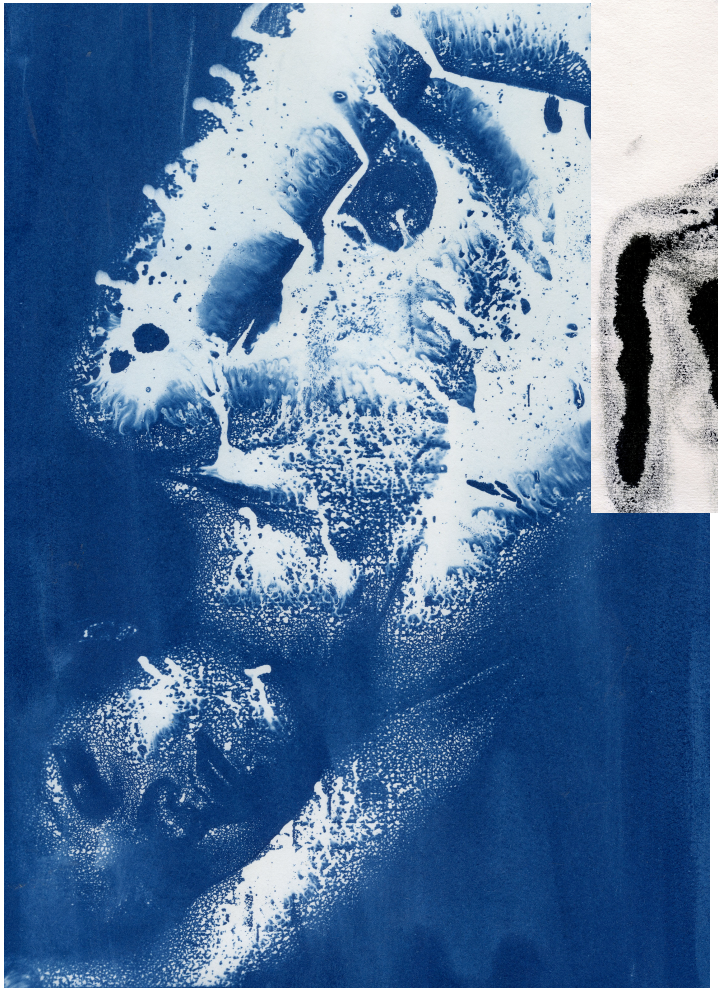
