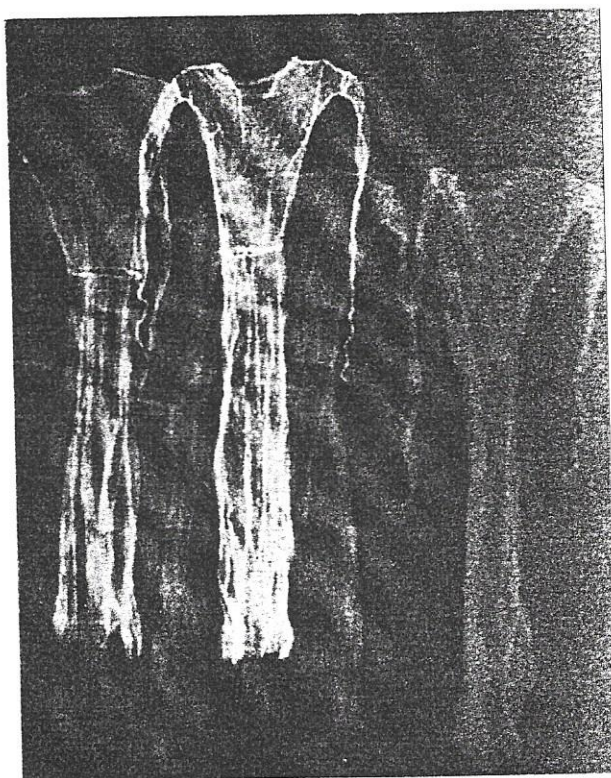


beyond surface

Kathryn Allan



beyond surface

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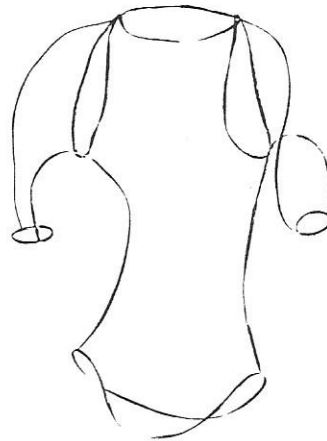


fig. 1

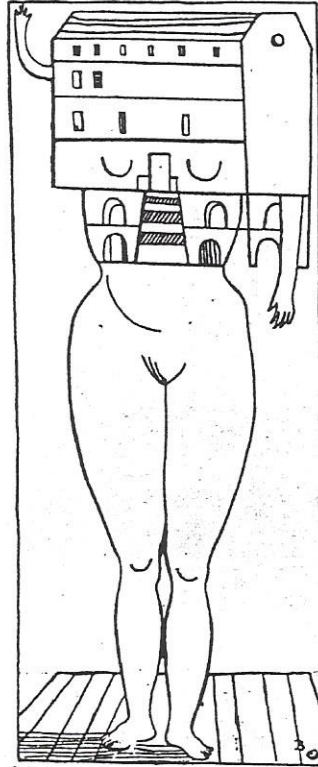


fig. 2

Femme-Maison

Louise Bourgeois

synopsis

"Dreams of a garment-house are not unfamiliar to those who indulge in the imaginary exercise of the function of inhabiting."(1)

"...a personal house of his own, a nest for his body, padded to his measure."(2)

Clothing houses us everyday. To our bodies it is a portable home, like a shell to a creature. It is our shield/screen/cover/protection/armour/refuge/safeguard/defence/cocoon. It is OUR space; personal cosmos. Clothing is an inside existence; an experience of interiority; an intimate sphere. It is our fabric haunt, our fibre shelter. It is private territory. Clothing tells stories of the skins against which it brushes, and these skins embed meaning in clothing. Hand-me-downs come instilled with these stories: fragments of the past made present through new wearing; memories made visible on new bodies; new bodies adding present experience to lived lives. Artists examine this discourse between yesterday and today, the then and the now, the previous and the current. Their language transcends the barriers of time. The vocabulary of clothing oversteps the walls of generations. What happens when this physical stratum between ourselves and others is disrupted, when the boundaries between within and without are not simply transferred by artists across edits in time, stretched to test their elasticity, but when they are literally turned inside-out? What are the effects of the opening up of the conventional, of the dismemberment of garments, of the transition from opacity to translucency, of the journey from contracted to expanded to contracted, of the multiplying of a dress by three? Where does person stop and garment begin? Where does garment blend with exterior space?

This piece of writing visits a system of empty dresses, of unwearable woven bodices, seamless fabric habitations, jumpers with heads. This is a voyage into the disparate, the abnormal, the sometimes almost invisible - the 'beyond surface' and what secrets lie therein. So accompany me if you will, for there are garments graceful, garments freakish, and garments the likes of which you will never have seen.

Kathryn Allan



Fig. 3

Double Vision - author portrait

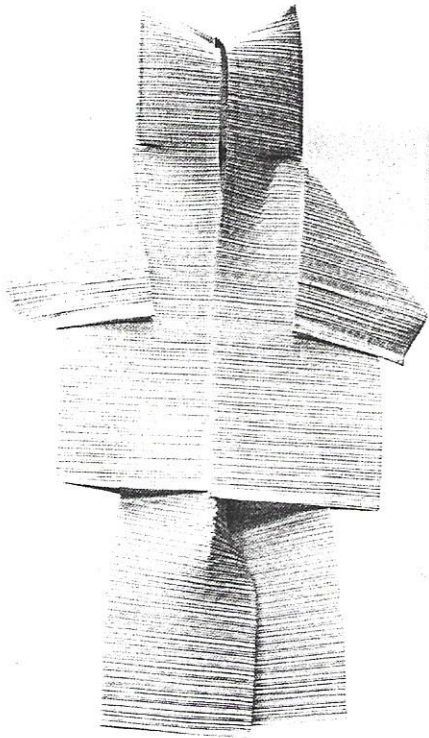


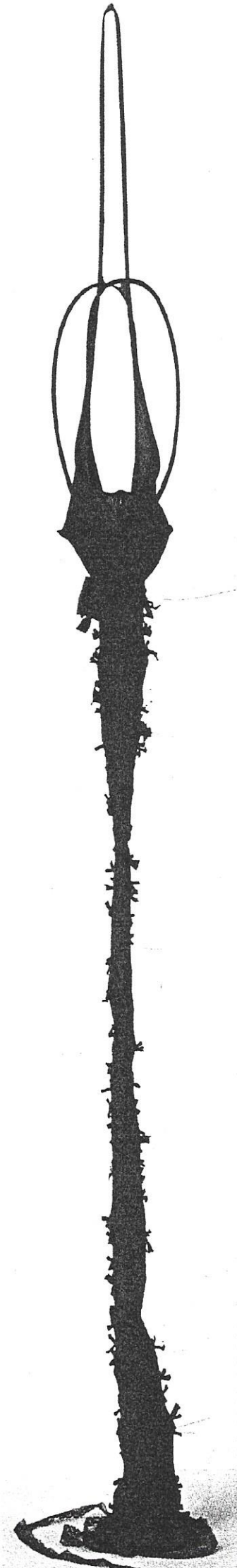
fig. 4

"...for the fold is without beginning or end."(3)

Just as Pennina Barnett says of the fold, this writing is too without beginning or end, for as I set out in the synopsis, this is a 'voyage' into another system. It is an experience in words, a literary recording of my journey into the altered world of the beyond surface. I am the visitor, not it to these pages. I existed in this other sphere, meeting with its artists, observing their ways, contorting my body into the unearthly garments. It neither began when I arrived, nor ended when I left. It is without beginning or end, and therefore so is this writing. You are my companion, reader, to accompany me on this seamless trip, to see what I saw, to witness a place where light is dark and sleeves are seven-fold. We shall emerge from cocoons only to crumple, but then we shall find a higher place with guiding lights and guiding lines.

It is a deceptive system to which I am taking you: rarely there do things come without a hidden duality, and so little is solely what it appears. Maybe I will lose you in revolutions, in the poetry of this system, in its ellipticalness, in its lyricism. Yet there are footholds, so try to find them, to cling to them in dark places and spring from them in light.

Seamless though it is, we have to 'begin' somewhere, and I wish to begin by telling you of my path into the 'beyond surface', for then you can accompany me with a little more knowledge of the place we are going, of its notions and its laws.



What you must first understand is that the currency of the system is cloth, for it deals in pleats and weave and knit; cotton, nylon and silk(fig. 4) The language of the system disappears and reappears. It is a poetic voice with which cloth speaks, silently. But you are already fluent in this wordless language. You speak it, everyday. It shifts and twists about you with its rhythms and its sounds. And you shift and twist within it, to those rhythms and sounds. Concerning our environment, clothes are "the most intimate of human spaces."(4) It is a closeness, a closeness where artists are to be found, a closeness that was my path into the 'beyond surface', for there I found Lucy Brown. I found her four years ago, working in the closeness, constructing garments from second-hand clothes; weaving impossibly-thin bodices and unwearable dresses(fig. 5). Brown wrote to me-

"People automatically assume that a garment is to be worn, to take away a garment's function leaves it 'useless' and changes the way in which it is viewed."(5)

Brown fabricates new identities out of old, changing not only the perception of the clothes, but their physical shapes as well. Her reworking of the hand-me-down becomes a reinvention of multiple lives; a cross-current of stories remembered in cloth-

"by going through this process (reworking) I explore the garments' construction, and discover alterations and pieces of hair from former wearers."(6)

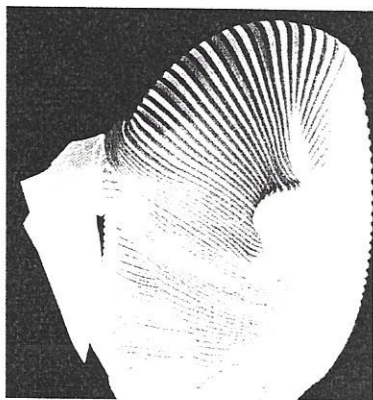
Alterations and hair then get mixed in a physical cross-current, for Brown weaves these fabric idiosyncrasies into each other so that they touch and exchange stories. And so, a new story is told, with chapter after chapter, for there is life after life in Brown's work, leading character after leading character, memory after memory.

Lucy Brown taught me that garments can be made of soliloquies, but they are soliloquies which I soon tire of hearing, for although hers is a language of reinvention and reinterpretation, it is, I find, also one of repetition. I was looking for a path into the 'beyond surface' whose scenery did not repeat. So I kept looking in the closeness.

fig. 5

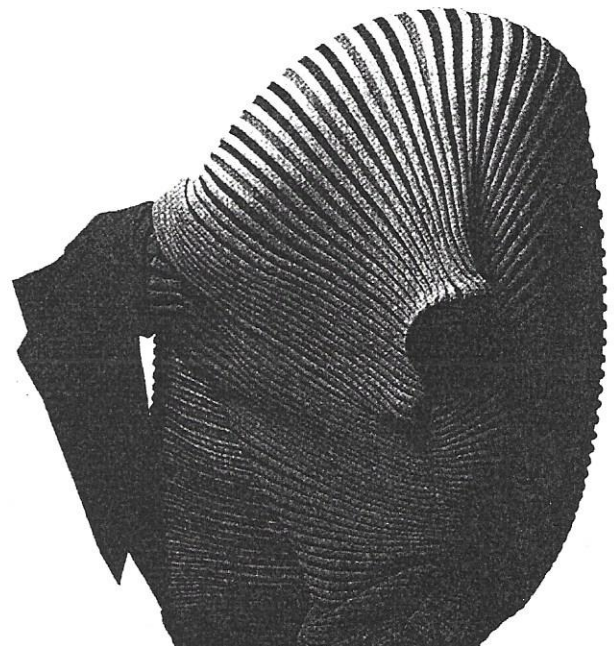
Grateful to Brown yet seeking something more, I kept looking. And just within the closeness I found Issey Miyake, searching out edges between art and fashion, edges where he creates seamless and seemingly unwearable garments. His are pieces that pleat, that fold in upon themselves, hide within themselves, spiral about themselves (fig. 6). His are pieces that have "made the everyday the stuff of dreams." (7) But Miyake's dreams are much recalled, his story one much told, in many beautiful words on many beautiful pages. Just as shells are "sublime subjects of contemplation for the mind" (8), many minds have contemplated the sublimity of Miyake's shell-like creations. And so there is no room remaining, I believe, inside folded tunics for any more beautiful words. They would only get lost.

I kept looking.



