

# Lying With The Wolf

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I find myself in bed with a person.  
There is a silence in the room. Maybe he is talking and there  
are plants swaying in the air blowing in from the open win-  
dow. I love plants.  
My head is on his chest and my gaze is directed through the  
window where it is still day  
Against my cheek I feel a pounding like the rhythm of a  
drum and my ear hears a deep ruffling sound that grows  
stronger when I close my eyes.  
I can listen to the inside of his body. A rhythm driven  
through his bones.  
The engine that runs without any hesitation.

This is the moment.

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# Introduction

We start at the central station of Milano. I found myself there in the summer heat, sweating and bored. I was with my boyfriend at the time, walking around the bookstore. In the English language section I picked up a book and read the title: *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Archetype* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés. It was written in golden letters with a tiny illustration of a tall woman standing, her hair waving in the wind, her hand resting on the neck of the wolf next to her. I had read about the book before and decided to buy it since I had always been interested in myth. We had to rush for the train. We got two seats next to the window. He was sitting across from me and I started reading. After the first chapter I closed the book and it was not until two months later that I opened it again. What made me stop reading? At the moment I was not sure, the only thing I knew was that what I read scared me and made me stop. The first chapter talked about women losing touch with their inner 'Wild Woman', core energy and creative power by losing themselves in the modern world. A Wild Woman. I felt a recognition and longing that made my skin tingle, but I stopped reading. Two months later life forced me to start reading again. The summer heat of Italy had evaporated, my relationship ended. I cut my hair and I picked up the book where I left off.

The more I read about the Wild Woman the bigger my longing and the stronger a question grew inside of me: is this core energy of the 'Wild Woman' still retrievable after it seems lost? Is it recognizable in other artists and in their art and is it necessary for female artists in the modern world? In this thesis I want to research these questions and its answers. Stating that this 'Wild Woman' is easily repressed and domesticated in modern times within women and men, I am looking at artists who, in my opinion, are still able to retrieve and reach into their primal nature and turn this into artistic creation. Art with a soul. It creates a dialog that shows the struggle of the repression by society (outer world) and the instinctual (inner world) and translating this dialog within their art. The artists I chose to explore in answering the question if the Wild Woman is still retrievable in art are all women who inspire me in their sense of strength, self-willingness, authenticity and who show their conscious or subconscious connection to the retrieving of their inner primal female energy in their work. Through the thesis I will

discuss works of Kiki Smith, Cindy Sherman, Niki de Saint Phalle, Phyllida Barlow, Anna Maria Maiolino, Eva Hesse, Laure Prouvost, Louise Bourgeois, Pauline Curnier Jardin and Berlinde de Bruyckere.

When my relationship ended I experienced that I felt like I had lost a part of myself, I could not retrieve my core energy and started to wonder if it ever had been there. Had a part of me died? Or had I never acknowledged this inner core energy. It felt as a cry of the heart. This drove me to an urge to go in search of it, within myself but also within others. I was not sure if I would ever recognize it. During my research I realized that certain myths and certain art and artists, that make me experience a connection or deeper feeling of interest, are very much connected to this subject and to my own practice. A deeper understanding develops itself in the shared interests of expansion, growth, creation, corporeality, female strength, contradictions in organic and structure and claiming space by big gestures. These subjects are surrounding us, some in a subtle and unnoticed way, others stand in front of you like trees in a forest; tall and unmovable.

Within my own practice I explore organic and structured shapes through different materials. My interest is mainly based on body inspired shapes of the inner and outer body which communicate a certain feeling, emotion and energy. My work varies in shapes and sizes you would like to hold, caress and care for and sizes and volumes that surround you and protect you. One could say I develop a physical dictionary to express emotion, changing the atmosphere in a room and treating different layers of space. I am interested in the bigger movement of building big, less controllable sculptures and create the sensation of experiencing a different world like for instance a forest of sculptures.

My poetry in this thesis illustrates the obstacles, the search and the ways of losing the part of myself that represent the 'Wild Woman' for me. It talks about the compromises we make for others and holding on to something that might not even exist. That is all I want to say about that, the poems are highly personal and all similarities with people or events might or might not be fiction. Fill that part in yourself, after all life is a bit of a gamble.

In Paradise  
there was no silence  
only a loud mystery  
of waterdrops  
falling into empty buckets,  
babies wrapped in cellophane  
and a girl  
with a bleeding key.





# The Wild Woman in Art

La Loba.

Somewhere in the desert a woman lives, wandering her way through the landscape looking for bones of all sorts of animals, but mainly bones of wolves. Bones that would have gone lost if not assembled. A woman more hairy and wolflike than any human on earth. She spends her days collecting bones and when she has every white shining bone to form an entire skeleton, she lays out the wolf before her. When the day goes into night and the sky starts shimmering with gray, she stands over the skeleton. She moves her arms like she is casting a spell or conducting an imaginary orchestra. Her voice grows stronger and heavier until she sings full out, gasping breaths, forming animal sounds. Flesh starts growing over the bones, forming muscles and tissue covering the body. She keeps singing, growling, howling and moving her arms and stamping her feet. From these bones and this flesh grows a coat of fur as shiny as it could be. She sings, her voice covering the night blue sky until the moon comes out. The creature begins to breath, it opens its eyes and stands up and runs away. With great speed it runs into the nothingness of the desert and when it is almost too far to see, you can see paws changing into feet and long legs and snout into a mouth. A woman appears where first there was a wolf running. She keeps on running, smiling and laughing.<sup>1</sup>

“La Loba” is the first myth of the book *Women Who Run With the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estés. Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1945) is a Jungian psychoanalyst, poet and Cantadora (collector and keeper of stories) from the United States, from a native American/Mexican family. She comes from a heritage of story tellers, farmers and living and learning from nature. She actively uses her collection of healing stories in her practice and in her research into the natural instinctive nature of the wild woman.

“La Loba” is a fairytale originating from the Latin countries but also has its roots in Eastern European countries. The story illustrates a ritual of rebirth. Giving something life by carefully assembling, building and putting energy into its being. This energy connects to our core, our power to create but also our power to transition. “La Loba” describes

<sup>1</sup> Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Woman Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. (First mass market paperback edition. The Random House Publishing Group, 1997) Own interpretation of the story ‘La Loba’ p.25.

the reawakening from the female body and soul: the Wild Woman, through creation and transition. It refers to the bones as the core, our skeleton and also our indestructible life source that will always prove that once there was life. Feeding the roots of this core is done by feeding creation, the act of making and the touching upon the soul of the object. This act of making also triggers a longing for understanding the urge to create. Is it the search for this core energy or the proving of a certain power that make hands translate feeling into materials, into an object? Are female artists consciously or subconsciously in search of their primal energy? The female body becomes a great representation of strength and fertility as a carrier of the 'necessity of existence' and new life. This 'rebirth' is represented in the story of "La Loba" but is also visible in the physical process of creating for the artist.

