‘For the Love of Dolls’: artifact and identity

An exegesis and appropriate durable record submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

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Janet A. Donaldson

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**Project Summary**

For this project I have developed a body of work that investigates the relationships between objects and identity, focusing on the doll. The research investigates the doll as not just a plaything, but as an object intimately linked to identity; considering image, form, symbol and meaning. I have created a collection of doll artifacts that function as projections of human character through cues that suggest aspects of emotions, personalities and characteristics. The doll, imbued with human attributes, reveals beliefs about human personal and social interactions, and contributes to an understanding of the interplay between creativity and identity.

I have investigated the use of dolls and puppets in cultural contexts in order to identify the various ways they are used to convey ideas, customs and life-styles relevant to their particular cultures, whilst equally maintaining and enriching a sense of identity. Research into historical dolls, their use and significance and the use of the doll motif in contemporary art complements the studio investigation.

In the project I have utilized jewellery and small object making skills and techniques to construct objects, sculptures and dolls as adornment from a wide range of materials, including precious metals such as gold and silver and non-precious metals such as bronze, copper, brass and nickel silver. These metals have been used in combination with natural, organic and found materials such as carved wood and bone, fabrics, porcelain, paper, plastic and leather.

Experimentation with the ‘marionette doll’ and ‘puppetry’ is an important aspect of the research. The theatrical nature of the marionette doll and its ability to reveal and express identity through movement is a particular focus. This theatrical quality in the dolls allows the exploration of larger narratives, alluding to the drama and folly of human existence. Individually and collectively the dolls reveal something characteristic of the intimate and the personal.
Research Questions

1. How can I extend, through the use of small object making techniques and materials, the development of the doll as an artifact?

2. In what ways can these artifacts based on dolls, function to reveal and comment on aspects of identity, both cultural and personal?

3. How does the use of the doll in culture and art function to manifest issues of human identity?
1. Introduction

‘In 1810, German philosopher and writer, Heinrich von Kleist had no doubt that his marionettes had souls, defined as the spirit of truth’.¹ ‘Grace appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness. That is, in the puppet or in the God’.²

In his book The Doll, Carl Fox considers various definitions of the doll – as plaything, toy, puppet, ‘object of ritualistic and sacred import’.³ He notes that the doll can stimulate the spheres of fantasy and reality for both the child as well as the adult: ‘The doll is a private vessel into which are distilled fears, hopes, sorrows and magic make-believe.’⁴

Dolls are, in essence, cultural icons. Their roots are in the depths of centuries and in the mysteries of rituals. They reflect our culture, show who we are, what we admire, who we think is important and how different peoples at different times have seen the world. The history of dolls is intriguing; they have played many roles, but have always been depictions of the human form. They can be idols, icons, statues, figurines, costume figures, fetishes, ancestral figures, religious offerings, action figures, models, ornaments, puppets and marionettes. Whatever they are called, they are imbued with human attributes, and there is a kind of magic in any such human-like representation. As Carl Fox states, ‘Perhaps the greatest single attraction of the doll is its almost magical power to engulf the viewer and lift him out of himself into the doll’s world–whatever it may be.’⁵

There are several links that connect my passion and the wider relevance of this research. First, the development and education of my young children during the 1980s was of primary importance to me and led to in my investigation into the teaching philosophy of Rudolph Steiner, (1861-1925). Steiner, Austrian philosopher and social reformer, taught that the doll was the prime gift to the imagination. Acknowledging the importance of the doll, I spent many years hand making fabric dolls, initially for my own children, but then for countless others, including children with special

⁴ Ibid. p. 47.
needs. Due to the effect and success of these dolls I wrote and illustrated a book in 1987 titled ‘A Child’s Neighbourhood’. ⁶

While the ‘doll making’ was initiated due to my role as a parent, the impact of making has permeated directly into my artistic practice, stimulating further research. Research undertaken for my Master’s project, titled ROOM; Memory ‘at the still point of the turning world’, resulted in an installation work that investigated the relationships between an environment with memory and identity.⁷ The project explored the concept of creating an environment to identify the importance of space/place and ones’ identity in that space. As part of this body of work, I produced two series of works using the doll motif. These dolls were created to simulate the human body/self, encouraging the process of seeking and identifying the self. I was interested in exploring the evocative doll concept to link, through the imagination and memory, the child-like pleasure of object and the possibility of seeking a reflection of the self. I am now extending and expanding this research by investigating more ways to facilitate the projection of human emotion and characteristics into the dolls so that they function as artifacts which highlight and expose issues related to personal identity and social beliefs and interactions.

‘I remember seeing an old doll in the hands of children on a remote Russian estate. It had come down through the generations, and all the members of the family bore a resemblance to this doll.’⁸

Dolls can be reminders, statements of affection and mirrors of our humanness that both reflect and help shape our sense of who we are. Similarly, artworks have the ability to stimulate and allow reflection and access to aspects of our experience and our selves that are otherwise inaccessible. As Eileen Blumenthal wrote, ‘They have been powerful conservators of social values, but also political subversives. They have given visible form to the vastness of the cosmos but also have shown the intimate interior of a human psyche.’⁹

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The tradition of figurative art work is an inherent part of human interaction and its evidence and continuity throughout the history of the human race makes it an inevitable part of society.\(^{10}\)

Dolls’ contribution and service to the human condition, in both social and psychological terms, has many facets. They have been used in child care and rearing, education, health care (including psychological and physical therapy where they have been used as diagnostic aids), commerce (including advertising) and even in law enforcement, where in some societies they have provided a means of anonymity and disguise to people assigned to imposing order. They have helped to convey and conserve culture. Their prominent appearance in celebrations including religious rituals, initiations and ceremonies for ancestors, as well as political events and civic activities like street theatre, art festivals and annual parades, such as Halloween, reinforce them as icons that strengthen the sense of belonging to a community and a sense of cultural identity and continuity.

By investigating these aspects, and by producing objects that explore the expression of human emotions and perceptions by investing them with attributes of human character, I will contribute to an understanding of the interplay between creativity and identity as expressed through the doll as artifact.

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\(^{10}\) Henry Glassie discusses the inevitability of tradition and figurative art. He highlights that when the tradition is figurative it becomes more naturalistic upon contact. He gives the examples of this tradition in contemporary African Sculpture, paralleled…in the Kachinas of the Hopi carvers and states that: ‘When the tradition lacks figures, they are added. When a tradition’s figurative dimension is slight, it is expanded.’ See ‘The Spirit of Folk Art: The Girard Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art’ (Harry N. Abrams, New York, in assoc with The Museum of International Folk Art 1989), p. 45
2. Historical and Cultural Background

2.1 Early Origins of Dolls

The doll has long been a potent cultural artifact. Dating back to the days of the Cro-Magnon in 25,000 B.C., doll-like objects carved out of stone, bone, wood and animal tusks are among the earliest known representational artifacts. Whilst the true meaning of these voluptuous figurines may never be fully known, their full bodies suggest a link to fertility rituals. As Eileen Blumenthal states, ‘In any case, before people had conceived of agriculture and animal husbandry, the earliest humans had taken the phenomenal conceptual leap to create miniature replicas of people.’

![Figure 1: Female figurine, Vestonice Venus. Country of Origin: Czechoslovakia. Culture: Upper Aurignacian. Date/Period: Palaeolithic c. 38000 BC. Place of Origin: Dolni Vestonice. Material/Size: Clay H= 11.5 cm. Credit Line: Werner Forman Archive/ Moravian Museum, Brno.](image)

12 Ibid. p. 11.
The production of figurines escalated from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic period, and came as a result of the growth in settlements that were wholly reliant on farming for their existence. With the cyclical life forces of farming and community being firmly attributed to supernatural powers, these figurines belonged to the ritual provisions that were made to assure survival and continuance.\(^\text{13}\)

Handmade dolls accompanied the ancient Egyptians and Incas into their afterlife. In ancient Greece and Rome it is also common to find dolls placed in burial chambers and tombs as guardians, guides or companions in the afterlife.\(^\text{14}\) These dolls were mainly made from wood and cloth, although clay and ivory dolls have also been found. There is no doubt that dolls also served girls as playthings in ancient Greece, while toy dolls, made mostly of clay, were commonly used in Roman times.\(^\text{15}\) It was customary for Roman girls, like their Greek predecessors, to dedicate their dolls to a goddess on the eve of their marriage.\(^\text{16}\)

The ancient Scots used dolls called poppets filled with herbs to aid in healing, banishing curses or protection against dark forces. These poppets were simple cloth dolls filled with lavender, other herbs or acorns. The acorns represented strength and this strength was meant to be received by the person it was being used for. Usually a blessing or incantation was said over the doll and then it was given to the individual to keep while in use.\(^\text{17}\)

The making of corn dollies was a European Pagan custom that evolved from the belief that the ‘corn (grain) spirit’ lived amongst the crops. According to Diana Cary and Judy Large, ‘Throughout Europe the concept of a Demeter corn mother figure or spirit in the grain was retained for centuries, with counterparts in the Americas in the form of Indian maize goddesses.’\(^\text{18}\) These fertility dolls had great significance, as the fecundity of the harvest was so important for survival. The dolls were usually made from the last sheaf cut at harvest. The ‘corn spirit’ was

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\(^{13}\) According to Marija Gimbutas, the departure from Paleolithic figurine types was not caused by ‘technical innovations, but by the permanent settlement and growth of communities,’ where art was closely connected with religion and ‘as early as the seventh millennium B.C. traits associated with the psychology and religion of the farmer are a characteristic feature of sculptural art.’ Furthermore Gimbutas argues that ‘this art was not consciously imitative of natural forms but sought rather to express abstract conceptions.’ See ‘The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe’, (Thames and Hudson. London 1982), p. 11.


\(^{16}\) Ibid. p.14


\(^{18}\) Diana Cary and Judy Large, ‘Festivals, Family and Food’, (Hawthorn Press, Gloucestershire 1982), p.66
believed to live within these dolls and they were kept all year to ensure a good harvest in the following harvest season. New ones would then be made to replace them and the spirit from the crop would be reborn. The corn doll lives on today, although in a much more decorative, folk art form.

2.2 Dolls of the Americas

American Indians used dolls in medicine ceremonies to bring healing energy to the sick. The Aztecs, Incas and Mayans of South America were among the first inhabitants of the Americas. Like other ancient civilizations, they have their own pantheon of deities. Similar to the civilizations of pre-Christian Europe, they worshiped many gods and goddesses.

![Figure 2](image)

Aztec dolls discovered in Mexico dated from the year 1000 BC were made of clay and bore the symbol of the sun, which was significant to the civilization’s cults. Fertility goddesses were depicted as doll figurines showing the female form as a symbol of the earth’s fecundity or of a mother goddess. Many of these artifacts were created from carved stone, clay and precious metals. Gold and silver fertility figures testified to the importance of having plenty of children.

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19 Antonia Fraser, ‘Dolls’, (Octopus Publishing Ltd, London 1963), p.15
Many of the figurines found in Mexico are google-eyed, just like their counterparts in Sumer (ancient Babylon) and are clearly connected with fertility and the cultivation of the Mother Earth.  

Antonia Fraser explained that dolls in ancient Peru ‘were produced of very high material standard, including massive females in gold and males in silver, both dressed in real cloth.’ Doll artifacts dressed in feathers and fine woolen cloth have provided significant clues about Inca religious and sacrificial practices. Woven woolen dolls and others made of cotton, plaited straw and reeds were buried with the dead to be helpers and to accompany the dead person in a future life. These ancients also made dolls that represented Ekeko, a God of health and wealth, and placed miniature versions of their desires onto the doll; this was believed to cause the user to receive all that he desired. Originally Ekeko dolls were carved out of stone, but in modern times, stone has been replaced by ceramic.

Around present-day Guatemala, the Ancient Mayans used woven cloth to make small bags which they filled with miniature dolls, known as ‘Worry Dolls’. These dolls, made from cloth and wood, were used to alleviate worries or fears and remain a tradition to the present day.

Indians from the Muisca region of Columbia used flat, stylized human figurines, known as tunjos, as votive offerings to the Gods. These small representations of human beings were cast in gold or gold/copper alloys and illustrated the lives of actual Muisca people; carrying children, holding shields, weapons, pots and everyday objects; some depicted scenes of people engaged in various activities. As Clemencia Plazas de Nieto and Ana-Maria Falchetti de Saenz observed, ‘They provide abundant ethnographic information because of the extremely fine detail in which

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22 For Bernard S. Meyers the artistic ability of the Incas was most effectively demonstrated in their textiles, ‘in which this culture was most unique.’ He also states that the Inca ‘art of feather weaving reached truly remarkable heights.’ See ‘Art and Civilization’, (McGraw-Hill, Inc., New York 1967), p.120
the figures are rendered and the numerous objects – ornaments, weapons and utensils – which they carry.26

The Hopi Indian tribe of the North American Pueblo, make kachina dolls. The term kachina refers to specific aspects of nature - the sun, rain, good crops and health - that the Pueblo attribute to the supernatural spirits. In kachina dance ceremonies, the Pueblo petition these spirits and give gifts of kachina dolls. The dolls are carved from dry cottonwood root, brilliantly painted and decorated with feathers, leather and yarn. At the end of the ceremonies the dolls are presented to the children. They are not playthings, although the children may carry them around, but are intended to teach the children about the gods and the details of their religious beliefs.27 Hung up on the walls by the Hopi, kachina dolls serve as a constant reminder of the spirit beings and their influence in everyday life.

Figure 3: Small ivory carving of a human adorned with blue beads. It probably served as a charm and hung from the owner’s neck. Culture: Eskimo. Credit Line: Werner Forman Archive/Alaska Gallery of Eskimo Art.

Alaskan Inuits\textsuperscript{28} have carved wood and ivory doll figurines for at least two thousand years. Carved ivory dolls make up a significant portion of the artifacts left behind by prehistoric Inuits. According to Susan Fair, *Eskimo Dolls*, these ‘comprise a body of artistry that ranks prehistoric Alaskan Eskimo carvers among the great creators of art in the world.’\textsuperscript{29} They were made as ceremonial objects, amulets and children’s toys.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Asiatic Eskimo puppet made from driftwood and sealskin with trade beads for eyes. It was probably used as a child’s toy or in humorous performances. Culture: Eskimo. Credit Line: Werner Forman Archive/ William Channing Collection.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{28} Where possible, I have used the term ‘Inuit’ instead of ‘Eskimo’. Since the 1990s the current appellation has been ‘Inuit’ to avoid insulting/colonialist associations. Appropriately, references that include ‘Eskimo’ are cited as such; for example the Alaska Gallery of Eskimo Art which still operates under this title, and in Werner Forman Archive credit lines.

Traditional carvings were small and meant to be held in the hand, hung around the neck or attached to clothing. They were intended to be experienced tactually and spiritually, alongside their visual presence. In addition to these carvings, evidence of Asiatic Inuit puppets made from driftwood and sealskin reveal that they were used as either child’s toys or in humorous performances. Inuit dolls are still being made today according to cultural traditions and aesthetics.

Figure 5: Puppet in the form of a human figure. Used in the winter dances. Country of Origin: Northwest Coast of America. Culture: Kwakiutl. Date/Period: circa 1890. Material Size: alderwood, human hair, h=52 cms. Credit Line: Werner Forman Archive.

Medicine men, known as shamans in both the Inuit culture and the Kwakiutl Indian tribe, who were inhabitants of the Northwest Coast of America and Canada, used mobile puppets in healing rituals and winter ceremonies (Figure 5). These puppets were often made of wood, human hair

30 Burch explains that one of the reasons Eskimo figure carvings were small and made to be carried on the body is because ‘large ones would have been too burdensome to carry as people moved around due to the course of their annual cycle.’ See Ernest S. Burch Jr, ‘The Eskimos’, (Macdonald & Co Ltd, London 1988), p. 79, p. 120
and skin. According to S.W.A Gunn, ‘Such aids were much used by medicine men for ritualistic curing, and it is easy to imagine the power of these audio-visual devices in enhancing the psychotherapeutic effect of the doctor’s séance’. 33

Haitians use talismans called voodoo dolls to invoke various favours from the Gods. These dolls could be used for healing, fertility, gaining power, luck and placing curses. Many African tribes use carved wooden dolls for similar purposes. 34

2.3 Dolls of Africa

With Africa’s long history of magic and fetishism, dolls have an important cultural place there. Many African dolls are used as ceremonial and spiritual human substitutes or as ancestor figures, and are imbued with power through ritualistic acts.

The West African Ashanti carved wooden fertility dolls known as Akua’ba. These ritual dolls evolved from the story of a young Ashanti woman named Akua (Wednesday born) and her inability to conceive a child (ba). 35 In an effort to help her overcome her infertility, a local priest advised the commissioning of a woodcarving of a small child and instructed Akua to care for it like a real infant. She had to carry it on her back in the traditional way, feed it and ritually wash it. In time, Akua conceived and gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Her good fortune and happiness inspired other women who were either hoping to conceive a child or hoping to ensure the attractiveness of the child being carried to do as she had done. All subsequent carvings were called Akua’ba in her honour. 36 Although today Akuabas are produced as souvenirs, traditional use of these dolls continues in some areas of Africa where they are now also considered to be a symbol of good luck.

The Ashanti also produced small cast brass and gold figurines which were used as gold weights and were executed with great detail and craftsmanship. Ladislas Segy observed, ‘The human

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36 Ibid.
figurines depict scenes in a very vigorous manner, generally referring to some legend or proverb.\textsuperscript{37}

The handmade Zila dolls of the Ndebele tribe, a faction of the Zulu nation of South Africa, are unique in intricate beadwork and ethnic richness. The dolls were made to commemorate special occasions such as weddings, births and initiation ceremonies. They get their name from the metal neck, arm and ankle rings – known as Zila – that are worn by the tribeswomen. The number of rings worn by a woman reflects her wealth and status within the tribe. Each Zila doll is a unique expression of its creator. As William Dunn explained, ‘The images through which the Ndebele people proclaim their identity are manifested in the Zila dolls’.\textsuperscript{38}

2.4 Dolls of Asia

Dolls with histories steeped in religious significance and ancestor worship also come from the civilizations of the Far East. Some of these Oriental dolls include the Daruma, Hakata, Hoko-san and Kokeshi dolls. The Daruma dolls represent Bodhidharma, a Zen Monk who introduced Buddhism to China and Japan. They are used for bringing good luck, making wishes and achieving goals.\textsuperscript{39}

Japanese Hoko-san, or servant, dolls were used to cure children of illness. They were placed in the bed with the child overnight and then thrown into the ocean the next morning, the doll vanishing along with the illness. These dolls were primarily made from papier-mache.

