



a bed

The bed is a bundle of paradoxes: we go to it with reluctance, yet we quit it with regret; we make up our minds every night to leave it early, but we make up our bodies every morning to keep it late. – Ogdden Nash

When I was thirteen years old I was diagnosed with Myalgic encephalomyelitis, also called chronic fatigue syndrome or ME/CFS. An incurable condition with a wide range of symptoms. The most common include extreme tiredness. Problems with thinking, memory, and concentration, and muscle or joint pain. The doctors told me it was triggered by the severe depression and anxiety I had developed after being bullied at school. It was my body's way of coping they told me- however even when my mental state improved my body remained painful and exhausted no matter how much sleep I got.

In a matter of weeks, my bed had changed from a piece of furniture in my room to my whole world. It was both a haven and a prison, somewhere I felt protected but also at my exposed and vulnerable. As my condition progressed my relationship with my bed became more complex. I would feel complete shame as I would not be able to drag myself out of my sheets at 3 pm on a Tuesday while I should have been at school. I saw it on my parent's faces when they would come to wake me up for the tenth time that day and saw that it was a pointless battle. I hated my bed and everything it represented, that stale smell of unwashed sheets and leftover crumbs from where I had eaten dinner while I could hear my family sitting at our dining room table eating their meal together. I loved my bed, the comfort and warmth it gave my aching bones and pounding head, and how I could drift off and be at complete peace whenever I wanted.

Shame

urnij u si pəq va bed is a place of rest

unhygienic si pəq va bed is comfort

urnij u si pəq va bed is a place of shame

urnij u si pəq va bed is a place of illness

“In 1998 I had a complete and absolute breakdown and I spent four days in bed. I was asleep and semi-unconscious, when I eventually did get out of bed I had some water went back and looked at the bedroom and couldn’t believe what I could see. This absolute mess and decay of my life. then I saw the bed out of that context of this tiny tiny bedroom and I saw it in this big white space I realized I had to move the bed and everything on it into a gallery space.”-Tracy Emin

TATE. “Tracey Emin on My Bed | TateShots.” YouTube, 2 Apr. 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=uv04ewpiqSc. Accessed 17 May 2022.

<p>World UK UK Politics Business Sci/Tech Health Education Sport Entertainment Talking Point In Depth On Air Archive</p> <hr/> <p>Feedback Low Graphics Help</p>	<p>WALES</p> <p>Monday, October 25, 1999 Published at 17:29 GMT 18:29 UK</p> <h2>UK: Wales</h2> <h3>Housewife 'outraged' by dirty bed exhibit</h3>  <p>Tracey Emin's 'dirty bed' angered housewife Christine De Ville</p> <p>A south Wales housewife who attempted to clean up an artist's bed exhibit has stood by her actions.</p> <p>Christine De Ville from Swansea said she felt "outraged" after hearing of the unmade bed on show by artist Tracey Emin which is shortlisted for the Turner Prize.</p> <p>Security guards moved quickly to prevent the mother of three from damaging the work.</p>	<p>24 Oct 99 UK Feathers fly at art show</p> <p>20 Oct 99 UK The Turner Prize draw</p> <hr/> <p>Internet Links</p> <p>White Cube - Tracey Emin</p> <p>Tate Gallery</p> <p>The BBC is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.</p> <hr/> <p>In this section</p> <p>Labour explores Assembly election wounds</p> <p>Delays hit coach crash compensation</p> <p>Ex-headmaster guilty of more sex charges</p> <p>Museum in pay-off probe</p> <p>Euro row over "Welsh" money rebate</p>
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Anon. “BBC News | Wales | Housewife “Outraged” by Dirty Bed Exhibit.” News.bbc.co.uk, 25 Oct. 1999, news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/485270.stm. Accessed 17 May 2022.

As the critics and some of the public flocking to an exhibition of the four finalists for the Turner Prize have been asking: When is an unmade bed a work of art and when is it an unmade bed? Dirty laundry aired in public, as it were.