"every fold originates from a fold, plica ex plica." (9)

fig. 6



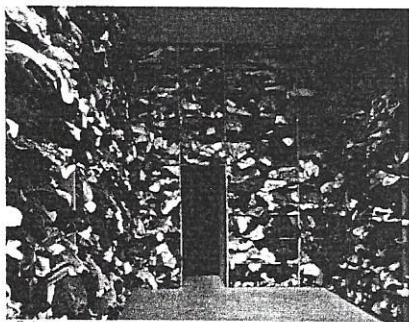


fig. 10

I kept looking and I found Freddie Robins. I found her knitting and playing with words. But not playing idly, for although it may be thought idle work (knitting), her intention is to get away from the expectations of the woolly jumper; "to express ideas beyond the scope of normal clothing."(10) And get away from expectation she does: jumpers have heads (fig. 7), knitted legs are sleeves for knitted bodies (fig. 8), neckholes are third arms (fig. 9). Yet despite their wit, Robins' 'freak' creations are not simply knitted jokes, for they have a political voice: "it's exactly what I'm interested in, the way women feel everything has to be useful."(11)

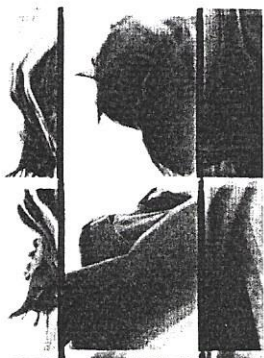


fig. 11

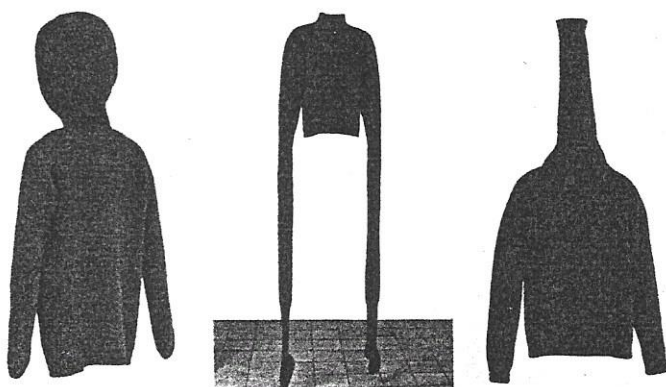


fig. 7, 8, 9

And so Robins subverts usefulness, making clothes not designed for our bodies, or perhaps they are clothes for which OUR bodies are not designed.

So Robins was a witty find, but for me a little too much sinisterness is knitted into her work.

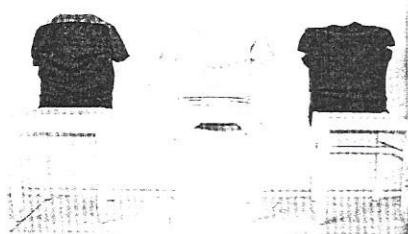


fig. 12

So I kept looking. And I kept finding: Boltanski's orphaned garments (fig. 10); Rideal's translucent veils (fig. 11); Martin Margiela's t-shirt dressed chairs (fig. 12) and inside-out clothes; Rauschenberg's 'Bed' (fig. 13), and Joseph Beuys' 'Felt Suit' (fig. 14).



fig. 13, 14



I found bags made from buttonholes -

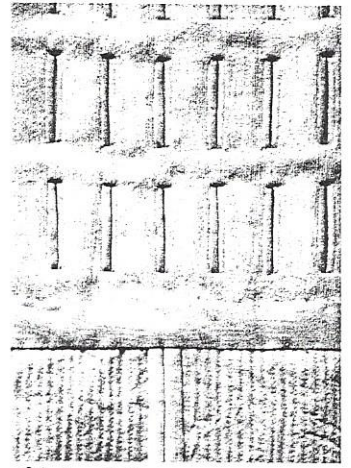


fig. 15

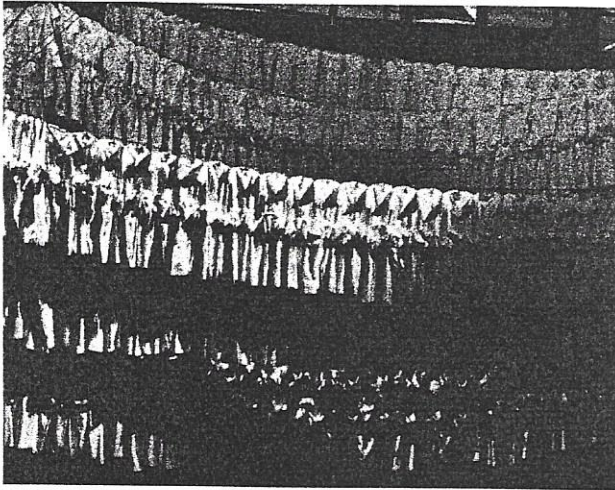


fig. 15a

- armies of shirts - and nettle leaf coats and honey bee dresses -

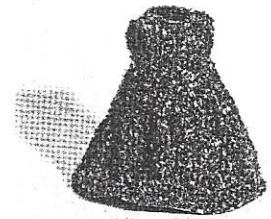
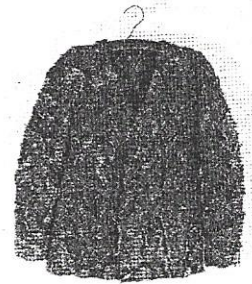


fig. 15b, 15c

- virtual frocks -



fig. 15d

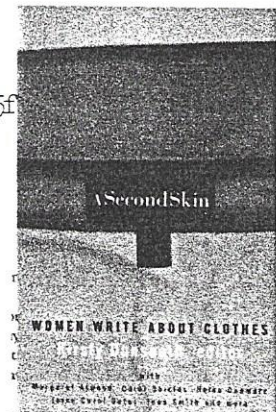
and story after story about clothes - fig. 15e, 15f

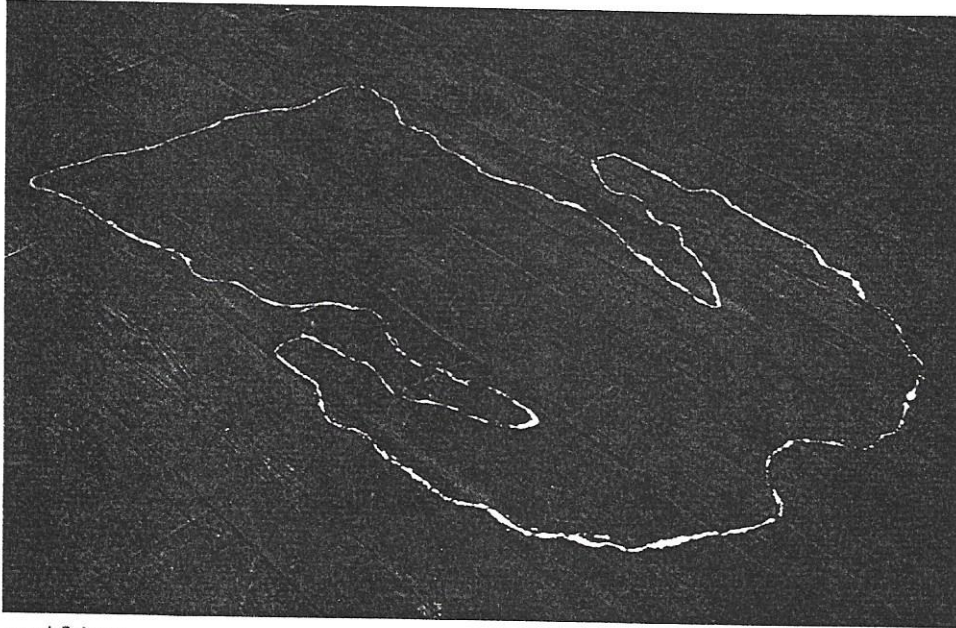
The Lady in the Boat with the Red Petticoat
 Jean Buffong

It's strange how for no obvious reason some things surface in your brain.

As I rummaged around trying to decide what to wear for the evening's event a riddle emerged from somewhere in my mind: 'the lady in the boat with the red petticoat'. Just that nothing more. Why this should come into my head at that time, I didn't give it a thought. It was just there.

I wanted to look 'good' for the evening. But on my looking





outline

Caroline Broadhead

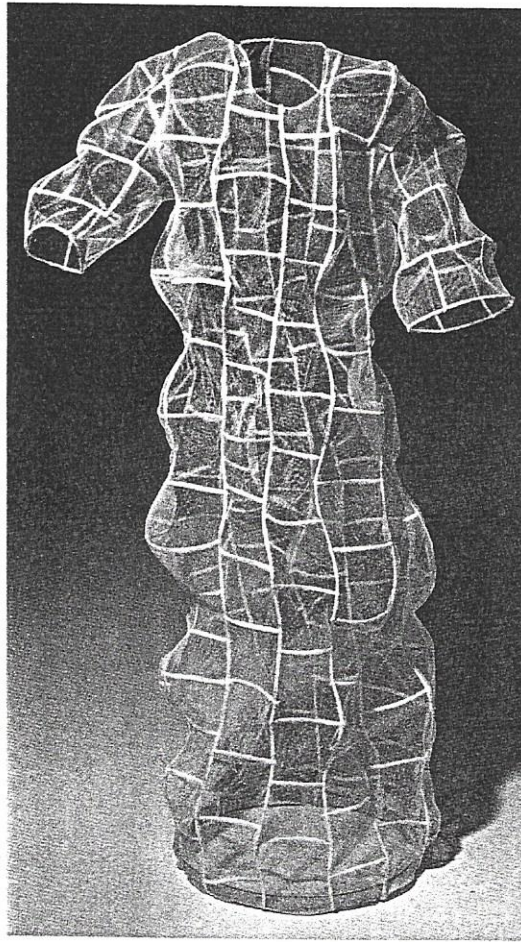


fig. 16

But my most enchanting, most poetic discovery is Caroline Broadhead, who speaks of her white garments in whispers, who teaches grace. But it is a discovery that brings with it disappointment, for so very rarely did I find words concerning Broadhead that were not static, sentences that were not earth-bound; writing that was not weighted to the page by gravity. They were not bad words and they were not unfaithful words. But they were words too heavy for Broadhead, sentences too calculated for the closeness she inhabits. There was nothing that whispered, nothing that hovered; no writing that went beyond itself to the place where her work is (fig. 16). I found no writing that went beyond its own surface. And so it is with Broadhead with whom we are to travel, with whom we shall spin in poetry and find lighter places. It is Broadhead with whom we shall go beyond, past the surface of her work and past the surface of the page. This is a piece of writing that should not really exist in words.



beyond surface

(part one)

accompany me...



fig. 17

Meeting Caroline Broadhead is like encountering one of her garments: ghostly, a trace of a person, someone without outline; visible, yet not wholly with us. She is not made of seams of course, nor can I see through her to space inside. But there is an element to her that slips through my fingers like sand; she is a breathing embodiment of the almost 'not there'. If the sun were to catch Broadhead at the right angle I would expect to see through her. If she were to claim to be able to walk through walls I would not like to bet against her. She wears pale coloured clothes and has long ashen hair, rather like her bewhiskered 'hoop' jewellery. She barely moves from one spot, she speaks in a whisper (fig. 17).

Superficially, Broadhead is plain, that is excepting her spectacles, narrowed and pointing skyward at their corners, framing the opening to her thoughts - her eyes - and affirming her humanness - do ghosts need glasses? Hands and eyes frolic in a choreographed dance when she speaks. Fingers wrap ideas, grasp thoughts and then set them free. Broadhead might be uncaging a bird to watch it fly away.

"The nest is a swelling fruit, pressing against its limits."(12)

To watch Broadhead is to witness a person swell and press against their physical limitations: her hands frantically leave her body sphere, releasing a soul, liberating a spirit, and then reenter her body domain with equal rapidity, this time clutching just a residue of that she let go. Eyes up down, here there. Her being is of contraction expansion: freeing, recapturing, freeing; perpetual rotations - thoughts forming circles - unwrapped, wrapped, unwrapped.

The bird analogy is a potent one, for Broadhead talks to me of a 'setting free': she says-

"it's rather like having children, you do your best with them, watch them develop, and then send them out into the world."(13)

-her hands move towards me in a giving gesture, a muted 'please take them'. Does she want anything in return? Broadhead's ethereality makes it difficult to say, but it is hard to believe she would take at all. This notion of her making as 'having children' sits at the heart of her being of contraction expansion: a child expands, a parent contracts; offspring eventually outgrow their creators; mothers and fathers have to one day let go. My mother is crinkled, I am a straight line. Broadhead nurtures her progenies, living side by side with these extra bodies. She works a single garment, or a series of garments, and then releases them. Souls loved and let free, now eligible parents themselves. Yet not parents in the conventional sense, more guardians, or guardian angels. A partly visible presence: the almost 'not there'.