The cylindrical Japanese Kokeshi dolls, made from the wood of the dogwood and pear trees, were originally made as offerings to Gods. While they are still made in the traditional way, they are now also commonly produced in abundance as souvenirs of Japan.

The use of paper dolls in Asian ritual ceremonies is another centuries-old tradition, while ‘the Balinese have made shadow puppets of leather and paper since before Christ.\textsuperscript{40} Mechanized puppets or Automata (a term used to group dolls which move due to some mechanism) dating back to the 17th Century also feature in Japanese and Chinese history. The karakuri ningyo dolls,

with clockwork-type mechanisms, are significant ‘because they are used during fabulous public festivals and are maintained as a treasured community property.’ These mechanical actors often depict legendary heroes and are created with beautiful expressive detail and costumes in order to entertain.

Japanese ‘doll’ festivals, Hinamatsuri, are very important yearly events. Ceremonial dolls – often valuable family heirlooms – are passed down from generation to generation:

‘These festivals have a known history of at least a thousand years, and beyond that their origins are shrouded in the mists of legends: what is certain is that their beginning had some sort of connection with an act of worship for the Emperor who was believed to have been of divine ancestry and the two most important dolls still represent the Emperor and Empress.’

2.6 Dolls of the Middle Ages and Renaissance

In Europe’s Middle Ages and Renaissance the doll found a niche within the Christian religion wherein the church used marionettes to perform morality plays. It is believed that the word marionette actually originates from the little figures of the Virgin Mary, hence the etymology of the word ‘marionette’ or ‘Mary doll’.

Whilst dolls from the Medieval period were used for religious and magical purposes, including witchcraft, it is also certain that they were used as children’s playthings. As Antonia Fraser states, ‘Some scholars, supporting the idea of the natural place of the doll in a child’s life, have advanced the theory that the religious figures, as they lost their significance, were handed over as toys to children.’

Medieval dolls were made from many different materials. Wood and cloth dolls were popular, but wax, ceramic and composition dolls were also common. Along with a variety of carved jointed dolls, wooden dolls known as ‘stump dolls’ were often carved from a single block. It is thought that the practice of dressing traditional ‘figure-shaped’ wooden pegs as dolls is derived from the

44 David Logan, ‘Puppetry’. (Brisbane Dramatic Arts Company 2007), p. 8
stump doll, as both forms have their roots in this period.  

Early composition dolls were produced from waste substances. Sixteenth century compositions comprised paper paste mixed with materials such as bran, vegetable matter, sawdust and arsenic (to discourage rats from eating the mixture) pressed into moulds. Dolls cast in lead and tin alloys, with hollowed backs and arms which were often placed so that the hands are on the hips, were also made in the sixteenth century. These dolls had origins in Germany but were more prevalent in England. They were dressed in period garments and their hands were shaped into loops so that they could be hung on strings like puppets.

From as early as the mid-1700s ‘paper dolls’ were made in the fashion centres of Vienna, Berlin, London and Paris. These dolls were hand-painted two-dimensional figures with accompanying costumes, and were created for the entertainment of wealthy adults. Although they were made to show current fashions, Judy Johnson states that they were also ‘done as satirical, sociopolitical illustrations of popular figures of the day.’

Other dolls from this period include ‘pantins’ which are jointed jumping –jack figures. A combination of a paper doll and a puppet, their limbs are jointed and tied to a pull string so that they can move up and down. These dolls were very popular among the French high society and royal courts, and were made to satirize nobility. Another version of the jumping-jack, now known as the ‘hampelmann’, was created in the 1800s for the burlesque at Frankfurt in Germany.

Matryoshka dolls, also known as nesting or babushka dolls, are a distinctive traditional Russian folk heritage form originating around 1890. They are hollowed wooden figures, made in sets, so that one doll sits inside the other. They are nested together so that when each one is pulled apart, a smaller one is revealed inside. These dolls are elaborately painted, and the nests can be as few in numbers as three or as many as twenty. Traditionally, a matryoshka doll was given to newborns to wish them a long and prosperous life, and today it is Russia’s most sought after folk-art souvenir.

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47 Ibid.
2.7  Industrial Production of Dolls

The eighteenth century saw the beginning of the industrial production of dolls, whereby factory production and distribution allowed them to be relegated to the level of mass-produced playthings, divorced from their sacred and ritual functions.

While the French were at the forefront of the utilization of dolls for the promotion of the latest fashions, glazed porcelain and high fired china dolls gained popularity in the 1840s, along with a version of the wax doll in which the heads were made with papier-mache and coated with wax to give the doll a smooth, transparent complexion. 52 Two of the most famous doll types of this era are Jumeau and Bru, named after their makers.

The first industrialized metal dolls were made of copper, zinc, brass, lead, tin, pewter and aluminium and were manufactured in France and Germany in 1860. Their production there was followed by the patenting of metal dolls in America in the late 1870s. 53 Around the same time, the introduction of rubber, polymer and plastic materials became significant in the mass-production of dolls, due to their lower sourcing and manufacturing costs. Although rubber had previously been used in doll making, it was not until the advent of the vulcanizing process in 1844 that the commercial production of rubber dolls became widely practical.

The nineteenth century also saw the development of the mechanical and talking dolls. These dolls operated with similar mechanisms to the automata of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which, according to Jessica Riskin, ‘informed the emergence of the early modern notion of the human-machine.’ 54 The challenge for doll makers was to make the clockwork mechanisms ever smaller and less complicated. In earlier, more bulky examples it was necessary for the wheeled

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54 Jessica Riskin poses the question of what it means to be alive and conscious: an aware and thinking creature. Riskin uses automata, life-like machines, to discuss the philosophical tradition of animation and consciousness as a major cultural preoccupation, with practices dating back to the mid 17th Century of late medieval to early modern Europe. ‘The human-machine held an array of cultural and philosophical implications, notably the tendencies to act unexpectedly, playfully, willfully, surprisingly and responsively.’ See ‘Machines in the Garden’, Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts 1, no.2 April 30, 2010: (http://rofl.stanford.edu/node/59) retrieved June 26, 2010.
mechanisms to be covered with garments, while the use of mechanisms that were operated by levers required the doll to have shoes made in heavy metal to ensure its balance.55

Celluloid dolls, manufactured from 1869 until the mid 1950’s, dominated the early plastic doll market. The kewpie doll, originally made in bisque, was one of the first to be produced in celluloid on a massive scale. Kewpies ‘cute’ caricature style features made them extremely popular, gaining unsurpassed commercial success. As celluloid was highly flammable and had a propensity to fade, further experimentation with plastics resulted in hard plastic dolls being manufactured by the 1940s. Hard plastic was an innovation in its own right because of its strength and durability, but the dolls were hard to the touch, prone to splitting at the seams and required hair that was either part of the modeled plastic or wigs that were glued on.56

The shift to the production of vinyl dolls in the early to mid 1950s was, therefore, another significant change to doll making. Vinyl was the material that doll manufacturers had been searching for since the inception of the ‘doll industry’. A prime example was the introduction of the ‘Barbie doll’ by Mattel toys in 1959; it gained iconic status and dominance as a fashion doll over its fifty year history. Vinyl was unbreakable, soft to the touch, and allowed doll makers to root hair into the head rather than painting it on or using wigs. It was also inexpensive, giving it the ability to answer the demands of the toy market.

Although most dolls are now mass-manufactured using such modern materials, there are many doll makers who still incorporate traditional materials, methods and cultural beliefs into handcrafted dolls for ritual and/or collectable purposes. Carl Fox observed, ‘My hope for the unknown doll lies in the one being created by artist-craftsmen who may not yet have commercial experience. In their studios today they are assembling from scraps, found objects and new synthetics, the doll to represent our time and culture. Nobody knows what forms and colours it will take, but I must expect that it will not be false to the spirit of man, and that it will not misrepresent man by distorting the natural and humble beauty we wish to see in Everyman.’57

57 Ibid. p. 55.
3. Literary and Artistic References

3.1 Particular Influential Literary Reading:

A number of literary texts contribute to my project, such as Sue Taylor’s *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety* (MIT Press, 2002), and Peter Webb’s *Death, Desire and the Doll; the life and art of Hans Bellmer* (Solar Books CA, 2008). Hans Bellmer created erotic and macabre dolls as he sought to explore forbidden areas of the human psyche in an attempt to understand the exchange between body and imagination. The erotic aspect of Bellmer’s work and its relationship to identity is of interest to me, but I am not concerned with creating works of a specifically erotic nature.

Carl Fox’s *The Doll* (Harry N. Abrams 1972) and Eileen Blumenthal’s *Puppetry and Puppets – an illustrated world survey* (Thames and Hudson, London 2005) are texts that explore the many aspects of the doll and the doll as puppet. They offer an overview of the unique nature and capacities of the doll, including the countless roles they have played in societies as works of art and historical artifacts. They also provide insights relevant to my interest in the role of puppets and marionettes and their ability to express human characteristics through movement.

*Ceska Loutka (Czech Puppet)*, (KANT Books, Prague, Czech Republic 2008), by Vaclav Jirasek, Jaroslav Blecha & Pavel Jirasek and *Czech Puppet Theatre: Yesterday and Today* (The Theatre Institute, Prague, Czech Republic 2006) by Alice Dubská, Jan Novák, Nina Maliková & Marie Zdeňková are both publications that offer comprehensive insight into the historiography and artistic phenomenon of Czech puppets. They represent significant contributions for the deeper understanding of Czech puppetry, and include important valuations on the history, theory, aesthetics and philosophy of puppetry.
3.2 Contemporary Art Examples:

Meaningful representations of doll motifs have appeared in artworks historically and culturally, and also figure significantly in contemporary art. Sydney Artist Ged Lardi creates extravagant body adornment using doll parts and gold to produce jewellery and sculptural works. According to Skye McCardle-Klingender, these works are ‘studies in female power and body adornment.’

His jewellery is armoured in gold and found objects including dolls faces, hands and other parts. They are used as appliqués and baubles for his extravagant, unsettling neckpieces and bracelets. Similarities between my own work and Lardi’s can be observed through a shared interest in the use of precious metals and body adornment. However, as the distinct feature of Lardi’s work involves the dissecting and use of ‘Barbie dolls’, my research differs from his because I am not interested in limiting my work, or associating it, with one specific brand-label consumable doll. I am more concerned with the creation of new doll types and their ability to suggest aspects of identity through expressions and physical movement.

Louise Bourgeois, a French born (b.1911), American-based artist who worked until a week before her death, in May 2010, was famous for sculptures made in all kinds of media. Her work included fabricated and sewn dolls. Abstract figures in groups carved from balsa wood, dolls and figures sewn from fabric and felt, many-breasted creatures and beautifully carved marble hands were all works that derived from the body, or rather from her perception of it. One of her pieces depicting a distorted torso with many orifices and breast-like shapes was titled a self portrait ‘because that, she said, was how she felt about her physical self, and by extension, how women generally felt, even while they studied copies of Vogue or Harper’s Bazaar.’

I personally relate to the Bourgeois description of her art ‘as the business of pain’, by which she meant, according to Robert Nelson, ‘the emotional torture of life, where desire is managed with horrible anxiety,’ and where the consequences of emotional drive are sometimes cruel but inevitable and necessary to existence. Bourgeois was concerned with the need and right to self-expression.

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60 Robert Nelson, ‘Sculpting her Art from Sex, Death and Spiders’. (The Age, 3 June 2010)
There is no doubt that my work and in particular the making of my doll artifacts derives inspiration from similar sources to Bourgeois’. Like her, I am interested in acknowledging deep-seated emotions and anxieties in order to explore the impact and effects these conditions have on identity. Like Bourgeois, I see the self-expression in my work as a form of restoration in terms of my feelings to myself and to others. Borne out of inner necessity, the need to explore the differences between real space and psychological space by expressing feelings and the way we see ourselves and our relationships, individually and culturally, effects the work in both complex and mysterious ways.

Australian artists Mirka Mora, Destiny Deacon and Linde Ivimey all produce fine art works with the doll image reflecting powerful expressive relationships. Mora creates colourful, sensuous visual artworks using doll iconography. David Langsam suggested, ‘Importantly the dolls are much more than a longing for childhood. They are part of Mirka’s painterly vocabulary. All the symbols are ‘archetypal images’ and are as ancient as the world.’ Mora’s work draws on her love of classical mythology and has a focus in painting and soft sculpture. By utilizing the sewing and needle-working skills that I have developed by making fabric dolls for children, my work employs similar materials and techniques. Unlike Mora, my work combines these skills and materials with the techniques associated with precious metal work, jewellery making and small object making.

In contemporary art the doll identity can speak universally, to something childlike, mystical and innocent, or to something sacred, profound, powerful and even frightening. They can represent life, creativity, imagination, hope, fertility, joy, past, present and future through their capacity, as extensions of the human self, to evoke humanity’s endless scenarios of images and ideas.

Destiny Deacon uses black baby dolls in her artworks. Deacon’s work challenges stereotypes and misconceptions about Aboriginality. ‘I think the dolls represent us in some way. You can sort of put your spirit in it…To create that mood for that doll, to say something for us.’ Deacon gives personalities to ‘found or collected dolls’ by using them as props to create melodramatic arrangements for her photographs and installations. She questions the historical representation of Aboriginal people and the use of the kitsch artifacts of popular culture by creating scenes to express dark notions of racism, incarceration and violence.

Unlike Deacon, I am not seeking to comment on one particular race or culture in my work, but rather focus on ways to stimulate individual responses to one’s own memory and identity through the use of generic human characteristics.

Melbourne sculptor Linde Ivimey creates confronting and contemplative doll figures using unconventional materials such as hessian, wax, hair and bones. My work shares an interest with hers in the use of organic and found materials, and bone in particular. Ivimey uses bones mainly as structural components, whereas I am using it to carve detail and create fine surface finishes as well as for construction. Her dolls are essentially rigid structures and do not explore expression through specific movement.

Ivimey’s work, like the other examples above, are relevant to the relationship between object and issues of identity, but all of these artists have primarily produced static works. None have explored the nature of the articulate doll or ‘marionette’. The typical attribute of life is movement and the way in which a doll appears to move will help give it its particular character and range of expression. I am interested in investing an inanimate object with the ability to move in order to give it the appearance of emotion and life, the attributes of a human being. Along with static works, I am also employing experimentation with articulated movement and performance to produce artifact dolls that have the ability to express identity as defined in the following groups of work.

Over time dolls have been made from every conceivable material. Reflecting some of these, the works will be constructed from a vast array of media, including precious metals such as gold and silver and non-precious metals such as copper, brass, bronze and nickel silver. These metals will be used in combination with natural, organic and found materials such as carved wood and bone, fabrics, porcelain, paper, plastics, and leather.
4. Development of an Original Body of Work

In the opening chapter of *Dolls*, Antonia Fraser discusses explanations for the origin of the word ‘doll’. First she notes that it is ‘a corruption of *eidolon*, the Greek for idol.’ She also explains that the Latin word *pupus* or *pupa*, meaning a new-born child, has been adopted in many languages to denote the representation of a little child. Examples include the German *Puppe* (doll) and the French *poupée* (doll). It is also worth noting that ‘puppet’ derives from the Latin *pupa*, which is not only the root for the French word for doll, *poupée*, ‘but also the name for the creature enclosed in a cocoon, not quite alive and not quite dead.’

In her introduction to *Living Dolls*, Gaby Wood gives an example of what Sigmund Freud referred to as ‘the Uncanny’, the feeling that arises when there is an ‘intellectual uncertainty’ about the borderline between the lifeless and the living. ‘It is triggered in particular’, Freud wrote, by ‘waxwork figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata.’

Another example of this phenomenon is discussed by Sarah Boxer in her New York Times article, *Pulling Strings: The Geppetto Effect*. Boxer writes about puppeteer Roman Paska and about how he, like Hendrich von Kleist, treated puppets as surrogate human beings. She notes that the emotion and anxieties that puppets provoke are associated with what Paska refers to as ‘The Inanimate Incarnate.’ They are not due to the human aspect of the puppets, but to the absence of the human; to the fact that the puppet appears both dead and alive. According to Paska, African and Asian cultures have always been more mindful of the puppet’s ‘otherness’ and its strange power: ‘For example, in Indonesia, puppeteers have the status of priests and are thought to spiritually possess their puppets during the performance. Indeed, it is considered dangerous for puppeteers not to finish a show and when a puppeteer dies, his puppets are buried with him.’

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64 Ibid. p.13
Legends about dolls coming to life also derive from Eskimo folklore and include the story of ‘The origin of Winds’ (from the lower Yukon) and another from Hooper Bay, where Ooloo, the daughter of Netchek, carved a boy doll from frozen blubber.\textsuperscript{68}

The story of Pinocchio, the character that appeared in Carlo Collodi’s (1826-1890), \textit{The Adventures of Pinocchio}, published in 1883, is a well known legend about a marionette coming to life. In a small Italian village, a wood carver named Geppetto carved a wooden block into a boy (wood carver was his creator and thus father). Named Pinocchio, the puppet dreamt of becoming a real boy. He was carved from a piece of pine wood – Pinocchio is Italian for ‘pine eye’.

All of these notions have influenced and inspired the development of my original body of work.

### 4.1 Early Work


\textbf{Figure 6:} For the Love of Dolls series: Neckpieces 2007; 925 Silver, Cotton Fabric, Cotton Wool. Each approx: H.180 x W.55 x D.20mm. Photograph by Jeremy Dillon.

The research for this body of work began with my initial questions about identity: my identity, gender identity, and who we think and feel ourselves to be. These questions extended to the

differences between who we are to ourselves, who we are to each other, how we perceive ourselves, how others perceive us, how we perceive each other and the importance of our identity in space/place.

My questions also considered the ways in which our characteristics are influenced by physical, social and emotional demands and how they can be thus modified, manipulated and shaped. I asked how our characteristics change between different environments and settings and how they are affected by social responsibilities and restrictions, including the struggle we sometimes face to define ourselves. What happens when our basic personal liberties are taken away? What impact does this have on our characteristics, our gestures, the way we look and the way we carry ourselves?

