Pragmatics of attachment and detachment: medium (un)specificity as material agency in contemporary art

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Abstract

This research arises out of my situated experience and the subsequent indeterminate positioning of my practice in-between the traditional disciplinary fields of textiles and fine art. Through a body of studio enquiry and accompanying theoretical and reflective commentary, the research questions whether a practice and knowledge base that is historically grounded in the interrogation of medium specific conventions can continue to be viable within a post medium/ postmodern contemporary art context. Implicit within this are two further considerations concerning the relationship between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic contexts and the tensions between subjective and material agency that arise in negotiating these positions.

Through a sculptural and installational practice I propose a constellatory opening up of textile in conjunction with other materials, in terms of material agency and 'productive indeterminacy', where boundaries become blurred, meaning is unable to settle and fundamental categorical divisions between subject and object are destabilised. The processual inter-relational model of 'attachment/detachment' is offered as a conceptual framework and overarching practice methodology that maintains these productive tensions and opens up a complexity through which the medium specific can be mapped in a fluid and fragmentary way. Three interdisciplinary concepts; 'camouflage' (Neal Leach/architecture), mimetic comportment (Theodor Adorno/philosophy) and 'complicity' (Johanna Drucker/contemporary art) provide theoretical models which allow for assimilation and differentiation and embodied adaptive behaviour. Drawing particular reference from Adorno's notion of mimetic comportment, the research involves a mode of behaviour that actively opens up to alterity and returns authority to the indeterminacy of the aesthetic encounter in a way that overturns the centrality of the subject. This is manifest through a range of practice strategies - 'thingness', 'staging' and the confluence of 'sensuous immediacy and corporeal containment' - which forge connections where distinctions remain mutable and mobilise a productive tension between subjective attachment and detachment.

The research takes the 'affective turn', and increasing interest in the agency of material across the arts, humanities and social sciences over the course of the last decade, as contexts which mark a shift away from concerns with signification and which focus instead on the corporeal intensities of material/matter. Acknowledging the critical currency afforded to textile in terms of signifying agency, the project is notable in placing an emphasis on materially embodied experience that privileges aesthetic artifice, complicit formalism and an ambiguous abstract sculptural language over more overt strategies of representation.

The research offers a reinscription of medium specificity in terms of material agency, where contrary to modernist conceptions of self-contained aesthetic autonomy there is a simultaneous concern with the distinct material properties of the medium and what they do in the social world. The research reveals that it is the ontological condition of textile as simultaneously social *and* material that has paradoxically accounted for its historical cultural ambivalence *and* its cultural significance. Moreover, it demonstrates that it is the interweaving of the sensuous and semantic so effectively mobilised through textile that gives rise to its affective indeterminacy. This affords it agential capacity as a transformative sensuous mode of knowledge production and artistic medium where boundaries between subject and object are destabilised and aesthetic considerations can be continuous with an engagement with social, historical and cultural contexts.

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1. **Introduction**

This research project arises out of my situated experience and the subsequent indeterminate positioning of my practice in-between the traditional disciplinary fields of textiles and fine art. This location on the boundary of conventional artistic domains emanates from my personal textile heritage and university education, the historical dissemination of my practice largely under the banner of contemporary craft or textile specific contexts, and my experience for the past twenty years as a lecturer within a department of fine art. My own identity and the subsequent identity of my practice have been formulated around an inherent tension between 'fitting in', yet at the same time, 'not quite fitting in'.

As an everyday material and artistic medium, textile[1] also occupies a liminal position. Existing as both a generality and particularity and ontologically formulated around an inherent tension between materiality and meaning. It is immanently mutable in a physical, cultural, and metaphorical sense and simultaneously socially pervasive and cultural ambivalent. Straddling boundaries between material and visual culture, textile is fully integrated as one of the vast array of materials on which artists draw. Yet it is also historically marginalised, having followed a completely different trajectory to the self-referential autonomy of traditional artistic media, and it still carries the legacies of this hierarchical relationship.[2] Textile is slippery stuff and difficult to pin down.

Through a body of studio enquiry and accompanying theoretical and reflective commentary, the research explores the productive indeterminacy and corresponding agency that arises from this condition of uncertainty and ambiguity. The project emanates in response to a creative, critical and professional challenge: whether a practice and knowledge base that is historically grounded in the interrogation of medium specific conventions can continue to be viable within a post medium/ postmodern contemporary art context. Implicit within this are two further considerations concerning the relationship between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic contexts and the tensions between subjective and material agency that arise in negotiating these positions.

The research takes as its point of departure an analysis of the specific material characteristics of textile and the unspecific heterogeneous discursive contexts that these give rise to. It aims to foreground the material and discursive conventions

particular to the textile field whilst simultaneously reconfiguring the parameters of the domain with full cognisance that this active opening up to heterogeneity and alterity could potentially undermine its very foundations and diminish what is distinctive to the medium. The intention is to embrace the freedom afforded by the post medium condition and assimilate with the richness and diversity of contemporary fine art practice whilst maintaining productive difference and acknowledging the continuing significance of materially grounded experience and a culturally situated domain.

Through a body of studio enquiry that pragmatically blurs disciplinary boundaries, fosters connections and temporary coalitions and affirms sensuous correspondences, whilst at the same time giving rise to a liminal zone of uncertainty, I consider the agential capacity that comes through the constellatory opening up of textile. The research seeks to demonstrate that it is the inherent indeterminacy and specific *un*-specificity of the medium that affords it such agency and paradoxically accounts for both its cultural ambivalence *and* its cultural significance. Moreover, I contend that it is the ontological interweaving of the sensuous and semantic so effectively mobilised through textile that gives rise to its agential capacity and makes it a potent artistic medium and a particularly effective and affective mode of knowledge production. Rather than the self-contained modernist conception of medium specificity, I propose that the constellatory re-inscription of medium specificity as material agency put forward by the research allows for a simultaneous concern with the distinctive material characteristics of artistic media and its socio-cultural potential and thereby for the discontinuous continuity of medium specificity even in its post-medium transcendence. This reformulation is significant in the way that it returns authority to the productive indeterminacy of the sensuously bound experiential encounter, where aesthetic considerations can be continuous with an engagement with social, historical and cultural contexts. This indeterminacy of the sensuously bound aesthetic encounter also opens up a corresponding tension between material and subjective agency, which I suggest has transformative potential for both the production and reception of art as well as wider social, cultural and political implications in the way that allows new possibilities for thought and action.

Methodology and aims

It is in addressing the agency that emerges (in)between the connections, disconnections and re-connections mobilised by the proposed constellatory reinscription of textile that the terms attachment and detachment figure. These terms indicate a conceptual framework and an overarching practice methodology that opens

up a complexity through which the medium specific can be mapped in a fluid and fragmentary way. The operational model of attachment and detachment is proposed as a way of maintaining a creative and dynamic tension between medium specific/post-medium and aesthetic and extra-aesthetic contexts, as well as the tensions between subjective and material agency that arise in negotiating these positions. The terms attachment and detachment are not conceived as binary oppositions but are presented as a model of processual inter-relationality that is contingent and immanently mutable.

Although attachment engages and unites and implies processes of connectivity, centring, stability relatedness and continuity, while detachment implies separation, critical distance, processes of decentring, interruptions in relatedness, disjunction, instability and discontinuity, they are fundamentally co-constitutive. Bound together in a reciprocally interactive process of becoming, detachment cannot be envisaged without an initial sense of connection and attachment cannot be determined without establishing an initial sense of separation.

The research examines and indeed, over the course of the PhD process, embodies and enacts, the productive indeterminacy that arises through this precarious unfolding relationship. It does this from a number of inter-related perspectives: firstly, in relation to the negotiation of medium specific and post medium conventions and the negotiation of a host of binary formulations that are mobilised through these essentially modernist and post-modern positions and secondly, from the affective dimension of experiential encounter and the corresponding tension between subjective and material agency that this gives rise to. This will be considered both in terms of the production and reception of the work and the unfolding nature of the PhD process itself. Thirdly this productive indeterminacy is examined through the staging of the aesthetic encounter with respect to a number of different cultural contexts, including fine art, textile specific, the museological and the everyday.

Accordingly, the primary aims of the project could be articulated as follows:

- To reconfigure medium specificity in a way that takes into account the post medium condition of contemporary fine art practice whilst recognising the significance of situated experience and the continuing validity of a practice grounded in a critical interrogation of material and cultural conventions.
- To develop a conceptual framework and practice methodology that allows for ever mobile processes of attachment and detachment where conventional binary oppositions become blurred and categorical divides between self and other remain productively indeterminate.

- To return authority to the affective indeterminacy of materially embodied aesthetic experience as a sensuous mode of knowledge production that invites interpretation, yet at the same time resists conceptual synthesis.

In order to achieve these aims I will:

- Create and present a body of practice that maintains a dynamic tension between aesthetic and extra-aesthetic contexts and material and subjective agency.
- Identify theoretical models that allow for processes of assimilation and differentiation and generate operational strategies that actively open up to heterogeneity and alterity whilst preserving a level of self-reflexive detachment.
- Capitalise upon the agential capacity that arises out of the constellatory opening up of textile in a way that demonstrates its potential as a medium of convergence and divergence and its ability to open up an affective gap between subjective attachment and detachment

Research contexts and (inter)disciplinary fields

In its mobilisation of productive attachments and detachments between the material and discursive conventions of textile and the wider contexts of contemporary art, the research is *de facto* intrinsically interdisciplinary and does not sit neatly within the boundaries of established academic fields. As categories of practice and knowledge production, the traditional material culture contexts of textile and the visual culture contexts of contemporary art are themselves heterogeneous and infinitely malleable, accommodating a wide range of interwoven practices and often-contradictory values and ideological discourses. Within the postmodern/post medium field of contemporary art, the traditional disciplinary fields of painting and sculpture have transformed and expanded to include a disparate miscellany of materials and approaches. Similarly, the generic term textile encompasses diverse materials, practices and processes and is variously used to describe ‘raw’ matter as in fibres, ‘cooked’ material as in thread and cloth, an assortment of material objects and associated practices and methodological approaches. As such it spans a variety of disciplinary fields that include the visual arts, craft, design, architecture, material culture studies, industrial and technical production. As Mitchell notes:

> It is perhaps because textiles are inherently associated with interweaving, networks and threads that they have emerged as an evocative signifying agent within the present epoch of critical – cultural practices; their pliability is such as to demonstrate interconnections (and some fraying) between disparate disciplines. No longer an

> island, the domain of textiles begins to register as an intercultural terrain of great complexity (Mitchell, 2000 p.13).

The research also extends to other knowledge paradigms (historical, social, cultural, philosophical, and phenomenological) that are used to situate the studio enquiry within a broader theoretical/conceptual framework. Contradicting the connotations of regulation and control that are implied by the term discipline and the disciplinary regimes of traditional epistemological domains, Estelle Barrett suggests that an innovative dimension of studio production as research is that it has the 'capacity to bring into view, particularities that reflect new social and other realities either marginalised or not yet recognised in established social practices and discourses' (Barrett & Bolt, 2007, p.4). In proposing medium (un)specificity as material agency, my concern is with the way that the constellatory nature of the practice restlessly criss-crosses the boundaries of disciplinary conventions and has the potential to materialise productive resonances across wider social, historical and cultural contexts, in a way that resists logical synthesis and could not have been revealed through other modes of research.

Medium specificity and the specific un-specificity of textile

As already indicated, the medium that provides a point of departure for the research and is interrogated in terms of its potential to blur categorical divisions and give rise to a productively indeterminate experiential encounter, is textile. Whilst textile has intrinsic characteristics and is medium specific in the way that perhaps painting might be, it is notably different in the way that it bridges material and visual culture and in the way that its extraordinary heterogeneity, ubiquity and global reach makes it culturally pervasive in everyday life. With its conventions within function and application where it 'acquired a patination of use rather than a provenance of value', (Rowley, 1999, p.3) and its subsequent marginalisation for its lack of disinterestedness and historical precedent as an aesthetically autonomous artistic practice, textile fundamentally counters the modernist idea of self-referential medium specificity.

Ineluctably bound to a history of modernism, the prevailing understanding of medium specificity is most notably associated with the mid-century art criticism and writings of Clement Greenberg. Medium specificity for Greenberg amounted to a 'self-critical tendency' whereby '(e)ach art had to determine, through its own operations and works, the effects exclusive to itself' (Greenberg, 1993, p.86). According to Greenberg, for a work to be successful, artists had to look to the distinct characteristics of their media;

the material and technical procedures that are ‘unique and irreducible’ and constitute its ‘limiting conditions’. (Greenberg,1993, p.89). In his canonical essay *Modernist Painting* written in 1960, Greenberg stated that ‘(t)he essence of modernism lies...in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticise the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it in its own competence’ (Greenberg, 1993, p.85). This adherence to the particular competences and formal properties of artistic media was part of the process of refinement and aesthetic regulation that was instrumental to the ideological trajectory of modernist abstraction. Art secured its position and subsequent aesthetic value through its autonomy and detachment from socio political contexts and the undifferentiated experience of the everyday. This meant not only distancing works of art from extra aesthetic contexts but also eliminating ‘from the specific effects of each art any and every affect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thus would each art be rendered “pure,” and in its “purity” find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as its independence’ (Greenberg, 1993, p.86). For Greenberg, this process of purification was achieved through what Caroline A. Jones describes as the ‘taming of the senses’ (Jones, 2005, p.149) where protocols of reduction and detachment which were employed as a means of intensifying aesthetic experience through the material disembodiment of the work of art and the privileging of the visual.

Contrary to the purity and autonomy that was the historical hallmark of aesthetic value, textile is heterogeneous, materially embodied and entangled in everyday reality. In proposing a shift from medium specificity to material agency, the research takes its lead from the material culture contexts of textile, where contrary to modernist conceptions of self-contained aesthetic autonomy there is a simultaneous concern with what objects are in a material sense and what they do in the social world. As with other aspects of material culture, the ontological identity of textile is formulated around a founding contradiction between materiality and meaning; it is simultaneously social *and* material. As Claire Pajaczkowska states, ‘(t)hat materiality always signifies, and that signification is always, also, material is the dimension of the contradiction of textiles’ (Pajaczkowska, 2005. p.223). It can be argued that what is specific to textile is its inherent pliability and softness. It is these material characteristics that lend themselves so readily to diverse application in the practical fulfilment of the body’s multiple physiological needs. It is through its subsequent ubiquity and resulting embeddedness in the routines of everyday life that textile accumulates complex associations which afford it psychological and symbolic potency and corresponding social and cultural significance.

Although modernist notions of medium specificity as a self-reflexive formalist approach and judgement of aesthetic value and progress have been thoroughly refuted through contemporary art practice and theoretical poststructuralist positions, its legacies persist and continue to provoke debate. The agency that is derived by leveraging meaning from the material conventions and discursive contexts of artistic media, together with tensions as articulated through relationships between materiality and meaning and between the aesthetic and extra aesthetic, remain particularly relevant to both the production and reception of art: this is addressed as a central concern of the present project. Existing critically-informed research that explores these tensions between medium specificity and the intermediality, tend to come from three broadly inter-related perspectives: as a means of affording continued critical significance and contemporary relevance to the languages of abstraction; as a means of asserting difference and what is distinctive to particular media in a creative climate in which the nature of artistic materials are limitless, forever interchangeable and mobilised in endless play of signification; or as a means affording credibility to the emergent 'expanded field(s)' of artistic practice and legitimising hybridity and intermediality. Within a fine art context, such debates are most prominently articulated in the fields of painting and in relation to the emergence of new digital media. Notable examples include exhibitions and accompanying publications such as *Hybrids: International Contemporary Painting*, Tate Liverpool (2001) *The Indiscipline of Painting*, Tate St Ives (2011) and recent practice based PhD's such as *Redefine and reterritorialise: painting as an interdisciplinary form*, Payne, A., (2005) and *Materiality and medium-specificity: digital aesthetics in the context of experimental film and video* (Payne, S., 2007).

Within a textile context, debates about the relationship between the medium as a discrete genre and an 'expanded field' of practice have been most ardently promoted, articulated and critiqued through the medium specific legacies of the 'fiber art' movement which emerged in the US in the 1960s and 1970s.[3] This gained prominence in the UK as a distinct area of artistic practice during the late 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s under the genre of 'textile art' and through the establishment of textile art as a specialised discipline within undergraduate courses during this same period. This was undoubtedly significant in raising the profile of the medium and the eventual demise of such programmes in the first decade of 2000 stands as testimony to its fuller integration. However, contemporary textile practice continues to exist as a separate genre that is attached yet detached from the critical and historical discourses of fine art and has largely been absent from broader curatorial agendas. Divided by attitudes to making, gendered associations and the ideological discourses that surround the hierarchy of art and craft, textile and fine art are the product of two separate yet

interweaving histories which have been well documented, most recently by Elissa Auther (2010) and by Grant Watson in the exhibition and accompanying publication *Textiles: Open Letter* (Rike & Watson, 2015). As Pamela Johnson noted in 2000:

> Art textiles has always operated in a border zone, caught between a paradox: too radical for traditionalists, too connected to material to carry conceptual weight; caught between mind and body, thinking and doing... Perhaps we might not talk of art Textiles but of art exiles (Johnson, 2000, p.21).

This having been said, the research sits within the context of what has been something of a resurgence of interest in textile over the last couple of years within contemporary fine art.[4] As the curator Jennifer Harris states in the catalogue to the major new international *Art_Textile* exhibition that recently opened at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, 'Textiles are having a 'moment'. The textile crafts are enjoying exciting new currency as a visual arts medium as part of a renewed critical engagement with material practices' (Harris, 2015, p.8). However, despite this resurgence of interest, the agential capacity of textile within a contemporary fine art context still remains relatively under theorised and one of the aims of this study is to offer a model of critical practice that attests to its constellatory complexity. Understandably, given its historical marginalisation within the discourses of fine art and seeming lack of critical currency, the research emphasis over the last couple of decades has been on the social, political and cultural significance of textile and its potential as a medium through which the heterogeneity and mutability of postmodern identity can be effectively materialised. Recognised as a dynamic system of codes and a common language that has the ability to move beyond cultural boundaries and articulate simultaneously a sense of 'difference and belonging: the individual and the social; self and other' (Johnson, 1997, p.8) textile has been central to the contestation of social, historical and cultural boundaries that arose in the 1960s and 1970s in response to the growing pluralism, interdisciplinarity and hybridity of contemporary visual culture. Feminist and poststructuralist theories have been instrumental in opening up a critical space for textile, providing the necessary methodological tools and affording currency to the medium through the strategic negotiation of the ideological discourses through which it had been traditionally marginalised. Receiving renewed attention through its alignment with the feminine and subsequent positioning as 'the other' and the devalued term in the deconstruction of binary oppositions, textile's boundary position became a site for resistance, used in a strategic way to unsettle seeming stable identities and subvert dominant models of autonomy.

My research draws on these legacies and recognises the signifying agency of textile, but it differs significantly in turning its focus away from postmodernism's representational and deconstructive strategies and privileging embodied material experience and placing an emphasis on the affective indeterminacy of the aesthetic encounter. Instead of an oppositional agency born of strategic resistance to the master narratives of modernist autonomy and mass material culture against which textile's identity as an artistic medium had been traditionally constituted, the practice adopts a mote affirmative notion of agency that acknowledges my complicity with these very same systems. Drawing on Theodor Adorno's notion of mimetic comportment, it involves a mode of behaviour that actively opens up to the otherness of the other and returns authority to the indeterminacy of materially embodied aesthetic experience in a way that overturns the centrality of the subject. It does this through a range of practice strategies, 'thingness', 'staging' and the confluence of 'sensuous immediacy and corporeal containment', documented in Chapter 4, which privilege materially embodied experience, complicit formalism, aesthetic artifice and an ambiguous abstract sculptural language over more overt strategies of representation. Whilst there has been a notable reconsideration of the significance of the aesthetic and the ways in which the sensuously bound experiential encounter exceeds linguistic systems of representation in both contemporary artistic practice and political thought (Kompridis, 2014; Rancière, 2013; Halsall, et al, 2009), this (re)turn to an aesthetic imperative clearly has significant implications from the perspective of textile. With its historical gendered associations and alignment with the decorative and applied arts, an emphasis on material conventions and the aesthetics of affect - with its corresponding emphasis on feeling, intuition and sensation - can easily reaffirm prejudices and leave intact the critical and ideological categories through which the medium has been traditionally defined.[5] However, it is in moving beyond more well-rehearsed discursive conventions and representative strategies and placing a focus on a more ambiguous abstract material sensibility which displays a self-reflexive complicity with the procedures and protocol of modernist aesthetic autonomy that I hope to demonstrate the constellatory complexity and agential capacity of textile. I contend that it is the sensuous and semantic potency of textile as a mode of knowledge production that affords it potency as a medium where a concern with aesthetic affects are ontologically inseparable from social, historical and cultural contexts.

The agency of matter/material within the contexts of affect studies and 'new materialism'

In addition to mobilising sensuous and semantic attachments/detachments across the distinctive material and discursive conventions of textile and the wider post medium condition of contemporary art, the research is also concerned with the productive tensions that arise between material and subjective agency in the process of negotiating these positions. How can a state of nomadic in-between-ness allow for ease of access and open up new experience? What are the personal, social and political implications (for both the artist and the audience who behold the work) in staging such an indeterminate aesthetic encounter? How does the encounter with the work make sense, or indeed not make sense and purposely evade conceptual coherence? How can the intuitive intensities of somatic experience lead to a qualitative transformation? How does the disruption of certainty that arises in the precarious relationship between a process of attachment that centres the subject and a process of detachment that decentres the subject, intensify experience and increase, or indeed decrease, the capacity for thought and action?

It is in addressing these concerns that the research draws on and has developed in parallel to what has been an increasing interest in the affective agency of material/matter more broadly across the arts, humanities and social sciences over the course of the last decade. Both the concept of 'new materialism' (Coole & Frost, 2010; (Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012; Barrett & Bolt, 2013) and the 'affective turn' (Clough, 2010; Gregg & Seigworth, 2010) within contemporary critical thought, emerged in response to what were seen to be the limitations of the linguistically determined systems of analysis that were the hallmark of poststructuralism. What the current preoccupations with new materialism and affect share in common, is a shift away from concerns with signification, focusing instead on bodily intensities and intuitions and the ways in which the processual vitality of material/matter and the sensuously bound encounter have the potential to challenge the Cartesian premise of *'cogito ergo sum'* and destabilise the centrality of the self-contained autonomous subject.

The recent publication *Carnal Knowledge: Towards a 'New Materialism' through the Arts* (Barrett & Bolt, 2013) provides a broad overview of the significant contribution made by the creative arts to research in the areas of affect and the material turn in philosophy and the humanities. Whilst the collection includes an essay on *Fashion as an Embodied Art Form* (Negrin, 2013) there is as yet no research of which I am aware that takes a specifically textile approach to affectivity demonstrated through

contemporary art practice. I aim to address this gap by exposing and embodying the precarious relationship between subjective and material agency as it unfolds in both the production and reception of the work and the PhD process itself. Here, the research again draws on the material culture conventions of textile in the way that material culture studies have traditionally recognised a more reciprocal relationship between subject and object. As Christopher Tilley argues, the central concern of material culture studies is to attempt to 'overcome the dualism in modern empiricist thought in which subjects and objects are regarded as utterly different and opposed identities, respectively human and non-human, living and inert, active and passive, and so on' (Tilley, 2006, p.61), proposing instead that:

> object and subject are indelibly conjoined in a dialectical relationship. They form part of each other while not collapsing or being subsumed into each other. Subject and object are both the same, yet different. The ontological relationship between the two embodies this contradiction or ambiguity; same and different, constituted and constituting' (Tilley, 2006, p.61).

Discourses in material culture studies recognise that 'instrumentality', or 'agency' as notably coined by the anthropologist Alfred Gell (Gell, 1998),[6] is not limited to human agents. Objects also operate as agents in the world and in embodying continually shifting meanings and assuming different identities according to changing circumstances, are invested with 'social lives' and 'biographies' (Appadurai, 1986; Miller, 2008, 2009).[7] Agency, which is understood by Laura Ahearn to be 'the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahearn, 2001, p.110) is not restricted to the essential characteristic of the rational subject, but unfolds through a complex network of relations and the socio-cultural and experiential contexts that shape them. What I seek to interrogate and articulate through what Estelle Barrett describes as 'the particulars *and* indeterminacies of embodied experience-in-practice', (Barrett, 2013, p.64) are the fluctuating intensities and sensory attachments/detachments that emerge through the constellation of artistic material, bodily matter, the material conditions of subjective experience and the material conditions of the contexts of this experience. Whilst material culture studies acknowledge the significant impact of the textual analogies of post-structuralism in allowing for a plurality of meaning(s), they are also critical of the idea that the relationship between signifier and signified is completely arbitrary. Instead, material culture is concerned with 'materialised texts' (Olsen, 2006, p.91) and the distinct 'properties possessed by the material world'. As the archaeologist Bjørnar Olsen observes, 'we are dealing with entities that do not just sit in silence waiting to be embodied with socially constituted meanings, but possess their own

unique qualities and competences which they bring to our cohabitation and (co-constitution) with them' (Olsen, 2006, p.92).

Moving beyond the context of material culture, there is an increasing amount of research that focuses on the complexity of objects and the role that they play in negotiating intersubjective relations and mediating our inner and outer worlds.[8] From a practice based perspective Antigoni Pasidi's 2013 thesis *Staging the Encounter: The Work of Art as a Stage,* interrogates that way that the spatial staging of sculpture, video and performance set up spaces and scenes that act as rehearsals and platforms for an affective experiential encounter. Pasidi proposes a shift from the traditional agential relationship between artist, artwork, viewer to one of staging, encounter and affect. Similar to my own research, her concern is with the transformative potential of affect which she describes as 'a self-transcending dialogue' or following Stephen Zepke's reading of Deleuze and Guattari '[t]he overcoming of [the body's] own limits' or 'the body as a process of material experimentation (Zepke 2005, p.59). Pasadi's research is a particularly useful point of reference, however, the textual element that deals with the theoretical mediation of affect and the performative agency of objects is easily separable from the documentation of the creative work. The practice is also very varied and moves from what was an initial material/conceptual approach to sculpture, to a more performative approach. There is not the specific sensibility to making and materiality that is a central concern within my own practice, or the attempt to try and integrate practice and theory, or indeed the evidential embodiment of the transformative potential of affect that is documented through my own research.

Nasreen, M. Nabil Riad Hussein's PhD from 2011 entitled *Performing Materiality: Rethinking the Subject-Object Relationship as a Site of Exchange in Performance Practice*, also explores the particular active capacity of objects and materials but it comes from a performance context. Although it is not a practice based project, it is nevertheless founded in a series of case studies within different frameworks of performance practice where, as she states in the abstract, 'the interaction between the subject and object is emphasised as dialectical and reciprocal, rather than hierarchical and subordinate'. As with my own project, the research argues for 'a deliberate creation of ambiguities that aims to expose contradictions rather than resolving them, which provoke the audience to dialectical enquiry' (Hussein 2011, p.341). Similar to Pasidi, Hussein takes a broad approach in her survey of the different agential capacities of objects and materials rather than a focused interrogation of the distinct qualities of materials and the particular affects that these give rise to.

Whilst within my own research, the practice extends beyond the use of textile materials and processes and employs a broad sculptural approach, it never loses site of textile. As with the social world and the material culture conventions from which the work draws its references, textile is never considered as an isolated phenomena and an end in itself but for its agential capacity in mobilising a constellatory network of material and discursive relations. Where other materials are employed, the sensibility to materiality and making remain a primary consideration. Although the potential significance of the research is that it can be applied more broadly to the affective agency of materially embodied aesthetic experience, I suggest that it is the distinct material qualities of textile that afford it *particular* agency. It is instrumental in affirming subjective stability by fostering somatic and symbolic attachments, yet at the same time the affective potency of its sensory immediacy has the power to blur categorical distinctions between subject/object in a way that destabilises the centrality of the self. Physically and culturally materialising our unfolding relationship with the world, textile offers a uniquely intimate realm of sensory experience and through its proximity and particular associations with the body, constitutes an ambiguous boundary. As simultaneously both a boundary that divides and frames and delineates the body from the social world and self from other, *and* a margin that blurs distinctions and eliminates difference by connecting the individual to the wider social body (Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998, p.xvii),[9] textile opens up a space of affective liminality. Like the skin to which it is often equated, cloth as a mediating tissue, membrane, or what Michael Serres calls a 'milieu', 'becomes a place of minglings, a mingling of places' (Connor, 2004, p.26) that both reinforces and undermines difference, producing a complex dynamic relationship between the traditional binary oppositions of subject and object, mind and body, nature and culture. As the paradigmatic transitional phenomena[10] that paradoxically facilitates both a process of connection and a process of separation, textile designates 'an intermediate area of experiencing' (Winnicott, 2005, p.3) which is formative in negotiating the continually unfolding relationship between attachment and detachment that is at the core of the thesis.

The structural format of the research: a constellation of components

In line with the overarching methodological model of attachment and detachment, the research is conceived as a constellation of interrelating elements in an attempt to mobilise productive connections across its constituent parts whilst resisting resolution. Composed of four elements, it reflects the to-ing and fro-ing between different modes of knowledge production - the intuitive sensuous knowing that arises through the process of making and the aesthetic experiential encounter, and the conceptual

rationalisation and critical reflection that helps to shape and reshape thinking and turn what was intuitive into something more intentional - together with the productive tensions between subjective and material agency that these give rise to.

- The first element is a collection of individual sculptural components which were conceived in a way that could be configured and reconfigured within different installational scenarios and exhibition contexts, affording multiple connections and temporary coalitions whilst remaining essentially mutable. These components drew their initial reference from an analysis of the functional conventions of textile and the wider network of references and discursive (inter)relations that these give rise to. However, in proposing a cartographic remapping and constellatory opening up of textile, the practice components are not bound by the specificity of the medium but are constructed from a range of different materials.

- The second element is the documentation of this collection of sculptural elements in the form of a concertina style quasi catalogue prompting connections with the everyday functional environment from which they derive their influence. Just as we might peruse items from a retail catalogue and in our imaginations place them in our own domestic environment, the intention is that the documentation of the components takes on a performative function as it evokes endless possible installational permutations in the imagination of the viewer. The classificatory connotations of the catalogue also reflect what started off as an initial attempt to categorise the components according to a conceptually determined taxonomy that grew out of an analysis of the functional associations of textile. The linear sequential format and regular folded divisions of the concertina suggest the temporal evolution of the PhD and a level of pragmatic subjective agency, determined rational coherence, structural organisation and the classificatory grounding from which the constellatory takes measure. However, as the practice began to dictate its own direction and exceed its intentional ground, it began to take on its own agency and expose the limitations of my predetermined subjective intentions and the imposition of a linguistically determined classificatory system. The resulting graphic and photographic visual representation functions as a way of taxonomically ordering that which is (un)specific and constellatory and resists semantic description and conceptual categorisation. In so doing, it reveals the arbitrariness *and* specificity of the categories and the agential potential of a materially embodied aesthetic language that can prompt correspondences whilst remaining ambiguous and resisting fixity. When unfolded, the concertina becomes a physical unwieldy map-like document. No particular element is privileged over the other and the boundaries

between the categories of components become blurred and do not adhere to the physical structured divisions. Similar to the installational components that it documents, the concertina has a doubly performative function and is devised in a way that when unfolded activates both the space of the gallery and the body of the viewer as they physically navigate its length to scrutinise its contents and simultaneously engage with the work on an aesthetic and conceptual level.

- The concertina style catalogue sits within a slip case alongside a further documentation of the practice. Taking the form of an A4 brochure style portfolio of images, this third body of visual evidence records the various exhibition and installational (re)configurations of the sculptural components and their staging within different contextual frames. By placing the constellatory documentation of the practice next to the classificatory documentation of the individual sculptural components, the visual and performative function of the audience is again doubly engaged, having to establish and grasp the space between the two modes of presentation.

- The fourth element of the thesis is this illustrated written text which is itself a constellation of practice strategies, theoretical, methodological and contextual perspectives, which gathers together a range of ideas and mobilise connections in a way that sheds light on some of the multiple layers of influence and contradictory affects that are embodied in the practice.

  Following the introductory chapter, the second chapter provides a conceptual framework for the research by outlining three interrelated interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives. Drawn from different disciplinary backgrounds and geographic and historical contexts, what all of the theoretical perspectives have in common is a concern with processes of assimilation and differentiation. Presenting different forms of embodied adaptive behaviour and the active forging of connections where distinctions become mutable and indeterminate, they were formative in the development of the conceptual framework of attachment and detachment. They also all rely on complicit sensibilities: a yielding to the other whilst also maintaining a level of critical distance. In my consideration of each of these theoretical perspectives, I interrogate interfaces between theory and practice through reference to the work of other practitioners. The first section comes the perspective of architectural theory and focuses on the aesthetic and strategic dimension of Neal Leach’s analysis of camouflage, which he broadly defines ‘as a mechanism for inscribing an individual within a given cultural setting' (Leach, 2006, p.240). I

consider Leach's notion of camouflage in relation to the work of Lili Dujourie. The second section comes from a philosophical perspective and considers Theodor Adorno's particular conception of mimesis as an affective sensuous correspondence. For Adorno, mimetic comportment privileges 'the knowing body' (Noland, 2013, p.182) and involves an active opening up to the ambiguous non-identity of the sensuously bound aesthetic encounter. I reflect on Adorno's notion of mimesis in relation to the work of Claire Barclay. Coming from the perspective of fine art, in the final section of this chapter, I consider Joanna Drucker's notion of 'complicity' (Drucker, 2005b) which recognises the way that contemporary artists assimilate with mainstream mass material culture whilst self-consciously communicating difference through the aesthetic artifice of 'complicit formalism'. I discuss Drucker's notion of complicit formalism in relation to the work of Thea Djordjadze and Andrea Zittel, artists who I suggest reflect Drucker's contrasting 'entropic' and 'affective' strategies of production.

Three methodological principles that emerged out of the studio practice and which are foundational to the overarching model of attachment and detachment are addressed in Chapter 3. This chapter is similarly divided into three sections: *Constellational inter-relationality*; *Subjective agency: constructive and contingent cartography*; and *Affective indeterminacy: the agency of matter/material,* which articulate what was a shift in attitude towards the practice and research as much as they are an analysis of operational approaches. *Constellatory inter-relationality* outlines a processually oriented methodological approach that allows for the multiple complex and contradictory elements of the practice and research and initially emerged out of the studio enquiry and the conception of the practice as an evolving 'catalogue' of interchangeable individual sculptural elements. Informed by Theodor Adorno's philosophical conception of the constellation (Adorno 2007, pp. 162-163), the notion of constellational configuration subsequently developed as an overarching methodological rationale and conceptual framework for the research and the structure of the thesis. In a constellatory formation, resonances intuitively emerge and connections are temporarily illuminated, but they remain fluid and are not reduced to categorical understanding. Section two, *Subjective agency: constructive and contingent cartography* and section three, *Affective indeterminacy: the agency of matter/material,* are themselves set in a constellatory or dialectical relationship to each other. Together, they outline the tension between subjective and material agency that is embodied in the research. *Subjective agency: constructive and contingent cartography* outlines a cartographic approach (Braidotti 2011, Meskimmon 2003), where the subject is both materially situated (attached) and in a

continual condition of emergence (detached). On the one hand the research is seen to be a pragmatic mechanism of construction - a way of moving forward through the active production of connections - but at the same time it is open to the affective nature of the chance encounter and essentially mutable and contingent. Drawing on feminist appropriations of Deleuze and Guattari's positive constructivism as opposed to the negative dimension of Adorno's utopian dialectic, the emphasis in this section is on the principle of cartography as an affirmation of subjective agency. *Affective Indeterminacy: the agency of matter/material* (Drucker 2005, Braidotti 2011, Meskimmon 2010) marks what was a significant attitudinal shift and acknowledges the principle of affect as an increasingly significant dimension of the research. The focus in this methodological component is on the transformative aspect of affect and how an increasing openness to the affective agency of matter/material had the effect of undermining subjective agency and derailing and rerouting the practice beyond self-determined motivations. The transformative agency of affect is considered from the perspective of the studio enquiry where the embracing of indeterminacy became a productive dimension of the practice and provided a release from the continual need for critical justification and an amnesty from the politics of strategic positioning. It is also considered from the perspective of the beholder's experiential encounter with the work where openness to the other of matter/material is seen to be simultaneously destabilising *and* edifying.

In Chapter 4 I turn my attention to the studio enquiry and address a number of key practice strategies which emerged over the course of the research that embody and elaborate these methodological principles. In section one, *Arbitrary Objects, Objecthood and Thingness* are considered as a constellation of contexts gathered around the essential three-dimensional aspect of the studio enquiry and points of reference that informed the development of the practice. 'Arbitrary objects' and 'objecthood' invoke the material and visual culture contexts between which the work is positioned, whilst the general notion of 'thingness' (Brown 2004) emerges as a productive strategy with which to bridge these contexts and a means of maintaining a productive tension between the aesthetic autonomy and the extra aesthetic dimensions of the practice. With its sense of familiarity yet resistance to interpretation, the part object - known but not known, and affective yet enigmatic indeterminacy, the suspended identity of thingness provides a release from my initially over determined conceptual rationalisation in favour of a more speculatively playful approach which prompted associations whilst at the same time exceeded those associations. *Staged Contiguity and Discontiguity* discusses staging as a broader operational strategy and aesthetic device. As a mode of production it

acknowledges the shift to a more process based performative approach where sculptural components are staged and restaged within a series of *mises en scène*. It also places an emphasis on the experiential encounter and recognises the ways in which the installational nature of the work stages an indeterminate experience for the those who behold the work. As a formal aesthetic framing device, staging provides a mechanism by which the various *mises en scène* can assimilate with the architectural environment whilst asserting their constructed artifice. Initially drawing reference from interior styling and the aesthetic staging of the everyday within retail and museum display, the use of the tableau format, platforms, plinths, linear frameworks and self-conscious formal arrangement, provides a way of foregrounding the usually 'invisible' quotidian contexts of material culture, distilling them from the immediacy of experience. This aesthetic attachment to, and detachment from, the everyday activates an uncertain affective encounter, where strategies of staging both arrest attention and distance the viewer. Briony Fer's analysis of the tableau (Fer 2004) informs reflections on the paradoxical characteristics of mobility and stillness, proximity and distance enacted through strategies of staging. *Sensuous Immediacy and Corporeal Containment* focuses on the medium specific conventions of textile and the way in which the inherent material characteristics give rise to a haptic aesthetic and a subsequent heightened sensuous immediacy and subjective attachment. This is set against practice strategies of corporeal containment, regulation and the adoption of a seemingly neutral aesthetic which produce subtle cuts and dislocations in the continuity of sensuous immediacy in a way that gives rise to a precarious encounter that continually switches between subjective attachment and detachment. Reflection on strategies of regulation are informed by Susan Best's *Visualising Feeling Affect and the Feminine Avant Garde* (2011) which argues for the centrality of affect even when there is a rejection of overt subjective expression.

Chapter 5 focuses on the testing of these strategies as the emerging catalogue of sculptural components are (re)configured within three exhibition contexts and specific cultural frames. These different contextual stagings, attest to the material agency of the work, demonstrating its ability to give rise to an affectively indeterminate experience that can accommodate the complex and contradictory medium specific/post medium and aesthetic/extra-aesthetic continuities and discontinuities that are mobilised through the constellatory opening up of textile. The various cultural frames I consider include the art gallery/museological context of the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, including the environment of the adjacent café/foyer area; a textile specific, international group exhibition shown within the heritage site of Salts Mill, Saltaire; and a 'white cube' studio/gallery space at the

University of Chester. These staged encounters build upon two earlier exhibition outcomes in the developmental stages of the research. The different sites of dissemination are themselves complex cultural constellations and were purposefully chosen as a way of testing the material agency of the work and its potential to mobilise convergences and divergences across the material and visual culture contexts from which the work draws its references. Reflections over the course of the three sections, focus on the various dimensions of this experiential encounter as it is mobilised through the material agency of the practice and its cultural frame.

In the concluding chapter I rehearse some of the outcomes that have arisen out of the research and reflect on the broader implications of the practice. The intention is to confirm the premise of the PhD that the re-conception of medium specificity in terms of material agency allows for the continued viability and distinctive dimension of materially grounded aesthetic experience even in its post medium transcendence. Furthermore, it asserts that the constellatory opening up of textile, articulated through the methodological processes of attachment and detachment provides a particularly effective/affective material embodiment of that premise. I argue that it is the distinctive somatic and semantic material culture conventions of textile that afford it particular agency as a medium of convergence and divergence in a way that blurs traditional categorical divisions and destabilises boundaries between subject and object. This state of productive indeterminacy affords it particular potency as an artistic medium and formative mode of knowledge production that is potentially transformative for both the artist and audience.

Notes to Chapter 1: Introduction

1. From a linguistic perspective, ‘textile’ and ‘textiles’ are often used interchangeably and point to the polysemic application and ambiguity of the term(s). Contingent on context they operate simultaneously as a singular noun (to refer to a particular type of material as in cloth, the etymology of the word textile coming from the the Latin word *texere*, 'to weave'); a series of material processes, multidisciplinary practices and methods of production; and in the academic context of ‘to make’ and ‘to study’ textiles, even operate as a verb. Within the last decade, coinciding with the establishment of *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture* in 2003, the singular noun textile, has been more widely adopted to refer to a dynamic and diverse set of material and critical practices. I similarly use the singular noun throughout the thesis to refer to textile both in a material sense and as a wider network of social, historical, cultural, discursive conventions.

2. With its history rooted in material culture and lack of detachment, textile practice has been marginalised from discourses of fine art (notably modernist abstraction) predicated on notions of disinterestedness and the autonomy of the artwork. Moreover, it was its particular association with women and the intimacy and tactility of the (female) body, its relationship with the crafts and the decorative, together with its situated position within the domestic sphere that consigned the medium to its lower status in the hierarchical art historical canon.

3. The identity of textile as a discrete self-referential practice initially emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s and was promoted internationally through exhibitions such as the Lausanne International Tapestry Biennials (1962-1995). It gained prominence in the UK through exhibitions such as *Art Textiles* (1996, 2000, 2004) and continues to have a significant cultural impact through major international touring exhibitions curated by Lesley Millar, Professor of Textile Culture and Director of the International Textile Research Centre at the University of the Creative Arts. They include: *Revelation* (1996-98); *Textural Space* (2001); *Through the Surface* (2003-05); *Cloth & Culture NOW* (2008); *Cultex: textiles as a cross-cultural language* (2009-11); *Lost in Lace* (2011-12); *Cloth & Memory {2}* (2013). Key critical commentators who have furthered the artistic, cultural and theoretical understanding of textile in relation to contemporary art include: Pennina Barnett (1999), Janis Jeffries (2001), Claire Pajaczkowska (2005), and Victoria Mitchell (1997, 2000, 2013).

4. A recent article (Bell, 2015) looks at this resurgence of interest and the diverse ways that contemporary artists are using textile as a medium. Major exhibitions over the past four years include: *Art_Textiles* at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester; *Sheila Hicks: Foray into Chromatic Zones* at the Haywood Gallery in London (2015); *Fiber: Sculpture 1960-present* at the Wrexner Centre of the Arts in Ohio (2015); Richard Tuttle: *I Don’t Know. The Weave of Textile Language* at Tate Modern and the Whitechapel Gallery in London (2014); *Soft Pictures* at the Museum Re Rebaudengo in Turin (2013); *Decorum* at the Musée d’Art Moderne in Paris (2013); *Art & Textile* at the Kunstmuseum in Wolfsburg (2013); *An Open Letter* at the Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach (2013); and *Social Fabric* at Iniva in London and Lunds Konsthal in Sweden (2012).

5. Although I am not blind to the significant relationship between textile and gender, this has been well documented elsewhere through feminist practice and theory. Notably, in the *Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (Parker, R, 1984) and the two complementary touring exhibitions *The Subversive Stitch: The Politics of Cloth* (1988) at the Whitworth Art Gallery and Corner House in Manchester, which together with the accompanying exhibition catalogue, developed and disseminated Parker’s research to a wider public. A recent conference held at the V&A Museum in November 2013 revisited the important legacy of Parker’s ground breaking book. See: http://www.gold.ac.uk/subversivestitchrevisited/

6. In *Art and agency, an anthropological theory* (1998), Alfred Gell's contribution to anthropology could be seen to be pertinent to all forms of material culture in the way that it proposes that material objects 'embody complex internationalities and mediate social agency' (Hoskins, 2006, p.75) and are contingent on socio-cultural relational contexts in which they are embedded. Their agency or instrumentality is as mediatory or secondary agents within a complex 'nexus' of social relations. Applying this to an analysis of the art object, Gell rejects the privileging of semiotic/linguistic or aesthetic interpretation of artworks that sees them as primarily objects of aesthetic contemplation or communicating symbolic meanings. Gell proposes that '[I]n place of symbolic communication, I place all the emphasis on *agency, intention, causation, result* and *transformation*. I view art as a system of action intended to change the world rather than encode symbolic prepositions about it' (Gell, 1998, p.6). His theory of art as a vehicle for 'distributing' social relations 'implies that we need to pay more attention to the phenomenological dimension of our interaction with the material world' (Hoskins, 2006, p.76). For Gell, a notable feature of the agency of artworks comes from ideas explored in *The technology of enchantment and the enchantment of technology* (Gell, 1992) whereby art objects have an impact or produce a 'captivating' experience based on the fact that they act like 'cognitive 'traps' (Gell 2006) and have 'a certain cognitive indecipherability manifest in performance' (Gell, 1998, p.95). Their 'magical' or enchanting quality comes from the fact that their complexity can impact in a material sense *and* escape intellectual understanding in a way that both seduces and overwhelms; what really characterizes art objects is the way in which they tend to transcend the technical schemas of the spectator, his normal sense of self possession (Gell, 1992, p.59).

7. The idea that objects have 'social lives is developed in the edited collection of essays *The Social Life of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), by Arjun Appadurai which explores the various ways in which material objects are mutable and shift in value as they are exchanged within different social contexts.

   > …we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things. Thus, even though from a theoretical point of view human actors encode things with significance, from a methodological point of view it is the things-in-motion that illuminate their human and social context. (Appadurai, 1986, p.5)

   Daniel Miller, Professor of Anthropology at University College London has also written extensively on the way that material objects 'challenge to our common-sense opposition between the person and the thing, the animate and the inanimate, the subject and the object' (Miller, 2009, p.5), underpin social relations and are used as a way of negotiating the complexities of contemporary life. (For a full list of Miller's extensive publications see: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/people/academic_staff/d_miller).

8. See for example: Hudek (2014), Schwenger, P. (2006) Turkle, S. (2011). *The Object Reader* Candlin and Guins (2009) also includes an extensive 'object bibliography' pp.537-544.

9. Cavallaro and Warwick go on to add a further level of ambiguity contesting what might be an over simplistic tendency to equate the boundary with the Symbolic and the margin with the Imaginary, or vice versa:

   > Indeed both the boundary and the margin apply equally to both the Imaginary and the Symbolic. If it is the case that the margin may be reminiscent of the state of undifferentiation peculiar to the Imaginary and the boundary of Symbolic compartmentalisation, it is nonetheless worth noticing that the margin also functions as a metaphor for the cohesive tissue required by the Symbolic and the boundary as a reminder of the desire for sealed wholeness typical of the Imaginary and of the subject's

rejoicing in the phantasmmatic plenitude of its own misrecognised mirror image (Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998, p.xvii).

10. The notion of transitional phenomena originally derives from studies in psychoanalytic object relations and was used by Donald Winnicott to describe the process by which the individual negotiates relationships between inner reality and the outside world. The baby's blanket is the paradigmatic transitional object, playing a key role in the first step towards individuation and the means by which the child facilitates the process of separation from the mother-object, the other, or what Winnicott describes as the 'not-me' (Winnicott, 2005, p.2). Judy Attfield observes that: 'Winnicott's clinical observations led him to interpret transitional phenomena an unresolved paradox in which the role of the transitional phenomena is to both join *and* separate the subject from the object at one and the same time' (Attfield, 2000, p. 126).

2. Theoretical Components: Models of Assimilation and Differentiation

2.1 Introduction

This project seeks to recognise the significance of situated experience and the continuing validity of a practice grounded in a critical interrogation of medium specific conventions. At the same time it aims to pragmatically reconfigure those conventions in a way that takes account of the post-medium condition of contemporary fine art practice. This constellatory remapping involves an active opening up to heterogeneity and creative engagement with the other that can be both broadening and enriching and potentially destabilising. The dissolution of disciplinary boundaries and ensuing integration within the wider milieu, involves a process of decentring and detachment that can be productive in facilitating a sense of connectivity and overcoming traditional hierarchical relationships. This is particularly significant in terms of the historical marginalisation of textile. However, it can also lead to an uncritical absorption and the loss of what is distinctive. The aim of the research is to maintain a continually mobile relationship between these conditions.

In this first chapter of this thesis I will begin by considering three interrelated interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives that address this precarious positioning and allow for both assimilation *and* differentiation. These provide the foundation for the conceptual framework of attachment and detachment that is at the core of the research. They give rise to the broader methodological principles that I consider in Chapter 3, inform the development of practice strategies that I outline in Chapter 4, and serve as an introduction to themes that are extended in the later contextual analysis of my work. In my consideration of each of these theoretical perspectives I interrogate interfaces between theory and practice through reference to the work of other practitioners in which these approaches might be evidenced. The first section (2.2) focuses on the aesthetic and strategic operations of Neal Leach's 'theory of camouflage', which he broadly defines 'as a mechanism for inscribing an individual within a given cultural setting' (Leach, 2006, p.240). I consider Leach's notion of camouflage in relation to the work of Lili Dujourie. The second section (2.3) focuses on Theodor Adorno's particular conception of mimesis as a mode of sensuous correspondence that involves a 'non-conceptual affinity of a subjective creation with its

objective and unposited other' (Adorno, 1984, p.80). I reflect on Adorno's notion of mimetic comportment in relation to the work of Claire Barclay. The third section (2.4) focuses on Joanna Drucker's notion of 'complicity' (Drucker, 2005b), which recognises the way that contemporary artists assimilate with mainstream mass material culture whilst communicating difference through a self-conscious aesthetic artifice. I discuss Drucker's notion of complicity in relation to the work of Thea Djordjadze and Andrea Zittel; artists who I suggest reflect Drucker's contrasting 'entropic' and 'affective' strategies of aesthetic production.

As a constellation of critical approaches, Camouflage, Mimesis and Complicity are drawn from different disciplinary backgrounds and geographic, historical and cultural contexts. They reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the research and the multiple and often contradictory cultural domains between which my own practice is situated. Viewed from an architectural and design context, Neal Leach's particular take on the everyday aesthetic and strategic dimensions of camouflage, is pertinent to the everyday material culture and design conventions of textile. From a philosophical perspective, Adorno's notion of mimetic comportment is a materialist philosophy that privileges the enigmatic indeterminacy of sensuous cognition. It is particularly applicable to the non-discursive somatic and semantic potency of textile and the corresponding relation between material and subjective agency embodied in the research. It is also relevant to the medium specific concerns of the research in the way that it maintains a dynamic tension between the social significance and critical function of aesthetic autonomy. Coming from a contemporary fine art perspective, Johanna Drucker affirmatively embraces the seductive symbolic efficacy of mass material culture. She fundamentally refutes the idea of aesthetic autonomy whilst recognising that it is the self-conscious constructed artifice of artistic practice that necessarily distinguishes art from empirical reality. This is again particularly relevant considering textile's embeddedness within the everyday and subsequent lack of precedence as an autonomous medium; a characteristic which clearly calls for strategies by which it can register as art and distinguish itself from its utilitarian counterparts.

In terms of the processual relationship between attachment and detachment that is the focus of the research, what this constellation of critical and cultural approaches have in common is a concern with intuitive adaptive behaviour and the active forging of connections where distinctions become mutable and indeterminate. They are all fluid modes of operation premised on processes of interrelationality that resist fixity and rely on an active opening up to heterogeneity and alterity, whilst also preserving a level of critical distance. In this sense I suggest that all three critical approaches are premised on a mimetic form of engagement. The paradoxical dimension of mimetic comportment

is that it maintains a productive tension between an intuitive sensuous attachment and self-reflexive conceptual detachment. While I focus specifically on Theodor Adorno's conception of mimesis and indeed this becomes a central concern and reflective frame of reference that runs throughout the research, both Leach's notion of camouflage and Drucker's notion of complicity are similarly dependent on a mimetic sensibility which 'sees continuities between things that were once held to be discrete, and discontinuity and difference where once there was sameness' (Gibbs, 2010, p.189).

Mimesis, as Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf demonstrate in their comprehensive analysis of its various theoretical dimensions, is itself a 'conceptual constellation'. It is an elusive term that encompasses a spectrum of meanings, which emerge out of an interplay of complex conditions and extends far beyond its Platonic understanding as imitation. Indeed it is the vagueness and complexity embodied within mimesis that is seen as a positive aspect and means by which a range of contradictory conditions can coincide (Gebauer & Wulf, 1992, p.309).

> Mimesis is not concerned with boundaries drawn between art, science and life. It causes accepted differentiations to lose their power to distinguish and strips definitions of their conventional meanings. New connections distinctions and orders of thought come into being. Hitherto overlooked mimetic processes come into view; they appear in the entanglements of art and literature aesthetics and science. The productive side of mimesis lies in the new connections it forges among art, philosophy, and science (Gebauer & Wulf, 1992, p.2).

Of particular significance to the practice based nature of the research is the way that the constellatory convergences and divergences embodied within mimesis are pragmatic, in that they provide a strategy for negotiating the ever changing material conditions of our situated experience. They are by their nature processual and always open to change. Emerging through practical experience and the product of embodied engagement, mimetic comportment also encompasses 'both an active and cognitive component…that cannot be sharply distinguished' (Gebauer & Wulf, 1992, p.5). Indeed mimetic behaviour operates through a process of corporeal contagion that resists theory formation and 'in which affect plays a central part' (Gibbs, 2010, p.187). Refuting the traditional binary opposition of theory and practice, it constitutes a sensible way of knowing and relating to the world where easy categorisation gives ways to an ever mobile process of connectivity and difference. In the sections that follow, I will briefly consider some of these characteristics of mimetic comportment as they are manifest in the theoretical approaches of Leach, Adorno, and Drucker and offer examples of artists

work in which they might be evident. These are characteristics that I will return to again and extend during the course of the thesis, providing the basis for the methodological approaches that guide the research and a reflective frame of reference for my own practice.

2.2 Neil Leach's Theory of Camouflage

The architect and theorist Neil Leach addresses mimetic characteristics of assimilation and differentiation through his interdisciplinary 'theory of camouflage', which he broadly defines as:

> an interactive process of becoming – of becoming one with the world, and becoming distinct from the world – where both states are locked into a mechanism of reciprocal presupposition. It is only by becoming other that a sense of distinction can be envisioned, while it is only by becoming distinct that a sense of connection can be postulated. The two tendencies operate as a form of gestalt formation, and are in turn dependent. Camouflage is ultimately a question of foreground and background. It is a matter of defining the self against a given cultural horizon (Leach 2006, p.245).

Encompassing a constellation of ideas around intermediary concepts such as mimesis, mimicry, performativity, becoming and belonging, Leach offers a range of interweaving theoretical perspectives which provide 'a framework for rethinking about the way we relate to the world' (Leach, 2006, p.ix). As an architectural theorist, Leach's particular concern is with the specific role that architecture plays in mediating this relationship; however, his analysis extends beyond the built environment to consider the broader significance of representation in fostering a sense of connectivity and the importance of the realm of aesthetics in facilitating this process.

Leach proposes that the impulse to assimilate underpins all human behaviour; quoting the French philosopher Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe he declares that we are 'infinitely mimetic beings' (Lacoue-Labarthe cited in Leach, 2006, p.3). The architectural dimension of Leach's concept of camouflage is most clearly manifest in our capacity to make ourselves 'at home' as we constantly adapt and assimilate to unfamiliar surroundings and new cultural contexts. This compulsion to adapt to our surroundings operates not only on a physical level but on a psychological level and is a fundamental

process through which we achieve symbolic stability. The desire for stability becomes all the greater in a culture of fluidity and fragmentation where traditional structures of belonging have become increasingly eroded. Leach's argument is that the alienation of contemporary culture prompts us to seek alternative mechanisms through which we can find a sense of place in the world and that architecture specifically, and the aesthetic realm more broadly, play a positive social role in allowing us to engage creatively with that world.

The two attributes that Leach identifies as being central to his theory of camouflage are the emphasis that it places on the realm of the visual and its strategic dimension. The visual dimension of camouflage recognises the important role of representation in facilitating a process of connectivity – either through self-representation or through the medium of representation. Rather than assuming a largely negative view toward contemporary visual culture, regretting the loss of the possibility of authentic engagement in a society awash with images and commodities, Leach sees the process of camouflage as a mode of engaging creatively with current post-modern conditions. Opposing the reductive attitude of postmodern discourse that tends to treat visual imagery in a homogenous way, he proposes a more discriminatory approach, suggesting that it is the 'efficacy of aesthetic expression' (Leach, 2006, p.242) that determines whether the exchange is productive or not. He refutes the idea of camouflage as the 'concealment of some originary ideal state' and reality as something that is 'lost beneath the play of surface imagery' (Leach, 2006, p.242) and instead positions camouflage with psychoanalytic perspectives that recognise the relationship between reality and the imaginary and the important role of representation in identity formation.

Resonating with my own ambition to move beyond medium specific conventions and embrace heterogeneity, the strategic dimension of camouflage is formulated in the urge to 'become other' in a way that facilitates a process of connectivity. From a temporal perspective it involves a double operation: an initial form of surrender that is followed by a more productive overcoming. Inscribed in the process of 'belonging' or 'becoming other' is an initial sense of differentiation; attachment and detachment are reciprocal. The logic of camouflage is ultimately a defence mechanism premised on the basis of the temporary dissolution of the self in order to preserve a sense of difference. Leach describes the process in economic terms, suggesting that 'it is a form of "investment" – an initial "loss" offset against the long-term "gain"' (Leach, 2006, p.246). Accordingly, the operation of camouflage is performative; it is a constantly shifting concept and a strategy that we employ as a means of self-preservation and way of coping with the

circumstantial conditions that are ever mobile and continually evolving. As Leach observes:

> The condition of camouflage is not a static one. It resides neither in the state of being connected, nor in the state of being distinct. Rather, it involves a continual shuttling between these two conditions, a keeping alive of the very possibility of change (Leach, 2006, p.245).

Understood within a spatial context, Leach advances camouflage as a transitory and fluid model of 'belonging', which he suggests moves beyond the more traditional Heideggerian notion of 'dwelling' with its concern with continuity.[1] Finding a closer correspondence with the Deleuze/Guattari rhizomatic model of nomadic territorialisolation and deterritorialisolation,[2] he proposes that camouflage provides a more 'complex and ever re-negotiable model of spatial belonging' that is more appropriate to contemporary modes of existence (Leach, 2006, p.183). Leach aligns camouflage with the provisionality of attachment and detachment embodied in the dynamic processes of both 'belonging' and 'becoming' which are active processes rather than given states. Citing Vikki Bell's introduction to *Performativity and Belonging*, Leach acknowledges the significance of the rhizomatic analogy 'conveying as it does an image of movement that can come to temporary rest in new places while maintaining ongoing connections elsewhere' (Bell, 1999 cited in Leach, 2006 p.9).

Leach's theoretical framework for thinking about the way in which we connect with our environment clearly can be extended to other aspects of material culture and the designed world, and could be as productively applied to the medium of textile as to architecture. Indeed, the provisional and strategic processes of assimilation and differentiation that define Leach's concept of camouflage are arguably embodied in the mutability and ephemerality of textile. Providing both a tangible material connection and a more ambiguous metaphorical boundary between self and 'not self', textile, as I have already indicated is widely acknowledged as the paradigmatic transitional phenomena. Whilst textile shares with architecture the characteristic of being what Leach describes as a form of 'background music which delineates the backdrop of our everyday actions' (Leach, 2006, p.8), I would suggest that it is the particular intimacy and transient nature of textile that makes it an even more effective and affective medium for materialising the impermanence of modern identity.[3]

In terms of the aesthetic operation of camouflage, I propose that it is the embodied nature of aesthetic experience that unites both architecture and textile. Leach

acknowledges that camouflage is not restricted to the visual domain and at one point states that '[I]ndeed, it is the very corporeality of aesthetic engagement that points toward the bond that might be established between individual and the world' (Leach, 2006, p.243). However, his analysis focuses primarily on the visual and does not really expand on the interdependence of visual and tactile registers and the broader significance of the body in aesthetic experience - and indeed as 'the first locus of subjectivity' (Meskimmon, 2003, p.72). As Vicky Bell observes, '(t)he production of the effect of identity, the effect (and affect) of various modes of affiliation, is an embodied process' (Bell, 1999, p.8). The correlative relationship between the haptic and scopic within our experience of the built environment has been notably explored by the architect and theorist Juhani Pallasmaa (2005). In his analysis of haptic aesthetics, Mark Paterson (2007) similarly recognises the co-dependence of vision and touch within our experience of architecture. It is a distinction that is conventionally associated with the corresponding characteristics of distance and proximity mobilised within the aesthetic encounter, where haptic engages and unites while scopic implies detachment and control. I make a more extended analysis of Paterson's notion of haptic aesthetics in section 4.4 when considering the dynamic tension between the strategies of sensuous immediacy and corporeal containment that I employ in my own practice. Recognising that such binary formations between vision and touch are over simplistic, it could nevertheless be argued that the mobility, tactility and direct proximity of textile to the body and its implication in the practices, rhythms, and routines of our everyday experience, prompts a more contiguous engagement than architecture and thereby makes it a particularly effective/affective medium in relation to the aesthetic operation of camouflage.

I propose that Leach's consideration of the way that architecture provides a social function in mediating between subjects and objects and facilitating a process of connectivity (or indeed discontinuity) might be usefully supplemented by an examination of the contribution that textiles play in defining the spaces that we inhabit. My own work draws on the interior conventions of textile by making ambiguous reference to the furnishings, fixtures and fittings through which we negotiate relationships with both our public and private spaces.[4] More provisional and adaptable than the static condition of architecture, yet more 'permanent' than the transient nature of dress, I would suggest that interior furnishings provide a rarely considered vehicle of aesthetic expression and an effective mechanism by which we facilitate a sense of belonging and physically and symbolically perform our identity.[5] The aesthetic staging of the everyday through visual merchandising, interior styling and the commercial commodification of lifestyles, clearly plays a significant role in mediating this

relationship. Rather than adopt a negative attitude towards the mass material functional contexts of textile and the 'futile' daily connotations through which the medium has been traditionally marginalised, my own practice embraces the seductive qualities of commodity culture and affirmatively assimilates with these mass material conventions. However, at the same time I remain ambivalent to its pervasiveness and seek to differentiate from everyday commodity culture by self-consciously adopting modernist production aesthetics that assert the aesthetic autonomy of the work. By calling attention to the aesthetic properties of the work and cultivating a 'thingly' ambiguity, the intention is to balance sensuous affinity and enigmatic detachment in a precarious equilibrium. The adaptive and correlative dimension of camouflage is played out through the work's negotiation of medium specific and post medium contexts and the affective indeterminacy of the experiential encounter that this gives rise to.

