

Solo Exhibition THELMA VAN RENSBURG

“UNEASY BODIES”

“The death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world”

~ Edgar Allen Poe

Artists Statement:

Thelma's art making process presently involves liquid mediums such as ink and watercolour and her focus is on the grotesque in female representation. She explores the female form, with a focus on female sexuality, beauty and ugliness, the gaze and the representation of women in the media.

In her current body of work, she offers a feminist critique on the representation of women in the media, where the visual image enforces the partially biased construction of femininity. The focus is on the representation of women in contemporary fashion photography and visual texts, and specifically the way in which a link is constructed between femininity and death, for example in the artwork Ophelia of Millais and the writer.

17 September 2016 @ 11h00

St Lorient Fashion & Art Gallery



St. Lorient
est. 1979

St. Lorient Fashion & Art Gallery, 492 Fehrsen Street,
Brooklyn Circle, Pretoria

www.stlorient.co.za • e-mail: stlorient@iafrica.com

fashion & art gallery
Tel: 012 460 0284

Lucy Anastasiadis of
St. Lorient Fashion & Art Gallery presents:

“UNEASY BODIES”

Solo Exhibition by Thelma Van Rensburg

“The death of a beautiful women is, unquestionably,
the most poetical topic in world”.

Edgar Allen Poe



Exhibition Venue

The Viewing Room Art Gallery @ St.Lorient

Opening

17 September 2016

Opening Speaker

Gwen Miller

Time

11h00

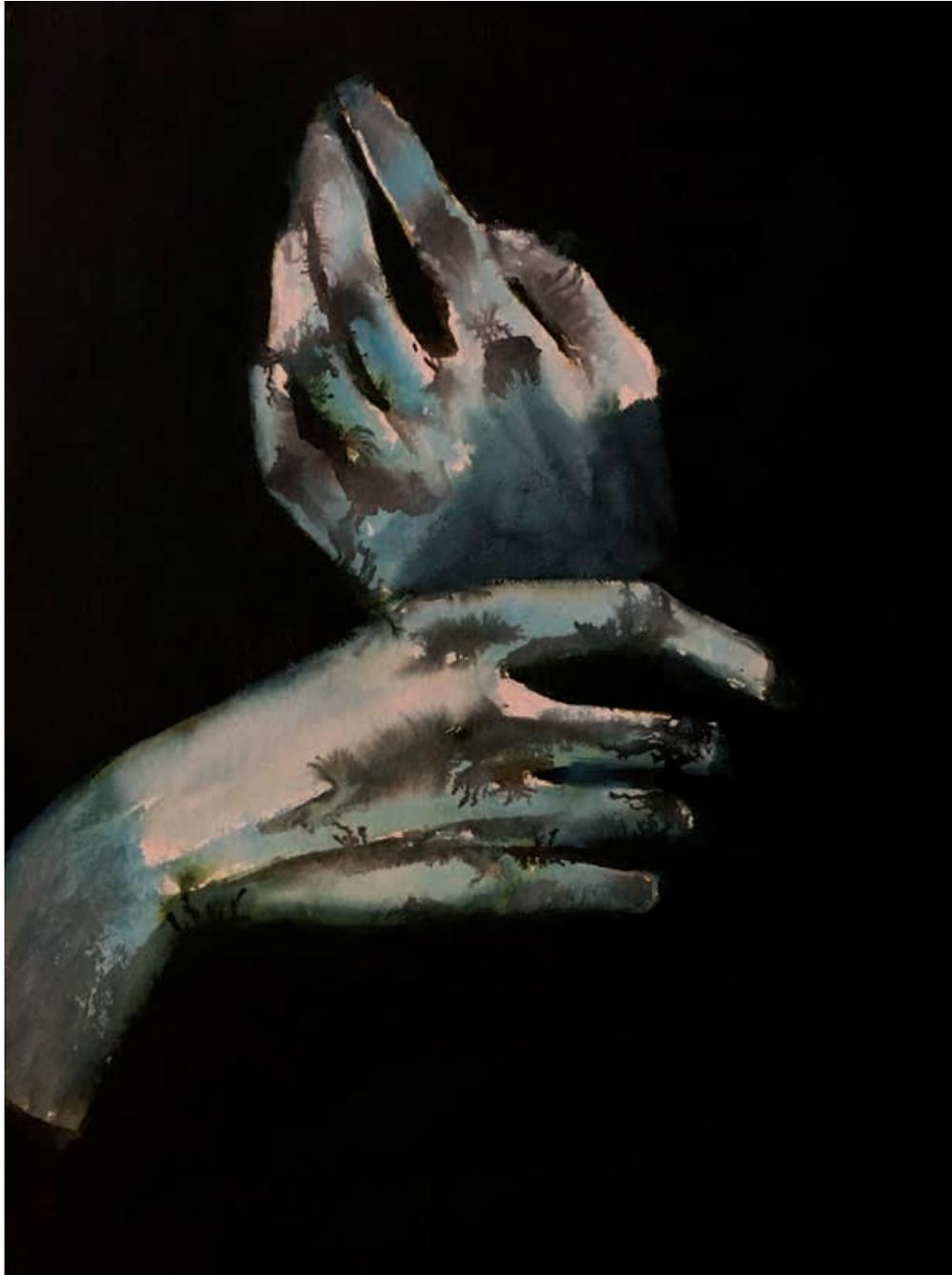


St. Lorient
est. 1979

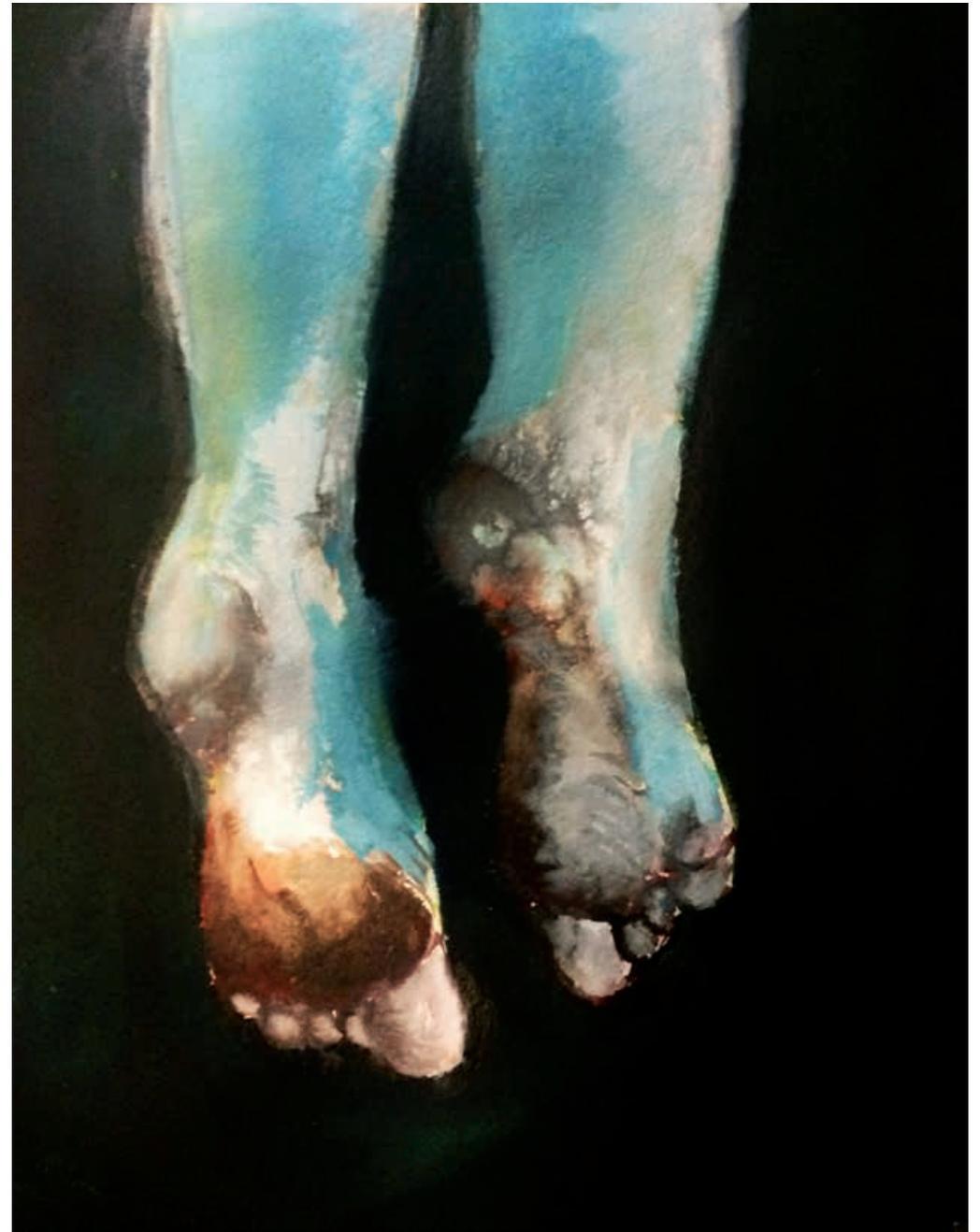
St. Lorient Fashion & Art Gallery, 492 Fehrsen Street,
Brooklyn Circle, Pretoria

www.stlorient.co.za • e-mail: stlorient@iafrica.com

fashion & art gallery
Tel: 012 460 0284



Cover page: Figure 1:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Unnuded* 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 56cm x 76m.



This page: Figure 2 and 3:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Forensic look: still waters*
(detail) 2016.
Ink on hand made paper, 41cm x 31.5cm.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iv
Artists Statement	3
Artworks	
Nameless commodity	2
Coffin of glass	11
Discarded	15
Beyond sacrifice	15
Slippage	18
Rigor of the feminine	20
Burdensome	23
Forensic look: Bloody body	24
Ophelia	29
Murky waters	30
Ambiguous death	30
Forensic look: Still waters	33
Beyond sacrifice	34
Forest	38
Biography	41
Short CV	42
Sources consulted	46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Unnuded</i> , 2015.	cover page