The artwork *Rapture* (2001, Bronze - Pace Gallery) by German-American artist Kiki Smith <sup>2</sup> (1954) has a visual and mythological connection to the story of "La Loba". Kiki Smith was part of the end of the second feminist art wave throughout the 70's, together with Cindy Sherman, among others. These artists explored ways to question the female role in social, political and cultural life by focussing on sexuality and the rights of the female body. The female body played a big role in the work of Kiki Smith. She explored social expectations regarding the female form and stretched boundaries to include bodily fluids and the use of myth, fairytales and religion in reference to the female figures in her work. Smith puts an emphasis on the power the female body communicates and what it can represent within myth and fairytale but also how this still can strongly relate back to modern times. The sculpture *Rapture* depicts a woman who steps out of the open belly of a wolf while holding onto one of its paws. This depicts a story of rebirth, it is a transition from wolf into Wild Woman addressing her primal energy. When discussing her sculpture *Rapture* Smith comments: "It's a resurrection, birth story; 'Little Red Riding Hood' is a kind of resurrection, birth myth." she says, "And then I thought it was like Venus on the half shell or like the Virgin on the moon. It's the same form - a large horizontal form and a vertical coming out of it."<sup>3</sup> Within her work Smith often refers to mythical depictions

<sup>2</sup> Kiki Smith was born in 1954 in Nuremberg Germany, but moved at an early age to the United States and established her art practice in New York.

<sup>3</sup> The Art Story, Kiki Smith on *Rapture* 2001, article on Artworks by Kiki Smith. <https://www.theartstory.org/artist/smith-kiki/artworks/> (accessed: December 2019)

of women and wolves like the drawings of *Carrier* (2001, MoMa NY) and *Lying with the wolf* (2001, Centre Pompidou Paris). These pieces also refer to the relationships between women and this powerful animal. They relate to the search of primal energy. The wolf through the centuries has been considered a mysterious and spiritual animal which carries our projection of seeking reconnection with our own animal soul. The she-wolf represents the nurturing energy which is the base of creative transformation and development, feeding our inner intellectual source and 'Wolf Woman'.

In *The Book of Symbols: Reflection on Archetypical Images* the wolf is referred to as a source of primal energy: "(...) Without those energies, in contrast to the wolf, we will never be at home in the universe."<sup>4</sup>

Symbols and representations of the female archetype play a big roll within the myths and stories in Clarissa Pinkola Estés' book, as well as in the work of many artists. Pinkola Estés takes the viewpoint of archetypical psychology, stating that the Wild Woman is the female soul who protects every creative form of expression in the female mind and soul. She protects artists like painters, sculptors, dancers, actors, poets and thinkers. The female soul helps the seekers and the ones who found what they were looking for, she protects our core. She embodies our instinctual nature and resides deep in our guts, just like all other forms of art<sup>5</sup>. Stated as such, the Wild Woman Archetype can be recognized as the 'Anima', the female archetype developed by the psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1976). The archetypes by Jung were developed to be able to understand and interpret dreams. The idea behind Jungian dream theory was that dreams reveal more than they conceal. The concept of the archetype dates back to the 'eidós' of Greek philosopher Plato (429-347 B.C.). The archetype is defined as the 'essence' or 'core' of the Psyche divided in multiple different personas. It is the imprint of mental form or energy in the soul before one is born and it is not influenced by the world of the living. The Anima is the female archetype. It is seen as a nature creature that can represent positive and negative sides of the female energy in the human Psyche, both in men and women.

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4 "The Wolf". In: *Wild Animal; Animal World. The Book of Symbols: reflections on archetypical images*, ed. by Ami Ronnberg and Kathleen Martin, (Taschen), p.274

5 Pinkola Estés, *Woman Who Run With the Wolves*. p.11-12

Jung describes the Anima as:

I am the flower in the field and the lily from the valley. I am the mother of genuine love, of fear, of knowledge and of sacred expectation. I am the mediator of the elements and have them bear each other: what is hot, I will make cold and what is dry I will make wet and what is hard I will make soft. I am the law of the priest, the word of the prophet and the wisdom in the wise. I will kill and I will give birth, there is nothing that can escape from my hands.<sup>6</sup>

The Anima has many embodiments and her symbols are: the mother, the witch, the whore, the old woman and the divine woman. These representations are often embodied by goddesses or main characters of myths. The most known embodiment of 'the Mother' which is also influenced by monotheistic religion is the Holy Mary.<sup>7</sup>

Holy Mary as a symbol of the divine mother and the all surrounding mother also appears as a subject within art. The American artist Cindy Sherman (1954) portrays herself as all kinds of different characters. She takes on different identities questioning prejudice, the stereotyping of women, gender roles and the judgement or expectation by media and social surroundings. Seeking empowerment in the obvious. She uses stereotypes, models or actresses from movies, but also plays with the idealistic view of women in Renaissance paintings in her series History Portraits (1988-90) making use of theatrical attributes as body extensions: "In their detachability, these elements point thus to the hermeneutic dimension of the work of art: the idea that it possesses an inner truth or meaning to which the interpreter might penetrate"<sup>8</sup>. In the work Untitled #216 Sherman poses as a staged classical depiction of Mary and child. Her humble gaze is directed downwards. Her posture is straight and gracious, holding the child in one arm, she is wearing a draped light blue cape and the backdrop is a subtle piece of lace fabric. But then this big, fake, bare breast takes away all the attention. Sherman plays with the depiction of the Holy Mary in a way that she emphasizes the attributes she is often depicted with, like the blue draped cape, the nursing child, the golden crown, downcast eyes and a bare nursing

6 C.G. Jung, *De mens en zijn Symbolen*, trans. M. von Franz (Lemniscaat, 11th edition, 1992). Own translation. p.

7 Jolande Jacobi, *De psychologie van Carl G. Jung: een inleiding tot zijn werk*, trans. M. Drukker (Cothen: Servire, 1992) p.61-74

8 Rosalind Kraus, *Cindy Sherman 1975-1993*, (New York: Rizolli International Publications Inc. 1993), p.173-174.

breast. She raises the question if these attributes, these theatrical clothes and objects, express her holiness. Do these archetypical symbols justify the assumption that we place the Holy Mary above all women in a way that we forget about her femininity and fertility? Or should we strip her of every object and holiness to reveal her core as represented in the artwork of Kiki Smith 'Virgin Mary' (1992). The sculpture embodies a naked, standing woman. She is stripped of all her skin and shows her muscular system, only the holy parts of the female body are covered in skin and full of pale flesh, like her hands, feet, breasts and uterus. Kiki Smith expresses with this sculpture the most powerful energy of the female body, the power to create. She doesn't undo the Virgin Mary of her holiness, she emphasizes this holiness in the body of all women. Both artists address the fact that 'the core power' or holiness of the virgin Mary houses within the body and human soul and is expressed throughout the body.

The Mother archetype is also represented in the work of artist Niki de Saint Phalle (1922-2002). She emphasized the representation of the 'Wild Woman' in her work referring back to female core energy, but also uses her female strength in her advantage being very determined on becoming famous as an artist with her empowering work. Going through a very traumatic childhood, dealing with sexual assault, she focused on empowering and honoring the female body. De Saint Phalle celebrated the female body and its powerful representation by showing the big curved woman, with her big breasts, large hips, round belly and fertile vulva in her art known as Nanas. The Nanas are depicted dancing, jumping, running or combined with animal heads referring to Native American spirit animals. They are de Saint Phalle's most celebrated works. She thought of them in their early stages as representations of happy, lively and free women but later she recognized a deeper representations of the good, giving and 'all surrounding mother', one who would activate and make people feel strong emotions of love as well as hate.

