

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY  
Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building

**Defamiliarising the Familiar: The Distorted Body in  
Photography**

by

**Lin Wei**

A Thesis Submitted  
In Partial Fulfilment Of The  
Requirements For The Degree

**Doctor of Philosophy**

Sydney, Australia

**2019**



## **Certificate of Original Authorship**

I, Lin Wei declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

Production Note:

Signature: Signature removed prior to publication.

Date: 8th November 2019

## **Acknowledgements**

This PhD research and thesis writing have been a long journey and it holds great significance and meaning in my life. Throughout these four years, I have experienced both stress and joy while floating between these negative and positive experiences emotionally and physically. It has made my life much more meaningful. I am very appreciative to the people who have surrounded me with their kindness, care and support.

I would like to express special appreciation to my supervisors Prof. Dr. Thea Brejzek and Prof. Dr Lawrence Wallen. To Thea, your care and intelligent advice helped my writing to progress fluently. I am especially thankful for your encouragement to believe in myself; all your kind words to let me slowly gain more and more confidence in my writing and public speaking. Your brilliant suggestions and comments have allowed me to pass through great difficulties. To Lawrence, your kindness and patience helped me to confidently and comfortably research, speak, and write when English is my second language. Your advice on both my practice and my career have been invaluable.

I am grateful to all my friends and colleagues who have supported me throughout this endeavour. Special thanks to my Australian mum, Julie Kirk, who informally adopted me during the course of this PhD. I appreciate you spending time and effort to persuade me when I was emotional and stubborn. I am grateful for your kind words and encouragement, remembering all my birthdays and cheering me up during these four years. Your care and love has lit up my life in Australia. I also thank my subject coordinators Dr. Alexandra Crosby, Dr. Cathy Lockhart, Dr. Donna Sgro. Thank you for providing me such an amazingly unforgettable and invaluable experience and support. Thanks to Dr Christina Houen of Perfect Words Editing for editing this thesis according to the guidelines of the University and the Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd)

Lastly, but most importantly, I want to express my deepest gratitude to my beloved partner Wayne Cheung. This research would not have been completed so smoothly without your patience, understanding, endless encouragement and unconditional love and support. Thank you for being such an amazing partner, friend as well as an indicator of my life in Australia, you fulfil me. I would also like to thank my loving and supportive mum. You let me be brave to challenge myself and make the impossible possible.

## Table of Contents

Certificate of Original Authorship .....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
List of Illustrations .....	v
Abstract .....	x
Biography .....	xi
List of Exhibitions .....	xi
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>xii</b>
Research Topic .....	xii
Research Questions .....	xiv
Theory Context .....	xv
Practice Context .....	xxviii
Methodology .....	xlvi
<b>Chapter 1: Distortions by Way of Concealment .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Chapter Overview .....	1
1.2 Introduction .....	1
1.3 Posing the Solitary Body .....	4
1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Posing the Solitary Body .....	16
1.3.2 — Key Findings .....	61
1.4 — Light and Shadow .....	63
1.4.1 — Photographic Experiments in Light and Shadow .....	77
1.4.2 — Key Findings .....	119
1.5 Framing and Cropping .....	121
1.5.1 — Photographic Experiments on Framing and Cropping .....	138
1.5.2 — Key Findings .....	189
1.6 Fusion with Materials .....	191
1.6.1 — Photographic Experiments on Fusion with Materials .....	205
1.6.2 — Key Findings .....	238
1.7 Conclusion .....	239
<b>Chapter 2: Distortions in the Ephemeral Dimension: The Mirror .....</b>	<b>242</b>
2.1 Chapter Overview .....	242
2.2 Introduction .....	242
2.3 The Flat Mirror .....	245
2.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Flat Mirror Distortions .....	254

2.3.2 — Key Findings.....	274
2.4 The Curved Mirror.....	276
2.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Curved Mirror Distortions .....	284
2.4.2 — Key Findings.....	314
2.5 Conclusion.....	316
<b>Chapter 3: Falsified Truths: Uncanny Distortions in Post-Production Manipulation</b> .....	<b>318</b>
3.1 Chapter Overview .....	318
3.2 Introduction .....	318
3.3 Post-Processing .....	321
3.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Post-Processing.....	331
3.3.2 — Key Findings.....	356
3.4 Digital Reconstruction.....	357
3.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Digital Reconstruction .....	373
3.4.2 — Key Findings.....	448
3.5 Conclusion.....	450
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>452</b>
Contributions and Implications.....	459
Recommendations for Future Practice.....	460
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>462</b>

## List of Illustrations

- Figure 1: Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933
- Figure 2: Man Ray, *Anatomies*, 1929
- Figure 3: Brassai, *Nude*, 1931-34
- Figure 4: Lee Miller, *Nude Bent Forward*, 1931
- Figure 5: Herb Ritts, *Untitled*, n.d.
- Figure 6: Herb Ritts, *Female Nude (Detail)*, Hawaii, 1989
- Figure 7: Herb Ritts, *Curved Torso*, Hollywood, 1989
- Figure 8: Tono Stano, *Fairytale Creature*, 1995
- Figure 9: Tono Stano, *Bottom*, 1994
- Figure 10: John Coplans, *Self-Portrait (hands)*, 1988
- Figure 11: Bill Brandt, *Eygalières, France*, 1953
- Figure 12: Bill Brandt, *Baie des Anges, France*, 1958
- Figure 13: Edward Weston, *Nude*, 1925
- Figure 14: Giron Mathilde, *Chemin de Chair*, 2012-13
- Figure 15: Klaus Kampert, *On Body Forms*, 2011
- Figure 16: Polly Penrose, *Paperwork* series, 2015
- Figure 17: Polly Penrose, *Paperwork* series, 2015
- Figure 18: Meltim Isik, *Twice into the stream*, 2011
- Figure 19: Laura Moore, *Framed* series #7, 2014
- Figure 20: Bart Hess, *Liquified*, 2012
- Figure 21: Erwin Wurm, *59 positions*, 1992
- Figure 22: Xavier Le Roy, *Self Unfinished*, 1998
- Figure 23: Vadim Stein, *Untitled*, 2011
- Figure 24: Andre Kertész, *Distortion No.49*, 1933
- Figure 25: Hans Breder, *Untitled*, from the series “Body/Sculptures”, 1969-3
- Figure 26: Hans Breder, *Untitled* from the series “Body/Sculptures”, 1972
- Figure 27: Florence Henri, *Self-portrait*, 1928
- Figure 28: Claude Cahun, *Self-Portrait*, 1928
- Figure 29: Joan Jonas, *Mirror Piece I*, 1969

Figure 30: Bohyun Yoon, *Fragmentation*, installation, dimensions variable, live models and mirror, 2003

Figure 31: Man Ray, *Primat de la matieére sur la pensée*, 1929

Figure 32: Man Ray, *Le Violin d'Ingres*, 1924

Figure 33: Asger Carlsen, *Hester*, 2012

Figure 34: Natalie Tirant, *i am complete*, 2015

Figure 35: Meltem Isik, *Suspicious Affinities*, 2015

Figure 36: Sam Jinks, *Distortions*, 2005

Figure 37: Shinichi Maruyama, *Nude #4*, 2012

Figure 38: Stephen Ocampo Villegas, *Distortions*, 2015

Figure 39: Frederic Fontenoy, *Métamorphose #17*, 1989

Figure 40: Lin Wei, *Experiment 3: Symmetrical forms on the plinth*, 2015

Figure 41: Lin Wei, *Experiment 7: Compressing the shape and posture of flexible body*, 2015

Figure 42: Man Ray, *Anatomies*, 1929

Figure 32: Lee Miller, *Nude Bent Forward*, 1931

Figure 44: Herb Ritts, *Female Nude (detail)*, Hawaii, 1989

Figure 45: Lin Wei, *Experiment 10: Posing the male and female body into tightly repressed forms against pastel-coloured backgrounds*, 2015

Figure 46: Lighting setup for *Experiment 10*

Figure 47: Lin Wei, Photo from *Experiment 10*

Figure 48: Lin Wei, *Experiment 10: Posing the male and female body into tightly repressed forms against pastel-coloured backgrounds*, 2015

Figure 49: Lin Wei, Close up of photo from *Experiment 10*

Figure 50: Edward Weston, *Nude*, 1925

Figure 51: Lin Wei, *Experiment 19: Emulation of lighting used in Man Ray's Minotaure (1933)*, 2017

Figure 52: Lin Wei, Lighting setup for *Experiment 19*, 2017

Figure 53: Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933

Figure 54: Lin Wei, *Experiment 20: Emulation of lighting used in Man Ray's Minotaure (1933)—snoot modifier*, 2017

Figure 55: Lin Wei, Lighting setup for *Experiment 20*, 2017

Figure 56: Lin Wei, *Experiment 22: Reveal body forms with emphasis on form and muscularity*, 2017

Figure 57: Lin Wei, *Experiment 24: Utilise black material to assist the shadow effect in further concealing body elements*, 2017

Figure 58: Robert Mapplethorpe, *Self-portrait*, 1988

Figure 59: Lin Wei, *Experiment 25: Casting shadows with body components*, 2017

Figure 60: Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933

Figure 61: Lin Wei, *Experiment 26: Inverted placement of lighting — light positioned from below aiming upwards*, 2017

Figure 62: Lin Wei, *Experiment 27: Generating shadows to conceal portions of the body using limb placement*, 2017

Figure 63: Lin Wei, Close-up of bottom-left of *Experiment 27: Generating shadows to conceal portions of the body using limb placement*, 2017

Figure 64: Lin Wei, *Experiment 30: Abstracted poses within circular frame against white background*, 2016

Figure 65: Lin Wei, Studio setup for *Experiment 30*, 2016

Figure 66: Lin Wei, *Experiment 31: Bodies of various shapes and sizes singularly placed inside the circular frame*, 2016

Figure 67: Lin Wei, *Experiment 35: Body location in relation to the frame, 180 degrees rotation*, 2016

Figure 68: Lin Wei, *Experiment 37: Re-examination of the application of outer frame in the image — removal by physical crop to instill floating bodies*, 2016

Figure 69: Edward Weston, *Nude (Miriam Lerner)*, 1925

Figure 70: Lin Wei, *Experiment 43: Circular framing using crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera*, 2016

Figure 71: Lin Wei, Overlay diagram on one image from *Experiment 43* showing a representation of the boundaries of sensors in relation to a crop sensor lens, 2016

Figure 72: Slocum Howland (American, 1870-1922). *No.2 Kodak snapshot of baseball game at Williston School, Easthampton, MA, ca. 1890*

Figure 73: Emmet Gowin, *Edith, Danville, Virginia*, 1971

Figure 74: Lin Wei, *Experiment 44: Circular framing using ultra-wide crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera with focal length reducer attached*, 2016.

Figure 75: Lin Wei, *Experiment 38: Cropping an image of two tightly combined bodies — after crop*, 2016

Figure 76: Lin Wei, *Experiment 38: Cropping an image of two tightly combined bodies — before crop*, 2016

Figure 77: Man Ray, *Monument to de Sade*, 1933

Figure 78: Lin Wei, *Experiment 39: Close-up crop converting two bodies into landscape*, 2016

Figure 79: Lin Wei, Uncropped version of *Experiment 39*

Figure 80: Bill Brandt, *Nude Baie des Anges*, 1959

Figure 81: Lin Wei, *Experiment 46: Utilising various coloured card-stock to conceal familiar components of the body*, 2014

Figure 82: Lin Wei, *Experiment 50: Molding the paper material to match posed body shape*, 2014

Figure 83: Lin Wei, *Experiment 52: Instances of the concealed body within paper roll*, 2014

Figure 84: Bart Hess, Still from *Mutants*, 2011

Figure 85: Lin Wei, *Experiment 53: Body Form #4*, 2014-17

Figure 86: Meltem Isik, *Twice into the stream*, 2011

Figure 87: Lin Wei, *Experiment 54: Body Form #5*, 2014

Figure 88: Lin Wei, *Experiment 59: The body in relation to the horizontal flat mirror surface*, 2016

Figure 89: Lin Wei, Lighting setup for *Experiment 59*, 2016

Figure 90: Lin Wei, *Experiment 63: Reconfiguring body shape through symmetry*, 2016

Figure 91: Hans Breder, *Untitled* from Body/Sculptures (1969-73) series, 1969

Figure 92: Hans Breder, *Untitled* from Body/Sculptures series, 1972

Figure 93: Joan Jonas, *Mirror Piece I*, 1969

Figure 94: Hans Breder, *Untitled*, from Body/Sculptures series, 1971

Figure 95: Lin Wei, *Experiment 64: Mirror as a device for severing the body into two parts*, 2016

Figure 96: Bohyun Yoon, *Fragmentation*, installation, dimensions variable, live models and mirror, 2003

Figure 97: Lin Wei, *Experiment 66: Photographing the real flesh and the reflected flesh*, 2016

Figure 98: Studio setup for *Experiment 66*

Figure 99: Lin Wei, *Experiment 67: Photographing the familiar, mirror bent on y-axis*, 2016

Figure 100: Andre Kertész, *Distortion* series, 1933

Figure 101: Andre Kertész, *Distortion* series, 1933

Figure 102: Lin Wei, *Experiment 70: Mirror surface bent along one point on x-axis*, 2016

Figure 103: Lin Wei, *Experiment 72: Distorted reflection of a reflection by mirror surface bent along two points on y-axis*, 2016

Figure 104: Lin Wei, *Experiment 73: Distorted reflection of a reflection by mirror surface bent along two points on x-axis*, 2016

Figure 105: Lin Wei, *Experiment 77: Further experimentation with ray-tracing the junction of distorted body overlap — Seeing through the mirror*, 2016

Figure 106: Source image for *Experiment 79*

Figure 107, Screenshot of HSL/Grayscale tab inside Adobe Camera Raw

Figure 108: Lin Wei, *Experiment 79: Influences of modifying colour luminance in monochromatic image*, 2018

Figure 109, Lin Wei, *Experiment 83: Observing patterns of colour change and colour perception through the application of Look-Up Tables*, 2018

Figure 110: Lin Wei, *Experiment 4: Examination of skin texture and effects of a coloured background*

Figure 111: Lin Wei, *Experiment 86: Blending modes — Digital Solarisation*, 2018

Figure 112: Man Ray, *Solarization (Nude torso)*, 1947

Figure 113: Man Ray, *Primat de la matière sur la pensée*, 1929

Figure 114: Graphic representation of feathered areas in Man Ray's photograph, *Primat de la matière sur la pensée*, 1929

Figure 115: Lin Wei, *Experiment 87: Application of Colour in Digital Solarisation*, 2018

Figure 116: Lin Wei, *Experiment 90: Removal of identifiable body elements*, 2018

Figure 117: Lin Wei, *Experiment 91: Emphasising the dismembered unfamiliar form*, 2018

Figure 118: Lin Wei, *Experiment 91: Emphasising the dismembered unfamiliar form*, 2018

Figure 119: Lin Wei, *Experiment 104: Reconstruction of elements into an uncanny state*, 2018

Figure 120: Lin Wei, *Experiment 107: Warping processes as a method of digitally reconstructing elements into an uncanny state*, 2018

Figure 121: Lin Wei, *Experiment 109: Manifesting multiple presences of a body in a solitary body*, 2018

Figure 122: Lin Wei, Deconstructed view of constituent body elements from reference photographs used for *Experiment 109*, 2018

Figure 123: Lin Wei, *Experiment 110: Reconstructing the premise of the human body — a corporeal sculptural form*, 2018

Figure 124: Lin Wei, Deconstructed view of constituent body elements from reference photographs used for *Experiment 110*, 2018

Figure 125, Asger Carlsen, *Hester*, 2012

Figure 126: Hans Bellmer, *La Poupée*, 1936

Figure 127: Lin Wei, *Experiment 111: Deforming the body into unrecognisable states*, 2018

Figure 128: Asger Carlsen, *Hester*, 2012

Figure 129: Natalie Tirant, *i am complete*, 2014

## **Abstract**

In the context of my photographic practice, this practice-based research investigates visual distortions of the human body through the application of techniques available to photography within a studio environment. Despite an understanding of the motivations and contextual reasoning for why surrealist and contemporary photographers distort the human body, the technical considerations of photographic distortions have been under-represented in photographic studies. This research is critical of the lack of understanding such techniques. The research on visual distortions is situated within the context of defamiliarisation and Freud's theory of the 'uncanny' (Freud 1919), which refers to an estranged yet familiar sensation, and is a pivotal component in the examination of visually distorted human bodies that do not conform with normative perceptions. This study comprises photographic experiments based on three main photographic techniques: distortions by way of concealment, distortions through the mirror, and distortions from post-production manipulation. Each technique is divided into sub-methods, which demonstrate the capacity of each technique for generating distortions of the human body within the photograph. This research is primarily situated within the context of Surrealism, for surrealist photographers were the first to engage in photographic experimentation to distort the body for the purposes of artistic expression. Thus, the established techniques of this research are supported by a technical analysis of comparative surrealist photographers, as well as contemporary photographers servicing the legacy of Surrealism, who critically engage with principles of the 'uncanny' in redefining perceptions of the human body through diverse photographic experimentation.

## **Biography**

Lin Wei is a photo-media artist based in Sydney who has exhibited both nationally and internationally since 2011. Wei's practice deals with transformational body iterations that question the stable and physical nature of the body through the lens. Her work explores photography's ability to illuminate fictitious bodies that transgress the boundaries of real flesh and affect human sensibility. Lin Wei employs the body's inherent capability to transform and manipulate itself through posture; at times her practice invites consideration of the body's relationship and collaboration with objects and material surfaces, and how they can reconfigure the representation of the normative body. Of further interest to her work is the intangible nature of photographic lighting to manipulate the body.

Her photographs often concern distortions through defamiliarisation, referring to the Freudian uncanny, which is described as something strange yet familiar. To this extent, Lin Wei is interested not only in capturing images of distorted bodies, but also in revealing the misleading impressions that the most familiar human object, the body, can unconsciously produce.

## **List of Exhibitions**

- 2018: Manifest Gallery 5<sup>th</sup> International Photography Annual Exhibition-in-print
- 2017: Reflections, Mohawk Gallery, Ohio, USA
- 2017: Transference, Gaffa Gallery, Sydney, Australia
- 2016: 8th Annual Nude, Manifest Gallery, Ohio, USA
- 2016: Jarvis Dooney Gallery, Berlin, Germany
- 2015: The Distorted Body, Central Park, Sydney, NSW
- 2015: Form #5, Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney, NSW
- 2014: N.A., Home@735 Gallery, Redfern, Sydney, NSW
- 2014: N.A., Rubicon Ari, Melbourne, VIC
- 2014: UTS Honours Graduation Exhibition, UTS ART Gallery, Sydney, Australia
- 2013: Situations, Boutwell Draper Gallery, Sydney, Australia
- 2012: Autonomy, Frasers Gallery, Sydney, Australia
- 2012: Parlour 25: The Mirror Parlour, MLC Centre, Kaldor Public Art Projects, Sydney, Australia
- 2012: Parlour 25: The Doppelgänger Parlour, MLC Centre, Kaldor Public Art Project, Sydney, Australia
- 2011: Photographic Intervention, Frasers Studio, Sydney, Australia

# Introduction

## Research Topic

This practice-based research investigates the application of available photographic techniques to visually distort the human body within a studio environment. Underpinning this research are practical digital photographic experiments that document and demonstrate the intricacies of each technique and method for distorting the human body. The research asserts defamiliarisation as a major contributing factor to the distortion of body form, where familiar impressions of corporeality that conform with normative perceptions are made unfamiliar, and present a conflicting case of the real. Underpinning this notion is the inherent correlation between the notions of *defamiliarisation* and *distortion*, in which both suggest an alteration of the real. The practical investigation into distorted and defamiliarised human body forms employs the Freudian concept of the ‘uncanny’, which is ultimately defined as ‘that class of the frightening which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar.’ (Freud 1919, 220); this approach augments the perception of the distortion. The concept of uncanny is vital, for it describes an experience that situates perception between the boundaries of the real and delusory.

This research takes its contextual cues from the distorted body forms that emerged in photographic practice in the 1920s; with the inception of Surrealism, the human body became an important form of distorted representation. Surrealist photographers Man Ray, Lee Miller, Edward Weston, Bill Brandt, and Andre Kertész, in particular, are examined in this research, for they saw distortion as a technique that can facilitate the representation of unconscious desires. Dismemberment and illogical arrangements of the body in the camera frame were their primary methods of distortion, reintroducing the past, familiar, but in disorienting forms. The surrealist visual depictions of the body were not without consequence — they motivated contemporary and more recent photographers to experiment with the human figure in similar ways. Darkroom experimentations by Man Ray have encouraged alternative photographic processes that tested the limits of film and subsequent digital formats. Kertész’s experimentation with the mirror’s dimensionless realm was superseded by the mirror experiments of Hans Breder thirty years later. The doll dismemberments by Hans Bellmer became applicable inspirations for contemporary photographer Asger Carlsen, in his manipulation of bizarrely amalgamated bodies. Despite research into the bodily distortions of

precedent photographers, the photographic techniques are less studied than the motivations and contextual reasonings for why these photographers distorted the human form. This research bridges this gap and contributes to an understanding of this phenomenon by examining the technical considerations of producing these photographic distortions of the human form.

Through a close analysis of each precedent photographer's works, this research establishes that these photographic precedents use defamiliarisation as a technique to distort representations of the human body; their distortions of the body manifested through visceral depictions of fragmented forms, symbolic juxtapositions, and traumatic representations. The research also explores how, in each case, the photographer's distortions derive, in part, from a critical engagement with both visual technical experimentation and principles of the Freudian unconscious. Investigations into precedent photographic works are embedded throughout each chapter to support and extend the findings from the photographic experiments. Combined with these technical analyses, the practical experimentations establish three main photographic techniques used in distortions of the human body; these will serve as the three substantive chapters for this research. Furthermore, these techniques encompass a subset of photographic methods, which are documented in respective subchapters, further demonstrating how the technique can be utilised in distorting the body.

Chapter One discusses the technique of concealment, and how it is possible to hide certain components of the body, specifically, the familiar, in manifesting unique forms of body representation. The narrative is framed by the reciprocative notion that concealment not only hides the familiar, but also reveals the unfamiliar. To support the outcome of defamiliarisation, this chapter will establish the criteria of what constitutes the familiar, based on a viewer's normative perception of the human body. Four methods of concealment that destabilise the spectators' perception of the familiar and recognisable body are proposed. They encompass: the body's inherent ability to pose itself into concealment; the manipulation of lighting to conceal the body in shadows; the body's position in relation to the frame and the conditional post-method of cropping; and the combination of compositional elements in unifying the body into a singular bizarre representation. In each case, the visualisation of a distorted body through concealment is dependent on the process of concealment in relation to the perspective of the camera. The established methods of posing and lighting in this chapter reciprocate and interrelate with the next two chapters, establishing the methods' critical functionality in distorting the human body.

## Introduction

Chapter Two investigates the ephemeral dimension of the mirror, and how its dimensionless surface destabilises the reality of the body. The chapter considers camera perspective in relation to the mirror surface in capturing the reflection that deforms and distorts the body's corporeality. Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia is addressed; the mirror is explained as a heterotopic premise, where the familiar and unfamiliar co-exist, giving rise to a distorted body with an uncanny presence. Two scenarios of the mirror, when the body meets its reflection in a flat mirror surface, and when the body is fluctuating due to the unstable nature of the curved mirror, demonstrate how the mirror as device generates distorted imagery for the lens.

Chapter Three approaches the field of photography after the photograph has been captured, emphasising how post-production has a crucial role in the photographic production and manipulation of form and reality. The chapter analyses two methods of post-production — post-processing and digital reconstruction — further describing how the tools technically operate and how they motivate the psyche to perceive the distortion and defamiliarisation.

In total, 111 experiments are conducted throughout this research. By and large, the research concerns are practice-focused, and detail the techniques available for photography and their incorporation in practices of distorting the human body. Reframing the experiments with their photographic precedents and their embedded contextual concerns reaffirms the consequence of distortion as not simply a distortion of visual perception, but an uncanny alteration of the human psyche. This research informs the study of under-represented technical considerations of photographic distortions, specifically of the familiar human form, and demonstrates how distortions are achieved photographically, as well as outlining the necessary requirements to drive the distortion of the human body towards the uncanny.

## Research Questions

This practice-based research identifies techniques of photography that distort the human body through defamiliarisation. The act of defamiliarisation is framed by Freud's notion of the uncanny, which refers to the familiar yet unfamiliar (Freud 1919). The research conducts digital photographic experiments in a studio environment to identify and demonstrate techniques of distortion that make the familiar body unfamiliar.

Investigation of the distorted body requires a definition of what distortion is, to frame an understanding of what forms a distorted body can assume, and how one perceives the distorted body in the photographic image. Combined with contextual research and positioning, this

research explores the necessary conditions for making photographs of bodies that are distorted.

Primary questions my research pursues are:

- How can the human body be distorted and transformed in the image using digital photographic techniques?
- How can photographic techniques be used to distort representations of the human body by defamiliarising the familiar?

Secondary questions that require examination are:

- Why is defamiliarisation a key element in distorting the human body?
- What are the perceptual effects of visually defamiliarised human bodies?
- How can Freud's theory of the uncanny be mobilised through a technical photographic exploration to offer renewed perspectives on the human body and prompt further visual and perceptual distortions of the body?
- Why do photographers have an interest in distorting the body?
- How have historical photographic practices, mainly Surrealism, provided a legacy for contemporary photographic representation?
- How does a visual distortion alter normative perceptions of the human body?
- What are the necessary conditions for the human body to be categorised as distorted with the inclusion of an external physical body such as objects, materials and surfaces?
- How does the viewer perceive defamiliarisation?
- What is the intended effect of distortion in photography?

## **Theory Context**

To understand what is a distortion, and how a human body can be distorted in the photographic image, the research reviews literature and theory encompassing the rationalities and ideologies of both distortion and the human body. Investigating these notions informs my understanding of the relevance of precedent discourse and differences between this body of literature and my research. I refer to key studies, focusing on: distortions in relevant disciplines and fields; distortions in body and psychology; distortions in art practice, with particular focus on Surrealism's pervasiveness of body representation; their intricate link to Freud's theory of the uncanny and the act of defamiliarisation; and how the body is discussed in theoretical discourse.

## **Definitions of Distortion**

## Introduction

The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2018) offers a general definition for distortion, referring to distortion as ‘the act of twisting or altering something out of its true, natural, or original state.’ For the *Oxford Dictionary* (2018), distortion is defined as ‘the action of giving a misleading account or impression.’ Alternatively, the *Cambridge Dictionary* (2018) provides two accounts of the definition of distortion that have commonality with the dictionary definitions cited above. As a false meaning, a distortion is ‘a change to the intended or true meaning of something.’ On the other hand, a distortion of shape is defined as ‘a change to the original or natural shape of something.’ (*Cambridge Dictionary* 2018)

Distortion is defined according to the context of the discipline. Medical studies define distortion as the state of being twisted out of a natural shape, position or form. In psychology, it is referred to as the process of altering or disguising unconscious ideas or impulses so that they become acceptable to the conscious mind (*Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine* 2003). Distortion in the field of psychology is typically addressed as part of a larger study — cognitive distortion. Initial studies of cognitive distortion are attributed to a seminal writing by Aaron T. Beck, who defines cognitive distortion as ‘idiosyncratic thought content indicative of distorted or unrealistic conceptualizations’ (1963, 324). This definition forms the foundation for later studies on cognitive distortion and cognitive behaviour theory.

In a similar vein, distortion in the field of music and audio media is discussed in terms of the alteration of the original shape or characteristic of an audio signal. According to Glen D. White (2005), distortion can be ‘any addition or modification to a signal caused by any type of equipment’ (114). Mendel Kleiner (2011) similarly notes that distortions are changes to a signal’s properties, adding that it affects the realistic reproduction of the audio sound, an occurrence produced by skewed frequency coverage. Studies of audio distortion form two opposing lines of thought — the first presents distortion as an undesirable or interrupting characteristic; while the second views audio distortion as the production of an advanced aesthetic. This is confirmed by Robert M. Poss’s *Distortion is Truth* (1998) and Michael Ross’s *Getting Great Guitar Sounds* (1998); both embrace and describe the elements of distortion and its effects.

Taking into account the interpretations from each aforementioned discipline, all suggest one thing in common — distortion can be related to a process of altering a reality or what is expected of reality. A distortion can thus be an illusion, a false reality, a deception, a false sense of truth. It can be applied mentally (e.g. cognitive dissonance), physically, visually, or aurally,

and is not limited by shape or form.

### **The Distorted Body from a Psychological Perspective**

The pursuit of ideal beauty has been a long-standing enquiry in art, taking place in major theoretical and empirical studies throughout each significant art movement. Major studies of the beauty and aesthetics of the human body shifted attention to the imperfections of the body and self; the advent of sociocultural studies in the 1960s and re-emerging interest in the 1990s put a particular focus on perceptually and psychologically driven distorted views of the body.

The re-emerging interest of studies of psychologically and perceptually distorted views of the body led to the republication of psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Paul Schilder's *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (1999), which questions how general perceptions of the body affect the way an image is read. On recognising the bodies of others, or images of other bodies, Schilder claims that:

... where we are not able to come to a true perception of our own body, we are also unable to perceive the bodies of others. One may question if the difficulty in recognizing the different parts of the bodies of others is not primary and the difficulty in recognizing parts of our own body secondary. (1999, 45)

Thus, by means of an interpretation, one's preconceived notions of the body are distorted when the observable human body is distorted in appearance and does not align with one's own commonplace understanding of the human body. It is noteworthy that Schilder's claim refers to one's recognition of the commonplace as *difficult* and not *non-existent*, suggesting that the viewer has not entirely given up, and is still in search for the point of convergence, the familiarity, within the distortion.

Theoretical perspectives on body image issues are extended by Joel Thompson (1999), who further analyses the historical changes in society's expectations of beauty. Further studies of body image gave rise to the study of *body image distortion* (B.I.D.), which analyses the primary diagnostic symptom of the slimming disease: *anorexia nervosa*. B.I.D. studies maintained a primary focus on addressing the grounds on which distorted views of the body are established and its subsequent effects. One approach to B.I.D. studies is the photographic image's contribution to distorted perception. In a collaborative study on measuring B.I.D. using modified camera technology, Richard Freeman (2009) conducted a technical study to qualitatively measure perceived body image. In a similar vein, Bernard Harper (2006) draws upon the photographic medium to explore the psychological disorder of B.I.D., employing the theory of photography to explore, in the field of psychology, how the device is exploited to

produce disproportionately larger or smaller estimations of perceived body weight. Freeman's and Harper's studies share the assumption that distortion — as is defined in its psychological context — is a form of an unhealthy and untoward disorder. Neither Freeman nor Harper, like other studies on B.I.D., refer to body distortion as a visual aesthetic. Although the foundation of B.I.D. studies refers to distortion as a psychological and perceptive issue in a medical context, there is an obscure connection to visual aesthetics in photography's function in distorting the body. Harper made a point that 'photography is, in terms of body image perception, an intrinsically distorting and often fattening medium' (2006, 1). This reveals, to some extent, photography's capacity to simulate visual and perceptual distortions, in contrast to normative perceptions of the human body.

### **Distortion in Art**

Beyond studies of distortion in a medical-psychological context, the interpretation that distortion can re-organise thoughts on a subject instigated further discussions into the psychology behind distortions in the arts. Through a visual analysis of sixteenth century Italian painting, art historian Edward Olszewski (1985) outlines two possible outcomes of distortion: distortion may be a characteristic of questioning values; or, through his observation of Raphaelite and Da Vinci works, he saw distortion as a response to the demands of perfection. The rationale behind the creation of unnatural proportions in art is to meet the artist's theoretical requirements, to strive for variety and explore imagination (Olszewski 1985). The second outcome identified by Olszewski is similarly noted by cultural geographer Bret Wallach (2005), who asserts that, from as early as the 1400s, the painter's attention shifted from producing photographically accurate images to products based on emotionally driven thoughts of the subject.

An individual's perception is identified as a main factor in how the distortion is viewed. In the context of painting, artist and writer Patrick Heron documents the way perception is involved in the distortion of an object: '...any representation of a three-dimensional subject upon the two-dimensional plane of a flat canvas, involves distortion of one kind or another' (1995, 7). Price Charlson (1963) offers a point of contention to Heron's notion: '...familiarity renders us insensitive to the distortion' (128); though a distortion may exist within the object, it is not recognisable, rather, the 'distortion must be sought' (129). While Heron and Charlson contribute to an understanding of artistic distortion from a metaphysical perspective, they fail to offer a methodology for object distortion.

Studying the psychology of the artist to create an account of the development, significance, possibilities, and limitations of modern abstract art, theorist Anton Ehrenzweig (1967) suggests that ‘any formal distortion is potentially realistic if the syncretistic concern with the concrete object is strong enough’ (144). This notion is based on an earlier essay, where Ehrenzweig (1949) argues that distortions in art are the outcome of the unconscious creation of works and the creation of unconscious works. The expression of the artist’s psyche is thus one factor of consideration in the creation of distorted representations. Accordingly, distortion can be influenced by the expression of intellectual thought, and at the heart of artistic creativity, involves the interference with natural form as a ‘certain exercise for thought’ (Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, as cited in Vygotsky 1971, 32)

### **Distortion in Surrealist Literature and Photography**

Modern perceptions of body distortion would not exist without the conditions that surrounded the inception of the surrealist movement. Surrealism is defined by its founder Andre Breton (1969) as: ‘Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express ... the actual functioning of thought ... in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern’ (26). Breton originally makes a claim for psychic automatism with literature as the central point of the movement; however, he later recognised that Surrealism was not limited to writing, but extended itself into visual art (Strehle, 2011). Breton maintains that the creation of images is a method of expressing imaginative thought in a materially visible format (Breton, 2002). Jemima Montagu notes that the surrealists revelled in Max Ernst’s collages and Man Ray’s photograms, for they mirrored surrealist poetic techniques of ‘disruption, syntactical discontinuity and unorthodox juxtaposition’ (Montagu 2002, 14). Ernst’s collages offered a visual encounter that, as Montagu writes, ‘resulted in a disorientation of the rational world like that experienced in dreams or hallucinations’ (2002, 14); while Ray’s rayographs (i.e. photograms, a cameraless technique) presented a way of manifesting the strange and unrecognisable from of the familiar everyday object. The techniques of Ernst and Ray instigated radical experimentation with visually illogical scenes that proliferated in surrealist visual art. Breton is noted to have found potential in photography as a medium to convey the irrational, despite the paradox of photography as an index of reality (Montagu 2002). The relationship between photography and Surrealism is re-assessed by art critic and theorist Rosalind Krauss (1981), who clarifies that the photographic medium, despite the paradox it produces, held a central position in conveying Surrealist concepts visually.

‘Dismemberment’ and ‘fetishism’ rose as concepts of the avant-garde following the repercussions of World War I, when Surrealism was established as a sociocultural revolution that aimed to reconstruct society and identity by breathing new life and exploring new values, which, as David Bate (2004) notes, ‘fought the pessimistic inevitability of certain modes of thinking, living and acting in a society’ (n.p.). New perceptions of the body were conceived as a result of the graphic evisceration brought about by the atrocities of war. Influenced by the destructive aftermath of World War I in society and civilisation (Lyford 2000), the first documented expression about the trauma of bodily mutilation appears in Breton’s first surrealist manifesto in 1924. He writes, ‘... there is a man cut in two by the window’ (Breton 1969, 21), establishing the act of dismemberment as a vital surrealist notion. Amy Lyford (2000) posits that dismemberment, as a visual form, was initially observed by Breton when he enlisted as a physician-in-training at the Val-de-Grâce military hospital during World War I. Edward Juler (2016) notes that the horrific visuals of the dismembered body made its way into surrealist art, presenting ‘new perspectives on corporeal narrativity’ (356). Dismembered body parts became frequent in surrealist images. Dismemberment as a visual aesthetic is further reinforced by Breton, who writes that ‘Surreality will be in any case a function of our willingness to completely defamiliarize everything ... right up to the point of defamiliarizing a hand by isolating it from an arm’ (as cited in Lyford 2000, 53) The shift in attention to the body through the act of dismemberment is seen as a reflection of surrealists’ violent and sexual transgression of the body in the image. One interpretation of this corporeal insurgency is that it counters the dehumanising trauma of the war (Lomas 2000); another interpretation is that the dismembered body, where the body is witnessed as fragmented and no longer whole, acts as ‘a metaphorical embodiment of wartime trauma’ (Juler 2006, 357). Dismemberment can also be interpreted as a ‘positive manifestation of desire’ (Caws 2004, 30) Dismemberment was not just a method to deal with the trauma of war; it also established itself as a new aesthetic that offered ‘a visual experience’ (Lyford 2000, 53). Dismemberment became commonplace, with misplaced or mangled limbs displayed in surrealist imagery. Hal Foster (2004) highlighted a paradox of dismemberment through an analysis of Hans Bellmer’s doll constructions, *La Poupée* (1933-35), linking the act of dismemberment to castration, and suggesting that dismemberment was notably fetishistic.

Dismemberment, as both a concept and visual technique, was not the sole method the surrealists used to distort the body. The human body was also subjected to distortions through re-representations, often presented in illogical arrangements; this also expressed the surrealist concept of the fetish. The insistence of such methods, as David Bate (2004) notes, was further

driven by Freudian concepts such as primitiveness, the double, and the uncanny. Sigmund Freud (1927) defines the fetish as ‘a substitute for the woman’s penis that the little boy once believed in and for reasons familiar to us—does not want to give up’ (152-153). The fetish and the uncanny are notions that converge at a point. The fetish is paradoxical, as it represents presence and absence. Johanna Malt (2004) describes the fetish as something that ‘stands in for something that was never there in the first place’ (134). Similar to how the uncanny operates, the resulting fetishistic image has to be come to terms with by the fetishistic viewer; it is most often a representation of a traumatic loss, which has explicit ties with the castration complex presented as a foundation to Freud’s concept of the uncanny. The notion of the fetish that the surrealists adhered to developed when the human body was repurposed into an object that is visually phallic (Metz 1985) and strangely uncanny, questioning the viewer’s perception of the subject.

### **The Uncanny and Defamiliarisation in Surrealism**

The concept of the uncanny and its applications in writing and visual art had been in the background of surrealist debates since the inception of the surrealist cultural movement in the 1920s. Visual Surrealism sought to tap into the unconscious and explore dreams and the unconscious, expressing one’s inner thoughts. Surrealist imagery thus was not always logical, in part due to distortion, illogical arrangement, and juxtaposition of objects, which created uncanny imagery. The term uncanny derives from the German word *unheimlich*, referring to something that is not quite right, unhomely, foreign or unfamiliar. The concept of the uncanny is first explored psychologically by psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch, in his essay *On the Psychology of the Uncanny* (1906). Jentsch describes the uncanny as a fearful sensation that rises from intellectual uncertainty. He notes that:

The dark feeling of uncertainty, excited by such representation, as to the psychical nature of the corresponding literary figure is equivalent as a whole to the doubtful tension created by any uncanny situation, but it is made serviceable by the virtuosic manipulation of the author for the purposes of artistic investigation. Conversely, the effect of the uncanny can easily be achieved when one undertakes to reinterpret some kind of lifeless thing as part of an organic creature, especially in anthropomorphic terms, in a poetic or fantastic way. (Jentsch 1997, 13)

Fellow psychiatrist Sigmund Freud considered this idea of the uncanny intolerable and contested it in his seminal essay *The Uncanny* (1919). Freud asserts that one must be accepting of the uncanny rather than be repelled by it. He notes that ‘the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar’ (Freud 1919, 220). For Freud, the primary operation of the uncanny manifests from the return of a repressed

infantile complex, or the revival of one's surmounted primitive beliefs. *The Sandman* (1816) by Ernst Theodor Amadeus (E.T.A) Hoffman is the foundation for this interpretation of the uncanny; Freud draws on the notion of the fearful loss of the eyes, which he connects to the fear of losing one's primitive belief in infantile sexuality. He asserts that the uncanny 'is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression' (241). The concept of the 'double' is also closely linked to the rise of the repressed material as a precursor to the uncanny experience. The double manifests in the form of repetition — when one's primary narcissism develops a sense of immortality as an infant, presences once again, and invokes the return to one's primitive state. Freud identifies that, while the double is an assurance of immortality for the child, the double progresses into an indicator of death when the individual becomes an adult. It is both a familiar and unfamiliar experience that blurs the boundary between real and unreal. Freud's description of how an uncanny effect can be produced is strikingly similar to how a visual distortion occurs, where reality or the original is altered or modified to provide a new reality:

the uncanny effect is often and easily produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality, such as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions and significance of the thing it symbolizes, and so on.' (1919, 244)

Freud's notion of the uncanny is predominantly adopted by cultural scholars and philosophers in analysing the uncanny, with multiple works based on or seeking to further expand on his notion. Margaret Iversen (2007) follows Freud's narrative of the uncanny, as well as Roland Barthes' studies of semiotics, to establish a connection between the uncanny and photography. Attributing the notion of the uncanny to the notion of the *presence of absence* within a photograph, Iversen notes that 'the nature of the medium as an indexical imprint of the object means that any photographed object or person has a ghostly, uncanny presence that might be likened to the return of the dead' (2007, 114).

The concept of uncanny and the idea of defamiliarisation are intrinsically linked to each other. One cannot talk of the familiar made unfamiliar without referring to the technique that provokes the unfamiliar. The technique of defamiliarisation is the act of making the familiar unfamiliar. In his essay *Art as Technique* (1917), Russian formalist literary theorist and critic, Viktor Shklovsky, develops the concept of defamiliarisation, asserting that: 'The technique of art [defamiliarization] is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself

and must be prolonged' (Shklovsky 1989, 778).

This holds similar notions to the concept of distortion, in that form is similarly affected, albeit through altering the object into a strangely unfamiliar state. Shklovsky's work expands on the effects of defamiliarisation, noting that the act of defamiliarisation slows one's perception of the object as a result of being impeded in the senses due to an unfamiliar presence. While Shklovsky was at the forefront of expanding the concept of defamiliarisation, he also implies that defamiliarisation 'is found almost everywhere form is found' (781). Shklovsky, however, fails to recognise that defamiliarisation is a technique that occurs only by the will of the artist. This implies that defamiliarisation cannot exist without the artist's interference with the form.

Uri Margolin's essay, 'Russian Formalism' (1994), further contributes to the concept of defamiliarisation in the field of literature. In contrast to Shklovsky's work, Margolin (1994) offers a different summary of defamiliarisation that exists in literature: 'our habitual perception of reality is disrupted through distorting the temporal and causal order of events and the logical order of information and by seeing the familiar from a nonstandard perspective ...' (815). This notion of defamiliarisation is limiting in that it follows a systematic approach to the shifting of perception, implying the available information is merely re-organised or re-shuffled to achieve a peculiar perspective, without considering possible alternatives that use elements that are not exclusive to the original subject. Furthermore, Shklovsky's and Margolin's discussions of defamiliarisation mainly focus on the aspect of the familiar made unfamiliar. Their discussion does not make apparent whether the unfamiliar retains any trace of familiarity. However, a connection can be established between notions of defamiliarisation and Freud's uncanny, indicating that the technique of defamiliarisation, which is the technique of the familiar made unfamiliar, can still maintain inherent traces of familiarity.

### **The Body as a Site of Cultural Representations in Art and Photography**

Studies of the human body are not limited to the field of anthropology, historical demography and pathology, but are also engaged in for the cultural and political weight invested in the body. This is the premise of philosopher Michel Foucault's socio-historical analysis of the body, which argues that '...the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs' (1977, 25). Sociologist Brian Turner (1984) extends this argument, indicating that the *female body* is the main body of focus by which one can challenge the 'continuity of property and power' (37). The human body, regardless of its physiology, is

thus a capable tool for challenging traditional concepts through painting, drawing, performance and photography — it is experimented with, transformed, juxtaposed, distorted, and politicised to represent ideologies and values.

The body as a subject in art is constantly undergoing shifts in cultural representation. Historical surveys have attempted to pinpoint the major turn of critical debate concerning the body. Tobin Siebers (2000) marks the 1970s as the key point in the shift of cultural representation, while Michelle Henning (2004) marks the 1980s as the moment when the human body became central to critical discussion, extending further consideration into the body in photographic practice. Regardless of the critical shift, sociocultural enquiries are necessarily historical — each shift represents a perceptive change in the way photographers and theorists align and represent the human body. Photography, as it did with Surrealism, has allowed an engagement with the alteration of normative perceptions of the human body. Photography, as an indexical medium, presented itself as a viable medium for challenging preconceived notions of reality. This was the case for philosopher Edgar Morin, who refers to photography as ‘extrasensory, it opens onto the invisible’ (2005, 33).

Interests in the theme of the spectacle and mass media were at the forefront of body representation in photography in the 1960s (Pultz 1995). One visual method of representation is the artist’s own flesh, which becomes a part of the work, as the photograph turns into a documentation of performance. Themes of body performance extend into current times as the body gains a metaphorical status in its representation of the self. In a historical survey of the body in contemporary art from the 1990s to 2009, Sally O’Reilly (2009) notes that:

The boundary between the human body and the world at large is blurred and shifting, and often difficult to identify. It is not simply the physical barrier of the skin, since this would overlook both the psychological sphere that exists beyond our basic corporeal boundaries and the reciprocal relationship between self and context. (8)

A critical enquiry of importance that also emerged from the 1960s, and still persists today, concerns the perception and interpretation of the human body in the photographic image. Perception is noted to be relevant in the visualisation of bodies and is a topic that also persists alongside concerns with the symbolic significance of the body, differences between gender and sex, and body and technology, and the active role of the body in social life (Featherstone and Turner 1995). Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964) expounds on the importance of perception and its relationship to the body: ‘For us the body is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions’ (38). Conversely,

one's experience of the world, or one's pre-conceived notions and perceptions of the human body, will be challenged when the body is reconfigured to an unfamiliar form. The many situations the body can appear in are examined by feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz in 1994; she analyses concepts of the body that are conceived from various viewpoints and in inputs from various fields. Influenced by psychoanalysis, Grosz examines how the modern body can extend beyond its restrictive frameworks. Two notions of corporeality are presented in her argument: the first approaches corporeality as an internal concept concerning psychology and phenomenology, while the second notion suggests an external concept, by which the surface of the body can be used as a tool for cultural and symbolic representation (Grosz 1994). These notions are similarly shared in a later enquiry by sociologist Francis Barker (1995), who echoes Grosz's thesis on subjection in his study of the aesthetics of the modern body. Both notions are the subject of critical debate but are also investigated pictorially.

The shift in modern interpretations of the human body is recognised by art historian Barbara Stafford in 1993. She redirects the discussion from text-based critical enquiries into body metaphors to focus on body metaphors derived from both art and medical contexts. Anthea Callen (1997) extends the discussion of the human body's representation in art and medical contexts, analysing anatomy's role in pictorial representations of the human body.

The growing interest in critical body studies coincided with the emerging technologies of the 1990s, which offered new methods of reproducing photographic images. From a photographic perspective, William Ewing (1994) compounds photographs that demonstrate these shifts of modern bodily representation in a photographic archive. Through this archive, it is suggested that photographs of transformed bodies can be attributed to the development of medicine and genetics (Ewing 1994). Besides analysing the shift in rational thought, Ewing also discusses the body as a complex tool for political inquiry. This discussion is extended by art historian John Pultz (1995), who considers the political nature of the body alongside a historical analysis of bodily representation in photography since the medium's inception. Pultz's postmodern perspective poses the photographic medium as a tool that offers empirical knowledge and an objective analysis of the human body. Situating photography in postmodern theory enabled Pultz to establish that social crises have not escaped political inquiry in photographic practice (Pultz 1995).

Whilst photographic practice is at the foreground for exploring political and social inquiry, the human body itself is a central component, an object even, of political and social inquiry. Any

visual form or text of body representation will inevitably engage in a form of inquiry to progress and provoke thought in areas of academic dissemination, such as disability, gender, feminist, social class, social identity, queer, fashion, mass media and violence amongst several others. These studies are dialogical by nature, with the majority of discourse, both textually and artistically, exploring the significance of these issues within social structures to manifest new methods and interpretations of cultural body representation.

Disability studies within an artistic framework investigated the disabled body as a site for ideological and creative expression. Seminal works such as philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (1968) align the disabled body to the concept of *grotesque*, which is a frequented topic of exploration in both scholarly studies and contemporary art concerning disabled bodies. Subsequent theories on the grotesque, as disability culture activist Petra Kuppers (2003) notes, opens up possibilities for unconventional and transgressive methods of viewing the body as a metaphor. Feminist studies sought to dismantle the social constructs of gender roles established within art and photography. Interest also pertained to how the female body is objectified and its symbolic value in conveying social meaning and sexual desire. Feminist art historian Griselda Pollock (1988) notes that 'the ideological construction of an absolute category woman has been effaced and [the] regime of [visual] representation has naturalized woman as image, beautiful to look at, defined by her 'looks'.' (89) Discourse surrounding the male gaze and the passive female body, in particular, was bountiful. The male gaze was assessed by Laura Mulvey (1975) in relation to the female body as an indispensable element of the image, and the implications of it from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Surrealist works were at the forefront of feminist studies for the prolific male use of female bodies to project forth their fetishist and voyeuristic desires. Bodies were dismembered, objectified, sexualised and abstracted, with violent tendencies in some cases, for the image. Mary Ann Caws (1999) assessed this trend, highlighting that it was 'problematic and imprisoned, for the other eyes. She may be lit or framed, but she is not whole.' (53-54)

Photographers similarly address social and political stances in their photographic works, which are also at the centre of academic discourse for their alignment to the aforementioned issues. Robert Mapplethorpe examined the queer body; Cindy Sherman explored identity, sexuality and femininity; Florence Henri delved into identity; Dora Maar looked into social issues; Francesca Woodman dealt with issues of gender, self and identity; Claude Cahun investigated the queer and identity; whilst Diane Arbus and Joel-Peter Witkin discerns on the disabled body to name a

few.

Apart from radical shifts in critical discussion around perceptions of the body, the human body is also implicated in the re-assessment of the relationship of photography and Surrealism that occurred in the 1980s. An analysis by Rosalind Krauss (1981) points to the paradoxical nature of photographing either the reality or its representation. She posits that the intrinsic indexical trait of photography is aligned with the surrealist fascination with producing a paradox — presence transformed into absence — as well as producing an experience of reality as representation (Krauss 1981). Krauss, Livingston, and Ades (1985) analyse the crucial role photography held within Surrealism, asserting that certain photographs by Ray, Magritte and Boiffard serviced the goals of Surrealism far more than their painting counterparts. The resurging interest in Surrealism and photography, prompted by Krauss' re-assessment, was accompanied by an interest in Bataille's *informe* (the formless), which loosely translates as and links to the idea of deforming. Psychoanalytic theorist Julia Kristeva finds this especially true in surrealist photography. Kristeva (1982) raises the concept of 'deformation' (which, by definition, can be linked to distortion) when talking about the overlapping and migration of Surrealist notions into contemporary photographic practice, noting that deformation can only exist within symbolic ideas (1982). On the other hand, the transformative culture shaped by the formless is studied in an exhibition catalogue, *Formless: A User's Guide* (1997) by Yves-Alain Bois and Krauss, who refer to Georges Didi-Huberman and his re-evaluation of Georges Bataille's concept of the formless; Huberman suggests the ability of forms to deform themselves constantly. Bois and Krauss (1997) further argue that the link between the formless and deformation determines that 'the slightest alteration in human anatomy would be said to participate in the formless' (80).

A closer analysis of the human body's ability to depict the formless is conducted by Reynaldo Thompson in 2004. Thompson's thesis pursues the idea that the formless human body is unrestricted by historical impositions and free to evolve in space. Alexei Vella (2011) further analyses the transformations of the body stemming from the formless in association with the grotesque and the uncanny. Drawing on the relationship between the uncanny and the transformed body, Vella suggests that 'bodies under processes of transformation can be considered uncanny ...' (2011, 41). As it is observed through the aforementioned studies of the formless, a case can be made for the close connection of deformation, as part of the *informe*, and distortion.

In sum, the human body has introduced itself as a practical and visual site that artists and photographers have politicised to represent cultural issues. These issues manifest around historical sociocultural concerns that artists and photographers alike sought to re-evaluate. Regardless of the case of cultural representation for which the body has been repurposed, the history of art, photography and associated theories demonstrate that the body is a powerful tool for conveying meaning and is constantly subjected to experimentation. As far as Pultz (1995) is concerned, the body, when represented, ‘produces more valuable answers than do stylistic analysis and connoisseurship’ (7)

As the nature of this research is practice-based, the next section — the practice context — will visually contextualise the research by highlighting and assessing the works of comparable precedent surrealist and contemporary photographers who utilise the photographic medium in servicing distorted human body forms. Whilst the practice context aims to contextualise the research within this criteria, I acknowledge that Surrealist photographers such as Dora Maar and Jacques-André Boiffard service the uncanny with concepts of identity and indexical truths respectively in their photography, which my photographic practice aims to perform the opposite of.

## **Practice Context**

While theoretical texts and literature provide insights into sociocultural and historical stances on the body, visual imagery — in particular photography — materialise these proclamations and ideologies in a visible form. The historical image precedents I select are based on the representative function they have for each technique. I draw attention to surrealist photographers, who were pioneers in distorted representation and experimental techniques in alternative photographic imagery of the human form, as well as current and contemporary photographers whose images visualise distortion in various forms, focusing mainly on precedent images with traces of defamiliarisation and surrealist notions.

### Distortions by Way of Concealment



Figure 1: Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933



Figure 2: Man Ray, *Anatomies*, 1929

In my research, the first technique I identify, concealment, is a key technique that photographers are observed to use when they approach body distortion. Man Ray was one of the first surrealist photographers to utilise this technique in his various experimentations with the human body. In his artistic oeuvre, Ray's photograph *Minotaure* (1933) (Figure 1) stands out as an unusually thoughtful treatment of lighting and concealment. The photograph reveals a female torso, posed with arms splayed and fading into the black background. It illustrates Ray's ability to create a representation of an otherworldly monstrosity through the manipulative use of lighting to conceal certain components of the body. The photograph sought to challenge the conventional depiction of the minotaur through the use of the human body and anatomical ambiguity, and questions assumptions made in response to the body within the photograph. David Cross (2006) suggests that the photograph provokes intellectual uncertainty, which can be achieved by '...effacing distinctions between imagination and reality' (142). Ray's *Anatomies* (1929) (Figure 2) further exemplifies concealment and obscurity. Ray's photograph displays an illuminated subject in front of a dark background, which serves to emphasise the form and contour to transfigure the representation of the subject. The subject is a female individual with their head tilted back. Through the perspective of the camera, the face is concealed while the jaw outline adopts a representation of a phallus. The reality of the image is again blurred due to the abstract composition presented in the frame. Discussing this photograph in *The Surrealist Look: An Erotics of Encounter* (1999), Mary Ann Caws notes of the ambiguity in the photograph:

This kind of ambiguity, frozen and in movement, is characteristic of Man Ray's fashion. For his numerous studies of the body nude and clothed, masked and androgynous, are at once simple and beautiful, complicated in their crossing, and somehow terrible. His studies of masking are ultimately baroque, in the sense that crossover can easily be: they are irregular, complicated, and revealing. They transgress, like the extraordinary

rendering of Lee Miller's neck. (145)



Figure 3: Brassai, *Nude*, 1931-34



Figure 4: Lee Miller, *Nude Bent Forward*, 1931

Other surrealist photographs that bear similarities to Ray's distortions, as well as provoking distortions of the body through concealment, are Brassai's *Nude Bent Forward* (1931-34) (Figure 3) and Lee Miller's *Nude* (1931) (Figure 4). Brassai's photograph transforms the female body into a near-fetish image, as the body is posed with head and legs concealed from view. According to Foster in *Prosthetic Gods* (2004), this results in a body that appears to 'rest in space as a penile apparition' (226). Miller's *Nude Bent Forward* (1931) also carries surrealist notions of reshaping the body in its transformation. The image also plays with the fetishistic form through a mixture of concealment and posture, where the rear and back of the body is truncated and foreshortened in appearance. Foster (2004) comments that Miller's transgendering of the female body in the photograph is not just the fetishistic object, but also is distinguishable as a body, which places the body between the familiar and the unfamiliar. There are publications that refer to Ray's experimental techniques, bringing together and mapping his creation of distorted imagery. Peggy Schrock's *Man Ray's Le Cadeau* (1996) draws on Ray's visual perceptions and puns produced by anthropomorphising objects, while Wendy Grossman and Steven Manford (2006) offer a technical analysis of Ray's fascination with juxtaposing the female body with an object.

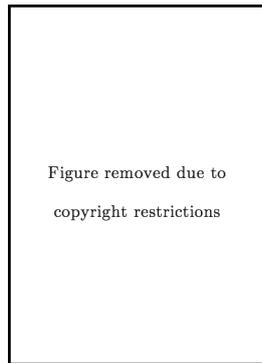
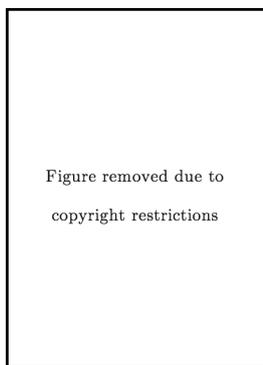


Figure 5: Herb Ritts, *Untitled*,  
n.d.Figure 6: Herb Ritts, *Female Nude* (Detail),  
Hawaii, 1989Figure 7: Herb Ritts, *Curved Torso*,  
*Hollywood*, 1989

Similar to his surrealist precedents, contemporary fashion photographer Herb Ritts regularly deals with shape and form in his photographs of nude bodies. In *Untitled* (n.d.) (Figure 5) Ritts has photographed a model posed in a compressed state, emphasising the crop to frame the head, neck and arms. *Female Nude* (1989) (Figure 6) reveals similarities to Miller's truncated form in *Nude Bent Forward* (1931), highlighting a theme of body form experimentation that extends beyond the frameworks of Surrealism and into contemporary photography. *Curved Torso* (1989) (Figure 7) also presents an examination of body form through posture, but reveals Ritts's experimentation with lighting and shadow to conceal and sever the body. Other experimentations with light and shadow that result in a defamiliarisation of the body can be observed in Tono Stano's *Fairytale Creature* (1995) (Figure 8) and *Bottom* (1994) (Figure 9). In *Fairytale Creature* (1995), a female is standing with her torso bent back at an extreme angle. The camera, positioned in front of the body, captures the standing vertical breasts that form a peak, while the positioning of the arms results in an appearance of dismemberment at the shoulder joint. The light is placed to reveal only the top portion of the body, submerging the remainder into shadows, emphasising the body distorted in form and composed to resemble an unfamiliar shape. On the other hand, another experimental photograph of Stano's, *Bottom* (1994), establishes an interplay with light and shadow to defamiliarise the viewer's perception of body shape and form. The defamiliarisation is initiated by the inverted use of lighting, highlighting the leg joint and the hip, yet submerging the area above the pubic region in shadows.

Figure 8: Tono Stano, *Fairytale Creature*, 1995Figure 9: Tono Stano, *Bottom*, 1994Figure 10: John Coplans, *Self-portrait (Hands)*, 1988

Concealment is also observed to function through the method of cropping and framing. Contemporary photographer John Coplans' photographs contain notions of the distorted body similar to Ray's, Brassai's and Miller's photographs. Coplans' photographs mainly use cropping

as a method of concealment to distort the human body into peculiar forms. Coplans' self-portrait *Hand* (1988) (Figure 10) divides the photographer's hand into two panels. The placement of his cropping manifests an abstraction of the palm and a near-geometric cluster of his fingers. The frame, through photographic cropping, announces that there is a difference between the part of reality cut away and signification. The photograph adapts traits of surrealist imagery, however, cannot be solely defined as such.



Figure 11: Bill Brandt, *Eygalières, France*, 1953



Figure 12: Bill Brandt, *Baie des Anges, France*, 1958



Figure 13: Edward Weston, *Nude*, 1925

Another contemporary photographer, Bill Brandt, uses wide-angled distortions of the body, similarly cropping the frame to conceal and reveal impressions of the body that were previously hidden and unknown. Key photographs that highlight this method of concealment include Brandt's *Eygalières, France* (1953), and *Baie des Anges, France* (1958). The images also utilise wide-angle perspectives to foreshorten the body and offer distorted and non-proportionate sizes of limbs. Brandt's methods of wide-angle perspective and cropping draw a connection with surrealist photographer Edward Weston and his photograph *Nude* (1925) (Figure 13), which contains subtle traits of wide angle perspective to foreshorten the hip on the right and downscale the torso on the left. In each case of Brandt's and Weston's photographs of the body, there is an emphasis on posture to enhance the effect of body distortion. Brandt, Coplans and Weston also exhibit traits of cropping that Krauss refers to in her critical essay *The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism* (1981): 'photographic cropping is always experienced as a rupture in the continuous fabric of reality' (31).



Figure 14: Giron Mathilde, *Chemin de Chair*, 2012-2013



Figure 15: Klaus Kampert, *On Body Forms*, 2011

More recent photographers whose work use cropping to conceal the body include Giron Mathilde's *Chemin de Chair* (2012-2013) (Figure 14) and Klaus Kampert's *On Body Forms* (2011) (Figure 15). Mathilde utilises a form of extreme cropping to render the body into pure abstraction, yet the resulting image, *Chemin de Chair* (2012-2013) does not invoke notions of the unfamiliar in the familiar. On the other hand, Kampert's *On Body Forms* (2011) reveals a nude body bent over and its torso twisted in an extreme manner. The crop is zoomed out to capture the conformation of the body. The head is dipped, revealing an extension of the neck that surges downwards out of the frame. Kampert identifies his own work as exploring body language through his abstracted nudes. Although Kampert's work exhibits traits of visually distorted bodies along the lines of the surrealists, it does not fulfil the criteria of surrealist bodies because, in the body's quest for abstraction and transformation, there is no attempt to invoke a hidden and bizarre feeling within. Kampert (2016) aimed to 'reveal mind and emotion, not only showing the body as such' (para. 6). He further noted his particular use of ballet dancers and their ability to express 'this wholeness in a particular manner' (Kampert 2016, para. 7). These photographs have the potential to open up new approaches to distortion by accessing views of the body usually hidden to the naked eye.

Another method of concealment that is identified utilises objects and materials to facilitate distortions of the body. These are a substantial component in the visual composition of the photograph as well as distorting the body through altered representations. In *The Camera as an Instrument of Persuasion* (1985), Kathleen Collins discusses the symbolic content and the balance between body and object: 'The photographer had available to him most of the subject matter and compositional elements available to any artist, including the use of props or surroundings that relied heavily for their meaning on symbolism' (20). This leads to ideas of

exploring collaborative uses of various material surfaces to assist in the distortion of the body to reveal the unconscious.



Figure 16: Polly Penrose, *Paperwork series*, 2015

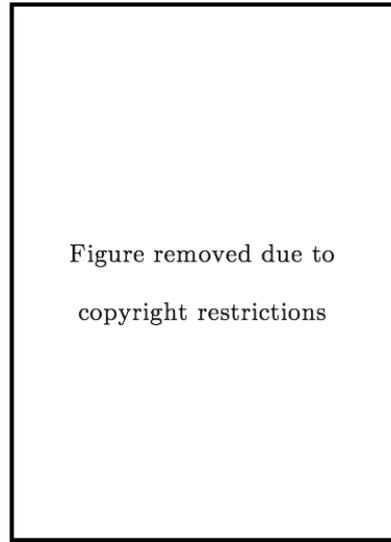


Figure 17: Polly Penrose, *Paperwork series*, 2015

As part of a short exhibition in 2015 showcasing self-portraits, Polly Penrose's *Paperwork series* (2015) highlights the collaboration between a human body and sweeping rolls of paper. Penrose photographs herself adopting various postures such as spreading legs apart and bending the torso (Figure 16) and stretched completely from head to toe (Figure 17). At the same time, the body is overwhelmed and consumed by the paper, concealing various body parts. Meltem Isik's *Twice into the Stream* (2011) similarly uses paper to collaborate with the body to achieve distorted appearances. Isik prints large images of magnified parts of the subject's own body and attempts to replace the portion of the body that it covers. Conversely, the malleable photographic print sought to become an extension of the body as it protrudes out to the left.



Figure 18: Meltem Isik, *Twice into the stream*, 2011

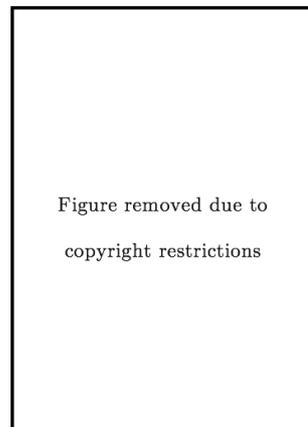


Figure 19: Laura Moore, *Framed series #7*, 2014

On the other hand, Laura Moore's *Framed series #7* (2014) (Figure 19) demonstrates a glass

pane (solid material surface) distorting the impression of the body in the photograph by directly reconfiguring the body's reality. With the bodies housed in a physically constructed glass cubicle, the encased bodies came into contact with the glass surface, which resulted in a flattened and emphasised portion of skin, presenting itself as an unfamiliar substance of the human body.



Figure 20: Bart Hess, *Liquified*, 2012



Figure 21: Erwin Wurm, *59 positions*, 1992

In addition to these images that highlight objects and material surfaces that interact with and support the distortion of the body, Bart Hess's *Liquified* (2012) used a material surface that fused with the body to achieve a distorted appearance (Figure 20). The apparel, which looks glossy, glass-like and slimy, acted as an extension while transforming the shape of the body as the body shifted in movement. Hess described his work as a body that 'appears to melt into a physical reality' (Hess 2017, [page no.]). Erwin Wurm's *59 positions* (1992) (Figure 21) similarly distorts the body by using material, putting clothes on his body subjects, and directing them to distort in various poses.



Figure 22: Xavier Le Roy, *Self Unfinished*, 1998

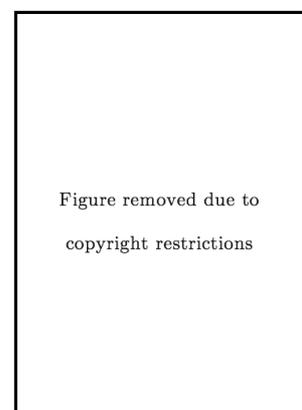


Figure 23: Vadim Stein, *Untitled*, 2011

Xavier Le Roy employs similar strategies to Wurm in his choreographed performance, *Self Unfinished* (1998) (Figure 22), which showcased a dancer whose head and arms were covered by

a stretched black shirt. The dancer navigated the space while covered in a garment, and invited the viewer to consider more than just a series of intriguing poses. Le Roy also offered psychological implications and visual ambiguities, as the body constantly distorted through shifting postures. In contrast to le Roy's performative distorted body, Vadim Stein, in *Untitled* (2011) (Figure 23), presented the distorted body amalgamated with fabric in the style of a fashion photographer.

Investigating the above-mentioned photographers and their images enable a qualitative examination of the variances in methods of concealment, and opens up a discussion of techniques of dealing with the human form that generate images of distorted bodies. Ray's, Brassai's and Miller's photographs reveal a method of posing to conceal. Posture is foregrounded in the work of contemporaries Ritts and Stano, and defamiliarised bodies are also notably formed through the intricate use of lighting and shadow. Surrealist photographers Coplans, Brandt, and Weston, alongside contemporaries Mathilde and Kampert, display a method of cropping and perspective to distort the body. Contemporaries like Penrose, Isik, Hess, and Wurm investigate distortions through the combined use of material and body posture to conceal the familiar.

### **Distortions in the Ephemeral Dimension: The Mirror**

The second technique I identify focuses on a particular and specialised form of the material surface — the mirror. The mirror functions as a reflective material surface. Furthermore, it possesses the unique property of ephemerality which, when photographed, adds a new dimension to the photograph. The mirror is a remarkable tool for distorting and defamiliarising the body. Designer Naomi Asakura and her team (1990) provided a technical analysis of the curious visual effects obtained from mirrors, as well as conducting experiments to demonstrate the potential transformation of forms. Asakura's analysis places the mirror in various positions, such as facing opposite each other, joining the edges at right angles, or bending a curved mirror. Each experiment presents a concise summary of what occurs in the reflection as well as how the reflection occurs. Asakura's analysis, however, is rudimentary and short on an in-depth explanation of how the mirror can affect perceptions of the subject in the mirror. Asakura summarises the superficial characteristics of the mirror:

Mirrors reflect objects and produce visual images. The forms produced by flat mirrors look the same as the reflected objects and constitute their counterparts on the plane. The forms produced by curved mirrors are distorted visual deformations of the objects. The process of making images by mirrors is instantaneous. (Asakura 1990, 73)



Figure 24: Andre Kertész, *Distortion No.49*, 1933

A major surrealist photographer who worked with mirrors was Andre Kertész. In the most literal sense in both title and image, *Distortions* (1933) (Figure 24) uses fun-house wavy mirrors to portray sweeping landscapes of bodily distortions that do not merely fragment the mirror's reflection and refraction but also 'the viewer's radical point of view that seems to be granted the power both to encompass more than humanly possible at a given instant and to dismember the spaces and bodies that it sees.' (Armstrong 1989, 61). Kertész explicitly draws on Freud's theory of the uncanny to explore the frightening and disfigured body, to produce a different kind of aesthetic ideal. In *Seeing the Surrealist Woman* (1991), Mary Ann Caws describes Kertész's works: 'There they are, the surrealist women so shot and painted, so stressed and dismembered, punctured and severed: is it any wonder she has gone to pieces' (11). Kertész's photographic series *Distortions* (1933) exploits the doubling of the mirror, displaying a body fragmented into various parts that hold a considerable distance between the distortion and the real body. It is also noted that the mirror and the double was also an experiment that surrealist photographer Hans Bellmer proposed to approach the realm of the realistic distorted body.

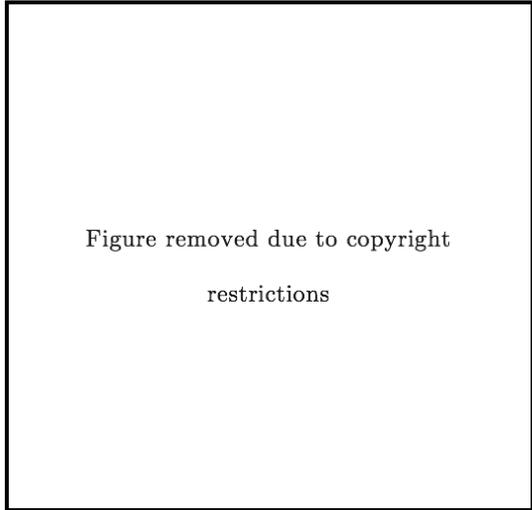


Figure 25: Hans Breder, *Untitled*, from the series "*Body/Sculptures*", 1969-73

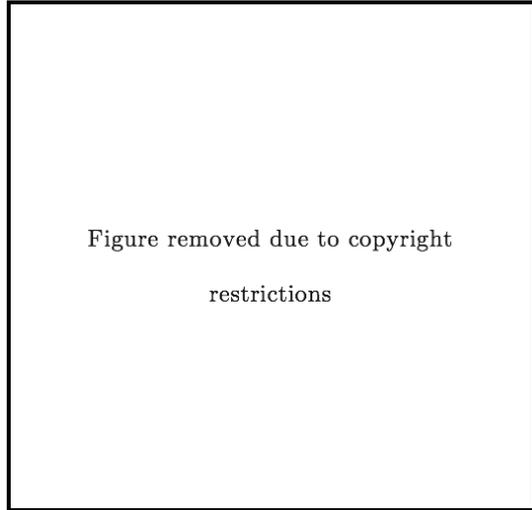


Figure 26: Hans Breder, *Untitled* from *Body/Sculptures* series, 1972

While Kertész photographed reflected wavy distortions of the body, Hans Breder's *Body/Sculptures* (1969-73) utilises the mirror in a more direct approach; he combines both the real and the reflected in the photograph, using flat mirrors (Figure 25). The mirror removes the torso, yet replaces it with a leg, resulting in an image of a body formed from an amalgamation of its parts. *Body/Sculptures* (1969-73) offers dissolution in the boundaries of space, which has the potential effect of disorienting the viewer. Breder also investigates the use of multiple mirrors and bodies to multiply the effect of distorted bodies (Figure 26).



Figure 27: Florence Henri, *Self-portrait*, 1928

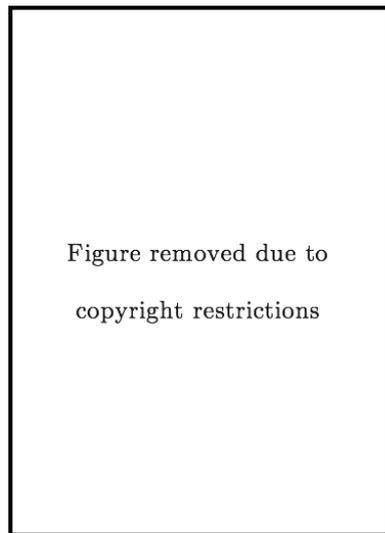


Figure 28: Claude Cahun, *Self-Portrait*, 1928

Apart from Kertész and Breder's documented use of the mirror to investigate distortions of body form, the mirror has been utilised in photography to investigate identity. Given the mirror's ephemeral reflections of reality, observers of the mirror can see versions of themselves

(Conley 2013). Self-portraits by photographer Florence Henri (Figure 27) and Claude Cahun (Figure 28) both examine their own identity with the camera out of frame; identity — the face — is the focal point of the photograph. A fascination with the mirror led Henri to question her identity by juxtaposing masculine and feminine symbols in her *Self-portrait* (1928). For Cahun, an exploration of duality in identity is a constant theme in her photographs with the mirror; this theme also extends into experimentation with shadows, double exposures, and inverted light. Such documented cases of the photographer's use of mirrors represent a phenomenological approach to distortions; they challenge notions of distorted identity, and to a lesser extent, the visual distortions and defamiliarisations that this research is aligned to.



Figure 29: Joan Jonas, *Mirror Piece I*, 1969

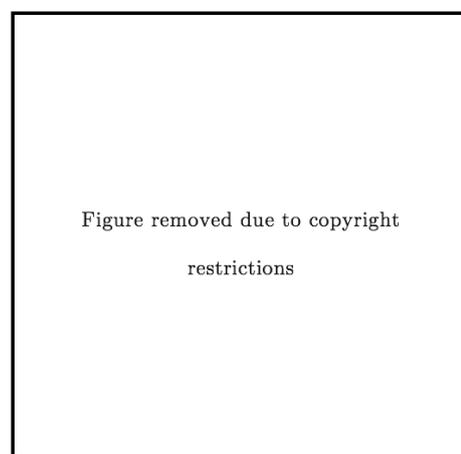


Figure 30: Bohyun Yoon, *Fragmentation*, installation, dimensions variable, live models and mirror, 2003

In line with my research, installation artists and choreographers are also observed to use the mirror as a device in their installations and performances. For them, the mirror is a site of investigation into different perceptions of the body. Performance artist Joan Jonas choreographs a *Mirror Piece I* (1969) in which fifteen performers each hold a flat mirror. In one documented instance of the performance (Figure 29), the mirror is observed to reflect a performer's legs while simultaneously severing the rest of its body from the image. This action of severing and reflection through the mirror also occurs four times in installation artist Bohyun Yoon's *Fragmentation* (2003) (Figure 30), where the mirror is slotted at four equidistant points along a resting male and female body. Both Jonas's and Yoon's use of the mirror hold traces of evoking an uncanny experience in the observation of a fragmented body. Whilst their mediums are not photography, their documented use of the mirror reveals notions of defamiliarisation that manifest in the reflective surface.

Investigation of artists and photographers who adopt the mirror in their work reveals varying

## Introduction

uses of the mirror to distort the body form. Surrealist photographers Kertész, Breder, Henri, and Cahun notably establish a connection with the mirror as a device for exploring fluctuations of form and identity. Their photographs involve, in a sense, a reconstruction of the body, either physiologically or psychologically. On the other hand, Jonas and Yoon use the mirror as a device to sever and fragment the body's form in their choreographed performances, with photography documenting the point of severance and fragmentation. These artists and photographers deal with two types of mirror as a device of distortion —the flat mirror and the mirror in a curved state.

### Distortions through Photographic Manipulation

The third technique I identify is post-production photographic manipulation, which has allowed for a further hands-on approach to distorting the body. My research has an elevated interest in Ray's solarisation experiments and their ability to distort images. The solarisation technique, combined with Ray's close-ups and odd camera angles, reduces the body to an almost fetishistic object (Hug 2003). However, research into Ray's solarisations is scarce, as more attention is paid to other photographic techniques such as his Rayographs.

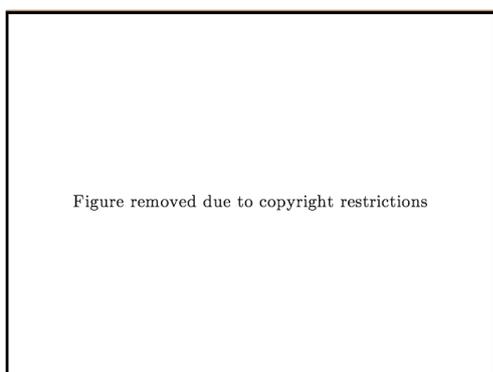


Figure 31: Man Ray, *Primat de la matière sur la pensée*, 1929



Figure 32: Man Ray, *Le Violin d'Ingres*, 1924

Ray's *Primat de la matière sur la pensée* (1929) highlights the effects of solarisation, an alternate darkroom post-processing technique. In Ray's photograph (Figure 31), the technique generates a dark contour along the rim of the body and shadows, as well as inverting the tones of shadows in certain areas. This technique finds the body floating in a state of in-between, separated from the background yet also seemingly merged into the background. While the tones of the photograph are manipulated, the technique also causes the body's appearance and proportions to be slightly altered. The left leg and arm are noticeably thinner than the model's right side, while the inverted shadow at the waist cuts into the body and thins the waist.

While Figure 31 manipulates the tones of the photograph, Ray's *Le Violin d'Ingres* (1924) shows a more direct approach to physically manipulating the form and representation of the body in the photograph. Ray photographed a woman's back with a gourd-shaped contour, and re-represented and transfigured the body of the woman into a violin by painting violin sound-holes onto the image (Figure 32). This reconstructive manipulation is an attempt to objectify the body through transforming the body's representation.

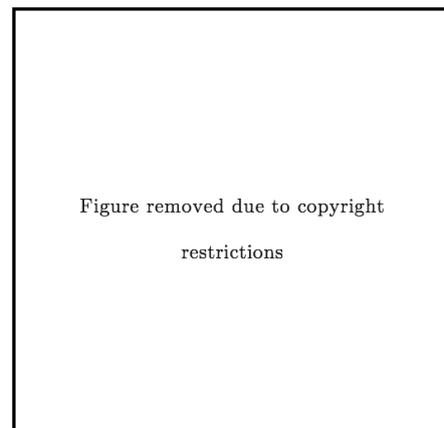


Figure 33: Asger Carlsen, *Hester*, 2012



Figure 34: Natalie Tirant, *i am complete*, 2015

Following the darkroom and analogue methods of manipulation adopted by surrealist photographers in the twentieth century, the emergence of the digital photographic era allowed for more photographs of the body, and for these photographs to be further manipulated and easily distorted to accommodate the photographer's vision. The idea of the artist-photographer playing creator and working to create a new form of body is discussed at length by Nina Hein (2005), who notes that 'the creator can carry out his or her own ideas and fantasies' (112). Working with digital manipulation, Asger Carlsen's series *Hester* (2012) (Figure 33) portrays bodies that are distorted into malformation. In an interview with Miléne Larsson, Carlsen remarked on the ability to have free reign over the photographic medium, noting that his works find the 'balance between fiction and reality to create something so subtle it almost feels real' (Larsson 2011, para.6). Carlsen photographs various body elements from different angles while lighting the scene in a way almost identical to crime scene photography. It is implied in an interview with Ruby Hutson-Gray (2012) that Carlsen uses Adobe Photoshop to merge the body together in post-production. Similar to Carlsen and the pursuit of distorted bodies through manipulative efforts, Natalie Tirant's *i am complete* (2015) (Figure 34) explores ways of critiquing gender and perception of gender roles in society. Her photographic manipulations reveal missing and additional body elements that emphasise the gender ambiguity of the human body. Similar to Carlsen, Tirant approaches distortions of the body as bizarre mutations, inviting comparison to surrealist photographers such as Bellmer and his violent acts of dismemberment and reconstruction of the body. It is noteworthy that although these photographs of bodies are distorted and mutated in post-production, the distorted bodies still contain inherent characteristics which viewers can associate the human form with.

Figure 35: Meltem Isik, *Suspicious Affinities*, 2015Figure 36: Sam Jinks, *Distortions*, 2005

Given the possibilities of manipulating the photograph using digital graphical software, investigation into physical modifications of the body also conjure notions of manipulating familiar body components. In *Suspicious Affinities* (2015) (Figure 35), Meltem Isik photographs close-up crops of the body and reassembles the prints physically into a representation of an unfamiliar form that bears minimal resemblance to a human body. While the form as a whole is inhuman, the qualities of the form are recognisable as human. Isik's reconstruction is similar to Carlsen's distorted bodies, but is approached differently, and is achievable using digital graphical software, similar to Carlsen's and Tirant's experiments. Sam Jinks presents distortions of the body through sculpture in an alternative method of manipulation. In contrast to previous methods of reconstruction, altering or adding components to the body, Jinks' sculpture *Distortions* (2005) (Figure 36) reveals a method of subtraction that is also achievable with a digital photograph. By removing the mouth and pupils from the sculpture, Jinks creates an uncanny face that is unsettlingly realistic. Notions of the uncanny are heightened by the hyperrealism of the sculpture, yet the realism is interrupted by the non-presence of the familiar; the scale, although not observable in the image (Figure 36) is strangely smaller than life-size. Both Isik and Jinks offer an alternative approach to distortions, and while the distortion is not enabled by means of photography, the methods by which the body is distorted can be adapted to photographic manipulation.

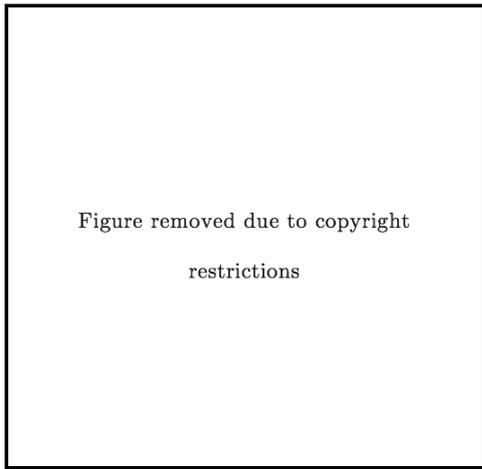


Figure 37: Shinichi Maruyama, *Nude #4*, 2012

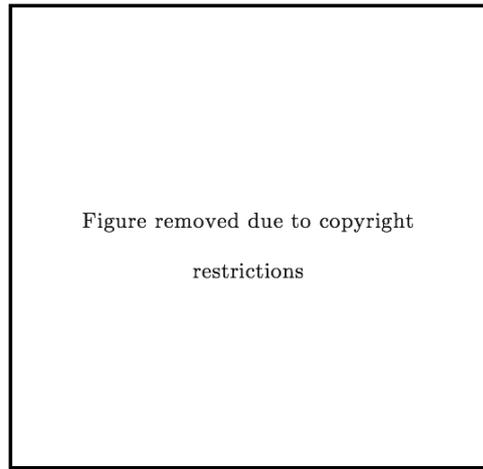


Figure 38: Stephen Ocampo Villegas, *Distortions*, 2015



Figure 39: Frederic Fontenoy, *Métamorphose #17*, 1989

The works of Shinichi Maruyama, Stephen Ocampo Villegas, and Frederic Fontenoy, all hold core values of photography and are presented as photographs of the manipulated human body. What sets these images apart from others dealing with photographic manipulation is their use of or affinity with video or video editing software techniques to achieve their resulting distortions. For Maruyama's *Nude #4* (2012) (Figure 37), although Maruyama refers to using a camera that photographs at 2,000 images per second (Rosenberg 2012), the underlying technology is a slow-motion video camera recording individual stills at 2,000 frames a second. The *Nude* (2012) series is thus formed from compositing each still into one single photograph, resulting in a nude human figure captured in motion; its features are blurred and abstracted. Whilst Villegas's use of his photographic manipulation technique for his *Distortions* (2015) (Figure 38) can be identified as the basic transform, scale, and skew functions in Adobe Photoshop, similarities to the technique can be linked to the video effect Time Displacement in the digital video effects/motion graphics software Adobe After Effects. By stretching and displacing the body at a certain point, the body descends into a channel of unrecognisable flesh, yet the portion that

remains untouched retains a certain amount of familiarity in the image, both from the identification of a face and the blemishes of skin. Time Displacement can also be used to achieve the photographic technique slit-scanning, noted in Fontenoy's *Métamorphose #17* (1989) (Figure 39); however, Fontenoy uses the technique in its traditional sense through photographic means. This observation is confirmed by the background environment in stasis in his images; recreation of the slit-scan technique digitally on a still image will simultaneously displace both the background and the displacing subject. In *Métamorphose #17* (1989), the technique has recorded the moving body as a series of blurs, similar to Maruyama's *Nude #4* (2012), yet more familiarity is evident in the image. Slit-scanning highlights a compelling use of motion image and motion graphics techniques to displace and render the body unfamiliar. Maruyama's, Villegas's and Fontenoy's works demonstrate techniques that adopt a different interpretation of manipulation. As video stems from a sequence of multiple photographic frames played in succession to display motion, manipulation dealing with effects tailored to video and motion editing is thus recognised as an additional approach to distorting, altering and manipulating images of the body.

The digital medium opens up to a plethora of options for manipulating the image, using a wide variety of digital tools, plugins and formulas; thus, manipulation and distortion of the image can be effected in many ways. Given that the manipulation of the photograph does not necessitate taking the photograph itself, I narrow down my scope of artists to those who take the photograph as well as use digital software to visualise and further develop images of distorted bodies that can be linked to the Freudian uncanny. Each investigated photographer deals with digital software in one form or another, demonstrating various methods and techniques available to distort the image. On the other hand, investigation into artists such as Jinks gives a broader scope on how distortion and defamiliarisation can visually exist, and how it can be translated across using digital software in post-production.

## Methodology

My research methodology is primarily practice-based, with the digital photographic demonstrations of distorted bodies forming the main outcome of the research. The written and visual analysis contextualises my practice. The practice and writing components consider two things: they examine the effects of visual distortions on human bodies, and bodies that intrinsically distort *for* the photograph. Notions of the distortions are grounded in actions of defamiliarisation, in which the research explores how body distortions can occur by employing this concept. Defamiliarisation is understood in this thesis as the act of making the human body unfamiliar, and is explored for its ability to alter and distort the reality of the familiar body.

Visual research plays a pivotal role in my research methodology, as it provides a basis for personal analysis and critical reflection. The photographs I produce inform my understanding of visual distortions, how they can be produced, and how distortion can be applied to bodies. My practice also has very specific concerns relating to the nature of the body form and its inherent potential to distort. There is no linear format for investigating the various techniques that can be applied to achieve distortions of the body. Like most creative endeavours that happen with chance encounters, techniques are developed and encountered throughout the course of the research. This is in accordance with Martin Heidegger's notion that art brings forth an understanding of an idea formed through the process of visual creation (Heidegger 2000). These encounters undergo a process of refinement and iteration to further distort and defamiliarise, based on my understanding of distortions.

Furthermore, the research context identifies existing texts that this research builds upon. The combination of distortion and surrealist visual concepts forms the foundation of my research enquiry. Given the photo-centric nature of my research, the research includes a technical analysis of precedent surrealist photographers as well as contemporary photographers whose works continue the legacy and are informed by their surrealist precedents. These technical analyses serve four purposes of the research. The first is to inform and analyse what techniques have already been employed, what is effective and what has proved ineffective in the distortion of the human body. This correlates with the second purpose, which is to reconstruct their photographic technique so as to understand and document the underlying steps taken to produce the distorted body in the photograph. The third is to extract, appropriate and extend these identified techniques where relevant, and apply them in the digital photographic medium. The fourth purpose is a comparative analysis of any similarities between these precedent

techniques and the techniques I come to identify through my own photographic practice. This both informs and reinforces my established techniques as credible methods of distortion that push the body towards the uncanny. By and large, my personal photographic practice and enquiry takes precedent over these technical inquiries into precedent photographic works.

Key practices that are part of my methodology are summarised below.

### **Photography**

The principal means of enquiry and central outcome of my research is a digital photographic practice. Approaches to the distortions of bodies are either captured with still imagery or recorded as moving images within a photographic studio environment. Angle and perspective play a huge role in the outcome of perceived distortions. Filming the body is required when investigating distortions that engage in temporality.

The process of acquiring these images of bodies takes a digital format, for digital processes allow for an immediate assessment of the image, as well as expanding on the possibilities of post-production. Digital formats favour traditional film and darkroom processes, because of the integrated technology and for convenient file archival purposes, especially when documenting the results.

### **Software and Post-Production**

After the photograph has been captured, the image requires processing either to achieve real-life representation of the distortion, or to investigate potential technical means of achieving or furthering the distortion in post-production. Given the experiments are conducted within a studio environment, the camera is tethered to the computer, so the images appear directly on the screen for an immediate assessment. The camera is tethered to Capture One Pro, a RAW processing software that has built-in photo processing capabilities. The software exports the RAW images from the camera to .TIFF to prevent colour and quality loss. Post-production is conducted in the digital graphical software, Adobe Photoshop. File archival management is organised using Adobe Bridge. Screenshots of steps taken in post-production are acquired by using the native Mac application “Grab”.

### **Lighting**

Lighting is a key consideration for my practice, for the photograph would not exist without light. The manipulation of light and its effects of highlighting or generating distortions of the human body requires consideration, and thus a stable and reliable environment is necessary.

While operating in a naturally-lit environment is feasible, variables such as colour temperature and luminance can impact the specificities of the distortion. This variable becomes more critical when dealing with photographs, as described in Chapter 3.3, Post Processing. Photographic production will thus be situated within a studio environment where elaborate lighting techniques can be set up and documented.

### **Writing**

While my photographic practice greatly shapes this research's enquiry, a textual interpretation is a similarly important means to my findings. The nature of the writing methodology is self-reflexive. The information collected from the photographic experiments, including the method and results, will be collated and analysed to filter what techniques and methods drive the human body in the photograph to be distorted. This forms the majority of the written component, which reflects on the project framed as research. The writing is also heavily influenced by, and co-exists with, the production of the practical photographic experiments. Further, the established techniques are supported by contextual research, which situates them among historical and contemporary precedents to further reinforce the relevance of the technique and its efficacy. The writing also serves to identify key methods, refine practice objectives, and provide counter-points.

### **Photographic Experiments**

Each photographic experiment is documented through photography and subsequently collated into a set of photographic experiments located at the end of each subchapter. This is the artefact of my research, which demonstrates the various approaches to distorted bodies that my research undertakes, and is a compilation of my practice-based thought which I can consult and re-evaluate on a regular basis (Gray and Malins 2004). The practical experiments also serves to record my tentative answers to the research questions I have raised. The documentation through the chosen lens enables the visualisation of distorted bodies.

The set of photographic experiments documents the process of conceptualisation/inspiration, method/approach, setup of the frame and lighting, relevant post-production steps, results, and critical and theoretical reflection. The documentation takes note of equipment and lighting used, together with a rationale behind its usage.

In certain photographic experiments, a precedent work is noted as the source of inspiration or continuation. The precedent works are primarily comparable photographers' works, or previous

experiments conducted for this research. These precedents, at times, persist as a repeated source of inspiration for subsequent experiments, as new experiments attempt to apply a different method to achieve a similar or new aim. When there is a new insight into the process of distortion, experiments at times revisit and re-evaluate these precedent works to attempt to understand, develop and advance the method for distorting the body. This new method, alongside new adjustments in model posture, new lighting setup, new composition, or tweaks in post-production settings, contribute to the structured documentation of the subsequent experiment.

Insights gained from the results of an experiment formulate the documented reflection at the end of the experiment. These reflections critically analyse the results, and whether the results fulfil the distortion and defamiliarisation criteria outlined for this research. The technical considerations, such as: the body's posture; how the scene was lit; the perspective of the camera; and the compositional elements of objects or materials, are also reflected on, to determine whether they contribute to or counteract the distortion of the body. Based on the results and the critical analysis, the reflection will develop suggestions and new hypotheses for subsequent or future experiments.

### **Selection of Models**

As a young Chinese woman of colour, I work exclusively with Chinese male and female bodies as they mirror my own body. The research acknowledges precedent historical, socio-cultural and political theories and enquiries surrounding the body; however, this research focuses on approaching bodies from an artistic and photographic perspective. The nature of this research is practice-based, and observant of techniques that defamiliarise, making the body familiar yet unfamiliar. In a sense, finding these similarities in my models are a form of self-reflection. There is a certain type of familiarity and tension when photographing Chinese models with bodies that resemble my own — in shape, size, structure, age and skin tone. These are body features that I am most familiar with and therefore this familiarity poses a particular challenge in defamiliarising the body through digital photography. The selection of these bodies responds to my cultural history, experience and understanding of the human body. As a female photographer, I am aware of the overtly sexualised gaze that motivates the objectification of the male and female Asian body in photography.

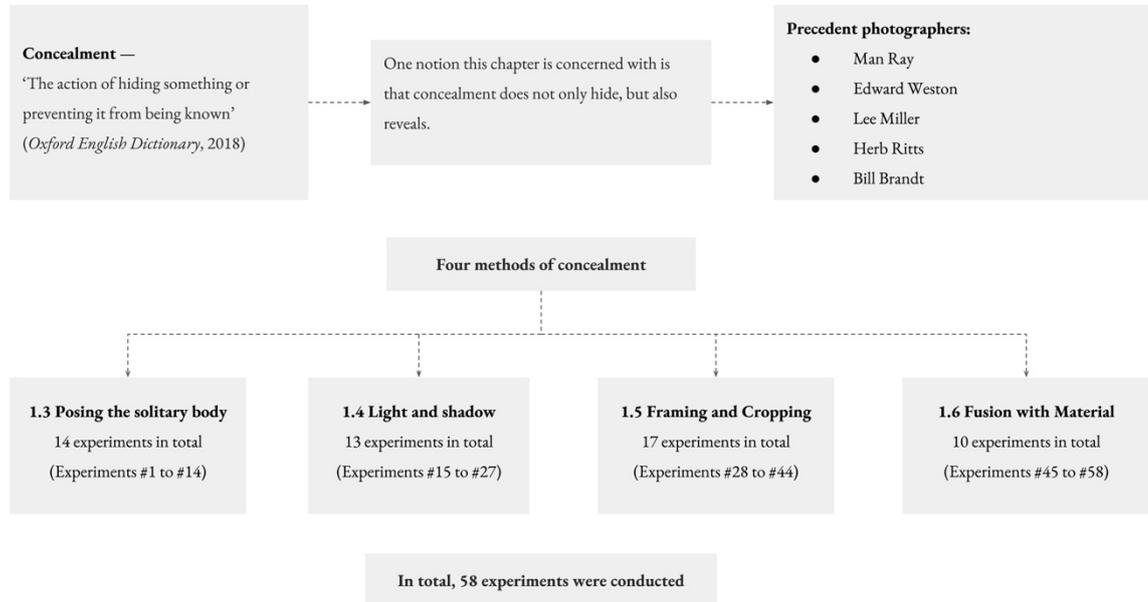
There are also no criteria for the model's physical attributes that reveal identity, i.e. gender, face, head, genitalia, body modifications and other identifiable traits, as my photographs intend

## Introduction

to conceal these factors in the process of defamiliarisation. Whilst the bodies selected for the photographic experiments fall into these criteria, it is the endeavour of this research to defamiliarise the familiar Asian human body through digital photographic techniques and transcend gender, race and identity. For this reason, the aforementioned physical attributes are always absent or obscured in the photograph. Transcending gender, race and identity represents an abstract ideal that facilitates the defamiliarisation process. Assessing the body's ability to transcend its limitations of familiarity and rise into an uncanny state requires these considerations.

# Chapter 1: Distortions by Way of Concealment

## 1.1 Chapter Overview



## 1.2 Introduction

The notion of concealment is paradoxical. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2017) defines concealment as ‘the action of hiding something or preventing it from being known.’ While the visual cues of a subject that is concealed become limited, the concealment invites consideration, not of what it seeks to hide, but of what it doesn’t, what is revealed as a result of the concealment. Revelation in this interpretation of concealment is further embedded in studies of what defines Freud’s ‘uncanny’; thus, concealment is a suitable point on which to begin establishing distortions. The revelation of the concealed is one variable Freud (1919) considers for the invocation of the uncanny: ‘It may be true that the uncanny is nothing else than a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it, and that everything that is uncanny fulfils this condition’ (245). This is established upon the paradox in the semantics of *uncanny*, which can be interpreted as both unfamiliar and concealed, and familiar and revealed.

This chapter takes its cue from this paradoxical point, where concealment is considered for its manifestation of ambiguity and the unfamiliar in the familiar human bodies. To support concealment as a viable technique in defamiliarising the human body, this chapter will draw

upon notions of identity and perceptions of familiarity, and how subjecting these to defamiliarisation can lead to reshaping and subsequently distorting the human body form for the photograph. Furthermore, the fundamental idea of concealment in producing distortions for the camera would not exist without reference to the surrealist photographers and their experimental methods of concealing and obscuring in portraying their unconscious desires. Therefore, a technical analysis of photographic works by surrealist photographers Man Ray, Lee Miller, Edward Weston, and Bill Brandt, among others, is conducted to support the understanding of how concealment achieves visual distortions. Examining these precedent photographers reveals that their approach to the human body at times results in indeterminate and unfamiliar forms, deriving from a certain belief that underlying hidden forms exist.

Here, I will elaborate on four methods that approach the paradox of concealment in manifesting distortions of the human body for the camera:

Subchapter 1.3 — Posing the Solitary Body explores the limitations and aesthetics of the singular body and its inherent potential to distort its own representation through posture. Three out of 14 experiments conducted for this section are selected to highlight how body shifts and particular positions operate in concealing anatomical features, and the subsequent manifestation of non-conformative body forms.

Subchapter 1.4 — Light and Shadow highlights the manipulation of lighting in concealing and the function of shadow in revealing distortions of body forms. 13 experiments are presented to demonstrate how defamiliarised bodies emerge from the shadows with the assistance of posture. Seven experiments are grouped to demonstrate how a controlled, single light source can unambiguously affect the reality of the body.

Subchapter 1.5 — Framing and Cropping investigates the potential of the frame as a means to visibly abstract the body through the inclusion and exclusion of anatomies within the frame. This method invites consideration of cropping as a separate yet intrinsic method of framing that achieves similar functionality in the distortion and defamiliarisation of the body for the camera. From the 17 experiments conducted, eight will be focused on to analyse how body localisation in relation to the frame renders the body into a form of abstraction.

Subchapter 1.6 — Fusion with Materials introduces an external element to facilitate the concealment of the body and its subsequent manifestation of a body form that comprises the body and material as a single entity. The material of focus is paper, chosen for its innate ability

to flex and remain in a rigid state. Five of 14 experiments are discussed to elaborate on the conceptual possibilities of transforming human body representation with the inclusion of such a transformational device.

### 1.3 Posing the Solitary Body

Before considering external factors as an auxiliary method to photographic distortion, it is appropriate to investigate the inherent potential of the human body to distort its own representation. For this section, the body's familiar and identifiable characteristics are scrutinised. Experiments concerning the flexibility of posture are emphasised, in consideration of its capacity to metamorphose the human body into distorted forms that are incomprehensible to its original, familiar state. A crucial method of posing that presents itself in this section is *contortion*. A contortion, in the context of the human body, is governed by the action of twisting or bending unnaturally into a different form or shape (Cambridge, 2018) and is a recurring action that is investigated throughout this section as a type of posing technique that enables distorted and defamiliarised bodies to emerge.



40(a)



40(b)

Figure 40: Lin Wei, Experiment 3: Symmetrical forms on the plinth, 2015

Figure 40<sup>1</sup> is an initial experiment that demonstrates a human body posing, using methods of contortion. Here, focus is placed on the singular body and how different shifts in body posture affect the way the body is presented in the photograph. The studio arrangement of this experiment centres the body as the main aspect of the photograph. The body is situated in front of a black background that is slightly illuminated by the soft kick-lighting above the model. The face is concealed in consideration that facial recognition is one of the key elements in identifying an individual (Burton, Jenkins, and Schweinberger, 2011). In Figure 40a, contortion is

---

<sup>1</sup> Experiment 3. Please refer to 1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Posing the Solitary Body

demonstrated through the gnarled and tense posture of the body: it is squatting on a plinth with feet and hands clasped together; the body is balancing on the balls of its feet, the knees are spread outwards and the head is lowered to feet-level. On the other hand, Figure 40b reveals the sitter kneeling with torso bent forward, such that the head is resting on the plinth, rendering the back visible to the camera. Hands are observed to be resting on the hip, while the elbows are locked and sticking out to the side. In both cases, hair is visible and flowing down onto the plinth. The bodies are bizarrely symmetrical and posing in unconventional and grotesque conformations, showing visual distortion by metamorphosis of form and familiar reality.

An assessment of Figure 40 finds that despite the bodies contorting and concealing the identifiable face, the defamiliarisation of the familiar human can be further heightened with the consideration of the perceptively familiar body components. Anne Hoffman (2009) identifies that ‘heads, body parts, contours, and surfaces — provided both the instrument and the material for projects that measured and documented the body’ (12). Observation of the body in Figure 1 reveals that hair is also a characteristic that can aid in the documentation of the body, as well as an authenticator of identity. The bodies express a human-like nature and appearance; a strong sense of familiarity remains in the image, as the sitter’s hands, head and hair are identifiable in the image. The postures are forced and rigid. Psychological perceptions of the body in the photograph are influenced when the body is presented in such postures, where limbs and identity are frenetic and liberated from constraints. This runs counter to notions of the Freudian uncanny, or of the unsettling familiarity of an object. One major factor that conveys the uncanny sensation is the necessary condition of *repression*. For Freud (1919), the uncanny is ‘nothing else than a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it, and ... everything that is uncanny fulfils this condition’ (245). Furthermore, one’s experience of the uncanny is such that one must come to terms with, and accept, the frightening aspect of the past (Freud 1919). Thus, for the body to be truly uncanny, it requires not just the rise of the repressed, but there needs to be a stimulant for reconciliation. Although the logical basis of repression and reconciliation are psychological concepts, visual applications of these concepts can be attained through a more focused and concentrated use of contortion.



Figure 41: Lin Wei, Experiment 7: Compressing the shape and posture of flexible body, 2015

Figure 41<sup>2</sup> pushes the process of defamiliarisation further by driving the physical flexibility and capacity of the body to further extremes. Factoring in the notion of a visual *repression*, the body is posed in a compressed and tight state, isolating familiar components of the body from the photograph. In *Experiment 7*, the sitter is upside down, resting on their shoulders, with thighs dangling to the left of the frame. The calves, feet and hands are concealed behind the plinth and body. The head is also removed from the photograph when tucked behind the shoulder joint. The back is positioned to face the camera to prevent frontal exposure of the genitals in the photograph. Posing the body as such highlights the concealment of familiar attributes in determining unfamiliar states of the human body. Furthermore, the concealment of identifiable features aligns with Freud's writings on the visuals of World War I. As with Breton, Freud was situated in and influenced by the war. He flags several visual attributes that can progressively create an uncanny human body: 'dismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist, feet which dance by themselves — all these have something peculiarly uncanny about them' (Freud 1919, 244). By way of dismemberment, *Experiment 7* eliminates the familiar and identifiable characteristics of the body through specific contorting poses, in order to conceal and transcend the human beyond the limits of the organic body. The familiar becomes repressed, while the unfamiliar arises within the photographic image. Although this experiment finds that the removal of components of familiarity through posing is a significant process in the defamiliarisation and distortion of the human body, the act of posing can also rearrange the components of the body such that the body as a whole is rendered into an unrecognisable state.

---

<sup>2</sup> Experiment 7. Please refer to 1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Posing the Solitary Body

Perceptual psychologist Rudolf Arnheim (1983) elaborates that a problem of photographers, and artists overall is, 'how to organise a multiplicity of dynamic vectors in a coherently functioning whole' (322). Posture proves to be one solution to this problem of the natural human body.

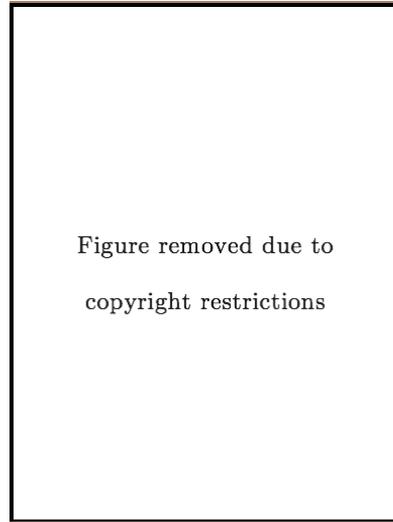


Figure 42: Man Ray, *Anatomies*, 1929

Arnheim's conjecture can apply to Man Ray's photograph, *Anatomies* (1929) (Figure 42). A technical analysis of *Anatomies* (1929) finds anatomical ambiguity as a posing strategy to reorganise the natural body and create distorted representations. The photograph depicts a close-up of the upper torso of a female figure whose body faces the camera front on, while her head is thrown back, approaching perpendicularity. The jawline, throat and clavicle are clean and unadorned, as the sitter's hair and facial features are not visible within the photograph. The outline and shape of the body is defined by the stark contrast between the white subject and the black background, presenting an abstract composition of the body that is disconcerting. Thus, the reality and identity of the body becomes questionable. This particular method of posing the body is intentional, according to Ray's own account (1934) of his photographic experimentations; he suggests that 'the artist deforms the subject as almost to hide the identity of the original, and creates a new form' (n.p.). In a similar vein, art historian and critic James Elkins (1999) argues that the metamorphosis of the body can be considered a new approach to body forms and representation, and that the physical transformation of the body was a potential avenue to explore.

Through Ray's concealment of identity and certain identifiable features, the image of the body has become defamiliarised from its normative bodily function and distorted in representation. The uncanny presences itself in *Anatomies* (1929) with the transformation from a neck to a representation of the phallus. In an assessment on how surrealist photographers reshape the

female body into a fetishistic form, Hal Foster (2004) refers to *Anatomies* (1929) as an example of an anamorphic apparition that is ‘nothing but head and neck, which are elongated by pose and angle to form another kind of phallic figure’ (239). What used to be a neck, hidden and protected, is now both vulnerable and invasive. Ray exploits visual perception by obscuring particular body elements to reveal a form unconnected to its biological appearance. Yet there is a retention of a strange familiarity with the presence of the repressed form of the phallic object. The concealment of identity operates in tandem with the metamorphic ability of posing to generate visual distortions of body form. In fact, the collaboration between the two is a key requirement in the reorganisation of familiarity and the conjuring of the uncanny in the photograph.

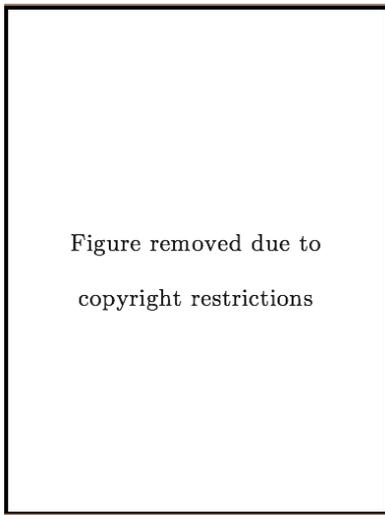


Figure 43: Lee Miller, *Nude Bent Forward*, 1931

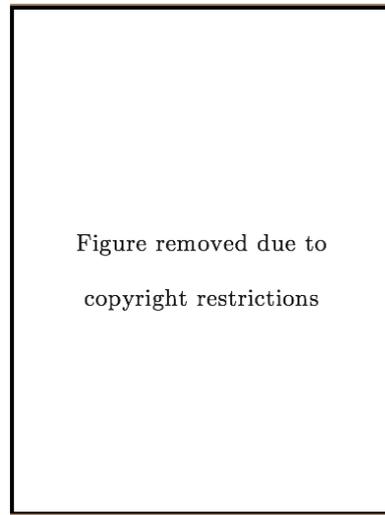


Figure 44: Herb Ritts, *Female Nude (Detail)*, Hawaii, 1989

A preceding work that uses concealment to effect bodily metamorphosis is Lee Miller’s photograph, *Nude Bent Forward* (1931) (Figure 43). In addition to the posture considerations, *Nude Bent Forward* (1931) places equal importance on camera perspective and lighting to realise the distortion — the top-down lighting and camera placement renders the human form almost completely as an abstract form. Here, the body is bent forward so that only the back and buttocks are visible, as opposed to the visible clavicle region and inclined neck in Ray’s *Anatomies* (1929). Compared to *Anatomies* (1929), Miller begins her distortion by taking the photograph from a higher camera angle, using presumably a wide-angle lens to foreshorten and bloat the gluteal region, whilst slimming the upper body at the rear. The legs, limbs and head are concealed from view, either tucked into the body or extending out of the frame. The more contemporary photograph by Herb Ritts, *Female Nude (Detail)* (1989) (Figure 44) is strikingly

similar to Miller's, yet there is noticeably a slight difference in the posture of the back. For Ritts, the body's back arches inwards, while the body in *Nude Bent Forward* (1931) stretches backwards in its bending state. This posture creates a varying result — the back is more bulbous and less triangulated. Furthermore, the technological advances of the photographic medium allowed Ritts to document the skin with more clarity than his surrealist counterpart, aligning the familiar further in his photograph of the body.

As for *Nude Bent Forward* (1931), the dramatic lighting achieves four effects: the muscles are illuminated and add depth to the body; the body is truncated; the outline of the body form becomes clear, and this in turn transforms the body, so that it resembles a penile apparition. Foster describes the transgendering of Miller's body as having broken the boundaries of the body and blurred its distinctions, revealing not only the body as fetishistic object, but also the distinction of it as both body and object (Foster 2004). A contrasting notion by Amy Lyford (1997) suggests that *Nude Bent Forward* (1931) presents a type of revolt against surrealism's strategies of objectification. In her analysis of masculinity's influence on particular applications of dismemberment of the body in surrealism, Lyford (1997) suggests that Miller's photograph offers less to the surrealist fetish than did most surrealist photographs of the body, which she attributed to the photograph's lack of spatial location. The viewer is then confronted with a series of questions that cannot be immediately resolved. In retrospect, the body in *Nude Bent Forward* (1931) is not only distorted in appearance, but it is also transcendental. Only when the body form is tightly repressed will feelings of ambiguity and uncertainty arise in the unconscious of the viewer. This notion is translated through the process of defamiliarisation in posing, which enables the conjuring of a human body that is both visually distorted and simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar.



Figure 45: Lin Wei, Experiment 10: Posing the male and female body into tightly repressed forms against pastel-coloured backgrounds, 2015

Based on this conjecture of repression, a method of compressed posture is applied to the bodies in the experiment shown in Figure 45.<sup>3</sup> The experiment demonstrates, quantitatively, the possibilities of such a method in exhibiting distorted forms of bodies. The experiment furthermore highlights the body's inherent potential to obscure and conceal itself through posture, distorting itself into a form that is far removed from its original appearance. In addition to lighting and perspective concerns, as previously outlined, *Experiment 10* situates each body in the process of distortion through a close collaboration with the model to conceal various body parts and generate peculiar arrangements of the human figure that are only visible from the camera's perspective. In Figure 45, eight photographs from the experiment demonstrate a reduction in the body's sense of familiarity, while a heightened sense of peculiarity is established within the photographs. In addition to posing in a compressed state, the muscles are flexing to similarly contract as well as emphasise the body's musculature and humanness. The angle of the

<sup>3</sup> Experiment 10. Please refer to 1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Posing the Solitary Body

body in relation to the lens is also key to showing the shape of the distorted body from a different perspective. This motion of contorting further limits the expressive capabilities of the body. The body becomes without context and is removed from any narrative overtones as they are sitting in isolation. The photograph's focus is withdrawn from the sitter's identifiable traits, identity or genitalia, with the intention of making the body ambiguous. In each case, the bodies are tight and compressed, yet are voluminous and exude organic and fleshly vitality. This paradoxical state, in which the bodies emanate impressions of indeterminacy, creates doubt as to whether the bodies, as objects, are of human or sculptural quality. *Experiment 10* demonstrates that selective removal of characteristics and identifiable features, along with the elimination of the narrative, serves to disrupt any sense of relationship and familiarity that the viewer would otherwise have with the figure. It is a major step in seeing the figure not just as a body, but as pure form. In a sense, the body undergoes a metamorphosis in the face of the lens.



Figure 46: Lighting setup for *Experiment 10*



Figure 47.:Lin Wei, Photo from *Experiment 10*

Figure 46 is the lighting setup used for *Experiment 10*. Two light sources were used to facilitate the distortion of bodily form. The key light, a medium-sized beauty dish, is on camera left, placed approximately 1.5 metres away, and is slightly above plinth-level. The beauty dish assists in defining contours of the body, due to its rapid light fall-off, and generates glowing sheens of highlights that emphasise the texture of skin (Shaw, 2008). A large 1.5-metre octabank softbox, with its front diffusing panel removed,<sup>4</sup> is placed behind the body on camera right, serving as the rim light. It is placed approximately 1.5 metres away, and two metres above plinth-level. Figure 47 demonstrates how this light creates a rim of highlight that emphasises the

<sup>4</sup> A large softbox has two layers of diffusion panels: one at the front end of the softbox and another at the midpoint between the front diffusing panel and the light. In this case, only the front panel is removed, leaving just the mid diffusing panel attached. This modification produces a soft light similar to a smaller soft box but is more directional.

musculature as well as gives depth to the form. This contrasts with the key light, creating a lighting environment that offers soft yet harsh lighting to illuminate both matte and shiny textured skin. As the sole focus of *Experiment 10* is the body itself, the sitters are laid bare on a white, unadorned square plinth. The plinth assists the photographs to achieve a sculptural outcome, as it functions to elevate the body towards a higher status; a realm that exists beyond the reality of the familiar human body. In an essay on Henri Matisse's sculptures, curator Oliver Shell (2007) notes that the sculptural plinth is an announcement of sorts; it signifies that something worthy and monumental is to be observed. Shell (2007) further assesses that the plinth establishes the notion of an artistic space with rarefied visual material, rather than the ordinariness of a 'space occupied with things' (64). Pastel-coloured backgrounds are also applied to further translate emotion and abstraction in the photographs. Piet Mondrian once spoke of the importance of incorporating colour and what it represented, mentioning that a colour precedent needs to be set when representing forms (Holtzman and James 1993). Mondrian regarded his subject matter as having been neutralised by a free expression of colour. A connection can be drawn to the use of pastel colours as a means of neutralising the strange body form. The use of pastel colours, which are mellow and slightly neutral, calm and void of intense tones, subdues the immediate anxious desire to reconcile with the distorted body. The body's skin tone allows the human to synthesise with the background, resulting in the distortion having a reduced effect on the audience, and creating an environment that beguilingly introduces the audience to the strangely familiar body.



Figure 48: Lin Wei, *Experiment 10: Posing the male and female body into tightly repressed forms against pastel-coloured backgrounds*, 2015

The photographs produced for *Experiment 10* establish three methods in which posture distorts and interferes with the recognition and familiarity of the body. The first consists of placing any body part that creates a sense of familiarity — whether the sitter’s face, genitalia that expose gender, hands and feet, or a combination of all — behind another body part. This affects the viewer’s ability to recognise and render the body as a whole; the body hovers between a state of the familiar and strange. In the case of Figure 48(b), the body is posing upside-down on the plinth in such a way that the torso begins to resemble the lower body, the arms resembling the legs and vice versa. For Figure 48(b), the bodily form bears a striking resemblance to the posed body in Figure 48(a), which hides all limbs behind the torso with its back facing the camera. Figure 48(g) poses the body similarly to Figure 48(a) yet presents a variation to the body’s form, demonstrating how minute adjustments to the concealment process can affect a varying visual interpretation of form. A closer look at Figure 48(d) finds the body facing perpendicular to the camera. Its legs, torso and shoulders are all positioned in a fanning effect, while the head is tucked behind the knees. In Figure 48(h), the head is omitted, while both arms and half of the

right leg are hidden behind the left leg. The bodies in Figure 48(c) and Figure 48(e) are photographed with concealed heads, and assume postures that bely the conventional limitations of the body. The incomplete body alludes to there being more to see, but it is up to the viewer to complete the narrative.

The second method uses posture to alter the shape and positioning of a body part. This alters the body element to resemble another body part, and can also create an uncanny impression that detracts the human from the body. Furthermore, this second method works in tandem with the first method. Figure 48(f) demonstrates this second method by providing a contrasting interpretation to Figure 48(a), revealing legs and metamorphosing the body to generate an uncanny representation of an avian. In a similar vein, Figure 48(h) conceals all familiar characteristics through compressed posing and contracting muscles to manifest an impression of a clenched fist. Figure 48(b), in particular, introduces an ambiguity to the photograph — the sitter is posed upside down, with his or her back towards the camera, ‘standing’ on the shoulders, buttocks raised in the air, with legs both hidden and pointing away from the camera. Distorted representation of the body is formed when such ambiguity and perplexity emerge that the buttocks gain a likeness to shoulders.

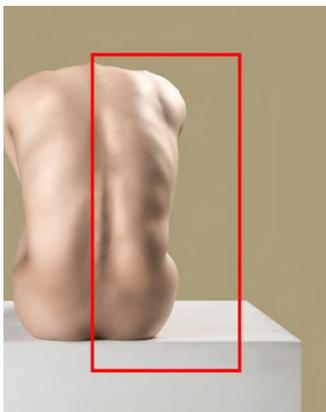


Figure 49: Lin Wei, Close up of photo from *Experiment 10*

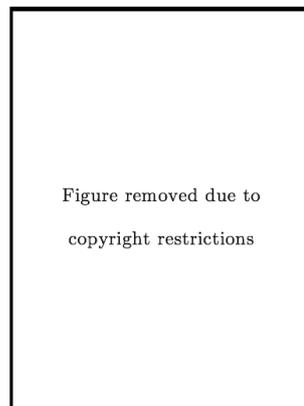


Figure 50: Edward Weston, *Nude*, 1925

The third method of posture is through the contraction of muscles, or flexing. Figure 49 demonstrates, in particular, how the body’s capacity to compress inwards and flex aids in facilitating the body’s distorting efforts. In the photograph, the head, arms, hands, legs, and feet are tucked behind the body. The only thing that remains visible is the back, which is full of muscle and the occasionally visible bone structure. The lighting further highlights the body’s muscle and form, which can imply a form of hidden strength or even movement associated with the body form. A precedent example that similarly demonstrates the third method is observed

in one photograph from Edward Weston's study of the abstract nude body, *Nude* (1925) (Figure 50). While Weston departed from surrealist notions and shifted attention to the aesthetic form of the body in his study of the abstract nude (Conger 2005), he had a vested interest in emphasising the individual characteristics of the female body. A closer examination of *Nude* (1925) finds that the camera is on the same plane as the body, which is lying on the ground, knees raised and back arched slightly. A distinctive feature that isolates this image as a precedent example to the third method is how the arching posture renders the body's ribcage visible and seemingly replaces the location of the breasts. The body is either drawing in the stomach for the image, or the torso is arched to its limits, or a combination of both. A narrower waist is fabricated, and the skeletal structure of the model is emphasised. A rim light is used to further emphasise the contour of the body and accentuate the bones. Weston's *Nude* (1925) proves how the technique of contracting and flexing not only emphasises the muscle but also exposes a unique representation of the body that is non-existent in its original state. It opens up investigation into unfound forms that do not conform with normative perceptions.

The following section details the 14 experiments conducted for this subchapter. The experiments follow a structure of examining the basics of body posture, the effects of various physical body attributes, and additional compositional elements, before scrutinising, re-evaluating, and repositioning body components. Furthermore, experiments with video are conducted at the end to realise the results and the metamorphosing process of the photographed distorted body in motion.

**1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Posing the Solitary Body**

Experiment 1: The singular body posed against a white cloth background

Experiment 2: Posing the model (Lisa) into compressed forms on a plinth

Experiment 3: Symmetrical forms on the plinth

Experiment 4: Examination of skin texture and effects of a coloured background

Experiment 5: Posing the singular body on a narrow plinth

Experiment 6: Posing a flexible body (yoga-practitioner)

Experiment 7: Compressing the shape and posture of flexible body

Experiment 8: Posing two bodies in the photograph

Experiment 9: Posing three bodies in the photograph

Experiment 10: Posing male and female body into tightly repressed forms against pastel coloured backgrounds

Experiment 11: Slow-motion video capturing dynamism of movement when the body shifts in posture

Experiment 12: Still-motion video capturing dynamism of movement when the body shifts in posture

Experiment 13: Slow-motion video capturing dynamism of movement when the body shifts in posture within void black space

Experiment 14: Floating the motion captured posed body

## Experiment 1: The singular body posed against a white cloth background

---

### Aim:

This experiment examines the movement of the body and the forms and shapes it can produce by utilising all components of the body. This experiment will focus solely on the body itself with the intention to assist in understanding the limitations and flexibility of the human body.

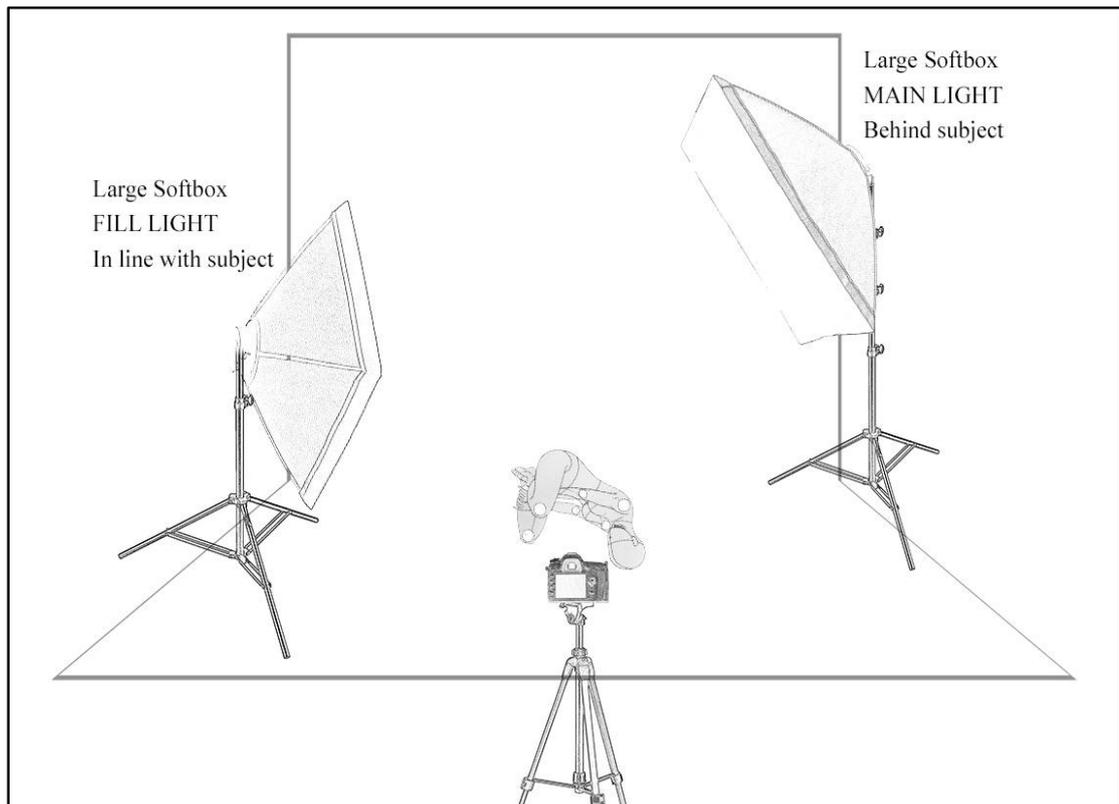
### Precedent:

-

### Method:

The body will be photographed against a white, unadorned cloth background, relying inherently on the body without the assistance of external elements. The face and sexual organs will be hidden from view in an attempt to reduce the familiarity of the body.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

Shutter speed: 1/100

Aperture: f/22

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox modifier, above and slightly behind the subject.

Fill light: Large softbox modifier, camera left, on the left of subject, to fill in shadows cast by the main light. Fill light is a  $\frac{1}{4}$  stop darker than the main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

As an initial experiment into the body and its posing, the sitter is moving into different forms and poses in an attempt to create strange imagery. An attempt was made to remove the head and sexual organs from the image. Crouching down appears to conceal the genitalia; an attempt was made to conceal the head by moving the arm in front of it, and tilting the head down conceals the face. The pose, however, places a strong emphasis on the hands. The posture is a bit stiff and unnatural as if it was forced. The attention turns to the hands and the gestures they make. The hands appear to be quite expressive and emotive. In addition to this, there appears to be no sense of distortion along the notions of a deformation or a misleading representation of the body. It is still evidently a human body, albeit contorted into a strange pose.

Furthermore, although the background is initially planned to remove any distractions from the form of the body, the employed white muslin backdrop is in itself a distracting element in the image, and can distract the viewer's attention from the body. The next experiment will make the background cleaner, or remove it entirely. In addition to this, expressive postures will be dulled down in consideration of the 'repressive' factor inherent in the manifestation of the uncanny. I may consider placing the body on a plinth to perhaps make the setting appear more natural and potentially align the body as sculptural-like.

Lastly, lighting with two softboxes makes the body appear flat with no contrast. I will examine how the body appears lit when using one softbox in the next experiment.

## Experiment 2: Posing the model into compressed forms on a plinth

---

### Aim:

This experiment aims to further explore the limitation of the human body and achieve a strange form that cannot be seen in everyday life. This experiment explores the model's contorting ability to create an unfamiliar scene in front of the camera. A female dancer will be used in the experiment.

This experiment draws on Man Ray's *Three nudes* (1919/1955), which reduces the human figure into geometrical shapes. This experiment also takes contrapposto<sup>5</sup> into consideration.

### Precedent:



Man Ray, *Three nudes* [Preconception of Violetta], 1919/1955

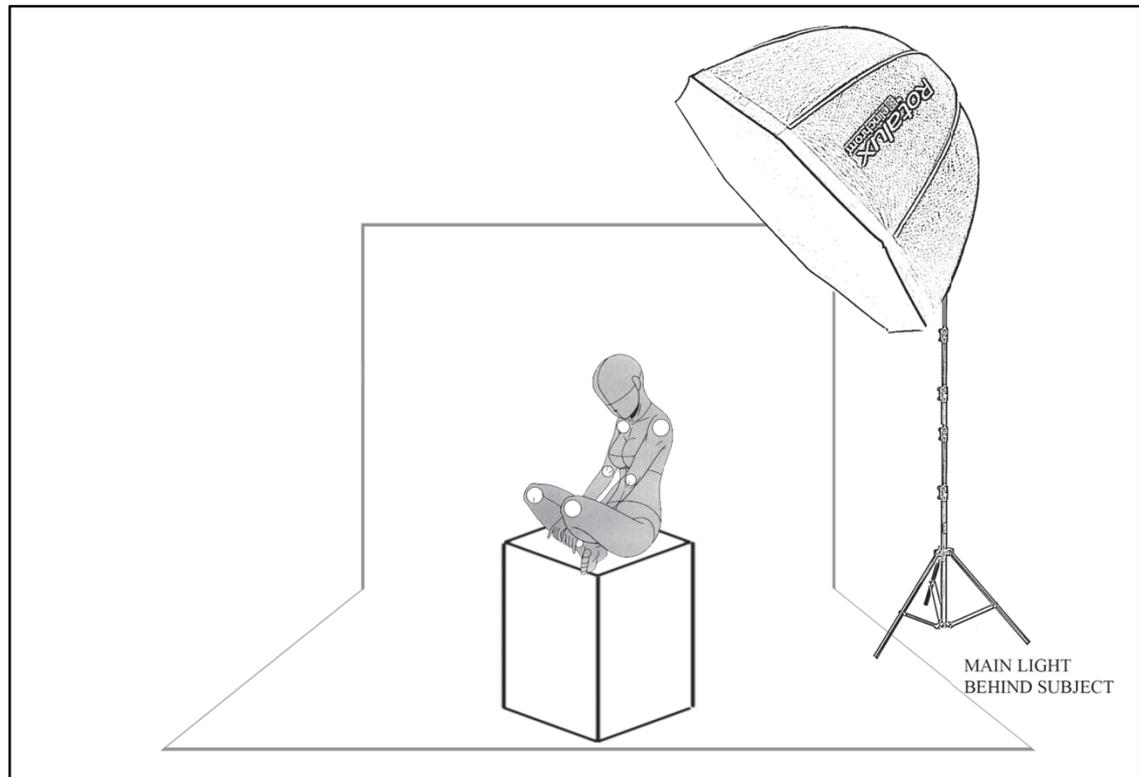
### Method:

Hide identifiable body parts in an attempt to reduce the familiarity of the body. Rely inherently on the body rather than rely on external elements, e.g. shadows, to conceal the body. The body will be placed on a white plinth, and the background will be black. The experiment will use one light source.

---

<sup>5</sup> Contrapposto refers to a form of classical posture, primarily used in sculpture, where the figure is standing while shifting weight onto one leg, which gives the figure a more natural and human stance. The process of this stance causes certain muscles of the figure to tense.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

Shutter speed: 1/160

Aperture: f/8

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large softbox modifier, camera right, behind the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Whites were not corrected for neutrality - a slight warmth was applied to emphasise the colour of skin.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

The stripping of various elements for this experiment is in consideration of stripping away as many distractions as possible, solely focusing the attention on the body itself and the possible postures it manipulates itself into. Using one light allows a more focused study of the body contour. As the light source is somewhat close to the background, the background is slightly illuminated, resulting in less contrast between body and background. Situating the body on a plinth establishes a relationship between the two and portrays the body as a sculptural element.

In terms of the body's 'uncanniness', it appears to be more constrained and its anatomies are moved closer to the body compared to the previous experiment. A problem of expressive gesture still persists in this experiment, as it did in the previous experiment. The hand that encroaches from behind the head is still recognisable. The hand is familiar, and its appearance portrays a very human object, thus its expressiveness will need to be contained in the next experiment.

I identify that the body is distorted into an unfamiliar *pose*, not an unfamiliar *form*. This is attributed to the multitude of identifiable features in the image, namely the head and the hand. Using a flexible body also allows me to see more possibilities in creating shapes and unprecedented forms. I also identify that the angle of the foot to the right of the image appears to have its representation altered. The toes aren't obvious as they are concealed behind the big toe. The next experiment will also attempt to pose the hand at an angle to transform it into an unrecognisable appendage. Also to be considered is the potential to create bodies of symmetry?

Another consideration when forming distorted bodies is that the criteria of repression can potentially extend to key factors of constraint and restriction.