Lili Dujourie; a processual relationship between proximity and distance

Considering the acknowledged practical dimension of mimesis, Leach fails to offer any concrete examples of what an architecture that conforms to the aesthetic and strategic operation of camouflage might actually look like. I would like to propose that in relation to the material and visual culture contexts in which my own research is positioned, a number of sculptural works produced by Lili Dujourie in the 1990s might provide appropriate examples of the way that it facilitates productive connections where clear-cut distinctions break down. Although the examples are not strictly architectural, I would suggest that they do have an ambiguous everyday objecthood that prompts connections with the built environment.

The most sustained analysis of Dujourie's work has been by the cultural theorist and critic Mieke Bal who frames it within her broader interests in the historical Baroque and what she describes as the 'productive uncertainties and illuminating highlights' that arise out of the correspondences between this period and more contemporary perspectives (Bal, 1999, p.7). Bal's interest in the Baroque finds a context within a much broader revival of interest in the period and its relationship to post-modern culture; both of which could be characterised by an undermining of the autonomous individual human subject and logical frameworks in favour of instability, fragmentation, and multiplicity. It is also the very forceful address to the senses and the 'vacillation between the subject and object' (Bal, 1999, p.7) particular to the Baroque period which makes it pertinent to Dujourie's work and significant in terms of Leach's mimetic theory of camouflage. Bal's engagement with Dujourie's work has focused largely on her early

video pieces and a collection of sculptures produced in the 1980s which draw on the sensuous immediacy and semiotic resonances of velvet as their primary material (Bal, 1998). However, the focus of my interest is a body of work produced in the 1990s where the excessive velvet draperies have been replaced by formally staged plaster 'cloths' and perfectly tailored folds of lead; exemplified in *Des point cardinaux* (1993) [Fig. 1], *Substantia* (1997) [Fig. 2], *De ochtend die avond zal zijn (The morning that will be the evening),* (1993) [Fig. 3], and *Luaide,* (1996) [Fig. 4]. While the more minimalist aesthetic of these works is very different to the earlier more exuberant velvet pieces, what is common to all of Dujourie's work is a heightened sensuality and material immediacy, together with a resistance to categorisation and a correlative engagement between artwork and the embodied experience of the viewer. I would argue that it is the highly regulated and contained sensuality of these later pieces that find resonances with my own work and give rise to a particularly precarious experiential encounter. This is something that I will discuss in further detail in section 4.4. The experience that is evoked in the encounter with Dujourie's work is characterised by an oscillating mobility, where, as Bal observes, 'the subject becomes vulnerable to the impact of the object' and there is a 'wavering relationship between subject and object and back to the subject again' (Bal, 1998, p.78). It is this uncertain mutual imbrication of subject and object instigated by Dujourie's work that finds correspondences with the mimetic process of assimilation and differentiation that are characteristic of my own practice and distinctive to the operations of camouflage.

In works such as *Substantia* (1997) and *Luaide* (1996), this process is prompted by the material immediacy of the perfectly folded lead which arouses an almost irresistible desire to touch and establishes a highly sensuous correspondence between artwork and viewer. This subjective affinity, however, is countered by an experience of remoteness and distancing that arises out of the regulated geometric precision and formal staging of the work, the affective material ambiguity of smooth cold lead mimicking softly draped cloth, and the semantic ambiguity of forms that are familiar, yet at the same time unfamiliar. This resistance to conceptual resolution is evident in the more minimalist works of *Substantia* and *Des points cardinaux*, which mobilise a constellation of associations that are part domestic, part institutional, part industrial. The works play between everyday functional objects, the specific objects of minimalist sculpture and modernist plinths or other contemporary display devices. The metal rollers/rails supporting *Des points cardinaux* and the work's implied weight suggest that it has perhaps been temporarily removed from some industrial production line or it is some form of monument in the process of being transported to its site. *Substantia* has connotations of both the intimacy of a dining table and the solemnity of an altar.

Figure 1. Lili Dujourie, *Des Points Cardinaux* (1993). Reproduced by kind permission of Lili Dujourie

Figure 2. Lili Dujourie, *Substantia* (1997). Reproduced by kind permission of Lili Dujourie

Figure 3. Lili Dujourie, *De Ochtend Zal de Avond Zijn* (1993). Reproduced by kind permission of Lili Dujourie

Figure 4. Lili Dujourie, *Luaide* (1996). Reproduced by kind permission of Lili Dujourie

However, the potential content of the work evoked through this ever shifting array of associations is always countered by its overwhelming material presence. The tension between the immediacy of an unconscious somatic identification with the artwork and self-reflexive detachment is further complicated in *De ochtend die avond zal zijn*, 1993. In this work we are presented with two simple very long low tables that are recognisable as furniture but which remain ambiguous; belonging not to the domestic realm, but to some uncertain institutional environment such as the quiet solemnity of maybe a reading room, a church or monastery, or pathology laboratory. One of the tables is covered with a thin white cloth of plaster, which softly drapes over either end as if the table is ready to be set or has been covered for protection following some former activity. On the other table, the cloth is carefully folded and placed in a way that it drapes on the floor; but whether this is in anticipation of it being unfurled or having just been removed, is uncertain. In addition to the oscillation between proximity and distance that is characteristic of Dujourie's work, what is created from the juxtaposition of these two pieces is a further tension between mobility and stillness which awakens in our imagination spatial practices and corporeal engagement. This bodily projection of the self, however, is again countered by the stilled formality of the situation where the soft tactile mutability of cloth has been momentarily frozen. As Bal observes, our experience of the work 'hovers between thing – the piece materially exhibited – and event – the encounter that changes our perceptions of categories and thus makes a lasting difference' (Bal, 1998, p.9). It is this potential of the work to open up a processually indeterminate sensuous and semantic experience where categorical divides between subject and object are not firm but continually malleable, that affords the work its potency. The processes of assimilation and differentiation that are evoked in the encounter with Dujourie's works are heightened by the way that it effectively negotiates a range of aesthetic and semantic registers. The work provides us with boundaries that remain open and ambiguous and it is this tension between formal concerns and the multiplicity of material culture references (domestic/table cloth, institutional/altar) and visual culture contexts (minimalist sculpture) that coalesce in pieces such as *Substantia,* that I would suggest makes the work so compelling and a useful point of reference for the research.

2.3 Theodor Adorno's Mimetic Sensuous Affinity

Theodor Adorno's particular conception of mimesis is similarly formulated around a highly sensuous correspondence with the other that resists the rigid divisions between

subject and object and where boundaries remain mobile and permeable. Central to his mimetic process is an active opening up and broadening of the self to the other that involves a form of surrender or a sense of yielding which overturns the priority of the subject. As Martin Jay observes, rather than using the word that in translation means imitation, Adorno chooses a verb that has the sense of 'to snuggle up or mold to' in order to stress a relationship of contiguity (Jay, 1997, p.32). Mimetic behaviour then, in Adorno's terms, 'does not imitate something but assimilates itself to that something' (Adorno, 1970b, p.162) where the subject actively adjusts to the objective world rather than reflects it in its own image. According to Jay this:

> involves a more sympathetic, compassionate, and non-coercive relationship of affinity between nonidentical particulars, which do not then become reified into two poles of a subject/object dualism. Rather than producing hierarchical subsumption under a subjectively generated category, it preserves the rough equality of the object and subject involved (Jay, 1997, p.32).

In place of a narcissistic mirroring which serves to reinforce the ego, the mimetic experience undermines its authority and involves what Gebauer and Wulf describe as a subjective 'transcendence toward the world, where fixed identity dissolves, reason itself is held in abeyance, and the subject is disempowered' (Gebauer & Wulf, 1992, p.287). Accordingly, in the sense in which Adorno uses the term, mimesis is a paradoxical concept which both shores up the self by facilitating a process of connectivity whilst simultaneously underlining the precarious nature of modern subjectivity by threatening its dissolution.

The point of departure for Adorno's understanding of mimesis derives from the archaic and primitive practices of mimesis whereby mimetic adaption to nature was seen as a form of self-preservation. What constitutes an empathetic affinity with nature in early phases of human development, according to Adorno becomes replaced by what he describes as 'an organised control of mimesis' (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972, p.180). The mimetic impulse is repressed and becomes superseded by the primitive practice of sacrifice; a form of exchange relation and the first form of representation where the fear of the unknown is conquered and controlled by replacing it with that which is known. Through this substitution of the unknown for the known - the object for the concept – 'the structure of sacrifice becomes the structure of modern rationality' (Vickery, 1999, p.285), where the experience of alterity and the sensuous particularity of inner and outer nature are subsumed within a system of identity. 'Libidinous drives and the domination of desire are sacrificed for a successful deployment of self as controlling

subject - the subject of discursive reason' (Vickery, 1999, p.285). However, whilst reason might enhance security and serve the interests of self-preservation, what is lost in the transformation of a mimetic intuitive sensibility into conceptual rationality is the very potential of a sensuously embodied emphatic relationship with the world. As Gebauer & Wulf note, '[t]he domination of the self over inner nature leads not only to its suppression but even to its dissolution. The sacrifice now is the vitality of the self, along with the sensuous fulfilment it contains' (Gebauer & Wulf, 1995, p.285).

For Adorno, art serves as 'a refuge for mimetic behaviour' (Adorno, 1984, p.79) and as Shierry Weber Nicholsen observes, mimesis constitutes the 'undefined foundational concept, the blank center itself' (Weber Nicholsen, 1997, p.83) that is at the heart of his *Aesthetic Theory* (Adorno 1970). The mimetic desire for sensuous proximity that is embodied in aesthetic experience becomes a corrective to the modern dominance of instrumental rationalisation. Rather than submitting sensual intuition and material particularity to the synthesising control of conceptual cognition, artworks preserve a sense of material otherness. This otherness or what Adorno calls 'non-identity' (Adorno, 2007, p.146) is what exceeds cognition. It is the gap or the reality of material experience that cannot be subsumed under the subject's concepts but which 'nevertheless exists in the shadow or penumbra of identity, as the fleeting reminder or glimpse of unrealised possibilities, of what that identity locked out, excluded, or can't quite become' (Redmand, n.d.).

According to Adorno, the mimetic impulse in art is the objectification of material non-identity, most effectively articulated in modernist art by virtue of its characteristic autonomy. Jay Bernstein eloquently sums up the critical role that the arts play in rescuing embodied experience from the distancing operation of instrumental rationality:

> From the outset, modern autonomous art operates as a critique of modernity because its very existence derives from the ever expanding rationalisation of the dominant practices governing everyday life to the point at which those practices no longer emphatically depend on individuals' sensuously bound, embodied encounter with the world for their operation and reproduction. What hibernates, what lives on in an afterlife in the modern arts, is our sensory experience of the world, and of the world as composed of objects, things, whose integral character apprehends all only through sensory encounter, where sensory encounter is not a simple filling out of an antecedent structure, but formative (Bernstein, 2006, p.3).

Understandably, since the 1960s any notion of autonomy within the visual arts premised on the distinct materiality of artistic media has been seen to be problematic. Contemporary artistic practice clearly counters the very basis on which autonomy could be assumed and in its plurality of forms calls into question the continuing validity of the aesthetic as a necessary feature of postmodern production. However, Peter Osborne argues that this antagonism towards aesthetic autonomy derives out of the conflation of two quite distinct conceptions of modernism (Osborne, 1989, p.32). In the evolution of post-modernist practice and theory there has been a systematic privileging of a stylistic, formalistic Greenbergian conception of autonomy over the more socially determined conception of autonomy as conceived by Adorno. Adorno's aesthetic theory is presented as a 'broad socio-historical theory of experience' (Osborne, 1989, p.38) that operates through a 'dual essence' (Adorno, 1984, p.326). It is both a product of historical social conditions but also a distinctive autonomous realm that stands in critical opposition to society. Citing Adorno's long standing intellectual partner Max Horkheimer, Osborne observes that Adorno's 'whole rationale is to overcome precisely that "one sidedness that necessarily arises when limited intellectual processes are detached from their matrix in the total activity of society" ' (Horkheimer, 1937, cited in Osborne, 1989, p.37). And as Gebauer and Wulf also note, 'mimesis presses beyond the realm of aesthetics, where it had been confirmed since Plato, and becomes effective as a social force' (Gebauer and Wulf, 1992, p.318). For Adorno, the critical function of art derives out of this contradiction of its autonomous status. It is on the one hand, a social product whose autonomy is produced and sustained through the institutionalisation of art, and on the other hand, constitutes a unique form of experience - the aesthetic - that resists absorption by the system within which it is a product. As Osborne observes: 'the autonomous status of any particular work must always be judged in terms of its immanent capacity to resist the values of the market through which it must, of necessity, nevertheless acquire its social reality' (Osborne, 1989, p.40).

In his 1999 doctoral thesis *The dissolution of the aesthetic experience: a critical introduction to the minimal art debate 1963 to 1970*, Jonathan Vickery draws on the dual essence of Adorno's aesthetic theory in his investigation of the nature of aesthetic autonomy and its implications for minimal art. Vickery proposes that the mimetic character of aesthetic experience is played out in the dialectical tension between the 'literal and the depicted which is the motor of modernism's cognitive enterprise' (Vickery, 1999, p.284). Material otherness or non-identity manifests itself 'in the conflict between the instrumental rationality embodied in the artistic form' (its 'depicted' conceptual meaning), 'and what reason dominates – the artistic material' (its sensual

material particularity)[6] (Vickery, 1999, p.287). To illustrate his argument, Vickery makes a comparison between the work of Anthony Caro and Henry Moore. He suggests that Caro's work dispenses with art's mimetic function as the material content is fully subsumed in pure optical syntactical arrangement. Achieving perfect identity 'the dissonance of modernist abstraction is finally tamed and made over into a harmonious arrangement of pure form' (Vickery, 1999, p.290). In Moore's work, however, aesthetic dissonance prevails in the internal mimetic dynamic between what the work is in a physical sense - communicated through a sensuous correspondence with the surface treatment and properties of the material, and its conceptual meaning - communicated through its representational form. There is also a further external mimetic dynamic in the way that the externally sited work assimilates yet differentiates with the landscape, somewhat similar to the way that the objecthood of minimalist art assimilates yet differentiates with the everyday objects within the built environment of the gallery. I will return to this relationship between harmony and dissonance and the tension between form and content that is necessary for mimetic comportment in section 5.3 *Cloth & Memory {2}: Constellatory Configuration 180813-BD183LA* when considering what are arguably the more usual reaffirming subjective narratives and harmonising tendencies associate with the medium of textile.

In *Mimesis and Mimetology: Adorno and Lacoue-Labarthe* (Jay, 1997), Martin Jay moves beyond modernist practice and theory and reflects on Adorno's aesthetic privileging of mimesis within a poststructuralist context where it is 'generally perceived as the closed economy of mimetic imitation and runs the risk of ideologically privileging an allegedly true original over its infinite duplications as opposed to a free play of signs' (Jay, 1997, p.29). According to Max Pensky, 'Adorno is an 'essential precursor' to poststructuralism in his rejection of Enlightenment rationality and his attempts to recover 'an ethics of alterity', but also 'it's continuing irritant' particularly in the way that his materialist philosophy 'challenges the linguistification of human relations that is the hallmark of post-structuralism' (Pensky, 1997, p.6). Jay analyses Adorno's conception of mimesis in relation to Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe's application of the term, in which he suggests 'the most profound poststructuralist mediation on the implications of the concept can be found' (Jay, 1997, p.31). Both Adorno and Lacoue-Labarthe are similarly concerned with the role that mimesis can play in opening up a place for otherness and non-identity. However, what sets them apart is the particular nature of the sensuous characteristic of the mimetic process. Similar to Neal Leach's visual dimension of camouflage, Adorno privileges visuality as the source of mimetic comportment, stating that '[t]he desideratum of visuality seeks to preserve the mimetic moment of art' (Adorno, 1984, p.141). For Adorno it is the way that the enigmatic

indeterminacy of visual experience facilitates a sensuous correspondence and invites interpretation, yet at the same time resists conceptual synthesis, which affords art its critical function. Unlike Brian Massumi and other more Deleuzian inspired thinkers, who have been instrumental in theorising the affective experiential encounter as precognitive and hard-wired into the body, Adorno never 'sought a realm prior to the senses and intelligibility' (Jay, 1997, p.42). For Adorno, aesthetic affect is always mediated and set in dialectical tension with the rationality of philosophical reflection. I will return to this relationship between mimesis and rationality in more detail in section *5.2 Concordance: Constellatory Configuration 260713-M156ER* when reflecting on my own practice and the difference between a classificatory and constellatory approach to knowledge production.

Lacoue-Labarthe, like Derrida[7] rejects the privileging of vision, favouring instead, aural rhythmic repetition with its infinite and perpetual deferral so characteristic of deconstruction. He believed that the mimetic correspondences evoked through the rhythms and repetitions of the voice provide a way of 'constructing a non-identical uncanny version of the self' (Jay, 1997 p.42) that is not dependent on speculative reflection and its corresponding association with mimetic imitation as a representation of the unitary subject. In its privileging of registers beyond the visual, I would suggest that Lacoue-Labarthe's conception of mimesis might also find resonances with the indefinable biological drives and bodily rhythms that Julia Kristeva (1984) identifies in her formulation of the subversive potential of the 'semiotic'. As a mode of pre-discursive somatic experience that preserves material otherness and exceeds symbolic signification, Kristeva's conception of the semiotic has been productively adopted as an analogy for the haptic sensuality of textile (Johnson, 1997, p.9). However, similar to Adorno's constellatory configuration of mimesis and rationality, what can sometimes be overlooked in adopting Kristeva's notion of the semiotic as an analogy for the aesthetic potency of material experience, is the inherent dialectical interdependence of semiotic and symbolic processes. This can arguably lead to either the fetishisation of material sensuality or to its equation with abject instability and irrational excess; both of which are problematic in terms of the subsequent reinforcement of binary oppositions. I will revisit this potential dilemma in section 4.4 when discussing the importance of the haptic dimension of mimetic comportment within aesthetic experience and the strategic negotiation of sensuous immediacy and corporeal regulation within my own practice.

From the perspective of my own practice and the processual model of attachment and detachment proposed by the research, I would suggest that it is the vital moment of mimetic assimilation mobilised through the agency of matter/material that opens up the

possibility of a sensuous engagement through which a constellation of aesthetic and extra-aesthetic correspondences momentarily coalesce. Yet it is the productive indeterminacy of this experience that gives rise to conjecture and the self-reflexive distance of conceptual analysis. As Huhn & Zuidervaart note in relation to Adorno's conception of mimesis, 'it is in the tension between mimetic tracing and critical thought that the enigmatic quality of art emerges and philosophical reflection takes wing' (Huhn & Zuidervaart, 1997 p.11).

Claire Barclay, a processual relationship between sensible and conceptual cognition.

I propose that the work of Claire Barclay might be useful as a model of practice in which this tension between mimetic tracing and critical thought is precariously maintained. Comprising formal configurations of disparate handcrafted and industrially produced components, Barclay's work both materially seduces and defies logical synthesis in equal measure. My own relationship with Barclay's work began with a chance encounter with her exhibition *Shifting Ground* at the Camden Art Centre in 2008 [Fig. 5]. Affording some credence to Adorno's notion that the mimetic impulse gives rise to what he describes as 'vital experience' (Gebauer & Wulf, 1992, p.286), I clearly recall a powerful identification and an overwhelming embodied connection with the material sensibility of Barclay's work even whilst it escaped my comprehension. Its on-going fascination stands as further testimony to the paradoxical combination of mimetic affinity and conceptual elusiveness that coalesce in her work.
As with all of Barclay's installations, what marked the familiar and yet strange assemblage of objects within *Shifting Ground* was the ambivalent relationship between affirmative material potency and the disquieting enigmatic ambiguity of its representational form. Formally awkward, lumpen, hand lime-rendered straw bales that evoked vague connotations of partly constructed or archaeological remnants of boundary walls were brought into an uncomfortable relationship with industrially fabricated, cleanly defined, open geometric frameworks. Placed amidst this unlikely stage set in a manner of composed casualness, were an assortment of precisely engineered small metal vessels, neatly seamed draped pieces of cloth, and plaited forms fashioned from straw in the style of traditional 'corn dollies'. The sheer indeterminacy of the work provoked the search for meaning, yet the play between a whole range of possible contradictory associations resisted subjective domination as any search for conceptual coherence is overwhelmed by the obdurate material presence of the work. Describing Barclay's installations in a pamphlet that

Figure 5. Installation view, *Claire Barclay - Shifting Ground*, Camden Arts Centre, London (2 May - 29 June 2008). Reproduced by kind permission of Claire Barclay and Stephen Friedman Gallery

accompanied the same exhibition, Andrea Tarisa wrote: ‘In many ways they dramatise the instability of presence, activated through a contradictory associativeness that muddies the clear waters of the known, the ordered and the ideal’ (Tarisa, 2008, p.4).

In Barclay’s more recent *Shadow Spans* installation at the Whitechapel Gallery in 2011 [Fig. 6], black timber frameworks arranged as a series of theatrical *mises en scène* give temporary architectural structure to the large open brick-exposed temporary exhibition space. Their panelled and sash-like construction vaguely suggestive of doorways and window casings, blurred boundaries between imagined external and internal spaces and variously framed a number of tableaux that changed according to the shifting position of the viewer. Characteristic of all Barclay’s work, these temporary partitions provided a backdrop against which a strange array of smaller ambiguous objects were provisionally staged. Similar to *Shifting Ground*, the installation abounded with sensual suggestiveness, resisted signification and encouraged open ended interpretation. Rather than overt expressive gestures, it is through the adoption of a rigorously formal autonomous aesthetic language that Barclay’s work is able to establish connections across a range of heterogeneous contexts whilst remaining enigmatic and eluding subjective conceptual rationalisation.

Through this more formal self-reflexive vocabulary, the work is able to secure what Adorno refers to as the ‘priority of the object’. According to Jarvis, ‘Adorno insists that the only way to do justice to “the priority of the object” is by pushing subjectively mediated identifications to the point where they collapse’ (Jarvis, 1998, p.184). Adorno’s materialist aesthetic is based on the belief that works of art add up to more than their production or reception by a human subject and are the ‘excess of meaning over subjective intention’ (Jarvis, 1998, p.102-3). Both the mimetic affinity of the sensory encounter and the excess of meaning are embodied in the non-identity of the material particularity of the work that cannot be contained within generalising universal concepts. As Johnathan Vickery observes, art, which is mimetic in structure, ‘appropriates particulars without subsuming them and thus preserves the material otherness otherwise eradicated’ (Vickery, 1999, p.286). Within Barclay's work, priority is given to the object as meaning emerges through a process of sensible cognition that derives as much through the embodied affinity of materials and processes as through representational form. The 2009 exhibition *Material Intelligence* at Kettles Yard in which Barclay was included gave focus to this cognitive aspect of materiality and what the curator Elizabeth Fisher in her introduction to the catalogue describes as:

> an approach to material experience as a way of thinking and communicating that

Figure 6. Installation view, *Claire Barclay: Shadow Spans*, The Bloomberg Commission, Whitechapel Gallery, London (26 May 2010 – 1 May 2011). Reproduced by kind permission of Claire Barclay and Stephen Friedman Gallery

> actively avoids or downplays language, often pointing to its inadequacy and essentially abstract nature… Material intelligence reprises a historical model of intuitive aesthetic experience as a way of getting beyond the often closed loops of images and words to find new ways of engaging with our cultural contexts' (Fisher, 2009, p.1).

This material intelligence can be found in both Barclay's approach to the process of making, and the work's mimetic facility to evoke powerful sensations and accommodate contradictory connections across a whole range of historical and cultural contexts, conjured through the resonances of its materials and the nature of its ambiguous form. As Rachel Jones observes in one of the catalogue essays that accompanied the exhibition, 'it is a matter of making, as well as the way matter makes, to which Barclay's work draws our attention' (Jones, 2009, p.2).

I propose that the strength of Barclay's work is the way that it mediates between the social reality of material culture and the context of fine art as an autonomous sphere of production. Her materials emphatically belong to everyday reality and their engagement with the world is underscored by their ambiguous relationship to everyday functional things. In her combination of both handmade and manufactured objects that both reference tradition and mass material culture, her work could on one hand be seen to be complicit with what Adorno, in his wholesale dismissal of the 'culture industry,' saw as its uncritical harmonising tendencies. Yet, on the other hand, as indicated above, in the way in which these elements preserve material particularity and are cast into a meaningful configuration that is not reducible to subjective interpretations, it also differentiates from mass material culture. Aligning itself with the enigmatic alterity of autonomous aesthetic experience, which Adorno believed was the mechanism by which art would critically detach from empirical reality, the work stands apart from the everyday rather than absorbed by it.

In contrast to Adorno's negative utopian mimetic dialectic, which stands in critical opposition to the instrumental rationality of capitalist culture, in the following section I consider Johanna Drucker's 'sweet dream' for an alternative affirmative approach to artistic practice that assimilates and works within the ideologies of mainstream culture. Rather than the self-contained model of medium specificity and the negative aesthetics of the avant-garde with its rejection of mass culture and aloofness from the 'supposedly polluting pleasures of the consumer culture in which they participate' (Drucker, 2005b, pxiv), Johanna Drucker's mimetic model of 'complicity' embraces its richness and complexity. In so doing it finds correspondences with Leach's notion of camouflage in

that both are models that aid identification with the reality of late capitalism, where aesthetic modes of production can provide a mechanism by which we both assimilate with and differentiate from contemporary postmodern conditions.

2.4 Johanna Ducker's Contemporary Complicity

In this section I consider mimetic comportment from the perspective of contemporary fine art's assimilation with yet differentiation from mass material culture. Whilst there has been a general abandonment of the concept of medium specificity and the idea that art, in both its modernist and postmodern guise, had to stand in opposition to empirical reality in order to perform its critical function, it is nevertheless, distinctive in constituting a unique realm of experience. As Simon O'Sullivan observes, 'whilst art might well be *a part* of the world (after all it is a made thing),… at the same time it is *apart* from the world. And this apartness, however it is theorised, is what constitutes art's importance' (O'Sullivan, 2001, p.125). Johanna Drucker theorises this adaptive opening up to heterogeneity and assimilation with, yet differentiation from mass material culture, as 'complicity'. It is a term that she sees as deliberately provocative, 'since it applies a knowing compromise between motives of opportunism and circumstantial conditions' (Drucker, 2005b, pxvi). As a pragmatic strategy, it reflects the circumstances of my own research and my ambition to take advantage of the limitless possibilities afforded by the heterogeneity of contemporary fine art practice whilst acknowledging the particular nature of my situated experience.

As I argued in the previous section, in its ambiguous formality, sensuous immediacy and resistance to conceptual synthesis, Claire Barclay's work could be seen to find correspondences with Theodor Adorno's conception of art as 'a refuge for mimetic behaviour'. For even whilst it moves beyond medium specific conventions and resonates with references to wider cultural contexts, the work self-consciously asserts its autonomy and distinguishes itself as a separate realm of activity removed from the reality of the everyday. However, whilst Barclay's work might find correlations with Adorno's aesthetic theory, it also departs radically from his wider critical concerns in that it has no specific political agenda and is constituted primarily as an aesthetic object without any intention to prescribe social transformation through cultural means.

Arising out of his own experience as a German Jew and having witnessed the rise of fascism and consumer capitalism during the mid-20th century, Adorno's philosophy

was driven by a conviction that modernist art should supply a political corrective to the ideological functions and unreflective rationality of instrumental reason. His utopian belief in the social function of modern art, however, was formulated on negative terms; as Simon Jarvis observes:

> Adorno's utopian negativity… works through immanent critique. It cannot provide a blueprint for what the good life would be like, but only examines what our 'damaged' life is like. It hopes to interpret this damaged life with sufficient attention and imagination to allow intimations of a possible, undamaged life to show through (Jarvis, 1998, p.9).

According to Adorno, in order to fulfil its corrective role, modernist art had to conspicuously assert its difference from what Adorno saw as the standardised, hollowed out, unreflective mass material products of the administered culture industry, which he believed fostered easy consumption and an 'unthinking and passive response' (Wilson, 2007, p.42). Understandably, Adorno's outright dismissal of mass culture has been shown to be elitist and derided by a subsequent generation of artists and critics. Writing in a completely different social climate, forty two years after the posthumous publication of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* in 1970, Johanna Drucker argues that not only are contemporary artists keenly aware of their imbrication in administered systems of cultural production, they are willingly complicit with the conditions of its operation. In *Sweet Dreams: Contemporary Art and Complicity*, she presents what is a fundamentally affirmative model of mimetic behaviour to counter Adorno's negative formulation. Drucker's model recognises the symbolic value that comes through material expression and that for this expression to have social relevance, it cannot stand apart from mass material culture but needs to draw on the widest range of codes and systems that reflect the dynamic complexities and contradictions of contemporary existence.

Whilst Drucker and Adorno are at complete opposite ends of the spectrum in relation to their attitudes towards mass material culture, they nonetheless share similar concerns in that they both recognise the paradoxical condition of art as a sphere of operation that is autonomous to social reality, yet at the same time relies on administered culture to maintain it as a separate sphere. As Drucker observes, '(t)he fundamental contradiction at the heart of contemporary fine art…is that it is simultaneously complicit with and alternative to the ideological values of mainstream consumer culture' (Drucker, 2005b, p.21). Indeed, she suggests that in many instances the concept of autonomy has become so naturalised that we fail to recognise its constructedness. Accordingly,

Drucker argues that whilst the idea of art as a separate realm of activity has 'given rise to a particular notion of autonomy in formalist and critical terms', it 'can also be read as bearing within it a sophisticated acknowledgement of complicity' (Drucker, 2005b, p.xiv).

> The aesthetics of complicity suggest that the many responses elicited by works of art and the range of impulses from which they are produced include recognition of the ways such contradictions and complexities are sustained. This acknowledgement is a step toward reading works of art as participants in an ideological agenda rather than objects or attitudes existing outside of ideology (Drucker, 2005b, p.39).

Thus, Drucker's essentially affirmative formulation of complicity counters Adorno's belief that the political corrective of modern art comes through its difficulty and unconsumability and the general avant-garde legacy that has been sustained on a rhetoric of resistance and negative opposition. She recognises instead that 'fine art is embedded in the very value systems that the avant-garde has traditionally assumed to oppose' (Drucker, 2005b, p.20). Contemporary fine art indeed may operate in a separate sphere and express alternative perspectives, but its values are not necessarily always oppositional to those of mass material culture. Its potency may lie in its capacity to 'jar the familiar senses and cognitive channels long enough to produce a moment of dissonant sensation and insight' but the generally affirmative attitude adopted by contemporary artists is far removed from social revolution or cultural transformation (Drucker, 2005a, p.142). The outmoded 'rhetoric of negative opposition' (Druker, 2005b, p.68) Druker argues, has itself become formulaic and conventionalised - conveyed through what she sees as easily appropriated terms such as 'subversive', 'resistant', 'transgressive', 'the abject' - and promoted through academic discourse and criticism which imposes predictable prescriptive categories on works of art and seeks examples that fulfil those preconceived categories (Drucker, 2005a, p.14). Notwithstanding Drucker's conflicting attitudes to Adorno in relation to mass material culture, her concerns with the homogenisation of theory would seem to find resonances with his critical stance against instrumental reason as a 'kind of rationality, which is a tool, blindly applied without any real capacity either to reflect on the ends to which it is applied, or to recognise the particular qualities of the objects to which it is applied' (Jarvis, 1998, p.14). Whether it is the critical framing strategies and autonomy of modernism or the institutional critique and contingency of post-modernism, the rhetoric of oppositional discourse is implicated in the structures that it proposes to critique.

Drucker's notion of complicity recognises this fundamental compromise. Within her formulation, complicity replaces the idea of autonomy and allows for a revised conception of formalism:

> complicit formalism counters the very basis on which autonomy could be assumed, while returning respect for the aesthetic properties of works of art - material and visual considerations - to a central place within our understanding of the ways art works through constructed artifice (Drucker, 2005b, p.xvi).

Drucker asserts that it is self-reflective conspicuous artifice that provides the potent mechanism that prompts in our imaginations reflection on the relationship between reality and the constructed nature of reality, and as such constitutes the very essence of artistic activity (Drucker, 2005b, p.9). As she deftly articulates, '(t)hrough an aesthetic appeal to the eye and senses, fine art achieves its effect. Through its artifice, it shows the constructed-ness of its condition - and ours' (Drucker, 2005b, p.xiii). Drucker's conception of complicit formalism moves beyond the formal concerns of high modernism where meaning was construed as self-evident, and draws instead on the legacy of Russian formalism (Drucker, 2005b, p.37) where formal existence is seen to be the product of broader cultural systems of meaning. Emphasising facture over form, which Drucker describes as 'the indexical link by which the materials and forms of aesthetic artefacts can be read in historical, cultural, economic, political terms' (Drucker, 2005b, p.36), Drucker accordingly adopts the term 'production values' in preference to 'formal values'.

Whilst complicity allows for the reconceptualisation of formalist autonomy, Drucker makes a case for the way that it also extends postmodern conceptions of contingency. Similar to the idea of contingency, complicity recognises the way that works are dependent on circumstances of production and reception; but it differentiates from contingency in its acknowledgement of the way that artists, critics, and academics are implicated within the systems of art. It is also marked by a much more affirmative sensibility. Complicity moves beyond the critical distance that prevailed within post-modern practice and theory and allows for what Drucker describes as '[t]he return of the aesthetic imperative as a motivating force' and 'material experience as a point of departure for the discussion of works of contemporary art' (Drucker, 2005b, p.67).

Drucker's argument is that in prioritising contextual frames of reference, there is the danger that the work itself gets overlooked. In line with Adorno's notion of 'material particularity' and 'the priority of the object', she believes that interpretation should arise

out of the visual analysis of the material object rather than on predetermined contexts that are projected onto it. Drucker sees ‘a renewed studio culture’ (Drucker, 2005b, pxi) evident in much contemporary practice, which she suggests far exceeds any pre-described critical frameworks or conceptual models that would aim to contain it. Her proposition is that when fine art is ‘(r)ecast as a cultural practice of complicity’, its ‘imaginative possibilities expand’ (Drucker, 2005b, p.24). As I document in section 5.4 *Studio Works: Constellatory Configuration 200914-CH22LB*, this is something that I can relate to from the experience of my own studio enquiry. Nevertheless, it could be argued that there are particular political implications for textile related practice. An emphasis on context has undoubtedly been significant in opening up a critical space for the medium, whereas a focus on material considerations can merely reaffirm preconceptions about its decorative connotations and seeming content-free status. In line with Drucker, however, and as I discuss in my practice reflections in section 5.3, the contexts that afford textile its particular critical currency, such as its association with the body, gender, the abject, the uncanny and memory, can easily become formulaic. Imposing pre-established interpretive frameworks that privilege content over form, the danger is that they can blind us to the multiple, complex and contradictory connections conjured up through aesthetic experience.

Similar to the other theoretical perspectives that I have considered, Drucker’s notion of complicity moves beyond simple binary formations and provides a mutable model, which is able to accommodate contradictions, perform critical operations and negotiate complex relations whilst engaging the concerns of mainstream culture. As with Leach’s notion of camouflage and Adorno’s conception of mimesis, aesthetic experience plays a significant role and is reinstated as an important aspect of artistic discourse. Drucker asserts that outside of its contextual frame of reception, what ultimately distinguishes contemporary fine art from mass material culture, and on which it depends for its identity, is its capacity to produce symbolic value, and, in concurrence with Leach and Adorno, this symbolic value or mimetic affinity is determined by the efficacy of its material expression.

Thea Djordjadze and Andrea Zittel, a productive relationship between mass material culture and aesthetic autonomy

In the final section of this consideration of theoretical models of assimilation and differentiation, I will briefly address the work of Thea Djordjadze and Andrea Zittel, whose work I suggest embodies two different approaches to material expression that

mimetically embrace the production values of mass material culture whilst remaining distinct from the broader field of cultural objects

The more affirmative flirtation and enthusiastic complicity with the wider systems and values of cultural production, that Drucker recognises as a trait of much contemporary fine art practice, inevitably gives rise to a challenge that is fundamental to artistic identity - how art distinguishes itself from its mass material counterparts. The dissolution of the dividing line between works of art and everyday objects leads back to the issue that has preoccupied artists for the latter part of the twentieth century and is common to all of the theoretical perspectives that I have considered. It is particularly pertinent to the medium of textile whose ontological identity is formulated through function and is positioned within the realm of material culture. Indeed, the blurring of the boundaries between every day and aesthetic objecthood is one of the key practice strategies that I adopt within the studio enquiry and provides the focus of my discussion in section 4.2 *Arbitrary Objects, Objecthood and Thingness.*

For Drucker, a crucial aspect in maintaining a stance of differentiation is 'to enact a strategy of displacement and transformation at the level of material production' (Drucker, 2005a, p.138). Whether it is a case of embracing the high end seductive production values of mass material culture or adopting more provisional processes and low grade materials, Drucker argues that it is the self-conscious attitude toward production that provides the critical transformation that separates current work from other forms of cultural expression. Drawing on 'the classical Aristotelian distinction between form (as organisation and structure) and matter (as that which is possessed of qualities even without having form)' (Drucker, 2005b, p.172) Drucker identifies 'affectivity' and 'entropy' as two contrasting strategies of differentiation that provide contrasting approaches to production.[8]

> The affective gesture puts material objects… into an organised construction... Affectivity takes what looked like matter already formed and uses it as simple matter to give rise to another level of organisation and structure… Entropy, on the other hand, is a deconstruction of normative identity through material means. It demonstrates the effect of removing things from the system of production and consumption in which they normally circulate. By rendering objects non-useful, the entropic gesture forces attention back into its "mere" materiality as an object, as a thing, so that it can't be pulled back into the form of the usual "commodified" (and readily consumable) object (Drucker, 2005b, p.173).

The work of Thea Djordjadze would seem to precariously hover between these two conditions. Her sculptures and installations consist of formally assembled objects which frequently combine more malleable perishable everyday consumable materials with carefully designed architectural and furniture like wooden and metal structures [Fig. 7]. Within her work, industrially produced unrefined construction materials such as sponge, plywood sheeting, carpet, and cardboard - often smeared with plaster and paint - are transformed into an organised configuration; yet this ordered arrangement exists unstably between a state of unfinishedness and disintegration This threshold between 'made' and 'unmade' would seem to be a common aesthetic that unites a number of contemporary artists, notably recognised in the legacies of such exhibitions as *Making and Unmaking: An Exhibition curated by Duro Olowu* (Camden Arts Centre, 2016); *Undone, Making and Unmaking in Contemporary Sculpture* at the Henry Moore foundation in 2010 (Le Feuvre et al. 2010), *Unmonumental: The Object in the 21st Century* at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York in 2007 (New Museum, New York, 2007), and *The Uncertainty of Objects and Ideas* at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in 2006 (Ellegood & Burton, 2006).

In Djordjadze's work, the tension between a sense of controlled formation and sense of possible collapse is heightened by what seem to be fragments of objects. Hand-moulded out of plaster, clay, and papier-mâché, they have vague reference to either matter that is in a process of being transformed into some 'cooked' cultural artefact or half decomposed objects that have been retrieved from an archaeological excavation. In her exhibition entitled *Endless Enclosures* at Kunsthalle Basel in 2009 [Fig. 8], these ambiguous traditional cultural references are further enhanced through the addition of actual museum artefacts such as rugs and carpets. These more fluid and unstable elements of Djordjadze's work are often arranged in relation to wooden structures that recall classical modernist aesthetics whose clean designed formality provides a sharp contrast to their raw materiality. As Quinn Latimer describes in his review of *Endless Enclosures*, '(d)isplayed as companions to her plinths, vitrines and shelves, the objects read as relics of humanity left to fossilise near the artefacts of human ingenuity' (Latimer, 2009).

Despite their often entropic materiality, Djordjadze's installations also have a strange aesthetic presence and a formal rigour. Whilst the rawness of the objects are very different to the more crafted or precision industrially fabricated objects that are configured in Barclay's installations, the work of both artists is marked by a simultaneous affirmative complicity with the seductiveness of mass material culture and re-engagement with the reflective self-conscious artifice of studio practice. In both

Figure 7. Thea Djordjadze. Installation view, *Explain away* Sprüth Magers Berlin,September 22 - November 07, 2009
Copyright Thea Djordjadze / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.
Courtesy Sprüth Magers

Figure 8. Thea Djordjadze Installation view, *Endless Enclosures*, Kunsthalle Basel, March 21 - May 24, 2009.
Copyright Thea Djordjadze / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.
Courtesy Kunsthalle Basel and Sprüth Magers.
Foto: Serge Hasenböhler

cases, elements from the sphere of cultural production are organised into new systems of meaning but this system of meaning remains elusive, prompting connections whilst resisting conceptual closure. Referential content emerges out of the particular nature of materials and processes but is suggestive rather than specific as the objects hover in a state of thingly indeterminacy. Similar to Claire Barclay, Djordjadze's works self-consciously reference the concept of formal autonomy and 'come into being first and foremost as an aesthetic object' (Drucker 2005b, p.53) whilst at the same time resonating with multiple and contradictory historical and cultural connotations.

Unlike Djordjadze's tension between entropic and affective registers, the material production strategies that Andrea Zittel employs in her trademark 'AZ living units' mimetically aspire to the sophisticated methods of industrial production and are hardly discernible from prototype product design [Figs. 9 &10]. Zittel's living units and environmental modular structures are industrially fabricated products, which effect their complicity through this easy slippage between art prototype and its engagement with the reality of mainstream mass production. Indeed Zittel's living units come so close to the commodities of high end product design that they have made the spreads of home design magazines and are nearly impossible to distinguish from the objects of commercial showrooms and design fairs. However, whilst the work runs the risk of total absorption and undifferentiation from the reality of mass material culture, it is far from the cool critical distance that was a mark of the oppositional critique and the re-presentation display strategies of the 1980s, exemplified in the work of artists such as Haim Steinbach. As Drucker observes: the work fits 'into a consumer aesthetic without any resistance' (Drucker, 2005b, p.223). Although it has a social agenda and might prompt reflection on the balance between 'personal aspirations and the covertly authoritarian logic that comprises consumerist economic and capitalist political power structures' (Morsiani, 2005, p.17), Zittel openly accepts her complicity within these same structures. Essentially affirmative, the work is an actual exploration of the social contradictions that it seeks to address and 'embodies an alternative rather than critical vision' (Drucker, 2005b, p.223). Zittel fully engages with the symbolic and production values of mass material culture whilst calling attention to what in her case is the very fine line that keeps the constructed artifice of the art world and the real world distinct.

However, where Zittel's modular living units differ from the other work that I have considered, is their less obvious corporeal sensuous material immediacy. As Stephanie Cash observes in her review of Zittel's work, '(o)ne can't help but notice that, in [her] search for functionality, streamlined simplicity and efficiency, comfort often seems to be

Figure 9. Andrea Zittel, *A-Z Wagon Stations* in On-Site, Milwaukee Art Museum, (2003-2004). Copyright the artist, reproduced by kind permission of the Andrea Zittel Studio and Sadie Coles HQ, London

Figure 10. Andrea Zittel, A-*Z Escape Vehicles*, Andrea Rosen Gallery (1996). Copyright the artist, reproduced by kind permission of the Andrea Zittel Studio and Sadie Coles HQ, London

sacrificed' (Cash, 2006 p.128). To return to my initial point of departure and the mimetic process in the context of design, Neil Leach at one point considers Adorno's 1965 essay 'Functionalism Today', (Adorno, 1965) which Adorno addressed in relation to Adolf Loos's seminal 1908 essay 'Ornament and Crime' (Loos, 1998). Although Adorno was generally supportive of the avant-garde in all fields, his main critique of Loos was that his argument was undialectic. In privileging rational functionalism and the purposively practical over the mimetic, Loos failed to appreciate both the significance of the sensuous dimension and the way that stylistic representation provides a symbolic form of identification. So whilst Zittel's modular structures inventively combine the symbolic seductive appeal of mass material culture with a committed social agenda, the materials and production methods that she employs tend to prioritise rational form over the mimetic instability of matter/material and more intuitive processes making. Accordingly, they seem to leave little room the enigmatic affective uncertainty of non-identical material particularity that troubles categorical divides between subject and object.

2.5 Summary Reflections

What has emerged through this analysis of various theoretical perspectives and practice examples is that they each involve a mimetic correlative adaptive behaviour and opening up to alterity where boundaries become porous and categorical distinctions break down. In each case it is the indeterminacy of aesthetic experience that facilitates both assimilation and differentiation and a more reciprocal relationship between subjective and material agency. Through an active yielding to the sensuously bound otherness of aesthetic experience, we forge a sense of connectivity that affords subjective coherence and stability. Yet the sense of attachment facilitated through an active opening up to heterogeneity cannot be achieved without first establishing a sense of detachment. Accordingly, assimilation always comes with the threat of instability and loss of differentiation. Leach's notion of *camouflage*, Adorno's conception of *mimesis* and Drucker's idea of *complicity*, constitute ever mobile models of inter-relationality where processes of assimilation and differentiation are maintained in a constant process of dynamic relation. For Leach this is effectively/affectively enacted through our experience of the built environment, which opens up the possibility of a sensuous engagement and symbolic relationship and subsequent ever mutable sense of belonging in a world that is continually in flux. For Adorno it is the desire for sensuous proximity, which is embodied in the aesthetic experience of modernist

autonomous art that facilitates a sensible cognition and a corrective to the increasing dominance of instrumental rationalisation. For Drucker it is the way that contemporary fine art affirmatively embraces its complicity with contemporary culture and draws on the richness of its sensuous and symbolic currency but distinguishes itself through the constructed artifice of material expression.

Whether it is from the perspective of the functional aspect of architecture and design or the autonomous sphere of artistic production, in all three cases, the process of assimilation and differentiation facilitated by the mimetic impulse arises out of the reality of circumstantial conditions and has a fundamental social dimension. The main difference is the level of consciousness through which mimetic processes operate. In forming the backdrop to our everyday experience, the sensuous correspondence instigated through architecture and design, like textiles, often remains unnoticed, whereas the autonomy of artistic practice brings often overlooked experiences to more consciousness attention. As we saw with Adorno's conception of the dual essence of art; artistic production is distinctive in that it is part of empirical reality and socially determined, but at the same time it is a self-conscious staged encounter that is removed from the spatio-temporal dimension of everyday activity. This shift in emphasis from object to process and the increasing significance of aesthetic experience means that much contemporary practice could be characterised in terms of the unfolding temporality of the event. As Simon O'Sullivan observes, art practice understood in these terms becomes 'a point of indetermination' where there is an ambiguous processual relation between subjective attachment and detachment, or what O'Sullivan describes as 'the mobilisation of indeterminacy through determinate practice' (O'Sullivan, 2010, p.202).

My own work seeks to heighten this productive indeterminacy through strategies that facilitate connectivity across the medium specific and post medium/postmodern contexts through which it derives its contradictory meanings, whilst remaining fluid and resisting fixity. In the following section I consider a series of foundational methodological approaches that grow out of the conceptual framework of assimilation and differentiation that I have just outlined. These are employed as a means of maintaining a dynamic tension between processes of attachment and detachment and as broader methodological principles are as much attitudinal as operational. *Constellational inter-relationality* draws on the correlative character of mimetic comportment and is adopted as a means of mobilising a mutable network of connections across the heterogeneous and often contradictory aesthetic and extra-aesthetic dimensions of the work. *Constructive and contingent cartography* and

Affective indeterminacy both draw on the tension between subjective attachment and detachment embodied in mimetic engagement and the corresponding processual relationship between subjective and material agency. *Constructive and contingent cartography* focuses on subjective agency and the self-determined pragmatic nature of the research that seeks to remap medium specificity and culturally situated and embodied experience. *Affective indeterminacy* recognises an increasing openness to the productive indeterminacy of affect and the significance of matter/material agency in undermining the predetermined intentions of subjective agency.

Notes to Chapter 2: Theoretical Components: Models of Assimilation and Differentiation

Neil Leach's Theory of Camouflage

1. To dwell according to Heidegger, is characterised by a particular situated relationship in the sense of 'to remain, to stay in place' (Heidegger, 1971, p.144). He observes: 'the basic character of dwelling is to spare, to preserve…dwelling itself is always a staying with things. (Heidegger, 1971, pp.148-149).
2. Territorialisation and deterritorialisation (and indeed reterritorialisation) are two of the many spatial figurations employed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1988) which accompany the concept of 'nomadology' and privilege the idea of fluidity and flux. Resonating with my own notion of attachment and detachment they operate through the principle of 'reciprocal presupposition' where the two terms fold into each other in a constant process of becoming. As Neal Leach observes, deterritorialisation might be understood as 'an urge to resist stratification, a compulsion to be continually mobile and unconstrained by structured systems of control' (Leach, 2006, p.90). However it is always accompanied by a complementary movement of reterritorialisation, which attempts to re-establish boundaries, and to recreate order and stability.
3. In addition to the symbolic and psychological resonances of textile, it is the physical material characteristics of textile - its warmth and essential pliability - that make it the archetypal nomadic architecture.
4. Although, textile is inextricably bound up with the familiarity and intimacy of the domestic sphere, my own concerns are as much with the non-descript mass produced upholstered pads, panels and covers that constitute the non-spaces of our built environment which provide an often unnoticed stage set for the repetitive routines of our busy lives and silently soak up the clamour of activity in their dense absorbent surfaces. In this way it aims to move beyond the binaries of public and private and the easy collapse of gender identity with spatial identity.
5. A notable exception is the Hayward Gallery's 2009 *The New* Décor exhibition which presented 'an international survey of contemporary artists whose work takes the common vocabulary of interior design as a point of departure' (Hayward Gallery, 2010). However, considering the significance of textile in terms of interior design, there was a significant paucity of textile materials and objects within the exhibition

Theodor Adorno's Mimetic Sensuous Affinity

6. Adorno develops his notion of material particularity in 'Particularity and the particular' in *Negative Dialectics* (Adorno, 1973) and 'Universal and Particular' in *Theodor W. Adorno, History and Freedom: Lectures 1964-1965*. (Tiedemann, 2006).
7. For a discussion of Jacques Derrida's mimetic approach to textual analysis, see: *The between character of mimesis (Derrida)'* in Gebauer and Wulf, 1992, pp.294-307

Johanna Ducker's Contemporary Complicity

8. In her employment of the terms 'affectivity' and 'entropy' Drucker draws on the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer's distinction between the two opposing poles of abstraction and empathy in his seminal 1908 book of the same name. Deriving his analysis from the study of decorative stylistic devices, Worringer equated empathy with the classical cultures of ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy which were marked by a more naturalistic, organic, harmonious embodied vitality. The tendency towards abstraction stands in opposition to this and rejects the organic in favour of the flatness of geometric design which as Drucker observes 'enacts an aesthetic of distance and control (Drucker, 2005b, p.173). A connection can also be made here between Deleuze and Guattari's 'primordial duality' between the 'smooth and striated' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988, pp.474-500). (see my discussion of the way that my practice activates this relationship between the smooth and striated on p.136 and corresponding note on p.139).

3. Methodological Components: Processes of Attachment and Detachment

3.1 Introduction

The challenge raised by the research is how to reconfigure the medium specificity of textile in a way that takes into account the post medium and postmodern condition of contemporary fine art practice, whilst also acknowledging the particular nature of a materially situated and embodied experience. What is at stake in such a negotiation is both assimilation *and* differentiation; identity *and* difference. Accordingly, beyond the immediate issue of medium and non-medium specificity, the research is broadly concerned with the pursuit of methods which interrogate relationships between processes of centring and decentring. The overarching methodological model of attachment and detachment that is the motor of this project is proposed as a way of maintaining a creative and dynamic tension between these relationships. The terms attachment and detachment are conceived in a way that aims to move beyond the stasis of binary thinking. They are presented as a model of processual inter-relationality that is contingent, ever mutable and welcomes complexity. The argument put forward by the research is that the discontinuous continuity between assimilation and differentiation, opened up through the operational model of attachment and detachment gives rise to an affectively indeterminate experience where disciplinary distinctions become blurred and fundamental categorical divisions between self and other are unstable, but significantly, a level of self-reflexivity and critical distance prevails. It is arguably this processually precarious relationship between centring and decentring mobilised through the practice that is transformative from the perspective of both the artist and the viewer.

The foundational methodological principles that I consider in this chapter are formative in generating a continually unfolding relationship between processes of attachment *and* detachment in a way that maintains a precarious balance between material and subjective agency. They move beyond binary conceptions of agency as autonomous and self-governing or constituted through external forces, and allow for both a level of conceptual self-determination, and openness to the chance encounter and the affective uncertainty of embodied aesthetic experience. The methodological principles that underpin the project are informed by previous pre PhD experience and emerge out of a

re-evaluation of my approach to the practice in the early stages of the research. Drawing on, yet marking a significant departure and evolutionary detachment from previous ways of working, the three overarching strategies that I outline over the course of this chapter embody a shift that is as much attitudinal as operational.

In the first section *Constellational inter-relationality*, I consider the principle of inter-relationality that emerges through the development of the practice as a series of interchangeable elements and the configuration of the thesis as a cluster of constituent parts. Drawing on Theodor Adorno's conception of the constellation, the aim is to maintain a level of methodological mobility that is less concerned with definitional frameworks and the imposition of predetermined meanings than the mobilisation of potential connections. As a processually oriented model, a constellatory approach allows for a level of self-determined agency in the active fostering of possible associations through the staging of the experiential encounter. However, the relationships between these parts remain fluid and contingent, momentarily illuminated through an ever mutable series of sensuous and semantic attachments and detachments.

Section two and section three are set in constellatory relationship to each other and expand on the dynamic tension between subjective and material agency that is integral to the operational model of attachment and detachment. *Contingent and creative cartography* extends the constellatory approach, applying it to the consideration of contemporary notions of subjectivity, which is understood not as some fixed essence but an ever unfolding relationship 'between the human and the non-human, the material and immaterial, the social and the physical' (Barrett & Bolt, 2013, p.6). The focus in this section is on the pragmatic dimension of the research and the PhD process as a re-mapping of subjectivity that takes account of my situated position, but at the same time is concerned with a process of detachment and an opening up of that position through the active plotting of new trajectories. Here I make a connection between Adorno's idea of the constellation and Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the rhizome. Drawing on feminist appropriations of Deleuze and Guattari's positive constructivism as opposed to the more negative dimension of Adorno's utopian dialectic, the emphasis is on the idea of the nomadic subject as an affirmation of subjective agency.[1]

In the third section I shift the emphasis to the idea of material agency and consider the methodological principle of *Affective indeterminacy*. Inherent in the cartographic process of attachment and detachment is both the pragmatic plotting of new

connections and an opening up to alterity, which has the potential to derail subjective agency. The focus of my discussions within this section is on the destabilising yet transformative nature of aesthetic affect - the intensive, non-conscious potential of the body 'to affect and be affected' (Massumi, 1987, p.xvi) - and the affective agency of matter/material beyond any imposition on the part of the subject. As a foundational principle, my concern is how the indeterminacy of materially embodied aesthetic affect opens up an enigmatic zone of experience and a processual space of becoming, which in exceeding conceptual synthesis has transformative potential. This is considered from the perspective of both my own experiential encounter within the studio and from the perspective of the viewer's experiential encounter of the artwork.

3.2 Constellational Inter-relationality

A constellatory approach to practice

The idea of *Constellational inter-relationality* initially emerged out of the studio enquiry and what was a desire to embrace the heterogeneous textile and contemporary fine art contexts in-between which the work was situated. Recognising that my textile background was something that was distinctive to my practice, I had spent the proposal stages of the PhD vainly trying to determine what was irreducible to the medium, believing that this would provide me with the necessary focus and angle from which to approach the research. However, the more I tried to find a focus, the more it eluded me; it seemed that what was specific to the medium was its very cultural ambivalence and *un*-specificity. The outcome of this initial proposal period of enquiry was a shift in emphasis from the notion of medium specificity to the idea of material agency. My concern became less about trying to define what is particular to the medium and more about its social, historical and cultural pervasiveness and the associations it facilitates.

Although I thought that the textile dimension of my practice might provide an original research perspective, my visual vocabulary had always extended beyond the immediate contexts of the discipline and I was therefore somewhat reluctant to artificially reduce the potential complexity of the work for the sake of imposing a research focus for the project. Accordingly, the challenge from a methodological perspective was to develop an approach to the studio enquiry that allowed for the speculative and emergent nature of practice and maintained a level of inter-disciplinary flexibility. What I was looking for was a mode of production that could accommodate

the diverse sensuous and semantic contexts of textile, but which also extended beyond the specificity of the medium and acknowledged the wider post-medium fine art context in which the practice was positioned. What initially emerged as a pragmatic response in relation to the limited time available to continually make new work and a desire to maximise the products of my labour, subsequently developed as an operational strategy premised on the idea of a series of interchangeable components [Fig. 11]. The conception of the work as a series of separate elements that could be continually assembled and reassembled provided a way of working that could accommodate the potential convergence and divergence of a rich field of references and cultural codes.

In their form, the sculptural components initially drew reference from the indicative functional conventions of textile[2] and included textile and non-textile materials, the handmade and the industrially fabricated. Abstracted from the everyday, the intention was that they would operate somewhere between representation and aesthetic autonomy, motivated by formal concerns, but at the same time making ambiguous reference to objects that are vaguely familiar. I had in mind the idea that one could reconfigure these quasi objects as one would rearrange furnishings, fittings and fixtures in an domestic environment. Just as one might select items from an IKEA catalogue, the individual sculptural elements would offer both in the imagination and in practice, the potential for an infinite variety of possible permutations. This interior design reference, in turn gave rise to the conception of a 'catalogue' and a methodological approach based on the development of a lexicon or taxonomy of different categories of components. Constellatory rather than classificatory, the aim was that the catalogue would reconfigure the heterogeneous contexts of textile in ways that have not yet been encountered, testifying to the signifying agency of the medium.

The development of this operational strategy marked a significant shift in approach; prompting a move from what had previously been a concern with a predetermined outcome where the location of the 'meaning' of the work was inherent within the individual object, to the privileging of process and interrelationality. Offering the opportunity for continual rearrangement, the physical form of the work remains essentially mutable, materialised through the temporary coalition of the discrete sculptural components within a changing series of staged *mises-en-scène*. Meaning similarly remains mutable, mobilised through the various correspondences set in play across the different elements and the subject of the experiential encounter. This more process based approach also afforded a greater level of provisionality within the

Figure 11. The studio practice conceived as a series of interchangeable components documented in the form of a quasi retail catalogue (2011-2014)

creation of the work, manifesting itself in an increased openness to the affective indeterminacy of the emerging practice, without feeling the need to rationalise every decision. There was still the opportunity for a level of control in the making of the individual elements, but at the same time, a greater degree of spontaneity as the production of the work moved from the security of the studio to a process of performed improvisation within the space of display.

Constellation as a theoretical construct

From its emergence as a practical operational strategy, a theoretical encounter with Theodor Adorno's philosophical conception of the constellation (Adorno, 2007, p162), prompted its development as a broader conceptual framework for the research and structural rationale for the organisation of the thesis. My adoption of the idea of a constellation of components as an overarching methodological strategy and means of mobilising productive attachments and detachments, was somewhat validated (but also frustratingly pre-empted) by Tate Liverpool's similar employment of Adorno's model of the constellation in their 2013 major rehang of their permanent collection. Borrowing the term from Walter Benjamin, Adorno developed the concept of the constellation as a model of heterogeneous relationality where elements are mobilised through productive correspondence. The constellational, or what Benjamin also described as the 'configurational' form, allows for the clustering of diverse phenomena within an open network of relations where no one element has primacy over the other. Within this non-hierarchical system, a distinction is made between what Adorno described as 'identity thinking' where objects are subsumed and contained under concepts, and the nature of truth, which is seen to emerge spontaneously from a constantly evolving constellatory arrangement. Accordingly, the constellation is less concerned with determining the nature of objects than with the sensuous and conceptual connections that they facilitate. In the prologue to the *Origin of the German Tragic Drama* (1998) in which Benjamin first uses the constellation analogy, he states that:

> Ideas are to objects as constellations are to the stars. This means in the first place that ideas are neither the concepts of objects nor their laws. They do not contribute to the knowledge of phenomena, and in no way can the latter be criteria with which to judge the existence of ideas... Ideas are timeless constellations... (Benjamin, 1998, p.34)

The constellation then is a fluid model where meaning is not predetermined and fixed, but emerges through a complex network of convergences and divergences that momentarily coalesce to produce new relationships. For Adorno, objects within the constellation 'remain[s] ever mobile, mediated, in a state of becoming' (Mussell, 2011, p.32). With the emphasis on relationality, difference and heterogeneity is preserved; '[t]he range of concepts that are gathered around a thing "illuminates" or gives insight into that thing' (Stone, 2008, p.58), yet they can only give us partial insight. Correspondences and affinities appear and disappear as soon as they are formulated. Walter Benjamin compares this momentary affinity between subject and object to a flame that fleetingly flashes and then is gone (Weber Nicholsen, 1997, p.58). Whilst the configuration of heterogeneous elements within the constellation potentially sheds light on the phenomena around which they are gathered, they can never fully reveal the particular uniqueness of the phenomena. Difference cannot be reduced to or assimilated within some universal principle or identity. As Martin Jay observes, the constellation signifies 'a juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle (Jay, 1984, pp. 14-15).

For Adorno, it is not only the constellation of external relations that impinge on the object that make it simultaneously apprehensible and resistant to categorisation; but in a second sense of constellation, 'Adorno suggests that each object is *itself* a constellation of different past relations with other objects, all which have shaped it' (Stone, 2008, p.59). Objects are accumulations of diverse contexts set in relation over time and as such become sedimented with historical content. Constellations are therefore simultaneously external to the object, determined by an opening up to the other/outside, formulated through difference, and inherent within the material particularity or non-identity of the object. It is in this double sense of the constellation that the material particularity of the object transcends representation and universalising concepts and can never be exhaustively understood. Adorno's is a materialist model within which the complex constellatory nature of objects cannot be subsumed by the subject. According to Adorno, it is in this tension between the momentary sensuous attachment and self-reflexive conceptual detachment that the limitations of subjective agency are revealed. And I would argue, as I discuss in the following two sections, it is through this (dis)connection between mind and body that the affective potency of aesthetic experience emerges. As we saw in the previous chapter, Adorno develops this active broadening of the self to alterity, through his particular conception of mimetic comportment. This is a connecting thread that runs throughout the thesis and an aspect that I will return to in subsequent sections. Whereas Benjamin is primarily

concerned with the 'non-sensuous' correspondence of ideas and the way that mimesis is sedimented within language, Adorno's concern is with aesthetic theory and he sees art as the prime repository for mimetic behaviour. For Adorno, it is within the constantly shifting enigmatic constellation of sensuous and conceptual correspondences of the aesthetic encounter that the dynamic tension between continuity and discontinuity is enacted. I would further argue that it is the particularly sensuous dimension of textile that effectively/affectively facilitates this paradoxical relationship.[3]

Adorno's constellatory configuration is essentially a dialectical method. However, unlike the traditional Hegelian dialectic where contradictions are reconciled, Adorno proposes a negative dialectic which resists positive resolution. Rather than a closed system, Adorno's negative dialectic is an open process where differences are materialised without subordinating them to an artificial unity for the sake of subjective coherence. Within this system antithetical elements 'are not reduced to categorical understandings' but preserve a productive tension between 'the contradictory and irreconcilable' (Callaghan, 2012, p.3). As Simon Mussell observes, as a method of critical theory, Adorno's constellatory model resists the synthesis of heterogeneity in favour of 'the juxtaposition of diverse objects and concepts within configurations that precisely *draw out* rather than resolve extant inconsistencies and contradictions' (Mussell, 2011, p.33). The continuity and discontinuity opened up through the constellatory experience of artworks, offers a utopian glimpse of a possible reconciliation between subject and object, whilst at the same time maintaining a level of self-reflexivity of the sensuous excess or non-identity of material experience.