Meeting Caroline Broadhead is like encountering one of her garments: at any moment I feel she could disappear into the air amongst her creations, dance with her dresses scattered across the sky, take up residence with her stellar garments. If I am not quick here she will float away, drift, migrate. For seconds she hovers before me: I can see her and sense her and know that there is weight to her body. But soon she will be gone, winged and mobile and meandering without gravity, untrammelled by a static world.

"...Silently the birds fly through us. O, I, who long to grow."(14)

Meeting Caroline Broadhead is like encountering one of her garments: a person unbuttoned from her smallness. A person who makes just fleeting visits to a planet from which she is disentangled.

Hurry now, we have just enough time to be witness to her work.



fig. 21

Eva Hesse

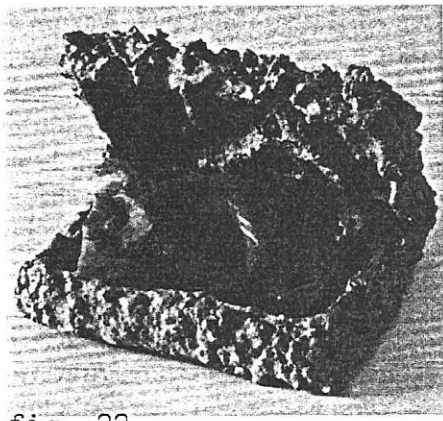


fig. 22

For Joseph

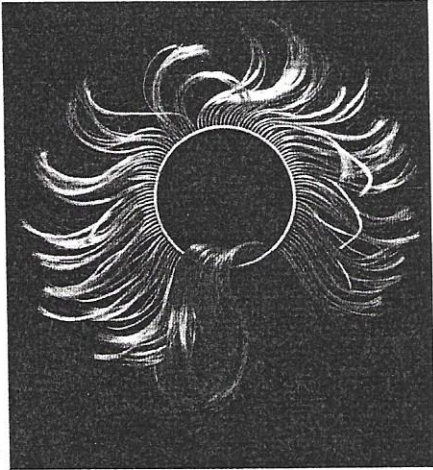


fig. 18

Skin and blood

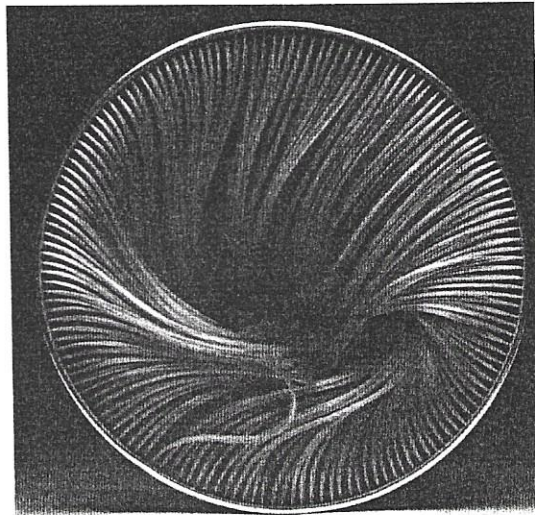


fig. 19

Tufted belt/bracelet

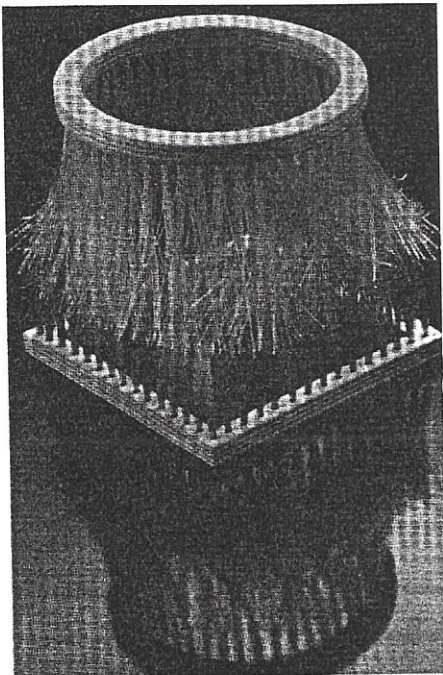


fig. 20

Push Together bracelets

Ethereal Broadhead equals Ethereal Creations. But where do they come from? In reality, a reality of gravity and earth, her garments do not descend upon our stratosphere from a higher realm, much as they seem to, and so much as we can believe them to. No, in the production of her work Broadhead has to make decisions like any other practitioner: artistic decisions, material decisions, decisions of space and weight and colour. In this sense, they are unlike having children, whose chromosomal makeup is naturally outwith the creators' control, for genetic mapping makes the decisions there. Broadhead's work gives the illusion of coming from another orb, of being mere callers upon this land. An illusion it may be, but convincing it is. We know in reality, the reality of gravity and earth, that her garments are made amongst us, but they have us believe that they live unchained, exonerated lives. So hurry now, we have just enough time to be witness to this work, to read a story of how they come into being; of how they become 'beings'.

Down to Earth

Broadhead trained as a jeweller. Or at least jewellery was the department from which she graduated. Yet I hesitate to claim that was the department WITHIN which she worked, for what are those unidentifiable objects that stare out at you from the page opposite?(fig. 18, 19, 20) Those hirsute circles, sometimes wood, sometimes silver. Are they really to be worn around the wrist or the neck? Surely not. They are not an embrace from our time, are they? Are they really with gravity like the rest of us, earthbound? Surely not. Are they?

To hold one is to hold a fragment of another life within my hands. A fragment of an existence for a fragment of time. The silken hair slips through my fingers like sand, just as Broadhead slips through my fingers, just as these words slip through your eyes, just as our journey through this other system slips quickly through time. Hair - dead in itself, dead as a substance - but providing evidence of life, of living, of breaths providing nourishment for roots. A residue left behind from a person passed on - love tokens in locket, a present from an absent being; a presence of an absent being.

Out of the corner of my eye I can see Eva Hesse, do you see her?(fig. 21) A ghost of a person, for she left this static world years ago. Out of the corner of my eye I can see her, weightless and unbounded, yet connected to the sphere of gravity by a thread, a hair, a hair of mine, a hair of yours, a human trace: her work. Do you see it, behind us over there? -

"For Joseph, a present made for the birthday of Rosie and Norman Goldman's son; it is small, grey, with a rough surface...and contains a lock of Joseph's hair, an overtly personal content making the gift the equivalent of the old-fashioned locket or brooch."(15)(fig. 22)

-A present for Joseph from Hesse. Do you see it? Do you see her? for soon she will be gone, but her work is for keeps; her work is our keepsake. Strands of hair plaited with strands of time, over Broadhead's shoulder. A time capsule made intrinsically human, over everyone's shoulder.

But, hurry now, time is slipping. Silken time like silken hair. Have we really time to look over our shoulder I wonder?

But why such haste? My limbs are stuck in whiskers, my body is stuck in time. My neck is bound in a cluster of threads, my wrist encircled in a tufted hoop. Barely can I contort my body to catch a glimpse of Hesse.

I am stuck in time, jumping through hoops. Why such haste?

"Time has whizzed back an inch or two on its reel; our short progress has been cancelled. I think also that in truth our bodies are naked. We are only lightly covered with buttoned cloth; beneath these pavements are shells, bones and silence."(16)

Let us loosen our pace.
Let us not tread so quickly.
Or crush shells,
Or break bones in our haste.
But the silence,
The silence we will stir a little.
We need to go backwards
Before we can go on.

Broadhead's Drip Brooch (fig. 23) is our first evidence, solid evidence, of her play with illusion: all is not what it seems in this back to front inside-out system. Hard ivory appears soft? But Drip Brooch will never drip on your shoes. The drip can never be **caught** by your fingertip. A drop more cream? Sorry, time is static. I am stuck again, and you are stuck with me. Drip drip drop is drip drip drip. No more cream for you. Time is not slipping, time is not dripping. We have hours, days, years, light years here, and when that is gone we have more light years.

Drip

Drip

Drip

Pamela Johnson notes of Broadhead's jewellery-

"When working with this sense of decorum she always nudged at the boundaries."(17)

Drip Brooch does this in two senses: firstly, it plays with the **stasticity** of its material - how fluid an ~~in~~-inflexible substance can appear, how the natural scope of ivory can be expanded without changing its inherent hardness; secondly, Drip Brooch literally overflows its silver enclosure. It is clever, maybe, just maybe we will taste the cream tomorrow (?)

But now we have time, because we are stuck, just as Drip Brooch is stuck on the outer edge of its base. Stuck on the silver hours it took to make it. But our journey must go on.

Follow me, this is an unpredictable world. Where next?

What next?

Drip Brooch

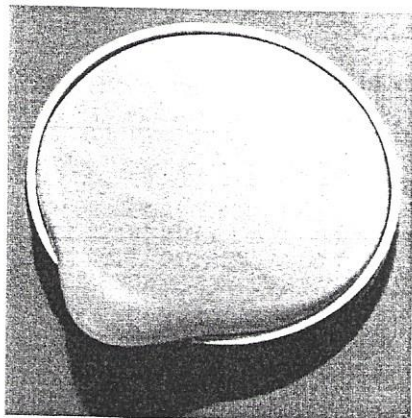


fig. 23

Fingerprint Bracelet

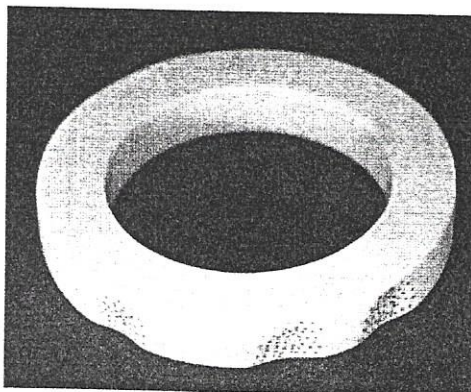


fig. 24

Time is generous again and there are clues. Did you see them, for they are just behind us: fingerprints - three - silver on ivory. Somebody has been there.(fig. 24) SomeBODY. A body, a person, a presence. And how do we know? They left behind a trace, not hair, but a copy of a unique pattern. Whereas Drip Brooch initiates Broadhead's play with illusion, Fingerprint Bracelet (fig. 24) marks the beginning of her exploration of space as a sphere around the body. Broadhead says to me "sometimes it's good to interrupt the routine."(18)

The silver fingerprints on the bracelet are a trace of an absent existence: whoever it was, time slipped away for them, but they left behind an enduring mark. The interruption here is two-fold: past time interrupts present wearing, and the physical imprints interrupt the otherwise blank surface.

Just as the imprint of these words interrupts an otherwise blank page.

And again, although here I think this is secondary to the bodily presence made so by the fingerprint, Broadhead is using illusion: hard ivory is made to look putty-like, malleable, and as though its whole structure might be destroyed within a clenched fist.

Just as these pages might be destroyed within a clenched fist.

My mother would make a pie on Sundays and I would seal its edges with my child-sized finger, leaving a circle of my child-sized stamp.

Quick now, we might be eaten. Things in this world are so often mistaken for what they are not.

Let us quicken our pace a little and jump through more hoops, forward a little. Let us stir the silence a little more. We want to hear our echoes.

"She developed her visual language by disrupting the known, familiar 'language' of the objects which cover, protect, adorn the body. The objects she produced were made to work with the body in a dynamic way, rather than as passive ornament. The embroidery hoop, bought in Africa, was used for the first nylon tufted piece."(19)

The origin of the 'hoop' jewellery, seen earlier, is not surprising. There is something about them tribal- the way they sit around the neck and wrist, the breadth of their covering. My limbs are stuck in whiskers again.

This notion of being stuck is not as cemented as it sounds. Broadhead's objective is not to fasten a person, although fastening may appear in a process. Rather, it is to dress the body with objects that change the body's movements - an invasion of body space. An invasion? We invite garments to inhabit our personal sphere day after day after day. Our clothes exist with us, living in syncopation with our rhythms. An itch here or there, a waistband a little too tight, but they do not invade. But then Broadhead's clothes are not the everyday. And they do invade, tufted bracelets and neck **pieces**: they infringe on our sphere. Fringes turned inwards. Fringes turned outwards. Everywhere we turn, fringes turning in and out.

But silken time like silken hair.

We cannot stay here for long.

