

Splitting Hairs

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

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Creating Definition - Introduction

‘Splitting hairs’ is defined as making superfine, unnecessary, and often ridiculous distinctions. It seemed an appropriate term to apply to art practice and theory, since a great deal of art produced is overly theorised, dogmatic and earnest. This is not necessarily generated by the artists themselves, but often by the curators, critics or those who write about art. In her book *Body and Self*, Anne Marsh talks about a number of artists connected with the Tin Sheds and The Yellow House in Sydney, Australia in the 1960s and 70s, whose work was imbued with humour and strong political messages, and “appeared to be silly but maintained a social critique.”¹ Humour and parody were an essential part of the surrealist movement in the 1930s, and I strongly believe that these two elements create the possibility for what is viewed to have a greater impact, and therefore leave a more lasting memory.

Certainly humour, irony and social commentary are aspects I consider to be critical to my art making. My work explores serious issues - racism, sexism, beauty, commodification - but they are presented in a way that is playful and invites multiple and contradictory responses. Much art is focused simply on the aesthetic, where the viewer’s response is more clearly spelt out, more one dimensional. I’m looking for ways to visually play with substantial issues in order to stimulate a whole set of responses that go beyond admiration and pleasure, and venture into the realm of the uncanny.² It was my intention that the work produced from *Splitting Hairs* would continue along this path.

As well as looking in depth at one aspect of the nature of hair - hair in our food and mouth - this project also looks at the words, descriptive phrases and slang terms that cross the boundaries between hair, food and sex. Each section of this documentation is titled using hair phraseology or word play to highlight the focus of the section and to link it back to the overall concept of ‘splitting hairs’.

¹ A Marsh, *Body and Self. Performance Art In Australia 1969-92*, Oxford University Press, Australia, 1993, p. 27.

² R Malbert, *Fetish and Form* catalogue essay from exhibition catalogue *Fetishism, Visualizing Power and Desire*, The Southbank Centre, London, UK, 1995, pp. 91 & 118; also J Engberg, *The Heimlich Unheimlich* catalogue essay, *Melbourne Festival Visual Arts Program 2002*, Melbourne, p. 4.

Early fuzz

Hair and photography are inextricably linked. Photography documents and records the process of creating hairstyles and the final product, the glamour head for display, publication, memory, posterity. The camera rarely captures the frizzy, tangled moments or when our hair is greasy and unkempt. Most people's vanity would not allow pictorial evidence of their 'bad hair' days. The hairdresser or beautician is like a performance artist, constructing a temporal work. "Cutting and styling hair are equally obvious examples of the way we transform the raw into the cooked, thus bringing our bodies into culture, and involve participation in ritualistic and creative behaviour which says much about ourselves."³

Hair can be a site or source of individuality, beauty, eccentricity, authority, ridicule or class distinction. In her essay *Bush Natural*, Marina Warner states that "The language of the self, personal and social would be stripped of one of its richest resources without hair; and like the faculty of laughter, or the use of tools, the dressing of hair in itself constitutes a mark of the human."⁴ Patience, skill and a sympathetic rapport with the medium are necessary for good hairdressing, along with the same close attention to detail, aesthetics and finish that is required in art making.⁵

Hair is ubiquitous. There's no escaping from it. It is a longitudinal record of our lives, revealing intimate details about us - what we ate, who we descended from, whether we smoked or took drugs, each hair being "a little book of the body."⁶ Hair can be analysed and used as crime scene evidence in forensic medicine, and breakthrough research has shown that it can be used to screen for breast cancer.⁷ Technically a 'dead' nerveless extension of the skin, hair is lifeless but constantly endowed with life, always growing, unstoppable until death.⁸ It is a popular belief that hair continues growing after death. Fact or fallacy? Wendy Cooper explains that what really

³ C Cox, *Good Hair Days*, Quartet Books Ltd, London, 1999, p. 1.

⁴ M Warner, *Bush Natural*, Parkett, Parkett Publishers, Zurich, Frankfurt and New York, 1991, No. 27, p. 6.

⁵ A Shelton ed. *Fetishism, Visualizing Power and Desire*, The Southbank Centre, London, 1995, p. 114 (discussion of British artist Sonia Boyce's work).

⁶ S Johnson, *Written on the hair*, The Age Saturday Extra, 1 September 2001, p. 6.

⁷ V James et al, *Using hair to screen for breast cancer*, Nature, Vol. 398, 4 March 1999, pp. 33-34;

J Robotham, *Cancer patent tied to a mortgage*, The Age, 19 July 2001, p. 4.

⁸ J Gray, *The World Of Hair, A Scientific Companion*, Macmillan Press, UK, 1997, p. 1.

happens is that some slight hair growth may continue once the heart has stopped beating. She suggests that it is more likely that the skin shrinks, making the hair appear longer and giving the impression that it has continued growing.⁹

Hair is acceptable or unacceptable in both its presence and absence. People engage with equal fervour in the processes of hair growth and removal. It is a neutral body part which has been commercialised, sexualised and genderised, and a catalyst for attraction, repulsion, hygiene or lack of it. There's the hair we can talk about and the hair we can't. With the proliferation of hair treatments and potions, hair has become a commodity built around personal denial and corporate opportunism. We are all on a natural progression towards greying and/or baldness regardless of what we do or how much money we spend. Our infatuation with colouring for continued youthful appeal is just one example of the way in which commodification is multivalent. As a result, women have become obsessed with vibrant, lustrous hair, men with treatments for curing baldness, and both sexes with perceived overly bountiful body hair.

⁹ W Cooper, *Hair (Sex, Society and Symbolism)*, Aldus Books, London, 1971, pp. 28-29.

Making Headway

When attached to the body, hair, particularly that on the head (especially when we've just come from the hairdresser), is described as sleek, smooth, beautiful, healthy, luscious, fabulous, sexy. Once removed from the body, descriptions of it are the very opposite - it becomes foul, disgusting, repulsive, dirty, gross, unhygienic: especially when it might have strayed from another's body and found its way onto your napkin, or worse, into your food or mouth.

“Her mouth was still twisted from the experience of sharing some food handler's unknown life or from a reality far stranger and more meandering, the intimate passage of the hair from person to person and somehow mouth to mouth across years and cities and diseases and unclean foods and many baneful body fluids.”¹⁰ This sentence from Don DeLillo's novel *The Body Artist* was like a persistent stray, tickling my imagination, and *Hairball Cafe* evolved from here. I began to visualise close-up images of hair on the tongue, beautifully presented sumptuous meals with hair garnishes; a hairball on the end of a fork; hair pressed into a cake of soap. The kinds of images that would provoke the oppositional responses of attraction/repulsion, pleasure/horror, desire/disgust.

Over time I noticed billboard and magazine images of spaghetti as hair - the edible blonde! (Figure 1) - and hair salons offering *menus* of their cuts, trims and styles. I read about a barber's shop in Adelaide, South Australia, a section of which had been converted into a coffee shop. Flyaway short or long blacks. A health hazard?¹¹ A hair salon in the Melbourne suburb of St. Kilda attempted to open a sushi bar within its parameters but was unable to get council permission.

Comedy is one area in particular that has played on the hair/food dichotomy. In an interview with Andrew Denton on ABC TV's *Enough Rope*, American comedian, actor and film producer Mel Brooks made the comment that comedy leavens the bread, it is invigorating, it makes the laughter rise.¹² This is evident in television productions such as Channel 10's *Rove Live*¹³ and ABC TV's *The Glasshouse*,¹⁴ in which host Wil Anderson suggested that a 'back, sack and crack' reference to male body waxing was “like something from a McDonald's menu!” In the SBS TV series *Pizza* the main character gleefully grimaces as he holds up a long strand of hair

¹⁰ D DeLillo, *The Body Artist*, Picador, UK, 2001, p. 12.

¹¹ P McDonald, *Short black and sides*, The Advertiser, 1 December 2001, p. 35.

¹² Andrew Denton interview with Mel Brooks, *Enough Rope*, ABC TV, Melbourne, 19 April 2004.

¹³ See Hair Extensions 1.

¹⁴ See Hair Extensions 2.

all gooey with sticky cheese in the promotional advertisements for the show. Newspaper cartoonist Michael Leunig's famous cartoon *Waiter, there's a hair in my soup*, where the chef and waiter appear in the room, excessive hair covering their faces, arms and aprons, the chef rubbing his stomach just as the diner finds one alarming hair in his soup (Figure 2), was selected for the animated series of his works.¹⁵

Then there's the 'mullet', normally an Australian fish but popularised as a hairstyle in the 1980s by pop singers Rod Stewart, David Bowie, Johnny Farnham and Olivia Newton-John; screen idol Mel Gibson, and football player and Channel 10's *Celebrity Big Brother* star Warwick Capper. The fashion house Gucci introduced a revamped version to the catwalk in 1999 - "wax-loaded, with a choppy and short front, and mudflap back"¹⁶ - without much success. There's also the 'mutton chop', a thick, bushy style of men's side-burns that was popular in the eighteenth century, and briefly in the 1970s among rebellious young men with more 'lefty' political tendencies.