In its rejection of hierarchical order and preservation of heterogeneity, I would suggest that Adorno's constellation is in many ways similar to Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's rhizomatic model (Deleuze and Guattari,1988).[4] Adorno's negative dialectic and Deleuze and Guattari's more affirmatively constructive rhizomatic approach, however, are themselves often set in binary opposition. As William Mazarella observes:

> [w]hy would anyone want to be stuck in Adorno's gloomy closet, trying to remain world historically hopeful about that tiny little ray of light making its way in from under the door, when they could be hitching a polymorphously perverse ride on one of the Deleuze and Guattari's thousand plateaus, from which infinite lines of flight radiate out toward the horizon' (Mazzarella, 2013, p.190).

This having been said, both take a critical stance against representation and the principle of identity in favour of a logic of internal difference, and both seek liberation

from the apparent seamless reconciliation of contradictions within Hegelian dialectics. One of the arguments that I hope to develop throughout this thesis is that Adorno's notion of mimesis could also be seen to provide an alternative account of affect rather than its more usual Deleuzian formulation. Where their methodological models diverge, is in their understanding of difference. Unlike Deleuze, Adorno remains wedded to the dialectical model as a way of exposing the negative otherness or material particularity or 'non-identity' that refuses to be reconciled. Conversely, Deleuze and Guattari reject dualist or dialectical approaches in favour of a more affirmative conception of 'difference in itself', where similar to the Nietzschean idea of 'eternal return',[5] 'difference is always already differing' (Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2012, p.130) and in a continual process of becoming. I will consider some of the implications of Deleuze's more affirmatively constructive approach within the following section of this chapter (3.2 C*reative and Contingent Cartography*) and address some of the implications of affect as a methodological principle in the final section (3.3 *Affective Indeterminacy*).

Constellation of components as a broader methodological principle for the research

As a model that privileges material particularity and is able to accommodate complexity and difference, Adorno's constellation provides a useful theoretical framework for the potential contradictory connections that I wish to mobilise within practice. However, it also provides a useful model for the broader PhD process itself. As a process, the practice-based nature of the research involves the negotiation of a number of interrelated yet often very diverse practice strategies, methodological principles, theoretical perspectives and contextual frameworks. Each of these is a complex constellation in its own right, sedimented with its own knowledge structures and disciplinary conventions. Although they are practically and discursively situated, these different interdisciplinary elements are themselves 'necessarily emergent and subject to repeated adjustment' as they respond to constantly changing environments and circumstances (Barrett & Bolt, 2007, p.6). The relationship between each of these constellatory components is dynamic and contributes to a contingent and subjective framing and reframing of the research. There is an affective inter-relationality between theory and practice, but no attempt to dismiss the differences and often-contradictory modes of knowledge production that are articulated in the two approaches. Instead the productive attachments and detachments between the studio practice and theoretical dimensions of the research are set in an ever-mobile affective constellatory formation. Studio enquiry gives rise to theoretical and conceptual perspectives; theoretical

perspectives illuminate each other, inform the studio enquiry and are themselves refashioned through the developing practice; and a variety of contextual situations provide the opportunity for different spatial and temporal encounters within the continually shifting constellatory experience of both the artist and viewer. What is crucial in the mediation of all of these contradictory constellations is the dynamic relationship between subjective and material agency and the sensuous and conceptual dimensions of the research. These are materialised in the continual tension between more rational and systematic procedures - strategies that are adopted in an attempt to bring things into order and afford coherence - and a much more instinctive and affective approach that resists more subjectively determined strategic manoeuvres.

The challenge is how to negotiate these often-contradictory dimensions of the research in a way that allows for a level of assimilation and creative and imaginative leaps across boundaries, whilst maintaining a level of differentiation and operational and interpretive vitality. By structuring the various elements of the practice and written thesis as a series of constellatory components, the aim is not to ‘reduce their difference to sameness' (Meskimmon, 2003, p. 232) or artificially impose a dominating subjective narrative and artificially reduce the complexity of the research’s constitutive elements. As Simon Mussell observes:

> As an alternative to totalising narratives of ceaseless progression, overcoming and codification, the constellational method proceeds rather, by way of arranging fragmentary concrete items and concepts so as to yield insights into the contingent, unfolding of historical processes. In contrast to the hierarchical and dominating procedures of identitarian thinking that impose subjective concepts onto objects, constellations involve a non-hierarchical, non-imposing method whereby concepts are arranged together so as to encircle the object of cognition, allowing the latter to spring forth when an appropriate constellation allows the object’s truth content to emerge (Mussell, 2011, p. 31).

Of course, for all the attempts to maintain a level of operational and interpretive fluidity, I am only too aware of the paradoxical situation and the fact that the research process by its very nature imposes a subjective narrative on its objects of enquiry. The pragmatic dimension of the research comes through the provisional gathering together of a series of components by way of mobilising a series of productive attachments and detachments, but these are not prescribed or necessarily signify causal relationships. From a practical perspective, what I hope to offer is just one possible route through the research, offering a configuration of varying insights that have affected a qualitative

change in my thinking and practice. Reflecting on Benjamin's analogy of briefly flashing constellatory flames, I am reminded of the old London tube maps, which through the press of a button temporarily illuminated a series of connections by which you could navigate your journey. Presented with the complex network of potential connections, it became apparent that there were many other possible courses of direction that one could have taken as well as many unforeseeable diversionary factors that could impinge on the journey.

I pick up on the tension between the pragmatic and unpredictable dimensions of this cartographic analogy over the course of the next two sections. As previously indicated, one of the fundamental concerns of the research in its negotiation of processes of attachment and detachment, is the way that the journey gives rise to an ongoing tension between subjective and material agency. On the one hand, there is the need to determine a way forward, whilst at the same time allowing insights to emerge from the practice that have the potential to destabilise and derail the project. In addition to the often-contradictory subjective and objective dimensions set at play between the studio practice and broader research process, it is a journey that also recognises subjectivity as a constellation that is itself in flux, continually centring and decentring over the course of the PhD. In the following two sections I propose two methodological principles that provide a means of negotiating some of these tensions between subjective and material agency. In *Contingent and creative cartography* I extend the model of the constellation to a processual model of subjectivity that both takes account of the situated nature of the subject whilst recognising that subjectivity is mutable and embodied through dynamic interrelationality. Drawing on the productive and affirmative dimensions of this model of subjectivity, the emphasis will be on the pragmatic mapping and remapping of subjectivity through the reinvention of my practice and the subjective agency afforded through the PhD process. The final component within this methodological constellation, *Affective indeterminacy,* is concerned with material agency and a shift in approach that affords greater significance to the affective ambiguity of the experiential encounter and the unpredictability of material/matter that has the potential to derail and re-route any subjectively predetermined plan.

3.3 Subjective Agency: Contingent and Creative Cartography

Cartography as a constellatory (re)mapping of materially embodied and culturally situated subjectivity

Acknowledging my personal investment in the research and the political implications of negotiating textile medium specificity, in this section I discuss the methodological principle of 'contingent and creative cartography' as a constellatory (re)mapping of culturally determined subjectively situated positions. I extend Adorno's constellatory model of inter-relationality by setting it in constellatory configuration with Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic model of connective conjunction and Rosi Braidotti's figuration of the nomadic subject. With an emphasis on the subjective agency afforded by the reinvention my practice during the course of the PhD, I consider the notion of cartography as both a theoretical construct and a strategic mode of operation. A cartographic methodology acknowledges the processually oriented constellatory (re)mapping of the research and the relationship between material and subjective agency embodied in the overarching premise of attachment and detachment. From my own perspective, conceiving the research as 'a living map, a transformative account of the self' (Braidotti 2002, p.3) has allowed my culturally determined subjectivity and medium specific attachment to be detached and pragmatically remapped in a much more fragmentary and productively affirmative way.

One of the initial impetuses for the research was a desire to acknowledge a body of work established over a period of eighteen years, but also to use it as an opportunity to reinvigorate my practice. The contingent subversion of reductive languages, typical of modernist abstraction through the sensuous and symbolic conventions of textile that was distinctive to my practice at the outset of the research, had proved to be a productive strategy [see appendix A]. However, the strategy had somewhat played itself out and become creatively restrictive. Yet whilst I had a desire to open up the practice, it was clear that my identity as an artist had been formulated in relation to the particular nature of my situated experience and that any research really needed to be grounded in that experience. I had the dilemma of trying to formulate a research proposal around a practice that acknowledged the past, but at the same time looked towards an unknown future. In the light of this dilemma, the cartographic approach provides a useful conceptual framework and operational strategy, in that it recognises the reality of lived experience and the embodied coordinates of a subjectively situated position. But at the same time, it is concerned with the active production of subjectivity

through the forging of new alternative creative connections. Allowing for a reciprocal process of both attachment and detachment, or 'territorialisation' and 'deterritorialisation' in Deleuze and Guattari's spatial terminology, it allows me to take my bearings and navigate the past, whilst also being open to the plotting of new trajectories and the redrafting of new courses of direction.

Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of a map not as 'an instrument of reproduction but rather one of construction' (Kaufman & Heller, 1998, p.5), cartography is most notably developed as a feminist figuration in the writings of Rosi Braidotti and Marsha Meskimmon. Describing the need to find new 'figurations or alternative representations' that can accommodate the processual and hybrid nature of subjectivity, Braidotti states:

> Figurations are not figurative ways of thinking, but rather more materialistic mappings of situated, or embedded and embodied, positions. A cartography is a theoretically-based and politically-informed reading of the present. A cartographic approach fulfils the function of providing both ex-egetical tools and creative theoretical alternatives. As such it responds to [my] two main requirements, namely to account for one's locations in terms both of space (geopolitical or ecological dimension) and time (historical and genealogical dimension), and to provide alternative figurations or schemes of representation for these locations, in terms of power as restrictive (potestas) but also as empowering or affirmative (potentia). I consider this cartographic gesture as the first move towards an account of nomadic subjectivity as ethically accountable and politically empowering (Braidotti, 2002, p.2).

From both a theoretical and an operational perspective such cartography has provided a crucial strategy in formulating new flexible models of subjectivity that move beyond the conception of the subject as *a priori* essence, object or a stable bounded entity. The process of cartography allows new maps to be drawn that move beyond the stasis of binary logic and instead articulate the mutability of the subject, embodied through relationality and mobilised through difference. Through the cartographic figuration, the subject is reconceived as a 'decentred', 'multi-layered', 'dynamic and changing entity' (Braidotti, 2002, p.2). Instead of the dialectical subject/object dichotomy there is an unfolding of complexity that allows for multiple connections and the reformulation of the subject as an inter-relational ever-mutable composite assemblage. Privileging movement and fluidity over fixity, subjectivity is seen to be always in a condition of emergence; continually ravelling and unravelling through an intricate network of

‘intercorporeal’ and ‘transindividual’ exchange (Meskimmon, 2003, p.77*).* In this complex processual interaction between human and non-human agents, 'bodies matter' and are recognised as the 'first locus subjectivity’ (Meskimmon, 2003, p.72) but are perpetually embodied through external encounters in a way that privileges heterogeneity over any sense of inherent essence or fixed reality. This remapping is methodologically beneficial in that it allows the implicitly negative formulation of alterity and difference within conventional binary logic to be destabilised and affirmatively reconceived in more positive terms as productive difference.

From the strategic mediation of binary oppositions to an affirmation of productive difference

Resonating with my own experience and ambitions to move beyond medium specificity, this pragmatic and affirmative re-conception of difference prompted a significant attitudinal shift. The strategic subversion of binary oppositions within my pre PhD practice, which harnessed the processes, materials and accompanying discourses of needlework/plain-sewing within the conventions of a minimalist aesthetic, initially emerged, albeit unconsciously at the time, out of an instinctive desire for self-preservation. The strategy was ostensibly a process of camouflage: an intuitive response to my repositioning within a department of fine art as a young lecturer and a means of affording some currency to my marginal position by assimilating with the hegemony of modernist abstraction. Increasingly informed by my engagement with post-modern ideological critique and the discursive turn within cultural theory, this initially instinctive response, over time became a more self-conscious strategic positioning. By way of affording currency to my marginal position, it developed into a strategic critical remapping of my practice that attempted to problematise boundaries and subvert the authority of conventional definitions of meaning. As the culturally undervalued term within the hierarchical fine art/textile binary, textile was reduced to the status of negative opposition, strategically adopting the language of modernist autonomy whilst simultaneously engaging in a critical re-formulation of the fine art discourses against which textile’s identity had been constituted. This strategy of cultural positioning functioned within a structuralist grid that ‘was conceived as an oppositional framework of culturally constructed significations’ (Massumi, 2002, p.2) with the aim of opening up a self-reflexive critical space of operation. It was a logically plotted grid in which the quotidian sensuous and semantic dimension of textile was set in a dialectical tension against the autonomy of modernist abstraction within a deconstructively expanded field. However, what was initially a productive and empowering strategy, in

time became formulaic and creatively limiting, subsumed by its own agenda and dictated by a 'rhetoric of negative opposition' (Druker, 2005b, p.68) that was dependent on a conceptual understanding of the cultural codes that were set in play. What is more, it was a game where the rules were still determined by the culturally dominant legacies of modernist abstraction. As Brian Massumi observes:

> The idea of positionality begins by subtracting movement from the picture. This catches the body in cultural freeze-frame. This point of explanatory departure is a pinpointing, a zero–point of stasis. When positioning of any kind comes a determining first, movement comes a problematic second…Movement is entirely subordinated to the positions it connects. These are predefined…The very notion of movement as qualitative transformation is lacking. There is "displacement," but no transformation (Massumi, 2002, p.3).

(Re)mapping as constructive agency

The cartography proposed by feminist writers such as Braidotti and Meskimmon draws on a different kind of map than the logically plotted structuralist grid. Theirs is a cartographic model that takes account of the significance of cultural positioning but embraces the Deleuzian rhizomatic[6] map where negative opposition gives way to an affirmation of complexity. Reconceiving the map in their rhizomatic way, elements are not restricted by a predetermined structure in which relationships are culturally defined. It is not about representation and the passive tracing of pre-described pathways but about the construction of new maps through the formation and re-formation of an unlimited number of possible connections. Unlike the arborescent model where the potential for connectivity is dictated by a linear bifuricating system of roots/routes that connect one point to another, in the rhizomatic map the connections themselves are always changing as well as the very rules that dictate the nature of the connections. The rhizomatic process of cartography is a decentred, dynamic, open system: '[t]he map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification…it always has multiple entryways' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988, p.12).

The elements within a rhizomatic map operate within what Deleuze and Guattari describe as ‘a plane of immanence’ or ‘plane of consistency’ where hierarchical distinctions are collapsed and flattened out and no one element has priority over another. As a formless, destratified, decoded, self-organising zone, ‘composing the

organic and inorganic, material and immaterial, and actual and virtual realms of our operating system' (Zepke & O'Sullivan, 2010, p.8), the plane of immanence is a space of complex connectivity and differentiation that is continuously in the process of formation. This zone is a space of indeterminacy and experimentation where subjectivity cannot be satisfactorily represented. Reconceived as 'a qualitative multiplicity in an open ended series of complexities' (Braidotti, 2002, p.265), and continually re mapped in a constant process of becoming, subjectivity becomes a pragmatic and creative operation. It is through the forging of new connections that one actively undertakes the production of subjectivity and has the capacity for reinventing oneself creatively. According to Guattari, '[one] creates new modalities of subjectivity in the same way an artist creates new forms from a palette' (Guattari, 1995, p.7). Similar to Deleuze and Gauttari's figuration of the machinic assemblage'[7] a rhizomatic map is defined by its functionality. It is a pragmatic performative space of experimentation, concerned with getting things done and moving us forward. Cartography as a process of autopoeitic self-creation[8] 'is a means by which individuals can reorganise, or re-singularise themselves in a creative, affirmative, and self-organising manner' (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.27). Just as we might plot a new map based on whichever connections are most useful, within a machinic assemblage, any component might be plugged into any other component according to which elements function most efficiently, even if, as Deleuze and Guattari observe, '(i)nevitably there will be monstrous crossbreeds' (Deleuze and Guattari,1987, p.157).

Embracing nomadic subjectivity

In line with Braidotti's conception of cartography as a living map, the cartographic process embodied within this research project 'actively creates the terrain it maps' (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.35). It charts what has been a considerable attitudinal and operational shift that has brought a qualitative transformation in the approach to the practice. It is a journey that is contingent in that there is an acknowledgement of the reality of my embodied situated experience, but creative in the desire for change and the opening up of alternative possibilities. Instead of being defined by the medium specific contexts of my practice and strategic subtle dualist game playing, there was a self-determined decision to forge new connections, open up to heterogeneity, and embrace uncertainty. This meant engaging affirmatively rather than adopting a position of negative critique, reintroducing movement into the heart of the practice and embracing my historically nomadic position. The shift in mind-set allowed me to think difference in positive terms, welcome the multiple, complex and contradictory

dimensions of my practice and recognise my own desire and complicity with those very same fine art conventions that as a younger artist and academic I somehow felt I had to oppose. The first new point of departure was to shift the agenda of the research from one that was largely dictated by visual culture and the legacies of modernism, to one that drew its reference from textile's functional conventions and traditional position within material culture. Instead of using the material, quotidian conventions of textile as a way of introducing subtle subversions into the art historical canon, but at the same time remaining critically aloof from those very same conventions, I embraced the seductive mass material associations of the medium. The meant opening up to the heterogeneous material agency of textile and moving away from medium specificity. Although the contexts and conventions of textile provided an initial stimulus and point of departure for the studio enquiry, I no longer felt bound by these conventions. Instead, my historical attachment to the medium became decentred and mapped in a much more fragmentary way through the active creation of new connections and a much more playful mixing of codes.

The significance of cartography then, is that it remains resolutely pragmatic and affords subjective agency; and this has allowed for the mapping and remapping of my practice over the course of the research. However, as Kaufman and Heller observe, the process of cartography is both 'the act of charting out a pathway and the opening of that pathway to the event of the chance encounter' (Kaufman and Heller, 1998, p. 6) where subjective agency breaks down and is seen to be limited. The transformation in the research that is less easy to measure is the shift in attitude whereby I was able to willingly accept the limitations of my own agential capacity and welcome indeterminacy as a productive force. Whilst the self-conscious desire to open up to heterogeneity was undoubtedly instrumental in bringing about a change in the practice, the real qualitative change only came about when I was derailed by the affective dimension of the practice. In the next section I will consider *Affective indeterminacy* as a methodological principle where the process of cartography extends agency beyond the priority of the subject and acknowledges the forceful intensity and agency of material/matter. It is in this way that the research project maps what Diana Coole describes as 'a spectrum across which agentic capacities appear and interact' (Coole, 2005, p.125).

3.4 Affective Indeterminacy: The Agency of Matter/Material

In the previous section, my concern was with the methodological principle of cartography as a constellatory (re)mapping of materially embodied and culturally determined subjectivity. As a pragmatically affirmative approach, this cartographic process afforded a degree of agency whereby I was able to welcome my indeterminate positioning and give currency to the circumstantial conditions of my situated experience. Rather than see my existence on the margins of visual and material culture as a disadvantage and site for resistance, my nomadic status allowed for the productive blurring of boundaries and a (re)mapping of the practice through the positing of alternative trajectories. This affirmation of productive difference was manifest in both an attitudinal and operational shift that moved from a rhetoric of negative critique and the strategic mediation of binary oppositions, to an acknowledgement of the constellatory complexity of textile as signifying agency and a subsequent more playful and enthusiastic engagement with a range of visual references and historical and cultural contexts.

In this section I turn my attention to the agency of matter/material and the methodological principle of affective indeterminacy. Where the process of cartography is theoretically premised on both an acknowledgement of the reality of situated experience and the active opening up to alterity, it was only when this became embodied and experienced in practice that there was a qualitative transformation in my approach to the research. In what follows, I consider the notion of affect and how an openness to the indeterminacy of the sensuously bound aesthetic encounter and the material vitality of the body, had the effect of undermining subjective agency in a way that derailed and rerouted the practice beyond self-determined motivations. My focus is on the Deleuzian account of affect and a broader concern with the agency of matter/material that has gained prominence within the arts, humanities and social sciences over the timescale of my own project. This is by way of introducing the concept and setting the scene for my later return to Adorno's conception of mimesis within my reflection on the practice, which I argue could be construed in terms of affect and thereby contribute to current understandings of the phenomenon. Moreover, I suggest that it is the productive indeterminacy opened up between subjective attachment and detachment mobilised through the constellatory nature of the practice that the affective potency of aesthetic experience emerges.

Affective contagion

I will begin with a couple of personal anecdotes:

1. As indicated earlier, I embarked upon the PhD desperately trying to find a focus for the research by trying to define what was specific to the medium of textile and attempting to make sense of the multiple influences and contexts that informed my practice. This was made all the more difficult as each of these contexts, which straddled both material and visual culture, were themselves subject to subtle combinations and subversions. On top of this, my reflections were based on both an established body of work and vague ambitions for an as yet unknown future practice. The beauty of a visual language is that it can accommodate constellatory complexity, where aesthetic ambiguity is seen to be a powerful force. This, however, is clearly at odds with the requirements of the PhD proposal where you are expected to reduce this aesthetic complexity to a logical, unambiguous, and very focused articulation of the area of investigation. What I was desperately searching for in those early days of the research, was what I hoped would be the reassurance of some underlying 'essence' or conceptually determined thread running through the diverse contexts of the practice that would somehow make sense of its potential complexity. But, the more I tried to find a focus and conceptually 'pin things down', the more it frustratingly continued to elude me.

   However, at the same time that I was adopting a more logical and pragmatic approach to the research, I was finding myself increasingly instinctively drawn to the work of a number of artists such as Tatiana Trouvé [Fig. 12], Claire Barclay [Fig. 13], Carol Bove [Fig 14], Nairy Bahgramian [Fig. 15] and Thea Djordjadze [Fig.16]; many of whom I had come across by chance on my regular trips to the Venice Biennale. This was work with which I was initially not familiar and would not automatically expect myself to have a natural affinity. The apparent difference of these artists to each other and to the reductive visual vocabulary that I employed within my own practice at the time meant that I did not see their work as being in any way relevant to the research and chose to ignore it. However, over a number of subsequent encounters, the work of these artists slowly began to impose itself on my consciousness. Although it seemed unrelated to my studio enquiry, my experience of this work prompted a forceful response that made an immediate impression but which I was unable quantify and therefore dismissed. As I described in my earlier accounts of the my initial aesthetic encounter with the work of Barclay and Djordjadze, the moment of aesthetic recognition that I experienced in their work was

very much a sensuous affinity which registered as a tangible bodily intensity and prompted an ambiguity of feeling that exceeded cognition. Simultaneously entranced and unsettled by the work's formality, its embodied presence, and the elusive and enigmatic mixing of cultural references, this was work that seemed to produce a potent aesthetic experience, precisely because it materially impinged on the body whilst at the same time resolutely resisting conceptual synthesis.

2. Further on into the research, I was in my local gym late in the evening, half-heartedly going through the motions on the cross trainer. With a full-time day job and little time for the research I was trying to maximise my efforts by reading at the same time that I exercised! Following up one of many research leads, I had just started reading *Art encounters Deleuze and Guattari, thought beyond representation* by Simon O'Sullivan (2006). I recall very clearly how having got a few pages into the book I was literally stopped in my tracks; my breath began to quicken and heart began to pound - in a way that was coincidental to the demands of the exercise! This had such an impact that I had to get off the equipment and sit down and was. temporarily suspended in a moment of inertia unable to continue reading or continue my workout.

I recall both of these anecdotes by way of personal testimony to the perplexing intensity of affect. The first account of what was in fact a slow accumulative series of experiential encounters had a particularly dramatic impact in terms of both derailing and dictating the direction of the research. For all my efforts to conceptually impose a research rationale and my self-determined desire to open up the practice and forge new connections, it was the unexpected affective response to the indeterminacy of these artists' work that brought about a real and qualitative transformation. It was the first hand experience of these artistic encounters that later resonated with the theoretical encounter with Simon O'Sullivan's textual account of the aesthetics of affect. Unlike the unexpected embodied intensity of the artistic encounters that gradually began to register in my consciousness, this was a Benjamin-like sudden mimetic flash. An instantaneous revelatory moment where I made a connection between O'Sullivan's articulation of the conjunction of 'rupture' and 'affirmation' that is characteristic of affect (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.1), and what I had experienced in my various encounters with the artists' work. Drawing on the work of Deleuze and Guattiri, O'Sulivan argues that the paradoxical experiences of rupture and affirmation arise through an encounter wherein 'our typical ways of being in the world are challenged, our systems of knowledge disrupted. We are forced to thought' (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.1). In both of the anecdotes that I recall, the full force of affect was materialised through the experiential

Figure 12. Tatiana Trouvé view of the exhibition 52nd edition of Venice Biennial, Italy (2007). Courtesy Tatiana Trouvé and Galerie Perrotin.

Figure 13. Installation view, *Claire Barclay - Pale Heights*, Mudam Luxembourg (10 October 2009 – 3 January 2010). Reproduced by kind permssion of Claire Barclay and Stephen Friedman Gallery

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Figure 14. Carol Bove, Museion Foundation, Bolzano (2014)

Figure 15 Nairy Baghramian, *Class Reunion* (2008). Copyright: Nairy Baghramian. Courtesy: the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery. Image: Wolfgang Günzel

Figure 16. Thea Djordjadze Installation view, *Casualties*, Galerie Meyer Kainer, Vienna, May 12 - June 08, 2011. Copyright Thea Djordjadze / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Courtesy Galerie Meyer Kainer and Sprüth Magers

indeterminacy of the event and the disjunctive conjunction between the immediacy of sensuous corporeal attachment and self-reflexive conceptual detachment. Within the temporal unfolding of the both the aesthetic and theoretical experiential encounters, there was a momentary blurring of the boundaries between subject/object, mind/body that resonated firstly within the processual vitality of somatic matter before registering semantically within the brain.

The processually oriented intensity of matter/material

What is often described as the 'affective turn'[9] within cultural theory within the mid-1990s was in many ways seen to be in response to what were perceived to be the limitations of the linguistic, psychological and sociological models of post modernism and poststructuralism. The ideological critique of representation and the opening up of historical, social and cultural categories to the test of their own history problematised boundaries and afforded a cultural repositioning. But on the whole, these were discursively constituted boundaries where the very matter/material substance of the body dissolved under a preoccupation with the textual and signifying registers of cultural production. As Brian Massumi observes: the discursive body can make sense through its signifying gestures and '[i]f properly "performed," they may also unmake sense by scrambling significations… but they don't sense' (Massumi, 2002, p.2). Whilst not dismissing the undoubted impact of poststructuralist theory and its particular significance in terms of affording critical currency to my own marginalised position; the turn to affect and corresponding resurgence of interest in 'new materialism',[10] places bodily matter and the 'qualities of experience instigated through matter in its most literal sense (and sensing)' (Massumi, 2002, p.4) at the forefront of analysis. Emerging as a concern across the humanities and social sciences, the turn to affect returns an emphasis to the sentient body and vibrancy and vitality of bodily matter - and indeed matter in its broadest sense - as a self-organising and 'transformative force *in itself*', (Dolphijn and van der Tuin, 2012, p.107 original emphasis).

Affect is the name given to the vitality of matter as it registers as intensity within the body. As affirmation of the body's unfolding relational complexity in a perpetual state of becoming, these bodily intensities are mobilised by its own processual materiality and infinite potential for variation. They are paradoxical in that they simultaneously reaffirm a sense of self and mark 'the subject's discontinuity with itself' (Clough, 2010, p.206). In his translator's notes to the introduction of *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi defines affect accordingly:

> AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling *(sentiment* in Deleuze and Guattari). *L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus)* is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. *L'affection* (Spinoza's *affectio)* is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include "mental" or ideal bodies) (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.xvii)

Expanding on this definition, Gregg and Seigworth eloquently describe affect 'as a gradient of bodily capacity – a supple incrementalism of ever modulating force relations – that…accumulates across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness' (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p.2). Variously characterised as pre-personal, trans-subjective, immaterial, not intentional, pre-cognitive; affect is understood as a resonation of unmediated bodily intensity that is 'immanent to matter' and 'immanent to experience' (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.41) which is hard wired into the body. Affective intensity is '[t]he feeling of having a feeling' (Massumi, 2002, p.14) but the nature of this feeling is difficult to articulate and is often deemed to be autonomous and removed from intentionality and cognition. Massumi stresses this autonomy, making a distinction between intensity and emotion, which he describes as 'qualified intensity'.[11] Indeed, once we register affect cognitively - once it is 'owned and recognised' - it becomes something else, absorbed into wider semiotic and semantic circuits of meaning (Massumi, 2002, p.28). For Massumi, affective intensity is 'a non-conscious, never-to-be-conscious autonomic remainder' (Massumi, 2002, p.25) which is in a continual feedback loop with its conceptually qualified counterpart.

As forces of intensity that extend boundaries between self and other and exceed reason and rationality, affect points to the instability of the body. Undermining any notion of a self-contained rational subject, it opens the body up to its own indeterminacy and is characterised by what Massumi describes as 'a crossing of semantic wires' in 'that it is not semantically or semiotically ordered' and can only signify itself in a paradox (Massumi, 2002, p.24). At the same time that affective intensity destabilises, it also introduces a level of vitality and the potential for movement and change. Simon O'Sullivan describes this space of indeterminacy between rupture and affirmation as an 'affective gap' (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.38) suggesting that '[i]t is in this gap then that genuine events emerge' (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.38). Moreover, he states that the aesthetic encounter occupies a privileged position in being able to open up this space of potential transformation. This affective gap - or what Massumi refers to

as 'the excluded middle'[12] - is the momentary suspension between activity and passivity, stimulus and response, between sensuous intensity and signification, between content and form, between mind and body……. between attachment and detachment, between assimilation and differentiation.

Discontinuous continuity: an affective gap between sensuous attachment and conceptual detachment

Here I propose a connection between the indeterminacy of the continuity and discontinuity between subject and object opened up through the constellatory nature of artworks that Adorno articulates through his aesthetic theory. I would suggest that the sensuous yet enigmatic dimension of mimesis that constitutes the blank space at the centre of Adorno's constellatory configuration might correspond with the affective gap opened up through the aesthetic encounter. However, whether understood in terms of the Adornian concept of mimesis or the more prevalent Deleuzian conception of affect, what is key is the way that the paradoxical dimensions of the experiential encounter resonate with each other across this gap or blank space and impinge themselves on the body through its processual condition of emergence. Massumi suggests that we should not see these paradoxical dimensions 'as binary oppositions or contradictions, but as resonating levels' (Massumi, 2002, p.33) and that these resonating levels constitute 'an immediate self-complication' (Massumi, 2002, p.14), or what he elsewhere describes as 'disjunctive coinciding' (Massumi, 2002, p.13). Qualifying this idea of self-complication, Massumi states that:

> It is best to think of it as a resonation, or interference pattern. An echo, for example, cannot occur without a distance between surfaces for the sounds to bounce from. But the resonation is not on the walls. It is the emptiness between them. It fills the emptiness with its complex patterning. That patterning is not at a distance from itself. It is immediately its own event… Resonation can be seen as converting distance, or extension, into intensity. It is a qualitative transformation of distance into an immediacy of self-relation (Massumi, 2002, p.14).

From a feminist perspective, Marsha Meskimmon similarly proposes the notion of resonance as a way of privileging complexity over binary conventions; particularly as a way of moving beyond the dualism of coherence and dissonance. Meskimmon acknowledges the significance of the term dissonance and the way that it was usefully mobilised within feminist debates in the 1990s to problematise ideas of consonance

and the notion of a coherent stable self-contained subject.[13] However, she offers resonance as a more suitable term for the way that it allows for multiple connections to coexist within a 'synchronous moment' (Meskimmon, 2003, p.237) without reducing difference. Drawing on the definition of resonance within the sciences, she usefully reminds us that one of its notable features is to be able 'to shatter what had been thought to be solid' (Meskimmon, 2003, p.238). Qualifying the productive dimension of resonance, she states:

> It is a logic of resonance that I would put forward as a feminist political strategy for art historical and critical praxis, precisely because the differences which can coalesce powerfully in one context need not be determined once and for all by that singular address. A resonant criticism is fluid and permits configurations with other differences, temporarily, materially and spatially. This reworks conventions of theory and practice through attentive explorations of time, matter and space within the nexus of the critical act (Meskimmon, 2003, p.238).

A qualitative transformation: embracing the productive uncertainty of aesthetic experience

It is the resonating in-between-ness of affect then that accounts for its force and aesthetic potential. It is a state of indeterminacy prompted by an encounter with something new, something other, which facilitates both an intensive corporeal affinity and exceeds the limits of our understanding. In terms of an operational strategy for the practice and guiding principle for the research, the acknowledgement of affect as a productive force had a significant impact. In the first instance, the uninhibited material pleasure and indeterminate vitality that I found myself responding to in my encounters with other artists work, provided a necessary stimulus and urgent desire to get back into the studio and what was a welcome amnesty from the conceptual rationalisation of the practice that seemed to have dominated the early stages of the research. The work that I had found so affective was not concerned with strategic game playing or the defensive mediation of binary oppositions, but was affirmative and gave the impression that it had emerged out of a process where making and materiality appeared to have agency. There still seemed to be a level of control in the production of the work and an evidently very considered approach, but it was work that seemed to relish its own openness and unpredictability, where ambiguity appeared to be one of its key motor forces. The affective contagion of this work seemed to grant me the 'permission' to welcome the complexity and contradictions opened up through the negotiation of the

various contexts of my own work. It provided me with a level of confidence to trust in the intelligence of practice and prompted a much more affirmative, playful, and open-ended process led approach guided by a response to formal considerations and the activity of making. The initial elements within my proposed catalogue of interchangeable sculptural components developed out of a conceptual analysis of the functional and semantic conventions of textile and were meant to be indicative of those conventions. However, the emergent nature of the studio enquiry meant that I soon began to produce work that no longer seemed to easily adhere to these conventions and it was only when I stopped trying to impose pre-conceived ideas and make work without necessarily having to rationalise every decision that the practice - and indeed I - seemed to have a greater vitality. Hence, what began as a conceptually determined classificatory taxonomy, over time developed into a much more aesthetically determined constellatory inventory. The effect of this opening up to affective indeterminacy was liberating, allowing me to privilege the affirmative dislocation of sensuously bound aesthetic experience over representation. I felt much more able to respond to gut instincts and unformulated sensations and to embrace uncertainty and the pre and non-rational aspects of my practice. I was much more open to the unexpected chance encounter and able to welcome contradiction and the indeterminacy that comes through the mixing of material and semantic codes. Significantly, by no longer predetermining the outcome but responding to the work as it emerged, I found myself both destabilised and enlivened by the constant sense of surprise as subjective agency and material agency became entangled in a process of productive co-constitution.

3.5 Summary Reflections

Reflecting more broadly on the three underlining methodological strategies that I propose as guiding principles for the research, there are a number of features that they have in common. What they all allow for is an unfolding inter-relational complexity where there is less of a concern with the nature of entities in and of themselves in favour of what they can do and the models of non-hierarchical, heterogeneous connectivity that they facilitate. Rather than static or fixed, they are operational strategies that are processual in nature in a constant condition of emergence where meaning and materiality is continually in flux. They have an affirmative pragmatic dimension and are concerned with the active production of the new through an opening up to difference and broadening of the self to the other. At the same time, however, this

embracing of alterity and difference creates an indeterminate space that has the potential to destabilise and undermine coherence. Falling within the overarching model of attachment and detachment proposed by the research, these three attitudinal and operational perspectives are foundational to the practice as it negotiates the relationship between medium specific and post medium contexts and material and subjective agency.

Within the following chapter, I turn my attention to the studio enquiry as I consider the material (re)mapping of the work and the subsequent emergence of a number of key practice strategies which form a constellatory relationship with the broader methodological principles that I have discussed above. The focus in this fourth chapter is on the evolutionary material configuration of the work and the way that the studio procedures open up material specificity and maintain a productive tension between processes of attachment and detachment. It is in the final chapter that the constellatory formation of the work is opened up to an even greater complexity through its configuration within a series of wider cultural contexts.

Notes to Chapter 3: Methodological Components: Processes of Attachment and Detachment

Introduction

1. Rosi Braidotti's conception of the nomadic subject draws on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of nomadism and is a figuration of contemporary subjectivity understood as mobile and in flux, able 'to move across established categories and levels of experience: blurring boundaries without burning bridges' (Braidotti, 1994, p.4).

Constellational Inter-relationality

2. In his attempt to construct a taxonomy of craft objects, Howard Risatti proposes the overarching concept of 'applied function' which he further sub divides into the categories of 'cover', 'container' and support' (Risatti,2007, p.32).
3. Shierry Weber Nicholsen provides a comprehensive analysis of Benjamin's and Adorno's different conceptions of the constellation in 'Aesthetic Theory's mimesis of Walter Benjamin'. In Huhn, T. & Zuidervaart, L. (1997).
4. The only research that I have been able to find that makes a comprehensive analysis of the differences and similarities between Adorno and Deleuze is the Doctoral thesis by Wu Jing (2009). *The Logic of Difference in Deleuze and Adorno: Positive Constructivism VS Negative Dialectics.* Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Hong Kong.
5. Similar to Adorno and Delueze and Guattari's anti-idealist stance, Friedrich Nietzsche's principle of 'eternal return' or 'eternal recurrence'- first mentioned in *Gay Science* (Nietszche,1961) and further developed in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Nietzsche, 1974) - is premised on the prospect that the world has no metaphysical purpose, beginning or end, but is an eternally repeating event and unpredictable play of difference. Without metaphysical purpose and in a continual state of emergence, life is an experimental process of self-creation where '[h]umans gain or lose power, ascend or descend depending on whether they live an affirmative or negative life. But these values are neither pre-given nor fixed…' (Zepke, 2005, p.13).

   > Nietzsche assumes an immanent will to power as the genetic condition of life, but its ascending and descending lines of valuation give different ontological expressions of its vitality. Depending on the perspective, evaluation produces values (interpretations) that either affirm or deny life. To negate will to power means to deny life and and results in nihilism, whereas to affirm is to create, and so to participate in life's vital becoming. Whichever way we look at it, there is no extra dimension in which our evaluations and actions are judged. We are what we do, and we get the life – and the art- we deserve depending on our perspective (Zepke, 2005, p.14-15).

   For further discussion on the relationship between Deleuze and Nietzsche, see: 'The Artist-Philosopher: Deleuze, Nietzsche, and the Critical Art of Affirmation' (Zepke, 2005).

Subjective Agency: Contingent and Creative Cartography

6. The concept of the rhizome is at the heart of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy. In the introductory chapter to *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1988) they draw on the figure of the biological rhizome which spreads horizontally and sends out multiple roots and shoots in all directions, as a model of non-hierarchical heterogeneous connectivity. As a self-proliferating multiplicity that privileges movement and is without foundations or origins, the rhizome is distinguished from the centralised hierarchical aborescent or tree-like root model dominant within traditional Western thinking that presupposes a stable single point of origin.
7. Deleuze and Guattari's machinic assemblages are fundamentally pragmatic, marked by their functionality and potential to connect heterogeneous elements in a non-hierarchical disjunctive synthesis rather than a logically cohesive system. Simon O'Sullivan states that 'like the Rhizome the machinic assemblage is to be thought of as a kind of concept tool that

enables a thinking through of expanded connectivity' (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.26). 'In such a machinic remapping subject and object become less fixed, both being moments in a network of continuous contact and communication between different kinds of machinic assemblages' (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.27). For further insight into the concept of the machinic assemblage, see: Zepke, S. (2005) *Art as Abstract Machine, Ontology and Aesthetics in Deleuze and Guattarri*.

8. Guattari draws on the Chilean biologist and philosopher's first use of the term autopoiesis to describe a system that is capable of maintaining and reproducing itself. Guattari conceives subjectivity as a 'machinic assemblage' which involves 'an internal cohesion (autopoiesis, or the production of a territory) but also an external openness (allopoiesis, or a deterritorialisation)' (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.27-28).

Affective Indeterminacy: The Agency of Matter/Material

9. The so called 'affective turn' began to emerge in the 1990's across the humanities and social sciences and has gained increasing prominence within the arts and cultural studies over the last ten years: notably with the publications of *The Autonomy of Affect* by Brian Massumi (Massumi, 2002); *The affective turn: theorising the social* edited by Patricia Ticineto Clough (Clough, 2007) and *The Affect Theory Reader* edited by Melissa Greg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010). As Marguerite La Caze and Henry Martin Lloyd observe in their editors' introduction to the special issue of *Parrhesia* on the theme of the philosophy of affect, '[b]roadly then the "turn" may be understood in terms of renewed and widespread scholarly interest in corporeality, in emotions, and in the importance of aesthetics' (La Caze & Lloyd, 2011, p.2). As such, the resurgence of interest in theories of affect could be seen to mark an epistemological move away from the linguistic preoccupation of literary theory and structuralism/post structuralism prevalent in the 1980's.
10. 'New materialism' or 'neo materialism' similarly emerged as a term in the late 1990's to describe a category or indeed cartography of theories, which, like the resurgence of interest in theories of affect, developed in response to the 'linguistic turn' in the 1980's. Where the linguistic paradigms of semiotics and deconstructive theory are concerned with the instability of language, new materialism is concerned with material agency and the dynamic instability and self-organising powers of human and non-human matter/material. Questioning the anthropomorphic narrative and centrality of the human subject, and marking a way of thinking beyond the traditional dualisms of nature/culture, subject/object, mind/body that have underpinned our understanding of the world since the enlightenment, the rise of interest in 'new materialism' is evidenced through recent publications including: *New materialisms: ontology, agency, and politics* (Coole & Frost, 2010); *New Materialism: interviews and cartographies* (Dolphijn & Tuin, 2012); *Carnal knowledge: towards a 'new materialism' through the arts* (Barrett & Bolt, 2013).
11. In his essay *The Autonomy of Affect*, Brian Massumi reflects on a series of scientific experiments which suggest that there is 'a half-second lapse between the beginning of a bodily event and its completion in an outwardly directed, active expression' (Massumi, 2002, p.29). According to Massumi the present is lost or suspended in this unmediated 'missing half-second' between past and future, 'passing too quickly to be perceived, too quickly, actually, to have happened…This requires a reworking of how we think about the body. Something that happens to quickly to have happened, actually, is virtual' (Massumi, 2002, p.30). Simon O'Sullivan describes 'this realm of the virtual…[as] a space or zone or what Alain Badiou might call an "event site"…Such an accessing of the event might involve what Henri Bergson calls *attention*: a suspension of normal motor activity which in itself allows other "planes of reality to be perceivable (an opening up to the world beyond utilitarian interests'. It is through art that we might encounter this affective cut in bodily continuity and the 'switching' of this 'spatio-temporal register' (O'Sullivan, 2001, p.127).
12. Marie Thomson and Ian Biddle provide a useful extrapolation of Massumi's notion of the excluded middle which they state draws on 'Aristotle's law of the excluded middle, the third of the three classic laws of thought (the first being the law of identity and the second being the law of non-contradiction) and states that either that proposition is true, or its negation is

true… In other words, there is no middle ground. In existing in the space between contradiction the middle of the excluded middle, Massumi's notion of affect troubles such principles, running against the grain of much twentieth-century thought that takes Aristolian principles as its ontological basis' (Thompson & Biddle, 2013, p6).

13. See Rosi Braidotti (1991) *Patterns of dissonance: A study of women and contemporary philosophy*.

4. Practice Components: Material Configurations

4.1 Practice strategies introduction

Having considered a number of theoretical models of assimilation and differentiation and outlined some of the broader overarching methodological principles in relation to the pragmatics of attachment and detachment, in this chapter I shift my enquiry to the studio. Informed by work carried out in the early stages of the research that bore the legacy of pre PhD practice, the methodological strategies articulate what was largely a shift in mind-set and are as much attitudinal as operational. Over the course of the following three sections, I map the development of the studio enquiry and address how these attitudinal shifts and the theoretical perspectives began to impinge on and be shaped by the parallel practical investigations.

Although their passage of development was far from straightforward and in reality materialised out of the usual speculative uncertainty of studio practice, three practice strategies: one, *Arbitrary objects, objecthood* and *thingness,* two, *Staged contiguity and discontiguity* and three *Somatic sensuous immediacy and the regulation of matter/ material,* emerged as foundational studio procedures. In my consideration of each of these strategies, I discuss their evolution and how they map onto the broader methodological principles of *Constellatory inter-relationality, Cartographic contingency* and *Affective indeterminacy* and the processes of sensuous and semantic subjective attachment and detachment that they engender. Inherent within the development of the studio strategies is an attempt to maintain a productive tension between the pragmatic dimensions of the research and corresponding subjective agency, through a self-determined attempt to open up medium specificity and pragmatically foster new constellatory connections. At the same time they allow for the unpredictable material agency of the practice and the processually oriented 'matter and matterings' (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p.3) of the body (mine and that of the viewer) as they are mobilised in an affectively indeterminate constellatory experiential encounter. Reflections on the (re)mapping of the practice give rise to, and are subsequently informed by, a series of accompanying theoretical correspondences which helped to (re)shape both the studio enquiry and my thinking in a way that made what was initially implicit, increasing

explicit. These theoretical connections are woven through each of the sections. Although I consider a number of exhibitions as part of the narrative of the development of the work, the focus in this chapter is on the material configuration of the practice and its installational context; and it is in the final chapter that I focus on the configuration of the work and its larger constellatory cultural framing.

The first section *Arbitrary objects, objecthood* and *thingness*, focuses on the attachments and detachments between the ontological material culture conventions of ‘objectness’, the autonomous fine art conventions of 'objecthood’ and the affective yet enigmatic indeterminacy of 'thingness'. Gathered in constellatory formation around the essential three dimensional nature of the studio enquiry, these contexts provided an initial point of reference for the production the work and its subsequent development as a material taxonomy of elements that bridge different forms of semiotic reference in a way that cannot obviously be defined. As an operational studio strategy, it is the particular enigmatic familiar unfamiliarity of thingness that is useful in facilitating sensuous and semantic correspondences across the various contexts between which the work is positioned, while at the same time resisting conceptual determinacy or resolution. The intention is that the productive uncertainty opened up through the non-identity of thingness becomes not only a space of semantic indeterminacy, but also a space of affective indeterminacy.

In the second section I consider the practice strategy of staging and the affective indeterminacy and corresponding tension between material and subjective agency that arises through the continual constellatory (re)configuration of the individual sculptural elements. As an operational procedure, the strategy of staging moves from a focus on the object as a self-contained entity to a more performative approach that is concerned with the staging of subject/object relations and the processes of centring and decentring enacted within the experiential encounter. As an aesthetic device, staging functions as a framing mechanism and formal mode of compositional arrangement. Both of these studio procedures are used as a way of declaring the autonomy and constructed artifice of the work in a way that both arrests attention and foregrounds the everyday material culture conventions of the work *and* subtly detaches and distances the viewer. Briony Fer’s analysis of the different registers of the tableau (Fer, 2004) informs reflections on the paradoxical phenomenological characteristics of mobility and stillness, proximity and distance that are activated through these strategies of staging.

In the final section I focus on the medium specific dimensions of the practice that provided the initial point of departure for the research. I begin by considering how the

inherent characteristics of textile give rise to a heightened sensuous immediacy and subjective attachment through the mobilisation of embodied haptic aesthetic experience. This is followed by reflections on the strategies of aesthetic detachment, corporeal containment and material regulation, which I employ in the work to both disrupt this sensuous immediacy and intensify the affective dimension of the work. My concern in this section is how the tension between attachment and detachment opens up a space of immanent affective potential and nuanced complexity that that eludes easy categorisation.

4.2 ‘Arbitrary objects’, ‘objecthood’ and the familiar unfamiliarity of ‘thingness’.

Developing out of the studio enquiry, ‘arbitrary objects’, ‘objecthood’, and ‘thingness’ constitute an ever-mutable constellation of operational and conceptual strategies orbiting around the essential three-dimensional form of the practice. With the aim of opening up a processual model of interrelationality, the terms provided an initial point of reference for the practice and a potential means by which I could mobilise ambiguous connections across the multiple and often contradictory material and semantic concerns of the research.

The blurring of boundaries between the everyday objectness of material culture and the 'literalist' object-hood of minimalist painting and sculpture, initially developed out of my pre PhD practice as a strategic gesture through which I could enact critical reformulations of the medium specific and post medium material and visual culture contexts in between which my practice was positioned. Within the context of modernist abstraction, the literalist espousal of ‘objecthood’ was the condition that minimalist sculpture and painting had to ideologically defeat in order to assert their aesthetic autonomy. The challenge emanating out of the interrogation of objecthood in the mid-1960s was how to assert the material identity of the work as a real physical entity, whist at the same time distinguishing it from mere objects of the world and what Clement Greenberg described as the realm of 'the arbitrary and visually meaningless' (Greenberg, 1993, p.131). It is within this realm of the seemingly 'arbitrary and visually meaningless' that the everyday objectness of textile operates. What was important for my pre-PhD work, and remains a significant point of reference, is the in-between status of objecthood: the way that it operates as a pivotal point of transition between

modernist discourse and the beginning of a post-modern critique and the fact that it is the immanent ontological condition of material culture.

Minimalist objecthood: from self-contained autonomy to affective encounter

The relationship between *Art and Objecthood* was most notably developed by Michael Fried in his now very familiar 1967 essay, formulated in relation to the aesthetic experience set in play by minimalist sculpture. Fried's critique of minimalist sculpture is premised on his belief that its preoccupation with objecthood, prompted a shift away from the internal relationships that derive from the formal qualities of the object itself, to the privileging of external relationships that are dependent on the circumstances in which the viewer encounters the object. He derided minimalist objects for their 'theatrical' anthropomorphic stage presence, which paradoxically seemed to be both 'directed at' yet 'distanced' from the viewer (Fried, 1998, p.111) and was wholly dependent on durational engagement. The lack of internal relations within minimalist sculpture meant that it revealed itself over time, striking up relationships between the objects and the space in which they were presented and between the body of the viewer, as opposed to what he deemed to be the absorptive, instantaneous presence of the work that he championed. The significance of Fried's phenomenological analysis is the way in which it privileges the indeterminacy of the experiential encounter and affords a more reciprocal relationship between subjective and objective agency. It has consequently been adopted more broadly as a model of the subjective experience within installation art. In the introduction to *Installation Art* (2005), Claire Bishop argues that the history of installation art revolves around an indeterminate experience where the subject is both 'centred', through active participation and sensory immediacy, and at the same time 'decentred'. This process of decentring is brought about by the multiple perspectives offered by the work which destabilise the idea of subjective coherence and mastery implicit within the detached viewing position of Renaissance perspective (Bishop, 2005, pp.11-13).

In addition to the way that notions of objecthood allowed me to blur the boundaries between the everyday contexts of material culture and the autonomous realms of visual culture, it is this affective indeterminacy between attachment/centring and detachment /decentring that the research aims to mobilise through its various operational strategies.

Arbitrary objects: from a visual culture agenda to a material culture agenda; from negative contingency to affirmative complicity.

The first two projects conducted in the early stages of the research continued to problematise the semantic references of the work and the tenuous relationship between the ideological autonomous space of modernist painting and the positioning of textile within 'the realm of the arbitrary and visually meaningless'. Focusing on the grid and the monochrome as paradigmatic modernist tropes, both of these projects established a correspondence between the essentially vertical, planar object conventions of monochrome painting, and the ontological identity of textile as a vertical planar functional object [see appendix B]. The problem with this work was that it was still dictated by a fine art agenda and dependent on the discourses of modernist abstraction for its meaning. The aim was to problematise a range of binary oppositions (visual culture/material culture, objective/subjective, distance/proximity, optic/haptic, modern/post-modern, aesthetic/extra aesthetic) in order to prompt a range of connections, at the same time as maintaining a level of ambiguity. However, the work's identity was still largely constituted through textile's reduction to a status of negative opposition within these binary formations. As previously discussed, what marked a significant point of transition for the research was a release from this strategic contingency and an acknowledgement of my own desire and indeed complicity with those very same systems - mass material culture and aesthetic autonomy - against which textile's identity as an artistic medium had been formulated. Instead of the subtle strategic subversions and oppositional procedures that were a feature of this early work, there was a shift of mind-set that resulted in a conscious yielding and opening up to difference.

In terms of the practice, this meant affirmatively embracing the specific (un)specificity of textile, drawing on the richness and complexity of its multiple material and symbolic conventions. At the same time there was a detachment from medium specific contexts through the use of a wider palette of materials and processes and the establishment of a more productive correspondence with the wide range of cultural codes and historical legacies with which it is entangled. The first move was to shift the agenda from one that was largely dictated by visual culture and the legacies of modernism to one that openly embraced the everyday objectness of material culture. However, rather than look to the subjective narratives or psychological and symbolic qualities of textile objects and materials that are arguably perhaps the more common focus of contemporary artistic interrogation[1] my point of departure was the workaday functional conventions of the medium. Recognising my own complicity with the seductive qualities of mass material

culture and commodities of consumer desire, I accepted that for textile to realise the full potential of its sensuous and symbolic potency and have social relevance, it could not only nostalgically look to the past and its craft heritage, but had to engage with contemporary mass produced design [Fig. 17].

However, as well as affirmatively embracing the more conspicuously seductive aspects of consumer culture, I remained intrigued by the plethora of inconspicuous, indeterminate constituent components of manufacturing processes that underpin and sustain the circuits of mass industrial production and distribution. Notable points of reference included the ubiquitous minimalist modular units and carcasses that camouflage the technological workings of everyday life; the mass produced upholstered furniture of public institutions; the contemporary plinths and pedestals of shop fittings and retail display; the standardised ergonomically tailored office furniture that populates our working environments; and the fixtures and fittings of our transport system [Figs. 18 & 19]. As everyday equivalents of minimalist objecthood, these mass-produced objects of our built environment anonymously blend into the background waiting to be theatrically activated through subjective engagement. What connects all of these less conspicuous objects of mass material culture, is the way that they operate on the boundary between the generic and specific and the way that their identity as objects is reduced to a state of productive indeterminacy once they are removed from their operational contexts. It is the way that they hover on the boundary between object and thing; between the familiar yet unfamiliar; the nameable and unnameable.

Thingness

Within the context of visual culture, Joanna Drucker proposes ‘thingness’ as a term that usefully updates Michael Fried’s notion of objecthood and is more appropriate for the current nature of contemporary fine art practice; suggesting that it promotes a new form of theatricality that is ‘far more connected to and complicit with the cultural world’ (Drucker, 2005b. p160). As she observes:

> In contrast with minimalism’s "objecthood," the concept of "thingness" links sculpture to objects in and of the world in a combination of traditional arts, conceptualised contemporary art, and mass culture production… The category depends on the intersection between the world of things that are irrefutably and indisputably a part of material culture and those that are in the world of art. Rather than preserving the thin dividing line that minimalism relied on to separate these domains, these new

Figure 97. Complicity with the seductive qualities of mass material culture and commodities of consumer desire

> works aggressively blur those boundaries. In capitulating to material culture, they embody its most phantasmatic properties: continually deferred possession, seductive contemplation, and endlessly displaced signification (Drucker, 2005b, p.157).

In the introduction to his edited collection entitled *Things* (2004), Bill Brown makes a distinction between objects and things, suggesting that objects are delimited by concepts and cultural codes through which they become recognisable and meaningful. Things on the other hand, exist in a suspended form of identity, in reference to the object but not in a way as to be able to necessarily identify it. Connoting a simultaneous sense of the general and particular, things operate on the threshold and suggest a liminality where they are immediately graspable but at the same time elude comprehension. As Brown observes: '(t)emporalized as the before and after of the object, thingness amounts to a latency (the not yet formed or the not yet formable) and to an excess (what remains physically or metaphysically irreducible to objects)' (Brown, 2004, p.5). Drawing reference from Jacques Lacan's 'location of the Thing *at* and *as.* the absent centre of the real' (Brown, 2004, p13),[2] Brown suggests that the thing is the enigma that encircles the object but which the object by its presence negates (Brown, 2004, p.6). In what is perhaps the most renowned philosophical treatise on 'The Thing' (das Ding) by Martin Heidegger, Heidegger similarly draws on the paradoxical absent presence that constitutes the thingliness of things. Heidegger discusses the nature of 'the thing' through the example of a handmade ceramic jug, suggesting that the thingness of the jug resides in its identity as a 'holding vessel'. He observes, however, that when we fill the jug, we do not pour the liquid into the sides or bottom: '(w)hen we fill the jug, the pouring that fills it flows into the empty jug. The emptiness, the void, is what does the vessel's holding. The empty space, this nothing of the jug, is what the jug is as a holding vessel'. Accordingly, when the potter makes the jug, 'he shapes the void' (Heidegger, 2001, p.167). In his analysis, Heidegger also draws on the etymological roots of 'das ding' and the Old High German meaning of the word 'thing' as a gathering or assembly (Heidegger, 1971, p.172). Here I make a connection with the way that Adorno suggests that every object is a constellation or 'sedimented history' (Adorno, 1973. p.163) of diverse past relations, which 'gather around' (Adorno, 1973. p.162) and shed light on it, without ever fully grasping the uniqueness of its unique unfolding material particularity. I would suggest that it is this indeterminacy of thingness - the mimetic zone of non-identity or absent centre within Adorno's constellatory configuration - that opens up a resonating affective gap across which a sense of sensuous continuity and conceptual discontinuity is momentarily revealed. I expand on the significance of this productive ambiguity in terms of the general

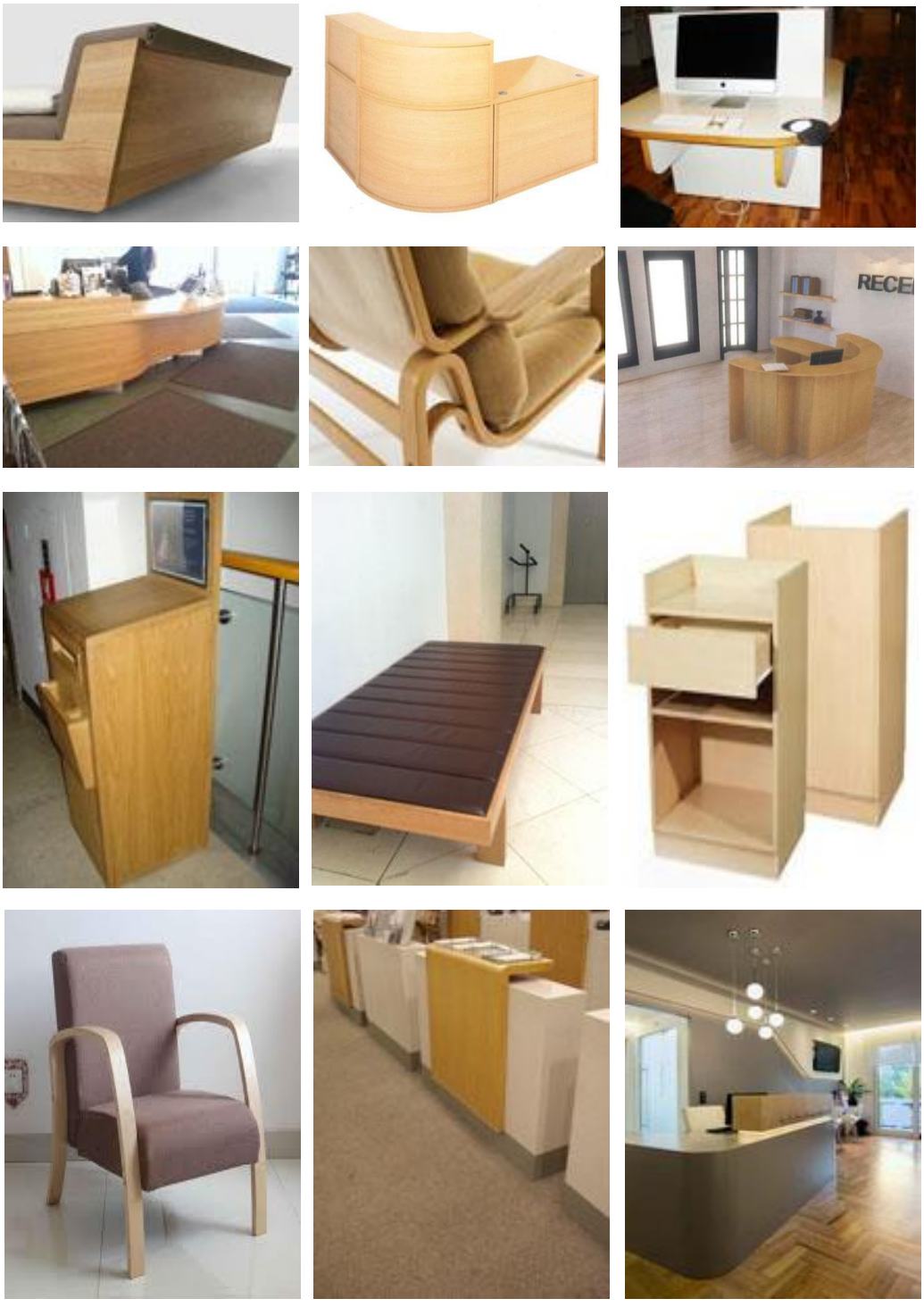

Figure 18. Visual references: mass upholstered furniture of our built environment, contemporary plinths and pedestals of shop fittings and retail display

Figure 19. Visual references: mass upholstered furniture, transport fixtures and fittings

development of my own taxonomy of thingly components below, but for now a couple of examples might be useful.

Both of the objects illustrated on the following page draw together a constellation of potential somatic and semantic associations that cannot be subsumed under universalising concepts. The object in Figure 20 is 150cm in diameter, made out of vinyl upholstery fabric and trimmed with a woollen binding that extends into straps that are finished with small metal hooks. These ties suggest that it has some particular function: maybe a child's bib, some kind of collar, a nun's wimple or other liturgical garment. However its large size and faux leather material, suggest perhaps a more industrial application or a specialist protective cover such as a blacksmith's apron or foundry worker's collar. Then again, the wipe clean, rain resistant vinyl might prompt associations with pushchair or pram covers or even some kind of equestrian shoulder guard or yoke. Its placement on the floor suggests perhaps a contoured bath mat or some other kind of protective floor covering. The tightly upholstered form in Figure 21 has reference to some unidentifiable piece of furniture, but there are also connotations of gym apparatus such as pommel horse or vaulting box. Its jointed two-part form suggests maybe some kind of pull-down car upholstery seat, or in profile, two overly large palms pressed tightly together in suppliant gesture or prayer. All of these potential associations - and indeed more - gather around and illuminate the objects but they remain unspecifiable and semantically unstable, resisting our natural tendency to classify and categorise. As Brown observes, 'the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-object relation' (Brown, 2004, p.4). From the perspective of my own work, thingness is experienced as both a gathering *and* an othering, a felt paradox of both the proximity and distance of attachment and detachment.

