

Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Between Dreams and Daily Work

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Abstract

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This dissertation is a monographic study of the sculptural work of artist Alina Szapocznikow (b. Kalisz, Poland, 1926, d. Paris, France, 1973). During her short but prolific career, Szapocznikow both expanded and dismantled the possibilities of figural sculpture, creating works that have been described through the frameworks of classical sculpture, socialist realism, existentialism, surrealism, *art informel*, assemblage, conceptual art, pop art, protofeminism, the part object, body/performance art, minimalist seriality, trauma and disability studies, and more. Her work, however, never easily fits into any of these characterizations and always moves just beyond strict categorization. This dissertation draws upon archival source material and existing scholarship to situate Szapocznikow's work within the networks of artistic production in Poland and France in the post-war period, in so doing asking how the frameworks listed above do and do not provide useful means for analyzing her work, and, in turn, how her work can expand and add nuance to established art historical narratives.

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Introduction

In an untitled artist statement from March of 1972, Alina Szapocznikow states that “My work is difficult, as sensation that is felt in a very immediate and diffuse way is often resistant to identification. Often everything is all mixed up, the situation is ambiguous, and sensory limits are erased.”¹ In a career spanning from her sculptural training in 1945 to her death at the age of 47 in 1973, Szapocznikow was prolific, producing a vast collection of drawings and sculptural works in a large range of styles and media. Her works range from classical figure studies in charcoal or plaster to amalgamations of World War II weapons and cement, to functioning lamps made of resin casts of breasts to submissions to conceptual art exhibitions. The connecting thread throughout her vast and varied body of work is the human figure, the human body. Even the most abstract of sculptural works always begin, as her drawings attest, with the human form. Despite this continuity of subject, Szapocznikow’s work, as she self-awarably states, is difficult. Forms and motifs repeat, disappear, reappear. Concepts are reworked, abandoned, and then revisited decades later. Szapocznikow was also deeply involved with the artistic circles where she lived (Prague, Warsaw, Paris), and also traveled. She was a keen exhibition goer and kept up with the many shifts in artistic production happening in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s. This is reflected in her work, where references overlap in convoluting ways, different approaches come in and out of her process, and she is constantly experimenting. The range of her experimentation, and her somewhat cyclical way of working, poses a significant challenge for one trying to write a cohesive, organized analysis of her work and has resulted in scholars often picking only one main theme, phase, method, series, or motif as their point of inquiry.

¹ Alina Szapocznikow, untitled statement, March 1972. Illustration no. 7384. Alina Szapocznikow Archive, digitized through the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, held by Piotr Stanisławski.

While preparing to write what will be one of the first monographic studies of her work in English, it quickly became clear that my main difficulty would be organizing a discussion of her work into chapters. The dissertation is loosely, but not entirely, structured chronologically. It begins with her early work, and ends with the series she was making just before her death. In between, however, there is quite a bit of jumping forward and backwards in time, and I hope my reader will bear with me. Szapocznikow consistently developed formal strategies that she would later reuse, including, sometimes, refashioning previously completed works into new pieces. This means that a work made in the 1950s will resonate with a group of works made in the early 1970s. Or a cast of a pair of lips from 1964 will be included in a sculpture made in 1969. While these jumps in time may seem minor, the rapidity and range of Szapocznikow's output can mean the character of her work changes significantly from year to year, series to series.

This dissertation builds off of the work done by art historians such as Agata Jakubowska and Jola Gola, who have written extensively on Szapocznikow's work and have helped to compile chronological and biographical details regarding her life and work. This project is especially indebted to the catalogue raisonné compiled by Gola, and its invaluable photographic documentation of works (both lost and still existent) as well as the thorough exhibition history and bibliography that Gola compiled. Recent exhibitions of Szapocznikow's work have also provided new critical discussion of her works that have been fruitful for this study. The catalogs for the 2011 exhibition *Alina Szapocznikow: Awkward Objects* at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, and the 2011-12 traveling exhibition *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1926-1972* have been particularly important for this project. The catalogs include essays by prominent art historians and curators working today: Cornelia Butler, Anda Rottenberg, Griselda Pollock, Elena Filipovic, Briony Fer, and others, and this dissertation is in conversation with

their interpretations of Szapocznikow's work. This project would also not have been possible without Szapocznikow's archive, held by her son, Piotr Stanislawski, and recently digitized in its entirety by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, providing access to a wealth of photographs, documents, letters, and insights into Szapocznikow's life and practice. I had initially started this project intending to examine Szapocznikow's work through the lens of affect, exploring how she "uses" affect as an experimental material in the same way that she uses plastics, bronze, and stone.² While affect and attention to the emotional resonance of her work remains part of this project and recurs occasionally, it has taken a back seat to a more thorough art historical examination of her work in its contexts. As there is still much too little scholarship on Szapocznikow, especially in English, it is my hope that this dissertation will provide other students and scholars an introduction to her work that compels further study and interpretive approaches, such as affect theory.

One of the aims of this dissertation is, therefore, to bring together a wealth of archival sources to deepen an understanding of Szapocznikow's work in the context within which she lived and worked. In so doing, I pay particular attention to variations in how her work developed and was received both in Poland and Paris, bringing to bear (mis)conceptions of Eastern European and Western European art history and false binaries often assumed therein. This geographic focus is particularly emphasized in the Prelude, wherein I examine Szapocznikow's early work made as a student in Prague and Paris after World War II, and her subsequent years in Poland working under the constraints of socialist realism. Little critical attention has been given to these early works, and indeed I believe an entire dissertation could be dedicated to this first phase of Szapocznikow's artistic development. While my focus on these works is brief, I hope to

² This approach was especially inspired by Susan Best's text *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-Garde* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

set the stage for both how Szapocznikow was moving between contexts and milieu and developing as an artist, both incorporating and discarding dominant styles and trends, including socialist realism, existentialism, and *Art Informel*, along the way. Her focus on the classical figure in early academic work subsequently is expanded to include strategies of fragmentation, abstraction, and assemblage as she pushes the possibilities of figural sculpture made using traditional materials (plaster, stone, bronze, and cement) to its limit.

The second main aim of this dissertation is to more deeply explore connections between her work and major movements in the twentieth century that have been made in passing, or within the constraints of an exhibition catalog essay. Assemblage, surrealism, nouveau réalisme, conceptual art, pop, serial approaches in minimalism, feminist art, body and performance art have all been attached to Szapocznikow's work in varying ways, both during her lifetime and after. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 each take up one or two of these connections to ask: Can Szapocznikow's work actually be called (pop, minimalist, etc.)? Why or why not? Invariably, Szapocznikow's work is difficult as described above, and does not easily conform to or sit within a descriptive category, style, or movement. Works made shortly after her move to Paris are one of the main points of discussion in Chapter I, where Szapocznikow experimented with assemblage techniques, combining car parts and other mechanical elements with molded plaster and cement. *Goldfinger*, a key work in her career that won her the Copley prize in 1965, also marks a significant point in that it opens her work to an interest in popular culture (the James Bond film and the car) and the use of the Duchampian readymade. The chapter then transitions to a discussion of works that have been variably connected to conceptual art, but Szapocznikow's practice cannot be called conceptual in a rigorous, Western art historical sense. Her works

loosely categorized under the banner of conceptual art are humorous, subversive, and too attached to the body and/or materiality, they are “drugged.”³

Szapocznikow’s interest in popular culture is further explored in Chapter 2, which focuses on two series of works that connect to pop art, the *Desserts* and *Fetishes*. In so doing, the chapter considers the troubled history of women artists working with pop idioms. Their work was often considered not pop enough to be included in the canon and, simultaneously, not feminist enough to be incorporated into the annals of early feminist art.⁴ Szapocznikow’s work fits uneasily between pop and profeminism, as well as between understandings and experiences of consumer culture in Eastern and Western European contexts. In exploring her works’ relationship to pop, I follow Cornelia Butler and Helen Molesworth and turn to an examination of work by women artists that incorporates surrealist approaches to the body, as well as psychoanalytically inflected formulations of the part object as a strain of sculptural practices of the twentieth century.⁵ Legacies of surrealism, bodily fragmentation, erotics, commodity culture, and an exhibition of the self suggestive of the “radical narcissism” of early performance and body art practices, all collide in these works.⁶

Chapter 3 continues the focus on commodities, but instead of consumerist culture writ large the chapter discusses two series of works that Szapocznikow intended to be functional objects for the home, the *Bellies* and the *Lamps*. These works confuse the distinctions between high art and functional design, and combine materials and methods of mass production (plastics

³ Manuela Ammer, ““My American Dream”: Alina Szapocznikow’s Take on Conceptual Art,” in *Alina Szapocznikow: Awkward Objects*, ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2011).

⁴ Kalliopi Minioudaki, “Other(s’) Pop: The Return of the Repressed of Two Discourses,” in *Power Up: Female Pop Art*, ed. Angela Stief (Wien; Cologne: Kunsthalle Wein; DuMont Buchverlag, 2010).

⁵ Cornelia Butler, “Soft Body/Soft Sculpture: The Gendered Surrealism of Alina Szapocznikow,” in *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955–1972*, ed. Elena Filipovic and Joanna Mytkowska (New York; Brussels: Museum of Modern Art; Mercatorfonds, 2011). Helen Molesworth et. al, *Part Object Part Sculpture* (Columbus, OH; University Park, PA: Wexner Center for the Arts and Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

⁶ Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

and factory production) with casting and hand sculpting techniques. The chapter also focuses explicitly on repetition as a strategy in Szapocznikow's practice, using a discussion of modularity and seriality as an aesthetic strategy in the 1960s to tease out how Szapocznikow both uses and resists the minimalist method of "one thing after another." Briony Fer's persuasive analysis of the complexity of seriality in art of the 1960s and 70s in *The Infinite Line: Re-making Art after Modernism* was particularly important for this chapter.⁷

Finally, Chapter 4 looks at the works that have been interpreted as the most overtly autobiographical of her oeuvre, the *Tumeurs*, *Souvenirs*, and *Herbarium*. Like many artists who are not white and male, Szapocznikow's work is often overly interpreted through a biographical framework. Her status as a Jewish woman and immigrant inflects much of the early (and, some more recent) writing on her work with a discussion of her beauty and personality through a lens of exoticism.⁸ This dissertation pointedly does not do this. Another element that has contributed to an overabundance of biographical readings of her work is her life story. Szapocznikow was a Holocaust survivor as a teenager, lost her fertility to a battle with tuberculosis in her early twenties, and then died at the age of 47 from breast cancer. While I do not want to argue that her work has nothing to do with her own experiences, I do want to be careful in how biography contributes to our understanding of her work. Chapter 4 takes on this question of the usefulness and limitations of biographical approach by focusing on trauma, illness, and death in these late series. Rather than reading the works autobiographically, however, I examine how the materials Szapocznikow used in these works—polyester resin casts and resin encased photographs—open

⁷ Briony Fer, *The Infinite Line: Re-making Art after Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

⁸ See Griselda Pollock's essay "Too Early and Too Late: Melting Solids and Traumatic Encryption in the Sculptural Dissolutions of Alina Szapocznikow" for a particularly pointed and thorough critical dismantling of this approach to Szapocznikow's work. Griselda Pollock, "Too Early and Too Late: Melting Solids and Traumatic Encryption in the Sculptural Dissolutions of Alina Szapocznikow," in *Alina Szapocznikow: Awkward Objects*, ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2011).

them to larger and relational understandings of trauma and the limitations of art's capacity to represent or speak to the full range of human experience.

Prelude: Beginnings

Around the end of WWII and the liberation of concentration camps, Alina Szapocznikow made her way to Prague.⁹ Szapocznikow was born in Kalisz, Poland, but she claimed the Czech side of Cieszyn, a town on the Polish/Czech border, as her birthplace to receive a Czech passport with the name Šapočniková. Shortly after arriving in Prague, she enrolled in a sculpture program at the Academy of Applied Arts. Two and a half years later she traveled to Paris, where she continued her studies at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. In 1950, she contracted tuberculosis, and after several stays in sanatoriums and in the midst of worsening Polish-French relations, she moved back to Poland in 1951. Many scholars writing on her work have discussed (briefly) the works she made toward the latter half of the 1950s in Poland, or (more in-depth) what is arguably her most productive period, the ten years between her permanent move to Paris in 1963 and her death in 1973. Looking at existent scholarship on Szapocznikow, the works produced in the last decade of her life, after her move to Paris, tend to receive the most attention. Earlier works, when discussed, are usually brought in as presaging later works—or, in the case of Griselda Pollock’s analysis, as a way to illustrate a progressive dissolution of sculptural form tied to a process of traumatic encryption that occurs over the course of her oeuvre.¹⁰ The works Szapocznikow made during her arts education in Prague and Paris receive very little attention, as do those she made within a Socialist Realist aesthetic upon her return to Poland. This is understandable because her work became increasingly experimental, and, perhaps, more interesting, when she began using a casting process just before her move to Paris in 1963.

⁹ Szapocznikow’s experiences during the final months of 1944 and early 1945 are unknown. We do know that she was imprisoned with her mother at Bergen-Belsen where they were forced to work at camp “hospitals,” though they were separated in autumn of 1944.

¹⁰ Pollock, “Too Early and Too Late,” 79.

Szapocznikow herself acknowledged the use of casting as an important shift in the direction of her work, and described *Noga (Leg)*, 1962, (fig. 1) by saying “part of it is cast from my leg, and part of it is molded,” thus combining her previous mode of working (molding and shaping material like plaster) with a new technique, casting directly from her own body.¹¹ In a slightly later letter to her friend Jerzy Stajuda, which was published in the culture column in the Polish magazine *Współczesność* [*Contemporaneity*], Szapocznikow wrote of *Noga* that “beset by the academic approach to abstraction, partly out of spite, or perhaps due to artistic exhibitionism—I cast my own leg and I created a portrait montage from a cast of my face.”¹² This quote hints at the motivation for Szapocznikow’s shift to experimenting with casting from her own body. She states that she felt “beset” or frustrated by the academic approach to abstraction prevailing in Poland at the time of her departure, and also spiteful toward that academicism. The statement not only highlights Szapocznikow’s humor in giving academic abstraction the proverbial finger by asserting a literal replica of her own leg as a work of art, but also suggests that the officialized discourse of abstraction prevalent in Poland was limiting the direction she wanted her work to take with regard to the figure. Hence, the statement is telling in terms of Szapocznikow’s motivations for moving to Paris in 1963.

While I agree with the consensus that the works made during the last decade of her life after her move to Paris, especially those utilizing polyester resin and polyurethane foam, are the most compelling and challenging of Szapocznikow’s oeuvre, her earlier works arguably warrant more serious and sustained attention. Particularly, I want to examine how these works register

¹¹ Alina Szapocznikow in Jean-Marie Drot, director, “En Pologne: 6eme partie de la liberté des Beaux-Arts en Pologne ou Jdanov n’est pas polonais,” part of the series *L’art et les Hommes: Journal de Voyage*, ORTF, France, March 26, 1969.

¹² Alina Szapocznikow, “Z Paryża pisze Alina Szapocznikow,” *Współczesność* 5 (1966): 8. Translated and quoted in Agata Jakubowska, “Alina Szapocznikow’s *Leg* and *Goldfinger*: Between Reality and Illusion,” in *Alina Szapocznikow: Awkward Objects*, ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2011), 124-125.

the complexity of the artistic climates of Prague, Paris, and Poland from the late 1940s and late 1950s up to her frustration with established artistic discourses for sculpture in Poland in the early 1960s. My hypothesis is that Euro-American scholarship on Szapocznikow tends to ignore, or only give passing glance to, these early works in part because they were made outside of a familiar context for most Western-trained scholars (including myself), whereas the works from Szapocznikow's "mature phase" after she began utilizing a casting process were made in Paris, a context firmly established within a Euro-American art historical narrative and thus more familiarly legible. If a socialist realist aesthetic is stereotypically thought to impair or limit the individual creativity of an artist, what would be interesting about an artist's work made within such a set of formal constraints? Does the abstraction and existentialist bent of Szapocznikow's work in the mid to late 1950s read as outdated when viewed through the lens of a Western-trained scholar?

The casting process did indeed push Szapocznikow's work in a new direction, but the focus on the body as the object of her attention was not new. While we don't know how exactly Szapocznikow became a sculptor, after her arrival in Prague she enrolled in the sculpture program at the Academy of Applied Arts in Prague.¹³ Formerly the School of Applied Arts, the school received enormous interest from students after the war, and thus was promoted to Academy. It is perhaps this general atmosphere of interest in studying art that prompted Szapocznikow to want to study there, though this is pure conjecture. Before and during her studies at the Academy of Applied Arts, she worked in the stonemasonry atelier of artist Otakar Velinsky, assisting on a range of commissions and learning the basics of working with stone. Joseph Wagner was her first sculpture instructor at the Academy of Applied Arts beginning in

¹³ Tomáš Pospiszyl, "Alena Šapočniková in Prague," in *Alina Szapocznikow: Awkward Objects*, ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2011), 237.

October of 1945. Wagner, and Stefan, despite forays into more experimental sculptural approaches between WWI and WWII, both returned to a more traditional, classical approach to sculpture in the 1930s and continued in this vein after WWII. As an instructor, however, Wagner seems to have encouraged students to find their own methods and styles within classical aesthetic values, preferring to ask questions of students rather than giving direction. This progressive pedagogical approach was also reflected in the school more broadly, as students “rediscovered the history of modern art. For some an interest in surrealism [both Czech and French] and trendy existentialism prevailed. For many students of sculpture cubism was newly inspirational.”¹⁴ One of Szapocznikow’s classmates, Miloš Chlupác, remembers of Szapocznikow that she was

from the very beginning worthy of respect, if not admiration or envy. This was especially true of the girls in Wagner’s studio, as none of them could be as brave as Alina in confounding the professor. Her works, both the good and the not-so-good sculptures, the questions with which she would bombard him—all this was necessary for her to make progress, to earn praise or reprimand, to discover what is next, how to proceed, and so on.¹⁵

Szapocznikow seems to have been an eager student, inquisitive and persistent in forging her own path. The extant images of works Szapocznikow made at this time are limited, but the works were mainly studies of female figures in classical poses, as well as busts and self-portraits that appear to have little investment in surrealism or existentialism.¹⁶ In these early works, Szapocznikow was experimenting with balancing a realistic depiction of a figure with a worked textural surface, such as in the small terracotta sculpture *Kobieta leżąca* (*Lying Woman*), 1946, a reclining, leaning female figure with marks of tools and hands clearly traceable on the figure’s

¹⁴ Pospiszył, “Alena Šapočniková in Prague,” 240.

¹⁵ Miloš Chlupác, unpublished text prepared for *Alina Szapocznikow: 1926-1973*, trans. Szymon Włoch (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki, 1975). Reprinted in *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955-1972*, ed. Elena Filipovic and Joanna Mytkowska (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 178.

¹⁶ I cannot help but wonder, however, if Szapocznikow encountered these two cultural and philosophical movements during her time in Prague. Specifically I wonder if she encountered the work of the Czech artist Toyen. Toyen’s surrealist-inflected fragmentation of the figure and distinctively erotic approach to the body seems to share much with Szapocznikow’s later work.

skin and clothing (fig. 2). This worked, textured surface would remain part of her work going forward. While these early pieces are typical of those made in a sculpture course in their pose and study of the figure, they already have a marked emotional sensitivity and expressiveness. The figure in *Kobieta leżąca* seems deep in thought or sleepy, head lolling to one side in peaceful relaxation. Szapocznikow appears to have only created works focused on the body (at least that is what we have record of), a focus she remained committed to throughout the rest of her career. Even in drawings from the period, including her time in Paris, she seems to have exclusively made studies of the human form: self-portraits, portraits of friends and relatives, life drawings of models, anatomical studies, and sketches for figurative sculptures.¹⁷

In November of 1947, after only two years in Prague, Szapocznikow left for Paris. We don't know why she left, though she departed right as political demonstrations both for and against the rise of the Communist Party were intensifying across the country. Czechoslovakia was in a complicated state of political flux directly after the war, with its democratic statehood reinstated in 1945 after the end of the Nazi occupation, making it the country with the most established history of democracy in Eastern or Central Eastern Europe.¹⁸ This didn't last long, however, and the country joined the Soviet Bloc in February of 1948 after the Communist Party seized power through a coup supported by the Soviet Union. Szapocznikow, then, was in Prague during a brief interregnum, and left before Stalinism and the demands of socialist realism took hold. Szapocznikow was sympathetic to communism and was a professed member of the party in Prague (though there is no official record of her membership), so it is unclear if she would have

¹⁷ See examples in Jola Gola, "Catalogue of Drawings by Alina Szapocznikow," in *Alina Szapocznikow - Zatrzymać Życie: Alina Szapocznikow - Capturing Life: Rysunki I Rzeźby: Drawings and Sculptures*, ed. Józef Grabski (Kraków: IRSA, 2004), 204-227.

¹⁸ I'm aware that this is somewhat of an over-simplification, and is also not accounting for the shifts in territory that happened from the 1930s-1940s, as well as the many differences between Czech and Slovak peoples and lands. But, for my purposes here, it seems enough to illustrate that Szapocznikow was aware of the increasingly volatile political situation, and perhaps was motivated to leave when an opportunity arose because of this volatility.

fled to Paris because of the political situation in Prague.¹⁹ Instead, she may have left for artistic reasons.

Paris was a longstanding point of contact for artists based in Prague, which is suggestive of why Szapocznikow decided to travel there. This connection between the two cities was in part due to the development of Czech surrealism in the 1920s and 1930s concurrently and in parallel with the development of French surrealism (Karel Teige published “The First Manifesto of Poetism” in 1924 a few months before André Breton published the “First Manifesto of Surrealism”).²⁰ Breton considered Prague a sister city of sorts to Paris, and there was continual relationship and several exhibitions that traveled between the artistic circles of the two cities after WWII and into the late 1940s. Indeed, as Piotrowski notes, “[a]long the banks of the Seine, the interest in Czech art was disproportionately greater than in art of any other Central European country,” and for artists working in Prague, Paris also remained “the main point of reference.”²¹ Szapocznikow maintained close connections with contacts in Prague for the rest of her life, but it is perhaps not surprising that she decided to continue her studies in Paris.

After arriving, Szapocznikow took classes at the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts*. She primarily took classes with Paul Niclausse as an auditing student, and also in 1949 began working at the J. Lerendu stoneworking studio near Père-Lachaise cemetery.²² While in Paris, Szapocznikow became part of both Polish and Czech circles of expatriates, and enthusiastically attended exhibitions at numerous galleries and museums, often with Ryszard Stanisławski, whom she met in the spring of 1947 and who would later become her first

¹⁹ Pospiszyl, “Alena Šapočniková in Prague,” 240. See also Agata Jakubowska, “Zaangażowana,” in *Portret wielokrotny dzieła Aliny Szapocznikow* (Poznań, Poland: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2008).

²⁰ Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989* (London: Reaktion, 2009), 41.

²¹ Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 43.

²² Jola Gola, “Chronology of Alina Szapocznikow’s Life and Work,” in *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955-1972*, ed. Elena Filipovic and Joanna Mytkowska (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 179.

husband.²³ The Musée Rodin was an important place that Szapocznikow returned to again and again during her time in Paris (including after her permanent move to Paris in 1963).²⁴ Indeed, the fragmentation of the body in Rodin, his dismembered and mutilated limbs and enlarged figures, as well as the intensity of the surface texture of his works, resonates with Szapocznikow's work of the 1950s, especially those of the mid-1950s such as *Ekshumowany* (*Exhumed*), 1957 (fig. 3). *Exhumowany* consists of a truncated body "whose abraded surface and haunting posture evoke corpses recovered from mass graves" or the cast remains of Pompeiiian victims of the eruption of Vesuvius.²⁵ *Exhumowany* was one of Szapocznikow's most popular works from this period, and it traveled to numerous exhibitions both in Poland and abroad.

Szapocznikow also likely encountered the work of Germaine Richier in Paris, including the 1948 exhibition of Richier's work in plaster and bronze at Galerie Maeght.²⁶ Szapocznikow's work under the guise of *Art Informel* in the mid-1950s resonates with Richier's signature combination of the worked, fragmented figures of Rodin and Camille Claudel and the existentialist overtones of Giacometti (who was revered by Jean-Paul Sartre).²⁷ Most of the extant or documented pieces Szapocznikow made during this first brief time in Paris are a continuation of her studies in Prague, primarily figural works, mostly busts. Of these works, R. Lacote stated that "on the eve of her return to Poland, Alina Szapocznikow revealed an immensely mature sculptor's talent. Her busts occupy an important place among these first

²³ Piotr Rypson, "Dwie Rozmowy z Ryszardem Stanisławskim (Two Interviews with Ryszard Stanisławski)," first interview September 5, 2000. Obieg.pl, November 1, 2008, <http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/rozmowy/1391> Accessed April 15, 2021.

²⁴ Sarah Wilson, "Alina Szapocznikow in Paris: Worlds in Action and in Retrospect," in *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955-1972*, ed. Elena Filipovic and Joanna Mytkowska (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 215.

²⁵ Elena Filipovic and Joanna Mytkowska, "Introduction," in *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955-1972*, ed. Elena Filipovic and Joanna Mytkowska (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 11-12.

²⁶ Wilson, "Alina Szapocznikow in Paris," 215.

²⁷ For an analysis of Richier's work in relation to both Rodin and existentialism, see Sarah Wilson, "Germaine Richier: disquieting matriarch," *The Sculpture Journal* 14, no.1 (2005): 51-70.

works; modeled with rigorous precision which is full of expression and which could seem almost indiscreet, if one did not sense in them the same amount of love as is contained in the cruel psychological reality of several other works.”²⁸ In 1949 Szapocznikow also seems to have focused on the convention of the mother and child with a series of works titled *Macierzyństwo* (Maternity) *I, II, and III*. The specific interest in women, and mothers in particular, would continue as a theme that reappears again in works from the mid-late 1950s and in the last years of her life.

In 1951, after a prolonged battle with tuberculosis from the end of 1949-1950 drained the couple’s finances, Szapocznikow and Stanisławski returned to Poland at the bequest of the Polish ambassador in Paris, Jerzy Putrament, who summoned Polish students in France to return to Poland due to worsening Polish-French relations in the early 1950s.²⁹ Szapocznikow was also facing deportation in France, as she had continued to use both her forged Czech identification documents and her Polish name while living there.³⁰ Her 1950 diploma work at the École, *Nu (Grande Figure) (Large Nude)*, was selected by her faculty for the first-place medal, but pressures to leave France forced her to abandon her studies and she didn’t complete her defense as a result (fig. 4).³¹ Upon the couple’s return to Poland, they faced a series of housing difficulties and ended up living in the warehouses of the Central Artistic Exhibitions Office in Warsaw’s Saska Kępa district. Szapocznikow gained employment for the Office, and assisted in overseeing the Marszałkowska Street Residential Area (MDM), a position which also garnered her and Stanisławski an apartment on that street.³² At some point during these first few months,

²⁸ René Lacôte, “La jeune sculpture polonaise. Alina Szapocznikow,” trans. Szymon Włoch, *Parallèle*, no. 50 (Paris, 1951), n.p.

²⁹ *Alina Szapocznikow: Drawings and Sculptures: Capturing Life*, ed. Jozef Grabski, trans. Maja Lavergne (Krakow: Warsaw: IRSA Publishing, 2004), 305-306.

³⁰ Jola Gola, “Chronology,” 179.

³¹ Jola Gola, “Chronology,” 179.

³² *ibid*, 182.

Szapocznikow obtained an artistic certificate, which allowed her to take up employment as an artist working for the state.

Szapocznikow began entering sculpture competitions in 1952, including one for the monument for Auschwitz-Birkenau.³³ She submitted a work she made in Paris, *Kobieta w chustce* (*Woman in a Head Scarf*), 1949 (fig. 5). The piece was part of a series of works she made when she was given work space at the J. Lerendu stoneworking studio that focused primarily on women. Good images of *Kobieta w chustce* sadly aren't available, and the work is no longer extant. The one image in the catalog raisonné shows a figure holding many bundles (and perhaps a child?), walking forward as if against a strong wind, in a manner evocative of Rodin's *The Walking Man*, 1907. In an earlier study for the face of the figure, we see wide, tired eyes and a face of exhaustion. The work suggests a persistence to continue in the face of hardship, and it isn't surprising that Szapocznikow submitted the piece for such a competition. In 1953, she submitted the series *Getto-Walka* (*Ghetto-Fight*) to the tenth-anniversary exhibition commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (fig. 6). The work features three figures in a triangular composition, one man walking forward, head held high. His arm wraps around the shoulder of the second figure, who is tensed to move or fight, all his attention on a woman that he seems to be holding back or protecting. The woman is almost falling forward, on her face a look of anguish, a baby held in her arms. The work was later described as noteworthy for sculpture of the period in that it has an "excellent sense of form, proper contrasting of solids...internal rhythm...a mature, almost classical composition."³⁴

Szapocznikow was then selected by a jury in 1954 to create a monument to Polish-Soviet friendship. She developed a 1-1 scale model of Stalin, titled *Stalin*, as well as an early version of

³³ While it isn't completely certain, friends' accounts suggest that Szapocznikow (along with her mother and younger brother) was imprisoned in Auschwitz at some point in 1943.

³⁴ Maciej Gutowski, "Zachować nietrwale," *Kultura*, no. 44 (1975): 11. Translation mine.

Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej (*Monument to Polish-Soviet Friendship*) (figs. 7-8). *Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej* was installed in front of the main entrance of the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw, and garnered Szapocznikow recognition as a public sculptor that would only continue to grow.³⁵ Indeed, six years later Szapocznikow would meet Pierre Restany when he traveled to Warsaw for a conference, and he would later describe her as “rightly recognized in her country, Poland, where she stands as a national celebrity figure.”³⁶ These last two works are some of the most overtly socialist realist of Szapocznikow’s oeuvre. Yet I think it is important to note that she was also making works for the state that conformed to socialist realist aesthetics enough for them to be accepted and exhibited. Works like *Kobieta w chuście* and *Getto-Walka* do not evince the same attributes associated with socialist realism at the time, the figures in these works seem less like archetypes for idealistic values and more human. The figures are fraught with tension in their expression and poses, and the sculptural surface of both is highly worked and textured.

The cultural “thaw” that occurred after the death of Stalin was not consistent in all of the Soviet Bloc countries. Stalin’s death and the later indictment of his crimes by Nikita Khrushchev in his 1956 “Secret Speech” (officially titled “On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences”) at the Twentieth Soviet Party Congress impacted the policy of different countries to varying degrees. Poland was the first to experience changes during the “thaw,” and these changes were already taking hold by the leak and widespread international distribution of the “Secret Speech.” Indeed, Khrushchev’s speech was widely circulated within Poland, in contrast to Romania where the text was the privileged knowledge of a few select party leaders and kept from the public.³⁷

³⁵ Joanna Mytkowska, “From Sculptures to Awkward Objects: A Short History of the Changing Reception of the Work of Alina Szapocznikow,” in *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955-1972*, eds. Elena Filipovic and Joanna Mytkowska (New York; Brussels: Museum of Modern Art; Mercatorfonds, 2011), 124.

³⁶ Pierre Restany, *Alina Szapocznikow* (Paris: Galerie Florence Houston Brown, 1967), n.p.

³⁷ Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 61-63.

The publicization of the speech in Poland led to country-wide protests culminating in October of 1956, when the pre-Stalinist leader of Poland, Władysław Gomułka, was reinstated. Gomułka denounced the evils of Stalinism and started a decollectivization process and reinvested in the public sphere in the hopes of attracting democratic socialists and revisionists.³⁸ This de-Stalinization also impacted the arts, and “Gomułka’s new government performed a cultural U-turn after 1956, encouraging the development of a Polish school of modernist painting in a bid to win back the wider artistic and intellectual community.”³⁹

This “thaw” and openness to the development of Polish modernist painting resulted in the rise of artists experimenting with variants of *Art Informel*. Piotrowski cites Tadeusz Kantor as cementing *Art Informel* as the trend within Polish artistic circles when the influential artist painted several notable works in the style after his return to Poland from a fellowship in Paris in 1956. Indeed, aesthetics characteristic of *Art Informel* were associated with European, and specifically French, modernism, with “*Art Informel* painting considered as the most complete incarnation of the notion of modernity, a perfect embodiment of the freedom of expression, and a sign of participation in the world’s most advanced contemporary art.”⁴⁰ *Art Informel* is a somewhat undefined or broad term in the French context, and the same is true in an East-Central European context. As Piotrowski points out, the term never had the “requisite semantic clarity,” but *Art Informel* in Poland did take on a characteristic emphasis on material, on “an experience of matter, rather than gesture,” and thus Polish *Art Informel* had more in common with matter painting, or *la peinture de matière*, than gestural abstraction.⁴¹ Because of the style’s association with Western artistic idioms, it may be surprising that the style was neither rejected by party

³⁸ Klara Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics in Central European Art: Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule, 1956-1989* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2014), 18.

³⁹ Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics*, 19.

⁴⁰ Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 67.

⁴¹ Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 78.

officials nor were artists forced to exhibit work in private; instead the style was even, on some level, celebrated.

In 1957, the “apogee of the cultural thaw” in Poland, the Zachęta Gallery held the *Second Exhibition of Modern Art*, which heavily featured variants on *Art Informel* as defined above along with other forms of modernist abstraction.⁴² The exhibition was by no means private or confined to an underground art scene. The opening for the exhibition was attended by party dignitaries and was widely and favorably reviewed in the national press. According to the exhibition catalog essay, written by Mieczysław Porębski, “one of Poland’s most eminent art critics,” the intention of the exhibition was to offer as complete a picture as possible of the achievements and aspirations of contemporary Polish art, and as such the exhibition only featured works made within two years of the exhibition.⁴³ Porębski’s text positions the exhibition as one moment in a longer history of the development of modern art in Poland, and emphasizes that modern art was not a new or fleeting trend, but rather had been an established part of Polish “cultural consciousness” since the early 1900s and the influence of Cubism. Porebski takes pains to point out how Polish modern art developed its own identity alongside other important European movements, with the 1920s Polish avant-garde “Blok” group (Katarzyna Kobro was a notable member) concurrent with suprematism and constructivism in Russia, neoplasticism in the Netherlands and Belgium, and purism in France.⁴⁴ This emphasis on both the national identity of Polish modern art and its connection to international (and specifically European) histories of the avant-garde is consistent with what Forgács describes as a lack of regional consciousness among artists within the Soviet Bloc. Artists did not identify as Eastern European, but rather as “Polish,

⁴² Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 78.

⁴³ Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, “Paris from Behind the Iron Curtain,” in *Paris: Capital of the Arts, 1900-1968*, ed. Eric De Chassy (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2002), 254.

⁴⁴ Mieczysław Porębski, untitled introductory essay, in *Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej (Second Exhibition of Modern Art)* (Warsaw: Zachęta Gallery, 1957), n.p.

or Czech, or Slovakian, or Hungarian, or Romanian, or Yugoslav (with further ramification on that); and ultimately, as *European* artists.”⁴⁵ Piotrowski also emphasizes this national, rather than regional, self-image, stating that “in Central-Eastern Europe we have a number of particular, or, more precisely, national art histories and canons, which are often incompatible and not interchangeable.”⁴⁶ The exhibition’s aim to showcase the best in contemporary Polish art, and the catalog text’s emphasis on the European lineage of the art exhibited, positions Polish art as concerned not with the aesthetics of socialism and connections to other countries in the Soviet Bloc but rather with the development of modern art broadly conceived. Around the same time as the exhibition, a new critical term was being used to describe Polish contemporary art: *młoda plastyka* (Young Art), “which could essentially refer to all art that rejected socialist realism and ranged from slightly stylized figuration to full blown abstraction.”⁴⁷ Variations of the term *młoda plastyka* persisted for decades, and consistently invoked youthfulness to indicate art that broke with Stalinist aesthetics and the conventions of socialist realism. While Porębski’s text doesn’t explicitly use the term (it likely wasn’t quite yet in circulation), his characterization of the works in the Second Exhibition of Modern Art as firmly disinterested in socialist realism but interested in contemporary modernist debates aligns with *młoda plastyka*.

Szapocznikow was on the organizing committee for the exhibition, alongside Kantor and eight others, and she exhibited three works: *Cialo (Tors-Leżąca) (Body (Lying down torso))*, *Monstrum I (Monster I)*, and *Maszyna-zwierze (Machine-animal)*, all from 1957 (figs. 9-11).⁴⁸

Cialo (Tors-Leżąca) is a truncated, abstracted torso, displayed lying horizontally on a plinth, with

⁴⁵ Éva Forgács, “How the New Left Invented East-European Art,” *Centropa* III, no. 2 (May 2003): 93.

⁴⁶ Piotr Piotrowski, “How to Write a History of Central-East European Art,” *Third Text* 23, no. 1 (January 2009): 7.

⁴⁷ Nikolaos Drosos, “Modernism with a Human Face: Synthesis of Art and Architecture in Eastern Europe, 1954-58,” PhD diss (City University of New York, Graduate Center, 2016), 108.