The Nanas resemble the oldest found depiction of 'the Mother' or 'Primal Woman'. This tiny Venus dates back to between 30 000-25 000 BC. She is called 'Venus of Willendorf'. The sculpture depicts an interpretation of the female body with large belly, large breasts and the vulva and represents the primal mother and Goddess of fertility. The 'Venus of Willendorf'<sup>9</sup> is a very sexual representation of

<sup>9</sup> Venus of Willendorf, is a small Paleolithic sculpture of 11 cm high and made out of chalk stone approximately between 28,000 - 25,000 BCE. She was found in 1908 in Willendorf, Austria. Both arms and legs, though not elaborately depicted give emphasis to the fertile parts of the body: breasts, belly and vulva. It is suggested the sculpture was a depiction of a fertility

the female body almost entirely focussing of reproduction, hardly showing arms or legs and with a big emphasis on breasts, belly and the vulva. The Nanas are large scale sculptures made out of epoxy and painted with bright, lively colored patterns. Nana's powerful presence communicates the necessity of her depiction, de Saint Phalle mentioned about the Nanas that she wanted them "to take over the world".<sup>10</sup> In the '*Giardino dei Tarocchi in Garavicchio*' (Toscane, Italy) Niki de Saint Phalle shows the embodiments of several Tarot symbols. One of the main character of the garden is 'the Empress'. The Empress is depicted in Sphinx position. To enter the sculpture one would walk through the door between her large, bright colored breasts. She wears a crown and is richly covered by all sorts of colorful mosaic patterns presenting her with a striking presence in the garden. The artist gave a powerful description in her own words:

The Empress is the Great Goddess. She is Queen of the Sky. Mother. Whore. Emotion. Sacred. Magic and civilization. The Empress which I made in the form of a Sphinx. I lived for years in this protective Mother.<sup>11</sup>

The Empress of Niki de Saint Phalle relates back to the meaning of the symbol within Tarot. The Empress is the third card from the Great Arcana and represents the all surrounding mother and the source of all creation. Within Jungian psychology, Tarot was seen as way of individualizing a character and passing on archetypical knowledge. The reading of Tarot speaks to the collective subconscious and grasps into to primal energy of the subconscious which with other words we can call the world of intuition. This world of intuition is something that is easily put aside in the organized world we live in in the Western societies. It is easier to have an explanation or function for certain feelings or events than to trust one's gut feeling or inner world. We leave things behind because we do not consider them important or useful. In fact, for growth and the feeding of this primal energy experiencing and listening to this gut feeling is very important. Because if we don't we might starve the artist and longing inside of us.<sup>12</sup>

figure or a mother goddess symbol. But also a representation of a aphrodisiac made by men for men. Kathleen Kuiper, "Venus of Willendorf", Encyclopaedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/science/fertility> (accessed: February 26, 2020)

<sup>10</sup> Carla Schulz-Hoffmann, "Die Nanas", Niki de Saint Phalle: Bilder - Figuren - Phantastische Gärten, (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 2003) p.19-20

<sup>11</sup> André Blas, Niki de Saint Phalle: Introspections and Reflections, <https://vimeo.com/35057914> (Vimeo, 2003)

<sup>12</sup> Carla Schulz-Hoffmann, "Die Welt der Tarot", Niki de Saint Phalle:

Within the monotheistic religion of the western world, the highest position of the female 'Goddess' is the 'Holy Mother' for she could not be equal to God himself. Although C.G. Jung bases his philosophy of the archetypes on the original archetypes of Greek Philosopher Plato, he does not use Plato's way of identifying the female archetypes by using the different persona's of greek goddesses. The American Psychologist and Jungian analyst, Jean Shinoda Bolen<sup>13</sup> (1936) reintroduces within her book *Goddess in Every Woman the female archetypes*<sup>14</sup>, identifying them as the 7 Greek Goddesses: Artemis, Athena, Hestia, Hera, Demeter, Persephone and Aphrodite. She uses the feminine principle of the goddess. In the ancient world the feminine principle of the goddess was represented in three aspects: the relationship: the invisible connection between all things; justice: representing wisdom and compassion; the unknown or spiritual world. A spirit that shows its nature but not its form, was given the meaning of 'Goddess', later it was recognized as meaning of the 'soul'. The feminine principle represented an image of 'the all surrounding' of all life: nature, matter and the body considered as 'object'. This was considered sacred, as the body or 'object' was the vessel of the 'invisible spirit' or the soul.<sup>15</sup>

The Bone Woman La Loba represents the protector of the Wild Woman in women and for that she is the protector of the female Anima. The artists Kiki Smith, Cindy Sherman and Niki de Saint Phalle all in their own way celebrate and emphasize the different archetype characters of the female Anima such as the Divine Woman, the Mother and the Wild Woman in their work. They communicate the strength of the female body and the feminine representation. The different depictions of women in their work show an almost literal translation of the feminine core energy. These embodiments are a great recognition of the Wild Woman within contemporary artworks and support the answer of my question if the Wild Woman and primal energy are still recognizable in modern day artists and prove that the longing for her presence has not disappeared yet.

Bilder - Figuren - Phantastische Gärten (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 2003)  
p.22-24

13 Jean Bolen is an American Jungian Psychoanalytic specialized in archetypical psychology in men and women addressing spiritual development. [www.jeanbolen.com](http://www.jeanbolen.com).

14 Jean Bolen, *Goddess in Every Woman* (first edition, Harper Colophon, 1985)

15 Anne Baring, article on Re-balancing the Masculine and the Feminine, 2018, [https://www.annebaring.com/anbar69\\_rebalancingpolarities.html](https://www.annebaring.com/anbar69_rebalancingpolarities.html) (accessed: January 27, 2020)

## Woman

mold my skin into being  
and stretch me out  
until I will cover sky and earth  
rip me open

from my blood that will flow  
make new life  
from my spit I will spill  
make it rain  
from my heart that will shatter  
make a fire

when you are done with me  
wrap me up into the smallest package  
and put me away  
in a place you will forget  
so I can hunt you in memories  
of empty glasses and dark corners  
to crawl under your bed

until the day you hear me scream  
and you will remember  
you are caught in my endless maze  
with no eyes to see  
I took your sight  
and molded it into touch  
I blindfolded you  
from now on you will be crying from  
your fingertips and blink with your toes

breath in this dry air  
feel this sharp glass beneath your feet  
and go  
for every step  
will be deeper in the understanding  
of how you were born



I'm waiting for you to look at me  
would she have thought of you orpheus?

you sit in front of me  
the table between us  
dark brown wood  
a pack of tobacco open and messy  
filters next to it  
Marlboro drama

“Do you have change?”  
“No”  
“Alright, a light?”  
“No I don't carry light around with me.”

a fire burning

an empty bottle of ketchup  
next to your favorite book  
everything goes with ketchup

your fingers rolling a new smoke

the plant I bought you still on the table between us  
in the same spot as yesterday  
it does not look as beautiful

“What will happen when you will leave?”  
“You will die.”  
“Yes, I think so.”

the cigarette tucked behind your ear  
because I don't carry light around with me

and still you won't look at me.



# The Soul and The Making

The creation of humankind in Greek myth is a story of sculpting. Prometheus sculpted men from clay of the earth and after he finished a creature that resembled the gods, it was not nearly as beautiful. Then Athena came and breathed life into the sculpture. From that moment on humankind was alive and carrying souls.

The process of making an artwork is similar to the act of creating. As an artist you want your hands to sculpt, paint, stretch or crack materials into being, a being with a deeper layer or soul. Creating an object with a soul is probably one of the most important aspects for a creator. One does not want to make an object and discover in the end that actually this object is 'empty' or incomplete. We probably do not even have the capability to see what is missing, we just experience that 'something' is missing.

The 'soul' in an object is a key essence within the ancient tradition of Japanese swordmakers this 'something' is identified as 'soul'. A sword was only finished and balanced when not only its esthetics balanced perfectly, but the sword also carried the right amount of 'soul'. Without it it would be incomplete. Only when there is left room for imperfection and transience, beauty and soul can grow in an object and an object can be complete. It is the notion of Wabi Sabi<sup>16</sup>. Wabi Sabi is an ancient traditional Japanese aesthetic that is based on the idea that in the imperfect houses authentic beauty and incomplete and impermanent qualities of an object are highly valued. Wabi Sabi supports the modest, humble and decaying of things existing.