The uncertain identity of 'the thing' becomes even more complex when it meets the unspecified materiality of 'stuff', which similarly accords with the generality and particularity of thingness. As Claire Pajaczkowska usefully reminds us, stuff is a translation of the French *étoffe* meaning fabric or material. She observes:

> Stuff has become, colloquially, a term used to designate generic "thingness," or unspecified materiality, in a way that gives eloquent expression to our culture's ambivalent relationship to textiles and to the tactile. We experience cloth as neither object nor subject, but as the threshold between, as a liminality where meaning decomposes into materiality, and threatens nonsense. It is this quality of non-sense that makes textiles especially interesting (Pajaczkowsca, 2005, p.221).

Figure 20. Catalogue component: vinyl, wool, metal fixtures (2014).

Figure 21. Catalogue component: felted wool upholstered form (2011)

Resonating with my articulation of the un-specific specificity of textile in the thesis introduction, in her essay *On Stuff and Nonsense: The Complexity of Cloth*, Pajaczkowsca similarly proposes that the particular effective/affective indeterminacy of cloth resides in its 'founding contradiction' (Pajaczkowsca, 2005, p.222) - what it is in terms of material reality and what it does in the social world. As Howard Rissati also observes in his *Theory of Craft* (Risatti, 2007), unlike the art object whose essential function is to 'communicate', the fundamental identity of the textile, qua craft object, is based on its ability to function and as such its 'thingness as thing' is inseparable from the 'laws of matter'; it is distinctive in being both nature *and* culture (Risatti, 2007, p.139). In terms of laws of matter, I would suggest that it is the material and figurative pliability of textile thingness - its dynamic tension between materiality and meaning - that affords it particular affective potency.

A thingly taxonomy of interchangeable components

As indicated earlier, the way that concerns with object-ness, objecthood and thingness manifested themselves in the studio enquiry was through the development of a taxonomy of individual sculptural components, which I envisaged would eventually being presented in the form of a quasi-retail catalogue. This thingly taxonomy drew its reference from the everyday ubiquity of mass material culture but at the same time maintained a level of formal aesthetic autonomy. As previously discussed, from a practical perspective, the intention was that this strategy would allow for an engagement with the process of making while at the same time provide a more processual approach where the outcome was emergent and contingent. Affording physical attachment and detachment, the idea was that the components would be interchangeable, offering a variety of permutations as they met other components in a potentially infinite number of possible combinations and in relation to different installational contexts. Although in taking the form of relational rather than non-relational composition the proposed configurations of components departed from my earlier more minimalist approach, I had in mind the archetypal phenomenological experiential encounter of Robert Morris's 3 *L-Beams* at the Green Gallery (1967) [Fig. 22] or his *Untitled (Stadium)* piece of the same year, which combined the ideas of modular permutation and provisional setting [Figs. 23 & 24].

As well, as offering the potential for attachment and detachment from a physical perspective, the intention was that the temporary coalition of discrete components would maintain a dynamic tension between semantic attachment and detachment. As

is the nature of components; on an individual level they maintain a level of ambiguity and anonymity and only realise their full functioning potential when they are repurposed in relation to other components as part of a larger machinic assemblage. From a Deleuzian perspective, these machinic assemblages offer the possibility of being 'plugged into' other machinic assemblages - different exhibition contexts and different subjective experiential encounters. From an Adornian perspective, as with the constellatory arrangement, the individual sculptural elements themselves constitute an internal constellation, sedimented with ambiguous references, which are then mobilised through an external network of relations where semiotic and semantic resonances remain ambiguous and continually in flux.

It was a body of speculative studio enquiry conducted during the summer of 2011 that gave rise to the strategy of creating a series of interchangeable components. As I have discussed elsewhere, this marked a considerable new direction in terms of my working process. Making a connection with Neil Leach's notion of 'camouflage' (Leach, 2006) as a mutable mode of belonging and the interior design conventions of textile, my thoughts at the time were with the way that we use objects to physically and symbolically define and redefine our relationship with our domestic environment. What I had in mind was the creation of a series of provisional sculptural scenarios that would afford a fluid sense of attachment and detachment and ever mobile process of embodied connectivity. As a way of beginning to materialise these tentative ideas, I used the opportunity of time and space during the University holiday period to set up temporary 'home' in a studio that had been vacated by students. Surrounding myself with various appropriated objects from around the department, the intention was to experiment with different arrangements as a way of making the transition into a more sculptural orientated practice and as a way of envisaging what form the various components might take. What developed out of this period of studio enquiry was an emerging taxonomy of potential components that included:

- Various configurations of plinth-like elements, MDF carcasses or casings that could potentially operate in a space somewhere between the minimalist sculpture, contemporary furniture, and retail display [Fig. 25].
- Upholstered elements that potentially 'flesh out' the hollowness of minimalist objecthood, communicating a precarious subjectivity that oscillates between aesthetic plenitude and a sense of detachment [Figs. 26 & 27].
- Architectural frameworks and partition devices in the form of trolley-like structures, curtains, draped carpets, and stage/platform structures which reconfigure modernist

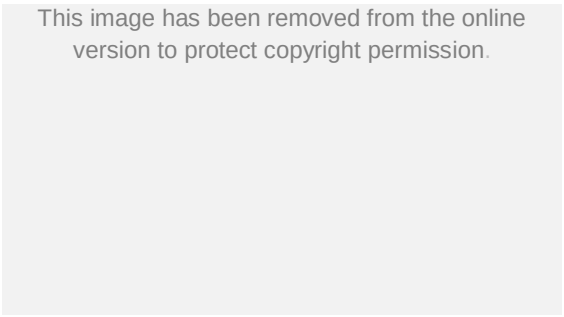

Figure 22. Robert Morris, *Untitled (L-Beams)* (1967) Installation Castelli Gallery.

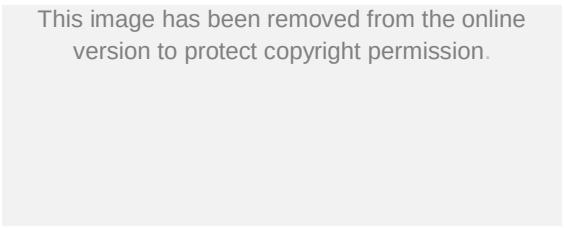

Figure 23. Robert Morris *Untitled (Stadium)* (1967)

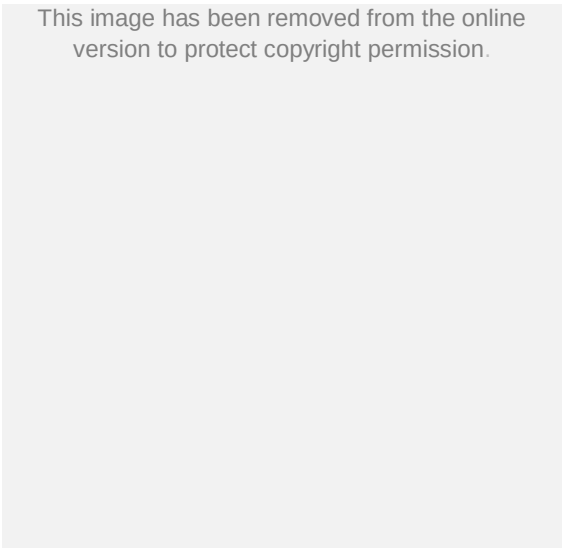

Figure 24. Robert Morris Floor plan of different configurations of *Untitled (Stadium)* (1967)

framing devices and are employed as a way asserting aesthetic artifice [Figs.28, 29 & 30].

- Draped tailored loose covers that draw on the planar conventions of textile and suggest part-garments or soft furnishings [Fig. 31].
- Quasi ambiguous 'artefacts' that would allow for the reintroduction of more labour intensive embroidery and reference the historical cross cultural contexts of textile together with its decorative conventions, as well as perhaps referencing the wider amateur appeal of needlepoint. [Fig. 32].
- Grips, tools, handles and simple armatures that reference the functioning body, the corporeal control of ergonomic design and the haptic conventions of textile [Fig. 33 & 34].[3]
- Pads and cushions that draw reference from the conventions of textile as support and the ubiquitous mass produced upholstered pads and panels that soften our relationship with the built environment [Fig. 35].

An opportunity to test the idea of reintroducing elements of hand stitching in the form of smaller ambiguous quasi artefact-like components, presented itself through an invitation to include a piece of work in the exhibition *Bite-Size: Miniature Textiles from Japan and the UK* which opened at the Daiwa Anglo Japanese Foundation in London (October 2011) and then toured to Kyoto and Tokyo [Fig. 36].

Whilst the more speculative activity using various appropriated objects had proved a productive exercise and a useful way of envisioning possible future directions for the research, the process of making remains a key aspect of the practice and it had always been my intention to make, rather than appropriate. In the light of the more process orientated nature of assemblage, appropriation is perhaps the more common modus operandi. As discussed in the analysis of Johanna Drucker's notion of complicity, this often takes the form of an engagement with the aesthetic and semantic richness of the excesses of mass material commodity culture. An alternative strategy is the appropriation of the disintegrating entropic stuff of material culture where the identity of objects is exhausted and begins to reveal itself as matter.[4] As Claire Bishop notes, the prevailing mode within installation art is an emphasis on real materials rather than their depiction or illustration in order to connote 'everyday life', 'low culture' or 'nature', and as a way of subverting cultural meanings (Bishop, 2005, p.41). However, from my own perspective, it is the embodied dimension of making that is crucial in the negotiation of processes of subjective attachment and detachment and the modernist/post-modern references of the work. Materialising its own process of production, foregrounding the corporeal aspects of

Figure 25. Studio tests: plinths, modular forms and casings (2011)

Figure 26. Studio tests: upholstered elements (2011)

Figure 27. Studio tests: upholstered elements (2011)

Figure 28. Studio tests: visual/structural framing elements; template for possible carpet partition (2011)

Figure 29. Studio tests: visual/structural framing elements; template for carpet partition (2011)

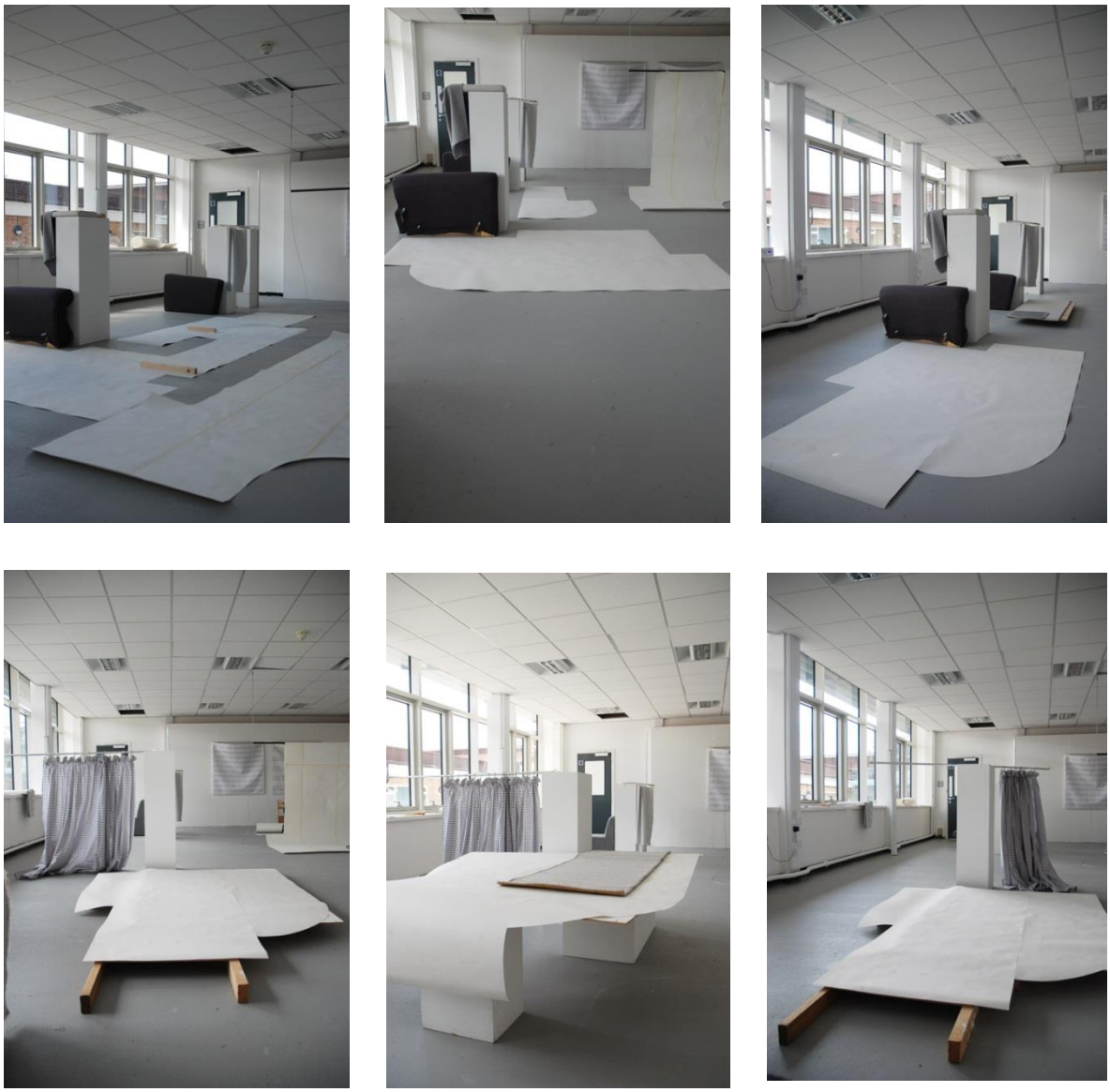

Figure 30. Studio tests: staging elements, templates for carpet/MDF visual framing devices (2011)

Figure 31. Studio tests: draped cover elements (2011)

Figure 32. Embroidered quasi cultural artefact elements (2011-2013)

Figure 33. The functioning body: grips, tools, handles (2011-2013)

Figure 34. The functioning body: grips, tools, handles (2011-2013)

Figure 35. Pads, panels and cushions (2011-2013)

subjectivity and awakening imagined touch in the experience of the viewer, it is the sensuous, somatic correspondence evoked through a materially based practice that I would suggest affords it affective significance. I will discuss the strategies that I adopt to both accentuate and regulate the embodied dimension of the work in more detail in section 4.4 of this chapter. As well as its material dimension, the emphasis on making is also clearly important in referencing the legacies of textile within the crafts and applied arts. However, while the process of making remains central to the practice, a new departure arising out of the research is a detachment from the privileging (and some would say, fetishisation) of the handmade and corresponding authorial agency, through the introduction of external fabrication, industrial processes and collaboration with small scale artisanal producers.

The first opportunity to trial the broader potential of what at the time was still a speculative and emerging strategy, came through an invitation to take part in an exhibition at Five Years gallery in London (November 2011).The prospect of the exhibition provided me with the catalyst to start producing a number of elements without necessarily predetermining how they would be used. My initial focus in terms of making was a series of ambiguous upholstered forms. Having spent a day with small-scale upholstery manufacturer and attended a four day upholstery course, I worked with a local upholsterer to create a number of timber framed padded structures that softened the contours of hard edged minimalist objecthood [Fig. 37]. As an alternative to the proposed hand stitched elements and by way of introducing industrial processes, I also worked with an embroidery manufacturer to create a digitally embroidered panel of cloth which I used to cover one of the curved upholstered forms [Fig. 38]. In addition to its reference to mass material culture, what was interesting about the digitally stitched form was the tension between the literal and depicted conditions of its objecthood.[5] This was manifest in the tension between its identity as an object and its insistence on surface which induced an indeterminate phenomenological experience as it materialised and dematerialised according to the play of light and the position of the viewer.

I used the digitally embroidered upholstered form as a central motif for the scenario that I created for the Five Years exhibition [Fig 39]. Although the space of the gallery was very limited - as indeed was the number of elements from which I could select in my yet to be developed catalogue of components - the exhibition provided a useful opportunity to reflect on the new way of working and on some of the practical approaches adopted to maintain a dynamic tension between the various contradictory semantic contexts of the work and a phenomenological sense of subjective stability

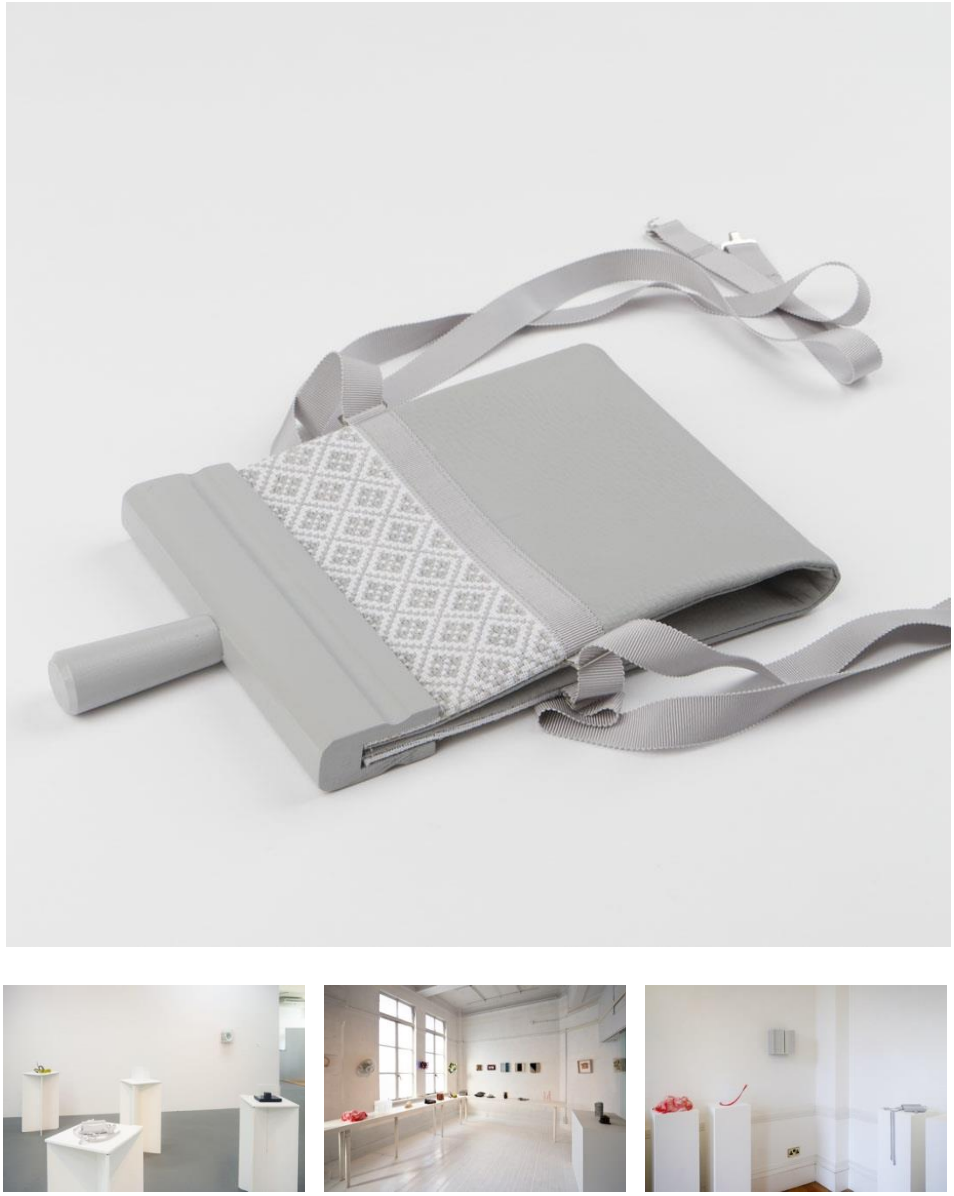

Figure 36. *Bite-Size: Miniature Textiles from Japan and the UK* (2011)

Figure 37. Upholstered forms (2011)

and instability. The release from the calculated subversion strategies of the early work allowed for a much more playful and speculative approach where I was able to make responses to the aesthetic considerations as they emerged. The reductive and formal vocabulary of the various components meant that they had an uncertain identity which created a delicate balance between the signifying and asignifying registers of the work. On the one hand, the play between hard and soft, the combination of different materials and surface textures and the overly formal compositional arrangement afforded a heightened sensuous immediacy and foregrounded the work's aesthetic autonomy. On the other hand, the familiar, yet unfamiliar thingness of the various elements, gave rise to ambiguous narratives that were part domestic and part institutional but which resisted conceptual synthesis. Attachment to the medium specific conventions of textile remained central, but these had been detached and decentred. The relationship between formally staged aesthetic autonomy and mimetic affinity engendered an experiential encounter that oscillated between proximity and distance. Further contradictory experiences of mobility and stasis were also evoked through the combination of more sturdy and stable elements and those that were casually placed and precariously balanced, as if they had momentarily come to rest or been suspended from their routine activity.

A second opportunity to test these practice strategies came in the form of an invitation to be part of a group show at Smiths Row Gallery in Bury St Edmunds (July, 2012) [for a review of the exhibition see appendix C]. Marking the gallery's 40th anniversary, the aim of the exhibition was to showcase artists that it had supported in the early stages of their careers who have subsequently gone on to exhibit at higher profile national and international venues. Appropriately entitled *Transformations*, the exhibition provided a useful platform to rehearse the transformation of my practice that had arisen out of the research. My plan was to use two more of the upholstered forms as the starting point for the Smiths Row scenario, but I also wanted to use the exhibition as an opportunity to make further additions to my collection of components.

Inspired by the curved laminated wooden arms of an IKEA type sofa in the University reception area, my intention was to create similar low bent wood structures by way of signifying both mainstream and more iconic modernist design history. In order to envisage what such structural elements might look like (and not having the necessary time or skill to create the forms in steam-bent laminated ply), I constructed box-like sections out of MDF; soaking, bending and pinning hardboard to achieve the curved hollow profile. The hollowness of the structures prompted me to consider constructing the curved and straight 'leg' sections of the structures as separate components for ease of transportation and by way of allowing me to vary their height. It just so

happened that the only pieces of timber I had to hand were fairly long lengths which produced tall vertical forms rather than the lower curved forms that I had imagined. The height of the structures provided an open architectural presence that contrasted with the self-contained 'stockiness' of the upholstered forms. They also provided a system that I imagined could potentially be used to create a variety of structural frameworks. Initially envisaged only as maquettes for external fabrication, there was something about the thingly prototype-like provisionality of the handmade structures - as objects not yet formed - that provided a foil to the more tailored refinement of the tightly upholstered structures. The unfinished rawness of the materials afforded a level of aesthetic artifice which set them apart from their more pristine mass material counterparts. The differently angled, 'legs' of the structures, also gave them a strangely animate quality adding to the anthropomorphic references within the work. But unlike the soft fleshy curves of the upholstery, the curves of the pinned hardboard were tightly honed and regulated as the material was fashioned in a way that ran contrary to its natural characteristics. As well as their leg-like associations, it was also suggested that there were further corporeal resonances in their 'thingly' pincer-like jointed quality that vaguely referenced oversized hair pins, sugar or laundry tongs [Fig. 40].

Extending these corporeal characteristics, a further category of components began to emerge out of the studio enquiry in the form of a series of grip or handle-like elements that vaguely made reference to tools or gym apparatus. Similar to the tightly fashioned upholstery and bent hardboard, the introduction of such elements seemed to suggest an efficient ergonomic controlled and controlling functioning body. Again, this idea of corporeal control is something that I develop further in section 4.4 *Sensuous immediacy and corporeal containment*. One of these tool-like elements provided me with the opportunity to extend my visual vocabulary of materials through the introduction of laminate. Similar to the bent wood, the introduction of laminate was based both on its aesthetic potential - a cool clinical smoothness to counter the soft warmth of felted woollen cloth - and on the potency of its semiotic references from the perspective of the functional aspects of design history. Within the long thin rectangular laminated frame of the handled tool-like component, I inserted an upholstered pad that I covered in my signatory buttonholed fabric, which introduced the possibility of staging my own past through the inclusion of elements from my previous work. By way of adding to the quasi 'artefact' category of components and the more traditional, historical, cross cultural connotations of textile, I used the Smiths Row exhibition as an incentive to return to the labour intensity of my previous practice, and produced a further towel-like embroidered element [Fig. 41]. In its form, this element drew on the pervasive identity of the textile object as a square or rectangular piece of cloth, where

Figure 38. Digitally stitched upholstered component, Five Years Gallery, London (November 2011)

Figure 39. Five Years Gallery, London (November 2011)

the 'raw' loom state condition of textile is 'cooked' into a cultural object through the addition of a selvedge or seam. But at the same time, it also ambiguously suggested some sort of cover or part garment.

What emerged over the course of these two exhibitions was a remapping of the practice; a new way of working through which I was able to maintain an open processual relationship between attachment and detachment, from both a literal perspective and in terms of the semantic dimensions of the work. The conception of the work as a catalogue of individual components which can be (re)configured within a series of different *mises en scène*, marks a shift from a concern with the self-contained autonomy of the object to a much more processual approach where the work is emergent and contingent. Offering a much more flexible operation, I am able to maintain a level of control and engagement with processes of making in the production of the individual elements whilst being open to the material agency of the work through a much more open improvised choreography. In terms of semantic attachment and detachment, the process of assemblage means that the potential meaning of the work is not inherent in the individual elements, but mobilised through a network of relations which momentarily coalesce in a temporary constellation. This allows for a greater complexity where the semiotic references of the work remain fluid according the provisional coalition of the objects and phenomenological readings that are dependent on the space of the gallery and the unfolding embodied experience of the viewer. The thingly taxonomy allows for a level of ambiguity that can accommodate the various visual and culture contexts in-between which the work is positioned. It draws its reference from the various conventions of textile, but this provides only an initial point of departure and the practice is not bound by these conventions either in terms of material, process or its aesthetic value. All of this gives rise to an affective indeterminacy where there is a more reciprocal relationship between subjective and material agency.

The space that I was allocated within Smiths Row gallery [Figs. 42 & 43] meant that the resulting scenario was quite compact, with the leg-like structures huddled together in a group in close relation to the other assembled elements. Framed in the corner and occupying its own self-contained space, it allowed limited physical access and a largely frontal viewing position. Whereas the formal staging of the elements in the Five Years exhibition was implicit and the size of the gallery afforded the viewer no other choice than to physically interact with the scenario, within the larger space of Smiths Row the staging became far more explicit, taking the form of a more obvious tableau-like *mise-en-scène.* In the following section, *Staged contiguity and (dis)contiguity*, I will focus on

Figure 40. Studio tests: bent wood ‘leg-like structural components (June 2012)

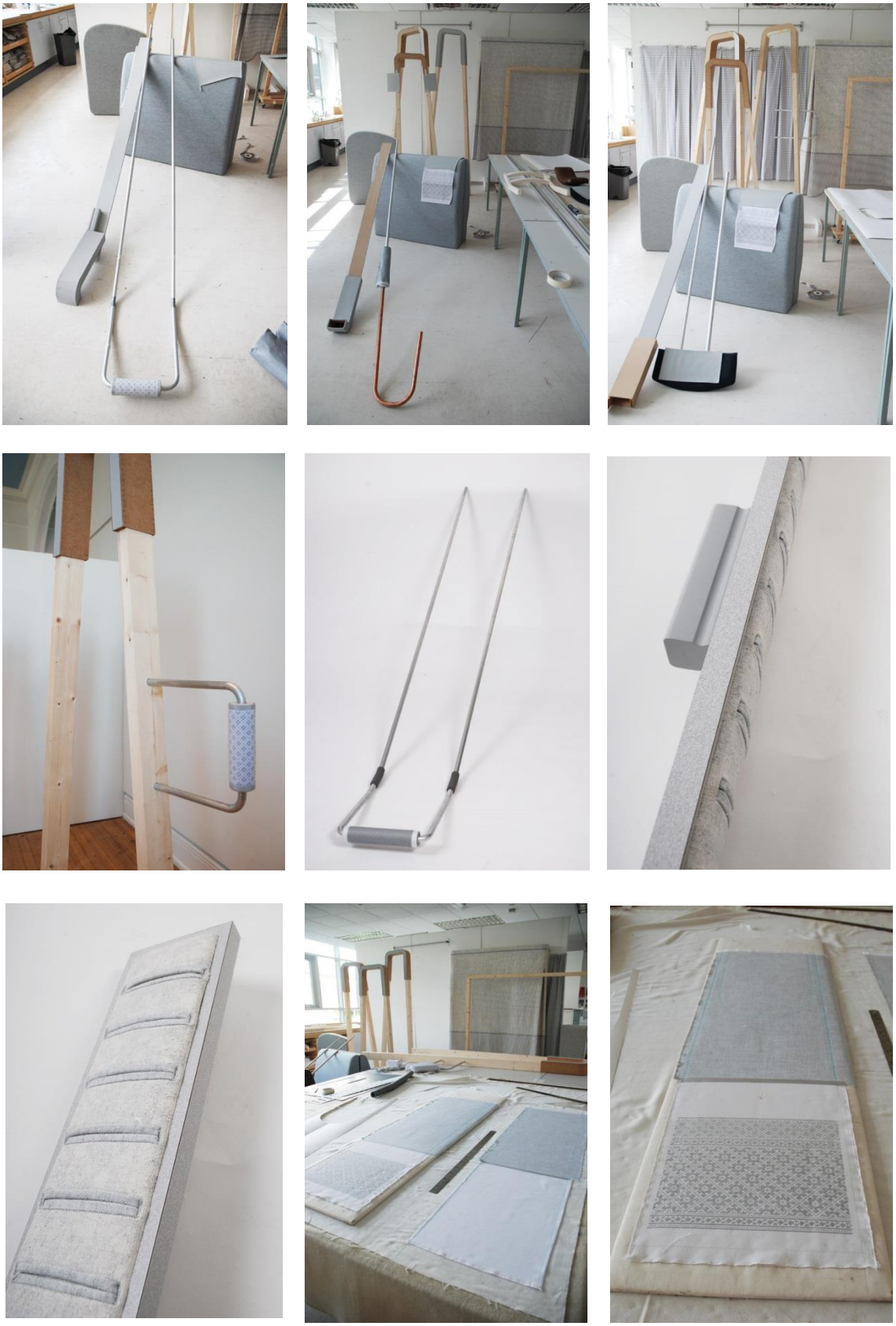

Figure 41. Studio tests: tools, grips, handles, laminated form, embroidered 'towel' (June 2012)

the notion of staging as it developed into a more conscious practice strategy and aesthetic device with which to heighten the affective indeterminacy of the experiential encounter.

4.3 Staged Contiguity and Discontiguity

In this section I consider the notion of staging as a practice strategy that shifts the status of the work from a self-contained medium specific autonomous entity to a process of 'enactment' where the work becomes a stage set for an unfolding experiential encounter. This shift from object to process is useful in terms of the cartographic remapping of the research as it stresses mobility and change and sees the experiential encounter as a productively indeterminate event that is contingent both in the sense of being unpredictable and dependent on circumstantial conditions. Reconceived in terms of an event,[6] the artist, the object, the *mise en scène* and the beholder of the work are all set in play, becoming entangled in an ever-mobile constellatory network of inter-relationality. Within this constellatory network, the relationship between sensuous and semantic attachment and detachment and material and subjective agency remain productively indeterminate, opening up an affective gap and space of aesthetic potential.

Staging then can be understood from a number of perspectives: firstly as a broader operational strategy and mode of production that is inherent in the conception of the work as a series of interchangeable components and the subsequent more performative approach to the practice. Secondly, as a specific formal method and aesthetic framing device that I employ within the work to subtly delineate and detach the practice components from empirical reality and their everyday material culture counterparts. Thirdly, the way that the work stages a processually oriented phenomenological embodied encounter for the beholder of the work through its installational format which is both centring and decentring. Fourthly, staging is understood in terms of the contextual positioning and cultural framing of the work. I focus my attention in this section on the agency of staging as a strategy of production, as an aesthetic formal device, and in terms of the way that the work sets the stage for an indeterminate encounter from the perspective of the viewer. I touch on the cultural framing of the work as I outline the initial emergence of staging as a strategy through its reference to the aesthetic staging of the everyday within diverse contexts such as museums of cultural ethnography, and interior styling and retail display. However, I leave the main discussion of the broader contextual framing of the work until Chapter

Figure 42. *Transformations*, Smith's Row Gallery, Bury St Edmunds (July 2012)

Figure 43. *Transformations*, Smith's Row Gallery, Bury St Edmunds (July 2012)

five where I reflect on the various contexts in which the work has been disseminated.

Staging as a mode of production

From the perspective of the production of the work, staging provides an operational strategy that gives significance to what has become a much more performative and provisional approach. Over the course of the cartographic (re)mapping of the research, both the method and the site of production have changed. What was previously largely a meticulously planned predetermined activity has now become much more playful and open ended, as the practice has moved out of the security of studio and is speculatively improvised within the space of display. The conception of the work as a 'catalogue' of interchangeable parts which can be continually assembled and reassembled within a range of different scenarios without necessarily predetermining their end use, has by its nature transformed my way of working. Within this much more speculative and contingent process of staging and restaging, uncertainty and mutability become the very logic of operation. The activity of staging, the thing being staged, and the context or frame in which the staging takes place, all take on greater significance as subjective agency is decentred and distributed across a much broader network of relations. Through this r(e)distribution of agency, the tension between subjective attachment and detachment becomes much more contingent, and the relationship between intention and outcome much more fluid and fragmented.

Installation: staging an indeterminate experiential encounter

Just as the more provisional approach to the production of the work stages a processually oriented contingent experiential encounter within the studio, the installational format of the work sets the stage for an indeterminate unfolding aesthetic experience from the perspective of the viewer who engages with the work. Rather than a passively detached spectator, the viewer's physical presence within the scene of operation affords a sensory immediacy, making them an active participant in a continually unfolding aesthetic encounter. It is in this way that artworks in general and installational art in particular, provide a platform through which to mobilise the performative engagement of the viewer and set the stage for a heightened phenomenological experience. And I would argue, in so doing create the conditions for the productive potential of affect. As I discussed in the previous section, it was this 'theatricality' that Michael Fried objected to in his critique of minimalist sculpture. The shift from internal relations to external relations and the subsequent implication of the

space of the gallery and body of the viewer, introduced a durational dimension to aesthetic experience. Rather than the absorptive, instantaneous 'presentness' (Fried 1998, p.22) of the work that Fried championed - where the subject was 'centred and transcendent and adequate to the centred and self-sufficient' autonomous medium specific work that they encountered (Bishop, 2005, p.133) - subjectivity was decentred and the aesthetic encounter became much more of an unpredictable event.

The emergence of installation art in the 1970's and the decentring of aesthetic experience that it engendered, is often seen to correspond with the emergence of poststructuralist theories, which similarly proposed a model of the subject as fragmented, de-centred, and as the product of external relations. Whilst the decentring of the subject has become the prevailing narrative within critiques of installation art, Claire Bishop argues that what is often overlooked within these narratives is the fact that 'by seeking to contrive a moment of decentring, installation art implicitly structures the viewer *a priori* as centred' (Bishop, 2005, p.133). Accordingly, installation art is seen to provoke a somewhat precarious relationship that pivots between subjective attachment and detachment. As Bishop observes:

> [T]he decentring triggered by installation art is to be experienced and rationally understood from a position of centred subjectivity. Everything about installation art's structure and *modus operandi* repeatedly valorises the viewer's first-hand presence – an insistence that ultimately reinstates the subject (as a unified entity), no matter how fragmented disbursed our encounter with the art turns out to be. Perhaps more precisely, installation art *in*states the subject as a crucial component of the work… What installation art offers, then, is an experience of centring and decentring: work that insists on our centred presence in order then to subvert us to an experience of decentring (Bishop, 2005, p.130).

Bishop suggests that this paradoxical conception of installation art as both centring and decentring arises out of the conflation of two types of subject: 'the *literal* viewer' whose physical presence within the installation affords a heightened sensuous immediacy and phenomenological self-awareness; 'and an abstract philosophical *model* of the subject' as dispersed and fragmented, which is brought about by the particular nature of this encounter (Bishop, 2005, p.130). 'Both types of viewer are implied, but it is impossible to reduce one to the other' (Bishop, 2005, p.131). She goes on to observe that very rarely is the viewer genuinely decentred or disoriented by an experiential encounter, but proposes that the proximity of the two models of the subject could be an appropriate criteria for aesthetic judgement (Bishop, 2005, p.133). However, I would

suggest that judgement based on the force of the aesthetic experience could be somewhat erroneous. Whilst my own experience would testify to the fact that aesthetic affect can undoubtedly be forceful, it need not necessarily be so and indeed might well only make itself felt through the most nuanced of bodily registers. As Gregg and Seigworth observe:

> In fact, it is quite likely that affect more often transpires within and across the subtlest of shuttling intensities: all the miniscule or molecular events of the unnoticed... At once intimate and impersonal, affect *accumulates* across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p.2).

The subtle accentuation of contradictory feelings set in play in the unfolding relationship between the indeterminacy of the aesthetic event and the indeterminacy of the body is something that I will develop further in the following section. However, whether the affective process of centring and decentring instigated through installation art is conceptualised in terms of a literal or philosophical model of the subject, as Gregg and Seigworth note, '(p)erhaps one of the surest things that could be said of both affect and its theorisation is that they will exceed, always exceed the context of their emergence, as the excess of ongoing process (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p.5).

Staging as a 'cut' in the continuity of everyday experience and framing from empirical reality

Having considered staging as an operational strategy and the ways in which the active staging of the aesthetic encounter through the medium of installation engenders an indeterminate phenomenological experience of subjective continuity and discontinuity; I will now consider how this is heightened in the practice through the use of aesthetic staging devices. The most notable of these is the presentation of the sculptural components in the form of a series of tableaux or *mises-en-scène*. This has the effect of constructing an ambiguous theatrical 'fourth wall' that both asserts the autonomy of the work and arrests the attention of the viewer, momentarily distilling the work from the immediacy of experience. My own staged scenarios are comprised of highly formalised arrangements, often choreographed in response to an initial 'lead protagonist' where the placement of each element is carefully considered in relation to other elements. The individual elements often take on the form of staging structures in their own right, such as platforms, open linear frameworks, curtains as fluid frames, or presentational

Figure 44. Structural/visual framing devices (2011-2014)

supports that play between modernist plinths or commercial display units [Fig. 44].

There were three key points of reference that informed the development of the tableau format. The first of which was a visit to St Petersburg ethnographic museum prior to the PhD in 2007, where I recall being particularly affected by the relationship between a display of embroidered Belarussian towels presented flat in a series of display cases and the staging of similar artefacts in a series of tableaux [Fig. 45]. Museums generally and ethnographic museums in particular, have been a constant source of inspiration for the way that they stage and foreground everyday experience and at the same time are distanced and detached from everyday experience. My interest has always been in the way that the mundane and not so mundane stuff of our heterogeneous quotidian existence is presented in a fragmentary way so as to activate a series of contradictory registers: between art and artefact, between the aesthetic and functional, between the material and the symbolic, between the universality of form and the specificity of cultural language. Isolated for aesthetic contemplation, cut from the continuity of time, taken out of their social context, and not ascribed any authorial identity, it is often the unyielding anonymity and indeterminate thingness of museum objects that seems to awaken the imagination. It is the tension between their formal and aesthetic dimensions and ambiguous social function that resonates with my own concerns and I would suggest affords them their potency. As Pamela Johnson observes 'we might not understand the specific meanings of a [textile] object from another culture, but we, nonetheless, can recognise an area of associative potential which may arouse further curiosity' (Johnson, 1997 p.8). In addition to these contradictory registers, what was communicated most affectively in the St Petersburg Museum was a paradoxical phenomenological experience of mobility and stasis, where tableaux that were meant to bring the objects to life, presented them in a strange formalised suspended animation. As a staged presentation of the real, the tableaux both activated the everyday at the same time that it was arrested into a moment of detached stillness. Within this encounter, subjective experience was placed centre stage but it was experienced as a cut or a loss that engendered a sense of estrangement. This half registered dislocating experience of attachment and detachment was further reinforced on a more recent visit to Budapest's Museum of Ethnography during the course of the PhD [Fig. 46].

The second point of reference that was instrumental in the development of the tableau format was the aesthetic staging of the everyday through visual merchandising and retail display. Of particular interest was the kind of aesthetic interior styling epitomised in stores such as Heals or The Conran Shop or the more ubiquitous IKEA, The White

Figure 45.St Petersburg Ethnographic Museum (2007)

Figure 46. Budapest Ethnographic Museum (2014)

Figure 47. Staging of the everyday through visual merchandising and retail display

Company, or John Lewis. Similar formally arranged *mise-en-scène* are also evident in the photographic tableaux represented in interior design magazines [Fig. 47]. Here the seductive aspects of material culture are writ large as objects that are normally caught up in the messy business of everyday life (or in this case have yet to enter into circulation) are removed from the business of living and aestheticised through formal arrangement. Pristine and unsullied, they command our attention and present a staged reality that is very different from the mundaneity of their everyday actuality.

The third point of reference was an encounter with Briony Fer's analysis of the relationship between the tableau and installation art in *The Infinite Line: Remaking Art after Modernism* (Fer, 2004). This provided a useful reflective framework for the tension between mobility and stillness that I encountered in the St Petersburg ethnographic museum and made explicit many of the concerns that were implicit in my work at the time. Fer begins her analysis by reflecting on a short essay on 'Bedrooms' by Marcel Proust which he later incorporated into the overture of *Swann's Way,* the first volume of *À la Recherché du Temps Perdu*. Fer observes that in the essay, Proust sets out a series of reversals - 'of mobility and stillness, inside and outside, entrapment and entrancement' (Fer, 2004, p.86) - which she suggests have particular relevance to the nature of the subject's encounter within installation art. On the one hand the subject experiences a heightened awareness, caught in the moment and lost in the immediacy of sensation. On the other hand, the subject experiences a loss of connection and 'views a whole series of tableau both riveted by and cut off from the scenes before him' (Fer, 2004, p.86). While Fer acknowledges the significance of Fried's phenomenological conception of theatricality, her concern within the essay is how the pictorial legacies of the tableau continue to haunt installation, not least in its mediation through photography. For although installation makes a claim for the significance of direct experience, for most of us, our encounter comes not through first-hand experience but through the form of representation. Here, the photographic tableau, similar to my encounter with the *mise en scène* in St Petersburg's ethnographic museum, has the effect of both suppressing *and* animating what is a mediated experience of the installation; but even though detached, the subject remains the centre of experience.

Referencing Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube* (O'Doherty, 1976) and the emergence of the pictorial idiom within the real space of the gallery, Fer notes how he draws attention to the way in which the tableau form, exemplified in the work of artists such as Ed Kienholz and George Segal made the spectator feel disconnected, as if intruding on the scene. In this way the installational tableau performs a similar role to the photograph or the mise en scène within cinema, producing a kind of detachment

which through its framing and staged artifice cuts us off from the immediacy of experience. Countering the animating anthropomorphism of minimalist objects, Fer observes how 'O'Doherty's own particular brand of anthropomorphism instead brings out the psychic resonance and, most strikingly, the cost to the subject who enters the scene of the work, where the pictorial effect of the tableau itself imposes a kind of deathly stasis' (Fer, 2004, p.89). Extending this argument, she points to the similar tension between movement and stillness within the cinematic cut. Whilst Fer does not propose that installation is like cinema, she does make the observation 'that the metaphorics of theatre and performativity that are often applied to [installation] tend to miss the sense of stasis and the very dialectic of mobility and stillness' - or in my terms, attachment and detachment - which O'Doherty recognises in the tableau (Fer, 2004, p.89). Fer uses Claes Oldenburg's *Bedroom Ensemble* of 1963 [Fig. 48] to illustrate the connection between the pictorial tableau and the cinematic *mise en scène*.

> Bedroom ensemble is empty and still, and slightly eerie. It is offered as something inviting that is also a little chilly... Fundamentally, though, the sense of detachment derives from the play Oldenburg creates between the different registers of the tableau - between the pictorial tableau and the cinematic tableau. On the one hand, there is an emptying out of the tableau vivant in favour of an empty set, the modern container for a life of desirable objects without inhabitants, an exaggerated and distorted version of the container that is the picture; on the other hand, the tableau as Roland Barthes famously described it, is a 'cut' in the continuity of film narrative and as a cut, the decoupage in cinema is a fundamentally fetishistic operation (Fer, 2004, p.90).

In his 1973 essay *Diderot, Brecht, Eisentein,* Roland Barthes draws on Denis Diderot's original conception of the relationship between the pictorial tableau and the theatrical tableau, extending it to literature and film. He describes the tableau, regardless of its pictorial theatrical or literary context, as 'a pure cut-out segment with clearly defined edges, irreversible and incorruptible; everything that surrounds it is banished into nothingness, remains unnamed, while everything that is admits within its field is promoted into the essence, into light, into view' (Barthes,1977, p.70). However, within installation art, as in contemporary cinema and theatre, whilst the pictorial tableau might continue to have a phantasmagorical presence, its edges have become increasingly blurred. Oldenburg's tableau may well dramatise the conventions of the picture but at the same time it shatters its self-contained illusion. Barthes recognises this in his essay, acknowledging that there is point at which 'representation is outplayed' and the tableau 'gapes open' (Barthes, 1977, p.77). Fer qualifies Barthes'

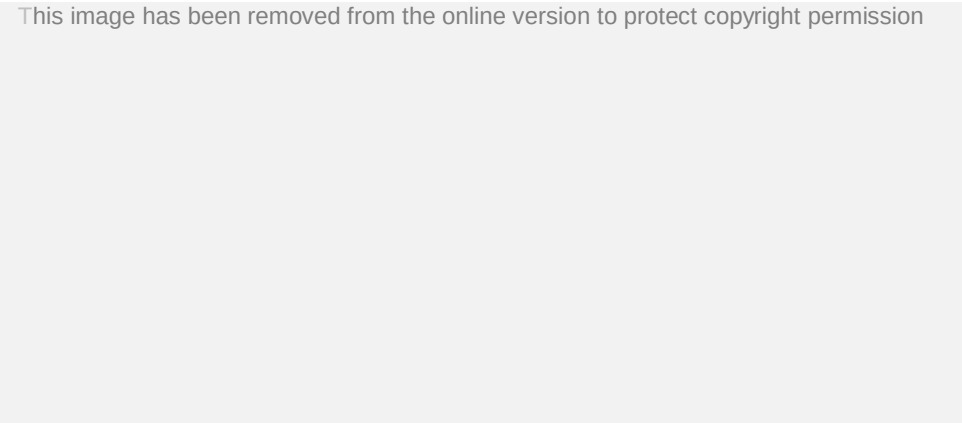

Figure 48. Claes Oldenburg, *Bedroom Ensemble*, 1963. 204 x 252in. As installed at American Pop Art, Whitney Museum of Modern Art (April 6-16 June 1974)

observation, stating that the tableau ‘gapes onto a mass of partial objects…it never entirely escapes the tableau form, but the tableau no longer contains it (Fer, 2004, p.91)

The manifestation of staging strategies within the practice

The staging strategies that I was employing in my own work seemed to follow a parallel trajectory to those articulated by Briony Fer and have a similar twofold function. In the first instance they are employed as a means of maintaining a productive tension between autonomy and empirical reality; a way of establishing resonances with the everyday contexts of material culture from which the practice draws its references whilst at the same time asserting its constructed artifice. It is through its staged artifice that the work is able to foreground the heterogeneous and often unnoticed ubiquitous objects of material culture, detaching the sculptural components from their everyday counterparts and distilling them from the immediacy of lived experience. In a self-reflexive process of critical reformation, the staging strategies make conscious reference to the distancing devices of modernist autonomy, whilst at the same time acknowledging my own complicity with those very same systems. It is through this active staging of aesthetic/extra aesthetic, modern/postmodern, medium specific/post-medium contexts that the work aims to mobilise a series of formal and semantic attachments and detachments that refuse to settle. The second function of the staging strategies adopted within the work arise out of this. By staging the everyday as a series of carefully composed ‘cut-out segments’ momentarily arrested from the continuity of time, the intention is that this sense of uncertainty is further heightened, engendering a similarly dislocating phenomenological experience of mobility and stillness to that I experienced in my encounter with the St Petersburg tableaux.

In its development, the practice seems to move from earlier scenarios where the tableau configuration was more pronounced, such as the Smiths Row configuration discussed in the previous section, to more recent work, which I will discuss in Chapter 5, where the self-contained tableau form is dispersed and gradually fragments into aseries of interconnecting set pieces. However, the very first manifestation of the tableau form was in the early stages of the research when I was still thinking about how we facilitate a sense of belonging and stage our identity through our domestic environments. Drawing vague reference from the commodification of lifestyles promoted through the interior styling of magazines such as Country Living, I made an architectural structure which, with its tongue and groove panelling and its Fired Earth paintwork, presented a coolly detached translation of this nostalgic and somewhat over

romanticised aesthetic. Informed by my encounter with the St Petersburg tableaux, my intention at the time was that the structure would provide a fairly inconspicuous vehicle on which I could stage smaller textile elements, similar to the embroidered Belarussian towels. The ambition was to establish a relationship between their static formal arrangement and the corporeal habits that I hoped they might awaken in the imagination of the beholder. As much as anything, however, the realisation of *Partition* (2011) [Fig. 49] was a practical challenge and a necessary catalyst to get back into the studio and physically give form to some of the ideas that I had been trying to work through in my head rather than through the process of making. As to be expected, as an initial manifestation of what were still unformulated ideas, there was a considerable gap between my intentions for the work and what it communicated in reality. Although *Partition* was conceived as a temporary architectural framing device, the piece was fairly solid and rather permanent looking and the height and scale of my own restaged piece of textile work (employed at the time as a substitute because I did not want to be distracted by the labour intensive process of hand embroidery) failed to suggest the possibility of reconfiguration. The solidity of the timber construction also meant that it was fairly indistinguishable from other structural aspects of the built environment and perhaps marked too fine a line between architectural assimilation and differentiation. However, what it did unintentionally give rise to, was the possibility of restaging my past through the inclusion of previous work. This at the time was largely a practical solution because I didn't have enough new pieces to sustain the space in which the work was to be exhibited. However, it also seemed to be a useful way of re-appropriating the past and suggesting the idea of subjectivity continually in flux. What was also an opportune outcome of this piece of work was the inclusion of the curtain element. The initial intention was to make a complementary piece to *Partition* where a fixed curtain element would be suspended from a timber constructed pelmet [Fig. 50], however, security motion sensors at the Norwich University of the Arts Gallery where the work was to be exhibited, prevented this. The fixed curtain rail was a subsequent adaptation allowing the curtain to be drawn at the end of each day and secured by a curtain tie-back [Fig. 51]. As such it provided a flexible reconfiguration of the modernist frame and prompted the actual physical repetitive corporeal engagement that I had hoped to awaken in the imagination of the viewer.

It was the relative immobility of this structure and the amount of time that it took to physically construct the piece that gave rise to the more speculative summer studio activity discussed in the previous section, where I explored a range of possible scenarios by appropriating what was at hand within the department as illustrated in figures 25 - 30 [pp. 82 - 87]. It was during this period of studio enquiry, that the idea of

Figure 49. *Partition*, Contemporary Arts Centre (CASC) (January 2011)

Figure 50. Studio test: suspended pelmet form and curtain tie-back used within NUA installation of *Partition* (January 2011)

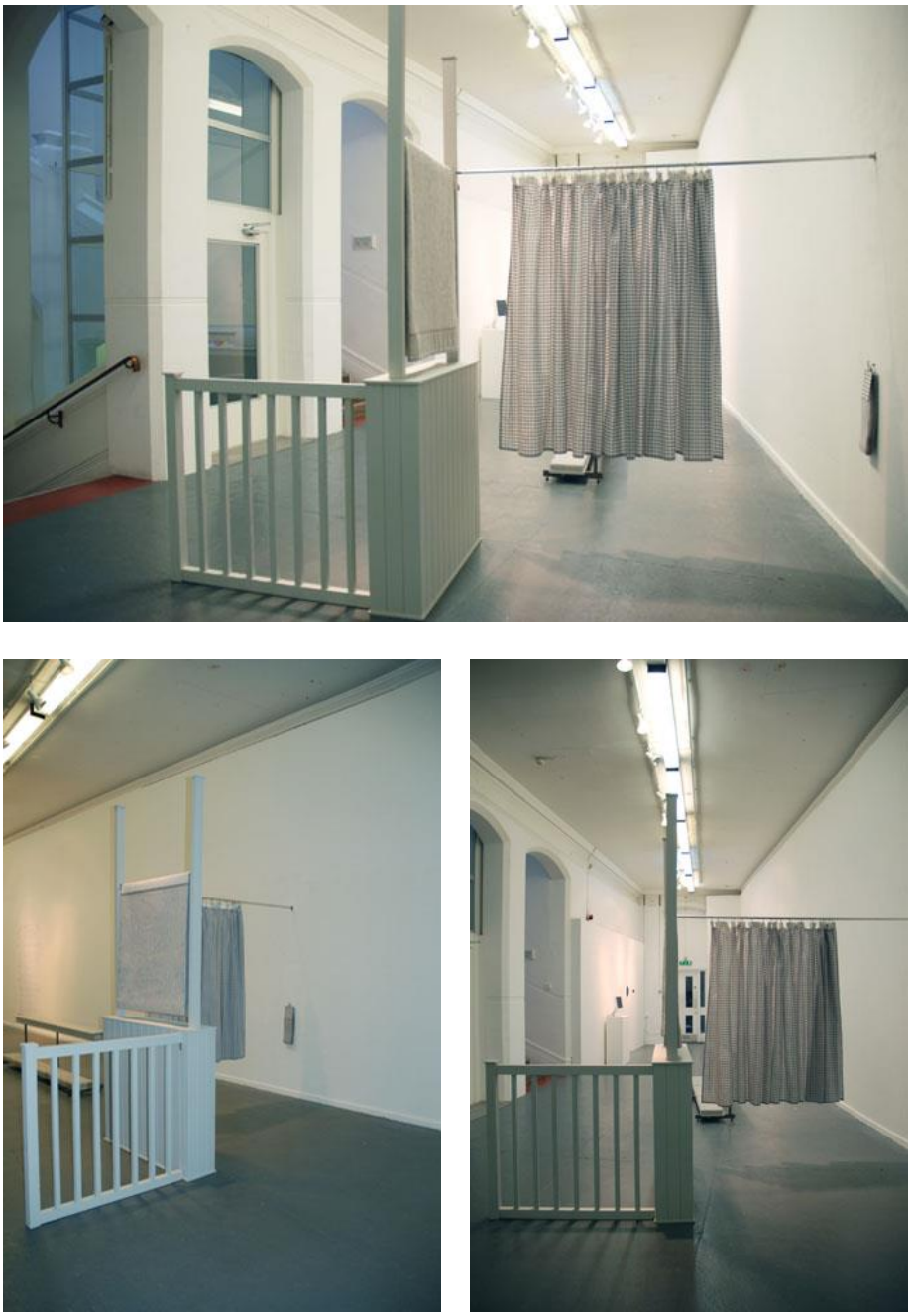

Figure 51. *Partition*, Installed Norwich University of the Arts (February 2011)

staging and the presentation of individual elements within a series of formally arranged tableau or the cinematic equivalent of the *mise en scène* began to present itself as a more conscious practice strategy. The tableau format became more explicit in the Five Years [Fig.39, p.98] and Smith's Row configurations as illustrated in figures 42 - 43 (pp. 03 - 104). It is the Smith's Row scenario in particular that perhaps corresponds more closely with the historical conceptions of the tableau as proposed by Dennis Diderot (1713 -1784),[7] which has been most notably interrogated from a contemporary perspective by the art historian and critic Jean-François Chevrier. Focusing his attention largely on the photographic tableau, exemplified in the work of artists such as Jeff Wall, Chevrier observes that:

> The tableau is useful essentially because it actualises the recorded image and accords it the visual authority of a frontal plane, at the level of the human body (the viewer's body); it contradicts the frenetic and blind circulation of media images and it gives to the photographic image the authority of the work of art… The tableau remains essentially the best model of the artworks autonomy at the end of the twentieth century because it initially cut the painted image off from its functional link with the specific place. (Chevrier, 1991 cited in Adams 2007, p38)

The position of the Smith's Row scenario in the corner of the gallery meant that its access was literally walled off from the viewer and it was similarly demarcated by a frontal plane. It was of a scale that directly related to the body; it staged references to the everyday whilst asserting its difference from the circulation of functional mass produced objects; and its configuration though responsive too, also stood apart from its immediate context. Within later scenarios such as the series of interventions within the Whitworth Art Gallery and the larger scale *mise en scène* within Salts Mill, the tableau form becomes increasingly ambivalent as the placement within the space and the addition of a more specific contextual frame take on greater significance. I will discuss this work in more detail in sections 5.2 and 5.3 respectively. However, it is in the final body of work discussed in section 5.4 that the tableau form is opened up into a more fragmented series of cinematic cuts where the transition from one frame to another unfurls seamlessly and ‘(t)he subject is distributed across the scene of dispersal’ (Fer 2004, p.94).

Although the tableau takes on different forms within the various scenarios over the course of the research, its role in each case is to set in play a series of contradictory registers. On the one hand the installational form of the work places the subject very much centre stage, immersing the viewer in the immediacy of sensory experience. At

the same time, the use of formal arrangement and framing devices introduce cuts into the continuity of experience, separating the work from its immediate context and heightening aesthetic artifice in a way that both transfixes and distances the viewer. In the following section I will consider how strategies of containment and the detached aesthetic of the work are similarly employed as way of interrupting the sensory immediacy of the work with the intention of producing an ambiguity of feeling and heightening aesthetic affect. It is in Chapter 5 that I consider staging as cultural framing when I reflect on the works attachment to and detachment from the variety of contexts in which it has been disseminated.

4.4 Sensuous Immediacy and Corporeal Containment

In order to fully grasp the significance of attachment and detachment that has been central to the research and its outcomes, it is finally necessary to address the terms from the perspective of the medium specific conventions of textile. In this chapter I consider the ways in which the particular material characteristics of the medium facilitate a heightened sensuous attachment and empathic embodied experience, as well as how strategies of subjective detachment, containment and the regulation of matter/material are employed within my own work in order to counter this sensuous immediacy. As with the notion of thingness and strategies of staging, the aim is to introduce subtle cuts and dislocations into the viewer's processually unfolding embodied experience. The argument that I hope to develop is that the unfolding relationship between subjective attachment and detachment gives rise to an ambiguity of feeling that continually oscillates between aesthetic plenitude and a momentary separation or loss of connection which opens up a space of heightened affective potential. If, following Gregg and Seigworth, we are to understand affect 'as a gradient of bodily capacity' that 'accumulates across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness' (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p.2), I would suggest that the intimate relationship between textile and the body makes it a paradigmatic medium with which to articulate this affective capacity.

I will begin by addressing sensuous attachment and the way that textile in particular, and my practice more generally, affords a direct sensory experience by drawing on Mark Paterson's (2007) discussion of 'haptic aesthetics' and outlining how the inherent tactility and pliability of textile maps onto his model of the 'aesthetic body'. I then consider some of the arguments against this direct equation of the materiality of the work with the materiality of the body and describe how within my own practice an

aesthetic of regulation and containment is used to counter sensory immediacy and overt subjective narratives. However, I propose that the seemingly coolly detached aesthetic of the work is far from disinterested, but is used as a strategy to intensify its affective capacity. I frame this by returning to the notion of affect and its conception as 'an intense and thoroughly immanent neutrality…that elude[s] easy polarities and contradictions' (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p.10). I contend that rather than a state of indifference, the neutrality inflected aesthetic of the work opens up an indeterminate space between attachment and detachment that is charged with affective potential, where its subtle material differences resonate as nuanced shimmering intensities within the processually oriented material vitality of the body

Sensory attachment: the haptic aesthetic body

As indicated above, textile material has particular physical qualities, notably its softness, tactility, ephemerality and inherent pliability, which prompts associations with the mutable matter/material of the body and facilitates a potent sensory attachment. As Claire Pajaczkowska notes: 'the textile arts, more than any other, implicate the body as corporeal reality' (Pajaczkowska, 2005, p.223). Because textile literally and culturally materialises our relationship with the world, it becomes enfolded into the dynamism immanent to corporeality, offering a uniquely intimate realm of sensory experience. Accordingly, whether it is the more outwardly representational characteristics of textile or the more ambiguous, complex somatic sensations that the medium gives rise to, its aesthetic potency lies in its direct address to the subject through the projection of this sensuous immediacy. It is this particular ability to heighten the viewer's bodily experience that affords a sense of reassurance, but at the same time opens the body to its own indeterminacy, producing an affective excess that has the potential to undermine subjective stability. Such is the aesthetic complexity of textile.