MILLER, MARJORIE. "Unmade Bed Exhibit Has London Tossing and Turning." Los Angeles Times, 29 Nov. 1999, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-nov-29-ca-38545-story.html. Accessed 17 May 2022.



In my bed. Reference image 2022

Gregor Samsa awakes to find himself transformed into a giant beetle. Gregor feels disgusted and ashamed of his new body as he is unable to go to work and perform his role in both societal and family life. Isolated in his bedroom he is desperate for human interaction but due to his physical form, he is hidden away, left to listen to the world go on around him.

I am reminded of how as a chronically ill person we are often hidden away by society—seen as something unfixable or repulsive. Our bedroom becomes both our escape and our prison. We are expected to live with our isolation and feel shame when the world gets a glimpse into our lives.

Toward evening every day the living room door . . . was opened, so that lying in the darkness of his room and unseen from the living room, he could view the whole family at the brightly lit table and could listen to their conversation more or less with their consent, completely unlike his prior eavesdropping.

Franz Kafka, and Jason Baker. *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*. New York, Barnes & Noble, 2004, p. 37.

To spare her from even these glimpses, he dragged the sheet to the sofa on his back one day—this required four hours' work—and laid it in such a way as to conceal himself entirely, so the sister could not see him even if she stooped down.

Isenstein, Jamie. Eyehole, 2005



"A sneak peak" Digital collage 2022





Shame

I am a shadow in this house

I am pale and sickly
I am clammy and smelly

People come and they go-
I hear them say my name
I hear them knock on my door

But I am too far away-
Away into the sheets and sweat
Away into unsettled sleep

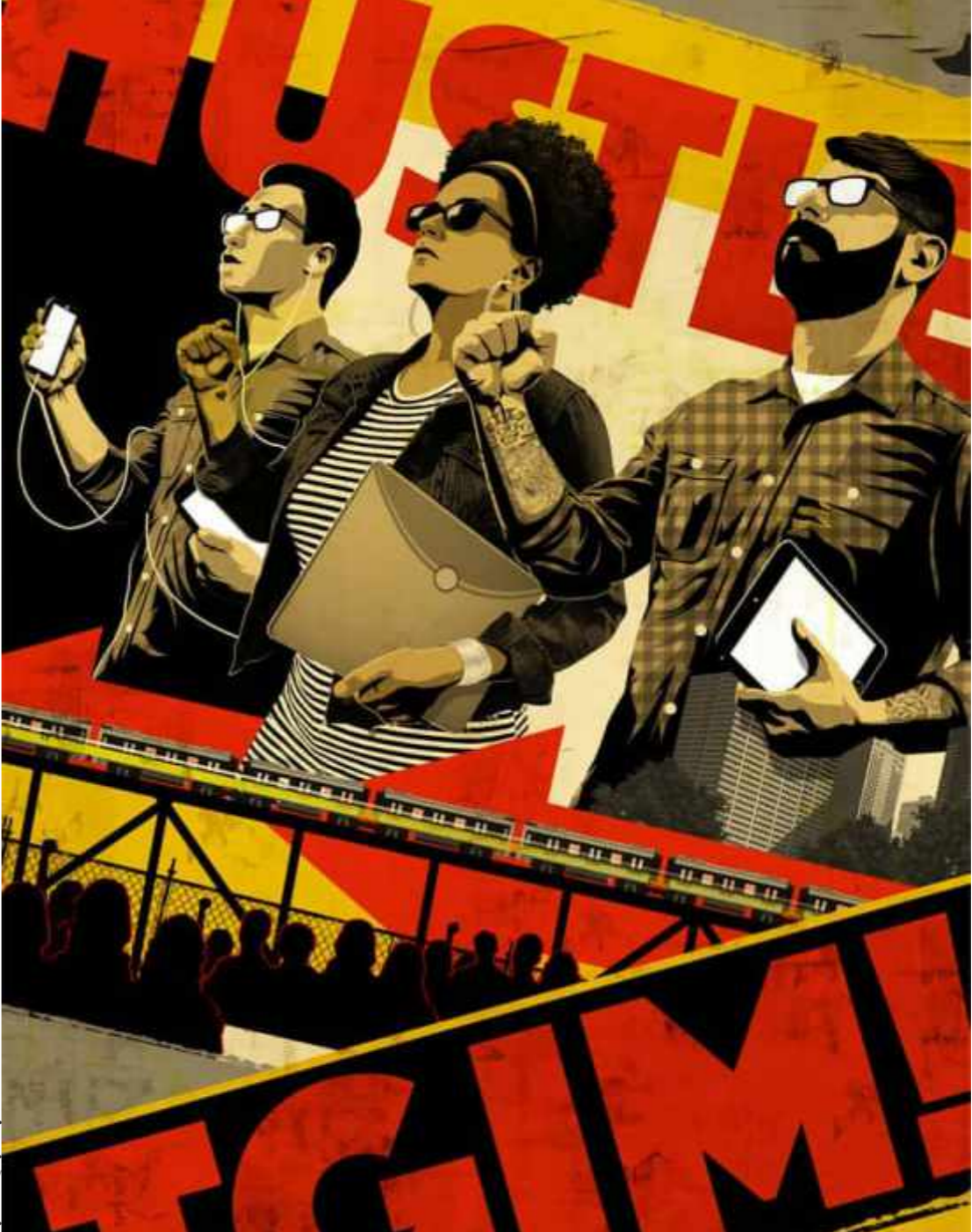
They try to drag me back-
They say they want me around