A 'smoothy' is no longer simply a thick, creamy health drink made from pureed fruit and milk; it is now part of the vocabulary of nudist enthusiasts. "A smoothy... until recently this word was unknown in the nudist world, but now it is becoming fully accepted. Smoothies drop their last piece of clothing - their pubic hair - and so these nudists are barer than nude! The word 'smooth' refers to the clean shaven body."¹⁷ Bald-headed men are also sometimes referred to as 'smoothies'.

Hair has a potent symbolism and possibly also real potency. There was an ancient belief that whooping cough could be cured by putting some of the patient's hair between slices of bread and butter (Figure 3), and feeding it to a dog. If the dog coughed while eating it, the whooping cough was successfully transferred and no longer afflicted the patient.¹⁸ The power of hair is at the forefront of the biblical parable Samson and Delilah. Egyptian slaves were clean-shaven so they could be identified as such - "a good example of the presence or absence of facial hair being an immediate signifier of stature and status, a much-recurring theme over time."¹⁹

My film search uncovered a whole menu of hairy delicacies. In John Water's *Pecker*,²⁰ the Fudge Palace Strip Joint served pubic hair and liquor, and 'tea-bagging' - that is "balls dangling on foreheads" - was strictly forbidden. Barbet Schroeder's erotic thriller *Maitresse*,²¹ has the mistress

¹⁵ M Leunig, *The Penguin Leunig*, Penguin Books Australia, 1974.

¹⁶ J Rocca, *A head for mullets*, *The Age* 1 August 2001, p. 5; also D Katz, *Return Of The Mullet*, *The Age Good Weekend*, 14 July 2001, p. 13.

¹⁷ Internet article viewed 4 March 2004, <<http://www.mensplayground.com/advice/nudism.html>>.

¹⁸ W Cooper, *Hair - Sex, Society and Symbolism*, p. 216.

¹⁹ A Peterkin, *One Thousand Beards - A Cultural History of Facial hair*, Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver, 2001, p. 17.

²⁰ *Pecker*, (Dir.) John Waters, 1998.

²¹ *Maitresse*, (Dir.) Barbet Schroeder, n.d.

serving dog food and hair to her S and M victim: “Will this do for the gentleman below?” asks the maid. “Tres bien. A few hairs,” says the mistress and she pulls out some of her blonde hair and garnishes the dish. In Patrice Leconte’s *The Hairdresser’s Husband*,²² since there is nothing to drink, Antoine makes cocktails from the salon cologne and shaving lotion. Yim-Ho’s film *Kitchen*,²³ set in Hong Kong, is about a funky male hairdresser and an aspiring, but very shy, female chef. *American Wedding* (or *American Pie 3*)²⁴ directed by Jesse Dylan has a scene where shaved pubic hair falls onto wedding guests as well as into the food.²⁵

The current health regulation regarding hair within the catering industry in Victoria, Australia requires that head hair be pushed or tied back away from the face and covered with a hair net or chef’s hat, so that it cannot escape. Body hair must be contained and kept away from food by a double breasted chef’s coat. Because exposed arm hair risks being singed and falling into the food, long sleeves should also be worn which many chefs find impractical. The *Herald Sun* newspaper reported that a restaurant in central China demanded its employees shave their heads. “With bald-headed waiters and cooks, the restaurant could guarantee customers a hair-free dining experience, said the owner”.²⁶

I began to collect hair/food anecdotes from catering personnel. One chef, having been in the hospitality industry for more than 25 years, said that back in his days of boys with long hair and big egos, he and his mates would often refuse to wear the chef’s hat or hair net. It was too uncool. He recalled one guy dubbed ‘Mr. Macho’, who would cover his head hair with the regulation hair net, but let his thick chest hair and heavy gold chain hang out the front of his open non-regulation shirt. There are echoes of the Michael Leunig cartoon.

The same chef had a customer who ordered chicken breast, and proceeded to eat until she found a small black hair in it. The meal was sent back to the kitchen where the chef tried to remove the hair, only to find that it was actually attached to the chicken - an unplucked feather follicle resembling a hair. She wasn’t charged for the meal, and was offered the possibility of re-ordering, but declined. On another occasion, a coarse, black two-inch long hair was found in a patron’s meal. The chef couldn’t figure out who it had come from. He was bald, his partner blonde and there were no other staff. It took them about a week to realise that it was a stray from the scrubbing brush that had been used to clean the pot. Another patron would get three-quarters of the

²² *The Hairdresser’s Husband*, (Dir.) Patrice Leconte, 1990.

²³ *Kitchen*, (Dir.) Yim-Ho, n.d.

²⁴ *American Pie 3*, (Dir.) Jesse Dylan, 2003.

²⁵ Internet Article viewed 4 March 2004, <http://www.screenit.com/movies/2003/american_wedding.html>.

²⁶ *Hair off the menu*, Herald Sun, 14 November 2001, p. 40.

way through her meal, complain that there was a hair or a fly in it and send it back to the kitchen. They eventually realised that she was adding the extras at a certain point during the meal, from a matchbox she always brought in with her, so she wouldn't have to pay.

There is a classic 1956 anecdote about baking a hair pie in Tim Bowden's book about Australians in Antarctica, *The Silence Calling*, where a weather watcher who was always looking out for hairs in his food, receives his just desserts from the chef.²⁷ The *Herald Sun* newspaper reported an article about a prison guard in a Queensland prison, who found a pubic hair in his chocolate pudding. It was common practice for trusted inmates to cook the food for the prison guards, as part of their rehabilitation, and as a cost cutting measure. Some inmates reportedly confessed that food cooked for prison officers often contained saliva and urine, and that plates were rubbed on prisoner's genitals!²⁸

Another internet article told of a sous chef who went out to dinner with a woman he'd met via the internet. They went to a fine restaurant in Lafayette (USA) and when their salads arrived, his date exclaimed "Oh my God, there's a pubic hair in your salad!" Sure enough there was a little black curly hair on the side of the plate. He plucked it out, let it float to the floor and ate the salad without raising an eyebrow. The next day he received a rejection email from the woman - she was totally disgusted that he ate the salad after finding a pubic hair in it. The chef thought the hair was more likely to be an arm hair. "Arm and head hairs fall into food all day long at restaurants. You just rarely see them. Chances are if you are an average person you have eaten more hairs than you want to know about."²⁹

²⁷ T Bowden, *The Silence Calling (Australians in Antarctica 1947-97)*, Allen & Unwin Australia, 1997, p. 222. See also Hair Extensions 3.

²⁸ The Herald Sun *Pubic hair, urine and other nasties in prison food*, AAP, 4 February 2004, viewed 5 March 2004, <<http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au>>.

²⁹ *Oh my God! There's a pubic hair in your salad!* viewed 5 March 2004, <<http://www.boston.craigslist.org/about/best/sfo/12657452.html>>.

The Stylists - Other Artists

A multitude of artists have used hair as an art material for centuries in both religious and secular art, but as Marina Warner again points out, many of the arts in which hair appeared have at various times been considered inferior and categorised as folk art, craft, tribal art or women's work.³⁰ The connection with inferiority is that hair has a material origin; it is organic, of the body, bestial, of nature and therefore inferior to culture. Contemporary artists Julie Rrap, Michele Elliot, Anne Graham, Douglas McManus, Nick Cave (Australia); Mona Hatoum (Palestine); Vivian Lynn (New Zealand); Sonia Boyce, Jordan Baseman, Tania Kovats, Dorothy Cross (United Kingdom); Anne Hamilton, Anne Wilson (USA), to name some, have all made works using hair or fur and contributed significantly to contemporary culture. However, there were other artists whose work I felt was more closely connected to the work I was making and the ideas I was exploring.

Foremost of these were British artist Helen Chadwick's 1994 photograph titled *Loop My Loop* (Figure 4), an "obscene, helixical lovebraid of pig gut and golden locks"³¹; Meret Oppenheim's 1936 work *Le Dejeuner En Fourrure (Breakfast In Fur)* - the famous fur covered cup, saucer and spoon, (Figure 5) and her sketches *Buttons For An Evening Jacket* (Figure 6), a design of tiny plates as buttons and cutlery embroidered with gold thread on either side, dated 1942-45.³² Also New Zealand photographer Anne Noble's work about "absent bodies making their presence felt... delicately caught impressions invoking a strong sense of touch,"³³ in particular her series *Ruby's Room* in which she showed a close up image of her daughter's mouth, sucking a wisp of hair.³⁴

The work of Aziz + Cucher (USA/Venezuela) has also been inspirational. They wallpapered a series of rooms with images of human skin, *Interiors* (Figure 7); also Alba D'Urbano (Italy) who photographed her own body and made a series of skin clothing, *Sarto Immortale (The Immortal Tailor)*³⁵ (Figure 8). Both of these artists construct the two-dimensional photographic

³⁰ M Warner, *Bush Natural*, p. 8.

³¹ M Allthorpe-Guyton, *Effluvia*, Catalogue on the work of Helen Chadwick, Serpentine Gallery London, 1994, p. 13.

³² C Meyer-Thoss, *Meret Oppenheim, Book of Ideas*, Verlag Gachnang & Springer, Bern, Switzerland, 1996, p. 59.