⁴⁸ In the Zachęta catalog, the title of the first work was given solely as *Cialo* but in the catalog raisonné the work is listed as *Cialo (Tors-Leżąca)*. It seems the latter part of the title was added at some point in the mid 1970s, after Szapocznikow’s death. Jola Gola, *Katalog Rzeźb Aliny Szapocznikow*, (Krakow: Muzeum Narodowe, 2001), ill. 110, p. 82.

what could either be splayed breasts or hip joints on one side (depending on one's orientation in relation to the work) and the suggestion of a pelvic cavity on the other. *Monstrum I* is one of a series of two works of the same title Szapocznikow did wherein a molded cement figure, disfigured and almost mummy-like in appearance, is impaled by and balanced on two metal stakes. And finally, *Maszyna-zwierzę*, which is no longer extant, was (as the title indicates) an animal like-creature, almost reminiscent of a headless dog sitting while straining to look over a window ledge, with two circular forms bulging from its hindquarters. The title's suggested pairing of the organic (animal) and inorganic (machine) presages a later series of work, discussed in Chapter 1, wherein Szapocznikow would embed readymade mechanical parts (often sourced from cars) into anthropomorphic plaster forms in the 1960s. All three works feature abstracted, biomorphic yet figural forms, and an intensely worked and textural surface. And none of the works could in any way be construed as engaging with the aesthetic codes of socialist realism. With the exception of Julian Boss-Gosławski, Szapocznikow's work is similar to the ten other sculptors who presented work in the exhibition, as all seemed to be practicing a similar style of abstracted figuration. Unlike the majority of the other artists, however, Szapocznikow's biographical statement doesn't list Polish training or exhibitions. Instead, it reads: "Born in Kalisz. She studied in Czechoslovakia and France until 1950. Participated in the International Sculpture Exhibition at the Rodin Museum in Paris in 1956. Works in Warsaw."⁴⁹ Thus Szapocznikow defined her artistic identity in relation to her time in Prague and Paris, as well as her recent participation in an exhibition at the Musée Rodin.

Szapocznikow's work was becoming increasingly popular in Poland by the mid-1950s, and she also had a two-person exhibition of her work alongside the surrealist painter Jerzy

⁴⁹ *Wystawa Sztuki Nowoczesnej (Second Exhibition of Modern Art)*, n.p.

Tchorzewski at Zachęta following the *Second Exhibition of Modern Art* in 1957.⁵⁰ At the two-person show, she exhibited a 1956 work titled *Trudny wiek (Difficult Age)*, among other pieces. This is a tall, somewhat elongated, slender, and youthful female nude standing proudly upright, burgeoning sensuality on display (fig. 12). *Trudny wiek* is often considered paradigmatic of Szapocznikow's process of developing a style all her own, in that it features a whole, upright figure that still manages to remain distanced from the aesthetics of socialist realism in its sensitive and assertive rendering of youthful female sensuality. Cornelia Butler asserts that the work presents a "challenge to Communist notions of privacy and the female body" and also illustrates that Szapocznikow was grappling with depictions of women (and women's roles societally) within the representational tradition of socialist realism.⁵¹ Izabela Kowalczyk notes that "traditionally women were represented as the 'pathetic' figure of the *Polish mother* who looked after the Polish home and was the guardian of national values...responsible for the continuity of faith, language, and culture...Even in the late twentieth century women were depicted in this traditional and national context as Polonia, Polish mothers, and mourning women."⁵² The figure of the mother recurs throughout Szapocznikow's career in various guises, and perhaps given the context for depictions of women-as-mothers in Polish art this is not surprising. *Trudny wiek*, unlike more traditional representations of women in this context, asserts an "aggressive verticality and confident sexuality" that is hard to read through a moral or nationalistic framework.⁵³ The title too could be understood as a self-reflective comment by

⁵⁰ See illustration no. 7321 for exhibition invitation, as well as 26 installation images in the folder labeled Zachęta, Warszawa, 1957 under Exhibitions. Alina Szapocznikow Archive, digitized through the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, held by Piotr Stanisławski.

⁵¹ Butler, "Soft Body/Soft Sculpture: The Gendered Surrealism of Alina Szapocznikow," 38-39.

⁵² Izabela Kowalczyk, "The Ambivalent Beauty," in *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, ed. Bojana Pejic (Köln: Walther König, 2009), 362. See also Ewa Grigar, "The Gendered Body as Raw Material for Women Artists of Central Eastern Europe after Communism," in *Living Gender after Communism*, ed. Janet Elise Johnson and Jean C. Robinson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007), 81-84.

⁵³ Butler, "Soft Body/Soft Sculpture," 39.

Szapocznikow on the state of her work at this time. She is working through growing pains, figuring out how her interest in sculpting the body can and cannot fit within predetermined aesthetic rules, just as a teenager must find their own path during the “difficult” age. Subsequent figurative works after *Trudny wiek* start to break down and become abstracted, and Szapocznikow begins an extended exploration of the topography and erotics of the body.

As mentioned above, party officials attended the opening of the *Second Exhibition of Modern Art*, and the exhibition received widespread attention in the national press, which suggests that the cultural thaw was indeed significant in Poland, and that officials understood that openness to Western associated artistic idioms was on some level irreversible. The following year, in 1958, Poland’s contribution to the Moscow exhibition the Art of Socialist Countries, which contained art from all twelve Soviet states, featured modernist works including examples of post-impressionist colourism.⁵⁴ The Polish delegation, as a result, was markedly unique in comparison to the eleven other countries' contributions exemplifying socialist realism. Poland’s section of the exhibition was the most widely viewed of all in the show, and it was both celebrated and vilified by the Soviet public and press. The authorities in Moscow were outraged, and “insisted that the Polish authorities offer an official declaration that future exhibitions should contain no more than 15 percent abstraction.”⁵⁵ Such an absurd mandate was of course unenforceable, though it does highlight how engagement with modernist abstraction was tolerated by Moscow authorities through a demand for strict control.

Szapocznikow’s works coming after *Trudny wiek* definitely exceed the fifteen percent rule for abstract content. Increasingly, her figures (as discussed above in relation to *Cialo (Tors-Leżąca) (Body (Lying down torso))*, *Monstrum I (Monster I)*, and *Maszyna-zwierze*

⁵⁴ Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics*, 19.

⁵⁵ Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics*, 19.

(*Machine-animal*) begin to lose representational and structural coherence. If *Ekshumowany* (*Exhumed*), is her first foray into removing limbs and subjecting a full figural form to a form of surface abstraction, this fragmentation continues in a work like *Piękna kobieta* (*Beautiful woman*), 1956, wherein a figure is cut off below pendulous breasts, the head only a spherical shape with no attempt at defined facial features, the hands on top of the head only gnarled pieces of clay (fig. 13). Szapocznikow was also making smaller works in gypsum, plaster, and ceramic in which the material is sculpted into tortured abstract bits of clay, almost desperately overworked (see *Powalona* (*Knocked down*), 1956) (fig. 14)), or vessels that are part-head, part-flower vase (see the series *Czerepy* (*Shards*), 1956-1957, and *Garnki - Glowry* (*Pots - Heads*), 1956-1957) (fig. 15)). A series of works titled *Postać* (*Character*), 1956-57, also operates on a small scale, figural forms in clay that are molded and shaped into various fragmented and abstracted poses, each expressive in a distinctive way (fig. 16). I have to wonder if the scale of these works indicates that they were solely made within Szapocznikow's studio space, as if she were working through a series of problems regarding abstraction and figuration. In 1957 Szapocznikow began casting small sculptures in lead without the aid of a founder, shaping the material with her bare hands. She would continue to make many cast works, including in bronze, using the same process, working and casting the material herself and making alterations throughout the process of creating a work.⁵⁶ The majority of the small sculptures from these series that survived were not formally exhibited until after Szapocznikow's death in 1973.

In 1959, Szapocznikow was invited to participate in the Youth Biennale in Paris, where she exhibited *Maria Magdalena* (*Mary Magdalene*), 1957-1958 (fig. 17). Her work was well received and she received invitations for further sculptural projects (perhaps leading to an interest in returning to Paris, which she would do in 1963). Works after *Maria Magdalena*

⁵⁶ Gola, "Chronology," 185.

continue to abstract figural form and become increasingly biomorphic. Pieces such as *Bellissima I* and *Bellissima II* top abstracted, curvaceous torsos with an elongated neck and form somewhat reminiscent of a flower (or a series of growths) (fig. 18). There is barely a trace of the figural in works from 1959, 1960, and 1961. These pieces are abstracted, spikey forms often held up with stakes, and Szapocznikow begins to embed metal armature and machine parts into some of these works. They are discordant, unsettling works, visceral and almost violent in tone. It is through the drawings she was making during the same period that these works' connection to the body resurfaces. What begins as a rough sketch of a figural form is added to, changed, fragmented until a final form is reached, which is then translated into a sculpture.⁵⁷ Bodies are twisted and truncated, reduced to cavities, pieces and parts, folds of flesh, or skeletal angles. Szapocznikow was pushing her main source, the body, as far as she could before a connection to it was broken completely. It is not surprising, then, that she needed to find a new process after exhausting the potential of hand-sculpting forms in clay or plaster and then casting from these models. As she was already completing casts of her works herself, it would not have been a huge leap to make a work cast from her own body. This experiment resulted in *Noga (Leg)*, of which, as described earlier, Szapocznikow wrote that she was "beset by the academic approach to abstraction, partly out of spite, or perhaps due to artistic exhibitionism—I cast my own leg and I created a portrait montage from a cast of my face."⁵⁸ Casting from the body, her own body, then, provided not only a new way to approach her chosen subject but also a way out of the dominance of abstraction in Polish art. Despite continuing to be successful in Polish artistic circles, Szapocznikow decided to move to Paris in 1963.

⁵⁷ See examples in Gola, "Catalogue of Drawings by Alina Szapocznikow," 230-253.

⁵⁸ Szapocznikow, "Z Paryża pisze Alina Szapocznikow," 124-125.

Chapter 1: Embodied Machines / Drugged Conceptualism

On February 28, 1965, the UK film *Goldfinger* had its French premier in Paris. The 1964 film, the third installment of the James Bond series, achieved critical and monetary success worldwide. The film's plot follows the always suave MI6 agent Bond, played by Sean Connery, as he intercepts and eventually prevents tycoon and gold smuggler Auric Goldfinger from catastrophically destabilizing the global economy. The beginning of the film features Bond's first cross with the villain: he interrupts Goldfinger's assistant Jill Masterson, who is perched with binoculars on a balcony helping Goldfinger cheat at gin rummy, and uses Masterson's communication device to blackmail Goldfinger into losing the card game. In typical Bond fashion, the assistant, Masterson, played by Shirley Eaton, is subsequently easily seduced by Bond's charms, and she and Bond sleep together. Bond is later knocked out by Goldfinger's bodyguard, and Bond wakes to find Masterson lying stiff and prone in his hotel room bed, her entire nude body covered in glittering gold paint, dead due to "skin suffocation" as punishment for her rendezvous with Bond. Eaton's part in the film was small, but the image of her nude body painted gold was an iconic part of the marketing and promotional material circulated ahead of and after the film's release, and even featured on the cover of *Life* magazine in 1964 (fig. 19). The film's title sequence continues the motif, and consists of scenes from the film projected onto gold-covered women (including the late Margaret Nolan who had a small role as a masseuse named Dink in the film) in states of ambiguous liveness, gilded women-as-sculptures whose bodies are fragmented by the cropping of the frame.⁵⁹

Much could be and has been said about the aestheticization and (literal) objectification of a woman's body in the film (indeed in the entire Bond franchise), especially in regards to the

⁵⁹ Christopher Mele, "Margaret Nolan, 'Goldfinger' Actress, Dies at 76," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/12/movies/margaret-nolan-dead.html> (accessed October 12, 2020).

dispensability of female characters and the uneven consequences resulting from sexual encounters. *Goldfinger* is relevant here because while living in Paris Alina Szapocznikow, who moved back to Paris from Warsaw in 1963, made the 1965 sculpture *Goldfinger* (fig. 20).⁶⁰ This explicit reference to a popular film, I argue, poses questions as to how Szapocznikow's engagement with both the film and the larger aesthetic registers of popular culture was part of a shift in her work from a more traditional sculptural practice to an experimental one, from interrogating the integrity of figurative form to grappling with the mutual incorporation of the body and object. The reference to *Goldfinger* (the film) suggests that Szapocznikow recognized parallels between, on the one hand, the film's entanglement of woman and object, sex and luxury, and, on the other hand, her recently developed exploration of the body-as-object in her first cast work, *Noga* (Leg), from 1962. *Noga* is a plaster cast of the artist's right leg, cut off and polished at the top of the thigh. As discussed in previous chapters, the sculpture marks a significant procedural shift in the artist's oeuvre, and Szapocznikow also made a version of the work in bronze. The sculpture *Goldfinger* continues the motif of truncated legs, though it does not include casting and instead incorporates an assemblage technique. *Goldfinger* features a vertically oriented car shock absorber as a base, with the top clamping down into the fulcrum point of two spread plastic cement forms. The entirety of the sculpture is painted gold, similarly, as Cornelia Butler has stated, "coated with the residue of modern excess" as was Eaton's body in the Bond film.⁶¹ The spread forms also have a visual parallel to poses in the title sequence of the film, and to the posters which Szapocznikow likely saw around Paris, wherein Connery's figure is superimposed over the prone Masterson, her gold legs sticking out on one side of him (fig. 21).

⁶⁰ Szapocznikow almost certainly saw the film, if not the posters for it around Paris. Her son, Piotr Stanisławski, wrote in a postscript to a letter Alina sent to his father Ryszard Stanisławski of seeing the film. See letter dated April 1, 1965 in *Lovely, Human, True, Heartfelt: The Letters of Alina Szapocznikow and Ryszard Stanisławski, 1948-1971* ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2012), 253-254.

⁶¹ Butler, "Soft Body/Soft Sculpture," 37.

Agata Jakubowska has elaborated on this gendered connection between Eaton (or a gold-painted woman) and the sculpture, and has described *Goldfinger* as a woman with her head pointing down, with the position of the shock absorber in relation to the spread, anthropomorphic, and leg-like cement forms suggesting the gender of the figure. The triangular end of the shock absorber clinches into the cement forms slightly off-center from where the crotch would be, if these were indeed legs, thus making it seemingly vulvic in form. In posters for the film, this area of Eaton's body is never revealed, Connery's figure (gun in hand) usually covers Eaton's groin (fig. 22). Thus, as Jakubowska has argued, "in comparison with this representation [the posters], the woman sculpted by Szapocznikow is not only shown in a more obscene pose, but also shamelessly depicts what the British film and its publicity posters had carefully hidden," in other words Eaton's crotch. Jakubowska goes on, however, to point out that *Goldfinger* is not purely literal, and that "simultaneously the largely abstract form of the *Goldfinger* sculpture allows the viewer—should he or she want to—to not notice it [the vulvic form] at all."⁶² And indeed some have not responded to the work in these kinds of gendered terms. Pierre Restany stated that the work is "a combination of metal elements embedded in gilded cement with a pair of thighs," reading the work anthropomorphically without elaborating further as to whom those thighs belong.⁶³ Urszula Czartoryska saw not legs but rather phallic forms, arguing that "the fetishistic form of *Goldfinger*, a gold, phallic-shaped sculpture combined into a suspension part is overtly grotesque."⁶⁴ Jola Gola, taking the title at its literal, rather than referential, meaning, described the work as a "cement fleshy finger of supernatural size," perhaps

⁶² Jakubowska, "Alina Szapocznikow's *Leg* and *Goldfinger*," 131.

⁶³ Pierre Restany, "Alina Szapocznikow. The Eternal Language of the Body," in *Alina Szapocznikow - Zatrzymać Życie: Alina Szapocznikow - Capturing Life: Rysunki I Rzeźby: Drawings and Sculptures*, ed. Józef Grabski (Kraków: IRSA, 2004), 121.

⁶⁴ Urszula Czartoryska, "Okrutna jasność," in *Alina Szapocznikow 1926-1973* (Warsaw: Galeria Zachęta, 1998), 19.

referencing the artist César Baldaccini, known by the mononym César, and the scaled-up casts of his thumb such as *Le Pouce (Thumb)*, 1965 (fig. 23).⁶⁵

The reference to César's *Thumb* is no coincidence, since Szapocznikow herself was aware of César's work. Shortly after returning to Paris from a trip to Carrara, Italy, and Poland, Szapocznikow saw *Thumb* at a 1965 exhibition organized by Claude Bernard titled "La Main, de Rodin a Picasso." The coincidental simultaneity of her casting from her own body in works such as *Noga* and César's enlarged cast of his own thumb two years later did not escape Szapocznikow. She subsequently wrote to friend Jerzy Stajuda and exclaimed:

Dear Jerzy! You can imagine my shock and quandary since only the photographer Marek Holzman and you, to whom I left the photographs before my departure, know that at that very time, being tormented by the fact that abstraction was becoming academic and perhaps a little out of perversity or even artistic exhibitionism, I made a cast of my own leg and a portrait montage with a cast of my face....So what now?! Fortunately, we know that everything in art has been done already—and therefore nothing has been done yet.⁶⁶

Szapocznikow's cavalier attitude towards César's concurrent work in similar modalities is typical of her attitude towards sculpture as a medium as well. Trained in the Western sculptural tradition, Szapocznikow was of course very aware of how her work both conformed to and deviated from that definition of sculpture. *Noga* marks a departure in that the cast form in plaster is directly from the body and presented as the work itself, not a study or a cast of a sculpted form to be recast in bronze. Unlike César's thumb, *Noga* stays true to the scale of the human body, maintaining a tension between the intimate, individual connection between body and cast and the uncanny alienation of the fragmented leg divorced from the rest of the body. The direct casting of *Noga* is not the only way Szapocznikow was playing with traditional sculpture. The dynamics of gravity and the viewer's experience were also increasingly coming to the fore in her work.

⁶⁵ Gola, *Katalog rzeźb Alina Szapocznikow*, 128. Original Polish: "Cementowy mięsisty palec ponadnaturalnej wielkości," translation my own.

⁶⁶ Szapocznikow, "Z Paryża pisze Alina Szapocznikow," 8.

Increasingly throughout the 1950s, Szapocznikow began moving away from the solidity of recognizably figurative sculptures in stone, plaster, and bronze towards works that are more organically abstract, less rooted in representational or formal coherence. Works earlier in the 1950s, some made for the Polish state, such as *Stefa (Gymnast)*, 1952 (fig. 24) or *Monument to Polish-Soviet Friendship* (1953-54), articulate Szapocznikow's training and skill in the figurative sculptural tradition. The figures are well balanced and proportionally correct, and they do not lack expressivity. However, the figures are spatially removed from our space on a pedestal, and they have a self-contained, almost static quality. Moving through the 1950s, the works, while still utilizing sculpting and carving techniques, become increasingly detached from the ground and from naturalistic representation. Figures' necks become elongated and the body becomes malleable and subject to distortion. In *Woman (Girl with a Long Neck)*, 1957 (fig. 25), unmoored breasts form the pendulous base of a torso somewhat reminiscent of a modernist sculpture by Jean Arp. A work like *Maria Magdalena* bears little resemblance to the eponymous figure and is seemingly suspended, precariously balanced on a single spindly support rod. There is a dismissal or recalcitrance to accept the laws of gravity, or, for that matter, the rules of traditional figurative sculpture. Increasingly, sculptures hover above the ground, sit directly upon it, or emerge out of it, no pedestal in sight, and many works no longer have a clear front or back. Griselda Pollock has described Szapocznikow's oeuvre as a process of sculptural dissolution, as Szapocznikow moved towards using experimental materials like polymers and polyesters in the later 1960s. I agree with Pollock that the later shift in materials does much to push Szapocznikow's works to the edge of definitions of sculpture. Yet, at the same time, when one looks at her earlier work, it is clear that this process of dissolution was by no means necessitated by a shift away from

traditional sculptural materials. It was already unfolding in her plaster, stone, and bronze works of the 1950s.

In 1955, during this period of expanding (or dissolving), Szapocznikow wrote of her interest in sculptures being viewed in the round, and stated that sculptures “should function in space [...] Let us place the sculptures in space in such a way that people can dance around them.”⁶⁷ The quote is as charming as it is indicative of the sense of irreverence and play that Szapocznikow desired for her work's relationship with the viewer; one should not only walk and contemplate but *dance* around her works. I can't help but smile at the contradiction between this sentiment and a piece like her *Monument to Polish-Soviet Friendship*, mentioned in the paragraph above. In this piece, which measures approximately ten feet in height, two well-muscled male figures stand together, arms locked in a brotherly embrace. Each holds one end of a draped flag. The piece was Szapocznikow's entry into a competition to design a sculpture celebrating Polish-Soviet friendship. While she did not win the competition, the state commissioned her to complete the work anyway. The piece was cast in bronze and housed in the Palace of Culture & Science until 1989, when portions of it were sawed off to fit through the doors as it was moved to prevent it from being vandalized in the wake of the large-scale protests and elections that led to the fall of communism in Poland. Szapocznikow's sculpture, with its ideological message and well balanced and solidly proportioned figures, embodies a socialist realist aesthetic typical of the era of Soviet control in Poland. The monument definitely was not meant to encourage dancing.

⁶⁷ Szapocznikow in a response to a questionnaire published by *Przegląd Kulturalny*, 1955. As quoted in Krystyna Czerni, “The Second Wing, or Alina Szapocznikow's Dream about Flying,” in *Alina Szapocznikow - Zatrzymać Życie: Alina Szapocznikow - Capturing Life: Rysunki I Rzeźby: Drawings and Sculptures*, ed. Józef Grabski (Kraków: IRSA, 2004), 20.

In contrast, a slightly later work like *Goldfinger* actually does prompt a kind of dance and the viewer is compelled to duck down, go up on tip-toe, and generally move about in ways not strictly quotidian to try to see it from all sides. In doing so, it is difficult not to marvel at how the sculpture's slim base reconciles the seeming top-heaviness of the spread leg-like forms. If one dances around the sculpture, one also has to acknowledge that while the relationship between the sculpture and the film discussed earlier in the chapter provocatively suggests that the figure is female, the work also evades any fixed or determined gender position, an evasion made clear through viewing the sculpture from multiple angles. Instead of a fixed figure, the combination of materials and the fragmentation of the body suggests a body unbound or moving beyond and through categorizations of male or female, human or machine. The body becomes flesh, a material substance at once solid and in constant flux, that can be composed, juxtaposed, enmeshed, and dance within the detritus of the world around it. The conflicting interpretations of the work in relation to anthropomorphism and gender attest to this non-fixity in Szapocznikow's deployment of figural form.

Szapocznikow's interweaving of traditional materials such as plaster and found materials such as car parts also connects her work to the strategy of the readymade and, inevitably, the international artistic influence of Marcel Duchamp. Szapocznikow was more than aware of the readymade as a term/approach, and titled a 1964 sculpture *Ready Made* (fig. 26). 1964, importantly, was the same year that Duchamp made a round of editions of his lesser known store bought objects from earlier in the 1910s, thus popularizing his concept of the readymade.⁶⁸ Duchamp, importantly, was on the jury for the Copley Foundation Prize in 1965 along with Jean

⁶⁸ Elena Filipovic, "Photosculptural: Alina Szapocznikow's Index of the Body," in *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955-1972*, ed. Elena Filipovic and Joanna Mytkowska (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 67.

Arp, Max Ernst, Roberto Matta, and Darius Milhaud, among others.⁶⁹ *Goldfinger* was a “hit” when exhibited at the 1965 XXI May Salon curated by Gaston Diehl, and Duchamp also visited Szapocznikow in her studio and saw *Goldfinger* there.⁷⁰ He must have been impressed, as Szapocznikow was awarded the Copley Prize that year. In a later text written for an exhibition catalogue, Restany speculated that it was the subsumption of the readymade aspect of the sculpture (the car part) into its overall formal composition that intrigued Duchamp.⁷¹ While this hypothesis is of course plausible (why wouldn’t the lauded “inventor” of the readymade appreciate that element of *Goldfinger*?), I have to wonder if this is the only reason Duchamp liked the piece. Especially considering that Duchamp visited Szapocznikow in her Malakoff studio, he would have known that *Goldfinger* was one in a series of works using car parts and other such machinic elements. Images of Szapocznikow’s studio from that year show the space brimming with sculptures in all stages of completion.⁷² Seen in combination with her larger body of work, *Goldfinger* becomes less a stand-alone work and rather an encapsulation of a process of experimentation, an exploration of combining the figural and the ready-made. I think it was this, the larger project that Duchamp must have seen in Malakoff, that made him appreciate *Goldfinger*. The use of the readymade abounded in works of the 1960s, but Szapocznikow’s particular project, her commitment to the body as an element in conjunction with that which is commercially produced, must have distinguished her sculptural practice.

Restany also seemed to understand this, at least somewhat. In the same text as above, Restany explains that the “metal elements thrust into golden cement” suggest an “ironic struggle between man and matter, between consciousness and the external world...a duel, quite cheerful at

⁶⁹ Gola, *Katalog rzeźb*, 128.

⁷⁰ Restany, “Eternal Language,” 121.

⁷¹ Pierre Restany, “Form Between Body and Play,” in *Alina Szapocznikow Rzeźba* (Warsaw: Zacheta Gallery, 1967), reprinted in *Alina Szapocznikow - Zatrzymać Życie: Alina Szapocznikow - Capturing Life: Rysunki I Rzeźby: Drawings and Sculptures*, ed. Józef Grabski (Kraków: IRSA, 2004), 324.

⁷² See illustrations 295, 687, and 4018. Alina Szapocznikow Archive.

that, was enfolding between what is organized and what is inorganic.”⁷³ So, indeed, Szapocznikow is staging a kind of collision or juxtaposition between the stuff of the world and the stuff of the body. The figure becomes almost (not quite) a kind of readymade. In a letter to Ryszard Stanisławski concerning an upcoming exhibition, she mentions the potential title of a work as “something like *Embodied Machine* or *The Embodiment of the Machine* in translation, although that sounds awfully figurative for just a machine that has grown a body (flesh).”⁷⁴ In my interpretation, the quote suggests that Szapocznikow was considering the machine as the first element that grew a body, rather than the body as the primary, autonomous whole that is added to by the machine. The hierarchical standing of the human form is destabilized, inherently fragmentary. Szapocznikow treats the forms of the body, its pieces, parts, shapes, angles, and textural qualities, as material to be readily used and reused, just like a mass produced car part. The stuff of the body collides with the stuff of the world in a reciprocally impactful relationship.

In exploring this connection to Duchamp vis-à-vis the readymade, it is also interesting to note that the spread forms of *Goldfinger* offer a visual parallel with the reclined figure of Marcel Duchamp’s long-term, secretive major work *Étant Donnés: 1° la chute d’eau / 2° le gaz d’éclairage* (*Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas*), 1946-1966. Like in *Goldfinger*, Duchamp’s figure’s legs are spread and cut off from view around the knee area (fig. 27).⁷⁵ When first viewing *Goldfinger*, I immediately thought of Duchamp’s infamous work. While there is no real evidence that *Étant Donnés* was in some way inspired by *Goldfinger* (and Duchamp was working on his last work for many years prior to his visit to Szapocznikow’s studio) the link between Szapocznikow and Duchamp goes beyond visual affinity. What is especially compelling

⁷³ Restany, “Form Between Body and Play,” 324.

⁷⁴ See letter dated August 21, 1964 in *Lovely, Human, True, Heartfelt*, 242-243. Italics original.

⁷⁵ This connection has also been remarked upon by both Jakubowska and Butler. See Butler, “Soft Body/Soft Sculpture,” 37, and Jakubowska, “Leg and *Goldfinger*,” 130.

about Szapocznikow's *Goldfinger* is that the gendering of the body is withheld, sidestepped, and kept ambivalent. This is in stark contrast to both the film *Goldfinger* and *Étant Donnés*. In both the film and Duchamp's piece, the anatomical femaleness of the body in question is explicitly delineated and laid bare. In the film, the gold of excess alchemically transforms the body into a luxury item or commodity object, especially in the opening sequence, and in *Étant Donnés* the anatomical femaleness of the figure the viewer peers at is made explicit, fully exposed to the gaze. While there is an element of control in both in that the filmmaker and artist limit the scope of the viewer's gaze (the gold coating maintaining an idea of modesty and the peephole determining the extent of what one can see), in the film and in *Étant Donnés* the figure coheres into a voyeuristically available female body. Szapocznikow's *Goldfinger* refuses this coherence.

The ambiguity of the figure in *Goldfinger* enhances a tonal incoherence in the work that both Restany and more recent scholars have noted. In Restany's reading cited above, the combination of materials in *Goldfinger* occurring as a "thrust" suggests a forceful and sexual kind of collision, an overcoming of resistance through force, yet this collision at the same time for Restany maintains a sense of irony, a "cheerful" tone. Cornelia Butler also describes *Goldfinger*, as well as works such as *Man with Instrument* (1965) and *Cleaning Woman* (1965), as "both humorous and deeply disturbing" (figs. 28-29).⁷⁶ The off-balanced appearance of *Goldfinger*, a round globule at the bottom like a head, almost suggests a figure cartwheeling, freely spinning in space, yet the compression of the shock absorber into the fleshy plastic cement is hard to reconcile as playful, cheerful, or humorous, and gives the work its "disturbing" quality. Just as the textural quality of the materials seem to clash, so too do the ways the formal elements come together tonally. The juxtaposition of materials, fleshy cement and mechanical, readymade

⁷⁶ Butler, "Soft Body/Soft Sculpture," 35.

car parts, creates an affective oscillation in the tone of the figure, a quality that permeates much of Szapocznikow's output in the early to mid-1960s.

Goldfinger is part of a loose series of assemblage sculptures, including *Man with Instrument*, *Cleaning Woman*, *Nedzarz (Pauper)* (1965), *Machine en Chaire I* and *II* (both 1964), and others wherein automobile parts are enmeshed in or seem to morph out of plastic cement that even when hardened retains a gloopy surface quality. *Man with Instrument* features a molded cement ovoid torso, with slight protuberances suggestive of breasts (again disrupting a gendered reading of the sculpture) precariously balanced atop a base that resembles legs with enlarged feet that melt into a puddle. Emerging from the torso at the stomach and neck, a curved pipe-like car part with scraps of metal at either end gives the figure a bowed dimension, as if the machinic element were forcing the shoulders to slump, the chest to compress, in a defeated or protective manner. Only the title of the work, *Man with Instrument*, gives the slumped figure a lighter tone, the parasitical car part transformed into a musical instrument, the figure's posture hunching to play a tune. The combination of fleshy cement and car parts in both *Man with Instrument* and *Goldfinger* creates an oscillation, a duel between competing material qualities, evocations of human and machine, organic and inorganic, and a felt response both disturbing and amusing. These works build on previous sculptures such as *Drang Nach Osten*, 1963, wherein metal spikes and weapon-like forms emerge from abstract stone and cement (fig. 30). While these works are darker, more disturbing and biomorphic in tone, the use of more recognizable anthropomorphic forms in combination with machine parts in works like *Goldfinger* adds a reference to the everyday world of things that the earlier sculptures lack.

These works were most likely a response to the popularity of assemblage in America and Europe, and in both France and Poland, during the postwar period. Assemblage, a term coined by

Jean Dubuffet in 1953 to describe his combinations of paint and collage, was an international trend in the 1960s variably described as Neo-Dada, junk art, and anti-art, among other terms.⁷⁷ Uniting the variety of expressions of assemblage—from Robert Rauschenberg’s combine paintings to Marisol’s collaged sculptural works—was an attempt to “narrow the gap between art and life.”⁷⁸ In Poland, artists such as Erna Rosenstein, Tadeusz Kantor, and Włodzimierz Borowski, among others, worked with various forms of assemblage.⁷⁹ Kantor, perhaps the most widely known of those three, had been incorporating non-artistic objects “of the lowest rank” into stage designs from 1944 onwards. He later made the *Multipart* assemblage exhibition in 1970-1971 featuring forty identical white canvases with umbrella parts incorporated into them.⁸⁰ In Paris, where Szapocznikow spent the majority of the 1960s, assemblage was an important strategy for the circle of artists loosely associated with Restany’s nouveau réalisme, such as Arman (Armand Fernandez), Daniel Spoerri, Yves Klein, Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, and others. Though the artists under the banner of nouveau réalisme never really thought of themselves as a movement or cohesive group, Restany saw in their practices a similar impulse to “appropriate everything from industrial pigment to torn advertising posters, from household trash to machine parts” as a means to get at the real of everyday experience in modernized postwar France.⁸¹ Restany’s manifesto, written in April of 1960, asserts that there is a “depletion and sclerosis of all established vocabularies” and that such vocabularies have been explored through

⁷⁷ Jaimey Hamilton, "Strategies of Excess: The Postwar Assemblages of Alberto Burri, Robert Rauschenberg, and Arman," Dissertation (Boston University, 2006), 4-7.

⁷⁸ William Seitz, *The Art of Assemblage* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), 82. See also Robert Rauschenberg, Untitled Statement in *Sixteen Americans*, ed. Dorothy Miller (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1959), 58.

⁷⁹ Elzbieta Błotnicka-Mazur, “Rethinking Polish assemblages of the 1960s: The (Re)turn to Things,” *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 66, no. 4 (2018): 131-50.

⁸⁰ Błotnicka-Mazur, “Rethinking Polish assemblages of the 1960s,” 138.

⁸¹ Kaira M. Cabañas, *The Myth of Nouveau Réalisme: Art and the Performative in Postwar France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 7.

traditional means to the point of exhaustion.⁸² Nouveau réalistes break with traditional means by considering “sociological reality, the common good of human activity, the large republic of our social exchanges, of our commerce in society.”⁸³ The forms that this work takes varied, from Niki de Saint Phalle’s *Tirs* to Daniel Spoerri’s *snare-pictures* to Arman’s destructive performances, but assemblage was a key methodology. Objects, materials, and modes of public consumption (such as television programming and the aesthetics of advertising) were part of the works, registering the shifts in a society continually becoming more industrialized.⁸⁴

Goldfinger and similar works’ combination of the machine and the human can be seen as compatible with the trend of nouveau réalisme, and the works specifically foregrounding the increasing presence of the car and other machines such as home appliances in French everyday life during the 1960s. Kristin Ross argues that one of the primary features of the swift postwar modernization of French culture was the rapidity with which people purchased automobiles, from one in ten people owning one in 1960 to one in four owning one in 1972.⁸⁵ For Ross, “the car *is* the commodity form as such in the twentieth century....when we remember that “Taylorization—the assembly line, vertical integration of production, the interchangeability of workers, the standardization of tools and materials....was developed *in the process of producing* the ‘car for the masses’ and not the inverse.”⁸⁶ Szapocznikow’s combination of car parts and anthropomorphic forms demonstrates an awareness of the new centrality of the automobile in French society and the ways in which machines and bodies collide and become interdependent within consumerism. *Goldfinger*’s structural support and the work’s impact come from the use of

⁸² Pierre Restany, “The New Realists,” 1960, in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 724-725.

⁸³ Restany, “The New Realists,” 724-725.

⁸⁴ See Chapters 4 and 5 of Cabañas, *The Myth of Nouveau Réalisme*.

⁸⁵ Jean Pierre Bardon, *La révolution automobile* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1977), 224. Cited in Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA; London: The MIT Press, 1995), 201.

⁸⁶ Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, 19. Emphasis original.

the shock absorber, and the car parts are what give *Man with Instrument* both its charm and uneasiness. The mechanical elements both contribute a violence in their impositions into the figures and are integral to the structure of the sculptures, just as the automobile both increased ease of movement and caused thousands of deaths in accidents and collisions. The commodity, in the case of the car and other appliances, in many instances isn't based on need, but rather is "acting in terms of a consciousness shaped by appliances. Thus artifacts are sometimes symbiotic with humans, but at other times the relationship is parasitic, and the survival of the object is at the expense of the human host."⁸⁷ Szapocznikow's assemblage works play out this dynamic—machine and human forms combine, though it is not entirely clear which is the parasite.

Szapocznikow didn't only use car parts in assemblage sculptural works, and she also later took on the car as a motif for capitalist luxury in one of her flirtations with conceptual art. *My American Dream* was Szapocznikow's contribution to Pierre Restany's 1970 exhibition "Art Concepts from Europe" at the Bonino Gallery in New York, and she traveled to New York (for the first and only time) in March of 1970 to see the show (fig. 31).⁸⁸ Restany, inspired by the flexibility of communication provided by new technologies, invited fifty artists from Europe to participate in the exhibition by sending "ideas" in a form and communication medium that they chose. The submissions ranged from sound on tape to maps to encoded equations to telegrams and other media. The only condition was that "no actual work of art, or any in an advanced state of realization" was to be admitted.⁸⁹ The exhibition was in line with the burgeoning trend in art towards dematerialization and an art of ideas, which Restany saw as emblemized in the

⁸⁷ Mihaly Czikzentmihalyi, "Why We Need Things," in *History from Things: Essays on Material Culture*, eds. Steven D. Lubar and W.D. Kingery (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 20-29, 21.

⁸⁸ Gola, "Chronology," 196. It is also interesting to note that Szapocznikow was in communication with Peter Seltz

⁸⁹ Letter of invitation to "Art Concepts from Europe" sent from Pierre Restany to Alina Szapocznikow, n.d., illustration no. 3834, Alina Szapocznikow Archive. Original French: "aucune œuvre proprement dite ou présentant un état de réalisation avancée ne sera admise." Translation mine.

enunciation of “new values” by artists like Joseph Kosuth and critics like Lucy Lippard.⁹⁰

Szapocznikow’s contribution to the exhibition read as follows:

To blow up twice the size and in pink Portuguese marble, the convertible Rolls Royce. This work or object will be very expensive, completely useless, and a reflection of the god of supreme luxury. In other words a “complete” work of art. If there exists such a fantastic snob as who would order this work to be made and put it right on his private lawn to greet his guests and invite them for drinks on the marble seats, then my American dream will be accomplished.⁹¹

Szapocznikow’s contribution, first handwritten in the structure of a poem accompanied by swirls, doodles, and a cartoon-like sketch of a Rolls Royce, then later typed up as a more sanitized and properly conceptual document, is notable for its proposition for the creation of an actual object, rather than an action or thought-exercise. Andrzej Wajda, a fellow Polish artist, famous filmmaker, and friend of Szapocznikow’s, remembers Szapocznikow telling him about her idea after she came back from her one and only trip to New York. He recalls that the idea “appeared in her imagination as a symbol of absurd wealth.” Wajda initially interpreted Szapocznikow’s idea of a marble Rolls Royce as “something as big as a desk paperweight” and only later realized that she meant to make it life-sized, a “‘real’ car made of Carrara marble standing on an English lawn in front of a palace. Just as if it was conjured up by a good fairy who can do anything.”⁹² For Wajda, this anecdote is an example of Szapocznikow’s refusal to not pursue her ideas, even the more grandiose ones. As he says, “Alina talked as we do, but she did not stop at that.”⁹³

⁹⁰ Pierre Restany, “Art Concepts from Europe,” *domus*, no. 487 (June 1970), 48. For more on “dematerialization” see Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, “The Dematerialization of Art,” *Art International* 12, no. 2 (February 1968), reprinted in Lucy Lippard, *Changing: Essays in Art Criticism* (New York: E.P. Dutton & co., 1971), 255-276.