To be part of the family-
My shame is too heavy
My sickness too strong

Shame

While working with my counselor, I've frequently brought up the topic of whether or not I am, in fact, lazy. It's a question that I compulsively ask. As someone who used to define herself vis-a-vis her work ethic, to become unable to act upon that work ethic is nearly intolerable. My deep fear is that I'm secretly slothful and am using chronic illness to disguise the sick rot of laziness within myself.

WEIJUN WANG, Esme. "I'm Chronically Ill and Afraid of Being Lazy "in a Society That Holds Productivity as Unequivocally Good, to Do Less Feels like a Moral Failing."" ELLE, 26 Apr. 2016, www.elle.com/life-love/a35930/chronically-ill-afraid-lazy/. Accessed 28 May 2022.



Callery, T. (n.d.). 'Grind Culture'. Available at: <https://www.taylorcalleryillustration.com/covers> [Accessed 10 Jun. 2022].

“Sickness as we speak of it today is a capitalist construct, as is its perceived binary opposite, ‘wellness.’ The ‘well’ person is the person well enough to go to work. The ‘sick’ person is the one who can’t. What is so destructive about conceiving of wellness as the default, as the standard mode of existence, is that it invents illness as temporary. When being sick is an abhorrence to the norm, it allows us to conceive of care and support in the same way. Care, in this configuration, is only required sometimes. When sickness is temporary, care is not normal.”

‘Lazy cow’

A woman that is quite capable of doing a days work, but chooses instead to dodge out of her duties. IE, if at work, hiding in the toilets, filing nails, chatting, making personal phone calls.

From 1998 - 1999, I had to “carry” a woman named “Margaret” as well as my own job, the lazy cow used to bug me so much that I wanted to punch her lights out.

by HILLY B May 15, 2007

B, Hilly. “Urban Dictionary: Lazy Cow.” Urban Dictionary, 2021, www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Lazy%20Cow. Accessed 28 May 2022.

Chidley, Kate. Lazy Cow, www.katechidley.com/lazy-cow/. Accessed 28 May 2022.



Comfort

Lullaby, and goodnight, in the skies stars, are
bright

May the moon's, silvery beams, bring you sweet
dreams

Close your eyes, now and rest, may these hours be
blessed

Till the sky's bright with dawn, when you wake with
a yawn.

As a child the two safest, most comforting places are in your bed or your parents arms. To go to bed was encouraged (often with protest!) snuggled into the covers you were safe, warm and nothing could hurt you. As a chronically ill person I think that childlike mindset sticks with you. On a day where the pain and fatigue is all too much my bed is only one I can turn to. In my bed I am a child again and nothing else matters.



