Seven Flights in the Life of Mori Bombyx

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Preface

This report will provide a contextual framework for my practice which is shaped by an exploration of personal and material concerns. Written using an autoethnographic approach to research, which is a "form of inquiry in which researchers use their own experiences to develop understandings and insights into a culture, subculture, or life experience" (Sage research methods , 2018) .

My practice adopts the moth as metaphor for both my identity and practice; a fluttering creature that does not quite achieve the beauty of the butterfly, but that is just as fragile. Each section of this text will be a line of flight made by the moth. The moth spewing its acid to emerge from its pristine white cocoon serves as an awakening, leaving their stain for all to see. This life cycle has shown me the moth's determination - there is always a way out and a way of getting your voice heard. Stains and mistakes are not always something to be ashamed of: Unexpressed emotions will never die: They are buried alive and come forth later in 'uglier' ways. Freud suggests that if you contain something for too long it will burst out in an ugly way, however, I still want to make these ugly feelings look beautiful: the moth still strives to become a butterfly – I enjoy the ambiguity of an ugly beauty (Freud, 2003). Even when trying to hold things in, contain these ugly personal things, they seep through unconsciously. Some of the writing in this report may be ugly as it seeps from my unconscious. I have chosen to write a fictional autoethnographic piece of text as becoming Mori Bombyx makes me almost anonymous – Mori Bombyx is derived from the name for a silkworm, the worm being an 'ugly' insect that produces a beautiful fabric.

This report is an assemblage of the many threads that I have untangled, unravelled and woven together, this happened by absorbing new ways of thinking and revisiting everything I already knew and opening this knowledge up to different angles or lines of flight. (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987)
This way of thinking has led to the vision of something expanding from a middle, like French knitting where you keep winding around the edge of the middle, pushing the stiches through the middle to expand the edges.

Although my work does not conform to one technique, my approach and methodologies are informed by a textiles sensibility, a materiality. It cannot be contained in a sketchbook, it is an ever-expanding assemblage: a narrative assemblage, but also a form of confessional, an approach taken by the contemporary artists Louise Bourgeois and Tracey Emin. Inspiration has been drawn from many sources, from personal experience and my family background – from guilt to fairy tales, narratives, biblical references and Greek mythologies, all of which I believed to be true. The image of the single stained cocoon triggered me to question everything which lead me to discover most things are neither true or fictitious, right or wrong, ugly or beautiful but a combination of these positions.

While reading Sylvia Plath's Bell Jar I was left to wonder what is fiction? What is truth? And in this text the reader may question who is Mori? Who are you? It is notable that there were many quotations throughout Sylvia Plath's writing that I could truly identify with – as if she was describing things she had witnessed through my eyes or I through hers, a kind of eternal return that countless women have experienced for centuries.

This text is structured over seven flights (sections) and can be read in any order as they are all distinct but are still connected by different threads. The text is intended to reflect the entire image from a moth from being in the shadows to total enlightenment.

Flight 1

Mori felt increasingly more and more confined, enclosed, unable to break free. Instinctively she knew that her confinement was wrong, the social constructs holding her in place, forcing her to do things, making her someone she wasn't. It was time to break free.

She remembered something her wise old uncle had said to her, "The more you struggle to live, the less you live. Give up the notion that you must be sure of what you are doing. Instead, surrender to what is real within you, for that alone is sure.... you are above everything distressing." (Spinoza, n.d.). Her Uncle had always been wise, he talked to her about truth and the importance of following her 'natural instinct', he had written extensively on how people were governed by patriarchs, rules and religion but in doing so, these structures had suppressed our natural instincts and made us more selective, rather than embracing nature's chaos - ugly and beauty, kind and cruel. He says, "I would warn you that I do not attribute to nature either beauty or deformity, order or confusion. Only in relation to our imagination can things be called beautiful or ugly, well-ordered or confused." (Spinoza, n.d.)

She had been naïve and unquestioning for too long, dutifully allowing others to dictate what her role should be. There were still pockets of archaic views echoing from the years of women's battles for equality. Mori had only experienced this first hand after she got married and had children of her own. She struggled to carry on with her practice as she was torn with the guilt of also being a good mother. Philosopher Simone de Beauvoir wrote about this subject extensively explaining how we become a woman rather than being born one (Beauvoir, 1997). She knew that the ideal of a woman within patriarchal society was a construct, a person who cares for others, produces children, must look beautiful and needs protecting; these are imposed characteristics, not biological leaving a woman to fall

victim to expectation, passive to her own social construct. “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir, 1997).

Over the years Mori had fallen into a trap and she was too ashamed to admit she was in. She had been told not think and feel for so long she had no idea who she was and what she believed anymore, the light inside her had been so suffocated it had almost been extinguished, the glowing embers would spark up every now and again but were quickly squashed. She left the safety of home but quickly learned that the real world was not like a fairy tale, and after having her wings badly burned several times she decided to do as her family said, not to feel hurt or experience pain like that ever again. She knew she should never speak of anything negative, but as Freud explains, burying things will only let them bubble under the surface until they surface even uglier (Freud, 2003).

No one was aware of her suffering- hidden behind the curtains.

In her unassuming anaemic white dress, bleached of the colour. She became invisible. She admired her cousin Mandarina; she was free with her bright colours, spreading her wings and flying; she didn’t feel the need to hide in the shadows. Mori had spent a good part of her life burdened with illness, always being grateful, she saw this as a blessing as it had given her was lots of patience, and time to examine every inch of her world. She often found herself looking up, watching her cousins as they flew so graceful, dancing around the lamp casting shadows on the walls wishing she could be there with them, aside from her feeble body, her conscience also weighed her down. Watching from the window, wanting more. She had longed to see up close the glass cases of all her ancestors preserved in their glass casket on the wall, rows of magnificent perfectly symmetrical butterflies with glorious wings an un-attainable perfection she felt she would never achieve.