### Experiment 3: Symmetrical forms on the plinth

---

**Aim:**

This experiment aims to push the body to the limits and create symmetrical forms that cannot be seen in everyday life. Continuing from previous photographic experiments, this experiment explores the possibility of each model's contorting ability to create an unfamiliar scene in front of the camera. I chose to use a female dancer in the experiment.

This experiment draws on Man Ray's *Three nudes* (1919/1955), which reduces the human figure into geometrical shapes. This experiment also takes into consideration the contrapposto posture.

**Precedent:**

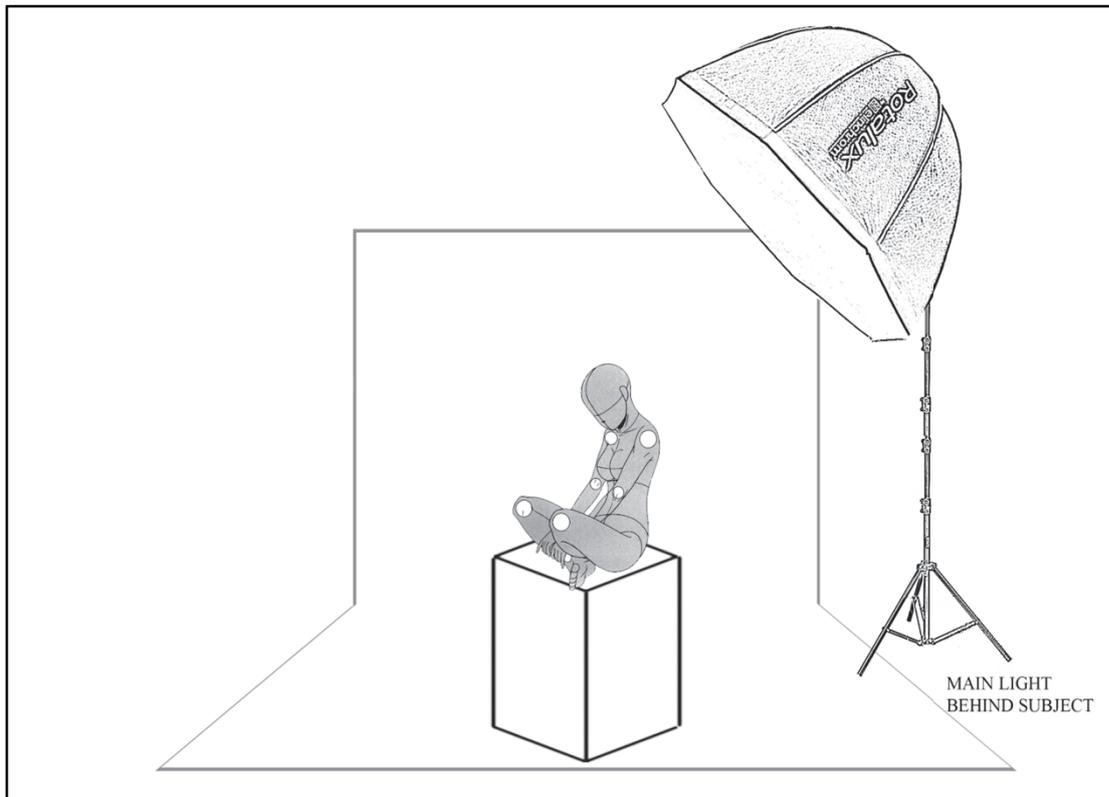


Man Ray, *Three nudes* [Preconception of Violetta], 1919/1955

**Method:**

Hide identifiable body parts in an attempt to reduce the familiarity of the body. Rely inherently on the body rather than rely on external elements, e.g. shadows, to conceal the body.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/8  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

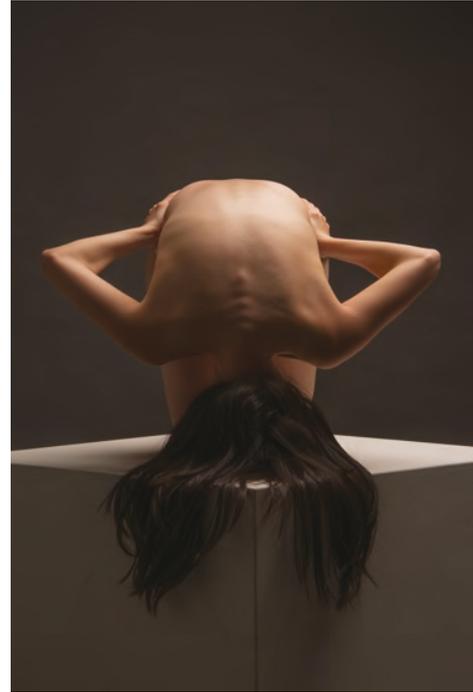
Main light: Large softbox modifier, camera right, behind the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Whites were not corrected for neutrality — a slight warmth was applied to emphasise the colour of skin.

**Results:**

(a)



(b)

**Reflection:**

There is a certain quality of the alien-like manifestation and the grotesque posing that makes the bodies curiously bizarre. The symmetrical bodies, and symmetry in general, have two effects on viewers. One, they represent a form of consistency and clarity when viewed. This can be seen as potentially beneficial, as it suggests a way of calming and not distressing the viewer. The second effect is that it represents order. This however can be contradictory, as a distortion is a mishap or disfigurement, among several other meanings that pertain to an alteration of the real.

The limbs and appendages take their cue from the previous experiment, in the attempt to make them less recognisable. The hands are angled side on to remove the appearance of fingers. In (a), the hands are clasped in front of the head. The contrast between skin tone and the dark hair makes the outline of a hand more defined. (b) corrects this issue by placing the hand in another location — on the hip. The hand melds into the body because of two factors: the first being the hand and hip are matching components, both with fleshly skin and similar colour tone. The second is due to the illumination of light, which cleanly cancels out a majority of the shadows that can separate the body through contrast. This is more evident for the right hand.

Angling the hands and placing them near similar components is a temporary solution, and further experimentation with gestures is needed to make the appendages more unrecognisable. In terms of the background, the colour is an important element that cannot be overlooked when considering the body as a sculpture. The colour palette of Giorgio Morandi's still-life paintings are earthy and pastel, and will be used as a reference for the background of the next experiment to investigate the relationship between background and body. I will also consider how the non-corporeal elements of the image can affect the perception of an uncanny body, and experiment with altering the colour and fleshliness of skin to be less familiar and more non-corporeal. To do so, I will make the body more sculptural and use white powder or body oil for the next experiment. Also for future experiments, perhaps I can consider the hand to be completely removed from the image, such that the body as a whole has less identifiable features?

## Experiment 4: Examination of skin texture and effects of a coloured background

---

### Aim:

This experiment aims to further defamiliarise the body by affecting the humanness of the body by altering its skin colour. In addition, this experiment aims to investigate the use of coloured backgrounds that allow the viewer to comfortably accept the body form. Giorgio Morandi's *Still Life* (1920) is used as a reference for it has a neutral, pastel and earthly colour palette that matches and can potentially blend well with the skin when used as a background colour.

### Precedent:

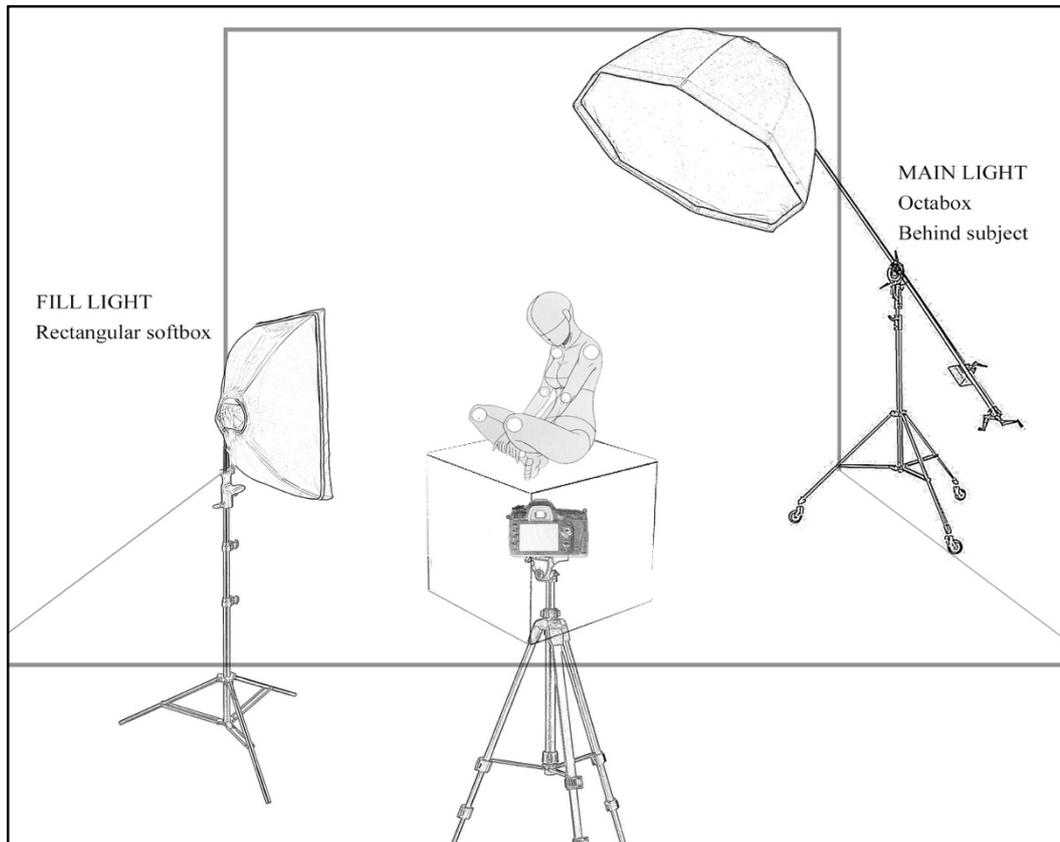


Giorgio Morandi, *Still Life*, 1920, Oil on Canvas

### Method:

Hide sexual anatomical body parts in an attempt to reduce the familiarity of the body. Rely inherently on the body without the assistance of external elements, e.g., hiding face and private body parts. The sitter will sit on a plinth that is rotated at a 45-degree angle so that the edge is facing the camera. The camera will be placed front on, at eye level to the body. Pastel-coloured backgrounds will be used. The sitter will also be covered in white powder.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/8  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Rim lighting, softbox modifier, camera right behind subject, to emphasise body muscles.

Fill light: Softbox modifier, camera left, in front of subject, increasing brightness of shadows cast by the main light. Fill light is at a lesser lighting output than the main light.

**Post-production settings**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Whites were not corrected for neutrality — a slight warmth was applied to emphasise the colour of skin.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

Placing a secondary fill light is noted to sculpt and define the muscles further in the photograph. As the main light is angled to emphasise the muscles, the secondary light creates a dynamic by filling in the shadow, and generates a clearly defined *terminator*<sup>6</sup> shadow. This lighting setup thus assists in emphasising the structure of the body as whole. I also identify that this is possible due to the secondary fill light source being smaller and at a lesser output than the secondary light in *Experiment 1*, which made the body appear flat with minimal shadows.

The paleness of the skin seems to be very distant and deathly pale — a trait that one cannot distinguish to be that of a human. Whilst it serves to disrupt and defamiliarise the body, the body becomes too far removed from its reality. The background, which borrows the earthly and fleshly colour palette from Morandi's *Still-Life* (1920), however is noted to be complementary to the body. It is not intense and does not create a stark contrast between the body and the space it is situated in. Rather, it presents a space of calmness which allows the spectator to comfortably accept the oddly-pale body. Future experiments will need to reconsider a lighter background to lift the mood of the image, as well as reconsidering the colour of skin and whether it shall maintain its familiarity or keep it unfamiliar. Perhaps the natural fleshly tones of skin will be able to blend more easily with the background. This may be dependent on the familiarity/unfamiliarity factors that comprise the photograph.

In terms of posture, these images reaffirm that although the sitter's facial features are concealed, the head of hair, hands and feet give away a perception of a human body form. The next experiment will focus on tightly compressing their bodies into forms that are human, yet strangely inhuman in appearance and devoid of individual characteristics. I will attempt to conceal the hair and hands in the next experiment. In addition to reconsidering the pose, I will also consider the utility of the plinth and how it can affect the body's capacity to pose into more contained and repressed forms. This may require me to use a wider or narrower plinth for the next experiment.

---

<sup>6</sup> The terminator is the edge, or area between the light and shadow; where the light transitions into the shadows.

## Experiment 5: Posing the singular body on a narrow plinth

---

### Aim:

Following on from an examination of the body as sculptural object, this experiment tests the plinth's role in affecting posture as well as changes in the perception of the human body. The experiment also aims to explore how the human body will look when the identifiable figures are reduced into simple shape/forms by placing the model on a white plinth.

This experiment takes note of Giacometti's *Torso* (1925) and its capacity to reduce the human figure into three geometrical shapes while taking contrapposto into consideration. The body is tight and compressed, voluminous and ascends upwards, exuding a form of organic vitality.

### Precedent:

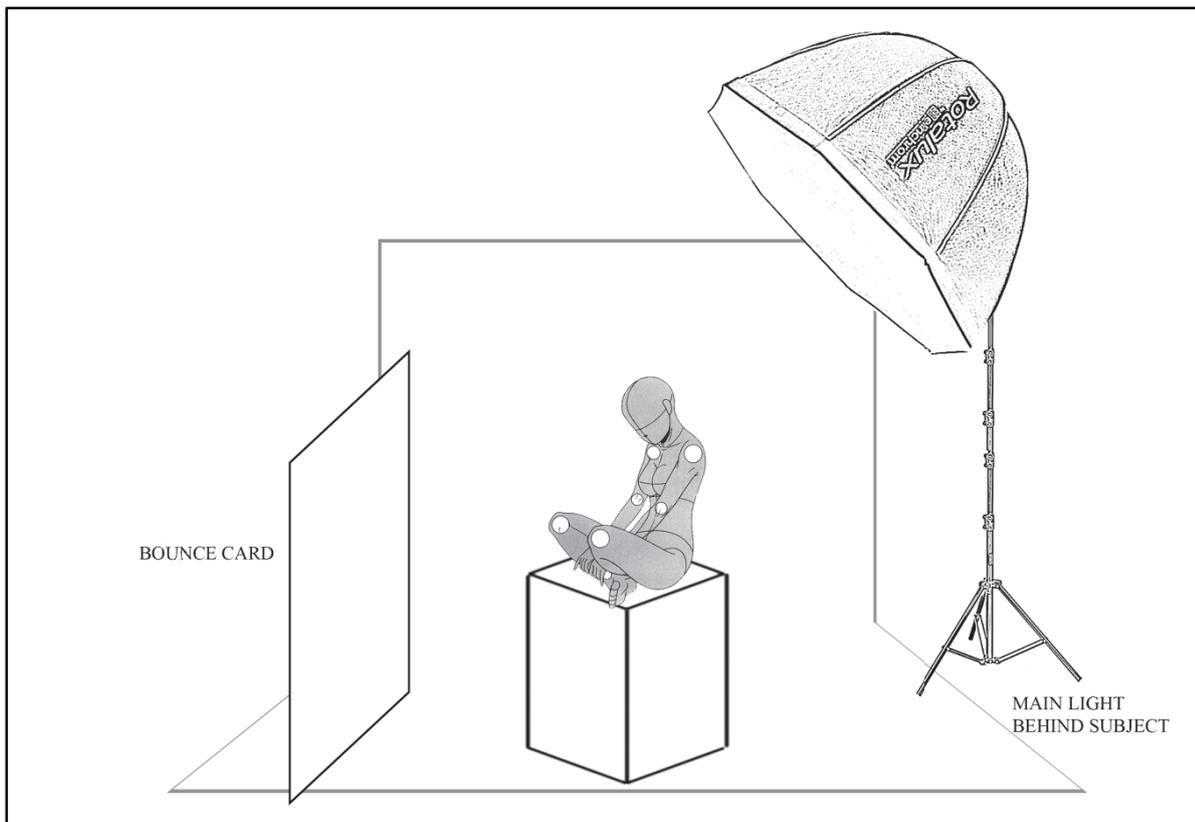


Alberto Giacometti, *Torso*, 1925

### Method:

Hide sexual anatomical body parts in an attempt to reduce the familiarity of the body. Rely inherently on the body without the assistance of external elements e.g., hiding face and private body parts. The sitter will be propped onto a narrow plinth that is 25cm wide. The camera will be placed front on, at eye level to the body.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/8  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: large softbox modifier, camera right, behind the body.

Fill: White bounce card, camera left, next to body, for subtle fill light to not make image too dark.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Whites were not corrected for neutrality — a slight warmth was applied to emphasise the colour of skin.

**Results:****Reflections:**

One distinctive note is the soft manner in which the lighting hits the body, illuminating the texture and depressions between the bones and muscles. The body appears to become more sculptural and less human in appearance and more as an object. This is also attributed to the fact that the body is posed with its back facing the camera. The narrow plinth forces the body to pose within the constraints of its surface area, as any erratic movement or posture will destabilise the body's support and the pose cannot be sustained. This impels the body to retract its limbs and appendages. Having the back facing the camera also opens up an avenue for several features to be concealed behind the body, resulting in less distracting elements and less identifiable traits that the viewer can identify. As a result of this, no hands, head, legs or feet are visible in this result.

For the next experiment, I will pose the body with its back facing the camera and attempt to reintroduce some familiar components, but in an unrecognisable form. This will be in a similar vein to the results and findings in *Experiment 3*, as I consider the recognisable and unrecognisable in the image. This will extend to stretching the body to its limits, which may mean employing an individual who can exert greater flexibility than an average human body can accomplish. This is reminiscent of Alberto Giacometti's *Torso* (1925), which conveys an abstract representation of a body, yet a human form is still visible.

## Experiment 6: Posing a flexible body (yoga-practitioner)

---

### Aim:

This experiment aims to explore sitters with greater flexibility and their ability to compress their body tightly, as previously seen in Experiment 5.

This experiment again takes note of Giacometti's *Torso* (1925) and its capacity to reduce the human figure into three geometrical shapes while taking contrapposto into consideration. The body is tight and compressed, voluminous and ascends upwards, exuding a form of organic vitality.

### Precedent:

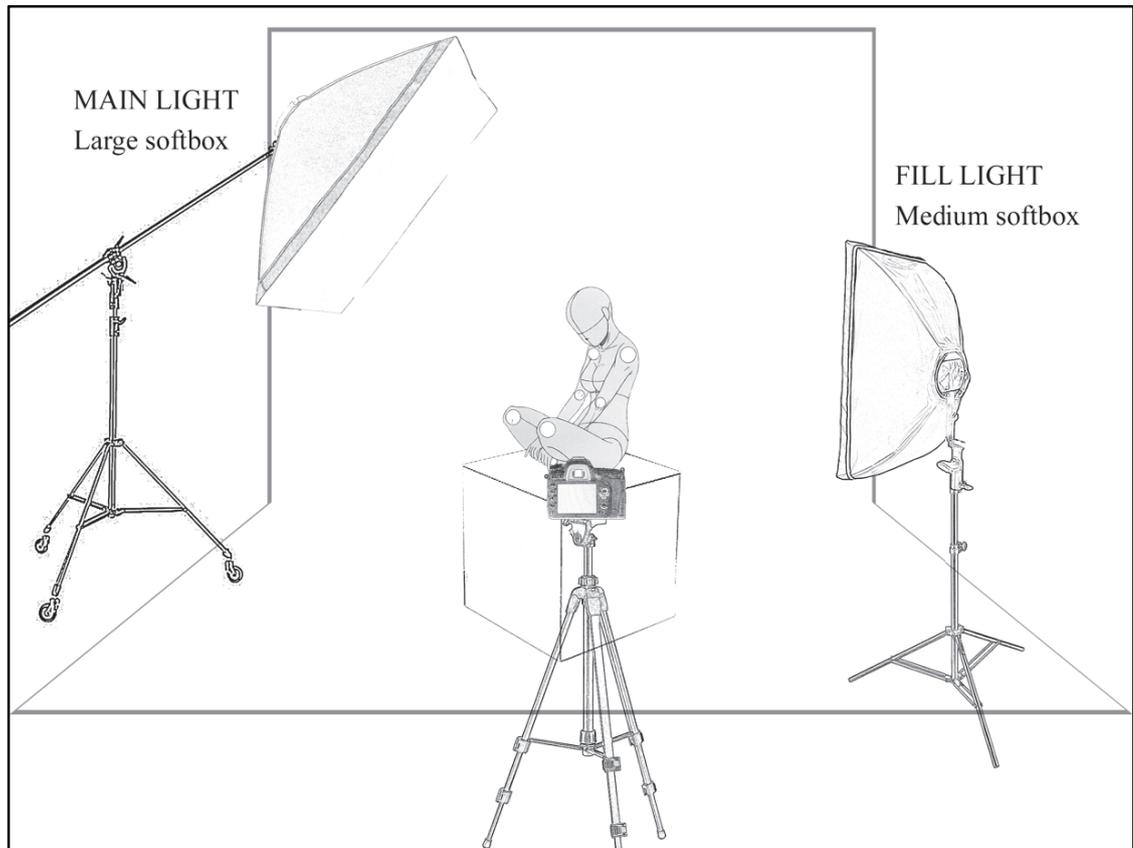


Alberto Giacometti, *Torso*, 1925

### Method:

Utilising various models with varying degrees of flexibility, the experiment will again attempt to hide identifiable body parts in an attempt to reduce the familiarity of the body. Rely inherently on the body rather than rely on external elements, e.g. shadows, to conceal the body.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

Shutter speed: 1/160

Aperture: f/8

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Rim lighting, large softbox on camera left, behind sitter.

Fill light: Medium softbox, camera right, directed at sitter. Approximately 0.5 stop lower flash output than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction for neutral white.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

Working with more flexible models opens up a wider avenue of possibilities in posing the body in strange and unique ways. This is due to their ability to manipulate body parts into places that are unprecedented to the average body. While a human body is capable of having their knees close to the chest, it is even more complex to have the feet up in the air and above the shoulders. The body in this experiment accomplishes this, which suggests a body undergoing transformation. I identify that while it is undergoing a process similar to the surmounting of the familiar, it has yet to truly be subjected to a complete defamiliarisation. This interrupts the body's ability to become truly uncanny, as the familiar human structure remains an immediately recognisable property of this body. This is due to the feet as well as the knee joint that connects the feet and hips. This result thus does not convey the essence of Giacometti's *Torso* (1925), as Giacometti can express the humanness of form in a compact state.

With further direction, it is perhaps possible to create a visual ambiguity when the viewer is confronted with a body part that is in a foreign location, or a body part that is deformed into a strange shape due to posture. The next experiment will conceal the feet and subvert preconceived notions of an orientated body by shifting the body into a posture that gives rise to a doubt about the limb's location. This may require a literal subversion by turning the body upside-down. Also keeping notions of the familiar characteristics in mind for future experiments, the head is no longer an option to reveal, and must be concealed to develop the body into an uncanny form.

## Experiment 7: Compressing the shape and posture of flexible body

---

### **Aim:**

This experiment aims to further explore sitters with different body shapes and greater flexibility. This is inspired by the precedent experiment, in which the sitter showed heightened flexibility in comparison to previous sitters.

This experiment again takes note of Giacometti's *Torso* (1925) and its capacity to reduce the human figure into three geometrical shapes while taking contrapposto into consideration. The body is tight and compressed, voluminous and ascends upwards, exuding a form of organic vitality.

### **Precedent:**

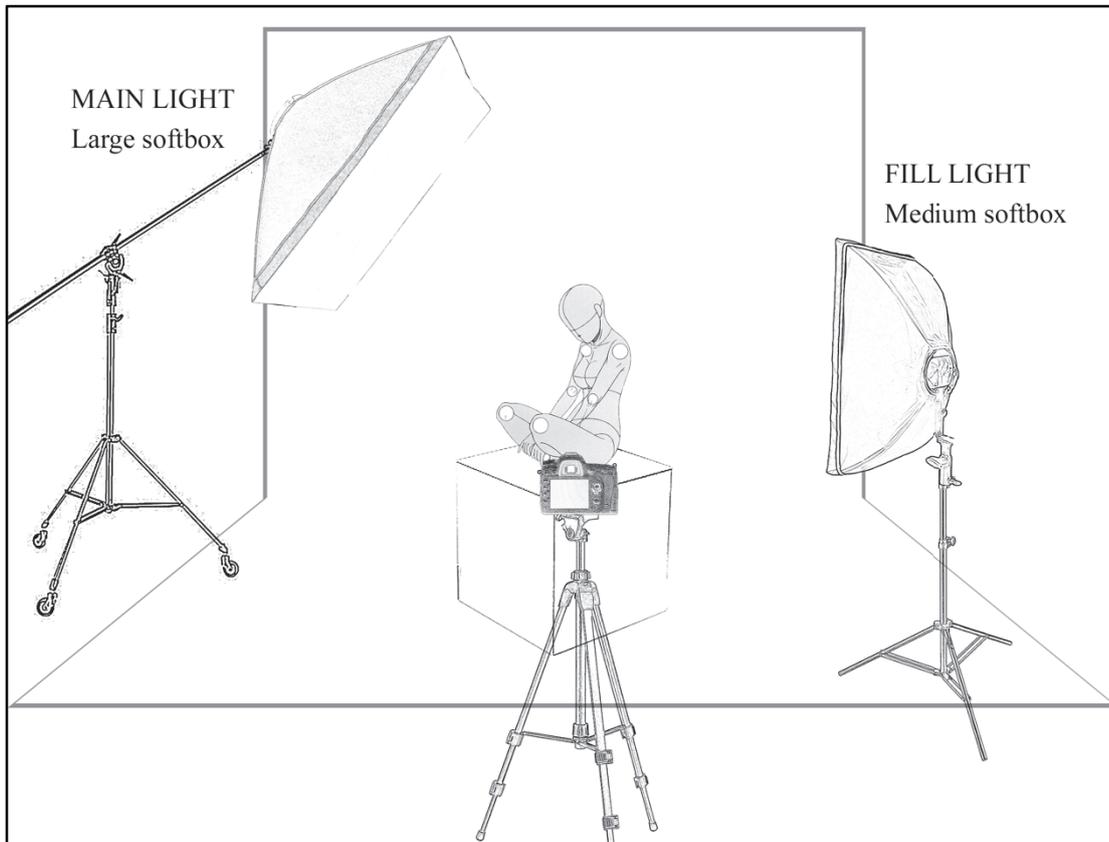


Alberto Giacometti, *Torso*, 1925

### **Method:**

Utilising various models with varying degrees of flexibility, the experiment will again attempt to hide identifiable body parts in an attempt to reduce the familiarity of the body. Rely inherently on the body rather than rely on external elements, e.g. shadows, to conceal the body.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/8  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Rim lighting, large softbox on camera left, behind sitter.  
Fill light: Medium softbox, camera right, directed at sitter. Approximately 0.5 stop lower flash output than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction for neutral white.

**Results:**

(a)



(b)

**Reflection:**

It is difficult to experiment with the limitations of the human body without a sitter with a flexible body. This experiment highlights the importance of using such an individual, which greatly assists in constraining the body to fall in line with Giacometti's abstraction methods. Here, the sitter is directed to rest on her shoulders. In the left image, *she* is seen to support her posture with an outstretched arm on the right. Upon further deliberation, to constrain and tighten the body to exude a stranger sensation, I directed the sitter to maintain balance and posture whilst eliminating the presence of her arm support. The result is more satisfying, as more body elements are concealed in the photograph, which makes the body less recognisable as a human form.

In the aforementioned observation, I emphasised the gender of the sitter in the experiment – the *she*. Whilst the posture here is interesting and works towards a distortion and defamiliarisation of form, one cannot help but take notice of an outline of a breast, giving one an impression that the body belongs to a female. This observation can interpret the gender of the body, which works against the direction of the experiments, which is to make the body less recognisable by removing characteristics that give away evidence of an identity. Further experimentation will need to be conducted to test with exploring the limitations of the human body, while considering ways in which body elements can also be constrained and concealed, removing certain narratives such as identity and gender.

Instead of *removing* components to defamiliarise the body, I will incorporate more body elements in the next experiment and attempt to merge them together. This is to defamiliarise the body with unfamiliar body components that do not conform to the normative human body structure. For example, what if the viewer is faced with a body with more than two legs?

## Experiment 8: Posing two bodies in the photograph

---

### Aim:

This experiment aims to understand the possibilities of creating images of distorted bodies through concealment by combining together two bodies of various individuals, some who are male and female, and others of different body structure, in front of the camera. It aims to examine how multiple bodies contort with each other, through hiding or combining particular body parts. An attempt will be made to merge two bodies to achieve one entity. This is a continuation of experimenting with ways the body can distort into different forms and shapes through posture.

This experiment draws on Man Ray's *Three nudes* (1919/1955), which bears visual similarities to Alberto Giacometti's abstract sculptures; both reduce the human figure into geometrical shapes and also take into consideration the contrapposto posture. The body is tight and compressed, voluminous and ascends upwards, exuding a form of organic vitality.

### Precedent:

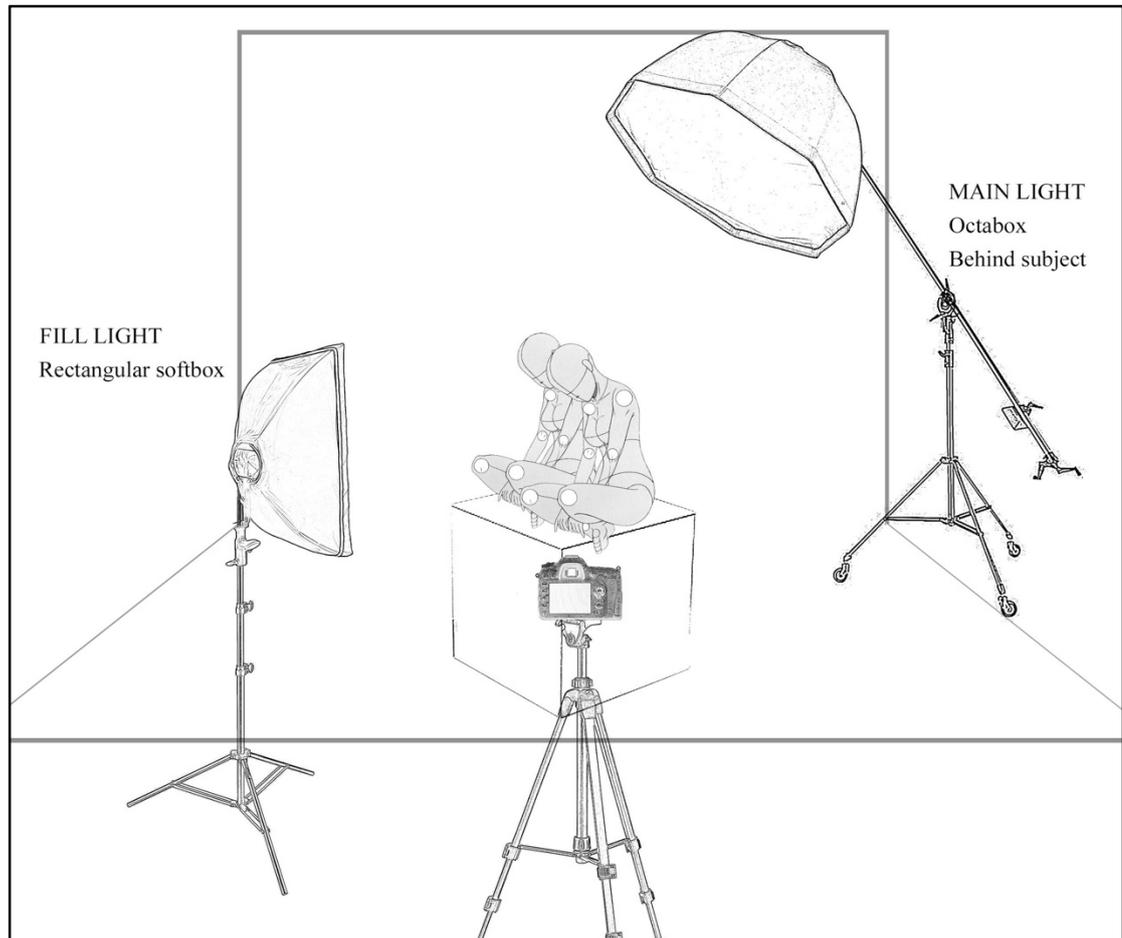


Man Ray, *Three nudes* [Preconception of Violetta], 1919/1955

### Method:

Introduce a second body to the frame. The experiment is a collaboration with both bodies, with the sitters' experimental posture and minor direction provided by me.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/5.6  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Rim lighting, Octabox modifier, camera right behind subject, to emphasise body muscles.

Fill light: Softbox modifier, camera left, in front of subject, increasing brightness of shadows cast by the main light. Fill light is at a lesser lighting output than the main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction for fleshly skin tones.

**Results:**



(a)



(b)

**Reflection:**

Although Ray's *Three nudes* (1919/1955) was selected as the precedent for this experiment for its depiction of body forms converging together, it is ironic that the bodies in this experiment appear to *not* be converging together.

The results of this experiment reveal an interesting approach to posing. Linking the bodies together unveiled a type of stiffness. This may be attributed to the predetermined body joints and rigid body structure that do not allow the bodies to meld together seamlessly as if they were water. I select two photos of noteworthy importance that demonstrates this. In (a), an attempt was made to place two backs together, on top of each other instead of side-by-side. The top body could not support itself. In order to show no other identifiable components, a secondary plinth behind the main plinth was required for the body to stand on. In addition to this, the necks were problematic to navigate around, due to their rigidity. Thus, the top body was directed to perform a front headlock, which places the shoulders of both bodies together. In (b), the idea of the primary body manifesting two more legs is more difficult to accomplish. The primary body is first posed with its legs jutting out to the side without revealing its feet. The secondary body could not mimic the thighs without creating a distance from the primary body. This is because the torso of the secondary body cannot be physically removed, and prevents the legs from appearing immediately next to the thighs of the primary body. As an alternative, the secondary body is posed behind the primary and facing the camera. It is reclined on its back and sticks its shins out in a fan shape. The visual similarity of the shins allows it to appear somewhat similar to the thighs. This posing compromise, however, still shows a gap between the two bodies.

This experiment thus identifies that the complexity of the human body itself does not allow it to seamlessly amalgamate with another body without presenting visual discrepancies. I assert a hypothesis that this may be alleviated if the body is shot directly front on, with lighting coming directly from the front, such as a ring-light. This will remove most of the shadows that separate bodily appendages and forms, and make the bodies appear more integrated. Furthermore, I

observe that the combination of two bodies into one creates further puzzlement and mysteriousness in the human form. A corporeal puzzle is generated as a second body is added to the equation. The results of this experiment show that limbs that jut out do not evoke a sense of a repressed feeling. This may be a consequence of the incapacity of the body to amalgamate well with another body.

The next experiment will attempt to combine multiple bodies of similar looks into one photograph, and direct them to pose in methods similar to *Experiment 7*, hiding the heads, genitalia, hands and feet. Having the bodies separate will increase the working area in the frame, and thus the plinth may not be a viable platform for them to pose on. The next experiment will thus also remove the plinth and place the bodies on the floor.

## Experiment 9: Posing three bodies in the photograph

---

### **Aim:**

This experiment tests a group of bodies posing for the photograph. The bodies are posed at a certain distance from each other, such that they do not appear to be connecting in the image. The experiment aims to observe the combination of 'lumpy' flesh bodies and whether a strange relationship can be established between them which gives rise to strange imagery.

### **Precedent:**

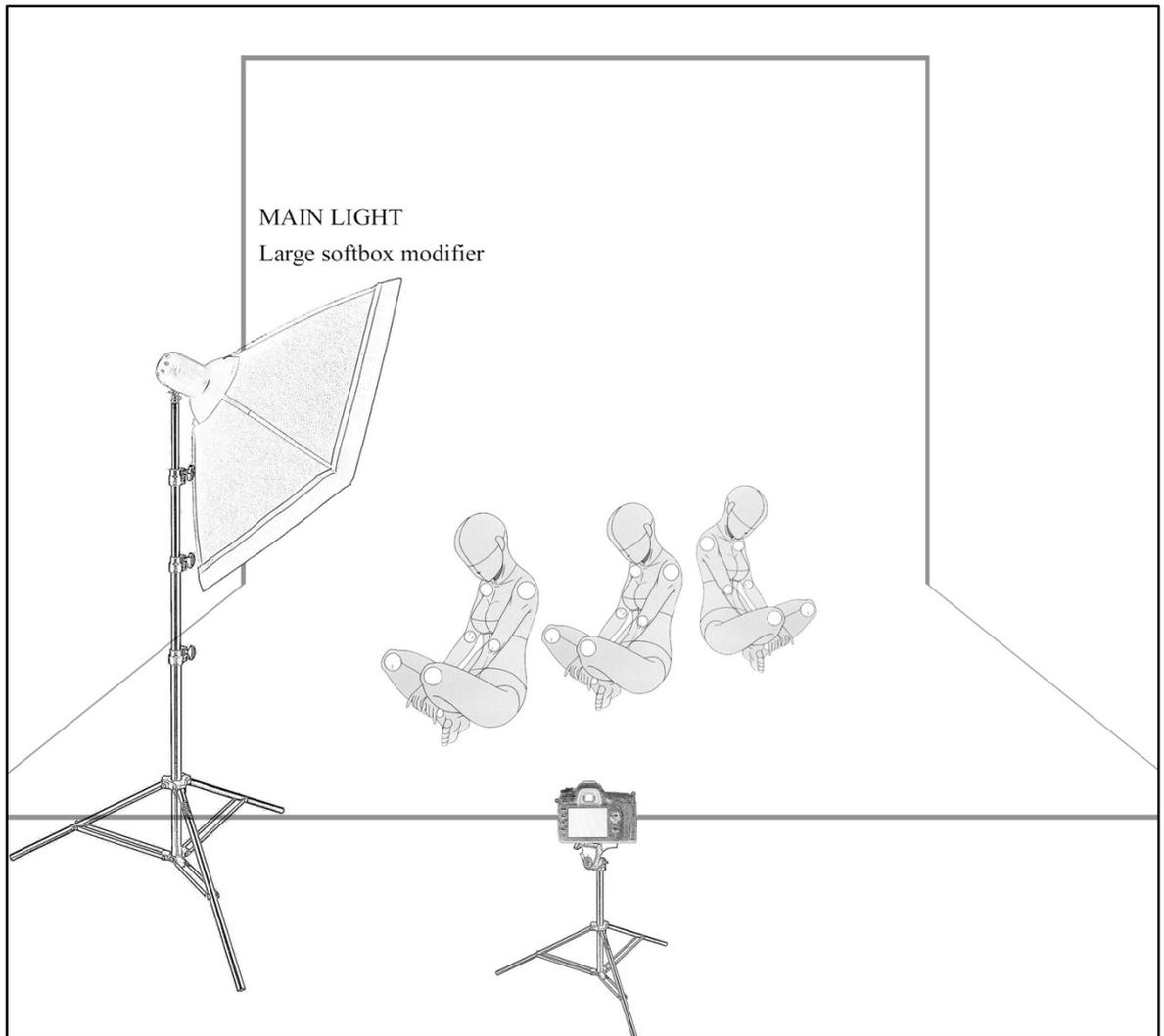


Man Ray, Three nudes [Preconception of Violetta], 1919/1955

### **Method:**

Introduce an additional body to the photograph, totalling three bodies in the frame. Through the sitters' experimental postures and minor direction provided by me, the bodies are placed at a certain distance from each other.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

Shutter speed: 1/160

Aperture: f/16

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large softbox modifier, camera left, in front of sitters.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction for fleshly skin tones.

Photoshop — Increase mid-tones of the photograph by 0.25 using Levels adjustment.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

In comparison to *Experiment 8*, where two bodies morphed into one, this experiment kept the bodies separate in their posing. By separating each body in their distortion of form through posture, I am able to identify multiple instances of defamiliarisation in the one image. This has enabled a more thorough understanding of how to pose the singular body, rather than attempting to amalgamate two or more bodies into a form that cannot be fully repressed.<sup>7</sup> In terms of the postures, the bodies in this experiment provide a framework that allow me to create photographs of bodies that are distorted and defamiliarised to the extent where they become uncanny in accordance with Freud's theory. The head shall not be revealed in the photograph. This can be concealed in any way through posture, either through concealing itself or using another body component to conceal behind. The representation of feet appears to be okay, as it does not give away any notions of identity or gender. In fact, the familiarity of feet helps ground the body in its humanness, as the remaining components attempt to distort themselves into unrecognition. Furthermore, the fleshy colour of skin is also identified as a trait that assists in identifying a sense of familiarity. Were the body to be completely unrecognisable, it requires traits such as these to bring back a sense of reality, of familiarity, that allow the viewer to accept the bodies rather than deny them.

Thus, the next experiment will incorporate these values of familiarity, principles of background colour as noted in *Experiment 4*, and notions of plinth highlighted in *Experiment 2*.

---

<sup>7</sup> See reflection of *Experiment 8* for observations on the consequence of combining multiple bodies.

## Experiment 10: Posing male and female body into tightly repressed forms against pastel coloured backgrounds

---

### Aim:

This experiment is a continuation of previous photographic experiments. It aims to explore the possibility of each model's bodily contortion ability to create an unfamiliar scene in front of my camera. A combination of female and male sitters is used here.

This experiment draws on Man Ray's *Anatomies* (1929) and *Minotaure* (1933), which reveal images of strange bodies juxtaposed against a dark background. In *Minotaure* (1933), the arms are thrown backwards and head tilted upwards to reveal a frightful form that is incomprehensible from its original. In *Anatomies* (1929), the sitter's head is thrown back, revealing a strange appearance that resembles a phallus. I similarly note that traces of distortion are also effected by dramatic lighting and shadow, generated by a one-light setup in the studio.

### Precedent:



Man Ray, *Anatomies*, 1929

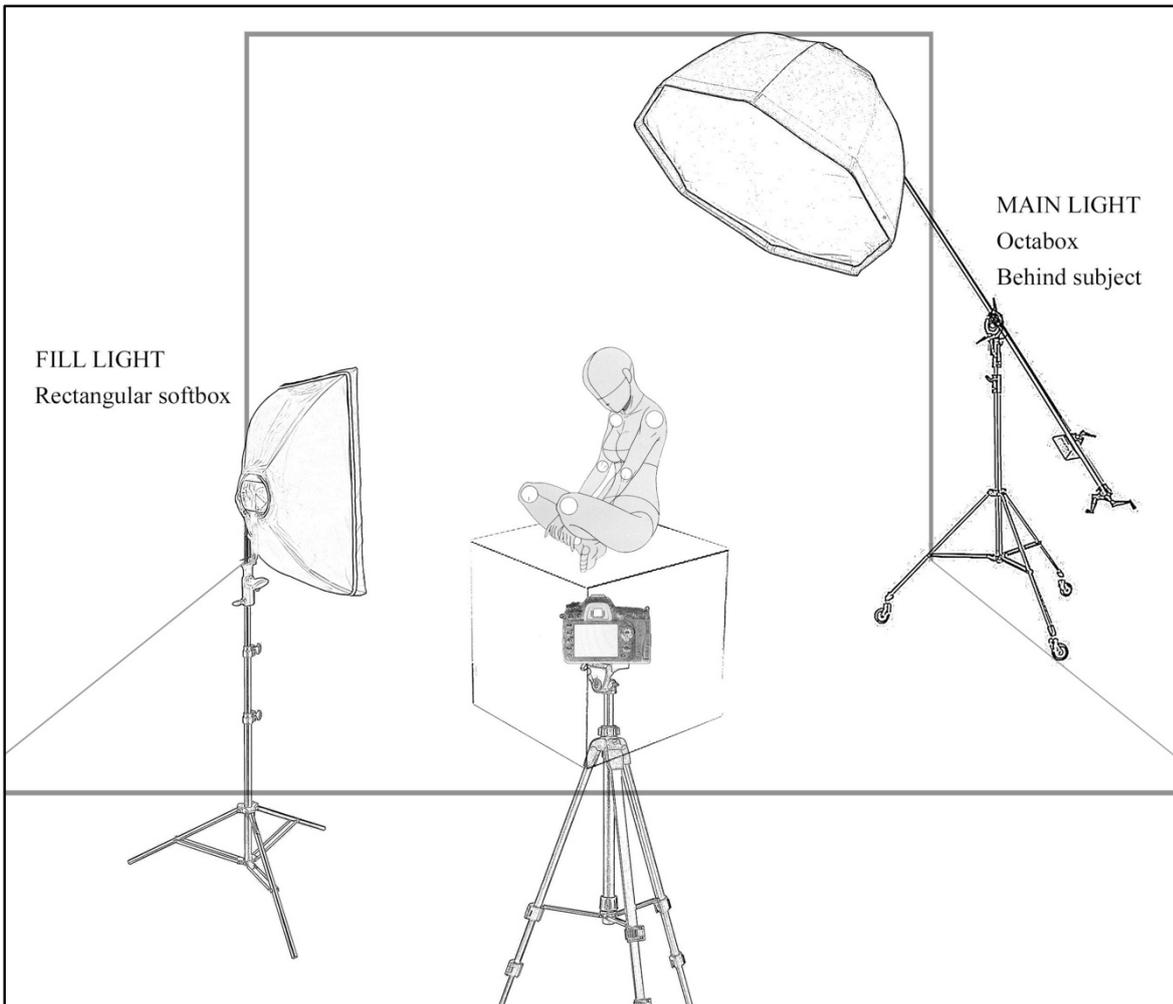


Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933

### Method:

Hide identifiable body parts in an attempt to reduce the familiarity of the body. This includes hiding hands, head, face, feet and even legs if possible. Rely inherently on the body to distort into an unfamiliar form, whilst using a two light setup to highlight the anatomy of the body. Include particular pastel coloured backgrounds.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/8  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Rim lighting, softbox modifier, camera right behind subject, to emphasise body muscles.

Fill light: softbox modifier, camera left, in front of subject, increasing brightness of shadows cast by the main light. Fill light is at a lesser lighting output than the main light.

**Post-production settings**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Whites were not corrected for neutrality — a slight warmth was applied to emphasise the colour of skin.

Blemish removal for plinth.

**Results:****Reflection:**

As previously specified, various elements from previous experiments were revisited here. The brighter pastel background colours align themselves with the ability to ease the tension within the photograph in comparison to *Experiment 4*. This is due to its soft tones, which can neutralise the anxiety present in the perception of an uncanny form. The lighting in this experiment is adjusted based on principles of lighting identified in *Experiment 4*, where the muscles are further emphasised. The depiction of muscles alleviates the unfamiliar form which the human body assumes. Furthermore, I identify that the contraction of muscles can be considered a method of posing, because posing is about *positioning*, where contracting muscles can place the parts of the body in slightly different positions that exaggerate its appearance.

Notions of the plinth are considered to align the body as a sculptural element in these results. In contrast to the plinth in *Experiment 2*, I shift the plinth in this experiment to be front on rather than on a 45-degree angle to the camera. This is in consideration for a cleaner aesthetic, but more importantly, to not divert attention away from the posed body. Given the nature of the lighting setup, were the plinth to be positioned 45-degrees to the camera, then the two faces of the plinth would have both a light and dark side.

Apart from correcting colour of skin-tone and blemish removal for the plinth, post-production was kept at a minimum for this experiment, as I wish to convey the capacity of the body to distort itself through posture without the assistance of external devices, apart from the camera and lighting; the plinth serves as a facilitator. Skin blemishes and inconsistencies are left in the image, as they further depict the fleshliness of skin inherent in human bodies, which serves as a subtle identifier to bring the viewer back to the familiar. Overall, this experiment reveals bodies that have been transformed into peculiar forms that appear strangely familiar. They are bodies, yet appear to not be bodies. This highlights my understanding of what distortion is, and what the distorted body should constitute. This experiment will be printed on photo-rag (Hahnemühle) for colour vibrancy and pictorial depth.

This experiment can be considered the final experiment in identifying the methods of posing used to distort and defamiliarise the body for the photograph. For the next experiment, I will attempt to capture the process of transformation when the body shifts and distorts itself in posture. This will be photographed on video or motion capture.

## **Experiment 11: Slow-motion video capturing dynamism of movement when the body shifts in posture**

---

### **Aim:**

Slow-motion video to capture the distorted body's subtle movements. The uncanny sensation this experiment aims to provoke is through the subtle morphing of the body. Inspired by the surrealists, following in the footsteps of Man Ray, I attempt to fabricate distorted bodies that can be considered bizarrely appealing.

Experimenting with video platform to capture the transiting body movements to show the subtle changes of the body as its transforms from one form to another, I attempt to manifest multiple intrinsic bodies with one single body as their foundation.

### **Precedent:**

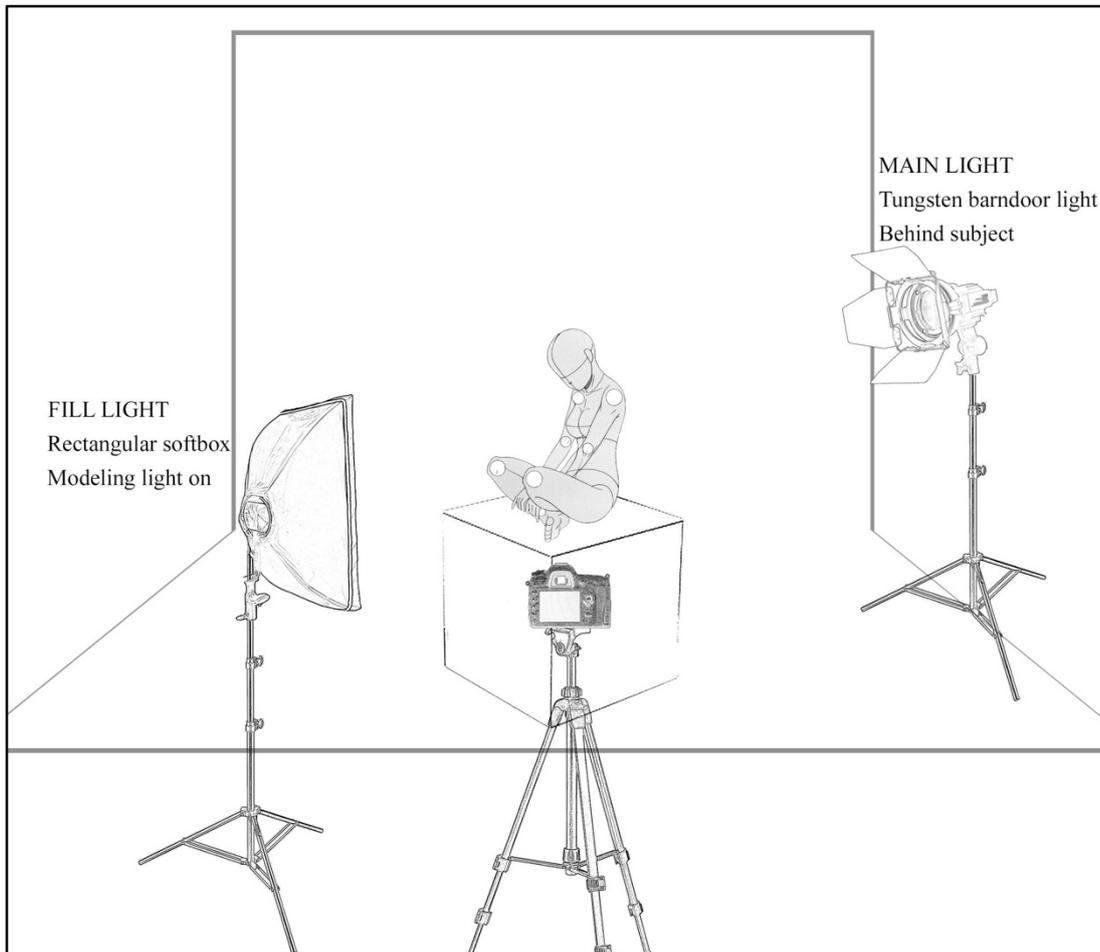
Methods of posture established in *Experiment 10*.

### **Method:**

Body is positioned at the centre of the frame. Place the body on a platform, e.g., plinth. Lighting is set up to highlight the muscles. Record for one minute. Body does slow subtle movements without revealing heads and recognisable features.

During this process the head, genitals and other recognisable features of the body are never revealed.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/60, recorded at 60fps, 720p  
Aperture: f/8  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Tungsten

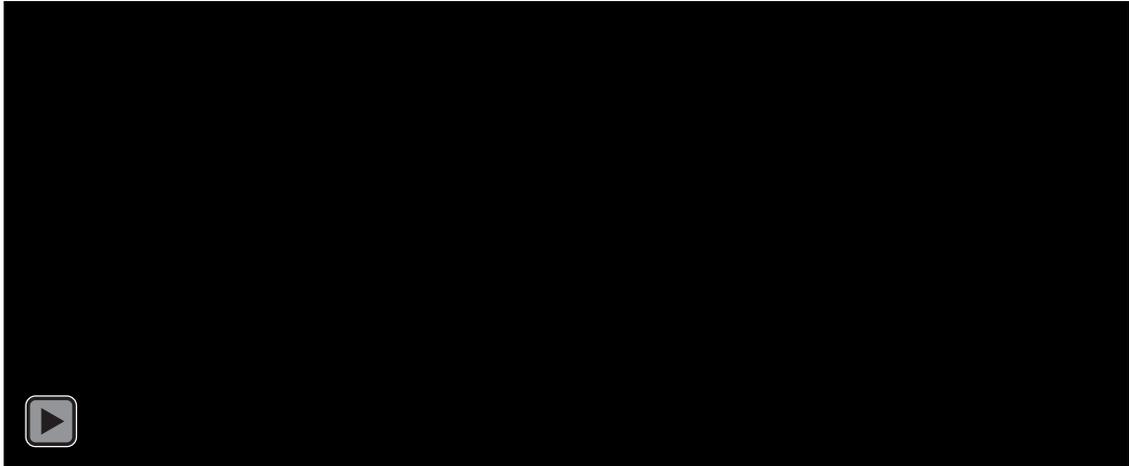
**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Tungsten lighting with barndoors, behind sitter, camera right, as rim lighting.

Fill light: Rectangular softbox with modelling light on, camera left.

**Post-production settings:**

Correction for white-balance  
Convert 60fps to 30fps for slow motion

**Results:**

Playable video file

**Reflection:**

This experiment initially uses *Experiment 10* as its foundations, in an attempt to convey movement in the body as opposed to the stillness in the image. The lighting is converted for practical use for video. The *terminator*, as previously outlined in *Experiment 4*, presences itself strongly in this result. Furthermore, the outline of the spine is evident, which is quite a harrowing visual.

In terms of the video and the body's movement, it initially appears aimless, with no direction. The shift of the body is not immediately recognisable, which may be due to the posing constraints set on the initial positioning of the body. As the body is facing the back and is crouching on its feet, the body cannot move around on the plinth, and is limited to shifting its limbs. Moving the limbs any further out may result in revealing the identifiable characteristics that the experiments desperately attempt to conceal.

Considerations identified are to replace the light background with a dark background to isolate the body even further, as the purpose of this video focuses on showing the body itself. The background is currently not working or aiding my focus, therefore it is a possibility to remove the background completely so as to not distract with it. The light is also quite harsh and overpowering, which doesn't seem to create an atmosphere and mood for the image. The body has motion, yet does not convey emotion. Furthermore, it will be interesting to incorporate the sound of the body when it is in movement and shifting into other poses. This can assist with making the body seem more lifelike and in a pitiable state.

Lastly, the slow-motion in this experiment was quite fast and could not effectively convey an uncanny feeling as I viewed it. The uncanny sensation this experiment aims to provoke is through the subtle morphing of the body. Thus, the next experiment will achieve two aims. The first will be to plan a script for the body to follow, to show different stages of transformations and revert back to its original position at certain intervals. The second is to use *still-motion* instead of *slow-motion*, similar to the early experimentations by Eadweard Muybridge (see Figure xx below), to photograph each stage of the transformation process.

## Experiment 12: Still-motion video capturing dynamism of movement when the body shifts in posture

---

### Aim:

Approaching the video concept in still-motion, perhaps there is something that can be captured in finer detail. The body as performance moves too quickly, losing many potential bodily distortions. The earliest still-motion revealed movements that were previously inconceivable and allowed for a further study of bodily movements.

### Precedent:

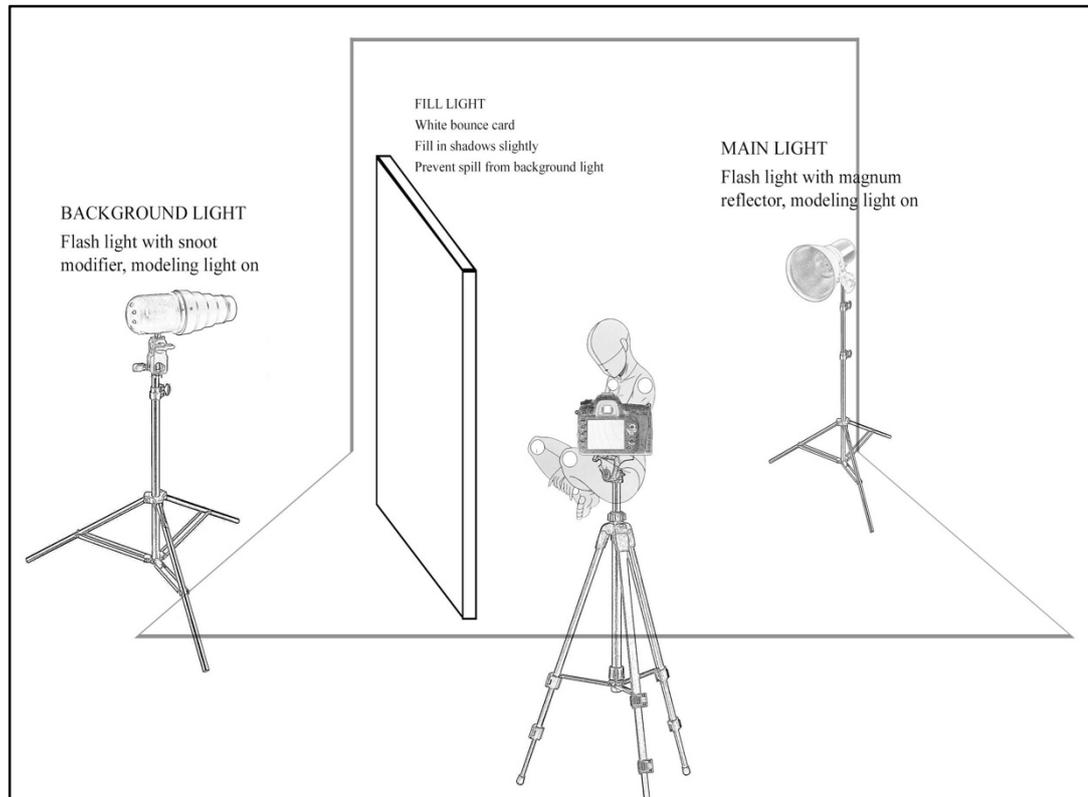


Eadweard Muybridge, *The Horse in Motion*, 1878

### Method:

Situate the body on a white cyclorama. The plinth is removed so the model has more space to move around in the frame. A camera with high FPS/burst rate will be used (Canon 7D mark II) Constant burst while subject performs in front of camera at 10fps.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Canon 7D Mark II  
Shutter speed: 1/200, burst-mode at 10fps  
Aperture: f/4  
ISO: 800  
White balance: 4650K

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Flash lighting with modelling light on, magnum lighting modifier, on camera right, behind the model acting as a kicker light.

Fill: Small white reflector, camera left, in front of model, to fill in shadows slightly.

Background light: Snoot modifier, camera left, aimed at background. Positioned just behind the white reflector to prevent light spill onto model.

Subject is 2 metres away from back wall, so back wall will not be relatively bright and flat.

**Post-production settings:**

Batch edit in Adobe Camera Raw, Bridge for batch conversion, white-balance correction.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

The results show the many nuances in the body as it undergoes shifts in body posture. Whilst direction was provided to the sitter, the body remained stiff, unnatural and unyielding, as it was still limited in its initial position. This may be due to the exposed feet. In addition to this, the lighting setup was adjusted to compensate for the transition from video to high-speed burst image capture. A bounce card was used instead of a light, which effectively reduced visibility of the back. This reduces clarity of form and details of fleshly components.

An additional process was conducted after capturing these images. The images were placed into Premiere Pro as an image sequence in an attempt to convert these still-motion images into a video to create slow-motion that exceeds the results of *Experiment 11*. This was not effective, as the video was not smooth and fluid. The type of slow motion required for this experiment needs to make the movement of the body seamless and especially subtle. The changes should not be very noticeable. This reflects the strangeness of the body that it should convey. The body seems still yet not still. To retain the smoothness of body transitions, the next experiment will revert back to slow motion video and apply a 50% reduction on the speed/duration of the video in post-production software.

The next video will also be captured against a black background, which will eliminate the distracting background as well as conceal the feet to try and make the body float in space. This may make the body more unsettling, situated in a dark environment.

### Experiment 13: Slow-motion video capturing dynamism of movement when the body shifts in posture within void black space.

#### Aim:

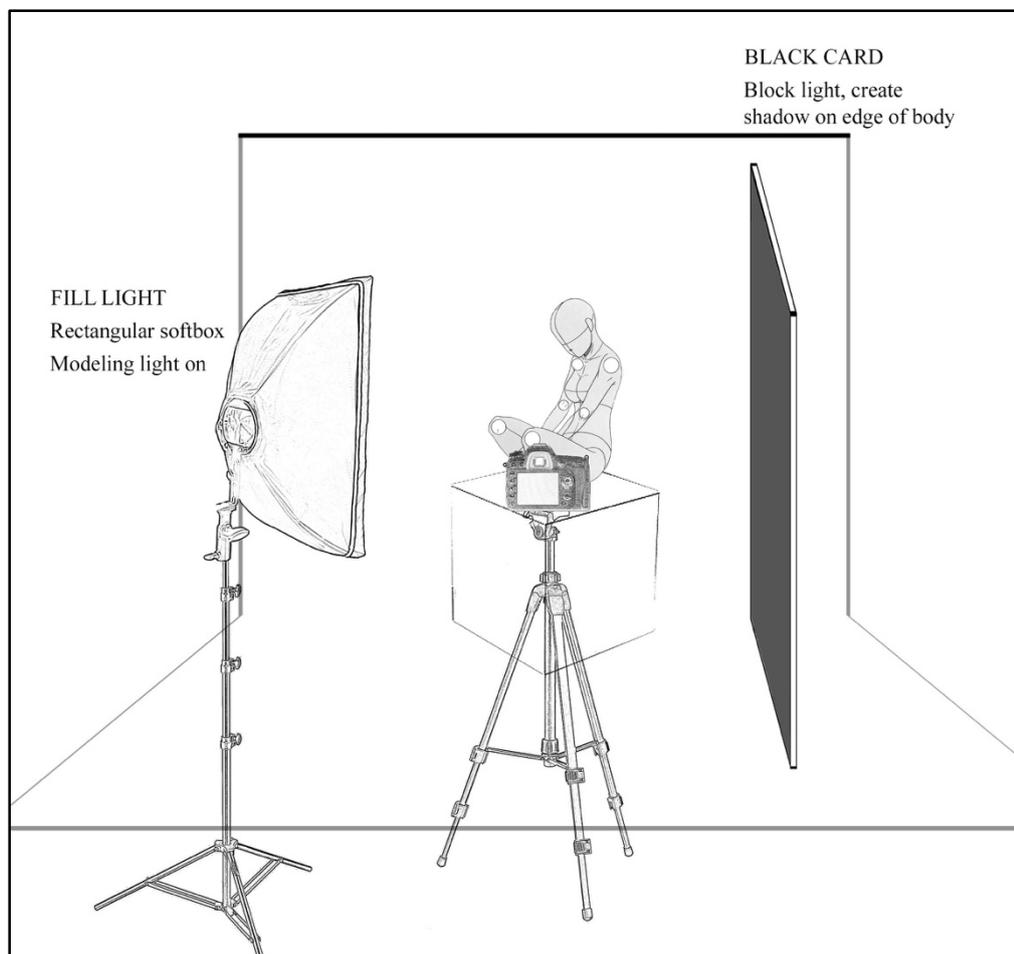
A revisit to *Experiment 12*, making appropriate adjustments to the setup and reproduction of the moving image. Moving the body onto a dark, black background, there are no distractions, just the body within the centre of the frame. The most optimal viewing suggestion is by way of projection within a dark room, where the projection blends into the wall and the body seemingly 'floats'. To simplify the matter of lighting, only one soft, diffused light was used to light up the body. Although it gives less depth to the definition of the body, it gives off a certain cinematic, ominous feel to the image.

#### Method:

The model is positioned in the centre of the frame, situated on a platform that is covered by a black cloth.

Minimal lighting will be used (i.e. one light). Camera is set up to record for one minute. Body does slow, subtle movements without revealing heads and recognisable features. During this process the head, genitals and other recognisable features of the body are never revealed.

#### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/60, recorded at 60fps, 720p  
Aperture: f/5.6  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Auto

**Lighting settings:**

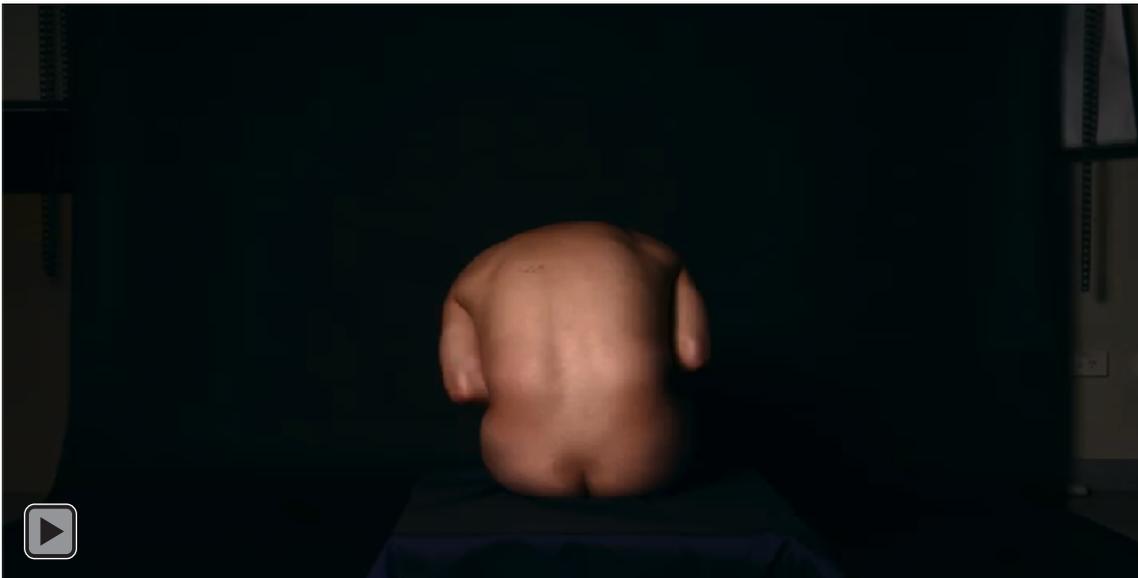
Main light: Elinchrom flash (square softbox modifier) with modelling light on, camera left, directed at model.

Black polyboard on camera right, next to model to stop spill light, darkening the right edges of the model, blending foreground and background.

**Post-production settings:**

Edit video in Adobe Premiere Pro, correct colour balance for neutral tones. Reduce speed/duration by 50%.

**Results:**



Playable video file

**Reflection:**

The 50% reduction helps to slow down the body movement. Although the body form is not entirely uncanny, the viewing process is. The slow shift in body movement is a compelling element of the video that allows the transformation not to be immediately discernible; however, over time, the change in body posture will creep on the viewer. In one moment, the body is fixed in position, while moments later, it has altered. If possible, the video can be even slower.

This experiment was exhibited at the Central Park Gallery space to test the potential of the video as an exhibitable piece. A few issues were identified:

The gallery space was rigid and unable to be adjusted. The video was projected onto a white wall, and opposite the white wall was a window spanning across the length of the room. There

were no options to block light from coming in. This caused the image to be quite faint, pale, and barely visible. This is also potentially in addition to the video being displayed on a white wall.

There are three formats this video can be displayed with: a TV monitor, an iPad, or via projector. A monitor and an iPad is inadequate in depicting a black background, as the backlit screen technology reveals more elements of the background. Furthermore, these screens overpower the image, causing the blacks to not appear to be a true black.

This type of video can be better suited if all elements apart from the body itself are hidden from view. Thus, the concept of the plinth cannot come into play, nor can the platform be questioned. The next experiment will use post-production software to mask off the plinth and the background and make the body float in the space.

## Experiment 14: Floating the motion captured posed body

### Aim:

Revisiting and refining *Experiment 13*, this experiment will make the body 'float' in the middle of the screen by removing the background completely. This experiment will also test with further video-editing. Provide a 'healthy' glow/warmth to the skin to give the body more realism.

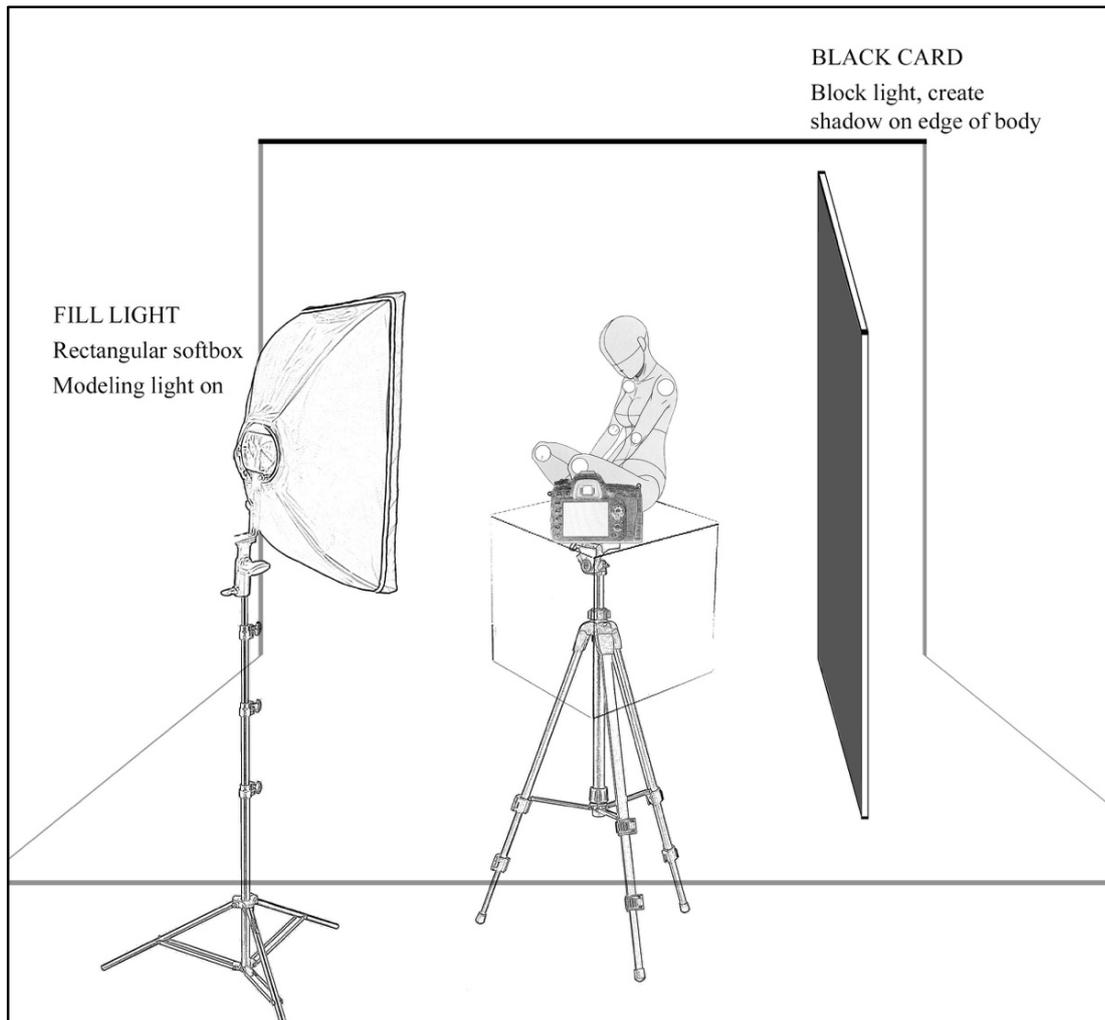
Owing to the 'liveliness' of the body, sounds and visuals of distinguishable movements can aid to making the image come to life. A dark setting is appropriate to isolate the body from its surroundings. Thus, the body is positioned at the centre of the frame and placed on a dark platform. For the duration of the recording, the body moves with subtle shifts, without revealing heads and recognisable features.

### Method:

Recording settings same as *Experiment 13*.

In post-production, remove blue velvet colour of the plinth, and create mask to completely darken background around the body.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

Shutter speed: 1/60, recorded at 60fps, 720p

Aperture: f/5.6

ISO: 100

White balance: Auto

**Lighting settings:**

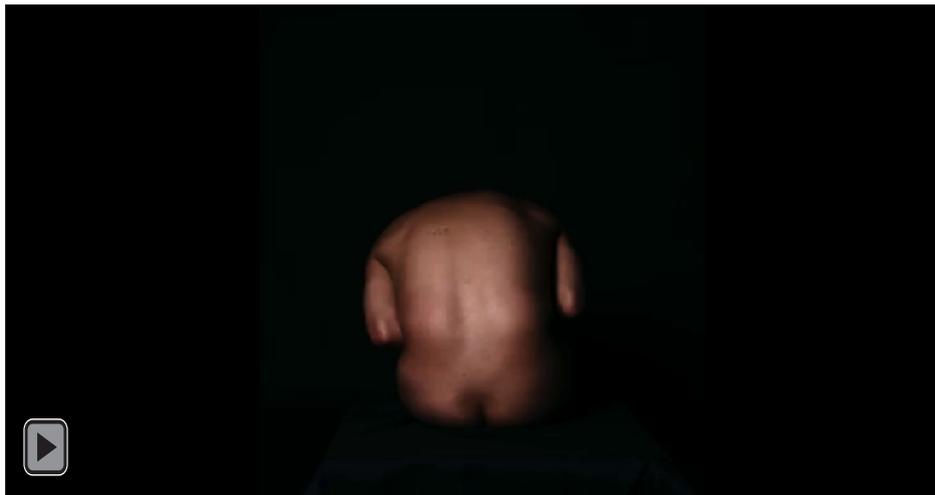
Main light: Elinchrom flash (square softbox modifier) with modelling light on, camera left, directed at model.

Black polyboard on camera right, next to model to stop spill light, darkening the right edges of the model, blending foreground and background.

**Post-production settings:**

Da Vinci Resolve — Increase gain, increase black contrast in levels (increase black and white input), adjust gamma, selective colour adjustments to emphasize fleshly skin, mask the body and darken the background, and sharpen the body to create crisp lines and edges.

**Results:**



Playable video file

**Reflection:**

In comparison to the previous experiment, the body is now seen floating in space as the platform is further removed from the footage. The video is tested using a projection on a black wall, which further allows the body to appear as if floating in space. Two reasons come to mind:

1. A projection does not have a border frame like a screen/television may have. Thus, the body is not contained in a frame, but rather freely appearing on the wall.
2. The projection covers the entire width of the wall, which further eliminates the border of a frame. It is noted, however, that true black from the footage can still be illuminated on the wall, hence the need to either fill the whole wall with the projection, or lower the brightness output of the projector to minimise the frame created by the projection.

The top and bottom of the body are still evident and therefore not particularly ambiguous. As

previously reasoned in *Experiment 13*, the poses are not uncanny, but the process of viewing the distorting process is. I hypothesise that future experiments on video can be aligned with Breton's vision of 'there is a man cut in two by a window' (Breton 1969, 21), as well as being in line with the surrealist idea of fictionalising a particular element, which may heighten the strangeness of the body. This may include cutting the body via a mirror reflection at various sections of the body, which is potentially a new type of technique to distort the body. This practical VFX can also be conducted in post-production, using mirror effects alongside other preset effects available to Adobe Premiere Pro.

### 1.3.2 — Key Findings

In retrospect, the three aforementioned methods of posture comprise, in one form or another, the aspect of compression and contraction as a technical representation of psychoanalytic repression, to both distort and extend the familiar human body into the realms of the unfamiliar. These three methods of posing are:

1. Localising the familiar by posing certain body components in front of familiar and identifiable body components.
2. Posing the body in compositions that convey a visual alteration of the fundamental structure and positioning of the body part.
3. Utilising the body's inherent ability to contract and flex to emphasise idiosyncratic body structures. Simultaneously, the contraction of muscles emphasises the familiar fleshly traits of muscle and skin to alleviate the deviation towards the unfamiliar.

Furthermore, it is apparent that concerns of perspective play an important role in dealing with posture and the manifestation of distorted bodies. The distortion will falter if the posture is viewed from a different angle. *Experiment 3* shows a progression into metamorphic and indeterminate bodies, yet highlights how the body's identifiable characteristics, as a signifier of the familiar, interfere with the distortion. Compressing the body (*Experiment 7*) provides the framework for introducing defamiliarisation into the posing process, which is further validated when the malleability of the body is stressed and compressed to its limits to demonstrate how uncanny distortions arise through a form of bodily repression (*Experiment 10*). Attention to precedent photographers Ray, Miller, Weston, and Ritts finds supportive use of these methods. Ray and Miller were evidently engaged in revealing unconscious forms of the human body, using concealment to strategically reveal evocative and expressive forms that convey the surrealist unconscious and fetishistic desire. Unlike his surrealist counterparts, Weston investigated distortion of the body form through abstraction, and in the process, unveiled a unique method of posing that defamiliarises the body. A brief examination of Ritts highlights how themes of posing to manifest distorted bodies extend beyond surrealist frameworks, and additionally, how technological advances of photography provide further clarity in the depiction of the familiar. An assessment of these precedents unveils a peculiarity and comprehensiveness of the human body; posing allows an avenue for the photographer to distort the body's representation.

Lastly, concealing familiar components of the body triggers a need for self-justification. Posing the human is a fundamental technique that is widely employed in photography, whereby a

subject assumes a particular position for the image. I conclude that the specificity of posing thus can destabilise and present an ambiguous reality that goes against the very nature of photography as an indexical medium, and displaces the conformist and pre-conceived representation of the human body in the image. In the next subchapter, I will outline another key factor that is required in the formation of a photograph. One that the photograph, and subsequently the visualisation of distorted and defamiliarised bodies, cannot exist without — lighting and shadow.

## 1.4 — Light and Shadow

The creation of distorted bodies in a photograph is not solely based on the body's ability to distort itself through tactical posing. Photography, by nature, is an indexical medium that records reality through a transference of light and shadow that reflects off a body or object onto a surface that is sensitive to light. The exposure of light is thus a significant factor in what becomes visible in the recording, and ultimately conceals areas that are darker or not exposed correctly, rendering elements in the shadow either unrecognisable or invisible. Given this predisposition, it is valid also to consider how the application of lighting techniques and the associated creation of shadows may affect the way bodies are conceived and perceived as distorted and defamiliarised in the photographic image.

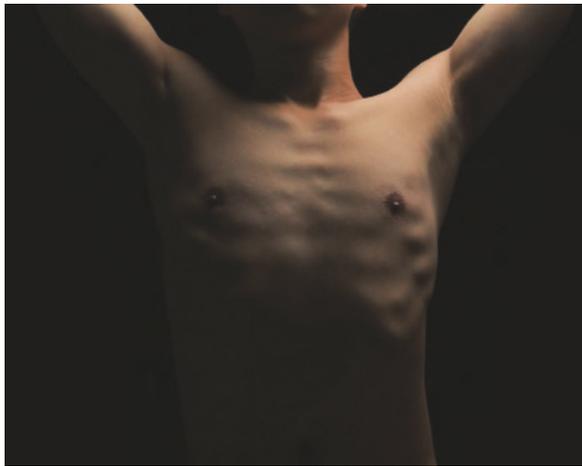


Figure 51: Lin Wei, Experiment 19: Emulation of lighting used in Man Ray's *Minotaure* (1933), 2017

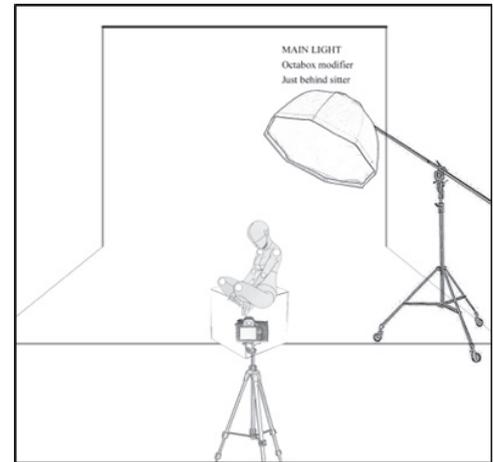


Figure 52: Lin Wei, Lighting setup for Experiment 19, 2017

Investigating the effects of lighting and shadow techniques requires control over the manipulation of light within the studio; even the slightest flaws, such as bouncing or fill light, are unsuitable for the purpose of examining the effects a light may have on the human body. Figure 51, *Experiment 19*,<sup>8</sup> is the control experiment which reduces the light variables to eliminate the propagation of such flaws. As Figure 52 shows, the body is photographed against a black background and one light source illuminates the scene. The background is situated four metres behind the body, such that the illumination of light will not be cast onto the background, rendering the background a plain black void. The body is positioned on a plinth that is covered by a cloth of black velvet to absorb and eliminate reflected light. Placing the

<sup>8</sup> Experiment 19. Please refer to 1.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Lighting and Shadow.

body in such a black environment isolates any additional elements or distractions, in order to focus on the distortion effects produced when manipulating the light source. Here, the light source is a small octabox that is above and behind the body on camera right. Utilising a precedent pose found in Ray's photograph, *Minotaure* (1933) (Figure 53) removes an extra variable — posture, to further situate the analysis of the experiment with the effects of lighting as the focal point. Ruminating on the possibilities of photography, scientist and photography pioneer William Talbot (1969) notes that 'photography was the first available demonstration that light could indeed exert an action sufficient to cause changes in material bodies' (n.p.). The placement of lighting in *Experiment 19* presents a case where the human body is undergoing physical transformation, either through concealment or the exhibiting of underlying layers that are previously concealed. The angle of lighting, in particular has multiple purposes in facilitating concealment. It emphasises the bony structure of the ribcage, revealing a component that is normally concealed behind the torso muscles. In addition, it creates a dramatic light fall-off that severs the body at the waist, as well as melding the triceps and neck into the background.



Figure 53, Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933

As previously established, the pose of the body in *Experiment 19* sets Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) (Figure 53) as the precedent, given that Ray challenged perceptions of the normative body in translating the female torso into the depiction of a minotaur with the combination of lighting and posture. Here, Ray uses a female instead of a male body. The prominent shadows underneath the breasts suggest that the lighting is harsh and is positioned at a high angle and either directly above or slightly behind the body. The arm on the right is overexposed, while the arm on the left is less defined and shadowed, yet the texture of skin is more drawn out in the image. The head is tilted back; both arms are raising up and escaping the boundaries of light, which sharpens the arms at a point to resemble horns. Furthermore, the belly is sucked in to create an impression of a mouth. Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) manifests an anatomical ambiguity

that casts doubt on the body in the photograph. The body presents a case of intellectual uncertainty, which is a core attribute in Freud's interpretation of the uncanny in 1919. This type of uncertainty is further examined by David Cross (2006) in his thesis on the grotesque body, in which he suggests that this type of uncertainty creates the effect of 'effacing distinctions between imagination and reality' (142). This notion of uncertainty is inherent in Ray's *Minotaure* (1933), as the photograph presents the viewer with a female torso, yet the strangeness of the subject at hand, the minotaur, prompts a further re-evaluation of the image. For Ray, the seamless utility of lighting and black background works in tandem to effectively enhance the perception of distortion, and also to effect uncertainty arising from the unconscious. The engagement with such a destabilising thought further aligns the photograph to a depiction of an uncanny body representation that is manifested through dramatic lighting and shadows. Two circumstances are presented in Ray's photograph that bring the uncanny to the surface: the harsh lighting, and a method of posing that exploits such lighting. In comparison to *Experiment 19*, Ray's photograph exhibits a more prominent gaping mouth and a displaced head that is severed at the clavicle, which owes principally to the harsh lighting.



Figure 54: Lin Wei, Experiment 20: Emulation of lighting used in Man Ray's *Minotaure* (1933)—snoot modifier, 2017

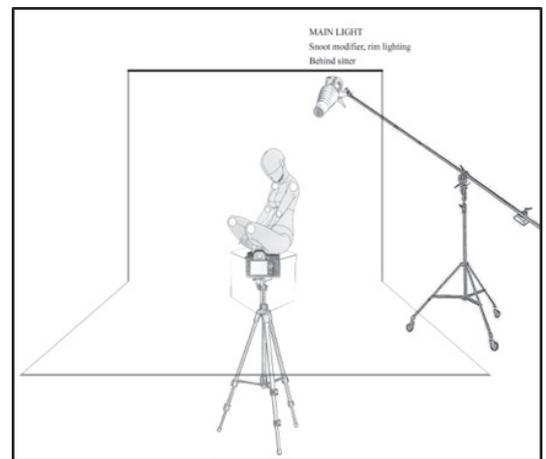


Figure 55: Lin Wei, Lighting setup for Experiment 20, 2017

Figure 54<sup>9</sup> borrows these circumstances and applies a variation to Ray's lighting. As shown in Figure 55, a snoot modifier substitutes the octabox modifier to narrow the angle of light spread and create harsh shadows. The positioning of this light classifies it as a back light, which Kodak defined as a light that prevents the subject from merging into the background, offering further depth to the image (Kodak Eastman Company 1957). Although a backlight separating the

<sup>9</sup> Experiment 20. Please refer to Section 1.3.2 — Photographic Experiments on Lighting and Shadow.

foreground from the background is true in most cases, the lighting in this experiment is paradoxical. That is, while the singular key light illuminates the human body within the black environment, the lighting subsequently submerges, melds and conceals the subject into the shadows. The snoot modifier concentrates the beam of light such that only a portion of the body is lit up. The narrowness of the light offers a glimpse of various sections of the body, which appear fragmented by the shadow fall-off. The head is now concealed within the shadows, presenting results that are strikingly similar to Ray's *Minotaure* (1933). The skin is more vibrant as a result of the hard light, and the protruding rib cage is more defined. Three methods of concealment are established, based on this light setup.

The first method, as *Experiment 20* demonstrates, involves moving any body part in and out of the beam of light. As the light fall-off is abrupt, any body part that moves outside the beam of light is abruptly cut off. Light is observed to cause a sudden rupture in the continuation of the body. As the body is seemingly dissected and concealed in the shadows, it compels further efforts to comprehend the corporeality within the darkness.

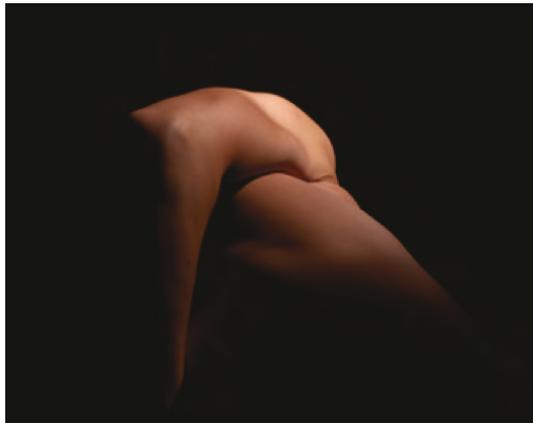


Figure 56: Lin Wei, *Experiment 22: Reveal body forms with emphasis on form and muscularity*, 2017

Figure 56<sup>10</sup> further demonstrates how the first method works in an alternative scenario, utilising the established lighting precedent. *Experiment 22* takes advantage of the shadows as the main component concealing the human body. The narrowness of the light, in particular, limits the visual cues such that only a portion of the body is revealed. Here, the body's back is facing the camera. Only the upper back is situated in the light. The sitter is tilting to the left, with the right arm twisting and bending behind the back, stretching to the left side of the body. The arm is bent at a 90-degree angle, with the wrist and hand dipping into the shadows. The left half of

---

<sup>10</sup> Experiment 22. Please refer to Section 1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Lighting and Shadow.

the forearm is faded into the shadows, resulting in the forearm converging into a sharp point at the wrist joint. The right shoulder is highlighted by the lighting, yet its usual sharp prominence is made unrecognisable because of the bent posture, revealing a rather fluid contour as the bicep connects to the shoulder, which, in turn, connects to the armpit and the not-so-obvious pectoral muscle. The body undergoes defamiliarisation under these lighting and posing conditions. With the assistance of the light and shadows, the defamiliarised body is presented as a projection that is floating in the black space.

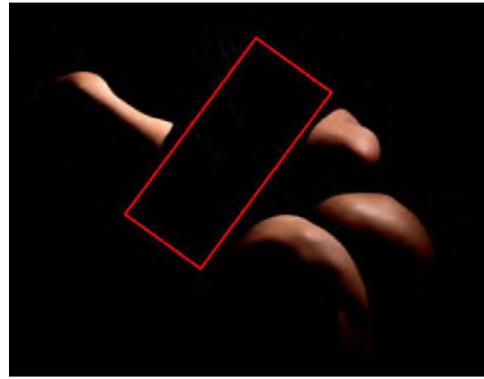
The results of *Experiment 22* draw upon Arnheim's theory (2004), which establishes how people can visually perceive, organise, and therefore structure shapes that are presented through optical projections. Arnheim's theory further suggests that an understanding of an object's properties is a requirement for humans to visually interpret an organised abstract form of the object (Arnheim 2004). These perceptual factors that allow for a comprehension of a visual complexity include, as Arnheim (2004) indicates, 'simplicity of shape, orderly grouping, clear overlapping, distinction of figure and ground, use of lighting and perspective to interpret spatial value' (157). In the case of *Experiment 22*, the object in question is the human body, which is previously established as one of the most familiar human objects. The requirements set by Arnheim also resonate with the parameters set for identifying human body parts from a computational perspective. Researcher Liang Zhao (2001) notes that contextual reasoning is needed to detect human bodies in order to localise human body parts, suggesting that the parameters for identifying human bodies are body contour, part recognition, humanness, body part location and outline, and similarity.

Based on the parameters set by Arnheim and Zhao, a number of criteria, such as skin tone and muscle contour, are met, which narrowly identify the subject as a human body in *Experiment 22*. Yet the body metamorphoses into a strange form as these parameters are interfered with — the body becomes visually peculiar, and presents distorted sections of the human body that do not conform with normative visual concepts. In addition to a distortion of form, a case of defamiliarisation of gender is also present in *Experiment 22*. Gender is an identifiable feature in determining body shape, and in the circumstances presented in the experiment (Figure 56), is obfuscated, as it becomes hidden from view. A recognition model for body parts normalisation, constructed by Qin Wu and Guodong Guo (2014), gathers available data on body shape and movement in an image, so as to identify the gender of an individual within an image. Two of four annotated body parts, which form the computational requirements for gender classification, are the torso and head (Wu and Guo, 2014). With the multiple nodes of identifiable human

traits concealed through the formative and determinant power of lighting, and the concealing elements of shadow, the body in *Experiment 22* cannot be immediately acquainted with. The subject bears both familiar and unfamiliar characteristics. It can be read as two bodies in tandem, in which one body is bent at the waist on the back of another body, or two polar opposite parts of the one body converge together.



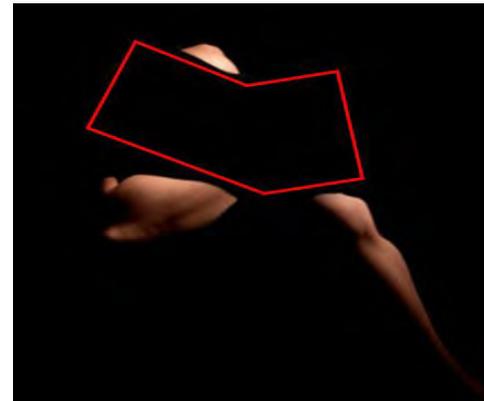
57(a)



57(b)



57(c)



57(d)

Figure 57: Lin Wei, *Experiment 24*: Utilise black material to assist the shadow effect in further concealing body elements, 2017

Using the existing lighting setup for its ability to define and emphasise human form, Figure 57, *Experiment 24*,<sup>11</sup> identifies a second method of utilising light and shadow, through a re-evaluation of the black velvet, as a functioning means of not just preventing light bounce, but also as a material that absorbs and suppresses light, given its low reflective power (Coblentz 1912). Combined with the darkness of the black background, the black velvet visibly occludes light from reflecting off its surface, as if a black void exists in the centre of the image. The void extends into the darkness of the black background, contributing to the visualisation of floating

---

<sup>11</sup> Experiment 24. Please refer Section 1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Lighting and Shadow.

masses of fragmented flesh. In one instance, Figure 57(a) finds the black velvet fabric wrapped around the arms in a half-dressed manner. In Figure 57(b), four portions of body mass become apparent in the image, as the velvet creates a chasm of separation between the masses. Both arms are abruptly cut off, highlighting a complete forearm on the left, cut off at the wrist, whereas the right forearm is severed in half. The fabric also conceals the head. The sitter's legs are pushed into view, such that only the kneecaps are visible in the photograph, fading out of the light to the bottom right of the frame. On the other hand, Figure 57(c) reveals three portions of the body in a triangular shape. The peak is the underside of the sitter's raised chin. For Figure 57(d), the velvet is wrapped around the left forearm as well as over the sitter's shoulders. The bottom-left body is the elbow joint and a portion of the forearm muscle. The bottom right body is the shoulder and triceps extending from the centre of the frame, sharpening to a point as it points towards the bottom right corner. The bodies become abstract and defamiliarised, in accordance with the deprivation of previously assessed parameters that are required for human body recognition (Zhao 2001). The images for *Experiment 24* forego any visual cues of body contour and localisation of body parts to unravel the masses of flesh. Although the body is fragmented by the light-absorbing fabric, familiarity maintains a perceptible presence in the photographs, through the provision of defined muscles and apparent skin colour.

The functioning of the black velvet as a stimulus of light occlusion to conceal the human body calls to mind the aesthetic use of the mask in surrealist photography. While it is stipulated that the mask is a form of concealment in which the face is generally hidden, so that any form of affiliation with the individual's identity is denied, the mask also opens up further expressions in the image. The presence of the mask in surrealist photographs serves to disrupt truth and reality. In an essay on fetishising fashion and culture, Whitney Chadwick argues that the function of the mask is to displace the reality that was hidden from view behind the mask (Chadwick 2001). In the context of the mask's potential to surpass the limits of the body, Elza Adamowicz, in contrast, refers to the mask as an ambivalent object — a substitute for that which is absent (Adamowicz 1998). These considerations reflect an extension to the notion of the mask, pertaining to the concealment of merely the *face*. By comparison, however, the velvet in *Experiment 24* does not present a disguise that replaces the reality it conceals, as a mask would suggest. Rather, by way of the displacement function of the mask, the velvet displaces the fabric of reality and causes a fragmentation in the projection of the human body.

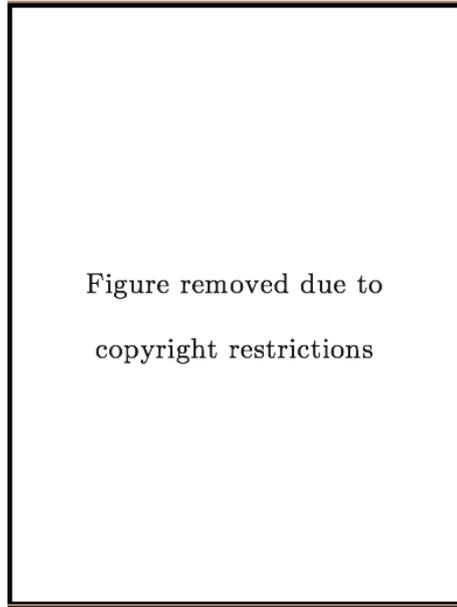


Figure 58: Robert Mapplethorpe, Self-portrait, 1988

An example of the second method, which functions to sever the body and manifest uncanny projections of floating body elements, can be observed in Robert Mapplethorpe's *Self-portrait* (1988) (Figure 58). Here, Mapplethorpe is photographed garbed in black attire that extends up his neck. A floating head remains in the top right, and a floating hand, grasping a cane capped with a skull, occupies the bottom-left of the frame. The photograph most obviously displays Mapplethorpe's head and hand in their entirety, alongside various symbolic elements that, as Jeffrey Grove (1999) elaborates, represent his 'corporeality in effigy', with the skull alluding to the 'inevitability of death' (230). Two technical considerations of concealment that are demonstrated in *Experiment 24* can be observed in his self-portrait. While the lighting setup establishes the body in isolation from the background, the utilisation of a black fabric material in conjunction with the black background results in the subject being disembodied. This produces a secondary effect for Mapplethorpe, where the visible parts of the body appear to float in space.

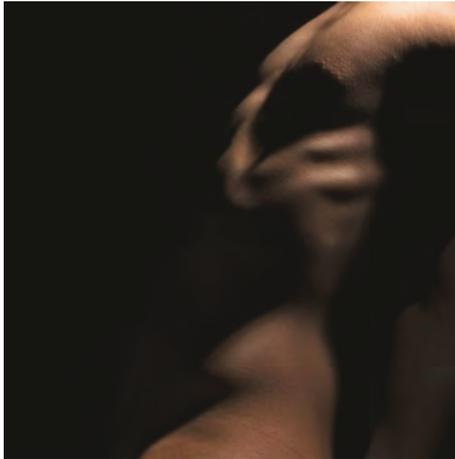


Figure 59: Lin Wei, Experiment 25: Casting shadows with body components, 2017

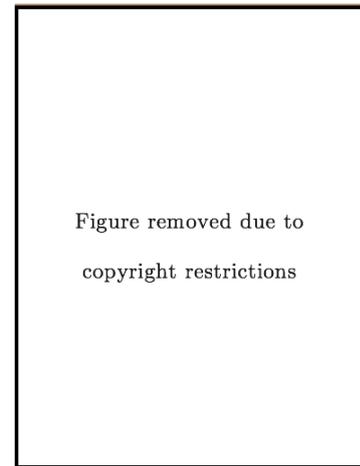


Figure 60: Man Ray, Minotaure, 1933

The third method that is ascertained through an investigation of the precedent lighting setup is the utilisation of body parts as the agent to cast shadows, and render portions of the body concealed within the shadows. Unlike the first method, which defines concealment through the physical manoeuvre of placing body parts within the boundaries of light to conceal, *Experiment 25*<sup>12</sup> (Figure 59) demonstrates movement through slight twists and contractions of the muscle, so as to cast shadows onto the body to conceal and manifest uncanny representations. The body is posed facing to the left of frame, back arched slightly, and belly sucked in. Given the position of the light in relation to the posture of the body, light is observed striking only certain parts of the body, due to its angle of incidence. The upper pectoral is illuminated, while a shadow is cast by the pectoral. The rib cage is accentuated, and the chasm where the belly usually resides has the impression of a gaping mouth. The breastbone, outlined by the shadow cast by the pectoral, gives the impression of a nose bridge. In addition, given the hard-light properties of the snoot modifier, skin texture is thrown into high relief, with the bumpy skin in the areola region prominent in the image. Skin texture, alongside skin colour and the shape of the body, further reinforces the fact that the object present in the image is a body. The image's outcome is the result of light distorting the representation of a particular body part, transfiguring it, so that it becomes unwittingly unfamiliar, yet at the same time familiar. Similar notions of muscle contraction can be linked back to Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) (Figure 60) and the ghastly representation of the minotaur, whereby the chasm that formulates the mouth owes to the contraction of the stomach region.

---

<sup>12</sup> Experiment 25. Please refer to Section 1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Lighting and Shadow.



Figure 61: Lin Wei, Experiment 26: Inverted placement of lighting — light positioned from below aiming upwards, 2017

So far, the elaborated demonstrations of lighting and shadow techniques are found and retrieved from a controlled lighting setup. Extending beyond the singular setup, alteration of perceptions of light is also a notable method in subsequent distorted perceptions of reality and the human body. In comparison to the preceding experiments, *Experiment 26*<sup>13</sup> (Figure 61) creates misleading impressions of human anatomy by illuminating the body from below with a rim light. Inverting the direction of light is a provocation to the normative perception of objects, based on the natural laws of light, where lighting is generally lit from top-down. In Figure 61, the photograph appears to show the underside of the shoulder, with the arm raised up and out, towards the left of the frame. In addition, the body appears to be tilted to the right, such that the ribcage is jutting out slightly. However, it is, in reality, the exact opposite. The joint is actually a hip joint and ‘the arm’ is actually the thigh. The sitter is upside down, resting on their shoulders, giving the image its contradictory appearance. In an essay on perceiving shapes from shading, alongside an assessment of how objects and shapes are derived and identified through various directions of illumination, Vilayanur Ramachandran (1988) suggests that a human’s natural interpretation of shapes is based on shadows, which rely on a light-from-above assumption. Considering that an individual’s perception of objects and vision is based on the way light reflects off objects, *Experiment 26* thus presents an unorthodox and unnatural illumination of the human body. By inverting the direction of lighting, it creates an unfamiliar and unnatural feeling in relation to a human’s experience with lighting, thus throwing the scene

---

<sup>13</sup> Experiment 26. Please refer to Section 1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Lighting and Shadow.

into disorder. These results are consistent with the results of an experiment performed by Harold Hill and Vicki Bruce in 1996 to test the accuracy of facial recognition. In one test, Hill and Bruce (1996) experimented with two directions of lighting — top lighting and bottom lighting — and how both affected the observers' interpretations of the face. Their results showed that observers were more likely to be confused when they were shown images that were lit from below. They note that matching 'surface images of faces was affected by a change in light ... matching views was better when light was from above than from below' (Hill and Bruce 1996, 993). The results of their experiment reveal that misrecognition was heightened when lighting differed from the cognitive bias, illuminating unfamiliar object shapes. A similar experiment by Liu, Collin, Burton, and Chaudhuri (1999) extended beyond the basic facial recognition outlined in Hill and Bruce's experiments. In addition to examining facial recognition<sup>14</sup> based on lighting direction at varying angles, photographs were inverted from positive to negative, showcasing images that contain slight traces of visual distortion and unfamiliar skin pigmentation (Liu et al. 1999). The study concludes that photographs with inverted lighting and inverted colours were just as recognisable as normal, top-lit photographs; a proposed solution to achieving significantly unrecognisable images was found to lie in directing the light from a wider degree or angle. This outcome is supported by *Experiment 26*, where unnatural impressions of the body are perceived as a result of the low angle light. In addition to the consequence of photographing the human body against a black background, the light, which serves as a rim light, throws the majority of the body mass into the shadows, and limits the viewer's ability to comprehend.

---

<sup>14</sup> While Hill and Bruce and Liu et al. investigate lighting effects on facial recognition, the experiments nonetheless pertain to an investigation of the recognition of a body component.



Figure 62: Lin Wei, Experiment 27: Generating shadows to conceal portions of the body using limb placement, 2017

Considering the aforementioned assessments of various ways in which lighting can be utilised to envision human bodies as radically other than their conventional reality, *Experiment 27*<sup>15</sup> (Figure 62) demonstrates an uncanny representation using two of the aforementioned lighting and shadow methods. Here, the body is cut in half at the belly by a shadow cast from the torso. The upper half of the body depicts the neck tucking in on the far right and seamlessly blending in with the chest, while the head is situated out of the beam of light and melding into the shadows. The body flexes, boring a hole in the clavicle region. The pectoral muscle is restructured by the lighting to resemble the upper regions of an arm. This type of perception is supported by the contextual rationale of body recognition that is outlined by Zhao (2001), where the positioning of such a body part can only be recognised as an arm given its positioning in relation to the shoulder joint. Going down this path of perceived reality further suggests that the arm can resemble the side of the torso. The characteristics, identity and gender of the body are uncertain, as distinguishable factors are concealed and obfuscated in the shadows.

---

<sup>15</sup> Experiment 27. Please refer to 1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Lighting and Shadow.



Figure 63: Lin Wei, Close-up of bottom-left of *Experiment 27: Generating shadows to conceal portions of the body using limb placement*, 2017

Yet what is frightening in *Experiment 27* is not this fleshly lump in the top half of the frame but rather, as Figure 63 highlights, the looming emergence of the fleshly mass in the lower half of the frame. Here, the body manifests from a combination of two limbs — the body’s right arm stretches to the bottom of the frame, while a knee rises into the boundary of the light and conceals the arm from the wrist downwards. The combination of the knee and the protruding and overly gargantuan limb offers an entirely incomprehensible, yet comprehensible body element that is phallic in appearance. The distortion is heightened with the addition of the crop, which recontextualises and offers a new perspective of the body. Such a representation of the phallus invokes sensations of the uncanny through a release of castration anxiety.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, the uncanny is further supported by the presence of the double. Freud, who echoes Otto Rank’s (2012) observation of the double, notes the ‘invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction ... from having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death’ (Freud 1919, 235). The double occurs through evidence of human primitiveness in the form of the texture and the fleshly colour of skin. Here, it is suggested that the double acts as a protection from death, or the far-reaching unfamiliar, yet doubles as a narrative of life, otherwise interpreted as the familiar. It presents an illusion of reality in its invocation of an uncanny sensation. Considering this, the fleshly and human skin in Figure 63 offers a sense of familiarity, despite the strangeness of its representation; reality is not completely effaced, allowing a sensation to arise within the viewer that keeps reality grounded despite the distortion.

---

<sup>16</sup> Freud (1919) refers to the return of the repressed familiar as one requirement to the invocation of the uncanny. The mother’s phallus, which only exists in the memories of the child, is once again present in the image.

Furthermore, the body in Figure 63 thus impersonates an archetype that hides the reality of their identity. Concealment is pervasive in the image, as it strives to reduce the body to its purest form, void of identity and gender to realise distortions that are familiarly human, yet peculiar in its depiction. By manipulating light to achieve effects of fragmented bodies and distorted forms, the body form embodies a power that can transgress the boundaries of real flesh and affect human sensibility. The notion of a ruptured reality is grounded in surrealist photographic theory, where the photographic medium is exploited to produce a paradox that reorganises conceptions of reality (Krauss, 1981). The result is the creation of a peculiar body part that is seemingly real yet can only be irrevocably fictitious.

The following section details the 13 experiments conducted for this subchapter. The experiments follow a structure of examining the basics of lighting, starting with a simple one-light setup, then: investigating consequences of more than one light and illuminating from different angles; eliminating lighting variables; transitioning from high-key to low-key; technically analysing lighting in a comparative precedent photograph that invokes the uncanny body; simulating the precedent lighting; and finally, applying and advancing upon the knowledge gained from a heightened understanding of precedent methods of lighting and shadow, to invoke the uncanny body in the photograph.

### 1.4.1 — Photographic Experiments in Light and Shadow

Experiment 15: Broad front-on lighting on body against white background

Experiment 16: Posed body illuminated from below eye-level — high-key

Experiment 17: Posed body illuminated from below eye-level — low-key

Experiment 18: 3-point-lighting illuminating the posed body

Experiment 19: Preliminary test of singular light source against black background — softbox modifier

Experiment 20: Emulation of lighting used in Man Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) — softbox modifier

Experiment 21: Emulation of lighting used in Man Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) — snoot modifier

Experiment 22: Lump of fleshly mass through removal of limbs from image

Experiment 23: Reveal body forms with emphasis on form and muscularity

Experiment 24: Utilise black material to assist the shadow effect in further concealing body elements

Experiment 25: Casting shadows with body components

Experiment 26: Inverted placement of lighting — light positioned from below aiming upwards

Experiment 27: Generating shadows to conceal portions of the body using limb placement

## Experiment 15: Broad front-on lighting on body against white background

---

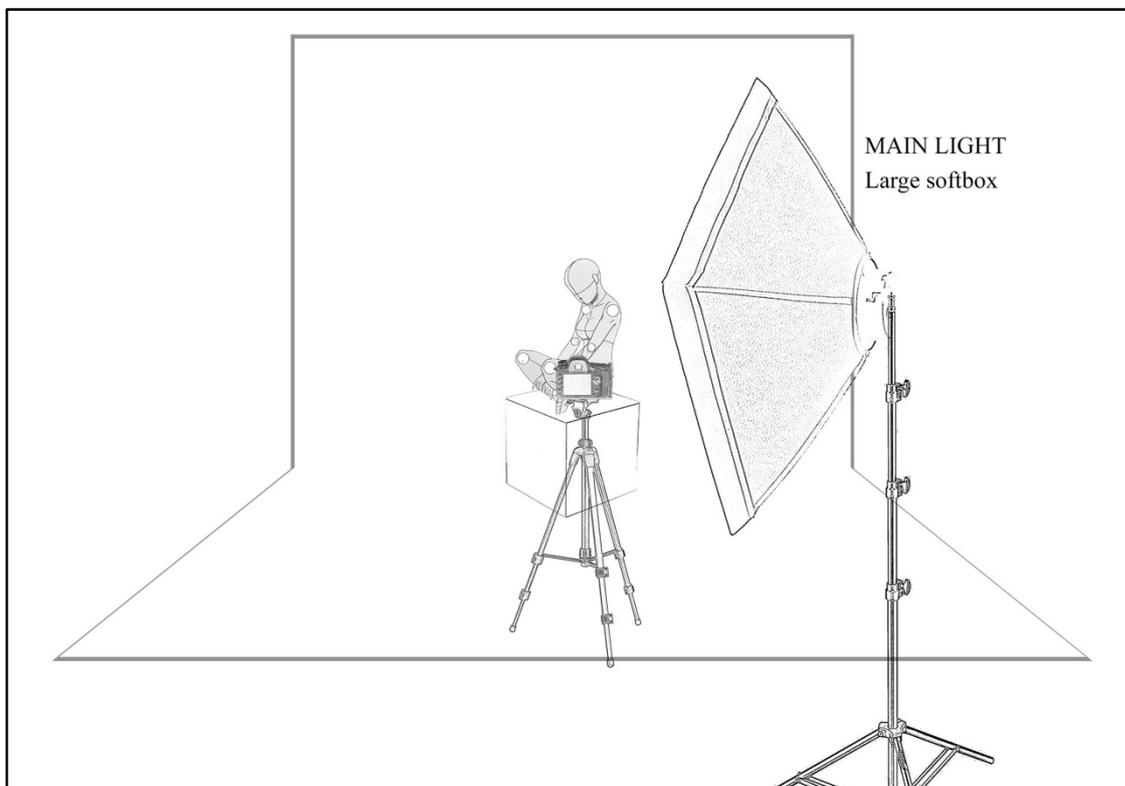
### Aim:

This experiment tests the simplest of lighting techniques, a single broad light aimed at the front of the subject from either camera left or right, and its effects on the body.

### Method:

A large softbox will be set up on camera right and above eye level. The light will be directed at the body.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

Shutter speed: 1/100

Aperture: f/8

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera right, 3 metres away from subject and above eye level, aimed at subject.

### Post-production settings:

Colour-correction for neutral white.

**Results:****Reflection:**

The body is shown as is, in its purest form without any adornments. The body is not distorted in any particular fashion by the light. This experiment confirms the output of lighting from a softbox to be diffused and renders the image's contrast and colours as flat. Skin texture does not 'pop' due to the low contrast. The softbox lighting diffuses the blemishes and flaws of the skin into the wider surface area, making the observation of skin texture less obvious. Also noted is not much of a separation between body components, as the arm appears to be slightly blending into the torso. This may be attributed to the distance of the light from the subject. At three metres away, the further the light is from the subject, the more lighting contrast is reduced, as there is a reduction in light wrapping around the subject. This is further stimulated by the large size of the softbox, which renders all details visible, with minimal shadow apart from the slight shadow fall-off on the left.

Soft lighting is great for concealing flaws of the fleshly skin; however, this may be ineffective for when the image requires such flaws to represent the reality of the body. A dynamic element is thus required in order for a distortion of the viewer's senses to occur. The next experiment will see to downgrading the size of the softbox, as well as introduce a smaller light placed below eye-level in an attempt to affect the way viewers perceive the subject. This is based on the strange phenomenon of lighting from below, whereas normal visuals are registered based on lighting from above.

## Experiment 16: Posed body illuminated from below eye-level — high-key

---

### Aim:

This experiment will aim to light the body from below eye level in order to affect and alter visual perceptions of the body. The experiment aims to develop further body distortions based on previous experiments with the body on the plinth.

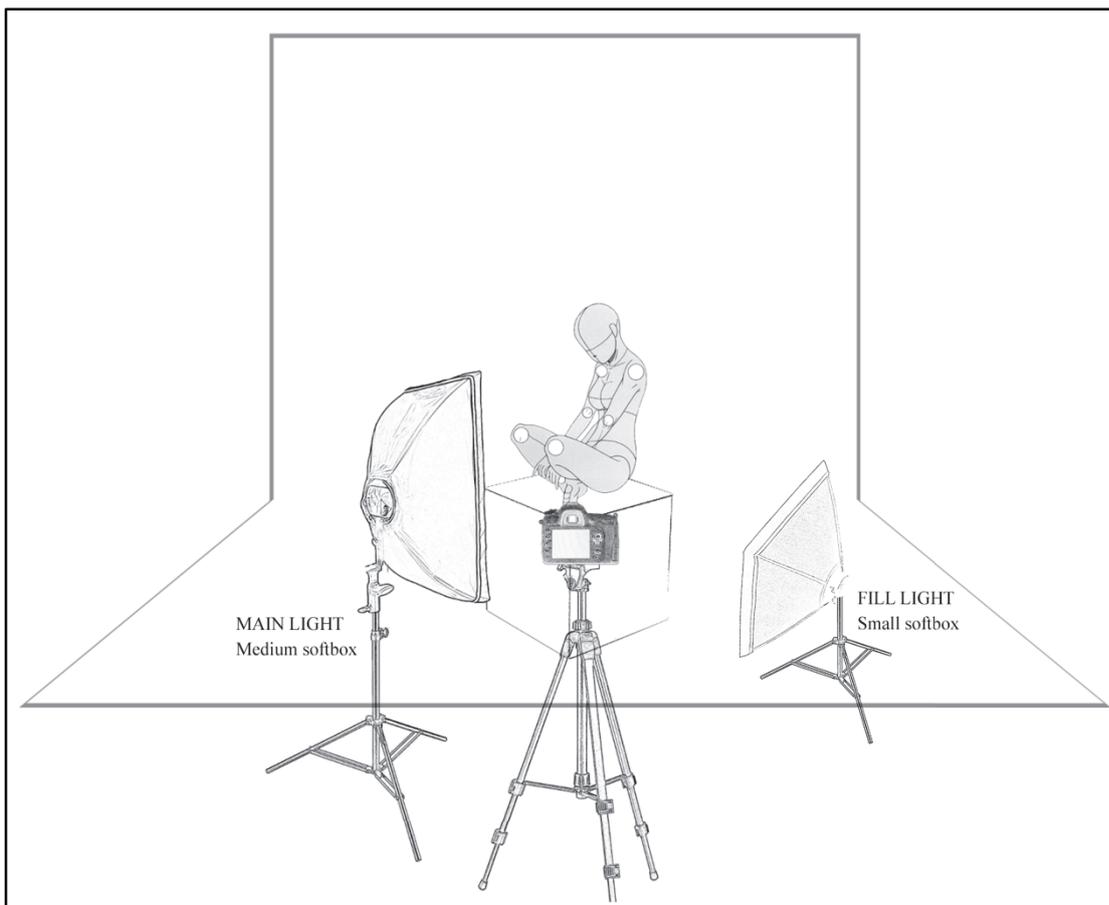
### Precedent:

*Experiment 15*, as well as posing principles from Section 1.3: Posing the Solitary Body.

### Method:

Hide identifiable body parts in an attempt to reduce the familiarity of the body. Rely inherently on the body rather than rely on external elements, e.g. shadows, to conceal the body. The experiment will use two lights situated below eye-level, and also utilise a white background.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/8  
ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Medium softbox on camera left, slightly below eye level with the body on the plinth.

Fill light: Small softbox on camera right, level with the plinth, slightly angled upwards, directed at the bottom of the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction for neutral white.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

This experiment concerns two ways in which lighting alters how the body as subject is perceived in the photograph.

Firstly, the softbox is lowered to a height just below the sitter's level. This runs counter to the familiar direction of a natural light source, which can be attributed to the sun and its top-down lighting. Nikos Metallinos (1996) suggests that 'when the same light source is placed below eye level, a different scene is created, altering the atmosphere and creating mysterious, unusual and uneasy feelings' (241). An example, as Metallinos notes, is the paintings of Rembrandt, where sometimes, the lighting is from below.

Secondly, the lighting in this experiment was subtle, and did not effectively outline the form and anatomy of the body when distorted. This may be due to having two light sources, especially when they are placed at angles that cancel out the shadows cast by the other light. To highlight this observation, the main light source is lit slightly from above. The conditions of this light positioning and its angle of direction cast shadows on the right side of the body. The secondary light, conveniently labelled as the 'fill light', is lit from below and from the right, effectively

filling in the shadows that are cast from the main light. Thus, the lighting appears flat, and the body does not convey depth or shadows.

To better analyse the unfamiliar perceptions caused by lighting from below, the next experiment will remove the main light and make the fill light the singular and primary light for the experiment. To place emphasis on the strangeness that may be invoked by such lighting, the next experiment will test a dynamic perspective and shoot the body at a wide focal length. Also, to prevent any uncontrollable lighting in the studio environment, the background will be switched to black.

## Experiment 17: Posed body illuminated from below eye-level — low-key

---

### Aim:

This experiment approaches the body form as in *Experiment 16*, but with a significant difference in lighting. I aim to illuminate the body with a low-key light setup in order to effect images of distorted bodies. Only one light will be used and it will be placed below eye-level.

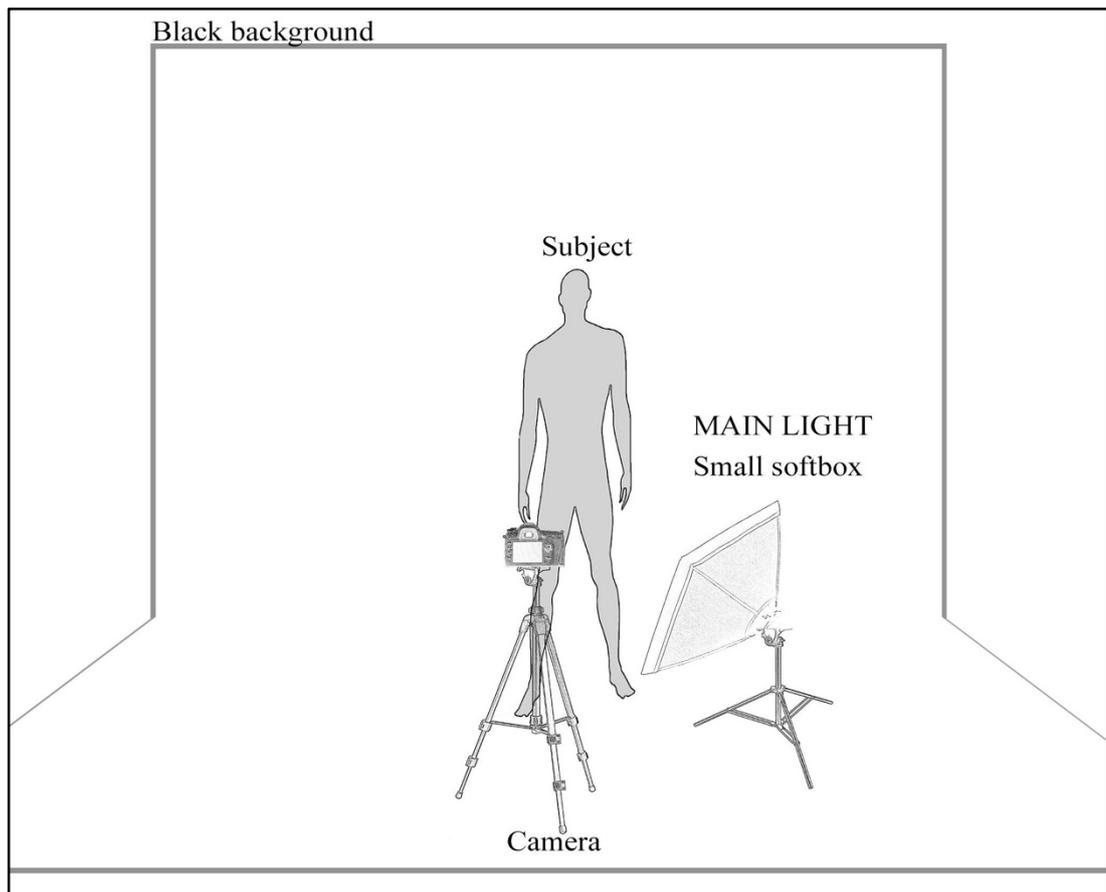
### Precedent:

*Experiment 16*

### Method:

Utilise a black background, and one small softbox located at floor level, aimed upwards at the body. A wide-angle lens will be used for a more dynamic approach in photographing the body.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

Shutter speed: 1/160

Aperture: f/5.6

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Small softbox on camera right, at floor level, aimed upwards at body

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

The low-key look of the body against a black background with harsh shadows resembles the dark photographs of bodies that the surrealist photographers produced. A noteworthy example is Man Ray's *Minotaure* (1933). In the case of the light directed from below, the effects are much clearer in this image than the last experiment with a high-key setup. The effects of lighting experiments are clearer when shot against a black background, due to minimal distractions and a distinct contrast between illuminated subject and dark background.

The wide-angle perspective visually distorts the body into a looming monstrosity; however, the skin-texture tells the spectator that it is still a body. This is another avenue worth exploring in distorting the body. Again, the soft lighting from the softbox diffuses the skin, making the flaws less noticeable. The skin texture that is present in the image is identified to be present due to the angle the main light is placed at. The more to the side and further away from the camera the lighting is placed, such as side-on or placed behind the subject, the more texture will be shown, due to the nuances of shadows that are cast from the skin texture.

The closer the light is to the subject, the more sudden the light fall-off is, as well as producing a stronger contrast, which emphasises the depth of the body in the photograph. Furthermore, due to the low-key setting, with the subject placed against a black background, the body appears to be slightly merging into the shadows. This is an interesting proposition that will be pursued in future experiments as a method to conceal certain body elements using shadow. For the next experiment, however, I will test harsher lighting modifiers<sup>17</sup> that can emphasise the texture of skin further. An example to follow will be the vibrant imagery seen in fashion photography.

---

<sup>17</sup> Hard lighting creates strong shadow lines. Soft lighting diffuses shadows, as noted in *Experiment 15*.

## Experiment 18: 3-point-lighting illuminating the posed body

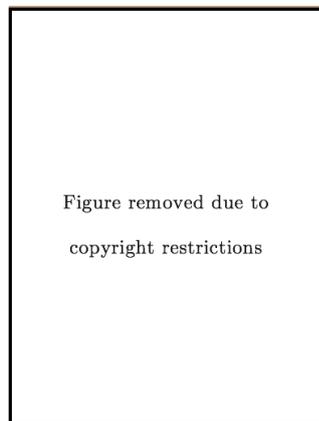
---

### Aim:

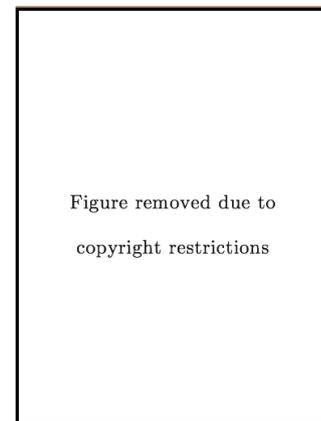
This experiment aims to enhance the look of the distorted body made possible through posture. The experiment will sculpt the posed body with light to further highlight the musculature, body shape and contours. Light as a tool has the potential to sculpt and shape forms. It can highlight and emphasise certain body parts, and it can cast certain body parts into the shadows, such as in Man Ray's method of concealment.

This experiment will base its lighting on Petrina Hicks and the incorporation of commercial photographic lighting in her *Untitled* (2005) series. A standard 3-point lighting seems to be employed with harsh lighting used for the rim lighting.

### Precedent:



Shenae and Jade



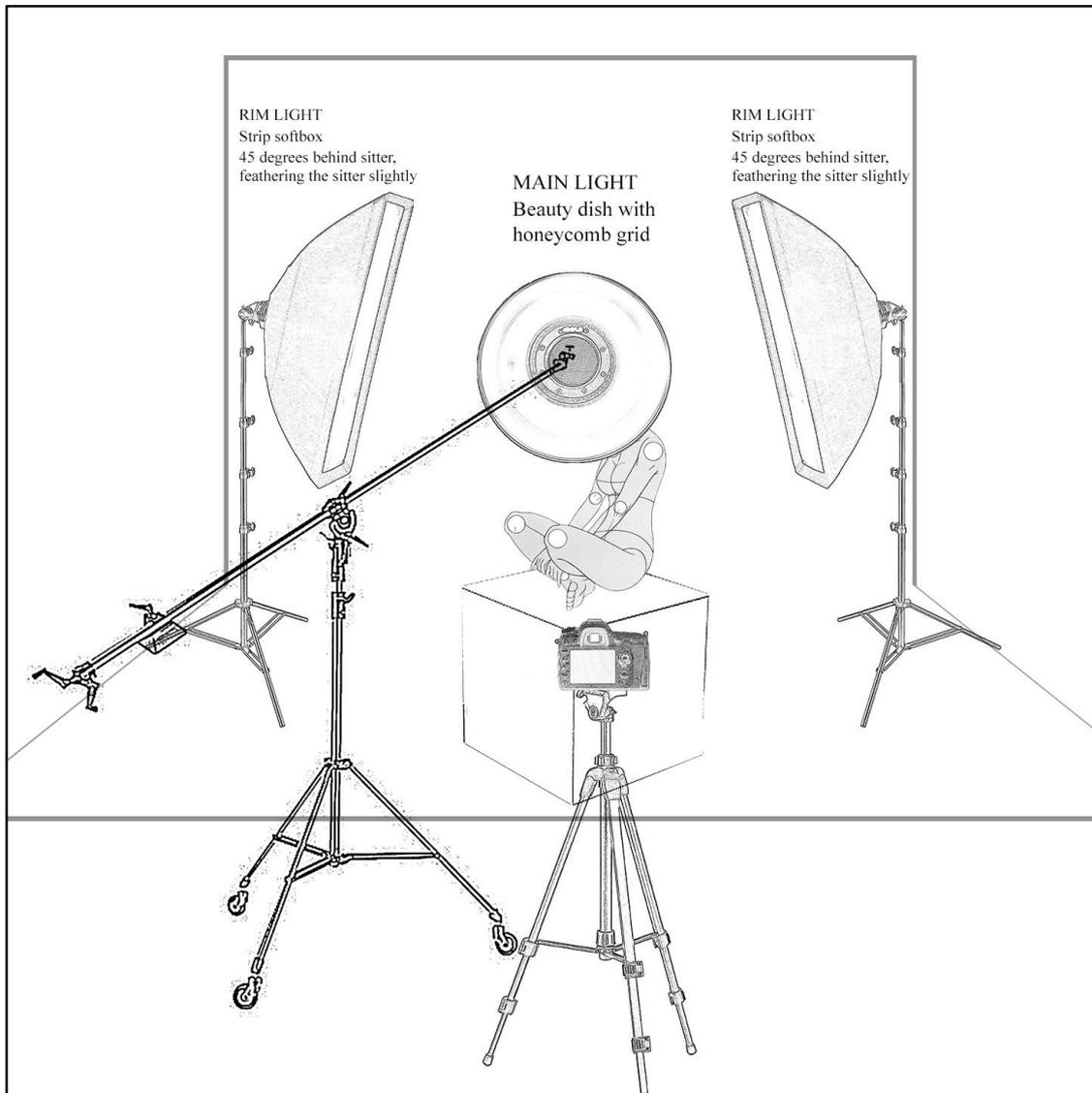
Lauren

Petrina Hicks, *Untitled* series, 2005

### Method:

Revisiting the body form on a plinth, this time adopting a 3-point lighting setup. This experiment will follow in the path of commercial (more specifically, a fashion setup) photography, similar to lighting in Petrina Hicks' *Untitled* (2005) series. Industry-standard equipment and software will be used. The lighting to be used will be from the Profoto brand (widely used in the fashion photography industry), and the RAW tether capture software will be Capture One Pro, exported into Photoshop for further retouching.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/8  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Beauty dish with grid, above camera, in front of model.  
Kick/Rim light: 2x strip boxes with grids behind subject on both left and right, skimming the subject.

**Results:****Reflection:**

The 3-point-lighting technique is a standard method used in visual media such as video, film, still-photography and computer-generated imagery. Further analysis of Hicks's *Untitled* (2005) series reveals that the warmth (i.e. reds, orange, yellows) of the photographs are desaturated. This is reminiscent of the colour grading found in advertising photography and composite retouching.

The image is colour graded by desaturating the skin tones, which makes it slightly plastic and unreal. By contrast, adjusting the luminance (lightness) of the selective colours retains and brightens the colour of the skin tone; however, the overall skin tone is different compared to Hicks's *Untitled* (2005) and is much darker than I anticipated. This may be due to the original colour of skin that correlates with the model's ethnicity. A number of favourable factors contribute towards Hicks's photographs, which I identify primarily as the tones of elements: a combination of pale skin, blonde hair and white clothing. Although this fundamental difference procures a different result compared to Hicks's, it does not necessarily affect the perception of reality.

The results convey a commercial aesthetic, due to the 3-point lighting; however, this is a secondary concern. The muscles are more sculpted and thus the body appears more three-dimensional. This result is confirmed by Jeremy Birn (2006), who notes that, 'One of the main goals of three-point lighting is to model with light. To model with light is to illuminate a subject so that your two-dimensional output shows the subject's full three-dimensional form' (36). The grid modifiers that are placed on all the light sources help direct the light into a narrower beam, which reduces light spill, and assists in creating more shadows on the body. In addition to the colour grading, the 3-point lighting setup also makes the body more unreal and plastic-like. This can be attributed to the glossy sheen of the skin, which is caused by the beauty dish. The beauty dish is noted to create hot spots in the highlights, while creating a sharp fall-off into the shadows. The addition of the grid modifier focuses the light beam, which emphasises the shadows.

In retrospect, increasing the height of the front main light and bringing it closer to the subject further defines the muscles and identifies the object as a body. I will apply this hypothesis in the next experiment. Furthermore, emphasising the shadows may be beneficial to submerging the body into darkness in a low-key lighting setup, as it can cause body elements to drop off into the shadows.