What the soul exactly means for an object is never entirely defined, but if we look back at the feminine principle relating to the body, the soul is the spirit that shows its nature but not its form. For me, encountering the soul of an object happens when the object expresses its need to exist. The urgency of the creation can be visible in the use of the material, the layering of the material or simply the recognition of the touch of a hand or the visibility of the construction.

British artist Phyllida Barlow (1944) has based most of her work entirely on her surroundings and the guidance of

<sup>16</sup> Wabi Sabi is an ancient traditional Japanese aesthetic that finds beauty in the imperfect, incomplete and impermanent qualities of an object. It supports the modest and humble.

Leonard Koren, *Wabi Sabi: for Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers*, (California: Imperfect Publishing Point Reyes, 2008) p.1

materials like plaster, concrete, wood, cardboard and textiles. Her sculptures use bright paint colors. She uses objects and spaces around her to start building her installations and sculptures, as if giving an answer to the question asked by the space. An outward movement. Phyllida Barlow's work demands attention. It does not complement a space. Her art takes over a space. She builds a world around her and does not compromise. Barlow's work is important because of the sense of urgency it conveys. It overwhelms in its size and roughness. It has the capacity to change the entire atmosphere of a space.<sup>17</sup> She constructs upwards when the ceiling reaches high and creates a movement through the space for the viewer. Her sculptures show the movement of growth and expansion. In 2017 Barlow represented the British Pavilion during the Venice Biennale with her installation *Folly*. She describes *Folly*<sup>18</sup> as an opportunity to entirely use and even abuse the British Pavilion. She was immediately intrigued by the height of the space and wanted to emphasize this aspect and the feeling of 'something that was left behind' in the space. She chose to build works that would talk about dualities and paradox and emphasize the height of the spaces, reaching all up to the ceiling but also barricading the doors and leading a decided path for the viewer through the space. In Barlow's words:

There was a sense of staging as though the sculptures had a performative role to which an audience would become another group of protagonists within that performance. The audience would be as important as the work itself.<sup>19</sup>

The intuitive rawness and 'nakedness' of material use in the construction of her sculptures complements the urgency of their creation. The action of its creation is very visible in each different work. Phyllida Barlow creates a deception of materials, she makes them seem as heavy, rough and hard to handle but really only uses materials that are manageable with the same qualities as macho artists would use. Barlow takes a stand in a field that is dominated by male artists. Making sculptures of a bigger size and presence is a dominant

17 Hauser & Wirth, article on Phyllida Barlow, <https://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/2826-phyllida-barlow>, (accessed: 15 February, 2020)

18 British Council Arts, article on British Pavilion Phyllida Barlow, [venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/2017-exhibition/phyllida-barlow](http://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/2017-exhibition/phyllida-barlow) (accessed: 15 February, 2020)

19 British Council Arts, The making of Phyllida Barlow: folly, <https://venicebiennale.britishcouncil.org/2017-exhibition/phyllida-barlow>, (accessed: 9 May 2017)

but bold statement. She was not recognized as a successful artist until much later in her lifetime, but she had always considered creating as a necessary part of her life. To Barlow, gender is not a subject she consciously includes in her work. It is more a preferred way of working. She refers to her way of making as 'quite aggressive' and has noticed through the years gender differences in the practical constructing of structures, ways of thinking and the more practical way of using skills. For example, she instructs her male assistants not to double screw joints or connections within a structure, because she wouldn't do it that way herself. Being authentic to what she would do contributes to her process and style of constructing, making it her own. She puts beauty and strength in the clear and simple way of constructing and leaves her mark. It is this necessity of creating that shows in her work which shows the 'soul' of the object and her own deeply rooted 'core energy'.<sup>20</sup>

A year ago, during a rainy day, I found myself at 22nd Street in New York. I visited the Hauser and Wirth Gallery. When I walked in I was welcomed by a huge installation of unfired clay objects. They were spread across tables, showing a reference to the physical process of forming clay by the touch of hands. The tables were surrounded by stacks of snake like shapes of clay carefully piled on top of each other. I immediately felt drawn to the tactile quality of the objects and the way they were presented. This installation, in a different way than Phyllida Barlow's work, gave me the feeling of growth and intuitive touch and decision making. One could recognize the act of the body in the molded sculptures. The artist who created the installation was Anna Maria Maiolino (1942), an Italian artist and living in Brazil. Anna Maria refers to herself as a wanderer. She has lived in so many places she calls home. The exhibition I found myself in was *ERRÂNCIA POÉTICA* (POETIC WANDERINGS 2018). The installation existed of stacks of clay snake-like objects, a version of the *Terra Modelada* (Modeled Earth) series which she named *in-locu* which means 'in its place'. The installation was made on site. The process consisted of rolling and molding all shapes one by one. She then put them in place to dry, where some cracked and changed color. This became a ritual of the body, similar to play, involving movement and repetition. The use of raw and primal material such as clay goes back to the most ancient of

20 Time Out Magazine, article on Phyllida Barlow Interview: "I like accidents with sculpture." <https://www.timeout.com/london/art/phyllida-barlow-interview-i-like-accidents-with-sculpture> (6 January, 2020)

cultures. Her connection with the labor of her own body also became an important part of her work. Being interviewed about her work she exclaimed:

I've learned all these actions, the process, and combined them to make the tools of my work, to make my own new vocabulary. Of course trying to go back to the origin, to the first gesture man made using his hands as tools and to create a paradox, a new alphabet, a new discourse.<sup>21</sup>

The installation *in-locu* is based on the idea of bodily functions, it refers back to the repetitive touch of the maker, the imprint of touch on the material and daily movements. She connected to the inner bodies motion of eating and defecating. I perceived this installation as a collection of expressions that could be felt but not explained in words. This art exists in shape or matter and carries a hidden meaning and soul unique to the viewer. If we look at the 'soul' of an object, within the feminine principle the object carrying the 'invisible spirit' was found sacred but replaceable. The object-soul is within anthropological meaning identified as 'Animism'. Animism is a term used to describe a belief that considers that all beings and objects carry a soul or a spirit and are inseparably connected to each other. This includes human manufactured objects, technological objects, stones, trees, animals, lightning, human beings etc. There is no set definition for Animism<sup>22</sup>, just like there is no set definition which describes the exact meaning of 'spirit' or 'soul'. When we talk about the 'soul' of an object I would like to emphasize the 'soul' of an art object. Finding the soul of an art object has also a lot to do with the materiality of the object and 'the human touch'. We find the soul of an artwork when there is room for imperfection. When the artwork goes beyond what it is thought to be, but also reveals a suggestion of deeper layering. One might say 'a deeper understanding', without explaining or analyzing the work. An explanation not based on only the physical qualities of the work but also the deeper

21 Hauser & Wirth, article on Anna Maria Maiolino on Poetic Wanderings. <https://vimeo.com/306905139> (accessed: 10 January, 2020)

22 Animism has its roots in religions believing in multiple gods based on nature spirits in the elements. Within early anthropology Animism was first introduced by anthropologist Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917) who believed this was a religion which was based on the necessity of recognizing the soul and spirits in Humans and other beings in order to pervade life and nature. Katherine Swancutt, article on Animism, King's College London, 2019 <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/animism>, (accessed: 17 December, 2020)

abstract understanding or ‘feeling’ the work communicates to the viewer, we could even say that a part of the ‘soul’ of the object is the process of the making. From the 1950’s onward the process of the art making began to play a more important role. Constructions and materials were exposed and shown how they had come to being. Art was accepted as ‘autonomous’ and did not have to have a direct connection to political themes or public understandings. The contexts of its making and the behavior of materials became a big part of the work itself and led to the term ‘Postminimalism’ in the early 70’s.

