

Thinking about my body at the butchery

Carina Sabharwal
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ARTIST STATEMENT (A BRIEF INTRODUCTION)



Before the decay of our flesh lies a more sinister death, that of recognition, where our bodies, in their most alive form, are fragmented, assimilated and prepared for consumption, the very life of our flesh erased.

My practice examines this severing between body and being, where Woman becomes both consumable and abject. I interrogate the processes through which womanhood is rendered a category of flesh, where identity and agency are fragmented, erased, and made visually and theoretically consumable.

I am drawn to the fragile boundaries that attempt to stabilise meaning:

Self / Other
Human / Animal
Nature / Sanitisation

Flesh becomes both a material and a theoretical border between that which is controlled and that which leaks, decays, or resists containment. My work is predominantly sculptural, utilising organic materials such as bark, animal skins, bones, fat, and blood, combined with materials that evoke ideas of sanitisation and human intervention, including plaster, plastic, glass, wax, beads, and inks. In examining the tension between containment and excess, I present sculptures at the threshold of enclosure, where they begin to spill or leak beyond their boundaries. In doing so, I critique the cultural obsession with flesh as a revealer of natural truth, situating it instead within systems of representation that construct and confine womanhood.

I visualise the violence inherent in essentialist ideologies of flesh by staging the female body as carcass, spectacle and com-

modity. I investigate the formation of the sexed body by actively reconstructing this process myself, fabricating the female carcass. In doing so, I engage with notions of sacrifice, transforming these carcasses into performative spectacles.

Embellishments underscore the grotesque contradiction of adorning wounds and carcasses. I use these embellishments as a moment of discomfort, where even in these carcasses, most bloody, leaky representations, they are forcefully adorned. What is adorned as sacred or beautiful is simultaneously flesh, decay and abjection.

By presenting female flesh as commodity, I underscore how the body circulates within culture as object, fragment, and resource, its agency absent. My exhibition space becomes a butchery, where I confront the “absent referent” of both animal and woman: how, in the act of consumption, individuality is erased and violence made invisible. Just as the animal becomes meat, women’s bodies are sexualised and fragmented into consumable parts, producing fragmented flesh, blood and skin, evoking both desire and repulsion while destabilising boundaries.

I blur the lines between what is recognisably human and what belongs to the animal other, reframing materials in clinical and decorative gestures, highlighting how patriarchal culture both distances humans from animals and feminises animals as consumable. The forms of these sculptures remain deliberately unstable, resisting singular interpretation and inviting multiple readings that unsettle fixed identities.



SMALL CURIOSITIES

This opening section begins my exploration into the boundaries that shape and contain Woman, both as an individual and as a category. Through a series of smaller sculptural objects, I begin to unpack how femininity is consumed, displayed and abject. Symbolically, women's bodies are visually and linguistically fragmented, reduced to sexualised parts in visual culture as something to be looked at, desired, and owned. Femininity itself is commodified; the feminine is marketed as a consumable aesthetic rather than a lived experience, where cultural industries sell the idea of "woman" as an image of desire or domesticity, rendering womanhood itself consumable. Women's reproductive and emotional labour are also appropriated and devalued, their time, care and energy consumed by patriarchal and capitalist systems. In this way, feminised forms of labour, such as domestic work or sex work, have been commodified as a consumable product or service. These works blur the line between human flesh, the animal body, and the artificial; merging bark, bone, and skin-like textures with plaster and glass. In doing so, they unsettle the distinctions between nature and sanitisation, body and object. The installation nods to the space of the butchery, its cold cleanliness, its choreography of display, while quietly undoing it. These pieces play between allure and discomfort, inviting the viewer to question what they are looking at and how they are looking. Here, the body becomes both spectacle and residue, opening the exhibition's dialogue on consumption, fragmentation, and our uneasy relationship with flesh.



Lamb Chops; Wood, Bark, Plaster, Oil pigment, String



Braai Champion;
Polyester fabric, Polyester filler, Oil pigment





A little burnt;
Polyester fabric, Beef tallow, Oil
pigment, Leather, String



Untitled;
Bark, Magnifying glass, Plaster,
Oil pigment, String, Cow hair

Golden chick;
Wood, Beef tallow, Oil pigment,
Cotton canvas, Plaster, Leather, String, Rosemary



Leaky Pelt;
Sheepskin, Hard plastic, Glass, Oil
pigment, Beads, String, Fabric,
Borax powder



