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**Moments of Repetition in the Process of Art
Production: Temporalities, Labour,
Appropriations and Authorships**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the
University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

by

Jill Townsley

November 2010

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ABSTRACT

This practice based PhD is an enquiry into repetition found in relation to the visual art object, specifically the repetition that operates within the process of art production. There is some precedence for the consideration of repetition observed as a repeated subject or object, and especially the Warholian like repeated image. Rosalind Krauss observed in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition* (1981) that many artists are '*condemned to repeating as if by compulsion, the logically fraudulent original*'. This research considers a different presentation of repetition, the repeated action of labour that accumulates during the process of production.

A body of artworks, that for the purpose of the research I describe as labourwork, was conceived and made with the concerns of repetition at the core of its process. Personal reflection and a close critical analysis of each labourwork, allowed for the identification of a number of issues that are significant to the consideration of repetition as it relates to the process of production. They include 'failure through repetition', 'temporality', 'erasure' and 'shifting authorships'. The emergent themes are considered within the thesis, where broader theories of repetition are addressed in order to position this form of art production within a larger theoretical framework.

The purpose of the repeated action within the labourworks was found to be more complex than a means to an end. It was not just a pre-requisite to forming a critical mass or achieving a particular form. When observed from the standpoint of different schema such as time, the simulacra, mimesis or theories of replication, the repetition within the labourwork was observed to be identified within many different constructs. It was seen to affect the object, its relation to the viewer, authorship and the subject. Yet, these multifarious roles are not differentiated within the single word 'repetition'.

The conclusion to this thesis summarises the effect repetition has been found to have within the labourworks, separating out its roles and offering opportunities to identify its individual operations, over-and-above the general term 'Repetition'.

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**DVD's containing visual documentation of all the Labourworks may be found
attached to the inside back cover of the thesis**

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

That so many twentieth-century artists should have manipulated themselves into this particular position of paradox - where they are condemned to repeating as if by compulsion, the logically fraudulent original - is truly compelling (Krauss, 1981, p.56)

In Krauss's comment on the appropriation of 'the grid' in contemporary art she discovers what seems a habitual activity that artists are 'condemned to', that of repetition. Krauss observes the recurrence of the grid, represented over and over again:

...artist after artist has taken up the grid as the medium within which to work, always taking it up as though he were just discovering it. (Krauss, 1981, p.54)

This study addresses the idea of repetition not as an endlessly repeated subject or object that Krauss identifies, but the repetition held within the process of art production; the repeated action of labour that accumulates to construct a whole.

Within my own practice I invest much intellectual and physical importance on the repeated action. Whether early or late work, repetition remains integral, not in a Warholian presentation of the repeated image but embedded within the process of production.

I became increasingly aware that the purpose of the repeated action was more complex than a means to an end. It was not just the prerequisite to achieve a critical mass, or realise a particular form - in many cases there were far more logical and practical ways of accomplishing that initial aim. For example, in the artwork *Brass Cube* (Townesley 2003), rather than welding sheet metal to make a 2-meter cube, the

structure is formed by hand looping brass wire, an act that required 300hrs of manual labour.

I also became fascinated by the idea that a small action could gather importance through repetition. The futility of the process - as singular - is somehow changed by its relationship to repetition.

If something is meaningful, maybe it's more meaningful said ten times. It's not just an aesthetic choice. If something is absurd, it's much more greatly exaggerated, absurd, if it is repeated. (Hesse, 1970, p.11)

While this statement holds much truth for understanding the initial incentive towards repetition, it is only a small part of the role repetition seemed to be taking within my own practice.

The extremely close connection between the repetition and the action of process - often symbiotic - meant many questions were emerging:

- What role does repetition (as joined to process) take in the authorship of the resulting work, and how may repetition interact with the will of the artist?
- What role does labour play within process, when it is required to operate through seemingly endless repetitions?
- If the labour of 'hand' process fails to repeat accurately, how does this affect our understanding of repetition? Can it be enlightened by theories of singularity, such as Mimesis offered by Plato in his *Republic*?
- Can the relationship between repetition and singularity affect ideas of originality, as referred to by Krauss?
- How does the action of labour (process) in conjunction with repetition relate to time, especially if the action is no longer physically present but offered as a trace, or as the result of a historic presence?
- If appropriation is considered a type of repetition, what role does process have in rendering it different/the same when represented?

These initial research questions were articulated within the following overarching aims:

1. To make artwork that has repetition at the heart of the process of production.
2. To reflect on the artwork in order to identify themes pertinent to an enquiry into the role repetition takes within the process of art production.
3. To consider and research established theories of repetition to help contextualise and realise any emerging themes (identified in aim 2).
4. To utilise the context (identified in aim 3) to further understand how repetition operates within the process of art production, and consider what this may mean for the resulting art object.

Method

This is a practice-based study that from the very beginning has unashamedly held practice at the forefront of enquiry. The art object itself is offered as a substantial part of this research and consists of eight separate artworks. Alongside this is a thesis consisting of a series of essays whose themes were identified as significant through the analysis of practice in relation to the initial aims and questions as outlined above.

I refer to the eight artworks as 'labourworks' both collectively and individually throughout the thesis. This term emerged as descriptive of the particular form of labour and repetition applied to the production of the work. All the labourworks have been exhibited individually during the research timeframe, and were shown together in a final exhibition entitled 'Moments of Repetition' which was held during the examination period. The DVD's that accompany this thesis contain images of each labourwork, the exhibition and a copy of all the time-based media works (animations and video).

A series of reflections on each labourwork is presented in the appendix, offered sequentially as reflective accounts. Each account is compiled from notes on the studio practice and processes. The voice of this writing is inevitably personal, as the form of reflection is a combination of observations 'in' and 'on' the practice, with some themes emerging during the activity of production and others reflexively after the work was

finished.

The aim was to compile textual passages that act as a platform, to identify any emerging themes pertinent across the labourworks. Each reflection provides information on the context from which the work evolved and the concept behind it. They also document the evolution of the work and how it relates to the overall themes of repetition within process.

Each labourwork plus reflection may be considered a project or case study, informed by, and informing the overall enquiry into the role repetition takes into the process of art production.

Each text is organised under the same general headings, to ensure continuity across all the reflections and to arrange randomly occurring information, into suitably applicable sections and subsections. Each labourwork can then be more easily compared and contrasted, offering the opportunity for horizontal analysis across all labourworks. The headings were chosen for their relevance to the area of study and suitability to the specific process of art production. They are as follows:

1 Introduction

This establishes the initial position and offers a very brief overview of each labourwork.

2 Creative Stimulus/Rationale

This section acknowledges the circular nature of the working process, especially where the labourworks themselves have initiated accompanying text-based enquiry into relevant or corresponding concerns; concerns that in turn have either implicitly or explicitly influenced the development of the practice. This section also acknowledges any inspirational source for the development or ideas embedded within each labourwork.

3 Material/Medium

The material or medium of each labourwork is discussed under this heading

especially where it has a bearing on the process or structure of the work.

4 Process

A narrative account of the way the work was approached or made is outlined under this heading. As the thrust of this research is looking at the way repetition operates within the 'process' of art production, this section is important in providing an account of that process.

5 Labour

Though labour is very closely related to process and often difficult to separate, it was considered that the very close proximity of the two terms meant that they needed to be considered individually, in order to identify more precisely how repetition may operate within the whole structure. The specific labour utilised in the labourworks is of a hand held scale and extensively repetitive, the relation to labour generally, seemed important as a characteristic of this work.

6 Repetition

This section identifies where and how repetition is manifest within the work, the objective being to identify how repetition operates within each labourwork.

7 Summary

The summary collates very briefly the substance arising from each reflection, providing an initial identification of important issues.

Under each of the main headings listed above, subheadings may be observed; these are specific to each labourwork. They aim to help correlate any particular considerations, that may be emerging through the reflective process as relevant to each individual labourwork,

Each labourwork is presented in chronological order. This was considered a logical program, as in some instances a labourwork builds on issues arising from the previous work. Each labourwork is however, a piece on its own, using different methods, processes and materials, and resulting in different outcomes: installation, sculpture, drawing, video or digital animation. It is important to reiterate that all the labourworks were developed with questions around repetition at the forefront of their reasoning,

whether implicit or explicit,

The reflective passages, helped identify primary and secondary themes emerging from the work. These were chosen for the frequency with which they appeared across the labourworks and for their overall importance to the study of repetition. These themes inform each of the critical essays presented in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5. They are as follows:

Process and **labour**; both themes have maintained their importance from the very beginning, they were identified as ways of interrogating each reflection,

Added to these are **time** and **authorship**, both of which emerge as outstanding issues grounded in all the labourworks and implicit in the context of repetition.

Secondary themes may be considered subsidiary or part of each of the four main themes identified above. Each one raises questions of the main theme, and they are addressed separately. The themes that emerged through the practice and considered for further critique are:

Process includes questions that incorporate the following secondary themes:

- What is the relationship between process and repetition?
- **Appropriation** – how may repetition be observed across different processes through appropriation?
- **Logic or systems** within process and how they help form the overall work through repetition?
- How is the '**crisis**' of repetition manifest in process?
- What is the relation of **singularity and difference** to repetition as observed in process?

Questions relating to **labour** and arising from the labourworks incorporate secondary themes such as:

- What role does **the hand** have in the labour when asked to operate through countless repetitions?
- How does the **mass produced** object as appropriated in the process relate to labour of the hand?
- What role does **limit** take within work that is specifically exploring repetition?
- How do systems such as **numbers** and **regular solids** operate to offer a limit to repetitive labour?
- How might **authorship** be observed within labour when that labour is significantly repetitive?

Authorship appears to be brought into question time and again in relation to repetition. Questions that arise from the labourworks include:

- Can repetition claim authorship?
- What role does **failure** have in claiming or deferring authorship?
- Can reception alter our understanding of meaning over time and through repetition?

Time as a main theme was thought to have many relationships with repetition and included questions about:

- The role of **digital media** in relationship to repetition, especially when observed over time?
- By utilising digital imagery to re-presenting repetitious processes, is it possible to effect our reception of time?
- What role does the digital **loop** take in illustrating, or not, our relationship to time through repetition?
- How are **endurance, anticipation and boredom** received when each emotion plays such a large role in endlessly repeating actions? What can this say about time?

Chapter 2 offers a very short overview of repetition offering definitions and background as relevant to the research. Chapters 3,4, 5 and 6 offers critical analysis of the themes

outlined above. Each chapter takes one of the four themes, outlining a context relevant to the practice, and providing a platform for the debates and issues arising through the practice. The chapters are as follows: Process - the logic of the work (Chapter 3), Labour – the hand and repetition (Chapter 4), Authorship and repetition (Chapter 5), Time Repeated (Chapter 6). Quotations are used that originate from the reflections (Appendix), in order to identify their incidence in the practice, and offer a traceable root back to the art object itself.

Chapter 7 concludes the enquiry, summarising some of the perspectives the research offers to the different roles repetition has been found to occupy within the labourworks, providing a critical summary of ideas relevant to the practice and possible further directions this work may take.

CHAPTER 2

REPETITION - A SHORT OVERVIEW

Definitions around repetition are multifarious. Though the word represents something repeated, this can have different outcomes depending on the discipline in which the word is expressed and its local context. Repetition can refer to both an event and a process; it can infer intent or accident; it can be used as a tool of rehearsal (rote learning); or as a frequency in marketing: '*The number of times an audience has an opportunity to be exposed to a media*' (Wells, Burnett, Moriarty, 1992 p288); it can be a cumulative action, that builds layer on layer to produce an intended whole, as in gym repetitions in weight training.

Repetition has both positive and negative connotations, as in stutter or reiteration. Commonly, repetition alludes to time, and this can be a very complex matter. It most generally refers to an incidence of repeated moments, but repetition can also have endurance and span vast swathes of time, either in its duration or its event (i.e. take a long time before the repetition re-occurs).

Many definitions fail to indicate the multifarious relationship we have with repetition. Its significance within particular disciplines is often substantial; science depends on repetition to prove its experiments; philosophers throughout the ages including Plato, Kierkegaard and Deleuze have dealt with particular aspects of its complexity; and psychoanalysts such as Freud have utilised repetition to enlighten their work. The commonality of repetition to all things and all subjects makes it a highly complex word in isolation. It has specific implications and philosophical substance within each disciplinary framework, while at the same time it is still capable of referring to a commonplace experience or event.

Repetition: More than Just a Device

Within the context of all the visual arts, the presence of repetition is so fundamental that it can often become invisible, underlying rather than explicit. It is often considered

a device, simply a means of achieving a critical mass or multiplication of form/image. It is a tool that is so embedded in its process, so commonplace, that it is often unworthy of reference.

A more complex contemplation of repetition can be observed in critical documentation since the 1960s in relation to process art, serial artworks and the repeated image or object - prevalent particularly in pop, minimal and post-minimal art. It is also evident in critical discourse that surrounds postmodern strategies (particularly digital practices and the use of parody, pastiche etc).

In general though, the term repetition is rarely applied with reference to its own more complex philosophical theories, especially when offered in relation to material based practice or a specific process of production. More usually it is considered as a compositional device with rhythmic visual/perceptual qualities. Historically, it was considered relative to the 'elements and principles of art and design', as identified by Denman Waldo Ross (1907) in his book *A Theory of Pure Design: Harmony, Balance, and Rhythm with Illustrations and Diagrams*. These principles were developed further by Arthur Wesley Dow, who considered repetition to be the 4th principle of composition:

Repetition. This name is given to the opposite of subordination (principle no-3) - the production of beauty by repeating the same lines in rhythmical order. The intervals may be equal, as in pattern or unique, as in landscape. (Dow, 1913, p.82)

The principles that Ross and Dow initiated played a large role in educational change. Up to the early 20th century, art education had been based on drawing, until '*a bold new emphasis took hold based on the elements and principles of design*' as documented in the *Handbook of research and policy in art education*. (Eisner, E.W. Day, M.D. 2004, p.694) This has perhaps contributed to an understanding of repetition offered as a singular statement of fact or event, a rhythmic ordering of composition

that is often aesthetic in nature.

This singular approach to repetition is not, however, consistent with other related creative disciplines. Literature has a lexicon of words that describe the differing roles repetition takes within language and text: *Epizeuxis*¹, *Anadiplosis*², *Anaphora*³, *Epistrophe*⁴, *Mesodiplosis*⁵, *Diaphora*⁶. Music has also, tentatively, begun to split the terms of repetition into *discursive*⁷ and *musematic*⁸ repetition (Middleton, 1990, p.267-92) since its prolific use in contemporary experimental music by composers such as John Cage, John Adams, Philip Glass and Terry Riley et al.

By appropriating into art practice some of the more complex ideas of repetition, as identified through other disciplines, it may be possible to utilise established knowledge that could widen our understanding of the role, purpose, or concepts repetition can bring to the art object.

¹ *Epizeuxis* – repetition of a word or phrase for emphasis, usually with no words in between.

² *Anadiplosis* – repetition of the last word of one line or clause to begin the next

³ *Anaphora* – A rhetorical term for the repetition of a word or phrase as the start of successive clauses.

⁴ *Epistrophe* - Ending a series of lines, phrases, clauses or sentences with the same word or words.

⁵ *Mesodiplosis* - repetition of the same word or words in the middle of successive sentences

⁶ *Diaphora* – Repetition of a common name so as to perform two logical functions: to designate an individual and to signify the qualities connoted by that individual's name or title.

⁷ *Discursive* – In music, a repeat at the level of a phrase or section, which generally functions as part of a larger-scale 'argument'.(Middleton, 1990, p.267-92) Discursive repetition is both 'repetitive and non-repetitive'.

⁸ *Musematic* – In music, repetition at the level of the short figure, often used to generate and entire structural framework. A repetition of precisely the same musical figure, such as repeated chords.

CHAPTER 3

PROCESS - THE LOGIC OF THE WORK

The Process of Repetition

Kate Armstrong argues that there are essentially two types of repetition in the process of art production: 1 - '*apathetic reiteration*' which artists such as Andy Warhol employ to act as a '*functional distancing*', and 2 - '*the project of abstraction*' which severs links with representation and finds through repetition a closeness with the '*unrepresentable other*' (Armstrong, 2002, p.15 & 37).

The second definition is most relevant to the labourworks considered during this research. The type of processes employed, combined with the labour (the action of making), which then undergo a lengthy sequence of repetition, is the vehicle for producing work that may connect with the type of abstraction Armstrong refers to; art that may bring us closer to what she coins the '*unrepresentable other*'. The labourworks do not deal directly with a repeated image or form, Warhol-like, but hold repetition within the labour of art production, a labour organised and initiated by process.

Armstrong perceives in repetition a Friedrich Nietzsche-like 'Death of God' (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*, 1883-1885), observed through a divergence from representation:

This is not to say that what is replaced (By God) is analogous to God, but that there must be something in every system that cannot be fully understood or fully cognized: the unrepresentable. (Armstrong, 2002, p.6)

The idea that through the process of art, something hidden, unrepresentable, may be made closer through repetition, is for me, extremely compelling as an incentive to work with repetition in this way.

Process and labour take different roles within the labourworks. Labour is concerned with the physical action of process, the making of the work, while process in this case refers to the systems and rules under which the work is made, the conceptual indicators of the work.

With all the labourworks the process could be associated with 'systems art' and 'process art' of the mid 1960s, where the process is the procedure that sets the governance and defines the boundaries (the system) by which the labour operates. It could also be associated with some forms of conceptual art. LeWitt describes his form of conceptual art as:

When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art. (LeWitt, 1967, p.79)

In the labourworks, the labour once established (through process) is then carried out in a procedural manner until an end is reached. The repetition operates physically through the labour, yet originates conceptually within the process, overseeing or initiating the action.

Process - The Profile of Process in Art Critique

If we propose to observe meaning in the repetition held in the process of art production - are we perhaps also inferring that the process itself has meaning? Repetition in the labourworks is impossible without the 'process' of its coming into being, and viewed in this way, process and repetition are interdependent. In art practice this is often a very physical act, the very substance of the work:

Issues of process determine how and of what the work of art is to be made. (Colpitt, 1997, p.7)

Artwork is generally critiqued formally through its final presentation - the object - or

through its reference to meaning - its content and context (the subject), including the incomplete, fractured, de-centred or schizophrenic subject of the postmodern. Less literature is given over to process, outside of a record of technical sequencing or action, usually a pedagogic enquiry. This could be because the action of the making-event is no longer present (exceptions apply i.e. interactive art, time-based media). Often process is held latent within the object and is perhaps thought relevant only to the practitioner. *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Harrison, & Wood, 2002) has no listing to process in its index (only Process-art movement), while both 'subject' and 'object' are logged, each with many relevant sub-headings.

'The Submerged side of the Art Iceberg'

Much attention has been focused on the analysis of the content of art making - its end images - but there has been little attention focused on the significance of the means...I believe there are 'forms' to be found within the activity of making as much as within the end products. These are forms of behaviour aimed at testing the limits and possibilities involved in that particular interaction between one's actions and the materials of the environment. This amounts to the submerged side of the art iceberg. (Morris, R. 1970)

Robert Morris's statement operated alongside his work, where process became an end in itself. During the late 1960's and '70's 'Process Art' became an identifiable term for the work produced by artists such as Morris, including Richard Serra, Bruce Nauman, Eva Hesse et-al. Emphasis was on the system of production and often identified prior to the making, as illustrated in John Hillard's *Camera Recording its Own Condition (7 Apertures, 10 Speeds, 2 Mirrors)* in 1971. Linked to the environmental art movement, process art often harnesses natural systems such as gravity (Robert Morris, *Felt Sculptures*, 1967), flow (Serra, *Splash Series*, 1968-1970) or condensation (Hans Haacke, *Condensation Cube*, 1963-5). Conceptual concerns that forged this way of working include a preoccupation with time and change, rather than static icons (Morris, *Anti-form*, 1968). The reasons for the process were conceptually based and part of a general trend towards the dematerialisation of the art

object, with the intent often being fixed through the manner of the process (Nauman, *Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square*, 1967-8).

Craft production – The Process of Making

A dissimilar field of art production that has generated some discourse around process is that of craft production. While it stands in contrast to process art, craft also explores process but in this case process is a means to an end. The process is appropriated for its suitability to the nature of the material and in relation to the object's function or form, not generally as the reason for production:

Craft always involves a distinction between means and end, each clearly conceived as something distinct from the other but related to it [...] Strictly, it applies not to the things but the actions concerned with them: manipulating the tools, tending the machines, or burning the fuel. These actions (as implied by the literal sense of the word means) are passed through or traversed in order to reach the end, and are left behind when the end is reached. (Collingwood, 1958, p.15)

Glenn Adamson updates this for a postmodern world, identifying craft process as 'supplemental':

A supplement is that which provides something necessary to another, 'original' entity, but which is nonetheless considered to be extraneous to that original. (Adamson, 2007, p.11)

The profile of the process in this case is of high order, yet draws no attention to itself:

To say that craft is supplemental, then, is to say that it is always essential to the end in view, but in the process of achieving that end, it disappears. (Adamson, 2007, p.13)

So, process within the craft environment is inherently linked to the end result, it is the means of the work, yet supplementary and operating separately from the autonomous object of art.

Repetition and the Singular

Though the process is established as the starting point for the labourworks, it was never formulated in isolation neither did it operate purely a means to an end. It was always structured in relation to the properties of the chosen material and physical limitations of the labour action while also forming the intent of the work through repetitive labour. Developed through studio experimentation, 'playing' with material and discovering ways of working that capitalised on simple repetitive actions or events.

The freedom of this early experimentation was not apparent at any other time in the realisation of the work. This differentiates this type of labourwork from many forms of art production where the fluidity of the creative process is left open throughout the making. More expressionistic work represents an ongoing process of reaction and reinvention, where the freedom of the artist's decision making is accumulative and flexible, able to change direction and consequently the meaning within the process of the making. This is not evident in the labourworks and it has an effect on the way authorship is presented. As outlined in the introduction, the relationship between formal research and making the labourworks has been a reciprocal association, with one informing the other.

The earliest references to repetition that had direct influence on the labourworks emerged through the word 'mimesis'. Mimesis offers an opportunity to engage with the singular through repetition, which in practical terms affected the choice of materials used in the labourworks. Mimesis can be defined as:

A basic theoretical principle in the creation of art. The word is Greek and means "imitation" (though in the sense of "re-presentation" rather than of

“copying”). *Plato and Aristotle spoke of mimesis as the re-presentation of nature.* (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1974, p.904)

Through mimesis both Plato and Aristotle formed an uneasy relationship with repetition. They believed strongly in the purity of the singular, identifying singularity as truth (Plato) and/or virtue (Aristotle); in other words an ideal state. Standing in opposition to this, is repetition, the very nature of which defies singularity. Mimesis instigates an opposition to the one 'truth', opposing the singular through repetition.

Like the word repetition, the condition of 'singularity' can shift as it moves across disciplinary contexts. Singularity could be considered the antithesis to repetition, yet it is difficult to comprehend repetition unless issues of singularity are addressed. As indicated, both Plato and Aristotle identified mimesis as destructive of the singular, however, their relationship to mimesis drew different outlooks as referenced in their writings.

In *Poetics* (Aristotle 335 BC), while referring primarily to poetry, Aristotle looks specifically at repetition in the form of imitation - mimesis. He sees repetition as advantageous in education, providing moral insight and growth. He advocated that experiencing emotions, such as fear and pity, through the rhetoric of a successful tragedy, the viewer or audience could undergo a catharsis. Proposing that imitation (viewed as a form of emotional repetition) is inherent to the human condition and useful as a way of learning from childhood and throughout life. Indeed, if today a general internet search for 'repetition' is made, it unearths instances of learning through repeating; from rote learning to repeat exercises, whether intellectual or muscular, all is gained through repetition.

Aristotle builds on this theory in *Nicomachean Ethics* (350 BC) where he articulates his regard for singularity by asking the question, '*what is virtue?*' It may be argued that there are many human virtues, for example, to be a good friend, to work hard etc, but these virtues are split, they are not capable of identifying what virtue actually 'is'. For

Aristotle there is something singular called virtue, which relates to many virtues.

Plato on the other hand advocates that mimesis is a dangerous and lucid thing that he refers directly back to the arts. Plato's dialogues have two important implications for artists:

1. There are two worlds: one of perception/appearance and a higher one that deals with the original truth, this is the realm of ideas.
2. Plato banishes artists from the republic, identifying the artist as dealing with perception and appearance, and is consequentially removed from the Platonic ideal, the singular - the one truth.

Both of these issues could be described as having origins in repetition and it could be argued that Plato's work is a continual interrogation of repetition.

In *'The Republic'* (Plato, 360 BC), Plato infers that all creation is imitation; he includes God's creation in this, believing that in itself it is an imitation of the truth and essence of nature (thought and ideas). Consequentially, the lowly artist's representation of this God-created imitation, is therefore a thrice-removed imitation, a representation of a representation - mimesis.

For Plato to achieve a true 'republic' or 'cityscape', he needed only positive, unambiguous things to exist, a city of control, with the goal of the city being the single truth. So anyone that invokes imitation or representation is to be banished. In his attempt to protect the philosopher Kings, who own thought and therefore truth, he banishes anyone he sees as dangerous. It could be said that the repetition, brought about through mimesis, is the problem that leads Plato to the banishment of artists from the republic.

Reactive Process

The contextual enquiry into mimesis, led inevitably to addressing the 'singular' and its relation to repetition within process. In simple terms, by applying some type of physical repetition to a material to formally address the repetition found at the source of the

making. For this, the relation of singularity to repetition became important as it led, in an evidence-based manner, to a principal related word - **multiplicity**, something that embodies:

1. A considerable number
2. The state of being multiple

Multiplicity offered a guide to a range of materials that could be categorised as multiple and could be easily appropriated - materials such as polystyrene beads or plastic spoons. The multiplicity of these materials allowed opportunities to engage a process of predetermined system, which would take the physical form of repetitive labour. Yet the considerable number of objects (multiples), already repeated in form, acted in a singular manner when an action was applied and then repeated. This was synonymous with general systems theory.

Post war **general systems theory** is conventionally taken to be the discovery of Ludwig Von Bertalanffy, and essentially originates from theoretical biology (as opposed to cybernetics, which is a more mathematically based discipline). As a generalisation Bertalanffy's concept has four principles:

1. Wholeness.
2. Organisation.
3. Finality - the fact that systems tend towards the same end state.
4. Isomorphism - the correspondence of the structure irrespective of the nature of components.

Isomorphism became important to the labourworks because through repetition it was observed that the concept of structure was inherent to the work, a relational phenomenon isomorphic in nature. When reflecting on how Labourwork 2 - *Information* was made, it was noted:

The combination of the process/labour and natural phenomenon (gravity) ensures each incremental layer has a smaller foundation on which to balance.

This meant that each structure though different in detail, still followed a specific format that produced a predictable 'end state'. As structures were repeated and presented as a whole, it was also possible to observe, through the relational comparison between each 'stalagmite' type form, a system that could be comparable with Bertalanffy's conception of systems, in so far as there is a specific organisation to each form that repeats itself, forming a structural 'wholeness'. (Appendix: Labourwork 2 - 6.1)

Reduction and Logic

The use of logic or system within the process could be described as reductionist, especially evident when we consider the labour actions identified by the process. Each individual action is always pared down, simple while singular and only complex through repetition. The loop, the scribble, the action of labour was described as insignificant, small, even '*domestic in scale*' (Appendix: Labourwork 1 section 7), 'boring' or 'everyday'. Equally, the materials used were described as '*mass produced low value materials*' (Appendix: Labourwork 5 section 7), themselves existing because of factory systems that idealise through a fine balance of economic and practical necessity.

The overall macro process, for example, the aim of achieving through labour a regular solid (the cube, pyramid or square), can be described as logical, with no room for embellishment. It appears that the multiplying effect of the repetition within this work, though held within a reductionist ideal, is adding something unusual to the work. The overall aims become the antithesis for the multiplication of small actions (of labour) and insignificant individual forms:

The simple logic of form acts as contrast to much of the frenetic activity applied to realise the structure. (Labourwork 1 section 2.2).

The contrast between the two could be considered as building tension into the work. One denies the other; the 'truth' within the logic is undermined by the repetition's

failure to repeat accurately. In other words, the repetition may be identified as revealing a misnomer about the logic we apply to the form of a regular solid. This was particularly evident in Labourwork 3 - *At This Very Moment in this Work Where am I?* Here the 'wonky' structures deviate from the LeWitt originals. By introducing repetitive action through process the clarity of the object was compromised. The structural stability was altered from a clean and clear description of logical space, into organic unstable (wonky) structures, that further question the mathematical logic at their source through a failure to repeat. Mel Bochner highlights the awkward relationship between truth and logic when he considers his *Measurement Room* (1969):

Measurement is one of our means of believing that the world can be reduced to a function of human understanding. Yet, when forced to surrender its transparency, measurement reveals an essential nothing-ness. The yardstick does not say that the thing we are measuring is one yard long. Something must be added to the yardstick in order to assert anything about the length of the object. This something is a purely mental act ... "an assumption".