## Experiment 19: Preliminary test of singular light source against black background — softbox modifier

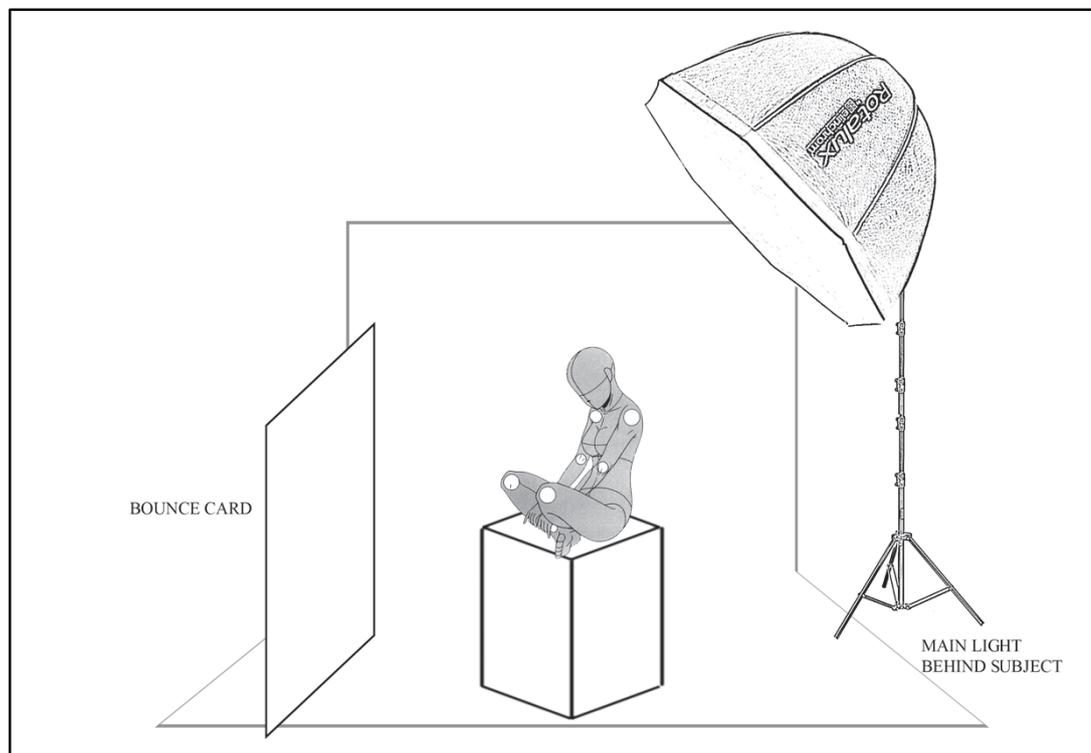
### Aim:

The experiment aims to observe the effects of lighting the posed body within a low-key studio setup. The light source will be placed close to the body to emphasise the shadow fall-off in an attempt to merge the body into the background.

### Method:

The body will be placed on a plinth against a black background. One softbox will be used to focus the effects of a singular light without the distraction of other variables.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

Shutter speed: 1/160

Aperture: f/8

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox modifier, camera right, 2 metres high, behind the body.

### Post-production settings:

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Whites not corrected for neutrality — a slight warmth is applied to emphasise the colour of skin.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

The soft lighting by the softbox is aesthetically pleasing and comforting. Although the flaws and blemishes are not obvious or emphasised due to the soft lighting, this is compensated for by the depiction of more form and muscle nuances. I identify this as occurring through the placement of the light source behind the body. One issue that arises is the variable of spill light caused by the softbox modifier, which illuminates the background slightly. The background appears grey when the paper backdrop is originally black. Another variable is the bounce lighting from the bounce card. This slightly fills in the shadows on the left of the body. This needs to be rectified for a more controlled analysis of the lighting effects of the body. The next experiment will flag the lighting so that it will not spill onto the background.

The lighting is also noted to create a particular, mysterious mood for the body to be photographed in. This may add to the acceptance of a distorted body that invokes strange sensations in the spectators. This sensation recalls Man Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) and its eerie depiction of a minotaur — a strange form that arises from the shadows and is manifested from the human body. The next experiment will attempt to mimic the results of Ray's *Minotaure* (1933), for his lighting is able to facilitate the rise of an uncanny form.

## Experiment 20: Emulation of lighting used in Man Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) — softbox modifier

---

### Aim:

This experiment is inspired by Man Ray and his dramatic lighting technique in *Minotaure* (1933), in which the arms fade into the background, concealed by shadows to reveal a frightful form that is incomprehensible from its original. The experiment will analyse and imitate the lighting used in *Minotaure* (1933) and thus serve as the basis for further exploration into the possibility of unveiling unfamiliar forms through this lighting, and concealing portions of the body in the shadow. This set of experiments will explore these strange forms juxtaposed against a dark background. Traces of distortion will be effected by dramatic lighting and shadow, generated by a one-light setup in the studio.

### Precedent:

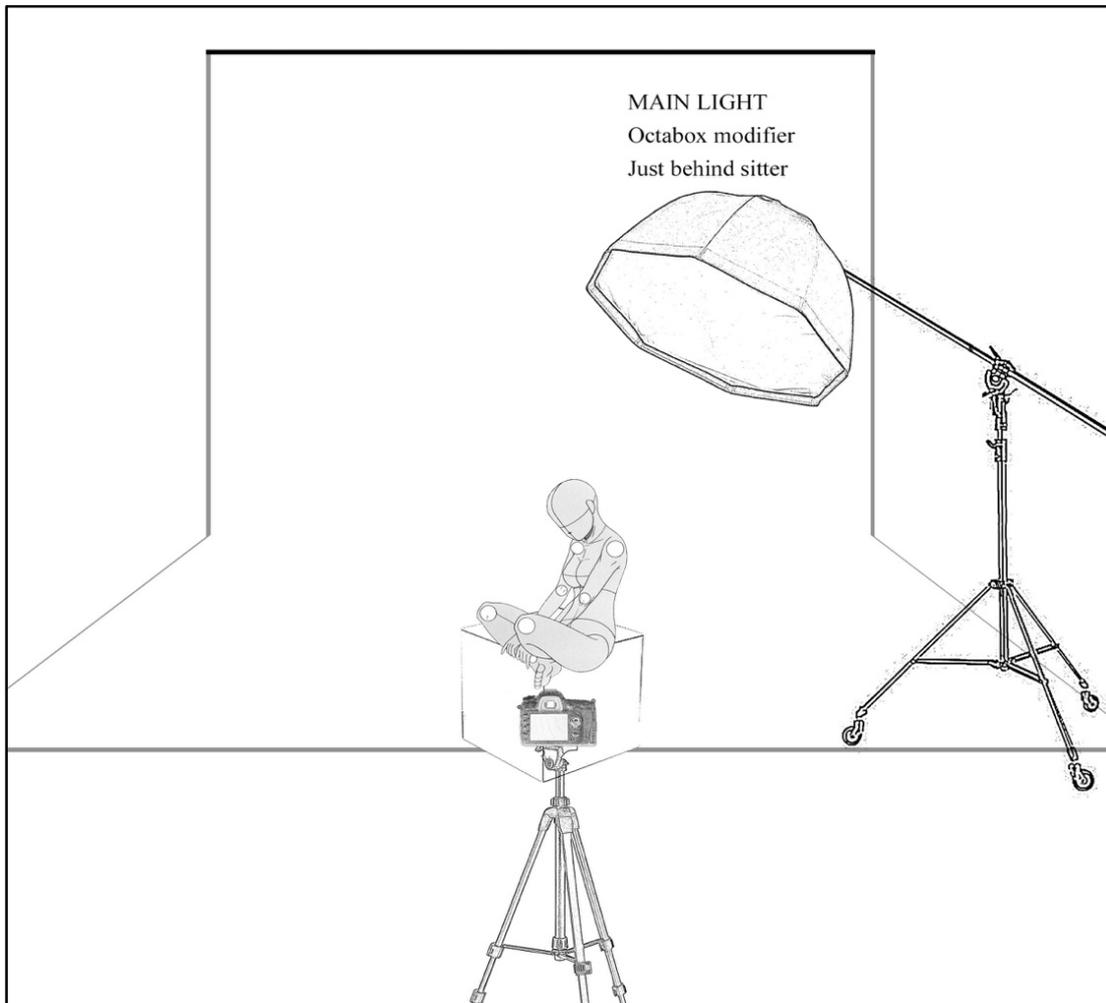


Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933

### Method:

Analyse Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) and set up lighting accordingly. To eliminate one extra variable, the sitter's posture will imitate the posture in *Minotaure* (1933). Test with softbox modifier first.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/16  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Octabox modifier, rim lighting, camera right, behind sitter to the right, approximately 1 metre above the sitter's head, aimed at the sitter's left shoulder.

**Post-production settings:**

Photoshop/Adobe Camera Raw: Increase the black input levels by 10 to further darken background and make certain body elements less visible.

**Results:****Reflection:**

Although a male subject is used in this experiment in contrast with the female body in Ray's *Minotaure* (1933), the purpose here is to analyse and recreate the lighting of *Minotaure* (1933) based on a number of identifiers. Key references to analyse in Ray's photograph are the light and shadow underneath the ribcage, shadow fall-off on the arms, missing head and neck, as well as a gaping chasm of a stomach.

Firstly, flagging the light by angling it away from the background and letting the light beam just skim the body allows the body to still be illuminated, while the background is submerged into a deep black. Unfortunately, however, the lighting here does not accomplish the ideals posed in Ray's photograph. The lighting in this experiment is too soft. The lighting does not make the body 'pop' and contrast from the background. Instead, the lighting blends the body into the background as a whole; the highlights do not save the body from submerging. The body features are still quite recognisable and do not undergo defamiliarisation. The next experiment will utilise the flagging principles and angle of lighting, as noted in this experiment, and apply the established points of a narrower light beam from *Experiment 18*. By combining these lighting considerations together, the lighting will hopefully deepen the shadows at the border of the body while simultaneously allow the body to emerge from the background.

## Experiment 21: Emulation of lighting used in Man Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) — snoot modifier

---

### Aim:

Further improving upon my analysis of Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) in the previous experiment, this experiment will aim to once again attempt to imitate Ray's lighting in his photograph. The experiment will utilise a narrow and harsher beam of light that will subject the body to defamiliarisation and allow it to emerge from the shadows.

### Precedent:

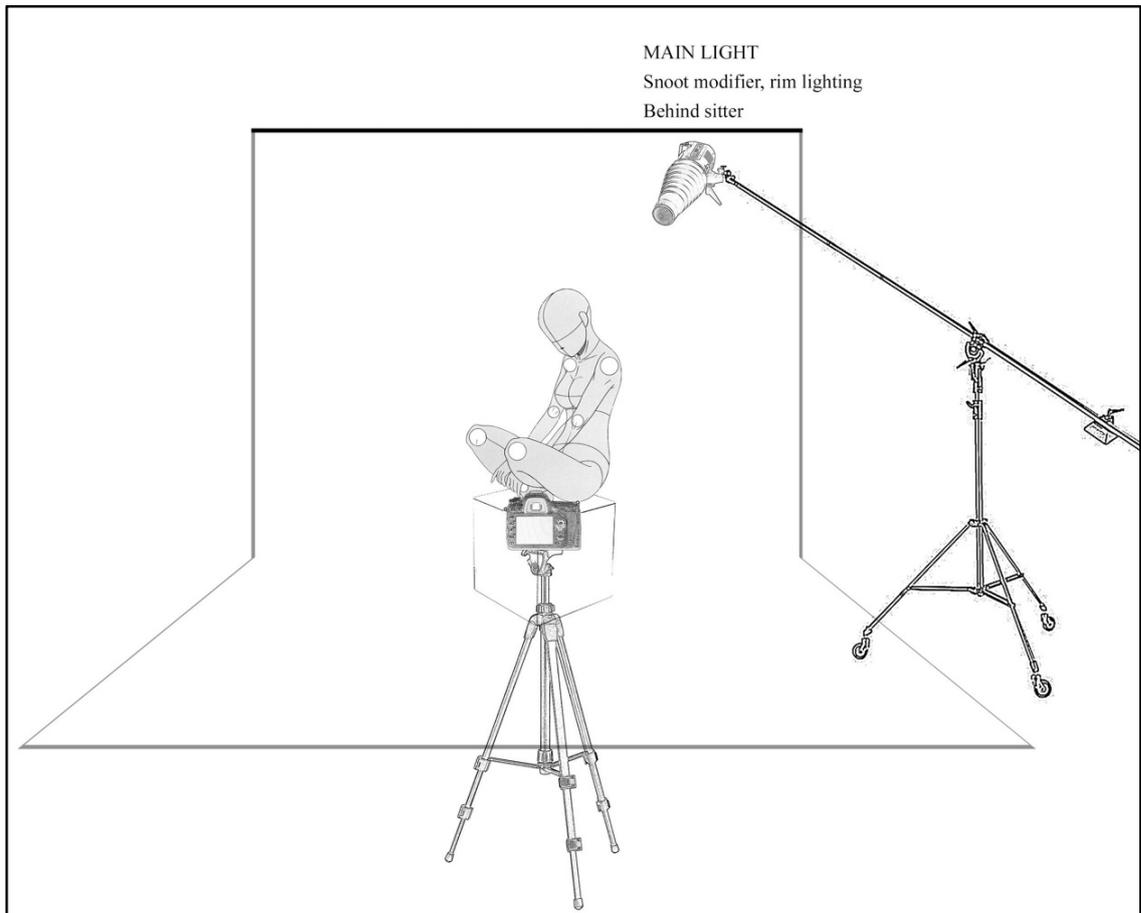


Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933

### Method:

Swap a soft light for a harsher and smaller light — the snoot modifier — to create a sharper light fall-off.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/16  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Snoot modifier with grid attachment, rim lighting, camera right, behind sitter to the right, approximately 1 metre above the sitter's head. Light is not directly facing the sitter's body, but turned slightly so that it is aimed more to the back of the sitter's head, feathering a great portion of the front of the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Photoshop/Adobe Camera Raw: Increase the black input levels by 10 to further darken background and make certain body elements less visible.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

The lighting is getting very close to Ray's *Minotaure* (1933). Exchanging the softbox modifier for a snoot produces great effects. A striking feature of snoot lighting is that the beam is very concentrated and directional, resulting in only a portion of the image being lit up. Furthermore, the snoot has a grid attachment, which creates a more directional beam. The snoot modifier also does not have a diffusing panel to soften the light, making the light harsher. This results in sharper shadows.

The snoot lighting is noted to greatly assist in fading the body into the shadows. Here the lighting is directed at the torso of the body from behind the subject. As the arms are raised up, they move away from the directional beam of light. The lower half of the body is also cut off from the light, as the body is posed with its back arched and arms raised, in addition to the belly being sucked in. As a result, this type of directional lighting effectively conceals the body in the shadows, while striking features manifest a strange type of form. This is reminiscent of severing and dismembering the body. In this case, the shadow is effecting this action. Thus, this experiment also recognises that shadows can be achieved not just by lighting, but are also determined by posture, which consequently determines what is severed and defamiliarised.

Although it is not immediately ascertained when the snoot modifier was first used in photography or cinema, or when it was first introduced, the surrealists had available to them zoom spots and Fresnel lenses that were prominent movie lighting modifiers. Further research identifies that the snoot modifier has links to the theatrical modifier, termed 'top hat'. Yet it is also unclear whether and when the top hat lighting was introduced to photography.

Moving forward, future experiments will utilise this lighting setup to explore how it can be used to defamiliarise and distort representations of the body in the manner Ray achieved with

*Minotaure* (1933). The next experiment will remove familiar components using principles of posture in Section 1.3: Posing the Solitary Body. I will thus attempt to remove limbs and gender from the image either by concealing them in the shadows, or through posture.

## Experiment 22: Lump of fleshly mass through removal of limbs from image

---

### Aim:

To embody my self-created version of Man Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) lighting technique to produce my own version of distorted bodies. This experiment aims to create abstracted forms of the body by concealing the body with light and shadow. In contrast to the previous experiment, this experiment will focus on more complete forms as opposed to divisive abstractions.

This experiment is also inspired by Man Ray's *Anatomies* (1929), where the sitter's head is thrown back into the shadows, revealing a strange appearance that resembles a phallus.

### Precedent:



Man Ray, *Anatomies*, 1929

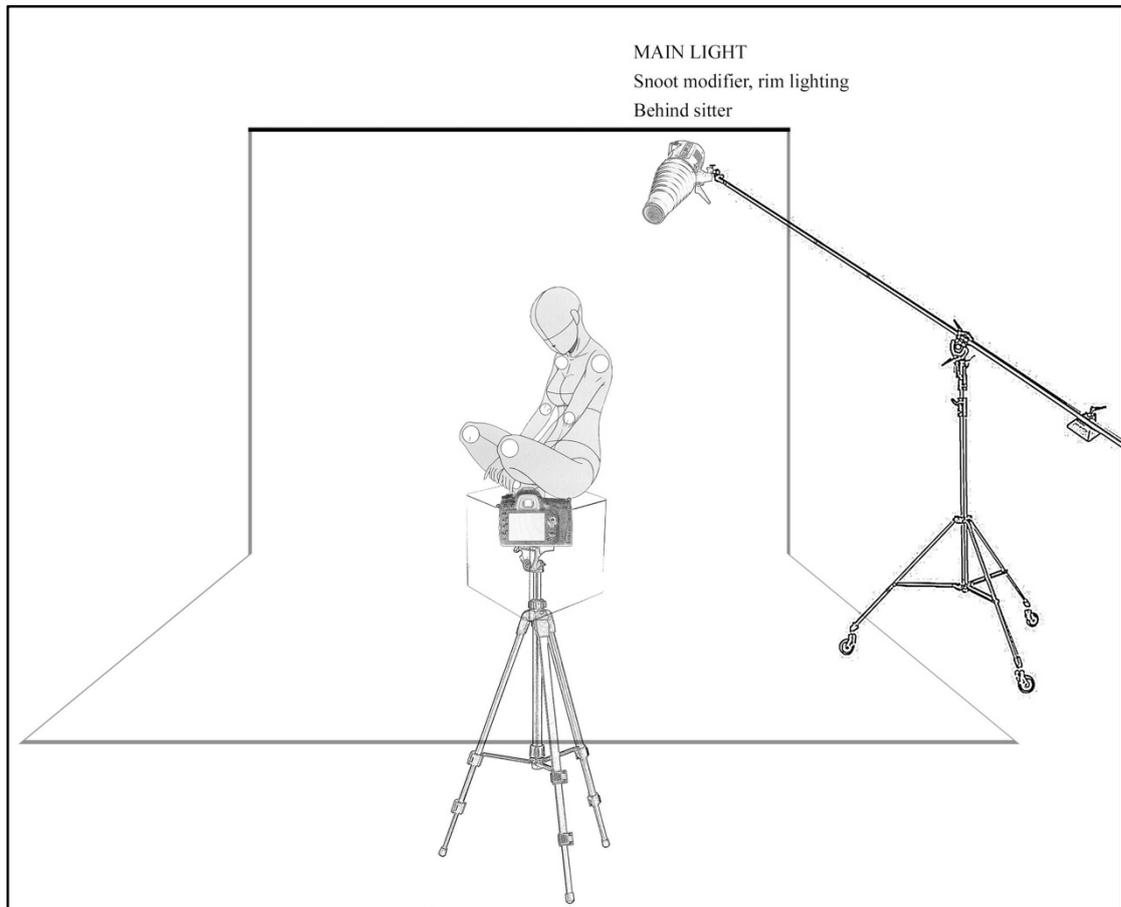


Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933

### Method:

The sitter is placed 3 metres away from a black background. A snoot lighting is positioned above the sitter. A dark black cloth is placed over the white plinth for the sitter to sit on when posing to eliminate any distractions. The sitter will pose in ways where their limbs are thrown out of the lighting.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

Shutter speed: 1/160

Aperture: f/16

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

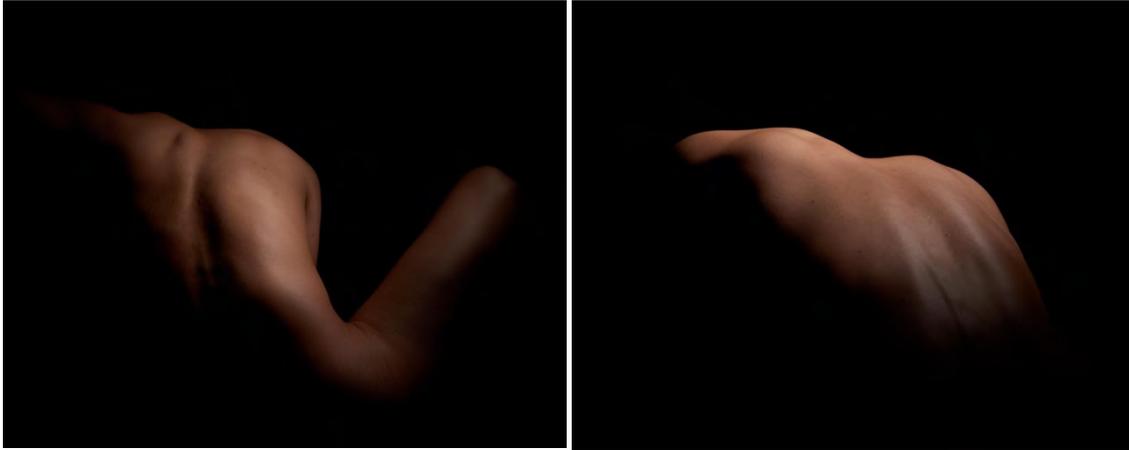
**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Snoot modifier, rim lighting, camera right, behind sitter to the right, approximately 1 metre above the sitter's head. Light is not directly facing the sitter's body, but turned slightly so that it is aimed more to the back of the sitter's head, feathering a great portion of the front of the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Photoshop/Adobe Camera Raw: Increase the black input levels by 10 to further darken background and make certain body elements less visible.

**Results:**



(a)

(b)

**Reflection:**

This lighting setup proves the ability to reveal abstract forms of the body that are incomprehensible with clear lighting. The body must pose within the boundaries of the snoot light. Utilising the boundaries is noticeably advantageous, as the edge of the light effectively disrupts the entire visual of the body form. The body appears to loom out from the shadows. Increasing the black input levels by 10 deepens the dark background and smooths any sharp edge that prevents the body from submerging seamlessly into the background. The presence of form is evident and the form is still determined as human.

The forms, however, are not peculiar to the degree of incomprehension or perplexity. This can possibly be attributed to its subtle and flat presence, which does not have enough impact in shifting the viewer's perception of the body. Aside from this, at one point the sitter began to sweat, due to extraneous posing. I take note that the sweat adds a layer of highlight onto the body, and also becomes another quality in identifying the form as a human body.

The next experiment will focus more on angling the body to emphasise the musculature, while distorting the body through posing. It will also test the extremities of the light boundary, and how far the body can be posed before being severed, as well as revealing its identifiable characteristics.

## Experiment 23: Reveal body forms with emphasis on form and muscularity

---

### Aim:

The experiment will place the body at the extremities of the light boundary and examine how far the body can be posed before being severed, as well while retaining traits that are familiarly unfamiliar.

The experiment is motivated by Ray's *Minotaure* (1933), and how the arms are ascending out of the frame to the point where the hands are dismembered at the wrist.

### Precedent:

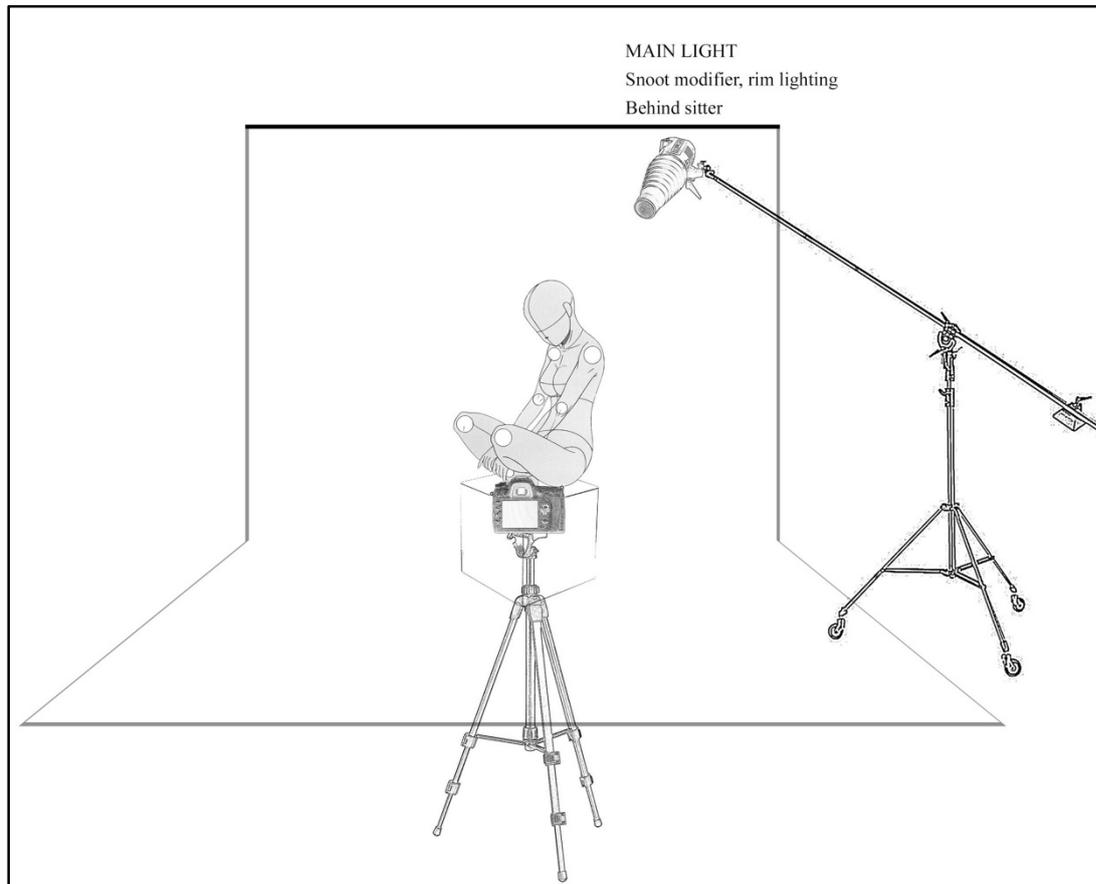


Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933

### Method:

Set a sitter 3 metres away from a black background. A snoot lighting is positioned above the sitter. A dark black cloth is placed over the white plinth for the sitter to sit on when posing, to eliminate any distractions. The camera is positioned 1 metre further away compared to previous experiments. The focal length will be wider than *Experiment 22* to provide more negative space surrounding the body.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

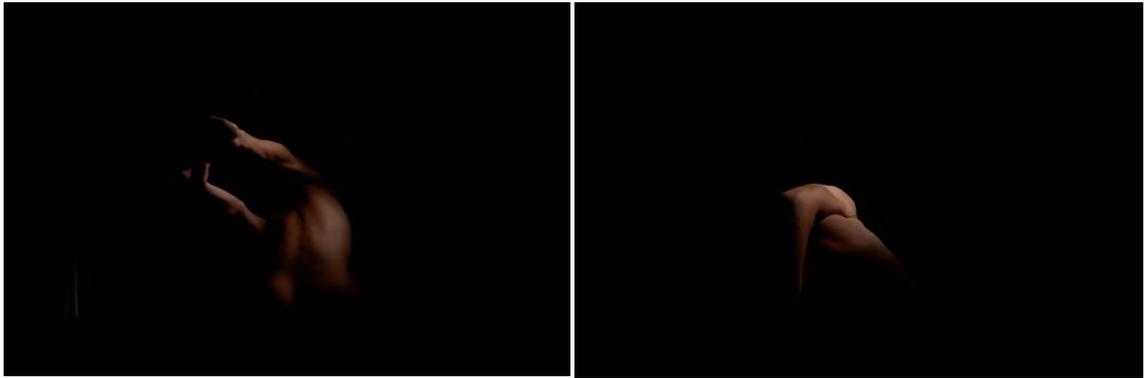
Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/16  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Snoot modifier, rim lighting, camera right, behind sitter to the right, approximately 1 metre above the sitter's head. Light is not directly facing the sitter's body, but turned slightly so that it is aimed more to the back of the sitter's head, feathering a great portion of the front of the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Photoshop/Adobe Camera Raw: Increase the black input levels by 10 to further darken background and make certain body elements less visible.

**Results:**

(a)

(b)



(c)

(d)

**Reflection:**

Previous experiments had the body tightly compressed into a repressed state to reveal the unconscious. This experiment also attends to the notion of the unconscious, however, instead of compressing the body, here the body is violent and flailing within this empty space, as if it is struggling to contain itself, or release itself from its repressed and distorted state. In comparison to the previous experiment, the bodies here are more dynamic in their posing, as they are stretching to reach one edge of the light boundary from the other side. The bodies are poetic and eerie; the pose conveys emotion and the feeling of breaking from their repressed state.

Through (a), the angle in which the arms are directed in relation to the torso throws the joint into the shadows. (b) focuses on placing the body at the bottom boundary of the light, using unconventional posture to assist in the depiction of a defamiliarised form. The boundary of light severs the remainder, rendering that portion incomprehensible, and presents the revealed as an abstract form. (c) features a body severed vertically as it is posed perpendicular to the direction of the light source. A type of dismemberment is identified when the knee is severed from the body, due to the hip joint being left outside the light beam. Similar occurrences appear in (d), with flashes of bodies appearing (albeit muted) in the bottom-centre of the photograph. These results thus outline how defamiliarisation can occur with the careful placement of body components both *inside* and *outside* the boundary of light.

Widening the focal length to increase the negative space surrounding the bodies gives the impression of a less constrained space for the constrained body to work in. The narrow light is identified to conceal more than reveal, and thus simplistic and compressed bodies are not conveyed effectively. More experimentation on dynamic posing will be conducted; however, I

will consider the facilitation of concealment with a non-distinguishable external element that can effectively blend into the shadows. This can support the concealment of the familiar as the body attempts various frontal poses to illuminate uncanny forms.

## Experiment 24: Utilise black material to assist the shadow effect in further concealing body elements

---

### Aim:

This experiment will investigate how black velvet, a material that has great light-absorbing capabilities, facilitates in concealing the familiar in the photograph. The experiment will aim to reveal abstracted forms by concealing the familiar.

This experiment takes its cue from Robert Mapplethorpe's *Self-portrait* (1988), where black clothing is identified as the additional element to conceal the body.

### Precedent:

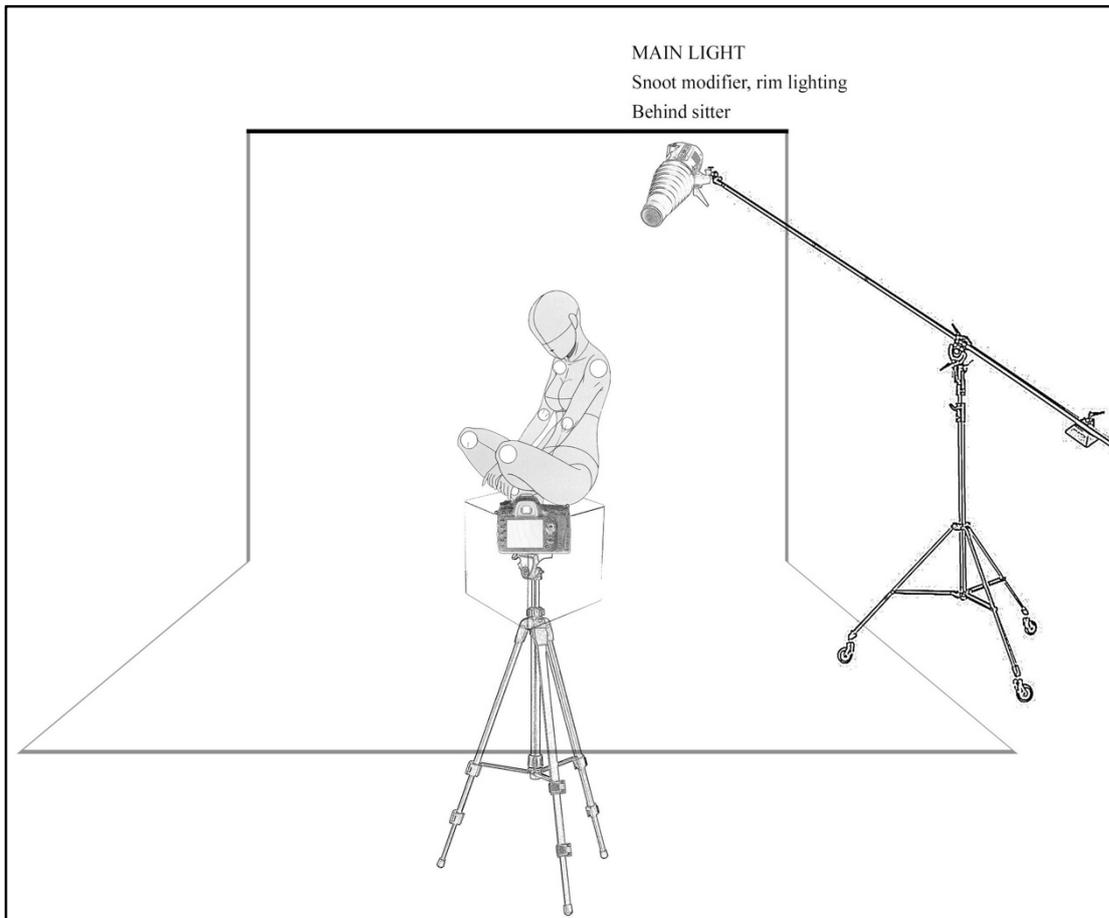


Robert Mapplethorpe, *Self-portrait*, 1988

### Method:

Set a sitter 3 metres away from a black background. A snoot lighting is positioned above the sitter. A dark black cloth is placed over the white plinth for the sitter to sit on when posing to eliminate any distractions. The camera is positioned 1 metre further away compared to previous experiments. Two materials are used – a normal black cotton shirt and black velvet.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/16  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Snoot modifier, rim lighting, camera right, behind sitter to the right, approximately 1 metre above the sitter's head. Light is not directly facing the sitter's body, but turned slightly so that it is aimed more to the back of the sitter's head, feathering a great portion of the front of the body.

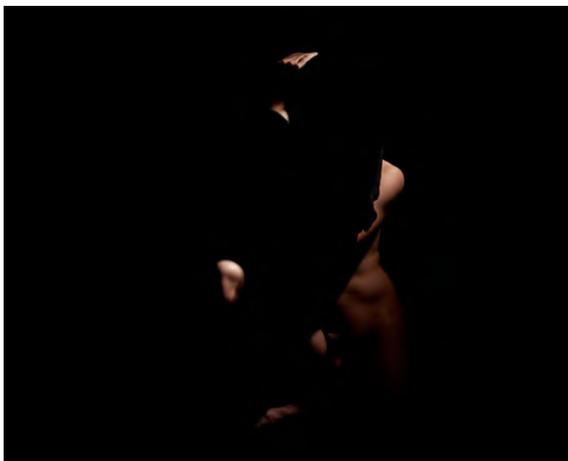
**Post-production settings:**

Photoshop/Adobe Camera Raw: Increase the black input levels by 10 to further darken background and make certain body elements less visible.

**Results:**

(a)

(b)



(c)

**Reflection:**

The standard black cotton shirt remains identifiable in the image, because it reflects a portion of light, although the light is extremely stifled by the blackness of the fabric. To further conceal evidence of a black shirt being used, the photograph's black input levels were increased by 10 for the cotton shirt to blend into the background. On the other hand, black velvet is identified to have low reflective power, which asserts it as the suggested material to conceal and create a negative space in a low-key environment. Black velvet, or black fabric in general, is also noted as a device frequently used in photoshoots as a negative fill to create contrast or prevent light spill. Regardless, the black materials noticeably blend well with the black background, such that it is nearly invisible in the photograph.

The results of this experiment are similar to the previous experiment (*Experiment 23*) where the body was divided into sections. Here, the body is dissected by both light and shadow as well as the black material. The result is a form that is incomprehensible and abstracted. One can link these forms, especially (a) and (b), to a biological and corporeal puzzle. This method of concealment has its concerns, as the body can become too distant for the viewer to become acquainted with the body, such as in (c), where the area of the void outweighs the presented pieces of human flesh.

This experiment opens up a discussion on the relationship between the human body and

material, and a material's contribution and assistance to the distortion of the body. This is perhaps another avenue, which will be investigated in a separate section.

For the next experiment, I will look into creating voids within the body itself without the assistance of black material. Creating these gaps within the familiar body may potentially give rise to uncanny forms, as was evidenced in Ray's *Minotaure* (1933).

## Experiment 25: Casting shadows with body components

---

### Aim:

The experiment revisits creating inconsistencies in the unfamiliar form, as well as the initial question arising from the observation of Ray's *Minotaure* (1933) – how to create uncanny impressions of the familiar human form through the utilisation of one light source and posture? To do so, the body will be initially laid bare and will rely on its contraction of muscles and slight, not dynamic movements, to cast shadows.

### Precedent:

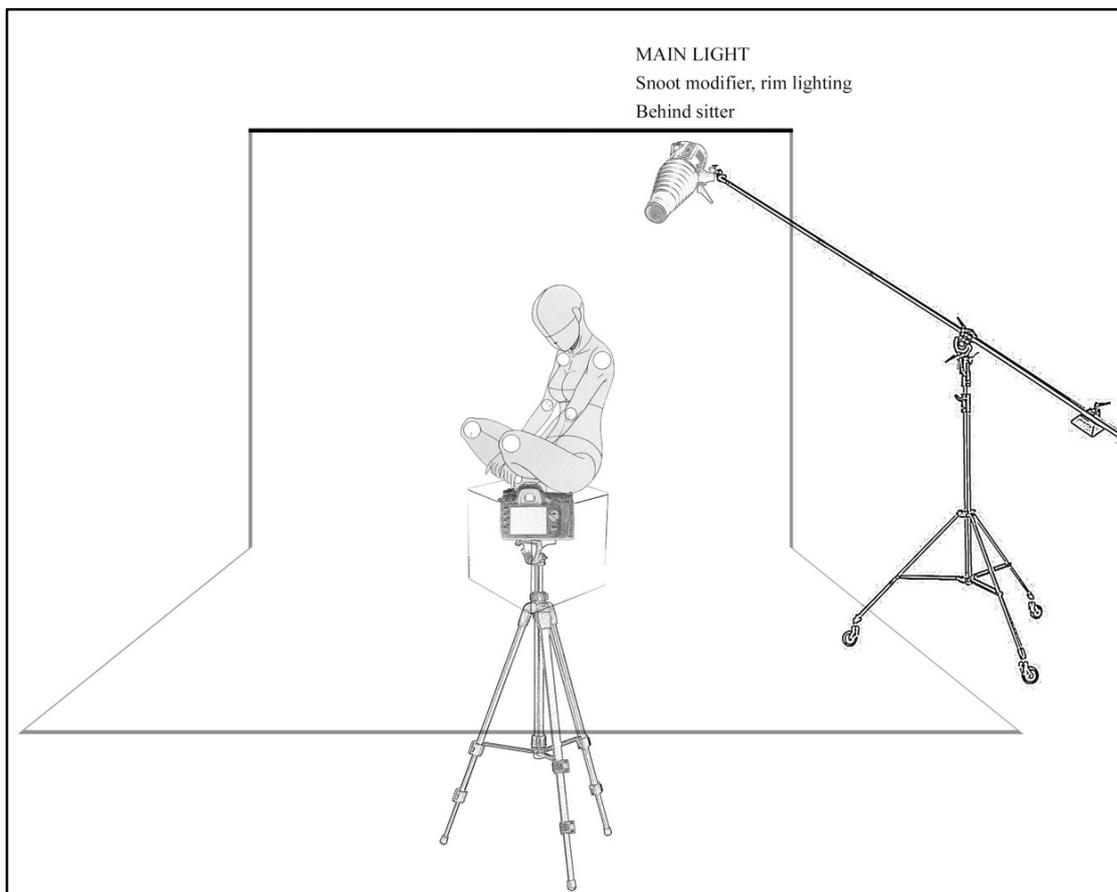


Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933

### Method:

Set a sitter 3 metres away from a black background. A snoot lighting is positioned above the sitter. A dark black cloth is placed over the white plinth for the sitter to sit on when posing to eliminate any distractions. The camera is positioned 1 metre further away compared to previous experiments. Allow the body to flex the body tightly, shifting itself with minute body movements in order to cast shadows onto other portions of the body.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/16  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Snoot modifier, rim lighting, camera right, behind sitter to the right, approximately 1 metre above the sitter's head. Light is not directly facing the sitter's body, but turned slightly so that it is aimed more to the back of the sitter, feathering a great portion of the front of the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Photoshop/Adobe Camera Raw: Increase the black input levels by 10 to further darken background and make certain body elements less visible.

**Results:****Reflection:**

I identify that minute shifts in the body allow it to cast shadows. This is a subset method that falls under the category of moving body parts in and outside the boundaries of light, using the shadow of the light to conceal. In this case, however, the body relies on its own components to cast shadows and conceal itself.

The image is strikingly reminiscent of Man Ray's *Minotaure* (1933), in that a gaping chasm is formed in place of where the belly is. The breastbone gives off the impression of a nose bridge, and the shadow cast beneath the pectoral muscle resembles an eye. The body is notably transformed into a transcendent figure that is eerie and somewhat haunting. Yet a closer examination of this ghastly figure affirms the underlying nature of the object that forms this figure — a human body. The result of this experiment is potentially leaning too far towards a complete transformation of the body.

The angle of the body in relation to the light source is also important in invoking these minute details. It allows the circular areas of the areola to be highlighted in the image. This notion reaffirms the previously outlined statement made in *Experiment 17*,<sup>18</sup> where the greater angle of the light reveals more texture and blemishes of the skin, which further aligns with notions of the familiar human in the image of the uncanny body. For the next experiment, I will again refer back to *Experiment 17* and the unfamiliar placement of light situated from below. This time, I will use the snoot lighting for its narrow beam and harsh lighting to examine how it might be possible to generate differing perceptions of the human body.

---

<sup>18</sup> See Reflections in *Experiment 17*.

## Experiment 26: Inverted placement of lighting — light positioned from below aiming upwards

---

### Aim:

This experiment will test the use of an unfamiliar light source, by lighting the subject from below as opposed to from above. This experiment is inspired by Man Ray's photographs of bodies against a black background, in particular, *Arm* (1935), in which lighting is seen to be sculpting the musculature of the body as well as creating an abstracted body part.

### Precedent:

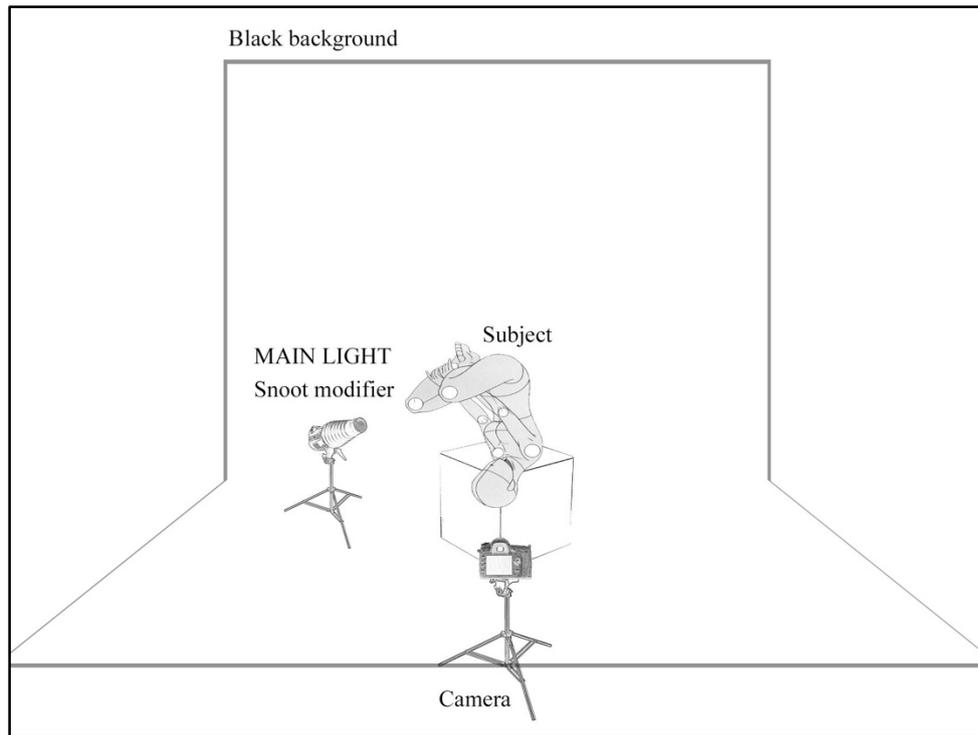


Man Ray, *Arm*, 1935

### Method:

The model is resting on their shoulders in an inverted position, whilst a light is lit from below to invert the illumination of muscles.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

Shutter speed: 1/160

Aperture: f/22

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

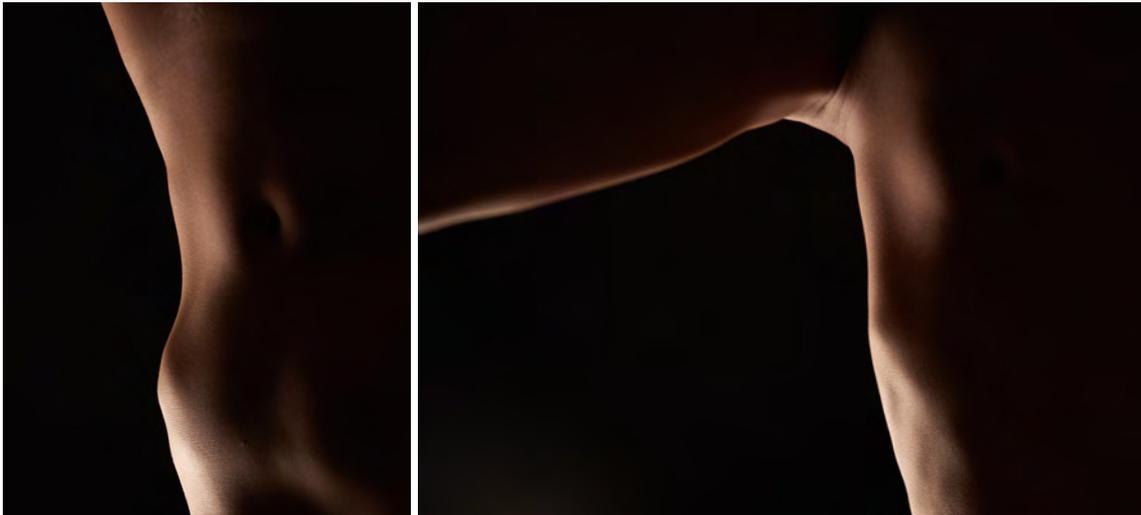
**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Rim lighting, camera right, behind sitter, below eye level and aimed upwards, to emphasise body muscles.

**Post-production settings:**

Photoshop/Adobe Camera Raw: Increase the black input levels by 10 to further darken background and make certain body elements less visible.

**Results:**



(a)

(b)

**Reflection:**

I first note that Ray's *Arm* (1935) is used as a precedent example for its combination of lighting to sculpt the muscles as well as its framing of them. Combining these two create a form that is geometrical in appearance, yet still quite a familiar object and human in form.

In this experiment, the inverted lighting provides misleading impressions of the body. Perception is altered, as the body part in the image cannot be immediately identified. For example, is the image on the right an image of an armpit, or a flipped image of something else, like a hip joint? It is actually the hip joint, with the sitter upside down and resting on their shoulders. The majority of the body can be seen thrown into the shadows, making further information needed to accurately assess the photograph rather inaccessible. The photograph then becomes more about the shape of the body, rather than showing a particular distortion or impression. This can be attributed to the positioning of the rim light. In comparison to the precedent photographs by Man Ray, Ray's lighting appears to be from above the sitter, and in the case of *Minotaure* (1933), slightly behind the sitter. In addition to the positioning of the light for this experiment, the size of the snoot used is a small size. This affects the mood of the image in two different ways. The first is that the muscles become more defined and the falloff from light to shadow is sharper. The second is that given its small size, less of the body is lit up in the photograph, making the majority of the human form hard to decipher, and the viewer must rely on the contour as well as additional features to comprehend the body form. These familiar features, as I identify, are the slightly illuminated navel and colour of skin and smooth muscles in (a); similarly in (b), except instead of a navel, the skin folds at the joint.

The next experiment will use the multiple established methods previously outlined for this lighting setup to seek distorted forms that convey an uncanny sensation. These methods will include extending the body inside and outside the light, using the body to cast shadows, and relying on the illumination of light at an angle that can emphasise the texture and reality of the body.

## Experiment 27: Generating shadows to conceal portions of the body using limb placement

---

### Aim:

This experiment will capitalise on the shadow's ability not just to conceal, but to effectively reveal nuances of the body that give rise to an uncanny impression.

The precedent examples to follow are Man Ray's *Anatomies* (1929) and *Minotaure* (1933), for they create an uncannily familiar form shaped by the shadows of the background as well as creating an uncanny form shaped by the shadows of the body respectively.

### Precedent:



Man Ray, *Anatomies*, 1929

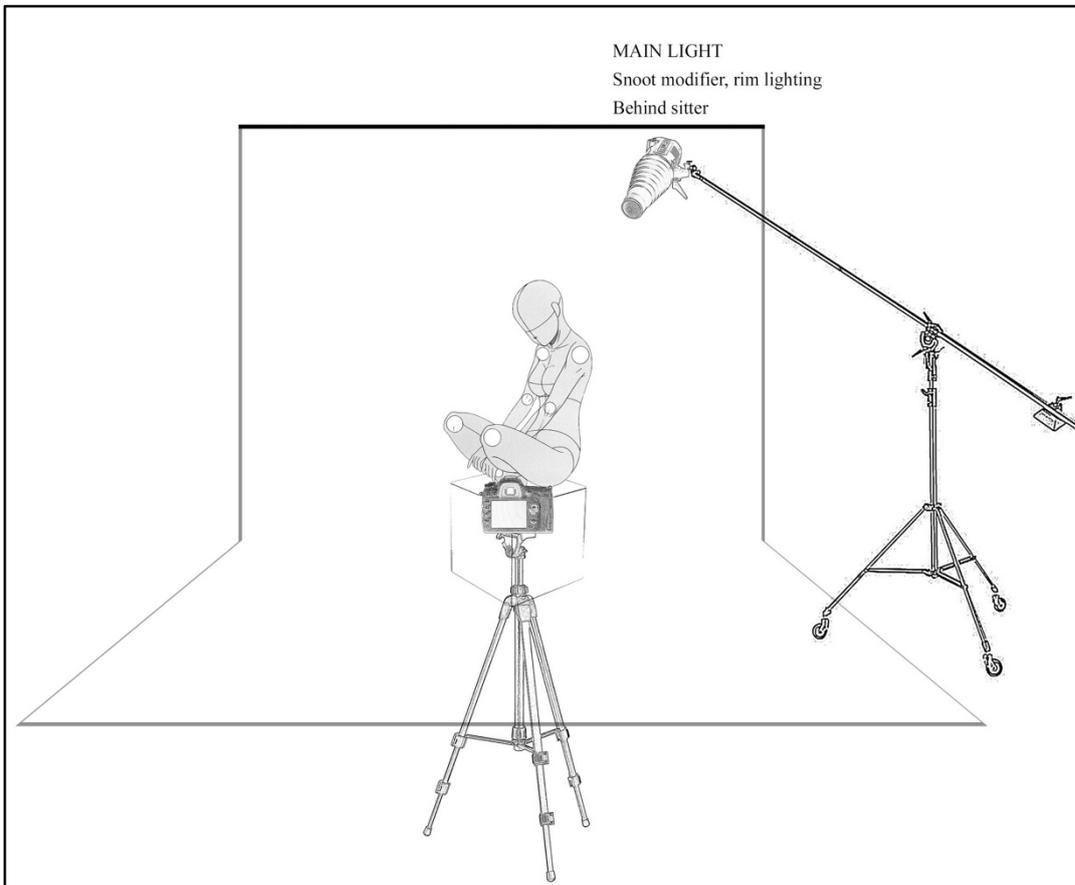


Man Ray, *Minotaure*, 1933

### Method:

The sitter is placed 3 metres away from a black background. A snoot lighting is positioned above the sitter. A dark black cloth is placed over the white plinth for the sitter to sit on when posing to eliminate any distractions. The sitter will pose in ways where they will cast shadows onto their own body, and also throw their limbs out of the lighting.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
Aperture: f/16  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Snoot modifier, rim lighting, camera right, behind sitter to the right, approximately 1 metre above the sitter's head. Light is not directly facing the sitter's body, but turned slightly so that it is aimed more to the back of the sitter's head, feathering a great portion of the front of the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Photoshop/Adobe Camera Raw: Increase the black input levels by 10 to further darken background and make certain body elements less visible.

**Results:**

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

**Reflection:**

Four scenarios are presented in this experiment that I want to take note of. (a) outlines how the illumination of the body can be severed through minute adjustments of the body. By doing so, the body casts shadows and dismembers itself into two sections. The top section is a fleshy blob, while the bottom section becomes apparently penile in appearance. This result also occurs because of the first method established, where the careful placement of body components within the shadows and illuminating only a portion of it can invoke defamiliarisation. (b) imitates the second established method with the black material, except with the absence of the black cloth. A void is created by the torso casting a shadow. A corporeal puzzle ensues. In previous experiments, hair is generally avoided due to it being a distraction, as well as a potential signifier of identity and gender. However, (b) slightly reveals hair, which I identify as assisting in concealing and shaping the form of the body. This is noticeably due to the colour of the hair, which blends seamlessly into the background, much like the black material previously highlighted. Although the form is separated by distance, it is still credible as a human body, owing to the tonality of muscles displayed. (c), on the other hand, presents a similar case to (b), except without the dismemberment of form. (d) applies more dynamism into the pose, with an emphasis on rotating the body to align the bumps of the oblique muscles perpendicular to the light source. Furthermore, an exaggerated dismemberment is achieved through the ascension of the knee.

Of the four, (a) is the most successful in producing an uncanny form, due to the penile apparition. Notions of the penile apparition as an uncanny form are supported by precedent

photographs such as Ray's *Anatomies* (1929) as well as the nude body forms by Lee Miller, Herb Ritts and Brassai.

The experiment confirms that all features of the body can be used to assist in distorting the image of a body without revealing to a great degree the identity of the sitter. An example of this is in (a), where the ear is skimmed with a highlight, but blends into the body. Lighting can blend, as well as conceal. Shadows can conceal, as well as reveal.

### 1.4.2 — Key Findings

The paradoxical element of concealment is prevalent in the illumination of entirely new forms that are distorted and defamiliarised. The concealing notions of shadow are subverted, as it becomes a facilitator for revealing distorted forms. The shadow fall-off is further defined by the directional angle of the light beam. The narrowness of the snoot modifier generated more solid and less diffused shadows, which resulted in a more direct dismemberment of the body.

Making use of this key factor, along with the various considerations of lighting and shadow, reveals four methods.

The first method is prevalent in *Experiment 20*, which demonstrates the apparent functioning of light to reveal and shadow to conceal, further finding that careful physical placement of the body within the boundaries of light can reveal, not just normative conformations, but also corporeal forms that defy logical sensibility.

The second method identifies light occlusion as a facilitator in the concealment and fragmentation of body form. *Experiment 24* demonstrates this by introducing a physical object, a black fabric that absorbs light, and effectively renders the area it encompasses into a void. To reduce the amount of light that is reflected from the surface of the fabric, velvet material was used for its low reflective power.

The third method highlights how the body itself serves as an enabler for casting shadows. These shadows can be cast either through minute fluctuations in body contraction (*Experiment 25*), or more direct positioning (*Experiment 27*). For *Experiment 27*, the first, second and third methods are applied to demonstrate an illusion of unreality, as well as to embrace and reverse the function of shadows not just to conceal, but to facilitate the revealment of distorted and uncanny human bodies.

The fourth method identifies that the direction of lighting affects the familiar perception of the subject. Findings from *Experiment 26* indicate that illuminating the body from below affects a viewer's recognition, which is established based on a developed cognitive bias (Hill and Bruce 1996).

A technical analysis of the human body in Ray's photographs finds corporeality undergoing a state of transformation that redefines the very function of the body. Through the technical considerations of lighting, Ray produces illusions of reality and fantasy, which comparably

demonstrate how the control of lighting and of posture can manipulate the body form into uncanny representations. Such lighting control calls to mind the philosophy behind Ernestine Ruben's close-up photographs of the body. In a conversation with James Christen Steward, Ruben (as cited in Steward, 2001,74) suggests that 'the medium of photography itself suggests the possibility of manipulation I can change and create and develop life into my own reality.' This motif is recurring for this section. The human bodies in this section undergo a transformation through the manipulation of light, resulting in an optic disorientation — the illuminated subject contains traits that are corporeal, yet non-corporeal, familiar, yet unfamiliar, and a body that dances between presence and absence, concealment and revealment. The matter of lighting and shadow and its dismemberment of form thus brings further to attention the third key fundamental idea that is ingrained in photographic practice: framing and cropping the body subject; this will be attended to in the next subchapter. Furthermore, the second method of lighting and shadow becomes an antecedent to another method to conceal the body with materials, which will be discussed in subchapter 1.6: Fusion with Materials.

## 1.5 Framing and Cropping

In considering the fundamental elements available when photographing a human body, it is inevitable to also align distortions of body form to the intrinsic frame that the photograph is presented within, and to its inclusive nature of cropping to compose the subject. While framing and cropping can ostensibly be referred to interchangeably — framing as cropping or cropping as framing — it is important to first recognise that while both have similar functions and intent, they operate within a different timeframe in the capturing of the photograph: framing occurs *during* the photographic process, while cropping occurs *after* the photographic process. Both techniques are useful as a form of severance in concealing certain body elements outside the boundaries, while emphasising the anatomies within.

The definition of framing can be understood as a form of construct that surrounds an arrangement of items or objects. Framing is the action of setting a composition within a border, and it occurs during the photographic process, where either the viewfinder or a physical construction of a frame bounds the subject. In the context of surrealist photography, Krauss (1981) notes that ‘the camera frame which crops or cuts the represented element out of reality-at-large can be seen as another example of spacing. Spacing is the indication of a break in the simultaneous experience of the real’ (31). On the other hand, photography historian John Szarkowski (1966) notes that the photographer’s central problem is what should be included and what should be rejected in the frame. Once a frame is set in place, the problem of composition then becomes the arrangement of objects and patterns of light and shade within that boundary. Understanding framing within these two contexts yields two investigative methods for framing body distortions: a physically constructed frame, and the camera viewfinder as frame.



Figure 64: Lin Wei, Experiment 30: Abstracted poses within circular frame against white background, 2016

Figure 64, *Experiment 30*<sup>19</sup> demonstrates the first method of framing, in which a frame is physically constructed to bridge and establish an intimate relationship between the frame and the human body. This unconventional approach to framing counters the traditionally limited interaction between the sitter and frame, by which the more common framing through the viewfinder is at a considerable distance from the model, with the model unsuspecting of the boundaries of the frame. Here, an unorthodox circular frame is constructed for a more effective and emphatic focus on the subject within the frame than the standard quadro format allows. The body is not centred in the frame; however, it does not necessarily require a central position in the circular frame for it to elicit illogical and beguiling appearances. Art critic William Zimmer (1991) suggests that the tondo<sup>20</sup> format presents great possibilities of abstraction. Although Zimmer does not explain how abstractions occur within the circular format, *Experiment 30* indicates that the circular frame offers less spacing for the body to reveal itself. The circular curvature of the frame results in a non-linear dismemberment. Thus, perceptions of the human body within the circular frame become more complex than observing a body in a quadro frame; this further aligns framing as a primary mechanism for the formation of a distorted and defamiliarised body. The frame's capacity as a device for defamiliarisation is anticipated by Szarkowski (1966), who notes that 'the edge of the photograph dissects familiar forms, and shows their unfamiliar fragment' (70). To create a region for the body to exist in that does not completely conceal all its elements, the circular frame is constructed 70

---

<sup>19</sup> Experiment 30. Please refer to 1.5.1 — Photographic Experiments on Framing and Cropping.

<sup>20</sup> Renaissance term for 'circular'.

centimetres in diameter. The bottom of the frame is one metre above ground level, and is cut into a wide paper backdrop. Supporting blocks of varying heights assist the body in framing itself. In Figure 64, the body fills half of the frame and positions itself according to the established principles of posing; the contour is bumpy and deformed, as the body is laying down, arching its back and sucking in its belly. It is immediately apparent that the frame begins to operate as a device of defamiliarisation, as limbs and genitals are situated out of the frame, and without contextual reasoning, the body becomes illogical. Similar to notions of shadowing as a method of severing visibility of the body, the frame allows the body to rearrange into geometrical shapes and lines while excluding elements of familiarity within the boundaries of the frame.

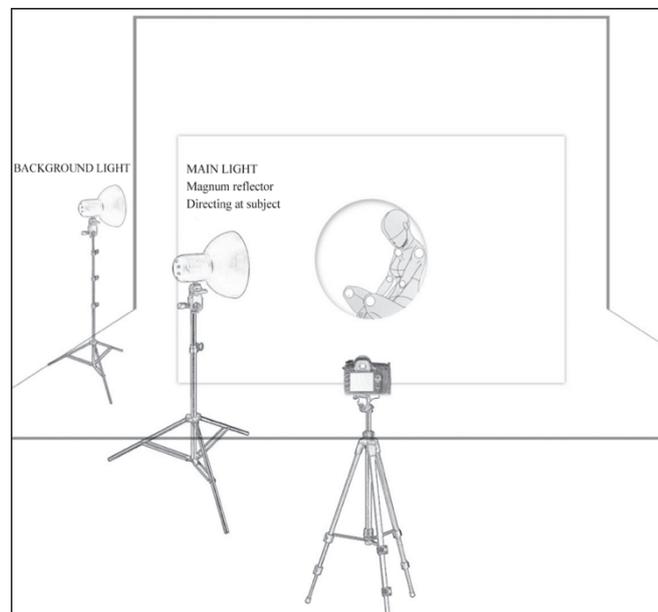


Figure 65: Lin Wei, Studio setup for *Experiment 30*, 2016

The emphasis on distorting the body into a series of shapes, contours and lines directs *Experiment 30*'s use of two lights to illuminate the scene. As shown in Figure 65, a hard light — the wide beam reflector — is utilised as the key light for its dramatic light fall-off, which imparts a sharp shadowed border to the the body form. Furthermore, the lighting facilitates the liberation of corporeality through the crisp texture of skin. The second light produces a graduating light as it exposes the background one stop brighter than the body in the foreground, and serves two purposes for the experiment. The first is to provide the photograph with more depth and separate the body from the background. Not illuminating the background would achieve a result similar to the previous lighting experiments in 1.4: Lighting and Shadow,

where the body submerges into the darkness of the background.<sup>21</sup> The second function is to present a circumstance where the simple undecorated background foregrounds the body as the focal point within the frame. Backgrounds are considered the least important element within a tondo art frame, and in some cases are omitted from the image (Olson, 2000).

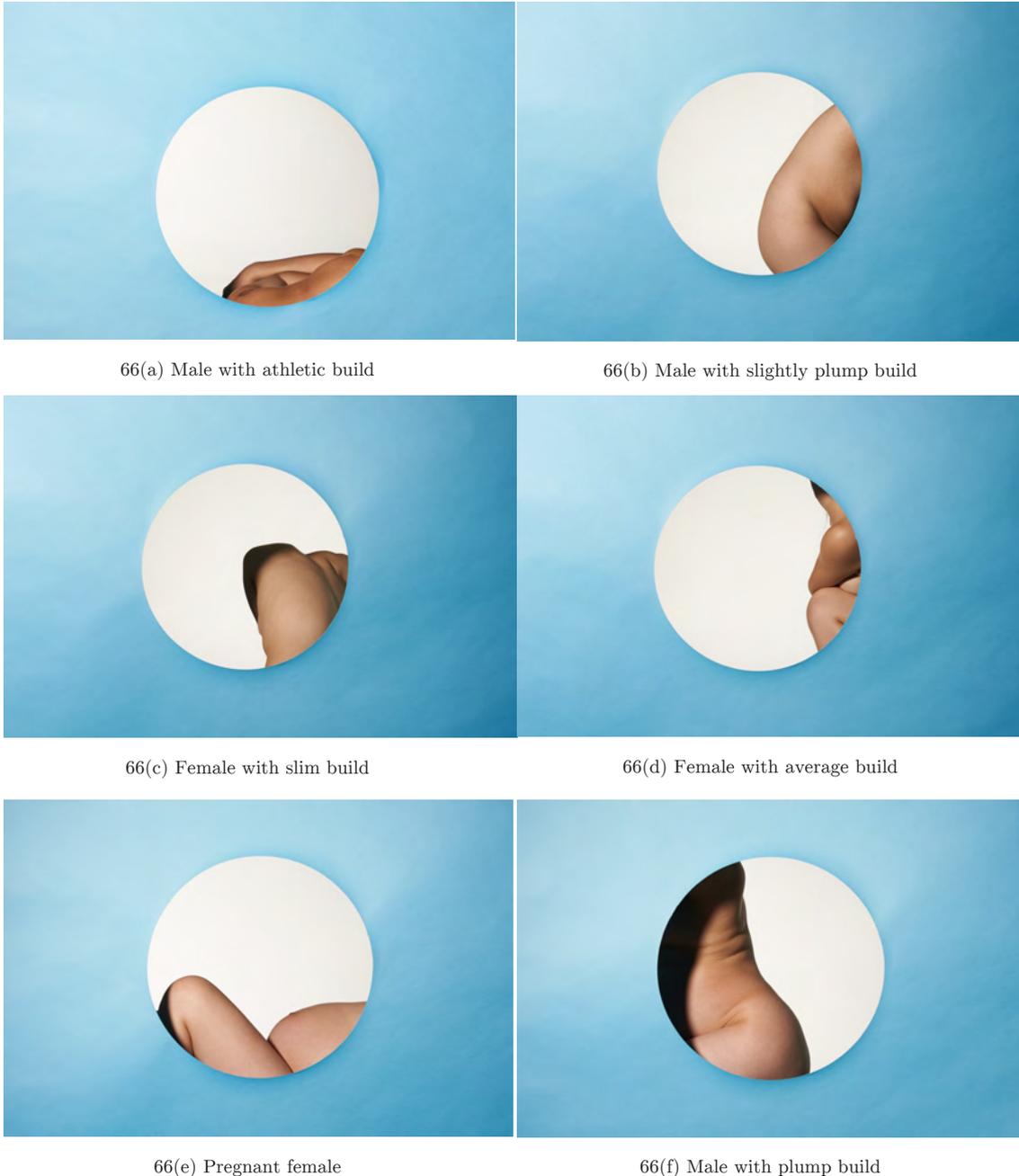


Figure 66: Lin Wei, *Experiment 31: Bodies of various shapes and sizes singularly placed inside the circular frame*, 2016

Having established the technicalities behind the physical frame, *Experiment 31* (Figure 66)<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Also see *Experiment 28*.

<sup>22</sup> *Experiment 31*. Please refer to 1.5.1 — Photographic Experiments on Framing and Cropping.

demonstrates how the frame can obfuscate and re-interpret human bodies of varying proportions, from slim to athletic, to muscular and rubenesque. Notions of posture are once again present for this experiment. Given the body's established ability to distort itself through specific posing, the frame here plays an important role in assisting the body to distort its representation. Through this experiment, it is observed how the frame transgresses from its passive state to become an active contributor to the defamiliarisation process — altered conformation of the human body would not exist without the frame's intervention. Bodies of a similar light olive skin tone are used for similar likeness of the bodies and to align them to notions of the terrifyingly familiar. Identification of multiple bodies in the series is based on contextual localisation, such as the pregnant belly aligning with the ascending knee in Figure 66(e), or the crooked neck in Figure 66(d) that is situated above a stack of perceptible limbs.



Figure 67: Lin Wei, Experiment 35: Body location in relation to the frame, 180 degrees rotation, 2016.

Drawing upon the analysis of body part localisation from *Experiment 31*, *Experiment 35* (Figure 67)<sup>23</sup> considers the idea that a reorientated localisation affects perceptions of familiarity and representation of the subject. Arnheim (1983) notes that the circular format ‘represents the superhuman, which is radically detached from the realm of earthly gravity... evoking a “floating world”, unencumbered by the burden of human existence’ (117–19). In Figure 67, the images are rotated 180 degrees, so that the figures are floating at the top of the circular frame. The images present bodies that appear to be unbound by the laws of gravity, a logical fallacy. Yet the frame conceals how the bodies function to remain in place. The bodies are holding their position, yet any given notion of frame rotation is not apparent. Based on the limited corporeal information, Figure 67(b) can be interpreted as a hip joint, yet in reality it is a shoulder joint

<sup>23</sup> Experiment 35. Please refer to 1.5.1 — Photographic Experiments on Framing and Cropping.

that resembles the contour of a lower back, hips and gluteal muscles due to the frame re-orientation. What Arnheim described is the notion of a visual reality that occurs as a transcending trait within the image. *Experiment 35* translates the visual reality from a case of inversion. While *Experiment 35* portrays the literal floatation of bodies inside the frame, it also extended towards a visual interpretation of a reality in which the body does not exist—a form that is unrestricted by the boundaries of gravity and normal perception.

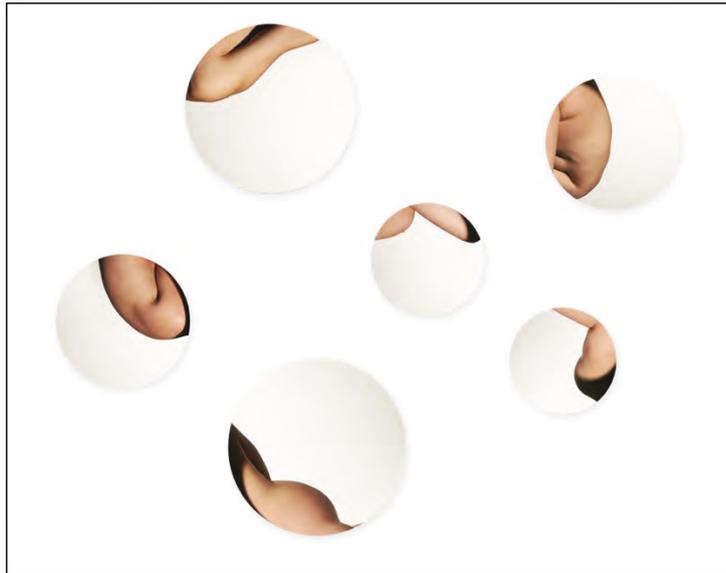


Figure 68: Lin Wei, *Experiment 37*: Re-examination of the application of outer frame in the image — removal by physical crop to instill floating bodies, 2016.

Figure 68<sup>24</sup>, *Experiment 37*, releases the confines of the blue frame by applying cropping to impart dynamism in the body movement and size. Six images of bodies that are defamiliarised by the circular frame are printed at varying sizes, ranging between 20 and 40 centimetres. The blue background is trimmed from the six images, leaving only the circular frame within. The six images can be read independently from one another, or can be read as a series when combined and arranged into a floating composition. In an essay on the neural basis of visual body perception, Peelen and Downing (2007) note that the body ‘conveys socially relevant information ... [and] becomes highly familiar with repeated exposure’ (636). Exposure to similar information allows individuals to determine the nature of the subject. Whilst repeated exposure of the defamiliarised body can heighten the familiarity of severed bodies, there are a combination of three factors in *Experiment 37* that disrupt the visual examination and interpretation of the familiar body. First, the frame initially conceals and reveals anatomies — the body skirts along the edge of the frame, not revealing certain features that permit a

---

<sup>24</sup> *Experiment 37*. Please refer to 1.5.1 — Photographic Experiments on Framing and Cropping.

recognisable identity, gender, or person. This first factor is established earlier in this subchapter and also in earlier subchapters on posing and light and shadow. The second factor is the varying frame sizes that serve to disrupt the alignment of multiple body components and draw a connection to a singular body; either the visual interpretation of multiple components of one body, or the inability to piece together the components towards a larger construct due to the varying proportions. The third factor is the orientation of the body in the frame; some frames are rotated more than 90 degrees, while others did not have their orientation rotated. The combination of the varying frame size and the rotation of the frames resulted in a corporeal puzzle that is difficult to decipher.



Figure 69: Edward Weston, *Nude (Miriam Lerner)*, 1925.

Deviating from the precedent of the tondo, it is important to briefly review utilisations of perspective and the frame to abstract representations of the human body. Edward Weston's photographic studies of the nude body, in particular, demonstrate the use of camera perspective and framing to abstract the human body into a visual representation of pure form. Weston photographs the female nude purely for aesthetics, void of psychological incentives, and instead maintains his intention to create impersonal forms that might call to attention a living body (Weston, 1990). Figure 69, Weston's *Nude (Miriam Lerner)* (1925) reveals an interesting abstraction of the human body. The aesthetic form of the nude is revealed through a close framing of the body. While not circular, the frame conceals the face, hands, arms and legs, and focuses on the model's torso, mid-section and buttocks. Wide-angle perspective foreshortens and monumentalises the buttocks and thigh, provoking a more dramatic and simplified representation of corporeality. The face was a complicating factor for Weston; it contained substantial detail and distracted from the form which he sought to portray, and thus was suppressed and never disclosed in his photographic series of the nude (Conger, 2005). In a way,

Weston’s concealment of the face, as an identifiable element, is an unconscious effort to transcend the limits of the organic body and break away from its very reality. The removal of such an expressive body component results in heightening the body’s defamiliarisation and subsequent distortion of form.

Weston’s photographs of the female nude draw certain similarities to the bodies in *Experiment 37* (Figure 68). Both depart from psychological expression and focus on lines and forms that are further emphasised by the frame. In a *New York Times* review on Weston’s photographs of nudes, journalist Janet Malcolm (1975) describes the bodies as ‘sexless and impersonal ... bodies transmuted into forms that follow no mere human (or sexual function)’ (131). While making the body sexless is helpful in the creation of strange and unreal bodies, it suggests that the nude bodies are too far removed from reality; corporeality is disconnected to opt for an emphasis on pure lines and form. A reference to the impersonal is in part due to Weston’s own conscious attempt to avoid the human in his photographs of nudes. Weston (1990) notes that his photographs are ‘entirely impersonal, lacking in any human interest which might call attention to a living, palpitating body’ (136). This motive is counterintuitive to the production of bodies that provoke uncanny sensations—only when a body is identifiable as real can it be truly distorted. In comparison, *Experiment 37* retains a level of humanness in the image through colour expression: skin colour reminds the viewer of the fleshiness and corporeality of the body—and consequently, the humanness of the image.



Figure 70: Lin Wei, Experiment 43: Circular framing using crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera, 2016

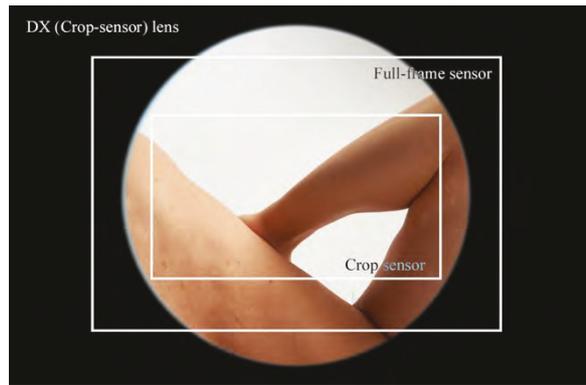


Figure 71: Lin Wei, Overlay diagram on one image from Experiment 43 showing a representation of the boundaries of sensors in relation to a crop sensor lens, 2016

*Experiment 37*, as with preceding experiments, examines how the physically constructed circular frame conceals and manifests peculiar conformations of the human body. Figure 70<sup>25</sup>,

---

<sup>25</sup> Experiment 43. Please refer to 1.5.1 — Photographic Experiments on Framing and Cropping.

*Experiment 43* applies the notions of the circular format, but investigates it using the second technical method for framing body distortions. In Figure 70, the experiment uses the viewfinder to frame the body, and uses an aberrant technical approach, a case of extreme mechanical vignetting, in creating the circular boundary in the viewfinder. Mechanical vignetting occurs when a physical object interferes with the light trajectory onto the camera sensor. Items that commonly cause mechanical vignetting are filters or an incorrectly attached lens hood.

*Experiment 43* exploits the aberrant combination of a full-frame digital single lens reflex camera body and a crop sensor lens<sup>26</sup> to achieve a form of mechanical vignetting. The black circular boundary in this experiment is the inner barrel of the lens captured in the frame. Figure 71 graphically demonstrates how the framing technique in *Experiment 43* functions. The experiment further found that the zoom lenses' internal glass movement also affects the amount of the lens barrel shown. The inner frame represents that if a crop sensor lens was attached correctly to a crop sensor camera body, the boundary of the lens barrel would be outside of the visible boundaries of the crop sensor,<sup>27</sup> and mechanical vignetting would not occur<sup>28</sup>.



Figure 72: Slocum Howland (American, 1870- 1922). No.2  
Kodak snapshot of baseball game at Williston School,  
Easthampton, MA, ca. 1890



Figure 73: Emmet Gowin, *Edith, Danville, Virginia*, 1971

The circular frame is similarly noted in the photographs produced by the Kodak Brownie cameras in the early 1900s (Figure 72). The Kodak Brownie operates on a simple mechanism—light enters the round lens and directly exposes onto the film. The image exposes through the

<sup>26</sup> A crop sensor lens is made specifically to be attached onto a compatible camera that has a smaller sensor than a full-frame sensor, or typical film size. The smaller sensor is essentially a cropped version.

<sup>27</sup> Sensors, as with film, have perpetually been constructed in the quadro format, thus photographs have been inherently displayed in the quadro format.

<sup>28</sup> A crop sensor lens projects a circular image that is about 28 mm in diameter, while the crop sensor is rectangular and 24x16 mm in size. Thus, the sensor records most of the projected image, while the lens barrel is absent from the image.

lens; however, the image was much smaller than the surface area of the film. As a result, circular format exposures would appear. This is technically similar to the aberrant technicality in *Experiment 43*, where the digital sensor captures everything in its quadro format, while nothing is exposed apart from the circular image in Kodak Brownie photographs. To further illustrate the technique of in-camera circular framing and its effects of defamiliarising the image, a review of Emmet Gowin's photographs, for example *Edith, Danvie, Virginia* (1971) (Figure 73), finds the circular frame evident due to a similar technicality in the camera. Gowin deliberately used a smaller 4x5 inch Schneider Angulon<sup>29</sup> on the larger 8x10 Eastman View camera (Gowin 2009). The camera and lens combination, which results in the formation of circles within the frame, is an integral component to Gowin's oeuvre. In his 1976 monograph, Gowin (2009) writes that the lens 'contributed to a particular description of space and that the circle itself was already a powerful form. Accepting the entire circle, what the camera had made, was important to me. It involved a recognition of the inherent nature of things' (101).

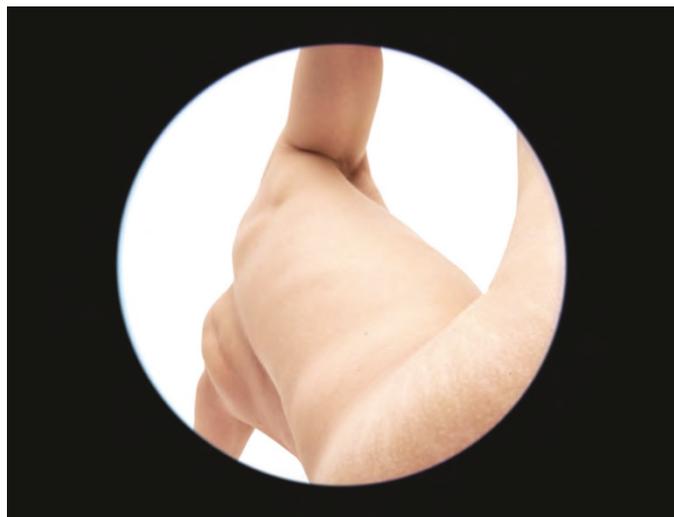


Figure 74: Lin Wei, *Experiment 44*: Circular framing using ultra-wide crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera with focal length reducer attached, 2016

An investigation into the Kodak Brownie and Gowin's selection of camera body and lens suggests that for the circle to be completely visible on the sensor, the lens must be small enough and at a distance from the sensor for the sensor to capture the circle boundary in its entirety. Factors of optical magnification are also of importance in determining the required distance.<sup>30</sup> *Experiment 44*, Figure 74, sets out to rectify the incomplete black circular frame produced in *Experiment 43*. In a technical review on the Carl Zeiss 15mm ultra-wide lens, Kevin Carter

---

<sup>29</sup> A lens.

<sup>30</sup> *Experiment 44*. Please refer to 1.5.1 — Photographic Experiments on Framing and Cropping.

(2012) notes that vignetting is expected on an ultra-wide-angle lens. An assumption can be drawn from this conjecture: the wider the focal length, the greater the vignetting. However, given that Carter's review is focused on the optical capacity of the lens, Carter is most likely referring to natural and optical vignetting. *Experiment 44*, on the other hand, finds that mechanical vignetting can also occur at wide angles or smaller focal lengths. Furthermore, the effect is greater with an ultra-wide perspective. In *Experiment 44*, the hip joint is closest to the camera, with the right leg ascending upwards along the right edge of the frame. The torso is foreshortened as the body is leaning away from the camera. The left elbow is severed as it is resting on the floor, out of frame, while the right arm is ascending upwards and also out of the frame. Here, a lens with focal range of 12–24mm is used and zoomed out to 12mm. A focal length reducer is attached to distance the lens from the camera, resulting in a complete circular frame produced through the viewfinder. Decreasing the focal length will result in greater radial distortion, or bloating of the image, which is known as the fish-eye effect. This is due to the optics of the lens achieving a wide perspective. A focal length reducer retains the optical traits of the 12-24mm, which has minimal radial distortion and does not bloat the image. Bearing this principle in mind, a fish-eye lens with a very low focal length can similarly produce a circular frame; however, it will bloat and distort the subject.<sup>31</sup> Perspective is an apparent effect that adds to the distortion of the body in the circular frame — the body is stretched and skewed due to the wide camera perspective.

Furthermore, the figure is foreshortened, creating a distortion that reveals a sense of monumentality in the image. The rigid thigh is curved and bent into an unnatural state, due to the slight radial distortion, and is observed to match the circumference of the circular frame. Here, wide-angle perspective fulfils an important role in emphasising and exaggerating the proportions of the body, rendering parts of the organic body into a form of abstraction. The skewed and abstracted form presents the viewer with a corporeal puzzle, given that the body parts cannot be aggregated because of their distorted proportions. The feeling of uncertainty is heightened as the frame disconnects a portion of corporeality, compromising the ability to recognise the familiar body part.

Although the previous assessment of Weston's *Nude (Miriam Lerner)* (1925) elaborated on the function of the frame in exhibiting such an abstract representation of the female form, it is

---

<sup>31</sup> This opens up an additional area to investigate body distortion in lens optics, both mathematically and scientifically; however this is beyond the scope of this section.

difficult to say whether the photograph is produced in camera as a result of precise framing, or whether the frame is determined through *cropping*. It is maintained that cropping was non-existent in Weston's asset of techniques (Watts, 2003). This stance is agreed by Art historian Lori Oden (n.d.), who states that cropping represented a failed image for Weston. Yet, in a technical analysis of nude images within a colloquium discussion, Brett Abbott (2005) suggests that cropping exists in Weston's repertoire of skills. Therefore, cropping cannot be ruled out as a potential enterprise for Weston in exhibiting abstract close-ups of the human body.

To reiterate, cropping is not to be confused with framing; they are considerably synonymous, given that they act in much the same way. Both are similar in intent: they focus on a point of interest, and the unessential content is cut out of the picture and concealed. However, cropping is a step that occurs *after* the photographic process, where the photographer seeks to further highlight and frame a specific part of the image. Cropping can also be understood as an act of reframing the image: it allows all visible aspects of a photograph to be further explored.

McManus et al. (2011) refer to photographic cropping as a smaller section of the larger photographic image that is selected and emphasised. The side effect is that the cropped area is no longer visible, concealed from view, and severed from the reality of the image — a distinctly similar trait to framing. For Weston, *Nude* (1925) could have been part of a larger image. To posit that *Nude* (1925) manifests through cropping suggests that the original reality may have revealed no distortion or abstraction of the kind that Weston sought after. Cropping the original severs the corporeality and alters the photograph's representation, by which a distorted form arises in *Nude* (1925). Krauss (1981) identifies this notion of cropping, noting that, 'photographic cropping is always experienced as a rupture in the continuous fabric of reality' (31).



Figure 75: Lin Wei, Experiment 38: Cropping an image of two tightly combined bodies — after crop, 2016



Figure 76: Lin Wei, Experiment 38: Cropping an image of two tightly combined bodies — before crop, 2016

Situating notions of cropping within this context invites consideration of the cropping of photographs that contain significant levels of familiarity and re-represent the corporeality within. Figure 75<sup>32</sup> is a re-examination of Figure 76, which reveals two bodies posing in a strange way that is telling of both body's presence. Figure 76 initially reveals two bodies, both facing away from the camera. One body is on top of the other. The body on the bottom is leaning forward; the body on the top is sitting on the shoulders of the former. The body on the top conceals the lower body's head and leans forward to conceal its own head. Figure 75 crops in to a section of the image; focusing on the buttocks residing on the nape of the neck. The radically cropped area emphasises the dark shadows where the two bodies intersect and creates an outline that seemingly presences as a phallus. This outline is further accentuated by converting the image into monochrome and increasing its contrast. The crop de-contextualises the former bodies and introduces an entirely new context to the image, calling to mind the surrealist notions of the unconscious production of sexual imagery. In this instance, the phallic imagery is in place of the original corporeality. Photographer László Moholy-Nagy (as cited in Hight 1995, 200) stresses that the 'camera forces the spectator to see in unusual ways, and hence a "new vision" of the world can be created'; this suggests that one technique to achieve

<sup>32</sup> Experiment 38. Please refer to 1.5.1 — Photographic Experiments on Framing and Cropping.

this is radical cropping and an exaggeration of light–dark contrasts. While Moholy-Nagy’s photographic oeuvre is architectural, his principles on cropping can be observed in *Experiment 38*.



Figure 77: Man Ray, *Monument to de Sade*, 1933.

A photograph that similarly stresses the potential of photographic cropping to re-represent corporeality and convey the surrealist unconscious is Ray’s *Monument to de Sade* (1933) (Figure 77). The photograph portrays female buttocks, closely cropped, with an upside down cross overlaid on the image. On the topic of cropping in her discussion of surrealist photography, Krauss (1981) claimed that it ‘puts enormous pressure on that frame to make itself read as a sign ... a signifier of signification’ (31). The implications of the surrealist unconscious largely rely upon the principle that Ray’s body is technically female, and the unconscious is translated through the signification of the phallus on the female body. A technical analysis of *Monument to de Sade* (1933) finds the symbol prominent, and the outline of the buttocks not immediately apparent. This highlights the uncanny at play, by which Ray defamiliarises the body to a degree where its corporeality is secondary and veiled by the signification of a cross. This can be associated with the flattened texture of skin due to the image’s low contrast, which does not provide depth to the body form.



Figure 78: Lin Wei, Experiment 39: Close-up crop converting two bodies into landscape, 2016



Figure 79: Lin Wei, Uncropped version of Experiment 39

A subsidiary experiment is undertaken to examine the process of distorting the representation of body contour, similar to Ray. Figure 78,<sup>33</sup> *Experiment 39*, is a photograph of two bodies hunched side-by-side and leaning towards each other. Their backs are facing the camera, with heads tucked in and muscles contracted to emphasise their musculature. Operating in the grayscale eliminates tonal skin discrepancies and equalises the two bodies as one conjoined entity, as well as defamiliarising further notions of corporeality. The crop focuses on the upper back area and the continuous contour that is observable through the contrast between illuminated skin and the dark background. A comparison with the original photograph (Figure 79) finds that the crop recontextualises the image of two bodies on a plinth to depict an

---

<sup>33</sup> Experiment 39. Please refer to 1.5.1 — Photographic Experiments on Framing and Cropping.

uncanny representation of a mountainous landscape.



80(a)



80(b)



80(c)



80(d)

Figure 80: Bill Brandt, *Nude Baie des Anges*, 1959

A technical analysis of Bill Brandt's photographic series of abstract nudes (Figure 80) on the beach illustrates the potential of cropping to conceal notions of human bodily form and transform the body into uncanny representations. Brandt's *Nude Baie des Anges* (1959) is comparable to Weston's organic abstractions of the nude body. They are both curiously depersonalised. In fact, Brandt's photographic view of the body bears traces of Man Ray's influence, given that Brandt, at a certain point, was Ray's assistant and adapted several technical photographic processes such as radical cropping under Ray's tutelage. Philosopher Nigel Warburton (1993) notes that Brandt's photographic nudes on the beach are unerotic, and present 'a world not of passion but of the contemplation of forms' (n.p.). Figure 80(a) shows a

tightly cropped image of a person's hands, resting on top of pebbles on a beach, with clear skies in the background.

The camera is placed at ground level, observing an impression of the hand as an assemblage of pebbles that are stacked into a tower. Closer inspection of such an uncanny representation finds skin wrinkles creasing along these pebble formations. The human flesh is morphing into a stone-like state, much like its surroundings on the pebble beach. The positioning and intertwining of the fingers is such that the shadows they cast blend seamlessly with the shadows produced by the pebbles. The photograph echoes sentiments on cropping as an interferer with reality (Krauss, 1981) as the hand is further de-contextualised with the palm cropped out of frame. While Krauss refers to photographic cropping as a rupture in reality, *Nude Baie des Anges* (1959) presents an anomaly that extends this notion beyond merely a rupture. Indeed, what is expected of reality is present in the images, yet its representation does not conform with its true corporeal essence. Rather, the photographic crop allows the subtle fractures of the hand to continue on in existence as an entity that conforms with its surrounding nature. The fingers align themselves as pebble-like entities that contain hints of corporeality.

The following section details the 17 experiments conducted for this subchapter. The experiments follow a structure of examining a physically constructed circular frame and the body's immediate relationship and interaction with it. They then critically analyse the compositional elements of both the frame itself and the contents within: from the colour and lighting of the frame and background; how the frame severs and dismembers: how the body interacts within the frame and within the limitations of the circular construct; and how the body's position inside the frame affects the distortion process. The experiments shift to consider cropping as an act of reframing to explore unique cropping compositions. Afterwards, the experiments transition the circular frame from a physical device, to consider how it can be technically manifested through the camera's viewfinder, while also considering wide-angle-perspectives. Lastly, with the distorting functions of the circular frame resolved in the initial framing experiments, the final experiments combine the optical distortion generated by a wide-angle-perspective with a circular frame that is manifested within the viewfinder. Follow-up experiments are conducted to resolve the seamless depiction of a circular frame through the viewfinder, combined with the wide-angle-perspective lens.

## 1.5.1 — Photographic Experiments on Framing and Cropping

Experiment 28: The posed body situated in 70cm diameter circular frame cut within paper wall

Experiment 29: Colour composition within and outside circular frame

Experiment 30: Abstracted poses within circular frame against white background

Experiment 31: Bodies of various shapes and sizes singularly placed inside the circular frame

Experiment 32: Observing abstraction of body form by increasing body surface area to fill up space within the frame

Experiment 33: Placing bodies along the edge of circular frame to increase negative space

Experiment 34: Visualising a floating body within the circular frame

Experiment 35: Body location in relation to the frame, 180 degrees rotation

Experiment 36: Colour composition of outer frame to complement the distorted body within the circular frame

Experiment 37: Re-examination of the application of outer frame in the image - removal by physical crop to instil floating bodies

Experiment 38: Cropping an image of two tightly combined bodies

Experiment 39: Close up crop converting two bodies into landscape

Experiment 40: Ultra-wide-angle distortion, affecting optical perspective and perception of the body

Experiment 41: Ultra-wide-angle distortion, defining body shape and joints

Experiment 42: Circular framing utilising crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera

Experiment 43: Circular framing utilising ultra-wide crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera

Experiment 44: Circular framing utilising ultra-wide crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera with focal length reducer attached

## Experiment 28: The posed body situated in 70cm diameter circular frame cut within paper wall

---

### Aim:

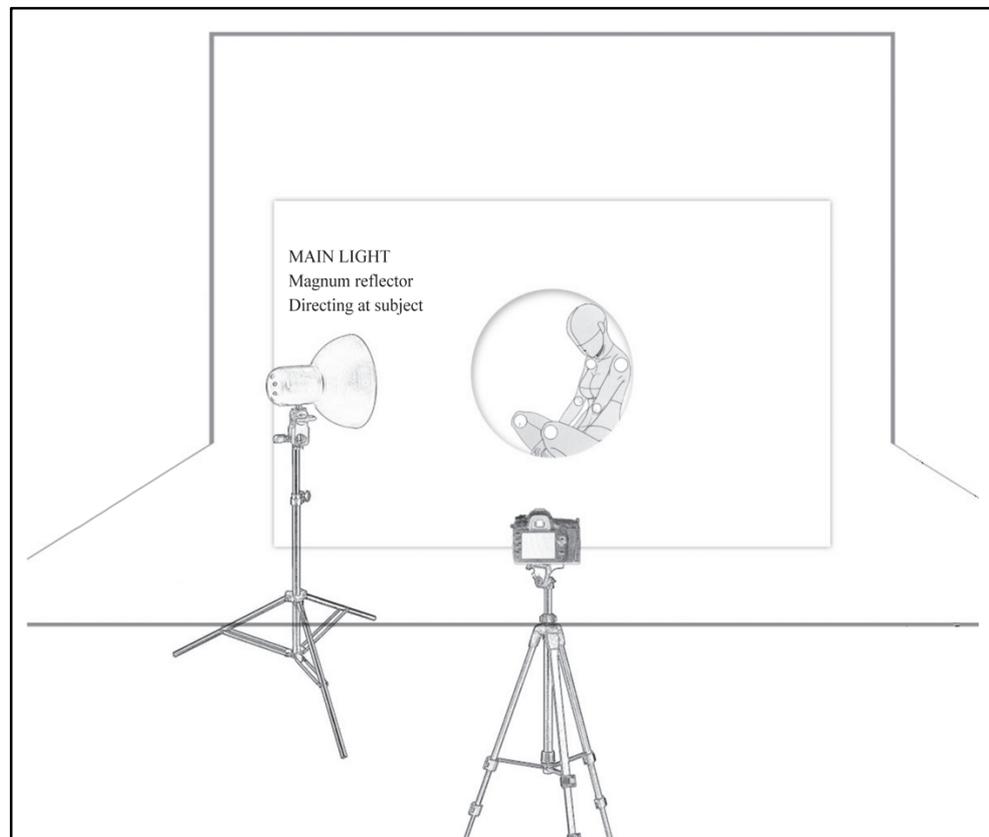
In this experiment, a physical frame of circular concavity will be cut from a paper backdrop. This will serve as the framing device as opposed to the conventional use of the viewfinder as a framing device. The experiment will observe the free movement of the body as it interacts and moves within the physical frame.

Art critic William Zimmer notes that the circular format presents great possibilities of abstraction (Zimmer, 1991).

### Method:

- Paper backdrop approximately 5 metres out from back wall.
- 70cm diameter circular hole cut in middle of paper backdrop.
- Platform for body to sit on.
- Body to distort and shift positions, skirting around the edge of the circular frame.
- Camera to be placed level with circle.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

**Lighting settings:**

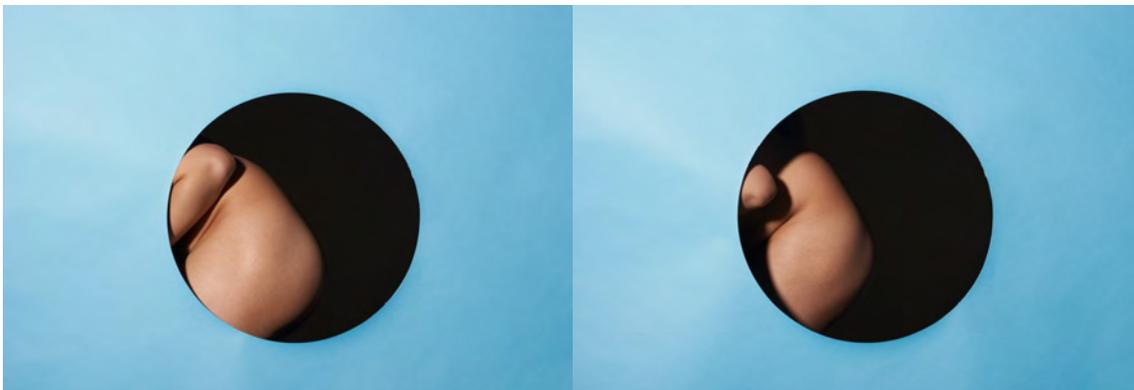
Main light: Magnum reflector, on camera left, aimed at sitter within the circular frame.

**Post-production settings:**

Adobe Camera Raw:

- Low-level sharpen to increase definition of shadow lines and body contour.
- Colour-correction for neutral whites.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

Once a frame is set in place, the problem of composition then becomes the arrangement of objects and of patterns of light and shade within that boundary. Thus, the body here proceeds to unveil certain characteristics and traits without revealing too much. This observation echoes photography curator, historian and critic John Szarkowski (1966), who argues that the photographer's central problem is based on what shall be included and what shall be rejected in the frame.

Two things are noted in this experiment when examining the balance of the colour composition:

1. Although it is secondary to the experiment's intention of distortion, the black background within the circle allows the body to be abruptly fade into blackness. This photographic aesthetic retains similar notions to those established in 1.4 Light and Shadow.
2. The coolness of the blue frame reflects onto the body, making the body look paler and sicklier than normal. This is noted to be due to ambient occlusion.

The next experiment will test various colour hues inside the circle as opposed to the current black void. This is to examine the background element and how it affects compositions inside the frame.

## Experiment 29: Colour composition within and outside circular frame

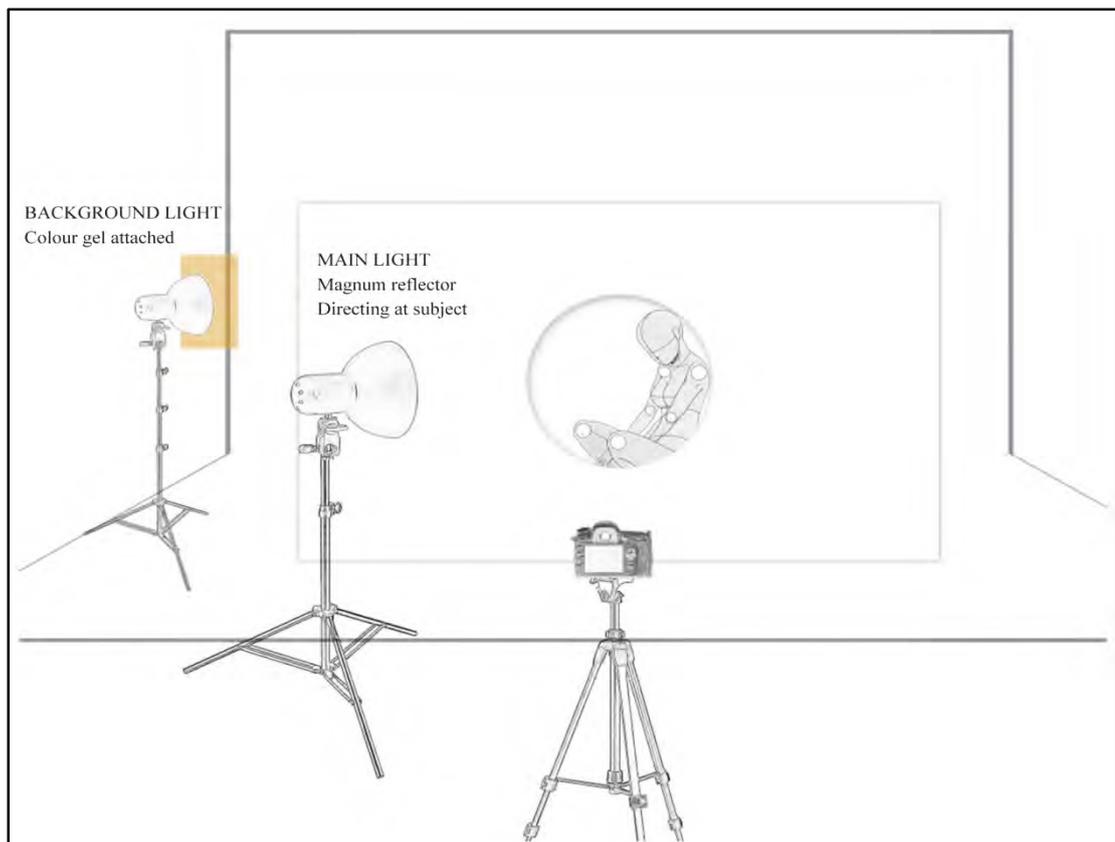
### Aim:

This experiment will examine how the background, as a compositional element within the frame, can affect images of distorted bodies. The experiment will analyse three colour hues, while utilising the initial frame setup in *Experiment 28*.

### Method:

- Paper backdrop placed approximately 5 metres out from back wall.
- 70cm diameter circular hole cut in middle of paper backdrop.
- Platform for body to sit on.
- Body to distort and shift positions, skirting around the edge of the circular frame.
- Camera to be placed level with circle.
- Add background light with varying colour gels.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Magnum reflector, on camera left, aimed at sitter within the circular frame.

Background light: Background reflector with different colour gels attached, on camera left, behind the constructed wall, aimed at background. Approximately 1.5 stops brighter than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Adobe Camera Raw:

- Low-level sharpen to increase definition of shadow lines and body contour.
- Colour-correction for neutral whites.

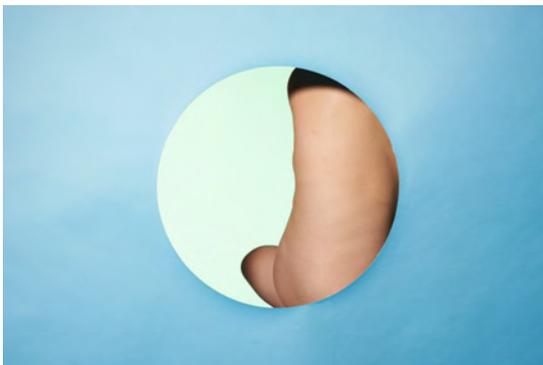
**Results:**



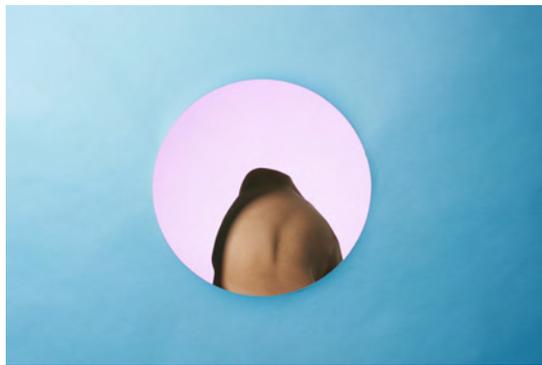
(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

**Reflection:**

As opposed to the black background in the circular frame, the bodies seem more abstract as the contours are more visible in the image. A high-key background also allows a separation between subject and background. This separation is further emphasised in the cases of (c) and (d), where the frame casts a shadow onto the body. Due to the distance between the body and the frame, the shadow is dark and has a sharp fall-off. This additional shadow element increases the contrast between the fleshly tones of the body, the coloured background and the coloured frame. However, it is questionable whether using colour gels on the background adds to the distortion or defamiliarisation of the human body. Rather, it appears more as an aesthetic afterthought that distracts and deters from the body. This distraction is heightened by the combinations of colour — the pastel green, bright orange and bright purple clashes against the sky-blue frame backdrop. Given the clashing colours, the next experiment will adjust the colour background to white and closely monitor the contents within the frame.

## Experiment 30: Abstracted poses within circular frame against white background

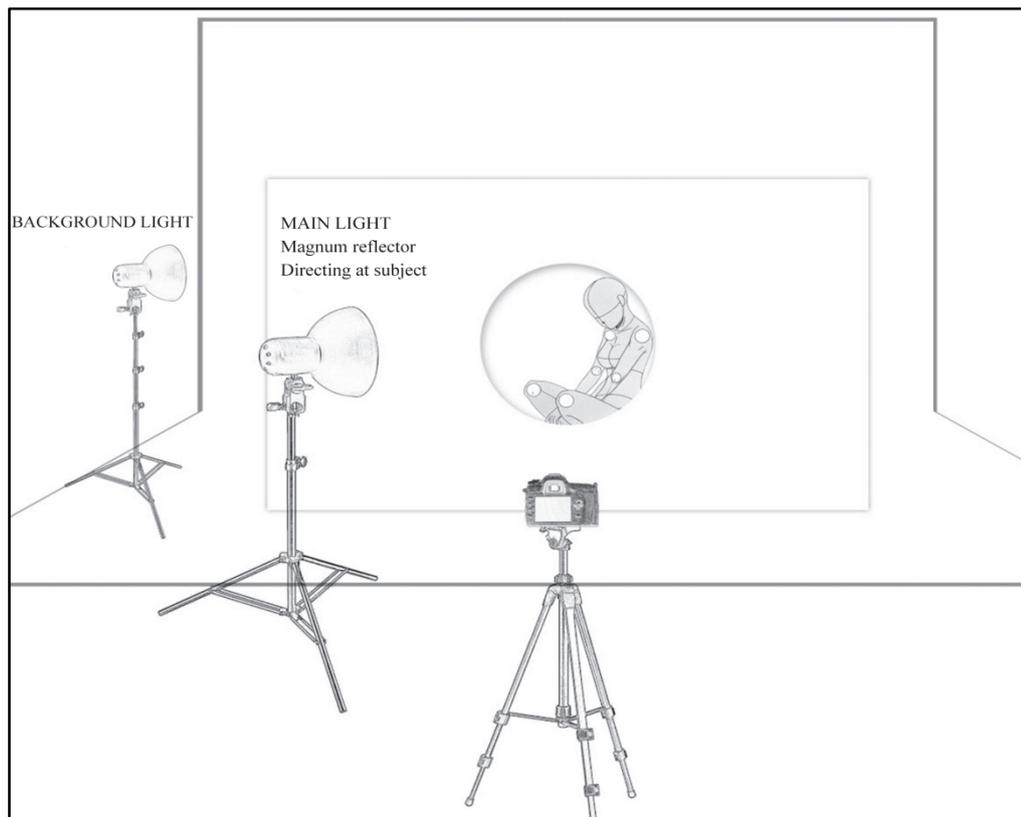
### Aim:

This experiment will examine the white background as a compositional element within the frame and how it affects viewing the body as it distorts in posture within the frame.

### Method:

- Paper backdrop approximately 5 metres out from back wall.
- 70cm diameter circular hole cut in middle of paper backdrop.
- Platform for body to sit on.
- Body to distort and shift positions, skirting around the edge of the circular frame.
- Camera to be placed level with circle.
- Add background light, with no colour gels.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Magnum reflector, on camera left, aimed at sitter within the circular frame.

Background light: Background reflector, on camera left, behind the constructed wall, aimed at background. Approximately 1.5 stops brighter than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Adobe Camera Raw:

- Low-level sharpen to increase definition of shadow lines and body contour.
- Colour-correction for neutral whites.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

In contrast to the previous experiment, the non-distractive background in this experiment allows the viewer to maintain a strong focus on the body. From this, I can identify that the circular frame helps to further centre the viewer's attention on the body. The body is resting on a plinth; its back is arched while the knees are bent upwards to the right. This allows a tiny white gap to form at the back arch, allowing a clearer depiction of form. Further analysis of this frame device yields that the body is observed primarily skirting the bottom and sides of the circular frame; therefore, the body form usually yields a fleshly mass that relies on its outline to identify form. I note that the frame is static while the body is dynamic, thus the experiments must rely on the body to generate more dynamic forms. This method of framing is advantageous, given the body's awareness of the boundaries of the frame. This is in contrast to the viewfinder, which only the photographer can see. For the next experiment, I will consider using this physical framing device to defamiliarise bodies of varying proportions, from male, female, athletic, slim, pregnant and plump, as the frame removes certain body identifiers from the narrative. Furthermore, there is potential for the body to be positioned skirting the top of the frame, which can potentially be seen as defying perception, as the bodies are no longer grounded.

### Experiment 31: Bodies of various shapes and sizes singularly placed inside the circular frame

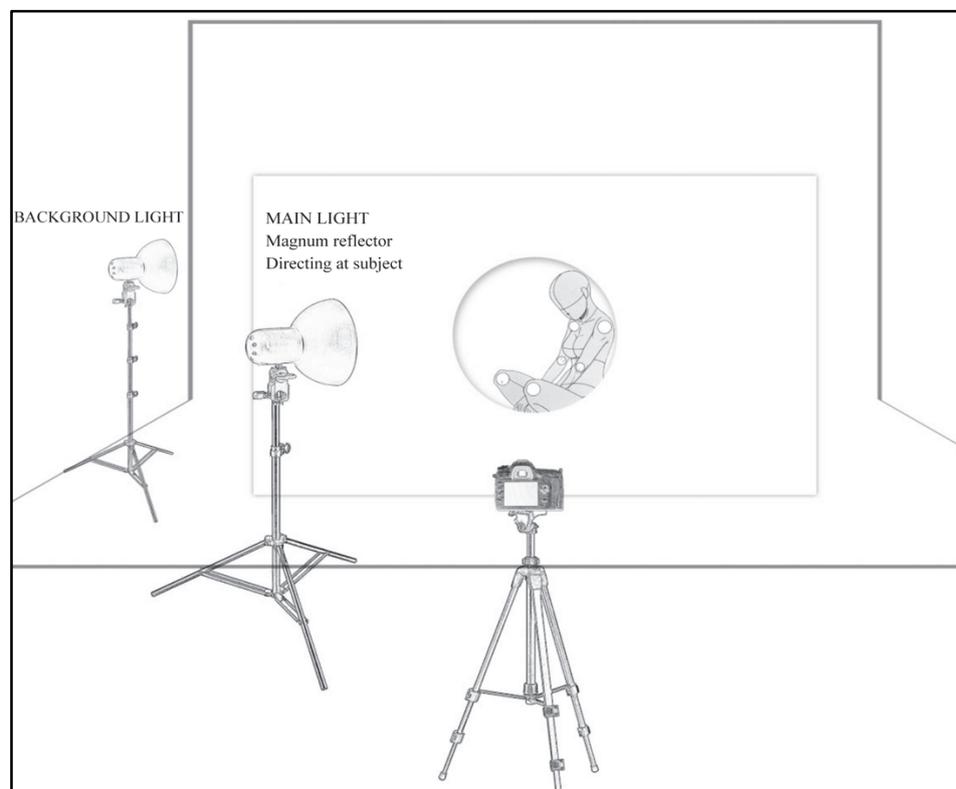
#### Aim:

This experiment aims to distort and defamiliarise differing body types by utilising the frame to disrupt the reality of the body parts. A hypothesis is that a plump arm can be slimmed or severed in half by the frame, or a skinny arm can be positioned such that it is not immediately recognised as a skinny arm, or can be logically perceived as an arm and perceived as another body component.

#### Method:

- Paper backdrop approximately 5 metres out from back wall.
- 70cm diameter circular hole cut in middle of paper backdrop.
- Platform for body to sit on.
- Body to distort and shift positions, skirting around the edge of the circular frame.
- Camera to be placed level with circle.
- Add background light, with no colour gels.
- Various models of different body proportions are introduced to the image.

#### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Magnum reflector, on camera left, aimed at sitter within the circular frame.

Background light: Background reflector, on camera left, behind the constructed wall, aimed at background. Approximately 1.5 stops brighter than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Adobe Camera Raw:

- Low-level sharpen to increase definition of shadow lines and body contour.
- Colour-correction for neutral whites.

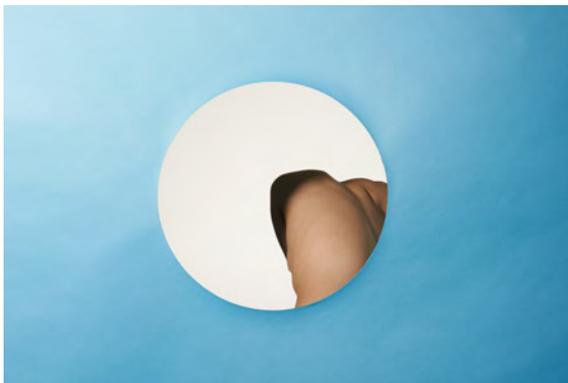
Results:



(a) Male with athletic build



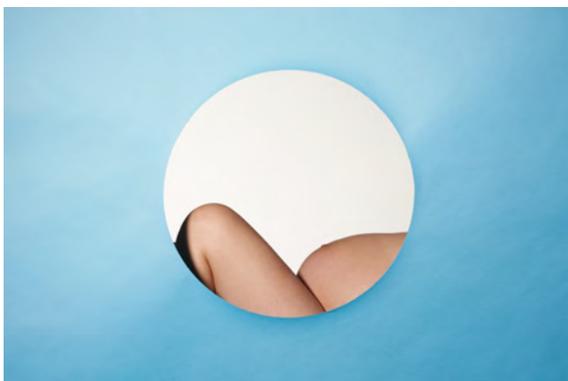
(b) Male with slightly plump build



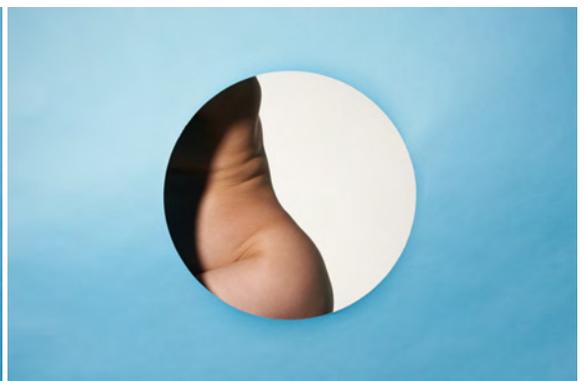
(c) Female with slim build



(d) Female with average build



(e) Pregnant female



(f) Male with plump build



(g) Female with plump build

**Reflection:**

In each scenario, the body form is recognised based on the lines and contours of the body and the skin folds. Forms of abstracted appearance are identified to be working towards a distorted form, such as with the pregnant female and the plump male and female. The pose established by the female with average build is unique, given how the head is dismembered by the frame. Ascending upwards, the head is concealed, while the neck appears elongated. This is recognised as an occurrence of distortion and defamiliarisation. A similar occurrence is observed in the female with plump build photograph. Although I photographed it, even I am misled as to what the primary mass of flesh represents, as I cannot recall what area of the body it is from. Yet I have an impression that it is a body due to its traits of fleshliness. This aside, there is still a certain lack of distortion in the images with slim/average/athletic body builds. The bodies don't feel immediately strange and frightening. Perhaps this has something to do with the way the bodies are presented as skirting the frame. Rather, the bodies can potentially be filling up a large majority of the frame. Thus, larger bodies will be emphasised in the next experiment.

On another note, when gathering the images together in a series, it can be interesting when the bodies of various proportions come together and have similar appearances. However, in some cases where significant identifiers of a body's proportion are not concealed, the bodies thus are immediately recognised as multiple bodies of varying proportions and the deception falters. This is not the case, however, when the images are viewed individually with no other images from the series inviting a comparison.

## Experiment 32: Observing abstraction of body form by increasing body surface area to fill up space within the frame

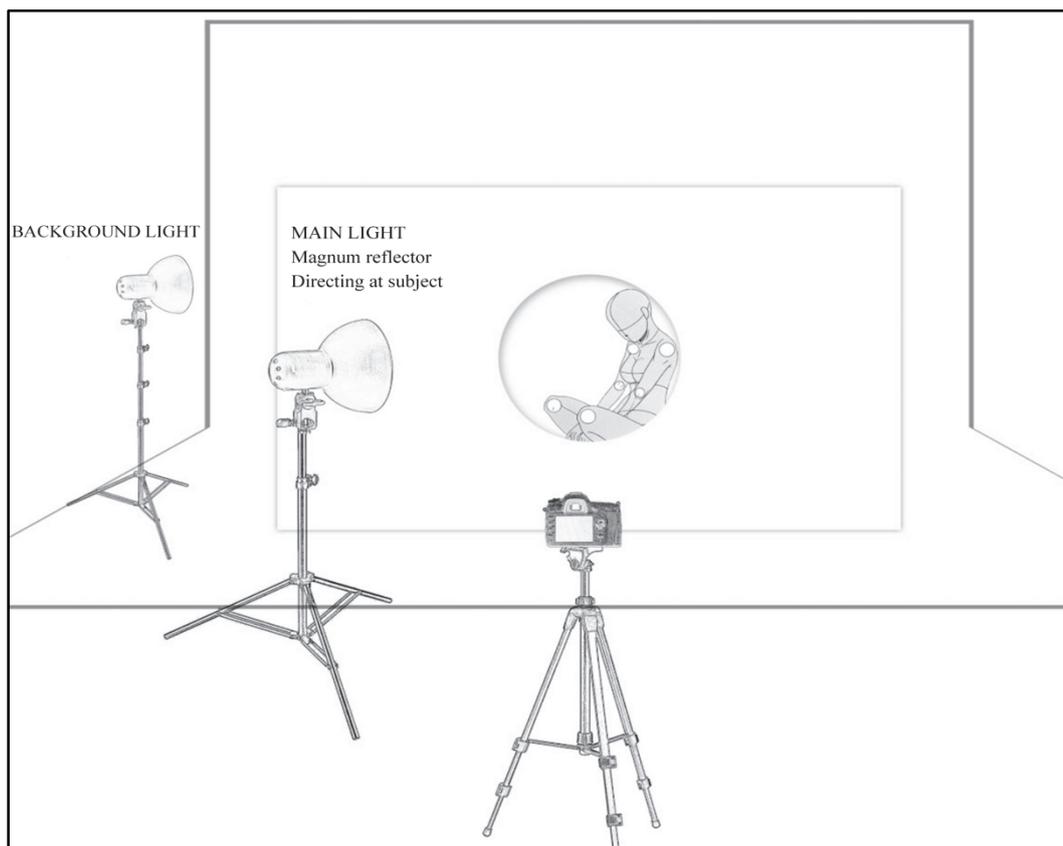
### Aim:

This experiment considers an emphasis of abstracted forms effected by a large-scale body filling up the frame. The frame will undertake the role of concealing the familiar while distorting proportions and representation of body components within the frame.

### Method:

- Paper backdrop approximately 5 metres out from back wall.
- 70cm diameter circular hole cut in middle of paper backdrop.
- Higher platform for body to stand on.
- Body to distort and shift positions, skirting around the edge of the circular frame.
- Camera to be placed level with circle.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Magnum reflector, on camera left, aimed at sitter within the circular frame.

Background light: Background reflector, on camera left, behind the constructed wall, aimed at background. Approximately 1.5 stops brighter than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Adobe Camera Raw:

- Low-level sharpen to increase definition of shadow lines and body contour.
- Colour-correction for neutral whites.

**Results:**



(a)

(b)

**Reflection:**

Contrary to my previous analysis, revealing more of the body is counterintuitive to the idea behind distortions by concealment. This is most likely due to more of the body being revealed, while the rigidity of the frame denies its ability to conceal such a large subject within. Whilst the frame has assisted in concealing certain recognisable body parts, such as the head and genitals, these images effectively reveal the idea that the more elements of the body are visible in the photograph, the more apparent it is legible as a human body. The bodies have identifiable components concealed; however, they do not undergo a sense of distortion or defamiliarisation, as the body is still familiar. They are abstracted but do not exude a sense of foreignness. The experiments will need to revisit further concealment to provoke distorted bodies. For the next experiment, I will attend to the antithesis of my previous hypothesis and examine whether showing less of the body in the frame (concealing more of the body with the frame) can affect a distorted or defamiliarised impression of the human body.

### Experiment 33: Placing bodies along the edge of circular frame to increase negative space

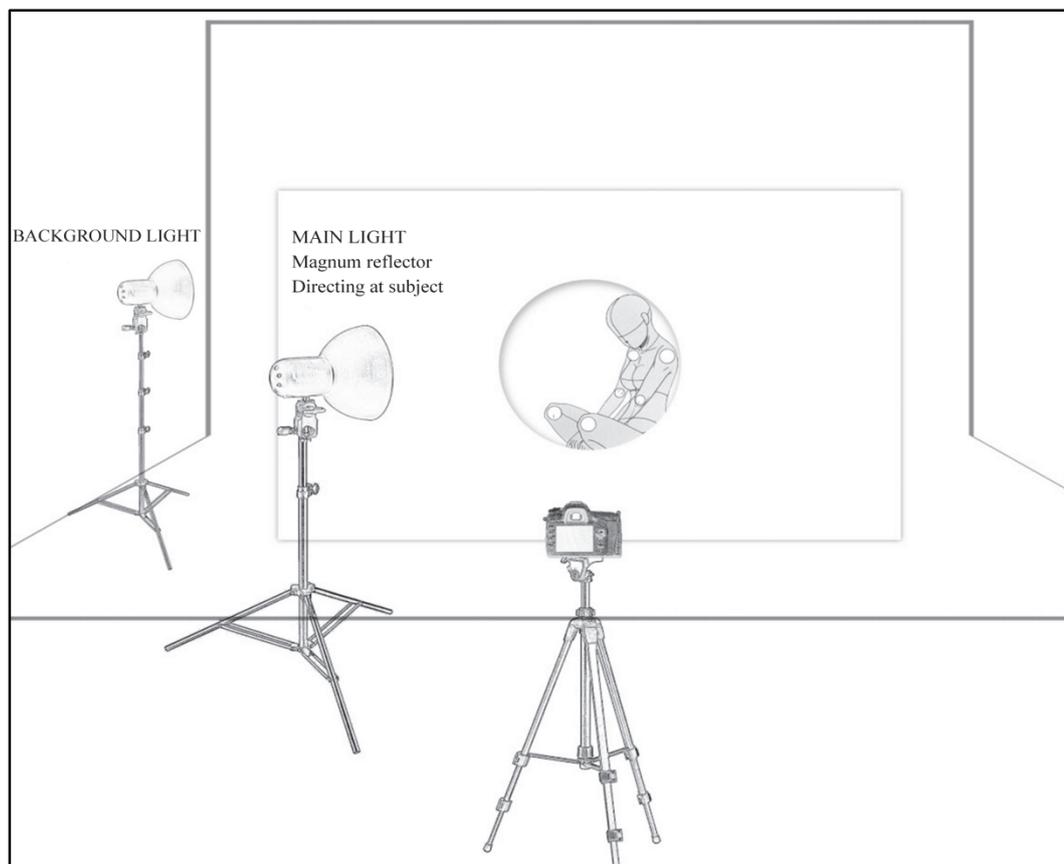
**Aim:**

This experiment explores whether the notion that the frame concealing more of the subject can reveal greater distorted or defamiliarised body forms.

**Method:**

- Paper backdrop approximately 5 metres out from back wall.
- 70cm diameter circular hole cut in middle of paper backdrop.
- Higher platform for body to stand on.
- Body to distort and shift positions, skirting around the edge of the circular frame.
- Camera to be placed level with circle.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Aperture: F/16  
Shutter speed: 1/100

ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Magnum reflector, on camera left, aimed at sitter within the circular frame.

Background light: Background reflector, on camera left, behind the constructed wall, aimed at background. Approximately 1.5 stops brighter than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Adobe Camera Raw:

- Low-level sharpen to increase definition of shadow lines and body contour.
- Colour-correction for neutral whites.

**Results:**



(a)



(b)



(c)

**Reflection:**

The bodies here begin to undergo a sense of transformation. The bodies are posed in ways that reveal abstract portions of the body. Although body parts are visible in each case, there are several layers occurring in the image, which are reminiscent of one of the bodies in a previous experiment, *Experiment 10*, in which one image resulted in the body producing a fanning and

unfolding effect. In (a), the simplicity of two knee joints sticking out of the frame yields two triangular components. The body in (b) is pregnant, thus making the bulging belly an additional element in the image to further defamiliarise the body from its conventional state. The body in (c) is arched backwards to align the body contour with the direction of the circular concavity. In this pose, folds of skin at the hip, spine and shoulders are subtly revealed on the solid mass of human body.

The bodies in these images reflect upon the notion of repression, where repression is a necessary condition for the invocation of an uncanny sensation. The bodies transform into metaphorical landscapes with undulating folds of skin and contours. The next experiment will attend to this similar scenario, but will further examine how these repressed and defamiliarised bodies are perceived when they are subverted from the reality of gravity.

## Experiment 34: Visualising a floating body within the circular frame

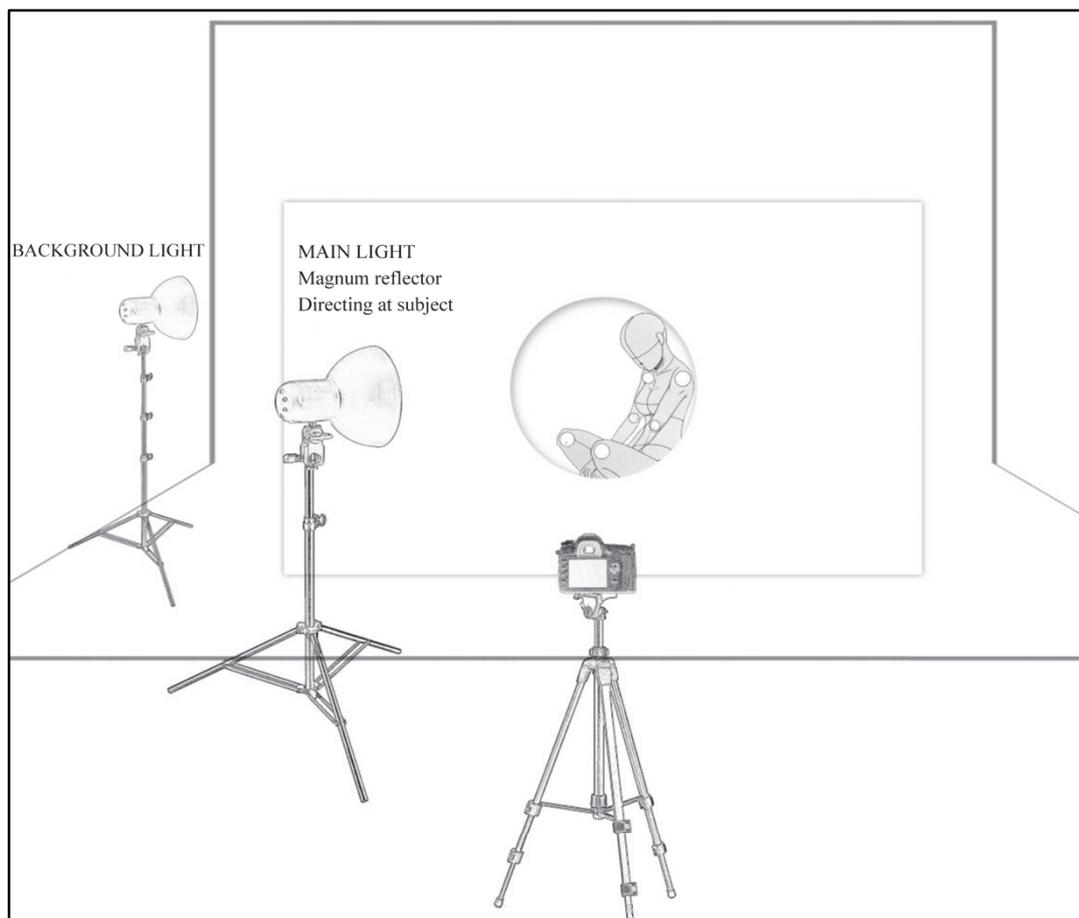
### Aim:

This experiment aims to create floating bodies in the frame. Bodies that are not grounded can potentially be seen as defying our visual perception, which further blurs the viewer's ability to accurately comprehend the elements of the body.

### Method:

- Paper backdrop approximately 5 metres out from back wall.
- 70cm diameter circular hole cut in middle of paper backdrop.
- Higher platform for body to stand on.
- Body to distort and shift positions, skirting around the edge of the circular frame.
- Camera to be placed level with circle.
- Direct the model to pose in unique ways that seem like they are floating and not touching the ground.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Magnum reflector, on camera left, aimed at sitter within the circular frame.

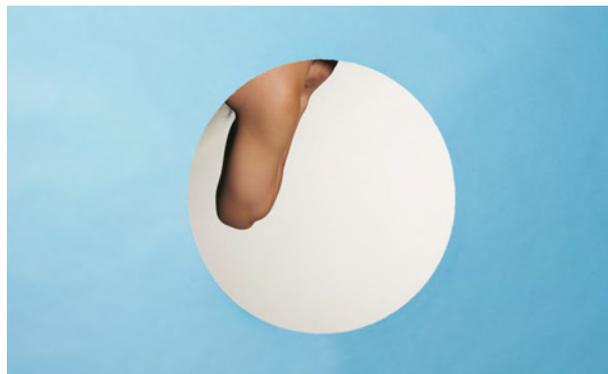
Background light: Background reflector, on camera left, behind the constructed wall, aimed at background. Approximately 1.5 stops brighter than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

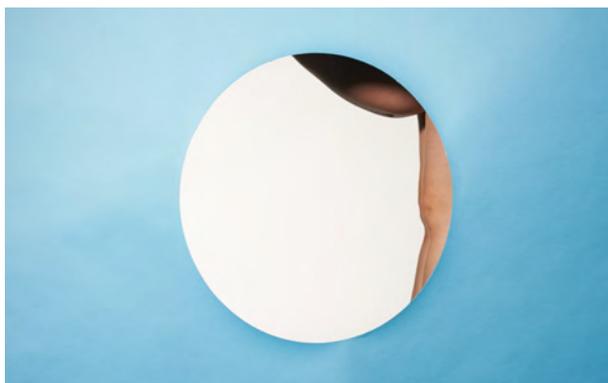
Adobe Camera Raw:

- Low-level sharpen to increase definition of shadow lines and body contour.
- Colour-correction for neutral whites.

**Results:**



(a)



(b)

**Reflection:**

The models in this experiment were directed to stand, rather than sit, in order to reach an elevated height. In (a), the model is athletic, and thus they were able to stand at the very edge of the frame and bend down, jutting their elbow out. In (b), a pregnant woman is directed to stand and bend forward at the border of the circular frame. The legs are locked as they ascend upwards along the edge of the concavity, while her bulging belly is slightly protruding in the frame. The images touch on notions of the circular format by Rudolf Arnheim (1983); he notes that the circular format ‘represents the superhuman, which is radically detached from the realm

of earthly gravity... evoking a “floating world”, unencumbered by the burden of human existence’ (117-119), The bodies are undergoing this process of transcending their reality, particularly through the concealment of the ground to make the platform indeterminate. This affects perceptions of how the body is able to suspend itself within the frame, which I note is made even more difficult due to the circular format, as opposed to the conventional quadro-format frame and its intrinsic ‘bottom’ frame, which can denote an orientation closely aligned with the ground. For the next experiment, I will subvert the reality further by fixating the bodies closer to the top of the circular frame, first posing the body near the edge of the bottom frame, then rotating the images 180 degrees.