⁹¹ Alina Szapocznikow, “My American Dream,” 1970, facsimiled in *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone, 1955-1972*, eds. Elena Filipovic and Joanna Mytowska (New York; Brussels: Museum of Modern Art; Mercatorfonds, 2011), 58. Manuscript of “My American Dream,” illustration no.7381, Alina Szapocznikow Archive.

⁹² Andrzej Wajda, “Alina Szapocznikow (1926-1973),” *Alina Szapocznikow - Zatrzymać Życie: Alina Szapocznikow - Capturing Life: Rysunki I Rzeźby: Drawings and Sculptures*, ed. Józef Grabski (Kraków: IRSA, 2004), 131.

⁹³ Wajda, “Alina Szapocznikow (1926-1973),” 131.

Indeed, Szapocznikow was serious about actualizing “My American Dream.” The summer after the exhibition at Bonino Gallery, she spent time in Carrara, Italy, and carved two small Rolls Royces, one in white and one in her desired pink Portuguese marble (fig. 32-33). The one in pink Portuguese marble, *Rolls Royce II*, 1971, featured the addition of a hood ornament (a decorative element not included in her sketch). What from far away looks like the winged figure that is the standard Rolls Royce hood ornament (a female figure in a gown, leaning forward, gown and wings pulled back as if in the wind) on closer inspection turns out to be an erect, gilded phallus with wings. The Rolls Royce ornament, which has been on their vehicle since around 1909, is called the “spirit of ecstasy,” so I can’t help but think that Szapocznikow was playing a small joke with her phallic version.⁹⁴ She was, however, serious about getting funding to actualize the full-size piece and also contacted Harald Szeemann, then the director of the upcoming Documenta 5, concerning potential sponsorship of the full-scale work. He expressed interest in exhibiting the work in Kassel but told her she must find funding elsewhere.⁹⁵ Szeemann’s response shifted the focus of Szapocznikow’s project, making the challenge not the creation of the work itself but finding someone willing to pay for it (finding, as she put it, a “fantastic snob” who would pay to produce, not even necessarily to own, such an object).⁹⁶ Szapocznikow tried, persistently, to fund the project, contacting Rolls Royce for funds and scale models from which to work, as well as a range of other potential patrons including, maybe not so

⁹⁴ The phallic hood ornament likely also connects to two a small series of works that Szapocznikow was also working on in 1971, titled *Mad Fiancée* that feature a reclining female form supported by a phallus the same size as the figure.

⁹⁵ Correspondence from Harald Szeemann to Alina Szapocznikow, July 15, 1970, illustration no. 3825, Alina Szapocznikow Archive.

⁹⁶ For letters, notes, and materials related to the project, see folder “Materials for the Project My American Dream,” Alina Szapocznikow Archive. For a more in-depth history and analysis of this project and Szapocznikow’s relationship to conceptual art, see Ammer, ““My American Dream’: Alina Szapocznikow’s Take on Conceptual Art,” 133-159.

surprisingly given her hood ornament above, Hugh Hefner of *Playboy*.⁹⁷ Sadly, a full-scale *My American Dream* was never realized, though as Szeemann perhaps understood, the work was and is meaningful as a conceptual proposition independent of its actualization.⁹⁸

The project's failure to be fully actualized cemented it as merely a conceptual proposition, yet Szapocznikow's proposal does not align with a strict understanding of conceptual art. Or, at least, it does not align with the strict conceptualism of artists associated with Art and Language like Sol LeWitt and Joseph Kosuth, which has become the standard narrative of the movement in Western, Euro-American art history. Inherent in Szapocznikow's approach to conceptual art is a contradiction to this definition of conceptualism. Conceptual art is usually thought of as resisting the economic primacy of objects in the art world, less about the work (whatever form it may or may not take), and more about the idea in one's mind (whether that be the mind of the artist or viewer). Additionally, conceptual projects often relied on linguistic, numerical, or semiotic systems. However, conceptual art was not homogenous across global contexts, and in many places conceptual art was not as stringently defined. The traveling exhibition "Global Conceptualism, Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s", highlighted the variance in conceptual approaches across geographies. In Eastern Europe—here defined as Poland, the former Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic and Slovak Republic), Hungary, Romania, the former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and East Germany—conceptual art was "never so rigorous" as its formulations in the US or Britain. Instead, in the words of Lázló Beke, "it was flexible and

⁹⁷ See correspondence to Rolls Royce from Szapocznikow, August 1, 1970, illustration no. 3833 and 3845, Alina Szapocznikow Archive, digitized through the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, held by Piotr Stanisławski, Poland. Correspondence to Hugh Hefner from Szapocznikow, September 14, 1970, illustration no. 3883, Alina Szapocznikow Archive, digitized through the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, held by Piotr Stanisławski, Poland.

⁹⁸ Ammer, "'My American Dream'," 145.

elastic, ironic, humorous and ambiguous, nonprofessional, communicable, always ready to become a social activity of a group of young people or even an alternative movement.”⁹⁹

It is much easier to see Szapocznikow’s flirtations with conceptual art, such as *My American Dream*, as conceptual when the works are viewed within the more expansive and ironically playful understanding of conceptual art articulated by Beke above. Restany was Szapocznikow’s main connection to the realm of conceptual projects, and in 1972, he again invited Szapocznikow to contribute to one of his conceptual exhibitions along with other artists based in the United States, Europe, and Japan. The exhibition was titled “Operazione Vesuvio (Operation Vesuvius)” and began with a competition seeking design proposals for a park at the peak of Mount Vesuvius. The exhibition ended with shows of the proposals at the Galleria Il Centro in Naples and Centro Domus in Milan that were curated by Restany and Dina Carola. Szapocznikow’s contribution was to transform the crater into an ice rink, and her proposal reads as follows (see fig. 34 for the typescript):

Ice Rink in the Crater of Vesuvius

Designing and producing an artificial ice skating rink, like an eye at the bottom of a volcanic crater, seems to me like a capital idea, from two perspectives:

- 1) This human gesture, by posing a challenge to nature, tames and bewitches it, bending it to our whim.
- 2) The futility and playfulness of the gesture belie its great importance.

The paradoxical absurdity of the project must be emphasized by a party atmosphere, music appropriate for the place (recording and playing Russian waltzes such as “The Hills of Manchuria” on a cassette player), illumination (paper lanterns) and coloring (artificial snow) of the ski slopes that will lead from the upper station of the cable car down to the skating rink.

Man will come to play where the earth recently spilled out internal fire, spurting it from its open entrails: a challenge and a blasphemy.

⁹⁹ Lázló Beke, “Conceptual Tendencies in Eastern European Art,” in *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s*, ed. Luis Camnitzer (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999), 41-51.

Challenge up to a certain point; an icy surface at the bottom of a crater has an immediate symbolic signification (like Barnett Newman's inverted obelisk) and, though its playfulness is opposed to all transcendentalism, this supreme challenge is also a manifestation of reverence before nature.

If one day during a figure skating competition, the Peggy Fleming of the moment performs her moves in the field in the iced-over crater, and if we, spectators awed by her prodigious and trivial pirouettes, are swept away by a sudden eruption of lava, fixed for eternity like the Pompeians—then the triumph of the instant, of the transitory, will be complete.

A fleeting instant, a trivial instant, such is the only symbol of our terrestrial passage.

Alina Szapocznikow
April 1972

N.B. The audiovisual information about the rink can be delegated to many different artists.¹⁰⁰

The exhibited version of the proposal featured the above text displayed on the wall along with a portable tape recorder that played Russian waltzes such as the “Hills of Manchuria” composed by Ilya Shatrov. There is, clearly, a lot to unpack here.

Like Szapocznikow's other contribution to a Restany-curated conceptual project, *My American Dream*, the Vesuvius proposal ironically straddles, in Manuela Ammer's words, “the gap between her conception of herself as a sculptor dedicated to the human body and the radical ideological shifts she was witnessing in the art world.”¹⁰¹ The Vesuvius project not only continues Szapocznikow's uneasy inclusion within the context of Restany's conceptual project, but also plays with the codes of the burgeoning trend of earth art or land art. Indeed, a large intervention in a volcanic crater is at home with Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, or works by

¹⁰⁰ Alina Szapocznikow, “Patinoire dans le cratère du Vésuve,” 1972. Typescript submitted for the 1972 exhibition “Operazione Vesuvio” organized by Pierre Restany at Galleria Il Centro in Naples and Centro Domus in Milan. Illustration nos. 7380 and 3885, Alina Szapocznikow Archive. Translation mine.

¹⁰¹ Ammer, “‘My American Dream’,” 158.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Walter de Maria, Nancy Holt, and Michael Heizer, among others. Szapocznikow's direct reference to Barnett Newman's inverted obelisk (presumably she means *Broken Obelisk* of 1963, of which there are several variants) positions the Vesuvius piece as a similar form of anti-monument. Newman turned an obelisk upside down, destabilizing its symbolic and literal form as a marker of power and history (fig. 35). Szapocznikow's ice rink would be a playfully irreverent intervention in the natural landscape that operates within a similarly anti-monumental logic. Rather than a clear and everlasting monument to humanity's power to control and manipulate nature, building an ice rink on a volcanic crater would instead emphasize the futility and stupidity of such an engineering feat at the moment of its destruction, thus undercutting any monumental logic. At the same time, however, the work is interested in a form of memorial or marking of time. The ruins of Pompeii, after all, serve as their own kind of monument to a tragic natural disaster.

Beyond the irreverence she notes (ice on top of a volcano), temporality is one of the most fascinating elements of this piece, and, indeed, in much of Szapocznikow's practice. A multiplicity of time-scales (both duration and the fleetingness of an instant), I think, is what connects this work with both earth / land art and performative strains of conceptual art, more than the proposed intervention in the natural landscape and the form of the proposal itself. In earth/land art, performance art, and conceptual art, time is a critical modality. For earth/land art, there's a simultaneous and sometimes contradictory concern with the more-than-human scale of geological time and the experiential time of the viewer walking on or moving through a piece. Much work made under the banner of earth/land art was similarly transient or ephemeral, the landscape itself taking over the work as the volcano would reclaim its crater in Szapocznikow's proposed scenario. Szapocznikow's piece is marked by multiple temporalities: the "eternity" of

the Pompeiians and the repeated cycle of natural phenomena across centuries, the performative duration of an ice skating routine and an audience's attention span, the played time of each piece of music and audiovisual program included, and the "fleeting" and "trivial" instant when an eruption permanently ends the scene.

Of course, unlike *My American Dream*, wherein Szapocznikow actually attempted to create the work proposed in her entry to Restany's exhibition, the Vesuvius piece was purely a proposal, the work itself is an impossibility. The work's preoccupation with temporality is not unique, however, and from 1970 to her death in 1973, time came increasingly to the forefront of her work. In 1972, Szapocznikow developed two works in a series of sculptures that bridge the ironic humor of *My American Dream* and the morbid temporal preoccupation of "Vesuvius": *Cendrier de Célibataire III* and *Cendrier de Célibataire IV* (figs. 36-37). Both pieces feature a stick of butter that functions as an ashtray, used cigarettes embedded into and melting the butter, black ash marring the butter's smooth geometric surface. In *Cendrier de Célibataire III*, the butter sits atop its foil wrapping; in *Cendrier de Célibataire IV*, the butter is unwrapped and placed on a plate. And, as butter doesn't last, the ephemeral works were captured in black and white photographs.

Elena Filipovic has read these two experiments with butter as part of Szapocznikow's larger interest in using photography as a conceptual tool and medium in relation to her sculptural work. For these pieces, Filipovic argues, photography "plays a vital role—not so much as evidence of a lost 'object,' but as a model for an experimental piece that the artist imagined making, each time anew, from comestible substances."¹⁰² Unlike some of the photographs Szapocznikow took of works in her studio that are no longer extant, where the photographs serve as the only visual record we now have, Filipovic reads the images of these works differently, as a

¹⁰² Filipovic, "Photosculptural," 68.

kind of instructional document Szapocznikow meant to be used to recreate the work, similar to the propositional quality to her contributions to Restany's exhibitions of conceptual art. The photographs, then, operate as "both conceptual document and schematic for an artwork that emphatically courts its own evanescence."¹⁰³

Alongside the photographs of these two works in Szapocznikow's archive is a letter that she wrote to her friend and fellow artist Annette Messenger. The letter makes explicit that Szapocznikow intended for the works to be recreated, as she outlines what should be done at the opening of an upcoming Paris exhibition at Atelier A Gallery. Szapocznikow had just been hospitalized, and was therefore unable to execute the piece herself. In the letter, she asks Messenger to ask someone else named "Mucky" (ostensibly someone involved with the organizing of the exhibition) to spend two to three francs on her behalf on a stick of butter to be placed out as an ashtray for cigarettes at the opening of the exhibition, and to put a couple of cigarette butts in the butter for good measure. She references the photograph, also sent, as the example for how this should be done.¹⁰⁴ She then tells Messenger to "not beat herself up about it—it's not very important." But clearly it was important, as Szapocznikow, despite being ill and "in bed and unable to come to the phone" takes the time to write out and mail instructions and photographic references for the work's execution.¹⁰⁵

The exhibition, curated by François Arnal, was titled "Cendriers et projets de cendriers" and featured a number of Szapocznikow's works in this series, along with several other of her sculptures. The series *Cendrier de Célibataire* includes the butter works above, along with two other polyester resin pieces, *Cendrier de Célibataire I* and *Cendrier de Célibataire II*, both also

¹⁰³ Filipovic, "Photosculptural," 68.

¹⁰⁴ Illustration no. 1526, Alina Szapocznikow Archive.

¹⁰⁵ Illustration no. 1526, Alina Szapocznikow Archive. Original French: "Mais ne te fracasse pas pour ça- c'est ne pas très importante." "Je suis lit et je ne peut venir au téléphone... je suis souffrante." Translation mine.

from 1972 (38-39). These pieces fall very much within Szapocznikow's method of working at the time (which will be further explored in the next chapter) in that they utilize casts in combination with a play on functional objects. *Cendrier de Célibataire I* features two polyester resin casts of the lower part of Szapocznikow's face put together to form a vessel filled with cigarette butts. With *Cendrier de Célibataire II*, there are no cigarettes, and instead two resin casts of breasts come together to form a bowl, or ashtray, that is situated on top of a slightly curved fragment of a cast of a belly.

In the letter to Messenger described above, Szapocznikow also mentions a different title for *Cendrier de Célibataire IV*, *Cendrier d'Ambiance*, or ambient ashtray.¹⁰⁶ The alternative title adds another layer to the piece as it would have existed as a sculptural object and how it functions photographically. An ambient ashtray implies that Szapocznikow was considering the expansive, varying sensations that make up one's experience of an event or place, the ambiance of a room or a crowd. Imagine entering an exhibition space to encounter the smell of melting butter mixed with cigarette smoke—likely not the ambiance or aroma one expects from an exhibition of art. Of course in 1960s Paris, cigarettes would be expected. Melting or burnt smelling butter, not so much. In imagining what this may have smelled like, I am reminded of works by the German artist Joseph Beuys that use large quantities of tallow or lard, such as *Unschlitt (Tallow)*, 1977, that I saw at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. The piece involves large tallow casts of the undersides of highway ramps, and while it is interesting architecturally and spatially to encounter, what I most vividly remember is the smell of decaying fat that permeated the exhibition space. Szapocznikow's piece would have had a different olfactory effect, but similarly the smell of the melting and burning butter would have been notable in the gallery, suffusing everything and everyone present with the scent. The “everyone” here is

¹⁰⁶ It should be noted that in her letter to Messenger Szapocznikow misspells *ambiance* as “*embiance*.”

important, too, as the French *ambiance* doesn't just translate to an environmental quality, it also translates to "milieu." And, indeed, Szapocznikow's ashtrays do keep a record of a kind of sociality: the cigarette butts from different people who attend the event are what make the work. Similar to how the convivial atmosphere in *Vesuvius* is key to the shocking moment of poetic transience at the moment of explosion, or the "fantastic snob" of an art collector that would bring home the irony of *My American Dream*, the exhibition-goers are key to the success of the *Cendriers*.

For Szapocznikow, as exemplified by the biting critique of wealth that inflects *My American Dream*, the art of "ideas" is not separate from that of objects, of buying and selling, or the physical, material existence of art. Instead, Szapocznikow's proposal attempts to work out a kind of paradox, both seeking to undermine and to capitalize on the work of art as an expensive, useless, and decorative object for those who can afford the luxury. The *Vesuvius* proposal similarly is a humorously poetic paradox, an ice rink on top of a volcano, a party turned poignant tragedy that speaks to the ephemerality of life. And, lastly, the *Cendriers* position banal everyday objects as works of art that still somehow maintain their functional use. That all three of these works can be described under the banner of conceptual art is paradoxical in and of itself. Yet, like the looser, more playful version of conceptual art that manifested in different parts of Eastern Europe, Szapocznikow's works maintain a kind of playful irreverence at the same time that they reveal an awareness of larger trends within the art world.¹⁰⁷ As Manuela Ammer has argued, Szapocznikow's conceptual works are "drugged": "they are humorous, they entertain the idea of luxurious objecthood, and they seek the sublime in pieces of rubbish."¹⁰⁸ It is not hard to

¹⁰⁷ Examples of other conceptual projects in Poland that have a humorous bent include Marek Konieczny's "Think crazy!" Fluxus-like activities and works like Krzysztof's Wodiczko's odd vehicles (like a car powered by walking on the hood, among others. Beke, "Conceptual Tendencies in Eastern European Art," 47.

¹⁰⁸ Ammer, "'My American Dream,'" 134.

see the throughline between Szapocznikow's assemblage-inflected sculptural works like *Goldfinger* and her flirtations with conceptual art, all consistent with her larger project of attending to the "paradoxes and absurdities" of the body, of life.¹⁰⁹

Assemblages such as *Goldfinger* and projects like "My American Dream" emphasize that Szapocznikow was not just interested in the paradoxes of individual emotional, physical, and mental experience, but that she was also concerned with the paradoxes and absurdities rooted in the body's relationship to the world around it. Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes this paradox as follows:

visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrustated [sic] into its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the same stuff as the body.¹¹⁰

The idea of the world being made of the same stuff of the body is mirrored, in a somewhat satirical way, in attitudes towards the increasing dependency on appliances in the home during the late 1950s and early 1960s, both in the US and Europe. Richard Hamilton, in describing his work *She* (1958-61) (fig. 40), which features the outline of a shoulder and suggestions of appliances in varying degrees of cohesion all immersed in a unifying cream-colored domestic space, stated that "The worst thing that can happen to a girl, according to the ads is that she should fail to be exquisitely at ease in her appliance setting....Sex is everywhere, symbolized in the glamour of mass-produced luxury—the interplay of fleshy plastic and smooth, fleshier metal."¹¹¹ The intermingling of the body in the world, in the context of the 1960s, often meant

¹⁰⁹ Alina Szapocznikow, typescript of untitled statement, illustration no. 7390, Alina Szapocznikow Archive. Original French: "les paradoxes et les absurdes." Translation mine.

¹¹⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind," in *The Essential Writings of Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Alden L. Fisher (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), 256.

¹¹¹ Agata Jakubowska, ed., *Natalia LL: Consumer Art and Beyond* (Warsaw: Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, 2017), 131.

that the fabric of the world consisted of metal gadgets, fast cars, efficiency-oriented systems and machines, and newly popularized plastic goods. Szapocznikow's shift in materials—from traditional plasters and cements with car parts to polyester resins and polyurethane foams—continued her commitment to materially explicating the experience of the body in the cultural and material stuff around her. This enmeshment of body and world is paradoxical, and can be violent, as assemblage works such as *Goldfinger* attest. Yet it also creates opportunities for experimentation in ways of making and being with objects. The next chapter focuses on two series Szapocznikow produced in the late 1960s that experimented with the textural qualities of new plastics to create objects meant to be used and interacted with in day-to-day life.

Chapter 2: Cannibalistic Pop / Artist as Fetish

Can there be such a thing as feminist pop art? If one looks at the canonical history of Euro-American pop, then the answer is probably no. However, in the past two decades increasing attention has been paid to recuperating the work and contributions of female artists under the larger aesthetic umbrella of pop. At the same time, this recuperation / re-evaluation has exposed another area of neglect for these artists, that of the feminist art movement's implicit disdain for artists working in a pop idiom. As Kalliopi Minioudaki, who has written extensively on feminist pop art, elegantly puts it: "marginalized in the histories of pop and repressed in the subconscious of feminist art history, the female producers of pop repeatedly missed the train of its canon as well as the rescue-wagons of feminist rediscovery."¹¹² These artists were largely seen as "not pop enough" during pop's heyday and after, and were simultaneously seen by self-ascribed feminist artists/critics/historians as "not feminist enough" and as complicit within the misogyny and sexism permeating much of the movement. Recent exhibitions and scholarship have complicated and questioned this double rejection, in so doing expanding and shaking up what both pop and feminist art (and feminist pop) can tell us about consumerism, popular culture, violence and war, sex, pleasure, and the intertwining of all of the above, both in the media landscape of the 1960s and now.

Some of the most prominent names in this reevaluation have been enfolded into the lore of euro-American feminist art in one way or another: Marisol, Niki de Saint Phalle, Martha Rosler, Evelyne Axell, Marjorie Strider (though it could be easily argued that the "popness" of these artists has in some ways been minimized in their general art historical framing). Other artists are less widely known: Rosalyn Drexler, Chryssa, Beatrix Gonzalez, Dorothy Grebenak, Joyce Weiland, Pauline Boty, Sister Corita Kent, and the list can go on, expanding

¹¹² Minioudaki, "Other(s') Pop: The Return of the Repressed of Two Discourses," 135.

internationally, of course, as pop and feminist art were and are global phenomena of many variations.¹¹³ No artist's work can be said to fit solely in one art historical box or another, and indeed these artists' practices are as divergent as they are aligned. And, of course, these artists are not either pop or feminist, or simply both or neither. Recent exhibitions have been important in acknowledging artists who contributed to art broadly, and to pop and feminist art specifically, acknowledgments that are long overdue. The value of this acknowledgment lies less in the formation of a revisionist canon, and more in the nuance, complexity, and perplexity these artists add to the very idea of what pop was and is, and simultaneously what feminist art was and is. As someone trained within the Euro-American, masculinist canon of pop, I find these artists' works to be as refreshing as they are deeply unsettling to that training. Jessica Morgan writes in the catalogue for the 2015-2016 exhibition at the Tate titled "The World Goes Pop," that "around the world, 'pop' did not just signify North American popular culture. Pop arose in singular forms and designations, but in no singular lineage. Many pops emerged simultaneously, and often imbued with an ambivalence, if not outright hostility, to the notion of American economic (and implicitly artistic) dominance...this was global yet specific pop."¹¹⁴ These variations in pop also challenge the stylistic hegemony of US pop, opening up the aesthetic registers of pop art to those that seemingly don't align with pop as it has been defined.

In 1965, Urszula Czartoryska, a prominent Polish art historian who also married Szapocznikow's first husband Ryszard Stanisławski after he and Szapocznikow divorced, described pop as a "wave" with origins in the West. I'm tempted to take on this motif of a wave, or a kind of rippling force, in that it considers pop as less of a domineering totality of critique of mass media, and more as a softer movement of ideas that involves a rippling effect. Each ripple

¹¹³ See *The World Goes Pop*, ed. Jessica Morgan and Flavia Frigeri (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

¹¹⁴ Jessica Morgan, "Introduction," in *The World Goes Pop*, ed. Jessica Morgan and Flavia Frigeri (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 15.

takes on its own distinct character, and no two ripples are the same. This is especially helpful in considering pop in a simultaneous Eastern and Western European context, wherein there were differing forms of access to commodities, and the image realm that surrounded consumer culture varied. Szapocznikow, as has been elucidated in earlier chapters of this project, bridged multiple geographic, socio-political, and artistic contexts in her life and work. The codes of pop, proto-feminist art, and surrealism are artistic idioms that collide in her oeuvre, bringing with them the nuanced manifestations of these idioms in the Polish / Eastern European and French / Western European contexts within which she lived and worked throughout her career. And, indeed, Szapocznikow's work brings to the fore many of the questions that I find most compelling: How does a flirtation with pop art complicate the way sexuality, pleasure, desire, and the body can be both challenging to and complicit within dominant visual codes? How does a nascently feminist critique of representation coexist with the politics of pleasure and with the coolly indifferent attitude of pop's exploration of commodity culture/capitalism? What does it mean for this work to be made by a female artist, the work invoking a (so-called) "female" gaze? How does an erotics of the body and object (i.e. the fetish) bring the legacy of surrealism to bear on some of these artists' variations of pop? And, more specific to this project, how do all these questions play out within the work of an artist bridging multiple geographic and artistic contexts like Alina Szapocznikow?

One somewhat recent exhibition that foregrounded several of the above questions was the 2010-2011 traveling show "Seductive Subversion: Women Pop Artists 1958-1968" organized by the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. I draw specific attention to the "Seductive Subversion" exhibition in part because the show included a work by Szapocznikow, entitled *Stela (Stele)*, 1968 (fig. 41). *Stela* features, as the title suggests, a vertically standing

tombstone-like construction of poured black polyurethane connected to a horizontal, poured polyurethane base. At the conjunction of the two pours, a pair of pale knees emerge, touching as if the figure's feet were awkwardly spread apart. Above the knees, the lower portion of a face in the same shade of resin resides, the lips covered in a dripping black material. Embedded on the base in front of the figure and on the back of the work are two sets of identical smooth black casts of legs cut off below the knee, toes perpetually pointed. Cast from Szapocznikow's own body, the skin-like semi-transparency of the resin face and knees is all the more unsettling in juxtaposition with the black polyurethane foam, which seems to engulf the figure. The piece, at first glance, is rather horrific and seems to have little in common with the other more colorful and characteristically "pop" pieces by artists like Evelyne Axell, Rosalyn Drexler, Pauline Boty, Dorothy Grebenak, Marisol, and other represented artists. *Stela* seems far removed from the realm of pin-ups, celebrities, mass media allusions, and artworks as commodities that otherwise populated the exhibition. However, its inclusion is incredibly generative for considering Szapocznikow's relationship to pop and (proto)feminism. Interestingly, and somewhat frustratingly, neither Szapocznikow nor *Stela* are mentioned in the exhibition catalogue for "Seductive Subversion." The photograph of the piece also comes at the very end of the catalogue. The inclusion in the exhibition but omission from mention or critical discussion is emblematic of Szapocznikow's uneasy relationship with pop, with feminism, and the Euro-American definitions of both. However, if we look at a work like *Stela* within a more expanded understanding of pop and the varying art historical movements that influenced it, the work's inclusion in the show begins to make more sense.

It is perhaps not too much of a stretch to connect a work like *Stela* the strain of pop wherein the media frenzy and sexiness of popular culture are explored through the lenses of war,

violence, and death, their juxtaposition and the numb or lack-of-response to them forming the critical foundation for the works. Szapocznikow's works have similarly been described in this dualistic framework of sex and death, perhaps most memorably by Pierre Cabanne, who wrote that "Alina's fetishistic catalogue mixes eroticism with exorcisms. One never knows if breasts and thighs emerge from a bed destroyed by a lover's embrace or from the mud of Hiroshima, if they are love or death."¹¹⁵ This ambiguous intermingling of love and death indeed connects Szapocznikow's work to one of the stronger undercurrents of much pop art from the 1960s. The focus on celebrity figures such as Marilyn Monroe, for example, in the work of Warhol, Boty, and Drexler, marries the obsessive love of celebrity worship with Monroe's tragic, untimely death, in the process highlighting the alienation inherent in celebrity. Or one can consider Warhol's broader *Death and Disaster* series alongside Drexler's reconfiguration of images and text from newspaper articles about various forms of violence. One can also consider Rosler's series *Bringing the War Home* in thinking about the paradoxically numbing consumption of mass media in television and print: the ads for home goods that incessantly run alongside gruesome coverage of traumatic events both domestic and international overloading any possibility of critical or compassionate response. Szapocznikow's series of works entitled *Souvenirs* similarly juxtaposes photographs of celebrities like Sophia Loren with widely circulated horrific photographs of concentration camps at the end of World War II and personal photographs from her childhood. While these works will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4, the attention to the circulation and inundation of images is characteristic of many artists working in a pop idiom. Television, magazines, billboards, and newspapers were all part of the mass media landscape of the 1960s, where the overwhelming overlap of advertising for consumer goods (and the lifestyles

¹¹⁵ Pierre Cabanne, "Alina. Against All Odds!" in *Alina Szapocznikow - Zatrzymać Życie: Alina Szapocznikow - Capturing Life: Rysunki I Rzeźby: Drawings and Sculptures*, ed. Józef Grabski (Kraków: IRSA, 2004),

they promised) with coverage of world events made for a compellingly vast realm of images for artists to collage, reconfigure, reference, and riff on.

Stela, of course, doesn't include a photographic element, and the work doesn't obviously reference the photographic landscape of popular culture. The work at first is somewhat off-putting, almost gruesome, as the black foam appears to engulf the figure inside and out. However, I noticed when viewing the piece that what initially appears as black foam being expelled from the figure's mouth upon closer inspection becomes black that has been intentionally applied to the lips, outlining their shape like somewhat clumsily applied lipstick. The drip at the corner of the mouth also could take on a provocative, sexual connotation. The black lipstick effect is a humorous addition to an otherwise macabre work that adds to a sense of affective confusion in its seeming inappropriateness.¹¹⁶ This small moment of somewhat subversive humor exemplifies how Szapocznikow's work is affectively tense, oscillating between positive and negative registers. The engulfing black foam both consumes and adorns the figure, and the body on display, cast from the artist herself, seems mired in the muck of being both subject and object.¹¹⁷

Another work from the same period, wherein Szapocznikow was experimenting with the possibilities of black polyurethane foam in a series of works titled *Expansions*, discussed further in Chapter 3, is *Torse noyé (Headless Torso)*, 1968 (fig. 42). This piece features a similar tombstone-like construction of a polyurethane base and upright. The figure that emerges is almost like the missing parts of *Stela*. A headless torso, in eerily pale polyester resin, with large, lush breasts with neon pink nipples, is cushioned in the black foam. The work is similar in tone to *Stela*, both grotesque and yet also somewhat comical, the figure almost overtly sexualized (yet

¹¹⁶ For a discussion of humor's use as an inappropriate affect, see Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003) 26.

¹¹⁷ For a further discussion of Szapocznikow's relationship to pop art Butler, "Soft Body/Soft Sculpture," 32-45.

without a head, i.e. brain). Interestingly, both *Stela* and *Torse Noyé* were featured in a photoshoot held at Szapocznikow's studio. In the images, Szapocznikow had model Anna Karin pose nude with various sculptures from the series of black polyurethane pours. In one image, Karin hugs a form on the wall, peering out at the viewer, *Torse Noyé* at her feet and *Stele* to her right. In another, she mirrors the pose of *Torse Noyé*, though her gaze remains fixed on the viewer, unlike the nonexistent gaze of the sculpture. The photographs emphasize the bodily nature of the works, the "femininity of the cast elements and undulate organic forms" of the polyurethane pours. And while Szapocznikow's casts were often from her own body, her "body need not have appeared in the photographs for them to announce it was *the* body and not just *a* body at stake."¹¹⁸ The works are both abstracted from their source via their fragmentation, but specific in their intimate, indexical relationship to the body they were cast from. The use of plastics from mass production combined with a complex, intimate erotics of the body in works like *Stela* and *Torse Noyé* connects Szapocznikow's works to a number of other artists and trends in art of the 1960s that blend legacies of surrealism, feminist (or proto-feminist) impulses, and pop modalities. These works engage with the trappings and materials of increasingly mechanized modes of production all while staying committed to the sensuality and intimacy of the body.

The Belgian artist Evelyne Axell was a direct contemporary of Szapocznikow, and made works that similarly blend the above approaches. Interestingly, the critic Pierre Restany was a proponent of both Szapocznikow and Axell's work, and while it isn't clear if Szapocznikow and Axell ever actually met or were aware of each other, they did move in similar circles in Paris.¹¹⁹ Axell began her career as an acclaimed theater and film star, and later transitioned to painting. René Magritte, by then a recluse, was her painting instructor and interlocutor and she learned

¹¹⁸ Filipovic, "Photosculptural," 67-68.

¹¹⁹ One of Axell's notable works, *Le Joli Mois de mai*, 1970, features a portrait of Restany in the upper left, alongside a grouping of revolutionary political women.

much from the Surrealist artist. While her early paintings in oil do have a traditionally surrealist bent, she quickly developed her own style very much engaged in the visual idioms of pop. Axell increasingly utilized plastics in her works, and often blended mass produced images with depictions of her own body, riffing on the pin-up aesthetic common both in mainstream media of the period and as a pop-art trope. Describing her aims, Axell said:

I want to create free images that are able to reflect all sorts of desire, with a brilliance that whets the appetite of the masses. My dream: to run a factory where perfected machines would cut off, paint, organize translucent, fluorescent, radiant materials following my orders and bending to my will. A factory at the service of imagination, fantasy, eroticism, producing on an assembly line works of art that are sold in supermarkets.¹²⁰

This quote could have very well been spoken by Szapocznikow, and indeed there are distinctive similarities between Axell's wish for a supermarket full of fantastical art objects and Szapocznikow's desire for her uncanny sculptures to fully embrace their commodity status (discussed further in Chapter 3). In addition, there are parallels between the two artists' interests in not only the modalities of the assembly line (mechanization, automation, repetition) but also in the materials that were currently so in vogue, namely plastics. Axell wants a factory of translucent, fluorescent, and flexible materials, which could only really indicate plastics. In fact, Axell used Plexiglas and Formica (melamine) to great effect in her work, often superimposing enamel painted layers of the translucent Plexiglas and more opaque Formica to play with depth and create otherworldly spaces for her distinctive (mostly female) figures. Szapocznikow too was interested in plastics for their connection to the repetition of mass production, as well as their physical qualities: their garishness, their lightness, their transparency. While the distinction between art object and commodity and the implications of repetition in Szapocznikow's work

¹²⁰ Evelyne Axell, *Pop Art: Nieuwe Figuratie/Nouveau Réalisme*, ed. André de Rache (Knokke-Het Zoute: Gemeentelijk Casino, 1970), n.p. Quoted in *Power Up: Female Pop Art*, ed. Angela Stief (Wien; Cologne: Kunsthalles Wein; DuMont Buchverlag, 2010), 51.

will be further elaborated in Chapter 3, the connection between Axell and Szapocznikow in terms of their material choices and interest in an erotics of commodity culture speaks to both artists' connection to pop. Both of their oeuvres explicitly meld some of the idioms of pop with a distinctively erotic focus on the feminine body. As Axell's quote above suggests, this is not just a pop of mass production and detached sex appeal; rather this is a pop of desiring subjects and desirable commodities, an erotics of consumption. Szapocznikow, I think, would have appreciated Axell's work, as in her own work there is a similar exploration of an intensely complex, emotionally charged and sensual relationship to her own body as well as to mass production and consumer culture. This is particularly true in two other series by Szapocznikow, the *Desserts* and the *Fetishes*.

A pile of breasts on a cake stand, lips served like a pudding in a crystal dish, a breast-topped ice cream sundae (nipple standing in for a cherry): at first glance, the *Desserts* are somewhat comedic, a parodic representation or literalization of the phrase that a person or object "looks good enough to eat." The colors are simultaneously realistic and fantastical, "visceral and kitsch," such as in *Dessert III* (1971): three hollow casts of pale-skinned breasts with vibrant pink nipples and two bright pink breasts with garish yellow nipples sit on a porcelain cake stand (fig. 43). In *Petit Dessert I* (1970-71), a realistic lower half of a face with pale skin and coral lips is set atop an artificial yellow ooze in a crystal dish (fig. 44). And, in *Dessert II*, a veiny-looking resin form is interposed with the cast of a breast, the nipple a striking look-a-like for a maraschino cherry on top of a sundae (fig. 45). The contrasting levels of realism in color add to an element of carnivalesque, of superfluous beautification. It is as if one were pressed against the window of a patisserie, admiring the array of delicate, artificially colored, too-perfect-or-unreal-to-eat delicacies.