(...)What I want of my art I can eventually find. The work must go beyond this.  
It is my main concern to go beyond what I know and what I can know.  
The formal principles are understandable and understood.  
It is the unknown quantity from which and where I want to go.  
As a thing, an object, it accedes to its non logical self.  
It is something, it is nothing.<sup>23</sup>

A Postminimalist artist who is indissolubly linked to the objects process, materiality and ‘soul’ qualities is Eva Hesse (1936-1970). Through her short career she developed her own wide vocabulary of shapes, sculptures and materials within sculpture and painting. Eva Hesse chose to use transient materials in her works, like rubber, papier-maché or latex. This awareness of the mortality of life and art was something that stayed of interest through her entire lifetime. Hesse stated in an interview with Cindy Nemser:

“Life doesn’t last, art doesn’t last. It does not matter.”<sup>24</sup>

She called her works, and her own life, ‘absurd’. She would collect found objects and materials together, wrap rope around other objects and hang or drape them on top of each other. She referred to her work as something ‘growing’ either from the ceiling, the wall or the floor and then it

23 Eva Hesse, “Eva Hesse, Statement 1968.” in: *Theory and documents of contemporary art: a sourcebook of artist writings*, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (University of California press, second edition 2012) p.705-706.  
24 Original interview: Cindy Nemser interview with Eva Hesse, January 20, 1970, Cindy Nemser papers, 2013.M.21, podcast “Eva Hesse, Oh more absurdity” Transcript of podcast by Getty with host Helen Molesworth, artist Mary Weatherford and art historian Darby English. <https://www.getty.edu/recordingartists/season-1/hesse/> (accessed: 5 February, 2020)

would become whatever it became. She enjoyed extremes and contradictions in materials and forms. Hesse saw all her work as very abstract objects. Her works are often thought of as very sexual or bodily translations. In her opinion, if this was even true, this was a totally subconscious decision. She thought of her work as very abstract forms and vehicles. She was more interested in material, composition and relation to space within her work. The only content she would subscribe to her work would be “the absurdity of life”. Hesse believed that her work and her life were inseparably connected to each other. To deal with the fact of being a woman artist is conflicting in the sense that ‘woman’ suggests a gender role and ‘artists’ suggests an ultimate freedom from all restriction including gender. The sexual quality in female artists work is either something unimportant, something balanced out between abstraction and reference or something over exaggerated. In a letter to Cindy Nemser in (1970) Eva Hesse said:

“Dear Cindy, the way to beat discrimination in art is by art. Excellence has no sex. Eva.”<sup>25</sup>

Hesse considered the work *Hang up* (1966) as one of her most ‘absurd’ and successful works because it evoked an extreme feeling. The work consists of a wooden frame covered with a wrapping of fabric sealed with acrylic and a cord covered steel tube making an wavy outward movement into the space. This creates an approaching movement between viewer and artwork, and the other end goes back into the frame. The work represents a dreamlike absurdity coming into reality. Hesse herself referred to the work as naive but with a certain depth, meaning or soul. She states in an interview in 1970 mentioned in the book *Eva Hesse* by Lucy Lippard:

(...) it is the most ridiculous structure that I ever made and that is why it is really good. It has a kind of depth I don’t always achieve and that is the kind of depth or soul or absurdity or life or meaning or feeling or intellect that I want to get.<sup>26</sup>

It was poetry in a sculptural embodiment. The handmade quality and original vocabulary of Hesse’s work was very

25 Eva Hesse to Cindy Nemser, January 27, 1970, Cindy Nemser Papers, (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute ) <https://www.getty.edu/recordin-gartists/season-1/hesse/> (accessed: 5 February 2020)

26 Lucy Lippard, *Eva Hesse*, (New York: New York University Press, 1976) p.56.



recognizable and exceptional within the timeline of slick and clean modernist art. Her works make you want to trace the edges with your fingertips or squeeze the endless amount of small rubber tubes.

The Postminimalism art movement was mainly dominated by male artists, Hesse often felt she had to prove or fight for her position within the art world of the time. Loosing and finding herself in this process, she did this in an extraordinary way by choosing a path for herself in which she made art from her own authentic way of creating. In a letter from 1965 to artist Ethelyn Honig, a friend and artist Hesse spend a lot of time with, Hesse talked about the 'female struggle' in art and mentioned:

A fantastic strength is necessary and courage. I dwell on this all the time. My determination and will is strong but I am lacking so in self esteem that I never seem to overcome. Also competing all the time with a man with self confidence in his work and who is successful also.<sup>27</sup>

With the "fantastic strength" and "courage" Hesse is referring to the retrieving of the inner 'wild woman', this core energy helps us realize what our core is made of. As women we possess the most mysterious power on earth: our body is made to create and carry new life. Our body is a life source, one we regulate and control ourselves. But it is also something she talks about accomplishing in her work "the kind of depth or soul or absurdity".

We can conclude that Eva Hesse was a great representative in choosing authenticity above expectation in her work. She was able to entirely develop her own language within her work and communicate this outward into the world, therefore she is an important character when it comes to representation of female strength in art. To her creating art was supposed to be an equality without question, a reflection of life and the self. This power of creation and with this the necessity of this creation being expressed in the form of the wrapping, building, constructing and molding in the work of both Barlow and Hesse illustrates the importance of the physical touch of the body and concludes the soul in the making. In my opinion this seeking and finding within the making of a

27 Eva Hesse, "Letter to Ethelyn Honig (1965)", "Process". in: *Theory and documents of contemporary art: a sourcebook of artist writings*. ed. by Kristine Stiles (Second edition, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California press, 2012) p.705

work, either on a conscious or subconscious level illustrates this urge of creating and is closely connected to the search of primal energy within yourself and within your work. It tells us about feeling and connecting to a work through our own experience of building, making instinctual choices, exploring a part of our inner world and discovering our preferences in the proces of making.

I looked across the border  
where the sky meets the sea  
and I saw it

the end of the world

I turned back and slept  
where the sea meets the sand  
dreaming I had seen everything  
though when I woke up  
there were only clouds  
and no border to cross

I turned back and swam  
until there was no land to look at  
and no sand touching my toes  
so I kept swimming to reach  
the end of the world

when I stopped I floated  
carried by salt of the sea  
with my eyes in the clouds

I never found the border again  
but I am still floating.

## A memory

I have a memory as a flash, from five years ago.

It was very late at night, summer. One where the air is very dry and nobody is on the street because it is a Tuesday and nobody is awake in the early hours of a Tuesday.

We are biking, my oldest friend and me. She is biking next to me. A string of hair sticks to her forehead, the heat makes us sweat. I had all my hair cut off, my high school boyfriend broke up with me and he never liked me with short hair.

I looked at the long road in front of us, only lit with yellowish lantern light.

I stopped cycling without speaking and she followed me.

We parked the bike near the water and together stood in the middle of the long empty road.

“What if we lay down?” I asked her. She just smiled and we both lied down.

In the middle of the road on the warm surface of the paved road. I felt my heart pounding in my chest, she must have felt it too.

Nobody asked what if a car comes, no car came. We lay there with a very dark sky above us. One of us started laughing I don't remember who, but we didn't stop. We lay there laughing and screaming until we both were out of breath.