It is particularly through the mobilisation of a haptic aesthetic - where haptic is understood as 'relating to the sense of touch; in particular relating to the perception and manipulation of objects using the senses of touch and proprioception' (OED, 2003) - that the materiality of textile, and indeed materiality more generally, so affectively bridges the gap between world and self and brings subject and object into intimate proximity. Following what Mark Paterson (2007) describes as a 'felt' phenomenology, we may come a little closer to gaining a greater understanding of the complex workings of touch and its affective significance within aesthetic experience. In his analysis of the various ways in which we are touched or affected by the aesthetic encounter, Patterson

draws on Husserl's conception of an aesthetic body as a way of articulating the various dimensions of tactility as they unfold within the increasing physicality of the traditional art forms. Paterson's conception of the aesthetic body begins with the exteroceptive surface and skin of painting; fleshes out and takes on the mass, volume and anthropomorphic contours of sculpture; and finally expands to the more distanced architectural spatiality of the body. The manifold senses of touch are implicated within the aesthetic body with corresponding complexity: moving from the more obvious registering of tactility and texture within the visual; to the more inwardly oriented senses including proprioceptive awareness of bodily positioning and muscular tension, kinaesthetic awareness of movement, and vestibular awareness of balance; to the deeper more ineffable internal sensations and bodily intensities that I seek to argue are mobilised through the more ambiguous aesthetics of affect. In what follows, I outline and extend Paterson's model by reflecting on how textile maps onto all three of these dimensions of the aesthetic body and how the haptic sensuality of the medium is manifest within my own practice, before going on to consider strategies that I use to contain and counter this sensuous immediacy.

i. Cloth, surface, skin, painting

In our mapping of the aesthetic body, we begin with its cutaneous surface and planar conventions. These conventions are very obviously characteristics fundamental to both textile and painting. Indeed what is a material illusion of tactility within the autonomous realm of painting is literally founded on the very tangible material reality of cloth. Historically, however, the physical reality of the textile ground was dematerialised in order to maintain the disembodied, distanced, logical conditions of vision.[8] As Claire Pajaczkowska observes, '[t]he textile of the canvas is the veil drawn over the real which enables the imaginary, of art to take its place as semiotic representational world' (Pajaczkowska, 2005, p.221). Nevertheless, although the material foundation of painting was historically denied and the registering of tactility through the painted mark operates primarily through the sense of vision; the phenomenological analysis of both Husserl and Merleau-Ponty demonstrate that vision cannot be separated from 'the kinaesthetic background within everyday embodied, consciousness, (that is) part of our anticipative orientation to the world' (Paterson, 2007, p.15). Even within the heights of modernist abstraction and the Greenbergian privileging of 'eyesight alone' that accompanied what Caroline E. Jones (2005) described as the increasing 'bureaucratisation of the senses', the aesthetic body remained a 'phantasmagorical' presence 'bodying forth' in compensation for optical reduction (Jones, 2005, p.149).[9] Instead of a vestigial presence, the planar surface dimensions of aesthetic of the body

are very much foregrounded in the loom-state pliable plane of textile which operates as both a material and metaphorical second skin mediating between the artwork and viewer. The tactile sensuality of surface is evidenced in my own practice through a range of textile materials which invite imagined touch: such as the soft yielding density of felted wool, the smooth suppleness of faux leather and the crisp fluidity of tightly woven cotton. The inherent softness and pliability of textile is heightened through its combination and contrast with non-textile materials such as the clinical sterile resilience of laminate, the roughness of un-planed timber, the smooth hard density of MDF or the surface worn rigidity of galvanised steel. Skin/surface connotations are further enhanced in the form of the work; particularly those elements that reference the functional convention of textile as cover, such as the tailored quasi garment/soft furnishing components; the draped curtain components; or the 'fully fitted' upholstery components [Fig. 52]. The complex interaction of optical and tactile senses is perhaps most apparent where these surfaces are worked. Most notably in the intricate labour-intensive hand embroidered components, the shimmering sheen of the viscose threads of the digitally stitched fabric used to cover one of the upholstered forms, or the soft striated density of the hand stitched woollen canvas-work used to upholster a series of square framed padded tubular components [Fig. 53]. Inviting an indeterminate 'haptic visuality',[10] the eye/body moves across these subtly modulated surfaces in the way of a visual caress. However, it becomes even more complex as proprioceptive and kinaesthetic senses are brought into play. The worked surfaces not only invite imagined touch but also awaken in the body the repetitive processes of their making. They also activate a very physical movement of the body in the way that their intricacy invites the viewer into a closer appreciation of surface incident.

ii. Tangible matter/material, flesh, volume, sculpture

We move from the aesthetic body's cutaneous surface and the more obvious registering of tactility through the immediacy of exteroceptive touch to the mobilisation of interoceptive somatic sensations through the physically materiality and volume of sculpture. It is this very physicality of sculpture, together with its assertive presence within the same space of the viewer that establishes a more pronounced empathic corporeal relationship. Robert Vischer's notion of empathy translated from the German *Einfühlung* as 'in-feeling' or 'feeling-into' (Greiner, 2015, p.2) provides an early articulation of the capacity of the imagination to evoke an experience of bodily continuity:

Figure 52. Skin/surface connotations: the conventions of textile as cover (2011-2014)

Figure 53. Stitched surfaces: interaction of optical and tactile elements (2011-2014)

> There is in imagination a prompt stimulation and pulsation (immediate sensation) and a successive enveloping, embracing and caressing of the object (responsive sensation), whereby we project ourselves all the more intensively into the interior of the phenomena, that is to say, there is an immediate sensation on the responsive sensation for the purpose of generating an emphatic sensation or empathy (Vischer as cited in Leach, 2006, p.39).

This empathic relationship is particularly evident where the shape, scale, orientation or echoing of biomorphic bodily contours within sculptural form prompts a more obvious mimetic figurative analogy. But as we saw with Michael Fried's critique of theatricality, even the reductive form of minimalist sculpture was refuted for its anthropomorphic presence. It is sculpture's potential to both mimic the body and awaken the more inwardly oriented ambiguous sensations of proprioception and kinaesthesia that affords the medium its affective potency. Respectively concerned with the way that we infer our position in space and an awareness of movement; these senses operate at a medium depth between the body's cutaneous surface contact and its deeper internal organs. Unlike Vischer's ideational conception of empathy, for Brian Massumi '[t]his asubjective and nonobjective medium depth is one of the strata proper to the corporeal; it is the dimension of the flesh' (Massumi, 2002, p.59).The ambiguous somatic sensations that resonate within the body are the product of its processual material vitality, 'embodied in purely autonomic reactions' (Massumi, 2002, p.25). Responses to external stimuli are folded into the body through the exteroceptive tactile sensibility of the skin, are translated through proprioception into 'a muscular memory of relationality' (Massumi, 2002, p.59) and subsequently unfold as external response in combination with the other senses. What Massumi describes as 'visceral sensibility', is equally of the flesh but operates within the deeper corporeal strata, manifesting itself as an interruption in the stimulus response circuit where the body is plunged into suspended animation. According to Massumi:

> Viscerality is the perception of suspense. The space into which it jolts the flesh is one of an inability to act or reflect, a spasmodic passivity, so taut a receptivity that the body is paralysed until it is jolted back into action–reaction by recognition. Call it the space of *passion*. Its elementary units are neither the absolute perspectives of movement-vision nor the vectorial fields of proprioception proper, but rather *degrees* of intensity (Massumi, 2002, p.61).

This 'jolt to the flesh' registers intensity so immediately that 'it can be said without exaggeration to proceed the exteroceptive sense perception (Massumi, 2002, p.60). Resonating in the body as an excess or ambiguity of feeling, it opens us up to the

affective indeterminacy of the body's processual material vitality. This self-reflexive recognition of self-complication, material alterity and difference, is brought to the fore in the aesthetic encounter in a way that reveals our sensuous affective capacity and expands our boundaries, but at the same time threatens subjective coherence. If sculpture in general has the potential to awaken these corporeal intensities through the mobilisation of proprioceptive and visceral senses, I would argue that the inherent mutability, softness and ephemerality of textile, which so closely duplicate the lively material mutability of the body, afford it a particular affective potency.

Within my own practice, this embodied physicality and fleshy corporeality is perhaps most obviously evidenced in the yielding somatic surfaces and supple padded contours of the upholstered components which have a reassuringly soft yet supportive muscular strength. Also, in a series of seamed biomorphic stuffed forms whose soft bulging plumpness can hardly be contained by their all too tight textile skins. However, proprioceptive resonances and kinaesthetic potential is also activated in the non-textile elements, such as the straddling tautness of the leg-like components; the stretched tensile rigidity of the bent wood components; the sinewy extension of elastic straps; or the arrested fluidity of the draped curtain elements [Figs. 54]. Components sit solidly on the floor; or lean precariously against a wall; handles and grips invite us to grasp and hold; and pliant materials are held tightly by more rigid supporting 'pinch-stick' structures [Fig. 55]. In addition to these more obvious somatic attunements, there are also much more subtly affective impingements on the body that are difficult to pin down, which I will address later when I turn my attention to the strategies that I use to affectively regulate the body. But before I do this, and by way of transition to my own detached aesthetic, I will finish this mapping of the haptic body by briefly considering how senses of touch are articulated through the increasingly more distanced spatial practices of architecture and how this is manifest in the work.

iii. Embodied practice, spatial habits, body, architecture

The externally oriented dispersed space[11] within the aesthetic discipline of architecture, clearly distinguish it from what was traditionally the self-contained space of sculpture, which, as we have seen, more obviously echoes the size and scale of the human body and has an immediate presence within the perceptual field of the viewer. Robert Morris further distinguishes between what he considers to be the more haptic proximity of objects within installation and the what is often seen as the visual distancing of architecture: 'it has to do with dealing with objects in that kind of latent sense, one has of being able to handle them and deal with them, move them. It is not a sense that I

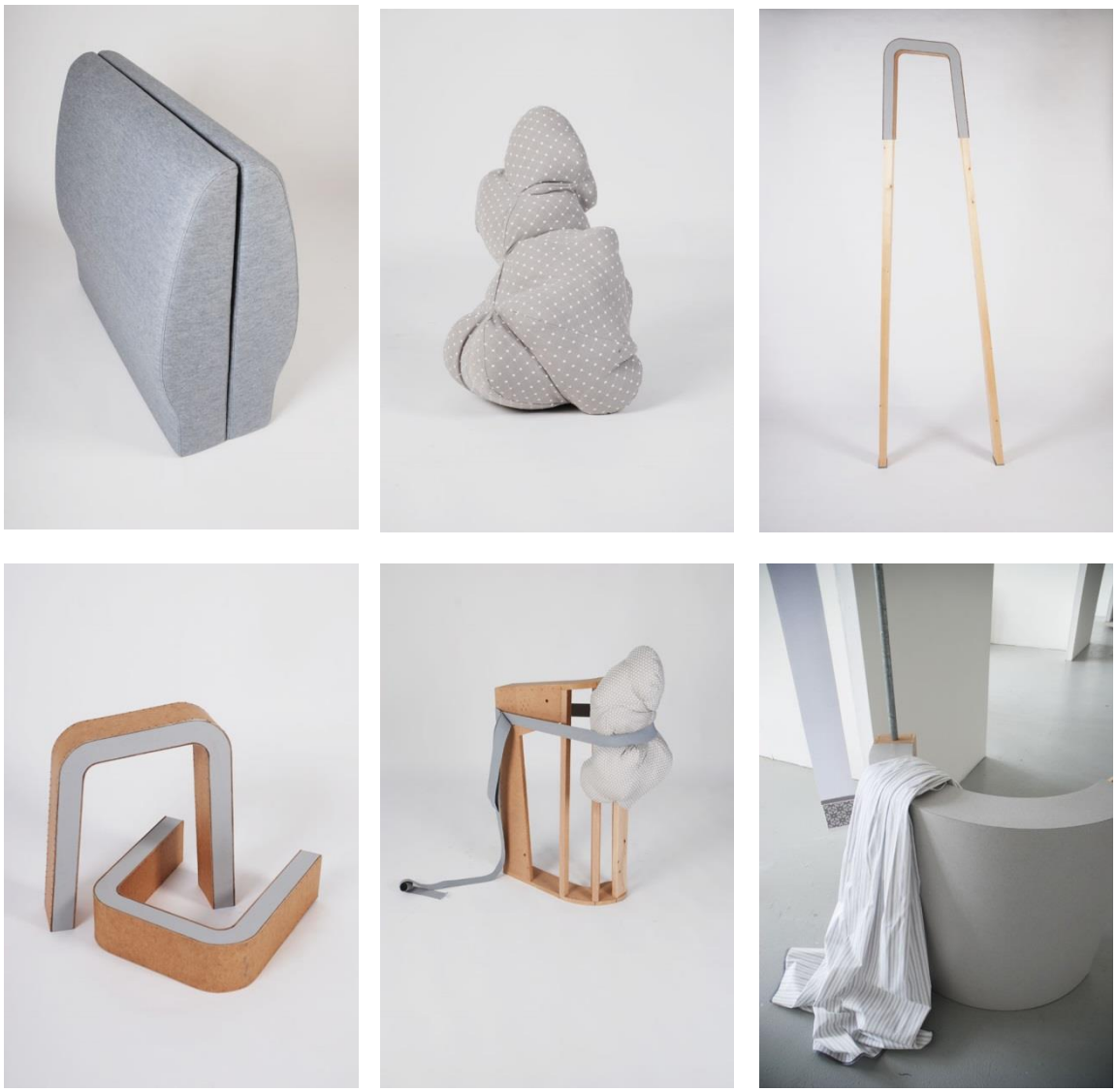

Figure 54. Proprioceptive resonances and kinaesthetic potential evoked through various practice components (2011-2014)

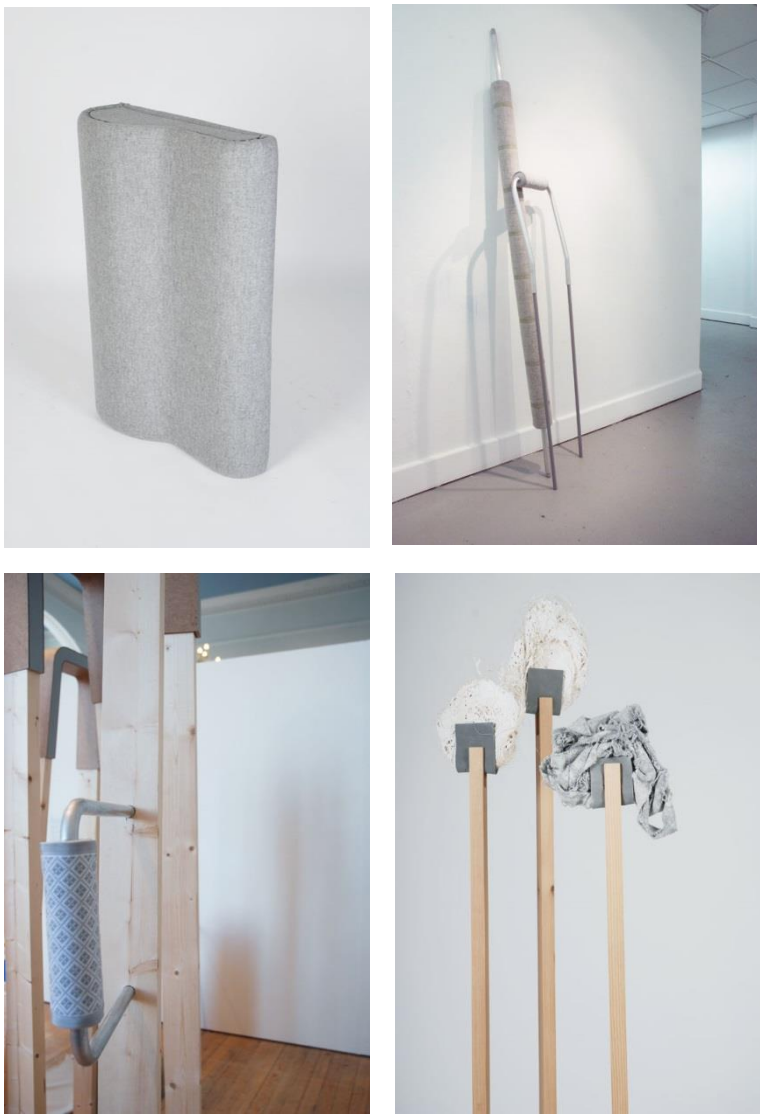

Figure 55. Proprioceptive resonances and kinaesthetic potential evoked through various practice components (2011-2014)

find applied to architecture, but objects that are in one's own body space' (Goossen, as cited in Colpitt,1990, p.79). However, as we saw in the previous discussion about the way that installation art stages the experiential encounter, and as Morris himself was instrumental in bringing the fore; whilst the haptic body is more actively engaged, it is also somatically distributed through the impingement of other sensory factors and external contexts. Although architecture itself remains inert, our bodies are radically contingent and in this sense 'our engagement with the built environment is never a given, static condition, but an ongoing process of constant adaptation' (Leach, 2006, p.7).

Whilst we might have a more distant and distracted relationship with architecture, haptic engagement takes on a temporal dimension through the accumulative habituated spatial practices that are part of the fabric of everyday experience. The somatic senses that constitute the spatial awareness of movement, position and balance, combine with the other senses and become imprinted on the body and internalised as corporeal memory, 'mastered gradually by habit under the guidance of tactile appropriation' (Benjamin, 1992, p.233). This 'archive of memorised sensory experiences' (Leach, 2006, p.142) and precognitive somatic intensities is subsequently re-activated or re- membered; projected onto the material form of architectural space, through what can be an affective yet often intangible sense of haptic/spatial continuity, or indeed discontinuity. My own work draws reference from the spatial environments that form the background of everyday experience, in particular the interior furnishings that mediate between body and architecture through which we have a more direct haptic relationship. In so doing, it aims to mobilise the affective potency and sensory immediacy of these corporeal memories and bodily intensities within the beholder who engages with the work. However, as with strategies of staging, I do this by momentarily interrupting this sensory immediacy and regulating the haptic body in a way that introduces a subtle sense of detachment or discontinuity within the experiential encounter. Before I consider how this is manifest in the work, I will briefly outline my reasons for adopting such an approach.

Subjective detachment: avoiding essentialism and clichéd conventions

Having gone to some lengths to make a case for the way that textile in particular, and my practice more generally, mobilises the haptic body and affords a direct sensory experience, it might seem strange to employ strategies that regulate and contain this sensory immediacy. My concern, however, is with the affective potential of the indeterminacy that arises between subjective attachment *and* detachment.

Countering the reassuringly familiar subjective narratives that are traditionally associated with textile, my own work seeks to forefront the affective agency of the material. This is where the mimetic model of sensuous correspondence proposed by Adorno is useful because it moves beyond anthropomorphic mimicry or mere empathy. Similar to empathy, there is an active yielding and openness to the other, where the subject sees or indeed feels him or herself into the object, but rather than a subjective projection and mirroring that reinforces the ego, mimesis undermines its autonomy and self-control. Within the sensuous affinity of mimetic comportment, some level of critical distance must be maintained through the dawning self-reflexive awareness of the dissonance of the nonidentical - the sensuous excess or remainder that resists subjective coherence. As Carrie Noland observes: 'in other words, our experience of artworks is a cognition laced with feeling, a consciousness *even within the loss of self-reflexive consciousness* (which is feeling) of being in contact with something one is not' (original emphasis) (Noland, 2013, p.181). I will pick up Adorno's notion of mimesis and this idea of it being 'a cognition laced with feeling' again in the following chapter where I reflect on the staging of the work within a number of different cultural contexts.

Aesthetic strategies which draw on the sensuous material vitality and alterity of the body have been used productively to challenge the Cartesian model of the autonomous stable subject and corresponding mind/body dualisms. This is particularly the case within the deconstructive project of feminism, where women artists informed by the psychoanalytical theories of writers such as Luce Irigaray (1997) and Julia Kristeva (1984), have developed aesthetic languages that draw on the materiality of the female body and female imaginary. Such strategies have been usefully employed within postmodern theory and practice as a way of marking productive difference and re-presenting what had been ideologically repressed within culture. In fine art as in textile practice, acknowledgement of the materialist, corporeal roots of subjectivity and the disruptive potential of the somatic, manifest through the foregrounding of tactility, fluidity and sensuality of matter/material, prompted newly found critical currency and a strategic way of reinstating the female subject. Indeed, as an artist and a young lecturer working within a fine art department whose background in textiles seemed to afford little currency, I found myself particularly empowered by such strategies.

However, one of the arguments against such strategies is that they merely replace a model of aesthetic expression based on the subjective experience of the (male) artist with a feminine mode of self-expression. There is also the danger of essentialism and an all too easy collapse of the feminine with either formless sensuous excess, or at the opposite end of the scale, with the entropic breakdown of matter/material and

associations with the abject or uncanny. As Katy Deepwell observes in relation to the medium of painting, the construction of a distinct female aesthetic based on a sensuous contiguity with materiality of the body can be problematic in that it can reinforce rather than disrupt binary oppositions (Deepwell, 1996, p.9). Within the already gendered practices of textile, the alignment of the feminine body with the particular characteristics of the medium and the direct address to subjective experience can be both productive *and* prove limiting, resulting in well-worn aesthetic strategies that can easily become clichéd and formulaic and fix textile practice and theory in a cultural and critical freeze-frame. Reflecting on the development of installation art as a genre in the introduction to *The Infinite Line, Remaking Art after Modernism*, Briony Fer similarly expresses reservations about an over investment in sensuous immediacy as a direct expression of subjective experience.

> [I]nstallation as a genre…brings with it a whole set of assumptions about the nature of aesthetic experience as direct and spontaneous that seemed to me deeply problematic. A similar set of assumptions attach to material processes in the idea that an excess of materiality leads to a more direct, even visceral experience. One of my aims is to counter the so-called emphatic model of aesthetic experience and consider instead the cuts and dislocations that are condition of viewing…even if the artwork itself looks as though it is exempt (Fer, 2004, p.4).

An aesthetic of containment: countering sensuous immediacy

Within my own practice, strategies of corporeal regulation and seeming subjective detachment are adopted as a way of introducing such a series of subtle affective cuts and dislocations within the aesthetic encounter. Rather than employ material strategies that merely reassure or reaffirm subjective continuity, or in an obvious way undermine subjective coherence, the work employs an aesthetic of containment in order to counter and complicate its otherwise installational fragmented aesthetic of dispersal. As with notions of fragmentation and dispersal, the paradoxical nature of containment is that it can have both positive and negative connotations and correspondingly give rise to a complexity of affects. To this end, the body is evoked in the work, but as a ‘detached presence’ (Fer, 2004, p.114) in an attempt to produce an ambiguity of feeling that shifts between aesthetic abundance and a momentary separation or loss of connection. Both the nature of the materials and the form of my work activate a heightened somatic attachment, but sensuous immediacy is continually kept in check, veiled behind a seemingly coolly detached and disinterested façade.

Moving away from aesthetic approaches that privilege material excess, the work presents a materially measured body. It is a body that is well-toned and trimmed, where the fluidity of cloth is continually brought under control. Upholstered forms are tightly tailored; the flow of fabric is regulated into neatly gathered curtains, or even when loosely draped, is staged with the same formality as the carefully composed swagged drapes of Renaissance painting. Cut edges are hemmed and bound, and compact cushioned panels and pads are fitted neatly into protective timber frames. Where materials other than cloth are used, we have empty carcasses and casings that are hardened, stripped of any excess flesh and 'close to the bone'. The supple flexibility of hardboard is placed under tension and securely pinned in place; the interior skeletal frames of upholstered forms are divested of their softening protective covers; loose fibres and cushioned forms are petrified in plaster and plinths and pedestals are fitted edge to edge with clinical wipe-clean laminate [Fig. 56]. Instead of an expressive body concerned with subjective narratives, we have a self-effacing practical functioning body. Drawing reference from Risatti's functional conventions of textile as cover, container or support (Risatti, 2007, pp.29-40) the body articulated within the practice is an ergonomic body designed for efficiency and comfort. Furniture components standardised to the average dimensions of the body provide reassuring support; handles and cushioned grips allow for ease of control; quasi tools hint at possible practical use; metal frameworks suggest gym apparatus; and platforms are cut and notched in the way that desktops or floorcoverings would be tailored to fit the body/space [Fig. 57]. The practice presents a materially measured, functioning body and a seeming complicity with modernist protocols of reduction and rationality, but it is not a simple strategy of subversion or reversal. Instead, strategies of control and containment are continually set in play against the sensory immediacy of the work in a way that reveals the inadequacy of binary oppositions and enhances affective capacity.

In *Visualising Feeling Affect and the Feminine Avant-Garde* (Best, 2011), Susan Best finds precedents for such a tension between an aesthetic of subjective detachment and the affective potential of art in the work of a number women artists in the 1960's and 1970's. Focusing on Lygia Clark, Eva Hesse, Ana Mendieta and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Best engages in a revisionist approach to art history by considering the way affect permeates their work even when, in line with the anti-aesthetic, anti-expressive protocols of the time, there was a deliberate suppression of expression and subjectivity. Discussing their work within the contexts of critical responses to minimalism, she demonstrates how 'contrary to all expectations, the eclipse of

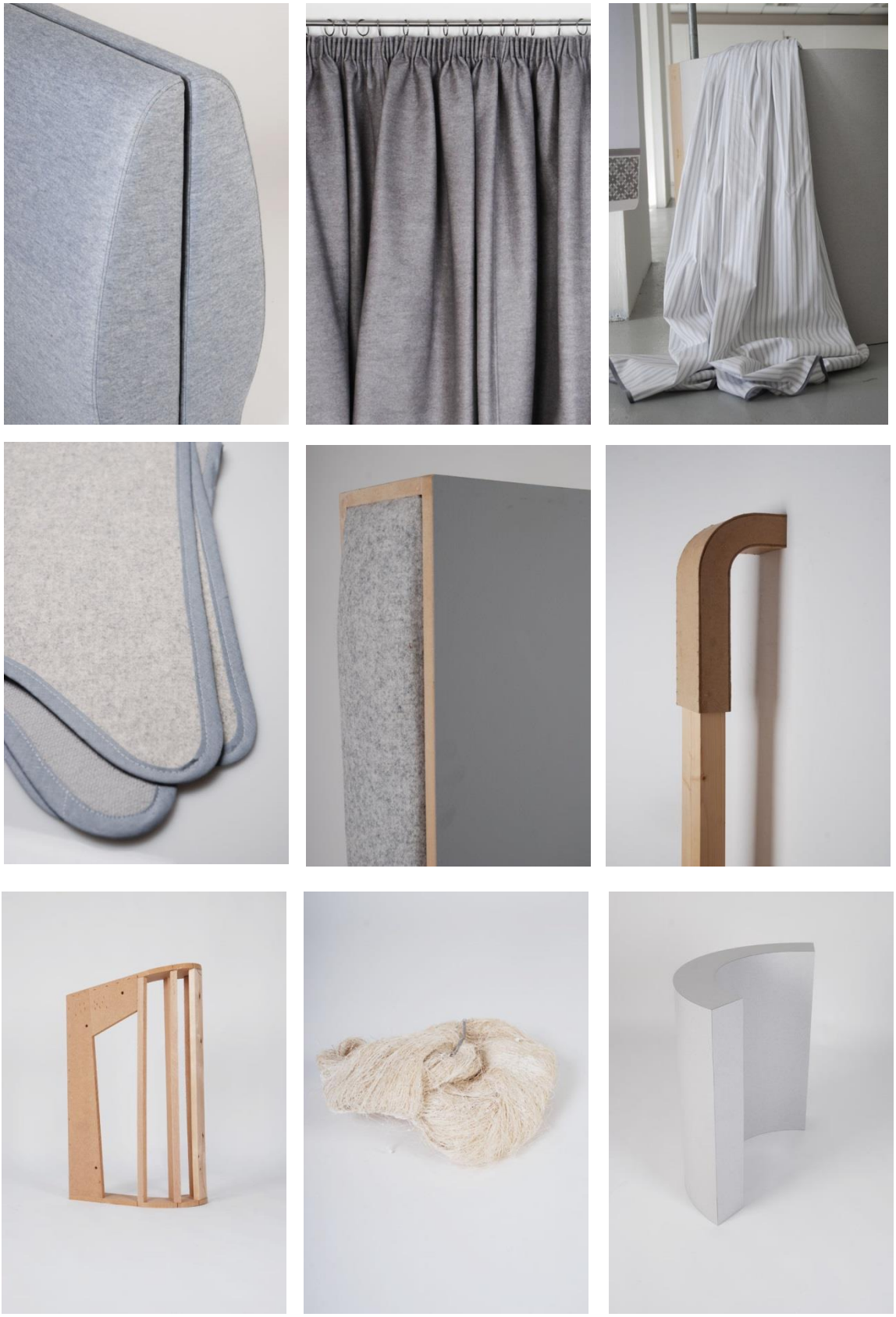

Figure 56. Practice components presenting a materially measured body (2011-2014)

authorship intensifies the expressive and affective dimension of art' (Best, 2011, p.138). Best analyses how in their different ways each of the four women artists refigure rather than reject the subjective dimension of art, moving away from a model of subjectivity that is concerned with the communication of the artists feelings, and offering instead a model of subjectivity that is both a product of the viewer's experiential encounter and embedded in the work itself. Of particular relevance to my own practice is Best's analysis of Eva Hesse's work and the way that it seems to marshal 'something that cannot be reduced to visibility' (Best, 2011, p.140) bringing together a whole range of contradictory and ambivalent resonances that 'one cannot resolve… into a cohesive expression' (Best, 2011, p.10). Best describes these elusive, contradictory feelings that are hard to pin down as 'non-categorical affect' (Best, 2011, p.5). In Hesse's case, the indeterminate affective dimension of her work derives from the particular combination of a detached aesthetic with a corporeal material sensuality. This provides both a sense of reassurance and reaffirms subjective stability but at the same time produces an ambiguity of feeling that puts this stability at risk. In her conclusion, Best suggests that this process of centring and decentring is indeed something that is common to the work of all four artists noting that:

> the language of the unconscious threatens to derail and undo, subjectivity, in ways that are hard to pinpoint, let alone control...[T]here is an aesthetic containment of what could otherwise be overwhelming. All four artists are within a hair's breadth of overwhelming ideas and sensations; it is their astonishing capacity to conjure such strong feelings, while also providing the assurance of containment or constraint (Best, 2011, p.144).

Brinoy Fer's analysis of Hesse's work within *The Infinite Line, Remaking Art after Modernism* similarly places an emphasis on the contradictory complexity of the subjective attachments and detachments that are both embodied within Hesse's work and activated within the experiential encounter. Discussing this tension, Fer states that:

> such a series of cuts puts a brake on and interrupts the constant circling of bodily empathies; not a filling up but making a hole in; not a directness but a kind of opacity. Contradictorily, then, to be in the encounter is to be out of the encounter. It is not simply how the body comes to be placed in the work, but how it does so only to expose a fundamental absence in the bits and pieces of subjectivity that seem to get detached in the process (Fer, 2004, p114).

Fer qualifies this, suggesting that detachment in Hesse's work 'ends up being not just a

Figure 57. Practice components presenting an ergonomic functioning body designed for efficiency and control (2011-2014)

necessary cost but also a gain,…[d]etachment, in these terms, then, is anything but neutral. It can be more or less violent but never indifferent' (Fer, 2004, p115).

A neutrally inflected space of resonating affective potential

As with the work of Lili Dujourie discussed in the earlier theoretical reflections, the regulated and contained sensuality of my own work, does not imply an absence of feeling but is employed both as a way of resisting easy dualities and a means concentrating and intensifying aesthetic experience. Opening up a potential space[12] that continually oscillates between attachment and detachment, containment and dispersal, mobility and stillness, sensuous proximity and self-reflexive critical distance, the aim is that the work gives rise to an ambiguity of feeling and elicits within the beholder a level of self-complication. The strategies of containment and regulation present the work in a state of latency waiting to be activated by the viewer, offering a model where 'static triumphs over dynamic; but it is a static that moves in its own fullness' (Marcuse as cited in Leach, 2002, p.217). A useful analogy could be made here with the term 'gathering of supplementary fullness', a phrase used within dressmaking to describe the various techniques employed to manage excess volume.[13] What is significant about these techniques, is that the processes of reduction and regulation imposed on the cloth concentrate and control excess, but through this concentration they both increase the capacity and ease of movement. Restriction and expansion are co-dependent.

In their introduction to *The Affect Theory Reader*, Gregg and Seigworth make use of the similar analogy or figuration, 'a gathering place of accumulative dispositions', to describe the mobilisation of corporeal intensities opened up by affective experience. Perhaps more poetically, they also describe this gathering of forces as 'the affective bloom-space of an ever-processual materiality' (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p.9). Gregg and Seigworth suggest that such is the force of the body's affective capacity 'that it can drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, [or]… likewise suspend us (as in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force relations' (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p.1). It is in this neutral space of immanent potential that the slightest nuance of difference registers as a progressive amplification or diminution of intensity. Drawing on a series of lectures that Roland Barthes's delivered during the late 1970s under the title of *The Neutral*, Gregg and Seigworth adopt Barthes's phrase 'an inventory of shimmers' (Barthes, 2005, p.77) to describe the various dimensions and infinitely subtle gradients of affect. Similar to the subtle synchronous vibration of

resonance, the shimmering nuanced space of affect potentiality opened up by the Neutral has an indiscernible force that has the power to 'baffle the paradigm'. According to Barthes, 'intensity matters for the Neutral because it's a concept that is allergic to the paradigm… we ask that the Neutral not be conceived, connoted as a flattening of intensities but to the contrary as a bubbling up' (Barthes, 2005, p.196-7). Instead of the easy polarities of binary oppositions, Barthes proposes a 'neutrally inflected' analysis that takes account of the 'plus/minus', 'the stretching' of intensities that register the nuanced subtleties of difference (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p.10).

The neutrally inflected aesthetic of my own work is perhaps most evident in the all-pervading greyness of its palette which is employed as one of the ways of registering such nuances of difference. Drained of the distraction of colour in favour of a close value of hues, the work is afforded a strange sterile artifice of unchanging sameness. Its consistent greyness sets the work apart from the chaotic chromatic variety of its quotidian counterparts, bleaching the life out of the everyday. At the same time, the absence of colour accentuates the material qualities of the work and as the omnipresent colour of everyday functionality, is adopted as a means of privileging the utilitarian over the expressive. In *The Luminous and the Grey*, David Batchelor meditates on the ambiguous relationship that we have with grey as a colour and the generally negative connotations that are associated with it. He offers a range of synonyms such as dull, dreary, boring, anonymous, tedious, characterless, nondescript. However, he qualifies this by noting the more productive dimension of terms such as neutral, ambiguous, uncertain, unclear and debatable, which point to its in-between status and afford it a potential richness and complexity that he suggests is rarely recognised (Batchelor, 2014, p.74).

Within my own work, what at first sight registers as a restrained uniformity of grey, slowly gives way to reveal a rich variety of tints, tones and shades; a subtlety that is further magnified through the tactile qualities of the different materials employed within the work and the detailed qualities of the making. As with the physical regulation of materials, the reduction of colour is employed as a way of concentrating and distilling the senses into ever more finely tuned gradations of intensities. There is both a dampening and amplification, an emptying out and a filling up; which similar to the affective experience of the staged St Petersburg tableau, evokes a pervading sense of stasis as if the body is in suspended animation. Referencing the way that strategies of repetition paradoxically equally accentuate and reduce difference, Briony Fer states: '[a]gainst expectations, it is almost as if the understated, the apparently inattentive and indifferent, becomes the necessary ground for heightened intensity (Fer, 2004, p.4). In

the temporal unfolding aesthetic experience of my own work, we become acutely aware of the infinite variety of greys, the different qualities of surface, how the optical play of light is activated or absorbed by those surfaces and how the manipulation of those materials ambiguously impinge on the body. We notice the way that the sheen of a silver grey striated viscose grosgrain ribbon sits differently on the surface of a cool, slightly embossed blue grey faux leather rather than sinking into the soft light absorbing density of a greenish grey felted wool. We notice the way that a warm dove grey slippery knitted woollen binding rolls in a slightly unruly way around the 'well behaved' resilient smoothness of a beigey-grey vinyl. We sense the difference between the brittleness of a salt and pepper flecked grey laminate and the softness of a similarly optically animated marled weave cotton. In a way that we can't quite make sense of, we become aware of the more subtle bodily intensities; such as the way that a soft tailored stone grey pad nestles comfortably into a slate grey MDF casing so that the springy density of the felted wool slightly expands to soften the cut edge of the timber. Or the way that the slap-flat fall of faux leather differs from the gentler soft springy fall of a woven woollen cloth; or the how the direction of a pressed seam on the shoulder of a minimalist upholstered form can provide an inherent sense of bodily satisfaction - or indeed, dissatisfaction.

As a beholder of the work we navigate our way through this haptic space of continuous variation and close vision, activating the subtle affective intensities of barely discernible relations between the body and the work in a similar way that the Deleuzian nomad navigates a smooth space.[14] This smooth space of the work, however, is continually countered by a static striated space that is defined by the subtle imposition of measures, and limits. Existing in a resonating interplay between the measured sensuous capacity of the work and the infinitely unmeasured sensuous capacity of the body, the smooth and striated unfurl in a shimmering intensity. Within the practice, the neutrally inflected aesthetic - whether manifest through the control and regulation of the materials or the coolly detached greyness of the palette - is employed as a way of resisting easy polarities. The work proposes a model of subjectivity as both attached and detached, where the haptic qualities of the work, and textile in particular, invoke a sensory immediacy that both asserts the centrality of the subject, but at the same time produces an indeterminately affective experience that undermines its stability.

4.5 Summary Reflections

Over the course of this chapter I have considered a number of strategies that are employed in the practice as a way of maintaining a productive tension between somatic and semantic attachment and detachment and corresponding subjective and material agency. In each case the different operational approaches give rise to a processually oriented indeterminate experience, opening up an affective gap in which the subject (as artist or viewer) is simultaneously centred and decentred. The ambiguous familiar unfamiliarity of thingness allows for a gathering or assembly of heterogeneous semiotic references that logically resist conceptual synthesis. Through the continual (re)staging of my thingly taxonomy in the form of a series of constellatory configurations, meaning remains mutable as the individual elements momentarily coalesce with other elements and are contingent as the experiential encounter is determined by circumstantial conditions. The particularly potent somatic and semantic associations afforded through the complex constellatory connotations of textile afford a sensuous immediacy, whilst a detached aesthetic and regulation of the sensuous immediacy of matter/material intensifies affective potential. Both the practice strategy of thingness and staging also allow for a productive relationship between aesthetic autonomy and empirical reality. The thingly dimension of the practice maintains enigmatic attachments to objects in and of the world whilst foregrounding aesthetic considerations, and the process of staging both places the everyday centre-stage at the same time that it is detached from the everyday through its constructed aesthetic artifice. And finally, each of the strategies allow for a level of attachment and detachment between sensuous affinity and critical distance and corresponding subjective and material agency, through the self-determined mobilisation of the affective indeterminacy of matter/material.

Having considered the ways in which various aspects of production give rise to an affectively indeterminate experience, in the next chapter I focus on the application of these strategies and the dissemination of the work in a number of different contexts. Here the cartographic (re)mapping becomes even more complex as the conceptual constellation of assimilation and differentiation and operational constellation of attachment and detachment are mediated within a wider constellational cultural frame.

Notes to Chapter 4: Practice Components: Material Configurations

'Arbitrary objects', 'objecthood' and the familiar unfamiliarity of 'thingness'.

1. See for example: Louis Bourgeois, Tracy Emin, Mike Kelly, Kimsooja, Yinka Shonibare, Mary Sibande, Risham Syed, Do Ho Su.
2. See: Lacan, J., & Miller, J. A. (2013). *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*. London: Routledge.
3. A preoccupation within earlier pre PhD work was the way that functioning objects within the built environment mediate between the body and space and instigate in us routinely repeated patterns of behaviour; which though often anonymous, are nevertheless crucial to the functioning of everyday life. Drawing reference from objects such as handles, handrails, barriers, ventilation grills and light-switches, my concern was with the way that they often mark fluid points of transition. These unconscious patterns of behaviour are echoed in the work through the repetitive processes of needlepoint and darning which bring both a private and a feminine intervention into the public realm of architectural space. This extended to a broader concern with the poetics and the politics of space and the way that the boundary or the margin frames, divides or alternately denies or allows access and is often a site of uncertainty and unpredictability. See Bristow, M. (2004) and Bristow, M. (2012).
4. Notable examples of artists appropriating the pristine seductive richness of mass material commodity culture would be Isa Genzken, Jessica Stockholder and Hew Locke. Notable examples of a more entropic approach would be Gedi Sibony, Alexandra Bircken and Ian Kiaer. For a discussion of this preoccupation with the more fragmented, discarded stuff of commodity culture see also (Stallabrass, 2009, pp.406-424).
5. For a discussion about the relationship between the literal and depicted dimensions of painting, see Michael Fried's essay 'Shape as form: Frank Stella's irregular polygons' in *Art and Objecthood* (Fried, 1965, pp. 77-99).

Staged Contiguity and Discontiguity

6. In his essay *From aesthetics to abstract machine: Deleuze, Guattari and contemporary art practice,* Simon O'Sullivan assembles a series of 'components of concepts' that he suggests 'are useful for thinking the expanded field of art' (O'Sullivan, 2010), one of which is the event. O'Sullivan sees the event as 'a point of indetermination' which 'holds the potential to open up new pathways, new possibilities of being (O'Sullivan, 2011, p202); a characteristic that he believes is evidenced in a new attitude in contemporary art practice.
7. Denis Diderot was credited with introducing the concept of the 'fourth wall' in theatre; the idea of an invisible barrier or imaginary wall separating the world of the action of the play from the everyday world of the audience. See: Bell, Elizabeth S. (2008). *Theories of Performance*. Los Angeles: Sage. p.203.

Sensuous Immediacy and Corporeal Containment

8. For a further analysis of this dematerialisation in relation to practice conducted in the early stages of the research, see the documentation of the first two projects carried out within the framework of the PhD 'Materialising the modernist grid' and The planar object' included as appendix B.
9. In her analysis of the 'modernist sensorium' in *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*, Caroline A. Jones observes that '[p]rotocols of reduction, narrowing, and restraint constrained the body to focus on one sense a time, reducing but also intensifying the sensations of maker and viewer *to cause them to "body forth" in the art as compensation for that reduction* (original emphasis). For Greenberg's readers and viewers, "bodying forth" was an elusive, prosthetic, and phantasmagorical experience that made sense (so to speak) of their developing situation as bureaucratised subjects of industrial modernity' (Jones, 2005, p.149-150).
10. According to Laura U. Marks: [o]ptical visuality depends on a separation between the viewing subject and the object. Haptic looking tends to move over the surface of its object. Rather than plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern

texture. It is more inclined to move than to focus, more inclined to graze than to gaze' (Marks, 2000, p.162)

11. Here I draw on Frances Colpitt's observation of the way that Lucy Lippard described the different ways that minimalist artists articulate space: 'Judd, Morris and Smithson,… make works that occupy space. Bladen, Tony Smith, and Grosvenor conquer space. The installations of Carl Andre and Dan Flavin disperse space, while Le Witt's grids and Smith's Smoke incorporate it' (Colpitt, 1993, p82).
12. The term 'potential space' comes from the British paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott who used it 'to refer to an intermediate area of experiencing'. For a more detailed analysis of this concept see (Ogden, T., H, 2014, pp.121-133).
13. There is also a connection here with Heidegger's 'thing' as a gathering or assembly.
14. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* (1988) Deleuze & Guattari, make a distinction between two types of space: smooth and striated. They describe smooth space as a haptic space; a fluid, formless state of continuous variation, characteristic of the sea or the steppe, dessert, or ice landscapes occupied by nomads. It is an open space of close vision where orientation is not demarcated or delineated by clear points of reference but through the subtle affective intensities of barely discernible sets of relations. The examples that Deleuze and Guattari provide of such intensities are 'winds, undulations of snow or sound, the song of the sand or the creaking of ice, the tactile qualities of both' (p.382). Striated space, on the other hand is characterised as static and sedentary and defined by divisions and regulations as in the city. To use the textile analogy that Deleuze and Guattari also employ, it is the gridded space of the intersecting warp and weft of woven cloth that is delimited by the frame of the loom, as opposed to the smooth space of felt with its multidirectional densely entanglement of fibres. However, smooth and striated, haptic and optic, dispersal and containment are co-dependent. As Deleuze and Guattari note, the 'two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transverse into striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space' (p.474). As Stephen Zepke (2005) observes: the organisation and regulation of 'striated representational space 'gives smooth space a milieu of propagation and renewal, without which its consistency might remain unexpressed (p.261).

5. Contextual Components: Configurations in Context

5.1 Introduction

Over the course of the last chapter I considered *thingness, staging*, and *sensuous immediacy/corporeal containment* as operational procedures, reflecting on ways in which they might facilitate a processually oriented experience through which relationships between attachment and detachment are maintained in a productive tension. The intention is that the indeterminacy of this experience opens up an affective gap where boundaries between the medium specific and post-medium contexts of the work become blurred and there is a more reciprocal relationship between material and subjective agency.

In this chapter, also constructed in three sections, I focus on the application and dissemination of these procedures as practice strategies operating within exhibition and installation contexts. The staging of the work within a variety of contexts becomes part of the larger cartographic process of the research, where the space of display is seen to assert its own material agency and the constellatory inter-relationships mobilised by the work are opened up to even greater complexity

The various cultural frames I consider include the art gallery/museological context of the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, including the environment of the adjacent café/foyer area (29 July - 1 Sept 2013); a textile specific, international group exhibition shown within the heritage site of Salts Mill, Saltaire (18 Aug – 1 Nov 2013); and a 'white cube' studio/gallery space at the University of Chester (1 Sept - 26 Oct 2014). These staged encounters build upon earlier developmental phases of the research as reflected in exhibition outcomes within Five Years and Smiths Row galleries. The different sites of dissemination are themselves complex cultural constellations and were purposefully chosen as a way of testing the material agency of the work and its potential to mobilise convergences and divergences across the material and visual culture contexts from which the work draws its references. My reflections over the course of the following three sections focus on the various dimensions of this experiential encounter as it is mobilised through the material agency of the practice and its cultural frame.

The first body of work I consider is an exhibition at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, entitled *Concordance,* which comprised a series of interventions staged within the transitional spaces between the textile and fine art gallery and the café/foyer area. The various definitions of 'concordance' as a state of agreement or congruity and an index that compares usages of the same word within different contexts reflect my main ambition for the exhibition. This was to blur categorical divides and foster correspondences across the gallery's historical and contemporary textile collection, its fine art collection, and the mass produced functional objects that are integral to its everyday operation. Although it was not a predetermined intention, the legacy of the gallery as a model of the 19th Century enlightenment enterprise also prompted reflections on the ways that museums have shaped knowledge through principles of order and categorisation. Drawing parallels with my own taxonomy of components and proposal to document the practice elements in the form of a quasi-retail catalogue, I discuss how the particular nature of the emerging practice soon began to exceed generalising concepts making it difficult to cleanly map the various components onto my conceptually imposed categories. Framing my reflections on the way that the thingly nature of the work is able to accommodate a constellation of resonances and render the contradictory and divergent articulate whilst at the same time defying discursively logical synthesis, I return to the paradoxical relationship between sensuous attachment and rational detachment embodied within Adorno's conception of mimesis.

The site-specific group exhibition *Cloth & Memory {2}* staged in the Victorian woollen mill at the heart of the model industrial village and UNESCO heritage site of Saltaire in West Yorkshire, provided an opportunity to revisit the textile roots of my practice and a medium specific context. The potent combination of subjective narratives embodied within the constellatory contexts of heritage, textile and memory mobilised through the exhibition prompted reflections on what might arguably be seen as a tendency to privilege subjective experience within much contemporary textile practice. These reflections are considered from the perspective of textile's newly found critical currency within the ideological critique of aesthetic autonomy and a postmodern nostalgia for those aspects that were repressed within modernity. The intention for my own practice was to exploit the subjective agency of the medium, whilst at the same time produce cuts in the continuity of aesthetic experience in a way that destabilised subjective coherence. Here again I look to Adorno, drawing reference from his notion of 'the shudder' and the tension between harmony and dissonance embodied within mimetic comportment. Exploiting the contradictory resonances of the tableau discussed in section 4.3 *Staged Contiguity and Discontiguity*, the work takes the form of a continually fluctuating frame that simultaneously affectively entices *and* distances the

viewer through the enigmatic familiar unfamiliarity and aesthetic artifice of its staged components. The argument developed through this section is that the continual generation of content from the specific conventions of the medium has the potential to become discursively saturated leading to the diminishment of aesthetic potency and critical function. Rather than merely reaffirm what is already familiar, the model proposed through the practice is one of discontinuous continuity where the affective alterity of aesthetic experience momentarily ruptures our customary patterns of behaviour and pre-established conceptual frameworks.

The final body of work I consider moves away from the site-specific *mise en scène* of the previous two exhibitions to a more 'neutral' yet undoubtedly as equally culturally loaded white cube studio/gallery space at the University of Chester. As a universal signifier of modernity, the ideological constructed context of the white cube offered an opportunity to address the tension between the registering of the work as autonomous objects that convey their meaning purely on materially aesthetic terms and the extra aesthetic cultural codes and heterogeneous associations that are ontological to the material culture context of textile. The detachment afforded by the neutrality of the white cube allowed for a more playful period of studio enquiry unencumbered by interpretive imperatives where I was able to privilege the aesthetic impulse over conceptual determination. Attesting this shift in attitude to a more mimetic sensibility and by way of a summary reflection, I outline what I regard to be some of the key characteristics of this approach. The discussion ends with a return to the initial impetus for the research and the tension between an attachment to medium specific conventions and the detachment afforded by post medium conditions. This is informed by a consideration of Adorno's concept of 'fraying' and the blurring of genre boundaries that it is arguably an inevitable outcome of the progressive critical interrogation of the specific conventions of aesthetic material.

Of course, as I discussed earlier, the nature of installation art per se and site-specificity in particular (in my case exemplified in the Whitworth Art Gallery interventions and the Salts Mill *Cloth & Memory {2}* exhibition), clearly counter any notion of medium specificity in the strictest modernist conception of the term. The belief that a successful work of art - as aesthetically autonomous, self-contained, self-reflective, and impervious to its surroundings - becomes untenable as the physicality and socially, historically and culturally constructed nature of the space of display impinges on the experiential encounter. Moreover, the pervasive and specifically *un-specific* material culture conventions of textile, fundamentally confound the notion of autonomy as a condition that is determined solely by aesthetic principles. However, despite the fact

that these various aspects would appear to undermine the essential premise of aesthetic autonomy, my contention is that when considered from the perspective of the processual dynamic of aesthetic experience, it continues to have contemporary relevance. Aesthetic autonomy arguably endures through the affective indeterminacy of the sensuously bound experiential encounter opened up between subjective attachment and detachment.

5.2 'Concordance' Constellatory Configuration 26713 - M156ER (29 July - 1 Sept 2013)

Setting the scene for an affectively indeterminate experience: context, intentions and outcomes

In the following section I reflect on ways in which the relationship between attachment and detachment unfold with greater complexity as the practice strategies of *thingness*, *staging* and *sensuous immediacy/corporeal containment* are culturally framed within the distinctive museological/art gallery context of the Whitworth in Manchester. The focus of my reflections is how the various configurations of the work within what is already an inherently constellatory cultural frame, allowed me to open up textile in a way that prompted connections across disciplinary boundaries and between aesthetic autonomy and the everyday. The legacy of the museum and its implication in enlightenment models of knowledge production based on principles of rationalisation, also gave rise to reflections on the relationships between the classificatory and constellatory and the subsequent separation of the domains of art and truth in terms of their cognitive capacities and the corresponding tension between material and subjective agency.

The resulting project *Concordance* on which I base my reflections, consisted of six sculptural interventions which temporarily inhabited two adjacent transitional spaces within the Whitworth; one of which was the everyday functional space of the café/foyer area and the other, the open plan textile gallery close to the point of entry from the foyer and close to the point of entry into the fine art galleries. I also produced a brochure in collaboration with the Liverpool based design practice Lawn Creative which included a commissioned essay by Dr Antoinette McKane, Post-Doctoral Teaching Fellow in Museum and Heritage Studies at Liverpool Hope University. The brochures

were displayed in a custom made sculptural component that was incorporated as part of the work. Other outcomes of the research included a self- authored press release and a review of the work in *Textile: The Journal of Cloth and Culture* [see appendix D].

My intention upon embarking on the project was to use the interventions as an opportunity to interrogate the semantic and affective agency of my various practice strategies in relation the contradictory processes of attachment and detachment afforded by the particular nature of the museological encounter. This encounter is itself a highly staged experience, where both subjects and objects are extracted from their social and historical situations and brought into relation to each other. The paradoxical conditions of stability/instability, proximity/distance, stasis/mobility, centring/decentring that I hoped to evoke within my work are also fundamental to the museum's operation and its inherently transparent mediating capacity. The Whitworth gallery's espousal of potentially conflicting discourses, through its juxtaposition of material culture and industrial production alongside the contemporary fine arts, made it a particularly appropriate context in which to foster interdisciplinary inter-relationality. With its history rooted in Manchester's industrial past, the gallery is noted for its internationally acclaimed collection of textiles[1] which, similar to the textile collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, was originally assembled as an inspirational resource for designers and manufacturers within the region. This distinctive textile context provided a suitable testing ground in which to stage the constellatory connections that I hoped to mobilise through my own work and to pragmatically problematise medium specific and postmedium boundaries. The definition of 'concordance' as both a state of formal agreement or congruity between parts and as an edited index that compares usages of the same word within different contexts, reflects the model of 'connection-in-difference' (Meskimmon, 2003, p.123) that I hoped to activate through the project.

In addition to the distinctively eclectic nature of its collections, what attracted me to the Whitworth as a venue were the contradictory references embodied in its architectural and interior design. The red brick Edwardian façade asserts an imposing institutional authority and reflects the 19th century detached ideological vision of museums as models of Enlightenment rationality and cultural imperialism. The grand entrance hall with its marble mosaic floor, glazed dome and granite columns, is now painted in a 1990s 'national trust' olive green and accommodates a reception area, shop and café together with their assorted fixtures and furnishings. In direct contrast to the gallery's grand 19th century exterior and entrance hall, the archetypal late 1960s open-plan streamlined modernist interior is inspired by the use of simple natural materials and contrasting textures typical of Scandinavian design. Characterised by a more relaxed

almost ‘domestic’ atmosphere, the open plan interior has the effect of blurring spatial and disciplinary hierarchical divisions allowing a seamless transition between the material culture and visual culture contexts of the various collections. The connotations of proximity and distance, sensuality and rationality, openness and containment, manifest in the different aspects of the physical environment, echo the wider contradictions that are staged through the inherent ambivalence of the museum; contradictions that I hoped to restage and reactivate within my work.

The staging of the work within the traditional cultural authority of the museum also provided an opportunity to reflect on different models of knowledge production and the tensions between subjective and material agency embodied within the studio enquiry and broader research process. As instruments of the enlightenment enterprise, museums have played a central role in the preservation and generation of knowledge premised on a simultaneous fascination *with* and detachment *from* the material world. The model of knowledge they traditionally uphold is one grounded in truth and reason, established through principles of scientific rationality and classificatory identification where order and unity are imposed on the diverse and particular. Museums are, as a consequence, a quintessential centring device or arena, fundamental to the formation of the modern subject in perpetuating the illusion of subjective mastery and cohesion. As Donald Prezioisi observes, ‘[m]useums are one of the central sites at which our modernity has been generated, (en)gendered, and sustained over [that] time’ (Preziosi 1996, p.97). The museological context of the Whitworth interventions prompted me to reflect on the rationalising procedures and protocols embodied in the epistemological classificatory conventions of the museum, in relation to Adorno’s more sensuously bound mimetic model of knowledge production which in its constellatory formation resists principles of identity and representation. Adorno’s promotion of the non-identical enigmatic dimension of sensory experience is significant in affording agency to the material domain in a way that challenges instrumental rationality and the sovereignty of the self-determining, autonomous subject epitomised in the museological tradition.

This tension between conceptual rationalisation and corresponding subjective agency and a mimetic sensuous affinity and corresponding material agency, was most noticeably played out in the development of the brochure that accompanied the exhibition. My intention was to use the brochure as an opportunity to test out the possibility of documenting my evolving taxonomy of sculptural components in the form of a quasi-catalogue. However, when it came down to organising the images, I found that my original conceptually determined categories soon began to break down in the

light of the emergent studio enquiry whose thingly indeterminacy seemed to resist easy classification.

Strategically blurring boundaries and undermining categorical divisions

In order to problematise medium specific and post medium boundaries and mobilise affectively ambivalent subject/object relationships, I chose to stage the various scenarios in the transitional spaces of the gallery, literally and figuratively positioning the work in areas which signalled spatial ambivalence as locations of passage and/or exchange [Fig. 58]. As the visitor arrives at the gallery through its hybrid grand entrance hall and the operational space of the shop and café retail outlets, they encounter a number of largely singular works which assimilate with their quotidian counterparts in a way that question their status as autonomous art objects or everyday functional objects. As they move through this space into the open plan textile gallery, I configured two multi-component tableaux. One on the boundary between the textile gallery and the everyday functioning space of the café/foyer area, and the other at the threshold point where the textile gallery merged into the fine art galleries. Similar to the singular objects in the foyer area, the intention was that the two tableaux would invite a sensuous correspondence where boundaries between material and visual culture contexts and conventions became affectively indeterminate. Positioned in direct relation to the glass vitrines which housed objects from the textile collection, the hope was that they would mobilise a constellation of temporary somatic and semantic resonances between aesthetic autonomy; the vague familiarity of everyday functioning objects; mundane mass produced museum furniture - that itself often hovers on the boundary between arbitrary objectness and minimalist objecthood; the detached framing conventions of museological modes of presentation; and the seductive styling of retail display.

The two staged tableaux on the boundaries of the textile gallery took the form of a vertically oriented assembly of components and a more horizontal configuration. The initial stimulus for the horizontal arrangement came quite by chance as I was moving some of the sculptural elements within the studio and noticed some strips of timber precariously balanced on two of the curved MDF structures that I had used within the Smiths Row exhibition. A further point of reference presented itself on one of my site visits to the gallery in the form of an impromptu ‘installation’ of exhibition construction materials which had been cordoned off from the public whilst the contents of the display cases were changed [Fig. 59]. Drawing on the implied performance conjured up

Figure 58. Whitworth interventions sited within the foyer/café area and the open plan transitional space of the textile gallery situated between the foyer and fine art galleries (July 2013)

by this accumulation of exhibition paraphernalia and harking back to the suspended animation of the St Petersburg museum tableaux, my aim was to configure the components in a way that evoked an affective tension between mobility and stasis, awakening within the imagination of the beholder a momentary pause between some imminent activity and corresponding cut in corporeal continuity. This is perhaps most evident in the arrested pliability of the textile elements staged within the two scenarios which hover somewhat awkwardly between potential mutability inferred through casual placement and a highly choreographed formal arrangement. Within the horizontal configuration [Fig. 60], a faux leather part-garment-like pattern piece is draped over a digitally embroidered upholstered curved laminate structure, whose castors invite movement but whose elevation on a raised platform limits this possibility. The gathered fullness of a cloth drape is hooked over an aluminium armature and carefully arrayed in a way that emulates the painted drapery within the fine art gallery. Taking centre stage within the scenario are a couple of hand embroidered panels of cloth which hang full frontally over the teetering lengths of seemingly casually placed timber. Drawing reference from the multi-functional elemental rectangular form of textile to which we ascribe a myriad of functions, these embroidered panels are pristine and show no signs of use.

The intention in including embroidered elements within the various scenarios was to mobilise a field of semiotic references; foremost amongst these being the Whitworth's own collection and the historical cross cultural, trans-national conventions of textile that I hoped would act as a foil to the more contemporary mass material culture contexts of the work. The aim was that the introduction of pattern would also signify textile's traditions within the decorative and applied arts and that the use of cross stitch would perhaps prompt associations with the wider amateur appeal of needlepoint and the mass commodification of the crafts through stores such as Hobby Craft. Having studied embroidery as a first degree and spent many hours in the Whitworth as a student, the embroidery was also a way of staging my own historically situated subjective experience, as well as a means of invoking an embodied response through the work's laboriously repetitive process of making. What intrigued me about the traditional cross stitch patterns that provided an initial stimulus for the embroidered pieces was the way that their meaning also resides in a state of perpetual ambiguity of sameness and difference - between what is recognised as a 'universal' textile language and cross cultural sign system and what was traditionally a very specific geographically located cultural code.[2] Detached from their original context, the ambiguity of these patterns becomes more pronounced as our engagement with the stitched motifs hovers between an aesthetically motivated response and intrigue about their imagined

Figure 59. Construction materials in the textile gallery during the changing of the display cases (May 2013)

Figure 60. Whitworth intervention: ‘horizontal scenario’ (July 2013)

symbolic significance. This is further heightened within my own reworking of the cultural motifs by reducing them to a unifying grey palette. Having produced an embroidered panel for the Smiths Row exhibition, I realised that the labour intensity of the hand stitching would be unfeasible. I therefore approached the Embroiderer's Guild in order to recruit a couple of volunteers to assist with the project.[3] As well as a practical solution, this was a way of recognising the history of the Guilds, the craft-based conventions of the medium, and indeed the ongoing social and cultural dimensions of such institutions.

Within the corresponding vertical assembly of components staged on the boundary of the textile gallery and foyer area [Fig. 61], another faux leather cover-like element and wooden handled embroidered quasi-object with long draped grosgrain straps (originally made for the *Bite-Size* exhibition) temporarily come to rest on a curved bent wood structure. Loosely tangled textile fibres are ossified within plaster and tightly gripped within a wooden baton and provide both an aesthetic and semiotic function by introducing a more organic form and signifying the ‘raw’ rather than ‘cooked’ conventions of material culture. A stole-like looped ‘conveyor belt’ of embroidered cloth is suspended from a powder coated stand; a tall MDF plinth is fitted with an inserted upholstered panel of woollen cloth; and a formal linear element reaches out into the space and doubles as a museum protection rail.

The regulated movement implied in the formal arrangement of the staged *mise-en-scène* echoes the regulating conventions of the museum, where objects that are usually caught up in the everyday experience of living are cut from the continuity of time and presented for scrutiny through a highly orchestrated aesthetic arrangement. As well as mobility and stasis, the scenarios also enact the elaborate staging of proximity and distance mediated through the museological encounter. Unlike the disembodied and detached textile artefacts which maintain a regulated distance through their glass vitrines, my own artistic interventions occupy the same space as the viewer and their pronounced haptic aesthetic gives rise to a proximal corporeal relationship. However, at the same time, the staging strategies employed in the work counter this sense of immediacy and assert aesthetic autonomy. These strategies were made quite overt in the textile gallery scenarios through the use of the tableau format, the platform, and the reconfiguration of the plinth and museum protection rail. Backed against the wall so as not to restrict access through the space, the tableaux are tightly configured and present a largely frontal view. Just as the textile artefacts in the glass vitrines are detached from their social and historical contexts and made visible through the viewing apparatus of the vitrine, it is through its self-reflexive aesthetic artifice that

Figure 61. Whitworth intervention: ‘vertical scenario’ (July 2013)

the work is able to both detach itself from its everyday counterparts and foreground the formal and semantic aspects of material culture that largely remain unnoticed. Due the limited availability of space and corresponding health and safety considerations, four of the five interventions within the café and foyer area were wall based and largely took the form of singular elements rather than the multiple component scenarios of the textile gallery. Presented as individual pieces, the staged artifice of the work was not as overt, and this, together with the fact that the multi-purpose space already contained a wide range of familiar and not so familiar functional paraphernalia, meant that the tension between assimilation and differentiation was more of a challenge. Taking their reference from this assortment of industrially produced foyer and café furniture, my intention was that the elements presented in this space would upon first glance appear to blend in with their surroundings, fostering connections with the world of functional design and only on closer scrutiny prompt the beholder who engages with the work to question their status as autonomous art objects. The various interventions included an overly elongated chair-like object hung on the wall next the café entrance, under which I trapped a gesso encrusted biomorphic cushion-like form. As a way of referencing my earlier practice and the set of work that had been purchased for the Whitworth collection, the textile element of this chair-like structure was constructed out of what had become my signature buttonholed fabric. On the opposite side of the room next to the entrance to the shop, a faux leather hooded cover was hung on a part bus stop, part coat stand-like structure, onto which I had fixed an upholstered pad, similar to the cushioned leaning supports on trains and buses, and an elastic strapped laminated shelf on which I placed some of the plaster dipped textile fibres [Fig. 62]. Other singular objects, included a further curved upholstered leaning support-like form positioned on one side of the main entrance and an MDF laminate and aluminium component designed to hold the brochures placed on the opposite side of the doorway [Fig. 63]. The main multi-component intervention within the foyer area took the form of a high curved shelf with a gathered curtain that had resonances of a dressing table, changing cubicle, and luggage rack. On the shelf, I placed a large skein of the plaster dipped textile fibres and two embroidered pouch/cap-like elements displayed on vertical display stands [Fig. 64].