The inequality had been entrenched for centuries but just like a stubborn stain.

Flight two

Mori wanted to regain control of her whole life, so she jumped feet first into the Masters course, not thinking, not breathing, not questioning.

She quickly began to realise that you cannot always make a clean new start, and old problems need to be addressed; a Pandora's Box had been opened.

It was Mori's first day, feeling clammy and anxious she heaved herself up the seven flights of stairs to the top floor, her chest tightened and became more restrictive with every breath, although the feelings were overwhelming they also reminded her she was alive, something she had not felt for a long time. Everyone else in the room was unaware of how huge a mountain it was for her to climb. She had signed up for the MA in a fleeting moment when she forgotten herself and reverted to her brave former self - always throwing herself into the fire. Opening the door Mori was reminded of Silvia Plath's words, "The eyes and faces all turned themselves towards me. Guiding myself by them as by a magical thread I stepped into the room." (Plath, 1972) In Sylvia Plath's Bell Jar there were many scenes that Mori identified with, she felt as if all the intimidating eyes in the room could see inside her, that she was not worthy of being there. To put her feet forward she needed the thread to guide her you through the room.

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Leap into the Void – Photographed by Harry Shunk (Yves, 1960)

Eves Klein 'leap into the void' was being shown as an analogy for the MA journey – making leaps of confidence without thinking of the consequences, enjoying the process and the different paths they lead you to, rather than thinking of the final outcome – something Mori was going to find hard as she had always been focused on producing a final outcome from her design background.

There were intimidating envelopes regimentally laid out on the table ready for the thought experiment. Mori sheepishly chose one, it read 'fire in the hearth' and had a passage saying to look at things in a primitive way. Mori puzzled over it for a while before identifying hearth was the heart of the home, so she decided she should start her journey there. Coincidently the essay title she had chosen to write alongside this was about domesticity, comparing artists that had used this subject as a driving force for their work, the home and this subject seemed to go hand in hand. She was experiencing struggles at home but her mother's words echoed in her head, "do not hang your dirty laundry on the line" (later she used this line as inspiration for how to present this essay). But subconsciously she was drawn to confessional artists who were openly producing work about this subject. Mori tried everything to evade examining her personal situation, being part of a society that shies away from anything negative, it had been ingrained in her to exude a perfect family life just like the reams of pictures on social media – portraying a fantasy life far from reality.

But even getting to college was proving increasingly difficult and she felt just like she was having restraint after restraint thrown over her, pinning her down, holding her back she felt just like Gulliver in the fairy-tale, exhausted from the struggle she finally surrendered taking the first steps to realisation.

Mori had always been inspired by photographic processes, and as the description said she needed to look at things in a 'in a primitive way'. Before the evolution of the camera people would trace round a loved one, leaving a silhouette on the wall before they went to off to war, if they did not return negative space would be left behind, marking where they had once been, a reminder of their existence. She

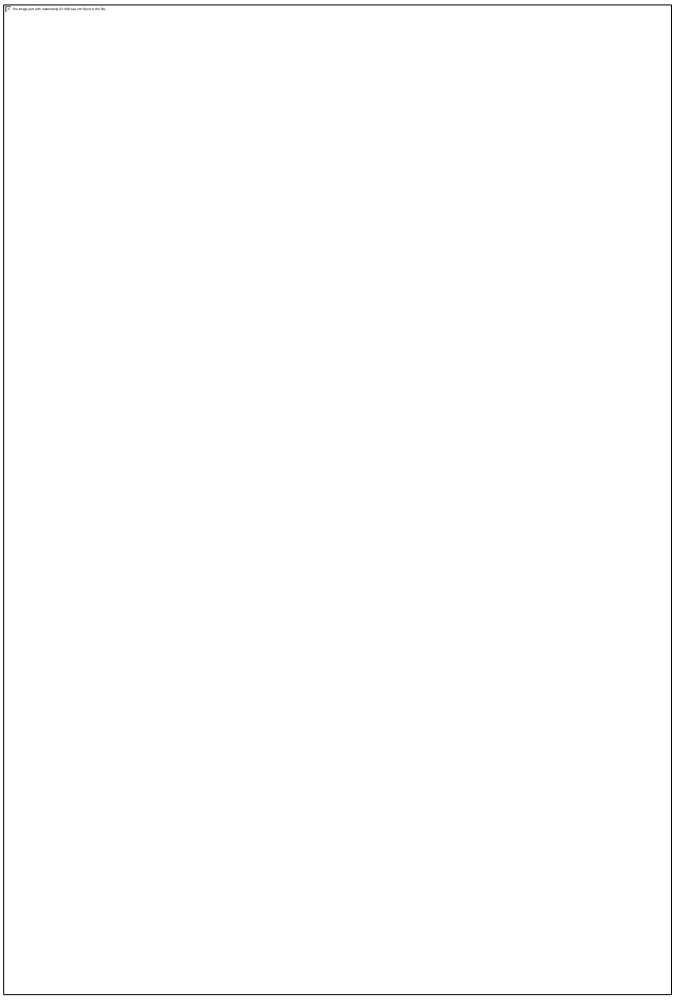
realised that is what she had been doing with all her possessions, collected and recording them in case they got damaged or lost, trying to freeze them in time. Maybe she was so scared to let go of things, reflecting her personality, they could be used to retrace her steps if she lost herself again. It is significant that the things Mori was drawn to were not perfect and sometimes very fragile, like the wings of a tattered butterfly after it had given its all to cross continents, just like a MOTHer that gives her all to everyone she cares for until she is a skeletal form of herself.