Then there was silence.

We got back on our feet and on to our bikes and cycled down the long road home. Sometimes looking at each other, softly laughing or sighing.

In the materiality of an object I can sometimes find my hands screaming.

When I cover them in clay, they will build me a sculpture and when I give them wood, they will start building and constructing high above my head.

We reach for something bigger and less controllable when we choose to build something bigger than ourselves. It creates a constant dialog between reaching within our body and reaching outward from our body. We are addressing our intuition in the guidance of the material and we might ask the question “what do you want to be?”.

It is a longing movement, to reach deep into the self and bring out something that touches upon a deeper understanding which communicates the core of the ‘something’.



# The Body of Creation - The Internal Power of the Womb

If we would look for the primal energy in women, we would start seeking it in the part of us that expresses emotion. The source of power, creation and destruction. It represents our guts, the deeper core of our strength. It has an air of mystery when it challenges us to go through pain or longing. A body that gives us life and a cave that challenges our anger and darkness. The universe collected in an organ that we carry around with us in the most vulnerable part of our body. The part that makes us feel fear, happiness, excitement, love or connection: our womb. The womb symbolizes the mystery of transformation, its inside is unseen and therefore accepted as unknown. Psychologically speaking the womb is the place where the ego is born and where the aspects of the ego that are fixed and static have to be stripped to their original state by descending back into the creative subconscious of the maternal womb.<sup>28</sup>

There was neither non-existence nor existence then; there was neither the realm of space nor the sky which is beyond. What stirred? Where? In whose protection? Was there water, bottomlessly deep?<sup>29</sup>

Within myths of creation like the birth of Aphrodite, where she is born from the foam of the sea and other ancient and primal legends the ocean represents the beginning of creation: "The ocean is our mother of mothers, the Great Round within whose fluid containment life began and from whose fertile precincts the first bold pioneers scuttled out upon the sand."<sup>30</sup> In its deep darkness of hundreds of kilometers unknown deep sea landscape the ocean is brought into connection with the deeper layers of the human psyche, within its changing tides and unpredictable subconscious and

28 "Womb", Human Body, The Book of Symbols: reflections on archetypical images, edited by: Ami Ronnberg and Kathleen Martin, (Taschen) p.400  
29 Rig Veda. Rig Veda is the oldest of four of the sacred collection of Sanskrit Hymns within Hinduism. The hymns discuss nature and the gods, astronomy and philosophical questions and virtues and were approximately composed between 1500 - 1200 BC. 10.129 Creation Hymn, The Book of Symbols, edited by: Ami Ronnberg and Kathleen Martin, (Taschen)  
30 "Ocean", in: Water, The Book of Symbols, edited by: Ami Ronnberg and Kathleen Martin, (Taschen), p.36-39.

the dissolving of the ego being lulled by the current of the waves. Jung referred to this part of the psyche that balances between the conscious and the subconscious and therefore connects to a bigger entity as the “collective subconscious”. He saw the personal subconscious as a wave and the collective subconscious as a never ending ocean.<sup>31</sup> This idea of the deep ocean representing the deeper layers of the subconscious we can connect to the rebirth of the ego in the waters of the maternal womb, descending back from the conscious into the subconscious.

This journey of the conscious into the subconscious is a leading theme in the work of French artist Laure Prouvost (1978). Her work talks about being stuck in misunderstanding or mistranslation within different languages. Within her installations consisting of many different objects and videos she takes the viewer on a journey into the subconscious. She examines and stretches different meanings of objects and seeks for translations of physical sensations like touch, light or even smell. These descriptions pair together with sounds, film shots and a dreamy narrative voice telling stories only the viewer can decide to be real or playing with fantasy. Prouvost describes her works as “less about life and more about questioning what we see and experience”.<sup>32</sup> She challenges you to see and feel a different reality, a narrative of anxiety, the existential or underwater fantasy worlds. During the Venice Biennale of 2019 in the work *Deep See Bleu Surrounding You*<sup>33</sup>, the public had to enter through the bushes and go through the backdoor of the by smoke surrounded French pavilion. The characters showed the way to the back entrance like they were tentacles pulling you into the main room: the Octopuses body of the work. A very dark cave like space, with a soft and bouncy floor. A big screen filled the back wall of the room. Couches and chairs were spread around and looked like shells, fish, sandcastles and all sorts of characters of an underwater world. The film pulled you into a journey in an underwater fantasy, illustrated by fragmented video shots of water, fish and other objects narrated by an almost childlike voice and various abstract sounds. In the two spaces on the sides of the main hall, the installation expanded with several deep sea objects in glass, flashing lights, fountains, smoke and textile

31 Claire Dunne, Carl Jung: wounded healer of the soul. (Watkins Media, 2015)

32 Tate Shots, Laure Prouvost Turner Prize Winner 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2V3TrbfV9t8>, (TateShots 2013)

33 Nowness, Laure Prouvost wades through notions of national identity at the Venice Biennale, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zsYLTpLvOI>, (Nowness, 2019)



pieces. It was an overwhelming experience, stories grasping into other storylines and mysteries balancing between real and unreal. Prouvost asks your awareness for the beauty in the things we see and not see, feel and experience luring us with her installation from the cave into the ocean of the subconscious and resolving the thin line between reality and fantasy. This instinctual feeling of experience houses in this mysterious cave. Caves being known for creating a passage from the world of the living to the underworld, the gateway between the conscious and the subconscious. Caves represent the primal function of being the earth mother, functioning as both womb and tomb. These mystical places symbolize a refuge and the maternal associations referring to death, return and rebirth.<sup>34</sup>

French artist Louise Bourgeois (1911-2010) talked very strongly about the function of the cave as a womb in the work *The Destruction of the Father* (1974). Talking about this work Bourgeois described herself as 'afraid of power' in real life but considered herself as a powerful artist, she says:

In my art, I live in a world of my own making. I make decisions. I have power. In the real world, I don't want power.<sup>35</sup>

The work *The Destruction of the father* shows a cave or womb like, dark space, filled with sensual body referenced shapes and bulbs with a skin like quality. In the middle of the cave stands an object that resembles both bed and table. Bourgeois refers to this object as the 'terrifying family dinner table' where her father would dominate the entire atmosphere of the family with his macho personality. In this work she fantasies to be the murderer, drag her father onto the dinner table and kill, dismember and eat him with the family regaining their own strength. Through her entire life Louise Bourgeois has struggled with family relationships, the relationship and betrayal of her father by cheating on her mother and the family and her believe she would never be as powerful as her mother. Already aware of her gender role on a very young age, as she was convinced her parents only wanted sons and thought having a daughter was a disgrace, female roles and sexuality and the reclaiming of these have shown to be a very high subject in her work. Bourgeois researched and translated this primal female nature and the power of creation in a big part of her oeuvre, giving

34 "Cave", *Earth, The Book of Symbols*, edited by: Ami Ronnberg and Kathleen Martin, (Taschen) p.112

35 Jerry Gorovoy and Pandora Tabatabai Asbaghi, *Louise Bourgeois: Bleu Days and Pink Days* (Milan: Fondazione Prada 1997) p.142

an embodiment to the beauty of the inner body, sex and unspoken truths. In an essay by Donald Kuspit on Bourgeois called *Where Angels Fear to Tread* published in 1987 in an issue of Artforum is stated:

Louise Bourgeois never had her due, (...) In art this is because of the general devaluation of the female artist, the unwritten (and unacceptable) rule that no woman artist can be that major, but the rule has applied doubly to Bourgeois: the provocative way her sculpture articulates what it is to be female makes it particularly challenging to the context through which importance and value are usually conferred. Her work deals with being a woman in a way Freud could not have fathomed. It talks about, acknowledges forces we don't want to broadcast loudly, and certainly not led loose.<sup>36</sup>

The sentence “acknowledges forces we don't want to broadcast loudly” emphasizes the strong and loud visual communication Bourgeois sculptures resonate. It is in this rawness she seeks the power she refers to. She undressed a part of the female body not for show but for understanding, revealing the vulnerable, the strong, the sexuality within our psyche, the power of creation, the shedding of skin and the flowing of blood.