Untitled;
Wood, Bark, Oil pigment, Beef
tallow, Binder clip, Nail





Untitled;
Wood, Bark, PE plastic,
Nylon fishing line



Untitled;
Bark, Leather, String



Untitled;
Calfskin, Polyester Fabric



Untitled;
Wood, Bark



Untitled;
Wood, Beef tallow, Oil pigment, Calfskin, Leather offcuts





Untitled;
PE plastic, Recycled glass,
Nylon fishing line

Untitled;
Calfskin,
Dyed leather



Untitled;
Magnifying glasses, PE plastic, String,
Dirt, Water





Untitled;
Wood, Beef tallow, Oil pigment,
Candles, Bark, Steel hinges



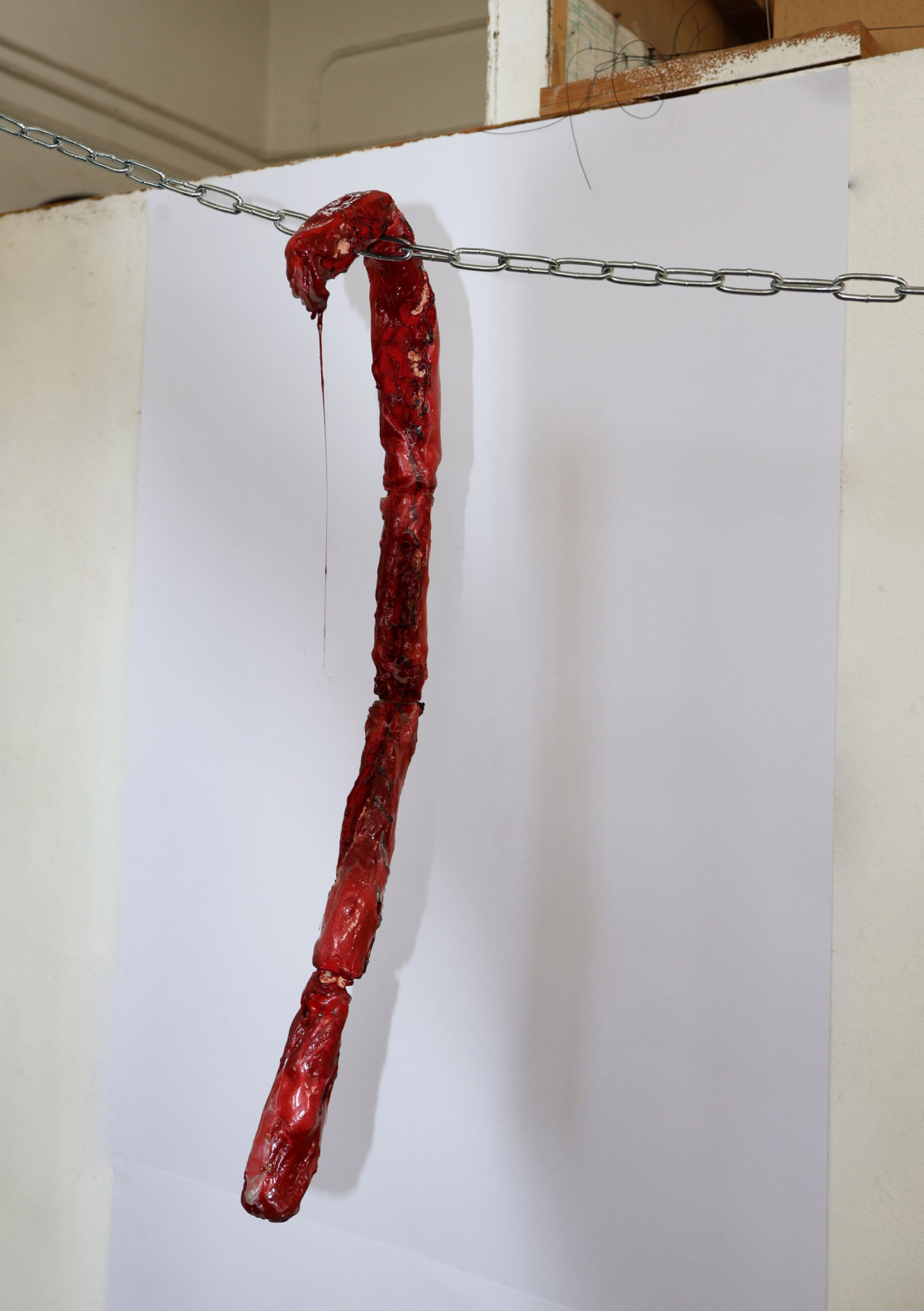
Ready-to-eat Selection;
PE plastic, Plaster,
Recycled glass