Szapocznikow wasn't the only artist of the 1960s to create plastic versions of food, or use the trappings of gustatory consumption as a way to think about consumption in a broader sense. In Paris, Daniel Spoerri, who was one of the artists Restany included in *nouveau réalisme*, made pieces that feature place settings as vertical objects on the wall in some of his "snare pictures," such as *Kichka's Breakfast I*, 1960 (fig. 46). In the United States, Eva Hesse, while not making anything literally representative of food, exhibited collections of small cast-off parts, models, and experiments, or as Briony Fer has described them, "studioworks," in glass pastry cases at her 1968 solo exhibition at the Fischbach Gallery in New York (see *Untitled*, 1968, (fig. 47)).¹²¹ Bill Barrette described one of Hesse's sculptures that was exhibited in one such case as a plaster and latex "sandwich," and another as a latex "pie crust."¹²² However, as Fer has argued, the description of these small objects as food in many ways minimizes their ambiguous, viscerally strange qualities.¹²³ Contemporaneously to Hesse, Claes Oldenburg made "fancies" that he placed within similar glass pastry cases on store-bought metal and ceramic dishes (see *Pastry Case, I*, from 1961-62, (fig. 48)).¹²⁴ And, in collaboration with Patty Mucha (then Patty Oldenburg), he was also making blown-up polyurethane, vinyl, and latex versions of desserts and other food items, such as *Floor Cake*, 1962 (fig. 49).¹²⁵ Sarah Wilson has hypothesized that Szapocznikow likely saw some of Oldenburg's works, including *Floor Burger (Giant Hamburger)*, 1962, in an exhibition at the Musée Rodin in 1965.¹²⁶

¹²¹ Briony Fer, *Eva Hesse: Studiowork* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 24.

¹²² Bill Barrette, *Eva Hesse: Sculpture* (New York: Timken Publishers, 1989), 144.

¹²³ Fer, *Eva Hesse: Studiowork*, 98.

¹²⁴ Briony Fer, "The Scatter: Sculpture as Leftover," in Helen Molesworth, *Part Object Part Sculpture* (Columbus: Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University, 2005), 225.

¹²⁵ The contributions of Patty Mucha to Oldenburg's pieces are rarely, if ever, acknowledged, and her work, involvement, and contribution to many artistic developments in New York in the 1960s is only recently being explored. Her papers are now held by the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University.

¹²⁶ Wilson, "Alina Szapocznikow in Paris," 217.

The Musée Rodin was a particular favorite of Szapocznikow's (she mentions it frequently in letters to her first husband, Ryszard Stanisławski), and she frequently visited it throughout her time in Paris, both in the early 1950s as a student and then after her later, permanent move to the city in 1963.¹²⁷ The exhibition at the Musée Rodin, *Etats-Unis: sculptures du xx^e siècle (United States: Sculpture of the 20th century)*, featured sculptural work by prominent American or US-based artists including: Lee Bontecou, Louise Bourgeois, Marisol (incorrectly named Escobar Marisol in the catalogue, instead of Marisol Escobar), Louise Nevelson, Barnett Newman, Oldenburg, George Segal, and others. The catalogue essay by René d'Harnoncourt, then the director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, states that the exhibition was organized to trace the evolution of US sculpture through three phases: older artists committed to the figurative (either in scale or representation), abstract expressionist sculpture concurrent with the styles of "New American Painting," and finally combines, assemblages, and other such works that highlight an interest in new materials.¹²⁸ In this third evolution, of particular interest is Oldenburg and his plasticky, oversized food sculptures, as well as Marisol's combination of materials and fragmentation of the human figure in her pop tableaux. Szapocznikow's *Desserts* meld a fragmentation of the human form with the textural possibilities of new plastics.

While we don't know for sure that Szapocznikow attended the show, the exhibition does illustrate the motifs of American contemporary sculpture that was being transported to a French context at the time: assemblages, combines, new materials. The influence of pop art, though in early stages, is present, as is an expansion of material possibilities for sculpture. The exhibition's thematic narrative also emphasizes a turn away from more traditionally figurative sculpture

¹²⁷ Agata Jakubowska, ed. *Lovely, Human, True, Heartfelt: the Letters of Alina Szapocznikow and Ryszard Stanisławski 1948-1971* (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2012). Wilson, "Alina Szapocznikow in Paris," 215.

¹²⁸ Musée Rodin, *Etats-Unis: sculptures du xx^e siècle* (Paris: Musée Rodin, 1965), n.p. Translation mine.

toward abstraction in parallel to the contemporaneous narrative surrounding painting. The exhibition catalog boasts that the exhibition was the largest ever to be brought to a European context, which may well be true given the logistical challenges of transporting sculptural works.¹²⁹ Szapocznikow's trajectory as an artist in many ways lines up with the trajectory of sculpture that the exhibition proposes. Szapocznikow began and was trained in a classical figurative model of sculpture with traditional techniques. She then became interested in more organic, biomorphic abstraction in works from the 1950s (though during her time in Poland she also made a significant number of works that align with socialist realist aesthetics, see Prelude: Beginnings and Chapter 1). She then transitioned to a blend of abstract figuration and assemblage (such as a work like *Goldfinger*, also discussed in Chapter 1). And, most notably, she was constantly experimenting with new materials and methods, especially plastics.

The fragmented breast of the *Desserts* was not without precedents or contemporaries. César, Szapocznikow's friend and fellow artist in Paris, created a massive fragmented breast as part of a water feature on the grounds of the Rochas perfume factory in 1966. In images, the breast seems more like a small iceberg floating in the water (fig. 50). As Wilson puts it, César's enlarged breast serves as "the female complement to his thumb sculptures, initially phallus-size...[then] expanded to a height of two meters...an overdetermined symbol for the machismo and self-confidence of the Nouveau Réaliste group, where even Niki de Saint Phalle, Alina's [sic] far more visible contemporary, suffered from 'girlfriend syndrome.'"¹³⁰ César's blown-up breasts emerge from and reinforce the masculinist sexism of the popular group of artists associated with *nouveau réalisme* (who, in a way, offered a French version of pop). Szapocznikow's fragmented body parts, the breasts in the *Desserts* especially, could not be more

¹²⁹ Musée Rodin, *Etats-Unis: sculptures du xx^e siècle*, n.p. Translation mine.

¹³⁰ Wilson, "Alina Szapocznikow in Paris," 219.

different, both in scale and viewing experience and in the potential psychoanalytic readings they suggest. For Wilson, Szapocznikow's *Desserts* are inscribed with "her secret, her own condition of imminent loss" (her breast cancer diagnosis) because of their "constant obsession with mutilation or the desire to mutilate."¹³¹ Scale is part of what enacts this difference in psychoanalytic reading. César's breast is enlarged to a monumental scale, thus displacing or distancing itself from the body from which the form was taken. Szapocznikow's *Desserts*, on the other hand, maintain an intimate scale and emphasize the indexicality of the casting process, the breasts therefore seeming less a monument and more akin to mutilation. While I agree with this distinction, and while I agree that the two artists' works share a formal interest in the implications of fragmentation, Szapocznikow's *Desserts* move further away from César's enlarged body parts as they eschew the monument in favor of a cannibalistically-tinged readymade. Rather than a monument, the *Desserts* feature recognizable body parts as food-objects. Food and the body become interchangeable, blurred, and the pieces thus sit somewhere both between and beyond the puffy enlarged cakes of Oldenburg, César's machismo, and Louise Bourgeois's intimate, psychologically charged abstractions.

While the food-like breasts in *Desserts* are made out of resin, edible precedents do exist. In Catania, Sicily, you can likely find "minne di Sant' Agata" or Saint Agatha's Breasts: mounded desserts made from layered pastry, ricotta, cake, and/or chocolate, covered with a blanket of marzipan, a creamy glaze, and a cherry on top (fig. 51). They do, in fact, look like breasts. Nuns began making these desserts to honor the martyr Saint Agatha, who was punished for holding fast to her faith and rejecting a Roman official by having both of her breasts amputated. She then died of her wounds in prison. Saint Agatha is usually depicted holding her breasts on a platter, an image not that dissimilar from *Dessert III*. Whether Szapocznikow knew

¹³¹ Wilson, "Alina Szapocznikow in Paris," 219.

of this particular Italian dessert, I don't know, but it is possible, if not likely, that she was familiar with the depictions of the saint and the image of breasts served up on a platter.

This connection serves to bolster the reading of Wilson, cited above, wherein Szapocznikow's *Desserts* have an implicit reference to her own illness and experience and the mutilation of the figure. While I do not discount that there is striking interplay between a concept of mastectomy as related to Szapocznikow's own experience with breast cancer (and with the horrors of concentration camps early in her life) and the *Desserts*, it is limiting to become too attached to this reading. The reading is also somewhat misleading considering that Szapocznikow was utilizing the fragmented breast as a motif prior to her breast cancer diagnosis. In 1966, she was experimenting with the translucent properties of resin and creating lamps made from fragmented casts of breasts and lips, such as in *Sein Illuminée (Illuminated Breast)* which features both (fig. 52). Of these works, Restany stated "The forest of fire-red lips, the sprawling torso dunes with nipples glistening like pearls, the glowing sphere breasts heavy with electrical glare: these freshest works by Alina Szapocznikow bring to mind, among the wonder that is the new 'Jugendstil,' women/flowers and the splendour of bodies bulging from light flickering on the inside."¹³² The works Restany was viewing, while also fragmented breasts, did not bring to mind illness or loss for him, as Szapocznikow's breast cancer diagnosis wouldn't come until two years later. I therefore am hesitant to read the *Desserts* through the lens of mastectomy or loss, as the source models for the resin casts Szapocznikow used for these works are similar (if not identical) to those used in the earlier series of lamps. I'm interested in a psychoanalytical reading of these works only insofar as it helps to situate these pieces in relation to the concept of the part-object, the fragment, and a legacy of surrealism that makes its way into many of the pop-inflected artists whose work maintains an interest in the erotics of the body. Szapocznikow's

¹³² Restany, "Form between body and play," 191.

works help us to see some surprising, and under-acknowledged, legacies of surrealism that run through pop art.

Similar to how Szapocznikow's conceptual pieces (discussed in Chapter 1) are "drugged" or imbued with a particular kind of subversive humor, Urszula Czartoryska has noted that the *Desserts* are both humorous and present a provocation, a transgression: "the bold and impudent proposition of cannibalism—the most frightening human taboo."¹³³ To imply the devouring of flesh, especially the breast, such as is served up in *Dessert III* and *Dessert II* (1970-71), is inevitably a psychoanalytically charged gesture. Mignon Nixon reads the work of Louise Bourgeois, who also made sculptures featuring multiple breasts and other body-like forms, alongside the psychoanalytic framework of Melanie Klein, and points to the conception of the breast as an archetype of the part-object that marks "the convergence of the libido and the death drive."¹³⁴ In the logic of the part-object, "the artwork becomes the site of infantile bodily drives where the muddling up of body parts (like breast or penis)...sets off a spiral of identification in which the body is both drawn close and lost track of."¹³⁵ In Klein's formulation of first phantasies, the breast becomes a site of both rage/aggression and desire/satiation, an object both sustaining and menacing. This "oral sadism" directed at the breast becomes a vicious circle of "a devoured, and therefore devouring breast."¹³⁶ Nixon reads this circular logic as opening into the "circular logic of the pun, the circuitry of the machine, the cycle of endless consumption, the concentricity of the mise-en-abyme."¹³⁷ This connection between the part object and infinite

¹³³ Urszula Czartoryska, "Transgression. On the Message of Alina Szapocznikow's Art," in *Alina Szapocznikow - Zatrzymać Życie: Alina Szapocznikow - Capturing Life: Rysunki I Rzeźby: Drawings and Sculptures*, ed. Józef Grabski (Kraków: IRSA, 2004), 74.

¹³⁴ Mignon Nixon and Louise Bourgeois, *Fantastical Reality: Louise Bourgeois and a Story of Modern Art*, October Book (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2005), 213.

¹³⁵ Fer, *Eva Hesse: Studiowork*, 29. The phrase "sets off a spiral of identification in which the body is both drawn close and lost track of" is a direct quote from Nixon, *Fantastic Reality*, 223.

¹³⁶ Nixon, *Fantastic Reality*, 213-215.

¹³⁷ Nixon, *Fantastic Reality*, 213-215.

cycles of consumption is most interesting in considering the *Desserts* and their relationship to pop, but it is also important to tease out the connection to surrealism, which is foundational to the idea of the part object.

Art historically, the part object has its roots in surrealism's penchant for "scrambling the body's hierarchy," as well as the interest in reclaiming the discarded and imbuing objects with new meaning via the realm of dreams, fantasy, and the erotic.¹³⁸ Helen Molesworth's exhibition *Part Object Part Sculpture* details a lineage of the part object that has its roots in Duchamp and his surrealist-inflected "abiding interest in the ties binding desire to the body and to things."¹³⁹ Focusing especially on the handmade erotic objects such as *Female Fig Leaf* (1950/1961), *Objet-Dard* (1951/1962), and *Wedge of Chastity* (1954/1963) along with the handmade reproductions of Duchamp's lost readymades, the exhibition traces a history of twentieth century sculpture wherein "the problem of the object, the most predominant form of which is the commodity; the situation of desire—and the inevitability of the displacement of erotic desire onto the desire for objects; and a continual play with various forms of reproduction, replication, and repetition create a field of aesthetic play for artists in the postwar period."¹⁴⁰ Szapocznikow's later work could be described as within this field of aesthetic play. However, unlike some of the artists included in the *Part Object Part Sculpture* exhibition that eschewed the figurative in favor of a more abstracted approach to the body-object, Szapocznikow remained committed to the body as figure, even as she fragmented, replicated, and recycled it. She also more readily flirted with the codes of minimalism (see Chapter 3), conceptual art (see Chapter 1), and pop than the artists included in *Part Object Part Sculpture*. Nevertheless, the prominence of the part object is one way in which Szapocznikow's work resonates with what Butler has described as a

¹³⁸ Butler, "Soft Body/Soft Sculpture," 37. See also Fer, "The Scatter," 221-233.

¹³⁹ Molesworth, "Introduction: Part Object Part Sculpture," 19.

¹⁴⁰ Molesworth, "Introduction: Part Object Part Sculpture," 19-20.

“collective unconscious” of artists who in their work “brought a uniquely gendered and even nascently feminist perspective to the discourse of the body inherited from the Surrealists.”¹⁴¹ Interestingly, many of the artists Butler includes in this collective unconscious are artists who worked across a wide range of media and genres, pushing and pulling on the codes of different artistic trends along the way: Orlan, Annette Messager, Lynda Benglis, Bourgeois, Hannah Wilke, de Saint Phalle, Bontecou, Hesse, Rydet, and others. Like these artists, Szapocznikow is difficult to pin down to one movement, style, or material process. Considering her work in constellation with other artists whose work similarly blends discourses of the body with a surrealist inflection opens up the possibility of connecting her work to larger trends, rather than isolating her practice as an outlier because it doesn’t fit into dominant trends.

Surrealism is a thread throughout Szapocznikow’s oeuvre from *Noga* (1962) onwards. I find the particularity of this idea of an inherited surrealist approach to the gendered body fruitful for thinking about Szapocznikow’s pop-ish works that play with consumerism and everyday objects. This surrealist lineage includes artist Meret Oppenheim, whose haptic sculptures rework everyday objects to uncanny effect. In her famous *Object* (1936), for example, a porcelain tea cup, saucer, and spoon are lined with lush fur (fig. 53). One can also think of *Ma gouvernante - My Nurse - Mein Kindermädchen* (1936/1967), a pair of white heels trussed up like a turkey on a silver platter (fig. 54). More contemporaneous to Szapocznikow is Oppenheim’s *Das Frühlingsfest (Spring Banquet)*. The piece was first staged in Bern in April 1959 and then reproduced as *Le Festin (The Feast)* or *Le Festin Cannibale (The Cannibal Feast)* or *Dîner sur la femme nue (Dinner on the Nude Woman)* by request of André Breton at the *EROS* exhibition in Paris in December 1959. The work consisted of a life-sized papier-mâché woman’s body, stretched out on a table with a plethora of food served on and in her. Participants, or guests,

¹⁴¹ Butler, “Soft Body/Soft Sculpture,” 37.

present for the feast had to eat with their bare hands. In photographs of the Paris edition, lobsters lie on the woman's legs, mussels and cockle shells fill up her belly cavity, and various fruits adorn her arms and chest (fig. 55). The impact of *Dîner sur la femme nue*, which has been reproduced in several exhibitions since, "all rests on the sense of touch; the fingers on the food served on the naked skin of a woman."¹⁴² The guests, whether actually participating or imagining doing so, have to confront the range of feelings from a slight titillation at the novelty of the experience to horror, with other feelings like pleasure, discomfort, humor, and embarrassment intertwining as one reaches out, touches, grabs, and eats in an imitation of cannibalism. Indeed, in *Dîner sur la femme nue* the "mannequin cannot escape cannibalization," as order and disorder, sex and food intermingle through the body invaded by foodstuffs.¹⁴³

While Szapocznikow's *Desserts* don't include an invitation to dine, there is a kind of confusion in the recognition of the serving vessels (a cake stand, a crystal bowl) as what they are, vessels for food, and this invitation is what gives the works the transgressive quality that Czartoryska describes above. Thus viewers are both pulled in and pushed away, moved between attraction and disgust. This oscillation is inherent to the dynamic of disgust itself and its paradoxical quality. Eugenie Brinkema argues that the paradox "resides in this affective ambivalence whereby aversion to an object is superimposed alongside attraction toward the same object...disgust "presupposes...a possibility of a positive laying hold of the object, whether by touching, consuming, or embracing it."¹⁴⁴ There is a "certain macabre allure" to disgust, which makes the simple process of either affirming or refusing the object more complex. The macabre allure of the *Desserts* is palpable in Szapocznikow's intermingling of the aesthetics of sugary

¹⁴² *Spring Banquet* was reproduced in 2004 at the Museum of Modern Art in Stockholm, at the opening of the 1988 exhibition *Women and Surrealism* in Lausanne, as well as for the 1988 film *Imago*. Elizabeth Mansén, "Fingertip Knowledge: Meret Oppenheim on the Sense of Touch," *The Senses and Society*, 9:1, 5-15, 12.

¹⁴³ Renée Riese Hubert, "From *Déjeuner en fourrure* to *Caroline*: Meret Oppenheim's Chronicle of Surrealism," *Dada/Surrealism* 18 (1990): 36-49, 40.

¹⁴⁴ Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014), 164-165.

treats and a dissected corpse. The surrealist penchant for fragmenting the body in the *Desserts* meets a cheeky mirroring of consumer culture's incorporation of the female body as an object for improvement, beautification, and modification through commodities.

The contrast between the appearance of the *Desserts* and their actual material composition is another factor in the oscillating reaction to the work. They look simultaneously sugary and realistically fleshy, but are in actuality plastic. About a decade prior to the creation of the *Desserts*, Roland Barthes described the aesthetic of food presentation that was increasingly inhabiting the pages of magazines like *Elle*. In the essay "Cuisine ornamentale" (Ornamental Cuisine), which was eventually republished in the 1957 *Mythologies*, Barthes points to the smooth coating that was becoming ubiquitous in food advertisements:

[T]he prevailing substantial category is surface sheen: visible effort has been made to produce glazed, carefully smoothed finishes, to conceal whatever aliment is underneath by a sleek deposit of sauces, icings, jellies, and creams. Such coatings derive, of course, from the very finality of superficies, vested in a primarily visual order. The magazine advocates a cuisine devoted to sight, that most distingué of the senses, for there is, in this insistence on *appearance*, a permanent craving for distinction...a cuisine of surfaces and alibis which consistently endeavors to attenuate or even to disguise the primary nature of foodstuffs, the brutality of meats, or the abruptness of shellfish.¹⁴⁵

These images of food in *Elle* were a "dream cuisine," and the food they presented was "at once close up and inaccessible, whose consumption can readily be accomplished in a single glance."¹⁴⁶

The visual, then, was (and is) a primary way in which postwar consumer culture functioned, in Western Europe (as well as other parts of the developed capitalist world).

While Szapocznikow produced the *Desserts* while living in Paris, I also want to acknowledge that she lived the majority of her life in Poland and kept close connections to family, friends, and artists in Poland and other countries in Eastern Europe. She moved back and

¹⁴⁵ Roland Barthes, "Ornamental Cuisine" in *Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard and Annette Lavers, 142-144 (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 142. Emphasis original.

¹⁴⁶ Barthes, "Ornamental Cuisine," 144.

forth between studios in Paris and Poland until her permanent move to Paris in 1968. Many of Szapocznikow's letters to friends and family from the 1950s and 1960s mention the recipients' need for goods, either the request to have them sent or the offer to send them. Stockings, shoes, chocolates, yarn, paper, and more are requested and offered, packages promised and money exchanged. The political complications of visas and passports also recur throughout Szapocznikow's correspondence, as both she and her Polish friends attempted to travel between Poland and other parts of Europe with varying degrees of success.¹⁴⁷

Thus, while she was enmeshed within the open and increasingly consumption-driven society of Paris, Szapocznikow was not at all disconnected from the varying levels of mobility and access to commodities in other parts of Europe. I do not, however, want to suggest a simplistic framework wherein Eastern European consumerism is defined by limitation and longing, and Western European consumerism by excess and emptiness. Recent scholarship on the countries within what became known as Eastern Europe during the Cold War has made clear that such binary understandings are often inadequate, if not inaccurate, as the particular forms of consumerism and access to commodities varied from country to country. Importantly, these variations and “consumer experiments and experiences in Cold War Eastern Europe by no means constituted mere imitations or reactions to capitalist patterns of consumption,” but instead involved complex and often paradoxical blends of state ideology and the pursuit of everyday comfort and pleasure.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, in the 1960s, many countries experienced different forms of revolutions in consumerism, wherein bright packaging, branded goods, supermarkets and fashion boutiques, and lifestyle magazines promoted an idea of “socialist consumerism.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ See *Lovely, Human, True, Heartfelt: The Letters of Alina Szapocznikow and Ryszard Stanislawski 1948-1971*, especially pages 187-208.

¹⁴⁸ Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger, *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

¹⁴⁹ David Crowley, “Pop Effects in Eastern Europe under Communist Rule,” in *The World Goes Pop*, ed. Jessica Morgan and Flavia Frigeri (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 33.

Szapocznikow's work, I'd like to argue, exemplifies the nuance of considering a work as "pop" through the lens of both Eastern and Western European definitions, nuance I hope to articulate through placing the *Desserts* in relation to two projects: the 1966 Czechoslovak new wave film *Sedmikrásky* (Daisies) by Věra Chytilová and Polish artist Natalia L.L.'s 1972-75 photographic series *Consumer Art*.

Daisies follows two anti-heroines (Marie-1 and Marie-2) who have decided that the world is "spoiled" and therefore they will be too. They gobble their way through the film, whether by ordering the menu at the expense of old sugar-daddies they abandon (sans payment) at train stations, getting totally sloshed at a cabaret, roasting phallic foodstuffs, or gleefully destroying an entire banquet during the climax of the film. The film received mixed reception, and has alternately been interpreted as critical of bourgeois capitalism and complicit with it.¹⁵⁰ Chytilová herself has added some confusion to this multivalent reception, insisting that the film was meant as a moral allegory that implicitly criticized its two protagonists' bourgeois, vapid existence. Communist officials, who censored the film and barred Chytilová from working for six years (from 1969-1975), stated the film was antithetical to the values of the socialist state because of its celebration of the two depraved heroines' excess and food wastage.¹⁵¹ So is the film critical or celebratory of its protagonists? Neither? Both? The strangely contradictory reception hinges on the simultaneous emptiness and excessive consumption that the two protagonists enact: throughout, they repeatedly insist on how bored they are, how boring and "spoiled" everything and everyone is, how devoid of satisfaction and meaning the world is; all the while they try to fill this void by ebulliently eating almost everything in their path. Their

¹⁵⁰ For more on the film's critical reception see Katarina Soukup, "Banquet of Profanities: Food and Subversion in Vera Chytilová's *Daisies*," *Tessera (Burnaby)* 24 (1998): 38-52.

¹⁵¹ Bliss Cua Lim, "Dolls in Fragments: *Daisies* as feminist Allegory," *Camera Obscura* 47, vol. 16, no. 2 (2001): 36-77, 37-38.

gluttony includes, during one scene, eating cut-out magazine advertisements of food (that are, it can be noted, similar in aesthetic to those described by Barthes) when they've run out of real food. Thus, while the film performs excess and food waste, it does so in order to foreground the emptiness and insatiability of the two main characters and the world they inhabit, even though the cause of their dissatisfaction remains unclear (State Communism? A lack of access to goods? Gender norms?). Perhaps the film is purposefully ambivalent.

Indeed, the narrative structure of *Daisies* emphasizes the ambivalence of the film's moral compass. Chytilová employs tactics typical of new wave film: the film jumps between color and black and white and intermittently uses color filters; still images are occasionally cut into the film strip to jarring effect; and image and sound are often unaligned. At one point, footage of an explosion of an atomic bomb with its subsequent mushroom cloud is cut into the film strip.

While I do not want to make the argument that Czech new wave film is equivalent to pop art, I do find it striking that the concerns of the film, and the intertwining of images of disaster with a kind of send-up of consumerism, resonate strongly with approaches associated with pop.

Regardless, the film employs a collage technique and eschews a straightforward narrative arc, thus refusing the narrative clarity required of most films made under Soviet rule through the 1970s. One could wonder whether it was actually the ambiguity and ambivalence of the film's structural and moral narrative that prompted the authorities to ban the film, rather than the more conveniently obvious "waste" of food.

The two heroines' quest for some kind of entertainment, something to interest and fill their need, is never satisfied and their insatiability is the driving force of the film's action. Insatiability, of course, revolves around the unfulfillment of a desire; a desire or appetite that can never be satisfied. In *Daisies*, insatiability is spot on to describe the two anti-heroines, as desire

and literal appetite are one and the same throughout the film. Appetite for food is blurred with the desire for pleasure, for entertainment, for a kind of fulfillment. As David Crowley has pointed out, the two anti-heroines' desire is for a kind of luxury, whether that be multi-course restaurant meals, slick advertisements, or the banquet they destroy. By eating it all up with enthusiastic yet strangely vacant gusto, the two protagonists "make an excess of what was already excessive."¹⁵² *Daisies*, then, poses a similarly gastronomic invective against bourgeois consumer culture as do Szapocznikow's *Desserts* in the way that consumption, as in eating, is subsumed into the realm of the purely visual.

Polish artist Natalia LL's iconic photographic and video piece *Consumer Art* parallels *Daisies* in that both foreground questions of desire, pleasure, excess, and privation through the material of food. *Consumer Art* features a series of photographs and videos of conventionally attractive women licking, sucking, and eating various foodstuffs such as a banana or an ice cream cone, as well as performing facial expressions with the lips and tongue, no prop required (fig. 56). While *Consumer Art* can easily be, and has been, read as a proto-feminist work that satirizes the fetishistic relationship between women's bodies, sex, and commodities rampant in advertisements of the period, the context of the work's production in Poland is important for understanding the critical nuance of the piece. As several scholars have noted, bananas, while obviously standing in for a phallus in the piece, were rare in Poland and in *Consumer Art* this scarcity is in some ways disregarded through the use of a rare object for pleasure rather than fulfilling a nutritional need. Similar, then, to how *Daisies* was criticized by Czech authorities for its food waste, *Consumer Art* could be and has been said to perform a kind of excessive wastefulness for the purposes of sensual titillation and entertainment. Agata Jakubowska argues

¹⁵² David Crowley, "Consumer Art and Other Commodity Aesthetics in Eastern Europe under Communist Rule," in *Natalia LL: Consumer Art and Beyond*, ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw, Poland: Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, 2017), 141.

that *Consumer Art* is “concentrating not on the play with consumerist culture but on the provocation...moral provocation connected to pleasure.”¹⁵³ Indeed, *Consumer Art* in many ways exaggerates the “techniques of arousal employed in advertising” to foreground and poke fun at the kind of fantasies advertisements projected through commodities.¹⁵⁴ Yugoslavian artist Sanja Ivekovic similarly took on the media landscape of advertisements for luxury or international goods in work *Sweet Violence*, from 1974 (fig. 57). The piece features a recording of a daily advertising broadcast that Ivekovic interposes with black bars, emphasizing the illusion of freedom or lifestyle choice that such advertisements offered. As Crowley has argued, both *Consumer Art* and *Sweet Violence* show an artistic interest in how the inundation of media images impacted people’s lives and perception, Natalia LL “distinguishing authentic sexuality from its reified forms” and Ivekovic examining “how private life is haunted by the commercial images.”¹⁵⁵ Just as the everyday world of *Daisies* has been “spoiled” for Marie-1 and Marie-2 in that everything they consume is empty, so too did commodity culture create an elision of desire and need, the commodity and the subject.

The commodification of the subject is a theme that Szapocznikow explored in a series of works entitled the *Fetishes*. These works include ashtrays and other pieces that featured objects from Szapocznikow’s daily life, as well as casts from her body. *Fajrant (End of Day’s Work)*, 1971, features a pink rubber work glove, fingers gripped around a paint brush, frozen in goopy polyester resin (fig. 58). *Bouche en marche (Fétiche III) (Marching Lips (Fetish III))*, consists of a cast of Szapocznikow’s lips on a spindly stem (similar in appearance to her *Lampe Bouches*, see Chapter 3) that emerges out of a landscape of polyester-encased lace and casts of a mouth,

¹⁵³ Agata Jakubowska, “The Attractive Banality of Natalia LL’s *Consumer Art* (1972-1975),” *Nordlit* 11, no. 1 (2007): 241-248, 247.

¹⁵⁴ Crowley, “Pop Effects in Eastern Europe under Communist Rule,” 33.

¹⁵⁵ Crowley, “Pop Effects in Eastern Europe under Communist Rule,” 33.

ear, and eye (fig. 59). Lace recurs as a material in several of the works from 1971, sometimes with more of an explicit reference to lingerie and the garments Szapocznikow wore on a daily basis. *Sculpture (Fétiche IV) (Sculpture (Fetish IV))*, 1971, features nylon stockings and lace lingerie-wrapped casts of breasts and mouths, some emerging from the tangled mass of fabric as if reaching up, gasping for air (fig. 60). The entirety of the work is covered in polyester resin and painted black, further emphasizing an unsettling quality to it: the forms seem almost charred, or completely decayed. Nylon stockings reappear in *Untitled (Fétiche VII) (Fetish VII)*, 1971, again wrapping a cast of a mouth, and tethering its floating form back to a mess of materials, including a tumescent cast of a rounded form (a thigh? a buttock? a breast?) and a discomfiting mass of grayish wool (fig. 61). Another piece from 1971, *La Larme (Tear)* is, somewhat uniquely, hung on the wall like a relief, and features a lace backdrop out of which a single pendulous polyester resin breast emerges and hangs, like a teardrop (fig. 62). These works, similarly to *Daisies*, foreground the combination of decadent pleasure with a kind of suffocation. Just as the protagonists in *Daisies* seem to be trapped in a pursuit of a satisfyingly entertaining experience, in the *Fetishes* the lingerie, stockings, and other such small moments of glamor from Szapocznikow's life are trapped in layers of resin.

The titling of these works as fetishes is fascinating, but also somewhat ambiguous. One could consider them in the context of the legacy of surrealism discussed earlier in this chapter, as “the surrealist reorganization of the body tended to revolve around the notion of the fetish.”¹⁵⁶ The fetish, for the surrealists, borrowed from a Freudian paradigm of the fetish, wherein there is a displacement of desire and/or fantasy for something absent onto a substitute object or body part, usually one that is inappropriate for sexual purposes. While the surrealists utilized a kind of estrangement to defamiliarize found objects and insert them into the realm of fantasy, the

¹⁵⁶ Butler, “Soft Body/Soft Sculpture,” 37.

Freudian fetish has “some demonstrable relation to the person whom it replaces (e.g. items of clothing, or underwear).”¹⁵⁷ Szapocznikow appropriately uses increasingly intimate items in these works, from her work gloves encased in resin to her own lingerie and stockings, to the “rigidified ‘waste’ of female carnality (underwear and cotton wool) with polyester” in *It’s Running Red*, 1967 (fig. 63).¹⁵⁸ She even presages her own funeral with *L’Enterrement d’Alina (Alina’s Funeral)*, 1970. The work consists of a series of resin encased photographs of friends and other materials molded into tumescent forms (discussed further in Chapter 4), mounted onto a polychrome panel and placed on the wall (fig. 64). The work includes items of Szapocznikow’s clothing, detritus from her studio, and other personal items forever preserved. While the work isn’t typically considered alongside Szapocznikow’s *Fetishes*, I think it shares a similar awareness of how her work, and herself, would be fetishized. The juxtaposition of her personal items alongside casts of breasts, feet, and lips, seems almost as if the works are literalizing the fetish as a motif. Szapocznikow, then, made fetishes of herself, both her body and objects that come into intimate contact with her in day to day life.

Some have read these works in relation to Szapocznikow’s battle with breast cancer and her knowledge of her own mortality. While I do think the works relate to Szapocznikow’s knowledge that her work would outlive her (which, for many artists, is an inescapable fact), I don’t want to dwell on these works’ relationship to illness or death. Instead, I find them interesting when related to a strain in art of the 1960s often described as “radical narcissism” wherein (usually female) artists made use of their own bodies in performative, often sensual, and often confrontational ways. As Amelia Jones describes, feminist body and performance artists

¹⁵⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: The 1905 Edition*, eds. Philippe van Haute and Herman Westerink (London: Verso, 2016), 16.

¹⁵⁸ Jola Gola, “L’Oeil de Boeuf: Finding the Key to the Works of Alina Szapocznikow,” in *Alina Szapocznikow: Awkward Objects*, ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2011), 22.

were often dismissed, or criticized for their narcissism. Jones shifts the term away from its negative connotations to instead suggest that an exploration and fixation on the self enacted by artists such as Wilke, Carolee Schneemann and others, is enacted for radical ends that “inexorably [lead] to an exploration of and implication in the other: the self turns itself inside out, as it were, projecting its internal structures of identification and desire outward... narcissism interconnects internal self and external self as well as the self and the other.”¹⁵⁹ Szapocznikow’s process of casting from her own body, and the many, many images of her in her studio playfully posing with her sculptures as if they are prostheses, connects her work to this relationality. The fragmented body in her work is both an anonymous body, the art historical, figurative body, and her specific body.

While Szapocznikow was reticent to speak about herself in interviews, she was very aware of the tendency towards self-promotion in artists. In an interview for a 1969 episode of the TV show *L’art et les hommes: Journal de Voyage* that focused on Polish art, Szapocznikow has the following conversation with Jean Marie Drot:

Drot: Is this your leg?

Szapocznikow: Yes, sculpted a little, slightly smoothed out. Half of it was my leg...

Drot: What do you mean—half?

Szapocznikow: Up to here, it’s my calf, here it’s sculpted, and here it’s rough.

Drot: You do not say anything about yourself, instead you depict yourself...

Szapocznikow: All artists are exhibitionists. [Laughs] I say nothing, maybe I even say too much... We always say too much about our lives.

Drot: This makes you laugh.

Szapocznikow: I want to do a third. This is a cast of my mouth.

Drot: So that’s one more version of you.¹⁶⁰

In the critical reception of her work critics often commented on her personality, her woman-ness, and her looks. It isn’t hard to understand why, as images from her archive show a smiling, vital,

¹⁵⁹ Jones, *Body Art*, 46.

¹⁶⁰ Drot, “En Pologne: 6eme partie de la liberté des Beaux-Arts en Pologne ou Jdanov n’est pas polonais,” 1969.

warm, and glamorous artist who seemed to love the camera. More than herself, however, Szapocznikow's archive is filled with photographs of her studio, her process. Her *Fetishes* read as an acknowledgement and even a celebration of the intimate relationship she had with her work. The pieces and parts of her body and her daily life are parts of herself, but also become estranged from the self when they are refashioned into works of art. It is almost as if Szapocznikow responded to the desire for statements regarding her work and her biography (As well as the tendency for critics to comment on her looks before her art) with these pieces, cheekily critiquing the fetishism of artists-as-personalities by creating literal fetishes of herself.

One could also consider these works alongside an equally influential conceptualization of the fetish, that of Marx's commodity fetish. In simple terms, commodity fetishism results when the social character of the labor and materials required to produce an object are concealed, and relationships between people become confused with relationships between things. Through this concealment of social relations and labor, "the products of labor become commodities, sensual things which are at the same time suprasensible or social."¹⁶¹ Art objects, of course, are commodities to be bought and sold, yet they also maintain a separation from the realm of mere commodities and they often insist on remaining connected to their maker and the materials they are made from. Szapocznikow was well aware of the commodity-status of art objects, and the arbitrariness of the amount of money often paid for artworks. In *My American Dream*, discussed in Chapter 1, she comments on the sheer ridiculousness of the value of art, stating that:

this work or object will be very expensive, completely useless, and a reflection of the god of supreme luxury. In other words a 'complete' work of art. If there exists such a fantastic snob as who would order this work to be made and put it right on his private lawn to greet his guests and invite them for drinks on the marble seats, then my American Dream will be accomplished.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume I, Ben Fowkes, trans. (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990), 165.

¹⁶² Szapocznikow, "My American Dream," 1970.

This humorous comment on the specifically American desire for useless objects of luxury is funny in that she proposes that the owner of the work use it as more than an aesthetic object. It should be placed on the lawn, climbed on, an accessory for a party. In a way, her *Fetishes* both reinforce and reverse the commodity fetish. In an almost surrealist, absurd imagining of artworks on lawns, as food items, and fetishes to the self, Szapocznikow calls attention to the uselessness of artworks at the same time that she remains committed to her work as an artist.

The *Desserts* and *Fetishes* exemplify what Butler, as cited above, has described as a “uniquely gendered and even nascent feminist perspective to the discourse of the body inherited from the Surrealists.”¹⁶³ They also add to this blend of (proto)feminism, surrealism, and the body the trappings of pop art, thereby revealing some of the surprising ways in which the legacies of surrealism were still very much at play in work of the 1960s that otherwise wouldn’t seem so quintessentially surrealist. Most importantly, however, these works illuminate a strain of pop art wherein desire, and, by extension, pleasure, is inherent to (rather than removed from) consumer culture, even if that desire is subsumed into the purely visual realm and the pleasure is fleeting, at best. Works like Szapocznikow’s, Axell’s, and Natalia LL’s, and films like *Daisies*, help to add nuance and complexity to understandings of how (proto)feminist art and pop art collide in various contexts of the 1960s. And they help us see how female artists in particular were pulling on the codes of pop to point to the ways consumer culture often placed women in a double-bind: consumer and consumed, subject and object. The next chapter explores this question further by focusing on a series of works Szapocznikow made as objects for the home, purposefully destabilizing the distinction between artwork and mere commodity.