## Experiment 35: Body location in relation to the frame, 180 degrees rotation

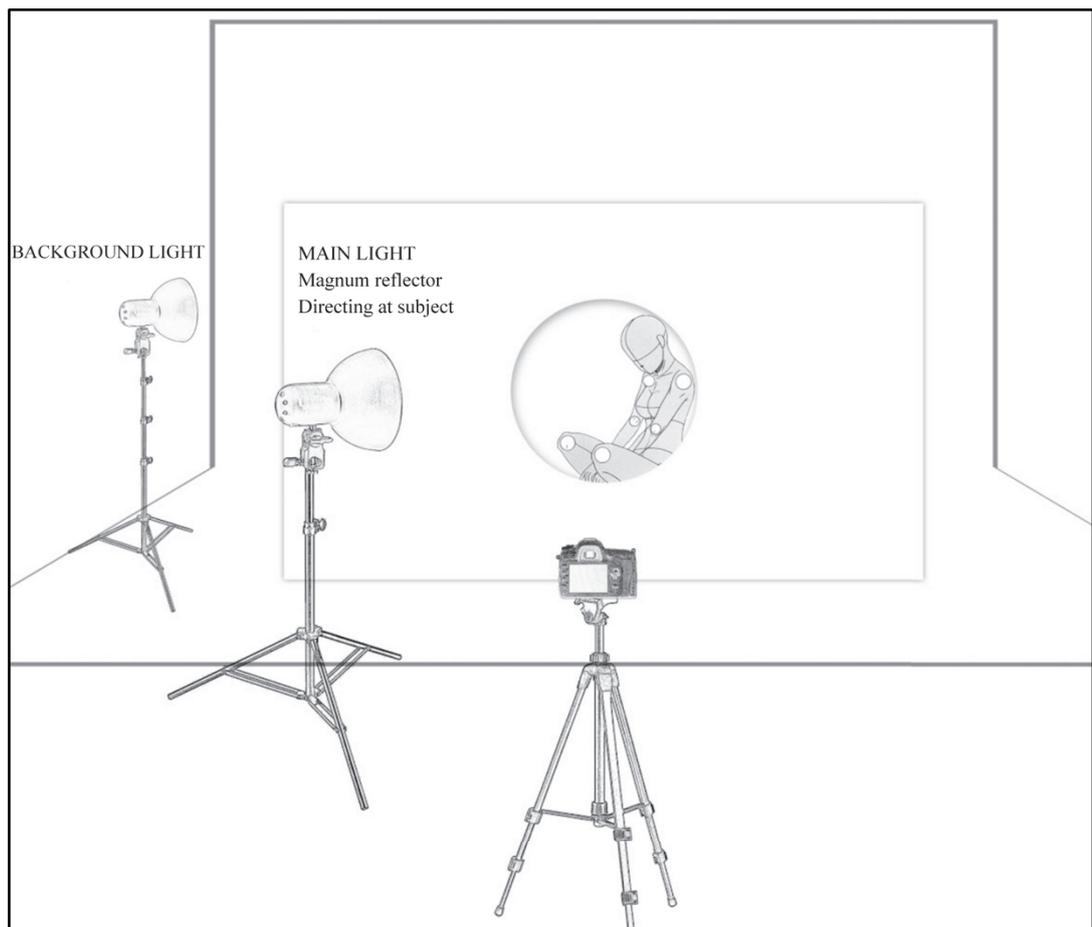
### Aim:

This experiment will situate the body closer to the top frame in order to invoke imagery that aligns closer to Arnheim's notion of the floating world in the circular frame (Arnheim 1983). This will be achieved by posing the body close to the bottom of the frame and rotating the image 180 degrees to invert the positioning of the bodies to the top of the frame.

### Method:

- Paper backdrop approximately 5 metres out from back wall.
- 70cm diameter circular hole cut in middle of paper backdrop.
- Platform for body to sit on.
- Body to distort and shift positions, skirting around the edge of the circular frame.
- Camera to be placed level with circle.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Magnum reflector, on camera left, aimed at sitter within the circular frame.

Background light: Background reflector, on camera left, behind the constructed wall, aimed at background. Approximately 1.5 stops brighter than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Adobe Camera Raw:

- Low-level sharpen to increase definition of shadow lines and body contour.
- Colour-correction for neutral whites.
- Rotate the image 180-degrees.

**Results:**

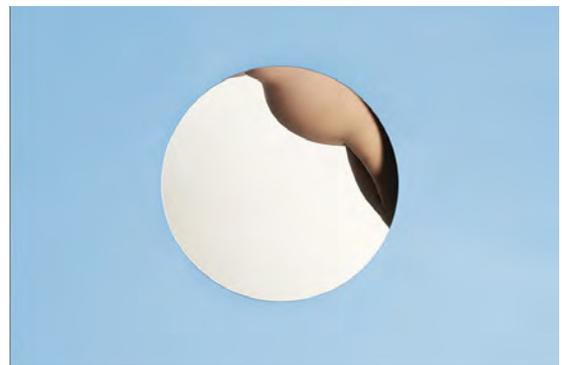
(a)



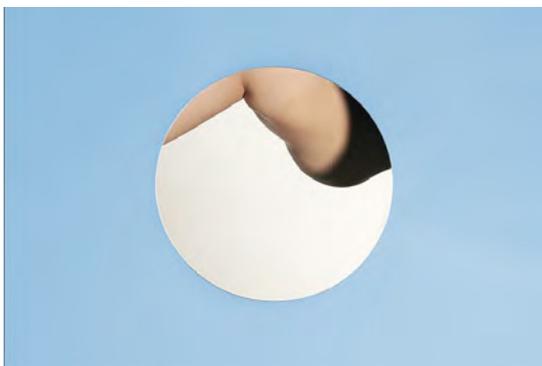
(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

**Reflection:**

The bodies in this experiment are posing according to principles established in *Experiment 33* — where the body is posing to highlight abstract forms that give away a sense of human conformation, which is facilitated by the folds of skin and muscles. The body has been severed and the frame shows only what the photographer intends. Through concealment with the frame, I am able to reveal body forms that are defamiliarised and distorted in appearance.

Furthermore, rather than directing the model to strenuously appear at the top of the circular frame, the images were rotated 180 degrees to make the bodies appear more floating and aid in the image's defamiliarisation of the body. Multiple sitters of varying body sizes were used for this experiment. Furthermore, (c) is borrowed from *Experiment 31*, for the body bears similar visual traits in this experiment. The series of images utilise the physically constructed frame in an attempt to go beyond conventional photographic framing techniques for viewing bodies, in order to disrupt the visual means to examine and interpret the familiar. It aims to reduce the

corporeality of the body as the frame dismembers parts of the body.

The experiment thus highlights a method of how the frame can conceal and sever the body to reveal distorted and defamiliarised forms. I direct my attention to the sky-blue frame, which was initially utilised due to its availability in the studio. Its apparent effects on the framing device were not considered; however, I will now consider the sky-blue frame and its purpose in the distortion of contents within the frame.

## Experiment 36: Colour composition of outer frame to complement the distorted body within the circular frame

---

### Aim:

This experiment will attend to the colour of the physical framing device and examine how a different colour may affect or facilitate the perception of distorted bodies. The experiment will use post-production techniques to convert the hue, lightness and saturation of the frame.

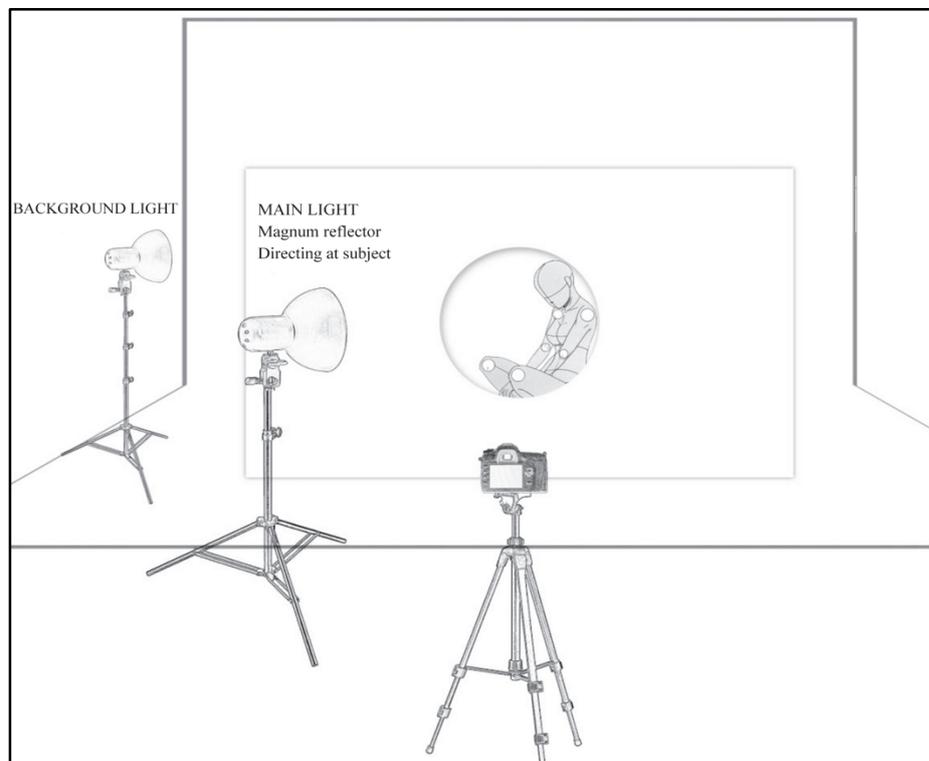
### Precedent:

*Experiment 35*

### Method:

- Paper backdrop approximately 5 metres out from back wall.
- 70cm diameter circular hole cut in middle of paper backdrop.
- Platform for body to sit on.
- Body to distort and shift positions, skirting around the edge of the circular frame.
- Camera to be placed level with circle.
- Use Photoshop to mask the bright blue background and apply a Hue/Saturation layer adjustment.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Magnum reflector, on camera left, aimed at sitter within the circular frame.

Background light: Background reflector, on camera left, behind the constructed wall, aimed at background. Approximately 1.5 stops brighter than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

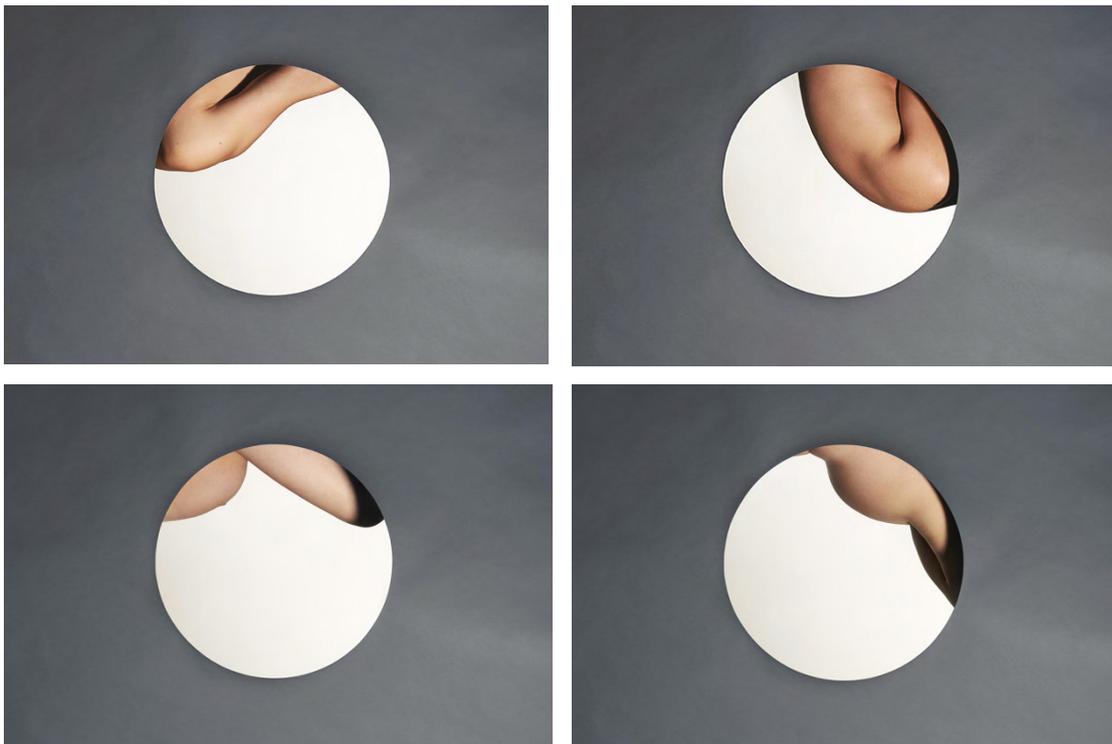
Adobe Camera Raw:

- Low-level sharpen to increase definition of shadow lines and body contour.
- Colour-correction for neutral whites.
- Rotate the image 180 degrees.

Photoshop:

- Desaturate and darken the paper background from bright blue to dark grey with slight blue tint.

**Results:**





**Reflection:**

Further improving upon the successfully concealed and subsequently distorted bodies in the image, I adjusted the colour to a more neutral tone. Hue had a slight incremental change while saturation and lightness were drastically reduced to adjust the colour to a more neutral and deeper tone. It is noted that the darker tones of the frame help emphasise the subject in the frame. The initial sky blue was noted to affect the way the body within the frame was perceived. Simultaneous colour contrast adjusts perception of the body as having a cooler tonality, due to the sky-blue background. Furthermore, the ambient occlusion makes the body slightly paler than usual in the process (noted in *Experiment 28*). Adjusting the colour to a deeper and more neutral tone thus alleviates the first issue of simultaneous colour contrast and gives the body warmer and fleshly tones, which spurs it towards further towards the familiar. The ambient occlusion doesn't appear to have a significant effect in the defamiliarisation, as it is negated by the removal of simultaneous colour contrast.

While the colour of the framing device is identified as affecting perceptions of warmth and heightened familiarity, I question its importance in the representation of these concealed, defamiliarised and distorted body forms. The next experiment will see to removing the entire outer frame to examine any changes in these distorted and defamiliarised representations.

## Experiment 37: Re-examination of the application of outer frame in the image — removal by physical crop to instil floating bodies

---

### Aim:

This experiment turns to cropping the circles out of the coloured background and re-arranging them in a pattern. The experiment will print the photographs at various incremental sizes between 20 and 40cm, and cut and rotate them to observe changes in body positioning and perceived body representation when viewed as a series of images.

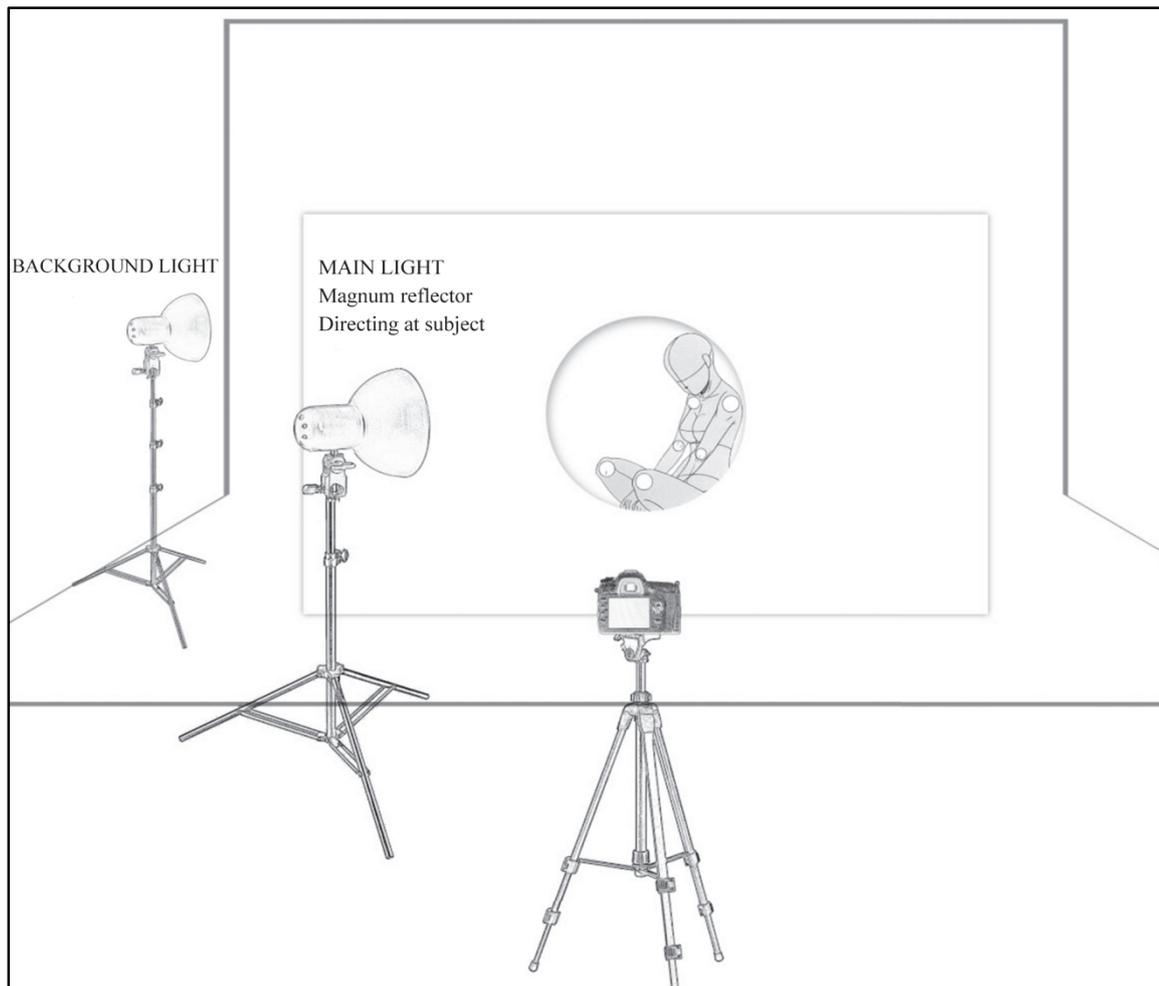
### Precedent:

*Experiment 36*

### Method:

- Print out *Experiment 36*. Prints are made at varying sizes, the largest being 40cm, while the smallest 20cm.
- Use scissors and trim around the circle, removing the dark grey background from the image, leaving a circular photograph.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Magnum reflector, on camera left, aimed at sitter within the circular frame.

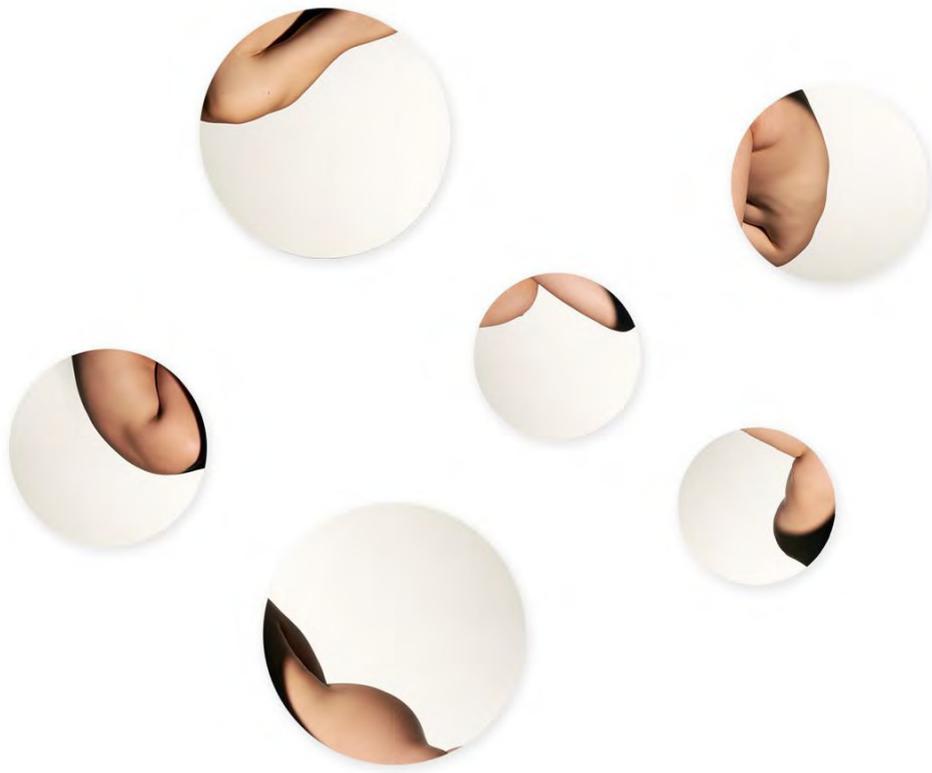
Background light: Background reflector, on camera left, behind the constructed wall, aimed at background. Approximately 1.5 stops brighter than main light.

**Post-production settings:**

Adobe Camera Raw:

- Low-level sharpen to increase definition of shadow lines and body contour.
- Colour-correction for neutral whites.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

Contrary to previous experiments, which involves framing the body, this experiment highlights the method of cropping in removing the bodies into their own frame. Although the colour background is removed, the bodies remain framed in the image. The elimination of the colour background allows the bodies to freely float in space, due to free rotation without the previously restraining quadro-format. The frame simultaneously exists and does not exist. Removal of the coloured background does not deny the frame, but rather emphasises its purpose in the distortion of form, especially when viewing the images in a series. This experiment highlights how a narrative can be constructed, as the six photographs are arranged into a composition to

construct a form of corporeal puzzle, which creates a certain incentive for the viewer to further re-frame the image and piece the image together.

In addition, this form of removing the frame allows the circular images to rotate, allowing for further experimentation with the body location within the circular frame. The various sizes of prints also provide a far more interesting narrative than the static frame across all six images in the previous experiment. It assists in breaking up the static visual and allows the distorted bodies to be more dynamic, expanding and contracting in size.

For the next experiment, I will query the function of the crop, which can serve as a method of reframing the image to uncover unique and defamiliarised representations of body form when getting up close to pre-existing images.

## Experiment 38: Cropping an image of two tightly combined bodies

---

### Aim:

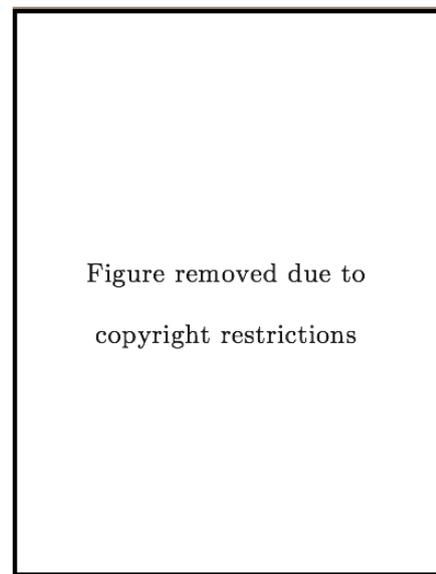
This experiment aims to crop further into the body landscape to explore the contours found from intersecting and meshing limbs. Man Ray's *Monument to de Sade* (1933) is a starting point for this experiment as I observe cropping as a technique to reveal unseen forms of the body.

Art critic Rosalind Krauss (1981) suggests, 'photographic cropping is always experienced as a rupture in the continuous fabric of reality' (31).

### Precedent:



Original source image

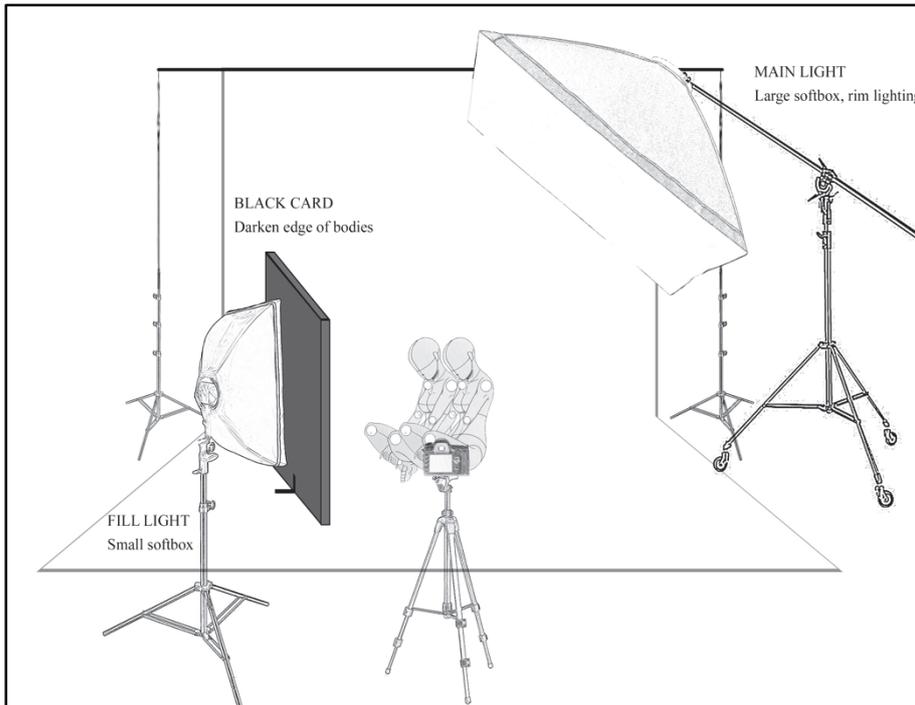


Man Ray, *Monument to de Sade*, 1933

### Method:

Use the crop tool in *Adobe Photoshop* to crop into the image, covering the whole frame with the fleshly body.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large softbox modifier, rim lighting, on camera right, behind the bodies.

Fill light: Small rectangular softbox modifier, on camera left, to fill in some shadows.

White bounce card: on camera left, next to the bodies, approximately 1 metre away.

**Post-production settings:**

Conversion to black and white, as well as colour conversion to give skin a sickly feeling (adjust white balance, leaning towards a cooler white, and green tint, with slight overall desaturation. Clarity is also slightly increased to show more texture in skin).

**Results:**

(a)



(b)

**Reflection:**

The background and environment the bodies are posing in is irrelevant in this examination of the cropping method. The experiment finds that cropping alters the representation of the two bodies and makes the two bodies appear close and intimate. Further analysis finds the initial stages of forming a phallic symbol (a) similar to Ray's *Monument to de Sade* (1933).

Experimenting with two colour edits yields a slight green tint (b) to simulate a slightly sickly and pale skin. In addition, in the legacy of the black and white photography of the surrealist period, converting (a) into a black and white photograph finds that while colour is eliminated, representation of human flesh is still evident. Comparing again to the precedent photograph by Ray, I identify that symbolic representation that is closely aligned to its original source can serve as a precursor to the identification of the familiar human. In this case, as with *Monument to de Sade* (1933), both images are of bodies with traces of supple flesh, while the symbolic representation is similarly a component aligned to the body. This makes the transition of perception easier from the familiar human to the defamiliarised and uncanny phallic representation. For the next experiment, I will examine the effects of cropping and including the contour and form of two bodies in an attempt to alter the representation of a body into an undulating human landscape.

## Experiment 39: Close-up crop converting two bodies into landscape

---

### Aim:

This experiment turns to cropping in order to visualise a defamiliarised and distorted appearance of the human body. This experiment takes inspiration from Doug Peter's *Multibody Bodyscape* (n.d.). I will examine the transformation of bodies into a representation of an undulating landscape.

### Precedent:



Doug Peterson, *Multibody Bodyscape* (n.d.)

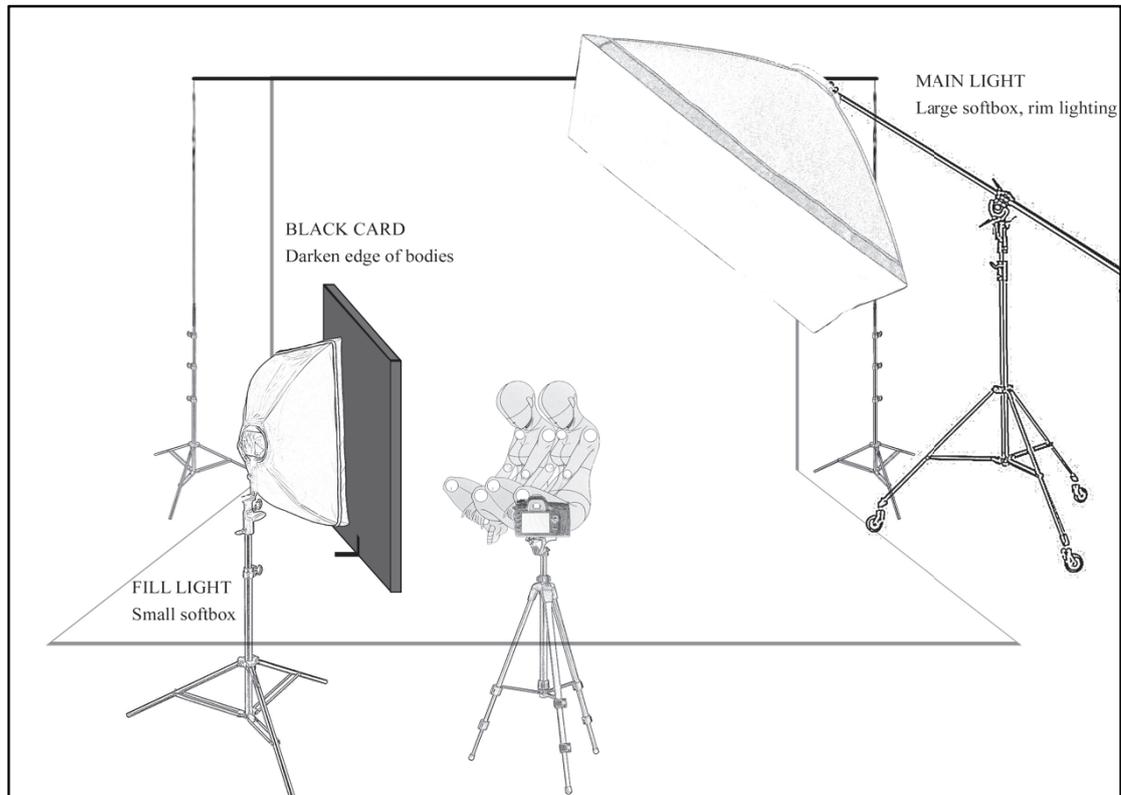


Lin Wei, Uncropped outtake from photoshoot, 2012

### Method:

Use the *Crop* tool in Adobe Photoshop to crop into the top portion of the image while retaining the shoulder region in the frame. Convert image to black and white. Mask and paint the background black.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large softbox modifier, rim lighting, on camera right, behind the bodies.

Fill light: Small rectangular softbox modifier, on camera left, to fill in some shadows.

Black card: on camera left, next to the bodies, approximately 1 metre away.

**Post-production settings:**

Adobe Camera Raw:

- Conversion to black and white.
- Black and White adjustment - Lower the red value. Darkens skin slightly.
- Levels adjustment - Increase contrast by increasing black input to 10 and adjust white input to 245
- Clarity +20

Adobe Photoshop:

- Use Quick Selection to form a basic mask of the background. Paint background black.

**Results:**



**Reflection:**

The collaboration of two bodies initially did not yield any impressions of melding together to form one entity; however, the crop draws an intimacy and closes the gap between the two. Although the black and white conversion does eliminate any colour or tonal discrepancies between both bodies, it reduces the closeness one may have and experience when faced with images of bodies. This type of distortion can be considered a form of transformation, as the bodies give a misleading impression of a landscape, but with the texture of a human body. This calls to mind distortion's utility in deceiving the viewer and offering a different perspective of the body — not in terms of angle of the body, but the way the body is perceived. The contrast between neutral toned skin and black background creates a stark separating contour line, seemingly in the appearance of a mountainous range. The crop removes the unnecessary components that do not contribute to the formation of this undulating landscape and is identified here as a method after the photographic process, and another process in the identification and visualisation of distorted forms. Furthermore, cropping is identified as an act of re-contextualising the image, as the image of the bodies is transformed into an image of an uncanny landscape.

As this experiment has highlighted instances of affecting the body after the photographic process, the next experiment will attend to the technical process of affecting distortions through the camera. I will thus investigate distortion that occurs at the extremities of wide-angle focal lengths.

## Experiment 40: Ultra-wide-angle distortion, affecting optical perspective and perception of the body

---

### Aim:

Given the characteristics of a wide-angle perspective to emphasise the size and skew the dimensions of objects up close, this experiment explores distortions of the body generated by an ultra-wide-angle lens. This experiment takes note of Bill Brandt's close up images in *Nude Baie Des Anges* (1959), where specific parts of the body are placed in the frame and enlarged due to the wide angled perspective.

### Precedent:

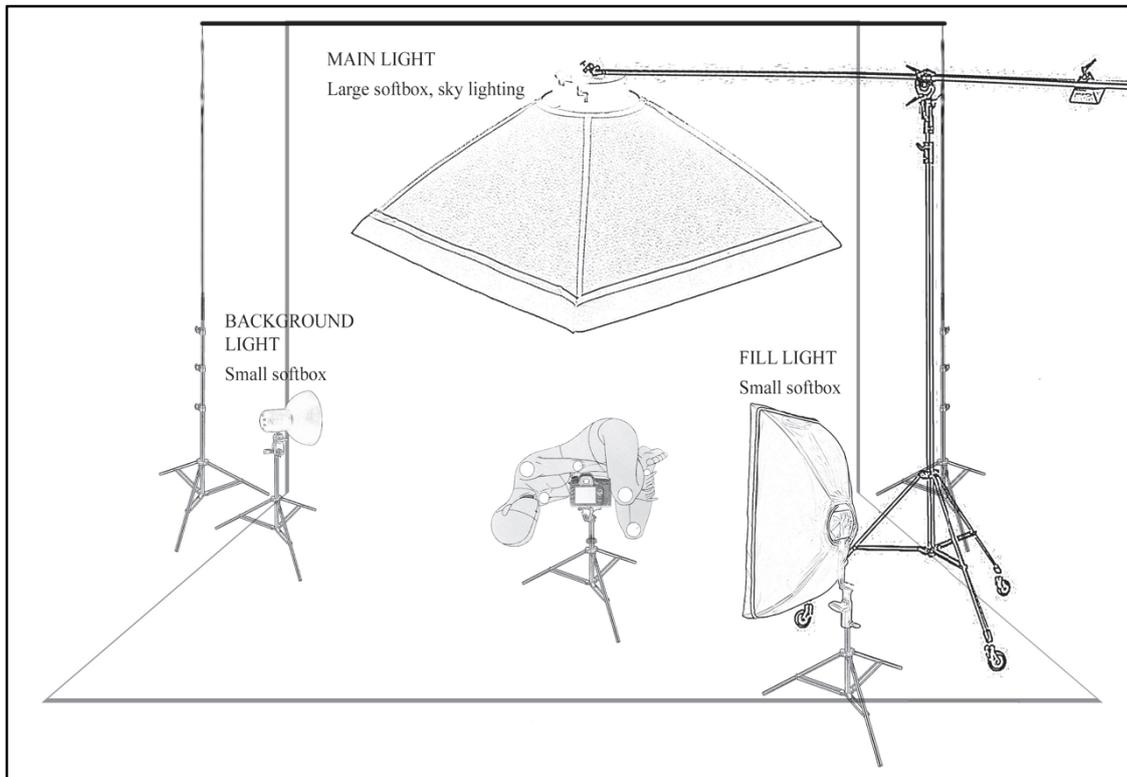


Bill Brandt, *Nude Baie Des Anges*, 1959

### Method:

Utilising an ultra-wide-angle lens (focal length less than 24mm in this case), the camera will be placed in very close proximity to the sitter, approximately 15 centimetres away from sitter. The experiment will be performed in the corner of the cyclorama.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/100  
Aperture: f/22  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lens:**

Nikon 14-24mm AFS f/2.8 G ED.

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large softbox modifier, sky lighting (overhead, above the model).

Fill light: Small rectangular softbox modifier, on camera right, to fill in some shadows cast by the overhead softbox. 1 stop lower than main light.

Background light: on camera left, close to wall, directed at wall behind body whilst not feathering the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction for neutral whites.

**Results:**

(a)



(b)

**Reflection:**

Given the scope of the ultra-wide-angle lens, I had to work very close to the sitter in order to place certain elements outside of the frame. In addition, the body needs to be placed close to the wall so that the whole background is in the frame. This creates an issue with the background light, which is similarly close to the wall and must be carefully directed behind the body without spilling light onto the body. The overall lighting was chosen to for its clean aesthetic and avoid distractions while focusing on the body.

The body in these photographs appear to have been severed, and the frame shows only what the photographer intends. In this experiment, the wide-angle technique reveals interesting shapes of the body, for example in the image on the right. On the other hand, the technique also reveals a form of body landscape, given the large mass of the upper back twisting and bending towards the foreground. This is reminiscent of Doug Peterson's *Multibody Bodyscape* (n.d.). As the experiment aims to create a distorted image of the body, (b) best represents this aim, as the body is more legible as a form, without being too far removed out of the frame. Given the inherent nature of the ultra-wide-angle perspective to distort any subject in its view, the next experiment will attempt to include more body form into the image and examine how the ultra-wide-angle perspective is capable of defamiliarising the familiar in an attempt to induce uncanny forms.

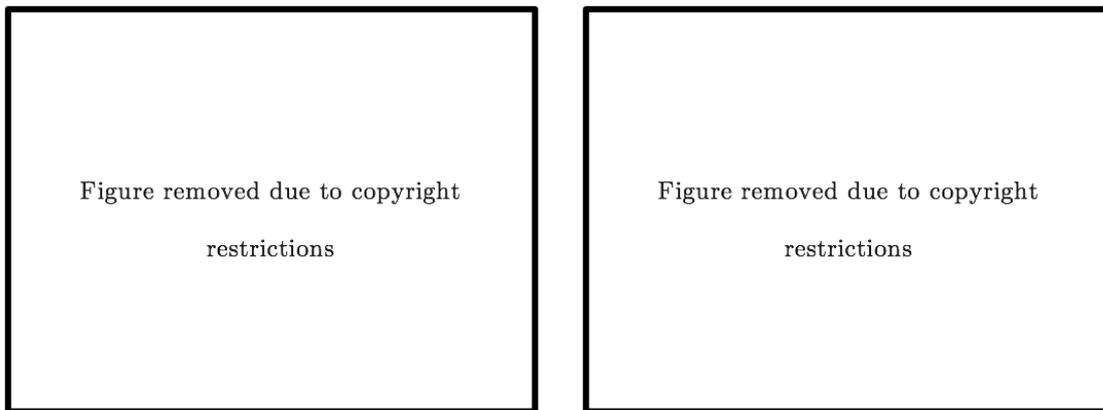
## Experiment 41: Ultra-wide-angle distortion, defining body shape and joints

---

**Aim:**

This experiment is a continuation of the previous experiment, in which I will aim to reveal more of the body form along with more defined body joints and shapes.

**Precedent:**

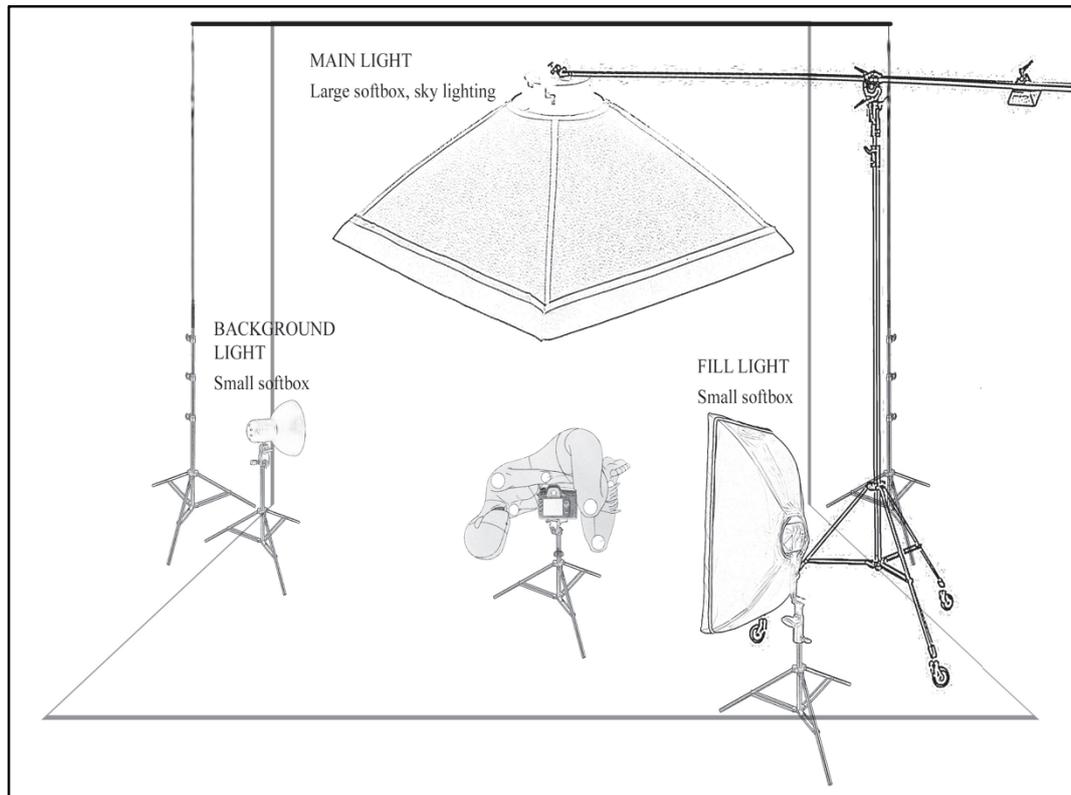


Bill Brandt, *Nude Baie Des Anges*, 1959

**Method:**

Utilising an ultra-wide-angle lens (focal length less than 24mm in this case), the camera will be placed in very close proximity to the sitter, approximately 15 centimetres away from sitter. The experiment will be performed in the corner of the cyclorama. The body will reveal more joints in the frame.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/100  
Aperture: f/22  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lens:**

Nikon 14-24mm AFS f/2.8 G ED

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large softbox modifier, sky lighting (overhead, above the model).

Fill light: Small rectangular softbox modifier, on camera right, to fill in some shadows cast by the overhead softbox. 1 stop lower than main light.

Background light: on camera left, close to wall, directed at wall behind body whilst not feathering the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correct for neutral whites.

**Results:**



(a)



(b)

**Reflection:**

While the previous experiment highlighted how the ultra-wide-angle perspective has an inherent distorting capability, the forms that it distorted were initially defamiliarised in appearance. Thus, the goal of this experiment is to reveal more of the body, or the familiar, whilst retaining its aim of creating misleading impressions or peculiar forms of the body with the assistance of the frame to conceal certain areas. This experiment finds that while the familiar is shown further in the photograph, the technical capacity of ultra-wide-angle perspective can still distort and defamiliarise the body form. The results successfully reveal uncanny forms that do not immediately adhere to normative perceptions of human body conformation. This is especially so in the case of (b), where the hip is foregrounded and emphasised due to its close distance to the camera. The positioning of the body is further curved, due to the effects of wide-angle perspective which is noted to greatly skew the image closer to the edge of the frame.

The coming experiments will attempt to combine and examine how the wide-angle-perspective can be utilised with the circular frame to effect greater distortions and introduce an uncanny form. Firstly, the next experiment will attempt to establish a method of constructing a circular frame in the camera viewfinder.

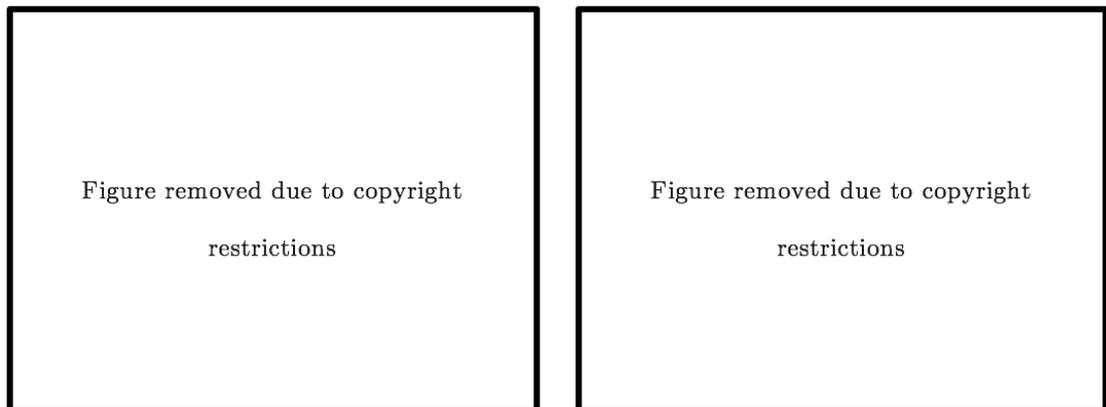
## Experiment 42: Circular framing utilising crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera

---

### Aim:

The experiment will combine a full-frame sensor camera with a crop sensor lens to construct a circular frame inside the camera viewfinder. Notions of the circular frame are taken from previous experiments of the physically constructed circular frame.

### Precedent:

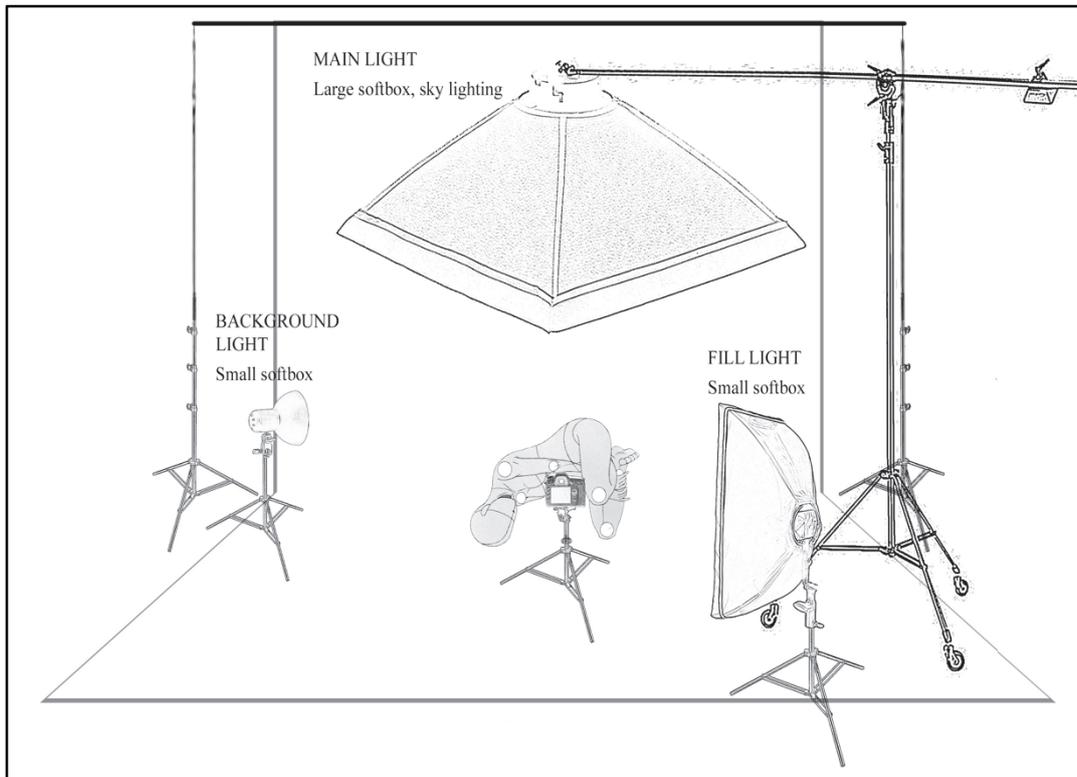


Bill Brandt, *Nude Baie Des Anges*, 1959

### Method:

Attach a crop sensor lens to a full frame camera. This will reveal the interior of the lens barrel, which acts as a form of circular frame. Studio and lighting setup are similar to previous experiment.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/100  
Aperture: f/16  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash  
Focal length: 200mm

**Lens:**

Nikon 18-200mm AF-S DX NIKKOR f/3.5-5.6G ED VR

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large softbox modifier, sky lighting (overhead, above the model).

Fill light: Small rectangular softbox modifier, on camera right, to fill in some shadows cast by the overhead softbox. 1 stop lower than main light.

Background light: on camera left, close to wall, directed at wall behind body whilst not feathering the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correct for neutral whites.

**Results:****Reflection:**

Through an improper combination of camera body and lens, a circular frame is generated within the camera's viewfinder. Keeping in consideration the circular frame as an effective shape to emphasise the subject within, this technique operates by combining a crop sensor lens with a full frame [digital] single lens reflex camera.

The circular frame is observed as the interior of the lens barrel. The barrel is visibly greater at longer focal lengths, which, I hypothesise, occurs due to the internal lens element movement in the barrel. In this experiment, the focal length is set to 200mm, which is the length at which the barrel is most visible. This condition may vary depending on the lens. The same can be held true with a wide-angle lens, as the barrel doesn't extend but the lens element inside shifts position when zooming in or out.

The next experiment will test this hypothesis, and whether the circular effect occurs when the lens barrel zoom movement is confined within the lens, such that the lens elements move as opposed to the exterior when zooming in and out. Furthermore, I will test this scenario with an ultra-wide-angle crop sensor lens. For example, the AF-S DX Zoom-Nikkor 12-24mm f/4G IF-ED has internal lens barrel movement. The current lens for this experiment (Nikon 18-200mm DX) has external barrel movement. The wider the focal length is, the further the internal glass elements may move deeper into the lens, thus emphasising the lens barrel, and consequently the circular frame becomes larger.

## Experiment 43: Circular framing utilising ultra-wide crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera

---

### Aim:

The experiment will combine a full-frame sensor camera with a crop sensor lens to construct a circular frame inside the viewfinder and apply methods of ultra-wide-angle perspective to distort and defamiliarise the body. Notions of the circular frame are taken from previous experiments of the physically constructed circular frame.

### Precedent:

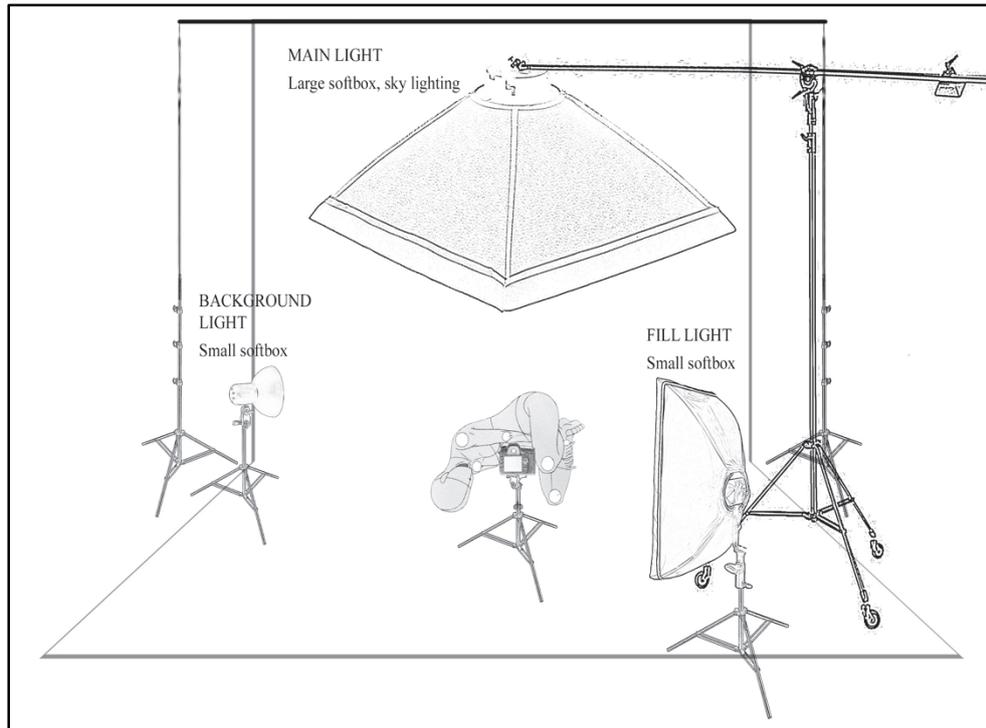


Bill Brandt, *Nude Baie Des Anges*, 1959

### Method:

Attach a crop sensor ultra-wide (Nikon DX 12-24mm) lens to a full frame camera.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Aperture: F/16  
Shutter speed: 1/100

ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash  
Focal length: 12mm

**Lens:**

Nikon 12-24mm AF-S DX Zoom-NIKKOR f/4G IF-ED

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large softbox modifier, sky lighting (overhead, above the model).

Fill light: Small rectangular softbox modifier, on camera right, to fill in some shadows cast by the overhead softbox. 1 stop lower than main light.

Background light: on camera left, close to wall, directed at wall behind body whilst not feathering the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correct for neutral whites.

**Results:**



(a)



(b)

**Reflection:**

This experiment identifies that the circular frame is partly effected due to the internal lens element movement. Furthermore, the ultra-wide-angle crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera combination produces a more complete circular frame for the image. Whilst it is still incomplete, where the top part is still severed from the image, this can be perhaps rectified by increasing the distance between the lens and sensor. Two options I am aware of are available to assist me in this endeavour — extension tube, and/or a focal length reducer. For the next experiment, I will use a focal length reducer to create a more complete circular frame.

## Experiment 44: Circular framing utilising ultra-wide crop sensor lens on full-frame sensor camera with focal length reducer attached

---

**Aim:**

This experiment will resolve the incomplete circular frame by introducing a focal reducer attachment between the lens and camera body. The experiment will retain the ultra-wide-angle crop sensor lens.

**Precedent:**

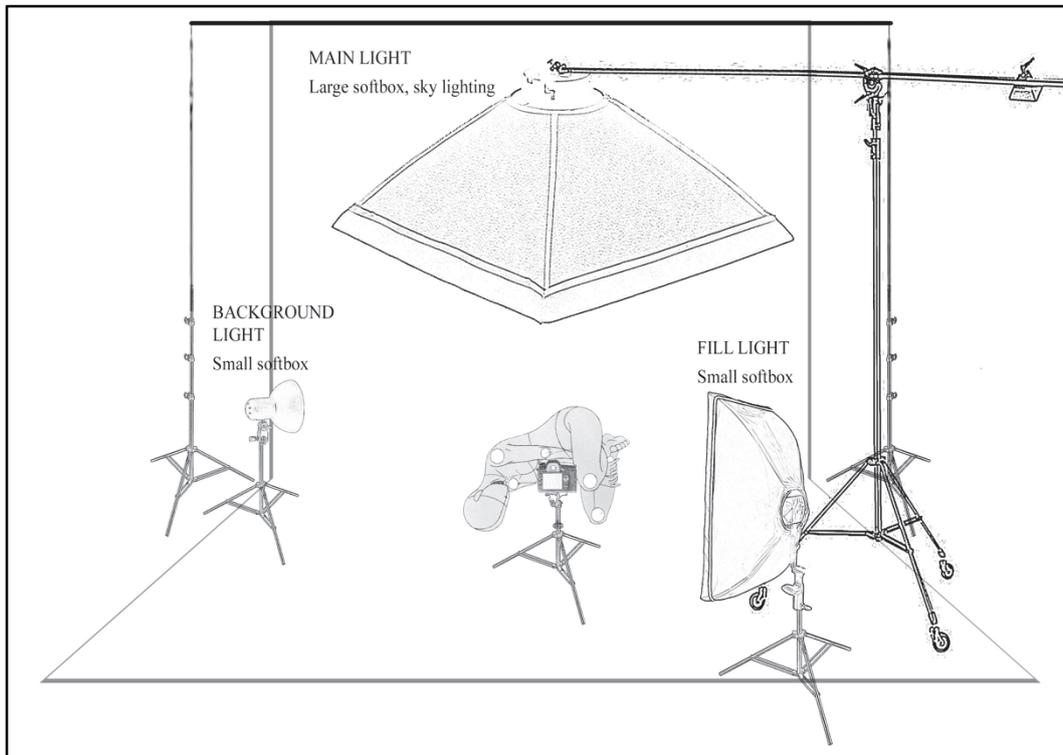


Bill Brandt, *Nude Baie Des Anges*, 1959

**Method:**

Attach a focal length reducer between the crop sensor ultra-wide (Nikon DX 12-24mm) lens and full frame camera.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

Focal length: 12mm

**Lens:**

Nikon 12-24mm AF-S DX Zoom-NIKKOR f/4G IF-ED.

FotodioX Macro Focusing Helicoid (Nikon mount).

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large softbox modifier, sky lighting (overhead, above the model).

Fill light: Small rectangular softbox modifier, on camera right, to fill in some shadows cast by the overhead softbox. 1-stop lower than main light.

Background light: on camera left, close to wall, directed at wall behind body whilst not feathering the body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction for neutral whites.

**Results:****Reflection:**

A focal length reducer was used for this experiment. A focal length reducer is normally used in astrophotography, to get a full-frame picture from a full-frame lens on a crop-sensor camera. However, the exact opposite applies for this experiment. The focal length reducer increases the distance between the lens and the camera, resulting in more of the lens barrel being shown in the final image. I opted for the FotodioX macro focusing helicoid, which is an unconventional choice for a focal length reducer. However, I identified that it has a moving element that allows the photographer to increase the length of the adapter. The adapter was set at its maximum extension length for this experiment, which greatly increased the depiction of the circular frame.

Given the nature of the ultra-wide-angle lens and its inherent distorting function of exponential skewing at the edge of the lens, the thigh of the body is observed to be uncannily bent into a curve and begins to run along the concavity of the frame. It is found that perspective has an inherent distorting function; wide angle perspectives achieve distortion and defamiliarisation through monumentalising, foreshortening and skewing the body into uncanny proportions. Furthermore, the body appears to be conforming to the shape of the frame. The circular frame provides another dimension for the body to exist in, as it also assists in highlighting an abstracted representation of the body. This observation is based on previously established principles of the circular frame.

Given that this is a manual adapter with no electronic functions to enable the camera body to control the lens, the aperture is stopped down to its lowest,  $f/22$ . This is also due to the Nikon 12-24mm DX lens having no manual aperture ring. This is a minor matter; indeed, it is advantageous, for  $f/22$  brings the subject more into focus.

In theory, a similar effect can be achieved without using a focal length reducer, but instead

using a lens with a lower focal length, for example, 8mm. This, however, approaches the territory of a fish eye lens, which has very niche and novel uses. Using a fish eye lens, however, may also require the use of a focal length reducer in order to get the complete circular frame effect, depending on the lens design.

### 1.5.2 — Key Findings

Experimentation with physically framing and using the camera viewfinder found inconsistencies in human body perception arising within the frame, as familiar components are concealed out of the frame. Given that the quadro format is universal, and studies on the rationale of such a frame are prevalent, opting for a circular frame presents an abstract method of investigating the rupture of reality.

Framing the human body within a circle finds that the circular format is an element that facilitates the use of the frame as a device of defamiliarisation. As *Experiment 37* finds, the framing technique can evoke the uncanny in four ways:

1. Firstly, the frame has the capacity to render the body into a construction of lines, contour and shape, devoid of identity. The physical frame capitalises on concealing the body's identity, gender, and individual characteristics, due to the collaborative and interactive nature of the frame.
2. Secondly, the fluctuating size of frames presented the body forms at varying proportions.
3. Thirdly, the rotation of the frames contributes to distorting perceptions of general body localisation.
4. Distortion and defamiliarisation of the body form is heightened when these three factors are combined (*Experiment 37*).

A technical analysis of photographers Weston and Brandt further proves that distortions of body form are heightened when the photograph focuses intently on manifesting forms of the body with disregard to including aspects of individual expression. Such intentions can also be initiated by means of photographic cropping, as *Experiment 38* and *Experiment 39* reveal. Regardless of whether the body is distorted through pre-planning the frame or cropping, the final outcome remains the same — both methods act to conceal and reveal the underlying ambivalence of bodies by drawing attention to areas of interest, where distortions and defamiliarisations of the body can be observed.

The emphasis on the unfamiliar invoked by the distorted body through framing and cropping calls to mind Dawn Adés and Simon Baker's (2008) analysis of the beauty of close-up imagery; they suggest that 'such unsettling and strangely beautiful close-up images render objects less recognisable while revealing something unexpected about them' (7). Adés and Baker's statement

is synonymous with this section, in that the unsettling can be revealed through both framing and cropping, with the latter conducted at a later stage in the photographic process to emphasise the unsettling familiar in the photograph. These processes are a controlled variable. As Sara Sklaroff (2001) indicates, 'photographers show us what they want to, framing the image depending on what story they want to tell' (25). Coincidentally, what the photographer chooses to include within the frame is another method of defamiliarising and distorting human body representation. The next chapter will discuss the involvement of external elements that are not limited to what is inherently available to the body and the camera.

## 1.6 Fusion with Materials

Up till now, I have argued that *distorted* and *defamiliarised bodies* manifest based on how the body can transform into uncanny forms through the use of fundamental capacities such as the camera, lighting and the body itself. It is important to add that distortions of body form are not solely inherent in these capacities, but also extend to external factors that facilitate such distortions. The relationship between human body and material is initially investigated in the experiments on lighting and shadow<sup>34</sup> using black velvet fabric. This section approaches this relationship with a closer analysis of the distinct collaboration between the two, and how the inclusion of such external physical elements converts the body into a distorted and defamiliarised form. The introduction of material to the photographic image of a human body subject becomes a substantial component in the visual composition; one must not only consider the human body as subject, but also the material and its effects on the body. Materials exist in various forms; the material has an inextricable connection with the object, as a solid material can transform into an object, or serve as an adornment to the object. My investigation into this human body-material collaboration will thus focus on a material that contains properties of both rigidity and tensility — paper; more specifically, *cardboard paper*. This is in consideration of the fact that the material can manifest in many forms, and is defined as ‘a material thing that can be seen and touched’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2018) — a material thing which is accessible in many shapes, sizes and properties. Paper can be at once firm and unyielding, yet malleable and manipulated to form different shapes and sizes. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on how the material can be utilised to induce visual distortions and defamiliarisations of the bodies, and less on the potential psychological relation or altered function of the material.

---

<sup>34</sup> Experiment 24. Please refer to 1.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Light and Shadow.



Figure 81: Lin Wei, Experiment 46: Utilising various coloured card-stock to conceal familiar components of the body, 2014

Figure 81,<sup>35</sup> *Experiment 46*, is an initial investigation into paper as a device for concealment of the familiar body components. The body is kneeling on the cyclorama. Two pieces of paper are wrapping the body; a large paper wraps the lower back, buttocks and tucked feet, while a smaller paper wraps around the head. From here the first form of functionality can be established: The paper is light and malleable, and is able to be supported by the model's hand-grip to maintain the wrapping in place. While the paper is concealing components of the body, it is additionally noted that the subject's posture is also directly involved in the process of human figure abstraction. This body and material relationship is symbiotic, and is embedded within fashion studies and the notion of *dress*, which is defined by Mary Roach and Joanne Eicher (1965) as the 'act of covering the body' (1). Emphasis on notions of dress pertains to the key factor that dress, as sociologist Joanne Entwistle (2000) notes, 'involves practical actions directed by the body upon the body, resulting in ways of being and ways of dressing' (39). Situating the experiment within a fashion context allows *Experiment 46* to draw a connection to the action of dress and the paper as a practical method to not just cover and conceal the familiar, but also to *adorn*, which is an aesthetic concept that pertains to altering the body (Entwistle, 2000).

The experiment places importance on the weight of paper stock in determining the final representation of form, which includes body and material combined into one entity. It is important to stress the rigidity and flexibility of paper to create palpable and fluid forms. Standard paper weight used for general printing purposes<sup>36</sup> yields a malleable and highly flexible

---

<sup>35</sup> Experiment 46. Please refer to 1.6.1 — Photographic Experiments on Fusion with Materials.

<sup>36</sup> Approximately 80gsm.

paper that cannot maintain a rigid state when manipulated. Conversely, *Experiment 46* uses the durable Canson Iris Vivaldi 240gsm card paper. The collaboration between paper and body in this experiment finds the body in a vulnerable and exposed state. While the paper is notably concealing familiar components, the body is still distinguishably corporeal and its conformation evident. That is, while the paper wraps the head, the shape it wraps into maintains visual similarity to the shape of a head. The material merely replaces the head. Similarly, while the larger paper conceals a portion of the lower body, body joints in the form of hip and knee are still perceived in the photograph. A symbiotic relationship between the body and paper is required. It is not possible to draw false impressions that bely the familiar without consolidating the human body and paper material into one entity. The paper remains a superficial element that does not homogenise with the human body.



Figure 82: Lin Wei, *Experiment 50*: Molding the paper material to match posed body shape, 2014

Figure 82,<sup>37</sup> *Experiment 50*, resolves this technicality by focusing primarily on concealing open cavities as opposed to covering the familiar. Ironic and antithetical as it may seem, to run counter to the proposed notions of concealing the familiar, the implications of this method are remedied by specific manipulation of body posture to emphasise the paper's homogenisation with the fleshy form. Here, a larger paper sliced from photographic backdrop paper is used, for it provides wider surface area. The paper is 170gsm, which is within the tolerance of durability when manipulated by the model. In *Experiment 50*, the body is lying on the ground, with its knees sprawled out and lower legs tucked in to form a triangular configuration. The arms are tucked underneath the body and away from camera view. The arms are positioned underneath the body, elevating the torso, which conceals the familiar chest and reveals a protrusion of the rib cage. A symbiotic relationship is established as a direct result of the collaboration between

---

<sup>37</sup> *Experiment 50*. Please refer to 1.6.1 — Photographic Experiments on Fusion with Materials.

body and paper, achieving a single entity. Were the body to be photographed in its triangular configuration without the paper concealing the large exposed region between its legs, the familiar would be laid bare for the camera. By rotating the paper into a diagonal position relative to the camera, and folding it up between the legs, the paper transforms into a triangular shape that seamlessly merges with the exposed triangular gap. Considering the notion that the material in this case acts as a method of concealment, perhaps what is revealed through this merger of body and material is a body that is neither familiar nor a body — rather, it presents the case of a body as object, tightly wrapped in a parcel arrangement. This consideration of the body points to a certain notion of dress; Eicher (1973) suggests that ‘body enclosures can also temporarily create the illusion of change in body conformation’ (24). While traces of this notion exist in this experiment, alongside evidence of defamiliarisation, the paper completely assimilates the body into one entity, resulting in a reduction of perceived body structure. *Experiment 50* thus establishes a method of concealment that takes the body and blends it into the material, both concealing the familiar and revealing the abstract within the body.



83(a)



83(b)



83(c)



83(d)



83(e)



83(f)

Figure 83: Lin Wei, Experiment 52: Instances of the concealed body within paper roll, 2014

Contrary to the mode of concealing established in *Experiment 50*, *Experiment 52* (Figure 83)<sup>38</sup> aims to determine whether an emphasis on shape-specific paper forms may contribute to the material as an extension of the human body. Here, the symbiotic relationship relies predominantly on the body organising its own structural form, while using the paper to navigate its own concealment. In order to visualise complex scenarios where the body distorts itself with or through the material, there is minimal intervention on my behalf as photographer, as the model freely poses, while shifting the paper around with minimal choreography.

Each documentation in Figure 83 reveals a raw, stripped-down look at unprecedented forms created by the body-material collaboration. In each instance, the body and paper undergo a

---

<sup>38</sup> Experiment 52. Please refer to 1.6.1 — Photographic Experiments on Fusion with Materials.

continuous change, as they fold and bend into each other. In Figure 83(a), the body is compressed and wrapped in paper, which gives an impression of an inverted C-shape. The paper in Figure 83(b) and Figure 83(c) are similarly flat and curled up to conceal the familiar at the edges of the body. Figure 83(d), on the other hand, renders the body completely invisible, as it conceals the whole body, voiding the photograph of any notion of corporeality. Figure 83(e) similarly conceals, yet maintains a fraction of the flesh; however, this bears similar results to Figure 83(d), in that the absence of corporeality removes a captured instance of body forms from the photograph, as the material becomes the primary focal point. Figure 83(f) rolls up the paper into a long pole that severs the top half of the posed body. The relationship between the body and material in Figure 83 suggests an alteration to the rigid materiality of the body — the body transforms to become more fluid and flexible. Body parts are either invisible, or captured in a continuous process of metamorphoses and arrangements. The body works to conceal itself, while the paper shifts into a shape that acts as an extension, and transforms the body's normative conformation. In the context of Dutch fashion photography, cultural theorist Danielle Brüggeman (2017) points out that identity is 'increasingly understood as a flexible, fluid or "liquid" dimension that can be shaped through fashion's material objects' (219). This is evident in *Experiment 52*, when the paper is not simply reconfiguring visual perceptions of the body, but also concealing and offsetting the consistency of the normative body. Its form and identity are defamiliarised.



Figure 84: Bart Hess, Still from *Mutants*, 2011

Following the logic of the material's rather fluid, flexible nature and its inherent function in conforming with the body, the choreographic works of Bart Hess (Figure 84) exemplify a combination of body and material in performance, dealing with fluctuations of the human body.

Though Hess's work deals in performance rather than photography, the basis of his visual expression in body metamorphosis correlates with the approaches to body distortion that are discussed in *Experiment 52* (Figure 83), as it does with the research on a wider scale. By contrast, photography is a technological documentation of the fluctuations of the body; the image provides evidence of the distortion, in effect. Hess's *Mutants* (2011) (Figure 84) is a rather distinct performance project, which sees the body in an undying process of being sculpted with latex material. Like *Experiment 52*, *Mutants* (2011) highlights the process of minimal choreography as a foundational element, allowing the body to discover visual distortions in various instances of its shifting poses. As the body is dressed in latex, the model moves around in eerie postures, using body joints to bend the neck, shoulders, elbows and wrist into strange inhuman poses. The inhuman here dictates that the body's structure no longer conforms with its naturalistic state, prompted by a combination of unorthodox poses, and the latex adopting the concept of webbing between joints. *Mutants* (2011) is recorded with video, highlighting the various forms the body adopts; it also captures the transformational process of distortion. While the human body is completely concealed, with no traces of skin, the latex material hugs the body, and defines its musculature and structure. This supports evidence of the human body; yet the body is transformed into a form beyond recognition, as the material reconfigures bodily, identifiable features.

Likening Hess's play on the materiality of skin and textiles to notions of Deleuze and Guattari's 'becoming-other', cultural theorist Anneke Smelik (2017) notes that the bodies are 'becoming-animal, becoming-cyborg, becoming-alien, becoming-fluid' (268) Furthermore, the bodies in Hess's *Mutants* (2011) have not observably departed from their human form. Traces of the familiar are still apparent in the human-like structure: extended head, shoulders, and potentially, hands clasped together in front of the chest. The recognition of the unfamiliar pertains to the disconcerting fluid-like latex that plasticises the body, transforming the body into an object that is one with the material. The facial features are blurred, while the neck is elongated and widened by the draping latex. *Mutants* (2011) captures that state of in-between, when the bodies become defamiliarised, when the familiar and unfamiliar are intertwined within the camera. The result is a conflicting visual of the normative body — it is neither human nor a foreign entity; potentially, it is a foreign entity with familiarly human attributes.



85(a)



85(b)



85(c)

Figure 85: Lin Wei, *Experiment 53: Body Form #4*, 2014-17

A survey of Hess's choreography of the body establishes that identity enters a state of flux when the body operates in tandem with the malleable material. The material composition, in its

efforts to facilitate a sense of revealing through concealing, destabilises the flesh and human-like characteristics of the body. Figure 85,<sup>39</sup> *Experiment 53*, approaches this notion, integrating both the body and the material into a singular object. Rather than submerging the body within the material and conveying the ‘in-between’ or the ‘becoming’, as Hess did in approaching *Mutants* (2011), *Experiment 53* emphasises the material as a corporeal extension to the body it conceals, while simultaneously the body acts as an extension to the material, and the material representation is reconstructed to contain traces of corporeality.

The three photographs from Figure 85 demonstrate the material and body composition transforming into an amalgamated form that bears human-like traits. The first photograph, Figure 85(a), captures the body as an extension to the material structure. It presents two cases of material interaction. The first is the paper as a facilitator of defamiliarisation through concealment. The paper conceals a large portion of the human figure, and reveals only the upper back. The lighting flattens, and thus removes evidence of a shoulder joint, which is further aided by the straight pose the arm strikes, and invites consideration of one elongated arm by an amalgamation of the arm and back, with no shoulder joint in-between. Secondly, the arm presents itself as an uncanny handle for the paper construction, suggesting a seamless merger between the materiality of fleshly skin and paper. This merger is similarly perceptible in its precedent, *Mutants* (2011). Brüggeman (2017) indicates that Hess’s textile work ‘raises questions about the porous boundaries between clothes and the physical body’ (229). Additionally, the boundaries between the human body and material in Figure 85(a) converge, to the point where one cannot be easily distinguishable from the other. This idea, in combination with the two cases of material interaction outlined in Figure 85(a), is also present across Figure 85(b) and Figure 85(c). The second photograph, Figure 85(b), poses the body side on and bending at the waist. The triangular paper construction severs the legs and torso, leaving behind an ovoid posterior. Combining the visible body and the triangular paper structure manifests an appearance that can be likened to a crustacean. The third photograph, Figure 85(c), reconfigures the paper into two triangular sections that fold at a point to complete a singular rhomboid structure that encapsulates the body. The body fills up the gap seamlessly, and invites suggestions that the body belongs to the constitution of the paper. Based on this concealment strategy, *Experiment 53* demonstrates the material as more than a facilitator of defamiliarisation. The material transforms the body’s structure; perceptions of the body are no

---

<sup>39</sup> Experiment 53. Please refer to 1.6.1 — Photographic Experiments on Fusion with Materials.

longer placed solely on the body, but on a combination of the body *and* paper as a single entity. While the first photograph Figure 85(a) presents a case where the body becomes an extension to the material construct, the inverse is asserted in Figure 85(b) and Figure 85(c), where the material actualises as an unfamiliar extension of the body.



Figure 86, Meltem Isik, *Twice into the stream*, 2011

The canon of material as unfamiliar extension can be associated with Meltem Isik's series of photographs from *Twice into the stream* (2011) (Figure 86). Isik (2011) describes her series as an 'inquiry into the way we see and perceive the human body' (para.1) and addresses this by printing an enlarged part of the sitter's body and overlaying it on the body. The print is personally supported by the sitter and positioned such that the fringe of the printed body aligns with the body concealed behind the print. In Figure 86, a female sitter is kneeling on the floor and reclined backwards. Her hands are holding onto a triangular print that covers her genitals, depicting a close-up photograph of a bending body part. In most cases, the concealed body is revealed as unfamiliar, due to the close-up; however, other photographs in the series reveal identifiable close ups. When overlaid on the body, the close-up body substitutes for the body concealed behind it, with a white border around the print preventing a direct connection with the real body. In each photograph from the series, the sitter tilts their head down and observes the unfamiliar with an emotionless expression. They are neither accepting nor repulsed. *Twice into the stream* (2011) does not directly emphasise the logic of the material as an unfamiliar extension. Rather, the print extends consideration into the familiar made unfamiliar, utilising a visual concept similar to skin grafts. An important distinction must be made regarding *Twice into the stream* (2011). While the photographs present visual traits exploring unfamiliar

conformations of the body, Isik is primarily concerned about bodily perceptions of the self (Isik, 2011). To achieve this, she is reliant on the material — an external device — to compare and ultimately satisfy the missing impression that is the invisible body, which the model cannot see. Isik's socio-psychological concerns therefore advocate imagery of merged, perplexing bodies that the individual must confront, yet the images do not address reconciliation with the strange. Identity is an important component to the image, establishing a connection between the model and the unfamiliar body. The void expressions of the sitters, however, suggest an uncertainty in dealing with the unfamiliar. It is in this point, combined with the implication of revealed identity, that *Twice into the stream* (2011) is antithetical to notions of the Freudian uncanny and the established notions of body defamiliarisation. By comparison, *Experiment 53* suggests a complete merger of the body, with disregard to identity. By severing the connection of identity and the familiar completely, the body is observed as pure form, similar to Weston's practice, which reinforces the importance of the paper material in collaborating with the body to generate bodily distortions.



Figure 87: Lin Wei, Experiment 54: Body Form #5, 2014

I previously mentioned that the intimate collaboration between body and material resulted in a  
202

consideration of both, as opposed to the body alone. Through *Experiment 53*, this has enabled the mutation of the body into uncanny forms, representing the human body as part-prawn and part-handle. This method of interaction presents a viable case of distorting the human body representation; however, I note an alternative method that reduces the material to an auxiliary role to strengthen the distortion of the body. Similar to previous experiments, Figure 87,<sup>40</sup> *Experiment 54*, situates the body in a white photographic studio environment, interacting with the material in question — paper. The experiment revisits the small form factor of paper to focus further on the distorting forms of the body, and invites further consideration of the material as a supporting element of concealment that elicits strange impressions of the body. Eight photographs are produced for this series, demonstrating compositions of body and paper that suggest a higher level of corporeality that is both real and irrevocably fictitious. In each of the photographs, the bodies borrow the concepts of posing from the first section: *1.3 Posing the solitary body*, while the paper is positioned in simple geometrical forms that do not homogenise the body. The paper considerably conceals the familiar and identifiable components of the body, while the body exploits opportunities for posing components around the material. As Claire Monneraye (2015), curator for the Australian Centre for Photography, succinctly noted in her review of this experiment, the camera thus captures photographs of bodies immersed in the material in order to ‘stay hidden from the external gaze’ (para.6). The concealment by paper draws connections to the action of dismemberment or severing. It physically removes the familiar from the photograph, rendering the remaining visible components into a type of corporeal puzzle of ambiguous elements.

One point I establish in this experiment, as with all other experiments of concealment, is that concealment is the precursor to revealment. This is also a line of thought in Heidegger’s notion of concealment, in regard to which, Professor Joseph Kockelmans (1985) notes that ‘revealment must always take place within a horizon of hidden darkness, which Heidegger calls concealment’ (160). Furthermore, Heidegger’s notion of concealment adheres to the idea that concealment doesn’t simply hide the truth, but rather, it contains it (Thompson 1994, 67). There are merits in Heidegger’s thoughts on the function of the material, which are relevant *Experiment 54*. Here, the familiar is physically contained and repressed. The unfamiliar reveals itself from this repressed state within the image. Without concealment, the uncanny cannot manifest from the human body. Concealment, in this case, presents itself as not simply an obstruction, but an

---

<sup>40</sup> Experiment 54. Please refer to 1.6.1 — Photographic Experiments on Fusion with Materials.

enabler for the creation of uncanny distorted bodies.

Apart from dealing with body poses and intentions of the paper, lighting is also of significant importance in the representation of distorted bodies in *Experiment 54*. The large softbox is lowered and brought closer to the body and paper composition for two reasons. The first is to increase the highlights and smooth the blemishes of the skin. At the same time, this gives the skin a sheen and an impression of artificial plasticity. This representation plays with a paradox of the realness of the body as represented by the body posture and structure. The second reason is to reconstruct the space from its previous anaemic state to a situated space that bears traits of reality: the space is not a utopia; blemishes and dirt exist; the separation of light and shadow are stronger, with deeper impressions of shadow, as evidenced from the background and light fall-off on the body. Situating the body in this environment allows it to be one step closer to reality, as opposed to being severed from it. In addition to the considerations of lighting, *Experiment 54* utilises pastel colours for the paper material, in line with the considerations of pastel-coloured backgrounds outlined in an experiment in *1.3: Posing the Solitary Body*.<sup>41</sup> The pastel palette ameliorates the composition as it softens the body and material in comparison to the stark red in previous experiments, allowing the concealment not to be abrupt and intrusive to the body, and reducing the anxious need for reconciliation with the estranged body.

The following section details the 14 experiments conducted for this subchapter. The experiments follow a structure of initially concealing the familiar body components with two paper materials, then limiting the amount of materials used to only one, in an attempt to reduce distraction between the body's interaction with the material. This resolution requires a switch to a paper material with larger surface mass; the experiments utilise this large paper material to examine: the interactions between the human body and material; the abstract shapes of body, the material, and the abstract poses of the body when conforming to the material: and the amalgamation of the paper and body, with the paper as an extension of the body. Furthermore, the experiments shift to reconsider the physicality of the material and how the body interacts with the unyielding nature of more solid and rigid objects.

---

<sup>41</sup> Experiment 10. Please refer to 1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Posing the Solitary Body.

## 1.6.1 — Photographic Experiments on Fusion with Materials

Experiment 45: Concealing the normal body with paper

Experiment 46: Utilising various coloured card-stock to conceal familiar components of the body

Experiment 47: Effect of paper cascading inwards onto the body along horizontal plane

Experiment 48: Effect of paper cascading inwards onto the body along upright plane

Experiment 49: Concealing the body with two rolls of paper

Experiment 50: Moulding the paper material to match posed body shape

Experiment 51: Concealing large body mass within large paper roll and construct shape

Experiment 52: Instances of the concealed body within paper roll

Experiment 53: Body Form #4

Experiment 54: Body Form #5

Experiment 55: Concealing the human body within a solid object — plinth

Experiment 56: Concealing the human body within a solid object — plinth

Experiment 57: Concealing the body within a two-object composition

Experiment 58: Concealing the solid object with the human body

## Experiment 45: Concealing the normal body with paper

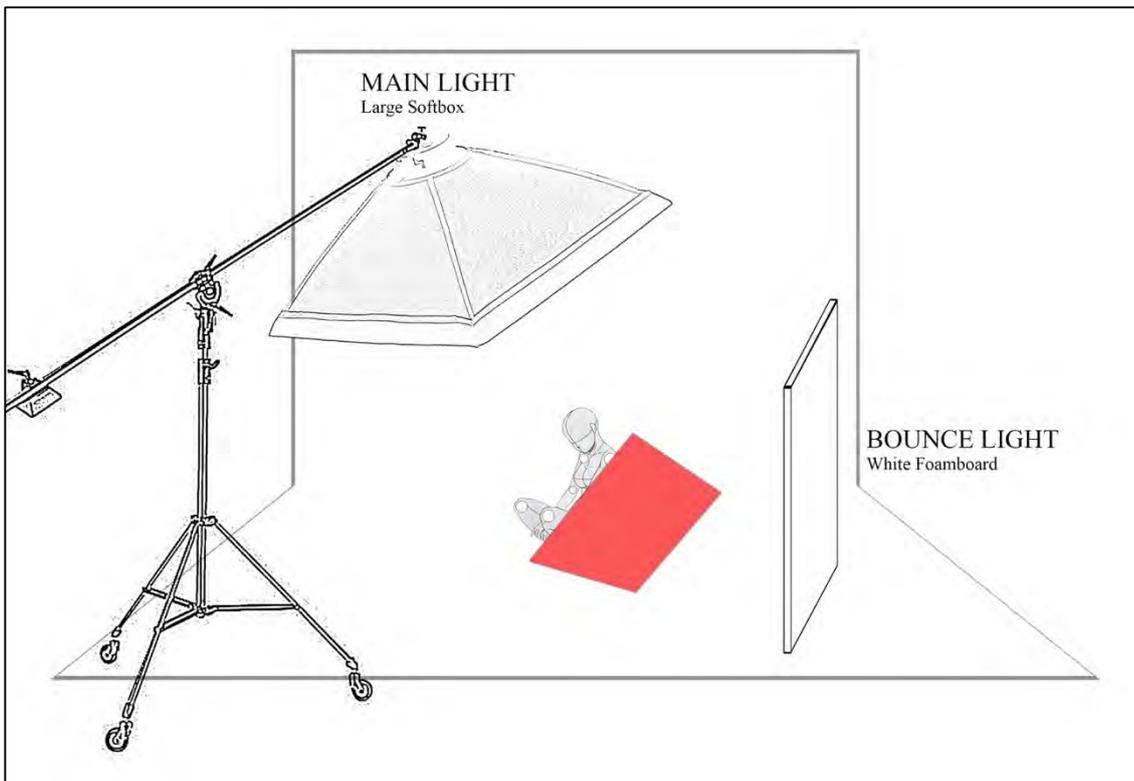
### Aim:

This preliminary experiment into concealing the familiar body will first test the effects of concealing the body behind material — heavy paper.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and material in the middle of frame. A 250gsm art card stock will be used. The body will work with the material to be predominantly concealed.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/11

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/160

Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

Bounce light: White foamboard.

### Post-production settings:

Colour-corrected for neutral white.

**Results:**

(a)



(b)

**Reflections:**

The paper is a rigid material, yet contains flexible properties that prevents the ability to support itself. The body in this experiment is required to hold onto certain parts of the paper, without disclosing the fact that the paper is being held in place by the body. The smooth surface of the material therefore determines the peripheral region of the paper to be the only points to grasp with a solid grip. The body uses hands, fingers, feet, and toes to grasp the edge of the paper. As a result of this action, the paper wraps around and encompasses the body in a fluid manner without any evidence of paper folds. Result (a) reveals the natural fragility of the paper and the feasibility of its being bent and marked. This is observed through the slight dent made near the centre-top region of the paper. Result (b) corrects this, while at the same time concealing the body further; however, I observe that this renders the body too concealed and unidentifiable, which foregoes any impression of a distortion or defamiliarisation in the process.

In terms of the body itself, the material's solidity is, unsurprisingly, highly capable of acting as a method of concealment for the body. Its linear periphery acts as a direct severing of the body, such that the result appears simply like a body actively hiding behind the paper, as opposed to the paper seeking to actively defamiliarise the body. The next experiment will examine this concern and reveal more of the body, while concealing familiar body components behind the paper in the image.

## Experiment 46: Utilising various coloured card-stock to conceal familiar components of the body

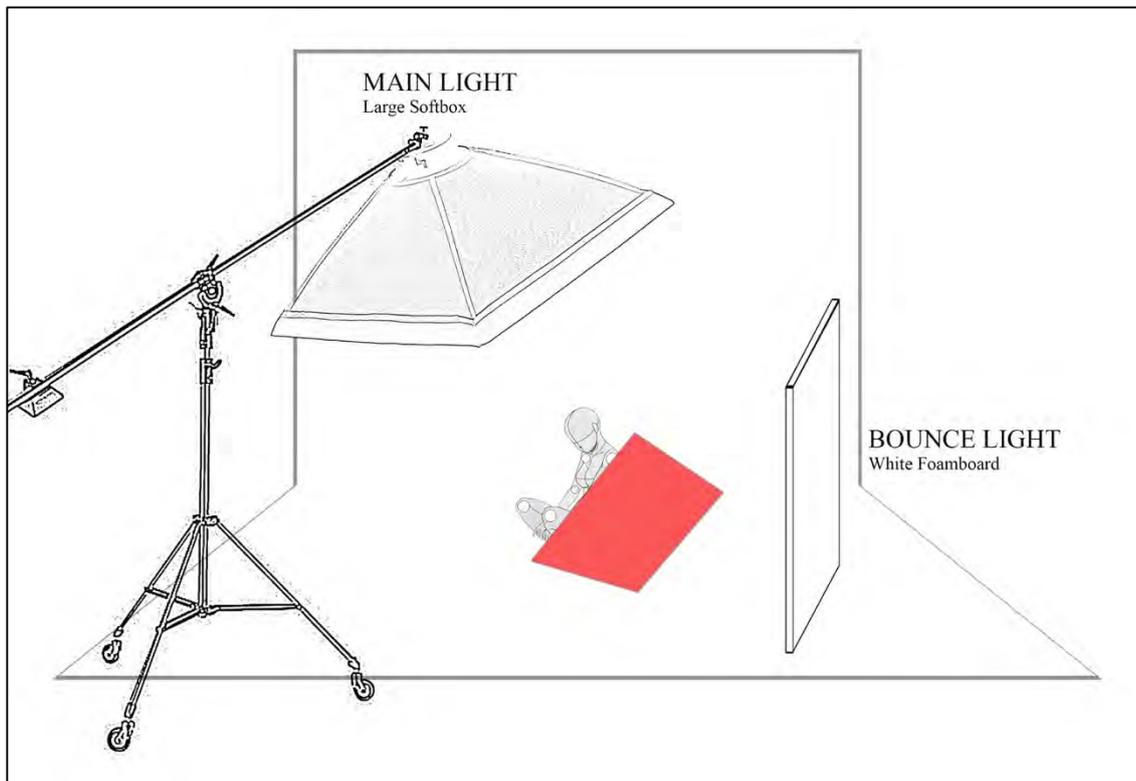
### Aim:

The paper will be actively used to conceal certain familiar components of the body. This experiment will also utilise posture principles for repression, that are outlined in 1.3: Posing the Solitary Body.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and material in the middle of frame. 250gsm art card stocks will be used. The body will work with the material to be predominantly concealed.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e  
Focal length: 50mm  
Aperture: F/11  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.  
Bounce light: White foamboard

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-corrected for neutral white

**Results:****Reflections:**

Reconsidering the role of the paper material in the previous experiment, this time I turn to actively utilising the paper to conceal the body, while retaining the body form in the image. The two different colours of paper are unrelated to the intention of the experiment, as they were what was available at the time of the experiment. The sitter is kneeling on the studio floor, while the larger paper wraps around the lower body to conceal two nodes of familiarity — the buttocks and feet. Another smaller-sized paper wraps around the head. Both paper materials are held in place by the body's appendages; the large paper wedged at the bottom and held tightly by the right arm, which is simultaneously positioned to conceal itself. The smaller red paper is held by the left hand, which is also compressed into the side of the torso to conceal itself.

The results of this experiment are bizarre, yet not thought-provokingly unfamiliar. Following the paper concealment, only the thighs, knee joints, upper back and upper arms are visible. These are somewhat equally identical in shape and size, suggesting a body transformation in process. What gives away the fact that this is indeed a body is the shape that the paper has wrapped into. For example, while the paper has successfully wrapped and concealed the head, the shape it adopts has resembles the shape of a head. This does not give a sense of false impression; rather, the paper is seen as a device of pure concealment, but not one of distortion or defamiliarisation that alters the form or the impression of a body. I note that paper of a smaller surface area equates to less concealment, and therefore less possibilities of concealment.

To reiterate previous established principles, the uncanny occurs after the process of defamiliarisation, while retaining traces of the familiar. The next experiment will seek to distort the structure and form of the body while using paper material to conceal familiar nodes of the body. To do this, a larger paper may be necessary.

## Experiment 47: Effect of paper cascading inwards onto the body along horizontal plane

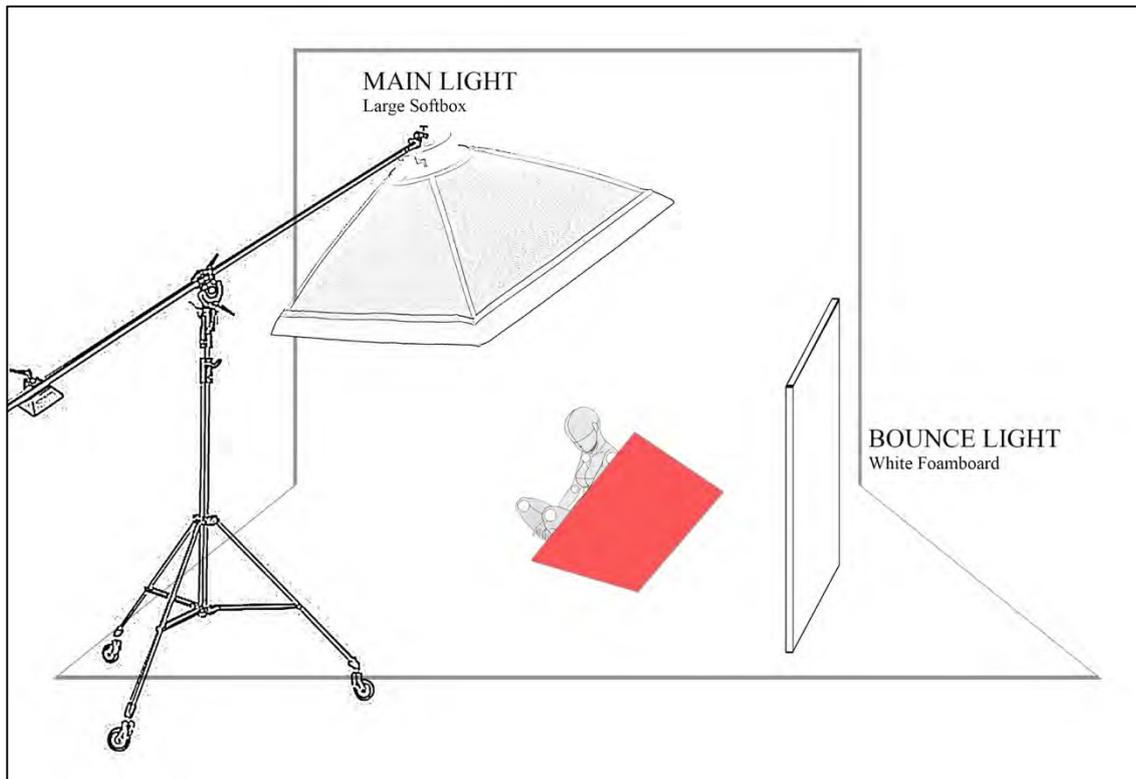
### Aim:

This experiment tests a larger paper in an attempt to conceal and distort the body. The experiment aims to utilise the large scale of the paper in deforming the paper at various points to both conceal and reveal uncanny impressions of the body.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and material in the middle of frame. A large piece of paper is cut from photographic backdrop paper. Red colour is selected given its contrast and distinction between human body and material.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e  
Focal length: 50mm  
Aperture: F/11  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.  
Bounce light: White foamboard

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-corrected for neutral white

**Results:****Reflections:**

The larger paper, in comparison to the previous experiment, is able to conceal more of the body. The paper is initially laid flat, yet given the origins of this paper as a backdrop paper roll, the paper has a natural roll, resulting in the material appearing to surge up and cave in towards the middle. This effect is advantageous for the body — the body has less responsibility and input in handling the paper, and is thus more focused on achieving its own distorted postures. The body is kneeling on the paper, with the body bent forwards almost to the point where the shoulders and chest region touch the knee. The neck is outstretched to the left while the chin is jutting out. The cascading paper conceals the head and face, leaving behind an impression of a jaw line. The paper also wraps a large portion of the body on the right, leaving behind a leg in the shadows. Upon observation of the result, I come to find that the body and paper operate on different levels and separately, although their fundamental goals are similar. Both actively operate with the aim of concealing, as the paper wraps and the body poses in distorted and deformed manners.

The next experiment will reconsider the motion of the paper as well as the body simultaneously distorting its posture to work harmoniously and in collaboration with the paper distortion. To do this, I will place the paper in an upright position and behind the body, so that more of the body will be shown. This is a polar opposite to the first two experiments on material concealment, where the body is hiding behind the paper.

## Experiment 48: Effect of paper cascading inwards onto the body along upright plane

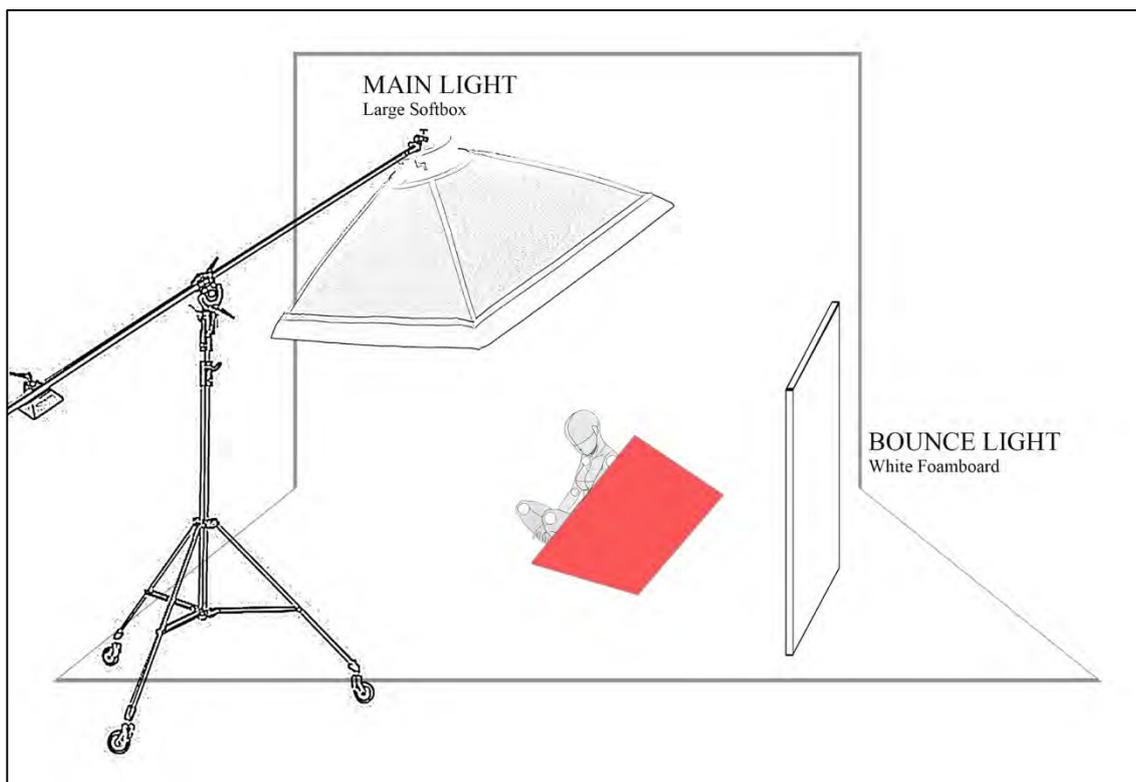
### Aim:

This experiment reconsiders the plane the paper is on, in an attempt to control the motion of the paper's natural roll. Furthermore, the experiment attempts to reveal more of the body as a result of this action.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and material in the middle of frame. A large piece of paper is cut from photographic backdrop paper. Red colour is selected, given its contrast and distinction between human body and material. This experiment will also utilise posture principles from the first section on concealment — 1.3: Posing the Solitary Body. The sitter will rest on the edge of the paper while the rest of the paper is held up behind the body.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e  
Focal length: 50mm  
Aperture: F/11  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

Bounce light: White foamboard

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-corrected for neutral white.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

Given that the body is now in a more revealing position, it now plays an active role in determining the position the paper moves in to conceal nodes that reveal identity, gender and other identifiable traits. The body is directed to grasp onto the corner of the paper and move it into position to conceal the head. The body also adjusted the position of its arms and legs so that they are concealed from the perspective of the lens. The bottom of the paper is lifted to roll over the top of the foot. This method of concealing is an improvement in the collaboration between body and material, as the body distortion must rely on the paper to accurately conceal familiar components of the body, while the body must simultaneously work together with the paper to conceal. The result, whilst not completely defamiliarised into a state that follows notions of the Freudian uncanny, sees the body working towards the second step in the invocation of the uncanny — defamiliarisation. The next experiment will attempt to conceal more of the body by introducing a second roll of paper, which will serve to conceal as well as affect the overall form of the paper–body form.

## Experiment 49: Concealing the body with two rolls of paper

---

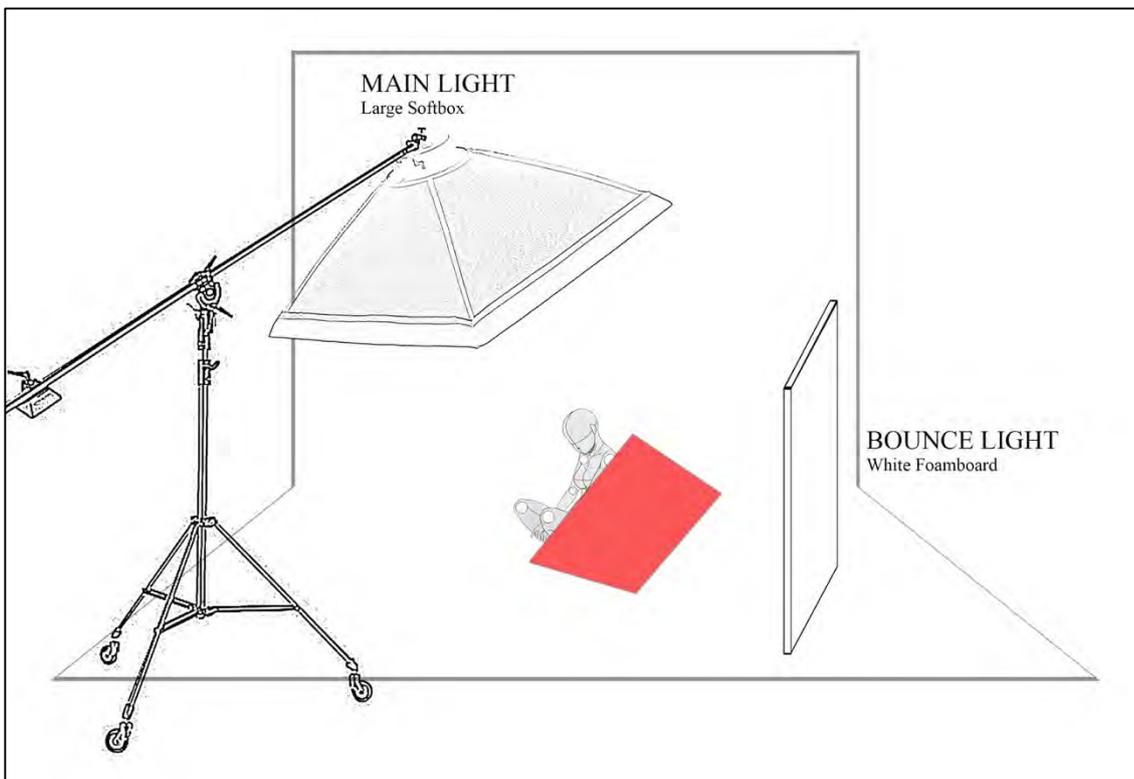
### Aim:

This experiment will observe any changes in degree of body distortion with the inclusion of an additional roll of paper.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and material in the middle of frame. Two large pieces of paper are cut from photographic backdrop paper. Red colour is selected given its contrast and distinction between human body and material.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/11

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/160

Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

Bounce light: White foamboard.

### Post-production settings:

Colour-corrected for neutral white

**Results:****Reflections:**

I note that two separate papers allow for uniquely combined paper shapes and areas of concealment that are unachievable with one roll of paper. While this is the case, the results appear no different to the results achieved using one roll of paper. This can be pinpointed to the notion that the degree of posture is adaptable in its collaboration with the paper. Regardless of positioning of paper, the body can still utilise the paper to varying degrees to hide specific areas of the body as required. The body can be positioned more frontally, while the second roll of paper conceals the genitalia while severing the legs and showing the feet below.

The findings of this experiment conclude that the body distortion does not increase with the additional roll of paper. However, the complexity of the paper shape increases. The use of two papers for this experiment further indicates an increasing level of distraction from the body. Disregarding the body within, the two papers working in tandem create more shadows and jagged lines, interfering with the main purpose of the experiment, which is to analyse distorted bodies achieved by way of facilitation with the material paper. For the next experiment, I will revisit a previous observation in *Experiment 46*: how the shape of the paper did not alleviate perceptions of an altered or distorted form. Thus, I will consider moulding the shape of paper to alter the compositional structure of the human body.

## Experiment 50: Moulding the paper material to match posed body shape

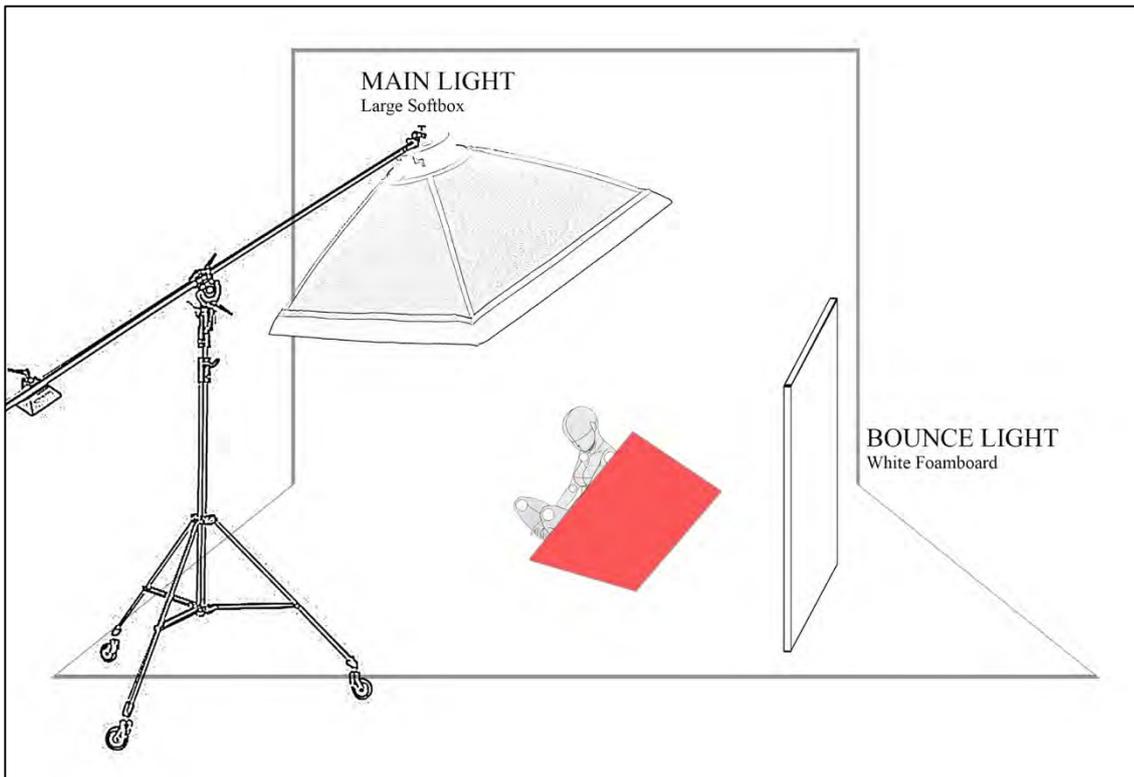
### Aim:

The aim of this experiment is to mould the paper to match the shape of the body in order to consolidate both the body and paper into one complete shape.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and material in the middle of frame. One large piece of paper is cut from photographic backdrop paper. Red colour is selected given its contrast and distinction between human body and material. This experiment will pose the body and paper simultaneously to create a final uniform shape.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/11

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/160

Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

Bounce light: White foamboard.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-corrected for neutral white.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The results of this experiment introduce a new avenue of exploration into the collaboration between body and material. The experiment utilises the flexibility of the paper material in order to shape the paper according to the shape of the body. A flexible body is utilised for this experiment. The body is kneeling on the ground, with the body leaning back to the extent that the back is almost touching the floor. The legs maintain the kneeling posture, while the arms are tucked behind the sitter's back. From above, the body appears in the shape of a triangle. The paper, underneath the body, is rotated such that a corner can be lifted up between the knees and rests on the belly of the sitter. The camera perspective reveals the thighs and remaining visible body bordering the triangular paper in the centre of the frame. The left and right side of the paper and neatly rolled up in a uniform manner. At once, the body is observed to complement the shape of the material. From a different perspective, the paper is seen to mirror the shape of the body in the midst of its concealment of the familiar. By doing so, the paper has also created a geometrical shape. This shape alters the overall impression of the body structure, as the gap between the legs is filled up with a solid mass. This mass simultaneously cuts off half the thighs and legs, which abstracts the impression of the appendages.

The next experiment will place more concern on constructing shapes and forms with the paper material while still attending to methods of concealment and posing to distort the body. Perhaps the collaboration of body and material will convert the perception of the material as not just a facilitator for distorting the body, but will adjust perception of the body and material as one single entity.

## Experiment 51: Concealing large body mass within large paper roll and construct shape

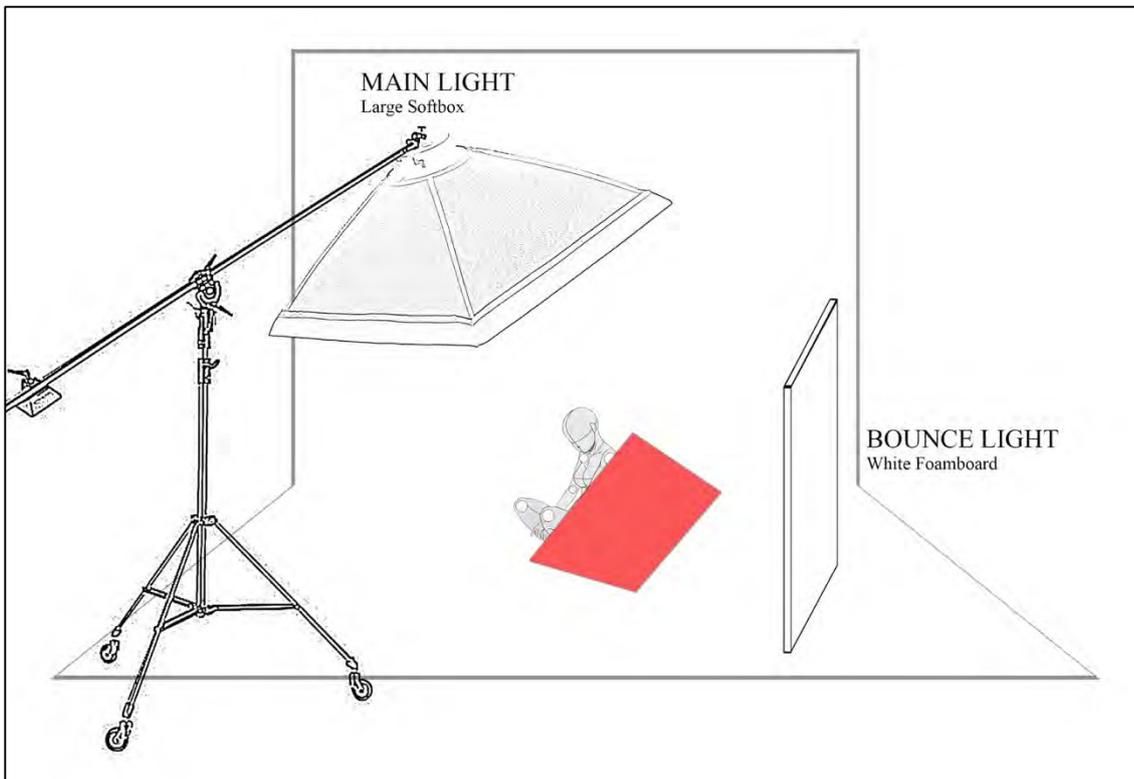
### Aim:

The aim of this experiment is to conceal the body using a larger mass of paper material in order to establish a sense of order within the chaotic jumble of paper, and transform the paper into a geometrical form or shape that complements the conformation of the human body.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and material in the middle of frame. One large piece of paper is cut from photographic backdrop paper. Red colour is selected given its contrast and distinction between human body and material. This experiment will pose the body and paper simultaneously to create a final uniform shape.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/11

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/160

Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

Bounce light: White foamboard.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-corrected for neutral white.

**Results:****Reflections:**

In comparison to the first experiment with the body and paper, the main distinction found in this experiment is the larger paper mass. Furthermore, the paper is undergoing a transformation into a geometrical form. The previous experiment revealed the body forcing a compressed posture in order to be largely concealed behind the paper. I note here that the larger paper offers a wider space for the body to move and interact in. This allows the body to become less focused on concealment and more on posture, which can affect the outcome of the imagery. Considering the potential of a larger paper up to this point, the experiment attempts to build shapes out of the paper while still considering the potential of the body to undergo distorted postures. In discerning the various components of the body in the image, the paper has successfully concealed the larger body mass while leaving the shoulder joint, arm and elbow visible. Combined with the thigh that pops up on the left, the body transforms the body into a form that would not have been possible by itself without any external assistance (in this case, the paper material). The shape of the paper, however, needs to be reworked as it is rough and dented. Although this is the case, it is possible to recognise this as an advantageous bonus to the image — it gives the image a more *raw* and *barebones* natural feel, giving the body–paper form a sense of legibility rather than a forged body–paper form. The next experiment will take further consideration into the ability of paper to transform into varying objects, shapes and forms, and combine them with the body to unveil unique forms that consider the body and paper as a single entity.

## Experiment 52: Instances of the concealed body within paper roll

---

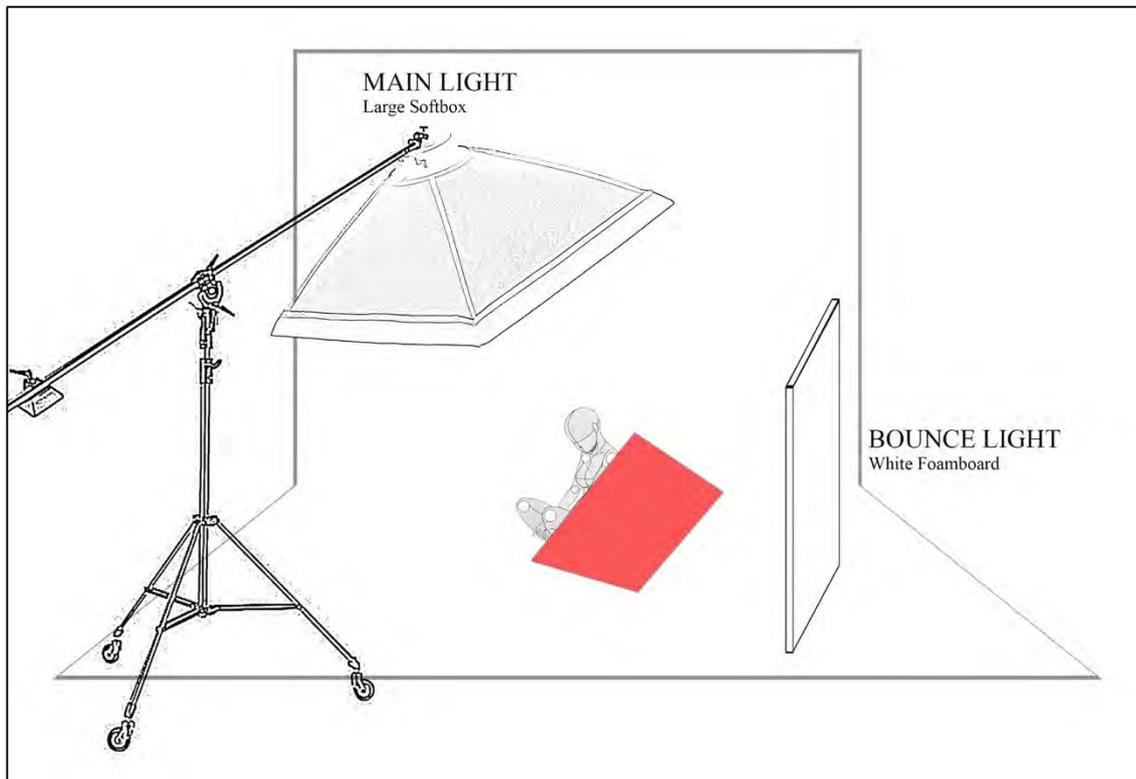
### Aim:

This experiment aims to visualise the body in the process of distortion when interacting with the paper roll through various means. The paper roll will manifest into different shapes that are supported by the human body.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and material in the middle of frame. One large piece of paper is cut from photographic backdrop paper. Red colour is selected given its contrast and distinction between human body and material. The body will pose in interesting forms while keeping defamiliarisation as a key component in its posture. The paper will be placed in various ways — under the body; over the body; around the sides; behind, and in front.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/11

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/160

Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

Bounce light: White foamboard.

### Post-production settings:

Colour-corrected for neutral white.

**Results:**

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

**Reflections:**

The images that are more successful can be attributed to when the body is sticking out of the paper in an abstracted way. No traces of a body can be seen in (d), which eliminates it as a candidate for the depiction of a distorted, defamiliarised and uncanny body. (c) shows traces of engaging with notions of the uncanny. It shows the body sandwiched between neatly wrapped paper. While it is still visible as a body, the body has clean lines that can be traced from start to finish in a jagged line. The stumpy limb that sticks out at the bottom is the elbow with the hand tucked underneath. This experiment thus finds that a collaboration with the body must be reliant on strong posture in order to successfully reveal distortions with a sense of

defamiliarised body. Furthermore, the shape of the paper in (c) is clean and slightly geometrical. The simplicity of the geometry does not distract from the body concealed within the paper. Other results for this experiment find the paper in odd and haphazard compositions, which do not allow the body to easily merge with the paper. (a) and (b) contain bodies that do not convey the uncanniness of form with the same strength that (c) offers. Another attribute I note in this experiment is the distracting effect of the shadow. If a large shadow, cast by the paper, is visible at the point where the body and paper join within the image, it destabilises the connection the body is attempting to establish with the paper. A disconnect is formed and the body's relationship with the paper is made distant. This is made evident in (f).

## Experiment 53: Body Form #4

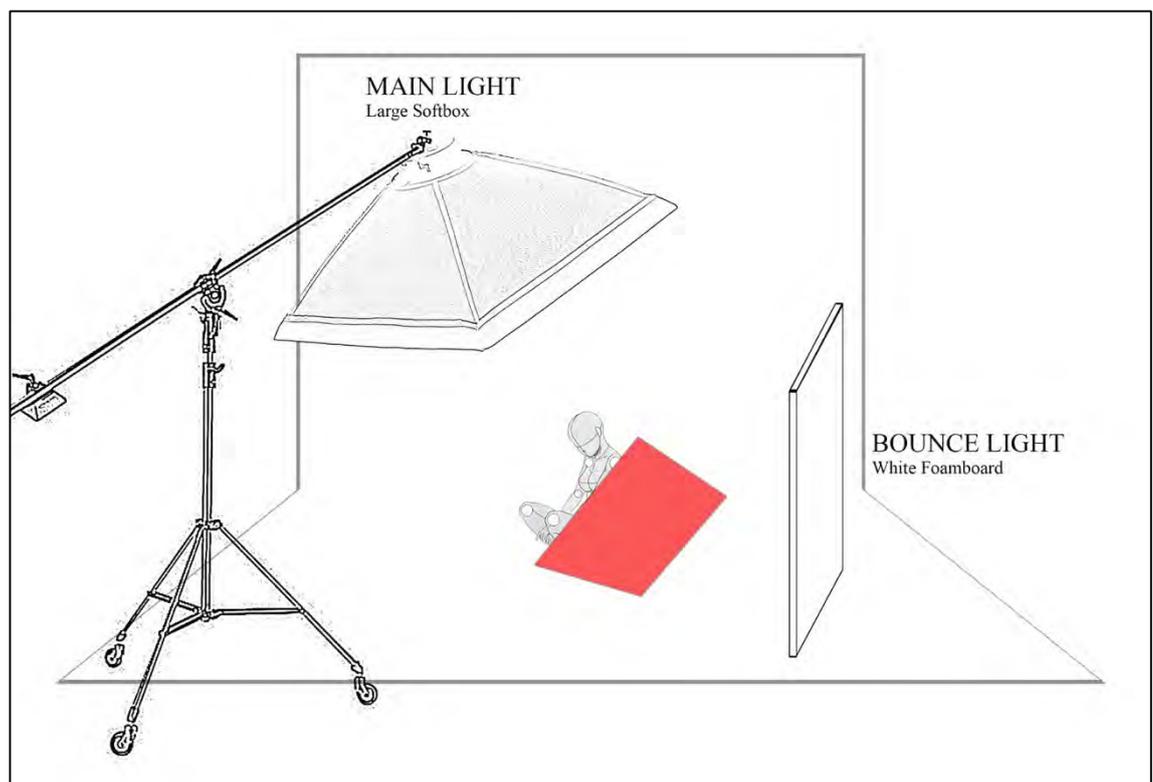
### Aim:

The aim of the experiment is to generate abstracted body poses in collaboration with the paper structured in simple geometrical forms.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and material in the middle of frame. One large piece of paper is cut from photographic backdrop paper. Red colour is selected given its contrast and distinction between human body and material.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e  
Aperture: F/11  
Shutter speed: 1/160

ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash  
Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.  
Bounce light: White foamboard.

### Post-production settings:

Colour-corrected for neutral white. Paper blemish and the studio floor is cleaned up in *Adobe Photoshop*. The background is made into a consistent neutral off-white.

**Results:**



(a)



(b)



(c)

**Reflections:**

The results in this experiment maintain a strong focus on geometrical forms for both the posed body and the paper material. In identifying a method for the body to establish a relationship

with the paper, the experiment opted to combine the body and paper into one entity. Furthermore, I note that this entity must be somehow recognised as an item that an individual can perceive as uncanny. This entity is thus achieved in this experiment by posing the body such that the lines established by the body run in parallel with the direction the paper's peripherals are running in. In the first instance, (a), the paper is shaped into a simple triangular shape. The body is simply bent at the waist and the edge of the back declines along the angled side of the triangle. The end result is a prawn-like conglomeration, which is established through the body posture and shape of the paper to achieve such an effect. For the second image, (b), the jutting arm adopts the appearance of a handle which is connected to the paper construction. The body is visible yet is transformed into a component that is weirdly familiar, not as a body, but as another object. The third image, (c), was slightly complicated to construct. It involved applying adhesive tape to the paper and body to maintain the parcel-like paper structure. The body's posture, when concealed by the large paper mass, adopts an 'S' shape. Were the paper to not conceal the body, the distorted appearance would not be successful. Furthermore, in each case, the contour of the body smoothly continues along the contour of the paper, which further supports a seamless combination of body and paper to form a single entity.

While this experiment emphasises the uncanny through the combined manifestation of human body and paper, the next experiment will seek to attend to the paper material as a facilitator for concealing the familiar, while the body distorts in posture to achieve uncanny forms.

## Experiment 54: Body Form #5

---

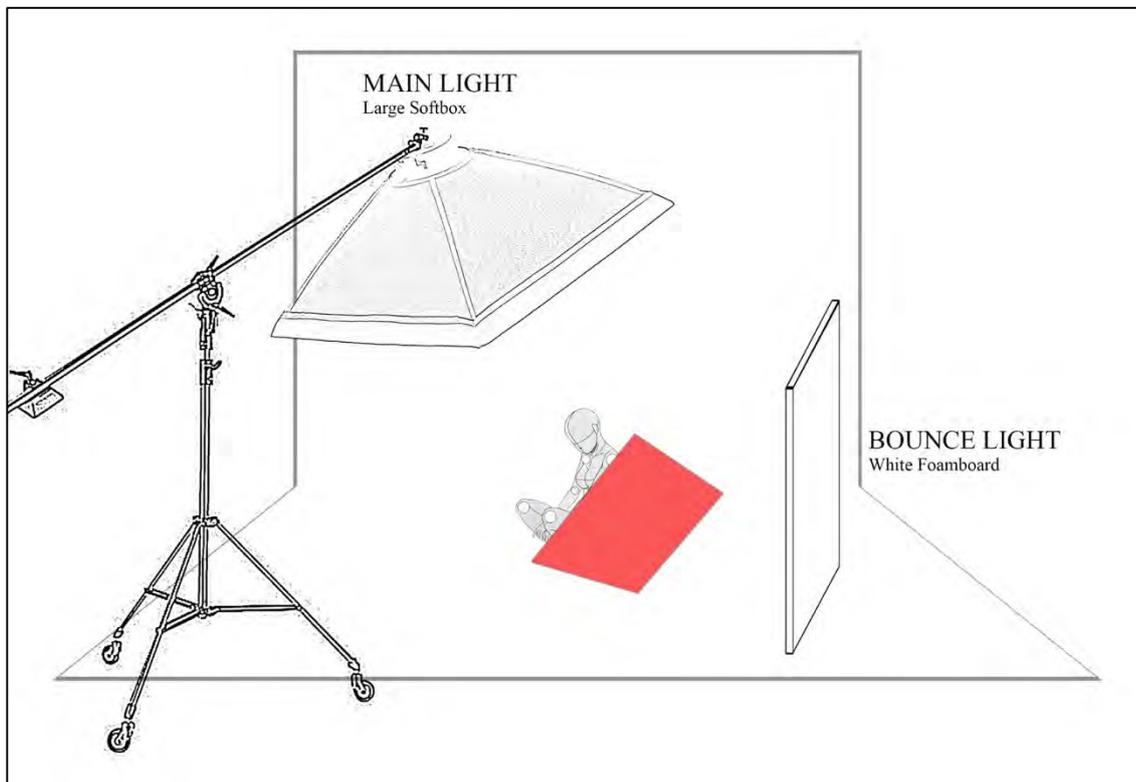
### Aim:

This experiment aims to push the limits of the abstracted body. Following principles of the geometrical paper form established in the previous experiment, as well as posing principles in 1.3: Posing the Solitary Body, this experiment attempts to pose the body in defamiliarised ways while it is concealed by a smaller paper. Paper of various colours will also be introduced to the image in order to create a psychological effect in stabilising the unfamiliar within the image.

### Method:

The experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and material in the middle of frame. The body will pose and interact with smaller paper of various pastel colours.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

Aperture: F/11

Shutter speed: 1/160

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

Bounce light: White foamboard.

### Post-production settings:

Colour-corrected for neutral white.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

I cannot say that one element of the image is more dominant than the other, as both the body

and paper work simultaneously to achieve images of the defamiliarised body. The extreme limitations of the smaller-sized paper allow the body to be more in the limelight, as opposed to the highly concealed results in the previous experiment. Attending to the paper as a simple geometrical form does not distract the observation of body form. The poses are also simple and constrained in their poses. The body's awareness of the paper allows it to pose while concealing the familiar behind the paper and revealing forms that are distorted and uncanny in representation. The paper allows the body to become more dynamic and bolder in its poses. It is clear that the form hiding behind the paper is a human body, however it has been rendered strange and unfamiliar due to the severing by the paper. In addition, the pastel coloured paper attempts to introduce a psychological effect of easing the viewer into these images of strange bodies. This approach is similar to *Experiment 10* in 1.3: *Posing the Solitary Body*, where I introduced pastel coloured backgrounds into the image to offset the peculiarity of the body. Furthermore, I note that the sterile and clean background in the previous experiment, *Experiment 53*, drew the combined body paper form away from reality, as it was an unrealistic element in the photograph. Thus, for this experiment, the raw background is retained to give the form within the photograph credibility for its existence. The light that hits the background creates gradients, providing depth and introducing a spatial context for the body to reside in. This conveys the notion that the defamiliarised body is existing in reality.

## Experiment 55: Concealing the human body within a solid object — plinth

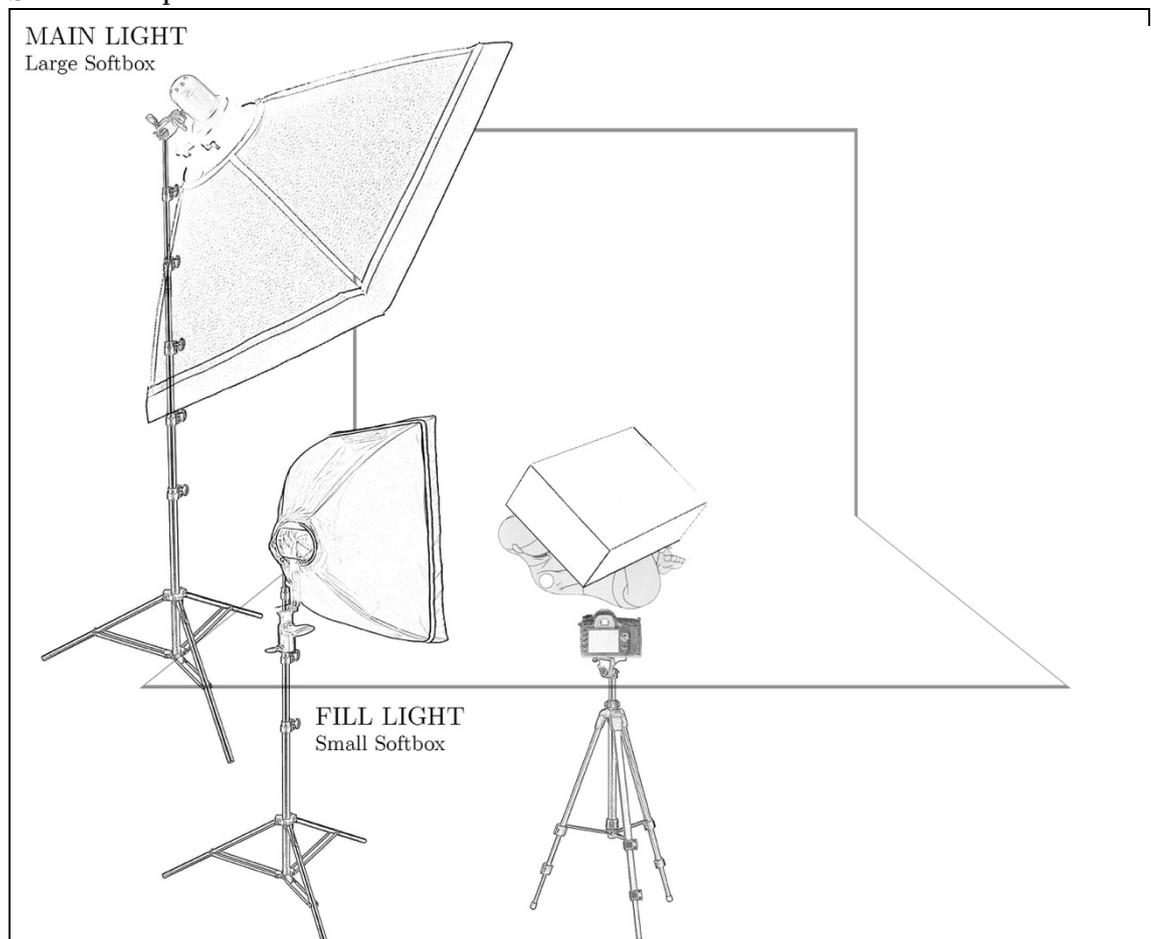
### Aim:

This experiment will aim to conceal the familiar human body using a solid object — the plinth.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and the object in the middle of the frame. A hollow box plinth will be used. The body will manoeuvre itself into the confines of the plinth.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

Aperture: F/16

Shutter speed: 1/160

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

### Post-production settings:

Colour-corrected for neutral white.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The body's pose operates on the principles established in 1.3: Posing the Solitary Body. While the body is engaging with the solid object in a similar manner to the flexible paper material, the rigidity of the plinth restricts the movement of the body. The small confinement of the plinth does not allow much to be concealed. The experiment thus finds a performative struggle between the human body and the plinth. As I come to observe this relationship, the struggle of the body indicates a disharmony that hinders the body from entering an uncanny state where its form is defamiliarised, distorted or deformed in appearance. The next experiment will place the plinth in a singular location and let the body interact around the plinth. I will observe whether this consideration can create unique representations of body forms.

## Experiment 56: Concealing the human body within a solid object — plinth

### Aim:

This experiment will aim to conceal the familiar human body behind the solid plinth object in an attempt to defamiliarise and distort its form.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and the object in the middle of the frame. A tall and narrow plinth will be used. The body will manoeuvre itself whilst positioning behind the plinth.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

Aperture: F/16

Shutter speed: 1/160

ISO: 100

White balance: Flash

Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

Fill light: Small softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject and feathered to the right.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-corrected for neutral white.

**Results:**



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)

**Reflections:**

There is no doubt that the solid properties of the object serve to conceal the subject it is in front of. Combined with the fact that the plinth is not malleable, the distortion process must rely solely on the body to interact and manoeuvre itself around the plinth in order to achieve a form that appears unique from the perspective of the lens. Furthermore, a tall and narrow plinth was used in consideration of the notion of repression. By limiting the surface area with which the body can conceal itself, I aimed to push the body to its limits in manifesting unique compositions that can prompt the uncanny sensation. Each result from this experiment, again, finds a playful interaction by the human body as it attempts to reorganise its position. In each

attempt, I have failed to include more of the torso or the main body in the photograph. This was due to its large, inflexible mass. Attempts, however, have been made to introduce uncanny elements that creep up on the viewer, such as in (a), with the rotated orientation of the hand, and the 180-degree orientation of feet in (c).