³³ J Paton, *States Of Grace - Anne Noble*, catalogue essay, Victoria University Press, NZ, 2001, p. 10.

³⁴ Part of an exhibition of New Zealand photography *Slow Release*, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2002. This series can also be seen in the catalogue *States of Grace - Anne Noble*, but this particular work is not reproduced.

³⁵ E Upton, *Skin (Surface, Substance + Design)*, Laurence King Publishing Ltd, UK, 2002, p. 107. See also *Hair Extensions 4*.

image into a three-dimensional object or space. In a similar vein, I refer to a series of works I made in 1999 using photographs of bare human skin for a group exhibition titled *Skin*, (shown at Stills Gallery, Sydney Australia). The photographs were constructed into objects - a hand bag, brief case, back pack, bum bag, fez style hats (thinking caps). It was a range of accessories called *Bare Essentials* (Figure 9) styled on objects and accessories that are usually made from animal skin, highlighting the fact that the human body has become an increasingly lucrative commodity.

Hong Kong artist, Leung Mee Ping's *Memorise the Future*, consisting of 10,000 shoes made from felted human hair (Figure 10) was also a work of particular interest. The sole of the foot is a hair-free zone and hair and feet are sources of two of the most common fetishes. Australian artist Linde Ivimey's *Mary of Egypt (Pubic kewpies or Hairy Mary's)* using human detritus (depilatory wax and human hair, presumably pubic hair) as the sculptural material and drawing on the use of slang - a 'hairy Mary' being a hairy male homosexual, also made a strong impression.³⁶

The works of all of these artists evoke strong sensations, especially of touch and smell, and provoke contradictory responses in the way the photograph of hair, or hair as the actual art material, has been used.

³⁶ Linde Ivimey, *Close To The Bone* Exhibition, Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne, 2003. This particular work was not reproduced in the catalogue.

The Style - Hairball Cafe

Hairball Cafe is a photographic installation comprising six tables, each with an underskirt, a hair print tablecloth and napkin, and a plate serving a hair meal. No chairs, no diners. An audience coming and going. Presence and absence. When the body is gone, it could be said that hair is a leftover, that which is remaining, like food uneaten at a meal.

Just like any cafe or restaurant worth its salt, *Hairball Cafe* has a menu listing what is on offer. *The Age* newspaper *Food for Thought* columnist, Terry Durack talks about a menu code of honour which has developed over time. "...we need a menu to know not only what is available, but in what style the chef intends to present it. Good menu writing is a talent. Adjectives are best avoided, as it is up to us diners to decide whether food is actually mouth-watering, melting, seductive or luscious."³⁷ I've taken this advice and kept the names of the dishes simple and descriptive.

Plates have a traditional function in the service of food, but they also have a long history and tradition of being collectible items. They lose their functionality and become decorative objects to commemorate an event or time. Precious artworks for display only. To eat from them would be a sacrilege.

The photographed hair morsels have been baked onto the plates at an extremely high temperature, via a digital ceramic transfer. This process is normally used in the funeral trade to attach images of departed loved ones to the headstones of their graves (Figure 11). Two things became apparent - firstly, the baked image made a direct reference to domesticity and the cooking process. Secondly, there was an older connection between hair and mourning, very strong in the Victorian era, when hair from the dearly departed was fashioned into mourning jewellery, most commonly lockets, rings or pendants (Figure 12).³⁸

Although what is served up here looks very enticing, it is indigestible. These meals are offered as a metaphor for all that is unpalatable in the world. Colonialism, racism, starvation, exploitation, bigoted and brutal regimes and a multitude of other injustices against humanity in which "millions of men and women and children have been kidnapped into slavery; men have been

³⁷ T Durack, *Food For Thought*, *The Age Good Weekend*, 5 July 2003, p. 57.

³⁸ L Taylor, *Mourning Dress. A Costume and Social History*, Allen & Unwin, UK, 1983, p. 224; J Pitman, *On Blondes*, Bloomsbury Publishing UK 2003, p. 140; M Warner, *From The Beast To The Blonde*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1994, p. 373.

lynched; children murdered; women raped and murdered, held prisoner, beaten; men, women and children systematically tortured and annihilated; people denied the most basic human rights, denied the dignity of language or meaning, denied their own names.”³⁹ Historically there has been a “cannibalistic devouring of other cultures”.⁴⁰ In a sense, whole ‘other’ colonised, subservient cultures have been swallowed, regurgitated and become the politically, socially and economically sanctioned ‘waste’ of the dominant cultures. History attests to this, and it is reinforced daily in all aspects of the media. Food for thought that is difficult to swallow.

³⁹ S Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture’s Revenge Against Nature*, The Women’s Press, UK, 1981, pp. 167-168.

⁴⁰ D Birnbaum, *Feast For The Eyes (The Art of Rivane Neuenschwander)*, Art Forum, May 2003, p. 143.

The Sets

Map O' Tassie Burger served on a Sea of Squid Ink

This setting was developed in response to a *Hair Free Gel* advertisement (Figure 13) in a women's magazine featuring a simple map of Tasmania with the words *GO BALD HERE* big and bold. I kept pondering the connection. Then a friend politely encouraged me to think about the shape and location of Tasmania, and I finally understood the meaning of the advertisement. At the bottom of the country. At the bottom of the body. Down there. The pubic triangle. Right! Apparently the term "show us yer map o' Tassie" has been a common Australian colloquialism, possibly started by satirist and comedian Barry Humphries⁴¹ but I must confess to not having heard the term before. Both *The Macquarie Book of Slang* and *The Oxford Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms* validate this meaning of 'Tasmania' or 'map of Tasmania' - "I might slip back to Miss Cox's place afterwards and see if she wants to give me another look at her map of Tasmania".⁴² There was also a mention of "come and see our map of Tasmania" in a segment about tourism in Victoria in a 2003 episode of ABC TV's *The Glass House*.⁴³

While combing the slang dictionaries, I found the term 'hair pie' which I feel deserves a mention here. It is attributed the meaning of 'crass; cunnilingus; female pudendum/genitals' in both *The Macquarie Book of Slang* and *The Penguin Book of Australian Slang*. A pie, whether sweet or savoury, is for oral consumption and is generally more delicious when hot. The sweet possibility of a hot sexual feast with a flavour that is distinctly savoury. There is a line of dialogue in the film *Kitchen* (directed by Yim-Ho) which demonstrates a delicious twist of language. The mother, transgendered from being Louie the hairdresser's father, tells Aggie the chef "He's been starving for so long, he'll love two hot dishes. The pork and you." Appetites for oral sex, like appetites for pies, are very individual and the odd pubic hair caught between the teeth (dental floss!) is simply one of the hazards of this exquisite pleasure.

In Peter Greenaway's film *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, Her Lover*,⁴⁴ the cook tells Georgina that black food is more expensive because "eating black food is like consuming death".

⁴¹ See Hair Extensions 5.

⁴² R G Barret, *The Real Thing*, 1986, p. 60 cited in G A Wilkes, *The Oxford Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms*, 4th Edition, Oxford University Press, Australia, 1978.

⁴³ See Hair Extensions 6.

⁴⁴ *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, Her Lover*, (Dir.) Peter Greenaway, 1989.

(See also Hair Extensions 7). Squid ink, the black viscous fluid discharged from the body of the cuttlefish and octopus, could easily be likened to menstrual blood towards the end of the period when it is darkening and coagulating. There are strong religious and cultural taboos in many cultures surrounding oral sex or indeed any sexual encounter when a woman is menstruating: most cultures see menstruating women as unclean.

The internet dished up an article titled *Snacking*, about two male American college mates talking about oral sex. “From Mayflower’s ministers to the followers of 19th century scribe Krafft-Ebing, who termed the act abnormal and for perverts, the vagina has been portrayed as a cesspool, the act of snacking declared taboo. Today’s culture hasn’t done much better.”⁴⁵ These young men were discussing the joys of performing cunnilingus and their preference for using the word ‘snacking’ (which they took from the back of a Triscuits box), rather than terms such as ‘chowing box’ or ‘eating pussy’. “Snackers do not ‘chow down’ like ravenous wolves; they nibble delicately, savouring the cuisine”.⁴⁶

From the outset of the project, I had been collecting pubic hairs, unwitting high tensile strays from the three people using my bathroom, so I had the perfect ingredients to create this dish.

The Full Downunder

An article in *The Sunday Age* on body maintenance for men titled *Are men the new women?*⁴⁷ prompted this table setting. The term ‘the full downunder’ has walked out of the beauty salon and onto the street: it means a full genital wax that takes an hour, is performed by a male beauty therapist and costs a mere \$74.50 to be “smooth, dewy and hairless”.⁴⁸ Hence the empty plate - clean, smooth, no leftovers. Male genital baldness should not be confused with male pattern baldness or alopecia. A gay friend told me he shaves his testicles, so that his lovers don’t get a mouthful of hair. “Nicks in the skin?” I ventured. “No problem, he said. The skin moves and stretches, so it’s actually easier than shaving elsewhere!”

