

**Organisational Encounters and Reflexive Undergoings:  
A Speculative Weaving in Three Transpositions**

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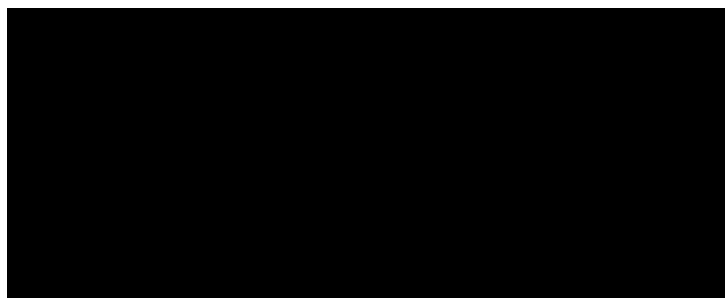


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2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I am aware of and understand the university's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.
4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.
5. The word count of this thesis, including amendments, is 53,120.

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# Abstract

## **Organisational Encounters and Reflexive Undergoings: A Speculative Weaving in Three Transpositions**

Assembling threads from psychoanalysis, art (psycho)therapy, and the arts in an interdisciplinary project, I (re)examine the psycho-social role of reflexive art practice in honing sensitivity to the affective dimensions of human situations and experience. Conceptualised as a process of speculative weaving in/through three transpositions, my research follows the intertwining dialogues and entanglements as I traverse institutional boundaries in healthcare and academia, *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking* a body of work.

In the first transposition, I cross disciplinary boundaries, *unmaking* previous practices to open spaces for learning through experience. In the second transposition, I assemble frames through which to observe and experience a healthcare setting and myself therein. Weaving in approaches from psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy I move attention to the site of *making* as a multi-layered response to the research situation. In the third transposition, I *remake* the residual 'body' of work – deepening my understanding of it as I (re)situate, (re)present, and (re)perform it in settings that bridge art, healthcare, and academia. Challenging traditional relations between researcher and researched, I amplify the psycho-social presence of the 'body' as different audiences are implicated in the meaning-making process through receiving, handling, and response.

Viewed as a space for imaginative encounter and performative enactment, emergent threads indicate the speculative, entangled, and affective nature of the research process, and an ethics of responsibility, attention, and care for/of the body. Understanding emerges through the transpositional work of moving, (re)assembling, and (re)configuring diverse practices and materials, the interweaving of dialogues, and the negotiation of tensions and resistances encountered at the borders between domains. While 'things' are made and documented along the way, the emphasis moves to making as *undergoing* – conceptualised as a process of 'speculative weaving'. Implicit in this process is 'time' and a capacity to endure and sustain the slow, messy, material, affective, and emotional 'work' bound into unmaking, making, and remaking, *through* which insights are gained. Claiming a position in the broad area of reflective practice(s) the 'work' of art amplifies both the significance of 'transference' as a method of reflexive enquiry, and the voices of ambivalence and embarrassment which resist moves towards exclusivity, absolutes, and certainties, and foreground the tensions arising in the spaces between disciplines.

As a site for reflexivity *through* which one may be pressed to notice and feel more acutely, the research value lies in the capacity of this method to embrace complex relationalities, engage our imaginative, emotional, and ethical sensibilities, and affectively (re)sensitise practitioners and researchers across arts *and/in* healthcare and the humanities in ways that may not emerge through more traditional approaches to reflective/reflexive practice(s).



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# Make an Entry

*come or go into; begin to be involved in*

*write or key information*

*submit in an official capacity*

Making my entry, I cast a speculative eye over an entanglement of threads and the process by which it comes into being. Looping *over* and *into* a material situation I set the scene, put forward a first impression – an outline that indicates the shape and mood of what is to come. Tracing the intertwining dialogues and entanglements as I traverse personal, institutional, temporal, and spatial boundaries, I weave a body of work into which I bind my own pathways – the acts of becoming artist-researcher.

Echoing places where one dwells, as well as the dialogue and questioning involved in making an academic enquiry, this ‘body’ holds the potential to spin an elaborate yarn. It is, inevitably, a reconstruction of events – a making and remaking of some *thing* that also involves its unravelling and deconstruction. Nevertheless, the conversations that gather and weave around it act as a vehicle – metaphor – through which I offer a ‘feel’ for my method, the material at hand, and the challenges encountered in feeling and thinking *through* the work.

In anticipation of the proceedings about to begin, I imagine the Lacanian psychoanalytic process of ‘patient presentation’, where patients are interviewed before a group of experienced and trainee analysts – something that may be described as ‘staging the unconscious’.<sup>1</sup> Or, as the tableau in Figure 1 depicts, the ‘Grand Round’ in medical education – a clinical lesson where the medical problems and treatment of a particular patient (in this case, a white woman diagnosed with hysteria) are presented to an audience of medical professionals and trainees (in this case, all white men).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joanne Morra and Emma Talbot, ‘Editors’ Introduction to Diana Caine and Denis Echarde’s ‘Staging the Unconscious...’, *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 16, 2017, p.185.

Presented at Joanne Morra and Emma Talbot, ‘Intimacy Unguarded: Gender, the Unconscious, and Contemporary Art’, Symposium, Freud Museum, London, 27 February 2016 <<https://www.freud.org.uk/2016/02/27/intimacy-unguarded-gender-unconscious-contemporary-art/>> [accessed 11 November 2021].

<sup>2</sup> Gerald Stern, ‘Whither Grand Rounds?’, *Practical Neurology*, 10, 2010, 284–289.



Figure 1. André Brouillet, *Une leçon clinique à la Salpêtrière*  
Oil paint, 1887<sup>3</sup>

The research situation is different, of course. Still, making an entry suggests the beginning of an involvement, introduction, movement through an opening that may allow access to a place. There is the implication of intention and the desire to cross a boundary, threshold, to move – transition – from one place to another, to penetrate or make a hole in something, and to *affect* and be *affected* through the action. In doing so I offer a written account of something – a description, note, record, or statement in which I make a mark, take up a position, put something on the page, in this case for submission. Even blank, the page is loaded with meaning. As I make my entry – write myself onto this stage – I make a move from the personal and private to a more public, perhaps political, arena. I expose my voice to scrutiny – make myself vulnerable. The move is full of risk as much as possibility.

---

<sup>3</sup> Brouillet's painting shows the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot giving a clinical demonstration to a group of post-graduate students at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris. For more information about the painting, see

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Une leçon clinique à la Salpêtrière.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Une_leçon_clinique_à_la_Salpêtrière.jpg)



## CHAPTER 1

# Set the Scene

*describe a place or situation in which something is about to happen*

## 1.1 Outline

*draw, trace, or define the outer edge or shape of*

### 1.1.1. How is your thesis and practice submission presented and organised?

I imagine the body of work laid out and, in the absence of its material form, attempt to trace around the outline of the residue contained within the spaces afforded by a box made of recycled material and a virtual platform.

As illustrated in Figure 2. I present this 'body' of work in three connecting and contiguous parts:

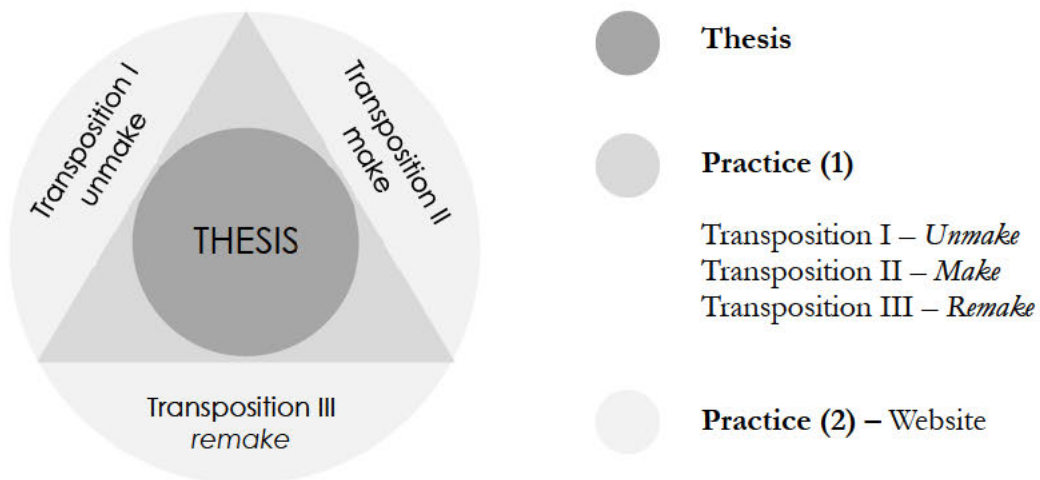


Figure 2. *The Outline of a Body of Work*

## Thesis

The thesis is organised in the form of a conversation – question and answer, call and response – for reasons I discuss in Chapter Five. The presentation and organisation of it emerges *through* performing the task of its making, as I continually loop back *over* and *into* the material, reworking its threads and *feeling my way into* the situation.

To some (although not all) questions I initially respond, as to this one, in a more poetic tone (and different typeface), with an embodied, reflexive thought, association or question as if pausing in preparation for a more considered response. Weaving together fragmented voices from theory, practice documentation, and conversations with others, the main body of text suggests a multiplicity of voices which, after writer Rolf Hughes, move between the creative and critical, artistic and academic, in a ‘hybrid’ form of writing.<sup>4</sup> Writing in the present tense I borrow from literary history as well as contemporary writers such as Maria Fusco, where reflection takes place in real time *as one is doing* with the hope of creating an experience of immediacy and aliveness for the reader.<sup>5</sup> As researcher I am, naturally, interested in contributing to academic discourse, and the text in Chapter 5 is also punctuated with questions that arose during and after the viva which supplement the original conversation. Yet, the overall tone is concerned with more experiential aspects of the research and creative process and ‘the struggle of human endeavour beneath the academic veneer’, to borrow from artist-writer Rachel Smith.<sup>6</sup> While the conversation may appear (on first glance) to know where it is going, contrary to appearances, it stutters and hesitates as diverse threads and fragments are woven together, layered, unpicked, picked up, dropped, returned to, cut into and out, and reconfigured – the fabric of the thesis and method of its fabrication gradually taking shape through the process of its construction.

Attached to the main body of the thesis, though not essential to its reading, are the appendices which, as with the footnotes (although more expansive) serve to elaborate

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<sup>4</sup> Rolf Hughes, ‘The Poetics of Practice-Based Research Writing’, *The Journal of Architecture*, 11, 2006, 283–301.

<sup>5</sup> Maria Fusco, ‘Opening Keynote’, *Gestures: Writing that Moves Between*, Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, 15 February 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Rachel Smith, ‘Drawing out Language: From or to and, Disrupting Dualism through Conceptual Poetics’, Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Fine Art, Sheffield Hallam University, 2020 p. 20.

particular notes regarding my process and its documentation, acknowledge associations, and offer additional context for the reader. The Bibliography offers a list of sources, presented alphabetically for ease of accessibility.



### Practice (1)

Transposition I – *Unmake*

Transposition II – *Make*

Transposition III – *Remake*



### Practice (2) - Website

Intimately bound into Chapters Two, Three, and Four of the thesis is the ‘Practice’, presented in three accompanying books and via a public-facing website (Figure 3).<sup>7</sup>

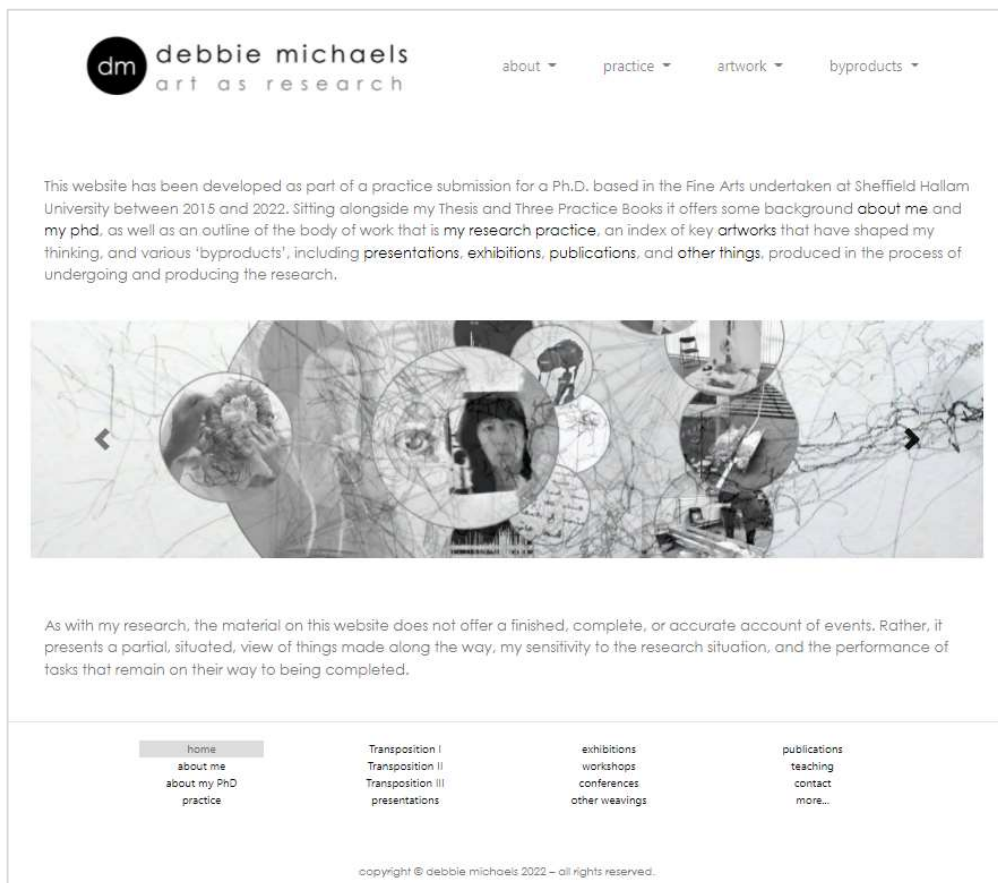


Figure 3. Art-as-research, website home page

<sup>7</sup> The website can be accessed at <<https://www.debbiemichaelis.co.uk/>>.

While the books follow the chapters in two-dimensional form, the website offers an overview of my research practice, the artworks that shape my thinking, and ‘byproducts’ produced *through* undergoing the research although, as Marissa Jahn implies, the entire body of work may be understood as a byproduct of the social system in which I am embedded.<sup>8</sup> Affording access to extracts of audio and video material, to which the reader is directed in the thesis, the website therefore offers a different experience to the books. To help readers locate themselves and the practice material, a ‘Timeline’ traces a further outline around the body of my research, taking the shape of a graphical, chronological, unfolding of events and the order of their occurrence (Figure 4).<sup>9</sup> Alongside and touching my thesis, these practice sites document and reveal the development of my research method, offering reflections *in, on, and through* the performance of tasks that remain on their way to completion.

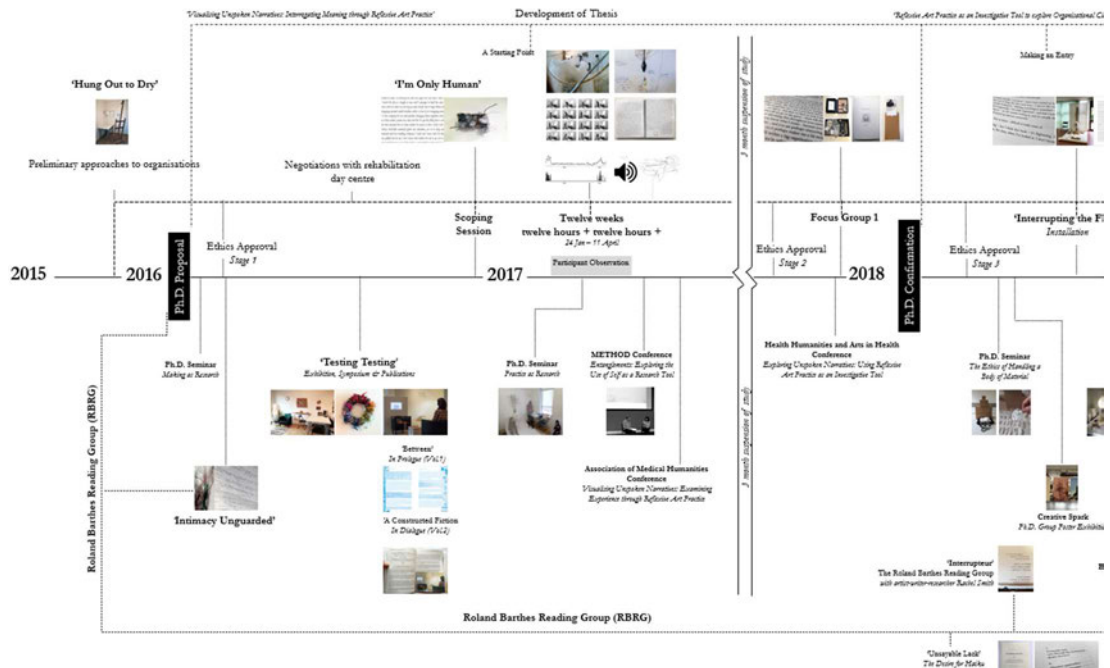


Figure 4. Detail of timeline

<sup>8</sup> Marisa Jahn, ‘Byproduct: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices’, Toronto: YYZ Books, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> See <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/timeline.php>>



On the following pages I present a list of artwork(s), identifying those that are self-initiated and those which are part of collaborative/group projects.<sup>10</sup> Details of each work/project are offered in the Practice Books and associated weblinks to which the reader is directed.

As I discuss in Chapter 5, the ‘work’ of art described in my thesis develops in response to the research situation I set up and the social situation in which I am embedded. This, in turn, offers various stimuli along the way, prompting certain individual artworks that involve inner processes operating in tandem with aspects of the outside world over a period of time. Approached holistically, the threads of these works are intimately interwoven and can only be explained with reference to the whole.<sup>11</sup> All artworks and ‘things’ presented in my thesis and practice submission are, therefore, entirely my own work in conception, design, and execution as, following artist and psychotherapist Patricia Townsend, the ‘newness’ of the work lies in the uniqueness of my particular response to these particular stimuli and the particular form that is given to the experience.<sup>12</sup> Questions are posed to which I respond, in my own unique, subjective, way. At the same time, it is only *through* conversations over time with the work of making, with myself, others, and the situations I am embedded in, encounter, and construct, that I come to understand the significance of certain things. While these conversations may not all be of my own design, the work made in response stands apart as well as being enfolded. I argue then, after Kate Lockwood Harris, that my voice and my work is never completely and entirely its own, but simultaneously individual and collective.<sup>13</sup> Comprising part of my practice each individual artwork, as well as the ‘work’ of art as a whole occupies a social space in that it is a product of the time and place in which it is created as well as myself, as individual artist-researcher-practitioner.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This list is added after the original submission in response to queries by the examination panel. As with this amendment, I identify in the thesis where substantial changes have been made or questions added in response to the viva and comments from the examination panel. I do this to be consistent with my method and in keeping with current thinking about acknowledging the role of reviewers and the review process in the development of publications. A. M. Clarnon, ‘Why We Embrace Open Peer Review at BMJ Open’, in *BMJ Open*, September 21, 2021 [Accessed 30 December 2022].

<sup>11</sup> See thesis Chapter section 5.2.6.

<sup>12</sup> Patricia Townsend, *Creative States of Mind: Psychoanalysis and the Artist’s Process*, London: Routledge, 2019, p. 124. See also thesis, p. 243.

<sup>13</sup> Kate Lockwood Harris, ‘Reflexive Voicing: A Communicative Approach to Intersectional Writing’, *Qualitative Research*, 16, 2016, 111–127.

<sup>14</sup> Patricia Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*. Guilford Press, 2009.

## SELF-INITIATED WORKS/PROJECTS

These works respond to the unique research situation I set up as this emerges and develops.

**Hung Out to Dry** Transposition II, pp. 03–07

A response to a meeting with a potential host organisation.

<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/hung-out-to-dry.php>

**Moments in Time** Transposition II, pp. 09–11

A response to nothing in particular.

<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/moments.php>

**I'm Only Human** Transposition II, pp. 13–17

A response to a scoping exercise in the host organisation – a healthcare setting.

<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/only-human.php>

**Twelve Weeks: Twelve Hours + Twelve Hours +** Transposition II, p. 19–119

A multi-layered response to observing and experiencing the healthcare setting and myself *in* it.

<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/twelve-weeks.php>

**Nothing Much Going On** Transposition III, pp. 06–07

A response to first impressions.

<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/twelve-weeks.php>

See Appendix 5 for full transcript of text.

**Interrupting the Flow** Transposition III, pp. 15–33

A response to moving, handling, and re-siting the residual body of studio-based work in the place where I had observed.

<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/interrupting-the-flow.php>

## SELF-INITIATED ARTWORKS IN RESPONSE TO COLLABORATIVE/GROUP PROJECTS

These works and associated publications respond to stimuli presented by others along the way while also responding to the unique research situation as it emerges and develops.

### **Intimacy Unguarded**

Transposition I, pp. 03–07

A response to a 'Roland Barthes Reading Group' project.

<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/intimacy-unguarded.php>

### **Be | Tween**

Transposition I, pp. 13–33

A response to the 'Testing Testing' project.

<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/between.php>

Michaels, Debbie, 'Between', in *Testing Testing: Prologue* (Vol. 1), ed. by Michael Day and Jo Ray, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, Art and Design Research Unit, 2016, pp. 43–46.

Michaels, Debbie, 'A Constructed Fiction', in *Testing Testing: Dialogue* (Vol. 2), ed. by Michael Day and Jo Ray, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, Art and Design Research Unit, 2016, pp. 17–20.

### **The Voice of Its Making**

Transposition III, pp. 44–45

A (re)making of studio-based audio-recordings in response to the 'Double Agency' intervention.

<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/voice-of-its-making.php>

Michaels, Debbie, 'Between Encounters: A Speculative Weaving', in *Double Agency*, ed. by Sarah Smizz and Julie Walters, Sheffield: Independent Publishing Network, 2018.

## SELF-INITIATED WRITINGS IN RESPONSE TO COLLABORATIVE/GROUP PROJECTS

These writings respond to activities sitting outside my primary research questions. Nonetheless, as I discuss in Chapter 5, they support this work, both *through* the imaginative spaces they offer and the publications that emerge. Further links can be found at <https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/publications.php>

### **A Grand Deception**

Transposition I, pp. 9–11

A response to ‘The Dreamer’s’ project.

Michaels, Debbie, ‘A Grand Deception’, in *The Dreamers*, ed. by Sharon Kivland, London: MA BIBLIOTHÈQUE, 2017, pp. 105–114

### **The Roland Barthes Reading Group**

Responses to various ‘Roland Barthes Reading Group’ projects.

Michaels, Debbie, ‘Unsayable Lack’, in *The Desire for Haiku*, ed. by Sharon Kivland, London: MA BIBLIOTHÈQUE, 2018, p. 5.

\_\_\_\_\_ ‘To Catch a Thief’, in *The Roland Barthes Reading Group: Roland Barthes Party*, ed. by Sharon Kivland, London: MA BIBLIOTHÈQUE, 2020, pp. 45–47.

\_\_\_\_\_ ‘A Mental Jolt’, in *The Roland Barthes Reading Group: Setting a Bell Ringing - after an Unmaster Class with Anne Boyer*, ed. by Sharon Kivland, London: MA BIBLIOTHÈQUE, 2021, pp. 59–62.

The Roland Barthes Reading Group, ‘The Work as Will’, *Inscription: The Journal of Material Text - Theory, Practice, History*, 1, 2020, 7–17, <<https://inscriptionjournal.com/author/the-roland-barthes-reading-group/>>

\_\_\_\_\_, ‘The Work as Will (Will to Begin)’, *Barthes Studies*, 7, 2021, 2–22, <<https://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/barthes/volumes/volume-articles/?q=volume-7>>

### 1.1.2. How are the chapters structured?

Pausing for breath toward the end of the task I insert a page between each chapter and section – blank, but not empty – waiting, pregnant with possibility. Returning to this page I resist the urge to get caught up in the detail, offering a general description of each chapter – an outline showing the essential features. The detail comes later.

#### Chapter One: Set the Scene

Introducing my project and outlining the focus of my enquiry, I respond to questions about why I undertake this research now and in the fine arts and why I feel it is important, for whom, and what I hope to achieve. Describing my general approach to the situation I outline the philosophies that underpin my research practice, my relationship to issues of reflection and reflexivity in research, and how my method is influenced by prior training and experience.

#### Chapter Two: Perform a Task (1)/*Transposition I: Unmake*

This chapter explores early artworks and writings that respond to crossing disciplinary boundaries between art (psycho)therapy and art academia, the transference of personal material from private to public spaces, and the dilemmas this evokes. Following the emerging dialogues and tensions as I ‘unmake’, ‘remake’, and resituate an ‘art-therapy-object’ in an art research context, I question whether being an art (psycho)therapist is a help or hindrance, and whether staging the encounter is merely a dramatisation or, as a constructed ‘fiction’, it offers something more.

#### Chapter Three: Perform a Task (2)/*Transposition Two: Make*

Through an emerging body of work I trace the development of my method. Crossing boundaries to negotiate and undertake a twelve-week participant-observation in a healthcare setting, I transpose and modify approaches from psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy, moving my attention to sites of ‘making’. Following the intertwining dialogues as I assemble frames through which to observe, experience, and document a situation and myself *in* it, I weave together observations, thoughts, ideas, and materials in a multi-layered reflexive response to the research situation.

I explore my initial impressions when making approaches to healthcare services with a view to observing and experiencing the organisation, how this preliminary work influences my research as it develops, and the barriers and ethical issues I encounter establishing the project. Commencing the participant-observation I describe the general atmosphere and happenings, the nature of my observing, how staff and patients respond to my presence, and the feelings evoked as I observe and am observed, in both the organisation and studio. I consider my encounters with objects, bodies, and things in various places, of coming up against the unexpected, and whether my feelings towards the emerging object-body-thing are just projections. As routine and familiarity sets in, I question whether I merely repeat what has gone before or if there is insistence in the repetition – a retexturing of experience. Then disciplinary tensions and an unforeseen rupture provoke a turning point, pressing me to notice and *feel into* the complexities of the research situation more acutely through my evolving entanglement with it.

#### Chapter Four: Perform a Task (3)/Transposition Three: Remake

Enquiring into the life of the residual ‘body’ of work outside the studio, I cross boundaries a third time, ‘remaking’ it in various forms and engaging others in this as I (re)situate, and (re)present it in settings that bridge art, healthcare, and academia. I consider why it is important to share my experiences *in/of* the healthcare setting with staff, how I go about this, and the nature of the exchanges that take place. Following where the material leads, I then explore what is involved in moving and handling the ‘body’ as I transpose it outside the studio, what is evoked and provoked, and what happens when I interrupt the usual flow of the healthcare organisation to install it in the place from where I had observed.

Pausing to reflect on how my practice has informed my understanding of my research method, I rework and amplify the presence of the ‘body’ as the voice of its making assumes unexpected significance. This provokes different responses in me as well as in those who encounter it, and raises questions of care, attention, and responsibility. Elaborating the evidence that presents itself I speculate on how the body acts, and what it activates as I (re)present it in different settings, and how I am implicated in this.

## Chapter Five: (Re)assemble the Threads

In the closing chapter, and incorporating questions that arise during and after the viva examination, I reassemble the threads addressing why my research is conceptualised as *a speculative weaving in three transpositions*, why I have chosen to organise and present my research in this manner, and the tensions between method and findings, research, and practice. Revisiting my method, I explore how it differs from what I imagined, identify ‘key’ works and turning points in my understanding and how they deepen and broaden my understanding of art as a research method. Summarising my ‘findings’ I return to the focus of my enquiry, identifying the characteristics and conditions that have been most useful in facilitating the development of my understanding, and what the specific contribution of my ‘methodology’ is.

Feeling my way toward the end, I claim a position in an area and identify my contribution to it. Drawing attention to further key findings, I revisit my relationship with issues of reflection and reflexivity in research and consider ‘entanglement’ as an alternative term to ‘weaving’. Moving on to explore the potential impact of my findings on practice and research as well as the caveats and limitations to my project, I explore the ‘what and where now’.

Finally, I find an end although, as I remark, the task is never-ending.





## 1.2. Begin

*perform or undergo the first part of*

### 1.2.1. What is the focus of your enquiry?

Returning to the beginning while approaching the end, I struggle to separate out the threads. Perhaps, after Samuel Beckett, 'the best would be not to begin. But I have to begin.'<sup>15</sup>

Assembling threads from psychoanalysis, art psychotherapy and the arts, I re-examine the psychosocial role of reflexive art practice in honing sensitivity to the affective dimension of human situations and experience. Learning *through* experience, my primary method is grounded in artistic practice as a means of enquiry into organisational processes. Embedding myself in a situation of my own construction (in part, at least), my attention is directed towards gaining understanding, of both the organisations and organisational processes involved and the method through which this understanding develops. As a practice-based enquiry situated in the arts, practice is not only embedded in my research process but, as the composer and scholar Craig Vear asserts, as practitioner I am crucially placed 'at the centre of the research'.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, while I refer to theory (mainly in footnotes), to borrow Vear's words my focus is on 'the use of ideas, beliefs or methods as opposed to investigating theories relating to them'.<sup>17</sup> Theory can, with its impersonal nature, so easily appear to strangle experience and intimacy.

A primary objective is, therefore, *not* to be 'objective', in the sense that I do not aim to carry out an impersonal, impartial systematic enquiry or present an accurate, complete, or 'factual' account. Rather, drawing on a range of artistic strategies, as well as my personal, subjective, experience I offer a partial, situated view – an account of my sensitivity to the research situation, one that also bears witness to the sensitivity of others.

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<sup>15</sup> Samuel Beckett, 'The Unnamable', in *Molloy, Malone Dies, the Unnamable*, London: Everyman's Library, 2015, pp. 329–476, 332.

<sup>16</sup> Craig Vear, 'Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research', London: Routledge, 2022 p. xxxii.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

### 1.2.2. How do you come to be here?

I *am*, and can only be *here*, because I have been *there*, and experienced and undergone *that*.<sup>18</sup>

I enter art academia without a fine art training, starting my professional career in 1981 as a commercial interior designer. Some years later, prompted by the aftermath of illness, life-changing surgery, and the restimulation of unprocessed traumas, I seek out psychotherapy. This marks the beginning of an intense period of personal change, professional retraining, and my introduction to various modes of reflective practice – through extended periods in personal psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, as art (psycho)therapy practitioner and educator and, more recently, as artist-researcher.<sup>19</sup> So, although in many ways I come from a place of privilege I also come ‘lugging this great heavy sack of stuff’ as Ursula Le Guin might say – a dense, fibrous weaving of life experiences, personal, social, and cultural understandings, and ways of doing things that may help or hinder me in this endeavour.<sup>20</sup> Undoubtedly, they will affect it.

### 1.2.3. Why address this now, and in the fine arts?

Hovering on the edges of retirement, I am driven by an awareness of what little time remains and a desire to expand my learning and make use of my experience – to *draw on it* and *draw it out* so it might travel further and act in the world. I write ‘because I want to say something. Perhaps I have something to say?’<sup>21</sup> (Figure 5)

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<sup>18</sup> Following a developing interest in psychotherapy and the application of psychoanalytic ideas outside the consulting room, I undertake an introductory course in Group Analysis in 1996-7 and complete a master’s degree in the psychoanalysis of groups and organisations in 2000. After completing a counselling course in 2002, and rekindling my interest in art, I go on to undertake a clinical training as an art (psycho)therapy practitioner, gaining professional registration with the Health and Care Professions Council in 2005. Between 1988 and 2012 I undergo two intense and lengthy periods of psychoanalytic psychotherapy/psychoanalysis, both group and individual. I return to less intensive psychotherapy for a period of two years in 2016, shortly after commencing my Ph.D.

<sup>19</sup> My use of brackets in ‘art (psycho)therapy’ is to indicate that the terms ‘art psychotherapy’ and ‘art therapy’ are used interchangeably within the profession and are both registered titles. I was first introduced to the term ‘reflective practice’ in 2004 during a training workshop by writer and educator Gillie Bolton.

<sup>20</sup> Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, UK: Ignota, 2019, p. 35.

<sup>21</sup> The Roland Barthes Reading Group, ‘The Work as Will (Will to Begin)’, *Barthes Studies*, 7, 2021, 2–22, p. 14. An extract from this work was also published in The Roland Barthes Reading Group, ‘The Work as Will’, *Inscription: The Journal of Material Text - Theory, Practice, History*, 2020, 7–17.

Reading ↔ Writing

**The Desire to Write**

Origin and Departure

My desire hangs by a thread although I cling to it for fear of letting go. Why do I write? What desire do I want to satisfy? Is it a desire that originates in an ethical attitude, or just to please myself?

Jubilation

There is no jubilation or joy in what I currently write (with the exception of this), yet I continue to write—to attempt to articulate my thoughts—because I want to say something. Perhaps I have something to say?

**The Hope of Writing**

Hope

Of keeping something alive. In order to keep it alive I have to remake it—to make is to want to remake. ‘To write is to want to rewrite’, but to what end?

Figure 5. *The Work as Will (will to begin)*, Extract, 2021

The philosopher Alva Noë suggests that all the arts are organisational and (re)organisational practices – methods of research – that illuminate ‘the ways we find ourselves organised and so, also the ways we might organise ourselves’.<sup>22</sup> Making sense of how we ‘organise’ ourselves (more, or less, consciously) in response to the situations in which we find ourselves, or that are imposed upon us has been of longstanding concern, personally and professionally. An ongoing challenge involves finding ways that help me, and those with whom I work, stay emotionally sensitive and alive to situations of vulnerability and suffering, and to confusing emotional, relational, and situational messes that are often difficult to pin down and articulate but are, nonetheless, intimately bound up with social aspects of life through the intensity of their affective attachments. Such attachments, to borrow from social psychologist Paul Hoggett, may be described as existing at the borders of consciousness; ‘more likely to affect us in our body, as a disturbance’ than being attached to thought and meaning.<sup>23</sup> I return to revisit these dilemmas because they do not leave me at peace; however, shifting position I shift the emphasis from art *as* and/or *in* therapy to art as a primary way of examining experience.

<sup>22</sup> Alva Noë, *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2015, p. 17.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Hoggett, ‘Collective Feelings and the Politics of Affect and Emotion’, *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion*, 3, 2009, 120–131, p. 121.

Increasingly acknowledged as a valid mode of enquiry, art offers ways of approaching and articulating an understanding of social situations often not utilised by other disciplines.<sup>24</sup> Indeed Patricia Leavy argues that arts-based practices hold useful strategies for ‘accessing silenced perspectives, evoking emotional responses, provoking dialogue, promoting awareness, and cultivating an increased social consciousness’.<sup>25</sup> Rooted in human experience and feeling while drawing on social meanings as subject matter, art is reflexive by nature as practitioners search for understanding *through* processes of making, with ‘meanings’ often residing in the questions provoked, what has been learnt from the making, and how new understandings emerge.<sup>26</sup> Practice-based research in the arts challenges traditional approaches; resisting fixed interpretation, and making imaginative, empathic participation possible through forms and practices that are evocative and compelling.<sup>27</sup> Creating and sharing understanding through a multiplicity of potential forms, such ambiguity of expression offers, as Gavin Sade suggests, ‘an important strategy in estranging the habitual’, and facilitating critical reflection on such habits and the way practice is organised and structured.<sup>28</sup>

Writing from an art (psycho)therapy perspective, I have previously argued for the value of framed spaces for imagination in offering insights into organisational life, and that ‘the evidence of our sensory, subjective human experience offers a perspective that is too important to be discarded’, even though it often is.<sup>29</sup> While I weave threads from psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy into this enquiry, to learn *through* experience in a manner that alters or transforms, rather than replicates, understanding, I must be open to shifting my orientation and participating differently in the world I inhabit. The arts offer different frames and lenses through which to experience and observe organisational processes (my own included) without the constraints of clinical practice and pressures to

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<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum, ‘On Not Knowing: How Artists Think’, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Leavy, ‘*Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*’, p. 259.

<sup>26</sup> Linda Candy, *The Creative Reflective Practitioner: Research through Making and Practice*, London: Routledge, 2019, p. 48. See also Mary Ryan, ‘Reflexivity and Aesthetic Inquiry: Building Dialogues between the Arts and Literacy’, *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 13, 2014, 5–18.

<sup>27</sup> Tom Barone and Elliot W Eisner, *Arts Based Research*, London: Sage, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Gavin J. Sade, ‘The Relationship between Practice and Research’, in *Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research*, ed. by Craig Vear, London: Routledge, 2022, pp. 179–190, 187.

<sup>29</sup> Debbie Michaels, ‘Art Therapy in Brain Injury and Stroke Services: A Glimpse beneath the Surface of Organisational Life.’, in *Art Therapy with Neurological Conditions*, ed. by Marian Liebmann and Sally Weston, London: Jessica Kingsley, 2015, pp. 135–151, 148.

‘evidence’ my findings in a particular way. While directed towards understanding my move is-also designed to disrupt it.

#### 1.2.4. Why is your research important?

‘My desire hangs by a thread although I cling to it for fear of letting go [...] Is it a desire that originates in an ethical attitude, or just to please myself?’<sup>30</sup>

The philosopher Donald Schön writes of the inherently unstable, complex, nature of practice, of tangled webs and turbulent environments, and of swampy lowlands where ‘situations are confusing “messes” incapable of technical solution’ but where the problems of greatest human concern might be.<sup>31</sup> Through my own experience and work with others, I am aware of how easy it can be in the face of pain, vulnerability, and suffering to turn away from ‘felt’ experience towards more technical, mechanical processes that deaden sensitivity, numbing feeling and thinking. The machine ‘feels’ nothing although, as anthropologist Tim Ingold notes, perhaps it should; even though it may be affected by environmental fluctuations it does not need to think about what it is doing or question – it just does it.<sup>32</sup>

In a culture where the costs of care, empathy, and understanding are often devalued or rendered invisible, imaginative, creative spaces for slow, meaningful, reflection that enliven rather than deaden our sensitivities are constantly being eroded, making such spaces a luxury.<sup>33</sup> Paradoxically, as educator Gillie Bolton notes, this makes them even more important.<sup>34</sup> While reflective/reflexive attitudes are deemed essential for responsible and ethical practice, increasing mechanisation, systemisation, and scrutiny of the human services

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<sup>30</sup> The Roland Barthes Reading Group, ‘The Work as Will’, 2021, p. 14..

<sup>31</sup> Donald A Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, New York, NY: Basic Books, 1983, p. 42.

<sup>32</sup> Tim Ingold, ‘The Textility of Making’, *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 34, 2010, 91–102.

<sup>33</sup> See Madeleine Bunting, *Labours of Love: The Crisis of Care*, London: Granta Books, 2020 Andrew Cooper and Julian Lousada, *Borderline Welfare: Feeling and Fear of Feeling in Modern Welfare*, London: Karnac, 2005; Tim Dartington, *Managing Vulnerability: The Underlying Dynamics of Systems of Care*, London: Karnac 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Gillie Bolton, ‘Reflection and Reflexivity: What and Why’, in *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*, London: Sage, 2010, pp. 1–24, 5.

with expectations of constant activity and busyness strike at the tacit, less articulable, subtleties of practice.<sup>35</sup> The philosopher Michelle Boulous Walker argues that such pressing demands of time, efficiency, and productivity make it difficult to adopt a contemplative attitude or to ‘engage with the complex and difficult in substantial and intense ways’.<sup>36</sup> In the context of professional practice this risks reducing reflection/reflexivity to a simple matter of ‘thinking rigorously’ where, despite the emotionally-charged landscape, emotions are downplayed in favour of targets which are easily measurable and subject to appraisal.<sup>37</sup> Yet, as educator Kate Collier warns, if imaginative thought is absent, ‘reflection’ may merely become an instrumental tool. Conversely, when aligned with the arts and aesthetic experience, it offers a space for re-imagining and re-visioning practice.<sup>38</sup> While research into subjective experiencing has been highly criticised for its unreliability, nonetheless, in *The Artistic Turn: A Manifesto*, Kathleen Coessens, Darla Crispin, and Anne Douglas argue:

If research in general is to deal adequately with human society, it needs to embrace those aspects of knowledge production that deal with human subjectivity and relationships, not as phenomena to be deduced and re-harnessed within human control, but open-endedly, as part of a process of creative construction and interpretation that is relative, specific to context and value-driven.<sup>39</sup>

While approaching my enquiry with questions in mind, it is only *through* the research that I articulate them. I question what is at stake if we do not take the time to slow down and pay attention to the feel and rhythm of the ‘stuff’ with which we are dealing; if we do not acknowledge the emotional labour involved in care and caring; if we cut out imaginative spaces that may be beyond words but help us to rework understandings and maintain a vital and affective root to our endeavours; if we are not prepared to stay with troubling, messy, painful experiences and complex entanglements that are difficult to apprehend or

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<sup>35</sup> See Paul McIntosh, *Action Research and Reflective Practice: Creative and Visual Methods to Facilitate Reflection and Learning*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2010; Candy, ‘*Creative Reflective Practitioner?*’.

<sup>36</sup> Michelle Boulous Walker, *Slow Philosophy: Reading against the Institution*, London: Bloomsbury, 2016, p. xiv.

<sup>37</sup> See Candy, ‘*Creative Reflective Practitioner?*’ also David Boud and David Walker, ‘Promoting Reflection in Professional Courses: The Challenge of Context’, *Studies in Higher Education*, 23, 1998, 191–206.

<sup>38</sup> Kate Collier, ‘Re-Imagining Reflection: Creating a Theatrical Space for the Imagination in Productive Reflection’, in *Beyond Reflective Practice: New Approaches to Professional Lifelong Learning*, ed. by Nick Frost Helen Bradbury, Sue Kilminster, Miriam Zukas, London: Routledge, 2010, pp. 145–154.

<sup>39</sup> Kathleen Coessens, Darla Crispin, and Anne Douglas, *The Artistic Turn: A Manifesto*, Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2009, p. 176. Cited in Sade, ‘The Relationship between Practice and Research’, p. 182.

comprehend, but in which we are intimately implicated. Ultimately this affects those who receive our care.

### 1.2.5. What do you hope to achieve?

'Hope: Of keeping something alive. In order to keep it alive I have to remake it – to make is to want to remake [...] but to what end?'<sup>40</sup>

Combining approaches from psychoanalysis, art (psycho)therapy, and the arts in a new configuration I contribute to ongoing conversations about the role of the personal, emotional, subjective, and aesthetic in the production and sharing of knowledge. More specifically I re-examine the potential value of artistic approaches to deepen, broaden, and challenge our understanding of the affective dimensions of human situations and experience. This contribution may be of particular interest to practitioners training and working in the arts (psycho)therapies and in different capacities across the humanities, arts *and/in* health, as well those who have an interest in the role of the arts in reflective/reflexive practice, and in research.

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<sup>40</sup> The Roland Barthes Reading Group, 'The Work as Will', p. 14.





## 1.3. Make an approach

*start to deal with a situation in a certain way*

### 1.3.1. What are the philosophies that underpin your research?

I confess to feeling confused and overwhelmed as I try to position myself amidst the epistemological and ontological terminologies.

Leavy suggests that ‘all art, regardless of medium, is a product of the time and place in which it is created, as well as the individual artist who is an embodied actor situated in the social order’.<sup>41</sup> Underpinning my method as I enter, (re)orientate myself, and approach the research situation is the basic principle that my understanding of the world is unique to me – constructed from prior understanding, experience, and beliefs – and that processes of learning and meaning-making are personal, sensory, social, and contextual, involving my active involvement. I do not unpick the threads to put everything in context as this implies that meaning is then accounted for – no longer open to revision.<sup>42</sup> Still, while I would not state categorically that I am a ‘constructivist’, nonetheless this model is useful as it values the individual’s subjective interpretation of experience with the potentiality for a multiplicity of perspectives.<sup>43</sup> I am influenced by feminism and psychoanalysis; postmodernism also informs my approach with its emphasis on the diversity of human experience and its invitation to tentative, marginalised voices to be heard alongside more dominant discourses. Such approaches lower the barriers between researcher and researched, encouraging reflexivity and responsibility through the use of ‘I’, rather the disassociated anonymity of

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<sup>41</sup> Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*, p. 216. I have had this quotation pinned above my desk for a number of years, as it resonated with the work of art (psycho)therapy. It is Leavy’s book that, in part, inspired me to pursue this research.

<sup>42</sup> In his lecture *Search and Search Again* Ingold suggests that by putting everything in context it can mean that we put it away rather than allowing it (e.g. art) to come into presence where we can pay attention/attend to it. Tim Ingold, ‘Search and Search Again: On the Meaning of Research in Art’, *Centre for Contemporary Arts*, Glasgow, 14 February 2018 <<https://soundcloud.com/cca-glasgow/tim-ingold-search-and-search-again-on-the-meaning-of-research-in-art>> [accessed 11 November 2021]

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Michaels, ‘Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Practice-Based Research’, in *Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research*, ed. by Craig Vear, London: Routledge, 2022, pp. 42–59. Michaels draws on George Box’s statement ‘all models are wrong, but some are useful’ to argue that ‘to see different paradigms of inquiry as theoretic models of the principles underlying knowledge production [frees] the individual to pick and choose the model that best fits a particular circumstance’. p. 47. See also George E. P. Box, *Robustness in the Strategy of Scientific Model Building*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Mathematics Research Center, 1979.

‘she’, ‘he’ or ‘they’.<sup>44</sup> The implication, as Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage propose in *Affective Methodologies*, is that the world may reveal itself through fluctuations and movements in the situation I set up as artist-researcher, that I am ‘part of – affecting and affected by – the research process, and that the situation can answer back and contribute to this interaction’.<sup>45</sup>

### 1.3.2. Can you expand on your relationship to issues of reflection and reflexivity in research. <sup>46</sup>

Prompted to return to the beginning as I reach toward the end, and for the benefit of the reader, I attempt to (re)position my project among the confusing, often contradictory, array of terms, definitions, and understandings of reflection and reflexivity. It is a complex matter which makes writing a synthetic summary challenging, as it emphasises the contradictions of the task in which I am involved.<sup>47</sup>

The philosopher John Dewey was among the first to introduce ‘reflection’ as a learning tool to draw personal meaning from experience.<sup>48</sup> His ideas of reflection as a specialised form of thinking, stemming from doubt, hesitation, or perplexity relating to a particular situation offered a basis for the concept of ‘reflective practice’ which, has burgeoned throughout various fields of professional and educational practice, particularly since the publication of

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<sup>44</sup> Kim Etherington, ‘Research Methods: Reflexivities-Roots, Meanings, Dilemmas’, *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 4, 2004, 46–47.

<sup>45</sup> Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage, ‘Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect’, ed. by Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015–6.

<sup>46</sup> This question is added after the original submission, in response to queries raised by the examination panel.

<sup>47</sup> Wendy Luttrell, ‘Reflexive Qualitative Research’, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*, 2019. Beginning her paper, Luttrell follows the lead of sociologist and narrative theorist Catherine Reissman who, when writing about her reluctance to craft a chapter on the topic of reflexivity for a methods handbook, captures the contradictions of the task. ‘Chapters typically review topics in neat disembodied packages [...] the very opposite of reflexivity in practice’. Catherine Kohler Riessman, ‘Entering the Hall of Mirrors’, in *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*, ed. by Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015, pp. 219–238, p.219, cited in Luttrell, ‘Reflexive Qualitative Research’, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> John Dewey, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*, Boston, MA: Heath & Co, 1933. For an overview of the development of ‘reflective practice’ including Dewey’s contribution see Linda Finlay, ‘Reflecting on Reflective Practice’, in *Practice-based Professional Learning Paper 52*, The Open University, 2008, 1–27, and David Boud, Rosemary Keogh, and David Walker, *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*, Oxon: Routledge, 2013.

Schön's book *The Reflective Practitioner* in 1983.<sup>49</sup> Yet, it remains difficult to define. Beyond broad areas of agreement which encompass examining assumptions of everyday practice, developing self-awareness, and critically evaluating responses to practice situations, contention and difficulty reigns.<sup>50</sup> Reflective practice is often seen as the bedrock of professional identity; however, as I imply in 1.2.4, questions about how, when, where, and why, mean that, for busy professionals facing demands for speed, efficiency, and productivity, it is all too easily applied in mechanical, unthinking, and unfeeling ways.<sup>51</sup> Dewey and Schön's work on the nature of reflection has drawn much criticism.<sup>52</sup> Still, both are relevant and Schön's ideas remain influential for many professionals, including artists; particularly through his challenge to more scientific models of objectivity and rationality and his attention to implicit, tacit, knowledge and processes of learning from experience *through* acting both intuitively and creatively.<sup>53</sup> This, Alan Bleakley argues (in support of Schön), implies that the proper response to the 'indeterminate, swampy zones of practice' is to develop a practice 'artistry' rather than a technical solution.<sup>54</sup> Yet, as Finlay warns, the territory remains heavily contested and both reflection and reflective practice are tools which require sensitive handling.<sup>55</sup> While they can be enormously powerful in examining and transforming practice, not all reflection leads to learning and, in Tony Ghaye's words, 'not everything we learn is sweet-smelling and rosy-red.'<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*. See also David Kolb, *Experiential Learning as the Science of Learning and Development*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1984; Graham Gibbs, *Learning by Doing: A Guide to Teaching and Learning Methods*, Oxford: Further Education Unit, Oxford Polytechnic, 1988.

<sup>50</sup> Finlay, 'Reflecting on Reflective Practice'.

<sup>51</sup> Reflective practice is now laid down as a professional standard for many professions, and is a key strand of approaches to the broader field of continuing professional development. Candy, *Creative Reflective Practitioner*, Finlay, 'Reflecting on Reflective Practice', Gillie Bolton, *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development*, 3rd edn London: Sage, 2010.

<sup>52</sup> Cristyne Hébert, 'Knowing and/or Experiencing: A Critical Examination of the Reflective Models of John Dewey and Donald Schön', *Reflective Practice*, 16, 2015, 361–371.

<sup>53</sup> See Candy, *Creative Reflective Practitioner*.

<sup>54</sup> Donald A Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*, Oxford: Jossey-Bass, 1991, cited in Alan Bleakley, 'From Reflective Practice to Holistic Reflexivity', *Studies in Higher Education*, 24, 1999, 315–330, p. 315.

<sup>55</sup> Finlay, 'Reflecting on Reflective Practice'.

<sup>56</sup> Tony Ghaye, 'Into the Reflective Mode: Bridging the Stagnant Moat', *Reflective Practice*, 1, 2000, 5–9, p. 6. See also Finlay, 'Reflecting on Reflective Practice'. Considering the darker sides of reflective practice, Finlay points out that there are cultural, personal, and ethical risks involved, not everyone ends up feeling empowered, and it can have a profound emotional impact on the person involved undertaking the research. If applied uncritically and without care, she suggests that reflective practice can 'reinforce prejudice and bad practice, leading practitioners to unwittingly collude with dominant cultural assumptions', or become absorbed in navel-gazing. Placing responsibility on the individual

The beginnings of my interest in reflection and reflexivity as processes of ‘learning *through* experience’ follows a violent interruption that brings a deadened, desensitised part of me back to life through the force of its impact. It is not a situation I care to repeat and had I not been *moved* to face the distress (with the help of others), I may well have lost my life. Yet, as Christyne Hébert points out, if we rely only on shocks and interruptions to prompt a move, we may never question established patterns that have become institutionalised in personal as well as societal norms and values.<sup>57</sup>

In my personal life as well as in my professional capacity as an art (psycho)therapist I have striven to become a ‘reflective practitioner’ through training, experience, personal psychotherapy and analysis, and in professional supervision; to develop a capacity to have an experience and think about it, both *in* a situation, and afterwards – something I discuss further in 1.3.4 and throughout my thesis. Traditionally seen as a solitary process of self-examination, my experience of self-reflexivity, in the context of psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy, is that it is an affective process *through* which inarticulable experiences might be shared with another/others – verbally and non-verbally – and *around* which feelings, imaginings, thoughts, and words may gather, potentially transforming understanding and leading to change. As well as being directed towards the inner world, such processes turn outwards to touch the social world through changing interactions with it. There is reciprocity and feedback which always involves an affective engagement – a meeting of embodied minds in process.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion proposes that ‘learning from experience’ begins in our earliest relations with others, as our awareness of emotional and sensory experiencing is mediated by the care-giving environment.<sup>59</sup> For him, thought emerges *through* these early affective relations which (in good-enough circumstances) foster a capacity to tolerate gaps in understanding – to bear uncertainty, to

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can also be a means by which organisations and broader systemic structures divest themselves of responsibility.

<sup>57</sup> Hébert, ‘Knowing and/or Experiencing: A Critical Examination of the Reflective Models of John Dewey and Donald Schön’.

<sup>58</sup> Lewis Aron, ‘Self-Reflexivity and the Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis’, *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 17, 2000, 667–689. Aron argues that self-reflexivity is ‘not the achievement of an isolated mind in private contemplation, as the traditional concepts of insight and self-analysis may have implied; rather self-reflexivity always involves an affective engagement’ developing within a relational matrix, p. 667.

<sup>59</sup> Wilfred Bion, R., *Learning from Experience*, London: Karnac, 1991.

‘contain’ difficult, painful, and overwhelming feelings and experiences, and to wait for meaning to emerge – ideas that have also been applied to artistic research.<sup>60</sup>

Crossing disciplinary borders as I move into the realm of art-as-research, much is outside previous personal and professional experience, although I draw extensively on this. Encountering ‘reflexivity’ in a different context I am unsure how to differentiate it from reflection. Its precise meaning is difficult to grasp as it is understood in a multiplicity of ways, although I gather that its significance in qualitative and social research comes through its unsettling of conventional scientific ideas favouring professional distance and objectivity over engagement and subjectivity.<sup>61</sup> Whereas reflection is generally characterised as a cognitive activity which seeks to give order and meaning to experiences and events that have happened, reflexivity is commonly defined as researcher self-awareness and self-analysis *throughout* the research process. Reflexivity implies ‘bending back on oneself’; although, as Wendy Luttrell suggests, when seen as part of a continuous iterative process, it is not limited to introspection or critical self-awareness, but derives from a collective ethos which ‘humanises rather than objectifies research relationships and the knowledge that is created’.<sup>62</sup>

For the purposes of this project, and after Barbara Probst, I understand reflexive engagement as promoting ‘an ongoing, recursive, relationship between the researcher’s subjective responses and the intersubjective dynamics of the research situation itself’.<sup>63</sup> In Schön’s words, the researcher ‘is *in* the situation that [they] seek to understand’.<sup>64</sup> Such

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<sup>60</sup> Jean Carabine, ‘Creativity, Art and Learning: A Psycho-Social Exploration of Uncertainty’, *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 32, 2013, 33–43, p. 37.

<sup>61</sup> Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher-Using Our Selves in Research*, London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004. See also Linda Finlay and Brendan Gough, *Reflexivity: A Practical Guide for Researchers in Health and Social Sciences*, Oxford: Blackwell Science, 2003. ‘Evolving over a century or more the project of examining how the researcher and intersubjective elements impinge on, and even transform research, has been an important part of the evolution of qualitative research.’ Linda Finlay, ‘Negotiating the Swamp: The Opportunity and Challenge of Reflexivity in Research Practice’, *Qualitative research*, 2, 2002, 209–230. See also Anne H Pässilä, Tuija Oikarinen, and Vesa Harmaakorpi, ‘Collective Voicing as a Reflexive Practice’, *Management Learning*, 46, 2013, 67–86.

<sup>62</sup> Luttrell, ‘Reflexive Qualitative Research’, p. 1. See also Finlay, ‘Negotiating the Swamp: The Opportunity and Challenge of Reflexivity in Research Practice’, and Audra Skukauskaite, Inci Yilmazli Trout, and Kaye A Robinson, ‘Deepening Reflexivity through Art in Learning Qualitative Research’, *Qualitative Research*, 22, 2022, 403–420.

<sup>63</sup> Barbara Probst, ‘The Eye Regards Itself: Benefits and Challenges of Reflexivity in Qualitative Social Work Research’, *Social Work Research*, 39, 2015, 37–48, p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> Schön, ‘*The Reflective Practitioner*’, p. 151.

reflexivity positions the researcher amidst their research subject rather than separate from it, shifting positionality to a more experiential, intersubjective, and emotional, place where feelings and affects may be valuable sources of data rather than things to be discarded or devalued.<sup>65</sup> In adopting this position I draw on my practice as art (psycho)therapist, where I am required to actively reflect on the process as it happens and my involvement in it. This, as Etherington suggests, requires an awareness of what I am feeling, thinking, and imagining, as well as an awareness of myself as both *affecting* and *affected by*.<sup>66</sup>

As I discuss in 1.3.4, how we use our ‘selves’ as instruments in psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy remains highly contentious. More recent criticisms of reflection and reflexivity, led by feminist theorists Donna Haraway and Karen Barad, question self-reflexive processes that may merely mirror fixed positions and lure us into reductionist ways of thinking rather than engaging in complex relational entanglements, matters I engage with throughout this thesis.<sup>67</sup> While ‘reflexivity’ offers opportunities for learning *through* experience there are considerable challenges – both theoretical and practical – which I am pressed to consider as I work *through* my research, the writing of this thesis and the presentation of the accompanying material. Indeed, Finlay warns that engaging in reflexivity is a perilous endeavour with many pitfalls.<sup>68</sup> Subjective complexities are difficult to unentangle and, as I discuss in Chapter 5, exposing vulnerabilities and confessing to methodological inadequacies is discomfiting. Nonetheless, as I *feel my way* into my research, I do so with the idea of reflection bound into reflexivity as an ongoing process of learning *through* and from experience toward gaining new insights of self and/or practice – an ‘active

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<sup>65</sup> Luttrell, ‘Reflexive Qualitative Research’.

<sup>66</sup> Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher-Using Our Selves in Research*.

<sup>67</sup> Donna Haraway has been a pioneer in debates that challenge epistemological practices of reflexivity that are seen to be grounded in representationalism through their mirroring of fixed positions. These, she argues, can lure us into more reductionist ways of thinking about things, predicated on the idea of ourselves as independent, knowing subjects. Expressing her misgivings, she writes ‘Reflexivity has been much recommended as a critical practice, but my suspicion is that reflexivity, like reflection, only displaces the same elsewhere, setting up worries about copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real.’ Donna Haraway, *Modest\_Witness@ Second\_Millennium. Femaleman\_Meets\_Oncomouse: Feminism and Technoscience*, New York, NY: Routledge, 1997, p. 16, cited in Vivienne Bozalek and Michalinos Zembylas, ‘Diffraction or Reflection? Sketching the Contours of Two Methodologies in Educational Research’, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 30, 2017, 111–127, p. 111. See also Karen Barad, ‘Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism without Contradiction’, in *Feminism, Science, and the Philosophy of Science*. Springer, 1996, pp. 161-194.

<sup>68</sup> Finlay, ‘Negotiating the Swamp: The Opportunity and Challenge of Reflexivity in Research Practice’, p. 212.

process of exploration and discovery which may lead to unexpected outcomes’, opening possibilities for new ways of seeing, thinking, and knowing.<sup>69</sup>

### 1.3.3. How would you describe your method?

I proceed as if to write – produce; yet, to announce it feels premature (Figure 6). The ‘as if’ implies a space for imagination with a slow uncertainty attached, ‘but how to begin to write a plan when I don’t know how it will turn out, but I do care’.<sup>70</sup>

Put simply, I assemble, combine, and redirect approaches from diverse disciplinary cultures and practices in an experiment with method; I try something out to see what happens.

However, I do not experiment to see if this method works better than another. Opening a space of possibility rather than closing a gap, I set up a ‘situation’ (more or less consciously) that involves interventions *in*, encounters *with*, and observations *of* a range of organisational/institutional environments and processes; in this case, a healthcare organisation, the research institution, and my own organisational processes in relation, and in response to, my experiences of both. My project is contextual and embedded in a particular situation, but one that is ‘made not found’ – part of a process rather than static.<sup>71</sup> Framed as an ‘exploration’ (Figure 7) and following the intertwining dialogues and entanglements as I traverse institutional boundaries, I embrace my research as an experiential process of making, modifying and designing objects, events and processes.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> See Finlay, ‘Reflecting on Reflective Practice’; Boud, Keogh, and Walker, *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*, p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> The Roland Barthes Reading Group, ‘The Work as Will’, p. 14.

<sup>71</sup> Mikka Hannula, Juha Suoranta, and Tere Vadén, *Artistic Research: Methodology*, New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2014. Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén suggest that ‘as contextual, the research happens on a site and in a situation that never is a priori but is always in need of being articulated, formed, discussed, maintained, and renewed. It is made, not found. It is in a process, not static’ p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> Linda Candy, Ernest Edmonds, and Craig Vear, ‘Practice-Based Research’, in *Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research*, ed. by Craig Vear, London: Routledge, 2022, pp. 27–41.

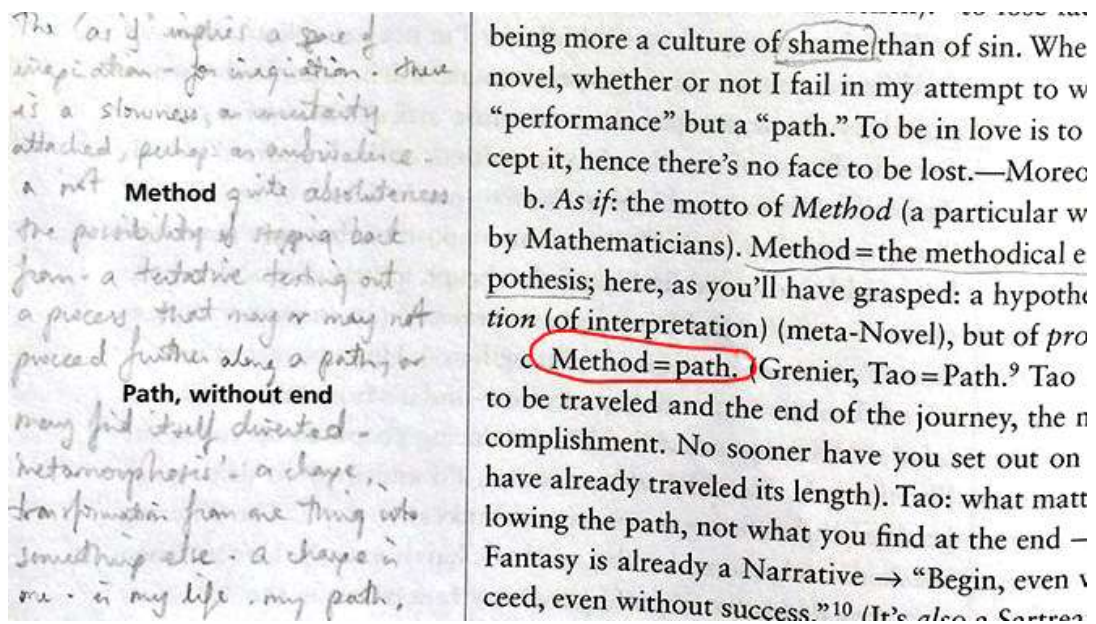


Figure 6. *Method – Path without End*, 9 June 2017<sup>73</sup>

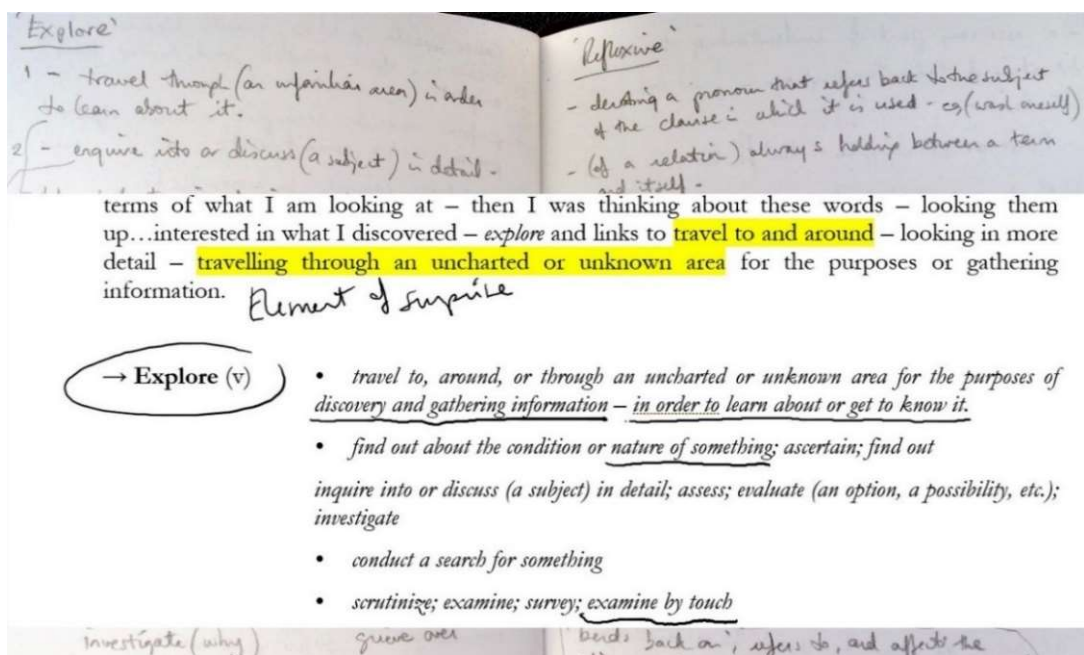


Figure 7. Layered extracts from notebook and supervision record, October 2017

<sup>73</sup> Extract from annotations to Session of December 16, 1978, Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the College De France (1978-1979 and 1979-1980)*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2011, p. 20. This was a task set for the Roland Barthes Reading Group by Sharon Kivland. I was on holiday in Spain at the time of writing.



It is by gradually *feeling my way into* the situation, and thinking *through* experiences of making that, after Candy, I ‘move towards knowing how to move forward’.<sup>74</sup> Positioning myself at the centre of the research process, learning *through* experience’ is at the core of my project; ‘experience’ understood as undergoing and encounter – bound up with life and dwelling *with* and *in* a situation, as well as practical contact *with*, observation *of* and reflection *in/on* events. More than introspection, I focus on the relational context, and how the emergent, negotiated, nature of practice encounters informs my understanding.<sup>75</sup>

However, while this focus may promote reflection and reflexivity, it carries its own set of considerations including the complex negotiation of fact and fiction, memory, reconstruction of events, authenticity, and ethics.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, as artist Grayson Perry asserts, I cannot step outside myself to look around the edges of my own humanity – see the world *not* through the lens of my own experience and emotions.<sup>77</sup> Putting myself firmly in the picture I am therefore, not unlike the artist Jo Spence (although this is not phototherapy), the active subject of my own investigation.<sup>78</sup> Directed towards challenging preconceptions and gaining new insights of self and practice, my method is concerned with listening, sensing, and imagining, with (re)capturing and mulling over practice and, as educator Kay Are proposes, ‘being impressed by a thing’– ‘feeling its touch and feeling in response’.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Candy, ‘*Creative Reflective Practitioner*’, p. 51. Candy suggests that the study of embodied cognition extends the scope of reflective creative practice further in the context of thinking through the body.

<sup>75</sup> Finlay describes this as ‘intersubjective reflection’. Finlay, ‘Reflecting on Reflective Practice’, p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> Joanne Morra and Emma Talbot, ‘Intimacy Unguarded: How the Personal Becomes Material’, *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 16, 2017, 159–162.

<sup>77</sup> Grayson Perry, ‘Guest Editor’, in *Today Programme*. BBC, 26 December 2019, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000cng4>>

<sup>78</sup> Jo Spence was a British photographer, writer, cultural worker, and photo therapist. Beginning her career as a commercial photographer, she is best known for her personal, politicised approach to documentary photography, through which she subverts the notion of an idealised female form as she documents her own experience of breast cancer. This, in turn inspired projects in ‘photo therapy’, a means of using photography as a medium to work on psychological health. In a review of her book *Putting Myself in the Picture* Barbara Rosenblum suggests that Spence’s work ‘makes the private visible and, in materialising it into a sharable form, helps turn it into public and political issues’. Barbara Rosenblum, ‘Putting Myself in the Picture: A Political, Personal and Photographic Autobiography, Jo Spence (Review)’, *Feminist Review*, 1988, 151–154. See also Jo Spence, *Putting Myself in the Picture: A Political, Personal and Photographic Autobiography*, London: Camden Press, 1986.

<sup>79</sup> Kay Are, ‘Touching Stories: Objects, Writing, Diffraction and the Ethical Hazard of Self-Reflexivity’, *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, 2018, 1–12, p. 2.

Entering into a dialogue with the material of the research situation as it emerges necessarily involves negotiation and exchange across boundaries. It is a process through which I hope to learn, one that presents considerable challenges which I discuss in Chapter Five. Although an organisation acts as both primary site and material for my project, my main concern is with ‘method’ – what is revealed *through* these exchanges and processes of ‘making’ in response. Resisting more systematic modes of enquiry my research is, nonetheless, subject to the systems, constraints, and conditions of the academic institution. Within these contexts I set up further frames, bringing forward and assembling threads from psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy, and incorporating adaptations to process based on previous learning.<sup>80</sup>

#### 1.3.4. How did your training and experience of psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy influence the design of your method?

So I think, and I feel. I wanted to see what happened if I expanded on a psychoanalytic model of organisational observation with artmaking (Figure 8).

So I think...and I feel...when I started off with all of this I had an idea that I wanted to take this psychoanalytic idea of organisational observation and see what would happen if I added to it – expanded on it – through the artmaking – something that may be considered a logical extension of an art therapy method. So I just feel that in order to try and contain it...all of this stuff I have gathered... I have to start by coming back to that – to where I start from – the frame and the threads I bring with me. But there is also the transposition from art therapy into the artworld which unmakes that.

Figure 8. Extract from annotated supervision report, 4 February 2021

Informed by psychoanalysis, part of my learning as art (psycho)therapist has involved using my personal sensitivity and subjectivity in order to understand the less conscious, unarticulated pressures in a working situation. While the two disciplines do not always lie comfortably together, as a reflexive space, psychoanalysis continues to be a useful resource, through its attention to ambivalent, conflicting, and fluctuating feelings, its tolerance for

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<sup>80</sup> Candy, ‘Creative Reflective Practitioner’, p. 53.

uncertainty, and its recognition of how difficult it is to stay in touch with the more discomfiting aspects of life. It reminds me that I am not transparent or immediately present to myself, that more conscious aspects of my experience may well be in conflict with those that are less so, that social situations are complex, and that identity is ambiguous and ambivalent.<sup>81</sup> It is also an invaluable resource for considering art, with its interest in processes outside conscious awareness about which we can say little.

The idea of learning *from* or *through* experience is a core tenet of psychoanalysis, although the discipline is rarely mentioned in the literature on reflexivity.<sup>82</sup> Since Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysts have understood that humans communicate affectively as well as discursively, and that this communication may not only occur between individuals but also, as Hoggett suggests, ‘from the group to the individual and thus from the group to the researcher’.<sup>83</sup> Of course, clinical and research situations are distinctly different. Neither psychoanalysis or psychotherapy are generally thought of as research methods, although social and qualitative researchers are increasingly interested in applying psychoanalytic ideas in the research setting, particularly the use of ‘countertransference’.<sup>84</sup> This is a rather clunky term for what psychoanalyst Robert Hinshelwood describes as ‘the most human of all human characteristics and functions [...] the essence of the live connection between human beings’.<sup>85</sup> Like empathy, it might be understood as an intensification of everyday experience, turning the spotlight on the ‘raw difficulties of being human’, and how aesthetic relations between people come alive.<sup>86</sup> Still, it has been argued that empathy is a poor epistemic guide,

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<sup>81</sup> Kelly Oliver, ‘Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity, and Feminism’, in *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, ed. by Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader, and Alison Stone, London: Routledge, 2017, pp. 231–240.

<sup>82</sup> Joanne Brown, ‘Reflexivity in the Research Process: Psychoanalytic Observations’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9, 2006, 181–197, p. 182.

<sup>83</sup> Hoggett, ‘Collective Feelings and the Politics of Affect and Emotion’, p. 127.

<sup>84</sup> Joshua Holmes, ‘Countertransference in Qualitative Research: A Critical Appraisal’, *Qualitative Research*, 14, 2014, 166–183. See also Louise Braddock, ‘Emotions, Interpretation and the Psychoanalytic Countertransference’, *Anthropological Fieldwork: a Relational Process*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, 204–228.

<sup>85</sup> R. D. Hinshelwood, *Countertransference and Alive Moments: Help or Hindrance*, London: Process Press Ltd., 2016, p. xiv. Hinshelwood’s description reflects more contemporary ideas of transference and countertransference as a complex entanglement that emerges increasingly as a form of narrative enacted in the analytic setting – through an attention to process, an emotional sensitivity, and a capacity to pick up ‘vibrations’ that, he argues, is part of human nature. See also R. D. Hinshelwood, ‘Observing Anxiety: A Psychoanalytic Training Method for Understanding Organisations’, in *Socioanalytic Methods: Discovering the Hidden in Organisations and Social Systems*, ed. by Susan Long, London: Karnac Books, 2013, pp. 47–66.

<sup>86</sup> Hinshelwood, ‘*Countertransference and Alive Moments*’, p. xv.

prone to irrational biases that muddle our judgement, rendering it potentially harmful.<sup>87</sup> As Hinshelwood cautions, while the psychoanalyst/psychotherapist's emotional sensitivity and personality may act as both receiving apparatus and motivation for making sense of experience (one's own included), it may also lead one to jump to conclusions.<sup>88</sup> The structure of the human instrument is fallible – full of holes – although these may enable an interesting tune to be played.

My method expands on a training model of observing organisations described in the psychoanalytic literature where emphasis is placed on the subjective experience of the participant-observer and their ordinary human capacity to 'pick up vibrations' – to intuitively tune into the atmosphere of a situation.<sup>89</sup> Transposed from the clinical setting the method resembles fieldwork in anthropology and sociology, although its psychoanalytic framework of concepts is shared with infant observation.<sup>90</sup> Still, like psychoanalysis or psychodynamic forms of art (psycho)therapy, I anticipate being drawn into the relational field; that I will *affect* and be *affected* by it.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, Hinshelwood suggests that the aim is to

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<sup>87</sup> Jesse Prinz, 'Against Empathy', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 49, 2011, 214–233. See also Paul Bloom, *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*, London: Bodley Head, 2017.

<sup>88</sup> Hinshelwood, '*Countertransference and Alive Moments*', 2016, p. 238. Since Freud there have been fierce debates about whether the use of counter-transference is a help or hindrance to clinical practice. Historically, these concerns have focussed on the potential threat to objectivity and professionalism, for misunderstanding and misuse, and the potential implications of this. It was Paula Heimann's seminal paper *On Countertransference*, published in 1950, that identified counter-transference as an important tool for facilitating understanding. She argued that, despite the dangers, counter-transference may become a useful probe or tool – 'an instrument of research into the patient's unconscious'. Paula Heimann, 'On Counter-Transference', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 31, 1950, 81–84.

<sup>89</sup> An adaptation and application of psychoanalytic thought outside the consulting room into a social and cultural context, the model was originally designed as a training exercise for psychotherapists and psychoanalysts working in organisations, aimed at honing intuitive sensitivity to human situations and experiences. See R. D. Hinshelwood and Wilhelm Skogstad, 'Observing Organisations: Anxiety, Defence and Culture in Health Care', London: Routledge, 2000; Hinshelwood, 'Observing Anxiety', 2013. I first encountered this approach while undertaking my Master's degree in the 'Psychoanalysis of Groups and Organisations' (1997-2000) when I was offered the opportunity to undertake a twelve-week psychoanalytic observation in an organisational setting. The study was subsequently written up and included in a publication of similar case studies. See Debbie Maxwell, 'Nowhere to Hide: A Day Case Centre', in *Observing Organisations: Anxiety, Defence and Culture in Healthcare.*, ed. by R.D Hinshelwood & W Skogstad, London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 122–141.

<sup>90</sup> R. D. Hinshelwood, 'Applying the Observational Method: Observing Organizations', in *Surviving Space: Papers on Infant Observation*, ed. by Andrew Briggs, London: Karnac, 2002, pp. 157–171. The method does not include interviewing or collecting data in a pro-active way, nor is it 'consultancy' as it does not seek to 'change' the organisation, other than 'to accept that the impact of an observer does change the field'. Hinshelwood, 'Observing Anxiety', p. 49.

<sup>91</sup> Informed by psychoanalysis, and based mainly in the private/independent sector, my own art (psycho)therapy practice has generally (although not exclusively) involved working long-term with adults. It may be described as 'analytic' in that the emphasis is on the 'transference relationship' between client and therapist, which may manifest in various ways through the psychotherapeutic

be ‘sufficiently close to the emotional currents’ in the social and cultural setting and ‘then (or subsequently) to be able to think about those experiences’.<sup>92</sup>



*I've suffered a traumatic blow  
to the head I hurt I'm angry  
and raw I'm a bloody mess*

*I don't remember you and yet I  
recognise you the hair the  
sticky congealed mess stuck  
down shiny as if still wet you  
glisten under the light the red  
smeared that has been dry now  
for years it stirs a part of me  
a time that cannot be  
remembered a wound a  
trauma the black  
meaninglessness without a  
structure or form a bloody  
mess the black seems to float  
amidst the red as if suspended  
in space somewhere shapeless  
formless unrecognisable*

Figure 9. *A Bloody Mess* (detail)

Mixed media with reflective text 2004 – 2016<sup>93</sup>

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process, including the use of space, time, art and other available materials/objects, including, myself. See Susan Hogan, ‘The Art Therapy Continuum: A Useful Tool for Envisaging the Diversity of Practice in British Art Therapy’, *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 14, 2009, 29–37. At the time of completing this Ph.D. I supervise a number of art (psycho)therapists working in organisational settings across public, private, and voluntary sectors, and am an associate lecturer with the Art Therapy Northern Programme, with whom I have been involved since 2006. I am also a founder member of Artspace Headspace, a community group set up with the aim of supporting local, accessible community-based art (psycho)therapy and therapeutic art resources for people affected by the impact of brain injury, neurological, and other long-term medical conditions.

<sup>92</sup> Hinshelwood, ‘Applying the Observational Method’, p. 163.

<sup>93</sup> This brief impression, one of two pieces made on consecutive weeks, was originally made in response to my work with an elderly woman who was struggling to adjust to the impact of a stroke. I have written about this work elsewhere; see Debbie Michaels, ‘A Space for Linking: Art Therapy and Stroke Rehabilitation’, *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 15, 2010, 65–74. The artwork returned to mind very powerfully early on in my research at which point I responded to the original piece through writing the accompanying text. The method of writing is borrowed from an exercise first undertaken during my art (psycho)therapy training by the educator Gillie Bolton, where the aim is to write freely without censorship, judgement, or attention to grammar or punctuation. Bolton, *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development?*. Remade as a two-minute video piece, the work was (re)presented in 2017 as part of a conference presentation.

Adapting the model, I draw in threads from art (psycho)therapy first encountered during my training. These involve the use of creative approaches, such as artmaking and writing, as multi-layered reflexive spaces through which to challenge more conscious thought processes and to broaden understanding of a situation through the way it ‘echoes’ and resonates in my inner world (Figure 9).<sup>94</sup>

While psychoanalytic ideas have long been transposed outside the consulting room, mapping clinical concepts onto social research is not uncontroversial, and is potentially misleading.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, noticing how the emotional life of the researcher is often downplayed, seen as embarrassing or relegated to an unspoken place, Kate Kenny and Sarah Gilmore argue that, through its attention to less easily observable emotional matters, psychoanalysis may enrich reflexive accounts in research encounters through offering an affective dimension.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, wanted or not, as psychologist Joshua Holmes acknowledges, feelings and bodily reactions are inevitable in qualitative research and may be especially powerful in relation to sensitive topics.<sup>97</sup> One consequence of the ‘turn to affect’ in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts may then be thought of as *more than* reflection, drawing attention to embodied emotional experience, enactment, and a ‘re-engagement with sensation, memory, perception, attention, and listening’.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> In the art (psycho)therapy profession this is known as ‘response art’ which aims, amongst other things – through dialogue and processes of shared reflection – to open, build, and deepen attunement and understanding in an empathic cycle. See Gary Nash, ‘Response Art in Art Therapy Practice and Research with a Focus on Reflect Piece Imagery’, *International Journal of Art Therapy*, 25, 2020, 39–48; Barbara J Fish, ‘Response Art: The Art of the Art Therapist’, *Art Therapy*, 29, 2012, 138–143; Mandy Rogers, ‘Absent Figures: A Personal Reflection on the Value of Art Therapists Own Image-Making’, *International Journal of Art Therapy: Inscape*, 7, 2002, 59–71. I refer to ‘resonance’, as described by Kenneth Wright as a ‘felt recognition of vital resemblances’ generating a ‘feeling of affinity between related forms and a sense of mutual recognition’. Kenneth Wright, *Mirroring and Attunement: Self-Realization in Psychoanalysis and Art*, Hove: Routledge, 2009, p. 7.