(Bochner, in Rorimer 2001, p184-5)

An acknowledgement that our factual world is only a '*function of human understanding*' leads us to a different vision. By looking for the difference between each repetition (the 'failure' of repetition) we are offered complexity beyond conformation of the repeat or the security offered within the fact.

The 'Crisis' of Repetition

To have an understanding that the singular, the different, has importance to the whole through repetition, there must be a common intelligence around 'the crisis of repetition'. Plato's '*Divided Line*' as 'simplified' for us in the Socratic Dialogue '*The Allegory of the Cave*' (Plato - found in *Book VII of The Republic*, 360 BC), highlights the problem of repetition deviating from the single truth and immediately brings about the first crisis of repetition: that if repetition is perceived as a representation, intrinsically different from the original, it cannot be a true repetition at all. A

consideration that repetition in itself is indeed impossible, not just as a Plato identified representation or mirror, but in its whole has important ramification on our consideration about what repetition is and how it operates.

But if we accept that the repeat is impossible then the heart of our relationship with reality, as identified through logic, can be undermined. Especially when our mechanisms for understanding require a fundamental belief in the repeat event, in order to pattern our systems of understanding. Such as may be found in laboratory conditions, the 'all things remaining equal' form of scientific repetition. Reliance on repetition could mean that the cultural foundations for truth are eroded through repetition's failure.

Søren Kierkegaard examined the specific question - 'is repetition possible?' - in his short book *'Repetition: A Venture in Experimenting Psychology by Constantin Constantius'* (1843). He considered whether anything could be repeated exactly as it happened the first time? He decides to test this by repeating a trip to Berlin, a place he had visited years before, in order to see if the experience was repeatable.

He concludes that repetition is the medium by which consciousness becomes possible. This is a very different idea than the Cartesian conception of - 'I think therefore I am!' for Kierkegaard it is more - 'I contradict myself therefore I am'. There is a collision of principles between the perfect form, or memory (embodied in the idealised form of thinking), and reality. Kierkegaard proposes that this is the point when we become conscious, when our idealised world collides and is broken by reality:

In reality as such, there is no repetition. This is not because everything is different, not at all. If everything in the world were completely identical, in reality there would be no repetition, because reality is only in the moment.
(Kierkegaard, 1978, p.274-275)

In Kierkegaard's construct, the two forms of ideal and reality, if communicated without fault, would result in a halting of consciousness, because things would just repeat without variation. Just like all the support characters in the film '*Groundhog Day*' (director: Ramis, H. 1993) we wouldn't be aware of it. It is through difference that we become aware. For Kierkegaard this form of difference is consciousness and the term he uses for it is 'individualisation'. He explores repetition in order to explain the process of individualisation based upon the contradictions of repetition. Kierkegaard is emphasising that no one has ultimate control, even within repetition.

Similarly though the labourworks embody a fundamental search for repetition, in reality they end up denying it. They exist on the shifting ground that allows no opportunity to settle, fitting more comfortably into a deconstructive paradigm that Deleuze outlines in one of his key terms - 'assemblage':

An assemblage is the dynamic interconnection of congruent singularities that remove the subject/object interface, yet retain elements of specificity. The human assemblage is a multiplicity that forms new assemblages with existing social and cultural assemblages of material movement, force and intensity.

(The English Research Institute, 2005)

The breakdown of the '*subject/object interface*' is of utmost importance, indicating that there may be more ways of identifying purpose or truth than through the traditional channels of critique. In Labourwork 5 - *Spoons* the labour plan is clear: to tie 3 plastic spoons back to back around the 'scoop' part of the spoon with a red rubber band, to form 3,104 units. The sculpture is then built from the ground up, with the legs of each unit slotting into the gap left between the rubber band, and the scoop of the spoon, on the corresponding units. In this way a pyramidal structure is formed.

This practical plan for labour - its process - is however, only equivalent to a printed equation; it is a sign or signification. The equation is descriptive of what happens but is

not interchangeable with the object itself. In a more fundamental context, gravity can stand alone without its descriptive equation, just as the art object can stand alone without the direct knowledge of its process. Yet the relationship between object and signifier can be challenged through the questioning eye of the observer. The observer provides the interface between other assemblages, which are in themselves unsettled - *'the dynamic interconnection of congruent singularities'* (assemblage). So the art object, by being available on many levels through reception, has the ability to shift (through concept) to the 'other'. In this way the labourwork utilises process as a conceptual signifier of both intent and content, repeated through assemblage. This demonstrates what Kate Armstrong argues is *'repetition as an ontological posit of the process of "coming-into-being"'* (2002, p.8).

Appropriation

One aspect of process that can claim a form of repetition all to itself, is appropriation. Whether borrowed elements or a whole copy, appropriation travels across fields of time and space to become re-figured, readdressed and repeated. More than just pastiche or tribute, appropriation has a long founded position within art that crosses many genres:

Artists appropriate when they adopt imagery, concepts and ways of making art that other artists have used previously, adapting these artistic means to their own interests. They also do so when they take objects, images or practices from popular (or foreign) cultures and restage them within the context of their own work either to enrich or erode conventional definitions of what an artwork can be. (Verwoert, 2006)

Though appropriation has some place at the core of creative practice, Marcel Duchamp's formal address of appropriation offered a new engagement with repetition. The appropriation of the art object through simple means, such as signing an everyday object (R. Mutt - *The Fountain*, 1917), do more than situate objects within different contexts, they multiply the singular into the plural and produce endless spin-

offs, either through actual replication (distinguished from one-another by minute but telling differences) or by association.

By dissolving the boundary between real life and art, through appropriation, Duchamp was operating a physically simple form of repetition, which nevertheless has complex results. From his own critical stance, his form of repetition obliterates the very thing he is using to express his ideas, the art itself. This form of annihilation, with its feet firmly planted in appropriation, is calling authorial agency and identity into question, pointing us towards a deconstructive view that works on more than one repetitious plane and in more than one way.

Duchamp is of course not the only practitioner of appropriation, many artists are using it, and it is now established as sitting comfortably within the postmodern frame. From Sherrie Levine, who plays with the theme of "almost same" in her photographs of Walker Evans originals, to Angela Bulloch who appropriates narratives and forms from across a wide range of sources. Within all of this work however, questions of authorship stand out, no matter what construct the appropriation is read within:

Appropriation has a contiguous relationship to the longstanding debate between 'originality' and 'imitation' consistently foregrounded in academic discussion of cultural practice from the Greeks to the late nineteenth century [...] Postmodernism appropriated and recast the discussion, installing something close to a culture of the copy in its shifting definition core.
(Welchman, 2001, p.4)

The type of appropriation seems important, and the appropriation of '*objects, images or practices*' all indicate different interests. Within the labourworks the form of appropriation is linked with the object through process, specifically the logical system of the work as presented in the object.

The Appropriated Logic or System

Labourwork 3 - *At This Very Moment in this Work Where am I?* approached most directly the issues of appropriation, and followed on from previous labourworks by questioning logic through repetition. It appropriates LeWitt's *Five Modular Structures (sequential Permutations of the Number Five)* (1972). Smithson says of these structures:

The high degree of structural organisation dislocates one's "point of view." One looks "through" his skeletal grids, rather than "at" them. The entire concept is based on simple arithmetic, yet the result is mathematically complex. Extreme order brings extreme disorder. The ratio between the order and the disorder is contingent. Every step around his work brings unexpected intersections of infinity. (Smithson, 1996, p.335)

LeWitt's original objects have clear, systematic and logical foundations. '*They are modular constructions with mathematic number systems at their source*' (Appendix: Labourwork 3 section 2.1). LeWitt is aware that there are limits to the purity of this logic, in his *Sentences on Conceptual Art* (1969) he observes:

Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach. (LeWitt, 1969, sentence no: 1)

Here he questions the hierarchy of art next to logic. The structures embody logic at their source yet express a creative objectivity beyond that logic, an objectivity Smithson identified as '*extreme disorder*' (Smithson, 1996). Krauss observed a similar phenomenon in LeWitt's work:

The experience of the work goes on exactly counter to "the look of thought," particularly if thought is understood as a classical expression of logic. (Krauss, 1978, p.55)

So, if through reception LeWitt takes us to an area 'between' art and logic with his very rational objects, perhaps we would expect the appropriation of those objects to do the

same. And yet, the result obtained from this particular appropriation, leads us even further from the idea that logic may elude to some kind of truth. The change in material, forces a change in process and leads to 'wonky' structures, structures that are even less able to adhere to the coherence of the original. In this case the appropriation has taken us further away from the source.

This particular appropriation is also reinstating process within the structure of the work, identifying it as a significant element. It is the failure of the repetition, within that process, that further betrays the logic of the form. What *Labourwork 3* explores, in a simple and pragmatic way, is the power/role of repetition within process.

Reproduction and a Historical Contingency

There is also a historical contingency to appropriation that has bearing on any new representation. Art is inevitably produced within its own history; what we may refer to as the historical agency of art. If our understanding of that history changes over time, as it is bound to do, so too does our understanding of that work when read from a different historical agency.

Appropriation has become a particular tool in contemporary art, requiring us to re-describe the work in altered terms relevant to the present day, shifting meaning in a way reminiscent of Raymond Williams' cultural reproduction.

The definition of the word reproduction is pluralistic within Williams's definition. He moves us away from the idea of repetition as a copy, towards ideas of cultural selection, officiated through the reproduction of aspects of culture, passed on, or appropriated, from person to person. The emphasis is neither of sameness nor difference, but culture born of a type of repetition, generative of either change or tradition, a form of cultural selection operating within a society. Williams embraces complexity in his form of reproduction while warning that the deepest replications of culture are neither good nor bad, rather, dominant or emergent, with the repetition of cultural 'normality' (right or wrong) being more deeply entrenched within the dominant

culture. In his book *Culture* (1981) he points to the 'variable autonomy' (Williams, 1981, p.193) between mainstream and marginal cultures:

Thus it is clear that if, on the one hand, we take cultural production as the production of newspapers and television programs, and, on the other hand, as the writing of poems and the making of sculpture, we have to observe, quite apart from the differences between the practices, radically different degrees of distance in their practical conditions. (Williams, 1981, p.191-192)

He points out that each cultural form is also observed and analysed '*according to the degrees of distance between the conditions of a practice and otherwise organised social relations*' (Williams, p.193), in other words, from the viewpoint of different cultural reproductions. The repetition then is more generative of reproduction within the dominant culture, which in Williams view is more '*determinate*' (Williams, p.189) while minority cultures remain more '*complex*' (Williams, p.189):

The reproduction of the practice is then in effect inseparable from reproduction of these determining relations, which are at the same time reproduced not only by the continuity of the practice but by the direct and general exertion of economic and political power. (Williams, 1981, p.189)

This wheels-within-wheels effect is repetition operating generatively, almost virally, repeating through cultural reproduction, and extending its influence to other forms of practice through generatively formed determinate values.

The repetition is in this case moving around the original object, re-forming its context and position within the current moment. This is a form of appropriation; not the usual description of reforming the event physically for a new time, but revisiting the singular from a new historical agency:

...that which is repeated has been – otherwise it would not be repeated – but

the very fact that it has been makes the repetition something new.
(Kierkegaard, 1983, p.381)

Jan Verwoert considers appropriation of objects as material in his essay *Apropos Appropriation; Why Stealing Images Feels Different Today* (2006); an object re-used, rather than a form re-made or re-visited. He discusses the voice of the object, when severed through time by appropriation, as being muted by history - expressive only of the change of time - bringing history to a standstill. Referring to works by Cindy Sherman and Robert Longo, Verwoert says:

These works convey an intense sense of an interruption of temporal continuity, a blackout of historical time that mortifies culture and turns its tropes into inanimate figures, into pre-objectified, commodified visual material, ready to pick up and use. (Verwoert, 2006)

Reading Time through Process

Sol LeWitt considers his work in relation to its time of making:

It is the objective of the artist who is concerned with conceptual art to make his work mentally interesting to the spectator, and therefore usually he would want it to become emotionally dry. There is no reason to suppose, however, that the conceptual artist is out to bore the viewer. It is only the expectation of an emotional kick, to which one conditioned to expressionist art is accustomed, that would deter the viewer from perceiving this art. (LeWitt, 1967, p.79)

What is important in relation to time agencies and appropriation is: '*to which one conditioned to expressionistic art is accustomed*'. Today's viewer is less likely to have been '*conditioned to expressionistic art*' due to the very success of the conceptual ideal that LeWitt advocates, and present in art since the 1960s. This raises the question as to what boundaries should art set itself when the '*conditioning*' of the viewer is informed by a healthy conceptual art tradition? LeWitt's *sentence* holds the clue. He professes that an artist should aim '*to make his work mentally interesting to*

the spectator, and therefore usually he would want it to become emotionally dry' (LeWitt, 1967, p.79). The assumption being, that we no longer engage mindfully with art if it is also providing an '*emotional kick*'.

This may have been a sound strategy of its time, but the commonality of '*dry*' art has altered our perception and created a new environment, a new time agency, within which the viewer has different expectations. The work in this study, perhaps indicates, that repetitive process is able to provide a re-injection of emotion without returning to an overly expressionistic tradition. This is achieved through the combination of labour and repetition. In the labourworks it is a reinjection of the hand in process.

CHAPTER 4

LABOUR – THE HAND AND REPETITION

All the labourworks have a significant relationship to hand labour. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when the repetition resides in the process of production, the action required to realise the repetition gives rise to an inquiry about the role the labour takes. In this case the labour is predominantly produced with the hand, which also instigated questions about the identity and ownership of the labour. How much residue of the labourer's (artist's) hand and will is evident in the final work? Meaning that any discussion around labour, relates closely to the chapter on authorship (chapter 5).

With the possible exception of the *Fulford in Fog Photographs*, all the labourworks have a nature that could be described of as 'labour intensive'. This is perhaps a definitive characteristic of the work produced: the intensive nature of the labour is observed, expressed and accountable through repetition.

There is precedence for this approach with artists such as Tara Donovan, Do Ho Sou and Allan McCollum, who all have an affinity with intensive labour, repeating actions and elements in large-scale works/installations. This contemporary group is understood in a different context to artworks of the '60s and '70s where the labour was heavily politicised, related to 'women's work' (Mierle Ukeles, *Manifesto for Maintenance Art*, 1969) or the presentation of labour offered as endurance: as in Bas Jan Alder's video works.

Today's artists are perhaps using the repetition of labour as spectacle; there is a gasp of amazement as we see Tara Donovan's meticulous stacking of plastic pint pots, repeated to form a vast landscape (*Untitled - Plastic Cups*, 2006), or Allan McCollum's cast and reconstructed individual objects (*Individual Works*, 1987 to date), currently running at over ten thousand. This labour, reminiscent of factory production, though utterly different in its purpose and consequent expression, is running counter to

today's push button culture, where objects and situations are dialled up at a distance - offering only a trace of human touch.

These works wear the labour and time on the outside; it is very difficult to observe the works without admiring the dedication to labour. This labour is not however, the labour of craft, it is not necessarily skilled labour and in fact is perhaps purposefully unskilled. The resulting artwork celebrates the mundane labour of the everyday: the repetitive, boring, undervalued and usually low remuneration labour, necessary to the survival of today's culture.

Mass Produced Low Value Materials

The choice of materials in relation to the labour is important. The industrial mark left behind on many of the chosen materials in the labourworks, particularly in Labourwork 5 - *Spoons*, binds them directly to an external manufacturable structure, whose elements are controlled and developed for entirely different reasons to that of the art object. These ready-made, mass produced materials bring with them questions about the assignment of authorship, contrasting with the personal nature of the manual labour applied to realise the artwork.

Ready-made artworks articulate a similar appropriation of elements - such as Carl Andre's bricks *Equivalent VII* (1966) or Duchamp's, *Fountain* (1917/1964). They too harness the external conventions of manufacture, though in this case they raise questions of authorship because of their lack of artisan labour. Essentially, they exclude traditionally defined marks of artistic authorship by eliminating the hand of the artist. The process of construction is purposefully minimal in Andre's works, and appears only as a signature in much of Duchamp's work.

The relationship between form and the constructive labour is different in the labourworks. It interacts with a more modernist idea of aesthetic quality, through the reinstatement of art process, as manifest in labour. Though the action is outside of what we may define as traditional art labour (carving, casting etc), it is pushed towards

that definition by its artistic intent, polarised opposite the manufacture of the material elements. However, whilst the labour may fall outside of external industrial manufacturing conventions, parallels can still be drawn between the almost obsessive repetition needed to construct this work (i.e. binding three spoons 3,091 times) and the labour utilised within industrial factory systems.

The piecework of a daily quota needed to complete the task, binds artistic production to that of industrial, especially early industrial labour. This is reiterated through the choice of materials, but there are important differences:

Traditional piecework lacks even the hope of a naïve young artist; workers have no intellectual control over their production, which is carefully watched and graded. It is a brutal life of necessity with few worker protections, where owners and property, not human beings, are always favoured by the law. (Sherlock, 2007, p.7)

In *Spoons*, the repeatability of the manufactured object is essential to the final work, as it stands counter to the unrepeatability of the repetitive labour. Reading backwards from the art object we may find that the very invisibility of the artist - while still being heavily conceptually present - can consequently link to the even more buried human labour, also present within the manufactured objects (i.e. plastic spoons). The labour utilised in manufacture, distanced through mechanisation, is still inevitable, even if only as a trace of the person who presses the button to turn on the machine.

Yet artistic labour, however repetitive, is separate from the role of hand labour within a mechanised capitalistic system or factory-based regime. Karl Marx considers:

Every kind of capitalist production, in so far as it is not only a labour-process, but also a process of creating surplus value, has this in common, that it is not the workman that employs the instrument of labour, but the instrument of labour that employs the workman. But it is only in the factory system that this

reversal for the first time acquires technical and palpable reality. (Marx, 1867, p.462)

The implication is that the maker's personal control over the labour is not accessible within the factory system. Esther Leslie makes this more explicit:

Marx had good reason to stress the great fluidity of the connection between segments in artisan labour [Handwork]. This connection appears to the factory worker on an assembly line in a detached, rarefied form. Independently of the worker's volition, the object being worked upon, comes within his range of action and moves away from him just as arbitrarily. (Leslie, 1998, p.7)

Without personal 'volition' the labour is employing the workman, creating a system where the hand labour is an extension of the mechanistic nature of the factory or machine.

In the labourworks the persona of the artist is fairly well hidden behind the 'process' - like craft-workers of ages, ever present but unknown. Though in this labourwork the artist is named, the work still goes against today's celebrity culture:

When Art comes from within, which is what it was for so long doing, it became a thing which seemed to elevate the man who made it above those who observed it or heard it and the artist was considered a genius or given a rating: First, Second, No Good, until finally riding in a bus or subway: so proudly he signs his work like a manufacturer. (Cage, 1978, p.129)

Skilful labour is traditionally a reliable marker of quality, but as already established, the kind of labour in the labourworks carries no value as skill, it evades the requirements for superiority or worth. So the link between the labour, as the quantifiable measure of quality or as the classical ideal of 'genius', becomes fuzzy. This is not only because of its post-Duchamp position in history, but by the reintroduction of the hand in the

labour.

Labour Revisiting Aura

In *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) Benjamin re-evaluates the significance of a link to the origins of the hand in art practice. He draws on history to broadly map the development of the tools of visual reproduction from wood blocks to the film industry. His interest is to study what repercussions this has on the art object and the culture it resides in. He is particularly interested in how the art object shifts from its original form through reproduction:

The technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced.
(Benjamin, 1936, p.215)

Benjamin perceives that the '*authority of the object*' is lost through reproduction; by this he refers to the loss of authenticity when the object is severed from its position in time and space, away from its historical context and accumulative histories. He packages this sentiment in the word '*Aura*' stating:

...that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. (Benjamin, 1936, p.215)

Esther Leslie, summarises his theory as:

The shift from artisan labour to industrial labour, with its growing redundancy of the hand in the processes of production, impacts on modes of memory and experience. Benjamin's delineation of modern, industrialized experience is shown to be redemptive. (Leslie, 1998, p.5)

It is important to ensure, at this point, that we know to what aspect of this work Benjamin's ideas may apply. Labourwork 5 – *Spoons* has more than one form of repetition:

1. The material - spoons and rubber bands - defiantly originating within the factory tradition as a multiple object.
2. The repeatability and artistic repetition of the hand labour - tying three spoons together with a rubber band.

I am not referring, in this instance, to the repeatability of the object in print or indeed in the video accompanying the work, that is dealt with later. Here, it is the repeatability of the labour that I would like to consider opposite Benjamin's theories. The work manages to reiterate his views while at the same time eluding them through the type of labour the repetition employs.

Benjamin equates aura with ritual, by returning to early art, and later, religious art:

We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function. In other words, the unique value of the “authentic” work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. (Benjamin, 1936, p.217)

He is optimistic about replication severing art from its aura, emancipating it from the ritual under which it had to operate, leaving room for a form of socialist production where the object could be based on more political ground:

...the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics. (Benjamin, 1936. p.218)

Using this construct, how then can the repetition within the labour of art production, as expressed in the labourworks, be understood? The process is set apart from the

ideals of aura because the mechanisms of production are more reminiscent of the factory system. But there is perhaps a ritual been expressed here too, in the sheer volume of repetitions required to complete the task, with some works such as Labourwork 1: *Brass Cube* and Labourwork 6: *Scribble Square* having limits set as external to the action of labour: i.e. when a 2-meter cube is completed or a defined area is black with scribbled ink. The external limit unapplied, would mean that the repetition could continue, infinitely repeating for the sake of the labour and repetition of that labour; offering no form other than the ritual of repetition - a Sisyphean like action, which could be described as a **repeat continuum**.

The ritual in this case is not expressive of magic or religion, as Benjamin outlined, but could be described as replicating and celebrating mundane, everyday actions of culture - the loop, the scribble etc. Actions, not conventionally viewed as rituals, appropriated for no reason outside of art for art's sake. It may also be possible to read the labour here as 'political', as having value within itself, using the art object to ritualise something that has no intrinsic value. Working back over Benjamin's theory, to re-establish a new aura that has political currency through its accessibility to all human experience, and converging with the socialist values that emerge so directly through Benjamin's writing. Corresponding with Duchamp, in that this type of labour equalises potential and offers it to all: everyone is an artist, all labour is art.

The Loop

Labourwork 1 - *Brass Cube* illustrates how labour can activate complexity, when a simple action, that of forming a loop, is repeated on a grand scale - specifically 300-hours of repetitive labour – looping. The definition for loop says:

1. *figure produced by a curve, or doubled string etc., that crosses itself:*
2. *attachment or ornament formed of a cord, thread, etc. so crossed and fastened at crossing;*
3. *ring or curved piece of material as handle etc..., endless strip of tape or film allowing continuous repetition;*

4. *(Computers) sequence of operations till some condition is satisfied.*

(The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1982, p.597)

The Labour action of this work adheres to two aspects of the definition 'loop': the first, being a simple physical formation of a loop, linked to other loops; secondly, there is also a macro definition of loop that the labour must '*satisfy*', that of '*sequential operations*'. This '*Sequence of operations*' is itself looped (as defined by the computer definition of loop), until there is a mass 2-meters square. The pre-determined '*condition*' is a regular solid of particular dimensions, and the '*sequence of operations*' is applied until the '*condition is satisfied*'. So the repetitive process of labour is a physical action to be identified under the definition loop, but also a sequence.

The sequential nature of this loop is important, as it is in this space that the repetition resides; it is also the space where the tension of this work is played out. The tension is realised through repetition as a battle between the control of the maker, over the potential chaos of the action. Without constant control over each individual action the 'singular' would escape the community or '*sequence of operations*' each is forced to inhabit; control ensures that the process continues relatively unchallenged by the individual until the '*condition is satisfied*'.

The macro process, defined as a '*computer*' loop, raises the question about the role of the artist/maker within this sequence. Is the artist purely a machine of labour, akin to the mechanistic sequencing of a computer (perhaps fulfilling Warhol's wish of artist as machine), or is the artist adding something within the limits of both the action of the loop, and the sequence of the loop? It could be argued that the tension between control and chaos, held within the gap of action and sequence, and realised through repetition (identified above), could indicate that the hand of the artist is essential to the resulting outcome of the work. The politics of this situation relates to ownership and whether it resides with the collective or the individual.

Limit

Some artists, Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhart, Kasimir Malevich et al employ repetition in the creative activity to explore the limit at the edge of human experience in order to glimpse at that which is the condition of existence. (Armstrong, 2002, p.37)

What is interesting in this statement is the use of the word 'limit', as an indicator of where '*the edge of human experience*' may be reached and glimpsed. Limits were identified within the labourwork, reached at a point at which a function, process or labour became closed or finished. The limit in the labourworks being the outer edge of what was possible under the rules of the work. For example, the 'primordial paste' process outlined in Labourwork 2 - *In-Formation*:

The resulting organic structures reached completion or an endpoint when it was impossible to balance any more beads on the top without changing the process. (Chapter 3, Labourwork 2 - 4.1)

In other words the structures reached their own limit in the process of production. Each repeated structure making up the whole, was then available for comparison. As Armstrong predicts, the invisible becomes visible through comparison across all limits (all the structures), revealing an inherent isomorphism (referenced in Chapter 6-Process).

The repetition has the potential to continue unchecked forever - repetition as a **repeat continuum**. Continuing endlessly unless it comes into contact with a limit, at which point it abruptly stops. It has already been established that the process was set prior to the labour of the work in a LeWitt-like fashion:

Once the idea of the piece is established in the artist's mind and the final form is decided, the process is carried out blindly. (LeWitt, 1969, sentence No. 28)

The limit in this case was where the labour applied to make each stalagmite form reaches a point of closure. The only way past this would be to change the labour pattern and therefore alter the original process. As LeWitt points out: the '*process*' (in this case process equates to labour) '*is carried out blindly*' with the idea leading the way through process. The effect of the limit was always to stop the repetition from continuing. It was established that in this work the function of a 'limit' could appear from various sources.

As well as the material and process limit outlined above, logical external limits were also observed. Systems whose knowledge is general currency, such as the regular solid (cube, pyramid etc), were observed to impose limits on the labour. In some cases, number systems became a device to limit, contain or control the action of the labour; in other cases the limit was internal to the process, closing the action of repetition through the final destruction of its own labour (erasure). All these elements of limit are considered separately in the following subheadings.

Number Systems

Number systems have their own logic and '*assumptions*', as Bochner identified (in Rorimer 2001, p184-5), and were important to the labourworks, as they often held a significant role in communicating the accumulation of objects, or in some cases repetitive action up to the limit of the system.

In Labourwork 7 - *Scribble to the Count of Five*, the number systems were deliberately appropriated and enforced to define the limits of the work. The activity was only allowed to stop after 500 repetitions. The limit being the number system of 500 repetitions consisting of scribbling while counting to five (repeated five times). This was set during the definition of process at the beginning of the action.

The Regular Solid as a Limit

Similar to number systems the regular solid, cube, square, or pyramid provided specific limits to the action. Just as LeWitt's structures were '*Established in the artists*

mind (LeWitt, 1969) and carried out through repetition until the ideal was met.

In the formula for Labourwork 1 - *Brass Cube*, the importance of the regular solid as a limit is obvious:

The Aim: *To make a brass cube 2 meters square*

The Process: *Hand looping brass staple wire*

The Task: *300hrs of repetitive labour* (Townasley, 2007)

The limit is identified by the predetermined 2-meter square cube, and establishes the boundary at which the labour must stop. It was impossible to envisage at the beginning of the making that the labour would take around 300hrs.

In Labourwork 5 – *Spoons*, the number systems employed were derivative of the structure the artist decided upon - the regular solid of a three sided pyramid 8ft tall. It took precisely 9273 plastic spoons to construct that particular sized structure and 3091 rubber bands to bind them as the process demanded. The mathematic system is external to creative desires or wishes; it is enforced by necessity, adding more or less spoons would have made the structure incomplete. The limit is set not through creative order but within a form of logic, sitting at the '*limit of human experience*' (Armstrong, 2002) and beyond our control.