The female equivalent of ‘the full downunder’ is a ‘four X’, otherwise known as the ‘playboy’ or the ‘hollywood’. Four X (XXXX) is also a type of beer marketed in the Australian state of Queensland. Over the last few years, the pubic hair-free zone has become immensely popular. “I didn’t think I’d get into the bald-eagle look until my girlfriend surprised me with it...

⁴⁵ D Edwards, (pseudonym) *Snacking*, Internet Feature Article 2000, viewed 6 September 2003, <<http://archive.salon.com/health/sex/urge/2000/05/02/cunnilingus.html>>.

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ K Heinrich, *Are men the new women?*, *The Sunday Age*, 3 June 2001, p. 7.

⁴⁸ *ibid*

She made certain the lights were off and when I felt her it was like, oh my God, an unbelievably primal welling of emotion. First from the shock and then from the whole little girl eroticism of it. It's hard to describe. I guess it was like tasting forbidden fruit. Oral sex was definitely better because there was no hair to get in the way."⁴⁹

Fully active, sexual women are being stripped of their maturity and returned to pre-pubescence, for hairlessness signifies immaturity, a body not yet sexually active. Many heterosexual men are attracted to women-as-girls. Girls are controllable, malleable, less threatening than adult women, especially those who allow their natural bushes to grow wild and rival the male's superior hirsuteness.

It also reflects an obsession with youth culture, which reveres youthfulness above maturity; a society that doesn't want its children to grow up. Hair removal is part of our narcissistic society's body maintenance regime that has become a huge growth area, stripping people of their hair and their money - anywhere from \$12 to \$75 per session, and no longer directed solely at women. Men's bodies have been co-opted and commodified too, and in the end, the agenda is more about services and products sold to reinforce social stereotypes rather than reinforce inherent individual beauty or hygiene.

It had been my intention to collect the waxed strips of hair from the Prahran salon mentioned in *The Sunday Age* article, but this was prohibited by health regulations. Instead I waxed my own legs and photographed the waxed strips of embedded hair, my own personal body waste. Once the tablecloth and napkins were completed, I was amazed by how closely the repeat pattern of the wax strips resembled the traditional checked pattern of table linen or napery.

Short 'n' Curly Vermicelli served on a Bed of Saffron Swirls

This setting made use of a small bag of anonymous blonde curls, which I have cherished since they were given to me many years ago. They were as vibrant and as lustrous as the day they were cut from the head. These golden locks, coloured somewhere between tumeric and saffron, curled around the fork as easily as fine spaghetti. This setting speaks to the culinary mix

⁴⁹ C Valhouli, Internet feature article 1999, viewed 6 September 2003, <<http://www.salon.com/health/feature/1999/09/03/bikini/index1.html>>.

that is quite typical of Australian cuisine or ‘Aussie food fusion’. Pasta dishes are traditionally served with a side salad, and Joanna Pitman in her book *On Blondes* serves up a ‘voodoo salad’ which includes tumeric and saffron among other questionable ingredients as part of a hair-bleaching recipe from medieval times.⁵⁰

Pitman also refers to the term ‘carrot yellow’ as a more desirable shade of blonde probably achieved by using saffron, the world’s costliest spice, weighed in carats and literally worth its weight in gold. Hair and gold share many similarities. They don’t tarnish, they survive time and decay, they can be cut, curled, crimped, stretched, soaked in chemicals and dyes, sizzled with hot tongs; both are imperishable and have a continual lustre. Gold is the metal of ultimate desire, just like ‘golden’ hair.⁵¹

The language of blondness has evolved through time and history to project a duality: to be both virginal and vampish, beautiful and dangerous, desirable and forbidden, innocent and guilty, absent (bimbo-ish) and present (intelligent). Blondness has become more of a value system than a description of hair colour. We’re all very aware of the blonde being described as ‘dizzy’. In her book *Pornography and Silence*, Susan Griffin elucidates a brilliant passage about the true meaning of dizziness, which is worth quoting in full: “...we are made to feel dizzy with feeling, beauty makes us dizzy, sexual ecstasy makes us dizzy, above all love makes us dizzy. To be dizzy makes us lose our balance. We suddenly see the world differently. We do not know where we are going. We lose control. We give ourselves over to fate, or the hand of the divinity, to the goddess. Dizziness was the state of the initiates at Eleusis. It is the state of the dreamer. Of one who contacts a deeper knowledge than her conscious mind had supposed existed. And above all, this dizziness destroys the ego, the ego which is made by culture, a culture pretending to be reality, a culture that the self remakes itself after the image of culture.”⁵²

‘Short ‘n’ curlies’ is slang for pubic hair and ‘to have a person in one’s power’.⁵³ Pubic hair in its natural state suggests uncontrolled growth, and hairiness indicates animal nature - a sign of wildness, fertility, sexuality. Streams of golden hair heavy with youthful promise and sensuality cascade and curl their way through fables and fairytales, myths and legends, with the power to captivate and cast spells. Modern advertising and marketing companies capitalise on this. They too get the consumer by the ‘short ‘n’ curlies’.

⁵⁰ J Pitman, *On Blondes*, p. 47.

⁵¹ *ibid* p. 57. Also M Warner, *From The Beast To The Blonde*, p. 372.

⁵² S Griffin, *Pornography and Silence*, p. 76.

⁵³ J Lambert ed., *Macquarie Book of Slang*, Macquarie Library, Sydney, 1966; and L Johansen, *Penguin Book of Australian Slang*, Penguin Books Australia, 1991/1996.

Meaty Hairballs served on a Bed of Twisted Angel Hair + Hairballs Askew-ered served on Finely Combed Rye

The meaty hairballs photographed for the plates are the matted tangles of my daughter's waist-length hair, the flyaways caught in her hairbrush. Her sleek, glossy hair became coarse and springy, with a feel much more like pubic hair once it was scrunched into balls. On first glance these meaty hairballs look almost fleshy, having a colour and texture similar to that of cooked meatballs. But on close inspection they have furry edges. These offerings are tough and twisted, destined to put you off your appetite, make you squeamish and provoke a choking, gagging response.

Hairballs, concretions of hair in the stomach, have an immediate association with animals. Cat and dog owners are familiar with the heaving up of hairballs, repugnant as a sight, smell and sound. People too can suffer from this affliction. It is a condition called *Trichotillomania* - officially classified as an impulse control disorder, which is the recurrent pulling out of one's hair, resulting in noticeable hair loss and accompanied by a heightened emotional state. According to Carol E. Novak, M.D. of the Pioneer Clinic, St. Paul, Minnesota USA,⁵⁴ many hair pullers may bite off the root of the hair, and some will even eat the whole hair. This behaviour is known as *Trichophagia*, and the actual hairball is called a *Trichobezoar*. The indigestible hairball can cause a blockage in the digestive system and if not removed by surgery, can result in death.⁵⁵

A variation on this is the *Rapunzel Syndrome*, when the abdominal hairball forms a tail which then follows the shape of the small and large intestine.⁵⁶ A more generic condition is known as PICA, an eating disorder typically defined as the persistent eating of non-nutritive substances such as pebbles, hair, paint chips, string, needles, light bulbs, lead, wood, paper, chalk, burnt matches.⁵⁷

Popular women's magazine psychologist Matti Gershenfeld wrote a column titled *Your Most Annoying Hair Habits Analysed*, in which she said that being a hair muncher "is the adult equivalent of sucking your thumb. It's a sign that you're overwhelmed by adult responsibilities."

⁵⁴ Brochure, Anxiety Recovery Centre Victoria, PO Box 358, Mt. Waverley, 3149.

⁵⁵ See Hair Extensions 7.

⁵⁶ M W Sanchez, C D F Rodriguez, P Luna-Perez, *Sindrome de Rapunzel (trichobezoar)* Abstract, viewed 5 July 2003, <<http://www.imbiomed.com.mx/Gastro/Gav62n4/english/Zga74-9.html>>; also viewed 5 July 2003, <<http://www.urbanlegends.com/medical/hairballs.html>>.

⁵⁷ See website <<http://www.emedicine.com>>, viewed 5 July 2003.

Her 'tress tip' is to "stop over-extending yourself with commitments and enjoy being a little more spontaneous on a daily basis. You'll have more fun."⁵⁸ The *Tomorrows Headlines* segment of ABC TV's *The Glasshouse*, featured the headline *Nicole Kidman Chokes - Coughs Up A Lenny Kravitz Hairball*.⁵⁹ And a word of warning to all hairdressers. Australian comedian Dame Edna Everidge's fictional son, Kenny Montgomery Everidge "had to give up being a hairdresser because of hairballs. It's an occupational hazard of hairdressers. One day he coughed and about three soggy chignons appeared in his hanky."⁶⁰

The *Twisted Angel Hair* came directly from the supermarket shelf. In the pasta sections of most Australian supermarkets various brands label a variety of fine spaghetti as angel hair - simply of a very fine, thin texture and made from 100 per cent durum wheat. Angel hair 'spag', angel cakes, angel fish. Manna from heaven. An angel is a divine messenger, a ministering spirit or a person possessing the qualities of gentleness and purity. There is a death connection here too, since a dead person regarded as having been received into heaven is also referred to as an angel. A twist is formed by winding together several threads into a spiral or coil. As a verb it means to entangle, distort, pervert or warp. It also means to eat heartily! As a noun it is a slang term for a good appetite, a bread roll or a dishonest person!