<sup>95</sup> Kate Kenny and Sarah Gilmore, ‘From Research Reflexivity to Research Affectivity: Ethnographic Research in Organizations’, in *The Psychosocial and Organization Studies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 158–182. See also Holmes, ‘Countertransference in Qualitative Research’.

<sup>96</sup> Kenny and Gilmore, ‘From Research Reflexivity to Research Affectivity’.

<sup>97</sup> Holmes, ‘Countertransference in Qualitative Research’, p. 167.

<sup>98</sup> Lisa Blackman and Couze Venn, ‘Affect’, *Body & Society*, 16, 2010, 7–28, p. 8. The ‘affective turn’ in the humanities and social sciences draws attention to the body, emotions, and embodied experience, illuminating both our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it. Originating in the work of the 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Baruch Spinoza (and elaborated on by Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari amongst others), the proposal put forward is that there is a parallel correspondence between the mind’s power to think and the body’s power to act, with a second correspondence between the mind’s receptivity to external ideas and the body’s sensitivity to other bodies. The implication is that an increase in the power to act and think corresponds to an increased power to be affected. Michael Hardt, ‘Foreword: What Affects Are Good For’, in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, ed. by Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley, Durham, NC: Duke

Transposing psychoanalytic ideas to arts-based research is complex. Approaching and constructing the research situation, and with Hal Foster's essay 'The Artist as Ethnographer' in mind, I must be careful to 'own' rather than 'other' discomfoting aspects of myself.<sup>99</sup> However, exploring psychoanalysis and the artist's process, artist and psychotherapist Patricia Townsend suggests that, just as the analyst listens for the potential meaning of the patient's communications through the echo and resonance of her own internal responses 'so the artist listens to the communications of the developing artwork through their effects on her'.<sup>100</sup>

### 1.3.5. Did any particular artists or creative approaches influence the design of your method?

The lack of a formal art training presses in!

Entering art academia without a fine art education I inevitably tread in the footsteps of those whose influence I may not be aware of but who have laid the ground, particularly those who have claimed a role for the artist in the wider social context.<sup>101</sup> Immersed in the research situation I am exposed to a range of artistic practices which (more or less consciously) inform my process. Yet, it is only as I work *through* my developing method that I recognise the significance of certain approaches and ideas and how these help me think *through* what I am doing. While many are woven into the body of this thesis and its footnotes, its constraints means that some are, necessarily, excluded while others are presented as subsidiary matter in Appendix 1.

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University Press, 2007, pp. ix–xiii. See also Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London: Continuum, 2004; Brian Massumi, 'Politics of Affect', Cambridge: Politiy Press, 2015.

<sup>99</sup> Hal Foster, 'The Artist as Ethnographer?', in *The Traffic in Culture: Refiguring Art and Anthropology*, ed. by George. Marcus & Fred Myers, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995, pp. 302–309, 304. Foster's text problematises the artist as participant-observer working 'on location'. See also Claire Doherty, 'Situation', in *Documents of Contemporary Art*, London: Whitechapel, 2009.

<sup>100</sup> Townsend, '*Creative States of Mind*', p. 92.

<sup>101</sup> Elizabeth Fisher, 'In a Language You Don't Understand', in *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, ed. by Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013, pp. 8–15.



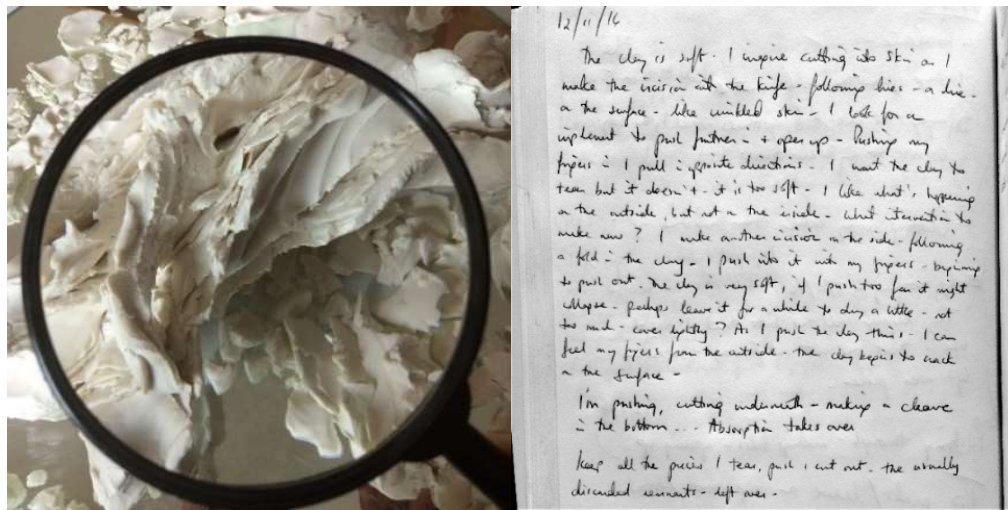


Figure 10. *Inside-Outside*

Porcelain sculpture with magnifying glass and handwritten process notes, 2016.

Entering the research situation my own art practice is based (although not exclusively) in clay and ceramic sculpture (Figure 10). Indeed, led by process, my practice resists definition and categorisation, not sitting comfortably in one place. However, to borrow this as a metaphor for approaching my research, the ‘cuts’ or interventions I make into the clay body, how I work with it and the way it responds to my interventions reveals something about its properties as well as my own. Yet the process – the dialogue that emerges through handling and manipulating the material – also reveals something about my method of working, what is produced, and how it is understood. They are intricately intertwined.

Expanding on Hinshelwood’s model, I have no idea what kind of ‘art’ I might make. Nonetheless, I am influenced by approaches that emphasise ‘the tacit dimension’, after Michael Polanyi, and the potential for processes of ‘making’ to bring to awareness what is sensed but cannot easily be explained.<sup>102</sup> Arguing in favour of more artistic, intuitive processes, Schön stresses the tacit knowledge that is difficult to articulate, but ‘implicit in our patterns of action and in our *feel* for the stuff with which we are dealing.’<sup>103</sup> Feeling is at the heart of imaginative work – fiction – which, to quote Virginia Woolf, is like a spider’s web, ‘attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life all four corners’.<sup>104</sup> The implication, Eileen John argues, is that, while not confined to registering ‘actual’

<sup>102</sup> Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1966. Polanyi suggests that we start an enquiry with the understanding that ‘we can know more than we can tell’, p. 23.

<sup>103</sup> Schön, ‘*The Reflective Practitioner*’, p. 49 (my italics).

<sup>104</sup> Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, London: Penguin Books, 2000, p. 43.



circumstances, imaginative experience is, nonetheless, pervaded by beliefs about the real world.<sup>105</sup>

I draw on methods learned *through* experience; specifically those that offer contained, non-judgemental spaces for imagination, wondering and ‘the play of speculation’, after psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott.<sup>106</sup> The idea of such spaces (both physical and psychological) where experiences, situations, relations, feelings and thoughts may be evoked, provoked, imagined, tested, and (re)enacted is important. However, while I bring certain frames of reference from psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy to the research situation, repositioning myself in the arts allows me to bend and reshape such frames, not unlike the artist who devises and applies a rule carefully at the beginning of a piece of work although later actions may take on a life of their own.<sup>107</sup> The emphasis shifts onto spaces *in/through* which the ongoing relationship between myself and my artwork might develop.<sup>108</sup> As with the artwork in Figure 9, and after the psychoanalyst and artist Marion Milner, within the constraints of the research situation and the frames I set up, I *feel* my way forward using whatever is to hand – my plan only definite to the extent of determining to go on in spite of not knowing what is going to appear.<sup>109</sup> Art, alongside psychoanalysis, is my compass.

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<sup>105</sup> Eileen John, ‘Art and Knowledge’, in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, ed. by Berys Gaut and Dominic Lopes, London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 384–393, 387.

<sup>106</sup> Adam Phillips, *Winnicott*, London: Penguin, 2007. On the opening pages of *Winnicott*, Phillips notes his preoccupation with gaps as potential spaces for the imagination rather than gaps to be closed. ‘He was to be preoccupied, as we shall see, by the idea of gaps, those “spaces between” where there was room for the play of speculation.’, p. 1–2.

The experiential approach to artmaking prompted a shift in my own practice away from representational styles to more intuitive processes of working with whatever is to hand.

<sup>107</sup> Candy, ‘*Creative Reflective Practitioner*’, p. 57.

<sup>108</sup> See Townsend, ‘*Creative States of Mind*’ for a discussion of the parallels between psychoanalysis and the artist’s process.

<sup>109</sup> Marion Milner, *On Not Being Able to Paint*, Hove: Routledge, 2010, p. 121. A friend and colleague of Winnicott, who had also been her analyst, Milner placed considerable emphasis, both clinically and artistically, on the process of emergence and the centrality of feeling and affect in mental life. See Claire Pajaczkowska, ‘On Humming: Reflections on Marion Milner’s Contribution to Psychoanalysis’, in *Winnicott and the Psychoanalytic Tradition: Interpretation and Other Psychoanalytic Issues*, ed. by Lesley Caldwell, London: Karnac, 2007, pp. 33–48.

### 1.3.6. How will you know if your approach has been successful?

Hinshelwood proposes that, as a *method* of enquiry

It means keeping an eye open for what constitutes an indication (evidence) that the method can succeed with the tasks you give it. And being open at least to the disappointing failure of the method.<sup>110</sup>

A key premise of research is that the knowledge generated can be shared. Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner suggest that arts-based research must enable a reader of that research to participate in some way in the experience of the author.<sup>111</sup> Questioning the success of my research I would ask whether the work calls forth or sheds light on something unfamiliar or serves to (re)sensitise the reader to aspects of an experience or situation that is familiar. Assessment of success might then be based on how the work makes one feel, what it evokes, provokes, and reveals (if anything) and how it resonates in the world – whether the work ‘moves’ us to a different position.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Personal Correspondence, 29 May 2016.

<sup>111</sup> Barone and Eisner, ‘*Arts Based Research*’.

<sup>112</sup> Leavy, ‘*Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*’.



# Perform a Task (1)

Transfer

*move from one place to another*

*change*

## 2.1. Cross a Boundary

*a line that marks the limits of an area*

### 2.1.1. How did it feel crossing disciplinary boundaries as you did?

I feel like an intruder in a foreign land - 'lost in an alien world where I don't understand the language'.<sup>113</sup>

Without the familiar professional boundaries of art (psycho)therapy, or a formal art training, I feel personally and professionally exposed, in a state of conflict and confusion about where the boundaries are and what is safe to reveal as old ghosts return.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, facilitated by conversations and creative opportunities presented by others, I tentatively use the personal as material for artistic practice and research.

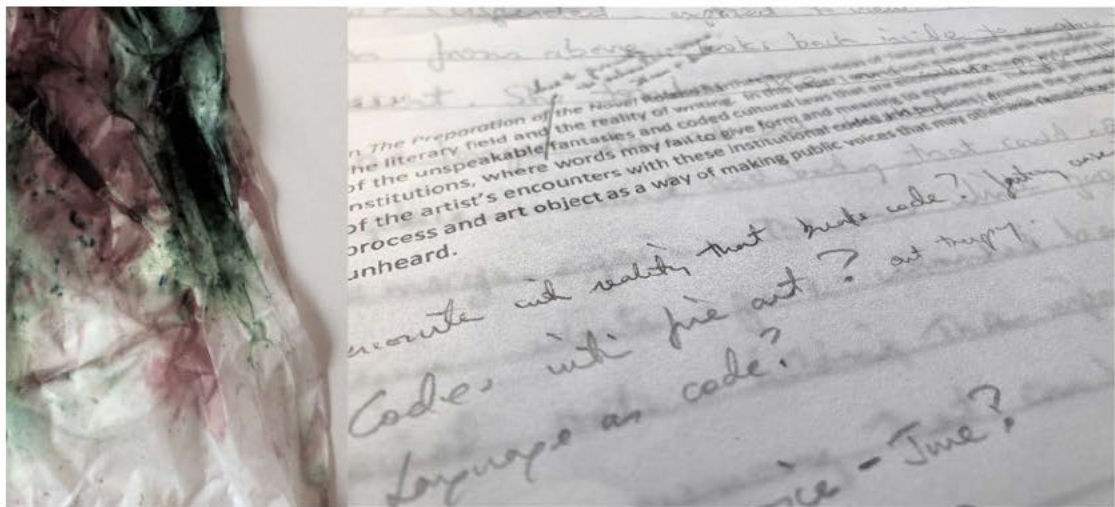


Figure 11. *Intimacy Unguarded*

Mixed media, typed and handwritten documentation, 2016

<sup>113</sup> Extract from Diary Notes 1, 9 December 2015.

<sup>114</sup> In February 2016, approximately six months after commencing the Ph.D. I seek out personal therapy again to help with the emotional disturbance provoked by the transition into art academia.

Borrowing its title from a symposium of the same name, *Intimacy Unguarded* (Figure 12) is the first such work *through* which a material response and associated documentation, (aspects of which may previously have remained material for personal therapy or clinical supervision), become potential artwork for public consumption.<sup>115</sup> Searching for an affective ‘punctum’ moment in Roland Barthes’s *The Preparation of the Novel*, I respond to the idea of ‘code and fantasy’ as I imagine moving art-therapy-objects into art academia – exchanging the codes and conventions of the psychotherapeutic setting, and the private, non-judgemental space afforded the art object, for a more public, critical, arena. Drawing on approaches initially learnt during my art (psycho)therapy training which emphasise a non-directive, non-judgemental ‘free’ approach, as Milner terms it – I begin on impulse rather than with anything in mind, somewhere between ‘doing’ and ‘dreaming’.<sup>116</sup> Combining the observation and noting of fleeting thoughts and sensory experiences, not unlike Milner’s practice, I draw a parallel with the working process of contemporary artist Emma Talbot whose work makes reference to dream material and personal thought processes, combines word and image, and focusses on the recording of marks as they happen. In her words, ‘that’s what it is’.<sup>117</sup>

A further opportunity to explore the personal as material for artistic practice leads to *Grand Deception*, an experimental writing that contributes to *The Dreamers* publication (Figure 12).<sup>118</sup> Again, moving material that, in a psychotherapeutic context, may remain within the

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<sup>115</sup> The artwork emerges from the ‘Roland Barthes Reading Group’ – initiated and facilitated by Sharon Kivland. The group, which I joined in 2015, sustained for over six years and serves not only as an environment in which a text is discussed – Barthes’s *The Preparation of The Novel*, (translated by Kate Briggs) – but also as a community for a space to think about the process of reading and its relation to writing. *Intimacy Unguarded* responds to a ‘punctum’ moment in the text Barthes’s *Session of December 9, 1979*. See *Transposition I – Unmake* for a fuller description of the work which borrows its name from the symposium of the same name, held at the Freud Museum. This examines the ways in which intimate, unconscious, aspects of being human become material for contemporary art, critical writing, and the dynamics of the consulting room. Morra and Talbot, *Intimacy Unguarded: Gender, the Unconscious, and Contemporary Art*.

<sup>116</sup> Milner, ‘*On Not Being Able to Paint*’, p. 120–121. For Milner this free method or ‘doodling’ enabled her to ‘disengage her mind from conscious intentionality and thereby render it receptive to other, less conscious states of experience’. Pajaczkowska, ‘*On Humming*’, p. 36. See also Alberto Stefana, ‘*Revisiting Marion Milner’s Work on Creativity and Art*’, *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 100, 2019, 128–147.

<sup>117</sup> Emma Talbot, ‘*Unravel These Knots*’, *Intimacy Unguarded: Gender, the Unconscious, and Contemporary Art*, Freud Museum, London, 27 February, 2016. See also [Emma Talbot - Unravel These Knots | Freud Museum London](#).

<sup>118</sup> Debbie Michaels, ‘*A Grand Deception*’, in *The Dreamers*, ed. by Sharon Kivland, London: MA BIBLIOTHÈQUE, 2017, pp. 105–114. This publication emerged from the ‘Writing Art’ module taught by Sharon Kivland in 2016–17. See <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/dreamers.php>> for further details and a short reading from the text.

bounds of confidentiality, I merge waking memories with dreams, and subjective reflection with imagination, fictionalising the personal as I shift the pronoun from ‘I’ to ‘she’, and the narrative away from logic, grammar, and punctuation to the randomness of the unconscious.

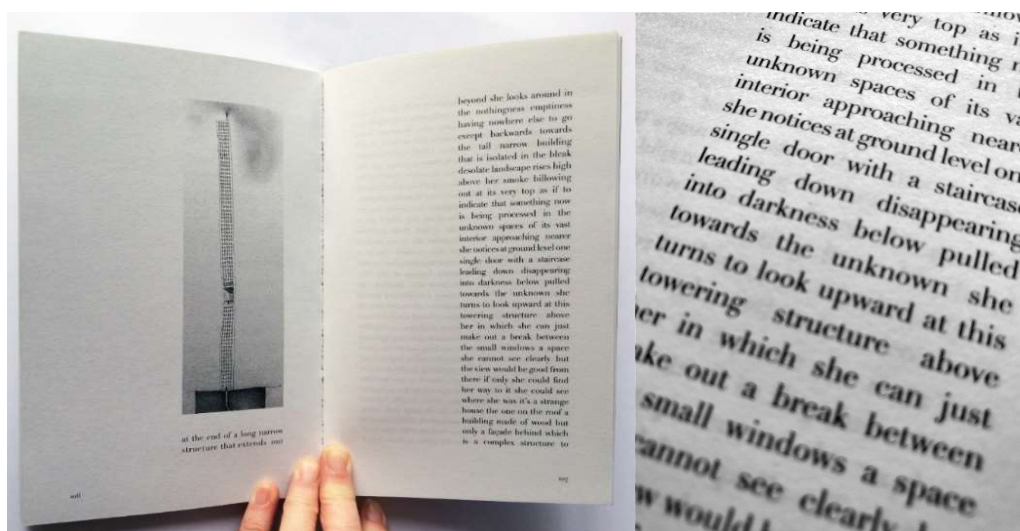


Figure 12. *A Grand Deception*

### 2.1.2. Has being an art (psycho)therapist been beneficial in your art practice or an inhibition. Have you had to ‘undo’ or ‘unthink’ certain things?<sup>119</sup>

Caught in the anxiety of presenting my work to an academic art audience at a symposium held as part of the *Testing Testing* project, I stumble in answering.<sup>120</sup> To move the art-therapy-object out of the privacy of its familiar environment and expose its unravelled threads alongside my own in a public arena is a risky business. Gathering myself now, I respond more fully.

<sup>119</sup> The question is the first posed during a Symposium held alongside the *Testing Testing* exhibition.

<sup>120</sup> Initiated and produced by practice-based Ph.D. researchers in the fine art subject area at Sheffield Hallam University the *Testing Testing* project explored the process of artistic production as research methodology, taking the form of an exhibition at SIA Gallery, a symposium event, and two publications in which each exhibiting artist wrote a text outlining the research context for their work. See Debbie Michaels, ‘Between’, in *Testing Testing: Prologue (Vol. 1)*, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, Art and Design Research Unit, 2016, pp. 43–46; Debbie Michaels, ‘A Constructed Fiction’, in *Testing Testing: Dialogue (Vol. 2)*, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, Art and Design Research Unit, 2016, pp. 17–20. For further details see <<http://www.testingtesting.org.uk>>.



I cannot easily shed my craft or take off the professional garments (habits) I have worn for many years – and put on those of an artist. Nor do I want to as they are useful in this endeavour. Still, as feminist scholar Sara Ahmed suggests, ‘a garment becomes attuned to the body that wears it [...] and through repetition, things acquire certain tendencies’.<sup>121</sup> Shifting position I must, necessarily, alter the orientation of my body which, in turn, affects the fit of the garments I inhabit, with the implication that I may need to adapt or change them. Still, unmaking the ‘art-therapy-object’ requires much preparation as the project is met with considerable ambivalence, resistance, and apprehension (Figure 13).

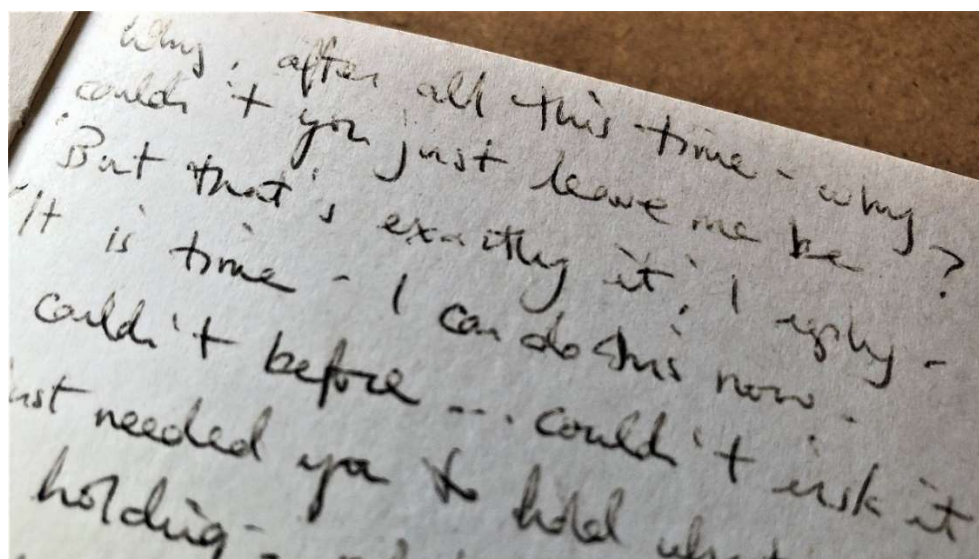


Figure 13. *Why Couldn't You Just Leave Me Be!?*

Diary Note, 11 August 2016

Although an inanimate ‘thing’ of little monetary value or worth, it holds layers of meaning and once the unravelling begins, it will be impossible to return it to its previous state. As artist and former art (psycho)therapist Cleo remarks as we contemplate this, ‘even though the materials might be the same [...] some change will have taken place’.<sup>122</sup> In beginning this unravelling, I am caught *in between* what I have been and what I might become.<sup>123</sup> Yet, whatever form and situation the art-therapy-object finds itself in, it exists, in Sharon Kivland’s words, ‘only because of, and in response to, the object it once was’.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Sara Ahmed, ‘Institutional Habits’, *Feminist Killjoys*, 2015, p. 4.

<sup>122</sup> Extract from conversation, with artist and former art psychotherapist Claire Lee (known as Cleo), 26 May 2016. I met with Cleo in the presence of the art-therapy-object to discuss its unmaking.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Personal communication, supervision meeting, 10 May 2016.





Figure 14. Susan Hiller, *Work in Progress*,  
Matts Gallery, 1980. Courtesy of Matt's Gallery, London.

I describe my process more fully in *Transposition I – Unmake*. But it is sometime later that I feel the resonance of Susan Hiller's 1980 performative installation/exhibition *Work in Progress*, as she painstakingly unravels threads of an existing canvas, cutting up others – a transformative process through which she reconfigures a series of paintings (Figure 14).<sup>125</sup> I have no idea how Hiller felt forty years ago; however, we are both clearly implicated in unravelling and repurposing threads in our respective works. While Hiller unpicks her canvas, I sit opposite the unravelled object (as the viewer is invited to do), watching a video of myself deconstructing it and listening to the sounds of its deconstruction (Figure 15).<sup>126</sup>

<sup>125</sup> Susan Hiller, *Work in Progress*, Performance/Exhibition, London: Matt's Gallery, 21 April–4 May 1980. A week-long performance, 'Work In Progress' involved unravelling a painting into its component threads; each day the resulting threads were re-configured as a 'doodle' or thread drawing. <[http://www.susanhiller.org/otherworks/work\\_progress](http://www.susanhiller.org/otherworks/work_progress)>. See also Jean Fisher, 'Susan Hiller: The Revenants of Time', London: Matt's Gallery, 1990, cited in Karen Wright, 'Susan Hiller: Analysis and Ecstasy', in *Entangled: Threads and Making*, ed. by Karen Wright, Margate, Kent: Turner Contemporary, 2017, pp. 138–143, 140.

<sup>126</sup> Debbie Michaels, *Be / Tween*, Multi-media Installation, 340×150×150, Duration: 50+10 Minutes (loop), Testing Testing, Sheffield Institute of Arts: Sheffield Hallam University, Art and Design Research Unit, 2016, <<http://testingtesting.org.uk>> [accessed 8 November 2021]. An extract from the video is available on the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/between.php>>. The 50+10 minutes is a reference to the timing of a traditional psychoanalytic/psychotherapeutic hour: a fifty-minute session + ten minutes writing up. It is a format I generally followed in my practice although, in a later correspondence I am reminded by artist-researcher Paula Smithard, with reference

Perhaps, as art critic Guy Brett suggests in relation to Hiller's work, 'one authorial self, or one part of the psyche [is slowly] ceding to another, by way of the same materials'.<sup>127</sup>



Figure 15. *Be | tween*

Returning to the question, rather than attempting to 'unthink' certain things (which I fear is impossible), I (re)examine and repurpose certain threads in recognition that, to learn *through* experience, I need to 'undo' and 'remake' the ties that constrain me. In the very process of imagining and performing the object's destruction I weave something new.

**2.1.3. But this is all a dramatisation, and then we become caught in this problem of what is authentic and what isn't? How does that fiction talk back to you? <sup>128</sup>**

Another question threatens my equilibrium as I feel a pressure to 'perform' - to be somewhere in my process and thinking I have not yet reached - to articulate what I am, as yet, unable to say.

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to the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, that the unconscious itself has no sense of time. Personal communication, Paula Smithard, 9 November 2017.

<sup>127</sup> Guy Brett, 'Elasticity of Exhibition', *Tate Papers, Landmark Exhibitions Issue*, 12, 2009, p. 7.

<sup>128</sup> Question posed by a member of the audience at the *Testing Testing* symposium, 2 September 2016.

Of course, it is a constructed fiction – a dramatisation (Figure 16).<sup>129</sup> The mock therapeutic staging invites the viewer to participate in a performance, to sit with the object and its *unmaking* for the duration of a traditional psychoanalytic hour, to become part of the drama through acting as witness to the object’s predicament.<sup>130</sup>

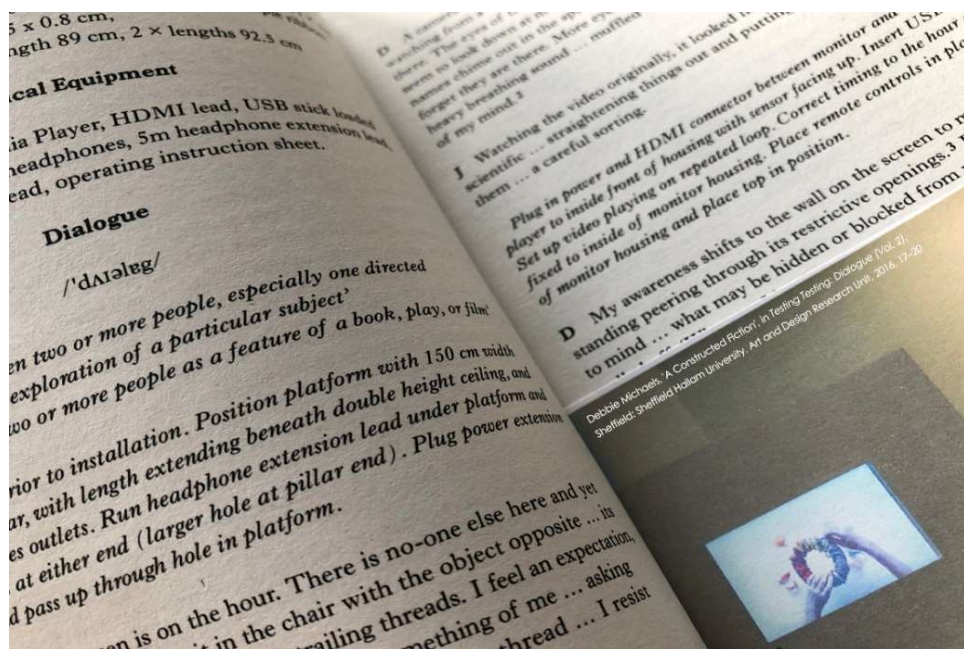


Figure 16. *A Constructed Fiction*

It asks something of the viewer – sets up an expectation – just as the psychotherapeutic, research, and exhibition situations hold expectations (albeit different) along with corresponding anxieties. Unmaking, moving, and remaking the art-therapy-object, and documenting the dialogues along the way, I act out something to see what is activated and, as with my art (psycho)therapy practice, anticipate being drawn into the unfolding drama.<sup>131</sup> To borrow from Collier, there is something theatrical about it – a re-imagining and fictionalisation of one situation in the context of another.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Michaels, 'A Constructed Fiction'.

<sup>130</sup> Michaels, 'Between', p. 45.

<sup>131</sup> Simon Clarke, Herbert Hahn, and Paul Hoggett, *Object Relations and Social Relations: The Implications of the Relational Turn in Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge, 2018.

<sup>132</sup> Collier, 'Re-Imagining Reflection'.

However, my focus is not on what is ‘made’ in the sense of staging a replica of my art (psycho)therapy room, although there are specific references with others implied.<sup>133</sup> Nor do I seek to dismantle and relocate the contents of the room as with Francis Bacon’s studio – my practice is still alive.<sup>134</sup> Rather, I am concerned with what is evoked and provoked through the process of *unmaking* the object and staging the work. I play with an idea – something that is both real and made up – a potential space, after Winnicott, where difference and similarity are accepted, but not resolved.<sup>135</sup> While the plinth I install may not be a ‘real’ table, neither is it purely fiction.<sup>136</sup> As part of the installation from which the unravelled threads hang, and in stimulating dialogue, it becomes part of what is being enacted more broadly. In the words of psychoanalyst Kenneth Wright, it is a genuine ‘mix-up’ of artist and object but with a separate existence in the real world.<sup>137</sup> If I think about how the fiction ‘talks back’ it is through dialogue with the process of ‘shaping a situation’, to borrow from Schön, and how I respond to the situation’s ‘backtalk’.



Figure 17. *Testing Testing*, detail of bracket and chair leg

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<sup>133</sup> The chairs were the same as those in my art (psycho)therapy room, as was the distance set between them.

<sup>134</sup> For a number of years after Bacon’s death in 1992, his atelier at 7 Reece Mews remained largely untouched. In 1998, a team of art historians, conservators, and archaeologists began to dismantle the room, meticulously surveying the space, and detailing exact positions of every item. Over 7,000 items were then carefully wrapped, shipped to Dublin, and reassembled in a purpose-built compound in Dublin City Gallery, now open to public view. See John Edwards and Perry Ogden, *7 Reece Mews: Francis Bacon’s Studio*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2001.

<sup>135</sup> In *Creative States of Mind*, artist and psychoanalytic psychotherapist Patricia Townsend describes how, in a radical departure from classical psychoanalysis, Winnicott postulates an ‘intermediate area of experiencing, a potential space, between the world of shared external reality and the personal inner world’. Donald W Winnicott, ‘Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena’, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34, 1953, 89–97, cited in Townsend, ‘*Creative States of Mind*’, p. 9.

<sup>136</sup> At the symposium this drew associations to Richard Artschwager’s artwork. See <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/artschwager-table-and-chair-t03793>>

<sup>137</sup> Wright, ‘*Mirroring and Attunement*’, p. 53.

I laugh at the juxtaposition of Woolf's words (see p.33) and the photograph of an aluminium bracket attached to a chair leg, one of four that attaches each chair to the platform – rendering the installation and the viewer 'safe', in line with health and safety requirements, but held in a fixed position (Figure 17).

The brackets draw a certain derision at the symposium, and I recall my discomfort then, as when fixing the chairs in place, observing my impulse to hide them, but leaving them clearly visible. The act feels significant although I am not sure why at the time. Yet, in the face of anxieties about how my work may be received, perhaps it is not surprising that I fix things in place in an attempt to protect them from being moved, dislocated, or damaged – to control what feels like an unnerving situation.<sup>138</sup> While holding the potential for creative transformation, change is a painful, messy, business, fraught with uncertainty and risk. No longer afforded the relative safety of familiar surroundings, I, like the 'art-therapy-object', risk exposure to detailed public scrutiny – to being 'undressed, taken apart and destroyed in my original form'.<sup>139</sup> Or perhaps I want the viewer to be held for a while, as I have been, in the uncomfortable position of 'sitting with' something discomfoting that makes little sense.

No doubt, there is more unpicking to do. While I do not literally re-site the contents of my art (psycho)therapy room or my practice, the personal, professional, and ethical dilemmas raised by imagining, mulling over, and enacting the unravelling, re-siting, and staging of the work are real. Like an analysis of sorts, *unmaking* and *remaking* the structural lines of my practice is complex, time-consuming work that demands emotional, as well as physical and mental labour. Although my initial impulse when visiting the exhibition site is to 'show my work in the area under the stairs away from the main gallery' where no-one will notice me, I position it centrally in the space with all its flaws and inconsistencies.<sup>140</sup> In doing so I make myself vulnerable.

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<sup>138</sup> I am aware of my own anxiety at the time concerning how, as art (psycho)therapist, I and my work would be received in a Fine Art context. This focusses on a fantasy that, in my absence (due to holiday), the work itself, which felt very personally and professionally exposing, may be devalued, damaged, or attacked. Aware of personal resonances, this concern is not totally unfounded. As David Henderson notes, psychotherapists are often viewed with 'envy, disgust, derision and suspicion'. David Henderson, 'Shame, Unknowing and the Between', in *Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies - 20th Anniversary Conference*, University of Essex, 23 November 2013.

<sup>139</sup> Michaels, 'Between', *Testing Testing: Prologue (Vol. 1)*, p. 45.

<sup>140</sup> Journal Note, 20 May 2016.



## Perform a Task (2)

Experience the situation and myself *in* it

*test, try, learn by practical trial*

*encounter or undergo (an event or occurrence)*

*feel (an emotion or sensation)*

## 3.1. Observe and be observed

*notice or perceive (something) and register it as being significant*

*make a remark*

*fulfil or comply with*

### 3.1.1. How would you describe the process of approaching and entering the healthcare setting?

'Let's imagine that the institution is an analysand', Kivland suggests. 'They will come with a demand. What is that?' 'Their demand is for a space for thinking about what can't be thought about or articulated,' I reply. 'Have they made that demand?' she continues. 'No' I reply, 'I approached them.' 'That would be an unconventional thing to do,' she remarks.<sup>141</sup> I agree although, in a research context, the analyst/psychotherapist-researcher would need to approach in order to gain consent, as I have approached various organisations to ask if they will act as host to my study - a study which involves me, as guest, entering the organisational body for a prescribed period of time.<sup>142</sup> Of course, access might be restricted, controlled by a gate-keeper, or denied altogether. My desire may represent a transgression, an unwanted intrusion or unwelcome act of penetration, piercing, or wounding - a crossing of boundaries that holds both sexual and violent connotations. Not only am I about to cross a boundary into the organisation, I am also about to let the organisation into myself - into my space.

At an initial meeting with a potential host, and conscious of a traumatised patient group in the background, I ask tentatively about the possibility of undertaking a participant-observation in the organisation.<sup>143</sup> 'That's a big ask!' they say, and I immediately pull back from pushing forward. The atmosphere warms with further dialogue about what will be involved - *'one hour a week over three months'* - and the meeting ends with an invitation to submit a more detailed proposal. Then, as I prepare to leave, they inform me of the 'panic'

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<sup>141</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland, supervision meeting, 14 June 2017.

<sup>142</sup> Not always - in some settings, e.g. neuro rehab, the art (psycho)therapist may approach someone who is unable to make the approach themselves.

<sup>143</sup> This initial meeting took place in November 2015.



in the team about an imminent inspection by the Care Quality Commission and, almost in the same breath, of a local girl who has been murdered.<sup>144</sup> The door is left ajar, but I am left with a powerful sense of the anxieties associated with being ‘looked at’ and ‘scrutinised’ as well as the potential, somewhere close by, for murderous violence. Perhaps their reticence is unsurprising? I am unfamiliar and have no part in any formal process in the organisation. As someone ‘outside’ rather than ‘inside’, my presence might understandably be experienced as threatening, even dangerous.<sup>145</sup> Indeed my host expressed concern about both staff and patients feeling unsafe being observed. Yet I am aware that approaching and entering the organisation is an integral part of the observation and that my emotional responses may offer useful clues.<sup>146</sup> As I leave the meeting I wonder if I *am* ‘asking too much?’, and travel, somewhat disappointed, to my art (psycho)therapy room with a view to making in response, although I have nothing in mind.

### 3.1.2. What did you make?

I describe this more fully in ‘Transposition II – *Make*. In the context of my request to observe, an impending CQC inspection, and a murder, it is perhaps unsurprising that what I make evokes associations to a cold, harsh, scrutinising, environment and dirty washing hung out to dry – with the corresponding implication of getting someone to take the blame for a bad situation or abandoning someone in need (Figure 18).<sup>147</sup> Yet this is not in my conscious awareness at the time of making. Indeed, as I note at the time, nothing fits together in a way that makes any sense.

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<sup>144</sup> The role of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as an independent regulator is to register health and adult social care service providers in England, and to check, through inspection and ongoing monitoring, that standards are being met.

<sup>145</sup> In *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice*, Judith Still suggests that hospitality implies ‘letting the other into oneself, to one’s own space – it is invasive of the integrity of the self, or the domain of the self. This is why it may be seen as both foundational (to be fully human is to be able to alter, to be altered [...] ) and dangerous.’ Judith Still, *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013, p. 13.

<sup>146</sup> ‘Above all’, the model states: the observer needs to get a sense of the atmosphere of the organisation generally, as well as specifically on the day, and the emotional quality of the interactions observed. Moreover, [she] needs to gauge the unfolding experiences [she] is having as observer, witnessing the activities, the pull to join in or retreat from them, the feelings of approval or disapproval, of like and dislike and so on, that will fleetingly pass across [her] mind.’ Hinshelwood and Skogstad, ‘Observing Organisations’, p. 22.

<sup>147</sup> In *Borderline Welfare* Cooper and Lousada point to ‘the risks of corruption to moral and professional integrity in a culture of excessive anxiety about the role of agencies of scrutiny, inspection and evaluation.’ Cooper and Lousada, ‘*Borderline Welfare*’, p.22.



Figure 18, *Hung Out to Dry*  
Bricolage-Assemblage, 2016

It is only as I step back to see what I have assembled that the work takes on significance; both in relation to the organisational encounter, and the movement from my art (psycho)therapy room to an adjacent space set aside for my research.<sup>148</sup> To borrow from Danielle Boutet, the artwork is not an ‘expression’ of my thoughts or emotions – a representation of an idea already formed in my mind.<sup>149</sup> Rather, as the artist Jyrki Siukonen suggests, like the *bricoleur* it comes into being through a process of moving and using stuff I have to hand, including space and time.<sup>150</sup> Still, it is not until sometime later that I see the

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<sup>148</sup> The room (approximately 3.3m × 2.6m) is separate from, but connected to, my art (psycho)therapy room via a boundary wall. Acting, for some time, as a waiting room for my clients, it is now put to a different use as a studio space for my research.

<sup>149</sup> Danielle Boutet, ‘Metaphors of the Mind: Art Forms as Modes of Thinking’, in *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a ‘New Materialism’ through the Arts*, London: I B Taurus, 2012, pp. 29–39, 38.

<sup>150</sup> Jyrki Siukonen, ‘Made in Silence? On Words and Bricolage’, in *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, ed. by Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013, pp. 88–96. In his chapter Siukonen draws on the ideas of the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and the *bricoleur* who puts pre-existing things together in new ways and makes do with whatever is at hand. ‘Consider him at work and excited by his project’, Levi-Strauss suggests. ‘His first practical step is retrospective. He has to turn back to an already existent set made up of tools and materials, to consider or reconsider what it contains and, finally and above all, to engage in a sort of dialogue with it and, before choosing between them, to index the possible answers which the whole set can offer to his problem.’ Claude

assemblage as part of a larger construction in which I am also intimately implicated (Figure 19).

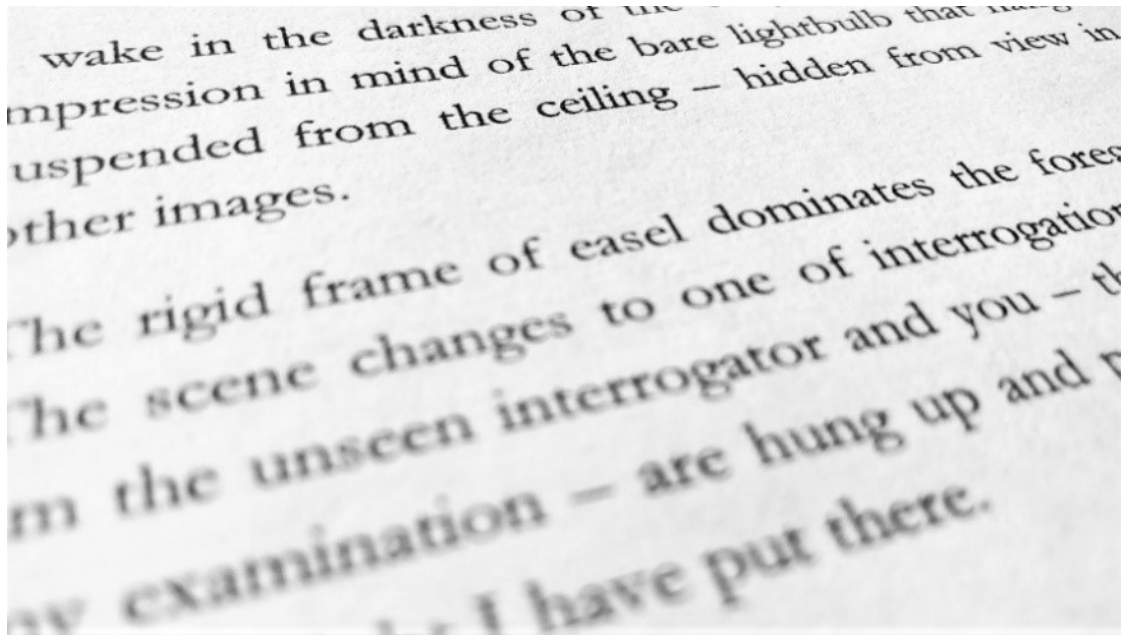


Figure 19. *Some Time Later (1)*

### 3.1.3. How did this work influence your research as it developed?

I resist the part of me that suggests I sweep it under the table and exclude it as being insignificant and somewhat 'banal' - lacking in originality.<sup>151</sup>

As with my work for *Testing Testing* my first practical step (conscious or not) is to turn back to an already existent set of tools, materials, as well as theoretical and physical spaces. Yet, as Siukonen implies, it is the *act* of moving and putting different combinations together that calls the work into existence, as it begins to take on signifiacnce and meaning *through* what it moves in me, although it is only some time later that I begin to articulate it (Figure 20).<sup>152</sup>

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Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1966, p. 8, cited in Siukonen, 'Made in Silence?', p. 92.

<sup>151</sup> That the work was 'banal' was a comment made when I presented the work at a Ph.D. seminar 'Making as Research' on 10 February 2016.

<sup>152</sup> Describing his process of moving and handling things in his studio, Siukonen draws attention to the *act* of moving something and putting combinations together - whether in play or by accident - an act *through* which he suggests, something inside him is also 'sophisticatedly moved'. Siukonen, 'Made in Silence?', p. 95.

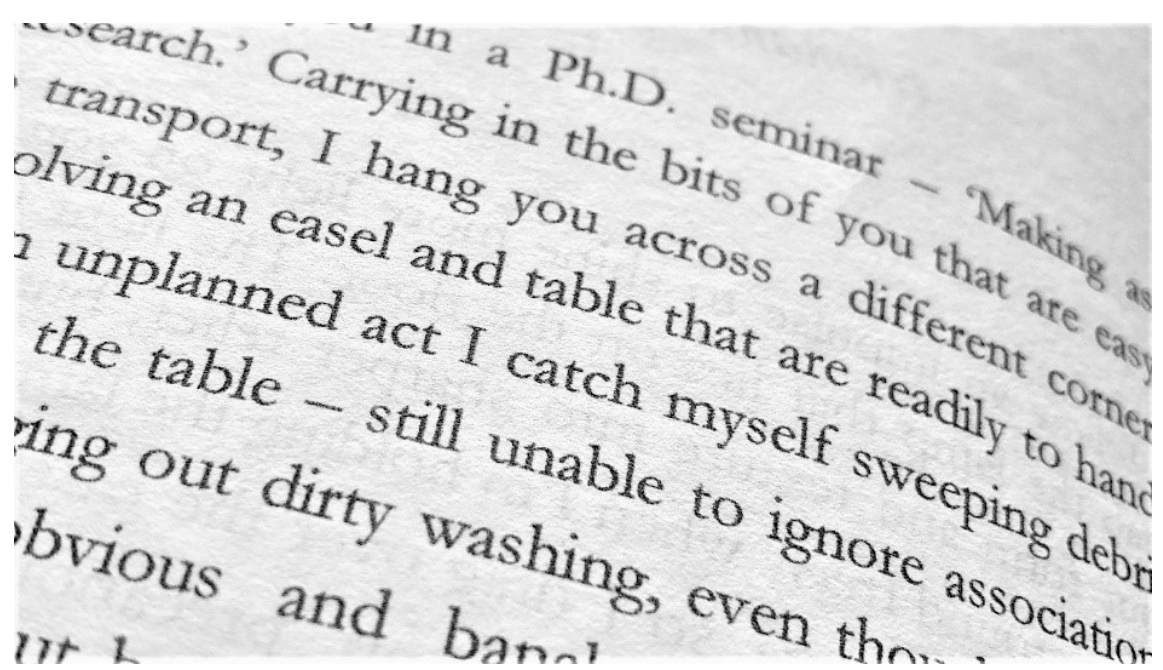


Figure 20. *Some Time Later (2)*

This implies imagination and a certain empathy for the materials I assemble – a capacity to *feel myself into things* including inanimate objects, as Gregory Currie suggests.<sup>153</sup> The artistic process becomes an empathic imaginative exploration – a transference – through which something is brought to life as I contemplate and experience one situation in the context of another, although, as I note with alarm when revisiting the photographs later, I am nowhere to be seen.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Gregory Currie, 'Empathy for Objects', in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 82–95. Empathy comes from the ancient Greek *empathēia* that derives from *em-* 'in', and *pathos-* 'feeling'. It is the English translation of the German *Einfühlung* which literally means 'feeling into' and first appeared in English in 1909 when it was translated by Edward Bradford Titchener. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 'empathy' was used to describe a unique combination of cognitive effort and bodily feeling thought to characterize aesthetic experience. Such experience was not limited to contemplating works of art, however; for several of its earliest theorists, empathy named our aesthetic experiences of other people, and was 'aimed at understanding how it feels to be *in* that other body or environment. In other words, it refers to some kind of imaginary perspective taking.' Joanna Ganzarek, Thomas Hünefeldt, and Marta Olivetti Belardinelli, 'From "Einfühlung" to Empathy: Exploring the Relationship between Aesthetic and Interpersonal Experience', *Cognitive Processing*, 19, 2018, 141–145, p. 141.

<sup>154</sup> I hold in mind artist and psychotherapist Patricia Townsend who, drawing parallels between the artist's process and that of the psychoanalytic endeavour, suggests that, by imbuing the developing artwork with something of the artist's own inner life, the outside 'something' – the subject of the work – is presented in a 'new and vital way'. Townsend, *Creative States of Mind*, *Creative States of Mind*, p. 124.

While the project does not gain momentum in this setting, the meeting and ‘making’ gives me a *feel* for the sensitive nature of the situation. It tugs at my insides, makes me think about my position, and is significant through raising my awareness of the potential for violence that lurks, even though I am not yet aware of the significance for my research.

### **3.1.4. Did you encounter any further barriers or ethical issues while setting up the project?**

‘To experience an organisation implies an experience of oneself *in* the organisation.’<sup>155</sup> I follow the signs to ‘Human Resources’ through locked doors and corridors, meeting suspicion, powerlessness, confusion, and frustration along the way.

Hinshelwood and Skogstad suggest that the reaction of the organisation and the ‘attitude of willingness, scepticism or fear’ are important indicative experiences.<sup>156</sup> I contact two other organisations known to me in health and social care, but receive no response.<sup>157</sup> Somewhat despondent and recognising what a ‘big ask’ this is, I finally contact the NHS community-based assessment and rehabilitation day centre where I undertook my art (psycho)therapy training placement, an approach which is received positively.<sup>158</sup> Still, acting as gatekeeper, the University raises concerns in response to my application for ethics approval as the placement means entering and observing in a healthcare setting with vulnerable adults.<sup>159</sup> Although I do not plan to work directly with patients, by its nature, an observation *of* the organisation and myself *in* it raises ethical issues concerned with ‘looking’,

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<sup>155</sup> Hinshelwood, ‘Observing Anxiety’, p. 52.

<sup>156</sup> Hinshelwood and Skogstad, ‘Observing Organisations’, p. 20.

<sup>157</sup> The organisations/services were all local geographically and I had some limited knowledge of them through my art (psycho)therapy practice and/or through exhibiting artwork.

<sup>158</sup> As an art (psycho)therapy trainee I worked here for one and a half days a week between 2003 and 2005. The service provides day rehabilitation for adults living in the community with neurological conditions that affect their daily functioning, such as stroke, falls, or Parkinson’s disease. I had hesitated to contact them initially due to my previous knowledge of the service and my concern that this may ‘numb’ the experience.

<sup>159</sup> My first ethics application was refused by the University in lieu of clarification on issues relating to observing vulnerable people, the nature of any artwork I might produce and whether I was planning to film in the setting. In particular there was a question of the validity of the method and confusion over whether I was observing people covertly or not.

the power relation between ‘observer and observed’, and how knowledge sought through this relationship is interpreted, represented, and used. As I note:

it is impossible to observe in any context without this having some impact on the environment and the people in it, including myself.<sup>160</sup>

As outsider, my entry and presence in the space may be experienced by staff as an intrusion with the potential to touch sensitive areas. Nevertheless, responding to concerns expressed by the University, I argue for the moral and ethical work of bearing witness to emotional vulnerability and pain, of being prepared to stay with it, be affected by it, and to contain or hold in mind what may feel unbearable for another, without necessarily resorting to ‘action’ – part of the psychoanalytic/art (psycho)therapeutic endeavour.<sup>161</sup> Of course, it might be argued that sometimes action is required. I would agree. Yet, turning to the artist Tim Etchells, I argue that ‘to witness an event is to be present at it in some fundamentally ethical way, to feel the weight of things and one’s own place in them, even if that place is simply, for the moment as an onlooker.’<sup>162</sup> To be(ar) witness is also to act. After negotiating my way through the complicated, sometimes rigid, and suspicious face of institutional bureaucracy the necessary approvals are gained and access is granted.<sup>163</sup>

### 3.1.5. What happened when you entered the rehabilitation centre?

Waiting on the outside, I experience a strong sense of déjà vu – of having ‘already seen’. Yet, while I return to familiar ground, it is an unfamiliar – strange – situation.

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<sup>160</sup> Extract from ‘Response to Rapporteur’s queries’, Approval of Research Programme (RF1), 19 April 2016.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Tim Etchells, *Certain Fragments: Contemporary Performance and Forced Entertainment*, London: Routledge, 1999, p. 17.

<sup>163</sup> My project did not require NHS ethics approval as I was not undertaking research with patients. However, the service and the building premises it occupied came under two separate NHS Trusts, requiring me to obtain an Honorary Contract from one, and a Letter of Access from the other. Although the Honorary Contract was confirmed verbally by phone in December 2016, the confirmatory letter I request never arrives, nor do I receive the ID badge – ultimately being told the day before commencing the placement that the permission of the service manager and a visitor’s badge is sufficient. By then I had lost ‘trust’ in the process. On arriving to begin the placement the service manager informs me that they don’t have visitor’s badges and that wearing my University ID badge is sufficient.



where to start I'm working with some thin copper wire the wire I really e  
I started this all in a tangle at one end I manage to find the end I  
sticks which are about an inch long an end actually they're longer 40mm lon  
wrapping around small wooden sticks in front of me wrapping arou  
I've been wrapping the wire and another stringing them together arou  
as if they mark a point on a line and then I've got this filling from a cusk  
the wire around two or three sticks I'm aware of what a relief it feels  
cotton wool-like material grabs my attention just to be doing son  
material used for stuffing cushions I really don't know what I'm doin  
was pulled out by me I don't know what relation this has to my visit to  
now pushed onto one of the sticks is suspended on the wire Is it

Figure 21. *I'm Only Human*

Mixed media, audio and written documentation, 2016

In contrast to my earlier encounter I feel welcomed. The team is supportive and, alongside negotiations with various authorities, we meet several times to discuss the nature of my project, ethics approvals and permissions, what will be involved, and a potential start date. Asking my contact, Ali, about the project, she says she hopes it might ‘inject something different’ – a curiosity and interest in research.<sup>164</sup> We agree a date for a scoping exercise with a view to commencing the twelve-week observation in January 2017, on a Tuesday morning between 9:30 and 10:30, part of the project I later name *Twelve Weeks: Twelve Hours + Twelve Hours +*, and which I describe more fully in *Transposition II – Make*.<sup>165</sup> However, returning to the scoping session, I question what I am doing. Nothing much seems to be happening, and I extend the session to see if ‘more happens’.<sup>166</sup> Feeling ‘out of sorts’, I wonder if the time is right, as if something *should* be happening, the confusion continuing to my ‘making’ later that day (Figure 21).<sup>167</sup> Nevertheless, I determine to hold with the time constraint – to see what *does* happen.

<sup>164</sup> Note from meeting, 4 October 2016. At the time of undertaking the project, Ali Madden was a senior occupational therapist in the service and my primary contact.

<sup>165</sup> The title of the project reflects the imposed constraints of one hour a week ‘observing’ in the healthcare setting + one hour a week ‘making’ in the studio, over a period of twelve weeks, at regular time and in a regular place. The ‘+’ at the end refers to the additional work involved as I *work through* the experience.

<sup>166</sup> I undertake the scoping exercise on 29 November 2016 with the idea of assessing the suitability of time and position. I had originally planned for a sixty-minute (one hour) session but extended this to ninety minutes.

<sup>167</sup> See *Transposition II – Make* for full text of *I'm only Human* which, taking its title from Rag'n' Bone Man's song ‘Human’ weaves thoughts expressed during the making process with written reflections. Rag'n' Bone Man, *Human*, Digital Download, 3:19, London, UK: Sony Music and Columbia Records,

### 3.1.6. In a practical sense, what happens in the setting during the time you are there?

I struggle with how to refer to those attending the service, mindful that 'patient' raises concerns about power relations and passive recipients rather than active participants in care processes. It is a knotty issue which I do not attempt to unpick. As an adjective, however, 'patient' implies a capacity to tolerate and endure, recognising the human subject, whatever their position, as vulnerable and exposed to suffering. Having considered other possibilities I return to 'patient' with Braunmühl's reframing of subjectivity in mind - a position where 'passivity' is not situated in opposition to 'activity' but 'acknowledges subjects' passive exposure to what is beyond their control as definitive of their predicament'.<sup>168</sup> As one patient remarks, the staff 'are very patient'.<sup>169</sup>

I observe on a day when the service is attended by people living in the community, and needing help with recovery and rehabilitation after a stroke.<sup>170</sup> Depending on transport most patients arrive before 10:00 a.m. and remain for the day, some attending over several consecutive weeks.<sup>171</sup>

All are directed or taken to the communal waiting area where I sit. Here they are greeted by nurses and support staff and shown to one of the seven tables clustered together. Those with mobility difficulties are brought in wheelchairs from which they may be transferred to a chair. Tea, coffee, and biscuits are offered, lunch orders taken and, at around 10:00 a.m. various health professionals collect patients for treatment.<sup>172</sup> In between times staff introduce themselves and the process to those who are new, check blood pressure, weight, and generally attend to patients and interact with each other at the nursing station

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21 July 2016. A reading of this work is available on the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/only-human.php>>

<sup>168</sup> Caroline Braunmühl, 'Beyond Hierarchical Oppositions: A Feminist Critique of Karen Barad's Agential Realism', *Feminist Theory*, 19, 2018, 223–240, p. 233.

<sup>169</sup> Journal Note, Observation Session 5, 21 February 2017.

<sup>170</sup> Patients generally attend on a particular day of the week according to the nature of their condition. This reflects some changes in the structure of the service since my time there as an art (psycho)therapy trainee.

<sup>171</sup> Many patients are brought in by NHS transport, however some do make their own arrangements.

<sup>172</sup> Core treatments include physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and nursing care. These are also supported by psychology and other treatments such as podiatry.



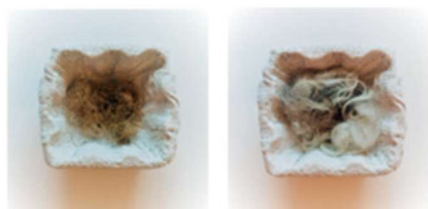
positioned to my left, with treatment rooms and offices around the edges. The television is usually on, a regular feature during the latter half-hour being 'Homes Under the Hammer'.<sup>173</sup>

### 3.1.7. How would you describe the general atmosphere?

'I'd fall asleep if I sat there' says the nurse in passing.

The general atmosphere is warm and friendly. Flurries of activity occur when patients arrive and again when they are collected for treatment, with staff actively involved in 'doing' as they carry out their duties. These contrast with quiet, sleepy periods when the pace is slow, chairs are empty, and nothing much seems to happen. At times there is a feeling of distance between staff and patients, with whispered conversations and laughter at the nursing station around cosmetic surgery and makeovers pricking my disapproval. Occasional references to one woman as 'trouble' disturb me, as does a joke 'tormenting her' with the idea that she has missed her cup of tea.

Tuesday morning observing the physical and emotional responses that are evoked in me through being in the environment.



As I need to immerse myself in the emotional atmosphere I will not be engaging in conversation during the time I am there. However, I recognise that my presence may raise curiosity and will endeavour to respond sensitively, respectfully and appropriately to any approaches. If you feel uncomfortable with my being there do let a member of the staff team know.



The aim is to see if art-making can offer me a reflective space for looking at aspects of organisational culture that may be difficult to express in words.

Future stages of the project will offer opportunities for the staff at ARC and others who use the service to contribute and respond to the artworks produced.

Figure 22. Patient information leaflet, January 2017

<sup>173</sup> The television is a new addition since I worked there as an art (psycho)therapy trainee. The BBC1 programme 'Homes Under the Hammer' follows new and experienced buyers at auctions bidding on (usually) rundown properties. It then follows them on their renovation project for either a rental or resale profit or loss.

At other times I witness a close intimacy, with experiences and laughter shared between staff and patients as if their roles momentarily disappear. Conversation brings a social element; still, as a relative notes in my hearing, there is ‘not much else to do’ except sit and wait, although magazines, drawing materials, and colouring books are available at each table, as are my leaflets (Figure 22).<sup>174</sup> Surprisingly perhaps, little emotional distress is visible although, as I describe later, I experience a range of feelings and sensations over the twelve weeks – some quite unexpected and distressing.

### 3.1.8. From where were you observing?

It’s hard to find somewhere I don’t feel in the way. Space by the window seems best.

Ali asks whether I want to be unobtrusive or to feel like one of them [a patient]. I say I want to take up as little space as possible. She says she wants me to take the space.<sup>175</sup>

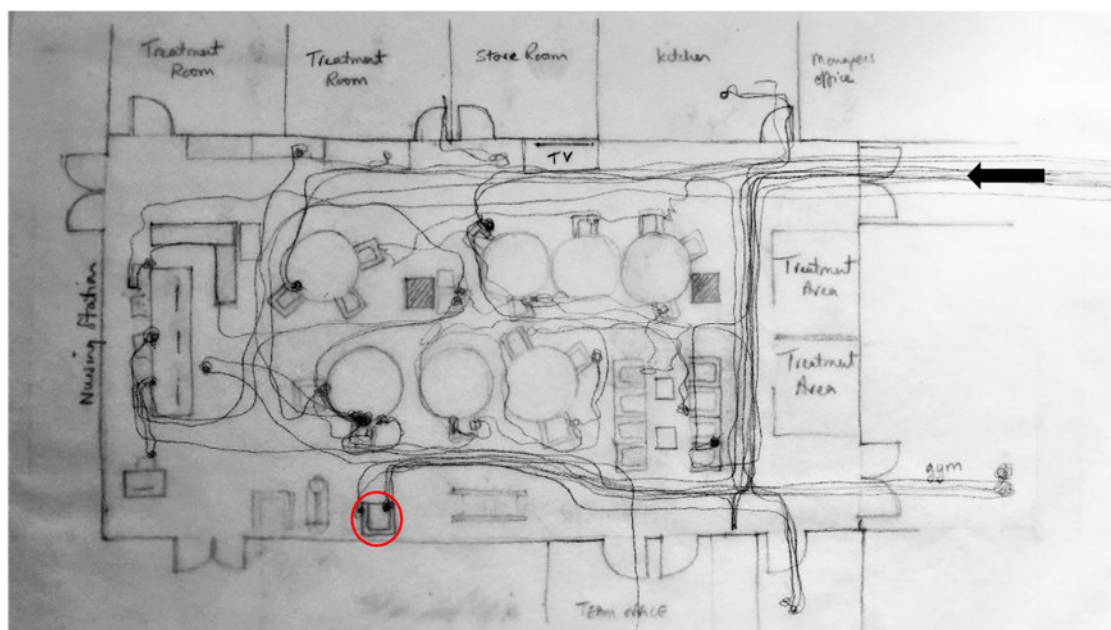


Figure 23. Sketch plan of observation setting

Pencil on paper, overlaid with tracing of lines, 29 November 2016

<sup>174</sup> See Appendix 2 for full details of the patient information leaflet. The images are drawn from *Moments in Time* – snapshots of some ‘thing’ in the process of becoming. See *Transposition II – Make*.

<sup>175</sup> Note after meeting with Ali, 4 October 2016.

In accordance with Hinshelwood's model, I position myself in a place that, although restricted, offers a wide field of view and hearing (Figure 23). There is sufficient space between me and the main body of patients for people to easily pass, but I am close to the table directly in front of me so, while my desire is to remain unobtrusive, I am in plain view.

### 3.1.9. Can you describe the manner of your sitting – your observing?

I sit on the edge - neither with patients nor staff - but in a chair that is the same type of chair on which a patient might sit, although when I begin it is the other way around.

As set out, I endeavour to adopt an attitude of open interest in whatever is going on, but without engaging with people except to respond sensitively and respectfully to any approaches.<sup>176</sup> (Figure 24)



Figure 24. *In the Patient's Chair*

Viewing myself through the lens of Yuen Fong Ling, 2016<sup>177</sup>

The stance involves observing without premature judgement, in a manner reminiscent of Freud's 'evenly suspended attention', described simply as:

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<sup>176</sup> 'The approach demands introspection and observation of the observer herself. It acknowledges that much of the observer's experience occurs outside conscious awareness; it is influenced, sometimes deeply, by childhood experiences of the observer, and observations arouse intrapsychic conflicts which affect not only the observation but can be important indicators within the observation.' Hinshelwood and Skogstad, 'Observing Organisations', p. 18.

<sup>177</sup> This photograph was taken by artist, educator, and my second Ph.D. supervisor Yuen Fong Ling during a supervision session held in my art (psycho)therapy practice room. In the photograph I sit in the patient's chair while Yuen occupies the therapist's chair.

not directing one's notice to anything in particular [...] Or to put it purely in terms of technique: “[S]he should simply listen, and not bother about whether [s]he is keeping anything in mind.”<sup>178</sup>

There are similarities with my art (psycho)therapy practice; I take time to prepare myself beforehand. Not withdrawing from the outside world but endeavouring to put myself into a receptive, impressionistic state, where I am emotionally available and sensitive – ‘lending’ my body to the situation, as Alan Karbelnig puts it.<sup>179</sup> Indeed, the ‘preparation’ likely contributes to the difference in my receptivity between the scoping session and when I begin the twelve-week participant-observation. As a process of ‘getting ready’, it is not unlike preparing for a performance.<sup>180</sup>

I'm not sure that slowing down is quite the right phrase but it feels [...] I go through sort of certain processes of gathering my things together – making sure I've got everything in the right place that I need to take with me. There is a certain getting myself into a particular frame of mind.<sup>181</sup>

The situation is reminiscent of *The Artist is Present* by the artist Marina Abramović (Figure 25). In this durational performance work, which takes months of preparation, Abramović sits in silence, without food or drink, for seven and half hours, every day, for three months, with members of the audience taking turns to experience sitting opposite her.<sup>182</sup> Unlike her, my aim is not to test my human body to its limits. The encounter is, none-the-less, testing;

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<sup>178</sup> Sigmund Freud, ‘Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psycho-Analysis (1912)’, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Case History of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works, Volume XII (1911-1913)*, ed. by James Strachey, London: Vintage, 2001, pp. 109–120, 111–112, my insertions.

<sup>179</sup> Alan Michael Karbelnig, ‘“The Analyst Is Present”: Viewing the Psychoanalytic Process as Performance Art’, *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 33, 2016, S153–S172. Clearly this is not a clinical situation, perhaps more akin to an ethnographic observation. Still, as Geoffrey Skoll suggests, in both the ideal of ‘evenly hovering attention’ can apply to perceptions of environments and situations. Geoffrey R Skoll, ‘Ethnography and Psychoanalysis’, *Human & Social Studies. Research and Practice*, 1, 2012, 29–50.

<sup>180</sup> For some years in the early part of the twenty-first century I performed lead roles in amateur operatic productions for Dore Gilbert & Sullivan Society and Sheffield City Opera, and as a concert soloist. I remain a member of a local amateur dramatic society.

<sup>181</sup> Extract from Research Journal, Pre-observation III – 7 February 2017.

<sup>182</sup> In 2010 at MoMA, New York, Abramović engaged in an extended performance called ‘The Artist Is Present’. The work was inspired by her belief that stretching the length of a performance beyond expectations serves to alter our perception of time and foster a deeper engagement in the experience. Marina Abramović, *The Artist Is Present*, 2010, Performance, New York, NY: MoMA, <[https://www.moma.org/learn/moma\\_learning/marina-abramovic-marina-abramovic-the-artist-is-present-2010/](https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/marina-abramovic-marina-abramovic-the-artist-is-present-2010/)> [accessed 8 November 2021].

not because I starve myself of sustenance (I am only there for one hour a week); rather, as psychoanalytic psychotherapist Noreen Giffney suggests, it is incredibly difficult to remain open to an other's experience amidst the turbulence engendered through such an encounter.<sup>183</sup>



Figure 25. Marina Abramović, *The Artist is Present*  
Performance Work, MoMA, 2010

*This image has been removed for copyright reasons. It can be seen at*

[https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/964?installation\\_image\\_index=131](https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/964?installation_image_index=131)

'What would happen if you spent the day' Kivland (SK) asks at a supervision meeting.

DM It would be too much. I couldn't.

[...]

SK It feels that intense?

DM I hadn't realised how intense it would feel until I did the first one.

[...]

SK In the community room it's just you? Or do you have a notebook? Just you?

DM Just me.

SK So you are this? It is you. Just you. Your attention – being present. Hence it being exhausting because you are having to be completely present.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Noreen Giffney, 'The Use of an Object', *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 20, 2019, 245–248.

<sup>184</sup> Edited extract from transcript of supervision meeting with Sharon Kivland, 8 February 2017. See Appendix 3 for fuller description of the observation and setting discussed during the meeting.

In contrast to the earlier scoping session the intensity surprises me; it is demanding, emotionally draining, work. I experience a host of feelings and sensations and, in the days following Observation I, feel as if something has ‘got into me’.<sup>185</sup> The project involves taking something from the outside, inside, and allowing the experience to inhabit and touch me bodily. Like Townsend’s description of Henrietta Simson’s work, I want to get inside the ‘thing’, whatever that is, and have it inside me.<sup>186</sup> Yet, as with my professional practice, I also need to be able to ‘leave it’ between sessions – to find ways of containing the experience, so I can think about it. *Feeling my way into* the situation brings empathy into the room; yet, as Leslie Jamison remarks, empathy is ‘always perched precariously between gift and invasion’.<sup>187</sup> By opening myself and ‘lending’ my body to the situation, the very welcoming turns into a violence with potential for the home to be turned inside out! As Mark Westmoreland remarks, after the philosopher Jacques Derrida, ‘[i]n welcoming the guest, the self is interrupted’.<sup>188</sup> So who is host and who is guest, I ask myself.

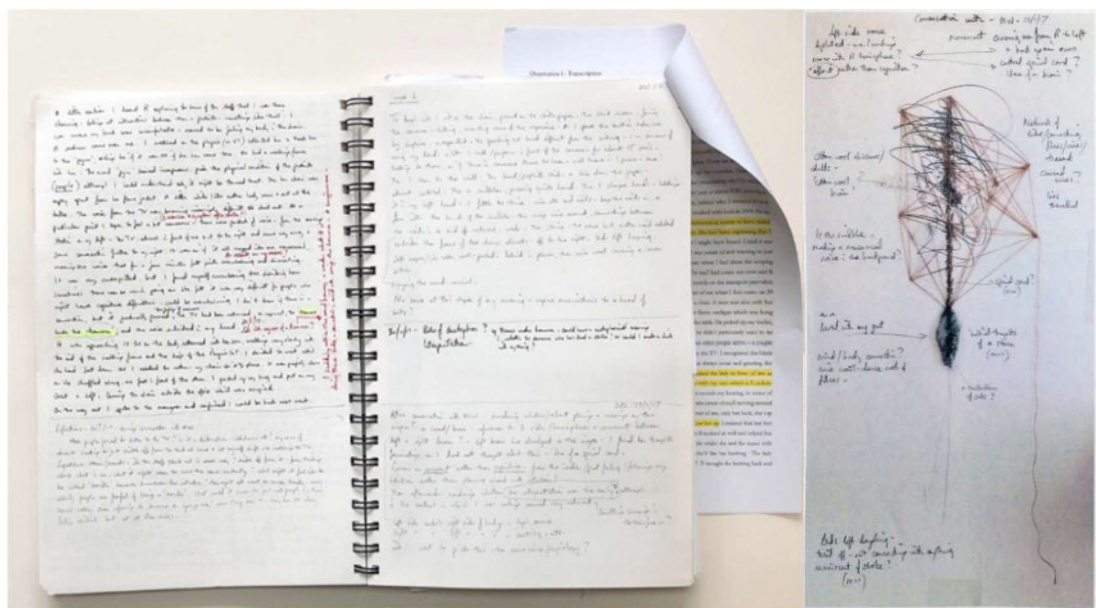


Figure 26. Research journal

Process notes after Observation I, 24 January 2017

<sup>185</sup> Note captured on voice recording, Pre-observation Session II, 31 January 2017.

<sup>186</sup> Townsend, *Creative States of Mind*, p. 11.

<sup>187</sup> Leslie Jamison, *The Empathy Exams: Essays*, London: Granta, 2014, p. 6.

<sup>188</sup> Mark W Westmoreland, ‘Interruptions: Derrida and Hospitality’, *Kritike: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 2, 2008, 1–10, p. 6.

In response to the turbulence, it becomes even more important to document aspects of my subjective embodied experience, as well as the material I produce.<sup>189</sup> I already wear a Fitbit to track aspects of my experience outside conscious awareness, including journeys travelled, speed, and heartrate.<sup>190</sup> Not unlike my art (psycho)therapy practice of keeping process notes, Michael Taussig's fieldwork notebooks or indeed Sophie Calle's diaries, my research journal also invites the imaginative blending of inner and outer worlds – mixing raw observational material with reverie, subjective reflections, associations, and photographs that, when annotated, become drawings (Figure 26).<sup>191</sup> Furthermore, as I wait in the car before Observation II, filled with anticipation of might unfold, I record my thoughts and feelings on my iPhone – a practice that becomes part of my weekly routine.

'It's a strange process this talking out loud – talking into a recorder – but somehow it seems a lot more authentic if that's the right word. Well, it is capturing what's more immediate [...] what's in my mind at this point – what's coming out of my mouth.'<sup>192</sup>

### 3.1.10. So the observation involves more than just looking?

The words of feminist scholar Donna Haraway resonate loudly as she insists on the 'embodied nature of all vision'.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> I expand on my documentation of *Twelve Weeks: Twelve Hours + Twelve Hours* + in *Transposition II – Make*.

<sup>190</sup> A 'Fitbit' is an activity tracker – a wireless-enabled wearable technology device that measures personal metrics. After looking into various instruments for recording my heart-rate, such as a finger monitor or chest-strap, I decided on a Fitbit, which would be comfortable and unobtrusive to wear, would record different personal metrics, and be useful for the purposes of this project as well as in my ordinary daily life.

<sup>191</sup> Anthropologist Michael Taussig describes his notebook as a scrapbook 'that you read and reread in different ways, finding unexpected meanings and pairings as well as blind alleys and dead ends'. Michael Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2011, p. 47. Referring to Sophie Calle's diaries I have in mind her 1981 work *The Hotel, Room 47*, in which employed as a temporary chambermaid for three weeks in a Venetian hotel, Calle examined and documented the personal belongings of the occupants of twelve rooms. The work, presented in a series of diptychs, combines photographic documentation with personal response. Sophie Calle, *L'hôtel, Chambre 47*, 1981, 2 works on paper, photographs and ink, London: Tate Collection, <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/calle-the-hotel-room-47-p78300>> [accessed 18 November 2021].

<sup>192</sup> Thought captured on voice recording, Pre-Observation II, 31 January 2017.

<sup>193</sup> Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14, 1988, 575–599, p. 581. Haraway defined the term 'situated knowledges' as a means of understanding that all knowledge comes from positional perspectives. For her, 'Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge [...] It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see.' p. 583.



Observation understood as ‘just looking’ is problematic with its implication of distancing the ‘knowing’ subject from the body and the ‘thing as it affects me’.<sup>194</sup> Sight, Walker argues, is incomplete by itself. Rather, she suggests, it depends on hearing and touch – senses that are often devalued, or silenced.<sup>195</sup> Listening, she continues, ‘bypasses the instituted structure of a *desire to know* by providing a context of proximity, gesture and nearness’.<sup>196</sup> Hinshelwood and Skogstad describe the psychoanalyst as an observer of her own subjective experiences as much as of her patients. Similarly, each observation rests on the observer’s subjective experience in the setting as much as on a description of what they observe.<sup>197</sup> Experiencing the organisation through an experience of myself *in* it, I attempt to pick up the ‘atmosphere’ and its fluctuations not through ‘finding’ them; rather, through being affected as the situation impresses itself on me (see ‘Transposition II – *Make*’).<sup>198</sup> For example, in the first Observation, I am suddenly overcome with feelings of nausea and disorientation as sounds and voices coming from all directions merge into one nonsensical noise. After a few minutes (and to my relief) the feeling passes. I recall Ali expressing concern that patients with cognitive impairment sometimes find it overwhelming when there is a lot going on. Except nothing much appears to be going on!

Transferring my attention from the organisational site to the studio as a site of ‘making’, I have no idea in mind. When preparing the space, I imagine an experimental, theatrical space, bounded by temporal and spatial constraints in which, like the psychotherapeutic setting, specialised work can take place.<sup>199</sup> Next to the clock that marks the hour from 11:15 to 12:15 every Tuesday morning, hangs a roll of paper – a backdrop on which something may be enacted. Opposite, audio-visual equipment is installed to document my interactions with the assemblage of materials, and tools gathered from various places on the basis that I will work whatever is to hand and what I am drawn to (Figure 27).<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Walker, ‘*Slow Philosophy*’, p. 105.

<sup>195</sup> *ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>196</sup> *ibid.*, p. 104, my italics.

<sup>197</sup> Hinshelwood and Skogstad, ‘Observing Organisations’.

<sup>198</sup> In ‘Transposition II – *Make* (Experience the Situation and Myself *in* it) I describe the pattern of my movements each week, offering a series of impressions drawn over twelve weeks through various documentary lenses as I transfer my attention from the organisational site to the studio as a site of *making*.

<sup>199</sup> Patricia Townsend likens the artist’s studio to the psychoanalyst’s consulting room, as a contained setting for the ongoing relationship between the artist and her work. Townsend, ‘*Creative States of Mind*’, p. 87.

<sup>200</sup> For further details see ‘Prepare the Set’ and ‘Document the Production’ in ‘Transposition II – *Make*’.





Figure 27, Studio set-up, January 2017

Still, as I enter the room, I feel lost. Sitting on the black plastic folding chair I have placed in the middle of the paper backdrop I talk to the cameras for the first fifteen minutes, as if needing the recording equipment to act as witness to what I have just experienced (Figure 28).



to have that... anyway... the surprise I guess was um... about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour in... there were sort of pockets of noise, of chatter from the television that was on and the news channel at the time and they were talking about Brexit and then there was some chatter at the nursing station and some chatter around an area where patients were... so there was something not quite opposite me, coming from the direction in front of me and then from the two sides... and I began to feel quite nauseous and I was really didn't understand it initially but it was as if all the sounds just merged and I couldn't hear couldn't pick out any words it just became the noise and the noise became quite overwhelming and senseless and it took me by surprise the strength of the feeling that I felt quite um disorientated almost um just this sound this kind of meaningless noise and I think the feeling lasted for about five minutes and and then passed it was as if I came out of something but it was unexpected I wasn't expecting it and the other thing I felt which I'm feeling now was this sense of sadness... I think the the the (emotional) whether it is to do with loss and I can feel I'm welling up as I'm talking... at other times there were er feelings of isolation aloneness and it kind of and it moved in and out from being um a feeling quite er in one sense an opportunity to sit and not to have to do anything although I was sort of doing something because I was um immersing myself

Figure 28. *I wasn't expecting this*

Timelapse stills with extract from audio transcript, Studio Session I, 24 January 2017

*feels really strange [...] I didn't know I was going to do this [...] a bit like a first therapy session, except there isn't a therapist [...] just these cameras and recording equipment that I'm looking at.*<sup>201</sup>

A bit like the 'Big Brother Diary Room', the tutor laughs when watching a video I present a few weeks later at a Ph.D. seminar.<sup>202</sup> I discuss the seminar more fully in due course (see 3.4: Feel the Tension); still, at the time, I am unable to respond with humour. Nor am I able to say that I do not feel I am being 'forced to confess' in front of the cameras. Rather, as I assert now with more conviction, I need to get something inside out, and the studio (unlike the seminar), feels like a safe environment.

Around 11:30, when the words run out, I turn to the wall to 'make a mark', taking a stick of graphite 'out for a walk' to borrow from Tim Ingold, after Paul Klee (Figure 29).<sup>203</sup>

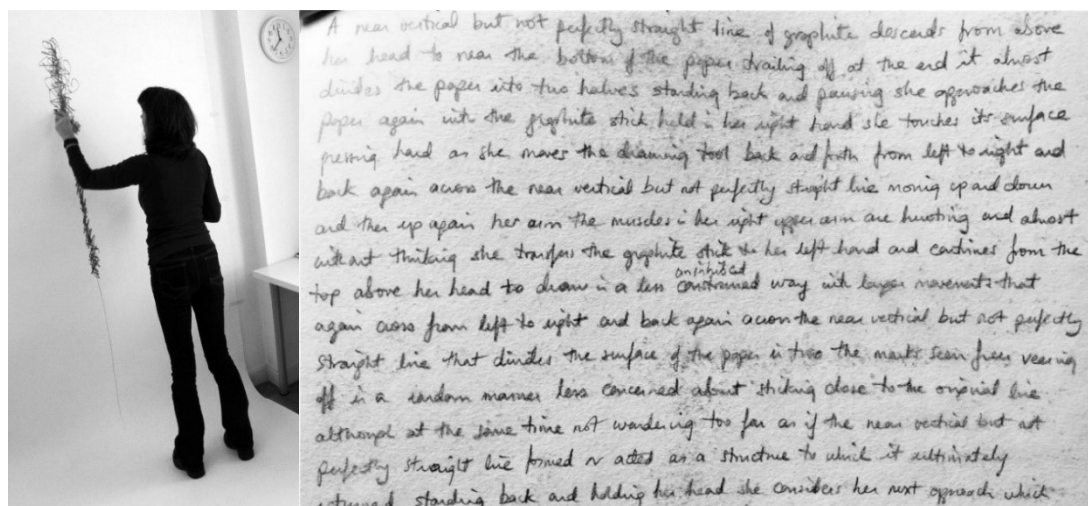


Figure 29. *Walking a Line*

Timelapse still, with extract from Journal Notes, 26 January 2017

<sup>201</sup> Extract from audio recording of Studio Session I, 24 January 2017.