External Contingencies Providing a Limit

The scale of the work was defined during the early stages of process, and in this way provided a specific limit, when the designated scale was reached through labour. The scale may have been decided due to specific requirements of space or site, and in some cases was very literally acting as a boundary to the activity of the work. In Labourwork 2 - *In-Formation*:

The room itself acted as a limit to the process of the work, which without the specific boundaries of space could theoretically continue infinitely or until

another boundary is met. (Appendix: Labourwork 2 – 4.2)

Limits were also observed to offer self-closure, due to the contingencies of either material or labour. For instance, where the chosen materials were physically incapable of building a larger scaled structure without breaking or collapsing. Or in the case of labour, where the practical task of repeating an action was no longer possible, maybe due to architectural access and the scale the work, or due to limitations in the physical strength of the maker.

Erasure

Another important, yet less obvious form of limit, was found when a repetition was taken to its somewhat illogical end - to the point of its own destruction or erasure.

A more physical form of erasure may be observed in 'Auto Destructive Art': art that reaches a limit by overseeing its own destruction through the process of its action. Gustav Metzger's *Acid Works* (1961) provides a good example, using sheets of nylon sprayed with acid, contorting them into different shapes, before the nylon totally dissolved. The limit was reached when nothing existed, one material negating the other, leaving us with nothing. However, the work also demonstrated both auto-destructive and auto-constructive properties, the process being constructive of contorted nylon shapes, formed before the total erasure of the object.

Erasure is particularly visible within Labourwork 6 - *Scribble Square*, where the action of scribbling was carried out until a defined area, 1-meter square, was black with ink. The original surface is erased through repetition, covering the drawn elements held within the development of the drawing; shapes and shadows of layers of scribble, erased by the eventual black surface. In effect, all the usual artistic considerations associated with drawing were negated. Structure, form, narrative, were all overlooked in preference for the process, the labour of scribbling repeatedly until the whole area was black, annihilating the intrinsic purpose through repetition.

This drawing followed in reverse order Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953), where Rauschenberg erased a Willem de Kooning drawing over a period of a month by rubbing it out. This destructive act had its critics:

What else, in God's name, could you think about his wanting to erase a de Kooning drawing? The implications were so blatantly Freudian, the act itself so obviously symbolic (if good natured) patricide. (Tomkins, 1980, p.96)

Tomkins sees the act of erasure as Rauschenberg killing off his artistic father, an erasure in Freudian terms. However, viewed in another way this could be a constructive operation, a re-invention of drawing. Rauschenberg wrote that he simply wanted to find out:

...whether a drawing could be made out of erasing (Rauschenberg, 1976, p.75)

So through erasure something else is formed and a 'return' can be observed; not a return of the original but a return to the significant elements, in this case a return to drawing (Galpin 1998). It is not unfeasible to take the constructive and deconstructive parts observed in erasure as a metaphor for thinking through a broader culture:

...an acceleration of the innate self-destructive tendencies of culture, so that (quite literally) a new culture might emerge, phoenix-like, from the ashes of the old (Brooks & Stezaker. 1975, p.12).

Rauschenberg's drawing starts off full and illustrative and ends empty, with only the residue of the action of labour present. Similarly, but in reverse order, the *Scribble Drawings* start as empty and white, then through the application of repetitive labour they conclude in the annihilation of the original state. We now perceive a full and black surface, a transformative process generative of both erasure and regeneration. The

drawing presents a history that contains the binary oppositions of empty and white or full and black.

Binary Oppositions - Deconstructing the Scribble

Existence/non-existence, black/white and full/empty are unarguably binary oppositions. There is also a conceptual leap offered here, from the binaries of black/full and white/empty towards the oppositions of existence and non-existence. Heidegger proposed that the condition of our existence must also be non-existence through his concept of Dasein:

“Death is a possibility-of-Being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. (Heidegger, 1927, p.251)

By assimilating non-existence (our death) we also contemplate existence. Like the sentiment of *‘Erased de Kooning’* Heidegger advocates a mode of existence in relation to history where existence is inherently linked, by non-existence, to all those who have gone before. By living through ‘authentic’ repetition, we are free to live our lives in the name of past existence, choosing our way of ‘being’ through repetition, assimilating the condition of history outside of a plane of pure singularity.

Developing on from Heidegger’s historical sensitivity through a specific binary opposition, Fred Orton highlights the importance of such oppositions as the origin to deconstructive theory, via propositions made by Jacques Derrida. Emphasising the dismantling of conflicting hierarchies, as deconstructive theory overturns them, to produce a non-hierarchical system:

Deconstruction has two (or three) main strategies. The first strategy is to identify the conceptual or binary opposition which operate within metaphysics and then to dismantle the implicit hierarchy established by that opposition...
(Orton, 1989, p.36)

Derrida tends to deal more specifically with text:

It is not enough to say that writing is conceived out of this or that series of oppositions. Plato thinks of writing, and series to comprehend it, to dominate it, on the basis of opposition as such. In order for these contrary values [...] to be in opposition, each of the terms must simply be external to the other, which means that one of these oppositions (the opposition between inside and outside) must already be accredited as the matrix of all possible opposition.
(Derrida, 1972, p.103 [as quoted by Orton])

Within the specific and wider linkage of the binary, an explicitly hierarchical relationship exists:

To do justice to this necessity is to recognise that in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment.
(Derrida, 1987, p.41)

The hierarchy is easy to identify in Labourwork 6 – *Scribble Square*, through the sequential nature of the process as the pure white is superseded by the black; black being dominant over white through erasure. But Derrida refers to a second phase of deconstruction, one he calls 'overturning' (Orton, 1972, p.36):

...a deconstruction of the whole system of oppositions allows Derrida to situate his own enterprise - his own placing between - at the site where the elements of each of these operations confront each other and where the interfaces are proliferated, disseminated, spread out, dispersed, throughout the whole text of metaphysics. (Silverman, 1983, p.106-7)

Continuing to apply deconstructive theory to this work, we see that it is the 'process' carried out through labour, (scribbling) that is the tool of 'overturning'. The scribble itself identifies the binary oppositions and puts them in a situation where one cannot exist without the other. Their positioning becomes '*disseminated*' through process, and the signage of black or white dispersed through the action of the process itself. The subjectivity of the two oppositions becomes secondary to the action of process. Process in this case is acting as '*différance*' (Derrida), the '*indecidable*' that avoids becoming a third object but nevertheless alters the hierarchy of the opposition, turning it back upon itself at any stage of its action:

Indecidables operate where philosophical oppositions arise. They are not elements of the opposition, yet they mark the oppositions and relate different oppositions to one another. Indecidables have a double character. They seem to raise the possibility of turning in either direction within a whole variety of philosophical oppositions, yet they do not assume the position of either side of such oppositions. (Orton, 1972, p.37)

In the labourworks, the labour becomes the 'deconstructive indicator', e.g. scribble, loop, etc. Silverman identifies deconstructive indicators as:

Although deconstructive indicators may themselves have indecidable character, they are not as such indecidables. Some examples include: trace, mark, border, margin, referral, blank, edge, etc. Each of these indicators is the marking out or writing in the place where a limit occurs. In each case a filled space occupies both sides. What is outside the limit is at the same time an inscription of the inside. What is on one side - this side, for instance - of the history of metaphysics indicates the possibility of the other side. The limit, mark, border, margin, etc. is the writing of that difference. Deconstructive indicators link one side to another, they serve as the hinge between - bringing together and at the same time separating off the two. (Silverman, 1983, p.108)

Silverman's theories can be directly applied to Labourwork 6 – *Scribble Square*. The paper is marked with an empty space (a limit) of 1-meter square. This empty space is then filled with a process of scribbling, until it is black with ink - another limit. If the empty white square, and the full black square, are the binary oppositions, then it is the process of scribbling that acts as the '*hinge between*', the deconstructive indicator, that brings the two states together, while at the same time providing the limit that separates them out.

The repetition here is not just physical but philosophical, the process is both the beginning and the end of the existence or precept of this work. The labour action of scribbling physically brings into being the binary opposites; while at the same time denies them existence. Process, as carried out through labour, is far more than a signifier or even the signified, it is in Derridian terms *différance*.

Absence and Presence

While the labour may be seen as bringing the binary oppositions into effect, it is also traditionally observed as the force that generates the realisation of the work. This is not however always prescriptive of the object of the art, only of the situation where the object exists. Parallels can be drawn between the labourworks and contemporary experimental music, particularly from John Cage through to later composers:

Experimental composers are by and large not concerned with prescribing a defined time-object whose materials, structuring and relationships are calculated and arranged in advance, but are more excited by the prospect of outlining a situation in which sounds may occur, a process of generating action (sounding or otherwise), a field delineated by certain compositional 'rules'.

(Nyman, 1999, p.4)

The analogy is especially relevant to Labourwork 5 – *Spoons*, but not simply because it is also a time-based work. The structure of the work is not primarily built to achieve

the formal pyramidal structure/form nor was it specifically subject driven, though of course they all have a role to play. The primary indicator of intent lies within the process. A 'process', similar to that identified by Nyman: '*outlining a **situation** in which sounds may occur, a **process** of generating action*' (Nyman 1999) in this case the process of decay.

Disparity must of course be identified here. The 'situation' of *Spoons*, in the form Nyman refers, is the pyramidal form - the formalist object of the work. This carries with it the '*process for generating action*', in the random decay of rubber bands. The object is installed, and rather than that being the conclusion of this work it is only the beginning. The 'situation' is set for the 'generation' of action, that of decay. Decay, through its action of undoing illuminates its opposite generative action, that of the labour, tying together 3 spoons with one rubber band. The absence (of the labour) is made present by the mirrored destruction: the action of material return.

The absence of presence is referred to in Cage's *Lecture on Something* (1959):

This is a talk about something and naturally also a talk about nothing. About how something and nothing are not opposed to each other but need each other to keep on going. (Written with silences omitted) (Cage, 1959, p.129)

This analysis equalises any hierarchy evident in binary oppositions. In *Spoons* this sentiment is paralleled, in that we are being made aware of a something - the labour of forming a rubber band to hold 3 spoons together, through to the action of a rubber band snapping – undoing the labour and leaving nothing. The material returns to its original state, making visible the invisible action of labour through its absence. Because of the reversed decay, the labour is temporally indicated by being undone through time.

The important conclusion is that the essential role that labour plays, does not just end with the object. Labour, is not just harnessed for its productive value, it also has

conceptual significance. When read in conjunction with process it can identify anomalies in the logic of the work, offering insight within a classical and postmodern frame.

CHAPTER 4

AUTHORSHIP AND REPETITION

The process within the labourworks identifies strict boundaries and instigates precise operations, under which the labour is carried out. As for experimental music, the process operates; *a field delineated by certain compositional 'rules'* (Nyman, 1999, p.4). This leaves very little room for authorial expression, similar to the minimal art of the 1960s. Robert Smithson wrote, referring to the art of that time:

*'It is, in fact, devoid of all classical ideals of space and process. It is brought into focus by a strict condition of perception, rather than by any expressive means. Perception and a deprivation of action and reaction brings to mind the desolate, but exquisite, surface structures of the empty "box" or "lattice". As action decreases, the **clarity** of such surface structures increases. This is evident in art when all representations of action pass into oblivion. At this stage, lethargy is elevated to the most glorious magnitude.'* (Smithson, 1996, p.14)

'Clarity' in this context refers to the communication of a logical precept (in LeWitt's case mathematical progression), positioning the idea or concept over the action of production. So, read within the confines of the 1960s it would seem that eliminating process was considered a mechanism for revealing truth:

LeWitt's search for the most universal and impersonal means of creating art may at first appear to be the exclusive domain of the Minimal art of the 1960s, in which presumably only basic visual experiences, whether of colour, shape, or material, are permitted and in which the idea is so dominant that the actual execution of the work has little or nothing to do with the artist's own hand. (Rosenblum, 1999, p,258)

These labourworks are not aiming to overturn this approach but they are re-establishing process, not in a classical sense by returning to the ideal of genius or reliance on 'aura', but through a complex relationship between repetition and labour. The repetition here works in two ways: 1- in its process, 2- time based (in the changing context). What is still held back is the opportunity for the expression of the authorial 'self'. The individual is not opened to exposure; the process reveals leakage but only due to the impossible repetition of an act, resulting in difference. The person of the artist is not revealed, and the 'ego' is not exercised.

Failure

The overall logic of some of the final objects in the labourworks could be described as socially collective, especially where they reference geometry, maths or the regular solid. We all possess knowledge of the logic of a cube, a pyramid, a square etc. yet, the final condition is never quite achieved accurately, they are all nearly correct, nearly accurate, just approximations of the shapes they aim to describe. The detail is wrong, it fails to describe according to the strict logic of the form:

The absurdity of the process of this work becomes important here, primarily through failure. The failure of the process as a logical action to satisfy the condition of a cube is obvious. There are many more practical ways of achieving a 2-meter brass cube that would produce a far more logically complete and correct form (welding sheet metal for example). The structure at its perimeters has obviously failed within mathematical terms. What then becomes important is the community of each action or loop to offer any semblance of structure. The triumphal failure of each loop to be replicated challenges the status of the 'logical' form within this ergonomic setting. (Appendix: Labourwork 1 - 6.3)

So through labour, this state of failure is offering something, it is expressing more, it is perhaps descriptive of nature or perhaps close to the 'unrepresentable other' that Armstrong depicts. This then indicates that some form of expression is operating

within the work. The expression is not however a personal emotional expression akin to expressionism or even the promotion of self, prevalent in some contemporary cultures as Benjamin identifies:

The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the "spell of the personality," the phony spell of a commodity. (Benjamin, 1936, p.224)

In fact, it is very hard to identify the personality of the individual within the work, even when the person of the artist is partially visible as in Labourwork 8 - 'Satie 840. Yet some authorial persona still emerges. It is through the labour that the individual or differences start to be observed. This distinction emerged through self-reflection on the process applied in Labourwork 1 - *Brass Cube*:

'It is difficult to define the amount of personal intervention that goes into the productive activity/manual labour. How much am I allowing myself to control the work? This becomes a constant tension or concern while making the artwork. To be able to exercise just the right control over each repetition, what is the optimum mood I should inhabit? Complex and unruly, every repetition defies the last in its need to escape the community it exists in. The action of making is now controlling me; too carefree and the actions become chaotic and petulant, too controlling and all expression, character and spirit is lost.

(Townesley, 2007)

Benjamin refers directly to the incalculable relation between the 'mood' of the person controlling the action and the resulting event:

The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is a familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. (Benjamin, 1936, p.230)

The opportunity for a leakage of creative control, is somehow drawing an antipathy with the logic embedded within the process. The form of repetition has been identified prior to the labour process - logical, often quantifiable (300hrs) and specific, but within these boundaries there is always opportunity for expression, however small. This links authorship (as creative expression) to failure because it is the failure of the repetition where the differences leak expression. LeWitt equates authorship with ego (*Sentences On Conceptual Art*, 1969), raising complex questions about motives for the production of art:

“The artist's will is secondary to the process he initiates from idea to completion. His wilfulness may only be ego.” (LeWitt, 1969, sentence no. 7)

Turning this around, we could perhaps conclude that the hand labour leaks expression, through the failure or 'crisis' of repetition. In other words, authorship in this framework is lost to the repetition of the action or 'moment':

The minute inaccuracies of each repeated action, measured over time, leak or record failure; a failure of the human hand over action. So the logical integrity of each structure is eroded, resulting in inaccurate forms. The 'wonky' structures highlight an ergonomic reality/intelligence that records a broader human experience through the repetition of action. Failure becomes expressive, in that it differs from the clear lines of logic. The repetition betrays the accuracy of each action, revealing difference, and leakage through difference inevitably alters the resulting object. (Appendix: Labourwork 3 - 6.1)

So the question must be asked, at what point does the system take over from the artist or vice versa? Gustav Metzger perhaps answers this question when referring to his 'Auto-destructive' art:

The artist desires and achieves a certain form, rhythm, scale: intends, and identifies with, all the transformations, predictable and unpredictable, that the

work is capable of. At a certain point, the work takes over, is in activity beyond the detailed control of the artist,... (Metzger, 1964, p.404)

Authorship and Reception

Another factor to take into account when considering authorship is that there must also be a viewer looking at the work, experiencing the art through reception. Aristotle proposes in the book *Poetics* (335 BC), that imitation, viewed as a form of emotional repetition through reception, is inherent to the human condition and useful as a way of learning. While referring primarily to poetry, Aristotle sees repetition as advantageous in education, providing moral insight and growth. He advocated that experiencing emotions, such as fear and pity, through the rhetoric of a successful tragedy, the viewer or audience could undergo a catharsis. This point of view identifies a fixed authorial message that can be transferred between the original text (or art object) to the recipient, a repetition in the form of imitation – a mimesis divergent to Plato's, though still based on imitation.

Reception theory considers the viewer within a more contemporary context, offering an alternative to the static transfer of original authorial meaning. Reception theory originated from the work of Hans-Robert Jauss in the late 1960s and has been described as:

...opposing traditional views of signification that privilege strong concepts of authorial intention and the related view that meaning inheres in texts. Both of these views situate the reader as the recipient of fixed, intentional meaning. Instead, reception theory emphasizes the range of possible "positions" that a reader may occupy... (Calhoun, 2002)

To some extent, this helps us to contextualise the repetition that happens through the return visit or viewing of any artwork, whether it is itself fixed or time-based each return event will be different.

The returning viewer became the problem that instigated the field of aesthetics. Lord Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley Cooper) advanced the idea that a moment in time, which if revisited either a second before or a second after, would be different. He did this through his theory 'the law of divinity', from which aesthetics is born. Aesthetics is not interested in how repetition relates to singularity or platonic truth, in other words a static authorial base. It is not even concerned about whether change exists. Aesthetics is the judgement of a work, our experience in front of a work, in the moment of viewing. By discriminating at a sensory or receptive level, aestheticians are thinking about repetition as judgements, as subjective and potentially different each time. Of course the idea that there is an aesthetic hierarchy of judgement brings with it a cultural and political contingency. The consideration that taste can be developed and fostered indicates a social zeitgeist that can alter or change our aesthetic understanding of an object through time, altering our relationship to authorship through reception.

This is something artists have themselves challenged through repetition. Warhol's *Brillo Box* (1964) brings to aesthetics the problem of repetition held within the form (as does much of the work of the 1960s). A copy of Steve Harvey's industrial design for the Brillo Box, is then repeated by Warhol, resulting in two forms of repetition - appropriation and repeat production. The work causes problems for placing aesthetic judgment; traditional constructs such as authorship, style, concept, execution, context, material, all become points for debate and confuse our conventional understanding of the aesthetic original.

Authorship Deferred

Derrida provides us with another way of observing authorship through the receptive relationship between object and viewer. In Derrida's framework, authorship is lost through reception, deferred through 'trace' to the 'Other', acting only within the present moment. Derrida claims that through authorial responsibility there is a shift in form, brought about through repetition, which changes concepts in time. He writes:

I interrupt for an instant: "in the present work" the unrepresentable has therefore presented itself, a relation with the Other (Autre) that defeats any gathering into presence, to the point where no "work" can be rebounded or shut in upon its presence, nor plotted or enchained in order to form a book. The present work makes a present of what can only be given outside the book. And even outside the framework. (Derrida, 1991, p.31)

If we consider the viewer of the time-lapse animation *Spoons* (who actually may stand for a viewer of any work, anywhere, in any form), they will observe the record of the decay (the time-lapse movie), which itself logs the random decay of the repeated action originally applied; the viewer becomes implicated in the chain of authorship. This is repetition working in a physical, intellectual and time based manner. Itself claiming authorship without possession and shifting context through trace:

To be sure, you are the author of the text you read here, that can be said, but you remain within an absolute heteronomy. You are responsible for the other, who makes you responsible. Who will have obligated you. [...] [T]here is nothing you can do about it, and unwittingly you will have read what will have made only possible, from out of the Other, what is happening at this very moment.' (Derrida, 1991, p.25)

In this way repetition is itself helping to shift meaning. Its authorship is not dictatorial, it has no sense of its own responsibility, it is just generative, working in all directions at all times, multiplying and shifting, amplifying and muting without ever altering the original object.

CHAPTER 5

Time Repeated

It could be said that when we refer to repetition we are actually contemplating time. The singular word time is far from singular if we look at it from all its possible viewpoints. Time can be a continuity, bringing unity to experience within an endless linear expanse, stretching forwards or backwards in space, providing us with time to order or solve, a Newtonian time. There is also a consideration that time, in itself, is just a human construct; Gottfried Leibniz identified time as simply a tool that humans use to compare events and sequence understanding. Time could also be viewed as a collection of capsules or fragments in time, infinite moments of continual birth and death. Each moment gathered together and sensitive to the circular movements of time and recurring events in history, making up time in a fractillian mode that is never-ending, always repeating.

Digital Media

Time plays a fundamental role in the repetition found in the labourworks, where repetition is generally sequential, and simply for that reason has a relation to time that is essential to its existence and development. However, the relation between time and repetition has emerged in different guises, raising questions about temporality or the return event that may be identified through endurance, boredom or anticipation. Digital media has had rather a significant role in bringing these issues to the work.

Technology is a form of toolmaking, body extension. Technology is not art and not invention. It does not concern itself with the undefined, the inexplicable. It deals with the affirmation of its own making. (Serra, 1994, p.19)

As much of the repetition has been identified as existing in hand labour, it may at first seem incongruous to now refer to digital media. But as Serra states:

All technology is a hand extension (Serra, 1996, p.98)

His statement anticipates the edge of new media research, where tactility and touch is becoming the interface between the human and computer. So the leap to digital media has not been too extreme, and it played an increasing role within the development of the labourworks. It was initially, simply used to make visible the instances of labour and repetition employed in the work, instances that were lost or erased through process over time. This is most particularly referenced in Labourwork 7 - *Scribble to the Count of 5* where digital scans were made at intervals of five seconds (counting to five), repeated 500 times during the development of the drawing. In fact, the process erases its own progression (as discussed under *erasure*), and is then partially rediscovered through presenting 500 'moments' of process, held within the timescale of the work. Moments that in turn are obliterated or over written by the gesture of the next five-second process - the next moment.

The format of this work in digital terms is multifaceted. It begins with the **digital image**, which is then compiled into a **time-lapse movie** and presented in a **video installation** comprising of five screens all portraying a different development of a single drawing to the same rules.

Each of the digital formats, with the addition of **real-time video recording** (Labourwork 8 - *Satie 840*) and issues of **the loop**, are now considered separately, with an aim to interrogate their individual relation to time and repetition, as perceived within the labourworks.

The Role of the Secondary Witness - The Camera Itself

Life is never fixed and stable. It is always mercurial, rolling and splitting, disappearing and re-emerging in a most unpredictable fashion.

(Eiseley, 1949, p.69-70)

The literary naturalist Loren Eiseley's prose became the informative starting point for the collection of 52 photographs of a rural Staffordshire landscape *Fulford in Fog* (recorded within Labourwork 7 - *Scribble to the Count of 5*). The images are a record of a mid November walk in thick fog. The experience of the walk fitted precisely Eiseley's quote.

The photographs capture instances of emergence and disappearance within, and of, the landscape. As the fog closes in, the topography is abstracted, both visually and contextually - always 'mercurial, rolling and splitting'. The camera is moving - neither 'fixed' nor 'stable' - while the fog obliterates the past and hides the future - offering only the caption of a moment of stillness, within the perpetual motion of the walk. (Appendix: Labourwork 7 – 2.1)

Photography can offer us a moment in time as no other medium can; the speed of the shutter being the birth and death of a moment that results in an image. While at the same time, the continuity of the experience can never be captured within a fixed instant. The camera is a secondary witness. Rather than capturing the continuation of time that the eye experiences, it enters the frame from its own point of view. In this way the photograph fails, it cannot capture in physical terms the exhausting consistency of change (linear time), though it alludes to it through association. What the camera can do but the eye can not, is transform time into a capsule, capture a moment, a singular event. In this sense the photographic process acts like memory, the recall possible only through experiential association with similar situations, or emerging from the image itself. The simulacra of the core-experience (the photograph) in turn being generative of new experience.

So repetition is being opened out in different ways. We have the core experience repeated now as an image, which is then replayed or repeated through reception to the viewer, who may through significance to their own memory and association, make repeat connections within their own experience. Each repetition has a different relation to time; the experiential continuity of 'real' time (that the artist experienced), moving to

the momentary, a capsule of time captured (the photograph), unfolding through reception into real time again and linking through association, memory, and experience, to a non present time - the 'other'. Which in turn, connects back (through time) to experiences that repeat a similar sentiment or event to the original image. This whole process could be defined as repetition operating in a circular fashion as a **return event**.

Time-Lapse Movie (or Animation)

The time-lapse animation appears like all movies and videos as a sequence of images, put together to produce a record of change through time, usually evident in movement. What is offered in the time-lapse animation (and the real time moving image) is a comparative opportunity for perceiving the difference between each repetition. Whether the movement is with the gaze of the camera, or with the alteration in object, it is through repetition that we are able to perceive the action. Repetition as a **return event** makes visible both change and movement.

The time-lapse animation is played at a faster rate than the video or the moving images that we are more readily in contact with through television or film. In this way it can access the image in a more temporal manner (in a time outside of real time), conveying time captured as moments in time and presented via a repeated photographic mechanism.

This was particularly observed in the decay of the pyramid in Labourwork 5 – *Spoons*; the temporality of sequence is made visible, as the time-lapsed action is held within a different yet parallel timescale - one physically inaccessible to us living in real time. Like the classic subject of rotting fruit (Sam Taylor-Wood, *Still Life*, 2001), the time-lapse animation speeds up the world, making the concept of decay even more accessible.

In this way the animation becomes something in itself - a simulacra of the actual object. In Baudrillard's terms:

Where as representation attempts to absorb simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, simulation envelopes the whole edifice of representation itself as simulacrum. (Baudrillard, 1981, p.6)

So the time-lapse animation of the decay becomes 'more' than the object itself, even when shown next to the 'real' thing.

The signified and the referent are now abolished to the sole profit of the play of signifiers, of a general formalization in which the code no longer refers back to any subjective or objective "reality", but to its own logic. (Baudrillard, 1975, p.127)

Utilising these terms opposite Labourwork 5 – *Spoons*, the 'referent' object, the pyramid, is only accessible within our own time when witnessed without the full overview that the animation provides - the 'signifier'. The repetition of the event (the animation as 'signifier') becomes the simulacra that move us into the 'hyperreal'.

Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. (Baudrillard, 1981, p.1)

The paradox is that in this work, 'decay' (traditionally of death) is also the generative field by which the repetition (time-lapse), through difference, reinvents the new - the simulacra. The simulacrum of time-lapse photography makes real or hyper-real what is temporally impossible.

The Video and Video Camera

Video and film is capable of presenting a recorded sequence presented within a timescale comparable to the original event.

A film operator shooting a scene in the studio captures the images at the speed of an actor's speech (Benjamin, 1936, p.213)

The external eye of the video camera makes its own copy of events, its eye fixed, non-judgmental and able to retell the story within a real time context.

Krauss questions whether '*The medium of video is narcissism?*' in her essay *Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism* (1976). She studies video of the 1970s observing that:

Unlike the other visual arts, video is capable of recording and transmitting at the same time-producing instant feedback. The body is therefore as it were cantered between two machines that are the opening and closing of a parenthesis. The first of these is the camera; the second is the monitor, which re-projects the performer's image with the immediacy of a mirror. (Krauss, 1976, p.52)

Repetition, as a doubling, is more directly obvious in video. The doubling of subject through the medium of video can reach a type of infinity, if appropriated within the moment of time that Krauss talks about - the subject feeds the subject feeding the subject etc. In *Satie 840* the artist is present and in being partially visible, during the two and a half hour long performance, there is a representation of the original repetitive act of chalking and rubbing out numbers sequentially, until the number 840 is reached. The representation is itself a doubling, but in this case the incidence of playback is separated from the event by time. Taking Krauss's observations regarding the close role of reception in relation to the action, there is also a feedback of reception - reception that in itself can be re-visited and doubled again, through return viewing.

Repeat viewing is interesting to the artist as it is usually out of their control, for the incidence of returning to the object of art is not generally mediated by the artist. So the question arises as to how the repeat viewing affects the object, what does repeat viewing do to judgement (aesthetics)? What are the modes of time that are being

exchanged?

This is very difficult to answer, but what could be proposed, is that time is controlled more directly by the viewer in the repeat visits than it is by the object. Repeat viewing can transcend the here and now, becoming circular in its reference to time, both reaffirming and indicative of change.

The viewer is associating a different situation to each repeat view. The moment of time of each view is different to that of any other. Here there is a clash between linear time and the moment. The viewer brings with them repetition held within the specific situation - the moment, which in itself is then assimilated back within linear time. In this way the focus of time can interchange between each frame, and the repetition operating in each frame takes different roles.