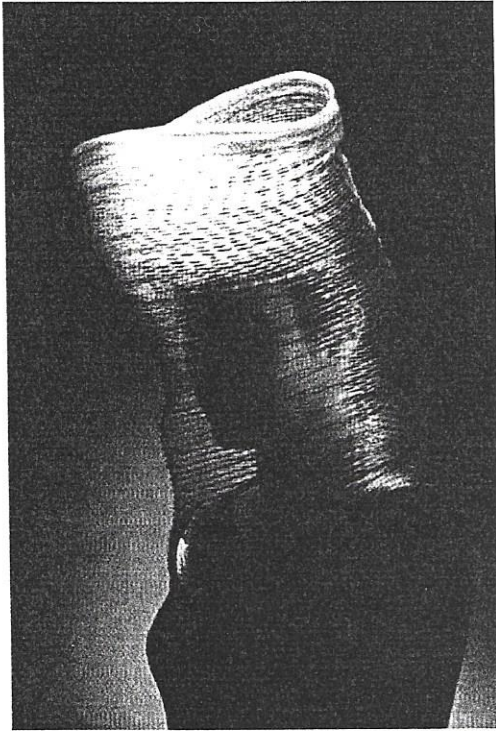


fig. 25

Veil

"My background in jewellery has made me aware of the way a piece fits, how it is put on and the consideration of movement. What effects will the body's movement have on an object, or how can an object condition how someone moves."(20)

- Caroline Broadhead

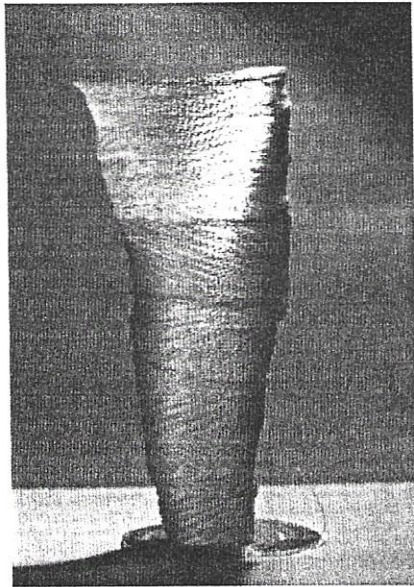


fig. 26

Sleeve

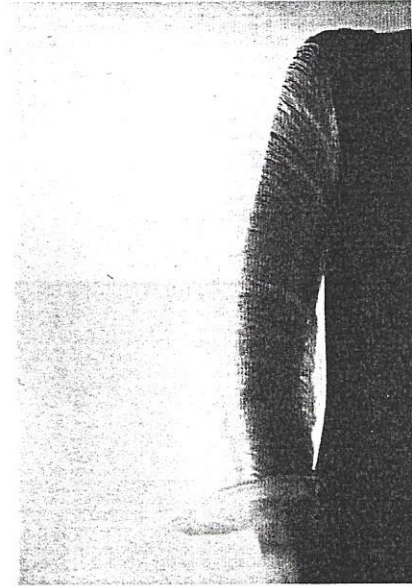


fig. 27

The Spinning Gesture

Our risk here is no longer one of being prey, rather it is of being consumed in a different way: drawn into the vortex of a series of distendable objects, sucked into a whirling mass of nylon tongues. At any moment we may be pulled this way or that, shrunk to a fraction of our size, or expanded beyond all proportions. Giddiness will be rife. If we are to survive we need eyes in the backs of our heads.

But why? What can be seen? I can see little, but a wave of nylon before my eyes. You can see little, for you have a wave of nylon before your eyes. We are caught in webs of light weight filaments.

I am veiled from you and you are veiled from me (fig. 25).

"Its thin veil quivers. But the chained beast stamps and stamps on the shore."(21)

Careful now, we are about to be shrunk. We are about to be shrunk and chained.

I can see you now and you can see me. What once veiled us is now a necklace, sitting unstirring below our chins. It is untelling of its recent journey, but I can hear the echoes in my eyes: yarns and yarns of nylon. Broadhead has spun us a circular yarn - a story so self-involved that there exist no seams, no beginning or end, simply nylon yarn after nylon yarn. Veil is a root and we are stuck here growing in circles. It is the root of Broadhead's very physical commitment to her notion of contraction expansion. Everything from this point on is sometimes there sometimes not there; sometimes immense sometimes miniature. We are to be propelled backwards and forwards, perpetually rotated, obscured from ~~view~~. We have no choice but to become the subject of objects' function and play. This is a vortical journey with few straight lines.

Accompany
me.

The Trace of the Spinning Gesture

Leave the root growing in its circles for Veil has sprouted a shoot. Leave the root growing in its circles for, as Broadhead says, "there is another hand at work."(22) A bough, a limb, a sleeve (fig. 26, 27). A shoot climbing skyward, seeking light. But it does not yet pierce the earth's surface. Sleeve is also stuck rotating. It can clothe the arm, dress the wrist, and extend to link body with ceiling. But limited gestures are all it can offer, over and over, again and again. For it has not the capacity to be any more - it is only part-garment, and a fraction at that. Sleeve, like Veil, lives in the **dark**.

Yet there is liberation to be had around the corner:



fig. 28

Eva Hesse

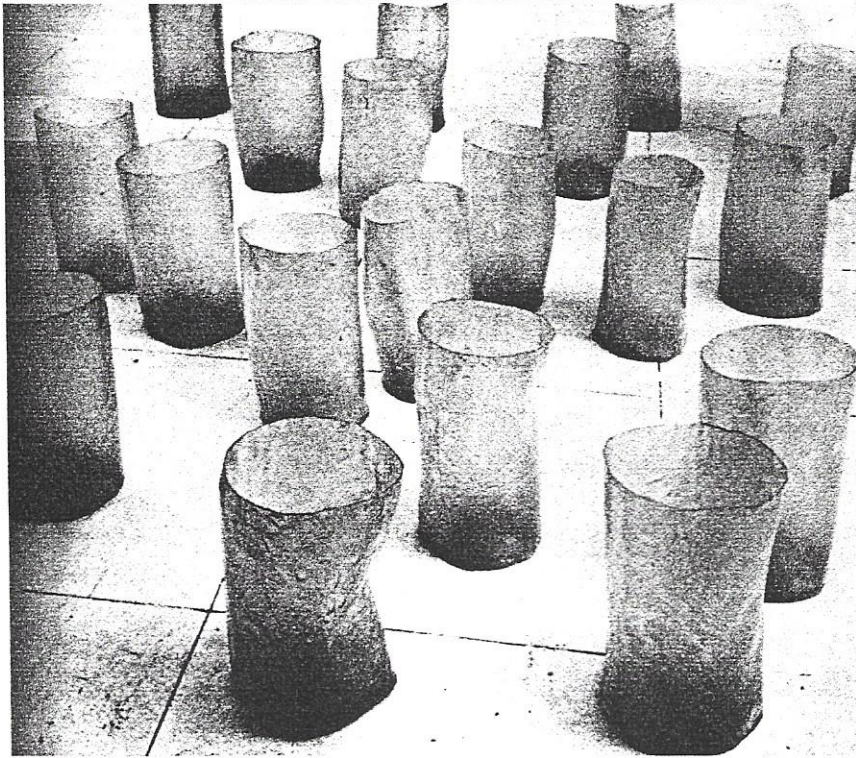


fig. 29

Repetition Nineteen III

"torus: 'a surface or solid generated by the revolution of a circle or other conic about any axis'."(26)

"-(the botanical): 'the swollen summit of the flower stalk, which supports the floral organs'."(27)

"-(the anatomical): 'a smooth rounded ridge or elongated protuberance, as of a muscle'."(28)

In the Poetics of Space, Gaston Bachelard writes-

"The details of a thing can be the sign of a new world which, like all worlds, contains the attributes of greatness."(23)

We must listen to Bachelard. We must not trip over the details of Sleeve, or miss its function in the darkness, for as this arm of nylon stems with which you and I are heavily intertwined nears the boundary between earth and sky, between part-garment and complete-garment, it begs the question: "Where is the boundary between ornament, garment, skin, subject and object?"(24) And Bachelard also writes-

"...entered into a miniature world and right away images began to abound, then grow, then escape - large issues from small...thanks to liberation from all obligations of dimensions."(25)

Ornament has escaped into garment, the silence is broken and stirred. Jewellery is becoming a being, but skin is outwith our reach still. We must climb in the dark with our synthetic arms.

Follow, me. Follow, Broadhead. Follow, the curve of your wrist.
There are tricks to be had up more sleeves. Follow me.

Slow down.

Not too quickly.

Hesse is with us once more, over there. She chases us as we climb. Or perhaps it is Broadhead who chases, for Hesse made some sleeves long ago (fig. 28, 29). Yet Hesse's rubberized sleeves are not arm-bound. Rather they have visually and physically escaped the body, and lie in a state of half-living, open and scarred (fig. 30), or stand in their fibreglass clusters like rooted veils holding light (fig. 29).

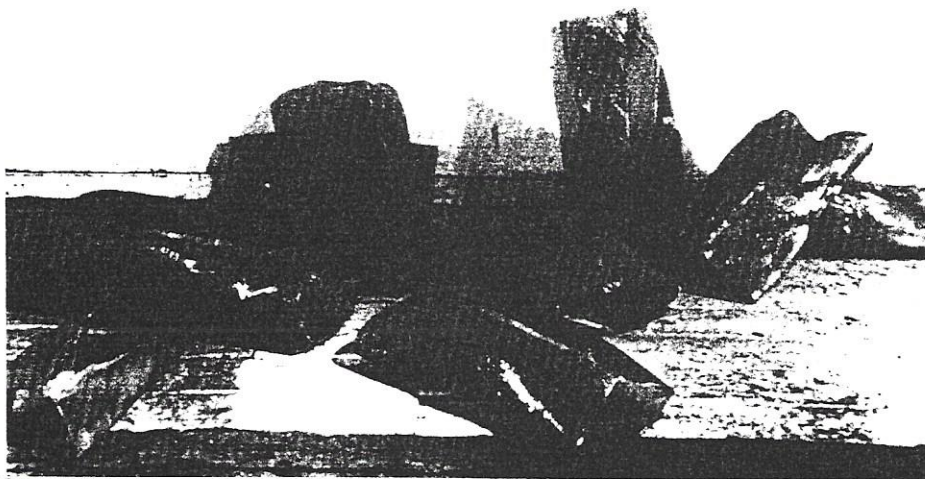


fig. 30

Tori

It is as though our synthetic-armed climb is momentarily interrupted by a meeting of Hesse's and Broadhead's minds: two artists caught in the tubiform concept of the sleeve.

And you and I are momentarily caught with them.

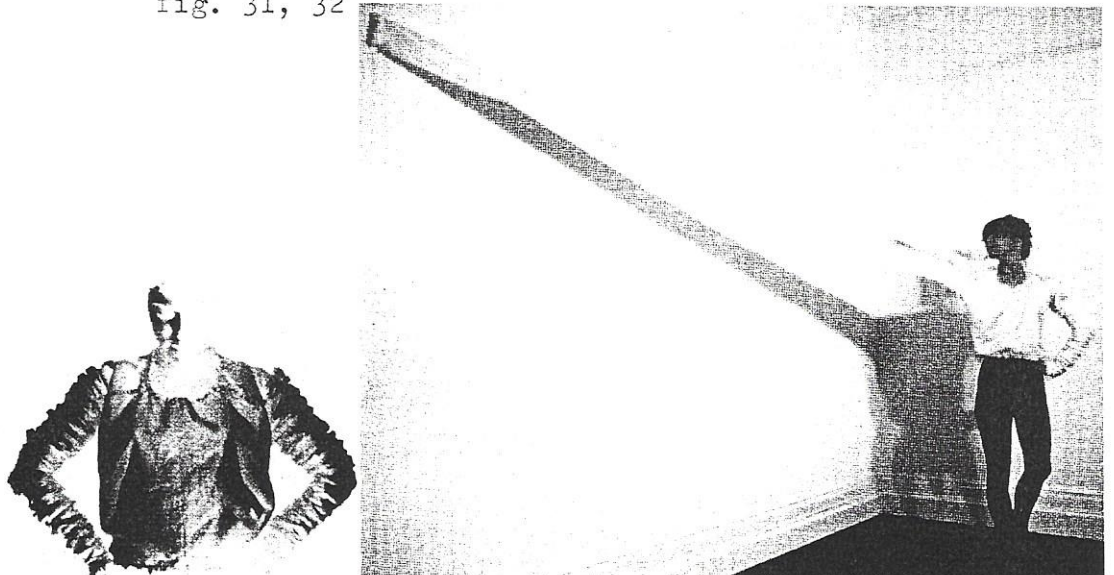
Two artists trapped in their self-made stalks,

and
we
are
trapped
too.
Wrapped
in
elongated
protuberances,
all
of
us.