<sup>202</sup> The comment was made during a Ph.D. seminar 'Practice as Method' on 8 March 2017, during which I present raw material from my research, including a video of the first fifteen minutes of the studio session after Observation I. Her comment refers to the British reality TV series 'Big Brother' in which a group of contestants, known as 'house-mates' live together in a specially constructed house that is isolated from the outside world, and are continuously monitored by live television cameras and personal audio microphones. The title of the show also references George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in which 'Big Brother' is ruler of a totalitarian state that persecutes individuality and independent thinking. George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1949.

<sup>203</sup> Paul Klee, *Notebooks: Vol 1: The Thinking Eye*, London: Lund Humphries, 1961, p. 105, cited in Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History*, London: Routledge, 2007, p. 73.

The movement moves me into a less verbal frame as the drawing transitions to wire and string drawn across and between the nails hammered into the wall. The threads form a tight network over the graphite scribble, beneath which I suspend a tightly woven diamond-shaped mesh of wire on a level with my gut. Pieces of cotton wool become caught in the web and threads are left dangling, trailing off not connecting with anything.

No sense at this stage of any meaning – vague associations to a head of sorts.<sup>204</sup>

With thoughts of brain parts, networks of connecting fibres, cotton wool brain, and ends left hanging, it is tempting to make an interpretation. While I do not discard these associations, observing in this context is more about listening attentively than interpreting – allowing impressions to be received and to form over time as I *feel into* the situation *through* their resonances. I content myself with making notes in my journal. However, a few days later, as I scan my handwritten notes, the word ‘hammer’ startles me, as if I have nothing to do with its presence on the page. It takes a moment to connect it with the television programme *Homes Under the Hammer*, the assault on my senses that day, and my use of the hammer in the studio – confusion that is captured (in part) sometime later through the layering of different documentary narratives (Figure 30).

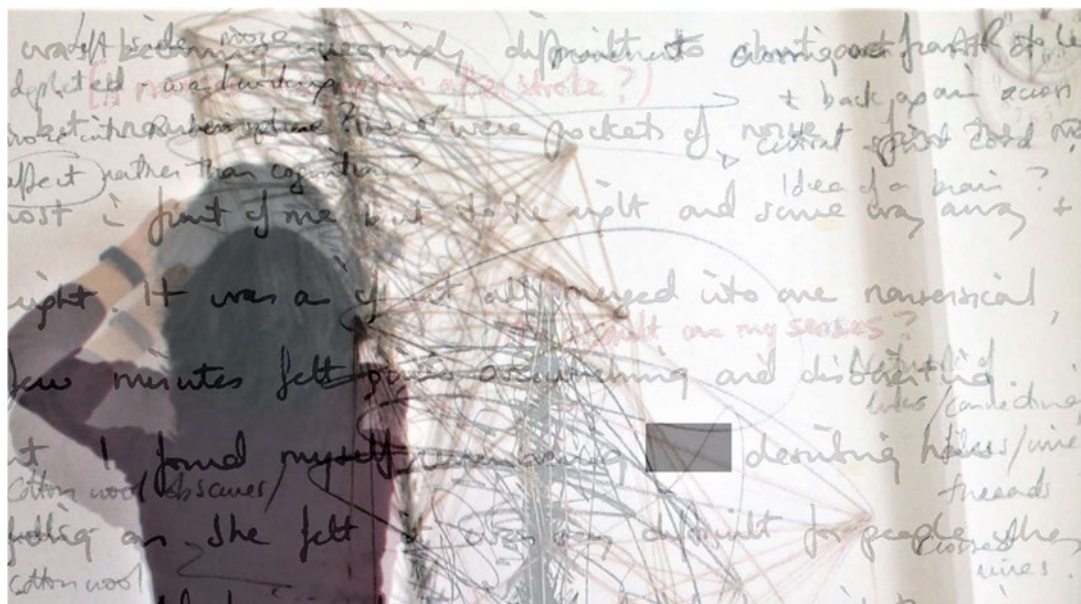


Figure 30. *Homes Under the Hammer: An Assault on my Senses*

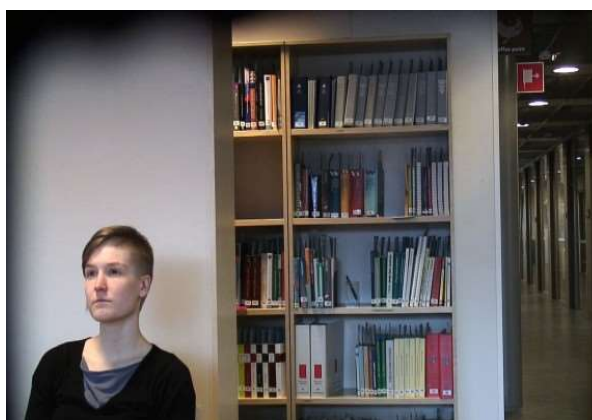
Layered image, annotations, and process notes, Observation I, 24 January 2017

<sup>204</sup> Extract from Journal Notes after Studio Session I, 24 January 2017.

### 3.1.11. How did the staff and patients respond to your presence as observer?

'What are you doing?' they all ask.

Many of the staff seem confused. Early in the first observation a nurse approaches apologetically, referring to something that has just happened in a team meeting. 'I hope you didn't hear' she says, 'I was trying to explain that you weren't doing anything, with the patients that is, but I got cut off, so it sounded like I was saying you weren't doing anything.'<sup>205</sup> Of course, I am not doing anything with patients in the sense that this is not clinical research. Their confusion is, perhaps, understandable; I am not here in a familiar role as patient, relative, or health professional, and do not conform to the unspoken rules and expectations of the setting. Yet, although I do not deliberately seek to provoke or unsettle, like the artist Pilvi Takala's intervention in *The Trainee*, my presence in the rehabilitation centre is, nonetheless, provocative (Figure 31).



From: X  
Sent: February 27 2008 00:16  
To: Z, Y  
Subject: marketing-trainee  
Importance: High

Hi  
As I already mentioned to Z, there has been a person sitting in the Tax library space and staring out of the window with a glazed look in her eyes...  
Female, very short hair, she said when asked that she's a trainee in Marketing.  
She sat in front of an empty desk from 10:30 on, went for lunch...

Figure 31. Pilvi Takala, *The Trainee*, 2008.<sup>206</sup>

Documentation of performance work. Copyright Pilvi Takala 2021, courtesy of the artist.

During the scoping session, a staff member extends her arms for a hug, before being told by others that (in accordance with my own protocol) they are 'not supposed to talk' to me!<sup>207</sup> Then, concerned about me sitting on my own, a patient invites me to join her table. The

<sup>205</sup> Extract from Journal Notes, Observation I, 24 January 2017.

<sup>206</sup> Pilvi Takala, *The Trainee*, 2008, Video Installation: Powerpoint presentation, keycard, letter, Duration: 13:52, <<https://pilvitakala.com/the-trainee>> [accessed 8 November 2021]. In her documentation of this month-long performance, Takala challenges the culture of a commercial organisation by sitting motionless at an empty desk. Christy Lange, 'Focus: Pilvi Takala: The Finnish Artist's Subtly Transgressive Video Performances', *Frieze: Contemporary Art and Culture*, 2012, 203–204.

<sup>207</sup> She had recognised me from my time there as an art (psycho)therapy trainee.

Tea Lady offers a drink during Observation I, which I politely decline, and I hear snippets of conversation over the twelve weeks – students asking what I am doing and staff trying to explain. Notably, in Observation VIII, a man, younger than I, who catches my eye on several occasions, deviates from his usual path after visiting the gym to limp unsteadily toward me with the aid of a stick. ‘What are you doing?’ he asks, ‘You come here each week and sit not doing anything except watching the telly!’<sup>208</sup> Without a clearly defined role, and appearing to be not ‘doing’ anything, it seems my presence disturbs the unspoken rules of the institution. While Takala’s covert project is privy to exchanges behind the scenes, I am left to imagine what the whispers hold. Perhaps, as the artist Oisín Byrne suggests, when we make our bodies inconvenient, we make the institution share our discomfort.<sup>209</sup> However one patient understands exactly what I am doing when, after enquiring, she eloquently completes my sentence with ‘*to get the feel of the place*’.<sup>210</sup> As Kivland remarks later, it’s not ‘arcane or bleak [...] but about sensing and responding’.<sup>211</sup>

### 3.1.12. You were being observed as well! Did this make you self-conscious?

Sensing the man’s approach, I wonder if my Fitbit will register my discomfort and increasing heartrate. It is a heavy responsibility – the realisation that to see is to be seen. I can neither escape the ethics of what I am doing, nor the words of the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, ‘You cannot open up a question without leaving yourself open to it. You cannot scrutinise a “subject” [...] without being scrutinised by it.’<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> I respond politely to the man, offer a brief explanation, and direct him to my leaflet and the information on the noticeboard. Later I note (to myself) that the same may be said of the man and many of the patients – that they come and sit doing nothing except watching the telly.

<sup>209</sup> Oisín Byrne, ‘Hand Holding’, in *On Care*, ed. by Rebecca Jagoe and Sharon Kivland, London: MA Bibliothèque, 2020, pp. 39–43, 43.

<sup>210</sup> Personal communication, Observation III – 7 February 2017.

<sup>211</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland, Supervision Meeting – 8 February 2017. See Appendix 3 for context and fuller description of observation and setting.

<sup>212</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, ‘Address on the Subject of the Course of Philosophy’, in *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence 1982-1985*, ed. by Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, pp. 99–107, 116, cited in Rachel Jones, ‘On the Value of Not Knowing: Wonder, Beginning Again and Letting Be’, in *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, ed. by Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013, pp. 6–31, 24.



Certainly, my presence has attracted the man's attention and, I venture, caused him to change his behaviour. Perhaps this is just a reaction to his awareness of being observed, as the Hawthorne effect suggests?<sup>213</sup> Indeed, as physicist David Bohm notes 'whenever you observe, the thing observed is changed'.<sup>214</sup> Or perhaps, as the philosopher Vinciane Despret argues through her discussion of Hans the horse, I influence and am influenced by the situation in ways that are against my will and outside my frame of consciousness?<sup>215</sup> Indeed, my anxiety on the man's approach suggests something unsettling or uncanny – a strangeness in the apparently ordinary.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> The alteration of behaviour by the subjects of a study due to their awareness of being observed became known as 'Hawthorne effect' – a term coined in 1958 by Henry Landsberger, also known as the 'Observer effect'. See Frank Merrett, 'Reflections on the Hawthorne Effect', *Educational Psychology*, 26, 2006, 143–146.

<sup>214</sup> Extract from Evelyne Blau, *Krishnamurti: 100 Years*, New York, NY: Stewart Tabori & Chang, 1995 see also Evelyne Blau, 'David Bohm & Krishnamurti: 2. From the Book '100 Years'' <<https://kfoundation.org/krishnamurti-and-david-bohm-2-100-years/>> [accessed 6 January 2021].

<sup>215</sup> Vinciane Despret, 'The Body We Care For: Figures of Anthro-Zoo-Genesis', *Body & Society*, 10, 2004, 111–134. Hans the horse was a late nineteenth/early twentieth century curio that was claimed to have performed arithmetic and other intellectual tasks. After some investigation it was demonstrated that Hans was not performing these esoteric calculations on his own; rather, he was 'reading' the body language of the experimenter without their knowledge. Despret views this episode not as a cautionary tale about the importance of double-blindness in scientific protocols, but rather as a testament to the power of mutual influence. Even though Hans and the humans did not share a common language, Hans was able to 'teach' his examiners a set of subliminal cues that they could use to give him the correct answer. While the human experimenters gave Hans the answers to a set of math problems, Hans gave his 'teachers' an entire system of communication without his teachers even being aware of it! Despret writes, 'Who influences and who is influenced, in this story, are questions that can no longer receive a clear answer. Both, human and horse, are cause and effect of each other's movements. Both induce and are induced, affect and are affected. Both embody each other's mind [...] If we can see [...] how human bodies influence the horse's answer through his peculiar sensitivity and talent, shouldn't we also imagine the converse situation: the horse has taught the humans, without their knowledge, the right gestures to (involuntarily) perform,' p. 115. According to Despret, we are not, then, the sole masters of our own destiny; rather, our actions are shaped subconsciously by the people, animals, and environment that surround us, and we, in turn, transform them.

<sup>216</sup> The term 'uncanny' was first used by German psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch in his essay *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*, 1906. Jentsch describes the uncanny – in German 'unheimlich' (unhomely) – as something new and unknown that can often be seen as negative at first. Sigmund Freud's essay *The Uncanny* (1919) repositioned the idea as the instance when something can be familiar and yet alien at the same time. He suggested that 'unheimlich' was specifically in opposition to 'heimlich', which can mean homely and familiar but also secret and concealed or private. 'Unheimlich' therefore was not just unknown, but also, he argued, bringing out something that was hidden or repressed. He called it 'that class of frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.' <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/t/uncanny>>, Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny (1919)', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, ed. by James Strachey, London: Vintage, 2001, pp. 217-256.

‘What’s the thing?’ Kivland asks during a meeting two years after observations have ended.

SK The uncanny feeling arises, according to Freud, not so much when we see the unfamiliar object, but it's when it starts to move towards us. That's something about the body. As long as it's the thing you've made – as long as it's doing nothing – isn't challenging, or isn't threatening. It's its potential movement.<sup>217</sup>

Writing into the transcription some months later, I add

DM As I transcribe your words, I recall the patients at the rehabilitation centre. As long as they are doing nothing – not moving – staying put until fetched, it is as if they aren't threatening. What becomes threatening is their potential movement.

SK Then that led me to thinking about the stroke patient – and I know that's implicit.

Hinshelwood and Skogstad suggest that the observer's role, while relatively passive in quality, is usually an anxious one, partly because it is passive and restraint is stressful.<sup>218</sup> Yet, far from this feeling like a passive, harmless activity with little responsibility, my observing stance as researcher holds all the force, desire, and intention associated with intrusion and the corresponding potential, as the art historian James Elkins implies, for it to cause interference and harm.<sup>219</sup> Elkins questions the idea that there is any such thing as ‘just looking’, or ‘an object that is simply looked at by something else called an observer’.<sup>220</sup> For him, looking and being looked at is complex, entangled, and immensely troubled – ‘caught up in the threads of the unconscious’ and ‘soaked in affect’.<sup>221</sup> A sharp reminder of how easy it is for the ‘gentlest, least invasive way to make contact with the world’ to turn into an aggression that ‘distorts what it looks at, and turns a person into an object in order to let us stare at it without feeling ashamed’.<sup>222</sup> Except now the tables are turned. Not only is it something I do, but something that happens to me.

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<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> ‘Restraint from accepting invitations to become more involved is stressful and threatens to make the observer a rejecting figure.’ Hinshelwood and Skogstad, ‘Observing Organisations’, p. 22.

<sup>219</sup> James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.*, p. 27.

### 3.1.13. What about in the studio? Did you feel self-conscious in front of the cameras?

Observer observed!

To borrow from Yuen Fong Ling, as bodies of sorts the cameras and audio-visual recorders ‘observe me having observed something else’.<sup>223</sup> Their consistent observing, listening, presence is generally reassuring in that they bear witness to happenings I am not aware of (Figure 32). At other times, notably in Studio Session VIII, the cameras become acutely persecutory as they assume an institutional gaze (see 3.4 Feel the Tension).

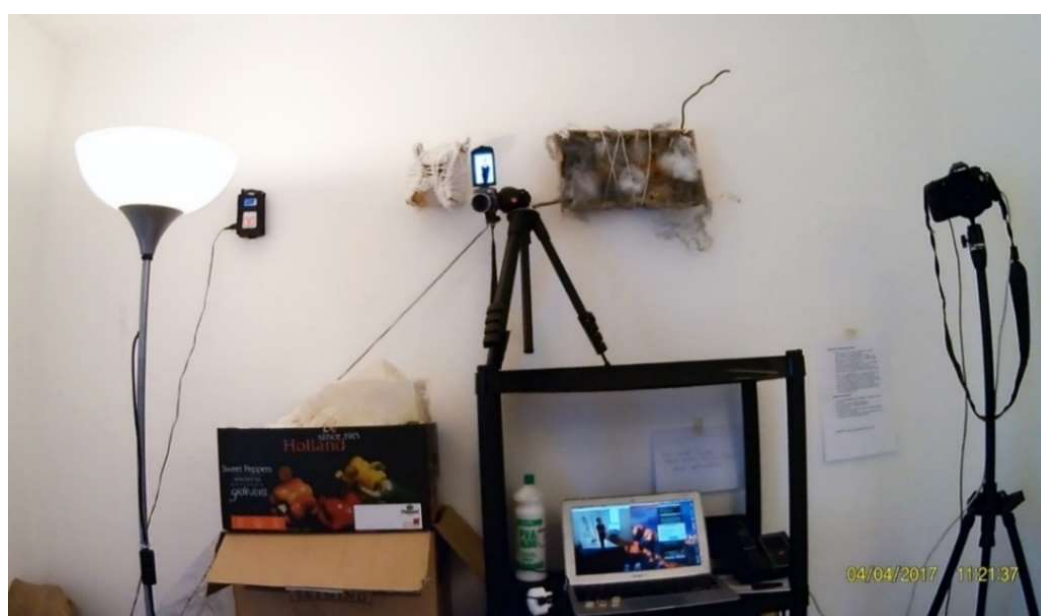


Figure 32. Screenshot from GoPro video, Studio Session XI, 4 April 2017

The audio-recorder is the most empathic listener; yet all these documentary devices act as research and artistic materials as well as analytical and critical tools with which to think *through* what they evoke and provoke. Like Jo Spence, as subject and author of the work, I am both in front of and behind their lenses.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Personal communication, Yuen Fong Ling, supervision session, 1 February 2017.

<sup>224</sup> I make this note with reference to Jo Spence while attending the ‘Speak, body’ conference at the University of Leeds in April 2017. Drawing on a range of artists and theorists, the conference sets out to investigate artworks that emerged coincident with the crisis of capitalism in the 1960s and 1970s in order to consider what they can tell us about contemporary transformations in art and politics. Gill Park and others, ‘Introduction’, *Speak, body: Art, the Reproduction of Capital and the Reproduction of Life*, School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds, 22 April 2017.





## 3.2. Encounter Objects, Bodies, and Things

*an unexpected meeting with someone or something*  
*unexpectedly be faced with or experience someone or something*

### 3.2.1. Do you feel like a human being or a thing? <sup>225</sup>

Without a clear role I feel uncomfortable. I recall the initial pleasantness of sitting quietly – not rushing – noticing a passing desire to be a patient again, looked after, a fantasy quickly dispelled as the reality of trauma, dependency, and vulnerability shakes me out of it.

DM I don't think I feel like a thing. I know I feel a bit in-between. I'm aware I'm not a member of staff, not a patient, and sometimes I can feel myself being pulled to be one or the other. <sup>226</sup>

I add later

I am there in the role of 'observer' although my badge identifies me as some 'thing' – a 'student'. And both, to some extent feel like a protection. A part of me hides behind them. In a way it feels a bit dishonest, a bit deceptive and that makes me feel uncomfortable. When I think about it from another position, I am there most definitely in my capacity as a human being – a feeling person – but for some reason I feel that I need to conceal that behind a badge, one that suggests to just be human is not enough. <sup>227</sup>

On several occasions I feel pulled towards helping a patient who is struggling with something, reminding me of my training placement. In Observation III, I watch a nurse transfer a woman from a wheelchair into the same style of chair on which I sit. My feet just touch the ground but hers are left dangling – one shoelace undone. <sup>228</sup> 'Can't you see?' I shout silently, willing the nurse to notice as she goes to get a cushion to help with sores, but

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<sup>225</sup> This question arose during my supervision meeting with Sharon Kivland on 8 February 2017.

<sup>226</sup> Extract from supervision meeting 8 February 2017. See Appendix 3 for context and fuller description of observation and setting.

<sup>227</sup> I add these notes later as I work into the transcript of the supervision meeting, which is submitted on 6 March 2017.

<sup>228</sup> In the first two observations I take a chair from one of the staff offices. Unable to access the office one week, I change to one of the two styles of armchair that a patient might sit in, one of which is slightly higher than the other.

that will raise her up even higher. To my relief another nurse intervenes and, after an awkward exchange with the first, the woman is helped into a lower chair, her shoelace retied. It is difficult to be ‘patient’ – to wait and ‘do’ nothing. During Session VI, I struggle to speak on behalf of a woman who complains of the chair being too high yet feel compelled on this occasion. Then, as I approach the nursing station at 10.30a.m. I feel myself step out of role and worry about being perceived as a critical, ‘superior’ observer or, then again, as the woman herself says, a ‘nuisance’ or ‘causing trouble’.

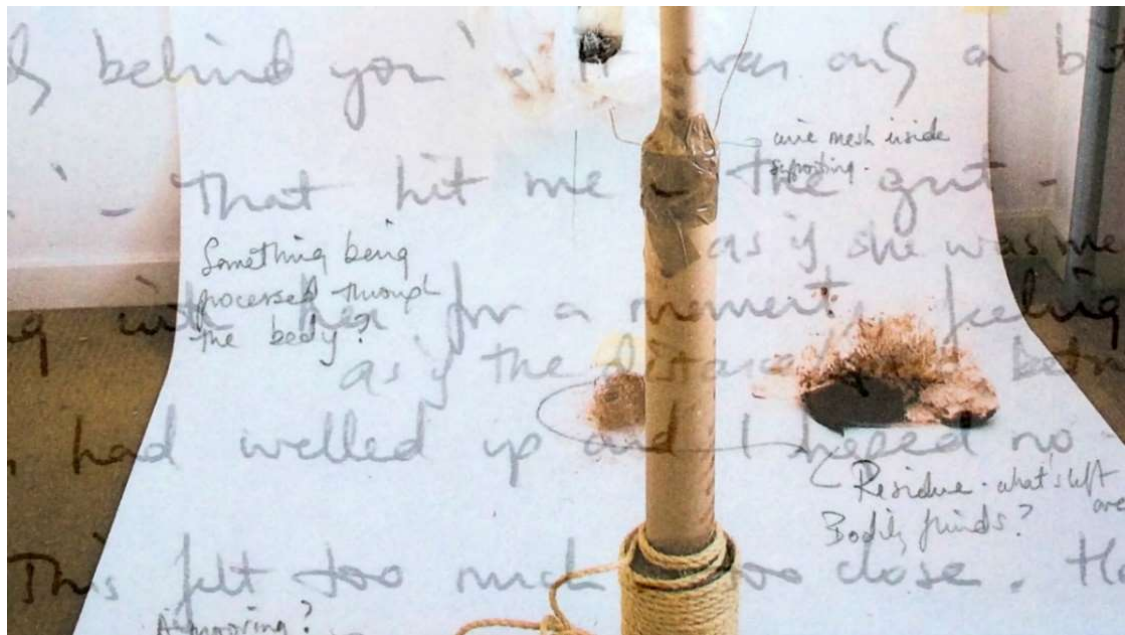


Figure 33. *Something Being Processed Through the Body*

Layered image, annotations, and process notes, Studio Session IV, 14 February 2017

In Session IV, the sudden realisation that my name is shared with the relatively young female patient in front of me punches me in the gut – the momentary identification collapsing the space between us. Simultaneously, the emotion filling me threatens to spill out, and I experience a powerful urge to leave. I resist, swallowing it back down and hoping no-one will notice, but it disturbs (Figure 33). Professionally, I understand about not adding to someone’s distress with my own – maintaining an emotional distance – a matter which I later discuss with the team (see Chapter Four). Yet, I am also conscious of societal and institutional pressures to quell powerful emotions lest they disturb the equilibrium –

something I recognise from my own life, but is also present in education and healthcare where, as Joan Healey notes, emotions are often configured as ‘disruptive forces’.<sup>229</sup>

Earlier in the same session, my anxiety rises as I watch a woman who is partially paralysed and unable to produce words become distressed in her helplessness as she struggles with her coat, only to be hushed by the man accompanying her. Witnessing her distress and pain I wish to be somewhere else, wondering later if this is a place where upset and distress must be hidden. Making in the studio immediately after the observation, I voice a concern about something getting lost and that

*I don't want to sit with my back to it. I feel like I want to sit and talk to it [...] I feel as if I've cut off from the intensity of this morning [...] It's almost as if I can't talk about it [...] I've got my back to the cameras because to turn the other way would mean having my back to the object [...]*

*It's like I feel paralysed to do anything [...] I just need to sit here with it.* (Figure 34)<sup>230</sup>

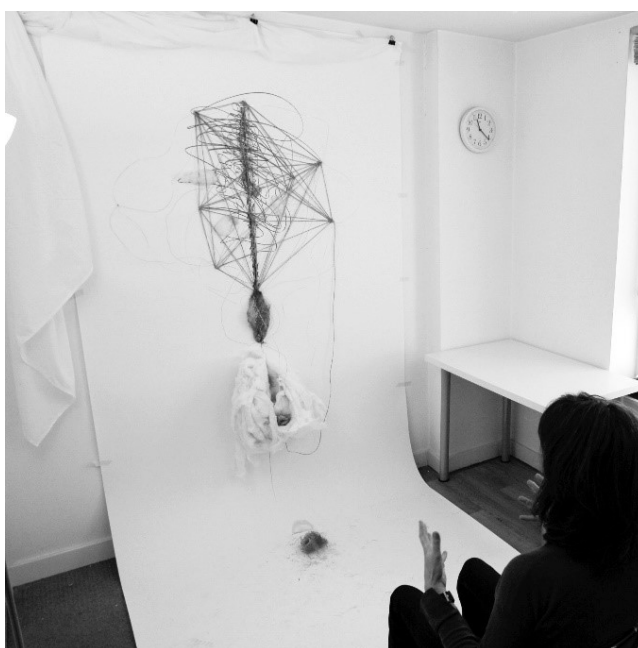


Figure 34. *I just need to sit here with it*

Time-lapse still from Studio Session IV, 14 February 2017

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<sup>229</sup> Joan Healey, ‘Exploring the Emotional Landscapes of Placement Learning in Occupational Therapy Education’, Ph.D. Thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, 2015, p. 10.

<sup>230</sup> Extract from Transcript of Studio Session IV, 14 February 2017.

Then, as I begin to move – to ‘do’ something:

*I feel like I’m doing something in front of the object today – in front of the analytic object.*<sup>231</sup>

Everything feels the wrong way around, as if I am the patient and the cameras behind are the analyst. But the object-body-thing pinned to the wall in front of me also assumes the analyst’s role, in a less detached, more empathic way. No longer screaming to be set free (as if I keep it strung up and imprisoned with cruel intent) it acts as a calm, reliable, holding presence – a container for what I struggle to contain and articulate myself. Perhaps, as the psychoanalyst Danuza Machado suggests, the work of art, if it is one, must unsettle, settle, and again unsettle. ‘It’s not the anxiety of a panic attack, [...] It’s the anxiety we have of being alive, that thing that moves us, makes us work, makes us think, that makes us write.’<sup>232</sup>

Perhaps I digress. To return to whether I feel like a human being or a thing, in Session VIII, I find myself fixating on the chairs and the blood pressure machines which become ‘objects’ waiting to be used.

The screens on the blood pressure machines take on facial characteristics in my mind and there is something at the point at which the chair legs meet the floor and turn into shadows that have the appearance of reflections.<sup>233</sup>

Drawn to the objects/items for sale, I imagine using them in an artwork, but feel I am drifting off. Two weeks later I feel distanced, ‘like an object – an item of something’. (Figure 35) As I sit *in* and *with* the organisation, I wonder how on earth I might bring *inside* the work I make *outside*. To find space for it here seems nonsensical; yet it feels possible when I am outside. By the end of the hour I long for some human contact but there is none.

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Alex and Danuza Machado Potts, ‘A Little Object’, in *In the Place of an Object*, ed. by Sharon Kivland and Marc du Ry, London: Aldgate Press, 2000, pp. 3–8, 5.

<sup>233</sup> Extract from Journal Notes, Observation VIII, 14 March 2017.

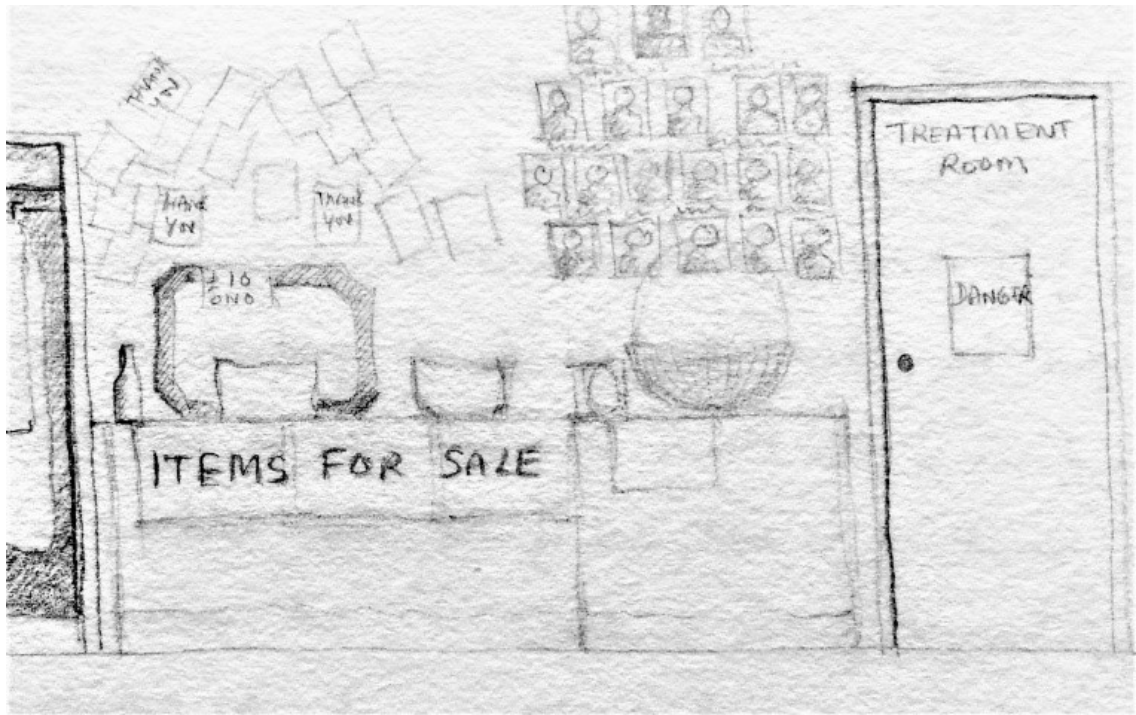


Figure 35. *I Feel Like An Object – An Item Of Something*

Pencil sketch in journal notes, Observation X, 28 March 2017

### 3.2.2. You speak of the material work as an ‘object-body-thing’? Can you expand on this?

‘Are you making a body?’ Fong Ling asks, the day after Observation Session II.<sup>234</sup> Perhaps he puts the shape in my mind, but it is already there in my annotations.

‘Patient’. This body is ‘pinned’ to the wall – left waiting – dependent on me, on my interventions – unable to move independently except to come loose or fall off<sup>235</sup>

I do not consciously make a ‘body’ and yet the material seems to insist with early associations to ‘brain’, ‘gut’, and ‘womb’. In the studio after Session III, I feel sick, as if there is something difficult to digest, and as my body presses up against the object-body-thing behind the sheet I have covered it with, I imagine the soft whiteness on a level with my groin as a urinal. (Figure 36)

<sup>234</sup> Personal communication, Yuen Fong Ling, supervision meeting, 1 February 2017.

<sup>235</sup> See annotations to photograph, Studio Session II, 31 January 2017.

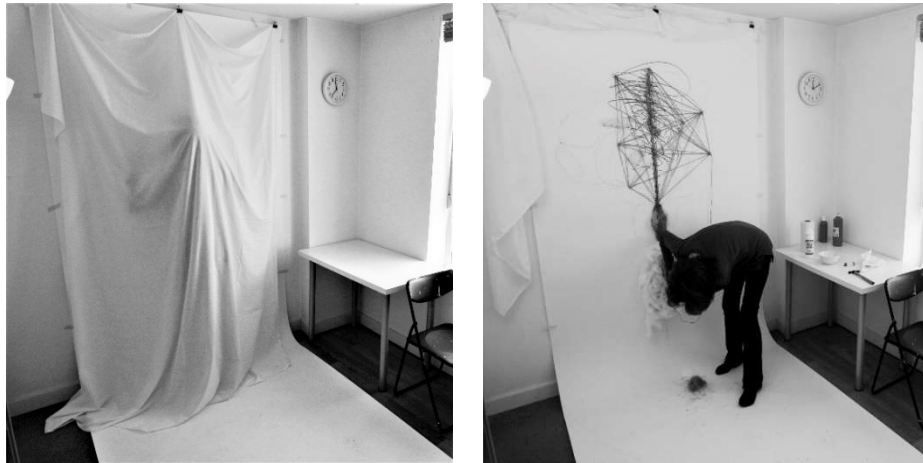


Figure 36. *Whose body is this?*

Timelapse stills from Studio Session III, 7 February 2017

Later, after uncovering it again, I imagine blood and semen. My hand penetrates the softness through which a pool of white stickiness forms on the paper beneath. Whose body is this?

*I feel like I'm making it go to the toilet. As if – there's something about digestion*

[...]

*It makes me feel quite sad. I'm not sure if this is an alive body or a dead body or if it's just marks and wire – and the inside of a pillow, and glue, and cotton wool<sup>236</sup>*

Speaking into the voice-recorder before Observation IV, I note the internal disturbance.

[...]it began to feel like – somebody, some 'body' – a body imprisoned in a room [...] in a locked building [...] the 'body' the object [...] pinned to the wall, hanging, suspended [...] it was like the object was screaming at me to take it off the wall – to let it go, set it free, take its constraints off.<sup>237</sup>

I imagine making a structure to support it – a backbone – a way of taking it out of the room so it can act independently.<sup>238</sup> Then, what it might mean to be imprisoned or locked in one's body, as it might feel for some in the rehabilitation centre due to paralysis or loss of

<sup>236</sup> Extract from transcript of audio from Studio Session III, 7 February 2017.

<sup>237</sup> Thought captured on voice recording, Pre-Observation IV, 14 February 2017.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

function.<sup>239</sup> How difficult to judge the level of support a body might need, a physiotherapist explains to a patient; if there is too much support the body may just collapse into it.

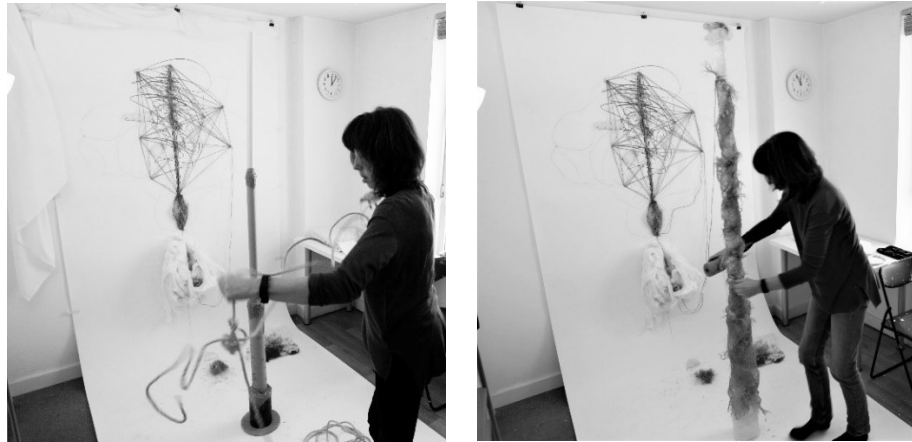


Figure 37. *What am I constructing?*

Timelapse stills from Studio Sessions IV and VI, 14 & 28 February 2017

In the studio, I construct something from cardboard tubes, packing tape, and wire mesh, a rather unstable structure that brings associations to a pipe, conduit, or transmitter – a mast, rather than a spine or support. (Figure 37 - left) On the paper, the residue of brown terracotta clay, the bulk of which is inserted into the bottom of the structure, joins the pool of yellowing glue and ginger coir, reminiscent of urine and pubic hair. Gender makes its presence felt alongside the question of whether something is being processed through my body and the material object-body-thing in the room. Then thoughts of body parts, limbless joints, of things cut off, of softness and warmth turning to coldness and rigidity pervade the following studio sessions. In studio session VI, I become involved in wrapping and covering, as if giving the body a skin. (Figure 37 - right) The tall structure, now wrapped in hessian scrim as if to clothe it and connected to the soft white mass with a thread, develops hair at its top and wires which, protruding out below, conjure up feelers or antenna. Perhaps, as a fellow researcher comments on seeing an earlier photograph of the work, a spider's body weaves a web while carrying a sack of babies, some of which fall to the floor? (Figure 38)<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> These comments were made by a fellow Ph.D. researcher at a book fair in Leeds on 5 March 2017.



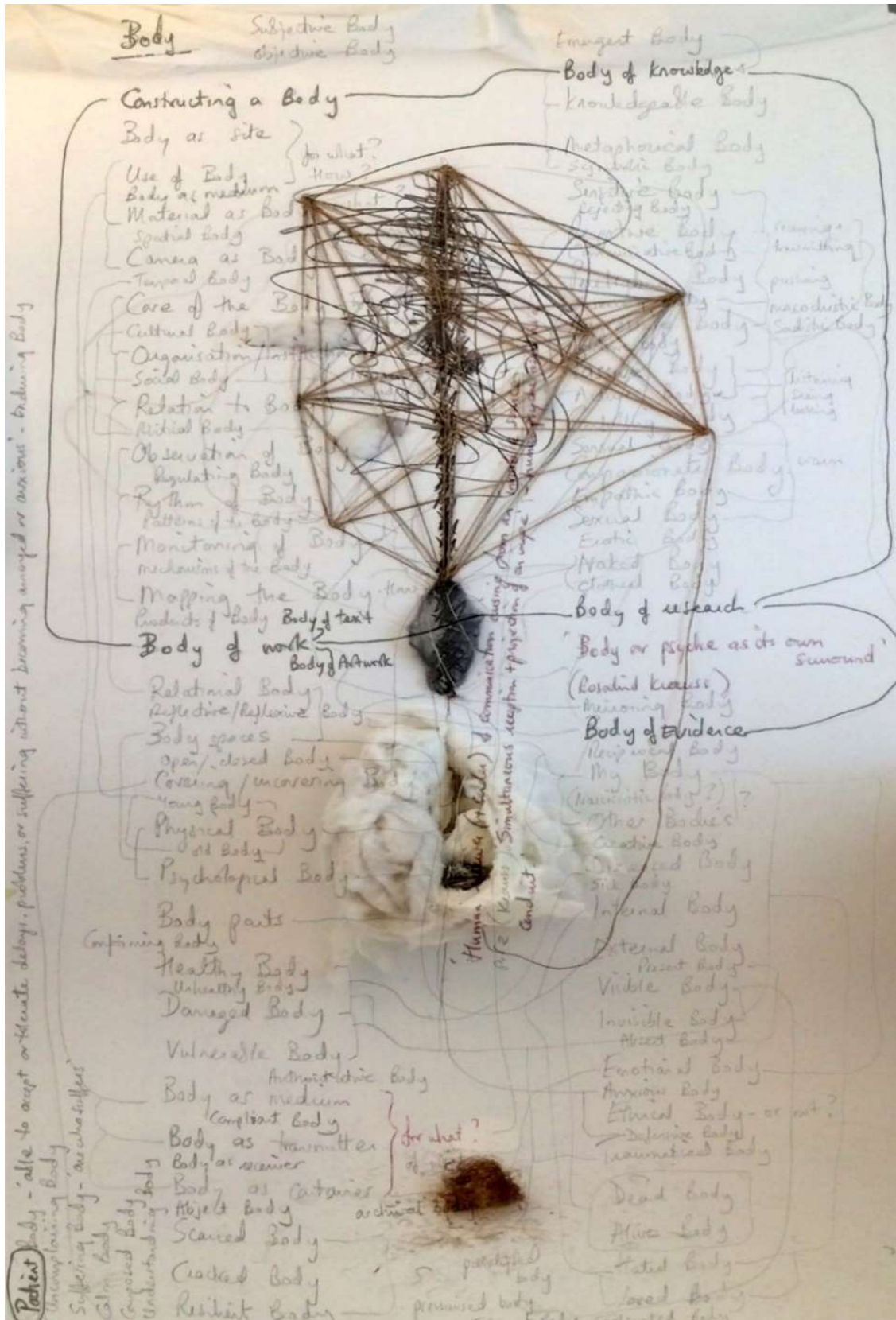


Figure 38. *A Body of Something*

Still from Studio Session III overlaid with Journal notes, 1 February 2017

### 3.2.3. Surely this is all just a projection?

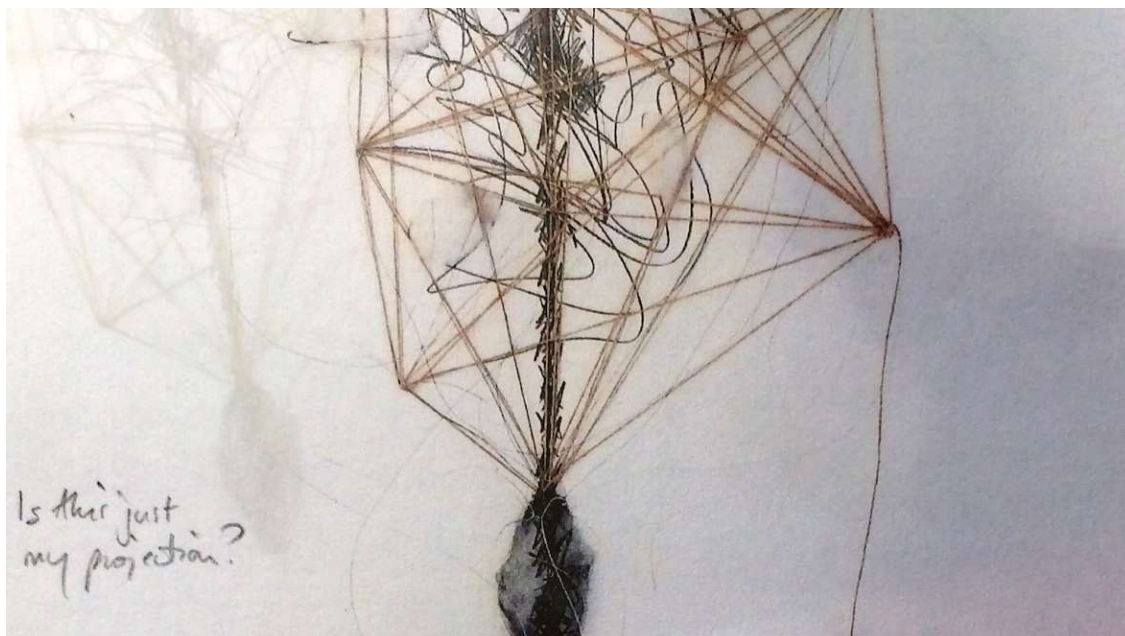


Figure 39. *Is This Just My Projection?*

Layered image and annotation, Studio Session II, 31 January 2017

The question (see also Figure 39) is quickly followed by a concern that I might unwittingly exploit those whose co-operation I seek – indeed need – in order to fulfil the task I set myself.<sup>241</sup> Again, I register a concern that my motivation is driven by narcissism rather than a maturing of consciousness and conscience – an ethical imperative where, in Emma Wilson’s words, ‘the self as well as the other may be exposed’.<sup>242</sup> What might it mean to create ‘in the name of’ or ‘for the sake of’ a cultural other that is placed ‘outside’ when there is an inevitable overlap with

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<sup>241</sup> Discussing Agnès Varda’s project, ‘Les Glaneurs Et La Glaneuse’ (The Gleaners and I) Emma Wilson draws on Hal Foster’s essay ‘The Artist as Ethnographer’ and his critique of the participant-observer tradition in which he questions the ‘*self-critique* of anthropology’. Applying Foster’s critique of the ethnographic turn in art which ‘promises a reflexivity of the ethnographer at the centre even as it preserves a romanticism of the other at the margins’, Wilson questions whether Varda’s work is merely an ‘unwitting projection of the self’ where the narratives of others are ‘turned into cultural exhibits and exploited’. Foster, ‘The Artist as Ethnographer?’, p. 305, cited in Emma Wilson, ‘Les Glaneurs Et La Glaneuse: Salvage and the Art of Forgetting’, in *The Art of the Project: Projects and Experiments in Modern French Culture*, ed. by Johnnie Gratton and Michael Sheringham, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005, pp. 96–110, 100–101. See also Agnès Varda, ‘Les Glaneurs Et La Glaneuse, Video (French with English Subtitles), 82 Minutes’, New York, NY: Zeitgeist Video, 2000. For the film, Varda travelled throughout rural and urban France to document various types of gleaners who, whether due to necessity or for artistic or ethical reasons, gather crops left in the field after the harvest or food and objects that have been thrown out.

<sup>242</sup> Wilson, ‘Les Glaneurs Et La Glaneuse’, p. 101.

my own unconscious and the corresponding risk that bringing the other into the self may result in narcissistic self-absorption?<sup>243</sup>

It is true that I endow the ‘body’ with feelings and characteristics; that it assumes both human and non-human forms. Nonetheless, following Winnicott, it is more than merely ‘a bundle of projections’; neither inner nor outer, it occupies an intermediate area of experiencing.<sup>244</sup> It has a physical structure, mass, and an anatomy of sorts – a body – that is separate from mine even though I temporarily inhabit it.<sup>245</sup> Rather than something complete and static, it might be described, to borrow from Wright, as some *thing* ‘alive with gestures and answering forms’ in the making that bear the residue of a living dialogue with me as artist.<sup>246</sup> In Ingold’s words, a ‘going on, or better, a place where several goings on become entwined’.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Kris Rutten, An van. Dienderen, and Ronald Soetaert, ‘Revisiting the Ethnographic Turn in Contemporary Art’, *Critical Arts*, 27, 2013, 459–473.

<sup>244</sup> Winnicott postulates an intermediate area of experiencing, a potential space, between the world of shared external reality and the personal inner world. Donald W Winnicott, ‘The Use of an Object and Relating through Identifications’, in *Playing and Reality*, London: Routledge, 1971, pp. 115–127, 118. See also Donald W Winnicott, ‘The Use of an Object’, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 50, 1969, 711–716.

<sup>245</sup> Joy Schaverien, *The Revealing Image: Analytical Art Psychotherapy in Theory and Practice*, London: Jessica Kingsley, 1999.

<sup>246</sup> Wright, ‘*Mirroring and Attunement*’, *Mirroring and Attunement*, p. 53.

<sup>247</sup> Tim Ingold, ‘Bringing Things Back to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials’, *NCRM Working Paper. Realities/Morgan Centre* 2010, p. 4.



### 3.3. Repeat

*something that occurs or is done again*  
*say again something (some)one has already said*  
*do (something)again or more than once*  
*be tasted intermittently for some time after being swallowed*

#### 3.3.1. Can you say something about the repetition – the familiarity of repeating the same routine?

Hinshelwood reminds me that part of the role of the observer is to rediscover the newness of the situation and set aside familiarity, lest it numb experience.<sup>248</sup> But after Session V I wonder if familiarity is setting in. Before the observation an old familiar headache nags at my left temple accompanied by mild nausea.

'There is something about the repetition. Repeating the same thing except it is the same but not the same'.<sup>249</sup>

While in many ways this whole project is a return to familiar ground, I have not been *here* before – in *this* situation. Still, as problematic aspects of my earlier life repeat on me, I wonder what I might repeat in a habitual, mechanical, lifeless way to avoid feeling and thinking and the experience of 'not knowing', or is it 'knowing'? Or perhaps, as writer Gertrude Stein suggests, as long as the emphasis is different, and is *insistent* in its difference – there is no repetition.<sup>250</sup> For her, remembering is the only repetition, and yet Freud would say that we must remember in order *not* to repeat.<sup>251</sup> Fearing that I tie myself in knots,

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<sup>248</sup> Hinshelwood, 'Observing Anxiety', p. 53.

<sup>249</sup> Extract from transcription of voice recording, Pre-Observation V, 21 February 2017.

<sup>250</sup> Gertrude Stein, 'Portraits and Repetition [1935]', in *Stein: Writings 1932-1946*, New York, NY: Library of America, 1998, pp. 287–312.

<sup>251</sup> 'We have learnt that the patient repeats instead of remembering, and repeats under conditions of resistance.' Sigmund Freud, 'Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through: (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psychoanalysis II) (1914)', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Case History of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works, Volume XII (1911-1913)*, ed. by James Strachey, London: Vintage, 2001, pp. 147–156, 151.

I hold onto Freud's assertion that we render the repetition compulsion 'harmless, indeed useful, by giving it the right to assert itself in a definite field. We admit it into the transference as a playground.' (Figure 40)<sup>252</sup>

SK So, repeating the hour. You have one hour plus one hour [...] Before you go into the centre, you are taping yourself in the car. Is there an equivalent of that which follows the hour?

DM No.

SK So, it segues almost immediately into the studio – into the making.

DM Yes. I go straight there. I don't have any communication with anyone in between.

SK So nothing of that intensity is broken? It's carried from one place to another. An immediate transfer of one experience to another without any break or mediation, except coffee.

DM and setting up the cameras.

SK Like speaking in the car, but the preparation takes a different form.<sup>253</sup>

I leave the observation at 10.30 and drive straight to my studio which takes about 15 mins. I don't speak to anyone in that time. I usually make a coffee and then set up the camera equipment. The art-making session is between 11.15 and 12.15, for one hour.

SK: So, repeating the hour...It's one hour observation, plus one hour making...So it segues - *to make a transition from one thing to another smoothly and without interruption*- almost immediately into the studio. So nothing of that intensity is broken...it is carried from one place to another, an immediate transfer of one experience to another without any break or mediation, except coffee...and setting up the cameras. Like speaking in the car, but the preparation takes on a different form.

Yes

Figure 40. Annotated supervision report

Detail, 8 February 2017

By Observation V, I have been following the same routine for several weeks, although each week is different.

Sometimes, as I've said, I really don't want to be there – like last week there was this impulse to get up and leave part way through the performance  
[...]

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<sup>252</sup> *ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>253</sup> Extract from transcript of supervision meeting with Sharon Kivland, 8 February 2017. See Appendix 3 for context and fuller description of observation and setting.

to say it fills me with dread is not quite right, but something like that [...] There is something really very difficult. [...] I'm on the outside going to the inside and perhaps there is this connection somewhere with this being almost like a play or something. It is a space set apart [...] has a start and a finish, a bit like a working day [...] but I don't have to be here all day. I couldn't be here all day and maintain this level of connection with what I'm feeling and of course, if I was working here I'd be getting on with the task [...] I'd be getting on with a different task [...]<sup>254</sup>

The session presents nothing notable, except that my attention is caught again by a chair-raiser – a contraption of four, square, plastic cups that fit over the bottom of each leg, held together by a cross-brace of wood.

I imagine the legs of the chair being constrained by this contraption – as if they might try to break free any minute. It seems silly and I try to dismiss the thought from my mind [...]<sup>255</sup>

Later, in the studio, I silently cover the material object-body-thing hanging on the wall with a white sheet. In an attempt to strengthen the wobbly, unstable, pole-like structure I wrap it in clingfilm, then layers of Modroc plaster bandage. The repetitive gesture feels calming, comforting – non-thinking – a relief. Still, fleeting thoughts of 'limbless joints' and 'body parts' seem strangely at odds as the material comes alive to me through the warmth it emits in its transformation from soft to hard, but then turns cold.<sup>256</sup> Writing up the observation session, I note:

I don't want to return my mind to earlier this morning, to recall the sequence of events, not that anything particularly powerful happened, but I am feeling the constraints of the task I have set myself and would prefer to be released from the sense of obligation to complete what I have set out to do.<sup>257</sup>

Thinking of the 'patient' object-body-thing pinned to the wall in a locked room, I question whether I have imprisoned myself 'pinned myself to the wall and locked myself into

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<sup>254</sup> Extract from transcript of voice recording, Pre-Observation V, 21 February 2017.

<sup>255</sup> Extract from Journal Notes, Observation V, 21 February 2017.

<sup>256</sup> Associations voiced during Studio Session V, 21 February 2017.

<sup>257</sup> Extract from transcript of Journal Notes, Observation V, 21 February 2017.



something that a part of me would like to be freed from'.<sup>258</sup> After noting the ongoing theme of makeovers, 'before and after' and what can or cannot be replaced, I wonder if familiarity is setting in. (Figure 41)

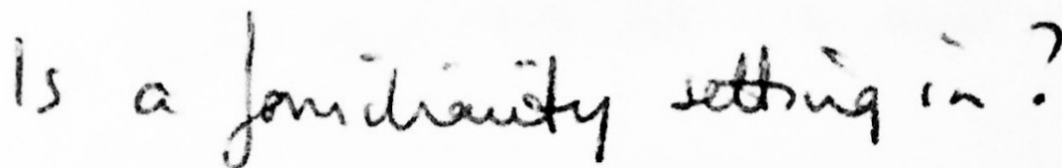
A photograph of a handwritten note on a light-colored background. The text is written in black ink in a cursive, slightly slanted script. It reads: "Is a familiarity setting in?"

Figure 41. *Is Familiarity Setting In*  
Journal Note, Observation V, 21 February 2017

The following day, emotion has left the encounter. The deadness troubles and disturbs, appearing to come from nowhere, and I struggle to connect it to anything. I write in order to understand – wondering if through the repetition and routine I enact something.

It's predictable and that's more comfortable, but it creates a distance and doesn't allow for human emotions – just becomes mechanical? [...] The material is on the outside – a covering – a layer of protection, layers of protection around a vulnerable core. It makes it stronger – more rigid and stable – but I can't get to the inside. The softer, more vulnerable parts are hidden, covered over. The overall picture [...] appears more clinical – cold – lifeless, just as the residue visible on the floor reminds me of the messiness.<sup>259</sup>

Perhaps the repetition and routine serve to deaden the emotional discomfort and pain I am confronted with each week, offering some protection or escape. Perhaps I grasp at this because the idea is familiar to me through psychoanalytic thinking, my experiences in psychotherapy/analysis, and my art (psycho)therapy practice. Or does its returning presence *insist* that I (re)pay it attention? (Figure 42) In *Labours of Love* writer Madeleine Bunting refers to the 1960 study of a nursing service by psychoanalyst Isabel Menzies Lyth, still a key reference for psychoanalytically-oriented work in healthcare settings.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Extract from reflections after Observation V, 21 February 2017.

<sup>260</sup> Isabel Elizabeth Menzies, 'A Case-Study in the Functioning of Social Systems as a Defence against Anxiety: A Report on a Study of the Nursing Service of a General Hospital', *Human Relations*, 13, 1960, 95–121 Cited in Bunting, *Labours of Love*, p. 261. See also Hinshelwood and Skogstad.



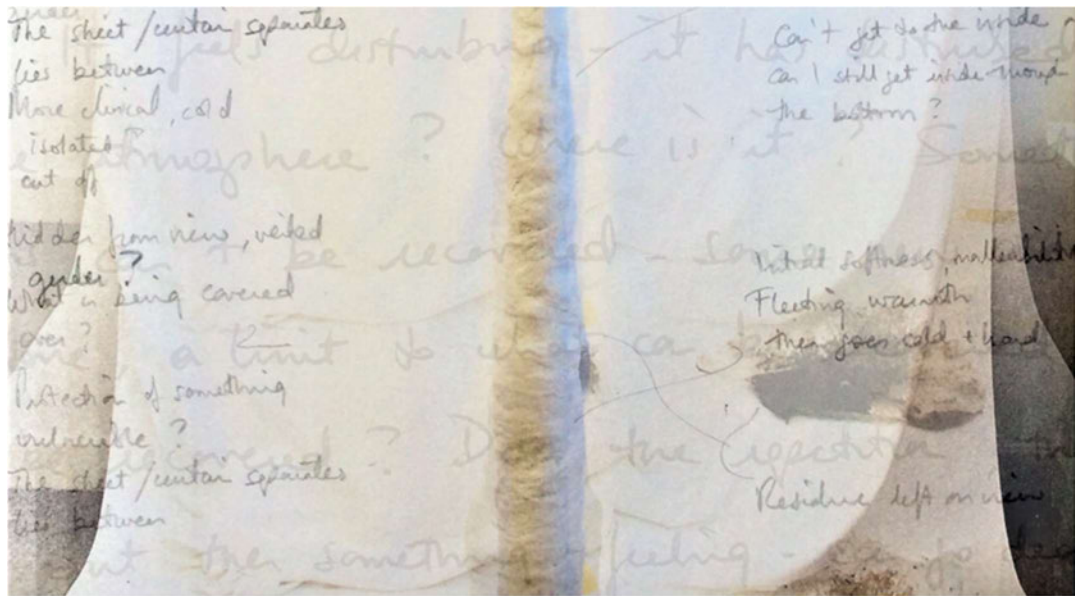


Figure 42. *Fleeting Warmth Turns Gold and Hard*

Layered image, annotations and process notes, Observation V, 21 February 2017

Menzies emphasises the stressful nature of working closely with people who are dying, suffering, or have experienced catastrophic loss, and the deep-seated fears about one's capacity to damage, and doubts about one's ability to repair. She identifies a system of 'ritual task performance' as well as processes of depersonalisation, distancing, and detachment, accompanied by a denial of feelings in both nurses and patients. Influenced and supported unconsciously by the institution and its members the system, she suggests, aims to help individuals avoid the conscious experience of such anxieties by eliminating situations, tasks, and relationships that provoke them.

In the aftermath of both observation and studio sessions, I search for internal resonances to help me think through what is happening.

a place where feelings – warm feelings – are cut off. Where feelings of connectedness to self and others go dead – cold and hard.<sup>261</sup>

The deadened, numb feeling is not altogether unfamiliar through its echo with earlier traumas and losses. Perhaps the intensity of feeling and my desire to escape the situation is an identification both with the underlying trauma and loss suffered by patients at the

<sup>261</sup> Extract from reflections, week V, 21 February 2017.

rehabilitation centre, and with staff who are confronted on a daily basis with the limits to what they can offer. As Bunting notes, drawing on the work of Menzies and others, in the face of profound need, the urge to turn away and escape the disturbing tension can be overwhelming because it confronts us with the fear that we are not equipped to meet it.<sup>262</sup> Some new neural pathways may be formed after a stroke through repetition of movement but for many there is a limit to the restoration and recovery of function. Something in the brain dies. With the fleeting move towards neuroscience, I feel a move towards a more distanced position where I risk becoming a cold observer watching from the outside rather than a warmer, more empathic witness to something happening on the inside. How hard it is, as artist David Clegg remarks, to resist a ‘culture of psychological censorship’ where barriers to listening safeguard against emotional connectedness.<sup>263</sup> Drawing back, I recall my response in the studio after the first observation, repeating the act of putting my hand on my chest (Figure 43).



Figure 43. *I Can't Repeat It*

Still from Timelapse Sequence, Observation I, 24 January 2017

Yet, as Hinshelwood and Skogstad suggest, there is more to the observational process than having a set of feelings; I must be able to reflect on them, not just discharge or dispose of

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<sup>262</sup> Bunting, *Labours of Love*, p. 262.

<sup>263</sup> Susan Schultz, M., 'Interview with David Clegg of the Trebus Project', 30 July 2012. Active for over ten years, The Trebus Project aims to capture the memories and insights of people with dementia before their words are lost to history. Trebus began after Clegg closed down the art gallery he used to run and began working on art projects with care home residents.

them.<sup>264</sup> Affective empathy may be the way in which we experience, in an embodied way, the emotions of another; still, as Jungian analyst Margaret Wilkinson adds, we also need cognitive empathy – the ability to think carefully about what is being experienced.<sup>265</sup>

*I hope the camera and the equipment is set up right – I hope it's capturing this – because I can't repeat it*<sup>266</sup>

### 3.3.2. Isn't there a danger of just repeating what has gone before?

Haraway's voice rings loudly as she expresses her 'suspicion that reflexivity, like reflection, only displaces the same elsewhere'.<sup>267</sup> No doubt my reading of the situation stirs well-trodden ground and repetition, as Ahmed warns, might easily become direction – habit.<sup>268</sup> I must be careful lest I merely mirror fixed positions by relying on structures or ways of thinking that have become institutionalised in my own mind. The possibility of being co-opted into the structures I critique is always looming.<sup>269</sup>

Accepting the idiosyncratic ways in which I may become 'confused [...] and lost in unwitting enactments, living out old repetitions', repetition is, and has long been, a strategy in both quantitative and qualitative research approaches as well as for artists and makers through the ages.<sup>270</sup> In the ancient craft of weaving, for example, it is the process of looping back and over that builds the body and structure of the fabric as it is held in tension with the loom. While the warp and weft enables and invites regular repeated figures, it might be argued that the 'tensions' and 'ambivalences' in the interplay between regular and irregular,

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<sup>264</sup> Hinshelwood and Skogstad, 'Observing Organisations', p. xiii.

<sup>265</sup> Margaret Wilkinson, 'Mind, Brain and Body. Healing Trauma: The Way Forward', *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 62, 2017, 526–543, p. 538.

<sup>266</sup> Extract from transcript of Studio Session I, 24 January 2017.

<sup>267</sup> Haraway, '*Modest\_Witness@\_Second\_Millennium. Femaleman\_Meets\_Oncomouse: Feminism and Technoscience*', p. 16, cited in Bozalek and Zembylas, 'Diffraction or Reflection?', p. 111.

<sup>268</sup> Ahmed, 'Institutional Habits'.

<sup>269</sup> Byrne, 'Hand Holding', p. 43.

<sup>270</sup> Clarke, Hahn, and Hoggett, '*Object Relations and Social Relations*'.

flow, and resistance, are intrinsic to making both textiles and text.<sup>271</sup> The art historian Joanne Morra reminds me of the repetitive, ritualistic, habits of successive sessions in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy that are essential to the ‘mise-en-scène’ or ‘frame’ supporting and facilitating ‘the work of analysis; the process of remembering, repeating, and working-through’.<sup>272</sup> Perhaps then, as Rachel Holmes suggests, I return to intensify my gaze – to linger, ‘pick up different scents and follow diverse connections’ – whether triggered by ‘childhood experiences, artwork, or whatever’.<sup>273</sup> A long slow analysis involves time as well as physical and emotional labour – what, in this situation, Morra might call the *work* of art and research. Still, I wonder if there is something compulsive in my return to these sites of prior performances or if it offers both a site *of/for* resistance and a transformational working through.<sup>274</sup> I return to Stein’s idea of ‘insistence’ rather than repetition, and a lecture by Tim Etchells where he begins with a performative monologue in which, over the course of ten minutes, he repeats the phrase,

*‘I know we are talking now, but I really want to talk to you’.*<sup>275</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> David Batchelor, ‘On the Relationship between Textiles and Modernism’, *Anni Albers and the Modernist Textile*, University College London, 26 January 2019.

<sup>272</sup> Joanne Morra, ‘The Work of Research: Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through’, in *What Is Research in the Visual Arts? Obsession, Archive, Encounter*, ed. by Michael Ann Holly and Marquard Smith, Williamstown, MA: Yale University Press and Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2008, pp. 46–63, 50.

<sup>273</sup> Rachel Holmes, ‘Paroxysm: The Problem of the Fist’, *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 20, 2020, 496–509, p. 4.

<sup>274</sup> Gabriele Schwab, *Derrida, Deleuze, Psychoanalysis*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 17–18.

<sup>275</sup> Tim Etchells, Gravity lecture series ‘Material’, Sheffield Hallam University, 1 February 2018. In a 2015 article for the Stedelijk Studies online Journal, Etchells writes about his performance work *A Broadcast/Looping Pieces*, which begins with the same monologue. Its origins lie in a series of handwritten and, later, computer-based notebooks ‘effectively a scrapbook of fragments that interested me for one undefined reason or another’, Etchells says. Reviewing the performance at the Stedelijk Museum, Weronika Trojanska describes how gathered fragments are randomly and unexpectedly juxtaposed and cut, placed in fresh combinations and, with each new performance, given new life. Etchells proposes that this gathering of fragments and snippets over time – and the performance of them – can summon ideas and images – that, by ‘naming’, as he puts it, we bring something into the room for consideration. Weronika Trojanska, ‘Tim Etchells: A Broadcast/Looping Pieces (Review)’, *Metropolis M - Magazine for Contemporary Art*, 14 January 2015; Tim Etchells, *A Broadcast: Looping Pieces*, Performance, Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 7 December 2014, <<http://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/124616>> [accessed 8 November 2021].

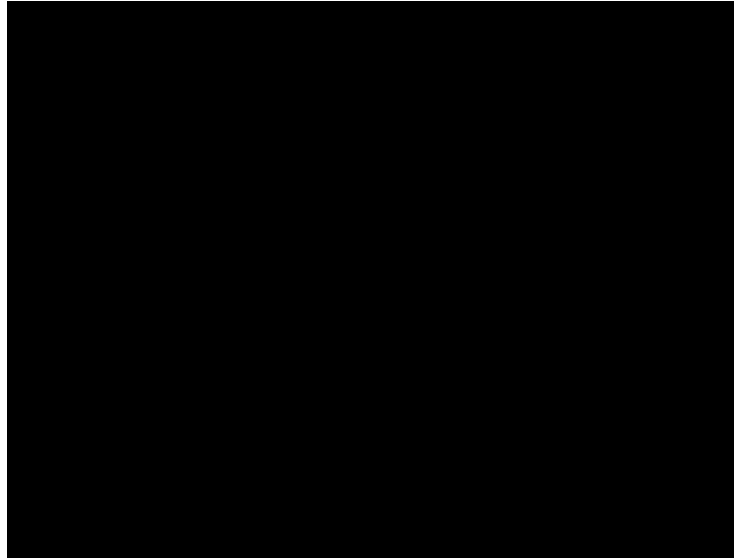


Figure 44. Tim Etchells, *A Broadcast/Looping Pieces*<sup>276</sup>

Performance, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 2014

*This image has been removed for copyright reasons. It can be seen at*

<https://timetchells.com/projects/a-broadcast-looping-pieces/>

As with Ingold's description of the maker as weaver, Etchells does not merely repeat the same gesture in a mechanical fashion (Figure 44).<sup>277</sup> Each iteration is spoken with different intonation, emotion, rhythm, and speed. In having a *feel* for what he does and paying attention to the stuff with which he is dealing, he responds to the task as it unfolds, retexturing his material with each iteration. Perhaps then, as Barad argues, reiteration is not about recurrence or reproduction of the same, but, as with all the "re's", is about raising questions of responsibility and hospitality in the sense of inviting and enabling response.<sup>278</sup> I reach for T. J. Clark's book *The Sight of Death* – a diary account of the author's process of returning, day after day, to stand in front of the same painting.<sup>279</sup> 'And slowly the question

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<sup>276</sup> Further information about the performance can be found at <<https://timetchells.com/projects/a-broadcast-looping-pieces/>>

<sup>277</sup> Drawing on the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Ingold argues that 'making is a practice of weaving'. For there to be rhythm, he suggests, 'movement must be *felt*'. Ingold, 'The Textility of Making'.

<sup>278</sup> Malou Juelskjær and Nete Schwennesen, 'Intra-Active Entanglements—an Interview with Karen Barad', *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning*, 2012, 10–23. Responsibility, Barad argues 'is not about a calculable system of accounting, but about hospitality as Derrida would have it, about inviting and enabling response. That is, what is at issue is a matter of responsibility for the violence of the cut and the co-constitution of entangled relations of obligation. What is entailed in matters of justice is paying careful attention to the ghosts in all their materiality – that is, all the labor, the really hard work, of tracing entanglements and being responsive to the liveliness of the world', p. 22.

<sup>279</sup> Timothy J. Clark, *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing*, Newhaven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006.

arises' he writes. 'What is it, fundamentally, I am returning to in this particular case? What is it I want to see again?'<sup>280</sup> Perhaps, as he remarks, astonishing things may happen if one 'gives oneself over to the process of seeing again and again' – repeatedly revisiting a situation to look differently.<sup>281</sup> Yet, I do not 'just look'. Rather, in returning week after week to the same seat, I observe an unfolding drama in which I also perform as actor. As Morra suggests, writing of Clark's endeavour, the desire and resistance involved in looking, or not looking, is fraught.<sup>282</sup> Reflecting after Session V, I note:

Did I not want to look at the image on the wall, or was it that it didn't want to see me?<sup>283</sup>

Four days later I return from a walk and to a chapter aptly named 'Looking Away, and Seeing Too Much' in Elkins's book *The Object Stares Back*. My eye falls again on the blurred black and white images which disturb me viscerally – described, in Georges Bataille's terms, as being 'painfully close to something I know I cannot or must not see'.<sup>284</sup> Averting my eyes and turning toward my computer in search of a document

I cannot organise my thoughts or vision in the space between what I have seen on the pages of the book and the computer screen. What I am looking for is the image of a map.<sup>285</sup>

Elkins reminds me of the ease with which one might become anaesthetised to another's pain, as well as one's own. I wonder about the repeating pull towards sleepiness and anaesthesia which seems to anticipate emotional or body-based material about to enter the room at the rehabilitation centre and which, during Observation II, is reminiscent of tiptoeing around a sleeping baby so as not to wake it.<sup>286</sup> Of course, experiencing drowsiness

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<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, 5–6.

<sup>281</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>282</sup> Morra, 'The Work of Research'.

<sup>283</sup> Extract from reflections, week V, 22 February 2017.

<sup>284</sup> Elkins, '*Object Stares Back*', p. 115. Elkins refers to a theory proposed by the surrealist, Georges Bataille, that there are three things that cannot be seen, even though they might be right in front of our eyes: the sun, genitals, and death. Addressing 'death', Elkins draws on a series of four photographs depicting a Chinese method of execution known as 'death by division into a thousand parts' – a sequence of images which, Elkins suggests, traps death 'between the frames. I may not know exactly where it is [...] but I know it happens before my eyes, and happens over and over again as I look at the sequence', p. 108. The victim is a woman, while all around are men.

<sup>285</sup> Journal note, 26 February 2017.

<sup>286</sup> Acknowledging the shift away from words, interpretations and meaning-making toward the affective, relational, embodied aspects of psychotherapeutic work Jungian analyst, Margaret Wilkinson,

simultaneously with some patients, I cannot be sure if I am receiving or producing the tiredness.<sup>287</sup> In Observation IX, I experience some discomfort and a desire to fidget within the constraints imposed. Indeed, it is a struggle to keep my attention from wandering off.

The television is intrusive [...] – too loud – and I feel it is being imposed. I notice at a certain point that we – me and the patients in the room – are all facing in the same direction, toward the wall with the TV on. It conjures up an image of mind control! [...] <sup>288</sup>

Again, after the final observation

It is a struggle to re-focus my mind on the observation – on what has now passed – or is past – to put myself back in that place. It is as if a part of me wants to put it behind me – to forget – go to sleep – to not remember – but the work is not yet finished.<sup>289</sup>

These incidents may be insignificant, but perhaps what is at stake, as Adam Phillips suggests in respect to Clark's project is 'what we won't be able to think or think about if we don't take the time to look' or, I add, notice through other senses.<sup>290</sup> Ahmed writes of the messiness of the experiential, the drama of contingency and how we are touched by what we are near.<sup>291</sup> In returning to various sites (more or less consciously) where there is vulnerability, pain, and suffering, I may revisit hurtful histories. However, such a concern,

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describes working with a particular woman with a history of trauma. 'I found that in a most powerful way my emotions and bodily experience would mirror/anticipate/be called forth by the emotional or body-based material that [she] was about to bring into the session.' Wilkinson, 'Mind, Brain and Body', p. 537. Drawing on the work of Italian Neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese and his ideas on 'embodied simulation', Wilkinson refers to this as *affective empathy* – 'the way we experience the emotions of another', p. 538. See also Vittorio Gallese, 'Visions of the Body. Embodied Simulation and Aesthetic Experience', *Aisthesis. Pratiche, linguaggi e saperi dell'estetico*, 10, 2017, 41–50. After Gallese and, through him, the work of Freud and French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the idea of *Einfühlung* – empathy – *feeling into* a situation may be understood not as a purely visual or cognitive process but one of gesture and sensory knowing – an embodied reciprocity through which we come to know about the presence of others and of the nature of their experience. Vittorio Gallese, 'Mirror Neurons, Embodied Simulation, and the Neural Basis of Social Identification', *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 19, 2009, 519–536.

<sup>287</sup> In the preliminary scoping session a nurse comments in passing 'I'd fall asleep if I sat there'. In Observation II 'my eyelids begin to feel a little heavy [...], as if I could just drift off to sleep'. Almost simultaneously a nurse approaches a patient. 'You look tired', she says. 'I am' they reply, 'not sleeping well.' In Observation IX again I note feeling 'I could almost drop off to sleep'. 'Oh, I could almost drop off' a patient says as we exchange glances and smiles.

<sup>288</sup> Extract from Journal Notes, Observation IX – 21 March 2017.

<sup>289</sup> Extract from Journal Notes, Observation XII – 11 April 2017.

<sup>290</sup> Adam Phillips, 'What Do You Think You're Looking At?', *The Guardian*, 13 August 2006.

<sup>291</sup> Sara Ahmed, 'Happy Objects', in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. by Melissa Gregg, Gregory J Seigworth, and Sara Ahmed, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 29–51.

she argues, is not necessarily a 'backward orientation: to move on, we must make this return [...] to reread melancholic subjects, the ones that refuse to let go of suffering'.<sup>292</sup> Braunmühl agrees, suggesting it is 'only on account of an empathy with what might possibly suffer that ethical concern makes sense'.<sup>293</sup> Her purpose is therefore 'to defend an understanding of ethics as being tied by definition to vulnerability'.<sup>294</sup> Held in tension with the desire to 'not feel' is an ethics of attention and 'attending to' that brings matters of vulnerability, care, and responsibility to the fore. Perhaps this is the nub. If we do not slow down and pay attention to what we are doing – how we *affect* and *are affected* – there *is*, as Freud might say, a danger of turning away, only to unconsciously repeat what has gone before, but in a way that deadens rather than enlivens feeling and thinking.

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<sup>292</sup> Ibid., p. 50 'Bad feelings are seen as oriented toward the past, as a kind of stubbornness that "stops" the subject from embracing the future. Good feelings are associated here with moving up and getting out. I would argue that it is the very assumption that good feelings are open and bad feelings are closed that allows historical forms of injustice to disappear.'

<sup>293</sup> Braunmühl, 'Beyond Hierarchical Oppositions', p. 233.

<sup>294</sup> *ibid.*, p. 230.





### 3.4. Feel the Tension (1)

*the state of being stretched tight  
mental or emotional strain*

#### 3.4.1. Were there any notable 'tensions' or 'turning points' in your process?

It is Session VIII and emotional residues from a recent Ph.D. seminar reverberate through my body. On entering the communal area, I usually walk to the left - clockwise - but this week I feel a pressure to walk the other way, to conform to a set of rules imposed by a different institution. I resist, but I feel a 'rupture' somewhere - as if a spell has been broken.



Figure 45. *Practice As Method*

Video stills, Ph.D. Seminar Presentation, 8 March 2017

In the psychoanalytic model, the observer presents an account of their subjective emotional responses to a seminar of other observers and, through sharing these with others, tries to verify their place in the observation experience.<sup>295</sup> Unlike this model where the seminar aims to offer ‘an atmosphere of acceptance and non-judgemental advice’ the research seminar is positioned differently. Part of its function is to challenge, and after presenting raw unthought-through material from the early stages of my research in this unfamiliar setting, I feel acutely exposed and vulnerable. (Figure 45)<sup>296</sup> The sharp critique takes me by surprise as tensions between art (psycho)therapy and fine art practices come to the fore. Wondering about my use of various materials and processes that bring an ‘art therapy’ aesthetic, questions are raised about my response to the situation, if it is genuine, and what conditions may unsettle my making and lead me to break with familiar conventions and languages – to work with things with which I might not have a natural empathy. I feel an intense pressure to ‘do’ something differently and, in the following days, write copious notes in an attempt to process the disruption. If I change my pattern, will I just be reacting to something I feel I have been told to do, or told I am ‘not’ doing in an attempt to conform?

In the rehabilitation centre the following week, I feel

out of it – unable to hear properly or concentrate on fully being there.<sup>297</sup>

I observe a conversation between a nurse and relative about the woman who sits between them, unable to speak due to a stroke. I also feel as if a conversation is happening around me – one I do not understand and from which I am excluded – and am relieved when the patient is, once again, included through their attention. In the studio I feel inhibited. I cover my face from what I imagine is the paralysing gaze of the academic art institution and the

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<sup>295</sup> The function of the seminar is to: ‘stimulate and clarify some theoretical reading at the start of the project; support the observer’s initial negotiations with the organisation; regularly hear and discuss process reports of observation sessions; and assist and advise on the ‘digestion’ of the observation material [...] when presenting to the seminar [...] the observer presents an account of [her] own sensitivity.’ Hinshelwood and Skogstad., p. 23.

<sup>296</sup> At a ‘Practice as Method’ seminar of fellow Ph.D. students I present an unedited fifteen-minute time-lapse video of the first five studio sessions in the studio with an inset video/audio-recording of the first fifteen minutes of my first studio session. This is available on the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/time-lapse.php>>.

<sup>297</sup> Extract from Journal Notes, Session VIII, 14 March 2017.

corresponding pressure to ‘rupture’ my process. Shame hovers. I do not want to be seen even though I am. (Figure 46)



Making the image afterwards – not sure I would describe it as making – working, interacting with what is in the space. I sit to begin with – I feel inhibited, as if behind the cameras there is a large audience of artists/art academics judging. The space no longer feels safe. I turn the camera back away from me and the object – then cover the lens – a gauze and red netting – to obscure the view – a red vein seems to extend across. I hang more material over the video as well before continuing to work with the object. Near the end of the hour I remove the covering from the cameras but cover myself with a sheet and sit on the floor alongside the object. Reclaiming some privacy? Under the sheet I think about Winnicott and how I feel that something has impinged on my play – inhibiting my capacity to play. The gaze of the other – caught in the gaze of the critical other – strips me of a skin – breaks through a protective membrane – ruptures.

Figure 46. *The Space No Longer Feels Safe*

Timelapse stills and process notes, Studio Session VIII, 14 March 2017

A part of me has closed down. Something has ‘impinged’, as Winnicott might say, and the potential for insights to emerge out of a more playful (albeit serious) encounter feels threatened by pressure to comply with a different institutional authority.<sup>298</sup> But which institution? I am no longer clear which direction I face. I work in silence; my actions still audible though largely obscured from view as I cover the camera lenses. Towards the end of the hour I expose them once more and sit on the floor next to the object-body-thing, now partially obscured beneath a polythene dressing that extends over the upper part of

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<sup>298</sup> Impingement implies an intrusion into an area belonging to, or affecting someone or something else. Winnicott’s idea of ‘impingement’ relates to ‘states of readiness and being prepared. It links with the capacity to allow things to take their course’. Jan Abram, *The Language of Winnicott: A Dictionary of Winnicott’s Use of Words*, London: Karnac, 1996, p. 164.

the tall erect structure nearby. Covering myself with a white sheet I imagine myself as a small child who, in covering her eyes, believes she cannot be seen. (Figure 47)



Figure 47. *Caught in the Gaze of the Critical Other*

Annotated Photograph, Studio Session VIII, 14 March 2017

Hinshelwood and Skogstad suggest that the atmosphere of the seminar may reveal some particular anxieties of the observer and, at times, replicate the emotional quality of the organisation being observed.<sup>299</sup> Given the different nature and setting of the research seminar, I hesitate to speculate on what the atmosphere might reveal about the anxieties and resistances in the room, or if some aspects mirror the emotional atmosphere in the rehabilitation centre. Accepting my own resistances and the risk that institutionalised, embedded, habits and routines guide my practice, what unfolds is a unique, uncertain situation, the shape of which will inevitably be affected by past experience and complex histories, and by the manner in which my work is received and responded to by others. Still, thinking *with* and *through* the experience as I write, and reflecting from a different position on the pressure (felt internally and externally) to 'rupture' my process and 'do' something differently, I respond more articulately.