Hairballs Askewered also plays with these language twists. A skewer is a long metal or wooden pin for threading meat or other foods. Chopsticks, as well as being used for eating, are sometimes used as skewers, threaded through a twist of hair to secure it. The word 'skew' or 'skewed' means oblique, distorted, awry, which in turn means twisted, distorted, crooked, wrong, perverse. Finally, the *Bed of Finely Combed Rye* references young, immature edible grasses - fine, soft and succulent. Marina Warner talks about virgins corresponding to vegetation, maidenhair ferns, the maidenhair of Virgo.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Magazine unable to be identified.

⁵⁹ *The Glasshouse*, ABC TV, Melbourne, 23 April 2004. (Referring to Australian actress Nicole Kidman and her then boyfriend American singer Lenny Kravitz).

⁶⁰ B Klein (Dir.) *Dame Edna's Work Experience*, 1997.

⁶¹ M Warner, *From The Beast To The Blonde* pp. 375-377.

Dark Chocolat Hairdo Mousse served on Warm Fleshy Delight

This setting is a visual representation of colonialism - the oppressors literally eating off the backs of the oppressed. Both sitters originate from Africa - the 'dark continent'. I chose to photograph black skin and hair, since it represents a significant portion of the world's underclass and black cultures are regularly perceived as the 'exotic other'. The micro-braided female hairdo is disembodied, objectified, plated up as a glorious, ornate creation, a fleur-de-lys, a 'Delilah'. "In the minds of many European photographers and their male clients, black African women were primarily objects of desire, deeply carnal creatures, amoral and yielding..."⁶² This attitude hasn't stopped with nineteenth century European photographers - it is an entrenched part of a chauvinistic mind, "a mind which projects all its fears in itself onto another; a mind which defines itself by what it hates"⁶³ even into the twenty-first century.

The tablecloth image is an exposed landscape of skin, naked and vulnerable. A body fragmented, depersonalised. It is a black man's body, a monstrous, bestial back whose prowess must be broken. When one body wore out, there was always another to take its place. Long after the abolition of slavery, it could easily be said that this is still the case. There is also the allusion to cannibalism. In many 'primitive' cultures, photography was often used as a deceptive tool to reinforce the coloniser's anxieties, prejudices and stereotypes, inspired by both fear and lust. These images "played into the hands of missionaries and colonialists who wanted evidence that distant tribal peoples were morally inferior, and therefore justifiably subject to the controls of more civilized peoples".⁶⁴

Countless films have been made offering cannibalism as the ultimate form of revenge. In *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, Her Lover*, the lover is cooked and served up to the thief upon the request of his wife. She shoots the thief after his first nervous bite (of the penis), and finally has the last word - "Cannibal". Other film examples include *Eating Raoul*, *Themroc*, *Eat The Rich*.

This table setting offers the one dessert item on the *Hairball Cafe* menu, the final course... or 'other' easy, lusty sweet.

⁶² W A Ewing, *The Body*, Thames and Hudson Ltd, UK, 1994, p. 247.

⁶³ S Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature*, p. 160.

⁶⁴ *ibid* p. 168.

Twisted Distinctions

Given that as a verb ‘twisted’ means to entangle, distort, pervert or warp, it seemed a most appropriate heading for this chapter. Soon after I began using the internet regularly for hair research, I was astounded by the number of pornographic sites my email address was bombarded with. This became a fascinating and frustrating aspect of my research and I had to spend much time deleting these unsolicited messages. Normally I’m not easily shocked but I was stunned by frequency of this invasion and also the sites themselves. The sheer number of very explicit sites commodifying teenage girls and offering them up as sacrifices for male consumption was astounding (Figure 14). Being the mother of a teenage daughter, I found this extremely disturbing. So what makes hair synonymous with pornography? What is it about pubic hair that is so unspeakable on one level and so exposed on another? What is the repression of body hair and the fetishisation of head hair in this highly moralistic society we live in all about?

Taboos

Hair is in the marginal space between life and non-life. It is at the same time subject, object and abject. When attached and growing out of the skin, hair is part of the subject, the natural body. As it protrudes through the skin, then detaches from the body, it becomes object. As bodily waste, it becomes abject, representing the unacceptable, the unclean, the filthy. Julia Kristeva talks about three different categories of the abject - “food, waste, and the signs of sexual difference (roughly corresponding to oral, anal and genital erotogenic drives). The subject’s reaction to these abjects is visceral: it is usually expressed in retching, vomiting, spasms, choking - in brief, in disgust.”⁶⁵

Hair falls into both the oral and waste categories. Kristeva argues that oral disgust is the most archaic form of abjection, involving cultural and social taboos around the consumption of food. Bodily waste - food, faeces, hair, menstrual blood, sperm, spit, snot, sweat, tears, urine, “inscribe the body in those surfaces, hollows, crevices, orifices, which later will become erotogenic zones - mouth, eyes, anus, ears, genitals.”⁶⁶ Hair grows either in these areas or around their rim. The abject is both inside and outside the body, dead and alive, clean and unclean at the same time.

German philosopher Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel notes that the mouth “is the privileged connection between interior and exterior, between subjectivity and the world of objects - the site

⁶⁵ E Grosz, *The Body of Signification*, from J Fletcher and A Benjamin ed., *Abjection, Melancholia And Love, The work of Julia Kristeva*, Routledge, London & New York, 1990, p. 89.

⁶⁶ *ibid* p. 88.

where nourishment enters the metabolic system, and thought, via language, becomes perceivable by the senses.”⁶⁷ Although the medium for thought is the voice, the mouth “chews, articulates, spits and hums.”⁶⁸

The experience of hair in the mouth is the equivalent of eating a part of the body - your own or someone else’s. (Again there is the allusion to cannibalism). Hair is a corporeal by-product provoking cultural and individual repulsion. I refer again to Anne Noble’s photograph of a child’s mouth sucking hair. This is quite common behaviour in children that always provokes a negative adult reaction - usually some kind of reprimand or punishment to discourage this ‘dirty habit’, this improper, unclean, anti-social behaviour. There are strong social and personal taboos against bodily waste, and hair in food is certainly one of them, the food being regarded as contaminated once a hair has been found in it. What was edible has become inedible.

In her book *Hair - Sex, Society and Symbolism*, author Wendy Cooper talks about the many taboos relating to the rituals of washing and cutting of hair, one example being that the chief of the Namosi of Fiji insisted on eating a man prior to having his hair cut.⁶⁹

Pornography

Pornography is extraordinarily difficult to define. The word ‘pornography’ comes from the ancient Greek words *porne* meaning whore and *graphien* meaning to write, so pornography essentially meant “writings by/or about whores”.⁷⁰ Over time, pornography has evolved from bawdy writings to sexually-charged and explicit images that have been readily available through magazines, books, videos and films, and in the later twentieth century via the internet, directly into people’s homes. Internet access has propelled pornography from the margins of society to mainstream consumerism and it has become a multi-million dollar industry.

The Age newspaper writer, Alison Cameron says that in an attempt to sell their messages to an image-weary public, advertisers and fashion designers borrow more and more from the world of pornography.⁷¹ There are numerous hair product advertisements where the bottle or object being

⁶⁷ Wilhem Friedrich Hegel quoted in D Birnbaum, *Feast For The Eyes (The Art of Rivane Neuenschwander)*, pp. 145-146.

⁶⁸ *ibid*

⁶⁹ W Cooper, *Hair (Sex, Society and Symbolism)*, p. 206.

⁷⁰ C Blakemore and S Jennett, *The Oxford Companion To The Body*, Oxford University Press, UK, 2001.

⁷¹ A Cameron, *Pornographic Chic - when indecent exposure hits the mainstream*, *The Age Sunday Life Magazine*, 2 June 2002, p. 23.

advertised is so blatantly shaped and positioned that one cannot help but think of pornography. This was graphically demonstrated in a 2003 shampoo advertisement screened on commercial television. My recollection is that of a close-up image of a phallic-shaped shampoo bottle spurting white frothy liquid over an ecstatic naked female in a shower scene. I remember thinking that the shampoo bottle had just ejaculated all over my TV screen. It could have been a scene from a 'porno flick'.

Pornography is about rage and revenge, humiliation and shame. It thrives in a culture of denial where there is a profound distrust of the flesh (and hairiness) of the body and everything connoting pleasure, instinct, femininity and feeling. These are denied in the chauvinistic psyche. Fear of the denied self is projected onto others - women, cultures with different skin colours and children. There is a split in the psyche which is at war with itself. Institutions and language maintain this denial and perpetuate this warfare and nature and culture are kept separate.

