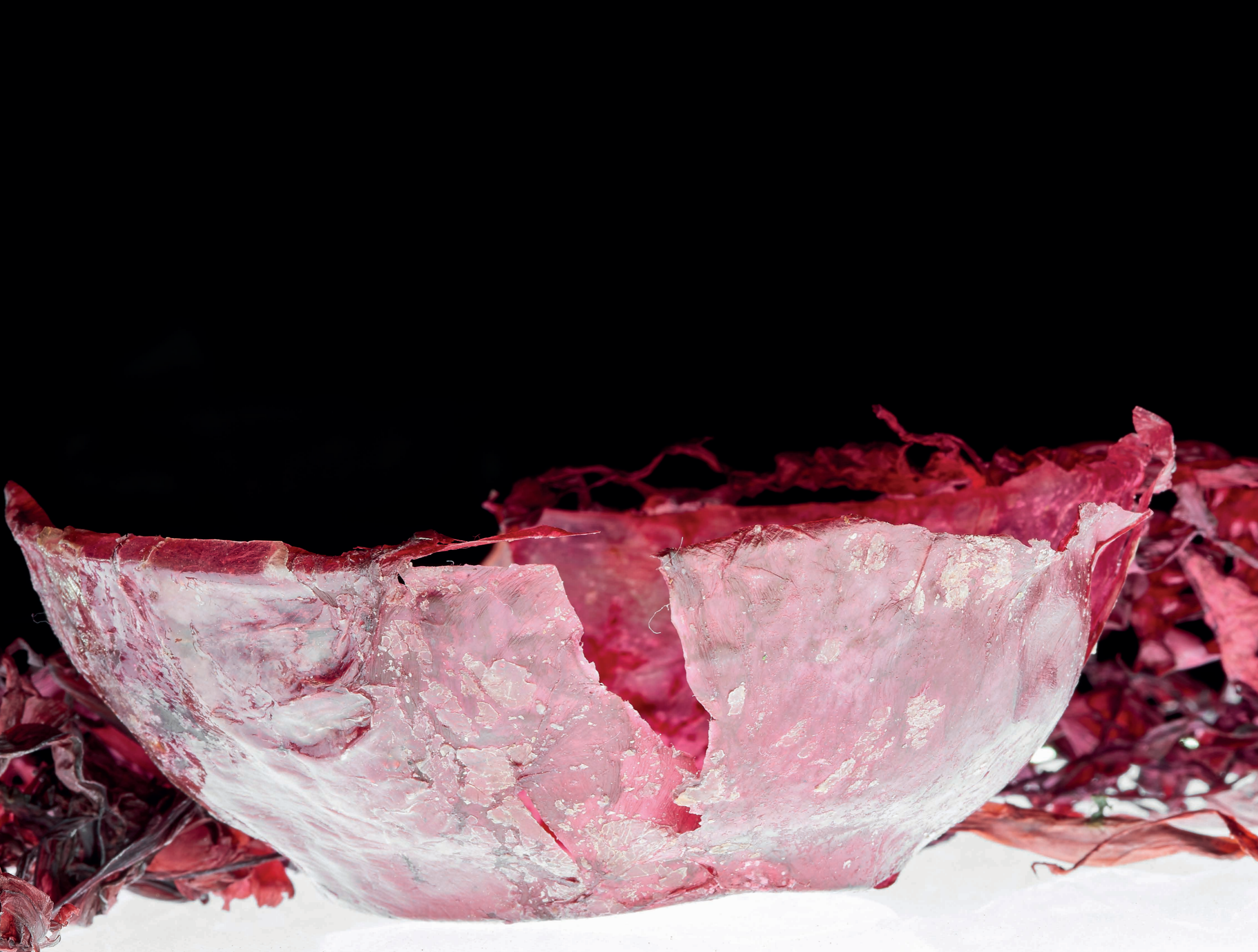


Remembrances

Some things go. ... Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. ... places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place – the picture of it – stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head.²²