I had hoped that the indeterminate yet familiar thingly nature of the cafe and foyer interventions would prompt connections with industrially produced objects whilst at the same time arousing intrigue and declaring their aesthetic autonomy. However, as elements that had been ‘designed’ specifically for the space they were perhaps a little too close to the world of function and remained too faithful to reality. Without the conditioning contextual frame of the gallery, their ambiguity succeeded and they

seemed all too easily to assimilate with their surroundings. Indeed on my various visits to the gallery, the people seated at the cafe tables and passing through the foyer, appeared to be completely oblivious to the work. This was not helped by the fact that I had purposely decided not to have any interpretive panels or any authorial attribution, in the hope that it would prompt visitors to the gallery to query the nature of the unfamiliar objects. The only clues providing an insight into the nature of the work were the brochures. However, their aesthetic presentation as part of the work meant that very few people realised that they were actually allowed to take them!

Adorno's dialectic of mimesis and rationality: 'knowledge-as-sensuous correspondence' and 'knowledge-as-quantification'

My ambition for both the textile gallery multi-part assemblages and the more singular objects in the café/foyer areas was to echo the operations of the gallery/museum and stage an affective experiential encounter by mobilising a constellation of somatic resonances and semantic associations whilst maintaining a level of detached 'thingly' ambiguity. The way in which I hoped to cultivate indeterminacy was by preserving a productive tension between the sensuous properties of the material and the work's representational form - between materiality and meaning. Whether I was successful in my ambitions is something I will address shortly. However, as a way of informing my reflections, it may be useful to return to Adorno's notion of mimesis, and in particular consider the paradoxical relationship between sensuous attachment and rational critical detachment embodied in his conception of the term. As indicated earlier, although it was not something that I had planned, the museological context of the Whitworth brought to the fore the tensions between these different ways of understanding ourselves and the world around us and prompted reflections on the relationship between what Neil Leach describes as 'knowledge-as-quantification and knowledge-as-sensuous correspondence' (Leach, 2006, p.23). These reflections are framed by the broader philosophical separation of art and truth underlying enlightened modernity that Adorno's aesthetic theory aimed to challenge.[4]

At various points in her analysis of the relationship between Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno's conception of mimesis, Shierry Weber Nicholsen likens mimesis to the blank space at the core of the constellatory configuration; referring to it as the enigmatic nonverbal '"thing" at the centre, which is not language, [that] binds the dissimilar and in fact alien words together' (Nicholsen, 1997, p.78). For Adorno, it is the mimetic comportment within both the production and reception of art that 'bring[s] unity to the diffuse non conceptual, quasi-fragmented materials in artistic products' (Adorno,

Figure 62. Whitworth intervention: ‘chair-like’ element; ‘coat stand-like’ element (July 2013)

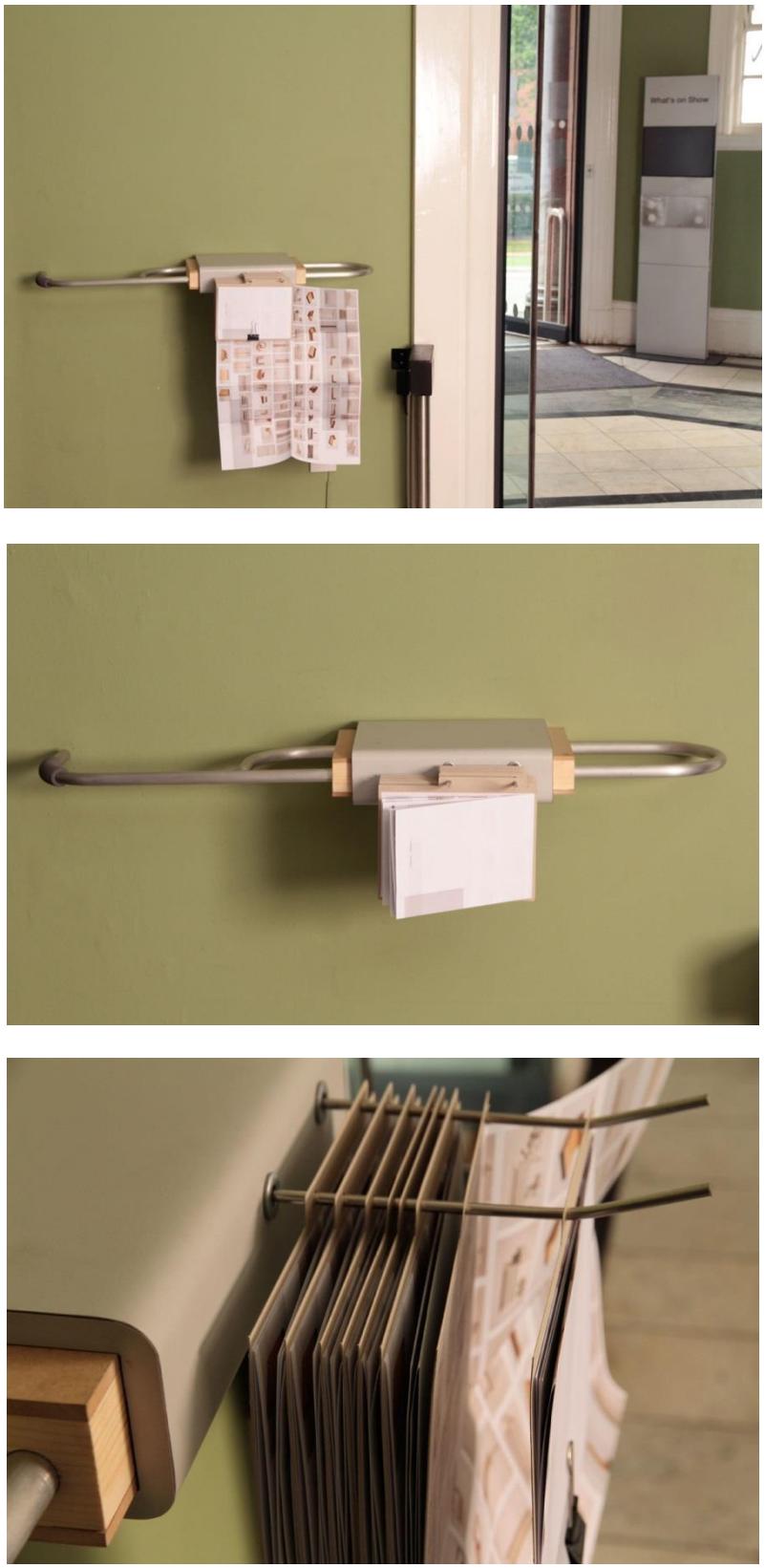

Figure 63. Whitworth intervention: brochure holder (July 2013)

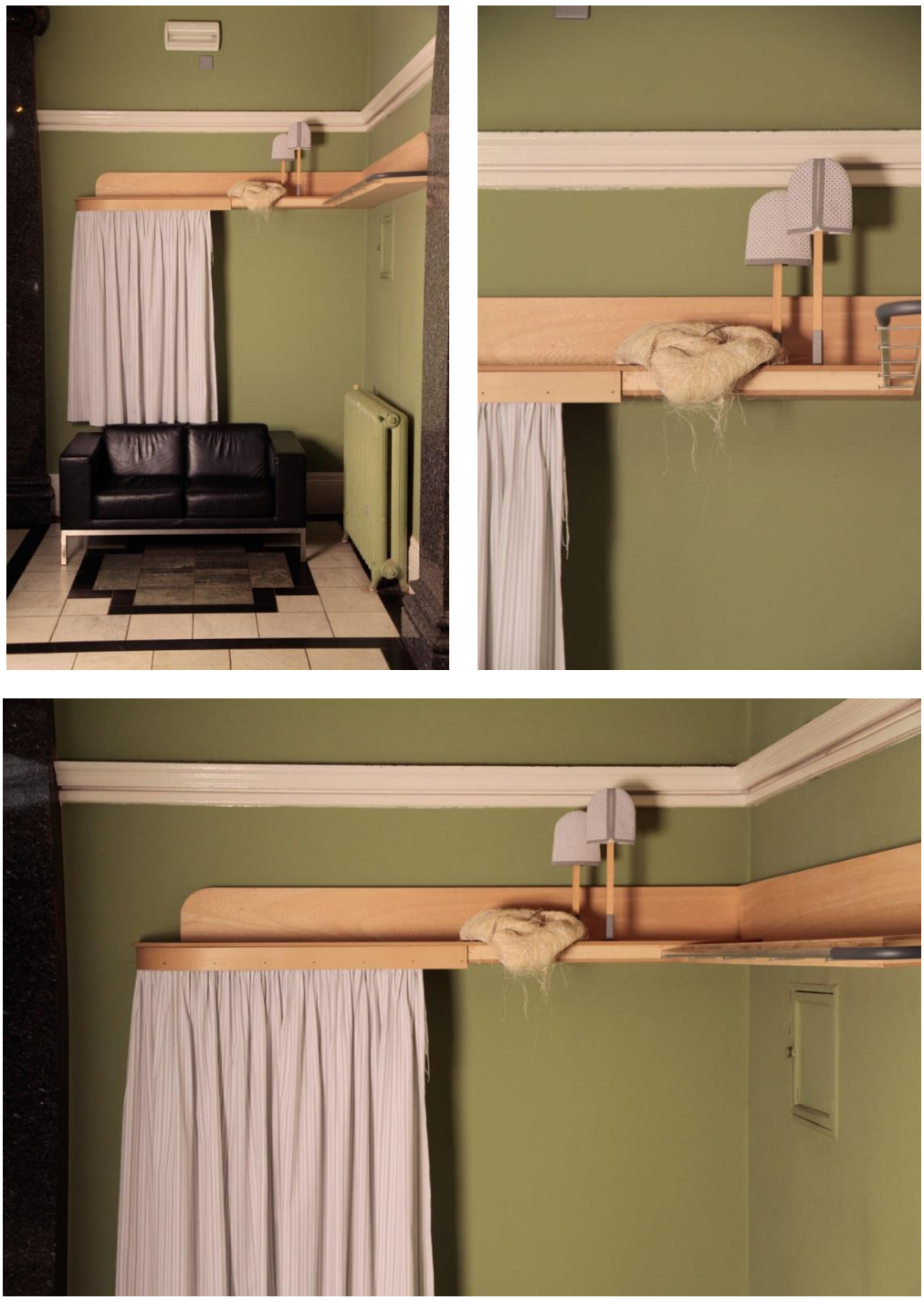

Figure 64. Whitworth intervention: shelf configuration (July 2013)

1984, p.423). Mimesis has a synthesising function that renders the contradictory and divergent articulate, but it operates in a very different way to conceptual understanding and logical synthesis. Jay Bernstein describes Adorno's conception of mimesis as 'a critical reinscription of intuition' (Bernstein, 1992, p.201). As a mode of 'sensual cognition' (Baumgarten, cited in Hellings, 2014, p.11), it is language-like in its communicative potential, yet at the same time it exceeds discursive language and cannot be reduced to signification. As Max Pensky observes:

> Mimesis for Adorno does not pertain to the relation between sign and referent; it is not a category of representation. Rather, it aims at a mode of subjective experience, a preverbal form of cognition, which is rendered objective in works of art, summoned up by the density of their construction (Pensky, 1997, p.90).

As I indicated earlier when outlining my broader methodological approaches, I would suggest that mimesis operates in a similar fashion to Simon O'Sullivan's notion of the 'affective gap' or Brian Massumi's 'excluded middle'. It is what Nicholsen describes as 'an enigmatic zone of difference, a zone of experience' (Nicholsen, 1997, p.65) where the relation between subject and object are both continuous and discontinuous. It is a paradoxical concept that derives from 'the non-conceptual affinity of a subjective creation with its objective and un posited other' (Adorno, 1984, p.80) that at the same time is co-constitutive with a self-reflective awareness of the blurring of these subject/object boundaries. Within artistic production and aesthetic receptivity, the mimetic impulse is manifest through a sensuous re-enactment and empathic mode of connectivity where the artist/viewer actively assimilates with the material otherness of the work. It is a process whereby 'one particular (the subject) appropriates another particular (the object) by likening itself to it' (Bernstein, 1992 p.201) without the need to dominate it through the subjective mastery of conceptual identification. It runs contrary to Leach's notion of 'knowledge-as-quantification' exemplified in practices of classification and categorisation typical of enlightened modernity which seek to control and contain inner and outer nature by subsuming material particularity under generalising universal abstract concepts. Instead, the mode of 'knowledge-as-sensuous correspondence' proposed through Adorno's mimetic comportment, is a non-subsumptive synthesis that seeks to keep alive the non-identical. Adorno's notion of the non-identical is not formulated in a way that provides insights into things in themselves but operates as a 'limit concept' (Stone, 2008, p.56). It acknowledges the limitations of conceptual understanding and allows access to what is unique in a thing in all its material particularity, in a way that returns authority to those aspects of the material domain that have become covered over or lost through process of

instrumental rationalisation. Through his premise of 'the preponderance of the object' [Vorrang des Objekts][5] (Adorno, 2007, p.183), Adorno's aesthetic theory attempts to expose the Enlightenment's goal of subjective mastery over nature as an illusory construction, affording agency to matter/material in all its sensuous fullness and complexity.

While Adorno attests to the significance of sensuous material particularity in exceeding identity thinking, he does not dismiss the need for conceptual mediation. Indeed as he notes, 'artworks...await their interpretation' (Adorno, 2004, p.169). The enigmatic quality of artworks incites interpretation and self-reflection and in this way they are always 'pervaded by the conceptual' (Adorno, 2004, p.125). The paradoxical nature of mimesis is that it is always set in dialectical tension with rationality even if in its manifestation through the material dimension of art, it continually evades conceptual grasp. As Adorno notes, 'Mimesis only goes on living through its antithesis, which it is rational control by artworks over all that is heterogeneous to them. If this is ignored, visuality becomes a fetish' (Adorno, 1984, p.141). Martin Jay suggests that Adorno posits a constellation in which reason and mimesis each make up for the deficiencies of the other (Jay, 1997, p.46).

Where Adorno reconfigures the intuitive moment in art in terms of mimetic comportment, he re-inscribes its particular conceptual capacity through his notion of 'spirit':

> The spirit of works of art is their 'plus' or 'surplus' - the fact that in the process of appearing they become more than they are…spirit transforms works of art - things among things - into something other than material things, realising at the same time that they can become spiritual only by retaining their material quality (Adorno, 1984, p.128).

If as Juliane Rebentisch observes, 'the "mimetic impulse" [is] the intrinsic logic of the material' (Rebentisch, 2009, p.120), then spirit alludes to what gets articulated through the non-repressive synthesis of material particularity through form. From the perspective of my own practice and research, the significance of Adorno's critical reinscription of concept and intuition in terms of mimesis and spirit is that it affords a more reciprocal relationship between subjective and material agency and form and content. It opens up the possibility for other models of knowledge beyond those grounded in truth and reason, offering a model which privileges the productive indeterminacy of the material domain where artistic form is suffused with both

sensuous and cognitive capacity and is aesthetically affective (and thereby politically effective) because it remains dialectically unstable. As Jay Bernstein observes:

> What Adorno challenges in the traditional view is that the duality of concept and intuition is closed and unmediated, that the moment of intuition always and everywhere lacks meaning (sense) and significance, and the moment of conceptuality lacks (sensible) givenness and materiality. On the contrary, it is just the rigid separation of concept and intuition, universal and particular, that Adorno sees art as questioning (Bernstein, 1992 p.199).

An embodiment of research concerns through the emergent tension between subjective and material agency

To return to the specific context of the Whitworth and the insights gained through the staging of the interventions. I would suggest that on reflection, the work still tended to privilege subjective intention and conceptual rationalisation over a more mimetic mode of production. In terms of the tension between attachment and detachment from the perspective of aesthetic receptivity, although I was aiming to evoke in the viewer an affective enigmatic indeterminacy, the work perhaps assimilated a little too well and the relationship between subject and object, form and content, could be said to be complicit with the legacies of the museum and one of stability and continuity rather than discontinuity and dissonance.

Because the elements in the café and foyer area were made specifically for the site and I outsourced aspects of their production, the desired thingliness of the work had to be ‘designed into’ the process. Thereby, the work understandably was always going to be limited by the imposition of my own will rather than the outcome of a more open ended speculative approach where the intrinsic logic of the material directed me as much as I directed it. As singular objects rather than assemblages of individual elements, there was also less opportunity for a chance coalition of constellatory connections. The functioning nature of the space meant that the interventions were largely wall based and therefore naturally detached from the viewer and less able to assert an embodied presence; and without the conditioning frame/stage of the gallery, became easily absorbed by the plethora of other objects in the space.

This was less the case with the scenarios within the textile gallery which articulated the space in a more pronounced way, and by the very nature of their multi-part composition

allowed for a greater level of provisionality and the subsequent combination of semantic references. However, the tight configuration of the tableaux and their position against the wall meant that there was still little opportunity for the viewer to interact with the work and these too remained fairly detached. Whether it was because of the practical implications of the work being positioned in what were functioning public spaces, or the research imperative to pragmatically forge visual and conceptual connections, or perhaps the mediating and interpretive legacies of the museum, I still somehow felt a need to comply with the controlling authority of the institution and dictated by issues of representation and meaning.

Where in terms of production, the interventions were still very much dictated by my predetermined subjective agency, this agency was subsequently undermined when it came to the production of the brochure. As I mentioned at the outset, I had intended to use the opportunity of the brochure as a means of testing the potential of documenting my evolving taxonomy of components in the form of a quasi-retail catalogue. The idea of the catalogue had come from the work's resonances with the functioning objects of mass material culture and my interest in the commodified aesthetic staging of the everyday through interior styling. The intention was to awaken in the imagination of the viewer the endless possible permutations suggested by the array of sculptural components and prompt connections with the aesthetic judgements that we make on a regular basis in relation to the configuration of our domestic environments. As previously discussed, the development of my thingly taxonomy initially drew reference from the functional conventions of textile in combination with a critical reformation of modernist contexts. Whilst this had provided a useful point of departure, the studio practice had increasing tended to dictate its own direction based on formal judgements or stimulated by some chance encounter with visual phenomena in the real world, regardless of the original research rationale. This was particularly the case when it came to the pressure of exhibition deadlines when limited availability of time meant that reflective action and an aesthetic imperative naturally took precedence over conceptual rationalisation. As a consequence, when it came to organise the various images of the work for the brochure, the thingly quality of the various elements meant that they either could no longer be easily accommodated according to my pre-determined categories, or any one element could quite happily be placed in any number of the categories.

The challenge that I faced in the design of the brochure was how to arrange the various elements in a way that reflected the embodied reality of the research and communicated a conceptual rationale for the development of the practice components, whilst avoiding semantic closure and subsuming the uniqueness of the objects under

generalising abstract concepts. As is only natural, when an object eludes our conceptual grasp, our desire for subjective control means that we to strive to master it through an ever richer range of concepts. Determined to make sense of the work for the sake of research coherence, I considered various classificatory systems and constellatory configurations, drawing on a whole host of visual and linguistic analogies in an attempt to plot possible connections in a more fluid rhizomatic fashion. Reminded of both the arbitrariness and cultural specificity of Jorge Luis Borges' fictitious 'Chinese Encyclopaedia',[6] even these more constellatory mappings could only give partial insight into the uniqueness of the thingliness of the elements, the contexts of their production and the potential complexity of their possible somatic and semantic connotations. The frustration of my own conceptual inadequacy at not being able to come up with an appropriate organising structure and what Adorno describes as the 'inevitable insufficiency' of thought (Adorno, 2007, p.5), together with the practicalities of time, meant that I abandoned all attempts to impose a linguistically determined classificatory system. Instead, I approached the production of the brochure purely as an aesthetic project. Rather than imposing categorical divisions, I decided on a non-hierarchical grid like arrangement using a folded map-like format and gave the designers licence to organise the images in whichever way they wanted [Fig. 65]. Although it was a frustrating exercise at the time, on reflection, it was a transformative point in the project where the theoretical concerns of the research were unwittingly embodied in the practice.

The Whitworth project had started out as a self-determined ambition to open up to alterity and foster a constellation of connections through the problematising of subject/object and medium specific/post medium boundaries. However, one of the unexpected insights to come out of the project was the practical embodiment of this objective and my self-reflexive awareness of the limitations of subjective agency in the face of material alterity. Both the actual interventions and the development of the brochure highlighted the productive tensions yet necessary inter-dependency between sensuous intuition and conceptual rationalisation and material and subjective agency. They exposed the limitations of identity thinking, but at the same time recognised self-reflexive conceptual rationalisation as an unavoidable trait of self-preservation and the necessary process by which we attempt to make sense of ourselves and the world around us. The affective dimension of artistic production and receptivity was seen to operate in the enigmatic zone of difference between these two different modes of knowledge production. My initial frustration at not being able to contain the practice within my predetermined categories and the acceptance that conceptual rationalisation was perhaps unconsciously limiting creative invention, proved to be a salutary and

Figure 65. Brochure produced to accompany Whitworth interventions (July 2013)

ultimately emancipatory experience. It allowed me to embrace my subjective indeterminacy and accede to the rupturing yet affirmative agency of the material particularity and non-identity of the work.

In the following section, I consider another dissemination of the practice which followed close on the heels of the Whitworth interventions. Installed in the UNESCO heritage site of Salts Mill in West Yorkshire, the installation picks up on some of the themes and insights that emerged out of the Whitworth project, providing a further perspective on the complex staging of subject/object relations opened up by the museological experience. Presented as part of an international group exhibition entitled *Cloth and Memory {2}* the installation provided an opportunity to revisit my medium specific roots and consider the tensions between sensible and conceptual cognition and subjective continuity and discontinuity as they are played out through the particular context of textile.

5.3 'Cloth & Memory {2}': Constellatory Configuration 18813-BD183LA. (18 Aug – 1 Nov 2013)

The exhibition context: the dynamic stability and instability of cloth, memory and heritage

A month after the Whitworth project, I was presented with another opportunity to stage work, as part of an international group exhibition entitled *Cloth & Memory {2},* located in Salts Mill, a textile mill at the heart of the Victorian model village and UNESCO World Heritage Site of Saltaire in West Yorkshire [see Appendix E for my profile page within the accompanying catalogue]. The exhibition was to be installed in the original spinning room at the very top of the mill which was usually closed to the public. Measuring 168m x 16m, the room was thought to be the largest industrial space in the world when it was built in 1853 [Fig. 66] and is longer than the 152 metre length of the turbine hall in Tate Modern. As with the Whitworth Art Gallery, Salts Mill as a contextual frame is culturally ambivalent constituted through heterogeneous and conflicting discourses. Foremost of these is its industrial heritage and position as a state-of-the-art manufacturing enterprise and philanthropic project during the rapid expansion of the textile industries in the 1800s. However, history and material culture sit side by side with contemporary visual culture, as the mill is also a gallery and the home of a permanent collection of David Hockney's work. In addition to this, it is a commercially run visitor site containing

Figure 66. Salts Mill, spinning room

an eclectic mix of restaurants and retail outlets. It was the contemporary textile context of the exhibition and historical legacies of the mill that provided an appropriate opportunity to revisit the medium specific roots of my practice and consider the tensions between processes of attachment and detachment seen through the particular lens of the textile.[7] Whereas the initial emphasis with the Whitworth interventions was on the pragmatic expanding of genre boundaries and semantic contexts largely from the perspective of production, the Salts Mill exhibition provided a vehicle through which to address the particular agency of textile from the perspective of aesthetic receptivity and the experiential encounter of the viewer.

As with the museological context of the Whitworth, the heritage site of the exhibition set the scene for a complex staging of subject/object relations. Viewed from the perspective of attachment, heritage sites, as a materialisation of collective memory, provide a sense of continuity and stability. As a way in which we make sense of ourselves in the present through reference the past, they are important in the construction and representation of personal and cultural identity, providing a sense of individual and social coherence in an ever-changing world. In their preservation and framing of the past, they can evoke nostalgia for tradition and a unifying narrative of belonging. As Doreen Massey observes in *Space-time and the Politics of Location*, heritage sites are particularly 'provocative of nostalgia' and often perform their work by 'presenting history as continuity, as Tradition in its conventional sense'. However, she qualifies this with her observation that 'such notions of tradition… can so easily be congealed into a static essence' (Massey, 1995, p.43). This sense of stability and nostalgia (with the subsequent threat of potential stasis) could also be said to be potentially symptomatic of cloth and memory which provided the specific curatorial rationale for the exhibition and an additional framing mechanism informing and impacting on the production and interpretation of the work. With its legacies within craft traditions, inherent somatic associations through its characteristics of pliability, softness and warmth, and social integration within the routines and rituals of everyday life, cloth is reassuringly familiar. The potency of textile as an aesthetic medium is that it is inextricably suffused with the memory of these associative personal and collective narratives. However, from the perspective of detachment and countering such constructs of seeming stability and continuity, the contexts of heritage, textile and memory are inherently mutable and contingent. Making selective use of the past and continually shaped by concerns and contexts of the present, they are fluid and dynamic, ever open to contestation and unable to provide us with unitary views or stable meanings. As an alternative to the sense of stability and stasis implied by the objective, authoritative, singular linear narratives of 'official' history, the subjective

narratives continually (re)constructed through the workings of heritage, textile, and memory are fragmentary, multiple, discontinuous, mutable and contradictory.

A fluctuating frame

It was the playing out of these contradictions that I hoped to evoke within the work. Exploiting my use of the tableau format, my intention was to literally and figuratively set the stage for an indeterminate experiential encounter. Drawing direct reference from the architectural steelwork that was a particular feature of the spinning room, I constructed a labyrinthine rigid structural galvanised steel framework [8] [Fig. 67] which was suspended from the rooftop by twisted steel rope and in part supported by a number of the wooden 'leg-like' components that I had originally made for the *Smiths Row* exhibition. In this context, the arched timber structures operated as a series of open gateways or viewing portals. Contrasting with the rigidity of this framework, I hung a series of curtains which both screened various surveillance points and revealed unexpected glimpses, providing the viewer with a range of different perspectives from which to engage with the work and a framing mechanism that was itself potentially mobile[9] [Figs. 68 & 69]. In reference to the worsted wool and alpaca cloth that was manufactured in Salts Mill during the height of its productivity, the curtains were made from a felted woollen cloth. The insulating absorptive density of these curtains seemed to suit the closed off empty stillness of the spinning room, creating a protective yet potentially claustrophobic scenario. Within the structural framework I staged a number of smaller elements which operated formally whilst ambiguously referencing both textile production and the wider everyday functional conventions of the medium. The clustered assemblages of components included a number of the bentwood trestle structures over which I draped the faux leather part-garment/antimacassar-like forms (originally made for the Five Years exhibition) and some new smaller woollen hood/bonnet/pocket-like pieces. One of the embroidered towel elements with an apron-like bib-shaped back and grosgrain buckled straps was hung from a handle section of the framework. Other fragments of woollen cloth and embroidered offcuts vaguely suggesting the samples of cloth compiled within Victorian textile manufacturer's pattern books were tightly gripped in a series of curved shouldered wooden stands. These stands were also used to support some of the plaster dipped fibres and a couple of small faux leather upholstered headrest and armrest-like forms whose ergonomic profiles invited a sense of corporeal projection and functional proficiency. The textile production tool-like forms [Fig. 70] included two exaggerated wood-turned 'niddy-noddys'[10] which an online review suggested 'might be an ill-made washing dolly' (Walker, 2013, p.2). I also added a couple of wood and aluminium versions of the niddy-noddy form and two overly long wood turned drop spindles which according to

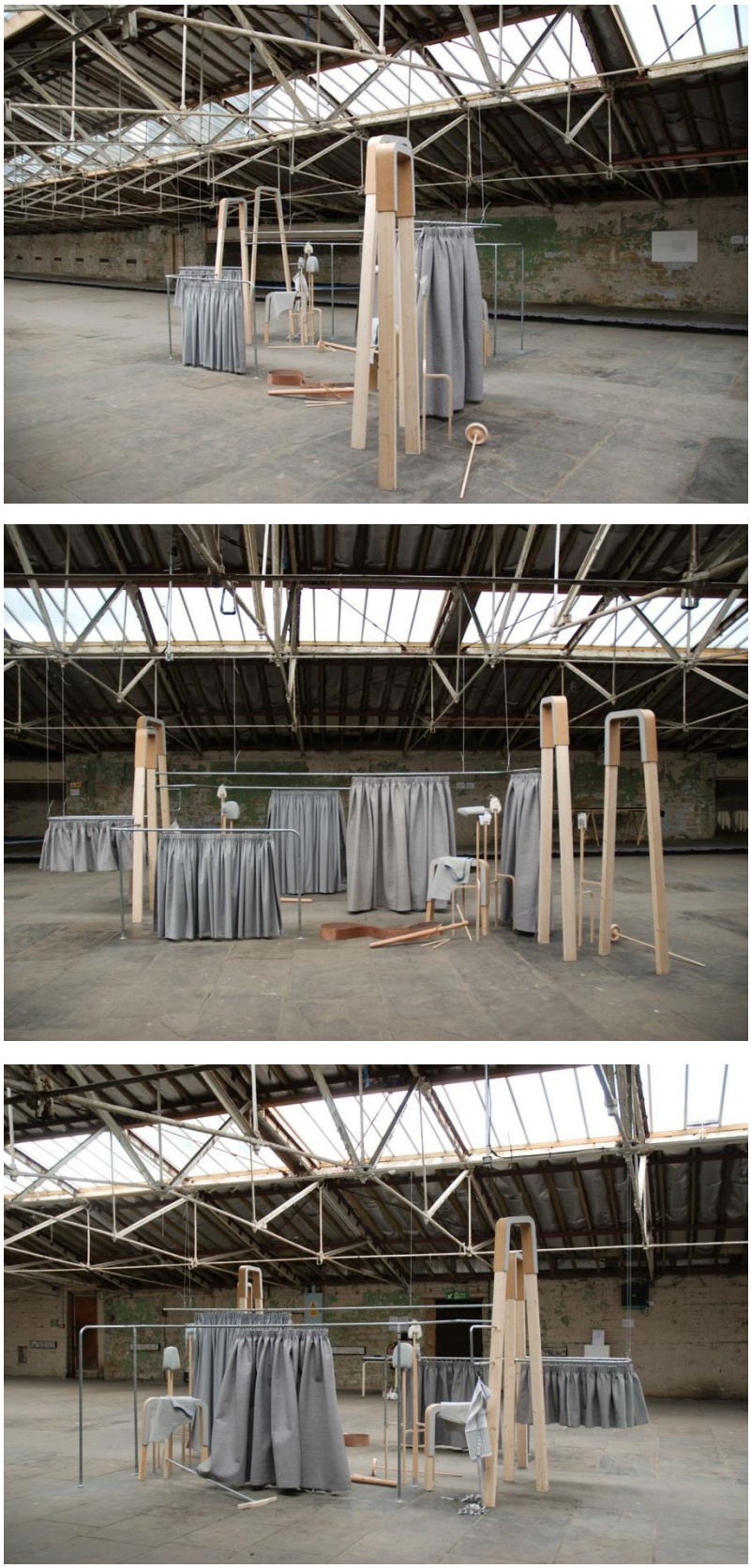

Figure 67. *Cloth and Memory {2}:* structural framework of component configuration 180813-BD183LA (August 2013)

the same review ‘could be interpreted as a plunger, a wheel on a long axle, or very sketchy representation of a piston’. A further addition to the staged components was a curved strip of leather that I acquired from a local tannery which had produced the original drive belts for the steam driven shafts that powered the mills in the area.

Both the nature of the materials and processes of making, prompted contradictory resonances. I realised at the outset that it was impossible to compete with the overpowering atmosphere of the spinning room; the peeling walls and heavy stone floor of which were saturated with the marks and smells of lanolin and engine oil and permeated by an expansive stillness which echoed with the dampened clamour of a hundred and fifty years of activity. In a somewhat instinctive resistant gesture to the poetic ambience and enduring weight of history, the ubiquitous contemporary construction materials and prototype aesthetic of my own sculptural components seemed to suggest the ephemerality of mass production and a much more transient sense of belonging. However, set against the provisionality of the rigged steelwork and readily available planed timber and hardboard, were the hand-crafted elements of wood-turned pitch pine, counted thread embroidery, leather upholstery and tailored cloth which hinted at more traditional social and historical contexts. The resulting overall feel of the tableau was a strange combination of resonances that had an enigmatic affinity with the domestic as well as the alienating detachment of some kind of institutional space[11] [see appendix F for an online review of the exhibition that discussed such a connection].

Postmodern nostalgia: reaffirming the familiar

In line with the intangibility of memory, the idea in staging the various elements within the structural framework was to physically and psychologically distance the viewer, creating a whole series of frames and perspectival positions that offered only a restricted and partial view. Yet at the same time that the structural frameworks physically limited access, my aim was that they would also seductively entice the viewer, providing glimpses and prompting corporeal correspondences with the smaller objects presented in what was a series of continually fluctuating frames. The intention was to establish a precarious relationship between the more affirmative material sensuality of the work and the somewhat dislocating, fragmented, detached experiential encounter evoked by its semantic ambiguity and staged artifice. Turning what was largely intuitive in the Whitworth project into something more intentional, the hope was that this tension between subjective attachment and detachment would set in play a mimetic sensuous correspondence that at the same time resisted semantic

Figure 68. Screened curtains providing a variety of viewing perspectives (August 2013)

Figure 69. Screened curtains providing a variety of viewing perspectives (August 2013)

Figure 70. Textile production elements: wood-turned niddy-noddys, drop spindles and leather drive belt (August 2013)

closure. Rather than submitting sensual intuition and material particularity to the subjective control of conceptual cognition, the aim was to preserve a sense of enigmatic material otherness that exceeded the representative form of the work. Drawing on my own affective response to the work of other artists, my hope was that through the enactment of this mimetic comportment, the viewer would be extended beyond his or her boundaries in a way that was both centring and decentring. As I have previously discussed, what marks the paradoxical nature of the affective encounter - the capacity of the material domain to conjure up potentially overwhelming ideas and sensations - is that it always comes with the threat of dissolution and the loss of the self. In place of a narcissistic mirroring which serves to reinforce the ego, the mimetic experience undermines its authority and involves what Gebauer and Wulf describe as a 'subjective transcendence toward the world, [where] the fixed *I*-identity dissolves, reason itself is held in abeyance, and the subject is disempowered' (Gebauer and Wulf, 1995, p.287).

It could be argued that this dissolution of the subject and the maintenance of the non-identical within the mimetic comportment runs counter to what are the more usual reaffirming subjective narratives associated with the medium of textile. As I addressed more fully in my consideration of strategies of sensuous immediacy and corporeal containment, the affective potency of textile tends to lie in its mobilisation of a haptic aesthetic and direct address to the subject through its capacity to evoke an emphatic experience of bodily continuity. Both the comforting somatic resonances of textile and corresponding accumulative symbolic associations afford it 'protective illusions' of familiarity (Robins 1991 cited in Massey, 1995, p.45). 'Freighted as it is with social and personal history…the ubiquity of cloth across time and culture suggests a commonality' (Johnson, 2007, p.8) and capacity for communal identification. This potential of textile to facilitate a sense of connectivity and continuity, arguably becomes all the more pressing in the fragmentary, dislocating, alienating conditions of postmodernity.[12] An understandable symptomatic response to this alienation, is the desire to return to an imaginary utopian ideal of authentic emphatic experience and shared collective identifications. Wendy Wheeler describes this as a postmodern nostalgia for a 'return to those things which are excluded, lost or repressed as a condition of modernity and the subjectivity it produces' (Wheeler, 1994, p.96). Constituting the marginalised other in the social, historical and culturally constructed dualities on which the enlightenment enterprise was founded (subjective/objective, autonomy/heteronomy, mind/body, aesthetic/extra-aesthetic, male/female, proximity/distance, public/private), textile finds much of its contemporary currency in this postmodern nostalgia. And whilst I am clearly predisposed to the workings of nostalgia and the affective agency of my work utilises

the personal and collective narratives articulated through textile for maximum expressive potential, I am also alert to nostalgia's negative dimensions. Nostalgic attachment always brings with it the danger of an all too easy collapse into the realms of commodified sentimentality and its correlation with a regressive traditionalism that seeks to ensure stability through a longing for an imaginary essentialist ideal. Accordingly, the continual challenge raised by the practice is how to draw on the affective potency and critical currency afforded through subjective experience without falling prey to what could be seen to be the potential fetishisation of subjectivity within postmodern discourses. The potent combination of subjective narratives embodied within the constellatory contexts of textile, memory and heritage mobilised through the Salts Mill exhibition made this all the more pertinent.

In her analysis of Rachel Whiteread's *House*, Doreen Massey describes what she sees as the contrast between the 'positive, dislocating, evocation of memories' (Massey, 1995, p.43) that is embodied in Whiteread's artwork and the way in which she suggests the classic heritage site performs its work. She states:

> While *House* is a prompt and a disturbance to the memory, the classic heritage site fills in those spaces and restricts the room for interpretation and imagination. Instead of questioning memory and pre-given understandings of the past, the classic heritage site will provide them ready-made. Instead of defamiliarising the supposedly familiar, it is meant as an aid to further familiarisation. It is, by design, an understandable rather than an unsettling space, a comfortable rapprochement with another time space. (Massey, 1995, p.43)

Massey contends that it is not a case of diminishing the undoubted potency of memory and nostalgia but acknowledging the uncanny or *strangely* familiar aspects that are evoked in a work such as Whiteread's *House* which have the effect of destabilising 'an all-too-*comfortable* nostalgia' (Massey, 1995, p.41). Just as textile's immanent material characteristics and quotidian contexts lend it connotations of comfort and familiarity, its inherent paradoxical liminality means that it has widely been adopted as a medium with which to express this uncanniness. Indeed it is this ability to simultaneously stabilise *and* destabilise (evidenced in its similar association with the abject) that has afforded the medium its newly found critical currency. However, as is the case with any artistic genre where the content is derived from the formal properties of the medium, the danger is that what is distinctive to the medium can easily become exhausted to the point of becoming 'discursively saturated' (Bernstein, 1992, p.198). The continual

rehearsal of the same concerns in accordance with well-established contexts can lead to the subsequent diminishment of aesthetic affectivity and critical function.

The generation of critical content is clearly all the more politically significant for the medium of textile whose historical marginalisation outside of the traditional discourses of fine art placed it in the realm of the functional and decorative and afforded it a seemingly content free legacy. The consequence of this content free legacy is that an aesthetic approach and formal interrogation of textile's material conventions can be problematic; merely reaffirming the ideological categories through which the medium has been traditionally defined. At the same time, as indicated above, the continual reiteration of medium specific content can easily become formulaic; projecting content over form and conditioning the viewer through the imposition of predetermined categories of meaning which overshadow the material particularity of the work. Whilst it may not be a literal processes of classification as with the more obvious museological context of the Whitworth and taxonomy of the brochure, aesthetic experience is nonetheless still subject to a process of rationalisation where the artworks are positioned and informed by pre-established interpretive frameworks.

Harmony and dissonance: affective shudders and shimmers

Accordingly, as already indicated, the challenge - so forcefully brought to the fore by the *Cloth & Memory {2}* exhibition - is how to effect an experiential encounter that exploits the somatic and semantic potency of textile without resorting to an 'all-too-*comfortable* rapprochement' that merely reaffirms what is already familiar. My contention is that from a textile perspective, in order for the continuity of subjective experience to register its affect, the relationship between stimulus and response needs firstly to be interrupted. I propose that the necessary condition of aesthetic experience is the opening of a gap between attachment and detachment and the subsequent temporary suspension of subject/object relations, however fleeting this might be. It is in this gap, this blank space at the centre of the constellation, this interruption of everyday experience, this momentary arrest of the unfolding processuality of the body, that I would suggest aesthetic autonomy continues to have relevance.

To further support this contention, it is useful to once more return to Adorno's notion of the non-identical embodied within mimetic comportment and consider the relationship between harmony and dissonance. As we saw with Jonathan Vickery's comparison of Henry Moore and Anthony Caro in the initial contextualising discussion of Adorno's

conception of mimesis, the argument that he puts forward is that the perfect syntactical arrangement of Caro's work dispenses with art's mimetic function. Within Caro's work, Modernism's inherent tension between the literal and depicted - between the work as representational form and the particularity of artistic material - is tamed and made over into a harmonious relationship. The substantive knowledge of the other that is a necessary feature of mimetic receptivity is eradicated, as the otherness of the other is presented as pure unity. Subject and object are thereby seemingly momentarily reconciled as material non-identity is dominated by rational form and subsumed within the subject's conceptual control. As Jay Bernstein notes '[h]armony, then, as an image of resolution and completion, of a dissolution of all that is heterogeneous to artistic form, becomes the mark of illusion, of the pretence of works being what they are not - real things' (Bernstein, 1992, p.205). According to Bernstein, the paradoxical nature of modernist art is that it aspires to be wordly (in the way that textile and other quotidian objects of material culture help us to make sense of ourselves in everyday experience). However, as he notes, 'art only exists in its distance from everyday life' and it is this semblance that 'flag[s] its own constitutive failure' (Bernstein, 2007, p.7). If art loses its autonomy it just becomes part of empirical reality and everyday experience, yet if it stands apart from the everyday, it loses its critical function. As Bernstein again observes, '[a]rtworks interrupt our merely instrumental engagement with objects' (Elkins & Montgomery, 2013, p.25).

In contrast to harmony's seeming resolution of alterity, the dissonance embodied within mimetic comportment retains an openness to heterogeneity that is disclosed in the illusory character of artworks. It is through the constructed artifice and inherent conflict between what the work is in a material sense and its signifying potential that artworks reveal their necessary distance from empirical reality. According to Adorno, it is the enigmatic dimension of the sensuously bound experiential encounter evoked by this conflict and the propensity of material particularity to exceed conceptual synthesis (whilst at the same time still making sense), that constitutes the truth content of art. As Adorno notes, '[t]he content *[Gehalt]* of art does not reduce without remainder' (Adorno, 2004, p.170). Through the material medium of art - which as Bernstein reminds us 'is not merely artistic stuff' but a stand-in for material nature (Bernstein, 2007) - we become aware of the lack of reconciliation between art and empirical reality and the precarious relationship between subject and object. At the same time, however, through the mimetic impulse, we are shown a promise of what this harmonious coalescence could be. As Vickery observes, '[t]he non-identical is the perpetual interruption of the perfect unity to which the artwork aspires' (Vickery, 1999, p.296).

Adorno uses the term 'the shudder' to describe this self-conscious memorial experience of material non-identity. According to Bernstein, shudder 'is the affective acknowledgement of the otherness of the other' (Bernstein, 1992, p.222). It is an archaic combination of fear and desire and subjective powerlessness in the face of an overwhelming experience that eludes conceptual rationality. Adorno's notion of the shudder is similar to the concept of the sublime. However, whereas the sublime is marked by the safety of distance and subsequent guarantee of self-preservation, 'the aesthetic shudder…cancels the distance held by the subject' (Adorno, 1997, p.269). Aesthetic receptivity for Adorno is a moment of 'shock' in which recipients 'lose their footing', where they 'forget themselves and disappear in to the work; it is the moment of being shaken' (Adorno, 1997 p.244). Finding a correspondence with the disorientating nature of affect, this momentary shock of mimetic assimilation brought about by the blurring of boundaries between subject and object, leads to the temporary suspension of the subject and manifests itself as a bodily inscription. As Adorno observes: '[U]ltimately, aesthetic comportment is defined as the capacity to shudder, as if goose bumps were the first aesthetic image' (Adorno, 1997, p.331). It is this moment of self-relinquishment together with a corresponding self-awareness of having lost oneself to the other, that Adorno suggests 'rescues subjectivity…by the negation of subjectivity' (Adorno, 1997, p.269). It points to our underlying contingency and the continuing significance of aesthetic experience.

This destabilising of subjectivity within aesthetic experience is where I suggest Adorno finds correspondences with Simon O'Sullivan's more Deleuzian informed notion of 'rupture' and 'affirmation', the terms that intuitively resonated so forcefully in relation to my own affective encounters and literally stopped me in my tracks when exercising in the gym in the early days of the research. Informed by his own experiential encounters with contemporary art, O'Sullivan (2001, 2006, 2010) discerns a new attitude that he characterises 'as a turn (back) to…the aesthetic potential of art' (O'Sullivan, 2010, p.190) away from the conceptual and post conceptual signifying strategies of the 80's and early 90's. Basing his analysis on the object based assemblages of artists such as Jim Lambie, Eva Rothschild and Cathy Wilkes, together with his own encounter with the works of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, O'Sullivan privileges an aesthetics of affect over representation. He notes:

> An object of recognition is then precisely a *re*presentation of something always already in place. With such a non-encounter our habitual way of being and acting in the world is reaffirmed and reinforced, and as a consequence no thought takes place. Indeed, we might say that representation precisely stymies thought. With a

> genuine encounter however, the contrary is the case. Our typical ways of being in the world are challenged, our systems of knowledge disrupted. We are forced to thought. The encounter then operates as a rupture in our habitual modes of being and thus in our habitual subjectivities. It produces a cut, a crack. However, this is not the end of the story, for the rupturing encounter also contains a moment of affirmation, the affirmation of a new world, in fact a way of seeing and thinking this world differently (O'Sullivan, 2006, p.1).

Rather than merely reaffirm existing interpretative strategies and subjective frames of reference - as I would suggest is often the case with the somatic and semantic potency of textile and as was effectively mobilised through the constellation of cloth, memory, heritage and the curatorial interpretive imperative of the Salt's Mill exhibition - the genuine aesthetic encounter, according to O'Sullivan, operates to decenter the subject and undo pre-established ways of thinking and feeling. However, as he qualifies, this disruption of the familiar is a productive indeterminacy that is followed by a second accompanying moment that marks the coming into being of the subject where we are opened up to something new, something different. The affectively aesthetic encounter - whether understood from the perspective of O'Sullivan's notion of rupture and affirmation, or Greg and Seigworth's neutrally inflected 'bloom-space' of shimmering intensities that accumulate across both relatedness *and* interruptions in relatedness, or the sensuous correspondence and dissonant shuddering non-identity of Adorno's mimetic comportment - contains within it both threat *and* promise.

As I discussed earlier in my consideration of the tension between sensuous immediacy and corporeal containment, I would suggest that the critical discourses that surround the medium specificity of textile tend to focus *either* on its harmonising tendencies and transitional potential to bridge gaps between subject and object; *or* on its dissonant, entropic formlessness and potential to exceed the boundaries of the self through associations with the uncanny and abject. Textile art as a medium specific genre - whether in its initial emergence as 'fibre art' in the 1960s, or through the subsequent development of dedicated textile art undergraduate programmes in the 1980s, or its gaining of prominence in the 1990s through the postmodern currency of structuralist and poststructuralist theory - has been pivotal in foregrounding the potency of the medium and associated critical discourses.

My ambition in staging the work within the *Cloth & Memory {2}* exhibition was to acknowledge this potency whilst at the same time trying to resist merely re-rehearsing well established critical discourses and interpretative frameworks. Rather than the

either/or of attachment/detachment and harmony/dissonance, the intention was to maintain a productive tension between somatic sensuous affinity and a haptic aesthetic encounter and a level of discord through the thingly ambiguity of the various elements and their semantic constellatory convergences and divergences. The hope was to open up an indeterminate space of shimmering and shuddering uncertainty that simultaneously centred and decentred the beholder who encountered the work. The online review of my work within the *Cloth & Memory {2}* exhibition would suggest that I went some way to opening up this affective gap between the reassurance of an embodied familiarity and the dislocation of enigmatic unfamiliarity:

> The mutability of the installation, its components, assemblages and sub assemblages derives from qualities, traces of reality the familiar and unfamiliar in their making and placing, which change according to how you frame your thinking, or how in coming to them your thinking is pre-framed. In addition, while you look at them, shifts in attention, perception, or fleeting memories may mean these qualities are re-framed and re-framed again in your encounter with the work (Walker, 2013, p.3).

On reflection, as if often the case with the productive uncertainty of art practice, at the time of making and installing the work, I wasn't really quite sure of my intentions and was responding largely to intuitive impulses and aesthetic considerations. However, informed by the experience of the Whitworth interventions I found myself increasingly able to embrace this indeterminacy and indeed find it liberating. This having been said, the curatorial rationale of the exhibition and ambition to widen access and impact through its positioning within Salts Mill meant that I felt an unconscious pressure to make the work accessible. In the final contextualising component of this chapter, I shift from the site specific contexts of the Whitworth Gallery and Salts Mill and reflect on a body of work staged within Chester University's studio space and the framing conventions of the more 'neutral' white cube. My focus in this section is on the transformative effect of the increasing decentring of subjective agency through a more mimetic approach and an opening up to the indeterminate material agency of the work. As I draw the written commentary to a close, I also return to the relationship between medium specificity and the transgression of genre boundaries through a consideration of Adorno's concept of fraying and notion of progress.

5.4 Studio Works: 'Constellatory Configuration 010914-CH22LB' (1 Sept - 26 Oct 2014).

In this section I consider the final dissemination of the practice within the framework of the research which provided both an opportunity for consolidation and summary reflection.[13] This culminating body of studio enquiry was marked by a move from the more culturally loaded site-specific contexts of the previous Whitworth and Salts Mill interventions to the more 'neutral' - but nonetheless as historically and ideologically constructed - 'white cube' studio/gallery space at the University of Chester. My reflections on this body of work begin with a description of the new work; work that seemed to embody a shift in approach that was made particularly apparent during this final period of studio activity. Ascribing this operational and attitudinal shift to a more 'Adornian' mimetic sensibility and by way of a summary reflection on insights from previous projects, I follow this with what I deem to be the characteristics of this more mimetic comportment. I end the discussion by returning to the initial impetus for the research and the tension between a historical attachment to medium specific conventions and the detachment afforded through the post medium transgression of genre boundaries. Here I again look to Adorno and his theory of progress and concept of 'fraying' as a theoretical context for my reflections.

A spatial opening up of the work and subjective opening up of the self

Both the Whitworth and Salts Mill exhibitions had been useful projects, affording the opportunity to test operational strategies and a reflective framework for the working through of theoretical and contextual correspondences. In each case, the ambiguous thingliness of the work, the combination of sensuous immediacy and material regulation, the tension between subjective and material agency and the connotations of the contextualising frame, were seen to mobilise a constellation of somatic and semantic convergences and divergences that gave rise to an affective indeterminacy. Whilst the staging of the work within the site-specific contexts of the two venues had disclosed a greater complexity, the historical legacy of the museum and the curatorial rationale of *Cloth & Memory* meant that I also felt somewhat governed by contextual imperatives. For my final project I wanted to be able to engage in a more playful and speculative period of studio enquiry where both the process of making and performance of the work in the space of display were able to dictate the direction of the practice, relatively free of external impositions. As with previous staging of the work,

this final period of activity provided an opportunity to re-appropriate existing elements as well as augment my growing vocabulary of forms. This time however, the production of new elements was not dictated by either the external context, or by my original conceptually determined taxonomy, but was primarily based on aesthetic impulses. These impulses emerged out of the process of making - often deriving from vague notions that had presented themselves whilst preoccupied with other projects, or were informed by the chance collision with everyday visual phenomena. The pressure of time and reality of exhibition deadlines meant that I had not been able to pursue these more speculative lines of enquiry, or as was often the case, these intuitive aesthetic impulses were dismissed because I felt that I could not conceptually rationalise them within the context of my original thingly taxonomy.

Without the pressure of external deadlines, not having to be selective and make discriminatory value judgements about what might and might not work, and with the practical luxury of a large space, I was able to enjoy experimenting with a whole range of scenarios. Somewhat ironically, considering the necessary level of rationalisation elicited by the research process, I felt as if I had been granted an amnesty from having to overly rationalise my actions and felt energised and eager to get back into the studio. With no predetermined clear ideas as to what the outcomes might be, I was now able to respond in a much more spontaneous way and had a new confidence that allowed me to welcome the affective indeterminacy of the practice. The studio activity began with what was initially the purely logistical exercise of moving a number of the components out of their temporary storage into the studio/gallery. Although I had no conscious intention to arrange the various elements, I intuitively found myself placing them in relation to each other and the surrounding architectural environment. These elements then provided the starting point for a further improvised choreography. Because of the size of the studio, I was able to open up the space between the various components. The pictorial tableau form, which in other exhibitions had remained largely self-contained and often frontal, now became more fragmented and dispersed, providing an uninterrupted vista where one scenario unfurled seamlessly into another [Figs. 71 - 74].

As already indicated, I now felt somewhat liberated and able to respond to ‘itches that still needed to be scratched’ and produce new elements purely on the basis of aesthetic impulses and creative hunches. Where the scale and proportion of the structural steel framework of the Salts Mill exhibition had to be designed in a way that it could be suspended from the architectural framework of the roof space and accommodate the various screening curtains, the framing elements were now freed

from any functional role. Working with a local fabricator I created a number of more dynamic curved steel structures without necessarily knowing how they would be used. These much more open framing mechanisms operated at a formal level, providing me with a number of linear devices with which I was able to articulate the space in a much more open and fluid fashion [Fig. 75]. The minimalist aesthetic of my pre PhD work meant that it was my natural tendency to configure elements according to the conventions of the grid, and indeed to some extent, the Whitworth and Salts Mill interventions still bore the legacy of this more formal approach. With the new work, however, this former predilection was abandoned in favour of a much more relational composition and performative unfolding of the work. I also found myself more conducive to relinquishing my craft heritage and usual highly laboured production values and more able to embrace the less finished, raw timber prototype aesthetic that had begun to emerge as a new aspect of my visual vocabulary. At the outset, this was only meant to be a holding position until I had the time and acquired the necessary level of skill to make the elements in a more proficient way. This shift in my aesthetic sensibility was notably evidenced through the inclusion of some timber upholstery frames which I had originally used as test pieces when trying to familiarise myself with the process of upholstery. Roughly made and now punctured with staple holes, these were elements which at the start of the research I would never have contemplated using within the work [Figs. 76 & 77].

In line with the cartographic dimension of the research and the active remapping of my subjectively situated position, I had always been drawn to the idea of re-staging elements of my pre-PhD work and indeed had done so to a small extent through the inclusion of my signature buttonholed gessoed fabric within one or two of the components. Because I no longer considered it necessary to have to rationalise the work in terms of my original conceptually determined taxonomy, I now felt at liberty to re-appropriate three densely stitched needlepoint upholstered handrail-like forms that I had produced when selected for the Jerwood Prize exhibition in 2002. These were incredibly labour intensive site-specific pieces of work that had originally encircled a series of architectural pillars within the Crafts Council gallery but which had remained in their storage boxes ever since. Feeling that I needed some taller elements as an alternative to the Smiths Row wooden leg-like structures, which were practically limiting because they needed to be screwed into the floor, I mounted the needlepoint handrail forms onto four spindly-legged steel frames [Fig. 78]. As with the cross-stitched towel-like elements, I was drawn to the traditional connotations of the needlepoint and the juxtaposition of different temporal registers, as the labour intensity of these works was set against the casual provisionality of some of the other elements. Having in the very

early stages of the research casually made a sketchbook drawing of one of the curved upholstered chair-backs in Tate Britiain's café, I also produced a complementary tall steel structure which supported my own reinterpretation of this upholstered form. I also re-appropriated another of my redundant site-specific darned handrail forms from the Jerwood exhibition, which I now threaded onto one of the open curved steel linear framing devices [Fig. 79].

Other new elements included very exaggerated versions of the Salts Mill niddy-noddy components which I now produced not for their textile production signifying potential but purely on the basis that their structure intrigued me [Fig. 80]. A further development was the inclusion of a series of biomorphic cloth constructed forms, the principle of which I had employed for a number of years when teaching a first year 3D skills construction module [Fig. 81]. What interested me about these forms was the contradiction between their apparent tailored complexity and their process of making which involved a type of free-form assembly where one piece of fabric was seamed to the next in such a way that made it impossible to predict the outcome. I enjoyed their lumpen tightly padded thingly quality which hovered somewhere between natural forms, strange soft furnishings, and indeterminate human/non-human body parts. However, I had only ever seen these samples in a teaching context, and again, unable to justify them in the context of my original taxonomy, I had never considered incorporating them within my own practice. Without any pre-determined intention, these strange stuffed forms now satisfied my desire for something more organic and a way of offsetting the more hard edged elements. They also allowed me to introduce patterned furnishing fabrics, prompting connections with the mass material decorative conventions of textile and the staged interior styling that had been an initial impetus for the work. The more bizarre creature-like complex versions of these forms were very much executed on a whim following a visit to Tate Britain where I was partly inspired by Richard Deacon's exhibition [Fig. 82] and a plaster structure within one of Phyllida Barlow's Duveen gallery interventions [Fig.83].