Mori had also experimented with creating photograms in college, she liked this technique because of its directness; being able to place actual objects onto the surface of the paper to produce a kind of replica image or a silhouette of an object. Pin hole cameras were new to her; but the idea she could make a very primitive camera with house hold objects really intrigued her.

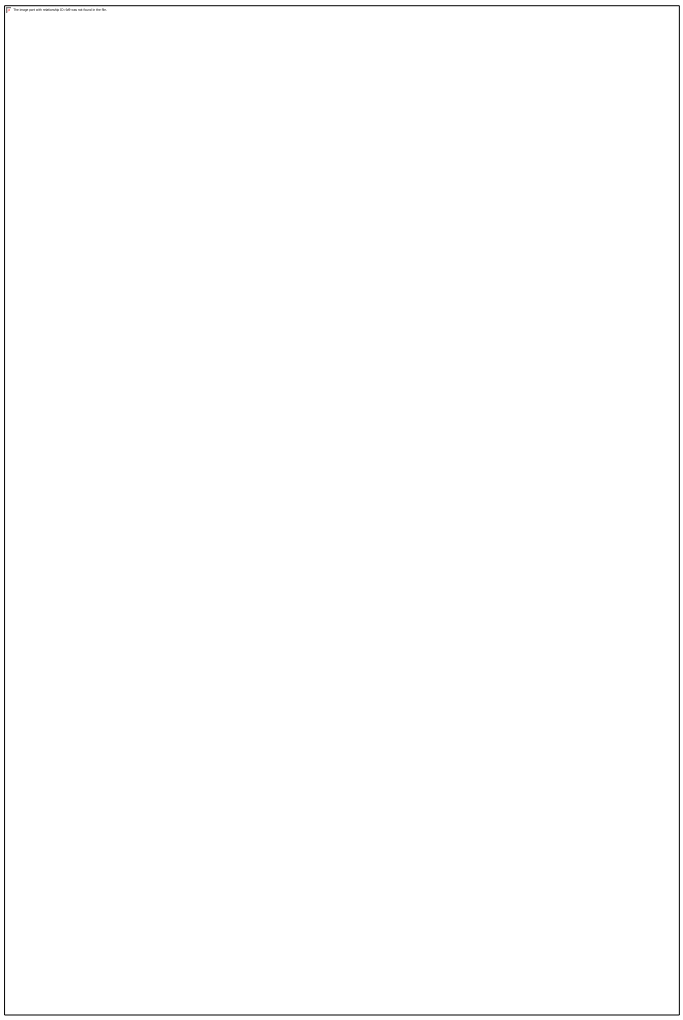
She started by picking out things from her collection, dolls furniture; they were primitive in the sense they are a child's first experience of role play which is usually influenced from a young age by the toys they are given to play with; girls are encouraged to play with dolls and furniture to lay down their boundaries and place from a young age. After arranging many compositions Mori felt the need to branch out again to find more inspiration.

She scrawled the internet, as the images rolled up the screen, striking black and white images of artist Cindy Sherman caught her eye. She had made iconic images of herself in very stereotypical poses, Mori thought it was significant that she had made the images herself as in one picture the shutter lead can

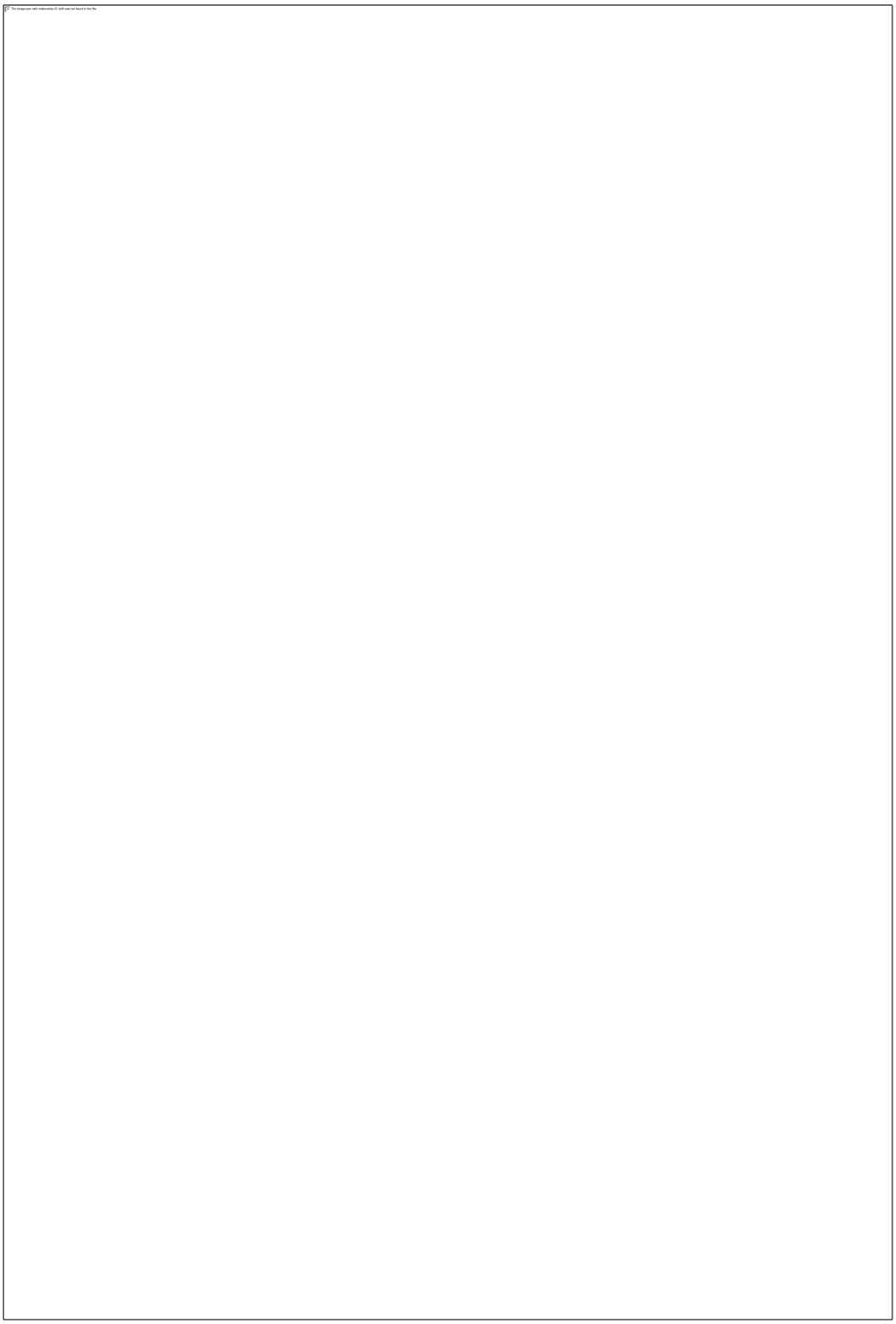
just be made out, rather than being the subject of the photographer she disrupts the norm by being the one who was in control. Also showing the many roles women are deemed by society to play.