Let us unwrap now though and continue our climb. Hesse is away again and we must continue alone,

you
and I,
and Broadhead.

fig. 31, 32 Shirt with Long Sleeves



Shirt with Long Sleeves (fig. 31, 32) is Broadhead's first whole garment and a milestone in our journey. The silence is certainly stirred now and our first skyward destination has been reached. Her work is now more garment than ornament, more skin than object. Broadhead says to me-

"the area that covers the body speaks of a whole person."(29)
An extension towards this whole person has been made three-fold: Firstly, our voyage has been shifted from dark seamless circles oscillating between jewellery and part-garment, to a wholly more functional and distinct realm in light; secondly, there is an extension in function (Shirt with Long Sleeves covers the upper body, not just a fraction); thirdly, there is a literal extension of the sleeves from arm-bound to sky-bound. A "tube linking the wrist" comments Broadhead.(30)(fig. 32)

Shirt with Long Sleeves was developed from the simple gesture of pushing up a sleeve; developed from simple fabric experiments (fig. 33). It is a repeated action that wraps our arms/unwraps our arms. A repeated action that clothes us fully.

We are fully clothed. Clothed in excess in fact, for there are yards of cloth stemming from our wrists, stemming from the axis about which the long sleeves revolve. Broadhead's tricks are up these long, long sleeves, occupying space which is not conventionally theirs, repeating their question in a louder voice-

"Where is the boundary between ornament, garment, skin, subject and object?"
(31)

-and in turn prompting Bachelard to say again that "large issues from small."
(32)

LARGE issues from small.

Broadhead is sowing the seeds for seriousness rather than gimmickry, serious rather than trickery. She scatters them around our feet, around our knees, around our hips, and around our shoulders. Broadhead is sowing seeds and amongst them we will grow, and beings will grow.

22 in 1 (armpiece)

fig. 33



Multiple Gadgetry

We are caught, though, in this cloth-gadgetry, enveloped within fabric this way and that. We pull a sleeve to disrobe ourselves, but just complicate our labyrinthine-garments, just multiply the network of tunnels and chambers.

(equation: disrobement divided by sleeves equals tunnels and chambers in perpetuity)

We are caught in a sub-system of trickery and games, not entirely sure where we begin or where we end, where outside space begins and ends. Our feet are tangled in thread, our knees are sore, our hips are bound, and our shoulders are heavy. Let us not panic though, for there is double information to be had here - two for the price of one.

TWO HEADS ARE ALWAYS BETTER THAN ONE. And we must try not to lose those heads, they will soon be wrapped seven-fold. Let us try to keep our balance as we twist and bend and spin in the vortexes of multiplicity, in the multiple dilemmas. Two heads are better than one remember.

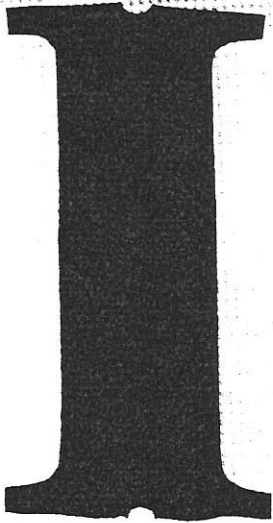


fig. 34, 35

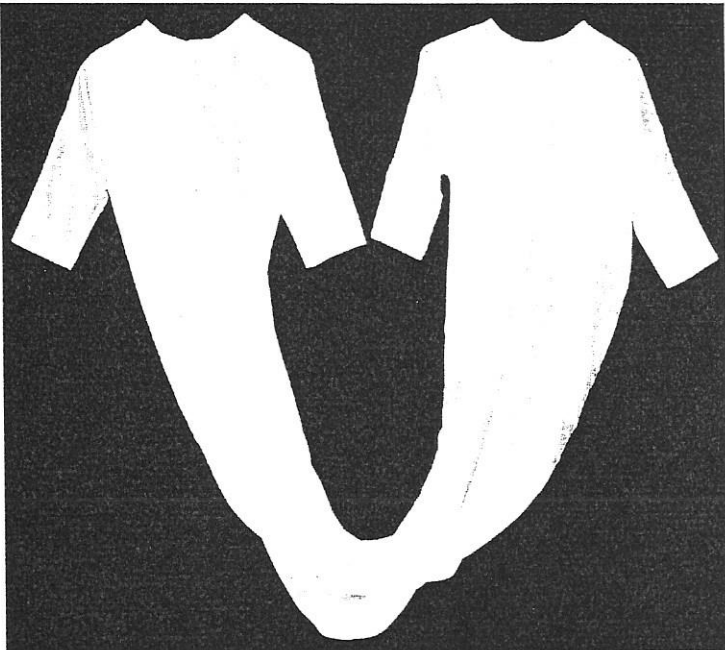
Twin Shirt

Twin Shirt is a dilemma (fig. 34, 35). It is a garment with two necks and two pairs of sleeves - a kind of 'push-me-pull-you' object, forever bound by a two-fold torso. Yet this shirt of double counterparts can be worn by a single body - a limitation Broadhead imposed when making, and in turn fabricating a limitation on the wearer: Twin Shirt's lower half may be turned inside out on top of the upper.

We really are twisting now, within a twisted system.

Broadhead says- "It has a restricting feeling when you wear it as it tightens up as you move."(33)

We are twisted into a double-take shirt: our heads turn twice as we notice a second neck. My shirt has the capacity for a second body, and two heads are better than one, but I cannot run for there are no legs to carry me. The threads have eaten my feet.



Gobble Gobble times by two, your feet have been eaten as well. We are being chewed by silk as I write.

(equation: disrobement divided by twin shirt equals absent legs in perpetuity)

In Pairs

I think my eyes are deceiving me.
Can you see double as well??

This no optical illusion though.
Rather it is another meeting of minds:
a conceptual pairing; a twin idea.
And in this case, a twin of Twin Shirt
(fig. 35). This is a deliberate aug-
mentation on the part of the artist.
Watercoats is two people becoming one.
Two people whose internal voices con-
flict, but who ultimately are pulled
together by an overriding current, a
current mixing two bodies into one -
swilling them round and round, churn-
ing bodily fluid with bodily fluid.

No legs but a strong running current.
We don't have such an easy ride.
But maybe Semmes is Broadhead's double.
For do we not all of us have one some-
where in the world??

Double take times by two.

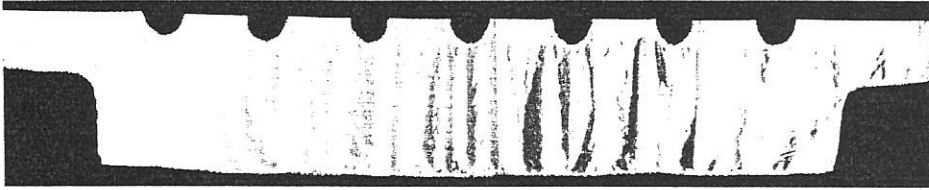


fig. 36

Watercoats

Beverly Semmes

We must leave the duet-singing garments and proceed on our
way. Matters are getting a little more complicated. Necks
and sleeves can no longer be counted on one hand.



"Wraparound Shirt is claustrophobic and is to accept a version of the self which may be at odds with our own, internal vision(s)." (38)

-Pamela Johnson

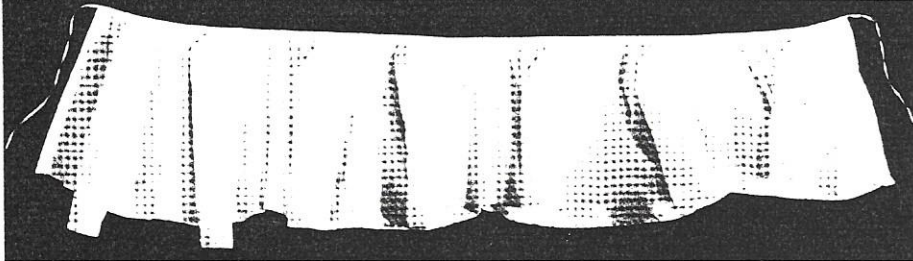


fig. 37, 38

Shirt with Seven Necks

Wraparound Shirt

Self-Impingement

Bachelard-

"Entrapped in being, we shall always have to come out of it. And when we are hardly outside of being, we always have to go back into it. Thus, in being, everything is circuitous, roundabout, recurrent; a chaplet of sojournings, a refrain with endless verse." (34)

Wraparound Shirt (fig. 38) could also be called 'unwinding shirt', for no sooner have we put arm in sleeve after arm in sleeve is it unwinding itself about our body. It might also be called 'circular', 'roundabout', or 'recurrent' shirt after Bachelard because, to borrow the philosopher's words, Wraparound Shirt is a 'chaplet of sojournings, a refrain with endless verse'. It is a garment of which we are the core, covered by its multi-surfaced, reinforced armour. It is a case of Russian Dolls, box-in-boxes, of which you and I are the smallest - the most protected when fully wrapped, the most vulnerable when the cotton is unwound. Fundamentally, though, Wraparound Shirt is Broadhead's idea of "form controlling movement" (35), which does include the notion of protection/vulnerability, but which is essentially about there being no quick way out; no conventional undressing. And so, whilst being protected we are the most constricted, and when being vulnerable we are actually the most liberated.

It is a two-faced system of double standards where we are trapped. Where we are wrapped.

Still, endless verse, so endless words...

Bachelard goes on-

"But what a spiral man's being represents. And what a number of invertible dynamisms there are in this spiral. One no longer knows right away whether one is running toward the center or escaping."(36)

Running or escaping? Running or escaping? Bachelard's philosophy is so close to Wraparound Shirt that his words might have been written directly for it? Are we dressing or undressing? Are we clothing ourselves in a roundabout way, for this is surely clothing of a roundabout kind, or are we de-stripping ourselves of this multi-layered shirt? 'Running toward the center or escaping'? Either way, we cannot get too comfortable.

Shirt with Seven Necks (fig. 37) is in essence Wraparound Shirt: a garment of extended proportions and multiplied features. It too has the vacillation between bound and unbound. It fluctuates between one garment and seven. When being put on, when 'running' toward their seven-thick states, both garments are a cloth-calcification - a fabric hardening of an outer cover, an exoskeleton in shirt form - a shell. Now who can possibly tell where we end and garment begins? The philosopher says-

"With a shell, the vital inhabiting impulse comes to a close too quickly, nature obtains too quickly the security of a shut-in life."(37)

It seems that form triumphs over movement. Rather than working in syncopation with us, these garments directly oppose conventional body rhythm; they have their own harmonies whose notes are outwith our physical range. Yet still we twist and bend and spin. Yet still are we caught in this 'shut-in life'. As Bachelard tells us, there are 'invertible dynamisms' in this spiral: protection/constriction, vulnerability/liberty. But when it comes down to it, when the helix is at its tightest, it is a completely shut-in life for me and for you. In the general flux of winding/unwinding, we are shut in, me and you.

Are we ever to come out of our shells?

'sometimes it's good to interrupt the routine'

Have you interrupted routine yet? the routine of reading a page, turning a page. Have you disturbed habit and suspended the story? I have, and I'm telling this story. It is me who navigates us across this paper, it is me with the compass who guides us over the poetic terrain. If you are drowning in the darkness I am your light. It is me with the pen keeping the diary, noting the scenery and describing the shapes of that which lies beyond this surface. I am sharing the secrets for they have been shared with me.

Have you interrupted routine yet? the routine of reading a page, turning a page. Have you disturbed habit and suspended the story? I have, here between part one and part two, and I'm telling this story. Sometimes it's good to interrupt the routine.

"There are great advantages in for once removing ourselves distinctly from our time and letting ourselves be driven from its shore back into the ocean...Looking at the coast from that perspective, we survey for the first time its entire shape, and when we near it again, we have the advantage of understanding it better on the whole than do those who have never left it."-Nietzsche (38)
Survey the entire shape of this writing: its bones, its flesh, its skin. Its bones can be seen but have you looked at them? Its flesh is on offer but have you tasted it? Its skin you have touched but have you felt it? Have you considered the hairs that bind my words? traces of life for you to hold within in your hands. Never judge a book by its cover. Never judge a cover until you know the book. Sometimes it's good to interrupt the routine.

Survey the ENTIRE shape of this writing: its bones, its flesh, its skin. Have you considered the type that scores my words into these pages? traces of me slipping through your eyes. Never judge words by the way they are typed. Never judge the way they are typed until you know the words. Sometimes it's good to interrupt the routine. Survey the ENTIRE shape. If you don't, things shall slip through your eyes without you looking.

(part two)

accompany me...

