

12-4-2006

# Janine Antoni: Finding a Room of Her Own

Stacie M. Lindner

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/art\\_design\\_theses](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/art_design_theses)



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Lindner, Stacie M., "Janine Antoni: Finding a Room of Her Own." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2006.  
[https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/art\\_design\\_theses/9](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/art_design_theses/9)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Art and Design Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gsu.edu).

JANINE ANTONI: FINDING A ROOM OF HER OWN

by

STACIE M. LINDNER

Under the Direction of Susan Richmond

ABSTRACT

Janine Antoni's object- and performance-based works draw from multiple influences including feminism and conceptualism, and in these works the artist has fashioned an investigation of the self through the examination of the mother/child dyad, creating a more than fourteen-year body of work about these relationships that explore the implications of feminine imagery. Antoni's works are an effort to distinguish her body as a feminine subject-object, but also to identify with as well as separate herself from the mother. While she is a conceptual artist, Antoni puts great emphasis on materiality. For her, the concept defines itself within the materials, and it is the process of the making that interests her most, empowering what is traditionally overlooked, forgotten, or disempowered. As she alternately separates from and connects with the mother and the foremothers of the artistic heritage that have surely contributed to establishing this identity, Antoni allows new images of the female to be made visible in a culture where they have traditionally been lacking.

INDEX WORDS: Janine Antoni, Body art, Conceptual art, Feminist art, Installation art, Performance art, Postmodernism, Self-portrait, Gender, Identity, Mother/child dyad, Object Relations

JANINE ANTONI: FINDING A ROOM OF HER OWN

by

STACIE M. LINDNER

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2006

Copyright by  
Stacie M. Lindner  
2006

JANINE ANTONI: FINDING A ROOM OF HER OWN

by

STACIE M. LINDNER

Major Professor: Susan Richmond  
Committee: Maria P. Gindhart  
Nancy Floyd

Electronic Version Approved

Office of Graduate Studies  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Georgia State University  
December 2006

*For Our Mothers*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper could not have been possible without the support of the many people who have provided me with their guidance and encouragement. Foremost are the faculty at Georgia State University whom I've had the pleasure and privilege of working with these last few years. Professor Cathy Byrd introduced me to Janine Antoni on a gallery visit in September, 2003, and I thank her for arranging that fateful excursion. Most especially I'd like to thank my advisor Dr. Susan Richmond, and my committee members Dr. Maria Gindhart and Professor Nancy Floyd. Notably, it was Dr. Richmond's seminar on feminist art in which this paper had its origins; Dr. Gindhart later encouraged me to pursue the project and present it at the Southeastern College Art Conference in 2005; and an assistantship with Professor Floyd provided much-needed writing inspiration. All three have provided counsel, scholarship, and friendship, and I owe them a debt of gratitude. I thank my family and friends without whose encouragement I could not have persevered. To my niece, Chloe Hanson, I press my hopes for the next generation of strong, creative women. I extend my appreciation and thanks to my colleagues at the High Museum of Art for being so supportive of my endeavors. Above all, I would like to thank the artist herself, Janine Antoni, for having created, and for continuing to create, a body of work that is thoughtful, inspiring, smartly amusing, and full of grace. The work and my investigations into it have meant a great deal to me, and I am grateful to have had the experience.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
CHAPTER	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. HERITAGE.....	10
2. ALL ABOUT THE MOTHER.....	43
3. AND DAD, TOO.....	92
CONCLUSION.....	106
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	112



## LIST OF FIGURES

1.1	Janine Antoni, <i>Loving Care</i> , 1993. . . . .	29
1.2	Mierle Laderman Ukeles, <i>Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance: Outside</i> , 1973. . . . .	30
1.3	Carolee Schneemann, <i>Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions</i> , 1963. . . . .	31
1.4	Carolee Schneemann, <i>Meat Joy</i> , 1964. . . . .	31
1.5	Carolee Schneemann, <i>Interior Scroll</i> , 1975. . . . .	32
1.6	Hans Namuth, Jackson Pollock painting <i>Number 32</i> , Summer 1950. . . . .	33
1.7	Yves Klein, <i>Anthropometry</i> , 1960. . . . .	34
1.8	Ana Mendieta, <i>Silueta</i> , 1976. . . . .	35
1.9	Janine Antoni, <i>Gnaw</i> , 1992. . . . .	36
1.10	Janine Antoni, <i>Lipstick/Phenylethylamine Display</i> , 1992. . . . .	37
1.11	Donald Judd, <i>Untitled</i> , 1968. . . . .	38
1.12	Eva Hesse, <i>Accession II</i> , 1967. . . . .	39
1.13	Eleanor Antin, <i>Carving: A Traditional Sculpture</i> , 1972. . . . .	40
1.14	Hannah Wilke, <i>S.O.S., Starification Object Series</i> , 1974. . . . .	41
1.15	Bourgeois, Louise, <i>The Destruction of the Father</i> , 1974. . . . .	42
2.1	Janine Antoni, <i>Momme</i> , 1995. . . . .	76
2.2	Janine Antoni, <i>Eureka</i> , 1993. . . . .	77
2.3	Janine Antoni, <i>Eureka</i> , 1993, detail. . . . .	78
2.4	Janine Antoni, <i>2038</i> , 2000. . . . .	79

2.5	Janine Antoni, <i>Lick and Lather</i> , 1993. ....	80
2.6	Janine Antoni, <i>Wean</i> , 1989-1990. ....	81
2.7	Janine Antoni, <i>Coddle</i> , 1998. ....	82
2.8	Janine Antoni, <i>Saddle</i> , 2000. ....	83
2.9	Janine Antoni, <i>Cradle</i> , 1999. ....	84
2.10	Janine Antoni, <i>Umbilical</i> , 2000. ....	85
2.11	Janine Antoni, <i>Moor</i> , 2001. ....	86
2.12	Janine Antoni, <i>Mary, Star of the Sea</i> , 1999-2000. ....	87
2.13	Piero della Francesca, Polyptych of the Misericordia, 1445-1462. ....	88
2.14	Janine Antoni, <i>Touch</i> , 2002. ....	89
2.15	Janine Antoni, <i>To Draw a Line</i> , 2003. ....	90
2.16	Janine Antoni, <i>To Draw a Line</i> , 2003, detail. ....	91
3.1	Janine Antoni, <i>Ready or Not, Here I Come</i> , 1994. ....	102
3.2	Janine Antoni, <i>Cast-Off</i> , 1996. ....	103
3.3	Janine Antoni, <i>Cast-Off</i> , 1996, detail. ....	104
3.4	Janine Antoni, <i>Mom and Dad</i> , 1994. ....	105

## Introduction

*I work differently from a lot of conceptual artists who begin their process with an idea: I begin with the idea of an experience I want to give myself. The meaning reveals itself to me through the experience, through the process.*<sup>1</sup>

Janine Antoni (born 1964) is a conceptual artist who puts great emphasis on materiality. For her, the concept will define itself within the materials, and it is the process of the making that interests her most. The artist empowers what is traditionally overlooked, forgotten, or disempowered: the handmade, the laborious, the time-consuming, the meditative, and her work is sometimes surprising and often illuminating. If one is familiar with Antoni's work, it is usually *Loving Care*, first created in 1992, in which she mopped the floor of a gallery with her own hair dipped in hair dye, or her piece for the 1993 Whitney Biennial, *Gnaw*, for which she constructed and displayed two 600-pound cubes, one of chocolate and one of lard, having 'gnawed' and chewed on them. These somewhat sensationalized and seemingly obsessive and unrelated pieces inaugurated for the public the artist's investigations into how everyday bodily activities achieve cultural significance, and they form several conceptual threads that become interwoven throughout her artworks. By displaying the gnawed-on sculptures as relics of her having been there, Antoni explores the tension caused by the absence of her own feminine body. The artist also subverts artistic technique and art historical tradition, as in *Loving Care*'s parody of the masculinist gestural stroke of the Abstract Expressionists and in the alternative way she 'carves' her *Gnaw* sculptures.

---

<sup>1</sup> Laura Cottingham, "Janine Antoni: Biting Sums Up My Relationship to Art History," *Flash Art* 26, no. 171 (Summer 1993): 105.

In exploring her artistic heritage, Antoni has acknowledged the works of many women artists of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s as having been influential and historically important, among them Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse, Ana Mendieta, and Hannah Wilke. In Chapter 1 I will explore these artists' work as well as that of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Carolee Schneemann, and Eleanor Antin, in relation to Antoni's. I will demonstrate how these women artists create a matrilineage and, using first *Loving Care* and then *Gnaw*, show how their concerns with the body, female beauty, identity, and constructions of femininity, as well as their methods of appropriation and questions of authorship, are all pertinent to Antoni's work. I will also include iconic male artists such as Jackson Pollock, Yves Klein, and Donald Judd in the discussion to demonstrate how both masculinist technique and patriarchal culture are factored into Antoni's artistic heritage.

Antoni's object- and performance-based works draw from multiple influences including feminism and conceptualism, and in these works the artist has fashioned an investigation of the self through the examination of the mother/child dyad, creating a more than fourteen-year body of work about these relationships that explore the implications of feminine imagery. Antoni's works are an effort to distinguish her body as a feminine subject-object, but also to identify with as well as separate herself from the mother. In Chapter 2 I will explore the progression of this mother/child relationship which Antoni has produced in a thematical, logical, but non-chronological manner. Interweaving the photographic and sculptural with the performance-based, these works are concerned with the multi-faceted bonds inherent to the mother/child dyad and, more specific to the artist, the mother/daughter relationship. Tracing her own early life, Antoni has recreated her mother's pregnancy in *Momme*, 1995; imagery of the womb and birth in

*Eureka*, 1993, and *Saddle*, 2000; nursing and weaning in *2038*, 2000, and *Wean*, 1989-90; nurturing in *Coddle*, 1998, *Lick and Lather*, 1993, and *Cradle*, 1999; several works that invoke the complexities of separation anxiety, including *Wean*, *Umbilical*, 2000, *Moor*, 2001, and *Mary, Star of the Sea*, 1999; and further child development as represented by *Touch*, 2002, and *To Draw a Line*, 2003. These works demonstrate the connections between the mother's nurturing and the child's need, and for both, the anxiety that is inherent in separation from the other. Antoni also investigates these relationships via interpretations of religious themes and other cultural issues. Many of the works utilize clear references to Biblical themes, such as the Annunciation, Creation, Transfiguration, and the Fall. Indeed, the Virgin Mary figures prominently in many of Antoni's works and the artist often draws upon imagery and mythology of the Virgin to enrich her investigations into the mother/child relationship. By creating/performing the body and its development from its earliest stages to that of the living, breathing, creative being, Antoni has produced an oeuvre worthy of visual, critical, and theoretical examination. And in so doing, Antoni challenges ideas of femininity, taking objects and actions from daily life that are easily identifiable as cultural and gender signifiers, calling them into question, and re-signifying them for her own use.

This forging of an identity, this conceptualization of the artist's life from its earliest state, and her bond with the mother who bore her, is one that needs further examination. Motherhood and child-rearing are usually viewed as a given for women, with other careers deemed secondary options and priorities. The bonds of motherhood, and the emotional and physical aspects of those bonds, are not generally looked at as rich fodder for art; indeed, they are not given much importance in society and we must

question why. In a 1976 article, “The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: European and American Women’s Body Art,” Lucy Lippard did just that, and noted, “No women dealing with their own bodies and biographies have introduced pregnancy or childbirth as a major image.”<sup>2</sup> Of course, Mary Kelly would answer that call in her monumental work *Post-Partum Document, 1973-1979*, initially exhibited in 1977, which, in its exhibition of the relics of the artist’s child’s first stages of life, examined the mother/child relationship and forced the acknowledgment of motherhood as a worthy subject of art.

Why wouldn’t the idea of the most important thing a society can do—perpetuating the species—be as valuable as a history painting that commemorates a battle? Why isn’t the identity of woman and mother as important as man and army general? Too, why has motherhood been traditionally shown as an idealized state of peaceful contentedness, when in reality it also includes discontent, confusion, and loss? Motherhood is a much-needed topic of exploration of the feminine in art and visual culture, a topic that society usually ignores in favor of more accepted, sexualized imagery, perpetuating traditional power structures through that ever-present Freudian symbol, the phallus, and women’s said ‘lack’ of such.

All of this speaks to the umbrella of postmodernism, as it rejects the notion that art can communicate universal issues across time and space. This deconstruction of the representation of the feminine is very much a postmodern idea—nothing’s new and, as subjectivity is an undeniable fact, nothing’s ‘true.’ But what is new and offers a new interpretation of the true is how it’s re-presented from a female perspective, a female voice, a female body. It is the unique that fascinates us, the small moment or concept that

---

<sup>2</sup> Lucy R. Lippard, “The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: European and American Women’s Body Art,” in *The Pink Glass Swan: Selected Essays on Feminist Art* (New York: New Press, 1995), 112; originally printed in *Art in America* 64, no. 3 (May-June 1976): 73-81.

reflects something new or overlooked. The unique voice of the artist communicates a fresh perception and points out that which we've failed to notice, sometimes offering an empathetic means which either reinforces our way of thinking or presents us with an alternative view. The feminist voice also offers another viewpoint: that of the female artist, an under-acknowledged perspective that has the potential to speak to the majority of the population that is grossly under-represented in the exhibiting art world. Antoni turns the eyes of the subject—herself—on the body of the object—herself—and reveals what it looks like when a woman looks at a woman. Traditionally, the female has been the object of a male gaze, but Antoni presents herself as the artist-subject and the muse-object of her own making.

Chapter 3 is focused on three works: *Ready or Not, Here I Come*, 1994, *Cast-Off*, 1996, and *Mom and Dad*, 1994. These works continue Antoni's exploration of parent/child bonds and are significant in that they include the artist's father as well as her mother. *Ready or Not* is a video piece in which Antoni plays a game of hide-and-seek with her father. This work introduces patriarchal authority in contrast to the nurturing figure of the artist's mother. *Cast-Off* is a little-known performance piece that was created for the opening of Antoni's first American solo museum exhibition at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia. In this work, Antoni investigates issues of identity and separation by performing with her parents in front of a live audience. The three of them wear knitted garments that are connected to each other and, as the artist walks away from her parents, they unravel, trapping everything within her path in the tangles of the blood-colored yarn. Or at least that was the concept. As the artist walked around and the garments unraveled, a too-polite audience stepped out of her way, defeating her intent to

substitute symbolically the lost parental relationships with the new-found relationships she found around her. In *Mom and Dad*, a photographic work, Antoni makes up her parents to look like each other. In this piece the artist questions the construction of identity, gender identity, and relationships both within the immediate family and outside that intimate circle. By reversing their maternal and paternal roles, Antoni questions the validity of gendered identity via the images of her parents. All three works provide excellent examples of the artist's investigations into the questions of identity, relationships, and familial bonds.

In examining Janine Antoni's works through the postmodern lenses of feminist and psychoanalytic theory, I will explore the themes of the artist's mother/daughter and father/daughter relationships as well as her artistic and feminist heritage. Like many art historians, I looked to psychoanalytic theory to help explain my ideas, with the works of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan being the most widely known and available. And yet, I found it dissatisfying to use a Freudian-derived theory to describe a feminist body of work. Alternatively, Melanie Klein's Object Relations theory holds that relationships, beginning with the mother/infant dyad, are primary, and that intrapsychic, interpersonal, and group experiences create the foundation for the development of individual identity. Klein's work, developed in the 1930s, was rooted in Freudian theory; however, it was her break with Freudian thought and her development of Object Relations theory which triggered a divide at the British Psychoanalytical Society in the early 1940s, causing two separate programs to be set up: one Freudian and one Kleinian.<sup>3</sup> Klein's relationship-based theory, and its more recent interpretations by such theorists as Jessica Benjamin, Rosalind Minsky, and Mignon Nixon, is much more relevant to my explorations than the

---

<sup>3</sup> Rosalind Minsky, *Psychoanalysis and Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 78.



phallic-based claims of Freud and even Lacan, and I use Klein's theories to help support and further my psychoanalytic investigations. According to Minsky, Klein's view is that "the mother and baby relationship from its first moments contains all the fundamental elements of future relationships, and this is based on an innate instinct in the baby which sees the mother not only as the source of nourishment but also of life itself. This is the basis of the life instinct."<sup>4</sup> In this way, Klein privileges the mother figure over Freud's father figure, providing a feminist version of psychoanalysis which refutes the authoritative, patriarchal Father for the nurturing, matriarchal Mother. Klein provides us with female models rather than Freudian afterthoughts. Even as Antoni investigates her fears and anxieties with both parents, the relationship with the mother is usually at the center of it, satisfying the need for women to have an alternative to Freud's gender-biased theories. Klein's work is concerned primarily with "how the child copes with what it assumes as the loss of the mother when she is absent, by dividing her and the external world by means of phantasy. Significantly, the breast replaces Freud's phallus as the object of most importance to the formation of the child's sexual identity."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Nixon suggests that recent re-reception of Bourgeois's work is a reason that Klein's work has become more topical. Noting that Bourgeois was a vocal critic of Lacan, Nixon cites Bourgeois's *The Destruction of the Father*, 1974, which involves the literal eating, and therefore silencing, of the father as a landmark foray into feminist art.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Minsky, 92.

<sup>5</sup> Minsky, 84.

<sup>6</sup> Mignon Nixon, "Bad Enough Mother," *October* 71 (Winter 1995): 74-75. In this article, a discussion of the 1994 *Bad Girls* exhibition, Nixon goes on to say: "If, then, Lacan is the bad father of this new generation of feminist artists, the bad enough mother is a seventies feminist, herself a bad girl, with whom the daughter can identify and in relation to whom she can position herself in the genealogy," 82.

Antoni tells us that performance can be a dangerous place, so the artist positions viewers in a relationship of empathy to her and the object and the process. Sometimes, because the performance has the potential to be too highly charged, as in a piece like *Gnaw*, Antoni presents only the relics rather than herself in the performance; although, in a work like *Loving Care*, we discover that the artist's attempt to do just that failed and she ended up performing the piece to great critical fanfare. Performance, according to the artist,

wasn't something that I intended to do. I was doing work that was about process, about the meaning of the making, trying to have a love-hate relationship with the object. I always feel safer if I can bring the viewer back to the making of it. I try to do that in a lot of different ways, by residue, by touch, by these processes that are basic to all of us in our lives . . . that people might relate to in terms of process, everyday activities—bathing, eating, etc. But there are times when the best way to keep people in that place, which for me is so alive and pertinent, is to show the process or the making. And it's always difficult to put myself there. It's a vulnerable place. It's very powerful. I think that the thing that is most dangerous about it is that I move the energy off the object and I try to put it on the process. But somehow it gets stuck onto me. This . . . is a tricky place for me, too. That's why I so often only work with the residue, and I'm sort of in the viewer's imagination when they look at the object. When I show myself doing these things, I know it will be riveting for the viewer, but I want it to be riveting for the right reasons, or for the reasons I'm interested in.<sup>7</sup>

In this way, viewers are in a subjective relationship to Antoni's process rather than the more objective approach that is normally employed to interpret conceptual work.

Through close visual examination of Antoni's object-based and performative works and personal interviews with the artist, I explore how relationships—the artist and her heritage, the artist and the viewer, the artist as daughter (and now, having recently had a daughter, the artist as mother)—are all crucial in explaining how a contemporary artist examines cultural and personal constructions of identity and femininity. By using

---

<sup>7</sup> Susan Sollins and Marybeth Sollins, eds., "Janine Antoni," *Art:21: Art in the Twenty-First Century*, vol. 2 (New York: Abrams, 2003), 74.

her body as a tool to explore her identity and make transparent the implications of feminine imagery, Antoni has created a body of work that distinguishes her as an artist who is both subject and object. As she alternately separates from and connects with the mother and the foremothers of the artistic heritage that have surely contributed to establishing this identity, Antoni allows new images of the female to be made visible in a culture where they have traditionally been lacking.

## Chapter 1: Heritage

*For we think back through our mothers if we are women.*<sup>8</sup>

This statement by Virginia Woolf from her landmark 1929 book, *A Room of One's Own* is an important one. As women, we look to our predecessors for wisdom and the precedents they have set; they are, in every sense of the word, our foremothers. In her article, "Mediating Generation: The Mother-Daughter Plot," Lisa Tickner quotes Woolf, reinforcing the idea that we all have mothers, which may be one of the only things that is a true universal. We also have many mothers, both the biological and the elected, which consist of any and all of those women who have provided a matrilineal heritage, inspiring, influencing, and shaping us. Woolf's statement is also an excellent acknowledgement of our foremothers' work, and how they made possible that which we are able to do now. Tickner notes that "Finding (real and elective) artist-mothers releases women to deal with their fathers and encounter their siblings on equal terms. Feminism fought for our right to publicly acknowledge cultural expression; it also insists on our place in the patrimony, equal heirs with our brothers and cousins."<sup>9</sup> In this way, we can think of our maternal heritage as consisting of two mothers: one, a biological mother; the other, a collective heritage of mothers.