My interest in what defines us as people and what defines us as individuals - our common and differing characteristics - raised my desire to investigate ways in which these human concerns could be imbued, described and suggested in objects. The gestural capacities of my objects gave me unexpected help in terms of my research with these questions and with the making processes.

**The Making and the Gesture**: 

These doll artifacts were created to simulate the human body/self, encouraging the process of seeking and identifying the self. In childhood, playing with dolls affects the innermost sphere, the very being of the child. As Heidi Britz-Crecelius explained, ‘Through the doll the child finds its own self.’

This series consists of dolls constructed using three different head types: heads made in fabric with no faces or facial definitions at all, heads made in fabric with painted and printed faces and heads made of cast silver. In forming the fabric heads I have deliberately allowed the lines and folds in the fabric, along with their subsequent stitching, to evoke and imply facial character and gesture. These fabric definitions therefore act as memory triggers and suggestions. The

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anticipation created by the deliberate omission of faces offers the viewer the opportunity to fill in from their own imagination all that is needed to make it real and human. Where there are no distinct facial features such as eyes, nose and mouth, the viewer is forced to look within and draw on their own knowledge, experience and understanding to interpret the suggested gestures.

Such interpretations, influenced by individual personal references, in response to a doll not bearing distinct facial markings but relying instead on the folds in the fabric to determine characteristics, differ significantly to interpretations of dolls whose facial features are distinctly marked. To highlight these differences I painted some simple colour faces, printed them onto separate pieces of fabric and then attached each one directly onto a rounded, formed fabric head, so that a halo type effect around the face was created. The intention of adding these simple painted faces was to evoke an element of gentleness and reflection, something akin to the angelic, in the gesture of the dolls. The addition of these marked features alters perceptions as they offer
pre-determined definitions of gestures. The more specific the information provided in relation to these facial definitions, the less the viewer is required to rely on their own imagination.

For the heads made in metal I used polished silver to enhance a sense of reflection and pureness in the faces of the dolls. Each doll is portrayed with the head tilted to one side, on a long slender neck and with closed eyes, to evoke the suggestion of deep thought and contemplation. Each also has hollowed cheeks and open mouth, to indicate a certain tenderness, heart-ache or suffering. The viewer could interpret the open mouth gesture to denote screaming, adding to the suggestion of torment, or alternatively, the gesture of singing or whispering, to suggest tenderness. My intention is that she screams but she also sings, so that these open mouths, importantly, indicate the ability and capacity to breathe…whether singing or screaming, the body is participating in accentuated breathing, and therefore life.

The bodies and limbs of this series of dolls are made up of combinations of fabric and silver, with each component being made separately. Some have stitched fabric dresses while others have fabricated or cast metal dresses. Some of the metal dresses are in plain polished silver and others are embossed patterns, cut-out patterns and folded and pleated patterns. The stitching forms an important aspect of the making and is deliberately emphasized. As opposed to concealing joins, I have created and highlighted additional stitched lines. The stitching not only connects the fabric pieces together, but also the metal components. While this stitching is influenced by my own previous doll making knowledge and derived from the traditional techniques used to make fabric dolls, my intention was to also use the stitching as a metaphor for repairing, healing, holding the body together and therefore evoking notions of the way we hold our body and its gesture.

These dolls all have limbs that move to varying degrees. The silver components that make up the metal limbs are riveted at the elbows and knees, while the fabric limbs are joined by buttons stitched in place to enable movement. The arms on all the dolls move at the shoulders. A group of dolls was created. Each piece of work was made to contribute a different character and inter-relationship of character, and to bring about emotion.

The Making and the Gesture:
The iconography of the silver heads and faces investigated and established for the previous series, *For the Love of Dolls*, became the accepted expression of gesture for use in this series that followed, *For the Love of Dolls – rediscovered*. Using this now familiar ‘head/face’ as a permanent feature of the doll gesture, enabled me to explore additional concepts for the structure of the body and to compliment the existing gestures. I was interested in looking at some specific notions associated with the traditional roles played by women and investigating ways in which to intimately express these.

![Image: Neckpiece 2007; 925 Silver, Cotton Fabric, Cotton Wool, Lace Paper. H.165 x W.75 x D.30mm. Photograph by Serana Hunt.](image)

*Lure* by the intimacy associated with domesticity, I considered the ‘cult of domesticity’: the woman’s domain, the day to day routine, the ritual and the duties, all undertaken for survival - the knowledge passed from generation to generation.
I contemplated the dichotomy between beauty and burden. There is a beauty in creativity, caring and decoration, while there is a burden in the weight of domestic tasks. Motherhood, devotion, passivity….Images of lace; soft decorative patterns; soft things/materials and the use of everyday objects to bring into being the elements we hardly recognize, yet know deeply; a perspective of one’s place with domestic tradition.

A definition of women’s work that occupied them with repetitive, time-consuming and painstaking tasks such as needlepoint and lace-making – such Victorian inventions served more than one function; encouraged as a way of expanding female energy and knowledge, women often used these to express genuine creativity and passion.

Women’s creativity with fashion, embroidery and child-rearing; the hand-making of dolls and other toys, along with the use of sewing machines by mothers and daughters to make clothes and other household articles, also served as an expression of home making, fashion and craft.

**Figure 9:** *For the Love of Dolls – rediscovered.* 9 Neckpieces 2008; 925 Silver, Cotton Fabric, Cotton Wool, Lace Paper H.190 x W.80 x D.20mm: H.180 x W.80 x D.20mm: H.180 x W.75 x D.20mm. Photograph by Jeremy Dillon.
Strongly influenced by sentimentality and my personal upbringing, growing up watching my mother - always with knitting needles, crochet hook or sewing in hand, and using a Singer sewing machine - has inspired the use of the embossed decoration for the bodies on this doll series. The patterns and shapes that I have used are derived from the metal plates once attached to old Singer Sewing Machines. Formed and molded in silver and combined with fabric, lace and lace paper, I have created dress-like shapes to serve as the main body part on the dolls.

Inspired by the ‘mechanical keyholes’ in the metal plates attached to the sewing machines, I have used them like keyholes, or peep holes, into secrets…knowledge, insights into the heart and soul…a secret ‘under-life’, infused with notions of beauty, but also highlighting the mechanical…the machine…the mundane, the potentially methodical, the routine…the production…the woman as production worker; the physical obsessions – the terror of ageing and the dread of lost control.

Challenging traditional roles of female behavior, I am interested in investigating symbols of female behavior. I have used the metal plates on the bodies as a metaphor for the metal casket of our own ‘iron maiden’\(^{71}\), as the arbiters of successful womanhood.

The embellished dress plates and components on the dolls are stitched together with cotton fabric and padded with cotton wool. Using this padding and stitching it in place on the metal components is also intended to reference a ‘cocooning’, to create a metaphor for the transformational quality of life.

I have adopted the simple style and movement of the metal limbs previously used, with the arms riveted at the elbows and attached on wires at the shoulders so that they move. Due to the length and embellishment of the dresses, the top components of the legs were no longer required. Instead, the bottom parts of the legs are attached on internal wires to allow movement as they come from beneath the dresses.

\(^{71}\) ‘The original Iron Maiden was a medieval German instrument of torture, a body shaped casket painted with the limbs and features of a lovely, smiling young woman. The unlucky victim was slowly enclosed inside her; the lid fell shut to immobilize the victim, who died either of starvation or, less cruelly, of the metal spikes embedded in her interior.’ See Naomi Wolf, ‘The Beauty Myth’, (Vintage Books, Random House UK, 1990), p. 17

![Figure 10: Respiration I: Brooch 2007; 925 Silver, Bone. H.80 x W.115 x D.20mm. Photograph by Jeremy Dillon.](image)

The Making and the Gesture:

In this series of work I was interested in capturing the essence of previously explored concepts, as well as capturing newly evolving notions that began to emerge in conjunction with the making of the previous work; the invoking of a kind of distillation in the symbolism.

Contemplating a process of refinement, the paring away of the superfluous, I gave careful consideration to essential elements: what is there is as important as what is left out. I was interested in releasing a beauty contained in the structure of the body; in the notion that a body’s structure holds within itself essential beauty.

Using the exposed rib-cage, I am expressing a raw skeletal feeling, a ‘gutting’ kind of feeling – stripping everything back – accentuating every breath. Beneath the skin there is a passion that can grow out of control and stimulate or disturb. Perhaps, like a feeling of dislocation to our
sensitivities, either physically or mentally; effecting internal functions or processes of thought. I am interested in acknowledging the sensuality of the ‘inner-being’. In addition to the rib-cage symbolizing something connected to dying and/or death, my intention is to actually highlight the ability and capacity for life, to breathe and keep breathing – with each breath guaranteeing the body becomes stronger and lighter. For this reason I have also used symbolic thin lines to represent ‘wing like’ bones, in place of arms, to suggest a sense of flight, a sense of freedom, deliverance, liberty, independence. I have also referenced the wing as a symbol of protection; a sense of protection for oneself and/or for someone else.

The rib-cage can also become, or be seen as a cage, as breathing cloaked in silence and/or as a ‘brace’ for the body; a brace that can hold and help repair the body and soul.

Once again, I have used the open mouth on these dolls, suggestive of screaming or singing, but more importantly, to indicate breathing; accentuated breath coming from deep within, a metaphor for the breath of internal and/or eternal life.

The heads, faces, rib-cages and wing bones of these pieces were all initially formed in wax and then individually cast in silver. Two of the pieces bear a small carved bone disc, lightly stained with red dye and attached to the silver rib-cage. I have added these discs to imply a continuum, that the remaining body and soul is housed and protected in this place. The third piece features a decorative silver ‘apron’ attached directly under the ribs and nestled over pleated fabric. Suggestive of a skirt and denoting a femininity, it also acts as a protective veil.

**Figure 11:** Respiration series: Brooches & Neckpiece 2007-2008; 925 Silver, Bone, Cotton Fabric.
H.55 x W.115 x D.20mm; H.220 x W.110 x D.20mm; H.80 x W.115 x D.20mm. Photograph by Jeremy Dillon.
The occurrence of the traditional symbolism used by Inuit and Aztec cultures to reference the body’s internal anatomy and soul was an exciting discovery for me. Examples of the Inuit puppets and masks (Figures 12 & 13) and the Aztec deity Mictlantecuhtli (Figure 14), enabled me to identify with these traditions, contributing to my desire to pursue further ways of manifesting similar qualities and notions in my work.

In his book *The Eskimos* Earnest Burch explained, ‘After proper magical preparations, shamans were able to see into the bodies of others, and expose their own internal anatomy to view.’\textsuperscript{72}

These powers are symbolized in dolls, puppets, figurines and masks of carved ivory, bone and

wood. The person in possession of such objects is able to be in touch with a spirit or ancestor, or whatever it is representing - to take on that character internally and to be regarded as its manifestation and embodiment.

Figure 13: A mask which probably represents the flight of a shaman’s spirit. The face in the centre of the body represents the shaman’s soul. Country of Origin: USA. Culture: Eskimo. Credit Line: Werner Forman Archive/ Eugene Chestow Trust.
Mictlantecuhtli is the Aztec deity known as the God of the Underworld, or lower part of the cosmos - a universal womb where human remains were kept. Most dramatically, he is represented with his flesh wide-open and liver falling from his chest (Figure 14). The Aztecs believed that a person’s liver housed his passion, the organ where the ihiyotl (soul) dwells, much like today’s society associates the heart with passion. The small holes in Mictlantecuhtli’s scalp indicate that at one time, curly human hair decorated his head, which represented chaos to the Aztecs and was typical of earth and death god figurines.\textsuperscript{73}

\textbf{Figure 14:} Aztec Figurine – Mictlantecuhtli. Photograph by Michel Zabé / AZA. Reproduction authorized by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia. [http://fieldmuseum.org/about/aztec-world-press-kit](http://fieldmuseum.org/about/aztec-world-press-kit).

By using symbolism to express concepts of ‘respiration’ in this series, I intended to also manifest notions of power, opportunity and autonomy into the objects; a sense and feeling of emancipation, of being set-free, liberated, released or unshackled.

4.1.4 ‘Bone Doll I’ : 2008

Figures 15 & 16: *Bone Doll I*: Neckpiece 2008; Bone, 925 Silver, Nickel Silver, Paper, Lacquer. H.320 x W.80 x D.35mm
Photographs by Jeremy Dillon.

The Making and the Gesture:

My interest in continuing the exploration of the exposed ribcage, previously used in the *Respiration* series, became a powerful personal desire, and a way in which I could delve deeper to convey the symbolic associations. This exploration resulted in the use of bone. As a material for carving it offered a number of conditions, all imbued with meanings and suitable to help articulate my envisioned concepts.

The ubiquitous production of bone carvings by numerous cultures throughout history is testimony to the relevance and importance of its use. Like many other artifacts, bone carvings were a form of language. The Polynesian language for example, was unwritten for centuries. Stories and traditions were passed from generation to generation through bone carvings. These carvings told
their stories of existence and affirmed ancestry, but also acted as vessels of the spirits and a way to link ancestors to their generations. Within this rich culture of tradition and spirituality, the practice of making artifacts deeply connected to deity continues today.\(^\text{74}\)

![Figure 17: Carved stylized female figure with incised decorations. Culture: Eskimo / Thule culture. Date/Period: c. 1000 AD. Credit Line: Werner Forman Archive/ Eskimo Museum, Churchill, Canada.](image)

Bone is the dense, porous, calcified connective hard tissue forming the skeleton of most vertebrates. The bone most suitable for carving often comes from cattle, with marrow bone being more frequently used, but bones from other animals are also usable. Bones acquired fresh from a butcher require considerable preparation first. Alternatively, ready material can be found in the form of weathered bones on farm or bush land.

The preparation of the fresh bone for carving was an intense experience for me. First, cutting the bone and removing the flesh and marrow; the flesh has to be stripped from the bone, which is

done by using a knife to scrape the surface and then scrubbing with soap and water using a stiff brush. The bones are then soaked and boiled in a solution of washing liquid and bleach diluted with water to remove remaining organic gelatinous matter. This involves the complete removal of the marrow - the very core - and I experienced this as a metaphor for going to the very core of the being. It added to the notion of expressing a raw skeletal feeling; that everything is stripped back, pared away, gutted.

As I am a vegetarian and have not participated in the consumption of red-meat for approximately 40 years I found this preparation a very confronting process. However, it became a ritualistic kind of experience for me; almost like paying homage to the animal that had provided the bone for the carving. There is evidence that other cultures, such as some Native Americans, participated in ritualistic practices in order to honour animal spirits by carving bone artifacts. These were worn as amulets or tokens of guardian spirits to give protection and increase personal power. Initially I gathered a collection of found bones to use because I felt that sourcing the material this way was a more interesting and gentle process. It also provided its own form of ritual for me. Having grown up on a farm in regional Victoria, discovering bones from various animals was a regular, intriguing event that was a natural part of country life. However, the amount of bone that I needed for carving the envisioned pieces was so significant that it became necessary to combine these found weathered bones with fresh, prepared bones.

Though I did not deliberately plan to use cattle bone as a material in my work, it seems that it became a natural progression. Milking cows on the family farm over the years has given me considerable time to ponder the nature of these animals as well as their significance and relevance to our lives. These are magnificent beasts, enormously solid, with feet planted firmly on the ground. Their heavy bodies are almost inexorably anchored to solid earth. They are not light-footed like a galloping horse or deer; they do not have the stealth of a cat. The amount of food they consume in relation to their body weight is immense and their processes of digestion equally intriguing. To observe a cow or a heard of cows chewing cud as part of this digestive process creates the sense of it being a peaceful ritual in itself. The subsequent production of milk provides us a vital source of food and nutrition.

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They are a creature that does not conjure a condition of anxiety, but rather exude a peaceful and harmonious soul-nature. Observing them, one gains the impression that the cow nature and earth life-forces are inextricably woven together. The nourishing vitality of these life-forces is manifested in the milk.  

Working with these creatures can be a very grounding experience for me. It can be a peaceful, thought provoking process that creates an interesting dichotomy between my relationship with the nature of the cow and my subsequent use of the produce these animals provide. In selecting to use their bones, I accepted the notion that these intriguing life-forces are imbued in the material and therefore offer a further symbolic dimension and theme of reverie.

The properties of bone are conducive to detailed carving and provided me with a suitable colour, as well as an ideal texture and surface finish for the translation of preciousness in this doll. The polished white of the bone helped reflect an element of purity. Bone is also a porous material and absorbs the body oils of anyone who wears it on their flesh.

Carving the ribs, body, legs and arms of the doll in bone helped me achieve a sense of innocence, and purity that I was searching for. While the elongated, slender limbs contributed an element of delicacy, I was also, once again, interested in the rib-cage alluding to the body’s internal structure, the sensual inner being and acknowledging the capacity of breathing and life.

To contribute further to these notions I chose to use a two-dimensional image of a baby doll face for this doll, instead of the sculpted symbolic open mouth and closed-eye features previously used. I drew and painted a face from a traditional ‘Bye-Lo Baby’ porcelain doll. This popular doll was realistic and natural looking, originally created in 1922 by American sculptress Grace Putnam (1877-1947), ‘whose search for an ideal baby led her through all the hospitals in Los Angeles.’ The resulting doll’s head was life sized, modeled from a three day old baby.

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76 In his book *Theosophy*, Rudolf Steiner describes the primal source of life and the vitality of life-forces that make up the organic kingdoms. The body, in the kingdom of nature, consists of a mineral structure of bones and flesh; a life carrying element such as blood and the sentient carrying structure of the brain and nervous system. These structures are permeated by forces of life which not only activate the movement of the blood, but enliven and create ‘sensation’ and the feelings, thoughts and impulses connected with it. The life-body exalts matter and raises it to a higher level, while the ‘soul’ exalts life and again, a higher level is reached, bringing the possibility of access to the realm of spirit. There is a mineral structure governed by inorganic laws, and in addition, there are activating sources of life governed by their own laws. Steiner refers to these entities as the ‘etheric-body’ and the ‘soul-body’. See Rudolf Steiner ‘Theosophy’ (Rudolf Steiner Press, London, 1965).

The flat imagery associated with the ‘pantin’ jumping-jack doll, combining paper doll with puppet, inspired the flat painted face and its subsequent mounting and framing with silver plate. This created an effect like a protective head shield, but was also reminiscent of a mask or collar, similar to the Elizabethan collar or ‘ruff’. The ruff started as a high frilled collar, fashionable in the Middle Ages. Over time it became bigger and more exaggerated, and was constructed on gauze wings that were raised at the back of the heads of women.

