

**COME TO YOUR SENSES, REMEMBER BELONGINGS:  
A PEDAGOGY OF MAKING, MEMORY and the HAPTICS OF HOME**

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## ABSTRACT

The relationships of memory to place, and of place to body, assert haptic memory and sensory knowing in this art practice research. Beginning with evocative objects — a wardrobe, a pair of shoes, a dress — this dissertation traces a circuitous material journey to a sensual biography of place. It culminates in two exhibitions, *Her Place and What was Learned There*, and *Her Place-Scraps*, distinct drawing installations of graphite rubbings on tracing paper, assembling a feminist response to familial vulnerabilities. The subject is the floors, walls, windows, ceilings, doors, stairs, furniture, clothing and surrounding landscape of an inherited home, forming a partial and fragmented archive reminiscent of memory's inconsistency, clarity, unreliability and fragility. The physically demanding process of art making asserted my body in that inheritance, while the architectural structures, the many objects and substances used throughout the studio research, reflect Mezei's 'domestic effects.' What evolves is the notion of haptics of home, sensuous memory and the residue of emotion rooted in tactile experience, supported by theorists Krasner and Fisher. I bring Kuhn's memory work methodology into conversation with Kadar and Perreault's interrelated concept of auto/biography, reflecting personal and social memory as specific to time and place. Incorporating memory work, I use creative writing to open a range of experiences that confront gender politics of the domestic in material, familial and narrative inheritances, and a requisite disinheritance, referring to Bailey and Goodall. I discuss contemporary women artists critically addressing materials, auto/biography, place, and the domestic sphere, as well as the historical and contemporary uses of rubbings in the West and East, encompassing geographical, biographical and educational purpose. I document the studio work in Process Journals, which elucidate a pedagogy of making, exemplifying the entwined processes of art making, thinking and theorizing; more significantly, this studio-making pedagogy reveals working with uncertainty, following curiosity and, ultimately, recognizing not knowing as intrinsic to art practice and to education. As artist and visual art teacher, I consider the generative potential of art practice in relation to *natality*, Hannah Arendt's call for the necessity of education to continually re-invent itself.

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**COME TO YOUR SENSES, REMEMBER BELONGINGS:  
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**FRONT YARD**

**Introduction**

A yard is where the inhabitants or things of the world dwell in a house between heaven and hell.<sup>1</sup>

Between Heaven and Hell: An idyllic setting for a second home on a great lake. Even though it is a simply constructed plywood and aluminum sided two-season dwelling, it is an expense and speaks of available income to maintain and travel there, and exists among rows of similar dwellings owned by white people, representing a range of political and socio-economic groups.

Even in Heaven, there can be pockets of Hell.

This excursion in doctoral research was an audacious pursuit of a long held desire since completing my Bachelor or Fine Arts Degree, to work seriously in a studio making artwork for an extended period of time. As researcher and artist, art practice enters a Faculty of Education with trepidation.



Making the Rubbing of *Hammock*. 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> Yard in Old English means Dwelling or house: middenerd, n. Obs. The world; the earth as a middle region between heaven and hell; (also) the inhabitants or things of the world, esp. as opposed to those of heaven; worldly things as opposed to divine or spiritual things. Cf. middle-erd n. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/118136#eid36751932>

As Barrett and Bolt state, “practice-led research is a new species of research, generative enquiry that draws on subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to extend the frontiers of research...”(1) yet “often contradict what is expected of research” (2). The studio practice, the art making was the focus of this dissertation, and was documented with dated notes and photos of works in progress, in Process Journals. These journals are quoted throughout, mostly chronologically, to demonstrate what I have called, A Pedagogy of Making, a concept based in James Elkins’ directive to artists working within the research institutions of universities, to demonstrate “the day-to-day experience of making - its exact pedagogy, its methods, knacks and skills, its feel” as the “act of making art” (246-247) is at the root of the division between art production and the expectations of the university.

At a time when Art Practice Research is defining itself as a field at the doctoral level within Visual Arts faculties, what are the expectations and requirements of writing? Meanwhile, inter- and trans-disciplinarity is encouraged across academia, the inclusion of Arts Based Practices within the Social Sciences and Education is an example. How different or distinct are the approaches to writing in these disciplinary fields, and how do these distinctions define the requirements for and of writing? And could a document such as this dissertation, represent a foray into approaches to writing from across a number of disciplines as part of a pedagogy of making that invoked its own directions, contingencies, requirements, and in so doing, invites new thinking about writing and the requirements for and of writing at the doctoral level? Writing this dissertation entails writing about art practice as a personal reflection; it includes memoir and creative writing; there is art history and art criticism; there is sociological, feminist and educational writing; there is geographical writing; and finally, writing about writing. If “knowing” in visual art requires knowing how in the studio, but also requires knowing how in the studio in relation to another discipline, such as geography for example, in what ways can this evolve the ways that writing is conceived in the research done in art practice at the doctoral level? What criteria for writing a pluralistic document such as this, would apply?

This written narrative is structured to reflect an architectural place, a home, that became the subject of this dissertation. There are five sections: “Front Yard” and “Back Yard” form the “Introduction” and “Conclusion,” respectively. Each of the two storeys of the house encompasses a different part of the story: “Ground Floor” comprises initial art making investigations while the “Second Storey” includes the studio work toward, and the reflections upon, two subsequent exhibitions which were drawing installations. The structure, then is architectural and also roughly chronological.

Most buildings, architectural structures have a front and a back, the former usually for public show and welcome, while the latter for that which is less desirable, perhaps, or more private. In the “Ground Floor,” I briefly describe the beginning of the project as it coincided with an encounter with dementia, the memory disease, which led to consideration of remembering, forgetting, memory, and the location of memory in specific familiar objects. This section covers two summers of art making produced in search of an idea or concept that could tie the various interests together and form the basis for art exhibitions. My artworks are discussed along with works by women artists and pertinent theorists all of which lead me to a guiding concept of the *haptics of home*.

“Second Storey” entails the working process of making graphite rubbings on paper of an inherited family home. These rubbings were then used in the two drawing installations titled, *Her Place and What was Learned There* and *Her Place-Scraps*. Theories of place, domestic space, domestic effects and auto/biographical practices structure the discussion, and I consider this work to be a *sensual biography of place* enacted through *haptics of home*. After the exhibitions in 2015-16, I began writing this document and in the process to unravel some secrets of the inherited home. These secrets led to creative explorations in writing. Finally, I turn to theorists of inheritance and disinheritance as a means to adjust to the revelations of the home.

As rubbings were the artistic medium for these exhibitions, there is a sub-section in Second Storey in which some history of rubbings is brought to bear on contemporary practices of rubbings

of architecture by a range of artists in comparison with the rubbings of *Her Place*. I consider the relationship of rubbings to auto/biography and to place.

In conclusion, I consider how a *pedagogy of making* was produced through the use of Process Journals and what that pedagogy entailed. I bring here examples of my educator practice to demonstrate the light threads that connect my work in education to my interests as an artist and to the work throughout this doctoral project. Theories of writing in art practice research at the doctoral level are considered. How art practice distinguishes itself within and in relation to the overall educational project, within university but also within schooling, where I have been a teacher for over three decades, is addressed through considering the vital role of *not knowing* in art practice. I then posit the importance of art as an event/encounter within education provided by visual art practice, in a repertoire of the creation of something new, which has more to offer as intrinsic practice to a 'forward thinking education' than education itself, (which rests upon knowing and the already known), in preparing young people for the future. This entire art practice research project provides a record of its own making.

## GROUND FLOOR

### COME TO YOUR SENSES

#### **Spring 2013: The Shoes, The Joy, The Bacon**

Driving to work, I was remembering a television commercial from when I was a child. A blond woman immersed in a bubble bath, happily washing her legs, one extended, pointing in the air, as if her legs were dancing, while the rest of her lay back covered in bubbles. Yet this dance was an upside down dance. A few days later, while I was driving home from work the image came to mind of black high heeled shoes full of Pond's Face Wash. I made a note of it. Shortly thereafter, the image of a *Joy of Cooking* cookbook coated in Vaseline appeared in mind. How to describe the "arrival" of a visual idea? Or an image-idea? It is not there, and then the image is; the materials are understood, sometimes even the process of its creation. It is possible to think through various methods of the making or unmaking. It is there to consider, to turn around and see from various angles and perspectives, in different contexts, or undergoing a variety of actions. It acts or is acted upon. The image is not static, and it does not require words to be "understood," although thinking with words is one way to think with it and about it, questioning it, wondering about it. Sometimes these visual ideas are accompanied by words, but usually they are not written or read but heard, as if the image had a voice or was speaking. These images of The Shoes and The Joy remained, persisted, kept coming into view, showed up at odd times, drifted in and out. Shoes from the bedroom wardrobe, filled with face wash from the bathroom, and a cookbook from the kitchen coated in Vaseline from the bathroom. The disjunction of "rooms of origin" was apparent after they had been made; at the time I looked ahead to the summer and planned to make them.

## **Chronology**

In this chapter I focus on a mostly chronological accounting of the initial studio work beginning in spring 2013 to spring 2015 that marked the beginning of this dissertation research process. With specific examples of the initial ideas for projects, the collection of the materials, the production of those projects along with the written reflections, comments from readings, and the photo documentation in a Process Journal, I convey what I did and how I thought about that doing at the time of the doing, and what the studio doing led me to read and consider. The argument for following this chronology through the documented pieces in the Process Journal is in keeping with Nancy de Freitas' recommendation that the use of documentation as an active part of the studio research produces a record that is vital to retrieving the inferences, intuitive leaps, the changes in thinking or material direction that occur while making art; sometimes it is difficult to recall just how a decision was made or what associations produced an idea. She states, "The process of moving intellectually or creatively from the known (present position) to the unknown (next position) is an inherent part of studio practice and evidence of its occurrence is an important aspect that should be included in an exegesis"(2002, 4). It has been a surprising process to go back through the documentation, noting where ideas first popped up, or to see the progression from small tentative experiments to full-on exhibition planning, accompanied by concepts that threaded throughout subsequent work.

Although, on paper, there appears to be a chronological progression throughout this dissertation, as each Process Journal entry is dated sequentially, most of these projects and the idea development overlapped at multiple points in the studio and during the writing process. As art critic David Carrier describes, "Stories have beginnings, middles, and endings, but in the world there are only events, which lack any intrinsic order until structured by writers" (40). The first part of this chapter attempts to bring order through chronology to what seemed like chaos, and while doing so, in relation to specific studio explorations and questions arising during the process, I discuss four

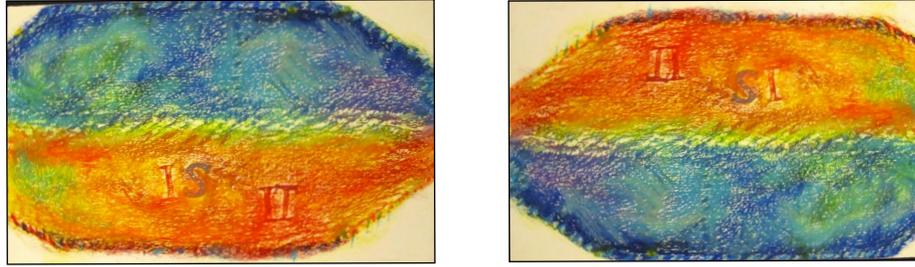
women artists in relation to a specific studio exploration of mine: Meret Oppenheim, Martha Rossler, Janine Antoni and Sigalit Landau. Interspersed, I consider methodological concepts borrowed from sociological researchers. Sherri Turkle invites professionals to choose and to reveal their intellectual practice of thinking with an ‘evocative object;’ and Claudia Mitchell and Sandra Weber likewise invite the personal stories that arise while discussing a dress in what they call ‘dress stories.’ Borrowing from evocative objects and dress stories, I consider bacon fat, in particular, and fat in an historical interpretation of its meanings to consider the impact of everyday materials and substances in our uses and interactions with them, and how that everydayness brings meaning to an artwork. In response to arriving at the concept of the ‘Haptics of Home’ while making rubbings in my studio explorations, I follow briefly with a discussion of haptics as part of a growing field of what Mark Paterson describes as ‘sensuous scholarship’ (5) that attempts initially to challenge the privileging of ocular observation as a means to certainty and knowledge (6) and then “to repatriate and reconsider non-visual experience, [ie. through the body, specifically through the senses] within the wide focus of cultural history and in individual experience”(5). Paterson situates explorations of the senses in the early conceptualization of phenomenology by philosopher Merleau-Ponty.

How sensuous scholarship has been interpreted within the field of Visual Art is explored through art critic Jennifer Fisher’s development of haptic aesthetics, a concept meant to explicitly acknowledge the significance of haptics in the experience of making and viewing of visual art. I highlight how everyday materials and objects inflect and project into our lives, disrupting the subject-object dichotomy. Later in this chapter, I will redirect the focus from the studio to the academic literature regarding Art Practice Research in order to set this project, undertaken in the Faculty of Education, but enacted through practices and theoretical developments that are taking place in university Visual Art programs in North America, Europe and Australia.

This entire dissertation process over the last six years has been cyclical in nature, following the structure of the elementary school teachers' calendar, whereby my personal work as an artist and as a writer took place on weekends and holidays, in between the scheduling demands of children's schooling. March break and summer months provided the prolonged open time periods for the combination of the elements of practice to get in gear together, optimally comprising: experimentation with materials and visual ideas, documentation with camera and written reflection, contemplation, and the organization of the before, during and after of the studio process. The other ten months of the year while being a teacher, I had minimal studio practice where I might occasionally have had time for one of the above elements of practice.

### **Front Porch: Forget**

One impetus at the beginning of this project was that a matriarchal relative was diagnosed with dementia. The effects of this memory disease were earth shattering, crushing; forgetting, simultaneously on an infinitesimal and a grand scale, with obnoxious speed, in fits and starts. Everyday objects become foreign and belongings lose their place; a hat is still a hat, but whose is it? Whose is it? Is it yours? Whose is it? Now, isn't really now, as time of day is uncertain and ordinary tasks are perpetually incomplete; dishes are washed in the sink with bacon fat from the grease can and scrubbed with a used teabag; directions reverse in circles; sayings replace thoughts; incomprehensible questions ensue: who was my husband? Long term relationships disappear while physical affection is given to favoured objects; voice recognition, face recognition blur in a sea of noise and bobbing heads; the anchor of meanings drops into the depths, severed from the hold of the ship. Spaghetti is a new favourite, but eating it with a spoon is so frustrating: What is a fork?



*Is It*. 2013. Collograph. Paper, oil pastel. 9x15". Left: right-side up. Right: upside-down.

And so. “Is It,” 2013 (above) began as a hand-knit sleeve of a sweater, surprisingly unrecognizable to this matriarch, an experienced knitter. I put the wool sleeve through a printing press with damp paper on top to create a collograph, then once it was dry, rubbed it with oil pastels. How could she not recognize a knitted sleeve, something she had made and constructed many times? What mysterious properties did this ordinary vertical object, unformed and unattached to its sweater body, now hold? Horizontally, it is a variable landscape where the sky can flip from blue to orange, above or below a field or water. This was the first article of clothing that I used.

## **Front Door: Remember**

### **THE PROCESS JOURNAL**

The Process Journals were used to transcribe in writing, and to document through photographs and some drawings, the ‘memory’ of this exploration. Below is an excerpt from one of three Process Journals maintained over the three and a half years of studio production up until I had the final of two exhibitions in February 2016. It would be impossible to recapture the connections among the processes of making the objects with the thinking about them without the documentation in the Process Journals. Throughout this dissertation I will use quotes from sections of the journals; they are dated, in italics, and are edited for length and clarity.

#### **March 2013**

*I read ‘The Memory Clinic: Stories of Hope and Healing for Alzheimers Patients and Their Families’ by Tiffany Chon, MD. The genetics and predisposition to Dementia/ Alzheimer’s are conveyed through the maternal side. When*

*damaging proteins take over in the brain in Alzheimer's/Dementia, these proteins are said to not "fold" properly. A number of my art project ideas drawn out or described in sketchbooks relate to paper folding, fabric folding and unfolding. The proteins that cause the dementia, that impede the neural connections are referred to as 'sticky.' How ironic that this stickiness should impede memories from 'sticking.' Sticky is an adjective in the online Oxford Dictionary, that has many meanings and references to physical, medical, idiomatic, and technological applications: adhering, adhesive, viscous, or viscid matter; glutinous consistency; also, a 'sticky' situation; 'sticky' weather during high humidity; prices not falling, but holding firm; stickiness describes the digital program that encourages users to return repeatedly to a website. (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/> accessed March 16, 2013)*

Or better, the informal, sticky fingers, meaning, a propensity to steal, as dementia steals memory, steals a shared life. This family inheritance of dementia, along with family secrets, sticky loyalties, sticky situations, sticky foundational narratives as recurrent points of return; they coagulate, but do not mend.

### **March 16, 2013**

*Blood is thicker than water.*

*Blood is stickier than water.*

*Collographs: from stencilled letters of text - invisible - shadows.*

### **March 19, 2013**

*re. 'Memory Clinic': In terms of prevention or maintaining brain health as long as possible: to maintain brain plasticity use games, word puzzles, math puzzles etc. - which are developing new skills (or re-using old skills?) But she does not mention learning. What is the relationship of memory to learning? If the neurotransmitters aren't able to send the message along the tunnel or the wire because there's gaps in the wire, the message stops. It ends. It disappears. As if it never existed. A thought can't expand. A memory can't be retraced to find itself. Learning did not happen. It cannot happen. So when dementia begins, its like the capacity to learn becomes undone. And then - it becomes a process of un-learning.*

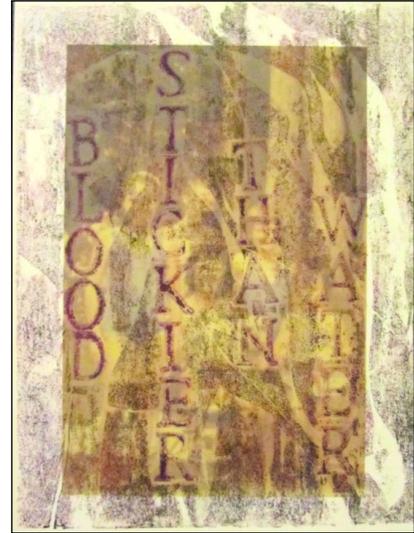
*"I'm fine. My memory is really slipping."*

Slippage, slipping, slippery. Memory is no longer sticking. The stickiness gives way to slipperiness. Slippery is a smoother form of tactility, like ice, like oil, like lubricant, like a wet road or a wet floor.

Yet, there is something sneaky about slippery: it isn't evident, obvious, it is somewhat invisible. You could miss it and slip. It doesn't ask permission or get your attention, alert or advise you. It goes on as if you weren't there, despite your presence; or perhaps at your request, a lubricant creates a slippery surface, but then it performs a function. A lubricant is under control. Slipperiness is not. Slippery, slipping and sticky have that in common: they are not under control.

**April 28, 2013**

*I began a collograph with the text, "Blood Stickier than Water". I couldn't decide on an image to go with the text so began with the text to make prints. I had just finished making prints with my grade eight students, so inks, colours, papers were on my mind. I planned the piece to fit the small printing press that is in the studio where I teach. I would have one day alone there on a holiday. This one day worked because the building was completely empty and I knew I wouldn't be interrupted by kids, colleagues or cleaning staff. I prepared my inks, papers and materials; inked up the plate and pulled prints. I didn't like the "boldness" - the ink was too dark, too plain, just text, not very interesting. I was disappointed as I only had one day, and these things take time to prepare and follow through. I used old photos to print on and found that unsatisfactory, as the text wasn't carefully placed. I needed to not add ink and make the photo more vague. I printed papers, newspaper, the financial sections, fabric, changed ink colours, inking techniques, and still at the end of the day, felt unsatisfied, I did not like the text, and did not like the text over the photo images. Still like the idea – Blood Stickier than Water.*



*Blood Stickier Than Water. 18x24". Mixed media, collograph, inks, with photo.*

What this excerpt also reveals is the balancing of time and focus as an artist with that of being an art teacher without a very functional studio of my own. It also shows how my working life as an art teacher bled into my choices for art making in the beginning of this project.

What was also becoming evident was the contrast in my deliberate regard of memory in contrast to the random loss of memory with dementia. Yet both shared a sense of loss.

Had the garden of my memory not begun to wither, I would perhaps have no reason to complain...as I survey my arid garden and struggle to reclaim the memories that have abandoned me, one by one, all I see are the traces they left in the dry soil. To be left with only the trace of a memory is to gaze at an armchair that's still molded to the form of a love who has left never to return: It is to grieve... it is to weep. (Pamuk 2006, 40)

## WORKING PROCESS, SUMMER 2013

### WHERE IS MEMORY?

In the summer of 2013, I started by amassing substances and objects to make artworks based initially on those images I had of shoes filled with Pond's Face Wash and the Vaseline coated *Joy of Cooking*. I also gathered bacon fat from my kitchen and freezer, jars of Pond's Face Wash that I found still existed, much to my surprise, and a used *Joy of Cooking* cookbook. While moving among the racks of clothing in the Salvation Army shop searching for pairs of vintage high heel shoes, I noticed dresses and blouses, their material and their designs, which had an effect on me, like recognition of something rediscovered, or uncovered, from long ago. These were ordinary objects and materials, everyday substances, as opposed to art materials. I timidly put objects together with substances: high heel shoes filled with face wash; Vaseline with sand, bird seed and old beef bones in the *Joy of Cooking Cookbook*; letters cut from meat, hung like earrings on a vintage dress; rubbings of fly swatters, vintage dresses and then added text; monoprints made with bacon fat and paint on yard sale doilies and blouses; an old drawer from a dresser from my childhood, filled with bacon fat and stuffed with costume jewelry. I thought of these first objects as *materialized memory objects* and then just *memory objects*. Through the tactility, scents and visual associations, this collection of objects evoked memories of women's, men's and children's lives, all moving in a constellation around and throughout a home. The specific place in which I was working, an inherited family home, a summer Lake House, eventually became the source of research, but that first summer, memory presided over these old, second-hand, oddly combined assemblages that I made; memory it seemed was multi-faceted, an embodied, sensory experience that encompassed the spontaneous visual or other sensory experiences with the imaginative and the deliberately intentional. In outlining common concepts of memory in *Contemporary Art and Memory*, Joan Gibbons explains the historical distinctions of types of memory: "The apparatuses of memory that developed were referred to as 'the artificial memory,' distinct from its opposite, the untutored and less regulated 'natural memory,' " both of which are

comparable to Marcel Proust's categories of voluntary and involuntary memory (2). Unlike ancient Western scholars labouring to commit argument to memory or to acquaint themselves with historical works, Proust eschews voluntary memory in favour of the uniquely personal multi-sensorial remembrance of past lived incidents. He emphasizes that voluntary memory is not only not intended to, but does not have the capacity of involuntary memory to awaken past experience. Proust nearly dismisses voluntary memory's impoverished production of a desired memory:

the facts which I should then have recalled would have been prompted only by voluntary memory, the memory of the intellect, and since the pictures which that kind of memory shows us preserve nothing of the past itself, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue ...[of a past place]... To me it was in reality all dead... And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) of which we have no inkling. (59)

His astounding claims are that memory is not entirely stored within us, but also within "some material object;" and that the object will reach us through sensation; meanwhile we have "no inkling" of what that specific object might be that is hiding the personal realm of our own past. This chapter will demonstrate how Proust's claims regarding involuntary memory were in accord with my studio work and my wondering about that work through the memory objects I made, the



*Woman Talking to Her Clothes*, 2013. 8x3". Watercolour on paper.

sensory engagement that occurred, and the surprises throughout, as I had no clear inkling in this early stage of what would become the final work.

The paradox remains that this project began through an encounter with dementia, the disease of forgetting, and then proceeded with the concept of memory, a backward looking event, which, in the face of dementia, is a privileged action, one that cannot be taken for granted. But then again, what do we "forget" involuntarily, or voluntarily, so that we do not have to remember? In this little

watercolour drawing, made right at the beginning of the summer, the woman is talking to her clothes, an object that is worn on her body, next to her skin. Is she addressing her memories? Or is it her presentation of self as she would like to be seen, at a future social gathering that she is discussing? Perhaps she is talking but the clothes do not know her, nor she them. Perhaps she is making an acquaintance with her forgotten clothing.

## A PEDAGOGY OF MAKING

For the purpose of writing about art work for this PhD in art practice, situated as it is within the Faculty of Education: Language, Culture and Teaching at York University, I take James Elkins' directive. He encourages doctoral art practitioners to

address the day-to-day experience of making - its exact pedagogy, its methods, knacks and skills, its feel...[because] that experience, rather than ways of conceptualizing the product of the experience, is at the root of the incommensurability of studio art production and university life...Let us continue to theorize the studio and the university, but not think that the problem is adequately addressed until we have found ways of talking about the relation of university life and the act of making art, as opposed to the variegated and often fascinating ways of talking about the relation between the university and finished *art*. (246-7. Emphasis in original.)

Bringing the practice of practice, the details of that practice, to the fore is meant to bring the as yet less familiar approach of art practice and its relationship in "art practice research" into the shared arena of "research practices" that characterize not only the university, but education in general. Part of the importance of this dissertation is in its contribution to the discussion of art making with some of its details, within a trajectory that produces objects of art and objects of art in exhibition. I have taken Elkins up on this charge to try to find ways to describe as he states above, a "pedagogy of making," its "methods, knacks, skills and its feel," as the art making process began, for me, as images in mind, and expanded through tactile associations from objects, clothing, to a whole house

and its furnishings. I also try to intersperse the theories that support, explain, validate my senses, the vague ideas or wonderings while making in the studio, and then afterwards, while considering the process, and, through this writing.