Figure 2: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Post mortem</i> , 2016.	i
Figure 3: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Deathly Silence</i> , 2015.	v
Figure 4: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Nameless commodity</i> , 2015.	2
Figure 5: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Nameless commodity (detail)</i> , 2015.	5
Figure 6: <i>Beymen Blender fashion concept store: Butcher shop</i> , 2010.	7
Figure 7: Guy Bourdin, 1975.	9
Figure 8: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Coffin of glass</i> , 2015.	12
Figure 9: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Discarded</i> , 2015.	15
Figure 10: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Beyond sacrifice</i> , 2015.	15
Figure 11: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Slippage</i> , 2015.	18
Figure 12: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Rigor of the feminine I</i> , 2015.	20
Figure 13: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Rigor of the feminine II</i> , 2015.	20
Figure 14: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Burdensome</i> , 2015	23
Figure 15: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Forensic look: Bloody body</i> , 2016.	24
Figure 16: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Forensic look: Bloody body</i> , 2016.	26
Figure 17: Vogue Italy, <i>Ophelia from Photo Vogue</i> , 2012.	27
Figure 18: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Ophelia</i> , 2015.	29
Figure 19: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Murky Waters</i> , 2015.	30
Figure 20: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Ambiguous death</i> , 2015.	30

Figure 21: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Forensic look: Still waters</i> , 2015.	26
Figure 22: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Beyond sacrifice</i> , 2015.	34
Figure 23: Thelma van Rensburg, <i>Forest</i> , 2015.	38

The passive reclining woman offers no threat; she is completely malleable, a dummy made of flesh. The object of gratuitous sexual violence and violation, she offers no resistance, but because of this she becomes unreal, like de Sade's libertines. As the threat of personality diminishes, her image-like quality transports her beyond the eroticism of the living to the fetishism of the inanimate object. She fits into dominant stereotypes so completely that she ceases to connote any reality apart from the images

Next page: Figure 4:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Nameless Commodity* 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 30cm x 45cm.