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<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

The characteristics and qualities of the materials I use may lend themselves to particular ways of working and, for some, carry associations to ‘therapy’ and ‘craft’ rather than ‘fine art’ although for others, they may fall between.<sup>300</sup> While craft is often marginalised in favour of intellectualising the artist’s activity, ‘making’ is dependent on tacit, practical, embodied, experience, knowledge and understanding, aspects that the sociologist Richard Sennett suggests, also apply to ‘making human relationships’.<sup>301</sup> Inevitably, my great heavy sack of stuff holds a repertoire of experiences and understandings, of which the materials I use are part. Nevertheless, it is the emergent dialogue that is of primary interest – how I involve these materials in my ‘making’ process (and vice versa), and what this brings to attention. Merging skills and tools that lie somewhere between art and psychoanalysis and inhabiting the tension at their edges, I draw on the work of the artist Lygia Clark who saw art is a ‘living’ thing – an experience realised through dialogue and sensory interaction.<sup>302</sup> Here, she suggests, the aim might be ‘[to] give the participant an object that has no importance in itself and that will only take on [importance] to the extent that the participant will act’.<sup>303</sup>

While it might be argued that choosing materials with which I have less empathy might usefully serve to disrupt the familiar, in developing a relationship with the *work* of art I consider it more important that the studio offer a safe, contained setting – a ‘facilitating environment’, after Winnicott, where there is suspension of critical judgement, internal and external.<sup>304</sup> As Townsend suggests, making choices about the space, time, materials, tools,

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<sup>300</sup> They may also be said to carry a ‘fine art’ history – through the work of fibre artists and, more recently strands of practice that are difficult to categorise as they fall between art and craft. See Karen Wright, *Entangled: Threads and Making*, Margate, Kent: Turner Contemporary, 2017.

<sup>301</sup> Sennett suggests that ‘the craft of making physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others. Both the difficulties and possibilities of making things well apply to making human relationships.’ Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, London: Penguin, 2009, p. 289. See also Tanya Harrod, ‘Craft’, in *Documents of Contemporary Art*, London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2018.

<sup>302</sup> Susan Best, ‘Lygia Clark (1920–1988) Bodily Sensation and Affect: Expression as Communion’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, 7, 2006, 82–104. The later work of the artist Lygia Clark holds a position that, in no small part, resonates, being described by Christine Macel as sitting on the border ‘somewhere between art and psychoanalysis’. Christine Macel, ‘Lygia Clark: At the Border of Art’, in *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art 1948-1988*, New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1988, pp. 252–261, 259. In her later phase, from 1976 until her death in 1988, Clark’s work sat on the borders between art and clinical practice as she developed her own therapeutic method touching clients with the help of ‘relational objects’. Eva Marxen, ‘Therapeutic Thinking in Contemporary Art: Or Psychotherapy in the Arts’, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 36, 2009, 131–139.

<sup>303</sup> Lygia Clark, ‘A Propósito Da Magia Do Objeto’, 1965. Cited in Anna Deuzeze, *The "Do-It-Yourself" Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010, p. 8.

<sup>304</sup> For Winnicott, the ‘facilitating environment’ is a safe space in which the infant can develop although, as Townsend notes, this development is ‘predicated on the infant’s changing relationship with “mother as object”’, and her capacity to provide this without impinging on it. She suggests that the

and equipment is part of preparing the circumstances and conditions necessary for the creative process.<sup>305</sup> Like psychoanalyst Donald Meltzer's idea of 'gathering the transference', it is about establishing the setting and creating a psychological as much as a physical space.<sup>306</sup> The constraints around the work offer a 'container' of sorts although, as psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden argues, this is not a static thing, but a living process that continuously expands and changes.<sup>307</sup> While he describes a psychological 'place', I extend this to encompass a 'place of making' where fragments – 'this and that, here and there' – may gather and be gathered in a way that allows experience, now and then, to come together in one place.<sup>308</sup> Such gathering of studio 'stuff' may connect me with the safe and known but what I am doing with it does not. To borrow from Rebecca Fortnum, positioned as a 'launchpad', the situation thrusts me into encounters that, initially at least, I do not understand.<sup>309</sup>

In terms of whether my response is genuine, life is never simple and at times we are all likely to be more authentic than at others. Drawing on the work of performance artist Florence Peake, I suggest that, in presenting an account of my sensitivity in the seminar, however un-thought-through, the *work* of making and presenting affords me access to that sensibility. At a performative lecture as part of the 'Transmission' series I watch Peake respond to a political question from the audience, without words, but silently and imaginatively with her body. She becomes the work.<sup>310</sup> Although different, my response to the research situation is also personal, subjective, and open to multiple interpretations.<sup>311</sup> To borrow from

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artist also needs a contained setting, free from interruptions where the ongoing relationship between her and her artwork can develop, and that the studio can provide such a space. Townsend, *Creative States of Mind*, p. 87.

<sup>305</sup> *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>306</sup> Donald Meltzer, 'The Psychoanalytic Process: Twenty Years on the Setting of the Analytic Encounter and the Gathering of Transference (1986)', in *Sincerity and Other Works: The Collected Papers of Donald Meltzer*, ed. by Alberto Hahn, London: Karnac, 1994, pp. 551–556.

<sup>307</sup> Thomas H Ogden, 'On Holding and Containing, Being and Dreaming', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 85, 2004, 1349–1364, p. 1356.

<sup>308</sup> *ibid.*, p.1352.

<sup>309</sup> Rebecca Fortnum, 'Creative Accounting: Not Knowing in Talking and Making', in *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, ed. by Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013, pp. 70–87, 75.

<sup>310</sup> 'Transmission', Sheffield Hallam University, 6 February 2018, <<https://extra.shu.ac.uk/transmission/transav.html>>

<sup>311</sup> <<http://www.florencepeake.com/about>>. Peake's website notes that she often creates sculpture and painting after a performance and that 'these artworks serve as documentation but also ways of processing the experience of the performance itself.'



Townsend, in responding to an outside ‘something’, I, like Peake, abstract from my perception those elements that resonate and then manipulate those elements ‘in whatever way is necessary in order to construct an artwork that will present [my] own personal view of this aspect of the world’.<sup>312</sup> The difference here is that, for the purposes of this thesis, I must articulate it:

*empty everything out onto the floor – everything that isn’t seen – bring that all forward.*<sup>313</sup>

In presenting an early account of my sensitivity with all its inconsistencies and flaws, I might expose my process in a public arena too early when the work is still in an undeveloped state of becoming. While I have a sense of something significant happening, the experience is personal to me and, as Townsend remarks, others are unlikely to respond with the same intensity.<sup>314</sup> Perhaps I expect too much or maybe, as the artist Hester Reeve suggests in a later conversation, it is not a performance for an audience at this point, but rather ‘part performance and part research [...] performing to access the thinking’.<sup>315</sup>

During the seminar, a fellow researcher-artist-writer remarks that while I appear quite unsettled in my voice reflection, the making itself is not. ‘It’s hypnotic to watch’ she says, ‘but it’s not unsettled.’<sup>316</sup> Responding now I argue that my voice reflections are part of, rather than separate from, the work of ‘making’ and, as with the psychoanalytic /psychotherapeutic process, it needs to unsettle *and* settle. Indeed, working *through* the writing of this text almost four years later, I am struck by the parallel with the organisational process in the rehabilitation setting where things appear generally quiet and settled although, as participant-observer, I experience significant emotional and sensory disturbance. Perhaps, as the artist Sonia Boyce suggests, ‘where calm seems apparent there is tension beneath’.<sup>317</sup> Responding to the raw material I present, another researcher-artist, also a

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<sup>312</sup> Townsend, *Creative States of Mind*, p. 70 (my insertion).

<sup>313</sup> Thought voiced in Studio Session VIII, 14 March 2017.

<sup>314</sup> Townsend, *Creative States of Mind*, p. 14.

<sup>315</sup> Personal communication, artist and educator Hester Reeve, 15 November 2017.

<sup>316</sup> Personal communication, Emma Bolland, 8 March 2017.

<sup>317</sup> Sonia Boyce, ‘Artist Talk: Sonia Boyce’, London, 12 April 2017 <<https://archive.ica.art/whats-on/artists-talk-sonia-boyce/>> [accessed [17 December 2021]]. Boyce is in conversation with art historian Sophie Orlando discussing her work on the occasion of the exhibition of *We Move in Her Way*. The title of the work suggests two possible readings: that ‘she’ dictates our movements, or that we obstruct ‘hers’, with both interpretations suggesting power is at play. Sonia Boyce, *We Move in Her Way*, 1 February–16 April 2017, Performance and Multi-media Installation, London: Institute of



healthcare practitioner, notes the exposure of emotional vulnerability commenting ‘I feel it's things that I've felt that I'd never dare say out loud.’<sup>318</sup> Yet, there appears little space for any further expression of emotion, which is quickly passed over in favour of artistic and professional critique, leaving me to sit with and work through the unsettling emotional residue.

Maybe, as Clive Cazeaux suggests, it is ‘not simply the case that we leave one way of shaping experience and move to another; it is the tension between the two’ that is of concern here.<sup>319</sup> I face in different directions at the same time – a situation I do not anticipate at the start. In settling and unsettling me the *work* of art may not have the same effect as analysis; yet, as Potts and Machado suggest, it still has a reflexive dimension.<sup>320</sup> It provokes a ‘turning point’ through the effect it produces.<sup>321</sup>

But then, if I am the work, what am I?<sup>322</sup>

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Contemporary Art, <<https://archive.ica.art/whats-on/sonia-boyce-we-move-her-way/>> [accessed 8 November 2021]

<sup>318</sup> Personal communication, Sarah (Smizz) Smith, 8 March 2017.

<sup>319</sup> Clive Cazeaux, ‘Inherently Interdisciplinary: Four Perspectives on Practice-Based Research’, *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 7, 2008, 107–132, p. 129.

<sup>320</sup> Potts, ‘A Little Object’, p. 5, my italics.

<sup>321</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>322</sup> Reflection after Observation VIII.



## 3.5. Become Entangled

*cause to become twisted together with or caught in  
involve (someone) in difficulties or complicated circumstances from which it is difficult to escape*

### 3.5.1. How did the disruption affect what you went on to do?

'It would be easy to get caught up in its wires', I note during Studio Session III when, behind the sheet that covers its form, I am pressed up close against the object-body-thing. It is impossible to know what I may have gone on to do had I not presented at the seminar. But my resistance to the institutional pressure is palpable, although this brings concerns that my attention is distracted from the observational task at hand. Or perhaps it is all part of the complicated situation I am entangled with.



Figure 48. *Incidental Packing Materials*

Documentation, 19 March 2017

Gathering recycling at home, certain packing materials catch my eye, reminding me of the incidental stuff we often throw away and how the way something is packaged, handled, and

carried is charged with meaning. (Figure 48)<sup>323</sup> My attention is also captured by articles in *Art Monthly* which prompt thoughts of work, labour, and production – the pressure to produce in order to be seen to be of value in society, and the question of how time is spent.<sup>324</sup> I determine to take the materials to the studio, but forget as I become caught up with:

undressing, unwrapping [...] wrapping up, unwrapping, undressing, dressing, undressing, covering, uncovering.<sup>325</sup>

During Studio Session VI, after draping a white sheet over my own head, I drape a sheet of polythene over part of the object-body-thing on the wall as if giving it a ‘skin’. Entering the studio the following week, the membrane is partially fallen away, again revealing the network of threads, but I leave it and continue wrapping the tall erect pole-like thing as if clothing it in something softer and warmer.

Preparing for Observation IX, I contemplate changing my usual clothes for those akin to a mime artist – all black, but with a mask. I am uncertain to what I respond, but catch a thought about ‘becoming faceless – a depersonalisation – distancing’.<sup>326</sup> In the studio later, I cover the camera lenses to partially obscure the view, change into the black clothes and put on a *papier-mâché* mask borrowed from my art (psycho)therapy room.<sup>327</sup>

In contrast to the previous week, I stand defiantly looking into the camera lens with a blank, featureless, emotionless expression. (Figure 49)

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<sup>323</sup> These were involved in the transportation of a hand-carved sculpture from Canada to England.

<sup>324</sup> Morgan Quaintance, ‘Cultic Cultures’, *Art Monthly*, 2017, 6–11 In his article Quaintance refers to Maria Eichhorn’s exhibition, *5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours* at the Chisenhale Gallery, during which staff at the gallery, while paid, do not work and the gallery and office are closed. The artistic endeavour aimed to ‘give time’ to the staff through which ‘the artistic work can emerge’. Eichhorn’s conceptual gesture critiques institutional production and broader neo-liberal patterns of consumption but may also be understood as an artwork that deals with ideas of displacement of the artist’s labour and of the artwork as work. Maria Eichhorn, *5 Weeks, 25 Days, 175 Hours*, Exhibition, London: Chisenhale Gallery, 23 April–29 May 2016, <<https://chisenhale.org.uk/exhibition/maria-eichhorn/>> [accessed 8 November 2021]. See also <<https://chisenhale.org.uk/exhibition/maria-eichhorn/>>

<sup>325</sup> Extract from voice recording, Pre-Observation IX, 21 March 2017.

<sup>326</sup> Note captured on voice recording, Pre-Observation IX, 21 March 2017. The clothes I bring include a black T-shirt, black leggings, and a black woolly hat.

<sup>327</sup> The polythene and the mask were borrowed from my art (psycho)therapy room.



Figure 49. *Becoming Faceless*

Time-lapse still, Studio session IX, 21 March 2017

The urge to tie myself up – to become entangled – returns and I follow it, unsure of its significance. As Fong Ling notes:

'it becomes theatre now – a staging of something'.<sup>328</sup>

Whereas previously I feel as if I am making some 'thing' in response to the research situation, I now feel entangled *with* and intimately involved *in* a performative enactment although, of course, it has always been so. (Figure 50)

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<sup>328</sup> Personal Communication, Yuen Fong Ling, supervision meeting, 22 March 2017.



myself up in the rope, starting at my ankles, so it is difficult for me to move, I continue up and around my legs, turning my body into the rope I include my right arm, so only my left is free to move, wrapping around my neck the rope sits uncomfortably on my skin, rough and abrasive in texture, I pull at it with my free hand the polythene has become caught as I wrap, caught up in the rope I tie myself to the vertical object, threading the rope through the soft wool-like material is that we are all connected, the rope scratches my neck the thought of a hanging flashes through my mind as a strangling, an entanglement from which I may not be able to break free from before I loosen the rope and begin to unentangle myself, unwrapping the bonds around my body until they fall and I can step free. The upstanding vertical object has been pulled towards the web of wires on the wall. It rests its head near the top of the spine-like marks, its length extending out at an angle the rope tangles on the floor by its foot, she picks up the polythene covering

Figure 50. *Becoming Entangled*

Time-lapse stills with process notes, Studio session IX, 21 March 2017



Figure 51. *A Rent in the Fabric*

Detail, Studio session IX, 21 March 2017

Photographing the residue at the end of the Studio Session IX, I notice a tear in the fabric of the polythene; a rent – rupture – through which I can see more clearly, although the

dense mesh of wire wool over graphite scribble on a level with my gut makes little sense. (Figure 51) The following week, after meeting with Fong Ling, I move the video camera to a central position opposite the paper backdrop, retaining the position of the time-lapse camera for consistency, while strapping a GoPro camera to my chest.<sup>329</sup> During the observation I feel at a distance – like an object – but at the same time ‘caught up in something’.<sup>330</sup> In the studio I change into my black uniform and mask and, after facing the cameras head on, become even more entangled with the object-body-thing as I sit underneath the polythene sheet amidst scraps of packing materials and other bits and pieces, hopelessly trying to thread something together that makes sense. (Figure 52) Toward the end of the hour, in desperation and utter frustration, I throw clay at the wall and tear down the web of threads, leaving them hanging. What may once have been spoken in words has now become unintelligible noise – guttural expressions of my rage at the meaninglessness and senselessness of it all.



Figure 52. *Caught up in Something*

GoPro video still, Studio session X, 28 March 2017

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<sup>329</sup> In supervision on 22 March 2017, we had discussed the idea of re-positioning the cameras to frame the space differently.

<sup>330</sup> Extract from journal notes, Observation X, 28 March 2017.

### 3.5.2. Did you make any sense of it?

The potentially destructive rage is hard to articulate.

Later, after finishing in the studio and before writing up my notes, I capture my thoughts on the voice-recorder, the only time I do so.

I just feel like I really don't know what I'm doing – why I'm doing it. [...] It reminds me of trying to recover my voice. [...] the frustration with the body when it won't do what you want it to [...] My frustration with the object – with what I'm doing. What's the point?<sup>331</sup>

Writing in an attempt to understand, there is a vague echo of 'having to adapt – to change to new ways', accompanied by a 'rage and anger about what is lost and cannot be recovered'.<sup>332</sup>

The artwork feels like a mess. A tangle of worthless, meaningless bits and pieces. Left-overs, brought from a former place into a new place where they are struggling to find a worth – a value.<sup>333</sup>

Undoubtedly, there is resonance with the pain of past losses; change is a messy business, full of uncertainty and destabilisation. Many who visit the rehabilitation centre face massive trauma and catastrophic change, affecting personality, identity, behaviour, and emotions as well as control over bodily function, and staff are confronted on a daily basis with the limits to what they can offer.<sup>334</sup> As I note after Observation V, replacing a dropped packet of biscuits, a cervical collar, part of a crutch, and even a hip joint is relatively straightforward, but what about what is not recoverable or replaceable? Although far less at stake for me, through the research process I also feel undone – again caught somewhere between what I was and what I am yet to become – like the object-body-thing. When the frustration and anger subside, my thoughts turn to how much space it takes up, as if 'the constraints I have placed upon myself have begun to imprison rather than free me'.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Extract from voice recording, Post-Studio Session X, 28 March 2017.

<sup>332</sup> Reflection after Observation and Studio Session X, 28 March 2017.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Michaels, 'Art Therapy in Brain Injury and Stroke Services'

<sup>335</sup> Reflection after Observation and Studio Session X, 28 March 2017.





Figure 53. *What am I Grappling With?*

(Left) Annotated time-lapse still, (Right) Annotations to photograph, Studio session X, 28 March 2017

The ‘DANGER’ and ‘CAUTION’ signs that catch my eye during the observation earlier that day recapture my attention. Is that the risk – the ‘danger’ in all institutions including healthcare and academia – that the rules take over the dominant position. ‘What am I grappling with?’ I note on a photograph in which I appear to be engaged in a struggle with something. ‘What do I do with all this?’ (Figure 53)

Four years later, as I adjust the position of things on my desk to help relieve the painful knots in my neck, I rediscover Susan Sontag’s book *Regarding The Pain of Others*. It has lain open under a pile of papers for some time, but it is as if I notice her words for the first time, although I previously underlined them. ‘It is passivity that dulls feeling’ she writes. ‘The states described as apathy, moral or emotional anaesthesia, are full of feelings; the

feelings are rage and frustration.<sup>336</sup> (Figure 54) ‘But compassion’ she notes on the opposite page is:

an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers. The question is what to do with the feelings that have been aroused and the knowledge that has been communicated.<sup>337</sup>

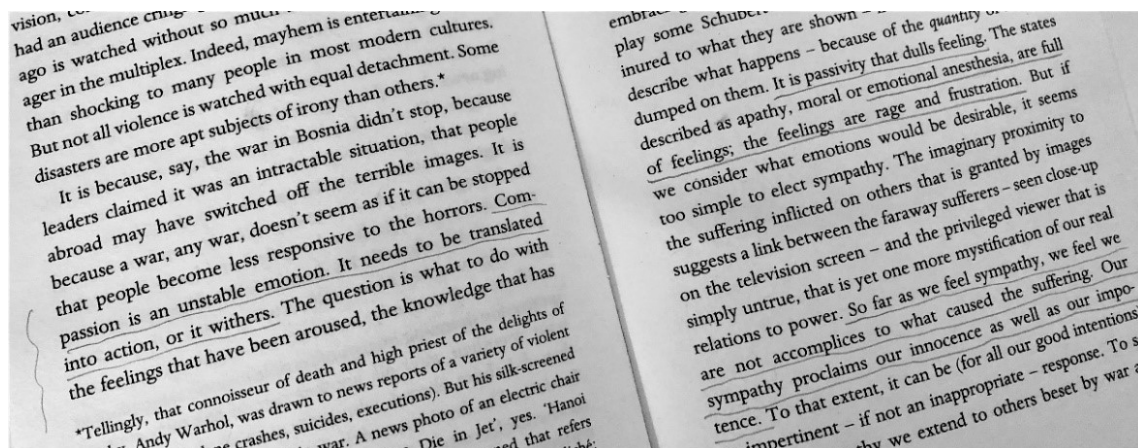


Figure 54. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 2003

### 3.5.3. What happened as you approached the end of the twelve-week observation?

The idea of ending feels strange; I will miss the people, but there is also relief. In the car before Session XI, I recall the sounds of my breathing behind the mask and beneath the polythene sheet and the weird swaying sensation as I hold onto the tall erect pole-like thing imagined as a mast with rope and netting wrapped around it. (Figure 55) It is as if I am on a boat or underwater, examining something.<sup>338</sup> I need to come up for air, put my feet on solid ground again. Time is running out, but I must ‘slow things down’, go at my own pace.

<sup>336</sup> Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, London: Penguin Books, 2003, p. 91.

<sup>337</sup> *ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>338</sup> Note from voice recording, Pre-Observation XI, 4 April 2017.



Figure 55. *An Underwater Investigation?*

Go-Pro video still, Studio Session X, 28 March 2017

Arriving for Observation XI a nurse, remembering me from twelve years earlier, asks if I am there to see a patient. I explain that I am here as part of a research project, to get a *feel* for the atmosphere. ‘Why do you need to do that?’ she exclaims. ‘You worked here for two years. You know what it’s like!’ ‘This is different,’ I reply, noting that two different chairs are already positioned in the place where I usually sit. The atmosphere is quiet, and I watch one of the administrators make her way around each table tidying the stacks of magazines on top of which are pens and pencils, hand cleanser, tissues, and wipes. As she sorts, my leaflets become absorbed into the piles. A part of me wants to shout ‘LEAVE THEM OUT’. I resist, not wanting to draw attention to myself, but feel I have disappeared – been absorbed. The exercise seems to be about ‘tidying – getting things in order’ rather than accessibility of resources. Small changes catch my eye this week; different staff and things moved – not where they were before. I feel acutely aware:

of empty spaces where people had been but are no longer [...] of time passing, moments going, presence and absences.<sup>339</sup>

In the studio my hands lead my body in a gestural, sensory, dance around the object-body-thing as if engaged in a strange ritual of sorts, accompanied by occasional vocal sounds –

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<sup>339</sup> Extract from Journal Notes, Observation XI, 4 April 2017.

thick and guttural as I draw around my hands, at other times more akin to singing. (Figure 56)

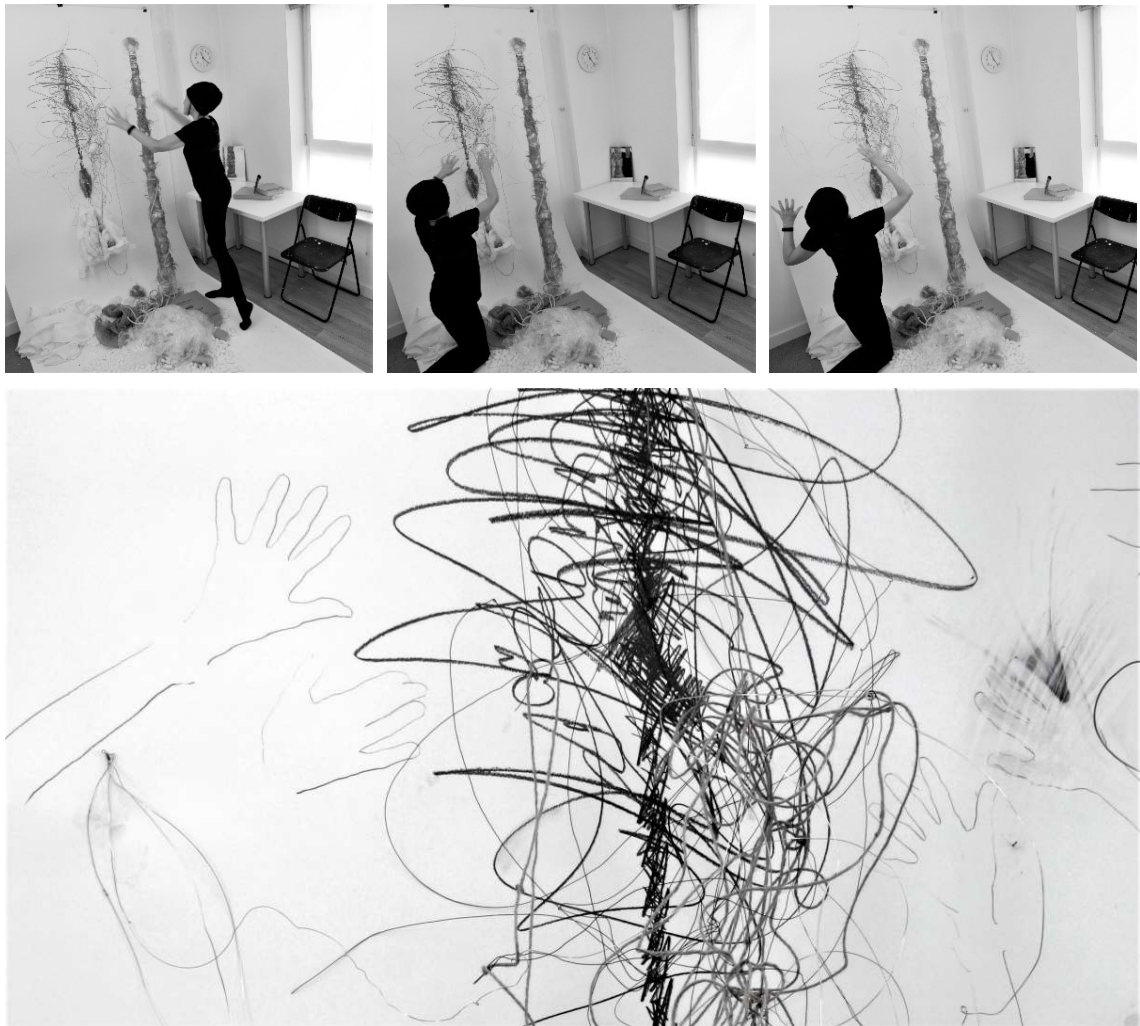


Figure 56. *A Strange Ritual*

(Above) Time-lapse stills, (Below) Detail, Studio Session XI, 4 April 2017

The drawn outline of hands seem to reach toward the object-body-thing. ‘Almost like worshipping some kind of ‘god-like figure – the totem of a primitive tribe?’ Kivland remarks some months later, ‘associated with rituals around how to constrain or proscribe behaviours.’<sup>340</sup> Or perhaps the ritual is about mourning?

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<sup>340</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland, supervision meeting, 17 May 2017. The meeting with Sharon and Yuen took place in the studio with the material residue of the object-body-thing in situ.



Towards the end of the hour I kneel, wrap my body in the clear polythene membrane, and curl up into a tight ball, quietly improvising in song

*'Can you see me? Can you see me? Can you – see me?'* (Figure 57)

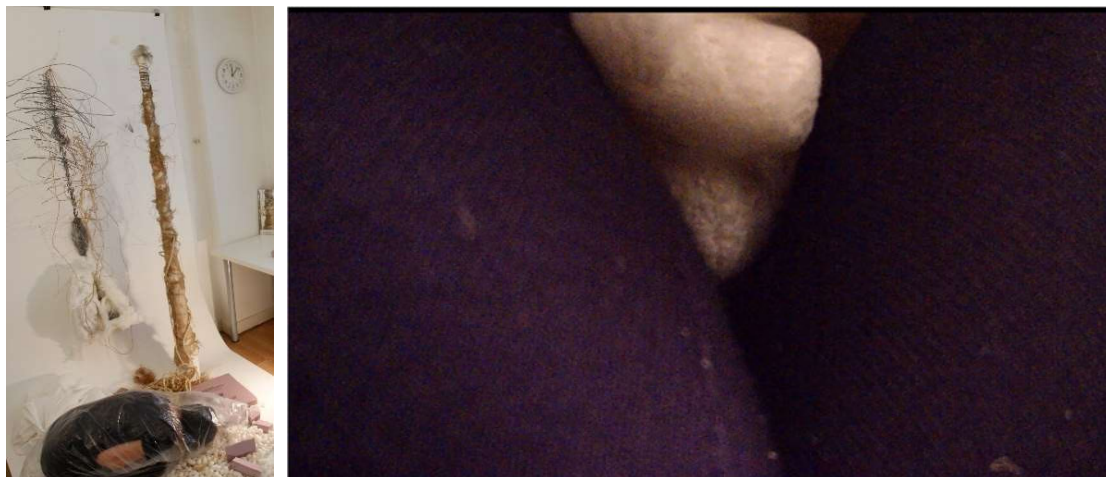


Figure 57. *Hiding in Plain Sight*

Time-lapse and GoPro video stills, Studio Session XI, 4 April 2017

Reviewing the time-lapse video later, the photographs seem over-exposed for no particular reason, and I feel saturated – ‘at the limit of what I can absorb’.<sup>341</sup> Perhaps I have reached saturation point in qualitative research terms when no new themes are emerging and patterns begin to repeat.<sup>342</sup> Yet, the saturation feels more like an intensity as I wonder if, like my leaflets, I have been absorbed into the culture.

The final observation feels like the death of something.

Something has happened in that room and it's coming to an end.<sup>343</sup>

A dream disturbs. I am unable to understand what is going on around me and what I am doing there – as if out of place and time. ‘Saturation’ and ‘over-exposure’ return but I am

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<sup>341</sup> Journal note, Observation XI, 4 April 2017.

<sup>342</sup> Benjamin Saunders and others, ‘Saturation in Qualitative Research: Exploring Its Conceptualization and Operationalization’, *Quality & Quantity*, 52, 2018, 1893–1907.

<sup>343</sup> Thought captured on voice recording, Pre-Observation XII, 11 April 2017.

unsure whether I dream the words or read them somewhere. Speaking into the voice recorder in the car, I feel in a different world, as if watching something happening around me. I imagine carrying out a post-mortem – a forensic examination – but am aware of a desire to move beyond the ending, away from it, as if it is easier to disappear into what I might do next. Hauling myself back I recall the previous week

tangling myself up with the wires [...] wrapping myself in polythene [...] it gradually got darker and darker [...] thoughts of suffocation [...] but then it did open up again.<sup>344</sup>

I struggle to stay with the present, with the quiet anticipation that something is about to happen.

As I enter the building for the last time I experience a tinge of disappointment and sadness. As I settle in my chair a nurse catches my eye. 'I'm just saying why you're here?'. Moments later a student nurse approaches. 'No-one seems to know what you are doing' she says, listening intently to my brief explanation, after which I contemplate the niggles at the back of my mind which insists that the nurse's (not the student's) sentence concludes with 'so they don't think you are loitering with intent'.<sup>345</sup> Still caught up in balancing the ethics of observing with the importance of bearing witness to something, I wonder again what is so difficult to comprehend, and the tension between hospitality and hostility. Noting that my chair is in a slightly different position this week I am relieved that at least something has moved, but now my view is partially obscured.

I have an urge, an impulse [...] to move the chair, but I don't – the impulse is to create more distance between myself and whoever might arrive at the table.<sup>346</sup>

Writing up the session on a train the following day I stop suddenly, feeling nauseous. Perhaps it is just the movement, or exhaustion. It is a struggle to refocus on what has now passed but, continuing later, I recall the feeling of watching from a distance

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<sup>344</sup> Thoughts captured on voice recording, Pre-Observation XII, 11 April 2017.

<sup>345</sup> Note from Research Journal, Observation XII, 11 April 2017.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

almost as if watching a film, but I am also in it – a part of the drama.<sup>347</sup>

I experience a strong sense of time passing and find myself noticing the incidental marks on the floor that are seemingly of little significance but nonetheless are there. As 10.30 a.m. approaches and I prepare to leave, a report on the television considers the dilemma of who should determine when and how the life of a sick body is ended. It seems poignant.



Figure 58. *Becoming the Object-body-thing*

Time-lapse and GoPro video stills, Studio Session XII, 11 April 2017

In the studio, I liberate the object-body-thing fully from the wall, strapping it to my body and entangling myself in its threads for the last time before disentangling myself and attaching it to the tall pole-like thing so it stands independently. (Figure 58) Working silently, I emit a sudden short, sharp, cry mid-way through the hour, then hum quietly as I sit resting my head on the object-body-thing. As 12:15 approaches I push the remaining detritus out of camera sight, as if insignificant. It is only later that I notice the length of string that extends across as if to emphasize the connection, although I do not place it there deliberately. (Figure 59)

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid.



Figure 59. *Residue*

Video still, Studio Session XII, 11 April 2017

‘Who says this is not for analysis’ Fong Ling remarks, ‘that this is more important than that.’<sup>348</sup>

SK This is as much as that. There isn’t any distinction except that this is more worked.

[...]

SK So the question is, does the residue still warrant capture or examination, or is it to be discarded now? or taken apart again?

[...] Because the danger – the risk – is that it’s seen as a work of art made in response to a series of events – that it’s given a status or importance that, actually, it doesn’t have for you – that it gets confused for being something.

DM I’m not quite sure at the moment *whether it is ‘something’ or not, what its status is although it feels, at the moment*, as if the main part of the work is elsewhere, captured in the videos and recordings – all the stuff that isn’t here, *isn’t visible here*.<sup>349</sup>

As Kivland reminds me, these bits and pieces are merely residue left over after a process has ended – part of the result of the *work* of art – ‘reminders that the act has taken place’, that something has happened.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Personal communication, Yuen Fong Ling, 17 May 2017.

<sup>349</sup> Extract from transcription of Supervision Record, 17 May 2017 – my annotations in blue.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.





# Perform a Task (3)

## (Re)situate & (Re)present

*situate elsewhere, in another place; move; relocate*

*present something again, especially for further consideration or in an altered form*

*depict (something or someone) in a picture, other work of art*

*state or point out clearly*

## 4.1. Re-turn

*come or go back to a place or person*  
*give, put, or send (something) back to a place or person*

### 4.1.1. Why did you feel it was important to return to the site?

Ingold's voice rings loud as he speaks of 'data' not as bits and pieces broken off from the ebb and flow of everyday life, but as something given; noting that there is something rather suspect – bothersome and unethical – about the idea of collecting data 'about' rather than learning 'from'.<sup>351</sup> His words rattle my insides. Yet, my return to site is more than merely going back to a place I have been before; it involves a multiplicity of processes.

My research is primarily concerned with artistic processes as a method of enquiry. Following Townsend, I take something from the outside inside – allowing the experience to inhabit and touch me – perhaps to 'make the inner world more "knowable" but also to shed new light on an aspect of the outer world'.<sup>352</sup> While the twelve-week participant-observation involves a regular process of moving between inside and outside, the *work* is mainly a private, subjective affair in that it involves 'getting into the culture and simply experiencing it'.<sup>353</sup> Yet, the project also depends on the hospitality of a host organisation and my placement *in* it. This necessarily involves negotiation and exchange across boundaries as the work becomes an empathic imaginative exploration through which I experience and contemplate an 'outside' situation in which I am intimately implicated as researcher.

Early on in my observations I become aware of the 'heavy responsibility'.

I really want to find a way to take the work the artwork in whatever form it ends up in [...] back into the organisation. That feels important but [...] a big responsibility as well in terms of what form and how I do that [...] there's something about this ethical responsibility of

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<sup>351</sup> Ingold, 'Search and Search Again: On the Meaning of Research in Art'.

<sup>352</sup> Townsend, '*Creative States of Mind*', 11 & 15.

<sup>353</sup> Hinshelwood and Skogstad, 'Observing Organisations', p. 165.

how I present my thoughts to the organisation [...] at what point is it appropriate to make an interpretation in whatever form that manifests itself [...] the artwork I'm making is some kind of response, and of course [...] they might just spew it up again or I might do it at the wrong time.<sup>354</sup>

The responsibility parallels aspects of the psychoanalytic/psychotherapeutic relationship with the corresponding tension between jumping in too early with an interpretation and 'holding' the space open for more to unfold. Then again, reflecting on the object-body-thing pinned to the wall in the studio, it cannot act if I keep it locked away under my control 'where only I can see it'.<sup>355</sup> Not unlike Becky Shaw's project *Transfer*, and as Fong Ling notes, moving the work somewhere else might 'unearth or unpack the material just by context'.<sup>356</sup> That said, while it screams at me to set it free, if I release its constraints too early without sufficient support, it will just 'collapse in a heap'.<sup>357</sup> Of course, had I followed the impulse, this may have led me down a different path. Still, noting my feeling of holding the work prisoner, I endeavour to stay with the disturbing feelings, imagining making a structure:

some kind of backbone for it – a way of taking it out of the room, letting it act, being able to move around it.<sup>358</sup>

Yet, how to do this? When *in* the organisation the idea of bringing the work I am making *outside, inside*, seems a nonsense; there is no space for it. 'And that's what they will be saying,' Kivland remarks:

SK where do we put this? But they don't just mean physically. The very thing you are trying to do is already blocked because people have no space in their

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<sup>354</sup> Extract from transcription of voice recording, Pre-Observation IV, 14 February 2017.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid..

<sup>356</sup> Personal communication, Yuen Fong Ling, joint supervision meeting, 6 December 2017. Exploring displacements and shifts of context as a way of focussing meaning, Shaw's *Transfer* project involved removing all the artworks from the Manchester Royal Infirmary and installing them temporarily at Castlefield Gallery, a mile and a half away.

Becky Shaw, *Transfer*, Installation, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, 3 December 2004–30 January 2005, <<http://www.beckyshaw.net/Transfer>> [accessed 20 December 2021] 'It seems important' Simon Grennan writes, 'that "Transfer" began as research rather than as proposition or imagined end result.' Simon Grennan, "'Transfer" Becky Shaw', *IXLA Reviews*, 28 January 2005.

<sup>357</sup> Extract from transcription of voice recording, Pre-Observation IV, 14 February 2017.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

thinking about it, because if they thought about it they'd be making a space for it.<sup>359</sup>

#### 4.1.2. Why such a delay?

There is much to process and the work has demanded more of me than anticipated. The spectre of the Ph.D. confirmation presentation and report, due in the autumn of 2017, looms large in the shape of a powerful, pressurising body, as does a trip abroad with my elderly parents that also demands my attention.<sup>360</sup> In an attempt to slow things down I apply for a three-month suspension from July – October 2017.

While always planning to involve others in responding to my work, the emergent nature of the project leads me to resist imposing a structure too early, only beginning to explore this once the observations are finished.<sup>361</sup> Initially I wonder about taking the object-body-thing into the Ph.D. community, ‘carried’ by others. But ethically it feels important to return to the rehabilitation centre first – to offer people there an opportunity to respond to it before taking it elsewhere. I meet with the head of University Ethics to discuss an approach. A ‘focus group’ with the staff team seems appropriate, with the aim of sharing aspects of my observation experience and the material produced.<sup>362</sup> As I note in my ethics application,

Feedback from the team will influence and inform my reflexive process and enable me to further explore the subject of my investigation.<sup>363</sup>

But I am now ‘outside’ the organisation and getting any response to the idea of a ‘Focus Group’ takes time. Further attempts at contact may also be perceived as intrusive. So I wait patiently, but not without some frustration.

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<sup>359</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland, joint supervision meeting, 17 May 2017.

<sup>360</sup> Confirmation of Ph.D. (known in the University as the RF2) takes the form of a seminar presentation and report, and involves an assessment process for the transition from Master of Philosophy (MPhil) to Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.).

<sup>361</sup> Since undertaking my art (psycho)therapy training I have been interested in how people respond to my artmaking process and the artwork I produce – how it is received, what it provokes or evokes (even if it is indifference, dismissal, or denigration) and how this might expand my own understanding of what I am doing and what my art speaks to.

<sup>362</sup> Having met with the Head of Ethics to discuss what I have in mind and how to present it to the ethics committee, a ‘focus group’ seems the most appropriate description for what is often used in research studies where multiple perspectives are sought in response to a subject or problem.

<sup>363</sup> Extract from Ethics Application ER5277788; approved 20 October 2017.

The absence of any communication [...] has left me feeling cut off when I feel I would like to [...] keep the communication open. Although setting up [the observations] took a long time, it was as if there was a clear direction. Perhaps that is it? I don't know what will happen next. I am reminded of being left waiting by a client (or even a hoped-for lover) – but am also aware of feeling shut out [...] very much on the outside again. I am left imagining – fantasising about the delay [...] a lack of interest or suspicion? I feel as if something is out of reach. Is there a space for me? Have I been shut out of mind?<sup>364</sup>

Gently persisting, I meet Ali early in July. As I am about to take three-months study leave we make provisional arrangements for the autumn after ethics approval is obtained; one hour during the time allocated for daily staff meetings. The following morning, between sleep and wakefulness, my mind turns to the tension between feeling not held in mind or being intrusive – a tension that resonates with my own experience of being a patient waiting to hear about an investigation or treatment. Or is there something I fear; my aggression or my desire to *know*?<sup>365</sup>

#### 4.1.3. What was happening during the time you were waiting?

Space and time to let the dust settle.

I present at three conferences during the spring and autumn of 2017. Yet while study is suspended over the summer, thinking is not. Exploring the 'use of self as a research tool' for METHOD 2017, I highlight some of the complexities and entanglements that arise when different 'bodies' (personal, theoretical, material, professional, institutional) meet, and when methods of research are an important aspect of the research subject.<sup>366</sup> (Figure 60) I address the difficulties encountered when crossing disciplinary boundaries and point to the potential value of dialogue as a research method – a significant thread in my research.

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<sup>364</sup> Diary Notes 1, 10 June 2017.

<sup>365</sup> Diary Notes 1, 4 July 2017.

<sup>366</sup> METHOD 2017 is an interdisciplinary postgraduate conference held at Sheffield Hallam University exploring the ingenuity embedded in research methods. As a biennial event it alternates with IMPACT.

The abstract is available at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/method17.php>>, together with a recording of the presentation <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/entanglements.php>>. The presentation transcript is documented in Appendix 7.

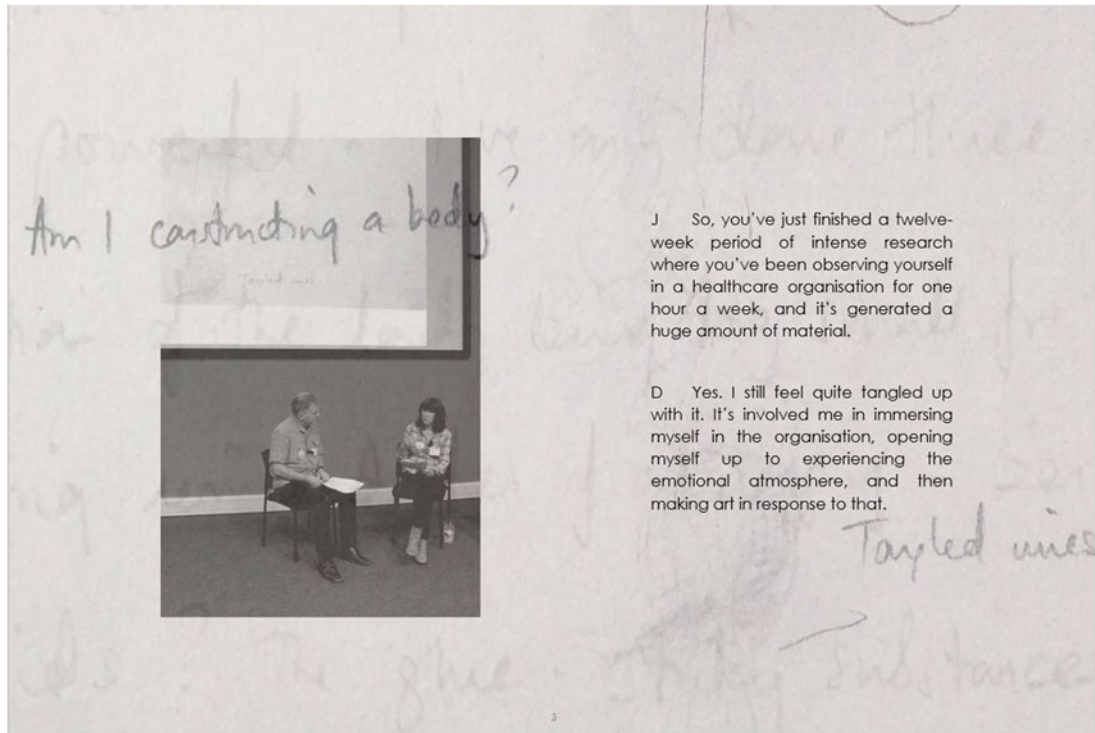


Figure 60. METHOD 2017

Layered documentation

Commenting on the interweaving of image and text in the background (which does not relate to the verbal conversation taking place), Kivland wonders if speaking in front of the screen obstructs the audience from seeing – the words becoming blocks as Marcel Proust might suggest.<sup>367</sup> Then again, as a ‘staging’ of something, I play with the idea of different dialogues happening at the same time in different places; how they lie alongside each other and are articulated, and what the ambiguity might activate. It is an experiment that, through its performance, complicates and challenges more traditional approaches to presenting research, enabling me to speak from inside out, *with* and *alongside* the material, and from a place of uncertainty, even if this means making myself more vulnerable.

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<sup>367</sup> Personal communication – supervision 17 May 2017. I look up ‘Proust obstruction of objects’ on google and am taken to *The Material Object in the Work of Marcel Proust* by Thomas Baldwin and a sentence that, referring to Edward J. Hughes’s *Marcel Proust, A Study in the Quality of Awareness*, suggests that, in Proust’s early work, he emphasises the importance of a “freedom from taxing reflection”, and that an ‘over-reaching, “hyper-active mind” that obsessively scrutinises personal experience are all viewed in terms of an “obstruction” to any instinctive happiness or pleasurable living’. Thomas Baldwin, *The Material Object in the Work of Marcel Proust*, Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2005. This reminds me of a not infrequent thought that embarking on this Ph.D. represents an obstruction to exactly that!! Perhaps a reading of Proust beckons?

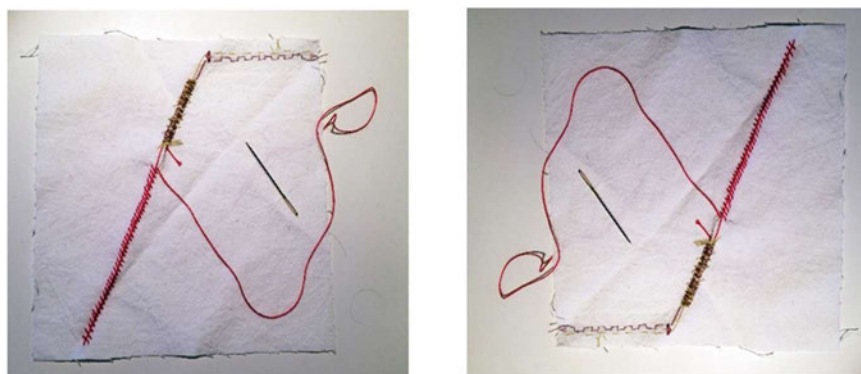
For the Association of Medical Humanities conference, I present for a different audience – one that seeks to promote critical dialogues between the humanities and healthcare, and is more sympathetic to art (psycho)therapy.<sup>368</sup> While drawing on material from METHOD, the performance is also different, focussing on my move to academic art research and the entanglement of past, present, old, and new; emphasising the role of art in offering ongoing opportunities for (re)examining aspects of the human condition through its capacity to *affect* and *reflect* differently at different times.

27.11.17

Health Humanities and Arts in Health International Symposium

Common Threads – [www.common-threads.org](http://www.common-threads.org)

Associations to a scar when making, repetition of stitch across a line, finding a rhythm → a wall/fortress...looking at the image the other way up it reminds me of a pen...drawing a line...as if writing something.



Merleau Ponty – intentionality – consciousness and intentionality

Idea that the contents of consciousness come out of what you are doing – thinking through doing

Figure 61. *Common Threads*

Diary Note extract, 27 November 2017

Presenting the same material again at the Health Humanities and Arts in Health International Symposium, what takes on significance is a workshop ‘Common Threads’ where, working with unfamiliar processes and material, I gradually find a rhythm in the repetition of stitching, my attention drawn to how thoughts emerge *through* the making process – thinking *through* doing.<sup>369</sup> (Figure 61)

<sup>368</sup> The abstract is available on the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/association-medical-humanities.php>>. The presentation included a remaking of ‘A Bloody Mess’ as part of a two-minute silent video.

<sup>369</sup> This was facilitated by ‘Common Threads’, an arts organisation which brings creativity, historical collections and communities together. <<http://www.common-threads.org/>>.





## 4.2. Exchange

*give something and receive something of the same kind in return*

### 4.2.1. What happened when you did return to the organisation?

Reflecting on their collection of studies, Hinshelwood and Skogstad note that there was never a demand made by organisations for a report; rather, as I myself experience, once the observations end there is a painful sense of ships passing in the night.<sup>370</sup> Yet, as Leavy suggests ‘creating a space for dialogue with the audience is vital to the negotiation of meanings and incorporation of multiple perspectives’.<sup>371</sup> Presenting material ‘outside’ gives me a certain confidence; however, returning to the organisation I am unsure how the work will be received. As the artist Maureen Connor might suggest, after being ‘allowed’ into the workplace as observer, I now invite staff to step outside and see aspects of their workplace from my perspective as an outsider.<sup>372</sup> In doing so, I open up a potential space in which otherwise difficult, even impossible, exchanges might occur, but I also risk losing control over the meaning of the work. It might ‘work’ for me but will it resonate for them and, if so, how. Indeed, as Kivland notes, they ‘may be rather surprised by what is brought back and not be able to process it’ and there is always the risk that the work might just be spat out as indigestible.<sup>373</sup> The question becomes *what* to feed back, and *how*.

Initially, thinking about sharing my observation experience with staff, I imagine presenting materials used in my studio process, accompanied by photographs or video material.

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<sup>370</sup> Hinshelwood and Skogstad, ‘Observing Organisations’, p. 166.

<sup>371</sup> Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*, p. 18.

<sup>372</sup> At the time of contributing to this book, the artist Maureen Connor had been developing *Personnel* – a series of interventions concerned with the art institution as a workplace – which explored the attitudes, needs, and desires of staff at various institutions. Discussing the tensions between hospitality and hostility in embedded art practices with Marisa Jahn, Connor suggests that ‘the artist, a stranger, is welcomed into the workplace as an ‘other’, a subject, and he/she in turn does the opposite: she invites workers to step outside and see their workplace from her perspective as an outsider’. Maureen Connor, ‘Personnel: A Conversation with Maureen Connor’, in *Byproduct: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices*, ed. by Jahn Marisa, Toronto: YYZ Books, 2010, pp. 95–98, 98. I refer to being ‘allowed’ rather than ‘invited’ as the manager of the service used this term, and it more aptly reflects the nature of the context in which the team responded to my request.

<sup>373</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland, joint supervision meeting, 17 May 2017. See Appendix 4 for fuller extract of the annotated supervision record.

However, in conversation with Hester Reeve, she questions if this is necessary, that it may be sufficient to merely act as an instrument to open a space for others to speak about their recollections of, and feelings about, the observation.<sup>374</sup> The idea appeals; more authentic in terms of opening a space for thinking about what might be difficult to articulate, and akin to aspects of my art (psycho)therapy practice. Perhaps ‘props’ are unnecessary? Yet, despite the appeal, I struggle to hold onto it.

Having received ethics approval I meet Ali to discuss the Focus Group, showing her some video screenshots from recent conference presentations. She imagines these might ‘challenge’ and ‘provoke’ as they are ‘a bit outside the box’.<sup>375</sup> I also wonder how staff will respond, imagining they might dismiss the work as a bit mad, or frivolous in the face of dealing with real vulnerability – thoughts with which I also grapple. Perhaps, as the social psychologist Michael Billig suggests, I fear being mocked for my infringement of social norms.<sup>376</sup> Then again, I want to unsettle a little.

At home I play with arranging the screenshots, which interweave photographs from my studio process with written annotations and reflections.<sup>377</sup> (Figure 62) Reconfiguring the photographs, I become aware of the tension between connecting them in a particular configuration and breaking up the linear narrative. Gradually the idea of an ‘archive’ takes shape – a collection of historical documents and artefacts – the record or memory of a series of gestures. (Figure 63) Part of this archive includes an experimental writing *Nothing Much Going On*, based on the transcript of the audio recording from Studio Session I where, for the first fifteen minutes, I recall aloud my experiential impression of the first observation.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Personal communication, Hester Reeve, 15 November 2017.

<sup>375</sup> Personal communication, 21 November 2017.

<sup>376</sup> Michael Billig, ‘Freud and the Language of Humour’, *Psychologist*, 15, 2002, 452–455, p. 454.

<sup>377</sup> These screenshots were taken from the video presentation for METHOD 2017. See <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/entanglements.php>>

<sup>378</sup> See Appendix 5 for a full transcript of *Nothing Much Going On*. A short reading from the text can be heard at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/nothing-much.php>>

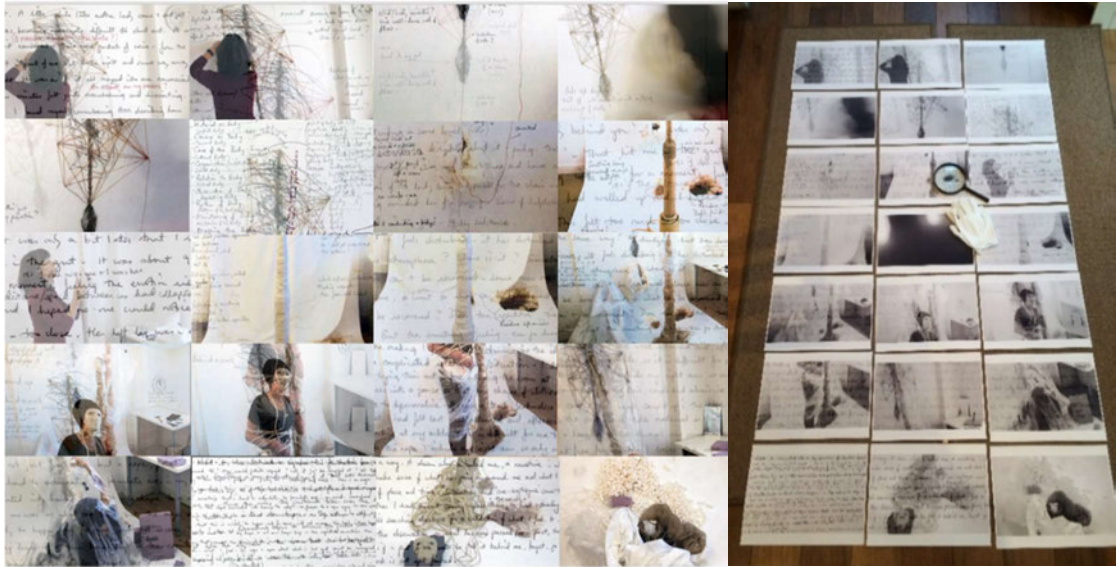


Figure 62. *Assembling and Reconfiguring*, November 2017



Figure 63. *Assemblage of Material*, 5 December 2017

#### 4.2.2. What kind of discussion took place?

Perhaps it is fear of social embarrassment that directs me to structure my presentation in a more formal manner. Still, at the beginning of the allocated hour, I lay out the materials on a folded sheet in the centre of the large table in the team office around which thirteen of us sit.

After introducing my project, I read from *Nothing Much Going On*.

SK Did that surprise them?

DM It resonated on various levels [...] Different professionals, picked up on different bits of it that seemed to resonate [...] <sup>379</sup>

For example, one person notes:

*from a therapy point of view that sounds like the patients we work with. A lot of those things that you mentioned – the isolation, the separation, the disjointedness, especially working with people with neurological conditions. [...] despite what we try to provide here, these are all things they come with us to work [...] it was like you were recalling an assessment, an initial assessment for treatment. For me it was like you were picking up on what was happening.* <sup>380</sup>

For another it resonates with patients who have communication difficulties:

*a lot of my patients have aphasia so the bit where you said 'somebody talk to me, nobody talk to me' – that is something that a lot of my patients say to me – that they wish someone would talk to them but they don't want to talk.* <sup>381</sup>

Another remarks:

*you are visiting like our patients will be and if that's the first time coming here then they may have all those thoughts as well [...] sat there, waiting, watching, looking at the environment and what that would mean to you and what that might mean to them.* <sup>382</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Extract from Supervision Report, 6 December 2017.

<sup>380</sup> Extract from Focus Group transcript.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

Someone else mentions the therapy ‘gym’, a rather incongruous term given the setting; it tends to make patients laugh, but anxious that they will have to perform on the treadmill. A conversation strikes up about whether it should be renamed. Then about the noise, how overwhelming it can be for those with cognitive or speech and language difficulties, or really quiet which means people get bored. How difficult it is to get the right balance. Changing the tone, another notes how strange it was seeing me there, and that I ‘looked sad’.<sup>383</sup> Wondering what patients might have thought, she remarks ‘I don’t know if we told people you were observing?’.<sup>384</sup> I might have left more space here for feelings, but with ethical considerations in mind, I fill it with reassurances that I had put leaflets out, that some had certainly looked, and others had asked – like the man who wondered what I was doing as it seemed I just sat and watched telly each week! We laugh. Then I invite people to explore the materials and envelopes on the table, which proves a bit more challenging. ‘In what way?’ Kivland asks the following day.<sup>385</sup>

There is tentative engagement by some, with questions about what things are and why I have a hammer. I respond, noting the *felt* significance of the hammer in association with *Homes under the Hammer* which plays each week on the TV. But ‘disturbing’ is the word that reverberates around the room in response to some of the photographs that emerge from envelopes, particularly those where I am behind the mask entangled with the rope. (Figure 64) It interrupts further exploration of the envelopes but generates more discussion about my process and the emotional landscape.

*[...] in order to survive and do our jobs we have to either – we feel it – but then we have to tuck it away somewhere [...] so if you think about absorbing that throughout your career and you never get a chance to offload it anywhere [...] because you have to keep doing your job, and it’s the consequences of that, and you are perhaps witnessing some of the stuff that we have to deal with naturally every day. So it perhaps makes me a bit more mindful of mental health [...] in a big organisation [...]*<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> She had known me from my time there as an art psychotherapy trainee.

<sup>384</sup> Extract from Focus Group I transcript.

<sup>385</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland, joint supervision meeting, 6 December 2017.

<sup>386</sup> Extract from Focus Group transcript.

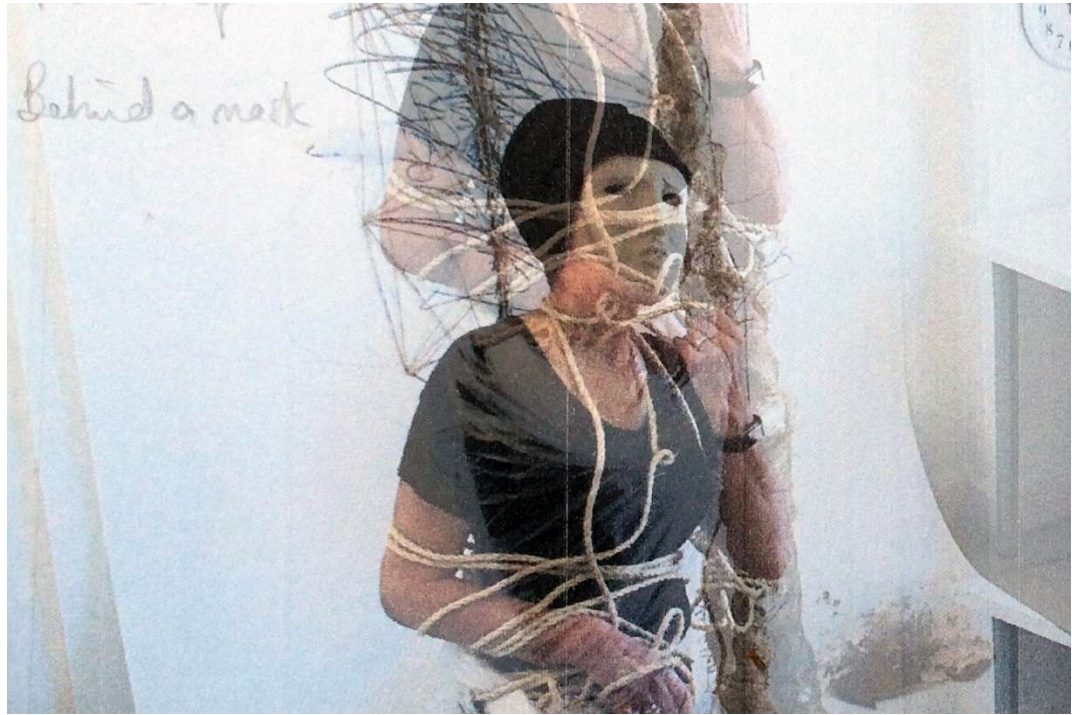


Figure 64. *Entangled Behind a Mask*

Layered image and annotations., Observation IX, 21 March 2017

A staff member (recently bereaved) becomes visibly emotional and leaves the room by the back door that leads to the garden. There is a pause in the conversation. After a few moments I wonder about the loss of what cannot be recovered and the significance of this, for me, during the observations. Again, I may have left more space, but in response to my associations with *Homes under the Hammer* and patients having suffered a stroke, someone says, 'I'm afraid it's that or Jeremy Kyle', breaking the atmosphere again with laughter.

Shortly afterwards, another says:

*you've talked a lot about negative emotions [...] sadness, about feeling tied up and a lot of heavy emotions. Were there any moments of lightness? [...] 'cause at the moment I struggle to see them!*<sup>687</sup>

I acknowledge her point, but comment that, rather than 'negative' (which, with the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein in mind, leans toward a split of good and bad) I see them as

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<sup>387</sup> Extract from Transcript of Focus Group 1.

part of a whole range of emotions.<sup>388</sup> I had witnessed laughter, as well as funny and very moving moments between staff and patients, although, as I say at the time, ‘if I’m honest, it wasn’t light’. I do not mention (although I might have done) the palpable split I feel at times between the laughter at the nursing station and the absence of such among patients, or the occasional cruel jokes about being ‘trouble’, made at a patient’s expense. Although not a conscious omission, addressing such issues would shift my position to one of criticism and judgement – *above* rather than *with* and *alongside* – which is not my purpose. They have ‘allowed’, rather than invited, me (back) into the organisation and, to some extent at least, I rely on their hospitality. However, the question leads to a discussion about the social role of humour in helping to sustain and manage things when it is ‘a heavy bag we’ve got here’, and how to balance it when patients still have to:

*go home without speech – without being able to function – and we still have to come in here and battle with various organisational systems that drive us all up the wall because we can’t get what we want!*

*A it’s not always easy for staff as well, ’cause obviously staff have to come to work, they’ve got things going on in their own lives.*

*DM Of course.*

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<sup>388</sup> As a *felt* experience Klein’s focus on the more visceral, affective, quality of anxiety and the more destructive aspects of human nature resonate at a gut level for me. I recall my analyst articulating my sense of relief that someone out there was thinking about these things, and am reminded of Bion’s idea of ‘thoughts in search of thinkers’ with the implication that thought is a social rather than individual process. See Wilfred Bion, R., *Second Thoughts: Selected Papers on Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge, 2018, cited in Susan Long, ‘Socioanalytic Methods: Discovering the Hidden in Organisations and Social Systems’, London: Karnac, 2013, p. 7.

Conflict, contradiction, and ambivalence characterise Klein’s phantasy world of ‘object relations’ where fluctuations in the capacity for love and hate can quickly turn care and concern for another into paranoid concern for the self. R. D. Hinshelwood, *A Dictionary of Kleinian Thought*, London: Free Association Books, 1991. Developing Klein’s ideas, Bion argues that it is through an emotional environment that supports ‘staying’ or ‘being’ with such experience, rather than seeking to get rid of or (re)solve the discomfort through premature action or moves to *all* or *nothing*, that we learn to ‘contain’ our fluctuating internal states and to tolerate ambivalence and the wait for meaning to gradually emerge. Bion, ‘*Learning from Experience*’.

Drawing on Klein’s work, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes in *Melanie Klein and Affect* that maturity involves engagement in an ongoing struggle to resist fixed, all or nothing, dualistic, oppositional positions that split good and bad, in the face of the very difficult embodied realisation that good and bad tend to be inseparable at every level. To borrow her words, it is ‘a fragile achievement that requires discovering over and over’. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes’, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 106, 2007, 625–642, p. 632.



- A ...and then they come into this day room. I suppose you like go into another mode – like acting
- B put your face on
- X [...] you have to put on a brave face and carry on
- DM and there's a mask sitting in the box
- S Yeah, there is – a mask sitting in a box. But yeah, we do don't we. We all have to do that. We do it in different ways at different places in our lives.<sup>389</sup>

Time has run out and I thank everyone for allowing me to bring in the work. 'And we've allowed you *back*' remarks the manager, which makes us all laugh again. I collect the consent forms, noting that a number of the team have expressed an interest in further opportunities to become involved in the project.

#### 4.2.3. What were your thoughts after the group?

Shame lurks as I recall laughing the following day when recounting the events in a supervision meeting with Kivland and Fong Ling. It is only afterwards, when I listen back to the recording of the meeting as I transcribe it, and notice my/our laughter, that I feel the discomfort, as if violence is being perpetrated.

One of the people had to go and I could see she was upset, it transpired she'd lost [redacted] recently...and then later on one of [redacted] said...'didn't you notice anything lighter? Wasn't there anything fun?'...because on the surface there is a lot of humour and lightness. I'm aware that as I write up how I'm talking about this and I laugh at various points...as if to relieve some of the heaviness?...or am I mocking them in some way?...I feel uncomfortable as I listen to myself and the conversation...am I/are we trying to make light of something that was disturbing...to put some distance between me and you/us and them?

Freud, Sigmund, 'Humour', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 9, 1928, 1-6 (look up)

*The violence of humour?*

*What is the laughter about?*

Figure 65. *The Violence of Humour*

Extract from annotated supervision report, 6 December 2017.

<sup>389</sup> Extract from Transcript of Focus Group 1.

Writing into the supervision report three months later, our exchange no longer feels like a laughing *with*, but laughing *at*.<sup>390</sup> (Figure 65) As Billig might say (with reference to Freud), this particular laughter has an ‘aggressive crackle that permits momentary pleasure in unfeeling cruelty’.<sup>391</sup> Perhaps, like the jokes made at the patients’ expense, I (re)enact something cruel through the retelling – mirroring a turning away to humour and lightness as a way of relieving the unbearable heaviness and avoiding troublesome, disturbing feelings.<sup>392</sup> To be upset and remain in the room clearly feels impossible for one staff member, reminding me of the powerful impulse to get up and leave an observation when emotion threatens to overwhelm.

In a joint supervision meeting with Fong Ling, Kivland wonders whether it might have been easier had I given the staff more clues as to how to read or look at the work; many envelopes remained unopened.

SK That was when they were awkward? An encounter with something – a language they were not familiar with

YFL Or wanted to see?<sup>393</sup>

I might have made the material more accessible by giving it more order; however, there is a complex tension between trying to help someone make sense of senseless experience, as in art (psycho)therapy, or breaking up established patterns of sense-making as with this research. I want the work to interfere with the normal arrangement of things – to evoke and provoke discussion and leave an impression, even though this may create uncertainty and unease. Yet, as a part of an exchange on which my research relies, I do not want the material to disturb too much, or generate hostility, as mutual trust facilitates the placement. The manager’s parting statement about ‘allowing me *back*’ suggests this trust must be handled with care – that hospitality might become hostility, and empathy, invasion.

Engaged in an ‘aesthetics of listening’, to borrow from the art historian Grant Kester, and positioned as ‘processor’ working from an empathic vantage point, I may be sensitised to

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<sup>390</sup> The supervision report was submitted in March 2018.

<sup>391</sup> Billig, ‘Freud and the Language of Humour’, p. 453.

<sup>392</sup> Wilhelm Skogstad, ‘Working in a World of Bodies: A Medical Ward’, in *Observing Organisations: Anxiety, Defence and Culture in Health Care*, ed. by R. D. Hinshelwood and Wilhelm Skogstad, London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 101–121.

<sup>393</sup> Extract from transcript of supervision meeting with Sharon Kivland and Yuen Fong Long, 6 December 2017.

moments that otherwise may alienate.<sup>394</sup> Indeed, in a conversation with the art historian Claire Bishop and theorist Stephen Wright, Jahn suggests that a core challenge of embedded art practice is the problem of how to retain the vitality of what happens on the inside, while at the same time transposing and communicating this authentically in a way that avoids alienating those involved as participants in the production of the work.<sup>395</sup> In respect to such practices, Connor proposes that there is also a parallel with psychoanalysis/psychotherapy in that what might be experienced as hostility in another context enables one to hear and acknowledge difficult information as part of the process of learning and change.<sup>396</sup> It seems though, that the provocation was generally received well. (Figure 66)

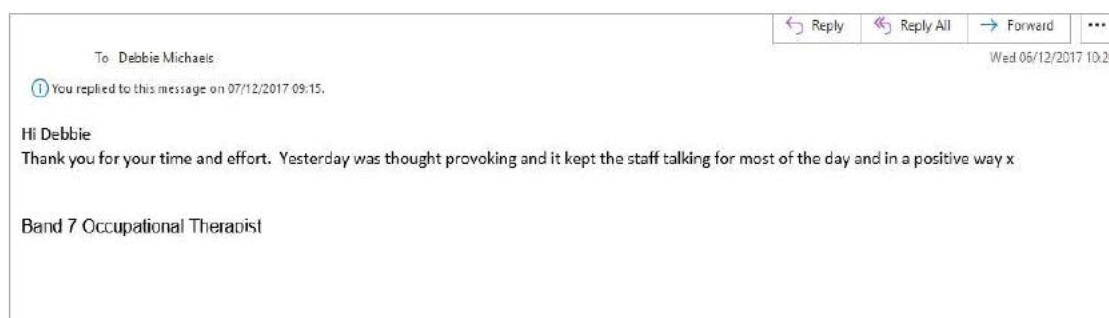


Figure 66. *Thank You for Your Time and Effort*

Email correspondence following Focus Group One, 6 December 2017

Yet, the laughter or joke that crackles with aggression and momentary cruelty is a sharp reminder of how easily ‘care’ and attention can turn its head to ‘not caring’. Like Pina Bausch’s 1978 performance work *Kontaktb Hof*, which functions as a metaphor for human

<sup>394</sup> Marisa Jahn, ‘APG Legacies and Aftermaths: A Conversation with Clair Bishop and Stephen Wright’, in *Byproduct: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices*, ed. by Marisa Jahn, Toronto: YYZ Books, 2010, pp. 50–53, 51. Exploring the legacy of the APG Jahn refers to the art historian and critic, Grant Kester, who describes an “aesthetics of listening” as a paradigm that regards listening and understanding as a constitutive act, counterposed to the Western emphasis on declaration and assertion. Grant Kester, ‘Conversation Pieces: Communication and Community in Modern Art’: Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004, p. 106, cited in Jahn, ‘Byproduct: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices’, p. 184.

<sup>395</sup> Jahn, ‘Byproduct: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices’, in ‘APG Legacies and Aftermaths’, p. 51. In another conversation between Jahn and Bogad, distinctions are made between ‘embedded’ art practices and those which are ‘site-specific’, ‘contextual’, or ‘interventionist’; namely that embedded art practices are ones in which the artist becomes parasitically reliant on its institutional host so that a ‘certain intimacy and reliance between parasite and host evolves’. They suggest that, for such art practices, ‘oppositonality is irreconcilably bound up with an empathic relationship to the larger whole’. Marisa Jahn and L.M. Bogad, ‘Byproducts and Parasites: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices’, in *Byproduct: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices*, ed. by Marisa Jahn, Toronto: YYZ Books, 2010, pp. 10–18, 12.

<sup>396</sup> Connor, ‘Personnel: A Conversation with Maureen Connor’, p. 98.

interaction, the caress becomes a slap so quickly it is almost impossible to identify what it is that has made it become its opposite.<sup>397</sup>

Returning to the tension between what I discuss with Reeve and what I actually do, Hoggett describes several ‘free associative methods’ that offer spaces for the affective dimensions of experience to emerge, followed by more sense-making processes.<sup>398</sup> Likening these group methodologies to ‘unfocus groups’, he suggests that they are designed precisely to avoid the imposition of a research agenda other than to provide a space to see what emerges. I remain drawn to the approach which, not unlike a Bohm dialogue, may allow for a freely flowing group conversation that has no predefined purpose.<sup>399</sup> However, I cannot escape a research agenda, therefore I am not so much concerned with what I *do*, but with the emergent tensions that arise and what they direct attention towards. My project provides a space to see what emerges – an ‘unfocussing’ – while at the same time offering an opportunity to ‘focus’ the attention.

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<sup>397</sup> Philippa Kaina, ‘Pina Bausch's Kontakthof’, *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 210, 2017, 383–383.

<sup>398</sup> These include: 1. ‘Organisational observation’ where the emphasis is on the capacity of the researcher to be attuned and receptive to the feelings that might be implicit in a situation; 2. ‘Ethnographic research’ or fieldwork in anthropology which acknowledges the central value of imagery embodied in ritual, artefacts, and customs as a source of data; 3. ‘Poetry, psychodrama, and theatre’, which may get beyond the discursive through its capacity to evoke and summon forth; 4. ‘Dreams’ as a form of reverie. Hoggett, ‘Collective Feelings and the Politics of Affect and Emotion’, 120–131.

<sup>399</sup> A Bohm dialogue looks well beyond conventional ideas of parlance and exchange, offering a free-flowing conversation in which participants attempt to reach a common understanding, experiencing everyone’s point of view fully, equally, and non-judgementally. For Bohm, ‘dialogue is really aimed at ‘going into the thought process and changing the way the thought process occurs collectively [...] If we ran machines without paying attention to them, they would break down Our thought too, is a process, and it requires attention, otherwise it’s going to go wrong.’ David Bohm, *On Dialogue*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 10.



## 4.3. Move

*make progress; develop in a particular manner or direction*

*change the place, position, or state of*

*stir up in someone*

### 4.3.1. How did this move your research forward?

Ahmed suggests that it is 'through the tasks that are on the way to being completed that a body reveals a stance or attitude', implying that we are not necessarily conscious of the knowledge that might be revealed.<sup>400</sup>

Early in 2018 I present my work as part of the Ph.D. confirmation assessment.<sup>401</sup> Discussing the next step with Fong Ling I note:

DM I feel as if the practice is very much emerging and I'm not quite sure where that's going to end up yet although it feels as if it's moving into a more performative space [...] I think that this idea of reconfiguring – disassembling and reassembling in different ways seems to be coming through.

YFL So do you have a shape and a form for what the next few projects might be?

DM [...] the idea of taking the object into the organisation [...] I would quite like for it to occupy ideally the space where I sat.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Ahmed draws on the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty and his thinking about the intelligence of bodies, and how we learn through them. In the activity of writing – the motor movement, for example – we might 'catch' a thought. Ahmed, 'Institutional Habits', 'Institutional Habits'. I make a connection here with the features of the unconscious which, as Jan Campbell suggests 'waits and lurks as a potential for different forms of expression [...] the forms that will give a shape to our desires and allow them to travel and communicate'. Jan Campbell, 'Dress Designs of Our Passions', in *Freudian Passions: Psychoanalysis, Form and Literature*, London: Karnac, 2013. It might be argued then, as Augusto suggests, that unconscious knowledge 'refers to knowledge that is revealed by task performance alone, subjects being unaware that they are accessing it, whereas we speak of conscious knowledge when subjects are aware of possessing and accessing it'. Luís M Augusto, 'Unconscious Knowledge: A Survey', *Advances in Cognitive Psychology*, 6, 2010, 116–141, p. 116.

<sup>401</sup> This involves a 30–40-minute seminar presentation on 7 February 2018, followed by a six-thousand-word report submitted the following month.

<sup>402</sup> Extract from transcript of supervision meeting with Yuen Fong Ling, 14 February 2018.



### 4.3.2. What was involved in moving the ‘object-body-thing’?

By the time I come to move it, I have lost my emotional connection with it and do not give much thought to what might be needed to facilitate the move, or what it might mean to hand the object-body-thing over to others.

A year after completing the observations I approach what remains of the object-body-thing with a view to moving it out of the studio into the rehabilitation centre. Ethically, I feel a responsibility to do this before allowing others to handle it; yet the work is also embedded in the research institution.

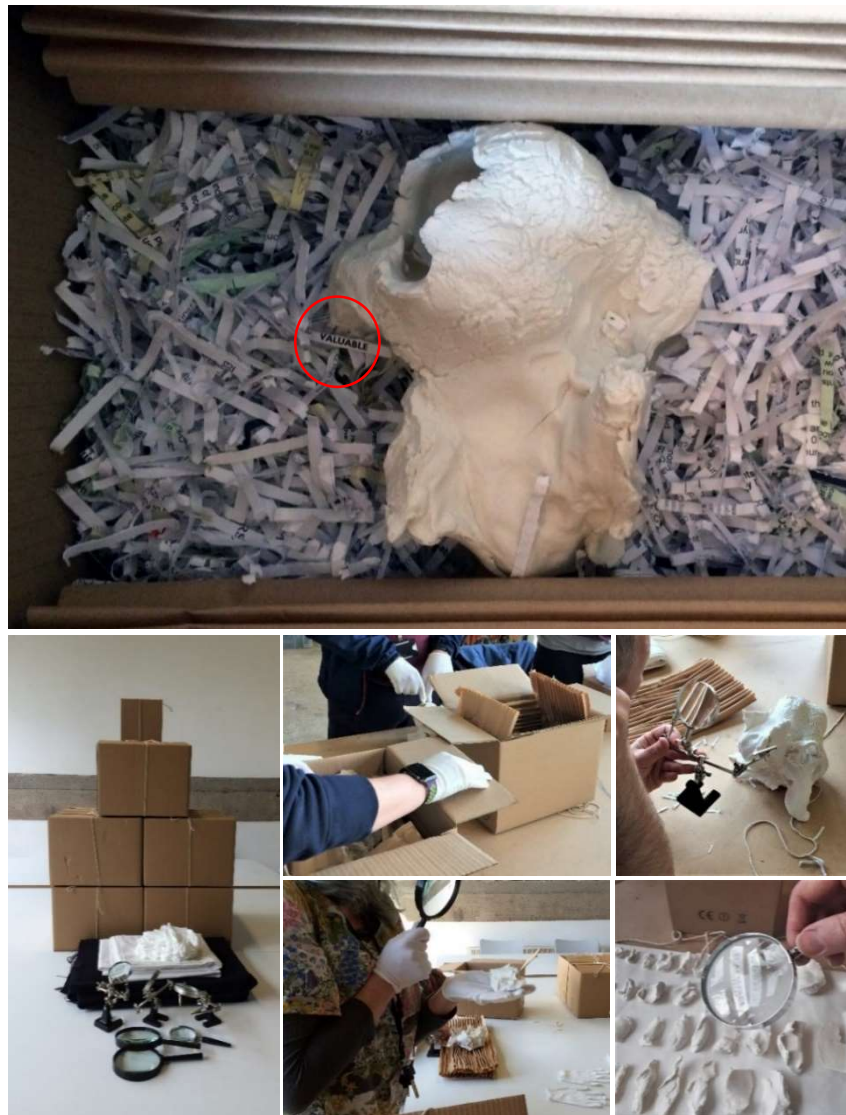


Figure 67. Documentation of seminar presentation/workshop, 23 March 2018

Taking advantage of a Ph.D. seminar to explore the ethical issues concerning the packing handling, and moving of sensitive, fragile material that belongs to, or is made by, someone else, I invite fellow researchers to engage with a number of hand-built porcelain sculptures and associated fragments. (Figure 67) Handling the material acts as a provocation to promote thought and discussion in a social space while the materiality of the process makes 'the fragility more obvious' because the material offered is personal – both *of* me and *by* me.<sup>403</sup> Indeed, I laugh with the realisation that, using the shreadings of old art (psycho)therapy process notes as protection for the porcelain sculptures I (unconsciously) use the residue of prior experience to protect my developing work; something the shreadings themselves identify as 'valuable'.<sup>404</sup> The process of moving, handling, wrapping, and unwrapping what is contained in the constraining body of a box becomes part of the process of how something is packaged, labelled, categorised, stored, and transferred from one place to another – a process that, a fellow researcher reminds me, also holds the resonances with the ritual of presenting a gift.<sup>405</sup> It draws attention to how material is formed through the research process, as well as an ethics of hospitality, attention, and care – issues that are particularly poignant in health and social care and academia.<sup>406</sup>

Returning to the studio sometime later to address moving the 'object-body-thing', I imagine dismantling it dispassionately; yet when I touch it again and look closely at its construction and how intimately its threads are entwined, the work assumes an unexpected significance. I realise that to even attempt to separate or dismantle its constituent parts risks permanently changing its nature and damaging its integrity. Then there is the matter of how to support and transport it safely. (Figure 68) I describe the process of packing up and moving the 'body' out of the studio more fully in *Transposition III – Remake*. Suffice to say, the evocative and provocative process is far from what I anticipate, marking a pivotal point in my research, as how the material is packaged, transported, and (re)presented becomes charged with potential meanings (Figure 69).