In *Pornography and Silence*, Susan Griffin discusses two types of delusions. The first is a private one where the mind possessed by such a delusion is perceived as mad or strange. This delusion sets the individual who believes in it apart from the rest of society. The second, mass delusion comprises a *shared* set of beliefs which are untrue, which distort reality. It is the exact opposite of the private delusion. The mind which shares the mass delusion is perceived as normal, while the same society perceives as mad the individual mind which sees reality. Griffin considers both pornography and racism to be mass delusions, accepted as sane views of the world. When we grow up in a culture which embodies and expresses such delusions, we begin to think of this distortion as 'human nature', and the violence of the chauvinistic mind towards others is actually seen as a natural part of everyone's reality.⁷²

Is it any wonder then that society is filled with hostile, brutal, humiliating, sexist, racist, controlled and manipulated images of women, children and other cultures which we consider bear no relation to our ordinary individual selves or realities? These images are projections of all that the chauvinistic mind despises in itself: the emotions, feelings and bodily functions made dark, pushed below the surface, rising up in perverse sadomasochistic scenarios, rapes and murders, sexual exploitation of children; on the internet, in the news, in the fashion industry, in advertising and marketing of products. In the same way that hair grows from under the skin and pushes through to the surface, (and no matter how gently or brutally we try to eliminate it, it is *always there* pushing its way back to visibility), pornography is also about what's lurking under the skin. It struggles to the surface - the return of the repressed, and is expressed in revenge, rage and humiliation against other inferior, less 'cultured' bodies.

⁷² S Griffin, *Pornography and Silence*, pp. 156-157.

Fetishism

Just as hair may or may not be acceptable in its presence or absence, fetishism also embodies the idea of presence and absence. The presence of an inanimate object for sexual arousal, representing a Freudian loss or absence of genitalia through castration. Two things generally characterise a fetish - it should be tactile - smooth or shiny, and should have, or suggest, a smell. In Paul Cox's film *The Golden Braid*,⁷³ the main character Bernard finds a blonde pony-tail in a secret drawer of an antique cabinet he is restoring. He caresses it, smells it, presses it against his cheek, rubs his face into it, falls in love with it, becomes obsessive and deluded and eventually careless, as he leaves it in his coat pocket which his cleaner takes to the dry-cleaners. She finds the braid and throws it in the bin. This film also illustrates the divided attitude of reverence and contempt towards the fetish, which is shrouded in ambiguity. Fetishism is associated with both excess and deficiency - areas that are often interpreted as disruptive to the social order and in need of 'treatment'.⁷⁴

Though seen as perverse, fetishism, especially hair fetishism, is quite a normal component of everyday life. "Braid cutting, a popular perversion during the nineteenth century, is now an anachronism. Nonetheless, if we think of braid cutting as a general variant of hair and fur fetishism, we will see that it is not such an uncommon perversion. The change in society's fashions from braids to bobs and demi crew cuts has not deterred the use of hair cutting, hair shaving, and hair plucking as obligatory conditions for sexual excitement and erection".⁷⁵ All perversions embody the fantasies of mutilation and restoration. This is most obvious in the hair fetish of braid cutting, an act symbolic of castration. The cut-off or absent penis, when symbolised by the cut-off hair, can grow back, become present again.⁷⁶ A hair fetishist was arrested in Melbourne, Australia in 1998, after cutting the hair of two women on a suburban train. One woman heard the sound of scissors, saw chunks of her hair falling off and immediately felt disfigured. The offender had been fascinated by hair since he was a boy and used to sit for hours outside a hair salon.⁷⁷ This boyhood hair fascination is exquisitely portrayed in Patrice Leconte's film *The Hairdresser's Husband*.

Women, and increasingly men too, are so obsessed with their hair, that it has taken on the realm of a fetish. Advertisers and companies that market hair products make full use of the deficient/excess dichotomy of fetishism. It is the kind of advertising that "implies fulfillment... a kind of commodity fetishism that like all fetishes, falsely promises to satisfy deep needs."⁷⁸ A

⁷³ *The Golden Braid*, (Dir.) Paul Cox, 1990.

⁷⁴ A Shelton ed., *Fetishism - Visualizing Power and Desire*, catalogue introduction, p. 8.

⁷⁵ L Kaplan, *Female Perversions*, Penguin Books UK, 1993, p. 22.

⁷⁶ *ibid* p. 118.

⁷⁷ S Butcher, *Hair thief told to cut it out*, The Age Newspaper, 30 July 1998, p. 5.

⁷⁸ P Ellingsen, *It's hand-to-brand combat in today's Barbie world*, The Age Opinion, 4 August 2001.

classic example being the Braun electric shaver advertisement as described in the Curly Distinctions chapter. The message of hair product advertisers is that our hair (and bodies) will always be lacking, always be deficient, in need of endless 'treatment'. We spend excessive amounts of money on excessive amounts of exotic hair potions and lotions in sexually suggestive containers to make us feel good, beautiful, fulfilled.

Curly Distinctions - Language & Marketing

The *Hairball Cafe* settings are titled menu-style, using puns, slang and word play to highlight the connections between hair, food and sex. Hair has a root, there are many varieties of 'root' vegetables, and sex is known as 'having a root'. We can have 'bad hair' days, we can eat 'bad' food, and sometimes we have 'bad' sex.

Hair is described as luscious, sumptuous, fabulous, rich, fresh-cut or limp, greasy or non-greasy. Hair products can be healthy, nourishing, full of vitamins and proteins, jam-packed with goodness. Dandruff is no longer the embarrassing white scalp scum, it is now 'sprinkles': the little sweet coloured confectionery used to decorate cakes. There's mousse and fudge, dressings and styling gel called 'curl jam'; sherberts, herbal extracts, summer crops and 'slices of colour to enhance the cuts'. Recent advertisements refer to hot chocolate treatments laced with creme caramel. Product descriptions sound deliciously edible and highly sexual. Thick and creamy, fast and easy. Marketing companies could easily be describing food or sex. A deeply penetrating, intense, totally organic (orgasmic) peach nectar experience.

There are rubber grips, and hot sticks. For 'extra grunt' and 'added volume' you can have *Fudge Erekt* and *Fudge Skrewd. md Big Hair* offers 'fat' hair for big heads and being short on length is never a problem. The Braun electric shaver *Synchro System Smart Logic* is designed as a shaft jutting out of a rounded bulbous stand - black and glossy, like an 'exotic other' erect penis rising from the scrotum. It is "activated, charged, maintains power, always ready for peak performance; enhanced with a 4-way moving head, needing fewer strokes for ultimate closeness." Ah, the climax - "an even closer shave." In the end, you will need to use it as often as any other shaving device.

Advertisers offer us endless promises of regular, extra or deep-conditioning treatments. A whole new technical and scientific language has emerged in the advertising world, seductive 'hype' to massage our egos and prise open the soft leather folds of our wallets. I suspect that the only deep conditioning is contained within the sales pitch of the marketing companies. "Because you're worth it"; because you're "head and shoulders above the rest."

In my language and slang research, I found other, more worrying connections which appear to link directly with pornography. As stated earlier, the thick part of coagulated blood (an

immediate association with menstrual blood) is known as the 'crassamentum', derived from the word 'crass' meaning gross, thick, dense, stupid.⁷⁹ Dictionary definitions of the word pudendum and variations of it are all about crassness and shame - that the female genitals and hairiness in general are something to be ashamed of. It says much about how our culture views women and the female body. Women can be 'hair pies', 'hairy chequebooks' or have 'hair like a bush pig's arse'. These terms are supposed to be funny but they are derogatory and often used as insults. It is a form of humour that revolves around shame, humiliation and ridicule, the very same constructs of pornography.

⁷⁹ A M MacDonald ed. *Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary*, W & R Chambers, London, 1972 edition.

Unmanageable Distinctions - Deadends, Offcuts, Flyaways

Originally *Splitting Hairs* was a much bigger project involving four series of works on the themes of hair/food, hair/feet, hair/skin and hair/smell. I had been keen to make large two-dimensional works which had a third dimension growing out of the photographic surface or skin, so that it was not easily visible at first glance. However, there were enormous financial and time constraints, and after much deliberation, I had to scale back the project to make it manageable. Each theme in and of itself was a sizeable project, and it was far more sensible to develop just one of the themes.

First to go was the hair/skin series inspired by the film *Memento*,⁸⁰ with its shaving and tattooing scenes. I'd become fixated with the idea of 'presence' and 'absence'. I could visualise the word 'presence' growing out of an image of a clean-shaven scalp, and 'absence' shaved into a full head of hair. I imagined a tattooed torso, in the first stages with just the dark outline, and the coloured areas embroidered into the photographic surface/skin with colourfully-dyed human hair. I would take a course at the Victorian Embroiderer's Guild to perfect my embroidery skills which had lain dormant since primary school. If I could do it with cotton, I could do it with hair. The finished pieces would reference hairwork of the Victorian era, body adornment and fashion, the injured or damaged body being sutured, even asylum seekers sewing their lips together.⁸¹

The hair/feet series was next to get the chop. I'd made a prototype of a hairy thong using small hairballs threaded on fine wire for the straps, and a black and white foot photograph printed onto the rubber sole using a liquid emulsion. This sat on my desk for some months while I pondered its potential, knowing that the best person to assist with these wild pieces of hair sculpture was in Sydney. I barely had enough money to pay the rent, so getting there or getting her here was out of the question. But then I was saved the expense by the humble thong becoming an item of high fashion footwear and once the world was saturated with Prada and Zomp thongs, I lost interest.

⁸⁰ *Memento*, (Dir.) Christopher Nolan, 2000.

⁸¹ K Taylor, *Woomera detainees sew lips in protest*, *The Age* 19 January 2002, p. 5.

The hair/smell project was based on the promotional peel-and-sniff postcard used frequently in advertising, particularly by hair care companies. It meant researching smells and finding someone who could help me formulate bad hair odours to embed in imagery. This was actually easier than I thought, once I'd found out about a research group investigating the senses at Swinburne University. After a brilliant half hour conversation with Dr. John Paterson who runs the group, I was armed with a single A4 page of notes on formulas, distillation, impregnation and testing. Dr. Paterson has previously worked with another visual artist on a smell project and showed great interest in this idea. Unfortunately at that point, the expense was prohibitive and another chunk was lopped off. I'd submitted an application for funding for this project to the Visual Arts/Crafts Fund of the Australia Council but without success.

I had originally intended to shoot the plate images on black and white film stock and print them onto the plates using a liquid emulsion, either *Liquid Light* or *Jessop's*. However, I had niggling concerns about the pre-coating for optimum emulsion adherence to a non-porous surface. The best form of pre-coating is two coats of hardware variety clear gloss polyurethane. However it can yellow over time and I have yet to find an artist's supplier offering an archival equivalent. It became clear that the images would have more impact in colour (food images always look far more appetising when photographed in colour), and presented on pristine white plates, so I had to rethink my approach. Probably a ceramic process would be best. Not long afterwards, and quite by accident, I found just the place offering the service I needed. A funeral shop, recently opened right across the street from where I live, printed images of the dead onto porcelain discs for tombstones.⁸²

As the research progressed, I pondered other images and works around pubic hair and language, pubic wigs (merkins); perhaps a soundtrack of scissors, cutlery - combined cafe and hair salon sounds; glossy posters offering 'furburgers' and 'forbidden fruit'. All of these ideas, which fell to the floor this time, may be developed as future projects.

⁸² See Hair Extensions 9.

The Final Cut - Conclusion

During my research I'd become a magnet, attracting anything and everything written or said about hair, like strays to a polyester blouse. For example, while reading Melina Marchetta's novel *Looking for Alibrandi*, (purely for pleasure, and not a novel about hair) I was struck by the frequency with which hair was mentioned - no less than 60 times in a variety of contexts referencing identity, fashion, class, age, cleanliness, and the environment.⁸³ Whenever I read a newspaper, a magazine, turned on the television, or watched a film there was something about hair. It would seem to be the most frequently discussed, most emotive and evocative body part.

Once I had settled on the hair/food theme, I attempted to locate as many links as possible between hair, food and sex. Ideas, stories and information came from varied sources - books, films, television, video, magazines, newspapers, the internet, conversations, brochures, radio, and billboard advertising. For the duration of the project, I had looked at the work of many artists and chose to refer only to a small number of works which resonated most strongly with my own.

Hairball Cafe was intended to produce a sense of disquiet and discomfort, and at the same time be embedded with humour and parody in keeping with the Surrealist tradition. It was shown as a work in progress at Stills Gallery, Sydney, in 2002. Art critic Robert McFarlane wrote in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, "Pam Kleemann proves there is still room for humour in art. Her installation, *Hairball Cafe* evokes the kind of restaurant one visits in dreams, or perhaps nightmares. But there is genuine wit in her surreal eatery, in which nothing should be eaten."⁸⁴ Visual Arts writer, Keri Glastonbury, wrote in *RealTime* magazine, "*Hairball Cafe* announces itself as an ironic and playful performance"⁸⁵ and *Critic's picks* in the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated that "*Hairball Cafe* conjures up hilarious associations between hair and food."⁸⁶

⁸³ See Hair Extensions 10.

⁸⁴ Robert McFarlane, *Face to face with the forces of change*, Metropolitan, Sydney Morning Herald, 8 July 2002.

⁸⁵ Keri Glastonbury, *Liquid Light Hair*, RealTime No. 51, Oct/Nov 2002, p. 36.

⁸⁶ VH, *Exhibitions – critic's picks*, Metro, Sydney Morning Herald, 26 July-1 August 2002, p. 23.

Hair Extensions - Endnotes

1. *Rove Live*, television program, Channel 10, Tuesday 25 March, 2003.

There was a conversation between host Rove McManus and comedian Ross Noble in reference to the spikes in singer Craig David's hair. Ross Noble said something like "If you're going to go to that much trouble to make the spikes, you might as well put some cheese and onion on them!" (A full transcript was unavailable).

2. *The Glass House*, television program, ABC TV, Friday 23 May 2003.

Host Wil Anderson said that the only reason Iraqi men had moustaches was that they were huge fans of Tom Sellack, and now that Saddam Hussein was gone, not only were they all getting rid of their moustaches, they were all waxing - back, sack and crack. "Sounds like something from a McDonald's menu" he said.

3. T Bowden, *The Silence Calling (Australians in Antarctica 1947-97)*, p. 222.

"Often expeditioners (and cooks) had their own ways of curing individuals of annoying mannerisms which disrupted the community. Bob Dingle was a weather observer at Macquarie in 1956 and remembers one winterer being obsessive about his food: 'He would examine all dishes put in front of him for little bits of hair... and if he found something he would hold it up and expose it to the whole group, saying, 'Look here's another short and curly'. This upset the cook, Jim Morgan, who waited until someone had their hair cut, then collected the results. The next day he baked individual fruit pies and completely filled one with hair: 'So when this fellow faced up to the counter for his dessert he was given the hair pie, with a nice layer of crust over it, smothered in custard. Everybody else in the party had been warned this was going to happen, so when he got back to the table and put his spoon into the pie, all the hair fluffed out... He was certainly cured from ever mentioning again that he'd found a hair in his tucker'."

4. E Upton, *Skin (Surface, Substance + Design)*, p. 107.

"In order to realise the clothing of my own skin, I put photographs of my body into the computer digitally and then processed them, formed them, and cut them so that they fit into the dress-pattern of a suit. Thus it was possible to remodel the two-dimensional image into a three-dimensional body form in the tradition of the ancient tailors. The body becomes a virtual entity, a data landscape, a digital abstraction." Quote from the artist Alba D'Urbano.

5. *Barry Humphries Flashbacks - 70s Australia. The decade that taste forgot*, video recording, ABC TV 1999.

Barry Humphries' character Les Paterson tells a story about a nude beach in Adelaide - Maslin's Beach. "A cabbie I knew, a cab driver in Adelaide, he told me that one day, really a hot afternoon, he was cruising down Hindley Street and a naked sheila jumps in the back seat. She says 'Take me down to Maslin's Beach'. Well he doesn't think. He's enjoying the sight in the rear vision mirror, so he runs her down to the nude beach and there's a fair bit on the clock. She says 'Oh I'm terribly sorry, I've left all me pockets behind'. He says 'That won't do, how are you gunna pay me?' Do you know what she done? She flashed the map of Tasmania. He looks over the back seat. He takes a good look at it and says 'Haven't ya got anything smaller?'."

6. *The Glass House*, television program, ABC TV, Friday 25 April 2003.

Segment on tourism about making Victoria "the friendly state". Wil Anderson says "Victorian ladies, don't make Steve Bracks get the sack, get Steve Bracks in the sack! 'Victoria on the Move' on the numberplates is no more, now its 'Victoria on the Job'. And to encourage interstate visitors, the tourism slogan will be changed from 'You'll love every piece of Victoria' to 'You'll love getting a piece in Victoria'. But that slogan will have stiff competition from some of the other states, especially 'come and see our map of Tasmania'."

7. Internet article *Hairball in stomach kills teenager*, 20 August 1999, viewed 5 July 2003, <www.keratin.com/ar/ar012.shtml>

"A British teenager who had a habit of chewing her hair died after a hairball, 12 inches long and 10 inches wide, developed in her stomach. The teenager died after several days of illness. It is thought the hairball had irritated the lining of her stomach and hours after the operation she suffered massive bleeding... The medical diagnosis for the condition is called trichobezoar... Up to 90% of patients are female with many between 20 and 30 years of age. The ingested hair always turns black regardless of the original colour, due to denaturation of proteins by the highly acidic stomach gastric juice. When a trichobezoar is removed in surgery it smells rather foul because the hair mesh traps undigested dietary fat and bacteria colonise the bezoar." (This adds yet another twist to the black food and death connection in the *Map O' Tassie Burger* section).

The television program *Ripley's believe it or not* also featured a human hairball story about a young Indian girl, in July 2003, but I couldn't access this story on their website.

8. *ADP Digital Photoceramics*, Sydney Road, Brunswick, Victoria, Australia.
When my mother died in 1998, my father decided he wanted her photograph on her tombstone. He had to send her picture to Italy as there was no-one offering this service here in Australia. The Director of ADP, Joanne Castagna told me that she had brought those very same Italian experts here to Melbourne to teach her the process so that she could offer it locally. Her business is booming!

9. Some examples -

M Marchetta, *Looking For Alibrandi* -

“ ‘I would have gone with him,’ Sera said, spraying half a can of hairspray around her gelled hair. ‘Sera, if they jailed people for ruining the ozone layer, you’d get life,’ I told her...” (p. 4) “...my hair is a legacy from my father. It’s curly and needs restraining at all times”. (p. 10) “... black roots and blonde hair teased from here to eternity.” (p. 19) “The world of sleek haircuts and upper class privileges.” (p. 31) “Oh God, Ma, I have to sleep in the same bed as her. She doesn’t even shave her legs.” (p. 74)

10. There is a very erotically charged piece of dialogue in the film *Like Water For Chocolate* -
“A strange alchemical phenomenon seemed to have occurred. Not only Tito’s blood but her whole being had dissolved into the rose petal sauce, into the quails and into every aroma of the meal. That’s how she invaded Pedro’s body, voluptuously, ardently, fragrant and utterly sensual. They had discovered a new way of communicating. Tito was the sender, Pedro the recipient. Gertrudis was the lucky one within whom this sexual encounter was synthesised through the meal.”

Glossary

<i>Alopecia</i>	Male pattern baldness
<i>Back, sack and crack</i>	Male body waxing of the back and genitals
<i>Bad hair day</i>	Common term for a having bad day or not being able to make your hair look good or manageable
<i>Bush</i>	Slang term for pubic hair
<i>Chignon</i>	A fold or roll of hair worn on the back of the head
<i>Delilah</i>	A temptress or alluring object
<i>Full downunder</i>	Full genital wax on a male body
<i>Hair-do</i>	Hair style
<i>Hair pie</i>	Female genitals or cunnilingus (oral sex)
<i>Hirsuteness</i>	Excessive hair growth
<i>Map o' Tassie</i>	Slang term for pubic hair
<i>Merkin</i>	Pubic hair wig
<i>Mullet</i>	Hairstyle of the 1970s and 1980s featuring a short choppy front and long tail flowing down the neck
<i>Pundendum</i>	External genitalia
<i>Short 'n' curlies</i>	Slang term for pubic hair or to have a person in one's power
<i>Splitting hairs</i>	Making super-fine, often ridiculous distinctions
<i>Tea-bagging</i>	One man draping his testicles on the forehead of another
<i>Trichobezoar</i>	A wad of swallowed hair or hairball
<i>Trichophagia</i>	Compulsive behavioural disorder of hair eating
<i>Trichotillomania</i>	Compulsive behavioural disorder of hair pulling

Specifications

Hairball Cafe consists of:

Six traditional round white porcelain 'coupe' pizza plates, nine inches in diameter. The images have been baked onto the plates by a digital ceramic transfer process which is normally used in the Funeral trade.

Six tablecloths, 107 cms square, and six napkins, 33 cms square, printed on white synthetic silk, with output from an Epson 44 inch Inkjet Printer, and machine finished with white cotton thread.

Six wooden table structures constructed from pine and MDF consisting of a tabletop, single pole and flat base. Tabletops measure 600mm sq. x H700mm. They are bracketed and screwed together for easy assembly and dismantling so that the work can travel.

Six stainless steel title holders.

Human and synthetic hair napkin ties.

Six white cotton underskirts finished with velcro attachment to table edges.

One wooden spatula.

Original images shot on Fujichrome 64 ASA, 35mm Tungsten Transparency Film.

E6 processing by Vanbar Photographics.

Transparencies scanned in the Post Graduate computer room at RMIT University City Campus using a Polaroid Sprintscan 35mm scanner.

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Chadwick, Helen *Effluvia*, Serpentine Gallery, London, 1994.

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Melis, Wim cur. *Africa Inside*, Noorderlicht photofestival, Stichting Aurora Borealis, Stichting Fotografie Noorderlicht, The Netherlands, 2000.

Neale, Margo cur. *Urban Dingo - the art and life of Lin Onus 1948-1996*, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2000.

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Smith, Jason and Green, Charles cur. *Fieldwork, Australian Art 1968-2002*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2002.

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Film, Television and Radio

Babette's Feast, motion picture, (Dir.) Gabriel Axel, 1987.

Bare, short film, Wild Iris Productions, Australia, (Dir.) Deborah Strutt, 2000.

Chocolat, motion picture, Orion Picture Corporation, (Dir.) Claire Denis, 1989.

The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, Her Lover, motion picture, CBS, (Dir.) Peter Greenaway, 1989.

Crimes Of Passion, Orion Pictures, motion picture, (Dir.) Ken Russell, 1984.

Dame Edna's Work Experience, video recording, DLT Entertainment U.K. Productions (Dir.) Brian Klein, 1997.

Eat Drink Man Woman, motion picture, (Dir.) Ang Lee, 1994.

Eating Raoul, motion picture, (Dir.) Paul Bartel, 1982.

Eat The Rich, motion picture, Palace Entertainment, (Dir.) Peter Richardson, 1987.

Feeling Sexy, Australian short film series, SBS Television, Melbourne, 12 December 2003, Showtime Australia, (Dir.) Davida Allen, 1998.

Barry Humphries' Flashbacks, Episode 3: The 70's - On The Map At Last, video recording, 1999.

Fried, Grilled Or Contaminated, video recording, Health Department Victoria, City of Melbourne, 1986.

The Golden Braid, motion picture, (Dir.) Paul Cox, 1990.

Hair, motion picture, United Artists Corporation, (Dir.) Milos Forman, 1979.

The Hairdresser's Husband, motion picture, New Vision, (Dir.) Patrice Leconte, 1990.

Kitchen, motion picture, Golden Harvest (Hong Kong) and Amuse Inc, (Dir.) Yim-Ho, n.d.

The Last Supper, motion picture, The Vault/Sony Pictures, (Dir.) Stacy Little, 1995.

Like Water For Chocolate, motion picture, (Dir.) Alfonso Arau, 1992.

Live Flesh, motion picture, Pinefilm Entertainment, (Dir.) Pedro Almodovar, 1997.

Maitresse, motion picture, Les Films Du Losange & Gaumont, (Dir.) Barbet Schroeder, n.d.

Marketing Food - A Stylish Approach, video recording, MSP Educational Services, Melbourne, 1995.

Memento, motion picture, (Dir.) Christopher Nolan, 2000.

Naked Lunch, motion picture, (Dir.) David Cronenberg, 1991.

Naked States (Meet Spencer Tunick - Artist), documentary feature, Juntos Films, (Dir.) Arlene Donnelly, 2000.

Pecker, motion picture, (Dir.) John Waters, 1998.

The Pornographer, motion picture, (Dir.) Doug Atchison, 1999.

The Pornographers, motion picture, (Dir.) Shohei Imamura, 1966.

Redheads, motion picture, Roxy Films, (Dir.) Danny Vendramini, 1992.

The Real Blonde, motion picture, Paramount Pictures/Lakeshore Entertainment, (Dir.) Tom DiCillo, 1997.

Safe Food Handling, video recording, National Film & Sound Archive, Film Australia, 1997.

SEX The Annabel Chong Story, motion picture, Madman, (Dir.) Gough Lewis, 1995.

Soft Fruit, motion picture, Fox Searchlight Pictures/AFFC, (Dir.) Christina Andreef, 2000.

Strawberry And Chocolate, motion picture, Franca Pelster Films, (Dir.) Tomas Guterrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabio, 1994.

Strawberry Blonde, motion picture, Time Warner Entertainment, (Dir.) Raoul Walsh, 1941.

Themroc, motion picture, (Dir.) Claude Faraldo, 1972.

Who Is Killing The Great Chefs Of Europe? motion picture, Lorimar, (Dir.) Ted Kotcheff, 1978.

Art 21, television program, SBS Television, Melbourne, 9 February 2003.

Rove Live, television program, ABC TV, Melbourne, 23 March 2003.

Melbourne Comedy Festival Gala 2003, television program, Channel 10, Melbourne, 3 April 2003.

The Glass House, television program, ABC TV, Melbourne, 25 April, 23 May, 6 June 2003; 24 April 2004.

The Secret Life Of Us, television program, Channel 10, Melbourne, 5 May 2003.

Crime Scene Investigation "The Execution of Catherine Willows" television program, Channel 9, Melbourne, 13 May 2003.

Hairy Women, television documentary, Channel 9, Melbourne, 2 November 2003.

Enough Rope, television program, ABC TV, Melbourne, 19 April 2004.

The Morning Show, radio program, Triple J, ABC Radio, Melbourne, 6 May 2003.

Appendices

Cooked + Hairball Cafe

Comments from the Exhibition Visitors' Book
Stills Gallery, 36 Gosbell St, Paddington, NSW.
July 3 - August 3, 2002.

“Wonderful, delightful and exotic - it’s making me hungry!”

“Delightful and thought provoking work.”

“Wow, amazing stuff, yum yum!”

“Waiter there’s a hair in my meal...”

“Fantastic work!!! Absolutely brilliant!”

“Interesting to see photo-art that is not ‘hanging’ on a wall.”

“Love ‘The Full Downunder’!! It’s great to see the work (Cooked) after seeing it in photographs. It’s amazing in reality. Congratulations.”

(Izabela, student, Newcastle University, NSW).

“It looked fantastic, very strangely erotic, also holding the space really well.”

(Professor Anne Graham, Head of Fine Art, Newcastle University, NSW).