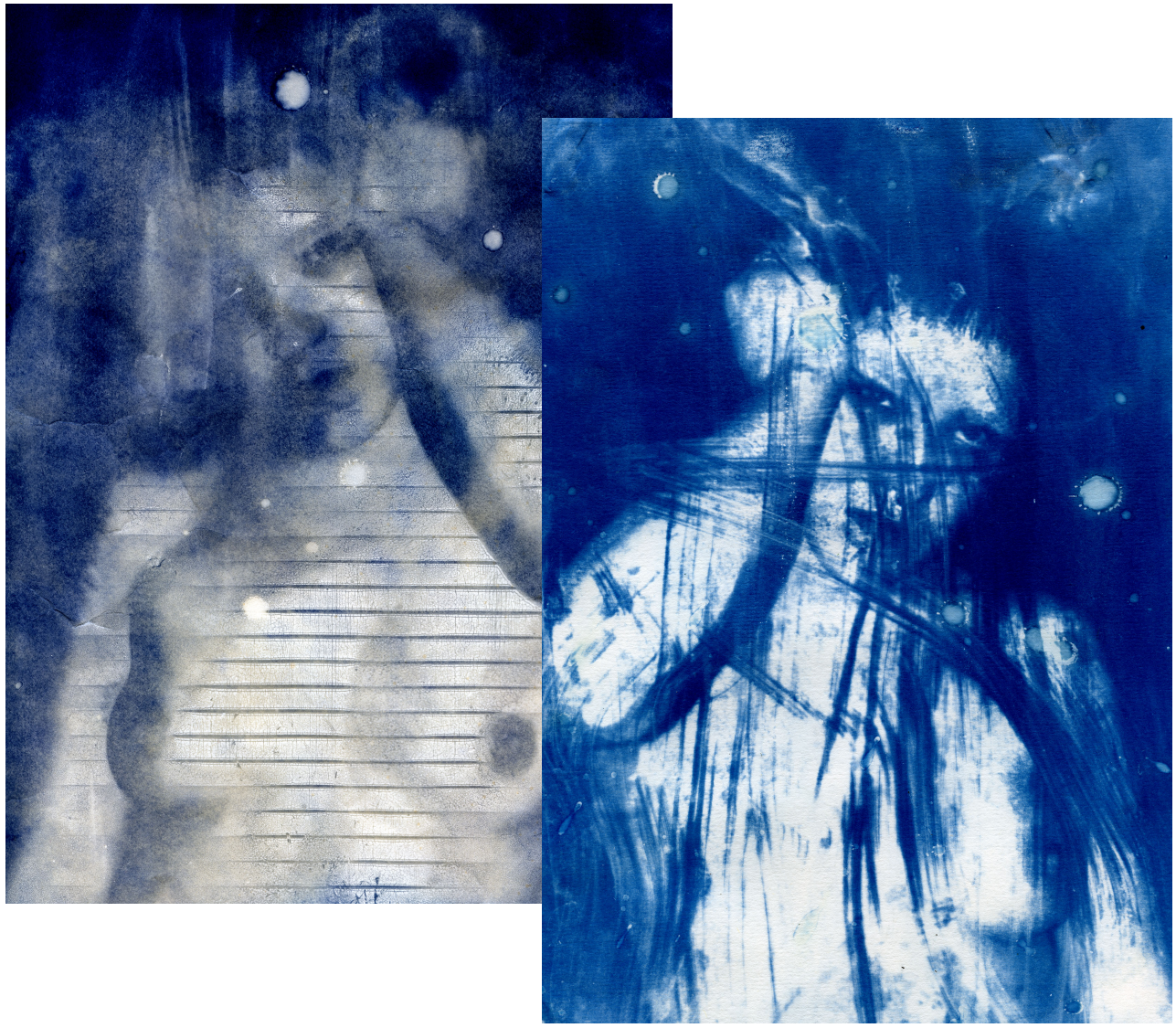