She uses fungal and bacterial stories to tell her own story, the story of her heritage as the daughter of first-generation immigrant parents, who, in the 1930s, came to South Africa from Eastern Europe to escape the Holocaust. As impoverished Jews, they considered South Africa as a 'land of opportunity'; Johannesburg was the *Goldene Medina* (City of Gold), yet their experiences in the New World were underpinned with a nostalgic longing for *Der Heim* (The Home). Creating an impression of a teapot out of cultured skin, she remembers her childhood home, the rituals of religious holidays that involved dinners for the extended family. She remembers the taste of the traditional Jewish food which originated from *Der Heim* that was served in fine crockery and cutlery specially laid out for these festive occasions. She remembers Sunday afternoon garden teas with family and friends, held to create a sense connectedness and belonging amongst a diasporic community. Here, the 'good' tea-set, teaspoons, cake-forks and embroidered tablecloths told their own stories – stories of middle-class consumption, respectability and having 'made it' financially.

Her impressions of domestic objects tell stories of her own dis-ease with these family heirlooms, so proudly passed down from matriarchal generation to generation. She handles her impressions of domestic objects with extreme care. Not only are they materially fragile; they are vestiges carrying fragile traces of past lives and spectral ancestors. She thinks of how care needs to be a considered political modality in how she, given her positionality as a white, cis-gender subject, might address questions of race against the backdrop of entangled, violent and lived racial histories. Once homely, comforting objects become charged with uncanny remembrances, the bittersweet taste of a constructed (false) sense of security built on privilege and tacit complicity. The impressions tell of how that which was once known and familiar (*Heimlich*) becomes disturbingly foreign (*Unheimlich*);²³ that which has been repressed resurfaces; the forgotten is remembered; once homely objects become unhomely or 'uncannily strange'.



She grew up 'respectably' in an all-white suburb of Johannesburg, at the height of apartheid in the 1960s. She remembers the black domestic worker who washed and dried the dirty dishes in the scullery. She shudders as she remembers the tinkling sound of the small porcelain bell that was rung at the end of each course, summoning the domestic worker to clean away the dishes from the table. The domestic worker, who was always only referred to by her Anglicised first name – 'Emily', 'Veronica', 'Joyce' – was a 'ghost in the house' – an unseen, unheard, voiceless figure relegated to the background, yet constantly present.²⁴ For, as Gabeba Badaroon observes in relation to the South African home under apartheid, "privacy in South Africa is itself a deeply structured space, marked by ritualized practices, stark boundaries, entrenched inequality, and the making of conflicted relations and subjectivities. ... [it is] a haunted place ... a place of silences, ghosts and secrets [in which] the most ordinary acts and spaces seem 'secretly familiar'. The memories, objects, and rooms of the household become the site of ambiguous and unsettling intimacies".²⁵

She wanders from object to object. She settles momentarily on a piece of fine English bone china; she feels the raised patterns on a damask cloth. She stays for a while with the entities that haunt her. These seemingly commonplace, often overlooked, objects evoke a multitude of uncanny remembrances: familiarity, strangeness, comfort, dis-ease, intimacy, distance, vulnerability, trauma, complicity and loss.

Barad sees "remembering" as a "bodily activity of re-turning", and the "work of re-turning – turning it over and over again" as central to the "ongoing labor of mourning".²⁶ For Toni Morrison,²⁷ rememory is a modality through which she negotiates the spectres of race. A rememory is also an object, place or person that triggers the process of individual and collective remembering. Remembering signifies a putting back together of reconstructed memories that proceed self-making and self-knowing. Yet, as a particular rememory is called to mind, another inevitably fades away. Remembrances are fleeting, elusive.