Dan Cameron remarks in his essay, "Habaeus Corpus," that Antoni has "placed herself squarely in the path of the artistic mainstream of the past thirty years," and is

---

<sup>8</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, reprint (San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957), 76; also see Lisa Tickner, "Mediating Generation: The Mother-Daughter Plot," *Art History* 25, no. 1 (February 2002): 26.

<sup>9</sup> Tickner, "Mediating Generation," 29.

constantly working with her relationship to the past so as to “stand up to the future.”<sup>10</sup>

There is evidence to his point. In this chapter, I will discuss the artistic heritage that is an important part of Antoni’s work, paying particular attention to many of the women artists that make up an influential matrilineage. Two of Antoni’s works in particular, *Loving Care*, 1993, and *Gnaw*, 1992, lend themselves well to her artistic heritage, and I will focus on them and their relationships to other artists’ work in this chapter.

In her *Flash Art* article, “Janine Antoni: Biting Sums Up My Relationship to Art History,” Laura Cottingham notes that Antoni has stressed her debt to early feminist art: “The humor, the process, the emphasis on performance, the intensely visceral quality of their work. It was necessary for the 80s feminists to exist for me to ‘return’ to the 70s. The 80s feminists used a language that was already respected, and they put their content in it, whereas the 70s feminists were much more extreme, and they paid for it by being dismissed.”<sup>11</sup> In this article, Antoni names many women artists as being influential for her, including Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse, Barbara Kruger, Sherrie Levine, Ana Mendieta, Cindy Sherman, and Hannah Wilke; several of these artists will be discussed here.

In exploring her artistic heritage, Antoni has acknowledged the works of these women artists as being historically important and influential. These artists are her aesthetic, feminist heritage, and their concerns with the body, female beauty, identity, and constructions of femininity, as well as their methods of appropriation and questions of authorship, are all pertinent inquiries that inform Antoni’s work. Antoni also makes it clear that she is not willing to allow any sort of outdated patriarchal limitations to rule her

---

<sup>10</sup> Dan Cameron, “Habaeus Corpus,” in *Slip of the Tongue*, exhibition catalogue (Glasgow: Center for Contemporary Art and Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 1995), n.p.

<sup>11</sup> Cottingham, 104.

and, in an oft-quoted phrase from Cottingham's article, Antoni says: "I feel minimalism has influenced and defined me as an artist. I was interested in the bite because it's both intimate and destructive; it sort of sums up my relationship to art history. I feel attached to it and I want to destroy it: it defines me as an artist and it excludes me as a woman, all at the same time."<sup>12</sup> These tensions that Antoni verbalizes become apparent in her work, both figuratively and literally.

In her article, "Women's Work (Or Is It Art?) Is Never Done," Kay Larson notes that Antoni has a sense of self-consciousness, as the artist says that "I couldn't make a mark that didn't have some roots in art history."<sup>13</sup> In her work, Antoni has explored some of the various art historical '-isms' that then become formal tools for her to use and reclaim: Minimalism, Abstract Expressionism, Classicism, and Feminism, among others. According to Antoni, "[Yves] Klein said that rather than paint the model, he wanted to paint with the model." For Antoni and her explorations of these formal tools, it is about "trying to be the model and the master at the same time."<sup>14</sup> Larson also observes that Antoni pays conscious homage to the feminist artists that have preceded—and paved the way for—her. Antoni, recognizing the changes that have been made in previous decades, says that, "I'm not from the generation of women who mopped the floor. I'm getting choices now that they didn't have."<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Cottingham, 104.

<sup>13</sup> Kay Larson, "Women's Work (Or Is It Art?) Is Never Done," *New York Times*, January 7, 1996, 35. The title of Larson's article makes reference not only to the popular idiom, but also to a contemporaneous 1993 essay by Lucy Lippard, "Moving Targets/Concentric Circles: Notes from the Radical Whirlwind," in which Lippard discusses how the feminist movement is still going on, that it is never done, and that the current climate of backlash and backsliding "make it painfully obvious that a woman's work is never done." Reprinted in Lippard, *Pink Glass Swan*, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Larson, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Larson, 35. Surprisingly, a Letter to the Editor in response to Larson's article indicates that the author feels Antoni's work is class-biased instead of gender-based, and that it is not art, it is not even "women's work. It is simply Marie Antoinette playing milkmaid." Freda Bright, Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*,

This matrilineage is indeed an important part of Antoni's work. One of Antoni's earliest performance pieces, *Loving Care*, first performed in London in 1993, in which the artist mopped the floor of a gallery with her own hair dipped in hair-dye, is a work that has many such noteworthy reference points (Figure 1.1). The first is Mierle Laderman Ukeles's *Maintenance Art* activities. Indeed, Antoni's 1996 American performance debut of *Loving Care* at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, was also the site of one of Ukeles's performance pieces in 1973, in which she washed the floors of the gallery, only to wash them again and again as the public walked through (Figure 1.2). Ukeles (born 1939), a wife, a mother, and a feminist artist, resisted the notion and label of 'housewife' and, declaring that everything she did was art, made art out of the daily actions that maintain life: washing and rewashing floors, dressing and undressing children, and dusting cabinetry. In her "Manifesto for Maintenance Art," Ukeles pinpointed the necessity of the work that goes unnoticed, and declared: "The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?"<sup>16</sup> Her "Manifesto" and related performance pieces highlighted the drudgery of the repetitive labor done by the unthanked, unheard, and unpaid workforce of America: housewives. Both Ukeles's *Maintenance Art* activities and Antoni's *Loving Care*, which use the artist's body as a tool, can be seen as a response to the dictate, *écriture féminine*, made famous by Hélène Cixous's essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in which the author said, "Write your self. Your body must be heard."<sup>17</sup>

---

January 28, 1996. This type of commentary, often given in response to a media soundbite, further proves the legitimacy of the issues Antoni investigates.

<sup>16</sup> Mierle Laderman Ukeles, "Manifesto for Maintenance Art," in Helena Reckitt, ed., *Art and Feminism* (New York: Phaidon, 2001), 198.

<sup>17</sup> Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," reprinted in Kelly Oliver, ed., *French Feminism Reader* (Lanham, MD: Rowman, 2000), 262.

Many women artists also owe a debt to Carolee Schneemann (born 1939) for her pioneering efforts to make her body heard and claim it as the site of her art, and for demanding that she be accepted as both image and image-maker. Schneemann is an innovative artist who has had a vital impact on body and performance art. While it was deemed acceptable for her to perform nude in 1960s pieces by such artists as Claes Oldenburg and Robert Morris, she was condemned for it in her own works such as *Eye/Body*, 1963, and *Meat Joy*, 1964 (Figures 1.3 and 1.4).<sup>18</sup> But in declaring her body as the site and inspiration for her own art and power, Schneemann challenged patriarchal obstructions to women's creative and sexual agency, setting many unprecedented examples. In her recent book, *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects*, Schneemann says:

I established my body as visual territory. Not only am I an image-maker, but I explore the image of flesh as material I choose to work with. The body may remain erotic, sexual, desired, desiring, and yet still be votive—marked and written over in a text of stroke and gesture discovered by my creative female will. [. . .] Using my body as an extension of my painting-constructions challenged and threatened the psychic territorial power lines by which women, in 1963, were admitted to the Art Stud Club, so long as they behaved enough like the men, and did work clearly in the traditions and pathways hacked out by the men.<sup>19</sup>

Schneemann, with her installation and performance artworks, became both artist and object, both eye and body at once. A good deal of feminist performance art was developed during this period, and Schneemann was at the heart of it; in the ensuing years, body art continued to flourish as women explored the “socially demarcated margins

---

<sup>18</sup> Created for the 1964 *Festival de la Libre Expression* in Paris, *Meat Joy* celebrated, quite literally, the visceral pleasures of the flesh. The performance was both admired and reviled, and caused a scandal. Schneemann, in an interview with Andrea Juno, said that because it was 1964, if the performers “had been totally nude, [we] would have been arrested.” In A. Juno and V. Vale, eds., *Angry Women* (New York: RE/Search, 1991), 69-70.

<sup>19</sup> Carolee Schneemann, *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002), 55.



separating artist/woman, high/low, [and] subject/object.”<sup>20</sup> Among many memorable quotes, Schneemann said in 1968: “I made a gift of my body to other women: giving our bodies back to ourselves.”<sup>21</sup> Schneemann’s *Interior Scroll*, 1975, still a landmark performance piece, is considered a definitive work of feminist body art that literally and figuratively gives voice to a female point of view (Figure 1.5). This work, in which the artist stood nude in front of an audience and slowly pulled a scroll from her vagina and then read from it, further validated her insistence on her body as the site of her visual territory. While most of Schneemann’s work was performed in the nude, Antoni’s is not. Yet Schneemann’s work clearly set precedents that made Antoni’s work and use of her body as a tool possible. Too, both artists’ work are also clearly linked to Cixous’s concept of *écriture féminine*, in that they insert their bodies as subject into the spectacle, refusing to play the part of the passive object.

However, there is also a patrilineage that is undeniably present in Antoni’s work, one which was, as Schneemann’s reference to it as an ‘Art Stud Club’ makes clear, not very accepting of women artists as members. Yet Antoni’s *Loving Care* has a clear channel to male artists such as Yves Klein (1928-1962) and Jackson Pollock (1912-1956). The well-known Hans Namuth photographs of Pollock at work in 1950 depict a perceptible correlation: the artist working on the floor and ‘stepping’ into the work, and using the body as a tool to create within that space (Figure 1.6). But whereas Pollock’s was a masculinist, Abstract Expressionistic gesture using paint and canvas, Antoni uses her hair as a paint brush, and sweeps her entire body around the floor as she paints with

---

<sup>20</sup> Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997,) 29-31. As Schneider further notes, performance art can be traced back to at least the early Twentieth-century Constructivists, Futurists, and Dadaists, where typically, women were “relegated to the status of ‘spouse’ or ‘lover’ or ‘muse’ or ‘try-hard,’” 188n18.

<sup>21</sup> Lippard, “Pains and Pleasures,” 103.

it. Hers is a feminine body, using a feminine-coded product, “Loving Care” hair dye; notably, it is in her mother’s shade: Natural Black. With this product and gesture, the artist at once articulates her reference to Abstract Expressionism, to products of cultural construction, and to her own, learned, constructions of femininity from her mother.

As previously acknowledged by Antoni, another correlation is to Klein’s infamous *Anthropometry* works of the early 1960s. In these pieces, the fully-clothed artist utilized nude women as living paint brushes, directing them around the canvas on the floor while an audience looked on (Figure 1.7). Indeed, Klein took great pride in commanding these performances unsullied, and of them he said: “I could dominate my creation continuously throughout the entire execution. In this way I stayed clean. I no longer dirtied myself with colour, not even the tips of my fingers.”<sup>22</sup> With *Loving Care*, in which Antoni was in a vulnerable, nearly-prone position on the floor working amongst upright gallery-goers, the artist has said she felt empowered literally to chase the viewers out of the room while performing this piece.<sup>23</sup> While she was ‘dirtying’ a normally clean, crowded gallery, the artist was mopping them out of the room and taking over the space.

While Pollock and Klein worked in untraditional ways, both still represent the traditional, male ‘master’ who is both artist and subject. In performing *Loving Care*, Antoni also becomes both artist and subject, becoming master and model instead of being relegated to the traditional, passive female roles of merely muse and object. Antoni says that “It’s really important for me that you look at my work and you know a woman did

---

<sup>22</sup> Yves Klein from an essay originally published in *Zero 3* (July 1961) and quoted in Sandra Stich, *Yves Klein* (Stuttgart: Cantz Verlag, 1994): 176-177; quoted by Peggy Phelan, “Survey,” in Reckitt, ed., *Art and Feminism*, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Gail Levin, “Interview with Janine Antoni,” March 1997, *City Arts*, Thirteen, WNET, New York, NY, <http://www.thirteen.org/cityarts3/show5/uncutp.html>.

it.”<sup>24</sup> Like Schneemann, Antoni uses her body as an instrument of her creative female will; thus, it is a female body with which the viewer is engaged, confounding traditional notions of male as active subject and female as passive object.

While *Loving Care* came to be known as a performance piece, this was not so the first time it was created. *Loving Care* was first displayed as documentation of a private performance in *The Autoerotic Object*, an exhibition at Hunter College in New York in October 1992; the debut of the public performance of the same piece occurred in London in 1993.<sup>25</sup> This demonstrates how an audience can be an essential part of the art process: while Antoni was trying to despectacularize the body by not exhibiting herself through performance, she found that simply showing the relics or residue wasn’t enough to substantiate the message of the piece and it became necessary to perform it.<sup>26</sup> Antoni felt that the first exhibition of the work failed; it felt flat and needed the charge that the performance provided. According to Juli Carson, curator of *Autoerotic Object*, viewers “demanded to *see* the body that had made these marks.”<sup>27</sup> This notion of the presence or absence of the artist will be explored further in the following chapter.

Antoni also considers Ana Mendieta (1948-1985), an artist who is best-known for making marks with her body, an important influence on her work, and of her, Antoni says that “Her body is at the center of her work, as is mine.”<sup>28</sup> In a series of pieces called *Siluetas*, Mendieta made earth/body works in the earth, sand, water, or snow, often leaving a trace of her body with other natural elements such as earth, twigs, rocks, flowers, blood, and fire (Figure 1.8). Most of these works were performed privately, in

---

<sup>24</sup> Larson, 35.

<sup>25</sup> Juli Carson, “Response to ‘The Reception of the Sixties,’” *October* 71 (Winter 1995): 144.

<sup>26</sup> Carson, 145.

<sup>27</sup> Carson, 144.

<sup>28</sup> Cottingham, 104.

the nude, and documented by the artist with either a still or video camera, and they form a connection between the artist and the earth, a substitute for her homeland.<sup>29</sup> In this way, both Antoni and Mendieta make and leave traces of their female bodies. Too, both artist's works exist only in photo-relic form: Mendieta's because she was the only one to witness it; Antoni, because the artist also photo-documents her performances, and of *Loving Care*, the artist has said that it is now 'retired,' and she will no longer perform it.<sup>30</sup>

In her book, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, Amelia Jones notes that "the position of the body [acts] as a 'hinge' between nature and culture."<sup>31</sup> With this hinge, Mendieta makes a connection to the earth, and the artist later said that, "I have been carrying on a dialogue between the landscape and the female body (based on my own silhouette). [. . .] I am overwhelmed by the feeling of having been cast from the womb (nature). My art is the way I reestablish the bonds that unite me to the universe. It is a return to the maternal source. Through my earth/body sculptures I become one with the earth."<sup>32</sup> Like the marks Mendieta left of her body in and on the earth, Antoni's body traces in *Loving Care* leave a stain on the gallery floor. These marks, these traces, are artist's marks of a female body, and they command attention because we know a human made them.

---

<sup>29</sup> Mendieta, who lived in exile from Cuba, said that "My exploration through my art of the relationship between myself and nature has been a clear result of my having been torn from my homeland during my adolescence. The making of my silueta in nature keeps (makes) the transition between my homeland and my new home." From Guggenheim Museum, "Moving Pictures: Ana Mendieta," *Arts Curriculum Online*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, [http://www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum/lessons/movpics\\_mendieta.php](http://www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum/lessons/movpics_mendieta.php).

<sup>30</sup> Janine Antoni, Artist Talk, Georgia State University (GSU), Atlanta, GA, April 5, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 13.

<sup>32</sup> Jones, 26, from an unpublished statement by Mendieta, from John Perreault, "Earth and Fire, Mendieta's Body of Work," from *Ana Mendieta: A Retrospective* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1987).

Another work by Antoni that has some similarly distinct references is *Gnaw*, from 1992, a work chosen for the 1993 Whitney Biennial. For this piece, Antoni constructed two 600-pound, 24-inch cubes, one of chocolate and one of lard, then gnawed, bit, chewed and spit out the pieces (Figure 1.9). The residue from the chocolate and lard cubes was then gathered and reproduced in the form of the packaging that nestles chocolates in a box of Valentine's candies, and the very-red lipstick that is a cosmetic mainstay of feminine allure.<sup>33</sup> These objects were then presented in a glass department store-like shop window display, which came to be known as the *Lipstick/Phenylethylamine Display* (Figure 1.10). In her article, "Janine Antoni," Ann Wilson Lloyd discusses issues of beauty and cultural expectations of femininity, and the fact that many saw *Gnaw* as a commentary on the eating disorders that are often specific to young women. In describing *Gnaw*, Antoni said that

I was thinking of the cube as kind of a cliché of minimalism, just as lipstick is a cliché of women and beauty. For me, it's not so much a critique of those issues as this idea of play, of using languages to make new meaning. So there has been a confusion of the critique in my work. The idea of putting the body back into minimalism—I feel like the postminimalists already did that. There is something about being in a different generation; minimalism isn't a threat to me. In terms of the critique of patriarchal art history, Sherry Levine already did that. So I hope I'm sort of opening the terms of the argument and the complexities of it. That's my goal. [ . . . ] Bulimia was just the surface. I didn't intend to make a piece about bulimia, I was just going through the process and spit this stuff out."<sup>34</sup>

There is an ironic connection between *Gnaw* and the media reaction that has sometimes surrounded it in that, like Antoni's process, a consumer society chews up and then spits out what it values and discards what it does not. This is apparent in many

---

<sup>33</sup> Mira Schor observes that Antoni was a former student of Maureen Connor, whose own work *Ensemble for Three Female Voices*, 1990, contained red lipsticks, among other objects. Both artists' works implicate consumer culture in the construction of femininity. Schor, *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 113.

<sup>34</sup> Ann Wilson Lloyd, "Janine Antoni," *Art New England* 16 (February/March 1995): 13.

critiques in which writers are disappointed by the lack of the artist's body within the work. There is a refuted voyeurism: expecting to see the artist feasting on chocolate they are confronted with gnawed-on cubes; in lieu of such dramatics, they must examine the relics more closely for meaning. This illustrates why Antoni has said that she is careful with when and where she allows her body to be visible in a piece. It can be a powerful position, and she is well aware of the gaze that wants to see her, just as she is adamant in countering the pleasure that the gaze expects with more intellectual concerns.

Indeed, in an *Art Monthly* article, "Young Americans Part I," Gilda Williams writes that Antoni gained notoriety with her sculptures of chocolate, lard, and soap, and her work was "quickly latched onto themes like bulimia and other popular eating disorders." Antoni, writes Williams, is a capable sculptor; however, "as a conceptualist less so." Williams admires *Gnaw*, but deems the *Lipstick/Phenylethylamine Display* in "very unsexy mirror and glass cases decidedly unsuccessful, wanting in irony and seduction."<sup>35</sup> I would argue that *Gnaw* is ironically accurate as it parodies the Minimalist cube, and the chocolate trays and bright red lipsticks in the shiny display are engagingly seductive; however, it is the kind of seduction that media and advertising use to entice consumers, not the bedroom variety. *Lipstick/Phenylethylamine Display* is not an over-the-top display, but a 'less-is-more' installation that is in sync with the 'minimalism' of the chocolate and lard cubes. I do not believe Antoni was trying to address eating disorders with *Gnaw*, nor was the artist implying such disorders are simply a popular trend. Antoni did not set out to make eating disorders look sexy; rather, she was trying to expose the social disorder of consumer culture by displaying it in the guise of a

---

<sup>35</sup> Gilda Williams, "Young Americans Part I," *Art Monthly* 194 (March 1996): 25.

minimalist feast. And by inserting her own body into the construction, the social arena, she does this by investigating what she knows.

With *Gnaw*, Antoni challenges the mind/body problem set up by Minimalist artists such as Donald Judd (1928-1994) who valued the purity of impersonal form over the emotional and the handmade (Figure 1.11). Whereas the Minimalists emphasized production, industrialization, and the material object, Antoni takes the feminist 70s emphasis on the body and applies it here: body plus object attributes, not one or the other. Antoni parodies the smooth, machine-made cube with her alternative ‘carving’ method, the artist’s teeth marks making a literal mockery of the idealized object and surface of Minimalism. Of the association, Antoni says that while “Minimalism introduced fabrication [. . .], my cubes are poured, chewed, spit out, melted down, and recast by me.”<sup>36</sup> With an ironic twist, the artist critiques machine-made, mass-produced products which, notably, are here coded feminine, as well as the semiotics and visual representations of the ‘ism,’ relying on the viewer’s own familiarity with the language and imagery inherent to Minimalism, to make new meaning in this work.