(Detail) Cassatt, Mary. A Goodnight Hug, 1880.



Experimental photography 2022



Experimental painting 2021



Experimental painting 2021

Comfort



Experimental photography 2022



Johnson, Traci. "Still from "Safe Space,"" Traci Johnson, 23 Mar. 2022,

‘Soft life’

A expensive lifestyle that requires no worry or stress but spending and looking good

Did you see Drake is living the soft life? i with i was like him

by Jerry Blacc December 27, 2020

Black, Jerry. "Urban Dictionary: Soft Life." Urban Dictionary, 2021, www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Soft%20Life. Accessed 28 May 2022.

As an adult, the words ‘soft and comfort’ translate into a less literal sense of the word but still hold the same values. In today’s capitalist society money equates to safety, comfort and softness. I worry for my future where I will unlikely be well enough to work a full time job which would give me this more adult definition of comfort. To live ‘a soft life’ is a luxury very few of us can actually afford.



Furthermore, chronic illnesses and disabilities can require more commitment for the disabled family member and medical expenses, thereby result in adverse economic consequences to collapse the economic stability of a household—such as unemployment, change in the state of employment, reduction in employee payment, out-of-pocket medical expenses, home modification expenses, etc.

Care

I find care for me comes hand in hand with fragility-
The phrase 'handle with care' often comes to my mind
when I am having a particularly hard day with my
illness. These days I see myself as a house of cards one
wrong move and I am dead to the world for at least a
week. In our post-pandemic society, such an emphasis
has been put on how to be healthy and utilise self-care
that I sometimes feel like the privacy of my bed is the
only place where I can allow my fragility to show.



Rodney, Donald.G. In the House of My Father, 1997

One of the common aspects of having a chronic illness or medical condition is a greatly increased sense of vulnerability. When there are things you cannot do for yourself, you are necessarily more dependent on others. This can have profound effects on your sense of identity, confidence, and self-worth.

The more strongly your identity is linked to seeing yourself as strong and independent, the more likely you are to perceive increased vulnerability as decreasing your self-worth. This likelihood is increased when you live in a culture where independence, strength, and individualism are highly valued, as tends to be true in the U.S.



Bourgeois, L. (1999). Maman. [bronze, stainless steel, and marble sculpture].



The sleepers, pillow 4 (2022)

Care



The sleepers, pillow 2 (2022)

“Her work illuminated how much paper is like skin, at once frail and robust, susceptible to puncture and able to weather the years. The act of using paper-mâché itself can be read as a pantomime of caring for such bodies: bandaging the skinned knee, wrapping the corpse.”

Smallwood, Christine. “Could Papier-Mâché Be the Perfect Medium for Our Times?” *New York Times*, 22 Feb. 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/02/22/t-magazine/papier-mache.html. Accessed 22 May 2022.

“I can remember at one point in a lecture, thinking, i’m not interested in making pictures of the body, but i am interested in the experience of the condition of the body. Everything about a threshold is an inherited physical predicament. We’re simultaneously insides and outsides, we’re containers and we’re contained, we’re born into material and we’re born into language. It’s the way that our physical selves actually establish so many of the metaphors within which we think.”





Smith, Kiki. *Hard Soft Bodies*, 1992.



The sleepers, pillow 3 (2022)

Care

The sleepers, pillow 5 (2022)



Munch, Edvard. The Sick Child, 1907



Absence

It is impossible to ignore the sense of losing time to your bed while the world goes on outside the four walls of your bedroom. This feeling of absence is felt not only by you but everyone around you- your family while they eat dinner together downstairs, your friends when they're at that bar they invited you to come to, your work colleagues when they see the empty chair at your desk. Chronic illness is cruel in the way it sneaks up on you when you least expect it leaving you no time to plan around it. You end up missing out and letting people down while you lie there isolated unable to move. My mother used to always tell me that my bed sees more of her than she does- and it was true, when I finally would get up an imprint of my body is left on the sheets from hours of lying in the same position. A ghostly shadow of the life I have lost to my bed.