Authorship is now passed to the viewer, as connections, affirmations and differences act upon each returned event. This links with Derrida's theory on infinite responsibility through authorship, crossing from the original through to the viewer, reader etc, making authorship responsible to the consumer, within and of, each moment in relation to situation. If that moment or situation is different, then it stands to reason that the reception of that moment will also be different, even if the original remains static. Thus through reception, in the repeat viewing, authorship is shifted through time and repetition. (as discussed in chapter 5 - *Authorship*)

All digital media has the possibility to be infinitely repeatable in its form, and this could equate with what Benjamin refers to as '*Mechanical reproduction*' (1936), but for the digital age. As such the historical contingency, comes to bear most particularly around digital media:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history

to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. (Benjamin, 1936, p.214)

Video Installations

Hans Belting identifies the idea of experiencing video installation as a moment in time brought about by the viewer's 'situation', coupled with the longevity of the situation of the work:

Video installations dramatize the problem of time, since they exist only for as long as they are actually on display. In contrast to videotape, which can be played anywhere, the video installation, like theatre, is linked to a performance situation. But unlike theatre, it has no text; and unlike film, no screenplay. Its picture sequence can be experienced only in the spot, that is, in a given space. It does not lend itself to be documented with photographs, nor does it offer itself for easy description. It can be captured only in its own medium, the video. (Belting, 2003, p.85)

This does not exclude the return event, but makes the presence of time more immediate, more pressing, held within a larger pocket of time and a larger overarching moment, that in itself, incorporates the viewer's moment. There is however, an external limit to the action of the work, delineated through the timeframe of the exhibition/installation.

The Loop

The loop as related to 'labour' (Chapter 3) has specific characteristics, in this instance it is reframed within digital media, particularly the moving image. The development of video and film art has offered us channels of expression that have the ability to cut through time and space. The tools of editing allow for dynamic interceptions within the natural flow of things, offering opportunities for holding action still or repeating it. Tools that in themselves become generative of different worldly outcomes. For example, the video works of Koki Tanaka where games are played with mundane and everyday

objects, intercepting actions or repeating them until they become extraordinary or bizarre. For example, his work 'Men and Women' (2004) showing 100 different ways to hold a beer and a plate by hand, cut in quick succession. Sound has also had influence as a medium, utilised within environmental settings such as Bruce Nauman's (2004) *Raw Materials*, exhibited as part of Tate Modern's *The Unilever Series*.

The video loop in the labourworks is the return that happens within the overarching time of the video, the joining of the end to the beginning in constant repeat with an infinite duration, or until the equipment is shut down.

The loop itself is held within the linear time of the video or animation, yet it also marks a return to the beginning endlessly presenting the birth, life, death, birth, etc. of the work. Providing a circular system of time within the larger continuum, the experience of this is akin to the return viewing discussed above, though in this case it is controlled neither by the artist nor viewer but by the sequence of the medium.

In the labourworks the loop has been used to multiply the futility of the repetitions within the structure of the work, deferring closure through the return of the video loop.

Endurance, Anticipation and Boredom

All three aspects of this section endurance, anticipation and boredom are emotional experiences that relate specifically to time. They were recorded in all the labourworks as feelings encountered during the labour of the making. These emotions were also evident to the viewer especially where time-based media was included in the presentation (Labourworks 5, 7 and 8).

These emotions are important to this research, not as feelings in themselves, or for what might be considered psychological reasons; this is not the area that this study is dealing with (but could offer an opportunity for future research). The experiences warrant closer consideration because of the role that time and repetition takes in their generation.

Endurance

1. *the fact or power of enduring something painful and prolonged.*
2. *the capacity of something to last or to withstand wear and tear.*

(Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English, 2008)

Often associated with heroism: the endurance of Shackleton's Antarctic expeditions, the endurance of a long distance runner, or even a Japanese game show. Endurance references a dedication of time to endeavours involving adversity, usually physical.

This level of endurance has some contextual links with performance art; particularly what may be called endurance-art of the 1970s:

artistic expression through acts of physical pain, trauma, survival or deprivation
(Vey Duke and Rodgers, 2005)

Artists that followed this definition include Chris Burden, Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, et al. and famously the work by Joseph Beuys, *I like America and America Likes Me* (1974), where he lived in a gallery with a coyote for 3 days. An important lifelong practitioner of this form of art is Tenching Hsieh, who lives out year-long performance's, the first of which was carried out within the year between 1978 and 1979. Each performance incorporates draconian boundaries of endurance such as: 'One Year Performance 1990-1981' known informally as 'Time Piece' where he punched a daily clocking in card in a time clock every hour on the hour, twenty-four times a day for one year. Shaving his head at the start and not cutting it until after the performance ended, a movie camera shot a frame each time he clocked on, providing a record of the processes. Hsieh outlines the rules of the work prior to production in simple written statements, for example for the 'One Year Performance 1978 – 1979' he writes:

I shall seal myself in my studio, in solitary confinement inside a cell-room

measuring 11'6" X 9' X 8'. (Hsieh 1978)

Relatively recent exhibitions have logged the history of endurance performances: such as 'Endurance' (1995), organised by 'Exit Art', which toured America and Europe for five years and presented a history from 1914 to 1995 of performance work dealing with mental, physical and spiritual endurance.

Endurance in the labourworks acts differently to this tradition, it relates more to a quantity of repetitions and the time needed to achieve them and less conceived of physical endurance, though some level of tenacity within labour is required. In Labourwork 8 - *Satie 840* and its origin in Eric Satie's *Vexations* the number 840 indicates the goal, the achievement. Yet the final 'conquering' of this number of repetitions is not an achievement in itself, nothing is gained in real terms by the final repetition than was achieved by the first repetition. They are all repeats of a simple action. It is through the addition of time that the act becomes endurance, testing the tenacity of mind to designate the time to repeat an action 840 times. The labour of the work is the only point of the exercise, an inward looking generation of self. An account of a performance of *Vexations* describes the experience of the work from the performer's point of view:

Evans played continuously for 15 hours until he reached repetition 595, when he suddenly stopped; he was in a daze and left immediately. He writes: 'I would not play this piece again. I felt each repetition slowly wearing my mind away. I had to stop. If I hadn't stopped I'd be a very different person today... People who play it do so at their own great peril'. (Bryars, 1983, Paragraph number 29)

While the destructive power of this excessive repetition is not conclusive, there is a wealth of history around repetition that endures through time, without relief or end. Sisyphus was condemned to an eternity of frustration by Zeus, who gave him the task of rolling a rock up a hill, a rock that before reaching the top would always just roll back down again:

His scorn for the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing. (Camus, 1942, p.116)

Later elevated to 'absurd hero' (Camus) by equating the activity to a search for meaning. Accepting the absurdity of the action and equating it to the absurdity of life, he asks the question: if life is inherently absurd why do we not all commit suicide? Camus' conclusion is that there is quality in the doing. By confronting the limits of reason and challenging absurdity, value can be found in the here and now, in the action:

All Sisyphus' silent joy is contained therein. His fate belongs to him. His rock is his thing. (Camus, 1942, p.118)

Similar to Buddhist rituals that repeat past all logic, enlightening through the struggle itself, Camus says:

The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (Camus, 1942, p.119)

The knowledge and control that is possible through repeat labours, can concentrate the mind in order to reveal new boundaries of experience, implying a repetition that may offer a form of enlightenment.

Boredom

It is important to consider the critical acclaim for boredom directed at repetitive work, as I argue that this has aesthetic and symbolic implications beyond the purely psychological experience of being bored. The repetitive nature of the labourworks raises fundamental aesthetic questions, in particular about the function of boredom in art:

Boredom was “mysterious and profound” for Satie. But it was also an effective way of mystifying and irritating the bourgeoisie, as Satie suggests in Sports et Divertissements [1914], which opens with a Chorale into which “I have put all I know about Boredom. I dedicate it to those who don't like me.” (Whittington, 1999)

Satie claimed to use his boredom as a weapon while at the same time packing it full of all his knowledge. In her essay 'The Issue of Boredom: Is It Interesting?' (1985), Frances Colpitt discusses the recent history of the role of boredom within contemporary art, and particularly the critical response to Minimal and Conceptual art, where formalist perspectives are omitted, leaving the viewer with little or no reference beyond the work itself:

The Charge for boredom is a forceful one, devastating even in its implication of triviality. (Colpitt, 1985, p.361)

While accepting boredom is something to be avoided, She goes onto say:

The tendency has been to dismiss as boring any object or experience that does not meet the contemporary audience's appetite for immediate sensory stimulation and satisfaction. It has been suggested that the viewer's boredom is often the result of indolence or frustration. To value a work of art by taking interest in it does involve commitment and concentration of attention, particularly in the case of the formally reductive and indifferenced object. (Colpitt, 1985, p.364)

Labourwork 8 - *Satie 840* and *Vexations* can be directly classified as formally reductive and 'indifferenced'. So for many viewers, more charged by formalist ideals, this repetition is perhaps generative only of monotony. Added to which is the immense time commitment that this work requires, negating totally any 'immediate sensory

stimulation and satisfaction'. However, once a formalist view of aestheticism is overlooked much more can be observed:

To be interested in Satie, one must be disinterested to begin with, accept that a sound is a sound a man is a man, give up illusions about ideas of order, expressions of sentiment, and all the rest of our inherited aesthetic claptrap.
(Cage, J. 1958 p82)

The idea that disinterest, brought about through repetition, can cut through our expectation of formal organisations to something 'other', has important implications for the active role of repetitive process and how it might identify, or at least point towards, another way of observing the repetitive art object:

Important to the concept of Vexations is the relationship between the repetitive form of the piece and the forgettable nature of its material. Vexations lingers in the memory as a vague impression, the details effaced as soon as heard: it is difficult to imagine anyone walking home whistling the 'tune' after a performance. Perhaps it is only because the music is almost literally self-effacing that extended repetition becomes tolerable. Above all, it must not be 'interesting'; it must not draw attention to itself as music, otherwise the listener - or performer - might attempt to discover meaning, expression, thematic development or any of the other qualities which the intellect is accustomed to seek in music. (Whittington, 1999)

Barbara Rose has also inferred that artists use boredom as a tool to distance themselves from the viewer, but far from taking a role that separates the narrative or meaning from the work, in a positive way, she describes boredom as being used as an impenetrable shield to test the audience's commitment:

Boring the public is one way of testing its commitment. The new artists seem to be extremely chary; approval, they know, is easy to come by in this seller's

market for culture, but commitment is nearly impossible to elicit. So they make their art as difficult, remote, aloof and indigestible as possible. One way to achieve this is to make art boring. (Rose, B. 1965 p62)

This is not the case with Labourwork 7 - *Scribble to the Count of 5* or Labourwork 8 - *Satie 840*. Here the repetition is aiming to act in a mesmeric fashion to help us see through the formal and physical, in the way that *Vexations* does. To do this we must experience something of the process, for it is within this process that the repetition becomes charged. The repetition is sequential, not offered en-masse but through time. Time offers us less opportunity to identify comparatively the repetitions as purely equal, in either process or form:

When all the data are unambiguously similar it does not take much comparison to make that similarity apparent; running one's eye down a picket fence once is enough to establish the equality of boards or spaces. Such quick satisfaction of the interest in clarity fails to arouse or satisfy a practical interest in the process itself. (Lind, 1980, p.139)

This is an important text as it acknowledges the process as a key element, but at the same time it prescribes limits through formalist critique, and what Francis Colpitt identifies as an '*appetite for immediate sensory stimulation and satisfaction*' (1985). By looking at aesthetics factually and through reductionism towards the identification of 'equality', as Lind does, the duration of Satie's *Vexations* or the labourwork *Satie 840* would offer nothing. A Camus-like acceptance of the substance by which this work exists for itself is needed to transcend the obvious or immediate response.

Writing about Warhol's film *Sleep* (1963), which was shown at Tate Modern alongside a full performance of *Vexations* (2007), Henry Geldzahler (also the model for *Sleep*) noted that the small actions of process became the sum of the work:

...what appears boring is the elimination of incident, accident, story, sound, and

the moving camera As less and less happens on the screen, we become satisfied with almost nothing and find the slightest shift in the body of the sleeper or the least movement of the camera interesting enough. (Geldzahler, 1970, p.300-301)

By viewing boredom in the way Geldzahler describes, it could be said that our relationship to time changes, we slow down to meet the moments as they arise, rather than to will their happening in a rush of anticipation.

Anticipation

Taking the most random instances of reception into account, the sequential nature of the digital-media (as found in the labour works) is logical. Using Labourwork 7 - *Scribble to the Count of 5* as an example, once the sequence of each moment of scribble has established itself, through repetition, we begin to understand an unfolding history, that also suggests a future. A timeline that turns white to black. The idea of black as completion is anticipated while viewing; it is, however, only rewarded with a loop. The perpetual repetition of the animation both rewards and agitates completion, returning us Sisyphus-like to the beginning.

Anticipation holds our interest; we invest in a promise of a future state, event or condition met, with repetition priming us to expect our goal early in the process. Time here can easily be wished away, each repetition is willed to completion, in readiness for the next, until our perceived goal is realised. What is offered by the combination of repetition and anticipation is a circle of perpetual motion, a simultaneous presentation of creation and death, whose ambition is further obliterated by the video loop. In Nietzsche's terms:

this, my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my "beyond good and evil," without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal. (Nietzsche, 1901 ed: 1967, p.550)

Temporality, Simulacra and the Eternal Return

The 'eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying' that **Friedrich** Nietzsche refers to, is the 'eternal return' prevalent within all the labourworks, and intertwined with the role repetition takes in the art.

In his book, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-85), he endeavours to help us obtain freedom through self-understanding by offering his vision through a lonely wanderer named Zarathustra, who encounters two eternal paths meeting.

This long lane backwards, it continueth for an eternity. And that long lane forward - that is another eternity. (Nietzsche, 1883-5, p.154)

Significantly the paths meet at a gateway inscribed 'This Moment':

Must not whatever can run its course of all things, have already run along that lane? Must not whatever can happen of all things have already happened, resulted, and gone by? [...] And must we not return and run in that other lane out before us, that long weird lane - must not we eternally return. (Nietzsche, 1883-5, p.54-155)

Through this dialogue and others, (e.g. the writings latterly compiled by his sister in the *Will to Power* [1901]) Nietzsche asks us to contemplate absolute repetition, making a moment repeat through many moments, proposing the prospect of the eternally repeating event:

In infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or another be realized; more: it would be realized an infinite number of times. (Nietzsche, 1901, p.549)

The enlightenment brought about through the eternal return is perhaps a direct result

of his 'Death of God' theory, as it offers another continuum over and above the traditional repository of Heaven and Hell. In fact, the whole idea of a personal search recounted in 'Thus Spake Zarathustra', the need to understand the self, is a response to his statement that God is dead - thus requiring a philosophical guidance of how to live.

Intriguingly, the idea of the eternal return has precedence in eastern religion such as Buddhism and Hinduism, though not exclusively. Early civilisations also contemplated a cyclical return of time, notably the Egyptians and Mayans; as does more contemporary mathematical thinking affirmed in the Poincaré recurrence theorem, referred to in this thesis and quantum physics.

It must be acknowledged that Nietzsche perceived the eternal return to be a most alarming concept. His own rather pessimistic outlook and continual ill health ensured that he perceived life to be a death, with death being the relief from suffering. He famously states:

Duration 'in vain' without end or aim is the most paralyzing idea... (Nietzsche, 1901, p.35)

'Return' happens in a variety of ways in the labour works. One way is in a 'material return', especially visible in Labourwork 8 - *Spoons*, where the plastic spoon and rubber band return to their original unprocessed state throughout the course of the work. Whether viewed collapsing in real-time or through the hyper-real of the video, the material return is constant, adhering to the mathematical Poincaré recurrence theorem:

Related to the concept of eternal return is the Poincaré recurrence theorem in mathematics. It states that a system having a finite amount of energy and confined to a finite spatial volume will, after a sufficiently long time, return to an arbitrarily small neighbourhood of its initial state. (Riveros, 2009)

The visibility of material return anchors the different stages of simulacrum within this work. As the repetition moves through simulation, away from the real and into the hyper-real, the material truth of the substance that makes this work is always returning. Whilst the repetition evident in the video is not physically present, the simulacrum is still anchored within the material return, and thus through signification, it is indicative of spoon and rubber band.

Simulacrum of the material return is presenting, mirror like, an early manifestation of simulacra more akin to the 'map' in the short fable by Jorge Luis Borges *On Exactitude in Science* (1946) than the hyper-real:

If we were able to take as the finest allegory of simulation the Borges tale where the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up exactly covering the territory (but where, with the decline of the Empire this map becomes frayed and finally ruined, a few shreds still discernible in the deserts - the metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction, bearing witness to an imperial pride and rotting like a carcass, returning to the substance of the soil, rather as an aging double ends up being confused with the real thing), this fable would then have come full circle for us, and now has nothing but the discrete charm of second-order simulacra. (Baudrillard, 1988, p.166)

Applying again Baudrillard's terms to the presentation of *Spoons*, with the 'referent' describing the object (pyramid) and the 'signifier', the video, each medium is then distinguished as taking a different role within the work. The referent presents itself within a mechanistic structure - achieved when all the material elements return to their physical origin; within this construct the work is able to reach an end state. The whole process is capable of being repeated but would need an external injection, outside of the original mechanism, to rebuild it.

The signifier however, presents itself within a Nietzsche-like 'Anti-mechanism'. As the

process is repeated ad-infinitum (as long as the video runs), the return never reaches equilibrium. There is no end state as the loop reclaims the performance ensuring the lack of beginning or end:

The sole fundamental fact, however, is that it [the world] does not aim at a final state; and every philosophy and scientific hypothesis (e.g. mechanistic theory) which necessitates such a final state is refuted by this fundamental fact.
(Nietzsche, 1901, p.377)

Let's imagine, if like Sisyphus we were to extend the mechanism of the referent to include a re-build - or re-application of the making process - each time the work reaches the equilibrium of total collapse. Could this take us closer to Nietzsche's 'eternal return' as we eventually observe the repeat of sequence?

And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series, a circular movement of absolutely identical series is thus demonstrated: the world as a circular movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game in infinitum.' (Nietzsche, 1901, p.549)

The referent would then mirror the action presented by the video signifier but there would still be a difference manifest by the video loop. The loop only has the power to repeat a single sequence of the action (putting aside component decay and the returning viewer who will always experience difference due to a changing personal situation).

So, through eternal return, the original premise (that the actual timescales found within the referent and the signifier are very different) could be extended to include infinity. Not only is time separated physically by the time-lapse video speeding up the action, separating it from the actual physical time of the referent (the object's material return),

but also, that very separation gap could be hypothetically extended. If our Sisyphean hypothesis of continual rebuild were applied, time could, in theory, be slowed down almost to infinity. To wait for the recurrence of the exact sequence of decay (that is each unit collapsing in an identical order and timescale) could take an unthinkable length of time.

Through anticipation of a repeat, the comparison gap between the referent and the signifier become stretched over eternity; still linked by material, artefact and process, but operating within multiple (and very different) timescales.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The essays in chapters 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 have identified some of the various functions and identities repetition has taken within the labourworks. While this study has centred directly on the work made as part of the research submission, it is not unreasonable to assume that repetition is also operating with similar patterns in other artists' work and within the broader spectrum of visual art language, the study of which could indeed contribute to further research.

When observed from the standpoint of different schema such as time, the simulacra, mimesis or theories of replication, repetition can be identified as functioning in many different ways. This research indicates that repetition can affect the object and its relation to the viewer, change authorships within the work and influence the subject; yet these multifarious roles are not differentiated within the single word 'repetition'. The research has demonstrated that the generality of the signification does not go any way towards referring to the rich functions and differing contexts to which 'repetition' contributes. The following conclusion summarises the effect repetition has been found to have within the labourworks, separating out its roles and offering opportunities to identify its individual operations, over-and-above the general term 'repetition'.

In this study the repetition was held very specifically within the labour of the work, with the process identifying the rules and aims of that labour. This differentiated the form of repetition away from its more usual identity and presentation, as the repeat image. Aligning the labourworks with Kate Armstrong's notion of the unrepresentable other. Armstrong proposes that '*there must be something in every system that cannot be fully understood or fully cognized: the unrepresentable.*' (Armstrong, 2002, p.6) This initiated an enquiry into the role repetition may take in order to question the rules or logic inherent within formal aspects of art production, and employed within the labourworks as process.

Repetition was found to have some power in revealing that logic may only be '*a purely mental act ... "an assumption".*' (Bochner). The ergonomic failure of the human hand to repeat absolutely a simple task, such as making a loop or scribble, resulting in inaccurate logical forms or 'wonky' regular solids, seemed to confer with this thought. What has been coined the 'crisis of repetition', the failure of repetition to replicate absolutely, has philosophical ramifications returning to Plato, where the thrice removed repetition evident in the art object, led to the banishment of artists from the republic; where any representation of a truth was considered a divergence from the singular, the original truth.

The relationship between the singular and repetition has remained an intriguing correspondence throughout philosophical history. Its association has led to today's post-modern sensibilities, where distancing through repetition, the simulacra, itself repeated through signification, resulting in the hyper-real, is now everyday cultural currency.

Baudrillard's matrix of connections highlights the interconnectivity between binary oppositions, the dependent relationship between the two extremes. This leaves us with a space to intercept with what Derrida would call an 'indecidable' through 'deconstructive indicators'. In the labourworks these were the actions of labour, such as: scribbling, tying together, looping or connecting. All, labour actions that through repetition bring into being the binary operators, such as black or white, full or empty, while at the same time denying their hierarchy, deferring them through repetition to the 'other'.

Repetition was not only found to excerpt a doubling, a multiplication of process or form, it was also able to obliterate and oversee its own closure through its own action. This illogical conclusion to repetitive process was found to be both suicidal and creative; creative, of moments and situations that no longer exist within the timescale of the action, obliterating themselves through each added moment of repetition, until in some cases total erasure occurred. The mechanism for creation and obliteration was

inherent within the repetition itself, simple actions of labour that repeat to the point of destruction, while still capable of creation until an endpoint was encountered.

The research identifies two types of repetition as significant within the labour and process of the labourworks.

The first form may be observed as a repetition that had the ability to continue ad infinitum or until a limit (whether self made or contingent) was met. I propose that this could be called a **repeat continuum**. This form of repetition was possible without any lapses of time between each repeated action, and could be observed particularly in the looping wire action of Labourwork 1 - *Brass Cube*, and the scribble of Labourwork 6 - *Scribble Square*.

The second form of repetition was identified as a '**repeat event**', whose activity had a specified distance between each repeat. Illustrated most accurately in Labourwork 4 - *Midday Sky*, the process initiated repetition of a single daily event, repeating once every 24hrs a photograph of the midday sky.

In both forms of repetition, failure was evident, either the failure to repeat accurately each action within a repeat continuum, or the inability to adhere to the logic of the task within a repeat event. In Labourwork 4 – *Midday Sky* such an inability is manifest, resulting in the actual presentation of a catalogue of failure. Either, a partial failure in the inability to execute the task accurately at the correct moment, or in some cases a complete failure, forgetting to carry out the task.

In both these cases our human relationship to time was somehow exposed through repetition, with time being relevant to one's own situation, rather than an external logical system of classification as in Newtonian time. The research demonstrates that the complexity of time emerged as an important partner to repetition, with one being influenced by the other.

This was observed to happen in various ways, one of which was identified as emotional. While the study was clear that it is not dealing with psychological responses to repetition, the incidence of **anticipation**, **boredom**, and **endurance** were important in the reception of the labourworks, both experienced by the viewer and by the artist during the making of the work. The occurrence of these emotions were identified as changing our experience of time, condensing or extending it, providing an experiential opportunity to observe repetitive actions in space. These could be either, increasingly small and more readily observed when time is slowed down experientially, or increasingly large, observed when small details are filtered out due to time speeding up. Such emotions were often orchestrated by the different presentations of time, through repetition and within the object of art; for example, in the minute changes of the decay of Labourwork 5 –*Spoons*, observed only in real time, as opposed to the condensed time of the time-lapse animation that showed the decay in snapshot, speeded up.

Our own experience of time opposite the labourworks, was often mediated through the digital media, as used within some of the works. It was acknowledged that historically the development of such vehicles accelerated our cultural occasion of repetition, in a way that Walter Benjamin described as detrimental to the 'aura' of the work. The camera itself, despite mediating the hand, was however considered an '*extension of hand labour*' (Smithson, 1980).

A muted or dampening of authorial control was in fact observed during the making. Not through the means of the digital media but through the type of control process instigated in the work, and the draconian manner in which the work's labour was carried out. Yet within this sterile condition, it was observed that through repetition a leakage of character, personified by the hand of the artist, could still be identified. The leakage was evident through the 'crisis' of repetition, as the difference between each small action leaked expression. This was not considered a return to an expressionistic tradition but a reinstatement of the hand in labour, labour that itself carried authorial value. The difference between each repetition leaked some incidence of the human

condition, a failure to repeat. Benjamin referred obliquely to this type of expressionistic leakage when he outlined the complex relation between hand and mind when reaching for a lighter or spoon (Benjamin, 1936, p.230). With this understanding we can see that the repetition itself is claiming some authorship, while at the same time channelling the person of the maker through difference.

To summarise, the research has provided a means of identifying the different ways in which repetition was seen to operate: it could be identified in the form of the '**repeat event**', or as a '**repeat continuum**'. Each had an effect on time altering its reception. The '**repeat continuum**' enhanced the aspects of linear time, organising objects and events (repetitions) within a past and future timeline. Alternatively, a '**repeat event**' accentuated through the eternal return, a circular time, more complex in nature, that could operate within a three dimensional construct with circles of time repeating within larger circles.

Repetition was also able to manoeuvre between different schemas, being equally authoritative within a platonic vision as within deconstructive ideology. Repetition can itself identify binary oppositions, while also being the originator of the deconstructive indicator that overturns the difference. Within the art object, its position is still inherent, often implicit, but its influence on structure, form, subject, object and authorship should not be underestimated. This research offers a new perspective on the repetitive strategies employed by some artists and identifies the process of repetition as integral to the meaning of the work rather than just a procedural device.

One important aspect of reading the repetition within the labourworks, is the necessity to engage visually and conceptually with the process of making - the labour. The simple processes (loop, scribble, etc.) and the number of repetitions of that process (through labour) are interdependent, needing both aspects to exist in the form that is so distinctive in the labourworks. The quantity of repetitions, coupled with the mundane process as singular, means that a critique of the process is necessary in order to engage with any of the wider concepts that repetition can present to us.

The importance of Process as identified here could have influence on future debates about the role process plays within the art object. Some historical insight into process has been offered through process art, procedural art and conceptual art, especially identified in artist's writing such as Sol LeWitt's statements and Richard Serra's lists and essays. But while process is generally acknowledged as extremely important to the art object its function is perhaps not as academically contextualised or critically acclaimed as either the 'subject' or 'object' of art. Process as Robert Morris coined 'the submerged side of the art iceberg' (1970).

This could have divisive origins, born of cultural prejudices between the art and craft worlds. Process is often synonymous with craft or design production, whose hierarchies have often been maligned as inferior to 'fine art' practice. A well documented tension, from Ruskin through to today's critical analysts (Glen Adamson and John Roberts). Perhaps this is because of the belief that process is supplemental (Adamson) to the object, a procedural means to an end, that in itself has been considered to have very little intellectual value beyond its physical or tacit skilling in the hands of the maker.

Future consideration for process across the fields of art, design and craft could be useful to identify the similarities and differences by which each mode of art utilises process, whether viewed within the frame of repetition or not. As well as being of considerable importance to art critique it could also have some effect on educational pedagogy. A general trend towards the merging of boundaries between art, design and craft may be observed in visual culture. A more integrated approach is becoming particularly visible in university education where specialist practice is being replaced by more homogenised visual courses. This trend may be economically driven, but more research about how the language of process, as identified across visual disciplines, may offer opportunities for a more strategic delivery of common skills and approaches. If the similarities can be offered across curriculum and the differences celebrated, perhaps offered in a more selective and specialised manner, the integrity

of each subject may be retained alongside fostering a healthy common unity.

Another useful future development would be to develop a taxonomy of repetition. This thesis has identified that repetition operates in a variety of ways within the process of repetition. A tentative start has been made in separating a repeat continuum from a return event. There is no doubt that many other patterns may be observed; clearly defining the different ways repetition may form to affect the object, context and content of the work would be immensely useful.