This pedagogy of making anchors the writing of this dissertation; the entries from the Process Journals provide a structure in the intimate and immediate accounting of the experience of studio making. This form of writing echoes Michael Carter's theory of "writing in a discipline" as a way of knowing. He clarifies the difference between writing in and writing outside of a discipline, where writing outside conceives of writing as a generalizable skill (385); however, writing in a discipline demonstrates "a specialized conception of disciplinary knowledge [that] is integrated with a specialized conception of writing" (387). In other words, "Writing outside and writing in corresponds to the difference between knowledge and knowing: knowledge is to know *that*, it is declarative and conceptual knowledge. While knowing is active, procedural or process knowledge, knowing *how*" (ibid). This raises an interesting point for artists, particularly those like myself for whom writing *as an artist* has been of little interest. How do artists write about their art making processes, their disciplinary experiences and their thinking about those processes? Particularly, as Elkins argues, the need to address the everyday experience of making shifts the status quo of university discourse to include not only the final art object, but the process of its creation in the discipline of studio art. Art History and Art Criticism entail writing *about* art, while Elkins advocates writing about *making* art. Given that art making is valued as a distinct, personal, or at least, non-prescriptive practice, would the writing generated across a range of art studio practices, then, most likely reflect a range of writing styles that encompass a unique breadth and depth of 'knowing' by each individual artist? Writing in a discipline that is exploratory, materially and conceptually, kinaesthetically and intellectually, could propose an exploratory approach to writing. A pedagogy of making then, is potentially conveyed through a range of writing in, given the understanding by Carter, that writing is a means to illuminate and integrate knowing (386); at the same time, there

could be writing outside of other disciplines that are connected to the work of an artist. As Elkins suggests, in bringing to light art making's own pedagogy with its diaristic, theoretical, experimental, historical, critical and expressive approaches to writing, the unruly relations between education and the act of making art become more discernible. These varied approaches to writing all contribute to a pedagogy of making throughout this project.

## MAKING: MEMORY OBJECTS

**Making:** The Shoes

**July 25, 2013**

*My room is beginning to smell like Pond's Cold Cream-I have a glob in a small bowl. It is barely changing shape. Its lost a bit of its gloss.*

**July 27, 2013**

*Today is The Shoes.*

I covered the work area with plastic garbage bags, put the black shoes and the Pond's Cold Cream jars and a spoon on the plastic. I scooped and shoved and poked the white creamy goo from the jars into the pointy toes of the shoes, along the sole and then scooped to fill the shoe; after the first, I did the same with the second. The sweet smell wasn't as terrible as I thought it might be. The slidey goo was all over my hands and the spoon handle but no worry, as it wasn't sticky. I took photos with my left hand and scooped with my right. Then I wasn't sure what to do with the shoes. So I put them in a shoe box so they wouldn't get wrecked, or fall over or get flies stuck in the face wash. *The Shoes* led directly to conceiving *The Wardrobe*. I will discuss *The Wardrobe* in a moment, and then further along I will describe its final form as completed in 2015.

## SEEKING ARTISTIC CONNECTIONS

Throughout this initial studio working, the artists sought were those with whom the image, subject interests, and or materials bore a relation to my own. These were primarily women artists and their artworks; below, as I work through this chapter, I discuss four of these artists: Meret Oppenheim, Martha Rossler, Janine Antoni and Sigalit Landau.

### Meret Oppenheim

*The Shoes* reminded me of Meret Oppenheim's *Object*, 1936, in which she covered a teacup, saucer and spoon in fur, bringing an everyday object together with an unexpected substance in a viscerally unpleasing way. Although another piece of Oppenheim's uses a pair of high heel shoes, it did not have the same visceral attraction as *Objet*. It is variously translated as *My Nurse*, *My Nursemaid* and *My Housekeeper*, 1936, and comprises a pair of white high heel shoes upside down on a platter, trussed like a turkey. The draw to a historical figure such as Meret Oppenheim represented a change in my art making practice, from drawing, painting, printmaking and hand built clay sculpture, to one where found objects became the material that served my yet to be articulated purposes. Despite my use of gender in the choice of women's shoes and women's clothing, my interests were not 'fetishistic,' but rather, associative. Abigail Solomon-Godeau's discussion of fetishism in relation to Oppenheim's art work points out that the artist community of Surrealists, to which she belonged, fetishized and eroticized femininity, "and for this reason, certain of the women artists in the orbit of Surrealism like...Oppenheim were further motivated to approach the fetish as a subject of artistic investigation" (47), particularly as the readymade or found objects made art making accessible to many women who did not have formal training, academic expertise, studio space, or much money. (Ibid 45-6). In my case, the everyday found objects, such as the shoes, the materials and substances, held associations and seemed linked to memory, although at first, I did not consider "my memories" but rather the sensation of the encounter with the objects and substances. That experience of these

everyday, gendered objects was what first captivated me. They were not visual objects and I was not making visual objects: they were sensual, tactile, evocative objects; they held something enigmatic that I could not articulate, that left me wordless. William Seitz, writing the catalogue for the 1961 exhibition of *Assemblage Art at the Museum of Modern Art*, traces the transition to the everyday object as art at the beginning of the twentieth century from the cubists to the assemblage works of surrealists. Seitz notes that the shift whereby the “trick of brushwork” in creating a fictional environment in a painting was left behind through collage and assemblage, and distinctly gestured toward “impersonal authorship” (23-24), is a point we will return to in the next chapter regarding rubbings. Yet, these pieces I made felt anything but impersonal. Seitz points out that in assemblage art,

meaning and material merge. Identities drawn from diverse contexts and levels of value are confronted not only physically, within the limits of the work they form, but metaphysically and associationally, with (and modified by) the unique sensibility of the spectator. Even taken in isolation, the possible meanings of objects and fragments are infinitely rich, whereas... professional art materials such as paint, plastic, stone, bronze, etc., are formless and, in the Platonic sense, are pure essences of redness, hardness, or ductility. Found materials are works already in progress: prepared for the artist by the outside world, previously formed, textured, colored, and even sometimes entirely prefabricated into accidental “works of art.” (84)

The infinite richness of found and familiar objects was what initially fascinated me, although the aesthetic relationships I formed with objects and substances were not pleasing in an everyday sense.

It is this sense of dis-pleasure, repulsion and the anxiety it provoked in me that leads to the notion of the uncanny as originally described by Freud. Nothing regarding the uncanny is found in “comprehensive treatises on aesthetics, which in general prefer to concern themselves with what is beautiful, attractive and sublime – that is, with feelings of a positive nature... rather than with the opposite feelings of repulsion and distress” (219). Maria Walsh, writing as an art critic, notes that Freud’s theory of the uncanny had to do with his theory of repression and,

how elements from the past erupt in the present, imbuing the latter with memory traces that render it disorienting. It is the anxiety that ensues from this disorientation that gives rise to

the experience of the uncanny rather than things in themselves...that these sensations are tinged with dread and horror links the uncanny to an aesthetics of the ugly... (20)

The anxiety that an artwork might evoke, then, beyond the art object itself, is the focal point of the uncanny, or the unhomely, as the translation in German of uncanny is *unheimlich*, has a negative connotation, with its apparent opposite, *heimlich*, or homely. Freud patiently includes the etymology with dictionary definitions and meanings of *heimlich*, as, firstly, “Belonging to the house, familiar, not strange, tame, intimate, friendly,” (222) and secondly, “Concealed, kept from sight, withheld from others, behind someone’s back; steal away; conceal sin; secretive; deceitful and malicious” (223). The word *heimlich*, then has identical meaning as its opposite, *unheimlich*. He does not consider these meanings contradictory or unambiguous, but that they belong to two sets of ideas (224). It is as if the familiar is also a convenient hiding place for the undesirable, hiding in plain view, as it were. If the undesirable were not hidden, or couched in familiarity, was simply exotic, it would immediately be recognized and repudiated. It is this turning upon itself, the familiar that is somehow concealing or concealed or then revealed simultaneously as unfamiliar that I think creates the uncanny in Oppenheim’s *Objet* and *My Nurse*. In her discussion of *Evocative Objects*, Sherry Turkle describes the dual nature thus:

among the meanings of *Heimlich* (familiar) is a definition of close to its opposite: it can mean concealed or kept out of sight. *Heimlich* has a “double.” By extension, Freud argues, our most eerie experiences come not from the exotic, but from what is close to home. Uncanny objects take emotional disorientation and turn it into philosophical grist for the mill. (320)

There is not a rational consideration of an object or experience, but rather, there is an emotional, and I would add, visceral response to the uncanny, before the rational or philosophical considerations begin. In trying to understand this concept, and how the familiar shoes filled with slidey-goo set in motion a sense of excitement tinged with anxiety that arose and increased in relation to many of the projects discussed below, what is apparent is the duality, the double of the familiar/unfamiliar, present/past, homely and unhomely where the uncanny is present. With the overview and benefit of hindsight about my art practice as recorded here, part of a pedagogy of

making is seeing how this understanding of the uncanny recurred in my work, and adds another interpretive layer to it, to which I will return.

### **Making:** *The Wardrobe*

*The Shoes* led directly to *The Wardrobe*. I will discuss *The Wardrobe* here and then again further down as more work was done to complete it in 2015.

**July 27, 2013**

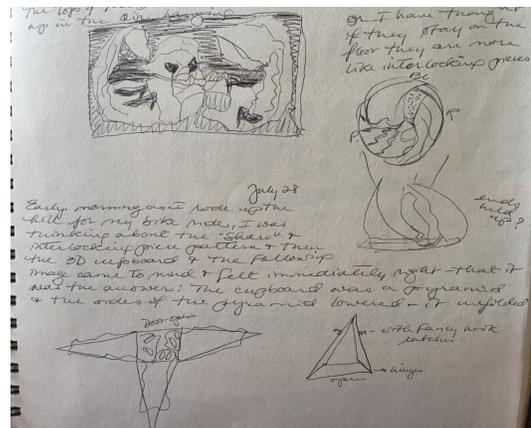
*I was thinking about how the women in my family loved to dance, and perhaps it was the dance steps I could somehow 'enact' with the Pond's Cold Cream and the shoes. But that isn't what gripped me. It was being in a woman's cupboard as a young child, touching the shoes, feeling the fabrics of all of her dresses against my face and arms. Even in the relative dark of the cupboard where I would crawl and sit for what now seem long long periods of time, even in that darkness, sitting upon shoes and belts and whatever lay on the floor of her cupboard, I could still see all of the colours of her dresses. The colours, textures, the shoes, the smells also. I've been trying to imagine a floor pattern to place the fabric and the shoes. Originally I envisioned them as on the floor, in a circle spotlight of colour. But the more I think about it, perhaps I should create that dark cupboard somehow, so that the viewer has to stick their head into the dark, small space - smell the Pond's and the fabric. The top of the dresses could be on the floor and the bottoms up in the air hanging. Or if they stay on the floor they are like interlocking pieces.*

**July 28, 2013**

*Early morning as I rode up the hill on my bike I was thinking about *The Shoes*, the interlocking piece pattern and the 3D cupboard and the following image came to mind and felt right: The cupboard was a pyramid and the 3 sides of the pyramid lowered - it unfolded.*

**July 29, 2013**

*A retired shop teacher will build the pyramid wardrobe using good birch and figuring out the angles for the triangular tips (45 degree?) He has lots of questions but is also discrete.*



**October 23, 2013**

While reading *The Lowland: A Novel* by Jhumpa Lahiri, I found this quote echoed my childhood experience of being inside a wardrobe as described above:

*"She told him how she used to sit inside the closet where her mother had kept her things. Behind the coats she hadn't taken with her, the belts and purses on hooks that her father hadn't yet given away." (299)*

One of the women in the novel eventually abandons her child and husband. The mourning daughter, in the quote above, would sit alone in the mother's wardrobe to grieve. The enclosed cloister of the wardrobe contains the presence of the absent person, through the somatic experience of the objects, through the wardrobe space itself, suffused with light, textures and scents. The somatic activates, or affirms memory, and is perhaps in this instance, comforting. Perhaps it forms a stage, to be in the presence of the absent person, "as if" they were there. It begins as comfort and reminder, but then becomes the body that should be addressed. That cannot be addressed. It is instead of the body. The wardrobe as the absent body is a container, holding a haphazard collection of objects from an individual's daily life. The wardrobe is a confined, sensory, concentrated experience of one person's collection.

James Krasner, in his analysis of the intimate, tactile experience of home, recalls his experience of prayer as a child:

Every night I would creep into the wardrobe in my bedroom, kneel down between the hanging shirts, and close the sliding door behind me. Kneeling on board games and sneakers was uncomfortable and strange, but I remember feeling a profound sense of spiritual sustenance, as the hanging clothes pressed against my face and back, moved slightly by my breath...remembering that comforting sensation of physical enclosure, intertwined with spiritual comfort, allows me to place myself precisely within my childhood home and my childhood faith. (139)

To go to a wardrobe as a child is to go to ground level, to sit on or among shoes, sheltered by the hemlines of whatever garment might extend its fabric edges from the top of the wardrobe, altogether forming a sphere of variable textured proximities. British artist Rachel Whiteread's first

sculpture, *Closet*, was directly related to childhood memories of a wardrobe, as this early sculpture was,

where the artist had withdrawn to dream. Her first work was *Wardrobe* (1998), in which she filled a wardrobe with plaster and then dismantled the outer casing, revealing the solidified space within. This she covered in black felt. It was a piece of post-war furniture similar to one that her parents had owned, in which she hid as a child... she discussed how she had a very clear image of herself 'sitting at the bottom of [her] parents' wardrobe, hiding among the shoes and clothes, and the smell and the blackness and the little chinks of light. (Barber 139)

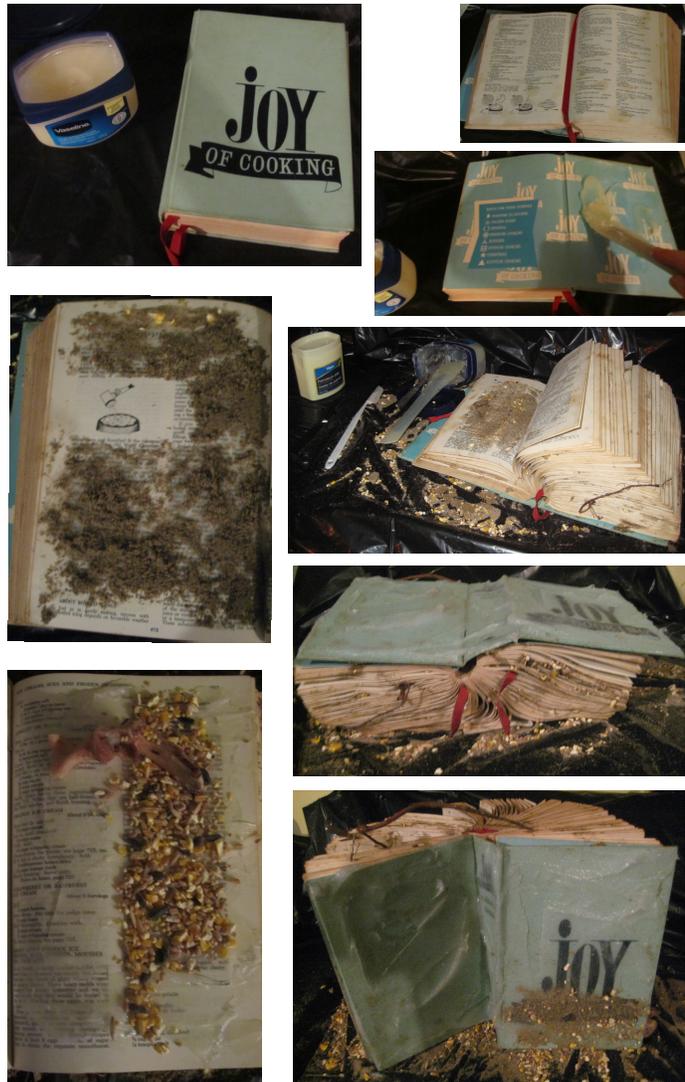
A wardrobe is a place to go to wait, to hide, but also to think, to remember, to mourn, to dream, to rest. The wardrobe is not the desired thing, the desired thing is absent; it is the place to want the desired thing. The wardrobe is a still, unmoving place, uninterrupted from outside. Although it holds objects, something beyond but in close relation to the objects is desired. We use wardrobes to store and contain our many things, clothing, shoes while we are out, wearing and using other clothes and shoes. Wardrobes contain our things for future use. Likewise, our clothes and shoes and objects in a sense, await that use. Can non-sentient objects wait? How do we think of that daily storage, as different from a storage locker or a basement? Are wardrobes evocative objects, as discussed further below? Or rather, they contain evocative objects; but perhaps more so, they are "evocative places." As a teacher, how do my students think of their wardrobes? What could they do with the idea of a wardrobe? Their school lockers are school wardrobes. One exhibition I organized with grade 6's was to curate an art exhibition within their lockers - they both made objects and brought found objects.

A wardrobe is a place where we put our collections - of shoes, clothes, miscellaneous accoutrements. Is a wardrobe an archive - a personal one? *The Joy of Cooking* and cookbooks are archives, that contain instructions so that we don't have to remember them. Both a cookbook and a wardrobe are sensory, calling upon our haptic engagement. But a wardrobe encompasses an individual past, holding objects, clothing, jackets, dresses that have been worn and have gathered memories that augment or embarrass our sense of who we are in the present. A cookbook could

belong to anyone, as could a single dress or pair of shoes; but the collection and its arrangement in any wardrobe will be unique.

**Making:** *The Joy*

*The Joy* was made in stages: I ordered a second-hand copy of *The Joy of Cooking*. I knew I needed Vaseline Petroleum Jelly. While shopping for this project, I found there were multiple other brands; President's Choice and a dollar store brand, which I learned while using each one, they represented various price ranges, viscosities and scents. I then gathered bags of sand from specific spots on the beach, picked up roots of cedar trees and seagull feathers; boiled and cleaned beef and chicken bones after family dinners; collected bird seed. Once gathered, the workspace was covered with garbage bags to contain the petroleum jelly and sand excesses.



Later, I recollect being on a family vacation as an adolescent in an isolated Caribbean resort. One of the visitors, a young boy, had an allergy to the heat or the sun or perhaps both. His parents went into the small town to buy Vaseline to cover his skin. They returned with a roast-sized package, wrapped in butcher paper, but inside the wrapping was a whitish translucent slab of petroleum jelly,

stretched like a flank, streaked with meringue-like peaks across the shiny butcher paper. Vaseline, meant to heal, but was served up like a slice of meat with confectionary drippings.

The photos of *The Joy* document the working process. I had a point and shoot camera that could be held in one hand and worked back and forth with both hands. I spent some time reading through the book, counting pages or recipes for dinner vs. the many more pages for desserts, wondering about this large tome of a cookbook as an archive of recipes from a particular time period, aimed at the North American Anglo housewife following the simple line drawings of white women's hands performing various tasks, representing a pedagogical model of instruction, giving advice while showing before doing. It was the only book (not the Bible) that owned a shelf and was apparently used, although in a circumspect manner, by all of the matriarchs in homes with which I was familiar. Most of them hated to cook.

### **Martha Rosler**

I think of Martha Rosler's parody, her 1975 video, *Semiotics of the Kitchen* in relation to this cookbook, *The Joy* (Rosler). Seemingly simplistic, yet with multiple applications, the parody is of the pedagogical model in general, but also of cooking in particular, as well as of a pedagogy of cooking as a gendered activity with the kitchen as a gendered space. As pedagogy, it is misconstrued and unravels the point; the purpose of a kitchen is lost in Rosler's demonstration. There is no desire for eating after her demonstrations, and no food is even apparent. It is an act, through a sort of brutal force, against desire of any kind. Her use of alphabetical order to 'teach' the 'names' and 'skills' of the various implements is pointless, demonstrating that such a simplistic and rudimentary model of education in regard to something that can be complex and nuanced, such as cooking, renders the form meaningless. This also leads to a misrepresentation of the kinds of skills that would be desirable in a kitchen, let alone required. Altogether, Rosler's glib tossing away of ingredients, coupled with her terse but useless alpha-ordered presentation and her violent misuse of the various

kitchen implements, struck me as hilarious. To take a step back from the kitchen, to think of the home as a place of pedagogy, perhaps Rossler was suggesting that an aggressive repurposing of the sharp and pointy kitchen implements would turn them into weapons of offence and defence, which might be more useful. Rossler's parody was an inversion of familiar expectations of women's place in the kitchen, thereby offering a feminist critique of the attempts by advertisers to present women as unwitting, unintelligent subjects. Part of the hilarity for me came from a certainty that Rossler enacted how many matriarchs in my life behaved in the kitchen, trying to manipulate foreign implements, to do bizarre things with unrecognizable substances.

*The Joy*, my artwork, was not made with words in mind. It was in many ways illiterate, a sensory misdeed, an ingredient mishap, an obliteration of a cooking and feeding archive, a misdirected unexpected use of kitchen spatula and bathroom petroleum jelly - Martha Rossler might approve. It was the making of a visceral non-palatable object, an encasement and suffocation of senses associated with nourishment. *The Joy* I created was a definitively anti-pedagogical gesture. The book was prepared from the back, smeared with globs of Vaseline, sprinkled with bird seed and a feather, seasoned with sand, filled with bones of carcasses and roots of old trees, as if this new book were the meal to be chewed and swallowed, to be digested. On some pages, just the shape of the text was covered; other pages, the shape of the spaces around the text and illustrations. None of the plentiful instructions were followed. It transformed into a tactile book, no longer functioning as a codex with decipherable order or recognizable pedagogical intent, but that of textures, shapes, objects and an overall unwelcoming coating of stickiness and sand. A book of nonsense, but sense-full. The tropes of cooking, the meanings of certain gestures in a kitchen, dissimulate.

**Making:** *The Bacon*

**Aug. 3, 2013**

*I am about to apply the bacon grease to the doily (from the yard sale). Three colours of water mixable oil colour-first I will do just the grease coating through printing press - to get the pressure -on wet and dry paper. Then add pigment.*

*First experiment: so disgusting. I've had to get over the grossness and do it, paint the fat. It stunk, it was greasy, sloppy, difficult to manipulate. The effect of the colour on the top impression was to render the image almost photographic. Can't tell if the grease is spreading on the paper.*

*Straight-up clothes has been done before. How could this be different? Layers? One colour? Transparent?*

### **Aug. 6, 2013**

*From Claire Robinson: "construction of meaning from a variety of artifacts."*

### **Aug. 2013**

*I painted 2 blouses in bacon fat with water based oil paint; one red one green. I used a wooden rolling pin to print them on sheets of paper. They just looked like slightly folded or bent blouses. The bacon fat smelled horrible and felt terrible on my hands. Later I thought that I was using bacon fat as if it was a medium, whereas I wanted it to be the content.*

### **Making: *This Is Forever***

*This Is Forever*, 2013, came about in conjunction with the early construction of *The Wardrobe*. I found the abandoned drawer in the garage where it survived decades of winters. It had been part of my childhood dresser, and for whatever reason, it had come undone or been wrenched free. This drawer is small - 10x10x5 inches. Dirt covered and musty, it is still the dusty rose paint colour from long ago.

In my rounds of collecting second-hand clothing from the Salvation Army, Value Village, and yard sales, I had also peered with mild recognition at the costume jewelry, seeing a semblance to what I remembered hanging, draped, piled, arrayed around the vanity mirror just outside of the wardrobe I used to visit. A pearl necklace and pearl earrings with the elaborate winding clasp really struck me: it was like I had picked them up from that remembered vanity just that moment. I knew exactly how they would feel. The image of them all stuffed into the small drawer filled with bacon fat was right: cold bacon fat worked best so the jewelry was suspended; they had to be shoved into the fat, and then they protruded exuberantly, glinting and writhing from within.

As a child, the wardrobe was a refuge, but the vanity table and mirror festooned with colourful dangling necklaces, earrings, bracelets, broaches tantalized, was a pedestal of glittering fascination that echoed with chatter against a backdrop of music and dancing, cigarettes, lipstick and perfume, sensually beckoning.



*This is Forever*. 2013. 10x10x5." Wooden box & drawer, bacon fat, costume jewelry.

What was it about the bacon fat? Why have it hold a swath of jewelry - some cheap, some less so? It was like a soft, benign - but putrid - nest inside the drawer, holding everything in place, in - search the word - stasis. When at a loss, search wikipedia: how does language function to bring unknown intentions to the surface and to the page? The medical term for 'stasis' is applicable: "a state in which the normal flow of a body liquid stops, for example the flow of blood through vessels or of intestinal contents through the digestive tract" In the midst of writing, I hear a word that seems to answer the need for such a word, but why that word? I look it up to find out.

*This is Forever* as a title, implies enduring into an infinite future; 'This is' will remain the same, unchanging, stopped, while continuing as such into that infinite future. So that the first component that was moving and changing through time, through the continuous present, will now remain as it is, forever. Cold bacon fat is already in stasis, a stopped state when cold, no longer liquid and flowing as it was when warm. The definition of stasis also refers to the intestinal tract and the stoppage of the flow of 'intestinal contents', which is typically, food. Bacon fat is the remnants of food, often thrown away. The bacon fat jar was kept either in the fridge or the freezer, a solid, until it was full. Then it was thrown out as a solid. *The Joy* was a cookbook effectively smothered by solid or non-

liquid, non-food items. Through the annoying currents of research, thinking and writing, all which are forms of movement, I have arrived at a concept that refers to unmoving. This surprising recognition of a word exemplifies how writing, which is really writing as thinking, uncovers a range of other possible considerations and concepts that have no singular meaning, but are dynamic and expand the intentions or insights of the text. (Bal, in Pollock, 2.)

*This is Forever*, then, is an uncanny object, a contradiction, as it appears inviting yet the jewels are coated in slimy guck. Bacon fat is only in stasis when chilled, so forever will last in the place of the drawer until the bacon fat changes state due to heat. The chilly jewelry in the drawer has presided over my freezer since 2013, a frozen memory, a frozen place in the drawer, a static, sticky repugnant thing.