To-go;
Plastic bag, Lolly dog
treat, Bulldog clip



Landscape; Cotton canvas, Wood, Plaster, Oil pigment



Sausage I;
PE plastic, Polyester fabric,
Polyester filler, Oil pigment



Sausage II;
Polyester fabric,
Polyester filler, String,
Leather, Stocking, Oil
Pigment



Sausage III;
Polyester fabric, Polyester
filler, Oil pigment

In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol J. Adams explores the intertwined relationships between meat consumption and constructions of masculinity, as well as the cultural processes that render women's bodies as meat. She explores historical examples of how male identity has been reinforced through hunting and consumption. As such, she asserts that "meat is a 'power-structured relationship' in which power is thought to transfer to the consumer". In this way, meat has been coded as masculine, signifying dominance and control over nature, qualities which have long been associated with men's superiority and their ability to 'control' their bodies and others'. Adams asserts that this type of thinking opens up for the naturalisation of both the sexual and carnivorous consumption of women. She reinforces this idea by referencing the way in which women are depicted as meat in visual culture, where female flesh is eroticised and marketed as a commodity, where women's bodies are displayed in a Playboy magazine as if it were a meat selection catalogue (Adams, 1990: 87). She explains how "just as the slaughterhouse treats animals and its workers as inert, unthinking, unfeeling objects, so too in rape are women treated as inert objects, with no attention paid to their feelings or needs. Consequently, they feel like pieces of meat" (Adams, 1990: 82).



Untitled;
Cardboard, Plaster, Fabric,
Leather offcuts, Clothes-
pins



A CARCASS SELEC- (COLLEC) TION

In this second section, my exhibition enters a colder, more clinical space, one of exposure and display. The sculptures here take the form of carcasses: ambiguous bodies that hover between human and animal, recognisably feminine yet resistant to clear definition. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject, these works linger at the border where subject and object collapse; where flesh, once living, becomes thing. Kristeva attributes the corpse as a signifier of the border where identity and order disintegrate. The carcass becomes a site of both horror and recognition, recalling what must be expelled to preserve order and life. In staging these carcasses as commodities, as if they were in an abattoir, I confront the mechanisms through which women's bodies are rendered consumable. Within patriarchal culture, femininity is dissected and sold: as image, as labour, as desire. Here, flesh no longer signifies life or identity, but a surface of transaction; an object to be looked at, adorned, and ultimately consumed.



Carcass I;
Leather, Plaster, Chiffon
fabric, Fleece fabric

Carcass II;
Cotton canvas, Leather,
Calfskin, Wood, Beads,
String, Oil pigment, Plaster