Untitled Film Stills no.35 (Sherman, 1977)



Untitled Film Stills no.6 (Sherman, 1977)



Interior Scroll, Photo by Anthony McCall (Scheemann, 1975)

There were also stills of Carollee Schneemann's performance of interior scroll, Mori with her prudish upbringing found her eyes almost burning as she looked at it, but like a moth to a flame she somehow found it fascinating- her initial thoughts of looking away pointed to how society had moulded her to look away from things that are uncomfortable, again part of her longed-for truth. She again remembered some wise words from her uncle, "The highest activity a human being can attain is learning for understanding, because to understand is to be free" (Spinoza, n.d.), shying away from things would not help her understand them.

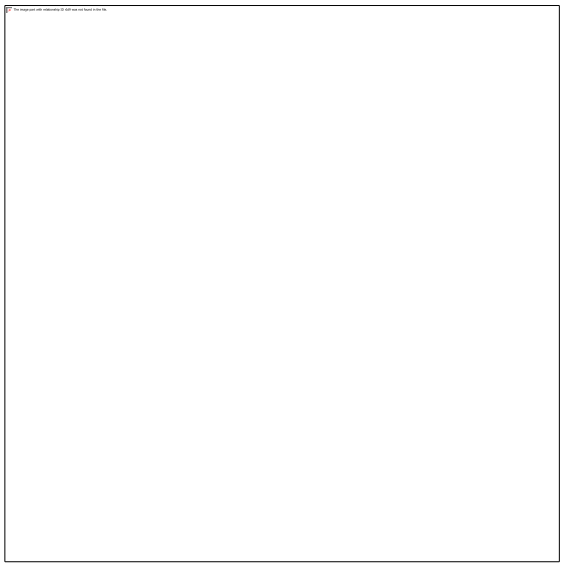
She admired Carollee Schneemann's braveness for reciting the poem she read from a scroll she retrieved from her most intermate area, the words were a reaction to the undermining treatment she had experienced from her male counter parts, and outlined the general struggle she and other women had faced at Art college which was very male orientated at that time. Although being naked and looking very vulnerable, she was taking control using her own body to grab people's attention, securing their gaze she was able to air her own views which they may not have ordinarily have listened to. Mori admired Schneemann for her braveness but struggled to even whisper how she felt.

" I'm interested in sensuous pleasure and the power of the naked body as an active image rather than the same old, pacified, immobilized, historicized body. So, for me, to activate and determine the energy of my naked body as imagery was to disrupt all the traditions I had learned—where you belong to the male artist and were passive and sort of splayed out." (Schneemann, 2015)

Taking strength and motivation from the strong women artists she had looked at Mori decided to set up a series of pin hole cameras recording herself carrying out her daily tasks at home to see where it would lead her. Taking inspiration from Cindy Sherman costumes, she chose to put on the restrictive corset she wore on her wedding day paired with a skirt and a 1960s style head scarf, this was significant drawing attention to the fact that although it was 2018 and she was still facing archaic opinions, and those that

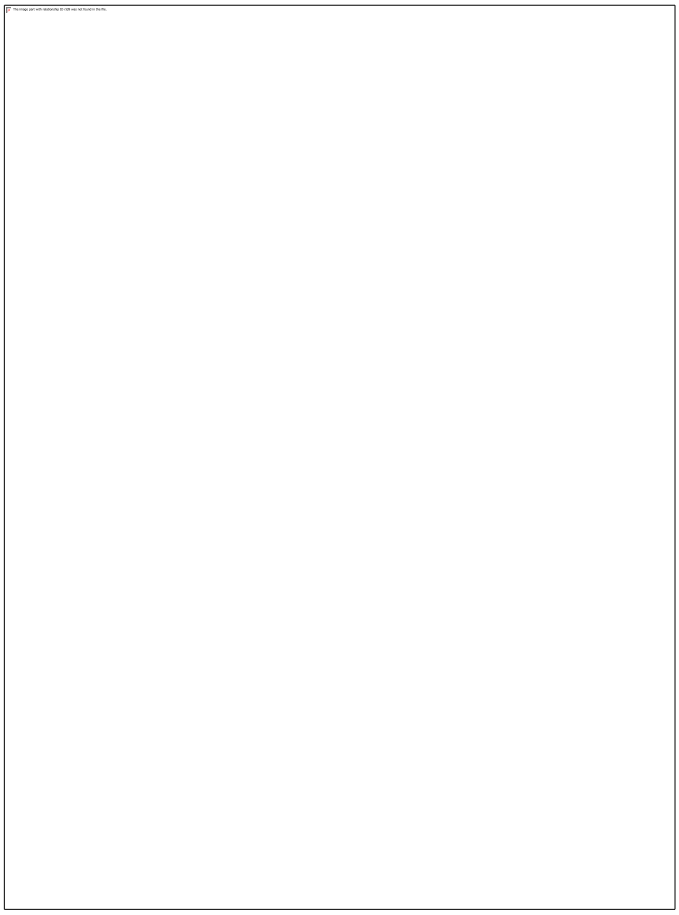
were present in the 1960s; the era of most of the artists she had been looking at. On her wedding day she had not realised by putting on this garment she would be committing herself to restrictions from there on.