By forming a taxonomy of repetition within the visual language we are aligning visual art with other art forms such as music, and more particularly literature, where identification of different modes of repeated words are itemised and so recognised within the technical form of phrase construction (e.g. Epizeuxis, Anadiplosis, Anaphora etc).

Closer collaboration between the visual practice offered in this thesis, and other art forms that have some previous understanding of repetition identified in their language, would be a profitable future step. Indeed, collaboration between the type of practice documented here, and a musical expert with a strong understanding of repetitive forms, perhaps with experience of post experimental music, could be a very interesting future project, offering opportunities for the cross fertilisation of knowledge and a chance to utilise information already established within musical theory.

Finally, considering repetition within the process of art production has been an exciting and challenging enquiry that has been particularly useful in making links across many fields of thought and action, and which, in itself, offers new and varied insights that have specific reference to the visual art object beyond a rhythmic device. This thesis suggests that within the fine art object the role of repetition can take not just a procedural but also a conceptual role, matching more precisely with philosophical modes of repetition and alluding to far more than mere constructional elements. This can raise many useful questions; the ones raised in this thesis are only just the start.

APPENDIX

REFLECTIONS ON LABOURWORKS

The following texts represent reflective accounts of each of the eight labourworks, they are offered sequentially and include some imagery of the work, though more extensive visual documentation should be referred to in the accompanying DVD. Each labourwork plus reflection may be considered a project or case study, informed by, and informing the overall enquiry into the role repetition takes into the process of art production. Further account of the strategy for this reflective account is outlined in Chapter 1: Introduction, Subheading: Method.

LABOURWORK 1
BRASS CUBE



Fig 1: *Brass Cube*

1 Introduction

This labourwork takes the form of a 2-meter square cube, made by repeatedly looping brass wire (manufactured to make paper staples). The work was completed before the research began in 2003. It is relevant, as it sets the initial context for research, becoming the pilot project for the questions that initiated this PhD. Reflections on its production and characteristics are thus particularly relevant. *Brass Cube* describes the type of repetition (in process) that the study concentrates on.

The 300hours of continuous and repetitive action of looping the wire is a record of the artist's constant struggle between control and chaos. The repetitive action allows the process to spiral out of her constraints but is pulled back by her overall desire to form a geometric structure. Each bale, distinct from the next in weight and density, retains a basic cube structure which combines to form the giant cube, housing within it a spiralling chaotic mass created by the imperfections of human practice. (Moore, S. 2003 p4-6)

The work has been exhibited twice before, and twice during the research timescale.

2 Creative Stimulus/Rationale

2.1 Repetition of hand held process

This is a driving point in devising the work - a direct creative stimulus. However, the emotional and practical reasons for developing and executing such processes are difficult to separate. There is a certain pleasure and pain in working in this fashion. It has become especially important to retain an ambitious logical integrity, either of scale or concept (i.e. the cube), which somehow runs in counter culture to the experience of the hours of labour that this work requires.

2.2 The regular solid - cube

The role of the regular solid has been an important device, a logical construct in which to contain the activity of the work's process and labour. The simple logic of

form acts as a contrast to much of the frenetic activity applied to realise the structure. Since the 1960s and 1970s the cube has been re-thought and redrawn, with works such as: Sol LeWitt '*Buried Cube Containing Object of Importance*' (1968), and Hans Haacke '*Condensation Cube*' (1963-5). In these works the cube itself became conceptually more than a precisely measured object that adhered to specific mathematic rules, providing a more flexible conceptual space in which to explore process, while still having a direct and logical form to operate within.

3 Material/Medium

The wire for this work was chosen after a long period of research. It was obtained from a winding factory that re-wound the wire onto smaller spools, packaging it for resale, for the final production of paper staples.

3.1 Function and form

While being conceptually interested in the 'paper staple' as a multiple object, the choice of material was made for more mundane practical reasons; this particular wire had the correct tensile strength to form a loop of a suitable size and tension to construct a spring like mass. The aesthetic of the wire being brass, and coloured accordingly, was a secondary concern to its specific tensile qualities and their appropriate relation to process and form.

3.2 Process informing material and material informing process

In retrospect, a search for a wire with the appropriate tensile strength sounds very purposeful, but in reality, the search for certain properties that informed the material choice, and the process devised to work with that material, grew together. I had for some time, been experimenting with applying 'textile like' manual processes to unusual materials, wire being just one of them. The tacit knowledge of how the wire reacts to the process applied, and how the process develops to respond to the material characteristics, developed over time through experimentation.

4 Process

A looping process reminiscent of a crochet loop was applied to the wire. Each loop was pulled by hand through its line and linked to previous loops in a random fashion, with a twist added to the line, one for every loop. This was important, as the twist provided additional tensile strength, giving extra 'spring', and ensuring that when multiplied, each loop did not collapse into any other and form a dense ball-like shape - which the material was inclined to do. As outlined in 3.2 the process developed along with the choice of material.



Fig 2: *Brass Cube* (Detail)

4.1 Process as an equation

I broke the production method down into a simple equation:

The Aim: To make a brass cube 2-meters square

The Process: Hand looping brass staple wire

The Task: 300hrs of repetitive labour

(Townesley 2007)

This equation provided the system by which the work was constructed. The experience of the production - 300 hours of repetitive labour - became more an act of endurance.

5 Labour

The labour and the process are very closely linked in this case and in some ways interdependent, with the labour being the physical action of the process of making.

5.1 Labour and the loop

The physical act of forming a loop is the substance of the work. When deconstructed all that is left is a series of interlocking loops. The material and labour have a continuity only closed by the pre-determined conceptual aim of constructing a 2-meter square cube; this aim being the only thing that prevents the labour continuing ad infinitum.

5.2 Hand held

The small (domestic) scale of the action of labour - in this case the looping and linking of the wire - stands in contrast to the intended scale of the completed work. This is a recurring feature across many of the labourworks.

5.2.1 Practical reasons

The work needs to be portable and available to be worked on at any opportunity, due to the vast amount of time it takes to make. Although the whole structure in final presentation is a single object, in reality, it is made from 40 sections measuring 100cm X 50cm X 50cm - rather like straw bales.



Fig 3: *Brass Cube* installation preparation (at Mill End Art Pavilion)

Each bale slots together to form the cube. This is necessary for transportation, fitting through doorways etc, and distributing weight. Also, it would be physically impossible to apply the hands-on labour process to one solid object of this size. Breaking the work down in this way meant that I could move the work between home and studio in sections. This allowed me to work in a piecemeal fashion, at any given opportunity throughout the day.

5.2.2 Process raising questions

The nature of the process of labour, once devised and decided upon, is perhaps different to other types of art making - appearing to be less fluid during the fabrication. The perimeters of the process and concept

are set prior to the action of labour (labour being the physical action of process in this case). The labour is then to some extent mechanical, but something else seems to be happening too. The intensity of the small action and the relentless repetition required needs concentration, and within the set perimeters has a more microscopic fluidity. Decisions needed to be made continually:

- Which loops should I attach this new loop to?
- Are the loops working together to push the structure out into an even mass?
- Am I constructing the form accurately?
- Should I add more twist to the wire now?
- Is the tension correct?
- Has the structure reached the correct size?
- When do I stop?

These questions are creative, and require creative or instinctive answers - depending how tacit the nature of the question. They are also continually unsettling, and require constant attention/concentration. The relationship between concentrating on the process and allowing what may be called a tacit knowledge (more subconscious action - rather like driving a car) to continue unchecked is unsettling. It was not so demanding that I was unable to listen to the radio while working, or even have a conversation. In fact, to have something to distract part of the mind from the boredom of the relentless repetitive action and the need to address the questions (above) is helpful, making the experience of time less arduous.

6 Repetition

Making a loop and linking it – repeated.

6.1 Repetition found in the process

In *Brass Cube* the repetition is embedded within the process of art production - the action of the making, rather than as a Warholian presentation of the repeated image. In this case the cube is a singular object. Though the repetition of action is integral to the material choice, a continual thread, and the techniques employed (crochet-like), something else is also happening. The function is stripped away, perhaps exposing the process as an important signifier of intent. In this way the work incorporates its repetition into the process of its own existence - towards what Kate Armstrong argues is '*repetition as an ontological posit of the process of "coming-into-being"*'. (Armstrong. K. 2002 p8)

6.2 A single aim a single action, repeated - 'crisis' of repetition

How to control and execute the labour through countless repetitions is a constant tension, as outlined in the *Negotiated positions* exhibition catalogue:

'It is difficult to define the amount of personal intervention that goes into the productive activity/manual labour. How much am I allowing myself to control the work? This becomes a constant tension or concern while making the artwork. To be able to exercise just the right control over each repetition, what is the optimum mood I should inhabit? Complex and unruly, every repetition defies the last in its need to escape the community it exists in. The action of making is now controlling me; too carefree and the actions become chaotic and petulant, too controlling and all expression, character and spirit is lost. (Townesley 2007)

When the action is repeated over time, comparisons may be made between each outcome. In almost clinical terms the aim must be to repeat to perfection, however, the result can never realise this aim. Perfect repetition cannot happen; difference becomes reality and the changes between each repetition become expressive, not through direct intent but through the nuance of labour. The hand labour leaks expression through the failure or 'crisis' of repetition.

6.3 The failure of repetition

Important to the aesthetic conclusion and not least the final 'condition satisfied' is the regular solid of the 2-meter square cube. The absurdity of the process of this work becomes important here, primarily through failure. The failure of the process as a logical action to satisfy the condition of a cube is obvious. There are many more practical ways of achieving a 2-meter brass cube that would produce a far more logically complete and correct form (welding sheet metal for example). The structure at its perimeters has obviously failed within mathematical terms. What then becomes important is the community of each action or loop to offer any semblance of structure. The failure of each loop to be replicated challenges the status of the 'logical' form within this ergonomic setting.

7 Summary

Labourwork 1 – *Brass Cube* is indicative of repetition held in process, and identifies the type of 'repetition' considered in this study. This labourwork raises questions about what repetition may offer in terms of our understanding of the art object.

The dedication needed to repeat the action of looping so extensively may offer more than just a means to an end. There was a general belief that 'something else was happening' – but what? This corresponds with the main focus of this research.

It was noted that the process developed alongside the choice of material through experimentation, with the functional requirements both of material and process being dependent on the other.

A predetermined logic of either intent or form (i.e. the cube) was expressed as a conceptual framework for the activity (process) of the work to exist. This served a useful role in providing a limit for what could be an endless activity, and offered an ambitiously large scale or concept that contrasted with the small 'hand held' scale of the process repeated.

The type of labour applied in this work is hand-held, domestic in scale. It was identified that this has practical reasons relating to construction, transportation and weight. Also

it was a way of dealing with the hours needed to construct the work, as it was portable and accessible during odd moments, maximising working opportunity. The process also raised aesthetic questions through labour, which needed constant attention, demanding decision making at a tacit and cognitive level. This drew questions about the artist's personal condition or mood, in relation to the labour of process and how much control must be exerted during the making, to allow the work to exist without becoming either too static or too chaotic.

It was observed that there is a type of 'failure' expressed through the repetition - the failure to repeat an action as it was done before, no matter how many times the action is repeated.

LABOURWORK 2
IN-FORMATION



Fig 4 & 5: *In-Formation* Instalation detail at: The Foundry Gallery

1 Introduction

This labourwork was the final result of many early studio experiments, using only polystyrene beads and glue as materials. It has been influenced by Bertalanffy's conception of systems through a quest for isomorphism (c.f. subheading 2.2). The final work is site specific, responding to the singular environment of the Foundry Gallery Vaults. The work takes up the whole of the space, flooding the floor and consists of many 'stalagmite' type towers that rise from a flat bed of polystyrene beads. The towers are themselves made from polystyrene beads so appear to grow in an organic fashion from the surrounding bead surface. Each tower is similar in its form yet different in its detail. The whole object/installation is intensely white and could be described as alluding to a primeval landscape.

2 Creative Stimulus/Rationale

2.1 Site specificity

This work had two manifestations; firstly in the *Studio Open* - 2005 during its development phase, then for installation at *The Foundry Gallery Vault*, an anarchic exhibition space in Shoreditch, London. The site-specific nature of *The Foundry Exhibition* had influence over the decision-making and the look of the work.

2.1.1 The studio exhibition

Consideration was required to establish how the work might be contained within a larger room, as an object rather than an installation. The problem was resolved by building a frame that sat on the floor and provided a space in which the work could exist. With this device the work could occupy a specified area without spilling out into the whole space. The frame was built from 2" by 2" wood and painted white, with dimensions of 10ftX12ft. Instinct dictated that a controlled space should be marked yet be as unobtrusive as possible. In effect, a boundary was

built within which the work could exist and was isolated, or at least contained, away from the rest of the room.



Fig 6: *In-Formation* – Studio Exhibition

2.1.2 The Foundry Gallery exhibition

The Foundry Gallery is situated within an old bank, with a bar at ground floor/entrance level and gallery spaces in the basement and vaults.

It is accessed down steep steps and is situated behind an original bank vault door - one foot thick with its locking cogs and bolts intact. It is lined with concrete and finished with a pebble-dashed surface. It has no natural light - the ceiling is low and it echoes and amplifies every sound. It is very claustrophobic though quite large and divided into two rooms, painted white, with a barred gate in the doorway between the two; the work was installed in the first room.

The pebble dashed texture of the wall had a visual correspondence with the surface of polystyrene beads; this continuity had important visual

reasoning for using polystyrene beads as the sole material in this setting.

The Foundry Vault is an eerie, subterranean, echo chamber of a space that evoked a particular atmosphere of separation away from the very trendy culture of the upstairs bar and the surrounding London-Shoreditch community. It was a space where it was possible to imagine that something of the past could be manifest, or something of the future be discovered. I intended to use these qualities to produce a work that could have grown spontaneously in this space, either as a remnant of past organic formations or a futuristic science fiction landscape. The fact that the basement was below the water table and regularly flooded influenced the elemental 'cave-like' atmosphere of the space, and so too, the rock-formation 'stalagmite-like' structure of the work.

2.2 General systems theory - isomorphism

Wider research around repetition led to reading around 'general system theory' whose terms had some influence over this labourwork. Especially isomorphism, which identifies a familial correspondence of structures irrespective of the nature of components. Isomorphism was considered by Karl Ludwig Von Bertalanffy to be one of the four principles of 'general systems theory' (discussed further in critical text p136), alongside: wholeness, organisation and finality (a tendency towards the same 'end state'). The concept that systems are a relational phenomenon became an important creative stimulus for this labourwork. The rationale aimed to demonstrate that the concept of structure, in this case internal, is a part of systems theory. It also demonstrated the irrelevance of the material identity of the components within the system.

These ideas influenced the labourwork in so far as it became a visual quest for isomorphism; a search for a type of relational phenomenon, that no matter how

many times a process was repeated, it resulted (relationally speaking) in the same 'end state', in this case a stalagmite type tower.

3 Material/Medium

3.1 Polystyrene beads - the primordial paste

Polystyrene beads had been used as raw material in studio experiments since the beginning of the research. Various self-concocted techniques of building developed, using adhesives and different forms of construction.

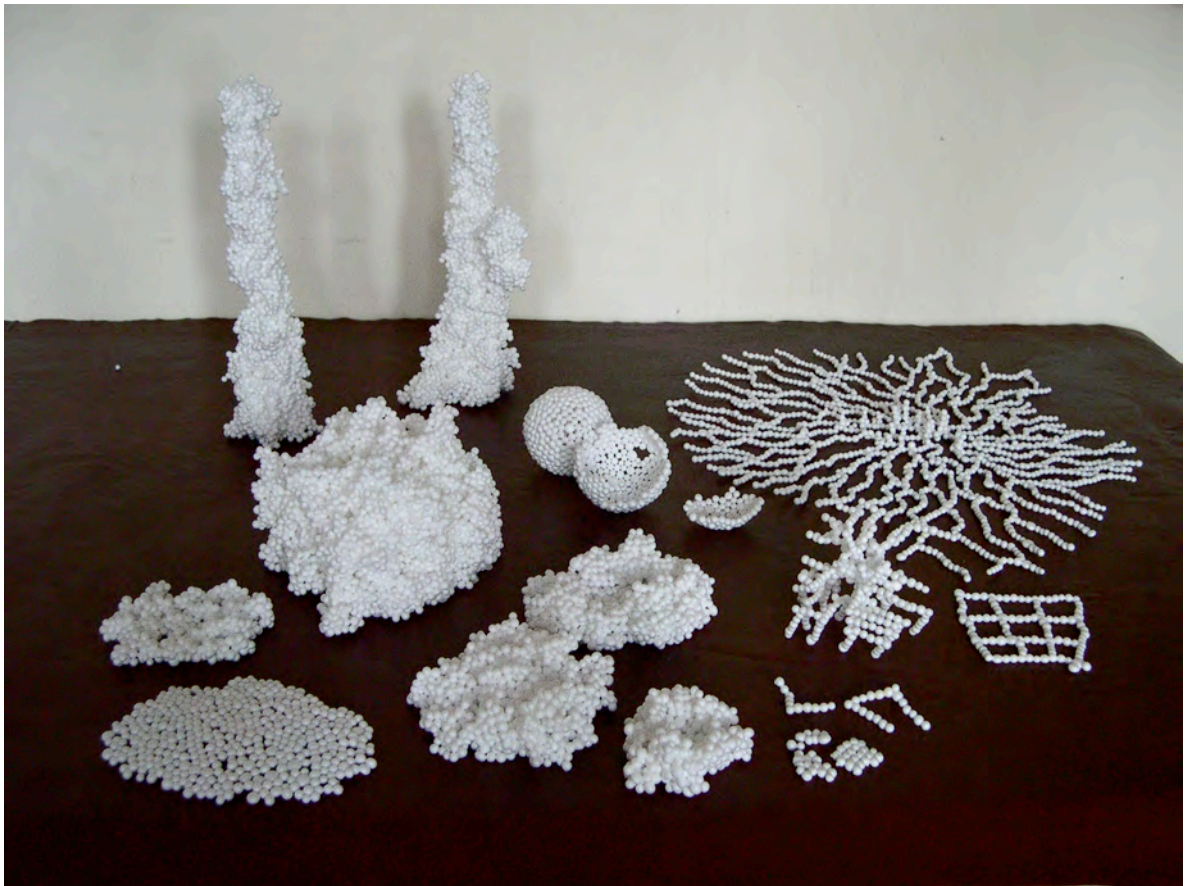


Fig 7: Studio Experiments

Ranging from: carefully gluing and placing each bead to adhere to the last, using a forma to shape and structure glued beads, to mixing larger quantities of beads with glue, to form what I called a 'primordial paste'. This combination of

Glue (PVA) and polystyrene bead was the raw material I eventually developed into *In-Formation*.



Fig 8: Primordial Paste – studio experiments

3.2 Multiplicity

1. *a considerable number or variety*
2. *the state of being multiple or varied*
3. *the number of energy levels of a molecule, atom, or nucleus that result from interactions between angular momenta*
4. *the number of elementary particles that form a multiplet*

(Encarta: World English Dictionary 1999 Microsoft Corporation)

The definition of this word became applicable in all its expansive meanings, applying either to the beads themselves, or the structures that evolved through

the gluing process.

The multiplicity inherent in the polystyrene beads was the immediate draw, and importantly, the difference of each bead albeit within a very narrow range. The containment within the bag (as they are sold) was interesting, in so far as it became the dominant factor for defining the external structure into which the beads organised themselves. This led me to consider how the beads may form structure without relying on this outer skin; the most obvious starting-point was to glue the beads together.

4 Process

4.1 Primordial paste - isomorphic structures

The process developed from an upping of production using the glue/bead 'primordial paste'. By mixing larger quantities I started by gathering a handful of paste, placing it on a table, allowing it to dry (about 8 hours) and then adding another handful on top. This primitive and playful 'mud pie' process had interesting results. It formed stalagmite type towers whose function follows directly the form of the making action. This particular building process formed strata, each incremental layer was balanced on the previous one and replicated its footprint, though each layer had a smaller and smaller base on which to settle.



Fig 9: Process - building the structures with the primordial paste

Gravity and the glue binder, combined with the careful hand placing, organised the bead components towards a similar end-state. The resulting organic

structures reached completion or an endpoint when it was impossible to balance any more beads on the top without changing the process. Isomorphic structures are the result, as no matter how many times the action is repeated, the result is always a stalagmite type organic form, indicating that a natural internal structure may exist within this work - a relational phenomenon consistent with general systems theory.

I repeated the process hundreds of times producing multiple stalagmite type structures, all strictly constructed within this very simple process.

4.2 Presentation

While considering how these structures may be presented, I wanted to highlight the making method. My rationale was to place them on the floor and flood the area around them with loose beads. This would unite the 'primordial paste' structures, contrasting them with the flat surface of the polystyrene beads when left 'unprocessed' to flow over the floor. The room itself acted as a limit to the process of the work, which without the specific boundaries of space could theoretically continue infinitely or until another boundary is met.

5 Labour

5.1 Continuity and change

The slow timescale of production depended on insistence and continuity. As time evolved, the opportunity for change became irresistible and began to fight with the need to carry on in uniform with the process. While at the same time, the need for continuity is heightened by the increasing investment of time already spent. New opportunities and ideas, however important, were shelved.

This built a feeling of entrapment within the system. The repetitive nature of the process became both compelling and sickening. The openness and flexibility during early discovery and development, was replaced by frustration and

boredom of the relentless repetition. It would have been a relief to stop and move on to other ideas, however, this is perhaps where the 'value' or even the subject of the work exists.

All the boundaries, practical, conditional, and human, reach an equilibrium, which reveals through the process, something other than the sum of those elements. This could be the very point or purpose for this way of working. It is reminiscent of craft production but without obvious function. The function was interlinked with the repetitive action, and the evolving form became a record of that process.

6 Repetition

6.1 The repetition of process and form - isomorphic

Repetition of the 'primordial paste' process is what forms the structure. The combination of the process/labour and natural phenomenon (gravity) ensures each incremental layer has a smaller foundation on which to balance. This meant that each structure though different in detail, still followed a specific format that produced a predictable 'end state'. As structures were repeated and presented as a whole, it was also possible to observe, through the relational comparison between each 'stalagmite' type form, a system that could be comparable with Bertalanffy's conception of systems, in so far as there is a specific organisation to each form that repeats itself, forming a structural 'wholeness'.

7 Summary

This work was identified as having some relationship to Bertalanffy's definition of General Systems Theory, both in its conceptual origins and in the way that the process and material combine to always form 'stalagmite' type objects. Though different in detail, each structure tends towards the same 'end state', demonstrating an isomorphic nature.

It was found that the repetition in this work originated in both the process and the resulting structures. The process required many repetitions of the same 'mud pie' placing of the glue/bead paste ('primordial paste'). The structures, though different in detail, were also repetitious in that the basic relational structure is always the same, each being a stalagmite type form.

This labourwork identified boredom as an overarching emotional element for the artist making the work. Boredom was generated by the labour and quantity of repetitions needed to complete the work. Consistency was essential to achieving a successful outcome; while at the same time, there was a creative invitation to evolve and change the process for new ideas and ways of working, which was tremendously enticing, and needed to be avoided.

LABOURWORK 3

AT THIS VERY MOMENT IN THIS WORK WHERE AM I?

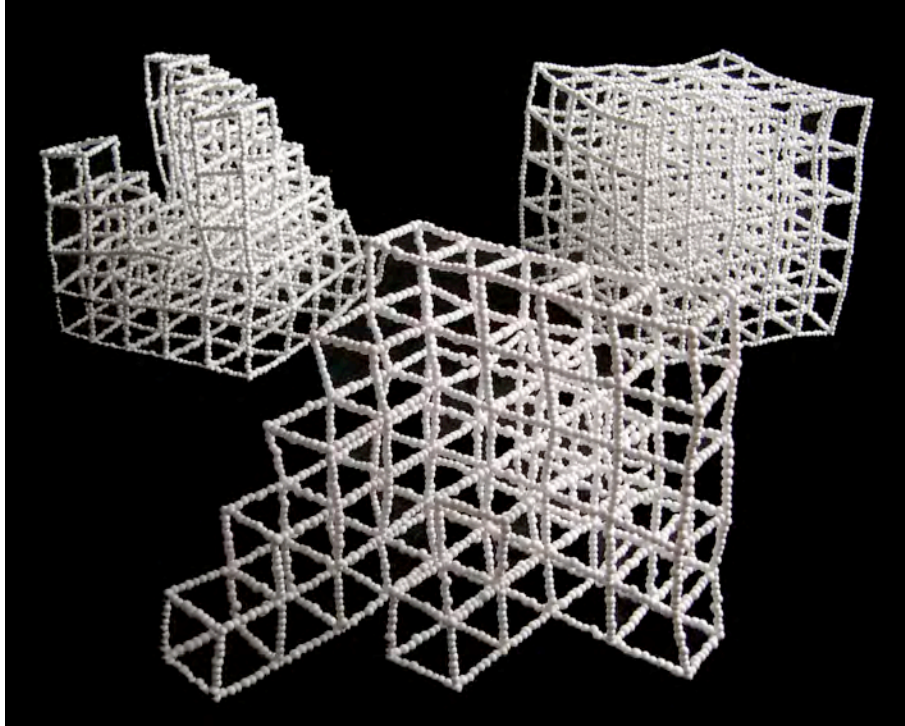


Fig 10: *At this Very Moment in this Work Where am I?*

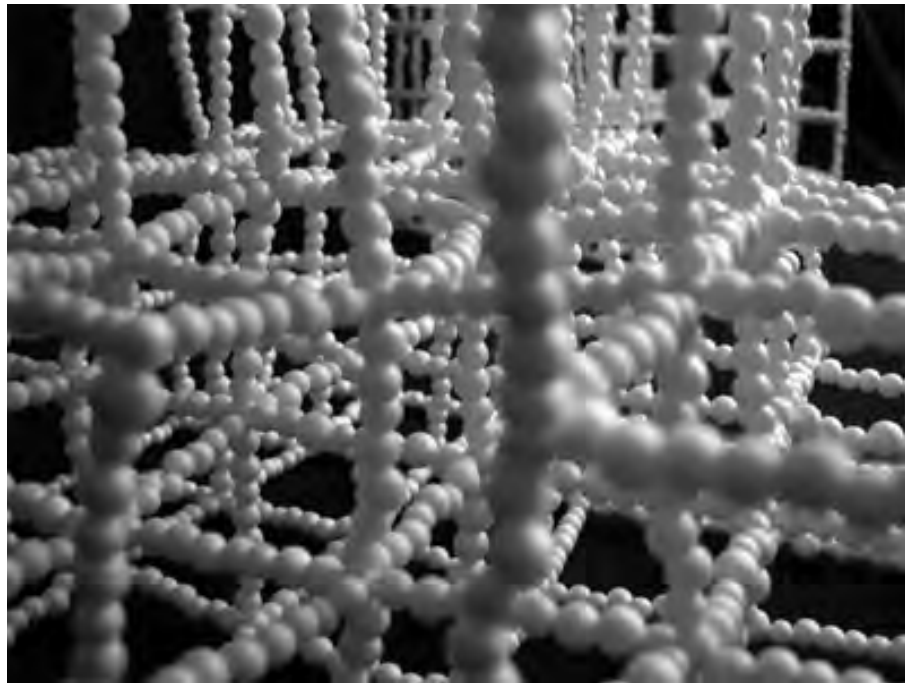


Fig 10: *At this Very Moment in this Work Where am I?* (Detail)

1 Introduction

This labourwork consists of the appropriation of Sol LeWitt's *Five Modular Structures - Sequential Permutations of the Number Five* (1972). The work follows precisely LeWitt's mathematical formula for 'Five Modular Structures' but each is made from gluing and pinning polystyrene beads together, rather than the wooden dowel of the original LeWitt. This reinvention, using a repetitive action dictated by the shift in material, results in 'wonky' structures that follow precisely the logic of *Five Modular Structures*, but with a very different formal result. What these objects aim to explore, in a simple and pragmatic way, is the power/role of process within construction.