The simple movement in this doll was created by cutting slotted joints into the bone limbs and riveting them with metal pins at the elbows and knees. The arms and legs are attached to the body with swivel mechanisms to enable free and full movement from the shoulders and the hips. To capture the full effects of this movement, I made the doll a wearable piece by attaching a chain so that it could be worn around the neck. The doll hangs directly down the front centre of the wearer’s body, where it can easily conform to the body’s natural movement.
4.1.5 ‘Me and You’ Series: 2008

![Image of Me and You: Objects 2008: Bone, 925 Silver, Bronze, Nickel Silver, Transfer Ink. Each - H.600 x W.300 x D.90mm. Photograph by Jeremy Dillon.]

**Figure 18: Me and You: Objects 2008:** Bone, 925 Silver, Bronze, Nickel Silver, Transfer Ink. Each - H.600 x W.300 x D.90mm. Photograph by Jeremy Dillon.

**The Making and the Gesture:**

Still deeply concerned with the definition and portrayal of the sensual inner being, these pieces, titled *Me and You*, were created as reliquary objects for the continued exploration of intuitive sacred dimensions. Crafted in the ilk of the ‘puppet type’ dolls used in healing rituals by Native American shamans, I chose a combination of cast metal and bone, using the bone for the body like a vessel. The natural cylindrical structure of the bone enabled a perfect vessel metaphor. They are like a container or shrine for the embodiment of feelings, the mystery of inner-knowledge and wisdom; a conduit for enlarged horizons of consciousness as well as a symbolic link between the human and the spiritual. They act as the shaman acts, as intermediary between the sacred and profane worlds.
Shamanism is one of humankind’s most ancient healing disciplines and I am fascinated by the embodiment of the sacred for use in spirituality and in healing. Such practices and experiences have been highly valued across cultures and centuries. Study specifically devoted to areas of spirituality and consciousness, known as transpersonal psychology, has gained increased interest in recent times as a discipline to coexist with modern medicine.

‘The term transpersonal was chosen to reflect the central importance of experiences in which the sense of self or identity extends beyond the personality or personal to encompass wider aspects of community, culture, and even cosmos.’

Figure 19: Me and You: Object 2008
Bone, 925 Silver, Transfer Ink
H.600 x W.300 x D.90mm
Photographs by Jeremy Dillon.

Figure 20: Me and You: Object 2008
Bone, Bronze, 925 Silver, Nickel Silver
H.600 x W.300 x D.90mm

For this body of work I made two object figures so that a dynamic and inter-relationship of identity between the pieces could be experienced. Although similar, each piece bears subtle differences, contributing to separate but unified identities.

Both figures have ‘bone vessel’ bodies containing symbolic references to the rib cage. For one, the rib detail is openly carved into the bone, while the other takes its detail from the drawn images placed on it. The arms and legs have been carved from long lengths of bone, slotted and riveted together to allow simple jointed movement. One figure also bears a symbolic bone wing on the right side of its body, alluding to an enveloping arm.

I have added this wing in order suggest that there are elements of a protective nature imbued in the character. The enveloping cloak-like-effect of the arm not only creates a perception that it is a protective device for itself, but also that it could draw the other closer; the possibility that there is a deep sense of care for the other, that it is the care-taker or the guardian. The wing is also an important metaphor for notions associated with freedom. Whilst one part of the character may be or feel aware and free, the other may still feel bound and restricted.

The ‘Me’ and ‘You’ in the works title is intended to have multi-layered meanings. Whilst the ‘Me’, connotes being representative of the individual, the ‘You’ could refer to another or a number of individuals or group identities. The connections between two people can vary dramatically; sometimes a relationship fosters equal conditions, responsibilities and strengths, while other times, one or the other is the stronger. Strength can be borne in the togetherness.

The faces on both pieces have been modeled similarly in wax, with one then being cast in silver and the other in bronze. Adopting the features of a contemplative condition, I created faces that could also reflect a sense of peace and wisdom, while allowing each object to reveal intrinsic idiosyncrasies. Together with the vessel-like bodies, my intention was to invest the objects with symbolic gestures that could suggest invocation or prayer; to summon inspiration, help, affirmation or promise. Alluding to human obsession and personal addiction, the objects were also designed to be triggers for thought and vehicles for transporting an idea, an emotion, from the maker to the observer. In this way, I feel a connection with the work of Linde Ivimey, who uses bone to create doll characters that contain autobiographical elements of her contemporary
existence. Ivimey invents fantastical and provocative characters - disturbing dolls that have earned her critical and popular acclaim.  

Figure 21: Carved hollow female figure. Culture: Eskimo. Credit Line: Werner Forman Archive/Anchorage Historical & Fine Arts Museum, USA.

Figure 22: Necklace with pendant in human form. Culture: Eskimo. Credit Line: Werner Forman Archive/Alaska Gallery of Eskimo Art.

‘With the Lotus Flower’ Series: 2008

The Making and the Gesture:

I created this series of works titled *With the Lotus Flower* to contribute to the concept of objects as reliquaries with uses in healing rituals or as healing devises. These pieces were made during drought times in response to the suffering, pain, thirst and despair I was experiencing from the people and the land all around me. I was interested in investing these dolls with a comforting, healing energy.

They were carved from bone, using the natural shapes inherent in the material, and made small so that they could be worn or held in the hand - their white, smooth, highly polished surfaces.
providing tactile comfort when held, touched or rubbed. They are prayer made manifest – embodying the sacred and spiritual in times of need.

![Figure 24: With the Lotus Flower: Object 2008; Bone
H.110 x W.25 x D.15mm. Photograph by Serana Hunt](image)

Created as gifts, these dolls have a likeness to the traditional Inuit whale bone, reindeer horn and ivory carvings (Figures 3, 17, 21 & 22), as well as bearing similarities to Polynesian carvings. I have used the bone to act as a vessel for sacred energies, but also a means to contain, through the natural absorption of the oils of the skin, the very essence of those who wear them. The natural colour transformation of bone due to this absorption is symbolic and has been revered by the ancient Polynesians as a way to connect ancestors to generations.  

Derivative of ‘goddess’ figurines and inspired by goddesses associated with water, I carved these goddess-like figures to represent archetypes of woman and water; the symbol of eternal unity - a specific concept of female identity.

Goddesses particularly connected with water are the personified Indian rivers Gangā and Sarasvati. The water of Gangā is sacred. It is often brought in a small pot to the rituals and annual celebrations of deities. It is believed to be the cure for all diseases, bringing immortality and also cleansing bathers of sins.

Gangā as goddess is depicted as a white young woman, usually holding in her hands a lotus and a small water pot. Sarasvati is the goddess of wisdom, learning and art. She is a mythologized river of the northwest India, and is also usually depicted as a white young woman, sitting on a lotus or

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a swan. These river goddesses also symbolise female charm and the image of ‘celestial beauty’ – namely Sarasvati, who is worshipped by poets and musicians.  

The white colour of the bone enabled the perfect representation of a ‘white woman’ and also translated a suggested sense of purity. I used softly drawn and printed images of lotus flowers, which were transferred onto the bone bodies along with simple printed detail on the faces. The portrayal of a kind of femininity and delicacy – beautiful but fragile flowers combined with a pale look.

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4.1.7  ‘Precious Summer Doll’ Series: 2009

Figure 25: Precious Summer Doll: Object/Neckpiece 2009; 925 Silver, Cotton Fabric. H.110 x W.25 x D.15-20mm. Photograph by Serana Hunt

The Making and the Gesture:

As an extension to the bone doll ‘goddess’ concept and the exploration of symbols associated with the earth elements, I was interested in creating an alternative series of small dolls made from metal and fabric instead of bone, to manifest similar gestures.
I initially began by identifying dolls traditionally connected with the rituals and festivals of the seasons, such as the summer harvest and the ‘corn dolly’. The making of corn dollies began as a pagan custom when farmers fashioned small ‘Mother Goddess’ figures from the last sheaf of straw cut at harvest in order to protect themselves against the disaster of barren land or a poor harvest the following year. It was believed that the corn-spirit resided in this sheaf, so at the end of harvest the ‘goddess dolls’ were carried into the houses and kept safe until the next spring. Spring brought about the re-planting of the crops, when the dolls were taken back into the fields again, enabling their spirits to enter and awaken the new seed. This fertility ritual was a very important and significant part of farming life to ensure successful summer harvests and ongoing future successes of the land.  

Embracing the harsh conditions of a very hot, dry summer, yet another in the years of ongoing drought which had by now rendered the land quite barren, I was interested in echoing the spirit of summer; embodying a spirit of summer into these dolls, not only to reflect the ’elements’ but to suggest the possibility of comfort and hope for the land and the people.

I commenced the making by working with wax to form the shapes of the figures. These waxes would then be individually cast in silver and brass. For several days I worked in intense heat, with the weather conditions impacting dramatically on the intuitive aspect of my making. The melting effects of the heat on the wax, the heat generated by my hands and the small wax burner, combined with the accompanying deeply felt and thought feelings, all contributed to the impact of this intuitive experience.

The mounting progression of heat over the days eventually reached what seemed like a firey crescendo, a legacy of years of drought, when bushfires swept Victoria. This great combustive, uncontrolled, destructive burning is now referred to as the Black Saturday bushfires; 7 February 2009. The inferno resulted in tragedy of monumental proportions - the consequential anguish touching and permeating the lives of people far and wide.

The making of the dolls thus took on an even more dramatic intent and there was a heightened sense of urgency to create them as symbols for healing; offerings to allow one to process the tragedy of the bushfire and a portrayal of identity for people to express love for land and country.

82 Diana Cary and Judy Large, ‘Festivals, Family and Food’, (Hawthorn Press, Gloucestershire 1982), p.66
Like the previous bone dolls, these were also made to be held in the hand, their polished metal surfaces smooth to the touch. Their fabric backs, padded and stitched to these metal surfaces also offered another tactile dimension. Deliberately devised to be rigid and without the ability to move arms and legs, the stature of their bodies is intended to express a sense of ‘holding tight’; tall with long arms attached at the sides guarding and embracing the body, as well as long legs standing on tip-toes.

Also, to indicate healthy summer growth in fecund seasons, I embellished a number of the bodies/dresses on the dolls with decorative foliage patterns. For their simple facial features, I adopted a pensive, deeply thoughtful and somewhat sad expression. They embodied a kind of melancholy, musing and reflective quality. These combined gestures contributed to the perception of being able to ‘look beyond’; of peeping on tip-toes in order to observe. The contemplative stance is a little restrained but still inquisitive, quiet but still observant and conscious, careful but bold and brave, surprised but not afraid, still but always with the intent of possible movement or activity.

These dolls were intended to be given as gifts and to function as votive offerings. The purpose of being able to touch and hold them was to be helpful to invoke or petition a thoughtful, gentle experience and a sense of peace and comfort by looking to the future.
4.1.8 ‘Find Your Own Voice’ Series: 2009

Figure 27: Find Your Own Voice I: Object/Neckpiece 2009; 925 Silver, Bone, Polymer Clay, Cotton Fabric
H. 400 x W. 200 x D. 90mm; Hoop Diam. approx: 150mm. Photograph by Jeremy Dillon.
The Making and the Gesture:

Building on previously explored aspects of movement I considered further notions of articulated movement in relation to identity and how performance and theatrical elements can be related to dolls to create and enhance gestures. Subsequently, masks and marionettes/puppets became the prime areas of my focus for further research.

First I considered the different interpretations and manifestations of masks. According to Collins dictionary, mask is defined as a noun – a covering for the face, as a disguise or protection or as a verb for behaviour that hides ones true feelings. – to cover with a mask; hide or disguise.83

With this in mind, I contemplated the use of cosmetics as a potential mask and posed a series of questions. Is it possible that make-up acts as a means of hiding oneself or hiding an aspect of identity, like looking from behind a curtain or mask? Is it expressing a ‘real’ identity, or is it a mask to suggest another identity? Does using make-up give another impression of one-self? Generally people wear make-up because they want to look more beautiful, often to achieve the mainstream ideal of beauty, but what are the parameters of beauty? Looking through the make-up mask, do the eyes reveal ‘another’ or ‘real’ truth? Does make-up help or boost the wearer’s self-esteem?

There is no doubt that cosmetics enable us to indulge in our obsession with the youthful and flawless look and has a long history of being used for these purposes. For women during the European Middle Ages it was popular to have pale skin as it was a sign of wealth. As well as drastic measures such as bloodletting, pastes of lead, chalk or flour were applied to the skin. White lead pigment, known as ‘ceruse’ was put on the face to achieve the pale complexions.

‘In Greco-Roman society, women wore white lead and chalk on their faces. During the Italian Renaissance, lead paint was used to lighten the face, which was very damaging to the wearer. Aqua Toffana was a popular face powder made from arsenic.’³⁴

The history of cosmetic make-up shows the most dangerous beauty aids were white lead and mercury. These not only eventually ruined the skin but also caused hair loss, stomach problems, the shakes, and even, potentially, death. Although these dangers became known, the majority of women continued to use these deadly whiteners. After Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603), contracted smallpox in 1562 she had scars which she tried to cover up using white lead make-up. As Victoria Rose explained, ‘Queen Elizabeth I of England was a well-known user of white lead, with which she created a look known as ‘the Mask of Youth.’³⁵

During the reign of Charles II of England (1630-1685), heavy makeup began to surface as a means to counteract the pallor from being inside due to illness and epidemics, with its use also being practical to hide the scarring of various diseases, such as smallpox. Royalty and nobility wore makeup as an indication of their status and rank.

³⁵ Ibid.
Alongside the ‘make-up mask’ and its relationship to identity and gesture, it is also important to discuss the mask as object in its own right. Masks are inanimate, ornamental art objects which become animated practical devices. They are dramatic in themselves and with all their mystery and magic they are also objects of endless contradictions. A performing object like a puppet, a mask seems to have the capacity to come alive with an effect closer to magic than technology. They conceal and reveal at the same time: masks hide the natural face, protecting the true identity, while revealing interior realities.

Like puppets they are inanimate objects that take on the appearance of life. When the inanimate is seen to be brought to life, preconceived ideas about the boundaries between life and death as no longer seem valid. Masks serve as a bridge between our hidden and conscious worlds. They can make the face larger than life, both actually and metaphorically, and they have the potential to be more subtle, imaginative, suggestive and dramatic than any actors’ face can ever be. Masks appear to change expressions when they are activated by the gestures of a performer and because of these motions, even masks designed to imitate one exaggerated emotion can still display many different expressions. In fact, the moment a mask is worn it comes alive in an infinite number of ways.

Masks, like puppets, have the capacity to transform performance from the realm of the ordinary and raise it to the level of ritual. They become translators from the human or ordinary realm, capable of revealing extraordinarily clearer, stronger and less ambiguous expressions of feelings. They paradoxically merge the self and the other by enabling us to look through someone else’s face. They can bring past and present together by reflecting faces that are the likenesses of both our ancestors and our neighbours. When used to perform, characters and situations are more heightened and more intense, automatically making them more archetypal, more mythic, more representative, and metaphorical. There is magnificence, grandeur and, as theatre scholar and performer Stefan Brecht notes, a revelation that the ‘ceremonial gesture’ imparts a dignified and imposing element to the performance.⁸⁶ Masks can be a catalyst to transform and charge simple actions with complex meanings.

Often the mask is used as the symbol for theatre in the West, based on a stylized representation of the masks of the ancient Greek stage. The logos of many theatre organizations feature masks and no image evokes theatre as distinctly as the masks of comedy and tragedy. Greek and Roman

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⁸⁶ Stefan Brecht, Peter Schumann’s, The Bread and Puppet Theatre, Volume 2 (Methuen Publishing 1988)
theatre were masked forms as was the Italian Commedia dell’Arte, and there are still many performance styles around the world that use masks such as Japanese Noh, Wayang Topeng in Indonesia, and many African and Native American rituals. In Western theatre today, masks still occasionally appear in mainstream plays, although a masked performance is often a result of experimental stage work. Incorporating masks into plays has traditionally been used as a way to address social and cultural roles and relationships.

The form of theatre known as masques first became popular at the court of King Henry 8th (1491-1547), the father of Queen Elizabeth I. It was an upper class Renaissance entertainment that continued into the Elizabethan era. A masque was a rich, dramatic entertainment often spoken in verse and performed by masked, disguised actors representing mythological or allegorical figures. These masked actors were usually members of the Elizabethan court. The masque productions, accompanied by music and dance produced by Elizabethan dramatists and composers were performed at various festivals and celebrations, such as Christmas and weddings. The masques of the Renaissance fused music, dance, poetry and drama into one lavish entertainment.

The history of the Elizabethan masque dated back to the ancient custom and ritual of ‘mumming’ which were performed by ‘mummers’. The first mummers performed mimes; plays without words re-enacting old stories, legends and myths. The term ‘mummer’ derives from the old Middle English word ‘mum’ meaning silent. All mummers were disguised with masks and referred to as ‘Guisers’. The important element of disguise was passed on to the masques of the Renaissance. The mummers were various male members from the community - many played the same role for years. They were traditionally associated with Christmas and torch light processions through the villages, and their appearances at the Manor House or Castle were greeted with great excitement. The mummers entered the Great Halls with loud blasts from trumpets and drums and the blaze of many torches. Over the years dialogue was added to the plays - they became a forerunner of the theatre. The element of disguise continued and the identities of the mummers were concealed. When dialogue was added to the plays of the mummers they also disguised their voices, continuing to conceal their identities.87

For this series of works, titled, Find Your Own Voice, I have created ‘doll-puppets’ that are structurally similar to each other, but have distinctly contrasting colour features. The use of

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Development of an Original Body of Work – Find Your Own Voice

separate white and black heads/faces was intended to emphasize the dichotomy that exists between these two colour accents. The white face was made to give the sense of it being layered by thick white lead ‘make-up’, alluding to being masked. The black face, also a reference to being masked, is symbolic of the make-up used in Elizabethan ‘masques’: ‘elaborate and fantastic black make-up was applied to the face to provide a contrast to the fashionable white make-up used by Elizabethan woman. Wearing this black make-up provided the only exception of wearing a mask.’

The use of polymer clay provided an ideal material to sculpt the heads/faces. It enabled me to capture both smooth and crazed or cracked areas of surface texture in order to suggest an applied layering of make-up. Being used as a mask to cover scars, pox marks or age lines, I intended this layering to reveal a sense of cracking, wearing and eroding with time, metaphorically alluding to covering the normal scars and signs of aging of life.