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> As I pack the sculpture shown in Figure 67, I notice that directly next to it a shredding with the word 'valuable' on it has made itself visible without my intervention.

<sup>405</sup> Personal Communication, Julie Walters, 23 March 2018.

<sup>406</sup> Becky Shaw, 'Working the Space : Augmenting Training for Practice-Based Research', in *Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research*, ed. by Craig Vear, London: Routledge, 2022, pp. 107–121.



23/7/18 . Thinking about moving the object - how to pack it up - I had imagined that I could separate some of the parts fairly easily, but when I looked closely everything is bound together + hard to separate. We think about something to support its 'spine' during transportation - J makes a 'caneer' from a 2"x2" length of wood, wooden stints + cardboard.

Figure 68. *Thinking about Moving the Object*

Journal note, 23 July 2018

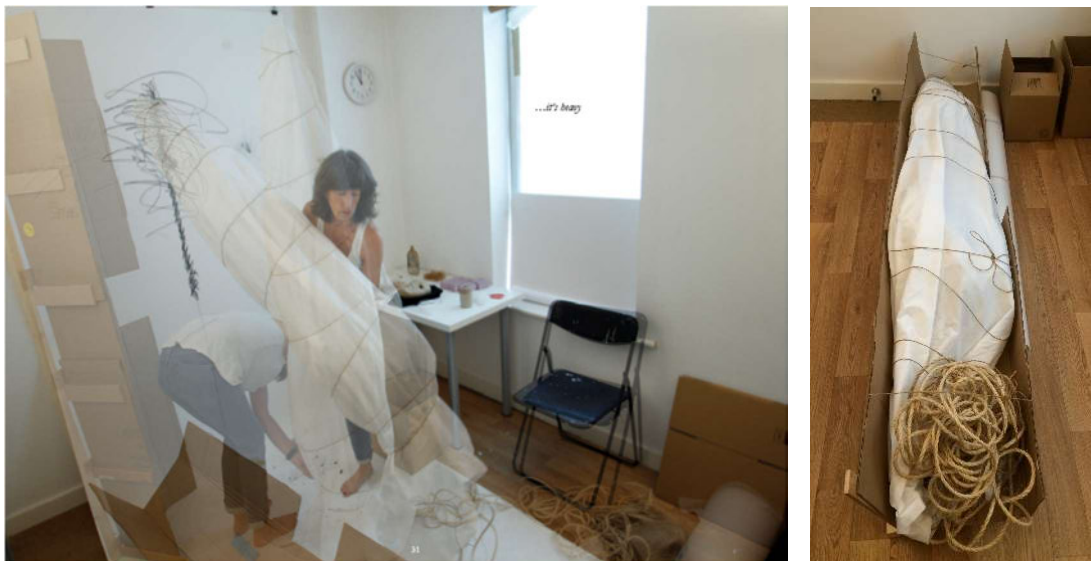


Figure 69. *Moving the Remains of Something Heavy*

Layered time-lapse stills with photographic documentation, 3 August 2018

Coming to life again through the act of handling and moving the work, the emphasis shifts away from what is 'made' or 'produced', to the performance of some 'thing in the making' although, as Kivland notes, this is not to say 'that the product might not perform in different

ways, but it is a different kind of performance'.<sup>407</sup> After Lygia Clark, I suggest that the materials, which have no importance in themselves, take on significance through my actions as participant – revealed through the affective dialogues and interactions that take place.<sup>408</sup> This is echoed by Barrett who argues for a mode of artistic knowledge production that is experiential, performative and rooted in material, sensory, and subjective processes, and the impulse to 'handle objects and to think and feel through their handling'.<sup>409</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland, supervision meeting – 9 May 2018.

<sup>408</sup> Clark, 'A Propósito Da Magia Do Objeto' cited in Dezeuze, '*The "Do-It-Yourself" Artwork*', p. 8. Writing about Clark and the influence of psychoanalysis on her art, Susan Best suggests that her work brings the affective background into the foreground through the 'strange capacities of bodies to imagine, to go with and into a task'. Best, 'Lygia Clark (1920–1988) Bodily Sensation and Affect', p. 91.

<sup>409</sup> Estelle Barrett, 'Materiality, Affect, and the Aesthetic Image', in *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'New Materialism' through the Arts*, London: I B Taurus, 2012, pp. 63–72, 64.



## 4.4. Interrupt

*stop the continuous progress of (an activity or process)*

*break the continuity of (a line or surface)*

### 4.4.1. What happened when you moved the work into the organisation?

The aim of bringing aspects of my understanding into the organisation in the form of the object-body-thing is to stimulate and invite response.<sup>410</sup> Still, it is a further interruption and intrusion. If only for a short while I am again reliant on their hospitality and trust.

Ali thinks that it might be feasible on a Monday morning. In the afternoon there is the Falls clinic, so everyone's attention is elsewhere. It seems that installing it in the approximate location of where I sat is possible – the pool table would need to be moved.<sup>411</sup>

Transporting the object-body-thing in the crude cardboard and wood cradle made by my husband, Jon, evokes powerful associations to carrying a dead body in a shroud for burial, not least because of the glances of passers-by as we load it into the car and unload it at the rehabilitation centre, laying it down close to where I had sat during the observations.<sup>412</sup> (Figure 70) Before unpacking it, I distribute leaflets explaining about the installation and opportunities to respond, as well as cards for anonymous responses with boxes to post them in confidentially.<sup>413</sup> Unpacked, the object-body-thing takes up rather more room than I do, extending further into the space, and staff must walk around it even if they pay it little attention. Indeed, one passing staff member says it makes her think of 'something tossed into the sea'.<sup>414</sup> A sea of 'what?' I wonder. Today is quiet; a clinic is cancelled. I sit *with* the object-body-thing for a while, but soon begin to feel uncomfortable:

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<sup>410</sup> I obtain University ethics approval to invite responses on the day and, later, with staff through a second focus group. Posters advertising the installation are also pinned on the notice board the week before to let people know what I will be doing. See Appendices 6.1.

<sup>411</sup> Diary Note, 17 May 2018 following a meeting to discuss installing the work in the rehabilitation setting.

<sup>412</sup> My husband, Jon, makes a crude cradle from cardboard and pieces of wood and helps me move it.

<sup>413</sup> See Appendix 6.2 and 6.3 for details of the Patient Information Leaflet and Feedback Card.

<sup>414</sup> Personal communication, 6 August 2017.

as if waiting for something to happen – for someone to approach – rather than giving other people space to respond and myself space to experience the situation from more of a distance.<sup>415</sup>



Figure 70. *Interrupting the Flow*  
Installation views, 6 August 2018

I leave at about 9.40 and return about a hour  
later - I sit at a distance from the art work - It almost  
looks as if it's part of the environment - Upright sections  
with bits hanging off - + wires - like the blood pressure  
machine -  
Sitting Alongside -

Figure 71. *Sitting Alongside*  
Journal Note, 6 August 2018

Overcoming concerns about people tripping over it, I ask about leaving the body-object-thing unattended for a while, catching a thought about leaving someone I am close to. Observing from a distance on my return, I am surprised at how easily it blends with the

<sup>415</sup> Journal note, 15 August 2018.

environment – silent, unmoving, patient.<sup>416</sup> At other times it is reminiscent of the machines with their wires – sitting quietly until activated by contact with someone. (Figure 71)

Sitting with Walker's book, *Slow Philosophy*, I hear a staff member ask a patient if he would like to have a closer look, to which the response is 'no'.<sup>417</sup> 'Would you like to do some physio?' they say. 'I'll do whatever you want me to do,' he replies. Later, another patient moves towards me with great difficulty on his way to the gym. He pauses close by and swears under his breath in frustration. I look up, smile, and hold his gaze for a moment. The physiotherapist accompanying him offers encouragement and asks if he can manage to stand while she fetches a walking frame. There is a long pause before he moves away and I swallow the emotion welling up before it spills out. He cannot be rushed or hurried – cannot move quickly as he may once have done. (Figure 72)

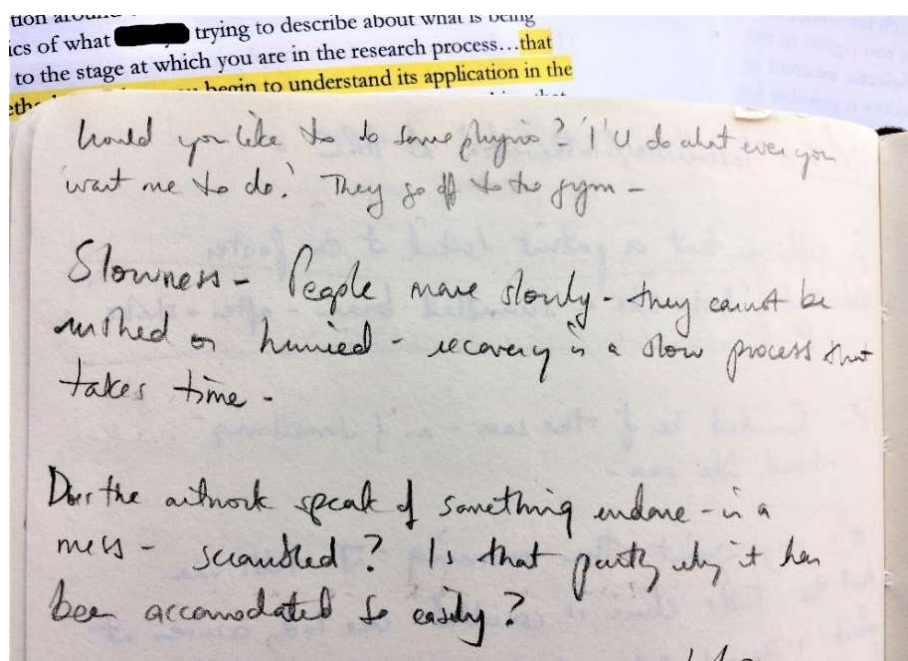


Figure 72. *It's a Slow Process*

Journal note, 6 August 2018

During the course of the morning there are whispers at the nursing station. Some ignore the object-body-thing completely while others tentatively approach. When a few linger, I ask if they are willing to share their thoughts, recording the conversation with consent. Others write on cards posted anonymously into the boxes provided which offer a range of

<sup>416</sup> I am absent for approximately one hour, attending to something on behalf of my elderly parents.

<sup>417</sup> Walker, '*Slow Philosophy*'.

responses from a 'load of materials found on a beach or in a shed', to 'reaching out to something that is difficult to grasp'. In conversation there are thoughts of a beach, flotsam and jetsam, and of a mask that is 'frightening', 'something untoward', 'not nice', and that 'doesn't belong there'. It 'throws up questions' one staff member writes anonymously, questioning whether this is art or whether the money might have been better spent on art (psycho)therapy, a question that also troubles me. Still, although written and recorded responses are limited to staff, I am told that, on seeing a photograph of the work on the poster, a patient remarks 'it looks like a scrambled brain after a stroke'. Is this partly why it has been accommodated so easily? Or is it because it sits quietly and does not move unless directly engaged with? No-one risks touching it and at approximately one o'clock, I begin packing it up, as if watching a video backwards – carrying it (again with Jon's help) back to the car, and then to the studio from where it came.

Meeting with Ali two weeks later to set a date for a second Focus Group she informs me that everyone has been talking, wondering what on earth it was and what I had been thinking! 'Whatever happens,' she says, 'it will go down in history as a memorable event [...] brought something to life.'<sup>418</sup> Perhaps then, as Etchells suggests, the *work* of art may hold the potential to 'turn us into witnesses', rather than mere spectators, if it leaves us 'unable to stop thinking, talking, and reporting what we've seen'.<sup>419</sup> Then, as I recount the story of the patient who cannot be rushed, she exclaims:

*That's the nub! You've bit it on the head! Constant pressure to do things quicker and process everything faster – more than a human being can do!*<sup>420</sup> (Figure 73)

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<sup>418</sup> Personal communication, 28 August 2018.

<sup>419</sup> Etchells, 'Certain Fragments' *Certain Fragments*, p. 18.

<sup>420</sup> Personal communication, 28 August 2018.

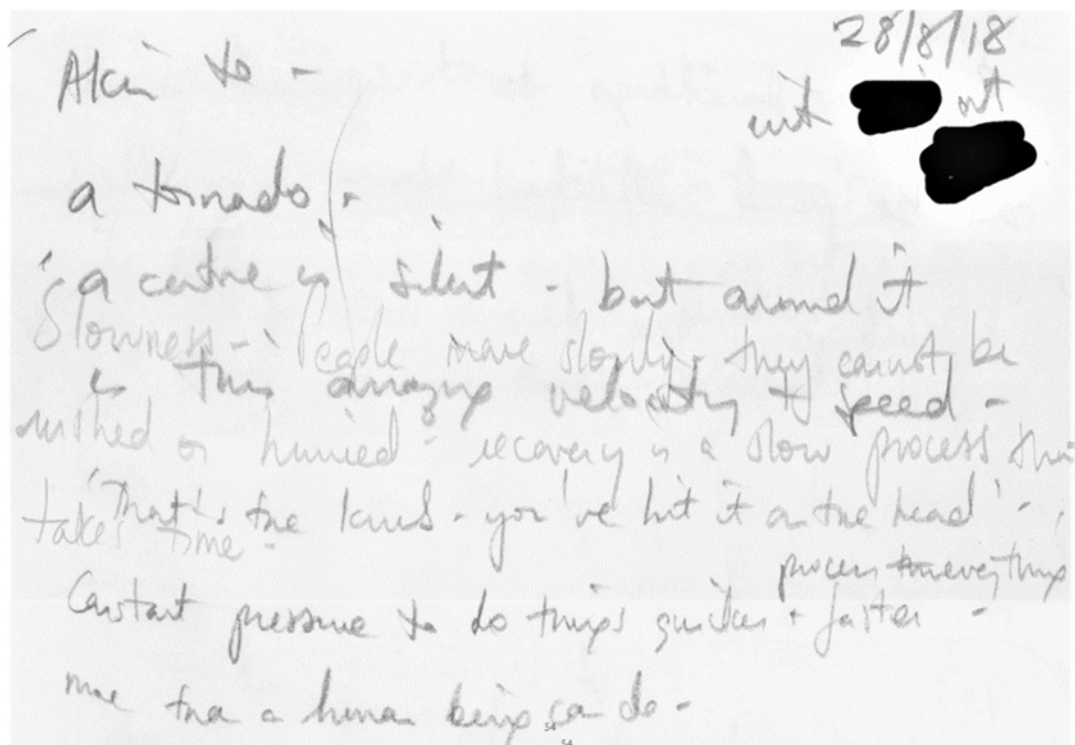


Figure 73. *Akin to a Tornado*

Layered journal notes, August 2018

#### 4.4.2. I'm interested in the title 'Interrupting the Flow' [...] what made you come up with that?

Prompted by a few photographs and an invitation to respond to the installation of the object-body-thing, the question interrupts a somewhat difficult conversation early in the second Focus Group in which staff share their struggle to understand it.<sup>421</sup>

X *It's a bit like somebody's tidied up the shed [...] and threw them from one place and that's how they landed - bits on top of each other [...] It's just a pile of material - full stop.'*

Y *I don't understand it.*<sup>422</sup>

<sup>421</sup> The second focus group was held on 16 October 2018.

<sup>422</sup> Extract from transcript of Focus Group II, 16 October 2018.



I wonder about expectations of being able to ‘find meaning’ or ‘understand’ and the tension between process and outcome. There is a pause, then the questioner’s interest and curiosity open a space for me to speak about my process and what insights have emerged – particularly those relating to care *for* and *of* the body. I might have thrown the question back; however, I respond as authentically as possible.

*I felt in a way that I was interrupting the process of the organisation [...] a little bit like me coming in and doing the observation [...] it felt as if I was interrupting your normal process and routine and introducing something unfamiliar – difficult to make sense of.*

*I was aware, certainly, of not wanting to take up too much space, of finding somewhere that didn’t interrupt the flow. At the same time [...] sometimes it is only when something gets interrupted that it [...] opens up a different way of seeing or looking at something, even though it might not be clear what that is [...] I’ve also been thinking about [...] the relationship to stroke – the interruption to the flow of blood and what it may mean for people not being able to make sense of something, or our responses as a society – how we respond to not being able to make sense of something.<sup>423</sup>*

Mindful of not wanting to take space away from them, I sense the importance of sharing my experience rather than just asking them to share theirs, acknowledging how they made a space for this weird, rather peculiar ‘thing’ that is difficult to understand. A call from a patient interrupts proceedings, continuing in the background. Yet, as I speak about the significance of the observations, the ‘making’ and ‘remaking’ process, moving the object-body-thing and (re)assembling it here, and how it ‘has moved and continues to move’ me, the atmosphere in the meeting also moves.<sup>424</sup> There is an acknowledgement of the tendency to ‘react’ adversely to something that is hard to understand because ‘we don’t like it’, and several people remark how uncomfortable the mask or ‘face’ made them feel, although it was hard to explain, but it felt ‘disconnected emotionally’ – ‘deathly’.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> These words form part of a sentence written in the information sheet for staff. However, as I read them out loud in preparation for the meeting and again during the meeting, their significance changes and I feel emotionally moved.

<sup>425</sup> Notes from transcript of Focus Group II.

#### 4.4.3. What did you take from the experience?

I enter the meeting hoping to get some useful feedback from the staff team. I leave with an acute sense of data being a 'gift' as Ingold suggests – something freely given – not extracted.<sup>426</sup> There is exchange and reciprocity involved. (Figure 74)

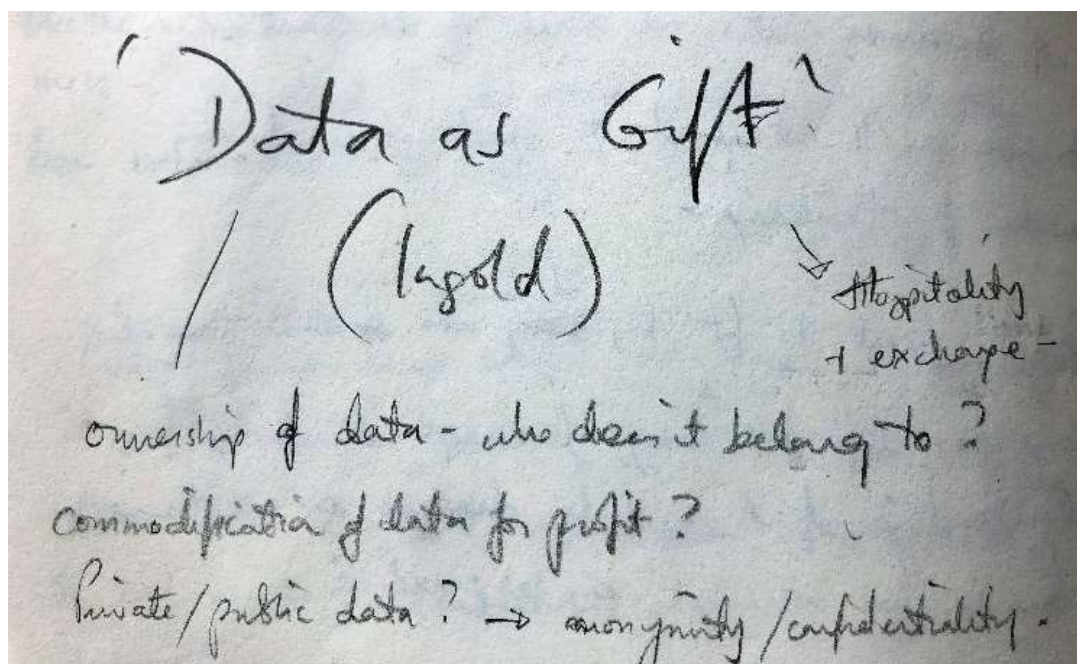


Figure 74. *Data as Gift*

Journal note, 15 August 2018

#### 4.4.4. This raises the question of ownership. Whose work is it?<sup>427</sup>

I hesitate in response to Kivland's question, which alerts me to the ethical complexities inherent in producing this work.

I am aware that I refer to this project as 'my' research and that my name will be given as author when it is submitted for examination. However, as Barthes argues, 'to give a text an

<sup>426</sup> Ingold reminds me that 'data' comes from 'datum', meaning 'something given' rather than something extracted. Ingold, 'Search and Search Again: On the Meaning of Research in Art'.

<sup>427</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland, supervision meeting, 4 February 2020.

Author is to impose a limit on that text [...] to close the writing'.<sup>428</sup> While this research project is *by* me and *of* me – a reflexive learning *through* experience – nonetheless, it is only through conversation (internal and external) with the work of making, with myself, with others, and with the situations I encounter and construct – that I come to understand what I am doing. As Bishop remarks, referring to Barthes, it might be said that 'authorships (of all kinds) are multiple and continually indebted to others'.<sup>429</sup> To borrow from Smith '[e]verything is "borrowed" because every word [...] has been used before in a different space' by many authors.<sup>430</sup> What matters are the ideas, experiences and possibilities that result from these interactions. As Ana Caetano suggests, reflexivity is part of social existence – embedded and embodied 'in situations of co-presence and collaboration with other social actors'.<sup>431</sup> The social bond is restored through a collective elaboration of meaning which refuses to remain static as the work is continually *unmade* and *remade* with each iteration and reading of it.

Perhaps, as Leavy proposes, in offering a 'body' through which others may draw on 'affective', rather than 'scientific', logic the *work* of art might offer, in return, 'a springboard for collective reasoning' as different threads are woven in the negotiation of meaning.<sup>432</sup> Nonetheless, while the 'body' of work may be passed between people without ownership, it must be handled with care, as must the contribution of others in its weaving.

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<sup>428</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image - Music - Text*, ed. by Stephen Heath, 1977, pp. 142–148, 147. See also Claire Bishop, 'Participation', in *Documents of Contemporary Art*, London: Whitechapel, 2006, 41–45.

<sup>429</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London: Verso Books, 2012, p. 9.

<sup>430</sup> Smith, 'Drawing out Language', p. 37.

<sup>431</sup> Ana Caetano, 'Defining Personal Reflexivity: A Critical Reading of Archer's Approach', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 18, 2015, 60–75, p. 68.

<sup>432</sup> Leavy, 'Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice', p. 166.



## 4.5. Feel the Tension (2)

*the state of being stretched tight  
mental or emotional strain*

### 4.5.1. How does your practice so far influence your understanding of what you are doing?

Stop the world I want to get off! Well, not off altogether, I just want to slow it down.<sup>433</sup>

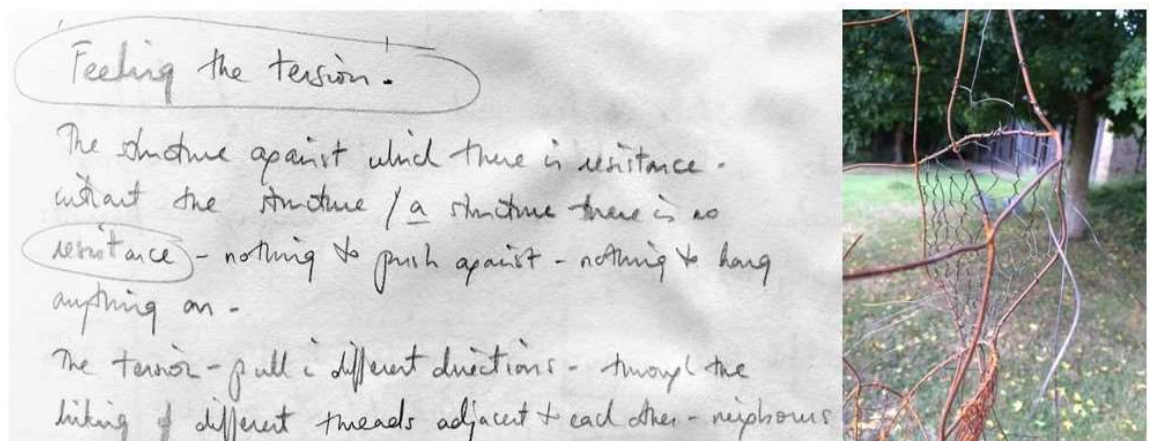


Figure 75. *Feeling the Tension!*

Journal note, 25 August 2018

The large robust structure is already embedded into the ground. I add to it by weaving individual strands around the edges of a discrete section, which offers a frame and space *in* and *through* which to weave. As I manipulate the material, pulling the strands in different directions and holding them in tension, I feel the resistance - both in the structure I weave into and my own body.

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<sup>433</sup> Diary note, 13 August 2018.

A slow iterative process, it takes time for residues to settle and impressions to form. Nevertheless, through the process of moving and resituating the work, and weaving in and out of different institutional and disciplinary spaces as I ‘make’, I become more aware of the complex entanglements and ethical tensions inherent in my position as artist-researcher, the corresponding pressure from the academic institution to present ‘findings’, and my resistance to this.<sup>434</sup> Although not intended as such, a wire weaving workshop offers useful material *through* which to feel and think, as I question how much to resist and push against the structure imposed and how much to make use of it.<sup>435</sup> (Figure 75) Still, it is ‘slow work’ and ‘hard to articulate the *felt* experience’.<sup>436</sup> Like the weaving process, my research:

involves slowing down, stopping to reflect, and dwelling with uncertainty – processes that often challenge and frustrate current institutional practices, in both health and social care settings, and academia.<sup>437</sup>

I sit with the Fitbit tracings of my heartrate, speed, and movement recorded during each observation, uncertain what use they serve.<sup>438</sup> It is only later, returning to (re)read them after installing the object-body-thing in the place from where I had observed, that significances begin to ‘glow’, to borrow from the educator Maggie MacLure – as if fragments ‘reach out from the inert corpus (corpse) of the data to grasp [me]’, confounding ‘the more industrious, mechanical search for meanings, patterns, codes, or themes’.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> I refer here to recommendations of the University Assessment Panel in relation to approval of confirmation of my Ph.D. subject, known as the RF2. Conditions to be addressed now state: ‘Please produce a short statement outlining what you consider to be the main findings to have emerged from the enquiry so far (in other words, what has your work in the organisation environment told you, or helped you to understand), and explain how these findings will go on to develop your art practice and to inform the design of the research as it progresses’.

<sup>435</sup> The ‘wire weaving’ workshop was facilitated by artist Cleo Claire Lee, and held on 25 August 2018 at the Hannah Bennett Sculpture Garden, in Eyam, Derbyshire.

<sup>436</sup> Diary note in response to ‘wire weaving’ workshop, 25 August 2018.

<sup>437</sup> Extract from response to RF2 assessment panel, submitted 18 October 2018.

<sup>438</sup> Initially, I imagine looking for changes that may correspond to fluctuations in my emotional states.

<sup>439</sup> Maggie MacLure, ‘The Wonder of Data’, *Cultural Studies? Critical Methodologies*, 13, 2013, 228–232, p. 228 (my insertion).

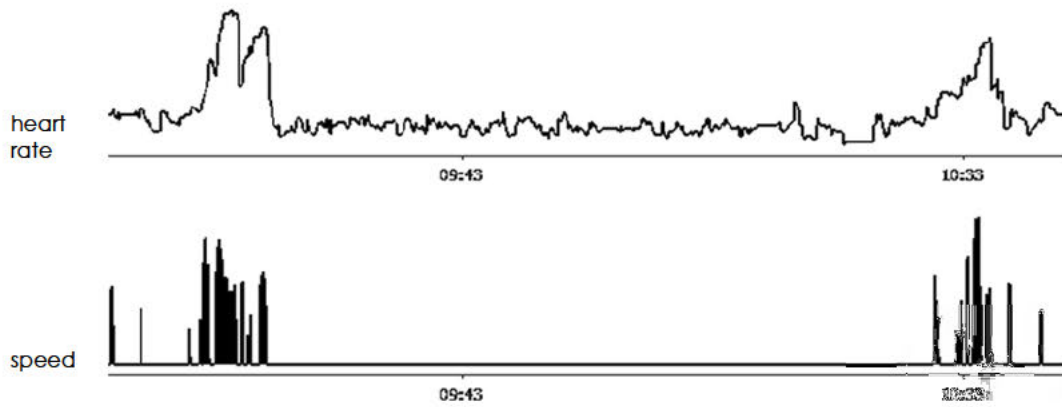


Figure 76. *Tracing a Pattern (1)*

Downloaded Fitbit data, Observation II, 31 January 2017

Initially, I imagine correlating my heartrate with emotional fluctuations. Yet, what becomes significant is that between 09:30 and 10:30 every Tuesday morning, when I observe the organisation and myself *in* it, my heartrate slows and no speed is registered – a realisation that ‘glows’ even more strongly in the light of Ali’s comments about the pressure to ‘do’ more quickly than a human being can manage. (Figure 76)



Figure 77. *Tracing a Pattern (2)*

Downloaded Fitbit data, Observations I & V, 24 January and 21 February 2017

Reworking tracings of my journeys, lines that had previously travelled along roads on a map become webs that wander around an area. Where I expect to find clearly discernible patterns, or hardly any movement (given that I sit in the same place each week), there is no

orderly, coherent, interpretation. (Figure 77) Rather, following the psychoanalyst and experimental educator Fernand Deligny, they become tracings that follow and map the gesture of an act.<sup>440</sup>



Figure 78. *Tracing a Pattern (3)*

Downloaded Fitbit data, Studio Sessions VI & XI, 28 February and 4 April 2017

Patterns of movement in the studio are, perhaps, less surprising. (Figure 78) While I find it hard to follow the density of lines accurately with the tip of a pen, ‘just tracing’ mechanically becomes about merely reproducing the same, as the work loses any authenticity and life. Then, all I see is a dead spider with its legs bent over.<sup>441</sup> Perhaps, as Deligny remarks, ‘lift a

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<sup>440</sup> Fernand Deligny, *The Arachnean and Other Texts*, Minneapolis, MN: Univocal Publishing, 2015. In the late 1960s psychoanalyst and educator Deligny founded a residential community in rural France for autistic children, many of whom were non-verbal. He opposed institutions and was critical of contemporary treatment and understanding of autistic people. Resident adults who cared for the young people were described as ‘close presences’ and were volunteers rather than paid workers. Rather than imposing language on the young people, they attempted to find a ‘mode of being that allowed them to exist’. Deligny suggested they transcribe the movements and gestures of the children on tracing paper maps. No attempt was made to interfere with their movements or to explain or interpret them; the focus remained on the process of tracing itself. He described these ‘Wander Lines’ as a form of ‘non-verbal’ narrative, a sign of essential ‘out of language’ common space.

Fernand Deligny, *Wander Lines*, Exhibition, London: States of Mind: Tracing the Edges of Consciousness, Wellcome Collection, 4 February–16 October 2016, <<https://galleryell.com/reviews/states-of-mind/>> [accessed 22nd December 2021].

Except for the walk from the car to the Day Centre, which varies depending on where I park, I follow the same routine each week (as described in my Practice Submission), sitting in the same place for the hour.

<sup>441</sup> Diary Note, 19 April 2017.



spider onto a glass plate and some sketchy weaving may occur, but only in a void'.<sup>442</sup> Without a structure to attach to, there is no support for the spider's gestures – no resistance – nothing to push against or hang anything on – no resonance felt through the threads or chance of capturing anything. Like the spider spinning a continuous thread from her own body, or the weaver at her loom, I begin to understand the work of weaving my research as a material, embodied process – a symbol for harnessed focussed attention and an extension of my body – intimately connected to the work I make and the construction of the weave.<sup>443</sup> (Figure 80)

I smile inwardly as my gaze settles on the photograph I insert into the text two months later, viewing myself and my weaving from a different place and time. The warp threads are held taught by my body as they stretch out between my legs in a state of tension. I laugh out loud, as Sigmund Freud's proposal that women only invented weaving to cover their genitals and shame penetrates my mind – imagining these threads as taut strands of my own pubic hair. My amusement lingers as I wonder what I might do with the hair that my body has shed in the shower – hair I have recently begun to gather – collect – for what purpose I am, as yet, unclear.



Figure 79. Documentation from, and in response to, a weaving workshop<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Deligny, *The Arachnean and Other Texts*, p. 54.

<sup>443</sup> Writing about the textile art of Anni Albers', curator Briony Fer suggests that 'the apparatus of the loom is an intricate three-dimensional grid, which becomes an extension of the weaver's body as she works'. Briony Fer, 'Anni Albers: Weaving Magic', *Tate Etc.*, 2018, p. 27.

<sup>444</sup> In October 2018 I attended four weaving workshops at the Tate Modern, 'In the Loom Room', run alongside an exhibition of the work of Anni Albers, the first of its kind by a female artist. Anni Albers, *Solo Exhibition*, 11 October 2018–27 January 2019, London: Tate Modern. In the photograph I am attached to a 'backstrap' loom – an ancient, versatile, and portable loom consisting of a number of sticks and a belt. The warp threads stretch between a fixed point and the weaver's body, which holds the threads in tension. For a more detailed description of a backstrap loom, see Anni Albers, *On Weaving: New Expanded Edition*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2017.



## 4.6. Rework and Amplify

*make changes to the original version of (something)*

*increase the volume of sound*

*enlarge upon or add detail*

*make something more marked or intense*

### 4.6.1. What am I looking at here?

The clock ticks silently marking time above a spotlight that illuminates the shadow of a body she drew before it existed. (Figure 80)



They turn their eyes to look as, with the help of another, she carries the shrouded body in a crude wooden container up the stairs through a crowded institution where people sit and study at tables set around the floors below and above to a small room in which she sets it down and, unwrapping its form, carefully places its body and associated parts on paper that hangs vertically from high up on the wall extending out horizontally along the floor.

The clock ticks silently marking time above a spotlight that illuminates the shadow of a body she drew before it existed. In the background the tones of her own voice interweave with those that are more mechanical – un/in/human.

She sits, waiting for the thoughts, as yet unknown, to arrive.

Figure 80. *Trace Recollections*

Extract from a writing in progress

A conference delegate enters the small tutorial room, steps over the object-body-thing occupying the room and sits on one of the two chairs opposite me. One of fifteen people to arrive over two days for a ten-minute experiential encounter, they have made an appointment to attend,

signed up for something. Yet 'neither of us know what kind of encounter we will have, or what will happen within the constraints of the allotted space and time'.<sup>445</sup> Also present, though not visible, is 'the-voice-of-its-making' – an intermingling of more or less distinct and identifiable vocal sounds with various other noises, accompanied by a rhythmic beat that marks the passing of every five seconds.

#### 4.6.2. Can you talk about the significance of the sound piece?

Associations to a voice being muffled.

Not unlike Robert Morris's 1961 work *Box with the Sound of Its own Making* 'The-voice-of-its-making' comprises a recording of the twelve hours spent making the object-body-thing, one hour a week over twelve weeks.<sup>446</sup> Rather than stringing all the recordings together in a somewhat lengthy twelve-hour sequence, I follow earlier experiments and overlay each hour of recording reducing its duration to one hour.<sup>447</sup> Like Morris's work, although different in form, I present the object-body-thing with a soundtrack of its own construction, making evident the *process* of its production, albeit in a compressed form, rather like this thesis.<sup>448</sup> Unlike Morris, however, it is a construction in which my voice, as maker, is also heard. Even though I recognise many of the sounds I make, divorced from the original site of making, and assembled differently, it is hard to locate them spatially or temporally, or to

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<sup>445</sup> Extract from Debbie Michaels, 'Between Encounters: A Speculative Weaving', in *Double Agency*, ed. by Sarah Smizz and Julie Walters, Sheffield: Independent Publishing Network, 2018. The 'Double Agency' intervention was made as part of the Design4Health conference hosted by Sheffield Hallam University in 2018. It comprised a series of one-on-one material & dialogical 'encounters' with four 'double agents', all health practitioners and artist/designer/researchers working with creative methods to look critically at aspects of the healthcare system. A pdf of the accompanying publication can be downloaded from the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/double-agency.php>>. The artist and educator Anne Tallentire also set up a project 'Double Agents' at the Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design. 'Central to the work of Double Agents is the principle of dialogue – that the processes of exchange, negotiation and conversation are generative actions – and that it is in these actions that new positions can be formed.' See <<http://www.doubleagents.org.uk/>>.

<sup>446</sup> Robert Morris, *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, 1961, Mixed Media Installation, 3.5 hours, Seattle, WA: Seattle Art Museum, <<https://art.seattleartmuseum.org/objects/11616/box-with-the-sound-of-its-own-making>> [accessed 8 November 2021].

<sup>447</sup> An excerpt from 'The-voice-of-its-making' is available on the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/voice-of-its-making.php>>.

<sup>448</sup> It has been suggested that Morris's work is 'a manifesto of sorts: insofar as it makes evident the means and methods of its own production, it heralded a paradigm shift in art, one in which process, duration, provisionality, and incompleteness take pride of place'.

See <<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/689665>>.

make coherent sense of them. As in composer Alvin Lucier's sound art piece *I Am Sitting in a Room*, where he records himself speaking, then plays back the recording into the room repeating the process, the structure and meaning of the words disappear.<sup>449</sup> The soundtrack disorients and reframes my experience of the original work, amplifying it in the process. Indeed, I am quite unprepared for what it evokes.

26.8.18

In bed thinking about the recording I'm making for Double Agency intervention – my associations to a voice being muffled – gagged – a body being bricked up behind a wall.

*trapped  
imprisoned*

Figure 81. *A Voice Being Muffled*

Diary note, 26 August 2018

With listening free to move in the space of resonance it is as if the volume has been turned up, intensifying the affective experience.<sup>450</sup> (Figure 81) Restructuring the recordings gives new texture and meaning to what has gone before as material 'made' in the past is 'remade' and amplified through touching the stuff of new situations in the present. Following the psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden, it is as if past experience takes on emotional significance it had not previously held – 'expanding the range and depth of thoughts and feelings that one is able to derive from one's emotional experience'.<sup>451</sup> Encountering what was made *then* in the *now*, the work reverberates and resonates differently, but *what* is under construction is unclear. One delegate remarks that it sounds like a construction site. Then again, looking at the bits and pieces scattered on the floor, others wonder if it has already been deconstructed

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<sup>449</sup> Alvin Lucier, *I Am Sitting in a Room*, 1969, Voice and Electromagnetic Tape, Electronic Music Studio: Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, <<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=I%27m+Sitting+in+a+Room+Alvin+Lucier>> [accessed 4 January 2022]. The words Lucier repeats are as follows: 'I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech with perhaps the exception of rhythm is destroyed. What you will hear then are the natural frequencies of the room articulated by speech. I regard this activity not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but more as a way to smooth out any irregularities my speech might have.'

<sup>450</sup> Riccardo Wanke, 'Alvin Lucier: The Space in the Sound and the Sound in the Space [Linear Notes Cd/Mode Record/Alter Ego]', *ResearchGate*, November 2016. See also Martha Joseph, 'Collecting Alvin Lucier's I Am Sitting in a Room', *Inside/out - Museum of Modern Art*, January 20, 2015.

<sup>451</sup> Ogden, 'On Holding and Containing, Being and Dreaming', p. 1358.

or is still mid-construction – not yet finished – or has fallen apart, and yet, is all together.<sup>452</sup> For many, the soundtrack distracts and annoys; while it is possible to pick out certain words, the conversation is elusive and difficult to follow. For some, the random noises intrude and interfere with a calmer, quieter, visual appreciation of the material work, creating anxiety and tension. For others they disturb, as it is unclear what the sounds are or from where they come, evoking thoughts of old institutions, someone in pain and distress, needing help, or trying to escape a situation – a body.

#### 4.6.3. What other responses did you get?

'What's going on' a university employee asks on passing the open door, remarking before they move on that the work brings to mind 'out of body experiences' and 'exposed nerves'.<sup>453</sup>

With the exception of one person, all the delegates are unknown to me. On encountering the installation my fellow Double Agent, occupational therapist and researcher, Julie Walters questions why bringing the work into a 'learning' environment should feel so disruptive and whether it is the 'messiness'.<sup>454</sup> Surely, as keynote speaker Jayne Wallace notes, 'being human is messy'.<sup>455</sup> Yet, the encounter is not what delegates expect, not least because it presents something outside 'social norms' – tactile, sensory, entangled, messy, and difficult to make sense of, in contrast to the clean, orderly experience of the main conference.<sup>456</sup> Indeed, carrying the shrouded object-body-thing through the institution in its crude container, turns the heads of those sitting in the café and at desks, as if its presence moving *in/through* the space interrupts more familiar processes. (Figure 82)

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<sup>452</sup> Some thoughts from participating delegates, conveyed in personal communications, 'Double Agency' Intervention, Sheffield Hallam University, 5-6 September 2018.

<sup>453</sup> Personal communication, anonymous, 6 September 2018.

<sup>454</sup> Personal communication, Julie Walters, 6 September 2018.

<sup>455</sup> Note from keynote lecture by Professor Jayne Wallace, Northumbria University, 5 September 2018.

<sup>456</sup> Personal communication, anonymous, 6 September 2018.



Figure 82. *When the Whole World is Silent, Even One Voice Becomes Powerful*<sup>457</sup>

Documentation, Double Agency, 6 September 2018

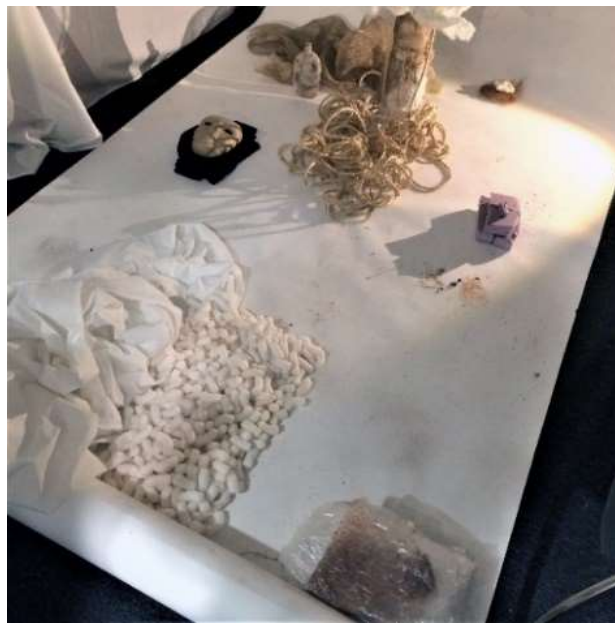


Figure 83. *Tidying the Mess*

Documentation, Double Agency, 6 September 2018

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<sup>457</sup> The text that forms the caption for the photograph is from a quotation by the Pakistani activist, Malala Yousafzai, which can be seen on the wall of the institution. The significance of its presence only begins to 'glow' some considerable time later when looking more closely at the original photograph and the relation of the text to the material body of work I have situated close by.



At a conference concerned with healthcare, perhaps it is unsurprising that the object-body-thing and its various parts brings associations to the human situations and experience – bodily processes and diagnoses – while for others it evokes dismemberment or being trapped in one’s body. The hands evoke ghostly associations, as if grasping at, or being called to ‘do’, something remarked on also by Fong Ling.<sup>458</sup> The mask placed on top of the folded black clothing stimulates thoughts of concealing one’s identity, a spy, anonymity, lack of expression, the facelessness of some healthcare institutions, and the idea that, underneath the mask, there is a mangled mess. Some find it sinister, while a few try it on. Others carefully move around the object-body-thing and move things around, while the final visiting delegate acts on a desire to ‘tidy up’ the mess. (Figure 83)

#### 4.6.4. What did you take from the intervention?

The following month, we four ‘double agents’ reflect on the intervention and our individual experiences of it. Thinking about the conference structure as a compression of time, we acknowledge the tendency and institutional pressure to ‘gorge’, as Walters puts it – to consume as much as possible – although there is always ‘too much’ to digest and not enough time to fully appreciate the offerings.<sup>459</sup> The forty-minute overall encounter was, in part, an attempt to offer a more personal, intimate, caring space for active participation – to slow things down, as Schön might say, in an endeavour to capture what might ordinarily be lost.<sup>460</sup> Still, although we wanted people to book, had all the available spaces been filled, we would likely have got in a mess with timings and been ‘knackered’ as a result, mirroring what often happens in healthcare.

Having never presented in this manner before, I am also unsure what to expect and, like Smizz, do not expect to get anything ‘super valuable’ for my research.<sup>461</sup> Nevertheless, contrary to expectations, I am taken by surprise as people participate fully and imaginatively. Although there is a palpable, expressed, tension between encountering the more meditative

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<sup>458</sup> Personal communication, Yuen Fong Ling, joint supervision meeting, 17 May 2017. See Appendix 4 for a fuller extract of the annotated supervision record.

<sup>459</sup> Personal communications, Julie Walters, 4 October 2018.

<sup>460</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, p. 160.

<sup>461</sup> Personal communications, Sarah Smizz, 4 October 2018.



material 'body' in conjunction with the discomfoting voice-of-its- making, and between trying to understand or sitting with the uncertainty of not knowing, most get 'stuck in' with the mess, and the emergent dialogue is full of rich resonances and potential meanings. Yet, although I bring my knowledge and experience as art (psycho)therapist into the room, as artist-researcher I underestimate the affective impact for someone entering the space and sitting *with* and *in* this strange, confusing, object-body-thing-situation. 'It's quite shocking when you walk in' one delegate says, 'to see a mask and all this chaos and not knowing what's happened.'<sup>462</sup> Of course, this is not psychoanalysis or art (psycho)therapy although it is an analysis of sorts and does require a commitment. Still, the ethical responsibility inherent in my position presses in as the affective intensity becomes more apparent, and I realise that I have, perhaps, not paid due care and attention. Even though I have good intentions of involving people, as with the rehabilitation centre there are risks associated with going into a community and disrupting it.

Although serious in its endeavour a part of me 'thought a lot of people would come in and say what the fuck is that; it's meaningless'.<sup>463</sup> Perhaps, in devaluing the work before anyone else can, I defend myself in anticipation of mockery.<sup>464</sup> We laugh, but there are serious undertones as we imagine how some delegates may be left feeling had they not moved onto Walters's intervention which became, in part, a 'debriefing' session after mine. Associating aspects of the object-body-thing to peoples' experience of the NHS, one delegate comments 'there's a lot of unpacking goes on and not much repacking [...] people are unpacked, strewn everywhere, hoping they're going to be able to put it all together again when they get home'.<sup>465</sup> While I think I hold the situation with care, perhaps they also refer to the brief but somewhat unsettling encounter, although I do not pick that up at the time. Indeed, as Smizz notes, going to the doctor can be a 'surreal experience; you feel you need to have a debrief, but the system doesn't allow it'.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> Extract from transcription of Double Agency reflections meeting, 4 October 2018.

<sup>464</sup> Billig, 'Freud and the Language of Humour'.

<sup>465</sup> Personal communication, anonymous, 6 September 2018.

<sup>466</sup> Personal communication, Sarah Smizz, 4 October 2018.

Fong Ling first asks if I am ‘exploring care of the body’ early in the participant-observational, although I hesitate to interpret at this stage (Figure 84).<sup>467</sup>

hanging...connections don't work  
Are you constructing a body of sorts?...exploring care of the body?  
How does it relate to your body...are you reaching beyond your reach?  
Abbreviated language of the body...how you use your hands.  
Metaphor

Figure 84. Extract from supervision record, 1 February 2017

Yet, it is only after moving the object-body-thing out of the studio, and (re)situating it, that I begin to *feel* the significance of the ethical dimension in his question, and the tension with my role as artist-researcher. While obtaining written consent from participants to record our conversations, approaching *Double Agency* as a conference presentation I misunderstand the University requirements for ethics approval and only apply retrospectively. While frustrated with my lack of forethought and a system that does not allow retrospective applications, it is the ‘afterwardsness’ – not realising the significance beforehand – that, in itself, becomes most significant. Grappling with the dilemma in supervision Kivland directs me to the psychoanalyst Jacques Laplanche and his concept of ‘afterwardsness’ or *après-coup*.

SK the realisation ‘after’ something and its importance in the present [...] there is a blow in the past and then it comes into the present when it meets new material, which is precisely what you are arguing.<sup>468</sup>

Elaborating Freud’s concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, Laplanche acknowledges the *time* and the *work* of thought which, he suggests, is a bidirectional process involving a temporal ‘looping back’.<sup>469</sup> As psychoanalyst Dana Birksted-Breen suggests, it takes time for disturbing elements to be assimilated, digested, and transformed – worked through – requiring a capacity to wait and tolerate the discomfort; ‘something is perceived but only takes on

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<sup>467</sup> Personal Communication, Yuen Fong Ling, supervision meeting, 1 February 2017.

<sup>468</sup> Personal Communication, Sharon Kivland, supervision meeting, 20 February 2019.

<sup>469</sup> Jean Laplanche, *Problématiques VI: L’après-Coup*, Paris: PUF, 2006. Laplanche conceptualises thought as a spiral rather than a straight line, one that ‘continuously moves away from a pole but at the same time it is brought to go over the same themes, hoping that it is at another level’. His concept of *Après-Coup* or *Afterwardsness* has its origins in Freud’s earliest writings and has attracted the interest of French Lacanian psychoanalysts and, more recently, British psychoanalysts, particularly in relation to trauma.

meaning retrospectively'.<sup>470</sup> Like the psychoanalytic/psychotherapeutic process, the *work* of art must 'unsettle, settle, and unsettle again'.<sup>471</sup> Through reflexively paying attention to my dealings with the research situation – looping back over and into how I administer and document the process, and how I move, handle, and use 'things', including other bodies, my understanding is also sophisticatedly moved. To borrow from Bolt after Heidegger, 'handling', as part of artistic practice, becomes a conversational relation of care and 'concernful dealings', where tools are no longer a means to an end, but rather 'are co-responsible (along with other elements) for bringing something into appearance'.<sup>472</sup> Perhaps then, as Jahn and Bogad propose, while 'things' may be produced along the way, it is in its capacity to (re)-sensitise us to affective relations that the *work* of art lies, rather than in the artwork – that moment where the body or the 'grain of the voice' begins to emerge.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> In *Time and the Après-Coup*, Dana Birksted-Breen draws attention to the emphasis French psychoanalysts have placed on the non-linear temporality of *après-coup*. She notes that the meaning given by Freud varies between three different usages. 'The first one simply means 'later'. The second one implies a movement from past to future: something is deposited in the individual, which is only activated later on [...] The third meaning implies that something is perceived but only takes on meaning retrospectively. It is this third meaning, the one least present in Freud, which was picked up by Lacan and developed by French psychoanalysts.' Dana Birksted - Breen, 'Time and the Après - Coup', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 84, 2003, 1501–1515, p. 1501. Emphasising process and the subjective non-linearity of time with its allowance for reciprocity, she suggests that 'reverberation time' created by the capacity to wait and tolerate remaining in discomfort, includes 'both a chronological aspect and a back-and-forth aspect'. *Ibid.*, p. 1506.

<sup>471</sup> Potts, 'A Little Object', p. 5.

<sup>472</sup> Relocating our thinking in 'handling as care', Bolt suggests that, in creative arts practice, research 'can be seen to emerge in the involvement with materials, methods, tools, and ideas of practice' which, in turn, become collaborators in creating open spaces of possibility. Drawing on the work of philosopher Martin Heidegger and his challenge to the instrumentalist understanding of human-tool relationships through which he posits a relation of co-responsibility and indebtedness, she suggests that 'artistic practice involves a particular responsiveness to, or conjunction with, other contributing elements that make up the art ensemble'; that it is through handling that we come to understand the world. Barbara Bolt, 'Heidegger, Handlability and Praxical Knowledge', in *Art and Design Update: New Policies - New Opportunities*, Australian Council of University Art & Design Schools, 2004, See also: Barbara Bolt, 'A Non Standard Deviation: Handlability, Praxical Knowledge and Practice Led Research', *Speculation and Innovation: Applying practice led research in the creative industries*, 2006; Barbara Bolt, 'The Magic Is in Handling', in *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, ed. by Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, London: I.B.Taurus, 2007, pp. 27–34.

<sup>473</sup> Jahn and Bogad, 'Byproducts and Parasites', p. 15.



## 4.7. Elaborate

*add more detail to what has already been said*

### 4.7.1. In what other contexts have you (re)presented your work?

In an attempt to avoid the complications inherent in 'representation', I bracket the (re) to indicate a further repetition in the presentation - a looping back, undoing, or doing again, but I cannot escape!<sup>474</sup>



Figure 85. *(Re)assemblage*

Regional meeting of art (psycho)therapists, 1 December 2018

In December 2018 I return to the art (psycho)therapy institution, packing and moving the object-body-thing again (with help), to (re)situate it, along with some documentation, in the room where I began to use art reflexively some fifteen years earlier.<sup>475</sup> Adapting my presentation to the unfolding situation (which is not what I anticipate), I sit alongside the 'body' and its various parts in the company of a group of practicing art (psycho)therapists

<sup>474</sup> In *Picture Theory*, William Mitchell proposes a move away from the idea that representations are merely 'objects representing' towards a focus on the cultural relationships through which representations are produced, valued, viewed, and exchanged. W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

<sup>475</sup> This room is the smallest of three studio training spaces.

– looking, listening, and responding to the object-body-thing and its voice as we think together about loss.<sup>476</sup> (Figure 85)

‘It seems to be quite natural that it’s gone back into the [art (psycho)therapy] institution,’ Fong Ling remarks.<sup>477</sup>

SK It could have been anything that was brought in though. I’m thinking of the figure of the analyst [...] because it’s a function – this mute thing [...] so you could take anything in and declare it to be the artwork, place it in the room, and you might provoke different responses, but none-the-less there is something about the role of projection.

DM Yes, it made me think about making a space.

SK By putting a thing in it?<sup>478</sup>

As I suggest earlier the object-body-thing is more than a projection. While it bears the residue of a living dialogue with me, as part of a ‘shared’ reality – a product of the time and place in which it is created – it acts as a mediating space ‘allowing something to be articulated around it’, as Kivland remarks; it provokes speech.<sup>479</sup> Clearly, its form and the instructions offer a framework for participation and how the ‘body’ is received. The level of intense engagement at the *Double Agency* intervention may well have been facilitated through the private, intimate, one-to-one nature of the encounter outside the workplace environment. In contrast, the Focus Groups at the rehabilitation centre take place in the team office with phones and other distractions. And, although the-voice-of-its-making is not yet constructed when the object-body-thing is installed there, had it been, I would have struggled with the ethics of exposing patients to it because of its evocative, disturbing nature. Perhaps, in the art (psycho)therapy setting, it is unsurprising that the work evokes (among other things) sitting in a clinical ward with someone, trying to make sense of what is being communicated, as we listen to ‘the noises we human creatures might make’.<sup>480</sup> Yet, as Leea Pienimäki argues, drawing on the work of the artist-researcher-educator Maarit Mäkelä, it is vain to even try

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<sup>476</sup> Art Therapy and Loss – Regional Meeting of Art Therapists, 1 December 2018.

<sup>477</sup> Personal communication, Yuen Fong Ling, joint supervision meeting, 5 December 2018, my insertion.

<sup>478</sup> Extract from transcript of supervision meeting, 5 December 2018.

<sup>479</sup> Personal communication, supervision meeting with Sharon Kivland, 27 March 2019.

<sup>480</sup> Reflection, Chris Wood, 1 December 2018.

to capture a work of art in words.<sup>481</sup> Like spiders, we can only ‘weave webs around it’, and accept there will always be things that cannot be caught or are lost from it, although they are still fundamentally present in the narrative.<sup>482</sup> A senior art (psycho)therapist and educator agrees when she notes after the meeting, ‘the artwork is visceral and speaks to visceral confusions – the struggle to know and the struggle to sit with not knowing’.<sup>483</sup>

I am pleased the work resonates and brings ‘constantly relevant themes [as well as] other clinical and personal reflections into the space’.<sup>484</sup> Yet, I wonder afterwards *what* it is I test out. Do I (re)situate the object-body-thing merely because I want ‘validation’ from the art (psycho)therapy community, or does my interest lie in the extent to which my research engages with the world outside art academia? If I think of it as a ‘do-it-yourself artwork’, after Dezeuze, which involves others as participants in developing the work, I am certainly interested in the idea of ‘repeatable surprise’ as unexpected things seem to happen and the response is different each time.<sup>485</sup> However, in a supervision meeting two days later I am bothered by the feeling that it has become an ‘object’ I carry around and ‘stick up’ in various places to be looked at, talked *about* from a distance, rather than something *through* which we might explore how we are implicated *in* the situation.<sup>486</sup> Has my relationship changed again from one of care to not caring? Have I squashed my ‘feelers’? (Figure 86) The ethical gravity pulls me back, pressing me to notice and feel more acutely into the situation. Jon constructs a new, more substantial, ‘box’ to hold the object-body-thing – not a ‘closed box’ or coffin, but one that allows the work to breathe. (Figure 87)

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<sup>481</sup> Leea Pienimäki, ‘A Researching Artist as the Generator and Interpreter of Meanings’, in *Artist as Researcher: In Between Art and Research*, ed. by Maarit Mäkelä and Sara Routarinne Helsinki: University of Art and Design, 2007, 10–16.

<sup>482</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

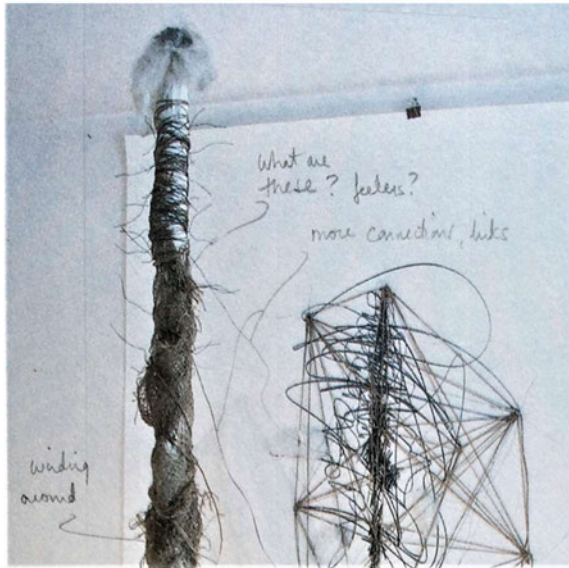
<sup>483</sup> Personal communication, Chris Wood, 1 December 2018.

<sup>484</sup> Extract from a review of the workshop published in a BAAT Newsletter in January 2019.

<sup>485</sup> Dezeuze suggests that the definition of a ‘do-it-yourself-artwork’ as ‘a tool, probe, seismograph, or simply a platform, implies its transportability from one context to another. Whether, and how, a do-it-yourself-artwork can successfully be transposed to a new temporal, geographical or institutional context reveals the extent to which it engages with the world outside art.’ Dezeuze, ‘*The "Do-It-Yourself" Artwork*’, p. 11. She draws on the artists Carsten Höller and Bruce Nauman in discussing the idea of a ‘repeatable surprise’ to borrow from Höller or as Nauman put it, ‘something happens that you didn’t expect and it happens every time’. See ‘Carsten Höller Interviewed by Germano Celant’, in *Carsten Höller: Registro*, ed. by Germano Celant, Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2000, and Willoughby Sharp, ‘Interview with Bruce Nauman’, in *Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words: Writings and Interviews*, ed. by Janet Kraynak, London: MIT Press, 2002, pp. 111–154, cited in Dezeuze, ‘*The "Do-It-Yourself" Artwork*’, p. 11.

<sup>486</sup> Supervision meeting with Sharon Kivland and Yuen Fong Ling, 5 December 2018.

DM I feel as if I'm working to keep something alive – to preserve a space for something?<sup>487</sup>



...and how do I get back in? And that's what happens in healthcare – the repetition [...] There was something one of the people said. I'd put this little piece of sheep's wool on top of the long *vertical, rigid*, pole, and she said 'is that a brain there?' It felt like the small brain, the lower brain – the cerebellum – stuck on the top, and I [...] remember that at one point there all these fine wires that were sticking out [...] like little antennae – *feelers* – and I'd completely lost track of those. They're probably all squashed now because I haven't paid any attention when I've set it up again. So it just made me think about how on one level I am talking about care *for* and *of* the body and yet, has it just become an object now? And how do I get back in touch – in contact with it again as something more?. And it's like that when you are working with people; when you can lose a connection and then how do you regain that connection? → ETHICS

I think I have just regained the connection through this conversation and realising what I am doing or in danger of doing!

Figure 86. *What Are These – Feelers?*

Extract from Supervision Record, 5 December 2018



Associations to the 'box' change all the time. In the making it has become a canoe – a boat of sorts – and when standing vertical it is reminiscent of a sarcophagus. But all have some association to the holding/carrying of a body – usually dead – a receptacle for something that is traditionally burnt or buried in a ritual?

At the same time I feel as if I'm working to keep something alive – to preserve a space for something?

Figure 87. *Working to Keep Something Alive*

Extract from Supervision Record, 5 December 2018

<sup>487</sup> Note from supervision meeting 5 December 2018. My husband, Jon, makes the box out of recycled wooden pallets, with handles cut into either end for carrying.



A few months later, after (re)presenting the object-body-thing to another group of art (psycho)therapists with a special interest in neurological conditions, the hand-written reflections offered in response appear illegible; or is it just too much to take in?<sup>488</sup> My anxiety rises. Of what value are they if I cannot understand them!

The following morning, however, it feels more possible to dwell with the uncertainty of not knowing. Holding them carefully in my hands, they change from pieces of extracted data to letters addressed to the 'body' of work – 'gifts' freely given that contribute to my understanding *through* what they evoke and provoke in the handling of them. (Figure 88)

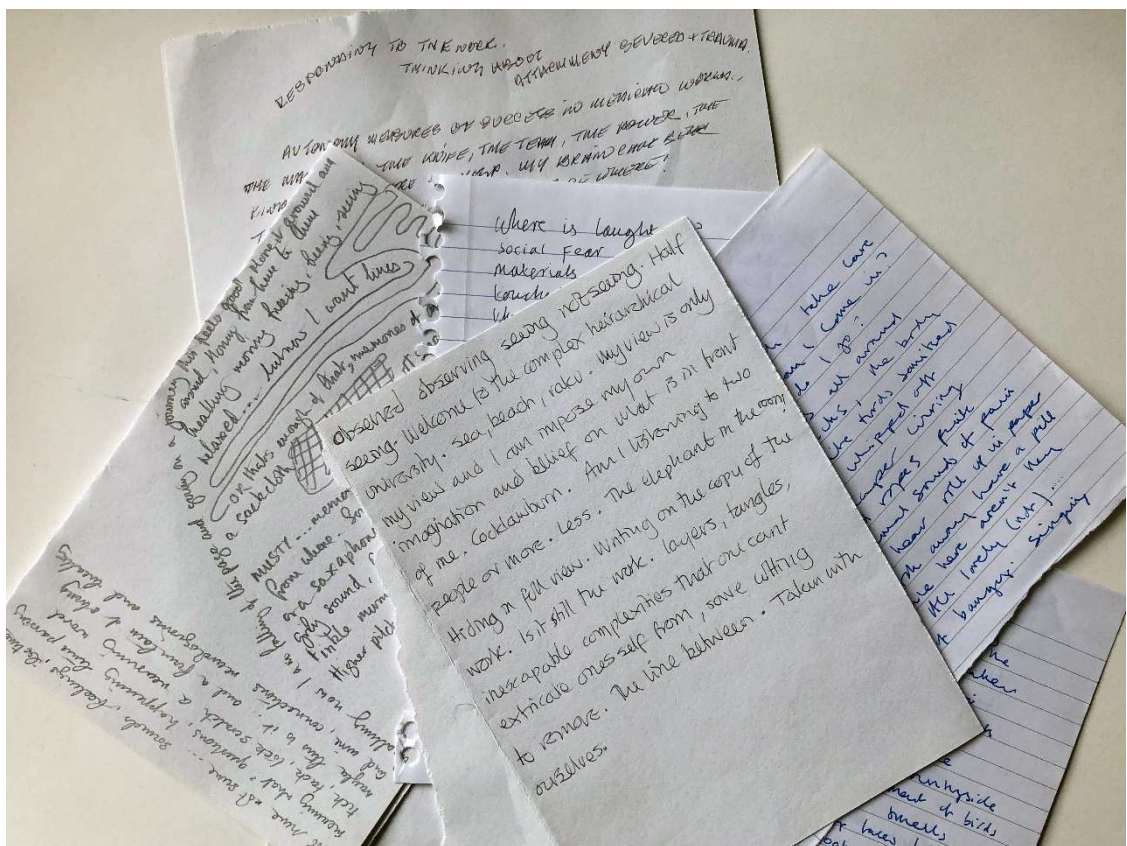


Figure 88. Reflective writings, BAAT Neuro SIG Meeting, 9 March 2019

<sup>488</sup> After gaining ethics approval, I present the 'body' of work at a meeting for the BAAT Neuro SIG, a Special Interest Group for art psychotherapists working with people living with neurological conditions.

#### 4.7.2. Has the manner of how you (re)present your research changed?

Attending the *Gestures* conference gives me permission to unpick and remake the work again.<sup>489</sup> Witnessing the affective, if challenging, nature of the performative presentations, I begin to (re)present myself *as* and *alongside* the ‘body’ of work from a position of closeness rather than distance. (Re)exploring ‘method’ for a conference in 2019, I gesture toward the object-body-thing with its associated parts laid out in ‘evidence’ bags, performing a reflexive, speculative, address to ‘it’ as ‘you’.<sup>490</sup> (Figure 89)



What do you ask of me?...the body seems to demand as I present it in yet another situation – to be looked at – examined – analysed – or is this my projection – a demand I place on you – the body – that you do my bidding and passively go along with whatever I ask of you – paralysed and unable to move without my or someone else’s intervention and unable to give voice to your own experience except through me? When I look at you here and now – in this form – in your box – yet again you evoke thoughts of a dead body – a body wrapped in a shroud – as if ready for burial – disposal. Are you just a thing covered over – shrouded – obscured – concealed from view? – silent now but messy and noisy in your making – are you dead or alive – what use do you serve?

Figure 89. *Questioning a Body of Material*

Documentation, METHOD Conference, 1 May 2019

Speaking to the material directly, I implicate myself in its making, shifting the relation between researcher and researched, challenging traditional conventions of presenting data, and raising questions concerned with analysis and meaning-making as part of, rather than separate from, the gathering/production of data – issues I address in Chapter Five.

Reconfiguring and fictionalising the work as a performative, theatrical space of encounter offers opportunities for bringing the ‘body’ back to life again *through* how it responds to the

<sup>489</sup> ‘Gestures: Writing That Moves Between’, Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, 15–16 February 2019.

<sup>490</sup> ‘Questioning a Body of Material’, METHOD Conference, Sheffield Hallam University, 1 May 2019. The original presentation script is documented in Appendix 8. The abstract is available on the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/method19.php>>.

opportunities and constraints offered by different sites and situations, and how others receive and respond to it.<sup>491</sup> That same spring I engage in a series of events designed to offer spaces for creative and critical thinking through practices of making and dialogue, the object-body-thing along with the-voice-of-its-making acting as further a provocation for exploring the ethics of handling a body of material.<sup>492</sup> (Figure 90)

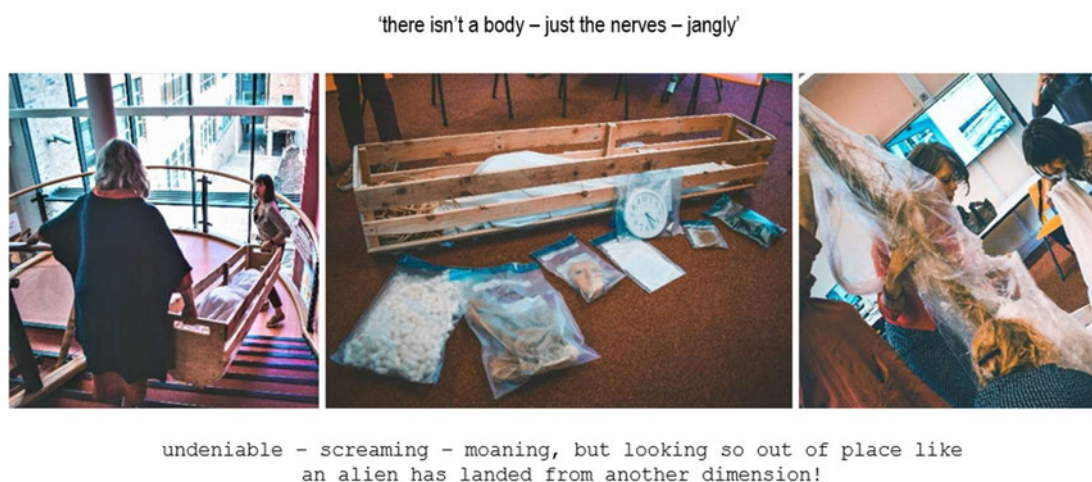


Figure 90. Growing the Critical Arts in Health Network (CAHN), Event 3, 13 May 2019

In June I reconfigure the object-body-thing again as an international audience is invited to handle its parts, presented in evidence bags in an open suitcase, while I perform an adapted reading to the body alongside 'the-voice-of-its-making'.<sup>493</sup> (Figure 91)

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<sup>491</sup> Ash Watson and Jessica Smartt Gullion, 'Editorial: Fiction as Research – Writing Beyond the Boundary Lines', *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal*, 6, 2021

<sup>492</sup> Obtaining University funding for a 'researcher-led' project, fellow researcher, and occupational therapist Julie Walters, and I use the opportunity to grow the Critical Arts in Health Network (CAHN), and connect with others across the University, and outside, with interests in engaging with creative processes as a way of thinking about the complexities to arts in health. We organised and facilitated a series of four events mediated through the boundaries of the setting, a critical focus for each event, and a range of 'making practices' designed to evoke and provoke. Through providing this frame we endeavoured to offer a space for creative and critical thinking through practices of making and dialogue. More information about the project is available on the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/critical-arts-in-health.php>>.

<sup>493</sup> For the Arts in Society conference in Lisbon 2019, I present the work in a performative reading, adapted from the script performed at the METHOD conference. Unable to transport the 'body' in its entirety, I present its associated body parts in a suitcase. The abstract is available on the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/arts-in-society.php>>.



I sit, listening to those that go before me.  
 The body parts sit in wait, still packed in the suitcase  
 that stands upright in a corner against a wall, with my  
 laptop on a table nearby, connected to a speaker, out of  
 which the voice of the work will speak - when it is time.  
 I wonder where to position the body parts + the body's  
 associated voice - where to place it - then - in the room.  
 As I sit - pondering - the suitcase in which the body parts  
 are packed takes a significance, with the red 'Explore'  
 label tied on the handle. All I need do, I think, is  
 put the case - open - on a table and invite people to  
 'explore' its contents. The voice seems central so, when the  
 time has come, I place it beneath the projection screen on  
 which images of me with the body as one as body  
 interacting - performing - appear. I stand to the side  
 after setting the work in motion - the performance.



Figure 91. *Organisational Encounters and Speculative Weavings*

Documentation and journal notes, Arts in Society Conference, 20 June 2019

A delegate approaches me afterwards. ‘Have you presented to health professionals?’ she asks. ‘It might help them connect with their humanity.’<sup>494</sup> We enter into an email correspondence which continues for several months. Describing her ‘personal/visceral reactions’ to my presentation, she writes:

*I felt as if I had fallen down a rabbit hole and was being taken to a place that was foreign to me, a place where I would not have willingly chosen to visit.*<sup>495</sup>

It is a powerful metaphor which resonates with my experience of entering art academia – one that like the delegate’s experience of my presentation, knocks me ‘off balance’.<sup>496</sup> I realise that it is not enough to ‘show’ the work; I am an intrinsic part of it. It has to be performed. (Figure 92) Indeed, it is *through* performing the task that I access the thinking.

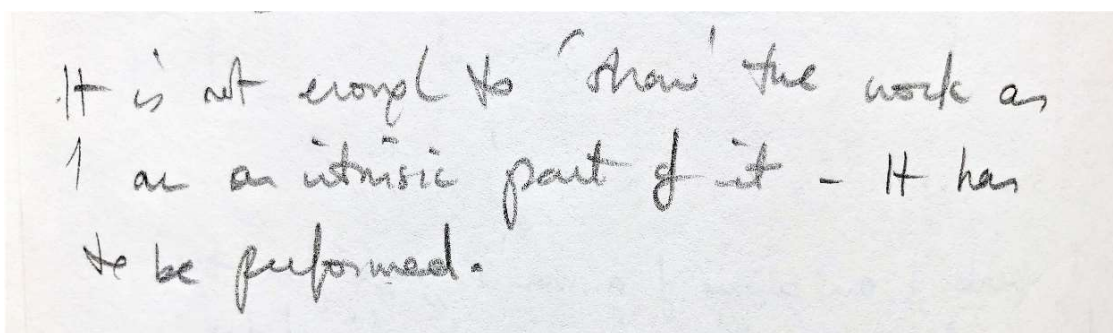


Figure 92. *It Has to Be Performed*

Journal Note, 20 June 2019

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<sup>494</sup> Personal communication, 20 June 2019.

<sup>495</sup> Personal correspondence, 4 July 2019. The expression ‘down the rabbit hole’ is often used as a metaphor to describe entering a situation or beginning a process that is particularly strange, problematic, difficult, complex, or chaotic, especially one that becomes increasingly so as it develops or unfolds. <<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>> It is an allusion to Lewis Carroll’s fictional tale, ‘Alice in Wonderland’. Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventure’s in Wonderland*, London: Macmillan, 1865. After the conference I enter into a correspondence with Professor McEachron over several months as she enquires further into my work.

<sup>496</sup> Personal correspondence, Professor Gail McEachron, 4 July 2019.



# (Re)assemble the threads

*gather together again*

## 5.1. (Re)organise

*change the way something is organised*  
*(re)structure; (re)construct; (re)order*

### 5.1.1. Presenting your thesis as question and answer is rather unusual; where did that come from and why did you do it this way?

It takes time to reorientate myself after producing the main body of work, and I struggle to gather my thoughts. Perhaps it is exhaustion, or maybe I do not want to cast my mind back – to (re)organise and (re)assemble the material – to revisit and feel into it again, albeit from a different position. But the work is not yet done.

I turn to the wall on which I piece together threads and fragments of a dialogue that, initially private, is later articulated in conversations with others that begin sometime before. Through the bodily act I perform, I finally understand the manner in which I must write. It becomes an imperative rather than a choice. (Figure 93)

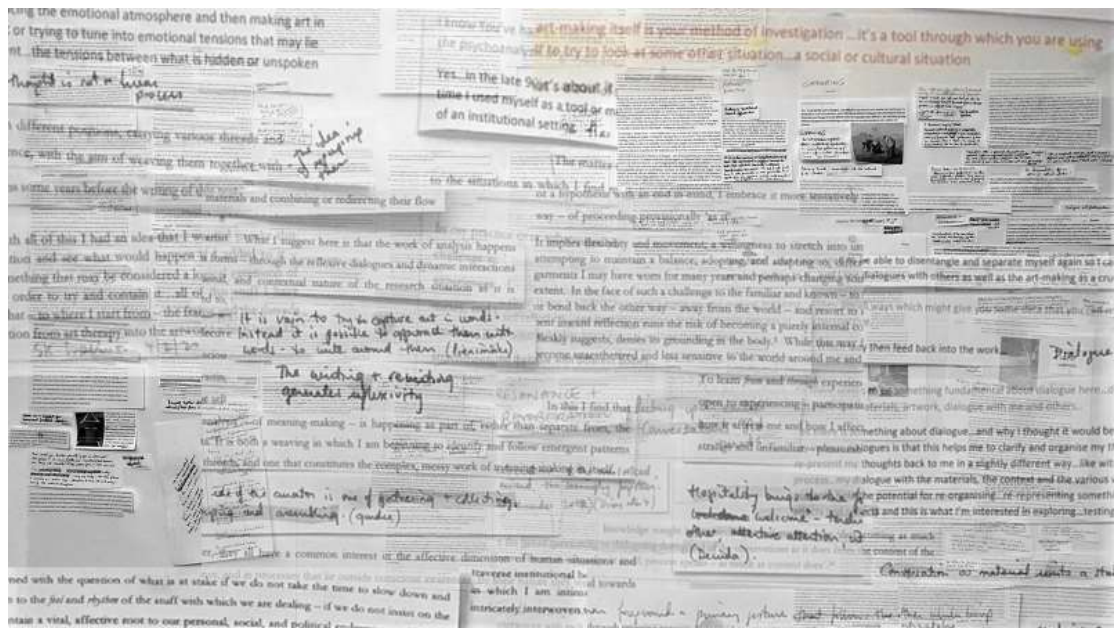


Figure 93. *Fragments of a Conversation*

Assemblage, May 2020



As an iterative, reflexive project, grounded in learning *through* experience, conversations with the work of ‘making’, with myself, and with others is at the core of my method. An early example is my conversation with Clee as I explore ‘unmaking’ the art-therapy-object for *Testing Testing*; an approach which reflects aspects of psychoanalytic/psychotherapy practice where experiential and contextual material is worked through with another minded body.<sup>497</sup> Intended simply as memory prompts, I do not plan for the recording of these dialogues to take on significance; nevertheless, such conversations, including research supervision, become increasingly important in facilitating my understanding of what it is I am doing, as I revisit and *work into* material from the position I am in at the time, often several months later.<sup>498</sup>

The idea of dialogue and turn-taking as a process of meaning-making first appears in my notes at the *Testing Testing* symposium where various forms of dialogue explored are discussed.<sup>499</sup> What also emerges during this project and in the subsequent body of work is the dialogue with context and site where, as Hinshelwood suggests (albeit from a psychoanalytic perspective), meaning comes as much from the *act* of questioning or dialoguing and what can be inferred from this, as it does from content.<sup>500</sup> Of course, as he notes, ‘if you ask a conscious question, you get a conscious answer’.<sup>501</sup> It might be argued that the questions posed here ultimately determine the answers and, consequently, distort. This is inevitable, yet I do not plan this method of writing in advance. Indeed, without an understanding of artistic research when I enter the situation, I imagine presenting my research in the more familiar format of a case study.<sup>502</sup> However, like my research practice,

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<sup>497</sup> Art (psycho) therapists are required to have regular supervision with another experienced psychotherapist. This has been described as a ‘creative, imaginative activity’ – a place for thinking and reflection where one relationship facilitates another. Chris Brown, Julia Meyerowitz-Katz, and Julia Ryde, ‘Thinking with Image Making’, in *Supervision in Art Psychotherapy: A Theoretical and Practical Handbook*, ed. by Joy Schaverien & Caroline Case, Hove: Routledge, 2007, pp. 167–181. In the case of my research the conversation facilitates the development of a relationship with my art practice.