### **Janine Antoni**

During this summer of working with bacon fat, I was reminded of Janine Antoni and her artwork, *Gnam*, (1993). The artist chewed away sections of the two, 600 pound, seemingly minimalist cubes of lard and chocolate, mimicking a subtractive sculpting method. By using her mouth, she created an intimate although self-defeating task in the case of the chocolate; however, in the case of the lard, it seems that chewing at a 600 pound cube of solid lard would be a repulsive experience for the artist, as it is vicariously for the viewer. In this work she confronted the repellent and the attractive on a monumental scale. She posits two materials, two substances, in equal physical value, but of antithetical social value. Chocolate, a substance of desire, luxury, sensual pleasure, with that of fat, the unwanted substance. Its necessity in preservation and sustenance contrasts with its contrary undesirability in contemporary Western society as both food and as bodily substance. In addition, the desirable, contains the undesirable. A compelling use of contrast in a massive, excessive display of consumable materials that are already considered excessive.

The specificity of the material composition in itself is significant in Antoni's work. It is not the appearance, the representation or the semblance of materials but the intrinsic nature of them that she is insistent upon. In a domestic setting, these substances are measured in ounces or tablespoons. The scale of the 600 pound cubes of both lard and chocolate raise the questions, "What is enough?" countered with, "What is too much?" and "What is the effect of the excessive?" The 600 pound cube of lard might have been white chocolate if only to make the experience of her performance more palatable for herself, let alone the viewer; but the choice of lard in her performance is significant in terms of its statement against desire. Antoni inserted her own body, and particularly, her mouth, creating a different dialogue, about women, women's bodies, the desirability of materials and the desirability of the bodies that consume some, enough, or too much of those materials. *Gnaw* confronts consumption. What does it mean for a woman to consume these substances? To be consumed by desire? Desire for beauty? Does that desire gnaw away intrinsic beauty? Does it destroy the perfect cube? The perfect self? The un-tampered with self? Is fat and excess fat what is gnawing away at us? Is excess fat repulsive? How is it the opposite of desire? Considering that fat is a component of chocolate, how is it that our desire and repulsion appear so split and separated from each other? It is a juxtaposition of material with forms of consumption.<sup>2</sup>

My use of fat was much more timid and her public performance practice is one that I would dread. Antoni, through her public physical labour, addresses the work of women's bodies in relation to desire and desirability, but also in relation to women's art making; how the action of *biting* is on the one hand, indulgent, but it is also offensive - offensive in both meanings of the word, in the sense of a strategic incursion, and also meaning insolent. I found it very difficult to move beyond my repulsion of bacon fat and encountered my own resistance to completing the ideas as

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<sup>2</sup>See Sidonie Smith, "Bodies of Evidence: Jenny Saville, Faith Ringgold, and Janine Antoni Weigh In" for an exploration of this artwork in relation to disorderly eating.

envisioned. In a 1999 interview with Stuart Horodner on BOMBSITE 66 website, Janine Antoni spoke of fighting with her materials in her artworks:

Making something is like a fight. I start out with an idea of what I want the object to be, and I try to impose it on the material. Usually the material resists me all the way. If I can stay open and have the courage not to hang on to my original idea, the material starts to speak back and tell me what it wants to be. A lot of meaning comes out in the fight that I couldn't have known before starting. It becomes this back-and-forth relationship.

Although she describes the materials "resisting" her, she obliquely identifies, in trying to stay open, her own resistance to closure, as she tries to "have the courage not to hang on to my original idea."

This is an articulation of visual art practice that distinguishes two important aspects of studio research: where the material is directive for the artist, and that following the material in lieu of, or rather than the other original idea is necessary. Whereas research that must stay true to the original research question does not have the option of changing the pre-arranged research process, but art making presumes changes in direction will be integral to the process. On the other hand, findings from both qualitative and quantitative research direct next steps, interpretations and conclusions at the end of the process. Antoni's description depicts flexibility as well as uncertainty; a process that begins with a visual idea but manifests through a heuristic relation with materials. Barbara Bolt describes this approach to art practice as material productivity or material thinking:

The concept of material thinking offers us a way of considering the relations that take place within the very process or tissue of making. In this conception, the materials are not just passive objects to be used instrumentally by the artist, but rather, the materials and processes of production have their own intelligence that come into play in interaction with the artist's creative intelligence. (Bolt, In Barrett and Bolt, 29-30)

Antoni clearly found her way with chocolate and fat, whereas I did not feel brave or brazen enough that first summer of 2013 with bacon fat as material when it came to actually handling it. In the summer of 2014, I was somewhat more productive, as I will describe below. I liked the initial ideas I had for using bacon fat with clothing, but felt resistance, anxiety and disgust with the substance. I became very unsure of what to do with the bacon fat, even though I was the one who developed the

idea. I wondered if I was conceding to “early closure” as Robert Kelly, in his work *Educating for Creativity* (2012) notes, which is the thwarting of idea generation and experimentation (p. 14). Was this early closure physical or sensual, whereby the textures were so repugnant that they overrode my interest or desire to make the objects as I envisioned them? So, why did I envision something that was beyond my physical/sensual capacity to make? How did that idea push me toward an uncomfortable encounter, that then “had the better of me”? I struggled with feeling defeated. I remained uncomfortable but thought perhaps “later” I would still make these assemblages using fat. However, my and Antoni’s uses of lard or fat brought to light the variety of inherent references within this “everyday” material, whether aesthetic and behavioural or cultural, including apprehension, disgust and undesirability as well as, contrarily, integrity, necessity and desirability. But, as the summer progressed, the anxiety I felt did not diminish but grew.

**Making:** *The Dresses*

**July 25, 2013**

*This has been a shopping and collecting week. All of these special finds have led to a certain amount of anxiety regarding using these beautiful old dresses and handmade things - to wreck them in an artwork! Using bacon fat will make them useless. I feel guilty and apologetic, worried that I'll be “caught,” anxious not to waste or deprive someone of this useful or beautiful piece.*

Over the course of a few weeks that summer, I found elaborate vintage dresses. I was surprised that I was uncomfortable with my plan to cut them up or coat them in a sticky substance, either bacon fat or petroleum jelly, as I had been thinking. I wonder if the dresses did not feel particularly special it would have been easier, but I “recognized” those dresses. Or perhaps it was fortuitous that those dresses did confront me; they reminded me, they “took me back,” - an interesting phrase - they took part of me back, as in, they returned me, or did something from the dresses come forward to meet me? How does memory work? Does it “return us”? Do we venture “back”? Or does the memory come forward to us? At any rate, looking at my studio events, these particular dresses were a catalyst,

they poked and punctured: I could see women I had known, women in the community, wearing them; I could hear the chatter and din of a party, smell the mingle of smoke and perfume. The found dresses, the sensory qualities of the textures, patterns, the sheen of satin, all contrived to seep in, surprisingly unwelcome-welcome. I have distanced myself over long years from many people in my past, from their class, from their values. I've lurked along a murky margin. And then, like warm gravy, a flood of memories. Coloured by longing, or wishing for simplicity, for ease, for belonging.

However, these dresses didn't belong to anyone I knew. Second-hand clothing was a quick way to collect evocative material; I pictured them sealed in fat or Vaseline. The German-Canadian artist, Iris Haussler whose artworks question presence and absence through fictional histories of individuals, produced a series of pieces using salvaged curtains from windows of abandoned buildings. She then cast



*Born in a Castle*. 2013.  
Dress, meat, wire.



the curtains in large rectangular blocks of wax, so the fabric appeared to be floating in a translucent liquid container, although the wax itself was hard (Haussler). It struck me that the difference between my ideas of clothing coated with bacon fat or Vaseline were different from the artworks discussed by Meret Oppenheim, Janine Antoni and Iris Haussler, as all of their works were *dry*; mine as I imagined them, were perpetually sticky. I fumbled around and got nothing done with fat and the dresses; I made some rubbings of them. *The Girls Live in the Toll Booth*, 2013, is a rubbing of one of the dresses, elaborately decorated with beads, a compelling garment, more like a relic than a second hand object. The letters for the text were cut from cardboard, reflecting the designation of static watcher to the girls, surrounded by swirling highways of mobility, foreign to them. With the the blue dress, the horizontal rows of intricately stitched texture created a pattern reminiscent of rows of text; the dress could be cut up the side and “opened” with a story told inside, or hanging there like jewelry, carved from meat. *Born in a Castle* seemed an apt tribute to upper class women, my

descendants of old money, women untouched by material want or need. Yet, each of these explorations felt insufficient and incomplete. From where was this anxiety arising regarding these dresses?

## **EVOCATIVE OBJECTS AND DRESS STORIES**

In this section, I will consider two non-art concepts that focus upon the many possible meanings that everyday objects bring and reveal through our interactions with them. Sherry Turkle invites professionals to choose an object that is an intellectual and or emotional companion, while Claudia Mitchell and Sandras Weber invite participants to focus on just a dress, to seek out the “dress story” that each one might offer. Following Turkle’s invitation, I consider not a dress, as I presumed I would, but bacon fat, or fat as an evocative object. Using cookbook and academic references, and a discussion of the artist Sigalit Landau’s use of salt with a dress, is a means for me to think through what fat means or meant to me while trying to work with it in the studio at the beginning of this dissertation research project.

### **Evocative Objects**

Reading *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* (2007), I was struck by author Sherry Turkle’s assertion to “consider objects as companions to our emotional lives or as provocations to thought... underscoring the inseparability of thought and feeling in our relationship to things. We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with” (5). Because I take this for granted, that objects are companions both emotionally and intellectually, whether they be the everyday manufactured, the handmade objects that cram my living spaces, or those objects of art, from other

times and cultures in friends' homes, as well as those displayed in galleries and museums. Stating that this position was previously unpopular, Turkle, as Professor of Social Studies of Science and Technology at MIT, and Director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self, and with a background in sciences, points out,

Behind the reticence to examine objects as centrepieces of thought was the value placed at least within the Western tradition, on formal, propositional ways of knowing. In thinking about science, certainly, abstract reasoning was traditionally recognized as a standard, canonical style; many have taken it to be synonymous with knowledge altogether. Indeed, so highly valued was canonical abstract thinking, that even when concrete approaches were recognized, they were often relegated to the status of inferior ways of knowing, or as steps on the road to abstract thinking. (6)

Although Turkle maintains that since the 1980s, with contributions from the sciences and feminist scholars there has been greater recognition of concrete ways of thinking and the pursuit of studies of the concrete (7), this complements Elkins' purpose, as stated above, that artists, as practitioners whose work is with objects and the making of objects, bring the experience of making into the academic environment, because "its methods, knacks and skills, its feel... is at the root of the incommensurability of studio art production and university life" (246). A pedagogy of making is where the concrete informs the art making, and also informs reflections and thinking - as artist, educator, and writer. Articulating that pedagogy of the inanimate, whether from the materials or the process of interacting with materials and object, the ideas drifting in and out of that practice, or the finished object, is a means to describe what is evocative about the material and the material making. It is a way to consider how connections were forged to both personal experience and, to use Turkle's term, to "intellectual practice"(7). Intellectual practice, informed also by art practice, with its pedagogy of materials is what I am trying to trace in this chapter; how my ideas initially directed material process, but then how material process directed the material objects, the continuation of my intellectual practice and the evolution of additional preoccupations, wonderings and further practices in art making. Easy to say that the combined processes of art practice research and written dissertation have been my overall Evocative Object for the last six years. Within it, there have been

other specific evocative objects of material preoccupation, intellectual practice and affection. But the difference between an evocative object made, such as an artwork or this dissertation, and a “found” evocative object chosen, as in Turkle’s book, is that the beginning, finding and solidification of objects made were decided by me in process. How can Turkle’s method, as sociologist, bring attention to objects, not as commodities, but as objects that shape our thinking, feeling, imaginative selves? And, how can a reflection with an evocative object, provide a model for thinking about art or for making art?

Turkle’s guiding framework to her authors has much akin to my creative process. She asked each author to choose an object and “follow its associations: where does it take you; what do you feel; what are you able to understand?” (7).<sup>3</sup>

This process of following associations, considering feelings, trying to understand materials, to pursuing emerging ideas, and to ponder the questions as they arise, is what she considers, intellectual practice. I hope to demonstrate that each object I worked with became an evocative object, in my push toward intellectual practice, but also toward thinking about an art object as something distinct from the everyday, although made from the everyday, with a history, surrounded by contexts, but also with the associations of the object, connected to my memory, which invited memory’s own bidding. Each object on some level resisted my process of imposing, extracting and facing whatever meanings the object itself proclaimed. Whereas Turkle invited authors to choose an object, my initial evocative objects were not chosen by deliberate decision, but rather as a visual idea that presented itself, with clarity in some cases or as a shadowy hunch in others. Although initially I imagined visual ideas for future art projects during that first summer in 2013 while collecting the many objects and materials it became obvious that my working direction, the meaning, was toward the past, where glimpses of memories or associations emerged through handling of the material

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<sup>3</sup> It would be interesting to do a similar exploration around evocative objects, or as a variation, an evocative material, or an evocative tool, with a group of visual artists, choosing any object including one they had made, and then follow Turkle’s instructions.

objects. When everyday material culture appears in artworks, as Seitz already described above, “Found materials are works already in progress: prepared for the artist by the outside world” (Seitz 84). To repeat my question, Where is memory? Although our surrounding physical environments are coated in layers of memory, we may be oblivious just as Proust declared, that it is hidden “in some material object...of which we have no inkling”(59-60). Memory arrives by surprise.

The dresses, shoes, clothing, fur coats, costume jewelry, Vaseline and bacon fat that I worked with pushed, pulled, taunted and teased me while I was left to ruminate as to why I wanted them so adamantly in the first place, why I had chosen them, what I was to do with them, how to understand the odd attraction I felt for the clothing, as they were not clothes *for* me; the comfort and repulsion of bacon fat; the medicinal police-like protective quality of Vaseline. They were clothes and substances that I needed to *do* something with, but the clothes and bottles of smeary slime were *doing* something to me. Thus, yes, they were objects to think with, but also they became objects that acted upon me, not simply passive objects to manipulate. While dresses hang and substances cling to glass jars in my studio, they rest in my mind, provoke me when touched, and then, “...I feel something start within me, something that leaves its resting-place and attempts to rise, something that has been anchored at a great depth; I do not know yet what it is, but I can feel it mounting slowly; I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed”(62). Marcel Proust should be quoted more often.

### **Bacon Fat**

Bacon fat is one of my evocative objects, and I choose it for more in-depth consideration here as it has been perplexing and disconcerting. Unlike the authors in Turkle’s book who describe positive rapports with their objects, like so many of the objects I was confronted with during this research, bacon fat is rather a conflicted evocative object. The 600 pounds of fat in Janine Antoni’s *Gnaw* is the focal point for me, of that art work. Although both the blocks are consumable as food, the

edible chocolate is what makes the inedible block of solidified fat so clearly fat, the undesirable, unspeakable, unfortunate side of the desirable, luscious chocolate. The fat becomes more repulsive in relation to the chocolate, an embarrassing reminder of the after-effects of desire. So this fat is charged with an undercurrent of disgust, anguish and antipathy.

Consider the many uses of fat: it is related to hygiene in soap. It is essential for sustenance. It can be used for protection, in the creation of light; of energy; or in food preservation. Hygiene, sustenance, protection and preservation. These are all traditional roles of the maternal, although not exclusively so. These indicate domestic use, which is fitting with my interests and pursuits, however, I will continue this discussion with a focus on the substance itself.

Fat is an object that in use changes states, from solid to liquid to flame; it devolves from fresh to rancid. Bacon fat, in particular, is the leftover from the desirable, bacon. *The Joy of Cooking* (1971) explains,

Bacon should have a good proportion of lean meat and not taste too salty. It cannot take much heat. Broil it or start it in a cold pan to keep it from curling...In pan-broiling, keep pouring off accumulated grease and watch carefully. Bacon burns in seconds and old bacon burns twice as fast as fresh (411).

Take that as a warning: old bacon burns faster than fresh. I have Old Bacon memories; would that they burned faster than fresh. Old Bacon, Old Money, Old Age, Old School, Old Story. *The Joy* cookbook offers three pages of information “About Fats in Cooking” expounding, “Few of us realize that, like an iceberg, the larger part of the fat we eat is invisible” (508). Another warning about fat, however, is that if we have poured off accumulated bacon fat, it is a lush syrupy brown caramel liquid, thickly turning to creamy vanilla. Bacon fat was the only fat that was kept in my childhood kitchen, although kept until the jar was full, the fat solidified in the fridge for convenient disposal; it wasn’t a culinary practice. So much tending required by bacon fat. Jennifer McLagan in her standout cookbook, *Fat: An Appreciation of a Misunderstood Ingredient, with Recipes*, (2008) explains that pork is a monounsaturated fatty acid, most commonly known as oleic acid. It is missing a pair

of hydrogen molecules (unlike saturated fatty acids that have complete pairs of hydrogen atoms) and is therefore softer at room temperature, somewhat stable and slow to turn rancid (6). She writes with culinary gusto about bacon: “Wherever pork is eaten, bacon is loved. Even when pork fat fell from grace, bacon, with its great salty and often smoky flavour, remained popular. ...Fear of fat made bacon a guilty pleasure that we could never quite give up” (72). Love, fall from grace, fear and guilt, to add to its iceberg-like menace and Old Flame transience. A slippery and manipulative indulgence, indeed.

Much later, I came across a historical examination of fat (not just bacon fat) as an example of material culture, by Christopher E. Forth, in which he highlights not just the ubiquitous familiarity of fat but the ambiguity of the material qualities of the substance, not only as it exists externally outside of our bodies but also within our bodies, as part of our internal physical structure (136). He explicates its many external purposes, uses, and its positive, negative and even contradictory meanings from ancient civilizations to modern times, and “the ways in which the materiality of fats ...has at times inflected cultural perceptions of corpulence” (137). Fat is an unusually versatile material, not the least of which are its many states, and its instability of freshness, which must have been more prominent a concern prior to refrigeration. Forth notes,

The modern West thus inherited from antiquity a view of fat as a sign of vitality and fertility that, when present in excessive quantities or in certain forms, was also capable of generating disgust... Fat *represents* increase while remaining a *material instance* of that increase; yet when increase extends beyond ripeness it easily transforms into waste and decay. (143, emphasis in original)

In particular, he examines select material properties of fat, and how these properties coexisted or possibly influenced (135) the production of negative social stereotypes and judgements upon the physical, mental and moral characteristics of people who were judged to be “fat” (148). Specifically, he posits social connections of material qualities of fat in combinations thus: unctuousness with corruption; softness with weakness; and insensateness with stupidity. It is a shocking array of attributes; the specific tactile, sensory qualities of the material noted and valued a particular way. It is

this translation that is so fascinating: the material affecting the cultural. By itself, fat is remarkable, yet whereas Antoni's 600 pound block of fat is irreverently large, it does not by itself convey corruption, weakness or stupidity; rather, something about volatility is in that excessive block of fat as it sits outside the body, dredged as it was from inside other bodies. By contrast, my collection of bacon fat filled a soup pot; that quantity, although excessive in a domestic environment, was less disturbing than the uses I wanted to put the fat to, such as coating a dress with a thick layer of it. The application of the fat to the dress hindered me; the application of the material to that cultural object, also a material object, was repugnant to me. I worried about the dress, but it was the action with the fat that caused the anxiety, the anguish and the anger. Forth emphasizes that fat as a substance has had historical and social significance; it is neither neutral nor passive in relation to culture. Specifically, because fat is also food, therefore living bodies both engage with, and are forms of, material and material culture (139). An evocative object that is both matter and person. Matter, material and its attributes not only affect culture - through consumption and various uses - but can play a significant role in how the culture sees itself. And, now I notice that I used the verb "sees," rather than "feels" or "experiences." Stating that "neither visibility nor aesthetics fully account for some of the negative images of fat people that have circulated in one form or another in the West," Forth's focus is upon complex interpretations that transfer negative attributes via the tactile or sensory characteristic of the unctuous and soft; but even more reprehensible is to be without senses at all, hence the insensate quality of the material itself. Simply put, the tactile or sensory characteristics are foundations for the moral judgement.

What is remarkable about bacon and its fat is how it provokes all senses: its aroma, its "unctuous" texture, its deep, enticing liquid brown, its enveloping salty-rich flavour, and its crackling, spirited sound while frying - the sensory experience of bacon and its fat precedes my ideas of it. As material, I know bacon. Cooking, seasoning, eating, preserving are instances where the material directs the participating person to develop their ideas and to understand how to work with the

material: cooking, seasoning, preserving and eating pork is quite different from doing the cooking, seasoning, preserving and eating of peaches. In this view, material objects precede, influence and help to bring to light ideas, assumptions and cultural understandings.

Could matter simply convey attributes? Could these attributions of fat apply to memory, or memories, and associations with fat? How is memory material? In answer to my question, “Where is memory?” - could it be in the substance, its usage, cultural associations, that *also* include the biases toward characteristics of the substance?

### **Sigalit Landau**

To push Forth’s point, if I consider that salt, water and muscle are also found both inside and outside the body, (where muscle is meat) these substances do not appear to harbour similar negative characteristics that are transferred to negative human characteristics. What is it about fat? In her use of salt, for example, Israeli artist Sigalit Landau has suspended in the salt water of the Dead Sea many everyday objects, such as food, a bicycle, fishing nets, dresses and shoes, but for my purposes here, given my interest in dresses, I will consider just one of the dresses. The Dead Sea itself earned its name due to the high level of salinity in the water producing a hostile environment for any plant or animal life. Landau’s artworks explore this static body of water, connected as it is historically and geographically between cultures in conflict. The artwork, *Salt Crystal Bridal Gown*, 2014, also represents a conflict but symbolizes a hopeful resolution. Using a black dress replicating that of an actress renowned in her role as star-crossed lover in an early 20th century Jewish play, the dress was encrusted with hundreds of pounds of salt after three months submerged in the water (Judah). Notably, during the process of accruing the salt crystals, the dress transformed from black to white, becoming the mourning lover’s bridal gown. Landau notes the draw of the elements, “It’s a little bit tantalizing, the sea in general and the crystal specifically — it’s very beautiful, it looks like milk or snow” (Ibid). Milk is a liquid obviously associated with a woman’s body. Snow, on the other hand, is

completely absent in the region of the Dead Sea. The object has now accrued associations both naturally connected to the dress and very foreign to it. As an object, it now evokes very different memories.

The artist advantageously uses salt crystalline structure to create objects that bedazzle, able to charm writer Tia Ghose of the popular science journal, *Live Science*. After explaining the nature of the Dead Sea's hyper salinity and the process of salt crystallization, Ghose declares, "As the dress initially caught bits of extra salt, that led to a locally higher concentration of salt, spurring the salt molecules to line up into crystals that eventually grew and transformed this deathly dress into a sparkly saline jewel." (Ghose). What makes this dress of salt so appealing? Landau explains, "That a bride can be from salt and not from sugar. That the past can be transformed so drastically and nature so healing" (Stewart). For all the hazards, deprivation and physical challenges of that specific Middle Eastern geography, still, nature heals, salt is healing. Could a dress slathered with hundreds of pounds of fat symbolize healing? Would it transform in a way that is aesthetically appealing? How important is aesthetic appeal? The idea of a rancid fat dress covered in flies and maggots is appealing to me, but the making of it, is not.

Landau describes her experiences with the Dead Sea environment: "Over the years, I learnt more and more about this low and strange place. Still, the magic is there waiting for us: new experiments, ideas and understandings. It is like meeting with a different time system, a different logic, another planet. It looks like snow, like sugar, like death's embrace; solid tears, like a white surrender to fire and water combined." (Ghose). Here, she cites solid tears as a metaphor for the salt crystals. Tears, whether solidified or liquid, are produced by the body, salt and water, they originate as liquid from within and are externalized through our eyes, on our faces; testimony to internal emotion, whether anger, love, or hurt, viewed upon someone else's face, tears inspire empathy. This association makes sense in Sigalit Landau's work as she is concerned with empathy and politics as much as with art: "Politics and poetry exist in my works, they mix and clash. When I look 'the

ugliness and pain of life in the eye', I know reasons for everything...whatever I feel is political. This is the force, the coercion of the place in which I live, but the materials I use are constructive" (Landau 60). Fundamentally, salt is constructive, the crystals build architecturally upon each other. The title for the article in *Live Science* gives it away: "Dead Sea Transforms Deathly Dress Into Gorgeous Salt-Encrusted Jewel" (Ghose). The power of salt is to transform death into an object that is hard, durable, shiny, sparkly like a coveted jewel, and white - and dry. These are all characteristics or attributes that are completely contrary to fat - which transforms from varying degrees of softness to liquid, is not durable, is dull and insensate, can burn, although this provides light, it also creates black smoke; although unctuous it inspires suspicions of corruption, and as if to verify its untrustworthiness, fat can change colour and odour, from luscious brown and creamy thick meatiness to a rancid, gag inducing stench in orange, brown and green. It is sticky, more wet than solid, dry only when frozen. By contrast, salt is a preservative, as in dried fish or in pickling vegetables; it is life-affirming, while fat, despite its necessity for nutritional survival, is usually characterized in repugnant terms. Considering Janine Antoni's *Gnam*, from this perspective, it/she pushes us to acknowledge this contradictory internal-external relationship we have to fat. She used 600 pounds of both lard and chocolate: the latter meant to be an excess of external pleasure, while the former, becomes the excessive internal by-product of the chocolate. One is desirable, the other, not so, but they are intrinsically linked.

Salt and fat, although both essential to our bodies, when externalized in everyday use or in cultural practice, as by Landau and Antoni for instance, the staging of the material itself provides context and conjoint meanings. This affirms Forth's historical insight into fat as a conflicted substance, which he points out is neither neutral nor passive in relation to culture (139), a point also illustrated by McLagan. Considering my own use of fat, perhaps what troubled me during my initial handling of this fondly remembered material, that then so alarmingly inspired disgust, was my unpreparedness for the potential influence of its many guises. Beyond my one poignant memory, I

did not consider all the associations, functions, or states of bacon fat as intrinsic to my pursuit. As an evocative object, a companion and provocation to intellectual practice, fat's own material substance plus its unique history bring slippery coatings, translucent liquid layers and opaque practices that inform and add metaphorically to my initial relationship with it. In terms of my artworks, bacon fat seemed to play a double role, as both substance to be applied to the dresses and clothing, but it brought its own meaning and strength of material associations to be more than a substance that coats or covers. It outweighed me. Although I did not pursue these projects with fat, it does beg the possibility to revisit it at a later date.