“Strange, isn’t it? Each man’s life touches so many other lives. And when he isn’t around he leaves an awful hole, doesn’t he?”

It's a Wonderful Life. Directed by Frank Capra, RKO Radio Pictures, 20 Dec. 1946.



‘The Birmingham Project’ (2012) references this toll obliquely. Made up of black and white diptych portraits, the work considers the Ku Klux Klan’s 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church that killed four Black girls. Each diptych shows, on one side, a Black child the same age as one of the murdered victims in 1963; on the other side is a portrait of an adult at the age the child would have been if alive today.

Wu, Simon. ““Grief and Grievance” Shows Us Profound Visions of Black Suffering | Frieze.” *Frieze*, 21 Apr. 2021, www.frieze.com/article/grief-and-grievance-2021-review. Accessed 31 May 2022.

“When absent, the body of someone becomes the negative space of the objects left behind, the artist says. “Tracing and mapping absence, shadowing the contours of a vanished presence, Empreinte reveals the imprinted sensations of a missing being.”– Mathilde Roussel-Giraudy

Yoo, Alice. “Feeling Your Absence (8 Pics).” My Modern Met, 8 Dec. 2010, mymodernmet.com/feeling-your-absence-8-pics/. Accessed 11 May 2022.



Roussel-Giraudy, Mathilde. Empreinte, 2010.



In *Ghost*, a large installation of a group of Muslim women in prayer, Attia renders their bodies as vacant shells, empty hoods devoid of personhood or spirit.



Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message 'He is Dead'.
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

Furniture is designed for and exists in close relation to the human body; in our daily life we are dependent on it and leave the traces of our physical presence on it. Whiteread's casts of the negative spaces around furniture, which through her processes become new forms, resonant of but not reproducing the original object, serve to defamiliarise the familiar and to represent it as a memory. This memory is not so much of the object itself, or even other similar objects, but of the human presences and contacts with that object which have now disappeared.



Whiteread, Rachel. *Untitled (Air Bed)*, 1992.



Imprint 2022

Absence

Processes

Casting: a sculptural process in which material is substituted to form the final artwork.

sachant, P., Blood, P., Lemieux, J. and Tekipp, R. (2019). 2.6: Key Terms. [online] Humanities LibreTexts. Available at: [https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Art/Book%3A_Introduction_to_Art_-_Design_Context_and_Meaning_\(Sachant_et_al.\)/02%3A_The_Structure_of_Art/2.06%3A_Key_Terms](https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Art/Book%3A_Introduction_to_Art_-_Design_Context_and_Meaning_(Sachant_et_al.)/02%3A_The_Structure_of_Art/2.06%3A_Key_Terms) [Accessed 10 Jun. 2022].

Casting, as employed by all three, is itself a process of metamorphosis and shifting boundaries. Bourgeois, Hesse and Whiteread's treatment of casting transforms the process from earlier established notions. Their tailored approach to the process and medium of making succeeds in keeping sensuous bodily characteristics such as an awareness of interiors, boundaries, and limits within the forms themselves.

They used casting to make boundaries visible, the liminal space between the interior and exterior world, ones in which social relationships of placement and arrangement create complex stagings.