Towards a more mimetic approach and constellatory inter-relationality between subjective and material agency

What became increasingly apparent during this final period of more playful studio activity was a qualitative transformation in my approach towards the practice, arising from what I would suggest was a more 'Adornian' mimetic disposition. In what follows below and by way of a summary reflection that reiterates some of the insights arising

Figure 71. Studio works: the more open and dispersed tableaux of *Constellatory Configuration 010914-CH22LB* (August 2014)

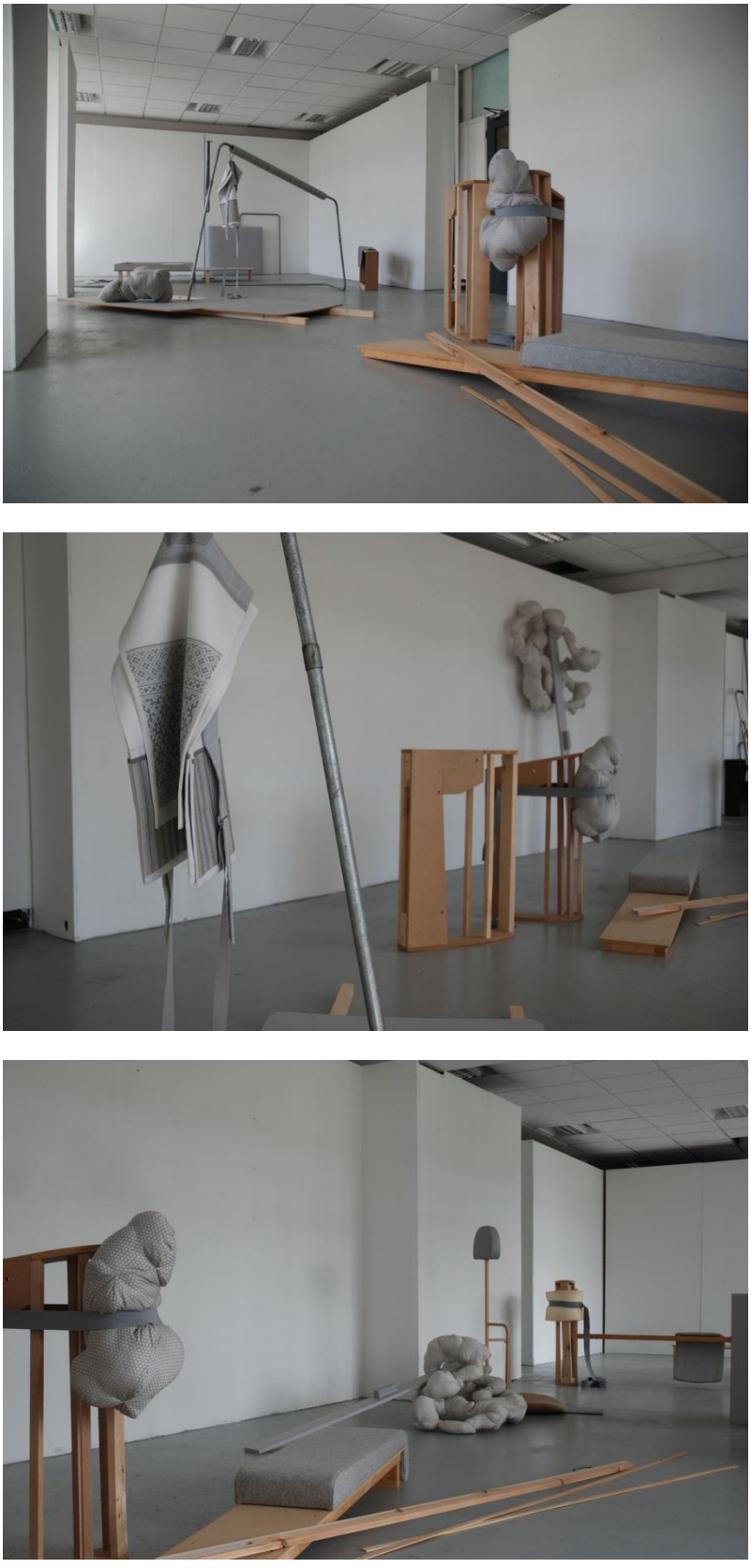

Figure 72. Studio works*:* the more open and dispersed tableaux of *Constellatory Configuration 010914-CH22LB* (August 2014)

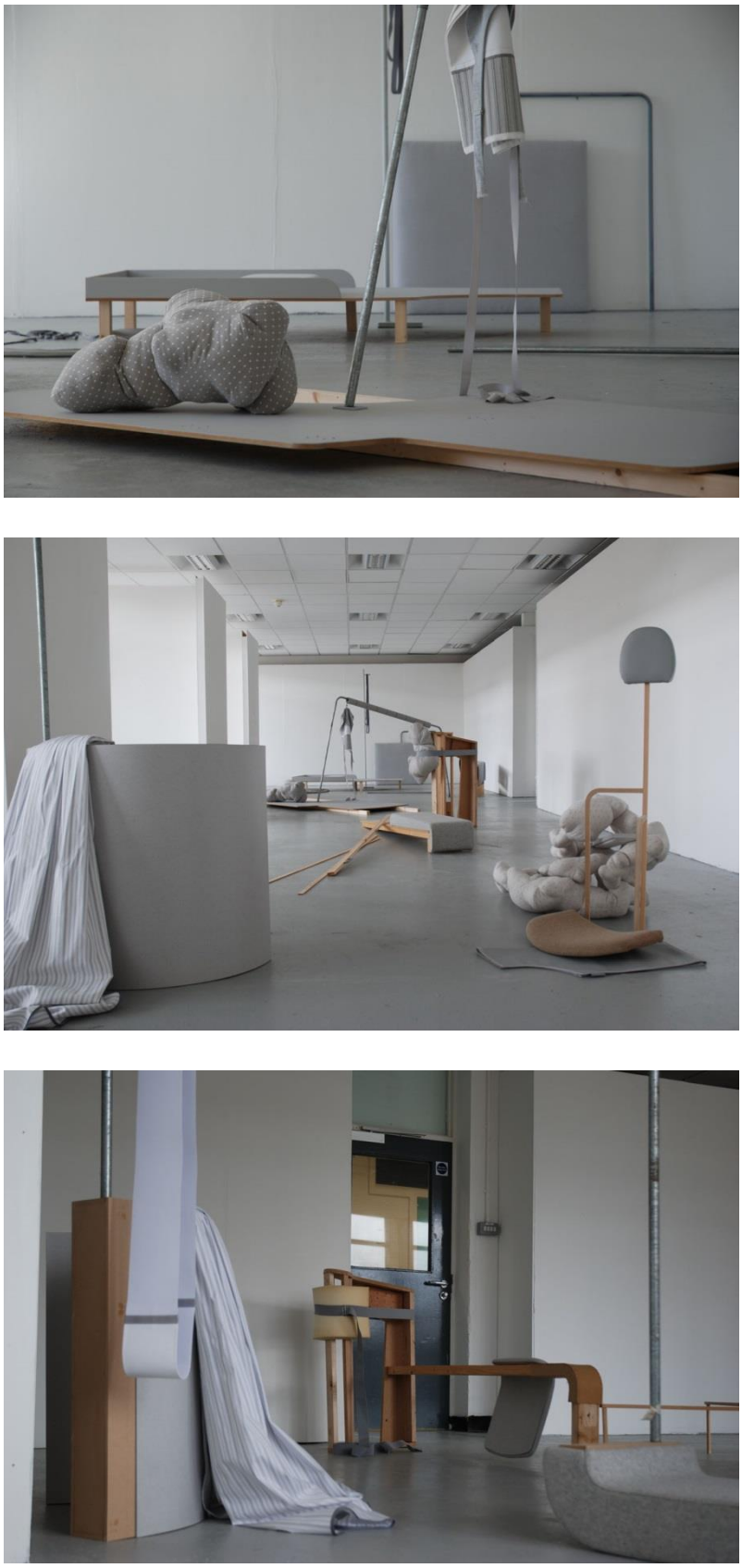

Figure 73. Studio works: the more open and dispersed tableaux of *Constellatory Configuration 010914-CH22LB* (August 2014)

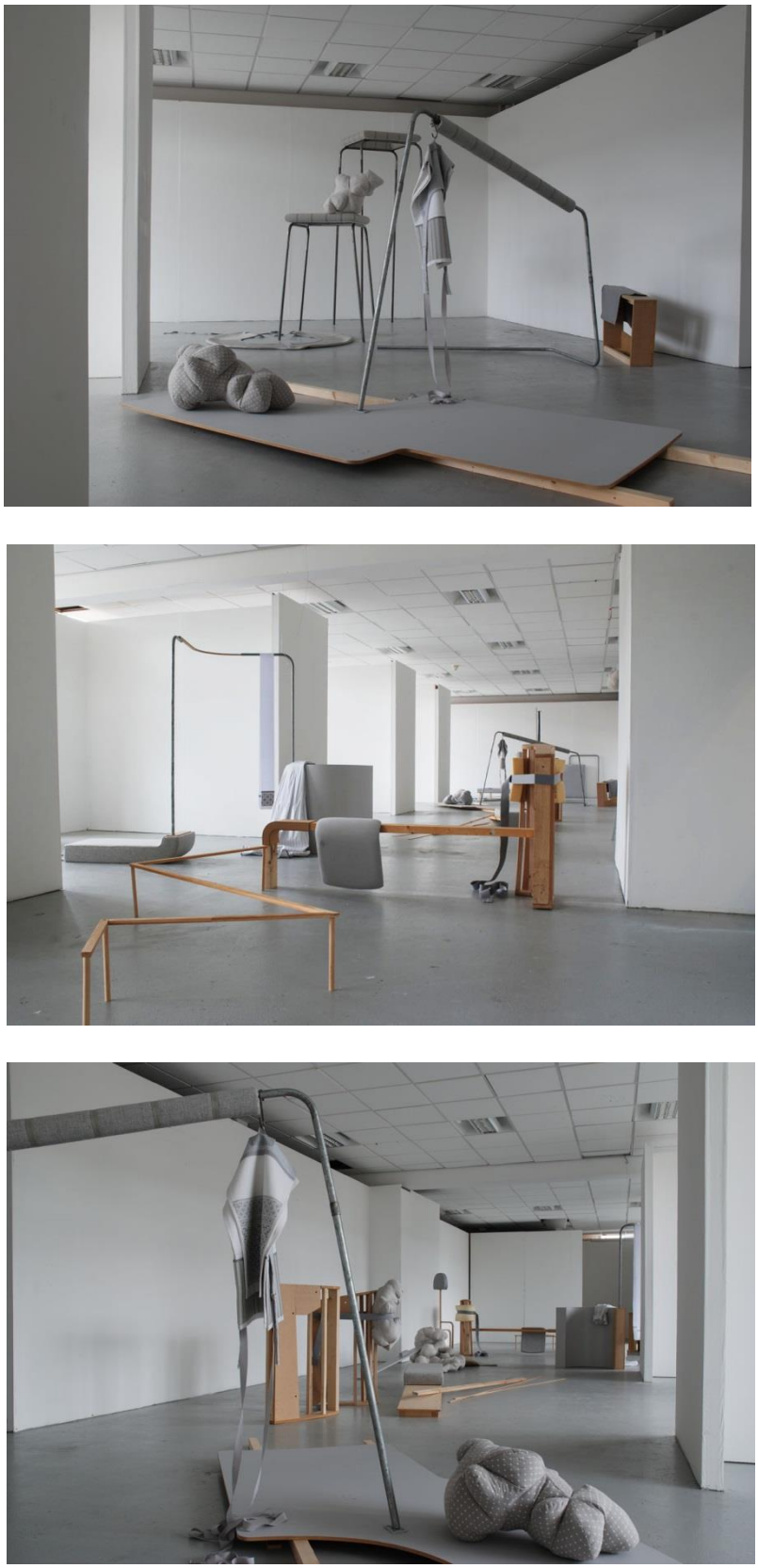

Figure 74. Studio works*:* the more open and dispersed tableaux of *Constellatory Configuration 010914-CH22LB* (August 2014)

Figure 75. Open linear framing structures (August 2014)

Figure 76. Timber upholstery-frame-like structures (August 2014)

Figure 77. Timber upholstery-frame-like structures (August 2014)

Figure 78. Re-appropriated Jerwood exhibition needlepoint upholstered 'handrail' forms (August 2014)

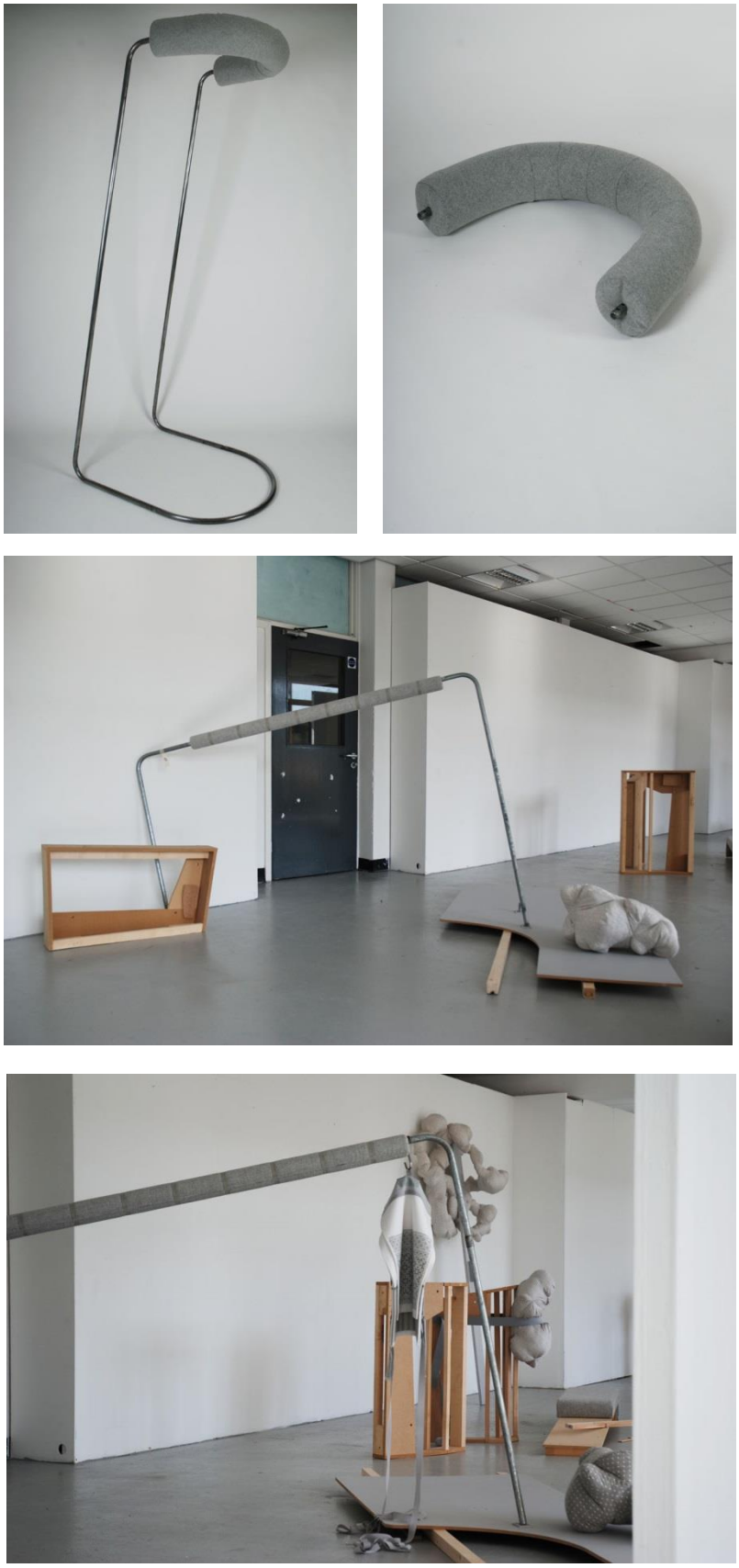

Figure 79. Upholstered 'chair-back' component; re-appropriated darned 'hand-rail' element (August 2014)

Figure 80. Oversized niddy-noddy elements (August 2014)

Figure 81. Biomorphic cloth constructed forms (August 2014)

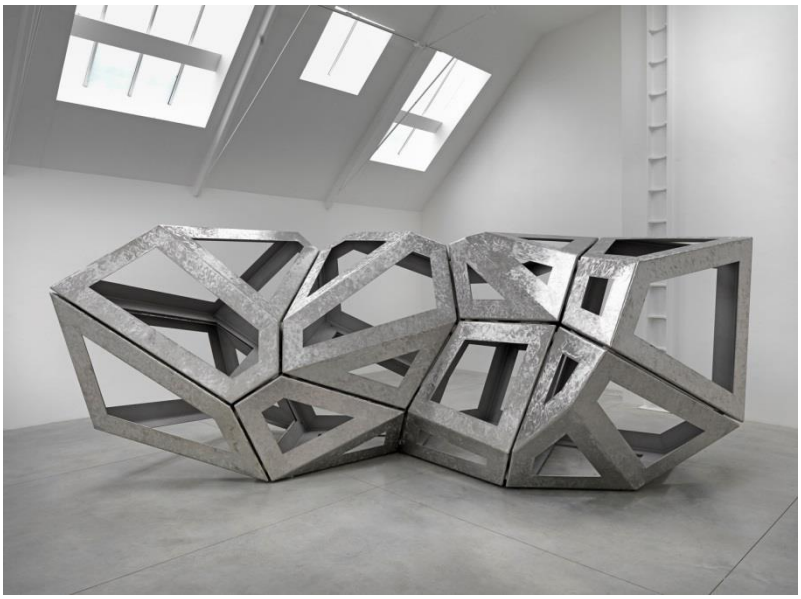

Figure 82. Richard Deacon, *Congregate* (2011) Copyright Richard Deacon; Courtesy Lisson Gallery. Photography: Ken Allard

Figure 83.
Installation view: *Phyllida Barlow. dock* (untitled: dock: hungprongsplastercoils)
Duveen Commission, Tate Britain, London, England
March 31 – October 19, 2014
Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth. Photo: Alex Delfanne

from the previous projects, I briefly outline what I propose as four of the key characteristics of this mimetic sensibility. In terms of the attachment and detachment that is the focus of the research it is this 'mimetic sensibility' that arguably allows for a discontinuous continuity between medium specific and post medium contexts and a more reciprocal relationship between material and subjective agency.[14]

i. Mimetic production: an active yielding to the aesthetic agency of the material

I would suggest that perhaps the most notable attribute of a mimetic sensibility is a return to an aesthetic impetus and an active assimilation to what Juliane Rebentisch describes as 'the intrinsic logic of the material' (Rebentisch, 2009, p.120). From the perspective of artistic production, this involves an active yielding to sensuous material particularity and creative receptivity to the process of making. A mimetic approach to making requires an openness to the possibilities thrown up by the creative process itself which privileges the primacy of the object and where material is seen to have agency and to some extent dictate its own direction. This agency can manifest itself as an unfolding continuous process where reflection on one material response informs the reaction to the next or on the basis of some chance whim or desire. Rather than dominating the material, allowing preconceptions to predetermine outcomes in a way that maintains the sovereignty of the subject, it demands a level of surrender and the relinquishment of self-preservation and conceptual mastery. This does not necessarily mean passivity or lack of subjective agency, but acknowledges the limitations of the subject and the critical potential of the work beyond conceptual rationality. Instead of adhering to traditional techniques (through which textile practice has historically found its definition) or re-rehearsing established aesthetic conventions or discursively imposed frameworks, a mimetic approach attests to material inventiveness and the non-identical within the creative process which always has the potential to exceed the subject's ability to comprehend and control it.

ii. Non repressive synthesis

The second characteristic of a mimetic sensibility is the processual internal dynamic between mimesis and rationality. As I outlined in my reflections on the Whitworth interventions, it is the emphatic assimilation and active yielding to the other that affords a mode of constellatory connectivity that renders the contrary and divergent as articulate. Mimetic affinity has a synthesising function; however, it is a non-discursive, non-repressive synthesis that does not seek to subsume sensuous material particularity under generalising universal abstract concepts. The subsequent

disjuncture between subject and object opens an affective gap or processual 'bloom-space' where the discontinuous continuity between attachment and detachment remain enigmatic, invite interpretation, and give rise to something new. To this extent, mimesis is always mediated by a self-reflexive rationality. It is, as Jay Bernstein observes, predicated on an affective encounter that is founded on a 'thick notion experience' as opposed to ordinary experience and 'not just raw feelings but feeling laced with cognition' (Elkins & Montgomery, 2013, p.74). It is in this sense a 'critical epistemology' and 'alternative form of reasoning, making, and knowing the world' (Elkins & Montgomery, 2013, p.71) which is co-constitutive with conceptual rationality but also significantly different from the dominating mode of knowledge as quantification. Within my own work this non-repressive synthesis is manifest in the tension between materiality and meaning where the familiar yet unfamiliar thingly quality of the components and their subsequent (re)configuration(s) prompt a complex constellation of contradictory resonances whilst remaining ambiguous.

iii. Reconfiguring autonomy: reality and constructed artifice

For Adorno, art maintains its critical function and social relevance by remaining resolutely autonomous and occupying a position in opposition to social reality. This is a position that clearly can no longer be sustained, particularly from the perspective of textile whose material culture conventions and embeddedness within the everyday mean that it is suffused with socio historical content. Within a more contemporary mimetic approach, autonomy is not discarded completely, but it is fundamentally transformed from its modernist medium specific associations. From the perspective of production, it persists through the dynamic tension between empirical reality and the self-conscious constructed artifice of the work. In accordance with Johanna Drucker, I would suggest that the idea of aesthetic autonomy can be usefully reformulated through her notion of 'complicit formalism'. As I hope to have demonstrated through the studio enquiry, complicit formalism provides a mode of operation that privileges the aesthetic properties of works of art, whilst engaging with the sensuous and semantic richness of contemporary culture. However, as evidenced in the staging of the work, and as Juliane Rebentisch argues in her analysis of intermediality in the *Aesthetics of Installation Art* (Rebentisch, 2009, 2012), it is from the perspective of aesthetic experience and the potential of material particularity to continually elude conceptual grasp, that aesthetic autonomy most notably maintains its enduring significance. Rebentisch states that 'the so called "transgression in the arts" compels us to replace the media-aesthetic paradigm with one based on the aesthetics of experience' (Rebentisch, 2009, p.119). I would further contend that it is in the enigmatically

affective zone of productive uncertainty, mobilised through a constellatory processual unfolding relation between attachment and detachment, that aesthetic autonomy noticeably manifests itself. Adorno believed that art can only secure its status through a progressive critical interrogation and self-reflective engagement with 'the traces to be found in the material and technical procedures' (Adorno, 1997, p.35) of the various aesthetic media as they are engendered over the course of history (an aspect I will further expand upon below when considering his notion of fraying). Drucker, on the other hand, wholeheartedly embraces the dissolution of the boundaries between art and life through the appropriation of objects and materials of mass culture. However, where there is some level of congruity is in the way that aesthetic experience is marked by its relation to yet separation from empirical reality. Art is part of the world but at the same time produces a disturbance or cut in our conditions of viewing that affectively suspends normal motor activity and allows us to see the world - and indeed ourselves - anew (O'Sullivan, p127).[15] The paradoxical nature of aesthetic autonomy is that if artworks fail to register their aesthetic constructedness, they just become part of empirical reality, yet if they stand apart from the everyday, their critical function is diminished. A mimetic sensibility arguably maintains this tension between aesthetic autonomy and social reality. In doing so, I suggest that it might suitably be reinterpreted as 'engaged autonomy', a term coined by the writer and curator Charles Esche (Seijdel & Melis, 2012, p.5).

iv. Mimetic receptivity: an affirmatively rupturing encounter

As indicated above, the characteristics of a mimetic sensibility are perhaps most notably played out through the process of aesthetic receptivity. As Brian O'Connor observes:

> [i]n the case of the experience of artworks - our aesthetic receptivity to and absorption in them - all of the fundamental aspects of mimesis are clearly visible: the responsivity to the other, the active adjustment to it, the abandonment of planning, transcending the limiting sphere of self-mastering autonomy and the emancipation of selfhood that is achieved through an interaction with an other. Although Adorno does not actually specify that it is aesthetic receptivity that is the paradigmatic mode of mimetic behaviour, it is the mode most in evidence when he employs mimesis as a critical category (O'Connor, 2013, p.169).

Where in the production of the work, the artist assimilates to the intrinsic logic of the material without limiting its potential through subjective domination, the viewer must

similarly surrender to the material otherness of the work. This, as we have seen, is potentially both an enriching and destabilising experience. A mimetic encounter opens up a sensuous access to the world where boundaries between subject and object are momentarily bridged and the viewer is released from the constraints of self-preservation. At the same time, however, this active broadening of the self to the other, or what O'Connor describes as 'a thrilling disengagement from the requirements of socially effective selfhood' (O'Connor, 2013, p.170) always comes with the threat of dissolution. Resonating within the body as an affective shimmer of libidinous desire or shudder of dissonance, the mimetic encounter both anticipates and exceeds subjectivity through the affective acknowledgement of the other. It is what Bernstein describes as 'a memorial experience of nature's transcendence, its non-identity and sublimity, at one remove' (Bernstein, 1992, p.220). Echoing my comments above, I would argue that it is through an aesthetics of experience that the agential capacity of medium specificity - construed in Adorno's terms of material particularity - continues to have contemporary validity.

Unravelling and interweaving, Theodor Adorno's concept of 'fraying'

By way of ending my reflections on this final period of studio enquiry and extending some of the observations above, I want to briefly return to the tension between a continuing attachment to medium specific conventions and the detachment afforded by the post medium dissolution of genres boundaries. The initial impetus for the research, resulting in what has been a constellatory material remapping of the work and the self, was a pragmatic ambition to move beyond the hierarchical binary formations that had traditionally positioned textile as the marginalised other to the medium specific, aesthetically autonomous legacies of fine art practice. This meant adopting a more affirmative attitude that moved away from a rhetoric of negative opposition and an opening up to alterity, whilst at the same time maintaining a level of self-reflexivity and acknowledging the significance of culturally situated experience. As the previous sections testify, the anomaly of the research is that the outcome of this desire to endorse what is specific to textile through an affirmation of productive difference, is a blurring of traditional disciplinary boundaries and to some extent the undermining of differentiation. Here again Adorno provides a useful theoretical framework for this anomaly through his theory of progress and suitably appropriate textile analogy of 'fraying'.

In his 1967 essay *Art and the Arts*, written seven years after *Modernist Painting*, Clement Greenberg's canonical treatise espousing the principles of medium specificity, and in the same year as Michael Fried's admonishment of 'theatricality' in *Art and Objecthood*, Adorno stated that '[i]mmunity to the zeitgeist is no virtue in itself' (Adorno, 2003, p.369). Faced with the increasing hybridisation of the arts in the late 1960s and early 1970s and countering his American contemporaries who believed that the survival of art was based on the strict separation of the aesthetic genres, Adorno contended that the transgression of disciplinary boundaries was an inescapable consequence of the progression of the arts. He uses the term *Verfransung,* which has been variously translated as 'fraying' and 'erosion', to describe this inevitable dissolution of clear lines of demarcation between the different genres. However, as Juliane Rebentisch (2009, 2012) notes in her analysis of the increasing trend towards intermediality, what these translations can easily miss is the sense of coming together as well as the sense of coming apart that is inherent within the term. Drawing on a range of textile metaphors, she suggests that fraying should not be read as merely an unravelling of ends, but also as an interweaving of what has been unravelled (Rebentisch, 2012, p.99).

For Adorno, this disintegration of the boundaries between the arts was consistent with the wider narratives of progress perpetuated through the modernist avant-garde. Adorno believed that it is only defendable, however, if instigated by the 'principle of construction' (Adorno, 1984, p.84) or internal logic of the discreet disciplines. The process of erosion for Adorno 'has the greatest power, where it is intrinsic, that is to say, where it arises from the genre itself' (Adorno, 2003, p.369).[16] It was only through the continual critical interrogation of what he calls 'aesthetic material' that the enigmatic tension necessary for the autonomy of art could be prevented from becoming subordinated under conceptual control and subsumed within convention. Adorno's understanding of aesthetic material differs from Greenberg's notion of 'aesthetic medium' in that it moves beyond reductive formal principles and refers to:

> 'the stuff the artist controls and manipulates: words, colours, sounds – all the way up to connections of any kind and to the highly developed methods of integration he might use. Material, then, is all that the artist is confronted by, all that he must make a decision about' (Adorno, 1984, p.213).

Adorno makes a distinction between what he sees as the constitutive 'qualitative plurality' (Adorno, 2003, p.371) of intermediality that emerges historically out of the principles of construction and what he saw as the self-imposed synthesis or false

hybridity of the arts, within for example, the notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The critical continuation of medium specific traditions as a point of departure for the generation of artworks is not borne of any desire to preserve the genres per se, but as Adorno notes, because 'there are inescapable constraints built into materials, constraints that change with the specific character of the material and which determine the evolution of methods' (Adorno,1984, p.213). The fraying of the boundaries between aesthetic genres, therefore, does not automatically diminish reflection on the inherent structural differences between aesthetic media. As Bjørnar Olsen notes in his analysis of the 'troubled engagement' between the linguistic turn of post structuralism and material culture studies:

> …there are qualities immanent to the signifiers (beings, actants) themselves, properties that are not accidental or only a product of their position in a relational web. A bridge or an axe does have competences that cannot be replaced by just any other signifier. Thus even if their qualities are activated or realized as part of a relational whole, the immanent properties of the material signifiers do matter (Olsen, 2006, p.99).

In this sense, as Juliane Rebentisch notes, it is not necessarily medium specificity that is eradicated, 'but its liberation from being enveloped by the idea of genre specificity' (Rebentisch, 2009, p.122).

Adorno's notion of the progressive unravelling and interweaving of traditional genre boundaries finds clear resonances with the cartographic trajectory of my own practice. However, his notion of progress is a product of its time and consistent with the meta narratives of modernity and undoubtedly has its limitations - not least of which is the evolutionary model of history and the idea that aesthetic experience unfolds as a seamless linear developmental narrative. Moreover, what can also be called into question is the fact that for art to maintain its aesthetic autonomy and thereby critical function and social relevance, the historical interrogation of established material conventions has to be self-evident. What is apparent from my own practice is that although a critical analysis of medium specific conventions might have provided an initial impetus for the studio enquiry and a point of departure for my thingly taxonomy of components, this is not necessarily retrievable by the viewer, nor was it meant to be a conditioning criteria of its aesthetic value. As we have seen over the course of the research and notably made evident through the plurality of meanings mobilised through the contextual staging of the work, reflections on medium specificity and the reworking of modernist positions is only one of the conflicting constellatory connections that might

- or indeed might not, be retrievable by the viewer. As Umberto Eco argues in his conception of 'the open work', the work of art is 'a work in movement' that 'is effectively open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings' (Eco, 1989, p.21) where the viewer is 'the focal point of a network of limitless interrelations' (Eco, 1989, p.4). The tension between aesthetic autonomy and empirical reality, that for Adorno was a necessary quality for art to maintain its critical function, cannot be reduced to artistic intention or automatically guaranteed by production strategies. However, as I have argued previously, where an engaged form of aesthetic autonomy continues to have contemporary relevance is through the constitutively processual nature of aesthetic experience where artworks invite interpretation but resist conceptual synthesis. It is in the affective gap opened up between subjective attachment and detachment that the indeterminate material particularity of artworks are seen to exceed their intentional ground and medium specificity is re-inscribed in terms of material agency.

5.5 Summary Reflections

What has emerged through the various constellatory (re)stagings of the work is an unfolding dynamic relationship between self-determined subjective agency and the material agency that arises out of the affective indeterminacy of the experiential encounter. From the perspective of production, in each (re)configuration of the sculptural components there was a pragmatic attempt to foster ambiguous somatic and semantic connections in a way that blurred disciplinary boundaries and problematised subject object relations. From the perspective of the viewer's experience, the co-constitutive relations between the material agency of the work and the already complex cultural frames of the Whitworth and Salts Mill were seen to be particularly effective in opening up a complexity where an array of sensuous and semiotic resonances were mobilised but refused to settle. While the site specific contexts opened up a productive complexity, the interpretative imperatives of the Whitworth's museological context and the curatorial rationale of 'Cloth and Memory', also seemed, albeit unconsciously, to place an emphasis on strategies of signification. The conventions of the white cube space, evidenced through the Five Years, Smiths Row and Chester University configurations, provided less external points of reference for the viewer, but in terms of the production of the work allowed for a greater level of aesthetic autonomy. It was during the final period of studio enquiry conducted in the neutrality of the studio space at Chester that this became most apparent. The detachment afforded by the contemporary post-medium condition was seen to take precedence over my continuing

attachment to medium specific conventions and I found myself able to yield to the limitations of subjective agency, open up to the material agency of the work and embrace the productive indeterminacy of the aesthetic impulse.

What had begun as a critical interrogation of the particular material conventions of textile and a pragmatic desire to acknowledge the agential capacity of the medium, had resulted in the erosion of disciplinary boundaries and the decentring of self. However, somewhat paradoxically, it was this opening up to the material non-identity of the self and the work and the subsequent tension between subjective and material agency, that brought about a qualitative transformation.

Notes to Chapter 5: Contextual Components: Configurations in Context

'Concordance' Constellatory Configuration 26713 - M156ER

1. The Whitworth is similarly acclaimed for it historical and contemporary collection of wallpapers which is one of the most important in the country.
2. In *The Migration of Stitches & The Practice of Stitch Movement* Anne Morrell documents the development and movement of embroidery stitches as they have migrated across cultures and how interconnected the different techniques and stitches really are, even though they have origins in very specific cultural contexts (Morrell, 2007). In *Symmetries of Culture: Theory and Practice of Plane Pattern Analysis,* Washburn and Crowe observe that the cross stitch patterns are all fairly similar because they are regulated by the formal rules of symmetry and as counted thread techniques are dictated by the grid of the warp and weft (Washburn & Crowe 1991).
3. I would like to thank Cathy Johnson from the Warrington branch of the Embroiderer's Guild and Jill Renwick from the Merseyside branch, together with Pat Cobbold and Maria Walker for their kind assistance with the cross stitched 'towels'.
4. See: Bernstein, J. M. (1992) *The fate of art: aesthetic alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno.*
5. Adorno's notion of 'the preponderance of the object' *[Vorrang des Objekts],* is *also translated as the 'priority' or 'primacy of the object'.*
6. In his 1942 essay 'The Analytical Language of John Wilkins' (Borges, 1975) Jorge Luis Borges' gives the example of a fictitious taxonomy of animals supposedly taken from an ancient Chinese Encyclopaedia entitled *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge* to illustrate both the arbitrariness and culturally specificity of any classification system. Michel Foucault famously cites the fictitious taxonomy in the preface to *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* (Foucault, 1970).

'Cloth & Memory {2}': Constellatory Configuration 18813-BD183LA

7. *Cloth & Memory {2}* was curated by Lesley Millar (MBE), Professor of Textile Culture and Director of the Anglo Japanese Textile Research Centre at the University for the Creative Arts. Lesley Miller has played a pivotal role in promoting contemporary textile practice and research over the last 20 years through significant international touring exhibitions and collaborative mentoring exchanges. Projects include *Revelation* (1996-8),*Textural Space* (2001), *Through the Surface* (2004-5), 21:21- *NUNO textiles* (2005-7), *Cloth & Culture Now* (2008), *Cultex* (2009-11), *Lost in Lace* (2011-12) and *Cloth and Memory* (2013). I was one of the invited artists involved in *Through the Surface,* an Anglo-Japanese mentoring exchange project and exhibition which toured the UK during 2004 and exhibited at The National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, Japan in 2005. I was also an invited artist in *Cloth & Culture Now* which included the work of 35 contemporary textile artists from Estonia, Finland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania and the UK and was exhibited at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, and the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester during 2008.
8. My initial proposal was to construct a series of frameworks running down the length of the spinning room in a way that might reference modular exhibition stands which the viewer would encounter as they moved through the space. It was the curator's choice to have just the one tableau.
9. I suggested that the exhibition invigilators might like to change the position of the curtains as a way of continually reframing the staged scenario.
10. A niddy-noddy is a tool used to make skeins from yarn.
11. In his online review of my work, Bob Walker wrote that the encounter with the work 'began to suggest an institutional space - the furniture of waiting rooms, the curtaining round a patient's bed, the bed-side chair' and in his analysis makes reference to 'surveillance' and 'warded-space' (Walker, 2013).
12. In his essay, 'Textile Art- Who Are You?' Sarat Maharaj proposes textile art as an example of Derrida's concept, the '"undecidable'...something that seems to belong to one genre but

overshoots its border and seems no less at home in another. Belongs to both, we might say, by not belonging to either."(Maharaj 2001: 7).

Studio Works: Constellatory Configuration 200914-CH22LB

13. This was the final period of studio production, although the PhD exposition will provide a further opportunity to re-stage some of the work.
14. Here I acknowledge Simon Mussell's application of a 'mimetic method' to the work of filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky in his PhD thesis *Constellations of Adornian theory and film: readings of Adorno with Tarkovsky and Haneke* (Mussell, 2011).
15. O'Sullivan here draws on Henri Bergson where the 'affective-gap' or 'hesitancy' is understood to be an interval between stimulus and response, which 'allows other 'planes' of reality to become visible' and creativity to arise (O'Sullivan 2006, p.38). O'Sullivan provides a more extended discussion of these ideas in a further section 'Bergson: the gap' (O'Sullivan 2006, pp.45-47).
16. An evident example would be Frank Stella's notched and shaped canvases (for example *Averroes*, 1960, *Marquis de Portago*, 1960, *Avicenna*, 1960) as an erosion of the boundaries between painting and sculpture as a precursor to minimalist objecthood.

6. Avoiding a Conclusion

The mobilisation and embodiment of indeterminacy through determinate practice.

In line with the constellatory principle of the research, I am hesitant to draw fixed conclusions or impose meanings that seek to prescribe a relationship between the often contradictory dimensions of the project as if it were a stable entity. Instead, it has been my intention to use this reflective commentary as a means of mobilising a constellation of conceptual correspondences and affective resonances across a diverse range of theoretical, methodological, contextual and practice based perspectives, without reducing them to a logically cohesive totality or terminal stasis. It is not the role of the written text to interpret the practice or of the practice to 'illustrate' theory, but as a cartographic process, the aim of the research has been to map an unfolding relationship between the two in a way that allows for complexity, contradiction and possible points of convergence or disjunction whilst remaining partial and open to change. As Gregg and Seigworth note: '[I]sn't theory - any theory with or without a capital T – supposed to work in this way? Operating with a certain modest methodological vitality rather than impressing itself upon a wiggling world like a snap-on grid of shape setting interpretability? (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p.2).

At the same time, the doctoral process by its very nature demands reasoning, articulation and a level of resolution. It is this productive tension, between self-determined subjective agency and an active opening up to the affective indeterminacy of material/matter that has been central to the research and lies at the heart of the methodological model of attachment and detachment. To quote O'Sullivan's particularly apposite phrase again, the research could be described as 'the mobilisation of indeterminacy through a determinate practice' (O'Sullivan, 2010, p.202).

I set out with a pragmatic desire to interrogate the notion of medium specificity and reconfigure it in a way that allowed me to afford currency to my situated experience and to question the continuing viability of a practice that had been historically grounded in the material and discursive conventions of a medium. The aim was to foreground the agential capacity of textile while at the same time move beyond the confines of the

medium and embrace the diversity and richness of the post medium condition of contemporary fine art practice. My contention is that although textile has become widely integrated as an artistic material, where it is employed as one medium among many others within an almost limitless creative repertoire, it still bears the legacies of its historical marginalisation. 'Held in the thrall of tradition', and seemingly lacking the 'originality and critical insight that has underpinned modernist notions of creative artistic practice' (Rowley, 1999, p.3), as a self-reflexive medium specific genre, it continues to operate in a sphere that has never been fully incorporated within contemporary fine art curatorial agendas.

Feminist and poststructuralist discursive strategies have been crucial to the development of my own practice and instrumental in affording the medium increased social, cultural and political significance and thereby artistic and critical currency. However, this agency has largely been born of a rhetoric of negative opposition and resistance to dominant models of modernist aesthetic autonomy. Moreover, there is the potential that the discursive contexts which afford textile its undoubted critical currency (such as references to the body, memory, the re-appropriation of gendered practices) can become self-exhausting. As with any content that derives from the specific conventions of the medium, they can become well-rehearsed pre-packaged generalities which pre-determine our engagement with the work and blind us to its material particularity. Yet, from a textile perspective, a return to aesthetic considerations and strategies that consciously privilege formal material considerations and hinder signification - even when employed as a means of foregrounding and intensifying the semantic and somatic potency of the medium - could be seen to be a retrograde step and simply reinforce hierarchical ideological positions. The intention of the research has been to eschew medium specific/post medium, aesthetic/extra aesthetic, modernist/postmodern binary oppositions, in favour of a more inclusive strategy where aspects of both of these approaches can be drawn upon for the purpose of extending and challenging current models and methodologies.

As an area of practice and research that remains under investigated, I hope to have addressed this challenge by demonstrating the very particular agential capacity that arises through a constellatory opening up of textile, and by situating its (un)specific material properties, practices and discourses more firmly within a contemporary fine art arena. As a model of 'embodied experience-in-practice', I would suggest that the research has wider significance in the way that it attests to the productive indeterminacy of materially embodied experience as a sensuous mode of knowledge

production and returns authority to aesthetic autonomy - albeit as a 'socially determined' autonomy (Osborne, 2012, p.121).

Mobilising constellatory convergences and divergences

The constellatory opening up of textile that has emerged as an outcome of the research contributes to debates surrounding the tensions between medium specific and intermediary/hybrid contemporary art practices by offering a revised understanding of medium specificity through its re-formulation as material agency. Within this re-formulation there is an acknowledgement of the distinct materiality of artistic media, but there is also a concern with the potential of the medium in terms of its 'socio-culturally mediated capacity to act'. Rather than the self-contained traditional modernist understanding of medium specificity where material conventions are immured within their own system of reference, within the model of practice presented through the research the inherent qualities and competences of the medium are activated as part of a larger network of agential capacities, including 'the human and the non-human, the material and immaterial, the social and the physical' (Bolt 2013, p.6). In practice, this has meant that the studio enquiry has not been limited to a formal interrogation of textile materials. Instead I have drawn wider reference from the diverse everyday associations and discursive conventions in which the medium is implicated, together with a reworking of modernist visual codes and conventions from which it has historically been marginalised. In this way, although one of the key outcomes of the research is a shift to a much more affirmative attitude, it maintains a self-reflexive critical inflection.

What the research has revealed is that textile is distinctive as a practice and knowledge base in the way that it has always been embedded and embodied as part of the social fabric of everyday life. Its specific material characteristics of pliability and softness afford it practical application, social pervasiveness and sensory immediacy, characteristics that cannot be disentangled from the innumerable (un)specific yet potent semantic and somatic associations with which it is physically, culturally and metaphorically intertwined. The purposeful function, social integration and embodied materiality that accounted for textiles' cultural ambivalence within the ideological discourses of modernism are reformulated through the studio enquiry as a productive indeterminacy. As an artistic medium, it is this specific (un)specificity that makes it particularly effective in mobilising a rich and complex network of aesthetic and extra-aesthetic relations. It is through its potential as a potent medium of convergence and

divergence that textile has been seen to challenge the fundamental premise of self-contained artist categories and disciplinary boundaries, blurring distinctions between subject and object and bridging gaps between realms that customarily remain separate and distinct. This is evidenced through the thingly quality of the individual sculptural components which prompt ambiguous reference to the heterogeneous material and visual culture conventions of textile. The provisional staging and restaging of these components within different installational scenarios in a way prompt temporary coalitions and keeps meaning in flux; the various scenarios assimilate yet differentiate between the different cultural frames in which the work is disseminated. In both the production and the reception of the work the heterogeneous resonances of the material practice are further complicated as they come into contact with the fluctuating affective intensities of bodily matter. The performative nature of the experiential encounter itself becomes a site of indeterminacy in a way that accommodates contradiction and complexity and allows connections to be momentarily illuminated that couldn't be revealed through other modes of research.

The methodological model of attachment and detachment put forward by the research has provided a conceptual framework and overarching operational strategy that has allowed me to articulate this potential for convergence and divergence. Attachment and detachment are significant as terms in maintaining a creative and dynamic tension between medium specific/post medium conventions and aesthetic and extra-aesthetic contexts, as well as the productive indeterminacy between subjective and material agency that arises in negotiating these positions. Within this broader framework of attachment and detachment, the concept of the constellation has been drawn on as a means of facilitating this foundational principle of inter-relationality and as a way of drawing out rather than resolving contradictions. Unlike the logically plotted ‘expanded field’ that is dependent on an initial pair of central binary oppositions, the constellation mobilises a whole host of dialectical complexities that gather around the thingly (un)specificity of the practice in a way that opens up an affective gap of resonating potential. Although an analysis of textile conventions provided the initial point of departure for my resultant taxonomy of sculptural components, over the course of the research the medium has become detached and decentred to the point where it is now the blank but all pervading absent presence at the heart of the constellation.

In terms of the reflective commentary, the constellatory approach has similarly allowed me to gather together a range of critical perspectives that are diffuse and although sometimes coherent, are often at odds with each other. They include an incongruous mixture of disciplinary fields and ideas that under other circumstances would seem to

be irrational and incompatible including: architectural theory, design, philosophy, fine art theory and practice, feminist theory, material culture, affect theory, new materialism, aesthetics. They have been drawn on not for their conceptual consistency but for their affective resonances with the unfolding practice and as a way of giving shape to sensory intuitions that are often elusive and difficult to define. In keeping with the pragmatic dimension of the research, they are selected for their functionality and the way that have allowed me to think differently and further my understanding of the methods and motivations of the practice. Their ultimate role, however, is in affording a capacity to act. Two of the resonant voices that have permeated the research are Adorno and Deleuze/Guattari.[1] Often seen as irreconcilable and holding conflicting philosophical positions, they have been set in constellatory configuration in a way that allows for potential connections to be momentarily illuminated. The thesis does not claim philosophical newness, nevertheless it has been interesting to reflect on the continuities and discontinuities between Adorno's conception of mimesis and the dominant formulation of affect theory through its Spinoza, Bergson, Deleuze, Massumi lineage. It is only as I draw the research to a close that I have found evidence from one or two critical commentators who have similarly made this connection.[2]

Affirmative complicity: strategies of detachment and aesthetic distance

Whilst my immediate concern throughout this project has been to foreground the particular agential capacity of textile as an artistic medium, paradoxically this has largely been achieved by supressing its somatic and semantic potency. An abstract sculptural language, manifest through material thingness, staged artifice and corporeal containment, has been privileged over representation and subjective narratives. These strategies of detachment that display a seeming self-reflexive complicity with modernist conventions of aesthetic distance have been set in dialectical contradiction with the embodied somatic and semantic resonances of textile. On reflection, the work could be seen to bear the legacies of my earlier more minimalist inflected practice in which a reductive and formal vocabulary provided a level of ambiguity where meaning is suggested yet unable to settle and there is a productive tension between aesthetic affects and wider social contexts. Although the work that has emerged as a result of the research process may look very different (and from my perspective certainly feels very different), there are other considerations that have remained constant, such as the neutral palette, the concern with making and materiality, the tension between the familiar and unfamiliar and the reference to material culture conventions. In the pre

PhD practice, however, these concerns were subsumed under the discourses of minimalist objecthood.

Where the practice has changed significantly as a result of the research is in the shift in emphasis from a straightforward relationship between subjective intention and objective outcome to a more processual and performative mode of operation and a concern with the affective agency of the experiential encounter. Strategies of detachment, containment and the intentional suppression of subjective narratives are now employed not as an overt critical poststructuralist positioning, but as a means of intensifying experience and eliciting an affectively indeterminate phenomenological response. The 'endlessly displaced signification' (Drucker, 2005b, p.157) of my thingly taxonomy, the separation of the work from empirical reality through the constructed artifice of strategies of staging, and the containment of sensuous immediacy through its neutrally inflected functional aesthetic (Chapter 4), have all been used as a way of frustrating representation, and introducing cuts and dislocations in the viewer's unfolding materially embodied engagement with the work.

In privileging ambiguous resonance over representation and opening up to the affective indeterminacy of the experiential encounter, my project offers different strategies and approaches to what could be seen to be the prevailing trends within current textile practice and research. As I write this conclusion, I attend the opening preview of *Art_Textile* at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, an international exhibition that explores the way that artists since the 1960s have used textiles 'as a powerful tool for expressing ideas about the social, political and artistic' (The Whitworth, 2015). Although I am represented in the exhibition by an earlier pre PhD set of work, I am struck by the way that the new practice that has emerged out of the research seems to take an approach that sets it apart from the predominant concerns with social and cultural representation and politics of identity. As textile is gaining increased critical recognition for its signifying potential, a model of practice and research that interrogates the aesthetics of affect with its emphasis on feeling, intuition and sensation, and strategies that actively seek to suppress subjective narratives and impede representational content, might appear to be a counterintuitive and retrograde move. However, as I hope to have shown, such an approach is not to deny the social significance or political efficacy of the medium, but in fact to attest to its material agency by privileging affective intensities, resonance and a sensuous mode of knowledge production over representation, signification and conceptual cognition. As Marsha Meskimmon observes, '[a]rt operates most powerfully in the registers of affect, imagination and resonance and, because of this, it invites dialogue, acknowledges (and

even courts) the generative possibilities of multiple meanings, and converses, readily in and through difference' (Meskimmon, 2011, p.92). Although there is a seeming complicity with conventions of aesthetic autonomy, my own work remains contingent and resolutely pragmatic throughout. As I have argued through my analysis of Adorno's conception of mimetic comportment and sought to demonstrate through the studio enquiry, the non-identity of sensuous material particularity resonates in the body and prompts sensuous correspondences yet in resisting conceptual synthesis destabilises the centrality of the subject. Instead of the reassurance of established codes and conventions and the more usual reaffirming narratives associated with textile, the work has been shown to defamiliarise the familiar. It is in the way that it 'stimulates us to understand and yet, in a strange way, at the same time eludes our acts of understanding in order to provoke them anew' (Rebentisch, 2009, p.124) that as Marsha Meskimmon observes, 'we are propelled to think critically' (Meskimmon, 2011, p.92).

Material agency as a sensuous mode of knowledge production

As indicated earlier, I would suggest that the broader significance of research, beyond the immediacy of the textile contexts, lies in the way that it returns authority to the affective indeterminacy of the experiential encounter as a sensuous and formative mode of knowledge production. As a practice-based model of research, the project attests to the distinctive nature of materially embodied aesthetic experience and argues for the continuing contemporary relevance of aesthetic autonomy - albeit in its qualified reconfiguration as a socio-culturally determined 'complicit formalism' and 'engaged autonomy'. The research has shown that aesthetic autonomy is no longer seen to be a direct property of the self-referential artistic medium or merely determined by production; instead, artworks 'become aesthetic by virtue of that which within them cannot be conceptualised or grasped as an idea, a concept, a strategy, or a technique' (Rebentisch, 2009, p.124). This is arguably important in the way that it keeps alive material otherness and the non-identical aspect of our sensuous relation with the world, together with a more reciprocal relationship between material and subjective agency. Rather than medium specificity with all its Greenbergian ideological undertones of purity and aesthetic value, we might usefully adopt Adorno's term 'material particularity' in recognition of the intrinsic properties that are distinctive to the material world and those aspects of the sensuously bound aesthetic encounter which cannot fit into established categories of understanding and exceed instrumental rationalisation and generalising conventions.

The research affirms the significance of the affective intensities and intuitions of 'the knowing body' and the epistemological dimension of creative practice, that is implicitly understood by artists but often downgraded in the more traditional academic research communities. It recognises 'a kind of liminal space where *not knowing* is not only not overcome but sought, explored and savoured' (Fisher and Fortnum 2013, p.7). Maintaining the productive indeterminacy of material non-identity and not-knowing, whilst a fundamental dimension of artistic production, is also significant from the perspective of receptivity in terms of overcoming established conventions and allowing new understanding and ways of being. This could be seen to be particularly applicable with the increasing prevalence of the art exhibition as entertaining spectacle and in in terms of affording currency to the unique contribution of practice-based research. It also has broader social implications within a world where the sensual and affective are increasingly conditioned by instrumental rationality and where everything has to be seen to be measurable and quantifiable.

Clearly, however, one of the challenges and paradoxical dimensions of the research process is that by their nature such affective resonances cannot be reduced to interpretive strategies or revealed through traditional academic modes of enquiry. They can only become manifest through the unfolding contingency of materially embodied experience and register through their resonating intensities and capacity to bring about a change in action or in the way that they open up new possibilities for thought. The cartographic dimension of the research as documented in the reflective commentary, whilst no substitute for the experience of the work, can at least provide a mechanism through which those changes can be made apparent. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the research could be seen to be 'a living map, a transformative account of the self' (Braidotti 2002, p.3), where, as Zepke observes, 'art emerges …as a privileged site of corporeal experimentation (Zepke, 2005, p.4). It is a pragmatic project in the sense that it is concerned with the active production of subjectivity through an opening up of the self to the possibility of being other and an acknowledgement of the agency of matter/material beyond the limitations subjective intentions. Self-determined subjective agency is inevitable and a necessary attribute and driver for the research, but my own agency has not diminished the agency of the emergent practice which has been seen to dictate its own direction beyond my initial intentions. Indeed the qualitative transformation in the research came about when my centrality as a subject was decentred, there was a release from rationalisation and I yielded to a more mimetic mode of behaviour that opened up to bodily intensities and intuitions and the material logic of the emergent practice.

It is in mapping the complex processes of attachment and detachment between subjective and material agency mobilised through the productive indeterminacy of textile that the research could be seen to contribute to the increasing scholarly understanding of affect and the renewed interest in the transformative potential of materiality. What it offers is a model of practice and an alternative form of knowledge production that is 'directed by feeling laced with cognition' (Noland, 2013, p180).

This is manifest through the particular disjuncture between the heightened sensory immediacy and the semantic resonances mobilised through the encounter with the work that serves to reaffirm subjective coherence. This affirmation of subjective stability is set against the enigmatic indeterminacy, interruptions in sensuous immediacy and self-reflective distance that come through the strategies of 'thingness', 'staging' and 'corporeal containment' which introduce cuts and dislocations in subjective coherence. It is also evidenced through the concept of the catalogue of components and the tension between subjective and material agency that comes through control in the making of the individual elements and the ever changing performative arrangements of the elements in the various spaces of display. It is further embodied in the PhD process itself, mapped through the shifting relationship between the classificatory (knowledge as quantification) and the constellatory (knowledge as sensuous correspondence). This is made evident through the two parallel modes of practice documentation: the gridded linear concertina taxonomy of objects and the brochure of the various installational configurations of the work which in themselves constitute a useful visual method as well as through the critical dynamic of the written thesis.

In my case, the transformation brought about by these various methodological and operational strategies has opened up new horizons. It has allowed me to adopt a more playfully affirmative mimetic sensibility and provided a release from agency based on critical resistance. I have been able to detach from the confines of a historical allegiance to medium specific conventions and embrace the affective indeterminacy and creative freedom of contemporary art practice, whilst at the same time foregrounding the particular agency that comes through the constellatory opening up of textile. This has been seen to create new possibilities for action and thought and given rise to what Drucker describes as 'an uninhibited engagement with material pleasure drawn from across the widest spectrum of contemporary experience…alongside an impulse to mine the archival riches of our diverse pasts' (Drucker, 2005, p.xi). Within this revised approach, the historical, social and cultural ambivalence of textile is re-envisioned as a productive indeterminacy that affords it material agency and allows for ambiguity, complexity and contradiction, and my liminal position and nomadic status

allows for ease of movement and mobility and the possibility of change. Here the methodological model of attachment and detachment extends beyond the immediate context of the research and becomes ‘a politics of lived experience’ (Zepke, 2005, p.9).

Notes to Chapter 6: Avoiding a Conclusion

1. Although they might ordinarily seem incompatible, in keeping with the pragmatic dimension of the research, it is the combination of the affirmative characteristic of Deleuze and Guattari and the critical function of Adorno that have been productive.
2. In the transcripts of the seminars from the Stone Art Theory Institute's Summer School which addressed the ongoing tension between the aesthetic and anti-aesthetic held at the Art Institute of Chicago, there are several references to the relationship between Adorno and affect. This is tackled head on in two of the invited written responses to the seminar proceedings by Carrie Noland ('Adorno and Affect', pp. 179-189) and William Mazarella ('Why is Adorno so Repulsive?', pp.190-194). See: Elkins, J. & Montgomery, H. eds. (2013). I also note from his website that Dr Simon Mussell whose PhD thesis investigated the 'Constellations of Adornian Theory and Film' (Mussell, 2011) has a forthcoming book entitled *Critical Theory and Feeling: The Affective Politics of the Frankfurt School* New York, which is due to be published by Bloomsbury in 2016.

Appendices

Appendix A

Images of pre PhD work

Appendix B

A point of departure: the first phase of the studio enquiry.

Project One: Materialising the Modernist Grid

Project Two: The Planar Object

Appendix C

Exhibition Review: Dormor, C (2013) Transformations Smith's Row, Bury St Edmunds, July 12-September 1, 2012. *Textile, Journal of Cloth and Culture*. vol. 11, issue 1, pp, 94 - 100. Bloomsbury.

Appendix D

- 'Brochure to accompany Whitworth interventions: *'Concordance' Constellatory Configuration 26713 - M156ER*
- Concordance Press release
- Exhibition Review: Williams, R (2014) 'Maxine Bristow: Concordance, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, July 29 – September 1, 2013'. *Textile, Journal of Cloth and Culture.* vol. 12, issue 2, pp. Bloomsbury

Appendix E

Exhibition Catalogue: Millar, L. (2013) *Cloth and Memory {2}*, Salts Estates Ltd, Saltaire. 120 page colour publication includes introductory essay by Lesley Millar and self-authored artist statement. ISBN 9780951695074.

Appendix F

Exhibition Review: R. L. (Bob) Walker, 'Cloth and Memory {2} Mutable Frame of Reference'
http://rediscoveringripleyville.wordpress.com/2013/10/28/cloth-memory-2-mutable-frame-of-reference/

Appendix G

Concertina catalogue: classificatory taxonomy of sculptural components (included)

Appendix H

Brochure: constellatory configuration of sculptural components (included)

Appendix I

Form of final submission.

Appendix J

Images of PhD Exposition Attach/Detach, CASC Contemporary Art Space Chester 7th April – 15th April 2016.

Appendix H

Details of exhibitions undertaken over the course of the PhD.

Appendix A

Images of pre PhD work

156 down 6 side seam, 1997

1,452 not motif but ground, 1998

3 x 19 intersecting a seam, 1999

Figure 84. Signature bound buttonhole ‘bag’ pieces

Doing without, sustaining 7 square metres, 1999

18 x 51 over 11.44, 2002

Double-lined (198 x 82), 2007

Figure 85. Signature bound buttonhole ‘bag’ pieces

Appendix B

The First Phase of Studio Enquiry

A Point of Departure

The first phase of the research takes as its starting point a body of existing work produced over a ten year period between 1997 and 2007. Central to this body of work was the development of what became my signature gesso encrusted 'bag' pieces [Fig 84, Fig 85]. The 'bag-like' form of this work developed out of a period of investigation where I was trying to find a 'neutral' vehicle that would operate autonomously and allow attention to focus on the quality of the stitched surfaces that I had been producing, but which in its objecthood would also ambiguously reference textile's position within material culture. The stitched surfaces themselves developed out of an interest in traditional needlework and plain-sewing techniques; in particular the way that such techniques constitute an essentially 'universal' language that crosses historical and cultural boundaries, but which in their ubiquity and repetitive functionality remain largely overlooked. Frontal, rectangular in form and audaciously occupying the hallowed space of painting, the bag forms quite naturally began to establish correspondences with the contexts of painting and in particular what Robert Hughes described as 'the seriality, repetition and exalted emotional silence that was the mark of a certain phase of American modernism' (Hughes, 1990, p14). What was initially largely an intuitive response prompted by formal and aesthetic concerns, developed into a more conscious approach where language systems intrinsic to textiles were framed within the conventions of a minimalist aesthetic and in relation to the discourses of modernist autonomy. Employing a reductive visual vocabulary and strategies of serial repetition, the aim was deny any emotional engagement and present a detached and disinterested neutral façade, knowing that any attempt at rational coherence and formal autonomy would be continually disrupted by the somatic sensuality of cloth and the social and historical connotations of the needlework techniques employed in its production.

Key concerns within this formative body of work include the strategic negotiation of textile and fine art contexts, the tension between autonomy and referentiality and the continual slippage between the work's subjective and objective dimensions. Many of the aspects of the personal visual language that emerged through the interrogation of these concerns continue to inform more recent work conducted within the framework of the research, even where the methods and motivations of the practice are distinctively

different. The practice strategies that emerged through the development of this early body of work include:

- The use of motifs that operate as seemingly autonomous formal devices but which also reference textile histories and traditions (buttonhole, seaming, quilting, darning).
- The creation of seemingly blank, 'neutral' surfaces through non-relational composition and systematic repetitive processes which paradoxically produce subtly striated effects that activate the surface and lead to a heightened sensuality.
- Forms that play between two dimensions and three dimensions and make ambiguous reference to both the object conventions of textile and the object conventions of fine art. Most notably the 'bag' form operated as a simple, formal, frontal device that allowed attention to focus on aesthetic qualities of surface and occupied the space of painting, but which was also informed by the seamed square rectangular format typical of many textile objects.
- The use of serial repetition as a way of resisting authorial subjectivity which at times amounted to quasi industrial production. The accumulative nature of these processes, however, had the effect of heightening material sensuality and led to works that became embodied through the labour intensity and 'drama' of their making.
- The tailoring of cloth to counter the conventional fluidity of drapery and sensual excess whilst at the same time maintaining a sense of imminent mobility through its inherent pliability that resists attempts to bring it into order. The choice of fabrics such as felted wool or the creation of densely stitched but supple surfaces also exploits this tension between flexibility and constraint.
- The use of a neutral palette to counter the expressivity of colour which also heightens the somatic tactility of the materials.

The first two projects developed within the framework of the PhD continue to employ the above strategies and are strategically framed by the formal autonomy of modernist abstraction and the debates around medium specificity within painting and sculpture in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The intention in these two projects is to investigate the monochrome and the grid as key tropes within modernist painting, which in their resistance to narrative and their primary concern with visual experience were instrumental in the drive towards modernist aesthetic autonomy. What both the monochrome and grid have in common is their insistence on surface and planar conventions. As Briony Fer suggests, they both have remained two of 'abstract painting's most resilient and repeated strategies' (Fer, B.1997, p.153) and indeed have sustained themselves relentlessly within both a modernist and a postmodernist

discourse. But the grid of modernist abstraction is also the fundamental structuring principle of cloth and surface and planar conventions are shared by both painting and textile, indeed the planar convention of painting is literally founded on the planar convention of cloth. What I am interested in investigating is how a textile language might inform and extend debates around the grid and the monochrome and in particular how the tactility of cloth confronts the primacy of vision and acknowledges what Marsha Meskimmon describes as 'the crucial role of corporeality and embodiment to thinking making and knowing' (Meskimmon, 2003, p72).

The inaugural project within the PhD continued to employ the bag-like form of the early work, however, the aim was to more consciously address the paradoxical status of the grid. The second project shifts the focus from surface to form and in particular the vertical object conventions of painting and the vertical object conventions of textile. The intention is to investigate the condition of objecthood as simultaneously the apotheosis of modernist discourse and the beginning of a postmodern critique, and significantly, as the ontological condition of textile culture. On reflection, the early work's correspondences with the languages of modernist abstraction was probably an unconscious form of mimetic self-preservation and a way of affording currency to my situated position and assimilating within what was a new cultural environment.

Project One: Materialising the Modernist Grid

The overt references to the work of Agnes Martin within the initial project, constituted a more self-conscious strategy and willing complicity with modernist abstraction as the autonomous other from which textile had been traditionally marginalised. In addition to being formative to the identity of both textile and fine art contexts, the grid seemed to be an appropriate vehicle for the research because of its inherent contradictory status and potential for multivalence. As famously outlined in Rosalind Krauss's key 1986 essay *Grids* (Krauss, 1985a) the interpretation of the grid has centred around an ambiguity between materiality and immateriality and subjective transcendence and concrete objecthood. According to Krauss, its schizophrenic nature comes from the two contradictory ways in which the spatiality of the grid can be constructed and read: what Krauss describes as its centripetal and centrifugal characteristic. A centripetal grid works inward from its outside edge, and by mapping the actuality of the surface of painting it declares its autonomy and its objective materiality. Conversely, whilst the grid operates in a materialist, centripetal way, it can simultaneously operate centrifugally presenting itself as if it were a 'mere fragment… arbitrarily cropped from a larger fabric' (Krauss, 1985a, p.10) and extending in all directions to infinity. In this

sense it is often associated with the intangible and ineffable and considered as a means of accessing an experience that moves beyond the boundaries of objective materiality. In her essay *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* (Krauss, 1985b), published in the same year as *Grids*, Krauss discusses how the 'mythic power' of the grid comes from its illusion as 'the originary status of the pictorial surface… the indisputable zero-ground beyond which there is no further model, referent, or text' (Krauss, 1985b, p160). However, as she goes on to argue, this illusory originary status is just that – an illusion or fiction and merely repeats and doubles the canvas surface, 'through its mesh creating an image of the woven infrastructure of the canvas'. So, instead of revealing the actuality of the surface, the grid in reality lays a veil over it (Krauss, 1985b, p161).

My aim for the first project was to interrogate and expose this fiction by overtly materialising the warp and weft of the textile grid through the counting and physical withdrawing of threads [Fig 86]. The intention was to acknowledge that the grid, whilst the 'originary status of the pictorial surface' and the founding principle of modernist autonomy, is before anything else material and the elemental structure of cloth. The approach I adopted was to translate Agnes Martin's painted grids through the technique of drawn thread work, interpreting her pencil drawn line through the slow and systemic counting and withdrawing of weft threads from the warp of woven cloth. For some of the samples, I chose a marl fabric where the warp and weft were different colours; for others, I replaced the withdrawn weft threads with a darned running stitch. Once the threads were withdrawn, I worked back into the surface with a ladder stitch: the basic stitch of drawn thread work that is traditionally used to edge table mats, napkins, and pillowcases [Fig 87].