### **Dress Stories**

Sherry Turkle explores the many nuanced roles that various objects play in our lives, recognizing that “We live our lives in the middle of things. Material culture carries emotions and ideas of startling intensity”(6). Evocative objects as articles of clothing are addressed in Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell's anthology, *Not Just Any Dress: Narratives of Memory, Body and Identity*. The authors, collected short autobiographical stories, called “dress stories” as a qualitative, sociological research methodology (4). Weber and Mitchell explore how one object, an article of clothing, a gendered object, a dress, can reveal a multitude of ideas and emotions about identity, body, and culture:

It is when talking about mundane, concrete, material objects from our everyday lives that we often uncover the multiple and culturally constructed meanings that a whole range of events and experiences can have for us. Although we may not be immediately aware of it, talking about clothes forces us to speak, directly or indirectly, about our bodies, about details of material culture, about context, about commerce and commodification, about social expectations and personal aspirations, about media influence, family relationships, work, play, values, social structures, and more. (6)

Weber and Mitchell, both educators, offer dress stories as methodology for understanding a life history or for constructing a memoir, given the “capacity of clothes to conjure up memories is at

least partially rooted in sensory and emotional associations that are automatically and unconsciously established as we go about living our lives in clothes” (257).<sup>4</sup>

The artworks I made with dresses, *Born in a Castle* and *The Girls Live in the Toll Booth* demonstrate dresses as both evocative objects and as dress stories, but stories whose meanings are analogies and metaphors. Dresses have been part of artworks of mine in the past, as can be seen in my drawing,



*Flood*. 2002. Charcoal on paper. 218x184 cm.

*Flood*, 2002, in which a naked woman is ceremonially carrying a very long dress, walking through post apocalyptic architecture, heedless of an ensuing flood. It is unclear where she is going or why. The dress used with a model for the drawing was passed down to me from matriarchs of long ago, a wedding dress; it sits in my wardrobe and has appeared in two other artworks, both as rubbings. *Running in the Family Body*, 2009, (this page) comprised a larger than life size charcoal drawing of my body on the left, and a rubbing to the right, of the same wedding dress on which are attached Augmented Reality TAGS. This piece was an audio-visual exploration of memoir, considering what is physically shared in a family, and how resemblance in sizes and shapes of body parts are evocative of stories and reminiscences; body parts lead to claims of lineage, the various family talents, such as hands and musicianship, and hobbies, like sports, including explanations of genetics that are repeated, ignored, dismissed or mythologized. The title is about running. One story points out how skinny legs “run in the family,” similar to those of an old patriarch who ran two miles a day, almost everyday of his life from age 16 to 72. Why would he do that? Some stories said that he was a fat child and a privileged fat boy is an easy target.

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<sup>4</sup> The same could be said for shoes, or any other item of clothing. See Emily Spivak, *Worn Stories*, 2014, which is non-gender specific, and Sheila Heti, *Women in Clothes*, 2014.

Such skinny legs after all that running. In *Flood*, the wedding dress is being carried, walking, while in *Running*, the rubbing of the wedding dress is beneath the AR TAGS that are patterned in a grid, where rows at the top of the paper (which is the bottom of the dress) show images progressing from the past to images of the present at the bottom of the paper (the top of the dress.) The drawings of the body and the wedding dress are upside down, upended, as are the stories. Neither dress is celebratory; one is being carried through immanent disaster, while the other underlies stories that ponder biological connection.



Detail. *Running in the Family Body*. 2009.  
Augmented Reality TAGS  
operating.



*Running in the Family Body*. 2009.  
Left: Charcoal on paper. 183x100cm.  
Right: Rubbing of wedding dress,  
graphite on paper. 196x91 cm. AR TAGS on acetate.

As Weber and Mitchell state, “A wide range of meanings are constructed and co-exist around and through our clothes - some of them fleeting and unstable, some of them contradictory,” where the denotative historical and cultural meanings may comply, or not, with the connotative meanings that each wearer, in their own context, brings to the article of clothing (255). Painting a blouse with bacon fat and oil paint or conveying privilege through text - *Born in a Castle* - are ways to interrupt or redirect or amplify the assumptions of the objects and the wearer. But these artworks using dresses from 2013 weren’t fully completed, they were part of the exploratory beginning in the studio. However, at the level of the material, the tactile, the fingers and hands, the weight of the dresses across a forearm, the way the molded sewn shoulders fit into the corners of the hangers - how to account for these intimate, somatic experiences with these objects? Increasingly, I felt that

there was something else going on, at a material, textural, beaded and thread-count level that I could not articulate. The dresses could make me feel something I would not have felt otherwise. Was this memory? Or was this another layer of meanings, fleeting and unstable, as Forth describes, in that the physical characteristics of these material objects could transfer to a social designation? Both Turkle's and Weber and Mitchell's essays address everyday objects, and, interestingly, both books are structured around the life cycle. Consolidating thought, experience, memory and imagination, Turkle states, "Objects have life roles that are multiple and fluid"(6). In the case of fat and dresses, the fur and the other objects I was working with, they were related to many stages of my life within the domestic sphere; a site of phases of individual and community life. I did not start thinking more broadly of the domestic sphere as an organizing concept until the summer of 2014, but without searching for a connection among all of these objects and substances, without the pause of the intellectual practice of thinking and feeling with them, I might not have found a coherent thread running through them. On the other hand, reading through my Process Journal in the present, I find some ideas to which I did not give credence at the time, but now consider anew. My focus was divergently mingling among making art or calling it art, and why, while trying to understand my choices of objects and substances, and why or how these were evocative, or as Mitchell and Weber state, to understand their variously constructed, perhaps contradictory and unreliable meanings. This process of thinking with the objects was both material and associative; how did the materials affect or respond, and what associations - memory, idea and material - could be found with each object or substance? This also formed a foundation to later thinking of materiality as separate, but also connected to, the associative and social meaning potential of everyday objects.

### **Educator Practice:** Everyday Objects In An Art Education Class

As an educator reading Turkle's text, I was relieved that objects were acknowledged as bearing

affective weight. In education, objects are generally not brought together with affect. Children study things, or look at, dissect, analyze things, or bring in items of importance to “family,” generally meaning the adults, but encouraging students to cultivate a sense of significance for objects is a newer idea. I am referring to a child’s personal emotional connections to people, animals, objects and places, that create meaning within her immediate world. Kids have very strong affective relationships with things. In my Visual Art class, I invited adolescent students to bring in objects that are representative of their many collections at home. They then each shared their story about their collection with the class. The objects needed to be things that they didn’t purchase or were of minimal cost, so that monetary value was removed. A swimmer brought some of her collection of used shampoo bottles and bathing caps; some brought hair elastics; candy, candy wrappers, Bazooka gum wrappers, Pez and Pez dispensers; wallets or colourful socks they had received as gifts; money from other countries; glass bottles filled with random things; playing cards they had snatched from a parent’s stash; dolls they had collected; sock puppets; sand from a beach; and all but one student, in two years of doing this project, had collections of rocks. What was notable about the rocks was that they were collected for entirely affective reasons: they were with their mom when they found it; on a trip, in a special place, at camp; or they liked the colour. None of them remembered that they had studied rocks at school two years prior; there was no geological interest. It was fascinating. We arranged the articles and drew everyone’s collections together in a mobile non-still, still life where they could wander and draw all of the objects in whatever arrangement they wanted, so each drawing of the group collection was also unique. Then students thought “Inside the Box” and created boxes with objects that represented either what was most important about themselves or that was most important to them to share with others, inside a box that could be either or both, private and public.

I have also invited students to bring in their own handmade objects from home, things they made by choice, their hobbies and favourite activities. This has always been incredibly exciting and a great lead up to a project that required exploring materials in order to make a metaphorical statement. I have seen knit purses, mini clay and felt baseball caps; altered father’s dress shirts; hand sewn skirts and dresses, sometimes independently designed; tie-dyed and other kinds of designed t-shirts; audition tapes for TV; mini Fimo sculptures; sketchbooks; jewelry; nail polish designs; and dolls with handmade clothes; and a handmade skate board. Needless to say, all of these mostly ordinary things – purse, hat, shirt, dress, t-shirt, drawings, jewelry, doll clothes - were protected with care and shared with humble pride by the individuals. These students demonstrated that making,

having, holding, using, sharing, wearing are all sensuous experiences that bring everyday objects into meaningful relationships for ourselves, with our bodies and with those around us.

Clearly a correlation exists among the emotional, cognitive and sensual relationships with material objects that form during childhood, and later appear in memory. How could building awareness of our many layered relationships with materials and objects change our experiences of schools? And of learning?

**Making:** Completion of *Wardrobe*, 2013 And *Fur*, 2015

I am writing about the *Wardrobe* here as it is part of the story of the dresses. Although the full work and completion of the *Wardrobe* happened in 2015, and it is chronologically out of sequence in this written structure, it is, however materially related to the current discussion about dresses and women's clothing; and fur became an evocative object, partly through its material provocation. Fur also offered up the residue of memory through its distinctive tactility, a surprise that filtered through my use of it. In my earlier consideration of Making: *Wardrobe* 2013, I considered wardrobes in relation to Turkle's concept: Are wardrobes evocative objects? Or rather, they contain evocative objects; but perhaps more so, they are "evocative places." They are containers that open and close and hold many things and chosen objects. For a child, they are places with "things to think with" and the wardrobe that I was making was meant as a gesture to that evocative place for a child, a place to think with, to feel the presence of others but yet remain solitary.

Once the *Wardrobe* was built it took two years to realize how to finish it. Was it a sensorial "cabinet of wonders" and comfort? Fur on the exterior and coating the interior came to mind. I purchased 3 real fur coats at second-hand stores: a mink, an orangey fox, and sandy brown fur that I couldn't identify by animal. Fur coats offer, like dress stories, memories and narratives particular to class, gender and social context as well as to family relationships.

## March 13, 2015

*The evisceration of the first mink coat. So many layers and surfaces. Took hours to undo-un-sen, pull apart - a complex hand- made object - like a house. It has to be undone in the stages that it was constructed.*

## March 15/15

*Rachel Whiteread: her first casting 1988 - a felt covered plaster cast of her 'Closet.'*

*In Margaret Iverson (2007) p. 18: "This was at first an autobiographical impulse, using something familiar, to do with my childhood. The first cast from furniture was called "Closet," taken from the space inside a wardrobe." "Closet" (1988) is a plaster cast covered in black felt, an addition she did not repeat, perhaps because it is essential for the sense of suffocating over-presence that these spaces appear filled with a solidified liquid substance (plaster, rubber, resin)."*

*It is interesting to me that she covered her 1st cast, of a closet, in black felt - a dark, soft, tactile fabric. Whereas I am covering my wardrobe in fur although I am emphasizing the darkness on the inside.*

*From TATE website Rachel Whiteread: Shedding Life: "Casting directly from objects which are part of our everyday experience, she makes visible the spaces in, under, on or between things...negative impressions of them: the space around or inside an object and not the object itself. To make 'Closet,' for example, the artist explains: 'I simply found a wardrobe that was familiar, somehow rooted in my childhood...I was left with a perfect replica of the inside.' Whiteread's interest can be said to be figurative, her sculpture to do with the human body. The objects from which she casts - mattresses, beds, sinks, chairs - all have an intimate, physical relationship to the body's shape and function...all have a familiar, human resonance...her constant reference is human, involved with objects that people can hold, use and inhabit... always second-hand, they have had a life prior to the artist's treatment of them, and bring their own history to the meaning of the casts she takes from them." ([www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/rachel-whiteread-shedding-life](http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/rachel-whiteread-shedding-life). Accessed March 15, 2015)*

*My work is very small scale - kitchen, rubbings are up-close to my face, hand, body. Could the opposite be true in my work - it is about absence?*

The above quote from the Tate about Whiteread's use of second hand objects that "had a life prior to the artist's treatment of them" repeats William Seitz's comments further above, that everyday objects already bear a life story.

**March 21, 2015**

*While undoing dark mink coat I realized I didn't just want to cut it - cut off collar, sleeves, so undid them stitch by stitch. Reverse Craftsmanship.*

*Then I was looking at the pile of lining and reinforcement materials on the floor and the word 'cathected' came to me. Like the infant's/child's tendency to undo, pull apart, destroy whatever that was their object of affection/attention/imagination. So that it is hardly recognizable - undone. Is that part of what I am doing? ('Transitional object' according to Winnicott (1971) 2005).*

Was Fur a transitional object in this project? What was it about the ripping? Ripping as a cathetic process. Is a wardrobe a transitional space for a child? A peculiar place of comfort, between absence and presence, here alone, waiting or hiding.

I have an uncomfortable, queasy-familiar relationship with fur. Fur has been clearly "out of bounds" due to issues of animal exploitation. However, the women in my extended and privileged family going back generations all owned and wore furs, and so despite my adult repudiation of the class and class values I grew up with, as a child I was familiar with the sensory beauty of fur. Fox stoles, with real fox heads, bent and flattened snouts, squished and beady eyes, feet with crooked toes and claws, all still attached, caused a stir among us, the wide eyed young. Mink coats of various lengths adorned the bejewelled women in their glimmering satins laced with glittering decorations. The reality of privilege is it cultivates its own intoxication with itself.

When I was 20, as part of my peripatetic education, I moved across Canada. Before leaving for the cold north west I bought a second hand racoon fur coat at the Salvation Army, a double snub to the family collection of furs: mine cost \$25.00 from a second-hand shop. It also had dried out and had a number of small tears that gradually increased in size as I wore it. Word got back to an elder matriarch who gave "one of her furs" to me: a 3/4 length beaver fur coat in perfect condition. I can't deny it: I wore this fur coat once in a mid-winter snow storm but was so self-conscious I couldn't enjoy it. That was the only time I wore it outside. Beaver fur is extraordinary and unique among furs, not only due to its deep rich, lustrous browns and silky texture, but it has a

sheen: it has a nap, which means that if the hairs are all stroked up, they might be lighter; stroked down, they will be darker. In a sense, the nap shows where and how it has been touched. Stroke it with fingers spread, and the trace of the fingers remains. Other furs with longer hairs do not do this, or at least not as neatly, as the hairs either entangle or fall back into their original position. I have guiltily, yet stubbornly, kept that coat. Once every couple of years, I end up taking it out of the wardrobe, put it on, look in the mirror at the implausible image, then hang it up again and close the wardrobe door. Fur coat embodies desire, rejection, denial and guilt. So like bacon fat.



*Fur Coat*, 1999.  
Charcoal on paper. 183x107cm.

*Fur Coat*, 1999, is a self-portrait of the implausible. Coat done up tight, yet bare legged and bare foot, looking askance standing in the corner of a bare attic room; boots pointing in the same direction as *Prognosticator*, an almost five foot tall ceramic sculpture I made my graduating year from NSCAD. The coat is a prop, not quite a costume. The drawing is a question: Can I, or could I, wear this coat? It is not even my coat. It does not belong to me, as I do not belong in it. My shoes are going to walk right out of the picture following the *Prognosticator*. But I am still standing there, wondering: Where do I belong?

I decided on fur for *The Wardrobe*. A friend of mine took me to a suburb where the Salvation Army had “good fur coats cheap” so I bought three of them. They couldn’t just be cut with scissors as they were lined. I thought it would be a quick task to remove the lining. What I discovered through my subsequent evisceration of two full fur coats, was the hidden craft, the skillful design and stitching work required to turn the multitude of tiny animal fur skins into a convincing, flowing piece of fluid fur many times the size of each irregularly shaped furred animal, with several layers of satin and cotton linings to buffer between the maze of fur seams and wearer. Animals typically

eviscerate their prey, with hunger and abandon. Eviscerating a fur coat required a methodical, tedious ripping and pulling of single threads, carefully unmaking and undoing the craftsmanship that had united layers and layers of fabrics, stitched with hidden lines of thread, leaving openings for pockets, buttons or sashes, attached to the fur pieces that were so precisely yet unpredictably pieced together to form the outer shapes. The interiors of the fur coats were fascinating. Why are they not worn inside out? The mink coat was made of long thin strips, while the lighter fur was made of larger, more contoured shapes whose interior resembled a landscape of fields or undulating geography. I found a handwritten note inside the dark mink coat between layers, and a small braid of thin leather strips, attached, but evidently useless deep inside the linings. Were they talismans? Good luck wishes? Messages? It took over two full days and evenings to remove the linings from the two coats. A layer of fur clung to all of my clothes and socks, and created a covering of fur dust across the floor.

I made a rubbing of the mink coat on the floor. Once I had laid the coat down, inside out, it was surprisingly similar to the grain of the wooden floor. I found the mink coat to be erotic in the contrast of fur and skin, the openings and protrusions. This also surprised me. The first rubbing was of the fur side of the coat, and at the time, I was quite frustrated by the lack of texture that showed up on the paper. By contrast, the interior skin was more visible in a rubbing due to the hardness of the skin and the texture of the seams. However, I tried at least two different papers, and perhaps another for the fur, and was disappointed. Given the extraordinary texture of fur, I had assumed that some of the fur would have shown up in a rubbing, however, the disappointment is perhaps premature and these rubbings warrant a second look.

Cutting and attaching the lighter fur to the exterior of the wardrobe was straight forward at first, cutting to fit with scissors and attaching with staple gun. The first piece is the most advantageously placed on the coat while after that, covering the wooden shape required more piecing together of smaller bits, adding stuffing between the fur and the wood so that the fur was

not so flat but more contoured. It looked like a creature, rather than a covering on a board. That was a surprise. A creature wardrobe.

There was not enough fur to cover the entire interior, but most of it is covered. Not sure if the floor can stay bare now that the dresses are hung and shoes placed inside. Once covered with fur, I moved on. The *Wardrobe* now sits on the running machine in the basement, forcing it to stand still.

### **Making: Mother/S/Kin 2013-15**

This is another project that was begun but not completed when first envisioned and started. For this I found a tall second-hand mirror and made the version that I had in mind in 2013; then approached it again but differently in 2015.

### **July 2013**

*A mirror is a frame of recognition. Mirror coated in Vaseline, then a layer of sand - sleep - dreams - Sandman dumps his bag of sand. Dreams are opaque, invisible, disappear, gone.*

### **Aug. 15, 2013**

*Very watery petroleum jelly from dollar store. The idea was originally of a kissed portrait as an interpretation of maternal acknowledgement or embrace. It would be one thing to 'kiss a portrait' on a piece of paper because that is simply a drawing with lips based on an idea. But kissing in a mirror is more of a chase - it will always bring you to the same close up reflection of your face; specifically to your lips. Perhaps it shouldn't be a portrait - random kisses all over the mirror? a pattern? Representations of portraits - according to what perspective? Obliterate the mirror with kisses? Obliterate perceived self? Cover with mother? Wonder about Lacan's Mirror Phase - maternal reflecting back to infant, acknowledges infant-self as separate from mother-self. Anxiety of separation?*

### **Mother/s/Kin 2013-2015**

The idea for this originated July-Aug./13.

### **Mar. 10/15**

*Just spent the last hour making, kissing, or performing, Mother/s/Kin. The first thing I noticed was the fragrance of the Vaseline: "Teddy's Choice, Le Choix Nounours, White petroleum jelly, baby scent". The 'baby scent' on my lips and in my mouth was horrid and then I forgot about it. I had the piece on an ottoman so I could kneel and kiss the entire mirror. I greased my lips and started kissing the mirror. Kissing lost its charm after about 10 kisses. It became a long dull procedure. I started watching the clock. My knees ached. I gave up worrying about my hair, nose, chin and collar being wiped along with petroleum jelly. I started kissing down the left side first and noticed the kisses had a pattern. I wasn't randomly kissing anywhere but for the sake of 'coverage' of the mirror surface I went from one end, across from centre. I noticed the pattern was like a tree up the centre and arching out from the centre. I decided to keep it as it occurred due to the movement of my body - not by my decision - so more about "The Trajectory of a Kiss" or "Kiss Trajectory". As I went along, the monotony and the simple exertion reminded of all of the rubbings. Physical labour of a certain specific sort, not entirely creative in and of themselves.*

*I also thought of Janine Antoni's "Butterfly Kisses" 1996-99, where she blinked her mascaraed eye lashes against canvas, creating a random array of repeated marks. Some of the angles on the mirror were difficult to get into. It reminded me of times when i would try to kiss my own children as they wiggled out of arms and my reach before I got to put my kiss on their body as I hoped. We use terms like: plant a kiss, deliver a kiss, give a kiss, or send a kiss, blow a kiss if not touching.*

These were sticky, planted, perfunctory kisses, boring and bored kisses. It is a mirror of obfuscation and obscurity. In what way could this possibly be a desirable "mirror stage"? In the end, this mirror looked like burnished metal. This was another experiment. It was interesting but not compelling. Vaseline and fat are both sticky substances. Sticky was still interesting.

At the end of the summer of 2013, I returned to my job as a visual art teacher. I returned to my studio work in the summer of 2014, and picked up where I left off working with bacon fat.

## **SUMMER 2014: THE HAPTICS OF HOME**

This section documents the studio process in the summer of 2014. I will continue with the Process Journal entries in chronological order to focus on the Pedagogy of Making, first, with additional theoretical ideas added into the chronology. Although I began by making a few small projects with

bacon fat, my direction shifted at the end of the summer, as I made numerous rubbings of the Lake House, using graphite and various kinds of paper. I began with braided rugs, a pitcher of gladiolas, part of a wicker chair and a table, plates and cutlery, a shovel. It was while doing these smaller rubbings that I thought of *the haptics of home* as a descriptor for how I was choosing to make the assemblages and the rubbings. I wondered if it could provide a framing concept for the whole dissertation. In the early fall I made larger rubbings of sections of tree trunks, the cement wall in the garden, paintings in their frames, the kitchen floor, and also the staircase to the second floor with the landing and cupboard door on one long sheet of paper. The change of scale from small household items on the counter to expanses of architecture provoked a another way of thinking about the project, as well as a more complex level of planning, and then, a more demanding physical engagement. And yet there still seemed to be an array of pieces, somehow disconnected.

#### **April 2014**

*Could 'collections' provide a framework or structure for thinking about or organizing my artwork*

#### **July 14, 2014**

*A rubbing of the stairs - inside Lake House? Would have to start at top? No, bottom at end of roll and unfurl upward - rub stairs and walls beside.*

*For all of the jello ideas, we don't have the fridge space.*

#### **August 3, 2014 - Haptics**

*Reading Laura Marks' (Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multi-sensory Media, 2002) "When translating from one medium to another, specifically from the relatively more sensuous...[handmade objects and substances] to the relatively more symbolic medium of words, the task is to make the dry words retain a trace of the wetness of the encounter" (x).*

Her discussion of the process of writing as a translation is apt, as writing requires movement from one medium or experience, whether sound, colour, gesture, feelings, arousal, anxiety, nausea, or bereavement into the static form of words; this translation is in effect a form of Synaesthesia where

one sensory experience is conveyed through another sense (Marks, ix). Writing requires the use of the shapes of letters and words, metaphors themselves, to somehow represent anew what has transpired. The tactility and sensuality of wetness slides nicely with my term, sticky. Wet and sticky materiality is specifically clingy, attached, but potentially moving, leaving traces of its path even as it transitions to another state, through evaporation, freezing, solidification. The trick of words, in thought and in writing in a public written dissertation is to allow the order of words and phrases and paragraphs to organize a very disorderly tactile, wet and emotional, intellectually divergent, and at times, physically taxing array of experiences.

### **August 3, 2014 continued**

*I am trying to figure out what 'encounters' I am trying to convey through art work. My advisors asked, "Whose memory am I referring to?" What memory?*

*What about drawing the things in the Lake House that belonged to others who lived here? Dead plants; dishes; knitted sweaters. Add rubbings on tissue paper. Combined with mono prints? Or embossed images?*

*What about drawing on the floor - like a rug - made of embossed sections - like a quilt or a carpet- some with geometric patterns and some with scenes/stories? Collographs with movable parts? (Homage to Riegl - textile curator).*

*The idea of an 'image' object on the floor - I've done before: "The Floor, the Wall and the Door"; in a self-portrait with a braided rug; rubbing of braided rug overlaid with of a rhubarb leaf. Also the "Play Room Floor" 1998 showing chaos of parenthood on a floor covered by toys.*

*Reading Laura Marks: (Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multi-sensory Media, 2002). She is a film theorist and critic, tasked with considering how the audial-visual work of film can also tap into other senses. P. xii The Haptic: "Touching, not mastering." From Deleuze and Guattari. "smooth space" is "a space that must be moved through by constant reference to the immediate environment, as when navigating an expanse of snow or sand." (Quoted in Marks, Deleuze and Guattari. "A Thousand Plateaus" pp. 474-500) Like walking on ice. Walking on the beach this morning - a total physical/sensual/full body/embodyed experience. Effects feet, calf muscles, gait, balance therefore proprioception (knowledge of physical self) as well as skin depending on weather - bare skin, heat, wind, chill, cold, blowing sand, moisture. The haptic: "Close-range spaces are navigated not through reference to the abstractions of maps or compasses, but by haptic perception, which attend to their particularity"(xii). Marks refers this idea to Deleuze and Guattari. (Ideas to make: MAP of a dress, a rug, a tea cup, a drawer, a cupboard, a room, a home, a bed from childhood.) (A Haptic Map.)*

Notes in Process Journal based on reading Laura Marks: *Touch*, 2012. xii-xiii.