The use of black and white is also a comment on identity with regards to skin colour: the distinctions and comparisons of race, ethnicity and egalitarianism; the light and the dark, the positive and the negative, and ultimately balance.

I chose not to inscribe or paint distinct eye features on the faces, preferring to leave a blank molded and hollow suggestion of their intended place, and allowing this to create a veil kind of effect. Instead, I have focused attention on the mouths. Painting red lips onto the mouths of both white and black faces, as well as making them moveable, enabled them to be highlighted within the obvious slotted and movable sections. I have featured the mouth in this way as a metaphor for the voice, a focus on speaking or being ready to speak. Words and the mouth of the body are intended as an expression of life. I am suggesting a readiness to present oneself to the world; of applying red ‘lipstick’ to encourage confidence and feel ‘presentable’ in order to emerge from a private place into a public arena. This engagement also alludes to the alluring nature of lips, the seductive connotations of breath, voice and words as well as those of kissing.

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89 According to Victoria Rose, ‘The Ancient Egyptians used a type of rouge to stain their lips by squeezing out the purple-red colour from iodine and bromine. Unfortunately, this combination of deadly ingredients led to serious diseases and came to be known as ‘the kiss of death’. See ‘The history of Make-up’, (www.makeup2enhance.com 2008) retrieved March 20, 2008
For the bodies, arms and legs on these dolls I have used a combination of bone and fabric. Bone as chest-plates, on the lower legs like spats and on the lower arms like cuffs, is suggestive of armor and protection. These bone components are stitched to lightly padded fabric panels that make up the remainder of the body and limbs, allowing them to move freely. Silver hands and shoes attached to the limbs are intended to draw the eye and attract attention when moved, their high polished surfaces, prominent like a flash. The attachment of simple strings to the arms, legs, head and mouth enables a light, natural movement, like dance. The silver hoop that connects all the strings is designed to be used as the ‘controller’, and can be worn around the neck or held in the hands. The strings can be pulled and manipulated so the doll can be played with like marionette/puppet whilst being worn or held.
4.1.9 ‘Grandmother of York’ Series. 2009-2010

Figure 30: Drawing by the author for Grandmother of York Series: Pencil, Pastel 2009. 250 x 210mm

Figure 31: Grandmother of York series: Objects 2009; Bronze, 925 Silver, Brass, Transfer ink
Each approx: H.340 x W.100 x D.45mm. Photograph by Jeremy Dillon.
The Making and the Gesture:

This series was initially inspired by the nursery rhyme, *The Grand Old Duke of York* and brought about by an inquisitive question from a grandchild. After singing and performing the marching rhyme to my granddaughters in an attempt to entertain them, the 3 year old repeatedly asked the question, “The Grandmother of York… But how many children did she have?”

The Grand Old Duke of York  
He had Ten Thousand Men  
He marched them up to the top of the hill  
And marched them down again

My granddaughter’s persistence with the question suddenly made me realize that she was interpreting ‘The Grand Old Duke of York’ as ‘The Grandmother of York’! It occurred to me that

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‘The Grand Old Duke of York’ - who he was and what he represented - meant little to this three year old child, in 21st Century Australia. The grandmother, on the other hand, who is a very active and significant figure in her life, represents specific attachment and meaning. The relationship between us, as grandmother and granddaughter, indeed has a profound influence on both our identities.

By using the rhyme as children’s entertainment, it brought to light the child’s perspective: her playfulness, innocence and honesty. In its simplicity, I was given a child’s eye view of interpreting folk stories in their own way.

My use of expressive marching actions to perform this nursery tune, combined with this child’s perspective, conjured images of an army of mothers and grandmothers - a regiment, all with marching orders and all in rhythm.

With this in mind, I created a series or ‘army’, of articulated doll soldiers with both feminine and masculine aspects. Although I was creating new interpretations of a soldier, they are reminiscent of American as well as European tradition; weighty, encompassing mass and gravity behind them, suggesting the historical weight of generations and woman. My intention was to reinvent the meaning of not just a toy soldier but a doll with all the connotations; cross-cultural and cross-gender. Articulated doll soldiers whose movements evoke play but yet also allude to far more complex human concerns.

Figure 34: Grandmother of York series: Objects 2009; Bronze, 925 Silver, Brass, Transfer ink. Each approx: H.340 x W.100 x D.45mm. Photograph by Jeremy Dillon.
The first dolls of this series were made from wood so that their components could be molded to make patterns for sand-casting in bronze. The majority of the dolls are robustly constructed from cast bronze, with a small number made in polymer clay. The contrasts created not only by the dramatic differences in weight between the heavy bronze and the light polymer clay, but also the differences in look and feel of these materials, contributed to the suggested idiosyncrasies of individuals within a group.

My intention is that each doll captures a subtle conflict. The suggestion of a rhythmical marching swing of left, right, left, right implies militaries, dominance, regimentation and subjection but also welcoming order, sequence and routine - a peace and harmony associated with mothering.

Even though the stature and construction of the dolls provided a particular uniformity when grouped together, I was also interested in establishing an insignia to further unify them as a collective. I was concerned that this insignia create a common link to connect the dolls, but also be able to suggest subtle differences to acknowledge individual identity; highlighting the importance of individuality within the group.

Revisiting the embossed decorative patterns inspired by the ‘Singer Sewing Machine’, previously explored and used as metal bodies in the Rediscovered series, I made fragments of the patterned

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91 With the assistance of an engineer colleague Graeme Johnson, we established a small studio/yard foundry in Shepparton where we were able to heat and hand pour bronze into the patterns made for sand-casting.
silver sheets. I created a number in silver and in transfer ink so that each one would be individual in size and shape, but all would contain the essence of the same pattern. These fragments, suggestive of fragments of memories and transformations, were then used like breastplates and armor on the dolls. I was interested in exploring and referencing the use of these, like a monogram, ‘coat of arms’, ‘clan crest’, or ‘clan uniform’; like the Scottish tartan - symbols of armory.

Many of the symbols adopted into armory have been used since the time of the Egyptians, but the use of symbols in heraldry did not begin until the 11th Century. ‘Heraldry is defined as the hereditary art or science of blazoning, the description is appropriate technical terms of ‘Coats-Of Arms’ and other heraldic and armorial insignia, and is of very ancient origin.’

By the 13th Century heraldry was used throughout Europe. Monograms were used in early European kingdoms by illiterate monarchs when signing documents. The ‘coat of arms’ came from the insignia displayed on the crest of a helmet or metal chest armor. These helped identify soldiers who had journeyed to battle or jousting matches. Eventually the symbols were also used on banners and flags.

In these early times people were known only by a single name. As population grew and people traveled further a field, it became increasingly necessary to assume an additional name to differentiate between bearers of the same personal name. By the end of the 14th Century most of the population had acquired a second name. Heraldry arouse through the necessity to achieve distinction between families. The insignia representing family crests and names is part of the history of heraldry and the coats of arms.

In Scotland, family and clan crests often had accompanying ‘clan badges’. In general terms, a clan is a social group made up of a number of distinct branch-families that descended from or accepted themselves as descendents of a common ancestor. The idea of clan as a community is based around this idea of heredity. The most prominent example of this form of society is the Scottish clan system.

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93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
Similarly in Scottish culture, the use of tartan as a form of clan or family identification is an emblem of National identity, making clan tartan one of the most powerful symbols of kinship.

I was concerned that this series of dolls be portrayed as a unified collective, a community, group or family, bound by the timeless uniformity of generic routines, rules and mechanisms - stimulating and dissipating unconscious anxieties. By acknowledging the re-interpretation and the re-telling of folk-lore, folk songs and dance, contributions to new family stories and myths can be created and therefore benefit the evolution and the culture of fairy tales and folk stories.
4.1.10 ‘The Girl with the Curl’ Series: 2010

Figure 37: The Girl with the Curl series: Brooches 2010; 925 Silver, Nickel Silver, Bone, Cotton Fabric, Cotton Wool. Each approx: H.190 x W.70 x D.30mm. Photograph by Jeremy Dillon.
The Making and the Gesture:

This series considers further the effect of childhood memories and their translation through to adult life - the influence of childhood activities, nursery rhymes and fairy tales on adult perceptions.

My initial inspiration for these works was derived from childhood memories that combined a nursery rhyme and a popular doll.

The nursery rhyme, There was a Little Girl, by poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-82):

There was a little girl,  
Who had a little curl’,  
right in the middle of her forehead.  
When she was good,  
She was very, very good,  
But when she was bad, she was horrid.

The influential doll was a version of the kewpie doll. The kewpie was originally conceived by Rose O’Neill, in the USA. These dolls appeared prolifically on cane sticks or crooks displayed in all the sideshow alleys at regional Agricultural Show Grounds and had all the plastic charm a pink and smiling doll could. They had sweet faces and plump bodies; they were ‘cute’ and utterly beguiling…misleading, charming and amusing. In his book Cute, Quaint, Hungry and Romantic: The Aesthetics of Consumerism, Daniel Harris describes the ‘cuteness’ of such dolls as an evolutionary adaptation to facilitate maternal instincts for a ‘mythical condition of endearing naiveté’.

We respond to the distortions and disproportions, such as a large forehead and eyes, a small mouth and bloated cheeks, as they encourage perceptions of vulnerability, uncertainty and weakness. These often grotesque disfigurements are used as contingent cues that evolution has built us to perceive as a cute ‘being’ and one who inhabits a ‘miniature world’. This miniature world is contained within a larger world that we inhabit which manifests a condition that involves us, more powerful beings, looking down on the miniature world.

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The allure of cute is that it assuages the pain of our basic affections, that there is a notion of love without risk. The warm rush of love that comes from recognizing yourself in another being is magnified by the perception that if it is inferior, there is no risk of love being rejected. The rush of the cute being similar to the rush of affection expressed in love.

The kewpie doll achieved profound worldwide commercial success, which was known as the kewpie phenomenon. Carl Fox observed that they were ‘made, as they have been, in every material and reproduced in an endless succession of souvenirs’.

I always felt that the doll, attached in place on the cane crook, alluded to the notion of the Little Bo-Peep rhyme…as well as The Girl with the Curl.

As a child I longed to have these dolls. They were very expensive for what they were and therefore quite unattainable. My parents were of the view that, as the dolls consisted of a lot of cheap plastic and glitter, with very little substance, that they were merely throw-away show souvenirs and most definitely not value for money. They came in a range of different sizes, and the larger one’s where always financially out of reach; not within the justifiable income range of a hard working, but struggling farming family for something that they could envisage eventually being tossed out as rubbish.

Attending the Agricultural Show in Melbourne revealed that these dolls where even bigger and better, with far more lavish decoration than any I had seen in the country.

It was the ultimate reward of the day if we got to take home a ‘show dolly’, even if it was just the small one!

Australian artist, Rosalie Gascoigne (1917-99) used kewpie dolls from a discarded sideshow that she found in a rubbish dump in 1976 in some of her found object art works using box assemblages.

‘Gascoigne’s box works playfully transform the former roles of their component parts, managing to convey the tawdry joys at the heart of their recent past while bringing them together in new

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combinations that charm and delight."³⁸\footnote{Kelly Gellatly, ‘Rosalie Gascoigne’, (National Gallery Of Victoria, Melbourne 2008), p. 15}…‘After sorting her cache of kewpie dolls by height and eye colour and having, in the spirit of Auntie Jack\footnote{Aunty Jack was the lead character in the Aunty Jack show, an Australian television (ABC-TV) comedy series that ran from 1972 to 1973. The series attained a cult status that persists to the present day. Auntie Jack was a unique comic character, devised and played by Grahame Bond—an obese, mustached, gravel-voiced transvestite—who solved any problem by knocking people unconscious and threatening to ‘rip their bloody arms off’. Uttering her familiar threat: “I’ll rip yer bloody arms off!” became a phrase which immediately passed into the vernacular.}, unsentimentally ‘ripped their bloody arms off’, Gascoigne hoped, by imposing a sense of order and control over her subject, to establish an ‘essence of dolly-ness’; thus creating a work that ‘says dollies unequivocally.’¹⁰⁰

The original molded plastic kewpie dolls had facial moldings that required, after forming, painted colour details of the eyes, mouth, cheeks and hair. It was necessary for these features to be added on in order to complete the full ‘cute’ doll effect.

Taking the basic molded aesthetic from the ‘cute’ kewpie, I replicated the forms of the facial features in modeling wax to create mask-like faces. I was interested in replicating the full shapes of the face and the swirls and curl of the hair, without any painted details, to capture the essence of this ‘cute dolly-ness’ so that I could then alter, distort and strip back some of the features before casting in silver.

The cuteness once imbedded in these dolls’ faces so perfectly now needed to be revisited, looked at in a different light and context, looked at with the view to question far more serious concerns. I wanted to create a certain disfigurement of the features and surfaces so that they appeared to have been eroded away. This erosion, or the notion of the face and features being worn by time, is deliberately speculative of covert violence or violation of some kind. The omitting of the painted details added to this eerily creepy perception of the disturbed. My intention was, once again, to draw on and make reference to, the gravitas and mystery of ancient masks, such as the Greek dramatic mask. The myth and ritual contained in the subliminal power of the masks’ ability to express profound hidden conflicts of the mind.

To help manifest similar conditions and gestures in the bodies of these dolls I referenced the images of dolls designed to be suggestive of a plump child or infant. I made bodies from lightly padded cotton fabric and polished bone, drilled and stitched together, and attached limbs and neck-yokes made of nickel-silver, with subtle etching on the metal surfaces detailing skin texture

\footnote{Kelly Gellatly, ‘Rosalie Gascoigne’, (National Gallery Of Victoria, Melbourne 2008), p. 15}
and bobby-socks. Not all the usual number of limbs were attached, some remained missing; the deliberate omission of arms and legs being suggestive of disablement or acute violence.

I have also added printed words and phrases to the fabric bodies. Words such as ‘cherish’, ‘adore’ and ‘forever’ alluding to the notion of something to be kept, cared for or treasured are intended to create a confusing dichotomy as the viewer’s attention shifts between the words and the ominous disfigurement.

I also created another version of The Girl with the Curl doll using alternate materials. With 14ct gold replacing the silver for the head, carved bone and transfer ink for the limbs, the use of black fabric as a contrast to the white, and the addition of a switch mechanism in the centre of the doll's body.
4.2 Recent Works: Marionettes and Puppetry

4.2.1 Introduction

‘The objects we call puppets in the context of folk traditions and art doubtlessly form an irreplaceable part of human culture.’\(^{101}\)

Articulated figurines were being created by ancient civilizations dating 30-35 thousand years ago.\(^{102}\) Articulated statuettes excavated in Greece and Italy plus some ancient texts show that puppets performed for entertainment as well as for ceremonies from ancient to Hellenic times, the fifth century B.C.E., and dolls with movable limbs were ubiquitous.\(^{103}\)

Puppets are directly associated with dolls and are often thought of as ‘little people’. While puppets often resemble dolls, and are sometimes made of the same materials, they are usually more articulated and are meant to be brought to life in front of a viewer.

A child will react to a doll, and that doll may come alive for that one child, whereas a child can become the puppet and can project a part of himself through the figure for an audience. The child will talk to the doll but will talk through the puppet.

According to the authors of *Ceska Loutka (Czech Puppet,)* puppets are artistic artifacts. They acknowledge and analyze the artistic phenomenon of puppets and their ability to represent artistic expression in their own right.

‘Puppets in themselves can be independent artistic creations; they inherently amount to creative and artistic abbreviations – epitomes. Meanwhile, unlike other creative works, they contain hidden action; they have a dramatic charge. With their power of motion, of “coming to life” puppets have an immensely attractive, nearly magical effect – even when observing a “lifeless” puppet, we expect a performance. This is given by the internal contradictory character of puppets – their non-living matter is intended to gain apparent life.’\(^{104}\)

\(^{102}\) Ibid, p. 17.
Puppet play has, over time, invaded virtually all countries and every field of dramatic art. Puppets of one sort or another have been part of the historical scene since the dawn of civilization.

Puppets have created and communicated shared references across divides of class, ethnicity and geography. From tribal ceremonies to the mystery and miracle plays given under the auspices of the Christian church, to comedy, tragedy and political drama, perhaps no other medium has so consistently clearly reflected the spirit of its time; and with it must be associated many great names of those who have fallen under the fascination and charm of its quaint magic.

Such great musicians as Mozart, Hayden and Bach and writers as Goethe, Le Sage and Maeterlinck have written plays for the marionette theatre. The poet Goethe surrounded himself with marionettes from childhood and eloquently wrote of them and for them. Voltaire became ardently enthusiastic about puppets when he discovered that they could be made to take the responsibility for some of his more adventurous theories. The French novelist, George Sand and her son Maurice created a portable marionette theatre to give entertainment and voice to racy commentary, at Nohant.

In Greek culture, Aristotle bore witness to the perfection of the marionette, while the great scientist Archimedes was committed to advancing the knowledge and skilled mechanics of the marionette. Archimedes and Plato, Michelangelo and Goldoni, Shakespeare, Brahms and Hans Christian Anderson, as well as George Bernard Shaw, Maurice Brown and Ellen Von Volkenberg, are merely a few of the great individuals to have worked with, and been captivated by, the unique and alluring nature of the marionette.105

The works of writers such as Heindrick von Kleist, with his essays, On the Marionette Theatre and The Dancer and the Puppet, have contributed to changing the view of the artistic conception of puppets; for example non-living figures are now often identified with imagination, being seen as symbols of creativity. Many artists have taken puppets out of the context of the art of theatre and experimented with them in their own artistic fields.

I remain fascinated by the way a puppet can have so much semblance of life in it – a little manipulated doll, either on strings or on your hand – how it can have such a moving, powerful effect on oneself or an audience. Creating puppets and performing with them requires, in effect, being audacious enough to shrink to a smaller world and ‘jiggle’ it around.

Puppets are iconic little figures and exist to represent the characters their author intends. A puppet performance is magical. The audience is complicit; imaginations must be engaged to complete the transformation from inanimate object to living character. The observer can fill the characters with their own frame of reference. There is always anticipation that the audience is smart and worldly and has their own emotional baggage, so that they start layering on their own associations. This may include subliminal residue, even in the modern West where theatre has been separated from religious ritual, of the association of puppets with spiritual or superhuman figures, enlarging the performance beyond merely ‘human’. Puppetry is the act of summing up and bringing to the fore the fragmented, hidden aspects of our subconscious.