<sup>498</sup> Examples of these dialogues can be seen in Appendices 3 and 4.

<sup>499</sup> Forms of dialogue noted include: those with context and site; how work opens up dialogue with an audience; dialogue as a process of meaning-making; dialogue as turn-taking. Diary note, 2 September 2016.

<sup>500</sup> Hinshelwood, ‘Observing Anxiety’/‘Observing Anxiety’.

<sup>501</sup> *ibid.*, p.49.

<sup>502</sup> Arguably, case study research is considered more appropriate for qualitative than quantitative research because of its foremost strength – the in-depth study of complex issues. Thakur Prasad Bhatta, ‘Case Study Research, Philosophical Position and Theory Building: A Methodological Discussion’, *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 12, 2018, 72–79.

the structure of the thesis and the questions it raises emerge iteratively from working with the material of the situation as I write and the difficulties I encounter as I do this.

Lyotard suggests that we write before knowing what to say and how to say it, and in order to find out, if possible.<sup>503</sup> I write – (re)write – while ‘locked down’ during a pandemic and, like the artist Hayley Newman, after feeling locked in a cycle of writing, beginning texts, not finishing them, and (re)searching a structure for my thesis that keeps the research process alive.<sup>504</sup> The question becomes *how to write?* Attaching words to thoughts and feelings proves troublesome. After Le Guin, ‘Words hold things. They bear meanings.’<sup>505</sup> Yet, the pressure to produce them only multiplies the distance between what I am writing and what I want to convey – deadening, rather than enlivening meaning. It is then that I (re)turn to my presentation at METHOD 2017, originating in the edited transcript of several conversations between myself and Jon, *through* which I consider and relive the rationale for my research approach and the challenges involved.<sup>506</sup> Then, I perform as the ‘owner’ of the experience on which we reflect, while Jon acts as a ‘dialogical other’, performing as facilitator and prompt, offering a framework through which I articulate some of the tensions and complexities in my research.<sup>507</sup>

Initially, I revisit this as a way of introducing the reader to my project. Yet, as I (re)write into it, I realise that the expanding dialogue is becoming the thesis, offering me a structure that entangles rather than separates practice and theory – theory and practice. Although not intentionally referencing the Socratic method of dialogue, in its movement between

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<sup>503</sup> Lyotard, ‘Address on the Subject of the Course of Philosophy’.

<sup>504</sup> Hayley Newman, ‘Locating Performance: Textual Identity and the Performative (Vol.1)’, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Leeds, 2001, p. 1. The global onset of the coronavirus pandemic hits England in February 2020 with lockdowns instituted from March.

<sup>505</sup> Le Guin, ‘*The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*’, p.169.

<sup>506</sup> Debbie Michaels, ‘Entanglements: Exploring the Use of Self as a Research Tool’, *METHOD*, Sheffield Hallam University, May 2017. Jon was a fellow PhD candidate at the time and also presented his work as part of this conference presentation. As we increasingly became involved in conversations at home about our respective research, I began to record these, out of which came the approach for *METHOD*. See <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/entanglements.php>>. (Re)presented here the original dialogue is extensively edited, expanded, reorganised, and interrupted by other questions posed along the way and performed through a piecing together of fragments and a rewriting of the text for a different audience.

<sup>507</sup> McIntosh, ‘*Action Research and Reflective Practice?*’.

question and answer it stimulates creative and critical thinking, challenges assumptions, and gradually unfolds insights. The ‘dialogue is the research’.<sup>508</sup>

It came from, and also, I guess, there was this wanting to start with the material... to use the material, notes that I'd made at the time... bits of things I'd recorded when I was using my voice as it was happening... that was the other thing I was thinking. I'm three years away from when I did it... I need to use the material that happened at the time... verbatim pretty much, and then I was trying to bring in, as I was writing... these bits are as I was writing it I was recalling how I felt and inserting bits that I'd written at the time and then reflections afterwards or bits of theory. And also I found that I'd changed... I was trying to work it with the three... two columns and then it just got too complicated and I was thinking about someone trying to read it. I started adding in another column and that didn't work, so I switched around to doing it in this way, and trying out different typefaces for the different voices that are interwoven together – an approach that offered me more flexibility than the more rigid structure of the column which began to feel constraining.

Making this shift from the vertical to the horizontal in the text felt like making a shift from a primarily ‘warp-faced’ weaving (emphasis on vertical threads) to a ‘weft-faced’ weaving (emphasis on horizontal).



Warp-faced

Weft-faced

The warp is the set of yarns or other elements stretched in place on a loom before the weft is introduced during the weaving process. They have to be strong as they are held under high tension. The weft carries almost no tension, so does not have to be as strong. Nevertheless, it is dependent on the strength of the warp and the frame of the loom, without which the fabric cannot be woven. It is the idea of interlacing ‘warp and weft’ – different voices – that I use metaphorically to describe the underlying structure upon which the fabric of my thesis is built, and the reflexive approach to building it – one that implies an ongoing conversation with the material of the situation.

Figure 94. *Warp to Weft*

Extract from annotated Supervision Record, 23 January 2020

<sup>508</sup> Hannula, Suoranta, and Vadén, ‘Artistic Research: Methodology’, p. 23.

Like the *work* of ‘making’, the thesis takes shape through the process of its construction rather than following a prescribed format. (Figure 94) My use of layered, juxtaposed narratives is influenced by works such as *The Body Multiple* by the ethnographer Anne-Marie Mol, where the analysis and reflection are juxtaposed.<sup>509</sup> Although I loop back, into, and over previously worked material, writing *as* and *with* the material shifts the relation between researcher and researched from one of power *over* to one of equivalence and analogy – a position, Jane Rendell suggests, where ‘as’ implies closeness, connection, and *with*-ness.<sup>510</sup> To write in this manner challenges academic convention. Nevertheless, as Smith argues, writing in a ‘hybrid’ style incorporating the critical, embodied, and poetic, dissolves binary oppositions and allows space for personal, material, and cultural voices to emerge.<sup>511</sup> I write in this way to stay in touch with what is being made and written – to keep the practice alive – otherwise I fear, after Mary Holmes, that the ‘flavour’ of feeling that attends my research will be washed away.<sup>512</sup>

Conversation and the *making* of it becomes part of my practice – a site where I dwell and a platform through which I share aspects of my internal life while working on the reflexivity and affectivity that results from ongoing conversations with the material of the situation.<sup>513</sup> Drawing on Haraway’s idea of localised and ‘situated knowledge’ I argue, with Knudsen and Stage, that as we are not in charge of the world, it reveals itself through the fluctuations and movements in the situations I enter or set up as researcher.<sup>514</sup> After Haraway, establishing a ‘conversation’ implies that I am ‘part of – *affecting and affected by* – the research process, and that the situation can answer back and contribute to this interaction’.<sup>515</sup> As Candy indicates, expanding on Schön’s ideas of the reflective practitioner, ‘at the micro-

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<sup>509</sup> Annemarie Mol, *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002.

<sup>510</sup> Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism*, London & New York: IB Tauris, 2010, p. 7.

<sup>511</sup> Smith, ‘Drawing out Language’, 19–20.

<sup>512</sup> Holmes apologises for the lack of emotionality in her paper and expresses her concern that, in trying to be clear she may have ‘washed away the flavour of the feelings which attend all our thinking’, and which, she argues, ‘are crucial in making the social world within reflexive modernity’. Mary Holmes, ‘The Emotionalization of Reflexivity’, *Sociology*, 44, 2010, 139–154, p. 140.

<sup>513</sup> Caetano, ‘Defining Personal Reflexivity’. See also Ana Caetano, ‘Reflexive Dialogues: Interaction and Writing as External Components of Personal Reflexivity’, *Sociological Research Online*, 22, 2017, 66–86, p. 76.

<sup>514</sup> Knudsen and Stage, ‘Affective Methodologies’, p. 5–6, my italics.

<sup>515</sup> Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage, ‘Introduction: Affective Methodologies’, in *Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect*, ed. by Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage, Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 1–22.

making level the investigation includes asking questions that will shape the thinking and making to follow'.<sup>516</sup> But the dialogue is inevitably influenced by personal and contextual material and, constructed (more or less consciously) for a particular audience, is limited in scope and exclusive.

### **5.1.2. Can you expand briefly on the relationship between the question-and-answer format and your interest in psychoanalysis.** <sup>517</sup>

Under the intimidating gaze of the academic institution, I recall again the Lacanian psychoanalytic process of 'patient presentation' introduced at the beginning of this thesis - a questioning that may be thought of as a staging of the unconscious.

As I discuss in the previous section, and elsewhere in the thesis, meaning comes as much from the *act* of questioning or dialoguing and what can be inferred from this, as it does from content.<sup>518</sup> Clearly the question-and-answer format presented here does not correspond with a psychoanalytic or psychoanalytically-informed art (psycho)therapy session (there would likely be less text and more pauses, blank pages, and imaginings or images). Nor is it intended to replicate or imitate. While this research weaves in threads from both disciplines along with the arts in a somewhat peculiar conversation, and while all may seek to gather new insights, transform understanding, and generate new possibilities, the context in which a research analysis takes place is substantially different to a psychoanalysis or art (psycho)therapy, both of which are subject to different boundaries and constraints, notably those of privacy and confidentiality. Although both process and outcome may be evaluated at stages along the way through various forms of questioning, neither involve 'defending' one's thesis in an oral examination at the end. Nevertheless, different (unconscious) defences may come into play to protect against the threat of a psychologically dangerous or emotionally unacceptable or painful situation, such as the working through of the end of an analysis or, indeed, completing a doctoral analysis which, in this case, involves working

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<sup>516</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*; Candy, *Creative Reflective Practitioner*, p. 49.

<sup>517</sup> This section is added after the original submission in response to the viva and queries raised by the examination panel.

<sup>518</sup> Hinshelwood, 'Observing Anxiety' 'Observing Anxiety'.

through more than one ending.<sup>519</sup> Indeed, an end is difficult to find as I loop back to the beginning once more to rework the threads of this project from a different position. It seems that, in following my research project I also follow a psychoanalytic one where, reaching toward the end, old ghosts from the past that I imagine I have laid to rest, return to assert their threatening presence even more powerfully.<sup>520</sup> Perhaps, as Jacques Lacan suggests, ‘the loop must be run through several times’ as part of the ‘*durcharbeiten* [working through] of the necessity of elaboration’.<sup>521</sup> To draw a further parallel, aspects of research, psychoanalysis, art (psycho)therapy and, indeed, reflexivity and the arts are concerned with curiosity and questioning as a way of life – with exploring, revisiting and reworking, and bringing ‘things’ into the present and into ‘presence’ to be considered and attended to.<sup>522</sup> Still, as I observe in 3.4.1 in relation to the research seminar, a crucial difference remains in that, in the psychoanalytic or art (psycho)therapy encounter, critical judgement is suspended as the contents of experience are disturbed and worked *through* (I discuss the importance of framed, non-judgemental spaces for dialogue in 5.2.5). As Schön suggests, the power of the psychoanalytic transference lies in its use as a ‘virtual’ world where it may be possible to experiment and ‘slow down phenomena which would ordinarily be lost to reflection’ through action.<sup>523</sup> If the transference becomes an object of curiosity, dialogue, and shared enquiry then thoughts and feelings may be seen as sources of discovery to be paid attention to rather than acted on or defended against.<sup>524</sup> Yet, as with psychoanalysis, art (psycho)therapy, and this research, much of the dialogue and questioning remains unarticulated – embedded and embodied in the relational process of weaving the work.

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<sup>519</sup> In psychoanalytic theory defence mechanisms are unconscious psychological strategies used to cope with reality and maintain self-image. They safeguard the mind against feelings and thoughts that are too difficult for the conscious mind to cope with. All defence mechanisms are a response to anxiety and how the conscious and unconscious mind manage the stress of a social situation. See Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*, London: Routledge, 2018. Subsequent theorists such as Melanie Klein and others have further developed these ideas.

<sup>520</sup> Anna Freud writes of the return of prohibited ideas to consciousness when repression fails as a defence mechanism. *Ibid.*

<sup>521</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminars of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis.*, New York, NY: Norton & Co., 1973, p. 274, my insertion [ ].

<sup>522</sup> For a more detailed view of the relationship between the Socratic method and psychoanalysis see Jonathan Lear, ‘The Socratic Method and Psychoanalysis’, in *A Companion to Socrates*, ed. by Sara Ahbel-Rappe and Rachana Kamtekar, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006, pp. 442–462.

<sup>523</sup> Schön, ‘*The Reflective Practitioner*’, p. 160–161.

<sup>524</sup> *ibid.*

**5.1.3. Both the practice submission and thesis are conceptualised as three transpositions. Can you elaborate on what these are and why you see it this way.**

‘Transposition’ implies an exchange of places, a move to a different context, or a change of key. A prime motivation for moving to art academia is that it might de-familiarise the familiar and challenge more established patterns, offering different frames and lenses through which to experience and observe organisational processes (my own included). Adapting threads based on prior learning and experience for art-as-research affords me space to (re)approach the subject and the frame differently; indeed, it might be said that the question of what is generated through ‘taking an aspect and transposing it’ to another situation is fundamental to my enquiry.<sup>525</sup> Unsurprisingly, ideas of ‘transference’ appear early in my research as I explore unmaking and moving the art-therapy-object from the comparative safety of the art (psycho)therapy arena to art academia – an act that prompts me to think about what might be activated by placing an object in a different context and changing the register through which it is read.<sup>526</sup> Using *Testing Testing* and other works as sites for exploration, and trusting in process, it is *through* the act of moving ‘things’ from one place to another, and what this evokes and provokes in me and others, that I begin to get a *feel* for the research situation. The idea of ‘transposition’ also runs through the participant-observation as material moves between various insides and outsides. It is only later, through the transfer of energy from one place to another, and the exchange of digital cutting and pasting on the computer for cutting, sticking, and (re)organising fragments of material on an adjacent wall, that the conceptualisation gradually emerges – underpinned by the ongoing work of *unmaking*, *making* and *remaking*. (Figure 95)

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<sup>525</sup> The idea of ‘transposition’ first appears in my Diary Notes on 2 September 2016 at the *Testing Testing* Symposium.

<sup>526</sup> Personal communication, Yuen Fong Ling, supervision meeting, 5 May 2016.





Figure 95. Three Transpositions – outline chapter structure, February 2020

I summarise these transpositional processes of *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking* as follows:

- **Transposition I** – I cross disciplinary boundaries, transferring and *unmaking* previous practices to open spaces for learning *through* experience.
- **Transposition II** – I assemble frames through which to experience and observe a healthcare setting and myself therein. Weaving in approaches from psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy I move attention to the site of artmaking and my *making* process as a multi-layered response to the research situation.
- **Transposition III** – I *re-make* the residual ‘body’ of work – deepening my understanding as I (re)situate and (re)present it in settings that bridge art, healthcare, and academia. Challenging traditional relations between researcher and researched, I amplify the psycho-social presence of the ‘body’ as audiences are implicated in the meaning-making process through receiving, handling, and responding.



What is not evident, although implicit in the process, is the time and labour this takes. The conceptualisation takes shape *through* the ongoing ‘work’ of *unmaking, making, and remaking* – not directed towards the making of ‘something’ which implies mastery over; rather, the ongoing performance of some *thing* in the making in recognition that, to borrow from Bolt, ‘creative practice can be conceived of as a performance in which linkages are constantly being made and remade’.<sup>527</sup>

#### **5.1.4. Can you elaborate on the aesthetic choices you made regarding the format of the three books and their status as part of your practice output.**<sup>528</sup>

Unprepared for the question the contents of my mind evacuate and I stumble over my response, unable to think as the power imbalance of the situation asserts itself. Remarks about the spiral binding, A4 dimensions, and glossy wipe-clean covers penetrate my sensitivities and I struggle with embarrassment and the powerful internal critic that devalues and laughs at what I present. Then again, I made certain aesthetic choices.

It is important to me to submit a hard copy of the thesis and accompanying practice documentation, as my main contribution to knowledge is concerned with the reflexivity generated *through undergoing* the work of handling and moving ‘things’ across boundaries *in* and *between* different sites. Still, I need to argue my case as the University moves largely online in response to the Covid pandemic, requiring submissions in pdf form.

I do not view the Practice Books as artworks or artist books in themselves, although they may become such in time. Rather, as documents that sit alongside my thesis while turning academic convention on its side, their A4 pages offer spaces through which to articulate and evidence my research enquiry in ways that are not possible through the thesis alone.<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> Barbara Bolt, ‘Material Thinking and the Agency of Matter’, *Studies in Material Thinking*, 1, 2007, 1–4, p. 3.

<sup>528</sup> This question is added after the original submission in response to the viva and queries raised by the examination panel.

<sup>529</sup> Robin Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Tussling with how to present a vast amount of documentary material without overwhelming the reader (or myself) but still conveying a sense of my process and experience, I offer snapshots, partial views, and layered narratives which, in places, are blurred and difficult to read. These reflect the complexity of the research situation and practice material, and a feminist approach which, after Haraway, does not offer a complete or objective account of events, but rather a partial, layered, subjective account of my sensitivity to the research situation.<sup>530</sup> While this may be hard to read, it nonetheless evokes a response through the inconsistency and incompleteness – provoking the imagination (and perhaps frustration) *through* the experience of not being able to fully grasp everything.

Aesthetically, I imagine the books (and the thesis) being Coptic bound – an ancient form of binding where sheets are sewn together through their folds, enabling the book to open flat.<sup>531</sup> Perhaps I might have pursued this further, or attempted binding them myself; however a lack of resources – time, finances, and energy – limit my pursuit, and the option of ‘perfect’ binding (not my preference) also falls by the wayside.<sup>532</sup> Ultimately, I envisage that the books, together with the thesis, will be bound in the traditional purple cover for submission to the University library. With practicalities, time, and exhaustion pressing in as well as the expectation that I may well need, or want, to make amendments, I reconcile with my aesthetic sensibilities, turning to the University Print Shop with its limited, but less costly, options of thermal binding for the thesis and spiral binding for the practice books (opening flat for the reader), adding a wipe-clean acetate cover for protection in the handling and transportation of them. I present the practice books to illustrate my method, rather than as artworks in themselves. Stimulating conversation, as well as feelings of embarrassment and foolishness that resonate with my experience at the *Testing Testing* symposium, this again draws attention to the complex nature of different sites, the tensions, ambivalences, and resistances encountered at their borders and what they might evoke, provoke, enable, activate, or silence when put in close proximity to each other.

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<sup>530</sup> Haraway, ‘Situated Knowledges’.

<sup>531</sup> Originating from early Christianity, this style of sewn binding is now often used when making handmade art journals or other books.

<sup>532</sup> Perfect binding is a form of bookbinding in which the leaves are bound by gluing rather than sewing. Such binding includes the front cover, spine, and back cover as well as interior pages. I dismissed this option due to cost through the need for quantity, and that fact that this kind of binding does not open flat.

### 5.1.5. A thesis is often organised as Literature Review, Method, Analysis, and Findings. Why choose a different approach?

How to keep the work alive?

In a practice-based enquiry method and findings, research, and practice are intrinsically intertwined.<sup>533</sup> As a set of processes around which various meanings float, the reflexive work of art-as-research is integral to the design of my project; yet, it is a slow, messy, business which, like meaning-making, does not happen in a linear, orderly fashion, but through the complex interplay of different elements.<sup>534</sup> Like the question that brings me to this research, presenting it becomes a matter of how to organise material in a way that keeps the practice alive – preserving rather than resolving tension – while meeting the necessary academic requirements. Like the work of *art*, the work of *writing* has an organising and structuring function while resisting fixed or static meaning: when I approach the tangled threads of the object-body-thing to move it, I cannot simply dismantle the research and separate its parts neatly and dispassionately without damaging its integrity. Although each transposition foregrounds a primary gesture which stands alone and is presented sequentially, each is intricately interwoven with the others in a reflexive conversation that continually loops back *over* and *into* as I *feel my way into* the situation. Feelings, thoughts, and insights emerge at different times and from all directions, as material ‘made’ in the past is ‘unmade’ and ‘remade’ through touching the stuff of new situations in the present – the conceptualisation emerging *through* the ongoing conversational work of *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking*. Sites of making and research therefore extend to the performance of *writing* which, as an ‘affect-laden’ process, *in* and *of* itself, generates reflexivity through the work of its construction.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> Gavin J. Sade, ‘Intractable Differences: Artistic Research and the Problem of Practice’, *Proceedings of the International Conference on Research Creativity*, 2012.

<sup>534</sup> Cultural theorist Stuart Hall suggests that culture may be understood as a set of processes around which various meanings and interpretations float – fluid and interacting rather than as a set of fixed practices and interpretations. ‘It is by our use of things, and what we say, think, and feel about them – how we represent them – that we give them meaning.’ Stuart Hall, ‘Introduction’, in *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. by Stuart Hall, London: Sage, 1997, pp. 1–11, 3, in Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 4.

<sup>535</sup> Anna Gibbs, ‘Writing as Method: Attunement, Resonance, and Rhythm’, in *Affective Methodologies: Developing Cultural Research Strategies for the Study of Affect*, ed. by Britta Timm Knudsen and Carsten Stage, Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. 222–236, 222.

In Siukonen's words, 'it is only afterwards, as soon as I start working on this text, that the work translates itself into sentences'.<sup>536</sup>

As noted by Hinshelwood, this enquiry is not primarily concerned with what I learn about the organisation, but with method.<sup>537</sup> While I further my understanding of healthcare and research settings (and myself) through the artistic process, emphasis lies with *how* these threads of understanding emerge, *how* practices of 'making' have been involved in their emergence, and *what* facilitates or hinders this. There seems to be a fundamental difficulty in saying *this* is the art and *that* is the thesis – to separate practice from theory, method from analysis and findings. Nor can I review the literature separately from undertaking the research as it is only through *undergoing* the work that I encounter the relevance of certain ideas.<sup>538</sup> As part of an iterative reflexive process this requires reading and (re)reading the research situation in which I am entangled; (re)turning to it time and again, going *through* and *over* the material, sitting *with* it, attending to it, exploring strategies for organising, configuring, and (re)presenting it, textually and materially, and involving others in dialogue with it. Far from a systematic, mechanical process from which I can distance myself (although I do try), learning *through* experience is a sensory, embodied, emotional endeavour, fraught with tensions and ambivalences as I engage in practical contact with, and observation of, materials, situations, and things, encounter and undergo events or occurrences, and feel, think, and act in response.

Organising my thesis contiguous with my practice submission, I write and present my research in a manner that reflects the process of its emergence; (re)assembling threads and fragments in a multi-layered narrative which unfolds practice and theory – a form of 'praxis' that may be understood as 'theory imbricated in practice' or, after Heidegger, what some call 'material thinking'.<sup>539</sup> While aware of the ethical tension between gathering and producing data – the former presupposing the existence of data 'out there', and the latter

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<sup>536</sup> Siukonen, 'Made in Silence?', p. 95.

<sup>537</sup> Personal communication, Robert Hinshelwood, 29 May 2016.

<sup>538</sup> Debbie Michaels, 'Organisational Encounters and Speculative Weavings: Questioning a Body of Material', in *Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research*, ed. by Craig Vear, London: Routledge, 2022, pp. 691–698.

<sup>539</sup> Nelson, 'Practice as Research in the Arts', p. 5. Following Heidegger Nelson indicates a mode of knowing which arises through doing-thinking (practice) prior to any articulation in propositional discourse (theory), see note 14, p. 188–9. Also, Paul Carter, *Material Thinking: The Theory and Practice of Creative Research*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2004; Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, 'Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry', London: I.B.Taurus, 2007.

acknowledging the involvement and influence of the researcher – the act of producing is entangled *with*, rather than separate from gathering. Whether in the form of subjective, experiential, sensory impressions, material artworks, or written documentation, such data will not exist as such until I, as researcher, ‘in a particular context and with a particular aim brings them forth.’<sup>540</sup> As practice-based project of which I am at the centre, I am embedded and embodied in it, intimately implicated in the process of gathering and gleaning in the sense of slowly collecting fragments of material, sensory, and affective impressions around which thoughts may begin to come together over time – an act of labour and patient effort.<sup>541</sup> Whereas gathering as ‘bringing together’ conjures up a gradual, ongoing, process, the idea of producing as ‘bringing into existence’ bears an idea of production and output – of producing something tangible that may then be judged by its utility value. There is a complex tension at play. Of necessity, the research situation demands that I pay attention to what is happening in the doing of something – in the performing and experiencing of it, rather than what it results in or is ‘found’. Analysis happens as part of, rather than separate from, the production and assemblage of material which, as well as being influenced by a multitude of other factors, inevitably contain traces of my presence. While I may wish to remain unobtrusive (as in the rehabilitation centre) in the weaving of this work, I both affect the situation and am affected by it. My weaving is one in which I identify and follow emerging threads and patterns, and one that constitutes the complex, messy, uncertain, work of meaning-making itself.<sup>542</sup>

In calling on the metaphor of weaving I call upon a history of women’s work and the time and labour involved – work which contemporary western culture has tended to place on the margins, rather than at the centre of how we make meaning.<sup>543</sup> I summon it as an

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<sup>540</sup> Capitolina Díaz, ‘Conversational Heuristic as a Reflexive Method for Feminist Research’, *International Review of Sociology/Revue Internationale de Sociologie*, 12, 2002, 249–255, p. 251.

<sup>541</sup> Traditionally associated with agriculture where, from biblical times, the poor were granted access to gather up the fallen grain after the harvest, ‘gleaning’ in its modern sense is concerned more with gathering in the sense of finding out or ascertaining something.

<sup>542</sup> In *The Textility of Making*, Ingold suggests that practitioners are ‘not so much imposing form on matter as bringing together diverse materials and combining or redirecting their flow in the anticipation of what might emerge’, p. 94. He draws on the work of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to argue that ‘the essential relation, in a world of life, is not between matter and form but between materials and forces [...] about the way in which materials of all sorts [...] mix and meld with one another in the generation of things’, p. 91–92. See also Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 377, and Petra Lange-Berndt, *Materiality: Documents of Contemporary Art*, London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2015.

<sup>543</sup> In his 1933 lecture XXXIII, on *Femininity* Sigmund Freud states, ‘It seems that women have made few contributions to the discoveries and inventions in the history of civilization; there is, however, one technique which they may have invented -- that of plaiting and weaving.’ Sigmund Freud,

epistemological tool – a ‘maquette of reasoning’, after Barthes – a tool *with* and *through* which to think.<sup>544</sup> Like Penelope from Homer’s *Odyssey*, whose deceptive weaving serves to hold off her suitors, I delay the demand of the academic institution for completion in ‘findings’, preferring to engage in ‘finding’ as part of the weaving process, something that might be described as ‘dialectical’ in that it accommodates complexity while preserving tension.<sup>545</sup> As Katherine Krüger argues, while the textile is being woven, and re-woven, the plot is suspended as uncertainty about the outcome enters the narrative – the weaving process constituting ‘the site of artistic creation and not, like the textile, its completion’.<sup>546</sup> *Finding* becomes part of ‘method’, as the emphasis shifts from making a ‘complete’ or finished fabric, to making as *undergoing*, and the knowledge that is revealed through the performance of tasks *on their way* to being completed.

Putting the words ‘speculative’ and ‘weaving’ together is not planned; rather, the conceptualisation emerges over time as their juxtaposition begins to ‘glow’ from the page on which I have written them. (Figure 96) The weaving is ‘speculative’ in that my making, understood in Ingold’s terms as a practice of weaving, is emergent, risky, uncertain, and unpredictable.<sup>547</sup>

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‘Feminity (1933)’, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis and Other Works, Volume XXII (1932-1936)*, ed. by James Strachey, London: Vintage, 2001, pp. 112–135, 132. According to Freud, it is shame, caused by the absence of a penis, that makes women imitate the veil of pubic hair which nature drew over the absence, by plaiting and weaving threads into fabric.

<sup>544</sup> French philosopher, art critic, and writer Denis Diderot saw the newly mechanised stocking weaving loom as an epistemological as well as a sociological development. He writes, ‘It can be regarded as a single and unique reasoning of which the fabrication of the piece of work is the conclusion.’ Cited in Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, *The Preparation of the Novel*, 168–9.

<sup>545</sup> *The Odyssey* has been criticised for supporting patriarchal norms and presenting Penelope’s character as submissive. Anna North, ‘Historically, Men Translated the Odyssey. Here’s What Happened When a Woman Took the Job’, *Vox*, 2017. However, Emma Wilson suggests that ‘Whereas the deceptive plots of Odysseus are geared toward a particular end [...] the deceptive plot of Penelope serves in the opposite direction: to hold off an end point, to avoid the end of the story. It is meant to be forever in a state of becoming, not completion.’ Emily Wilson, *Homer. The Odyssey*, New York, N.Y.: Norton, 2018, p. 45–46. Wilson’s reading implies a ‘tension’ – a pull in opposite directions which differentiates each position, while retaining the connection between them. It may then be argued that Penelope’s weaving exemplifies the ‘particular form of conversation engaged in by women, a kind of “weaving” akin to the dialectical’ in the sense that it seeks to accommodate complexity while preserving tension’. Bradley Bryan, ‘Women’s Work as Political Art: Weaving and Dialectical Politics in Homer, Aristophanes, and Plato’, by Lisa Pace Vetter (Review), *Political Theory*, 35, 2007, 101–103.

<sup>546</sup> Kathryn Sullivan Kruger, *Weaving the Word: The Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production*, London: Associated University Presses, 2001, p. 57.

<sup>547</sup> In *The Textility of Making*, Ingold argues against the assumption that ‘making entails the imposition of form upon the material world by an agent with a design in mind’. Rather, he suggests that ‘making is

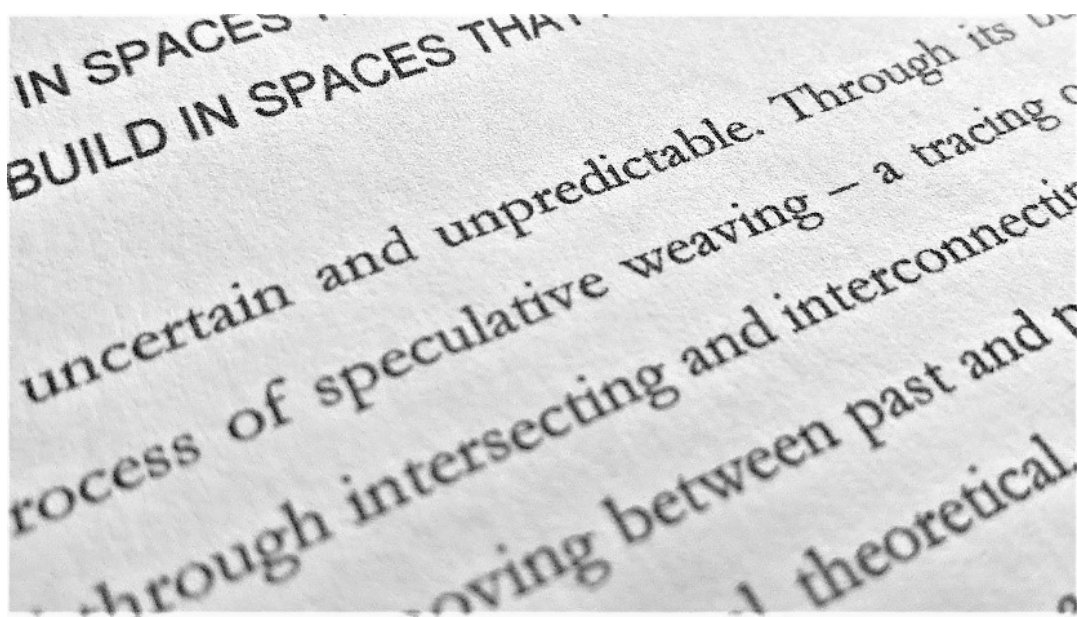


Figure 96. *Speculative Weaving*

Extract from an early draft, June 2018

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a practice of weaving in which practitioners bind their own pathways or lines of becoming into the texture of material flows'. Ingold, 'The Textility of Making', p. 91.

## 5.2. (Re)visit

*come back to or visit again*

*consider (a situation or problem) again or from a different perspective*

### 5.2.1. How does your method, and your thoughts about it, differ from what you planned or imagined?

Revisiting the material, I do not stand back to separate myself from the action; rather, revisiting *is* part of the action – part of the ongoing *work* of art-as-research that involves going back *into* and *over*, ‘re-turning’, in Barad’s words.<sup>548</sup>

As discussed, my original plan (if somewhat sketchy) is to construct a situation in which to expand on Hinshelwood’s psychoanalytic model of organisational observation with a reflexive artmaking component drawn from art (psycho)therapy practice. Still, while I am relatively clear on the framework for the organisational observation, I am unsure what form the artmaking component will take and how these elements will work together. The structure of ‘one hour a week in the organisation + one hour a week in the studio, at a regular time and place’ only crystallises as I approach and prepare the stage for the twelve-week participant-observation in the rehabilitation centre. The method develops over time as part of an iterative reflexive process, although its development is undoubtedly influenced by prior experience as well as the time, space, materials, and tools I have at hand. It is also informed by preliminary negotiations with, and initial artistic explorations into, the research situation, as I reorientate myself in art academia, take advantage of opportunities such as *Testing Testing*, and *The Dreamers* and begin to document the dialogues that emerge.<sup>549</sup> As described in Chapter Two/Transposition I – *Unmake* and Chapter Three/Transposition II – *Make*, this work goes towards informing my method as it develops, and preparing the

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<sup>548</sup> Through the addition of the hyphen Barad likens ‘re-turning’ to the work of earthworms turning the soil over and over – ingesting and excreting [...] opening it up and breathing new life into it’. Karen Barad, ‘Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart’, *Parallax*, 20, 2014, 168–187, p. 168.

<sup>549</sup> This is shown in my diary and journal notes, as well as the *Testing Testing* project, and works such as *Hung Out to Dry* and *I’m Only Human*, Michaels, ‘A Grand Deception’. See Practice Submission – Transposition II.



conditions necessary for getting a *feel* for the research situation. It is not planned: the method evolves through the performance of the work, as does its title.<sup>550</sup>

It is unsurprising that the model of ‘one hour in the organisation + one hour in the studio’ reflects aspects of the psychoanalytic or art (psycho)therapy encounter; it is as much about creating a psychological space for working *with* and *through* as a physical one. Hinshelwood’s observational model is a transposition of psychoanalytic ideas outside the consulting room and, as he notes in an early correspondence, ‘the use of art as a self-reflective tool [is] actually a logical extension of an art therapy method’.<sup>551</sup> Although the frame (or brackets even) serve to hold things in place early on as I make space for my practice, it also acts as material with which to work – something to be bent and reshaped. As I follow where the emerging material leads, both method and frame expand back and out further, changing and developing as the threads of Hinshelwood’s model and my art (psycho)therapy practice become assimilated into a more performative approach, conceptualised as a ‘speculative weaving in three transpositions’. More than ‘this + that’, the fact that I do ‘this’ as part of ‘this + that’ changes the nature of ‘this’ and ‘that’ as they move beyond what they are as individual processes and become part of a new affective assemblage with its own properties.<sup>552</sup>

Although not sure how the project will develop beyond the studio, I am keen to see how people in the rehabilitation centre and audiences in other contexts might respond, and envisage I might undertake interviews; nevertheless, I do not anticipate the shape of my research practice as it unfolds in Chapter Four/Transposition III – *Remake*.

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<sup>550</sup> The development of the thesis titles can be identified at the top of the Timeline.

<sup>551</sup> Personal correspondence, 29 May 2016.

<sup>552</sup> Writing about affect as method, Anna Hickey-Moody draws on the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to argue that ‘percepts and affects exist within an artwork because they have been embedded in the assemblage that is a work of art, on the terms established by the work, terms specific to the way the work has been constructed. These terms are not established through the artist’s intentions; they are pre-subjective, they are a performance of a wider assemblage of material and technique.’ Anna Hickey-Moody, ‘Affect as Method: Feelings, Aesthetics and Affective Pedagogy’, in *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*, ed. by Rebecca Coleman and Jessica Ringrose, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013, pp. 79–95, 88. ‘To feel or sense is to imagine.’ p. 82.

### 5.2.2. What are the ‘key works’ which functioned to get you to your final stage?<sup>553</sup>

Although, as part of the *work* of art-*as*-research, each ‘work’ has significance for my thinking, being intricately interwoven with the others, key works are:

1. ‘Be | tween’ through which I begin to *unmake* and reframe previous practices as I move things from one place to another.<sup>554</sup>
2. ‘I’m Only Human’ and the ‘Twelve Weeks: Twelve Hours + Twelve Hours +’ project, through which I begin to understand my *making* process – embodied in the emerging object-body-thing – as a performative intertwining of *undergoings* and *goings on*.<sup>555</sup>
3. ‘Interrupting the Flow’ and ‘The-Voice-Of-Its-Making’ through which I *remake* and amplify understandings as the audience is also implicated in the meaning-making process.<sup>556</sup>

### 5.2.3. What are the key turning points in your understanding, and where do these appear in your practice?

Moving aspects of my practice from art (psycho)therapy to art academia shifts the emphasis from art *as* and *in* therapy to art as a primary way of examining experience. How art practice is ‘framed’, and in what context it is situated and viewed, affects how it is understood and valued, and may be quite different when viewed from these, as well as other, perspectives.

As I describe in Chapter Two, the move is not straightforward. Nonetheless, while crossing disciplinary boundaries is fraught with tensions and ambivalences, the unfamiliar situation

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<sup>553</sup> This question is added after the original submission in response to the viva and comments made by the examination panel.

<sup>554</sup> See Transposition I – *Unmake*, and <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/between.php>>

<sup>555</sup> See Transposition II – *Make*, <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/only-human.php>> and <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/twelve-weeks.php>>

<sup>556</sup> See Transposition III – *Remake*, and <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/interrupting-the-flow.php>> and <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/voice-of-its-making.php>>

offers me scope for trying things out within different constraints.<sup>557</sup> This is exemplified in ‘Transposition I’ as, tentatively, I explore how documentation of the personal might become material for artistic practice and research, experiment with different media, reconfigure fragmented narratives, and risk moving my art practice from the non-judgemental, private, setting of art (psycho)therapy to a more critical, public, arena. As with *Hung Out to Dry*, at the time I am unable to articulate a clear case for how my work in *Testing Testing* functions as a site for reflexivity. With the time and space that follow the act, I suggest now that it is *through* the process of *unmaking* the art-therapy-object, moving it across boundaries, staging and documenting its resiting, and exposing it to critique, that I get a *feel* for what it means to be on the margins as I open myself to a new way of learning. (Re)situating the art-therapy-object and ‘staging’ the work (re)frames my reflexive practice in a more performative, imaginative, space, somewhere between fact and fiction. As a transference and re-orientation of practice I assemble different voices and identities in an *undrawing* and *redrawing* of practice.<sup>558</sup> *Through* dramatising the process something new is written.

Crossing boundaries again in ‘Transposition II’, I enter the rehabilitation centre, moving between clinical setting and art studio as I expand on Hinshelwood’s observational model. Through this transference of experience, attention moves from the healthcare setting to the site of artmaking and the *making* process as a multi-layered response to the research situation – a place where things *can* and *do* happen. Entering the rehabilitation centre as artist-researcher, I challenge convention for myself and the organisation, provoking questions about what I am doing, and stimulating powerful sensory and emotional responses in me. The studio offers a transference space away from the clinical setting (although connected to it), *through* which I explore my sensitivity to the situation as I move, handle, and manipulate materials, imaginings, feelings, and thoughts within the constraints of time and space imposed. This may be why the eruption of disciplinary tensions at the Ph.D. seminar, with corresponding pressures to ‘disrupt’ my process and break with familiar conventions,

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<sup>557</sup> Candy makes some helpful distinctions between professional and creative practice, while acknowledging the overlaps. She notes that ‘to be a creative practitioner you do not need a licence to practice whereas if you are a professional practitioner you are subject to a legally enforceable code of practice and you have others to answer to for the way you practice [...] Providing services that meet the needs of people is not an essential element of creative practice as it is for the professional practitioner.’ Candy, ‘*Creative Reflective Practitioner*’, p. 45.

<sup>558</sup> Emma Cocker, *The Yes of the No*, Sheffield: Site Gallery, 2016, p.10.

are so unsettling as they rupture the safety of the frame and the process underway.<sup>559</sup> Of course, I cannot know how things may have proceeded otherwise. Still, while resisting *felt* pressures (internal and external) to modify my practice in order to ‘fit in’, moving the work from the privacy of the studio and exposing it to the scrutiny of art academia nonetheless provokes a turning point through the effect it has, as it presses me to notice and *feel into* the complexities of the research situation more acutely.

Confronting my ‘discomfort with discomfort’, made manifest through the change of garments in the studio and the wearing of a discomfoting mask, becomes an important part of the reflexive work as I grapple with *which* institution I respond to. As the layers of my subjectivity are sharpened I realise at an emotional level (although it is only later I articulate it) how intimately my process of making in response to the rehabilitation service is entangled with the institutional context in which I make.<sup>560</sup> Yet, while the research situation ‘moves’ me it seems that, in both settings, the voice of emotion is quickly removed.

As I work *through* my practice to slow down institutional processes, the emphasis gradually moves from ‘making something’ to the ‘performance of some *thing* in the making’ – an intertwining of ‘undergoings’ and ‘goings on’ *in* which I am intimately entangled and *through* which I access the thinking. Entwined with these ‘undergoings’ and ‘goings on’ is the process of documenting and recording my practice, including the conversations that take place around it which, rather than being separate, become part of it. In turn, this process foregrounds the affective cultural sensitivity of documentary fragments and recollections captured in various media.<sup>561</sup> Indeed, Knudsen and Stage argue that through simply paying attention to such sources (including their banality and unsophistication) emotion and affect become more approachable as analytic objects.<sup>562</sup> Perhaps, as Fong Ling suggests, not only

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<sup>559</sup> I will leave it to others to argue the ground between the arts and art (psycho)therapy. The ties that both bind and separate are complicated and difficult to unravel, and can lead to attempts to sever connections altogether or to devalue the potential contribution of the other to understanding the complexity of a situation. However, while differences in cultural practices and language may obfuscate rather than enhance understanding between disciplines, none-the-less they share an interest in the subjective nature of *feeling-thinking-knowing* – with enactments; live, playful exploration and dialogue with process and context; and with the unfolding of a narrative that is not only linear, but also associative and entangled.

<sup>560</sup> I comment on this in response to questions from the assessment panel as part of the Ph.D. confirmation process, otherwise known as the RF2.

<sup>561</sup> Jahn, ‘APG Legacies and Aftermaths’, p. 51.

<sup>562</sup> Knudsen and Stage, ‘Affective Methodologies’.

is it a method for me to listen back to conversations and reflect on them, it raises the question of my practice as a form of ‘close listening’.<sup>563</sup>

This brings me to another notable turning point when I cross boundaries again in ‘Transposition III’ and move the residual ‘body’ of work out of the studio – (re)making, (re)situating, and (re)presenting it, initially in the healthcare setting, and then in other settings that bridge art, healthcare, and academia. Challenging more conventional ways of presenting research and testing preconceptions through sharing my sensitivity across disciplines, the psychosocial presence of the ‘body’ and its associated parts becomes amplified and charged with resonant meaning as different audiences become participants in meaning-making. Having posited my practice as a ‘speculative weaving’, through receiving the work, the audience plays a crucial role; unpicking threads in an attempt to understand it more fully, and weaving their own in response, whether through interest and engagement, indifference, dismissal, or devaluation. This is exemplified in the responses of staff at the rehabilitation centre and, later, my (re)making of studio sound recordings for *Double Agency*. As a counterpoint to the still, relatively silent presence of the material object-body-thing (when not moving), the-voice-of-its-making amplifies a discomfoting, unsettling, disturbance in the atmosphere that is difficult to clearly grasp or articulate, but nonetheless touches as it resonates in the space. The *work* of art materialises through practices of documenting, moving, handling, (re)organising, and (re)assembling of materials, tools, emotions, ideas, fragments, recollections, and other beings and ‘things’ – practices that, through their contextual sensitivity, also carry the potential for violence.

Paying close attention to my dealings with the research situation, my embodied understanding is sophisticatedly moved again as, pressed to notice my involvement as researcher, I speculate how the ‘body’ might be damaged, destabilised, or disrupted, the implications of this, and how I am implicated in it. I am further pressed by the demand of the research institution that I articulate my research ‘findings’ and ‘what my work in the organisational environment has told me, or helped me to understand’.<sup>564</sup> Resisting this

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<sup>563</sup> Personal Communication, Yuen Fong Ling, Supervision meeting, 9 March 2021.

<sup>564</sup> This is part of a broader question posed by the assessment panel as part of the Ph.D. confirmation process (known as RF2). ‘Please produce a short statement outlining what you consider to be the main findings to have emerged from the enquiry so far (in other words, what has your work in the organisation environment told you, or helped you to understand), and explain how these findings will go on to develop your art practice and to inform the design of the research as it progresses.’ July 12, 2018.

demand and approaching ‘finding’ as a *process* rather than result or outcome, I argue that sharing my sensitivity across disciplines and bearing witness to the sensitivity of others in response deepens my understanding of the broader human situation. This—draws my attention to hospitality, the nature of different sites, and an ethics of responsibility, attention, and care *for/of* the body – matters which are poignant not only in healthcare, but also academia.

That an ethics of care emerges from the material is unsurprising given my background and the nature of my research. Yet the manner through which these ideas emerge does surprise. More than cognitive, the knowing resonates experientially over time *through* direct sensory engagement with the material of the research situation, *through* which I come to understand something about it. The action and materialisation calls forth the emotion, thought, and understanding *through* how I affect and am affected. The conversational relation foregrounds the tension between instrumentality and care, offering an insight into what is made manifest through the *unmaking, making, and remaking* process, the context and manner in which the work is received, and how the art is *working*. Indeed, it is only as I revisit *I’m Only Human* in 2021 when preparing the website, record myself saying the words, read it to others, and receive their response, that I fully appreciate the insistence and persistence of my attention to the material (albeit ordinary) as I return to work *over* and *through* it again and again.<sup>565</sup> As an ongoing process of *remaking*, reflexivity may then be understood as a process of careful and continued re-engagement with artistic process, experience, and emotion, with the capacity to transform personal experience into something shareable.<sup>566</sup>

Another rupture and key turning point in my understanding comes when questions of ‘time’ and ‘afterwardsness’ begin to glow following *Double Agency*. As I discuss in Chapter Five, it is only *after* the intervention at the conference, which produces unexpectedly rich material, that I appreciate its significance for my research as I am confronted with the ethical dilemma of how to use the material generated in the absence of ethical approval. Nevertheless, while I find the situation intensely frustrating, it is in grappling with these tensions over time that

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<sup>565</sup> I first read *I’m only Human* to fellow researchers and artist-writers Emma Bolland and Julia Calver during an online WHIP meeting. Otherwise known as ‘Work in Progress’ WHIP was initiated by Calver in October 2020, and offers an informal space for sharing and discussing writings in progress. A reading of *I’m Only Human* is available at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/only-human.php>>.

<sup>566</sup> Mareli Stolp, ‘Self-Reflexivity and Subjective Artistic Experience’, *PLEASE SPECIFY! Society of Artistic Research*, Helsinki, 28–29 April, 2017.

its usefulness emerges, as I come to realise *after* the event its importance in the present, and turn to fiction as a potential way of handling the material. (Figure 97)

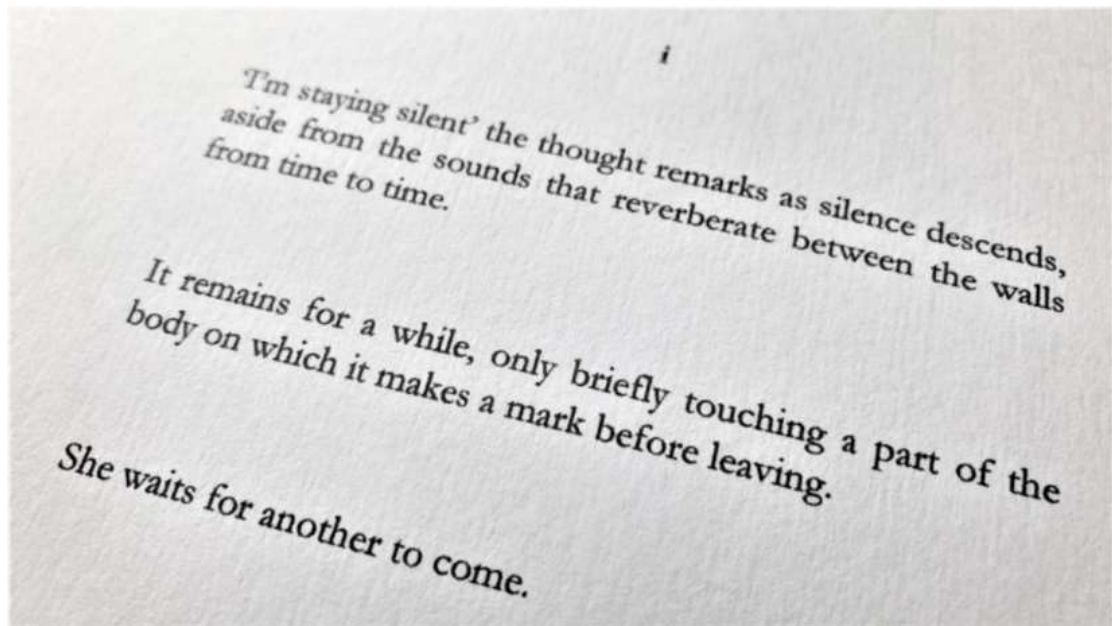


Figure 97. *Trace Recollections*<sup>567</sup>

Extract from a writing in progress

Still, while the understanding comes ‘afterwards’, I do not approach the situation from a distanced position of reflection *on*, although this implies *after*; rather, reflexivity emerges *through* the practice, as material ‘made’ in the past meets new situated material in the present. Implicit in this is the time and space that follows the act in order for experience to be assimilated, digested, and transformed into understanding – worked *through* the body. As with the emotional disturbance following Observation V, there is a delay before bodily resonances take on any meaning, and a further delay before I can articulate them; something is perceived but only takes on meaning retrospectively. Rather like the hammer that reappears in different guises and situations throughout my research, performing differently as it moves from one place to another, the implication is that there is not only a delay in understanding, but an ongoing provocation to further translation.

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<sup>567</sup> *Trace Recollections* is an experimental writing based on transcripts of conversations recorded (with participant consent) at ‘Double Agency’, 2018. Edited, anonymised, and fictionalised into fifteen accounts, they present groups of thoughts that, temporarily, occupy the makers mind. I imagine this as a performative reading involving more than one person, accompanied by extracts from ‘the-voice-of-its-making’.

Such a provocation or ‘interference’ comes in the summer of 2019, when first encountering Haraway’s concept of ‘diffraction’.<sup>568</sup> Initially, I experience its nagging presence as threatening my position, with its apparently rigid and critical stance towards reflexivity as assuming a human agency that ‘works alone’ and merely mirrors fixed positions.<sup>569</sup> As Bolton reminds me, the metaphor of the mirror is limited; not all reflection leads to learning and ‘the reflection of shit is shit’.<sup>570</sup> However, while accepting there is always a risk of turning to narcissistic navel-gazing, this does not correspond with my understanding of reflexivity as learning *through* experience which implies engaging with the world and other bodies – being open to experiencing.<sup>571</sup> Indeed, in life generally as well as in my professional work, I am reliant on others to hold up a mirror to ‘stuff’ (and shit) that I am unable to see myself. As a metaphorical and methodological counterpoint to ‘reflection’, the concept of ‘diffraction’ troubles, partly because, while realising it is relevant to my research, I do not yet appreciate its relevance. However, ‘staying with the trouble’, after Haraway, and resisting a move to an ‘alternative’, Barad reminds me, through her use of the hyphen in ‘re-turn’, that ‘reflection and diffraction are not opposites, not mutually exclusive’; rather, they ‘often overlap in practice’.<sup>572</sup> There is ‘play’ here.

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<sup>568</sup> In *The Promises of Monsters*, Haraway differentiates ‘diffraction’ from reflection and refraction, arguing for diffraction as ‘a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction’. Donna Haraway, ‘The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/D Others’, *Cultural Studies*, 1992, 295–337, p. 300. I first encounter the idea of ‘diffraction’ as a counterpoint to reflection at a seminar presented alongside an exhibition curated by a fellow Ph.D. student. Jeanine Griffith, *A Strange Weave of Time and Space*, Curated Exhibition, Sheffield: Site Gallery, 12–28 July, 2019, <<https://www.sitegallery.org/exhibition/a-strange-weave-of-time-and-space/>> [accessed 27 December 2021].

<sup>569</sup> Sketching the contours of reflection and diffraction, and drawing on the work of Haraway and Barad, Bozalek and Zembylas differentiate the two as follows: ‘The reflexive process assumes a human agency that works alone and intentionally; the diffractive process instead acknowledges that individual agency is entangled with other agencies, and this realization has important ethical and material implications that must be examined.’ Bozalek and Zembylas, ‘Diffraction or Reflection?’, p. 123.

<sup>570</sup> Bolton, ‘Reflection and Reflexivity’, p.10.

<sup>571</sup> I (re)turn to psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion’s idea of ‘learning from experience’. This involves the mediation of an awareness of emotional and sensory experiencing which, he suggests, is a key process through which thoughts and thinking become possible. The process of mediation begins in our earliest relations with caregivers and the caregiving environment. Bion, ‘*Learning from Experience*’.

<sup>572</sup> In a footnote to *Diffracting Diffraction*, Barad notes that ‘While returning might have the association of reflection (how light returns from where it came once it hits the mirror), re-turning, as I hope to develop this notion, is about diffracting. The play here between reflection/returning and diffraction/re-turning, separated only by the mere mark of a hyphen, is an important reminder that reflection and diffraction are not opposites, not mutually exclusive, but rather [...] often overlap in practice.’ Barad, ‘Diffracting Diffraction’, (2014) Note 2., p. 184 – 5. In referring to ‘staying with the trouble’ I borrow from Haraway’s eponymous book in which she suggests that our task is to ‘make trouble, to stir up potent response [...] as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet spaces’. Donna



Rather than pitting one strand of thought against another or making a move to diffraction as holding the answer, it is in grappling with the literature, language, and the tensions in their differences that I find them to be most useful as, *through* their entanglement rather than their opposition, the tussle presses me to notice and *feel* still further into the research situation. Placed in a conversational relation, the concept of diffraction with its emphasis on the ‘performativity’ of matter rather than representation of it, holds up a mirror to my understanding of reflexivity. In Barad’s words, it offers ‘a way of thinking about change that doesn’t presume there’s either more of the same or a radical break with the past’.<sup>573</sup> Rather than rejecting old foundations, I repurpose old threads, making use of them differently as my relation to, and understanding of them, changes.<sup>574</sup> Staying with the tension, my attention is drawn to a fundamental dilemma for my research; how to (re)present it in a way that does not efface my practice, but opens a space of possibility in the entanglement of matter and meaning, method and results – an entanglement that has been brought into appearance *through* the ongoing work of art-as-research rather than reflection *on* it as something separate, finished, and complete.

#### 5.2.4. How would you summarise your findings?

The demands of a Ph.D. set up an artificial frame around an ongoing, evolving process. While the requirement to specify a contribution to knowledge in the form of ‘findings’ focusses the eye and tightens the compositional space, it also limits the view, with its implications of ‘fact’, ‘truth’, and ‘objectivity’. Yet, arguing for the situated nature of knowledge Haraway suggests that ‘only partial perspective promises objective vision’.<sup>575</sup> My thesis does not offer itself as a ‘finished’ work that sits *over*, *above*, and *apart* from what it ‘finds’. Rather, it presents a partial, situated, view that sits *with* and *alongside* as an interweaving of threads in conversation, *through* which meanings and understandings may go on developing. Although the method produces results or a ‘product’ which performs, it

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Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, London: Duke University Press, 2016, p. 1.

<sup>573</sup> Juelskjær and Schwennesen, ‘Intra-Active Entanglements’, p. 16.

<sup>574</sup> Evelien Geerts and Iris van der Tuin, ‘Diffraction & Reading Diffractively’, *Matter: Journal of New Materialist Research*, 2, 2021, 173–177.

<sup>575</sup> Haraway, ‘Situated Knowledges’, p. 583.

is, to borrow again from Kivland, ‘a different kind of performance’.<sup>576</sup> I do not approach ‘finding’ with the idea of something to be ‘found’; rather, as Lacan might say after Freud, it is in the *attempt to find* the object that the *work* of art-*as*-research comes into being in the form of new insights and understandings.<sup>577</sup> Although I gain insights about the organisational situation, my main contribution to knowledge lies with ‘method’ – what may be revealed *through* processes of ‘making’ and the performance of tasks *on their way* to being completed.

(Re)turning to the focus of my enquiry, I (re)assemble threads from psychoanalysis, art (psycho)therapy, and the arts in a (re)examination of the psychosocial role of reflexive art practice in honing sensitivity to the affective dimensions of human situations and experience. A practice-based enquiry, it is grounded in a concept of reflexive practice as a process of ‘learning *through* experience’ where practice, Vear suggests, is not only embedded in the research process, but research questions arise through the process of practice with the practitioner-researcher ‘at the centre of the research’.<sup>578</sup> Indeed, *more than* merely an internal, cognitive, process which takes place separately from the action, the performative, embodied, embedded nature of my research practice *demand*s that I engage in an ongoing reflexive and affective dialogue with the matter at hand – in thinking *through* the intensity of feelings and sensory experiences evoked as I move, handle, and manipulate things; feel, mull over, imagine, filter, and sort.<sup>579</sup> In Brian Massumi’s words, ‘[t]hinking *through* affect is not just reflecting on it’.<sup>580</sup>

Two intertwined strands emerge from the tangle that is the ‘work’ of art-*as*-research, encapsulated in Figure 98.

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<sup>576</sup> Personal communication – Supervision meeting, 9 May 2018. This tension between process and product is, of course, present also in psychotherapeutic endeavours.

<sup>577</sup> See Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997. Put simply, Freud’s ‘lost object of desire’ which Lacan refers to as ‘objet petit a’ is something that is incessantly searched for and never found, but that allows the individual to continue to learn as it points to the unattainable – the absence of something.

<sup>578</sup> Vear, ‘Routledge International Handbook’, p. xxxii.

<sup>579</sup> In *The Politics of Affect*, Brian Massumi argues that the feeling process cannot be characterised as exclusively subjective or objective. Bodies, he proposes ‘think as they feel on a level with their movements. This takes thinking out of the interiority of a psychological subject and puts it directly in the world: in the co-motion of relational encounter’. Massumi, ‘Politics of Affect’, p. 211.

<sup>580</sup> *ibid.* p. vii.

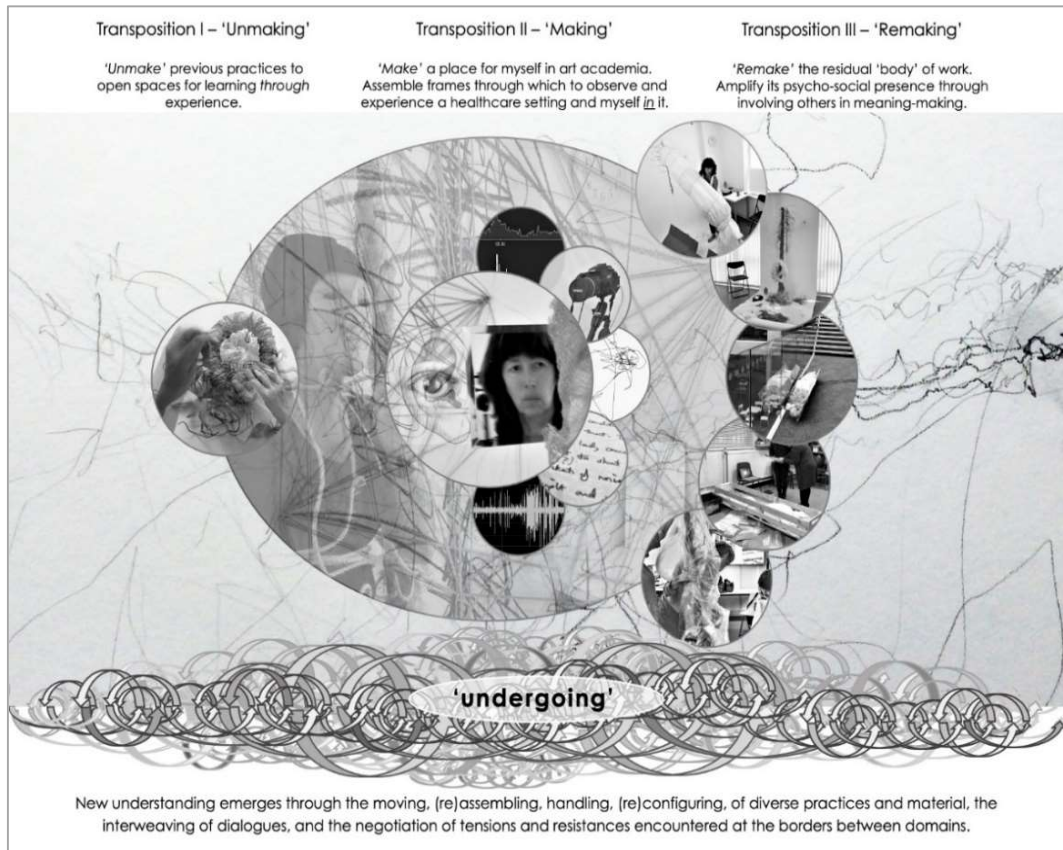


Figure 98. *Unmaking, Making, and Remaking: A Speculative Weaving in Three Transpositions*<sup>581</sup>

The first is concerned with the reflexivity generated through the moving and handling of practices, materials, situations, ideas, things, emotions, and other 'bodies' – conceptualised as a transpositional process of *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking*. The second, deeply entwined with the first in its underpinning of it, is concerned with the reflexive work of *undergoing* – conceptualised as speculative weaving – work that presses me to notice and feel more acutely *into* the emotional, affective, and ethical dimensions of the research situation.

Art practice is experiential and performative, as it involves the *doing* of something. However, my experience of the *work* of art-as-research is that more is involved. After Ingold, the *doing* is embedded in *undergoing* which implies experience and encounter – living *through* something with the implication of engagement in the world – *affecting* and *being affected*.<sup>582</sup> I weave a

<sup>581</sup> This illustration was prepared in response to a request by the editor for 'an illustration that encapsulates your research project, its processes, and outcomes' as part of instructions for authors contributing to the *Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research*, edited by Craig Vear.

<sup>582</sup> In *Art as Experience*, philosopher John Dewey draws attention to the relationship between 'doing' and 'undergoing' as a condition of experience, implying that 'undergoing' is a consequence of 'doing'. John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York, NY: Berkeley, 1934, pp. 45–6. However, in *The Life of Lines*

tangled web; yet only through closely following and paying attention to process – where the threads lead – and working *through* this, do I begin to untangle and understand how my practice addresses the research enquiry.<sup>583</sup> (Figure 99)



Figure 99. *Tangled Webs*  
Pencil on paper, 2017

Far from a neat, linear, cognitive process devoid of emotion, the process is fraught with uncertainty and ambivalence as bodies touch and affective impressions are made and left. I struggle to retain the flavour of my emotional labour in writing this thesis, because, as Ahmed suggests, emotions are associated with women and considered ‘beneath’ the faculties of thought and reason.<sup>584</sup> Yet, lending my emotional, imaginative, performative body to the research endeavour and employing my psychosomatic responses *through* the ‘work’ of art-as-research has been crucial in establishing a close relationship with the affective dimensions of the research situation, in analysing the material produced, and deepening and broadening my understanding of it. While documentation and ‘things’ made

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Ingold argues that ‘for life to continue, the things we *do* must be framed within the lives we *undergo*’. Tim Ingold, *The Life of Lines*, Oxon: Routledge, 2015. Ingold challenges the more conventional view that the mind ‘does’ (mastery) and the body ‘undergoes’ or suffers (submission), reversing the temporal priority. For him, undergoing is not a passive submission. Rather, it is active in the sense that the ‘doer’ remains inside the process of her ‘doing’. Doing (action) and undergoing (submission or suffering) always go together. Thus, he suggests, in any kind of skills practice, submission leads, as aspirant imagination *feels its way forward* with mastery following on in its wake – life being held in tension between the two. Ibid. See also Tim Ingold, ‘The Creativity of Undergoing’, *Crag Seminar*, University of Edinburgh, 11 February 2015 <<https://vimeo.com/120103218>> [accessed 18 July 2022].

<sup>583</sup> Nelson suggests that ‘one notion of ‘rigour’ in [Practice as Research] is the worked-through-ness of ideas in process’. Nelson, *Practice as Research in the Arts*, p. 75.

<sup>584</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014.

along the way act as residual evidence that something has taken place, engaged in a practice of ‘close listening’ I shift the emphasis to *making as undergoing* as I touch the surfaces of other bodies and ‘things’ and experience the ‘affect’ of one surface against another. As Cleo writes alongside *Preys* ‘it’s a fine line between feeling and not feeling – how the work marks the body’.<sup>585</sup> (Figure 100)

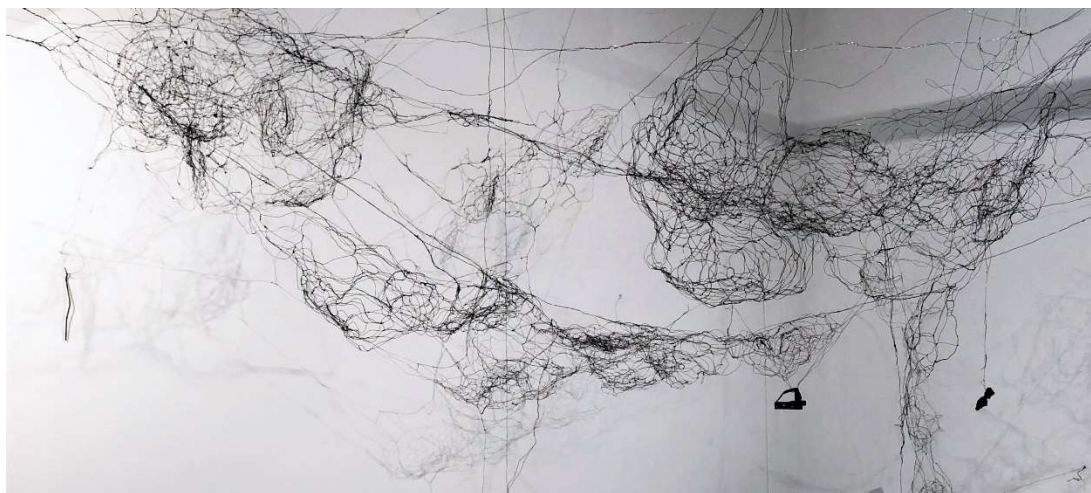


Figure 100. Cleo Claire Lee, *Preys*,  
Installation View, Bloc Studios, Sheffield, October 2020, courtesy of artist.

Following Ahmed, in being *pressed* to notice and feel more acutely, I borrow the idea of ‘impression’ as it ‘allows me to avoid making analytical distinctions between bodily sensation, emotion and thought as if they could be “experienced” as distinct realms of human “experience”’.<sup>586</sup> I argue then, along with others, that feeling, affect, and emotion be *included with*, rather than *excluded from*, the rational and that, as such, experiences *of* and encounters *with* the ‘work’ of art are of potential value for other perspectives.<sup>587</sup>

Implicit here is ‘time’ and a capacity to endure and sustain the slow, ongoing, messy, material, affective, and psychological ‘work’ bound into the *unmaking, making, and remaking*. Feelings, thoughts, and insights emerge at different times, from different directions, as

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<sup>585</sup> This work was presented as part of a group show *Transient Lines* in which four Sheffield women artists celebrate and decry the concept of boundary through multidimensional explorations of time, space, and materiality. Cleo Claire Lee, *Preys*, 2020, Installation, Sheffield: Bloc Studios, <<https://www.cleo clairelee.com/installation#/new-gallery-11>> [accessed 19 November 2021].

<sup>586</sup> Ahmed, ‘*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*’, p. 6.

<sup>587</sup> See also ‘Situated Criticism’ in Rendell, ‘*Site-Writing*’, 2–7.



material ‘made’ in the past is continually ‘remade’ through touching the stuff of new situations in the present.<sup>588</sup> This implies not only a delay in understanding but an ongoing provocation to further (re)makings, as material that appears the same is reworked and retextured, giving new meaning to what has gone before. Through tolerating the passage of time and the discomfiting, distressing, feelings of uncertainty, ambivalence, and confusion as I move across and between boundaries, the threads I bring into the research situation are slowly repurposed, rewoven and re-turned through the transpositional process. Rather than a complete, ‘finished’ piece of research, which implies that the body of it is no longer needed, I understand the ‘body’ of work presented here as a potential, speculative, space that may remain open to different, perhaps contradictory, interpretations or readings offering the possibility of something ‘more’.<sup>589</sup>

In summary, transformation and new understanding emerges *through* the interdisciplinary, transpositional nature of moving, handling, (re)assembling, and (re)configuring diverse practices and materials, the interweaving of dialogues, and the negotiation of tensions, entanglements, and resistances encountered at the borders between domains. Following Cazeaux, this opens a potential space for the introduction of new concepts to make sense of the research situation and my affective experience of it.<sup>590</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> In *Affect and Emotion* Margaret Wetherell suggests that ‘[a]ffective meaning-making in the present will be a mix of past personal and cultural meanings carried forward and meshed with the present relational circumstances. The past, in other words is available as a kind of unconscious storehouse of possible personal associations and patterns colouring new experience and constructing perception. It is open to revision and will be constantly remade in the light of the present.’ Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding*, London: Sage Publications, 2012, p. 153.<sup>589</sup> Mark Ledbetter, *Victims and the Postmodern Narrative or Doing Violence to the Body: An Ethic of Reading and Writing*, London: Macmillan Press, 1996.

<sup>589</sup> Mark Ledbetter, *Victims and the Postmodern Narrative or Doing Violence to the Body: An Ethic of Reading and Writing*, London: Macmillan Press, 1996.

<sup>590</sup> Cazeaux, ‘Inherently Interdisciplinary’.

### 5.2.5. What have you identified as the characteristics or conditions that have been most useful in facilitating the developments in your understanding?

Underlying this is the crossing of boundaries, although, of course, it is not about crossing boundaries per se. Had I moved into a different academic discipline, the situation and my understanding of it would also be different. Still, crossing boundaries into art academia, I set the conditions and parameters *through* which my understanding emerges; the move sets the frame for my enquiry which, after Cocker et al, might be described as a ‘live exploration’.<sup>591</sup>

First, deciding on an environment in which to undertake my exploration I choose to cross into a discipline which, although bound by different rules and conventions, offers access to languages of feeling, affect, imagination, metaphor, and models, with strategies for exploring these. Although subject to the constraints and authority of the academic institution, as well as those I impose myself, as a site for learning *through* experience, crossing boundaries into art academia with its emphasis on practices of ‘making’, offers me a different kind of transferential space – a ‘virtual’ world *in/through* which experiences, situations, relations, feelings, and thoughts may be evoked and provoked, as well as explored, tested, and (re)enacted.<sup>592</sup> Performing the work offers material *with* and *through* which to explore real situations with all their conflicts and associated dilemmas, and how I am implicated in them.

The nature of my experience and practice as I enter the research situation undoubtedly influences the materials, resources, and technologies I use, as well as where and how I use

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<sup>591</sup> Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer, and Mariella Greil, *Choreo-Graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017 With art-based research at its heart, the three-year project explores the nature of ‘thinking-in-action’ produced through collaborative interdisciplinary exchange. In the final section of their book, the authors draw their ending ‘with an opening, an invitation to play’ calling for ‘exploration in-and-through artistic practice’. They suggest that their research enquiry is best experienced through the experience of live exploration itself, practised or even played at the level of embodiment rather than only read in the pages of a book’, p. 382.

<sup>592</sup> I refer here to ‘virtual’ in the sense described by Donald Schön, which may be understood in psychoanalytic terms as the ‘transference’. In such a virtual world of experiential, performative engagement, Schön suggests that it may become ‘possible to slow down phenomena which would ordinarily be lost to reflection’. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, p. 160. The implication is that if emergent material can become an object of shared enquiry – brought into the present so it can be attended to – then puzzling, uncomfortable, thoughts and feelings, as well as inconsistencies and confusions may become sources of surprise and wonder, rather than triggers for action.

them; yet, as a speculative space, researching in the arts presents opportunities to experiment with moving, handling, (re)organising and (re)assembling these differently, and to explore different tools, processes, strategies, and media without direct risk to other people although, as bodies touch, the potential for harm is always close. Moving and being moved, touching, and being touched are delicate, sensitive matters. Yet, the tensions encountered at the borders between different domains as I move *through* and *around* them, dwell *in* them, affect and am affected *by* them, stimulate my senses. They (re)sensitise me to the everyday handling of ‘things’ *through* which we come to understand the world, offering opportunities to (re)explore and (re)imagine situations in ways that reshape and extend existing threads of understanding while drawing them into the weave differently.

Intricately interwoven with the first is a second, ‘time’. The research process is, necessarily, constrained by time limits. I also set time parameters around other aspects of my practice, marked by the ever-present clock. Even though these limits sometimes feel inflexible, constraining, and exhausting, as part of an iterative, reflexive process, the work of *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking* – learning *through* experience – demands that I take time: time to *feel* my way forward, time to try different things out, to play without an immediate objective; time to sit with, and attend to what is happening in the performing and undergoing of something rather than in what it results in or is ‘found’; time to slow down and dwell with the tensions and uncertainties of not knowing; time to pay attention to the incidental things that, on first glance, seem unimportant; time to read and (re)read a situation; time to revisit, go back *into* and *over* – ‘re-turning’ to borrow again from Barad; time to pay attention to *how* I affect and am affected; and time to work *through* different reiterations as old material from the past is remade through touching the stuff of new material in the present.

I smile as, returning to an earlier conversation with Kivland, I reflect on my observational experiences in the rehabilitation centre, noting the significance *now*, of a comment made *then*, that ‘interesting connections don’t always come at the time, but through the making – the time-lapse’.<sup>593</sup> Indeed, revisiting video and time-lapse material for the website in December 2021, I am struck by my early experience *in/of* the organisation four years earlier and its significance now for my research.

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<sup>593</sup> Supervision meeting with Sharon Kivland, 8 February 2017. See Appendix 3 for a fuller extract of the supervision record.



*I really didn't understand initially but it was as if all the sounds merged and I couldn't bear – couldn't pick out any words [...] it just became the noise and the noise became quite overwhelming and senseless.*<sup>594</sup>

Yet, while time to generate the necessary attention and focus is significant, it also raises the question of time in the sense of the point at which exhaustion becomes an obstacle or distraction, and, like Abramović perhaps, the need for preparation time before beginning the performance itself.

This brings me to a third thread, intimately entwined with the above two through its underpinning of them. This is concerned with the importance of framed, non-judgemental, spaces for dialogue and working *through* the dilemmas that arise as I disturb the contents of my experience and provoke them to move in unfamiliar and unexpected ways. Rather like the man in the rehabilitation centre who seems to move differently in response to my bodily presence, if things are not where they should be or usually are, are too lively or stir things up through their movement, there is a risk of destabilising the organisational equilibrium (internal and external). In the face of my discomfiting experience at the Ph.D. seminar, I respond by hiding my face, covering the cameras, becoming silent, changing my clothes, and putting on an expressionless mask, the presence of which provokes considerable discomfort for staff at the rehabilitation centre, and others when they later receive and handle the object-body-thing. Documented conversations with the material, as well as the consistent support of supervision and others is crucial in enabling me to work *through* the discomfiting entanglements, ethical dilemmas, and emotional turmoil.

In turn, this helps me make use of the experience to further my understanding of the research situation, as my attention is directed to the complex nature of different sites, and what they might evoke, provoke, enable, activate, or silence when put in close proximity to each other.<sup>595</sup> Such conversations are not separate from practice, but intricately bound into it as they continually (re)direct my attention to the practice itself and my investment in the

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<sup>594</sup> Extract from audio recording of Studio Session 1, 24 January 2017.

<sup>595</sup> While developing a capacity to stay with or 'contain' disturbing and ambivalent feelings is part of my training and practice as an art (psycho)therapist, the academic art institution is unsettling in its unfamiliarity and the fluidity of its boundaries. Artist and researcher Jean Carabine draws on psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion's ideas of 'containment' and 'learning from experience' and offers some useful thoughts for learning to work with not-knowing and uncertainty in artistic practice. Carabine, 'Creativity, Art and Learning', 33–43.

‘work’ of art. To borrow from artist-writer and fellow researcher Julia Calver, they act as rehearsal spaces – sites where thoughts might gather around a subject rather than focus on the production of an outcome.<sup>596</sup>

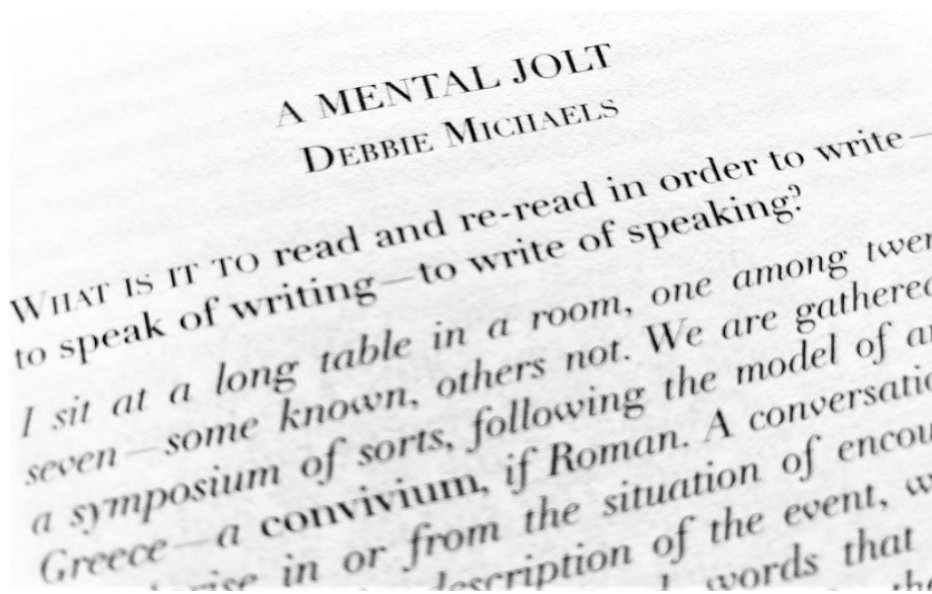


Figure 101. *A Mental Jolt*

Extract from The Roland Barthes Reading Group, *Setting a Bell Ringing*, 2021

While my use of these dialogues is woven into this body of work, other such spaces – sites – which support the work of art-*as*-research are less evident. For instance, while not overtly present, as a site for reading *about/and* writing, the consistent presence of the ‘Roland Barthes Reading Group’ nonetheless supports the writing of this thesis, both *through* the space it offers and the publications that emerge from it.<sup>597</sup> (Figure 101)

Other weavings – practices of making – offer further conversational spaces *through* which I mediate and process sensory, emotional, impressions and experiences that are difficult to articulate.<sup>598</sup> (Figure 102)

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<sup>596</sup> Julia Calver, ‘Voices and Morphologies’, *Impact*, Sheffield Hallam University, 15 September 2021.

<sup>597</sup> Publications include Debbie Michaels, ‘Unsayable Lack’, in *The Desire for Haiku*, ed. by Sharon Kivland, London: MA BIBLIOTHÈQUE, 2018, p. 5; Debbie Michaels, ‘To Catch a Thief’, in *The Roland Barthes Reading Group: Roland Barthes Party*, ed. by Sharon Kivland, London: MA BIBLIOTHÈQUE, 2020, pp. 45–47; Debbie Michaels, ‘A Mental Jolt’, in *The Roland Barthes Reading Group: Setting a Bell Ringing - after an Unmaster Class with Anne Boyer*, ed. by Sharon Kivland, London: MA BIBLIOTHÈQUE, 2021, pp. 59–62; The Roland Barthes Reading Group, ‘The Work as Will’. Details of these contributions as well as short readings from them are available at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/roland-barthes-reading-group.php>>.