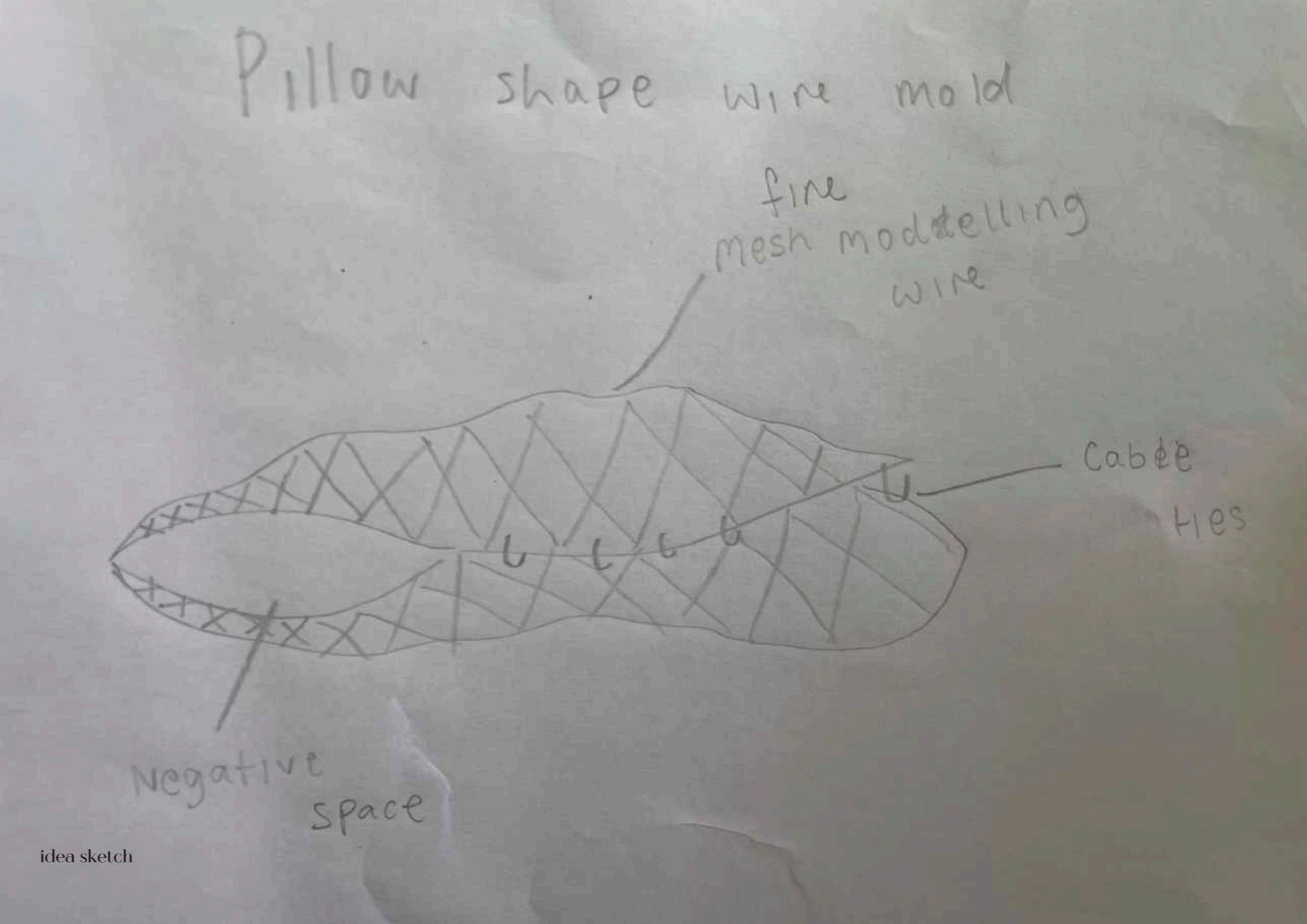
Sexton, Sarah (2018): The Inbetweenness of Casting: Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse and Rachel Whiteread. University of Illinois at Chicago. Thesis. <https://hdl.handle.net/10027/23033>



