

2006

Collecting the self

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Collecting the Self: Paintings

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

Master of Creative Arts - Research

from

University of Wollongong

by

Leonie Watson B.Sc.(Hons), BCA

School of Art and Design
Faculty of Creative Arts

2006

CERTIFICATION

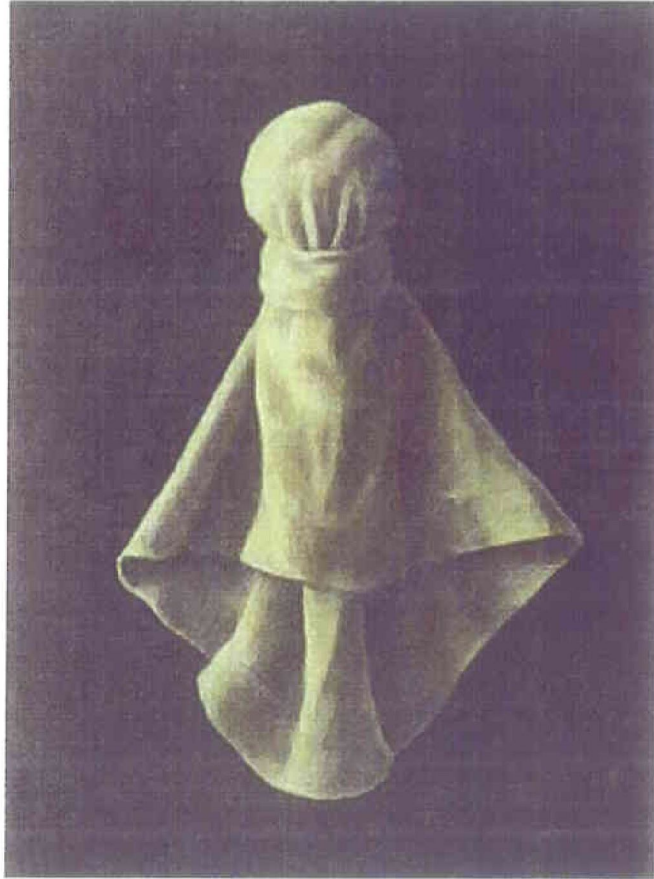
I, Leonie Watson, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Creative Arts - Research in the Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leonie Watson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the name.

Leonie Watson

4 October, 2006

Collecting the Self: Paintings



Leonie Watson *Bruised Angel* (2005). Oil on linen, 38 x 29 cm.

Leonie Watson

Abstract

This study examines the intertwining of the body and the self and the way this is represented in the visual arts. This research is informed by the bodily interventions of feminist artists and new conceptions of the self as multiple, a “locus” or meeting place of desires, beliefs, language forms and histories. This “self” is extended by technology, which dissolves boundaries of scale, of inside and outside. The paintings ask whether defined gender boundaries can be blurred, whether discrete notions of body and self can be merged, through ambiguities of inside/outside, using folds and concealments to make new kinds of bodies.

This work proposes a body/self that is always *in parts* and *in process*; continually fragmenting, yet recombining to find moments of “wholeness”, however transitory. The suite of paintings titled *Messengers* (2005 - 2006) represent some of these fleeting moments of apparent wholeness. They are complete only at the moment we see them in the light that glances across them. They represent an “incomplete” wholeness. The figures in *Messengers* are hybrid forms. Knotted and folded into phallic, testicular, cervical and vaginal orifices and protuberances, they present ambiguously-gendered “creatures” that merge inside and outside, self and other. These new kinds of bodies - fragmented, dispersed, reassembled - enable us to see ourselves as we feel – multiple, in flux and yet held together by a desire for unity - however momentary and contingent.

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