<sup>598</sup> These making practices include drawing, ceramics, and weaving with various materials. See website for more images at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/things.php>>.



Figure 102. *A Selection of Other Things*, 2015 – 2021

Setting up the research situation I put protected space and time aside. This offers an enabling structure *in* which to dwell and *through* which to develop my method of working. Yet, while my ‘making’ process is linked spatially and temporally to the organisational situations I construct and encounter, I do not ‘direct’ it; rather, I construct framed spaces *through* which to consider what emerges. While holding the research situation in mind, the reflexive *work* of art takes place without anything particular in mind. The affective qualities make themselves known *through undergoing* the performative, transpositional work of moving, handling, (re)organising, and (re)assembling things, as I continually *unmake*, *make*, and *remake* the work and my understanding of it.

In summary, *through undergoing* this live transpositional exploration, the contents of the heavy sack I carry are tipped out on the floor, moved about, scrutinised, reorganised and transformed in ways I do not always feel in control of, but nonetheless surprise. In response I am pressed to move, scrutinise, and reorganise myself and to change or adjust the fit of the garments I wear. Although challenging, the underlying move into art academia and the speculative work of art-*as*-research affords the space, time, and a safe-enough environment *through* which to do this. Indeed, the change in how I understand my practice, the changes in thesis title, and the difference in how I answer questions *now* as opposed to *then* is only possible, as Kivland puts it, ‘because of the understanding I have gained about what it is I am doing *through* the practice – not only *through*, but also the time and space that follows the act in order to begin to understand what the act is’.<sup>599</sup> The act in itself is transformative – practice, a device that prompts the research.

<sup>599</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland, supervision meeting, 10 October 2017.

### 5.2.6. Can you make more explicit what the specific contribution of your 'methodology' is at a level of granularity.<sup>600</sup>

I struggle with how to address the question, recalling the unravelled threads of the art therapy object which, when separated and laid out in their component parts, become unrecognisable as having contributed to its form.<sup>601</sup> While I understand that I must be explicit about the contribution of my research methodology and how specific methods may be useful to other practitioners, the whole is not merely the sum of its parts, if only because, in Vandana Shiva's words, 'its parts are so cohesively inter-related that isolating any part distorts perception of the whole.'<sup>602</sup>

My approach to this research is holistic in the sense that its various parts are interwoven and can only be explained with reference to the whole. The key to my methodology resides in assembling practices, techniques, and approaches from different disciplines – specifically psychoanalysis, art (psycho)therapy, and the arts, in a new configuration. It is *through* the interdisciplinary, transpositional, nature of my research practice, the weaving together of ideas, practices, and strategies drawn from different disciplines, and the negotiation of tensions, entanglements, and resistances encountered at the borders between domains that new understanding and insight emerges. Although I am able to identify certain individual activities, qualities, and practices that may be useful to others, their value becomes evident *through* the process that brings them together which is described more fully in my thesis and practice submission. For example, as I note in answer to 5.2.1, while I add an artmaking component – 'this' – to an existing psychoanalytic model of organisational observation – 'that' – something that has not previously been done, the fact that I do 'this' as part of 'this + that' changes the nature of both as they move beyond what they are individually to become part of a new affective assemblage. It is true that recording vocalisations of observations, feelings, thoughts, and associations as I sit in the car each week, before entering the organisational setting to observe, is a specific method that may be passed on to another researcher and potentially developed into a project. Yet, while this, as well as the other recording devices I use to document my process may be of value as methods in

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<sup>600</sup> This question is added after the original submission in response to the viva and queries raised by the examination panel.

<sup>601</sup> See Transposition I – *Unmake*, p. 22–23.

<sup>602</sup> Vandana Shiva, 'The Violence of Reductionist Science', *Alternatives*, 12, 1987, 243–261, p. 246.

themselves, the specific contribution of my methodology lies in the multiplicity of ideas, strategies, processes, and potential positions drawn from different disciplines *through* which I explore and examine my experience of the research situation. Working within particular constraints described in the thesis and accompanying practice documentation, this multiplicity of potential positions includes the following:

- Moving practices, objects, bodies, ideas, and ‘things’ from one place to another, and putting them together differently in anticipation of what might emerge.
- Negotiating the borders between different sites.
- Using multiple recording devices and strategies in a range of media to document my research process.
- Engaging in dialogue with various material, mechanical, theoretical, and physical bodies as well as different disciplines and professional groups.
- Layering and interweaving narratives across a range of media and sites of making.
- Revisiting and reworking material made in the past as it meets the stuff of new material in the present.

Appendix 9 more specifically identifies (in a compressed form) the parameters, constraints, and primary steps I took in developing the methodology for the main body of my research, the ‘Twelve Weeks’ project, where I expand on the psychoanalytic model of organisational observation. However, prompted to approach the main question from a slightly different angle, and reflecting on the most valuable and generative methodological actions in the project as a whole, I return to pick up key threads from the summary of findings in 5.2.4 and from the end of the previous section, 5.2.5. Pulling out three gestural actions or practices – *move, make space(s), and take time* – I do so with the understanding that as ‘doings’ or things that may be ‘done’, these acts are also embedded and embodied in the performing and *undergoing* of them.<sup>603</sup> Understanding emerges not only *through* the practice but *through* the space and time that follows the act in order to begin to understand what the act is. While I identify these specific gestures, after Gansterer, Cocker, and Greil they are ‘perhaps best experienced through the experience of live exploration itself, practised [...] at the level of embodiment’ rather than read only as a set of instructions in the pages of this thesis.<sup>604</sup> With this in mind I present them as guiding principles which may inform the practice of others.

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<sup>603</sup> See 5.2.4, f/n 579.

<sup>604</sup> Cocker, Gansterer, and Greil, ‘*Choreo-Graphic Figures: Deviations from the Line*’, p. 382.

## Move

The first, and core, generative action or gesture is the transpositional process of moving and handling practices, materials, situations, ideas, things, bodies, emotions, attention, and energy across boundaries, a process I describe in detail through my thesis and the accompanying practice documentation. It is *through* the act of moving ‘things’ (including myself) from one place to another, negotiating the tensions and resistances at the borders between domains, and repeatedly looping back *over* and *into* the emergent material to reassemble and reconfigure it – drawing in other threads along the way – that my understanding is sophisticatedly moved as I am pressed or ‘moved’ to notice and *feel into* the affective dimensions of the situation more acutely. Such gestural actions or practices include:

- Move to a different context and/or position.
- Move across professional, disciplinary, and institutional boundaries.
- Move out of a comfort zone.
- Move to unmake previous practice, de-familiarise the familiar, and challenge more established patterns.
- Move to disrupt and interrupt the flow of usual processes.
- Move to seek a different viewpoint – to touch the ‘stuff’ of the world in a different way.
- Move to set up an artificial frame around an ongoing process.
- Move to assemble and adapt frames through which to observe, experience, and document a situation and yourself *in* it.
- Move to transfer experience, energy, and attention to the site of *making* as a multi-layered response to the research situation and a primary way of examining experience.
- Move to change the register through which something is read.
- Move to embrace practice-based research as an experiential process of making, modifying and designing objects, events and processes.
- Move from *doing* to *undergoing* (embedded and embodied in doing).
- Move to holding an open, receptive, non-judgemental, frame of mind.
- Move to sit *with* and *alongside* rather than over and above.
- Move back and *forth*, between, and *through* different spaces and sites – external and internal, physical and psychological, real and imagined, fact and fiction.

- Move to follow where the material leads.
- Move toward knowing how to move forward.
- Move to involve others in the meaning-making process.
- Move away from representation toward performance, participation, and enactment.
- Move toward the incorporation of multiple perspectives.
- Move to assemble different voices and identities *through* which insights might be read
- Move *towards* understanding rather than fixed meaning.

### **Make space(s)**

Intimately entwined with the above, a further gestural action is concerned with making space(s) for learning *through* experiences of making. This includes making space(s) for things to gradually emerge *through* the development of the relationship between myself as artist-practitioner-researcher and my work as I *move* ‘things’ and am *moved* in the process. Both valuable and generative in practice, these movements involve the physical and psychological making of ‘virtual’, framed space(s) *in/through* which experiences, situations, relations, feelings, and thoughts may be evoked and provoked, as well as explored, tested, and (re)enacted; contained ‘places *of* and *for* making’ where fragments may gather and be gathered in a way that allows experience, now and then, to come together in one place. Within this broader action I identify the following gestures:

- Make space(s) for questioning established practices and approaching a subject from a different direction.
- Make space(s) for preparing the conditions necessary to enter into the creative process.
- Make space(s) for the experiential – for trying things out, and seeing what happens.
- Make space(s) for wonder, surprise, and speculation.
- Make space(s) to facilitate movement.
- Make space(s) for the assemblage of frames *through* which to observe, experience, and document a situation and yourself *in* it.
- Make ‘virtual’ space(s) *with* and *through* which to imaginatively explore real situations with all their conflicts and associated dilemmas.
- Make space(s) for recording, documenting, and containing fragments of experience.
- Make space(s) for the suspension of critical judgement (internal and external).

- Make space(s) for patience, compassion, empathy, respect, vulnerability, humility, and understanding.
- Make space(s) for feelings, embodied emotions, and imagination.
- Make space(s) for listening closely and attentively as well as looking.
- Make space(s) for contemplation and reverie.
- Make space(s) for encountering, taking in, and thinking about something unfamiliar and complex.
- Make framed, non-judgemental space(s) for dialogue and ‘working *through*’ as the contents of experience are disturbed and provoked to move in unfamiliar and unexpected ways.
- Make space(s) for dwelling with troubling, messy, unsettling, painful experiences and complex entanglements.
- Make space(s) for ambivalence, embarrassment, and discomfort.
- Make space(s) for dwelling with uncertainty and not knowing.
- Make space(s) *through* which to mediate and process sensory, emotional, impressions and experiences that are difficult to articulate.
- Make space(s) for the seemingly insignificant to glow with significance.
- Make space(s) for engaging in conversation with self, others, and the material of the situation as it emerges.
- Make space(s) for engaging different audiences in different ways.
- Make space(s) for looking at things from different perspectives and angles.
- Make space(s) for exchange, reciprocity, and acknowledgment that others may experience and understand the same thing differently.
- Make space(s) for the inclusion of different voices and perspectives.
- Make space(s) for the interweaving and layering of different dialogues.
- Make space(s) for revisiting, remaking, reassembling, and reconfiguring material.
- Make space(s) for the introduction of new concepts to make sense of experience.

### **Take time**

As I emphasise in 5.2.5, the iterative, reflexive process of *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking* – learning *through* experiences of making – demands that I take time; time to prepare and reorientate myself to different surroundings and ways of doing things, as well as time for



residues to settle and impressions to form, and for disturbing elements to be assimilated, digested, and worked through the body into something meaningful. Taking time is, therefore, both a valuable and generative gestural action, as well as a useful principle to guide practice. In the case of my research this has demanded that I do the following:

- Take time to set time constraints – to put specific, regular, protected time aside.
- Take time to prepare the circumstances and conditions necessary for the creative process.
- Take time to prepare physically, psychologically, and emotionally.
- Take time to gather tools, materials and other resources.
- Take time to assemble frames through which to observe, experience, and document the situation and yourself *in* it.
- Take time to *feel* your way *forward and into* a situation.
- Take time to pay attention to process – to what is happening in the performing and undergoing of something.
- Take time to slow down and question established patterns.
- Take time to listen attentively as well as look.
- Take time to pay attention to the situation and your experience *in/of* it – what you observe and how it ‘feels’ – how you *affect* and are *affected*.
- Take time to dwell *with* and *in* a situation – with the uncertainty of not knowing, and with troubling, messy, unsettling, painful experiences and complex entanglements.
- Take time to allow for disturbing elements to be assimilated, worked *through* the body, and transformed into meaning – to let the dust settle.
- Take time to notice and pay attention to the incidental things that may, on first glance, seem unimportant or insignificant.
- Take time to document and record interactions, feelings, thoughts, imaginings, and speculations.
- Take time to engage in conversation and dialogue with self, others, and the material of a situation as it emerges.
- Take time to listen to the voices of others.
- Take time to mull over, filter and sort.
- Take time to revisit, repeat, re-read, review, re-turn, reorganise, and remake.
- Take time to reassemble and reconfigure things differently.



### 5.3. Make an Impact <sup>605</sup>

*come into forcible contact with another  
have a marked effect or influence on someone or something*

#### 5.3.1. Can you explicitly claim a position in a field and your contribution to it.

A part of me resists asserting ownership of a space with the implication of fencing off an area and taking possession exclusively for myself. It is only through crossing boundaries in an ongoing conversation with the research situation and the 'work' of art that I come to understand the significance of certain things. As I remark earlier, my voice is never its own, but simultaneously individual and collective.<sup>606</sup>

As a practice-based research project, grounded in learning *through* experiences of making, my research claims a position in the broad area of reflective practice(s) which, Candy suggests, is undergoing a revival driven by 'new forms of research carried out in conjunction with creative practice', and underpinned by practitioner documentation of the making process.<sup>607</sup> Situating the practitioner at the centre, this form of research embeds and embodies ways of knowing in practice – thinking *through* making – emphasising the presence of the 'knower' and the practitioner's experience and voice as a primary source of knowledge and understanding.<sup>608</sup> Such an approach, Candy argues, provides valuable 'insider' insights into reflective thinking and its relationship to action, potentially influencing 'the ideas and actions of other practitioners as well as a wider community of interest.'<sup>609</sup> In turn, it offers new opportunities for reflection and reflexivity as 'practitioners seek greater understanding about what it is to be human through the making and sharing of work.'<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> Section 5.3 is amended after the original submission in response to the viva and to address queries by the examination panel.

<sup>606</sup> Harris, 'Reflexive Voicing: A Communicative Approach to Intersectional Writing'.

<sup>607</sup> Candy, 'Creative Reflective Practitioner', p. 234–5.

<sup>608</sup> *ibid.*, p. 51 and Afterword.

<sup>609</sup> *ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>610</sup> *ibid.*, Afterword.

One of my reasons for undertaking this project in the arts was to challenge my own understandings as well as more traditional approaches to research. Yet, bringing together diverse ideas, materials, and practices in anticipation of what might emerge, my project does not settle comfortably in one place. By its nature, artistic practice moves across boundaries, offering a multiplicity of models, metaphors, and approaches *through* which to explore, examine, and consider different situations and our experience(s) of them.<sup>611</sup> Indeed, *feeling my way forward and into* the research situation I find that the boundaries around reflective and reflexive practice(s) overlap and, as such, are difficult to clearly define as they are also fiercely contested. Weaving threads across personal, professional, disciplinary, institutional, and material boundaries, as well as external and internal spaces, fact and fiction, the ‘work’ of art-as-research emerges *through* entangled relations and tensions at the borders between domains; a process that, after Barad and other new materialist thinkers, acknowledges their fluid, temporary, and porous nature.<sup>612</sup> Informed by feminist ideas that challenge rational-emotional dualisms and dichotomous thinking, this material practice pushes towards potential spaces where matter and meaning are inseparable and boundaries are never fully defined – always *moving towards* becoming. In such spaces practices are concerned, not with representation (which may merely reproduce the same elsewhere), but with involvement, movement, performance, enactment, affect, and the incorporation of multiple perspectives and voices *through* which insights might be read.<sup>613</sup> This foregrounds the creative potential of art as a performative practice which pushes beyond more conventional ideas of reflection and reflexivity in its capacity to embrace complex relationalities, and engage senses and affective sensibilities *through* the moving, modifying, and handling of ‘stuff’.<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>611</sup> Shaun McNiff, ‘Art-Based Research’, in *Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research*, ed. by J.Gary Knowles and Adra L.Cole, London: Sage Publications, 2008, pp. 29–40. See also Michaels, ‘Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Practice-Based Research’.

<sup>612</sup> Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007, cited in Dorota Golanska, ‘Geoart as a New Materialist Practice: Intra-Active Becomings and Artistic (Knowledge) Production’, *RUUKKU - Studies in Artistic Research*, 9, 2018. New materialism comprises a range of contemporary perspectives in the arts, humanities, and social sciences that have in common a theoretical and practical ‘turn’ to matter, emphasising the materiality of the world and everything in it, and shifting the focus away from texts, ‘systems of thought’, and ‘discourses’. It signals a growing cross-disciplinary effort to challenge long-standing assumptions about the relationship between humans and the non-human or other-than human-world, the key being reworking and eventually breaking through dualisms. Nick J Fox and Pam Alldred, *Sociology and the New Materialism: Theory, Research, Action*, London: Sage, 2016. See also Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van Der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012.

<sup>613</sup> Veronica Ann Mitchell, ‘Diffracting Reflection: A Move Beyond Reflective Practice’, *Education as change*, 21, 2017, 165-186.

<sup>614</sup> Barbara Bolt, *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image*, London: IB Tauris, 2004.

Such a performative practice is exemplified by the interdisciplinary, transpositional nature of this research: the object-body-thing which exists in a shared, intersubjective, space; the use of different artistic, documentary, and theoretical lenses *through* which to examine emergent material; and the invitation to others to become involved in the meaning-making process. The I/‘eye’ of research practice is thus examined *through* dialogues that gather around the ‘work’ of art as it materialises in the complex negotiations and exchanges that take place across boundaries. *More than* reflection (which implies an intellectualised, distant, activity) and including bodies, practices, and emotions as well as cognition, the work of reflexive art practice moves *through* and *beyond* personal subjectivity and a deadening optical metaphor to a more embodied, shared, performative, conversational, and affective space *through* which I (along with others) grapple with different materials, practices, ideas, relationships, experiences, emotions, and thoughts, as well as confusing messes and entangled threads.<sup>615</sup>

Being a reflective, reflexive, practitioner means cultivating the many ways we can learn *through* experience. To ‘flect’ or ‘flex’ implies a capacity to move, to bend and yield, to be flexible and pliant without breaking and, to borrow again from Barad, all the “re’s” must be taken as questions, not answers – questions of response-ability and hospitality in the sense of inviting and enabling response.<sup>616</sup> Attachment of value moves away from what the art ‘means’ to how it ‘works’; what it evokes and provokes, what questions it brings into the present to be attended to, the degree of awareness it induces, and how it affects and ‘moves’ those it touches and who touch it. Yet, while the work of many feminists emphasises the value of ‘gut-level’ responses and the ‘call to emotionality as a validity checkpoint or source by which to consider authenticity’, such voices remain largely excluded from conversations around reflective practice(s) and reflexivity, where the focus tends to be on the cognitive and the individual.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>615</sup> Veronica Ann Mitchell, ‘Diffracting Reflection: A Move Beyond Reflective Practice’, *Education as change*, 21, 2017, 165–186. Drawing on new materialist thinking Mitchell argues that, for reflective practices ‘to become socially just pedagogies, educational spaces are needed where students can feel comfortable grappling with thoughts and experiences [...] and move beyond the privacy of individual subjectivity to interrelationships that matter.’, p. 172. See also Gillie Bolton, ‘Explorative and Expressive Writing for Personal and Professional Development’, PhD Thesis, University of East Anglia, 2010.

<sup>616</sup> Juelskjær and Schwennesen, ‘Intra-Active Entanglements’. Responsibility, Barad argues ‘is not about a calculable system of accounting, but about hospitality as Derrida would have it, about inviting and enabling response. p. 22.

<sup>617</sup> Leavy, ‘*Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*’, p. 82–3. See also Holmes, ‘The Emotionalization of Reflexivity’.

Developing Schön's ideas, Candy suggests that reflection in creative practice is a 'multi-faceted and pervasive process that is embedded in the practitioner's way of working.'<sup>618</sup> Situating my research in the arts I do not look to art as a way of transporting me to an 'elsewhere'. Rather, as Simon O'Sullivan implies, weaving in threads from psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy, that inform my particular way of working and thinking as a practitioner, utilises and puts me in touch with the 'stuff' of the world in a *different* way.<sup>619</sup> Practice is therefore embedded in my research process, as am I. (Re)assembling these threads in a new configuration, I do not plan to develop Schön's ideas on reflective practice, although his attention to implicit, tacit, knowledge and his emphasis on the intuitive 'artistry' of practice interest me. Nonetheless, returning to his work over time I find that my research picks up on an aspect rarely mentioned in the literature, that of the psychoanalytic concept of 'transference'. Indeed, the transpositional nature of this research draws attention to the 'work' of art as a 'transferential' space, full of imagination, emotion, and affect; a potential space where things can and do happen and where bodies and 'things' move, and are moved, from one place to another – *affecting* and *affected*.<sup>620</sup> Schön suggests that the creation and maintenance of such a 'virtual' world is as much a method of enquiry as a strategy of psychotherapeutic intervention.<sup>621</sup> In this 'virtual' space, where the boundaries between self and other, real and not real, fact and fiction, become blurred, experiences, situations, relations, feelings, and thoughts are evoked and provoked, as well as explored, tested, performed, and (re)enacted. As I remark in 3.1.3 within the broader frame of the research situation, the artistic process becomes an empathic, imaginative, exploration – a transference – through which something is brought to life as I contemplate and experience one situation in the context of another. Indeed, it is *through* the experiential exploration afforded by the transferential space and the narratives that emerge that I begin to get a *feel* for the stuff with which I am dealing.

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<sup>618</sup> Candy, 'Creative Reflective Practitioner', p. 52. See also Linda Candy, 'Reflective Practice Variants and the Creative Practitioner', in *Routledge Handbook of Practice-Based Research*, ed. by Craig Vear, Linda Candy, and Ernest Edmonds, London: Routledge, 2022, pp. 415–425

<sup>619</sup> Simon O'Sullivan, 'Fold', in *The Deleuze Dictionary : Revised Edition*, ed. by Adrian Parr, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, pp. 107–109.

<sup>620</sup> The psychoanalytic concept of 'transference' is fundamentally based on Freud's original idea and traditionally regraded as the 'transferring of emotion which was usually first experienced in infancy or childhood, on to any new situation in which a close relationship with another human being is involved'. Nonetheless, art (psycho)therapist Joy Schaverien notes that it is rarely applied as lifeless thinking, but is always being modified and re-evaluated. Schaverien, 'The Revealing Image', p. 13.

<sup>621</sup> Schön, 'The Reflective Practitioner', p. 160–162.

As a concept, ‘transference’, (brought to life by the ‘countertransference’), is of increasing interest to qualitative, social, and ethnographic researchers and informs both my art (psycho)therapy practice and my approach as I enter this project (see 1.3.4). Indeed, it is the transpositional work of *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking* that, in this situation ‘kindles the fire’.<sup>622</sup> Still, despite encouraging a more meditative, contemplative, approach to analytic work psychoanalytic ideas are strikingly absent from most accounts of reflective practice and reflexivity, and little attention has been paid to the role of transference as a method of enquiry outside the clinical setting.<sup>623</sup> This may be because, traditionally, reflexivity in this context is considered the achievement of an isolated mind in private contemplation and, although transference refers to everyday phenomena that subtly colour our responses to others, the technical language is clunky and difficult to access.<sup>624</sup> Also, as I and others experience *through* my research in relation to the art-therapy-object, the object-body-thing and the-voice-of-its-making, transference reactions may take us by surprise and be surprisingly unsettling, occurring not only towards other people, but towards materials, objects, ‘things’, institutions, artworks, and the ‘work’ of art.<sup>625</sup> Emerging through a complex entanglement transference responses can be especially powerful in relation to affect-laden situations, such as those in healthcare, as well as other settings that may engender ambiguity, anxiety, uncertainty, vulnerability, and frustration, including art and design practice(s) or practice-based research.<sup>626</sup> Transference is full of emotion, affect, and ambivalence, aspects of a reflexive research process that are often downplayed or excluded altogether.<sup>627</sup> Yet, if

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<sup>622</sup> Schaverien, ‘*The Revealing Image*’, p. 23.

<sup>623</sup> See Brown, ‘Reflexivity in the Research Process: Psychoanalytic Observations’

<sup>624</sup> Aron, ‘Self-Reflexivity and the Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis’. Contradicting this more traditional concept of insight, Aron argues that self-reflexivity always involves an affective engagement with one or more others.

<sup>625</sup> Ralph R Greenson, *The Technique and Practice of Psychoanalysis*, London: Hogarth Press, 1967. Cited in Schaverien, ‘*The Revealing Image*’, see Chapter 1.

<sup>626</sup> Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, ‘Behind the Mask: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Interaction in the Design Studio’, *Journal of Architectural Education*, 53, 2000, 194-206. Picking up on Schön’s use of the transference to explore the design studio as an educational environment, Ochsner suggests that transferences can emerge as a powerful force in situations such as the design studio where, through its deliberate fostering of creative play and ambiguity, the individual becomes vulnerable.

<sup>627</sup> Brown, ‘Reflexivity in the Research Process: Psychoanalytic Observations’. Brown draws attention to ‘the importance of thinking about the transference relationship one develops in relation to a profession, institution and research project’ and how this may promote a critical attitude that ‘has affinities with, and complements, reflexive analyses in the sociology of knowledge.’, p. 193. See also Kenny and Gilmore, ‘From Research Reflexivity to Research Affectivity’ in which the authors explore ‘the affective, intersubjective experiences that mark ethnographic settings, in a way that is informed by an understanding of transference and countertransference’, with the aim of enhancing self-reflexivity, p. 168.

the transference can become a thing of interest and shared enquiry – be brought to life – *through* a non-judgemental attention to process then, I suggest after Schön, it might become possible to slow down affective phenomena that would ordinarily be lost to reflection.<sup>628</sup>

As well as offering an affective dimension, psychoanalysis is particularly useful for understanding my research as it presents a picture of human relations with the world beset by ambivalent, conflicting, and fluctuating feelings. Indeed it has been said that all transference is characterised by ambivalence.<sup>629</sup> Reluctant to move towards exclusivity, absolutes, and the certainties often associated with knowing, the emotional, affective, and performative intensity of working *through* the transpositional and transferential ‘making’ process necessarily opens up spaces of resistance as well as those of possibility. Such tension is evident throughout my research: specifically in the object-body-thing which refuses to settle comfortably in an entirely safe place, provoking ambivalence in those that encounter it; the partial, illegible photographs which are difficult to read; and the-voice-of-its-making which, despite its affective resonance, makes little coherent sense. Emerging in *between* spaces *through* the transpositional process of moving ideas, practices, emotions, and ‘things’ from one place to another across spatial and temporal boundaries, ‘ambivalence’ reflects the complex, multi-layered, unpredictable, and incomplete nature of my research, where different disciplines and threads of understanding are held in tension with one another and *feeling one’s way towards* knowing does not exclude other ways of feeling or knowing.

A key thread reaching out of this complex entanglement is concerned with the reflexive learning that takes place *through undergoing* the embodied work of moving, handling, and (re)configuring diverse practices, ideas, materials, emotions, and other ‘things’ within the transferential frame set up by the unique research situation. It is the process of working *through* the intertwining dialogues encountered at the borders between different domains that amplifies the significance of ‘voicing’ which, Candy suggests, may be strengthened and

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<sup>628</sup> Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, p. 161.

<sup>629</sup> Ambivalence refers to the simultaneous existence of opposing forces. Derived from the Latin *ambo*, or ‘both’ and *valere*, ‘to be strong’ the term was introduced in 1910 by the Swiss psychiatrist Paul Eugen Bleuler and was later adopted by Sigmund Freud who used the word to describe psychological conflicts between life and death, love and hate. Difficult to tolerate and often regarded as something to be avoided, for Melanie Klein, ambivalence is viewed as an achievement rather than a problem to be resolved, though only when it is acknowledged rather than repressed. Hanna Segal, ‘The Achievement of Ambivalence’, *Common Knowledge*, 25, 2019, 51–62. See also Sharon M Chubbuck and Michalinos Zembylas, ‘The Emotional Ambivalence of Socially Just Teaching: A Case Study of a Novice Urban Schoolteacher’, *American Educational Research Journal*, 45, 2008, 274–318, p. 310.



shared *through* creative practice, stimulating new ways of thinking.<sup>630</sup> This practice of ‘voicing’, embodied *in* and articulated *through* processes of *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking*, moves back and forth across disciplinary, institutional, theoretical, and material borders, between personal and shared space, and between internal and external spaces of experience set up by the research situation. It constitutes my way of learning *through* ongoing conversations with the emergent material and the performance of tasks on their way to completion. In Candy’s words, this work ‘is of necessity speculative’ as I develop new frames of reference and explore more tacit, subjective, and affective ways of knowing *through* creative practice.<sup>631</sup> Still, as Monika Rogowska-Stangret and Olga Cielemecka remark, ‘[t]o speak our bodies, to let the voice be heard comes with risk; it is scary’.<sup>632</sup> As Probst points out, subjectivity, ambivalence, partial, and multiple meanings, and the constructed nature of knowledge still carries little currency in academia where measurement continues to dominate, and pressures to produce ‘hard’ findings mean that the practitioner’s reflective and reflexive voice is often devalued or written out.<sup>633</sup>

Working through the final stages of my research it is pointed out to me that I only include a short excerpt from the-voice-of-its-making in my practice submission, minimising its potential contribution as a key artwork.<sup>634</sup> Embarrassed, I recall my difficulty holding onto the value of the sound piece, as if the significance of its unsettling, irritating, yet powerful voice easily slips away. It seems that, in the process of cutting it short, I inadvertently (and unconsciously) muffle the voice of my research and its affect, relegating it to a more or less unspoken, unheard, place.<sup>635</sup> While this realisation reverberates through my personal and cultural body as a woman, perhaps I also mirror the challenge in design and performing arts to have practice-based research acknowledged as a principled, rigorous, activity. Where historical and theoretical research is privileged, the practitioner’s voice often remains

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<sup>630</sup> Candy, ‘*Creative Reflective Practitioner*’, p. 235.

<sup>631</sup> *ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>632</sup> Monika Rogowska-Stangret and Olga Cielemecka, ‘Vulnerable Academic Performances. Dialogue on Matters of Voice and Silence in Academia’, *Matter: Journal of New Materialist Research*, 1, 2019, p. 30.

<sup>633</sup> Probst, ‘The Eye Regards Itself: Benefits and Challenges of Reflexivity in Qualitative Social Work Research’.

<sup>634</sup> My examiners felt this work was a key contribution and needed to be presented as part of the PhD in its entirety – be exhibition ready.

<sup>635</sup> The full version of ‘The-Voice-Of-Its-Making’ is available via the website and can be heard at <https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/voice-of-its-making.php>

unheard and, I might add, particularly so when it is an emotional, affective, one.<sup>636</sup> Indeed, learning *through* the experience of putting my practitioner ‘self’ at the centre of the research process and exposing my underbelly and ‘undergoing’ to the scrutiny of others, I find myself caught in a vulnerable, unsettling, place that profoundly disturbs, wondering if I have become caught in a web of my own construction. Pressed by my examiners to consider if I ‘lose my nerve’ in arguing for the ‘ongoingness’ of my project, I momentarily lose my voice as well as my nerve and am left grappling with the question of whether my refusal of critical mastery and an emphasis on the ongoing, speculative, ambivalent, nature of my research slips into indecision and indifference; an abdication of responsibility rather than a move to address the urgency of the situation alluded to earlier in 1.2.4.

Yet, while the urgency of the moment presses in through its demand for action (both real and imagined), Derek Ruez and Daniel Cockayne suggest that these demands are best understood not as demands to feel a certain way, but to acknowledge the relationship between feeling and knowing; that ambivalence is productive not only through its questioning stance, but through its potential to multiply affective resonances, even if these are difficult to tolerate.<sup>637</sup> Indeed, psychoanalyst Hanna Segal insists that the price of denying our ambivalence, as individuals and groups, is very high.<sup>638</sup> As Sedgwick argues, after Klein, in refusing to settle comfortably in one place the power of ambivalence lies in a form of relationality that deals in middle ranges of negotiation and exchange of affect although, (and I repeat with insistence) it is always an incomplete, ongoing, ‘fragile achievement that requires discovering over and over’.<sup>639</sup> I therefore stress the ‘ongoingness’ as well as the ‘undergoingness’ of this research process which moves *towards* understanding rather than fixing it, demanding that I go back *over* and *into* the material – ‘re-turning’ it again and again as Barad might say – as its significance is transformed and brought to life differently through meeting the material of new situations.<sup>640</sup>

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<sup>636</sup> Vear, ‘Routledge International Handbook’. See also Holmes, ‘The Emotionalization of Reflexivity’.

<sup>637</sup> Derek Ruez and Daniel Cockayne, ‘Ambivalent Methods, Geographical Difference, and the Politics of Feeling-Knowing’, *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 11, 2021, 126–129.

<sup>638</sup> Segal, ‘The Achievement of Ambivalence’ Segal argues that ambivalence – the conflict between the life and death forces within us, love and hate, good and bad – is part of the human condition and something we deny at our peril.

<sup>639</sup> Sedgwick, ‘Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes’, p. 632. See also Segal, ‘The Achievement of Ambivalence’.

<sup>640</sup> Through the addition of the hyphen Barad likens ‘re-turning’ to the work of earthworms turning the soil over and over – ingesting and excreting [...] opening it up and breathing new life into it’. Barad, ‘Diffracting Diffraction’, p. 168.

Sitting close to ambivalence is the voice of ‘embarrassment’ which, as part of my emotional research journey, not surprisingly attracts ambivalence with its associations to shame, humiliation, and being exposed in front of an audience. Embarrassment is a disruptive, unsettling, feeling and, naturally, I would rather avoid the fluster it induces, although it is milder and more easily acknowledged than shame, especially when humour can be attached to it.<sup>641</sup> Still, it feels somewhat counterintuitive to draw attention to moments which might provoke laughter and ridicule, such as the audience response to noticing the chair brackets at the *Testing Testing* symposium, which comes to mind as I stumble over responding to questions concerning the aesthetics of the practice books and why I cut short the-voice-of-its-making. Yet, along with ambivalence, I am directed towards embarrassment as a key finding of this project; perhaps because, while I inevitably trip up on occasion as I negotiate disciplinary boundaries, falling into the swampy mire or stumbling over my own feet, or those of others, the embarrassment generated is useful in its unsettling. Indeed, I must accept that, by transposing ideas from psychoanalysis and art (psycho)therapy to the fine arts in order to undertake – *undergo* – this research, I place myself in a position where I am bound to trip up as I sacrifice a more familiar, comfortable, identity, although when and where is unpredictable. Naturally, attention to inconsistencies and flaws leaves me feeling vulnerable and exposed as I lose composure and balance at times and struggle to find the humour in some situations. Yet, Ervin Goffman suggests that if the situation is saved without fluster, ‘something important may be lost’.<sup>642</sup> Acknowledging and voicing embarrassment as an aspect of reflective practice foregrounds the ambivalences and conflicts of identity that arise in the social spaces between disciplines, as power dynamics, differences in code, convention, and ways of doing, seeing, and understanding make themselves known. A mechanism that ensures social compliance, embarrassment disrupts and questions the order of things (consciously or unconsciously); it unsettles and, as Billig remarks, on occasion takes pleasure in subversion.<sup>643</sup>

Returning to issues of reflexivity in research, ambivalence is directed towards holding multiple, partial, positions simultaneously in tension in recognition that, to borrow from

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<sup>641</sup> Michael Billig, ‘Humour and Embarrassment: Limits of ‘Nice-Guy’ Theories of Social Life’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 18, 2001, 23–43.

<sup>642</sup> Erving Goffman, ‘Embarrassment and Social Organization’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 62, 1956, 264–271, p. 270.

<sup>643</sup> Billig, ‘Humour and Embarrassment: Limits of ‘Nice-Guy’ Theories of Social Life’.

statistician George Box, ‘all models are wrong but some are useful’.<sup>644</sup> While acknowledging the myriad forms of reflexivities that are practiced, Etherington suggests that holding a balance between different positions might help mitigate the risk of getting sucked into the swampy mire of narcissistic navel-gazing, whether as individual, profession, or institution.<sup>645</sup> This stance is exemplified through the transpositional process as I search for understanding *through* the moving, assembling, and reconfiguring of diverse ideas and practices, and the emotional, affective ‘work’ of *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking*. Still, as I discover through situating myself and my practice at the centre of the research process, engaging in reflexivity is ‘a perilous endeavour, full of muddy ambiguity and multiple trails’; in short, a swampy mire where solid ground is scarce.<sup>646</sup> Nor, as Foster warns, does reflexivity prevent us from being seduced into romanticising voices that sit on the margins – something I am wary of as I advocate for those which, so often, remain unheard in research.<sup>647</sup> A sticky area, there is no clear path through. Alongside well-trodden criticisms of navel-gazing and mirroring fixed positions, sit the considerable personal challenges of managing my own emotional responses (including embarrassment), as well as the self-doubt and anxiety provoked and evoked by being questioned as well as through questioning the dominant voices in me and the academic (amongst other) institutions. Far from presenting myself or this project as a ‘paragon of formal reflexivity’, to borrow Foster’s words – ‘sensitive to difference and open to chance’ – my vulnerabilities, discomforts, ambivalences, embarrassments, and frustrations are exposed for all to see.<sup>648</sup>

As I experience the blurry edges of reflective and reflexive practice(s) *through undergoing* my research, the line between openness and intolerable rawness is difficult to navigate and being open to unexpected, critical feedback is painful even if it brings awareness to new insights as well as blind spots and ‘sticky’ moments.<sup>649</sup> As an unsettling of conventional practices to introduce the potential for learning, reflexivity demands time and commitment – time for disturbing elements to be assimilated, worked *through* the body, and transformed

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<sup>644</sup> Box, ‘Robustness in the Strategy of Scientific Model Building’, p. 47.

<sup>645</sup> Etherington, ‘Becoming a Reflexive Researcher-Using Our Selves in Research’.

<sup>646</sup> Finlay, ‘Negotiating the Swamp: The Opportunity and Challenge of Reflexivity in Research Practice’. See also Etherington, ‘Becoming a Reflexive Researcher-Using Our Selves in Research’.

<sup>647</sup> Foster, ‘The Artist as Ethnographer?’.

<sup>648</sup> *ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>649</sup> Probst, ‘The Eye Regards Itself: Benefits and Challenges of Reflexivity in Qualitative Social Work Research’.

into meaning.<sup>650</sup> It involves a commitment to step out of one's comfort zone, face the discomforts, bend and contort oneself into different positions, look back, inside, outside, and around in new ways, and engage others in difficult conversations.<sup>651</sup> There have been times when I have questioned if my approach to this research has aggravated or mitigated my sense of being overwhelmed or stuck, or whether it has merely distorted. *Undergoing* the 'work' of art-as-research has affected me profoundly, touching my vulnerable, emotional, body very painfully at times. Unlike Abramović I do not set out to test my body to its limits; nonetheless, the transferences are powerful, particularly as I work *through* the remaking of several endings, feeling the powerful body of the academic institution bearing down. Knocked off balance and pushed near to the limits of my emotional endurance, I am pressed to consider what it takes to stand up and find a voice when you can't produce the words. There is a delicate balance between remaining silent and saying too much. Again, through the transference, my attention is drawn to the complex nature of different sites, the tensions, ambivalences, and resistances encountered at their borders and what they might evoke, provoke, enable, activate, or silence when put in close proximity to each other.

Looping back to the beginning as I *feel* my way forward toward the end, the development of this method is concerned with exploring the psychosocial role of reflexive art practice in honing sensitivity to the affective dimensions of human situations and experience. Endeavouring to 'stay with the trouble', as Haraway might say, I argue that the social, political, and ethical awareness generated *through* the personal, experiential, subjective, emotional, and affective 'work' of *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking* has helped me navigate a way through the swampy mire and contributed to both the integrity and rigor of this research.<sup>652</sup> As I search for understanding *through* processes of 'making' that respond to the research situation, reflexivity is, in this sense, a primary vehicle for my enquiry; not a flourish, nor exposure for its own sake. Rather, in Ruth Behar's words, it is 'essential to the argument'.<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> Pässilä, Oikarinen, and Harmaakorpi, 'Collective Voicing as a Reflexive Practice'.

<sup>651</sup> Skukauskaitė, Yilmazlı Trout, and Robinson, 'Deepening Reflexivity through Art in Learning Qualitative Research'.

<sup>652</sup> In referring to 'staying with the trouble' I borrow from Haraway's eponymous book in which she suggests that our task is to 'make trouble, to stir up potent response [...] as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet spaces'. Haraway, '*Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*', p. 1.

<sup>653</sup> Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1996, p. 14. Cited in Etherington, '*Becoming a Reflexive Researcher-Using Our Selves in Research*', p. 31.

### 5.3.2. Would you consider 'entanglement' (or other alternatives) as a more appropriate term than weaving?

Unsettling fixed positions as a 'voice of the middle', ambivalence demands humility, an open mind, and an acknowledgement that, while I develop certain strategies, methods, and ways of understanding through this research, others may experience and understand the same material differently. This middle voice is tested when I am asked to consider if 'entanglement' (or other alternative) may be a more appropriate term than 'weaving'; the implication potentially being that the metaphor – trope – of 'weaving' risks becoming a mere cliché; easy but a bit boring.

What results is undoubtedly entangled; yet it is only by working *through* the process of intertwining diverse practices, ideas, and materials together and following the dialogues that take place, that these entanglements make themselves known. What I describe in my thesis is what resonates as I *feel my way forward and into* the situation. While I cast a speculative, ambivalent, eye over an entanglement of threads and the process by which it comes into being, it is the metaphor of 'weaving' that acts as a vehicle *through* which I offer a 'feel' for my method. It is the meaning I make of the work *through undergoing* the research process – performing tasks on their way to completion – the material gradually coming together, like a weaving, through the process of its construction. Although this may, when approached from a different viewpoint, appear entangled, this does not alter the validity of my voice, or the primary metaphor of 'weaving' that gives meaning to my experience and process as I *undergo* it. To draw a parallel with psychoanalysis, and art (psycho)therapy, the danger is that, when offered by a more powerful authority (and depending on context), an alternative interpretation risks devaluing, silencing, or overwriting the experience and voice of the other. Yet, holding my nerve and the idea of an ongoing conversation in which meanings, understandings, and ends may be contradicted, unpicked, and rewoven differently, I must acknowledge (with some ambivalence) that 'entanglement' offers a useful metaphor when moving forward beyond this Ph.D.; indeed, with its implications of being caught up in a complicated or compromising situation, I might well consider 'knotty' as an alternative. As Ingold remarks, in the knot things meet in the middle, 'in the midst of things, while their ends are on the loose, rooting for other lines to tangle with.'<sup>654</sup>

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<sup>654</sup> Ingold, *The Life of Lines*, p. 22.

### 5.3.3. How do you envisage your findings will impact on practice and research?

'How about this, is this any use or is it total nonsense?' – observation as a point to begin – a mark?<sup>655</sup>

The main driver for my research is a concern for how increasing mechanisation and systemisation of the human services strikes at the tacit, less articulable, subtleties of practice, deadening rather than enlivening our affective sensitivities. This threatens creative, reflective, spaces where insights emerge through more imaginative and playful, albeit serious, encounters rather than through the need to comply with an authority of some kind. My starting point is that feelings and bodily reactions attend all our thought processes and, as I argue *through* the 'work' of art-as-research, there is much at stake if we exclude embodied emotions, affect, and imagination from processes of learning; they inform our understanding of the world and keep experience alive. When learning *through* experience is approached only in a technical, cognitive, way it may fail to give form or pattern to our experience – to touch us in a way that moves.<sup>656</sup> Motivation to engage in reflective practice(s) may then be low with the assumed closure limiting affect and the intensities that can emerge.<sup>657</sup>

Cocker suggests that 'to build in spaces that are more speculative you have to *build in* spaces that are more speculative'.<sup>658</sup> This implies time – time to slow down, to reflect, and to sit with and dwell with the uncertainty of not knowing – processes that often challenge and frustrate institutional practices, particularly when time and space are in short supply. While reflection and reflexivity are deemed essential for responsible, ethical practice, slowing down and making space to attend to, and question, how we *affect* and *are affected by* the work we do interferes with the smooth flow of production, being at odds with the 'time is money'

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<sup>655</sup> Extract from Diary Notes One, 8 August 2017. I borrow the first question from Ludwig Wittgenstein, who is quoted by John Latham in Pauline van Mourik Broekman and Josephine Berry Slater, 'Countdown to Zero, Count up to Now: An Interview with the Artist Placement Group', in *Byproduct: On the Excess of Embedded Art Practices*, ed. by Jahn Marisa, Toronto: YYZ Books, 2010, pp. 42–48, 44.

<sup>656</sup> Wright, '*Mirroring and Attunement*'. See also Mitchell, 'Diffracting Reflection: A Move Beyond Reflective Practice'.

<sup>657</sup> Mitchell, 'Diffracting Reflection: A Move Beyond Reflective Practice'.

<sup>658</sup> Cocker, '*The Yes of the No*', opening page, my italics.

demands of capitalism.<sup>659</sup> Challenging established patterns and opening oneself up to take in and think about something unfamiliar and complex – to let it touch and *move* you to a different position – whether as individual, organisation, or society risks turning the house upside down, undermining the frameworks on which we rely for support. That, as I (re)discover through this research, is unsettling to say the least as it involves confrontation of oneself and one’s situation and the problems encountered in doing this.<sup>660</sup> It is hardly surprising there is resistance. Yet, to avoid the complexity is to be complicit in not paying attention – not caring; there is a delicate balance.

Referring back to the most valuable and generative gestures and actions, and the guiding principles identified in 5.2.6 – *move, make space(s)* and *take time* – this research speaks to the importance of opening oneself up to the possibility of ‘moving’ between positions, as well as the need for protected time and space in which meaningful dialogue and reflection can take place without scrutiny or assessment; where the messy organisational and emotional complexity of a task and its affective impact can be held and thought about; and where human vulnerabilities and differences are not excluded or shunned, but welcomed and valued as part of ethical practice.<sup>661</sup> As a site of imaginative encounter and performative enactment *through* which one may be pressed to notice and feel more acutely, I argue that the value of the method presented here lies in its potential to embrace complex, ambivalent relationalities; to engage our senses and affective sensitivities – our imaginative, emotional, ethical, thinking bodies – in ways that might not arise through more traditional approaches to reflective and reflexive practice(s). This might then make it possible to experiment with moves that, ordinarily, may alienate or anger those involved in the production of the work. Sitting *with* and *alongside* rather than *over* or *above* other approaches, my research therefore also speaks to a broader agenda of equality, diversity, and inclusivity. As the writer Stephanie Bailey notes,

it takes time ‘to learn each other’s languages, to give room for personal needs and those of others, while being mindful of the conditions of these

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<sup>659</sup> Lene Auestad, ‘To Think or Not to Think—a Phenomenological and Psychoanalytic Perspective on Experience, Thinking and Creativity’, in *Psychoanalysis and Education: Minding a Gap*, ed. by Alan Bainbridge and Linden West, London: Routledge, 2018, pp. 23–36.

<sup>660</sup> McIntosh, ‘*Action Research and Reflective Practice*’, p. 28.

<sup>661</sup> Caroline Braunmühl argues that while ‘empathy is by no means necessarily ethical [...] ethics cannot do without empathy, in the sense that a refusal of empathy in many cases negates the possibility of an ethical practice’. Braunmühl, ‘Beyond Hierarchical Oppositions’, p. 236, note 8.



interactions and the necessity for care, compassion, and patience: states that feel increasingly rare in a hardening and accelerating world [...]<sup>662</sup>

Every mark we make or contact we have affects the space it occupies and our relation to it, whether we are conscious of its touch or not. The material woven into this body of work offers some evidence of its impact. Yet, like a psychoanalysis or art (psycho)therapy much remains unspoken and unwritten – embedded and embodied in the relational process of weaving the work and the threads that extend further out and into the world, about which we may know little. Impact as a process of transmission and communication – where something is transferred from one place to another – may, as with my work here, need time to resonate and reverberate before it can be articulated. Still, its threads already reach into and across academic, professional, and artistic communities.

Presenting my research at conferences as well as through publications, I add to a growing body of work that emphasises the practitioner’s voice in practice-based research and the value of affective methodologies.<sup>663</sup> (Figure 103)

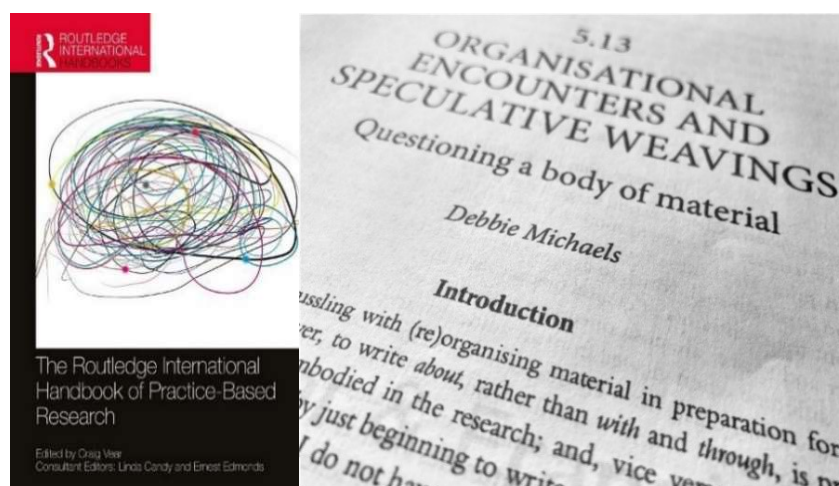


Figure 103. *Organisational Encounters and Speculative Weavings: Questioning a Body of Material*

Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research, 2022

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<sup>662</sup> Stephanie Bailey, ‘Entangled Bodies’, *Art Monthly*, 2021, 9–12, p. 12. In borrowing this quotation, I am mindful that Bailey writes in the context of disability. Still, her words resonate perhaps because, to quote her again, ‘the politics of disability connects with the politics of recolonisation, anti-imperialism, and anti-capitalism, because they are the conditions that are rooted in a system that defines a human’s worth by their ability to work’, p. 10.

<sup>663</sup> See Michaels, ‘Organisational Encounters and Speculative Weavings’ and Knudsen and Stage, ‘Affective Methodologies’. Details of *The Routledge International Handbook of Practice-based Research* can be found at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/publications.php>>

Offering a method that is ‘modifiable and modified in use’ my research builds on ‘inventive’ approaches that, following Lury and Wakeford, work *through* ‘body-ing forth, grasping – in relation to particular situations’.<sup>664</sup> After Williams, Shaw, and Schrag it complicates and extends the challenge to ‘explore the “space” produced by arts practice in healthcare’ and, I suggest, in academia.<sup>665</sup>

Emergent threads also reach toward the pedagogical aspects, through sharing this body of work and its findings with the art (psycho)therapy community as part of professional training and development.<sup>666</sup> Accepting that there are significant differences between psychoanalysis, art (psycho)therapy practice, and practice-based research in the arts, Leavy suggests that arts-based therapies (many of which are informed, to a greater or lesser extent, by psychoanalysis) have helped inform an understanding of artistic research practices.<sup>667</sup>

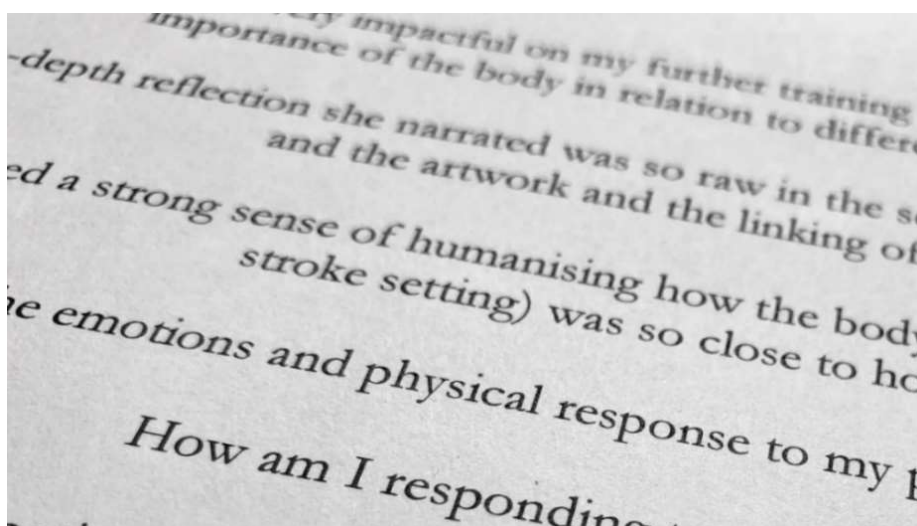


Figure 104. *What I Learnt and Might Make Use of*

Extract from compilation of trainee feedback, Art Therapy Northern Programme 2020

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<sup>664</sup> Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford, ‘Introduction: A Perpetual Inventory’, in *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social*, ed. by Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford, London: Routledge, 2012, pp. 1–24, p. 11.

<sup>665</sup> Frances Williams, Becky Shaw, and Anthony Schrag, ‘Enstranglements: Performing within, and Exiting from, the Arts-in-Health “Setting”’, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12:732957, 2022, 1–11, p. 2.

<sup>666</sup> As an associate lecturer on the Art Therapy Northern Programme I continue to deliver teaching sessions, experiential groups, and presentations based on my research to trainees undertaking an MA in Art Psychotherapy Practice, as well as to special interest groups. See <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/baat.php>>, and <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/teaching.php>>

<sup>667</sup> Leavy notes that the shift towards arts-based practices as a new methodological genre in academic research, which occurred from the 1970’s was, in part, ‘the result of the work done in the arts-based therapies’. Leavy, ‘*Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*’, p. 9.

Building on art (psycho)therapy research in the areas of ‘response art’, reflective practice(s), and art-based methodologies, I shift the emphasis away from what the art ‘means’ to how it ‘works’, broadening the scope from the visual, to the embodied, sensory, performative, ‘work’ of art as material *with* and *through* which to affectively *feel* one’s way into human experiences and situations’ – processes that are at the root of the profession but which we are often urged to dispense with as researchers. (Figure 104) In the words of a senior art (psycho)therapy colleague, it draws attention to ‘how we make sense of matters before us, initially in an unstructured way, but finding structure as we go (weaving)’; *with*, and *in* the presence of, others.<sup>668</sup>

Working across disciplinary boundaries this research amplifies the learning opportunities afforded by sharing and exchanging ideas and practices through artistic practice, as well as the tensions, ambivalences, and resistances encountered at the borders between domains as different languages, understandings, and ways of doing things collide. As Michaels implies, after Cazeaux, it is not just through ‘seeing things differently’ that new understanding arises, but when the collision of different perspectives leads to the introduction of new concepts to make sense of a situation.<sup>669</sup> Bridging both practice and research, this project foregrounds an ethics of responsibility, attention, and care *for/of* the body not just in practice but also *through* the way we gather, produce, move, handle, and present ideas and data, and how we represent those who may be the subject of our enquiry. It is therefore relevant, not only for practitioners and researchers working across the humanities as well as arts *and/in* healthcare but also for those affected by, and in receipt of, the care that is delivered.

As I draw this to a close, resisting internal and external pressures to neatly tie the ends, the impact of my research does not offer answers. Rather, in the shape of a speculative weaving, it contributes to an ongoing, cross-disciplinary, open conversation. As Calver suggests, changing practice and the manner of articulating that practice changes understanding.<sup>670</sup> It is *through* moving, assembling, and reconfiguring diverse ideas and practices and experiencing the tangled network of resistances and new possibilities that emerge, that my understanding is sophisticatedly moved. Ultimately my research is concerned with making a space for thinking *through* feeling, for exploring one situation in the context of another,

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<sup>668</sup> Personal communication, James West, 13 March 2019, in response to BAAT Neuro-SIG presentation.

<sup>669</sup> Michaels, ‘Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Practice-Based Research’, p. 53.

<sup>670</sup> Calver, ‘Voices and Morphologies’.

*unmaking, making, and remaking* understanding, and considering how the ‘work’ of art may be applied as a method for (re)sensitising practitioners to the affective dimensions of human situations and experience. The work of negotiating, preparing the conditions for this, and weaving the threads is ongoing. Nevertheless, drawing particular attention to an ethics of responsibility, attention, and care *for/of* the body I argue, after art (psycho)therapist Corrina Eastwood and others, that making, sharing, and voicing *through* the ‘work’ of art in an act of radical vulnerability can support the depth of reflexivity necessary to unsettle established patterns, value systems, and power structures while, at the same time, encouraging people to move towards understanding rather than simply criticising.<sup>671</sup> As I voice out loud in an address to the object-body-thing (brought forward from Appendix 8):

*As a body of work – the ‘work’ of art – you help me to feel, think about, and articulate what it means to be human – to be vulnerable, messy, uncertain, conflicted and contradictory – to be caught or knocked off balance. Through what you evoke and provoke in me and others – whether through interest and engagement, indifference, boredom, or dismissal – you draw attention to an ethics of care – how the material, physical and psychological ‘body’ is valued and cared for as it moves in, out, and through various institutional settings – and to the fragile and delicate balance – the tiny, sometimes imperceptible shifts in position – the to and fro, in and out – between concern for the other and for the self – between kindness and cruelty, empathy and apathy, hospitality and hostility, life and death.<sup>672</sup>*

#### **5.3.4. What are the caveats and limitations to your research?**

Perhaps this *is* all just an elaborate fiction, a yarn or web I have spun to seduce and entrap, a distraction from real work – a defence against feeling and thinking.

As noted in 5.2.4, the nature of a Ph.D. is that it sets up an artificial frame around an ongoing, evolving process. A temporal line is drawn around it whereas reflexivity is a lifelong endeavour. My enquiry is context specific. I choose particular sites *in/through* which

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<sup>671</sup> Corrina Eastwood, ‘Finding Reconnection: Using Art-Based Intersectional Self-Reflexivity to Ignite Profession Based Community Care in the Arts Therapies During the Covid-19 Pandemic’, *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 80, 2022. See also Rogowska-Stangret and Cielemeńska, ‘Vulnerable Academic Performances. Dialogue on Matters of Voice and Silence in Academia’.

<sup>672</sup> Extract from ‘Questioning a Body of Material’, conference presentation, METHOD 2019. See Appendix 8 for the full transcript.

to set up the research situation, develop, and test out my method over a particular period of time, placing emphasis on the subjective, emotional, and affective dimensions of the material that emerges. As a practice-based study concerned with ‘learning *through* experience’ I focus on my experience of the situation and the narratives that emerge rather than the theoretical, historical, social, cultural, and political forces that shape it. Nonetheless, as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu asserts,

the most ‘personal’ difficulties, the apparently most strictly subjective tensions, and contradictions, frequently articulate the deepest structures of the social world and its contradictions.<sup>673</sup>

Hinshelwood describes psychoanalysis as a ‘reflective practice tuned to the unexpressed’ in the sense that what is ‘psycho-analytic’ is the human capacity to have an experience and to think about it.<sup>674</sup> Accepting that feelings, emotional responses, and bodily reactions, attend and inform all our thoughts and learning, the psychoanalytic model of organisational observation that I adapt, modify, and expand aims to raise self-awareness, sensitise the practitioner to the affective dimensions of human situations and experience, and promote integration of both the observational and experiential.<sup>675</sup> Transposing this training model, along with threads from art (psycho)therapy, to an academic art setting I test my capacity to observe and experience, to hold, contain, and *undergo* a relationship over time – to dwell *with* and *in* a complex situation and observe its *affects* – and to see what happens when I take something from the outside inside and allow the experience to inhabit, touch, and potentially *move* me towards different understandings.<sup>676</sup> Still, as I point out in 1.3.4, and as Brown remarks, mapping psychoanalytic concepts and practices onto social or artistic research has its limits and is not uncontroversial.<sup>677</sup> Nonetheless, along with the other threads from practice and theory I weave into this work, I argue that such models are not mutually exclusive but, as demonstrated *through* my research and when assembled differently, may produce new methods and ways to approach and consider the area being explored.

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<sup>673</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, et al, *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999, p. 511.

<sup>674</sup> Hinshelwood, ‘Observing Anxiety’, p. 50.

<sup>675</sup> Hinshelwood and Skogstad, ‘Observing Organisations’.

<sup>676</sup> Brown, ‘Reflexivity in the Research Process: Psychoanalytic Observations’. Brown’s paper draws on her experience of a two-year infant observation training at the Tavistock Clinic in London. See also Townsend, *Creative States of Mind*.

<sup>677</sup> Brown, ‘Reflexivity in the Research Process: Psychoanalytic Observations’.

Beginning *now* rather than *then* I would, no doubt, approach the research situation differently. I am, and can only be, *here* because I have been *there* and experienced and undergone *that*. Indeed, for the latter part I, along with the rest of the world, am caught up in a global pandemic and subject to periods of ‘lockdown’ where movement and contact is severely restricted and bodies can only meet safely in ‘virtual’ spaces. Limited in my capacity to move freely, I am pressed to think of those whose freedom of movement is, for one reason or another, more seriously restricted than mine – such as those who suffer the sudden impact of stroke, feel locked in their bodies or situations through illness or disability, or live under repressive regimes of a different nature. I do not suggest, or presume, that my experience of vulnerability is the same as theirs; merely that, as Mari Ruti proposes after Judith Butler, as a human being I may ‘possess the capacity to recognise the correspondences, the often quite abstract resemblances between different experiences’.<sup>678</sup> While the pandemic limits the scope for presenting the object-body-thing and its various parts in person (which I find preferable), these limitations nevertheless present new opportunities *through* which to explore, (re)organise, and (re)present the material ‘body’ of work, (re)making it again in ‘virtual’ spaces and bringing different sensitivities to the fore.<sup>679</sup>

Haraway argues that ‘the self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly’.<sup>680</sup> This thesis does not present a factual, accurate, or complete, account of events. Rather, (re)configuring threads from psychoanalysis, art (psycho)therapy, and the arts in an interdisciplinary project, I present a partial, situated, speculative view of my sensitivity to the research situation with all its inconsistencies and flaws. Indeed, like the art-therapy-object, and as discussed in 5.3.2, the work remains open to being unpicked and rewoven differently. (Figure 105) As Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford argue in *A Perpetual Inventory*, matters ‘of use, of collaboration, of

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<sup>678</sup> Acknowledging her reservations about the idea that ethics should be based on something as unreliable as a capacity to be moved by the suffering of others, Ruti suggests that the common experience of precariousness provides grounds for translating from one experience to another in a way that ‘makes identification (and therefore ethical indignation, outrage and action) possible’. Mari Ruti, ‘The Ethics of Precarity: Judith Butler’s Reluctant Universalism’, in *Remains of the Social: Desiring the Post-Apartheid*, ed. by Maurits van Bever Donker, et al., Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2017, pp. 92–116, 111 – 112.

<sup>679</sup> This was particularly key for my online presentation at the Cultural Literacy Conference in 2021 which involved a performative reading based on observation notes, accompanied by the-voice-of-its-making. The abstract and audio-visual material is available on the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/cultural-literacy-everywhere.php>>. See also Debbie Michaels, ‘Questioning a Body of Material: A Speculative Weaving’, *Cultural Literacy Everywhere*, Online, 13–14 May 2021 <<https://padlet.com/DacaStudio/bf73qzbzhigr68vw>> [accessed 29 December 2021].

<sup>680</sup> Haraway, ‘Situated Knowledges’, p. 586.

situatedness, [do] not imply the ineffectiveness of methods [...] only that their inventiveness [...] cannot be secured in advance.<sup>681</sup>



Figure 105. *Shadow of an Object*

Layered image with text, November 2021

There are many threads I might have followed or lenses *through* which I might have looked. Writing from the position I am in now I cannot return to where I was at the time things happened; insights and understandings come with time and space as I work *through* the research process and the material generated. I rely on working *with* and *through* extensive documentation to *feel into* the material as I produce it although, by its nature, all documentation is selective, incomplete, and abbreviated, as is this thesis, the accompanying practice submission, and website a compressed version of events. While presented with many views in mind, inevitably it excludes. It is the working *through* – the ongoing transferential process of *unmaking*, *making*, and *remaking*, and the compression of time and

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<sup>681</sup> Lury and Wakeford, 'Introduction: A Perpetual Inventory', 7.

space involved as material is continually moved, handled, (re)organised, and (re)assembled differently – that offers new ways of understanding. Like Lucier’s sound piece, the object-body-thing and the-voice-of-its-making, the resonances evoked through the rhythm and movement *felt* in the process of going *over* and *into* again and again, and the sense I make of these rhythms and movements relate to the room in which I sit and the sounds made which, in part at least, define that space.

### 5.3.5. What and where now?

‘I’d like to present [the work] outside’ I say, in December 2017.<sup>682</sup> ‘Which outside?’ Kivland asks, ‘*Testing Testing* is an outside, and *The Dreamers* is an outside and we don’t know where that goes, but it is out in the world.’<sup>683</sup> She is right, of course, even though that was then and this is now.

Projecting towards the end of my research near the beginning, Kivland wonders (as I do now) ‘whether the material part might disappear entirely’.<sup>684</sup> As Rebecca Schneider suggests, the performance cannot reside in its material traces.<sup>685</sup> Still, the remains of the object-body-thing continue to occupy a corner of my mind, and studio – residual evidence of something having taken place although, as implied, there is more to *this* work than *that*.<sup>686</sup> As I venture beyond these speculative weavings I anticipate a further ‘transposition’; yet I can only speculate as to its shape. Alongside threads that extend into academic and professional communities through presentations, teaching, and publication, as part of a transference and transmission of ideas beyond my research (while rooted in it) documentation of the ‘making’ process also lends itself to being unpicked, rewoven, and re-read differently. As I note on 8 August 2017, when transposing my computer-based Diary Notes to material form, as a collection of fragments, the project is ‘a work in progress – a work to be worked on, gone

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<sup>682</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland – joint supervision meeting 6 December 2017, my italics.

<sup>683</sup> Ibid.

<sup>684</sup> Personal communication, Sharon Kivland, 8 February 2017.

<sup>685</sup> Rebecca Schneider, ‘Performance Remains’, *Performance Research*, 6, 2001, 100–108. See also Rebecca Schneider, ‘Performance Remains Again’, in *Archaeologies of Presence*, ed. by Gabriella Giannachi, Nick Kaye and Michael Shanks, London: Routledge, 2012, pp. 64–81.

<sup>686</sup> Ibid.



over, revisited [...] a layering of understandings and attempts at understanding – imaginings’.

These foreground the ongoing movement of research material from:

*observation* → *notebook* → *artefact* → *publication*

and through

*felt experience* → *recorded* → *written* → *spoken* → *performed* → *speaking out*

between them and the patients or ‘something’ allowed up by the chair in front of me to the chair is empty apart from the turquoise

pockets of noise – of chatter – from the there was some chatter at the nursing quite opposite me, coming from the c

but it was as if all the sounds just me became quite overwhelming and sense – this sound, this noise, this meaningless I came out of something, but it was u

ce approaches  
he office, now

king. At other  
‘do’ anything,  
ing somebody  
to ask me if I

Are people forced to listen  
My sense of almost wantir  
myself drift off into watchir

Repetitive stories/sounds  
off from it? – from thinking  
the noise constantly?

which her cardigan hangs. From time to time a stand of knitting drops below the chair into my scope staff that I am observing interactions between them and the patients or ‘something else there’. My back against take the woman who appears rolled up by the chair in front of me to the ‘gym’. Such an slowly alongside by invitation. Then the chair is empty apart from the turquoise cardigan. Another

ree quarters of an hour in. There were pockets of noise – of chatter – from the television that was They were talking about Brexit. Then there was some chatter at the nursing station and some nts were, so there was something not quite opposite me, coming from the direction in front of

I really didn’t understand it initially but it was as if all the sounds just merged and I couldn’t it just became the noise and the noise became quite overwhelming and senseless and it took me sling. I felt quite disorientated almost – this sound, this noise, this meaningless noise and I think nutes and then passed. It was as if I came out of something, but it was unexpected. I wasn’t

and the woman with the turquoise fleece approaches  
ll she sits, then carry my chair back to the office, now  
I leave the building.

Are people forced to listen to the TV? Is it a distract  
My sense of almost wanting to just switch off from t  
myself drift off into watching the TV.

ss? I can feel I’m welling up as I’m talking. At other  
opportunity to sit and not to have to ‘do’ anything,  
but I had a feeling sometimes of wanting somebody  
me there was a part of me wanted her to ask me if I  
‘felt I was in a very different frame from when I was  
my people were there – whereas this time I was not  
sory level, but these moments of feeling isolated –  
of being outside. I’m not a – I don’t have an identity  
This sense of isolation and I think the address – I’m  
r back towards me. I remembered her from the last  
he wall behind me, and although I have my watch I  
ing – when I came in – to do this. I wasn’t expecting  
g on the wall.

Repetitive stories/sounds – do the staff blank out in  
off from it? – from thinking about what is on? – what  
the noise constantly?

What might it feel like to be called ‘trouble’?

What would it mean to just call people by their nam  
to someone as ‘young man’ when they aren’t? Ma  
resilient but not at other times?

th her son and, at one point after a while, there was  
fleece cardigan, a lilac fleece cardigan. And her hair  
‘t – it’s just her fleece hanging over the back of this  
then the legs of the chair and the arms of the chair.  
d I couldn’t see the other one, but I know it’s there,  
nitting, part of her knitting – a strand – came down  
tile later, she is collected to go to the gym. (I laugh)  
upational therapist came and collected her and put  
knew – it was about exercise. Maybe it’s not an OT

Afterwards I wonder about placing meaning on the i  
referencos to two sides/hemispheres – movement  
brain? Left brain less developed in the image  
fascinating as I have not thought about this – the id

The process as emergent rather than cognitive – i  
/following my intuition rather than planning ahead u

Later still I wonder if the interpretation is too ea  
context in which I am working it seems very relevant  
in the transference?

hope the camera and the equipment is set up right,  
here initially, in the organisation, it was as if nothing

**Role of metaphor – Interpretation:**

Homes under the hammer could have a metaphor  
who has had a stroke, or could I just make a link w

ere’s some charcoal that I’ve put on the floor that is just stopping the roll from moving forward

the sounds

I’ve only got five minutes

Figure 106. *Twelve Weeks Revisited*<sup>687</sup>

Extract from experimental writing, 2021 (in progress)

<sup>687</sup> *Twelve Weeks Revisited* draws on observations, notes, and reflections made during ‘Transposition II in a re-reading of the original material. Disrupting the linear narrative, I imagine an encounter with a material unfolding as the reader grapples with its physicality as well as its meaning. The structure and format of the text draws inspiration from Jacques Derrida’s book  *Glas*. Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1974.

Feeling my way forward and beyond, while looping back *over* and *into*, I imagine further *unmakings*, *makings*, and *remakings* which, after Winnicott, make *use* of this body of research while simultaneously destroying it.<sup>688</sup> (

Figure 106 & Figure 107)

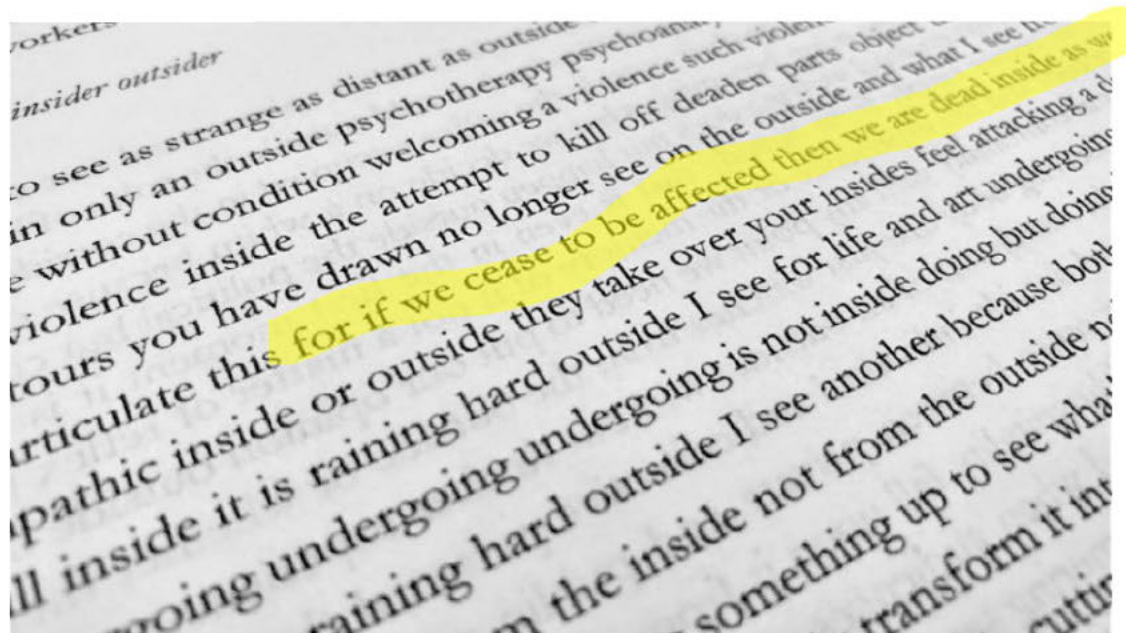


Figure 107. *Insider-Outsider*<sup>689</sup>

Extract from experimental writing/performative reading, 2020 (in progress)

The website already presents itself as a space beyond, open to others, a mutable space also open to ongoing change as material is reworked, potentially taking on different relevance and meaning. The vague outline of an exhibition lingers, associated with a collaborative, participatory, performative, series of events. A journal paper is in progress and the shape of a book – books – also hovers, along with further potential weavings incorporating the

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<sup>688</sup> Winnicott suggests that, to find personal meaning in our encounters with the outside world we must not merely accept it as we find it but break it down or destroy it (in fantasy) in order to create it anew for ourselves. Winnicott, 'The Use of an Object'. Townsend also draws on Winnicott (and others) to suggest that the artist feels compelled to create new forms for her experience that will eventually have an existence in the outside world and, in order to do this, she must mobilise her aggression as well as her receptivity. Townsend, '*Creative States of Mind*'.

<sup>689</sup> *Insider-Outsider* is a fifteen-minute performative reading that responds to a Ph.D. seminar presentation on 7 December 2020. Based on a search of my diary notes in 'Word' for the words 'inside' and 'outside', each partial sentence in which the word is placed is joined together, with punctuation, theoretical references and some repetitions removed. Along with *Trace Recollections* and *The-voice-of-its-making* the work was proposed for 'The Crystalline Studio' oHPo radio project hosted by Sheffield Hallam University and led by Julia Calver, Emma Bolland, and Anton Hecht. For personal reasons I was unable to take part, however I continue to develop these works.

gatherings of hair still being collected. Whether these imaginings assume material form or not, it is *through undergoing* the ongoing work of *unmaking, making, and remaking* – the transpositional process of moving, (re)assembling, and (re)configuring, and negotiating the tensions and resistances encountered at the borders between domains – that the ‘body’ of work may remain alive as it is shared and made use of both *by* and independently *of* me. Inevitably, threads will wander off elsewhere. Then again, others may weave their way back into the subject I address, further augmenting and amplifying an understanding of it through what is touched, felt, and moved in the process.



## Find an End

*come or bring to a final point; finish  
reach a point and go no further*

Is it me or has the world changed? I struggle to find an end – to stop. Then again, looping back to making an entry perhaps I ‘write the last line first’ – draw the shadow of the work before it exists.<sup>690</sup>

In ‘finding’ an end, or at least searching for one, I do not seek conclusion in finality; the work of speculative weaving is ongoing. In Barthes’s words, method is ‘at once the path to be travelled and the end of the journey, the method and the accomplishment’.<sup>691</sup> Still I must, for the purposes of this work, loop back *over* and *into* the ‘body’ of material again, find an end and draw a line under (or *through*) it, although this end may yet be unpicked and rewoven differently.

*I've put my hand inside it  
Pulled the pin out*

*I'm not sure if I want to tangle – untangle it – almost like I want to find its end  
I've found an end*

*I've lost it (I laugh)*

*Ah! there it is – how easily it gets tangled up – feels like a never-ending task.*<sup>692</sup>

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<sup>690</sup> I borrow here from Adrian Rifkin, ‘A Transcription of Adrian Rifkin’s “on Writing the Last Line First (One of Three Possible Titles)”’. Transcribed by Yuval Etgar, Jessyca Hutchens, Anita Paz, Naomi Vogt, and Nina Wakeford’, *OAR: The Oxford Artistic and Practice Based Research Platform*, 2016.

<sup>691</sup> Barthes, ‘*The Preparation of the Novel*’, p. 20.

<sup>692</sup> Extract from audio recording, Studio Session III, 7 February 2017.



# Appendices

# Appendix 1

## Subsidiary Matter

In presenting this subsidiary matter, I do not offer an exhaustive list of material glanced at, read, reread, forgotten about, or discarded; rather, I offer a further glimpse into my method of working. Drawn from 'Diary Notes' spanning six years, Appendix 1 offers selected examples of material that has caught my attention and informed the development of my research practice, but is excluded from the main body of the thesis due to necessary constraints (Figure 108).

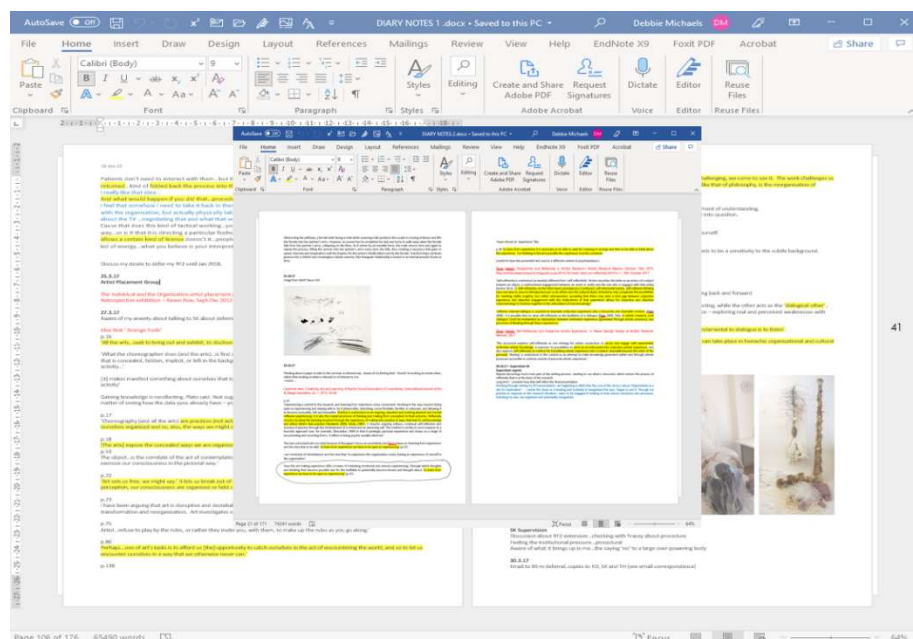


Figure 108. Screenshot of diary notes pages

Such subsidiary matter includes:

- 1.1 Artworks, exhibitions, and projects
- 1.2 Conferences, presentations, and artist lectures
- 1.3 Further reading

References are presented under each heading in the order in which I encounter them. Below some (but not all) are fragments of notes made at the time. Each is also identified alphabetically in the Bibliography.



## 1.1 ARTWORKS/EXHIBITIONS/PROJECTS

Bill Viola, *Man Searching for Immortality/Woman Searching for Eternity*, 2013, Color High-Definition video diptych projected on large vertical slabs of black granite leaning on wall, 227 x 128 x 5 cm each, video duration 18'54": Yorkshire Sculpture Park, 10 October 2015 - 10 April 2016, [file:///C:/Users/Debbie/Downloads/bill-viola-press-release%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Debbie/Downloads/bill-viola-press-release%20(1).pdf) [accessed 22 December 2021]

Observation, close observation, looking closely, close reading of something, slow movement, giving close attention, observing myself observing, self-examination, immersion, staging.

Nam June Paik *Tv Buddha*, 1974, Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, Installation, <<https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/nam-june-paik>> [accessed 23 December 2021]

Relation between image, medium, body, and viewer.

Mary Kelly, *Post-Partum Document: Documentation III: Analysed Markings and Diary Perspective Schema (Experimentum Mentis III: Weaning from the Dyad)*, 1975, 13 works on paper, graphite, crayon, chalk and printed diagrams, mounted on paper, Displayed: 360 × 6493 mm object, each: 286 × 361 × 35 mm, Project/Exhibition, <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/kelly-post-partum-document-documentation-iii-analysed-markings-and-diary-perspective-t03925>> [accessed 8 November 2021]

Tracing differences between lived experience and an analysis of that experience.

Personal is political.

Content or raw material is subjectivity.