In the cycle of shedding skin every month, having a physical and spiritual new beginning emphasizes the growth and abundance of the body represented by the flowing of red blood. This menstrual blood is exposing what women are taught to hide. In the artwork *Train* (1993) Kiki Smith plays with the taboo of female body fluids, the sculpture consists of a standing female figure her legs separated and her shoulders slouching. She looks over one shoulder, a train of red glass beads leaves her vulva, resulting in a playful pattern behing her. With this Smith approaches poetic quality of the menstrual blood as a decoration to the female body, an accessory on its own. While menstrual blood represents rebirth and the power of creation it also represents destruction and decay. Women who are post-menopausal are believed to lose their fertile beauty and their sexuality with the loss of the power to create and reproduce, although in ancient cultures it is believed women who transition into menopause carry the energy of their wise blood within them

36 Donald Kuspit, “Where Angles Fear to Tread” in: Louise Bourgeois: Blue Days and Pink Days by Jerry Gorovoy and Pandora Tabatabai Asbaghi, (Milan: Fondazione Prada 1997) p.180

and become a being filled with great wisdom.<sup>37</sup> The work *Qu'un Sang Impur*<sup>38</sup> (Only an Impure Blood, 2019) by French artist Pauline Curnier Jardin is a video installation work inspired by the, at the time, censored homo-erotic short film *Un Chant d'Amour* (1950) by French poet and writer Jean Genet (1910-1986). In *Un Chant d'Amour* under the voyeuristic eye of a sadistic prison guard, beautiful young inmates are filmed performing sexual acts, dancing and trying to communicate their desires to each other in their cells. In the work *Qu'un Sang Impur* the prisoners are embodied by post menopausal women who have lost their patriarchal stamp of being an object of desire and celebrate their erotic power, masturbating in their cells and dancing on a dreamlike rhythm. Every time they experience desire, illustrated by the strong urge to kill beautiful and sensual young men, they bleed and red blood drips from between their legs onto the floor.<sup>39</sup> With this work Curnier Jardin questions our imposed judgement about the loss of femininity and desire of post menopausal women who are freed of the reproduction cycle and are thought of to no longer fulfill the beauty standards. She also shows how strong the female role is still inseparably connected to body and the function of the female body as both sexual object and womb. Here I want to briefly mention the book *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir, which is recognized as the basis for the second feminist wave. Simone de Beauvoir counting herself as an Existentialist, stated that "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman." Implying that surroundings initiate what it means to be and how to behave as a woman.<sup>40</sup> She criticizes in her work the assumed or indicated position a woman is expected to fulfill, but also the woman losing the core of herself and what place she should occupy not as a womb being "cursed" in de Beauvoirs' words by the power of reproduction but instead as a human being. She describes this superficial assumption of women being a womb:

Woman? Very simple, say those who like simple answers: She is a womb, an ovary; she is female: this word is enough to define her. From a man's mouth, the epithet "female" sounds like an insult; but he,

37 "Menstruation", in: *Human Body, The Book of Symbols*, ed. by Ami Ronnberg and Kathleen Martin, (Taschen) p.402-403

38 *Qu'un Sang Impur* was the winner of the Preis der Nationalgalerie 2019 and shown in the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin in 2019.

39 Pauline Curnier Jardin, *Qu'un Sang Impur*, <http://paulinecurnierjardin.com/quun-sang-impur-2019/> (accessed: 5 February, 2020)

40 Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction" by Judith Thurman, *The Second Sex*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2011) p.xv

not ashamed of his animality, is proud to hear: “He’s male!” The term “female” is pejorative not because its roots woman in nature but because it confines her in her sex, and this sex, even in an innocent animal, seems despicable and an enemy to men, it is obviously because of the disquietly hostility woman triggers in him. Nevertheless, he wants to find a justification in biology for this feeling.<sup>41</sup>

Retrieving the core of the female body and taking back their sexuality Curnier Jardin shows the celebration of aging, the actresses showing wrinkled skin and killing the youthful men who rejected their desires. The taboo of aging and decay brings us back to the notion of *Wabi Sabi*<sup>42</sup> which celebrates all things transient and imperfect and supports the thought of ‘the acceptance of the inevitable’. Making an inward movement within our bodies we reach upon the tactility and natural structures in bones and organs. We can acknowledge the fragility and transiency of our bodies, the softness and play between living and dying. We try to find the beauty in what has been and what keeps changing and we have to reach inside to find what we do not see.

This beauty of decaying is beautifully embodied in the work of Belgium artist Berlinde de Bruyckere (1964) who emphasizes the mortality and transience of the body. Her sculptures, build up out of thin layers of a broad color palette of wax which gives her the possibility to create a skin and flesh like quality, mainly show the translation of physical pain and exposing the rawness and pureness of the body. De Bruyckere translates objects into bodies, dead tree branches are casted to look like bones, joints and body parts. They show a color scheme of the human body with bruises and muscle like structures supported by old rags of textile knotted together. She celebrates the beauty of the decay and death. The installation of *Met tere huid / Of tender skin*<sup>43</sup> (2014-2015) shown in the Hauser & Wirth Gallery London, shows a collection of textured hanging sculptures, sculptures in the space and several paintings consisting of wax, iron, textile cloths, epoxy and rope. The standing sculpture installations in the space resemble a combination between tree branches,

41 Simone de Beauvoir, “Biological Data”, *The Second Sex*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2011) p.21

42 Leonard Koren, *Wabi Sabi: for Artists, Designers, Poets and Philosophers*, (California: Imperfect Publishing Point Reyes, 2008)

43 Hauser & Wirth, article on Berlinde de Bruyckere *Met Tere Huid / Of Tender Skin*, 2014-2015, <https://www.hauserwirth.com/hauser-wirth-exhibitions/5155-berlinde-de-bruyckere-met-tere-huid-of-tender-skin>, (accessed: 5 December, 2019)

chunks of flesh and bones, connected together with rope, textile rags and supported by wooden structures. The wall objects consist of used leather horse halters which de Bruyckere experiences as highly erotically charged objects similar to vulvas. She emphasized this quality by adding a layer of tender skin, using wax, onto it. A second skin that strongly refers back to female sex. At the same time Berlinde de Bruyckere explains this as an empowering act, connecting the roughness and rawness of the object that was formerly used to restrain the strength of horses now becoming the carrier of femininity. This duality is of rawness and sensuality of the object is also recognizable in the use of materials: the used old rags, the roughness of the leather and the tactility of the layered wax. The wax almost directly referring back to physical bodily wounds bound together with rags and rope in a organic constellation.<sup>44</sup> De Bruyckere puts emphasis on the transience of body and soul and shows in her work a direct connection to death and the indestructible life source: Bones. She becomes creator of a 'skeleton' and a collector of the bones, thereby bringing us back to the bone woman 'La Loba'.