2 Creative Stimulus/Rationale

2.1 Appropriation - forming questions

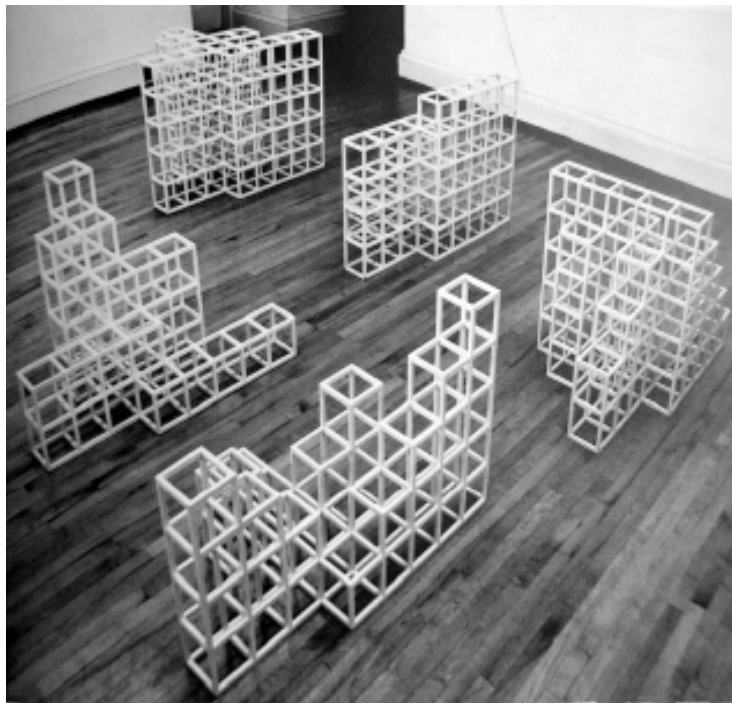


Fig 11: Sol LeWitt's *Five Modular Structures - Sequential Permutations of the Number Five* (1972)

The repetition of the exact structural organisation found in Sol LeWitt's *Five Modular Structures*, combined with a change in process brought about by a

shift of material, offered an opportunity to observe any changes and analyse any differences. LeWitt's original objects have clear, systematic, and logical foundations. They are modular constructions with mathematic number systems at their source.

The structures embody logic yet express a creative objectivity beyond that logic. It is exactly the area between art and logic that was interesting in LeWitt's work, the experiential indicators that work counter to the logic or rational. I wondered whether it was possible that conditions for a '*leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach*' (LeWitt 1969 Sentence No. 1) could be increased. Could the reintroduction of process be a catalyst, or a mechanism to highlight the gap between art and logic? Was it possible that repetitive manual action could further reveal that 'area between'? Even serve to further question the certainty of logic as a realistic indicator of possible reality?

3 Material/Medium

If an artist uses the same form in a group of works, and changes the material, one would assume the artist's concept involved the material. (LeWitt, 1969, Sentence no. 31)

This statement was important as LeWitt endorses that a material change has conceptual value. All that has essentially been done in the reproduction of this work is to change the material.

3.1 The polystyrene bead

The material possibilities and idea grew together from handling the polystyrene beads used for the labourwork *In-Formation*. The material was originally chosen because of a conscious search for 'singularity' (outlined in labourwork 2 3.2).

4 Process

Each Polystyrene Bead was forced onto fine stainless steel wire cut to lengths, ensuring that each bar of the construction would be made from 10 beads. Each bar was then connected and glued at the intersection with other bars. Building from the base up.

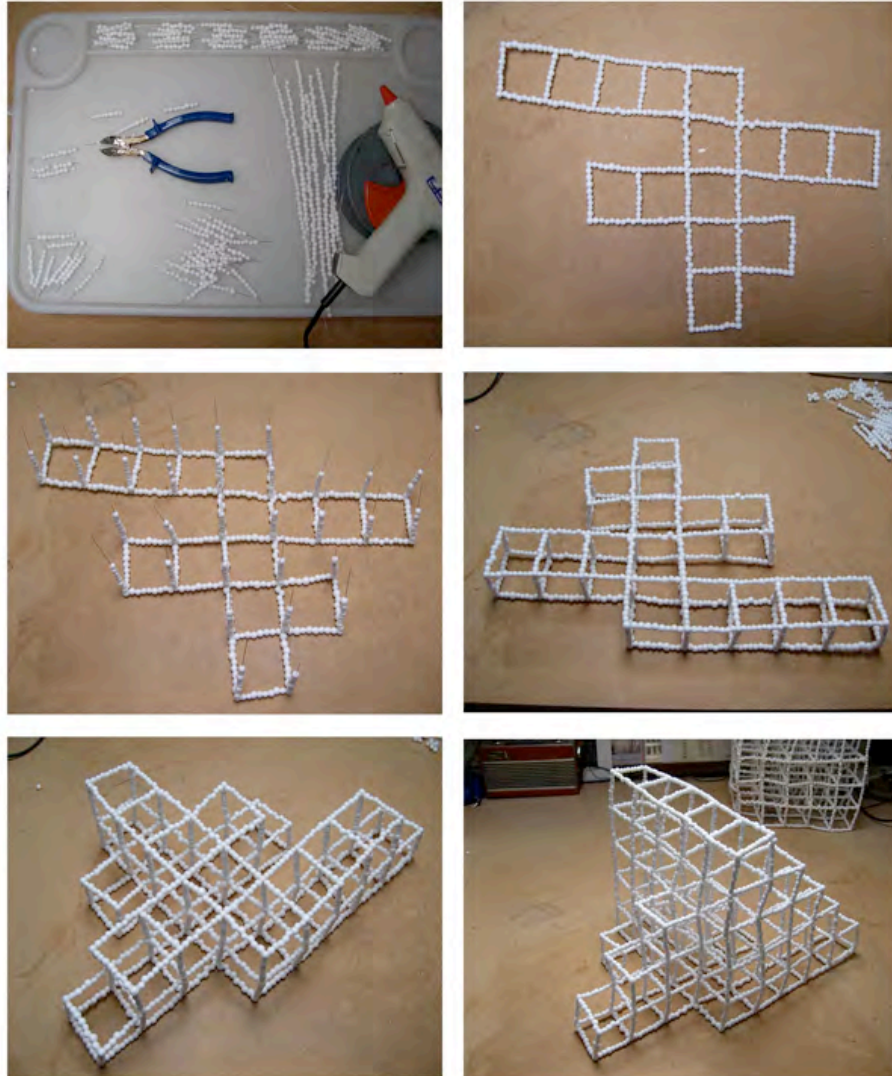
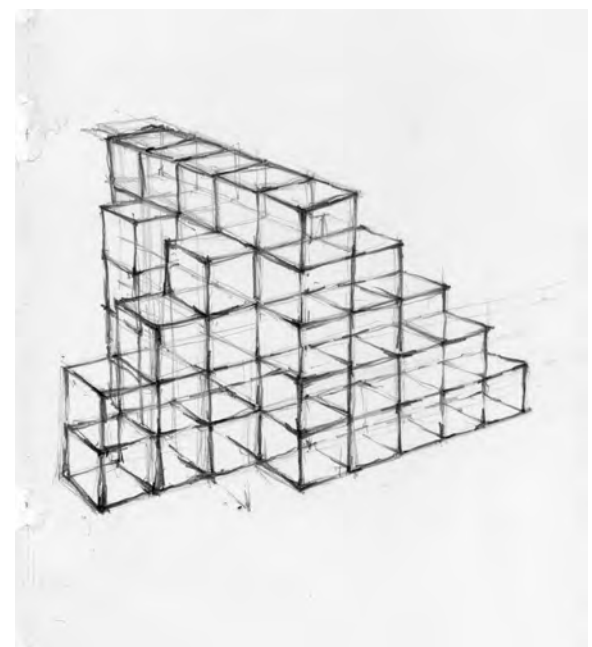
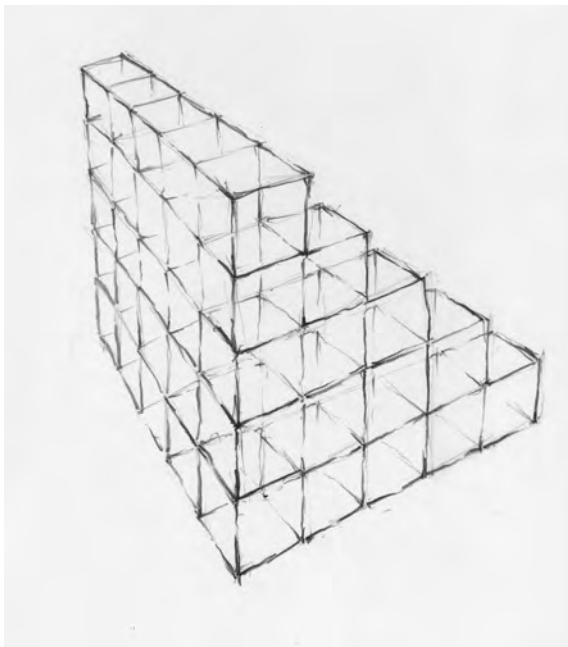
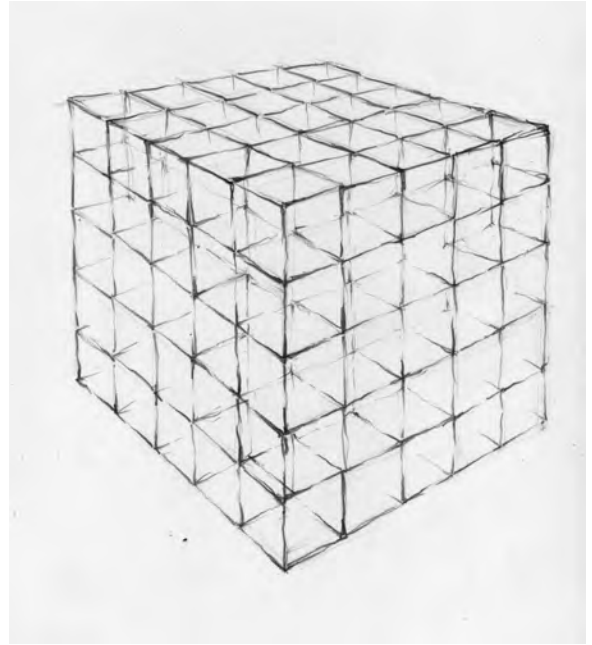
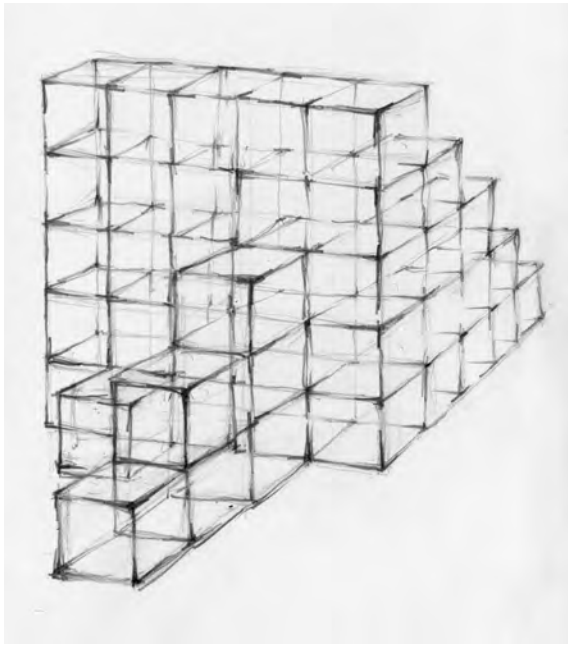


Fig 12: Process, making *At This Very Moment in This Work Where am I?*

4.1 Seeing logic – through drawing

The initial task was to work out the mathematical structure of LeWitt's

constructions from catalogue images. The limited information gleaned from a flat 2D picture meant that understanding their whole form was difficult. Knowing that they depended on a logical mathematical system meant that discovering the key to their whole shape was rather like doing a puzzle. There was a definite answer that was arrived at through observation (drawing) and logic.



Figs 13, 14, 15 & 16: Drawings from sketchbook

4.2 Shift in process through appropriation

The form and mathematic system remain the same. However, the new material insisted on a change in the mode of production or process. In turn, the process dictates a different scale and object stability, a stability relating to the structures physical properties not the aesthetic or creative strength of object.

Particular determinations were required:

- To follow the logic of the original work, each section of the cubic module should consist of 10 polystyrene beads. (Five would have been consistent with the concept *Sequential Permutations on the Number Five* but resulted in too small a unit to be considered viable. Ten however is perfectly divisible by five and suitably whole in decimal terms.)
- The beads must be pinned with wire when joining. The overall strength of the structure required this.

5 Labour

When positioned within LeWitt's Sentence 31, the determinate change of material has conceptual value, leading to an enquiry into the resulting process. The link between material and process may not be relevant in all cases; it is relatively irrelevant in LeWitt's constructions. The relentless nature of repetitive action needed to construct this work in this unlikely material, is hard to overlook, and conceptually pertinent to the structural and perceptual outcome.

5.1 Wonky structures

The shift in process results in a crumpled version of the original. By reintroducing repetitive action through process the clarity of the object is compromised. The structural stability is altered from a clean and clear description of logical space, into organic unstable structures that further question the mathematical logic at their source.

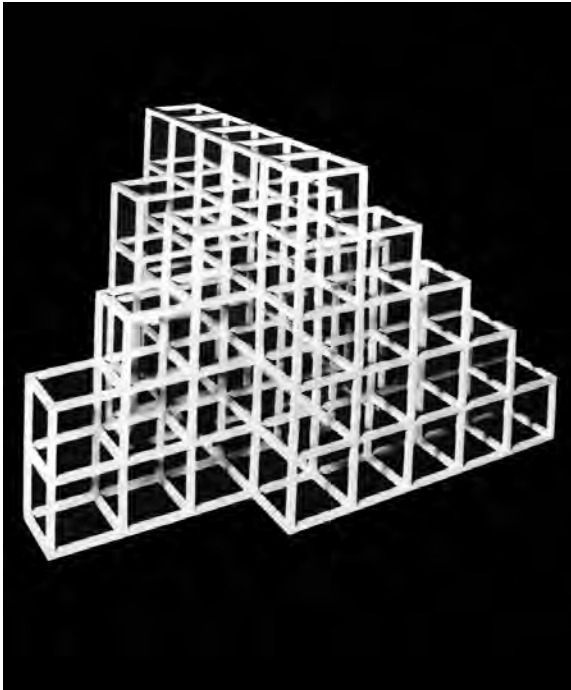


Fig 17: Sol LeWitt, One of *Five Modular Structures - Sequential Permutations of the Number Five* (1972)

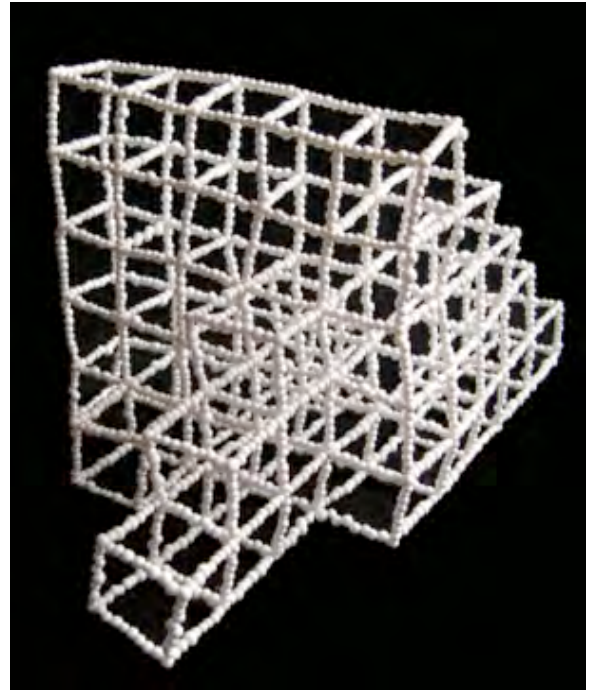


Fig 18: Townsley, One of *At This Moment In this Work Where am I?* (2006)

6 Repetition

The repetition of labour as addressed above - has an outcome that is divergent to the logical object.

6.1 The failure of repetition

The minute inaccuracies of each repeated action, measured over time, leak or record failure; a failure of the human hand over action. So the logical integrity of each structure is eroded, resulting in inaccurate forms. The 'wonky' structures highlight an ergonomic reality/intelligence that records a broader human experience through the repetition of action. Failure becomes expressive, in that it differs from the clear lines of logic. The repetition betrays the accuracy of each action, revealing difference, and leakage through difference inevitably alters the resulting object.

6.2 Repetition as appropriation

Another type of repetition in this labourwork is found in the appropriated form, through the desire to recreate again the logical precept of LeWitt's structures. The context, is of course, impossible to appropriate through the distance of time and space. The material, process and labour of the work differ absolutely from the original. The research aim was to question the role that labour had in recreating (or not) the logic of the original.

7 Summary

What emerges through this labourwork is an understanding that appropriation is in itself a form of repetition, which stands in addition to the repetition held in the process of the work. This labourwork also concurs with Brass Cube as identifying that repetition brought about through repetitive hand labour fails in true terms to repeat. The inaccuracy of each repeated action brings about a 'failure' of repetition. Yet, the failure is revealing of an ergonomic reality different from the logic of the forms. This shows the reality of difference in human action, each difference leaking expression through its divergence from true repetition.

There is also a complex questioning of pure logic embedded within the principle of this work, in both its original form and the appropriated labourwork. Though in each case the structural logic is the same, the result is vastly different due to a shift in material and consequently the process. The logical foundations of this work are also mirrored in the creative stimulus, which was as much an enquiry into possible practice-based research methods, specifically using the art object to test out ideas. It was thought to be an important development in understanding the nature of practice within a research paradigm, and acted as a reminder to the important role of reflection within practice-based research, in order to reveal emergence, rather than to fabricate situations to identify themes.

LABOURWORK 4
MIDDAY SKY



Fig 19: *Midday Sky 05/05/06*

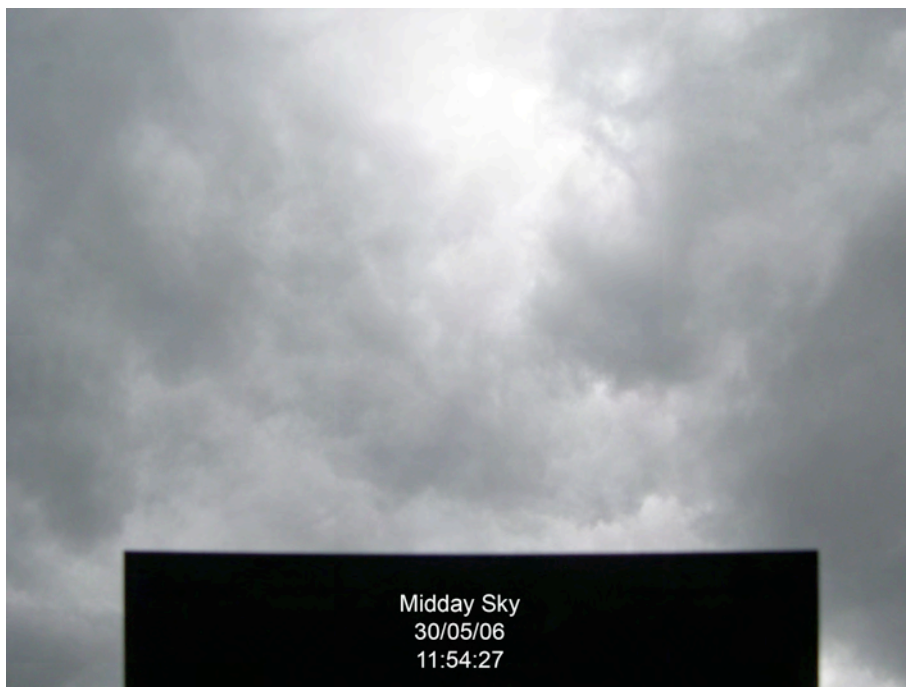


Fig 20: *Midday Sky 30/05/06*

1 Introduction

I became increasingly aware that the repetition explored so far was inherently linked to a rolling action – infinite, if not constrained by particular contingencies or logical devices (i.e. by the cube or through the contingencies of appropriation). In this labourwork I wanted to look more specifically at repetition as a 'return event'. A singular action whose repeat has occurrence over a longer more fixed timescale, specifically a daily event. The decision was thus made to take a photograph of the sky at midday, every day for at least one month.

2 Creative Stimulus/Rationale

The idea to devise a system to log repetition over time had been brewing for a while. Some very early experiments, such as taking a digital photograph of the surface of a pond that I passed on a daily basis, became an impetus for the work. The pond changed dramatically with the seasons - drying out in the summer, strewn with leaves in the autumn, and iced over in winter. This drew a very loose context to the paintings of Monet's *Haystacks* (1266-1290) or *Water Lilies* (1913-26), drawing comparisons of repetition over time. The subject of the repeat event needed to be as constant and stable as it could be, in order to examine natural change or difference over time.

2.1 Nietzsche - eternal return

Nietzsche's eternal return became very relevant to this work - the idea that time is a circular event, ever repeating through infinite permutations.

The 'failure' of repetition found in many of the previous labourworks, is the opposite of repetition as found in the 'eternal return', which identifies an 'absolute' repetition. Nietzsche's philosophy perceived the return event as negative: "*Duration 'in vain' without end or aim is the most paralyzing idea....*" (Nietzsche 1967 p55). So, could the reverse, the failure of repetition be viewed as positive?

The previous labourworks log a certain distress at the failure to repeat in

process terms, and yet, that very failure was also something indicative of the quality in the work, and this needed more consideration. One way of doing this was to look at the way Nietzsche relates repetition to time through the return event. This labourwork formalises this by looking at repetition over a specific timescale - specifically 24-hours repeated. It was also an incentive for using a more natural subject such as the sky, which has longevity beyond our own physical time, relating more directly to Nietzsche's 'infinite time'.

2.2 On Kawara - "date paintings"

On Kawara's *Date Paintings*, sometimes known as *The Today Series* were originated in 1966 and continue to date. They are a series of paintings depicting the date on which each was made. The date is executed in white letters on a solid colour background, which varies in shade and colour. On Kawara's paintings provided a useful formal reference, especially while considering what information to include within the picture frame, i.e. the date and time. I did consider a note of place could also be included, but decided that as the subject of the sky was universal, the place was not relevant in this case.

3 Material/Medium

The material in this work must be considered more laterally than in previous labourworks, and perhaps for this reason, is more complex. Material here is considered both the action of making (process) and the photograph itself, as a record of that action.

3.1 The digital photograph

The physical photograph is a record of the action needed to make it, highlighted by including an overprint depicting the precise time and date each photograph was taken. This was a direct attempt to draw the viewer into the action of the moment of making. Each individual photograph is also printed to the same format - ensuring a continuity of form across each return event - each day's photograph.

3.2 The action of making

The digital photograph is an ideal medium as it is extremely stable when repeated, more basic creative actions of process, such as drawing, are far less consistent, far more open to shift and change as each repetition is made. The stability of the camera to form a repeat action was important in order to capture natural change or difference over time, observing the change in subject rather than the change in the process or event (the act of making a picture).

3.3 The Sky

As already indicated I chose the sky for its reference to time beyond the present, as an infinite past and future fixture, relating conceptually to Nietzsche's 'infinite time'. Another important and simple practical reason was that it is always there, no matter where you are - a constant, always available for photographing. Though perhaps technically the subject, the sky could also be viewed as the material of the work.

4 Process

Midday seemed a logical marker of time; it is a significant hour, and doesn't suffer from fluctuating seasonal daytime light problems, as does the morning or evening sky.

4.1 Devising the photographic process

It became important to achieve a pragmatic shot akin to the work of Bernard and Hilla Becher e.g. *Pitheads* (1965-1973).

The Becher's endeavour to use similar lighting conditions, so all of their prints have roughly the same range of black, grey and white tones. This allows the photographs to be compared with one another without extraneous differences - dramatic skies or deep shadows - distracting from the subject matter. It also means that each individual picture is as faithful and accurate a record of the structure as possible.

(Collins, M. Undated: Tate Magazine)

In this labourwork the primary subject is the nuance of change offered by a 'dramatic sky' – the changes provided by a single object. This required a different approach to the Becher photographs, though the photographic images still needed to be as consistent as possible. To achieve this the camera was fixed on automatic and a grey card was used to set the controls consistently, to balance the exposure on every repeated occasion. In this way the decision-making was kept to a minimum at each event and ensured the availability of invariable light and colour information. The variations should now be in the relation between the constant grey-card and the changing sky. This process identifies the camera as implicit in the authorship of this work.

4.2 The problem of logging physical time

How to identify the correct time to take the daily image became a philosophical problem. If I used my own watch, what happens if it is not accurate, or slows down, or I forget to put it on? Could I use any timepiece? Any handy clock, watch etc. would not necessarily be accurate and never synchronised with others. I could ring the speaking clock - but I would still need a clock to tell me when to ring. I considered listening to the radio every day and waiting for Big Ben – which was neither practical nor accurate.

I considered carrying a digital alarm clock with me - though this had exactly the same problems as my wristwatch and had the added complication of being an external prompt. It is another machine external to the simplicity of the concept that would have a strong authorial role, masking the artist's own fallibility.

The decision was made to leave the mechanism for logging time as simple as possible, by using whatever means came to hand in whatever situation I found myself in. This was difficult to accept while I searched for the perfection of the repeat, but as the practical reality of the task mounted and mistake built on mistake, the failure became more important and revealing, overcoming the desire for repetition. This was an unexpected shift in creative practice.

The camera itself had a built in clock (accessible after the image was taken) that records the exact time and date of each picture, so all the data around the events was recorded, by the camera that takes the picture. This became useful when organising the presentation of the images and for this reason the same camera was used throughout the labourwork.

4.3 Presentation

A section of the grey card was left visible in each image, it became the ground onto which the time and date of each photograph was added later in Photoshop. Where photographs were missed they were commemorated by a full image of the grey-card, with the relevant date and the word 'missed' printed onto it.

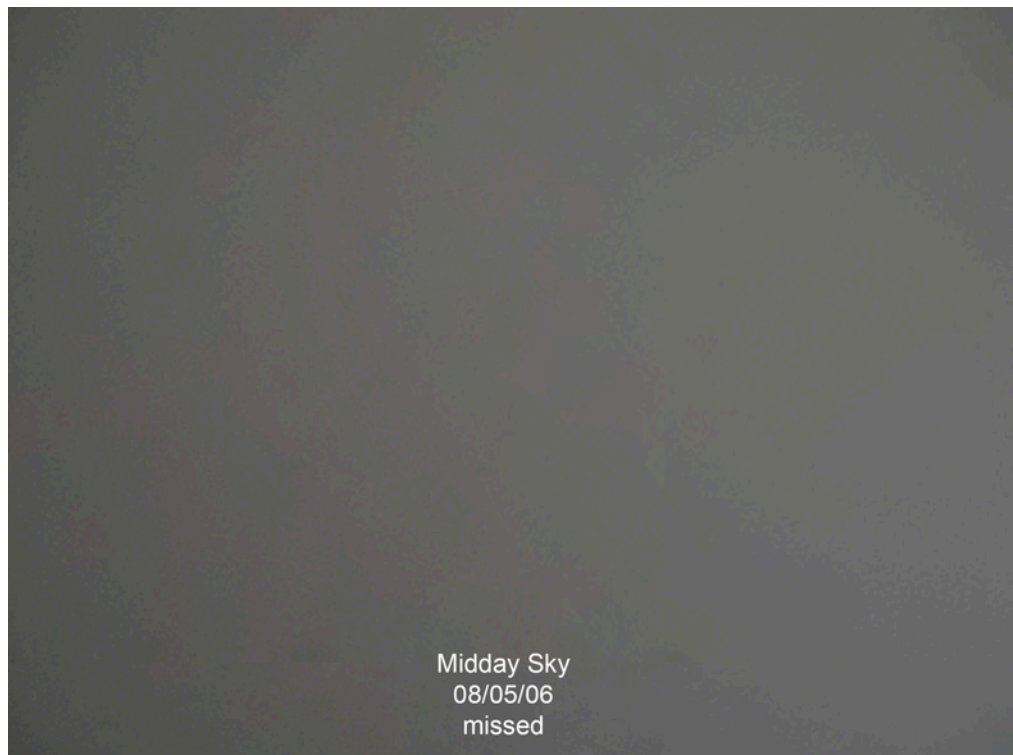


Fig 21: *Midday Sky 08/05/06*

For final presentation I chose to print the digital photographs on A4 photographic paper and place them in a grid formation, which takes its

references from the formal calendar layout for the month the activity happened.

5 Labour

5.1 The labour of memory – commitment

The commitment to an action repeated over time has strict boundaries on personal activity. Having to stop whatever is being done at a certain time has sometimes exposed the performance of the act. The occasional interaction with others (or at least being visible carrying out the work) somehow places the artist at the centre of the work, in a somewhat performative manner.

Ideally, the aim was to take the picture on the dot of midday but this proved impossible. The human failure to repeat accurately a daily event was most frustrating, yet it is this very failure and shift that became interesting in the result. In many ways this labourwork was the most difficult to do, much harder than continuous repetitive labour, which can be organised around personal events. The process is more controlling of the artist, despite requiring less physical time to fulfil the outcome.