My experimentation with movement gestures and puppetry associated with the design and making of my doll artifacts, up to this point, had contained an element of play and whimsy. Previously, the making had not been based around any one set of rules or technical procedures synonymous with the traditions of marionette and puppet making, but rather was subject to chance. In fact, it was because of the body of research pertaining to this doll-making, and the direction it subsequently led me, I discovered that there were indeed, some strict rules and guidelines associated with the design and construction of marionettes. These guidelines are steeped in tradition and exist so that specific character gestures can be generated and manifested in the puppet. This intensifies the expression of the actions and emotions that they are designed to represent. Puppets that create the illusion of life by using movement exclusive to their construction can more easily encourage a viewer to accept the living existence of an otherwise inanimate object.

The necessity of learning more about these particular aspects of design and construction in order to pursue further investigation and ways in which to imbue my artifacts with character gestures became of paramount importance.

Drawing on centuries-old tradition, Czech puppet making and theatre (loutkove divadlo) is even today considered the best in Europe and among the best worldwide. Puppets have always had a magical and symbolic role in this region since first appearing in 12th century religious ceremonies.

In August 2010 I therefore attended the ‘Marionette Carving and Construction’ workshop at the studio of Miroslav (Mirek) Trejtnar (b.1962) in Prague, Czech Republic.
4.2.2 Czech Republic Puppet History

The origins of Czech puppetry date back to the early Middle Ages when, in the central European lands that are now partly covered by the Czech Republic, numerous types of puppets were used as part of pagan customs, rituals and religious ceremonies, as well as for entertainment.\footnote{Alice Dubská, Jan Novák, Nina Malíková, Marie Zdeňková, ‘Czech Puppet Theatre: Yesterday and Today’ (Theatre Institute Prague, Czech Republic, 2006), p.6}

The tradition of Czech puppetry is actually younger than that of many western European countries, but it was the continuous development of the marionette-type puppet in the Czech lands that had the greatest influence on the shaping of Central European puppet theatre. Czech puppetry as it is known today was imported in the late 17th century by itinerant puppeteers from Holland, England, France and Italy. Initially Czechs assisted the foreign groups and by the end of the 18th century Czech companies had been established.

Most companies first used puppets as cheap substitutes for actors, combining live actors and puppets onstage; these puppets tended to be large and life-like, with body proportions and range of motions similar to that of a human.\footnote{Jirasek, Blecha & Jirasek, ‘Ceska Loutka’ (Czech Puppet), (KANT Books, Prague, Czech Republic 2008), p.39} As the genre developed, companies specialized in sole puppet performances. The puppets became smaller and more stylized, with the size of their heads and hands exaggerated, as these are the most expressive parts of the puppet. Whole families were involved in running the itinerant companies with the business being passed down from generation to generation.\footnote{Alice Dubská, ‘Czech Puppet Theatre: Yesterday and Today’, (Theatre Institute Prague, Czech Republic, 2006), p.6} Usually one puppeteer- the head of the family- manipulated all the puppets and was responsible for all the vocals. This staging creating a unique balance of rhythmical and subtle movements combined with highly stylized and impassioned vocal displays. The texts, which were known by heart, were based on classical stories such as Faust, Don Giovanni, Genevieve or historical Czech plays. The intended audience was adults, who would gather on the town square or in the pub for a performance.

The type of puppet used was a marionette – which means a puppet manipulated from above. Most marionettes were suspended on stiff wires which extended from the head to a control device. The puppet had only four strings, which controlled arms and legs. This construction gave the puppet a rigid, highly stylized movement and allowed the puppeteer to manipulate several at one time; he
could just sit puppets onstage while manipulating others, which would be impossible if the puppets were only on strings.\footnote{109}

The one exception was the Czech puppet character ‘Kasparek’ (little Kaspar), who hung only on strings to give him more flexible movement. Kasparek is a jester-like character, similar to the British Punch or Italian Punchinella. He appeared in almost all puppet plays, accompanying the protagonist and always making the final comment.\footnote{110}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure38_39.png}
\caption{Marionettes from the collection of Jiri Vorel, Roztoky Museum, Roztoky, Czech Republic. The collection includes some of the oldest Czech puppets from the early 19th Century and includes over 2000 pieces; puppets by renowned puppet carvers, including Mikuláš Sichrovský, Josef Alessi, Johan Flasch and Antonín Sucharda. Photographs by the author 2010.}
\end{figure}

The puppeteers’ interest in high quality, realistic figures encouraged them to employ craftsmen specialized in carving. They hired church woodcarvers, who also made religious sculptures, to make their puppets, which contributed to their high artistic quality.\footnote{111} Typical characters were

\footnote{109} Mirek Trejtnar & Leah Gaffin, Notes taken from ‘Marionette Carving and Construction’ workshop, Puppets in Prague, August 2010.
\footnote{110} Mirek Trejtnar & Leah Gaffin, Notes taken from ‘Marionette Carving and Construction’ workshop, Puppets in Prague, August 2010.
\footnote{111} Jirasek, Blecha & Jirasek , ‘Ceska Loutka’ (Czech Puppet), (KANT Books, Prague, Czech Republic 2008), pp.42-43
those used for classic stories and included kings, queens, Faust, devils, knights, robbers, princess, skeletons to represent Death and of course, Kasparek.

Puppet shows were the only form of theatre performed in the Bohemian villages, and they were the only shows performed in Czech (all city theatres performed in the official language, German). During the Czech national awakening of the late 19th century, itinerant puppeteers were embraced as social and cultural icons who had helped preserve Czech culture and language. Despite their naivety and limited literary skills these puppeteers were able to communicate the ideas of ‘Enlightenment and National Revival’ to their audiences.¹¹²

This reverence of the puppeteer established a place for him in Czech history. It also encouraged a boom in community and amateur puppet theatre in the early 20th century, with the ‘world of puppets’ being idealized and shaped by the Czech cultural renaissance. Many of these ‘amateur’ groups were run by professional artists, designers, and intellectuals with generous funding. These companies aimed performances at children.

¹¹² Alice Dubská, ‘Czech Puppet Theatre: Yesterday and Today’ (Theatre Institute Prague, Czech Republic, 2006), p.6
The puppetry movement intensified after the Czechoslovak Republic was established. Over 2000 companies existed in the country in the 1920s, many of high artistic quality. The Czech magazine *Puppeteer* was established in 1912 and the international puppetry association UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionette) was founded in 1929 at the Riše loutek (Empire of Puppets) in Prague at an international puppetry conference. UNIMA still exists and has its headquarters in France.

World War II brought many developments to a halt, although the famous *Spejbl and Hurvinek* comic puppet characters, who had been created in the 1920s, continued to perform, criticizing the Nazi regime until their puppeteer was put in a concentration camp. In occupied Czechoslovakia during the Second World War, the puppet theatre was part of the resistance movement.

After the war, the Communist regime centralized all theatre, including puppetry. They banned most amateur groups, and hijacked the tradition as their own, establishing large puppet theatres in all major Czech cities. These companies were set up to promote socialist values to children. The government also established a puppetry department in the Prague Theatre Academy and supported an animated film studio, started by the children’s illustrator and puppet maker Jiří Trnka (1912-1969).

While the large puppet companies often suffered censorship and control, most of the time they could still experiment artistically. The puppet theatre, originally named Východočeské loutkové divadlo (East Bohemian Puppet theatre) and renamed DRAK, (an abbreviation for Divadlo, romanitostí, atrakcí a komedie - Theatre of Variety, Attractions and Comedy), was world famous, winning awards at puppet festivals throughout the world in the 60s and 70s. The DRAK Puppet Theatre still operates today and is one of the best known Czech puppet theatres at home and abroad.

Since the fall of Communism, many independent companies have been established, including the Forman Brothers company (sons of puppeteer Milos Forman). The Forman Brothers Theatre is a contemporary Czech puppet theatre which has gained enormous response from audiences in the Czech Republic as well as all over Europe and the United States. Czech animated puppet films are

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113 Jirasek, Blecha & Jirasek, ‘Ceska Loutka’ (Czech Puppet), (KANT Books, Prague, Czech Republic 2008), pp.211-222
also renowned, and the work of surrealist animated film maker Jan Švankmajer (b.1934), who studied puppetry at the Prague Theatre Academy, can be seen in art cinemas around the world.\footnote{Alice Dubská, Jan Novák, Nina Malíková, Marie Zdeňková, ‘Czech Puppet Theatre: Yesterday and Today’(Theatre Institute Prague, Czech Republic, 2006), pp. 36-57}

‘Puppets are firmly rooted in my mental morphology, and as a result of that I keep going back to them, in both life and work, as something that represents for me a kind of certainty in relationship to the world. As a rule, I resort to puppets in moments of danger. I create my Golems to protect me from the pogroms of reality.’ - Jan Švankmajer (filmmaker), 2003.\footnote{Mirek Trejtnar & Leah Gaffin, Notes taken from ‘Marionette Carving and Construction’ workshop, Puppets in Prague, August 2010.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figures/figure41-42.jpg}
\caption{Marionettes from the collection of Jiri Vorel, Roztoky Museum, Roztoky, Czech Republic. Puppets by renowned puppet carvers, including Mikuláš Sichrovský, Josef Alessi, Johan Flasch and Antonín Sucharda. Photographs by the author 2010.}
\end{figure}
4.2.3 ‘The Sun God’ Marionette: 2010

In August 2010 I attended the ‘Marionette Carving and Construction’\textsuperscript{117} workshop at the studio of Miroslav (Mirek) Trejtnar in Prague, Czech Republic. There were eight other participants in the trans-cultural workshop, with Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Great Britain, America, Korea, Argentina and Australia represented. Each person brought their own range of personal and cultural ideas, knowledge, values and perceptions to share in the studio environment.

Mirek, the workshop leader and master in his field from the puppet design department of the Prague Academy of Performing Arts, has also trained with the Institute UNIMA in Charleville, Mezieres in France. He founded his own puppet company (KID) in 1989, designing and making wooden puppets, toys and sculptures. His artworks have been exhibited in many places around the world, including at several UNIMA festivals. He has designed marionettes for numerous productions including \textit{The Baroque Opera} by the Forman Brothers as well as puppets for the Jiří Trnka animated film studio in Prague. Other masters of puppetry were tutors and instructors during the workshop. These included Zdar Sorm (carving and technology), Sota Sakuma (carving), Dora Bouzkova and Renata Kubisova (manipulation and performance), Eva Pechackova and Marcela Kralova (costumes) and Leah Gaffin (history).

\section*{The Making and the Gesture:}

Participation in the Prague workshop provided me with significant insight into the historiography and artistic phenomenon of Czech puppets. The important valuations into the historical and cultural philosophy, combined with the thorough design and technical instruction for making traditional Czech marionettes,\textsuperscript{118} enabled a considered approach to the puppet character I would design and carve in the workshop.

I was interested in experimenting with previously explored symbolic references, such as the exposed rib cage, within the context of the traditional marionette. The carving of a wooden marionette offered another way in which I could explore personal attachment to the exposed rib-cage and its gesture associations. The structure of the chiseling that gives a patterned, carved look, which is the traditionally preferred surface finish to a sanded smooth look, enabled me to

\textsuperscript{117} To be referred to as the Prague Workshop.
\textsuperscript{118} See Appendix I for detailed instructions on the designing and technology of making a marionette.
experiment with effects that would impact and compliment the strength of the gestures. The strong, bold marks made by the chiseling techniques, together with the iconography of the traditional European style marionette, provided the additional effects necessary to contribute to the expressions and drama associated with articulated dolls and puppets. I was concerned with conveying a particular strength as well a certain divinity in the marionette character I made during the workshop.

![The Sun God Marionette](image)

**Figure 43:** The Sun God marionette: Lime Wood, 23ct Gold Leaf, Paint, Lace Paper Prague Workshop, 2010. H.600 x W.200 x D.100mm

![Detail - The Sun God Marionette](image)

**Figure 44:** Detail - The Sun God marionette 2010: Photographs by the author.
Thus, the puppet character I made was to become *The Sun God* to be used in the traditional marionette theatre production held in the last days of the workshop. My participation in the performance as a puppeteer using my puppet was an integral part of the training.

**Figure 45:** Patterns, technical drawings and carvings for *The Sun God* marionette: Prague Workshop 2010. Photograph by Mirek Trejtnar

**Figure 46:** Carving *The Sun God* marionette head: Prague Workshop 2010. Photograph by Mirek Trejtnar
Through the various processes of designing, technical drawing, pattern making, carving, assembling and costume techniques\textsuperscript{119} \textit{The Sun God} character emerged and developed into a fully articulated working marionette.

I chose to allow the detail of the carved rib cage to be a feature aspect of the puppet character and costume. I highlighted the left side of the carved ribs by applying maroon paint in the recesses and gold leaf to the relief surfaces, in order to suggest a certain sense of deep passion and pure lightness of the heart. I also applied the maroon colour to the lips to indicate an extension of this passion, and attached gold leaf to the puppet’s head to represent the ever present and eternal light of the sun. I painted subtle details into the carved areas of the eyes, to contribute to the wise, almost scrutinizing glance of the puppet. I was interested in imbuing this wise expression into the puppet character to allude to a kind of wisdom associated with an ever knowing and powerful ‘Sun’ and ‘Sun God’; a certain divinity.

\textsuperscript{119} See Appendix I for detailed instructions on the designing and technology of making a marionette.
The Puppet Performance


Figure 51: Completed marionettes by the participants in the Prague workshop, hanging ready for performance: Prague Workshop 2010. Photograph by the author.
At the completion of the workshop a traditional puppet performance was given to an audience by all the participants using their newly constructed marionettes. In total there were nine participants and nine marionettes. Over the course of the workshop there were many lessons on how to manipulate and perform with puppets. In addition to these lessons, and as the marionette characters developed, a script for the performance was written. Each participant contributed to the story which, when finished, was learned and refined through several rehearsals. The final performance was given to a packed and eager audience. It was received with much enthusiasm and deemed a great success.

Figure 52: Completed marionettes by the participants in the Prague workshop, hanging ready for performance: Prague Workshop 2010. Photograph by Mirek Trejtnar.
4.2.4 ‘Vilém & Jarmila’: 2010 – 2011

The Making and the Gesture:

Posing the question of what it means to be alive and conscious, an aware and thinking creature, Jessica Riskin in *Machines in the Garden* uses automata, life-like machines, to discuss the philosophical tradition of animation and consciousness as a major cultural preoccupation, with practices dating back to the mid 17th Century.\(^{120}\)

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In her book *Living Dolls*, Gabby wood deals with the issues that concern us when we are faced with certain versions of ourselves. Whether it is a speaking robot, intelligent machine or even just a doll that moves, she explains that ‘behind each of these inventions is a single notion: that life can be stimulated by art or science or magic. And embodied in each invention is a riddle, a fundamental challenge to our perception of what makes us human.’

In October 2009 the French street theatre company Royal De Luxe presented a performance in Germany titled *The Berlin Reunion*, as part of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The reunion show was performed in the style of a ‘Fairy Tale for Berlin’ and featured two gigantic marionettes that told the magical story of the Big Giant, a deep-sea diver, and his niece, the Little Giantess who, after being separated by the wall, are reunited after many years of separation at the Brandenburg Gate. (Figures 54, 55 & 56)

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The empowering large scale stature and presence of the ‘Big Giant’ and the ‘Little Giantess’, together with the concepts of automata, life-like machines and other large marionettes, was inspirational for the carving of two puppets/marionettes to produce the work which I titled *Vilém and Jarmila*. Vilém and Jarmila are the central characters in the romantic poem *May (Máj)* by Czech poet Karel Hynek Mácha. A homage to the beauty of spring, it is considered an epic masterpiece. Published in 1836, it is known as one of the most prominent works of Czech literature, influencing hearts and minds over the past two centuries. Allured by its dramatic tale of seduction and revenge - the lament of lost love and the poet’s recollection of the lovers’ legend - I was interested in echoing an intimate translation.

Being captivated by the essence of Czech art and culture, and encouraged by my time spent in Prague and the knowledge and philosophy gleaned from attending the workshop, I was drawn to embrace the carving of a life-size puppet in order to reflect aspects of this translation. A smaller puppet similar in size to the *Sun God* was made to accompany the large figure, contributing an integral aspect to the concept of the work.

My intention was to imbue the large puppet with qualities that could reflect a divine nature. I was interested in manifesting a state of divinity, embracing a kind of sanctity in the gesture. In a way, I aimed to create a kind of Deity, a Guardian Spirit - a figure metaphorical of both guardian and caretaker; the fragile being/our own fragile internal being but also the fragile beings we conceive, grow and nurture on the inside and the outside.

‘Many religions use a light metaphor for divinity: Moses’ face when he descended from Mount Sinai blazed like the sun, and medieval iconography surrounded saints with halos.’

Most people understand analogies associated with ‘the light of grace’, and are aware that radiance can emerge from faces and bodies - the pure light that shines from a person making them truly beautiful. Statements such as ‘her face lit up’, ‘she radiated beauty’, the ‘glowing mother’ to be – the light of creation - the ‘radiant bride’ – the light of happiness all contribute to these perceptions. This illumination or emitting of light is often associated with love and intimacy, the warmth of the familiar, a sense of wholeness and trust, light in a body’s sexuality, vulnerability or wit, as well as the notions of a healing light – a light that cures.

The large puppet, Vilém is essentially portraying the stronger guardian character, while the accompanying smaller marionette is suggestive of Jarmila, the metaphor for the fragile being, the vulnerable lover. I am also alluding to the notion that the Jarmila character is the reflective inner-self, the inner being of one-self, and the soul of the larger character.

**Figure 57**: (Detail); Authors’ concept drawing for large puppet Vilém & Jarmila: 2010. Scale: 1820 x 500 mm.

**Figure 58**: Patterns for large puppet, Vilém & Jarmila

**Figures 59 & 60**: Carving and construction of the large puppet for Vilém & Jarmila: Authors’ Studio Shepparton 2011.
Both the puppets have the ability to move, enabling their positions and poses to be altered, as well as offering the possibility of performance. The small figure has been made with the same joint mechanisms as the Sun God. Using the cultural context of the traditional Czech marionette, it is suspend from a wire and four strings. It has its own controller attached to the central wire so that it can be moved independently. The larger puppet has simplified joint mechanisms which allow for simple movements and gestures with the aid off pulleys and strings. These strings are manipulated by the pulling of various handles from a central control area.