¹⁶³ Butler, “Soft Body/Soft Sculpture,” 37.

Chapter 3: “Awkward Objects”: Lit-up lips and fragmented torsos

In a text dated March 7, 1968, Szapocznikow explains her interest in using plastic materials for their ability to “express and capture our age because of their repetitive possibilities, their transparency, their inexpensiveness.”¹⁶⁴ She goes on to state that her age is an “age of modular multiplication, of swift mass consumption, of automatic repetition. These symptoms that are so characteristic, so superficially gay and so sadly monotone and moving. I hope to explore deeply the problem of the repeated module, in direct contact with the module’s industrial production.”¹⁶⁵ Szapocznikow links industrial production, emotional production, and the production of repeated modules (a mode of composition often associated with US minimalist artists of the 1960s). She draws a connection between the commodity production methods emblematic of the decade (multiplication, consumption, and automated repetition) and a particular set of emotions or affects associated with these methods (playfulness, the uncanny, and sensuality). This chapter will explore how Szapocznikow’s process of making and her artworks often maintain an ambivalent and contradictory relationship with one another: her interest in the repetitive possibilities of mechanical production and industrial materials is often complicated by her commitment to casting as a technique and the body as form.

This tension between process and result is especially palpable in two loosely connected groups of works I’ll call the *Bellies* and the *Lamps*. In each series, Szapocznikow utilizes a specific form of serial repetition to create sculptures that were intended to function as quotidian objects for the home. This chapter will focus on how the *Bellies* and the *Lamps* mimic (in appearance only) the methods of mass production to create uncanny works that sit ambiguously between high art and functional design, sculpture and objecthood. These “awkward objects,” as

¹⁶⁴ Alina Szapocznikow, “Les matériaux plastiques, que j’utilise...,” March 7, 1968, illustration no. 3833, Alina Szapocznikow Archive. Facsimile and translation in *Alina Szapocznikow: Sculpture Undone*, 108.

¹⁶⁵ Szapocznikow, “Les matériaux plastiques, que j’utilise...,” March 7, 1968.

Szapocznikow described her sculptural work from the late 1960s, do not fully conform to the realm of either high art or design; instead, they ambiguously move between the two.

Art historically, to repeat a module in a serial format is a strategy that has become characteristic of American minimalism (and to some extent conceptual art and pop art). Szapocznikow was likely familiar with American minimalism, if only peripherally. Of course, not all artists working in a serial format in the 1960s can be automatically lumped into the concerns of dominant styles like minimalism, and indeed the serial format has long been part of artistic production. However, an important shift took place during the 1960s in many artists' and critics' understanding of what a "series" is, what it consists of, and how it affects the temporal, aesthetic, and phenomenological relationship between and among a group of artworks, and between viewers and works. Prior to the late 1950s and 1960s, to work in a series often denoted compositional progression from one piece to another, all variations on a theme. Conversely, for minimalist artists of the 1960s, seriality or a serial aesthetic was distinct from working in a series. Rather than an investigation into composition and questions of light, time, and movement via a single subject or motif, minimalist artists approached seriality as anti-compositional, a way of exploring how order is manifested. This is exemplified in Mel Bochner's 1967 text on minimalism "The Serial Attitude," which states that "serial order is a method, not a style," and in the famed logic of Donald Judd's "one thing after another," wherein the ordering of a series of works is not "rationalistic and underlying but is simply order, like that of continuity."¹⁶⁶ In other words, order is not necessarily determined by theme or progression, but rather by simple relationships in time and space as the viewer encounters the work phenomenologically. A group of Judd's cubes, for example, are not a series in so far as there is a progression from one to the

¹⁶⁶ Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," in *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 824-828, 827.

next, a development on a motif, rather they are all the same and become serial in how we experience them one after another after another. Szapocznikow's work, particularly her *Bellies* and *Lamps*, operate between the more traditional understanding of a series and the one expounded by minimalism. Her process involves a repetitive, serial use of certain modules (a cast of a particular belly, particular lips, a single breast), but the finished works suggest a deep and probing exploration of those modules as a motif wherein not all iterations are the same.

The minimalist "serial attitude" has become a dominant way of understanding how repetition functions in Euro-American art since the 1960s. However, in *The Infinite Line: Remaking Art after Modernism*, Briony Fer argues that "seriality" is not, and was never, solely concerned with the approaches of minimalism, nor was it straightforwardly and consistently defined and executed by minimalist artists. Instead, to work in a series is much more nuanced than Judd's "one thing after another." Fer defines a series as "a number of connected elements with a common strand linking them together, often repetitively, often in succession." For Fer, a series does not only entail a repetition of single forms (à la Judd's cubes), but also denotes a range of "mutually interwoven" forms, ideas, and concepts. Fer traces the emergence of this idea of repetition back to the late 1950s and the transition from a collage aesthetic to a serial one, as artists grappled with "what it meant to continue to make art after modernism."¹⁶⁷ That is, in the wake of the exhaustion of an idea of art as autonomous and separate from life, and with the increasing infiltration of the concerns and materials of day to day life into art, the significance of seriality in artistic production changed. This transition from a collage aesthetic to working in a series parallels Szapocznikow's move from the assemblage sculptures discussed in Chapter 1 to more explicit experimentation with the repetitive possibilities of the casting process.

¹⁶⁷ Fer, *The Infinite Line*, 3.

Fer takes a methodological starting point from Deleuze (*Difference and Repetition* was published in 1968), who she argues “can be seen as symptomatic as well as brilliantly diagnostic of the very preoccupation with and embeddedness in repetition” that she analyzes in late modern art.¹⁶⁸ For Deleuze, there are a multitude of registers of repetition, and thus for an analysis of art, repetition doesn’t always operate against the aura of a single work. Instead, repetition can generate new aesthetic strategies within the distinction between an individual artwork and a repeated multiple. Repetition is not solely a matter of ordering, but rather “it is a means of disordering and undoing.”¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, Fer notes that serial repetition affords a way for artists to “dramatise the temporal” through “animating and transforming the most everyday and routine habits of looking.”¹⁷⁰ I follow Fer’s analysis of series to examine Szapocznikow’s use of repetition as a method to not only problematize the single, auratic work of art, but also to make messy and diffuse the categorical requirements that distinguish sculpture from everyday objects in how the viewer is meant to engage with the works themselves.

If one considers Szapocznikow’s practice as a whole, and examines her drawings along with her sculptures, it is evident that reusing and refashioning forms is a technique that permeates her work. While repeating sketches and drawings is a typical part of sculptural composition, Anna Żakiewicz has suggested that Szapocznikow became attuned to “the power of expressiveness that lay in repetitiveness” as a technique unto itself while working on a series of monotypes from 1960-1965 (figs. 65).¹⁷¹ A monotype requires only a surface like a sheet of glass or printing plate, ink or paint, and paper. The design is added free-hand to the plate, and then is imprinted on the paper, resulting in a unique print. For Szapocznikow, monotypes presented an

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*, 3-4.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, 2.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*, 3.

¹⁷¹ Anna Żakiewicz, “On Alina Szapocznikow’s Drawings,” in *Alina Szapocznikow - Zatrzymać Życie: Alina Szapocznikow - Capturing Life: Rysunki I Rzeźby: Drawings and Sculptures* (Krakow: IRSA, 2004), 41.

entirely different manifestation of drawing, and introduced an element of chance in how the pigment would spread and overlap on the paper. Monotypes have the potential to result in repeating forms, but always with unavoidable variation. In this way, the method is similar to Szapocznikow's casting process: the variability of the imprint of ink on paper mirrors the unpredictable imprint of flesh on plaster, resin, and foam.

From 1968 to her death in 1973, Szapocznikow increasingly utilized polyurethane foam. Polyurethane is a plastic polymer that was developed for construction purposes as an efficient way to seal building joints and create insulation and filling for furniture cushions. The foam Szapocznikow used (likely ester based) began as a liquid and expanded when exposed to air, making it both something she could manipulate (it will fill up a mold and take its form, for example) and something that took on a will of its own if allowed to expand free-form. Like many experimental materials used by artists in the 1960s, polyurethane was quite toxic, a fact not known until later.¹⁷² Szapocznikow sometimes used the polyurethane foam by itself, such as with the 1968 *Ventres-Coussins (Belly Cushions)* series (fig. 66), and sometimes combined it with her other plastic polymer of choice, polyester resin. Polyester resin, in contrast to polyurethane foam, is almost always poured to fill a mold or encase an object, so there is less room for formal chance as it hardens. As discussed in Chapter 2, the two materials differ in textural quality: resin sometimes retains a translucency, and has a soft, matte surface texture (especially if a powder such as talc is dusted on the mold before pouring the resin in), and it seems solid, if somewhat pliable. The foam, in contrast, is opaque, almost matte, and can be smooth if poured into a mold but often forms a wrinkled texture due to the material's reliance on air to take up volume and its eventual deflation as it ages. The skin-like quality of the surface of the foam also contributes to

¹⁷² Thea van Oosten, *PUR Facts: Conservation of Polyurethane Foam in Art and Design: PUR Research Project*, Vol. 41333 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011).

its squishy quality; one is very tempted to touch it, to press one's finger in to see if it springs back or sinks.

Szapocznikow started using polyurethane foam in her *Expansions* series, which includes works like *Stele* and *Headless Torso* discussed in Chapter 2, as well as the *Bellies* and other works. This loose series exemplifies her experimentation with the material. It flows freely, contains embedded resin casts and natural materials, and captures the imprint of body parts. The range of uses and the variance in tactility of the substance are what is most striking about this series: polyurethane's texture can appear molten, hardened, oozing, encrusted, oily, dry, soft, and rock-like. In some works, the material evokes pollution or toxicity, such as in *Pollution II* or *Grande Plage (Big Beach)*, both from 1968 (figs. 67-68). In others, it seems like fertile soil, as in *Le Couronne de la Mariée (The Crown of the Bride or Bride's wreath)*, 1968, wherein grass and small lip casts emerge in a whimsical circle (fig. 69). In still others, it takes on the contrasting textural appearances of rough and smoothly polished black stone: *Janus* or *Les Capuchons*, *Jambes noyées (Drips, embedded legs)*, both from 1968, are good examples (figs. 70-71). Also in 1968, Szapocznikow made at least one abstract sculpture in black granite, *Czarna (Black)*, that plays on the contrast between polished and unpolished stone (fig. 72). That year, Szapocznikow visited a quarry in Querceta, Italy and sent a quick note to Restany describing how impressed she was with the site.¹⁷³ Restany's catalog essay for her 1968 exhibition (which featured works in the *Expansions* series) responds to the works with a connection to landscape. He writes (of *Grand Plage*):

Double metamorphosis of this magical carpet, it is the night that becomes woman. In the spontaneous line-up of bellies on a foam beach, it is the warm sea sand or the cold lava that become flesh, availability and desire of flesh. The soft foam casts create their own

¹⁷³ The postcard featured a black and white photograph of the quarry on the front. Anke Kempkes, "Black Drips and Dark Matter - The Luxury Gap - Concept Individuel - Quarry Desert," in *Alina Szapocznikow: Awkward Objects*, ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2011), 180.

psychosensory environment: in this feast for the spirit and the senses, the industrial nature is organically bound to Nature at large.¹⁷⁴

Anke Kempkes has connected the kind of cosmic, mystical, and psychosexual ideas Restany evokes here with the “sensationalism of landscape” often associated with Earth or Land Art, as well as with the concept of the “Non-Site” in the work of American artists like Robert Smithson.¹⁷⁵ The quarry, for Smithson, was an “entropic” landscape, a place of constant flux, fragmentation, and disorder on a time scale beyond the human.¹⁷⁶ (One can also consider Szapocznikow’s “Operation Vesuvius” proposal for an ice rink on top of a volcanic crater in a similar vein—see Chapter 1.) However, while works in Szapocznikow’s *Expansions* series do have an entropic quality, the autonomy of the poured material itself adding to this, I hesitate to connect these works directly to Earth Art or Smithson’s Non-Site. Szapocznikow never lets these works stray too far from human scale, the physicality of the human body, both in the form and size of the finished works and in how they are made. As Restany notes in the text quoted above, the works maintain a connection to the erotic fleshiness of the body even as they are produced serially using the methods of mass production.

Szapocznikow had photographs taken of her experimentation with polyurethane in her studio.¹⁷⁷ In the images, often taken in a serial format, we see her pouring the material, manipulating it with her hands, embedding other casts within it, filling molds, and letting it expand. The polyurethane is never far from her hands, and there is an intimate physicality to her process of working with it even if it is an industrial material used in factory production. I

¹⁷⁴ Pierre Restany, “La Nature Moderne est Amour,” in *Alina Szapocznikow* catalog (Brussels: Galerie Coggieme, 1968), n.p.

¹⁷⁵ Kempkes, “Black Drips and Dark Matter,” 182-184.

¹⁷⁶ Eugenie Tsai, “Robert Smithson: Plotting a Line from Passaic, New Jersey to Amarillo, Texas,” in *Robert Smithson* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004), 15.

¹⁷⁷ See folder titled “Documentation of Work on the Sculptures from the Series ‘Expansions,’ 1968,” Alina Szapocznikow Archive.

couldn't help but think of Lynda Benglis's poured works, which have been called fallen paintings, pictorial sculptures, or "frozen gestures."¹⁷⁸ A famous photoshoot from *Life* magazine in 1970 shows Benglis pouring colored latex onto the floor, and the spread featured earlier images of Jackson Pollock as well, situating Benglis within a lineage of the physicality of painting, the legacy of Abstract Expressionism. While Benglis was trained as a painter, her pours push the idea of painting to the absolute limit, coming off the wall onto the floor, the place of sculpture, while utilizing industrial materials such as liquid rubber, latex, and polyurethane, all materials that "can and will take [their] own form."¹⁷⁹ Similarly, Szapocznikow's works with poured polyurethane flirted with defying the defining criteria of vertical-on-the-wall equals painting and horizontal-on-the-floor equals sculpture. While all the works are in three dimensions, some were installed on the wall, the forms emerging out into the space of the viewer. Others, such as *Grand Plage*, were exhibited right on the floor, no pedestal in sight. Beyond the similar materials and ambiguities of Benglis's and Szapocznikow's poured works, however, they also share a distinctive physicality and scale. While Benglis's polyurethane works take on more of a performative element in that they are typically produced within an exhibition space, both artists' works maintain their relationship to the body. As Benglis described her pours, they were best at a certain scale "because of the size of the pour, and the size of the pour had something to do with my body, and everybody else's body."¹⁸⁰ Szapocznikow's works, too, maintain a relationship to the body. Perhaps more than any other of the *Expansions* series, *Siege-Piege (Seat Trap)*, 1968, illustrates how polyurethane takes on all surfaces that touch it while it hardens. *Siege-Piege* features a minimalist cube that Szapocznikow poured liquid polyurethane foam on

¹⁷⁸ Robert Pincus-Witten, "Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture," *Artforum* 8, no. 3 (November 1974): 54-59.

¹⁷⁹ David Bourdon, "Fling, Dribble, and Drip," *Life*, February 27, 1970, 62.

¹⁸⁰ Robert Enright, "Poring and Pouring: the Physical Body and its Gestures, an Interview with Lynda Benglis," *Border Crossings* 34, no. 2, 2015.

top of (fig. 73). She then sat on the foam as it expanded and dried, thus forever leaving an imprint of her buttocks on the work. (I can't help but think of this as a cheeky response to the phenomenological reading of minimalist sculpture.) Even when produced with industrial materials, Szapocznikow's works maintain an indexical relationship to the body, both in the physicality of their making and in the casts and imprints that are embedded in them.¹⁸¹

The *Bellies* series began with a cast of the belly of Arianne Raoul-Auval, who was Szapocznikow's friend and the partner of artist Roland Topor at the time.¹⁸² Szapocznikow then made life-size versions of the belly in plaster and polyurethane, both as singular works and as embedded elements within other sculptures, such as in *Grande Plage*. Szapocznikow, as her statement at the beginning of this chapter suggests, was overtly thinking about modules, and indeed the cast belly functions as a module: a single tangible unit that can stand alone or be repeated without losing its integrity. She even titled a now-lost work *Modules répétés*: the piece consisted of ten casts of bellies in polyurethane foam attached to a stick to function as a kind of mobile turning in the wind (fig. 74). Restany identified the cast belly as a shift in Szapocznikow's practice toward a kind of repetition, or "consistency of her language by means of the consistency of matter," as he termed it. He described the belly as a "module" of Szapocznikow's "quantitative language," a language that has "tendencies to all quantitative combinations (repetition, juxtaposition, etc.)" and "lends itself to an infinity of 'compositions': laid out sparsely over an expanding foam carpet; superposed one over the other in totem-like or military post fashion; spread evenly over a surface, as a repetitive series."¹⁸³ When utilized in

¹⁸¹ One could also consider a connection between *Siege-Piege*, Nicola L.'s work from the late 1960s and early 1970s, and Ruth Francken's 1971 *Man Chair*.

¹⁸² Topor was a friend of Szapocznikow, and Szapocznikow was part of the artistic circle known as "Groupe Panique" which Topor co-founded with Fernando Arrabal, Alejandro Jodorowsky, and Jacques Sternberg. The group promoted a kind of black humor that fused science fiction and fantasy, tarot, theater, writing, film, mime, design, and art. See Wilson, "Alina Szapocznikow in Paris," 215.

¹⁸³ Restany, "La Nature Moderne est Amour," n.p.

combination with other materials, the infinitely repeatable plastic forms offered Szapocznikow a new way to experiment and push her sculptural practice further away from her traditional training.

In another riff on the belly-as-module, Szapocznikow planned to make one hundred cast copies of the belly as cushions, the *Ventres-coussins*, which offer “foam folds of flesh in place of comfy sofa cushions.”¹⁸⁴ These cushions range in color from a deep black to gold, to bright oranges and yellows. She contacted Bienaise, a furniture maker in Paris, about the possibility of mass-producing the cushions as seats for a stool.¹⁸⁵ It is unclear what exactly ended up happening with this particular collaboration, though she did receive a receipt for twenty-five “ventres” in polyurethane foam from the same manufacturer a few weeks later.¹⁸⁶ In any case, this particular cast of Raoul-Auval’s midsection became a modular form that could be a singular work, as with a belly cushion, or be combined with itself and repeated in varying configurations. Interestingly, Restany saw the single belly cushion differently than the belly cast when used in a repetitive, modular manner. In the same text quoted above, he states that “the quantitative syntax objectifies the form: this belly only reads as such when isolated and abstracted from its context.”¹⁸⁷ Restany’s text suggests that modularity denatures or obscures the belly’s status as a belly, implying that modularity tends to be opposed to or in tension with corporeality: modularity effaces the belly’s “bellyness.”

The folds of flesh captured in the works based on the cast of the belly are in many ways abstract despite their indexicality; they could be representations of any of a variety of folds present in the flesh of the body, whether the fleshy folds of the belly, the groin area, folds around

¹⁸⁴ Filipovic, “Photosculptural,” 71.

¹⁸⁵ See letter from Szapocznikow to Bienaise, May 16, 1969, illustration no. 1411, Alina Szapocznikow Archive.

¹⁸⁶ Receipt from Bienaise to Szapocznikow, May 30, 1969, illustration no. 7356, Alina Szapocznikow Archive, digitized through the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, held by Piotr Stanisławski, Poland.

¹⁸⁷ Restany, “La Nature Moderne est Amour,” n.p.

joints, or the curved surfaces of lips—or not of the body at all but rather folds of material. They are sensuous, but not always clearly indicative of their source. This is especially true when they are enlarged in scale, such as in a large marble sculpture of two stacked bellies titled *Grand Ventres (Big Bellies)*, 1968, that is currently installed in the outdoor sculpture garden at the Kröller-Möller Museum in the Netherlands (fig. 75). Szapocznikow was invited by a marble company to travel to Italy, to select the marble for this work and to begin its production, and the work was featured in a short article and photoshoot for *Elle* magazine in 1968.¹⁸⁸ In the photoshoot, Szapocznikow is working on and posing with the sculpture, a playful relationship to her work that is also evident in the many photographs from her own studios. The enlarged scale of the bellies in this work further destabilize the relationship between the original form (a cast belly) and the belly as a repeated module, complicating yet again the relationship between corporeality and modularity. Adding an additional layer is the fact that rather than being produced from a mold, in a factory, as with the *Ventres-coussins*, Szapocznikow carved *Grand Ventres* by hand using traditional sculptural techniques. The shift in scale and change in materials in many ways makes the belly featured in *Grand Ventres* seem less related to a person, and therefore somewhat less uncanny or strange when compared to the *Ventres-coussins*.

The strangeness of the *Ventres-coussins*, their ambiguity, is in part due to their fragmentation; it is rare to see a person's midsection detached from the rest of them. And in many ways, this fragmentation disturbs the midsection's function: that of serving as a core, the container of organs, of digestion, the gut (intuition), the site of the womb, an area both structurally vital and deeply vulnerable to injury. This ambiguity of the belly as a form creates a

¹⁸⁸ Jean Monteaux, "Alina sculpte ses ventres dans le marbre de Michel-Ange," *Elle* 1968, nr 1191, illustration no.: 7267, Alina Szapocznikow Archive, digitized through the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, held by Piotr Stanisławski, Poland. See also the folder of photographs in the archive titled "'Grands Ventres,' A Photo Session for 'Elle' Magazine, 1968."

tension between the fragment and the whole; the mold of the abdomen of Arienne becomes a fragmented cross-section of the body, as if sliced from the middle, yet the viewer wants to relate this fragment to a whole, a person, to make sense of its form. It is uncomfortable for a belly to remain a fragment, yet it is difficult to make sense of a belly without a body. Can we determine who the belly belongs to? Can this fragmented midsection of a belly be read in gendered terms? Important for this question is that Szapocznikow cast from the belly of someone else, not from herself, further complicating our desire to place the body as belonging to the artist, or to someone definite.

Piotr Piotrowski argues that this distancing between the form and the artist complicates the relationship between Szapocznikow and ideas of “body art” that are relevant to works cast from herself. Piotrowski cites Jakubowska in reading these works (like much of Szapocznikow’s output) as concerned with the aesthetics of the body fragment, but writes that the belly’s distance from the artist’s body “shifted the focus from visual perception to tactile experience, and hence suggested the greater importance of physicality and materiality over visuality....the mimetic quality of the belly’s mould [sic] and its provocative tactility also challenges that system of dependencies.”¹⁸⁹ Interestingly, Piotrowski’s (and Jakubowska’s) reading implies that the belly, when fragmented, is somehow more physical, more tactile, than the fragmented leg (*Noga*), face, lips, foot, and breast that Szapocznikow used in other works. This is in part, perhaps, because the belly is one of the least visible forms of the body on a day-to-day basis: it is hidden in clothing, felt more than it is examined. What is most interesting here is the idea that the tactility of the belly cushions challenges systems of dependencies—particularly those that rely on sight, which is to say the reliance on the visual as the primary mode of understanding art. Szapocznikow’s *Bellies*, especially the cushions, instead point to a different way of experiencing sculptures.

¹⁸⁹ Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 344.

Rather than looking, she intended for the viewer to squeeze them, put them on the couch, lay their head on them. This tactile dimension is temporal and durational in a way that the visual often isn't. These objects are meant to be lived with, not merely looked at. In a way, one could think of this incorporation of sculptural objects into the home as a progression from her earlier sentiment, from 1955, that sculptures "should function in space... Let us place the sculptures in space in such a way that people can dance around them."¹⁹⁰ If one dances around a sculpture, why not also hug said sculpture? Lie against it, take a nap, and make it part of one's daily life.

Szapocznikow was not alone in creating works that were meant to be used as furniture, straddling the realms of fine art and design. A contemporary who explored similar methods was the French artist Nicola L., who was tangentially involved with the artists of *nouveau réalisme* and was friends with Restany. Initially trained as a painter at the *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, she eventually moved toward directly involving the viewer in her works. Her "Penetrables" are canvases into which the viewer can insert their limbs and head, essentially wearing the piece as a kind of skin or clothing. This direct physical relationship between viewer and work was further developed in pieces that she described as "functional art." In *White Foot Sofa*, 1968, a giant foot in white vinyl functions, as the title suggests, as a sofa on which one can recline (fig. 76). The piece evokes the blown-up scale and soft plastic of pop à la Oldenburg, but with a focus on the body.¹⁹¹ More overtly than Szapocznikow, Nicola L.'s amalgamations of the body and domestic objects took on early forms of feminist critique. Her *Little TV Woman: 'I Am the Last Woman Object'* from 1969 features a soft white vinyl female form (fig. 77). The figure's breasts are drawers, and in the place of a stomach is a TV monitor. On the monitor is text

¹⁹⁰ Szapocznikow in a response to a questionnaire published by *Przegląd Kulturalny*, 1955. As quoted in Czerni, "The Second Wing," 20.

¹⁹¹ Erica F. Battle, "Nicola L.: The Threshold of Skin," in *Nicola L: Works, 1968 to the Present*, exhibition catalog (New York: Sculpture Center, 2017), 8.

overlaid with the sound of the artist's voice reciting: "I am the last woman object. You can take my lips, touch my breasts, caress my stomach, my sex. But I repeat it, it is the last time."¹⁹² The work both invites and refuses viewer engagement and participation, with drawers and a soft, invitingly tactile form in contrast to the ultimatum of the text. According to Ruba Katrib, this juxtaposition provides "a fresh critique of the commodification of the female body through new technological means," namely television.¹⁹³ Nicola L. also created acrylic and steel lamps featuring oversized eyes and lips, blending again functional domestic objects, art, electricity, and the body. It is unclear if Szapocznikow and Nicola L. knew each other, though they moved in very similar circles in Paris and were both supported by Restany. It is, however, striking that both artists were engaged with similar questions regarding the distinctions between art and design, sculpture and commodity.

Szapocznikow first began experimenting with the transparency of polyester resin with *Autoportrait I*, 1966, a marble base topped with a clear (now slightly yellowed) resin cast of lips and halo-like circle (fig. 78). Light travels through the resin in contrast to the solidity of the stone base, giving the resin the appearance of being lit. Szapocznikow continued these experiments by adding electricity and lights to two larger works, *Femme Illuminee* (Illuminated Woman) and *Caprice - Monstre* (*Caprice - Monster*) (figs. 79-80). At the same time, she was also experimenting with placing casts of lips and breasts (both in plaster and in resin) on stems in various configurations, with titles such as *Bouche en Marche* (*Marching Lips*). These works are both playful and somewhat off-putting and frightening, a trait Szapocznikow acknowledges with the title of *Caprice-Monstre*. It is as if the talking flowers of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*

¹⁹² Ruba Katrib, "Nicola L," in *Nicola L: Works, 1968 to the Present*, exhibition catalog (New York: Sculpture Center, 2017), 5.

¹⁹³ Katrib, "Nicola L," 5.

had gone horribly awry, produced in a Frankensteinian laboratory. Restany had the following to say about these works:

The forests of carmine-red lips, the sprawling torso dunes with nipples glistening like pearls, the luminous globes of breasts heavy with electrical glare: these freshest works by Alina Szapocznikow bring to mind... women/flowers and the sumptuousness of flesh highlighted by interior lighting. This excessively beautiful flesh loses its physical sensuality in favor of the transcendental magic of the object.¹⁹⁴

For Restany, the addition of lighting emphasizes the sensuality of the body casts, yet at the same time reconfigures the casts by distancing them from the physicality of the body. They instead become magical objects. While I'm not convinced by Restany's poetic assessment of these works, there is a way that the addition of electrical elements and lightbulbs to the lips and breasts on spindly stems further adds to the ontological confusion in these works: they become not only humorously grotesque sculptures but also functional commodities for the home.

Fer cites Roland Barthes, speaking primarily about pop art, as saying that "the stake of these repetitions (or of Repetition [sic] as a method) is not only the destruction of art but also (moreover, they go together) another conception of the human subject: repetition affords access, in effect to a different temporality."¹⁹⁵ Temporality is a key facet when considering the kind of repetition at play in the *Lamps*. The works have the greatest effect if they are arranged in a row, as Szapocznikow kept them in her studio (an effect that was somewhat replicated at Hauser & Wirth's 2019-2020 exhibition of her work) (fig. 81).¹⁹⁶ Each piece is distinct, yet all are related. The viewer can see them all at once by stepping back, but cannot actually take them all in. The *Lamps* operate temporally in their use of illumination. Each takes on very different formal characteristics depending on whether it is turned off or on. An encounter with the works, then,

¹⁹⁴ Pierre Restany, catalog essay for solo exhibition of Alina Szapocznikow's work, Galerie Florence Houston-Brown, Paris, January 1967. Illustration no. 6568, Alina Szapocznikow Archive, digitized through the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, held by Piotr Stanislawski, Poland.

¹⁹⁵ Fer, *The Infinite Line*, 3.

¹⁹⁶ See illustration 6814, 1973 photograph of Szapocznikow's Malakoff studio, Alina Szapocznikow Archive.

occurs on multiple levels of temporal duration: from one piece to another; from the whole set to the individual works; from on to off, and back again. This is a viewing experience that mirrors the repetitive logic of the works themselves, a viewing experience that is suffused with friction because of its character as “serial-understood as a series of disconnections,” to borrow Fer’s terms.¹⁹⁷

To return to the photo in Szapocznikow’s studio, or the *Lamps* on display at Hauser & Wirth, the line-up of the lamps on a shelf emphasizes their functional quality. Each of the lamps works, plugs into a wall, and a lightbulb turns on. These are not quotidian lamps to be found at a store, however. The lamps themselves are enigmatic, as if resisting giving an answer to the question of their status in relation to categorization. The *Lampe-bouche* (*Illuminated lips*) from 1966 are especially so (fig. 82). Five colored polyester resin stems, spindly and meandering, varying in color from dark gray to white, are topped with ovoid resin cut-outs featuring partial casts of the lower part of a face. The lips are colored in shades of red, some featuring a pale, semi-translucent skin color, others set in opaque gray resin, the polychromy “both visceral and kitsch; they are both dead and alive.”¹⁹⁸ When turned on (itself a pun on the erotic expression “to be turned on” that also somewhat works in the French), this ambiguous state of liveness is increased: the lighter colored resin becomes more translucent, the lips darker in comparison, whereas with the darker gray resin, the lips become more translucent and seem to glow. This creates a somewhat otherworldly effect of disembodied lips, floating and aglow, not speaking, not smiling and yet not frowning either. The lips aren’t pursed and almost seem about to open. As Butler puts it, they are “perched as if to kiss or exhale.”¹⁹⁹ For Czerni, the *Lamps* “tremble on

¹⁹⁷ Fer, *The Infinite Line*, 4.

¹⁹⁸ Butler, “Soft Body/Soft Sculpture,” 34.

¹⁹⁹ Butler, “Soft Body/Soft Sculpture,” 34.

thin stems—like balloons on threads, try to soar up into the air.”²⁰⁰ They seem somewhat detached from gravity, as if pulling away from reality.

The *Lamps* would seem to fit right in with artist Evelyn Axell’s desire “to run a factory where perfected machines would cut off, paint, organize translucent, fluorescent, radiant materials following my orders and bending to my will. A factory at the service of imagination, fantasy, eroticism, producing on an assembly line works of art that are sold in supermarkets.”²⁰¹ They are fantastical, erotically charged objects that appear as if they were produced in a factory. Importantly, however, the lamps were not actually mass-produced, and instead were handmade by Szapocznikow from casts of her own face, the face of a close friend, and breasts. This process heightens the tension between a commodity-object, a lamp for an end table in a living room, and a work of high art, a sculpture. Important, too, is the works’ relation to Szapocznikow’s own body, and the intimate process not only of the cast of her own lips or a friend’s used to make the resin forms, but also the fact that she made these works by hand, touching, spreading, pouring, and coloring the resin in intimate contact with the material, without the assistance of a factory or manufacturer. This tension between the mass-produced and the handmade constitutes another way in which Szapocznikow’s work converses with the legacy of Duchamp and builds on and complicates the dynamic of the readymade present in her assemblage works discussed in Chapter 1.

In contrast to the use of a manufactured car part in *Goldfinger*, Szapocznikow’s *Lamps* are readymade objects in appearance only. Both works are cast from a physical body, and thus very visibly bear the imprint or trace of physical touch, and the resin is also hand-formed and colored, rather than produced in a factory where the history of an object’s making is often

²⁰⁰ Czerni, “The Second Wing,” 23.

²⁰¹ Axell, “Pop Art: Nieuwe Figuratie/Nouveau Réalisme,” in *Power Up: Female Pop Art*, 51.

obfuscated. In *Touching Feeling*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, drawing on Renu Bora's essay "Outing Texture," contends that to perceive an object's texture is implicitly to ask whether the object was "sedimented, extruded, laminated, granulated, polished, distressed, felted, or fluffed up," and to hypothesize whether it is "easy or hard, safe or dangerous to grasp, to stack, to fold, to shred, to climb on, to stretch, to slide, to soak."²⁰² Thus, the material qualities of an object—what it looks like—are simultaneously information about how an object was made and what it would be like to touch it. The production of the object and the experience of handling it via touch are interlinked through texture. With the *Lamps*, the use of a seemingly mass-produced electrical skeleton combined with a plastic (itself a product of mass manufacturing) complicates the correlation between the works' texture (mass-produced plastic) and how they were made (by hand). This tension between the handmade and the mass-produced hinges on a physical intimacy between Szapocznikow and her work, both in the casting process and in the molding, coloring, and finishing of the *Lamps*. Sedgwick also argues that texture has a temporal dynamic, and that it always implies the way "physical properties act and are acted upon over time."²⁰³ This idea of reciprocal acting and being acted upon is important for understanding the dialectic of mass-production and manual production in Szapocznikow's work, as it imbues her materials with an agency, resins and foams used in the period were often more unpredictable than they were controllable. Unlike an assembly line, where each work is made in the same amount of time and room for error or variation has been minimized for maximum efficiency, Szapocznikow's process wasn't optimized, and she was experimenting with new materials in her studio, not in a factory. The finished works also, through their variations, create the animate qualities described above. The repetition of forms in Szapocznikow's *Lamps* is disjointed; each required a different amount

²⁰² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 14.

²⁰³ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 13.

of time to create, contains within it different textures and material properties, and therefore demands a different amount of time from the viewer.

Both the *Bellies* and the *Lamps* combine recognizable, though fragmented, body parts and familiar useful objects, making it difficult to determine where these works belong in terms of both affective and art historical terms. Are they sculptures? Design objects? Are they funny in their punning and sensual suggestiveness? Or are they sinister in their evocation of lamps made from skin? Are cushions that mimic the comfort of resting one's head on a loved one's belly charming or horrific? What do we make of the mildly impertinent or flirtatious quality of the lips, a tone Agata Jakubowska has described as a kind of coquetry?²⁰⁴ Szapocznikow was interested in making straightforward objects for the home, as illustrated in her somewhat mysterious 1972 *Table*, a marble-topped coffee table supported by curved, entangled black metal legs, photographed installed in someone's lush midcentury living room (fig. 83).²⁰⁵ The *Lamps* and *Bellies* are clearly not so utilitarian as the unassuming table, yet they are functional. Elena Filipovic argues that "these objects announce unabashedly an approach to sculpture straddling the quotidian and the uncanny, at once useful and unsettling."²⁰⁶ This quick reference to the uncanny, a term often used to describe Szapocznikow's works, warrants some unpacking, especially in light of the pendulum swing between usefulness and the capacity to unsettle that Filipovic identifies with the term. For Freud, in his 1919 essay "The Uncanny," at the core of the uncanny is a confusion of animacy, of how something is situated in relation to the living (a child's doll, for example), and the disruption of familiarity: a threat to the intimacy of the home space, a kind of concealment or secrecy.²⁰⁷ With the *Lamps* and the *Bellies*, the uncanny operates

²⁰⁴ See Agata Jakubowska, *Portret Wielokrotny Dzieła Aliny Szapocznikow* (Historia Sztuki - Uniwersytet Im. Adama Mickiewicza W Poznaniu Nr 32. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2008).

²⁰⁵ See folder "Table, 1972," 18 illustrations, Alina Szapocznikow Archive.

²⁰⁶ Filipovic, "Photosculptural," 71.

²⁰⁷ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 123-134, 135, 152.

on multiple registers. There is the disturbing relationship between the inanimate and animate created by the casting process, and the disruption of familiar forms (lips, a folded belly, a lamp, a sofa cushion), and the disruption of the home space through the implied violence of a body fragmented into pieces and parts to become living room décor. The works also harbor some secrecy. The *Bellies* belie their origin, and the texture of the polyurethane gives them a density and opacity that is texturally strange, difficult to figure out. Similarly, in the *Lamps*, the lips' expressions remain impenetrable, aglow but not telling us much. The work's uncanniness also operates on a categorical level, speaking directly to what Baudelaire identified as sculpture's problem, that it "suffers because it too easily becomes indistinguishable from a luxury object."²⁰⁸ Sculptors such as Brancusi worked hard to separate their work from the realm of utilitarian objects or luxury commodities. Szapocznikow, on the other hand, fully embraced this paradox, and rather than trying to distinguish her sculptures from the quotidian, she "*wanted* her artworks to be commodities."²⁰⁹

Szapocznikow's desire that her work be a commodity, either one as luxurious as "My American Dream" or one as useful and quotidian as a lamp or cushion, indicates that she was very aware of the place of sculpture as an art form during the rapid rise of consumer culture, mass production, and the developments of pop, conceptual, and minimalist art in the 1960-70s. In her last artist statement written in March of 1972, Szapocznikow describes herself as a sculptor who has "experienced the failure of a thwarted vocation."²¹⁰ She goes on to state that despite her best efforts and lifelong commitment to her craft, she increasingly became aware of the "poverty of [her] methods in comparison to modern techniques," admitting that she had been

²⁰⁸ Charles Baudelaire as quoted in Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 63.