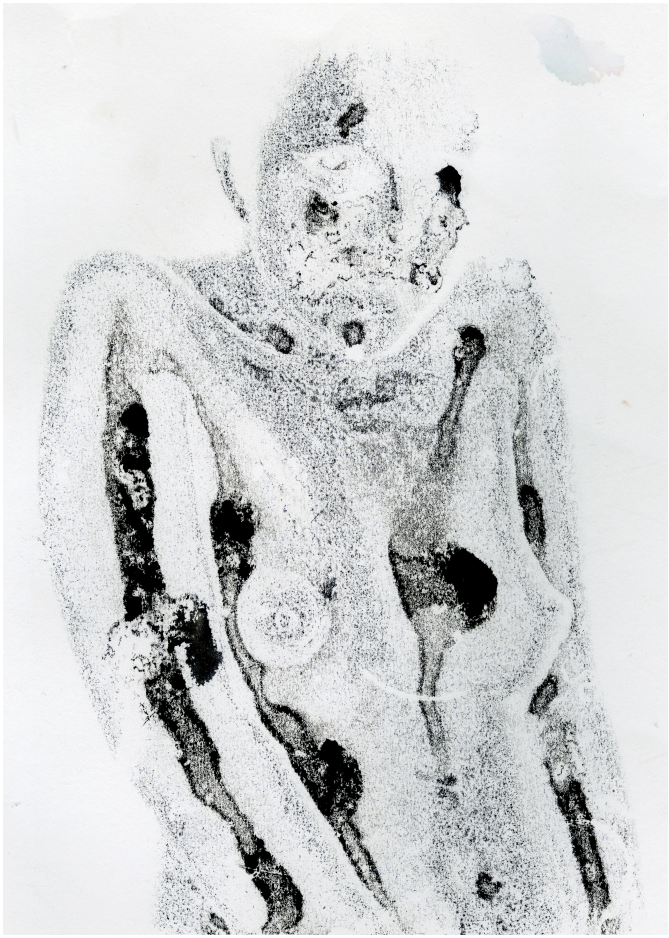












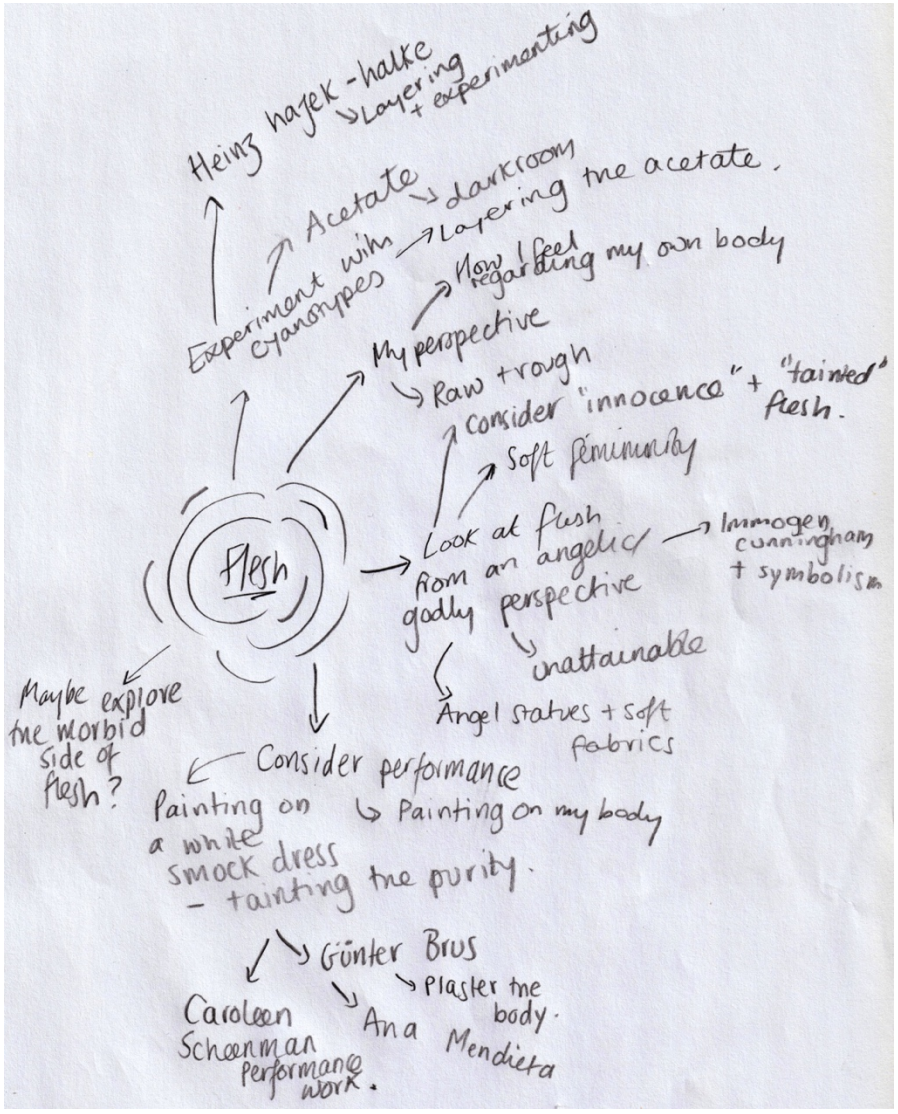




Flesh

I wanted to continue the subject matter explored in “Cat Person”. Matters of the flesh. Exploring the divine and the real and how I view and perceive my own flesh and body. I, along with many others, have a complicated relationship with my flesh, somewhat of a disconnect. Having an eating disorder along with in my early teens, which resulted in me taking a year out if school, has left me with this strange view of myself, one that I find hard to put into words. I have also harmed my body, which is a controversial topic, but one that is deeply personal and important for me to express. I have never felt at home within myself, I have never felt free or relaxed