<i>(Alois Riegl 1927)</i> HAPTIC	OPTICALITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ancient</li> <li>- Intercultural</li> <li>- Embodied</li> <li>- Material</li> <li>- Mimesis (criticism)</li> <li>- Close</li> <li>- Singular</li> <li>- Particularity</li> <li>- Multiple points of contact</li> <li>- Textures: Physical tactility</li> <li>- Smooth (Deleuze &amp; Guattari)</li> <li>- PERCEPTION: tactile, kinaesthetic, proprioceptive, in &amp; out of body</li> <li>- HAPTIC VISUALITY: Eyes organs of touch; draws on other senses</li> <li>- Near</li> <li>- Multi-sensory</li> <li>- Body: all sense involved: hear, smell, touch, taste</li> <li>- Inter-corporeal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Knowledge</li> <li>- European post-Enlightenment</li> <li>- Rationality</li> <li>- Disembodied</li> <li>- Language = symbolic</li> <li>- Distance</li> <li>- Ideal</li> <li>- Ready-Made principles</li> <li>- Striated (Deleuze &amp; Guattari)</li> <li>- Dominance</li> <li>- Western idealism</li> <li>- OPTICAL VISUALITY</li> <li>- Far seeing</li> <li>- Renaissance perspective</li> <li>- Figurative</li> <li>- Space</li> <li>- Figure and ground</li> <li>- Interconnect</li> <li>- Visual mastery of individual viewer</li> </ul>

*Alois Riegl - originated term Haptic.*

*Haptic and optical slide back and forth.*

*\*\* Does memory slide from haptic to optical - combining and separating? \**

*(A room of furniture coated in bacon fat.)*

**Making:** Rubbings

**August 5, 2014**

*Made a graphite rubbing of embroidered pillow. The rubbing of the cushion was now a memory of the cushion - a bit indistinct - imperfectly representing ... like a memory - clearly there, but details very indistinct. What a rubbing does is concentrate the black or the texture of the object in the centre - or where the ridges of an edge are - a bit like drawing something backlit, where the concentration of shadows is in the centre and the edges are light as the back light reaches around the edges. It seems an apt visual/metaphor for a memory.*

**Making:** Bacon Fat

**August 6/14**

*The day of bacon fat. For the container of bacon fat the original idea had been to make the “round peg in a square hole” but with a mirror. However, in the photograph, quite apart from the reality of rancid fat, vomit smell and the disgusting nature of fat on fingers and all the surrounding surfaces, is the “beauty of the image.” It looks like a*

*creamy crème brûlée, a favourite desert. How photos lie - both ways - they make the complex look simple and the sensually ugly look beautiful.*

*Round Peg Square Hole*, 2014, brought together all of the bacon fat that I had accumulated between summer of 2013 and 2014. The numerous jars and a can of fat were transported to the Lake House where three works were made and documented. For *Round Peg*, each jar of fat was emptied into one huge soup pot to melt down to a uniform consistency. The stench of the rancid fat made me gag and want to vomit - it smelled worse than vomit.

Laura Marks discusses the power of smell: "...smell has a privileged connection to emotion and memory that the other senses do not...Experiments in sensory memory show that while we recall equally well from looking at an image or smelling an odour, the odour memory is much more likely to be accompanied by a blast of emotion. There's little doubt that smell is the communication medium most intimately associated with memory" (120). This explains why the photos of the *Round Peg* are completely ineffective - visually, they masquerade the smell and texture; that bacon fat cannot be contained in writing.

After making these pieces with bacon fat, I threw the huge pot with the fat for *Round Peg Square Hole* into the garbage. There was no other way to dispose of the fat, and I did not want to clean, see or smell that pot ever again. The ice cube trays of *Drowning the Buds* and *Drowned Geranium* still take up space in my freezer, enhancing all frozen food packages with a staunch musty stink that has to be washed off to be rid of it.

**Making:** *Drowning the Buds* and *Drowning a Geranium*

**August 6/14**

*Again, there was an image in mind that I decided to make.*

*I have never liked or understood geraniums. They were very popular when I was growing up. I remember their smell. Mostly I disliked their garish scarlet red - orange-red. I bought a big geranium plant at the market. I had no problem chopping off a big blossom for the ice cube trays. But then, the colour of the red (I chose the more crimson one) really*

*struck me - against the fullness of the leaves. One of the leaves fell off in the car and when I picked it up I was startled by the recognition I felt looking at it - but particularly, by the smell, or fragrance. I have seen these leaves, it seems all throughout my childhood. There is an excess in geraniums. I was surprised when I actually looked at the geranium blossom after cutting bits from it. It is a fecund plant. Each 'flower' is actually a cluster of individual buds/flowers. Each 'blossom' is a complex structure of flowering buds and buds waiting to flower around it. The leaves are wide, rounded, generous. They look beautiful in their creamy little cube, frozen in place and they looked quite wonderful in the translucent fat.*

So many memories in a leaf, in a bud, in a blossom. Where is memory?

*Other rubbings: carpet, lid of laundry basket, throw rug, bed spread. The rubbings show how to use marks to indicate textures of various kinds. They are the haptic image - they need a bit more to give more meaning.*

### **August 8, 2014**

*Reading Peter Elbow: "Writing with Power; Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process." 1998. Freenwriting - write without stopping for 10 minutes. Turn this into Drawing - Free Drawing - helps to practice the producing process separate from the revising process. I will keep a separate sketchbook for "Free Drawing" and use this at school with kids. We'll draw together.*

### **Educator Practice: The Free Draw**

This is one example of how my dissertation research, in this case into writing, influenced my work as a visual art teacher. Having introduced Free Draw into my courses at school, it is one of my students' favourite activities. Directly following the Free Draw we include either a partner or small group share, or an optional "Gallery Walk" open book share.

### **August 12, 2014**

*I was lying in bed early dawn yesterday wondering how to convey these ideas/memories that are more like 'hauntings' ghosts from 'before' my past...so 'before me' and before my memory = BMM. What was floating through my mind was the drawing I did using backlighting. It is, as an image, similar to rubbings, in that the light and shadow are reversed. The highest points are darkest; the lines between where normally there is not light [it is in shadow and thus black] as it is an indentation, becomes white in a rubbing. Internally, the distinct shapes/textures have an outer white edge of 'light' with dark/darkest in the centre.*

*I woke up and thought - I have found my method. It was a joyful discovery and a great relief.*

*I was thinking of the difference between the kitchen and the studio: the former is a source of pleasure, the studio is often a source of angst. The kitchen is about making known things for known ends. They are usually based on close people's stated or known preferences, so that pleasure is inherent in the making, anticipation, serving and consuming.*

*Art as synaesthetic experience.*

*Eating/food as synaesthetic experience. The synaesthesia of sharing pleasure of food.*

*I invite my friends to choose an ice cream flavour, and then make that ice cream for them. What kind of art activity could give that immediate, made to order, sensual, pleasurable experience? Completely individualized - like Laura U. Marks pointed out about smell - we all have individualized sensory experiences with smell. Ice cream flavours are generally chosen for personally affirming reasons.*

### **August 17, 2014**

*Peter Elbow again "Writing with Power; Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process." 1998. (Lists a number of techniques for "the creative element" in the writing process, to get "more of your experience linked to your thinking"p. 60. I put his list of 13 Techniques in my Process Journal.) These techniques could be interesting for Free Drawing/focused drawing with kids; to do for myself; and now to possibly organize some of my approaches to my own work - particularly - "Prejudices"; "Dialogues" - between 'memory objects;' "Scenes" - rubbings of floor in kitchen, doors, windows; "Portraits;" "Role Play"; "Time;" "Errors;" and "Lies." All very evocative.*

*Draw a room - layer over with written dialogues, speech bubbles, other drawings - on tissue, plastic, mylar.... Layer the portraits - objects - dialogue - lies.*

*Also consider the Domestic Sphere - rubbings of: braided rugs; stairs; table; vanity; floor - kitchen, bedroom; stove-top; oven grates/racks; dishes; cutlery.*

### **August 19, 2014**

#### **The Haptics of Home**

*Yesterday and today-made several rubbings- some experiments with chalk and oil pastels and white candles, paraffin wax - only works on hard surface, does not work on textiles-rugs. Graphite stick and one coloured sticks conte/pastel - thick - work better than chalk - both have powder but the pastels more so. Done - 2 braided rugs - 1sm 1large on reg and on tissue paper.*

*Dining Room table - round with Victorian tiles. This was the most 'gratifying' as each tile was unique and it was possible to lean over each one and watch the image very gently emerge - some so subtle - depending on the glaze application. I loved the delicacy. the texture of the wood was also distinct around the edges. While rubbing this and watching these faint images emerge from beneath the graphite, I thought that these rubbings are about the haptics of home. Perhaps that is the overarching concept of my dissertation. Since my supervisors encouraged me to think of 'my memories' and the viewer- I have really oriented my focus on the textures, colours, smells, sounds of this place and wonder how to better grab them and use them.*

*A number of new possible pieces and objects emerge:*

- *The Ceiling - the witness to transgression. A rubbing of this ceiling could be interesting to approach - along the lines of Peter Elbow's writing prompts: a dialogue with; a scene; an error on my part, someone's part, the bed's part. 6 different rubbings - hang like ceiling - write to them.*
- *Include my poem - The Incest Bed*
- *The fire place - wrap around*
- *Carpet in living room*
- *Set of windows*
- *Angled corner of ceiling in my bedroom*
- *Plants: of season - beet tops, chard, rhubarb leaves; geranium leaves, poppies, lilies*
- *Lamps: wrap paper and rub; unfurl.*
- *Gladiolas - from the local farm; and the pitcher.*
- *Rubbing on tissue paper of the beach*
- *Wicker chairs, love seat.*
- *Curtains - books and all - trace the pattern with the upside down flowers on one. (Sore evidence of a matriarch's dyslexia). Pull closed and rub them on window - so whole window frame and curtain together - transparent.*
- *Mirrors and frames*
- *Rubbing of mattress cover*
- *Dresser*

*Some of the tissue paper rubbings could be hung in a sequence/ line up - transparent.*

*In terms of haptics - these are all sensual surfaces/ objects - translated into flat 2D images. How does 'flatness' relate to the concept of memory? It seems apt.*

*Colour is an issue if I continue to use graphite - everything is grey on white. Since my drawing style is also black charcoal - and since these memories are for the most part troubled - perhaps rendering them black and white like old photos suits them. I find it startling seeing old photos in colour - perhaps my memories are black and white and that's partly why drawing/rubbings work. Colour is a jolt in the present/now but not part of the past - atonal - not atonal - monochromatic.*

*These objects, scenes, portraits relate to the haptics of home.*

As is evident from this entry, this was a turning point. Rather than looking outside of the home, in second-hand stores or yard sales, my focus shifted to the specific objects and particular places within that home. My sensual engagement with these objects and materials led me to the concept of the haptics of home, in terms of thinking about my direction and orienting my studio working process.

#### **Sept. 23 2014**

*Patriarch's Robe Undone. Rubbing on bedroom floor. Floorboards - pattern of white and thin boards shows through in rubbing, through robe.*

I found matriarch and patriarch bath robes at the back of a wardrobe at the Lake House. Familiar from many years, an adult lifetime of wear. Holding these garments was a surprisingly tentative, delicate, somewhat repugnant experience. Open them, search them, realizing they had probably not been washed since the last time they had been worn; turn them inside out, lay them down, pick them up, place them on the floor, stretch them out, cover them with tissue paper so that they are still visible. Then to kneel over them, feel my legs and the tops of my feet against them through the paper, rubbing my fingers into them, and stroking with my hands while pressing the graphite against them into the floor. Unleashing for me, as it was *Undone* for the gown. The rubbing was made on the floor of my childhood bedroom.

**Aug. 25/14**

*I have started walking around the Lake House with new eyes and hands - looking for objects to use for rubbings. How far could I go? If I make a bunch of rubbings what can I do with them all? Fold them up into an unfolding book-a package of unfolding rolls-sheets of tissue and cartridge? Put them all in the suitcase I found?*

*Found Geranium essential oil - used for "calming." How could I use essential oils in papers? Contrast to bacon fat? Coat rubbings in bacon fat/Vaseline/essential oils? So that the tactile, optical, olfactory work together? But the bacon fat is so repellant no one would touch it. [Or want it in their gallery.]*

*What is interesting about the wrapped rubbings, is the distortion of the complex 3D forms - the wicker chair and the ceramic pitcher - they become disjointed forms through the irregularities of paper.*

"Texture Eyes" described how it felt to be exploring this place now.

**Sept. 21, 2014**

*How much physical labour goes into making all of these rubbings - even the small framed oil paintings - I wondered if the textures of the paintings would somehow reflected the image in the painting - but they don't. My knees are saved by knee pads, but shoulders tired from leaning forward on one arm. Ambidextrous but still requires process of rubbing - careful attention.*

**Sept. 27, 2014**

*Rubbings of two cedars - in between which hung red canvas hammock with white fringe when I was young. These trees have been here more than 50 years.*

*The background influence of some of these rubbing ideas isn't just the idea of haptics of home but also a way to highlight features of this home - this building/Lake House - following the example of architect (Finnish) Juhani Pallasmaa Editor "Hvittrask: the Home as a Work of Art," 1988. The book documents the architectural creation of Gesellius, Lindgren and Saarinen - large and small features are highlighted - doors, rugs, windows, stairs as well as rooms, floor plans and aerial photographs.*

*Does loving the Lake House make the rubbings a work of art or just memory?*

Juhani Pallasmaa writes: "Hvittrask was the focus of Saarinen's life in Finland; after his move to the US, it was the embodiment of his longing for home, the object of his close attention and the occasion for his yearly visits" (10). Similar to my experience of the Lake House. How does a place create that kind of intense attraction and desire?

**Sept. 28, 2014**

*Rubbing of kitchen floor - what a huge task - despite the smallness of the kitchen. It was odd - felt like washing the floor but here I was applying black marks to it. The floor has its own unique story in each section or each tile - with chip marks and cracks. So many feet have stood and walked there.*

*I am anxious - my list grows, I am focused and working but cannot keep up. I am also not sure that there is any point to doing these rubbings - they are bland - just grey textures - although 5-6' long and wide. What else could be done with these? floors - clothes - objects.*

**Oct. 4 2014**

*Stairs. Rubbing the most involved. Held roll at top stairs by metre stick in roll - pulled paper to bottom and work from bottom to top - folding paper around each stair as roll is at top and could continuously unfurl. Then pulled roll up across hall up on laundry cupboard door - so from ceiling 2nd floor to floor on ground floor.*

*I wonder about using each stair as a frame for another drawing? Or of hanging it from ceiling? Then adding the rest like a paper doll house.*

## **Haptics, Aesthetics, Phenomenology and Art**

Haptics as a concept introduced and then validated a mode of interacting through the senses with the world of everyday objects and places, with materials in a studio, with art making, and with art objects in general. Having been educated in art schools during modernism's demise, formalism and perspectival realism did still play a significant role in my experience prior to an introduction to feminist art and postmodernism. However, due to my attendance at art colleges rather than art departments in universities, I also had the opportunity to explore many crafts, such as glass blowing, textile printing and tapestry weaving, paper making, ceramics and hand-built life-size ceramic sculpture, as well as drawing and printmaking. My art education encompassed a Western perspective of Art History, but also, a history of craft which by contrast, interestingly, offered an enthusiastic global cultural history. Thinking about haptics as the non-verbal, non-ocular sensual experience of making art brings together craft and making, emergent studio process and the potential meaning(s)

of materials. Haptics in a practice, in a studio or in a kitchen or with the materials in a bathroom, cultivate emergent learning; heuristic learning, by doing, trial, experiment, error, and try again.

I was introduced to haptics in Laura U. Marks' *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*. As a film critic Laura U. Marks explicates a theory of haptic visuality where the viewer is engaged as an embodied spectator, affected "not simply in psychic registers but in the sensorium," (17) even while the ephemeral nature and limited duration of film does not produce a tangible object. Particularly in film she intends to "restore the flow between the haptic and the optical that our culture is currently lacking. That vision should have ceased to be understood as a form of contact and instead become disembodied and adequate with knowledge itself is a function of European post-Enlightenment rationality" (Marks, xiii). In this, Marks reiterates art critic Jennifer Fisher in her project to resuscitate the "premodern meaning of the 'aesthetic'" re-inscribed as Haptic Aesthetics, fully comprised of multi-sense perception, and as a "term of perception and experience...[which] accounts for the thinking body itself" (4). Fisher posits the significance of this recovery as a stance against the domination of modernism's adhesion to the "singularity of vision" (Ibid) and that reuniting the corporeal with aesthetic experience will build an understanding of the experiential in contemporary art in relation to the "beholder's sensory production of knowledge." (Ibid). Not only is the artist creating works through various sensory engagements, but artworks, as Marks stated for film, stimulate a sensory response in the viewer beyond that of just the visual. Fisher refers to the haptic sense as:

comprising the tactile, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive senses, describes aspects of engagement that are qualitatively distinct from the capabilities of the visual sense. Where the visual sense permits a transcendent distant and arguably disconnected, line-of-view, the haptic sense functions by contiguity, contact and resonance. The haptic sense renders the surfaces of the body porous, being perceived at once inside, on the skin's surface, and in external space. It enables the perception of weight, pressure, balance, temperature, vibration and presence. (5)

Fisher's interest is how both the visual, 'distal' and the haptic, 'proximal' are not separate, but intertwined in visual art (5). In all of the artworks I had made thus far, they each began as visual

ideas, but the internal tingling or thudding resonant connection I felt for each of them was sensory - including the olfactory, and the potential of taste, comprising the bones from meat that I had eaten in *The Joy*, for example. This was a compelling way to think about the connection of the senses as an approach in art making. Looking back on my thinking about the four women artists discussed above, each one made work that either directly engaged the haptic in the making or in the completed artworks described; and each one impacted the viewer, speaking for myself, as both visual and multi-sensory subjects. As Fisher states, expanding our view of the aesthetic, “as a means of connection and sensorial engagement, can be recuperated and mobilized as a much more complex, wide-ranging and dynamic idea...aesthetic analysis can elucidate the significance of art’s sensorial aspects in the production of knowledge” (10). I am still unclear as to what “the production of knowledge” is, in art; in keeping with a haptic or sensorial engagement, I think of art as an encounter, some kind of relation that is not fixed either in the artwork or in my “encounter” or engagement with it. What is sensory knowledge and how is it distinct from other knowledges? My body, comprising senses and mind, partake and perceive an artwork, or a reproduction of one, within a certain time and geographical location; similarly, body, senses and mind perceive and partake in relation to my movements through my days, whether at home, wearing particular clothes, walking through crowded school hallways, in my kitchen preparing food, or wandering through a childhood home of memories. My experience of an artwork, of art making, or of the everyday passage of time is perceived and acknowledged while in my body, in whatever state of mind and affect at that time.

This view is echoed in some of the early philosophical theories of French phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. I briefly mention this as it is an underpinning philosophy from which further consideration of the senses and haptic experience evolve. Martin Jay (1993) expressly describes Merleau-Ponty’s crucial, if perhaps incomplete, contribution to this area of phenomenology. In Mark Paterson’s “archaeology of perception,” which he compares to Merleau-Ponty’s early *Primacy of Perception* (3, 1964), Paterson explores bodily sensations, including

kinaesthesia and proprioception, noting that, as these were the subject of phenomenological analyses by Edmund Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology is therefore a suitable mode of analysis of these more interior senses of touch (7). Phenomenology, by comparison to all other areas of philosophy, is “a branch of philosophy which is unusually open to the interpretation of sensory experience” (16). Detractors of phenomenology claim it is too subjective, merely descriptions of private phenomena (24) and criticism of Merleau-Ponty by feminists for his universal body: “indubitably abstract, singularly white, adult, able-bodied and male” (153) is well taken. However, as philosophy that considers the lived experiences within a body, it is an historical reference and a field for future mining given its direct connection to heuristic experience and learning.

Could the Phenomenological method of rich description of sensory experience, as used in a Process Journal, work as a method of writing, and of dissertation writing for PhD in Visual Art?

Laura Marks introduces the concept of the Haptic Critic and Haptic Criticism which bears similarity to my approach throughout this project. I wonder how this is similar to Phenomenological description:

The haptic critic, rather than place herself within the “striated space” of predetermined critical frameworks, navigates a smooth space by engaging immediately with objects and ideas and teasing out the connections immanent to them... Haptic criticism is mimetic: it presses up to the object and takes its shape. (xiii).

Although Marks is writing as a Haptic Critic, this could also be a relevant descriptor for haptic making, such as I have laid out in the dated entries from my Process Journals. These entries reveal the specific processes of making and thinking, recording the immediate engagement with ideas and with haptic experiences of objects, while striving to find connections among them. Consider also, Michael Carter’s theory of writing in a discipline: if an artist is haptically driven then, writing directly about that sensory experience while seeking connections, as depicted by Marks, also demonstrates writing in that discipline. How must artists shift the kind of writing that occurs while writing about

the making that is essential in that discipline? Jennifer Fisher's theory of haptic aesthetics and Marks' theory of haptic criticism affirm this sensory experiential involvement while making and writing; together, these two theorists forge the connection between the senses, the symbolic form of writing and affect. The haptic sense provides an affective link through sensory experience.

### WINTER 2014 AND SPRING 2015

My readings moved from objects to architecture and to place. However, during the winter the Lake House is buried in snow and I live far away in a large city. I was unsure of what to do or make, disconnected from that place. Reading through my various process journals, photocopying pages and considering what to make next, I followed the ideas from spring 2014 into the winter of 2015 to work with petroleum jelly, gelatin and eggs on small scale projects combining everyday items from the kitchen, the bathroom, the bedroom.

In their special issue on sensory aesthetics in *Senses and Society*, 2012, Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher daringly include examples from restaurants, haute cuisine and fashion in order to

elucidate the interactive and participatory registers of a sensory aesthetics that is not constrained by the rigid (and now outmoded) distinction between high and low culture, an obstruction that was traditionally buttressed by the pre-eminence of vision in the hierarchical ordering of the senses...Moving beyond such a binary logic, we expand the critical consideration of fine art to include gastronomy and fashion, as well as sensory aesthetics that pertain to embodied affective encounters both inside and outside of conventional exhibition venues. (134)

Gastronomy and fashion are shared in public exhibitions in restaurants, fashion shows and retail opportunities. None of the following works were originally intended for exhibition as they were explorations, considering food, serving food, serving food as metaphor, with various mixes and mishaps. These intermediary projects did, however, continue to provoke for me as the maker, a sense of uncanny discomfort through their familiarity and evocations

**Educator Practice:** What could this focus on the senses and haptics mean for art education?

The Art Gallery of Ontario has a new program that is focused on a sensory approach to experiencing artworks, particularly for the visually impaired. (AGO). An idea for a project: students create a “sensory” exhibit, considering some of the artists discussed by Drobnick and Fisher. A sensory curriculum, not to separate the senses but to reorient students to the interrelatedness of the senses would also be a possibility.

### **Making: Petroleum Jelly, Eggs, Jello and Gelatin**

#### **Eggs and Petroleum Jelly: *Unlearning***

*Unlearning*. 2015. Raw eggs in carton, petroleum jelly.

**Nov. 5/13** - First idea: small drawing of eggs in carton: *Unlearning. Small eggs coated in Vaseline.*

**Mar. 7/15** *Recipes for the Abject*

*Scraps. Abject. Eggs and Vaseline.*

*While coating and scooping gobs onto the eggs of 'Unlearning', 2015, I wondered "Is this enough?" What if I just keep adding till I've used up 2 containers of Vaseline? Not like in cooking where "enough" is prescribed, decided in advance - open to some moderation within a limited range but very limited. Cooking is determined by "what is enough" in advance. Whereas Art eschews "enough" and asks "what will happen if..." or "I'm gong to add this to that and see what happens."*

*But in learning what is enough? How is that part of the pedagogical question? Have we taught "enough" content? Have they learned enough? How will we know the "answers" to any of these questions? Do we test students - can they show that they have learned enough? Enough measured backwards by content but immeasurable by the unknown future. What is enough for the unknowable? 21st century learning: What is enough for an educator to "do"? Educators do and enough is the measure of the educator and of the student. Enough - unspoken measurement. What is enough in cooking? Cleaning? Making Art? Mourning?*

*With a disease like dementia, enough is the unanswered request. There is never enough of remembering. There is too much loss.*

How enough of x is determined says a great deal about the determining person/social group/culture/society. The question of “enough” seems to be at the crux of education, but also of art and art making. What is enough, what is more than enough, what is too much, what is excess, how do those things pertain to art, to an object, to meaning? Is it an excess of materiality? In excess of acceptability, beyond the “norm”? In education, a more quantifiable version of enough is the norm, as students need enough courses and marks to graduate, enough practice, enough knowledge of various aspects of a discipline. Enough is a determiner, a pronoun and an adjective. It is about the present and the future: What is enough now to ensure a future result?

## **Gelatin And Jello**

I made a variety of plain gelatin and commercial Jello molds suspending eggs, jewellery, a tea cup inside the material. Jello is a trademarked, coloured and flavoured gelatin. Gelatin is a flexible substance as it not only changes state from liquid to a semi-solid, but it is translucent or even transparent and can hold its shape for a limited amount of time depending on the environmental conditions: it needs to be kept at a cool temperature. Although lightweight objects can be easily suspended in the solidified state, heavier objects will cause the solid to disintegrate.