The idea of the absurd is another important aspect of Antoni’s work. The artist has said that “I feel like people often interpret my work as heavy, but I also think it’s humorous. Certainly my work is indebted to . . . the idea of appropriation, specifically to a feminist appropriation of male art—chewing the minimalist cube is also funny and even absurd.”<sup>37</sup> This concept of the absurd is one which surely pays a debt to Eva Hesse (1936-1970). Hesse’s work deals with contrasting issues of intellect and emotion, hard and soft, and most certainly the absurd. In an interview with the artist, Cindy Nemser

---

<sup>36</sup> Cottingham, 104.

<sup>37</sup> Cottingham, 104.

asserts that Hesse was “one of the pioneers of her generation to acknowledge the need for restoring spontaneity, sexuality, and emotional reaction to an art form grown sterile and rigid.”<sup>38</sup> The artist often used unlikely materials in unlikely ways; for example, pairing cheesecloth with latex rubber, or cardboard with fiberglass.

In *Accession II*, 1968, Hesse lined a galvanized steel cube with thousands of rubber tubes, uniting opposite materials as well as contrasting the geometric and the organic (Figure 1.12). Responding to the rigidity of the Minimalist, fabricated cube with the softness of a writhing mass of tubing, the box is filled with an interior eroticism. All of Hesse’s work is about making interesting combinations or contrasts: order and chaos, hard and soft, reason and emotion. “I remember always working with contradictions and contradictory forms which is my idea also in life,” the artist said. “The whole absurdity of life, everything for me has always been opposite. Nothing has ever been in the middle.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, while Hesse chose to address the hard Minimalist cube by filling the interior with a chaotic softness, Antoni addressed it by fabricating the cube in organic materials and then taking a bite out of it. Through their use of materials, both artists give an absurd and visceral twist to the unemotional cube.

Of *Gnaw*, Antoni also said she was thinking about traditional sculpting methods like carving, and figurative sculpture. The artist decided that “rather than describing the body, I would use the body, my body, as a tool for making art.”<sup>40</sup> Like Antoni, Eleanor Antin (born 1935) has used similar transgressive sculptural methods. Antin’s *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture*, 1973, challenges traditional notions of both sculpting and female

---

<sup>38</sup> Cindy Nemser, “Eve Hesse,” in *Art Talk: Conversations with 15 Women Artists* (New York: Harper Collins, 1975), 174.

<sup>39</sup> Nemser, 182.

<sup>40</sup> Larson, 35.



beauty (Figure 1.13). Over the course of a month, the artist maintained a strict diet and photographed herself nude every morning in the same four poses to document the regime, her intention being to ‘carve out’ an ideal form. Antin’s parody of the Classical tradition of sculpting from marble and ‘setting free the figure within it,’ laid bare in her mug shot-like photographs, exposes the socially-induced frustration and guilt most women feel when trying to conform to conventional constraints. Antin, who felt gratification in that she controlled when the piece was finished, said that “When the image was finally refined to the point of aesthetic satisfaction the work was completed.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Antoni says that she exerts this kind of control over her work, and has identified “labor as a kind of meditation.” While Antoni’s work may be conceptual, it must also be physical for it to be satisfying for her. In an interview with Judith Olch Richards, the artist said: “A lot of critics have talked about my labor as obsessive-compulsive behavior, but I’ve never really seen it that way: I do feel that I push my body to a limit, but I know where that limit is, and I stop there. I believe in labor but my work isn’t masochistic. I see it as a discipline.”<sup>42</sup> Both Antoni and Antin use transgressive sculptural methods: Antoni in carving with her teeth, while Antin carved her body by dieting. Both artists’ works comment on the extremes women are sometimes compelled to in order to feel socially acceptable.

Hannah Wilke (1940-1993) also addressed sexual and gender issues by using her own body in her art, sometimes using interesting, transgressive sculptural materials, as well. In her essay, “The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: European and American Women’s Body Art,” Lucy Lippard notes that Wilke and Schneemann, a ‘glamour girl,’

---

<sup>41</sup> Eleanor Antin, “Artist’s Writings,” in Reckitt, ed., *Art and Feminism*, 85.

<sup>42</sup> Judith Olch Richards, “Janine Antoni, March 18, 1999,” *Inside the Studio: Two Decades of Talks with Artists in New York* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2004), 228.

and a 'body beautiful,' respectively, were criticized for being narcissistic for claiming their bodies for their own work.<sup>43</sup> Lippard also notes with some degree of frustration and derision that

Men can use beautiful, sexy women as neutral objects or surfaces, but when women use their own faces and bodies, they are immediately accused of narcissism. There is an element of exhibitionism in all body art, perhaps a legitimate result of the choice between exploiting oneself or someone else. [. . .] Because women are considered sex objects, it is taken for granted that any woman who presents her nude body in public is doing so because she thinks she is beautiful.<sup>44</sup>

In Wilke's *S.O.S. Starification Object Series*, 1974-1979, the artist flirted with the audience, gave them gum to chew, and then formed the chewed gum into vaginal shapes and stuck them on her body (Figure 1.14). Wilke, like Schneemann and Antin, was challenging preconceived notions of beauty by literally scarring herself with these twisted shapes. They 'mark' her with representations of both pleasure and pain, scarring her with the female genitalia that are usually hidden. This scarification is also an allusion to the pain many women go through to be beautiful in order to feel socially acceptable and desired. Lippard observes that Wilke's 'scarification' is also a parallel to African coming of age rituals through which women gain status, but by calling them 'stars,' the artist also points to the American celebration and commodification of beauty.<sup>45</sup> Corinne Robins, in her essay, "Why We Need 'Bad Girls' Rather Than 'Good' Ones!," discusses how Wilke confronted the viewer with these chewing-gum vulvas decorating her body. Robins quotes the artist as saying she felt that "the naked body being what we all have," was a way to bring us together in order to show the way women's genitalia has traditionally

---

<sup>43</sup> Lippard, "Pains and Pleasures," 102. The artists were so dubbed in the press due to their traditional good looks.

<sup>44</sup> Lippard, "Pains and Pleasures," 102.

<sup>45</sup> Lippard, "Pains and Pleasures," 110-111.

been viewed as abject.<sup>46</sup> This idea of the abject is also one Antoni has addressed, in her use of lard as a sculptural material, and her re-use of the material in the lipstick display has a connection with Wilke's commentary on the way culture manipulates women's desire to be and feel beautiful. Narcissism is an affront leveled at many a woman artist, and in the next chapter I will demonstrate how Antoni further explores this subject.

Of all the women artists mentioned here, Louise Bourgeois (born 1911) is an artist who is still going strong at 95 and has certainly lived to earn the title of foremother. Notably, Bourgeois's 1982 retrospective exhibition was the first ever given to a woman by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Tickner, citing Bourgeois as a foremother whose work has been re-received and championed rather late in her life, says the artist is a "Judith Shakespeare, brought to publicly recognized creative life through the work of the daughters she has also inspired."<sup>47</sup> Bourgeois's work can also be readily linked to Antoni's *Gnaw*. In her essay, "The Gnaw and the Lick: Orality in Recent Feminist Art," Mignon Nixon points to Bourgeois's 1974 installation, *The Destruction of the Father*, in which the artist literally destroys the patriarch by biting and eating him (Figure 1.15). This work, with its cave- or gaping mouth-like structure, provides an environment for that which the title spells out, a work that the artist created in response to her own childhood traumas and fantasies. Nixon notes that this work demonstrates a "substitution of oral sadism for speech as the little girl's desire to speak and her frustration at being silenced is transposed into the desire to bite, to cut, to destroy the one who oppresses with

---

<sup>46</sup> Corinne Robins, "Why We Need 'Bad Girls' Rather Than 'Good' Ones!", in Marcia Tucker, ed., *Bad Girls*, exhibition catalogue (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art and Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1994), 42-43.

<sup>47</sup> Tickner, "Mediating Generation," 33. In referring to Judith Shakespeare, Tickner is invoking Virginia Woolf's likening of women writers [and artists] to the 16<sup>th</sup> century author's invisible, albeit imagined, sister, in *A Room of One's Own*.

his speech.”<sup>48</sup> Bourgeois’s work takes the social ritual of the family meal and turns it into an act of aggression against patriarchal authority. Indeed, Bourgeois has never hidden the fact that her work is the result of psychological wounds inflicted by her father, and as Mira Schor notes, hers is “the murderous rage of a betrayed daughter.”<sup>49</sup>

Antoni’s ‘bite’ also exemplifies this destroy-the-father logic via art historical terms. According to Nixon, “This shift from speaking to biting, from linguistics to orality can be understood as a turn from the signifier to the drives. [. . .] For many, *Gnaw* signaled a retreat from the 1980s investigation of the signifier, grounded as it was in poststructuralist theory and a Lacanian account of sexual difference, and towards a literal and essentialist conception of the body.”<sup>50</sup> In the backlash of the theory-heavy 80s, women artists who were more body-centric were labeled ‘essentialist,’ an oversimplified brand that equated such feminist pursuits with the ‘nature’ side of the nature vs. culture debate, sanctioning ‘universal’ feminine traits, which furthered separatist culture. Schor also notes that women get “waved away from the door marked ‘essentialism’ by deconstructionist critics and by others afraid of the biologicistic implications and dangers” of the body.<sup>51</sup> As the intellectual and artistic communities of the 90s furthered feminist and gender studies, interrupting heteronormative patriarchy, women artists had more freedom. Antoni, who came up in the early 90s, was at the forefront of and benefited from this development.

Antoni creates a new corporeality of the body, in response to some of the major art influences before her, i.e., Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and Conceptualism,

---

<sup>48</sup> Nixon, “The Gnaw and the Lick,” in Reckitt, ed., *Art and Feminism*, 275.

<sup>49</sup> Schor, 60.

<sup>50</sup> Nixon, “Gnaw and Lick,” 275-276.

<sup>51</sup> Schor, 58.

but inserts her idea of the body as subject-object into it in ways the 60s and 70s feminist artists could not or were not allowed to because they were dismissed. In her article, “Antoni’s Difference,” Ewa Lajer-Burcharth theorizes that, “By rephrasing the Minimalist process in terms of these fundamental mechanisms of the self, Antoni stakes her own identity as an artist on the production of a body—in both an aesthetic and a psychosexual sense. But she brings up a specific, imaginary body, nothing that one *has* or *is*, but rather a corporeal fantasy of difference between the self and other, between Antoni and what she, as an artist, is not.”<sup>52</sup> Lajer-Burcharth also asserts that her take on Antoni is different from that put forth in an *October* “Round Table” discussion, where “Antoni is accused there of having pictorialized, spectacularized, and generally misconstrued Minimalism.”<sup>53</sup> Lajer-Burcharth notes how Antoni’s work and the work of earlier feminists have been dismissed by those who say there wasn’t a “meta-artist” among them worthy of the title.<sup>54</sup> Yet many of the aforementioned women are precisely some of the artists I would cite as having created bodies of work that are both important and influential: Bourgeois, Hesse, Mendieta, and Schneemann; and indeed, Antoni, as I will show in the succeeding chapters.

Antoni’s processes are an important factor in her work, and many of them are a product of some of the innovative women artists discussed here. The artist investigates new processes in new ways, and self-consciously references them to a heritage she is well aware of. In discussing some of her processes, Antoni says:

---

<sup>52</sup> Lajer-Burcharth, “Antoni’s Difference,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 133.

<sup>53</sup> Lajer-Burcharth, 164n1, referring to Krauss et al, “The Reception of the Sixties,” *October* 69 (Summer 1994): 14-15.

<sup>54</sup> Lajer-Burcharth, 164n1.

We're at a time when all kinds of artistic languages are possible, and minimalism is one of the languages available to us and we're using it. I've also used expressionism—in my performance in London last year, *Loving Care*, 1993—and even 19<sup>th</sup> century classicism, in *Lick and Lather*, in my work for the 1993 Aperto in Venice. [. . .] I'm interested in everyday body rituals and converting the most basic sort of activities—eating, bathing, mopping—into sculptural processes. Even in doing this, I imitate fine art rituals such as chiseling (with my teeth), painting (with my hair and eyelashes), modeling and molding (with my own body). In terms of materials, I use materials which are appropriate to the activity. Those materials, soap, lard, chocolate, and hair dye, all come in contact with the body and redefine or locate the body within our culture. These materials also have a specific relationship to women in our society. The gender of the viewer informs the reading of my work.<sup>55</sup>

As we shall see, Antoni investigates many different materials and processes, thinking them through her body, meshing the intellectual with the physical and the conceptual with the corporeal. A predominant theme also emerges: just as Antoni has a matriarchal heritage of women artists, she also has her own mother from which to draw inspiration and artistic fodder, a relationship which has been a rich vein for the artist to mine. The next chapter will focus on Antoni's interpretation of this maternal relationship: the connection between mother and child, and her search for identity both within and separate from this relationship.

---

<sup>55</sup> Cottingham, 104-105.



Figure 1.1. Janine Antoni, *Loving Care*, 1993  
Performance with “Loving Care” hair dye, Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London,  
[http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object\\_id=64#](http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64#).



Figure 1.2. Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Hartford Wash: Washing, Tracks, Maintenance: Outside*, 1973  
Performance, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT,  
[http://www.feldmangallery.com/media/ukeles/hartfordwash\\_01.jpg](http://www.feldmangallery.com/media/ukeles/hartfordwash_01.jpg)





Figure 1.3. Carolee Schneemann, *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions*, 1963  
 Performance with paint, glue, fur, feathers, garden snakes, glass, and plastic,  
<http://www.caroleeschneemann.com/works.html>

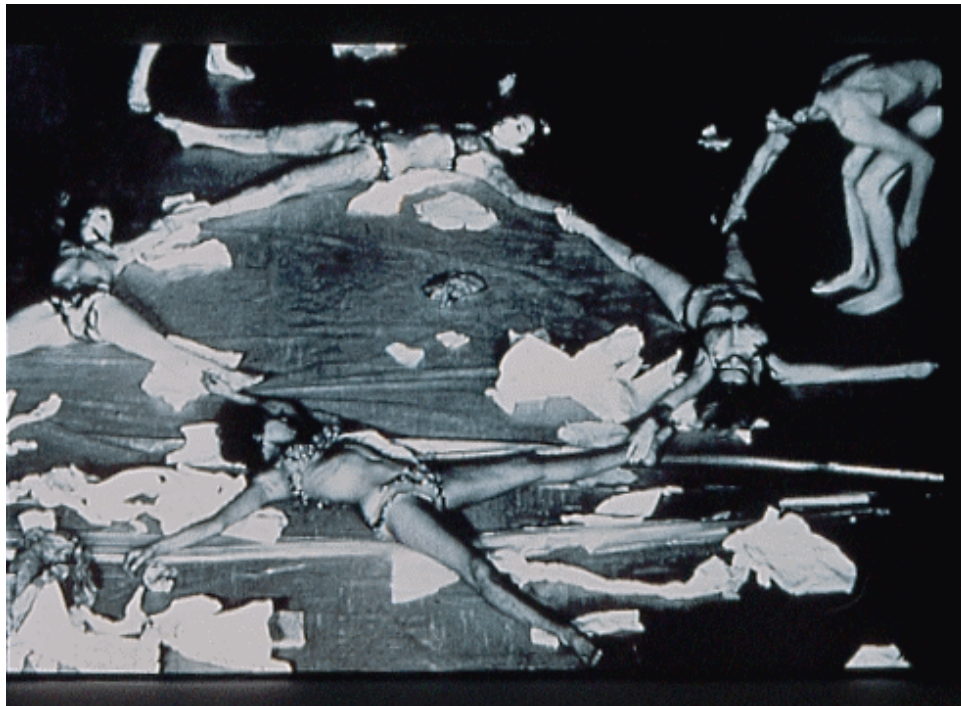


Figure 1.4. Carolee Schneemann, *Meat Joy*, 1964  
 Group performance with raw fish, chickens, sausages, wet paint, plastic, rope, shredded  
 scrap paper, Judson Church, New York, <http://www.caroleeschneemann.com/works.html>



Figure 1.5. Carolee Schneemann, *Interior Scroll*, 1975  
Performance, East Hampton, NY, <http://www.caroleeschneemann.com/works.html>



Figure 1.6. Hans Namuth, Jackson Pollock painting *Number 32*, Summer 1950  
Photograph, <http://www.nga.gov.au/Pollock/action.htm>



Figure 1.7. Yves Klein, *Anthropometry*, 1960  
From the Monotone Symphony Performance,  
[http://www.artwebcenter.net/Pages/yves\\_klein/yves\\_klein.htm](http://www.artwebcenter.net/Pages/yves_klein/yves_klein.htm)

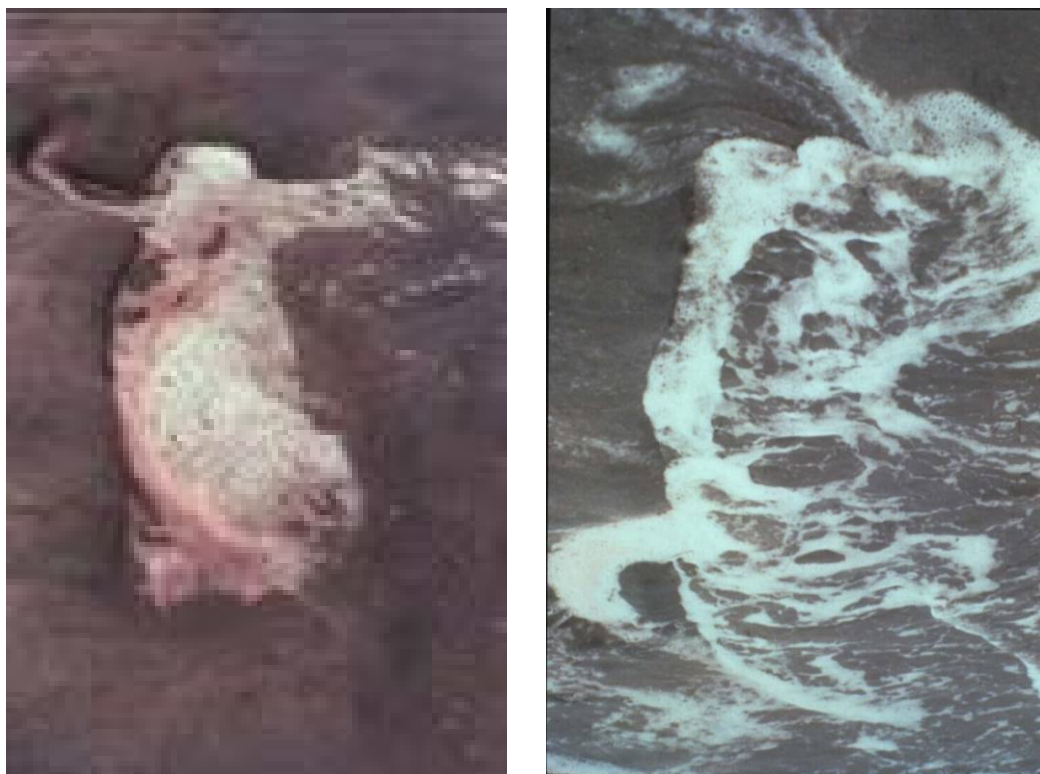


Figure 1.8. Ana Mendieta, *Silueta*, 1976  
Cibachrome prints, two from a series of nine prints, 8 x 10 inches each,  
<http://www.mcasd.org/collection/index.asp>



Figure 1.9. Janine Antoni, *Gnaw*, 1992  
600 lbs. of chocolate and 600 lbs. of lard, 24 x 24 x 24 inches each,  
[http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/art\\_sculpture.html#](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/art_sculpture.html#)



Figure 1.10. Janine Antoni, *Lipstick/Phenylethylamine Display*, 1992  
45 heart-shaped packages made from chewed chocolate and 400 lipsticks made with  
chewed lard, pigment, and beeswax,  
[http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/art\\_sculpture.html#](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/art_sculpture.html#)



Figure 1.11. Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1968.  
Enamel on aluminum, 22 x 50 x 37 inches,  
[http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist\\_work\\_md\\_70\\_3.html](http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_work_md_70_3.html)