Carcass III;
PE plastic, Human hair,
Plaster, Oil pigment



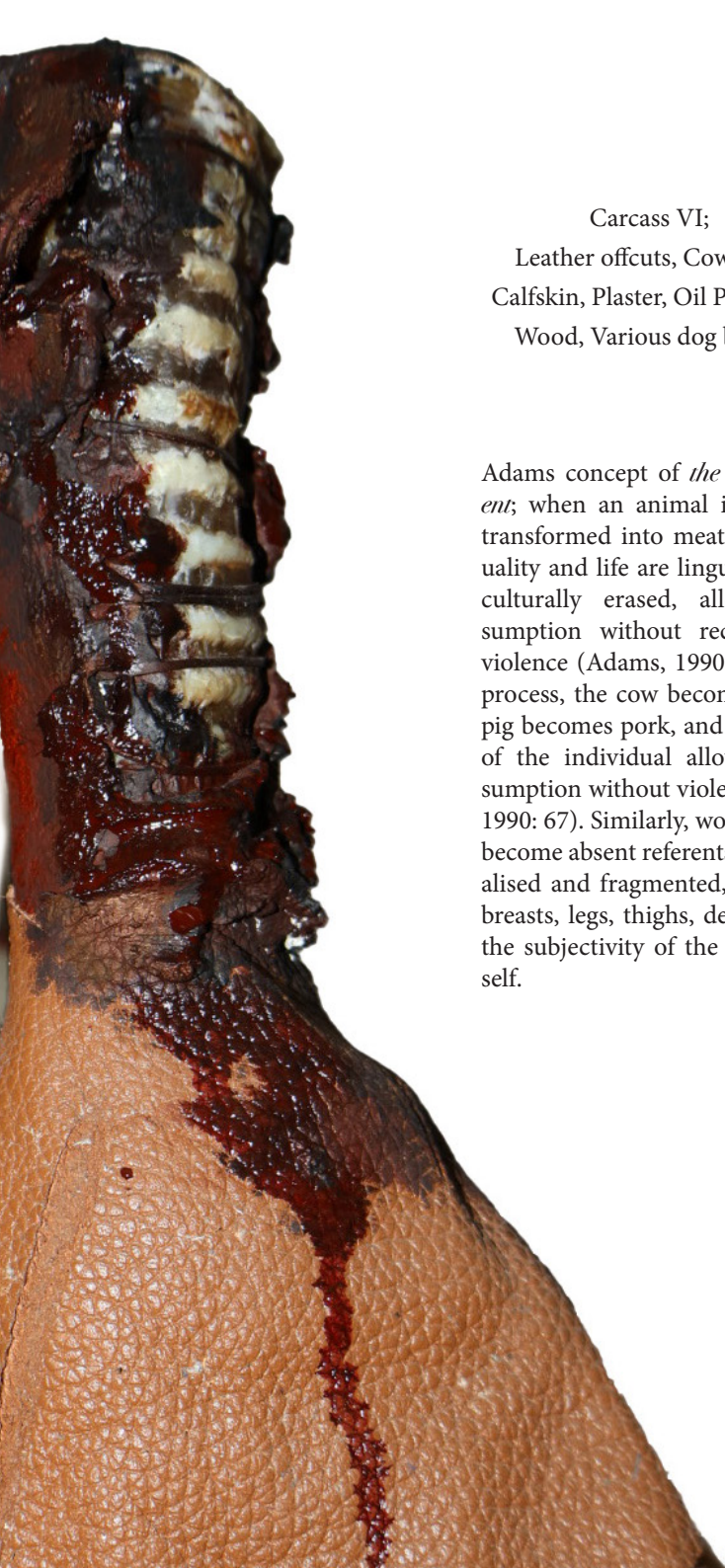


Carcass IV;
PE plastic, Polyester fabric,
String, Beads, Leather, Oil
pigment



Carcass V;
Cotton fabric, Plaster, Oil
pigment, Cardboard





Carcass VI;
Leather offcuts, Cowhide,
Calfskin, Plaster, Oil Pigment,
Wood, Various dog bones

Adams concept of *the absent referent*; when an animal is killed and transformed into meat, its individuality and life are linguistically and culturally erased, allowing consumption without recognition of violence (Adams, 1990: 66). In this process, the cow becomes beef, the pig becomes pork, and this absence of the individual allows for consumption without violence (Adams, 1990: 67). Similarly, women's bodies become absent referents when sexualised and fragmented, turned into breasts, legs, thighs, detached from the subjectivity of the woman herself.





Carcass VII;
PE plastic, Human hair,
Human nail clippings,
Nylon fishing line, Fabric



Adams asserts how all animals for consumption become symbolically female, representing the violated victim of male violence, the bloody flesh of the animal recalling the sex that cyclically bleeds, the one which reveals what is meant to stay hidden (Adams, 1990: 102). In this way, Adams suggests that the symbolic rendering of animals' fate as female resonates with the facts about animals used for food, and the sexual politics of meat is reinforced in the literal oppression of female animals (Adams, 1990: 102). As such, the absent referent facilitates the abjection of women by turning them into anonymous, leaking, fragmented flesh. Patriarchal culture normalises violence against women by hiding the subject behind soluble signs, while simultaneously staging her as abject matter that can be rejected, controlled, or destroyed. In this way, the concept of the absent referent exposes how women's bodies can be simultaneously eroticised, commodified, and repudiated, situating them within a cultural logic that treats them as meat.



Carcass VIII;
Plaster, Leather offcuts, Cow
hooves, Cotton canvas, String,
Clothespins, Cowhide,
Polyester fabric

In undoing the naturalised body, my practice traces the violence hidden within metaphors of divinity, purity, and nature, staging flesh as both spectacle and commodity. By collapsing the boundaries between self and other, human and animal, nature and sanitisation, I visualise how essentialist imaginaries of womanhood mask consumption, violence, erasure, and abjection beneath the guise of reverence. Carcasses adorned, wounds embellished, bodies fragmented; these are not utopias, but contradictions made visible. What leaks, decays, and resists containment unsettles fantasies of purity and stability, revealing identity as porous, unstable, and ungovernable.

In forcing these fragile borders to collapse under their own weight, my work rejects the promise of essentialist closure and instead gestures toward an embodied fluidity, where flesh is not destiny, but a site of critical engagement, vulnerability, and becoming.

References;

Adams, C.J. (2010) *The Sexual Politics of Meat, A Feminist Vegetarian Critical Theory. Twentieth Anniversary Edition.* New York City, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

Kristeva, J. (1982) *Powers of Horror, An Essay on Abjection.* New York City, New York: Columbia University Press.