## **Gelatin**

**May 10, 2014**

*Gelatin Eggs. Eggs suspended inside: 6 of 1, 1/2 dozen of the other. Quail eggs. Terrine (gelatin) layers of lingerie in gelatin.*

**March 9/15** *Wishbone*

*Turkey wishbones were a childhood tradition for making a wish. Boiling turkey bones produces gelatin where here I submerged/embalmed/entombed the wishbone in generic gelatin. Opaque and transparent.*

**Mar. 13/15**

*Rachel Whiteread - massive scale yet still refers to the 'human'. I wonder if my piece(s), by contrast are on such a minute scale - they refer to the absent human - attention to object, not (the) human who lived there - Melancholia?*

**Mar. 21-23/15** *Six of One and Half a Dozen of the Other*

*The Egg - in cooking and in eating should be removed from its shell. In cooking, it should be incorporated into the food, not separate. I wasn't originally thinking this would break. I liked their suspended look-layered. Like a fantasy that falls apart. Whole eggs and shell as food-not food.*

**Mar. 23/15**

*These egg pieces took a few days and several layers of gelatin to form and layer the eggs so that they are nicely suspended above and around each other. I have started to get the rhythm of gelatin and Jello. I think they are all falling apart as the gelatin which is quite weak falls apart with gravity and weight of all the objects I put in there - except the wishbone. I should probably double [the gelatin], Gelatin alone has a passing, weak but disgusting smell. Jello on the other hand has that candy-medicine and chemical smell.*

**Jello**

A tea cup in Jello was the first piece I tried with Jello, and quite easily made a mess of it. It requires patience and time to set before the next flavour layer can be poured. I stirred it up instead. A friend's mother explained that you boil the water, stir the jello and pour it, between loads of laundry or cleaning. Then come back later and do the same with the next flavour. The careful planning and timing required by women working in the home. For soup or bread, I understand that. For Jello apparently I did not, but that is how Jello masterpieces are made.

**Mar. 10-12/15** *Pearls in Jello. 2015*

*A truncated neck, no torso, no head. Just a neck submerged in Jello [surrounded by] pearls. Jello is a bizarre product: It tastes like medicine. It appears I am a very bad jello maker. My moulds don't work despite adding less water as suggested. The layered colours don't show up that well - quite unlike the picture in the cover of the Jello book. Failure in the kitchen.*

*Jello: the riotous within the domestic is found in the kitchen sink before the refuse heads down the drain. Jello as sculpture - transformable, mutable in use and structure; ecological; transitory. Despite following the recipes, these photos [of the globs in the sink] act as an anti-cookbook of kitchen failures, or the aesthetic of kitchen failures. Like the disgusting smell of rancid fat: What to do with kitchen failures?*

Jello is made of gelatin. Gelatin is made of collagen. If cooking with Jello is a creative activity, then according to the Jello website, collagen is the creative material:

*How can one possibly mold Jell-O into so many different shapes? The gelatin in Jell-O is what allows you to get so creative -- but what exactly is gelatin, anyway? Gelatin is just a processed version of a structural protein called collagen that is found in many animals, including humans. Collagen makes up almost one-third of all the protein in the human body. Collagen is a fibrous protein that strengthens the body's connective tissues and allows them to be elastic... that is, to stretch without breaking. As you get older, your body makes less collagen, and individual collagen fibers become increasingly cross-linked with each other. You might experience this as stiff joints from less flexible tendons, or wrinkles due to loss of skin elasticity. (Jello).*

Here I was trying to avoid the body, the family, the body that represents the family, the body as the connective tissue of family, and I ended up using it in a “creative” commercial form.

*Slippers* and *Forgotten Slippers*, 2015, was a duration piece, through the stages of making, and then of ‘forgetting’ it for three months, whereby its ensuing process of disintegration and mouldering produced the end product. My physical engagement with the piece ended in March. I left the bowl in the fridge for three months, originally because I couldn't decide what to do with it, it was quite large to lift and turn upside down. (A family member opened the fridge and said to me: “I thought I told you, I don’t like flip-flops in my juice.” One of the drawbacks of making art in a shared living space.) Once the mould began to collect and the Jello to shrink and pull away from the sides of the bowl, I decided to leave the Jello and the suspended slippers to succumb to its own breakdown as the slippers had belonged to the matriarchal relative who had succumbed to dementia. Dementia eschewed with the time of her life, oversaw the waning of her matriarchal role, and so the submission of the gelatin to the weight of time, gravity and temperature seemed appropriate. The submerged slippers, like underwater creatures, floating specimens in chemical solution; yet the bowl is a rainbow of Jello colours, open, greeting, invitational, as any bowl of food. Food is open for the taking, while specimens are closed; food is shared while specimens are documented and archived. Perhaps these distinctions represent Diana Taylor’s contrasting use of the archive and the repertoire. As a ritual the sharing of food is an embodied, life affirming, community activity, that has its own sequence for inviting, beginning, consuming and ending. A specimen is perhaps established using

specific criteria prior to submersion; and it is guarded for future experiments upon it, with reference and additional documentation outside of it by others, thereby performing archivally rather than as a piece in a repertoire. If part of the distinction then is that the repertoire is performed and embodied in the moment, through agency and choice, whereas the archive has performers perform upon it, then does that make an archive an ‘object of...’, and a repertoire is one managed and directed by ‘subjects who...’?

Does a subject have agency when they forget? Can we have a repertoire of ‘forgetting’? Obviously, we have many repertoires against forgetting - birthday parties, cookbooks, alarm clocks, pop-up reminders, photo ‘albums’, written music, cultural or spiritual traditions. If I neglect an artwork in order to maximize its decay, could that be a ritual of forgetting? How does neglect differ from forgetting?

### **I am sticky**

*Sticky. Petroleum Jelly. Petrol & jelly repel together. I cling. Smear. Slather. Stolid, I hold my shape. Pale, translucent. Like jelly yet tasteless. Hold my place, even upside down. Pliable, thick beyond liquid. Unmoving. Heavy. Gaseous petroleum, dredged out of drilling and rigging. Gripping petrol, jelly tensile strength outwits the cleansers. Vaseline, once I was a Wonder. Adhere to me, will it or not. Insidious sucking of pores. Unnerving slickness. Filmy slimy glop. Outlast the nipers. Sticky thicky stickiest of Jelly. I am defensive. Stickiness. Clog, cover, hide, prevent, pretend, protect, conceal. Even steal. I am the worst.*

The title of this chapter is “Ground Floor: Come to Your Senses,” as a single family house would likely have the kitchen on the ground floor, connected to other living spaces. Many of these initial projects or explorations contained substances and physical action connected to the kitchen: storing bacon fat and spreading it or preparing gelatin/Jello in moulds, all of which brought a pronounced sensual awareness to the making process. The use of clothing would typically be associated with a bedroom or hall wardrobe while Vaseline and face wash would be stored and used in a washroom. However, the different substances and objects were combined without respect for their room or yard or ground of origin: Pearls and Slippers in Jello; Vaseline with roots, and sand in a cookbook;

flowers preserved in fat. There is something “unhomely” about this kitchen, this place where we prepare food, or rather, where I enact preparations resembling kitchen acts, but these acts and objects transform the kitchen to a place of serving inedible, anti-nourishing, repugnant un-dishes, in a sense, a place of unlearning the habits and traditions of the kitchen and cooking. These sticky substances together relate to functions of the maternal: Pond’s Cold Cream Face Wash is used for personal hygiene; Vaseline is used for protection; fat is part of daily sustenance; Jello and gelatin consist of a protein base which is nutritious. Hygiene, protection, sustenance, nutrition. A preservative is missing; perhaps Sigalit Landau’s use of salt could also be an attempt at preserving the ephemeral, every day objects in her artworks.

However, these small scaled forays were unsettling for me and difficult to place. I could not understand the anxiety produced by these assemblages. Bringing the unlikely materials and objects together produced the uncanny effect of anxiety. The familiar was accompanied by the unfamiliar, and so there was a simultaneous sense of finding and losing the familiar. This simultaneity of loss and recognition is how I explain my experience of the uncanny. I see/feel/recognize while at the same time do not recognize the familiar. A moment of not knowing, wondering, questioning, uncertainty that is not quickly resolved through explanation or reason. It is unsettling. The loss of the familiar in the face of it. It seems unfair, wrong, a trick, a joke, a guess at unguaranteed certainty. Hence, loss. And embarrassment. Why this anxiety? Why do I not know what to do or why I want or don’t want to do the thing I thought I wanted and envisioned? Why have a visual idea if it is too uncomfortable to make it? My mind’s ideas seem to be ‘beyond me.’ This is a possible distinction between thinking in art making compared with academic research.

## ART PRACTICE RESEARCH: RESEARCH CONTEXT

“Those features that belong to the image as image, art as art, are transformed under the discursive mandate to try impressions into words, to explain rather than to experience, and to turn the simultaneity of vision into ordered chronological syntax - all in the name of research.” (Holly 7).

In this section, I address how art practice is currently evolving within the university and doctoral context within and beyond departments of Visual Art. My purpose is threefold. First, I will discuss the rationale for the process of documentation in a Process Journal, as has been used thus far in this writing to impose a chronological structure. Second, the chronological entries from the Process Journal have structured this chapter of the written dissertation as a means to follow a Pedagogy of Making as it unfolded in my Art Practice Research. And third, distinctions will be ventured between the various terms in current use and their various enactments and understandings in universities, whether in humanities, Social Sciences and Education in particular, and Geography, and in doctoral programs in Visual Art departments. There are differing descriptors for the multiple understandings, interpretations and practices of Art, and its “usage” across various disciplines: Arts-Based Research, Practice-led Research, Art Practice as Research, Artistic Practice as Research and Creative Geographies. If art is “used” for an intention or purpose outside or beyond the practice of making art, that would be a consistent criteria for Arts-Based Research (ABR), as in art enhancing disciplines outside of art to create and communicate their research. I have pursued my long suffering art practice as art, not sociology, within the broad parameters of contemporary art, and in the academic research for this paper, I have sought theoretical connections that also reach outside of the discipline of art but bring significant reference points to contemporary art making. I chose the term, Art Practice Research, to keep the descriptor to the point, without simile or comparison, just as any other researcher might say they are conducting “scientific research” or “historical research,” not “history as research” as this seems redundant; science is the quintessential model of research - practicing science already means research. Some artists may choose to be practicing artists and not

art practice researchers. One criteria for higher education Visual Art degrees in Art Practice Research is the use of Documentation of the creative process, as Gilliam and McGilp, de Freitas, and Fortnum and Smith advocate, which I elaborate below. However, to my surprise, Arts-Based Research did play a role in this dissertation as I explored creative writing as a means to address secrets, which were hidden and anecdotal, hardly archival or documented as historical events. Creative writing, writing in academia and writing toward a doctorate in art practice will be further discussed in the next chapter, “Second Storey.” The challenges of assessment of Arts-Based as well as Art Practice within the university environment will be briefly discussed.

### **Documentation: The Process Journal**

In bringing art studio practice as the research process and product into the traditional and exploratory qualitative research field of education, moving out beyond the Department of Visual Art, the obligation arises for me to articulate the tacit, understated, often inexplicable dimensions of the creative process, which has proven to be a challenge. I have organized this chapter chronologically based on entries from my Process Journal, frankly hoping the entries would speak for themselves. As a visual and written document these journals become the record, or the archive of the creative process as I experienced it at the time, and as a document, can now be foraged for information in a way methodologically similar to archival research of personal journals. Perhaps it is this intentional creation of a researchable document that moves art practice into art practice research, whereby two parts of the process become researchable: the practice of documenting, or as Fortnum and Smith describe it as the methodology of documentation (170); and then the practice of art practice becomes researchable. But as Fortnum and Smith point out, not surprisingly, the relationship between artworks and process is complex (171). I would expect that relationship is also

unique not only to individual artists, but as well, the creative process may vary in specific art projects made by the same artist.

In general terms, the dimensions of the creative process being documented are material and intellectual, but to speak of the material requires addressing the visual as well as the physical, tactile, kineasthetic, or haptic bodily engagement in the making process. This then invokes explanations of the progress or meandering, evidenced through divergent trends or multiple material experiments concluding in art works that are declared as finished or unfinished, in process, preparatory or experiments, from the point of view of the artist in the studio. Bill Gilliam and Helen McGilp advocate for a practice-integrated Creative Process Journal that is “like an interview transcript, thus provides the empirical data for subsequent critical interpretation ... or for a more formal analysis led by research questions” (181). While being filled with detailed description, they advocate for the direct correlation of documenting the working process clearly so that it can be discussed and conveyed and add to the broader understanding of “*how* artists know”(179), which is in effect, what I have done here, using dated entries to demonstrate the development of ideas throughout my working process. I initially chose a broad research question posed by Estelle Barrett in *Practice as Research*, regarding the choice of studio practice as research: “What new knowledge/understandings did the studio enquiry and methodology generate that may not have been revealed through other research approaches?”(1). Part of what this studio enquiry reveals is how its own process occurs, its own pedagogy of making. More specifically to creative work, what I have called the Process Journal, makes visible the movement in the tacit working process, allowing it to be viewed and possibly discussed in light of “research questions.” However, Gilliam and McGilp are quick to point out the ambivalence toward predetermined questions in a creative process:

What these questions are can only loosely be predicted at the outset. The notion that research ‘questions’ or lines of enquiry antedate the ‘investigation’ is here confounded. In arts research, as in the creative precursor of *all* original research, questions, directions and resolutions emerge: the progressive development of these elements being recorded and

reviewed in the thesis. This is the essence of using a CPJ [Creative Process Journal] as a formal research tool” (183).

The Process Journal is intended to provide insight into these varied processes and to potentially illuminate previously invisible trajectories of material and thought transformation as it occurs in the studio. That is what I have hoped to show here through using a combination of chronological narrative with theoretical consideration.

Most visual artists grow up or study their field with a sketchbook of some kind in tow somewhere. My previous use of sketchbooks has been to randomly draw at the front, write at the back, and collect paraphernalia between the pages. Entries were not necessarily dated or connected to each other. This unsystematic array represented my part-time approach to my studio practice, before committing to the specific rationale of Nancy de Freitas for using a Process Journal in graduate art practice.

Nancy de Freitas’ research regarding a definition of studio documentation as a practice to be encouraged with graduate students studying art, design and the performing arts, was based on the premise that in the face of empirical models of research, the arts could provide more evidence of the “intellectual and creative substance of the artwork,” (1) and proof of the analytical and critical thinking that was on-going in studio practice. Evidence and proof. The artists in her research project maintained numerous practices for documenting aspects of their work, such as collecting photos, drawing or occasionally writing in a sketchbook or creating a digital document. What was missing for these graduate students of the arts was a strategic approach to documentation as a means of knowledge construction, through deliberate writing about the evolution of their artwork and their ideas surrounding it:

There is a difference between documentation used as an active research method and the straightforward recording of studio experiments and completed work. When documentation is applied to practice in direct association with critical and reflective engagement, it becomes an exploratory tool that has the potential to influence work in progress and be used constructively for this purpose. The process of moving intellectually or creatively from the

known (present position) to the unknown (next position) is an inherent part of studio practice and evidence of its occurrence is an important aspect that should be included in an exegesis... This process of inference should be documented and later edited so that significant aspects can be communicated. (4)

Her suggestion, like Gillam and McGilip, is not just that this sort of documentation should happen often, but that it should be a strategy of studio research, occurring at every turn in the creative process. More specifically, De Freitas suggests three significant points of reference to include in on-going reflective writing: “1) the original or subsequently modified propositions, questions or speculations; 2) the tangible evidence of work progress such as photographs, models, digital files, etc.; and 3) the theoretical perspectives” (6). Establishing this focus is meant to bring integrity to the process of reflective thinking as a means of illuminating practice led research. While attempting to follow de Freitas’ three suggested points of reference - Propositions, Progress, Theory - while in the middle of it all, my use of the Process Journal was not neat or carefully structured around these three points at all. Rather, I used the writing process as a means to contemplate theory or questions or recall memories or make lists or write a description of an activity as the need or impulse arose; I regularly printed and glued photos of art work as it progressed, and wrote in the moment, and then wrote and commented on previous writing in a back and forth response. Sometimes I discussed readings, or took notes from readings, while other times I simply rambled about my plans or intentions, making observations that now could be of little interest or might have led to a significant understanding, such as my consideration of the “haptics of home” as an organizing idea. So although I used the Process Journals regularly, and developed a practice of corresponding in them, the gathered commentary there demonstrates the array of observations, experiences, changes in direction, questions and wondering that arose not before, but hand in hand with whatever was immediately preoccupying, while working and considering on-going interactions, events, ideas and recollections. This exemplifies perhaps, the benefit for me in the practice of writing and keeping a

record of that writing while collecting photos and images of progress, assembling and containing whatever thoughts or objects move in and out of view.

These journals provide a record to remember and recall the dynamics, the decisions and the stages over the duration of the work for reference during this dissertation writing. I have been surprised while re-reading them; I was reminded of many moments and actions I had forgotten. However, I wonder that any kind of documentation of a working process can fully represent that process, where thinking has changed multiple times, with each new material or object made, each book or text read or those encountered in footnotes and bibliographies. The intellectual evolutionary process through reading is less visible than the photos of artworks. The end results of the reading and writing are only partially documented in this written dissertation, and it must be recognized that although more organized than my previous approach of using sketchbooks, the methodology inherent in the Process Journal is still provisional, while it creates its own collection, its own archive. As such, I have two overfull Process Journals that have made the journey with me since the proposal exam in June 2014.

### **Art Practice Research: Theoretical Issues**

I will begin with a brief description of practice-led research (Sullivan 2005, Barrett and Bolt 2010, Paltridge et. al. 2011) and why I have, perhaps boldly, chosen this as the focus as well as the working approach of this project. As Christopher Frayling pointed out, there is a difference between advanced practice and research, and also between research as a process and a research degree that is a qualification. (Macleod and Holdridge, xiii). I am a full-time art teacher, and I do not have an advanced practice in art-making; I chose to approach this project as an artist because it is what I had assumed I would do as a young art student but did not do. Diving into this deep end at this late stage in my teaching career, and at this point in my life, I was encumbered with all of the learning

that happens for an amateur at the beginning of a serious endeavour. This dissertation is an examination of my working and learning process, which I consider to be research, and of the extra-discursive pursuits that occurred as a result of what happened in the studio, which have also inspired a great deal of theoretical research.

The art practice research field in higher learning institutions splits into two groups: one group uses arts methods, and they are both non-artists and artists attempting to convey “non-art” research, as in sociology for instance; the other group is practicing artists in PhD programs. The following terms are examples that reflect methods used by non-artists or artists working in: Sociology: Arts-Based Research or ABR (Leavy 2009, 2017, McNiff in Knowles, 2008); Education and Sociology: arts-informed (Cole et. al. 2004, and Knowles and Cole, 2008); community-based activist-research (Knowles and Cole, 2008); Education: Artist/Researcher/Teacher: A/r/tography (Irwin 2004). Of note, all are North American in origin. Art practice-led, research in and through art, art as research, and artistic practice are terms used within doctoral programs in visual art departments in North America, Europe and Australia. (McNiff 2013, Wesseling 2011, Macleod and Holdridge 2006, Borgdorf 2012, Maharaj 2009).

A clear distinction exists between the approach of the artist and the sociological researcher who researches a research question, gathers data following a clearly outlined methodology that may also incorporate arts approaches, where the arts may then also be used as a means to communicate the findings. It seems, then, that Arts-Based Research is somewhat incomplete as a descriptor and this has contributed to the confusion. What seems to distinguish it from art practice is its alignment with sociological research, and with the structure of “using methods - of art making” to do that research. Findings, as results of the arts methods, are then presented in whole or in part through/with/in the Arts.

On the other hand, what of the artist, in my case working within education, whose artworks and experiences in studio and as writer, have pertinence to education? Given my Visual Art

education in the early 80s, I would broadly position myself within the discipline of Visual Art rather than sociology, following the lineage of post modern, feminist art from the 1970's and 80s.

The differences between practice-led research and Leavy's definition of arts-based research will help to clarify my theoretical position. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt state the aims of studio-led, art practice as a research methodology in their introduction to *Practice as Research*:

It is aimed at extending the processes and methodologies of artistic research as the production of knowledge and assessing the potential impact of such research within the discipline and the broader cultural arena. The emergence of the discipline of practice-led research highlights the crucial interrelationship that exists between theory and practice and the relevance of theoretical and philosophical paradigms for the contemporary arts practitioner... We propose that artistic practice be viewed as the production of knowledge or philosophy in action... artistic research demonstrates that knowledge is derived from doing and from the senses. We demonstrate further, that practice-led research is a new species of research, generative enquiry that draws on subjective, interdisciplinary and emergent methodologies that have the potential to extend the frontiers of research. (1)

I will return to their statement regarding “assessing the potential impact of such research within the discipline and the broader cultural arena” in my consideration of art practice as an approach to research in education at all levels. My own art practice demonstrated Barrett and Bolt's point above that knowledge is derived from doing and from the senses. If I might re-phrase Barrett and Bolt, the contributions this dissertation could make are as follows: to exemplify a ‘generative enquiry’ that has the potential to extend thinking, and perhaps engage a community of thinkers within the Faculties of Education and Visual Art. It becomes an example of “a pedagogy of studio making,” where the thinking is represented in the Process Journal, in the making, and in the art object, and that making and thinking are indicators of research. Interdisciplinarity can productively develop through subjective, emergent practices, while considering art practice research as a frontier that offers unique possibilities as research, not only within the academy at large, but also within schooling, where a standard, traditional approach to research by young students is maintained.

What distinguishes ‘art practice-led research’ from art practice is the self-consciousness of the ‘research’, on the one hand, as a subject to be explicated, and further to that, the explicit

requirement for the written component of the dissertation. The requirement to write, and to do so in a variably prescriptive fashion would be a deterrent for many artists who prefer to focus on making art. However, the point of art practice research is to unearth and open up the thinking and searching by the artist as it occurs in the studio, in relation to books, to the lived world, in front of other artworks or media, through conversation, in contemplation, all in relation to an art project or a body of art work. This thinking has historically been invisible in the end result of the artwork and to the audience, or rather, not explained in words. That invisibility, or missing explanation belies the significance of that thinking; between the documentation of process and the written submission, the complexity of art practice and its own thinking may become more visible. As it is, there are diverse approaches to the written component in PhD practice-led programs as McLeod and Holdridge, and Paltridge et al., demonstrate.

To push beyond Elkin's point above, what I have now called, *A Pedagogy of Making*, where he points out the importance for artists to illuminate, validate and therefore familiarize readers with the art making process, is the question of the validity of these studio practices themselves as research. Elkins, again (243) makes the startling suggestion to avoid comparison with or the use of the term 'research': "In general I do not find it promising to tinker with research or new knowledge: they get in the way, and they are too diffuse and too distant from art practice to be much use." There is the conundrum: what terms do we use for what happens in an art studio? Elkins suggests finding concepts and methods more appropriate to the studio and its theories.

One method is to consider process itself: research in sociology, for example, compared to research in studio-making. I will look for a moment at the process of research as delineated by a small group of artists in comparison to my own experience of traditional sociological research. Fortnum and Smith in discussion with artists noted "patterns of process" (169) such as: A. the self imposed parameters of a practice; B. the way artists strategically balance unknown outcomes with known procedures and ideas; C. the movement between different types of engagement with

materials and concepts; D. the drive towards [and away from] resolution (169). Because I am standing with one foot in art education and one in visual art practice, what is interesting about this list of patterns of process (that is, unfortunately, not elaborated upon by the authors) is the points of meeting and separation between qualitative research process and art practice process.

Speaking only from personal experience researching a traditional Masters thesis, here are a few considerations: A. any form of research requires parameters; traditionally these are decided beforehand, stated, and they do not allow for deviation; and those original parameters must be addressed in the conclusion. Stating the question from the outset may or may not occur with art processes - parameters are permeable and flexible, they may be significant at the beginning of a project or may emerge during a project, they may be similar or completely different by the end of a project. So it would seem less about the self-imposition of parameters but rather the timing of the nature of the chosen parameters in relation to the project that might distinguish an art practice process from a more traditional research process. The parameters I worked with as demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter, to make the assemblages that came to mind with the materials and found objects as imagined, formed the introduction to this dissertation research; and these parameters changed as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, and new parameters in materials, concepts and theories were pursued for the final project.

B. A strategic balance of the known procedures with the unknown outcomes is, to be fair, common to any good research. I remember in a graduate education methodology class being told that we should be surprised by the outcomes of our research: otherwise, what was the point to reconfirm old ideas or ways of thinking? However, the degree of unknowability is higher in visual art, as although I have an idea of how the final work 'might' look and be received, I will not know until it is done and exhibited; and then, because I do not wish to be tied to the standard writing model, the end product for this writing is also unknown, posing a creative, intellectual and rigorous challenge. C. and D. strike me as indicators of the generative and therefore, unsettled mind, with

movements between types of engagements with materials and concepts, impelling the drive toward or away from a particular resolution - would all be requirements for trying to think anew, to allow a shift to a parallel or angled approach, above or below the current passage.

However, in social sciences research with human subjects, with institutions and their programs, such as schools and their curriculum, as these were my concerns in my masters thesis, I felt bound to resolution, to a positive outcome, as that would confirm my research by demonstrating its ultimate purpose through its usefulness, and by making recommendations that could lead to its beneficial recurrence. As graduate researchers, we are expected to demonstrate the significance of our research, whether researching in schools or in studios and writing dissertations about it. Moving toward significance and resolution is what universities are expected to do. However, moving away from resolution, with a feminist critique of the domestic (Rossler), toward a condemnation of the double standard of desire in consumer consumption (Antoni) or the materiality of death, preservation and conflict encrusting a symbol of love (Landau) or the inversion and misapplication of the everyday domestic objects with materials (Oppenheim), and then, in my own work, are ways that art does not follow an expected process of resolution in research. The four artists I have discussed here have made artworks that are highly significant, well resolved pieces of art that are theoretically relevant and incisive, materially innovative, as well as symbolic, metaphorical and poetic. As a research process, however, I suggest that their significance is in C. the movement between different types of engagement with materials and concepts, as the range of those engagements is two-fold: first, the manipulation of the material, the things and objects, and second, how these materials, things and objects become imbued with the ideas, the theories and concepts.