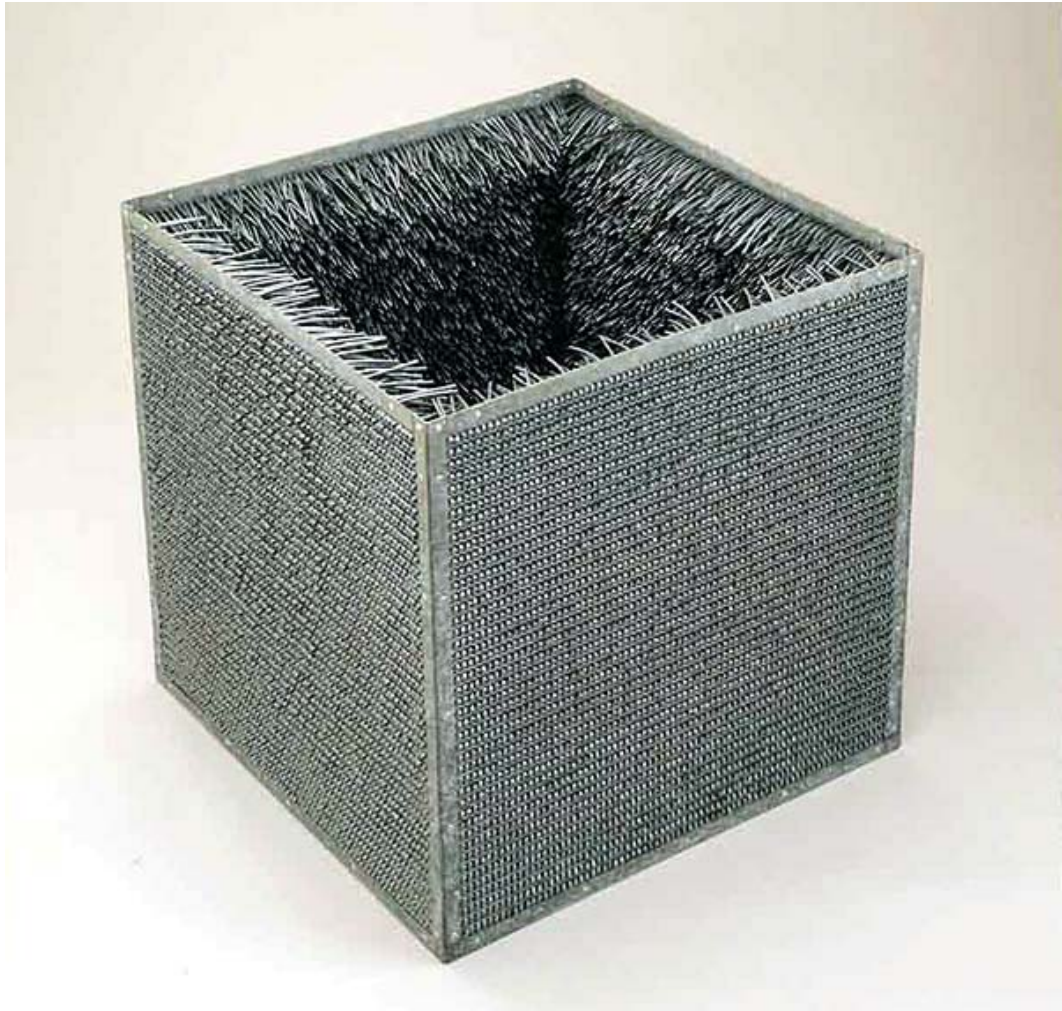


Figure 1.12. Eva Hesse, *Accession II*, 1968  
Galvanized steel with rubber tubing,  $30\frac{3}{4} \times 30\frac{3}{4} \times 30\frac{3}{4}$   
<http://www.bluffton.edu/womenartists/chapter11.html>

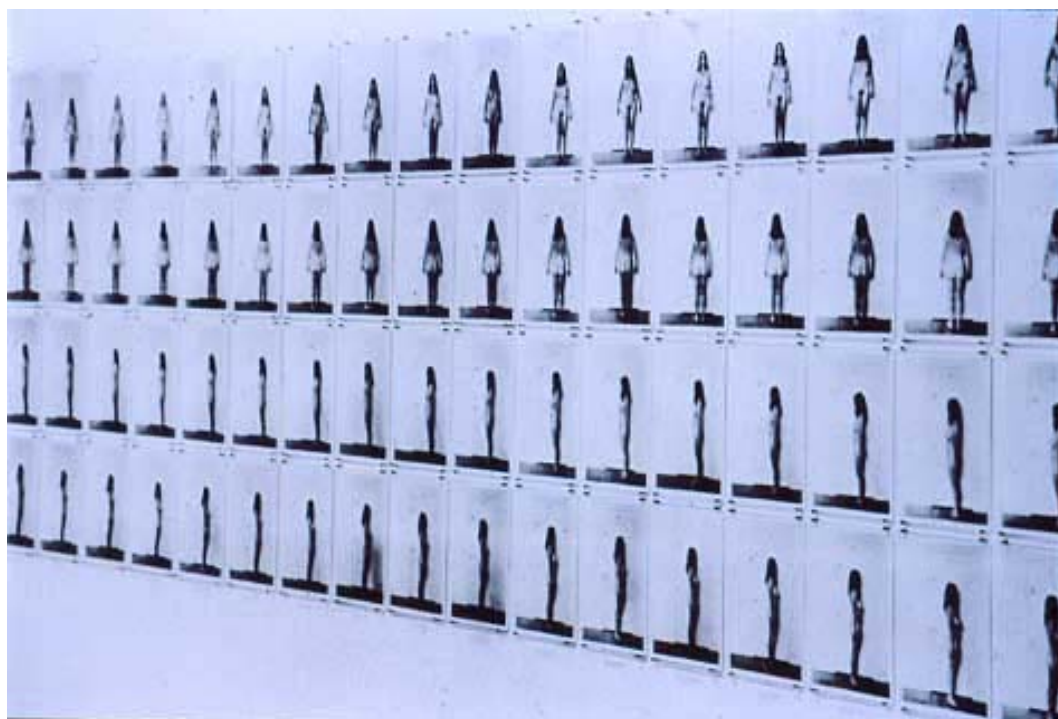


Figure 1.13. Eleanor Antin, *Carving: A Traditional Sculpture*, 1972  
144 Photographs,  
<http://138.110.28.9/courses/awlee/art242/feministphotographers/image1.html>



Figure 1.14. Hannah Wilke, *S.O.S. Starification Object Series*, 1974-1979  
Photographs (with chewing gum detail),  
[http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/David\\_Winton\\_Bell\\_Gallery/wilke.html](http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/David_Winton_Bell_Gallery/wilke.html)



Figure 1.15. Louise Bourgeois, *The Destruction of the Father*, 1974  
Installation with latex, fabric, and red-colored light,  
[http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/html\\_En/13/hm13\\_2\\_001\\_6.html](http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/html_En/13/hm13_2_001_6.html)

## Chapter 2: All About the Mother

*In all of my work . . . I go to the personal but it's not about me. It's about the mother. Even though I'm using my mother . . . I really want it to be about the viewer's mother, all of our mothers.*<sup>56</sup>

The works I will investigate in this chapter are pieces which trace a logical, but not chronological, progression: a series of objects in a variety of media in which Antoni explores the many stages of early life. The artist creates—recreates—her life and, in doing so, a body of work that becomes another life that is both about and of her body emerges. I shall trace these works in a thematical progression: the artist's own re-conception and birth; the bonding with her mother; separation anxiety at the imagined and physical separation from the mother; and further childhood development which includes exploration of identity and relationships both inside and outside the familial community. While these works were not created in chronological fashion, I think insight is gained by sequencing the works, which span from 1989 to 2003, in a thematic order. I will also address the artist's predilection for using transgressive, non-traditional methods and art historical references, and the parallels her work provides to some traditional religious ideas and psychoanalytical theory.

Antoni's 1995 photograph, *Momme*, forms the beginning image in this series. With this progression of works, the artist explores the parent/child relationship, but more specifically, she explores the identity of her own self and how it came to be. In *Momme*, we are presented with what appears to be a conventional portrait of a woman in an upper

---

<sup>56</sup> *Art:21—Art in the Twenty-first Century*, PBS, 2003, <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/>.

middle-class setting (Figure 2.1). The woman is portrayed as a serene, Madonna-like figure in a chaste white dress with bare feet. But then one notices that there are three feet instead of the usual two, and it soon becomes clear that there is a decided ‘bulge’ about the woman’s midsection. Antoni, in creating this portrait of her mother, has also made it a self-portrait by hiding under her mother’s dress, making her appear pregnant with the baby that she herself once was. In her essay about Antoni’s work, “Mother Lode,” Amy Cappellazzo appropriately references Adrienne Rich from her germinal book, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. Rich, in speaking of the pregnant state of a woman who is also a daughter, said: “We see a reunion of mother and daughter that is physically and psychologically sublime, subversive, and preverbal—the joining of two alike bodies, one of which has spent nine months inside the other.”<sup>57</sup>

Antoni asked her mother to “pretend she was the religious figure in an Annunciation scene,” says Sarah Bayliss in her article, “The 24-Hour-a-Day Artist.”<sup>58</sup> Religion plays an important part in much of Antoni’s work. She attended Catholic school through high school and, as Eleanor Heartney notes in her 2004 book, *Postmodern Heretics: The Catholic Imagination in Contemporary Art*, the artist confesses that, like many Catholic schoolgirls, “in the second grade she wanted to be a nun.”<sup>59</sup> The Annunciation theme is quite apparent in *Momme*: her mother wears a white gown, which symbolizes the purity akin to the Virgin Mary; she looks toward a radiant light, which could represent the angel Gabriel; on the table beside her are flowers which traditionally represent fertility; and there is a framed photograph of Antoni’s grandmother, which

---

<sup>57</sup> Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, 1976, reissue (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1995), 220. Also see Amy Cappellazzo, “Mother Lode,” in Janine Antoni, *Janine Antoni* (Seestrasse, Switzerland: Ink Tree, 2000), 108.

<sup>58</sup> Sarah Bayliss, “The 24-Hour-a-Day Artist,” *Artnews* 98, no. 10 (November 1999): 166.

<sup>59</sup> Eleanor Heartney, *Postmodern Heretics* (New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 2004), 160.

refers to the traditional Annunciation story of Mary and her mother, Saint Anne, who completes the matrilineal line. As we shall see, Antoni returns often to Catholic doctrine.<sup>60</sup> We will also see that Antoni's mother is a willing participant in many of the artist's works, which demonstrates the strength of their mother/daughter bond and the trust that is implicit within that relationship. *Momme* visits a recurring theme in her work: the return to the womb and the anxiety that is produced by being separated from it. Nancy Princenthal, in her article "Janine Antoni: Mother's Milk," remarks that the portrait is like a fiendishly clever joke: "*Momme* is about . . . a thoroughly Freudian subject: the eternally unresolved need for the mother, and the fear that such yearning induces."<sup>61</sup> This fear, of course, refers to the need for both connection to and separation from the mother.

As Jo Anna Isaak has noted in her book, *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter*, there have been two main Western cultural creations that have shaped our understanding of motherhood: Christianity and Freudian theory; one provides a religious account, the other a cultural, psycho-sexual one. Both institutions undermine the feminine and relegate the mother to an intermediary role: in Christianity, the Virgin Mary acts as a mediator between the power-base of Father and Son; for Freud, the female's lack of and hence her desire for the phallus are her impetus, not a sexuality of her own, thus inferring secondary status.<sup>62</sup> Feminist Postmodern theory and discussion have helped to disrupt these assumptions, and many women artists have

---

<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the artist named her own company Immaculate Conception, Inc., further bonding herself to the identity of the Virgin Mary.

<sup>61</sup> Nancy Princenthal, "Janine Antoni: Mother's Milk," *Art in America* 89, no. 9 (September 2001): 127. Princenthal also notes that Freud observed the 'comic of situation,' which includes, for instance, 'exaggeration' and 'unmasking,' as "mostly based on embarrassments, in which we rediscover the child's helplessness." Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (New York: Norton, 1963): 226.

<sup>62</sup> Jo Anna Isaak, *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 140. Isaak also notes Freud's assertion that the mother's happiness will be greater if she has a little boy "who brings the longed for penis with him."

turned to alternative theories and images to investigate and demonstrate their applications.

Feminist interpretation of psychoanalytic theory asserts that long before the oedipal phase and penis envy, “the little girl has consolidated her feminine gender identity on the basis of her identification with her mother.”<sup>63</sup> This makes Freudian arguments that are solely phallus-based, according to Jessica Benjamin, “simply implausible.” In her article “A Desire of One’s Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space,” Benjamin states that “the girl sustains her primary identification with the mother and the boy must break with that identity and switch to the father.”<sup>64</sup> This seems a more credible argument since in traditional homes the primary caretaker is the mother and always has been. Freudian theory was—and is—an argument for the sake of maintaining patriarchal control. Thus, says Benjamin, “maternal identification theory leans toward the revaluation of the mother, whose influence Freud neglected in favor of the father,” which restores a more positive inference to the female condition, one that is not based on the negative aspects of a ‘lack.’<sup>65</sup> The vital relationship is the mother/child one, and the Freudian model of patriarchal authority is diminished by shifting this power structure to a more equal division, not so heavily based on the individual, but on the relationship between and within the mother/child dyad.<sup>66</sup>

This model of the Mother and Child is the idealized maternal relationship in Western society, yet due to commercialized and commodified images of woman, the

---

<sup>63</sup> Jessica Benjamin, “A Desire of One’s Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space,” in Teresa de Lauretis, ed., *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 82.

<sup>64</sup> Benjamin, “Desire of One’s Own,” 82.

<sup>65</sup> Benjamin, “Desire of One’s Own,” 83.

<sup>66</sup> Benjamin, “Desire of One’s Own,” 82.



maternal, and motherhood, this ideal becomes more a representation that imposes on reality, not a reality itself. As Isaak further observes, since it is men who have historically done the creating, then it is men who have created this idealized picture of mother, this “image of woman so mired in the nature side of the culture versus nature dichotomy.”<sup>67</sup>

Antoni, too, questions her incentive in making *Momme*. According to Marina Warner’s article, “Child’s Play (Ready or Not, Here I Come),” the artist says this photograph is about her “ambivalence about her mother’s generation and its brand of femininity: ‘I don’t know how much to take from it and how much to reject. There’s always the temptation to hide behind her idea of femininity—because it still works.’”<sup>68</sup> This statement is just as much about the artist’s desire to hide behind her mother even as she is ambivalent about the hiding.

Because there are no significant female power images that counterbalance the phallic symbol, “the closest we have come to an image of feminine activity is motherhood and fertility,” says Benjamin.<sup>69</sup> And yet, these ‘activities’ are more like passive, idealized states of being; indeed, many women don’t even have a choice about becoming a mother, or they simply accept it as the next stage in their lives. Because of the traditional notion that motherhood is ‘natural,’ Benjamin notes that “the mother is not culturally articulated as a sexual object, one who actively desires something for herself.”<sup>70</sup> Women are routinely identified as someone’s wife or mother, but often lose their own identity within this exchange. Without her own identity and sexual agency, the female will always be an object in Freudian thought: she can be the phallic mother or the

---

<sup>67</sup> Isaak, 140.

<sup>68</sup> Marina Warner, “Child’s Play (Ready or Not, Here I Come),” in Antoni, *Janine Antoni*, 84.

<sup>69</sup> Benjamin, “Desire of One’s Own,” 83.

<sup>70</sup> Benjamin, “Desire of One’s Own,” 83.

object of desire, but she is never the subject of her own activity. This ‘naturalization’ of motherhood is a key factor in women’s lack of agency in traditional society and reinforces patriarchal power, leaving it unchallenged. And while Christianity has projected the fantasy of the Virgin Mary—both mother and virgin—onto all women, Antoni portrays her mother, a woman of a certain age, as the Madonna, transgressing assumptions and expectations of what motherhood should look like. Feminist interventions such as Antoni’s interrupt traditional thinking and shift emphasis away from the linear Freudian theory of masculine and feminine development based on the penis and the female’s lack, to one of relationships, the first of which is the mother/child one. Such polarities of male/female, active/passive, and nature/culture support a hegemonic culture that must always have a superior and an inferior. A feminist critique argues that individuality is more properly a balance of separation and connectedness, and of agency and relatedness.<sup>71</sup>

In *Eureka*, 1993, we see the next logical step from the pregnancy imagery of *Momme*: a womb and a birthsite. To create *Eureka*, Antoni had herself lowered into a bathtub full of lard, from which her body displaced an amount equivalent to her person. The artist then used the lard to make a large cube of soap (Figure 2.2). *Eureka* is based on the ancient Greek legend of Archimedes, who discovered the theory of displacement while bathing. The artist uses her body to help question and answer both the intellectual and the corporeal aspects of her work. Cappellazzo notes that “Antoni puts as much emphasis on the cerebral as on the physical intelligence of the piece. Body intelligence is as valuable as intellect for the artist. As a conceptual artist very much concerned with the physicality of her work, Antoni allows a multitude of readings and references for

---

<sup>71</sup> Benjamin, “Desire of One’s Own,” 82.

*Eureka*.”<sup>72</sup> While the piece itself is interesting to look at, closer study of this work is rewarded with further insight.

As in many of Antoni’s works, the viewer is presented with the finished piece, minus the performance: it is a tub of lard, showing the imprint of the artist’s body, and the cube of soap made from the displaced lard. These things are the relics of the performance, for which the artist was clearly present, yet we are most aware of her absence. Like Joseph Beuys, Antoni thinks of lard as a substance of the body, and of it has said: “I think of the tub of lard as a womb image because lard is a material of the body.”<sup>73</sup> Fat may be a repulsive substance to some, but it makes up approximately 25% of the average adult woman’s body. This lard, or fat, then, creates not only a womb image, but is also symbolic of what many women fight in a weight-obsessed culture. Notably, it is also a substance that women need to have a healthy pregnancy.

It is interesting to observe that in the monograph of Antoni’s work, there are photographs of this piece that give it another perspective. A viewer of just the relics that make up *Eureka* would see the tub with the impression of her body in it, and the cube of soap. The additional photographs provide an intimate look into the process of making this piece, giving it a performative aspect that is at first humorous to watch as Antoni, suspended from a harness and dressed in leotard and head-wrap, dives in, submerges herself in the lard, and then gets yanked out (Figure 2.3). The inclusion of the harness reminds one of endurance performance pieces like Schneemann’s *Up to and Including Her Limits* from 1973, or Matthew Barney’s early 1990s gallery performances that included his use of Vaseline, also a fat-like substance. However, if one views this piece

---

<sup>72</sup> Cappellazzo, 110.

<sup>73</sup> Cappellazzo, 113.

as the birth it symbolizes, then this is also a Creation scene and the images take on further meaning, the yanking out having perhaps more significant, Christian connotations. Certainly a reference to Eve's creation scenario in Genesis is not out of place, and is in keeping with the many biblical references we see in Antoni's work.

Too, this trace of the body is reminiscent of Mendieta, who used her body to document her being torn from the Mother Earth, which is of course a symbolic separation from the maternal. Antoni has said that, "Perhaps our first bath is the beginning of our bodies' separation from the mother and weaning into culture."<sup>74</sup> Antoni starts with the body, and then through the transformation of the lard—a substance of the body—she creates soap to wash herself with, thus, ending up back at the body. Of this process, Antoni says in an interview with Lloyd that "There is the idea of closing the circle, or starting somehow with my body and going somehow into the culture and then coming back to my body."<sup>75</sup>

Heartney also notes that Antoni's works with chocolate and lard involve "transformations, or to use the more religiously loaded term which [the artist] prefers, Transubstantiation," likening the changing of lard into soap with the Eucharist's conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.<sup>76</sup> *Eureka*, an image of birth, rebirth, or Creation, is also a Resurrection. The exhibition of the relics includes the tub of lard with the impression of Antoni's body and the cube of soap with which she washed herself. According to Heartney, these materials recall "the reunion with their glorified bodies which the faithful will experience at the end of time."<sup>77</sup> This desire to be

---

<sup>74</sup> Cappellazzo, 113.

<sup>75</sup> Lloyd, 12.

<sup>76</sup> Heartney, *Postmodern Heretics*, 161.

<sup>77</sup> Heartney, *Postmodern Heretics*, 163.

enveloped in the warmth of the womb only to be removed is like a birth or a rebirth, and the soap is there to complete the cleansing ritual.

With *2038*, from 2000, an image made seven years after *Eureka*, Antoni is back in the tub and presents herself as the image of the Madonna (Figure 2.4). In *2038*, Antoni, who did a residency at the Wanås Foundation, a rural medieval estate in Knislinge, Sweden, that includes a castle and a fully functioning dairy farm, is bathing in a tub that is used as a trough for cows. Here the artist is in the maternal role, and it appears that she will feed the cow who, as a commercial producer of the milk available on every grocery shelf and in every grade-school cafeteria, feeds the world. While the viewer may be initially incredulous at this scene, the artist's downcast eyes and delicate features play off the largeness and docility of the bovine creature, and both reveal compassion and grace. *2038*, then, is a commentary on the nurturing role of the mother-child relationship and the bond that is created through the nursing process, but also an observation of the production of the goods and services that are opaque to the unthinking consumer. Antoni explains that she "wanted the tenderness of the image to exist in contrast to this reality."<sup>78</sup> As the cow dips to drink, to nurse at her breast, Antoni is a calm, serene, even beatific picture of womanhood in sharp contrast to the creature whose tag, says the artist, "both names it and reveals its identity as a biological machine."<sup>79</sup>

In comparing the role of the Madonna, a larger than life woman who nursed the infant Jesus and therefore, within the Christian world, humanity, to the more earthly roles of mother and cow, Antoni stresses how they both provide sustenance. But the artist also conflates their positions in a world where a breast-feeding mother is generally hidden

---

<sup>78</sup> Princenthal, "Mother's Milk," 128.