For centuries women have been associated with passivity, excessive corporeality, weakness, dependence and irrationality in relation to men, which has unfortunately been regarded as the norm. In certain circles, women came to be deemed as mere objects, who needed to be controlled to uphold the status quo of male supremacy, thereby dispossessing female subjectivity and embodiment (Peterson & Lupton 1996:73, Malson 1995:218, Malson 1998:108, Mulvey 2009:8).

This tendency manifests significantly in media representations of the female body thereby exerting tremendous influence on the consumption and media circulation of the female body in western culture. Susan Bordo (1993:309) argues that female bodies are subjected to a never-ending pursuit of "an elusive ideal of femininity" which ultimately creates docile female bodies: "bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, augmentation, 'improvement'". One such form of regulation is representations of the ideal female body in fashion magazines.

By means of the theories of Stuart Hall on representation, the abject body as theorised by Julia Kristeva and the grotesque body as theorised by Mikhail Bakhtin, this practice based research study critically investigates representations of the beautified female corpse in fashion magazines.

It is argued that stereotypes of female eroticism, subordination, powerlessness and passivity are at play here, traits also associated with the patriarchal notion of the epitome of femininity (Malson 1995:218, Malson 1998:108, Mulvey 2009:8). These images, I argue, clearly implicates violence in the form of abduction, rape and death, evidenced in the way the models are presented in a variety of deathly poses. It can be argued that the women in such images are voyeuristically depicted as post coital, passive victims of sexual violence, which on a whole eroticizes and fetishises domination, sexual violence and death.

Artists Statement

In the exhibition ~~Shut up and be still~~ I focused on exploring meaning through the use of fluid, changeable materials and techniques such as ink and watercolour. The designated title ~~Shut up and be still~~ has dual implications. Firstly, it indicates a defiant stance to compel the viewer to engage with the intended message of the work, which is the interrogation of the silencing and pacifying of women through the ages, established since the dawn of Eve. This is corroborated by the author Elizabeth V. Dowling's (2007:30) argument that patriarchal expectation is geared toward the silencing of women. Likewise, the author Robin Morgan (1989:108) maintains that "The majority of the population in virtually all nation-states is female, and is forced by patriarchy to obey, be silent and acquiesce".

As I have verified in the dissertation that accompanies this exhibition, male-on-female violence is central to the silencing and pacifying of women in western society, especially in cases of rape and domestic violence (Burte 2008:viii-ix)

The word *still* in the title refers to the fetishisation of the passive, lifeless female figure as discussed in Chapter One and Two of the dissertation. My body of work, through the exploration of the concurrent identification of femininity with death in western culture, encourages a dissection of these established patriarchal atrocities against women. Secondly the title ~~Shut up and be still~~ could be interpreted as the traditional gesture of respect and deliberation after a tragic event. For the viewer a moment infused with silence may evoke some contemplation in remembrance of multiple abused women personified in this exhibition.

Figure 5:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Nameless commodity* (detail), 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 35cm x 45cm.



"The death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetic topic in the world."

Edgar Allen Poe

Artist, Thelma van Rensburg has investigated the concepts of abjection and the grotesque as contrast to and feminist critique of the representations of women in the media, where the visual image enforces the partially biased construction of femininity. Her exhibition attempts to question the representation of women in contemporary fashion photography and art and specifically the way in which a historical link is constructed between femininity and death as is evident in artworks such as John Everett Millais's *Ophelia* (1851).

The words of the feminist, literary critic, Beth Ann Bassein (quoted in Carlson 1996:388) on women's association with death prompted this investigation. She states that the obsession with the beautiful dead female "have helped to perpetuate a view of women that identifies her with the most passive state occurring, that of the dead."



Figure 6:
Beymen Blender fashion concept store: *Butcher shop*, 2010.
Photograph, dimensions unknown.
Photograph by Koray Birand.
(AOTW 2010).

The fashion photograph

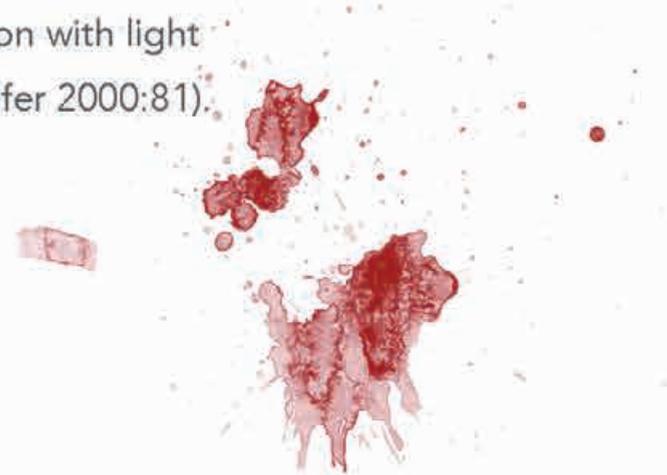
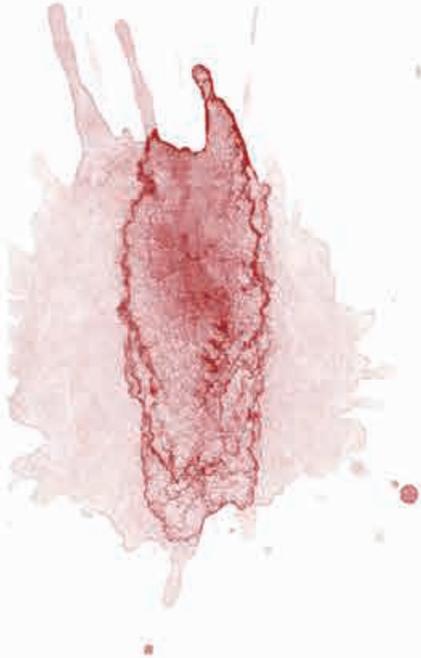
In contemporary western culture we are bombarded daily by images from the mass media such as magazines, digital media and advertising. Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (2009:9) point out that these images are intended for a variety of audiences and can produce a wide range of responses. Such images can become invested with an array of meanings and may carry immense power in influencing people's thoughts and beliefs (Sturken & Cartwright 2009:9-14). In support of this are the findings of Dr Alexandra Hendriks and Dr Michael Burgoon (2003:5) who state that continuing subjection to popular media has muted and mounting repercussions on moulding viewpoints of collective reality. Additionally, Sturken and Cartwright (2009:12) argue that people assign meaning to the material world within the cultural contexts that we engage in every day. Therefore, we fabricate the interpretation of substances by means of representation (Sturken & Cartwright 2009:12).