Processes

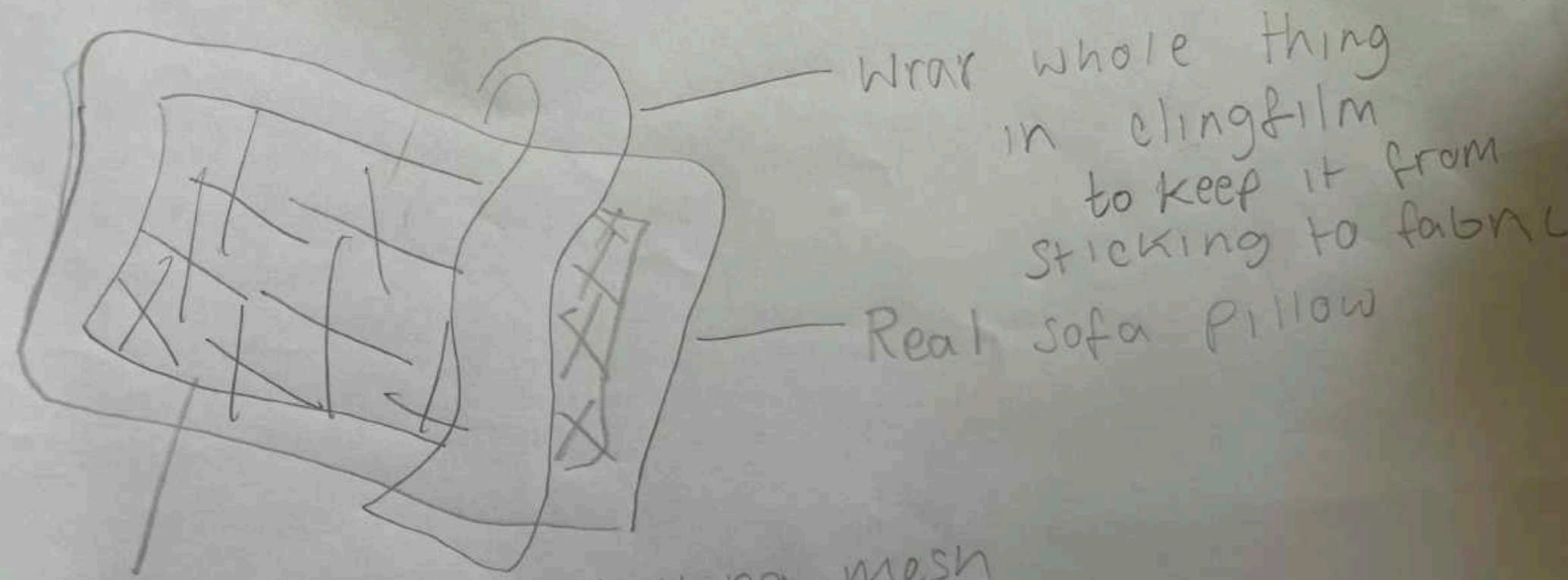


Work in progress



idea sketch

Pillow shape mold TAKE 2



layer of wire modelling mesh to add additional texture

idea sketch

Work in progress



Processes

Work in progress



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Processes



Work in progress



Processes

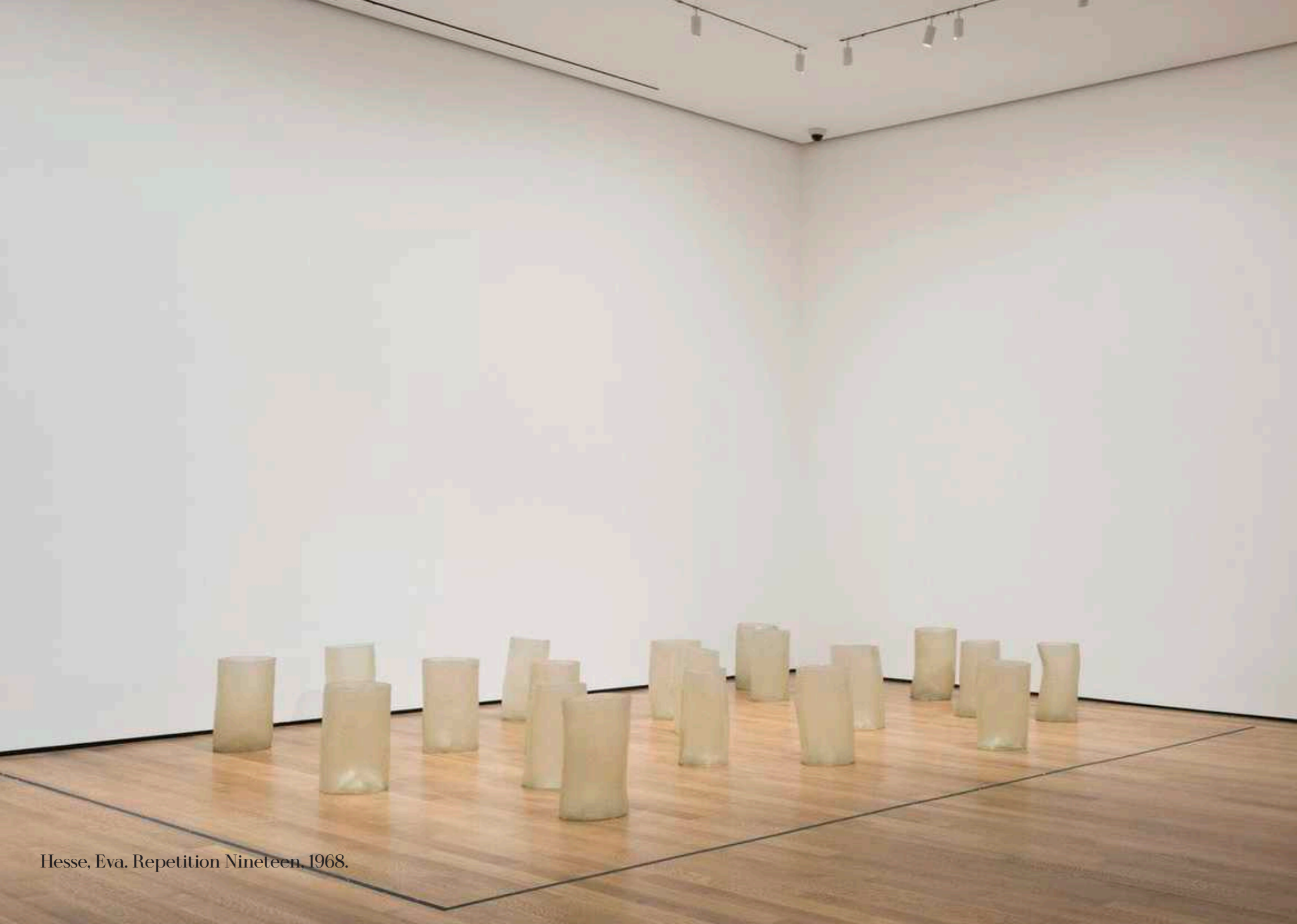


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In terms of displaying my work, I took inspiration from other artists who aim to spark empathy and connection from the viewer. I noticed that many of these artists did not add unnecessary decoration or added furnishings. The work was most powerful when it took command of the room how it was and draw you into finding out more about it.



Hill, Luzene. Retracing the Trace, 2011.



Hesse, Eva. Repetition Nineteen, 1968.

Though her career was short, Hesse left behind a vast and influential legacy, bringing emotional fragility into Minimalist forms, an attitude that continues to be felt in sculptural practices today.

Lesso, Rosie. "Eva Hesse: The Life of a Ground Breaking Sculptor." TheCollector, 2 Apr. 2020, www.thecollector.com/eva-hesse-the-life-of-a-ground-breaking-sculptor/. Accessed 31 May 2022.



I tried displaying an early prototype version of my fabric cast 'imprint' on the wall but ultimately found that it was much more powerful with its message facing away from the viewer on the bare floor. As it is unclear at first to the viewer that it is a hollow cast it could be mistaken for being a real person lying there under the sheet during the exhibition. I liked this aspect of the work and wanted to play up to this illusion.



With my fabric sculptures 'the sleepers' I considered having them dotted around the room individually as singular sculptures. However, the sleepers were different to imprint in the way it was meant to represent a community of chronically ill people instead of one isolated individual. I decided to rest some of the sculptures up against each other in the gallery space which I felt captured the themes of support and fragility within my work.



The sleepers in gallery space 2022



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