<sup>79</sup> Princenthal, "Mother's Milk," 128.

away from the public eye. Antoni has noted that while the Virgin Mary is admired for many things, she wasn't really allowed to do much in the way of bodily functions; she certainly didn't have sex or any other appetites, but she did nurse her child. And in this sincere portrait, the artist presents herself as an image of a nurturing mother giving sustenance to another. They know not of separation, or of loss. In this moment they are bonded, as surely as any mother and child.

In *Lick and Lather*, 1993, Antoni again enacts a maternal role, but here she also introduces the theme of separation. For *Lick and Lather* Antoni cast a mold of herself—a classical bust, 24 inches high—then cast seven busts in chocolate, and seven busts in soap (Figure 2.5).<sup>80</sup> She then resculpted the images by licking the chocolate, and by bathing with the soap. Washing and licking are very loving activities, like taking care of a baby, but the artist transformed the images—her image—through the process. Feeding herself with herself, washing herself with herself, these are nurturing acts, but in performing the maternal, Antoni slowly erased her self through these acts, her own touch defamiliarizing her self much like a woman's sense of self is often subsumed by her identity as a mother. It is an interesting idea of having to 'unmake to make'—creating something by destroying it—which the artist explores in many of her works. Antoni also likens this process to that of the infant's earliest explorations, saying that "From the beginning, I've been interested in the fact that a baby puts everything in its mouth in order to know it. And sometimes, through that process, destroys it."<sup>81</sup> With this statement Antoni implicitly describes Freud's theory of the oral stage of childhood development in which

---

<sup>80</sup> Seven heads refers to Polycleitos's 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. canon of the ideal mode of human proportion.

<sup>81</sup> Bayliss, 167.

the mouth is the locus of pleasure and identification, which the licking of the chocolate clearly evokes, even as she enacts the nurturing actions of the mother.

Rosalind Minsky observes that in Kleinian theory, the baby's first experience of another is the mother, and it is her breast with which the baby first identifies the mother. Therefore, "loving and hating phantasies of the breast are the baby's first experience of relating to the mother."<sup>82</sup> This sense of 'good' or 'bad' breast is incorporated into the baby's own identity of feeling good or bad: when the baby is happy, fed, and feeling secure, the breast is good; when it is unhappy, hungry and anxious, the breast is bad. Thus, because the breast is the mother and also the child's own identity, the child must maintain an inner 'good' breast with which it can build a self which will be able to keep it safe from the 'bad' breast' or other external 'bad' objects.<sup>83</sup> This, according to Klein, is the first beginnings of the self. Klein's work, says Minsky, is concerned "primarily with how the child copes with what it assumes as the loss of the mother when she is absent. Significantly, the breast replaces Freud's phallus as the object of most importance to the formation of the child's sexual identity."<sup>84</sup>

With *Lick and Lather*, Antoni also evokes another form of childhood identity formation, one that occurs through vision. In his theory of the "mirror stage" of a child's development, Lacan stresses that it is through another's eyes that the infant first develops a sense of self, by 'seeing' itself reflected there. However, this sense of self is indelibly tied to the other, as the infant is not yet aware that it is a separate being. In most cases, this other is the mother who, as the primary caregiver, is the one who 'mirrors' the infant's identity back upon it. Lajer-Burcharth reminds us that in Lacan's mirror stage

---

<sup>82</sup> Minsky, 83.

<sup>83</sup> Minsky, 84.

<sup>84</sup> Minsky, 84.

theory this narcissism is the first act of self-identification.<sup>85</sup> Lacan's theory also involves a psychological split, which Antoni portrays in this work: the images of the contrasting busts reinforce the notion that the self emerges by dividing against itself; thus, loss and separation result.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, as Lajer-Burcharth says, the process of identification is "envisioned by Antoni as both productive and destructive of identity, securing and undermining its stability."<sup>87</sup> In both unmaking and making her self, the artist probes and negotiates the confines of the material body and the constructed self.

With *Lick and Lather*, Antoni embraces this narcissism, utilizing it as another tool with which to explore her identity. Lajer-Burcharth notes that while Wilke and other women artists were criticized for being narcissistic, "Antoni self-consciously declares narcissism to be the very subject of her inquiry, visualizing it, moreover, as a specific psychosexual process."<sup>88</sup> Thus, the artist not only performs the nurturing acts of the mother, but she re-enacts the self-awareness identification process of the child. In the belabored process of licking and lathering—up to eight hours at a time she has said—Antoni is surely imitating the importance of the mother's caretaking. And just as importantly, the artist is exploring her own identity as the developing child. By confronting the critique of narcissism 'head-on,' Antoni "also appropriates it as one of the mechanisms of aesthetic self-generation."<sup>89</sup> In a surprising critique, Saul Ostrow complains in the article, "Spotlight: Janine Antoni," that while he knows "we are to fantasize about Antoni compulsively licking and scrubbing away" the sculptures in *Lick*

---

<sup>85</sup> Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, "Antoni's Difference," in Antoni, *Janine Antoni*, 62, 75n18. This 2000 essay is a revised and shorter version of the author's 1998 article of the same name.

<sup>86</sup> Lajer-Burcharth 1998, 167n28.

<sup>87</sup> Lajer-Burcharth 1998, 152.

<sup>88</sup> Lajer-Burcharth 1998, 153.

<sup>89</sup> Lajer-Burcharth 1998, 154.



*and Lather*, he thinks they “could have just as easily been realized using a hot air gun.”<sup>90</sup>

It’s an intriguing suggestion; however, the point is that that is decidedly not how they were made. The sculptures were painstakingly made by the artist’s own hands to demonstrate the emotional and physical bonds that are employed in the care and development of another, that other being both her self and her identity of self.

In addition to these investigations, Antoni is also playing with the traditions of representation. Placed on pedestals, her busts are arranged in a classical manner; facing each other, the installation evokes traditional, columned halls where, however, images of women were rarely included. Classical busts usually depicted powerful men who have names and a written history, whereas women, as the artist notes, were usually portrayed as allegorical representations of “hope and charity and love.”<sup>91</sup> Yet with her untraditional materials and methods, Antoni is clearly subverting the very classicism she imitates. The artist confronts her own image, erases it even, and then sets it upon literal pedestals of historicity, both refuting its legitimacy and claiming it at the same time. In Jane Blocker’s book, *What the Body Cost*, the author also notes that Antoni, in using the representation of herself, “pulls her own image back from the rigorous effects of art, from the made-world of objects, and reintegrates it with the body where its manifestations are metabolic.”<sup>92</sup> *Lick and Lather* is an investigation of the body where the artist is at once probing the interior self by examining her identity, and the exterior self by examining the historicity of culture and society.

---

<sup>90</sup> Saul Ostrow and Andrew Renton, “Spotlight: Janine Antoni,” *Flash Art* 177 (Summer 1994): 119. In this article, the two authors report on two separate Antoni works; Renton discusses *Slumber*, 1994, a work not included in this paper.

<sup>91</sup> *Art:21*, PBS.

<sup>92</sup> Jane Blocker, “Mouths,” *What the Body Cost* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 50.

With *Wean*, from 1989-90, the artist introduces a more physical aspect of the process of separation. Made quite early in the artist's career, *Wean* forms a key link in this series of works that address the mother/child relationship, and with this piece, Antoni foreshadowed much of her work dealing with this relationship and the separation inherent in it (Figure 2.6). *Wean* is a series of plaster impressions made directly into the gallery wall: of the artist's breast, her nipple, three baby bottle nipples, and the plastic packaging of the baby bottle nipples.<sup>93</sup> As the title indicates, the work is concerned with the process of separation—the moment when the child becomes less dependent on the mother. Antoni's sculpture demonstrates the connection between the mother's nurturing and the child's need; with the inclusion of the machine-made nipples and packaging, she also implicates consumer culture in the weaning process of separation. This is similar to how the artist used the cow in *2038* to reference the ways in which consumers take cultural products and services for granted with no thought to how they are procured. In Richards's interview with the artist, Antoni makes clear that *Wean* became the foundation for all of her subsequent work by saying: "It mapped out a certain territory that all my work would deal with from that point on."<sup>94</sup> Indeed, in a recent lecture, the artist opened her talk with this image and a similar statement, underscoring the importance this piece has had on her work for more than sixteen years.<sup>95</sup>

Antoni has also said that she was "thinking about stages of separation from the mother, as well as the separation we experience from our own bodies, as we are weaned

---

<sup>93</sup> Princenthal also notes that "Duchamp's cast body-part fragments and accessories seem relevant to Antoni, including especially his 1947 *Please Touch*, a female nipple shown in relief on the cover of an exhibition catalogue." Princenthal, "Mother's Milk," 128n3.

<sup>94</sup> Richards, 227.

<sup>95</sup> Antoni, Artist Talk, GSU.

into culture.”<sup>96</sup> *Wean* very clearly traces Antoni’s initial attempt to carve out this space for herself, and of the mother’s and the daughter’s loss in this necessary act of separation. This work also inaugurated the artist’s investigations into how everyday bodily activities achieve cultural significance. Lajer-Burcharth observes that, like Mary Kelly’s influential 1973-1979 work, *Post-Partum Document*, these objects are relics of an investment in the body. For Kelly, it is a document of the mother’s separation; for Antoni, it documents the daughter’s separation.<sup>97</sup>

The breast—a conspicuously objectified symbol of woman—is represented in *Wean* as the human, functional body part it is, alongside its machine-made substitute. If the impression of the breast and the nipple are regarded as sexualized, then that perception is immediately recontextualized as soon as the latex nipples come into view.<sup>98</sup> The impressions of the natural breast and nipple are in sharp contrast to the impressions of the latex nipples and plastic packaging, which put cultural signifiers of the sexualized feminine and the nurturing maternal in conflict with each other. This allows viewers to speculate about their own notions of what symbolizes Woman and Mother, and why society usually separates the two.

Contemporary Western culture lacks power-based symbols and metaphors for woman. Society generally gives us either hyper-sexed fantasy images or obedient housewife-moms—both of which are a woman who lacks a phallus and is therefore ‘Other’ in a patriarchal-dominant culture. In Western culture, the role of mother is non-sexualized to retain the purity of the identification with the Virgin Mary. Yet the breasts are regarded as sexual objects, and they are commodified in the majority of films,

---

<sup>96</sup> Richards, 227.

<sup>97</sup> Lajer-Burcharth 1998, 144.

<sup>98</sup> Cappellazzo, 109.

advertisements, and products that are marketed in our culture.<sup>99</sup> Antoni presents us with alternative symbolic images which help women create an identity and maternal lineage of their own, outside the privilege of the phallus and patriarchal culture. As Lajer-Burcharth observes, Antoni places herself in “relation to the feminist aesthetic practice of the previous decade: positioning her as a daughter, it maps out the parameters of her artistic explorations in a psychosexual sense, as a critical inquiry into her own beginnings as a subject.”<sup>100</sup> With this key early work, Antoni invokes a weaning from the natural mother; however, with this separation from the biological mother comes a furthering of the identity of the self.

In *Coddle*, from 1998, the artist again presents herself as a Madonna-figure; however, now she is Mother, and she nurtures her self (Figure 2.7). Cradling her own leg, Antoni is a Madonna and Child image in solo; wearing the blue and red garments symbolic of the Virgin Mary, she sits barefoot upon the same silk-upholstered sofa she utilized for her mother’s portrait in *Momme*. Again, the Catholic-inspired religious imagery is important to Antoni as it will strike a familiar chord with viewers, and Heartney suggests that both *Momme* and *Coddle* use “the language of religious art” and the mysteries of the Transformation and Incarnation to probe the link between mother and child.<sup>101</sup>

As tenderly as she might cradle an infant, Antoni gazes upon her self. Here, the artist has placed herself at the center of the image, and she is the focal point of the

---

<sup>99</sup> Mary Yalom has written an interesting account of the breast, exploring images and perceptions ranging over a period of twenty-five thousand years, and considering the implications of religion, psychology, politics, and the arts. Yalom says that the breast varies in reality according to its beholder: “Babies see food. Men see sex. Doctors see disease. Businesspeople see dollar signs.” Mary Yalom, *A History of the Breast* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998), 275.

<sup>100</sup> Lajer-Burcharth 1998, 144, 147.

<sup>101</sup> Heartney, *Postmodern Heretics*, 161.

picture; however, the absence of a child indicates that there is either desire or loss of another. This kind of poignant moment is difficult to find in cultural imagery, either popular or historical, but is very real in many women's lives. Again it references a Christian image that will reverberate with viewers: the Pietà. Like the Virgin Mary holding the body of her dead son, *Coddle* portrays a loss so deep that the artist has no one to comfort her but her own self. "It's an image of absence," says Antoni. "It's about what's not there."<sup>102</sup> Many women deal with this type of loss, whether it's the loss of a child, the loss of a never-conceived child, or the loss of the bond the mother has with a child. This is a reality of motherhood: it is sometimes marked by pain, anguish, and loss, which is in contrast to the rosy picture that Western culture often markets to its consumers about the maternal role. This image of what's not there lends another aspect to the perception of motherhood, and with *Coddle*, Antoni illustrates the need for loss to be more recognized within our social framework.

Perhaps also, Antoni is invoking the loss that the child feels. Painful feelings of fear and anxiety over losing the mother are usually furthered by feelings of guilt at the fantasies of destroying her, because she is also the 'bad' breast which is sometimes absent and which induces anxiety. In Freudian thought, this guilt is associated with the Oedipal phase, which involves fantasies of destroying the father. Minsky notes that in Klein's theory, "painful feelings of guilt and anxiety result from the baby's phantasied, murderous attacks on the mother. They occur [early], at between three and six months, but they represent a major turning point for the baby as it enters what for Klein is the all-important *depressive position*."<sup>103</sup> This, not Freud's Oedipal crisis, represents the root of

---

<sup>102</sup> Sollins and Sollins, 80.

<sup>103</sup> Minsky, 88.

Kleinian theory and the child's first sense of self. With positive, loving feelings the baby can repair the damage to its internalized bad objects and its external world, as represented by the mother, and "its inner world can be transformed by re-populating it with good objects—a restored and repaired mother whose loss can be endured."<sup>104</sup> Thus, through these positive, loving experiences with the mother, the child comes to trust and internalize the external world, one of both good and bad, and it will have negotiated the depressive position successfully. Notably, this is also the necessary step to achieving identity of oneself and separation from the mother.

With this separation, the child will also be able to develop successfully its own, healthy identity, one which repairs rather than destroys, as in Freud's Oedipal complex. However, notes Minsky, "Klein took the view that most of us never entirely resolve the depressive position throughout our lives."<sup>105</sup> Thus, as infants, as children, as adolescents, and on into adulthood, Kleinian theory holds that we negotiate this depressive position of separation continually. Successful negotiation is rewarded with an identity of self, one that is able to navigate a world of pain and loss. Klein's depressive position, says Minsky, replaces Freud's Oedipal crisis.<sup>106</sup>

Continuing this theme of loss, is Antoni's *Saddle*, 2000, which was made at the same time as *2038* at the Wanås Foundation (Figure 2.8). In creating this piece, the artist first made a cast of her body on the floor, positioning herself on her hands and knees. She then draped a fresh cow hide over this casting, molding and forming it to the contours of her body. The result is a figure that is reminiscent of the bodies—both the artist's and the cow's—that once were present. It is at once arresting and mournful, fascinating and

---

<sup>104</sup> Minsky, 88.

<sup>105</sup> Minsky, 88.

<sup>106</sup> Minsky, 90.

sorrowful. Because it is on the floor, down on all fours, so to speak, it is removed from the hierarchal level of the gallery pedestal; we want to touch it, and we can feel the presence of the bodies without even doing so.

Antoni has said that “On the one hand this sculpture equates my skin with the cow’s, but on the other hand, it is reminiscent of the womb and being surrounded by the body of the mother.”<sup>107</sup> In creating this piece, Antoni makes a space for herself: a womb to which she can return. Her body has formed a space that allows her own body to take shelter in and be comforted; the cow, a gentle creature, has provided the skin for this nurturing place. This is a womb image that the artist has created of her self and for her self, but like *Coddle*, it clearly speaks of loss. The presences of both the artist and of the animal create a shell of absence. Notably, Antoni said that she felt that she made “a ghost of myself.”<sup>108</sup> This lack becomes a placeholder for the artist’s desire for the mother. And yet, even as the viewer feels this absence, the figure is not in the fetal position of an infant in the womb, but in the crawling position of a child that is becoming more mobile and thus more independent of the mother.

With *Cradle*, 1999, the process of “unmaking to make” is again put into play, as is Antoni’s continued negotiation of the separation and connection of the mother/child relationship. *Cradle* is made from a construction tractor bucket cut in half, with one half forming the outer vessel and the other eight parts made from the melted down metal of the other half (Figure 2.9). The construction tractor, which is usually an earth-moving apparatus of destruction, is here converted into objects of nurture: each of the eight pieces is an element which both holds and is held, and they nestle and support each other. These

---

<sup>107</sup> Princenthal, “Mother’s Milk,” 126.

<sup>108</sup> Sollins and Sollins, 79.

cast objects are: an agricultural bucket, an escalator bucket, a snow shovel, a garden shovel, a fireplace shovel, a serving spoon, a soup spoon, and a baby spoon. Each piece acts as the host for the previous piece, and each symbolically represents the functions of carrying, holding, giving, serving, and feeding—all of which closely parallel the caregiving actions of motherhood. Yet nurturing is a very tender and physical feeling of holding, loving, and giving, and the position of being held makes one comforted, vulnerable, and helpless, all of which is in sharp contrast to the origins of the piece: a construction tractor, a hard metal and aggressive piece of equipment that claws at the earth. Perhaps this action is not unlike the artist's own gnawing at a block of chocolate or lard, albeit in a larger scale.

The piece culminates in the looped baby spoon, which, like the baby bottle, is a symbol of the child's independence from the mother, as it is the first utensil with which a child learns to feed itself. *Cradle*, then, acts as a continuation of *Wean*, and as Cappellazzo has observed, “the baby spoon [denotes] the next stage of feeding after the latex nipple.”<sup>109</sup> While all the other elements hold and are held, the littlest spoon is the last to be cradled. It represents the next stage in the feeding of the child after weaning: the child learns to feed itself and is further separated from the mother. This connection to, and severing of ties with the mother is a rich vein to be explored. Many women, as mothers themselves, relate to both roles now that they are both mother and child. Princenthal notes that Antoni cites a biblical scene when she refers to *Cradle*: Leonardo da Vinci's drawing of Saint Anne and the Virgin Mary. The artist says that “da Vinci has

---

<sup>109</sup> Cappellazzo, 114.



captured the poignant moment of a mother relating to her daughter as a mother. . . . Mary is both mother and child.”<sup>110</sup>

Interestingly, *Cradle* does not involve Antoni’s body. All of her works until this point—and most others going forward, as we shall see—involve the artist’s body in some fashion, whether she is performing in the piece, photographing herself, or using her body to cast an object. *Cradle*, while it was certainly conceived of and produced by the artist, does not contain imagery of the artist’s body in the work. Perhaps *Cradle*, in this aspect, denotes a very strong sense of separation; the child who can feed itself is independent indeed. Yet in choosing the little looped spoon as the object that signifies this independence—it is the only object which doesn’t also hold another—the artist “exposes the tension between the need for separation and the need to be held.”<sup>111</sup> Like *Coddle*, *Cradle* exposes a hole in our social fabric—one that denies loss in privileging the more satisfactory attributes of the nurturing mother as a social norm and signifier in order to mask the pain of loss.

Having coddled, cradled, and weaned, with *Umbilical*, from 2000, Antoni creates a relic that eternally freezes the mother/child connection (Figure 2.10). It is a sculpture cast in silver of the inside of the artist’s mouth and of her mother’s hand, the two connected by a spoon from the family silver. Literally like the figure of speech, ‘from hand to mouth,’ it connects a personal, intimate element of herself with the mother who bore her in a reverential, ‘reliclike’ fashion. It is like a fossil but, cast in silver, it is also likened to precious family keepsakes. Here then, is another aspect to the push-pull relationship between mother and child: for as the biological umbilical is cut, and the child

---

<sup>110</sup> Princenthal, “Mother’s Milk,” 128.