Mori examined the Pin hole images and although everything in the room was crisp she was blurred and almost invisible, in others she looked very small and diminutive – just how she was feeling invisible and insignificant, like a tiny doll or puppet placed where it was told.



(wilshere-Butler, 2016) untitled image

In another she had placed a lampshade over her head. It illustrated that she was always trying to look on the bright side and show humour, but on the other hand it had a serious note showing again how she felt as though she was blending into the furniture.



(wilshere-Butler, 2016) Untitled image

Mori later found an American photographer called Francesca Woodman, she too had created many blurred images from movement and long exposure, portraying women merging with their surroundings.

Untitled Image- Space2 (Woodman, 1975-78)

“Francesca plays with distorting reality into a surreal fantasy by squeezing herself behind mantelpieces or into small cupboards…… or pulling wallpaper over herself like a blanket. She often seems to be retreating into the material of the building” (Tate, n.d.)

Silvia Plath and Francesca Woodman recorded their torment at being wives and mothers. Both their lives ended in tragedy – Francesca committing suicide the year Mori was born. In this poem Metaphors Plath describes herself a vessel a carrier for everything else,

I’m a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrils.
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
This loaf’s big with its yeasty rising.
Money’s new-minted in this fat purse.
I’m a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
I’ve eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there’s no getting off.

(Plath, 1981)p.116

This poem struck a familiar chord with Mori, especially the way they both felt during pregnancy. An elephant, a house and a purse; these things are not important or significant in themselves but more they are the carriers or vessels for the thing that is important such as the elephant who carries the precious ivory. Plath says it is not important just like the empty vessel there for others to use. In having a child, she becomes a carrier for another, losing her own individuality, her own place in the world, her rights. This is how Mori feels too. She also recalls her aunt Orgyia, who had been born completely without

wings, she had felt so useless and grotesque that she had hidden herself away simply living to bring up her children.

Mori discovered the work of Janine Antoni who had made endless controversial pieces stemming from the subject of inequality, she made a performance piece that was a protest to the Yves Klein images she had seen in the 1960s. Antoni interpreted the images as him (Yves Klein) being the master, instructing the women to do as they were told like his puppets, manipulating and instructing them to paint their naked bodies and print them onto a canvas, in an act of exploitation and degradation.

Loving Care photographed by Prudence Cumming

(Antoni, 1993)

In this performance entitled ‘tender loving care’ , using her own body to perform demonstrated that she was the one in charge of it. Mori herself found it difficult to watch the Yves Klein recording as it seemed very sexualised and aimed at men’s enjoyment. (Klein, 1962)

In the performance, spectators crowded around her while she bent down, in a derogatory position, performing the menial task of mopping the floor with her own hair. They were unaware that just like artists Schneemann and Sherman had done before her, she was taking control of her own body and not cleaning the pristine white gallery floor but staining it, making her mark as she pushed the spectators out of the room. Antoni realised this protest within practice reflected that of other female artists whom she had been unaware of at the time, reinforcing their invisibility as artists.

In a Pecha kutcha style presentation, she projected her pin hole images onto the screen while familiar everyday sounds of housework work played in the background. As part of her performance rather than standing at the front to deliver her presentation, she slowly and quietly weaved in amongst the audience cleaning around them making herself insignificant and almost invisible. It ended with her reaching the front and bravely climbing onto a table under a spotlight. She unravelled part of her skirt on which she had written a poem in the style of Faith Wilding’s ‘Waiting’, “the Performance program at Womanhouse, "*Waiting*" condenses a woman's entire life into a monotonous, repetitive cycle of waiting for life to begin while she is serving and maintaining the lives of others.” (React Feminism, n.d.)

4 Video of waiting

Mori recited what she waited for each day describing her loneliness and feelings of insignificance. It brought tears to the eyes of many women in the audience, they too could identify with what she was saying but were embarrassed to admit. Also, the fact it was spoken seemed to make the words more poignant.

Just like Antoni's performances there was a sense of both the poignant and the playful in her performance, in describing the 'odd socks breeding in the laundry basket' she outlines a problem most mothers can relate to, making a connection with them and triggering their empathy.

This performance was very significant to Mori as it was the first step of breaking her silence. All her research into the openness and braveness of other female artists had helped her to find her own voice. It had given Mori her first Public acknowledgement, in turn giving her a sense of identity. Although it had pushed her out of her comfort zone, She also found it very liberating as culturally we are so afraid to talk about issues like this as we are supposed to be in a post-feminist era, but the legacy is so entrenched it is not going to be eradicate centuries of gender discourse. Mori's experiences and the fact other women and artists were still experiencing it means it still needs a voice- it was why Mori was so at odds with a culture that is supposed to have liberated women. Mori had confronted her own role as a female artist with this baggage, to find another context.

Flight three

camping in open fields, Mori began to feel freer and questioned whether she wanted her work to keep reflecting her struggles, the constant re-examining was too painful, it was time to move on.