Margaret Harrison, Kay Hunt, and Mary Kelly, *Women and Work: A Document on the Division of Labour in Industry 1973-75*, 2016, London: Tate Modern, Video, 2 monitors, colour, audio, photographs, gelatin silver print on paper and works on paper, ink, <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/harrison-hunt-kelly-women-and-work-a-document-on-the-division-of-labour-in-industry-1973-t07797>> [accessed 22 December 2021]

The use of research methods drawn from the social sciences as an artistic strategy.

Fernand Deligny, *Wander Lines*, 4 February - 16 October 2016, London: States of Mind: Tracing the Edges of Consciousness, Wellcome Collection, Exhibition, <<https://galleryell.com/reviews/states-of-mind/>> [accessed 22 December 2021]

Mapping gestures

Cornelia Parker, *Transitional Object (Psychobarn)*, 2016, New York: Metropolitan Museum, Installation, <<https://www.metmuseum.org/press/exhibitions/2016/cornelia-parker>> [accessed 22 December 2021]

Construction – façade and the structure required to support and keep it up.

Jane Grisewood, *Ghostlines*, 2009, 14.8 × 10.5 each, London: Centre for Recent Drawing (C4RD), Graphite on paper, <<http://www.janegrisewood.com/Drawings/project2detail7.html>> [accessed 16 December 2021]

Mapping Journeys – Idea of tracking my movements when I'm sitting doing observation

Wellcome Collection, *Bedlam: The Asylum and Beyond*, 15 September 2016 - 15 January 2017, London, Exhibition, <<https://wellcomecollection.org/exhibitions/W31tsSkAACkAP5p8>> [accessed 22nd December 2021]

Bars, constraining, silencing  
Outsider/insider

Paul Nash, 'The Surrealist Object Explained', ed. by Tate Archive, London: GB 70 TGA 769/1/59-60, nd

'Surely you might say an object which is found cannot be concerned with an act of the imagination. On the contrary, it is found by that means, by finding it you create it.'

Paul Nash, 26 October 2016 - 5 March 2017, London: Tate Britain, Exhibition  
<<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/paul-nash>>  
[accessed 22 December 2021]

Bruce Nauman, *Mapping the Studio I (Fat Chance John Cage)*, 2001: Dia Art Foundation;  
Partial Gift, Lannan Foundation, 2013, DVD Projections (colour, sound, 5 hours  
45 minutes), <<https://www.diaart.org/exhibition/exhibitions-projects/bruce-nauman-mapping-the-studio-i-fat-chance-john-cage-exhibition>> [accessed 22nd  
December 2021] Bruce Nauman, *Mapping the Studio Notebook (Book 1)*, 2001,  
Unconfirmed: 24 × 15.2 × 1, London: Tate, Ink on paper,  
<<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/nauman-mapping-the-studio-notebook-book-1-t12591>> [accessed 22nd December 2021]

Documentation of Studio process

B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, London: Panther, 1969

Book designed to be read in any order. The story is in the interplay of the memories, something that works no matter what order they arrive in.

Elizabeth Price, *Boulder*, ongoing since 1996, London, Packing Tape

Repetitive reflexive gesture over an indefinite and protracted period of time.

Tomma Abts, 7 June - 9 September 2018, Exhibition, London: Serpentine Sackler Gallery,  
Abts, Tomma, 7 June - 9 September 2018, Exhibition, London: Serpentine Sackler  
Gallery, <<https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/whats-on/tomma-abts/>>  
[accessed 22nd December 2021]

Surely an outcome does not and cannot signify or represent the complexity of the process that has been undergone in order to produce it?

Becky Shaw, and Rose Butler, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, 2016, London, Film, photographs, and  
artists pamphlet, <<http://www.beckyshaw.net/Hiding-in-Plain-Sight>> [accessed  
22nd December 2021]

Uses exploratory performance to question what the care environment is and how carers inhabit it, and what we might expect of art in this context.

Cecilia Vicuña, *Quipu Mapocho*, 2016, 2 × 1.5 × 1.5m, Mixed media including unspun wool, twigs, and string/performance,

<<https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13557/cecilia-vicuna>> [accessed 21 December 2021]

Symbolic function of textile and language – weaving as writing.

Louise Bourgeois, *I Do, I Undo, I Redo*, 2000, London: Tate Modern, Installation,

<<https://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern/turbine-hall>> [accessed 23 December 2021]

## 1.2 CONFERENCES/PRESENTATIONS/ARTIST LECTURES

Paula McCloskey, 'Where Art Happens', Transmission, Sheffield Hallam University, 23

February 2016

<<https://extra.shu.ac.uk/transmission/documents/Transmission2015-16semester2.pdf>> [accessed 20 December 2021]

Subjective position – of 'becoming' rather than fixed, trans-subjectivity

Human-ness as a shared experience, the everyday – validated as a site of knowledge.

Engagement with different aspects/positions, re-imagining a space or position?

Performative element to observation? durational looking?

Reflexivity essential in getting some critical distance from subjective position?

Penny McCarthy, 'My Documents', Lunchtime Seminar, Sheffield Hallam University, 16

March 2016

Fragments & partial views, close-up looking

Memory as archive

Making as a repurposing or remaking to find a new form.

Spending time as a way of getting to know.

Mapping

Destabilisation through fictionalising.

Rita Charon, 'How to Listen to the Talk of Pain', in *Encountering Pain: Hearing, Seeing,*

*Speaking*, London: UCL, 1-2 July 2016

Witnessing – 'tellings' - listening to pain demands an ethical response and action?

If pain is an intersubjective event, an increasing capacity to witness the pain will increase the capacity to manage the pain, on both sides.

Becky Shaw and Rose Butler, 'Hide and Seek: Playing with Visibility', *Putting Space into Action*,

University of Huddersfield, 30 September 2016

How making produces insight, questions, and problems

Seeing, observing, witnessing and experiencing, and what these feel like in research and healthcare practice.

Erica Scourti, 'Who Is an Artist?', Transmission, Sheffield Hallam University, 7 February 2017

<<https://extra.shu.ac.uk/transmission/documents/TRANSMISSIONprogramme2017.pdf>> 20 December 2021

What are the risks you take when you allow another human to see you?

Public and private spaces – exposure – self-consciousness

Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, 'Who Is an Artist?', Transmission, Sheffield Hallam University, 7 March 2017

<<https://extra.shu.ac.uk/transmission/documents/TRANSMISSIONprogramme2017.pdf>> [accessed 20 December 2021]

'Not sure I know who the audience is - but I definitely trust the little voices that tell me to do something'

'Speak, Body: Art, the Reproduction of Capital and the Reproduction of Life', School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies: University of Leeds, 21-23 April 2017

Feminist discourse around 'body'

Historical moment viewed from now – potential to look from a different position

What can be discovered and re-visioned from a new position – with new eyes

Objects from the past have interest now because they are not ours?

Emotional underbelly

Emma Cocker, Nikolaus Gansterer, and Mariella Greil, 'Choreographic Figures', Please Specify, Society of Artistic Research, Helsinki, 28-29 April, 2017

Acting with, in or through materials

How indicates activity – the unfolding of a process – pedagogical – leads to a procedural knowledge – a how to

Howness is always in a process of becoming – describes an enquiry into the state of something  
- Invites epistemological and ethical

With-nessing – blurring space between observer/participant performative practice and modes of witnessing

Figuring relations – the ethical concerns of 'meeting' others/sharing space with other artists/witnesses

Artistic research seeks not so much to make explicit the knowledge that art is said to produce, but rather [...] invites 'unfinished thinking'. Hence, it is not formal knowledge that is the subject matter of artistic research, but thinking in, through and with art.

Mareli Stolp, 'Navigating the Constellation', *Please Specify*, Society of Artistic Research, Helsinki, 28-29 April, 2017  
Mareli Stolp, 'Self-Reflexivity and Subjective Artistic Experience', *Please Specify*, Society of Artistic Research, Helsinki, 28-29 April, 2017

The performer as having access to tacit, embodied knowledge that people outside may not have.  
Artistic research has to be translated from the personal, subjective experience to a shared experience that can be accessed by those outside.

Shared experience as resonance – others can experience a resonance in response to my subjectivity.

Becky Shaw, Sophie Hope, and Anthony Schrag, 'Half-Eaten - Practice Research within Organisations', *Artistic Research Will Eat Itself*, Society of Artistic Research, Plymouth, 11-13 April 2018

System as eater – artist as food – the institution eats the artist

Processing/process/processed

Allows for sense of time

What happens to the context after she's been there?

Emma Cocker, 'Chewing the Cud', *Artistic Research Will Eat Itself*, Society of Artistic Research, Plymouth, 11-13 April 2018

Process and performativity

Material being re-worked emotionally? Practically?

Gesture – affective potentiality

Reflection on process of making becomes part of the process

Paul Seawright, 'Professor Paul Seawright Lecture', Sheffield Institute of Arts, 14 January 2019

The research practice has to be articulated and described – but explaining takes away the mystery – it is lost. – that is the price of being in the academy!

Rye Dag Holmboe, 'Anna Freud's Loom', *Anni Albers and the Modernist Textile*, University College London, 26 January 2019

Weaving and psychoanalysis seem intuitively connected, but little written about it.

Resistance of textiles to logical or chronological interpretation.

Weaving as a metaphor for the dream, - loom as unconscious dream machine.

Time of weaving as a time for thinking about internal objects through a dialogue with the materials and constraints of the loom.

Weavings can be slow in the pace of looking at them – moves between deep historical time, durational present and potential futures. – time and labour – weaving is a temporal medium

Alison Ballance, 'Ghosts: Performance Presentation on Shame, Recollection and Gestures in Art Practice', *Gestures: Writing that Moves Between*, Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, 15-16 February 2019

Trusting what you know despite what you're told

Gesture of mark-making – movement

'A language that's not there yet'

Joanna Walsh, *Seed*, 16 February 2019, 30 mins, *Gestures: Writing that Moves Between*: Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, Participatory Performance

The multilayering of voices

Where is my own voice in this or am I speaking someone else's?

Christodoulos Makris, 'Poetry and Cultures of Feedback', *Gestures: Writing that Moves Between*, Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, 15-16 February 2019

How I use and implicate others in my research practice.



Anna MacDonald, *Art, Containment and Care*, 2015, London: Cross-Cultural Live Art Project (CCLAP), Performance,  
<<https://cclap2014.wordpress.com/2015/10/27/cclap-2015-performative-lecture-art-containment-and-care-anna-macdonald/>> [accessed 21 December 2021] <sup>262</sup>

Explores the psychodynamic notion of 'holding' as a form of care.

### 1.3 FURTHER READING

Christopher Frayling, 'Research in Art and Design', *RCA Research Papers*, 1, 1, 1993, 1–5

Research *into, through, and for*, art and design.

Jean F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, [La Condition Postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979] in Reason, Peter, and Hilary Bradbury, *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, ed. by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, London: Sage, 2001

In action research knowledge is a living, evolving process of coming to know rooted in everyday experience; it is a verb rather than a noun. This means action research cannot be programmatic and cannot be defined in terms of hard and fast methods, but is, in Lyotard's sense, a work of art.

Louise Bourgeois, Marie-Laure Bernadac, and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *Destruction of the Father Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews, 1923-1997*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998

'I mean that this is something that you do not want, that you undergo. Unconscious is something that is volcanic in tone, and yet you cannot do anything about it, and you better be its friend, you better accept it, and even love it if you can, because it might get the better of you, you never know', p. 27.

Deborah Wye and Carol Smith, *The Prints of Louise Bourgeois*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994

'One wants' Bourgeois has said 'to look, to see, to listen, to try desperately to hear...to sometimes perceive. But these processes must be manipulated by the emotions. If there are no emotions, there is no perception' p. 10.

Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, Princeton and Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2011

Belting writes of images 'not as media'; rather, 'their need for and use of media in order to be transmitted to us and to become visible for us'. He contends that 'our bodies themselves operate as a living medium, by processing, receiving, and transmitting images' (p.5). While he is speaking from an anthropological rather than a psychoanalytic perspective, nonetheless there are parallels with psychoanalytic concepts such as projection, transference, and countertransference where the analyst's body and mind may be 'used' as a medium through which to process experience that has no words.

Keith Lehrer, *Art, Self and Knowledge*, Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012

Art can provide us with a sensory experience that provokes us to reconfigure how we think about our world and ourselves.

David Maclagan, 'The Biter Bit': Subjective Features of Research in Art and Therapy', in *Art and Music Therapy and Research*, ed. by A Gilroy and C Lee, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 206–222

'Research: the word brings up fantasies of clinical detachment, dusty scholarship and competitive ambition. Both institutionally and personally, it carries a certain clout, justifying status and promoting interests [...] Indeed, far from being simply motivated by the desire for truth, I suggest that research in the field of psychoanalysis (and possibly other fields) is likely to be informed by some of the very factors it purports to examine: namely transference phenomena, not just between the subject of the research and their clients or colleagues, but between the researcher and the material of their research. This complication is aggravated when a significant part of this material also includes paintings or drawings; for here, besides psychological features, aesthetic factors also enter into the picture', p. 206.

Rachel Philpott, 'Engineering Opportunities for Originality and Invention: The Importance of Playful Making as Developmental Method in Practice-Led Design Research', *Studies in Material Thinking*, Vol.9, 2013, 16, <<http://www.materialthinking.org>><sup>334</sup>

The challenges to retaining a playful approach within institutional constraints that may prioritise intellectualised, rationalised and well-documented methodologies.

Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality, Vol. 3*, New York: Pantheon, 1986

'One of the basic principles of the practice of the self: be equipped with, have ready to hand, a 'helpful discourse', which one has learned very early, rehearses often, and reflects on regularly', p. 101.

'This pre-occupation with the environment, with places and times, called for a constant attention to oneself, to the state one was in and to the acts that one performed', p. 102.

Gary Peters, *The Philosophy of Improvisation*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009

'the deep-rooted entwinement and entanglement of the old and the new which is often obscured', p.1.

Theodor Reik, *Listening with the Third Ear: The Inner Experience of a Psychoanalyst*, New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1948

'One of the peculiarities of this third ear is that it works in two ways. It can catch what other people do not say, but only feel and think; and it can also be turned inward. It can hear voices from within the self that are otherwise not audible because they are drowned out by the noise of our conscious thought processes. The student of psychoanalysis is advised to listen to those inner voices with more attention than to what "reason" tells about the unconscious'.

Philip M. Bromberg, 'The Third Ear', in *Clinical Perspectives on the Supervision of Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy*, ed. by Leopold Caligor, Philip M. Bromberg and James D. Meltzer, Boston, MA: Springer US, 1984, 29–44

Jeremy D. Safran, 'Theodor Reik's Listening with the Third Ear and the Role of Self-Analysis in Contemporary Psychoanalytic Thinking', *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 98, 2, 2011, 205–216

Clark Moustakas, *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990

Heuristic research begins with a personal question or challenge, but one that has a social or universal significance. It is aimed at discovery through self-inquiry and dialogue. The life experience of the heuristic researcher and the research participants is not a text to be interpreted but a full story that is vividly portrayed and further elucidated through art and personal documentations.

Sustained immersion in the issue being researched and direct, personal encounter.

Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1959

Theatre as a metaphor. If we imagine ourselves as directors observing what goes on in the theatre of everyday life, we are doing what Goffman called dramaturgical analysis, the study of social interaction in terms of theatrical performance.

Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter, Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, Oxon: Routledge Classics, 2011

\_\_\_\_\_, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, London: Verso, 2004

We are all precarious in that we have bodies that are vulnerable.

Vulnerability connected to interdependence – challenges ideology of individuality.

Body as something that is produced...construction of a body.

Henk Borgdorff, 'The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research', in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, ed. by Henrik Karlsson & Michael Biggs, London & New York: Routledge, 2011, 44–63

Artistic practice is not only the result of the research, but also its methodological vehicle, when the research unfolds in and through the acts of creating and performing.

Havi Carel, and Ian James Kidd, 'Epistemic Injustice in Healthcare: A Philosophical Analysis', *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy*, 17, 4, 2014, 529–540

'...the structures of contemporary healthcare encourage epistemic injustice because they privilege certain styles of articulating testimonies, certain forms of evidence, and certain ways of presenting and sharing knowledge'.

Shaun McNiff, *Art-Based Research*, London: Jessica Kingsley, 1998

Psychoanalysis and other psychotherapeutic psychologies distinguished from 'legitimate' scientific methods because they relied on introspective data that could only be observed by the persons experiencing them.

'If I had given the objects more attention during the study, it is possible that they might tell stories about how and why they came into existence', p. 54.

When research process recognises the objects as full participants this can lead away from one-sided autobiography toward an examination of 'interplay'.

Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013

Listening is hard, but it is also a fundamental moral act.

Kieran Cashell, 'Fearless Speech: Tracey Emin's Ethics of the Self', in *Aftershock: The Ethics of Contemporary Transgressive Art*, London: I.B.Tauris, 2009, 123–157

'Ethics originates when we begin to consider ourselves from the perspective of the other and therefore begin to regard ourselves as other - for the other', p. 147.

Joy Schaverien, 'The Retrospective Review of Pictures', in *One River, Many Currents: Handbook of Inquiry in the Arts Therapies*, ed. by Helen Payne, London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley, 1993, 91–103

Pictures can re-evolve the countertransference from a past time and bring it live into the present.

Aline Wiame, 'Reading Deleuze and Guattari through Deligny's Theatres of Subjectivity: Mapping, Thinking, Performing', *Critical Psychology*, 9, 1, 2016, 38–58

Mapping, thinking, performing.

Tracks and traces as evocative acts.

Cartographic paradigm suggested by Deligny as alternative to the Freudian, psychoanalytic one, which is archeological. While the archeological paradigm takes a vertical direction (the clues lead us to what is hidden deep under), the cartographic one is horizontal: we are and we express ourselves through what we do and how we play in space

Michael Taussig, 'What Do Drawings Want?', *Culture, Theory & Critique*, 50, 2-3, 2009, 263–274

A line drawn is important not for what it records so much as what it leads you on to see.

Linda Candy, and Ernest Edmonds, 'Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts: Foundations and Futures from the Front Line', *Leonardo*, 51, 1, 2018, 63–69

Stephanie Springgay, and Sarah E. Truman, 'On the Need for Methods Beyond Proceduralism: Speculative Middles,(in) Tensions, and Response-Ability in Research', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2017, 1–12

Raymond Williams, 'Structures of Feeling', in *Structures of Feeling: Affectivity and the Study of Culture*, ed. by Devika Sharma and Frederik Tygstrup, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015, 20-26

That a particular feeling or pattern of feelings may characterise and age or epoch in society's development – something implicit, embodied and enacted.

Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion', *History and Theory*, 51, 2, 2012, 193–220

Practices not only generate emotions, but that emotions themselves can be viewed as a practical engagement with the world.

Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000, [De l'hospitalité: Anne Dufourmantelle invite Jacques Derrida à répondre, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1997]

To enter into another body - am I feeding off this institution?...feeding off others?

Simon Critchley, *Memory Theatre*, London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2015

'Memory is repetition,. Sure. But it is repetition with a difference. It is not recitation. It is repetition that creates a felt variation in the way things appear. Repetition is what makes possible novelty', p. 74.

Maria Walsh, 'Art: A Suitable Case for Treatment', *Art Monthly*, 415, 2018, 14–17

Pamela Whitaker, 'The Art of Movement : The Deleuze and Guattari Art Therapy Assemblage', Sheffield, University of Sheffield, 2007

The Deleuze and Guattari Art Therapy Assemblage is a practice in which to stimulate improvisational and experimental affects within the making and viewing of artworks. The significance of this practice is its composite of influences.

'...the idea of an assemblage of relationships that do not interpret an image, but suggest instead a landscape of activity, p. 8

John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York, CT: Berkley, 1934

Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, London: Routledge, 2013

'The living work of art, however, is not an object but a thing, and the role of the artist is not to give effect to a preconceived idea but to follow the forces and flows of material that bring the work into being', p. 96

David Kennedy, *The Ekphrastic Encounter in Contemporary British Poetry and Elsewhere*, Oxon: Routledge, 2016

Philomela is unable to speak because she has had her tongue cut out to prevent her telling of her rape, so she weaves her story into a tapestry. Kennedy suggests that Philomela's power to speak is 'woven into and hence bound up with the power of pictures to speak – to break through the silence in which they, like women, are traditionally bound.

Elissa Marder, 'Disarticulated Voices: Feminism and Philomela', *Hypatia*, 7, 2, 1992, 148–166

Articulates the difficulty of speaking the experience of being silenced.

Kim Etherington, *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher-Using Our Selves in Research*, London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2004

So much useful data but how on earth do we make sense of it and represent it!



Katy Macleod, 'Writing/Art', *Studies in material thinking*, 1, 1, 2007,  
<<http://www.materialthinking.org>>

The relationship between 'intellectual work and material practice in art'

Elizabeth Price, 'Sidekick', in *Thinking through Art: Reflections on Art as Research*, ed. by Katy Macleod & Lin Holdridge, Oxon: Routledge, 2006, 122–132

The written text is in the form of a highly reflexive exploration of the personal, socio-political complexities and uncertainties inherent in the work being made 'Boulder'.

\_\_\_\_\_ 'A Demonstration of a Relation between Thinking and Doing: Sidekick; and Other Unfinished Work, Undead' University of Leeds, 1999

The main work consists of text that is repeated with variations a number of times – focussed on the process of making and interacting with the 'thing'

Antonio Damasio, and Hanna Damasio, 'Minding the Body', *Daedalus*, 135, 3, 2006, 15–22

'The body in mind helps us construct ourselves and then allows us to understand others', p.22.

John Rae, 'Exploring Creativity from Within: An Arts-Based Investigation', *Art Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal*, 3, 2, 2018, 216–235

Tim Ingold, *Correspondences: Knowing from the Inside*, Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 2017

John Sheid, and Jesper Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus: Myths of Weaving and Fabric*, trans. Carol Volk, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996

'Writing needs the reading voice in order to realize itself as a "fabric"...', p. 152

Christopher Frayling, *On Craftsmanship: Towards a New Bauhaus*, London: Oberon Books, 2012

'To educationalists [...] the word is associated with learning by doing – experiential learning', p. 12

Courtenay Young, and Michael Heller, 'The Scientific 'What!'Of Psychotherapy: Psychotherapy Is a Craft, Not a Science!', *International Journal of Psychotherapy*, 5, 2, 2000, 113–131

'It is our contention that psychotherapy [...] is not a science: it is a craft, a set of specialized skills.'

Anna Macdonald, 'Touch, Containment and Consolation in 'This Is for You'', *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices*, 9, 2, 2017, 255-268

To contain something, you must both have contact with it and remain separate from it.

Amanda Bingley, 'Touching Space in Hurt and Healing: Exploring Experiences of Illness and Recovery through Tactile Art', in *Touching Space, Placing Touch*, ed. by Mark Paterson and Martin Dodge, London: Routledge, 2016, 71–88

Touch experienced in one moment can connect us to foundational experiences of touch in another.

Hettie Judah, 'Mona Hatoum's Hair: Interweaving Strands, and the Artist's Work', in *Kvadrat Interwoven: Stories and Commentaries from Contemporary Culture*, <<http://kvadratinterwoven.com/mona-hatoums-hair>>: 2016

Hatoum's woven hair grids do not conform to parallel lines, as the peculiarities of the head force their way into the warp and weft, resisting the oppressive, imprisoning qualities of more rigid structures. I feel my emotional skin being pierced although I cannot articulate where it is located and push the feeling and corresponding thoughts away, noting Judah's comment that the fragility of some of Hatoum's hair weavings may also render them vulnerable to being blown away, overlooked, or thrown out.

Kathryn Lloyd, 'Women and Hair: Materialising the Object', in *Entangled: Threads and Making*, ed. by Karen Wright, Margate, Kent: Turner Contemporary, 2017, 128–137

Abject qualities that can render hair disgusting when it is separated from the body and found inside our mouths, on clothing, and in food – a waste product – revolting detritus to be cast aside

Ann Coxon, 'Making Something from Something: Toward a Redefinition of Women's Textile Art', in *Entangled: Threads and Making*, ed. by Karen Wright, Margate, Kent: Turner Contemporary, 2017, 30–43

Marit Paasche, 'Philomela's Tongue', in *Entangled: Threads and Making*, ed. by Karen Wright, Margate, Kent: Turner Contemporary, 2017, 44–59

The Greek word for weaving is 'histos' – web or tissue – which can also mean cloth, material or fabric, the etymological root of the word 'history'

Weaving as 'to move from one place to another'(c. 1200) and later – move to and fro – side to side

G. S. Viereck, 'An Interview with Freud', *Psychoanalysis and the Future: A Centenary Commemoration of the Birth of Sigmund Freud. New York: National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis*, 1957, 1–11

'psychoanalysis supplies the thread that leads the man out of the labyrinth of his own unconscious', p. 5.

Cecilia Vicuña, *Word and Thread*, trans. Rosa Alcalá, Edinburgh: Morning Star Publications, 1996

Performance and connection through thread.

Victoria Mitchell, 'Textiles, Text and Techne', in *Obscure Objects of Desire: Reviewing the Crafts in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Tanya Harrod, London: Crafts Council, 1997, 324–332

The textility of making suggests a practice which informs thought.

Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Micheal Naas, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999

'The word "hospitality" here translates, brings to the fore, re-produces, the two words preceding it, "attention" and "welcome" [...] hospitality, the face, welcome: tending toward the other, attentive intention, intentional attention, yes to the other', p. 21.

Homay King, 'Matter, Time, and the Digital: Varda's *The Gleaners and I*', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 24, 5, 2007, 421–429

Like the filmmaker's look, the analyst's listening is a kind of gleaning, an attunement to the under-remarked and to what at first glance seems insignificant or without value.

Tania Splawa-Neyman, 'The Gleaning Guide: Venturing in Redirective Fashion', *The Design Journal*, 17, 3, 2014, 347–360

Metaphorical gleaning is the taking and reusing of "bits" for purposes for which they may not have been intended.

House, Jonathan, and Julie Slotnick, 'Après-Coup in French Psychoanalysis: The Long Afterlife of Nachträglichkeit: The First Hundred Years, 1893 to 1993', *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 102, 5, 2015, 683–708

Untranslated residues.

Reading and re-reading

Deborah L. Browning, 'Laplanche on Après-Coup: Translation, Time, and Trauma', *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 66, 4, 2018, 779–794  
Rachel Holmes, 'Fresh Kills: The Spectacle of (De) Composing Data', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20, 6, 2014, 781–789

A complex mode of ongoing analysis that works at conjuring a multiplicity of versions, layers, framing devices, conflicts and affects.

Retains an openness to reinvention.

\_\_\_\_\_, 'Theatre of the Self: Autobiography as Performance', *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 22, 4, 2009, 399–416

Dan Zahavi, 'Empathy and Mirroring: Husserl and Gallese', in *Life, Subjectivity & Art*, Springer, 2012, 217–254

Empathy as involving a form of simulation that allows for a direct experiential understanding of others, one that doesn't rely on cognitive operations or conceptual reasoning.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Duke University Press, 2003

Paranoid and reparative reading – draws on psychoanalyst Melanie Klein's ideas of flexible oscillating to-and-fro movements and changing relational stances, rather than stable structures or normatively ordered stages. In order to maintain a balance you have to move.

Beside – at the side of, next to, alongside.

Siri Hustvedt, *The Shaking Woman or a History of My Nerves*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2010 <sup>212</sup>

The writer's deficits and defects may be as important as her more obvious strengths.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, London: Routledge, 2005, [Phénoménologie de la Perception, Editions Gallimard, 1945]

Embodied knowledge – known by and through the body when it is practiced.

Shogo Tanaka, 'The Notion of Embodied Knowledge', in *Theoretical Psychology: Global Transformations and Challenges*, ed. by Paul Stenner, John Cromby, Johanna Motzkau, Jeffrey Yen, Ye Haosheng, Concord, ON: Captus Press, 2011, 149–157

'The body is always embedded in some particular situation, and the surrounding objects induce the body to move appropriately', p. 152.

Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, London: Routledge, 2011

It is precisely because no work is ever truly 'finished' that it remains alive.

Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, 'Hannah Arendt's Storytelling', *Social Research*, 1977, 183–190

Arendt uses the image of Penelope's weaving to describe thinking; what is thought is rethought, ceaselessly, spurred by internal and external dialogue.

Carolyn Walker Bynum, 'Wonder', *The American Historical Review*, 102, 1, 1997, 1–26

'Our research is better when we move only cautiously to understanding, when fear that we may appropriate the "other" leads us not so much to writing about ourselves and our fears as to crafting our stories with attentive, wondering care. At our best, it is the "strange view of things"', p. 25.

Kathrin Thiele, 'Ethos of Diffraction: New Paradigms for a (Post) Humanist Ethics', *Parallax*, 20, 3, 2014, 202–216

Rick Dolphijn, and Iris Van Der Tuin, 'Matter Feels, Converses, Suffers, Desires, Yearns and Remembers: Interview with Karen Barad', in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, ed. by Graham Harman and Bruno Latour, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012, 48–70

'Ethics is therefore not about right responses to a radically exteriorized other, but about responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming, of which we are a part', p. 69.

Adam Kleinman, 'Intra-Actions: Interview with Karen Barad', *Mousse*, 34, 2012, 76–81

'How would we feel if it is by way of the inhuman that we come to feel, to care, to respond?', p. 81.

Evelien Geerts, 'Ethico-onto-Epistem-Ology', in *New Materialism: How Matter comes to Matter*, 2016

Ethical accountability and care that arises when perceiving the face of the Other.

Claire Colebrook, 'Materiality: Sex, Gender, and What Lies Beneath', in *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, ed. by Ann Garry, Serene Khader, J. and Alison Stone, London: Routledge, 2017, 194–206

Materialism adds a dimension that would complicate matters, or remove the apparent simplicity of the stability of things.

Vanessa Bartlett, 'Psychosocial Curating: A Theory and Practice of Exhibition-Making at the Intersection between Health and Aesthetics', *Medical humanities*, 2019, 1–13

More in-depth analysis of the contribution of visual art to medical humanities is urgently required.

Anna Hickey-Moody, and Tara Page, *Arts, Pedagogy and Cultural Resistance: New Materialisms*, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015

Thinking through events as the way that matter comes to matter, or matter impacts on bodies and futures.

We are entangled, co-implicated in the generation and formation of knowing and being.

Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of Unthought Known*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2018, [Columbia University Press, 1987]

'More often than not we are made use of through our affects, through the patient generating the required feeling within us', p. 136.

Thomas H. Ogden, 'Destruction Reconciled: On Winnicott's 'the Use of an Object and Relating through Identifications'', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 97, 5, 2016, 1243–1262

I imagined this would come at the end of my project, only to find it at the beginning because it involves a destruction of the object and a change in relating to it.

Emily Clair Danvers, 'Criticality's Affective Entanglements: Rethinking Emotion and Critical Thinking in Higher Education', *Gender and Education*, 28, 2, 2016, 282–297

Bodies reconceptualised not as independent free agents but as emerging through the entanglement of social, discursive and material practices.

Tony Ghaye, 'Into the Reflective Mode: Bridging the Stagnant Moat', *Reflective Practice*, 1, 1, 2000, 5–9 Alan Bleakley, 'From Reflective Practice to Holistic Reflexivity', *Studies in higher education*, 24, 3, 1999, 315–330

Malou Juelskjær, and Monika Rogowska-Stangret, 'A Pace of Our Own? Becoming through Speeds and Slows–', *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics*, 1(1), 06, 2017, 2542–4920

'We want to direct our attention to 'staying with the trouble' rather than finding a quick and easy solution, because any apparent solution, however caring and attentive its intentions, may be all too easily consumed by fast approach', p. 4.

José Esteban Muñoz, 'From Surface to Depth, between Psychoanalysis and Affect', *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory*, 19, 2, 2009, 123–129

The fold permits one to see the inside as merely the other side of the outside or surface.

Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*, London: Constable, 1961

'Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience [...] It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me [...] My experience is not authoritative because it is infallible. It is the basis of authority because it can always be checked in new primary ways. In this way its frequent error or fallibility is always open to correction', pp. 23–24

Noreen Giffney,, *The Culture-Breast: Cultural Experiences and the Psychoanalytic Clinic*, London: Routledge, 2021

Encounters evoke experiences and experiences evoke reactions, which in turn offer a space for reflection, if they can be tolerated long enough to be held in mind.

Judith Butler, 'Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance', in *Vulnerability in Resistance*, ed. by Zeynep Gambetti Judith Butler, Leticia Sabsay, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016, 12–27



Rachel Holmes, 'Paroxysm: The Problem of the Fist', *Cultural Studies↔Critical Methodologies*, 20, 5, 2020, 496–509

'Undertaking a long and slow analysis forces a radical reconsideration of established educational and methodological habits'.

Using bits and pieces of theory to listen.

Joseph D. Sweet, Emppu Nurminen, and Mirka Koro-Ljungberg, 'Becoming Research with Shadow Work: Combining Artful Inquiry with Research-Creation', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26, 3-4, 2020, 388–399

'Researchers who use art to engage with inquiry often seek inclusive relationships with their audience to generate affective responses founded in resonance and growing possibilities', p. 390.

# Appendix 2

## Participant-observation – Patient Information Leaflet

This leaflet was distributed in the Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre to inform patients and relatives about my project.

Debbie is currently undertaking a part-time PhD at Sheffield Hallam University, based in the Fine Arts

The title of her project is:  
**Visualising Unspoken Narratives:  
Interrogating Culture through Reflexive Art Practice**

Her enquiry is concerned with whether reflexive art-making processes can be used as a means of investigating and illuminating aspects of organisational culture in health and social care where words fail to give form and meaning to experience.

If you would like to find out more about the project you can contact her at:  
[e: deborah.a.michaels@student.shu.ac.uk](mailto:deborah.a.michaels@student.shu.ac.uk)

In a professional capacity Debbie works as an art psychotherapy practitioner and clinical supervisor.

Registered Art Psychotherapist  
Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

Registered and Accredited Counsellor & Psychotherapist  
British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)


Member of the British Association of Art Therapy (BAAT)

BAAT Registered and Approved Private Practitioner and Clinical Supervisor

Associate Lecturer, Art Therapy Northern Programme

### Observational Study

24<sup>th</sup> January – April 11<sup>th</sup>  
Tuesdays 9.30 - 10.30 am



Debbie Michaels

PhD student, Sheffield Hallam University  
*In collaboration with the*  
Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre  
Nether Edge, Sheffield.

### Sitting with Feelings

As part of my PhD study I am undertaking a Case Study at ARC in which I am using artistic strategies to explore the relationship between myself and the organisation.

During Stage One of the project I will be sitting in the communal area at ARC for one hour each Tuesday morning observing the physical and emotional responses that are evoked in me through being in the environment.



As I need to immerse myself in the emotional atmosphere I will not be engaging in conversation during the time I am there. However, I recognise that my presence may raise curiosity and will endeavour to respond sensitively, respectfully and appropriately to any approaches. If you feel uncomfortable with my being there do let a member of the staff team know.

### Art-Making as a Means of Discovery

After each sitting I will go to my art studio to reflect on and record my observations and my experience of ARC through a range of artistic approaches. Artworks may include drawings, three-dimensional objects and structures, collages, writings, video and sound recordings.



The aim is to see if art-making can offer me a reflective space for looking at aspects of organisational culture that may be difficult to express in words.

Future stages of the project will offer opportunities for the staff at ARC and others who use the service to contribute and respond to the artworks produced.

### Ethics Approvals

I have the necessary approvals and an Honorary Contract from Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. I will **not** be interviewing staff or patients, collecting any personal information, observing any personal care or treatments processes, taking photographs or making recordings. Instead, I will be collecting my own emotional and sensory impressions which I will then reflect on through art-making processes, writings and journals.



### Confidentiality

Any identifiable features will be anonymised for the purposes of publication, presentation, exhibition or thesis unless informed written consent has been obtained. If you have any questions or concerns about this aspect of the project, please get in touch with me via the details on the back of this leaflet.

## Appendix 3

Transcript extract – supervision meeting with Sharon Kivland (SK), 8 February 2017.

(My voice is differentiated in grey for ease of identification).

DM I've started observation 3 weeks ago.

SK OK describe each to me. Is your blog published...you haven't started it yet, but you are going to?

DM Am I?

SK Having an online blog is quite useful...can choose whether to make it public or not. It might not be for now.

DM Might be for later. At the moment I am keeping a journal...I'll tell you what I'm doing. Observation every Tuesday morning between 9.30 and 10.30. I go and sit in the same place each week in the communal area of the rehabilitation centre. And during the course of the hour...not engaging with anyone...sitting and my focus is on trying to tune into...

SK Describe how you sit.

DM I guess it is a similar attitude that I adopt when I'm seeing a client...so I take some time in the mornings before I go, so not rushing, I arrive often early...sitting in the car tape recording my thoughts and before I leave home, preparing...taking time to get myself into a particular frame of mind...before I see a client...try, not to withdraw from outside world, but to get myself into a frame of mind where I'm open to what's happening, not on a 'I've seen' this that or the other although it might include that, but trying to be more aware of what I'm feeling, if I'm feeling anxiety or nervousness, my general frame at that time, and then I sit in the chair.

SK What does the space look like?

*(I show plan)*

SK So there are clusters of tables and chairs.

*(I describe layout)*

SK So it's a waiting area?

DM Yes, and waiting area and a social area...the patients come in...often there all day, a number of treatments etc. (I describe) served tea etc.

SK So it would be a different group every Tuesday?

DM No, people will come for a certain period of time...so I've seen several people who have been there...

SK So they'll go for a number of weeks...or months?

DM Weeks. I've made a decision not to find out exactly, too much detail about the organisation...originally I had a timetable with what was happening on each day, so that I could look at when I could go in, but at the moment I am observing what is happening there and my response to being there...what I see...so a lot of the patients have been there each week and they tend to sit in the same position. And I'm sitting in the same position

SK ...and you've just got a chair, no table?

DM No...and I'm in between these parallel bars etc...TV over here. Staff are over here and come out etc.

SK ...and all the staff know who you are?

DM Yes and I did some information for them for their noticeboard and leaflets for patients

SK Should anyone ask?...

DM Yes...and I wear my university badge.

SK But it's not offered as directly to people, only in terms of a response if anyone asks...so it's protective rather than informational and proactive?

DM It's proactive in terms of the information that I've given to the staff team, but not to patients. I'm not interviewing or talking with patients or collecting data from them at this time...I have all the approvals to be there and I'm wearing a badge that identifies me as a student, and if somebody asks me, as they did this week, the I would respond to this and the staff know.

SK Do you have different levels of response prepared or are you ...what happened when you were asked this week?

DM Well at the end...it was when I was leaving, one of the ladies, patients...

SK Who recognised you from ?

DM The previous week...and had been waiting for a long time for something to happen...as I was leaving she said, 'Oh I've noticed you sitting there for a while, what are you doing?.'

SK In a pleasant way...curious?

DM Yes, curious...so I said I'm coming in for an hour a week on a Tuesday morning at this time...and she said, 'to get the feel of the place'...

SK Actually that's very nice.

DM I thought that's 'spot on?.'

SK That's really...

DM You've got it.

- SK So this is very useful...so if it comes up in terms of the ethics, this is it, that someone has understood exactly what you are doing...that it's not arcane or bleak, but it's getting the 'feel' and that's about sensing and reacting...that's really lovely.
- DM I thought it was brilliant. Earlier on in the observation I heard a snippet of conversation...I think he was wondering who I was and one of the staff was saying 'she's a student...art therapist..research...bits as they disappeared into the room...so I've heard snippets.
- SK It's a small enough space with few enough people for you to be very obvious.
- DM Yes...and I feel obvious...I'm not sitting with staff or patients, I'm sitting to one side although I sit in the same chair as a patient might sit in, I did yesterday, took a different chair...so I am there for the hour...observing my feelings which has been quite interesting.
- SK Can I just ask...the hour...what would happen if you spent the day?
- DM It would be too much...I couldn't.
- SK Because?
- DM It would be too much to focus on...it's a bit like trying to do more than an hour of therapy... sometimes people ask for a two-hour session and I say no....
- SK It feels that intense.
- DM Its very intense.
- SK OK that's what I wanted to find out.
- DM And I hadn't quite realised how intense it would feel until I did the first one, and then I go at 10.30 ...I don't actually say hello to anyone when I come in or goodbye...I sign in and smile if I meet someone's gaze. I leave at 10.30 and go to the studio, the space that I've created to make in, and then I usually start...I get there have a coffee, set the equipment up...the session time for the making is 11.15-12.15.
- SK So repeating the hour...you have an hour plus an hour. Is there...before you go into the centre, you are taping yourself in the car. Is there an equivalent of that which follows the hour?
- DM No...partly because...
- SK So it segues almost immediately into the studio...into the making.
- DM Yes...I go straight there...I don't have any communication with anyone in between,
- SK So nothing of that intensity is broken? It's carried from one place to another...an immediate transfer of one experience to another without any break or mediation, except coffee...
- DM ...and setting up the cameras.
- SK Like the speaking in the car, but the preparation that takes a different form...In the community room it's just you? Or do you have a note-book?...just you?
- DM Just me.

- SK So you are this? it's you, just you, your attention...being present...and hence it being exhausting... because you are having to be completely present...there is nothing ...usually in a space where we are trying to pass un-noticed we have a book or something, but you are there...attuned...to listen...to get the 'feel'....Do you feel very self-conscious? Or is that becoming...
- DM I do...but it feels OK...people know I'm there, still some curiosity, but there is a lady who has been there for 3 weeks who sits very close to me, directly in front, but always positioned with her back to me, so I feel as if I have been developing a relationship with her...but I do feel self-conscious, yes
- SK Do you feel like a human being or like a thing?
- DM I don't think I feel like a thing...I know I feel a bit in-between...I'm aware I'm not a member of staff, not a patient, and sometimes I can feel myself being pulled to want to be one or the other.
- SK Which you are resisting
- DM Yes...part of what I'm interested in is the points of resistance...boundary roles...so I have felt at times, oh it would be nice to be looked after, be a patient...something quite nice about just sitting and not having to do...but of course I am doing...
- SK You are on duty...makes one conscious of how seldom are the times when one isn't on duty.
- DM Yes
- SK But if you were not on duty would you be less or more self-conscious of yourself.
- DM I don't know.
- SK Something being called into question... is the consciousness of who you are...what you are...the ontological.
- DM Sometimes I have felt a pull to just go and talk to the patients, to be a volunteer, other times to be back in my role as art therapist.
- SK Where you feel comfortable
- DM Yes...last week, second observation, there was a particular point when it went very quiet...almost as if people could be asleep and I could feel myself almost wanting to go to sleep and then...I picked it up...and wondering am I just wanting to switch off, and then literally within a minute, one of the nurses who is very empathic...shed wandered round and was talking to one of the other patients and had started talking to him and said...you look really tired...'yes'...the bits sometimes that happen.
- SK Did you feel that you were receiving the tiredness in the room or do you think you were producing it.
- DM No, I think I was receiving it...I think so...its always hard to know but it felt as if I was picking something up. There have been some very powerful moments. The 1<sup>st</sup> observation...they have a TV there which wasn't there when I worked there as an art therapist...and there was a particular point fairly late on where the noise, and it wasn't

noisy, but the noise from the TV ...the chatter, the noise, chatter from the nurses station and somewhere else all kind of merged together and became overwhelming and made me feel quite sick...and that really took me by surprise. Just interesting connections that don't always come at the time, but through the making...the time-lapse. The connection on the TV...Homes under the hammer, and I use a hammer in my art-making...not consciously at the time, but only days later that I made an association with it...various kinds of connections ...at the moment I am noting them, questions...trying to let it emerge, to not put too much meaning on it at the moment.

SK To avoid interpretation...to listen.

DM Yes...if I have an association, noting it down afterwards, but not...

[...]

## Appendix 4

Transcript extract – supervision meeting with Sharon Kivland (SK) and Yuen Fong Ling (YFL), 17 May 2017.

(My voice is differentiated in grey for ease of identification. I write into the conversation sometime after the meeting in blue highlighting particularly significant thoughts in yellow)

SK Interesting to me when it doesn't look like it's a sculpture...where it's coming apart...where it's not holding its form, although...you don't know if this is before or after...

YFL ...and I guess, as well, it's about context...the process of you handling the material that seems to capture some information...you are reviewing...part of your analysis.

DM It does feel like residue or the results of my processing of something.

SK So the question is, does the residue still warrant capture or examination, or is it to be discarded now or taken apart again?

DM In order to move it, it will need to be taken apart.

SK Because the danger – the risk – is that it's seen as a work of art made in response to a series of events; that it's given a status or importance that, actually, it doesn't have for you; that it gets confused for being something.

DM I'm not quite sure at the moment...whether it is 'something' or not, what its status is although it feels, at the moment, as if the main part of the work is elsewhere...captured in the video's and recordings...all the stuff that isn't here, isn't visible here. But yes...in some form or other it will get dismantled and moved out of this space. Perhaps there will be another unravelling or unwrapping or it may be that attempting to move it, transport it in its current form, will reveal something. But not discarded yet, physically, or mentally, as it does feel intimately connected to my process. It holds something, even if I'm not sure quite what this is. Perhaps I need to review, to process the other material I have gathered (video & audio recordings, timelapse, journal notes, recorded notes, tracking data) before I can get a clearer picture of where this material sits.

SK It could be taken, more or less into a gallery and be read in terms of the body – an object. It's the size of a body – has the parts of a body.

DM It does have resonances for me as a body, ideas about 'care of the body', care of the self/other. This feels relevant to the context. It also exists in relation to me and my interactions with it, has been constructed by me, and I'm aware that I have an attachment to it as a body of some sort – something that I have created. So there also might be something useful here to investigate – my attachment, my investment in it, in this object that I have constructed in a particular space and time. I am reminded



of the work of Joy Schaverien, Jungian analyst, art psychotherapist and author, who writes about the life *in* and *of* the picture and also about disposal. 'For the disposal of the picture [object] to effect a resolution, the way in which the picture is invested will need to be understood.'<sup>693</sup>

...but that's only a small part of it...

SK So it's how you work with it or around it

DM Yes, I'm not clear of its significance yet, so it is something about how I work with it, how I use the material – what it speaks about. I don't think I'm finished with it yet.

YFL Sharon made a really interesting point about how it relates to the materials that are here...



...they have this potential for being used and manipulated and yet they still feel connected to it...

DM I can't remember if that (putting the string there) was deliberate, but yes, definitely connected – the remains, remnants – what appears to be left over. And yet the white cotton sheet and the plastic sheeting played a particularly important role in my interactions – covering, obscuring, hiding, concealing and then revealing again. The scrim had been wrapped around the base of the structure, but when I look at the photograph the white sheet reminds me of a shroud, as if it might be covering/wrapping a small body and similarly the scrim.

The white polystyrene pieces and the dense lilac-coloured material were packing materials around an artwork (not mine) that was made and transported from one country to another, the artwork made out of materials (stone and antler) which was then transformed into something else (sculpture). They caught my attention one week when I was sorting the recycling and I noted down my thoughts about the incidental stuff that we might often throw away, and the idea of how the way something is packaged carries or is charged with potential meaning. Again when I am looking at the photograph as I write, the white polystyrene reminds me of grubs, and I

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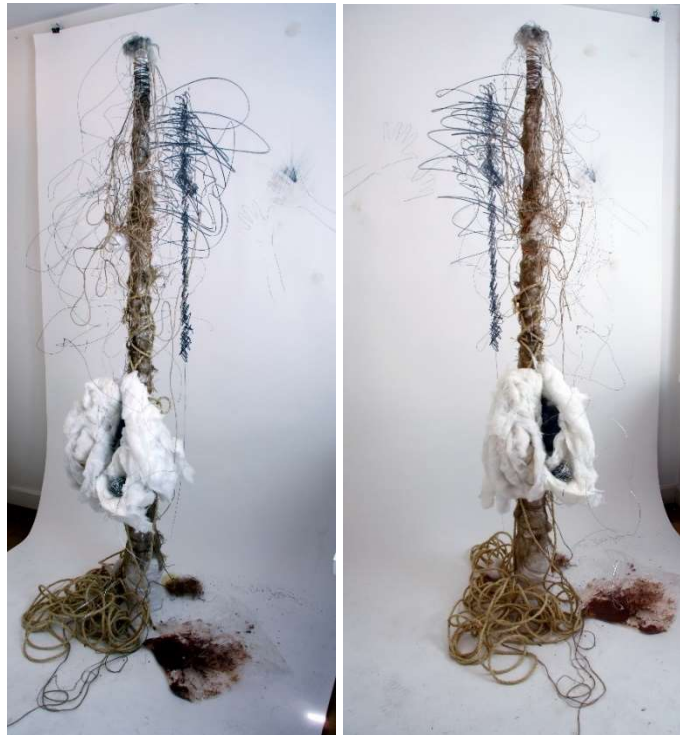
<sup>693</sup> Schaverien, 'The Revealing Image', p. 137.

remember how I have noted to myself before the question of whether this work is dead or alive.

YFL It's a nice touch because who says this is not for analysis – who says this is more important than that.

SK This is as much as that. There isn't a distinction except that this is more worked

YFL The drawing also. What's your feeling about the drawing and its relation to the object or is it an integral part of it?



DM It's almost like a shadow – as if I drew it before the object. Again, I'm imagining things being re-presented in different ways, but this (the part of the paper on the floor) has got all the marks – my footprints – from me walking all over it, and these (the graphite scribbles) were the first marks I made.

SK But those are self-conscious marks and these (footprints etc) are what happened as a token.

DM That was the starting point – the vertical line.

YFL Because there's an echo of the shape. Makes me think of the drawing as a kind of rehearsal...a way of thinking through

DM It is often how I start with something.

YFL I like the way the hands are placed around – like a call to action, as if you are being called to 'do' something – like you are saying to yourself, 'do' something – 'make' something.

DM The hands came late on (after obs 11), whereas the vertical scribble came at the beginning. When I drew the hands, and the use of my hands seemed particularly significant in that session, I had associations to asking for something – a reaching out.



SK It is almost as if worshipping some kind of god-like figure – the totem of the primitive tribe

YFL Yes, exactly.

SK There are also associations with prohibition, Freud's 'Totem and Taboo'<sup>694</sup>, figures representing the gods or death, and they are associated with a number of rituals around how to contain or constrain or proscribe behaviours.<sup>695</sup>

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<sup>694</sup> Sigmund Freud, 'Totem and Taboo (1913)', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis and Other Works, Volume XIII (1913-14)*, ed. by James Strachey, London: Vintage, 2001, pp. 1-162

<sup>695</sup> 'A totem is a symbolic emblem of a particular social group within a tribe. It may be an animal or, less commonly, a plant or natural phenomenon like rain. A totem is an object of reverence and worship, and is protected by taboos which generally forbid killing it, eating it, or even touching it. On special occasions, however there may be a ritualised killing and sacramental eating of the totem animal. Allegiance to a particular totem defines social relationships in as much as sexual relations between members of the same totem are usually forbidden.' A. Storr, *Freud*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 85.

DM I need to give this more thought, and what it may mean in the context of my enquiry. However, it makes me think about the institution, powerful bodies that hold authority or are given authority to determine and regulate what is allowed or forbidden. Also the ritualistic aspects of this process and whether this is a kind of totem or talisman for me? I am reminded again of Joy Schaverien and her writing about the ‘talisman’ and the ways in which the picture as an object, comes to be *valued*, the talisman being the result of a relationship to an object which magically empowers it.<sup>696</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> Schaverien, ‘*The Revealing Image*’

## Appendix 5

### 'Nothing Much Going On' – Transcript

This piece of writing – prose – was read for staff at the Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre during Focus Group I. It is based on a transcript of the audio recording from Studio Session I where, for the first fifteen minutes, I spoke out loud to the cameras, recalling my experience of the first observation in the organisation. An audio extract from this reading is available on the website at <<https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/nothing-much.php>>.

This feels  
strange

*I didn't know I was going to do this*

need to sit  
like a first therapy session  
except no therapist  
only cameras  
recording me  
looking  
being looked at

*it feels peculiar*

should I have said that  
confidentiality  
anonymity  
I might erase

first session  
sat for an hour  
in a chair  
in the same place  
focusing on what  
what I was feeling  
physically  
emotionally

*surprised me*

sitting with my feelings  
got there early  
enough time  
leaflets  
eight  
one on each table  
patients

people  
what I am doing  
feels important

*the surprise was*

pockets of noise  
not quite opposite  
in front of me  
from two sides  
nausea  
I don't understand  
the sounds merge  
I can't hear  
noise  
overwhelming  
senseless

*took me by surprise*

strength of feeling  
disorientation  
meaningless  
noise  
five minutes  
passed  
out of something  
unexpected

*I wasn't expecting it*

sadness  
welling up  
isolation  
aloneness  
moving in and out  
to sit  
to not have to do  
immerse myself  
somebody talk to me  
no don't  
no conversation  
a different frame  
looking in  
not hearing  
just taking in  
sensing  
isolated  
outside  
I am outside  
coming in  
from outside  
no identity  
no role  
where am I  
isolation

sadness  
in front of me  
back was to me  
clock behind me  
my watch  
I need a clock  
in front of me

*I wasn't expecting to be looking in this direction*

*I was expecting to be facing the other way*

why so emotional  
a head above  
a square frame  
back of a chair  
hanging  
fleece  
hair white  
shoulders hidden  
armchair  
fleece hanging  
square frame  
a head  
underneath  
one leg  
a foot  
just an ankle  
and foot  
legs of a chair  
arms  
disconnected  
strange

weird  
abstract  
one leg  
one foot  
an ankle I can't see  
I know it's there  
of course  
a head  
square frame  
foot  
knitting  
a strand  
below  
the floor  
knitted  
and then  
the gym  
I laugh  
a gym  
can only walk with a frame

I know

of course  
exercise

empty chair  
square frame  
cardigan

and I'm thinking  
I hope I've set it up right  
I hope it's capturing this  
because  
I can't repeat it

*and I'm struck by the difference*

in recounting it  
it was as if  
nothing much was going on  
my back hurts  
I hurt

I've got my badge



## Appendix 6

### 'Interrupting the Flow' – Art Installation

The aim of bringing the artwork into the rehabilitation centre was to stimulate the imagination, curiosity, and discussion through the process of installing it, documenting it in situ and dismantling it. With agreement from the staff team, ethics approval was sought from the University.

During the week prior to the installation, posters were pinned on the notice board in the Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre to inform staff, patients, and relatives about my project. Leaflets were distributed on the day with feedback cards and boxes for people to respond anonymously should they wish. Details of these are on the following pages.

# 'Interrupting the Flow'

An Art Installation

*by*

**Debbie Michaels**

PhD Researcher, Sheffield Hallam University

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2018



*in collaboration with, and exhibiting at*

[deborah.a.michaels@student.shu.ac.uk](mailto:deborah.a.michaels@student.shu.ac.uk)

# 'Interrupting the Flow'

## An Art Installation

by

**Debbie Michaels**

PhD Researcher, Sheffield Hallam University

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2018

### What my research is about

I am interested in using art-making processes to explore aspects of organisational culture that may be hidden from view or difficult to put into words.

### What the artwork is about

The artwork is a response to my experience of sitting in the communal area at ARC for one hour at a regular day and time each week over a period of twelve weeks. During each hour I observed the interactions that took place, and the physical and emotional responses evoked in me through being in the environment. After each observation I went to my art studio and recorded myself interacting with the various materials and 'things' that I had taken into the space. The work you see here has undergone many stages of development and transformation. It is not a finished artwork but remains in a state of transition – between one place and another.

### Why I am installing it in ARC

As the artwork is a response to my experience *in* and *of* ARC, it felt appropriate to bring it back into the organisation. The work may be experienced and understood in many different ways, and any potential meanings are open to speculation. I am particularly interested in how it is received in the space and what thoughts and feelings are evoked by the artwork and its presence here.



### How you can contribute

I will be here with the artwork during the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> August, and you are welcome to have a closer look and to engage with it in whatever way feels comfortable. I will not approach you directly for a response. However I am interested to hear any thoughts and answer any questions you have – as a patient, relative, or member of staff.

You can feed back in the following ways:

- Write something, or make a mark or drawing on one of the cards provided and put it in the box on the table. You do not need to put your name on it.
- If you would like to speak with me about the artwork I may ask for your consent to audio-record our conversation. This is entirely voluntary and I will be happy to speak with you without recording if you would prefer.


### Confidentiality and Anonymity

I will not be collecting any personal information. I will be photographing the artwork in situ, however I will not be photographing staff, patients or relatives.

All identifying features will be anonymised for the purposes of research, including publication, presentation, exhibition and/or thesis.

deborah.a.michaels@student.shu.ac.uk

## 6.2 Patient Information Leaflet



Debbie is currently undertaking a PhD at Sheffield Hallam University based in the Fine Arts. Her enquiry concerns the use of her own artistic practice as a means of exploring organisational culture.

She is also a registered art psychotherapist and associate lecturer on the Art Therapy Northern Programme.

If you would like to find out more about the project you can contact her at:


**e: [deborah.a.michaels@student.shu.ac.uk](mailto:deborah.a.michaels@student.shu.ac.uk)**

**t: 07957 789961**

© Debbie Michaels 2018

### 'Interrupting the Flow'

Monday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2018



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by  
**Debbie Michaels**  
PhD Researcher, Sheffield Hallam University  
*in collaboration with the*

#### What my research is about


I am interested in using art-making processes to explore aspects of organisational culture that may be hidden or difficult to put into words.

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#### How you can feed back your responses

I will be here with the artwork during the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> August, and you are welcome to have a closer look and to engage with it in whatever way feels comfortable. I will not approach you directly for a response. However I am happy to answer any questions you have.

You can feed back in the following ways:

- Write something, or make a mark or drawing on one of the cards provided and put it in the box on the table. You do not need to put your name on it.
- If you would like to speak with me about the artwork I may ask for your consent to audio-record our conversation. This is entirely voluntary and I will be happy to speak with you without recording if you would prefer.

#### Confidentiality and Anonymity

I will **not** be collecting any personal information. I will be photographing the artwork in situ, however I will **not** be photographing staff, patients or relatives. All identifying features will be anonymised for the purposes of research, including publication, presentation, exhibition and/or thesis.

## 6.3 Feedback Cards



### 'Interrupting the Flow'

An Art Installation by Debbie Michaels

*PbD Researcher, Sheffield Hallam University*

**Monday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

The artwork installed here today is part of a research project. You are welcome to take a closer look and to touch the work. I am interested in what feelings, thoughts or imaginings the artwork evokes for you – as a patient, relative or member of staff.

You can feed back by:

- Writing, making a mark or drawing on the back of this card and putting it in the box on the table. (You do not need to put your name on it.)
- Speaking with me about the artwork. (I may ask for your consent to audio-record our conversation. This is entirely voluntary and I will be happy to speak with you without recording if you would prefer. All identifying features will be anonymised for the purposes of the research.)

Please tick ✓:

patient

relative

staff

other

## Appendix 7

### 'Entanglements: Exploring the Use of Self as a Research Tool' - Presentation Transcript

#### **METHOD Conference**

*Doctoral School, Sheffield Hallam University, 3 May 2017*

The presentation takes the form of a performance of an edited transcript of conversations between myself (D) and Jonathan Michaels (J) in which we discuss my practice-based Ph.D. This is the original transcript in the format of the script presented on the day. The conference abstract is available via the website and a recording of the presentation is available at < <https://www.debbiemichaels.co.uk/method17.php>>

#### **[DEBBIE TITLE slide]**

- D Hello,  
The following two presentations take the form of conversations between myself and Jon...we are both PhD researchers based in the Fine Arts here at Hallam, but with backgrounds in other disciplines. We also live together and, as you can imagine, this means that there is a lot of discussion around our respective projects. What we present here are edited extracts of on-going and constantly evolving conversations, each focussed on particular aspects of our methodologies. The conversations follow on from each other and in the first, which concerns my work, glimpses of related dialogues run in parallel.
- J So, you've just finished a 12-week period of intense research where you've been observing yourself in a healthcare organisation for an hour a week... and it's generated a huge amount of material
- D Yes... I still feel quite tangled up with it...it's involved me in immersing myself in the organisation...opening myself up to experiencing the emotional atmosphere and then making art in response to that...
- J I know you've talked before about trying to listen or tune into emotional tensions that may lie beneath the surface...not immediately evident...

- D Yes...what I'm interested in is whether I can tune into what may be unspoken or unheard ...and seeing if what comes out...what emerges...through my reflexive art-making in response to this can offer any insights...whether it can open up a space for reflecting on this... a space for dialogue... between me and the organisation...
- J So if I'm understanding this...you're using yourself and your art-making to investigate the organisation...
- D yes... I'm using myself and my art-making process reflexively as a kind of investigative tool ...if that makes sense... *...a bit like a case study where my relationship with the organisation is the case being studied...*by me
- J So it's an investigation both *by* you and *of* you...
- D Yes...and I'm using art-making process is the main method of investigation and discovery.
- J I know you've had an interest in organisational dynamics for a long time, since you did your MA in the psychoanalysis of groups and organisations
- D Yes...in the late 90's... as part of that I did an organisational observation which I suppose was the first time I used myself as a tool or medium through which to tune into the emotional atmosphere of an institutional setting...
- J That wasn't research though?
- D No...not as such...it had actually been designed as a psychoanalytic training method for thinking about organisational dynamics ...specifically emotional conflicts that may be stirred up by the nature of the work...
- J Didn't you get that published as part of a collection of case studies...
- D Yes...so in that respect it has contributed to a body of knowledge...
- J And the chap who designed this method is one of your advisors?
- D Yes, that's right Bob Hinshelwood...  
in fact I'm reminded about his response to my RF1 proposal when he pointed out that my enquiry is about a method... it is not about the particular organisation, and I need to be open to the possibility that the method might fail...and of course I don't know yet what will come out of this...
- J But presumably you have an underlying feeling that something useful might, because of your experience of using reflexive art-making in your art psychotherapy practice...

- D Well yes... my thinking...my life... has been very influenced by psychoanalytic ideas over the past 30 years, and using my own subjective emotional responses, or my countertransference, is fundamental to informing my work as an art psychotherapist...
- J But I remember when you trained as an art therapist the art-making seemed to open up something else...
- D Yes...when I was training I found that... for me at any rate, that the more experimental approach to art-making opened up a completely different way of working for me...a much more playful space...a space for the imagination..., but also a mediating space...for reflecting on experiences, thoughts or feelings that might be difficult to articulate in words, for whatever reason... so it became a kind of thinking through doing or making...
- J So you became interested in how making art might promote you to think about things differently...
- D Yes, I became interested in how art-making could be used as a way of reflecting on the clinical work but also for reflecting on my position in relation to the work ...to the person or the situation...how my process and what it might activate or stir up in me as material for reflection...might inform and feed back into my work...
- J So it opened up a different way of looking and understanding?
- D Yes...potentially...but I think that there was also something about the context and the way that the work was being looked at and thought about ...
- J How do you mean?
- D The art-making took place in a confidential, non-judgmental setting during the training...the artwork wasn't being made for public display...it wasn't being evaluated or judged as good or bad ...
- J Very different from the art world?
- D Yes...what particularly interested me was the potential for art-making to create a space for the play of thoughts...for questioning...speculation about what might be going on in a particular context ...what might be difficult to articulate...for holding multiple meanings
- J So it raised questions about meaning?
- D Yes...it wasn't about fixing the meaning or interpretation as is often associated with psychoanalysis and art therapy for that matter, but it was



more about playing with thoughts and associations...for allowing insights to emerge...this is where I find Winnicott's ideas useful...

J What ideas are those?

D Well I suppose I'm thinking here of the difference between insights that emerge more spontaneously out of a playful experience which, Winnicott would say, are likely to be more authentic, and where a meaning or interpretation might be prematurely imposed...to comply with an authority of some kind...

J Do you mean that there are all sorts of tensions here relating to potential meanings or how meaning is made?

D Yes...I'm aware I have a repertoire of examples and understandings, and ways of doing and thinking about things that I'm bringing into this...I've built up over the years...my history...which may help or hinder... I see these as starting points, reference points...but also departure points...

J So part of doing this Ph.D. is about wanting to study this area in more depth?

D Yes...and putting myself in a Fine Art setting puts me in a different position...puts the emphasis on the art-making rather than psychotherapy ...I'm transposing aspects of my practice into a different setting and I guess...allowing a different practice to emerge in response to the material and situations I encounter.

J But fine art has a very different language and different rules and conventions

D Yes...and I feel very much an outsider at times...but part of this is about challenging myself

J Questioning prior systems of understanding and meaning-making?

D Yes...disrupting my processes and being prepared to be disrupted and disturbed and to feel the effects of that disturbance...that's all part of my work as a psychotherapist but is also part of this investigation... it involves a lot of introspection and self-analysis as you know...I guess that is part of the self-reflexive bit...I have to look at my involvement, my investment in this process and how that influences it...so I am also coming up into conflict with different part of myself,

J I know you've talked about this enquiry throwing up all sorts of conflicts and throwing you up against ...not just the organisation you are looking at, but all sorts of... 'bodies',

D Yes, ... not just the physical bodies, the people in the organisation I'm observing but also other institutional bodies as well as professional, theoretical and of course material bodies...

- J So there's a lot of tensions...
- D Yes... insider/outsider...ethical dilemmas around looking and being looked at...the power dynamics...private and public spaces...tensions between art therapy and fine art.....also how my body... my presence might impact others and how other bodies may impact me...knowing and not knowing ...
- J It sounds complex process...
- D Yes... a complicated situation...lots of intertwining threads that can feel like quite entangled ...and difficult to see where I am in relation to it sometimes...a lot of uncertainty...
- J It often seems that...articulating something when things feel very complicated ...when you get your thoughts out there and start speaking about them...it helps to clarify
- D Yes...that's why having different conversations feels so important... even though it might be very challenging...we might not understand each other or agree...but ultimately getting different perspectives and reflecting on these helps me to work out where I am in relation to it...and to begin to articulate this for myself in a way that then feeds back into the work...
- J ...it sounds a bit like the same thing happens with your art-making - it helps you to clarify it in your own mind... through the doing
- D Yes...I think my art-making is key to this...to grounding myself through the process...there is something about the 'doing'...the making...using my physical body...that helps me to process my experience...particularly if I can't articulate it in words...  
...I suppose I am using my body as a kind of site...a medium for receiving, processing and transmitting images...
- J So your idea is that the art making may provide some insights into the organisation ?
- D Yes, they may only be fragments, glimpses, traces of experience... moments...but these may evoke further associations images, memories and emotions...that, in turn both affect and reflect...speak back in some way
- J The artwork records your process in some way... more than just prompting your memory?
- D Yes...I suppose that is also part of it.. in this research context particularly, it documents the process...acts as a form of documentation, which may take the shape of artwork ...but it also creates a space for reflecting...for taking some distance...thinking about what might be going on and where I am in relation to it...it enable me to look from a different position...critically as well I hope...

- J ...a space for critical reflection...
- D Yes...essentially, I think the core of what I'm studying is self-reflexivity through my art practice as a method for looking at unspoken aspects of organisational culture, but ultimately what I am testing is whether there is something in this self-reflexive process and its products ...that resonate in and for the organisation...and whether this opens up discursive spaces for reflection and dialogue
- J So the fundamental process is about trying to understand what's going on through your process...through art-making and self-reflection ...and by documenting...recording your process in different ways, through using various materials, audio, video, photographs, keeping a journal, writing things down...noting
- D ...and through engagement and dialogue with different bodies...
- J they are all ways which might give you some data that you can reflect on...each gives a different perspective.
- D Which have implications...and may influence and feed back into the work...
- J But the art-making itself is your method of investigation ...it's a tool through which you are using yourself to try to look at some other situation...
- D Yes...that's about it

## Appendix 8

### ‘Questioning a Body of Material’ – presentation transcript

#### **METHOD Conference**

*Doctoral School, Sheffield Hallam University, 1 May 2019*

This is the original transcript of the performative reading presented at METHOD 2019, a variation of which was also presented at the Arts in Society conference in the same year and the Critical Arts in Health Network event, ‘The ethics of handling a Body of Material’. It continues to be adapted depending on the audience and situation and is often performed alongside extracts from ‘the-voice-of-its-making’. I present it here in two columns to break up the linear narrative.

As I bring this body of work into the room, I am reminded of Tim Ingold when he says that art is about bringing something into the present so that it can be attended to. What I bring into the present room for consideration today is a gathering of threads – part of a body of material – a speculative weaving – an ongoing reflexive conversation that responds to my experiences *in* and *of* a stroke rehabilitation day centre in the context of an academic art research enquiry.

What do you ask of me the body seems to demand as I present it in yet another situation – to be looked at, examined, analysed – or is this just my projection – a demand I place on you – the ‘body’ – that you do my bidding and passively go

along with whatever I ask of you – paralysed and unable to move without my or someone else’s intervention, and unable to give voice to your own experience except through me. When I look at you here and now – in this form – in your box – yet again you evoke thoughts of a dead body – a body wrapped in a shroud – as if ready for burial – disposal. Are you just a thing covered over – shrouded – obscured – concealed from view – silent now but noisy in your making? Are you a dead or live body? What use do you serve?

The box you are in is, of course, not a coffin although it repeatedly evokes this in myself, and seems to in others as well. It merely offers a practical way of transporting you from one place to

another, and more substantial support and containment than its rather flimsy predecessor, while still allowing you to be seen and to breathe.

Your shroud – a white sheet – covers the polythene I wrapped around your body, underneath which are the materials you are made of – string, nails, wire, sheep’s wool, cardboard, clay, plastic drainpipe, plaster bandage, and more – materials gathered by me over the years, assembled in this place – this makeshift studio – and intimately bound together during twelve hour-long sessions over a period of twelve weeks between January and April 2017.

You were not planned – at least not in the form you emerged in. I had no idea when I began what form you would take you, how I would construct you, or that two years later I would be here – sitting in a lecture theatre your body beside me with various associated body parts in plastic bags, as if a murder has taken place and I have brought in the evidence to be examined. Have I murdered you I wonder? Killed you off – or at least attempted to do so because you are too much to think about. I confess, you are a heavy weight to carry around – tricky to handle and difficult to understand – and I struggle to manage and make sense

of you on my own. Yet, as a body of material you seem very much alive.

I recall – I think it was after week three of the observations – the heavy, ethical responsibility I felt I was carrying, and disturbing thoughts that I was holding you, the ‘body’, prisoner in a locked room in a locked building – pinned to the wall, hanging, suspended – as if I was doing something cruel and punishing to you – keeping you imprisoned while I photographed and recorded my interventions with you each week. In your paralysed helpless silence I imagined you screaming at me to set you free. I felt your pain and my struggle with knowing how to respond. I think that was when I first thought about making some kind of structure – spine – that might support you to stand more independently – away from the wall. Early on in your making you would have just collapsed in a heap on the floor had I not pinned you there. And I had to be able to put you down – to leave you – shut you away somewhere in my mind between our encounters as they were so intense – to distance myself so I could think about our relationship – so that, ultimately, I could care for you.

I remember as I spent more time with you over the weeks – engaging and interacting with you – constructing you

– I become more entwined with you – a part of your construction – but then, five weeks on – unexpectedly – the liveliness of our encounter turned cold and I felt dead inside – as if a part of me had died. Is it the repetition I wonder, the routine – the protocol – that sucks the life out of the human and material encounter? What is it? What is being deadened? What do I emit through my presence as observer? Am I a cold detached, judgemental body that watches from a distance? – or is my warmer empathic body acting as a receiver of sorts – a witness to something?

As the weeks pass the cameras I have positioned in the space to document everything become increasingly intrusive, as if the critical gaze of art academia and the healthcare inspectorate watches my every move. Feeling exposed and not wanting to be seen I cover my eyes, then their lenses and then myself, feeling their paralyzing scrutiny stifling my creativity and ability to move and think freely – for myself. I change my clothes, my identity, and put on a mask – become faceless – my words transforming into sounds – unintelligible noises. You become a tangle of worthless, meaningless bits and pieces – scraps and left-overs brought here from a former time and place – struggling to find a worth, a value, a purpose, a use.

Full of rage at the pain of what is lost and cannot not be recovered or replaced and unable to articulate the meaninglessness of it all in words I throw things at you, rip your threads off the wall in anger and frustration, and cry. I feel imprisoned rather than liberated by the very constraints I have put there – and by the rules governing me – as if I have constructed a monster that threatens to take over – and human pain and distress is the elephant in the room that must not be acknowledged. In remorse I gather up your threads and help you to stand.

It is more than a year after the twelfth and final observation that I approach what remains of your body – the residue left after I finished constructing you in that particular form – processing my experiences of being *in* the stroke rehabilitation centre through your body and my own. From early on in my research I had wanted to take you outside – into other places – to see what you evoked or provoked in others. I just wasn't sure how to do it and I felt an urgent ethical imperative to take you into the stroke rehabilitation setting first – to situate you, if possible, in the place where I had sat during the twelve-week observation – to feed the residue of my experience back to the organization in the form of you.

I did visit you during the interim period while you were safely locked away and I even invited a few privileged people to look at you. Perhaps I needed that distance – space to reflect – but I had lost my close emotional connection with you – a sense of your value – so I hadn't given much thought to how I would move you or what you might need. After all, you were only a gathering of inanimate materials – an object – a 'thing'. But I have to get you out of that room – you can't stay there forever! When I originally thought about packing you up and transporting you I imagined separating your body parts quite easily, as if – dispassionately – I could just dismember you, pack you away in various boxes and then reassemble you. I wouldn't be able to fit your spine in a box, but that would be relatively easy to carry and fit it in the back of my car. But when I approach you again and look closely at how intimately your threads are woven, bound – entwined – together, and mine with yours – to even attempt to separate or dismantle you into your constituent parts feels damaging to your integrity. It is as if as soon as I really engage with you again – touch you – you come back to life through what you touch and evoke in me.

So I begin by removing some of the loose pieces and artefacts, not attached

to your main body, carefully laying them out on the table as if ancient remnants – before packing them – again with care – in boxes. Discarding the bubble-wrap I have brought, which seems to have no place now, I wrap your upright body in the polythene sheeting which had covered us both at times and then with the white sheet. Carefully, I pick you up in my arms, and lay you gently in the cradle that has been made to support you, tying string around to secure you in place. It is too risky to attempt to carry you on my own – I might drop you – so my husband helps and together we take your body out of the studio to the car – gathering glances from passers-by and acknowledging the powerful evocation of carrying a dead body in a shroud for burial – a ritual of sorts – a mourning perhaps?

With consent from the stroke rehabilitation centre, and with help, I carry your body in and place you and your associated body parts in the space they have made for you for the duration of a morning. It is the same space where I had sat for an hour a week, at the same time each week over twelve weeks, although your body takes up rather more room. I leave you there for a while in your unwrapped state, as if you are a patient. Looking at you from a distance when I return later I am surprised at how

easily your body fits in – how you seem to blend with the environment – silent – unmoving – patient. At other times you seem reminiscent of the machines with their wires, machines that also sit quietly until activated – brought to life – by a member of the staff team. I have not yet given you your voice. That came later – that might challenge – disturb. There are whispers at the nursing station and a few approach nervously to look more closely. Some share their thoughts with me in person – others write anonymously.

So what do I ask of you, my body of material? What do we bring into the room for consideration? What I hoped when I began this endeavour was that I might glean something of organisational culture – of the unspoken tensions and human dilemmas that we all struggle with in our encounters with institutions – in this case a stroke rehabilitation day centre in the context of an academic art research enquiry. Of course you are not a real body in the sense of being a live person, but my feelings are real and very much alive, as are those of the people who do the caring and those who are cared for in the stroke rehabilitation centre, even if there are no words for them or the words can't be produced. So there is something very real at stake here – real suffering.

Yes, I play with the imagination – with processes of identification and projection – of transference – as a form of analysis, but this is not a game. As a body of work – the 'work' of art-making – you help me to feel, think about, and articulate what it means to be human – to be vulnerable, messy, uncertain, conflicted and contradictory – to be caught or knocked off balance. Through what you evoke and provoke in me and others – whether through interest and engagement, indifference, boredom, or dismissal – you draw attention to an ethics of care – how the material, physical and psychological 'body' is valued and cared for as it moves in, out and through various different institutional settings – and to the fragile and delicate balance – the tiny, sometimes imperceptible shifts in position – the to and fro, in and out – between concern for the other and for the self – between kindness and cruelty, empathy and apathy, hospitality and hostility, life and death.



## Appendix 9

### ‘Twelve Weeks: Twelve Hours + Twelve Hours +’ Project

#### Parameters, Constraints, and Primary Steps

This table identifies (in a compressed form) the parameters, constraints, and primary steps I took in developing the methodology for the ‘Twelve Weeks’ project, where I expand on the psychoanalytic model of organisational observation.

<b>Twelve Weeks: Twelve Hours + Twelve Hours +</b> <i>See Chapter 3 &amp; Transposition II - Make</i>	
PARAMETERS/ CONSTRAINTS	
Where?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider what kind of organisation or situation you want to observe and experience yourself <i>in</i>, and how to make an approach.</li> <li>2. Negotiate a placement.</li> <li>3. Once a placement has been agreed, identify a position from which to observe and experience the organisation and yourself <i>in</i> it.</li> <li>4. Decide on a space, environment, or site of making <i>in</i> and <i>through</i> which to respond to the observational experience.</li> </ol>	<p>Ethical approval may play a significant role here.</p> <p>Consistency is advised, although you may choose to explore how moving to different positions affects the situation and your experience of it.</p> <p>This may be a closed space such as a studio or other site outside the organisational setting (as described here). It may take place somewhere in the organisational setting, or in a more open, public, space. Alternatively the site of making may be a canvas, sheet of paper, ball of string, or lump of clay.</p>
When?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine timings, frequency, and the overall length of the project.</li> <li>2. Mirror the time constraints observing in the organisation in your making sessions.</li> <li>3. Devise a mechanism for keeping time.</li> </ol>	<p>This may follow the model described. (<i>See Transposition II, pp. 20–23</i>) If experimenting with different lengths of time consider how much time you need to facilitate attention to the affective sensitivity and atmosphere of the situation, and how much time is too much. Test it out before commencing the project.</p> <p>Allow sufficient time to move from one site to the other. Minimise contact/communication with anyone so intensity of experience is maintained.</p> <p>E.g. an alarm, clock, hourglass.</p>

What?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gather the materials, resources, and technologies you might need to respond to and document your experience.</li> <li>2. Identify a range of documentary mechanisms offering different viewpoints.  (Depending on the situation, these may be used in combination as described herein, taken in isolation, or used as starting points to develop other methodological approaches).</li> </ol>	<p>This may depend on your existing practice(s) or you may choose to use something unfamiliar. Mechanisms might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A journal to capture and document observations, thoughts, associations and other material.</li> <li>○ Fitbit technology to track and trace aspects of bodily experience outside conscious awareness, e.g. heartrate, speed, journeys travelled.</li> <li>○ Voice recordings to capture feelings, thoughts and associations while waiting in the car before each observation.</li> <li>○ Use of timelapse photography, audio, and video recordings to document making processes.</li> </ul> <p><i>(See Transposition II, pp. 30–39)</i></p>
How?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The work is emotionally demanding and requires heightened awareness, attunement, and an open, empathic, non-judgemental attitude. Consider how to prepare yourself before the beginning the project and how you might sustain yourself during it.</li> </ol>	<p>This may include limiting the time you spend, and allowing yourself time and space to digest and process the affective experience in between sessions.</p>
HOW TO BEGIN	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Follow the procedure you have laid out within the parameters/boundaries you have set and <i>feel your way forward and into</i> the situation.</li> <li>2. In the studio, space, environment, just start without anything particular in mind, following the intertwining dialogues and where your body and the materials lead you.</li> <li>3. Document the process through different lenses that offer a range of alternative viewpoints.</li> </ol>	<p>Being consistent will help contain the material and develop your role and attitude as observer.</p> <p>Some questions to ask yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What happens at the borders between domains?</li> <li>- What draws your attention?</li> <li>- What surprises you?</li> <li>- What distracts you?</li> <li>- What do you feel pulled towards or away from?</li> <li>- What pricks your senses?</li> <li>- Do you feel any resistance? If so, when, where, and in response to what?</li> <li>- What disrupts/disturbs/interrupts your process?</li> <li>- How do you feel?</li> <li>- How <i>do you affect/ are you affected</i> by the situation?</li> </ul>



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