<sup>111</sup> Princenthal, “Mother’s Milk,” 128.

is weaned and learns to feed itself, it becomes independent of the mother. While the physical bonds weaken, the emotional bonds strengthen; made manifest in silver, the bonds are durable and cannot be severed; her mother's willingness to participate is also notable in its affirmation of this bond's strength. Like *Cradle*, *Umbilical* is fashioned from metal. Yet here Antoni returned to hers and her mother's bodies to make the cast object. Perhaps it is simply a demonstration of the feeding that is inferred with *Cradle*'s spoon. Or perhaps *Umbilical* is another representation of the 'bite,' which was so inherent to the sculpting of *Gnaw*. Both interpretations seem to have resonance. While the object can be interpreted as a logical follow-up to the inferred independence of the looped baby spoon, does the artist also bite the hand that feeds her? The bite may sum up Antoni's relationship to art history, but it can also be read as an assertion of the aggressive impulses that Klein tells us the child feels. Just as Nixon observed that Antoni's *Gnaw* denoted a "shift from speaking to biting, from linguistics to orality . . . a turn from the signifier to the drives,"<sup>112</sup> in *Umbilical* we see perhaps the physical enactment of these drives.

Minsky notes that Klein's theory describes a 'depressive anxiety,' in which the infant's aggressive impulses and desires toward the bad breast (mother) are now felt to be a danger to the good breast (mother) as well."<sup>113</sup> And because the infant's identity is still tied in with the mother's, the child's aggression is directed at both the mother and the self. This process is another type of splitting: the child unconsciously separates the 'good' fantasy object—the mother/breast, from the 'bad' one—anything that separates the child from the mother/breast including the mother, in its internal world. According to Minsky,

---

<sup>112</sup> Nixon, "Gnaw and Lick," 275.

<sup>113</sup> Minsky, 87.

it does this by “splitting itself into two; usually it is the ‘bad’ part of this self which is disowned and projected onto something in the external world. This is initially the mother’s breast which consequently becomes ‘bad’ because it now carries part of the baby’s ‘bad’ anxiety-ridden identity.”<sup>114</sup> As the child continues to develop, it learns to perceive its mother as a whole person, and not just a breast-object, and “learns that both loving and hating experiences can be integrated and co-exist in the same person, in both its mother and itself.”<sup>115</sup> This process allows the child to realize that positive and negative behaviors do not necessarily exist independently of each other, but are somewhat fused together, in both itself and in others. In contrast to Freud’s theory of a child’s development, Kleinian theory maintains that aggression—and the efforts to suppress it—is the main psychic struggle, not sexuality. This shift in emphasis, along with the allowance of opposing behaviors to coexist, collapses the binary Freudian theory of the castration complex, in which masculine and feminine development is based on the penis and the lack, with agency and passivity being the developmental and polar outcome.<sup>116</sup> In this way, the child begins to learn to identify others and their behaviors, and to negotiate relationships with them, via the same instincts of love and hate that it feels for itself.

Antoni creates another umbilical connection in *Moor*, 2001, but this time with rope, which suggests a more flexible position than the hard metal of the previous two objects (Figure 2.11). This is perhaps in keeping with the child’s new experiences and development, learned from the preceding stage. Rope, like the chocolate or lard that she exploited in many previous pieces, begins another avenue of exploration for Antoni.

*Moor* is handmade rope, made from things collected from the artist’s friends and family.

---

<sup>114</sup> Minsky, 85.

<sup>115</sup> Minsky, 87.

<sup>116</sup> Nixon, “Gnaw and Lick,” 276.

She asked people to give her items for this purpose, and later realized that many of the things were from people who had passed away, so this making of the rope is like a spiritual recycling and a way for these objects to have and represent another life. Antoni takes great pleasure in seeing visitors look at the rope, notice details like shirt buttons, some feathers, or a necklace sticking out, and then consult the materials list and realize what the rope is made from. These objects form immediate connections to those they represent, and it is an enduring life-line that unites an unrelated group into a unified whole via the artist.

*Moor* was created specifically for an exhibition in Stockholm, where Antoni tied one end of the rope to a column in the gallery, then took it “out the window, over the balcony, over a street, to a tiny little lifeboat that was floating in the center of the harbor.”<sup>117</sup> This description by the artist, when more closely read, is likened to a small child tied to the mother figure. Antoni validates this observation, and says that, “There is a connection to my mother and the work. I guess I could say that about most of my pieces. But I guess the rope is an umbilical cord.”<sup>118</sup> This umbilical is both fragile and enduring, yet flexible enough to reach out into the world, signifying a maturation of the bond. While the rope connects the signified mother and child, it extends beyond the boundaries of the enclosed gallery—the artist’s space, another womb, even—into the community at large. This is like the crawling stage, where the child begins to explore its environment away from the only world it has known prior: its mother. Indeed, in *Moor*, the book Antoni produced in 2003, the artist expands on the item list and turns writings and anecdotes from her friends and family about the donated materials into a living poem

---

<sup>117</sup> Sollins and Sollins, 81.

<sup>118</sup> Sollins and Sollins, 81.

of sorts, uniting words like she joined the materials, weaving sentences like she twisted the rope, and creating intimate connections with the world outside the familial unit.

In a departure for the artist, Antoni created *Mary, Star of the Sea*, 1999, a performance piece for herself and another, which furthers the artist's investigations into connections. Antoni designed an object to represent parallel religious personas in their respective faiths: Yemanjá, a powerful Candomblé *orixá*, and the Virgin Mary, a Christian saint. The artist created and sewed two dresses together, so that when performing, each costume would represent the respective figure that was visible (Figure 2.12). This piece was created in conjunction with the Projeto Axé Ballet Company in Salvador, Brazil, a project Antoni worked on as part of France Morin's *The Quiet in the Land* series of community-based art and education projects.<sup>119</sup> Morin says in her article, "The Quiet in the Land: Everyday Life, Contemporary Art, and Projeto Axé," that the project empowers the children of the community by "transforming their transgressive energy from a force of destruction into one of creation."<sup>120</sup> The children of Projeto Axé, an organization founded in 1990, agree to attend school and abide by rules, and in return they receive meals, health care and counseling; they also earn income to replace what they lose by not working the streets. Indeed, it is their transgression that Antoni says "was a revelation" when she found it to be the common ground between her and the children, and she says that "As an artist, I have come to know this as my role in society, as well as what I have to offer."<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup> Morin has organized *The Quiet in the Land* projects in Sabbathday Lake, Maine, 1995-1997; Salvador, Brazil, 1999-2000; and the current project in Luang Prabang, Laos, begun 2004. Antoni is a participant in all three of these projects.

<sup>120</sup> France Morin, "The Quiet in the Land: Everyday Life, Contemporary Art, and Projeto Axé," *Art Journal* 59, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 5-6.

<sup>121</sup> Morin, 5. Antoni further says that "transgression has always been the position of these former street kids, and it has given them knowledge and insight that I, as a sheltered and privileged child, did not have. I

Antoni performed the role of the Virgin Mary, and Vanessa Fabian Conceição dos Santos, a dancer from the ballet company, performed as Yemanjá. As the women danced they transformed back and forth, from Virgin Mary to Yemanjá and from Yemanjá to Virgin Mary. At the moment of each transformation a complex figure incorporating concepts from both religions emerged: Catholicism's Transubstantiation, and Candomblé's *giça*, a type of trance wherein the *orixá* enters the body.<sup>122</sup> Morin observes that Antoni's and Santos's performance explored the syncretic identities of the two beings, and that their personas have been "historically fused together because both represent sacred love, purity, and faith."<sup>123</sup> In further describing the performance, Morin notes that "Santos performed as Yemanjá while Antoni was invisible beneath the former's skirts, and Antoni performed as the Virgin Mary while Santos was invisible beneath hers. Then, the two performers removed themselves from the object and each put on the other's clothes."<sup>124</sup>

Thus, Antoni as the Virgin Mary, the ultimate Mother figure, is inextricably attached to Yemanjá, forming a fused bond between female deities. The artist is bound to and one with Mary, the eternal Mother, even as she is bound to and one with Santos as Yemanjá. Being physically bound to each other forms another umbilical of a kind, perhaps a mother/mother relationship. However, when the one is invisibly submerged beneath the other, it is like the child returning to that mother's womb. Effectively, Antoni plays dual roles here, and is visible, emerging or hidden, depending on the moment of

---

have told them that their power is not in denying their past, but in using that knowledge and spirit of transgression to make real change in society." From *The Quiet in the Land*, Art Education Projects, New York, NY, 2006, <http://www.thequietintheland.org>.

<sup>122</sup> *Quiet in the Land*, Art Education Projects.

<sup>123</sup> Morin, 7.

<sup>124</sup> Morin, 7.

transformation. This concept of the hidden has a similarity to *Momme*, yet while she remained invisible as the unborn child in that work, the artist performs both mother and child roles here. To further the religious symbology, there is also a likening to the Virgin Mary as the *Misericordia*, or Madonna of Mercy, who holds out her robes to enfold all into the church, an image best personified by Piero della Francesca's 1445 altarpiece in Sansepolcro, Italy (Figure 2.13). Perhaps in this sense, in *Mary, Star of the Sea*, Antoni is enacting the roles of mother, and the born and unborn child; performing in the womb and giving birth; and sheltering the at-risk children with which she felt a kinship. In this piece, perhaps, is the culmination of many of the objectives the artist is investigating: how to find her identity in and amongst the many roles a woman plays, as both a mother and a child.

While learning to make the rope for *Moor*, Antoni thought it would be interesting to walk on the rope she was making. That would come later, in the next piece to be discussed, *To Draw a Line*, 2003, but for *Touch*, 2002, the artist did learn to walk a tightrope, and created a video piece to document the act (Figure 2.14). Antoni produced *Touch* in the Bahamas, the location of her childhood home. The artist had a rope leveled on the beach, just above the height of the horizon, so that as she walks along, the rope dips to it just as she touches that illusory line. More important, Antoni notes that learning to walk the rope was a life lesson: as she struggled to learn to be in balance, what she found was that she “was getting more comfortable with being out of balance.”<sup>125</sup>

It's significant that the artist returned to her childhood home to enact this piece. Of this place Antoni says: “I went home to the Bahamas, to the beach that was directly in

---

<sup>125</sup> *Art:21*, PBS.

front of the house that I grew up in.”<sup>126</sup> This going home, this return to the familial scene allowed the artist the space and atmosphere to explore in a comfort zone. *Touch* signifies the toddler stage of childhood: the child who learns to walk is able to move about on its own, but there can be significant repercussions such as falling, getting lost, and being separated from the mother. The maturing child is not only curious about how and why they can get there, but what ‘there’ is there. It’s a big world that a child has the power to discover, and *Touch*, significantly shot outdoors, is in direct contrast to another video, *Ready or Not, Here I Come*, which I will discuss in the next chapter, that takes place indoors. In *Ready or Not* the artist demonstrates a need to be seen as independent; however, the video culminates in Antoni returning to the safety of the mother’s womb. In *Touch*, the artist is exploring her environment alone, poised to enter the world on her own terms. According to Antoni, the horizon is “a very hopeful image, it’s about the future, about imagination,” but it’s not a place that actually exists.<sup>127</sup> *Touch* is about this desire for the impossible, and in examining that desire, getting it for just a moment and then having it taken it away—much as a child learns the daily lessons of life and how to negotiate independence.

*To Draw a Line*, from 2003, marks a continuation of Antoni’s artistic explorations in *Moor* and *Touch*. For *Moor*, the artist learned to make a rope; for *Touch*, she learned how to walk a rope. For *To Draw a Line*, Antoni walked a rope that she made (Figure 2.15). This piece represents the next childhood stage of exploration and learning, and ‘learning from our mistakes.’ We’re not supposed to fall, but inevitably, we learn as much if not more from our mishaps as from our accomplishments. As Antoni learned

---

<sup>126</sup> *Art:21*, PBS.

<sup>127</sup> *Art:21*, PBS.



from *Touch*, while she was trying to learn to be in balance what she came away with was a more comfortable level of being out of balance. “Balance is this ideal state we have in our minds, we are always striving for,” Antoni says, “whereas it is only a moment we pass through from a general state of imbalance.”<sup>128</sup> In this way, the artist reframes our understanding of falling as an inevitable aspect of life and change.

In addition to the performative aspects of *To Draw a Line*, Antoni decided to investigate the sculptural implications of the tightrope; of highest importance was the making of the rope. In Linda Weintraub’s article, “On the Tightrope,” many details about the rope-making are spelled out. For example, the artist and her assistant spun 1,800 kilos of raw hemp into strands, and then twisted it using an antique rope-making device. They then joined 120 feet of hand-made rope with 1200 feet of machine-made rope, with the splice at the centerpoint of the rope that the artist would walk on.<sup>129</sup> Making things by hand is essential to the artist, as has been evidenced in many of her works. “We have lost the connection of where things come from,” she says, and the artist strives to make things from natural fibers and by hand whenever possible. For *To Draw a Line*, in learning how to make rope, Antoni first learned to test its strength by breaking it, as an advisor told her that “You have to break something to know how to make it stronger.”<sup>130</sup> From this experience the artist learned that “that is how you discover the limit of possibility.”<sup>131</sup>

While this piece was initiated as a performance, it is meant to be viewed as a sculptural installation. I viewed the exhibition a few days after its opening in 2003, but recently viewed a videotape of the artist’s performance on opening night. I did indeed get

---

<sup>128</sup> Ginger Danto, “Life as a Tightrope: Weave, Walk and Fall,” *New York Times*, August 24, 2003, 23.

<sup>129</sup> Linda Weintraub, “On the Tightrope,” *Tema Celeste* 99 (September/October 2003): 64.

<sup>130</sup> Danto, 23.

<sup>131</sup> Weintraub, 65.

caught up in the drama of the ‘will she or won’t she’ aspects of it, even though I knew Antoni would, of course, fall (Figure 2.16). Yet the installation is a massive, awesome thing with enough drama to carry its own visual weight. The contrast between the industrial-size steel reels and the cloud-like hemp that contains an imprint of the artist’s body is impressive. I do admire Jerry Saltz’s description of this 4000-pound hemp heap as a “super smelly über-Oldenbergian Golden Fleece,” in his exhibition review in *The Village Voice*, “The Artist Who Fell to Earth.” However, Saltz’s critique centers on the fact that he believes Antoni’s works demand her performance within them. Saltz says he’s a fan of the artist, even though her work can be “unvisual and overly cerebral.” When she’s on, she’s on, he says, but “when she’s off, there’s more to think about than to look at.”<sup>132</sup> These statements are excellent examples of the kind of critique leveled at many female artists by critics uncomfortable with the disruption of the privileged gaze. Saltz is being forced to investigate the artist’s works, not just look at them; to participate in their meaning, not just take pleasure in voyeurism. Only the lucky few who were present for the performance got to see her fall, he said, and she “fell well.”<sup>133</sup> But Antoni wants the viewer to realize that there is more to the work than the moment of the performance, hence her decision to display just the relics. This piece, like the others I have outlined here, demonstrates another linkage between the mother and child, and an indication that the child is growing up. The same material that held her up on the rope also cushioned her fall, much like the mother that gives birth to the child must allow it to be independent, but is also there for support when she’s needed.

---

<sup>132</sup> Jerry Saltz, “The Artist Who Fell to Earth,” *The Village Voice* 48, no. 40 (October 2003): C80.

<sup>133</sup> Saltz, C80. Saltz also mentions a cell phone that went off as being the catalyst for when Antoni fell, but the artist insists that when she was up on the rope, she was fully in the moment and the sound of the cell phone was not what triggered her fall. “[The article] created a meaning that wasn’t there,” says Antoni; from an informal talk at Georgia State University, April 6, 2006.

But the artist struggled with the need to not fall. Antoni spoke with the press in advance of the performance, and in Ginger Danto's article, "Life as a Tightrope: Weave, Walk and Fall," the artist said that she had decided to include a fall, because "what you should not do from a tightrope is fall. It's the ultimate thing to offer."<sup>134</sup> The artist found that learning to fall put her in a similar state of uncertainty as her other artistic endeavors, and says that, "Putting yourself in that uncertain place [is] the only way for me to make interesting art."<sup>135</sup> Perhaps the 'fall' also alludes to another Fall, one which is again in the Christian lexicon. Indeed, it was only through the eating of the apple offered by the serpent that Adam and Eve were able to gain the forbidden knowledge which eventually led to their expulsion from Paradise. However, this Fall is what made them human, able to learn and grow and eventually procreate, and to experience life separate from the Father. As in many of her works, Antoni embraces transgressive actions which may be different, denied, or painful in order to comment on feminine aspects of the human condition; and, as Weintraub aptly observes, "Antoni does not fall from grace; she falls into it."<sup>136</sup>

In these works, Antoni investigates the process of discovering identity, a process that is indelibly tied to sight via the mirror-reflection stage, but often does so not through vision, but through her other senses. *Gnaw* allowed the artist to connect intimately with her materials through the mouth; with *Lick & Lather* she again came into intimate contact with not just the materials, but also the image of herself. In *Eureka* the material she removed to make the impression of her body was made into the soap with which she then washed her body. Certainly the tactility of *Saddle*'s rawhide is as important as the

---

<sup>134</sup> Danto, 23.

<sup>135</sup> Danto, 23.

<sup>136</sup> Weintraub, 67.

symbology of it, as is *Moor*'s rope. In none of these works is the artist's sense of sight privileged. For Antoni's investigations of and with her body, the non-visual senses have as much credence in the work as the more culturally dominant sense of sight: touching, biting, licking, all are much like the child's first connections to the world known at first only through the mother by suckling and smelling. As Warner notes, Antoni's work "challenges the traditional hierarchy of the senses. While Western culture tends to privilege knowledge gained through the eyes, associating it with rationality, science, objectivity, (and of course, maleness), Antoni turns to the more female senses of taste, smell, sound, and touch."<sup>137</sup> Antoni locates her experiences within the rituals and constructions of daily life, empowering that which is often ignored and disvalued: the handmade, the laborious, and the meditative, which speaks to the artist's valuation of the process over the end-product. The viewer, in bringing their own experiences to her intimate processes, is put in a position of empathy, and the dramatic acts the artist engages in then have a foundation of recognition which enables the viewer to identify with Antoni's work and concepts.

These processes and concepts also spell out the body of work which comprises the artist's life, and her attempt to find her identity within the relationships with her parents, and more specifically with her mother. As Kleinian theory states, the depressive position is one we must successfully negotiate to develop our sense of identity, yet, most of us never entirely resolve it, and so we are bound to continue working at it throughout our lives. Antoni's series of works outlined here, while continually investigating the connection and separation from the mother, are exemplary of the repetition and work that a person must go through to find their sense of self and identity. Far from being obsessive

---

<sup>137</sup> Warner, 80.

acts, the artist's investigations present us with positive images of woman that claim a central and powerful role for the mother, one which traditional Freudian thought does not. And by creating objects and performative works with and of her body, Antoni takes us back to the body, away from a consumer culture that commodifies and objectifies the bodies of women. By bestowing agency upon the mother, women are active subjects in life, not simply passive objects beholden to another's desire.