Painstakingly hand carving and constructing every aspect of the large puppet figure, without the use of machines, enabled me to immerse myself intensely with the intuitive understanding of my research as well as the making processes. The making of the large puppet in this particular way enabled me to think about my research. It embodied procedural research and understanding.

The finished works, in my perception, provide a site of reverie and meditation - an echo of the genesis of the project and the very act of making.
4.2.5 ‘Infant of Prague’ Series: 2011-2012

**Figure 62:** Infant of Prague: Brooch 2011; 925 Silver, 14ct Gold, Brass, Cotton, Plastic. H.90 x W.60 x D.40mm
Photograph by Jeremy Dillon

The Making and the Gesture:

During the time I spent in Prague attending the marionette carving workshop, I spent some time walking and exploring the city. On one of these walks, the discovery of a small pink plastic doll’s leg wedged in the cobblestones of the street represented a significant find. The association of the ‘found object’ along with the exciting new experiences the city offered became the initial
inspiration for the work that I titled *Infant of Prague*. The plastic leg was used as an integral component of the piece. I was interested in exploring the essence of these new experiences and emotions in order to encapsulate the concepts of infant emotions; the bringing-about, or capturing of the emergence of infant emotions and the subsequent effects on our development and the shaping of our identities.

![Infant of Prague: Brooch 2011; 925 Silver, 14ct Gold, Brass, Cotton, Plastic. H.90 x W.60 x D.40mm](image)

*Figure 63: Infant of Prague: Brooch 2011; 925 Silver, 14ct Gold, Brass, Cotton, Plastic. H.90 x W.60 x D.40mm*  
Photograph by Jeremy Dillon

In his paper, *Infants and Emotions: How the Ancients’ Theories Inform Modern Issues*, Matthew Spackman notes that ‘for Aristotle, emotions resulted from the evaluation of the importance of environmental stimuli to one’s wellbeing.’¹²⁴ Philosophers, such as Aristotle and the Stoic and

Epicurean theorists, understood emotions as primarily moral and socio-cultural phenomena. With a focus on the cognitive study of emotions, they regarded the most important of the cognitive processes to be that of evaluative perception.

It appears that some of the personality characteristics of infants emerge from the positive and negative interactions of their brains’ emotional strengths with world events. Positive emotional systems seem to operate as attractors that capture cognitive spaces, leading to their broadening, cultivation and development. Negative emotions are inclined to constrain cognitive activities to more narrow and obsessive channels. The fundamental assertion is that with the emergence of habitual capacities to project their emotions into the world, infants gradually come to see their environments as essentially friendly places or uncaring and threatening ones. A great deal of this presumably emerges from brain processes that control sadness and joy.

These functions, along with developmental implications, contribute to understanding how infants’ emotional environments affect their adult relationships. The belief that early relationships form patterns or models for the development of later relationships embraces the idea that emotions are both determined by and determine social interaction. This touches on the moral aspects of mothering as an essential ingredient in the development of persons and the way in which relationships are built across lifetimes.\textsuperscript{125}

After returning to Australia from Prague, I encountered another significant find for the work. The discovery of a small silver charm in a local opportunity shop added further dimension to the nascent concept and momentum for the making of the work. The charm, attached to a string of beads, was embossed and had a tag that read ‘Infant Jesus of Prague’, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Sunday after Epiphany, To attract Success & Financial Security.

Searching for the ideal ‘infant’ body as the extension to suitably accommodate the found plastic leg, I chose the iconography of the ‘hard plastic’ baby dolls, common in the 1940s and 50s. These particular dolls are not only familiar to me, but also represent a significant source of emotional attachment as treasured playthings, connected to the memories of childhood play days. I have kept my original ‘baby’ doll from childhood, which is the size of an infant baby, as a treasured possession. My children and their children have played with this same doll, creating new and additional emotions and memories. I made small wax replicas of the doll’s body and cast them in

\textsuperscript{125} Matthew Spackman, ‘Cognition and Emotion, Infants and Emotions: How the Ancients’ Theories Inform Modern Issues’, (Psychology Press Ltd, Brigham Young University, Utah USA, 1999, 13 (6), 795-811), p. 809
silver. The found leg was then attached in place on the silver body, with the other leg remaining missing.

Concerned with the concepts surrounding the development of infant emotions, where the aim of healthy development is to generate harmonious, well-integrated layers of emotional and higher mental processes as opposed to conflicts between emotional and cognitive experiences, I was interested in exploring notions of possible ‘disabilities’ that could derive from negative experiences. My intention was to allude to potential disability, not only physical, but also the deep nature of the emotional brain and the psychiatric difficulties that can emerge from underlying imbalances.

A disability, loss or limitation of function, may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, developmental, or some combination of these. The term disability covers impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. The medical model of disability is derived from the scientific understanding of the causes of impairment. This confidence in medical science’s ability to cure or rehabilitate a disabled person is based on the notion of normality, where the understanding of the causes of the impairments is assessed from a deficit point of view against normality: what a person cannot do, as opposed to what one can. This model sees medical care as the main issue in question, and sees disabled people as needing to be adapted to fit into the world as it is.

The social model of disability argues that although individuals may have various impairments, the degree and nature of the disability they experience will be the result of what arrangements society makes to support their social, economic and cultural participation. This issue is both cultural and ideological, requiring a perspective where equal access for someone with a disability is a human rights issue of major concern. The difficulties people experience as the barriers that disable them and curtail their life chances are often the result of a lack of rehabilitation. The argument, therefore, that people should not be reduced to just their impairments is dependent upon how different social environments may modify these paths.

I was concerned that the Infant of Prague doll work questioned the notion of normality and of what is normal. While suggesting a certain disablement through the deliberate omission of ‘normal’ limbs and the subsequent replacement of the missing arms with ‘twig-like’ replicas, I enabled them to be seen and act as fully viable and possibly functioning limbs. I have used these twig-like limbs as prosthetic possibilities, physically and metaphorically, imbued with questions:

What happens when limbs are cut from a pruned tree? Is this seen as disabling the tree? Do the limbs grow back? Do they grow back stronger? When something is pruned it will rejuvenate and more growth will flourish, often with flowers and abundant fruit, but what happens if a person loses a limb or some other function? Does something grow back in response to this? Does it make a character stronger? If someone has an impairment, does this become his or her primary focus or reference? Does an impairment create a condition for a person to be perceived as pitiable and pathetic or alternatively, conjure impressions of sweetness and innocence? Can people see beyond the disability? Does it change identity? Like the cutting of hair or the change of a hair style, how much influence does this have on changing one’s identity?

I have used the switch in the centre of the dolls body as a metaphor for the mechanisms, rules and routines that are put in place for people to continue ‘normal’ functions and combat impairment, alluding to the adaptations that are necessary to fit in to the world. Mental impairments in people are often not as obvious as physical disabilities, like damaged or missing limbs, but while there is the possible prosthesis for an amputee, mental impairments require different mechanisms. By using the switch I am also referencing the notion of the ‘miracle cure’, the possibility of it being obtained with the ‘flick of a switch’.

There is a sense in which I, too, am an infant of Prague. I feel I had such a glimpse of another sort of happiness there. In part it was learning that chisels can sing in my hands, but more than this: I remember so clearly going to sleep under those high windows knowing just how lush the trees were just below, with the moon shining so powerfully and the city like a reliquary.

As well as being interested in what is perceived as different, faulty, disfigured, damaged or violated - what contributes to one being physically or emotionally paralyzed or alive - I am also concerned with what commonly connects us, what is seen as timeless uniformity and familiarity; the purity and perfection that can be found in the emotions of human life.
5. Conclusion

In the course of the completion of this research project I have produced a body of jewellery, small objects and sculptures, that group together to represent both a collection of the exhibited artifact and a collection of doll objects intimately linked to identity. Being imbued with human attributes, these doll artifacts function as projections of human character.

The objects have been made and positioned within thirteen separate artifact categories and are grouped for display under these same titles. I have chosen to present the works in a ‘built room’ installation which I have fabricated from wooden panels. My intention is to create an intimate space, metaphorically integrating notions of personal place/space with doll artifacts together with notions of the intimate themes/settings such as the tomb and the theatre, associated with the prevalence of doll artifacts throughout history and across different cultures. During the course of the research, these locations have arisen as re-occurring settings for dolls and therefore fundamentally inform aspects relevant and integral to the making of the new ‘doll’ works, as well as the associated space and environment for their presentation.

My intention is that the viewer, by participating in the intimate installation, is stimulated and influenced by the triggering of their own memory associations. The invitation to the viewer to intimately experience the objects in the created space evokes an interaction and relationship between oneself and the objects. The objects are experienced with one’s memory of other life experiences superimposed upon them, as do the spaces that they occupy and the rituals that they may have engaged in - the often unspoken memories of one’s body in action. They hold not only evidence of their histories, but also a tangible trace of layers of stories and memories – souvenirs of daily life. Looking at the realm of identity, the association with memory, one’s intrigue with objects and the quality of the lives lived through objects, a perspective of one’s place with tradition is offered; the intimate offering of personal and precious objects and the related personal attachment to object.

Throughout the period of the research cross-fertilization between formal academic inquiry and studio investigation informed and directed the studio experimentation and development of the work. I began by looking at the countless existing artifact types, acknowledging that dolls and puppets have accompanied human kind from time immemorial. The research uncovered
Prodigious evidence that assures of what seems to be a universal instinct - of our inborn desire to create symbols representing of ourselves. The earliest deliberations, evidently ritual objects and considered to be the source of all art, contain themes from ancient myths and legends that appear from the beginning of time in the art of all cultures. These artifact figures, enlivened through ritual structures, also maintained aesthetic function. Insofar as my research can find, original artistic expression with characteristic traits of all the arts applies for these ritualistic man-made animated figures. Such dolls and puppets have facilitated contact and communication that is otherwise hard to achieve.

In addition to looking at artifact types from ancient cultures, I observed other historically and culturally related hand-crafted examples, along with similar examples that are positioned in contemporary art. The substantial lineage of mass-produced doll genres was also an area for focused research.

Deliberation on the collected research material resulted in questions and considerations that contributed to the relevance and the making of new doll types. I considered the possibilities of making new idiosyncratic projections, the imbuing of objects with particular human attributes, which would take form in jewellery, object and sculptural artifacts. Studio inquiry highlighted initial concerns to be addressed for further considerations, such as the importance of the need to understand fully the proportions of the human body and face – you can not successfully distort or exaggerate without being aware of the normal. I looked at particular gestures and engaged with quotidian actions and rituals. I observed the gestures associated with certain everyday habits and daily rituals that we engage in, often unselfconsciously. I sought to make visible the evidence of typical gestures, to be a proverbial for attitudes, character or characteristics; to express a truth, to be axiomatic or to give a warning. These gestures, integral to defining relationships between people and daily life, enable layers of history to be built into a single object, with the capacity to evoke memories and stimulate emotion in the viewer.

As the studio investigation progressed, features of the work developed as symbols of my own personal iconographic language. The evolution of this symbolism revealed itself through a range of particular characteristic features and gestures that were being manifested into the works. These expressions became integral to the artistic language of the dolls and created momentum for further research.
Features such as the open mouth, closed eyes and the rib-cage can be seen as re-occurring gestures throughout the project. They become favoured, privileged and important gestures representing aspects of ordinary expressions, rituals and habits in our daily lives. The construction of an open mouth, for example, was intended to indicate a variety of conditions, from talking to singing or screaming. Through engaging with traditions and processes, my work observes the gestures, often by altering their existing contexts, and seeks to subtly bring about an awareness, to provoke the viewer to notice and observe the ordinary and the overlooked - to enable the objects to speak of the expressions in everyday lives.

A number of the works were made with the deliberate intention of them not being worn as jewellery. They were instead created as objects for the direct purpose of ornamental artifacts or as objects that could be held in the hand. I initially experimented with simple movement gestures as a means to help invest and imbue life into the dolls. The basic mechanisms for these movements came about as a result of experimental studio investigation, often by chance, and utilized a range of riveting and jointing techniques.

As the project progressed, the search for new approaches in order to facilitate the expression of gesture into the work, led to intense investigation into the characteristic mannerisms associated with movement in the area of puppetry. This became imperative to the research and was integral to the advancement of the project.

Puppets are a specific means of expression that are enlivened by movement and empowered using expressions that represent a highly stylized presentation of reality. They mirror the metaphor of humans and a possible higher power; they are the coming to life of artificial figures created by humans. A typical attribute of life is movement and as such, is the essence of puppetry. Movement gives a puppet its particular character and range of expression, and to this end it is important to understand the ways of making movement, the movements of living creatures, the rhythms of work and play. It is also important to be open to making new discoveries about movement - akin to the makers of kinetic sculpture. Focused research into marionettes and puppets in their cultural contexts identified the various ways they are used to convey ideas, customs and life styles relevant to their particular cultures, whilst maintaining and enriching a sense of identity.
Ultimately I was drawn to the marionettes of the Czech Republic, where puppeteers are considered undisputed leaders of puppetry in Europe. Artistic forms and aesthetic qualities have always played a significant role in determining the nature of Czech puppetry. This growing fascination and appeal eventually led me on a journey to the workshop of Mirek Trejtnar in Prague, capital of the Czech Republic, where I undertook intensive study into the history and making of Czech marionettes.

It is important to acknowledge the significance of Prague as place in the project. I was completely allured and attracted to the city and saw it as a reliquary in its own right, filled with an endless supply of reference and resource materials. During my stay I explored the city, visited countless museums, galleries and shops, all with exhibits dedicated to marionettes. I attended puppet performances, both traditional and contemporary, some intended for children and others specifically for adults, in conventional theatres as well as in contemporary outdoor theatre spaces and festival environments. I also had the privilege of visiting the artist studios of other renowned marionette makers. I documented my experiences and findings through photographs, journal writings and drawings, and acquired resources which included literature and a collection of artifacts.

It was in Prague that I learned the significance of each puppet type. Each puppet, through its technology and visage, predetermines its own range of expressive possibilities, and in a certain sense, demarcates the interaction between puppeteer and puppet.

There is no doubt that marionettes perform as artistic artifacts. They have a certain intrinsic aesthetic value and their visual appearance has communicative significance. Made to move, puppet types are constructed so as to most nearly approximate human movement and appearance, and this serves to enhance the illusion that they are living beings. In order to approach this simulation of human form, marionettes must be so contrived as to be as flexible in the same parts of the anatomy as their human counterparts. The control of the marionette depends on the balance between the action of the manipulator holding the strings, the weight of the puppet, the precise relationships of its moveable jointed parts, and the force of gravity. I discovered that it is almost impossible for a puppeteer to not compare the control and strings of a marionette to a brain and nervous system, for they are in a sense an extension of our own histrionic abilities. Once blessed with the mechanics of movement, it is difficult to regard a puppet as a thing without individual personality, as without an identity.
The instruction and making in the workshop informed new artifact outcomes; there was value in the freshness of the making, sincerity and freedom to try out all different kinds of ideas. It provided a vivid way of exploring many aesthetic problems and was a fruitful means of linking different subjects. I think the special quality in the making was the rare and exquisite balance of the relationships between all the elements – acquiring command of the materials and experiencing the extraordinary sensitivity in the carving, jointing and movement of the puppet, all contributing to artistic unity and intensity.

As a conduit for information and ideas delicate and allusive, the workshop enabled the discovery of the pure enchantment and tremendous impact of the ‘marionette doll’, designed to ‘tell’, and act as a lens to magnify the power and expression of gestures. With puppet action highly charged with emotion - externalized expressions and feelings - the viewer’s imagination is stirred. We are able to express humility towards something mysterious and transcendent in puppets as it is difficult to discern what controls them, but there is an awareness of something invisible and enigmatic; that there is mystery behind them. Marionettes, being suspended and attached to the centre of gravity, moving freely in space with the gestures of their floating limbs governed by natural forces, give the appearance of grace. Reflecting on the essence of grace and von Kleist’s belief that his marionettes had souls, which he defined as the spirit of truth, it is easy to understand our propensity to gravitate towards such artifacts, suffused with emotion and meaning, and why they contribute to rolling the collective soul open for contemplation.

Puppets, with their peculiar ability to make us believe they are us, are the ultimate, ironic genius – inert actors, seemingly capable of breathing new life, so great is the power of these constructed beings to show ourselves to ourselves.

The gaining of this additional knowledge was essential. The manifestation and embodiment of this additional knowledge is contained in the work – the collateral information.

In the traditional context, the making, nature and intended role of the marionette is usually associated with their use as performance objects in the theatre. My intent, however, in the making of new types, was to position them as a collection of exhibited artifacts. Whilst the new works contain all the necessary qualities to perform as theatre objects, I am primarily concerned with
them functioning as independent artifacts, independent of the theatre and able to exude expressive gesture outcomes without having to be reliant on the traditional theatre environment.

Consideration of these notions enabled the completed series of ‘doll’ works, wide-ranging in theme and emerging over a lengthy time frame, to comprise an orderly and inter-connected series from the earlier works to the works accomplished during and after the marionette workshop. Some of the works are fixed objects. Others are available to be engaged with, explored and held in the hand, taken away or worn as jewellery. When interacting with the created doll, the viewer is stimulated to recognize facets of self and is drawn to consider issues of self-perception and identity. By using the dolls as surrogates and reliquaries, the work evokes an interaction and relationship between the doll objects and the individual, establishing links to artifact and identity. These links are created when the individual identifies aspects of their own personal characteristics and social existence/interactions in the doll surrogates.

At the completion of this research project, I have produced a body of doll artifacts that are imbued with both historically generic as well as autobiographical associations - reliquaries of my own contemporary existence. They come together as a collection of individual artifacts that are at once ‘canny’ and ‘uncanny’ in their creation; objects to show our existence - a trace of self.
Appendix I

The Making and the Gesture: The technology of making a marionette

Designing a Marionette

The design of a marionette is based on several questions that help determine the size and technology to be applied. What is the purpose of the puppet? Who is it being designed for? What kind of show is it being designed for? Where and what kind of space will it perform? What kind of audience? What kind of time and budget will be required?

A marionette is a puppet that is manipulated from above. There are two types of marionettes: There are those suspended on a thick wire extending up from the head, and those suspended only on strings.