5.2 The machine raising questions – camera

The camera is an important character within the authorship or creation of this work. It has particular systems which have a bearing on the outcome, such as aperture, lens etc, all of which have influence over the look of the resulting photograph. This is compounded by the decision to keep the camera on a constant setting, leaving the decision-making of how to take each picture out of the equation. In this way some of the authorship is deferred or channelled through the camera itself and away from the artist.

6 Repetition

6.1 The return event

This labourwork represents singular repetition over time – where one action is repeated at regular instances – once every 24-hours. This is different to the repetitive action of previous work – where the action is generative or implicitly perpetual. The repetition here is a once daily event that has 24-hours of inactivity (or other activity) around it, relying more on memory and habit, than action and labour.

6.2 Difference and repetition

Each individual image of the sky stands proudly as unique and singular. The quantity of images of the same subject offers comparison across a whole, especially when displayed en masse. The repetition is held at the source of the picture making – that of pointing the camera, holding the grey board and shooting. The difference in the result and the repetition within the action are interdependent, yet separate.

6.3 The role of failure

The failure of the artist to achieve the premise of the work is explicitly transparent within the final presentation. The action repeated over time is more revealing than the final image in this instance. This is particularly visible when an absence of action is presented, i.e. where the picture of the sky does not appear during one 24hr period. The blank grey screen logs the failure of the artist to manage the return event, thus drawing the viewer into the experience of the process of repetition, the frustration of the missed opportunity being explicit.

The printout of the time the image was taken, superimposed on each image (as recorded by the digital camera), further compounds the catalogue of failure, with only a fraction of images been recorded on or even near mid-day, presenting an irregular ordering of our actions opposite time when repeated.

7 Summary

This work was devised to specifically explore the return event – a singular activity repeated over a specific period of time. The process utilises a digital camera to capture an image of the sky at 12-noon each day. The very specific structure for this work raised questions about the relationship between artist and digital/mechanical means of production, i.e. the camera, challenging where authorship resided within the structure and process of the work.

Once presented and organised within logical mechanisms (the On Kawara inspired calendar grid) – the failure of the return event, is all too visible in this instance. The artist fails spectacularly to align her action/memory to the mechanics of the labourwork.

The Nietzsche proposition of the ‘eternal return’ as a creative stimulus for the work brings a new frame for repetition that has an eternal timescale, way beyond the object or physical/process duration of the work. The open-ended nature of this labourwork, unconstrained by any external precept for closure, references longevity beyond the physical time of the work.

LABOURWORK 5
SPOONS

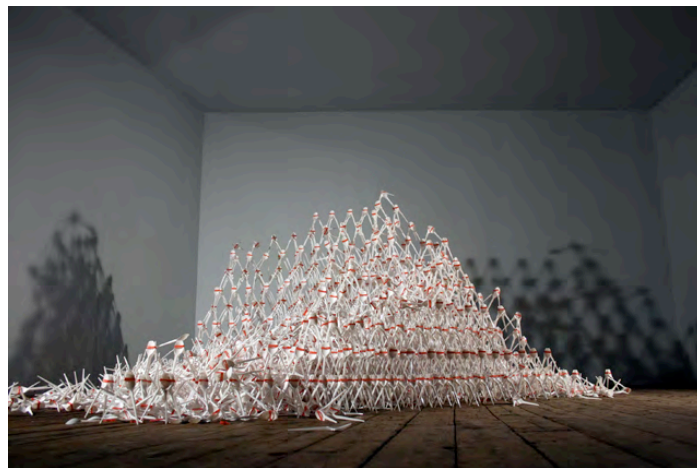
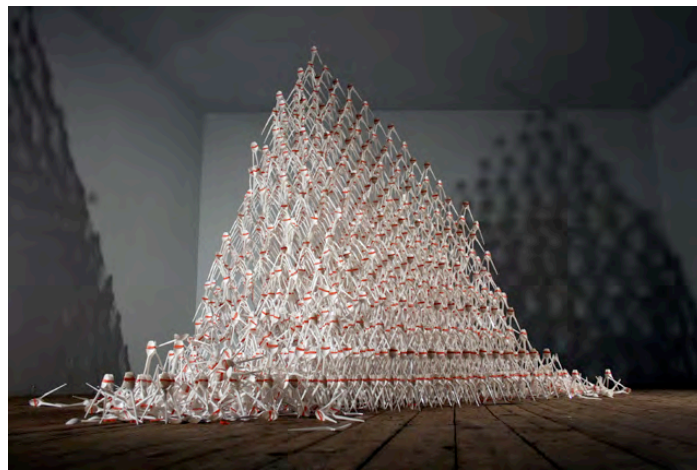
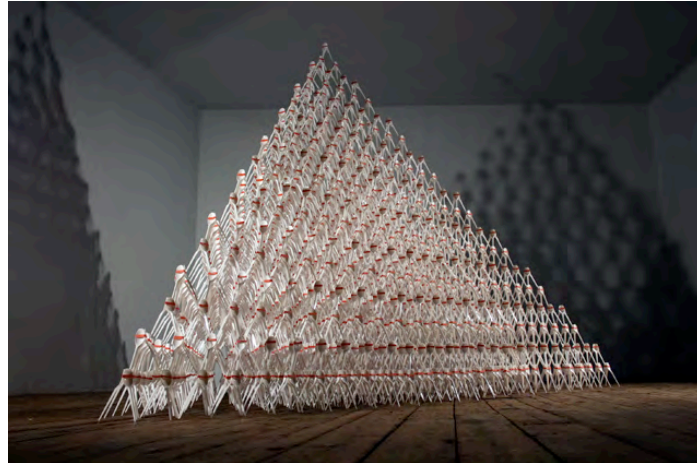


Fig 22, 23, 24: *Spoons*. at various stages of decay

1 Introduction

The labourwork *Spoons* takes the following practical form, as recorded in the exhibition catalogue for *Second Lives; Remixing the Ordinary* shown at the Museum of Art and Design, New York:

Spoons is made from 9273 plastic spoons and 3091 rubber bands. Three spoons are bound together at the scoop end to form a unit, like a tripod standing on the tipped handles of the spoon. The “bowls” of the spoons are held back to back, so that a hollow is formed between the rubber band and the concave end of the spoon head. This allows each unit to be joined with others to build a pyramidal structure. The units are placed so that the tessellation of the structure allows each layer to rest offset to the previous one by the triangulation of the spoon top. Over time, the rubber in the band perishes and the unit collapses. The whole sculpture is then undermined and experiences a random decay. This process was filmed with time-lapse photography programmed to take one frame every twenty minutes, day and night. (Townsley, J. 2008)

Previous labourworks identified time as having an important relationship with repetition. This work was made in order to understand that relationship further, and specifically, consider ideas related to temporality.

2 Creative Stimulus/Rationale

The chosen materials and a desire to construct a significantly sized regular solid informed the creative stimulus for this work. Also, formal research related to other labourworks had identified time as a useful reference for debates into repetition.

2.1 The regular solid - pyramid

The pyramidal structure of spoons was devised through experiments in tessellation using the materials and the individual unit of 3 spoons tied together with a rubber band. The structure itself imposes a specific order of construction

and demands precise number quotas to achieve a whole.

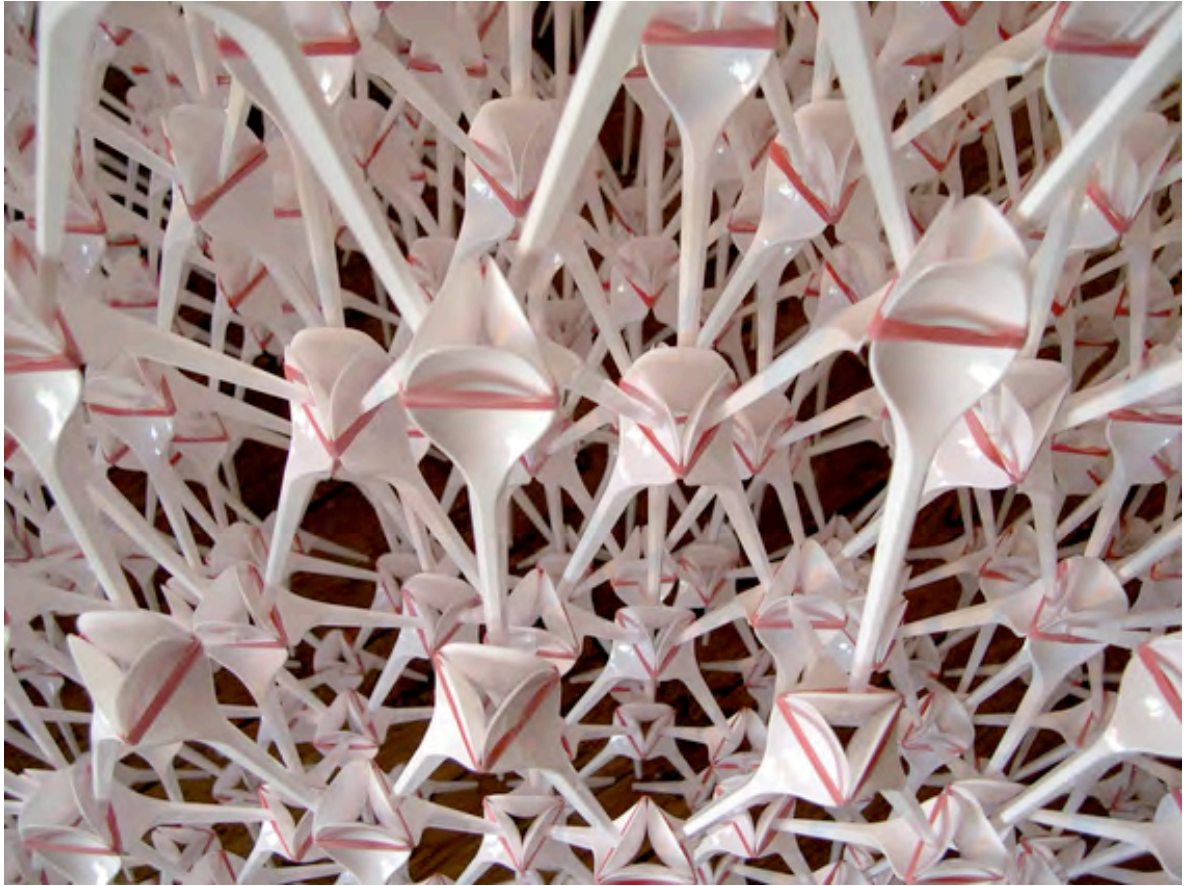


Fig 25: *Spoons*. (Detail)

2.2 Repetition of hand held process undone

The undoing, deconstruction or erosion of the structure became the conceptual driving point for this work. The material qualities (the decay of the rubber) inspired consideration of ways to present the decay of a structure, specifically through the undoing of the manual process applied to construction. The circular movement of material, changed through hand held process to complete structure, and its deconstruction and consequent material return, seemed to challenge ideas of closure and what it means for a work to be finished. It appeared that time was again playing a role by identifying or measuring a return, perhaps, even presenting loss through the decay of the structure.



Fig 26: *Spoons*. (during later stages of decay)

2.3 Time and temporality

The conceptual notions of temporality became an important conceptual drive and platform for reflection in this work, and a stimulus to utilise time-lapse video to explore the timescale of this work more directly.

3 Material/Medium

I was continuing to search for materials that offered a multiplicity of form and that could offer me the opportunity to apply a simple process, easily repeated. For this

reason I spent some time searching pound shops and car boot sales. Plastic cutlery is easily obtainable and available cheaply in large catering packs.

3.1 The spoons

The plastic spoons were particularly interesting as they have an aspect that is not purely directional. By this I mean that from all angles the structure has depth - in comparison to a knife or a fork, who if observed from a side angle become almost linear in form. The bowl like aspect of the spoon means that even if the handle is viewed from the side, appearing linear, the spoon head still has a three dimensional aspect. This meant that the spoons tessellated easily, and their third dimension allows for tessellation in three dimensions rather than on a single plain.

3.2 The rubber bands

The rubber bands became a chosen material by accident as I was devising ways of building with the spoons. I was experimenting with different glues, and the rubber bands were useful for holding the structures while the glue was drying. I had a large collection of red bands gathered from the streets of London, (they are originally used to hold the post together, the postmen discard them on their rounds). I was interested in their origin and recyclability.

It was not until later that I realised that the rubber band had properties of primary significance to this piece of work. When comparing the glued spoons to the ones with bands around, it became obvious that the rubber secured spoons were more honest in their construction. The bright red band was not hiding its function. It had an added use, in that it also allowed the spoon tripod to flex in response to other units when combined to form a substantial structure. So, offering perfectly simple units that could build and tessellate in all directions.

There was of course another property of the rubber band - that of its temporality. The rubber would rot and give way over time. This gave immediate

conceptual purpose to constructing a significantly sized structure from many units. Each unit of three spoons would have an unspecified lifespan.

3.3 The video

Though not essentially a material, the video format section of this work is very important to the overall concept. The video presents in a time-lapse sequence the deconstruction of the structure. It provides us with a different timescale - revealing the deconstruction without having to engage with the structure in real time.

4 Process

The process of this work is threefold: 1 - in its construction, 2 - in its erosion or deconstruction, and 3 - in the presentation of the video alongside the work.

4.1 Construction

The overall map of construction is well documented in the introduction to this labourwork. Essentially the construction consists of two separate processes: 1 - the repetitive labour of each unit of 3 spoons tied together with a rubber band, and 2 - the building of the 3091 units each balanced on the next to form a pyramid around eight feet high.

4.2 De-construction

Over time the rubber in the band perishes and the unit collapses. The whole structure is then undermined and experiences a random decay. The rubber bands fly as they snap and the spoons fall, undoing, even commemorating, the labour applied to the construction, returning the structure to its elemental components of spoons and rubber bands. The footprint of the original structure can be observed through the archaeology of the fallen materials, with the rubber-bands flinging far from the structure and the quantity of spoons building towards the centre of a general triangular form.

4.3 The video

The deconstruction process was filmed over 2 months with time-lapse photography - programmed to take one frame every twenty minutes, day and night. This particular sequence was filmed in the studio with 4 cameras positioned from the left, the right, up high and down low, ensuring that no movement was missed. Each camera was linked to a computer that was programmed to control the camera precisely.



Fig 27: Studio during the time-lapse photography of *Spoons*

The resulting images were then sequenced together to form time-lapse animations. For exhibition, each animation was presented consecutively and the video looped, presenting a continuous sequence of the complete structure decaying to nothing - and then appearing again from a slightly different angle and decaying etc. The video shows the deconstruction in super fast time - unreal time, yet this video becomes almost more real than the very slow timescale (the real time) of the structures demise; the viewer can see the whole 3 months activity in just a few minutes.

5 Labour

The repeatability of the materials through industrial fabrication, contrasts with the more personal nature of the manual labour applied to realise the work, raising questions about the assignment of authorship.

5.1 Industrial fabrication

The industrial mark left behind on the chosen materials binds them directly to an external manufacturable structure, whose elements are controlled and developed for entirely different reasons to that of the art object, the spoons are a manufactured commodity.

5.1.1 The visibility of labour - manufactured and art labour

'Reading backward from the art object, it is possible to connect the invisibility of the artist (who remains conceptually present) to the even more obscured human laborer, whose efforts also exist within the manufactured object. The labor of manufacture, although now distant through mechanization, is still inevitable, even if only as a trace of the person who presses the button to turn on the machine.' (Townesley, J. 2008 p220)

5.2 Hand held

The hand held labour/process needed for the construction of each unit is a physical act, yet it must adhere to the number systems imposed by the final pyramidal shape (the number of units needed to build the form). This means that the repetition of labour becomes a job of working through 'daily quotas' in order to achieve a specific mass.

This labour process is outside of what we define as a traditional art process (carving, casting etc), but is pushed towards that definition by its polarised intent compared to the industrial manufacture of the material elements. The process falls outside of the external manufacturing conventions but the almost

obsessive repetition needed to construct this work, combined with the number quota, binding three spoons 3091 times, still has parallels with industrial manufacturing labour. Binding artistic production to that of the industrial, especially early industrial labour, which is also re-iterated through the choice of materials that are inherently products of mass production.

To some degree, this work conceals my identity as an artist behind the repetitive manual labor applied to realize the work. Like craft-workers of ages, unknown but ever present. Although unlike the unknown craftsman or anonymous factory worker, I am named. By emphasizing the 'processes' of construction and deconstruction over personality, this work goes against the grain of today's celebrity culture. (Townesley, J. 2008 p220)

6 Repetition

The repetition in this work may be found in 3 very different forms: in the material, the process/labour of construction and deconstruction, and further through the video representation of the work.

6.1 Repetition found in mass produced materials/objects

The spoons and the rubber bands are both low value industrially mass-produced objects. The repeatability of the materials brings with them questions about value and the cultural accessibility/availability of the repeated object, brought about through mass production.

'The repeatability of the manufactured object is essential to the final work, as it stands in opposition to the impossible task of making a perfect repetition by hand labor.' (Townesley, J 2008 p220)

6.2 Repetition found in the process of construction and deconstruction

The single unit or module - three spoons and a rubber band, is the single object

that mirrors all other objects in this work. It is both singular and plural in its form, and it could be argued that one stands for all, as each is a replica of the last. The pyramid as a final construction also demands specific sequencing - starting in the middle and building out and up. This is different to the random decay of each unit. Though repetitive, as it happens to each unit, the sequence of deconstruction is unpredictable.

6.3 Repetition found through video

The use of video to record and represent the decay of the structure is in itself a repetition of a specific event. The video of the decay is presented alongside the actual object. The decay of the object will take a different sequence to the video, as each unit collapses in a random sequence (with the video depicting a previous decay). Repetition is further extended through looping the film so that it plays over and over again, resulting in infinitely repeating complete forms that fall to the ground and appear again.

7 Summary

Though a simple regular solid, this work is complex in its presentation of closure, which rather than being fixed at the pinnacle of its pyramidal construction, is followed by deconstruction. Through the video the process is repeated over and over again, opening the debate about when the work is actually finished. Perhaps challenging the need for a fixture in time that can be described as finished.

Repetition may be found in several ways: 1: - through the use of multiple mass produced low value materials, 2: - the repetition of labour required to construct the piece and then the natural undoing of that labour as each rubber band snaps, 3: - in the presentation alongside the object of a time-lapse video that records a decay (though not a precise replica of the decay sequence in the gallery, it is still a repetition of the form of the work), and 4: - the video is looped to repeat ad-infinitum.

Time-lapse video has proved an important tool in exploring time and exposing the different timescales present in this work. Difference observed through repetition can

be identified in the real-time decaying object when compared to the time-lapse video placed along side it. The shifting timescales take us beyond our usual experience of time and into alternative timeframes.

Temporality is also identified as an important platform for reflection on repetition, especially when that repetition is presented as a sequence or time based event.

It was also noted that the relationship between the artist's manual labour, used to construct each unit, and the original manufacture of the materials had some share of authorship within this work.

LABOURWORK 6
SCRIBBLE SQUARE



Fig 28: *Scribble Square* in *Negotiated Positions* exhibition



Fig 29: *Scribble Square* (Detail)

1 Introduction

The previous labourwork *Spoons* presented, through repetition, the deconstruction of form, as each physical repetition of construction was undone through the random decay of the materials used. In Labourwork 6 – *Scribble Square* the relation between the process as generative (constructive) and the process as obliteration (deconstructive) is more closely related, operating simultaneously.

This work looks at the obliteration of an image brought about by the process of its making being repeated to the full conclusion of action. Using a simple scribble as the process, it is repeated until a defined area is black with ink. This relentless repetition both adds to the image and obliterates it.

2 Creative Stimulus/Rationale

2.1 The regular solid – 1-meter square

A square 1-meter square seemed an appropriate stable form in which to work, and of a suitable size to offer the process of scribbling beyond a usual scale or quantity. The rationale was to use the most simple action of 'scribbling' and repeat it with an ambition altogether out of proportion to the characteristics of the action/labour. The scribble is considered a childlike act, yet could perhaps be something different if harnessed within a structure and repeated beyond usual conception; interrogating the original premise that repetition offers more than the sum of the parts.

2.2 Binary oppositions

Labourwork 5 - *Spoons* inspired rudimentary research into the notion of 'binary oppositions' very simply equated to the object being either whole (constructed), or collapsed (deconstructed). The basic precept that each state acts as the binary opposition to the other became intriguing, and Labourwork 6 is some response to that interest. Taking a white empty piece of paper and turning it into an inky black full piece of paper seemed a logical more structuralist approach to analysing the two oppositions. As my research developed I was

inspired by developments away from structuralism towards a more 'democratic' form of opposition found within a deconstructive precept, specifically the role that repetition may take in the transformation of one state to the other.

2.3 Robert Rauschenberg *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953)

Rauschenberg's process of erasing the de Kooning drawing over days, using numerous rubber erasers, has had a direct influence on the construct of this labourwork. In essence this labourwork was devised to the same structure as Rauschenberg but working in the opposite direction. For Rauschenberg the obliteration was through taking away, erasing the image; within *Scribble Square* the obliteration is additional scribbling over and over, until the surface and many of the original marks of the process of scribbling are covered.

3 Material/Medium

The material in this case is very basic - paper and gel pen. The gel pen has a constant and steady flow. Black ink was chosen as the diametric opposite of white paper.

4 Process

This work consists of 5 large drawing papers, each marked with an area/space one-meter square. Each of the 5 squares is filled with scribble - until the whole area is black with ink.

4.1 The scribble

The scribbling motion was constant and of a size that fitted a comfortable action of my hand. I worked randomly over the surface being careful not to break the defined line of the 1-meter square, which was impossible. The scribbling was sustained for many days until the area was black with ink and before the surface of the paper began to erode under the pressure of the pen and the ink. Little specks of white still remain on the surface of the paper, as scribbling over and over again on the same spot, still did not cover every speck. The urge was to dot the specks of white with ink, but that would have

been a change in the process and outside of the rules of this particular work.



Fig 30: *Scribble Square* (Detail)

4.2 Process as transformative

The square is black. It has been transformed from a white surface (paper) empty of process, to a black and full surface of scribbled ink, through the process of repeating a scribble. It is a negation and obliteration of a white form into the generation and emergence of a black form. The polarity of this change is not immediately obvious to the viewer, as access is only possible by observing the final black state. The temporal presence of white is inferred through the actual presence of the black. The inference of white is only possible by reading and considering the process of change. The edge of the drawing and surface texture are essential in telling this story. The inference of white is visible in minute specks or remains of a present yet inaccessible white.

The coverage of black is both destructive of the white and generative of the black. The repetition of the process is both self obliterating and generative, suicidal and nascent.

5 Labour

The action of labour in this case is primeval, elementary. The act has both drudgery and exuberance, requiring tenacity to fill the whole meter square (days of labour) until it is black, and then repeat the task 5 times.

6 Repetition

There are two types of repetition in this work.

6.1 Repetition of process - the scribble

The repetition of the scribble movement has an infinite gesture that was only closed by the defined area of 1-meter square and the quality of the paper surface reaching the point of erosion if further scribbling was applied.

Scribbling could be considered an activity with one beginning, offering the potential to continue ad-infinity or until a decision is made to stop. It could also be considered a series of small repetitions, with each loop of scribble being a repetition of the previous and pre-empting the next, multiplying over the surface and overlapping previous marks.

6.2 Repetition of form or image - 5 drawings

On initial inspection the 5 drawings look identical; they are identically sized black squares placed uniformly on white paper. On closer inspection however, the surface of each is different. The drawing appears to have tidemarks formed by the layering of the scribble, with some areas being more overworked than others. These are not uniform across the 5 drawings. The edges are also different, with each line that transcends the boundary of the square being individual. In this way the hand process of production is revealed through the

quintuple repetition and presentation of the drawings

7 Summary

Following directly from *Spoons* this work's creative stimulus/rationale is built on a desire to visualise 'binary oppositions'. This has prompted questions about the relationship between repetition and deconstructive theory.

The two states of white and empty verses full and black - are both present at the same time in one place through reading the process of the work. This is both generative of mark while at the same time obliterating previous marks and the original state (empty and white). Each state is dependent on the other for its existence.

The repetition of the action of scribbling reveals a dependence on either: a systemic closure - the square; or a material closure - the quality of the surface of the paper (standing up to repeated scribbling). Repetition is also found in the presentation of 5 individual drawings made to the same system.

LABOURWORK 7
SCRIBBLE TO THE COUNT OF 5

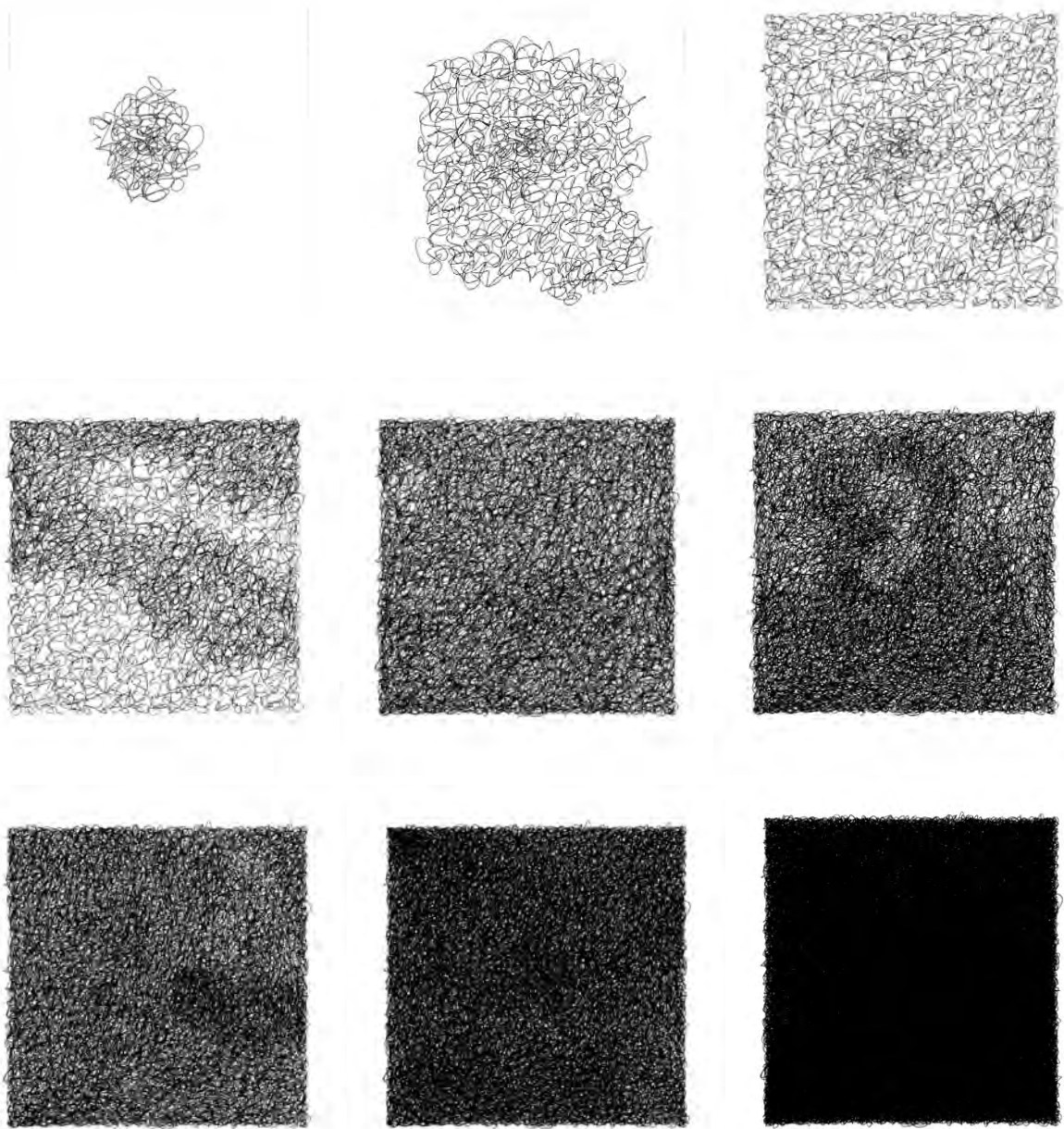


Fig 31-39: *Scribble to the Count of 5* (stills from the time-lapse animation)

1 Introduction

This labourwork consists of a video installation and is a direct evolution from Labourwork 6 - *Scribble Square*. It picks up on the idea that repetition can be transformative - changing from one state (in binary opposition) to another. This time, the process of scribbling is made more accessible through the use of time-lapse imagery. Electronic scans were taken of the scribbling at regular intervals and presented as a video animation.