or whatever. My skin is not soft with youth; it is soft with rot. I feel cracked and misshapen, like a statue made by a dodgy sculptor.

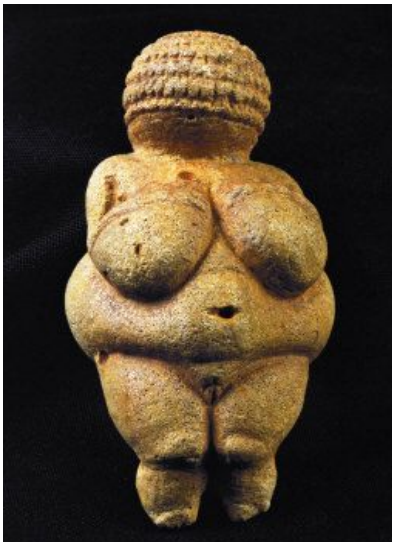
So, in a way I want to compare the angelic/divine flesh with how I view my own (or “the real”).



Initial Ideas

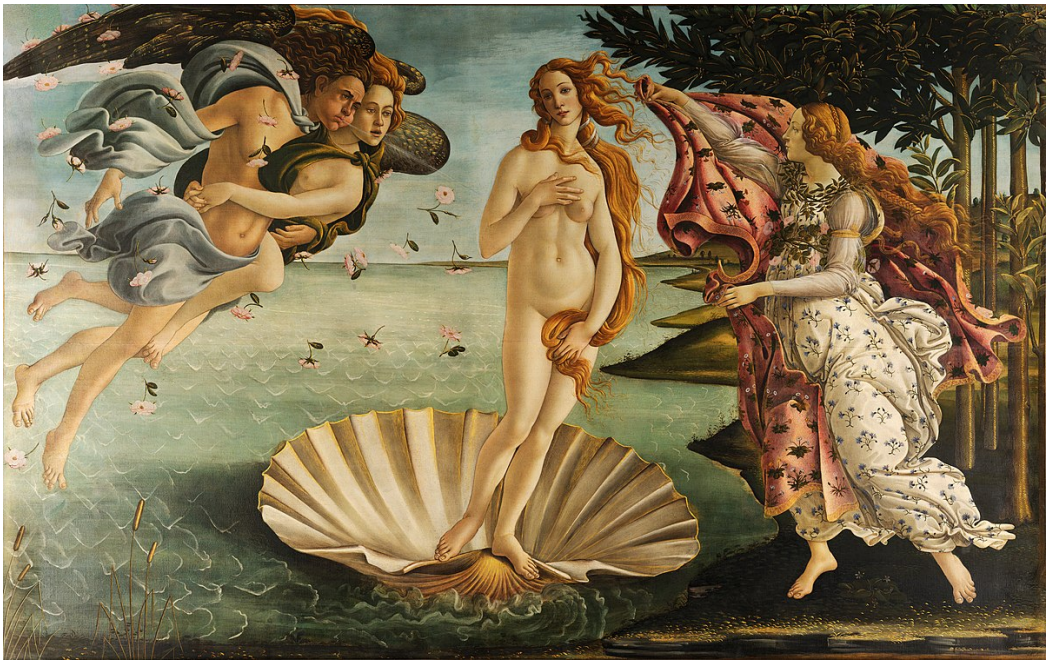
Research

As part of my research I looked at Goddesses in Art (1997) by Lanier Graham. Something which surprised me was that goddesses weren’t viewed as significant compared to Gods, not until the 20th Century. The oldest Goddess known to historians is The Great Goddess, she is one supreme being, she creates all as well as destroys all. The stone age depictions show a plump-shaped woman with no defining facial characteristics.



