



Not yet Earth

by

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## Not Yet Earth

Flesh seeps into every part of my images. Sometimes it is barely suggested and sometimes it is overt: a hand, a knee or a whole body, or a pile of visceral strands that evoke flesh only obliquely. *Not Yet Earth* is rooted in a series of performative interactions, in which my body engages with other kinds of flesh as I 'play' with discarded pieces of butcher's meat, assembling and disassembling the scraps, twisting, moving and arranging them in pools of water and mud. The dead flesh is my drawing tool and my creation. Through manipulating it I impose my will on its existence and also by implication upon my own living flesh. Conversely, in becoming an extension of my body, the material acts upon my substance and changes it in return.

These performative interactions inform all the series in this exhibition, each of which brings a different understanding to the careful, ritual arrangement of the meat strands. Through them I address the tension between our understanding of the body as self and as matter. This theme is both universal and intensely personal; two years ago I was diagnosed with a disorder that caused my immune system to turn against itself and attack the platelets in my blood, causing spontaneous bruising among other symptoms. I have never been more aware that my flesh has an existence that is independent of mine. I have never felt more mortal. This work is both an attempt to understand the unique dual character of flesh, and to regain a sense of control over it.

To do this I address the meeting point of body and matter. In death, flesh becomes meat. It is no longer an animal and it is not yet earth, although it exists somewhere on a continuum between the two. It is not animal but it is treated with the same prohibitions and taboos, eliciting the feelings of conflicting repulsion and attraction that the body does. Flesh marks the transitional moment between animate and inanimate; it is dead and yet it is permeated by a history of being alive. By turning my gaze upon this fluid substance I recognise the mortality of my own body and its inseparable relationship with matter.

In *Meat, Mud and Water*, a series of CMYK screen prints, substances take on one another's characteristics. Body parts are imprinted in glistening mud, meat and living flesh appear interchangeable and colours leak from one substance to another. The surface of the print is as evident as the space within the image, and the distortion of colour that has happened through the CMYK process suggests bruising and a breakdown of the boundaries between one substance and another. In *Raw Material*, a pair of CMYK screen prints layered with projected video, boundaries are also in question: the inanimate moves and the animate is tempered as one thing exchanges attributes with another, posing questions about where flesh and the body end and inanimate matter begins.

Arrangements of meat are transformed through etching in *Visceral Strands*. The strands become ambiguous in scale, substance and space as they reconfigure across the series. They seem to be suspended; perhaps in water or, neither lifeless nor alive, in some metaphorical space between flesh and mud. In one print a pile of stringy scraps, ambiguous but innately visceral, hangs in the center of the image, twisted and coiled. In another they are strung out in tangled mesh across the whole print. Sometimes a form is reiterated as the shapes of one

image reappear in another and sometimes the image is so dense that the form is barely present.

In *Meat Knot* and *Meat Drawing*, ritual interactions between intentional mind, living body and dead meat speak to the dynamics of power that run in both directions between my self and my matter, and explore through touch and movement the complex relationships that develop. In these video works duration becomes prominent as the lens traces the act of handling the materials and creating order from recalcitrant flesh, which, though therapeutic, has an aspect of endurance to it, not least in the slow and compulsive nature of the process.

The *Remains* drawings acknowledge, as tangled knots of matter, the anxiety, conflict and dissonance that accumulate between the body and the self, heightened by the experience of existing in a physical body that is not fully my own. These pieces are at one level a direct attempt to exorcise this conflict by repeatedly confronting and describing it, so that eventually it will be reduced and expelled through the act of bringing it outside my body. The scale of the drawings echoes the body's proportions and the placement of each knot is chosen deliberately to reflect the location of my physical experience of anxiety.

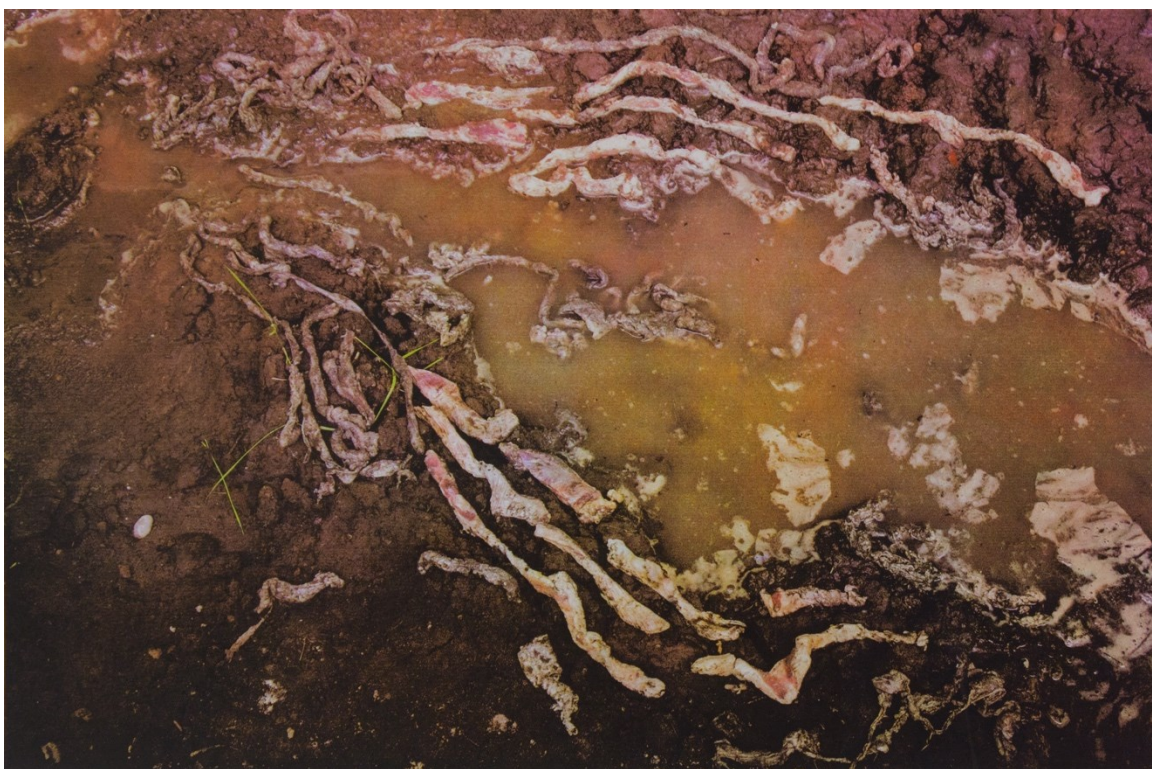
These concerns are especially pertinent in an age when the sense of self is less and less limited by our substance. Rebellious flesh can be subdued and brought into check, its mortality pushed further and further into the distance until it becomes an abstract idea instead of a visceral reality, and the possibility that our bodies will ultimately become something else is shocking and inconceivable. The origins of flesh in the body are often unrecognisable, so that our physical relationship to it is invisible and disturbing. Our integration with our own matter and the matter around us is fractured and difficult to see.

My work addresses these spaces of blurred edges, transition and conflict through sustained looking, responsive drawing and layering using print and new media. The breakdown of clarity and accumulation of depth that happens through print and durational processes helps to unfold the blurred edges of physical substance and the complex relationship between body and self. Drawing is crucial both in a traditional sense and in my performative 'drawing' with meat and organic material, because it reflects directly the tensions that accumulate in the body. Through mark-making the body's movements reveal the physical manifestation of the self's confusion.





*Mackay\_001 Meat, Mud and Water II 2017 CMYK screen print 22.5 x 34 inches*



*Mackay\_002 Meat, Mud and Water III 2017 CMYK screen print 22.5 x 34 inches*





*Mackay\_005 Meat, Mud and Water I 2017 CMYK screen print 22.5 x 34 inches*



*Mackay\_004 Meat, Mud and Water VI 2017 CMYK screen print 22.5 x 34 inches*





*Mackay\_005 install shot, Meat, Mud and water II and III; Visceral Strands*



*Mackay\_006 Visceral Strands (install shot) 2017 etching 98 x 180 inches*



Mackay\_007 **Visceral Strands 20** 2017 etching 18 x 24 inches



Mackay\_008 **Visceral Strands 4** 2017 etching 18 x 24 inches





Mackay\_009 **Visceral Strands 19** 2017 etching 18 x 24 inches



Mackay\_010 **Visceral Strands 19** 2017 etching 18 x 24 inches





*Mackay\_011 install shot, Remains, Raw Material, Visceral Strands*



*Mackay\_012 **Raw Material I** 2017 CMYK screen print on aluminium with video projection 22.5 x 34 inches*





*Mackay\_013 **Raw Material II** 2017 CMYK screen print on aluminium with video projection 22.5 x 34 inches*



*Mackay\_014 install shot, **Raw Material** (interactive detail)*



*Mackay\_015 install shot, Meat Knot; Meat Drawing; Remains*



*Mackay\_016 install shot, Remains*





*Mackay\_017 **Remains 7** wax crayon on paper 2018 80 x 37 inches*



*Mackay\_018 **Remains 5** wax crayon on paper 2018 80 x 37 inches*





Mackay\_019 **Remains 8** wax crayon on paper 2018 80 x 37 inches



*Mackay\_020 **Remains 2** wax crayon on paper 2018 80 x 37 inches*





*Mackay\_021 detail, Remains 6 wax crayon on paper 2018*



*Mackay\_022 install shot, Remains*



*Mackay\_023 install shot, Meat Knot; Meat Drawing*



*Mackay\_024 video still, Meat Knot*





*Mackay\_025 video still, Meat Drawing*



*Mackay\_056 video still, Meat Knot*

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