

*Subdermal Plasticity: Histories of Contraception*, draws from my own embodied experience of having Nexplanon implants inserted, removed and re-inserted over the course of the last eight years.

The work looks to navigate my own relationship to hormonal contraception and both the pleasures and disappointments its use can entail. Reflecting also, on the social and technological evolution of contraception, from the use of acacia leaves, pomegranate seeds, and wool in ancient Egyptian and Greek cultures to the introduction of hormone-releasing vaginal rings in the twenty-first century.

Research into relationships between contraception, female sexual desire and the historic archetype of the witch, form the ground on which this body of work is built. The relevance of the witch – in this instance – as a healer and a midwife in early modern Europe [1]. As someone historically persecuted for aiding the use of contraceptives and abortifacients through knowledge of the medicinal properties of plant matter.

Further references and themes span from Nineteenth century psychiatry's treatment of the hysterical patient – particularly Jean-Martin Charcot's transformation of patient into performer[2]; Karl Blossfeldt's botanical studies; conversations, anecdotes and research-papers regarding the normalisation of pain in relation to hormonal contraceptive-use and it's *common* side-effects (such as mood disturbances, nausea, a loss or decline in libido, etc); and the *Malleus Maleficarum* condemnation of witches for "destroying the generative force in women [...] procuring abortions, [and] offering children to devils" (47)[3].

---

[1] Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives, & Nurses: A History of Women Healers*, 2nd edn (The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2010).

[2] Paul Regnard and Désiré-Magloire Bourneville, *Iconographie Photographique de La Salpêtrière: Service de M. Charcot* | *Wellcome Collection*, 5th edn (Paris, 1876).

[3] Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 1st edn, 1486.