Hauntologies

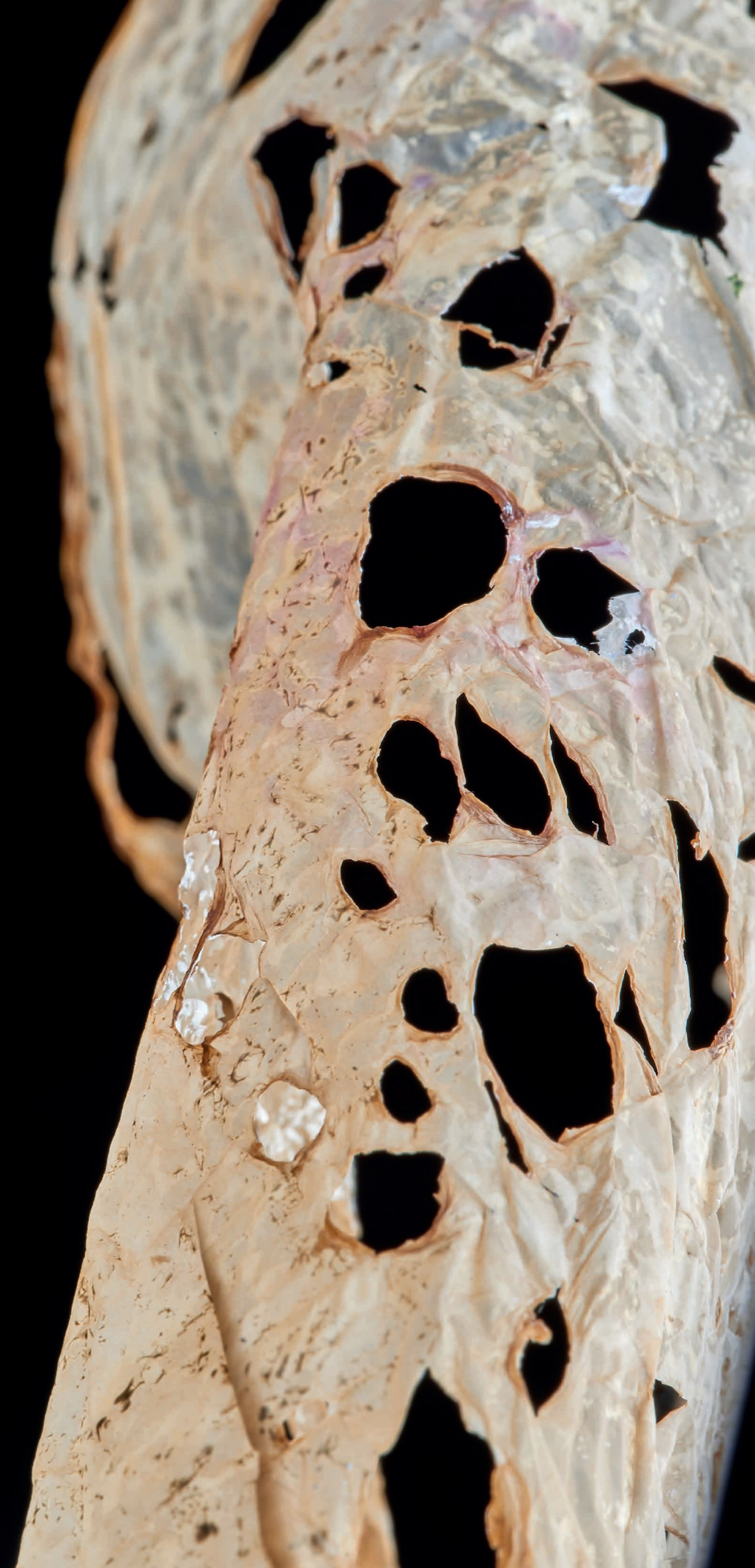
For the fragments in their custody comprise matter out of place. And the whispers of dislocation can be heard. Ghostly voices of other places, of lineages, of origins. ... What is present speaks loudly of absences, and what is absent presents itself insistently. Presence and absence unfolding out of one another. The experience of being haunted.²⁸