²⁰⁹ Filipovic, "Photosculptural," 71. Emphasis original.

²¹⁰ Szapocznikow, untitled statement, March 1972. Original French: "Pour en arriver à ce que je suis aujourd'hui: rien d'autre qu'un sculpteur qui assiste à la faillite d'une vocation contrariée." Translation mine.

conquered by the “hero-miracle of our age, the machine. To it belong beauty, revelations, testimonies, and the recording of history. To it belong, in the end, truthful dreams and public demand.”²¹¹ In light of this, Szapocznikow goes on to describe her creations as “awkward objects,” indicating that she understood how her work sits uneasily, awkwardly, between the “failed vocation” of sculpture and current methods of mechanical production. It would seem, then, that the *Bellies* and *Lamps* are Szapocznikow’s attempt to push her “awkward objects” a little more toward the realm of the mechanized, mass-produced commodity, yet this too is a failed attempt. These works embrace the repetitive logic of the commodity but do not give up the artist’s intimate, experimental, and very non-mechanized tactile relationship with her materials; modularity and corporeality are inextricably intertwined.

²¹¹ Szapocznikow, untitled statement, March 1972.

Chapter 4: (De)Personalizations

Pink and dark blue string, a cast of the artist's face, red resin lips, paper wads, photographs, newspaper clippings, and bundles of wool. These are some of the materials that are recognizable underneath semi-transparent layers of resin in Szapocznikow's *Tumeurs*, or *Tumors*. A loose series of works begun shortly after the artist's first breast cancer scare in 1968 and continued until her death in 1973, the *Tumeurs* range in scale and configuration from a single diminutive globule, as in *Tumeur (Tumor)*, 1970, (fig. 84) to a larger amalgamated construction, as in *L'Enterrement de Alina*. Some, like *Petit Tumeur (Small Tumor)*, 1969-70, are the size of a paperweight, only about 2-3 inches in diameter, and could easily be held in the palm of one's hand (fig. 85). These smaller works are often exhibited in vitrines, like specimens under glass. As they increase in scale, the works usually move from the vitrine to the floor, invading the viewer's space. *Envahissement de Tumeurs (Invasion of Tumors)*, 1969, for example, consists of a number of tumors of varying sizes, ranging from slightly larger than the petit tumors to around a foot and a half in diameter, all scattered on the floor (fig. 86). Szapocznikow initially exhibited *Envahissement de Tumeurs* outside, on the ground surrounding her marble sculpture *Grandes Ventres*—two scaled-up casts of bellies stacked one on top of the other (discussed in Chapter 3). In this configuration, the globular forms of the tumors do indeed seem like an invasion, as the title of the work implies.

Similar to how cancer, in the words of Susan Sontag, is a “disease or pathology of space... (cancer ‘spreads’ or ‘proliferates’ or is ‘diffused’),” Szapocznikow produced dozens of these tumescent forms toward the end of her life.²¹² These works are commonly regarded as some of the most overtly autobiographical of the artist's oeuvre. However, while it is nigh on impossible to separate an artist from their biography, and these works from Szapocznikow's own

²¹² Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 14-15.

death from breast cancer, it is important not to oversimplify these pieces, which are not without precedent in her oeuvre. Starting before her first experience with breast cancer, Szapocznikow began incorporating photography into her sculptural work in a loose series titled the *Souvenirs* that feature photographs of friends and celebrities, mass-circulated images from the Holocaust, and family photographs from Szapocznikow's childhood. These pieces employ an *informe* aesthetic: they are lumpy masses of resin-encased materials, now yellowed and hardened with age. The inclusion of photography, however, opens the works (and, by extension, the tumors) to a more expansive discussion of memory, trauma, and the indexical and corporeal nature of the casting process in Szapocznikow's later work. Szapocznikow's last series, *Herbarium*, extends this discussion even further, as Szapocznikow took semi-transparent resin casts of her son, Piotr, and herself and mounted the skin-like forms to polychrome wood. These works are extremely tender, yet they are also haunting inversions of pieces like the *Souvenirs* and *Tumeurs* the resin shell is emptied of its corporeal substance, leaving only a ghostly trace of the person it was cast from. In an artist statement written in 1972, Szapocznikow explains: "through casts of the body I try to fix the fleeting moments of life, its paradoxes and absurdities, in transparent polyester. My work is difficult, as sensation that is felt in a very immediate and diffuse way is often resistant to identification. Often everything is all mixed up, the situation is ambiguous, and sensory limits are erased."²¹³ In these three late series, it is clear that the artist was grappling with the fragility of her body and the possibility of her death. At the same time, the works speak expansively to the fragility, transience, and joy of human experience, and to the impossibility of capturing, of representing, that experience in artistic objects.

²¹³ Szapocznikow, untitled statement, March 1972.

In scholarship on Szapocznikow, both from during her life and after, her biography overshadows most discussions of her work. Szapocznikow was a Holocaust survivor who as a teenager was forced to work with her mother in concentration camp “hospitals.” After the liberation of the camps, she obtained false documents and moved to Prague, where she began to study sculpture. She later moved to Paris, though a severe bout of tuberculosis and a lack of funds forced her return to Poland. The treatment for the tuberculosis, while successful, left her unable to have children. Then, only two decades later, cancer would claim her life at the age of 47. I do not want to ignore these facts, or argue that they aren’t important or relevant to examining her work. I do, however, want to consider what her works articulate about sculptural practice, about her process and use of materials, and how they communicate with the viewer. A strongly biographical interpretation can yield only a partial understanding of these aspects of Szapocznikow’s work.

In 1973, after undergoing a mastectomy, Szapocznikow wrote to Wojciech Skrodzki: “one must preserve everything that the surgeon extracts and discards during the operation, everything that is discarded, bloodied.”²¹⁴ Andrzej Wajda, in a moving catalog essay / obituary he wrote for *Projekt* shortly after Szapocznikow’s death, remembers Szapocznikow expressing a similar sentiment to him at one point in their friendship. As he recalls it: “‘You know,’ Alina said to me at another time, ‘one should record everything that the surgeon throws away during an operation: blood stained tampons, scissors, a lancet...everything that is unnecessary.’”²¹⁵ It is unclear if both sources were present when Szapocznikow expressed the idea and remembered it differently, or if she was interested in this idea and therefore was discussing it with many friends, as many of us might. Regardless, the repetition is striking, as are critics’ and friends’ varying

²¹⁴ Alina Szapocznikow quoted in Andrzej Osęka and Wojciech Skrodzki, *Współczesna rzeźba polska* (Warsaw: Arkady, 1977), 27.

²¹⁵ Wajda, “Alina Szapocznikow (1926-1973),” 131-132.

interpretations of the story. Osęka and Skrodzki directly connect the idea of collecting that which is discarded after surgery to Szapocznikow's mastectomy.²¹⁶ For Andrzej Wajda, in contrast, Szapocznikow's statement was distanced from her illness. Wajda goes on: "She said it quite simply and immediately began to consider the technology of how it should be done in order to make the strongest expression, so that to this very day I am unable to associate the cycle of sculptures called *Tumeurs* with her, with her tragic illness."²¹⁷ These two different interpretations of Szapocznikow's post-surgical statement epitomize the varying approaches to her work. On the one hand, her statement (and therefore work) is all-concerned with her own experience (biographical reductionism). On the other hand, her statement (and therefore her work) is interested in the ways in which the material realities of the body can be best materially translated into sculptural works.

In approaching Szapocznikow's work as she wanted, on its own terms rather than as purely autobiographical, I've found it necessary to reconsider common definitions of trauma. Ann Cvetkovich, in *An Archive of Feelings*, discusses how the dominant psychoanalytic and psychiatric discourses define trauma as "relating to an event outside the range of usual human experience" that causes psychic distress and dynamics such as repression and dissociation.²¹⁸ Cvetkovich cites Cathy Caruth as offering the influential characterization of trauma as being "at the limits of our understanding," at the intersection of the known and unknown. For Cvetkovich, the psychoanalytic and psychiatric understanding of trauma is problematic because it pathologizes and isolates individual's experiences, rather than considering how trauma can be rooted in larger structural, historical, and material contexts. Cvetkovich argues for a consideration of trauma as culturally defined, as "intersections of emotional and social processes

²¹⁶ Osęka and Skrodzki, *Współczesna rzeźba polska*, 27.

²¹⁷ Wajda, "Alina Szapocznikow (1926-1973)," 132.

²¹⁸ Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 18.

and intersections of memory and history” that form around public events.²¹⁹ Here, then, I follow Cvetkovich’s method in considering Szapocznikow’s work in relation to larger discourses, conceptions, and narratives concerning trauma, rather than trying to psychoanalyze or pathologize Szapocznikow’s feelings about her experience through her work.

With the *Tumeurs*, specifically, I am interested in how these works both conform to and complicate socially defined understandings of cancer and the ways people grappling with the traumatic disease are often expected to maintain certain codes of aesthetic and affective presence. Anne Boyer, in her recent book *The Undying*, gives a pointed analysis of the way literature concerning breast cancer in the 1970s tended toward separating the subject (their feelings and experience) from the disease. Susan Sontag, for example, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1974, took care to not write her book *Illness as Metaphor* as if from her own experience of cancer. According to Boyer, Sontag does not write “I” and “cancer” together because “to think only of oneself is to think of death.”²²⁰ Conversely, Audre Lorde, in *The Cancer Journals*, radically narrates her own experience with breast cancer, fighting against the “tyrannies of silence” imposed through fear, shame, stigma, and oppression.²²¹ Lorde, as a Black lesbian, was acutely aware of the many forms of silence imposed on her because of her identity. As Lorde confronted her mortality after her diagnosis and before surgery, it was a community of other women that gave her strength and reinforced the crucial need to speak, to write, to share. For Lorde, death itself is a kind of final silence, and rather than avoiding the articulation of the self, she adamantly must speak in order to maintain her subjectivity.

²¹⁹ Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*, 18.

²²⁰ Susan Sontag quoted in Anne Boyer, *The Undying: Pain, Vulnerability, Mortality, Medicine, Art, Time, Dreams, Data, Exhaustion, Cancer, and Care* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 7.

²²¹ Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1992), 58.

The “tyrannies of silence” Lorde identifies are enmeshed in the history of societal discourses surrounding cancer. In the 1970s, when Szapocznikow was diagnosed and died, and when Lorde was writing *The Cancer Journals*, many mainstream discourses attributed cancer to a kind of flaw in the person themselves, a “bad personality type,” and “[d]epression, repressed emotions, and succumbing to stress were designed as causes of cancer; therefore the patient was blamed for her illness.”²²² Fear of this kind of blame contributed to longstanding stigma surrounding cancer, and this fear is one of the tyrannies of silence Lorde refers to. “In the cause of silence,” she writes, “each one of us draws the face of her own fear—fear of contempt, of censure, or some judgment, or recognition, of challenge, of annihilation. But most of all, I think, we fear the very visibility without which we also cannot truly live.”²²³

Boyer elaborates that, historically, many cancer patients have been enmeshed in a realm of secrecy. Doctors occasionally hide diagnoses from patients; patients sometimes hide diagnoses from friends and family; and many treatments involve horrendous side effects that are not always disclosed to patients in advance. For Boyer, the experience of having cancer involves an exhausting chain of expectations, especially for woman patients: women are expected to hide the bald patches that result from chemotherapy; to use makeup to look well; to be hopeful, positive, and gracious; to accept pink-ribbon-labeled goods as markers of support instead of symbols of suffering made into profit; and to reassure loved ones, colleagues, and others that they (the person with cancer) are doing OK even if they are not.²²⁴ Cancer, then, in many ways carries the expectation of concealment and of maintaining an external sense of normalcy. Of course, this may be an extremely useful way of coping for some, but Boyer’s point is that the

²²² Diane Price Herndl, “Reconstructing the Posthuman Feminist Body Twenty Years after Audre Lorde’s *Cancer Journals*,” in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2002), 146.

²²³ Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*, 21.

²²⁴ See Boyer, *The Undying*, 73-76.

transformation of silence into a norm has the overarching effect of augmenting sick people's suffering and oppression.

I want to argue that with the *Tumeurs* Szapocznikow publicly explores the formal registers—the aesthetic dimensions—of the tumors that were the basis of her illness. Taking the tumor as a form that both is and is not directly tied to her personal experience, she prompts a tactile, physical experience for viewers that is intimately and sometimes unsettlingly evocative of our own bodies, their surfaces and interiors, their materiality, and our emotional responses to them.

Most discussions of the *Tumeurs* interpret the series through the lens of autopathography: an autobiographical narrative of illness or disability. The *Tumeurs* become Szapocznikow's way of coping with her illness and mortality, of registering and physically manifesting the disease that was invisibly ravaging her body. While I agree that the works relate to Szapocznikow's diagnosis, treatment, and eventual death from breast cancer, they also have dimensions of context and meaning far in excess of autopathography. Importantly, Szapocznikow did not tell many of those close to her that she had cancer, that she was dying. Wajda recalls that it was only "a few days before her death I learnt that she had been seriously ill for many years. But I consider it normal that none of us knew about it, that we could not tell by looking at her....she concealed her sufferings and her anxieties for herself."²²⁵

Szapocznikow was similarly reluctant to discuss her experiences as a prisoner in concentration camps as a teenager. In letters to her first husband, Ryszard Stanisławski, shortly after the end of the war, Szapocznikow makes only one mention of her experiences during the war, writing:

²²⁵ Wajda, "Alina Szapocznikow (1926-1973)," 132.

it occurred to me that the antagonism and misunderstandings that take place between us come primarily from a single source. You simply look at certain things still in such a nice, cultured, polite way, as it ought to be, in fact, and maybe sometimes I envy you that. But the difference lies in the fact that during your formative years, over the last ten years, you did not go through that baptism of despair, all of that, all of that did not vanish all those times without a trace, as happened for me in the ghettos and the camps. I'm sorry, Ryś, I'm ashamed by this, you know how I can't stand, am repulsed by those people who reproach themselves or "praise" themselves for the years of suffering that they endured. But you have to understand me, you I have told already, and maybe I will later be capable of telling you everything for those times....your ideas didn't change as fundamentally as mine did, so that instead of "nice, cultured, polite" what was left was "lovely, human, true, heartfelt."²²⁶

Later, in a 1966 interview for a documentary film on Polish art in Paris, Jean-Marie Drot somewhat ruthlessly presses Szapocznikow to speak of and connect her works to that traumatic experience. When she smiles, laughs, refuses to directly answer his questions, and instead shifts the discussion to one of her sculptures, *Naga*, (*Naked*), 1961, (fig. 87) he says, "You say nothing about yourself, instead you depict yourself."²²⁷ In response, Szapocznikow says, "All artists are exhibitionists. I say nothing, maybe I even say too much... We always say too much about our lives."²²⁸ Here, Szapocznikow demonstrates a marked refusal to let her work be interpreted only through the lens of her personal experiences and traumas.

Importantly, the bulbous forms in the *Souvenirs* and *Tumeurs* have precedents in Szapocznikow's work from before her breast cancer diagnosis. In early sculptures such as *Naga*, Szapocznikow introduced tumescent forms into her upright figural works, resulting in a "body barely held together in its skin."²²⁹ *Naga* is part of an incorporation of abstraction as Szapocznikow worked her way from the authoritative figurative style of Socialist Realism to a

²²⁶ Alina Szapocznikow, letter to Ryszard Stanislawski, January 25, 1949, in *Lovely, Human, True, Heartfelt: The Letters of Alina Szapocznikow and Ryszard Stanislawski, 1948-1971*, 67. Underline in the original.

²²⁷ Drot, director, "En Pologne: 6eme partie de la liberte des Beaux-Arts en Pologne ou Jdanov n'est pas polonais," 1969.

²²⁸ Drot, director, "En Pologne: 6eme partie de la liberte des Beaux-Arts en Pologne ou Jdanov n'est pas polonais," 1969.

²²⁹ Butler, "Soft Body/Soft Sculpture," 39.

more organic, biomorphic approach to figural sculpture (see Prelude). Many scholars see this departure from socialist aesthetics beginning with *Trudny wiek* (*Difficult Age*), 1956, a confidently sexual, almost aggressively upright female figure. *Trudny wiek* posits a challenge to notions of privacy and the female body, and is also a departure from the heroic sculptures honoring military figures or the depiction of women as “mothers” in Polish socialist realist art of the 1950s.²³⁰ Works coming after *Trudny wiek*, such as *Maria Magdalena* (*Mary Magdalene*), 1957-58, start to open up the body from within and disrupt traditional representations of the body by confusing or blurring the delineation between external and internal, growth and decay. *Mary Magdalene*’s body becomes a lumpish, abstracted form, a body chewed up, used, and expelled, as if an interior mass was spit out, made external. Butler has pointed to how Szapocznikow’s *Mary Magdalene* follows the lineage of Donatello’s *Mary Magdalene* (1454-55), but furthers its haunting quality to become a “vulnerable expression of depletion,” a body that is a “humble bony remnant of itself.”²³¹ *Naga* continues this thread of a depleted body whose skin barely holds it together into a recognizable figurative form, with lumps seeming to bulge out threatening to burst through the skin. This threat to the integrity of the body resonates with the works of Magdalena Abakanowicz, an important contemporary of Szapocznikow, whose signature *Abakans* present a soft, woven, monumental exploration of the interior erotics of the body (fig. 88).²³² The *Abakans* are circular or cylindrical in shape, and have slits, folds, and protrusions. As Abakanowicz has said of these works, “Through cracks and openings I try to get the viewer to penetrate into the deepest reaches of the composition. I am interested in the scale of tensions that

²³⁰ Izabela Kowalczyk, “Poland: Izabela Kowalczyk,” in *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe*, ed. Bojana Pejić (Vienna: Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig; Cologne, Germany: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2009), 362.

²³¹ Butler, “Soft Body/Soft Sculpture,” 39.

²³² Butler, “Soft Body/Soft Sculpture,” 40.

intervene between the woven form, rich and fleshy, and the surroundings.”²³³ While very different materially, Abakanowicz’s *Abakans* bear affinities with Szapocznikow’s exploration of inner organ-like forms made externally present in her *Tumeurs*.

The *Tumeurs* mark a shift in Szapocznikow’s oeuvre from a process of casting to a process of encasing materials, a shift from a focus on surface form to a focus on interior materiality. The surface of the *Tumeurs* is secondary to the materials that a semi-transparent layer of resin encases. By contrast, many of Szapocznikow’s cast forms are hollow: in *Dessert III*, breasts become shells, emptied of their flesh. The *Tumeurs* are matter contained by skin. The quality of the polyester resin is reminiscent of skin or a dried animal hide in its semi-transparent opacity. In describing Eva Hesse’s *Contingent*, 1969, which is made with fiberglass, polyester resin, and latex, Yve-Alain Bois has invoked the fingernail as a material proximate (fig. 89).²³⁴ A fingernail is both alive, part of the body and rapidly growing, and dead cellular matter; a hard, containing, and protective surface that is also flexible, fragile, and prone to injury. This analogy between a fingernail and the texture of aged plastics is relevant to Szapocznikow’s polyester resin works, as it highlights the strange animacy of these works. The resin holds light in such a way that it can seem to glow, and the smooth, plasticky, yet skin-like surface makes it difficult to understand what the material is. Is it artificial or organic? Dead or alive? One can assume that they are smooth in texture, yet they could also be goopy, sticky, or slimy, and one is left both wanting to touch them and afraid to do so.

The textural quality of the *Tumeurs* has shifted as they have aged (similar, in fact, to how Hesse’s works have changed with time). The resin hardens and yellows, becomes slightly more

²³³ Magdalena Abakanowicz, untitled statement, 1969. Reprinted in *Magdalena Abakanowicz: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982), 48.

²³⁴ Yve-Alain Bois quoted in Susan Best, *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-Garde* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 84.

opaque and brittle as the polymers break down. I noticed this most starkly when looking through Szapocznikow's archive. Among the images of the *Tumeurs* are several diapositive color photographs taken when the works were created, and in these images the pieces look remarkably different from how they appear today (see fig. 90 for an example).²³⁵ The resin is lighter in color and much more transparent, which allows the colors of all the materials within to be seen, not just the brightest and boldest colors, such as the red lips described earlier. The pinks, yellows, and blues in the *Tumeurs* recall cotton candy, yet they also have the quality of an anatomical model—layers of muscle, fat, and veins color-coded for easy identification. They are in many ways much less like an actual fossil or specimen, as they appear now, instead in the photographs they appear lighter and more artificial without the encasement of a yellowed resin shell.

Given their ambiguous textures and form, the *Tumeurs* could also be said to exist in a kind of liminal space, similar to actual tumors that are neither subject nor object. In that way they connect to the abject, the uncertainty or horror caused by the breakdown or loss of the clear distinction between subject and object, self and other. Kristeva argues that it is in encountering that which reminds us of our own materiality (and, by extension, mortality) that we experience the abject: “a wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not signify death....refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live.”²³⁶ A tumor, indeed, would fall into this category of things that can prompt abjection. A tumor is not a discrete object: it is of the body, a mass of proliferating cells created by a living being. Yet a tumor isn't fully part of the subject: it is a growth, a parasitical anomaly that usually warrants removal. Piotrowski reads the *Tumeurs* as posing a direct challenge to ideas of contained

²³⁵ See folders “Tumeurs Series, 1969,” “Wool - Tumeur I, 1972,” and “Wool - Tumeur II, 1972,” in Alina Szapocznikow Archive, illustration no. 3998.

²³⁶ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) 3-4.

subjectivity, for “if subjectivity is embodied,” it is inherently called into question when embodiment seems to be losing its boundaries, when “‘I’ is identified with a decomposing body in the process of losing its integrity.”²³⁷ While Piotrowski frames this as a statement, I’d like to explore it as a question in terms of how the *Tumeurs* figure the body as such—its boundaries, its limits, its internal and external form.

Many photographs in Szapocznikow’s archive feature her in intimate proximity to her materials and works, directly holding them on and around her body, physically connecting casts to the origin of their form (herself) as if they were “paradoxical items of clothing.”²³⁸ Similar to sculptors like Louise Bourgeois, Szapocznikow seems most at home in her studio surrounded by and in intimate contact with her sculptures. These images add a performative register to her work, and support a connection that Piotrowski and other recent exhibition catalog texts have made between Szapocznikow’s work and the concerns of body art. Szapocznikow’s practice of casting from her own form is the most often cited way in which she aligns with what Rebecca Schneider, Amelia Jones, and Peggy Phelan have all in slightly different ways formulated as a “radical narcissism” in performance and body art practices in the 1960s and 1970s—the exhibition of the self to radical artistic and political ends. While many of the *Tumeurs* do not feature direct casts of Szapocznikow’s face or body, they align with this assessment of Szapocznikow’s work as a performative approach to sculpture. In a series of photographs taken at her studio in the Malakoff suburb of Paris in 1970, Szapocznikow poses with *Invasion of Tumors*, (which, to recall, features a range of differently sized globs of resin-encased materials spread out on the grass) (see fig. 91 for an example). She lifts the tumors up as if to liberate them from gravity, then throws them back down. She lounges with them, pulling them close to and

²³⁷ Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 347.

²³⁸ Anne Tronche, “Corps en Lapsus,” in Alina Szapocznikow, Jonas Storsve, et al., *Alina Szapocznikow: Du Dessin à La Sculpture* (Paris, France: Éditions Dilecta; Centre Pompidou, 2013), 26.

onto her body, cradling them gently. And she crouches down, reaches out, and hugs a larger tumor, her head bowing toward the piece. The images are variously playful, silly, poignant, and touching, and they throw into question the negative connotations of their titular implications. The way Szapocznikow relates to these works suggests that they are (potentially) both traumatic and joyous, serious and playful—far from the stark symbols of suffering they’re often taken to be.

Szapocznikow’s last work in the *Tumeurs* series is *Tumeurs Personifiées* (*Tumors Personified*) from 1971, and this piece features casts of her face in combination with resin-encased materials to form sixteen heads of various sizes (fig. 92).²³⁹ Szapocznikow’s insertion of her own likeness into the work prompted Agata Jakubowska to argue that the work functions as “a form of a self-portrait.”²⁴⁰ The work was first exhibited at the Galerie Aurora in Geneva, Switzerland, in a show curated by Claudine Martin titled “Instant et Chose” that included Christian Boltanski and Annette Messager, both Szapocznikow’s friends.²⁴¹ The work was shown again in 1972 at the *XXIV Salon de la Jeune Sculpture* in Paris and Ivry-sur Seine, France.²⁴² In their first exhibition, the heads were spread out on a bed of sharp stones on the gallery floor in a corner. In their second exhibition for the *XXIV Salon de la Jeune Sculpture*, the work was again spread on stones, but this time in a more open setting, rather than in a corner. Installed scattered on the floor, the work requires the viewer to walk around, bend down, stoop, get close to the ground if possible to see each tumor up close. Viewers thus must mirror, mostly through imagination in a museum space, Szapocznikow’s relationship to the tumors in the archival photographs of her with *Envahissement de Tumeurs*. The way Szapocznikow oriented herself to her work is also the way viewers are supposed to relate to these works. We are among

²³⁹ Gola, *Katalog rzeźb Alina Szapocznikow*, 191.

²⁴⁰ Agata Jakubowska, “Ciało kobiece w pracach polskich artystek współczesnych” (The female body in the works of Polish contemporary artists), MA Thesis, Institute of Art History, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (1999), 132. As quoted in Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 346.

²⁴¹ Gola, “Chronology,” 197.

²⁴² Gola, *Katalog rzeźb Alina Szapocznikow*, 191.

them, with her, on the ground, and they are not solely invocations of her own personal traumas. Piotrowski has characterized this viewing dynamic as one that puts in sharp relief the contrast between the viewer's mobile and fully dressed state and the "defenseless, 'naked', tortured and sick body" strewn in pieces on the ground.²⁴³ My own experience, however, was the opposite. The delicate, semi-opaque forms of the tumors featuring Szapocznikow's face made me feel exposed, the vulnerability of the work and the need to come closer to it unsettling. Goosebumps, a shiver down the spine—these works are haunting reminders of our own physicality, our materiality.

By inserting her own body, her likeness, into the tumors, Szapocznikow identifies herself with the tumors: she is part of them and they are part of her. Thus, Jakubowska is correct to argue that the tumors take on the guise of a self-portrait. Interestingly, this is one of the few works in Szapocznikow's oeuvre that uses a cast of her full face rather than a fragmented portion like lips or the lower half. The connection between self and artwork also plays out in the two different titles that Szapocznikow gave this piece. When it was first exhibited in Geneva, Szapocznikow titled the work the *Désintégration de personnalité* (*Disintegration of Personality*), then later changed it to *Tumeurs Personnifiées* (*Tumors Personified*) before exhibiting the work again at the Salon de la Jeune Sculpture. Anda Rottenberg has argued that this change in title creates a double shift: "the artist's attention shifted from personality in the psychological sense to the physical person," and "the concept of fragmentation (disintegration) in the mental sphere was replaced by a term related to the concentration of biological matter (tumors)."²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 346.

²⁴⁴ Anda Rottenberg, "Personalizations," in *Alina Szapocznikow: Awkward Objects*, ed. Agata Jakubowska (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, 2011), 103.

Sontag, in *Illness as Metaphor*, states the following: “In cancer, non-intelligent...cells are multiplying, and you are being replaced by the non-you.”²⁴⁵ Lorde similarly suggests that cancer enacts a kind of depersonalization, but rather than focusing on only the disease itself, Lorde situates this depersonalization within larger societal structures. In recounting the pressure she received post-mastectomy to use a breast prosthesis (either by stuffing a bra with lambs wool or silicone gel or by getting an implant), Lorde argues that the idea that prostheses are necessary is

a reflection of those attitudes within our society towards women in general as objectified and depersonalized sexual conveniences. Women have been programmed to view our bodies only in terms of how they look and feel to others, rather than how they feel to ourselves, and how we wish to use them. We are surrounded by media images portraying women as essentially decorative machines of consumer function, constantly doing battle with rampant decay. (Take your vitamins every day and he *might* keep you, if you don’t forget to whiten your teeth, cover up your smells, color your gray hair and iron out your wrinkles....) As women, we fight this depersonalization every day, this pressure toward the conversion of one’s own self-image into a media expectation of what might satisfy male demand. The insistence upon breast prostheses as ‘decent’ rather than functional is an additional example of that wipe-out of self in which women are constantly encouraged to take part.²⁴⁶

The title *Désintégration de personnalité* implies a process of losing the self, the self becoming detached from personhood, identity, individuality, perhaps through a process of multiplication or shattering. The work features tumor-like lumps with casts of Szapocznikow’s face that proliferate and are strewn on the floor. This self becoming multiple mirrors the cellular multiplication of cancer itself. Cells multiply too rapidly, become too many too quickly, and are out of control. Cancer, then, is the body, is the self, even if it harms the self. The many lumpy faces scattered on the ground suggest a shattering open and apart, but also a repetition, a building up of many selves, an increasing. Thus there is both an energetic destructiveness and a creative generation occurring simultaneously. The second title, *Tumeurs Personnifiées*, indicates a process of

²⁴⁵ Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, 67.

²⁴⁶ Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*, 57.

becoming rather than a process of coming apart. While depersonalization implies loss, personification denotes a gaining of identity, of personality, of self. This radical merging of the “I” and cancer is, however, somewhat paradoxical, as the “person” is not specified. This further challenges the reading of her works as autopathography. While they aren’t not about her, they also cannot be narrowly reduced to her and her experience of illness. .

In two untitled drawings Szapocznikow made while in the hospital for treatment, Szapocznikow sketches herself post-mastectomy, a long chain of stitches on one side of her chest stretching from collarbone to belly button (figs. 93-94). In the first of these, a ballpoint pen drawing, five sketches show the figure in various states, presumably in a hospital. In the first sketch, the figure cries out “Aaa! aaa!” while writhing on a bed, fluid bags hanging from the torso; in the second, hands seem to claw at the bed as the figure curls into a ball, again with fluid bags dangling; and in the third, the figure reclines on her back, evidently exhausted. In the fourth sketch, the figure sits in an armchair, clothed, calmly smoking a cigarette, and in the fifth, she stands, again nude, staring out at the viewer, the scar prominently contrasting with the lone breast. In the second untitled drawing, also c. 1971-72, done in pencil, Szapocznikow draws herself standing, lower arms and legs fading away, staring out off the page. Her face and neck are beautifully modeled—a testament to Szapocznikow’s skill at drawing—hair only suggested by loose curling lines. The drawing becomes more roughly sketched moving down the figure’s body, but what garners the most attention is the chest. A single breast, with a large areola, is almost in the center of the chest, and next to it, compressed on the right side, is a long, jagged, stitched scar again running the length of the torso. The breast’s center placement almost makes it read as an eye, a cyclops-like gaze emanating from the chest. The stitched scar meanwhile reads as a violent lack, the spatial configuration of the figure’s chest completely imbalanced by its

presence. Yet what is most striking about this drawing is the delicacy of how Szapocznikow renders her own face and gaze. The figure stares out at the viewer, shoulders squared. The gaze is serene, the face peaceful and quietly confident. If the *Tumeurs* ask us to consider the ways in which illness estranges us from ourselves, Szapocznikow's works suggests that forming an intimate relationship between the body and the stuff of the world, and radically embracing the body in all its material realities, are a way to counteract this estrangement.

While there are almost seven thousand photographs in Szapocznikow's archive, mostly taken by friends and colleagues who passed through her studio, Szapocznikow rarely used a camera herself, but instead seems to have wanted her works documented in varying stages of completion. It wasn't until 1966 that she incorporated photography directly into her sculptures. In a now-lost piece titled *Photomaton*, she attached photo-booth images of herself (black and white images, usually around two inches square and used for identification documents) to matchboxes, encased them in polyester resin, and built them up into a tower (fig. 95). While this work is no longer extant for reasons that remain unclear, it clearly opened up a world of material possibilities for Szapocznikow's practice. She began encasing both photographs and other materials in resin in various amalgamated forms. As Filipovic has argued, "One cannot easily imagine today how strange and singular Szapocznikow's use of photography in her sculptures would appear at the time," especially considering that photography was still fighting to be seen as a fine art form in and of itself.²⁴⁷ Despite the vast variety of artwork using different kinds of photography now, however, these pieces are still strange, provocative objects to behold.

After *Photomaton*, Szapocznikow's next works with photography were the *Souvenirs*, 1967, a small series of photographs encased in resin and arranged standing up or lying down (fig. 96). These works are somewhat flat, almost like cardboard cut-outs, and lack the wool and

²⁴⁷ Filipovic, "Photosculptural," 75.

detritus that adds volume to later versions of works in the series. Szapocznikow used portraits of her friends Fernando Arrabal and Christian Boltanski, celebrities Twiggy, Sophia Loren, and Monica Vitti, as well as anonymous figures. Also included is a photograph of the face of a Holocaust victim taken after the liberation of the death camps. This image features a woman, her head thrown back and mouth open, and was widely circulated during and after the Adolf Eichmann trial in 1961 and the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial in 1964.²⁴⁸ The same image appears again in *Grand Tumeur I*, 1969, juxtaposed with a still image of Emmanuelle Riva in sensual ecstasy in Alain Renais's 1959 film *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, making death and pleasure indistinguishable from each other (fig. 97).

Piotrowski calls *Grand Tumeur* a face “imprisoned by a plastic mass,” as if the figures within were trapped, silently screaming underneath the resin.²⁴⁹ I agree that there is something deeply unsettling about this image of a Holocaust victim in combination with a still from a love scene in a popular film. Filipovic contends that the image of the Holocaust victim, which Szapocznikow also uses in *Grand Tumeur II*, 1969, and *Souvenir I*, 1971, functioned for Szapocznikow as Barthes's punctum, the image pricking her memory of the what she experienced in the camps (figs. 98-99).²⁵⁰ Barthes's argument is that if photography bears witness to the real—to the “having been there” of a person, object, or event—the photograph can speak to the unspeakable, providing in images that which words cannot describe. One can only wonder what Szapocznikow saw in this image, how it may have pricked her memory, and why she sourced a negative of it and used prints of it in multiple works. Easier to ascertain, though, is how she uses this image alongside others.

²⁴⁸ Filipovic, “Photosculptural,” 74. The negative of this image is in Szapocznikow's archive, though its source is unknown. Filipovic suspects that it was a book, rather than a magazine, as magazine clippings are present in Szapocznikow's archive. If it was from a magazine, Szapocznikow likely would have clipped the image, rather than procuring a negative. Alina Szapocznikow Archive, illustration no. 3998.

²⁴⁹ Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 346.

²⁵⁰ Filipovic, “Photosculptural,” 76.

The first group of *Souvenirs* from 1967 features each portrait as an individual work (though they were exhibited together, scattered on a table). Each person, then, remained somewhat recognizable even when encased in resin. The work featuring Sophia Loren, for example, maintains her light blue eyes and strong brows. The form is fragmented slightly, and there is a split toward the lower half of her face, but the gaze is strikingly direct and somewhat eerie. The works featuring Twiggy and Monica Vitti similarly gaze out at the viewer provocatively. The presence of these celebrity figures demonstrates that Szapocznikow was mining a photographic archive that wasn't confined to her own experiences and connections. Instead, the use of celebrities (film stars and models in particular) opens up the archive to the larger realm of media and the circulation of images in magazines, newspapers, film, and television. Like much pop art of the 1960s, these works feature both the glamor of celebrity culture and the weight of death and tragedy. As discussed in Chapter 2, pop art often mined the realm of mass media to emphasize the “numbing” or desensitizing way in which images of the horror of war are placed next to advertisements for home goods and articles on celebrity gossip, Andy Warhol's *Death and Disaster* series being the most famous example. Distinctive in Szapocznikow's work, by comparison, is that she draws on iconography from several decades before, evoking the Holocaust and the Second World War.

Anke Kempkes has argued that Szapocznikow's sometimes anachronistic references would have made her work seem “less contemporary to a Western eye”—which is to say a non-Eastern Bloc eye—and thus made her works appear more personal than they actually were.²⁵¹ At the same time, however, Kempkes notes that a work like *Souvenir I* would have been a shocking, highly contemporary image in Poland in the late 1960s, as 1968 saw a wave of intensifying anti-Semitism in Poland that would have resurfaced the horrors of the lead-up to the

²⁵¹ Kempkes, “Black Drips and Dark Matter,” 171.

concentration camps and other forms of persecution of Jewish peoples and other minority groups that occurred in Poland around World War II. Following student protests demanding freedom of speech without censorship, the response of Władysław Gomułka's government to the protests quickly escalated, and the role of students in the protests was used as an excuse for the expulsion of Jewish students and faculty from universities. Jewish intellectuals, in particular, were targeted, and even (in a bizarre twist) blamed for Stalinism. The events led to the emigration of approximately fifteen thousand Poles of Jewish descent (about half of the Jewish population that still remained in Poland). The intensity and sudden ferocity of the anti-Semitic campaign "stunned the population, and a majority of intellectuals [Jewish or not], into silence."²⁵² Szapocznikow was visiting Poland in March of 1968, and saw the anti-Semitic political demonstrations firsthand. One can only imagine how frightening it would have been for someone who had (barely) survived and lost so much, to see it happening all over again. Szapocznikow seems to have made the decision to no longer maintain a Warsaw studio and cut ties with many Polish contacts after she left Poland (she only returned for one last short visit in August of 1969), and it is no wonder why.²⁵³ While student protests raged in 1968 Paris alongside mass general strikes, it must have felt safe enough in comparison with the dangers that the political climate in Poland represented.²⁵⁴ The *Souvenirs*, then, are complex in that they combine mass media imagery with highly personal photographs while also politically evoking a "past" that was very much part of Szapocznikow's present in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In the first group of *Souvenirs* from 1967, Szapocznikow used portraits of two friends, Christian Boltanski and Fernando Arrabal. These portraits, rather than being mass-reproduced

²⁵² Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics*, 42-44.