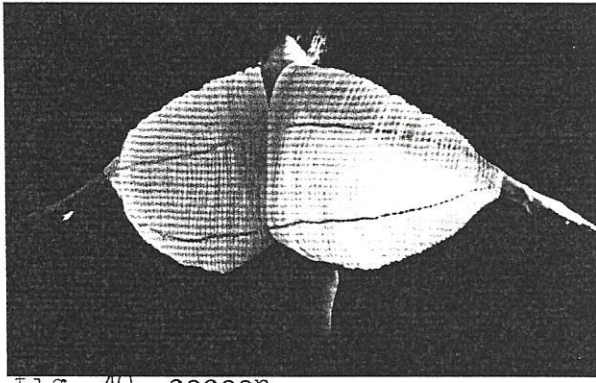


fig. 40 cocoon no.1

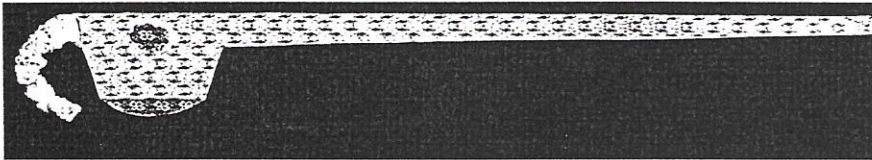


fig. 41 stretch no.2

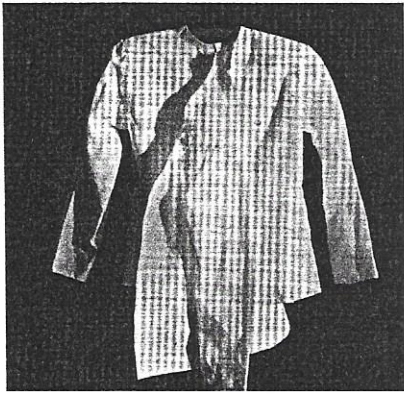


fig. 42 uniform no.3

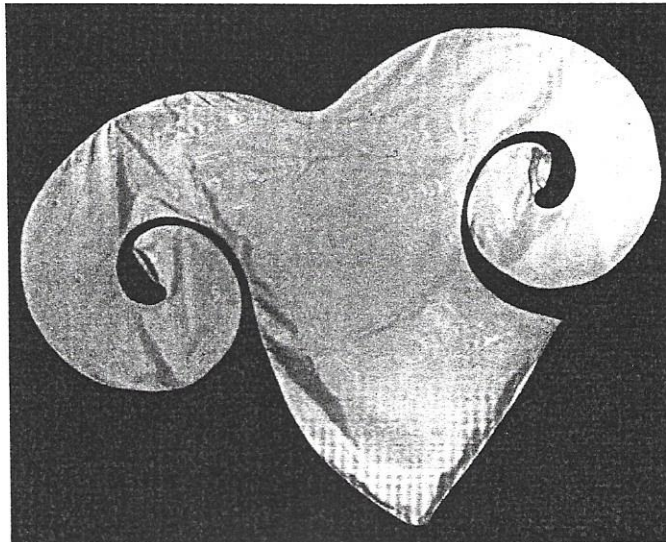


fig. 43 curling up no.4

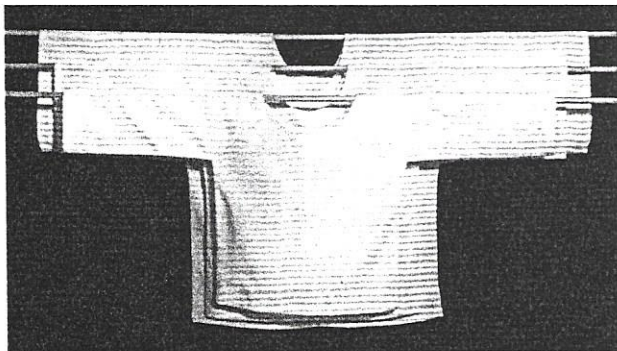


fig. 44 carrying people no.5



fig. 45 crumple no.6

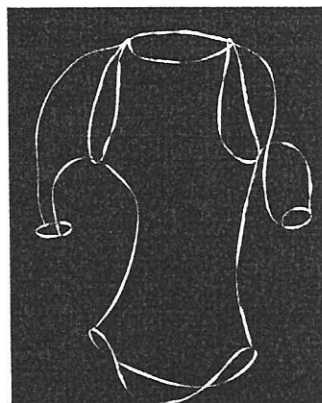


fig. 46 seam no.7

Seven Ages/the Butterfly Effect

Slowly. Slowly we do come out. But not from a shell are we emerging. Broadhead has made us a silky protective envelope, marking her garments as metonymic symbols: her cloth-cocoon is a substitute for birth, for being born. (fig. 39, 40) Suddenly, with this emergence, her objects make some sense in the world from which you and I have come - the world of weight and gravity and reality. No longer are we caught rotating in gimmickry of limited gesture. No longer are we caught growing in circles in darkness. No longer are we chained by nylon yarns. We are being born into the 'beyond surface', and the common thread of having been born links me to you and us to it. We are all threaded together to form the material reality that begins here: birth, life (in its various stages), and death. Or, to use Broadhead's metonymy, 'Seven Ages'. (fig. 39-46) Rosalind E. Krauss says-

"It allows him to become a disembodied intelligence circulating through an ideal space to grasp the thing from all sides at once, and to collapse this conceptual circumnavigation into a single, infinitely rich and complete moment of intellection. The moment of contact - is extended and thickened into an encounter that is pregnant with an accumulation of past and future relationships."(39)

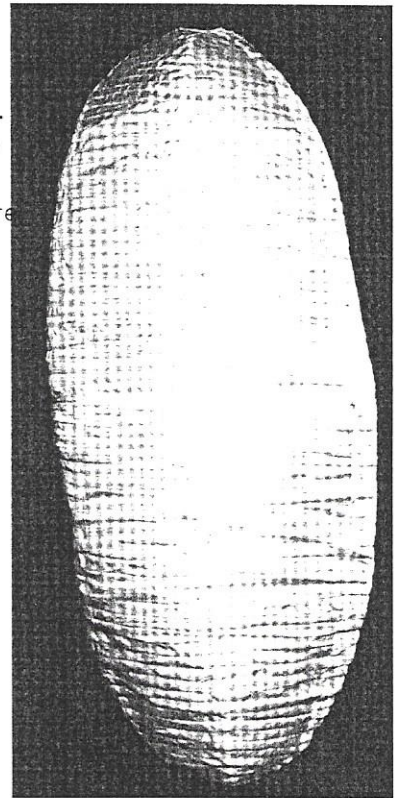


fig. 39

Seven ages no.1:
cocoon

We have been freed from that which tossed us in its oscillations. Our fabric rind is peeling, and we are peeling from our fabric rind. What does the future hold? Moreover, what is holding the future? for, until now, until 'the moment of contact' (as Krauss comments) our destinies have been accumulating in the emptiness of the cocoon. But then it was full with us; and we were born. It was full with the passage of time; a temporal pod whose silk split, whose waters broke. It is Bachelard's 'nest', and we were the 'swelling fruit, pressing against its limits'. (fig. 40)

The press is becoming a stretch, an outreaching in lace (fig. 41). It is a distension towards a uniform, that which Mary Kelly terms "a certain kind of obliteration."(40) She says-

"The uniform is like what you have on now, where you can be in the world- and have a voice."(41)

But are we not obliterated already? In some way cancelled by our whiteness? Have we the voice which Kelly talks of, the literal voice with which she speaks? Is the garment over our skin over our voice as well? A fabric voiceover, a woven mute? (fig. 42)

Our life "through white garments"(42) lives on colourlessly, perhaps silently.

We curl (fig. 43). Our arms are drawn inwards by seams that are too short for their outer joints; our joints are too tight for our inner energy. So we curl. We curl into Fallopian tube shape, and so now we are ready to carry people -

"The skin on her belly had become coarse and wrinkled, with the underlying ligaments showing through in whitish streaks; the skin did not look like a real part of the body, but rather resembled a loose sheet."(43)

Our belly has become coarse and wrinkled; a loose sheet with room for extra bodies (fig. 44). But now the underlying ligaments have outgrown us, and our whitish streaks have become their whitish streaks, and as they stand straight we begin to crumple.

We are crumpling (fig. 45). No longer are we made from lace, delicate in an opening web, for we are dissolving before our very eyes. No longer are we woven in symmetrical patterns and figures, for we are slipping into assymetry as we fade. We are going inside. We are looking inside, and the insides are looking at us.

We are seams (fig. 46). We have become, in Broadhead's seventh age, "an interiority of space."(44) An externalization of the inside:

a garment x-ray.

Full Circles

"And when an organism dies, it does not really vanish, but folds in upon itself, abruptly involuting into the again newly dormant seed"(45)

Our sub-journey has come full circle-

unfold - fold - unfold

cocoon - seams - cocoon

seed - skeleton - seed

fullness - emptiness - fullness

We are beginning again. The cocoon is full again. We have folded in upon ourselves and we haven't vanished. We are the seed again, in the silky protective envelope (fig. 39), and as Deleuze writes, "just as the butterfly is folded into the caterpillar that will soon unfold."(46)
We will unfold again and again and again.

We will unfold and unfold, but will we always exist in circles and cycles? arm-length cycles, full life-length circles. We have been freed from gimmickry and its oscillations, but now we are being tossed in a seven-stage revolution. Is there not some hole somewhere in this seamless-scheme? Some gap in the chain of this spiral-system?

I am dizzy in circles.