Figure 2.1. Janine Antoni, *Momme*, 1995  
Cibachrome print, 35 x 29 1/3 inches,  
[http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object\\_id=64#](http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64#)



Figure 2.2. Janine Antoni, *Eureka*, 1993  
Bathtub, lard, soap, and Corian; soap, 22 x 26 x 26 inches; tub, 30 x 70 x 25 inches,  
[http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object\\_id=64](http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64)



Figure 2.3. Janine Antoni, *Eureka*, 1993, detail  
Antoni, *Janine Antoni*, 111





Figure 2.4. Janine Antoni, *2038*, 2000  
Cibachrome print, 20 x 20 inches,  
[http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object\\_id=64#](http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64#)



Figure 2.5. Janine Antoni, *Lick and Lather*, 1993, and detail  
7 chocolate busts and 7 soap busts, 24 x 16 x 13 inches each,  
[http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/art\\_sculpture.html](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/art_sculpture.html)



Figure 2.6. Janine Antoni, *Wean*, 1989-1990  
Plaster impressions in the wall,  
<http://www.sitesantafe.org/exhibitions/exhibitfr.html>



Figure 2.7. Janine Antoni, *Coddle*, 1998  
Cibachrome print and hand carved frame, 21 ½ x 16 inches,  
[http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object\\_id=64#](http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64#)



Figure 2.8. Janine Antoni, *Saddle*, 2000  
Raw hide, 26 x 33 x 79 inches, two views,  
[http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object\\_id=64#](http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64#)



Figure 2.9. Janine Antoni, *Cradle*, 1999  
Two tons of steel, 60 x 60 x 60 inches,  
[http://www.luhiringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object\\_id=64#](http://www.luhiringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64#)

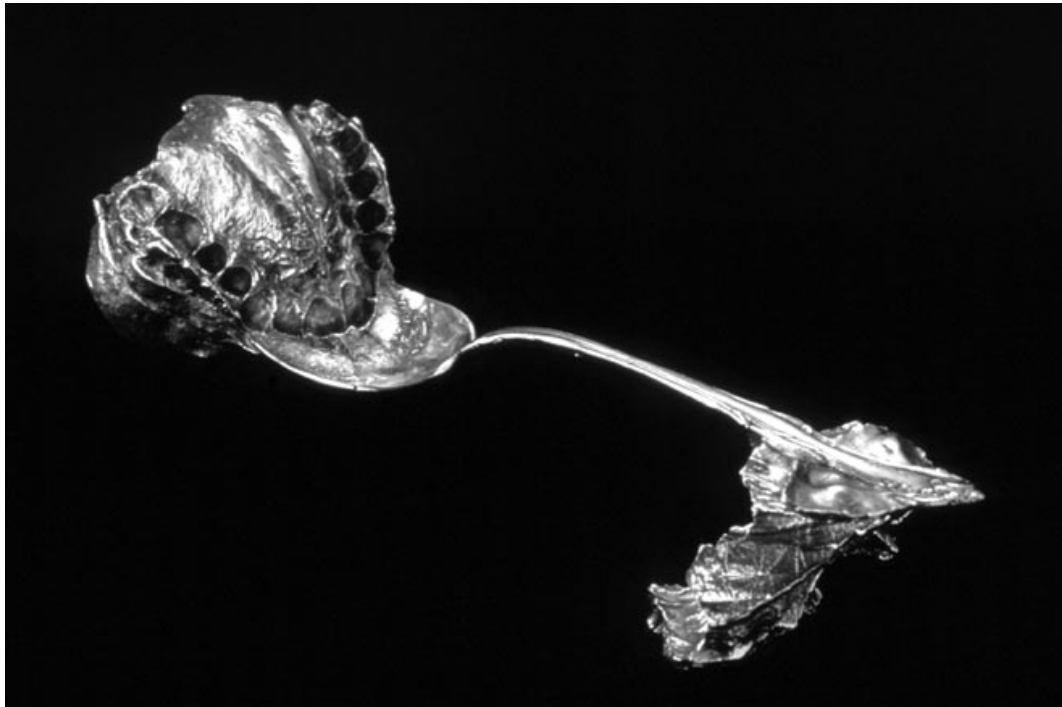


Figure 2.10. Janine Antoni, *Umbilical*, 2000  
Sterling silver, 3 x 8 x 3 inches,  
[http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object\\_id=64#](http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64#)



Figure 2.11. Janine Antoni, *Moor*, 2001  
Installation, mixed media rope, dimensions variable, interior and exterior views,  
[http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/art\\_moor.html](http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/art_moor.html)





Figure 2.12. Janine Antoni, *Mary, Star of the Sea*, 1999-2000  
Performance with Vanessa Fabian Concieção dos Santos and handmade dresses  
<http://www.thequietintheland.org/brazil/category.php?id=janine-antoni>



Figure 2.13. Piero della Francesca, Polyptych of the Misericordia, 1445-1462, detail  
Oil and tempera on panel, 130 x 107 ½ inches, Sansepolcro, Italy,  
<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/P/piero/altar.jpg.html>



Figure 2.14. Janine Antoni, *Touch*, 2002

Video still,

[http://www.artnet.de/usernet/awc/awc\\_thumbnail.asp?gid=424261583&cid=75386&works\\_of\\_art=1](http://www.artnet.de/usernet/awc/awc_thumbnail.asp?gid=424261583&cid=75386&works_of_art=1)



Figure 2.15. Janine Antoni, *To Draw a Line*, 2003

4000 lbs. raw hemp fiber, 120 feet of hand-made hemp rope, 1200 feet of machine made-hemp rope, 2 recycled steel reels, 140 lead ingots, 2 steel ramps, 4 steel and rubber laminated chocks, 35 x 20 x 10 feet,

[http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object\\_id=64#](http://www.luhringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64#)



Figure 2.16. Janine Antoni, *To Draw a Line*, 2003

Details from performance,

[http://www.artnet.de/usernet/awc/awc\\_thumbnail.asp?GID=424261583&CID=75386&page=6&recs=6&MaxPages=6&works\\_of\\_art=1](http://www.artnet.de/usernet/awc/awc_thumbnail.asp?GID=424261583&CID=75386&page=6&recs=6&MaxPages=6&works_of_art=1)

### Chapter 3: And Dad, Too

*It makes sense to work with my parents, since they were my role models.*<sup>138</sup>

In this chapter I will discuss three works that are distinguished by the artist's inclusion of both parents. While I have demonstrated the importance of the mother/child bond in the previous chapter, and Antoni's mother's complicity in participating in her daughter's work, the artist's father has also been a willing participant. These works signify the need for identity within the parent/child relationships, as well as demonstrate the need for independence and understanding of other intimate relationships. The inclusion of the artist's father becomes important here for its introduction of the representation of patriarchal authority.

In a 1994 video piece, *Ready or Not, Here I Come*, Antoni employs a new tactic to explore her sense of identity: the artist and her dad play a child's game of hide-and-seek (Figure 3.1). *Ready or Not* signifies a continuation of childhood stages of playing and, via this game, exploration of the self, family, and community. In this work, the viewer also previews the beginnings of the image of Antoni's mother that later became *Momme*, the portrait which began the previous chapter's discussion. In *Ready or Not*, Antoni's father plays a starring role.

The video captures a domestic scene, located in the security and familiarity of the parent's home. The video camera that is recording the piece is held by the father. As Antoni and her father engage in the game, she hides and he finds her several times,

---

<sup>138</sup> Bayliss, 166.

allowing the viewer to become familiar with the format. Then, as he continues to prowl through the house, he frustratingly finds her to no avail. Finally, after a Hitchcockian period of suspense, he finds her in a state of undress, hiding under her mother's voluminous white dress, and exclaims, "It's like you're being born again . . . But I got you with no clothes on!"<sup>139</sup>

Childhood games and stories commonly pit 'us' against 'them,' which represents good against evil, or familiar against strange. Warner observes that "by casting someone in the role of the predator, [we] can feel we control that threat." We are not them, they are not us, and fairy tales about monsters, giants, and ogres demonstrate the "absolute moral necessity of caring for the young."<sup>140</sup> In *Ready or Not*, Antoni hides and escapes from the ogre/father into the safety of her protector/mother. This scene is the endpoint of the video and, according to Warner, the "bodily contact between mother and daughter briefly restores the former child to the primal bliss of union."<sup>141</sup> The location of this reuniting is the safe haven of the family bathroom, where the artist's mother is ensconced, clean and pure, representing a return to the womb.

Warner also notes that in the video the maternal figure of Antoni's mother is like a "silent mother, robed in white, enthroned in the purity of the family bathroom, [and she] becomes a Mother of Mercy, opening her cloak to shelter her children."<sup>142</sup> This *Misericordia* image is one we are familiar with from the previous chapter's discussion of it and *Mary, Star of the Sea*. But this reference is also appropriate for *Ready or Not*, and

---

<sup>139</sup> Warner, 81. In addition to Alfred Hitchcock, Warner also makes reference to the films of David Lynch, particularly *Blue Velvet*, 1986, in which Dennis Hopper's handheld camera hunts "his quarry," Isabella Rossellini.

<sup>140</sup> Warner, 81-82.

<sup>141</sup> Warner, 82.

<sup>142</sup> Warner, 83.

indeed, for *Momme* as well. The *Misericordia* is a sheltering figure, the mother of all mothers who offers sanctuary to those in need. The Virgin Mary, and all of her attributes, plays an important part in Antoni's work whether the artist is highlighting the Madonna's motherly qualities or pointing out the dichotomy of those qualities in relation to women trying to live up to such high cultural expectations.

It should also be noted that in this piece the camera takes in the view of the father: his is the Gaze and it is from his point of view that the viewer is allowed the sense of sight. The father sees as he moves around, while Antoni is in the dark, hiding; indeed, the artist devalues her own sight as part of the game. Yet, as the artist, this play is initiated by the daughter, to allow her father to 'see' that, while they are playing a child's game, she is no longer a child. In a conflation of psychoanalytic theory, this piece demonstrates both Freudian and Kleinian concepts. While *Ready or Not* is replete with Freudian imagery in its assertion of the father's patriarchal authority, the mother's body is the site, in Kleinian terms, that contains everything including shelter, nourishment, parental figures, and future babies; in short, the whole world.<sup>143</sup> Yet according to Freud, part of the process that establishes the father as patriarchal authority involves the child's rejection of the mother and embracing of the father as authority figure; in the case of the girl child, the father is also seen as an ideal sexual partner. Clearly Antoni privileges her father with the sense of sight to 'see' her; however, by providing herself with the protective mother figure, she buffers the father's authority with the safe haven of the mother. Toying with both Freudian and Kleinian tenets of psycho and sexual development, the artist challenges notions of patriarchy, matriarchy, and the division of authority that is surely a shared agency.

---

<sup>143</sup> Minsky, 95.



A work that is perhaps more obscure than some of the artist's other works discussed here is *Cast-Off*, which further explores the bonds between Antoni and her parents. *Cast-Off* is a performance piece that the artist created for the opening of her first solo museum exhibition in the United States, *Mother Tongue*, at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia, in January 1996.<sup>144</sup> In this performance, Antoni and her parents wear knitted garments that are linked together, and as the artist walks away from them, the garments unravel (Figures 3.2 and 3.3). Having never seen this work documented or performed, I felt compelled to examine it more closely, and I contacted both Antoni and Carrie Przybilla, then Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the High Museum and curator of this exhibition.<sup>145</sup> This work, with its motif of unraveling, evokes a separation, and in this case it is with both parents.

Conceptually, *Cast-Off* fits in well with many of the artist's other works, especially *Moor*, whose handmade rope symbolically connects the mother-gallery to the child-boat in the harbor. With *Cast-Off*, Antoni created another umbilical signifier via the hand-knit garments. Przybilla relates that Antoni said she "always wanted to do something knitted," since unraveling has such a strong suggestion of separation. However, the artist didn't know how to knit and didn't have time to learn. Przybilla offered to knit the garments and ended up making the two tunics and the skirt worn by Antoni and her parents, hand-knitting them to the artist's specifications.<sup>146</sup> *Cast-Off*'s

---

<sup>144</sup> As an assistant in the Curatorial Department of Modern and Contemporary Art at the High Museum, I am privileged to be able to source this primary information. To find material of this nature that would be so viable to a paper already in progress was a boon beyond words. I thank the Museum for allowing me to utilize these materials, which include notes, slides, and the exhibition brochure.

<sup>145</sup> Unless otherwise noted, quotes by Janine Antoni in this section are from a conversation with the author on September 14, 2006; quotes by Carrie Przybilla are from a conversation with the author on October 4, 2006.

<sup>146</sup> Antoni, like many artists, often has help in crafting her sculptural objects, so this is not an out-of-the-ordinary occurrence; the artist has studio assistants and her mother frequently helps her, as well.

connective garments are made of one hundred percent cotton yarn in a deep red color that Antoni refers to as ‘blood-like,’ which evokes a visceral, vein-like quality. According to Przybilla, the artist specifically requested that the material be a natural fiber, and she also chose the color. This color is certainly symbolic of the familial bloodline that ties a parent to a child and, therefore, one parent to the other.

However, this lifeline is not meant to hold fast, but to literally come apart. Unlike *Moor*, whose intent is to connect the two figures, *Cast-Off* is meant to separate. Similarly, as *Moor* is meant to anchor, *Umbilical*, has a very visceral connection, as it links the artist’s mouth to her mother’s hand. Both *Moor* and *Umbilical* make manifest connections, whether it is with *Moor*’s rope or the more rigid metal of *Umbilical*, but *Cast-Off* is the very antithesis of either of these works: in its unraveling, it is literally meant to separate. Semiotics figure prominently in many of Antoni’s works, and she seems to be a proponent of wordplay. In examining the titles she chooses for her works, we see that many of them are of a nurturing nature: *Cradle*, *Coddle*, *Lick and Lather*, *Touch*. *Umbilical* certainly has the most visceral connotation, as it denotes an actual body part that specifically, physically links the mother and child. But other than *Wean*, which has its own maternal implications of separation, *Cast-Off* is singular in Antoni’s works to have a title with this allusion to disconnection: it means to push away, to discard, to reject, to abandon.

According to Przybilla, art for Antoni “is a form of play, a means of experimenting with new ideas and safely trying out different roles. She also recognizes the role of play in teaching social norms.”<sup>147</sup> *Cast-Off* does seem to have play-like qualities. Like the earlier video piece, *Ready or Not, Here I Come*, which is performance-

---

<sup>147</sup> Carrie Przybilla, in *Janine Antoni: Mother Tongue* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1996), n.p.

like and also includes both parents, *Cast-Off* is very much a performance enacted by Antoni and her mother and father: they wear costumes and they play roles. Yet it is not a game of hide-and-seek, or a reenactment of a biblical reference like some of her other works, but a different kind of exercise: the artist asks her parents to stand still and watch while she walks away from them. This leaves them somewhat helpless, unlike in *Ready or Not* where her father controls the camera and her mother enacts a protective role in the final scene. Yet, much like *Ready or Not*, Antoni tests the waters of independence. The garments of blood-like yarn connect the artist to her parents, only to be pulled apart as she attempts to leave them.

Unfortunately, what an artist can never plan for is the audience's reaction to and participation in a performance. As Antoni walked away from her mother and father and into the crowded performance space of the gallery, the garments unraveled, leaving a trail of yarn to tangle and enmesh everything and everyone in her path. Przybilla remembers that "People were trying to get out of Janine's way as she walked, when it was really about how you leave your parents and become entangled in other relationships." However, the artist didn't want to tell viewers what to do, or to pre-arrange anything with people in the audience; it's an important factor to Antoni that the performance be what it will be. Yet what she had conceived of failed: instead of becoming entwined with the audience, the artist became separated from them as well. The audience remained onlookers instead of participants, and did not come to represent the relationships that an adolescent or adult fosters outside of the familial nest. Conceptually it could have worked but for an audience that remained too polite to participate.

Additionally, the galleries of the museum were not nearly large enough for Antoni to complete the unraveling of the garments. She walked around the galleries, down the ramps of the museum's interior, and then outside. "I had to walk outside, down the street and around the museum," Antoni says. All of this to get away from her parents! Yet, as one can see from the documentation of the performance, she does not get away, not completely. The garments that her mother and father wear unravel, but the artist's garment does not. Przybilla notes that it was a conscious decision by Antoni that her parents' garments would unravel but hers would not. In this way, a connection remains: the artist has her 'self' intact, as represented by the equally intact garment. This garment and the unraveled yarn then function as relics of the work.

When I contacted Antoni to discuss *Cast-Off*, the artist confirmed what I suspected: her first words to me were, "Well, I sort of buried that piece." When I asked for what reason, the artist indicated that it wasn't very successful; thinking about it further, Antoni added, "Not the concept of it, just the execution." Poor execution isn't always grounds for banning an unsuccessful piece, it may mean that it just needs work; *Loving Care* is an example of that, with its flawed, first exhibition. I asked if she would ever consider performing it again, and Antoni said possibly, but that changes would need to be made. First, the space would need to be larger to better accommodate the performance, and second, Antoni would give her parents more to do. As willing subjects—and objects—in the artist's works, Antoni says they are happy to participate, even though "Dad's a performer, but Mom's not." However, the artist says they "felt out of control" because they had nothing to do. Przybilla concurs, and says that Antoni's parents are "really good sports," and that they participated without any advance direction

or preconceived notions. One can sympathize with any performer who must remain still amongst onlookers, but for parents who must witness their child's separation from them, Antoni says that it was "a bit traumatizing for them." I also pointed out the relationship *Cast-Off* has with works like *Moor* and *Umbilical*, and the artist agreed and said that she "still feels good about the piece," and that it "fits in well with the rest of [her] work." Antoni also added that she especially likes that *Cast-Off* incorporated the concept of 'unmaking to make,' the process of creating something by destroying it which figures prominently in many of her works, such as *Lick and Lather* and *Cradle*, among others.

Performatively, *Cast-Off* was a new arena for the artist, as she not only performed with others, but with her parents. She would go on to perform *Mary, Star of the Sea* in 1999 with Vanessa Fabian Concieção dos Santos, the dancer from the Projeto Axé Ballet Company, but even in this piece Antoni remains forever connected to both the Virgin Mary and her alter ego of Yemanjá. The artist's parents had previously participated in *Ready or Not*; however, a video piece done in the privacy of the home is a much different thing than performing live in front of a museum full of onlookers. The artist explored new ground in *Cast-Off* by having her parents perform with her, and by asking live viewers to witness the performative separation they would enact together. *Cast-Off* provided a safe place for play, a place to examine the strength of familial bonds, the anxiety of separation, and the tension caused by testing social constraints of roles and identity. *Cast-Off* seems to be yet another example of the artist's attempt to work through the depressive position of Kleinian theory, one which allows the child to become its own identity while separating from the parental bonds.

*Mom and Dad*, 1994, a photographic work in which Antoni made up her parents to look like each other, marks a culmination in the child's progression (Figure 3.4). This piece presents many interesting issues: the artist is certainly questioning the construction of identity and gender identity, but also relationships, both within the immediate nucleic family and outside that intimate circle extending to potential marital relationships. *Mom and Dad* tackles adult issues of identity within relationships and marriage, including a key concern for many: does one maintain one's own identity within a marriage? This can be especially true for women, who have traditionally relinquished their name to take the man's; often revert to submissive roles in the home; and may incur lessened personal wealth if they give up their career. This piece concerns issues that the older child, the adolescent, the young adult—indeed, most everyone—ponders: who am I, and why? By questioning the validity of identity via the images of her parents and reversing their maternal and paternal roles, Antoni questions her own identity and her relationships with them.

In Rosa Martinez's essay, "Conjunctions and Disjunctions," Antoni says that "What became fascinating during the process was the resistance or the impossibility of turning my parents into each other. What I was arriving at was a half-mom, half-dad creature, but to create this composite I had to reverse our roles in the sense that my parents made me, and now I was making them."<sup>148</sup> Antoni has often made gender the focus of her artistic questions and used her parents as participants in her explorations; indeed, this chapter focuses exclusively on works the artist made using her parents in key roles. With *Mom and Dad*, Antoni used make-up and prosthetics to make them into what is their already-perceived identity: mom is 'feminine' and graceful; dad is 'masculine'

---

<sup>148</sup> Rosa Martinez, "Conjunctions and Disjunctions," in Antoni, *Janine Antoni*, 124.

and debonair. Yet when they portray each other, this identity is unmasked in the images that they present: femininity is more than an elegant hairstyle and a chic black dress; masculinity is more than distinguished grey hair and a good suit and tie. They are feminine and masculine in that they personify the roles of *mother* and *father*, and have been the example of those gendered identities to the artist all of her life; in the most basic sense, it is all that she knows.

While Antoni is most visibly pondering the question of her own identity as traced through the example of her parents, the artist is also demonstrating her awareness of adult relationships and, particularly, marriage. In Martinez's essay, the artist says that "Although physically my parents may embody certain stereotypes in terms of their sexual identity, their personalities were much more complex. What seemed most striking to me was that after forty years they had become a kind of unit, sometimes in spite of these gender roles."<sup>149</sup> Lajer-Burcharth observes that while Antoni attempts this makeover to make her parents embody each other, they are never quite complete; it is transparent that they are in fact still themselves, so they become "a mom *and* dad at the same time."<sup>150</sup> As the child in search of identity and seeking it in the mirror of the familial unit, Antoni has given her parents each other's identity, and they are both man and woman. In this transvestive state, the fused identities disturb the prescribed roles of man and woman, and father and mother. Similar to *Ready or Not*, with *Mom and Dad* Antoni shifts the socially sanctioned roles of the paternal and maternal, and thus the artist both points out and embraces difference from social norms.

---

<sup>149</sup> Martinez, 129.

<sup>150</sup> Lajer-Burcharth 1998, 156. The author also notes an interesting reference for this work: it was "Duchamp's dictum that [the artist] can never expect to start from scratch; he must start from ready-made things like even his own mother and father," 167n33. From Katharine Kuh, "Marcel Duchamp," *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962): 81-93.