Figure 7:
Guy Bourdin, 1975.
Photograph. Dimension not available.
The Guy Bourdin Estate, 2014.
(Brandt 2009).

Forensic Look: Pallor Mortis

Pallor mortis is the first stage of death and occurs immediately after death in the body of a person with light skin because of lack of blood circulation (Schäfer 2000:81).



Coffin of glass

The work pictures a youthful, powdery pale, almost childlike face. Excessively contrasted to the light pink and white colours of the overall image is her raven black hair, which corresponds with the story of *Snow white*. Except, other than the beautified corpse of Snow White, the work details a stiff skeleton-like hand in pink hues next to the head of the figure. The enlarged, rigid placement of the hand emphasizes the fact that this is a dead girl, which is also visible in her barely noticeable facial features and pale complexion. As in the tale of *Ophelia*, Snow white, which is exemplified in the work, compounds the tradition of the merging of femininity and death and the comparison thereof with a passive object to be scrutinised (Bronfen 1992:65). In this respect I argue that the work emphasises the way in which the horror of female death is obscured or aggrandised in western culture (Su-Lin Wee 1997).

Next page: Figure 8:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Coffin of glass*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 22.5cm x 30cm.





Abjection

For Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror: An essay on Abjection* (1982), abjection first occurs at the point of separation from the mother, the child then enters the symbolic realm or law of the father. Abjection thus represents a revolt against that which gave us our existence (Pentony 1996:1). The abject body becomes intolerable because it leaks wastes and fluids and is in violation of the hope for a flawless and decent body (Kristeva 1982:73). Much like the grotesque body of Bakhtin the abject body is ambiguous and reminds us of our corporeal deterioration and eventual death (Covino 2004:17). Kristeva (1982:4) sees the corpse as the ultimate symbol of abjection. It fractures the boundaries between inside and outside, fluid and solid (Menninghaus 2003:374). It's the ultimate disintegration of the autonomous subject "the corpse represents fundamental pollution" (Kristeva 1982:109). In addition, Kristeva (1982:4) states:

The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us. It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules.

The abject, similar to the grotesque, thus evokes horror, which is a combination of fear and disgust (Kristeva 1982:3).

I concur with Connely (2012:4) who argues that: "[The grotesque] always represents a state of change, breaking open what we know and merging it with the unknown. As such, the one consistent visual attribute of the grotesque is that of flux."

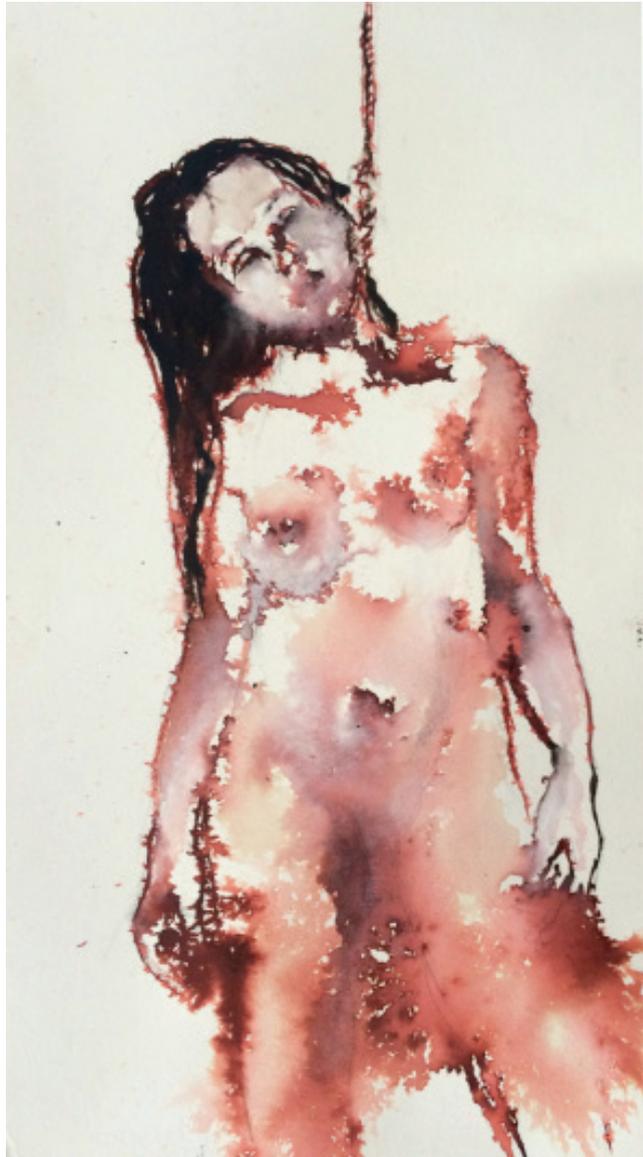


Figure 9:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Discarded*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 19cm x 35cm.



Figure 10:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Beyond sacrifice*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 45cm x 30cm.



The grotesque

Bakhtin (1995:19) draws a distinction between the 'grotesque' body and 'classical' body and interprets the 'classical' body as a contained or enclosed body. In contrast, he defines the 'grotesque' body as a body that defies the "smooth surfaces of the body and retains only its excrescences" (Bakhtin 1968:21). This body is concerned with the "lower stratum of the body" relating to abject "acts of defecation, and copulation, conception, pregnancy and birth" (Bakhtin 1968:21).

Bodily fluids and orifices are quintessential elements of the grotesque according to Bakhtin (1968:21). Elizabeth Grosz (1994:192) also conceives fluids as a marginal condition and lurking crisis to systems and order. She states that:

... corporeal flows ... attest to certain irreducible 'dirt' or disgust, a horror of the unknown or the unspecifiable that permeates, lurks, lingers and at times leaks out of the body, a testimony of the fraudulence or impossibility of the 'clean' and 'proper' (Grosz 1994:194).