Mori began looking through some of her old books, delicate translucent paper-thin flowers floated from the pages. She fondly remembered picking flowers and placing them between the pages of a heavy book to preserve them, freezing them it in time. She Interpreted this as her former self leaving clues of old interests again more bread crumbs for her to retrace her steps. Returning to the comfort of the dark room. She decided to make some photograms, scattering her preserved petals and seeds over the surface of the photographic paper, after exposing the composition she instinctively painted on the developer and waited for the image to magically appear. Without examining it too much, just enough to see an image had developed she quickly fixed it and carried on making more, Mori would always loose herself for hours in the dark room, although normally being scared of the dark, the soft red glowing light felt soothing and almost womb like with the bubbling of the wash tank over flowing. Before she knew it, it was time to pick up the children again, she quickly fed her prints through the drying machine and carefully put them in her bag before running off to catch her bus.

It was not until late that night after all her mundane tasks were done that Mori was finally able to look at her prints. Upon close examination dancing mother earth like figures could be seen in each one. They portrayed the carefree nature loving person she used to be, and whom she wanted to find again.

Mori had also almost forgotten that in the first few weeks of college, being eager to immerse herself in every new experience, she booked herself onto a study trip abroad. Again, her family tugged at her confidence and filled her with doubts. finding herself being reeled back by the silk thread, the umbilical

cord her family still had firm hold of, she cut it and again took another leap of faith following the deep yearning she had inside her; she needed to find herself. Once far enough out of reach the voices of doubt faded, Mori began to hear much more supportive and encouraging comments. Looking around her, realising she was amongst other mothers, who had left their husbands and children, the guilt began to fade. Mori realised this was the first time she had been truly alone, and able to recover and regenerate from all the pain and suffering the last few years had thrown at her. When they finally arrived, Mori felt all her senses re -awakened. Free from any of the responsibility and distractions Mori could hear every tiny sound, the humming of the trams, the bells of the bicycles and birds singing in the trees. Making most of taking everything in while she was there, her first night's sleep was the best she'd had in years. In the galleries she appreciated being able to get intimately close to everything, taking in the tiniest details without the anxiety of one of her free-spirited children hitting anything over. She was overcome by the paintings of masters like Picasso, Monet and Van Gogh. The reproductions she had seen in books had not shown texture and depth of each brush stroke, the colours of Van Gogh sunflowers were much more vibrant, they almost jumped off the canvas. It was much more than just a painting.

She also noticed the smells – not being able to eat chocolate like everyone else she walked into the delicatessens and was overwhelmed by the amazing smell that wafted up her nose, she didn't feel cheated as she breathed it in so deeply, it filled her respiratory system until she could almost taste it.

While she was there she couldn't resist her old habits and picked up some mementos– while passing the beautiful flower market she found an interesting seed, she thought it could represent her rebirth/new beginnings. Ironically it transpired there was poison hidden inside its beautiful shell. She also picked up a postcard from a nearby gallery, it was a photograph of a modern interpretation of princess and the pea. It reminded her of sitting on her dad's knee as a child and while he told her the well-known story, he would say she was the princess and each morning she would wake and try to find the pea under her

mattress. (Anderson, 2005) He told her many fairy tales and that one day a prince in shining armour would come and sweep her off her feet. In reality it had not quite turned out like that. On the return coach journey home Mori saw the familiar twinkling lights that as a child had signalled she was almost home. She had always thought it was a magical fairy kingdom, and for years she had tried to capture an image but it always whizzed past the windows too fast. The irony only dawned on her as she gazed out of the window as an adult, that it could not have been further from the truth- it was a steel works, she now could picture the red faces beading with sweat, with hot metal pouring and spluttering, violently. The smog all around like a veil hiding its ugly truth.

As she reached home Mori had ambivalent feelings, she was back to reality but would hold onto importance of self-preservation as she realised how easy it was to neglect oneself.

Upon entering a conservation seminar, Mori identified with an 'unfinished textile', since in her chaotic life she never had time to finish anything either. Drawn to the delicate translucent paper tissue Mori listened to the tender words of the conservation officer, explaining how she cared and looked after the items, as if they were her own children. Mori had often longed to be carefully handled and wrapped in delicate tissue paper, not in the sense that she wanted to be protected, and smothered, more to be cared for in a way she hadn't been – Mori then realized there was a difference in being cared for than being held back, even if they may come from the same place. Another step to enlightenment, shedding of her skin.

Flight 4

Feeling ever closer to metamorphosis Mori decided to study it first hand by observing silk worms, readily available and cheap to buy as pet food, she felt distain at their lack of worth. No one would ever consider feeding beautiful winged butterflies to their pet, why moths being that they are from the same family?

Mori silkworms were from the same lineage that had produced the silk for Lady Diana's wedding dress and its 25ft long trail. Initially her designer had said she was "appalled" (invitation to a Royal Wedding , 2018) to see the silk so crumpled and creased as she stepped out of the carriage, far from the perfect vision she had imagined, but on reflection she thought what had materialized looked even more beautiful, "she looked like a Caterpillar emerging from a chrysalis and transforming into a butterfly" (invitation to a Royal Wedding , 2018)

Mori looked after her silk worms tentatively immediately feeling a maternal connection to them, proudly watching them shed their skins as they reached each new stage (instar). Rather than the beautiful transformation she wanted to witness, one morning she was confronted by a horrifying scene of which reminded her of the black bile. Having little or no immune system had left silkworms defenceless to the tiniest of germs. This image would stain Mori's conscience leaving her melancholic for a long time. Mori rescued some that had not been contaminated, when they neared pupation she placed cardboard tubes into their container expecting them to conform as she did, but to her frustration they refused to start spinning where they were told, eventually she had the privilege to witness them spinning their protective cocoons in front of her. Starting from the outside in, the layers became denser and denser, until it finally disappeared to transform in their own private space. After a few days an assuming velvety moth crawled out into the open. The cocoon it had emerged from, once white and pristine was now stained around its opening. Mori found the stain so beautiful, the deep burnt orange

was so contrasting as it bled into the stark white, it made her realise that not all stains mistakes needed to be hidden, they were also a sign of rebirth.