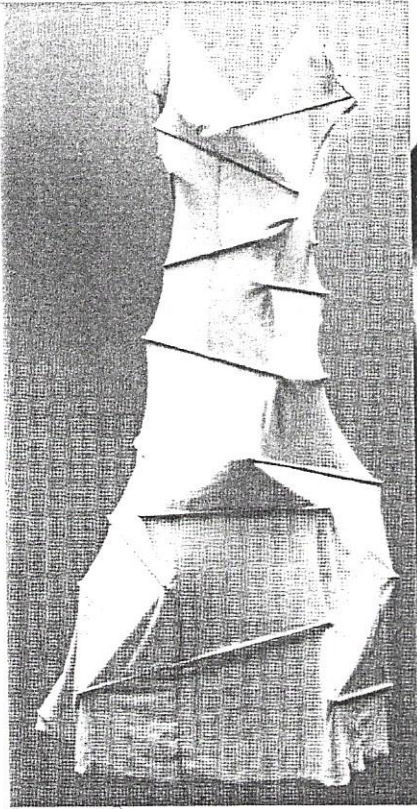


fig. 48

Stress

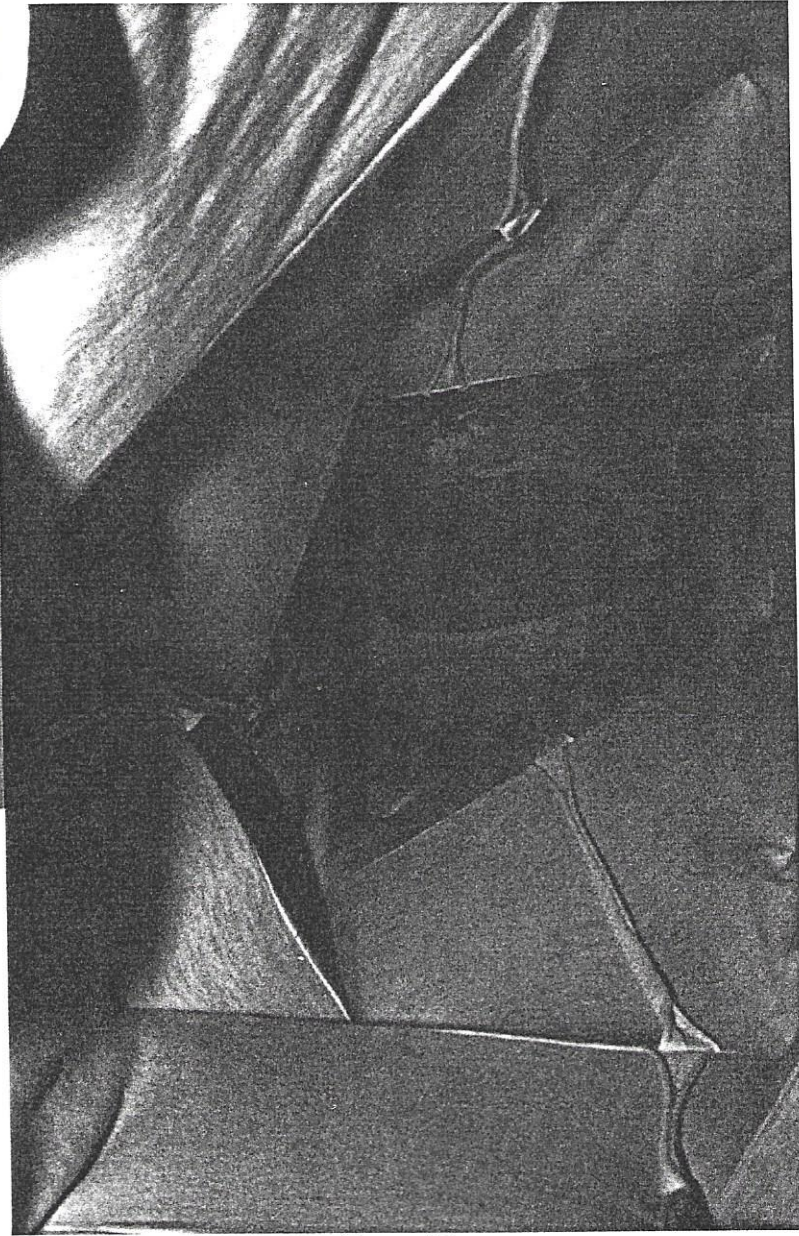


fig. 47

interior of Stress

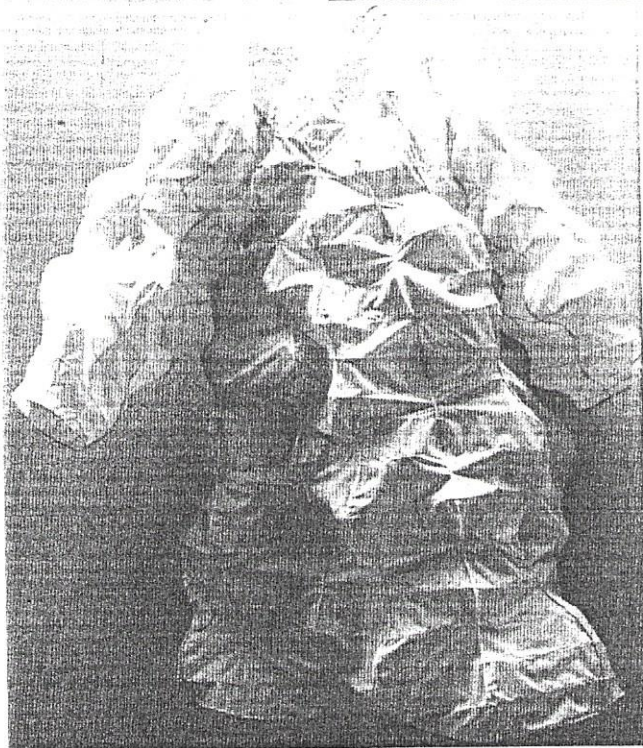


fig. 49

Wobbly Dress

Out of Body Experience

Bright white lights. Light white dresses. There was a hole, not below but above. This is a higher sphere - a small opening of whiteness and heights reaching further than before. It is a linear ascent, not a weighted descent, not a curvilinear existence for us anymore. This is the afterlife of the beyond surface, its higher floor, the surface beyond the 'beyond surface'. Although it is not a 'surface', more a 'space', where emptiness and invisibility are common traits; almost an inexistence. Deleuze says-

"In this ambiguous space, the mind has lost its geometrical homeland and the spirit is drifting."(47)

Broadhead has lifted us to an ever-shifting realm, one no longer ordered by points, lines, curves or surfaces. This is a sphere of multi-direction, not of limited gesture. This is an elevated floor and a two-fold maturing: (1) a literal growing up, a going upwards; (2) a conceptual maturing. We are not ruled by geometry. Our spirit is drifting

(Hidden Parameters)

Ideas move about us, inside of us, outside of us. The emphasis now is on the outwards projection of inner selves, and in so being, there are physical emphases on the inside of Broadhead's dresses (fig. 47). Deleuze says-

"Everywhere the subject swirls in the midst of forces they exert stress that defines the individual body, its elasticity, and its bending motions."(48)

This higher, seemingly inexistent invisible sphere is in fact swirling amongst forces. And within it I am swirling and you are swirling and forces are defining, although we are not defining ourselves for this is not a clear-cut system. Broadhead says to me- "Parts that we claim as ourselves are subject to external and hereditary influences."(49)

'Stress' (fig. 48) is an externalization of inward stresses - a kind of explosion/implosion of strains and tensions, resulting in an interior deformation (fig. 47), and an exterior change of dimensions;

"Such transformations convey the projection, on external space, of internal spaces defined by 'hidden parameters'."(50)

(Hidden parameters) are at play. (Hidden parameters) are playing with us. Forces are wobbling us and defining cavernous surfaces (fig. 49). Although not a 'surface', more a permeable membrane, a fragile fluid shifting space, where interior and exterior landscape are transposable and transposing. As Deleuze writes of the Baroque curve, Wobbly Dress constitutes "more than a line and less than a surface."(51)

The 'less than surface' surface-less (?) Wobbly Dress fits the Baroque further, as Deleuze goes on-

"Fabric or clothing has to free its own folds from its usual subordination to the finite body it covers. If there is an inherently Baroque costume, it is broad, in distending waves, billowing and flaring, surrounding the body with its independent folds, ever multiplying - a system like rhingrave canons - ample breeches - vested doublets, flowing cloaks, enormous flaps, overflowing shirts, everything that forms the great Baroque contribution to clothing."(52)

Wobbly Dress billows and **flaps**, surrounds and multiplies, creates canons and overflows. We have reached the higher floor where Broadhead makes Baroque-like garments.

Our spirit is d r i f t i n g

the higher floor

we have reached

'sometimes it's good to interrupt the routine'

Have you interrupted routine yet? the routine of reading a page, turning a page. Have you disturbed habit and suspended the story. I have, and I'm telling this story. Have you considered the traces that separate my pages? trace elements laid bare to reveal me, conceal me. Survey the ENTIRE shape of this writing.

(part three)

let me accompany you...



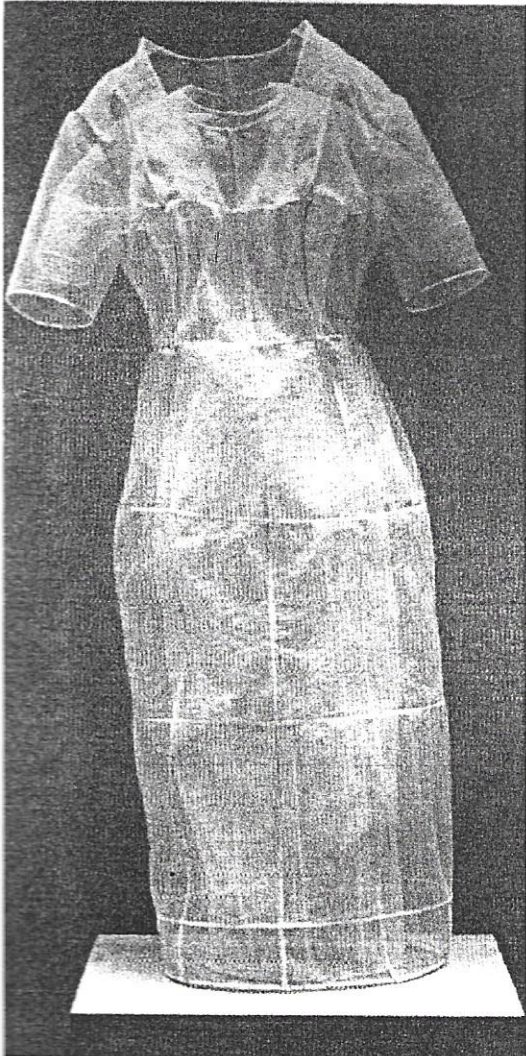
We are slipping upwards through the system, slipping higher. The reality of gravity and earth is tiny from up here. We have been unchained and time and light is everywhere. Lightness is everywhere this time. Broadhead's objects have become 'beings'.

"-he noticed huge white and silver forms looming high up in the air. He noticed the great extensions of their dazzling and partially concealed forms. The forms, alive in a way that only the most awesome things are alive, encompassed him-"(53)

The souls, of which I wrote in the beginning, have been loved and let free, and now they encompass us with a partly visible presence. Encompassing me and encompassing you.

"He wasn't sure what had changed, but he felt as if he were at an angle inside himself. The sudden sight of the angels seemed to have twisted his neck in some way."(54)

Our necks have been twisted and our heads have been turned. There are angles inside of us and angels around us (fig. 50, 51). Broadhead has been watching: watching her creations develop, and watching you and I develop with her creations.



At last we take up residence in her stellar world - winged, mobile, and meandering without gravity.

fig. 50, 51

Empty Dress, Double Vision

Behind Our Own Backs (or, The Realization of the Shadow - after Jung)

There are shadows though, amongst this lightness. Shadows that intercept the light rays of the shifting 'beings'. Shadows that interrupt the beings encompassing you and me with their whiteness.

There are shadows, up here in this whiteness; aspects we have ignored; darknesses we have not embraced (fig. 52).

"-one becomes acquainted with aspects of one's own personality that for various reasons one has preferred not to look at too closely. This is what Jung called 'the realization of the shadow'."(55)

Jung continues-

"All the contents are blurred and merge into one another, and one never knows exactly what or where anything is, or where one thing begins and ends."(56)

Jung's words grasp hold of what now is happening in this ethereal system, and articulate that which would otherwise slip through the fingers like sand - in reality, shadow-chasing games always end in defeat. Jung pins down notions surrounding that which is impossible to immobilize (the shadow), and in turn, Broadhead 'pins up' physical embodiments of his shadow-ideas (fig. 53, 54, 55). The white garments have a dark side, an alter ego, a soul (fig. 56).

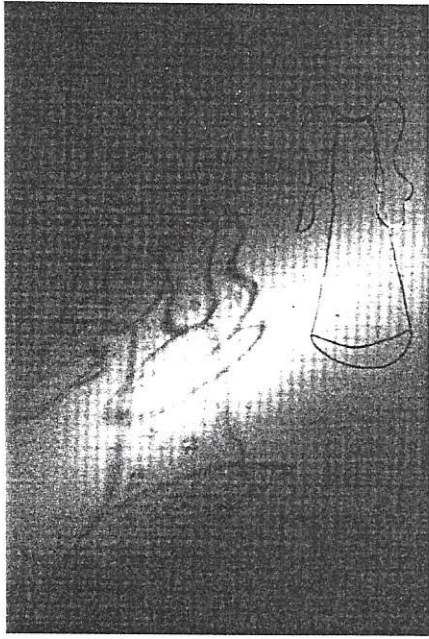
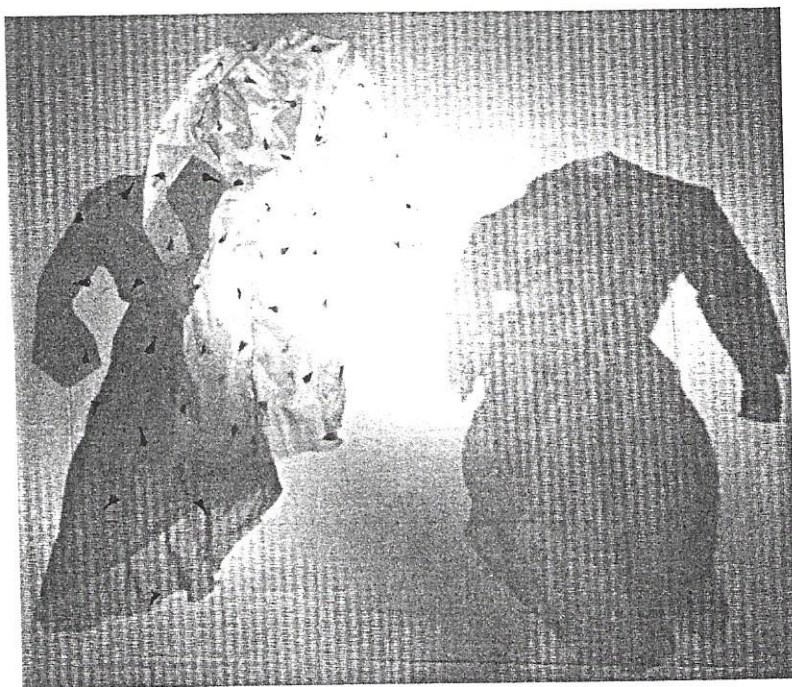


fig. 52

Shadow Dress

Steppenwolf

fig. 56



Absence or Presence?

-----?

That these dark sides shift and blur and merge amongst and with the whiteness it is difficult, as Jung wrote, to define beginnings and ends. Are these shadows really there? Do they confirm the presence of the white garment, or then are they an indication of an absence? Are they simply the consequence of the material presences, or the beginning of something which has no real substance?

Oh dear, shadow-chasing games always end in defeat.

Shadow-chasing shadow-questions will maybe be the same.

Yet the shadows ARE there, for Broadhead scores them in pencil on walls, cuts them from fabric, and illuminates the positive to create their negative doubles. Broadhead says-

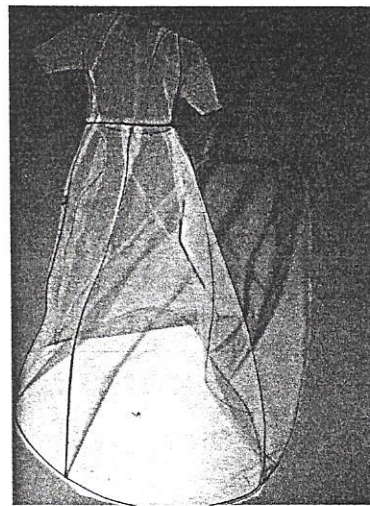
"By giving 'body' to a shadow I am giving more importance to the thing that is not immediately apparent."(57)

Oh dear, shadow-chasing games always end in defeat.
Shadow-chasing shadow-questions seems to be the same.