My own movement swerved along a path that began with second-handed engagement using second-hand clothes and everyday substances in a way that I found quite off-putting. This then swerved into a more personal approach using an inherited family home as the subject, or the main object or the protagonist, and the secrets of the home emerged much later while trying to write this

dissertation, as will be discussed in the next chapter. Thinking anew as an artist means making things that cannot help but be in relation to other art objects, and or their ideas, and seeing or finding distinctions while also recognizing commonalities. Critically discerning where the balance lies then, is the challenge - is it with the distinctions or with the commonalities? Art weighs distinction as the more significant criteria. I sought relationships with other women artists while trying to discern this balance, in the following ways: for their use of feminist critique of the everyday domestic in objects, materials and place (Oppenheim, Rössler, Antoni); for their use of materials similar to those I used, such as fur, fat, food and clothing (Oppenheim, Antoni, Landau); for their use of similar subjects/objects, such as dresses, shoes, assemblages (Oppenheim, Landau). Part of the research in art practice is in finding and knowing some of the connections within the art practice neighbourhood. One of the drawbacks of Arts-Based Research used by researchers outside the discipline of visual art, is in not knowing the art practice neighbourhood well, as I will address below.

Then there is the question of how art practice could forward strategies that will change the nature and practice of research. Marquard Smith poses the pertinent question:

Can art history, visual cultural studies, curatorial strategies, and fine art practices themselves initiate new strategies for doing research? How might they change our notion of what actually constitutes research? How do our encounters with art and visual cultural practices provoke the emergence of new objects and subjects of research, thereby forcing us to return to the question of research anew? In light of recent curatorial activities and fine art practices, aren't they already doing this? (xxi)

It is quite arguable that fine art and possibly current curatorial practices have already inspired new strategies for doing, and mostly, presenting research in the Social Sciences, and as currently used is what constitutes Arts-Based Research.

## Art Practice, Writing and Language

Regarding writing in research, whether art history, visual art, or cultural studies, art historian, Michael Ann Holly had this to say: “If the activity involves considerable reading rather than looking it is called research...our strange disciplinary passion - turning images into words and calling it “research” - often goes unremarked” (3).

Janneke Wesselling emphasizes that the research of the art practice be demonstrated in a structured verbal defence before peers. He describes the ‘artist-as-researcher’ as someone who is open to engage in dialogue and debate regarding their artist statements, their production and thought processes with an academically informed public (3). Implicit, then, is language:

...almost everyone concurs that language somehow plays an important part in research in art. Without language it is impossible to enter into a discourse, so the invention of a language in which we can communicate with one another about research in art and through which we can evaluate the research is probably more important than devising a viable research methodology. (4-5)

It is difficult to know which is more confining: the specific language(s), inevitably with a set of required terms ‘in which we can communicate... about research in art’ and also, about evaluation of that art, or a ‘viable’ methodology. Wesselling’s suggestion for the ‘invention of a language’ simplifies the obverse side of the research coin: the sterilization of the standardized methodology of academic research has in part been created by standardized language which methodology was organized to re-create and validate. My distance from the university environment places me at a disadvantage to comment upon the intricacies and challenges of working through the range of art practices, with the debates and dialogues about importance, contribution, newness, originality, validity etc. But, the necessity of language, or rather, effective debate, then, also becomes a criterion for acceptance to and successful evaluation of the PhD in Art Practice Research. Will these very specific requirements of some kind of academically written text, accompanied by rhetorical language skills in cultural theoretical debate, both born in an academic environment as opposed to the studio,

be the cornerstone of Art Practice as Research, as distinguished from art practice? Are academic skills to be the final measure? What is the goal for a researcher? How will studio practice distinguish itself?

Mieke Bal states: “What is needed is a concept of research specific to visual arts which has come up... namely *close looking*.” I would add to this, close sensing, with attention to haptics. “Out, then, goes the blinkered art historian; in comes the close reader [sic: Looker? Observer? Sensor? ] of images. Sitting in front of ...[various kinds of artworks or archival materials] a student of art...will have to look for the longest sustainable time until the object starts to move, morph, and transform” (2008, 210). I have never found the term “reading” when applied to visual art works accurately reflected my experience of looking or rather, experiencing art. Bal’s description of what she means by the term close looking is significant: “to look for the longest sustainable time” requires stillness, kinesthetic control, on the one hand, and most likely, sensory awareness on the other. A close looker might ask: How did the artist do that: with their hands/tools/techniques in what way? While close looking or experiencing, why do I continue to follow the sections of the art work and end up *here*? What is being communicated here not only visually, but materially, through the object itself? What echoes/references to the historical and current world events/histories/cultures can be found in this work? What philosophical concepts/ideas might emerge, to pose philosophy in action, as Barrett and Bolt state above? (1). Where are my thoughts roaming? Sensory awareness would be inherent in the close looking, otherwise, how might the art object seem to the looker that it was moving, morphing, and transforming, metaphorically or sensorially?

What makes art practice unique, and quite antithetical to a research paradigm with predictable “methods” that provide, among other things, a structure of procedure and report, is the demand of art to be new, to be different from other art - from what has gone before, such that copying styles, following a predecessor’s processes, making work that is just like someone else or closely based on someone else’s work, as one might do in a performing art, like music or dance or in

the performance of a well known play, is absolutely not encouraged in Visual Art, unless it is a form of critical engagement.

Sarat Maharaj (2009), an inventive and exciting writer in the field of art practice research, states any attempt at regulating a method or a process will eventually be adapted and redirected according to the artist's "handling, by embodied knowledge" (2), so that, "exact repeatability' would be looked upon not only as unlikely but as undesirable, where each rerun would spawn unique, one off variants - where repetition amounts to unpredictable generation of divergence and difference" (5). This focus on the individual handling in the production of work is also what is tacit, unplanned at times, unpredictable, frustrating and temporary in its importance, depending on the project. I doubt that knowing about the different consistencies and sensory elements of the different brands of petroleum jelly will be of much interest to anyone, besides me. It is also a challenge to report. These are significant aspects of art that, based on an understanding of predictability avoidance in order to produce something 'new' are encouraged as part of an individual pedagogy of making.

Practice as a research emphasis in art practice research disrupts the theory/practice dichotomy. Practice is prioritized from the outset as the means of producing artistic/creative/studio artworks with their own distinctive complex of meanings that can lead to discursiveness with various theories and various other artworks. Practice can have a flexible relationship to theory, in that practice can precede, respond to, add to, follow and critique theory. Sarat Maharaj (2010) describes how visual art practice interacts,

with established discursive academic circuits and think-know components. They do so vigorously - glossing and translating them, aping them with bouts of piss-take, subjecting them to *détournement*. However this should not lull us into seeing the discursive as the only or the prime modality of "thinking through the visual." Alongside, runs its intensive non-discursive register, its seething para-discursive charge and capability - both its "pathic" and "phatic" force, its penumbra of the non-verbal, its somatic scope, its smoky atmospherics, its performative range. (3-4)

With this spectacular description of the counterpoint juxtaposition of thinking with the material working in visual art practice, Sarat Maharaj in “Monkeydoodle” (1997) demonstrates the sort of creative amble into other written forms that could be expected from a scholar of Marcel Duchamp and James Joyce. Adulation aside, note that he cautions against just, “seeing the discursive as the only or the prime modality...” He is underscoring the “seething” experimental sensory affective and performative potential of the “non-verbal.” In Phenomenology, the senses are acknowledged first. I found that the materials used in the studio provided the means and the links to further discursivity with other materials and ideas, and with theories outside of the studio, as where the material of bacon fat led me to artists or other theorists and other kinds of texts, including cookbooks. But I did not begin with an academic idea or theory, I began with material processes; perhaps that is a distinction to make among artists as researchers and as a means to illuminate the subtleties of research in visual art, for where an artist begins and how they begin, in relation to making and the impetus to making; their materials; and ideas, whether visual, conceptual/philosophical/linguistic, or conceptual/visual, or linguistic - to name a few possibilities. Whether beginning with an academic idea or with material process, in the end, does the object speak to both the material and to an idea, an experience, to discourse? This relationship between practice with the material, and theory with the practice and or the material and or the idea, is discursive rather than hierarchical. The specific process of art practice research within the academy does not orient itself so that practice affirms theory, rather, that practice leads to dialogue among objects, theories and philosophical stances that can be produced “in action” in the studio, as Barrett and Bolt state.

### **Arts-Based Research: The Social Sciences Connection**

Although perhaps these statements may be obvious within the disciplinary departments of the fine arts, it is necessary to discuss them, albeit briefly, more explicitly in other disciplinary fields such as

education, a field within humanities encompassed within the sociological research paradigm. My attempt throughout my studio working was not to use or follow a qualitative arts-based research model. Graeme Sullivan (2005) contextualizes the model:

Those researchers promoting arts-based research locate the theoretical parameters that shape their inquiry in the social sciences in general and qualitative educational research in particular. The approach taken argues for an expansion of inquiry practices, yet this is undertaken within existing theoretical paradigms. While Eisner and others make a strong case for educational change that is informed by the arts, there are limits to what can be achieved if the conditions of inquiry remain locked within the constraints of the social sciences rather than within the art practice itself. (61).

The constraints of the social sciences can work two ways: to constrain the parameters from the outset or at any point of the artistic exploration, but also the constraint of depth of knowledge in the art form(s) used, which allows for the lack of understanding or expertise by the sociological researcher expanding into the field of the arts. This constraint on background or tacit knowledge is important to acknowledge. Another constraint might be on assumptions of process. Shaun McNiff describes the importance in his art-based research approach of a “systematic use of the artistic process,” which is repeatable and reliable, and which he has been able “to perfect” (in Knowles and Cole: 29-31). Notice that this is the opposite of Sarat Maharaj’s point about the impossibility, due to the “handling” of the artist, and the undesirability of repeatable processes in visual art. Ardra Cole and Gary Knowles state that they are life history researchers, acknowledging that they, like many others in the social sciences engage in arts-informed research as “a methodology-enhancement to other research approaches or as a stand-alone qualitative methodology,” in order to engage a broader public beyond the academy in “knowledge advancement” (60). They state that they do not intend to produce fine art works, but in order to provide some artistic guidance encourage researchers to be aware of the Elements and Principles of Design. These Elements and Principles have been in school art curricula since the beginning of the twentieth century, they continue to be part of the required curriculum despite being rebuked by many art teachers who have an understanding of postmodern art (Gude, 2004). However, there is a troubling instrumentalism to Cole’s and Knowle’s

mission, while they also seem to take a deprecating position toward art-informed work that does not serve this mission:

Consistent with the broad agenda of social science research to improve the human condition, arts-informed research has both a clear *intellectual purpose* and *moral purpose*. Ultimately, the research must stand for something. Arts-informed research representations, then are not intended as titillations but as opportunities for transformation, revelation, or some other intellectual and moral shift. They must be more than good stories, images, or performances. (66)

“Titillations” is an unfortunate choice of language. What do they mean? No tickling? Or no sexually provocative artwork? No sexual humour? Or would titillations mean art that followed its own research practice agenda, without “a moral imperative or inherent critique”? (66) Morality around sexuality or gender are not social justice issues? Surely, Cole and Knowles can’t mean that. “Moral purpose” is not defined: whose morals, of course is the question, as if morals were large, easy to determine blocks to move around as monoliths without shades of subtlety and backhandedness, without cultural or religious, cultural or gendered significance, or, at the very least, differences of opinion. In the history of art, the instrumental requirement of art to convey a particular message that is legible and comprehensible to many has always been problematic (For example, consider religious art, political propaganda art, advertising, and blockbuster movies). The entire thrust of postmodernism in visual art has been to question and do away with the historical traditions of prescribed categories of acceptability while uncovering the social construction of art as a social activity. While the social sciences may be opening up from the tight strictures of their academic discipline’s methodologies and modes of academic written presentations, as a result of these postmodern times, the adaptation of art practices by the social sciences may well reflect postmodern art practices, yet the social sciences may fall back on modernist approaches, such as the Elements and Principles of Design, while incorporating this outmoded modernism into their newer post modern social scientist stances. Art becomes the beacon for demonstrating fewer structural hindrances to academic research and academic production while adapting some of art practices that

are more sociological, anthropological in nature. How will the social scientists know the difference between post modern art practices and modernist terms (such as Elements and Principles) of assessment or understanding? How will they assess whether their work, if it needs to be more than good images or performances, how will they ascertain the “good images” let alone what is more than good, or morally good, as Cole and Knowles stated above? Hence, a disjuncture.

### **Creative Geographies: “Remaking Geographies”**

Harriet Hawkins, speaking broadly of the connection of place or geography to artistic practice as “Creative Geographies” describes the potential of art contributing new ways of thinking where visual art has offered “a sense of disciplinary critique and transformation” and “promoted intersections of artistic practices and forms of disciplinary knowledge making” (240). She traces the historical relationship between geographers and artistic representation, while latterly artists have opened up the ways they address place, places, and aspects of geographical experience. “Artistic practices have long had value as providing geographical information about people, places, species, and landscapes. Indeed, recent methodological trends arguably extend this trajectory as geographers turn to creative practice-based research, as well as to artists, to develop “other” ways of researching and evoking places in their research” (241). This specific embrace by geographers of many aspects of the history of art right up to contemporary practices acknowledges the ‘place’ not only where art making occurs, but as a subject or theme which forms a disciplinary connection. Geographers’ and humanities theorists provided a framework for my thinking in the next stage of art making, as I will discuss in the next chapter, *Second Storey: Remember Belongings*.

These questions arose many times for me and seem to be at the crux of the uneasy relationship between art and education:

What would education have art do?

Meanwhile, what would art have education do?

Arts-based practices ask the former; art practice research might ask the latter, or it might not.

### **Assessment In Arts-Based Practices**

Assessment is the challenge, the albatross of art education. And, the demand is high. Although the aesthetic or artistic goals are thus, “more than good stories” etc., the assessment of them is always much more tenuous; and so perhaps the move toward social justice must be made obvious.

Patricia Leavy (2009) discusses evaluation of Arts-Based Research (ABR) work, and poses the question: What background and expertise does the researcher in ABR require?

While arts-based research texts must be rendered with consideration for the aesthetic qualities, so too must audiences or evaluators be cognizant that these are not ‘pure’ artistic representations but rather *research texts*. The important assessment questions are: How does the work make one feel? What does the work evoke or provoke? What does the work reveal? (italics in original).

These last three questions are good preliminary questions for an art appreciation discussion. However, visual artists have not only an extensive array of technical skills, with tools and materials, but also knowledge of the histories of the field, of the various debates, historical and contemporary, whether about aesthetics or politics regarding art works, or complicated theoretical positions. Art practice research, as I am attempting to engage with it, begins with this background knowledge and understanding in studio work and is followed by extensive research into historical antecedents in art practice, art theories and other fields of interest. The arts-based researcher, on the other hand, may not have background knowledge and skills in studio work or familiarity with the history and debates, and may perhaps under recognize the fullness of, or the derivative nature of, their connections to various art practices. I do make a distinction between an artwork that is meant as an artwork and one that is meant as a sociological “research text.”

That being said, as a teacher engaged in curriculum integration and interdisciplinary curricular projects in schools, there is some familiar terrain when compared to sociologist researchers trying to expand *how* they do, which impacts *what* they do. I understand a number of these issues from working with other professional teachers who do not have a visual art background, while I lack a science or history or drama background. Getting it right for one discipline may mean not getting it quite right in another, which challenges assumptions, values and beliefs surrounding the idea of the purpose of the task. I appreciate the excitement the arts bring to the participants (in schools, that is primarily the students), along with the gritty issues around priorities, the lack of time, and always, the assessment. I continue to encourage arts-based research within the field of education specifically for the reasons Leavy states: they provide alternate modes and opportunities for communicating, which bring new perspectives; the arts connect to issues of identity; the arts address ideas and affect; they contribute to critical thinking about social issues; the arts allow researchers to also focus on the contribution of process, not just end product; the arts produce/are interpreted as producing multiple meanings, which lead to dialogue (12-15). In addition, the arts include exhibition, which requires an audience, expanding the social interaction with the research and the ideas therein. While acknowledging the very real challenges, I applaud this evolution in sociological research. However, my purpose in this dissertation was to resuscitate my own art practice and to see where it led.

### **Assessment In Art Practice Research**

To return to the question of assessment, in art practice research Wesselling states that the condition of a PhD in art as research is

the research needs to yield fresh insights, not merely into one's personal work but for art in a broader sense as well. Crucial is the academic opponent, whose task it is to critically evaluate the new contribution to the artistic domain. If the research fails to produce novel insights, then there is no justification for the research project to lead to an academic dissertation. (4)

Weselling introduces two academic practices: the academic opponent, which would require then, a defence, armed for a rhetorical exchange; and the new, the novel, for art in a broad sense. What is left out of this description is the nuances of the new, as this is, it has to be, an iterative process. The new is obviously in comparison to, is an expansion on what has gone before, so that the relationships to before are current in the new. What becomes new, is often a hard won development within an individual's own art practice, and in relationship to peers who are also expanding their practice, in iterative steps.

From this examination across a section of the field of Art Practice related to research within universities, there are a few salient factors: the doctoral PhD art practice as-led research is grappling with very different university education and academic research related issues than Arts-based, -informed, social science practitioners who have added arts practices to their methodology 'kit'. Both attempt to 'fit' into education's abiding structures of research, despite widespread unrest with the previous 'scientific model' of research, by using: references to the published academic field; statements of research purpose or interest; approaches that are called methodologies - or not; end products that include a studio object that requires assessment; a written end product that requires assessment; and possibly, a rhetorical defence that must be won. The social sciences hope to expand the field of what is researched and what is found and how it is shared, through adding arts methods. Doctoral studies in Visual Art in some corners are grappling with what to keep and what and how to create a meaningful way to think about Visual Art practices within the uneasy relationship with education.

### **Spring 2015**

After looking at all of the objects, assemblages, substances I had brought together, it was once again summer. All of that work had revived isolated memories, sensory memories,

more fluid and general than specific. I considered the organizing concept of the Wunderkammer - the Cabinet of Curiosities. My fridge seemed like a cabinet full of jello and gelatinous curiosities, and *Wardrobe* offered the possibility of a different kind of cabinet. However, after reviewing all of these refrigerated dishes and the rubbings of fragments of sections of the Lake House from the previous summer, in consultation with my supervisors, I decided to pursue the rubbings of a home as the organizing idea to focus and build a large body of work for exhibition. I went back up to the Lake House. I saw that the house was itself a place, and a container, of memory - its own cabinet of curiosities. Everything was connected to it. All of the objects I had collected, the assemblages, the explorations with the various substances, had all taken place at the Lake House, the one place to which I had been connected for over 50 years. Everything up until that point had been disparate components, pieces and parts of a missing larger frame. I decided to make extended rubbings of the place, the house, based on the ideas recorded in the Process Journal during summer 2014, of the rooms, the stairs, the ceiling, the kitchen floor - all of the components that made the Lake House the frame or the container, the overall structure for the final artworks for this research project.

## SECOND STOREY

### REMEMBER BELONGINGS

**July 2, 2015**

*Rubbings: rubbing over surface. Very subjective choices based on what is given by the surface to the paper. Rubbing on - Rubbing over - Rubbing off - Rubbing in - Rubbing at. A Prepositional struggle to describe and understand the need and the attraction of making these rubbings. How factual or accurate need they be/are they? What 'facts' of physical structure do they convey? What 'facts' of psychic structure - desire, loss, melancholy, repetition, scratching, insistence, loss of words or images do they convey? Do they indicate a loss of imagination, a loss of personal imaginary that I should rely on this given thing? [ie. the Lake House as the subject of the rubbings, rather than painting or drawing for example]. How does this building add up to a story? Or a collection of facts?*

*Or rather, multiple collections of narratives?*

*This is one narrative.*

*These rubbings represent a narrative of tactile and sensory remembered experience. They are real in this sense of showing this remaining physical place, but the narrative of the rubbings, it is voluntary [personal] on my part.*

*The building continues to exist, astonishingly. What level of interaction do I have with it? What interaction do I want to have with the rubbing experience? What am I trying to convey? The fear of loss of an 'imaginary' is real. Perhaps it is an art practice thing.*

**July 16, 2015**

*How to think about learning here: How do we learn in the home? How and when do conversations occur? With whom about what? How do we learn in our everyday environment? The tacit understandings - never questions.*

*I should realize, speaking of learning, that when I am struggling with an idea that is 'not enough,' to wait - to put-up with the head aches, confusion, depression - until the new idea arrives, which it seems to - unexpectedly, but finally. So I should learn to find some peace with the annoying process of waiting. It would be good to realize that that is what I am doing - waiting - not 'incompetent,' an 'idiot,' 'stupid,' 'slow,' and all those other derogatory terms.*

## RUBBINGS OF INHERITANCE, NARRATIVES OF DISINHERITANCE<sup>5</sup>

*Her Place And What Was Learned There*  
And  
*Her Place-Scraps*

### Introduction

*Her Place And What Was Learned There*, the title of an art exhibition I held at Eleanor Winters Art Gallery, York University in 2015, and *Her Place-Scraps*, an exhibition I held at Propeller Art Gallery in Toronto, 2016, were two drawing installations that comprised graphite rubbings on yards of paper made in an inherited family home. In this chapter I discuss the second phase of the art making process, following the explorations and uncertainties of the first two summers of working toward an idea, an overall concept gave way to the clear and focused direction to working toward two exhibitions. I had made two proposals in the spring with two different galleries and was accepted in both. I continue to intersperse quotes from my Process Journals by way of demonstrating A Pedagogy of Making through this art making process and the exhibitions. After the exhibitions the focus in this chapter shifts to the third phase of writing about this whole project, and then to the research into the history and uses of rubbings in contemporary art practice. The various uses of rubbings provoked the question: How are rubbings inherently auto/biographical and place-based?

I draw from a variety of scholars to ground my discussion of the process of making the graphite rubbings, briefly referencing other women artists whose artwork pertains to place, and the domestic sphere in particular. I also refer to Annette Kuhn's concept of memory work and how this practice applied to *Her Place*. I consider Yi-Fu Tuan's theory of place and Kathy Mezei's recognition of the importance of the domestic space, (what she calls domestic effects), as theory and for creative practitioners. Jennifer Fisher's theories of haptic aesthetics affirmed my direction while

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<sup>5</sup> This section draws in part from an article I wrote in *Vitae Scholasticae* ["Her Place and What Was Learned There: Rubbings of Inheritance, Narratives of Disinheritance." *Vitae Scholasticae*, Volume 34, Number 2, 2017, 43-61] working with the concepts of family methodology and questions of inheritance for this dissertation. I have permission to use material from this piece.

making the rubbings, and I introduce again my idea of the ‘haptics of home’. James Krasner supports the view that home is an intimate space due to our engagement in it through sensory, tactile and embodied knowing. I consider this art making to be a Sensual Biography of Place and Ann Hamilton’s approach to her installations is referenced as an example. I very briefly try to connect Kathy Mezei’s domestic effects with Marlene Kadar and Jeanne Perreault’s concept of the auto/biographical in five women artists’ artworks, by way of contextualizing *Her Place* but also addressing the issue of the autobiographical in women’s artworks related to the domestic. The use of rubbings is historically and conceptually fitting for capturing the various architectural aspects of a lived-in, multi-generational home.

Once the exhibitions were over, with the writing of this dissertation document began the third phase of this entire doctoral project. I describe the sensual, sensory actions and products of rubbings and theorize the fitting connection to my explorations of memory and family. Evan Imber-Black’s theories and categories of family secrets focus the memory work of writing the fictional, imaginative, narratives of the house. I appreciate Stout and Daiello’s encouragement to artists to use expressive writing to deepen their understanding of their own work. I use poetic, fictional narratives to expand the emotional force, inviting understanding, acceptance – or repugnance – of the stories, by evoking the voice of the home. Lucy E. Bailey’s work with “genealogical refusal” and Harold Goodall’s “narrative inheritance” have led me to find a tenable position, both personal and theoretical, to provoke and explore the question of what I wanted or could accept from such an inheritance. The grief – and there is grief - is partly about what happened, to whom and by whom, but also for what wasn’t, and what didn’t happen. There is a narrative gap. I am reassured by Amy Prodromou’s work that representation of loss or grief need not conform to predictable cycles.

Finally, at the end of the chapter, I include a section to address the history and uses of rubbings, with a focus on contemporary artists whose rubbings also connect to place, architecture, memory and home: “Rubbings in History, Art and Home: Monuments, Place and Auto/Biography.”

I am interested in the specific qualities of rubbings that seem to make a claim to the ‘real’ world, and thereby echoing or providing a biographical impulse and a record of place. By examining six artists, and Do Ho Suh’s rubbings in particular, I question the impact of gender on the reception of his rubbings of “home.”

As art practice, the process of making the artworks of this inherited home, of giving them titles and putting them in exhibition pushed me to confront the entire family inheritance, not just the building: the stories, secrets and silences that clung to physical sections of the home. The work felt like a confrontation. I knew as I decided to make the specific rubbings, that I was chasing secrets. In her study, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, Annette Kuhn introduces “a method and practice of unearthing and making public untold stories” that she terms memory work (9); this process offered a background from which to consider my analysis of memories connected to this multi-generational home. Although Kuhn’s study refers to family photography, her process of beginning with a shared family object or collection of objects, such as the family photo album, bears correspondence with my use of a multi-generational family home. Memory work functioned for me through the art making process and continues to function in this writing. Memory work invites “a critical consciousness that embraces the heart as well as the intellect, one that resonates, in feeling and thinking ways, across the individual and the collective, the personal and the political” (9). The exhibition of *Her Place and What Was Learned There*, presented opposing experiences of intimacy: tactile rubbings of parts of familiar rooms, furniture and possessions, while acknowledging transgressions that took place within the family. As Kuhn states,

...the fact that we experience our memories as peculiarly our own sets up a tension between the ‘personal’ moment of memory and the social moment of making memory...and indicates that the processes of making meaning and making memories are characterized by a certain fluidity. Meanings and memories may change with time, be mutually contradictory, may even be an occasion for, or an expression of, conflict. (14)

In many ways the experience of making the rubbings, thinking and theorizing about family inheritance, was and still is very unpleasant. It was not what I expected of research, and yet the

artworks of five women artists confirmed the complex possibilities of making work with reference to memory, 'home,' the objects of 'home', the domestic sphere, all of which to varying degrees reflect the biographical: Louise Bourgeois, Heidi Boucher, Rachel Whiteread, Katrin Sigurdardotti, Mona Hatoum. In addition, the conceptual framework of "family methodology," also affirmed this art making process as contributing to academic research that is a legitimate means to address the personal experiences of, and contributions to, critiques of larger social power imbalances and abuses. I am related to generations of racially and socio-economically privileged people who were both abused by other privileged ones and were then in turn abusive, and yet the privilege of those generations remained intact, while reverberations rumble through to the present. And so, this inherited multi-generational family home brings with it many memories, stories, lessons and burdens.