What intrigued me about this Goddess is her power along with her depiction. When we hear the word “Goddess” we often think of porcelain toned, slim framed female entities with long flowing hair, not what the figure depicts here. The cracks and aging of the material are interesting, they show, in a way, how I view my own flesh. I want to incorporate texture into my work. I find the juxtaposition of this representation of a Goddess with Aphrodite (the Goddess of love and sexuality within Greek Mythology).

Aphrodite (also known as Venus) has had many depictions throughout art-history. One of the earliest, a sculpture by Alexandros of Antioch called Venus de Milo (101 BC) inspired what would be the renaissance portrays of Aphrodite.



Birth Of Venus, 1484-1486, Sandro Botticelli

The Birth of Venus is the most famous representation of this Goddess. Within the painting she is being attracts attention from those who want to adore her. She stands in a shell; she is supposedly birthed from sea foam. Her long blonde hair carefully blows in the wind and falls onto her pale flesh. It’s also important to note her pose, a contrapposto pose, known for being widely used in renaissance art. The dipped hip creates a sense of movement while the subject still remains relaxed and fragile.



The Birth of Venus, 1863, Alexandre Cabanel

In this rendition of the birth of Venus, while different, we see the key similarities. Even though laying down her hips still have a contrapposto position, as if she’s gently turning over on the ocean. Cherubs surround her, chubby little infant like angles which, to me, take on an androgynous form.

Günter Brus



Self-Painting, 1964, Gunter Brus

Brus is an Austrian artist who experiments with various processes and medias. I am interested in his work titled "Self-Painting". Brus is a controversial artist, some of his works depict self-mutilation and defection, he shows us humility in its rawest and hardest to look at form. For my project I want a juxtaposition between how I see my own flesh and representations of divine, perfect feminine representations in art. In self-painting, Brus has covered himself in white pigment, with a crack straight down the centre of his face. The tools around his face suggest adjustments to be made to himself, as if sculpting his own being. The crack could symbolise a breaking down of the self, how we will never know what we really are. The self-portraits I'm going to use for this project will have a textured quality, inspired by a sculptural form and how the degradation I feel on my own flesh.

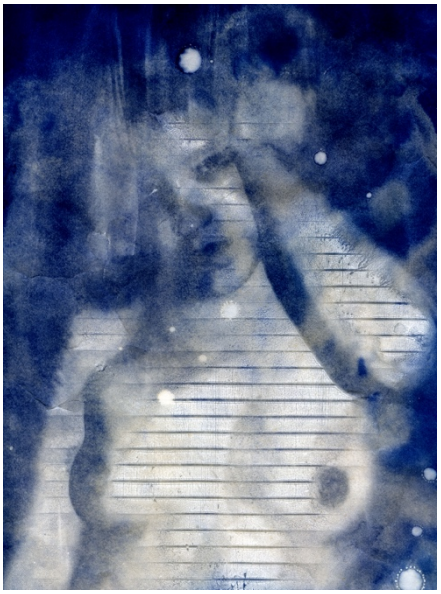


Self Portrait as a Drowned Man, Hippolyte Bayard, 1840

I chose to shoot partially nude as a homage to Aphrodite and also Self Portrait as a Drowned Man by Hippolyte Bayard, It's thought he appeared partially nude as a homage to paintings of martyrs. The photograph is considered to be the first staged photograph. Bayard, although pioneering many photographic processes was sort of swept under the rug when Louis Daguerre's coveted Daguerreotype. What am I a martyr for? A belief of unattainable purity, the dirtiness I always feel on my flesh that wont shift. I've spent time considering how it is that I can appear nude in photographs while feeling so self-conscious. Art as therapy? Maybe not. I feel a disconnect when I see an image of myself, I think I have done this to protect myself, in a way, I push it back in my head and consider myself as paint that is touching a canvas, and what does paint have to feel bad about?