The grotesque's ability to overcome the boundaries, borders and rules of the enclosed classical body is of specific significance here.

Next page: Figure 11:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Slippage*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 45cm x 30cm.





Forensic Look: Rigor Mortis

According to Scott A. Wagner in his book *Death scene investigation: A field guide* (2009:19) rigor mortis can be defined as 'the stiffening of death'. Rigor mortis is a chemical reaction, which occurs in the muscles after death. The body stiffens causing the limbs of the deceased to remain fixed in position from the moment of death. The body then remains in this position for up to thirty-six hours (Wagner 2009:20).





Figure 12 and 13:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Rigor of the feminine I and II*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 45cm x 30cm.

Rigor of the feminine

My work, Rigor of the feminine I and II (previous page), was motivated by the visual traits of rigor mortis. I aimed to achieve the unnatural peculiarities rigor mortis can take on, by depicting two figures with unnaturally clenched hands, rigidly fixed arms and the hyper extended head of the woman in Rigor of the feminine II.

I argue that the rigidity of rigor mortis acknowledges my contention on feminine angst, containment and restriction because the body becomes fixed in one position (Russo 1995:10, Foucault 1995:25-26, Brookes 1993:19). I attempt to evoke the claustrophobia of such restriction by means of formal attributes such as extreme cropping and the 'oppressive placement' of female figures in relation to the format.



Forensic Look: Livor Mortis

Livor mortis is the fourth stage of death and is the settling of blood in the lower parts of the body; for example, when the body is lying on its back the blood will settle there and will cause purple and pink discolouration of the skin. Although the parts of the body which are in direct contact with objects such as bra straps and the floor will become pale as a result of the pressure on the veins of the skin (Wagner 2009:21).





Figure 14:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Burdensome*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 20cm x 35.5cm.

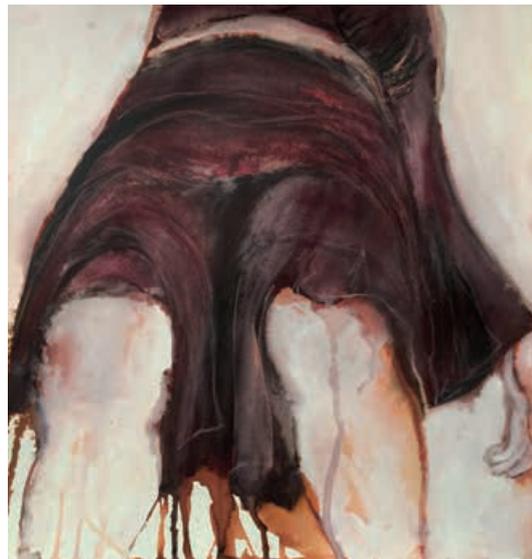
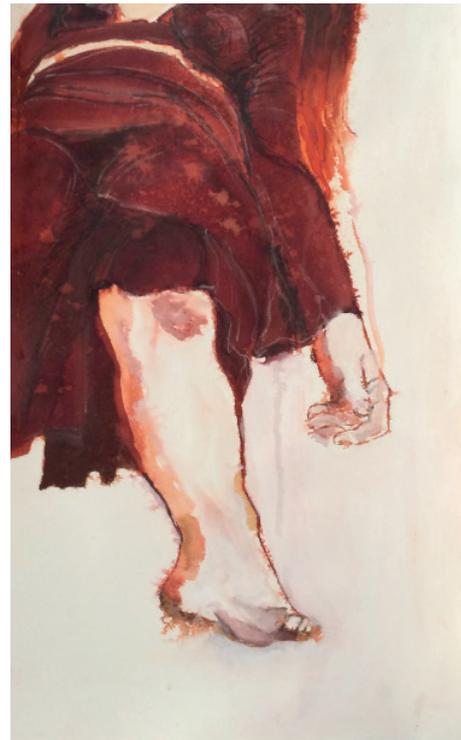


Figure 15:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Forensic look: Bloody body*, 2016.
Watercolour and ink on Fabriano paper, Sizes variable.

Ultimately, my intention was to dissolve boundaries between the aesthetic and ambiguous, thereby defying disciplining and cleansing hegemonies (Mey 2007:84). By these means I explored Kristeva's abject and Bakhtin's grotesque body as potent instrument of transgression and resistance against dominant social norms (Mey 2007:2). As a result, the viewer becomes the mediator, who bears witness to atrocities of femicide, forcing a vivid experience of violated, lifeless flesh onto the viewer, and opening avenues of questioning.



Figure 16:
Detail, *Forensic look: Bloody body*, 2016.
Ink and watercolour on paper, 35cm x 33cm.

Ophelia:

During the nineteenth century Ophelia's death scene as played out in William Shakespeare's Hamlet became a cult figure and "the single most often represented female figure of the time" (Romanska 2005:485).

This calls attention to the imposition of the connotation between women and death, which Bassein (quoted in Carlson 1996:388), states has helped eternise a vision of women that establishes her with an extreme form of passivity, namely that of the dead.



Figure 17:
Vogue Italy, *Ophelia from Photo Vogue*, 2012.
Photograph. Dimensions unavailable.
Photograph by Lialia D. Reznik.
(Vogue Italia 2012).

Revelling in the abject: The imperfect Ophelia

The work *Ophelia* refers to Hamlet's tragic heroine discussed in Chapter Two of the dissertation accompanying this catalogue. I chose Ophelia as a subject because there are plentiful references in fashion photography based on this iconic feminine corpse. Other than the beautified Ophelia depicted in fashion photographs, my work depicts an ascending body severed in half, floating upright, seemingly dissolving and decomposing into the paper.

Next page:
Figure 18:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Ophelia*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 45cm x 35cm.





Other than the beautified Ophelia depicted in fashion photographs, my work depicts an ascending body severed in half, floating upright, seemingly dissolving and decomposing into the paper. My intention was for the internal body to emerge and appear externalised, bursting with grotesque figuration and abject fluidity which is also based on found fashion photographs depicting female deaths such as Ophelia. I want to refer again to the words of Kristeva (1982:3) on abjection and the crossing of boundaries which was my conceptual intention in the above works:

These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being ... Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—cadere, cadaver ... "I" is expelled. The border has become an object.