²⁵³ Gola, "Chronology," 195.

²⁵⁴ For an analysis of the events of May and June of 1968 in Paris (a discussion that is somewhat outside the scope of this project), see Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

images of a celebrity figure, are more intimate and personal, taken for this project. Similarly, in *Souvenir I*, 1971, Szapocznikow juxtaposes mass media with her own photographic archive. The work features a blown-up photograph of Szapocznikow as a child on a day at the beach, sitting on the shoulders of her father, all smiles. This image locates the work in what Griselda Pollock has described as “‘before’ ‘the event’” of trauma. For Pollock, the photograph is “sealed into a chemically created simulacrum of skin.”²⁵⁵ Where her father’s face would be, however, is a tumescent form emerging out of the plane of the work, and below that, taking up the lower ground of the work, is the same image of the Holocaust victim. Rather than a cropped version of the corpse (only the face), the figure’s skeletal chest is also shown, as are two legs framing the face. *Souvenir I*, then, combines a personal photograph from Szapocznikow’s childhood with an image that was circulated and became part of a larger cultural memory, a record of the Holocaust seen by millions of people. The French word *souvenir* translates to memory or remembrance. Szapocznikow meant the title of the works to be in French, but there is also something intriguing about considering the double meaning of *souvenir* in English. Are these works a literalization of memories as Szapocznikow psychically experienced them, or are they tokens, placeholders that evoke larger contexts and experiences?

Souvenir I was exhibited at the Aurora Gallery in Geneva in the same show as *Tumeurs Personified*.²⁵⁶ Rather than appearing as a standalone work, however, the piece was hung on the wall above a table with numerous smaller sculptures featuring tumors, lips, fetish-like forms, and other such motifs Szapocznikow was using during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The entire configuration—table, tablecloth, small works, and wall piece—was titled *Souvenir de la table de noce d’une femme heureuse (Remembrance of the wedding table of a happy woman)*, 1971 (fig.

²⁵⁵ Pollock, “Too Early and Too Late,” 85.

²⁵⁶ Gola, *Katalog rzeźb Alina Szapocznikow*, 184.

100). Jola Gola has framed this work as part of a Bataillesque thread (or “key”) that runs through Szapocznikow’s work. While I’m hesitant to apply a single interpretive key as a means of “unlocking” an artist’s entire oeuvre, the reference to Bataille is an interesting one here. Gola specifically draws upon Bataille’s novella *L’oeil de boeuf*, wherein eroticism and death are intertwined with a helping of black humor. Another work by Szapocznikow that was exhibited alongside *Souvenir de la table de noce d’une femme heureuse* at the Aurora Gallery was *La Couronne de la Mariée*, 1968. Part of Szapocznikow’s *Expansions* series (discussed in Chapter 3), the work features a circular pour of polyurethane foam with embedded grass, lips on stems emerging out of the grass and towards the viewer flowers. The work takes the form of a funeral wreath, and in combination with the title is somewhat ironic, if perplexingly so. Are these works cheeky (and somewhat proto-feminist) comments on the status of women in marriages (with fragmented body parts standing as metonyms for a fragmented sense of self)? Or are they a conflagration of death and love, intimacy and the frailty of such intimacy? For Gola, these pieces evoke a black humor that indicates Szapocznikow’s grappling with her impending death due to breast cancer. They are “joy in the face of death—death whose nonsense can only be retorted using the quintessence of nonsense: laughter.”²⁵⁷ I do not think we can know that these works represent Szapocznikow’s feelings about her mortality, but her use of photography in works like the *Souvenirs* does create a paradoxical mixture of intimacy, pop culture, childhood joy, memory, and horror. The resin itself adds to this mixture, encasing the images in a layer of a skin-like substance that has slowly hardened and yellowed over time, almost fossilizing these images as if they were preserved in amber.

Photography as a marker of indexicality, in Szapocznikow’s work, is fundamentally linked to her sculptural process of casting. Just as a photograph has an indexical relationship to

²⁵⁷ Gola, “*L’oeil de boeuf*,” 67-68.

the source of the image, a cast from a body or form also maintains an indexical relationship to its model or source. Rosalind Krauss's two-part essay "Notes on the Index" applies Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic framework of the index to American art of the 1970s. While the artwork Krauss discusses has little in common, aesthetically or conceptually, with Szapocznikow's work, her analysis of the way semiotic notions of the index permeate or undergird much art of the 1970s is productive for considering Szapocznikow's sculptural project and use of photography. Citing Peirce, Krauss elaborates on how photographs operate as indexical signs rather than iconic signs. While icons "establish meaning through the effect of resemblance," photographs have a more direct physical relationship to their source than one of resemblance.²⁵⁸ Photographs "are in certain respects exactly like the objects they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that they were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature. In that aspect, then, they belong to the second class of signs [indices], those by physical connection."²⁵⁹ One could argue, then, that photographs and cast forms share a common element: they carry a physical connection to the model from which they were produced. It is perhaps not so strange that Szapocznikow turned to photography as a medium given that she had already been exhausting the potential of the casting process in various materials. The indexical nature of both photography and casting accomplishes Szapocznikow's aim, as articulated in her 1972 artist statement, to "fix the traces of the body."

The trace of the human form in casts of the body, which produces an affective mixture of sensuousness and morbidity, is most poignant in Szapocznikow's last series of works, the *Herbarium* series. The title references the practice of pressing pieces of plant matter (flowers,

²⁵⁸ Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Part 2," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986), 215.

²⁵⁹ C. S. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs," *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 106. As quoted in Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Part 2," 215.

leaves, etc.) to flatten and preserve them as specimens. This is an ancient and varied custom, and historically has often been part of the scientific or medical study of plants. Szapocznikow's title is both apt and somewhat perplexing. The works in the *Herbarium* series feature translucent resin casts of both Szapocznikow and her son Piotr. The resin, once removed from the mold, was thin and somewhat pliable, and Szapocznikow pressed these skin-like casts onto polychrome wooden boards and hung the pieces on the wall. The semi-flattened resin casts (some are flatter than others) are therefore similar to herbaria in that they appear as pressed, preserved remnants of something that used to take up volume but which has dried over time. Yet the quality of resin doesn't read as plant-like in any way. Instead, it seems almost like an exoskeleton of a reptile, shed and discarded, a fragile, thin remnant of a protective shell.

The *Herbarium* series was made at the same time that Szapocznikow was making full-body casts of her son Piotr. These casts resulted in three life-sized sculptural works, all titled *Piotr*, one in clay, one in painted polyester (no longer extant), and one in polyester resin (fig. 101). All three feature Piotr leaning backward and defying gravity, his head lolling to one side. The pose evokes that of Michelangelo's *Pietà*, 1498-1499, yet rather than a fully limp (read: dead) body, Piotr's is still alive, unsupported by a maternal figure.²⁶⁰ Rottenberg contends that in these works—and Szapocznikow's turn to realism by replicating the whole of a body—Szapocznikow attains the “Renaissance perfection of expressing a person who is still alive, but already slightly dead—the most prominent allegory of *Vanitas* in all her work.”²⁶¹ While the *Vanitas* motif is absolutely present in *Piotr*, the archival images of the process of making this work offer a slightly different perspective on the piece. In a series of images taken

²⁶⁰ Szapocznikow made several trips to Rome, and while she doesn't mention Michelangelo's work directly in her letters to Ryszard Stanislawski, it is highly likely that she was familiar with Michelangelo's *Pietà* and works by other artists that utilized the same motif.

²⁶¹ Rottenberg, “Personalizations,” 110.

(we don't know who took these particular photographs) during the casting process, we see Szapocznikow and Piotr in Szapocznikow's studio. The first thing that struck me when looking through these images was the tenderness and sense of collaboration between Szapocznikow and her son. They are working together and smiling, and you can read the care in how Szapocznikow applies plaster to his body and how he assists her. *Piotr* may seem like a *Pietà* wherein Christ is unsupported by maternal hands, but the work carries with it all Szapocznikow's love and care for her son.

Herbarium XII (Head of Christ), 1972, was commissioned by the Polish Pallottines for their chapel in Paris. It features a resin cast of Piotr in the guise of Christ, and the haunting, trace-like form harkens to the Veil of Veronica or the Shroud of Turin: Szapocznikow had Piotr wear a crown of thorns when she made this cast, so *Herbarium XII* is especially evocative of the visage of the dead Christ (fig. 102). Sarah Wilson has elucidated Szapocznikow's relationship with the Pallottines. When Piotr broke his leg in 1964, it was to the Pallottines' facility in Osny that she took him to recover. There she met priest Jozef Sadzik, who wrote a thesis on Heidegger's aesthetics that same year, and who would remain a friend. Sadzik also commissioned work by other contemporary Polish artists and writers, including stained glass windows depicting the apocalypse of the Book of Revelation from the artist Jan Lebenstein and translations from the writer Czesław Miłosz. Lebenstein was a long-term acquaintance of Szapocznikow's, and both Lebenstein and Miłosz had connections to Szapocznikow's second husband Roman Cieślewicz, who was a prominent graphic designer.²⁶² Cieślewicz designed two exhibition catalogs for Lebenstein and provided illustrations for some of Miłosz's translations.²⁶³ Thus, while it may seem surprising that Szapocznikow's unsettlingly visceral, very of-the-flesh

²⁶² See *Lovely, Human, True, Heartfelt*, 235, 244, 250, 253, 280-281, 283.

²⁶³ Wilson, "Alina Szapocznikow in Paris," 226-227.

work would be commissioned for the altar of a modernist church, the commission reveals another network of community that she was a part of in Paris.

Szapocznikow also made resin casts of her own likeness that she included in the *Herbarium* series, such as *Autoportret - Herbier (Self-portrait - Herbarium)*, 1971, and *Herbier XI (Herbarium XI)*, 1972 (figs. 103-104). The works are almost identical to the *Herbaria* that feature Piotr, with eerily pale resin casts smashed onto polychrome boards. These works, despite their relationship to paintings hung on a wall, foreground the relationship between the interior and exterior in sculptural works as they embody the liminal space between the interior and exterior of a sculpture, like skin. If Szapocznikow's very early work maintains a relationship between an internal structure of the figure and what is outside (in her socialist realist pieces, for example), she soon moves toward works that can be described in similar terms to how Rosalind Krauss has characterized Rodin. Like Rodin, in Krauss's reading, Szapocznikow's work from the late 1950s and early 1960s forces the viewer to acknowledge the work as a result of a process, "an act that has shaped the figure over time." It is on the surface that "the externalization of gesture meets with the imprint of the artist's act as he shapes the work."²⁶⁴ As Szapocznikow shifts to a casting process, the relationship of inside to outside becomes secondary to the relationship between model and multiple. Yet throughout her experiments with plastics, there is a play with volume, with relationships between surface and structure. The *Desserts*, for example, feature both empty shells (merely surface) and casts filled with other substances (inauthentic volume). The *Tumeurs* and *Souvenirs* similarly play with inside and outside, sometimes commingling casts with lumpy, molten forms, all encased in resin. The photographs add to this play by pointing toward external referents. With the *Herbarium*, it is almost as if there is no longer an inside or an outside. Instead, we are left with what would have provided the

²⁶⁴ Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1981), 30.

distinction between the two, the in-between. Skin, after all, is both a field of containment and a surface—it both holds in and faces outward. The *Herbarium* series is the closest realization of Szapocznikow’s stated aim to “fix in resin the traces of our body” because of their fragility, vulnerability, and haunting corporeality.²⁶⁵ While the *Tumeurs* and *Souvenirs* invite an embodied confrontation with illness, the fragility of the body, and the transience of memory, *Herbarium* and related works like *Piotr* offer traces of the bodies of Szapocznikow and her son, as well as heartbreakingly tender reminders of their collaborations in her studio. These works cannot be solely interpreted via references to Szapocznikow’s biography, or only through received ideas of trauma and illness. Instead, trauma, joy, humor, love, eroticism and (perhaps above all) material experimentation intertwine in these works. They simultaneously highlight art’s inability to fully “represent” the full range of human experience and also show how art can provide relational means of gaining access to that range through the body. As Szapocznikow said of her chosen subject, “of all the manifestations of the ephemeral the human body is the most vulnerable, the only source of all joy, all suffering, and all truth.”²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Szapocznikow, untitled statement, March 1972.

²⁶⁶ Szapocznikow, untitled statement, March 1972.

Conclusion

In 1971, Szapocznikow made the only piece of her career that could be considered as a photographic work in its own right. As discussed previously, there are thousands of photographs taken of her and her works that are in her archive, and she incorporated photographs taken by others into some of her sculptures. However she was rarely, if ever, behind the camera herself, and she was not making photographic works of art. The *Fotorzeźby* (*Photosculptures*), then, are somewhat of an anomaly (fig. 105). In my mind, however, they encapsulate many of the most important facets of Szapocznikow's work and offer a way to conclude this project.

The *Fotorzeźby* consist of twenty black and white photographs of masticated chewing gum in varying shapes, and the photographs are typically displayed in one long line across a gallery wall. The lumpen, globby, stringy, stretched, and distended pieces of gum are staged on concrete steps or table top edges. Some almost appear like reclining figures, some like flayed skin, and some are completely abstract. In an accompanying text for the work, that is written in English and typically shown alongside the photographs, Szapocznikow says

The other day, Saturday, tired from having spent hours polishing my Rolls-Royce in pink Portuguese marble, I sat in the sun and day-dreamed as I mechanically chewed a bit of gum.

In shaping with my mouth odd-looking and bizarre forms, I suddenly realized what an extraordinary collection of abstract sculptures was moving between my teeth.

One has only to photograph and enlarge my masticated creations in order to achieve a sculptural presence.

Chew well then. Look around you. Creation lies just between dreams and daily work.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ Alina Szapocznikow, untitled text written at 92 Malakoff, June 22, 1971. Illustration 7379, Alina Szapocznikow Archive.

The text stages a tension, as Filipovic has argued, between “a result that is both immanent (in a sculptural sense) and impermanent.”²⁶⁸ The works are inherently sculptural in their form, yet it is only in photographs that they can be enlarged and made lasting, only then can they realize their potential as sculptural works of art. Photography, then, functions similarly to the polyester resin used in other of Szapocznikow’s works, in that it is a “transparent film” and “documents and preserves the fleeting, the discharged and forgotten.”²⁶⁹

The *Fotorzeźby* formally recall her early experimentations with biomorphic abstraction, and also materially resonate with the abject and skin-like quality of the resin in later series like the *Tumeurs* and *Herbarium*. Yet, the series of stark black and white images, each with one primary subject, more quickly connects to photo-conceptual projects of the 1960s and 70s (Bernd and Hilla Becher, Mary Kelly, Eleanor Antin, and others) than sculpture, and calls to mind Szapocznikow’s own flirtations with conceptual art such as *My American Dream* and the *Cendriers* series.²⁷⁰ When I first viewed these pieces, I also immediately thought of Hannah Wilke’s 1974-1982 *S.O.S.—Starification Object Series*, which involved both a performance where audience members were invited to chew gum and place it on her body, as well as a series of performative self-portraits where she poses with chewing gum adorning her nude body. In some documentative pieces resulting from the series, black and white photographs are paired with small pieces of chewing gum in a frame, tiny sculptures that resonate with the gum on her body in the images above them (fig. 106). On Wilke’s skin the gum forms read as scars, and the chewing gum itself is often labial in form when viewed up close (though Wilke thought of the chewing gum as androgynous in form).²⁷¹ While Wilke’s work stages what would become known

²⁶⁸ Filipovic, “Photosculptural,” 64.

²⁶⁹ Ammer, ““My American Dream,”” 154.

²⁷⁰ Filipovic, “Photosculptural,” 64.

²⁷¹ Wilke quoted in Jones, *Body Art*, 184.

as the radical narcissism of feminist performance practices, Szapocznikow's *Fotorzeźby*, unlike works like the *Desserts* and *Fetishes* that radically exhibit herself-as-artwork, don't really do this. They instead seem to epitomize two key facets of Szapocznikow's oeuvre: the body as her main source and inspiration, and her commitment to the physical, intimate process of experimenting and working with materials.

Czartoryska has argued that the pliant form of the chewing gum provided Szapocznikow with yet another means to explore the imprint of the body, the traces of the body, in material form. Szapocznikow's mouth, then, would become a "blind assistant" taking on the role of an "unconscious, gustatory, and sensual executor" of the sculptural process in lieu of the artist's hands.²⁷² What I find most striking about Szapocznikow's text, however, is that she specifically uses the word "mechanically" to describe how her mouth made these works. This implies an autonomous, repetitive process and invokes the realm of mechanized, industrial production that she begins exploring in works incorporating assemblage car parts in the early 1960s and continues to develop in the *Bellies* and *Lamps* wherein artwork and commodity are not mutually exclusive. Just as the *Bellies* and *Lamps* inevitably fail to be mass produced objects because of their relationship to the body and the hand-made, so too do the *Fotorzeźby* fail to be mechanical in their form. Each is unique, individual, and each bears the imprint of Szapocznikow's body in its production, just as her casts forever carry the trace of the body from which they were made.

As photographs, the *Fotorzeźby* function indexically in relation to the pieces of gum that Szapocznikow photographed. The index is a key facet of Szapocznikow's practice, both in her continual documentation of her sculptures in her studio and in her use of the casting process. Series like the *Souvenirs* and *Tumeurs*, especially, push the indexical quality of Szapocznikow's work to its limits, combining photography, casting, and the traumatic to unsettling effect. Some

²⁷² Czartoryska, "Okrutna jasność," 21.

of the gum sculptures in the *Fotorzeźby* are also formally similar to the *Herbarium*: skin like, flayed forms that seem to be neither inside or outside, but rather something abject and in between. Unlike the *Herbarium*, however, the *Fotorzeźby* remain much more playful. These are not hauntingly sweet meditations on love and death. As Szapocznikow's text proposes, the *Fotorzeźby* are a call to action, a call to attention.

Szapocznikow both expanded and dismantled the possibilities of figural sculpture during her short but incredibly productive career. In the span of 28 years, between 1945 and 1973, she creates works that could be described through the framework of classical sculpture, socialist realism, existentialism, surrealism, *art informel*, assemblage, conceptual art, pop art, protofeminism, the part object, body/performance art, minimalist seriality, trauma and disability studies, and more. Her work, however, never quite fit into any of these characterizations, and was always moving just beyond strict categorization. It is my hope that this dissertation elucidates the many ways that Szapocznikow's work *contributes* to art historical understandings of the above movements, styles, and approaches, that it shows how her work can add nuance and complexity to art of the post war period. In Poland, Szapocznikow is very well known and her work is often considered as a "bridge" between more recent feminist art practices and nascent, proto feminist practices of artists working in the 1960s.²⁷³ The relevance of Szapocznikow's practice is not limited to Polish art history, however, and this dissertation contributes to understanding the larger network of artists and movements that Szapocznikow was part of and in dialogue with. As Szapocznikow herself found with her ever evolving and experimental exploration of the human form, through embodied machines, awkward objects, and resin traces of the body, there is always more to try, to learn, and to see, sometimes from surprising,

²⁷³ Butler, "Soft Body/Soft Sculpture," 38.

disturbing, playful, humorous, tragic, and deeply moving sources. As she suggests: “Chew well then. Look around you. Creation lies just between dreams and daily work.”²⁷⁴

²⁷⁴ Szapocznikow, untitled text written at 92 Malakoff, June 22, 1971.

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Illustrations

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I have also given the catalog raisonné illustration number for each of Szapocznikow's works listed below. When relevant, the illustration number for Alina Szapocznikow's archive is also given.



Figure 1. Alina Szapocznikow, *Noga (Leg)*, 1962. Plaster, 7 ⁷/₈ x 19 ¹¹/₁₆ x 25” (20 x 50 x 63.5 cm). Photo: Thomas Barratt. Catalog illustration no. 225.



Figure 2. Alina Szapocznikow, *Kobieta leżąca* (*Woman Lying Down*), 1946. Terracotta, 6 ½ x 7 ⅞ x 33" (16.5 x 20 x 33 cm). Catalog illustration no. 4. Archive illustration no. 319.



Figure 3. Alina Szapocznikow, *Ekshomowany (Exhumed)*, 1954-1957. Versions made in both cement and bronze, 25 3/16 x 16 9/16 x 11 13/16" (27 x 14 x 30 cm). Catalog illustration no. 66. Archive illustration no. 375.



Figure 4. Alina Szapocznikow, *Nu (Grande Figure, Anita) (Nude (Large Figure, Anita))*, 1949-1950. Gypsum, 29 x 35 x 15 ¾" (76 x 35 x 40 cm). Catalog illustration no. 23. Archive illustration no. 331.



Figure 5. Alina Szapocznikow, *Studium głowy kobieta w chuscie* (*Study for Head of Woman with Headscarf*), 1949. Gypsum, 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 23 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (100 x 100 x 60 cm). Catalog illustration no. 21. Archive illustration no. 330.



Figure 6. Alina Szapocznikow, *Getto-Walka (Ghetto-Fight)*, 1953. Gypsum, 52 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 26" (134 x 85 x 68 cm). Catalog illustration no. 54. Archive illustration no. 358.



Figure 7. Alina Szapocznikow, *Stalin*, 1953-1954. Gypsum, exact dimensions unknown. Catalog illustration no. 52. Archive illustration no. 353.



Figure 8. Alina Szapocznikow, *Przyjaźni Polsko-Radzieckiej* (*Monument of Polish-Soviet Friendship*), 1953-54. Versions made in both clay and bronze. Exact dimensions unknown. Catalog illustration no. 57. Archive illustration no. 364.



Figure 9. Alina Szapocznikow, *Cialo (tors-lezaca)* (*Body (Lying down torso)*), 1957. Artificial stone, 6 11/16 x 17" (17 x 45 cm). Catalog illustration no. 110. Archive illustration no. 4744.



Figure 10. Alina Szapocznikow, *Monstrum I (Monster I)*, 1957. Cast iron, cement, iron filings, exact dimensions known, likely 10 ⁵/₈ x 5 x 5" (27 x 14 x 14 cm). Catalog illustration no. 111. Archive illustration no. 423.

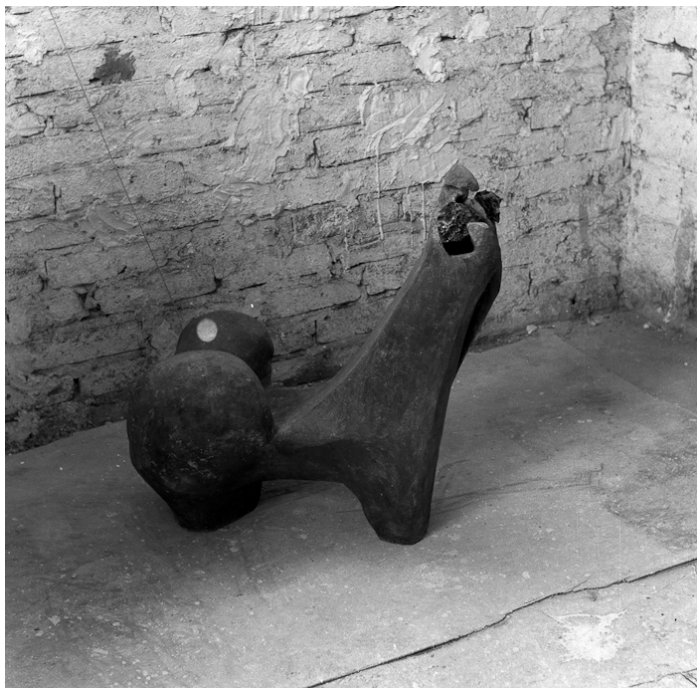


Figure 11. Alina Szapocznikow, *Maszyna-zwierzę* (*Machine-animal*), 1957. Gypsum and iron filings, exact dimensions unknown. Catalog illustration no. 104. Archive illustration no. 4747.



Figure 12. Alina Szapocznikow, *Trudny wiek (Difficult Age)*, 1956. Painted gypsum, 74 ½ x 24 x 15" (189 x 59 x 38 cm). Catalog illustration no. 69. Photograph: Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź.



Figure 13. Alina Szapocznikow, *Piękna kobieta* (*Beautiful Woman*), 1956. Terracotta, 20 ½ x 12 ¼ x 14 ¾" (52 x 31 x 37 cm). Catalog illustration no. 70. Archive illustration no. 384.



Figure 14. Alina Szapocznikow, *Powalona (Knocked down)*, 1956. Gypsum, exact dimensions unknown. Catalog illustration no. 77.



Figure 15. Alina Szapocznikow, *Garnek I (Głowa) (Pot I (Head))* (left) and *Garnek VI (Pot VI)* (right), 1956-1957. Colored ceramic. Catalog illustrations no. 82 and 87. Archive illustrations no. 402 and 407.

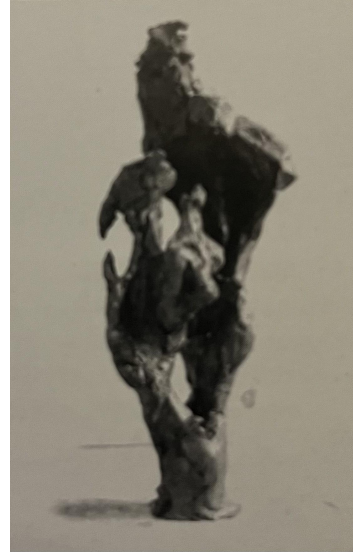


Figure 16. Alina Szapocznikow, *Postać II (Character II)* (left) and *Postać VI (Character VI)* (right), 1956-1957. Dimensions unknown. Catalog illustrations no. 93.2 and 93.6.



Figure 17. Alina Szapocznikow, *Maria Magdalena (Mary Magdalene)*, 1957-1958. Versions made in gypsum and bronze, 65 ½ x 22 x 14 ⅞” (166.5 x 58 x 36 cm). Catalog illustration no. 114. Archive illustration no. 4383.



Figure 18. Alina Szapocznikow, *Bellissima I* (left) and *Bellissima II* (right), 1959. Gypsum (left) and terracotta (right), 25 x 14 x 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (64 x 35 x 30 cm) Each. Catalog illustrations no. 135 and 136. Archive illustrations no. 460 and 461.

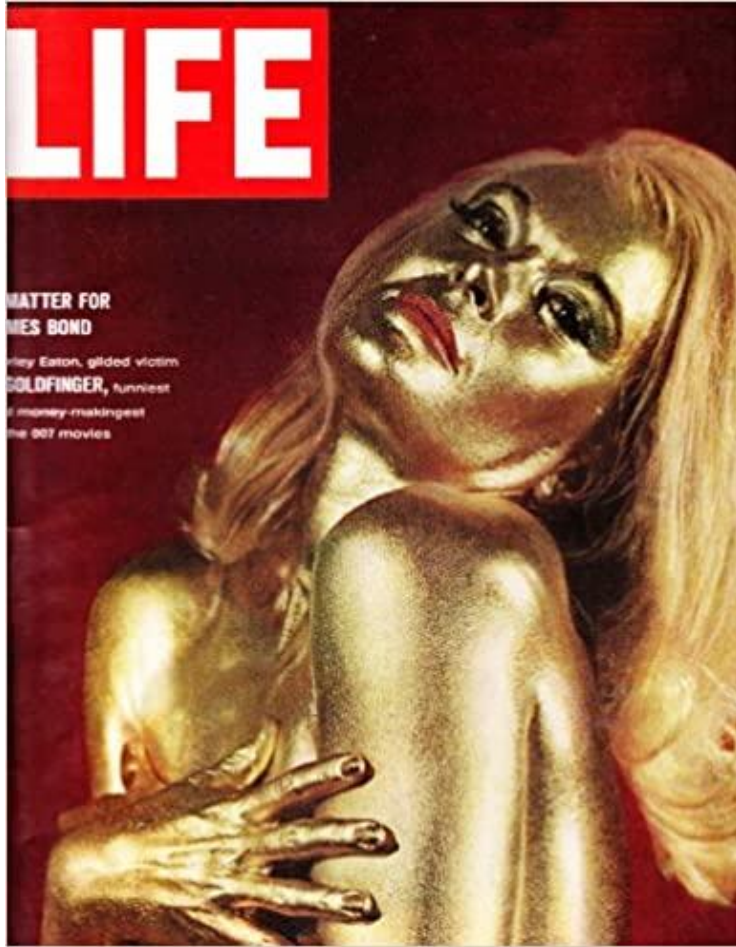


Figure 19. Cover of *Life Magazine* 57, no. 19. November 6, 1964. ©Time, Inc.



Figure 20. Alina Szapocznikow, *Goldfinger*, 1965. Gold painted plastic cement and car part, 72 1/16 x 29 15/16 x 22 7/16" (183 x 76 x 57 cm). Photo by Piotr Tomczyk, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź. Catalog illustration no. 283.



Figure 21. Promotional poster for *Goldfinger* in England, 1964.



Figure 22. Promotional poster for *Goldfinger* in France, 1965.



Figure 23. Cesar, *Le Pouce (Thumb)*, 1965. Red Polyester Resin, 16 x 5 ½ x 8” (40.5 x 14 x 20 cm). Tate Modern, London. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London.



Figure 24. Alina Szapocznikow, *Stefa (Gymnast)*, 1952. Gypsum, dimensions unknown. Photo by Ryszard Stanisławski. Catalog illustration no. 45. Archive illustration no. 343.



Figure 25. Alina Szapocznikow, *Kobieta (Dziewczyna z długą szyją) (Woman (Girl with a Long Neck))*, 1957. Colored gypsum, dimensions unknown. Catalog illustration 105. Archive illustration no. 4731.



Figure 26. Alina Szapocznikow, *Ready Made*, 1964. Plastic cement, iron filings, shoe, objects, dimensions unknown. Catalog illustration no. 262. Archive illustration no. 4945.

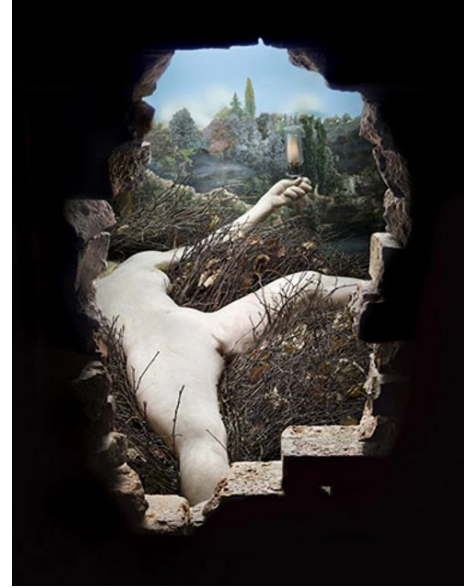


Figure 27. Marcel Duchamp, *Etant Donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage...* (Given: 1. *The Waterfall*, 2. *The Illuminating Gas...*), 1946-66. Mixed media assemblage: (exterior) wooden door, iron nails, bricks, and stucco; (interior) bricks, velvet, wood, parchment over an armature of lead, steel, brass, synthetic putties and adhesives, aluminum sheet, welded steel-wire screen, and wood; Peg-Board, hair, oil paint, plastic, steel binder clips, plastic clothespins, twigs, leaves, glass, plywood, brass piano hinge, nails, screws, cotton, collotype prints, acrylic varnish, chalk, graphite, paper, cardboard, tape, pen ink, electric light fixtures, gas lamp (Bec Auer type), foam rubber, cork, electric motor, cookie tin, and linoleum, 7' 11 1/2" x 70" x 49" in (242.6 x 177.8 x 124.5 cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris / Association Marcel Duchamp.



Figure 28. Alina Szapocznikow, *Człowiek z instrumentem* (*Man with Instrument*), 1965. Cement, metal car part, black patina, 58 ¼ x 15 ¾ x 13 ¾" (148 x 40 x 35 cm). Catalog illustration no. 286. Photo: Fabrice Gousset for Hauser & Wirth.



Figure 29. Alina Szapocznikow, *Femme de ménage (Cleaning Woman)*, 1965. Plastic cement, automobile parts, polyester, 57 x 23 1/4" (140 x 59 cm). Catalog no. 287. Photo: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.



Figure 30. Alina Szapocznikow, *Drang Nach Osten (Drive to the East)*, 1963. Asphalt, cement, plaster, pieces of weapons used in WWII, dimensions unknown. Catalog illustration 229. Archive illustration no. 4874.

★ THE ONE PIECE SOLID MARBLE ROLLS.

My AMERICAN DREAM .

TO BLOW UP TWICE THE SIZE AND IN PINK PORTUGUESE MARBLE, THE CONVERTIBLE ROLLS ROYCE, ★. THIS ~~OBJECT~~ WORK OR OBJECT WILL BE VERY EXPENSIVE, COMPLETELY USELESS, AND A REFLECTION OF THE GOD OF SUPREME LUXURY. IN ~~ANOTHER~~ OTHER WORDS A "COMPLETE" WORK OF ART. IF THERE EXISTS SUCH A FANTASTIC SNOB AS WHO WOULD ORDER THIS WORK TO BE MADE ~~AND~~ AND PUT IT RIGHT ON HIS PRIVATE LAWN TO GREET HIS GUESTS AND INVITE THEM FOR DRINKS ON THE MARBLE SEATS, THEN MY AMERICAN DREAM WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED.

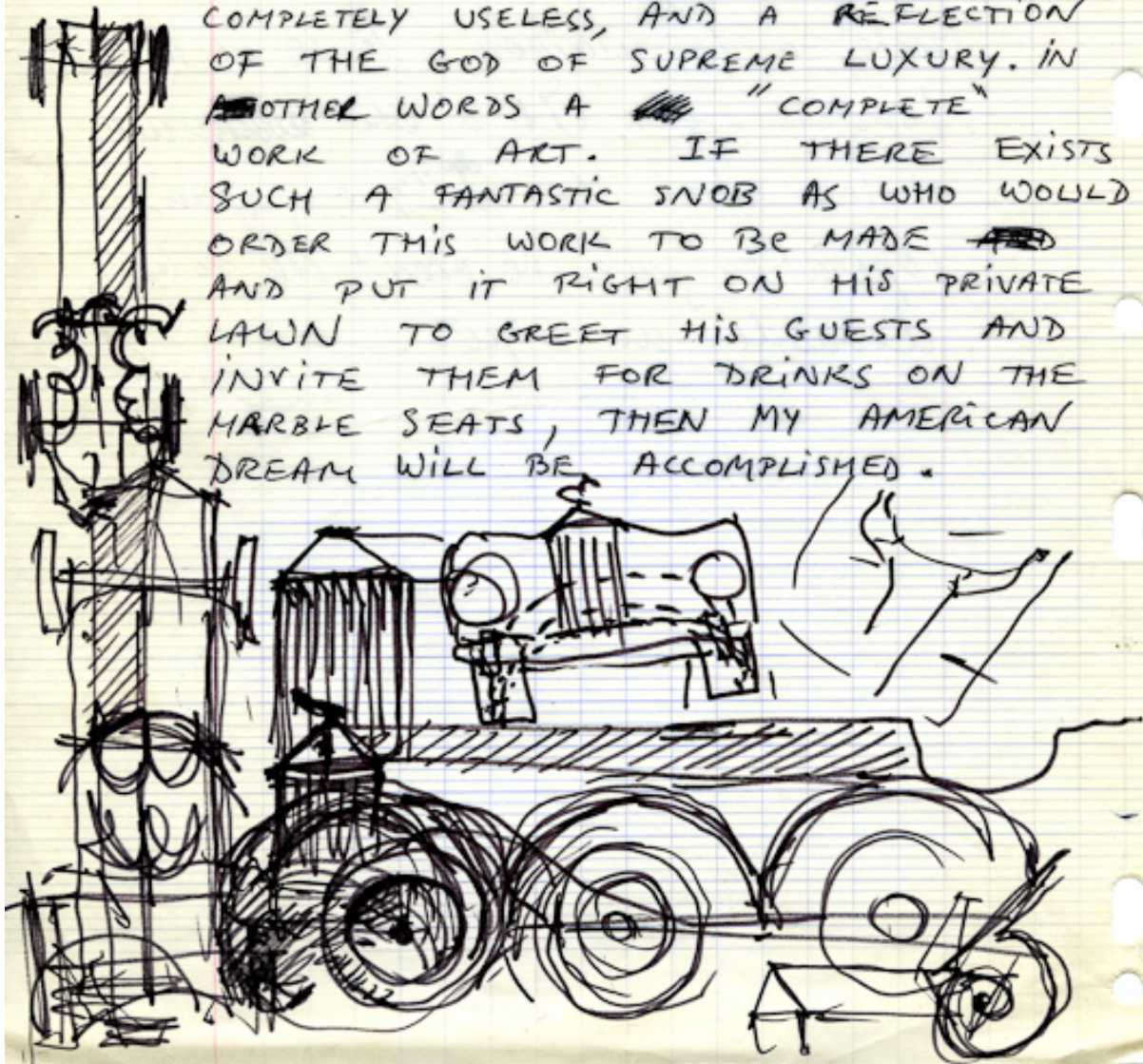


Figure 31. Alina Szapocznikow, "My American Dream" text, 1970. Archive illustration no. 7381.