Working with acetate and cyanotypes I wanted to produce prints of myself along with sculptural works, it felt quite repetitive but allowed me to get into a flow where I sort of become obsessed with creating these ink-prints and cyanotypes. One process I came upon by accident was birthed from frustration. After successfully printing acetate negatives using the facilities at university, over the weekend I wanted to create more, so I bought acetate and loaded my printer. The first time it worked, somewhat, they were cracked and there was banding clearly visible but at least they were dry. The next day and from then on the ink refused to dry to the acetate. However, this meant I could manipulate the ink on the acetate, I let it drip and placed it on top of the cyanotype paper, unsure of how they would come out.







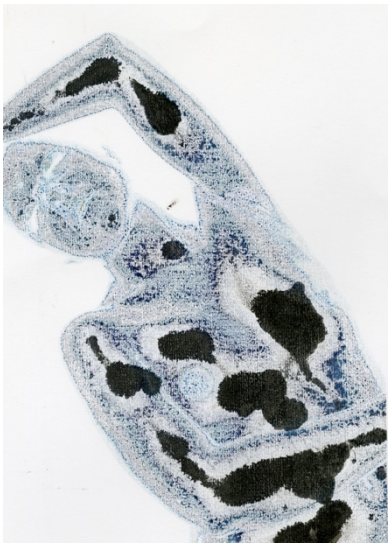


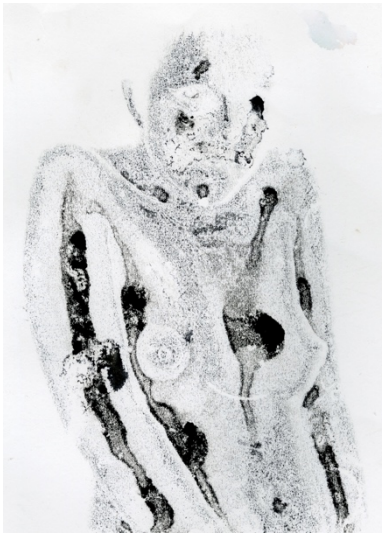


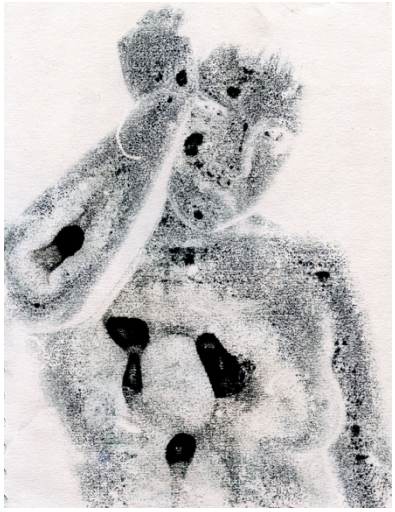
I experimented with letting the ink run and also with smudging it (as seen in the first left print). In the second one on the top row I sprayed surface cleaner on the paper after printing for a cloudy effect. I especially liked the outcome on the second row, right one as it looks as though there's water falling off of my body, brining an element of life to a still moment. I am going to write more about the positioning and meaning of body language when I get to my final piece. However, I wanted to juxtapose portraits where I am not engaging with the audience, questioning their gaze and with reference to "nudes" from renaissance and prior where the woman not looking made the male gaze feel more comfortable looking at her body, she is passive and unaware.