Incontestably embodied, I argue that works such as *Deathly monument* and *Murky waters* embrace the grotesque and abject in terms of disorder, ambiguity, instability, flux and the exceeding of limits. In this regard I argue that the above works resist the totalitarian, perfected, immutable, well-defined and standardised female body of patriarchal normative structures (Shabot 2014 2014:503, Berberick 2011:2).



Above: Figure 19:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Murky Waters*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 45cm x 30cm.

Below: Figure 20:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Ambiguous death*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 24cm x 29.5cm.

Forensic Look: Venous marbling

In forensic science venous marbling or patterning is a term that refers to the tree like patterns that become visible on the skin due to blood breakdown of superficial veins and occurs in early decomposition (3-5 days) (Wagner 2009:26).



Forensic look: Still waters

Creating the work *Forensic look: Still waters*, with muse, *Ophelia* still in mind, I opted for a similar method to the work, *Forensic look: Bloody body* by depicting snap-shots of hands and feet which allude to forensic photographs of floating body parts seemingly doomed to a watery grave.

In the work, I opted for blotchy blues and greys with touches of ochre, aligned with the discolouration that occurs in the decomposition process in the body after death. I employed a method of dissolving ink and watercolour to create intricate colour patterns and drips and stains aiming to seduce the viewer into the depths of the body's fluid margins. This I contrasted with backgrounds in shades of black, creating menacing dialogues between figure and ground, thereby accentuating the deathlike, macabre and ominous atmosphere of the work. The emotive use of colour and the scattering of body parts was ultimately aimed at creating dialogue between embodiment and signification, allowing for "message and meaning" to become inseparable (Siopis in Martin 2009).



Figure 21:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Forensic look: Still waters*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, Installation view.

Patriarchal control: Female sacrifice



Figure 22:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Beyond sacrifice*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 45cm x 30cm.

The painting, *Beyond sacrifice* depicts a nude female body lying exposed over a table, referencing violence in the form of rape. The spread eagled woman also alludes to a sacrificial sensibility. On the readings of Irigaray the author Tatjana Alecsic (2013:22) argues that radical feminism situates female sacrifice as the foundation of patriarchal order. She argues that by means of male domination, normalisation and ownership of the women's bodies, women become sacrificial victims. Cixous (2000:165) similarly denounces female sacrifice as the cornerstone of the patriarchal social system.

Unlike the placated sensationalist fashion photographs discussed in the dissertation accompanying this catalogue, the works, *Beyond sacrifice* and *Nameless commodity* was intended to be alarming, startling and shocking. In addition, I argue that in both these works the female body exemplifies what Bronfen (1992:141) describes as "signify[ing] a moment of control and power".

These images speak of the aftermath of violent deaths and are suggestive of torture and perhaps rape, befalling many women at the hands of men as asserted by Williams in his report, *Gender violence concerns all of us* (2013).

It was my intention to draw the viewer in and to prompt dialogue regarding such atrocities. An Analysis by Frederick Burwick (1990:137) on the grotesque's effect on the viewer is of value here. He argues that, "the grotesque results from the ironic tensions of form vs. content, illusion vs. delusion" affectively aggravating such responses as "attraction and repulsion, participation and rejection" in the viewer. The impression of the grotesque he states "requires a metonymic game with cause and effect". This assumption Burwick (1990:137) substantiates with the following words:

Thus we look at the work even while we enter into it; we maintain aesthetic distance outside the work even while we feel ourselves implicated in the conditions represented inside. When delusion is thematized in a work of art, the viewer is able to engage an illusion of delusion.

The viewer is therefore consciously aware of his or her uncompelled cooperation in the effects of the work. It is anticipated that the imitation of the female corpse in my work then becomes an encounter with the viewer, an encounter of representation which releases the imprisoned female body from her perfected cave and from futile images, infuriating reflections and mocking alteration (Irigaray 1974:179). In conclusion, it is thus evidently a game of transgression and subversion as Russo asserts (1995:65).



Forensic Look: Decomposition

Decomposition occurs after rigor and livor mortis. The decomposing body progressively changes from a green discolouration in the abdominal region to swelling and bloating of the body (Wagner 2009:26). The environment plays a major role in the category of decomposition and degree at which it advances (Dix & Graham 2000:10). In the course of the bloating phase bodily fluids may ooze from the body's orifices. Eventually the body's soft tissue will degenerate into a mass of indistinguishable tissue (Dix & Graham 2000:10).



Forest



Figure 23:
Thelma van Rensburg, *Forest*, 2015.
Ink on Fabriano paper, 45cm x 55cm.

Another work that hints at rigor mortis and the decomposing body is *Forest*. Composed of four parts, the work is presented as a grid revealing four women in hauntingly dark outdoor locations. The figures were situated in different contorted positions in order to mimic cases of rigor mortis. Branches and soil surround the figures, hinting at victims found in remote locations. Other than the ornamented bodies depicted in the fashion magazines my work, *Forest* reveals bodies rendered in hues of blue and grey, aligned with the decomposition process which occurs in the body after death. The contorted bodies in the work *Forest* with their heads obliterated by black and white ink, references the oozing of fluids, which occurs at the bloating phase of decomposition. The work indulges in the discomforting nature of death and bodily fluids and attests to Grosz (1994:193-4) and Kristeva (1982:3), who regard fluids as a marginal condition and lurking crisis to systems and order (Grosz 1994:192). Grosz (1994:192) states that:

corporeal flows ... attest to certain irreducible 'dirt' or disgust, a horror of the unknown or the unspecifiable that permeates, lurks, lingers and at times leaks out of the body, a testimony of the fraudulence or impossibility of the 'clean' and 'proper'.

The work, *Forest* endeavours, to subvert the enclosed body of the male controlling gaze discussed in Chapter Two. This is also implicated by the window format of the work, which links to gaze as theorized by theorised Mulvey (1975:4) and Berger (1972:64).

It could be argued that the mediums and materials used and approach taken by me in the body of work *Shut up and be still*, reflect and represent a forensic interestedness in the unrepresentable in representation, thus representation that fails toward formlessness and oblivion, but also extrasensory awareness (Elkin 2008:xv-xvi).