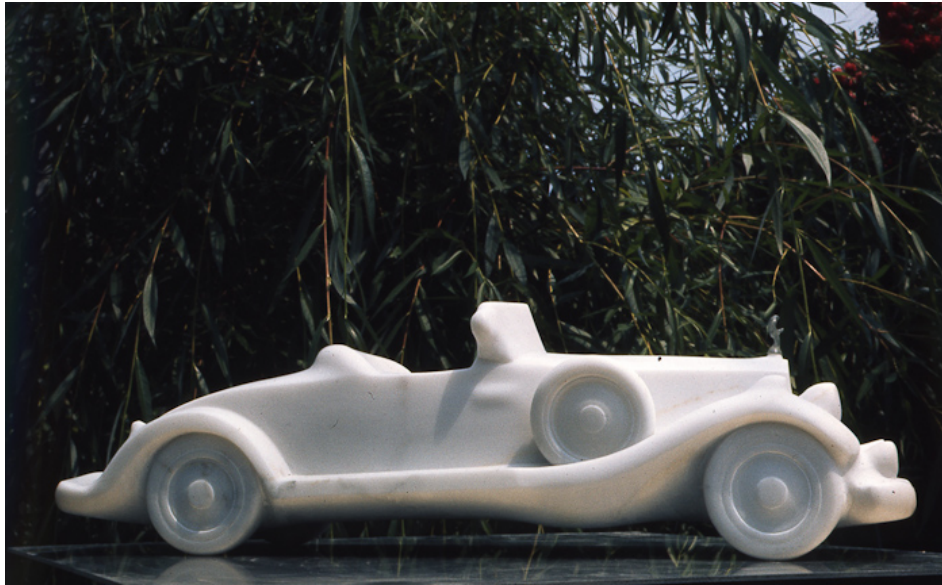


Figure 32. Alina Szapocznikow, *Rolls-Royce I*, 1970. Carrara marble, 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (20 x 64 x 21 cm). Catalog illustration no. 415. Archive illustration no. 5553.



Figure 33. Alina Szapocznikow, *Rolls-Royce II*, 1971. Pink Portuguese marble, 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 25 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (20 x 64 x 21 cm). Catalog illustration no. 455. Archive illustration no. 5551.

PATINOIRE DANS LE CRATERE DU VESUVE

Concevoir et réaliser une patinoire artificielle, comme un oeil au fond du cratère volcanique, me semble une idée capitale à deux points de vue :

- 1) ce geste humain, en jetant un défi à la nature, l'apprivoise et l'envoûte selon son caprice.
- 2) la futilité et l'aspect ludique de ce geste revêtent une grande importance.

Le côté paradoxal et absurde doit en être souligné par une ambiance de fête, une musique appropriée à ces lieux (enregistrement et diffusion par magnétophone des airs de valses russes tels que "Sur les monts de Manchurie", l'illumination (lampions) et la coloration (neige artificielle) des pistes de ski qui mèneront de la station supérieure du téléphérique à la patinoire.

L'homme vient jouer là où jadis la terre a répandu le feu infernal jaillissant de ses entrailles ouvertes : un défi et un blasphème.

Défi jusqu'à un certain point ; une surface de glace au fond du cratère a une signification symbolique immédiate (comme l'obélisque renversé d'un Barnett Newman) et, si elle s'oppose à toute transcendance par son côté ludique, ce défi suprême est aussi une manifestation de recueillement devant la nature.

Si un jour pendant les compétitions de patinage artistique la Peggy Fleming du moment exécute ses figures libres dans le cratère gelé et si nous, spectateurs ébahis de ses pirouettes prodigieuses et futiles nous sommes pris par une brusque éruption de lave et figés pour l'éternité comme les pompéiens, alors le triomphe de l'instant et du fugitif sera complet.

Un instant fugitif, un instant futile, tel est le seul symbole de notre passage terrestre.

Alina SZAPOCZNIKOW

avril 1972

N. B. L'information audio-visuelle sur la patinoire peut être confiée à une pléiade d'artistes.

Figure 34. Alina Szapocznikow, text for *Operation Vesuvius*, 1972. Archive illustration no. 7380.



Figure 35. Barnett Newman, *Broken Obelisk*, 1963-1969 (variations were made during these years). Cor-ten steel, 24' 7 1/4" x 10' 5 1/2" x 10' 5 1/2" (749.9 x 318.8 x 318.8 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figure 36. Alina Szapocznikow, *Cendrier de Célibataire III (The Bachelor's Ashtray)*, also titled *Cendrier d'Ambiance III (Ambiance Ashtray III)*, 1972. Butter, cigarette butts. Catalog illustration no. 476. Archive illustration no. 1010.



Figure 37. Alina Szapocznikow, *Cendrier de Célibataire IV (The Bachelor's Ashtray)*, also titled *Cendrier d'Ambiance IV (Ambiance Ashtray IV)*, 1972. Butter, cigarette butts, ceramic plate. Catalog illustration no. 477.



Figure 38. Alina Szapocznikow, *Cendrier de Célibataire I* (*The Bachelor's Ashtray I*), 1972. Colored polyester resin and cigarette butts, 4 9/16 x 4 15/16 x 4 5/16" (11.5 x 12.5 x 11 cm). Catalog illustration no. 474. Photograph © ADAGP, Paris.



Figure 39. Alina Szapocznikow, *Cendrier de Célibataire II* (*The Bachelor's Ashtray II*), 1972. Polyester resin, 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 10 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ " (13 x 27 x 18 cm). Catalog illustration no. 475. Archive illustration no. 1008.



Figure 40. Richard Hamilton, *She*, 1958-1961. Oil paint, cellulose, nitrate paint, paper, and plastic on wood, 48 x 32" (121.9 x 81.3 cm) © The Estate of Richard Hamilton. Tate Modern, London.



Figure 41. Alina Szapocznikow, *Stela (Stéle)*, 1968. Polyester resin and polyurethane foam, 31 1/8 x 18 1/8 x 27 3/16" (79 x 46 x 69 cm). Catalog illustration no. 393. © ADAGP, Paris. Ursula Hauser Collection, Switzerland.



Figure 42. Alina Szapocznikow, *Torse noyé (Headless Torso)*, 1968. Polyester resin and polyurethane foam, 18 ½ x 25 3/16 x 28 ¾” (46 x 64 x 73 cm). Catalog illustration no. 391. Zachęta National Gallery of Art, Warsaw.



Figure 43. Alina Szapocznikow, *Dessert III*, 1971. Colored polyester resin and porcelain base, 7 1/8 x 9 7/16 x 9 7/8" (18 x 24 x 25 cm). Catalog illustration no. 449. Kravis Collection.



Figure 44. Alina Szapocznikow, *Petit Dessert I (Small Dessert I)*, 1970-71. Colored polyester resin and glass. 3 3/16 x 4 5/16 x 5 1/8" (8 x 11 x 13 cm). Catalog illustration no. 447. Kravis Collection.



Figure 45. Alina Szapocznikow, *Dessert II (Dessert II)*, 1970-71. Colored polyester resin, glass, photographs. 7 ½ x 5 ⅛ x 5 ⅛" (19 x 13 x 13 cm). Catalog illustration no. 448. Collection Savine Labelle-Roujoux.



Figure 46. Daniel Spoerri, *Kichka's Breakfast I*, 1960. Wood chair hung on wall with board across seat, coffeepot, tumbler, china, eggcups, eggshells, cigarette butts, spoons, tin cans, and other materials, 14 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 27 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 25 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (36.6 x 69.5 x 65.4 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Daniel Spoerri / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ProLitteris, Switzerland.



Figure 47. Eva Hesse, *Untitled*, 1968. Glass and metal case with 15 studioworks (mixed media), 14 ½ x 10 x 10 ⅔" (37 x 25.5 x 27 cm). Private Collection © The Estate of Eva Hesse. Courtesy of Hauser & Wirth.



Figure 48. Claes Oldenburg, *Pastry Case, I*, 1961-62. Burlap and muslin soaked in plaster, painted with enamel, metal bowls, and ceramic plates in glass and metal case, 20 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 30 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 14 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (52.7 x 76.5 x 37.3 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Claes Oldenburg.



Figure 49. Claes Oldenburg, *Floor Cake*, 1962. Synthetic polymer paint and latex on canvas filled with foam, 58 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 9' 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 58 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (148.2 x 290.2 x 148.2 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Claes Oldenburg.



Figure 50. César, *Sein*, 1966. Installation view at the former location of the Rochas perfume factory, Poissy, France. Photo: Le Parisien / Yves Fossey.



Figure 51. *Minne di Sant'Agata*. Photo: La Cucina Italiana / Salvatore Spatafora.
https://www.lacucinaitaliana.com/italian-food/italian-dishes/minne-sant-agata-authentic-sicilian-recipe?refresh_ce=



Figure 52. Alina Szapocznikow, *Sein Illuminee*, 1966. Colored polyester resin and electric light, 22 x 7 x 6 1/3" (56 x 17.5 x 16 cm). Catalog illustration no. 342. Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw.



Figure 53. Figure Meret Oppenheim, *Object*, 1936. Fur-covered cup, saucer, and spoon, cup 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (10.9 cm) in diameter; saucer 9 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (23.7 cm) in diameter; spoon 8" (20.2 cm) long, overall height 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (7.3 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / Pro Litteris, Zurich.



Figure 54. Meret Oppenheim, *Ma gouvernante - My Nurse - Mein Kindermädchen*, 1936/1967. Metal plate, shoes, string, paper, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 13 x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (14 x 33 x 21 cm). Moderna Museet, Stockholm. © Meret Oppenheim / Bildupphovsrätt.



Figure 55. Meret Oppenheim, *Le Festin Cannibale (Cannibal Feast)*, 1959. Photo: Denise Bellon / Galerie Cordier, Paris.



Figure 56. Natalia LL, *Consumer Art*, 1972. Black and white photographs, 39 1/3 x 39 1/3" (100 x 100 cm). © Natalia LL.



Figure 57. Sanja Iveković, *Sweet Violence*, 1974. Video (black-and-white, sound), 5:56 min. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Sanja Iveković



Figure 58. Alina Szapocznikow, *Fajrant (End of Day's Work)*, 1971. Polyester resin, rubber glove, brush, 10 ¼ x 6 5/16 x 4 5/16" (26 x 16 x 11 cm). Catalog illustration no. 441. Dr. Werner Jerke Collection.



Figure 59. Alina Szapocznikow, *Bouche en marche (Fétiche III) (Marching lips (Fetish III))*, 1970. Polyester resin and plastic lace, 7 1/8 x 14 9/16 x 9 7/16" (18 x 37 x 24 cm). Catalog illustration no. 436. Archive illustration no. 5606.



Figure 60. Alina Szapocznikow, *Sculpture (Fétiche IV) (Sculpture (Fetish IV))*, 1971. Polyester resin, stockings, wood, lingerie, paint, 10 1/4 x 13 3/8 x 15 9/16" (26 x 34 x 39.5 cm). Catalog illustration no. 437. Photo: Thomas Barratt / Hauser & Wirth.



Figure 61. Alina Szapocznikow, *Untitled (Fétiche VII) (Fetish VII)*, 1971. Polyester resin, nylon tights, wool, 13 13/16 x 19 11/16 x 15 3/4" (35 x 50 x 40 cm). Catalog illustration no. 440. Photo: Simon Vogel / Koeln.

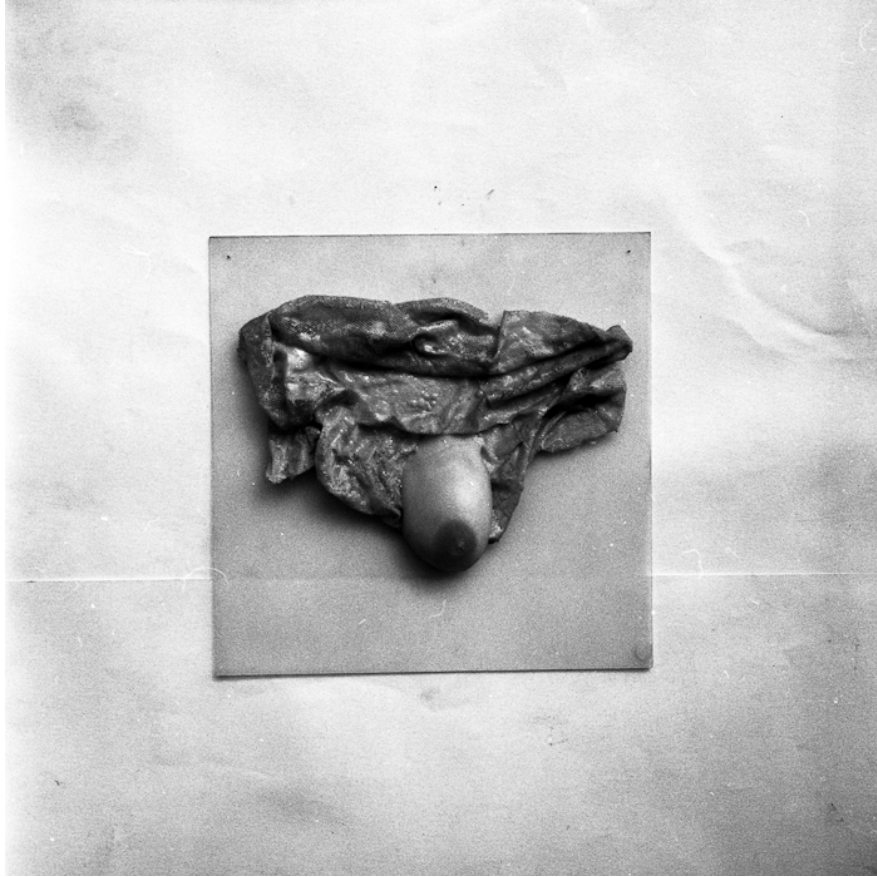


Figure 62. Alina Szapocznikow, *Tear*, 1971. Polyester resin and lace, 11 x 17 x 2" (28 x 43 x 5 cm). Catalog illustration no. 456. Archive illustration no. 5241.

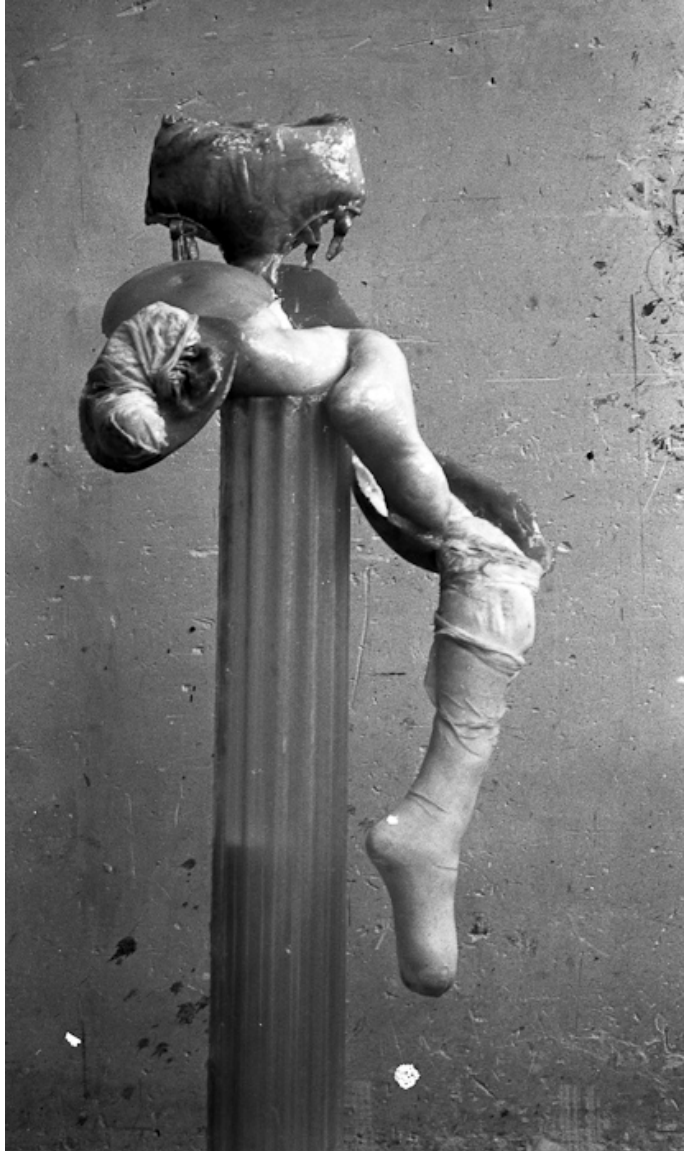


Figure 63. Alina Szapocznikow, *Ca coule en rouge (It's Running Red)*, 1967. Polyester resin, cotton, underwear, Dimensions unknown. Catalog illustration no. Archive illustration no. 2492.



Figure 64. Alina Szapocznikow, *L'Enterrement d'Alina (Alina's Funeral)*, 1970. Polyester resin, glass wool, photographs, wood, gauze, artist's clothing, 53 3/16 x 82 11/16 x 19 11/16" (135 x 210 x 50 cm). Catalog illustration no. 413. Archive illustration no. 5496.



Figure 65. Alina Szapocznikow, *Untitled (Study for a Sculpture 4)*, c. 1963. Monotype and ink on paper, 16 ½ x 11 ⅝” (41.9 x 29.5 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Figure 66. Alina Szapocznikow, *Ventres-coussins (Belly Cushions)*, 1968. Colored polyurethane foam, 5 1/8 to 7 x 11 7/8" x 13 1/2" (13 to 18 x 30 x 34 cm) Each. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Catalog illustration no. 380.



Figure 67. Alina Szapocznikow, *Pollution II*, 1968. Polyurethane foam, grass, metal, 15 ¾ x 18 ½ x 2 ¾” (40 x 47 x 7 cm). Catalog illustration no. 387. Archive illustration no. 866.



Figure 68. Alina Szapocznikow, *Grande plage (Big Beach)*, 1968. Polyester resin, colored polyurethane foam, wood. 22 7/16 x 133 7/8 x 65” (57 x 340 x 156 cm). Catalog illustration no. 388. Archive illustration no. 5063.



Figure 69. Alina Szapocznikow, *La Couronne de la Mariée (The Crown of the Bride or Bride's Wreath)*, 1968. Polyurethane foam, polyester resin, grass, metal, 25 ⁵/₈ x 23 ⁵/₈ x 11 ¹³/₁₆" (65 x 60 x 30 cm. Catalog no. 398. Archive illustration no. 5219.



Figure 70. Alina Szapocznikow, *Janus*, 1968. Polyurethane foam, 82 11/16 x 39 3/8 x 7 1/8" (210 x 100 x 18 cm). Catalog illustration no. 382. Archive illustration no. 5468.

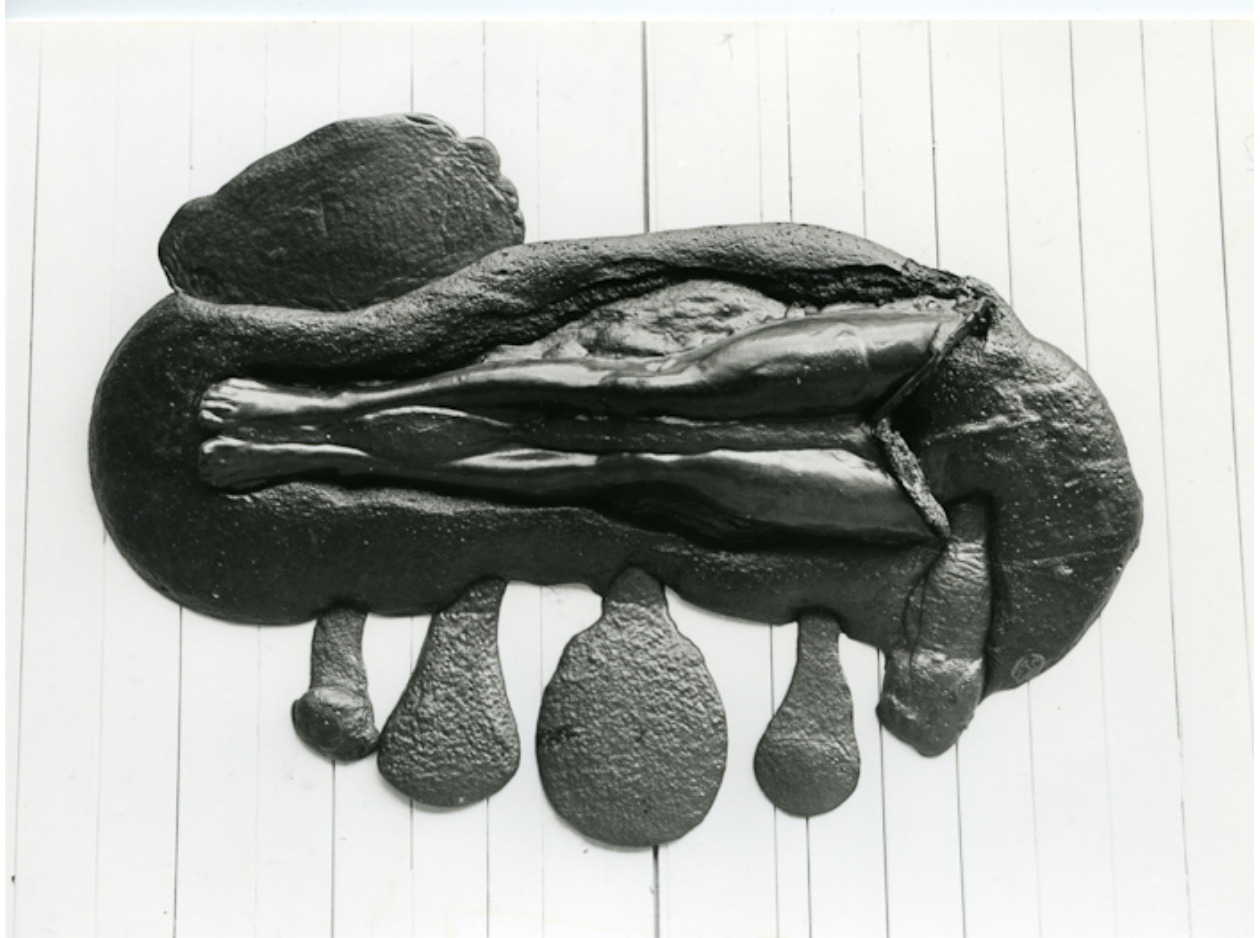


Figure 71. Alina Szapocznikow, *Les Capuchons*, 1968. Polyester resin and polyurethane foam, 37 13/16 x 54 3/4 x 5 15/16" (96 x 139 x 15 cm). Catalog illustration no. 390. Archive illustration no. 865.



Figure 72. Alina Szapocznikow, *Czarna (Black)*, 1968. Black granite, dimensions unknown. Catalog illustration no. 399. Archive illustration no. 876.



Figure 73. Alina Szapocznikow, *Siege-piege (Seat Trap)*, 1968. Sponge and polyurethane foam, 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (40 x 47 x 7 cm). Catalog illustration no. 394.



Figure 74. Alina Szapocznikow, *Modules repetes*, 1968. Vinyl and wood, 81 x 41 ⅓ x 6 ⅔” (206 x 105 x 17 cm)Catalog illustration no. 375. Archive illustration no. 814.



Figure 75. Alina Szapocznikow, *Grands Ventres (Big Bellies)*, 1968. Carrara marble, 67 x 55 x 37” (170 x 140 x 95 cm). Catalog illustration no. 379. Archive illustration no. 825.



Figure 76. Nicola L, *White Foot Sofa*, 1968. Vinyl, 30 x 67 x 35" (76.2 x 170.2 x 88.9 cm).
Photo: Arsenal Contemporary.



Figure 77. Nicola L, *Little TV Woman: 'I Am the Last Woman Object,'* 1969. Vinyl, wood, television, 44 x 20 x 18" (111.5 x 50 x 45 cm). Collection of Xavier Gellier.



Figure 78. Alina Szapocznikow, *Autoportrait I (Self-portrait I)*, 1966. Marble and polyester resin, 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 11 $\frac{13}{16}$ x 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ " (41 x 30 x 20 cm). Catalog illustration no. 382. Archive illustration no. 712.



Figure 79. Alina Szapocznikow, *Femme Illuminée (Illuminated Woman)*, 1966-1967. Plaster, colored polyester resin, electrical wiring, 61 1/16 x 22 7/16 x 15 3/4" (155 x 57 x 40 cm). Catalog illustration no. 350. Collection Alexandre Stanislawski. Photo: Fabrice Gousset, Paris.



Figure 80. Alina Szapocznikow, *Caprice - Monstre (Caprice - Monster)*, 1967. Sponge, polyester resin, metal, electrical wiring, 78 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (200 cm) high. Catalog illustration no. 352. Archive illustration no. 5468.



Figure 81. Installation view, “To Exalt the Ephemeral: Alina Szapocznikow, 1963-1972.” Hauser & Wirth, New York, 69th Street, 2019. Photo: Genevieve Hanson.



Figure 82. Alina Szapocznikow, *Lampe-Bouche (Illuminated Lips)*, 1966. Colored polyester resin, metal, electrical wiring, dimensions variable. Catalog illustration no. 338-347. Installation view at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, February-April 2012. Photo: Brian Forrest.



Figure 83. Alina Szapocznikow, *Table*, 1972. Pink Portuguese marble, metal, polyester resin, 19 $\frac{2}{3}$ x 70 x 39 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (50 x 180 x 100 cm). Catalog illustration no. 472. Archive illustration no. 2766.



Figure 84. Alina Szapocznikow, *Tumeur (Tumor)*, 1970. Colored polyester resin and gauze, 1 13/16 x 2 9/16 x 3 1/8" (4.6 x 6.5 x 8 cm). Photo: Fabrice Gousset, Paris.



Figure 85. Alina Szapocznikow, *Petit Tumeur (Small Tumor)*, 1969-1970. Polyester resin encased material, dimensions unknown. Archive illustration no. 5408.



Figure 86. Alina Szapocznikow, *Envahissement de Tumeurs (Invasion of Tumors)*, 1969. Polyester resin, paper, gauze, wool, photographs, dimensions variable. Catalog illustration no. 403. Archive illustration no. 2775.



Figure 87. Alina Szapocznikow, *Naga (Naked)*, 1961. Terrazzo, 63 x 15 ¾ x 14" (160 x 40 x 35 cm). Catalog illustration no. 206. Archive illustration no. 563.



Figure 88. Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Abakan Red*, 1969. Tate Modern, London.



Figure 89. Eva Hesse, *Contingent*, 1969. Cheesecloth, latex, fiberglass, 137 ¾ x 248 x 43" (350 x 630 x 109 cm). National Gallery of Australia. © The Estate of Eva Hesse, Hauser & Wirth.



Figure 90. Diapositive photograph, Alina Szapocznikow's Malakoff studio, Paris, France, 1971. Archive illustration no. 5604.



Figure 91. 1970 photograph of Alina Szapovznikow with the work *Envahissement de Tumeurs* (*Invasion of Tumors*), 1969. Malakoff studio, Paris, France. Archive illustration no. 2791.



Figure 92. Alina Szapocznikow, *Tumeurs Personifies*, 1971. Polyester resin, glass wool, newspapers, gauze, dimensions variable. Catalog illustration no. 465. Archive illustration no. 997.



Figure 93. Alina Szapocznikow, *Untitled*, c. 1971-1972. Ballpoint pen on paper, 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (29.5 x 21 cm).

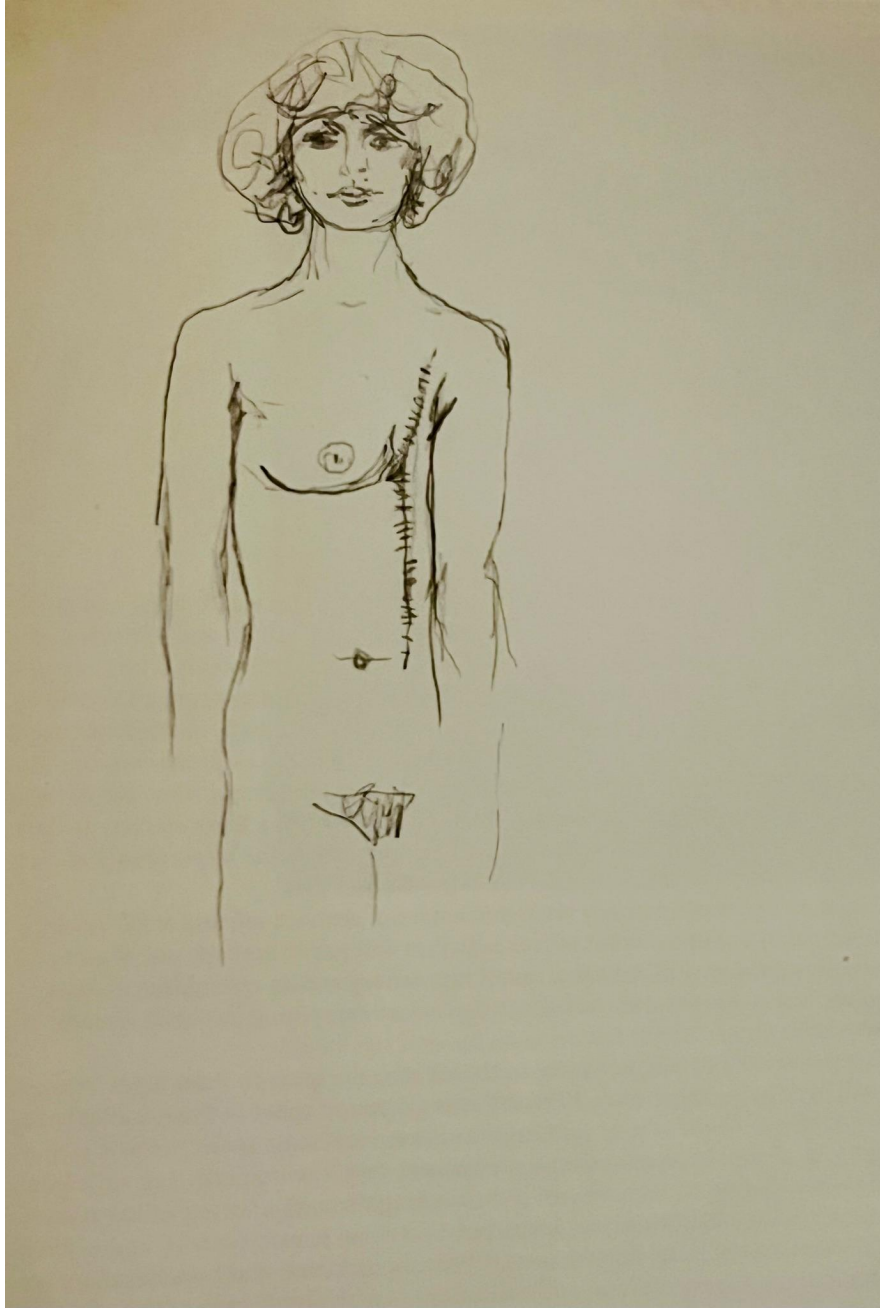


Figure 94. Alina Szapocznikow, *Untitled*, c. 1971-1972. Pencil on paper, 11 ⁵/₈ x 8 ¹/₄" (29.5 x 21 cm).



Figure 95. Alina Szapocznikow, *Photomaton*, 1966. Photographs, matchboxes, polyester resin, dimensions unknown. Catalog illustration no. 329. Archive illustration no. 733.



Figure 96. Alina Szapocznikow, *Souvenirs*, 1967. Polyester resin and photographs. Dimensions variable. Catalog illustration no. 367.



Figure 97. Alina Szapocznikow, *Grande Tumeur I (Large Tumor I)*, 1969. Polyester resin and photographs, 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 36 $\frac{2}{3}$ x 38" (73 x 93 x 97 cm). Catalog illustration no. 405. Archive illustration no. 7439.



Figure 98. Alina Szapocznikow, *Grande Tumeur II*, 1969. Polyester resin and photographs, 33 ½ x 47 ¼ x 35 ½" (85 x 120 x 90 cm). Catalog illustration no. 406. Archive illustration no. 7441.



Figure 99. Alina Szapocznikow, *Souvenir I*, 1971. Polyester resin, glass, wool, photographs, 29 9/16 x 27 9/16 x 13" (75 x 70 x 33 cm). Catalog illustration no. 452. Archive illustration no. 26.



Figure 100. Alina Szapocznikow, Installation image of *Souvenir de la table de noce d'une femme heureuse* (*Remembrance of the wedding table of a happy woman*), 1971. Catalog illustration no. 442. Archive illustration no. 985.



Figure 101. Alina Szapocznikow, *Piotr*, 1972. Polyester resin. 80 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 13" (205 x 42 x 33 cm). Catalog illustration no. 480. Installation view at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, February-April 2012. Photo: Brian Forrest.



Figure 102. Alina Szapocznikow, *Herbarium XII (Head of Christ)*, 1972. Polyester resin, polychrome wood, 15 ¾ x 15 ¾" (40 x 40 cm). Catalog illustration no. 493. Archive illustration no. 4094.



Figure 103. Alina Szapocznikow, *Autoportret (Herbier)* (*Self-portrait - Herbarium*), 1971. Polyester resin and polychrome wood, 31 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 2" (81 x 52 x 5 cm). Catalog illustration no. 466. Archive illustration no. 5203.

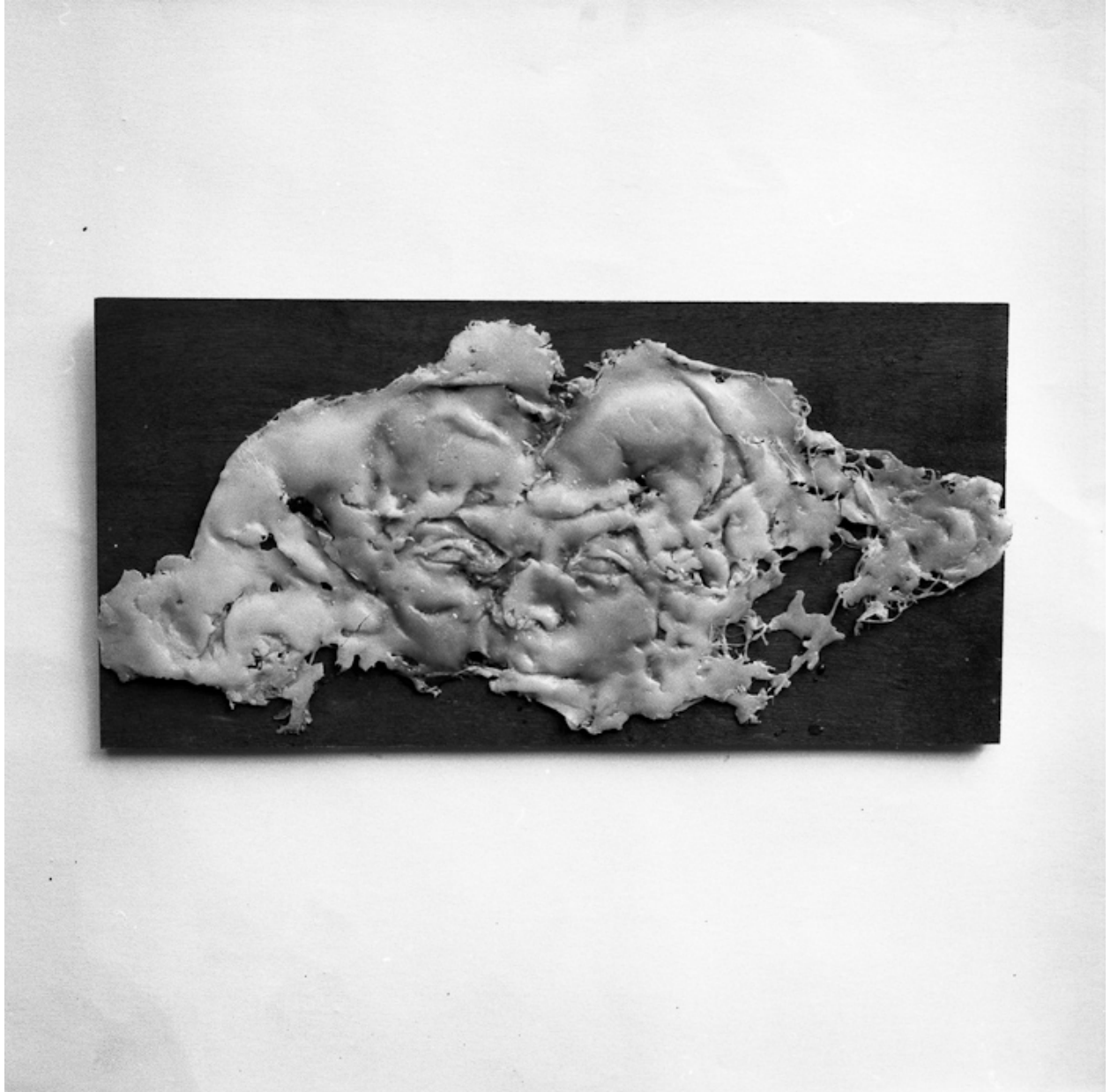


Figure 104. Alina Szapocznikow, *Herbarier XI (Herbarium XI)*, 1972. Polyester resin and polychrome wood. Catalog illustration no. 492. Archive illustration no. 6792.



13/20



14/20



15/20



16/20

Figure 105. Alina Szapocznikow, *Fotorzeźby (Photosculptures)*, 1971. Twenty gelatin silver prints, dimensions variable. Hammer Museum of Art, Los Angeles.



Figure 106. Hannah Wilke, *S.O.S.—Starification Object Series*, 1974-82. Gelatin silver prints with chewing gum sculptures, 40" x 58 1/2" x 2 1/4" (101.6 x 148.6 x 5.7 cm). Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2023 Marsie, Emanuelle, Damon and Andrew Scharlatt - Hannah Wilke Collection and Archive, Los Angeles