I made the ink prints by using an ink roller to fully press the acetate on to the paper so the ink could transfer on to it. I experimented in Photoshop with inverting them to become positives again, but I think the inverted (original) versions are more poignant as I feel they ask you to look more, instead of only glancing. The inverted, to me, also have a more statuesque feel, they invoke a stillness that is interrupted by the ink dripping as if melting away. The ink dripping signifies an end, slowing dripping away into nothingness. Times where I've felt so overwhelmed by my own image that I'd wish it would disappear, to some extent we all want to sculpt ourselves. Like in Brus' work I wanted the medium to work with my self to not take away from my reality but make it hyper-real. Each crack and imperfection begins to show how I view myself, unwhole and impure (to put it bluntly). Scars that are both physical and psychological have deeply impacted my perception of self, however, I am not oblivious to the fact that I am harsh.

More cyanotyprs….















To work alongside my self-portraits I wanted to create prints with “constructed” female forms along with cupid, an androgynous infant who represents love. To do this, for the statues I appropriated art works at the National Museum Cardiff. The torso is titled Female Torso, 1938 and was made by sculptor Sir William Goscombe John. The statue is striking, the female form is limbless and headless yet still invokes a softness within such violence. The marble figure to the right is Musidora by Robert William Sievier, 1830, this figure emobodies, to me, a complete gentleness without protest, unlike the torso. I experimented with different backgrounds for the cupid, using my hands and some fabric for each. For the torso I also did this, I wanted to make sure my cyanotypes were striking while also having texture and depth. I didn’t maniputalte the original negatives or distress these prints, I wanted them to be soft and easier to look at so that the juxtaposition between myself and what I view as perfect is strikingly obvious.

Installation

While considering what I was going to put up for the exhibition I knew I wanted different scales and a sort of montage approach where prints would overlap and work together to create an intriguing installation that invokes movement through the stills. A lot of this was trial and error, putting prints together, moving the around and seeing what works best. I decided to start this I would choose a base print to work around, so I printed the torso with the white background at a scale of A0, giving me plenty of room to work around on and around it.

While installing the ink prints didn't seem to fit in, and limited to a certain amount of space, I decided to not include them in the installation and focus mostly on the cyanotypes while also including a couple of acetate prints.









Close-ups to show details in the installation.

The prints overlaying and scattering off the big print guides the eyes in a certain way. The curvature of the torso works with the placement of the prints and creates a sort of swooping motion that guides. The mixing of the prints and the acetate creates a window for the audience in to the process without giving too much away, it fuses the battered cyanotypes with a cleaner look creating an interesting contrast. The prints where I look asleep, a martyr just as the The Portrait of a Drowned Man, are combated by the two where the gaze is projected back, creating a conversation between the two. Why are you looking at the vulnerable, unconscious body? Taking ownership of myself, in a way, while feeling disconnected from what I see. The banding on the acetate self-portrait and one of the cyanotypes like a glitch, mixed with the timeless effect of cyanotype brings the installation into the modern while also revealing the reference to the past influences. The cyanotype with the cupid and the hands work well with the limbless torso, the hands are striking, as if fallen from the torso who is grasping at a delicacy and softness that is always out of reach.

Ultimately, I wanted my installation to be a conversation about the body and disconnection, through merging myself with the sculptural world. I wanted it to be about not feelings content in your own flesh, how looking at outside beauty can, in a way, create an either further disconnect from my perception. I don't need someone to understand my past and personal issues, as long as they can see that I am not trying to become the sculpture but feel as disconnected from myself like I am looking at one when I look at a mirror. However, what I see isn't smooth and created with great care. You can see how my research influenced the outcome, with my body language paying homage to the subtle movement and stillness to the Venus paintings with a brutal realness present in Brus' work and the stone age Great Goddess.

In the PDF I included the ink prints because it allowed me with more space to play around with scale and placement and they felt more at home than they did in the installation.

Overall, I think I pushed myself to experiment with different processes and this is work that I would like to further push and develop in the future as there's so much more that could be explored within the realm. My main struggle during the project was considering it on the larger scale, especially when it came to the installation.