Reflecting on the journey of the conscious being born into the subconscious, we can conclude that the different layers of the psyche unfold in the waters of the womb. The womb both functioning as womb and tomb confronts us with the position of women still being thought of as an inseparable representation of their body. We have questioned the power clashes and taboos on the position of women in art, explored the physical possibilities of female bodies, their sexuality and celebrated the beauty of aging and decay. In this women find the tools to decide, create and claim the place and the representation of who they want to be apart from their gender role, a woman with a cause: a Wild Woman.

44 Kunst Museum Den Haag, article on Berlinde de Bruyckere, 2015 <https://www.kunstmuseum.nl/nl/tentoonstellingen/berlinde-de-bruyckere-0>, (accessed: 5 December, 2019)

between conversation  
your hands forming words  
I don't want to think  
that I know everything  
about you  
I do not want to burn my fingertips  
on the flaming heat of your skin  
you say you are the sun  
does that make me a star  
or a sunbather on a crowded beach  
you talk in word games  
and fortune cookies  
or sad songs and supermarket recipes  
poetry  
of unanswered phone calls  
you scare me with your demons  
scars and gunfire  
me sleeping innocent on your chest  
hearing the ruffle of battle drums  
in your heart  
and the suffocation in your breath  
chai lattes  
and bronzing oil with cheap wine  
longing for you  
Why are you here?  
I asked for an angel  
but they made me a modern day Persephone  
in my mind I disentangle  
all the moments I wanted to stop loving you  
the stolen whiskey bottle  
empty on my nightstand  
your handwritten letter burning behind my eyes  
you cannot leave me  
you possess no such power  
dark skies  
I started smoking again  
smoke rising from my mouth  
you are my tyrannosaurus rex  
ripping flesh from my bones  
and eating me alive

but please  
don't leave me standing here  
waiting  
until you pick up the phone

The way I see, you.

For sometimes there is not much to see, when its dark and it rains.

But some days I can see enough to see through you.

Like a thin sliver of cellophane,  
caught by the shape of light.

You are so see-through.

Drops of dawn shiver on the grass, when it seems green and made of ice.

And I see only you surrounded by morning mist.

In the middle of the field, arms spread like Jesus,  
eyes in the sky, you scream from the top of your lungs:

“I SEE YOU! I SEE YOU EVERYWHERE!”

A sigh.

A sigh that fills the city air, summer going into fall.

My hands feel cold, my eyes water from watching you.

A bird flies up from a branch into the sky,  
reaching above the tops of trees and skyscrapers far in the clouds.

What if it would fall,  
like a stone back to earth.

It would rain birds today, big chunks of hail.

And the only thing I would see

Is you.





# Conclusion

Six months later, I sit here before you. I still have the same haircut, I kept it like that. It fits me now. I look around me in the room, a glass of white wine next to my laptop screen. I just finished eating and now I am writing the last part of this body of work I started all those days ago. A woman and her laptop, at first soaked up by heartbreak now finishing putting all the bones back together. I stopped believing in coincidences and decided some things just happen to a person.

This thesis is written in three parts. The first chapter 'The Wild Woman in Art' focusses on the emerging of the Wild Woman through myth into art which is inseparably connected to the end of the thesis, always starting and ending with the bones. In this part the archetypical value of the Wild Woman and Anima is explored with an emphasis on the archetypical symbol 'The Mother' relating to art. The second chapter 'The Soul and the Making' talks about the act of creation, referring to the first creation of men and the act of creating of an artwork focussing on material, constructing, expanding and growing as an outward movement. I refer to artists who show the 'necessity of the creation' in their work relating very strongly to emotion and bodily interaction; creating a sculptural vocabulary of shapes and structures leaving room for the 'soul' of the object. In the final chapter 'The Body of Creation - The Internal Power of the Womb' the theme of creation returns but with a strong emphasis on the inward movement of the body. I talk about the womb as a cave of creation and the strong assumptions, prejudices but also the strength and power it communicates. Balancing between birth and decay by mentioning artists who explore the theme of the cave as womb and tomb and we finish the end of this thesis at the beginning: La Loba. To answer the initial questions of the thesis we discovered the existence of the Wild Woman in the work of several mentioned artists and maybe even its presence in all women. With this we emphasize the necessity to name, awaken and express its presence, since the position of the female (artist) leaves room for more recognition and acknowledgment.

I have been searching for the answer to the question if the core energy of the 'Wild Woman' is still retrievable after it seems lost? Is it recognizable in other artists and in their art and is it necessary for female artists in the modern world?

Building this piece one bone at a time, I chose a selection of artists that I consider suiting for this subject. I am very aware there are many others. It was a journey through the recognition of myth and archetypal symbols and meaning within the body of work and the body itself. Forming a body, from a primal source. Experiencing the act of creation having multiple meanings, shown through the visible languages artists use to embody an emotion, thought or statement. Having in common its pureness, strong communicative quality and feminine energy. Within this skeleton of words an understanding arose that this primal energy I was afraid had gone lost, has in fact always been there in the work of women who were neither afraid to show nor to make aware what kind of power they possess. A power in the abstract sense of making, a power underlining the surrendering to the creation. We acknowledge that within modern times it might be more difficult to recognize and become aware of the feeding of this creative source inside of us, but I find solace in ideas and ways of working I can identify myself with. The artists I chose to write about have a way of building a visual alphabet within their art that expresses emotion, growing, expanding and giving. The Wild Woman is retrievable in the sense of taking the freedom to create and pursue ones values and understandings through their work, building a world they want to be a part of.

I would like to emphasize what was important for me in the process of writing this thesis, I believe everybody needs a heroine. A heroine you can identify with, speaking a visual language you can relate to. I searched for recognition and maybe even proof, that I was not alone in wanting to be a part of a world where art making is its main consent and femininity is often forgotten or looked down upon. What I found was a selection of works and artists that inspire and own up to the position they created and fought for.

wanneer de dag overgaat in de avond  
rust ik mijn handen op het koele oppervlak van de toog  
mijn vingers bespelen de natte rand van mijn glas  
mijn lippen vormen zich naar woorden  
die ik niet spreken wil  
luid geraas in mijn oren  
van ontembare stemmen  
die zich om mij heen bewegen  
in de gestalten van onbekende mensen  
en misschien een bekende  
daar in de hoek alleen met zijn krant  
verwonderd  
onbezonnen  
onrustig  
glijd mijn blik door de hoge ramen  
de straat op  
waar het langzaam duister wordt  
en waar een man en een vrouw arm in arm  
de straat oversteken

als ik thuis kom later  
en je bent er niet  
zal je me dan eens vertellen  
waar je geweest bent al die dagen  
dat mijn bed leeg was en je schoenen bij de deur  
weg waren  
we kunnen er ook over zwijgen  
dat je me dan alleen even aankijkt  
en misschien mijn hand pakt  
ik bouw wel een huis voor je  
van bierviltjes met een tuin van gebruikte kurken  
dan kan jij eindelijk  
een vide bouwen zodat je kan uitkijken  
op de woonkamer als ik mijn boek lees  
op de bank

het is duister geworden buiten  
en de fietslampjes dansen voorbij  
stemmen gaan steeds harder klinken

mijn bekende heeft zijn hoek verlaten  
zijn krant ligt dicht gevouwen op tafel  
de rand van mijn glas is droog geworden

“Wil je er nog één?”

vraagt de barman met zijn achterover gekamde haren  
zijn blik is afwachtend en ongeduldig  
de vieze theedoek hangt slap over zijn schouder  
ik knik en hij schenkt mijn lege glas bij  
nu glijden mijn vingertoppen weer ongeremd  
over de rand van mijn glas  
en glimlach ik bij de gedachte  
aan eenzaamheid in de zomer.



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