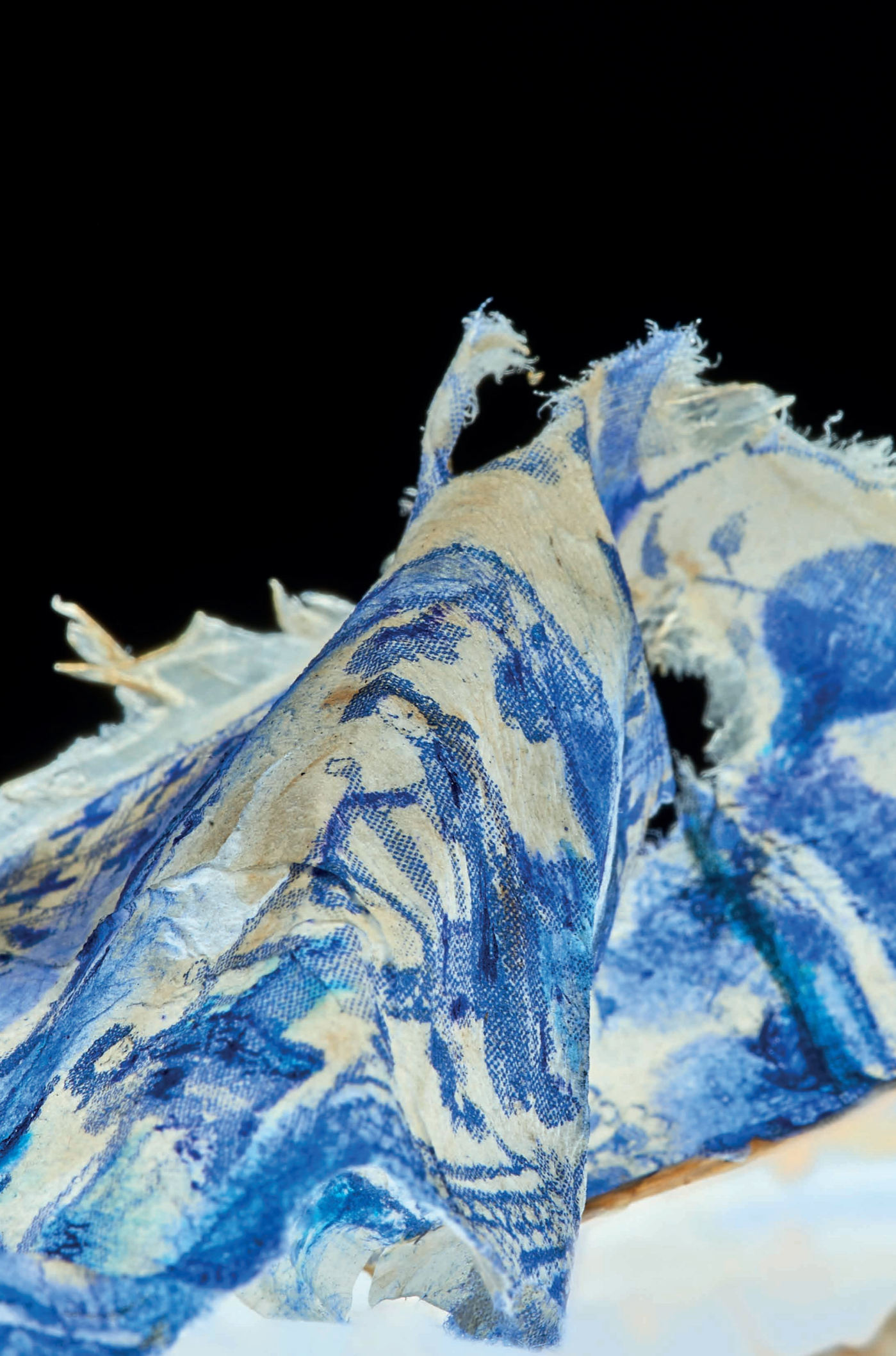
She is fascinated by the histories of the original objects from which she takes her impressions. They include items of Chinese porcelain and English bone china referencing the traditional styling and patterning found in Royal Doulton, Royal Albert, and Royal Worcester ranges. Some of the objects feature quintessential, yet ubiquitous blue and white patterns of Chinese origin, such as the willow pattern, which the British appropriated and used in their production of blue and white eighteenth century porcelain. Similarly, the Dutch replicated these patterns in their 'Delft blue' porcelain, named after the city of Delft where it was produced. She reflects on how these designs, which are still being produced, or reproduced, have become domestic 'classics' in many settler colonial locations. As such, the objects and her impressions of them resonate as spectral traces of colonial legacies that haunt domestic interiors and broader individual and collective imaginations in post-colonial contexts.

