

STATION

KATE BOHUNNIS

fill me up and make me useful

Fill me up and make me useful expresses the absurdity of the patriarchal perception of a woman's body as possessing both inherent physical and cognitive failings. Reducing a body's value solely to its (assumed) biological potential creates a monolithic body—one that is rendered too biological and therefore too vulnerable for impactful use outside of a reproductive realm and, simultaneously, strips it of cognitive capability.

"...women's corporeal specificity is used to explain and justify the different (read: unequal) social positions and cognitive abilities of the two sexes. By implication, women's bodies are presumed to be incapable of men's achievements, being weaker, more prone to (hormonal) irregularities, intrusions, and unpredictabilities."¹

Aside from the immediate issue of a woman's body needing male activation to be considered effective, the corporeal specificity when diagnosing sexed potential as either male/female or masculine/feminine continues a dangerous binary obsession that only serves to feed strategic disempowerment of anyone outside of, or beyond, the cis male marker. This is important to note as patriarchal oppression and subordination does not only undermine a cis woman's body, but extends to many communities across gender and sexuality.

I believe Deleuze and Guattari's *The Body Without Organs* provides a way to escape these predetermined binaries. Offering a path towards self-actualization built from a chorus of ever-changing parts and intensities.

"The Body without Organs is not simply disorganized, it is that which repels organization...It has the capacity to disarm and undo, as it is a ceaseless coming-undone, unbound. This Body is all that is beyond and exceeding containment."²

Fill me up and make me useful speaks through and against patriarchal definitions of the gendered body. The sculptural forms are made from the contrasting mediums of hard, sharp steel and soft, fluffy fabrics, and foreground handstitched embroidery that recalls reproductive systems in the abstract and malformed. They inhabit a space between violence and uselessness. Lacking in structural integrity, these forms have lost control and will soon encounter complete dysfunction.

¹ Grosz, Elizabeth Grosz. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. (Allen and Unwin: Sydney, 1994), 14.

² Dawson, Nicole. *(Re)Thinking Bodies: Deluze and Guattari's becoming-woman*. (Faculty of Humanities, Brock University St. Catharines, Ontario 2008), 10.

—Kate Bohunnis

About the artist:

Kate Bohunnis lives and works in Tarntanya (Adelaide), Australia.

Focusing on identity, gender and queer perspectives, Bohunnis' installations connect material experimentation and its ability to communicate psychological states and behaviours. This material performativity is either enacted on its own, or posturing and interacting with another to create a new structural system or tenuous imbalance.

Bohunnis is a graduate from Flinders University with First Class Honours. The recent winner of the 2021 Ramsay Art Prize, Bohunnis has exhibited at the Art Gallery of South Australia, ACE Open, Firstdraft, BLINDSIDE, Praxis ARTSPACE, FELTspace, Sister Gallery, PICA and various group exhibitions throughout South Australia.