Mori realised in many silk factories it had been a closely held secret that many pupae would never reach the end of their journey, blissfully unaware they were spinning their own tombs from which they would never emerge naturally. Instead being plucked up and placed into boiling water, killing them quickly, preventing them from staining the cocoons, and damaging the valuable continuous thread. As the hot water loosened the thread from around them it could then be reeled up and spun to make luxurious silk for humans to wear, frivolously taking away the moth's destiny to transform, instead exploiting their life's work for their own gain

Lady Diana in putting on her silk garment was committing herself to a life where the world could pass judgement, the confinement of this construct became too much to bear. In breaking free her life too ended in tragedy along with the thousands of silkworms who had produced her magnificent dress.

It really Struck Mori how naive and un questioning she had been, with that trauma still fresh in her head she began to witness another bitter sweet tragedy unfold, other moths miraculously began to burst free but on closer inspection they were all males, in wait for females they continually flapped their wings for days spinning around until they almost destroyed themselves, leaving their wings comparable to shards of broken glass. Days later a female eventually hatched. One of the males was still clinging on to life, they shared one last fleeting dance before he became still. Soon after the female laid her eggs, her big eyes full of hopelessness connected with Mori's. She felt her pain as the moth laid down beside her partner slowly faded away, her poison being starvation from having no mouth nourish her. It reminded Mori of the tale of Romeo and Juliet. This tragedy was a far more real portrait of reality and cruel nature. More like the original fairy tales of brothers grim, censored and romanticized to appeal to a wider audience who wanted to escape or hide from reality.

Rearing them herself, the moths had become very precious to Mori, and after only a few making it too adulthood she decided to source more Lepidoptera specimens.

Arriving early Mori very surprised to see twisted deformed butterflies that had not emerged properly, far from the perfect specimens she had seen displayed in cases. The scientist explained they had to be pierced through their thorax to kill them quickly, at first this seemed barbaric but she explained that if they had not emerged properly they may be diseased and could spread to the other butterflies and moths. Again this reflected the cruel, real ness of nature that our society would rather brush under the carpet, as a culture we do not like dealing with real thing or confronting our immortality.

Mori left with a box of specimens, many had flown freely and had died naturally but strangely she found the twisted bodies just as beautiful. One of the butterflies looked as if it had used all its determination to rip itself from free from its chrysalis, the spine like section still adjoining it like the guilt, the umbilical cord she had found so difficult to get free of. Inspired by this Mori began to look at spines, seeing moth shapes echoed in scientific spinal diagrams. She realized that spines represented fragility and strength, the part of the body holding everything together, but could be easily broken. To Mori the truth was represented by the Stripping something back to its very essence. Moths and butterflies having an exo-skeleton, wear their fragility on the outside for all to see. Mori made several pieces resembling back bones and liked how they could be cured and uncurled, representing how she felt having days of strength and weakness.

Mori not being trained in photography, found it difficult to truly capture the Moths beauty. Being adaptable she used what was to hand scanning them into the computer, again she liked the directness. To her surprise the resolution was better than she expected and she was able to magnify them seeing the magnificent shard like wings, this made her want to capture their fragility in glass.

She had always had a fascination with glass because of its ambiguity – its strength and fragility, used as protection carefully pinning fragile items inside, yet if it brakes the splinters and shards are so dangerous, as a child she had been taught to be afraid of it. Maybe that's what drew Mori to this material, its fragility and the fact it was dangerous as well as protecting. Other scans showed tiny scales like fragile armour, in places the wings resembled thread bare fabric, showing their strength and determination to keep going until their final flutters just like the butterfly effect this had set of a reaction inside her that she could not contain.

Flight 5

The silk moth's story had now taken more importance than her own.

With the images of the stained cocoons and the defenceless moths in her head Mori decided to make sense of trauma in making multiples. Freudian theory explains that people who had suffered trauma often relive it over and over to understand it. This gave mori more understanding of the words from Silvia Plath's book when she describes being fascinated with, "people in crucial situations. If there was a road accident or a street fight or a baby pickled in a laboratory jar… id stop and look so hard I never forgot it" (Plath, 1972).

Mori also knew just like the butterfly effect there was strength in numbers, more voices making a louder voice. She realised that flat images did not have the impact she wanted. A lot of Mori's research had been feminist based as it reflected her own experiences but ultimately she wanted to stand up for anyone without a voice.

Insert Picture- Keifer

She was inspired by the work of Anselm Keifer who also tackles important issues pointing out that"only by going into the past can you go into the future (Keifer, 2018) Using found objects, embalming them to create relics of the past. Mori began to dip her stained cocoons into porcelain, only having a few and they were so precious to her. She wrestled with her conscience as to whether she should order more for

her to use? She decided she could warrant their use for the greater good and to raise awareness of their secret.

The next day it dawned on her the magnitude of how many silk worms, that had been untimely plucked from their slumber, cut out, leaving empty shells for others to exploit.

Dipping them in slip she began to understand their story as their thread began to unravel.

She also experimented with casting her cocoons and moths in glass. Casting the fragile moths proved physically and mentally difficult as Mori felt intrusive placing a scewer up though their body to secure them, being fragile they were almost discintergrated in her hands, adding wax sprues made them look like bizarre puppets.

Instead she decided to combine the old idea of tracing the moths outline, and cut out multiples with aid of a modern waterjet cutter.