These 'not immediately apparent' shadows are presences AND absences simultaneously, for this is a shifting system where a single object has multiple functions, where darkneses indicate the presence of light and whiteness illuminates the absence of dark. Shadows give weight to this ethereal world. Broadhead is a dark horse speaking in whispers. Whisper after me...

fig. 53, 54, 55

shadow ideas-



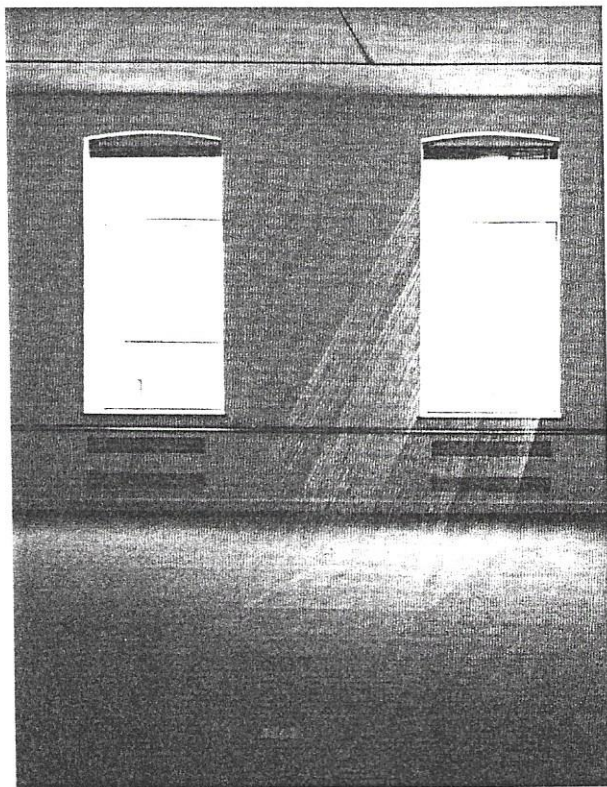


fig. 57

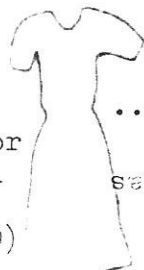
Still Light



----- But it is still light. It is still a light world-----

"Light and the rational forms are locked in combat; light sets them into motion, bends what is straight, makes parallels oval, inscribes circles in intervals, makes the intervals active. Hence the inexhaustible variety."(58)

It is still a light world with this darkness: Broadhead has mapped out an impenetrable area of light for us with her elastic lines, created a timeless projection, and projects timelessness from window to floor (fig. 57). It is an elegant network of threads, 'Still Light', a constant shaft of light and radiance, an "imprisoned star caught in the instant's freezing."(59)



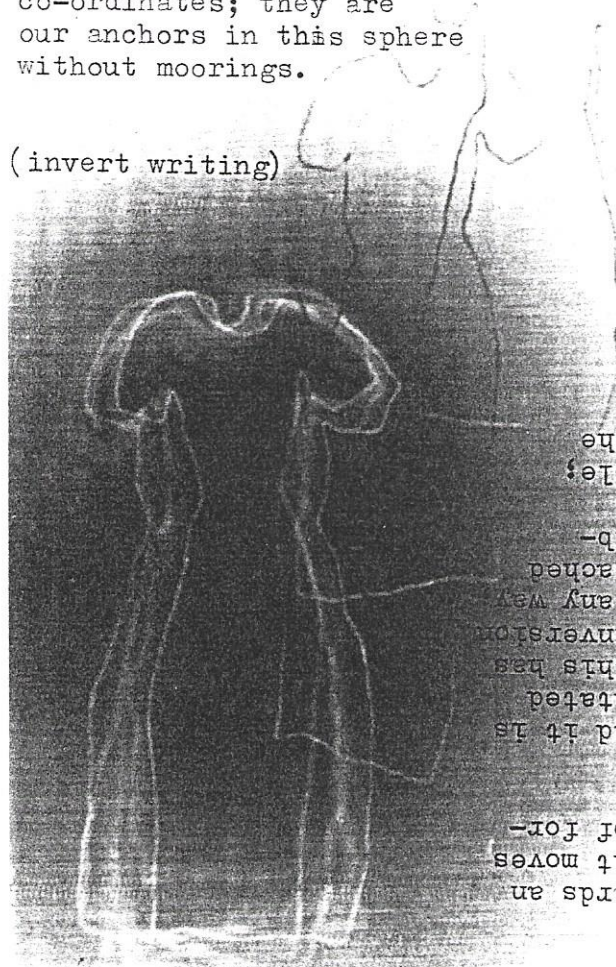
The intensity of its presence depends on natural light from the window, making it a kind of threaded sundial whose illuminated lines 'lengthen/shorten' as does the day.

And it is the lines that we must watch (fig. 57) now the 'beings' are away, as the beings escape across the page to a higher place beyond the surface of the page. The lines are our co-ordinates; they are our anchors in this sphere without moorings.

And now we can be away to a higher place beyond the surface of this page as we escape across it...
We are here and it is sublime. My head is a tower where light rays are dancing. Your head is a tower and light rays are dancing there too.

"Your head is a tower where light rays dance."(61)

(invert writing)



We have reached the lightest space and it is sublime. We may be a little disoriented and find ourselves upside-down, but this has been a dizzying journey so a little inversion is only to be expected. And anyway, any way up-side-down or inside-out, we have reached it - the lightest space. And it is subtle. It is the most shifting whilst static; the most visible then invisible; the most illuminated then darkened; the most earthbound yet weightless. And we can be beyond, for that is where this is, and this is to where we have travelled.

This is our lightest space-

fig. 58 Tunnel Dress (invert)

Afterword

It is as if we had never been here.

This is a piece of writing that should not really exist in words. Broadhead's is lyrical work, musical even with its rhythms and its tempos, for it is ever shifting and from new threads it makes new chords. And as Igor Stravinsky says, "How misleading are all literary descriptions of musical form"(62)

I am sorry if I have mislead you.

I am sorry if I am still misleading you...

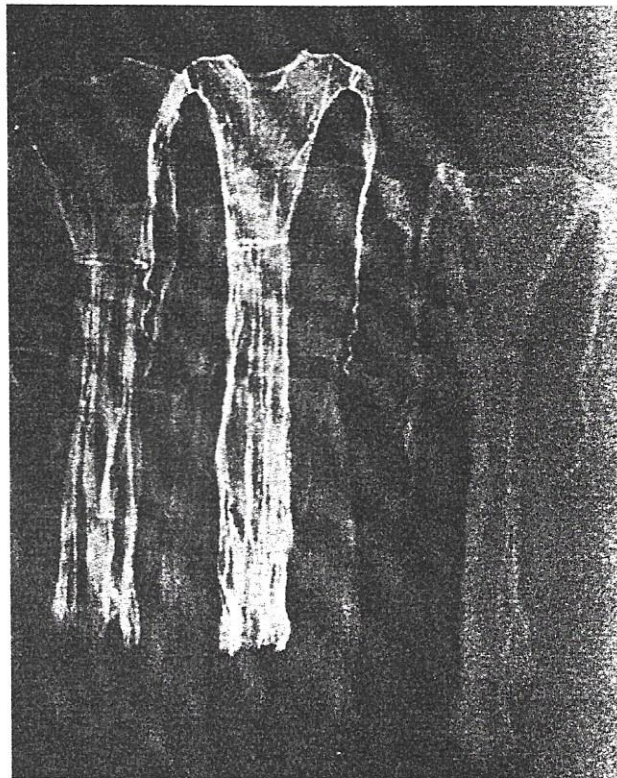


FIG. 59

in-crease-de-crease

Caroline Broadhead

This is a piece of writing that should not really exist in words. So why write it? Why give a literary description of a lyrical, musical form?

As I wrote in the beginning, my discovery of Caroline Broadhead brought with it disappointment - I found only earthbound sentences and static words - nothing that whispered, nothing that hovered; no writing that went beyond itself to the place where her work is. I wanted to write weightless words for Broadhead, words that slip through the fingers and slip through the eyes - hairbound words like her hairbound jewellery, imprinted words like her imprinted bracelet, words separated by a trace, like the traces she leaves us. I wanted to write words for Broadhead that can be held up, written down, look at anyone squarely and declare 'we are living in this book, side by side, without doing injustice to the work we are accompanying'. I wanted to write a co-voyage, one that saw the changing scenery but looked at it as well, one that went to dark places as well as light, one that was not afraid to go round and round because it knew that in the end it would go on, and then on and on, from shadows to illuminations, across the poetic terrain.

I have written the score for Broadhead's work, to be played and played again. And the secrets, they are still to be found if you keep looking...

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illustrations continued:

fig. no.-

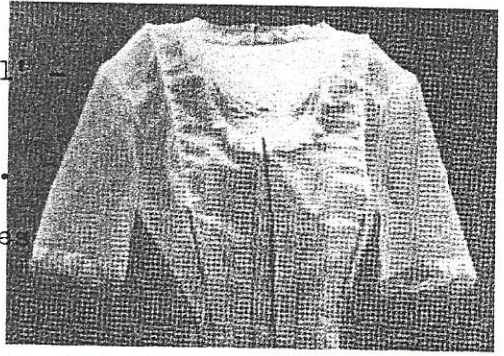
56. Broadhead, Caroline: Steppenwolf, 1997. Scorched silk, paint, pencil, dimensions unknown, in Johnson, P. Bodyscape: Caroline Broadhead, p.3.
57. Broadhead, Caroline: Still Light, 1998. Pilot installation, elastic, talc, dimensions unknown, in Johnson, P. Bodyscape: Caroline Broadhead, title page.
58. Broadhead, Caroline: Tunnel Dress, 1999. Wire, silk, dimensions unknown, in Harris, Jennifer (ed.) Art Textiles of the World: Great Britain Volume 2, Telos Art Publishing 1999, p.41. (computer-manipulated by author).
59. Broadhead, Caroline: in-crease-de-crease, 1999. Net, 2m x 7m x 30m, in Harris, Jennifer (ed.) Art Textiles of the World: Great Britain Volume 2, Telos Art Publishing 1999, p.39. (computer-manipulated by author).



secrets lie herein

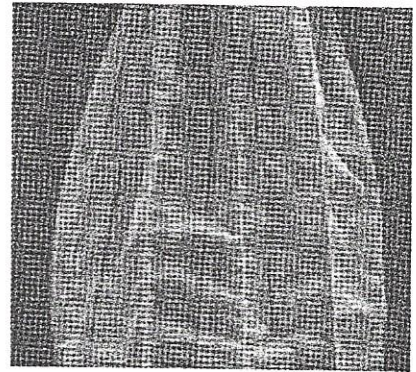
The Higher Floor

Not a 'floor' by definition, rather a 'level' a vertical position reaching further than before, a place of higher altitude than the floors below, a life after the floors below. Emptiness and invisibility are manipulated by hidden parameters: insides become outside and dimensions are changed. Defining surfaces is difficult, for fragile shifting membranes exist here. The Higher Floor is a continual upward movement, amongst 'beings', but the experience is outwith bodies. We can stand on shoulders to see into this white opening.



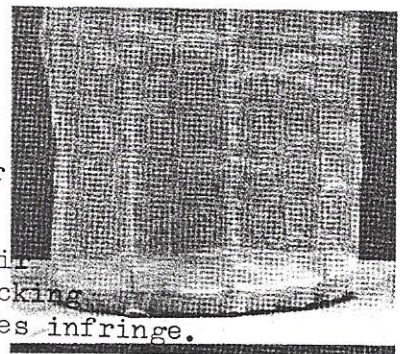
The Middle Floor

A transitional floor/a sub-system. No more oscillations, no more growing in circles below-ground, no more gimmickry. However, this floor is a single life-oscillation in seven stages (cocoon-seams-cocoon). The cocoon-womb analogy places this sub-system on the middle floor. The middle floor thus becomes the 'uterine' floor - a temporary house for development towards the higher floor.



The Lower Floor

A fragment of a floor where traces of life can be grasped - hair, fingerprints. A floor of perpetual movement, between slipping through time like silken hair and sticking on silver hours and sticking within fringes because hirsute circles infringe. The lower floor is the root: a below-ground spinning existence.



Survey the ENTIRE shape of this writing.