Biography

Thelma van Rensburg is South African by birth (1969). She holds B.A Honours degrees in Physical education and Psychology. In 2004 she decided to pursue art as a full time career and received her B.Tech degree in Fine Arts at Tshwane University of Technology in 2007. She has undertaken numerous research trips and travelled extensively to broaden her knowledge of art.

Since graduating in 2007, she has participated in four solo exhibitions and numerous group exhibitions throughout South Africa. Her work has featured in prestigious competitions in South Africa such as Sasol New Signatures, Thami Mnyeale Fine Arts awards and the Sanlam Vuleka Arts competition in South Africa.

Her work is in art collections in Holland, France, South-Africa and Germany. She has also exhibited alongside well-known South African artists such as Claudette Shreuders, Jan van der Merwe, Asha Zero and Diane Victor.

Short CV

QUALIFICATIONS:

1990. Ba. Human movement studies degree at the University of Pretoria

1992. Ba. Hons. Recreation degree at the University of Pretoria

2000. Ba. Hons Psychology degree at UNISA

2007. Btech. Fine Arts degree at Thswane University of Technology,
completed Cum Laude

2013. Ba. Hons. Fine Arts at the of Pretoria (non-degree purposes)
completed Cum Laude

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

April 2016: "Poetic death"

Art Lovers Gallery, Pretoria.

August 2014: "Fragments of unbecoming"

Art Lovers Gallery, Pretoria.

March 2009: "Masquerade"

Rust-En-Vrede Gallery, Cape Town.

September 2009: "Seductress in distress"

Kunsthuse Gallery, Cape Town.

December 2008-March 2009: " Layers of Illusion."

Exhibition of digital works and paintings: MAP (Modern Art Projects) Gallery in Graskop,
Mpumulanga, South-Africa.

Selected group exhibitions:

- *SOIL(ED)*, Masters exchange exhibition, Van Wouw House, Pretoria, July 2016
- *Us and I*, Masters exchange exhibition, UCT Gallery Cape Town, August 2015.
- *Map of the new art*, Imago Mundi- Luciano Benetton collection, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore, Venezia.
- *Transforming the negative into positive through art*, Trent gallery, Pretoria. Curator: Anna Liebenberg, June 2014.
- Salon 1, Melville, Johannesburg. Curated by Andrea Rolfes and Ann-Marie Tully, July 2014
- *Thami Mnjele Fine Art Awards exhibition*, Kempton Park, September 2014
- *Affordable Art fair*, Fried Contemporary Gallery, Pretoria. Curator: Elfrieda Dreyer, March 2013.
- Invited to participate in the *Benetton Art project, Small Canvas Project* to be accessioned into the Luciano Benetton Collection, which were shown nationally, and internationally at three venues, including the Venice Biennale of 2015.
- Turbine Art Fair, Art Space Gallery, Curated by Tereza Lizamore, Turbine Hall, Johannesburg, 2013.
- *Grotesque femininities*, for the fourth year Fine Arts exhibition titled *Collective Spaces*, University of Pretoria, 2013.
- *5 Artists*, St Lorient Fashion and Art gallery, Pretoria 2012
- *MAP (Modern Art Projects) Retrospective*, U.J gallery, Johannesburg University, 2011.
- *Bodies in Transition*, Fried Contemporary Gallery, Pretoria, 2010.

Residencies:

- Transart Summer Residency at Uferstudios, Berlin, Germany, 24 July to 15 August, 2015.

Publications:

- Publication in *A Look away Magazine* May 2010.
- *International Contemporary Artists Volume 1*, by I.C.A Publishing 2011.
<http://www.incoartists.com/>
- *International Contemporary Masters Volume 5*, 2011 by World Wide Art Books. <http://www.internationalcontemporarymasters.com/artists.html>
- Publication in *International Dictionary of Artist 2011* by World Wide Art books.
- Selected for "Selected Creative's " for One Small Seed magazine issue 22, 2011.
- Publication in Art Now Books- *RE-IMAGINE, new contemporary art 2011*.
<http://www.artnowonline.com>
- Publication in *The Pulse of Mixed Media: Secret and passions of a 100 Artists revealed*, 2012.
"Starry Eyes", by North Light books.
- Publication in *Important World Artists Volume 1*.

Competitions:

- Finalist, *For the love of Arts Competition*, Art Lovers Gallery, Pretoria, 2015.
- Finalist in the *For the love of arts Competition*, Art Lovers gallery, Pretoria, 2014.
- Entry into Beers Lambert Competition: *Contemporary Visions IV*, 2013
- Entry into Sanlam National Portrait Awards, 2013.
- Finalist in Thami Mnjele Fine Art Awards - Kempton Park, Gauteng, 2010, 2011.
- 2nd COLLAGE Annual Competition-Online Exhibition 2011 – Awarded Diploma of Excellence
<http://www.artaddiction.net/Collage/collage.htm>
- Finalist in Ekurhuleni competition, Kempton Park, Gauteng, South-Africa, 2009.
- Finalist in Sanlam Vuleka competition, Cape Town, 2009.
- Finalist in Sasol New Signatures competition, Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa, 2007

Sources consulted

Alecsic, T. 2013. *The sacrificed body: Balkan community building and the fear of freedom*. Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press.

AOTW. 2010. *Ads of the world: Blender concepts store: Butcher shop*. [O]. Available: http://adsoftheworld.com/media/print/blender_concept_store_butcher_shop
Accessed 21 November 2015.

Ash, J & Wilson, E (eds). 1993. *Chic thrills: A fashion reader*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bakhtin, M. 1968. *Rabelais and his world*. Translated by H Iswolsky. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Berberick, SN. 2011. The objectification of women in mass media: Female self-image in misogynist culture. *The New York sociologist* 5:1-15. The online Journal of the New York State Sociological Association. [O]. Available: <http://newyorksociologist.org/11/Berberick2011.pdf>
Accessed 14 August 2016.

Berger, J. 1972. *Ways of seeing*. London: Penguin.

Bordo, S (ed). 1993. *Unbearable weight: Feminism, western culture and the body*. California: University of California Press.