Figure 3.1. Janine Antoni, *Ready or Not, Here I Come*, 1994  
 Video stills,  
 Antoni, *Janine Antoni*, 82, 85-86





Figure 3.2. Janine Antoni, *Cast-Off*, 1996  
Performance with the artist, her parents, and knitted garments, detail, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA



Figure 3.3. Janine Antoni, *Cast-Off*, 1996  
Details from performance, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA



Figure 3.4. Janine Antoni, *Mom and Dad*, 1994

Cibachrome prints, 24 x 20 inches each,

[http://www.luhiringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object\\_id=64#](http://www.luhiringaugustine.com/index.php?mode=artists&object_id=64#)

## Conclusion

*The trajectory of my work has set me up for this.*<sup>151</sup>

With these works, Antoni has created and investigated her self, her identity, and her relationships. But, of course, this work is not the means to an end. An artist's work is a continuing path and Antoni's is no exception. This paper takes into account a fourteen-year body of work, beginning with *Wean*, 1989-1990, and concluding with *To Draw a Line*, 2003. The artist has continued to work on other projects, and she also had a baby, a daughter of her own. As Antoni has acknowledged, her work has had a trajectory that has led her to motherhood. All of her work has been about the mother, and she is now one herself. Indra is almost two years old, and Antoni is working on a video project with her. The project began when Indra was just six months old and Antoni observed that "everything went into the mouth." The artist felt that, like herself, her daughter was trying to know and understand her world through her body. Indeed, Antoni says that by knowing things through Indra's eyes and mouth, it's like "quoting myself and my own work."<sup>152</sup>

The video project, which retells the story of Demeter and Persephone, will continue the artist's investigation into issues of identity and separation. This ancient myth certainly has relevance: as the story goes, Persephone was abducted by Pluto, God of the Underworld, but a deal was struck with Demeter, Goddess of the Harvest and

---

<sup>151</sup> Antoni, Artist Talk, GSU.

<sup>152</sup> Antoni, conversation with the author, April 6, 2006.

Persephone's mother, so that she could return to Earth for half of every year.<sup>153</sup> This myth explains our seasons and cycles of life: when Persephone returns to her mother and the Earth, Demeter rejoices and Spring begins leading to the lushness of Summer and harvest time; when Persephone must leave and return to the Underworld, Demeter is miserable and the Earth grows cold, leading to the bareness of winter. This myth is also an example of the bond between mother and daughter, and personifies the anxiety that is felt at the threat of separation. As a mother now too, Antoni is in a position to feel this threat from both sides of the relationship.

Indeed, this separation anxiety is not limited to the bonds the artist feels with her human relationships. Antoni has said that she “panics at the end of each piece” as she completes it, fearing, perhaps, that she’ll never have another idea.<sup>154</sup> The artist has also expressed her inability to separate completely from the work itself, once it is finished. In a recent article, “Looking After Their Own,” Susan Emerling discusses what artists choose to keep of their work and why. Antoni comments that she is loathe to disconnect with her work, saying that she has an “inability to separate, which is part of the content of the work.”<sup>155</sup> When a work is sold, the artist often has stipulations that she can add to it, as she has with *Moor*. “What’s painful is not only the selling but the brutality of letting something go,” says the artist. “With *Moor* I keep adding to it. The whole process can continue even though the piece has sold.”<sup>156</sup> In this way, the artist can still hold onto a piece, can still keep the bond alive, so to speak, even though it has left her immediate vicinity. Similar to the myth in which Demeter mourns the loss of her daughter but is

---

<sup>153</sup> Due to variations intrinsic to myths, these deities are also known as Demeter or Ceres; Persephone, Proserpina, or Kore; and Pluto or Hades.

<sup>154</sup> Antoni, Artist Talk, GSU.

<sup>155</sup> Emerling, “Looking After Their Own,” *Artnews* 104, no. 5 (May 2005): 130.

<sup>156</sup> Emerling 130.

reassured when Persephone is returned to her, the artist is comforted when she keeps the work close. And like many artists, Antoni also keeps one of every multiple she makes. That way, the artist has more control over not only the work itself but how it is shown or depicted. This aspect of control is important too, because, of course, in a subjective world, perception and interpretation are everything.

But there is more to the myth of Demeter and Persephone and a closer reading is beneficial. Tickner compares this myth with Freud's Oedipal complex. As Demeter mourns the loss of Persephone to Pluto and the Underworld, the earth grows cold and crops fail; when Persephone is returned to her, the earth warms and blooms and her creativity is restored.<sup>157</sup> Freudian theory tells us that as the mother is revealed to the child as not being in possession of the phallic member, the boy develops fear of castration of his own member; the girl, in discovering her lack, develops envy as well as resentment toward her mother for failing to equip her properly. The myth, then, could be summarized as the girl's rejection of her mother and the transfer of love from her first maternal object to a heterosexual love object.<sup>158</sup> However, this is a rupture of the mother/daughter relationship of monumental proportions, and a feminist interpretation is demanded. According to Tickner, "The Freudian model of oedipal rivalry is replaced by an object-relations model of selfhood." For if women are to "think back through our mothers," then it is a connection we seek, not a separation.<sup>159</sup> As aptly demonstrated by Antoni's work, while women may need to identify themselves as separate from the mother in order to

---

<sup>157</sup> Tickner, "Mediating Generation," 26.

<sup>158</sup> This transfer, as the myth's retelling so often overlooks or 'screens out,' is that it is by way of rape that Persephone is abducted. Jacobus calls this the "dark underside of the Oedipus complex, or rather, the price paid by women for the civilizing effect of the Oedipus complex of men." Mary Jacobus, *First Things: The Maternal Imaginary in Literature, Art, and Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 15.

<sup>159</sup> Tickner, "Mediating Generation," 26.

establish selfhood, they still need a bond with the heritage that brought them forth, be that biological or historical.

The myth of Demeter and Persephone also figures prominently in Mary Jacobus's book, *First Things: The Maternal Imaginary in Literature, Art, and Psychoanalysis*, in which the author challenges the "universal memory" of myths by providing alternative readings of them.<sup>160</sup> Often, Jacobus notes, it is the mother figure that is either left out or disempowered as stories are handed down through the ages. Feminism has tried to fill in this lack by 're-membering' the women who have been displaced. The myth of Persephone is, after all, also a provision for the girl's maturation into womanhood, so that she can go forth and have children of her own. And yet, Persephone's sacrifice is at the behest of a forceful heterosexual patriarchy.<sup>161</sup> The Freudian Oedipal-castration complex is built into our culture and the female's lack is inherent in it. Does the myth tell of a girl child rejecting her mother for failing to provide her with the penis that she so envies? Does she transfer her desire to the father figure? As Jacobus observes, it is not envy that the girl child develops, but a feeling of nostalgia for the member she never had. Desire, while it is linked to threat for boys, is therefore linked to nostalgia for girls. This nostalgia can also be likened to homesickness, which Freud defined as a longing to return to the "lost home," or, the womb.<sup>162</sup> Thus, it is the mother's nurturing that the girl longs for, even as she tries to identify herself as separate from her. In an alternative interpretation, Benjamin explains that the girl does not envy the phallus, she longs for the bond that occurs between the father and son that she cannot be a part of. In this sense, her envy is really about the longing for a thwarted identification with the father, not for the

---

<sup>160</sup> Jacobus, 14.

<sup>161</sup> Jacobus, 18.

<sup>162</sup> Jacobus, 18-19

lack of the penis that would make her be like him.<sup>163</sup> This, too, then, is an attempt for connection, albeit with the father.

Indeed, Minsky notes that in Kleinian theory, the womb, not the penis, becomes the object of envy, because for the infant, the mother and her breast contain the whole world. Once the child enters the depressive position at about six months of age and self-identity begins to occur, then it is the womb which the mother possesses and the child lacks. Klein subsumes Freudian theory of the father “in the all-powerful figure of the mother and the central role of the depressive position associated with her. The moment when the child becomes a full-blown human being is no longer the successful resolution of the Oedipal crisis but the successful emergence from the depressive position, and the mother, rather than the father, occupies the central role.”<sup>164</sup> With Kleinian theory, an alternative to patriarchal hegemony is established by empowering the mother with a symbol that can stand up to the overly-sanctioned phallus.

Tickner, too, notes that it is the cultural matriarchy that Woolf invokes when she speaks of the importance of thinking through our mothers. Woolf isn’t trying to free herself from a Freudian rivalry between mother and daughter, says Tickner; rather, she is seeking “attachment, not separation.” Thus, the sense of kinship with her heritage is what both “forms and enriches her.”<sup>165</sup> Woolf closed her landmark book with the hope that women would work towards the common goal to have the space and the means to be, to have an identity of their own, and to have full, independent lives in which they could be creatively engaged:

---

<sup>163</sup> Benjamin, “Desire of One’s Own,” 89.

<sup>164</sup> Minsky, 94.

<sup>165</sup> Tickner, “Mediating Generation,” 26.



For if we have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves . . . then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. Drawing her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born.<sup>166</sup>

Shakespeare's sister, says Woolf, "lives in you and me," and as feminists continue to address issues of identity and equality, we must heed Woolf's caution that "without that effort on our part," then the life we expect for ourselves will be impossible.<sup>167</sup>

As Antoni forges ahead in her work, we can look forward to the new images and interpretations that surely will speak to the artist's experiences as a woman, a mother, and a daughter. The artist's works help provide new imagery, new meaning, and figurations of woman, and give us new tools to explore cultural identity, and the production of it. By imagining the body as unhindered by cultural codes, Antoni destabilizes the structure of culturally produced gender boundaries.<sup>168</sup> Thus, her images reenvision female identity, desire and loss, making what has been traditionally a lack culturally visible.

---

<sup>166</sup> Woolf, 113-114.

<sup>167</sup> Woolf, 114.

<sup>168</sup> Lajer-Burcharth 1998, 160.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Antoni, Janine. Artist Talk. Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA, April 5, 2006.
- . *Moor*. Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden and SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, NM, 2003.
- . “Where the Water Meets the Sky.” *O: The Oprah Magazine* 4, no. 4 (April 2003): 22, 200-01.
- Antoni, Janine, and Marcel Odenbach. “Advertisement for Myself: Marcel Odenbach in Conversation with Janine Antoni.” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 21, no. 2 (May 1999): 33-41.
- Antoni, Janine, et al. *Janine Antoni*. Seestrasse, Switzerland: Ink Tree, 2000.
- Janine Antoni: Mother Tongue*. Exhibition brochure. Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1996.
- Art:21—Art in the Twenty-first Century*. PBS. 2003.  
<http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/antoni/>.
- Bal, Mieke, and Norman Bryson. “Semiotics and Art History.” *Art Bulletin* 73, no. 2 (June 1991): 174-208.
- Barnes, Brooks. “When Art of Decay Decays, What’s a Curator to Do? Aging Dung, Blood and Food Give Conservators Fits, Lessons of Sausage Making.” *Wall Street Journal*, October 28, 2003, Eastern ed., sec. A:1.
- Barrett, David. “Contained.” *Art Monthly* 186 (May 1995): 30-2.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.
- Bayliss, Sarah. “The 24-Hour-a-Day Artist.” *Artnews* 98, no. 10 (November 1999): 164-7.
- Bee, Susan, and Mira Schor, eds. *M/E/A/N/I/N/G: An Anthology of Artists’ Writings, Theory, and Criticism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Benjamin, Jessica. *Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis*. New York and London: Routledge, 1998.

- . *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.
- Berkovitch, Ellen. "Janine Antoni, Site Santa Fe." *Artforum* 41, no. 4 (December 2002): 142-3.
- Blocker, Jane. *What the Body Cost: Desire, History, and Performance*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.
- . *Where Is Ana Mendieta? Identity, Performativity, and Exile*. Durham and London: duke University Press, 1999.
- Bright, Freda. "Janine Antoni: Rich Woman, Scrubwoman." Letter to the Editor. *New York Times*, January 28, 1996.
- Broude, Norma, and Mary D. Garrard, eds. *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*. New York: Abrams, 1994.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990.
- . *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York and London: Routledge, 1993.
- Camhi, Leslie. "Seeing and Believing." *The Village Voice* 42, no. 35 (September 1997): 87.
- Carson, Juli. "Response to 'The Reception of the Sixties.'" *October* 71 (Winter 1995): 144-5.
- Cassel, Valerie, et al. "Beyond Boundaries: Rethinking Contemporary Art Exhibitions." *Art Journal* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 4-21.
- Cembalest, Robin. "Fast Forward." *Artnews* 92, no. 9 (November 1993): 22-3.
- Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1978.
- . *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Cotter, Holland. "3 Legged Race." *New York Times*, September 27, 1996, late ed.: C29.
- Cottingham, Laura. "Janine Antoni: Biting Sums Up My Relationship to Art History." *Flash Art* 26, no. 171 (Summer 1993): 104-5.

- Danto, Ginger. "Life as a Tightrope: Weave, Walk and Fall." *New York Times*, August 24, 2003, late ed., sec. 2: 23.
- Davis, Kathryn. "Santa Fe, New Mexico." *Artpapers* 27, no. 2 (March/April 2003): 48.
- De Lauretis, Teresa, ed. *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
- Emerling, Susan. "Looking After Their Own." *Artnews* 104, no. 5 (May 2005): 128-31.
- Findlay, Judith. "Press Me, Push Me, Feel Me, Find Me." *Women's Art Magazine* 64 (May/June 1995): 14-16.
- Fisher, Jennifer. "Interperformance: The Live Tableaux of Suzanne Lacy, Janine Antoni, and Marina Abramovic." *Art Journal* 56.4 (Winter 1997): 28-33.
- Gibbs, Michael. "The Spine." *Art Monthly* 174 (March 1994): 26-7.
- The Girl Made of Butter*. Exhibition catalogue. Ridgefield, CT: Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, 2001.
- Glueck, Grace. "Janine Antoni: 'Imbed.'" *New York Times*, April 22, 1999.
- Guggenheim Museum. "Moving Pictures: Ana Mendieta." *Arts Curriculum Online*. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY.  
[http://www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum/lessons/movpics\\_mendieta.php](http://www.guggenheim.org/artscurriculum/lessons/movpics_mendieta.php).
- Heartney, Eleanor. "The Bawdy Art of Catholics: Catholic Imagination Shapes Contemporary Art in Daring, Sometimes Shocking Ways." *National Catholic Reporter* 40, no. 16 (February 2004): 14-16.
- . *Postmodern Heretics: The Catholic Imagination in Contemporary Art*. New York: Midmarch Arts Press, 2004.
- Heon, Laura. "Janine Antoni's Gnawing Idea." *Gastronomica* 1, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 5-8.
- Iannacci, Anthony. "Janine Antoni." *Kunst-Bulletin* (June 1994): 16-25.
- Isaak, Jo Anna. *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Jacobus, Mary. *First Things: The Maternal Imaginary in Literature, Art, and Psychoanalysis*. New York and London: Routledge, 1995.

- Jones, Amelia. *Body Art/Performing the Subject*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Juno, A., and V. Vale, eds. *Angry Women*. New York: RE/Search, 1991.
- Kaplan, Janet A. "The Quiet in the Land: Everyday Life, Contemporary Art, and the Shakers: A Conversation with Janet A. Kaplan." *Art Journal* 57, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 4-27.
- Keenan, Georgina. "Dream Weaver." *Artnews* 96, no. 8 (September 1997): 36.
- Kelly, Mary. *Post-Partum Document*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1983.
- Kimmelman, Michael. "Eva Hesse and the Lure Of 'Absurd Opposites.'" *New York Times*, May 10, 1992.
- Kolbowski, Silvia, et al. "A Conversation on Recent Feminist Art Practices." *October* 71 (Winter 1995): 49-69.
- Krauss, Rosalind, et al. "The Reception of the Sixties." *October* 69 (Summer 1994): 3-21.
- Kremer, Mark. "Amnesia." *Kunst & Museumjournal* 5, no. 5 (1994): 41-4.
- Lajer-Burcharth, Ewa. "Antoni's Difference." *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 129-70.
- Landau, Suzanne. "Public Exposures, Private Rites: Three New Acquisitions in Contemporary Art." *Israel Museum Journal* 12 (Summer 1994): 39-46.
- Larson, Kay. "Women's Work (Or Is It Art?) Is Never Done." *New York Times* January 7, 1996, late ed., sec. 2: 35.
- Levin, Gail. "Interview with Janine Antoni." March 1997. *City Arts*. Thirteen, WNET, New York, NY. <http://www.thirteen.org/cityarts3/show5/uncutp.html>.
- Lippard, Lucy R. *The Pink Glass Swan: Selected Essays on Feminist Art*. New York: New Press, 1995.
- Liss, Andrea. "Maternal Rites: Feminist Strategies." *N.paradoxa* 14 (January 2005): 24-31.
- Lloyd, Ann Wilson. "Janine Antoni." *Art New England* 16 (February/March 1995): 12-13.

- MacRitchie, Lynn. "Janine Antoni at Anthony D'Offay." *Art in America* 82, no. 6 (June 1994): 108-9.
- Melrod, George. "Janine Antoni at Sandra Geering." *Artnews* 91, no. 6 (June 1992): 132.
- Meskimmon, Marsha. *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Minsky, Rosalind. *Psychoanalysis and Gender*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Morin, France. "The Quiet in the Land: Everyday Life, Contemporary Art, and Projeto Axé." *Art Journal* 59, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 4-17.
- Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Nagoya, Satoru. "De-Genderism." *Flash Art* 195 (Summer 1997): 132-3.
- Nemser, Cindy. *Art Talk: Conversations with 15 Women Artists*. New York: Harper Collins, 1975.
- Nixon, Mignon. "Bad Enough Mother." *October* 71 (Winter 1995): 71-92.
- Nochlin, Linda. *Women, Art, and Power: and Other Essays*. New York: Harper, 1988.
- Oliver, Kelly, ed. *French Feminism Reader*. Lanham, MD: Rowman, 2000.
- Ostrow, Saul, and Andrew Renton. "Spotlight: Janine Antoni." *Flash Art* 177 (Summer 1994): 119.
- Pollock, Griselda. *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988.
- , ed. *Generations & Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- Princenthal, Nancy. "Janine Antoni at Luhring Augustine." *Art in America* 87, no. 7 (July 1999): 88.
- . "Janine Antoni: Mother's Milk." *Art in America* 89, no. 9 (September 2001): 124-9.
- The Quiet in the Land*. Art Education Projects, New York, NY. 2006.  
<http://www.thequietintheland.org>.
- Reckitt, Helena, ed. *Art and Feminism*. New York: Phaidon, 2001.

- Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. 1976. Reissue, New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1995.
- Richards, Judith Olch. *Inside the Studio: Two Decades of Talks with Artists in New York*. New York: Independent Curators International, 2004.
- Ruiz, Cristina. "The Art of Women's Work: Performance Art Coupled with Analysis of Museum Buying." *Art Newspaper* 7 (January 1996): 10.
- Saltz, Jerry. "The Artist Who Fell to Earth." *The Village Voice* 48, no. 40 (October 2003): C80.
- Schneemann, Carolee. *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2002.
- Schneider, Rebecca. *The Explicit Body in Performance*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Schor, Mira. *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Slip of the Tongue*. Exhibition catalogue. Glasgow: Center for Contemporary Art and Dublin: Irish Museum of Modern Art, 1995.
- Smith, Roberta. "Janine Antoni." *New York Times* March 11, 1994, late ed.: C30.
- . "Images Shimmer Upon Screens, Installed in the Imagination." *New York Times* August 14, 1998, late ed.: E33.
- Sollins, Susan, and Marybeth Sollins, eds. *Art:21: Art in the Twenty-First Century*. Vol. 2. New York: Abrams, 2003.
- Tatge, Catherine, and Deborah Shaffer, dirs. *Art:21: Art in the Twenty-First Century*. Created and produced by Susan Sollins and Susan Dowling. Seasons 1 and 2. Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2003. DVD.
- Taylor, Simon. "Janine Antoni at Sandra Gering." *Art in America* 80, no. 10 (October 1992): 149.
- Tickner, Lisa. "The Body Politic: Female Sexuality & Women Artists Since 1970." *Art History* 1, no. 2 (1978): 236-247.
- . "Mediating Generation: The Mother-Daughter Plot." *Art History* 25, no. 1 (February 2002): 23-46.

- To Draw a Line*. Exhibition brochure. New York: Luhring Augustine Gallery, 2003.
- Tucker, Marcia, ed. *Bad Girls*. Exhibition catalogue. New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art and Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1994.
- Volk, Gregory. "Janine Antoni at Luhring Augustine." *Art in America* 91, no. 11 (November 2003): 158.
- . "The Wanås Foundation: Patronage and Partnership." *Sculpture Magazine* 20, no. 1 (January/February 2001).  
<http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag01/janfeb01/wanas/wanas.shtml>.
- Weintraub, Linda. "On the Tightrope." *Tema Celeste* 99 (September/October 2003): 62-7.
- Williams, Gilda. "Young Americans Part I." *Art Monthly* 194 (March 1996): 24-6.
- Winter, Amy. "Feminism & The Politics of Appearance." *Off Our Backs* (November/December 2004): 14-16, 18.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. 1929. Reprint, San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957.
- Yalom, Mary. *A History of the Breast*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1998.