Although the work was produced by laborious repetitive processes and the rational mapping of the surface through the counting of threads, the outcome of this labour was a subtly modulated surface that was activated by the play of light. This play of light gave rise to a sense of indeterminacy produced by an optical dematerialisation of the surface. However, as Krauss observed in relation to Martin's paintings, any sense of visual indeterminacy is both a product of and is always countered by the tactile. Krauss's 1992 essay *The/Cloud/* provided a useful reflective framework for this interaction of visual and tactile registers. Krauss's essay draws on Kasha Linville's phenomenological reading of Agnes Martin's paintings, in which Linville describes how the reading of Martin's work changes according to viewing distance. The viewer's experiential encounter with the work takes them 'through a transition from a distant stone like façade, through luminous veil, to a close up tactile encounter with the striated surface…' (Morley, 1996, p.15). Krauss's argument is that the atmospheric/cloud-like

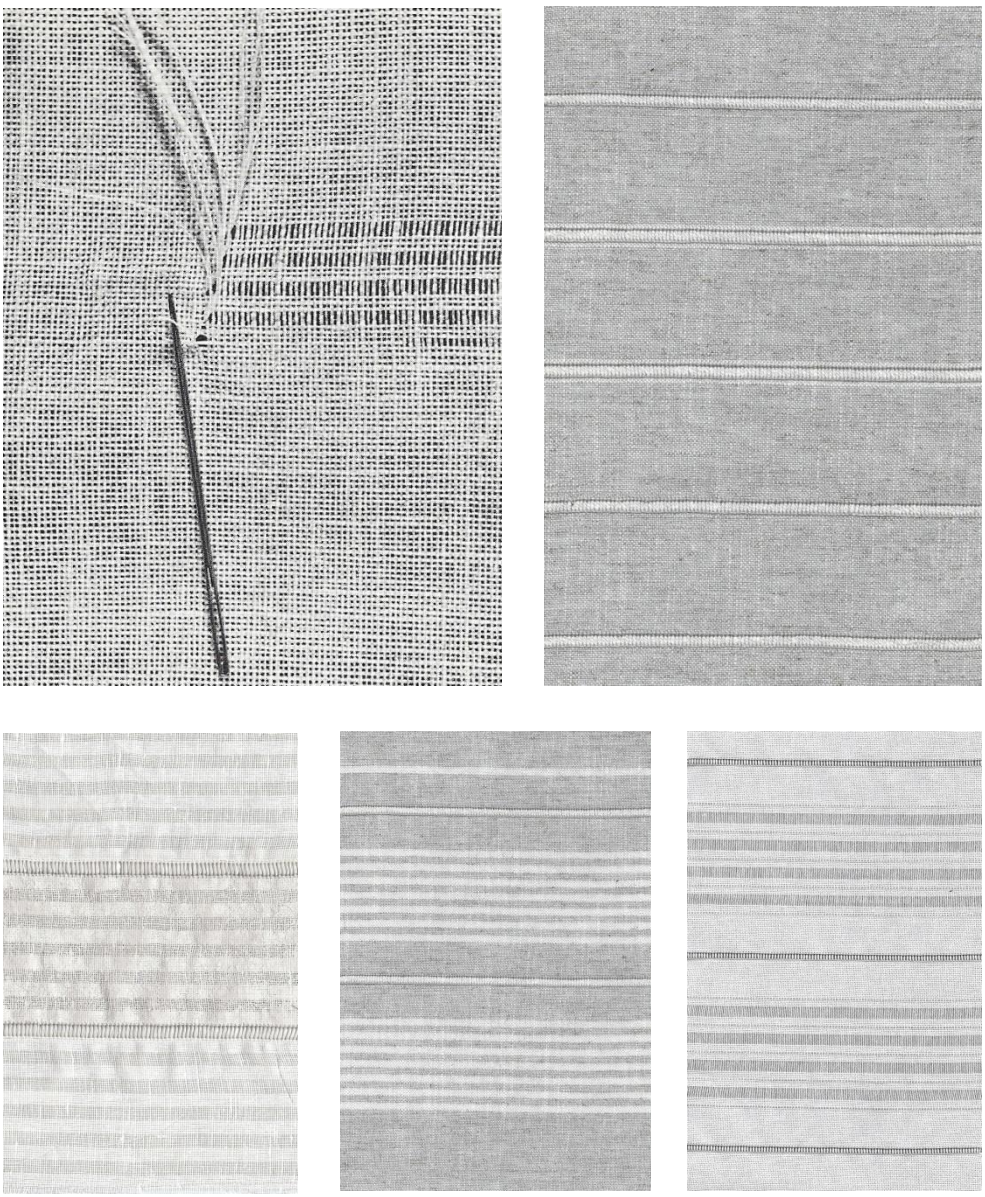

Figure 86. Drawn thread work samples (2010)

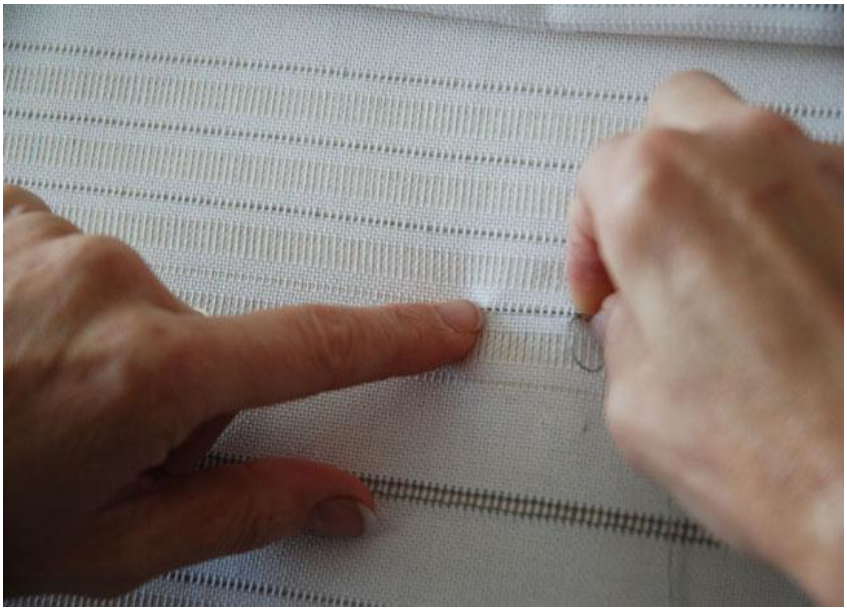

Figure 87: Work in progress: drawn thread work, darning and ladder stitch (2010)

(Re)drawn thread/line 0110, (re)drawn thread/line 0120 (2010)

Figure 88. *(Re)drawn thread/line 0110* (detail) (2010)

(Re)drawn thread/line 0110, (re)drawn thread/line 0120 (2010)

Figure 89. *(Re)drawn thread/line 0120* (detail) (2010)

middle distance reading of the work only gets its effect ‘within the system in which an opposite effect is also at work, and that it both defines and is defined by that opposite’. She suggests that ‘The signifier /cloud/ plays a major, foundational role’ - its role is ‘that of “remainder” – the thing that cannot be fitted into a system but which nevertheless the system needs in order to constitute itself as a system’ (Krauss, 1992, p159).

She goes onto argue that any attempt to move towards the logical conditions of vision and the autonomous object, was continually forced to include its opposite, ‘(f)or as the grid came to coincide more and more closely with its material support and to begin to actually depict the warp and weft of textiles’ (Krauss, 1992, p.164), the supposed logic of vision became infected by the tactile. Within Martin’s painting, the optical ‘emerges within a system that is defined by being bracketed by its two materialist and tactile counter terms: the fabric of the grid in the near position and the wall like stele of impassive, perfectly square panel in the distant view’; accordingly, the optical becomes ‘a function of the tactile (kinaesthetic) field of its viewer’ (Krauss, 1992, p.164).

From a more contemporary perspective, Simon Morley applies a similar analyses to the work of a number of painters including James Hugonoin, Simon Callery, and Callum Innes - work which he describes as painting which ‘elicits an awareness of material/structural considerations’ and surface facture through the use of the grid and the tactility of paint ‘while paradoxically being defined by the amorphous and indeterminate’ (Morley, S. 1996, p.14). Morley suggests that the effect of the juxtaposition of the subjective optically and the objective tactility demonstrated within the painting of Hugonin, Callery, Innnes ‘aims to intensify an awareness of the body as interface between consciousness (subjectivity) and the world of objects and materials (objectivity)’ and to ‘locate the viewer more fully in what Maurice Merleau-Ponty notably calls the ‘flesh’ of the world’ (Morley, 1996, p16). Within Krauss’s analysis of Martin’s work and Morley’s analysis of more contemporary painters what we have is embodied perception – a perception that clearly is not as Greenberg proposed for ‘eyesight alone’ (O’Brien, 1993, p.59) but relies on the interaction of both visual and tactile registers and acknowledges the significance of the body in aesthetic experience, and indeed as the locus of subjectivity.

This sense of embodiment is all the more pronounced within my own work through its overt material tactility, somatic sensuality, and use of processes which provide a very tangible trace of the body. However, somatic sensation and embodied subjectivity is continually regulated as the emotive potency of the textile material is constantly kept in check through a self-imposed regime of quasi-mechanical repetitive activity and hidden

behind its coolly detached disinterested façade. The subjective narratives evoked through the materials, processes and form of the work are silenced as it adopts the autonomous and authoritative formality of a modernist aesthetic. Yet any attempt at rational coherence and objective neutrality is continually disrupted by the subjective narrative potential of textile and by the affective potency of cloth. It is the particular nature of this affective potency that I am interested in investigating through this first stage of the research - the way that textile can produce an intensity of experience that is deeply felt yet lies out of the reach of conventional language, and specifically in relation to my own practice, the way that this experience is intensified by being framed and regulated

On reflection however, one of the main issues that arose out of the production of the two complementary pieces *(re)drawn thread/line 0110 (2010)* and *(re)drawn thread/line 0210 (2010)* [Fig 88, Fig 89] that emerged out of this period of studio enquiry was that the laborious hand drawn thread-work was indistinguishable from the sophistication of similar industrially produced cloth. The intention was that the subversion of modernists conventions through the use of textile materials and processes would produce a strategic slippage and subsequent critique of hierarchical ideological positions. However, what became apparent was that the technique of drawn thread work is not immediately recognised and therefore failed to signify the traditional conventions of textile as was the intention. This having been said, the tension between subjective and objective registers and the state of indeterminacy achieved through the optical experience of surface facture, the notion of the 'remainder' as the excess of representation and the viewer's kinaesthetic experience alternating between proximity and distance, are outcomes that continue to resonate with more recent work.

Project Two: The Planar Object

> '… the expansion of the realm of the pictorial is at best a mixed blessing for the modernist painter: because at the same time that the spectator may have gained the ability to see a length of fabric as a potential painting, he may also have acquired the tendency to regard a modernist painting of the highest quality as nothing more than a length of coloured fabric. That is, because all sorts of large or small items that used to belong to the realm of the arbitrary and meaningless may now be experienced pictorially or in a meaningful relation to the pictorial, the risk is greatly increased that first-rate modernist paintings will appear arbitrary and visually meaningless...' (Fried, 1965, p.258).

Where the first project aimed to unpick and destabilise the modernist grid, the second project also takes a modernist trope as a point of departure. Similar to the grid, the identity of the monochrome is also formulated on the tension between its subjective and objective dimensions – between its literal objecthood and its concern with the optical and the phenomenology of visual experience. The aim for project two was to explore the tenuous relationship between the ideological autonomous space of modernist painting and the positioning of textile within 'the realm of the arbitrary and visually meaningless' (Greenberg, 1995, p.131). The approach that I took was to establish a correspondence between the essentially vertical, planar and object conventions of monochrome painting, and the identity of textile as a vertical planar functional object, Finding a context in the critical debates that surrounded monochrome painting in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in relation to the modernist dialectic of the depicted and the literal, the concern was to maintain a productive indeterminacy between the object form of the work - as painting and as pelmet - and a material insistence on surface. The emphasis in the work is on the way that the quilted gesso encrusted surface activates the light and animates the expanse of surface, however, similar to project one, the 'presentness' of the visual experience is continually countered by both the work's tactility and the objective sensibility of its material form. Whilst *Pelmet* (2011) [Fig 90] was still largely informed by a fine art agenda, there was a subtle shift which began to acknowledge the mass material culture conventions of textile. What is distinctive to the medium of textile is its pliability and it is this ontological material condition that gives rise to its essential functional conventions: in this case its fundamental form as cover. However, similar to the tailored lead of Lili Doujourie's *Substantia* [Fig 1] and *Luaide* [Fig 4] the physical pliability of the quilted and gesso encrusted cloth within *Pelmet* is not communicated through the fluid sensual excess of Baroque drapery but is highly controlled and regulated. The work has a tailored and fitted fullness, a stilled yet imminent mutability. The intention was that the potency of the work would be heightened through protocols of reduction which in constraining the body caused the viewer to 'body forth' in compensation for the reduction (Jones, 2005, p.149).

Though not a conscious correspondence at the time, the ambiguous identity of *Pelmet* would appear to find resonance with previous work such as *Light-switch ref: 203/18* (2003) [Fig 20] and *Conduit ref: 203/18* (2003) [Fig 21] which similarly 'mimicked' aspects of the built environment and explored the way that things such as handles, handrails, and light-switches ambiguously define points of spatial transition and instigate unconscious repetitive corporeal habits. However, although the mimetic slippage of *Pelmet* was perhaps more evident than the intended subversion instigated

Figure.90 *Pelmet* (2011)

by *(re)drawn thread/line 0110 and (re)drawn thread/line 0210* and began to more overtly acknowledge the material culture conventions of textile, both of these sets of work are still dictated by a fine art agenda and somewhat dependent on a self-referential critique of modernist discourses for their meaning. Although the aim was to problematise a range of binary oppositions (objective/subjective, distance/proximity, optic/haptic) in relation to the strategic negotiation of processes of assimilation and differentiation, and to produce an experience of uncertainty as the work operates in an indeterminate territory between textile and fine art conventions, the work's identity is still largely constituted through its reduction to a status of negative opposition in a modern/postmodern dialectic.

Appendix C

Exhibition Review: *'Transformations': component configuration 12712-IP331BT*. Smiths Row Gallery, July 12-September 1, 2012.

Exhibition Review
Transformations

Smith's Row, Bury St Edmunds, July 12– September 1, 2012

Celebrating its fortieth birthday, Smith's Row, formerly known as Bury St Edmunds' Art Gallery, has played a vital role in offering time and space for early- and mid-career artists to produce new work, exhibit, and take up training opportunities as part of their professional development. Thus the gallery has operated within the scope of a "ladder" gallery, part of a network of such venues across the UK.

Transformations showcases a group of eight such artists, selected for the ways in which their work operates within the field of contemporary visual arts, whilst also subverting its conventions through their choice of media, most particularly referencing craft techniques. Four of the artists, Catherine Bertola, Maxine Bristow, Susan Collis, and Freddie Robins draw on textile, textile language, and textile processes to explore and challenge fine art conventions, confounding and confusing subject-object dualisms through their hand-making and time-consuming processes. The other four artists, Ben Coode-Adams, Roger Hiorns, Haroon Mirza, and Caroline Wright bring together conflicting and competing ideas and materials, opening up relationships between artist, materials, and processes such that the emergent artworks simultaneously evoke embodied understanding and refute definition.

Susan Collis exquisitely stitches paint splashes and smears onto worker's overalls bringing the hidden work of the artist to consciousness. The worthless marks reveal themselves as the time-consuming activity of hand-stitching. In both *100% Cotton* (2004) and in *Revival* (2011), exhibited alongside, unconscious and conscious become fused and yet remain separated within and across the surface.

In contrast Roger Hiorns' sculptural practice is an alchemical transformation: copper sulfate crystals inhabit and overwhelm objects, creating new and seemingly living colonizations. *Discipline* (2002) (Figure 1), an

REVIEWED BY CATHERINE DORMOR
Catherine Dormor, PhD, is an artist, writer, and researcher. Her work is in private collections and has been exhibited across the UK and internationally. She has recently been awarded a practice-thesis PhD by the University of the Arts, London, and Norwich University College of the Arts.

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Figure 1
Roger Hiorns, *Discipline* (2002), steel, thistles, copper sulfate, Velcro, 114 × 66 × 51 cm. Courtesy of Smiths Row Gallery.

installation of crystallized thistles metamorphoses weeds into abstract blooms, glittering and entrapped. Hiorns expands and extends, bringing excess to detritus, still life to dead matter. He offers integration and separation in a seemingly continuous event of the work's production, hovering perpetually in the space between material and form.

Ben Coode-Adams' working and thinking processes are opened out through photographs juxtaposed with low-tech felt-tip pen drawings and corrugated cardboard sculptures. In his images the viewer is confronted by a predilection with paths, dykes, and rivers heading off into the far distance, begging questions of purpose and destination (Figure 2). Clues are provided by the accompanying drawings and sculptures, where the visible and photographable slip and slide into ideas and imaginings. Are these pre-linguistic expressions of inhabitations of the landscapes? The landscape reveals burial chambers, conflating the hope and desire of the open road ahead with the depth and despair of interment. Death pulls the figures onward.

Remaining in archaeological mode Catherine Bertola's work evokes the past by partially recreating a 1766 carpet design (Figure 3). Through fragmentation Bertola draws attention to the activity of production at the same time as its inverse—degradation, fusing past, present, and future within and between the stitches of the hidden and anonymous

Figure 2
Ben Coode-Adams, *Poles Apart* (2002–10), installation of blog pages: photographs, drawings with felt-tip pen, approx. 300 × 200 cm. Courtesy of Smiths Row Gallery.

workers. This work suspends the ephemeral and foregrounds the ubiquitous.

Where Bertola brings hidden working practices into the daylight, Freddie Robins offers a challenge to the notion of knitting as a passive, benign activity. In *Craft Kills* (2002) (Figure 4), a self-portrait based on St Sebastian's martyrdom, knitting needles pierce a knitted body form. Robins presents the viewer with an empty, passive jumper-being, referencing the need for an inner body to animate, activate, and support alongside challenging the perceived "safety" of such activities through humor. In this work and the accompanying drawings, Robins brings conformity to subversion, setting knitting not as an activity of safety and comfort-production, but rather as a series of actions and processes through which identity and subjectivity can be formed and expressed. Robins upsets notions of utilitarianism in favor of artistic expressionism, function, and form in favor of conceptual rigor. In so doing she rejects craft-art arguments as irrelevant and misplaced borderlines.

By way of a strikingly different set of processes and

Figure 3
Catherine Bertola, *The Palace at Hillstreet* (2009), handworked needlepoint on canvas, approx. 300 × 300 cm. Courtesy of Smiths Row Gallery.

preoccupations, Maxine Bristow explores the intimate and troubled relationship between minimalist sculpture and architectural/physical features (Figure 5). Here Bristow presents a series of forms, part objects, and suggestions of items of furniture that speak in a corporeal language. The elements carry ambiguous connotations of utility whilst defying clear categorization. In this work material culture butts up against and mingles with a minimalist aesthetic that enables and encourages both exchange and subversion to cohabit in an extraordinarily subtle way, but one that is nonetheless powerful for that subtlety. Bristow achieves this through textile materials and processes, revealing the potency of cloth as simultaneously concept, metaphor, process, and matter. Bristow is not about softening minimalistic aesthetics, but rather confounding and confusing traditional dialectics.

Working across disciplines the artists and works brought together in *Transformations* could appear disparate, selected because of their connections with Smith's Row. However what is revealed here is a powerful exhibition of work underpinned by common questioning and challenging of the boundaries that govern the realm

Figure 4
Freddie Robins, *Craft Kills* (2002) and *Untitled* (2011), knitting, knitting needles, ink drawing on paper, approx. 300 × 300 × 200 cm. Courtesy of Smiths Row Gallery.

Figure 5
Maxine Bristow, *Untitled* (2012), wood, felt, embroidered cotton, faux leather, dimensions variable. Courtesy of Smiths Row Gallery.

Figure 6
Gallery view. Courtesy of Smiths Row Gallery.

of fine art (Figure 6). Where Collis, Hiorns, and Coode-Adams re-present the working processes of art-making, Bertola, Robins, and Bristow question the mutual exclusivity of assimilation and differentiation within fine art discourses, whilst Mirza and Wright alternatively seduce and reject in a refutation of power play at the boundaries of visual art culture. Here, art-making processes are laid bare, highlighting the role that technical and hand-making skills potentially offer within a conceptual framework.

Awards have followed these artists: Hiorns being nominated for the 2009 Turner Prize, Coode-Adams was shortlisted for the 2008 Jerwood Drawing Prize, Robins and Bristow were both shortlisted for the 2002 Jerwood Applied Arts Prize, Mirza won the Northern Arts Prize 2010, Bertola was announced as the Northern Visual Artist of the Year 2010, and Wright holds an Arts Council Escalator Visual Arts Award. Such accolades testify to these artists' ability to secure and occupy ground both within and beyond conventional boundaries. This is vital and potent ground that opens up space(s) for recontextualization and celebration of craft techniques, processes, and language.

This exhibition marks the invaluable role ladder galleries play in supporting artists. It also serves as a welcome reminder that material culture and conceptual fine art can, and must, remain intimate bedfellows. Further, the space opened up through occupying this is a rich and powerful one.

Appendix D

Brochure to accompany Whitworth interventions: *'Concordance' Constellatory Configuration 26713 - M156ER*


Whitworth Art Gallery

Press Release

Maxine Bristow: Concordance

Monday 29 July – Sunday 1 September 2013
Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

Concordance is a series of sculptural interventions by the artist **Maxine Bristow** that temporarily inhabit various spaces in the Whitworth Art Gallery during the final weeks prior to the Gallery's closure to complete a transformational fifteen million pound refurbishment. Occupying the café/foyer area and parts of the textile gallery, the interventions are part of a new body of work by Bristow which marks a significant development in her practice.

This new approach involves the creation of a 'catalogue' of individual elements or 'components' that can be variously configured (and reconfigured) to form a variety of different tableaux. The point of departure for this catalogue of components are the multiple, and complex, material and disciplinary conventions from which textile derives its potentially contradictory meanings. However, far from being bound by these conventions the work aims, instead, to maintain a sense of mutability, where meaning is not stable but continually in flux. Here, meaning is produced through temporary liaisons across a range of social, historical and cultural contexts. The indeterminate identity of these installations prompts the viewer to ask whether these are artworks or part of the miscellany of gallery and café furniture that make up this multifunctional space.

The self-consciously formal staging of these scenarios references modernist protocols of distance, epitomized within the conventions of museological display and the aesthetic artifice of formal autonomy. However, they also draw on the aesthetic staging of everyday mass material objects within interior styling and retail display, where objects and materials that are normally caught up in the messy business of everyday life - or in the case of retail display have yet to enter into circulation - are removed from the business of living and aestheticized through formal arrangement.

The productive tension - between the work's staged formality and enigmatic ambiguity and its heightened sensual, material immediacy and symbolic currency – seeks to establish a precarious experiential encounter for the viewer. The particular affective dimension of such an encounter, which oscillates between an affirmative sensuous correspondence and slightly dislocating detached presence, is a legacy of Bristow's previous work and one that she is now exploring through the medium of installation.

Maxine Bristow has a history rooted in textiles but has taught within fine art programmes for twenty years. Her teaching, research and practice concerns lie with the formal and semantic conventions of textile and the critical debates that surround the negotiation of these conventions within the broader realm of contemporary visual culture. Bristow has exhibited nationally and internationally and is represented in the permanent collections of the Crafts Council, London, Whitworth Art Gallery and Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery. She was selected for the Jerwood Textiles Prize in 2002, and in 2008 was one of the artists nominated for the Northern Arts Prize.

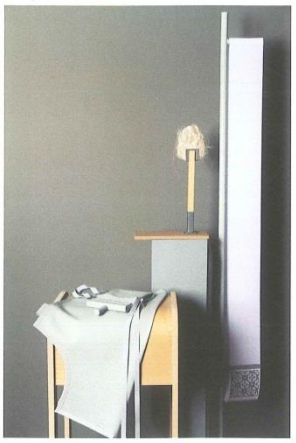
MANCHESTER 1824
The University of Manchester
Whitworth Art Gallery

Whitworth Art Gallery
The University of Manchester
Oxford Road, Manchester M15 6ER
Admission Free. Opening Times: Monday to Saturday 10am-5pm, Sunday 12-4pm
General Info email: whitworth@manchester.ac.uk or telephone: 0161 275 7450
Visit: www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth

For further information, interview requests and images please contact
Jennifer Harris on 0161 275 7478 or jennifer.harris@manchester.ac.uk

Exhibition Review: Williams, R (2014) *Maxine Bristow: Concordance' component configuration 26713-M156ER, Whitworth Art Gallery*

Exhibition Review
Maxine Bristow: *Concordance*



Exhibition Review
Maxine Bristow: *Concordance*

Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, July 29–September 1, 2013

REVIEWED BY RHIANNON WILLIAMS
Rhiannon Williams is Reader in Textile Culture and Senior Lecturer in History of Design at the University of Derby. Her research interests focus on the integration of theory into practice underpinned by her own art practice. In 2013 Rhiannon represented the UK at the 14th International Triennial of Tapestry, Central Museum of Textiles, Lodz, Poland.

In conversation about her most recent body of work, installed at the Whitworth Art Gallery just before the building closes for refurbishment, Maxine Bristow summarizes her current approach to practice as the pursuit of "productive indeterminacy." Understanding this philosophy is key when viewing a very discreet group of largely textile configurations that you may, or may not, register when entering the Whitworth's ground floor cafe and textile gallery. Such is the degree of discretion and unfamiliar configuration of overfamiliar forms in these tableaux—combining for example, upholstered pads, a curtain or screen, aluminum rods and U-bend "props," a cloth folded, cloth draped, or cloth belted—that visitors may pass on or puzzle over how to comprehend the elements amassed so precisely before them. However, as we have come to expect of Bristow's work, low-key visual presence belies the sophistication required to conceive of, and execute, such pieces; a sophistication also required of any visitor who seeks to engage fully with the work (Figure 1).

Bristow explains her intent to itemize and "play," in a formal sense, with the conventions of textile as we encounter them in everyday life. She sets out to rein in a material culture of nascent proto-objects, mounting displays comprising in the main of cloth parts prior to their assembly into fully functioning object-hood. Generic functions for textile have, Bristow suggests, possibly generated a universal typology of designed components subsumed into our common environment. Bolsters, casings, framings, covers, and cushioning are just a few recognizable figures derived from cloth put to ordinary use. Not only does Bristow identify and define fundamental forms on an ontological level, she goes on to perform an extrapolation of their essential qualities distilled into compositional pieces—making, if you like, a palette of form. This affords an endless and open-ended juxtaposition of sculptural arrangements referred to as

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Printed in the United Kingdom

Figure 1
Concordance, 2013. Photograph by Chris Bebbington.

"temporary coalitions." The fluidity of practice resulting from this methodology is animated through play, not strategy, and the artist allows serendipity and empathetic judgment to guide her in the use of her textile lexicon. Indeed, Bristow remarks on a gainful slackening of or relaxing back from the theoretical strictures of Modernist aesthetics that characterized her earlier work, relinquishing what Victoria Mitchell refers to as the "measured and reasoned" (2006: 19) outcomes of *Sensual Austerity* exhibited in 2006. By "relaxed'" I believe Bristow means a "creative opening-up," and by "slack" she indicates an intellectual unharnessing by which "productive indeterminacy" becomes a feasible methodology.

The primary definition of "concordance" as an edited list of notable works and citations seems as appropriate to Bristow's installation as the alternative definition referring to "a state of

agreement." Not only are these *ensembles* a *resumé* of types or formal tropes, they also operate clearly as a sympathetic grouping of elements poised in aesthetic accord. Visual judgments have consciously moved each tableau towards a finely tuned *mise en scène*. One component leans to lightly touch the contrasting surface of a larger unit (gray felt touching plywood); a pile of neatly folded fabrics is stacked with great exactitude highlighting differences in edges and bindings. Long strips of veneer teeter at their point of balance cutting in front of embroidered panels falling from an MDF frame. The elemental rectangle of cloth is evident in a variety of guises—that multifunctional base unit to which we all assign myriad practical uses. Wedging, lifting, falling, gripping, knotting, and perching are among the mechanics of display that, with a lightness of touch, articulate each "coming together." Continue to look and you begin to see a play with negative and positive space, and with scale. Over all, a gentle centripetal force seems to hold these elements in correspondence, aided by a commonality of color—muted graphic grays and utilitarian tan and buff—all preparatory pigments indicative of raw material (Figure 2).

Our discussion turns to Adorno and Bristow describes how an understanding of mimesis has informed her thinking behind, and making of, *Concordance*. Aesthetic engagement has involved a "yielding" towards the world, a "giving in" in order to find "sensuous correspondence." This generous approach disqualifies any investment in ego and does much to explain the reflective and prudent work now on exhibition. It may be difficult for the viewer to latch on to an intellectual agenda here, for Bristow invites her audience to share in sensuous rather than cognitive experience; forms are suggestive and visual encounters judicious, but nothing is resolved in terms of fixed meaning or intention. I found myself drawn to surfaces and shapes that I can

Figure 2
Concordance, 2013. Photograph by Chris Bebbington.

only describe as being in a state of "ergonomic readiness"—the human hand could work/play all over these pieces, pulling curtains, grasping soft handles, testing a pad, unrolling new fabrics, unbuckling, and smoothing. Expectant human use has always been inferred in Bristow's work hence a somatic register is at once discernable.

There is nothing in *Concordance* that demonstrates an appropriation of material culture by the artist. Indeed, Bristow stresses that the majority of components have been fashioned or made—not found—thereby holding in esteem, but not romancing, a range of artisanal skills. Upholsterers, laminators, and metal fabricators have been involved. Embroidered cloth, referencing the ubiquitous cross-stitch common to so many cultures, is represented by digital and hand-stitched examples. This allows decorated cloth to take up a place in Bristow's typology.

Overall, the curatorial opportunity offered by the Whitworth, involving two fairly intimate spaces (in particular the walls adjacent to tables and chairs in the café), has afforded Bristow a testing of space and affect. On this occasion there have been "no *avant garde* difficulties" as Bristow terms it and the physical closeness and availability of each installation intensifies the mimetic potential for individuals who are drawn to look closer. I wonder how the same exhibition might fair in a "white cube" space. It is certainly Bristow's intention to return to this arena where distancing and objectivity will, to some extent, set askew the connectivity enjoyed by viewers at the present venue. Rarefied space will, however, ensure no danger of the work being overlooked, the possibility of which is a risk at the current staging of *Concordance* and is perhaps the only drawback of the exhibition (Figure 3).

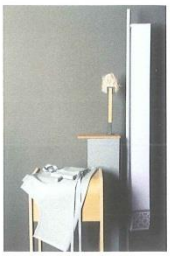


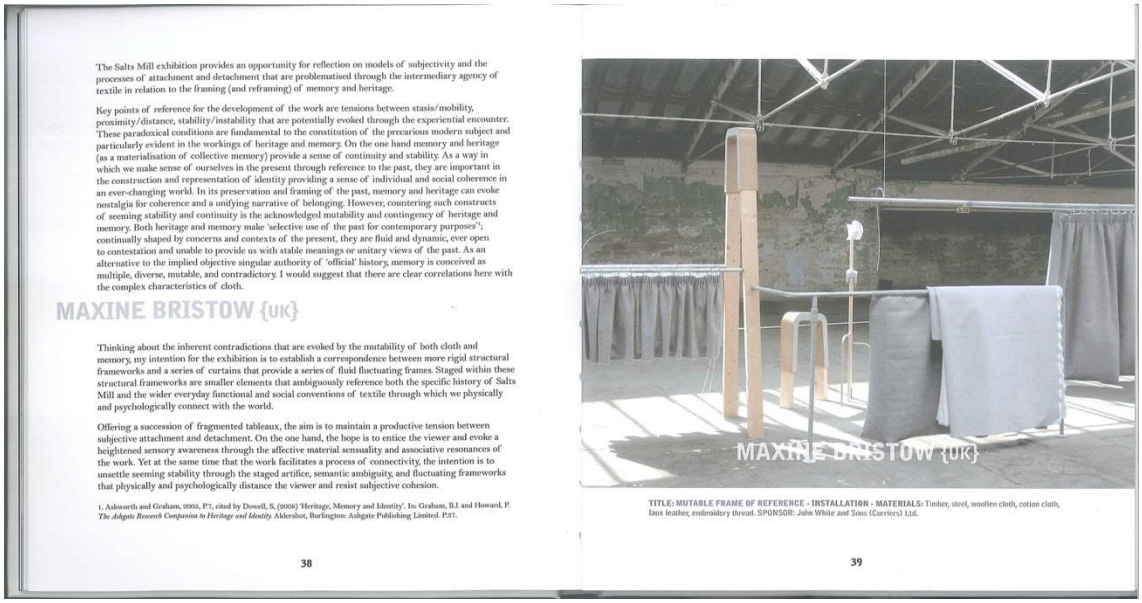
Figure 3
Concordance, 2013. Photograph by Chris Bebbington.

Reference

Mitchell, V. 2006. "Clothing the Grid: Alterations and Alternations." In M. Bristow (ed.), *Sensual Austerity*, pp. 19–32. Sleaford: National Centre for Craft and Design.

Appendix E

Catalogue profile pages *Cloth and Memory {2}* catalogue



The Salts Mill exhibition provides an opportunity for reflection on models of subjectivity and the processes of attachment and detachment that are problematised through the intermediary agency of textile in relation to the framing (and reframing) of memory and heritage.

Key points of reference for the development of the work are tensions between stasis/mobility, proximity/distance, stability/instability that are potentially evoked through the experiential encounter. These paradoxical conditions are fundamental to the constitution of the precarious modern subject and particularly evident in the workings of heritage and memory. On the one hand memory and heritage (as a materialisation of collective memory) provide a sense of continuity and stability. As a way in which we make sense of ourselves in the present through reference to the past, they are important in the construction and representation of identity providing a sense of individual and social coherence in an ever-changing world. In its preservation and framing of the past, memory and heritage can evoke nostalgia for coherence and a unifying narrative of belonging. However, countering such constructs of seeming stability and continuity is the acknowledged mutability and contingency of heritage and memory. Both heritage and memory make 'selective use of the past for contemporary purposes'; continually shaped by concerns and contexts of the present, they are fluid and dynamic, ever open to contestation and unable to provide us with stable meanings or unitary views of the past. As an alternative to the implied objective singular authority of 'official' history, memory is conceived as multiple, diverse, mutable, and contradictory. I would suggest that there are clear correlations here with the complex characteristics of cloth.

MAXINE BRISTOW {UK}

Thinking about the inherent contradictions that are evoked by the mutability of both cloth and memory, my intention for the exhibition is to establish a correspondence between more rigid structural frameworks and a series of curtains that provide a series of fluid fluctuating frames. Staged within these structural frameworks are smaller elements that ambiguously reference both the specific history of Salts Mill and the wider everyday functional and social conventions of textile through which we physically and psychologically connect with the world.

Offering a succession of fragmented tableaux, the aim is to maintain a productive tension between subjective attachment and detachment. On the one hand, the hope is to entice the viewer and evoke a heightened sensory awareness through the affective material sensuality and associative resonances of the work. Yet at the same time that the work facilitates a process of connectivity, the intention is to unsettle seeming stability through the staged artifice, semantic ambiguity, and fluctuating frameworks that physically and psychologically distance the viewer and resist subjective cohesion.

1. Ashworth and Graham, 2005, P.7, cited by Dowell, S, (2008) 'Heritage, Memory and Identity'. In: Graham, B.J. and Howard, P. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*. Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited. P.37.

38

TITLE: MUTABLE FRAME OF REFERENCE - **INSTALLATION - MATERIALS:** Timber, steel, woollen cloth, cotton cloth, faux leather, embroidery thread. **SPONSOR:** John White and Sons (Carriers) Ltd.

39

"Turquoise towelling, white broderie anglaise, blue gingham....spending hours making doll's house replicas from the remnants of our home sewn outfits."
{MAXINE BRISTOW}

40

CURATOR'S NOTES: "Memory is often suffused with nostalgia, heritage can be a diffusing veil, cloth carries so many narratives. It is against and within these elements that Maxine Bristow is placing her work, framing views through cloth draped and hung over half-familiar objects. The elements seem to be randomly assembled, in fact everything has been minutely considered in order that the unpredictable may occur. Depending how we place ourselves in relation to the work, it provides us with hard and soft edges for the fragmented vistas it affords. There are clues and allusions: shapes reference domestic tools, the structure is utilitarian but useless, the cloth could have been discarded, or specifically placed, but nothing is spelt out. The work offers us the opportunity to detach ourselves from the nostalgia, and avoid those values we habitually ascribe to cloth. To think what are we looking at, and what are we seeing, and re-determine the nature of the things seen."
(LESLEY MILLAR)

Appendix F

Exhibition Review: R. L. (Bob) Walker, 'Cloth and Memory {2} Mutable Frame of Reference'

rediscovering Ripley Ville

rediscovering south Bradford's Victorian industrial model village

Cloth & Memory {2} : Mutable Frame of Reference

By rlbobwalker on October 28, 2013

(http://rediscoveringripleyville.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/20131001wardedspace_8142-crop-7-by-10.jpg)Maxine Bristow's work 'Mutable Frame of Reference – Installation – Material', in the Cloth & Memory {2} exhibition in the Spinning Room at Salt's 1853 Mill, is conceptually challenging. This post gives a personal but historically contexted reading of the installation that acknowledges the fluid frames, mutability and associative resonances of the work. Through these readings and the memories that the structural frameworks and curtaining evoke, the post settles, unsettlingly, on ideas of 'warded' space. From there it moves on to an account of an incident in the early 1860s when the 'Lancashire Cotton Famine' was near its peak and then comes back by way of the worsted trade to Bowling Dyeworks, the industrial model village of Ripley Ville and Salts Mill.

This is the second in a series of three posts on the Cloth & Memory {2} exhibition. A previous post has reviewed 6 other exhibits adding a commentary, in the form of supplements, that make connections between the exhibits and worsted dyeing, Bowling Dyeworks and Bradford's 'other' industrial model village; Ripley Ville.

Theoretical underpinning

A future post 'Colour Supplement' engages with the theoretical positions that inform Maxine Bristow's work (see Cloth & Memory {2}, page 38) and within their context uses the idea of 'the supplement' to critique Bradford's understanding of its Victorian history and what this means for its heritage offer. This post revolves around and then enters into the exhibit to settle, unsettlingly on the idea of warded space. This is an idea that connects to the theory of a 'surveillance and a carceral society' (http://www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/newhistoricism/modules/foucaultcarceral.html) , associated with Michel Foucault and his account of structural (epistemic) changes in the relations between state, society and the individual in the early 19th century.

Cloth & Memory {2} : Mutable Frame of Reference

Occupying a central space in the Spinning Room of Salts 1853 Mill in Saltaire, Maxine Bristow's work 'Mutable Frame of Reference – Installation – Material' is designed to be conceptually challenging. It is one of 23 exhibits in the Cloth & Memory {2} exhibition that runs for its final week until Sunday, November 3rd.

(http://rediscoveringripleyville.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/20131009wholeinnstallationclothandmemory2exhibit_8136-crop-15-by-10.jpg)

At a distance, in spite of its central location, the tonal values of the cloths and the runs of matt metal rails allow an assimilation of the installation to the space of the Spinning Room. Approached, incongruities appear. The 'Scandinavian' blond-wood, the bent-wood components and smaller dimensions of the railings suggest technologies and a modern structure from the late 1950s or 1960s, certainly from a period that came after the hundred years when the Mill was in its prime.

There is something else. In a room constructed and used in an age wedded to utility, few components, sub assemblies or assemblages suggest a use outside of the installation. The four arched openings, for example, do not function as gateways. One (see above, bottom left corner) has a long dowel with a turned disc across the threshold. Another restricts access or egress with a show of curtaining of a length, at a height and that curtains off such a small space as to confound ideas for its use. All the arches are barred in some way.

At this or an earlier point you may wander away or may have wandered away from the installation to look at another exhibit (see 'uncanny' below).

(http://rediscoveringripleyville.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/curtaining-and-assemblage.jpg)

Seeking meaning

Two larger objects in fabric suggest a mattress and blankets, other components (above left) could be bibs or aprons made to unusual dimensions, One object, in the same assemblage and shown below in the image to the right, might be an ill-made washing dolly. That long dowel and disc referred to earlier could be a plunger. On the basis of these partial readings of the installation it is almost possible to see the whole as comprised of creatively (dis)organised internal and exterior domestic spaces.

But then there is the component on the floor in the assemblage, shown above left, that looks like a drive belt – from a steam driven shaft? And that 'plunger' could be interpreted as a wheel on a long axle, or is it a very sketchy representation of a piston? Then, differently, looked at from one side there is something about the proportions of the installation that momentarily suggests what? – stabling and a curtained off stall with horse blankets?

In line with Maxine Bristow's intentions it is only possible to get a few elements to cohere to one interpretation. It is not possible for a whole assemblage or tableau. Disruptive elements occur – some more disruptive than others. The head-rest/chair back and the other upholstered faux-leather elements (see above right) like totems atop frail square posts are almost as indecipherable as the white object, below left.

(http://rediscoveringripleyville.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/close-up-assemblage-and-components.jpg)

Mutable frame of reference

The mutability of the installation, its components, assemblages and sub-assemblages derives from qualities, traces of reality the familiar and unfamiliar in their making and placing which change according to how you frame your thinking, or how, in coming to them your thinking is pre-framed. In addition while you look at them shifts in attention, perception, or fleeting memories may mean these qualities are re-framed and re-framed again in your encounter with the work.

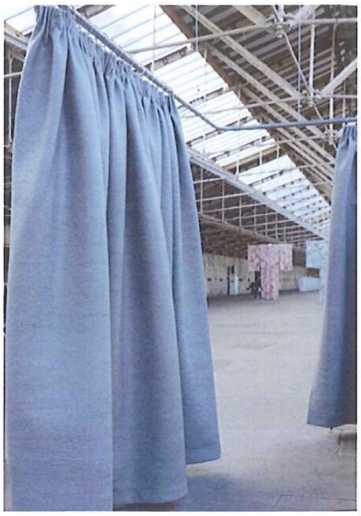
According to these subjective framings – and from within limited registers of demotic or received English – some words that may come to mind are; weird, puzzling, archetypal, imagined, symbolic, surreal, uncanny (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncanny) or, getting closer to the mutability of the exhibit and its tableaux, polyvalent, or polysemic.

Framing subjective attachment and a historical continuity

What follows is an attempt, against this flux of mutability, to settle, unsettlingly, on a continuity. This connects one subjective reading of the installation, personal memories, a canonical and a set text, a passage from a book about the Lancashire Cotton Famine and the building of Saltaire and Ripley Ville.

Warded space

At various moments in multiple encounters with the exhibit the neutral blond-wood, the bent wood frames, the very colour of the fabric and faux-leather began to suggest an institutional space – the furniture of waiting rooms, the curtaining round a patient's bed, the bed-side chair. At moments these become a particular chair, the swish of curtaining round a bed, a ward associated with birth, others, more recent, with life -saving surgery, Walking round the installation, one interrupted line of vision, on the diagonal, offered perhaps imperfectly the opportunity to re-presented this illusion/delusion. In a deliberated transgressive act, I stepped inside the installation; to its interior space. Seeking the view of someone lying down on a bed I squatted, somewhat precariously, in this inner curtained area and pointed my camera.



(http://rediscoveringripleyville.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/20131001wardedspace_8142-crop-7-by-10.jpg)

One of three images taken along the diagonal from within the installation 'Mutable Frame of Reference' by Maxine Bristow. image copyright R L Walker 2013

By this time the idea of a curtained space within a hospital ward had become so strong that when processing the photograph, the kimonos of Yatsuko Fujino's exhibit, 'Cloud Piece1 : Fate – Piece2 : Cipher – Piece3 : Garden' in the distance (exhibit 8) became associated with fellow patients cotton printed nightdresses on a mixed surgical ward and their wrapping, ties and sash with tie-at-the-back surgical gowns.

This strongly evoked memory of warded spaces and the re-creation of one such space within the installation led to recollected conversations with ward sisters and joyful andtraumatic incidents on wards. There was also an explosion of thoughts related to;

- words (wardens, warder, ward of court, cell, surveillance, schooling (horse/child)),
- a canonical text, 'Discipline and Punish' read more than a decade earlier and an elective text 'Reconstructing Local History' from a study module eight years ago.
- and further more recent readings

Within the last of these was the memory of a passage in a book, 'The Hungry Mills : the story of the Lancashire cotton famine 1861-1865' by Norman Longmate (pub. 1978) . It concerns an incident one evening at a school in Stockport in December 1862. Clothing items collected by the famine 'Relief Committee' are to be distributed to the needy. The distribution is scheduled to start at six o'clock …

long before that hour crowds assembled and beset the place. It appeared that an agent of the Relief Committee, having some weeks before made a visitation to each house to ascertain what was most needed, had booked such articles as were required, and the people being provided with tickets, they had been led to expect that their wants would be supplied. We came down at six o'clock, and had some difficulty in forcing our way through the crowd to the top of the room. There must have been full five hundred persons assembled. The room was admirably suited for the purpose, having a gallery round it, and four small class-rooms or cells warded off. In these the clothing was deposited, ladies undertaking to give it out. It was easy, however, at a glance, to see that the supply was insufficient, that there was not enough for half the number of people present . . . . A kind elderly lady had. . .brought a book in which it was proposed to enter such articles as the applicants received, according to the number of tickets they brought, and two men appointed for the purpose stood by her to call out the names of those who were to come up . . . . The business began by certain names being called over and after some little delay the parties squeezed themselves through the crowd to the top of the room, and were asked what they wanted most. 'Please, sir, I booked for a shirt and a shift and a flannel,' perhaps was the rejoinder. Then came the sad announcement that only one article per head could be given and blank disappointment shaded all faces . . . . The flannels and gowns were soon disposed of, leaving, as time went by, nothing but shirts, shifts and stockings. We remained until past 10 o'clock, when not half of the names had been called out, but yet nearly all of the clothing was disposed of . . . . Several heads of families we saw go away with one shirt or one shift only . . . . Here were people brought from various distances under the expectation of receiving clothes to keep them warm. . .and now. . .called together to receive one garment a-piece . . . . It would have been better to have clothed a few families well, than thus make a show of relief which was virtually valueless.

(http://rediscoveringripleyville.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/warded-space.jpg)

The account, abridged by Longmate, is by a Mrs Ellen Barlee, from a booklet ' A Visit to Lancashire in December 1862' published the following year "'. Mrs Barlee was from London. The passage appears in 'The Hungry Mills' (p 153)

Surveillance and a Carceral Society

In Mrs Barlee's phrase 'four small class rooms or cells warded off', there is the easy subsumption of a schoolroom to the carceral model. The more ambiguous one of 'having a gallery round it' suggests a capcity for freer circulation and perhaps an uninterrupted view of proceeding (surveillance). Her approval of the room,as 'admirably suited for the purpose' extends the carceral model to another purpose; an orderly relief over more than four hours of the distress amongst families and individuals amongst 'the full five hundred' in the crowd 'who beset the place'.

Mrs Barlees account is about an active process of warding off. It identifies those who are warded and the activities and objects that need securing or restricting or for other reasons warding off. It concerns also the rules, roles and behaviours of those in the warded space. This is a particular description of social control. The attributes I have drawn attention to were however, spread through the design, administration and regulation of behaviours across a whole range of Victorian institutions; the hated workhouses or Bastilles, the Victorian asylums and madhouses, hospitals, schools, prisons, the manufactories and Mills. On this reading of the epistemic changes in the 19th century, the orthagonal grid of the industrial model villages of Bradford (Saltaire and Ripleyville) can also be seen as mimicking the serried array of tents of an army camp, with houses/tents in appropriate places for people of the different ranks or social classes. **(1)**

In the empty space of the Spinning Room now, the notion of warded industrial spaces is more difficult to maintain. The low partitioned recessed in the rooms walls mark the Victorian arrangements of machine and workers, workers and machines, while the name and role of the Spinning Room's Overlookers, responsible for workers discipline, revivify it as a place of surveillance.

Lancashire Cotton and Yorkshire Worsted : Famine and Feast

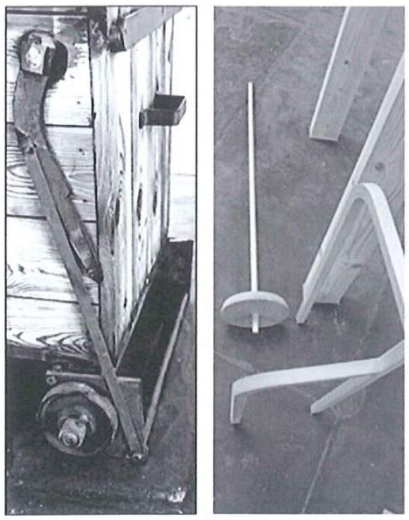
In the Victorian world of Worstedopolis in the run-up to when Bradford's other industrial model village was conceived, this post shows that what was bad for Lancashire was good for Yorkshire, the Worsted District and the worsted trade -at least in the short run. An indication of the likely impact of the cotton famine of the early 1860s on Salts Mill or Bowling Dyeworks or Bradford's worsted trade can be found here (http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=bSG8AAAAIAAJ&pg=PA9&lpg=PA9&dq=cotton+famine+1861+65+worsteds+Yorkshire&source=bl&ots=JWMBHSl-71&sig=7RAzGp1frjVCjvY80n5mSiPFUuI&hl=en&sa=X&ei=WIdtUtD8GPLZ0QXT8YCoCQ&ved=0CD0Q6AEwAw#v=onepage&q=cotton%20famine%201861%2065%20worsteds%20Yorkshire&f=false). Counter-intuitively but then the clue is the name 'Lancashire Cotton Famine', most of the famine's negative impacts were confined to that county. What was bad for Lancashire trade and nearly disastrous for Mill workers and their families was better for Yorkshire. The Yorkshire trade continued to grow and prosper during the 1861-1865 cotton famine period. This immediately precedes when the industrial model village of Ripley Ville was planned and building work started (November 1866 to summer 1867).

At the same time the organisation of the Relief effort to alleviate the Lanacashire workers distress must have re-inforced or renewed employers sense of duty to others**(2)** while softening attitudes to assistance or of deference in independent workers. In the West Riding of Yorkshire in this receptive climate and through the uninterrupted increase in their fortunes, a worsted manufacturer like Titus Salt may have been better able to continue his ambitious paternalistic project, while a dye-master like Henry Wm Ripley could initiate a project of a politico -philanthropic or neo-paternalistic kind.

One aspect of the political context under which Ripley Ville was built also flowed from the Lancashire Cotton Famine. The disciplined behaviours of the Lancashire workers influenced the decision by Wm Gladstone to move to a position where he favoured extension of the vote to such working men. The extension of the franchise to an upper slice of working men was enacted by Parliament in 1867,

Truck and wheel

And finally another look at that long piece of dowel with the turned disc at one end – this time alongside an image of a truck that can be found on the first floor of Salts Mill, used as a display unit for books. The truck has the brake on and the axle isn't visible but does it make an otherwise puzzling component in Bristow's exhibit wheel enough?



(http://rediscoveringripleyville.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/frame-of-reference-truck-with-brake-on-and-polysemic-shapes.jpg)

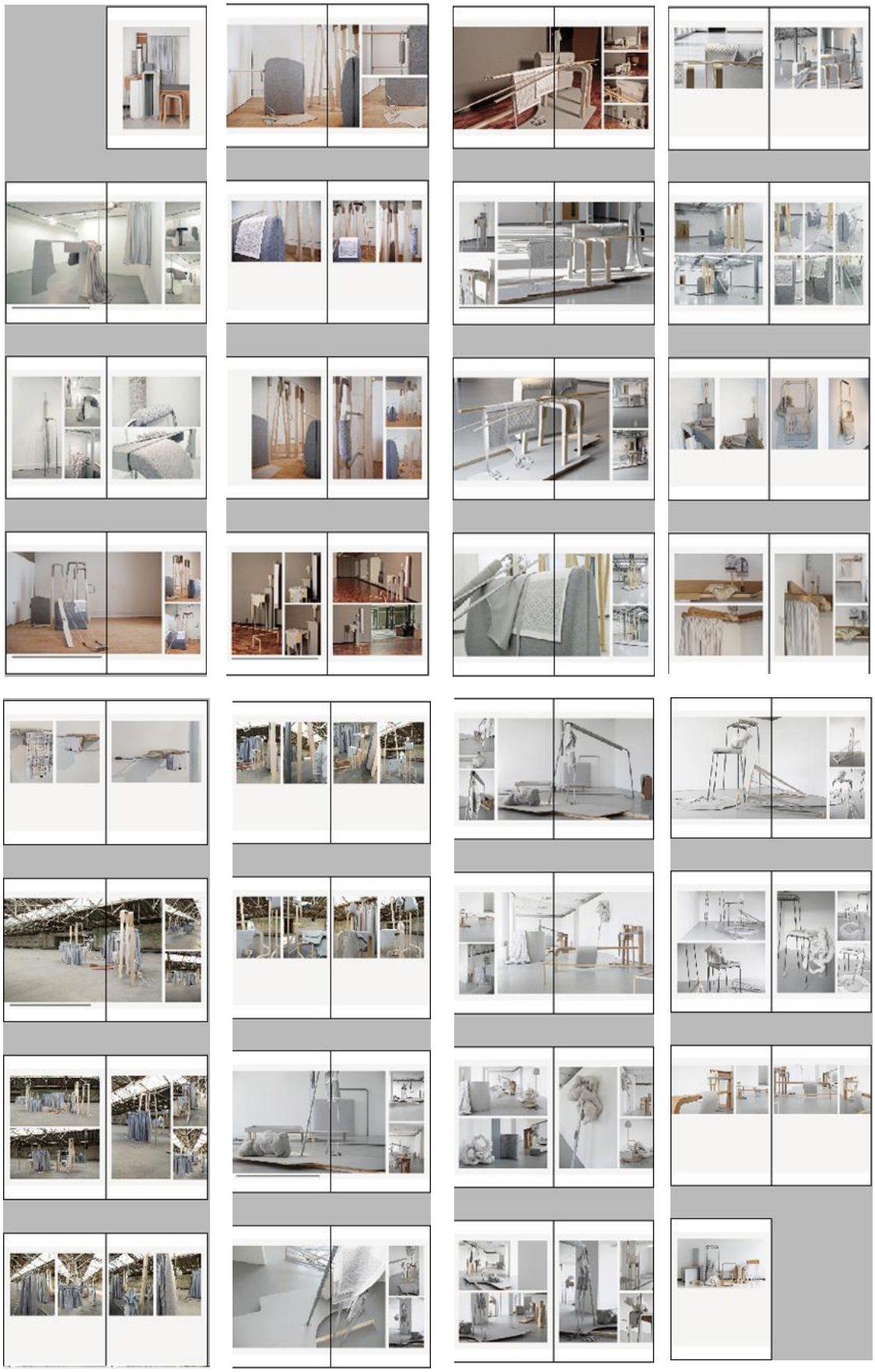
Notes

(1) The argument is made by Jackson et al in 'Saltaire the Making of a Model Town' that such a class based hierarchy of housing did not exist in Saltaire. I find their case unproven. They present Census data, which reflects the operation of the mid-Victorian rental market and household income or accumulated wealth at one particular point in time, as negating the differing sizes of a houses internal and external spaces and their arrangement, or the more generous arrangements for window and doors and the superior embellishment of facades. Inhabitants of the houses in the 1860s could recognise these markers in a hierarchy, just as inhabitants or visitors can recognise them now. Mid-Victorian inhabitants, who were arguably much more class-conscious would read these and know the hierarchy – just as they would know households that managed to rent something above or below either the class, or social standing ascribed to them or the household's self -description.

Appendix G. Concertina Catalogue

Four metre classificatory taxonomy of sculptural components (included)

Appendix H. Brochure: constellatory configuration of sculptural components (included)

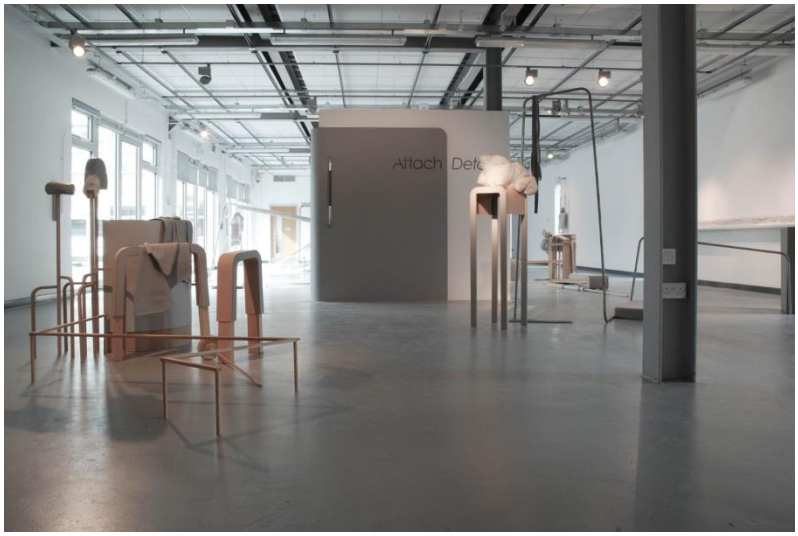


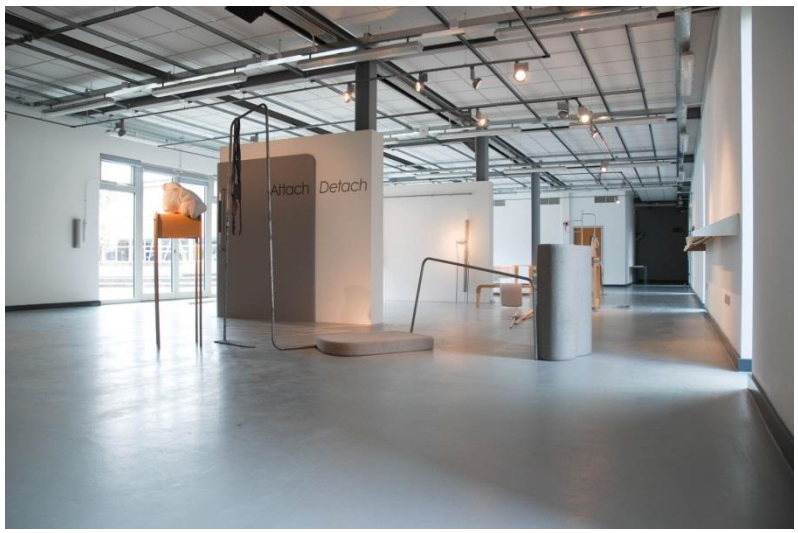
Appendix I.

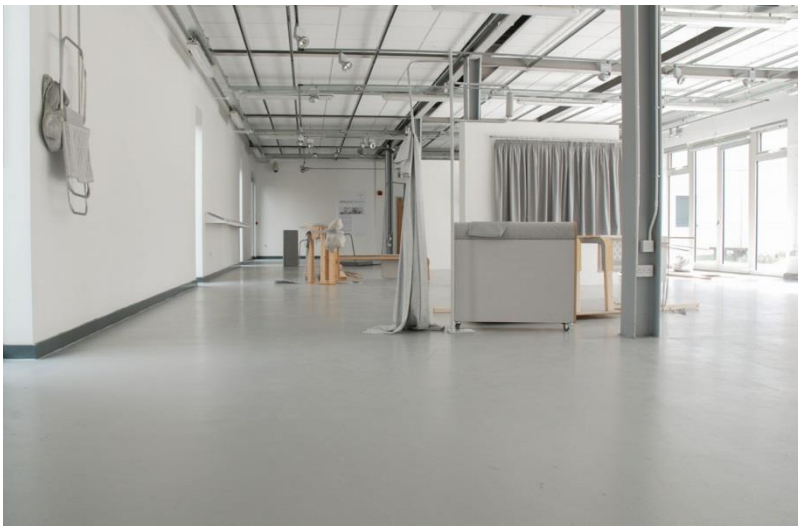
Final submission including cloth covered thesis, concertina catalogue of sculptural components and brochure containing images of the various staging of components.

Appendix J.

Images of PhD Exposition Attach/Detach, CASC Contemporary Art Space Chester 7th April – 15th April 2016





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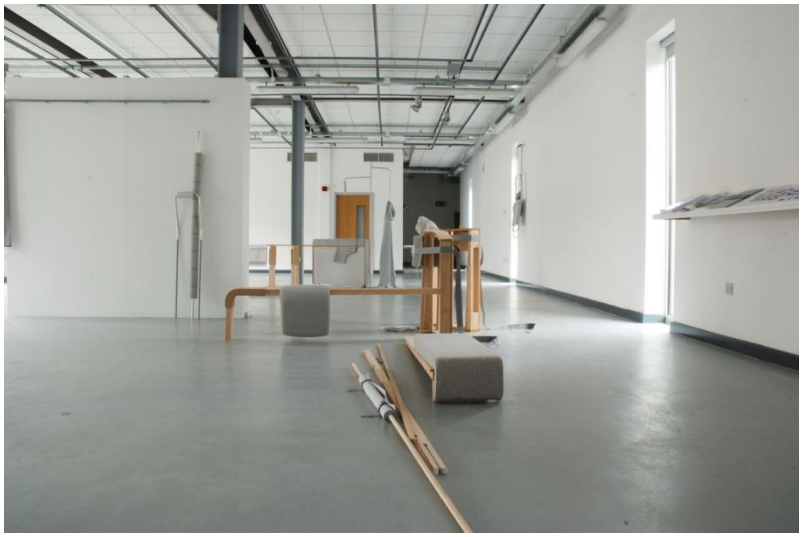


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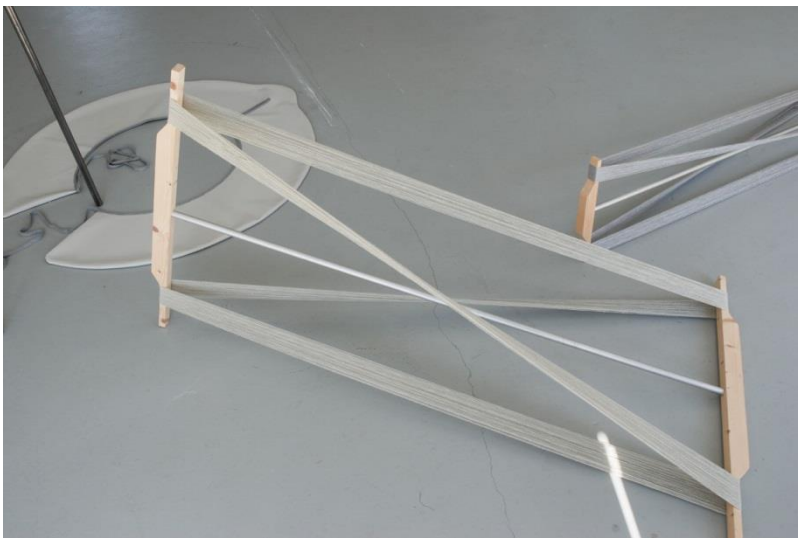

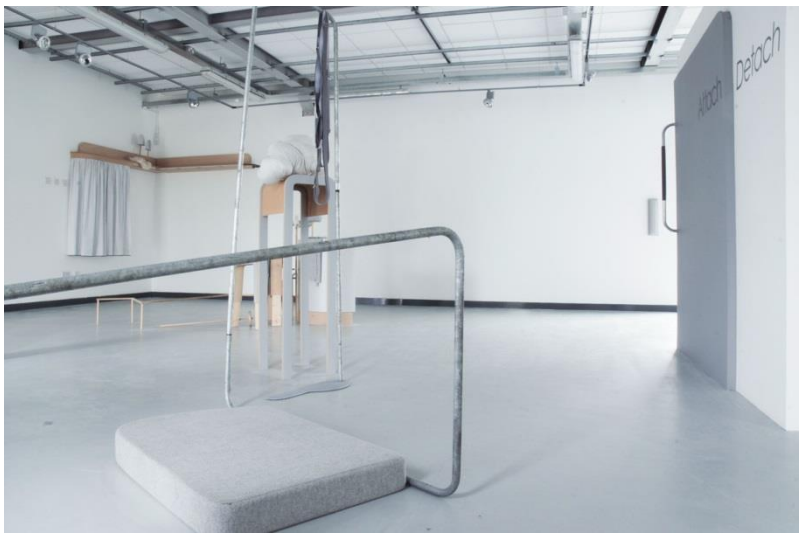
Attach
Detach


Attach|Detach


Attach|Detach

Appendix K. Details of exhibitions undertaken over the course of the PhD

- *Component configuration 18111-CH22LB*
  CASC Contemporary Art Space Chester 14 Feb – 18 Feb 2011
  Norwich University College of the Arts 21 Feb – 25 Feb

- *Bite-Size: Miniature Textiles from Japan and the UK*
  Touring exhibition, curated by Lesley Millar, Professor of Textile Culture, UCA
  Japan House, Daiwa Anglo Japanese Foundation, London 31 Oct – 14 Dec 2011
  Gallery, Gallery, Kyoto, Japan, 25 Feb – 10 March 2012
  Nagoya University of the Arts, Tokyo, Japan, 11 May – 23 May 2012

- *Z-depth buffer: component configuration 261111-E84QN*
  Two person exhibition with Sally Morfill
  Five Years Gallery, London, 26 Nov – 11 Dec 2011

- *'Transformations': component configuration 12712-IP331BT*
  Smiths Row Gallery, Bury St Edmunds, 12 July – 1 Sept 2012, curated by Rosie Grieve

- *'Transformations': (re)configuration 121012-CH22LB*
  CASC Contemporary Art Space Chester, 12 Oct – 2 Nov 2012
  Shown within the CASC gallery at the University of Chester, this exhibition was a reconfiguration of elements from the Transformations exhibition at Smiths Row gallery, Bury St Edmunds.

- *'Concordance': component configuration 26713-M156ER*
  Solo exhibition, curated by Amy George.
  Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, 29 July – 1 Sept 2013

- *'Concordance': (re)configuration 23913-CH22LB*
  CASC Contemporary Art Space Chester 23 Sept – 28 Oct 2013

- *Cloth and Memory {2}: component configuration 18813-BD183LA*
  Group exhibition, curated by Lesley Millar, June Hill and Jennifer Hallam
  Salts Mill, Saltaire, 18 Aug - 1 Nov 2013

- *Component configuration 010914 - CH2 2LB*
  Studio space, University of Chester 01.09.14 - 26.10.14

- *Attach/Detach: PhD Exposition*
  CASC Contemporary Art Space Chester 7 April – 15 April 2016

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