Brandt, S (dir). 2009. *When the sky fell down: The myth of Guy Bourdin*. [Film]. Visionary films. [O]. Available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yr-AwMGGA-g>
Accessed 27 May 2015.

Bronfen, E. 1992. *Over her dead body: death femininity and the aesthetic*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Brookes, R. 1993. Fashion photography. The double page spread: Helmut Newton, Guy Bourdin, & Deborah Turbeville, in *Chic thrills: A fashion reader*, edited by J Ash & E Wilson. Berkeley: University of California Press:17-24.

Burte, A. 2008. Breaking the culture of silence: Uniting to fight domestic violence. Centre for enquiry into health and allied themes. Mumbai. Survey no 2804 & 2805.[O]. Available:
<http://www.cehat.org/go/uploads/Library/68.pdf>
Accessed 14 August 2016.

Burwick, F. 1990. The grotesque: Illusion vs. Delusion, in *Aesthetic illusion: Theoretical and historical approaches*, edited by F Burwick & P Walter. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter:122-137.

Burwick, F & Walter, P (eds). 1990. *Aesthetic illusion: Theoretical and historical approaches*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Carlson, EW. 1996. *A companion to Poe studies*. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Cixous, H. 2000. Laugh of Medusa, in *The Routledge language and cultural theory reader*, edited by Burke, L & Crowley, T. New York: Routledge:161-173

Connely, FS. 2012. *The grotesque in western art and culture: The image at play*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Covino, DC. 2004. *Amending the abject body: Aesthetic makeovers in medicine and culture*. New York: The State University of New York Press.

Dix, J. & Graham, M. 2000. *Time of death, decomposition and identification: An atlas*. New York: CRC Press.

Dowling, EV. 2007. *Taking away the pound: Women, theology and the parable of the pounds in the gospel of Luke*. London: T&T Clark international.

Foucault, M. 1995. [1977]. *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Translated by A Sheridan. New York: Random House.

Gilbert, PK. 2012. *Department of English: Pamela Gilbert*. [O]. Available:
<http://www.english.ufl.edu/faculty/pgilbert/index.html>
Accessed 4 May 2016.

Grosz, EA. 1994. *Volatile bodies: Toward a corporeal feminism*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Hendriks, A. & Burgoon, M. 2003. The relationship between fashion magazine consumption and body satisfaction in women: Who is most at risk of influence? Paper represented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association. San Diego, CA.

Irigaray, L. 1974. *Speculum of the other woman*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kristeva, J. 1982. *Powers of horror: An essay on abjection*. Translated by LS Roudiez. New York: Columbia University.

Malson, HM. 1995. *Anorexia nervosa: Discourses of gender, subjectivity and the body*. Doctoral thesis, University of London. London.

Malson, HM. 1998. *The thin woman: Feminism, post-structuralism, and the social psychology of anorexia nervosa*. New York: Routledge.

- Martin, M. 2009. *Art Africa: Penny Siopis*. [O]. Available:
<http://artsouthafrica.com/archives/archived-reviews/213-main-archive/archived-reviews/1781-penny-siopis-7.html>
Accessed 4 May 2016.
- Menninghaus, W. 2003. *Disgust: The theory and history of a strong emotion*. New York: SUNY Press. Mey, K. 2007. *Art & obscenity*. London: I.B Tauris.
- Mulvey, L. 1975. Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Screen* 16(3):6-18. [O]. Available:
<http://screen.oxfordjournals.org/content/16/3/6.full.pdf+html>
Accessed 23 August 2016.
- Mulvey, L. 2009. *Visual and other pleasures (Language discourse, Society)*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Morgan, R. 1989. *The demon lover: The roots of terrorism*. New York: Washington square press.
- Peterson, A & Lupton, D. 1996. *The new public health: Discourses, knowledges, strategies*. London: Sage.
- Pentony, S. 1996. How Kristeva's theory of abjection works in relation to the fairy tale and postcolonial novel: Angela Carter's the 'bloody chamber', and Keri Hulme's 'The bone people'. *Deep South* 2(3). [O]. Available:
<http://www.otago.ac.nz/deepsouth/vol2no3/pentony.html>
Accessed 12 April 2014.
- Romanska, M. 2005. Ontology and eroticism: Two bodies of Ophelia, *Women's studies. An interdisciplinary journal* 34(6):485-503. [O]. Available:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00497870500277914#abstract>
Accessed 6 September 2015.
- Russo, M. 1995. *The female grotesque: Risk, excess and modernity*. New York: Routledge.

Schäfer, AT. 2000. Colour measurements of pallor mortis. *International journal of legal medicine* 113(2):81-83.

[O]. Available:

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2FPL00007713>

Accessed 16 May 2016.

Shabot, SC. 2014. Philosophy as grotesque: The case of Nietzsche. *Filozofia* 69(6):503-513.

Sturken, M & Cartwright, L. 2009. *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture*. New York: Oxford.

Su-Lin Wee, V. 1997. The most poetic subject in the world. *Kinema: A journal for film and audio visual media*. [O].

Available:

<http://www.kinema.uwaterloo.ca/article.php?id=284&feature>

Accessed 22 April 2015.

Vogue Italia. 2012. *Photo Vogue: Ophelia*. [O]. Available:

<http://www.vogue.it/en/people-are-talking-about/art-photo-design/2012/01/ophelia-from-photovogue#ad-image157542>

Accessed 12 August 2016.

Wagner, SA. 2009. *Death scene investigation: A field guide*. Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis.

Williams, P. 2013. Gender violence concerns all of us. *The South Africa Government news agency* 27 February.

[O]. Available:

<http://www.sanews.gov.za/south-africa/gender-violence-concerns-all-us>

Accessed 4 September 2015.

~~Shut up and be still~~

A collection of ink works for the
degree in Masters of Arts at the
University of Pretoria.

THELMA VAN RENSBURG

Date: 26 August 2016

Venue: Anton Van Wouw House

Clark street, Brooklyn.

Time: 18:30



CONTACT

thelmav@lantic.net

082 858 3958

www.art.co.za/thelmavanrensborg

Facebook: [Thelma van Rensburg//Visual Artist](#)