The plinth, as a solid object, does not assist in the process of distortion. The next experiment will consider placing the body at the forefront as the body attempts to conceal the plinth.

## Experiment 57: Concealing the body within a two-object composition

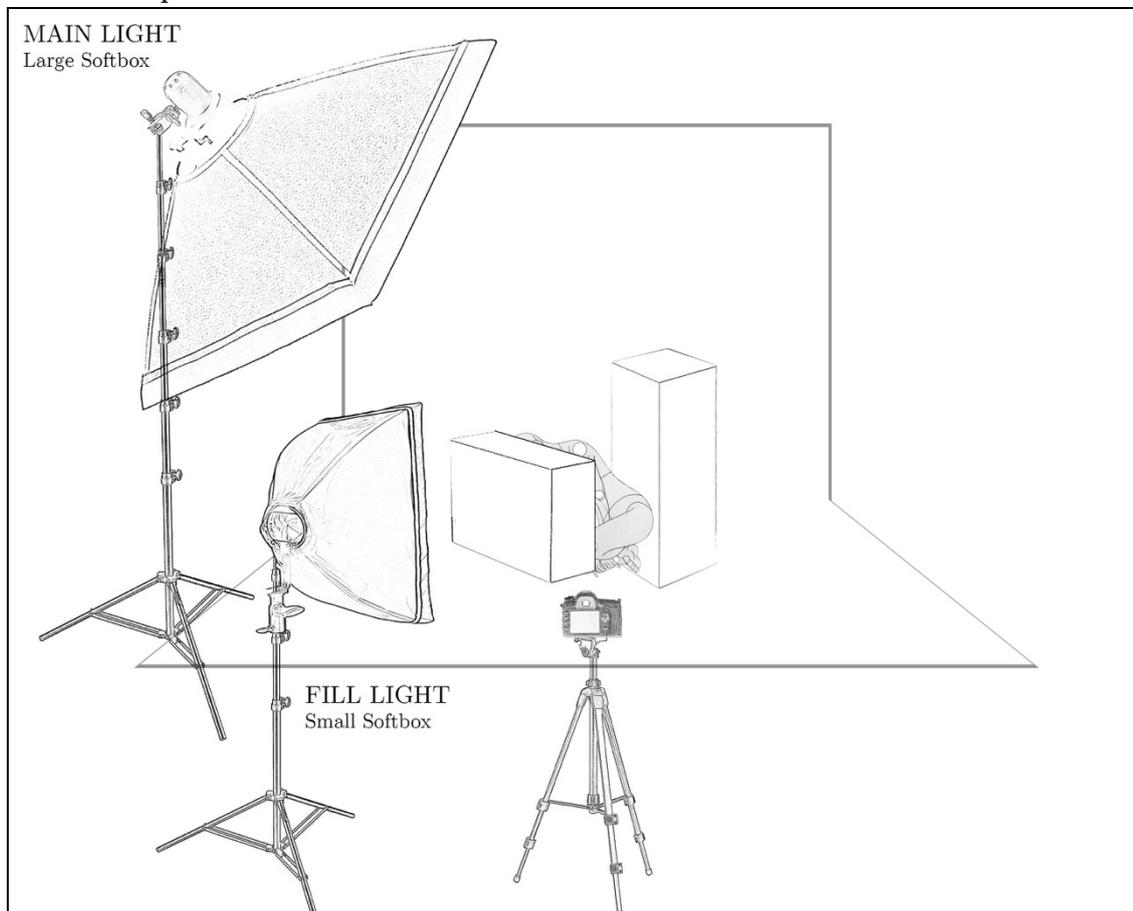
### Aim:

This experiment will observe how two objects — the plinth — can affect changes in concealing the human body to distort its form.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and the object in the middle of the frame. Two plinths of varying dimensions will be used. The body will be manoeuvring around the plinth.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/160

Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

Fill light: Small softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject and feathered to the right.

### Post-production settings:

Colour-corrected for neutral white.

**Results:**

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

**Reflections:**

(a) is reminiscent of Robert Gober's sculpture *Untitled Leg* (1989-90), which depicted an uncanny sculpture installation of a hyper-realistic leg protruding from a wall. Comparatively, this is an actual leg. What sets Gober's sculpture in the realm of the uncanny is not merely its hyper-realistic attribute, but its displacement when coming directly out of a wall in addition to its dismembered state, which aligns with the underlying themes of war and dismemberment that formulate the notion of Freud's uncanny. Comparatively, (a) is protruding from within a divide between two plinth objects, which can indicate an extension to a larger body mass and reduce the premonition of a dismembered leg. (b) is quite similar, except the concealment does not utilise the second plinth to a great extent. Both (c) and (d) are aligned closer to notions of dismemberment. It was mentioned earlier in the research that special circumstances call for the hands and feet to be identifiers of familiarity that call on the uncanny. (c) and (d) represent this case. They utilise both objects to conceal the majority of fleshly mass, while the arm and hand creeps out from behind them. The heads are concealed behind the right plinth while the lower body is removed from the photograph with the existence of the plinth on the left. (d) is closer to a distortion and defamiliarisation of form as the arm appears disjoined from the body, which presents a questionable case of body localisation.

To consider another avenue of concealment, the next experiment will place the model in front of the plinth object and attempt to conceal portions of the body.

## Experiment 58: Concealing the solid object with the human body

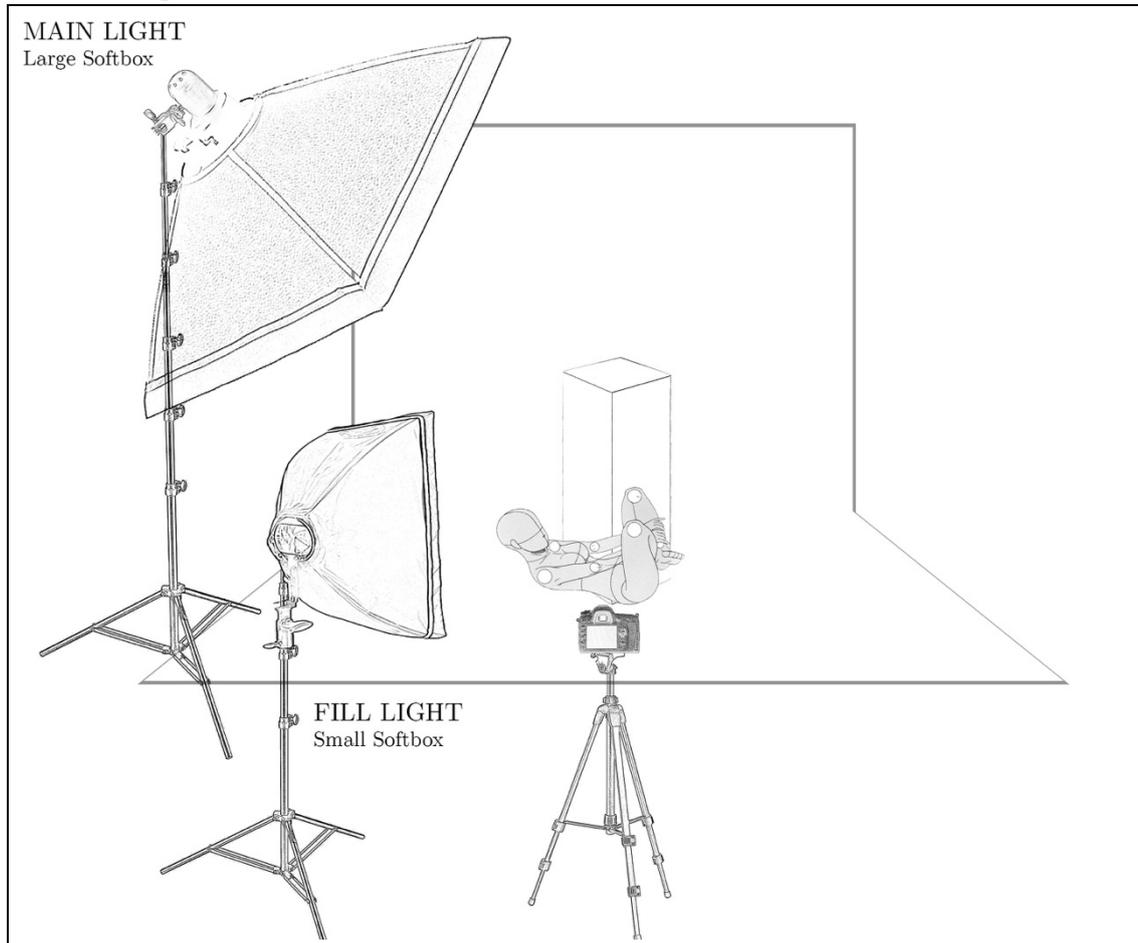
### Aim:

This experiment will aim to conceal the familiar human body using a solid object — the plinth.

### Method:

Experiment will be conducted in a studio with simple one-light setup. Focus will be on the body and the object in the middle of the frame. A tall and narrow plinth will be used. The body will be manoeuvring around and interacting with the plinth.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/160

Focal length: 50mm

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

Fill light: Small softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject and feathered to the right.

### Post-production settings:

Colour-corrected for neutral white.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

As the model poses, they had to take into consideration how to pose with the object in mind. Concerns are raised on how the model can utilise the plinth to conceal a portion of their body. Concealment largely constitutes covering or hiding a subject. Previous experiments sought the material and object as facilitators to mould themselves around the body. Here, the body wraps around the plinth, allowing the arms and head to be concealed behind the plinth. The body's simplistic structure begins to conform with the geometrical plinth. The body's structure, however, remains legible. It provides a glimpse into the white plinth abruptly severing the body. As the white plinth slightly fades into the background, it is as if the object is fading out of existence.

It introduces a unique proposition: to blend the white plinth into the white background further in future experiments. This blending can appear to create a void in the photograph, as a portion of the body is posing and being concealed behind the white plinth, or any white object. The void can potentially serve as a disruption of the reality of the body.

### 1.6.2 — Key Findings

Through the experiments outlined in this section, it seems that concealment is intrinsic to the material. *Experiment 50* identifies that when the body is posed ambiguously while the paper embodies it, the natural structure of the body becomes altered in the process of defamiliarisation. Alternately, the material can assist the body in transforming into a form that cannot be classified as representational of the human, yet with the presence of the human persisting within the image (*Experiment 53*). These unique body forms require the material to be in direct contact with the human body in its composition within the photographic frame. Consideration of all these aspects reveals that the material plays an auxiliary role in the composition, facilitating distortions of the body that evoke uncanny impressions by concealing the familiar (*Experiment 54*).

Through a comparison with notions of dress, concealment is found to be a natural trait inherent to the material. Observing this notion from a photographic perspective, the traits of the material and its interaction with the body reveal an intimacy between the two materialities. At a certain point, there appears to be a crossover between the materiality of the human skin and the texture of the material in question — paper. The paper conforms its structure to complement the body; at the same time, it conceals the familiar while substituting the human component for an abstract form.

Analysis of Hess and Isik finds reinforcement of the notion of material and how it can invoke an alteration of form and affect visual perceptions. On one hand, an inquiry into Hess's work finds an alignment with notions of the uncanny, as his bodies evoke disturbing alien forms that contain human-like conformations and movements. On the opposite end of the spectrum, analysis of Isik's photographs show that while concealing the body with the material conveys traces of defamiliarising the conformation of the body, the persisting image of identity within the frame prevents the body as a whole from undergoing a fundamental defamiliarisation.

Nevertheless, this further examination of precedent artists reflects on the various approaches to the material and how it can be utilised in its many forms and states, whether loose or rigid, in concealing, defamiliarising, and distorting the normative body. In contrast to the experiments on paper, experiments conducted with solid plinths (*Experiment 55*) identify that the human body must conform to the solid material, while the opposite cannot be achieved, due to the rigidity of the material; therefore an incompatibility between the two is suggested.

## 1.7 Conclusion

With all things are considered, it is apparent that an engagement with the paradox of concealment reveals forms of visually distorted and defamiliarised bodies. Concealment in this context is a process of defamiliarisation, when the body is surmounted and transcends the normative pretence of its familiar form. This is recognised in the results of the experiments conducted on concealment. Whether concealment is approached anatomically (posture), optically (lighting and shadow), physically (framing and cropping), or materially, the human body is subject to an alteration in one form or another. The matter of manipulating the unfamiliar body into an uncanny form is furthermore determined by the sensitive retention of the familiar in the photograph.

In the 14 experiments that focused on the body's capacity for posture, stressing the shifts in body movement allows the body to conceal itself, and thus reconfigures components of the body that further alter normative perceptions of the familiar. In the case of Experiment 10, the concealment of the familiar impairs the body's corporeality. The explicit depiction of a body laid bare on a plinth further validates the inherent potential for corporeality to defamiliarise itself, which is evidenced through the perspective of the lens. Experiments on lighting similarly invoke the paradox of concealment, whereby light does not simply illuminate the familiar, as the unfamiliar simultaneously manifests from amongst the shadows. Experiment 27, in particular, grounds this notion in place by drawing upon shadows to conceal the familiar and reveal the unfamiliar, which maintains traces of the real and familiar. The uncanny manifests in the visual depiction of the fetish, whereby the human form is reconfigured to outline a phallic phantom form. The body form produces a paradoxical reality, in which human sensibility is affected and the form of the body is questioned.

In dealing with the intrinsic nature of the photographic frame and cropping, it can be argued that the frame as a device maintains a fundamental capacity of concealment. Indeed, what is left out of the frame is subsequently concealed, while the attention is drawn to the contents within. The frame naturally destabilises and dismembers the reality of that which is larger than the frame itself. As with the case of the experiments utilising a paper construct, the frame allows the selective concealment of identity, gender and individual characteristics, while body component localisation cannot be immediately perceived, due to the illogical arrangements presented in the frame. The inclusion of a circular format further introduces another element of the frame that can facilitate the abstraction of the distorted human form. On the other hand,

bringing the material to the foreground is a distinctive device that destabilises the corporeality of the body in the photograph. The experiments find that concealment is intrinsic to the material. The material is auxiliary to the distortion, and through collaborative means, the material is able to conceal the familiar, while altering the representational values of the body as human and a non-corporeal entity.

It is necessary to acknowledge that the camera perspective, the mechanical and instantaneous nature by which the camera operates, is significant to the production of visually distorted human bodies. Photography allows the capturing of fleeting nuances when the body distorts itself in posture, or when the body moves in and out of the light and shadows, or within the frame, or when the body situates itself within the material. An investigation into precedent photographers finds that while surrealists strove for an evocation of unconscious desires, their engagement with the camera for concealment led to fragmentations of the familiar and a distortion of the human body in the image. A comparison with their photographs that utilise the four discussed methods re-affirms the consensus that concealment is a suitable technique for the defamiliarisation of human figures.

Further investigation into the four techniques finds an inexplicable and homogeneous relationship between each technique. The body's self-sufficient capability of posture is utilised in the experiments of lighting and shadow, framing and cropping, as well as in fusing with the material. Lighting and framing are simultaneously an important consideration in the depiction, whether utilised as primary factors or auxiliary elements of the uncanny human form.

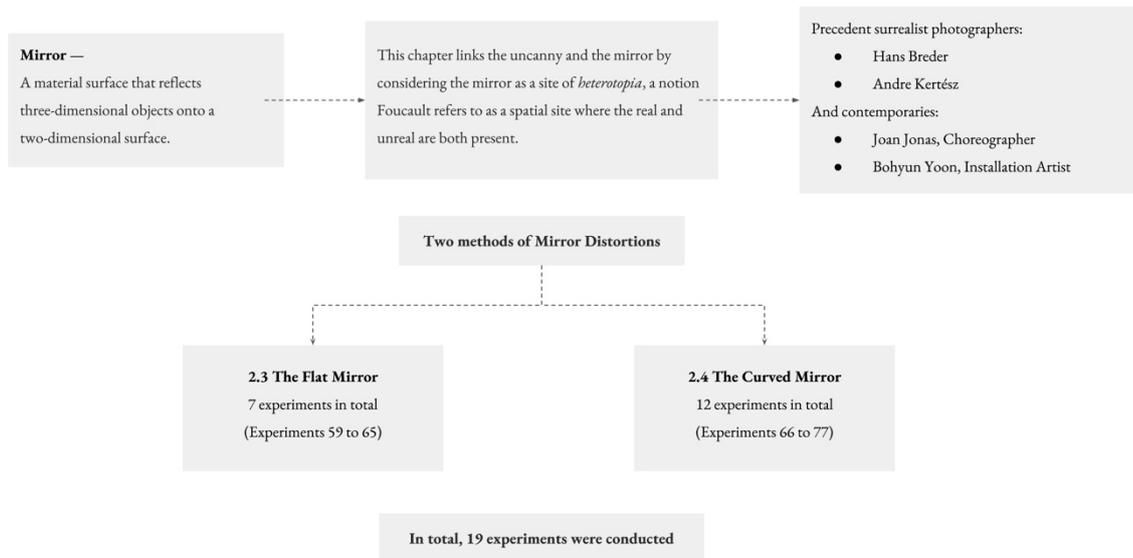
Regardless of which methods are used to incorporate elements of concealment, it is evident that the proper use of concealment, with consideration of the familiar, can give rise to the uncanny. I conclude this chapter on concealment with a reflection upon the words of Diane Arbus (1972), who claimed that, 'photography is a secret about a secret. The more it tells you, the less you know' (n.p.). Likewise, the antithesis applies to the concealment technique; the less perceptible evidence in the photograph, the stronger the reconciliation with the distorted body.

Discussion of the fundamentals thus forms a framework for how the camera and the human body operate in their own rights to achieve distorted and defamiliarised body forms. 1.6: Fusion with Materials turned to how the inclusion of external elements can affect the composition of the image. However, the utilisation of external elements also prompts an inquiry into the physical object itself. In the next chapter, I will apply principles of posing, lighting, framing, cropping, and the material, to discuss avenues of distortion that are affected by an interaction

with a material surface — the mirror.

# Chapter 2: Distortions in the Ephemeral Dimension: The Mirror

## 2.1 Chapter Overview



## 2.2 Introduction

At the end of the previous chapter, I discussed how the material object facilitates the distortion through a series of collaborations with the body and a pursuit of concealment. The characteristics of the material object categorise it as operating in the three-dimensional. Although its benefits in altering normative perceptions and distorting the body have been previously observed, I now turn to investigate the utilisation of an object from a different perspective: the material surface; more specifically, the mirror. The mirror presents itself as a curiously paradoxical surface. On one level, the third-dimensional image manifests on its two-dimensional surface. On another level, the mirror possesses the unique ephemeral property of reflection that is dimensionless. It is this paradoxical notion that I establish and will elaborate upon in this chapter as the primary method of distortion that the mirror makes available.

In considering this dimensionless space and how it creates images of distorted bodies, I will also reflect upon Michel Foucault's notions of the heterotopic mirror and its curious connection with Freud's uncanny in the act of defamiliarisation. Foucault's notion of *heterotopia* posits a spatial site where the real and unreal are both present. With this conjecture he establishes the mirror as one such site that plays on this paradox; it is here that I draw a parallel with Freud's uncanny,

where the familiar and unfamiliar can supposedly simultaneously exist within this heterotopic premise. Foucault defined the heterotopia as a space for the affirmation of difference, drawing parallel with Freud's notion of reconciliation with the unfamiliar. Thus, I will present the mirror as a heterotopic site, to further aid the defamiliarisation of the body. For this it is applicable to refer to a distinction that surrealist artist and photographer Hans Bellmer presents in his essay *Notes on the Balljoint* (1938), where he investigates the capacity of the mirror in photographic experiments. He finds that:

What began as an experiment in focusing has now become a practical demonstration of a "third image," of its constituent parts and its active components: the mirror divides and reproduces at the same time, it creates antagonism but its movement resolves the contradiction, as the whip does for the top, and goes beyond it to create a third reality. (Bellmer, as cited in Lichtenstein 2001, 55)

I observe that this 'third image' is achieved by and dependent on the state in which the mirror resides. These states that I will discuss are flat (plane mirror) and curved (convex mirror). Of further importance to this research, I adhere to the foundational concepts of the flat and curved mirror, which are discussed from a technical and mathematical perspective by designer Naomi Asakura. For objects and forms reflected by the flat mirror, Asakura (1990) summarises that they 'look the same as the reflected objects and constitute their counterparts on the plane' (73). Curved mirrors, on the other hand, produce forms that are 'distorted visual deformations of the object' (73). I conduct a closer examination of how the mirror, this unique material surface, operates as a technique for distorting the human body, in keeping with this thesis's premise that notions of distortions are the result of visual deformation and defamiliarisation. Underpinning this section is a technical analysis of photographs produced by surrealist photographers Andre Kertész and Hans Breder, whose photographic experiments with the mirror reveal the body in disarray and disfigurement.

Subchapter 2.2 — The Flat Mirror, investigates the mirror in a rigid and flat position, inviting a closer look into the distortions achieved through the dimensionless reflection at rest. Three of seven experiments will be highlighted and discussed to elaborate how the one-sided body's interaction instigates a fluctuation within the mirror surface.

Subchapter 2.3 — The Curved Mirror, explores how the fluctuation of the mirror surface invokes a new reality for the body to reside and distort within. Twelve experiments are conducted, highlighting the capacity of the mirror to distort as well as defamiliarise the body. Seven experiments are focused on here to demonstrate the capacity of the mirror to bend not just its physical state, but also to bend the reflected body into a state of defamiliarisation. Thus,

this section also documents how the body-mirror interaction is a result of an immediate collaboration between the two and how the degree of distortion is reliant on this collaboration.

## 2.3 The Flat Mirror

Initial experiments in the relationship between human body and mirror are conducted based on the mirror in stasis. This is in consideration of allowing the body to act as a mediator for interaction and provoke a response from the mirror, which stands as a supporting element of distortion. As the mirror is immobile, a controlled studio setup is constructed for the body to reside and interact with the mirror in.



Figure 88: Lin Wei, Experiment 59: The body in relation to the horizontal flat mirror surface, 2016

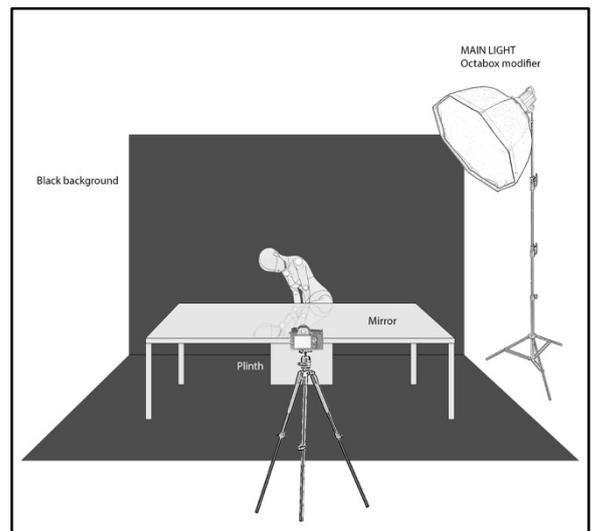


Figure 89: Lin Wei, Lighting setup for Experiment 59, 2016

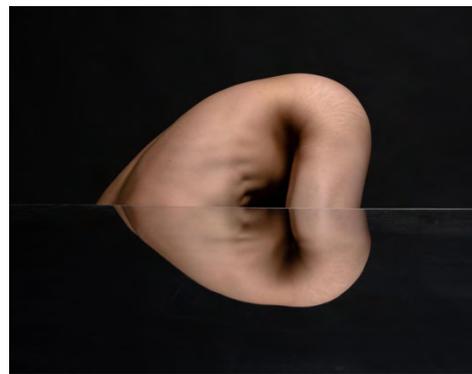
Figure 88<sup>42</sup> is the control experiment. The mirror is laid horizontally and flat on a raised platform. Given the reflective surface, the lighting is placed away from the mirror's edge and out of frame to avoid its reflection from entering the image (Figure 89). A plinth supports the sitter to a height where the mirror is level with the waist. In Figure 88, as the body is posed to conceal its familiar parts, the camera's line of sight of the lower body is affected by the mirror, so that the ephemeral nature of the mirror, the reflection, replaces the absent lower body. Following laws of reflection, the reflected image is defined as a virtual image, in which 'the image produced by the reflection is virtual' (Gilbert and Haeberli 2011, 39). Notions of the virtual assume that the virtual is not real. On discussing the virtual and the actual, Douglas Gittens notes that the virtual 'exists only in essence, or effect, whilst not being "actual" or "real" in the true sense' (Bartram, El-Bizri and Gittens 2016, 97). The lower half of the image that is induced by the mirror can thus be considered illusory, as the lower body oddly depicts the upper

<sup>42</sup> Experiment 59. Please refer to 2.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Flat Mirror Distortions.

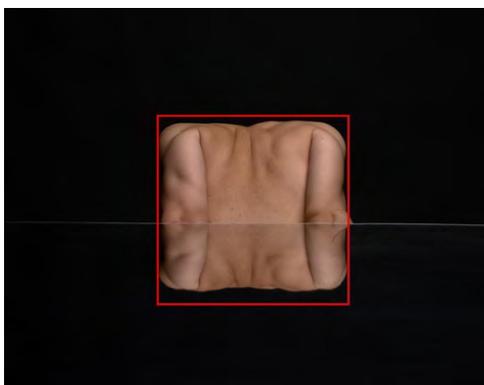
back, yet it is not; it can also be perceived real by seamless extension, as the virtual image becomes a part of the real body. The observed method of achieving this perfectly conjoined body is to maintain physical contact with the edge of the mirror. No gap between the real and virtual is revealed in the image, as the joint and lines of the real body match up with the reflected, forming a coherent whole. I borrow the quantum mechanical term ‘superposition’ to describe the state the resultant body resides in based on this merger with the virtual. This state of superposition indicates an inexplicable connection of physical matter that collapses conventional perceptions of reality. This sudden existence of a unified body represents a paradox — the mirror evokes a type of observable reality in which the observed physical body is both present and absent. Simultaneously, we observe the two body parts, real and virtual, are separated by the spatial dimensions of the mirror, yet they are interconnected. This observation counters our notions of proximate cause, in which one object, in this case, the body, must be at a proximate distance to the other to be perceived as having an immediate result on the other. And it is through this state of superposition invoked by the mirror that the body becomes defamiliarised and its reality questioned.



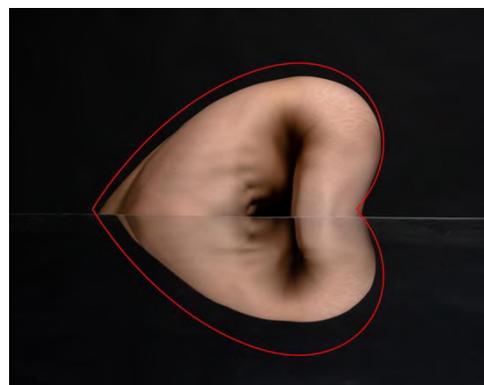
90(a)



90(b)



90(c)



90(d)

Figure 90: Lin Wei, Experiment 63: Reconfiguring body shape through symmetry, 2016

Figure 90<sup>43</sup> utilises this studio and plane mirror setup and offers new realms of possibility for reconfiguring the shape of the body through symmetry. In Figure 90(a), the back is exposed to the lens, the sitter's shoulders raised, arms taut and snapped to the body's side and head tucked in, forming flat edges and sharp corners along the rim of the body. Combined with the reflection, Figure 90(c) reveals the body adopting a square shape. Figure 90(b), on the other hand, finds the body facing side-on and bent over. The mirror cuts off halfway through the thigh and upper body, resulting in a heart-shaped body (Figure 90(d)) that is achieved with the reflection. Both results highlight the body undertaking a transformation into shapes that do not conform with normative perceptions of the body, bearing in mind that physical contact is key to near-perfect symmetry. While certain shapes can be perceived through the combination of the real body and its reflection, there are three elements within *Experiment 63* that throw symmetry off-balance.

The first is the angle of the lens in relation to the plane mirror surface. The camera must initially be positioned at a specific height in order to capture the entire half of the body in the reflection without cutting the reflection off at the bottom of the frame due to the narrow length of the mirror. The heightened position of the camera thus influences the second element, where the reflection is foreshortened in appearance, causing an off-balance symmetrical visual of the body. The third element is a body component's position in relation to the mirror at the point of capture. When a particular body part loses contact with the mirror edge and moves slightly away, the illusion of a symmetrical, whole, and gratifying body is broken, as a disjoint is created. In Figure 90(a), a disjoint is visible on the right when the arm separates from the edge of the mirror and slides slightly to the right. In Figure 90(b), the reflected image appears shifted to the right. These three instances, when working in tandem, cause a disconnect from reality that is induced by a collaboration with the mirror, redeeming the viewer from the strangely gratifying and oddly familiar human body in the photograph.

---

<sup>43</sup> Experiment 63. Please refer to 2.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Flat Mirror Distortions.



Figure 91: Hans Breder, *Untitled* from *Body/Sculptures* (1969-73) series, 1969

A clearer and more extreme example of the edge of the body being severed can be seen throughout Hans Breder's photographic series of *Body/Sculptures* (1969-73), which reveal a performative play between the female figure and the mirror. For Breder, perception and liminality is at the core of his dialogue. Photography, and the mirror allowed Breder to dissolve boundaries and introduce forms of sensibility that are beyond reason, otherwise would not exist, or be possible. In Figure 91, the female figure is resting on the floor with buttocks facing upwards on an angle. A flat mirror is resting on the buttocks, tilted at an angle such that the legs of the real body are shown in the reflection. In an interview with Alice Maude-Roxby, Breder (as cited in Roxby 2007, 61) notes his use of the body as a 'liminal, transformative site.' This notion is reflected in *Body/Sculptures* (1969), where Breder photographs the human body turning into a conglomeration formed from four legs pieced together. The resultant imagery is an uncanny depiction of the human body as witnessed by the accurately depicted limbs, yet is distorted in a notably and significantly complex form. The contour of the real buttocks is completely visible, while the reflected image shows traces of incompleteness at the border of the mirror — the border provokes a sense of disorientation in the whole representation of the body form. This bears similarities to *Experiment 63*, in that while the mirror functions as an extending and transformational device to distort the representation of the body, it also contains uncanny-invoking capabilities — as well as the border — that subtly deny the reality-in-transformation. In *Experiment 63*, the shape constructed with the mirror is anxiety-inducingly incomplete, while Breder's photographs of the body and mirror in *Body/Sculptures* (1969) are foreign and malformed.



Figure 92: Hans Breder, Untitled from *Body/Sculptures* series, 1972

It is also observed that bodies distorted into legged monstrosities are a recurring theme in Breder's photographic experimentation with the body and mirror, with up to eight legs visible in the photograph, with the inclusion of an additional body and an extra mirror; this conglomeration can be identified in another photograph taken in 1972 for his *Body/Sculptures* series (Figure 92). Here, two bodies are lying down next to each other with intertwining legs. Two mirrors are held up and respectively placed on top of each body, angled at a point such that the camera captures reflections of two points of the intertwining body. While the bodies in this photograph are noticeably combining and merging into a single organism, the chaotic mass of limbs denies the transformation and renders the body in a state of in-between—a body yet no longer a body. This is due to the image being too far removed from any recognisable type of body form, containing neither traces of body mass nor linking joints.

Breder's venture into the naked human body and mirror materialises with a strong focus on technical fragmentation of form. Breder was far more invested in pictorial value than in the conditions of the body. A close analysis of his images with mirrors reveal common ground with the early surrealists and their tradition of transfiguring the body. *Body/Sculptures* takes place at a time when mirrors became more prevalent objects for their properties, which are observed to surpass the physical and its function. They are believed to allow one to gaze into the soul, a transcendent unknown, or a dimensionless realm. Although it is neither established nor repudiated that Breder's photographs delve into this area of metaphysics, it remains evident that the mirror allowed Breder to investigate the immaterial, which, he explains, allows for an experience that 'creates an effect that is at once both abstract and real' (Breder 2012, 501). Breder's exploitation of the optical properties of the mirror sees a deconstruction of boundaries,

which further alludes to a disorientation of the viewer's perception — of space, of the human body, and overall, of the real as witnessed through the photograph.



Figure 93: Joan Jonas, *Mirror Piece I*, 1969



Figure 94: Hans Breder, *Untitled*, from *Body/Sculptures* series, 1971

Given the reflective properties and ephemeral nature of the mirror, it is also a widely considered and incorporated tool for interactivity in performances and installations. Similar results to *Experiment 63*<sup>44</sup> can be observed in the photographic documentation of performance artist Joan Jonas' choreographed performance *Mirror Piece I* (1969) (Figure 93). This work was conceived alongside the heightened interest in the mirror, and around the same time as Breder's *Body/Sculpture* (1969-72). Jonas' experimental projects like *Mirror Piece I* (1969) were essential to the development of contemporary and conceptual performance art; her works were embedded with themes of symbolism, body representation and the self. Figure 93, in particular, is one documented part of the performance that reveals an instance when one of the fifteen performers is sitting on the ground, holding an oblong mirror upward and tilting forward, while the mirror is resting on the performer's hip joint. The image is photographed with the mirror front-on and from a higher position to the performer, which results in a reflection of the legs that seemingly connects with the real legs. The reflection is in place of the body, which is rendered invisible by the mirror; the reflecting background is a continuation of the grassy floor that surrounds the body. The viewer's apprehension of the body is destabilised by the apparent misleading structural formation of human legs. Focusing on the juxtaposition between concepts of the mirror, reality, and representation for *Mirror Piece I* (1969), Anja Zimmermann places emphasis

---

<sup>44</sup> Experiment 63 [n 43]

on the border at which the real and mirrored image intersect, and similarly concludes that it is a major factor in destabilising the representation of the body. She notes that the intersection is particularly ‘disorienting, because it makes it impossible to distinguish between figure and ground — and thus between the real body and its mirror image’ (Zimmermann 2001, 98).

This form of utilisation of the flat mirror, as well as the visual likeness of Jonas’s *Mirror Piece I* (1969), can be recognised in one of Breder’s photographs from *Body/Sculpture* (1969-73) series. In 1971, Breder posed the body in a similar manner to Jonas’ *Mirror Piece I* (1969), although the back of the legs is visible (Figure 94). The results are strikingly similar, and raise questions about the perceptions of the normative body. On the one hand, Breder opted for photographic documentation to demonstrate the various transformations of the human body manifested by a performative interaction between body and mirror. On the other hand, Jonas utilises the positioning of body and mirror as object to engage the spectator in comparisons with their normative perceptions of the body. As Cristina Albu (2012) succinctly puts in her thesis on the effects of mirrors in installation art, the combination between real and mirrored body in Jonas’s *Mirror Piece I*, ‘... was a sign of the mutability of identity that is recurrently shaped by one’s recognition of himself or herself in the image of multiple others’ (86).

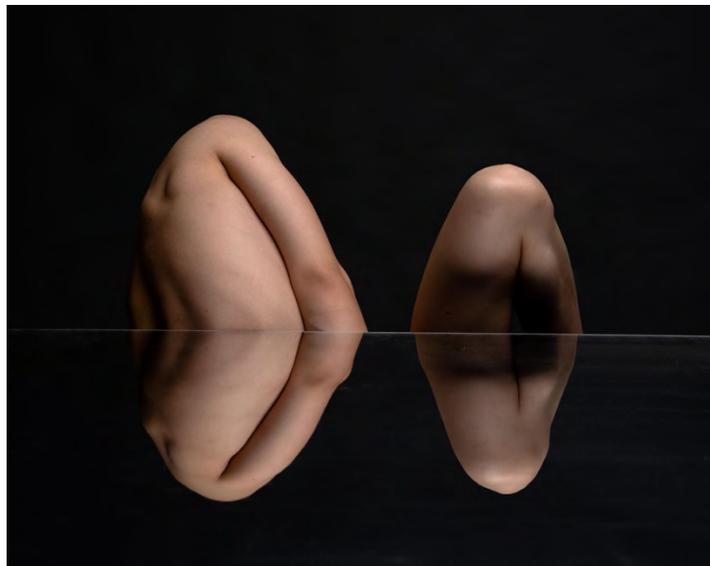


Figure 95: Lin Wei, *Experiment 64: Mirror as a device for severing the body into two parts*, 2016

Breder and Jonas outline instances where the mirror transforms the body in an uncanny manner. Seeking to further destabilise the structure of the human body through a collaboration with the mirror surface, *Experiment 64* (Figure 95)<sup>45</sup> pursues the mirror as a device of

---

<sup>45</sup> Experiment 64. Please refer to 2.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Flat Mirror Distortions

dissemblance and reconstruction. In Figure 95, the body is touching the mirror's edge and facing side on, with knees raised and body slightly bent inwards to form a recession between the upper body and the thrusting kneecap. The hip joint is rendered invisible as it conceals itself underneath the material surface. At this juncture, the mirror is observed to not just act as an extension, but also to work in tandem as a device for separation, where the mirror has separated the body into two entities. This necessitates analysis of the body as no longer just one body, but two bodies that are subject to altered representation as a result of the mirroring effect. In *Experiment 64*, the body on the left has its head tucked in and arm squeezed tightly to the torso. Similarly, on the right, the upper and lower leg are tightly squeezed together, revealing a shape that bears, to a certain extent, a similar visual appearance to its left counterpart. The mirror reflects what logically, normatively and perceptively should be a body joint by which the two mountainous body parts homogenise, but in a reversal of facts, the mirror extends and reconstructs two near-identical sets of body forms that mirror the state of mitosis. While this appears to be the case, the experiment faces a similar predicament as with its precedents — the angle at which the image is photographed cannot accurately align the real and mirrored body at its point of intersection, precipitating the fate of the resulting body to a state of an unfamiliar conglomeration.



Figure 96: Bohyun Yoon, *Fragmentation*, installation, dimensions variable, live models and mirror, 2003

In a similar vein, Bohyun Yoon adopts the mirror in his installations to visually separate the body and reconstruct it based on its segregated parts. Yoon is primarily an installation artist who deals with distortion and invisible properties, which is aided by his interest in mirrors. In the case of his *Fragmentation* (2003) (Figure 96), the work relies on four individual standing sheets of mirrors to separate the bodies at four equidistant locations running the length of the body. Perfect silhouettes are cut into the mirror so that the body fits perfectly into the standing mirrors. The work relies entirely on the mirror's capacity to not just replicate the body, but also

to cause fragmentation based on the spatial gaps surrounding the body as a result of the reflection. In addition to the distortion achieved through reflection-based fragmentation, the physical mirror as an object allows for distortions of the body to be viewed from various perspectives. In the particular case of Figure 96, which documents the installation from a perspective close to the model's feet, the assembled mirrors are observed to sever the body from the ankle, and consequently, as the self-referential title of the work suggests, fragment the body into several components. As with the vast majority of photographs working with flat-mirror reflections, the body is subjected to a type of uncanny form of distortion. The body is accurately reproduced in the mirror reflection; however, no matter the perspective, it contains a trace of strangely inaccurate alignment and incompleteness, in the photographer's pursuit of forming a complete whole by using the mirrored and the real body. Coupled with the resultant unique, duplicative form of the body induced by the mirror, the image satisfies the requirements for an uncanny body distortion. These results align with its historical precedent, Breder's *Body/Sculptures* (1969-72), as well as with the photographic experiments conducted for this section, in particular *Experiment 64*. Furthermore, it is an admission of the notion that the uncanny body can manifest within the mirror regardless of perspective or quantity. The mirror is an inherently uncanny-inducing tool.

The following section details the seven experiments conducted for this subchapter. The experiments follow a structure of examining the qualities of mirror reflection, and as a device of dismemberment, the body's positioning in relation to the mirror to incur: disjoints in integration; symmetry to abstract body form; and lastly, re-assessing the reconstructive capability of the ephemeral reflection prior to the dismemberment induced by the physicality of the frame.

**2.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Flat Mirror Distortions**

Experiment 59: The body in relation to the horizontal flat mirror surface

Experiment 60: Body asymmetry from angular posture

Experiment 61: Morphing body shapes through symmetrical investigation of the side-body

Experiment 62: Morphing body representation through symmetrical investigation of the flattened body front-on

Experiment 63: Reconfiguring body shape through symmetry

Experiment 64: Mirror as a device for severing the body into two parts

Experiment 65: The body reflected on flat material surface — the mirror

## Experiment 59: The body in relation to the horizontal flat mirror surface

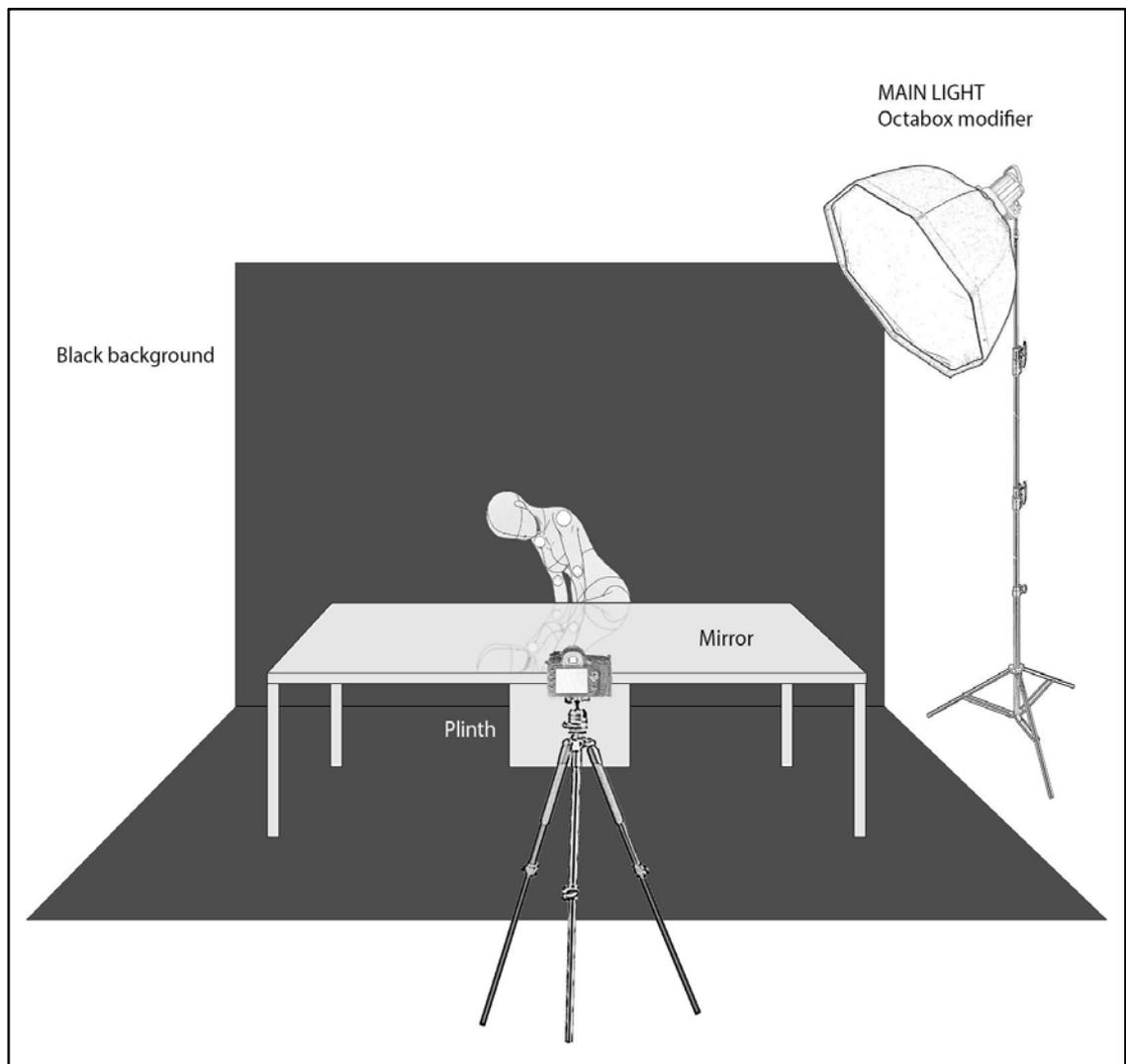
### Aim:

This experiment aims to photograph the body in relation to its real duplicate that is produced by a flat mirror surface.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on a horizontal flat surface, such as a table, reflected surface facing upwards. Set up a black background behind the table, and a plinth (lower in height to table) next to the plinth for posture and sitting support for the sitter. The camera is placed at just above the horizontal plane of the mirror surface.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 200

Aperture: F/22

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/160

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, behind and above subject on camera right, feathering the real body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

This experiment serves as the test control for the forthcoming experiments. The lighting must be considered carefully to avoid being reflected in the mirror — front on is not possible as it makes the blemishes on the mirror more obvious and visible. Placing the light above the sitter results in the light encroaching into the reflection. Thus, to avoid all distractions and produce a clear image focusing on the body and its reflection, the light is placed away from the mirror reflection and to the far right. The experiment also foresees the solid physicality of the mirror and the capacity of its edge to sever the body. Thus the mirror is raised high on a platform (a table is used, as depicted in the studio setup). In order for the mirror to create a continuation of the body, the body must be directly touching the edge of the mirror. As the body is quite front-on, there are certain limitations in its posture, as the sitter attempts to conceal particular elements whilst interacting with the mirror. The initial limitation noted is the body, whose identifiable features consist of and are divided into three sections: the top (i.e. head), the middle (i.e. genitalia and in certain circumstances, hands), and bottom (feet). In addition, the mirror is essentially immovable in its current position. The next experiment will consider the body's

posture in relation to the mirror's edge to sever the near-seamless continuation of the body by angling the body away from the mirror's edge.

## Experiment 60: Body asymmetry from angular posture

---

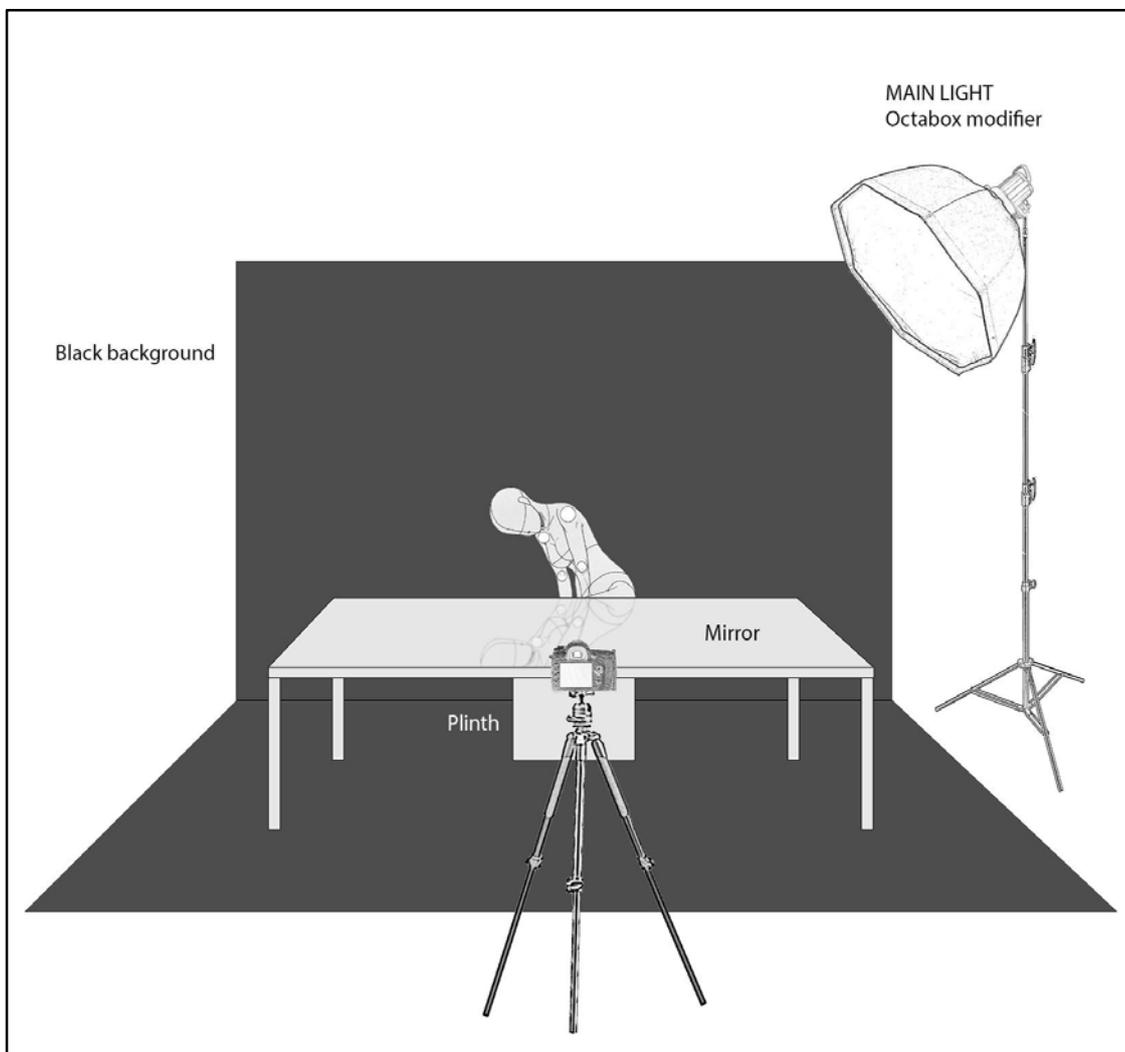
### Aim:

This experiment observes key changes in symmetry when the body is on an angle to the mirror, while keeping a portion of the body in contact with the mirror.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on a horizontal flat surface, such as a table, reflected surface facing upwards. Set up a black background behind the table, and a plinth (lower in height to table) next to the plinth for posture and sitting support for the sitter. The camera is placed at just above the horizontal plane of the mirror surface.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 200

Aperture: F/22

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/160

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, behind and above subject on camera right, feathering the real body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

Multiple areas of the body are angled away from the mirror's edge, such as the hip on the left, the left shoulder joint (from camera perspective), and although not immediately visible, the arm on the right. There is a certain disturbance and anxiety that arises from the image which is both physical and psychological. The physical disturbance are the small discrepancies in the misalignment of form and the perceptible defect of the asymmetrical body, as the reflection is not aligned correctly with the real body. The illusion of a whole entity is slightly disrupted, yet at the same time the combination of the real and the mirrored body offers a perplexing view of a corporeal mass. The next experiment will attend to completing the amalgamation of the real and the reflected body and adjust the body shape to be symmetrical, to reduce the angst that this experiment presented.

## Experiment 61: Morphing body shapes through symmetrical investigation of the side-body

---

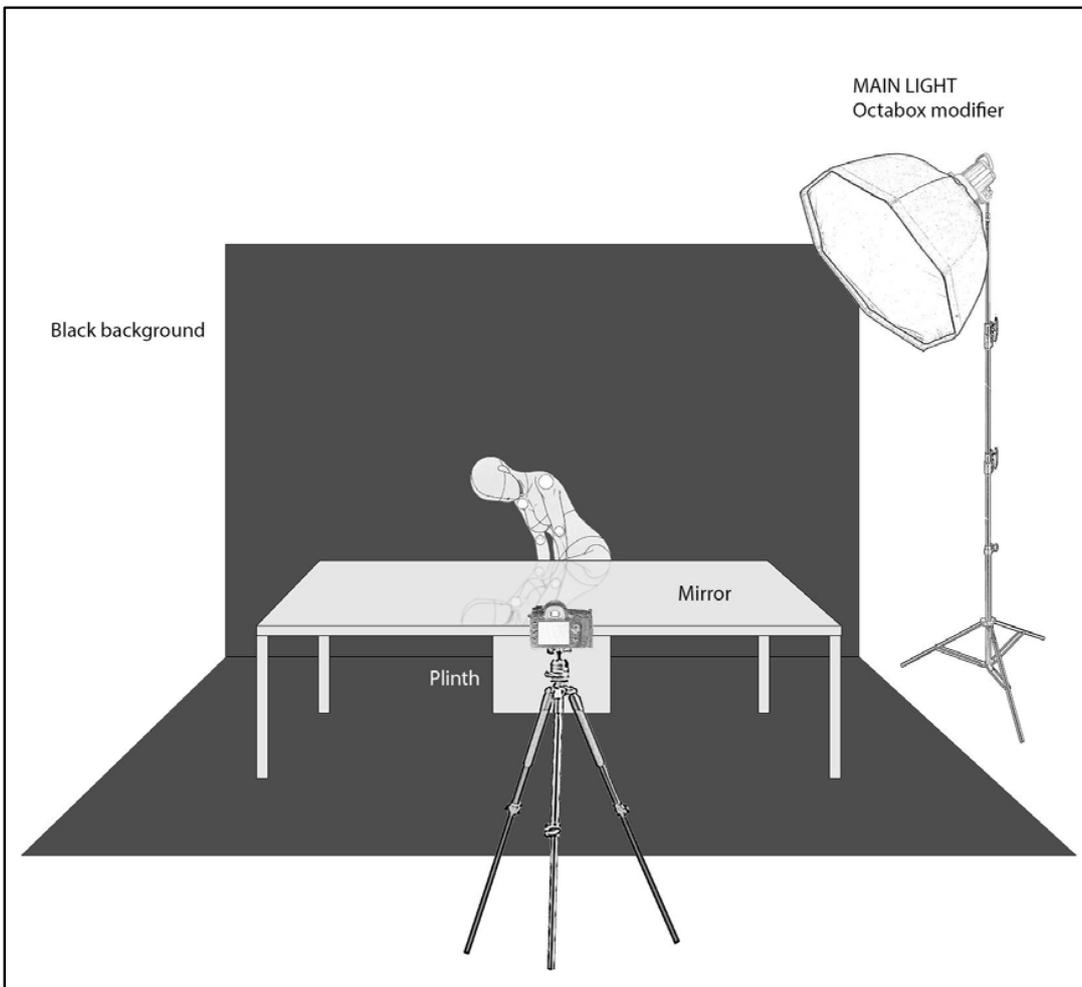
### Aim:

This experiment observes how symmetry can create distorted representations of the body when placed side on to the mirror surface by visualising odd shapes and body forms. The experiment will also aim to reduce the discrepancies of two visually separate entities.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on a horizontal flat surface, such as a table, reflected surface facing upwards. Set up a black background behind the table, and a plinth (lower in height to table) next to the plinth for posture and sitting support for the sitter. The camera is placed at just above the horizontal plane of the mirror surface.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 200

Aperture: F/22

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/125

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, behind and above subject on camera right, feathering the real body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:****Reflections:**

Two perspectives of the human body are presented as a result of symmetry in this experiment. The mirror in this experiment acts as a physical medium that offers an ambiguous form of the body. Firstly, the correct orientation of the body cannot be immediately determined, whether the head is on the left and hip on the right, or vice versa. This is due to the near-perfect curvature of the posed body. In addition, the limb offers both perspectives of an arm or a leg given its neutral shape. Secondly, when posed against the mirror to achieve near-full symmetry, the mirror acts as a continuation to the body's reality and generates a new bulbous-like shape and form. Components of the body nearest to the mirror were required to be in physical contact with the mirror's edge in order to reduce the misalignment between the real body and its reflection. Given how the mirror also serves as a device to conceal the identifiable components underneath the surface, this may suggest an avenue to conceal more sections of the body, as the reflection serves to refill and replace the concealed and missing body parts. The next experiment will attend to this assumption.

## Experiment 62: Morphing body representation through symmetrical investigation of the flattened body front-on

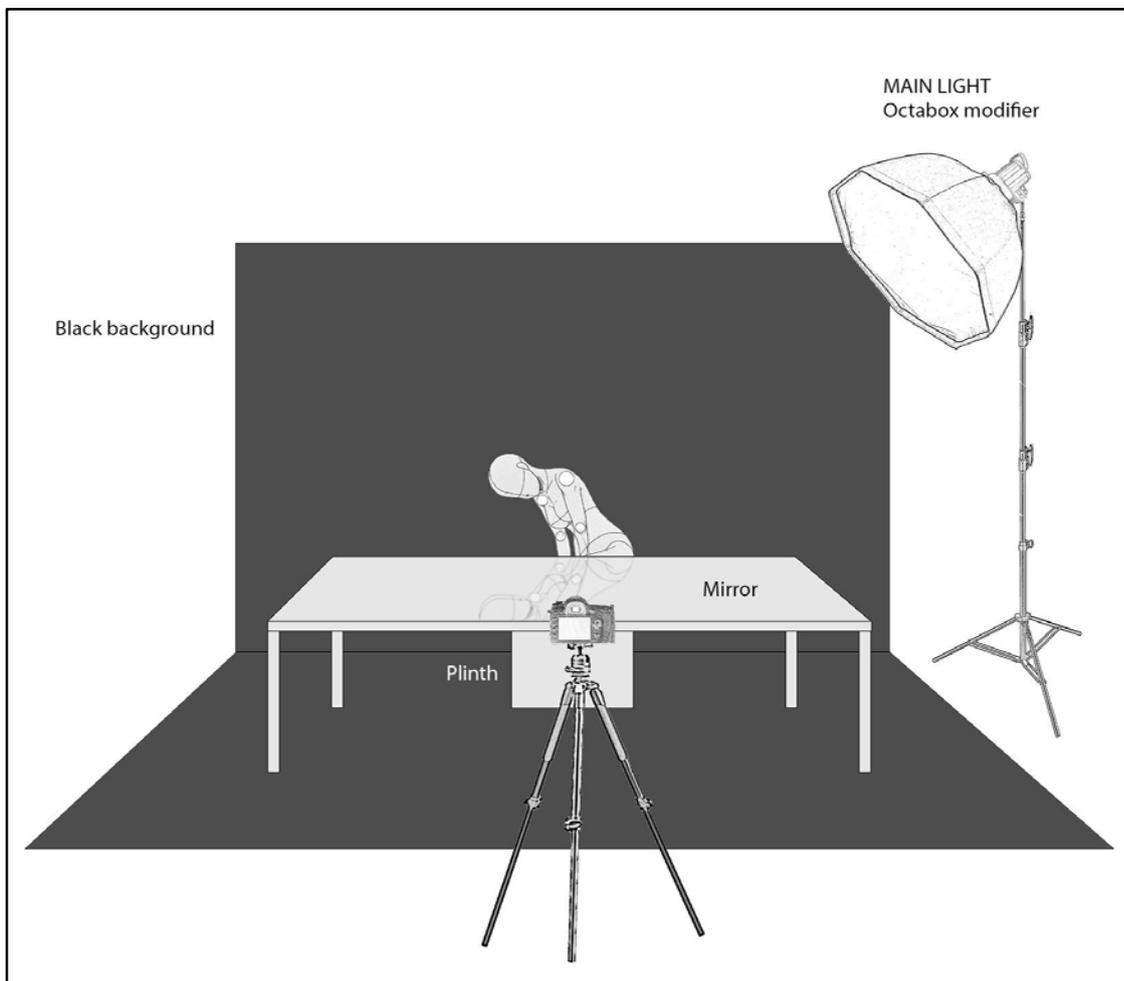
### Aim:

This experiment observes how symmetry can create distorted representations of the body when minimal body information is shown.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on a horizontal flat surface, such as a table, reflected surface facing upwards. Set up a black background behind the table, and a plinth (lower in height to table) next to the plinth for posture and sitting support for the sitter. The camera is placed at just above the horizontal plane of the mirror surface.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 200

Aperture: F/22

White balance: Flash

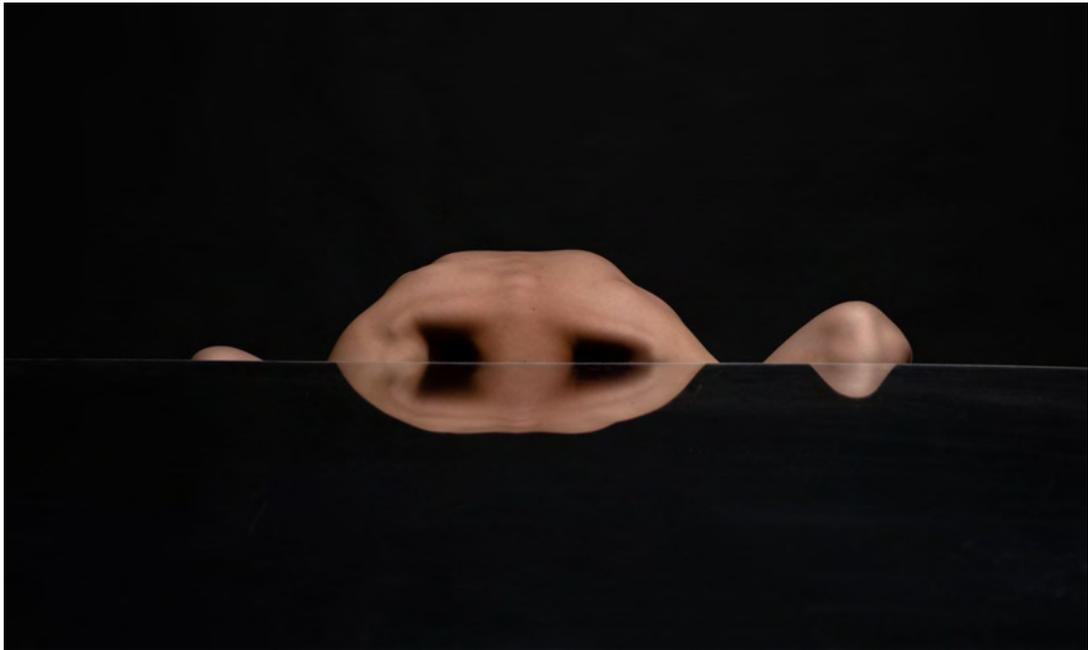
Shutter speed: 1/125

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, behind and above subject on camera right, feathering the real body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:****Reflections:**

Unlike the previous experiment, this experiment reveals the collaboration of mirror and human body to create an alternative representation of a human body part. As the body descends below the mirror, the represented body becomes narrower as the majority of the body becomes concealed below the mirror surface. The body is leaning forwards to a large degree, with shoulders pushed forward and rotated such that a deep recession of the supraclavicular region<sup>46</sup> is formed. The presence of this body shape, in combination with the mirror to complete the gap and form a more complete image of the body, bears striking resemblance to human, or animal, nostrils. Whilst this produces results that are comparable to the surrealists, and reinterprets representations of the body, much of the body form becomes lost in the image. The next experiment will summon more of the real body into the image and pose the body symmetrically, while keeping in consideration representations that are formed from a fleshly and fuller body mass.

Furthermore, this experiment seems to suggest that the mirror not only severs the body through its reflection, but also, given how the mirror is situated within a low-key environment, it can separate and divide components of the body. Here, there are three portions. This may be another avenue to pursue in defamiliarising the body.

---

<sup>46</sup> The gap in the clavicle, between the neck and shoulder joint.

## Experiment 63: Reconfiguring body shape through symmetry

---

**Aim:**

This experiment aims to reconfigure the normative perceived shape of the body by utilising the mirror as a material surface to sever the real body and construct a new form of body.

**Precedent:**

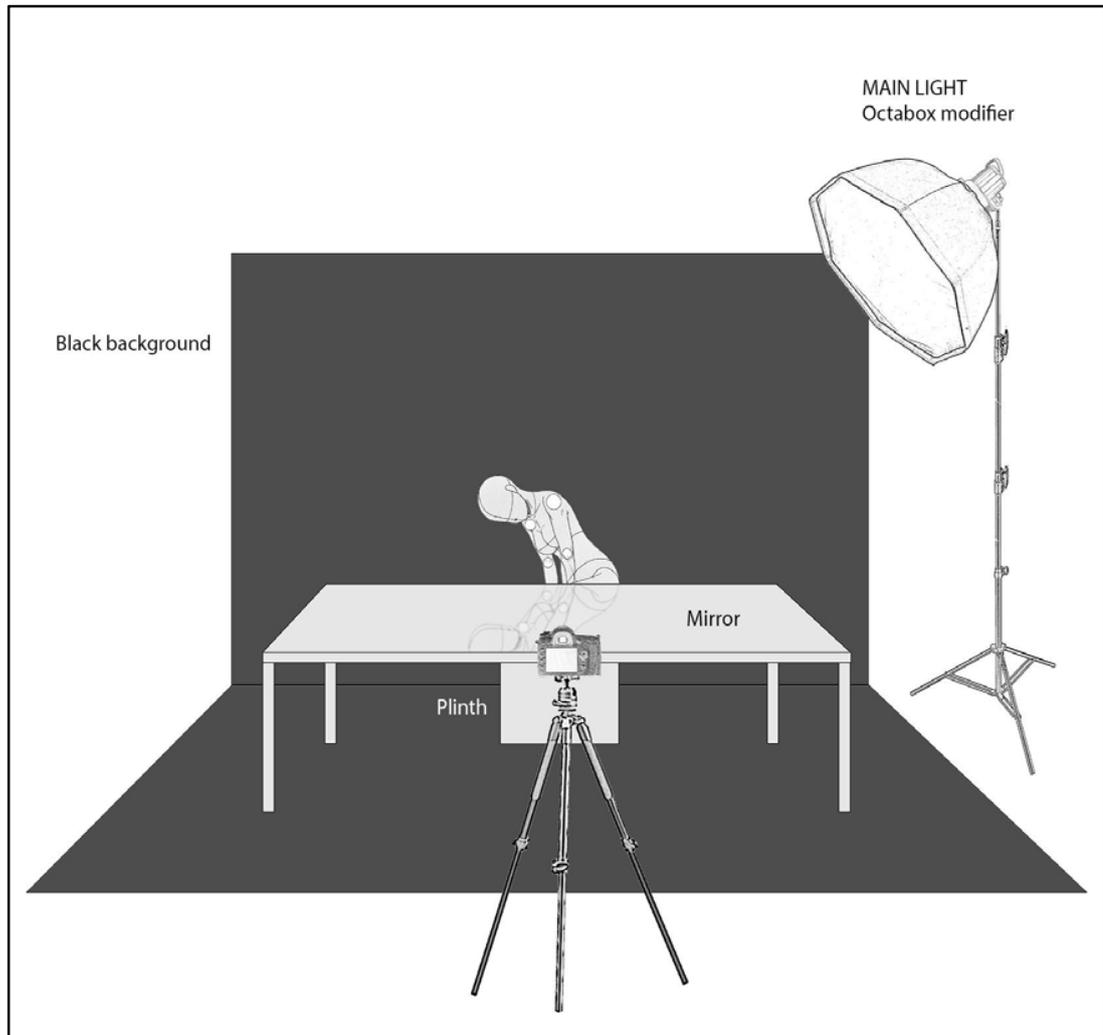


Hans Breder, *Untitled-Body* from Sculpture series, 1969-1973

**Method:**

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on a horizontal flat surface, such as a table, reflected surface facing upwards. Set up a black background behind the table, and a plinth (lower in height to table) next to the plinth for posture and sitting support for the sitter. The camera is placed at just above the horizontal plane of the mirror surface.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/125  
Aperture: f/22  
ISO: 200  
White balance: Flash

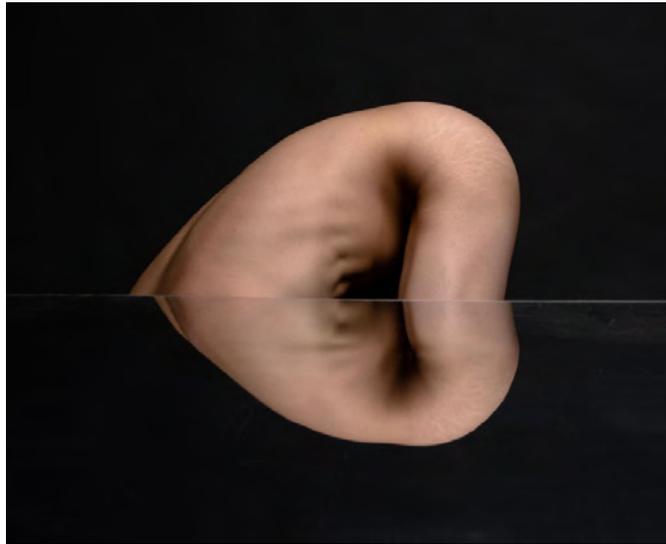
**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, behind and above subject on camera right, feathering the real body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

This experiment focuses on keeping the mass of the body within the frame, such that the image (when real and reflection are combined) forms a more complete body shape. The first result

reveals the body adopting a pseudo-heart appearance, made possible by the angular posture of the body. The second image reveals a more abstract shape of the body that allows for various interpretations by the viewer. This experiment reveals the mirror as a device for reconfiguration. The third entails the body transformed into a square shape by 'squaring' the shoulders.

A reassessment of the misalignment finds that it is favourable in disrupting the metamorphosis into a complete body. The body is situated in a liminal state, where the body is seemingly complete yet the discrepancy defies its completeness. The next experiment will continue with this theme while introducing the previous assumption of the mirror severing the body into two separate forms.

## Experiment 64: Mirror as a device for severing the body into two parts

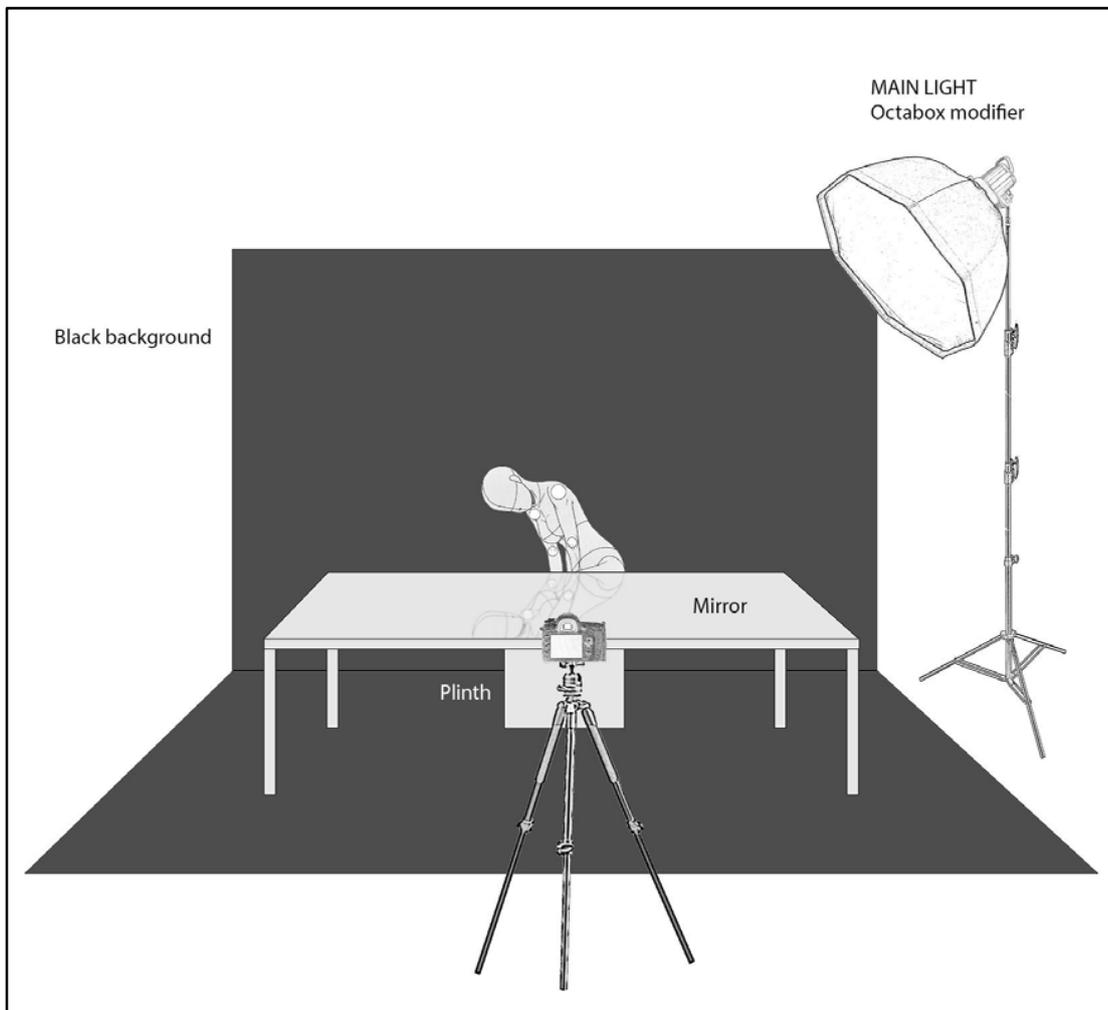
### Aim:

This experiment aims to use the mirror as a device for creating more than one portion of the body in the photograph, using notions of the previous experiment to add shape and mass to the two portions of the body.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on a horizontal flat surface, such as a table, reflected surface facing upwards. Set up a black background behind the table, and a plinth (lower in height to table) next to the plinth for posture and sitting support for the sitter. The camera is placed at just above the horizontal plane of the mirror surface.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 200

Aperture: F/22

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/125

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, behind and above subject on camera right, feathering the real body.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:****Reflections:**

The experiment maintains simplistic fleshly forms while separating them into two entities. To achieve this result, the platform on which the body is residing is lowered. The experiment takes into consideration the various joints of the body, in particular the flexible hip, which connects the flexible upper body and alterable legs. Furthermore, both the upper body and legs are long, thus allowing for a recession to be formed in between the two when they are both pointing upwards. Thus, the sitter in this experiment is sitting on their buttocks, with feet planted on the platform and knees pointing upwards. The body is kept closer to the mirror edge to allow the body to form a near-complete whole body. The subtle line that is the edge of the mirror seemingly connects the separated bodies. The representation of the body is altered when severed, as two bodies are now taken into account rather than just one. The body becomes defamiliarised as result of this process.

Up until now, the experiments examined how the body reacts photographically when placed at

the edge of the material surface. The next experiment will examine how the body responds when placing it directly in front of the mirror reflection, and how this may elicit a distortion or defamiliarisation of the body form.

## Experiment 65: The body reflected on flat material surface - the mirror

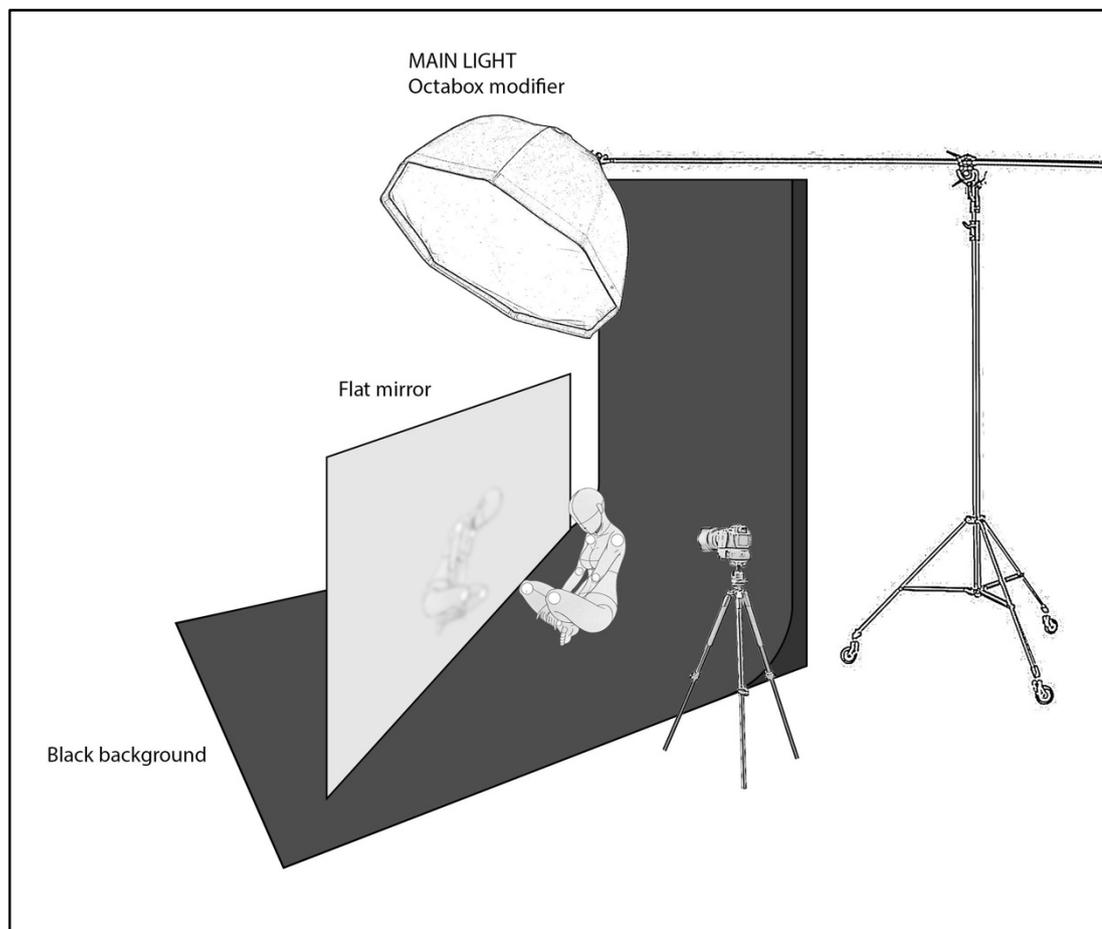
### Aim:

This experiment aims to explore the relationship between the flat material surface and the body when coming into direct physical contact with the mirror reflection.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The mirror is tilted upwards by approximately 3 degrees. The mirror surface is kept rigid, straight and flat. The body is placed in between the mirror and background. The camera is set up to photograph predominantly the reflection, but also will include the real human body in the captured frame.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e  
Aperture: F/14  
Shutter speed: 1/100

ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

Placing the mirror in a vertical position required an adjustment of the light positioning. Given the close proximity, where the body comes into contact with the mirror, the direction of lighting the front of the body had to consider how the physicality of the mirror would cover the body. This is especially because the experiment is aiming to illuminate the body in the reflection. This consideration thus situates the lighting for this experiment to be directed at the mirror instead, illuminating the reflection rather than the real body. This light positioning also feathers the real back (the body component that is directly facing the camera), thus the back is also illuminated within the photograph. A black background is used again to avoid photographing any distractions, such as the scratches on the mirror, hiding any unwanted background elements that may appear when parts of the mirror are bent at a slight angle.

The mirror surface is observed to replicate the human body, recording the real in its reflection. It is not immediately clear how the body form is defamiliarised, apart from a portion of the reflected body being concealed by the real body. In addition to this, the reflection is just as real as the real body, which can suggest two bodies at play. Notions of the double are not evidential despite the literal doubling effect of the mirror reflection. However, upon closer analysis, while the body does not immediately appear to be perceptively distorted, the slight tilt in the mirrored surface results in the duplicate body not being a 100% replica. The reflected body seems to be slightly elongated. It is the beginning of an uncanny sensation. This may suggest a whole new avenue where only the reflection is captured, and moving the mirror into different

states can induce an uncanny distortion. The next section will thus investigate the dynamic movements of the mirror, especially when curving it into different states and how this alters the reflection as well as perception of the human body.

### 2.3.2 — Key Findings

The flat mirror is able to construct distorted and uncanny body forms with its reflection. This is possible when emphasising the paradoxical ambiguity of the flat mirror surface. The idea of mirroring half the body to visualise a complete body form invites consideration of the ephemeral nature of the material surface as a medium of discovery and creation. This is formed on the basis that the mirror responds and reacts to the real body through its reflection. The influence that the reflection (the virtual) has on the real prompts an engagement that transforms the body into one that is distorted with traces of the unfamiliar. This is addressed by the mirror's ability to create a state of superposition, for the body to become distorted and defamiliarised. Aligning the resulting body, when the real is combined with the virtual body, in the state of superposition presents a paradox for the uncanny to arise in. The paradox that disorients the viewer's preconceived notions of reality is directly related to notions of proximate cause, where the real and virtual combine into one single entity that is realistic in appearance.

Unlike previous examination of the body in relation to a solid and malleable material, the mirror does not simply conceal a portion of the body, but is also found to possess the capacity to substitute the concealed for a preternatural body component. The crux, as suggested and observed in *Experiment 63* and *Experiment 64*, is that the distorted forms are ultimately reconciled by the lens in relation to the mirror surface. Perspective is important in achieving the state of superposition. This is reaffirmed with an investigation into photographer Hans Breder and artists Bohyun Yoon and Joan Jonas, who all convey an intimate performative play between the body and the mirror. For them, the physicality of the mirror subverts the notion of a dimensionless realm, and presents possibilities, not just of dismemberment, but of a reconstruction of the human body that highlights the body in an uncanny sense. Through the collaboration with a mirror surface, the body accumulates multiple appendages. For Breder, the transcending body as a result of the direct reflection of legs echoes the dolls of his surrealist precedent, Hans Bellmer, who dealt directly with a physical dismemberment and assemblage of grotesque and uncanny forms. While they are not photographers, I identify the similarity in the mirror performances of Yoon and Jonas, where the structural representation of the human body is destabilised by the mirror in relation to the lens.

*Experiment 64* investigates this notion found in these precedent works, and finds the physicality of the mirror serves a direct function in the destabilisation of the body's reality. While it is initially posited that the mirror is a dimensionless realm, the flat mirror experiments highlight

that the distortion requires the involvement of the mirror's two-dimensional surface, which renders the three-dimensional object inside its reflection, the dimensionless realm. This sentiment is addressed in a similar manner in relation to where distortions can occur in art (Heron, 1955). The physicality of the flat mirror is required to dismember the body, while the reflection, or the virtual, is required to reconstruct the body into a paradoxical and uncanny state where the familiar and unfamiliar simultaneously exist. The mirror, however, does not solely exist in a rigid state, for the mirror as a reflective *surface* can exist on any medium, and be fluid, and thus exist in a curved state. The next subchapter will outline how distortions and defamiliarisations of the human body form materialise through the curved properties of a mirror reflection.

## 2.4 The Curved Mirror

Delving further into the state of the mirror, the attributes of the mirror also exist in a more malleable state. The keenly deformable properties of the flexible mirror prompt new avenues for body visualisation. Deformation of the mirror surface manifests subsequent distortions in the reflected mirror image. The strategy in the experiments to follow involves examining the various forms of mirror deformation and its relative reflected body distortions, on the ground that both the mirror and human body work in collaboration with each other to simultaneously distort.



Figure 97: Lin Wei, Experiment 66: Photographing the real flesh and the reflected flesh, 2016

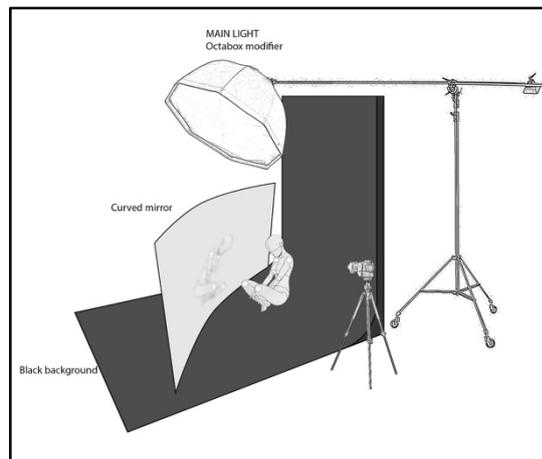


Figure 98: Studio setup for *Experiment 66*

Figure 97<sup>47</sup> reflects this notion by creating a visual comparison of the real body in contrast with the reflected body induced by deforming the surface of the mirror. To execute this, the surface area of the mirror, which is slightly bent at a point in the middle (Figure 98), covers the entirety of the camera frame. The subject reaches out and touches the mirror to the right of the frame. The real hand is visible in the camera frame. The body is simultaneously visible in the reflection, albeit with a monstrous and deformed appearance. The deformation occurs within the boundary of curvature along the mirror surface. The point of contact is also noticeably where the distortion is at its weakest state. The distortion develops at a larger rate as the body moves further away from the curved mirror surface, resulting in visibly less clarity and detail. The resulting image touches on French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's notions of the mirror image and its reflection in his mirror stage essay, *The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience* (1949). He establishes the psychological

<sup>47</sup> Experiment 66. Please refer to 2.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Curved Mirror Distortions

development of a child and their encounter with themselves, seen through their mirror reflection; they thereby gain recognition of their image and identity that are distinct from others. This development of awareness, which Lacan posits occurs during the first 18 months of the child's life, thus develops the child's understanding of itself existing outside of its body. Contrasting with this notion, Figure 97 presents a re-evaluation of the identifiable and normative body that an individual establishes from early on. It challenges the visual perception of what a normal body constitutes by way of a distorted reflection.

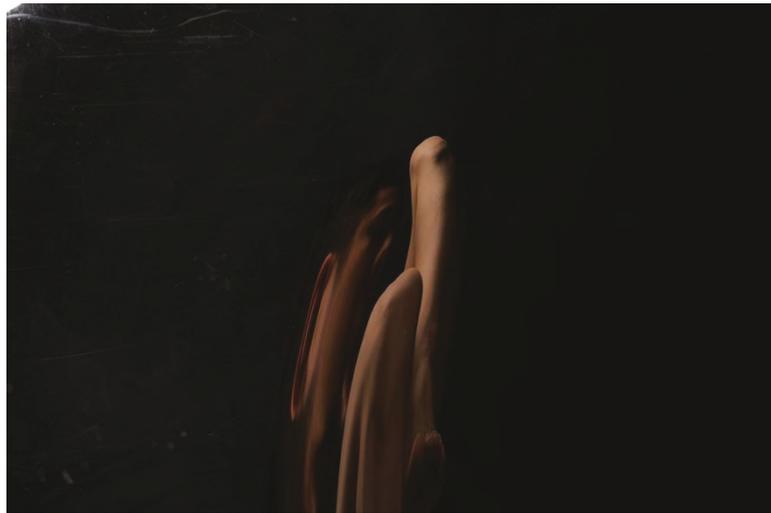


Figure 99: Lin Wei, Experiment 67: Photographing the familiar, mirror bent on y-axis, 2016

To elaborate on the curved mirror's capacity to distort the body from a psychoanalytical perspective, Figure 99<sup>48</sup> singles out and focuses on the distorted reflection through an experimentation of skewing the body in one direction, specifically along the y-axis. Focusing on the mirror presents the space within as a site of the phenomenon. By presenting the mirror and body this way, the mirror becomes aligned with Foucault's notions of heterotopia, pertaining to a non-hegemonic space of absolute realness that is yet absolutely unreal (Foucault, 1986). Aligning the mirror to a heterotopic site is of critical importance in establishing a link to the uncanny, which has parallels to Foucault's notion that the real/familiar and unreal/unfamiliar co-exist. The effects of the mirror as a heterotopic site become apparent in Figure 99, as the familiar — the subject's head and legs — is placed approximately in line with the lens's observed point of curvature on the mirror. From the singular perspective of the lens, the midsection of the head notably converges inwards, and is further elongated vertically. The suggestion of the distortion, acquired through the morphed and abstracted features, transforms the familiar

---

<sup>48</sup> Experiment 67. Please refer to 2.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Curved Mirror Distortions

human body into a site of foreign aesthetics. The mirror simultaneously reflects the ‘real’ body adopting illusionary and unfamiliar characteristics. The ear on the left is no longer reminiscent of a biological hearing organ, but rather a gaping chasm of abstraction. Aiding in the mirror’s distortion of the body is also the placement of lighting in the scene. The light is placed overhead and is directed at the mirror as opposed to the body. In this way, only the surface features of the body facing the mirror will be illuminated for the lens. It simultaneously disrupts the facial features, casting shadows over and concealing important identifiable facial features such as the eye, brows, and mouth, while casting a dim light over the nose, which floats among the darkened facial features. The experiment demonstrates that the body, as well as mirror, must be aligned with stringent requirements in order to undergo a distortion. The requirements can be categorised into three areas: lens perspective, degree of mirror surface curvature, and location of body relative to the mirror surface.

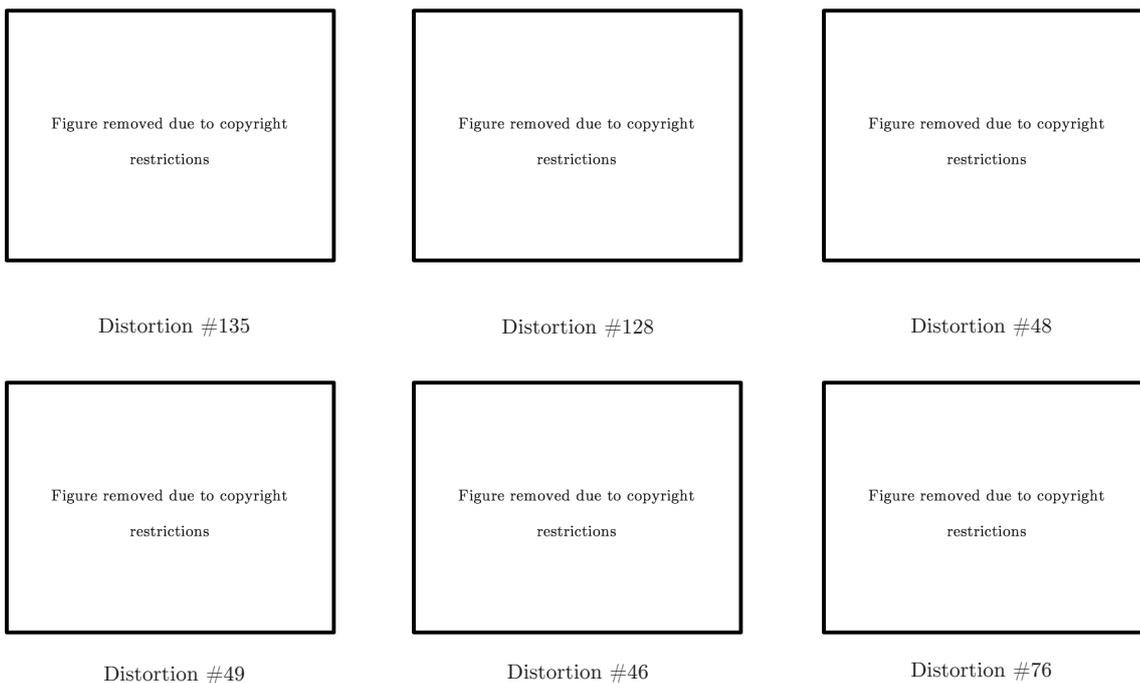


Figure 100: Andre Kertész, *Distortion* series, 1933

Hungarian surrealist photographer Andre Kertész’s observations of the mirror surface are a pivotal component in illustrating an approach to body distortions in the mirror that similarly follow the three measures outlined above. In an introductory essay on Kertész’s mirror distortions, Hilton Kramer (1976) emphasises Kertész’s acknowledgement of particular surfaces, revelling in its ability to procure ‘telling human detail that lives on easy terms with an extraordinary sensibility for pictorial form’ (n.p.). Kertész’s *Distortions* series (1933) consists of

206 photographs revealing the female nude body being distorted within the frame of a wavy carnival mirror. The images demonstrate the morphing bodies in stasis as the camera captures the state of in-between when the body becomes distorted. Furthermore, a transcript by Weston Naef, curator emeritus of photographs at J. Paul Getty Museum, reveals that Kertész ‘used two floodlights to illuminate the scenes.’ (J. Paul Getty Museum 1994, 129) This simple choice of lighting allows the entirety of the body and its various nuances of distortion to be captured and observed. Each photograph illuminates a different visual shift in body distortion; however, a few double-ups of the distortion effect are observed, albeit utilising various components of the body to achieve such effect. These instances can be identified in Figure 100, highlighting six examples of the body folding and duplicating on top of each other at the point of mirror surface curvature. In *Distortion #48*, the mirror seemingly stretches, duplicates and merges at the knees and upright extended arms. In *Distortion #49*, the whole body is constantly folding into mass abstraction. The extended arm to the side becomes an individual limb that is dismembered from the body within the reflection. This form of body distortion is similarly reflected with the female leg in *Distortion #46*, which aligns itself with traits inherent in *Experiment 67*. In each case of these six images, the mirror surface renders the female body into an abstraction.

While these dream-like abstractions exemplify the classic notion of surrealist tinkering with the female body, observed traces of the Freudian uncanny transform the bodies to become visually frightening, monstrous, and disfigured, resulting in a different kind of aesthetic ideal. The bodies are chaotic and irrational, stretched and deformed. Yet the mirror does not exclude notions of the human in its reflection. Traces of the familiar can still be fleshed out in the image. Feet make a strategic appearance in some, while hands and breasts are occasionally present to draw the viewer back to the reality of the image.

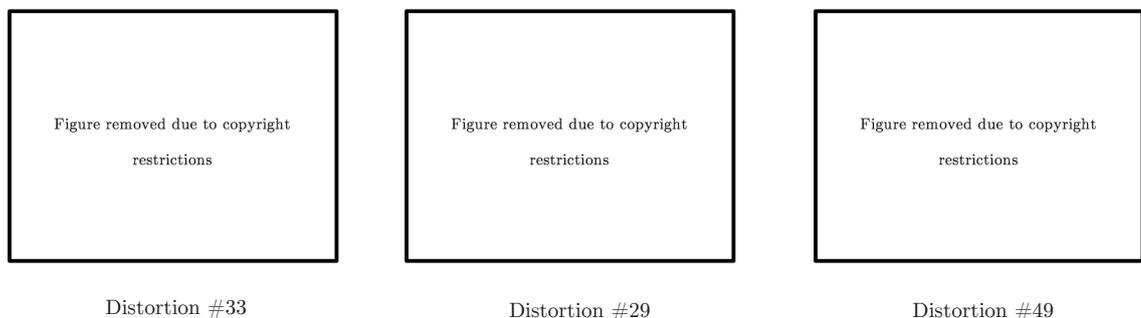


Figure 101: Andre Kertész, *Distortion* series, 1933

Given the static nature of the structurally sound carnival mirror constructions, Kertész was limited in mirror flexibility, so that his experiments explored avenues of body distortion through strategic perspectives. This measure adopted by Kertész can be ascertained through a selection

of zoomed out images (Figure 101), and is testament to the second method of approach to mirror surfaces and body distortions — camera placement and varying lens perspectives. Figure 101 illustrates Kertész: experimenting with the reflection from directly front on for *Distortion #33*, showcasing a more complete and embodied reflection; bird's-eye angle for *Distortion #29*, revealing a flattened impression of the subject; and over the shoulder in *Distortion #49*, resulting in a complete abstraction. By alternating the lens perspective, the body in the reflection undergoes a transformation, despite the body holding similar positions. These images of Kertész, while flawed in their ability to capture uncanny bodies, are sufficient proof that the creation of a distortion is not limited to a singular perspective in relation to the curved mirror.



Figure 102: Lin Wei, Experiment 70: Mirror surface bent along one point on x-axis, 2016

As a counterpoint to this unyielding requirement inherent in Kertész's *Distortions* series, the mirror shifts the axis of curvature for *Experiment 70* (Figure 102)<sup>49</sup> such that the point of curvature occurs along the x-axis as opposed to the y-axis. The experiment entertains the fact that while the body can remain posed in one particular position, with the camera placed in a static position, a shift in the mirror surface can achieve an entirely new visualisation of distortion. Shifting the mirror adjusts the spatial site within the mirror; thus the positioning and posture of the body needs to be re-adjusted as well. Initial stages of *Experiment 70* sought to simulate the body posture in *Experiment 67* (Figure 99); however, the results revealed that the body posture is not functional for this particular mirror curvature, and consequently the body did not appear significantly deformed, altered or distorted. Thus, the body is shifted in this experiment to complement the curvature of the mirror surface. The sitter adopts a crab position, with the torso positioned in line with the curvature, resulting in it appearing elongated

---

<sup>49</sup> Experiment 70. Please refer to 2.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Curved Mirror Distortions.

and siphoning off towards the right of the frame. Through careful placement, the hand and legs remain visible and somewhat proportionate within the distortion, reducing the viewer's tension towards the unrealistic manifestation.



Figure 103: Lin Wei, Experiment 72: Distorted reflection of a reflection by mirror surface bent along two points on y-axis, 2016



Figure 104: Lin Wei, Experiment 73: Distorted reflection of a reflection by mirror surface bent along two points on x-axis, 2016

Figure 103<sup>50</sup> and Figure 104<sup>51</sup> make further enquiries into the combination of multiple nodes of curvature along the mirror surface, to reinforce the notion that the degree of body distortion is relative to the degree of curvature. The experiments bend the mirror surface into an s-curve, along both the y-axis and x-axis respectively, resulting in a greater amplification of deformation in both the reflected body as well as in the perception. Curving the mirror surface into an s-curve results in establishing a point of inflection along the surface. A beguiling phenomenon occurs within each experiment at this inflection point. For *Experiment 72*, the legs are perceptually ordinary, albeit slightly narrow and lengthened, yet are bordered on the left and right by body components that have reflected upon themselves. The left is an abstracted oblong representation of the rib cage caved in on itself, while the right is the sitter's ear undergoing a similar process to the rib cage. For Figure 104, the left and right of the body similarly appears to be a mirrored instance within the reflection, given the similarity of the streaking shadows in the centre of the photograph, trailed by the spherical object underneath. Yet the viewer becomes conscious of this illusion through the irregular body shape that transpires in the reflected reflection. These results reveal that the familiar becomes more severely complex in the face of combined nodes of curvature, as the body becomes more difficult to comprehend.

<sup>50</sup> Experiment 72. Please refer to 2.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Curved Mirror Distortions.

<sup>51</sup> Experiment 73. Please refer to 2.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Curved Mirror Distortions.

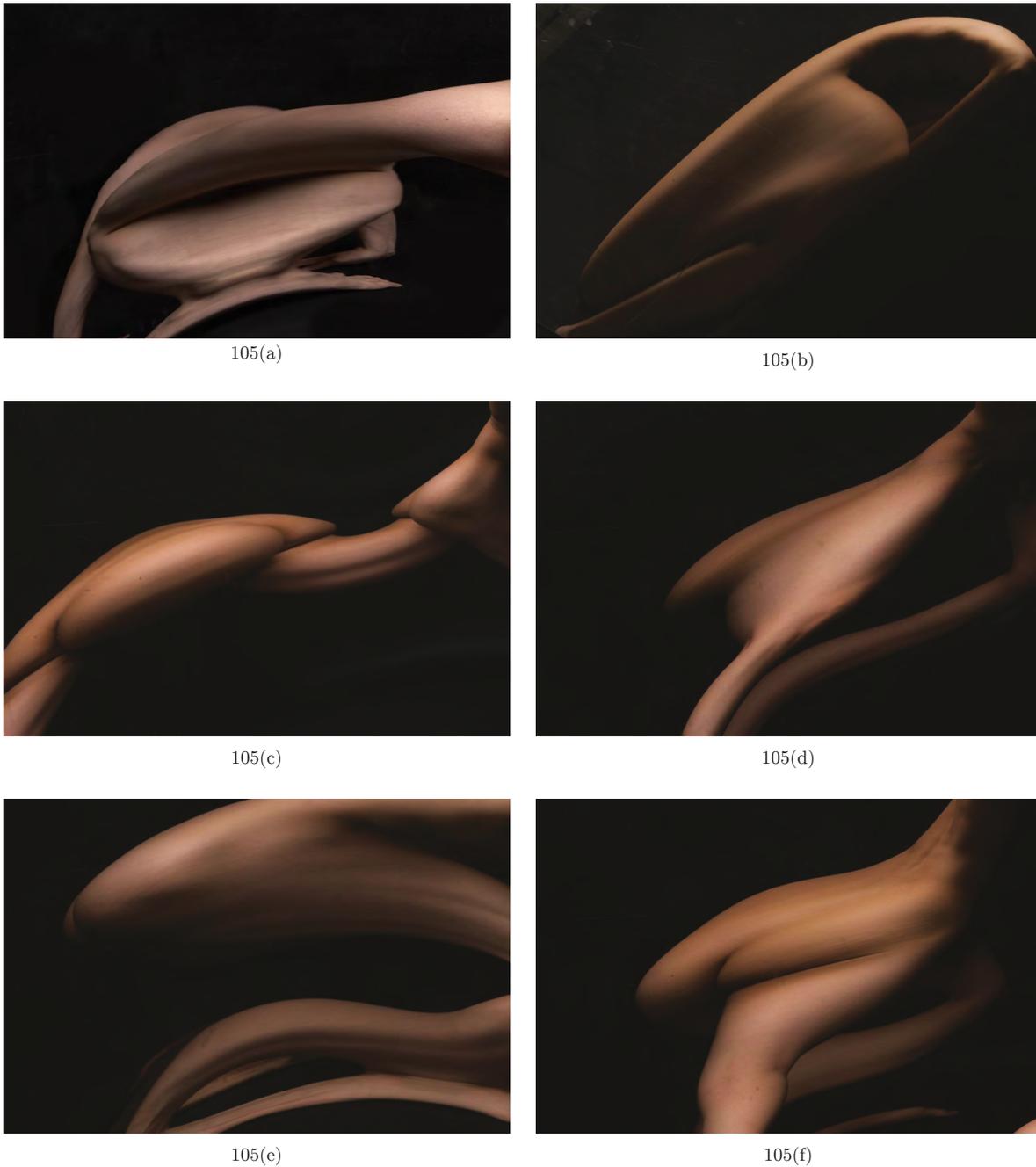


Figure 105: Lin Wei, Experiment 77: Further experimentation with ray-tracing the junction of distorted body overlap — Seeing through the mirror, 2016

Figure 105<sup>52</sup> sufficiently demonstrates that the curved mirror can distort the familiar body when taking into account the three measures of lens perspective, degree of mirror surface curvature, and location of body relative to the mirror surface. The camera is placed at a 45-degree angle to the mirror surface and raised slightly above body level. This placement is designated in tandem with the body placement in relation to the curved mirror, where the body adopts a position in

---

<sup>52</sup> Experiment 77. Please refer to 2.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Curved Mirror Distortions.

front of the mirror solely for the camera to pick up its distorted reflection. The mirror is curved in a twisted configuration with the main focus being to capture its distorted reflections of the human body. Each body is no longer concrete. They are stretched, skewed and duplicated upon in their abstraction, rendering most of the human body incomprehensible. The mirror reflection is so distant from conventional reality, and deeply entrenched in a virtual space of unfamiliarity. As perceptual psychologist Rudolf Arnheim describes in his book *Art and Visual Perception* (1974), the distorting mirror creates an ‘interference of the practical business of life since the immutable physical object would be represented by a constantly changing image’ (106) The mirror alters the body such that no component is recognisable; however, closer analysis reveals that the skin and slight giveaway of a muscular structure is vaguely noticeable. Furthermore, in each photograph, there is a presence of an unbalanced and inaccurate mirrored instance within the reflection. Further analysis of these images reveal that this instability is predominantly because the flexible mirror is not reliable in adopting a perfect curvature and straight surface; also, it is because the body becomes increasingly distant from the surface of the mirror. The combination of these factors results in an unstable, if not an uncanny, instance of the distorted body.

*Experiment 77* also gives a visual demonstration of exponential distortion, based on the degree of mirror curvature. Taking into consideration the curved mirror’s pre-determined ability to produce beguiling effects when it reflects upon itself at its point of inflection, the instance in Figure 105(c) alters the mirror surface into a W shape, increasing the number of inflection points by one, and resulting in two areas where the reflection can be reflected twice. The outcome is a body that has folded twice on itself, with three points of recognisable duplicity — one on the bottom left, and two in the top right corner. The reflection transforms the human body into a chain, with the body split into a series of links that are cohesive, yet seemingly separate from each other. The results of this experiment collectively demonstrate the various nuances in distortions that the mirror can introduce to the body through shifts in the mirror curvature.

The following section details the 12 experiments conducted for this subchapter. The experiments follow a structure of examining a comparison between the real and the reality as represented by the curved mirror, before analysing effects of body distortion when curving and twisting the mirror at one or two points in different orientations. Furthermore, the experiments assess an overlap of the reflection and focus on its duplication effects, which unveil unique and distorted forms of the body.

### 2.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Curved Mirror Distortions

Experiment 66: Photographing the real flesh and the reflected flesh

Experiment 67: Photographing the familiar, mirror bent on Y-axis

Experiment 68: Photographing the abstract body, mirror bent on Y-axis

Experiment 69: Object within material surface to visualise the direction of distortion

Experiment 70: Mirror surface bent along one point on X-axis

Experiment 71: Mirror surface bent along two points on X-axis

Experiment 72: Distorted reflection of a reflection by mirror surface bent along two points on Y-axis

Experiment 73: Distorted reflection of a reflection by mirror surface bent along two points on X-axis

Experiment 74: Abstract bodies through shape and form compression — Mirror surface twisted along the X-axis

Experiment 75: Abstract bodies through shape and form compression — Bottom corners of mirror brought inwards

Experiment 76: Ray-tracing the junction of distorted body overlap

Experiment 77: Further experimentation with ray-tracing the junction of distorted body overlap — Seeing through the mirror

## Experiment 66: Photographing the real flesh and the reflected flesh

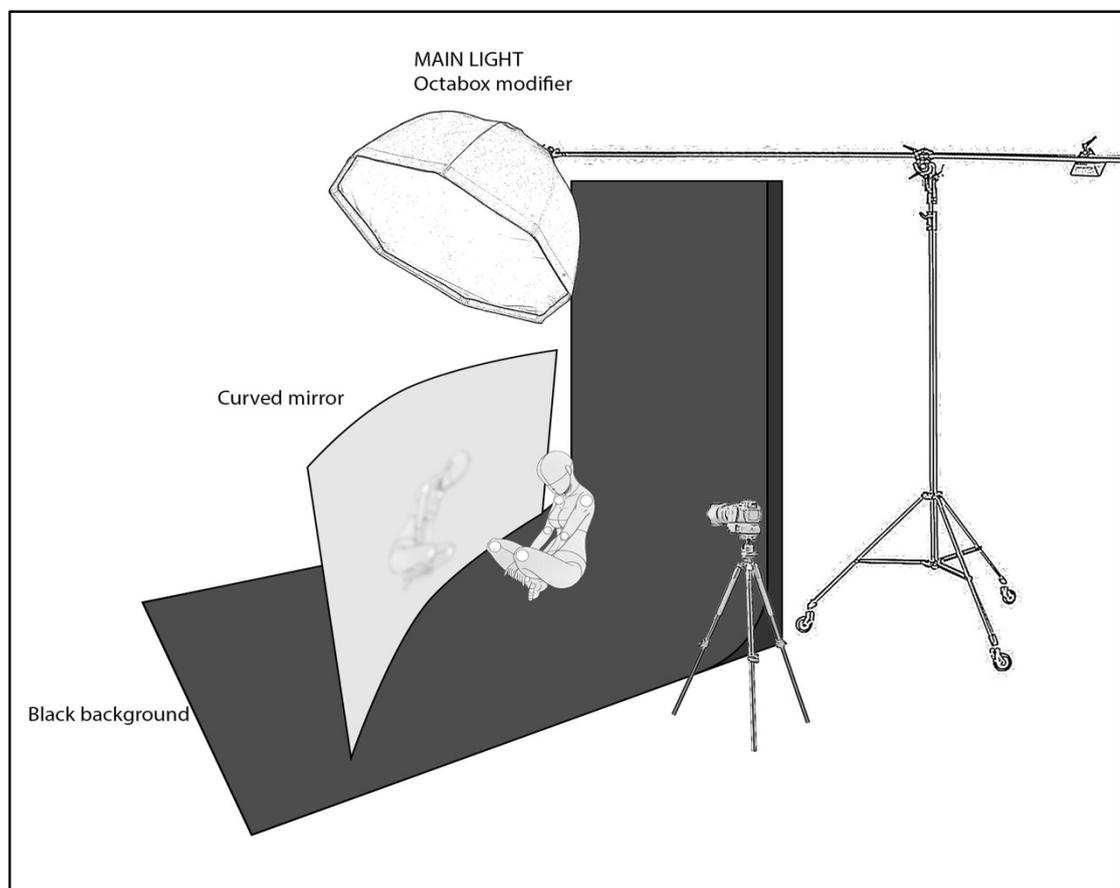
### Aim:

This experiment explores the potential of the curved mirror, as a material surface, to extend the normal body through the reflected surface, and also the potential of the curved mirror to cause fluctuation in the human body.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The mirror is twisted slightly at the middle. The body is placed in between the mirror and background. The camera is set up to photograph predominantly the reflection, but also the limb of the body.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

Extending from the last experiment on the flat mirror distortions, this experiment followed up on showing more of the reflection and less the real body. In addition to the technical considerations outlined in the method, the black background provides dark undertones to the photograph, suggesting a glimpse of a horrific manifestation in process, when the body becomes morphed into a monstrosity. Although it is mentioned previously that limbs, hands, genitals, and facial features offer modes of familiarising with the body in the photograph, the hand is used in this scenario to act as a point of extension. The reflected area at the point of contact shows less distortion of the hand and forearm, while the upper half of the arm and body is stretched and skewed where the mirror is at its most bent point. This results in less clarity and detail of the body in this area. As the hand did not participate in the transformation of the body, its placement in the image will need to be reconsidered. The next experiment will remove the hand entirely, and the camera will focus explicitly on the reflection. Given how the curved state of the mirror appears to stretch the body, the next experiment will also retain the familiar in the reflection in order to distort it.

## Experiment 67: Photographing the familiar, mirror bent on Y-axis

---

### Aim:

This experiment will aim at more familiar body components such as head and feet in the photograph, utilising the capacity of the curved mirror to stretch and blur specific points of interest at its curved points, so as to disfigure and defamiliarise particular familiar parts of the body. This experiment is inspired by Andre Kertész and his *Distortions* (1933) series, where Kertész actively deals with the uncanny in his photographs of distorted female figures produced by wavy carnival mirrors. It is also noted that several photographs from his *Distortions* (1933) series reveal most of the body figure in the frame.

### Precedent:

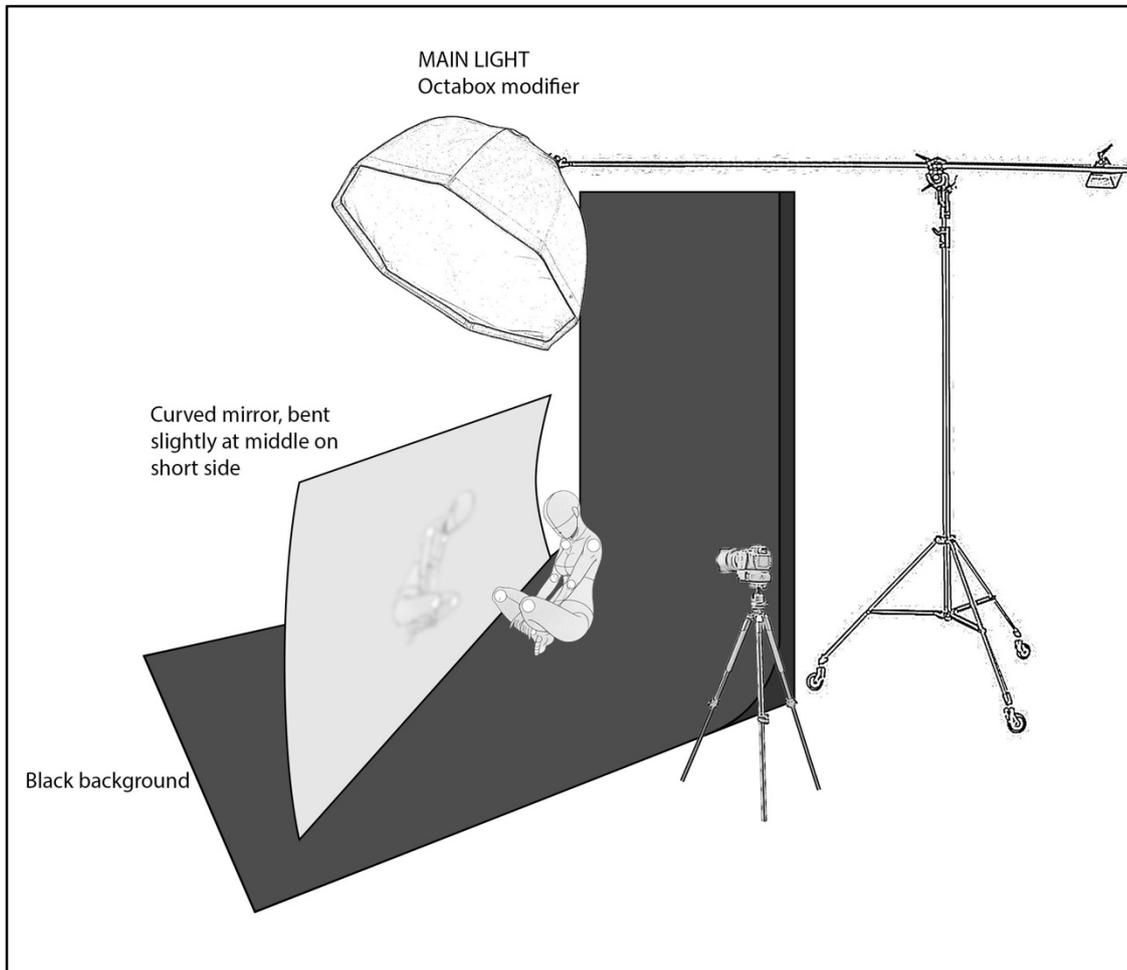


Andre Kertész, *Distortion #34*, 1933

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The mirror is slightly bent in the middle on the short side (1.4m). The body is placed in between the mirror and background. The camera is set up to photograph only the reflection.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/100  
Aperture: f/16  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:****Reflections:**

This experiment takes advantage of the mirror's capability to stretch the body. The head, legs and feet are most visible in the photograph. A few things to note about photographing specific points of interest: the photographer must move together with the model, in order to reach a point where the sitter reveals a particular body component in the reflection, while the photographer resides at a particular angle and location in relation to the mirror to capture the specified point of interest. The particular curve in the mirror for this experiment presents many variables.

1. A single curvature in the mirror reveals a distortion at its curved point.
2. The distortion in the mirror reflection is only revealed when the camera perspective meets the specific point object at its reflected incidence.
3. Thus, perspective is important, due to the incidence of reflection.

Meeting these requirements, the results show the head severed below the nose, while the ear, a small part of the body, is stretched and elongated to almost half the size of the leg in the photograph. The elongation is observed to run in only one direction, perpendicular to the curved point. The next experiment will observe defamiliarisations based on an abstraction of form in the curved mirror reflection.

## Experiment 68: Photographing the abstract body, mirror bent on Y-axis

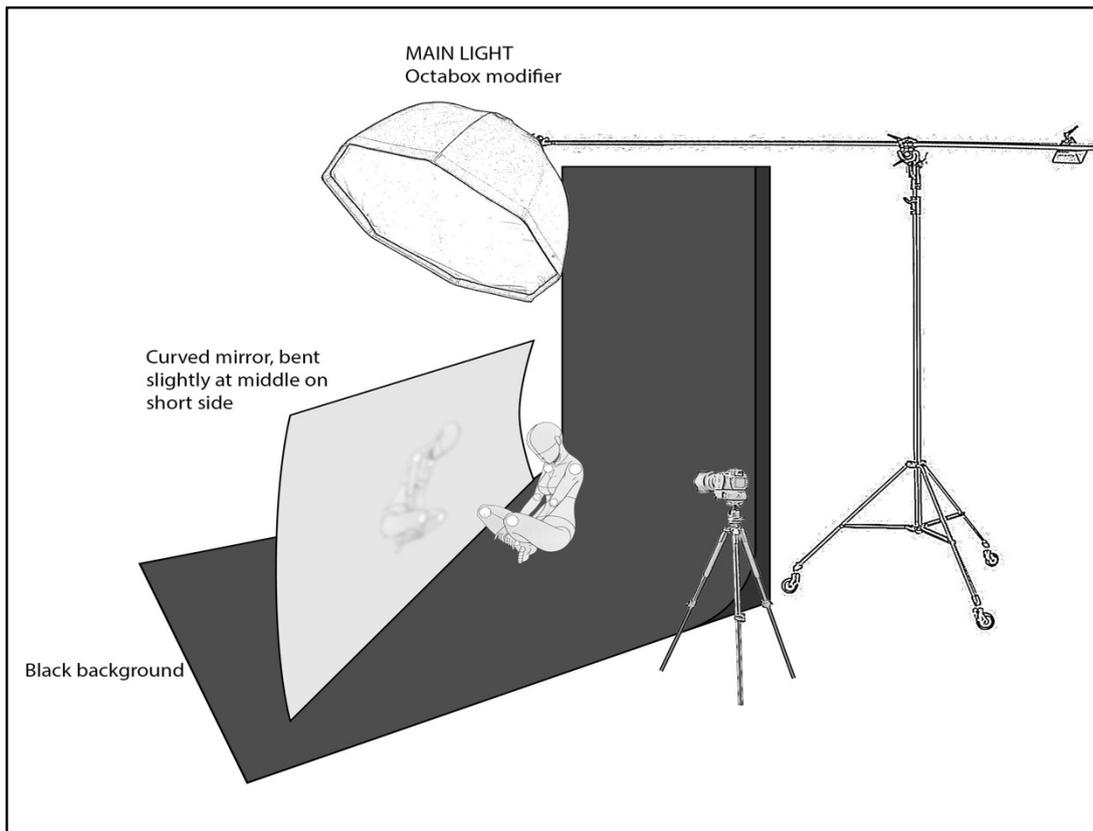
### Aim:

This experiment aims to photograph the abstracted body, in which the body is posed according to the notions and methods discussed in 1.3: Posing the Solitary Body. The experiment explores possible notions of expanding upon the distorted body achieved through posture, by including the effects of the curved mirror.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The mirror is slightly bent in the middle on the short side (1.4m). The body is placed in between the mirror and background. The camera is set up to photograph only the reflection. The body will pose similarly to postures seen in *Experiment 10*.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is

angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The method of photographing the reflection is a very peculiar method. One must photograph the reflection at a 45-degree angle to the mirror surface in order to photograph the reflection of the body ‘front-on’.

Following on from the previous experiment, as well as engaging with notions of posture from *Experiment 10*, the body is posed to reveal its back in the reflection, with arms raised such that the elbows are in line with the shoulders. The identifiable components established in the first technique of concealment are hidden from the camera’s view. As the body is slightly bent forward, the top half of the body is foreshortened, while the mirror cascades the lower back into darkness. This results in heightened abstraction of the body. It is observed that smaller details, specifically lumps in the body, are enlarged through the distortion process — the lumps of the spinal cord are made more obvious. Given how the mirror is observed to distort the representation and form of any subject in its reflection, the next experiment will place a solid geometrical object next to the body and observe, with better clarity, the directional changes brought on by the curved mirror. This will assist in informing my understanding of the possibilities of directional distortion with the curved mirror.

## Experiment 69: Object within material surface to visualise the direction of distortion

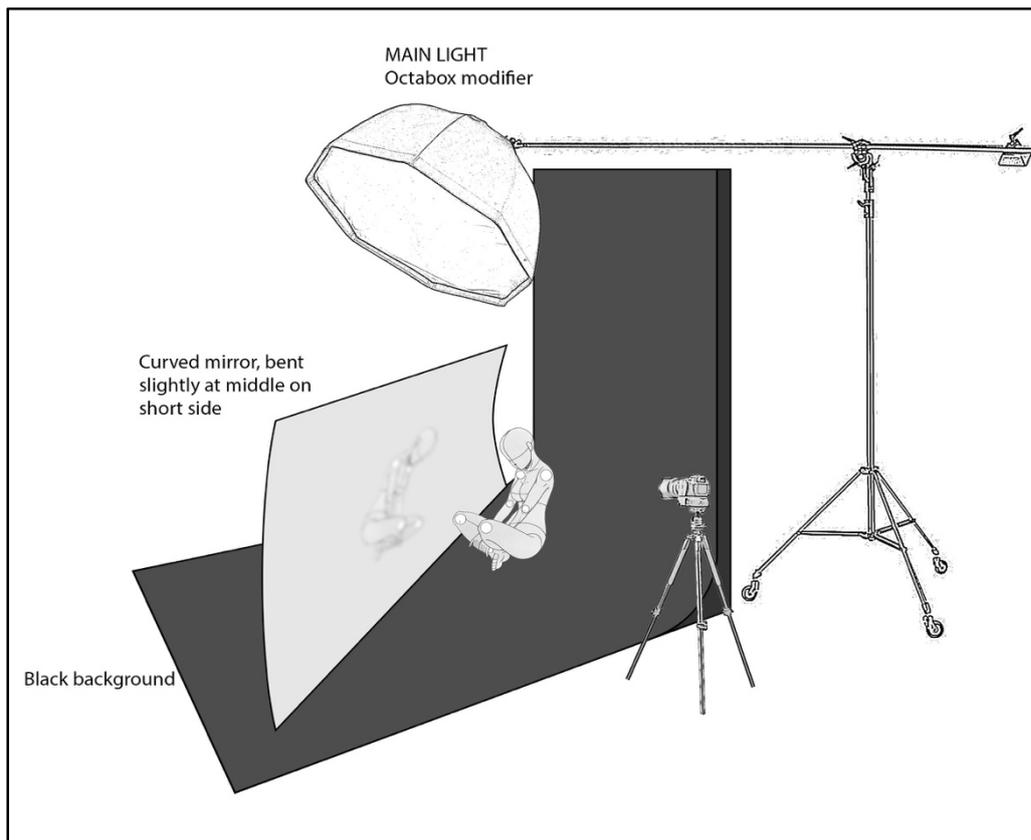
### Aim:

In order to better visualise the distortion effects caused by the manipulation of a curved mirror, a square plinth — a geometrically proportionate object — is placed within the photograph alongside the human body. The experiment will observe the visual changes brought forth by various curves and flexes of the mirror.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. A small 50cm<sup>3</sup> white plinth is placed underneath the body, with one side facing the surface of the mirror. The camera is set up to photograph only the reflection. The mirror will be bent at various angles during the experiment.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is

angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The experiment reveals that minute adjustments to the angle in which the mirror is bent can achieve drastic changes to the reflection of the normal body. The mirror is bent in the middle at the short side, but to a much lesser degree in comparison to the previous experiment. Such a small bending point yields a body that becomes stretched from top to bottom of the mirror. Another method seen here of manipulating the surface of the mirror is by pushing against it. As a malleable material surface, the mirror is subjected to surface changes caused by slight force applied to the surface. Although not visible in this photograph, a corner of a table is pushing slightly against the back of the mirror, at the location where the sitter's buttocks are visible in the reflection. This makes the buttocks more bulbous in shape, while bloating the straight edge of the plinth such that an S-curve is formed. The next experiment will investigate the mirror curved in the other direction — the x-axis, and how it can elongate and stretch the width of the human body to defamiliarise it.

## Experiment 70: Mirror surface bent along one point on X-axis

---

### Aim:

The experiment observes changes to the reflected body by bending the mirror at one point along the x-axis. This experiment utilises Andre Kertész's *Distortion #126* (1933) as a precedent, where the mirror is bent along the x-axis. It is observed that Kertész's photograph uses a wavy carnival mirror with a set configuration for its curvature: one concave and one convex curve.

### Precedent:

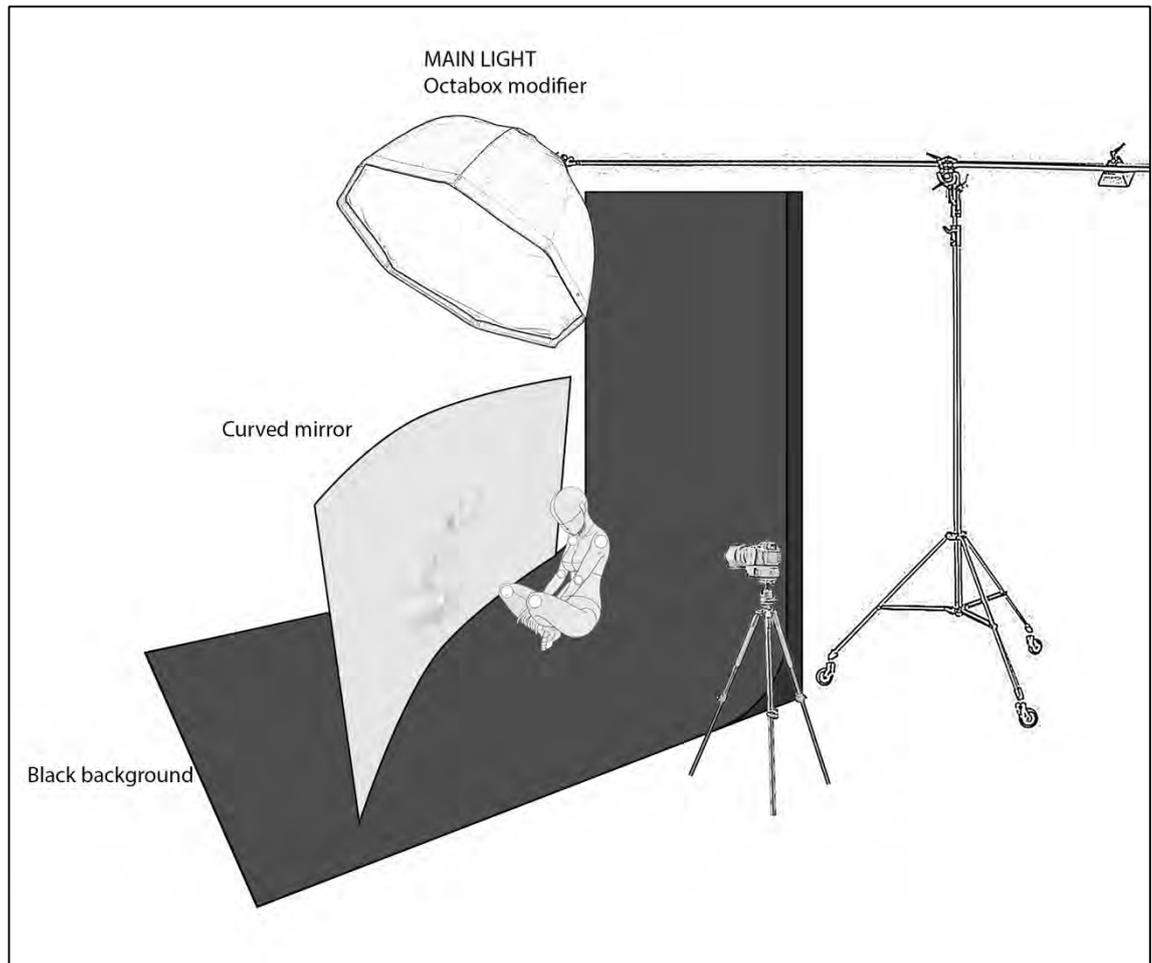


Andre Kertész, *Distortion #126*, 1933

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The camera is set up to photograph only the reflection. The mirror will be bent slightly along the X-axis during the experiment.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Aperture: F/16  
Shutter speed: 1/100

ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The body in this experiment adopts a more exaggerated pose in an attempt to distort the upper half of the body and translate the upright body into a form that does not appear upright. The results are frightening, as the body appears to be siphoning and flying to the right of the frame. However, upon closer analysis, the appearance of the hand in the bottom right corner suggests otherwise, revealing the idea that a hand is supporting the weight of the 'flying' body. This factor reduces the sense of uncanniness in the photograph. Its precedent, Kertész's *Distortion #126* (1933), reveals a female figure that is completely recognisable, yet perceptibly peculiar, as a result of the mirror's inducement of disproportionate human body parts.

I also note that the edge of the mirror as well as the cloth the female figure is resting on can be recognised within Kertész's photograph *Distortion #126* (1933). This communicates the perspective and location at which Kertész captures the reflection, which is directly in front of the mirror and above the body. Also, it is noted that this reveals the mirror being curved at two points in a wave configuration for Kertész's photograph. Furthermore, the background is not a concern for the photograph, while it is similarly not a distracting element. This may be due to several factors, such as the grayscale of the image reducing the amount of readable information, and the ripples of the cloth running parallel to the edge of the mirror offer a sense of background continuity. A comparative analysis finds that whilst Kertész's photograph contains these aesthetic characteristics, the result of this experiment supersedes Kertész's in terms of corporeal familiarity, as the fleshly tones of skin and body form are more defined. Based on an observation of Kertész's photograph, the next experiment will test another state of the curved mirror by curving it at two points and distorting the reflection.

## Experiment 71: Mirror surface bent along two points on X-axis

---

### Aim:

Following along from the previous experiment, this experiment will test distortions of the body achieved by curving the mirror surface into an S-curve, with one concave and one convex curve. This experiment utilises Andre Kertész's *Distortion #126* (1933) as a precedent, where the mirror is bent along the x-axis. It is observed that Kertész's photograph uses a wavy carnival mirror with a set configuration for its curvature: one concave and one convex curve.

### Precedent:

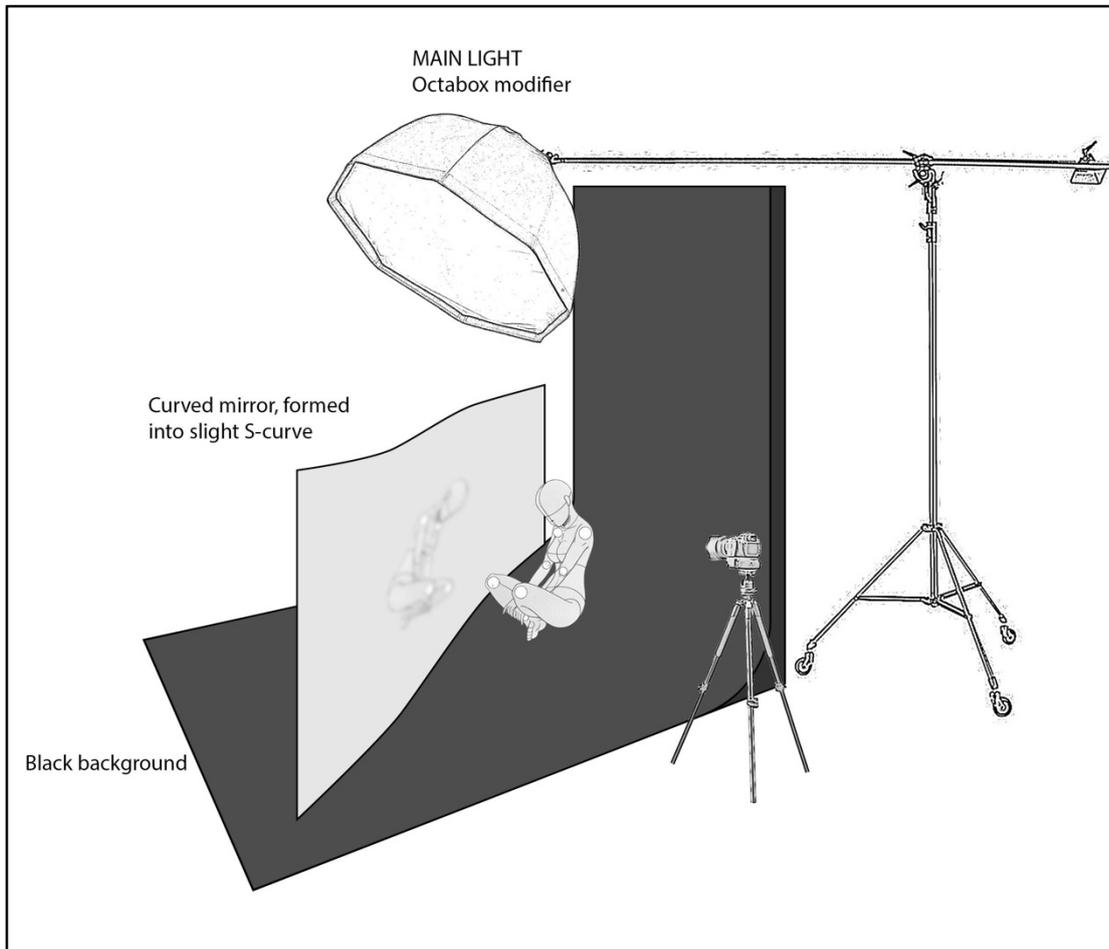


Andre Kertész, *Distortion #126*, 1933

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The camera is set up to photograph only the reflection. The mirror will be bent at two points of approximately equal distance (1 metre) from each other on the X-axis.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Shutter speed: 1/100  
Aperture: f/16  
ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:****Reflections:**

The observed reflected body is both foreshortened and enlarged at the specified points of curvature. Bloating the mirror outwards transforms the body into a more rounded shape, as it compresses the edges of the object. The effect of curving the mirror inwards (concave) produces the same results as seen in previous experiments. The two curving points, however, when combined together, produce a wobbly and disconcerting effect on the body, as various proportions are made big (the leg on the right) and small (the arm on the left). An additional observation through this experiment is that the curving of the mirror surface compresses the edges of the object (i.e. body). The next experiment will alternate and curve the mirror into an s-curve/wave configuration on the y-axis to generate the distortion effect.