Her impressions of these objects, and to some extent, the objects themselves, could be seen as speaking to ways in which the ghosts of South Africa's colonial and apartheid pasts – what Jacques Derrida²⁹ calls "hauntologies" – continue to inhabit the present. The concept of 'hauntology' replaces the ontological notions of 'being' and 'presence' with the figure of the ghost or spectre; it is an ontology haunted by disjunct, invisible-yet-present traces of a troubled past, and a disquieting strangeness. Derrida describes hauntology as the endless return of past trauma and injustice: "If I ... speak at length about ghosts, inheritance, and generations, generations of ghosts, which is to say about certain others who are not present, nor presently living, either to us, in us, or outside us, it is in the name of justice".³⁰

Hauntological time is out of joint. Derrida describes it as time that is "disarticulated, dislocated, dislodged"; "deranged, both out of order and mad"; it is "off its hinges"; "off course, beside itself, disadjusted"; "disharmonic, discorded, or unjust"; "undone".³¹ As John Wylie says: "Aside from casting doubt on the distinction between life and death, the spectral above all confounds settled orders of past and present. Spectrality effects in place, and differentially in different placings, an unsettling complication of the linear sequence of past, present and future".³² In her impressions, these multiple temporalities are ever co-present. While they reference the past, and appear to inhabit varying states of atrophy, the impressions are suspended in the present. Yet, they are ever-changing, fluid, unfixed. They recall the disquieting spectres of colonial and apartheid that continue to inhabit the present, or what Christina Sharpe, writing in relation to the spectral presence of 'the wake', calls "that past not yet past, in the present",³³ while simultaneously pointing to haunted futures to come.

The typically English and Dutch styles of china and patterning of her impressions refer to a legacy of British and Dutch Imperialism and colonialism that can be traced to a deeply troubled history of West-East cross-cultural and economic exchange. In the seventeenth century, during the 'Dutch Golden Age' of trade, art, science and military prowess, the Netherlands was the foremost maritime and economic world power. The megacorporate





trading company, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and its sister company, the Dutch West India Company, presided over the Eastern and Western trade routes.

Spices, luxury goods and porcelain were commodities that were shipped from Asia to Europe alongside enslaved peoples, who were shipped to the colonies, and were themselves considered as commodities, fungible objects of trade. Trade in luxuries for use in the Dutch middle-class household was thus inextricable from human trade, human abjection and objectification, just as that global capitalist model remains entangled in the economy of enslavement and racial hierarchisation today.

During the eighteenth century, Britain rose to a dominant position among European trading Empires. The British commercial market extended from North America and the Caribbean to India and China, through the activities of the East India Company. In her impressions, these references to colonial Dutch and English trade are extended in the function of the objects themselves – porcelain teacups and sugar bowls are used to hold tea and sugar, which, in turn are the nutrients upon which the cellulose skins feed. Sugar and tea are commodities which are resonant with the British Empire and Imperialism and carry long histories of exploitation in its colonies. From the 1600s to 1800s, the East India Company was instrumental in spreading tea from China to India; with their plantations in India, British interests controlled tea production in the subcontinent. Tea, which was initially an upper-class drink — a sign of high society and social class — became the infusion of every social class in Great Britain throughout the eighteenth century, and has remained so, to the extent that tea drinking is often associated with British culture. The Jamaican born, African-Caribbean cultural theorist and political activist, Stuart Hall uses sugar to describe his presence in the United Kingdom as follows:

I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea ... Not a single tea plantation exists within the United Kingdom. This is the symbolization of English identity ... what does anybody in the world know about an English person except that they can't get through the day without a cup of tea? Where does it come from? Ceylon – Sri Lanka, India. That is the outside history that is inside the history of the English. There is no English history without that other history.³⁴

Tea and sugar have their own stories to tell. These stories carry hauntological resonances of British and Dutch Imperialism and colonialism – the very mechanisms that drove the enculturation of capital, set against an historical backdrop of slavery, genocide, dispossession, exploitation, displacement and precarity. In tracing the stages of capitalism in South Africa from its mercantile phases with the establishment of the Cape of Good Hope, through Dutch and British settler colonialism and apartheid, her impressions tell stories of global emerging capitalist networks, of slavery and radical displacement, of large scale land appropriation for the cultivation of commercial mono-crops, of elimination of indigenous plant and animal diversity, of corporate greed and the brutal instrumentalisation of life. They talk of pride and prejudice, of the dangerous fictions of nations, of the inventedness of identity. They speak of respectability carried on the backs of enslaved and indentured peoples. They speak of the violence of colonisation. “Every landscape is haunted by past ways of life” write Elaine Gan, Ana Tsing, Heather Swanson and Nils Bubant:³⁵ “Ghosts remind us that we live in an impossible present” ... “a time of rupture, a world haunted with the threat of extinction. Deep histories tumble in unruly graves that are bulldozed into gardens of Progress”.³⁶

Immaterial matter(s)

How the object impresses (upon) us may depend on histories that remain alive insofar as they have already left their impressions. The object may stand in for other objects or may be proximate to other objects. Feelings may stick to some objects, and slide over others.³⁷

She takes an impression of a teapot; she lays the table. These domestic acts, seemingly simple, even banal, are linked to connectedness and care, yet historically laden with the burdens of gender, race and class. Her medium is at the level of life processes. She intertwines the vital material of life with the human material of politics. Inasmuch as she is enchanted with microbial life and matter, she is also enchanted with the stories that the Wedgwood cup, the spoon and the tablecloth tell.

"The lactic acid bacteria and acetic acid bacteria components unique to a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast are usually viewed as a source of spoilage rather than a desired addition".³⁸ She uses the source of spoilage of matter to create impressions that evoke haunted vestiges, wherein memories of the dead and violent past histories linger, but, as Barad reminds us: "Hauntings are not immaterial. They are an ineliminable feature of existing material conditions".³⁹ Her work prompts us to "abandon any notion of thinking as a disembodied, cerebral, process", and instead understand it to be a "thoroughly situated, worldly and worlding, affair".⁴⁰

Leora Farber and Lize van Robbroeck, written under lockdown, 2020

Lize van Robbroeck is Professor in Visual Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Stellenbosch University.