Marionettes suspended on a wire

Marionettes suspended on a wire are the most common form in the Czech cultural context. They are hung on a wire with four strings, two for the hands and two for the legs. These types of marionettes can move faster and more dynamically, with precise movements. They are easier to manipulate; one puppeteer can manipulate more than one marionette at a time. A marionette on a wire can sit, kneel, or stand onstage on its own. The movement is more limited because the head and the neck of the marionette are connected; they cannot be separate pieces. This kind of puppet evokes more dramatic and dynamic emotions. Traditional Czech marionettes used this technology, as it allowed one puppeteer to have numerous puppets onstage at one time.

Marionette on strings

The second category is the marionette suspended on strings only. This marionette can make softer, more complicated movements, but they perform slower. The head and the neck can be in separate pieces. A puppeteer can only manipulate one marionette at a time and the puppet cannot be left onstage without being held. This kind of puppet evokes more gentle emotions.

Puppet Characters
There are many traditional archetype characters and they are usually designed in a certain way depending on their character. For example:

- A princess has a round face and small hands.
- A witch generally has a big head, a long nose and long fingers. She is hunched over with her head in front of her body and the head is made so it can sway back and forth.
- A knight has big shoulders, a smaller head and carries a sword in his hand. He can have a carved body as his armor. He is usually on a wire so he can fight with his sword.
- A Kasparek (a jester – the Czech version of Punch) usually hangs only on strings so he can perform lots of tricks.
- A devil has horns and one foot is cloven. He is usually on a wire so that he can have dramatic entrances and exits.

The puppet character I made during the workshop was to become the *Sun God* to be used in the traditional marionette theatre production held in the last days of the workshop.

The first stage of designing a marionette is to make simple sketches of the character - the basic expression of the face. Then a drawing to scale, front and profile, must be done. These drawings are used to determine the technology and dimensions for the technical drawings.

*Figure 64:* Technical drawings by Mirek Trejtnar, given as examples during the workshop, Prague 2010: Photograph by the author, Reproduction authorized by Mirek Trejtnar.

**Technical drawings**
The technical drawings are required to show exact sizes of various and specific parts of the bodies and types of joints that will be necessary. In the traditional Czech cultural context, the basic technical guidelines for making marionettes are applied to the following drawings.

**Proportions and Dimensions**

In the Czech tradition the head of a marionette is larger than a human. The ‘ideal’ proportion depicting a human head is 1:7 of the human body. In a puppet it should be around 1:5. If the marionette character is a child or a Kasperek (the jester), the head is usually 1:4. The head is regarded as the most important part of the puppet’s character and must be a focus for the audience. It is also important that faces and the eyes can be seen when the puppet is conveying gestures. Hands can also be larger and the arms generally longer, so that the hands would physically be below the knees. The arms should be able to move as much as possible. Textiles or leather can be used to help create good movable arm joints at the shoulders as well as the elbows. Elbows need to be flexible, but should follow the natural movement of the human body, i.e. an elbow does not bend backwards.

**The Body**

The body is usually smaller than the legs, which are longer so the puppet can walk more easily. Legs are generally a little proportionately longer than ordinary human legs. The lower part of the leg is usually longer than the upper part of the leg; depending on the design, the top can be about 1/5 shorter than the bottom half.

**The Feet**

Feet are often proportionately longer than that of a human – this allows more stability and conveys a pleasing genre. A comical puppet can have even longer feet, but care must be taken not to make the feet too heavy or the puppet will not be able to ‘walk’ well. Generally if feet are too heavy or too light, the puppet will have restricted walking.

**Balance**

In the Czech context, it is best if the heavy part of the puppet is at the hips because if the hips are too light, some lead needs to be added. The required weight of a puppet is on a centre line and critical to the equilibrium and ‘feel’ of the puppet.

**Carved Details**
Carved hair, beards, fingers and ears must be designed to be more compact so that they don’t get tangled with strings. The hair on traditional puppets is almost always carved instead of glued on. The size of the nose does not interfere with the strings so they can be any length, but longer noses can break easily. Sometimes they are reinforced with a dowel inside. All parts of a puppet must be made strong enough to withstand a performance. Very thin fingers, for example, could snap off during a performance.

**Figure 65 & 66:** Technical drawings for *The Sun God* marionette: Prague workshop 2010. Photographs by Mirek Trejtnar.
Technical drawing is important in the mapping out of the critical parts to ensure movement of the puppet. All puppets, as marionettes, are required to walk, kneel and sit. Therefore, the design of the flexible joints is one of the most important aspects of a puppet.

Joints must be designed to be along a centre line. Centre lines on the drawing should be depicted as broken lines (------) so they are easily identified. The centre line is where hands, head and joints are connected. These lines need to be made for the puppet front view (en face) and also in profile. The profile, head and body have the same centre line.

From the front view, the centers of the legs are equidistant from the centre line. Along the centre line of the profile of the puppet, the upper leg is connected to the lower leg at the knees, the hips are connected to the legs and the arms are connected to the shoulder and the neck to the body. Holes for the neck (for a puppet on a wire) are also drawn on the centre line. En face, the head connects to the body on the centre line and the distance between the centre line and the centre of the legs must be the same on both sides. The puppet must have the same weight on both sides of the centre line. If, for example, a puppet has a larger stomach, this weight needs to be compensated for either by adding extra wood or lead weight in its back-side.

Working from the original drawing to scale, the technical drawing is started by drawing two vertical centre lines, one for the en face and one for the profile. Four horizontal lines are then drawn to show basic proportions; one line to mark the top of the body, one to mark the top of the legs, one for the top of the knees and one at the top of the feet.

Vertical lines show the main part of the body. They need to be drawn to show the size of the main part of the body. These lines create boxes in which the character’s head, body, legs and feet can be re-drawn in both en face and profile. Arms and hands are drawn on the side of the paper out of the profile of the body. All horizontal lines must be carefully drawn at right angles to the centre lines. Details of the joints, holes for nails and leather connections are then added.

**Drawing and Making the Head and the Neck**

In the Czech cultural context, a marionette suspended on a wire has the head and neck in one piece. The marionette I made during the workshop in Prague, titled *The Sun God*, is such a marionette character. This wire goes through the head and into the body through a hole in the
neck. The hole is approximately 2.5cm wide and about 6cm deep for a traditional 50-60cm puppet, which is the size of The Sun God marionette. The wire is placed slightly off the centre line by about 5cm; it goes into the neck and extends down about 2.5cm, then curves and hooks back up. A smaller wire ‘pin’ that comes into the puppet from the side of the body fixes the head in place.

![Figure 67: Technical drawing for head of marionette on a wire: Prague Workshop. Drawing by the author 2010. 280 x 180mm]

**Drawing and Making the Hip Joints**

Basic wooden joints can be the same for marionettes on a wire as for marionettes on strings. The distance between the legs (from *en face* perspective) is proportionately wider than that of a human’s. It is important that this distance is large enough to ensure that when the strings are extended upwards from the knees of the puppet, they are pulled into positions on either side of the head without touching it. If the feet are too close together the puppet will not walk correctly and if the distance between the legs is too wide the puppet will swing from side to side when it walks.

There are two main ways of connecting the leg to the body: First, joints can be carved inside the puppet body. This method can be used for all puppet types (Figure 68a). Second, legs can be
connected to the side of the puppet body on wooden dowels, which are most appropriate for a puppet without a costume or a dancing puppet (Figure 68b).

The first type of these wooden joints are created by making slotted holes at right angles in the puppet body, placing the top leg joints into the slots and connecting them with a small nail or wire. It is important to find the correct place for this connection by considering the shape of the body so that the leg can be lifted up in front of the puppet’s body as well as enable it to sit. The leg must not be able to go back behind the puppet, as this is not a natural leg movement for a human or puppet.

For the *en face* technical drawing, two vertical slits need to be drawn in the bottom of the body into which the top of the legs will fit. The width of the slits for a 50cm puppet is about 10mm. The height is determined in the profile drawing. On the profile drawing the distance between the centre line and the front of the abdomen, on the bottom part of the body, is measured. About 25% is added to this measurement. Using this amount and measuring from the bottom of the body, vertically on the centre line, will give a point that is the centre of the pivotal part of the joint. At this point a hole will be drilled through the body and joint, where a wire or nail will connect the leg and the body. From this pivotal point a compass is used to mark a circle that has a radius of about 10mm. The top of the circle is the top of the joint. A straight line is drawn to mark the top of the slit, then redrawn horizontally on the *en face* drawing to give the height of the slits as well as marking the place of the hole for the wire. Finally, on the profile drawing another circle is drawn from the centre of the pivotal point of the joint. This circle’s radius is the distance between the pivotal point and the bottom of the body, on the centre line. This circle is only drawn on the front part of the abdomen on the profile drawing. This gives the shape of the lower body. When making the marionette, it is important to cut on this circle accurately to ensure that the puppet can lift its legs, sit and walk like a person.

The second example of the wooden hip joints, which are the connections I chose to use for the *Sun God* marionette, are made by drilling holes in the puppet body. Two open holes were drawn and cut out in the bottom of the puppet body, into which the top of the legs are fixed on dowel. The width of the dowel for a puppet about 50-60 cm tall is 12 - 15 mm and it goes through the body into both the right and left legs. The hole for the dowel in the legs is 2.5 - 3.5 cm deep.
To ensure the correct placement of these joints, on the profile technical drawing the centre of the hole must be marked on the centre lines of body as well as on the centre lines of legs. The distance between the centre line and the front of the abdomen is measured on the bottom part of the body. About 25% is added to this distance and this amount is then measured from the bottom of the body, on the centre line, vertically. This point is the center of the pivotal part of the joint. Here, a 12 or 15 mm hole is drilled for the dowel to be inserted through the body. From this pivotal point, a compass is used to mark a circle on the leg with a radius of about 15 - 20 mm. The top of the circle is the top of the joint on the leg. A horizontal line is then drawn from the top of the joint onto the en face drawing so that the height of the leg and the place for the dowel hole is marked. On the profile drawing another circle is drawn on the bottom part of the body from the centre of the pivotal point of the joint. The radius for this circle is the distance between the pivotal point and the bottom of the body (on the center line). This gives the shape of the lower part of the body. The top of the leg must be shaped round in a full circle that can move in the 15 - 20 mm hole in the body when it is attached on the dowel. The leg is fixed with a small wire in a notch carved in the ends of the dowel.

**Drawing and Making the Knee joints**

Knee joints are wooden and created by making a hole at right angles and connecting the joints with a small nail or wire, similar to the hip. A slit is made in the upper leg and the top of the lower leg fits into this slit. For the knee, however, it is important that the joint is invisible from the front, i.e. with the slit being visible only from the back. The joint must also be long enough for the puppet to kneel. It is important, when the puppet kneels, that the hips and body lean a little forward and the knee leans a little backwards so the puppet does not fall back.

As the joint is invisible from the front, the lines on the technical drawing need to be drawn as broken lines (----). The width of the slit is about 10mm and must be drawn on the same centre line as the hip joint. The whole leg is on its own centre line, so the slit can be drawn based on the centre line of the leg - 5mm in both directions. The height of the slit is, once again, determined by the profile drawing. Generally, the cut in the back part of the upper leg is a little thinner. 3-5mm of wood is left in the front of the upper leg so that the joint will not be seen from the front. A broken line or ‘a false leg line’ is drawn on the profile drawing, which is the place the slit will start (see illustration). To find the place to mark the hole for the wire/nail and the pivotal point of the knee joint, the distance from the bottom of the upper leg is measured upwards, along the centre line, about 20-25mm. At this point a circle also needs to be drawn. To find the radius of the circle, the distance between the centre line of the leg and the ‘false leg line’ needs to be measured.
This is the height of the slit and should be indicated on both profile and *en face* drawings with a horizontal line.

**Figures 68 a & b:** Technical drawing for marionette knee and hip joints: Prague Workshop. Drawings by the author 2010. 420 x 300 mm

**Drawing and Making the Feet**

In traditional marionette making, there are usually no joints at the feet. Marionettes for a specific purpose such as dancing can have joints, but this makes it much more difficult for the puppet to walk. In order for the puppet to walk properly, the bottom of the feet cannot be flat. They must be curved, on a circle, so that the motion of walking is imitated by the marionette. To indicate this on the profile drawing, the point of the compass is placed at the pivotal part of the knees, where the drill hole will be to connect the upper and lower legs. The distance to the bottom of the puppet is measured along the centre line and a semi-circle is drawn with the compass towards the front of the foot. The circle must not continue along the heel in the back of the foot; this part of the heel should remain flat.
Appendix I - The Making and the Gesture: The technology of making a marionette

**Drawing and Making the Hands**

In the traditional Czech marionettes suspended ‘on wires’, the hand and arm are in one piece. They are usually only separated on puppets with strings for a specific movement, such as dancing, and there are many variations for these connections. If the left and right arm and hand are identical, only one needs to be drawn on the technical drawing. If they are different (for example, one hand open and one closed) both must be drawn.

**Figure 69:** Technical drawing for angle of feet to knee on marionette: Prague Workshop. Drawing by the author 2010. 150 x 150mm

**Figure 70 & 71:** Drawings, patterns and carved wooden blocks for *The Sun God* marionette: Prague Workshop 2010. Photographs by Mirek Trejtnar
Making the Patterns from the Technical Drawings

When the technical drawing is completed, a pattern must be made for each piece of the puppet - head, body, upper leg, lower leg, upper arm, lower arm - by tracing the different pieces on the drawing and cutting them out. The joints and the holes also need to be included on the patterns. These patterns can be used to test the joints to see if they move well by pinning them together where the joints are to be connected.

Preparing the Wood and the Wood Blocks for Carving

For the parts of the puppet that are to be carved, an appropriately soft wood is needed. The wood used in the workshop in Prague is lime wood (called linden in British English or ‘Lipa’ in Czech). Bass wood can also be used for marionette carving and is a popular choice in America.

These woods are ideal for carving as they are not only soft without being ‘spongy’, they are also light, so that the puppet is not too heavy and more easily controlled. They also have less visible grain structure, which is important because woods with very visible grain structures, waves and knots are very difficult to carve. For the parts of the body that are not carved and not visible, pine, beech or oak wood without worms or knots can be used. Beech and oak, for example, are hard, strong and heavy which makes them ideal for use as dowels for connecting other woods, as well as for the hand controllers.

On the technical drawing, lines/blocks are drawn around each of the pieces - a block around the head, a block around the body and so on. This must be done en face and in profile. These blocks determine the shape and size of the blocks of wood that will become the pieces of the puppet.
Each piece is a separate block that needs to be prepared. If a design has a part that sticks out such as horns, a large nose, a large stomach, separate blocks for these pieces are made and then glued onto the first blocks. This saves a lot of wood and carving time. The blocks of wood are cut using a circular saw and any pieces that need to be added must be glued together so that the grain is running in the same direction. When the blocks have been cut, centre lines need to be marked on each piece, both from the front and the side. The ‘patterns’ are then placed in the right position on the centre lines of the blocks and traced around from both views. The marks for the joints and holes must also be included. These joints are cut out of the blocks using a band saw and the holes for wire, leather and nails are drilled. This is done before band sawing the shape of the drawn piece, to remove excess wood before carving, to ensure that the joints can move. The blocks can now be carved.

**Figures 74 & 75**: Carving The Sun God marionette head: Prague Workshop 2010. Photographs by Mirek Trejtnar

**Carving the Wood for the Marionette**

The wood carving is done with wood chisels.

The most important rules for carving the blocks are:

a) Keep the centre lines drawn on. If they are carved away, they must be redrawn. This is especially important *en face*, so that the nose and eyes are centered.
b) The main shape should be carved first, followed by the details.

c) Chisels should always be held towards the bottom, ensuring control.

d) Part of the hand should be touching the wood while chiseling.

It is important to begin carving with the head of the marionette, first making sure the whole shape is rounded. The details of the eyes, nose, mouth and ears can then be carved. The body is the next part to be carved, followed by the arms and the legs. The larger shapes can be carved by holding the wood in a bench vice. Smaller shapes and details are accomplished by holding the wood in the hands. Carving should be executed by using the chisels to go with the grain, not against it. Details can be carved by working at different angles with chisels that have the profile of the shape that needs to be made; the wood should be approached at two angles. Depending on the design, the structure of the chiseling that gives a patterned, carved look is traditionally preferred as a surface finish than a sanded smooth look.

Figure 76 & 77: Working on The Sun God marionette hand: Prague Workshop 2010. Photographs by Mirek Trejtnar
Connecting the components of the puppet

When all the parts of the puppet have been carved, the joints can be connected with nails/wires, and/or leather, and eye screws put in place for the strings. After the central wire has been hooked in place through the neck and head of the marionette, the handle/controller is attached at the top end of the same wire. The correct positioning of the controller is dependant upon the size of the marionette as well as the height of the person manipulating it. It is essential that the marionette is able to be manipulated from the puppeteer’s extended arm with ease.
**Painting and Costume of the Puppet**

It is important to seal the wood, even if the puppet is not going to be painted, so that the wood does not absorb moisture and change shape. This also protects the puppet from dirt. An emulsion of wood latex/glue mixed with water and painted on is a suitable sealer. The entire puppet should be covered, except for the joints.

The painting of the puppet should be done with a very light mix of water based paints and painted to look a little transparent. It is important to paint so that the shape of the wood and the carving can still be seen.

Historic puppet costumes were inspired by clothes of the Baroque period. Puppet costumes are better if they are exaggerated, particularly if they are wide, as this makes the costume more alive. It isn’t necessary to have full costumes on puppets – one costume detail or carved and painted costume that gives the character of the puppet is sufficient. For the *Sun God* marionette I chose to allow the detail of the carved rib cage to be a feature aspect of the puppet character and costume.

![Figure 81 & 82: Painting and finishing The Sun God marionette: Prague Workshop 2010. Photographs by Mirek Trejtnar](image-url)
Stringing the puppet

The traditional puppet with a wire requires four strings: two for the legs, so the puppet can walk; and two for the hands. The eye screw for the hand string is placed on the hand above the gap between the thumb and the fingers. The eye screw for the leg is placed on the centre line - the same centre line as the knee joint. The screw should be placed half-way up the upper leg - when measuring for it, the joint piece at the top of the leg should not be included.

For a marionette on strings without a wire, there are nine strings. There are two strings on the temple above the ears, which hold the puppet, and a third string at the back of the head, which when lifted will allow the head to go down in the front. There are three strings on the body. The first two are on the shoulders and the third is on the puppet’s seat. This string brings the body up and allows the puppet to bow. Strings for the hands and legs are the same as those for a puppet with a wire.
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