## Experiment 72: Distorted reflection of a reflection by mirror surface bent along two points on Y-axis

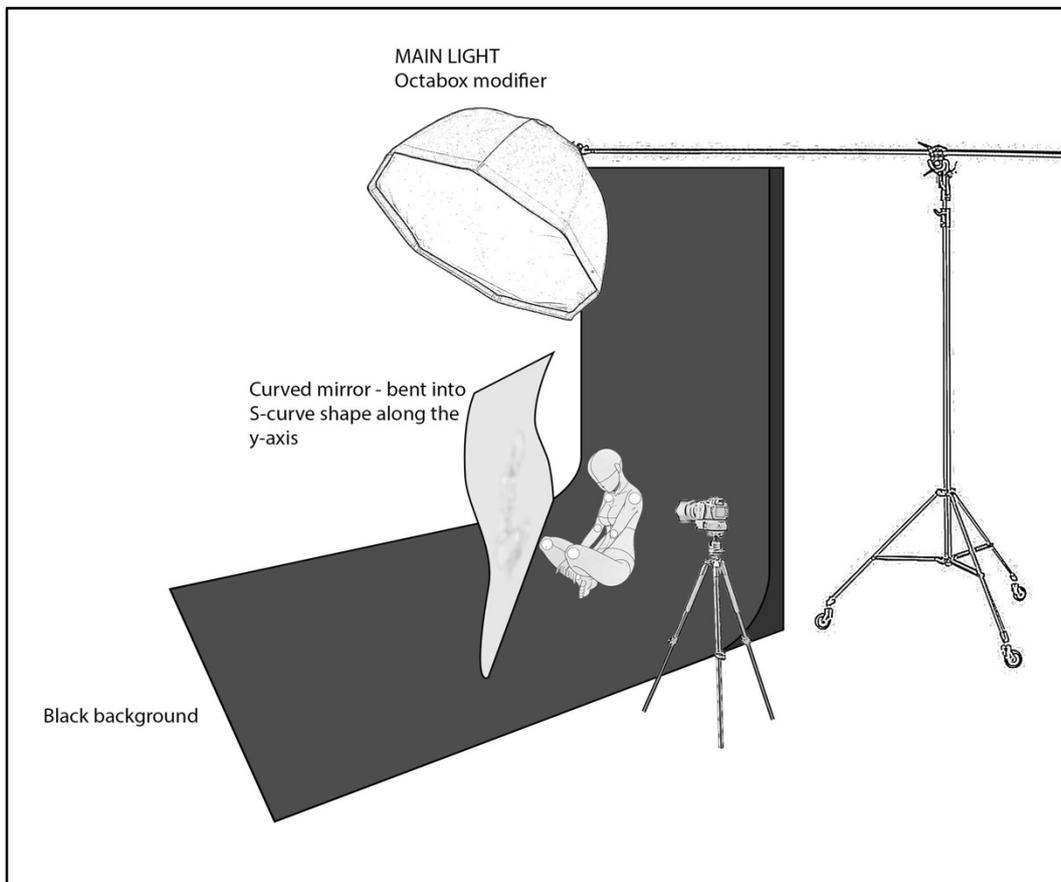
### Aim:

Following along from the previous experiment, this experiment will test distortions of the body achieved by curving the mirror surface into a S-curve along the y-axis, similar to vertical wavy carnival mirrors.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The camera is set up to photograph only the reflection. The mirror will be bent at two points of approximately equal distance (approximately 50 centimetres) from each other on the Y-axis.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is

angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The particular point where the mirror surface starts to concave downwards is where the angle of incidence overlaps, producing a flipped image that merges with the reflection with the correct orientation. This experiment differs from the previous in that the mirror bending angle is greater than for its precedent. Using this method to distort the body, the head — a familiar and highly recognisable component of the body — is placed at the overlapping point. The reflected ear is stretched, producing a secondary flipped image that is connected by way of the overlapping reflection. The result is an eerie and terrifying manifestation of a body object that bears no resemblance to its original appearance. It is not immediately recognisable as a head, nor is it recognisable as any particular body part. It seems that the mirror curvature where the overlapping point exists is due to a deeper curve. The next experiment will observe this effect and how it operates. This will alternate and conduct the mirror curvature along the x-axis. This is because the curve configuration can be retained much more easily along the x-axis as opposed to on a y-axis.

### **Experiment 73: Distorted reflection of a reflection by mirror surface bent along two points on X-axis**

---

**Aim:**

Following along from the previous experiment, this experiment aims to overlap the reflected body by bending the mirror into a deeper S-curve along the x-axis.

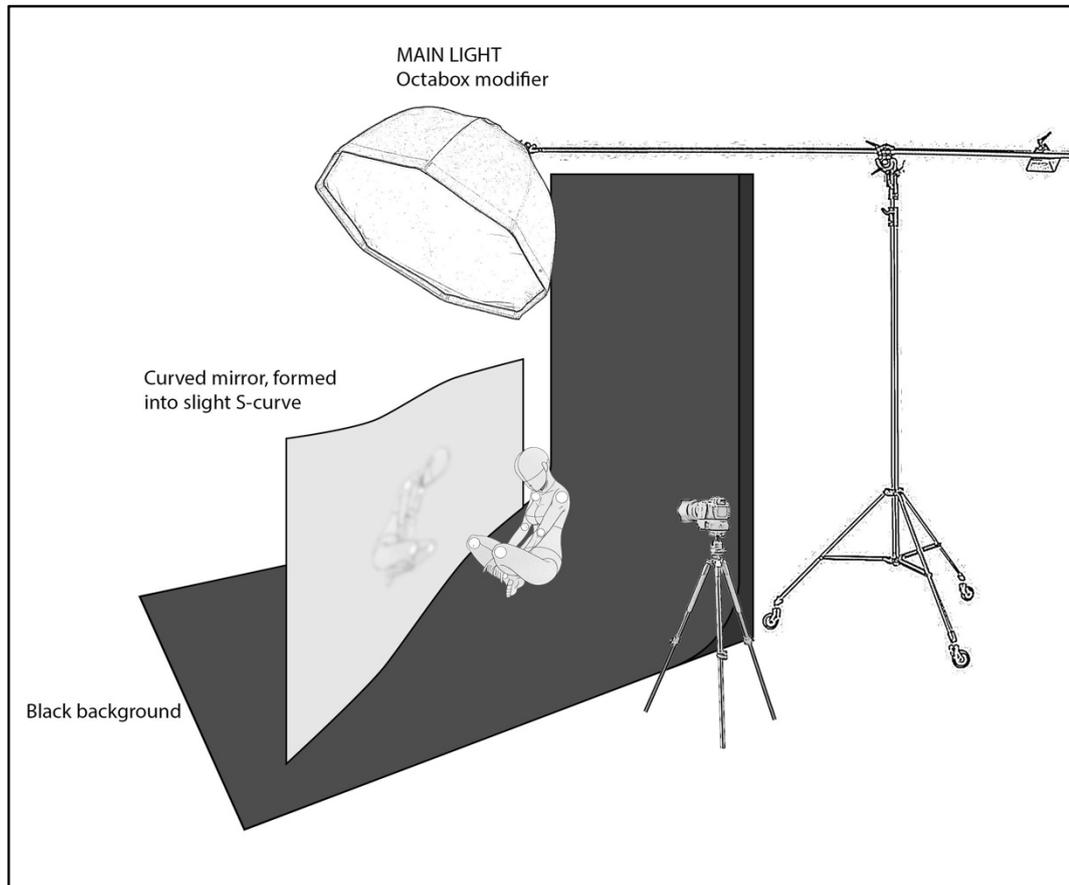
**Precedent:**



**Method:**

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The camera is set up to photograph only the reflection. The mirror will be bent at two points of approximately equal distance (1 metre) from each other on the X-axis. The mirror is bent approximately 10 degrees.

**Studio setup:**



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e  
Aperture: F/16  
Shutter speed: 1/100

ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

Revisiting experimentation with mirror manipulation along the x-axis, this experiment displays a larger distorted body mass due to a wider bending angle, as well as the landscape orientation of the frame. As the surface of the mirror becomes more curved, the details of the reflected body become more distorted and stretched and thus less identifiable as a human body. This is advantageous in defamiliarising particular body parts; for instance, the ball-like shape in the middle resembles an abstracted form of a clenched fist. This may be due to the innate properties of the mirror, where each point of the mirror reflects at a particular angle. Given the deep recession of the curve, the mirror is reflecting its own reflection. It thus procures less visibly discernible body components in the image, apart from the obscure arm on the right, which is much more distinguishable due to the flat surface of the mirror in that area. The next experiment will examine a different form of curvature. Rather than using linear bending along the axes, the next experiment will twist the mirror to create curves in the mirror surface.

## Experiment 74: Abstract bodies through shape and form compression — Mirror surface twisted along the X-axis

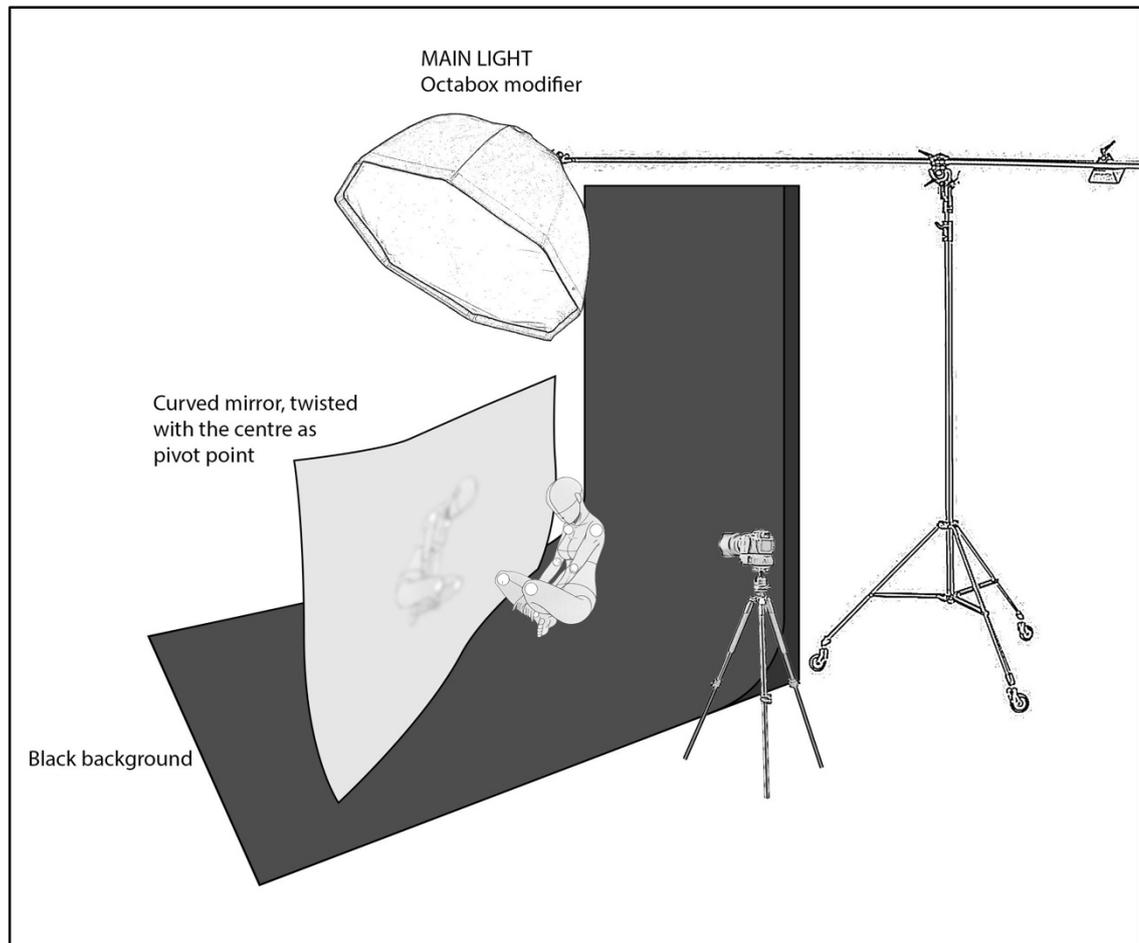
### Aim:

This experiment applies the found results, where the edges of the object are compressed from the bent mirror surface. This experiment will also revisit the experiment when bending the mirror along the Y-axis and creating abstract forms of the body. This experiment aims to abstract the body through compression, achieved when the mirror surface is put under stress of another form of distortion — twisting.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The camera is set up to photograph only the reflection. The mirror will be slightly twisted along the x-axis.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e  
Aperture: F/16  
Shutter speed: 1/100

ISO: 100  
White balance: Flash

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

Slightly twisting the mirror surface seems to produce an effect that creates both convex and concave curves, where the body is both enlarged and foreshortened at various locations of the photograph. Following on from previous methods of abstracting the body through posture, the results of this experiment show the body forming into a squiggling shape. Although much of the body has been defamiliarised as a result of stretching, the foot brings back traces of the human body. This type of mirror deformation stresses a closer interaction with the photographer and the body, to capture the reflected body in certain defamiliarised and distorted states. As with all forms of mirror curvature that have been experimented on until now, distortions have been achievable, and twisting the mirror surface follows this exact trend. The next experiment will turn to twisting the mirror inwards in a concave manner.

## Experiment 75: Abstract bodies through shape and form compression — Bottom corners of mirror brought inwards

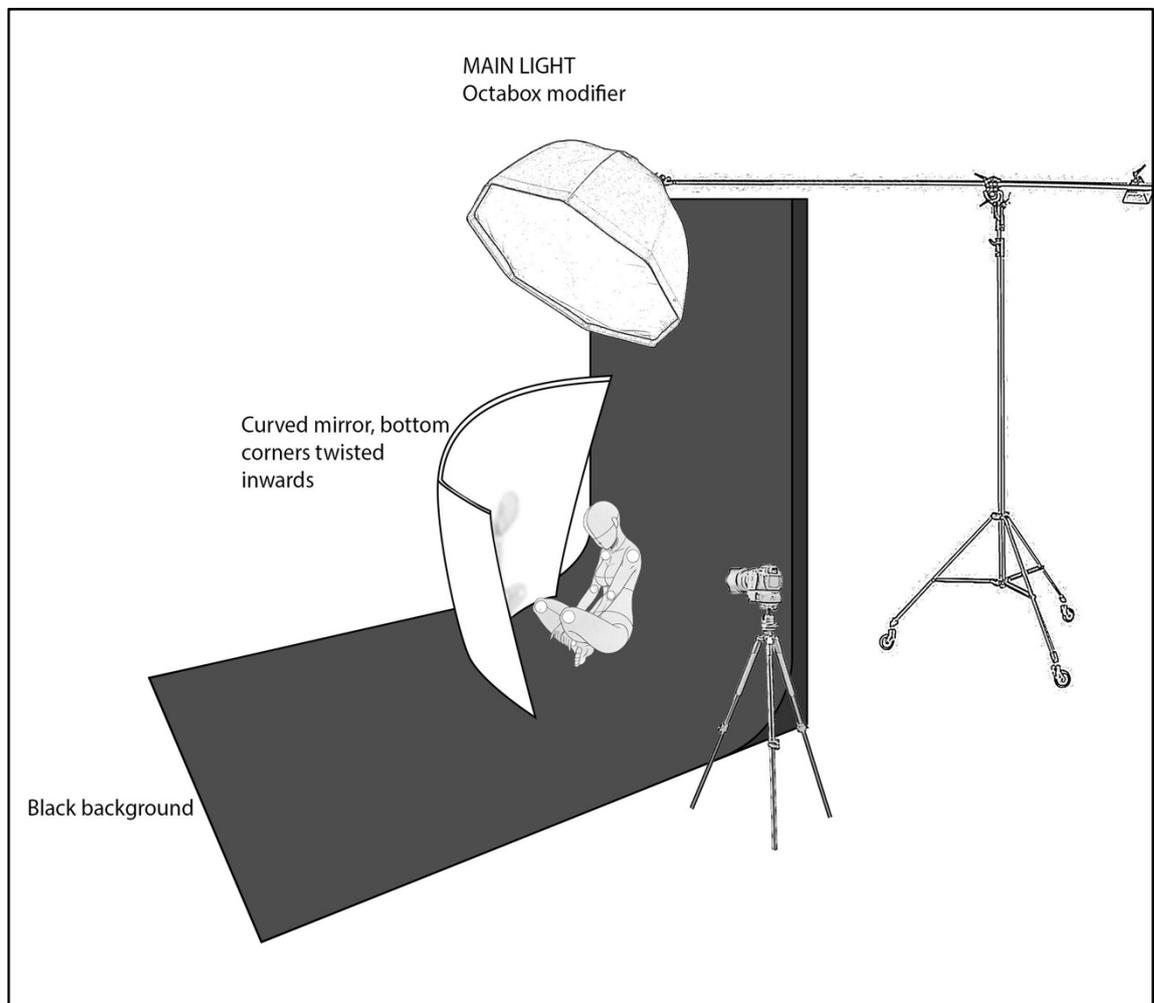
### Aim:

Following on from the previous experiment, this experiment observes distortions of the body achieved through a different variation of twisting, when the bottom corners of the mirror surface are brought inwards.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The camera is set up to photograph only the reflection. The mirror will be slightly twisted along the x-axis.

### Studio setup:



**Camera settings:**

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

**Lighting settings:**

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The twisting of the material surface in this experiment reveals an interesting development for the distortion of the body. This way of twisting the mirror surface appears to create layers in the body. In addition, the rigid body components such as limbs are no longer straight, becoming deformed, bent, stretched, and compressed in interesting ways. The waist is cinched in, buttocks are exaggerated to a point, the kneecap is malformed, protruding in the opposite direction, and the foot at the bottom of the image is elongated and flattened. While the distorting, overlapping effects of the body can be achieved when the mirror is bent at greater angles, (which this experiment has performed), it is not visible in this experiment. This is most likely due to the camera perspective not being in line with the visual distortion. This will be looked into for the next experiment.

## Experiment 76: Ray-tracing the junction of distorted body overlap

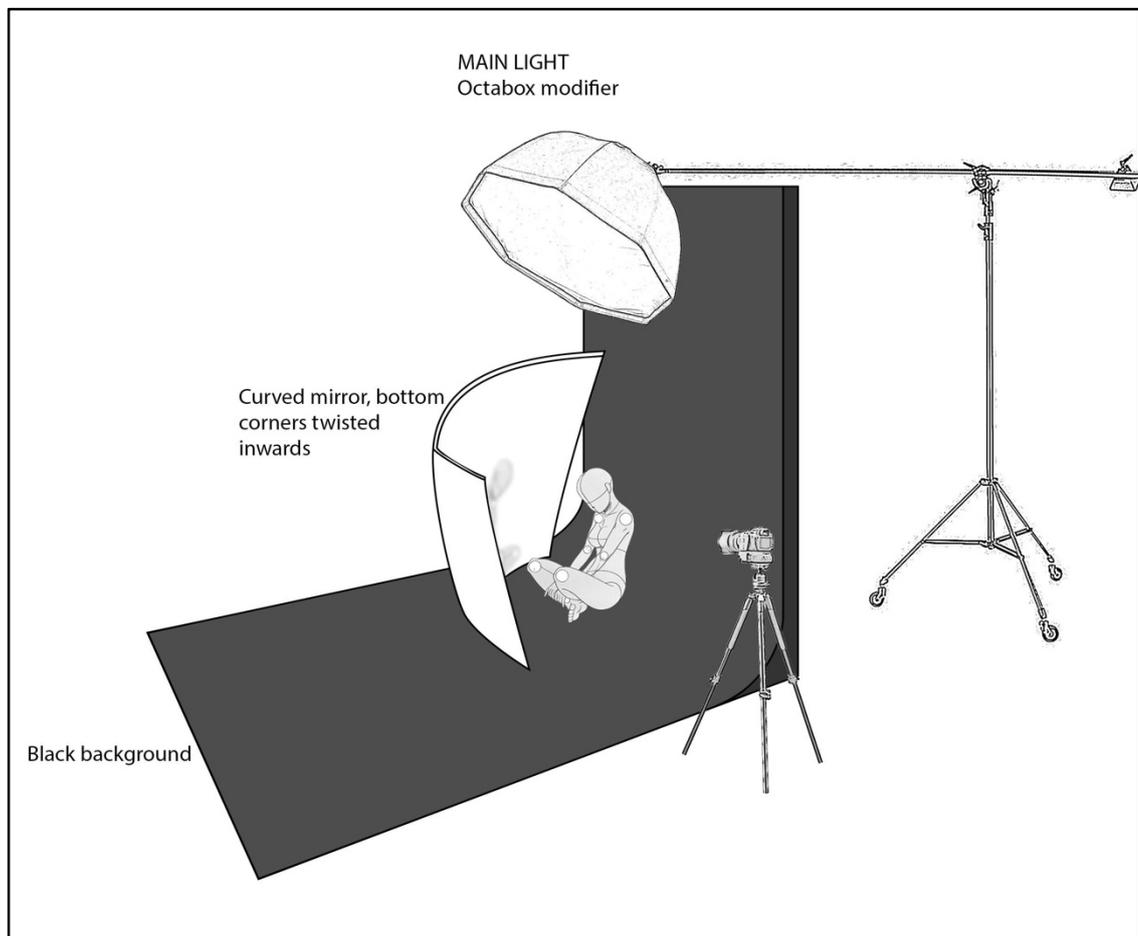
### Aim:

This experiment aligns the perspective of the lens to capture the specific point within the mirror at which the body overlaps when a mirror is bent at greater angles.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The camera is set up to photograph only the reflection. The mirror will be twisted inwards at the bottom.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The sitter is requested to stand in one position, leaning forwards, with buttocks protruded slightly to act as a connecting joint within the reflection. The reflection is unstable due to the fragility of the material surface. Changes can be effected by the slightest wobbles and subtle bends of the mirror, and the most minute adjustments in body posture and camera angle can achieve an entirely different imagery. Taking this instability into consideration yields imagery such as the results produced by this experiment. It is achieved through a careful, scrutinising collaboration between sitter and photographer, so as to move the body to specific locations in order to enter the junction at which the body begins to overlap in the reflection. This curvature configuration seems to produce more effective uncanny body results than the wavy configuration does. This is because this configuration contains both the characteristics of a deep curve that allows the reflection to fold in on itself, and the distorting effects of the twisted configuration. The next experiment will investigate this mirror curvature further, so as to defamiliarise and distort the body form.

## Experiment 77: Further experimentation with ray-tracing the junction of distorted body overlap — Seeing through the mirror

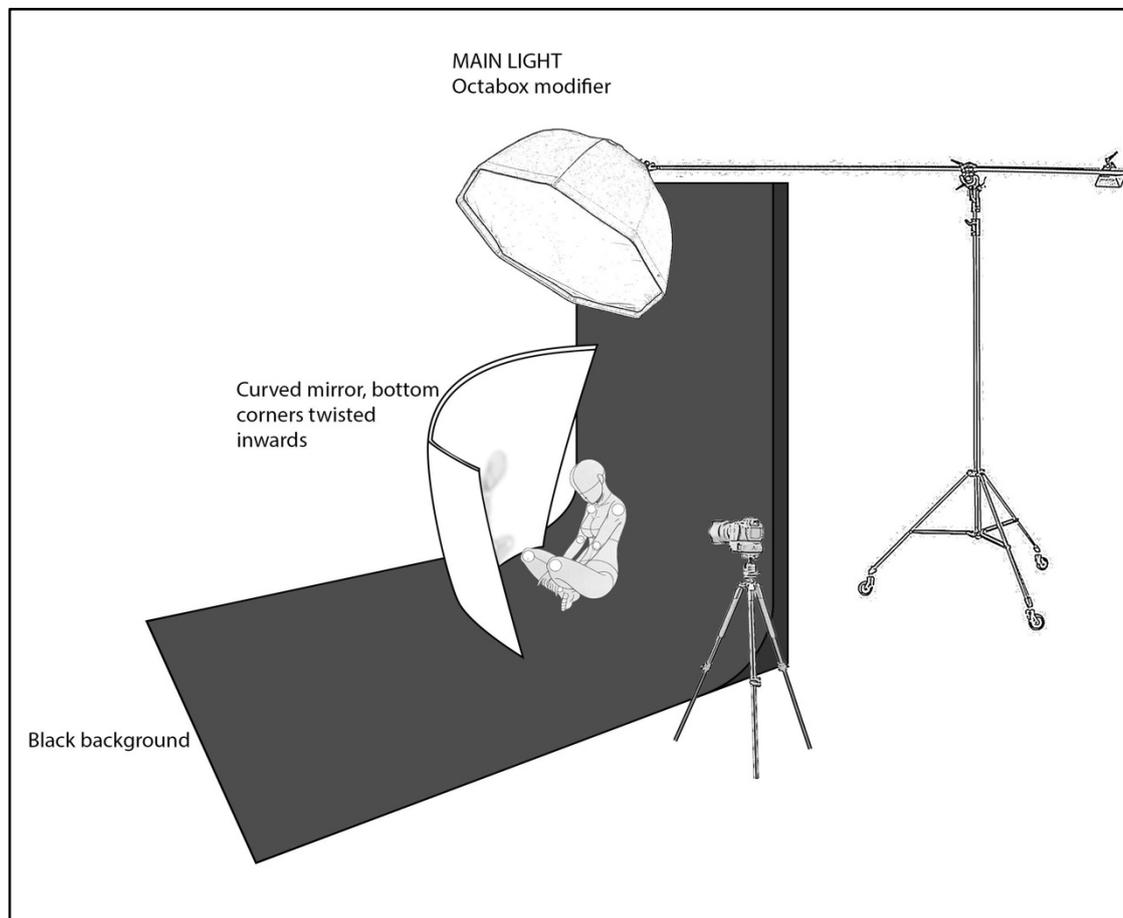
### Aim:

This experiment investigates further into ray-tracing the distorted body within the mirror reflection by alternating body positioning and camera perspective.

### Method:

Set up a 1.4m x 3m flexible mirror on ground level, propped up and rotated 45-degree angle to a black background, with the reflected surface facing the background. The mirror will be twisted inwards at the bottom. The camera positioning is subject to the positioning of the body in relation to the mirror and its reflected surface.

### Studio setup:



### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

ISO: 100

Aperture: F/16

White balance: Flash

Shutter speed: 1/100

### Lighting settings:

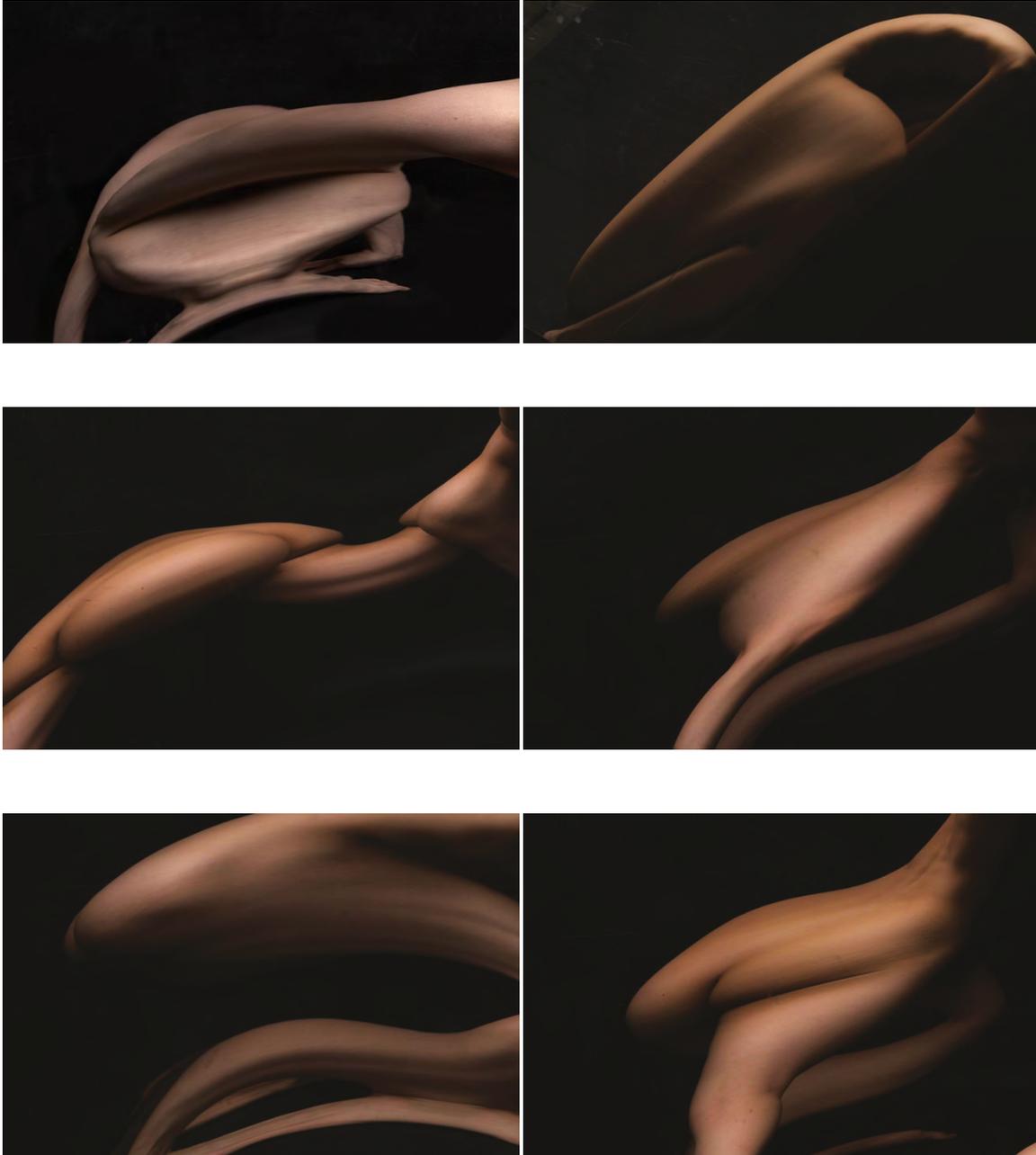
Main light: Large octabox modifier, above subject and aimed at the mirror reflection. Light is

angled so that the real body is just feathered out of the light rays.

**Post-production settings:**

Colour-correction in Adobe Photoshop Camera RAW. Corrected for neutral whites. Slight level adjustment is used to clip the shadows to obtain a pure black background.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

This series of photographs combines several facets of visual distortion developed over the course of these mirror experiments.

1. The curving mirror elongates and stretches the body, both in length and width. This can result in two things: the body is extended and is also rendered abstract.

2. The junction of overlapping reflection defamiliarises the body, and can further conceal components of the body that reflect individuality and identity.

In hindsight, the distorted bodies produced by placing a body in front of a mirror surface can be a calculated process, identifying specific angles at which the mirror is curved, and placing the body such that the reflected distortion can be ray-traced through the camera lens. The mirror, as a material surface, offers a unique perspective for the sitter to interact with. The sitter not only interacts physically with the mirror, they also react to it through its reflection, and respond accordingly to achieve a desired distorted effect that is visible from the perspective of the camera lens.

### 2.4.2 — Key Findings

Based on the photographic experiments investigating the curved mirror, I determine that three factors affecting the distortion of the body are:

1. Lens perspective.
2. Degree of mirror curvature.
3. Relative positioning of the body to the mirror.

Based on these factors, the body undergoes a process of distortion, specifically through the stretching and skewing of the reflection. All experiments conclude that any curvature of the mirror surface will result in a distortion of the reflection. Distortion and deformation of the body subject occurs when the mirror is curved regardless of the axes (*Experiment 67* and *Experiment 70*); however, defamiliarisation of the familiar is affected by the axes of mirror curvature. This can be modified by the positioning of the body (*Experiment 68*).<sup>53</sup>

An overview of Andre Kertész's mirror distortions provides comparable insights into available precedent methods of utilising the curved mirror. Whilst the effects demonstrated in some experiments conducted in this study bore certain similarities to Kertész, the specificities of achieving distortions of the body that invoke the uncanny are demonstrated here. As Naef describes, Kertész's curved mirrors allowed the body to 'exaggerate and condense' (J. Paul Getty Museum 1994, 74) in the process of its grotesque transformation. The experiments conducted here further outline the ability of the curved mirror not just to exaggerate and condense, but also to distort through actions of *folding* and *multiplying* the body. The folding effect can occur when two vertices of an adjoined edge are brought closer together (*Experiment 76* and *Experiment 77*); however, the folding of the subject is heavily influenced by the positioning of the body in relation to the mirror surface, as well as the perspective of the lens capturing the uncanny effect. Without these necessary requirements, the body will be photographed distorted in a destabilised and wavy state (*Experiment 74* and *Experiment 75*). The multiplying effect is most pronounced and distinguishable when introducing two points of curvature in the mirror surface (*Experiment 72* and *Experiment 73*).

The collaborative process of the three aforementioned factors reveals that it is not only the mirror that bends — so too does the body, as the degree of distortion is relative to the degree of

---

<sup>53</sup> See *Reflections* section in Experiment 63. Please refer to 2.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Flat Mirror Distortions

curvature. *Experiment 77* demonstrates how taking these three factors into consideration can yield visually distorted and defamiliarised bodies that are uncanny in appearance. In hindsight, the body in each highlighted experiment undergoes a visible transformation within the mirror — the familiar is not concealed, but rather, stretched to become unfamiliar, resulting in a more complex and incomprehensive body.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Distortions seldom occur unless intention is instilled in the body to actively seek its own distortion. The mirror, however, possesses a certain sentience that brings forth an uncanny reflection. The mirror is a device of paradox — it determines that if the presence of the uncanny does not occupy the mirror, then a distortion cannot exist. This is strangely accurate, as experiments show the mirror in various instances that reveal a reality in which the familiar is both present and absent in the reflection. This idea of the uncanny mirror and the act of distorting and defamiliarising the body is interrelated with Foucault's notion of heterotopia. There exists within the mirror a space that is both real yet unreal, but ultimately, as Foucault clarifies, is the reason for such a heterotopia; the mirror enables the space to 'exist within reality' (Foucault 1986, 24).

On the one hand, the flat mirror experiments reveal a superposition when the virtual reality (reflection) merges with reality, procuring a body compound that both exists and does not truly exist. It is through this superposition that a distorted body that is strangely real, yet oddly unfamiliar, arises within the lens. In the case of *Experiment 64*, the distortion effect is brought about by the mirror severing and reconstructing the absent body with an unreal body. This technique not only confirms the ability of the mirror to accurately reflect the subject, it also asserts the mirror as a physical device that can fragment the body. Further, the technique renders the body perceptibly unfamiliar. As in other instances of flat mirror experiments, the distortion is brought about by the tendency to disconnect the real body from its virtual image to enhance the sense of unfamiliarity when viewing the image.

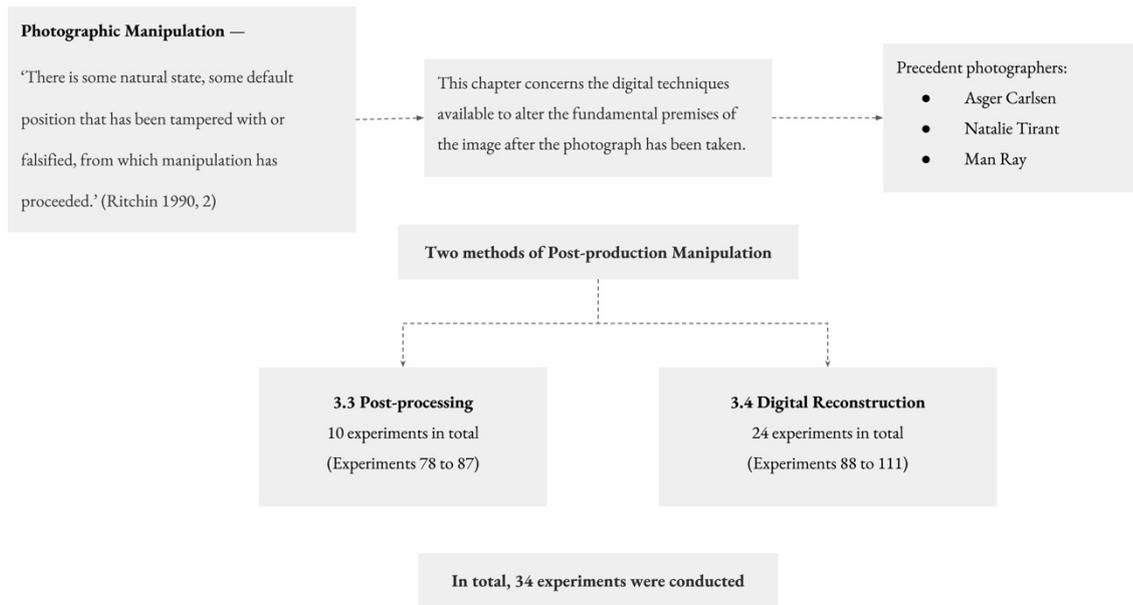
On the other hand, my experiments with the curved mirror illustrate a technique that visually defies the congenital nature of the mirror as a device of accurate reproduction. Filling the entire frame of the image with the curved mirror reflection establishes an unstable space that is constantly alternating and does not offer a specific reality. Placing the body within this space renders it into an abstraction. The results of the experiments with the curved mirror are vastly different to the experiments in the flat mirror. The curved mirror finds the body undergoing significant transformations — the familiar being stretched into incomprehensible states (Experiment 67), while bodies are shown folding in on themselves (Experiments 72, 73 and 76). The ephemeral dimension of the curved mirror offers complete freedom of abstracted body representation. Shape and body form can extend in any perceivable direction, whilst the unlimited arrangements of posture further heighten the defamiliarisation of the body within the

mirror reflection. Minute adjustments of the body posture and perspective are noted to have a major effect in the final image of distortion. Furthermore, as the results of the experiments reveal, distortions of the body are exponential with the increase in degree of mirror curvature. The results of this mirror technique echo Sabine Melchior-Bonnet's notes in her survey of the mirror's history: 'The mirror will always remain haunted by what is not found within it' (Melchior-Bonnet 2001, 273). No matter what state the mirror resides in, whether straight or curved, it cannot escape its reality as a device of defamiliarisation.

In discussing how the camera, the body, and physical elements interact to achieve visually distorted and defamiliarised human bodies, there is a persistent trait that inextricably links the techniques of concealment and the mirror together; that is, how each result undergoes processing and further correction in the production and post-production process. For the next chapter, I will focus on the latter: how post-production facilitates as well as operates as a primary instigator for the visualisation of distortions, and how it can be utilised to achieve uncanny body forms.

# Chapter 3: Falsified Truths: Uncanny Distortions in Post-Production Manipulation

## 3.1 Chapter Overview



## 3.2 Introduction

Photography, by nature, is a manipulative medium. The adage that the photographic medium can accurately index reality is a questionable one. The opposite to this statement multiplies with the emergence of digital technologies that render the photograph highly susceptible to manipulation. Geoffrey Batchen (1994), in a discussion on the artifice of photography, argued that the essence of traditional photographs has never been an authentic representation of reality, and that ‘photographers intervene in every photograph they make’ (48). This statement in itself has its uncanny signature in all the experiments produced to date for this research. A recurring theme of this research, after all, is the ability and intent of the photographer to generate distortions that do not visually conform with normative perceptions of reality, requiring active participation in selective representation to enable visual interpretations of the distorted and defamiliarised human body.

This chapter will emphasise the manipulative efforts that occur after capturing the photograph, bearing in mind that distorted and defamiliarised bodies are manipulated not only in the capturing of the photograph, but also in the editing process afterwards. Thus, in accordance

with the underlying theme of this research, I deviate from the route followed so far in this last chapter. In contrast to the other chapters, which dealt with the production of the photograph, this chapter will investigate the realm beyond the photographic image: photographic manipulation through digital post-production.

The chapter focuses on manipulation in the digital medium, studying the qualitative changes in manipulated bodies through the predominant use of the digital graphical software *Adobe Photoshop*. Manipulation in the digital medium is an evolved process adapted from traditional darkroom manipulation. Much of the technical aspects of darkroom manipulation are embedded and improved upon in digital platforms for manipulation like *Photoshop*.

I will refer to *Photoshop* as both a noun and its popularised meaning as a verb, which is used to describe the action of altering a photograph digitally through the software. The digital method is used rather than traditional darkroom processes because it expands on the various possibilities of manipulation, as the experiments will reveal. With reference to Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (1977), Fred Ritchin (2009) states that the 'digital destabilises the photograph as a faithful recording of the visible, its new flexibility opens it up to other approaches that previously may have been quickly rejected or deemed impossible' (53). *Photoshop* enables photographers, in particular those working in fashion and mass media to create the perfect ideal body. In contrast to the extensive use of *Photoshop* in fashion and mass media to create the perfect body, my research focuses on using the digital tools in *Photoshop* to distort and defamiliarise the body resulting in disfigurement and deformity.

Most importantly, this chapter adheres to the idea of the creator and the will to manipulate and exert control over the image. In discussing Heidegger's notions of our being uncanny, Katherine Withy (2009) suggests that 'Nonsense cannot be made sense of without destroying it, just as the uncanny cannot be known or made familiar without destroying it' (8). This notion goes hand in hand with the technique of photographic manipulation, especially when taking into consideration the four forms of photographic manipulation that Dino Brugioni proposes:<sup>54</sup> the removal of details, the inclusion of details, photomontage, and false captioning (Brugioni, 1999). Here, I condense these four identified forms into one method, which involves the technique of digital reconstruction. I also propose an additional, largely overlooked, method of distortion —

---

<sup>54</sup> Brugioni refers to the term photo *fakery* instead, however this terminology refers to the negative connotations pertaining to the action of *manipulation*, i.e. to *falsify* or *tamper*.

post-processing — which is a post-production process that has existed since the conception of photography. While there are several more tools and processes of digital manipulation, they either fall under the umbrella of the two main methods I propose for this chapter, or are unsuitable for the distortion and defamiliarisation of the human body.

Subchapter 4.2 — Post-processing investigates the method of altering the colour and luminance of a photograph to alter contours and form in order to distort the visual representation of the body. Of the 10 experiments conducted for this method, four are highlighted and discussed to elaborate how varying adjustments to the photograph can alter the way a body is perceived.

Subchapter 4.3 — Digital Reconstruction deals with the method of modifying the body beyond its normative form, and investigating various approaches, either by addition, subtraction, or an alteration of a component to a nonconforming element that invokes, not only confusion in the viewer, but also the inconceivable, collapsing perceptions of the human body. Of the 24 experiments conducted for this method, three experiments are discussed to highlight three particular tools used to distort and defamiliarise the human body. Three further experiments are elaborated on to outline how the combined application of these three tools can reconstruct the uncanny body in the form of composites.

### 3.3 Post-Processing

Traditionally, for processing a photograph after it has been captured and developed, the available options are: cleaning/dust removal, dodging and burning, colour correction, airbrushing, and cosmetic retouching. All these methods involve a form of alteration to the photograph. The following experiments dealing with post-processing utilise the method to deconstruct the reality of the photographed human body.



Figure 106, Source image for *Experiment 79*

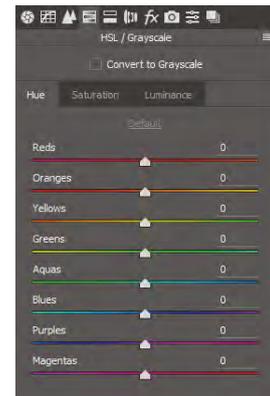


Figure 107, Screenshot of HSL/Grayscale tab inside *Adobe Camera Raw*

Figure 106<sup>55</sup> borrows the image from a previous experiment<sup>56</sup> as a source image to investigate perceptions of the human body when digitally altered to a monochromatic image. This image is edited in Adobe Camera Raw, a RAW image processing plugin capable of making adjustments to an image captured in RAW image format.<sup>57</sup> The luminance values (Figure 107) are the main sliders used for adjusting the colour of skin. While skin colour pigmentation of various individuals is varied and interspersed (Angelopoulou 1999), the colour of skin can be organised into three colours according to Newton's colour spectrum: red, orange and yellow. This is confirmed in Figure 108,<sup>58</sup> where adjustments to the red, orange and yellow sliders resulted in visible alterations to skin luminancy, whereas the remaining colours — green, aqua, blue, purple, magenta<sup>59</sup> — did not affect the skin.

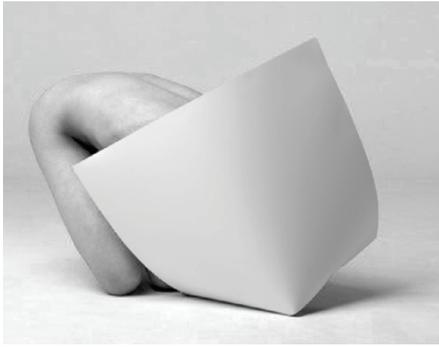
<sup>55</sup> Experiment 79. Please refer to 3.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Post-Processing.

<sup>56</sup> Experiment 54.

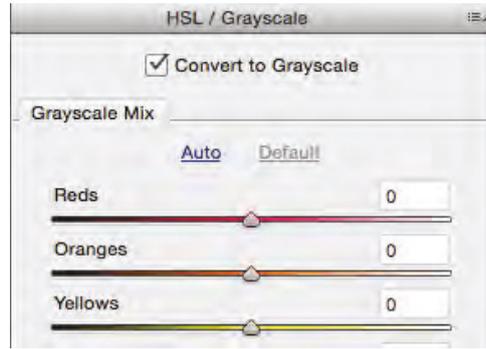
<sup>57</sup> Selecting the camera image output to RAW when photographing (each camera brand maintains their own proprietary RAW image format and extension, e.g. Nikon = .nef, Canon = .cr2) allows uncompressed data to be stored in the image file, providing more information and allowing finer control over post-processing in graphic software.

<sup>58</sup> Experiment 79 [n 57]

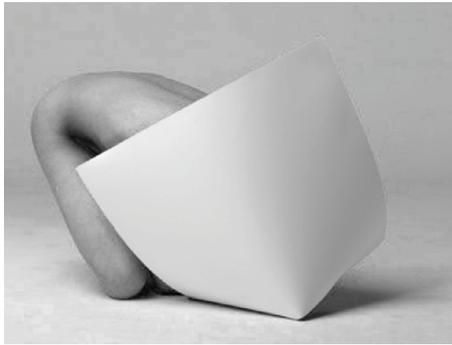
<sup>59</sup> In certain cases, when the individual has a sustained bruise or other kind of skin blemish that has a red-pinkish hue, then adjusting the magenta slider influences the skin.



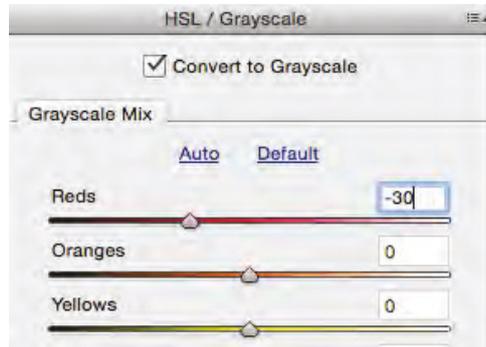
(a)



(b)



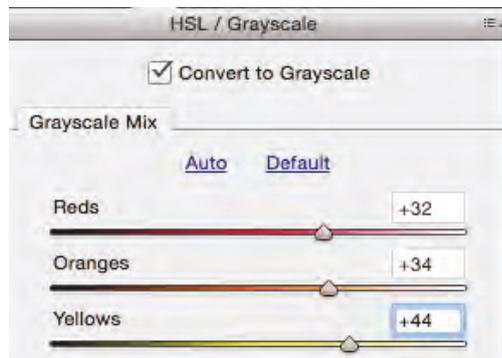
(c)



(d)



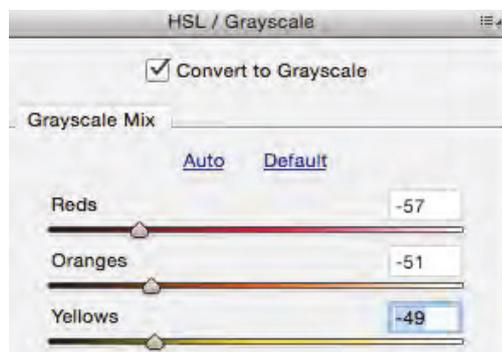
(e)



(f)



(g)



(h)

Figure 108: Lin Wei, Experiment 79: Influences of modifying colour luminance in monochromatic image, 2018

Figure 108(a) is the control experiment. Figure 108(b) shows the sliders set to default value after converting the image to grayscale. Adjusting the reds finds the selective control of the darker region; the oranges represents adjustments to the mid-tones, while the yellows serve as the highlights. The red slider is lowered for Figure 108(c), creating a stark contrast tone as the shadows are darkened, while midtones and skin highlights remain the same as shown in Figure 108(d). Considering the notion that red, orange and yellow values represent shadows, midtones and highlights respectively, keeping the values within close proximity to each other results in a blending of tones. Figure 108(e) relatively increases the red, orange and yellow. The values for Figure 108(e) are represented in Figure 108(f), where the yellow is increased significantly, while the red and orange values are increased to a value within close range of the yellows, resulting in a perceptually pale and white, almost ghostly body. Figure 108(h) shows that further adjustments in the negative direction manipulate the skin into a tanned and dark pigmentation. In each result of this experiment, the consequence of manipulating the luminance of separate colour values finds the reality of the body in fluctuation. In one scenario — Figure 108(e) — the body no longer maintains its healthy tone, transformed into a sickly pale body. In addition, the minute adjustments to the red, orange and yellow values provide the body with seemingly virtuous and unblemished skin.

Conversion into grayscale provides avenues for the manipulation of luminance and consequently affects the perception of the body in the image. On discussing how to read a photograph, David Finn (1994) indicates that ‘color photographs are more “real” because they are closer to what we actually see’ (17). *Experiment 79* appeals to this notion, in that colour contributes a significant portion to the reality of an image. The first effect that arises from a conversion to grayscale is the reduction of reality in the image. Blemishes in the skin tone can be easily expunged from the image, while the second effect — adjustments to the luminance values of skin colour — alters body characteristics which can re-align race and identity. The distortion manifests in the form of an uncanny perception of the represented body. As Edgar Huang (1999) points out, ‘examining the negative (if possible) will immediately betray the manipulation’ (6). Of course, for a photograph’s authenticity not to be brought into question, manipulations must not reveal its original reality. That is, unless a discrepancy of the reality or the familiar is intentionally brought into the frame to advocate for the rise of an uncanny experience. The normative body in *Experiment 79* is disrupted by the presence of verisimilitude that is achieved through the manipulation of the colour luminance values. What is evidenced in the photograph is a human body that is strangely fair, strangely dark, strangely blemished or pigmented.

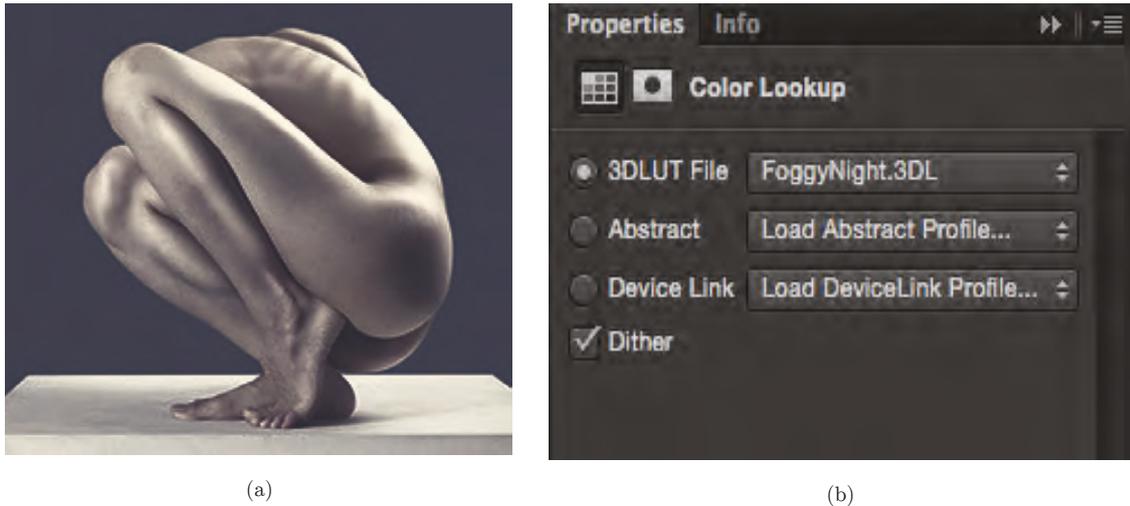


Figure 109: Lin Wei, *Experiment 83: Observing patterns of colour change and colour perception through the application of Look-Up Tables*, 2018

Suppose that colour alteration in grayscale is indeed a method for distorting representations of the body; then it is necessary for the successive step to further consider manipulation of skin tone in the colour spectrum to assess for potential influences of distortion. A previous experiment<sup>60</sup> is borrowed for the foundation of *Experiment 83* (Figure 109)<sup>61</sup> to alter the colour values of the image by selectively sampling a group of colour values within a specific channel in the image, and to alter those values into a different set of colour values, resulting in a colour shift. A Look-Up Table (LUT)<sup>62</sup> is used as the determinant method to visualise pigment discolouration and how it elicits different visibilities of the body. Figure 109(b) shows one preset used for *Experiment 83*. Although the image has not achieved peak de-saturation or grayscale, the colour of skin is strongly modified from its original fleshly skin hue to a high-contrast, cyan-tinted appearance that presents the body as not human, but more metallic and objectified. The characteristic of skin is no longer evident, and is replaced by a grainy and metallic-textured surface. While the nature of humanness has dropped as a result of this colour conversion, the results bear resemblance to prior results in an experiment<sup>63</sup> conducted in the first chapter, 1.3: *Posing the Solitary Body*. The skin, however, is modified to a greater degree in *Experiment 83*. An observation can be established based on a comparison between the two experiments, *Experiment 83* (Figure 109) and *Experiment 4* (Figure 110): defamiliarisation occurs during strong shifts in skin representation; the stronger the modification, the further the body and its

<sup>60</sup> Experiment 10.

<sup>61</sup> Experiment 83. Please refer to 3.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Post-Processing.

<sup>62</sup> A preset formula that determines and modifies specific colour values based on the original source value.

<sup>63</sup> Experiment 4. Please refer to 1.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Posing the Solitary Body.

situated environment departs from reality. In the context of digital manipulation, alteration of colour must be within the range of being slightly imperceptible and not too far altered from its source values, otherwise the balance between the familiar and unfamiliar will sway and the uncanny experience falters.

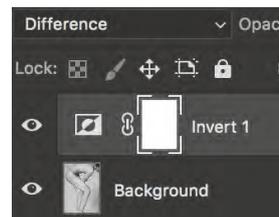


Figure 110: Lin Wei, Experiment 4: Examination of skin texture and effects of a coloured background

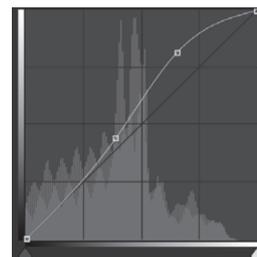
While I draw upon this conjecture, that is not to say that the effects of such skin-colour modification are entirely insufficient to enable a distorted and defamiliarised human body. Digital graphical software such as *Adobe Photoshop* offer greater exertion and control over the manipulation of RGB channels, hues and saturation (Lehr, Loss, Teeling, and Gown 1999). Furthermore, the selective use of an LUT in *Experiment 83* represents post-production capabilities to perform automated adjustments without subjective intervention (Knochel, 2011). While this is paradoxical, as the values of an LUT are determined by its creator, the fact that the LUT can be exercised in any photograph establishes the idea that the photograph will be subjected to objective distortion and defamiliarisation. For *Experiment 83*, this distortion through skin modification represents a profound shift in attention towards the body, which is no longer a familiar human but a familiar effigy that bears qualities emphasising the humanness of the body-as-sculptural-object.

Colour alteration of the conditions of human skin through the photographic image is not the only post-processing method that infers distortion through post-production manipulation. The *form* is a persisting characteristic of the body that is examined, and is once again at the heart of consideration of how post-processing methods can induce distortions and defamiliarisations of the body form. While it is substantiated that post-processing predominantly affects colour, alteration of supplementary colour has also been observed to increase or decrease the perceptible size of the subject in the image. Take, for example, the result in the aforementioned *Experiment 79* (Figure 108(e); here, the body loses depth and contrast and becomes flat when the reds, oranges and yellows converge at similar values (Figure 108(f)).

This perceptible change can similarly occur in post-processing methods involving high-contrast manipulations. One such method is the *Sabatier effect*. The *Sabatier effect* is unconventional in the sense that the process reverses the dark and light tones; the edge of the object is emphasised and is highly contrasted to the contents it encloses. A thin clear line also comes into effect at the edge of the subject, which is, as Lynne Warren (2005) elaborates, ‘due to the desensitizing effect of the action of light on the developed highlights, preventing the edge of this region from developing further’ (1459).



1) Invert adjustment with *Difference* blending mode



2) Curves adjustment

Figure 111: Lin Wei, Experiment 86: Blending modes — Digital Solarisation, 2018

The Sabatier effect originates from within the traditional darkroom, however it can be similarly visualised digitally in Photoshop.<sup>64</sup> Figure 111<sup>65</sup> reveals the result of the effect. The highlights are observed to be in a naturally perceived state based on the laws of light; however, the logical locations of shadows are inverted and appear as highlights. This is most noticeable within the pelvic region; however, the effect is also evident in other areas such as the chin and the bicep region. Furthermore, a solid black line creates a perimeter around the body, while a white line is additionally generated as a border. Logic is in disarray, while the familiar perceptions of light and shadow are inverted, and thus the body undergoes a process of defamiliarisation. John

<sup>64</sup> Photoshop offers a solarisation filter within the *Filter > Stylize* submenu, however it only produces a simplistic effect, cannot be controlled, and does not service the effect of solarisation competently. Therefore, a manual approach is required.

<sup>65</sup> Experiment 86. Please refer to 3.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Post-Processing.

Wiley (2014), in his examination of the Sabatier effect, notes that the photograph is ‘exposed to light midway through the development process, which reverses some of the light and dark tones in order to defamiliarize the subject’ (3) In *Experiment 86*, defamiliarisation occurs when natural perceptions of light, shadow and form are altered due to the paradox of the effect: it neither inverts nor faithfully represents the reality of the body, yet it displays all components of the body, albeit in a very peculiar manner. Additionally, it is observed that the components of the body are separated by the sharp contrasting lines generated by the effect. While the effect seeks to defamiliarise the body, the retention of form retains the familiar in the photograph.

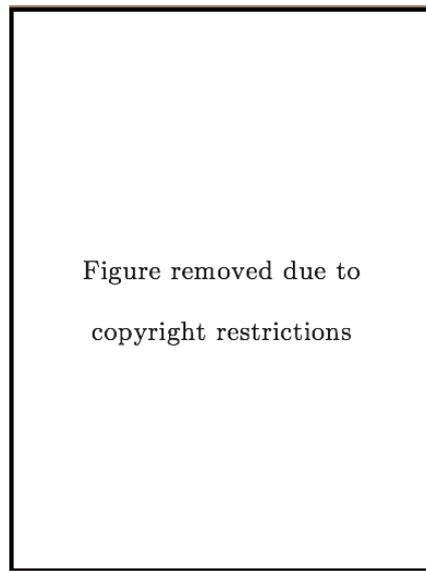


Figure 112: Man Ray, *Solarization (Nude torso)*, 1947

To further illustrate how form and contour are altered using the Sabatier effect, it is appropriate to briefly review the important characteristics of Man Ray’s experimentation with the effect (Figure 112), which he refers to as solarisations. In an examination of Ray’s solarisations as one technique of several in surrealist photography, David Wilson (2008) emphasises that solarisations allowed Ray to,

strip his photographs of their reality, and endow them with a peculiar tension that objectified the subject and undermined the immediacy of identification, making the photo into an image which confronted the observer with far more differences than similarities with the original model. (4)

The human body as subject did not escape Ray’s experimentation with solarisations. Images such as *Solarization (Nude torso)* (Figure 112) demonstrate Ray’s expert use of the effect to outline the contour of the body. Combined with flat lighting, solarisation enabled the body to

appear as a cut-out. Ray's over-exposure of the photograph during the developing process (Wilson, 2008) renders the texture of skin mute, and further blends the body into the background.



Figure 113: Man Ray, *Primat de la matière sur la pensée*, 1929



Figure 114: Graphic representation of feathered areas in Man Ray's photograph, *Primat de la matière sur la pensée*, 1929

An assessment of other solarisations by Ray further reveals the process of selective solarisation, in which the solarisation is strategically placed to defamiliarise certain areas of the photograph. In Ray's *Primat de la matière sur la pensée* (1929) (Figure 113), the top right half is discernibly exposed correctly during the developing process, while the majority of the bottom left half is submerged in the technique of solarisation (Figure 114). This instance of selective solarisation enables the photograph to experience both a reality and an illusory state. A portion of the body remains inherently familiar and indexed correctly, while the latter portion becomes abstracted and unfamiliar. While the body has achieved a paradoxical state, the conditions of lighting and body posture achieve familiar, yet unfamiliar bodies, that are non-repulsive and reconcilable. Ray's solarisation of bodies precipitates the uncanny through defamiliarisation of form. In particular, in *Solarization (Nude torso)* (1947), the female body transcends to a form that bears a slight metaphorical representation of the phallus. For *Primat de la matière sur la pensée* (1929), the body conglomerates with its shadow, extending the form of the body beyond its corporeality. This act of subversion is Ray's secondary intention in his experimentation with the effect, while his first is solarisation as an experimentation with pure aesthetic that stems from gaining control of the technical fault inherent in the creation of the effect (Gershon, 1991).

Although I posit that lighting and body posture are important factors in solarisation to defamiliarise body forms, these are conditions set within the scope of Ray's technological capabilities, which are constrained to the analogue medium. For a distortion to sustain the uncanny, the process of defamiliarisation must arrest an element of the body in order to present

an uncanny sensation. Ray endows his solarisation with visualisations of form. However, one attribute that does not inhabit his solarisations is the presence of colour. The importance of colour as an anchor point of the familiar is reflected throughout the course of this research, and is thus another point to consider here in invoking greater familiarity in these images of defamiliarised human bodies. Furthermore, the consideration of colour in solarisations acknowledges the paradox of the presence of absence in the fetish (Malt, 2004) and in photography (Iversen, 2007). Malt (2004) describes the fetish as something that ‘stands in for something that was never there in the first place’ (134); it is a notion that conjures the uncanny experience, in which the viewer must come to terms with the fetishistic image. On the other hand, the presence of absence refers to the presence of an absent reality within the photographic image (Iversen, 2007).



Figure 115: Lin Wei, Experiment 87: Application of Colour in Digital Solarisation, 2018

As a counterpoint to Ray’s limitation by the analogue medium, colour is re-applied to the solarisation in *Experiment 87* (Figure 115)<sup>66</sup> to further extend the ability of solarisation to defamiliarise and distort the body into an uncanny state. The base image<sup>67</sup> is selected for its clearly depicted form and also to highlight the application of colour to emphasise the uncanny.

---

<sup>66</sup> Experiment 87. Please refer to 3.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Post-Processing.

<sup>67</sup> Experiment 27.

Upon applying a digital solarisation to the image, the base image is duplicated and placed on top of the solarisation with a Screen blending mode applied to subtly bring back the colour of skin. While it is suggested by Saskia Sassen (2011) that a black and white photographs ‘...creates distance and thereby unsettles meaning’ (438), the retention and sight of colour is the point of reconciliation, by which the anxiety of the viewer settles and is therefore unperturbed by the distortion. The addition of colour to an otherwise black and white image that is neither positive nor negative provides two outcomes. The first is the visually uncanny colour of the skin, which leads to the second outcome: the strengthened materialisation of the fetishistic image through the representation of the phallus. While the original photograph repurposed the body to represent the phallus, the phallic form is ever more real in the paradoxical image which solarisation attempts to defamiliarise. Not only does the presence of colour highlight the familiar within the unfamiliar, it enables the solarised body to presence even more as an uncanny entity. Colour is therefore working in tandem with the presence of form to invoke the uncanny in the image. This method of post-processing is thus an operation to make up for a shortcoming, and further instil the essence of the familiar into the solarisation that seeks to defamiliarise.

The following section details the ten experiments conducted for this subchapter. The experiments follow a structure of observing: the post-processing capabilities in post-production, from conversion to black and white; variable luminance in skin tone in both colour and monochrome; adjustments to skin tone and hue in both monochrome and colour; and how these adjustments affect the representation of the body. Lastly, the experiments shift to resolve an experiment that utilises post-processing to affect structural form.

### 3.3.1 — Photographic Experiments on Post-Processing

Experiment 78: Conversion from colour to black and white — observing perceived differences of monochromatic bodies

Experiment 79: Influences of modifying colour luminancy in monochromatic image

Experiment 80: Influences of modifying hue and saturation of skin tone

Experiment 81: Converting image to colour negative

Experiment 82: Black and white negative conversion

Experiment 83: Observing patterns of colour change and colour perception through the application of Look-Up Tables

Experiment 84: Increasing contrast/high-tonal photograph

Experiment 85: Increasing contrast/high-tonal photograph with adjustments to colour saturation

Experiment 86: Blending modes — Digital Solarisation

Experiment 87: Application of Colour in Digital Solarisation

## Experiment 78: Conversion from colour to black and white — observing perceived differences of monochromatic bodies

---

### Aim:

The aim of this experiment is to convert a colour photograph of the body into black and white and observe the effects of perceiving the human body when in the state of monochromacy.

### Method:

Convert a JPEG file in the plugin *Adobe Camera Raw* using Convert to Grayscale”

### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e

Focal length: 50mm

Aperture: F/11

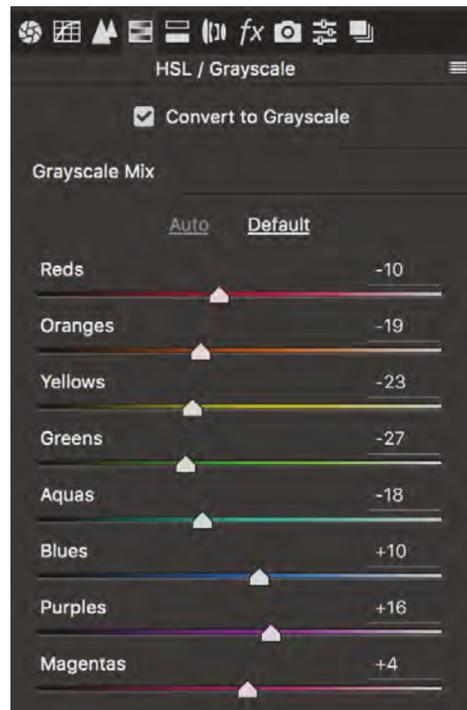
Shutter speed: 1/160

ISO: 100

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

### Post-production settings:



**Results:****Reflections:**

One of the main advantages of post-production methods utilising digital media and technologies is the ability to convert colours to monochrome at will to varying degrees. The conversion from colour to black and white in this experiment results in a desaturation of the body's skin and also the background, albeit slightly difficult to recognise, given the neutral white tones within the original colour image. I find that colour is an over-complication of thought in the photograph, while the monochrome is a simplification of subject matter. Such simplification diversifies the image and opens up the potential for abstract thought. Saskia Sassen suggests that a black and white photograph '...creates distance and thereby unsettles meaning' (2011, 438). There are certain truths to this idea; the visual can be obscured and lines blurred between objects in the photograph, causing uncertainty to arise in the image. This notion is further heightened when the subject has a high contrast, or is at the opposite end of the grayscale spectrum to other objects or background in the image.

There are certain advantages to retaining the colour of skin in the photograph, such as the retention of familiarity in the image, as well as a representation that exudes vitality in the subject — the body. In comparison, the monochrome replacement depletes the body of its life. Familiarity is instantly reduced as a result. More importantly, from a visual perspective, the body becoming grayscale represents the merging of subject and background, as the subject operates in the same spectrum as the neutral off-white background. Focus is no longer directly on the body; thus its distortion is difficult to ascertain. This can be perceived as a beneficial result, as the distortion is subdued and less abrupt for the viewer than its colour counterpart. The next experiment will observe changes in body perception through the alteration of colour luminancy, specifically in the skin tones.

## Experiment 79: Influences of modifying colour luminancy in monochromatic image

---

### Aim:

This experiment investigates the digital application of altering lighting effects on the body and how it creates distorting effects on the body.

### Method:

Convert a JPEG file in the application *Adobe Photoshop* and adjust the red and yellow sliders in the Black and White adjustment layer to achieve a separation between subject and background.

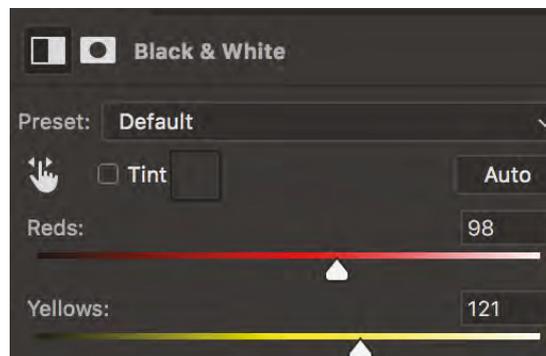
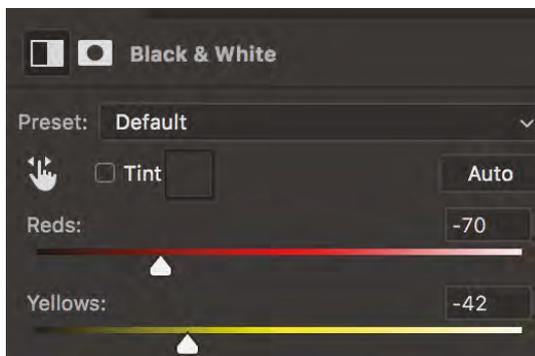
### Camera settings:

Nikon D800e  
Focal length: 50mm  
Aperture: F/11  
Shutter speed: 1/160  
ISO: 100

### Lighting settings:

Main light: Large softbox, on camera left, aimed at the subject.

### Post-production settings:



**Results:**

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

**Reflections:**

Adjusting the red and yellow sliders in the Black and White adjustment layer results in a shift in colour luminancy. The higher the number, the lighter the 'colour' (which is converted to monochrome) while the lower the number, the darker the colour. This digital process is similar to contrast control in the darkroom, albeit with much finer control over the result. Given that the reds are a naturally darker colour than yellow, the red slider is a controller of darker tones in the image. This naturally assigns the yellow slider as the modifier of the bright tones in the image.

In Figure (a), the reds are lowered while the yellow slider is lifted up, resulting in a higher contrast image. The muscles are thus more defined. In Figure (b), the red slider is lifted while the yellow slider is lowered drastically, creating a flatter image where separation between bright and dark tones is harder to distinguish. Presenting the body in this fashion makes the muscles and body components harder to distinguish, with the outer conformation of the body and the intersecting lines as parameters to establish the subject as a human body. Further tests with the sliders find that lifting and lowering both sliders simultaneously alters the perceived colour of skin. In Figure (c), the body appears lighter with fairer skin, while in Figure (d), the body representation is altered such that a person of ebony skin tone is supposedly displayed in the photograph. Thus, I find that altering luminancy of skin tone achieves distortion of the body subject. Of further note is that reducing the red slider reveals more blemishes and imperfections in the skin. This is favourable in presenting characteristics of the skin in the photograph to convey familiarity.

Monochrome images have a certain one-dimensionality to them. The next experiment will see how the modification of these colour values affects perception and representation of the body when operating in a colour space as opposed to a grayscale image. Working with colour, however, imposes two additional values that are modifiable — hue and saturation.

## Experiment 80: Influences of modifying hue and saturation of skin tone

---

### **Aim:**

This experiment investigates the digital manipulation of skin colour tone by adjusting the values of hue, saturation and luminance in a RAW photo processor.

### **Method:**

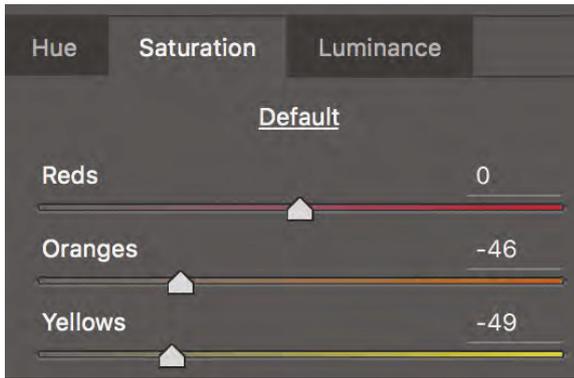
Edit the RAW file in the RAW processor *Adobe Camera Raw* and adjust the hue, saturation and luminance sliders in the HSL/Grayscale panel. Focus is on the red, orange and yellow sliders in this assessment of skin tone.

### **Precedent:**

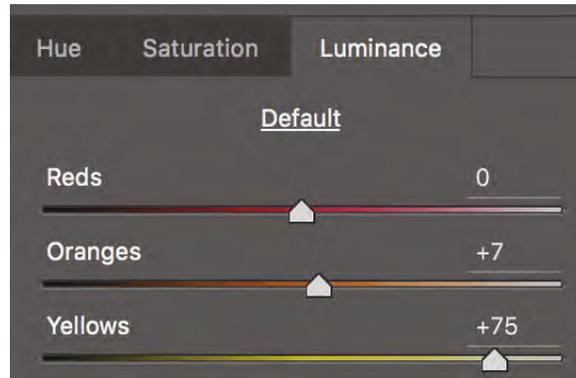


Source image

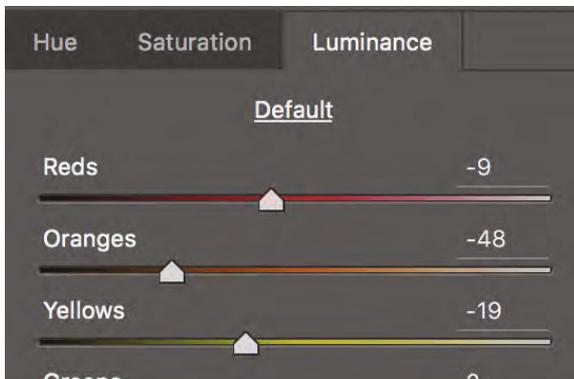
Post-production settings:



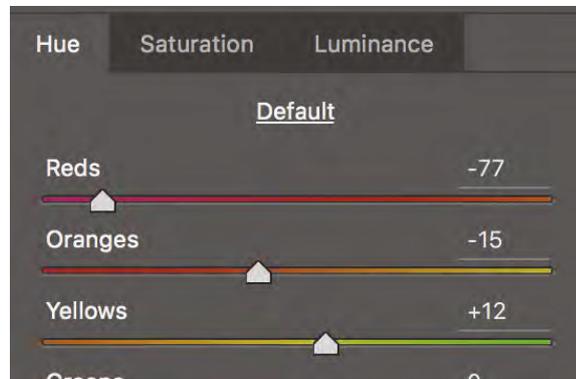
(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

**Results:**

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)

**Reflections:**

For this experiment I opted for Adobe Camera RAW, given its powerful formulas, calculations and accuracies in adjusting various components of the image. There are three main RAW photo processors on the market that are favourable for photographers: Adobe Camera RAW, Capture One Pro and Adobe Lightroom. Capture One Pro is favoured amongst commercial photographers (in particular, fashion) as it processes colours with a particular aesthetic, as well as giving the image an aesthetically pleasing colour contrast. Its editing abilities are limited, and from experience, colours such as pinks and yellows can generally be processed incorrectly. The options inside Adobe Lightroom are essentially a simplified version of Adobe Camera RAW, but packed with features for the prosumer.

Having clarified selection of processor, the manner in which the images are adjusted is essentially the same as in the previous experiment, except that the adjustments in the colour of skin are now visible, as opposed to the shift in grey tonality. In (a), the saturation sliders are

lowered, resulting in the skin appearing somewhat grey. This portrays the notion of a sickly and deathly body, which is remedied in (b) by increasing the luminance values, adding colour and life back into the skin. At the same time, making this adjustment results in (b) having lighter skin. To contrast with this, (c) reduces the luminance values and further desaturates the reds, oranges and yellows to produce ebony skin. On the other hand, (d) makes adjustments within the “hue” tab, pushing the warm tones towards a redder tone (red to magenta, orange to red), resulting in the appearance of sunburnt skin.

In 1994, David Finn suggested that ‘color photographs are more “real” because they are closer to what we actually see.’ (17) This is most likely due to the additional colour information available in the image, which can be comparatively aligned with reality. This experiment, however, alters such a reality through the adjustment of skin tones using the Hue/Saturation sliders in the adjustment layer. Each experiment finds the skin subjected to modification, with the result vastly different to its original appearance. Only the colour of skin is affected. Skin colour however, is one denominator of identity in a human body. The form in the photograph remains a recognisable human body. Perhaps the only way the body is defamiliarised when its skin tone is changed is when a pre-existing relationship exists between the viewer and the sitter. Otherwise, when viewing the bodies for the first time, one can assume the skin colour is natural and not subjected to modification.

The next experiment will seek to analyse how body representation is affected when viewing colour from an inverted perspective. This may require modifying the image into a negative.

## Experiment 81: Converting image to colour negative

### Aim:

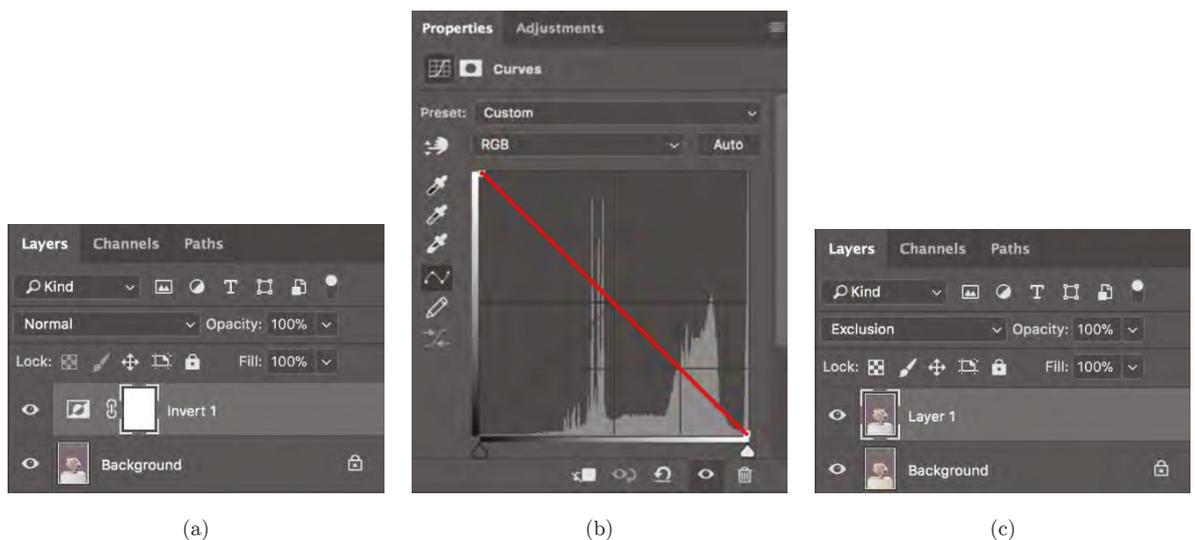
This experiment abstracts the colour of the body by modifying colours such that the body appears as if it were photographed on a colour negative film, in which the colour values are inverted.

### Method:

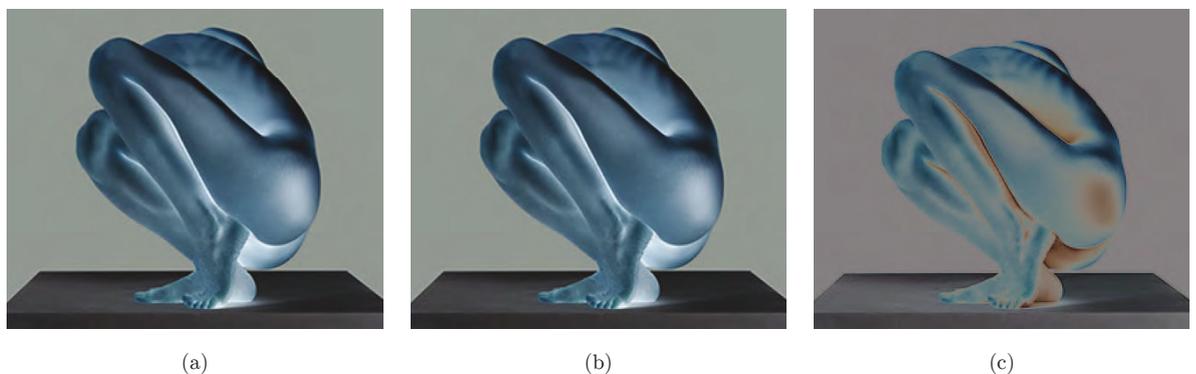
Three known methods achieve this:

- Preset adjustment: Open up photo in the application *Adobe Photoshop* and use the Invert adjustment layer.
- Curves: Open up photo in the application *Adobe Photoshop* and invert the diagonal curve in the Curves adjustment layer.
- Blending mode: Duplicate the photo layer in *Adobe Photoshop* and use the Blending Option — Exclusion.

### Post-production settings:



### Results:



### Reflections:

There are three methods to achieve this. The first two achieve the same result. While the third has somewhat similar results, it is not a true inversion; however, its effects are notably distinct

from the first two methods. As the colours are inverted in each photograph, the skin turns to a metallic blue, while highlights and shadows are simultaneously inverted to shadow and highlight respectively. The photo becomes abstracted as the skin is no longer represented as skin, with lines of bright light running along the path where the shadows previously are located. The third example has orange shadows replacing the highlights, as a result of lowered contrast when subtracting colour information. The final result from inverting the colour photograph appears unpolished and can be further refined. Perhaps this can be remedied by removing the abstracted colour by further converting it into a black and white photograph.

Given how the blue colour of flesh is far from corporeality, the next experiment will aim to translate this inverted photograph, or negative, into a grayscale space to remove the effects of colour, which may provide more clarity and insight into a defamiliarised body with clearer notions of familiarity.

## Experiment 82: Black and white negative conversion

---

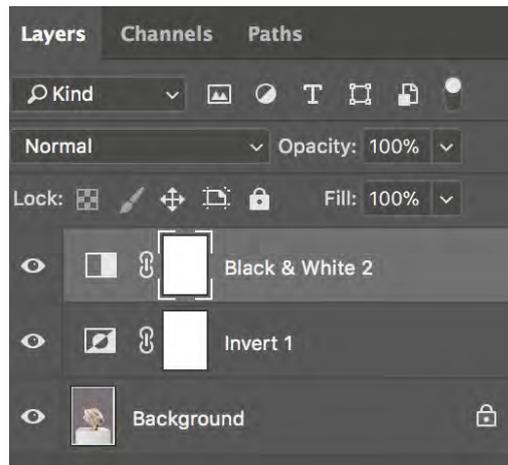
### Aim:

Progressing from the previous experiment, this experiment will examine the effects of the body when inverted in black and white.

### Method:

Further apply a Black and White adjustment layer following the steps in *Experiment 4* to procure an inverted colour image.

### Post-production settings:



### Results:



### Reflections:

When viewing the image as a black and white negative, the form of the body is much more defined than its colour predecessor, enabling the familiarity of the human to exist more strongly within the image. This monochromatic inversion furthermore defamiliarises the viewer's comprehension of image-viewing, as shadows are no longer shadows and highlights are no longer

highlights. This effect, however, is subtle. In viewing this image as a whole, the simplicity of the body form allows the viewer to forego the inverted lighting conditions in examining and determining the subject as a human body. The following experiment will revisit how changes in colour affected perception of the fleshly skin. In the next experiment, I will observe changes in perception based on the application of unfamiliar colour changes which defy normative perceptions.

## Experiment 83: Observing patterns of colour change and colour perception through the application of Look-Up Tables

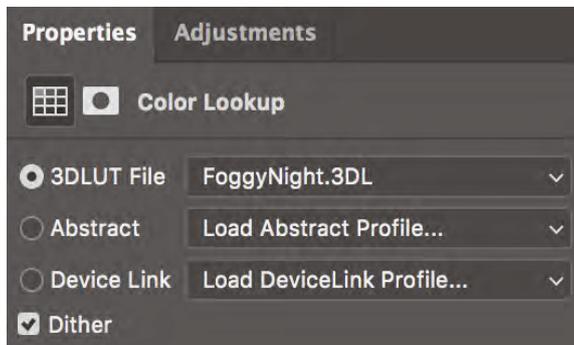
### Aim:

This experiment examines the perception of bodies through the modification of its RGB values.

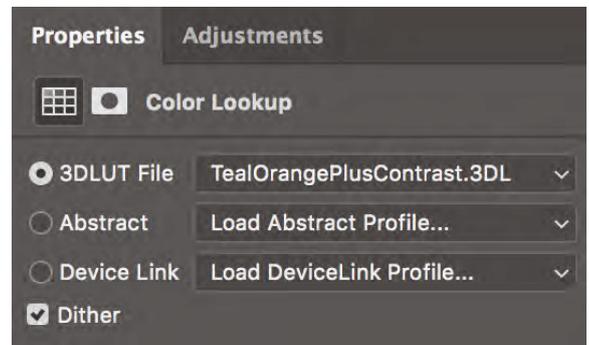
### Method:

For simplicity's sake, Look-Up Tables (LUT) are used, however finer manual control can be obtained by using all available sliders in Colour Balance, Hue/Saturation as well as the combination of various other adjustment layers to achieve a desired effect. LUTs are applied to the source image of the processed RAW image of the body. LUTs in their simplest form can be referred to as a filter that is applied on top of an image. This method is essentially colour-grading to achieve a particular aesthetic or look.

### Post-production settings:



(a)



(b)

### Results:



(a)



(b)

### Reflections:

Experimenting with various 3DLUT files yields a whole variety of different results. The available presets enable the source image to transform and appear as photographed on a

particular film stock, which subsequently modifies the various RGB values, or hue, saturation and brightness values in the photograph. My results show that there are no immediate changes in the body's form, familiarity or identity. Rather, altering the colour of the image affects the state of skin as well as the mood of the image. For example, (a) desaturates and transforms the body into a cooler, metallic state, while (b) makes the skin warmer and yellower with green shadows, eliciting a sickly and alien-like body. The stronger modification of colour yields a more unfamiliar body and unfamiliar environment; however, the amount of unfamiliarity is perhaps based on how far and different the modified colour is from its original state. Defamiliarising the body to reach a state of the uncanny should make the unfamiliar slightly imperceptible; in other words, the colour values of the image aren't too far altered. Given this assumption, the next experiment will modify the fleshly colour of skin such that it is not greatly exaggerated, while the change is still perceptible.

## Experiment 84: Increasing contrast/ high-tonal photograph

### Aim:

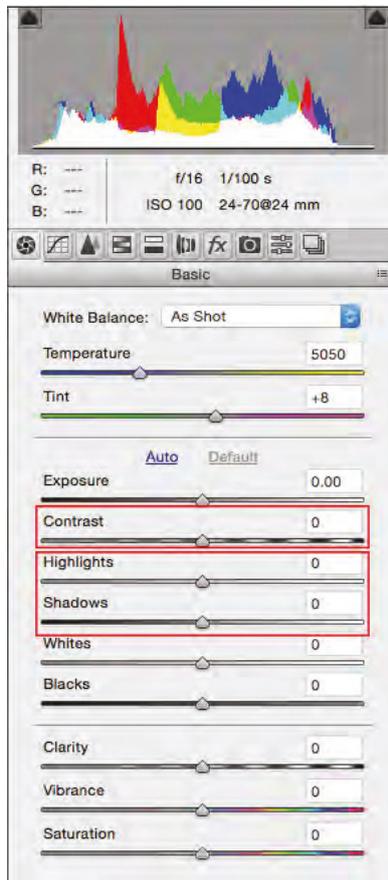
This experiment increases the abstraction of the body by increasing the brightness value of highlights and darkening the shadows in the image.

### Method:

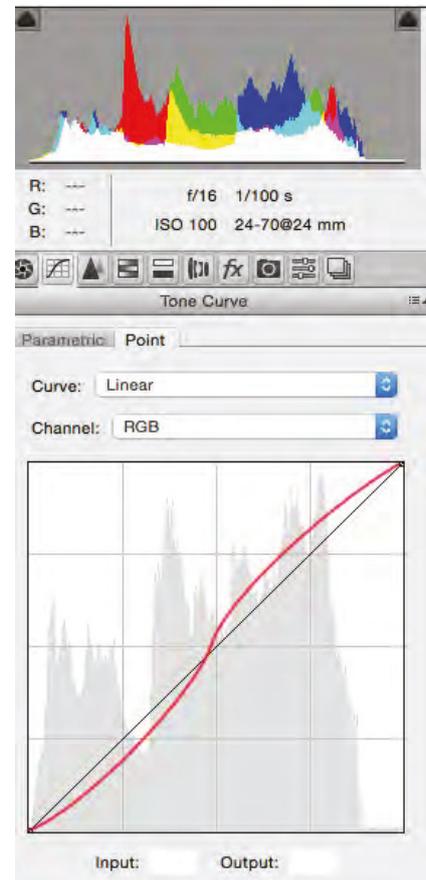
Few simple methods are available in *Adobe Camera Raw* to increase contrast albeit fine control over each method is required to achieve similar results:

1. In Basic tab:
  - a. Increase Contrast or;
  - b. Increase Highlights, decrease Shadows
2. In Tone Curve tab:
  - a. Generate S curve either manually or using pre-set options

### Post-production settings:



Operating the Basics tab



Operating the Tone Curve tab

**Results:**



(a)



(b)

**Reflections:**

Not much defamiliarisation of the body is observable. Perceptible modifications of the body can only be linked to the aesthetic of the image as well as loss of image information due to the increased contrast. In terms of aesthetics, the use of contrast has turned the colour of skin from its original skin tone in the source image (a) to a repulsive orange tone (b). Further investigation into compensation and colour correction needs to be conducted when contrast is applied to skin. This will be conducted in the next experiment.

## Experiment 85: Increasing contrast/ high-tonal photograph with adjustments to colour saturation

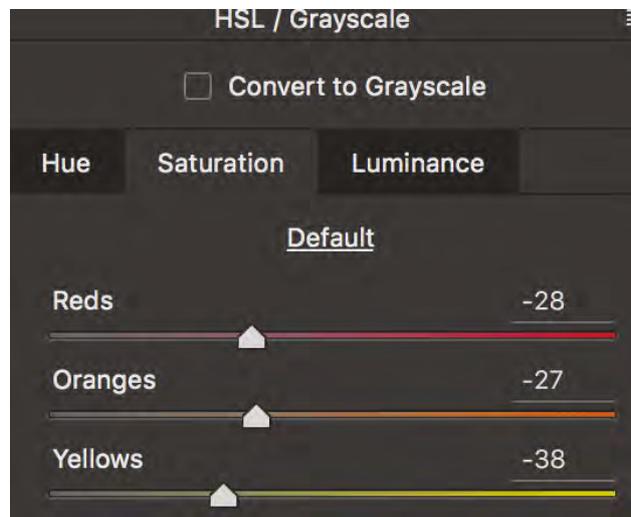
### Aim:

Following the previous experiment, this experiment aims to reduce the repulsive effect from the highly colour contrasted skin.

### Method:

Increase contrast according to methods in previous experiment. Reduce saturation with precise control using the Reds/Oranges/Yellows sliders inside HSL/Grayscale tab.

### Post-production settings:



Operating the HSL/Grayscale tab

### Results:



(a) Original contrasted image from Experiment 84



(b) After reduced saturation

**Reflections:**

In (b), the repulsive orange effect of skin appears restrained, leaving behind a strange metallic sheen on the body. Perhaps by stripping away the excessive colour inherent in the contrasted skin, blemishes become more evident and highlighted on the body. In addition, the highlights of skin appear to pop out more and are more distinct than before from the shadows thrown from the body. The application of desaturation is essentially a linear reduction of colour corresponding to shades of grey. The desaturation effect thus gives the body a plasticised, metallic look, almost nearing fake reality. The next experiment will turn to a particular alternative photographic process that was popularised by Man Ray — the Sabatier effect, or solarisations. Its origins lay in traditional darkroom process; however, I will attempt to produce the same effect in the digital medium using digital tools.

## Experiment 86: Blending modes — Digital Solarisation

### Aim:

This experiment will emulate the effects of solarisation based on the results of Man Ray, who popularised this alternative darkroom process.

### Precedent:



Man Ray, *Solarization (Nude torso)*, 1947

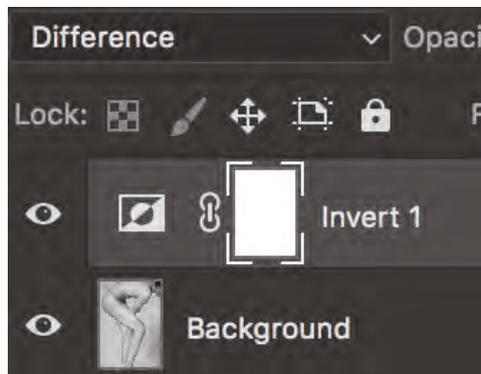
### Method:

Use tools available in *Adobe Photoshop* to recreate the effects of solarisation, which Kirsten Hoving Powell recognizes as an effect of hardening the edges around a figure and making the boundaries between form and space even crisper than they are in real life.

3 methods are available to produce similar results.

1)

- Adjustment 1: Invert adjustment layer (with Exclusion/Difference blending mode)
- Adjustment 3: Curves adjustment layer (points on the curve adjusted to darken black points and deepen shadows, as well as boost highlights to increase contrast)

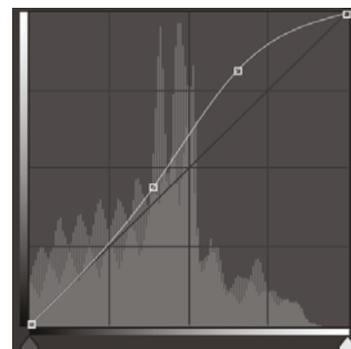


2) Adjustment 1: Invert adjustment with exclusion

2)

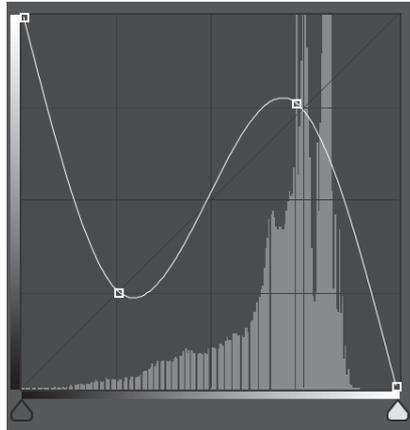
- Filter>Stylize>Solarisation

3)



4) Adjustment 2: Curve adjustments inside Tone Curve

- Adjustment 1: Convert image to black and white
- Adjustment 2: Create Curves adjustment layer. Create 4 anchor points on curve.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> point approximately: Input: 0, Output: 255.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> point approximately: Input: 65, Output: 65.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> point approximately: Input: 185, Output: 195.
  - 4<sup>th</sup> point approximately: Input: 255, Output: 0.



1) Adjustment 2

**Results:**



Original



Digitally solarised

**Reflections:**

Adjustments to the anchor points in the Curves adjustment layer results in a different appearance of solarisation. The Curves adjustment in the 1<sup>st</sup> method emphasises the highlights while retaining the dark tones in the image. The Curves adjustment in the 3<sup>rd</sup> method is a clearer representation of how the solarisation operates. As solarisations invert the brightest and

darkest tones in the image while retaining the midtones, the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> point are inverted on the curve, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> retain their original position on the curve.

Through testing various blending modes, exclusion best fit the criteria and acts as the foundation to solarise the image. Exclusion inverts all colours in the source image apart from blacks. The result is comparative to the blending mode Difference, except the blacks are not crushed, allowing the adjustments to be controlled to a finer degree. By initially inverting the image, Exclusion reverts the image back to its pre-inverted state, except the shadows remain inverted while the deepest blacks become defined highlights. This method achieves a result that is the underlying visual intent of solarisation. The results find the body sharply defined by the dark black and white borders. The inverted shadows also appear to add another level of abstract dimension to the image as the highlights begin to blend with the shadows and vice versa. The experiment finds that a careful adjustment of values to achieve the solarisation/Sabatier effect can result in a defamiliarisation of form. The lines and form of the body are contrasting and juxtaposing with one another. The next experiment will seek to add more nodes of familiarity in the image by including colour into the image. This is based on the established fact that the fleshly colour of skin is an identifier of corporeality.

## Experiment 87: Application of Colour in Digital Solarisation

---

### Aim:

Using a digitally solarised photo as the source image, the original image pre-solarisation will be applied on top and will blend into the existing monochromatic solarisation.

### Precedent:

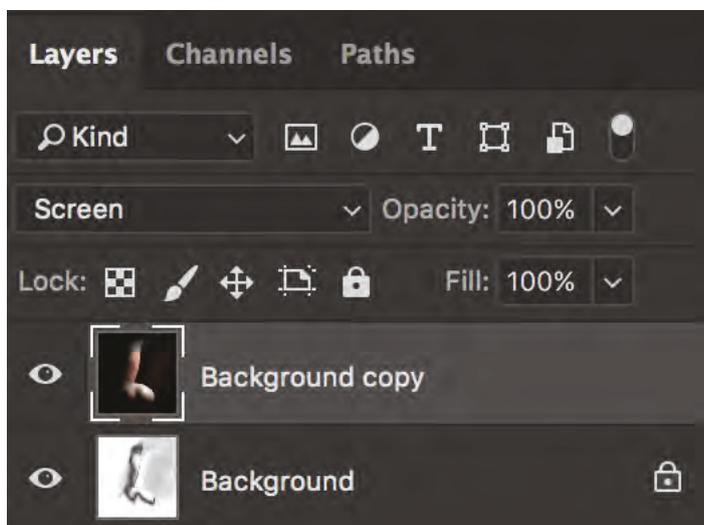


Lin Wei, Solarised photo, 2018

### Method:

Apply original colour image as an upper layer in Photoshop. Convert blending mode to Screen.

### Post-production settings:



**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The coloured solarisation is more effective, without any issues, due to the already existing white background of the monochrome solarisation. The Screen blending mode allows colour to be inserted into the image, which introduces a corporeality to the previously unfamiliar form. It thus illuminates upon a frighteningly phallic figure. Adjusting brightness and contrast can help to emphasise the figure, as well as define the colours a bit further to strengthen the solarisation.

### 3.3.2 — Key Findings

The preceding fundamental images of familiar human bodies make it possible for post-processing to investigate defamiliarisations through colour and luminance alteration. The idea of post-processing itself is a technical matter — there are several avenues to pursue in generating effects that either enhance the image or throw it into chaos. The experiments elaborated here, however, are sufficient to demonstrate how certain considerations within the act of post-processing can subject the human body to cases of defamiliarisation, and at the same time, offer distinct cases of reconciliation in order to draw the viewer towards observing uncanny distortions.

In *Experiment 79*, emphasis is placed on luminance values, and identifies how an alteration of luminance can distort representation of the body and enable the rise of altered perceptions. Luminance affects skin representation and is partly capable of reconfiguring an individual's racial attribute. Defamiliarising a viewer's perception of the body requires the viewer to have an initial comprehension of the body's predisposition prior to the manipulation; otherwise, viewing the body after its luminance values have changed is the assumed reality which has not been defamiliarised from the perspective of the viewer. A discrepancy in the photograph needs to be present for the body to be uncanny. One method of generating discrepancies in the body and the viewer's perception is to adjust contrast and colour tone in the monochromatic image. Increasing contrast and introducing a colour shift, such as a cool blue tone, can alter the constitution of the body to be perceived as a metallic sculptural object. This is demonstrated through the use of Look-Up Tables in *Experiment 83*.

Post-processing not only affects colour, but can also affect form. This is identified through the use of the Sabatier effect, or solarisation. This method inverts shadows and highlights, which can meld the body into its environment and separate components due to contrasting lines generated by the effect. This is proven in *Experiment 86*. Investigations into Ray's solarisations further support solarisation's ability to defamiliarise through isolating, abstracting and emphasising form. The application of colour in a monochromatic solarisation increases familiarity towards the subject, relieves the remaining angst that is cast by the solarisation, and places the defamiliarised body in an uncanny state (*Experiment 87*). Given how post-processing methods primarily deal with an alteration of colour, luminance and contrast, the examined method of solarisation is an isolated case whereby form is altered. The next subchapter will look closely into more direct methods of altering form, particularly in dismembering and reconstructing the body.

### 3.4 Digital Reconstruction

The first discussed method of post-production introduced a type of variation to the image through the alteration of colour. This section will consider another method that introduces variations to the image through an alteration of *form*. Here I will elaborate on how the action of digital reconstruction can simultaneously deconstruct the human body and reconstruct a distorted representation in the photograph. *Digital reconstruction* refers to a manipulation of the body through modifications made to the original photograph. The focal point of this method of manipulation persists is *form*. Underpinning this section is an examination of how methods of digital reconstruction not only facilitate the distortion of the body in the photograph, but of how the method itself is an enabler of further possibilities of generating distortions.



a



b

Figure 116: Lin Wei, Experiment 90: Removal of identifiable body elements, 2018



a



b

Figure 117: Lin Wei, Experiment 91, Emphasising the dismembered unfamiliar form

It is useful to investigate the primary effects of deconstructing a body in Photoshop to further develop more complex manipulation methods for distorting bodies. For this, Figure 116<sup>68</sup> and

---

<sup>68</sup> Experiment 90. Please refer to 3.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Digital Reconstruction.

Figure 117<sup>69</sup> depict methods of post-production as a facilitator of distortions of the body in the photograph. Both Figure 116(a) and Figure 117(a) are source images that contain principles of posing methods outlined in 1.3: Posing the Solitary Body. While the bodies are posing through contortion and with concealment in mind, certain characteristics and familiarities remain in the photograph. Limitations of human flexibility are constraints in how freely the body can pose to distort and defamiliarise itself in the perspective of the camera. To further conceal the familiar where the initial posing methods were incapable of concealing, Figure 116(b) shows the main torso and buttocks removed from the source image. On the other hand, Figure 117(b) shows the head digitally severed from the neckline. Both images use the Pen tool in *Photoshop* to remove the components before filling in the missing section with the background to seamlessly bring reality back into the photograph. The cases present two different methods of deconstructing the body. The first method exhibits distortions of body form through the creation of an unfamiliar protruding appendage that manifests from the deconstruction of a body part. As recognised through Figure 117(b), the distortion of the real and familiar body owes itself to the manufacturing of an entirely new body form through the precise dissection at the neckline. In place of the head is an odd, two-pronged, grotesque fleshly mound that is full of flesh. Figure 116(b) demonstrates the second method, which is the removal of a core body element to endow the body with two separate entities; it presents an outright abolition of the main torso, and offers two scenarios: the photograph presents a hollowed body, yet simultaneously introduces the body in an entirely new form; the unusual dissection bestows two separate leg entities on the image that appear to be standing by themselves with no primary means of support.

The inevitably successive method of deconstruction, reconstruction, further extends the realm of manipulation possibilities. Four reconstructive methods are recognised to alter form in *Adobe Photoshop*. The first is through the aforementioned Pen tool, which deconstructs and consequentially reconstructs the form. The second is the metamorphosis of form by means of the warping tool Liquify. It allows the photographer to transform the photograph by shifting pixels as a painter would manipulate the image on a canvas. Yet Margaret Iversen (2007) indicates that the nature of the medium serves as an indexical imprint of the subject. Any alteration to the indexical imprint can be understood as an alteration of the constituted reality within. Thus, the Liquify tool is a naturally defamiliarising tool. Additional warping tools such as Transform, Puppet Warp and Perspective Correction are identified and documented in the set of

---

<sup>69</sup> Experiment 91. Please refer to 3.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Digital Reconstruction.

photographic experiments. However, Liquify offers finer control over minute adjustments in warping the subject.

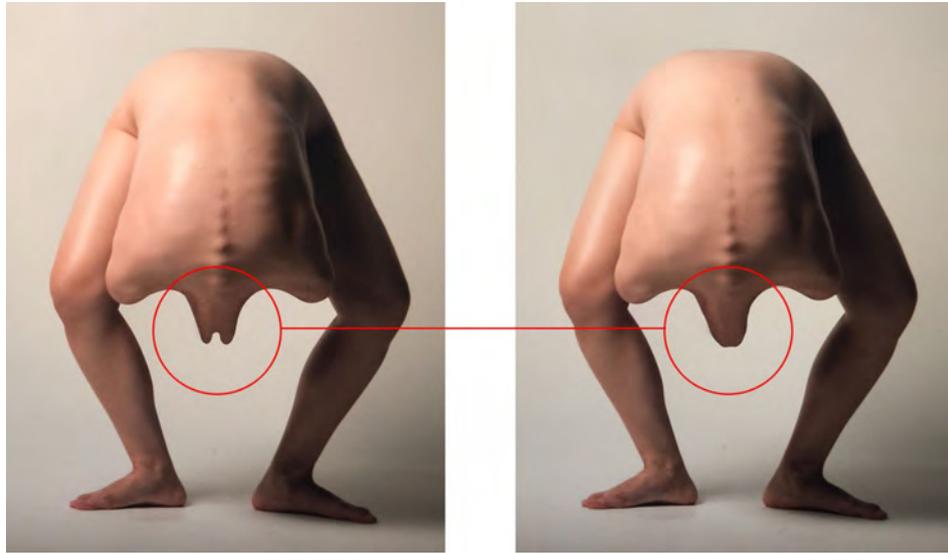


Figure 118: Lin Wei, Experiment 91:  
Emphasising the dismembered unfamiliar form,  
2018

Figure 119: Lin Wei, Experiment 104:  
Reconstruction of elements into an uncanny  
state, 2018

To elaborate on how liquify allows distortions of the body to occur in the photograph, Figure 119<sup>70</sup> borrows the body from Figure 118, challenging the dichotomy of the unfamiliar familiar. There are two factors in the results shown in Figure 119 that alter perception of the *unfamiliar*. The first is that the reconstruction reverts the unfamiliar into the familiar. Precise warping with the Liquify tool reforms the double-pronged malformation into a stumpy mound that bears more resemblance to a neck than its predecessor. This reformation influences the second factor, where the neck, while a familiar component, is placed in a state of ambivalence. Multiple considerations of the human body are present. At once, evidence of an incision is non-existent, as if the decapitation is a natural deformity. Another convincing observation is that the photograph compels a depiction of a malformed, thin neck. On the other hand, it can also appear to be, not a neck, but an unconnected appendage. Through the Liquify tool, the photograph reveals an unsettling appendage that, in contrast to normative reality, the viewer knows is not true. Yet the meticulous application of the digital manipulation confers a gap in the expected unreality of the body. It is not that the appendage does not exist, but the Liquify tool allows the possibility for it to exist. The body is familiarly human yet is simultaneously unfamiliar.

<sup>70</sup> Experiment 104. Please refer to 3.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Digital Reconstruction.

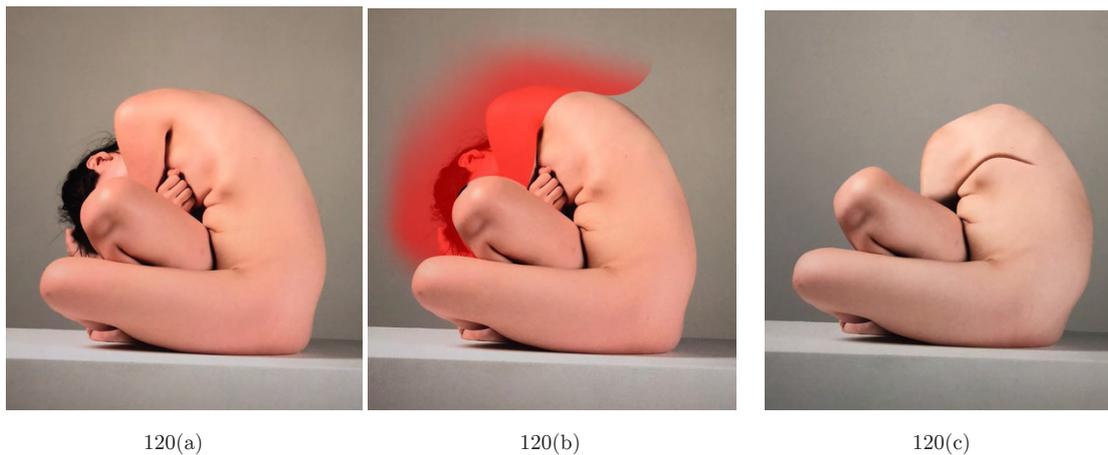


Figure 120: Lin Wei, Experiment 107: Warping processes as a method of digitally reconstructing elements into an uncanny state, 2018

Given that the Liquify tool is defamiliarising by nature, its application can be combined with the previous method of concealing through cutting, using the Pen tool to extend the realm of possibilities in distorting the body. Figure 120<sup>71</sup> utilises both methods to reconfigure the natural state of the human figure. The figure in Figure 120(a) is initially sitting on the plinth, with the right knee ascending upwards and over the left thigh. The torso is hunched over and behind the right leg. The figure's head is significantly lowered with the assistance of the left hand in an attempt to conceal themselves — as identity devices — while the right hand is concealing the chest region. While the posing again renders the process of defamiliarisation unsuccessful, reconstructive methods allow the body to be successfully portrayed as defamiliarised. In Figure 120(b), the head is edited out. The left arm and shoulder are similarly cut out to reform the top of the body. Figure 120(c) shows the back is then pushed down using the Liquify tool.

Furthermore, Figure 120(c) reveals the third type of reconstructive method available in post-production: the transformation of elements through reconstruction or cloning, primarily with the Clone Stamp tool. Not to be confused with the second described method, the primary mechanism of this method is the removal and enhancement of specific elements to enhance the distortion of form. Alterations of the body are conceived based on subjective manipulation. Barbara Savedoff (1997) describes this alteration of the image as a result of an artist's imaginative rendering as a form of divergence: 'the defamiliarizations of photography are read otherwise, for despite our knowledge of the ways in which photographs can mislead and distort, we nevertheless irresistibly see the photograph as faithfully recording for us the appearances of

<sup>71</sup> Experiment 107. Please refer to 3.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Digital Reconstruction.

the world' (203).

Operating on this principle, the hand in Figure 120(c) is edited out using the Clone Stamp tool. This is in favour of removing identifiable attributes of familiarity to distance the body further from reality. The Clone Stamp tool allows the user to replace a section of the photograph with a selectively sampled area of a different section of the image. The tool is utilised in *Experiment 107* to duplicate and extend the topmost fold of skin in the belly region, transforming the capacity of the region to be perceived as no longer a belly fold but the posterior of an arm. This perception is aided by the previous edit in which the top section of the body is pushed down using the Warp tool. While this form of manipulation results in an altered representation of the body, it also demonstrates how enhancements to the body are able to produce a point of conflict, particularly with the photographer's intention of intervention in the image. In the case of *Experiment 107*, the outline of the skin fold over-extends the threshold of the axilla<sup>72</sup> and curves downward in a nonsensical manner; both which do not conform with natural anatomical perceptions of the human arm.



Figure 121: Lin Wei, Experiment 109: Manifesting multiple presences of a body in a solitary body, 2018

Considerations of the described first, second and third method extend further into the fourth form of reconstruction: compositing, which is the creation of a photograph through the

---

<sup>72</sup> The axilla is the region at the proximal end of the arm.

duplication or combination of constituent body components or elements from reference photographs. Figure 121<sup>73</sup> demonstrates this fourth method of digital reconstruction. In contrast to the previous experiments, *Experiment 109* integrates multiple images into a composite image, agglomerating body components from eight reference photos to construct a body that supersedes its normative precedent in the source image. Multiple components incorporate the image. Two backs are visible; one is submerged into the other, while an arm and two legs are apparent, albeit with a misplaced foot.

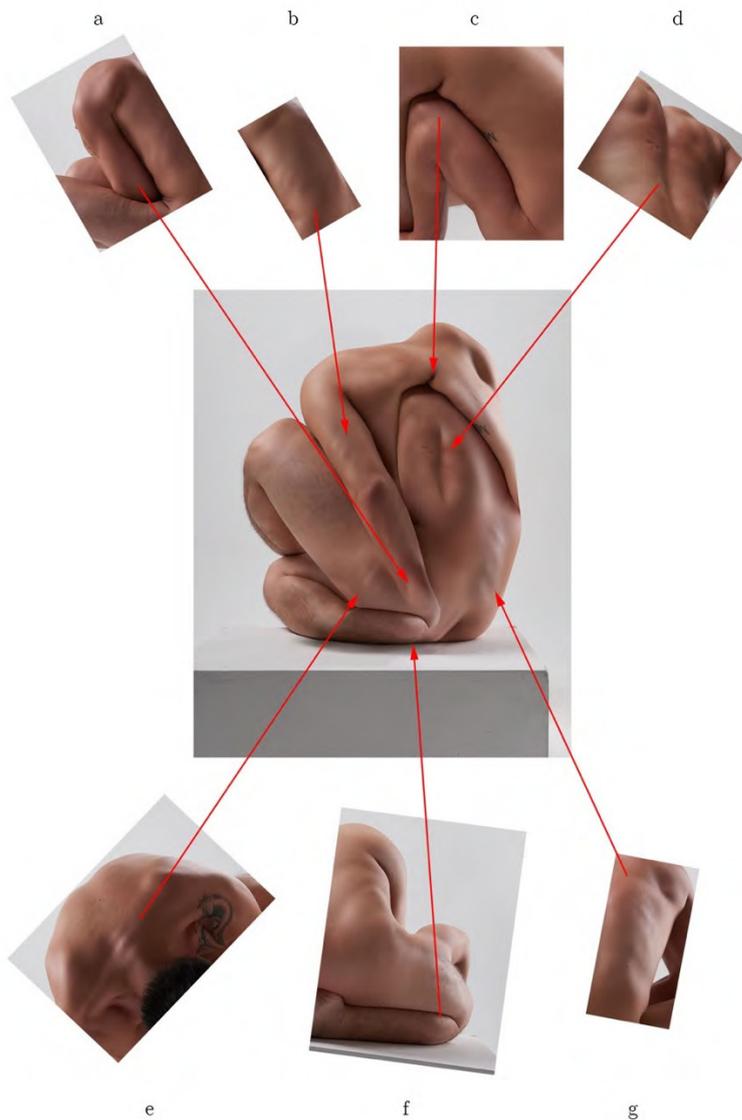


Figure 122: Lin Wei, Deconstructed view of constituent body elements from reference photographs used for Experiment 109, 2018

These inconsistencies in the body form are generated by a composite of constituent components

---

<sup>73</sup> Experiment 109. Please refer to 3.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Digital Reconstruction.

that run contrary to their functioning purpose in the final outcome. In Figure 122, Figure 122(c) is a close-up crop of an elbow joint that is wedged close to the body and forming an angle. The image is rotated 90 degrees and forms the contour of the second back in the composition. Figure 122(d) is a secondary spine from an additional reference image that is composited into the image to complete the image of an additional back. Both Figure 122(a) and Figure 122(f) are an elbow and a calf borrowed from reference images to replace the wrist and foot respectively. The outline of the ribcage in Figure 122(b) forms an unfamiliar muscular component on the arm; the back of the neck in Figure 122(e) forms a skin blemish at the upper thigh region, while another outline of the ribcage in an alternate reference image, Figure 122(g), forms another unfamiliar muscular component just above the gluteal muscles. To claim that the photograph in *Experiment 109* is a composite requires the necessary condition of a complex amalgamation of each constituent body component when combining them all together. Whether the composite asserts a representation of reality or not ultimately depends on the aptitude to achieve verisimilitude. Composite images can enhance the reality of the photographic subject, yet Huang (1999) asserts that composite imagery can simultaneously result in a distortion of reality, due to an ‘incommensurate scale or impossible combinations of elements’ (170). A particular method that is demonstrated in *Experiment 109* to alleviate the uncertainty of reality is through the precise amalgamation of the point of contact between two or more images. While each reference photograph constitutes of inconsistently illuminated constituent body components with various skin tonality, they are seamlessly merged using a combination of Layer Mask and the Clone Stamp in Photoshop. Upon positioning the constituent body component in the source image, the Layer Mask masks out sections of the reference image that do not appeal to the distortion. In addition to this, applying the mask with a soft brush allows the reference image to blend more smoothly. This step, however, is incapable of meeting verisimilitude in the distortion. The Clone Stamp remedies this.

Firstly, I refer back to *Experiment 107* and the usage of the Clone Stamp tool in the experiment, which demonstrated the fundamental nature of the tool — first as a tool of addition, through the selective replacement of the subjective (body) characteristics, and second as a tool of subtraction/removal, through the selective addition of non-subjective (non-body) elements to replace the subjective (body) characteristics. *Experiment 109* demonstrates both the adding and subtracting operations of the Clone Stamp. In adding selective elements from the reference image to merge the reference constituent, the process overrides and subtracts certain characteristics from the underlying layer — the source image and vice versa. The ongoing cycle

of positioning reference photos, applying a Layer Mask and Clone Stamping thus enables a distorted and unequivocal body containing unfamiliar fragments that run contrary to normative perceptions of what constitutes a human form. The application of the digital tools — Layer Mask and Clone Stamp — reconstructs the disjoint between the incongruent body elements to achieve near verisimilitude, which destabilises its position as one of real and familiar, or one of unfamiliar and abject fear and uncertainty. Furthermore, were these tools and methods not applied to the photograph, then the composite would not exist and the foundation of verisimilitude in the unfamiliar form would crumble.



Figure 123: Lin Wei, *Experiment 110: Reconstructing the premise of the human body* — a corporeal sculptural form, 2018

Having assessed the fundamental premise that these methods and tools are effective, Figure 123<sup>74</sup> demonstrates how they can be utilised to manifest a distortion focused on an idiosyncratic form that exhibits traits of familiar components, which runs contrary to the resulting composite in *Experiment 109* and its familiar body structure and idiosyncratic features. While much of the same processes in *Experiment 109* are applied in *Experiment 110*, the resulting form is disparate. In Figure 123, the body form can be broken down into four sections: top, bottom, left and right. Each section highlights a distinct anomaly. The top section vaguely resembles a smooth back that is interrupted with a visible winged scapula. The shoulder joint on the right

---

<sup>74</sup> Experiment 110. Please refer to 3.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Digital Reconstruction.

appears to merge downwards into a form of gluteal region with no hip crest to define the joint. This right section runs downwards and joins a fleshly mass that cannot be identified, however skin folds establish this section as a body joint. The left side of the top region runs down a structure that resembles an arm, which is placed in front of another body component that can potentially be aligned with a leg, although its orientation cannot be verified.

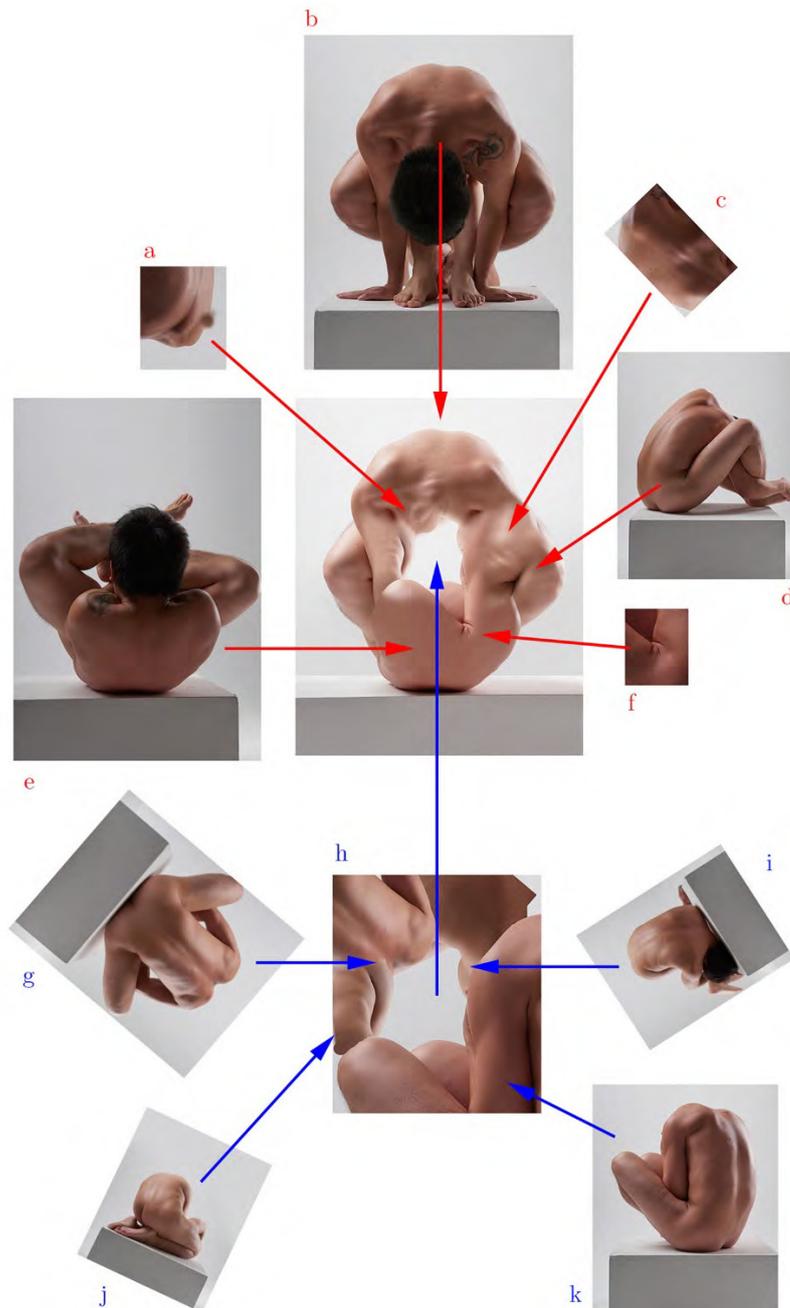


Figure 124: Lin Wei, Deconstructed view of constituent body elements from reference photographs used for Experiment 110, 2018

*Experiment 110* is made from two main components: Figure 124(b) and Figure 124(e). These two are scaled to proportion, combined together at their knees and blended with the Layer

Mask. This initial process of reconstruction forms the main structure of the body. The third most important constituent that aggregates the form is Figure 123(h), which is constructed from four separate reference photographs — Figure 124(g), Figure 124(i), Figure 124(j) and Figure 124(k)— that are cut and overlaid on each other to form an inner contour. This third constituent, Figure 124(h), is a clear representation of the composite method’s ability to distort the representation of subjects in a photograph. Through a series of rotation and selective positioning, the resulting composite utilises four body contours of various origins — a shoulder blade from Figure 124(g), a hip from Figure 124(i), an arm from Figure 124(j), knees, elbow and arm from Figure 124(k) — to manifest the inner contour of the principal body form. The act of manipulating reference photographs and readjusting their representation suggests the notion that perhaps the current reality in which humans exist is an ‘imperfect precursor or prefiguration’ to the broader spectrum of a virtual world, which topples the conventions of reality and perhaps even transcends it (Robins 1991). In discussing how new image technologies allow for the creation of an alternative world, Kevin Robins (1991) argues that,

The dislocation of image from referent reinforces its perception as a domain in its own right. Through the problematization of any indexical or referential relation to reality, the image-space, or data-space, assumes for itself an increasing autonomy. In the factitious space, the formal and logical space, of the computer, it has become possible to simulate a surrogate reality, a kind of alter-reality which is difficult to differentiate from our conventional reality and which, it is claimed, even threatens to eclipse it. (59)

Robins’ proclamation that reference images enable an alternate reality directly correlates with how images are antecedents for manipulating representation, especially to conform with the photographer’s wishes. As in *Experiment 110*, the inner contour — Figure 124(h) — is inserted into a framework to manifest a form that bears a sculptural appearance that corresponds differently to conventional reality. Furthermore, this representation is intensified with the insertion of a hip joint — Figure 124(d) — in the right section of the photograph. This insertion achieves two effects: the first is to seamlessly merge the principal body together using a body component that has similar skin and muscle tone; the second is to accomplish a defamiliarisation, as it assumes an intergluteal cleft. Through this very complex rendition of a body component, *Experiment 110* demonstrates a critical aspect of the composite method: it not only alters the form of the human body beyond normative comprehension, it allows the conversion of the familiar representation to an uncanny representation. To highlight this, presuppose that the Freudian uncanny is encountered when something that is initially familiar becomes unfamiliar, then is approached or viewed as simultaneously both familiar and unfamiliar. The hip joint is initially a familiar component of the human body. The process of

defamiliarisation occurs when situating the hip joint in the composition and merging it into its surroundings; it thus assumes a depiction of another component, thereby rendering the hip no longer recognisable. Yet when viewing the hip joint, it resembles a different body component. It is simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar, in part due to indeterminacy, as the structure of the joints and unfamiliar muscle characteristics surrounding it destabilise the experience of the viewer; the composition introduces something that is unfamiliar, yet also familiar, into the familiar.

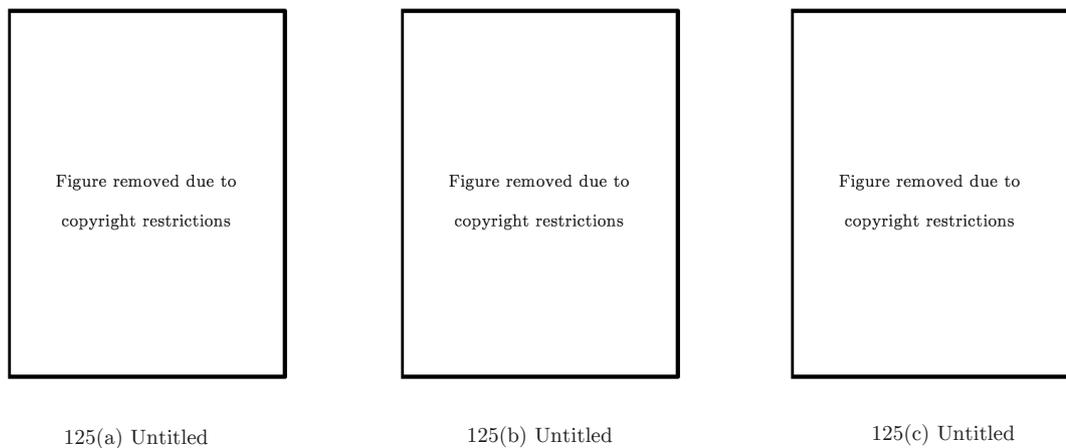


Figure 125, Asger Carlsen, *Hester*, 2012

To reinforce the narrative that the digital reconstructive method of composition enables the manifestation of distorted and uncanny bodies, I turn to the Danish photographer Asger Carlsen, who addresses the human body in his digital manipulations. What is significant about his work is that although Carlsen operates primarily in black and white, it remains apparent that his body manipulations contain the preconditions of both familiarity and unfamiliarity that situate them within the uncanny. An effective example of this can be observed in his *Hester* (2012) series (Figure 125), which particularly deals with body constructs where its distortions are stark and gnarled. The uncanny is prevalent in his distorted bodies; the final images merge multiple photographs of the body — some opting for four or five images — to generate sculptural mounds of flesh that are at times human yet monstrous. Figure 125 highlights three examples of composites that effect distorted and defamiliarised bodies. Similar to *Experiment 109* and *Experiment 110*, Carlsen uses *Adobe Photoshop* to merge the body together in post-production (Hutson-Gray 2012). In addition to composite techniques, *Hester* (2012) reveals evidence of the other three methods of reconstruction — the pen tool, liquifying and clone stamping — to reform, disguise and conceal components to conform with the primary body in the photograph. In Figure 125(a), there is no immediately discernible feature of the body other

than the textural rugged and wrinkled skin drooping off to the side. The body form is not clearly defined; however, upon closer observation, form is supplemented by the layers of fold in the skin. In the top right is a skin fold that can also be interpreted as an outline of an intergluteal cleft. A stretched belly button is conspicuously placed in the centre of the body. Figure 125(a) shows the body composited into a corporeal puzzle filled with familiar features that prevent it from submerging into a form that bears no traits of the human. Figure 125(b) similarly merges multiple body components to create an amalgamated body, yet its progression into the uncanny is antithetical to Figure 125(a). Instead of developing a form that contains familiar traits, Figure 125(b) presents a familiar form with unfamiliar characteristics. A body is standing upright; its head is missing and its arms replaced by outstretched legs that protrude to the left. Feet do not occupy the distal end of the legs. Instead, a clump of flesh assumes the feet's position. The hip of the strangely placed legs is slender and comparable to female shoulders. The body in Figure 125(c) finds the body similarly posed as the body in Figure 125(b), with similar bodily components; however, there are slight differences that separate the two's ability to convey the unfamiliar sensation. In this third example of Carlsen's, the upper body is presented in a more abstract form; one less leg extrudes from the top of the body. The upper leg is more constrained in its placement, and the image does not assign a particular gender to the body. This step in Carlsen's manipulation process reduces the amount an observer can perceive of the body and pressures the body deeper into an uncanny state. The raw detail of the rugged heels and stretch marks in the hip region are key identifiers that revert the defamiliarisation process. This method, that is distinct throughout his *Hester* (2012) series, exemplifies Carlsen's efforts to seamlessly synthesise each element of the body together to make such unfamiliar amalgamations more familiar and real. Such efforts are accommodated by the use of the digital medium to construct the bodies.