Flight 6

Mori Had always been inspired by science it offered an attempt to understand nature and the real world to find truth. Mori then heard of the cross pollination project, Knowing moths were an important but almost invisible pollinator; doing their work at night, and knowing they were far less revered than their cousins the butterfly or the loveable fuzzy bumble bee Mori decided she wanted to learn more. she attended many days onsite where she was fully immersed in the pollinators habitat. Her own story became less important and she began to focus on raising awareness of pollinators

She had created the pieces utilizing modern techniques creating multiples quickly on the waterjet cutter from images she digitally traced from her moth photograms, then pairing this with the hands on

traditional method heating her metal pieces, Mori felt very empowered using the forge- normally a strong man's tool, immersing them in fire and beating them into shape until they finally came to life.

Mori found engagement projects with scientists very valuable to her practice. being fully immersed with all the factual information from the Scientists whilst being up close with pollinators themselves and their habitat has meant her work was able to develope from just being beautiful images of moths and butterflies to so much more. The process of collaboration, pooling of different skills made a much rounder and more powerful message, lots of little voices making one much more powerful loud buzz!

Participating in a Bumble bee walks Mori found kinesthetic approach important. On one side the grass had been left a little longer,than on the other. impact of the difference was immediately evident, the side that clover had been allowed to grow was humming with bees and hoover flies, while the other side was almost baron.

Also capturing some of the bees to identify to see them close up, drew her attention to how amazing they were, she had never realised how hairy they were and the vibrant redness of a red tailed queen bee.

It was not that she I hadn't cared about them before, she just hadn't stopped and examined them closely, and made the connection that is needed for true empathy. Finding this made her realise she could utilize this process in her own artwork to encourage people to notice, care and act.

As well as sharing the scientists practice, Mori also wanted to she her own, Cyanotypes seemed perfect as it used the same principles recording items on a pre-stained surface but utilised natural UV light from the sun and could easily be carried out on location. Also its vibrant blue colour is symbolic and evocative to its origins, one of the original science art collaborations used by Anna Atkins in to create beautiful yet

important recordings of botany in at the time a very mans world.

(Atkins, 1852)Poppy no.PH381-1981

comparing some of the final images created was very interesting, the scientists images were laid out very precisely in a very scientific manner, whereas Mori's was blurred creating an atmospheric picture, almost as if you were in the garden as one of the pollinators. The scientists having a practical not aesthetic mind had chosen weeds, not the showy flowering plants Mori had picked – weeds suggest unwanted and again less revered for their beauty, being a scientists they had recognized their worth and necessity as vital to pollinators food and habitat, surprisingly it made a beautiful image.

Whilst in the garden washing out her prints in one of the old Belfast sinks, Mori began to start a dialogue with the general public showing them plant material collected from the farm and its uses for pollinators. They were all very keen to know if there would be workshops where they could have a go themselves.

During the workshops they used plant materials Mori had preserved from the summer, being very brittle, Mori found it difficult to watch people handle her precious plants, She was reminded of the seasons changing, the helicopters saw fall from the trees on hers walk to and from college each day, spinning like ballerinas fresh and green against the harsh concrete, they lay on the ground decaying, transforming into fragile skeletons before sending out new shoots in the spring. She realized there was something far more important than the plants themselves, it was the lived experience, the process bringing understanding and reconnection. This would be passed on for generations who had lost touch with reality and nature.

Flight 7

Mori surveyed the vast array of work she had created, her work being an outlet for her confessions. There were common threads joining them together but in her chaotic life she had ben flitting back and forth between ideas, each day taking a slightly different trajectory.

A narrative of fragility connecting both a woman and moth, both submissive, and unable to make their voices heard emerged. Subconsciously Mori had made several pieces all of which made sounds. As she carried her fragile cocoons across the room she heard a soft tinkle.

She had made glass dominos in response to her children, whom she observed constructing a domino show, yet failing to stand the pack before they all fell back down. Starting over and over each time they would get a little further. This felt like an analogy for explained Mori's life - the constant struggles and chaos, feeling stronger more days than others. In re-enanacting the domino show, performing the action until finally, all the dominos made it all the way around, she was not prepared for the chimeing sound that has resonated in her head ever since. She questioned if it could be the pure emotion explained by affect theory (O'sullivan, 2001) so immersive, it was like a wake- up call, the divine moment she needed.

Researching bells and their meaning, John Donne poem “No man is an island”(Donne, 1624) created this connection. He says

“perchance he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me, and see my state, may have caused it to toll for me, and know not that……

No man is an island, entire of itself; everyman is a piece of the continent, a part of the main continent……

Any man’s (woman’s/insects/ living creatures) death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.

Mori also came across a sound and spoken word piece by piece Fern Thomas (Thomas, 2013) which was very spiritual leading on to what she had also read about the symbolism within Hinduism, their belief was in placing bells in the doorways of places of worship your mind would be cleansed, empty ready to receive new ways of thinking. Mori hoped to achieve this by subjecting her audience to the sounds of her dominos reverberating around the room, encapsulating them in an invisible ring. Mori pulled together all her threads and was finally able to knot them.

Finally realizing that pushing the dominos, letting go of control and all the high expectations and

unachievable goals to be the perfect mother, wife and artist was the first step to regaining control, was also a letting go of her fragile precious moths - their dissent became her assent.

As a final piece Mori created a film of the process, like the film of stan Brakhage- Moth light (Brakhage, 1963)she was also re-animating her moths. It needed to be film with sound to create an immersive experience - a room full of out -pouring’s - time to collect and survey the damage in order to rebuild.

Bells tolling for loss of myself, the women and other…… that had not been acknowledged, and for the tragedy throughout this narrative, for clarity to emerge from the chaos.

This process, both cathartic and liberating as much as it has been painful and uncomfortable chimes like the sound of the glass moths falling. To refer to Freud once again, there can never be one thing or another, beauty or ugly something is always being supressed.

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