Sources Cited

- ¹ Iovino, S and Oppermann, S. 2014. Introduction: Stories Come to Matter, in *Material Ecocriticism*, eds. S Iovino & S Oppermann. Bloomington: Indiana University Press:1-2.
- ² Barad, K. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press:ix.
- ³ Haraway, D. 2004. *The Haraway Reader*. New York/London: Routledge:6.
- ⁴ Radomska, M. 2016. *Uncontainable Life. A Biophilosophy of Bioart*. PhD thesis submitted to Linköping Studies in Arts and Science, no. 666, Department of Thematic Studies – Gender Studies:41.
- ⁵ Haraway, D. Ibid.
- ⁶ Barad, K. Ibid.
- ⁷ Palmer, H and Hunter, V. 2018. Worlding. *New Materialism Almanac*. <https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/w/worlding.html>
- ⁸ Oppermann, S. 2014. From Ecological Postmodernism to Material Ecocriticism: Creative Materiality and Narrative Agency, in *Material Ecocriticism*, eds. S Iovino & S Oppermann. Bloomington: Indiana University Press:56.
- ⁹ Ahmed, S. 2006. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press:34.
- ¹⁰ Conner, S. 2004. *The Book of Skin*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press:90.
- ¹¹ Serres, M cited in Connor, Ibid. 26.
- ¹² Ibid. 90.
- ¹³ Kristeva, J. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. L Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press:3.
- ¹⁴ Barad, K. 2007. Ibid. 151.
- ¹⁵ Radomska, M. Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Haraway, D. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham/London: Duke University Press:1.
- ¹⁷ Braidotti, R. 2015. Posthuman, All Too Human? A Cultural Political Cartography. Lecture presented at the *Inhuman Symposium*, Fridericianum, Kassel, May 25. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNJPR78DptA>
- ¹⁸ Braidotti, R. Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Braidotti, R. Ibid.
- ²⁰ Braidotti, R. Ibid.
- ²¹ Venn, C. 2010: Aesthetics, politics, identity: diasporic problematisations. *Critical Arts* 24(3), November:322.
- ²² Morrison, T. 1987. *Beloved*. New York: Alfred A Knopf:35-36.
- ²³ Freud, S. 1955 [1919]. The uncanny, in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by J Strachey. London: Hogarth:217-256.
- ²⁴ Badaroon, G. 2014. The ghost in the house: women, race, and domesticity in South Africa. *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 1:173.
- ²⁵ Badaroon, G. Ibid. 178.
- ²⁶ Barad, K. 2017. Ibid. 84.
- ²⁷ Morrison, T. Ibid.
- ²⁸ Harris, V. 2015. Hauntology, archivy and banditry: an engagement with Derrida and Zapiro. *Critical Arts* 29(1):20; 13.
- ²⁹ Derrida, J. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. P Kamuf. New York: Routledge:4.
- ³⁰ Derrida, J. Ibid. XV111.
- ³¹ Derrida, J. Ibid. 18, 22.
- ³² Wylie, J. 2007. The Spectral Geographies of W.G. Sebald. *Cultural Geographies* 14(2):172.
- ³³ Sharpe, C. 2016. *In the Wake*. Durham: Duke University Press:13.
- ³⁴ Hall, S. 1991. Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities, in Hall, S. *Essential essays*, Vol 2: Identity and Diaspora. Duke University Press:48-49.
- ³⁵ Gan, E, Tsing, A, Swanson, H and Bubandt, N. 2017. Introduction, Haunted Landscapes of the Anthropocene, in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, eds. A Tsing, H Swanson, E Gan & N Bubandt. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: G2.
- ³⁶ Gan et al. Ibid. G6.
- ³⁷ Ahmed, S. Ibid. 8.
- ³⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SCOBY>
- ³⁹ Barad, K. 2017. No Small Matter: Mushroom Clouds, Ecologies of Nothingness, and Strange Topologies of Spacetime-mattering, in Gan et al. Ibid. G107.
- ⁴⁰ Van Dooren, T. 2018. Environmental Humanities, in *Companion to Environmental Studies*, eds. N Castree, M Hulme & J Proctor. London: Routledge:439.

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

2020 *intimate presences/affective absences (or, the snake within)*. FADA Gallery, University of Johannesburg.

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)

Website: www.leorafarber.co.za
Email: leoraf@uj.ac.za
Instagram: [leoranfarber](https://www.instagram.com/leoranfarber)
Twitter: [@Leorafarber](https://twitter.com/Leorafarber)
Facebook: 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 for the production of this catalogue is gratefully acknowledged.





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/viad.fada](https://www.facebook.com/viad.fada)

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