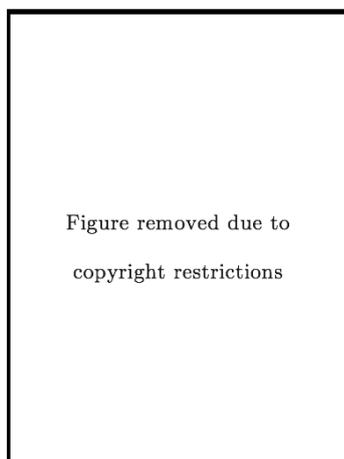


Figure 126: Hans Bellmer, *La Poupée*, 1936

Savedoff's (1997) notion of the artist's imaginative rendering resonates with Carlsen's choice to edit his bodies in post-production. It is liberating, and grants Carlsen the ability to have finer control over the photographic medium. In an interview with Miléne Larsson, Carlsen notes that his works achieve to find the 'balance between fiction and reality to create something so subtle it almost feels real' (cited in Larsson 2011, para.6). Although situated in a contemporary context, his photographs are heavily influenced by and contain surrealist undertones (Larsson 2011), which explains the visual similarities of his photographs to the likes of Hans Bellmer's *La Poupée* (1936) (Figure 126). In comparison to his surrealist precedent, Carlsen has available to him the ability to digitally synthesise elements of the photograph to render his body subject more real. These forms cannot be made apparent through the indexical ability of the photograph itself, nor through relying on the body posing, or with the assistance of practical effects, due to the instability of the synthesis. Carlsen's use of *Adobe Photoshop* in his *Hester* (2012) series proves that investigations of the body through post-production, in particular digital reconstruction, allow for new comprehensions of the distorted, defamiliarised and subsequently uncanny body forms to be discovered and formed through iterations of composited body elements.



Figure 127: Lin Wei, Experiment 111: Deforming the body into unrecognisable states, 2018



Figure 128: Asger Carlsen, Hester, 2012

That the digital reconstructive method of compositing invokes an uncanny depiction of reality is within expectations, for a photographic composite that aims to transcend and become an alternate reality relies on the fundamental premise for the uncanny, both in perception and sensation. Composites confront reality on all fronts, as it is a method of direct severance and

reconstruction of a reality supplied by referential imagery. According to Fred Ritchin (2009), photographic manipulation alters the human body on a fundamental level: ‘The alteration of the phenotype, modifying body parts and exchanging them among the people depicted, is symptomatic of the transition from a focus on the visible human, illuminated by the play of light and shadow, to experimenting with his coded being, or DNA’ (41).

While there are certain truths to this statement, to suggest that manipulation is akin to operating with DNA is a superficial argument, given the nature of the photograph and the process of image manipulation itself. The photograph is a representation of reality, and a manipulated image gives an altered representation of reality, one which befits the criteria of the artist–photographer. This is proven time and again in the experiments on digital reconstruction in this thesis. Take, for example, the composite body in Figure 127,<sup>75</sup> which contains a corporeal structure and characteristics that are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. Like Carlsen’s photograph from the *Hester* (2012) series (Figure 128), the body in *Experiment 111* does not bear a distinguishable resemblance to the conformation of a human. Limbs and identifiable features are not apparent in the image. In contrast to *Experiment 109* and *Experiment 110*, which highlighted two scenarios where the familiar and unfamiliar (body features and body structure respectively as well as vice versa) can simultaneously exist in the image as two separate nodes working together to convey an uncanniness, the body in *Experiment 111* demonstrates the familiar and unfamiliar as one unit, whereby the features and structures of the body are simultaneously familiar *and* unfamiliar. As a result of this process of manipulation, identity cannot be ascertained, yet the form present in the image is recognisable as a corporeal and fleshly human body, due to its properties of skin, muscles, and vague similarity in contour. This is achieved through the exacting requirements of the photographer in dismembering, defamiliarising and reconstructing — all using digital tools in a digital medium — the familiar elements so that they fall in line with the Freudian uncanny.

---

<sup>75</sup> Experiment 111. Please refer to 3.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Digital Reconstruction.



Figure 129: Natalie Tirant, *i am complete*, 2014

To reinforce the idea that the artist–photographer is in control of creating distorted and defamiliarised bodies along the lines of the uncanny, the antithetical, in which the artist–photographer loses control over the distortion and defamiliarisation process, must be explored and accounted for. Experimentation with *Adobe Photoshop* as a digital reconstruction tool is also apparent in Natalie Tirant’s photograph *i am complete* (2015) (Figure 129). Similar in vein to Carlsen, Tirant also uses a combination of tools available in *Adobe Photoshop* to malform the bodies. The body in *i am complete* (2015) is reclining with its back facing the camera. A pair of breasts are photoshopped in to replace and defamiliarise the right shoulder. While the body is manipulated to present a visual ambiguity of natural form, *i am complete* (2015) appears to remain heavily invested in exposing gender to belie Tirant’s intent of generating a body that is ‘neither exclusively male nor exclusively female’ (Rubicon Ari 2014).<sup>76</sup> While Tirant does indeed highlight examples of distorting the body form through methods of digital reconstruction, the work has yet to truly depart from the recognisable and identifiable in order to defamiliarise and situate the body in the uncanny. This is most evidently in the comprehensible breast that is conjoined to the similarly comprehensible human body. The breast, in its most suggestive state, bequeaths the female gender to the form which it attaches to, with no other gender element to dispute this claim. For a digitally reconstructed body to contain the essence of the uncanny requires a level of both visual comprehension and incomprehension of form that suggests, paradoxically, familiar notions that are unfamiliar, as well as an unfamiliar element that is oddly familiar.

The following section details the 24 experiments conducted for this subchapter. The experiments follow a structure of technically examining the available tools in Photoshop to dismember and

---

<sup>76</sup> *i am complete* (2014) is previously titled *Exposed* for its first appearance in an exhibition at Rubicon Ari

reconstruct the body, then combining and applying these tools to reconstruct the body through removal, duplication, metamorphosing through reduction, enlargement, and transfiguration.

These experimentations lead to a culmination with all the tools combined, to examine how the nuances of each tool are efficiently utilised in the creation of body composites. Each experiment contains elaborate step-by-step documentation of each tool used and the effect it creates.

**3.4.1 — Photographic Experiments on Digital Reconstruction**

Experiment 88: Transforming the body through fragmentation and body separation

Experiment 89: Removing a whole component of the body from the outer regions

Experiment 90: Removing a whole component of the body from an inner region

Experiment 91: Emphasising the dismembered unfamiliar form

Experiment 92: Repositioning components of the body

Experiment 93: Duplicating a component and position it in another location

Experiment 94: Mirror transform (flip image)

Experiment 95: Distortions in scale and perspective — truncation and foreshortening

Experiment 96: Blending components of the body for seamless integration

Experiment 97: Blending bodies from two separate photographs

Experiment 98: Blending bodies from three separate photographs

Experiment 99: Photographic compositions of the same bodies

Experiment 100: Removal of subtle body details

Experiment 101: Obfuscating the familiar

Experiment 102: Enlarging body components (Liquify)

Experiment 103: Emphasising the transformation of muscle shape

Experiment 104: Shifting pixels to digitally reconstruct an uncanny body component

Experiment 105: Transforming the shape of the body to conform with a known object

Experiment 106: Puppet-warp transform to reshape the whole structure of the body  
(edit>puppet warp)

Experiment 107: Warping processes as a method of digitally reconstructing elements into an  
uncanny state

Experiment 108: Composites and juxtapositions (placing body next to objects or in situations)

Experiment 109: Manifesting multiple presences of a body in a solitary body

Experiment 110: Reconstructing the premise of the human body — a corporeal sculptural form

Experiment 111: Deforming the body into unrecognisable states

## Experiment 88: Transforming the body through fragmentation and body separation

---

### Aim:

This experiment aims to separate components of the body to investigate how particular components can affect the overall image of the complete body.

### Method:

Mask certain components of the body in the source image and shift them away from the body (up, down, left or right).

### Post-production settings:

- Use Pen tool in Adobe Photoshop to mask a section of the body.
- Make selection from work path.
- Transform and drag away from main body.



Image showing masked selection moved away from main body

**Results:**

Components separated

**Reflections:**

The selected components that were shifted away are parts that were hidden behind the body. The mask runs along the inner edge of the body, completely isolating the components from the body. Isolating the outer body components shows that even when removed there are no additional changes to the distortion of the body. When closely examining the results, I can observe the heel of the rear foot, which did not get masked and isolated, alongside the leg. Furthermore, the result suggests a chasm that can be bridged between the missing parts, to form a link and extend the body, either through reconstructing it by cloning or simply skewing the body, using Transform tools, without the need to drag the component away from the body. The next experiment will observe changes in perception by removing the components completely.

## Experiment 89: Removing a whole component of the body from the outer regions

---

### Aim:

Following on from the previous experiment, this experiment observes the body when certain components are removed completely from the source image.

### Method:

Mask certain components of the body in the source image, delete and patch up the remaining negative space.

### Post-production settings:

- Use Pen tool in Adobe Photoshop to mask a section of the body.
- Make selection from work path.
- Combination of Brush and Clone Stamp tool to remove the components from the source image and reconstruct the background.



Brush tool to remove shoulder blade



Clone stamp tool to remove leg and reconstruct the set

**Results:**

(a) Rear leg and shoulder blade removed



(b) Torso removed

**Reflections:**

In this experiment, the removal of the body required a refill of the gaps, otherwise the removed section would be a void blank in the image. To retain a sense of realism in the image, the experiment required filling in portions of the background.

For result (a), it is strange that there is an additional component that does not belong to the body's foot sticking out from underneath the sole (observed to be the heel from the rear foot). Removing the various components from the body reduces its depth in the image as well as inducing a very peculiar and uncanny feeling when observing the body. This is perhaps due to the idea that it is difficult, perhaps impossible, for the body to assume this posture without falling over, because of its centre of gravity. The idea that the body is in this position is peculiar, and raises the question of how it can possibly be stable. The removal of the components is thus a removal of information by which the viewer can accurately assess and perceive the body. For result (b), the absence of the torso causes a sense of alien-qualities that I observe are too far removed from reality. (a) is a stronger result, as it plays on the perception of balance and gravity in the image, giving the overall image an unsettling feeling. This is in addition to the fact that the removal of components does not reduce the overall familiarity of the body, as the image can be easily misinterpreted as having nothing removed from the body.

The next experiment will observe changes in perception when an inner section of the body is removed from the photograph.

## Experiment 90: Removing a whole component of the body from an inner region

---

### Aim:

Following on from the previous experiment, this experiment observes changes in perception when an inner component is removed completely from the source image.

### Method:

Mask certain components of the body in the source image, delete and patch up the remaining negative space.

### Post-production settings:

- Use Pen tool in Adobe Photoshop to mask a section of the body.
- Make selection from work path.
- Combination of Brush and Clone Stamp tool to remove the components from the source image and reconstruct the background.



1) Use Pen tool to mask an outline of the main body.



2) Use Brush and Clone Stamp tool to remove the main body and reconstruct the background

**Results:****Reflections:**

Similar to the previous experiment, it is immediately apparent that an unfamiliar conformation is at play in the image. With the inner body removed from the image, the legs and arms appear dismembered. The impression of the subject is very sculptural in appearance. Furthermore, it is not entirely clear what the neck area is supposed to be without precedent knowledge of it. The fact that the legs and arms are supporting themselves without a main body component is an uncanny observation, as normative sense would dictate that firstly, a body does not exist, and secondly, it is impossible for the legs to stand like that and be separated. It calls for an uncanny experience.

The next experiment will observe enhancements made to the body that has been defamiliarised and dismembered using the method and tools established from this experiment.

## Experiment 91: Emphasising the dismembered unfamiliar form

---

### Aim:

Following on from the previous experiment, this experiment will examine how the Clone Stamp tool can operate as a form of construction process to enhance the peculiarity of the dismembered body.

### Precedent:



### Method:

Defamiliarise the body by running the dismemberment along a unique outline of the body. Use the Clone Stamp tool to increase body elements in the image.

### Post-production settings:



1) Create path outline around the using the Pen tool. Follow the hairline closely and avoid outlining the hair.



2) Using the Gradient tool, sample a section of the background and create a vertical gradient over the head.



3) Clean up stray hair using Clone Stamp tool.



4) Emphasise the spine by adding extra using the Clone Stamp tool. As the bulbous points ascend upwards, they get smaller.

### Results:



### Reflections:

This experiment uses the same dismemberment process as the previous experiment. However, with the additional process of slight enhancement to an existing feature, the final appearance of the spinal cord can be perceptibly real, given the inherent nature of the body. The appearance of a spinal cord is enhanced given its posture; however, there is a certain bizarreness to it. The bony conformation places emphasis on the skeletal composition, as well as the uncanny reality of the body. Furthermore, dismembering the head along the hairline invokes a strange prong-like appendage that is protruding from the neck. This in itself is unfamiliar. The next experiment will seek to reposition a portion of the body in the image into another location. The assumption is that this will not only distort form, it will also distort the representation, and an uncanny body form can be perceived.

## Experiment 92: Repositioning components of the body

---

### Aim:

This experiment investigates the perceived difference of manipulation in comparison to the real body, and whether the shifting of components results in a distortion, or defamiliarises the body as a whole.

### Method:

Mask one component of the body in the source image, reposition and adjoin to another part of the body.

### Post-production settings:

- Use Pen tool in Adobe Photoshop to mask a section of the body.
- Make selection from work path.
- Use Transform tool to reposition the component to another location.
- Use Clone stamp tool to blend the adjoined bodies together.
- Combination of Brush and Clone Stamp tool to remove the components from the source image and reconstruct the background.



Selecting component



Shifting to another position that it can seamlessly adjoin and align with.



Cleaning the background



Process of blending the components for seamless integration using clone stamp tool

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

I note that by reconstructing areas of the image such as background, set, and certain areas of the body, I eliminate any misgivings of potential photographic manipulations. This process of shifting components starts to severely alter the shape of the body. My initial observations found that the back of the body has a similar shape to the top of the thigh, thus prompting an investigation into potential connections. Finding that the back can adjoin at its edges, I began the process of integrating them together. The thigh thus appears to have grown a set of grooves that can either be identified as folds of the skin or a potential bone structure that does not

originally exist in that location. Furthermore, there is a perceived lack of the upper body; however, there is also the potential perception of an upper body integrated into the upper leg. This latter perception is uncanny, as the upper leg contains qualities of the back; yet this 'back', a compounded body component, is much smaller in comparison to the lower legs and feet. Questions also arise pertaining to the strange growth spurting from the 'back' that cannot be immediately answered.

Here, the body undergoes a deformation, through the removal and *addition* of a new subtle component that conforms with the original structure of the body. I emphasise the word addition, as that particular component is nowhere to be seen in the photograph apart from where it's placed. It can be assumed that it was not originally there and it has been added into the photograph. The next experiment will present a more direct addition through a duplication of a body component in the image, and observe any changes in perception based on this bizarre inclusion.

## Experiment 93: Duplicating a component and position it in another location

---

### Aim:

This experiment investigates the altered representation of the body when a component is duplicated and repositioned in the image.

### Precedent:



Meltem Isik, Suspicious Affinities (Untitled #7), 2015

### Method:

Duplicate a section of the body and integrate to form another part of the body.

### Post-production settings:

- Use Pen tool in Adobe Photoshop to mask a section of the body, make selection.
- Duplicate the selection (Layer > New > New layer via copy).
- Transform tool to reposition and rotate the component to another location.
- Create Layer Mask and mask off undesirable components, e.g. lower leg, and to clean up edges of the new body component.
- Use Clone stamp tool to blend the adjoined bodies together.



Selecting component



Duplicate layer and transform (shift to different position and rotate)

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The duplicated body component can be clearly perceived as a component that does not belong to the human body. Closer analysis can identify perceptions of that component as a duplication of the thigh underneath it. There are early stages of altered representation in this experiment. The duplicated thigh extends upwards at the waist, inviting representation of a back. Given the

seamless integration using the clone stamp tool, as well as using the layer mask, I retain the skin folds at the point where the body is bent. Keeping this in the image maintains a sense of realness and familiarity in the image, as the joint suggests the body bending and ascending upwards in actuality. I also note that while the upper back in the original source photograph has not been removed from the image, there is a certain uniqueness that can be attributed to a puzzle, when the edges of the puzzle link up together to form a whole. This needs to be considered further in future experiments: does this puzzle-like creation invite a stronger feeling of familiarity/unfamiliarity or reduce it? The next experiment will seek to duplicate using a different process, by mirroring a portion of the photograph.

## Experiment 94: Mirror transform (flip image)

---

### Aim:

This experiment investigates the altered representation and form of the body when the image is cut in the middle and flipped on its y-axis.

### Precedent:



Meltem Isik, Suspicious Affinities (Untitled #7), 2015

### Method:

Duplicate the left side of the image, flip and adjoin to the edge of the photograph.

### Post-production settings:

- Use Rectangular Marquee tool in Adobe Photoshop to create selection of the left half of the image.
- Duplicate the selection (Layer > New > New layer via copy).
- Use Transform tool, then Flip Horizontal, and shift to the right and reposition the selection until the left edge adjoins to the right of the original selection in step one.
- Use Spot Healing Brush with 0% hardness to brush over the connected edge of the upper portion of the body and slightly on the lower leg region to merge the two components together.



Selecting component



Flip duplicated layer along y-axis

**Results:****Reflections:**

Another altered representation is present for this experiment. The originally kneeling body has transformed into the appearance of a frowning face. If I did not use the Spot Healing Brush to brush the joint, the dark pigmentation of the skin can create an impression of a nose. However, brushing over this dark pigmentation causes the body to become more abstract in its representation. The clean lighting also allows for the integration of the image to be more seamless. If the body was dramatically lit from a different angle, the flipped image would result in an unnatural and odd lighting that gives away the sense of reality and might cause the integration to suffer. This has similar results to the Flat Mirror experiments in Chapter 2; however, digital technology has revealed an ability to surpass the border and allow for a merging of body parts to create an uncanny image.

## Experiment 95: Distortions in scale and perspective — truncation and foreshortening

---

### Aim:

This experiment investigates manipulation of perspective and selective scaling of body components to foreshorten and truncate the body.

### Precedent:



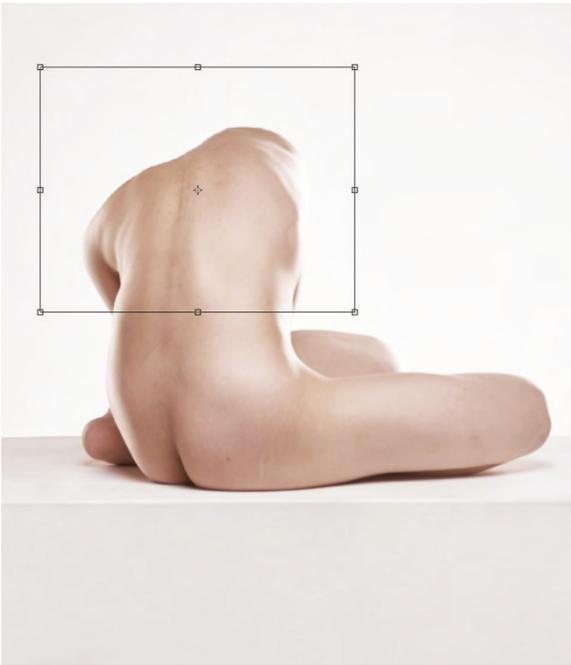
Edward Weston, *Nude*, 1925

### Method:

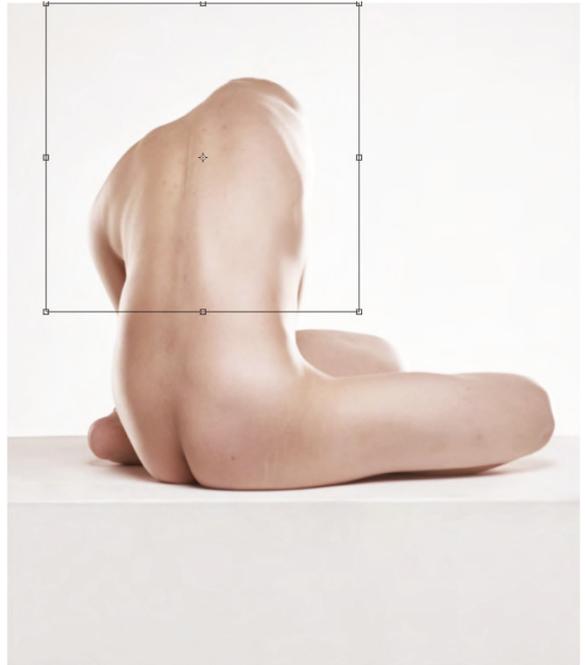
Use 'distort' and 'perspective' options in Transform tool and manipulate the source image using available 8 anchor points.

### Post-production settings:

- Use Rectangular Marquee tool in Adobe Photoshop to create selection.
  - Approach 1: Use Transform tool, drag one of the edge anchor points and either extend or contract. Do this one, two or three times.
  - Approach 2: Use Transform tool, change to Transform>Perspective, drag one of the corner anchor points left or right to adjust perspective. Switch to Transform>Distort, to reduce severity of perspective distortion.
  - Reconstruct the set for Approach 2 to reconstruct the frame and retain realness of a photograph using Clone Stamp tool.



1) Selection in source image



2) 1st distortion: Drag top anchor point to extend



3) 2nd distortion: Create new selection, drag right anchor point to contract body



4) 3rd distortion: Adjust perspective, then use Distort and drag top anchor point down to reduce the primitiveness of exaggerated perspective distortion.

**Results:**



(a) Following from 3rd distortion, reconstructing the background and set using Clone Stamp tool



(b) Following from 2nd distortion, reconstructing the background and set using Clone Stamp tool

**Reflections:**

When changing perspectives and distorting scale, it is important to note that this simple method of selecting and transforming also reconfigures the background as well. Given that the source image has a simple setting of white neutral colours, the background is easily reconstructed. Reconstruction enables the photograph to exist in a real state, whereas if I were to leave the photograph in its transformed state, when the shape of the image becomes trapezoidal or narrowed, it leaves evidence of post-production manipulation and renders the effect of uncanny defamiliarisation ineffective. In (a), the body is truncated similar to a preceding photograph by Edward Weston — *Nude* (1925). The body is disproportionate — the back is smaller than the enlarged thigh. In comparison, (b) shows the opposite, of a towering back overshadowing a dwarfed thigh. To realise an extended version of an uncanny form, the next experiment will develop these results by incorporating elements of duplication, as established in the previous experiment.

## Experiment 96: Blending components of the body for seamless integration

---

### Aim:

This experiment simulates the process of body fusion in creating unfamiliarly situated body components that do not belong or exist in actuality.

### Precedent:



Edward Weston, *Nude*, 1925

### Method:

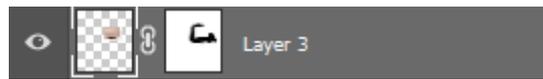
Use combination of Layer Masks and Clone Stamp tool to refine the fusion of additional body components.

### Post-production settings:

- Select and duplicate specific body component. Drag to a different location on the body using combination of transform and rotation.
- Create Layer Mask and brush back undesirable elements of the background inherent in the duplicated body component layer.
- Adjust the highlights and shadows at the connecting points to heighten seamless integration.



Duplicate and shift component



Create layer mask and brush away undesirable elements



Clean up highlights and shadow to connect the body further



Repeat process as desired

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

In conducting this method of distorting the body, it is noted that unfamiliar extensions of the body, such as the result, are too far removed from reality. While the experiment has proven that blending the components (through the use of Clone Stamp and Layer Masks) shows a connection being established with the body components, the components itself are too foreign to the body. Integration of various components needs to consider the type and shape of body in order to create an unsettling body, in which it is not immediately apparent that it is distorted and defamiliarised. The body must be manipulated into a state where the components can potentially be real.

Perhaps the duplicated component does not suit the location where it has been placed. It appears too out of place. The next experiment will source compatible body components from two constituent photographs and composite them together into an uncanny form.

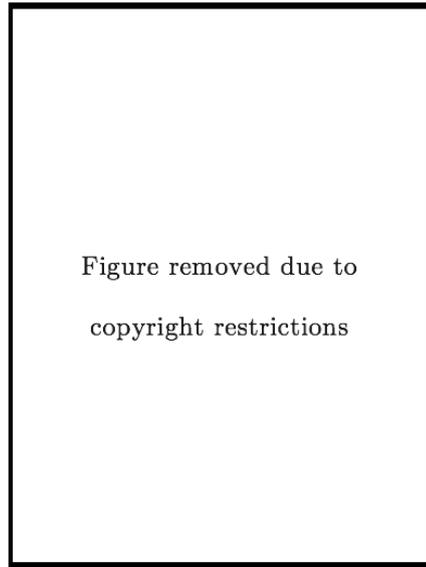
## Experiment 97: Blending bodies from two separate photographs

---

**Aim:**

This experiment will fuse two components of the body from two separate photographs to create an abnormality in the human body.

**Precedent:**



Asger Carlsen, *Hester*, 2012

**Method:**

Use combination of Layer Masks and Clone Stamp tool to refine the fusion of additional body components.

**Post-production settings:**



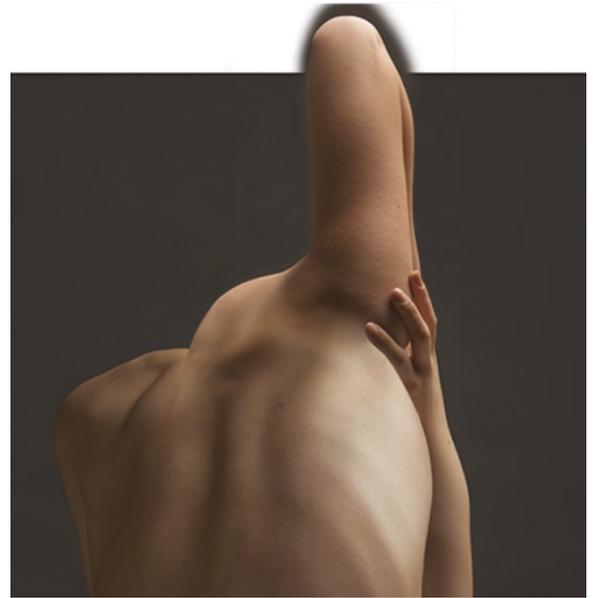
Source image #1



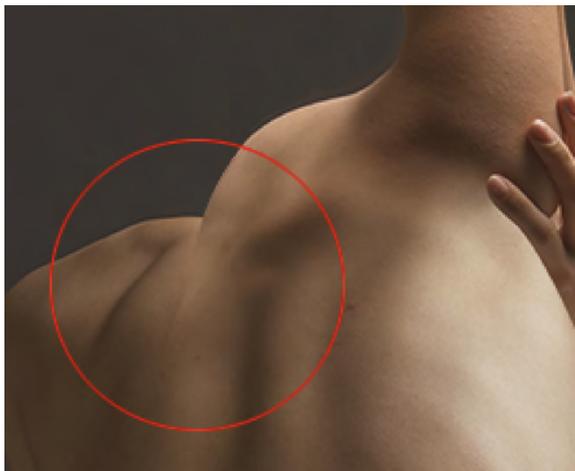
Source image #2



1) Background extended and 2nd image composited into 1st image, aligning hand on right to shoulder



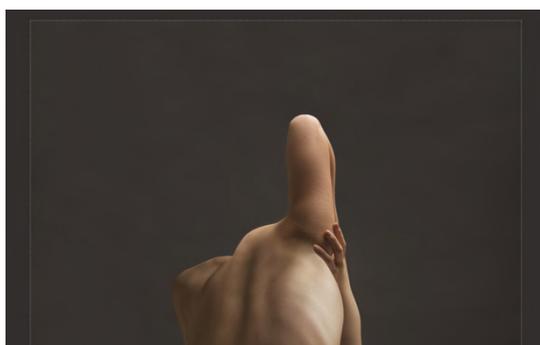
2) Apply Layer Mask to remove head and distracting body on left. Bodies joined up on left and right. Hand merged with shoulder.



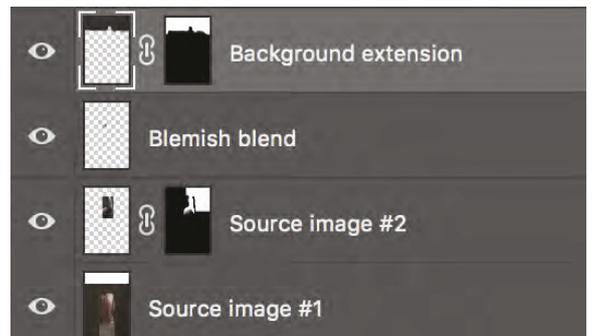
3) Joint of the composite requires attention for seamless integration



4) Blend with clone stamp tool. Extend shadow on the right up the back.



5) Extend background using clone stamp tool and mask around the arm



6) Screenshot of layers highlighting steps taken

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

Two things appear to be happening in this photograph. The shoulder joint on the right has been replaced by a hand, inverting the orientation of the arm. Previously descending, now the arm is ascending upwards and grabbing onto the shoulder joint. This adds a perplexing element to the photograph as the viewer can begin to wonder where that arm is coming from. The second observation is the formation of a new arm that is ascending upwards. That arm, which is originally from the second source image, is now in place of the arm previously present in the first source image; however, upon closer observation, it is inverted and cannot be positioned as such in actuality. This can provide for a very strange and disconcerting experience. Of extra note: A selection requires approximately 0.5 to 1 pixel feathered edge to match the consistency of the edge of the body and make the result more realistic. A selection with 0 pixels feathered results in a very sharp edge, which is impossible for the camera to capture.

The hand in this image is a special circumstance, in that it facilitates the uncanny rather than merely being a clear depiction of a familiar body component. As much of the body is distorted and abstracted in appearance, the hand offsets the angst in the image. Furthermore, its uncanny placement provokes the uncanny sensation. The next experiment will seek to develop further the notion of composite photography by including another constituent photograph to extend the composited uncanny body.

## Experiment 98: Blending bodies from three separate photographs

---

### Aim:

This experiment supplements the previous experiment and aims to extend the body further in an investigation of the amalgamated body.

### Method:

Use combination of Layer Masks and Clone Stamp tool to refine the fusion of additional body components.

### Post-production settings:



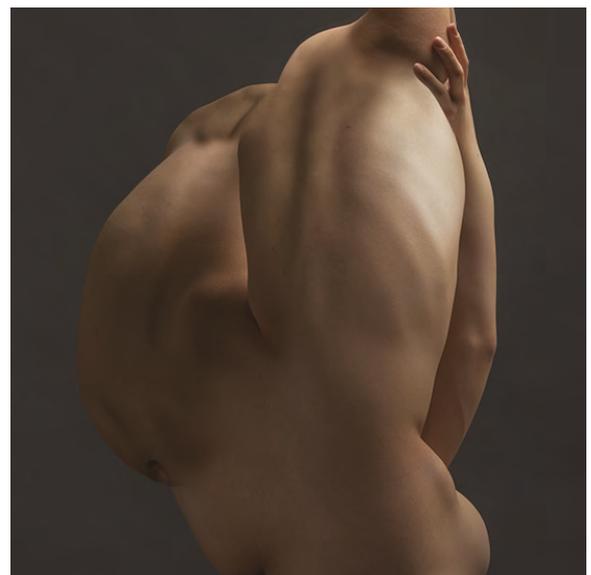
Source image #1



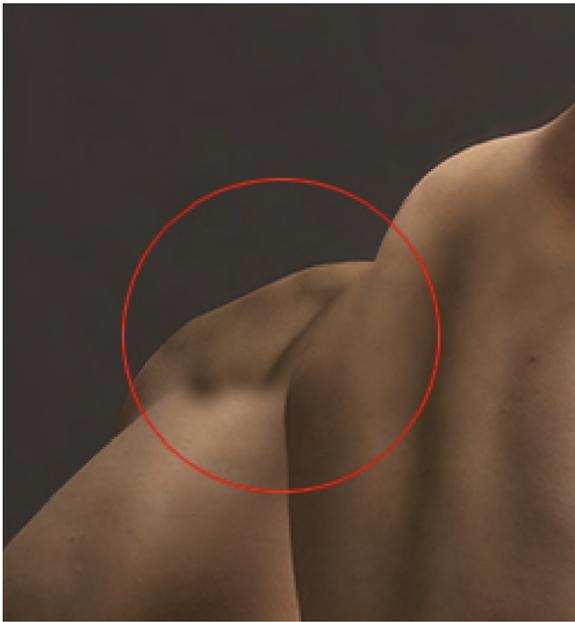
Source image #2



1) 2nd image composited into 1st image, positioned on left



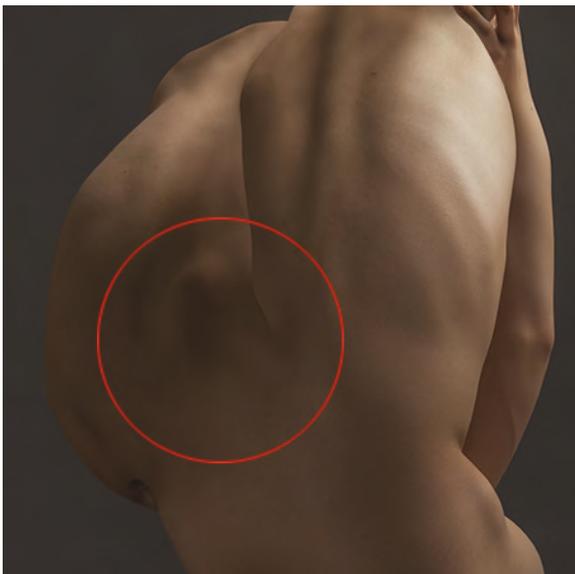
2) Apply Layer Mask to remove familiar components, i.e. hand, head and majority of right side of body



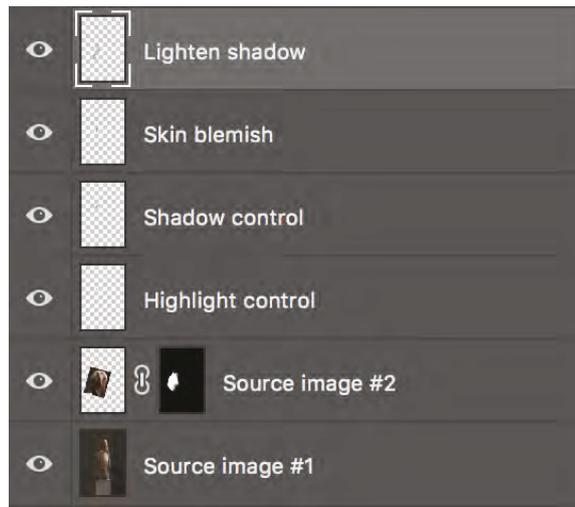
3) Joint of the composite requires attention for seamless integration



4) Blend highlight and shadows with clone stamp tool



5) Smooth skin and blend highlights and shadows further



6) Screenshot of layers highlighting steps taken

**Results:****Reflections:**

In comparison to the previous experiment, the effects of photo manipulation are more obvious and attract immediate attention from the viewer. There is obviously a strange transformation occurring in this image, as the body is merged together with another body. Including this third body gives slight context to the ascending arm on the right, as if that arm can potentially belong to the body on the left. I find the result of this experiment less effective in comparison to its precedent. Main reasons include the observation of multiple grooves and identifiers of similar muscle, such as the spinal cord. Another reason is the sharp line in between the two bodies. While I have already remedied this by feathering the edge by 1 pixel to reduce the edge sharpness, the line itself visibly separates the bodies, as if it is resisting mutation.

For the next experiment, I will deviate from the current trend of digital reconstruction experiments and produce a composition that subverts established notions of the familiar. That is, the presence of the familiar *legs* and *feet*, within a defamiliarised and uncanny context.

## Experiment 99: Photographic compositions of the same bodies

---

**Aim:**

This experiment seeks to create an illusion of a bodily reality by compositing images that have been photographed specifically for the purpose of combining them into one whole image.

**Precedent:**



Source images

**Method:**

Camera on tripod. Photograph main image with one plinth on top of another thinner plinth. Remove top plinth and place body into first position on the left. Photograph body each time in new position. Cut out legs in *Adobe Photoshop* using Pen tool.

**Post-production settings:**



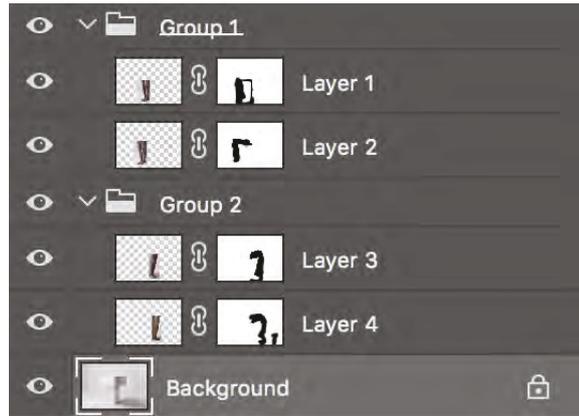
1) Main image



2) Roughly cut out legs from all four images and place into main image

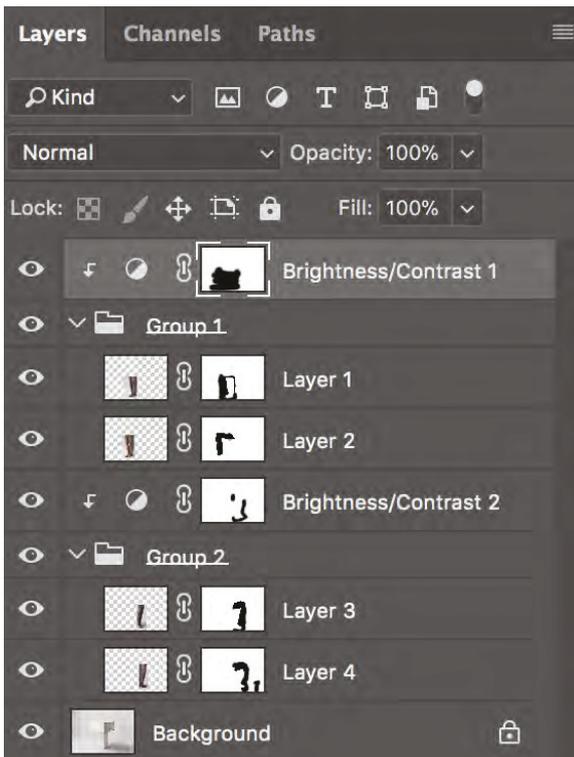


3) Use Pen tool to mask around each leg

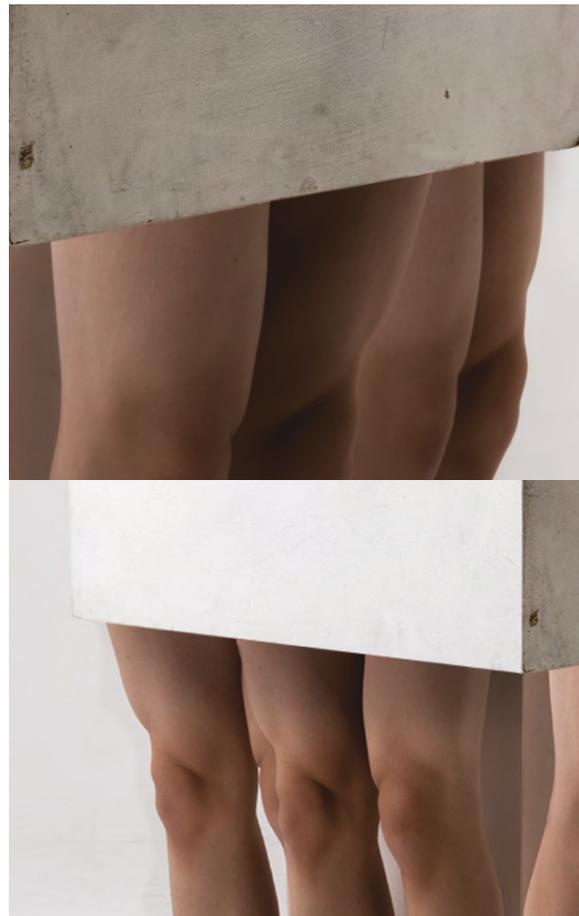


4) Create Layer Mask for each leg layer and apply mask (with 0.9px feathered edge) using paths created with Pen tool in Step 3. Use white brush to brush back in shadows underneath the feet.

Place layers with left legs in one group. Place layers with right legs in another group.



5) Create and assign two Brightness/Contrast Adjustment Layers for each group. For the group of left legs, set brightness to -49. For the group of right legs, set brightness to -72. Set both layer masks to hidden (white), and brush the leg area just underneath the top plinth to give the effect of casted shadows.



**Results:****Reflections:**

The results look slightly odd. The body as a whole is not visible, yet four sets of legs are recognisable. They appear cold and bare, almost as if they were humanised mannequin legs. This method of compositing the body requires a greater attention to detail to seamlessly integrate the legs into one image. The result of the composition does not convey a distorted or uncanny body, but instead an uncanny scene. This is perhaps attributed to the obviousness of the legs and the unreasonable scenario it is situated in. This confirms the proposed assumption in the last experiment's reflection. A composition that can convey distorted bodies while similarly creating an uncanny sensation, like this experiment, perhaps requires the body specifically photographed while distorted in posture, or photographing close-ups of the body and upscaling them in post-production before compositing. The next experiment will move away from an examination of composite manipulation and revert back to analysing specific details of the body and how the removal of familiar components can abstract representations of the body.

## Experiment 100: Removal of subtle body details

---

### Aim:

This experiment observes the state of the body when subtle details are removed from the body.

### Method:

Use combination of Clone Stamp and Spot Healing tool to brush away blemishes and/or various details in the photograph.

### Post-production settings:



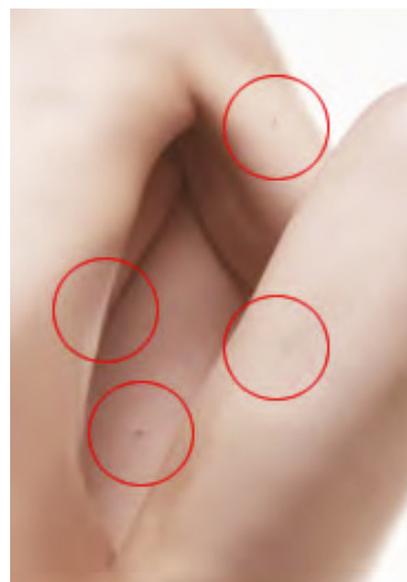
Brush away rib cage and skin fold at hip joint



Remove spinal cord



Blend shadows and highlights



Remove marks, spots and visible nipple

**Results:**

Source image



After post-production

**Reflections:**

When viewing the image by itself after manipulation, the effects are not immediately recognisable. With more attention placed on details and focus on blending the components seamlessly, the manipulation is hard to discern. Therefore, when subtle details are removed, as shown in this experiment, the sensation of uncanny is not an immediate sensation. The skin folds at the hip joint facilitate recognition of the fact that it is skin and a joint that belongs to a human body. The non-perception of such skin fold at a location that *requires* the representation of this fact thus provokes an uncanny response to the body in the image. The smoothing of the ribcage removes the musculature and bone structure of the body. This abstracts the body, while the clear depiction of skin and overall body conformation confirms its existence as a human entity. It is previously determined that the uncanny requires a need to creep up on the unexpectant viewer; however there needs to be a stronger indication of it, otherwise the viewer will never be able to discern a normal body from an uncanny body. While the results from this experiment suggest the onset of an uncanny form, I will turn to a more obvious removal of a familiar component in the next experiment.

## Experiment 101: Obfuscating the familiar

---

### Aim:

The aim of this experiment is to utilise a photograph with obvious representations of identity, such as the face, genitals, hands or feet, and obfuscate them in an attempt to enhance defamiliarisation.

### Precedent:

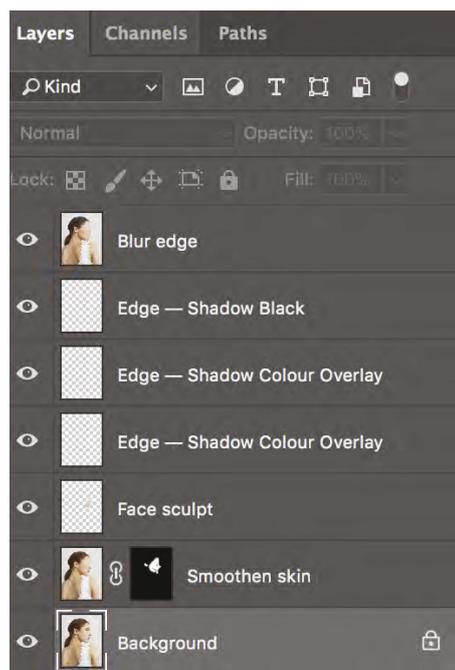


Sam Jinks, *Distortions*, 2005

### Method:

Use a combination of Clone Stamp, Spot Healing, and Brush tool to blend elements in the photograph.

### Post-production settings:



Results:



(a)



(b)

**Reflections:**

Previous experiments revealed how cutting away the familiar is a direct removal of the familiar from the image. The face in this experiment is replaced by a layer of skin from another section of the body, yet I also tested sculpting the face to remove facial features. In (a), the facial features (eyes, nose, mouth) are directly eliminated and no longer recognisable. The pen tool sculpted the general ovoid shape of the face, then a selection is made to allow cloning of the skin within the ovoid shape. On the other hand, (b) keeps the facial structure, but covers the facial features in a layer of skin. Visible indentations of the eyes and nose are still obvious and highlighted in the image. Both results work well, in their own rights, in defamiliarising identity, through different approaches of obfuscation. The body in the image is notably uncanny given its highly human-like conformation, and its hair, ears, nose and mouth, while the eyes are patched up and invisible (b). Alternatively, this is similarly the case in (a), except there is no face but there is a presence of a head. The next experiment will attend to a different method of reconstruction by transforming body conformation, either through emphasis or reduction.

## Experiment 102: Enlarging body components (Liquify)

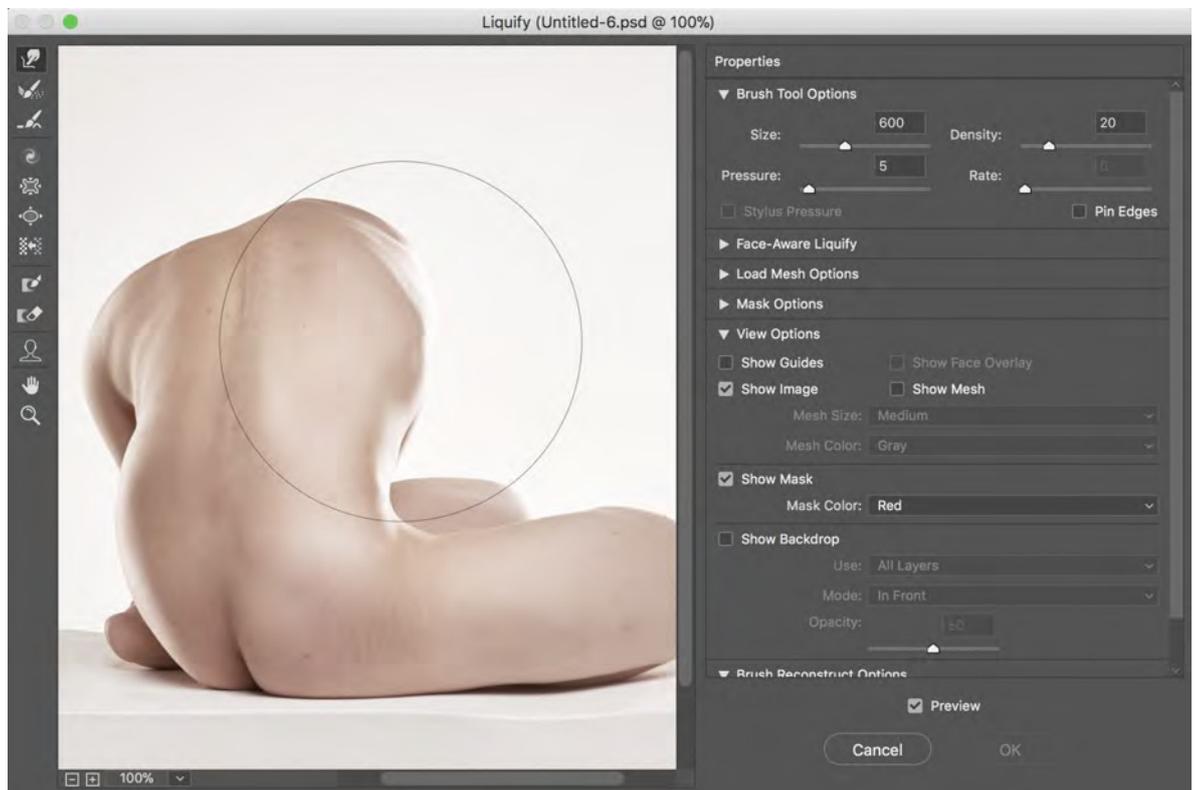
### Aim:

This experiment aims to distort the body through warping elements of the body into larger proportions.

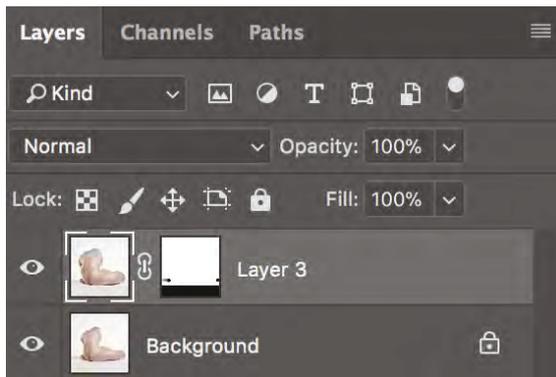
### Method:

Duplicate image into new layer, then use Liquify tool in *Adobe Photoshop* to adjust body components.

### Post-production settings:



- 1) Brush size set to large in order to morph large portions of the body. Pressure and Density set low to control the amount of transformation.



2) Layer mask applied to brush back layer and reveal straightened plinth



3) Plinth straightened

### Results:



### Reflections:

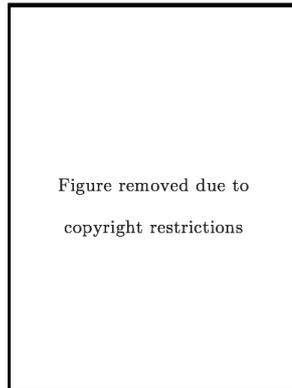
While this experiment focuses on enlarging the body, I also pushed the left waist inwards a tiny bit to emphasise the left shoulder and left hip. The results reveal a body of unrealistic proportions. The back is bulbous and hunched over, while the thigh on the right undergoes similar post-production treatment. Due to the large scale of the liquify brush, all components surrounding the subject (body) are similarly shifted around. Minute details such as these are identifiers that give away the illusion of a false reality, detailing the photograph as primarily a fake. Thus I opted to apply a layer mask to bring back the originally straight platform the body resides on. This is to maintain a sense of order in the photograph and not allow it to lean too far towards the fake side. To examine the extremities of this type of digital reconstructive tool, the next experiment will emphasise the distortion of form by exaggerating the liquifying effect.

## Experiment 103: Emphasising the transformation of muscle shape

### Aim:

This experiment aims to distort the body through warping elements of the body into larger proportion and affecting the structure of the body.

### Precedent:

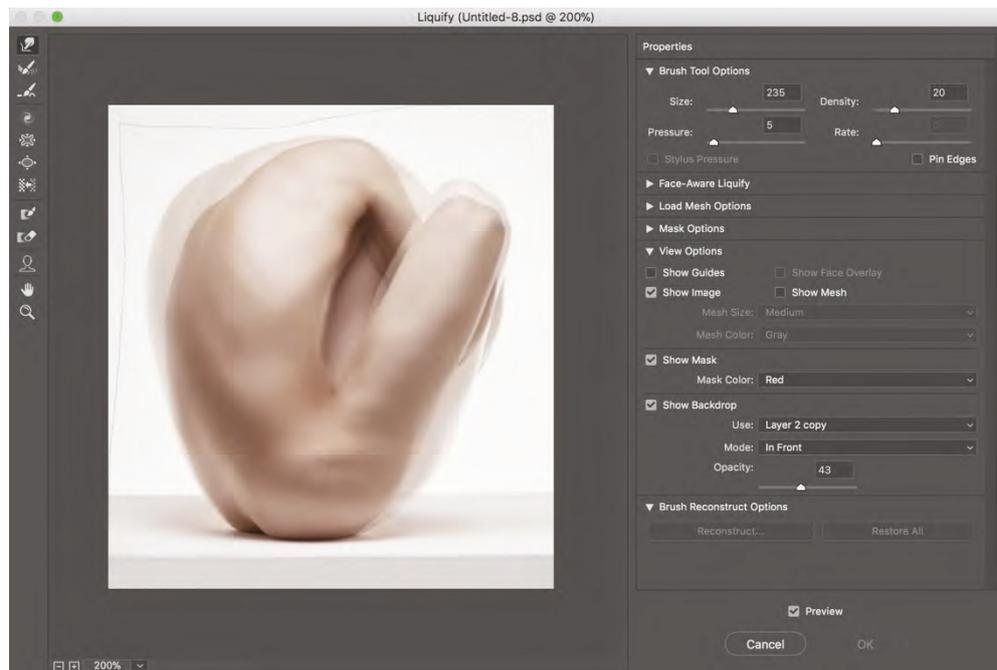


Edward Weston, *Pepper No. 30*, 1930

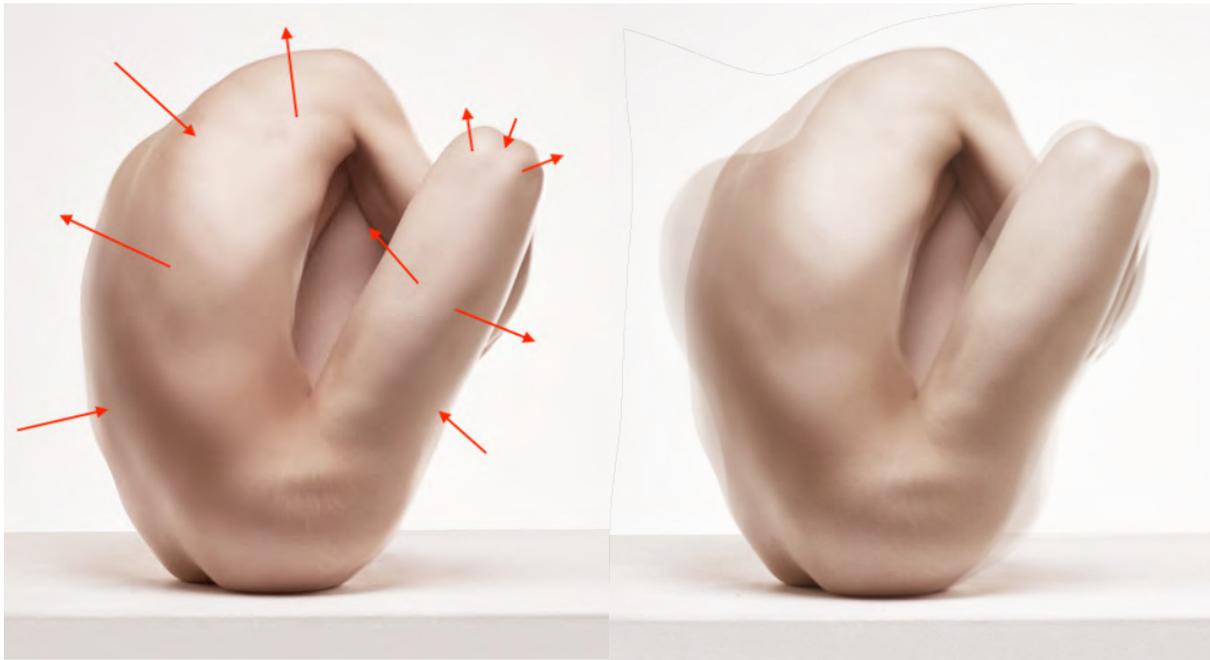
### Method:

Use Liquify tool in *Adobe Photoshop* to adjust body components.

### Post-production settings:



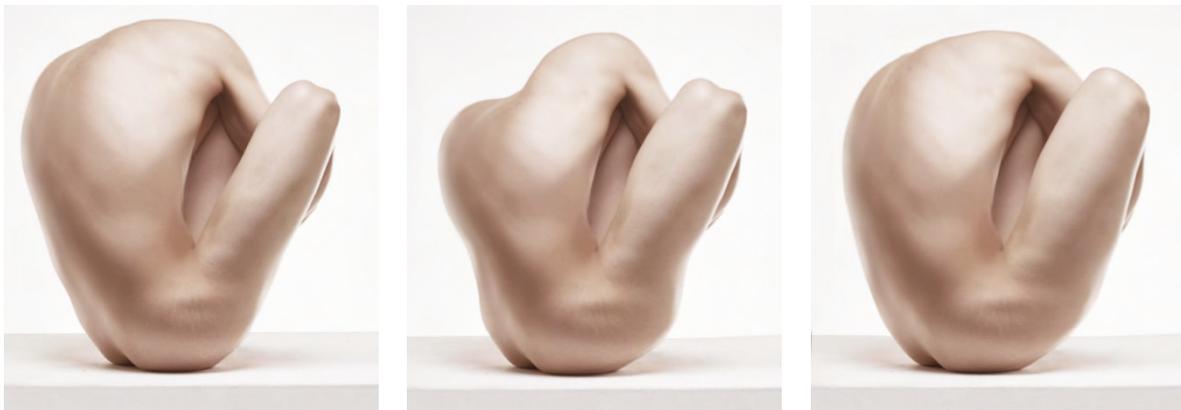
- (1) Option 1: Smoothen edge of body into a smooth curvaceous line using Liquify, then make body more plump. Screenshot shows comparison between source image and when the body is liquified.



(2) Option 2: Use Liquify and morph the body according to the direction of arrows

3) Option 2 when liquified with backdrop showing before and after comparison

**Results:**



(a)

(b)

(c)

**Reflections:**

In comparison to the last experiment, these results emphasise the unrealistic proportions and structure of the body. These bodies are inherently false and unconventional due to the photographic manipulation.

(a) — comes across slightly more realistic although triangular.

(b) — aligns itself more with Weston’s *Pepper No. 30* (1930), adopting a capsicum shape.

(c) — is more ovoid and bulbous and can also be perceived as slightly realistic.

Viewing the results and not the process can identify the body in (a) and (c) as naturally occurring as a result of its posture for the photograph. The bodies can be perceived as plump by

nature and their proportions emphasised. To develop this experiment, I will consider including the method of using Liquify, as established in this experiment, as well as using the previous methods of removing particular body components using the Pen tool. As I progress, I will begin to combine previously established methods and work with these tools in tandem to generate a body of uncanny proportions and representation. The next experiment will revisit a previous experiment and test the Liquify tool as a method of reconstruction.

## Experiment 104: Shifting pixels to digitally reconstruct an uncanny body component

---

**Aim:**

This experiment will examine the efficacy of the Liquify tool for reconstructing dismemberments generated by the Pen tool.

**Precedent:**



**Post-production settings:**

Dismember a familiar component of the body using the Pen tool and rely on the Liquify tool to reconstruct the dismembered section seamlessly.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

I previously asserted that the prong-like appendage facilitates a type of uncanny, reality given how it is bony in appearance. Yet the prong-like appendage itself is an unfamiliar component that does not exist on the human body. What's bizarre about the results from this experiment is

that filling in the gap modifies the unfamiliar into a state that can be classified as familiar, yet is not itself a familiar protrusion. The experiment's processes set up a paradox; however, the Liquify tool finds itself reconstructing the appendage into an uncanny form. The next experiment will examine the effects when exaggerating proportions of the body using the Liquify tool. The aim will be to conform the reconstructed body to a known and uncanny element.

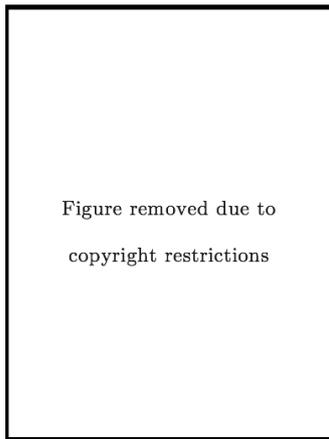
## Experiment 105: Transforming the shape of the body to conform with a known object

---

### Aim:

This experiment aims to adjust the proportions of the body to match the shape of a known object. Man Ray's *Le Violon d'Ingres* (1924) is the set precedent for the photographer's ability to associate the shape of a woman's body with the shape of a violin's body.

### Precedent:



Man Ray, *Le Violon d'Ingres*, 1924

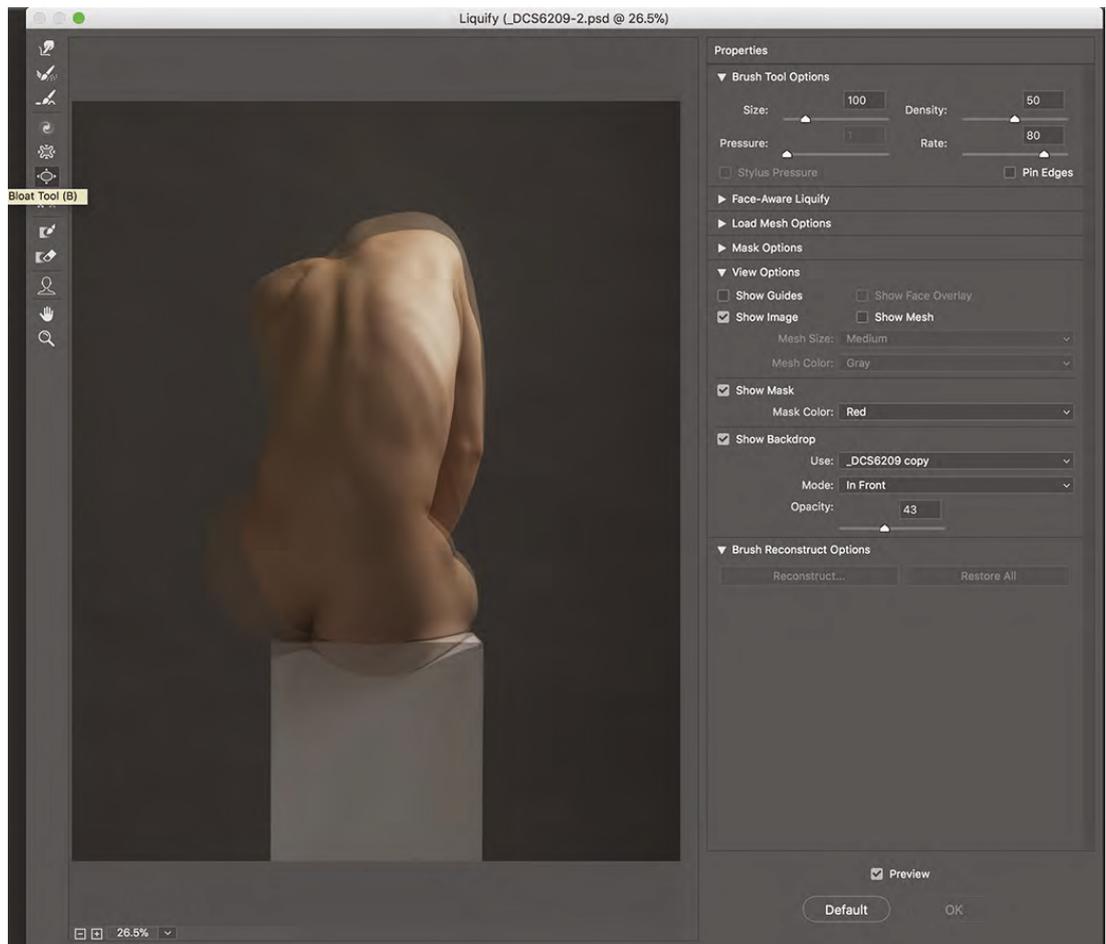


Lin Wei, Source image for Experiment

### Method:

Use Liquify tool in *Adobe Photoshop* to shift body components around. Use Pen tool to mask components, and Clone Stamp tool to hide components. Use Brush tool with 10% opacity to brush shadows in.

## Post-production settings:



- 2) Use Bloat tool in Liquify to make buttocks consistently round. Use Forward Warp tool to enlarge right shoulder and dip the left shoulder.



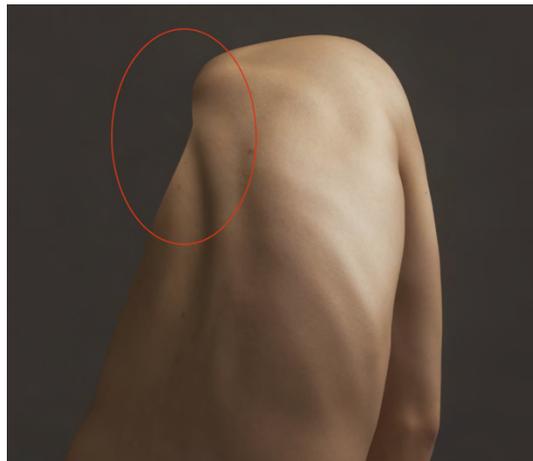
3) Result of Step 2.



4) Use Pen tool to select portion of body. Make selection with 0.7px feathered edge.



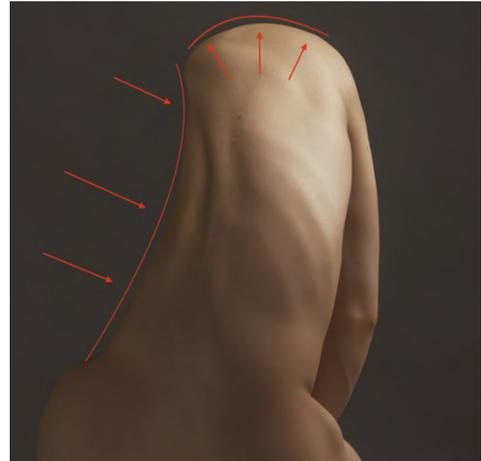
5) Result of Step 4 with left shoulder removed



6) Use Liquify to reduce bump on lower curve and emphasise upper bump



7) Using path created from Pen tool in Step 4, invert selection and use Brush tool with black colour at 10% opacity to fill in and make shadows more realistic.



8) Use Liquify to push left side of body in whilst keeping a consistent curve, while enhancing the top of the body.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

In comparison to Ray's *Le Violon d'Ingres* (1924), there is an association between instrumental object and the body with minimal alteration of the body apart from a simple juxtaposition. Instead, I opted to transform and manipulate the body to resemble the object. The result of this

experiment falls in line with the surrealists' desire to depict visualisations that conform with their fetish. Having an end-goal visualised is a prerequisite for this experiment, otherwise there is a plethora of options into which the body can be transformed. The simplistic body in the original source image allowed it to be much simpler and easier to manipulate the body in this experiment. Darkening the shadows on the left side of the body allows realism to be retained in the image. As the body has been manipulated into a distorted form that does not bear resemblance to its original appearance, the arm on the right is left untouched to keep the body in line with that of the uncanny. Keeping the arm in the image prevents the image from being purely phallic, but still strangely phallic.

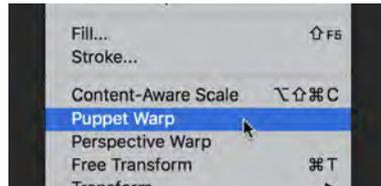
As I investigate new tools to deform and transform the body's shape, I came across a type of Transform tool in Photoshop — Puppet Warp. For the next experiment, I will investigate its effectiveness and whether it can defamiliarise while keeping elements of familiarity in the image for further consideration of applying further tools to digitally reconstruct the body.

## Experiment 106: Puppet-warp transform to reshape the whole structure of the body (edit>puppet warp)

### Aim:

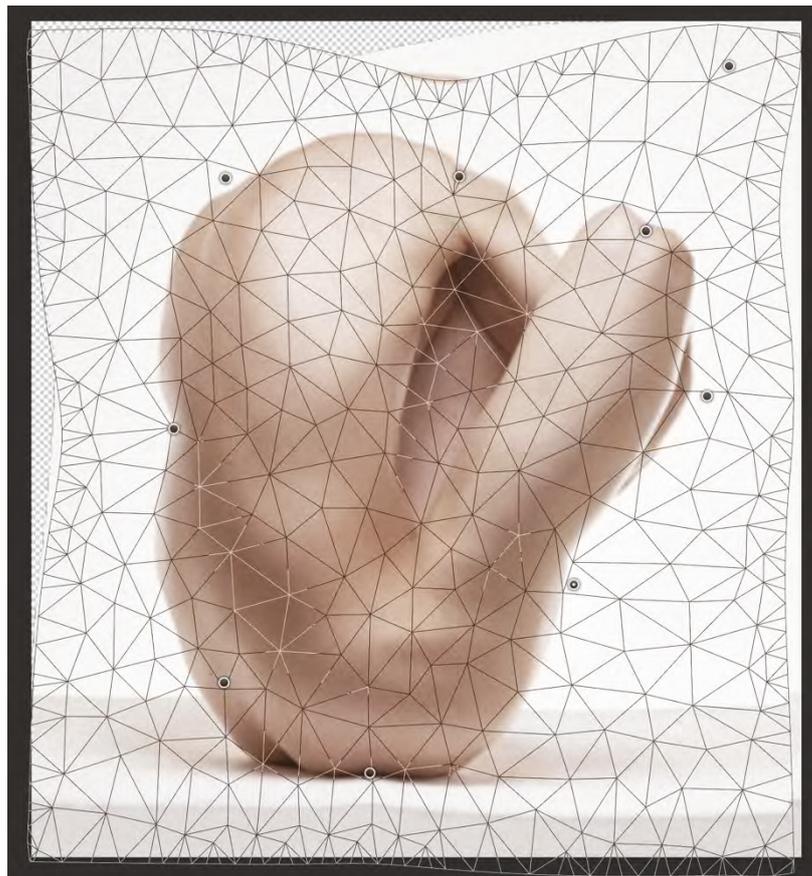
This experiment explores an alternative method, Puppet Warp in *Adobe Photoshop*, and its efficacy in transforming and distorting proportions of the body.

### Method:



Using *Edit > Puppet Warp* on the original source image, click on various areas of the photograph to generate movable anchor points

### Post-production settings:



Create anchor points and shift points to various locations

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

This method of distorting the body produces less refined and polished results compared to using other tools such as Liquify. This may be due to the limitations of the Puppet Warp tool and generating nodes that shift at a point. When dragging one anchor point, the body components at another anchor point remain fixed in position, thus creating a sharp distortion that gives forth strong impressions of falsification. On the other hand, not excluding the element of the plinth finds that the presence of the plinth and its defined edge may be a reason for its heightened unrealistic appearance. Perhaps the true function of this method of distortion relies on minimal shifts from its original locale, and also to transform photographs of objects with protruding limbs. The body in the source photograph for this experiment however is bunched up into a ball, resulting in less tangible components to shift without affecting other areas of the body. Thus, this method of distortion produces results of lesser reality.

The next experiment will examine a different method of warping to reconstruct and extend components of the body, with the addition of utilising a combination of tools to conceal and extend body elements.

## Experiment 107: Warping processes as a method of digitally reconstructing elements into an uncanny state

---

### Aim:

This experiment will utilise previously established reconstructive methods of the Pen, Clone Stamp and Liquify tool to reconstruct the body. To further heighten the uncanny, the experiment will examine Transform>Warp as a possible method of selective warping to distort the human body.

### Precedent:



### Method:

Use Liquify tool in *Adobe Photoshop* to shift body components around. Use Pen tool to mask components, and Clone Stamp tool to hide components. Use Edit>Warp tool on a selection to modify its composition.

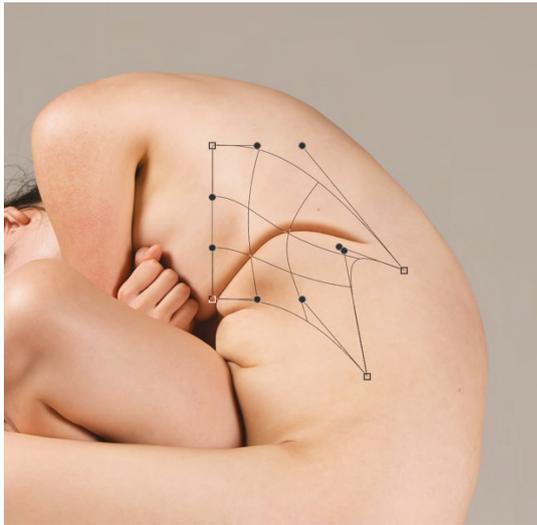
### Post-production settings:



1) Use Liquify to morph various sections of the body (such as the back and the top thigh).



2) Create a new layer. Use Clone Stamp to extend the skin fat fold.



3) On the Clone Stamped layer, use (Transform>Warp) and drag the anchor points to reform the extended skin fat fold into a curved line that descends downwards.



4) Use Pen tool to make selection around the body, cutting into the head and the shoulder joint. Make selection with 0.5px feather.



5) Use Clone Stamp and Brush to fill in the background, which will unveil the new form based on the outline formed from the Pen tool.



6) Use Clone Stamp to remove the hand. Use Brush tool to reconstruct the shadow.



7) Use Liquify to push the sharp protrusion downwards.

**Results:**



**Reflections:**

The Warp tool can also be a tool of defamiliarisation similar to the Liquify tool. This experiment's approach to the tool required the component (i.e. the skin fold line) to be thin as well as in its own layer. This allowed for an easier approach to morphing the line into a different shape without affecting other elements. This avoids the issue found in the last experiment, where even the background morphed alongside the subject. As a result, the extended skin fold is

in an odd position. It is also questionable how it extends and cuts deep into the side of the body. Furthermore, the successive use of Photoshop tools conceals the body posture's failure to procure defamiliarisation. The next experiment will revisit a different type of composite manipulation. Rather than compositing constituent elements together to form a newly created body, the next experiment will composite two elements into a *composition*, similar to a still-life composition. This may alter representations of not just the body, but also the object, as the body is juxtaposed alongside the object.

## Experiment 108: Composites and juxtapositions (placing body next to objects or in situations)

---

### Aim:

This experiment explores the juxtaposition of bodies and objects in situations of still life. It further explores whether the representation of the body is altered as a result of an established relationship between the two subjects.

### Precedent:



Source image 1a

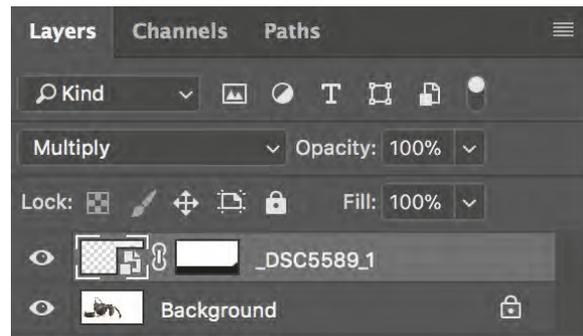


Source image 1b

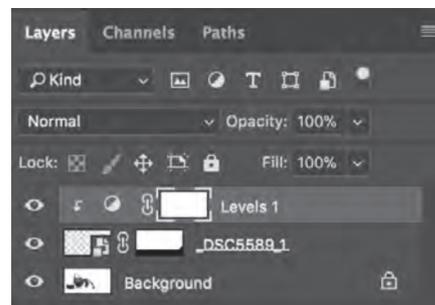
### Method:

Mask the body and keep the shadow, and composite into a still-life photograph. Source images must be photographed in similar lighting scenarios for realistic composition.

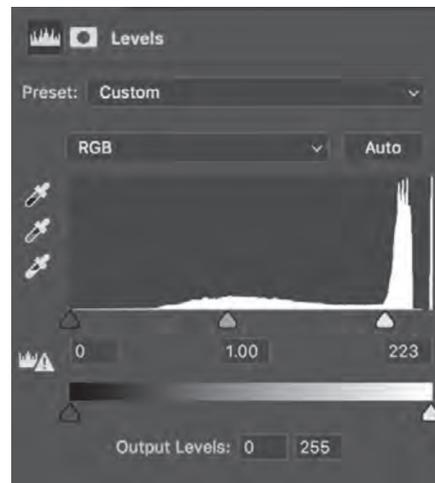
### Post-production settings:



Place Source image 1a into position in image of Source image 1b. Create Layer Mask and brush out plinth. Set Blending Mode from Normal to Multiply.



Create Levels Adjustment Layer and assign this adjustment layer to the layer of the body (hold Alt and click in between Levels layer and body layer). This results in any adjustment in the Levels layer to only apply to the assigned layer.



Increase White Point Input Level (for this experiment, 223) to blow out background



Create new Levels Adjustment Layer and set White Point Output Levels to 240. This will reduce the whiteness of the background to an off-white.

### Results:



### Reflections:

Compositing the body requires scaling the body to the size of the objects in the still life image. It creates two scenarios, where the object is as big as the body, or the body is small and object-like, similar to the object. In this image, an antique compass is resting outside of its case and the body is placed on the right of it. In terms of body distortion, there is none. However, in terms of distortion in perception, the body is aligned with the object. This method of transformation can be achieved in photography through forced perspective; however, the advantage of compositing the body in a digital application allows the freedom to shift the body around and adjust its scale; every change affects the perception of the body as an object.

Up till now, the experiments have investigated various avenues of manipulation using the several tools to digitally construct, remove, deform and reconstruct the body in the photograph

alongside means of compositing. The following experiments will seek to incorporate all these tools to create an archetypal body that constitutes of all these tools and methods to manifest an uncanny body.

## Experiment 109: Manifesting multiple presences of a body in a solitary body

### Aim:

This experiment applies reconstruction methods to deform the natural structure of the body and introduce various muscular arrangements to produce a human body that contains non-corporeal elements.

### Precedent:

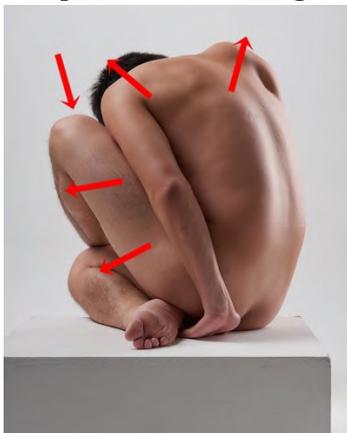


Source image

### Method:

Mask off the hair, reconstruct the foot and hand to resemble an amputated joint. Apply muscular patterns and skin textures from reference images from the same shoot and blend them using masking tools and clone stamping. Deform the legs and enhance the shoulder blades using the Liquefy tool. Reference images are from same shoot with model posing in different ways.

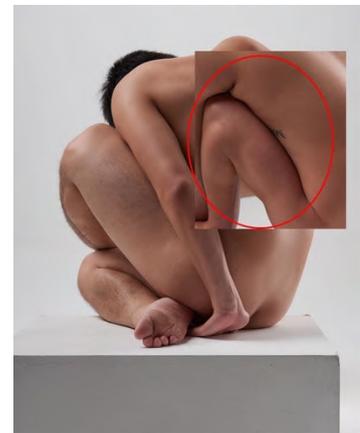
### Post-production settings:



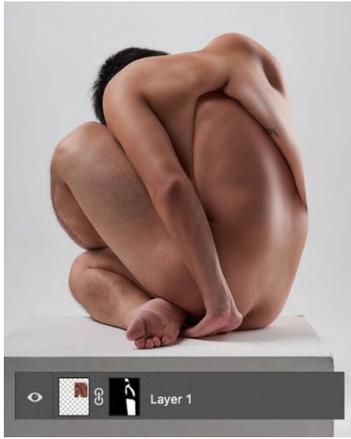
1) Use Liquefy to push knee down, thighs out and shoulder blades out.



2) Result of Liquefy tool



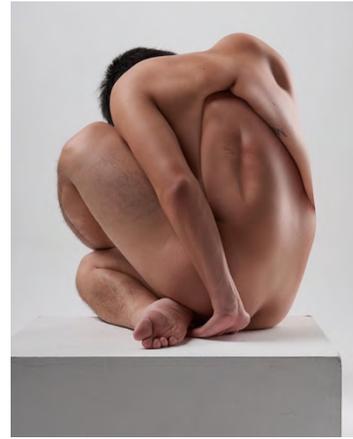
3) Place reference image, align leg to the back in source image.



4) Create Layer Mask for reference image and brush, leaving in the contour of the leg.



5) Place reference image, align the spine to the newly created section.



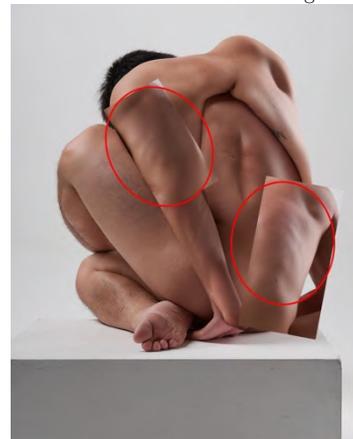
6) Create Layer Mask for reference image and brush, blending the spine into the back of the source image.



7) Reference image used for the dark elbow, which will be used to replace the hand and wrist in the source image and alter representation to resemble dismembered limb.



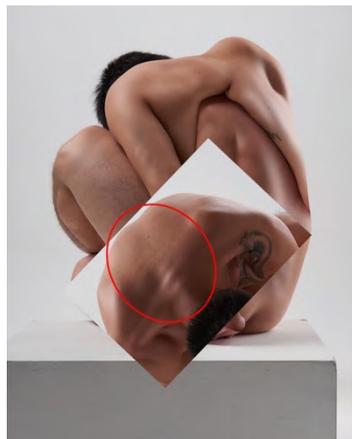
8) Create Layer Mask and blend the elbow to become the endpoint at the wrist for the source image.



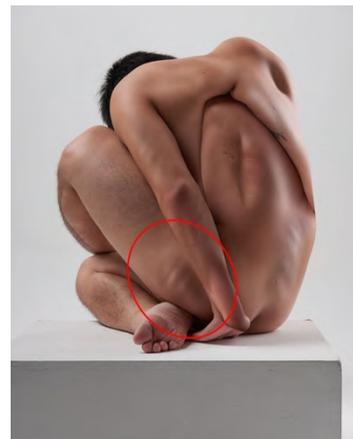
9) Source reference images showcasing skin textures as well as emphasis on muscles. Line up images to sections of the source image.



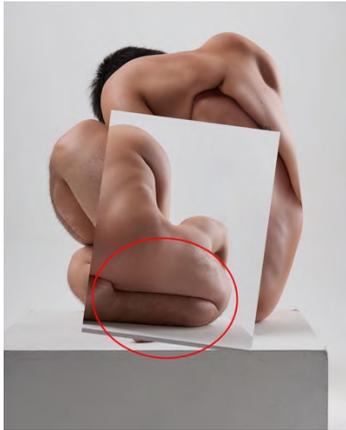
10) Create Layer Mask and blend dark skin in.



11) Source reference image with a dark region to make the region in source image darker and more real. Create Layer Mask and blend the bone formation in.



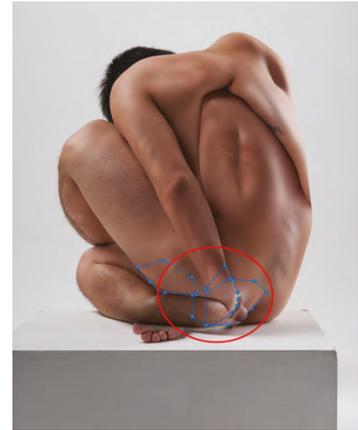
12) Reduce opacity to 70% to make the bony conformation less distinguishable.



13) Source a reference image that has a dark joint which will become the end point that conceals the hand and foot.



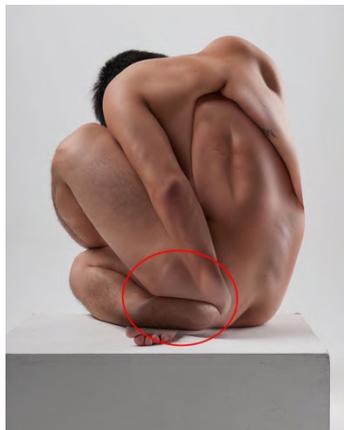
14) Create Layer Mask and blend in the joint, keeping the bottom contour of the leg and cutting off where the contour of the leg meets the wrist and ankle.



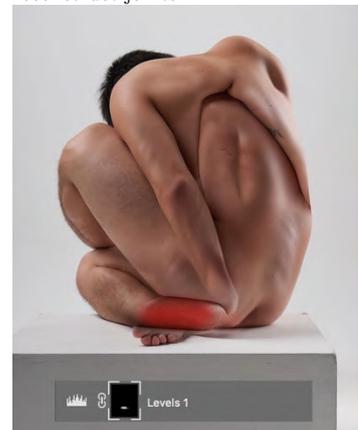
15) Use Pen tool to reconstruct the contours of the limbs for a more natural form. Mask using 1 pixel feather radius for more natural reconstruction and use stamp tool to reconstruct joints.



16) Result of reconstruction



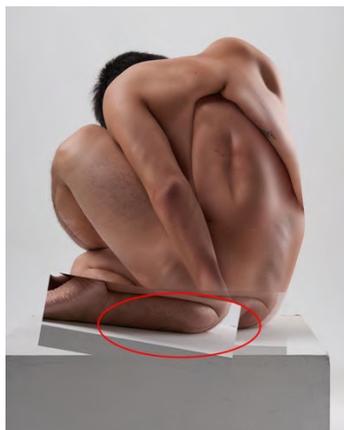
17) Clean and smoothen the joints of the newly created limbs using stamp tool.



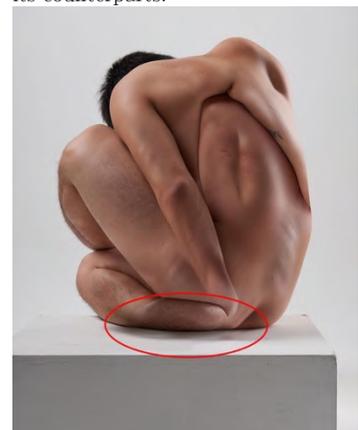
18) Create Levels adjustment, mask and increase midpoints to brighten the new limb to blend the limb with its counterparts.



19) Roughly brush foot out using Stamp tool.



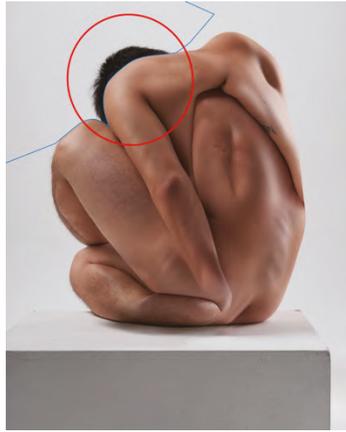
20) Reconstruct contour and accompanying shadows using reference image with similar shadow contour. Duplicate reference image, shift and rotate the duplicate to extend shadow contour for a seamless look.



21) Use Layer Masks to brush in the bottom contour of both reference images.



22) Align the image further with the real by reconstructing the shadow using stamp tool and a black brush with low opacity.



23) Use Pen tool to mask head. Use a 1 pixel feather radius to prep for a smooth contour and natural outcome.



24) Use Stamp tool, sample the grey background and conceal the head.

### Results:



### Reflections:

Applying skin textures and different muscle patterns to the image resembles a form of skin grafting. It is possible to assume that these skin textures can be applicable and can potentially exist in those locations; however, it must be considered that positioning these skin grafts in unnatural positions can forego this assumption. The second reconstruction method of using the Liquify tool to slightly deform the body structure appears to exert no real effort in the reconstruction of form, yet this may be advantageous in recreating the 'creepy' factor which is one necessary condition to the manifestation of the uncanny, where the familiar must slowly be dawned upon with realisation. Strictly speaking, the Liquify effect doesn't highlight the familiar, but it conversely makes it less familiar. The third reconstruction method of introducing form reconstruction and dismembered joints is the most obvious and direct photographic intervention in the deformation of natural corporeality. One can consider observing two, if not three bodies

melding into one single entity. This is beneficial in establishing the outcome as a visualisation of a body form that is strikingly familiar, perhaps overly familiar to the point that it becomes unfamiliar. The inclusion of an additional back creates an illusion of multiple limbs which may owe to the juxtaposition of multiple contours that are coursing along the body. Of further note is the dismemberment of the hands and feet by a reconstructive effort of replacing them with reference elbows: manipulating these end-joints reconstructs the hands and feet from their originally rugged and precipitous form into smooth joints that do not disrupt, but rather, aid in increasing the perception of the body contours.

This experiment can be considered a work that represents the culminating use of multiple reconstructive methods to create a familiar yet unfamiliar form. The form of a human is visible, yet its components suggest an alienating effect at play. The next experiment can consider delving into the opposite, where the form of a human is not visible, yet its components may suggest a familiar disposition. Furthermore, the next experiment may require consideration of post-processing methods to enhance clarity of the familiar components in viewing the distorted form. One method is to increase contrast to achieve separation and emphasise the disjointed components in the image. Another method that can achieve separation is selective dodging and burning to emphasise the misplaced musculature.

This experiment thus finds the uncanny from within a familiar body conformation with unfamiliar bodily attributes. The next experiment will examine the opposite — an unfamiliar body structure with familiar body attributes.

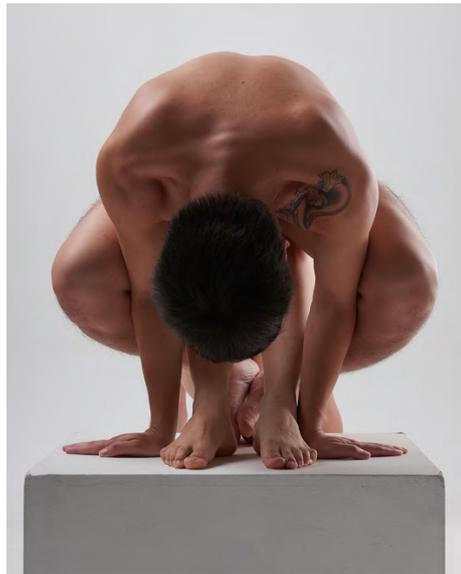
## Experiment 110: Reconstructing the premise of the human body — a corporeal sculptural form

---

### Aim:

This experiment applies reconstruction methods to reconstruct a model of the human body in a sculptural form that contains representations of the corporeal. The human body will become non-corporeal, due to the form's disconnection from a human reality.

### Precedent:



Source image

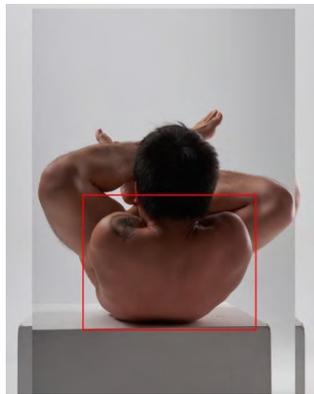
### Method:

Mask off the hair, reconstruct the foot and hand to resemble an amputated joint. Apply muscular patterns and skin textures from reference images from the same shoot and blend them using masking tools and clone stamping. Deform the legs and enhance the shoulder blades using the Liquefy tool. Reference images are from same shoot with model posing in different ways.

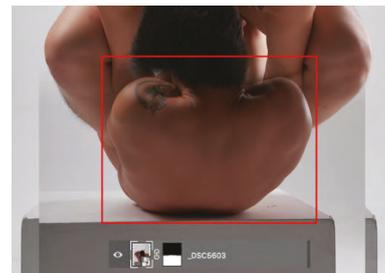
### Post-production settings:



1) Source image.



2) Source a reference image and align the back to replace feet and hands in source image.



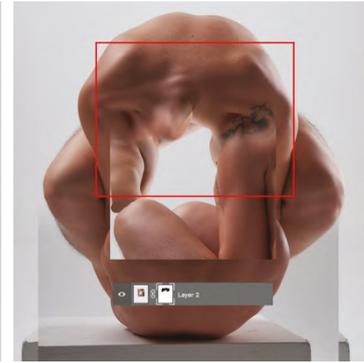
3) Create a layer mask and blend bottom part of reference image into the source image.



4) Construct a gap using contours from reference images of human bodies.



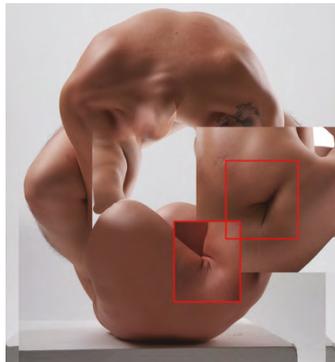
5) Place the constructed gap into the source image.



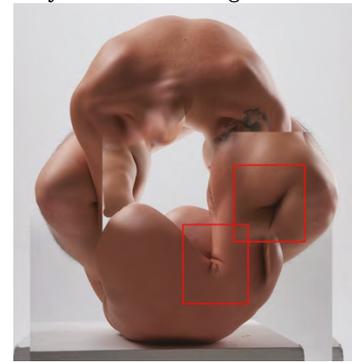
6) Create a layer mask and blend top section of the constructed gap into the body in the source image.



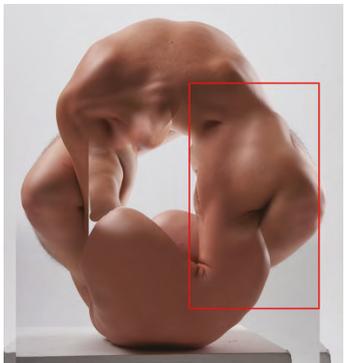
7) Use Stamp tool to blend bottom half of the constructed gap into the body in the source image.



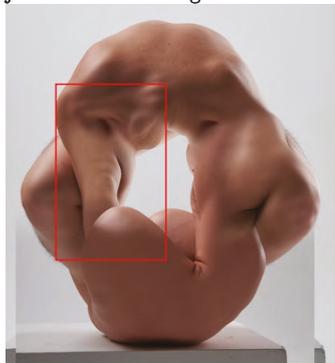
8) Source reference images of joints to replace and reconstruct the joints. Align these selections to the joints in source image.



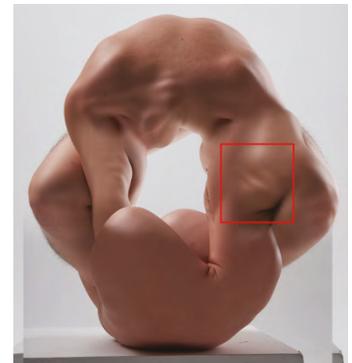
9) Use a Layer mask to blend the reference joints into source image and refine the merger further using Clone Stamp tool.



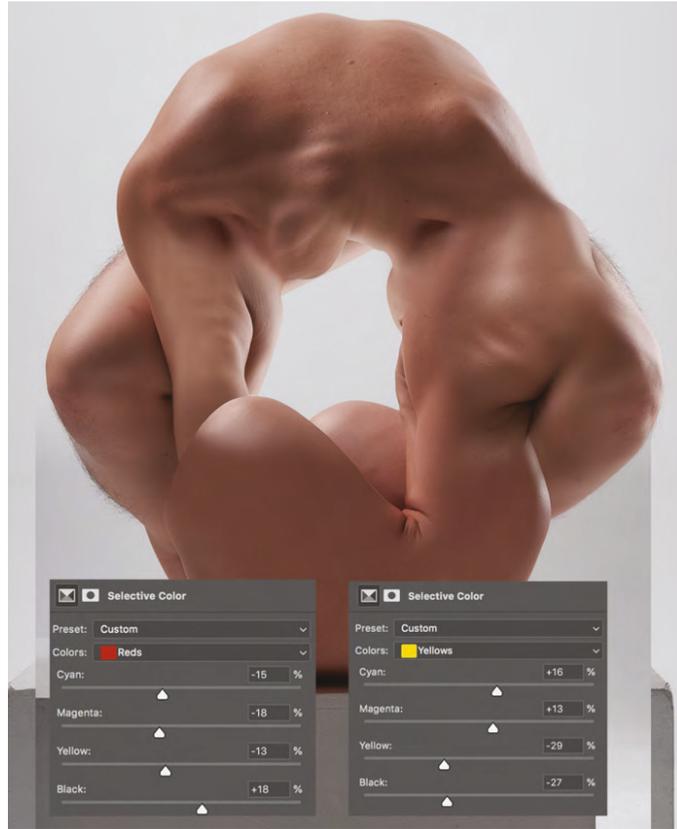
10) Use Clone Stamp tool to remove remaining contour in the bottom right and reconstruct the top right gap to seamlessly blend the components together.



11) Use Clone Stamp tool to seamlessly blend the arm of the source image and the body's back in the constructed gap. Retain the texture of the ribcage as a source of visual muscularity.



12) Source a reference image with rough patches of skin blemish. Place the selection into the source image in a location that can appear genuine and blend in using a Layer mask.



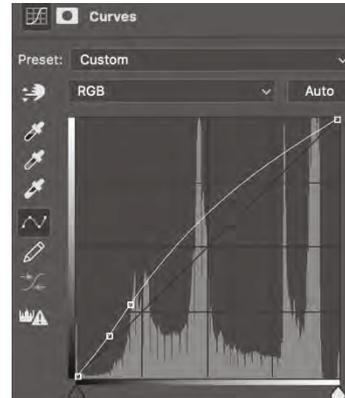
13) Apply a Selective Colour layer adjustment. Focus specifically on the red and yellow colour channels, and adjust the values of CMYK accordingly to blend and make the skin tone balanced and uniform.



14) Apply a Curve layer adjustment to brighten the overall tones of the sculpture.



15) Reconstruct the environment. Clone Stamp tool to reconstruct the plinth, Pen tool to mask the edge of the sculpture and then use the Brush tool to smoothen the tone of the off-white background.



16) Apply another Curve layer adjustment that increases the midtones of the sculpture to induce warmer and brighter tones. Apply a node that slightly drops off in the dark area of the histogram to darken the shadows.

Results:



### Reflections:

In contrast to the previous experiment, this experiment attempts to address a more outlandish construct made of corporeal components. This results in a body that contains a sculptural element. The perceived notion of a sculpture possibly owes itself to the manner in which the form balances itself on the plinth, as well as the distinct gap that is present in this form. Given how the gap in the form is unequivocally a non-conformative feature in a human body form, it is a contrary function to heightening the humanness of the sculpture, and aligns itself more to the form as a sculpture. Situating this 'form' in this context thus establishes the body as an object element; however, there are several features that call to attention notions of corporeality within the sculpture. The visible contour and joints are components that speak to a musculature that is familiar, yet their placement is unfamiliar. Through a combination of masking and the Clone Stamp tool, the limbs, joints and muscles seamlessly blend together to form a complete component. Furthermore, sourcing certain features, such as muscles or skin blemishes from reference photographs, as noted in step 12, allows the photographer to apply non-existent corporeal features to the image. This influences the perception of certain components that the viewer is trying to make sense of. When combining multiple images from a wide range of sources, there is a discernible difference in the way the body is lit in each scenario. This affects the skin colour and luminance of the bodies, which is most evident when placing them side by side.

Although there are other methods, such as Hue/Saturation or Colour Balance with specific layer

masking adjustments, applying a Selective Colour layer adjustment removes the masking variable as each colour channel is separately controlled to apply very specific adjustments. The red channel has all values apart from the blacks reduced to offset the harsh red tones. The yellow channel has increased magentas to push the yellows into a more reddish hue, while increasing cyan removes the harshness and dulls the colour values of the yellow. The blacks in the red channel are increased to slightly increase contrast of the skin, while the blacks in the yellow channel are reduced to brighten the highlights slightly, to emphasise the glossiness of the skin. Furthermore, the final curve adjustment specifically addresses the implications of viewing a brighter and warmer image, which is more comfortable and relatable to the eye. While the premise of this construction is a human body, the final result speaks to a form that is perceptually not grounded in a human form. It is discernibly not human, yet is constructed with familiar human elements.

The previous experiment examined a combination of tools to produce a body of familiar structure and unfamiliar attributes, while this experiment produced the antithesis. In the next experiment, I will investigate the procurement of an uncanny form based on an unfamiliar body structure *as well as* unfamiliar attributes that are abstracted and not immediately perceptible.

## Experiment 111: Deforming the body into unrecognisable states

---

### Aim:

This experiment aims to ascertain whether the removal of identifiable features, in particular limbs and joints, can still invoke an unfamiliar body conglomeration with a lingering familiar presence.

### Precedent:

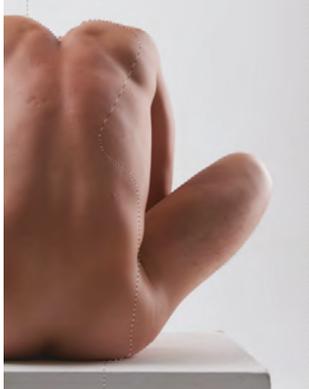


Source image

### Method:

Remove the limbs and body components using the three established methods of Clone Stamp to blend and mix components together, adding an external element from additional reference images, and direct dismemberment through selective masking.

### Post-production settings:



1) Use the Pen tool to create a path that will cut through the body while retaining the body area that rests on the plinth. Make a selection with the path.



2) Use the Clone Stamp tool to roughly brush away the body and replace with the background.



3) Find reference image with unique musculature and align it with the middle region of the body in the source image. Create a Layer mask and hide it.



4) Use the Quick Selection tool on the main body so that brushing the reference image in will stay within the boundaries of the selection.



5) With the previously created Layer mask for the reference image, brush the reference image back using a soft-edged brush. The red region represents the mask overlay of what is not brushed.



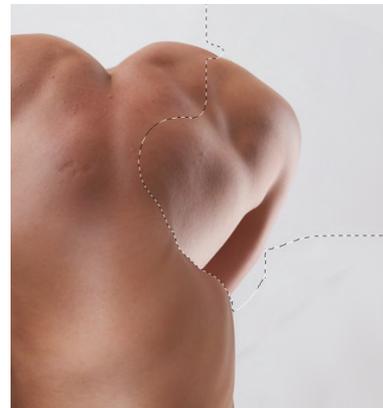
6) Result of brushing the Layer mask.



7) Reconstruct the top-right shoulder of the main body by finding a reference shoulder and aligning it to the top-right section of the main body. Create a Layer mask and hide it.



8) Use the Pen tool to create a selection that runs along the bottom right contour of the body. This will become the boundary for the shoulder reconstruction.



9) With the previously created Layer mask for the reference shoulder, brush the reference shoulder back into view so that it aligns with the main body.



10) Construct a body component in the bottom-right area of the main body by finding a reference image and aligning it to the bottom right section of the main body.



11) Create a Layer mask and blend the two bodies together so that the edges are seamless.

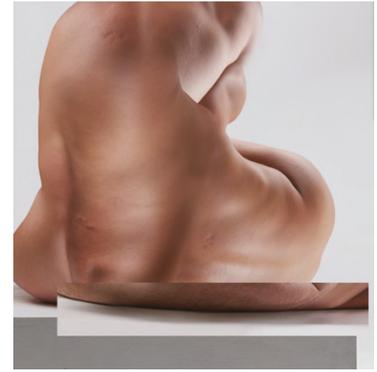


12) Further dismember and deform the body by using the Pen tool to make a selection that cuts through the left side of the body.



13) Roughly erase the body by filling the selection with a colour sampled from the grey background.

14) Create a new layer to apply edits when using the Clone Stamp tool to smoothen the edges of the joined bodies.

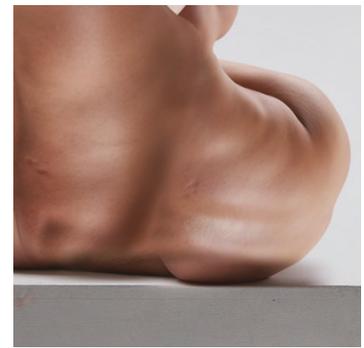


15) Bring back realism to the body by reconstructing the shadow using shadows from reference images.

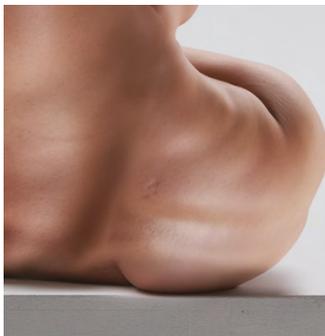


16) Create a Layer mask and brush to merge the reference shadows into the main body.

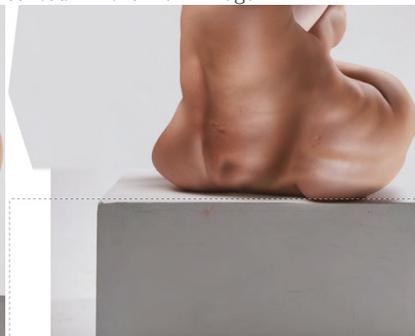
17) Repeat the process using another shadow from a reference photo which contains a round edge that matches the contour in the main image.



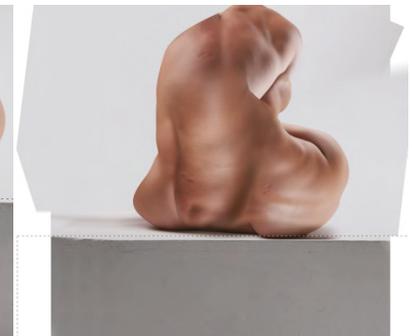
18) Create a Layer mask and brush to merge the reference shadows into the main body.



19) Use the Clone Stamp tool to blend the shadows into the main body as well as to match the shadow tones of the existing shadows.



20) As the bottom-right section of the body is now encroaching on the edge of the plinth, the plinth needs to be extended and pulled down. Make a selection of the front facing section of the plinth and duplicate the whole plinth selection.



21) Use the Free Transform tool and drag the vertical node downwards to elongate the selection.



22) Reconstruct the background and sides of the plinth using the Clone Stamp tool.

23) The top-side of the plinth is not discernible from the background. Use the Rectangular Marquee tool to make a selection of the top side of the plinth.

24) Select the Gradient tool with white as the main foreground colour. Use the Gradient tool to apply a slight white gradient to both sides of the plinth to separate the plinth from the background.



25) Apply a Selective Colour layer adjustment and adjust the reds to blend the skin tones of all the merged bodies together.

## Results:



## Reflections:

In creating an entirely new form such as in this experiment, the will of the creator is key to the determined outcome of the image. Here, distorting the body through reconstruction requires a premise of dismemberment and deforming. Furthermore, reconstruction of the body shape also lends itself to utilising components that are sourced from reference images taken from the same shoot folder, and that present various initial body distortions through posture under the same lighting condition. This allows for a process of merging components into areas that is not initially possible, such as when combining under-exposed areas with properly exposed areas with highlights, and vice versa. In this experiment, the Clone Stamp tool offers not just a method of seamlessly blending components together, but also a method to alter components to better suit its placement in various illuminated areas of the image. This is most evident when the reference shadows were initially too dark when placing it in the bottom-right section of the image; however, the Clone Stamp tool corrects this.

The resulting form in this experiment adopts a position of unfamiliar familiarity, situated between a combination of both premises that the previous two experiments aimed to examine. It combines multiple bodies into one heaping mound of flesh that is not separated by a non-conformative element, as in the previous experiment. The form contains evidence of a corporeal object, as witnessed by the joints and irregular patterns of flesh that courses its body. In addition to this, the form is composed of corporeal elements such as skin, muscles, and the flaws inherent that accompany these elements. While the reconstruction of the plinth through the *Free Transform* tool does not necessarily aid in the representation of an uncanny form, it aids in retaining a sense of realism in the image that does not defy the illusion that the body manipulation aims to convey. While this is the case, an interesting proposition comes into play that can be later queried: to leave the body component hanging off the plinth demonstrates a sense of interaction between the fictitious body and its environment. If this is the case, it must be remedied by a manipulation to fix the shadow fall-off generated by the body onto the plinth, as well as the muscular interaction at the edge where the body component falls off the plinth.

### 3.4.2 — Key Findings

The method of digital reconstruction to create uncanny bodies can be approached in infinite ways using tools available in *Adobe Photoshop*. For the distorted body to be uncanny, it must fulfil the preconditions of familiarity and unfamiliarity the latter is achieved through defamiliarisation, which can be approached through an amalgamation or separation of parts. Primary tools of dismemberment and reconstruction that this section investigates and finds effective are the Pen, Clone Stamp and Liquify tool; the Warp tool operates similarly to Liquify, but on a broader scale with conditional requirements. The Pen tool is found to conduct operations of isolation and removal reminiscent of dismemberment, while special-use cases of the Clone Stamp tool can achieve similar results of dismemberment through the paradoxical means of adding and substituting body elements with non-body elements such as the background. Alternatively, the Clone Stamp tool is a primary tool for seamlessly amalgamating body components to render the reconstructed body more aligned to the real. The Liquify tool, on the other hand, allows the photographer to immediately affect the natural conformation of the human body, by either bloating or reducing the size of certain elements, which can be utilised to reconstruct (Experiment 104) or defamiliarise (Experiment 107) the body. Barring the Warp tool, these three primary tools are complementary, and work in tandem to distort and defamiliarise the subject into an uncanny state. The fourth method of compositing is found to utilise all three tools, and is established as a key technique in manifesting distorted and uncanny representations of the human body. Furthermore, the compositing technique can be executed in three ways to lead to an uncanny body.

Firstly, composites can transform the representation of a body component from a constituent photograph to resemble a different body component. This process renders the constituent body component unfamiliar yet bizarrely familiar when placed in the composite image. *Experiment 109* highlights this approach to constructing an uncanny body that supersedes its normative precedent. An example that is provided is how the contour of a knee adopts the contour of a back that melds into the source body. This establishes the ability of compositing to create familiar human outlines that contain unfamiliar attributes. Secondly, composites can manifest the opposite, to construct corporeal anomalies whose structural outline is unfamiliar and non-corporeal yet contains familiar attributes, as is evidenced in *Experiment 110*. Thirdly, composites can be executed to create uncanny bodies through a combination of both a familiar structure *and* familiar attributes, while the execution can transform the impression of the body to be unfamiliar, as outlined in the composited body in *Experiment 111*. Through careful

implementation of these three applications, it is possible to construct a body of distorted and uncanny attributes.

### 3.5 Conclusion

At this point, it is necessary to reiterate that sourcing appropriate photographs of human bodies to manipulate is required, considering that post-production manipulation fundamentally depends on the nature of the original photograph. The manipulation process is an ongoing cycle of transformation and reformation that assumes and reinterprets the composition of the original. This process situates distortion methods among efforts to reconstruct the image. Engaging post-production manipulative methods in the digital medium affords finer control over the strength and outcome of distortions. Furthermore, these distortions arrest possibilities in defamiliarising the subject within the photographic image. Marilyn Waligore (1995) asserts that the digital medium, specifically the root enabler — the computer — expands on imaging possibilities; she finds that ‘the computer permits the artist to explore the visual alteration of the familiar’ (253). Much in the same way that the photograph becomes malleable, the multitude of functions that digital graphical software, such as the tools that *Adobe Photoshop* offers, enables simplistic deployments of distortive means that subvert reality, and transform the image on a fundamental level, whether it is visually or contextually. This is especially true for the introduction of digital photography, for it provides a more efficient and seamless way to execute compositions that are closer to reality. The unfamiliar is visually real and familiar and the opposite can be similarly held true. As this chapter comes to find, post-production manipulation can affect the scale, proportion, localisation, perception, and representation of the human body subject.

On one hand, enquiries into post-processing establish a method of interference with the inherent luminance and colouration of the photograph. The processes involved in this interference notably reconstruct representation, and at times, alter the form of the subject. Post-processing in the digital environment transitions manipulation from the physical intervention in the darkroom, to a digital effort on the screen that allows for finer clarity and control over the distortion effects. This is most evidenced with the experiments in digital solarisation, in contrast to Ray’s efforts of solarisation. As the results of *Experiment 87* suggest, this technique remains a matter of interest in its ability to retain the familiar while subverting corporeality to invoke the uncanny in the distorted body. While a comparable darkroom technique is potentially feasible, the experiment demonstrates how digital post-processing techniques employ principles of post-processing to alter form as well as colour, so as to preserve skin tone as the attribute of familiarity in the photograph. Furthermore, experiments on post-processing demonstrate how an

alteration of a narrowed colour range (specifically red, orange and yellow values) creates bodies that are inherently unstable in representation as well as in potential identity and racial denominations.

Enquiries into digital reconstruction find inextricable links to post-processing, where, in specific scenarios, a re-assessment and conversion of colour is necessary to align the constituent body components together and achieve verisimilitude. However, the main strength of digital reconstruction lies in its ability to directly impact and distort the body's conformation. The described body reconstructions involve a subset of concealing identifiable features in the process of defamiliarising the body through constructing unfamiliar elements that impede the senses. The primary method of digital reconstruction that effectively dismembers and defamiliarises, reconstructs and transcends the normative body is found to be techniques of compositing. They allow the photographer to approach distorted and uncanny bodies in the photograph an endless number of ways. As Canadian design scholar Ron Burnett (2004) notes, 'the shift to the digital has shown that photographs are simply raw material for an endless series of digressions...' (28). As the results of *Experiments 109, 110 and 111* suggest, constituent body elements can present themselves as a foundation for extensive exploration into the manifestation of unprecedented and uncanny forms. Furthermore, the digital tools available to enable the digital reconstruction process make the body infinitely malleable.

In spite of the possibility of describing post-production efforts as a non-photographic technique, the pursuit of these manipulative processes has always been confined to the photograph. Photographic artist and writer Victor Burgin (1999) asserts that 'manipulation is of the essence of photography; photography would not exist without it' (41). These elaborated *post-production manipulation* stratagems are deeply rooted in photographic practice; even more so because these manipulation methods essentially require the presence of a photograph.

## Conclusion

This research into the photographic techniques of distorting the human body and their intersection with practices of defamiliarisation has in many ways been an effort to bring together an informed understanding of how distortion is achieved on a fundamental level, both practically and in the perceptual effects it achieves. The research aim was to investigate and expand upon the technical considerations in photography, with a primary focus on first-hand practical demonstrations in the form of experiments, to construct and inform my understanding of techniques and methods of distorting the human body. In so doing, the research also placed importance on analysing precedent photographs that highlight distortions of the human body.

This research is motivated by the broader interest of digital photography, which heralded a new generation and platform for conducting visual images of distortion. The context of the body is specifically chosen for its inherent alignment with the familiar, which motivated artists and photographers alike to constantly assess and critique bodily forms. Such attention has placed the human body in the limelight of photography, and its evolution and transformation, and its metaphorical, juxtaposed and symbolic alignments became documented. Underlying representational and contextual concerns prevail in the photographic conception of visually distorted bodies, and existing research has largely sought to understand the reasons. Extant studies are embedded in psychological, socio-historical and cultural assessments, whereas the technical concerns of the distortion process are under-represented. This research investigates the technicalities of achieving such distortions of the human body, and provides a proof of the concept through practical photographic experimentation, demonstrating how distortions of the body are achieved. The research sought to answer two primary questions: how the human body can be distorted and transformed in the image using digital photographic techniques; and how these distortion techniques are achieved through a defamiliarisation of the familiar.

The context of distortion is situated in the domain of Surrealism, as well as of distortions in contemporary times. Surrealist precedents are used in this research to assist in further illustrating the unique ways of distorting the body visually for aesthetic as well as objective purposes. The research is contextualised by the photographers of the surrealist era, who were active in exploring distortions of which the body was the subject. The surrealist era was also a time when the concept of Sigmund Freud's uncanny rose alongside the movement, and contributed significantly to the fundamental principles of surrealist visual distortion. Through a

contextual review of the surrealist photographers, this research found that distortions of the body were partly approached through the process of defamiliarisation — by making the familiar body less familiar. Yet the distorted body did not become completely unfamiliar, but rather uncanny, as the unfamiliar became tied up with a surmounted familiarity that exists from a primitive or infantile belief. Not only was the body visually distorted, but it distorted normative perceptions, as the body contained an extraordinarily complex irregularity that could not be immediately ascertained.

This thesis approached the distortion of the body with the assumption that the familiar can placate the defamiliarisation and invoke sensations of the uncanny. Each conducted experiment investigated the nuances involved in the conception of the photograph, to further understand the necessary requirements of familiarity and unfamiliarity, as well as a balance between the two to achieve the uncanny. In order to understand the assessed nuances, each experiment documented and scrutinised how the variables affect the body's approach to a distorted and defamiliarised form. The exploration further informs my understanding of the technical approach, and provides a framework for proposing another avenue to distorting the body in subsequent experiments.

The photographic experiments focused on three primary techniques of distortion — *concealment*, *mirrors*, and *post-production* — that are identified in dealing with notions of distortions conceived from a process of defamiliarisation. The structure of the research is aligned to demonstrate the progression of each technique. The first technique — concealment — sought to be necessarily deconstructive. To provide a framework for distortions in forthcoming experiments as well as the latter two techniques, the section on concealment proposed an assessment of distortions and defamiliarisations based on the fundamental capacity of both the human body and the camera, and how their inherent characteristics can achieve a distorted and defamiliarised form. The technique is divided into four sub-methods to approach each separate capacity: investigating how the human body as subject in the photograph conceals through principles of inherent *posture*; how concealment can be affected through principles of *lighting* and *shadow*; how the camera operates in *framing* and *cropping* the image to conceal; and how the application of external elements, which is investigated through the *material*, adds to the composition of the image and effects distortions of body form.

To arrive at the conjecture of what constitutes defamiliarisation first required an initial understanding of the precedent familiar. After all, distortions, particularly in the visual sense,

occur when something no longer bears its original appearance due to an alteration or deformation. For the body to be recognised as uncanny thus required an understanding of a viewer's normative perceptions of the familiar body. Thus, Chapter One enquired into what is comprehended as familiar. Investigations for the research were largely divided between analysing the familiarity of the human body based on its inherent biological traits, and looking at the way these traits, and the body in general, are normatively perceived based on localisation and lighting. In one instance, the technique of concealment analysed what is comprehensively familiar in the human body. Heads, body parts and contours were recognised as prevalent sources of body identification (Hoffman 2009), while faces conveyed an association with an identity or an individual (Burton, Jenkins and Schweinberger 2011). Genitalia were also considered an identifiable feature.

For the body to become uncanny, it is not as simple as having the familiar and unfamiliar exist in the image. This was a pivotal notion that was considered when assessing the technique of concealment. Intuition dictates that concealing familiar nodes such as the head, body parts or genitalia is essentially defamiliarising, but it does not convey the uncanny. A dynamic relationship between the photographer and the body is necessary to open up a critical dialogue that is experienced by the viewer. The manifested distortion can only be perceived from the perspective of the lens; thus, direction by the photographer is often required for the displacement and defamiliarisation of the body. This is repeatedly evident and described throughout Chapter One, as well as in the wider research, when dealing with poses and using the body to conceal itself. Questions repeatedly arose around posing and how to convey repression through concealment, which motivated an interest in the literal repression of the human body. By conveying the literal sense of repression, the experiments further came to find that vestiges of the familiar, which the body and the photograph sought to repress, further reinforced the paradoxical notion of disclosure through concealment and the subsequent revelation of an uncanny form.

In another sense, repression can occur through the limitation of bodily information in the image. The surrealist precedents largely created uncanny forms through abstracted forms with phallic and erotic implications, due to their literal representation of an underlying theme of the uncanny — the castration complex. Experiments in posing, however, found that defamiliarised body forms do not require transformation into an erotic or phallic representation to become

uncanny.<sup>77</sup> On a broader scale, it can be argued that the familiarity of the body does not require the implication of genitalia in the photograph to prompt a familiar–unfamiliar representation. However, a frontal view of a woman’s breast was found to be defamiliarised and became uncanny.<sup>78</sup> An assessment of this unique instance finds that genitalia *can* exist in the uncanny body, but must be subjected to defamiliarisation, particularly of their form. Yet, they can also forego their function as a familial anchor, as familiarity can shift to find solace in details of musculature, contour and skin texture. Considerations of these nodes of familiarity allow for a stronger focus on a defamiliarisation of body form.

The importance of posing the body in the defamiliarisation process is highlighted, given how each following method and technique applied principles of posing in practice. Posing into repression further allowed sensations of ambiguity and uncertainty to arise in the unconscious of the viewer. Yet, this notion can be conveyed through other methods of concealment. In fact, the methods established in concealment are interrelated, and can be used hand-in-hand to achieve distortions through defamiliarisation. Experiments on lighting and shadow required posture to move within the boundaries of light to ascertain the body’s defamiliarisation. Lighting and shadow also played on the paradoxical notion of revelation of the uncanny through concealment. A shadow inherently conceals; thus it is recognised as a major proponent for concealing the familiar and revealing the uncanny. A sequence of experiments that followed a method of contemporary lighting interpreted from Man Ray’s lighting in *Minotaure* (1933) outlined how a one-light setup in a low-key environment provided an effective environment to defamiliarise the human body and achieve an uncanny form based on the castration complex narrative.<sup>79</sup> A facilitating attribute to this lighting setup is the well-defined terminator that makes the body dismemberment caused by the light beam much more distinguishable, whilst the gradual shadow fall-off fades the body into the low-key environment, and is also a key approach to defamiliarising body conformations, as perceptions of the form become ambiguous.

The frame is fundamental to the photograph, therefore it could not be ruled out for this research. While the edge of the light beam functions as a type of border where the shadow boundary conceals the body subject, so does the frame, when placing the body outside of its boundaries. Similar to experiments on lighting and shadow, experiments on framing and

---

<sup>77</sup> Experiment 10.

<sup>78</sup> Man Ray, *Minotaure* (1933).

<sup>79</sup> Experiment 27.

cropping utilise principles of posing to repress the body and abstract its form, while the frame serves as a method of dismemberment. Furthermore, introducing a physical frame into the body's consciousness allowed the body to be more responsible for directing its poses in relation to the frame.<sup>80</sup> Depicting the frame as a circle, in particular, assisted in affecting normative perceptions, given its possibilities of abstraction (Zimmer 1991). Opting for a physical frame does not rule out the traditional means of framing the image through the viewfinder, as this method similarly proved how placing body components out of the frame achieved similar results as did a physical frame, minus the enabled interaction, due to the frame's physicality. To achieve the same abstraction that a circular frame offers, the experiments came to find applying a focal length reducer generated a circular frame within the viewfinder.

The importance of perspective in the distortion and defamiliarisation of the human body cannot be denied. Perspective was pivotal throughout each experiment, extending to those not confined to the specific study of distorting and defamiliarising the body through framing. After all, the photograph is captured from the singular perspective of the lens. Were the body subject to be photographed from a different angle, the defamiliarisation would not register in the image. Especially in the experiments on framing the human body, the stakes of defamiliarisation are increased when using a low focal length, or an ultra-wide-angle lens, to distort the body through an emphasis of foreshortening of components. Cropping, on the other hand, found no difference in results to framing, as it is established to be a re-framing operation that occurs after the photographic production process. In a sense, cropping is a recalibration of the frame for which the original photograph may not have depicted a distortion or defamiliarisation, and cropping attempts to clarify it.

Strategies of concealment do not merely belong to the foundational elements of the photographic production process such as the body, lighting, and camera. A question was initially posed as to whether an external physical object contributed to the distortion or defamiliarisation process. While the first three methods focused on the fundamentals of the body, camera, and photographic lighting, the inclusion of the material attended to the issue of composition, and led to an assumption that the material facilitated the defamiliarisation process as it became attached to the human body. The subject was no longer merely the body, but the material and human body combined. It is initially strange to consider this. However, there are two

---

<sup>80</sup> Experiment 28.

interpretations of defamiliarisation that were established at the beginning of this research: one is to make something unfamiliar, while the other is to heighten the perception of the familiar by presenting the familiar from a non-standard perspective (Margolin 1994). Situating the body-material entity in this context thus calls for a defamiliarisation process that not only makes the human body unfamiliar, but also necessitates the unfamiliar to be made uncanny by way of making the form familiar again. Experiments thus amalgamated and aligned the body and material to resemble uncanny objects,<sup>81</sup> while other experiments operated on the established concealment paradox to reveal the uncanny body form through concealing the familiar.

This paradoxical notion is not only present in the technique of concealment, but permeates the other two techniques. The second technique emerged as a continuation of the principles established in the first technique: applying principles of posture, lighting and framing to investigate distortions and defamiliarisations of the human body in the ephemeral dimension of a material surface — the *mirror*. The mirror is a complex device, for it contains its own paradox, which complements the paradox of concealment: the reflected image is of a three-dimensional space, yet the surface of the mirror is two-dimensional. This paradox is profound, as it creates another layer in the paradox — the reflection is ephemeral and dimensionless, as the image is not real, but illusory. Situating the mirror in this context of paradoxes thus motivates another highlighted form of distortion — a distortion of reality and a distortion of the senses. The mirror is a naturally uncanny-inducing device. It is exactly for this reason that the mirror presents itself as a great device and technique for distorting and defamiliarising the body.

It is this point that directs critical insight into two types of mirrors; the mirror has two opposing states that affect perception, depending on their use-case: the mirror in a *flat* state and a *curved* state. It is self-evident that the flat mirror generates a flat reflection, whereby the reflected body in a flat mirror constituted its counterpart (Asakura 1990). However, the flat mirror experiments introduced the theory of *superposition* to comprehend the uncanniness in the photographed image. Much like the experiments with the material and concealment, the body required an intimate interaction with the physical mirror. The uncanny sensation can be spurred by the presence of ambiguity, which was captured by photographing the real body and its reflection. Moreover, the closer the body is to the mirror, the more the body becomes uncanny. This, however, is not necessarily true when dealing with the curved mirror. The curved mirror

---

<sup>81</sup> Experiment 53

## Conclusion

holds similar values, yet unlike the flat mirror, the reflection in the curved surface focuses on an immediate defamiliarisation and distortion of form. The curved mirror is dynamic. It constantly fluctuates. The slightest curvature of the mirror surface induces a distortion. Even as the mirror is situated in a curved state, the malleability of the material surface does not allow it to remain in stasis. While photographing both the real and virtual body can create a juxtaposition between the real and illusory, the effect of defamiliarisation and the state of superposition isn't as effective as using the flat mirror. Tactically situating the mirror as a *heterotopic* site induces a direct engagement with the reflection, rather than photographing a combination of both the real and the reflection.

While the primary methodology uses practical experiments to inform my understanding of how distortions and defamiliarisations work technically, these technical assessments are supported by a critical analysis to determine the effectiveness of the technique in achieving such distortions and defamiliarisations. Given how the mirror is a conceptually captivating device, complementing the technical analysis with an alignment of concepts assisted an analysis of how the uncanniness occurs in the photograph; for the state of superposition occurs by photographing both the real and the virtual, while the heterotopic site occurs when directly faced with the reflection. However, the third technique — *post-production manipulation* — engaged in a highly technical approach to generate uncanny bodies, based on my informed understanding acquired from the contextual review in this research. Research into this technique pulled away from the production side to engage in the post-production side of photography, and experimented with avenues of post-production manipulation that included *post-processing* and *digital reconstruction* methods to distort representations of the human body in the photograph.

Manipulations of the photograph alter the image on a fundamental level. Like any other technique, the process of defamiliarising the body in post-production manipulation requires an intimate relationship, not just with the body, but also with the complexities of the photograph in a digital space. An interrogation of the digital tools in *Adobe Photoshop* finds multiple potentials that range from techniques of concealment to new methods of duplicity and metamorphosis. Applying these tools simultaneously to the photograph further required a mediated response to bring about familiarity as well as unfamiliarity, and amalgamate a body that adheres to notions of the uncanny. At the beginning of the enquiry into post-processing methods, experiments were conducted with the assumption that only colour would be affected. This assumption was called into question, as the experiments came to find, not only a defamiliarisation of perception based on colour, but also a defamiliarisation in structural form.

Digital reconstruction, however, demonstrated a more abrupt approach to a defamiliarisation of the body conformation. While the research finds methods of removing the familiar to enact defamiliarisation in the digital reconstruction process, defamiliarisations can also occur by expanding upon the familiar components. Composites, in particular, raise the defamiliarised bodies onto another level that transcends the normative beyond comparison. The photographer, while adopting the position of creator, must still exert self-control in transforming the body into an uncanny form.

Generating these images of uncanny bodies is largely determined by a series of demands that are based on an informed understanding of what defamiliarisation is, what can be made unfamiliar, and what are the perceptual effects of such a process. A broader analysis of all three techniques reveals that the universal necessary requirement for each distortion of the body is the presence of a complex amalgamation of corporeal familiarity and unfamiliarity in the photograph. Defamiliarising the human body is not without consequence. Questions are raised in the face of the body of ambiguous in/animate-ness. Through these technical photographic approaches, not only does the body in the photograph become distorted and defamiliarised; so, too, do the normative perceptions of the human body, for the viewer's developed cognitive bias becomes subverted as the body metamorphoses its familiarity.

## **Contributions and Implications**

This practical research was designed to address the under-represented techniques that are part of a formula to achieve visually distorted and defamiliarised bodies that adhere to Freud's notion of the uncanny. Extant research into historical precedents has largely followed the contextual reasonings of the photographer, and less the means by which the photograph was produced. This gap motivates this research to fill and provide, not just an assessment of precedent photographic techniques, but also to develop and illuminate new photographic techniques that are based within a more contemporary and digital timeline. The photographic techniques employed in my practice-based research that distort and defamiliarise the human body are informed by my own cultural position and experience of the human body as a young Chinese woman of colour. This dissertation contributes to the discussion of a representation and politics of the body in photography. My photographic experiments demonstrate that digital photographic techniques are able to transcend gender, race, identity and individuality and thus counteracts the traditional representation of the Chinese body, as desirable and exotic. My

research thus contributes critically to the politics of representing the Chinese body in photography. Furthermore, these techniques may provide a framework for both artist-photographers and researchers to develop and assess photographs of uncanny bodies. This is in addition to providing a framework for my own photographic practice within which to extend into other research areas that concern distortions and defamiliarisations of the human body. As French philosopher and aesthetician Mikel Dufrenne (1964) noted, 'what arouses technical effort is also this old feeling of closeness that we experienced originally with the world and which expresses itself more spontaneously in aesthetic contemplation than in scientific curiosity. Thus, art often requires techniques, and the techniques spur new artistic research' (118). The research offers, to photographers who may embark upon the path of distorting the body, an approach and methodology for understanding and applying defamiliarisation as a means for distortion. Moreover, the documentation of experiments this research undertook can reinforce the values of what this distortion means. Further, given that extant studies of defamiliarisation are literature-based, this research contributes to a more practical and visual approach to the technique, and will motivate more focused studies of visual defamiliarisation in scholarship in this field.

## Recommendations for Future Practice

The techniques this research addressed were largely scrutinised and condensed from a list of possible techniques that were conceived prior to, during, and after the experiments were conducted. From the list, the material was integrated from a consolidation of both the solid object and flexible material. While the material and material surface were investigated, they are physical objects that largely exist in a flexible and a liminal state. Preliminary research had been conducted on the solid object; however, further research can assess variations of the solid object, and how the body reacts to different objects in a photographic composition. Additionally, new research can address the placement of objects within a photographic *composite* that is constructed through post-production manipulation. This is not limited to merely the juxtaposed composition of the object and the body. Possibilities of the uncanny may arise from a heightened homogenisation, achieved through an amalgamation of the body *and* object as one entity in the photographic manipulation, which supersedes the physical amalgamation of the body and object/material in the photograph. Furthermore, research into framing and cropping as devices of dismemberment suggested further forms of the uncanny, based on an amalgamation of constituent photographs. This has parallels to a manual approach to collage and composite photography, which may open up a new unprecedented technique.

An additional avenue that can be further explored is the distortions enabled by lens optics. This was briefly mentioned in subchapter 1.5: Framing and Cropping, and how the properties of lens optics can magnify and bloat the subject matter in the lens. Conversely, studies in this area can extend consideration into distortion from compaction by the lens optics.

Lastly, all the experiments in distorting the body in the photograph required a directive for the body to manoeuvre itself in posture. There are an unlimited number of poses, but a limit to what an individual body can accomplish. This number multiplies when taking into consideration the perspective of the lens, external elements, body proportions, and flexibility. Thus, more poses can be investigated, either by the solitary body, or in collaboration with objects and materials, with these considerations in mind.

## Bibliography

- Abbott, B. 2005. *Edward Weston: Photographs from the J. Paul Getty Museum*. Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications.
- Adamowicz, E. 1998. *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image: Dissecting the Exquisite Corpse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Adés, D., and S. Baker. 2008. *Close-up: Proximity and De-familiarisation in Art, Film and Photography*. Edinburgh: Fruitmarket Gallery.
- Albu, C. (2012). Mirror Affect: Interpersonal Spectatorship in Installation Art since the 1960s. PhD, University of Pittsburgh. <http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/11546/>
- Angelopoulou, E. 1999. *The Reflectance Spectrum of Human Skin*. Technical Report. University of Pennsylvania, December.  
[https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1616&context=cis\\_reports](https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1616&context=cis_reports)
- Arbus, D., M. Israel, and D. Arbus. 1972. *Diane Arbus*. New York: Aperture.
- Armstrong, C. 1989. "The Reflexive and the Possessive View: Thoughts on Kertesz, Brandt, and the Photographic Nude." *Representations* 25: 57-70. doi:10.2307/2928467
- Arnheim, R. 1974. *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1983. *The Power of the Center: A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . 1983. "The Rationale of Deformation." *Art Journal* 43 (4): 319-324.
- . 2004. *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Asakura, N. 1990. "Experiments with Mirror Reflections." *Leonardo* 23 (1): 71-74. doi:10.2307/1578468
- Barker, F. 1995. *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Bartram, A., N. El-Bizri, and D. Gittens, D. 2016. *Recto Verso: Redefining the Sketchbook*. Farnham: Taylor and Francis.
- Batchen, G. 1994. "Phantasm: Digital Imaging and the Death of Photography." *Aperture Magazine*, 136: 46-51
- Bate, D. 2004. *Photography And Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism And Social Dissent*. London: I. B. Tauris.
- Beck, A. T. 1963. "Thinking and Depression: I. Idiosyncratic Content and Cognitive Distortions." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 9: 324-333. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.1963.01720160014002
- Birn, J. 2006. *Digital Lighting and Rendering*. San Francisco: New Riders.
- Bois, Y. A., and Krauss, R. E. 1997. *Formless: A User's Guide*. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books.
- Bouqueret, C. 2008. *Surrealist Photography*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Breder, H. 2012. Intermedia. Retrieved from <https://www.hansbreder.com/intermedia-1/>
- Breton, A. 2002. *Surrealism and Painting*. Boston: MFA Publications.
- Breton, A. (1969). *Manifestoes of Surrealism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Brüggeman, D. (2017). "Dutch Fashion Photography: Liquid Bodies and Fluid Faces." In *Delft Blue to Denim Blue: Contemporary Dutch Fashion*, edited by A. Smelik, (page range). London: I.B.Tauris.
- Brugioni, D. A. 1999. *Photo Fakery: The History and Techniques of Photographic Deception and*

- Manipulation*. Dulles, Virginia: Brassey's Publishers.
- Burgin, V. 1999. "Art, Common Sense and Photography." In *Visual Culture: The Reader*, edited by J. Evans and S. Hall, 41. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Burnett, R. (2004). *How Images Think*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Burton, A. M., R. Jenkins, and S. R. Schweinberger. 2011. "Mental Representations of Familiar Faces." *British Journal of Psychology* 102 (4): 943-958. doi:10.1111/j.2044-8295.2011.02039.x
- Callen, A. 1997. "The body and Difference: Anatomy Training at The Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the Later Nineteenth Century." *Art History*, 20 (1): 23-60. doi:10.1111/1467-8365.00045
- Carter, K. 2012. "Carl Zeiss Distagon T\* 2.8/15mm ZE." *The British Journal of Photography* 159 (7805): 88-89.
- Caws, M. A. 1999. *The Surrealist Look: An Erotics of Encounter*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Caws, M. A. 2004. *Surrealism*. London: Phaidon.
- Caws, M. A., R. E. Kuenzli, and G. G. Raaberg. 1991. *Seeing the Surrealist Woman: We are a Problem. Surrealism and Women*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Chadwick, W. 1995. "Fetishizing Fashion/Fetishizing culture: Man Ray's Noire et Blanche." *Oxford Art Journal* 18 (2): 3-17.
- Charlson, P. 1963. "Distortion." *Art Journal* 23 2: 127-129. doi:10.2307/774510
- Coblentz, W. W. 1912. "The Diffuse Reflecting Power of Various Substances" *Journal of the Franklin Institute* 174 (5): 549. doi:[10.1016/S0016-0032\(12\)90099-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0016-0032(12)90099-X)"
- Collins, K. G. 1985. *The Camera as an Instrument of Persuasion: Studies of 19th-century Propaganda Photography*. PhD, The Pennsylvania State University. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/303384905?accountid=17095>
- Conger, A. 2005. *Edward Weston: The Form of the Nude*. London: Phaidon Press.
- Conley, K. 2013. *Surrealist Ghostliness*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Cross, D. A. 2006. *Some Kind of Beautiful: The Grotesque body in Contemporary Art*. PhD, Queensland University of Technology. Retrieved from <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/16277/>
- Dufrenne, M. 1964. "The Aesthetic Object and the Technical Object." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 23 (1): 113-122.
- Eastman Kodak Company. 1957. *Industrial Motion Picture*. 1st ed. Rochester: Eastman Kodak Company.
- Ehrenzweig, A. 1949. "Unconscious form-creation in art." *British Journal of Medical Psychology* 22 (1-2): 88-109. doi:10.1111/j.2044-8341.1949.tb02885.x
- Ehrenzweig, A. 1967. *The Hidden Order of Art: A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Imagination*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.
- Eicher, J. B., and M. E. Roach. 1973. *The Visible Self: Perspectives on Dress*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Elkins, J. 1999. *Pictures of the Body: Pain and Metamorphosis*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
- Entwistle, J. 2000. *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*. New York: Wiley.
- Ewing, W. A. 1994. *The Body: Photoworks of the Human Form*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Featherstone, M., and B. S. Turner, B. S. 1995. "Body and Society: An Introduction." *Body and Society*, 1 (1): 1-12.
- Finn, D. 1994. *How to Look at Photographs*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Foster, H. 2004. *Prosthetic Gods*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Foucault, M. 1986. "Of Other Spaces." Translated by M. Jay. *Diacritics*, Spring (16): 22-27.

## Bibliography

- Foucault, M., A. Sheridan, and A. M. S. Smith. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Paris: Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques.
- Freeman, R. J., C.D. Thomas, L. Solyom, and M. A. Hunter. 1984. "A Modified Video Camera for Measuring Body Image Distortion: Technical Description and Reliability." *Psychological Medicine* 14 (2): 411-416.
- Freud, S. 1919. "The 'Uncanny'." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, Volume XVII, translated and edited by J. Strachey, 217-256. London: Hogarth Press.
- Freud, S. 1927. "Fetishism." In *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited by J. Strachey, 147-157. London: Hogarth and the Institute of Psychoanalysis.
- Gernsheim, H. 1991. *Creative Photography: Aesthetic Trends, 1839-1960*. [place of publication]: Dover Publications.
- Gilbert, P. U. P. A., and W. Haeberli, W. (2011). *Physics in the Arts*. Revised edition. Elsevier Science.
- Gowin, E. 2009. *Emmet Gowin: Photographs*. Germany: Steidl Publishers and Pace/MacGill Gallery.
- Gray, C., and J. Malins, J. 2004. *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*. Burlington: Ashgate. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.uws.edu.au/login?url=http://www.myilibrary.com?id=109644>
- Grossman, W. A., and S. Manford. 2006. "Unmasking Man Ray's Noire et Blanche." *American Art* 20 (2): 134-147.
- Grosz, E. A. 1994. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin.
- Grove, J. D. 1999. Robert Mapplethorpe's Self-portraits. PhD, Case Western Reserve University. Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/304499141/15F241262D414486PQ/1?accountid=17095>
- Harper, B. 2006. "Body Image Distortion in Photography." Retrieved from <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.433029>
- Heidegger, M. 2000. "The Origin of the Work of Art." In *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, edited by C. Cazeaux, 80-101. London: Routledge.
- Hein, N. 2005. Performing the Image: Representations of the Body in the Avant-garde. PhD, Columbia University. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/docview/305016106?accountid=17095>
- Hennings, M. 2000. "The Subject as Object: Photography of the Human Body." In *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, edited by L. Wells, 189-230. London: Routledge.
- Heron, P. 1955. *The Changing Forms of Art*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hess, B. 2017. "Liquified" Retrieved from <http://barthess.nl/liquified.html>
- Hight, E. M. 1995. *Picturing Modernism: Moholy-Nagy and Photography in Weimar Germany*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hill, H., & V. Bruce, V. 1996. "Effects of Lighting on the Perception of Facial Surfaces." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 22 (4): 986-1004.
- Hoffman, A. G. 2009. "Archival bodies." *American Imago* 66 (1): 5-40.
- Holtzman, H., and M. S. James. 1993. *The New Art — The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.
- Huang, E. S. 1999. Readers' Perception of Digital Alteration and Truth-Value in Documentary Photographs. PhD, Indiana University. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/docview/304505179?accountid=17095>
- Hug, J. J. 2003. Transfixed and Transformed: The Photographs of Surrealism. Masters thesis, California

- State University. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/docview/305271217?accountid=17095>
- Hutson-Gray, R. 2012. "Asger Carlsen." Retrieved from <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/15159/1/asger-carlsen>
- Isik, M. 2018. "Twice into the Stream." Retrieved from <https://www.meltem-isik.com/twiceintothestream>
- Iversen, M. 2007. *Beyond Pleasure: Freud, Lacan, Barthes*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.
- J. Paul Getty Museum. 1994. *In Focus: Andre Kertész*. Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum.
- Jentsch, E. 1997. "On the Psychology of the Uncanny." *Angelaki* 2: 7-16.
- Juler, E, 2016. "Man's Dark Interior: Surrealism, Viscera and the Anatomical Imaginary." In *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*, edited by A. Whitehead, A. Woods, S. Atkinson et al., 356-376. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
- Kampert, K. 2016. "Klaus Kampert — About." Retrieved from <http://www.klauskampert.com/about/>
- Kleiner, M. 2011. *Acoustics and Audio Technology*. 3rd ed. Fort Lauderdale: J. Ross Publishing.
- Knochel, A. D. 2011. Seeing Non-humans: A Social Ontology of the Visual Technology Photoshop. PhD, Ohio State University. Retrieved from [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/pg\\_10?::NO:10:P10\\_ETD\\_SUBID:75096](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/pg_10?::NO:10:P10_ETD_SUBID:75096)
- Kockelmans, J. J. 1985. *Heidegger on Art and Art Works*. Netherlands: Springer.
- Kramer, H. (1976). "Introduction." In *Distortions*, edited by N. Ducrot. 1976.. 1st ed. New York: Random House.
- Krauss, R. E. 1981. "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism". *October* 19: 3-34.
- Krauss, R. E., J. Livingston, and D. Ades. 1985. *L'amour Fou: Photography and Surrealism*. Washington D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art.
- Kristeva, J. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Reprint edition. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kuppers, P. 2003. *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge*. London: Routledge.
- Lacan, J. 1949. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." Translated by Alan Sheridan. Paper presented at the 16<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Psychoanalysis, Zürich.
- Larsson, M. 2011. An Interview with Asger Carlsen. Retrieved from [https://www.vice.com/en\\_au/article/ex5484/an-interview-with-asger-carlsen](https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/ex5484/an-interview-with-asger-carlsen)
- Lehr, H. A., C. M. van der Loos, P. Teeling, and A. M. Gown. 1999. "Complete Chromogen Separation and Analysis in Double Immunohistochemical Stains using Photoshop-Based Image Analysis." *Journal of Histochemistry and Cytochemistry* 47 (1): 119-125. doi:10.1177/002215549904700113
- Lichtenstein, T. 2001. *Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Liu, C. H., C. A. Collin, A. M. Burton, and A. Chaudhuri. 1999. "Lighting Direction Affects Recognition of Untextured faces in Photographic Positive and Negative." *Vision Research* 39 (24), 4003-4009. doi:S0042698999001091 [pii]
- Lyford, A. J. 1997. Body Parts: Surrealism and the Reconstruction of Masculinity. PhD, University of California. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/docview/304343378/CC06EFD70F2C4A35PQ/1?accountid=17095>
- Lyford, A. 2000. "The Aesthetics of Dismemberment: Surrealism and the Musée du Val-de-grâce in 1917." *Cultural Critique* (46): 45-79.
- Malcolm, J..1975, "The Dark life and Dazzling Art of Edward Weston." *The New York Times*, February 9,

## Bibliography

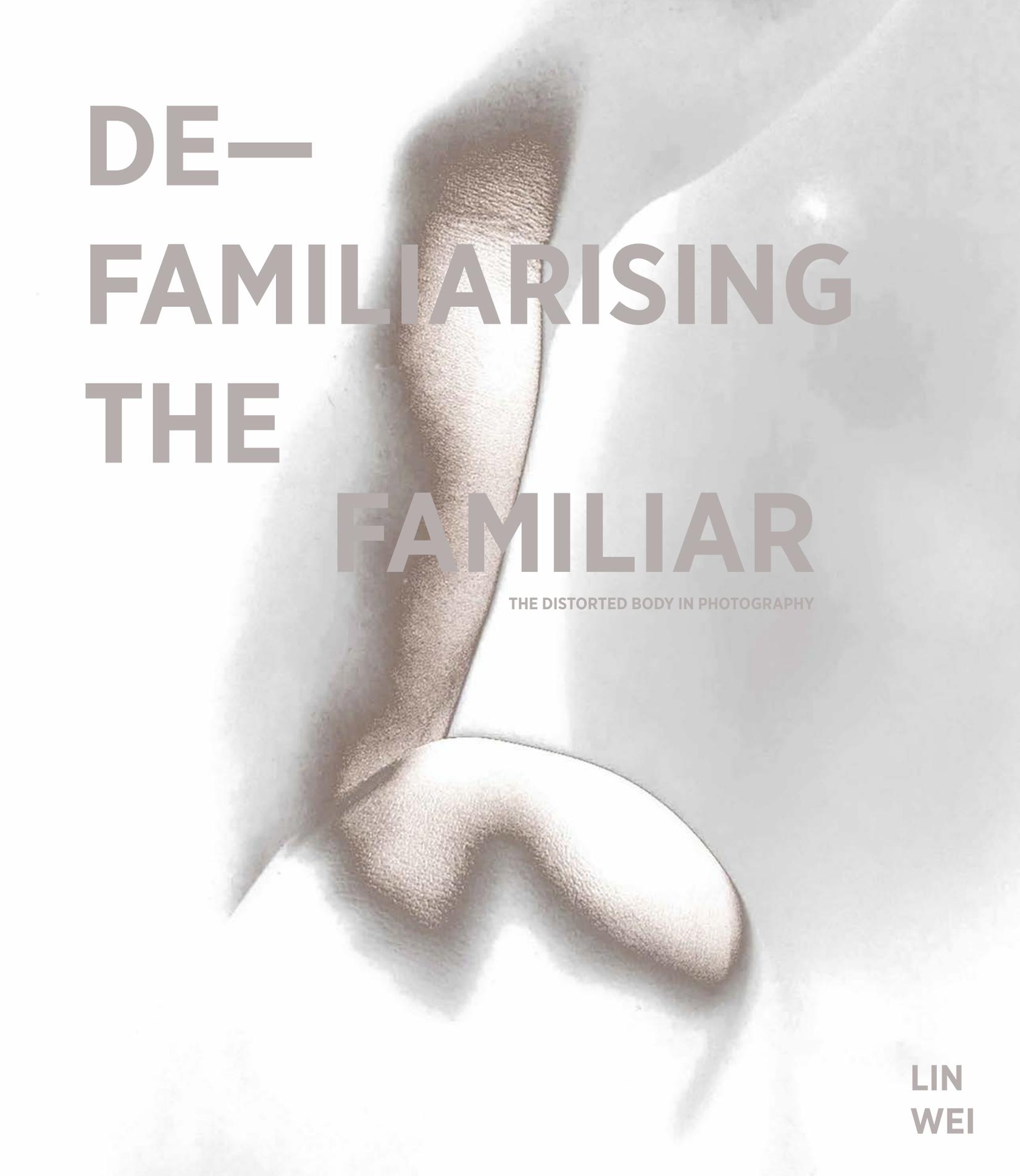
131.

- Malt, J. 2004. *Obscure Objects of Desire: Surrealism, Fetishism, and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Margolin, U. 1994. "Russian Formalism." In *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, edited by M. Groden, M. Kreiswirth and I. Szeman, 814-819. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Maude-Roxby, A. 2007. *Live Art on Camera: Performance and Photography*. Southhampton: John Hansard Gallery.
- McManus, I. C., F. A. Zhou, S. 'Anson, L. Waterfield, K. Stöver, and R. Cook. 2011. "The Psychometrics of Photographic Cropping: The Influence of Colour, Meaning, and Expertise." *Perception* 40 (3): 332-357. doi:10.1068/p6700
- Melchior-Bonnet, S., K. H. Jewett, and J. Delumeau. 2001. *The Mirror: A History*. London: Routledge.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. 1964. *The Primacy of Perception: And other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History, and Politics*. Edited by James Edie, translated by W. Cobb. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Metallinos, N. 1996. *Television Aesthetics: Perceptual, Cognitive, and Compositional Bases*. Mahwah: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Metz, C. 1985. Photography and Fetish. *October* 34: 81-90.
- Miller, B. F., M. T. O'Toole, and C. B. Keane. 2003. *Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health*. Philadelphia, PA: Saunders.
- Monneraye, C. 2015. "Lin Wei, Body Form." Retrieved from <https://acp.org.au/index.php/connect/photo-social/entry/lin-wei-body-form>
- Montagu, J. 2002. *The Surrealists*. New York: Harry N. Abrams.
- Morin, E. 2005. *The Cinema, or the Imaginary Man*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mulvey, L. 1975. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinemas." *Screen* 16 (3): 6-18
- Oden, L. 2018. "Edward Weston." Retrieved from <http://iphf.org/inductees/edward-weston/>
- Olson, R. J. M. 2000. *The Florentine Tondo*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Olszewski, E. J. 1985. "Distortions, Shadows, and Conventions in Sixteenth Century Italian Art." *Artibus Et Historiae*, 6 (11): 101-124. doi:10.2307/1483261
- O'Reilly, S. 2009. *The Body in Contemporary Art*. New York: Thames and Hudson.
- Peelen, M. V., and P. E. Downing. 2007. "The Neural Basis of Visual Body Perception." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* August: 636-48.
- Poss, R. M. 1998. "Distortion is Truth." *Leonardo Music Journal* 8: 45-48. doi:10.2307/1513399
- Pultz, J. 1995. *The Body and the Lens: Photography 1839 to the Present*. First Edition. New York: Harry N Abrams.
- Ramachandran, V. S. 1988. "Perception of Shape from Shading." *Nature* 331 (6152): 163-166.
- Rank, O., and H. Tucker, H. 2012. *The Double: A Psychoanalytic Study*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Ray, M. 1934. *Age of Light. Photographs by Man Ray: 105 works, 1920-1934*. NY: Dover Publications.
- Ritchin, F. 2009. *After Photography*. New York City: W.W. Norton.
- Roach, M. E., and J. B. Eicher. 1965. *Dress, Adornment and the Social Order*. New York: Wiley.
- Robins, K. 1991. "Into the Image: Visual Technologies and Vision Cultures." In *Photovideo*, edited by P. Wombell, 52-78. The University of Michigan: Rivers Oram.

- Rosenberg, D. 2012. "How to shoot 2,000 nudes a second." Retrieved from [http://www.slate.com/blogs/ behold/2012/12/06/shinichi\\_maruyama\\_using\\_new\\_technology\\_to\\_capture\\_nude\\_portraits\\_photos.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/ behold/2012/12/06/shinichi_maruyama_using_new_technology_to_capture_nude_portraits_photos.html)
- Ross, M. 1998. *Getting Great Guitar Sounds*. Wisconsin: Hal Leonard Corporation.
- Sassen, S. 2011. "Black and White Photography as Theorizing: Seeing what the Eye cannot See." *Sociological Forum* 26 (2): 438-443.
- Savedoff, B. E. 1997. "Escaping Reality: Digital Imagery and the Resources of Photography." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55 (2): 201-214.
- Schilder, P. 1999. *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body: Studies in the Constructive Energies of the Psyche*. London: Routledge.
- Schrock, P. E. 1996. "Man Ray's le Cadeau: The Unnatural Woman and the De-sexing of Modern Man." *Woman's Art Journal* 17 (2): 26-29.
- Shaw, S. 2008. "Shedding New Light on Modifiers." *Studio Photography*, 11 (1): 42-43.
- Shell, O. 2007. "Seeing Figures." In *Matisse: Painter as Sculptor*, edited by D. M. Kosinski, J. M. Fisher, S. A. Nash, A. Boulton, H. Matisse and O. Shell, 49-71. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Shklovsky, V. 1989. "Art as Technique." In *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, edited by D. H. Richter, translated by L. T. Lemon and M. J. Reis, 775-784. Manhattan: St Martin's Press.
- Siebers, T. 2000. *The Body Aesthetic: From Fine Art to Body Modification*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Sklaroff, S. 2001. "The Timeless Moment." *U.S. News and World Report* 131 (2): 24.
- Smelik, A. Ed. 2017. *Delft Blue to Denim Blue: Contemporary Dutch Fashion*. London: I.B.Tauris.
- Stafford, B. M. 1993. *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Steward, J. C. Ed.. 2001. In *Human Touch: Photographs by Ernestine Ruben*. Tucson, Arizona: Nazraeli Press, in association with The University of Michigan Museum of Art.
- Streahle, D. A. Z. 2011. "Visual Surrealism: A History and Analysis of the Surrealist Image." *Lehigh Review* 19 (11): 22-27. <https://preserve.lehigh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1009&context=cas-lehighreview-vol-19>
- Szarkowski, J. 1966. *The Photographer's Eye*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art.
- Talbot, W. H. F., and B. Newhall. 1969. *The Pencil of Nature*. New York: Da Capo Press.
- Thompson, M. G. 1994. *The Truth about Freud's Technique: The Encounter with the Real*. New York: New York University Press.
- Thompson, J., L. Heinberg, M. Altabe, and S. Tantleff-Dunn. 1999. *Exacting Beauty: Theory, Assessment, and Treatment of Body Image Disturbance*. Washington, D. C.: American Psychology Association. doi:10.1037/10312-000
- Thompson, R. 2004. *The Body without Form*. PhD, The University of Texas. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/docview/305097174/1B97429C06B44600PQ/1?accountid=17095>
- Tirant, N. 2014. "Exposed." Retrieved from <http://www.rubiconari.com.au/archive/2014>
- Turner, B. S. 1984. *The Body and Society: Explorations in Social Theory*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Vella, A. 2011. It lacks A human corpse. Masters thesis, Ontario College of Art & Design. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/docview/921358985/2DFB4F60BBB342A1PQ/1?accountid=17095>

## Bibliography

- Vygotsky, L. 1971. *The Psychology of Art*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Waligore, M. 1995. "Artist-sorceress: Photography and Digital Metamorphosis." *Leonardo*, 28 (4): 249-256.
- Wallach, B. 2005. *Understanding the Cultural Landscape*. New York: Guilford Publications.
- Warburton, N., and B. Brandt, B. 1993. *Bill Brandt: Selected Texts and Bibliography*. New York: G.K. Hall.
- Warren, L. 2005. *Encyclopedia of Twentieth-century Photography*. London: Routledge.
- Watts, J. 2003. *The Photos of Edward Weston*. Washington D.C.: National Public Radio.
- Weston, E., and N. Newhall. 1990. *The Daybooks of Edward Weston*. New York: Aperture.
- White, G., and Louie, G. J. 2005. *The Audio Dictionary*. Third edition, revised and expanded. Washington: University of Washington Press.
- Wiley, J. J. 2014. "Midnight in Paris: Meeting the Photographers behind the McMullen Museum's "Paris Night and Day". Retrieved from <http://bcheights.com/2014/02/13/midnight-in-paris-meeting-the-photographers-behind-the-mcmullen-museums-paris-night-day/>
- Withy, K. 2015. *Heidegger on Being Uncanny*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wu, Q., and G. Guo. 2014. "Gender Recognition from Unconstrained and Articulated Human Body." *The Scientific World Journal*. doi: [10.1155/2014/513240](https://doi.org/10.1155/2014/513240)
- Zhao, L. 2001. Dressed Human Modeling, Detection, and Parts Localization. PhD, Carnegie Mellon University. Retrieved from <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.uts.edu.au/docview/275835140/E055BF11968F4337PQ/1?accountid=17095>
- Zimmer, W. (1991). "The Tondo." *Art Journal*, 50 (1): 60-63.
- Zimmermann, A., C. Isles, and J. Jonas. 2001. *Joan Jonas: Performances Film Installations 1968-2000*. Berlin: Hatje Cantz.



DE—  
FAMILIARISING  
THE  
FAMILIAR

THE DISTORTED BODY IN PHOTOGRAPHY

LIN  
WEI

# Defamiliarising the Familiar

The Distorted Body in Photography

**LIN WEI**

Lin Wei is a photo-media artist based in Sydney who has exhibited both nationally and internationally since 2011. Wei's practice deals with transformational body iterations that question the stable and physical nature of the body through the lens. Her photographs often concern distortions through defamiliarisation, referring to the Freudian uncanny, which is described as something strange yet familiar. To this extent, Lin Wei is interested not only in capturing images of distorted bodies, but also in revealing the misleading impressions that the most familiar human object, the body, can unconsciously produce.

## defamiliarised | distorted

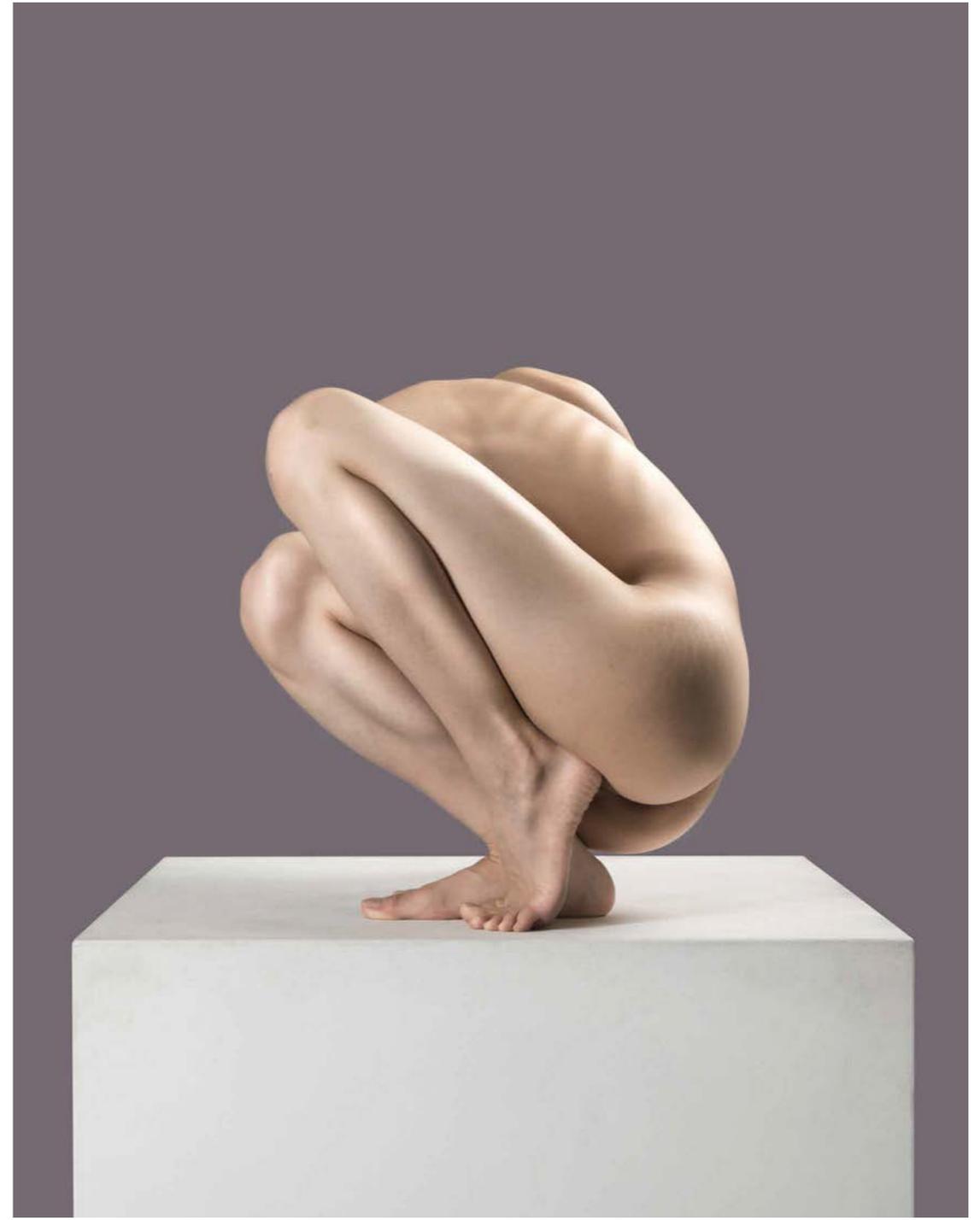
We are all born as humans with an adept understanding of the nature of our bodies — what body parts we have, the flesh of our muscles, how we move, our imperfections and the limitations of our body. We build a locally consistent set of beliefs on how our body should function and it is what we grow up to be familiar with.

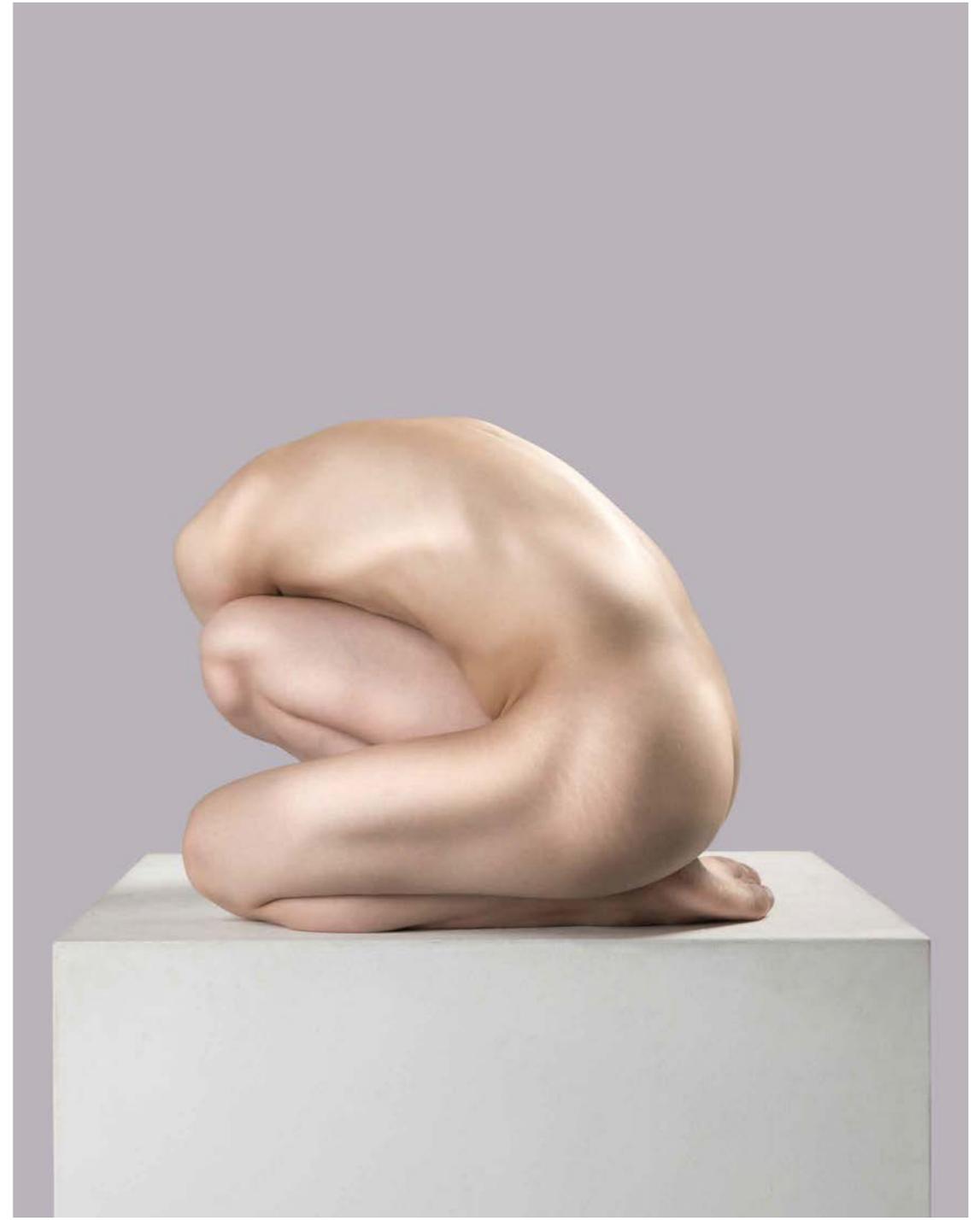
But what if our pre-existing notions are challenged? I set out on a journey to manifest the unfamiliar impressions of the body, to illuminate upon fictitious bodies that transgress the boundaries of real flesh and affect human sensibility. Some bodies transform through postures; some in collaboration with materials; framing and cropping the body; body forms manifested from the manipulation of lighting; extending to investigations of the defamiliarised body in the reflection of mirrors as well as post-production manipulation.

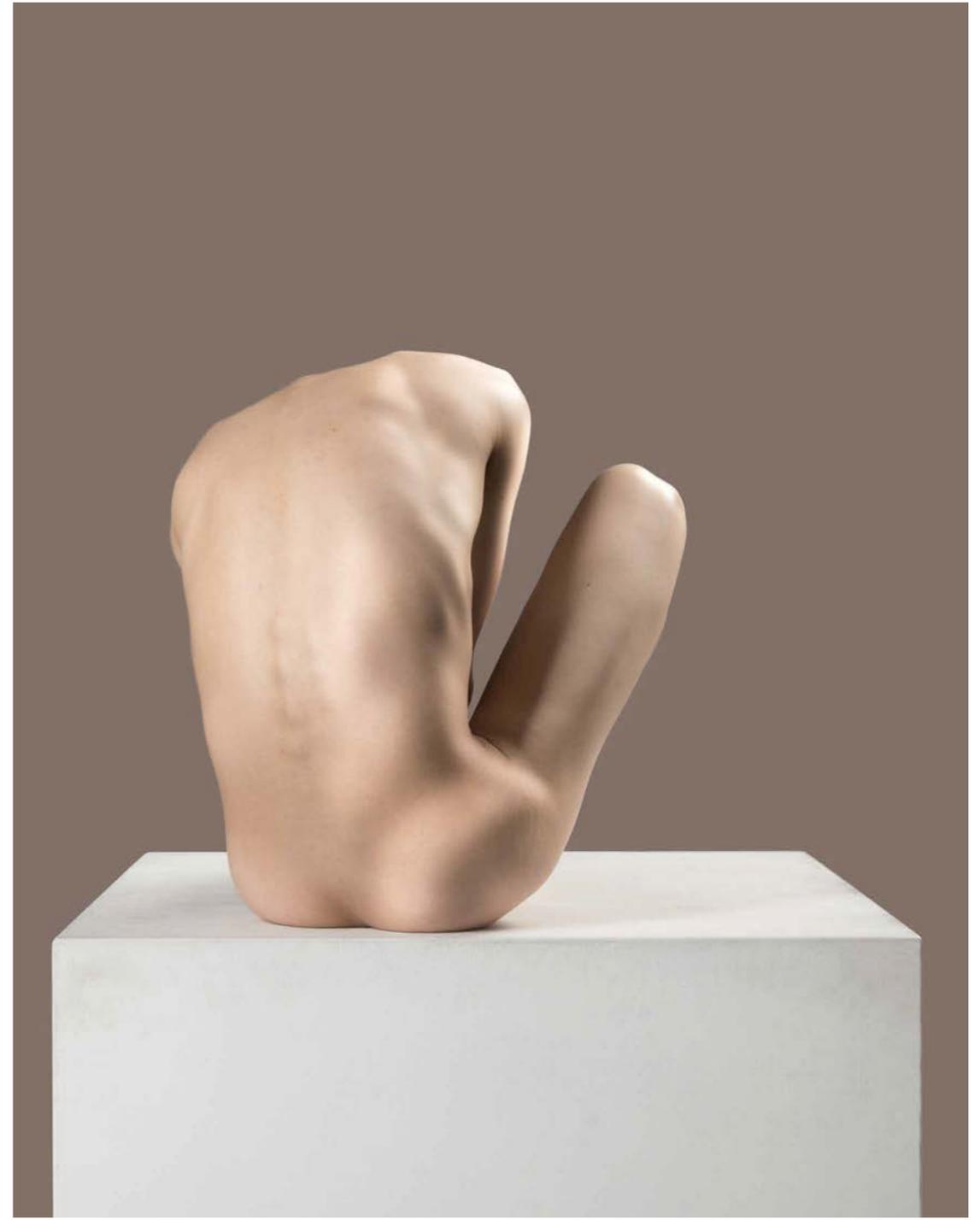
# I concealment

/kən'si:l̩m(ə)nt/

‘The action of hiding something or preventing it from being known’





















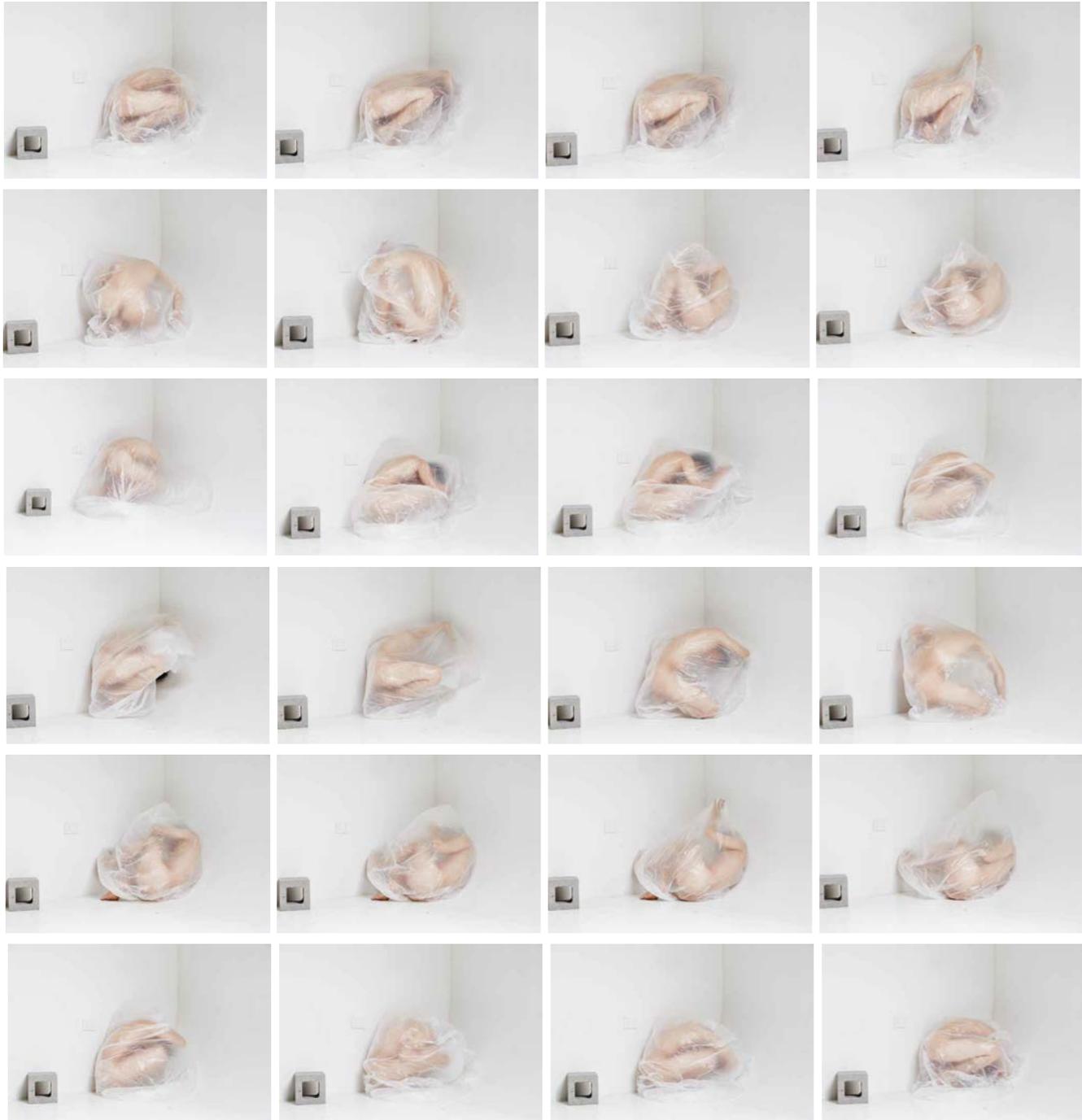


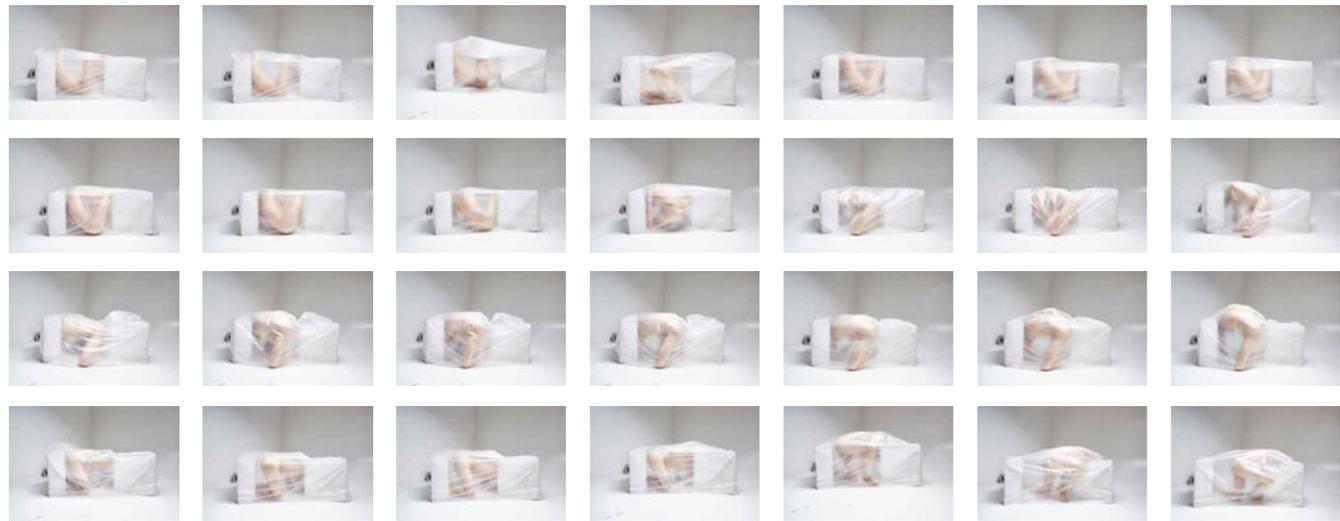










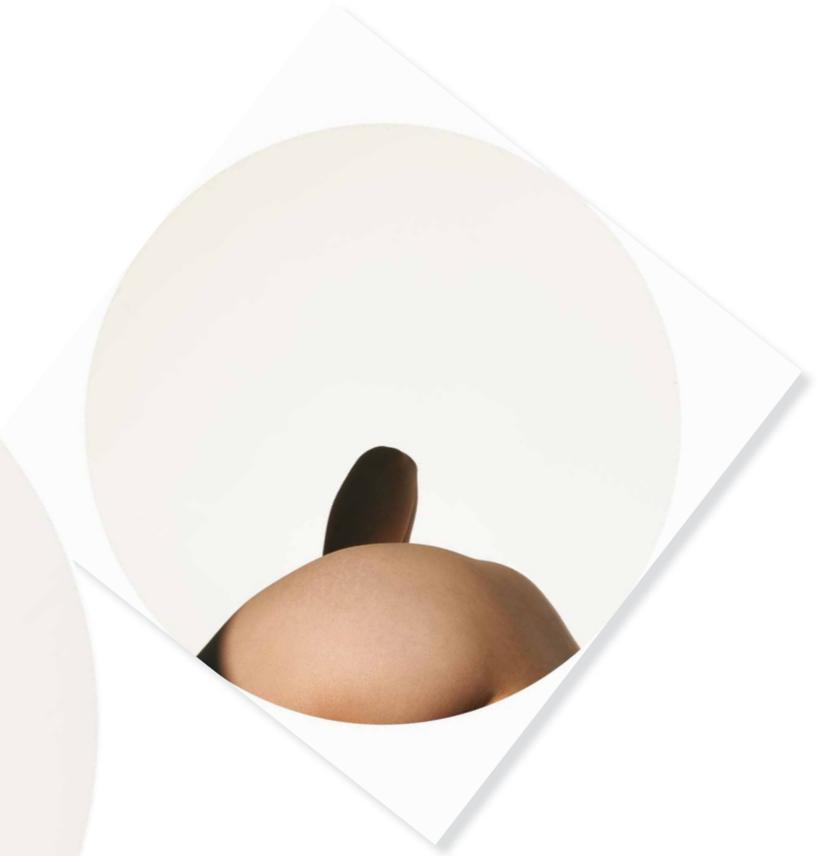
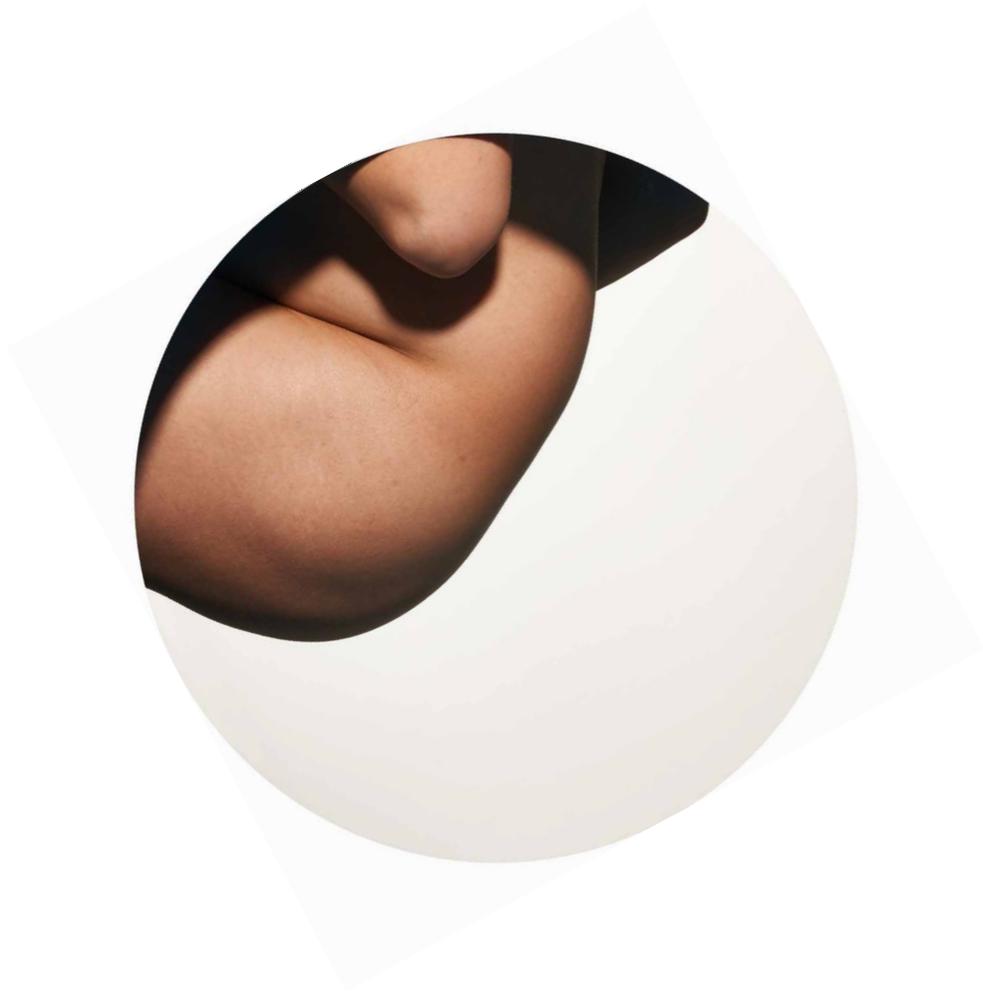










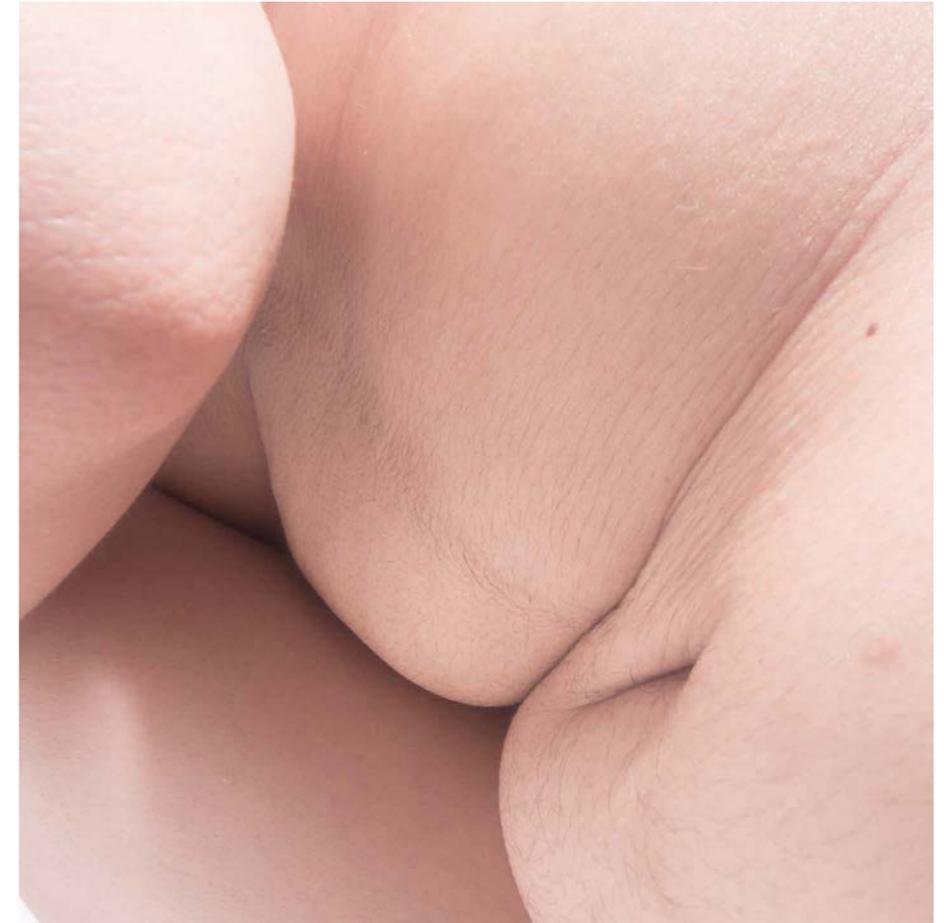




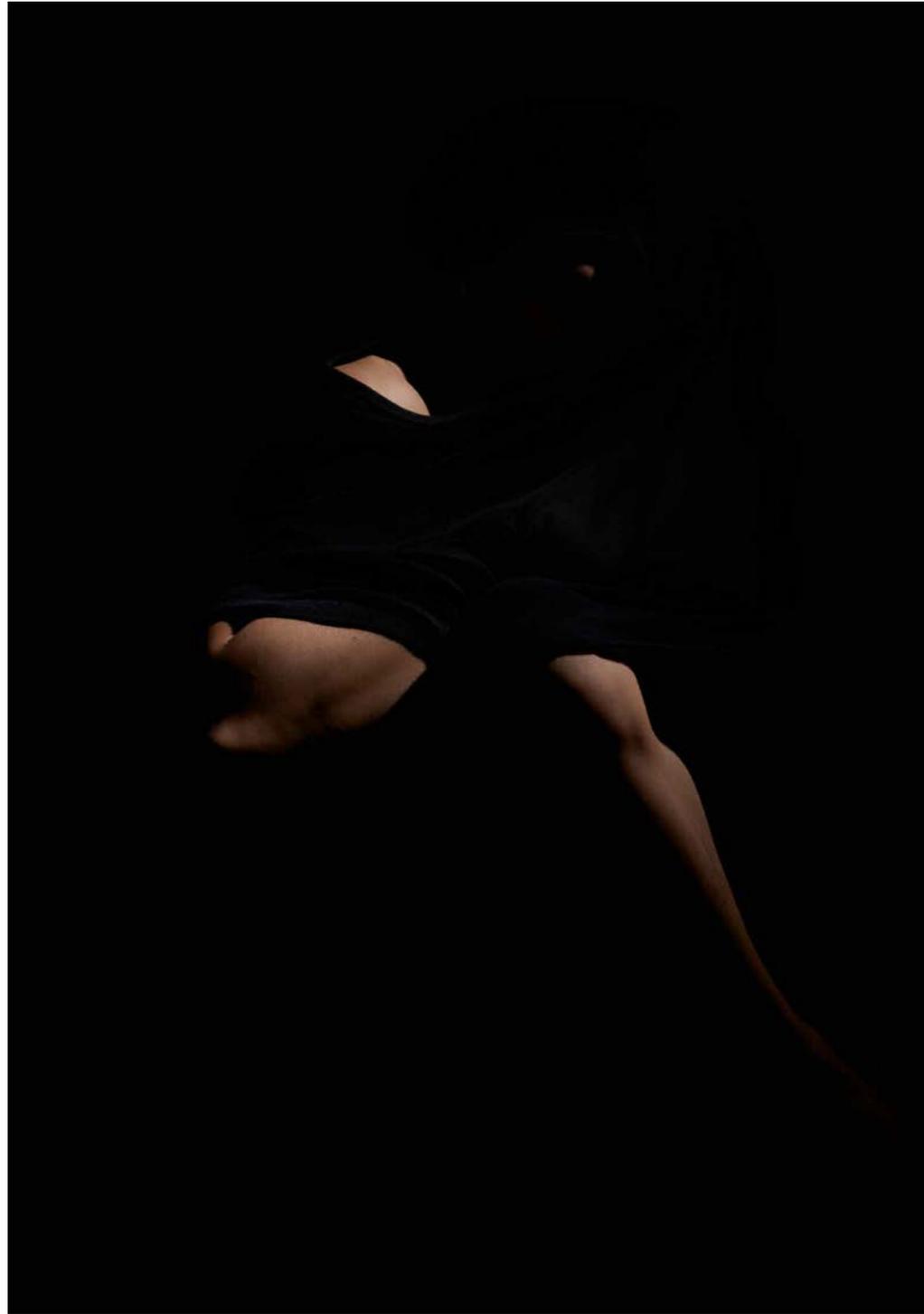






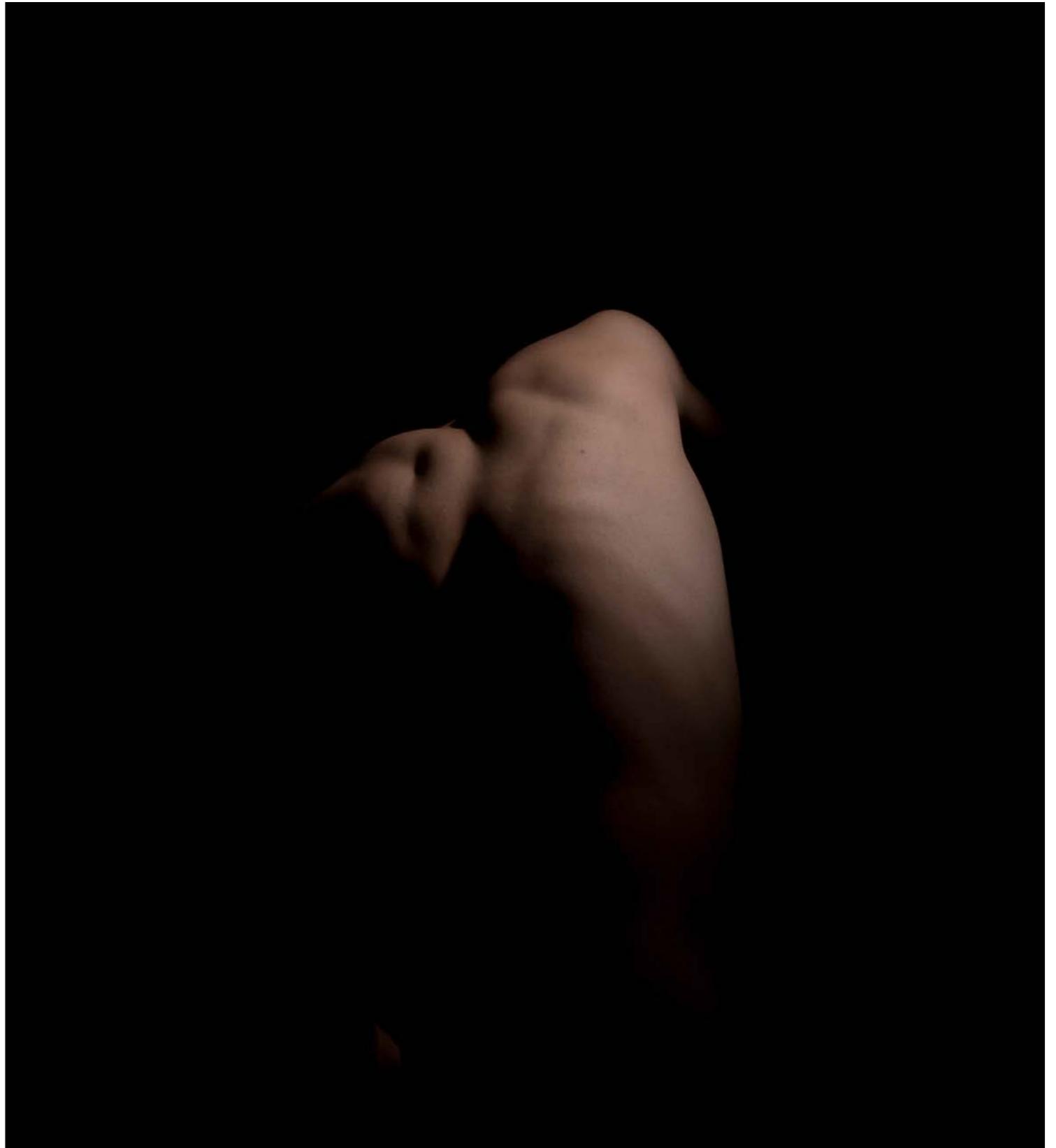
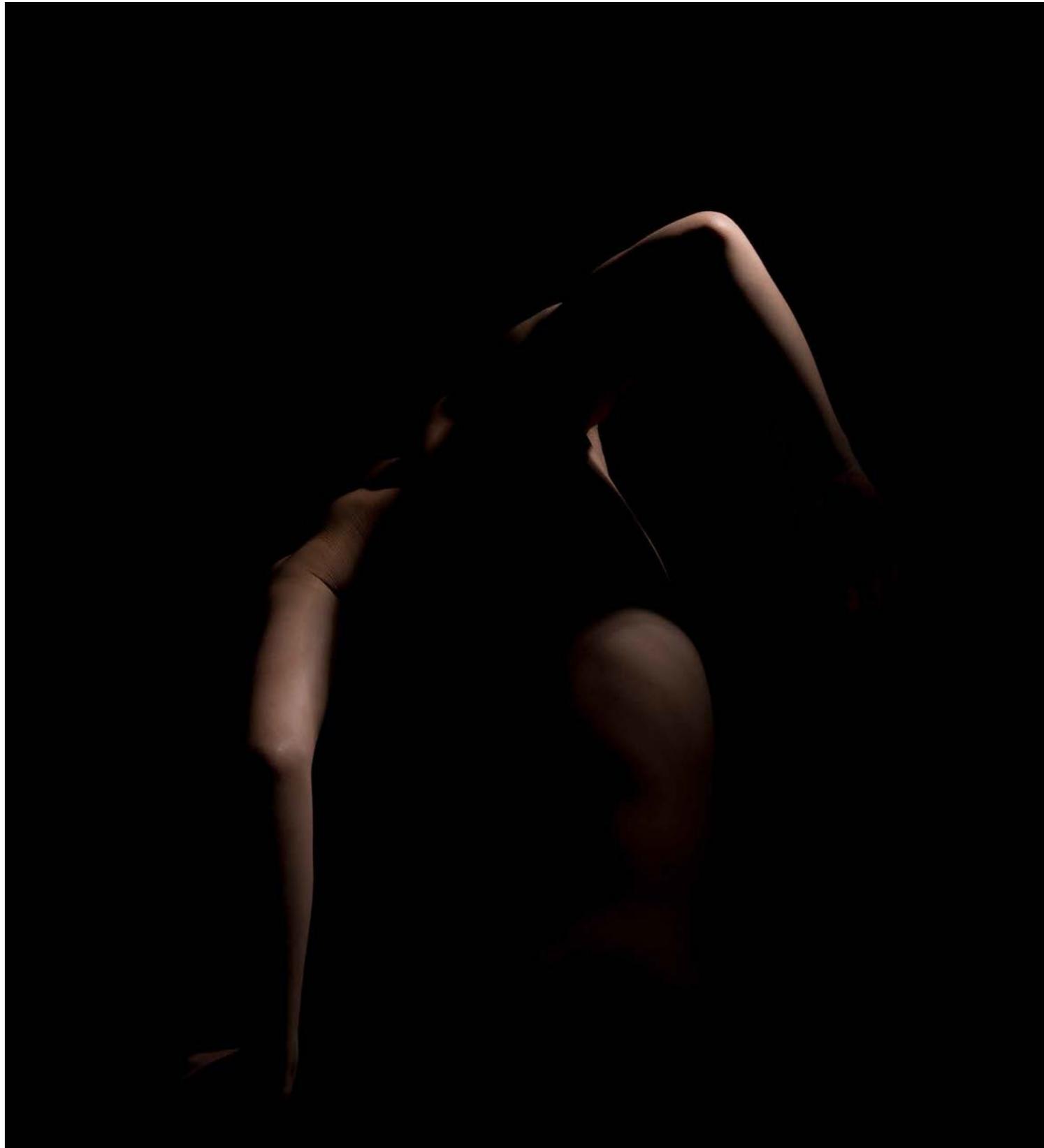


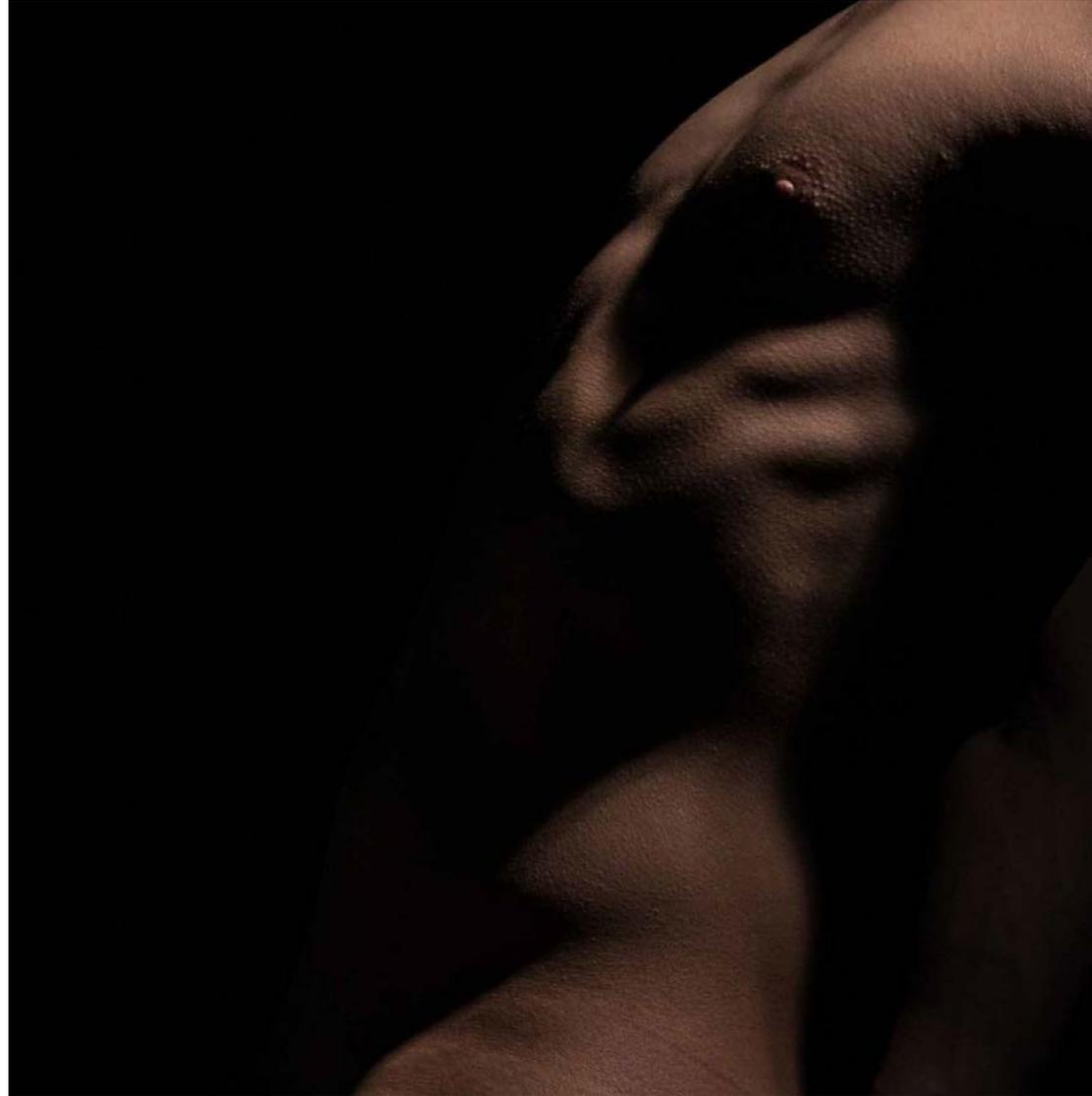










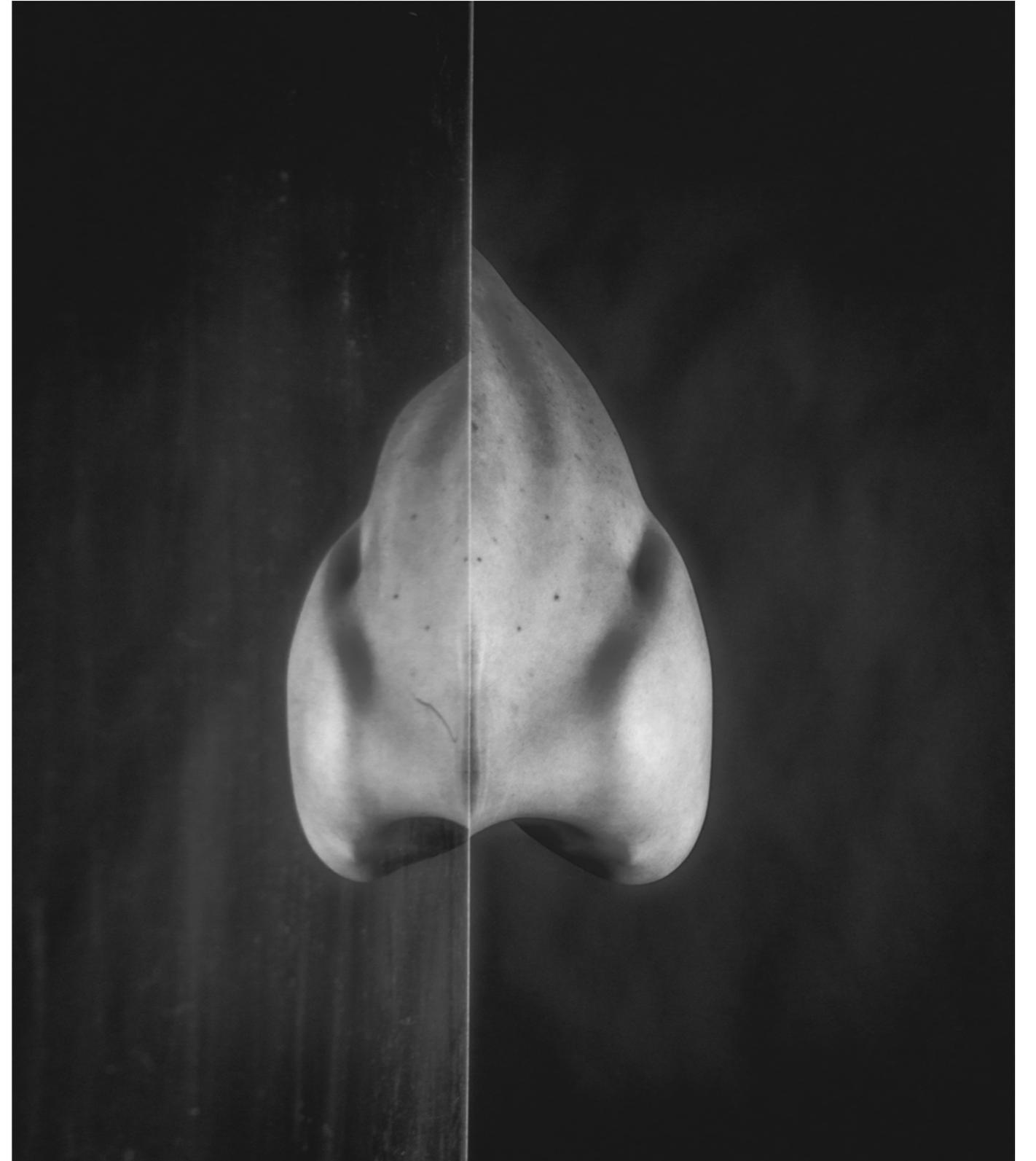


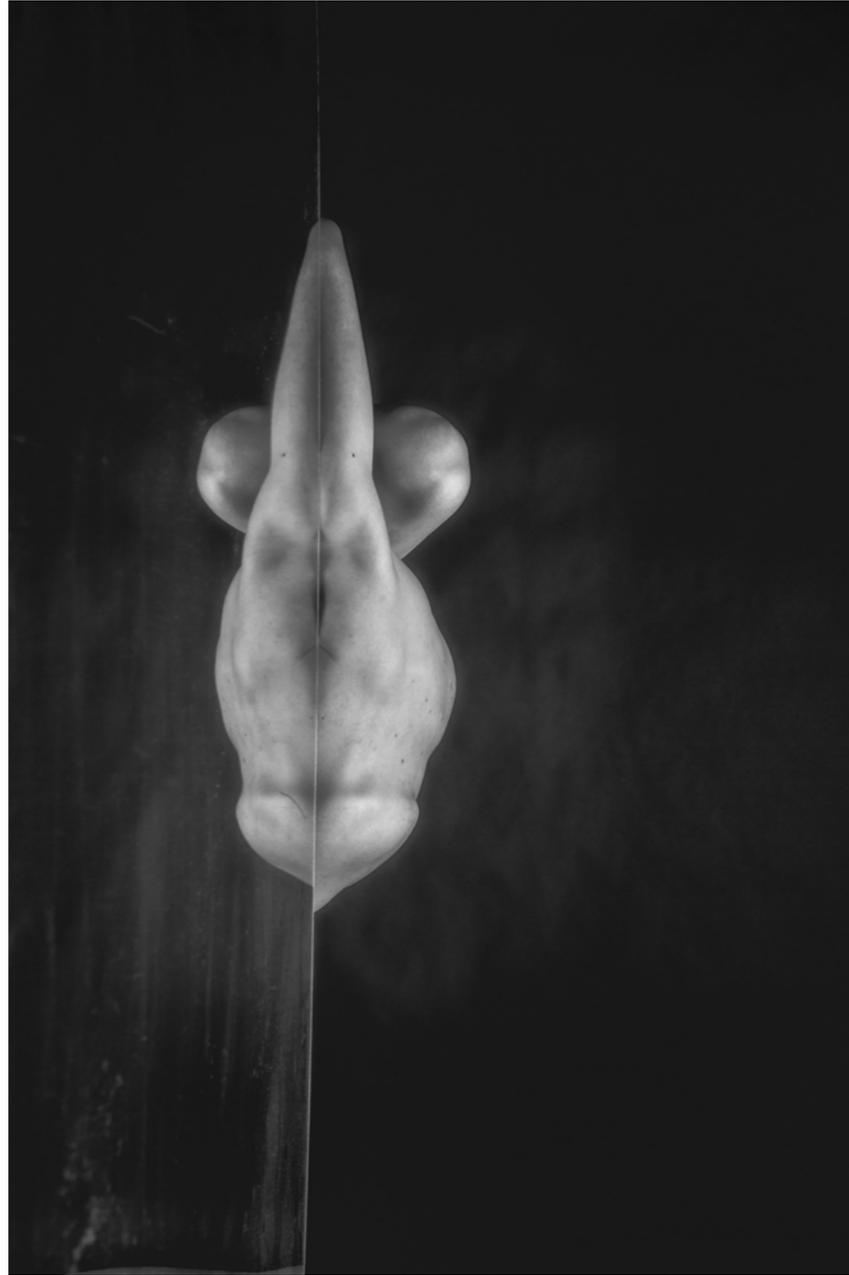
## II

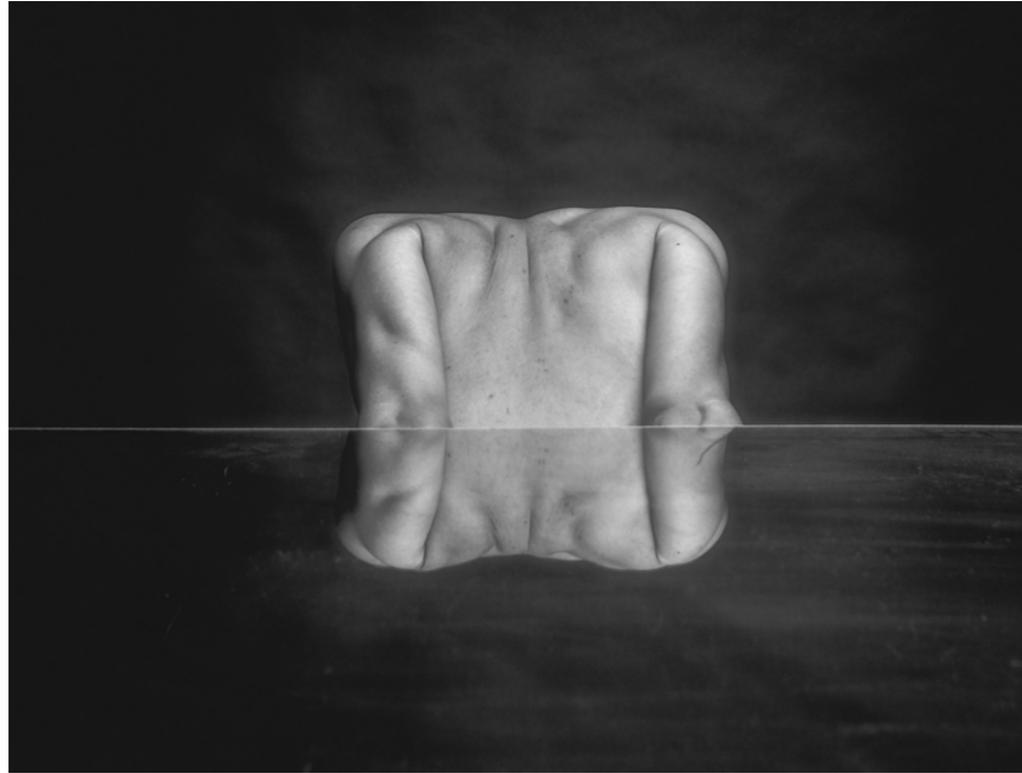
# mirror

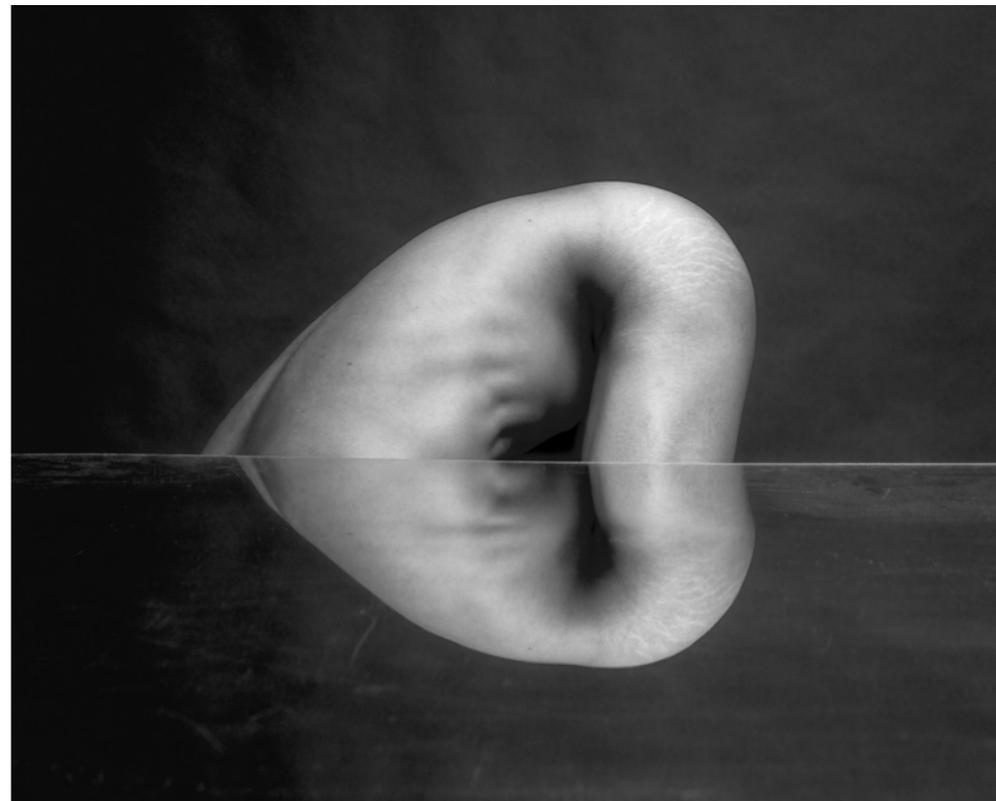
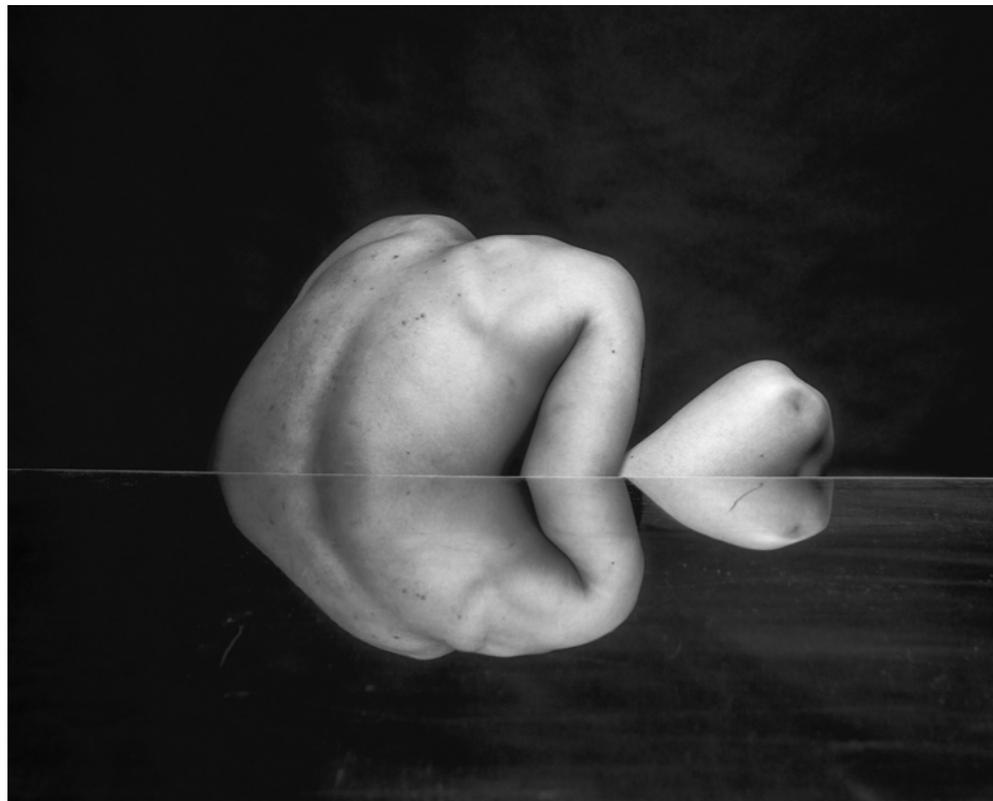
*/'mɪrə/*

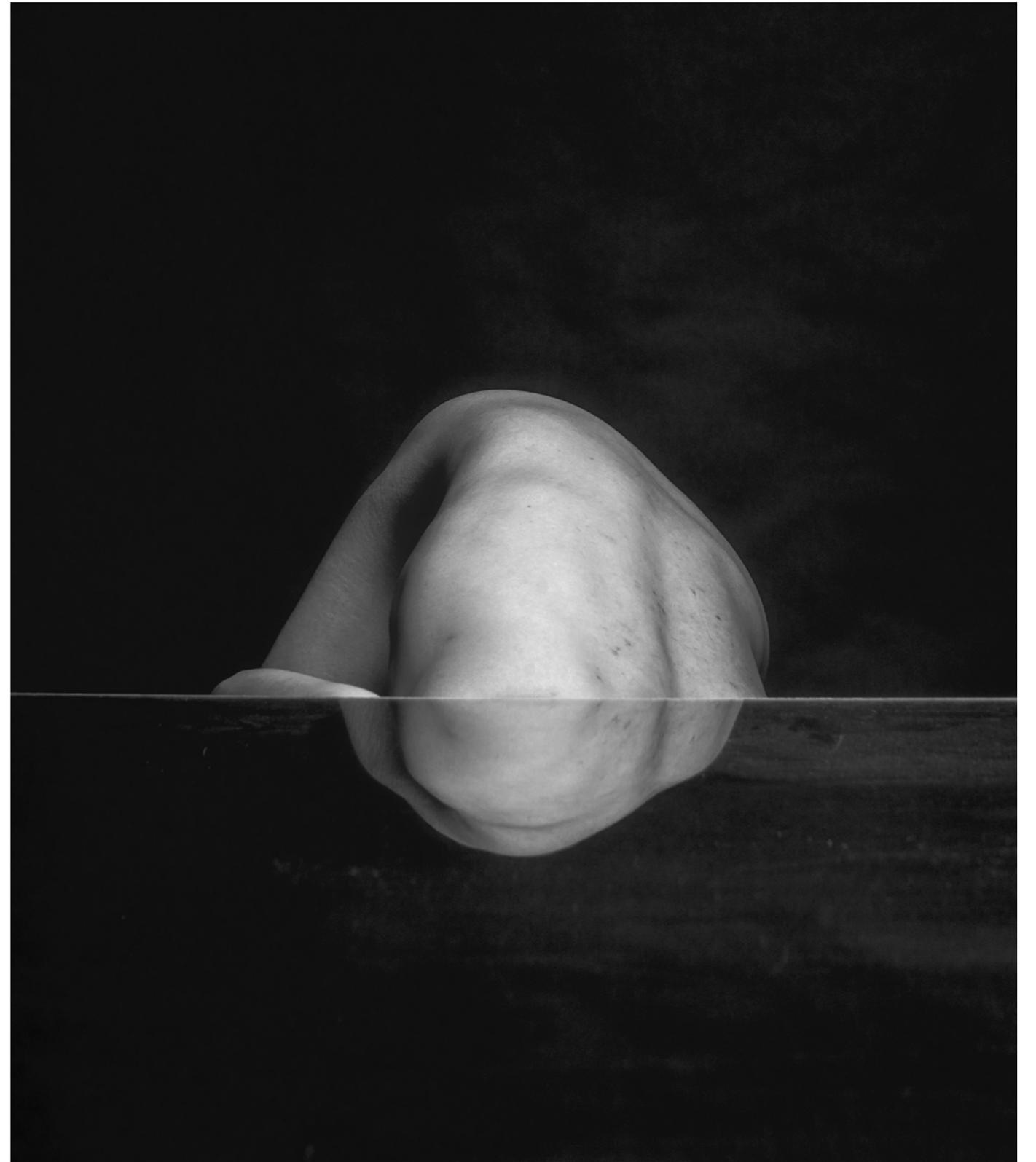
A material surface that reflects three-dimensional objects onto a two-dimensional surface.

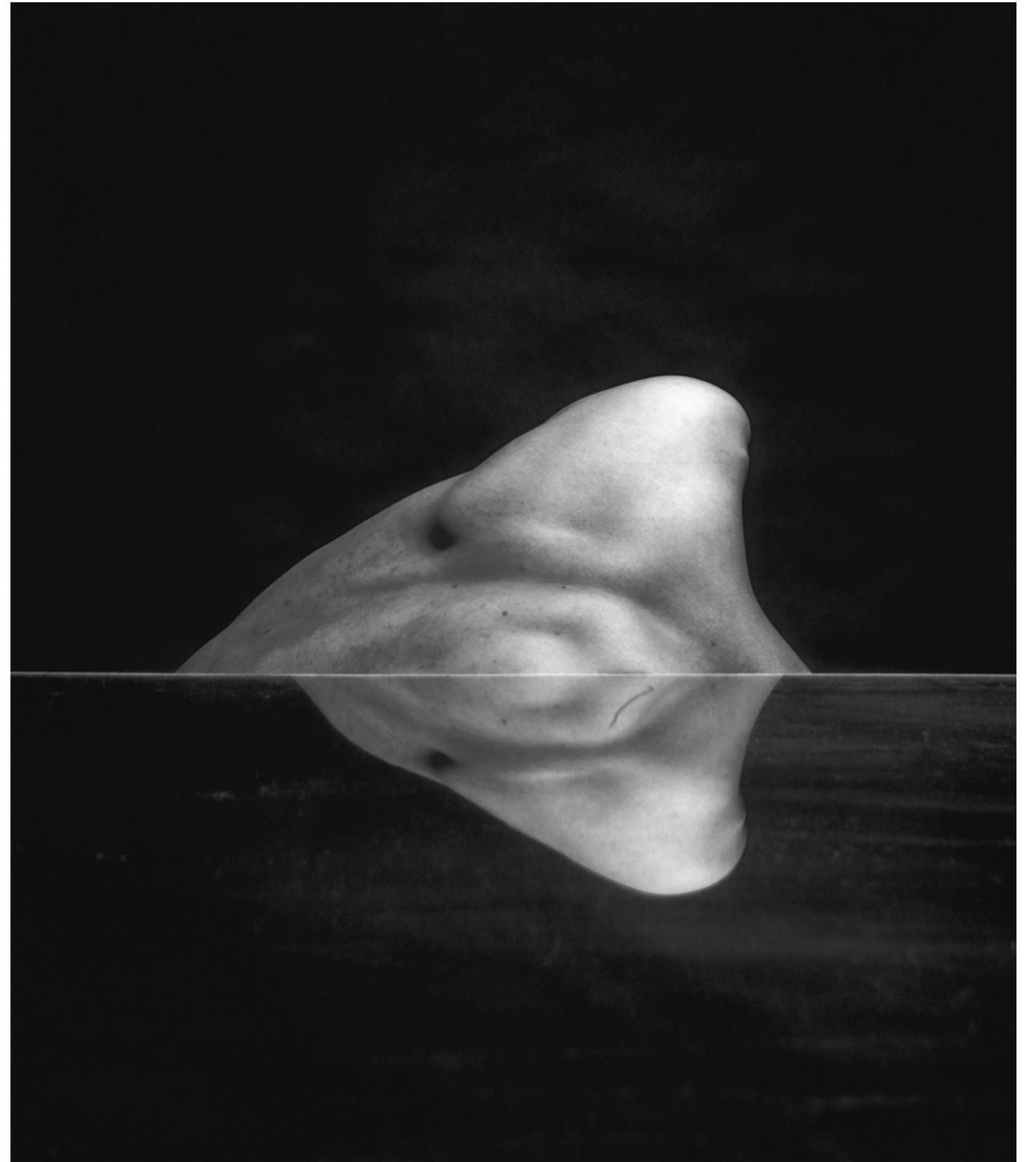


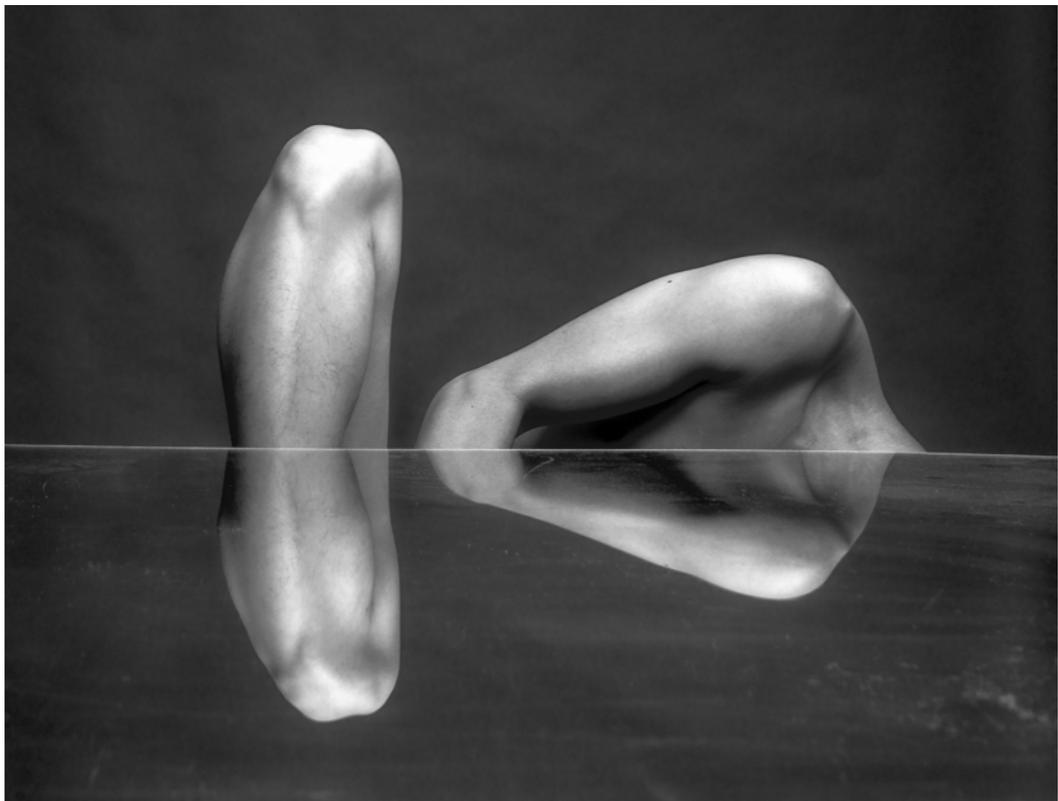


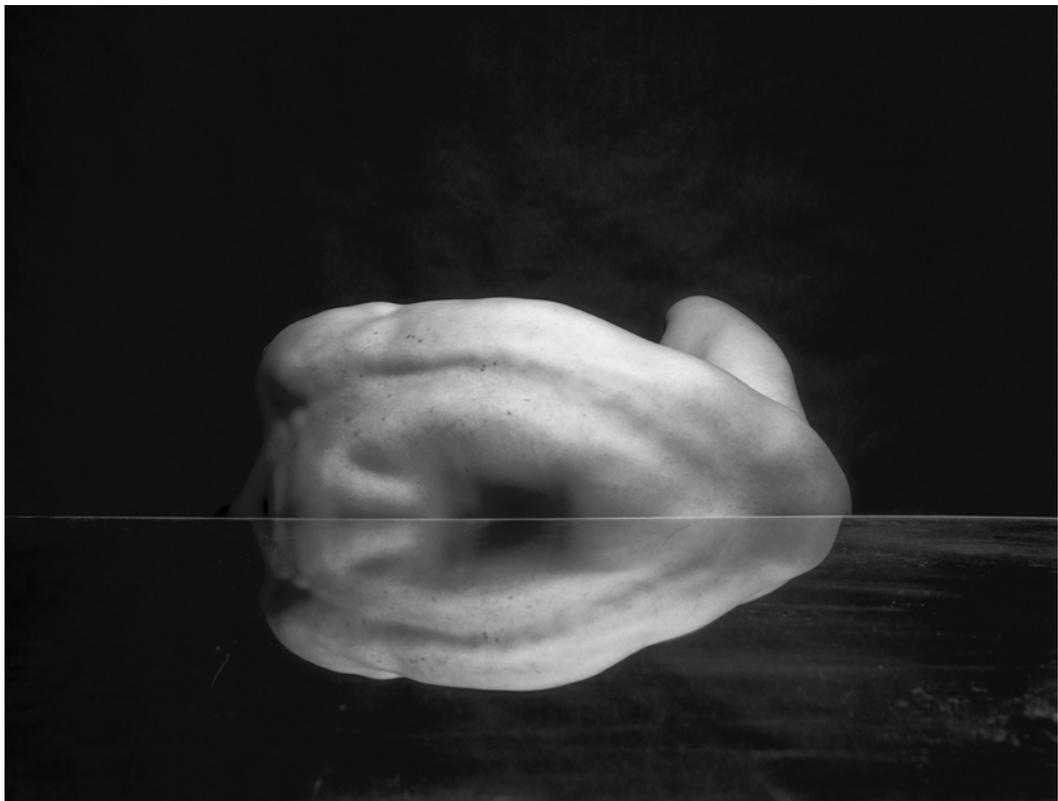


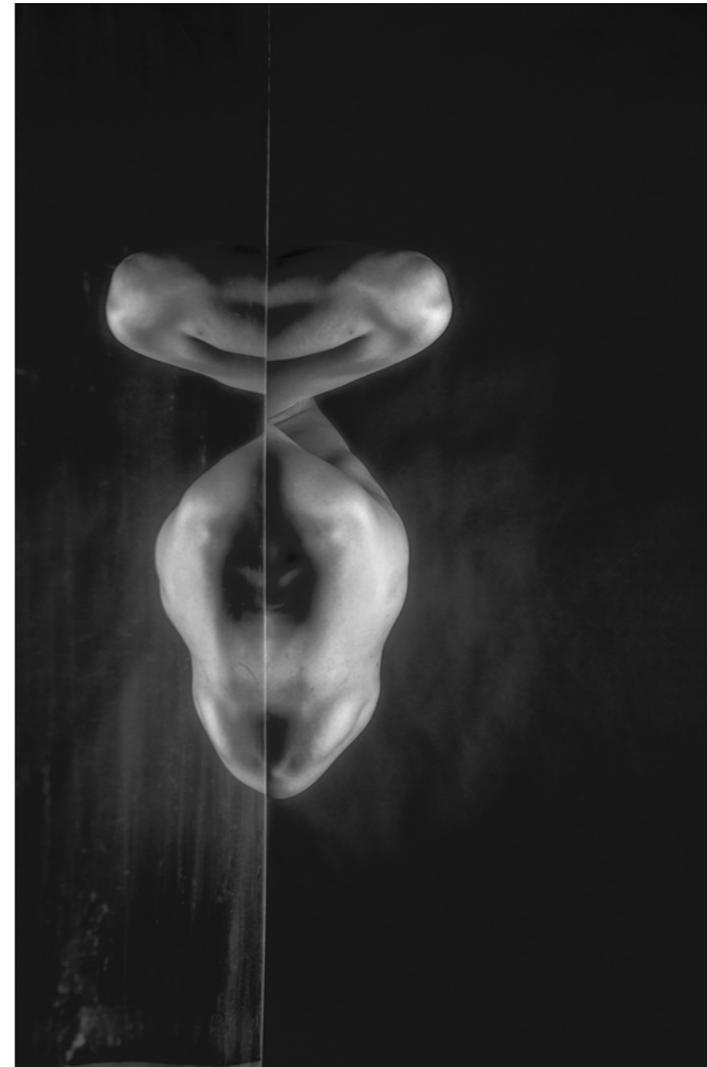
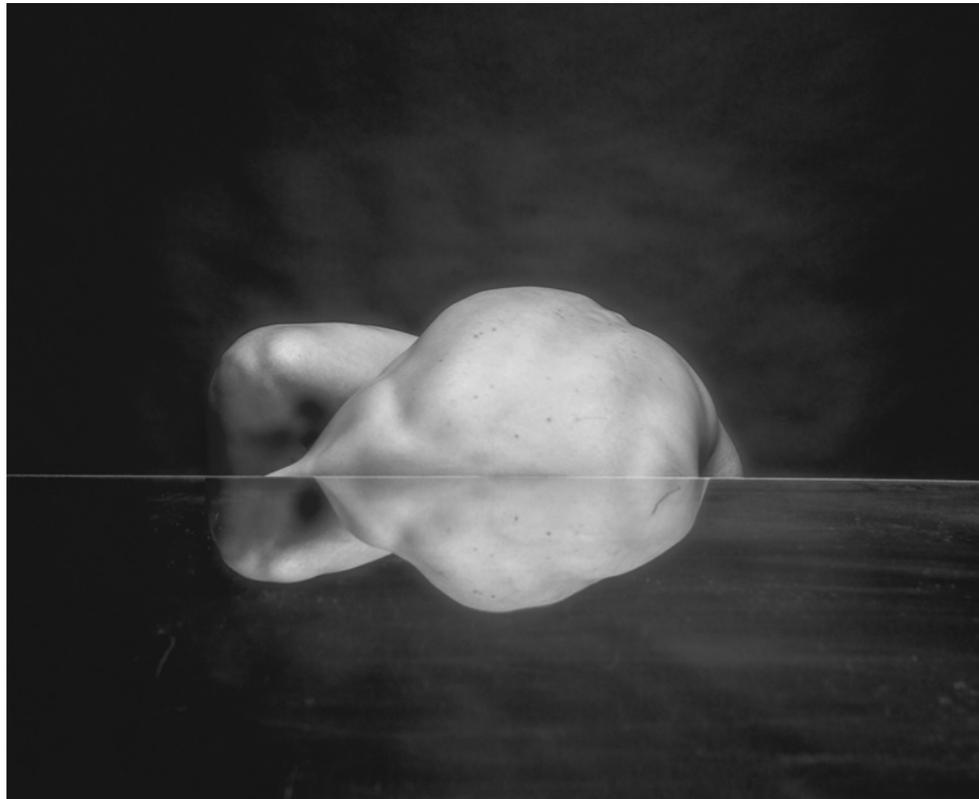


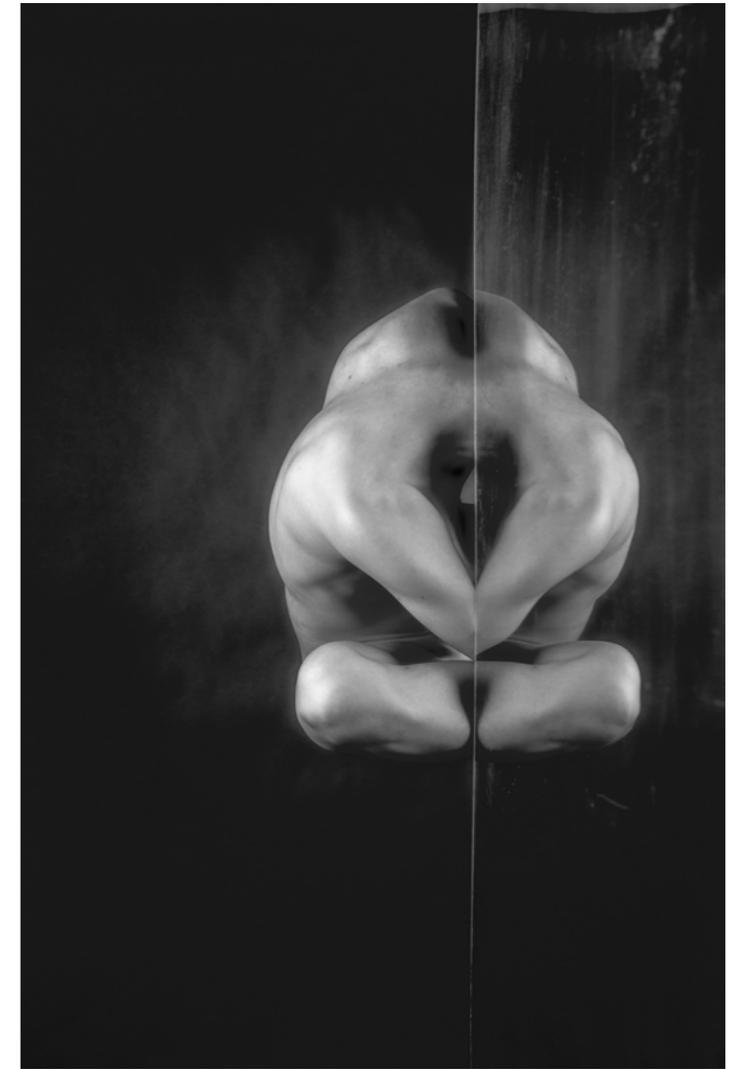
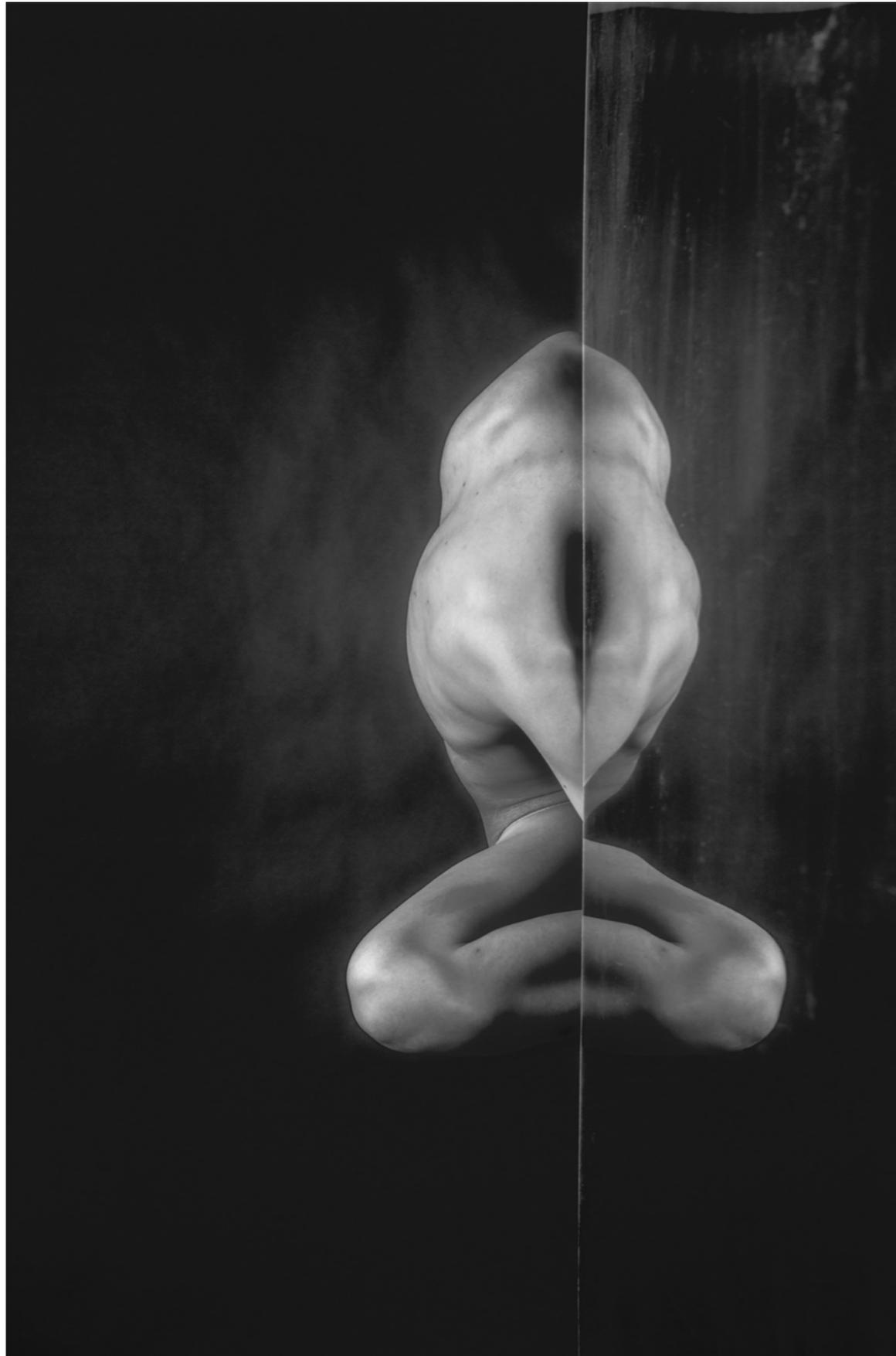
















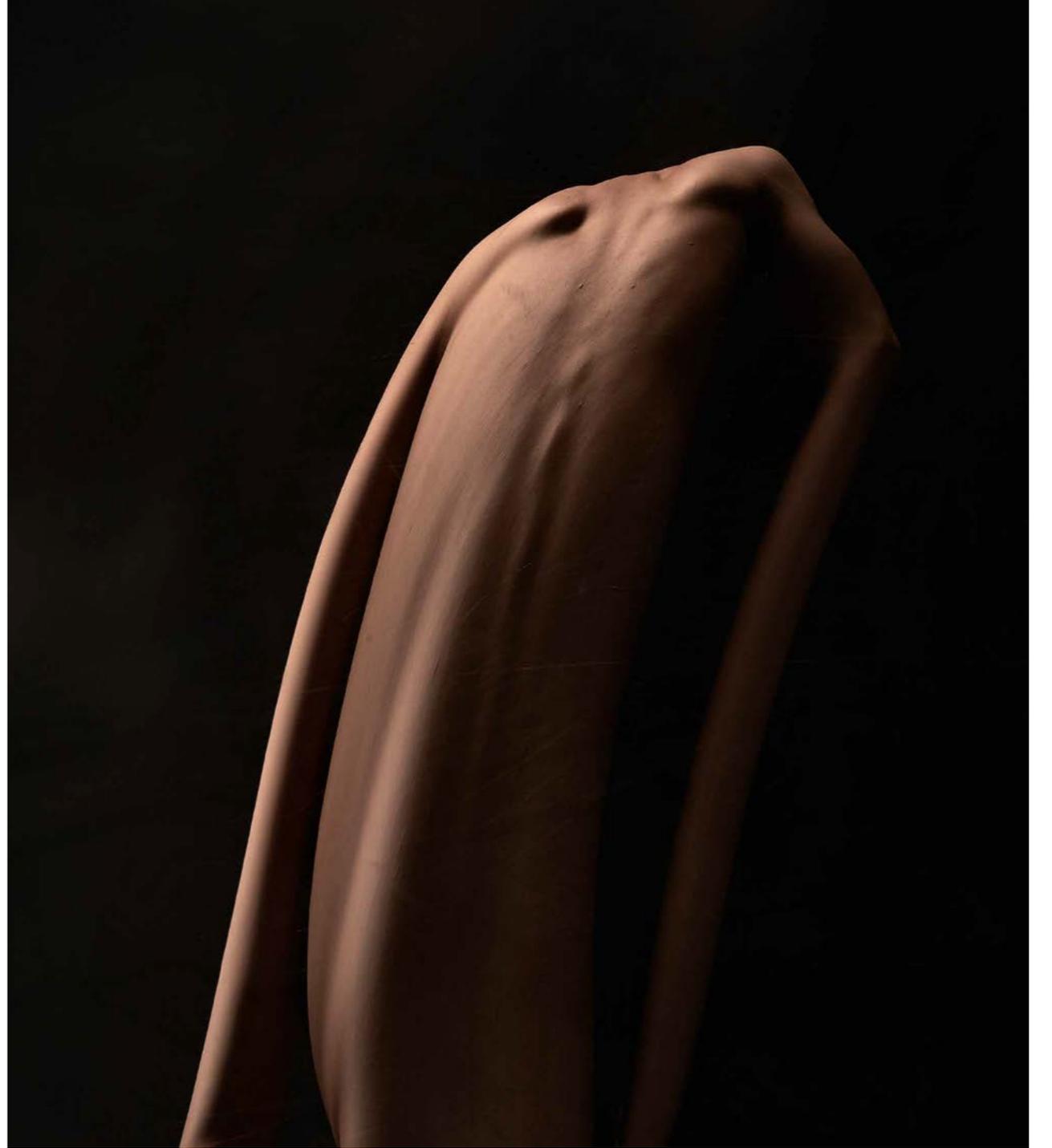


























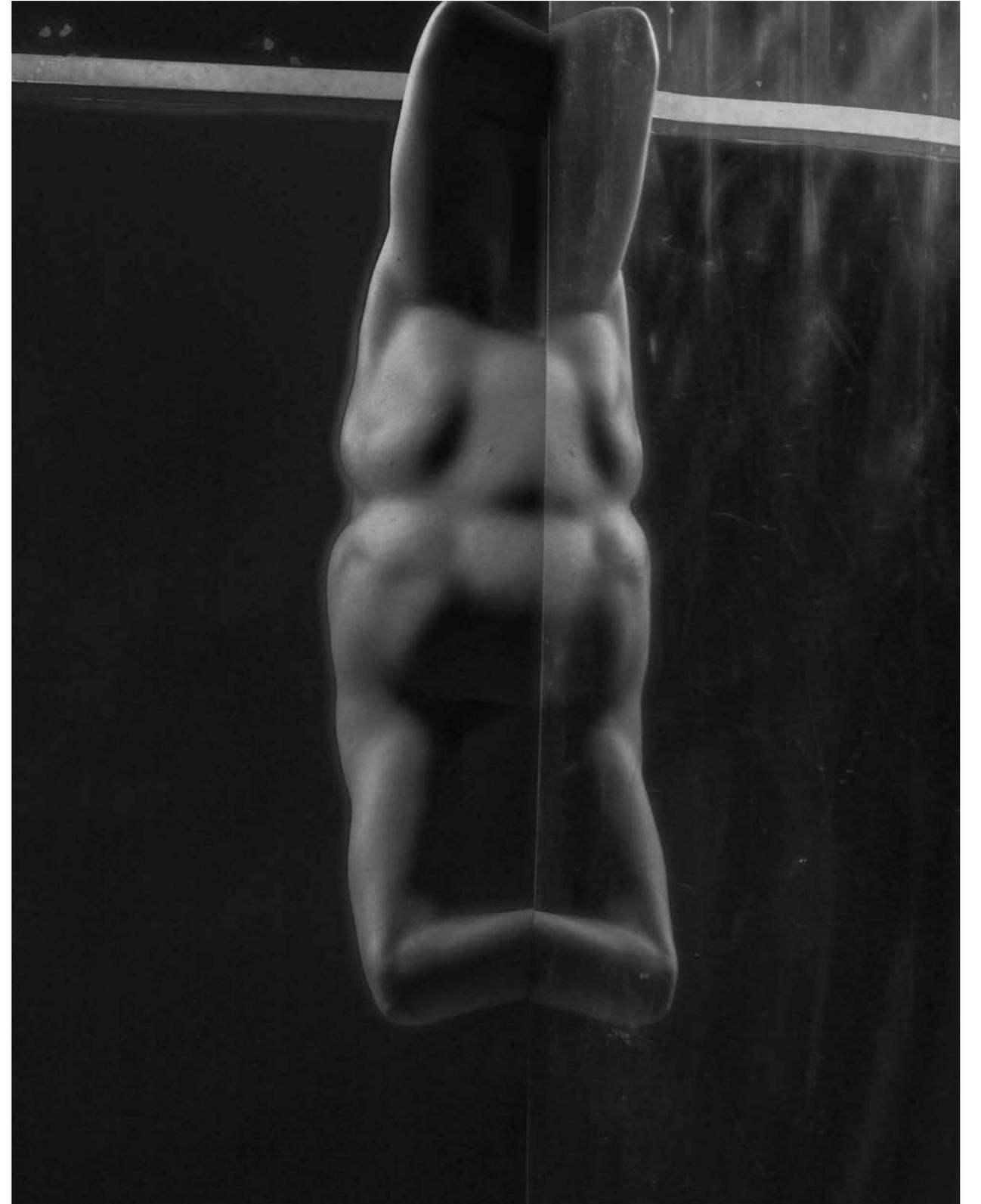
# III

## photographic manipulation

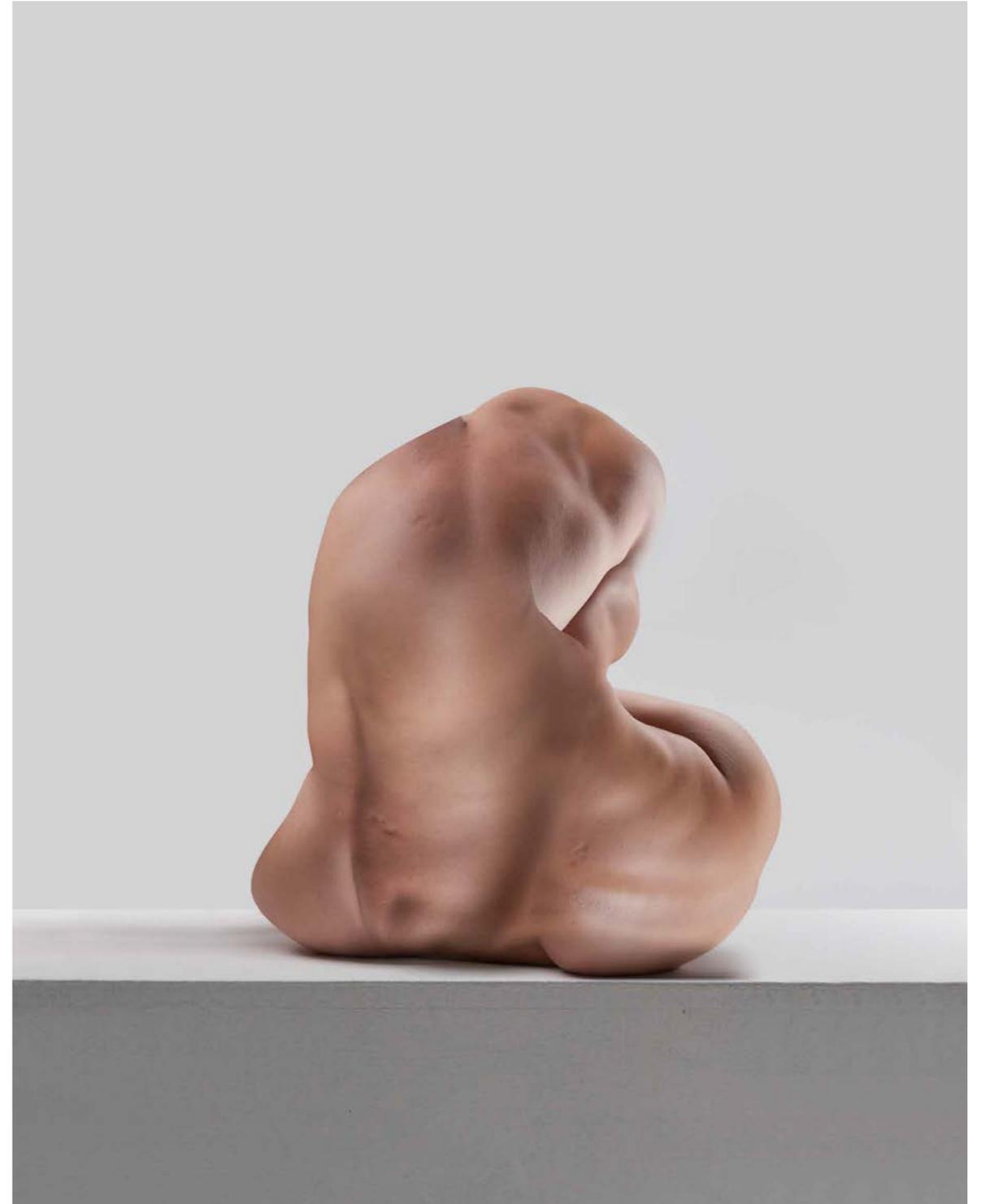
/ fō-tə-'gra-fik / mə,nɪpʃʊ'leɪʃ(ə)n/

*An alteration of the fundamental premise of a photographic image.*













— 3  
*N.A. Series*, 2013-15  
C-Type Print



— 4  
*N.A. Series*, 2013-15  
C-Type Print



— 5  
*N.A. Series*, 2013-15  
C-Type Print



— 12  
*Untitled*, 2015  
Inkjet Print



— 13  
*Body Form #5*, 2014-15  
C-Type Print



— 14/15  
*Body Form #5*, 2014-15  
C-Type Print



— 6  
*N.A. Series*, 2013-15  
C-Type Print



— 7  
*N.A. Series*, 2013-15  
C-Type Print



— 8  
*N.A. Series*, 2013-15  
C-Type Print



— 16  
*Body Form #5*, 2014-15  
C-Type Print



— 17  
*Body Form #5*, 2014-15  
C-Type Print



— 18/19  
*Body Form #5*, 2014-15  
C-Type Print



— 9  
*N.A. Series*, 2013-15  
C-Type Print



— 10  
*N.A. Series*, 2013-15  
C-Type Print



— 11  
*Untitled*, 2015  
Inkjet Print



— 20  
*Outtakes of Body Form #5*, 2014-15  
C-Type Print



— 21  
*Body Form #5*, 2014-15  
C-Type Print



— 22/23  
*Body Form #5*, 2014-15  
C-Type Print



— 24/25  
*Body Form #5*, 2015  
C-Type Print



— 26/27  
*Untitled*, Study of body and two papers, 2014  
Inkjet print on matte archival



— 28  
*Body and two papers*, 2014  
Inkjet print on matte archival



— 35  
*Untitled*, Study of body and plinth, 2013  
Inkjet print



— 36  
*Body Form #4*, 2015  
Inkjet print on textural fine art cotton rag



— 37  
*Body Form #4*, 2014-15  
Inkjet print on textural fine art cotton rag



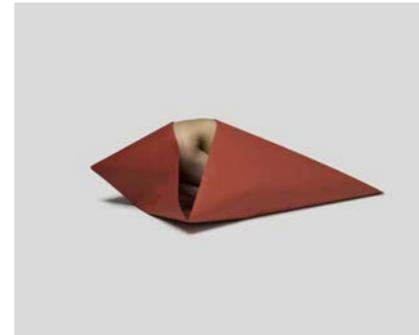
— 29  
*Body and two papers*, 2014  
Inkjet print on matte archival



— 30  
*Body and two papers*, 2014  
Inkjet print on matte archival



— 31  
*Body and two papers*, 2014  
Inkjet print on matte archival



— 38  
*Body Form #4*, 2014-15  
Inkjet print on textural fine art cotton rag



— 39  
*Body Form #4*, 2014-15  
Inkjet print on textural fine art cotton rag



— 40  
*Absence in Perception*, 2016  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 32  
Outtakes of interaction between body and plastic, 2016, Inkjet print



— 33  
*Untitled*, Study of body and plastic, 2016  
Inkjet print



— 34  
*Untitled*, Study of body, plastic & plinth  
2016, Inkjet print



— 40/41  
*Absence in Perception*, 2017  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 42  
*Absence in Perception*, 2017  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 42  
*Absence in Perception*, 2017  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 42  
*Absence in Perception*, 2016  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 42/43  
*Absence in Perception*, 2016  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 43  
*Absence in Perception*, 2016  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 45  
*Absence in Perception*, 2017  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 46  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2017  
Inkjet print on textural fine art cotton rag



— 47  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2017  
Inkjet print on textural fine art cotton rag



— 43  
*Absence in Perception*, 2016  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 44  
*Absence in Perception*, 2016  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 44  
*Absence in Perception*, 2016  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 47  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2017  
Inkjet print on textural fine art cotton rag



— 48/49  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2017  
Inkjet print on textural fine art cotton rag



— 50  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2017  
Inkjet print on textural fine art cotton rag



— 44/45  
*Absence in Perception*, 2016  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 45  
*Absence in Perception*, 2016  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 45  
*Absence in Perception*, 2017  
Metallic print on glass plate



— 51  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2017  
Inkjet print on textural fine art cotton rag



— 52/53  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2015  
C-Type print



— 54  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2016  
C-Type print



— 55  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2018  
C-Type print



— 56  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2019  
Metallic print



— 57  
*Untitled*, cropping study, 2015  
C-Type print



— 65  
*Dissimulation*, 2017  
C-Type on matte archival



— 66  
*Dissimulation*, 2017  
C-Type on matte archival



— 67  
*Dissimulation*, 2017  
C-Type on matte archival



— 58  
*Dissimulation*, black velvet, 2017  
C-Type on matte archival



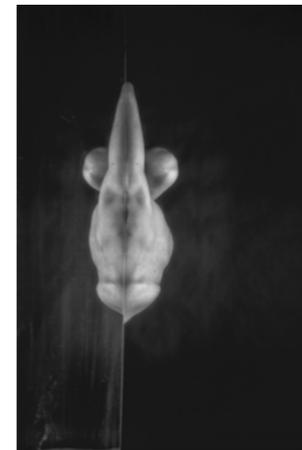
— 59  
*Dissimulation*, black velvet, 2017  
C-Type on matte archival



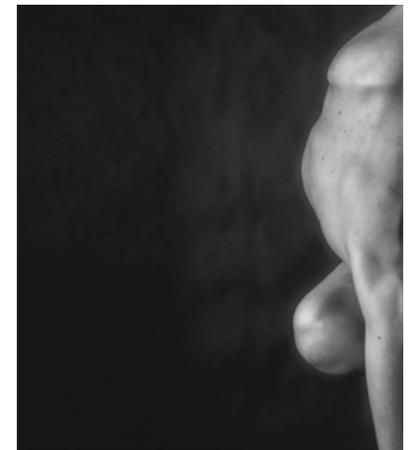
— 60  
*Dissimulation*, 2017  
C-Type on matte archival



— 71  
*Flat mirror study*, quasi-symmetrical forms  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 72  
*Flat mirror study*, quasi-symmetrical forms  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 73  
*Flat mirror study*, quasi-symmetrical forms  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



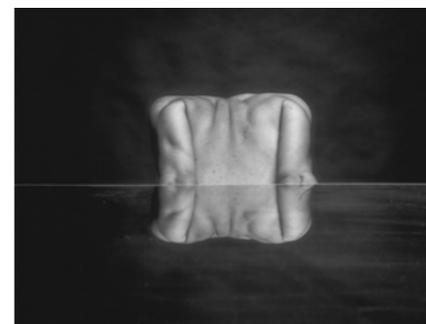
— 61  
*Dissimulation*, 2017  
C-Type on matte archival



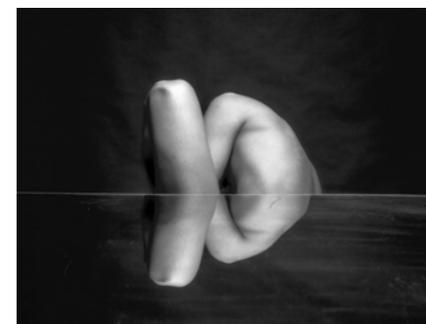
— 62/63  
*Dissimulation*, 2017  
C-Type on matte archival



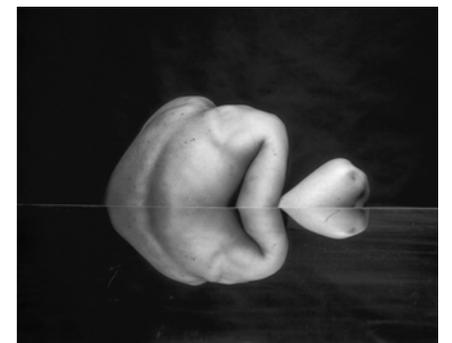
— 64  
*Dissimulation*, 2017  
C-Type on matte archival



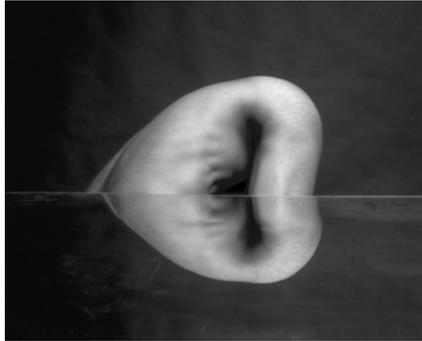
— 74  
*Flat mirror study*, quasi-symmetrical forms  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 75  
*Flat mirror study*, quasi-symmetrical forms  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



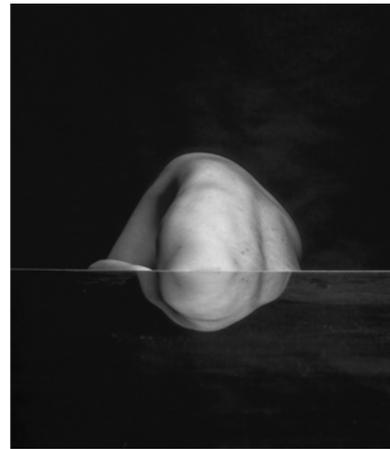
— 76  
*Flat mirror study*, quasi-symmetrical forms  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 77  
*Flat mirror study, quasi-symmetrical forms*  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



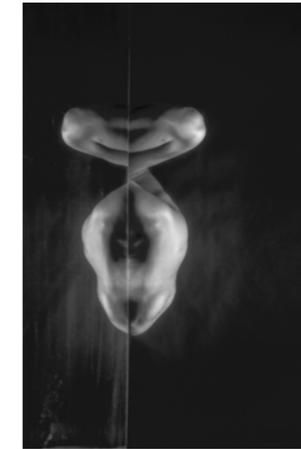
— 78  
*Flat mirror study, quasi-symmetrical forms*  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 79  
*Flat mirror study, dysymmetrical forms*  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 86  
*Flat mirror study, quasi-symmetrical forms*  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



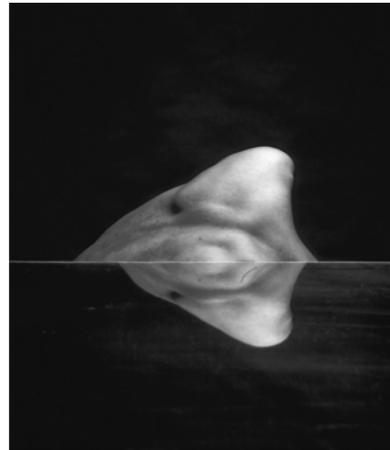
— 87  
*Flat mirror study, metamorphic body, 2016-19*  
Giclee on Hahnemuhle



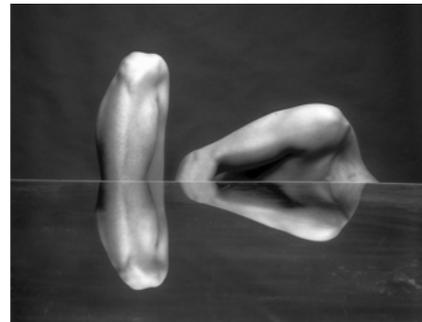
— 88/89  
*Flat mirror study, metamorphic body, 2016-19*  
Giclee on Hahnemuhle



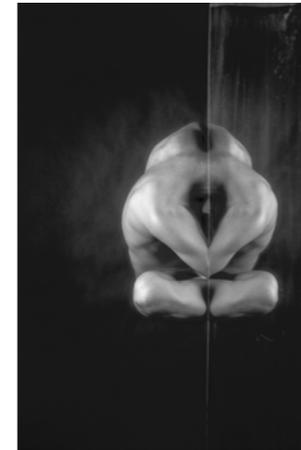
— 80  
*Flat mirror study, quasi-symmetrical forms*  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 81  
*Flat mirror study, dysymmetrical forms*  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 82  
*Flat mirror study, quasi-symmetrical forms*  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 89  
*Flat mirror study, metamorphic body, 2016-19*  
Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 90/91  
*Seeing through the mirror, curved mirror study*  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 92  
*Seeing through the mirror, curved mirror study*  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 83  
*Flat mirror study, quasi-symmetrical forms*  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 84  
*Flat mirror study, quasi-symmetrical forms*  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 85  
*Flat mirror study, quasi-symmetrical forms*  
2016-19, Giclee on Hahnemuhle



— 93  
*Seeing through the mirror, curved mirror study*  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 94/95  
*Seeing through the mirror, curved mirror study*  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 96  
*Seeing through the mirror, curved mirror study*  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 97  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 98/99  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 100  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 108  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 109  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 109  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 101  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 102/103  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 104  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 110/111  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



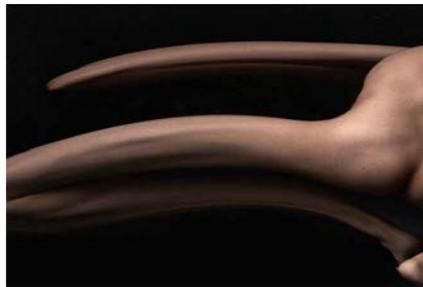
— 112  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 112  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 105  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 106/107  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 108  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 113  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 113  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 114/115  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 116  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 117  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



— 118/119  
*Seeing through the mirror*, curved mirror study  
2017, C-Type on matte archival



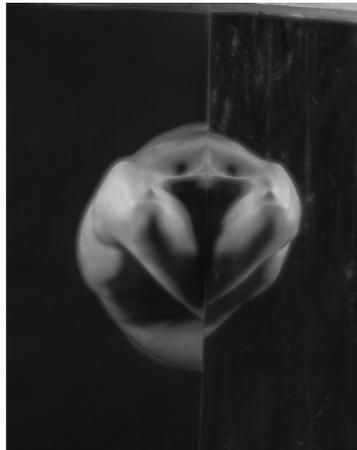
— 129  
*Untitled*, composite form  
2019, Inkjet on Hahnemuhle pearl



— 130  
*Untitled*, composite form  
2019, Inkjet on Hahnemuhle pearl



— 123  
*Untitled metamorphosis*, solarisation  
2019, Inkjet on Hahnemuhle pearl



— 124  
*Untitled metamorphosis*, solarisation  
2019, Inkjet on Hahnemuhle pearl



— 125  
*Untitled metamorphosis*, solarisation  
2019, Inkjet on Hahnemuhle pearl



— 126  
*Untitled*, black and white digital solarisation  
2017, Metallic print



— 127  
*Untitled*, digital colour solarisation  
2017, Metallic print



— 128  
*Untitled*, composite form  
2019, Inkjet on Hahnemuhle pearl