2 Creative Stimulus/Rationale

Labourwork 6 - *Scribble Square* was the starting point for this work. I aimed to make visible the development of a 'scribble drawing' through time, rather than presenting only the conclusion of the process of making, as observed in *Scribble Square*.

2.1 *Fulford in Fog* photographs



Fig 40: *Fulford in Fog* (one of 52)

'Fulford in Fog' became a conceptual starting point for this work; it is a collection of 52 photographs I took of a rural Staffordshire landscape. The images are a record of a mid November walk in thick fog. The photographs capture instances of emergence and disappearance within, and of, the landscape. As the fog closes in, the topography is abstracted, both visually and contextually - forever *'mercurial, rolling and splitting'* (Loren C. Eiseley 1971 p69). The camera is moving - neither 'fixed' nor 'stable' - while the fog obliterates the past and hides the future, offering only the caption of a moment of stillness within the perpetual motion of the walk.

3 Material/Medium

This work utilises the very basic material of paper and pen, alongside the digital technology of a scanner and computer software to animate the still images into a time-lapse movie.

3.1 The relation between drawing and new media

The very basic materials used while scribbling, contrast with the technology used to animate the movie.

3.1.1 The photograph

By obtaining the photographic image with a scanner, it was possible to ensure that the paper could be placed accurately on the same spot each time to prevent the animation becoming too shaky when stitched together and speeded up.

The photograph captures the development of the drawn surface at 500 regular intervals, making visible the addition and obliteration that the scribbled mark causes to the surface.

3.1.2 Time-lapse movie

Each frame in the time-lapse animation is only a very small proportion

of the drawing process (1-frame for every 5-seconds), giving the impression that time has speeded up. The dichotomy between the slow laborious process, the captured image, and the presentation of the time-lapse movie (offering the image at a vastly increased time rate), means that time itself is being altered through the different processes of this work.

4 Process

The drawing takes place within a defined perimeter - a square 16cm X 16cm - and consists of drawing or scribbling for a set period of time, more precisely a mental count of five seconds. This process is repeated 500 times until the whole area is black with ink. After each count of five (or one unit of activity) the image was scanned, providing a record of the drawing development from beginning to end. The images were then cut together to form a time-lapse video/animation.

This whole process is repeated five times - to realise five drawings and animations whose linear (scribbled) progression develops singularly within each animation. The process repeats yet each outcome develops differently. A sound track is added of a whispering count to five accompanied by the sound of scribbling - repeated. All five animations have the same sound track but each has an incremental delay of 0.15 seconds, so that, although they begin together, they gradually slip out of synchronicity to produce a cacophony of counting sound. The five animations are then mounted in an installation, consisting of five monitors organised to play the five animations simultaneously. The monitors are organised in a circle to form a central viewing position, surrounding the viewer by the animations on five sides.

4.1 The scribbling

Although each image was taken after 'a count of five', I found myself controlling the scribble within those 5-seconds. So the square (defined in pencil) has a first layer of scribble that was spread evenly throughout that surface, defining that square in space. The consecutive layers were built up with each 5-second

scribble aiming to continue where the last one stopped. The effect of this is that the animation shows blobs of scribble appearing sequentially over the surface.

4.2 The time-lapse movie

The aim was to make a link between the artist and the viewer through the process of change, by presenting the sequence of process temporarily within a time-lapse animation.

The timing of the whole animation appears to slow down as the square becomes denser. At the beginning, when there is lots of white paper, it is obvious the marks have been made; each 'unit of activity' appears in rhythmic clumps. By the end, when the image grows more opaque, it becomes difficult to see where the pen has been, so the activity appears to slowdown through time, becoming less rhythmic. Yet, in reality the process itself never changes or slows - it is just as frantic in the end as it is in the beginning.

5 Labour

Labour in this work repeats the type of labour found in Labourwork 6 - *Scribble Square*: scribbling. But it also presents other types of labour:

1. The counting of time, breaking the activity into units of action.
2. The labour related to configuring and operating new media software in order to animate the units into one whole time-lapse animation.

I deal with each of these types of labour separately.

5.1 Counting through labour - quantifying action

The act of counting to five while scribbling alters the labour of scribbling (as discussed throughout Labourwork 6 - *Scribble Square*). The act is no longer continuous; it is broken down into 500 units, each of a duration equivalent to counting to five. I am careful to try to retain a constant rhythm to this counting; it becomes both scientific (as a measure) and mesmeric. By using the sound of counting and scribbling as the soundtrack to the animation I hope to draw the

viewer into this unusual experience of time related to process.

5.2 New media

The labour here is very different to all types of labour thus far considered. It is reactive to specific elements of software procedure, and though often repetitive, the computer takes the burden of the repetitions, calculating them to the programmer's specifications.

6 Repetition

The repetition here is complex as it operates on many levels in different forms and within different time frames. I have split it into two sections: 6.1 deals with the repetitions found in the process of making the work, and 6.2 deals with the repetition found within the presentation of the work.

6.1 Three time frames within process

Repetition in this work is happening within three time frames.

6.1.1 Repetition of the scribbling process

This is the basic and laborious real time repetition of forming and repeating a scribble. It is inherently a physical repetition.

6.1.2 The count of five - 1 image

Counting to five while scribbling forms a marker in which to make an image - this is repeated 500 times. The act of counting to 5 creates natural gateways in time where the scribbling process discussed in 5.1 is broken down into units of activity. The sound of counting to five, repeated, is also used within real-time as a soundtrack to the animation.

6.1.3 The time-lapse animation X 5

The processes in 4.1 and 4.2 (scribbling and the time-lapse animation) are then repeated 5 times to make five animations. When presented

simultaneously they offer repetition in form and structure, but difference in the detail of the development of each drawing.

6.2 Presentation

The presentation of the work involves the duplication of particular equipment and to sustain the performance the animation must be looped.



Fig 41: *Scribble to the Count of 5* Installation

6.2.1 The loop

Each animation is looped to play continuously from beginning to end, repeated until the machinery mounting this work is turned off. Looping offers a sequential repetition, which in this case, wipes clean the scribble and highlights the binary oppositions of white and empty, and black and full (discussed in Labourwork 6 - *Scribble Square*). It also folds back time, taking us through an event then slipping back to the beginning, over and

over.

6.2.2 The equipment - mounting five animations

Each animation is presented via a monitor connected to speakers, mounted on a plinth. The monitor and speakers are connected to a video recorder. All are plugged into a power extension, which connects to a socket. This configuration is repeated 5 times and the equipment for each of the five animations is identical.

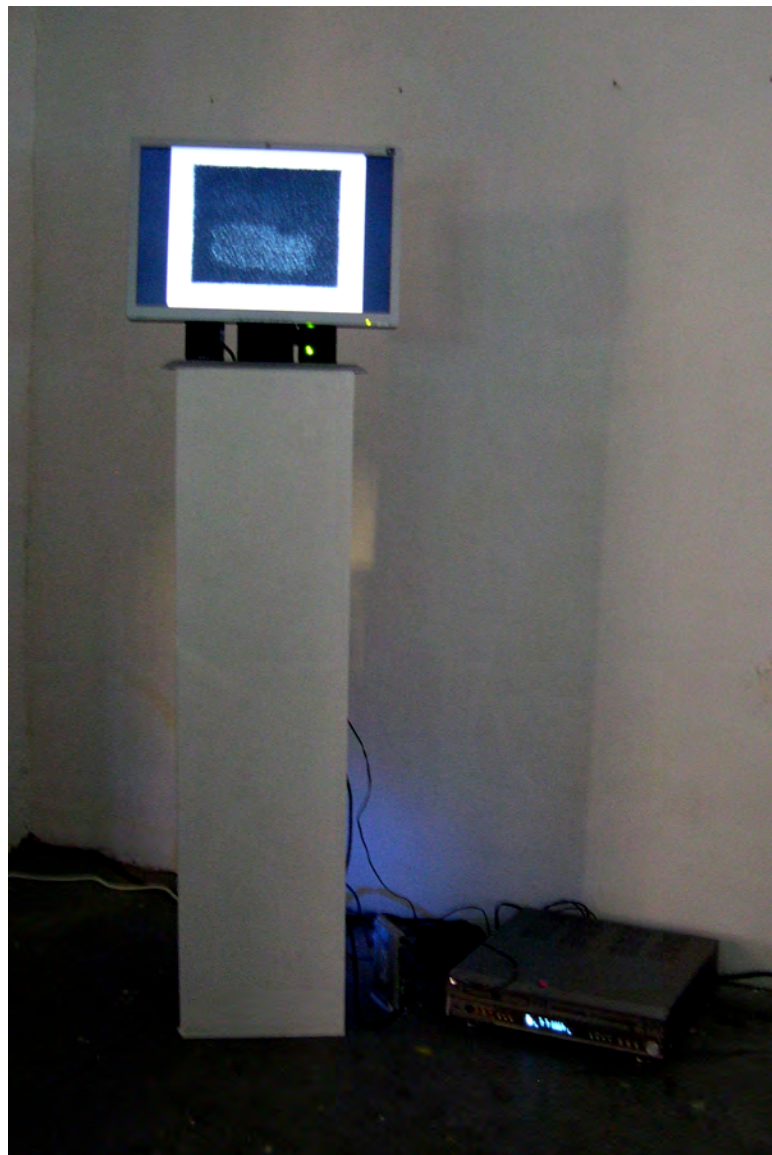


Fig 42: *Scribble to the Count of 5* Installation

7 Summary

This installation is perhaps the most complex labourwork to date. Though the core activity is simply scribbling, the variety of repetitions and multifarious time frames presented, make the work much more involved.

The original aim was to make visible the temporal moments of process, but it was found that by doing this the installation presented itself in many different timescales all at once. This means that the viewer can slip out of real time and into the speeded up time of the time-lapse animation and back again. The sound track anchors each speeded up unit (itself a conglomeration of five seconds condensed into one fleeting image), within a systematic number system that never reaches beyond five.

LABOURWORK 8

SATIE 840

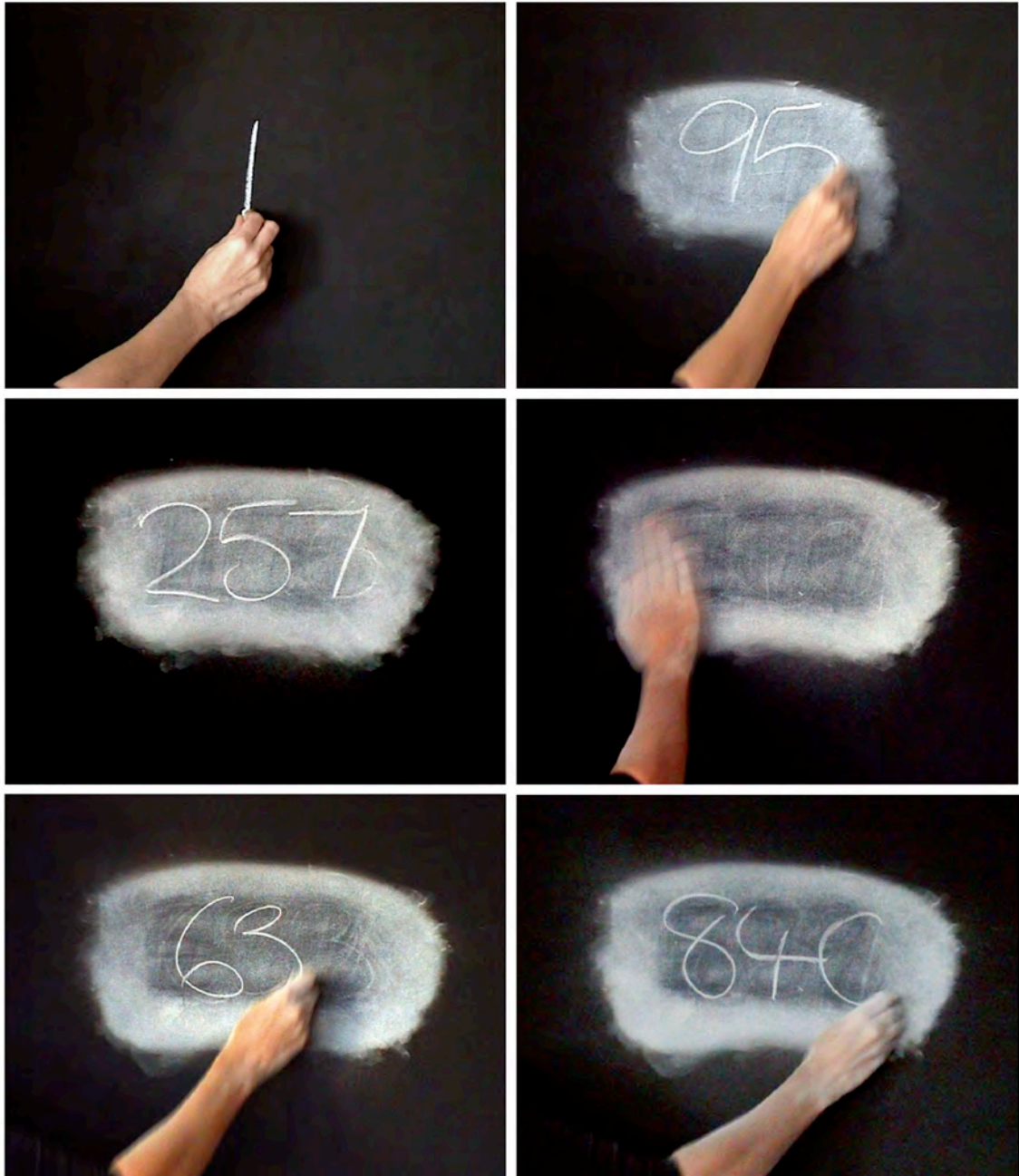


Fig 43: *Satie 840* Stills from the video

1 Introduction

Utilising new media proved a useful tool in revealing repetitive process over time, as explored in Labourwork 5 - *Spoons*, and Labourwork 7 - *Scribble To The Count Of Five*. This labourwork uses video alongside a static element. The final presentation comprises of a blackboard on which is chalked the number 840. Next to this, and presented at the same height and size, is a monitor showing a video taken in real time of the artist chalking numbers on a blackboard and rubbing them out. Working sequentially from 1 to 840 the video takes 2 hours and 5 minutes, and is looped.

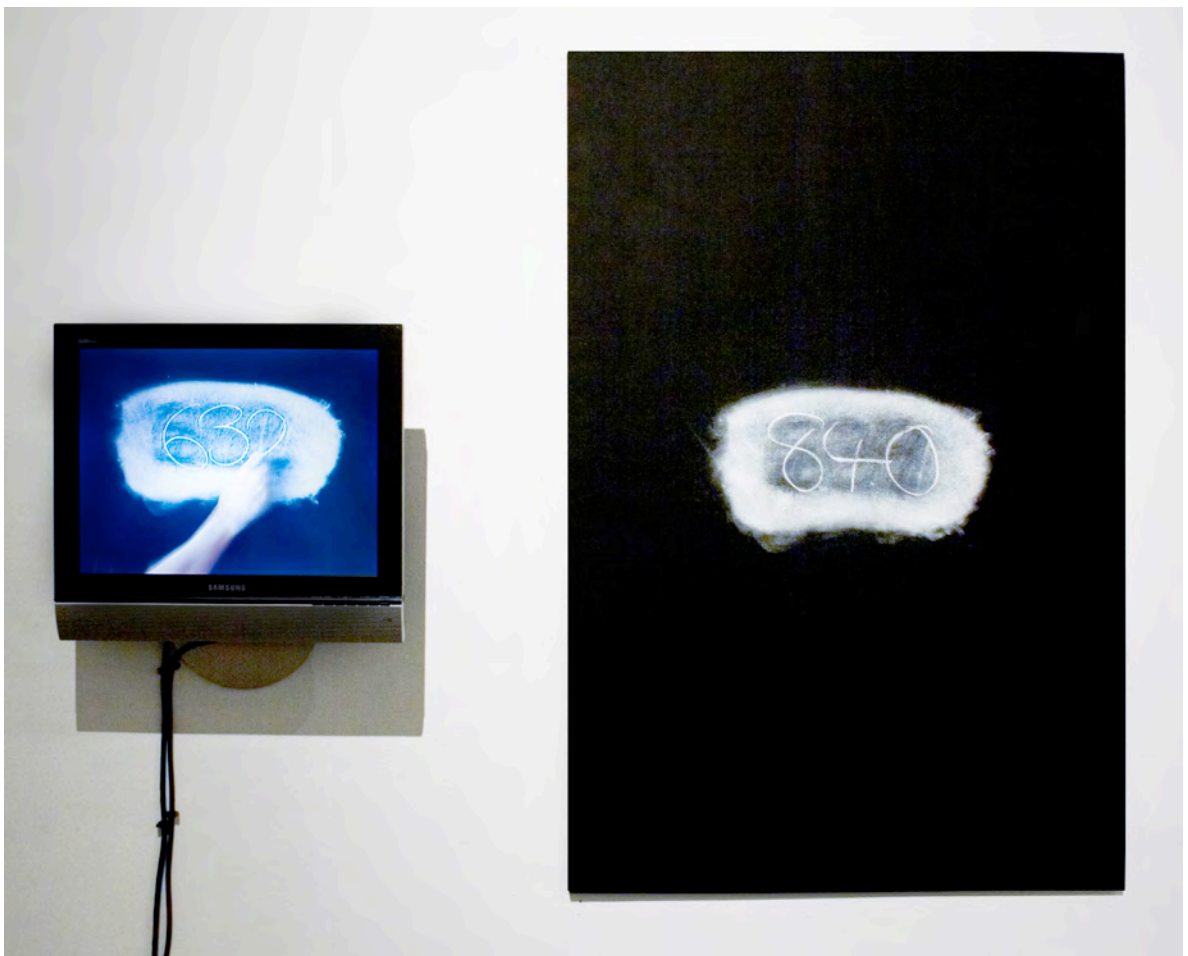


Fig 44: *Satie 840* Installation

This work takes Eric Satie's music *Vexations* (1893) as its motivation. *Vexations* is a short musical phrase that is repeated 840 times. This work uses the same repetitious

principle in order for the artist, and to some extent the viewer, to experience what 840 repetitions may look and feel like.

2 Creative Stimulus/Rationale

Reflective accounts of musicians who have experienced for themselves a performance of *Vexations*, and particularly the real time reflection between Gavin Bryars and Christopher Hobbs, inspired this labourwork. The relationship between the process of the work and the experience of the performers drew resonance with some of my own experience of repetitive process. Cage wrote about a 1963 performance of *Vexations* at the Pocket theatre in New York:

(People) who understood it (Vexations), and sympathised and even agreed with the idea of playing something 840 times, didn't bother to show up [...] if you came you saw the great difference between an idea and an experience.
(Cage, J. 1976)

The idea that knowledge of repetition and experience of repetition were two different things became the creative stimulus for this labourwork.

2.1 Vexations - Eric Satie

To play this motif 840 times in succession, it would be advisable to prepare oneself beforehand, in the deepest silence, by serious immobilities. (Satie, E. quoted from the score of *Vexations* 1893)

Satie composed *Vexations* in 1893; it was made for piano and consists of a short 52 beat musical phrase that is repeated 840 times. The first documented 'complete' performance of *Vexations* was organized by John Cage in September 1963 at the Pocket Theatre, New York. The performance took 18hrs and 40mins to complete.

2.2 *Vexations and its Performers* - Gavin Bryers

Vexations and its Performers is a reflective account between Gavin Bryers and Christopher Hobbs, it was made during a performance of *Vexations* in 1971 at Leicester Polytechnic. As the only two performers of the work on this occasion, they use notes to communicate their concerns and thoughts to one another during the performance. The whole account stands as pure reflective practice and a valuable document, relating the experience of playing and repeating the *Vexations* phrase 840 times.

2.3 The performance and lecture of *Vexations* alongside Warhol's *Sleep* (1964) at: The Tate, Long Weekend (2007)

This performance happened shortly after I made *Satie 840*. Though oblivious to it's scheduling while making the work, the event has influenced my reflections and broadened my understanding of context.

3 Material/Medium

3.1 Blackboard and Chalk

Chalk and blackboard were used because of the obvious erasable qualities of the chalk from the board. There is a tradition of these materials used in contemporary art (Tacita Dean *Roaring Forties* series 1997). In this labourwork, the continuous activity over one particular spot builds a memory of the action as the debris of chalk-marks build around the numbers. The blackboard is always static, showing only the culmination of the action through the marks left by the chalk. On reflection there is also a performative quality that this medium brings to the work, reminiscent of school. The activity possesses a teacher-like quality that has some bearing on the relationship between artist and viewer, linking them through traditional and familiar reception.

3.2 Video recording

The video recording is in real time, filmed with a static camera. Though it only focuses on the blackboard, the artists forearm and hand comes and goes

rhythmically, as the number sequence builds. The video has sound, adding to the rhythmic nature of the action as the chalk works on the surface of the blackboard and the hand rubs away the number. Additional to this, is the everyday sounds of dogs barking, London traffic, and doors opening and slamming. This seems to add time to the rhythm of the action, creating a mundane unpredictable backdrop to this slow event.

4 Process

4.1 System and endurance

The number system is very important in this work as it anchors the moment within a much bigger frame. Each number is separate though part of a whole. The final presentation of this work includes the blackboard placed alongside the video of the performance. The monitor for the video should present the action as near as possible to real size and be placed at the same height as the blackboard image. Having the final mark as the conclusion to the number system, visible and static, means that the constant change of the video is always measurable in relation to the final condition.

5 Labour

5.1 Endurance and the anticipation to finish

The experience (of chalking to 840) has parallels with the repetitive process within previous labourworks, but this time there were no opportunities for rests or distractions: this work was more about endurance. Endurance may be considered a task of sustaining an activity without giving-way, indicating that there is a wholeness to this task. The 'finishing line' of 840 is a very specific point that can be anticipated early in the process of the work. As the task neared the end, the excitement to finish was immense. The repetition of the labour was uncomfortable, standing on one spot for so long was difficult; knees stiffened, and the act of rubbing out each number with the hand 839 times wore holes in the skin that became tender. The process created an increasing quantity of chalk-dust, and by the end, all objects in the immediate vicinity of

the drawing were covered in chalk; the artist also needed to wear a facemask.

5.2 Boredom

What may be described as boredom, is a factor in both the making of this work and the reception of it. Making the work required endurance and was boring, and yet, the boredom was active and could be described as meditative; the mind was somehow open to less controlled thoughts (subconscious thoughts), while the general activity just went on. Time became less distinctive, or at least was experienced differently. Though the first performance took nearly three hours, the remembered experience was nothing like that long. However, while in the process of the work, the feeling is of drudgery, endless activity that moves so slowly towards the goal. This often made it difficult to keep a regular and steady timing to the work, the instinct being to speed up the activity, to instigate a quicker finish.

5.3 Failure - requiring added endurance

This work had to be repeated three times before it was successful enough to present. The first time the video camera was set to automatic focus. This caused the final image to move in and out of focus each time the artist's hand moved in front of the blackboard and was liable to make any viewer sick.

The second attempt used the same blackboard, but the continuous chalking and rubbing-out over one specific spot, meant that the area became too highly polished. The performance had to be abandoned half way through, as the chalk was not working on the board.

The third and final attempt required a newly primed blackboard and a very early start to ensure that there were no interruptions and that the sun didn't get around to the window and begin to highlight the blackboard, causing camera problems with lighting changes.

There are faults and failures recorded within the final presentation; a whole section of numbers are repeated at one point. This type of failure, though devastating while actually working, became part of the piece. When finally presented this type of mistake became interesting and emotionally insignificant next to the problems encountered on the first and second attempts.

6 Repetition

6.1 Repetition and system

The action of this work is repetitive, chalking a number and rubbing it out - repeated. A sequential change drives the work as the number sequence develops.

6.2 The loop

The continuous video loop is used in this labourwork, as it was for Labourwork 5 and 7. In this case though the timescale is different as the whole sequence is very much longer, taking 2hrs and 5mins to return. The whole build-up of action is once again looped back to nothing. This helps identify the binary oppositions of the work, in this case, empty and black to full and white. Positioning the video directly next to the original blackboard - clearly showing the number 840, references the closure of the number system. When this work was shown in exhibition people would return to the piece and small crowds would gather when the video neared conclusion, of course all anticipation of closure was rewarded with the video loop that takes the action right back to the beginning.

6.3 Anticipation

The proximity of the original blackboard placed next to the video is important for communicating the adherence to a number system that drives the action of the performance. Only once in 840 repetitions does the number repeat itself across the video and the blackboard, though the residual chalk marks around the numbers grow to a likeness. This allows the viewer to position their

observations within a universally known system and drives anticipation of closure towards the number 840.

7 Summary

This labourwork appropriates a sequential number system up to 840, influenced directly by Eric Satie's *Vexations*. Through reading reflective accounts from musicians who have performed the piece, John Cage identified: '*if you came you saw the great difference between an idea and an experience*' (1976) of the repetition in *Vexations*. This instigated a desire to experience 840 repetitions visually and physically. In this way, the work became an act of endurance in the quantity and scale of the repetitions needed for the continuous real-time performance.

Boredom was identified as a significant character in the work, both in its making and reception. The identity of the boredom was hard to understand; yet it was acknowledged that it influenced some change in the experience of time, both during the act of making and in the reflection of that event.

The number system, as the main character in the work, also acted as a point of closure or finish, when the static element of the blackboard (showing 840) was presented next to the video. This raised some anticipation of event, experienced by both the viewer and the artist, as the video activity drew towards the number 840. The use of the continuous video loop (another form of repetition) meant that anticipation was unrewarded and in some ways lost to a larger 2 hour and 5 minute (video loop) repetition.

Exhibition and Publication Output For All Labourworks During The Research Period

All the labourworks have been exhibited individually in addition to the Solo Exhibition '**Moments of Repetition**' (2010), presented at the Nunnery Gallery and offered as part submission for a PhD alongside this thesis. Some work has generated publications, whose content has been used within the labourworks reflections above. Each publication has offered a consideration of the work within a larger context and an opportunity for peer review. Each output, exhibitions and publications, are listed below.

Labourwork 1 – *Brass Cube*

1. Exhibition: *Bristles Balls and Brass: Sculpture by Jill Townsley* (2003-04) Hatfield University Gallery.
2. Catalogue: Moore. S. '*Bristles Balls and Brass - Sculpture by Jill Townsley*' (2003) University of Hatfield Press.
3. Exhibition: *Mirror II Nature* (2003) Mile End art Pavilion, London
4. Catalogue: Bond, A. '*Mirror II Nature*' (2003) Seven Seven Contemporary Art publication.
5. Exhibition: *Same Difference* (2005) Stark Gallery, London. A two-person show with artist Ryan Durrant.
6. Exhibition: *Negotiated Positions* (2007) University of Chester
7. Catalogue: Selected Essays '*Negotiated Positions*' (2007) Centre for Practice as Research in the Arts at the University of Chester.

Labourwork 2 – *In-Formation*

1. Studio Open: (2005) Bow Arts Trust, London.
2. Exhibition: *In-Formation* (2005) The foundry (the lower 'vaults' gallery), Shoreditch, London.

Labourwork 3 – *At This Very Moment In This Work Where am I?*

1. Studio Open: (2006) Bow arts Trust, London.

Labourwork 4 – *Midday Sky*

1. Studio Open: (2006) Bow arts Trust, London.

Labourwork 5 – *Spoons*

1. Studio Open: (2006) Bow arts Trust, London.
2. Exhibition: *Second Lives: Remixing the Ordinary* (2008) Museum of Art and Design, New York.
3. Catalogue: *Second Lives: Remixing the Ordinary* (2008) Museum of Art and Design, New York.

Labourwork 6 – *Scribble Square*

1. Studio Open: (2007) Bow arts Trust, London.
2. Exhibition: *Negotiated Positions* (2007) Chester University.
3. Catalogue: *Negotiated Positions* (2007) Published by the Centre for Practice as Research in the Arts at the University of Chester.

Labourwork 7 - *Scribble To The Count Of Five*

1. Studio Open: (2007) Bow Arts Trust, London

Labourwork 8 – *Satie 840*

1. Studio Open: (2007) Bow arts Trust, London
2. Exhibition: *Unnatural Histories* (2008) The Nunnery Gallery curated by Miriam Blundell.
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Images

Fig 11: **Sol LeWitt** *Five Modular Structures - Sequential Permutations of the Number Five* (1972). White printed wood. 5 pieces, each 62 x 98 x 62 cm. In; The LeWitt Collection, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, on extended loan

Fig 17: **Sol LeWitt** *One of Five Modular Structures - Sequential Permutations of the Number Five* (1972). Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh.