

Disability Rights and Wrongs: Mona Hatoum

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(<https://sleuth.files.wordpress.com/2007/12/monahatoum1.jpg>)

Untitled (Wheelchair) 1998 by Mona Hatoum

I've recently been reading Tom Shakespeare's *Disability Rights and Wrongs*, a book that has been cropping up on every Disability Studies reading list. At the recent Disability Research Forum at Sheffield Hallam, discussion of the book kicked off with consideration of the front piece, a work by

artist Mona Hatoum. I was the only member of the group to have seen wider examples of Hatoum's work, and I think for those interested in exploring cultural conceptions of disability her work is deeply rewarding. *Untitled (Wheelchair)* pictured left, is used for Shakespeare's cover. This is one of a series of works, all of which deal with the body in its absence. I will not describe my reaction to these sculptures, as they are open to interpretation, but it is difficult to consider these images without being drawn into them. This image shows a steel wheelchair, hard and uncompromising, on casters. It looks like institutional furniture. However, this is not the architypal Model 8F wheelchair of the NHS. It appears instead more like a hospital's kitchen trolley. Two kitchen knives emerge where the handles should be.

Untitled (Wheelchair II) seemingly repeats this image. However, the handles are now deeply serated knives, the chair is slanted forwards at an angle like an italic letter. Movement and speed seemingly enter the picture, implying a pushing force.

A third image from this series is *Webbed 1* (below). This sculpture, again in grey steel, depicts a hospital bed. The springs of the bed are arranged as a spiders web. To find out more about Hatoum's art, publications and exhibitions, and to see these works in more detail visit her pages at the **White Cube Gallery**



Untitled (Wheelchair II) sculpture by Mona Hatoum

(<http://www.whitecube.com/artists/hatoum/wheelchair/>).



(<https://sleuth.files.wordpress.com/2007/12/webbed1.jpg>)

Webbed 1, Sculpture by Mona Hatoum