From Sherry Turkle's discussion of *Evocative Objects*, it is apparent that the gifts that we give and receive are considered differently from other objects and are evocative in a distinct manner. Gifts are rarely from strangers. A gift bears the weight of social custom and expectation. As an inheritance is a gift, it too is weighted.

The social theorist Marcel Mauss...describes the animation of objects: gifts retain something of their givers. As people exchange objects, they assert and confirm their roles in a social system, with all its historical inequalities and contradictions. A gift carries an economic and relational web; the object is animated by the network within it. (Turkle, 312).

I am not sure that I deserved this gift of the Lake House, enacted as a grandiose gesture of goodwill. I was not an endearing household member or guest. On the one hand then, it could be said that my critical reflections and attempts at reflexivity continue to perpetuate my attitude of ingratitude. On the other hand, I wonder at such a gift, the mean-spirited intentions it was meant to cloak, the secrets that have slowly slid into view, the sadness with such misguided and ill-meaning behaviours that exist herein, while simultaneously encompassed within a breathtaking geography peopled with buoyant communities. It is, in effect, an uncanny place: familiar yet simultaneously shaded with anxiety. In Freud's discussion of the uncanny he quotes Schelling's definition as the

“name for everything that ought to have remained...secret and hidden but has come to light” (224). And so, what are the obligations of inheritance, the expectations of inheriting, of giving, but more to the point, of receiving inheritances, particularly those that are uncanny? If, as stated above, gifts retain something of their givers, then this artwork and written work is a continuation of the contradictions inherent in this complicated inherited relational web.

Any, perhaps all other individuals of the multi-generations who have enjoyed dwelling in this home, if asked, or had they inherited this place, would have different stories to tell of their time and their relationships here. This is simply my story. It is a story of inheritance and disinheritance.

### **Place, Domestic Space And The Haptics Of Home**

A decade ago I was surprised to inherit the multi-generational family home, that I will call the Lake House. I did not expect to inherit it, I had not wanted it or asked for it; however, it was not just a building, an architectural structure; it was a distinct home, a distinctive place. Although I spent my childhood and teenage years there every summer, I visited only intermittently as an adult. During one of those visits, two weeks before my first



child’s birth, my water broke, extravagantly spilling across the floor. Altogether, this Lake House had been an essential part of my early development; had been highlighted during significant transitional moments; and given my nomadic life, it was, and still is, the one consistent place that I know from childhood, despite the contradictory and contested feelings that I have for it.

In order to think about this house, this place, this home, I will briefly consider five theorists whose ideas about space and place, the domestic space, and home, effectively narrow down from expansive space to the near familiar and then to the specific tactile sensations that define domestic home experience. These theories not only reflect my experience of remembering while in the Lake House, but also, reveal a direct connection to the making of the rubbings for *Her Place*, and to consideration of the scope of family methodology in relation to them. Yi-Fu Tuan was a Modern geographer philosopher (2011) who defined place as having a range of characteristics that distinguished it from space. Once a relatively unfamiliar space becomes thoroughly familiar (73), it acquires definition and meaning (136), and it

provides a “pause in movement,” which in turn allows the possibility “for a locality to become a center of felt value”(138) - then it becomes place.

A similar transformation occurs when architecture becomes a home: “A house is a relatively simple building. It is a place, however, for many reasons.

It provides shelter; its hierarchy of spaces answers social needs; it is a field of care, a repository of memories and dreams” (164). Home and place are

interrelated concepts according to Tuan, where

home is a specific place, but a place is not necessarily home. However, I propose that those within the structures could feel, positively or negatively, the values, meanings, pauses, care, repositories and memories that define place. Home may or may not be a shared family or childhood place, if the definition, meaning or the memories are undesirable. Home may be found in the escape from such a place, or home may have nothing to do with geographic or material entities. Family methodology, then, may involve swerving around place, house, home, values, meanings, care, and memories, all of



which poses a range of contradictory meanings. The shifting between place and home was what inadvertently confronted and captivated me when I returned to this inherited place over a decade ago and became overwhelmed by sensations, sounds, scents, textures and emotions that were so familiar and imbued with memories, and felt like home.

Kathy Mezei's article, "Domestic Space and the Idea of Home" supported my thinking early on during my studio explorations that addressed visual memoir using images and objects from the domestic sphere. She describes the significance of domestic spaces and the enduring "domestic effects" of the objects and structures of home on the individual and on the auto/biographical writing, or art works, of the individual:

...it is important to review domestic spaces as sites of epiphany, revelation, personal interaction, and change, to investigate these "domestic effects," and to recognize the domestic as monumental rather than merely incidental, ornamental, and marginal...Studying the effect of the domestic on and through auto/biographical practices thus deepens our knowledge of how selves are imagined, constructed, and represented. Interior domestic spaces (furniture, rooms, doors, windows, stairs, drawers – familiar, everyday objects) which have and could be perceived as banal and ordinary, and hence insignificant, are vital to the shaping of our memories, our imagination, and our "selves." (81-82)

My art making process inside the Lake House affirms that its domestic effects have been monumental. The rubbings began as a sensual, tactile engagement that then led to memories, revelations and a reimagining of my "self." I made rubbings of all parts of the home. (As you can see in the photos I am in process of making the rubbing of the stairs and the table). I also made rubbings of floors, walls, doors at either end and the hallway in between, cupboards, bath tub, bed, braided rugs, tables, chairs, dresses and bath robes, windows with curtains, framed oil paintings, bouquets of flowers, vegetables and fruit, pots and pans, cutlery and dishes, the cement wall in the garden, two trees and a section of a rock covered beach. Each of these elements possessed a sensual narrative of belonging in and near that home.

In her article, "Relational Sense: Toward a Haptic Aesthetics," art critic Jennifer Fisher describes the haptic sense as comprising all of the tactile, kinesthetic and proprioceptive senses, in

that it “enables the perception of weight, pressure, balance, temperature, vibration and presence...the haptic defines the affective charge - the felt dimensionality - of a spatial context”(5). Haptic sensory experience described the ways I was working: I was thinking with my body, my bare feet on cracked linoleum, rubbing my fingers through the cutlery drawer, feeling the edges of the framed paintings, stretching to reach the top of the crenulated curtained windows, stroking the bath robes abandoned in the wardrobes, using my “texture eyes”, rather than seeking images. As mentioned earlier, I wondered if the haptics of home would be an appropriate title for an artwork that was made and installed as a physical space to be walked in and around, like the rooms in a home. Fisher points out that this is not a binary of vision and touch but rather, to understand how aesthetic experience is already constituted of both haptic and visual senses. Haptics work from the inside out:

What is compelling about the haptic sense is that despite its categorization as a proximal sense it is implicated in distal perception as well... haptic perception can elucidate the energies and volitions involved in sensing space: its temperature, presences, pressures and resonances. In this sense it is the affective touch, a place of feeling distinct from actual physical contact. And inside the skin, it is interoception, an aspect of the haptic sense, which perceives the visceral workings and felt intensities of our interior bodies (Ibid).

In addition to my transition from visual appraisal to bodily recognition of places and objects, was the effect of the physical labour of rubbing. It was a tedious and exhausting process to make the extensive rubbings for *Her Place*. The art making demanded an acknowledgement of my uncomfortable body: bent over, on hands and knees, perched on folded legs sitting on the tops of my bony feet, stooped over my thighs as they pressed into my stomach while perched on the edge of a step ladder, crouched awkwardly on a staircase, reaching up to a ceiling for extended rubbings, including rubbing a swinging ceiling light fixture. All of the bending and crouching and scrubbing with a 2 ½ by ½ inch stick of graphite was much akin to cleaning, except I was conjuring black marks rather than clean surfaces. I have felt my way across each surface of these rubbings: caressing, stroking, pressing, squeezing, folding, wrapping and then unwrapping the tracing paper from each section or object of the home.

**July 17, 2015**

*What to do with all of these objects? The overall arranging and movement of large-medium-small parts is a lot like a scene or set design [theatre] - create a space, arrange the objects, glimpse a narrative as a set allows a narrative. Create a space - create a specific/general place. Not site specific, but create a specific site.*

This became the organizing idea for the first installation of *Her Place and What was Learned There*. As I asked in the first section of this dissertation in relation to Marcel Proust, Where is memory? Is it in a specific place or site? Is it in the objects? Or is there a relationship amongst all of these?

**August 16, 2014**

*A friend from my teenage years showed up. Hadn't seen each other in forty years. We sat at the table on the porch, catching up. We ate butter tarts. He said he remembered sitting at the table just like that, on that porch, for hours, talking away together into the night. He wiped his hands along the edge of the table, then spread them in front of him, as if to embrace a large bucket of ice cream - that suddenly disappeared: "Is this the same table that was here when we were kids?" No, it was not. What sort of tactile memory process occurred that brought that realization to him about a table he barely knew and hadn't seen for decades?*

This exemplifies phenomenologist Edward S. Casey's description of the tenacity of the traces of place upon our bodies:

Places come into us lastingly; once having been in a particular place for any considerable time - or even briefly, if our experience there has been intense - we are forever marked by that place, which lingers in us indefinitely and in a thousand ways... The inscription is not of edges or outlines, as if place were some kind of objet; it is of the whole brute presence of the place. What lingers most powerfully is this presence and, more particularly, *how it felt to be in this presence...* (2001, 414)

I would add, that objects from such a place also leave their trace, their inscription which may or may not be separated from the original place. In the case above with the friend and the table, clearly the table and place were connected as a whole. The original table was removed years ago. Recently I

walked into a neighbour's house and without a second of doubt, recognized their old table as a copy of our same table. I recognized it, knew how it would feel, like a phantom sensation, how the bench and the rounded edges rested behind my knees, the board across the centre at our feet, the knobs on the ends, the width and space to walk around it. The town had had a wooden furniture factory until the 1980s, so that table was not unique, but it was uniquely remembered. Objects can also cause us to recall our *habitus*, the remembered bodily experience implaced within a specific world of that object. Casey borrows from social anthropologist, Pierre Bourdieu the concept of *habitus* to explain how we remember or know with our bodies how to move and interact in specific places with specific objects:

A given habitus is always enacted in a particular place and incorporates the regularities inherent in previous such places - all of which are linked by a habitual bond. It does not matter that the bond itself is often unconscious...[being] *taken for granted* is what allows it to be all the more effective in its operative force. Prominent among things taken for granted is the *implacement of habitus* itself, its placial bearing as it were: a particular place gives to habitus a familiar arena for its enactment, and the lack of explicit awareness of that place as such, its very familiarity, only enhances its efficacy as a scene in which it is activated. (2001, 410)

I began to watch myself at a remove, performing numerous specific actions of *habitus*, previously taken for granted but entirely wrapped into the experience of that particular place: how sand is washed from the feet after swimming at the beach; the shuffling around the tiny kitchen during meal preparation or clean up; the daily opening and closing of windows; the hanging of laundry, a necessary weather dependent activity as there is no dryer; the constant floor sweeping; the shucking of fresh corn, outside, an August preoccupation. As I grew to accept habitation in this Lake House, previous patterns and habits of engagement between my body and the place became apparent.

The theorist who additionally validated my artistic mission, and consolidated the idea of the 'haptics of home' with more emphasis on this as the primary means of relating to domestic space through an intimate tactility, was James Krasner. He sees our experience in domestic space as an embodied, sensuous one.

While the home is both a cultural formulation and a building, it is, more than either of these, a cluster of tactile sensations and bodily positions that form the somatic groundwork through which we experience its emotional sustenance. If we focus more on motion and location in domestic space rather than on geometric or spectacular function, domesticity ultimately becomes continuous with the body's sensorium. Embodied identity at home... must take into account the body's intimate and dynamic engagement with the home's resonantly familiar materiality. The home...emerges as a bodily operation rather than an architectural structure. (5)

If we come to know a place, a domestic space, a home, as a bodily operation, what is it we know? We know where we are by the feel of the floor tiles or the projection of the cupboard, so that it is partly navigational. We know how to shape our bodily positions in each of the many places for the specific activities required there. We know the textures, weights and structures of its surfaces. We are then pointed by memory to the accumulated associations with each of these physical elements. What became evident in the making of the rubbings for *Her Place* was that the memories that pushed to the surface with urgency were related to the body, or the multi-generational bodies that had lived in the Lake House, and as Krasner describes above, those bodies' "intimate and dynamic engagement with the home's resonantly familiar materiality." The significance of this non-linguistic, artistic exploration and exhibition of place, the representation and theorizing of the domestic sphere as a physical, sensual entity, and the haptics of a home, together, formed the basis of this art practice research which extended to research in family methodology, and contributes to artistic research regarding 'home', which by its very nature is auto/biographical.

### **A Sensual Biography Of Place**

In her 1997 article, "Methodology in the fold and the irruption of transgressive data," Elizabeth St. Pierre questions traditional structures and assumptions of research. As a feminist working within philosophy and qualitative methods, St. Pierre had not referred to visual arts or the performing arts,

disciplines which deal with what she describes as “transgressive data,” consisting of emotional data, dream data, and sensual data which arise in various ways throughout a researcher’s experience of doing their work. She does however, mention the growing theoretical field regarding place and the potential for researchers to account for the ‘sensual effects’ of a “bone-deep attachment to one landscape in particular...the literal ground of our knowing...” (183). She encourages researchers to

think about our physical as well as our theoretical grounding in our research projects. How are these physical and theoretical sites of knowing related and what are the effects of those relations? A researcher who studies her own growing-up place...[as St. Pierre did] may find that sensual data have long since mapped and fashioned in a subtle way her consciousness and extra-consciousness. Such sensual data add folds of situated richness... (183-4)

Clearly, I see a very strong correspondence to what she has described here and my work throughout this entire studio, exhibition and dissertation writing process. As an order of experience, the physical knowing occurred in my fingers, the soles of my feet, my hands, my senses, my orientation to or with the place. Whether of dresses, petroleum jelly, furniture, food or an entire inherited home, this physical engagement preceded the theoretical explorations. I think of the haptics of home as a more specific experience of *a sensual biography of place*.

How do artists encounter ‘place’ through the sensual occurrences within it? Artist Ann Hamilton’s career has evolved around interactions and relationships established with specific sites. She approaches her installation sites with a conscious focus not only on the history and the memory that may belong to the specific site, but she also gives her attention to the sensuous qualities of the site. In the exhibition catalogue for *The Picture is Still* 2003, at the Akira Ikeda Gallery in Japan, Tomoaki Kitagawa describes Hamilton as making a prior physical, tactile and sensuous exploration of the building. She taps, scratches, sniffs the wall, scrapes the floor with her shoes and listens. Kitagawa quotes Hamilton, “I pay attention to the felt qualities of a place. I try first to take the building in through my skin;” Hamilton describes her hand as her “hand-eye...a kind of metaphoric eye...a way of seeing through the body”(43), or using Krasner’s term, as a bodily operation. This is a synaesthetic transposition of one sense with another, her hand becoming an eye, touch as a form of

vision, seeing, while also smelling and listening. Her installation practice then, begins in a place, and comprises objects relevant to each specific site, from a room full of hanging sticks of charcoal; re-made books; to animated tables; sideways hanging trees; factory wall-sized motor operated, swinging curtains; as well as sound and video. All senses are activated. The sensuous aspects of the place amplify its biography; in her installations the viewer becomes conscious of each sensory layer as an orchestratable form, where in their prior everydayness, simultaneity and necessity determined the experience of these as inseparable.

I mention Ann Hamilton here, although the domestic space of home is not a subject in her artworks, because she clearly articulates her haptic art practice in relation to specific places, and then produces site specific installations which, using Jennifer Fisher's definition above, engage the viewer in a haptic aesthetic experience of those artworks.

Another artist whose artworks and art making process are demonstrably concerned with a sensual biography of place, is Sigalit Landau, the Israeli artist mentioned above in Ground Floor. As 'biography' she is interested in the history, and in the qualities of the specific geography of place in her use of The Dead Sea; but there is also a personal biography of place, a motivation connected to memory and childhood: "The different rules of gravity and light, beauty and sterility, and a lot of childhood memories are what brought me time and time again to create, experiment, shoot, sail, and crystalize memories in this one lake" (Stewart). The artist submerges in the sea while installing, monitoring and removing artworks from the water, a full sensual, haptic engagement with/in place. Although the artworks mentioned previously, constructed with immersed dresses and articles of clothing, are exhibited either as photographs or hung as pieces in an art gallery, in terms of the viewers' body movement or aural involvement, the artworks appear less haptically engaging for the viewer than Ann Hamilton's pieces. However, Landau's garment-artworks evoke an uncanny sensual presence that is both visually extraordinary and yet viscerally, interoceptively understood, as deceiving through the weight of the piece contrasting with the sparkling, deadly salt.

There are two levels of haptic and sensuous experience at work then, with the first level being that of the artist during the making of the artwork, and the second, that of the viewer during their engagement with the curated situation of the artwork. In the making of their works, these two artists intentionally develop an intimate haptic, tactile experience of place. This corresponds to what Krasner above described as the “body’s intimate and dynamic engagement with the ‘home’s’ ... [replace with: ‘the place’s’ ] resonantly familiar materiality” in building a sensual biography of place. Hamilton captivates the biography of the place, encompassing the social historical and geographical, where Landau’s biography of place slides between personal, geographical and historical.

One way to differentiate between an artistic organization of an experience of place and a more journalistic or documentary experience would be through an exaggeration of some element: scale, sound, movement, quantity, or the quality of materials. This becomes an important point in my work on *Her Place*, as rubbings are created on a one-to-one scale. How or what to exaggerate? For me, the emphasis became the material fragility of the paper covered in the dust of graphite.

I realize now that my early focus at the beginning of the summer of 2015, was on the look of the pieces while trying to figure out how to put them together; and then, on the completion of my many lists of rubbings of objects, furniture and sections of the home. My choices were oriented toward those objects that exerted a narrative pull, by reproducing an aspect of the object, if quite imperfectly, with a rubbing. This imperfection began to hold some of the sensuous biography of the place.

### **July 29, 2015**

*There is no attempt to falsify - in the sense of replicating a believable objet or texture - like a museum diorama or a Wonderland castle. Although the rubbings are made on and depict ‘real’ places and objects they are so unlike their real mould that they become jest - or gesture to an actual object - they are intentionally partial, incomplete, lacking, insubstantial. Hanging by threads. They are more akin to inaccuracies - falsity - lies - is it real - no - is it partially believable? Is it mostly fallible? The drawings are depleted.*

## **Domestic Effects As Auto/Biographical In Five Women Artists' Artworks**

As I made the various rubbings, the conundrum was to what extent did these personal experiences and remembrances pertain to or qualify as, research, or as art practice research. The visual, sensual and haptic guided the making of my artwork, using thin brittle tracing paper to reconstitute the idea of a home with its own memories, with its own vulnerabilities. The rubbing (the action) and the paper (the material) were intrinsic as research; the rubbing and the paper produced the end results, which then, could have been hung or exhibited any number of ways. Extending the idea of the sensual biography of place, from Ann Hamilton and Sigalit Landau's attention to the particular biography, geography and history of their specific sites of working, I move now to address the specific place of the domestic sphere in relation to biographies formed there. Part of my research then, has been to consider how women's artworks related to home, memory, domestic places address this issue of 'the personal' in their material mix of making and exhibition. I will introduce and briefly describe a group of five contemporary women artists, Louise Bourgeois, Heidi Boucher, Rachel Whiteread, Mona Hatoum and Katrin Sigurdardottir, whose artworks share a notable interest in the home, domestic spaces and objects, and the events occurring in and in relation to, domestic home life. I find it useful to look at both art criticism and theories from the social sciences to consider the concerns posed in this section. I will then bring Kathy Mezei's concept of domestic effects, introduced above, as a means of considering these ideas.

Following Kadar and Perreault, I use the term auto/biography "with the virgule to indicate the intimate yet blurred relationship between the genres of autobiography and biography" (7). As Annette Kuhn states, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, there is "a certain fluidity" in how meaning is constructed between the 'personal' memory, (autobiographical) and social memory, (biographical) and that that construction is not static or inconsequential. What I am wondering is

how domestic effects are acts of memory and thus, are by their very nature auto/biographical. To recapitulate, Mezei describes domestic effects as:

...sites of epiphany, revelation, personal interaction, and change...to investigate...and to recognize the domestic as monumental rather than merely incidental, ornamental, and marginal...Interior domestic spaces (furniture, rooms, doors, windows, stairs, drawers – familiar, everyday objects) which have and could be perceived as banal and ordinary, and hence insignificant, are [shown as] vital to the shaping of our memories, our imagination, and our “selves” (81-82).

In this recognition is an auto/biographic background of knowing and familiarity, as haptic experience, of sensual places that situate events and relationships, early formation and fundamental learning. Therefore, these domestic effects are formed in our pasts, while continuing into the present. I take this auto/biographical blurring to mean that our ‘selves’ are not closed or unique constructions independent of other equally constructed selves, but rather, are caught, as all selves are, in a number of intersections within multiple social, historical and temporal webs. In considering *Her Place* in the context of other artists working with references to remembered domestic effects, I concur with Annette Kuhn, that what is being made, in this writing, and in these artworks, is intersubjectively, blurrily, shared as processes and as objects, “across a range of different social, cultural and psychical categories, to produce complex and even contradictory subject positions, hybrid or fragmented identities” (149-150). Making the rubbings of the inherited childhood home felt both sticky and dry, tasted of summer peach and bitter resentment, light and ethereal, smudged and torn.

Similar to Kuhn, Kadar and Perreault state, “Auto/biography is essentially, though not exclusively, a work of memory” which offers and yet expects “the obligation to remember” (6). They continue: “We do not mean to argue that auto/biography is a pure record of truth or even fact; rather, it is a rendering, often in a single voice, of experience framed by time and place, and as such it will rarely speak in the official ventriloquist’s collective parody of truth...” (Ibid). These scholars provide another frame through which to consider theoretical debate in the visual arts. The

artist Louise Bourgeois, for example, is defended by Griselda Pollock (2011, 1-2) against the readiness of viewers and critics to bring a reductionist view of her work based on information about her experiences of child abuse.<sup>6</sup> She criticizes the ‘disfiguring reception’ of Louise Bourgeois’ work, accomplished, “by the ease with which the hungry interpreters consumed the life story that the artist had apparently flaunted in front of them, as if autobiographical memories provided the key to the interpretation of her work”(1). She adds that within the art world context, “If you are a woman, the linking of art and life is merely reductive” (2). I do not doubt Griselda Pollock’s stance; and I will not pursue the whole of Pollock’s complex matrixial psychoanalytic discussion here. However, in relation to my question about how the personal and memory function as research, but more problematically, as art practice research, Pollock points to the evolution of Bourgeois’s artwork which dramatically diverged after 1982 with the emergence of feminism as a cultural force.

If trauma is ever encountered, its traces risk a secondary traumatising, unless the gesture of its becoming encounters a receptive discourse to structure it. Witnessing – hospitable participatory responsiveness – is a reciprocal act allowing the offered trace to be processed in the encounter with and by an ‘other’, whether the other be an individual or a culture. (2)

Within this cultural moment, we could consider that Bourgeois encountered that tension described by Kuhn, between the personal moment of memory and the social moment of memory; and that the auto/biographical blurring between the individual and the group, between one woman and many created a hospitable moment.

The crucial problem with a closed narrative or an overly defined framework, as Pollock points out is that, “The story of what Bourgeois called ‘Child Abuse’ seems to have *suspended further exploration of what her work was doing*” (1. Emphasis mine). Is it not possible to have and do both? Critic Maria Walsh takes a slightly different view of Bourgeois’ own discussion of her artwork, that imposes a ‘psychic narrative,’ (23), whereas,

these case histories have to be taken as semi-fictional in the sense that all case histories are a construction after the fact and are themselves a working through of fantasies and desires in

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<sup>6</sup> Some authors do not focus on this: see Racz, pp 88-93.

a literary rather than a visual medium. It is crucial to resist as much as possible the tendency in our culture to latch onto words as having the power to explain art. (23)

Or as Pollock states, for autobiography to explain art. Does it make a difference if we use auto/biography and words to explain art, understanding the cross referencing that can be productively garnered, as Kuhn, Kadar and Perreault have indicated? Words and auto/biography, then, where do they belong in discussions of artworks? Do they not inform us, provoke us to think about the art? Where do words, as physical text belong within an artwork, as with the rubbings of framed wall paintings I hung on the walls to define each section? How do they function to open or close meaning?

In a variety of media, sculptures and installations, Heidi Boucher, Rachel Whiteread, Mona Hatoum, and Katrin Sigurdardottir, create sensual auto/biographies of place through a pervasive haptic understanding to invoke and provoke the experiential potential of these domestic effects. Despite this linking of art and life, as Pollock stated, it is difficult to see any of these artists or these artworks in reductionist terms. This is an apologetically brief description, as each of these artworks obviously warrants greater consideration.

Swiss artist Heidi Boucher was recovered from obscurity in 2005 (Lunn, 247). Her work in the 1970s began with clothing and then in the late 70s until her death in 1993, she made latex moulded “skinnings” (Vali) of interiors of familiar homes, beginning with her parents’ master bedroom, “Raumhaut” (room skin); she then peeled off the ‘room skin’ for exhibition. (Swiss Institute). This anatomical language, where skin and the walls or structures of home are equated, is remarkable, referencing the room or the home as a living creature, or perhaps, more so, a dead carcass, from which the skin might be peeled and hung to dry. As latex is a wet medium applied to a layer of fabric, peeling could be accomplished once the latex was dry and would hold its shape. *Hantraum (Abmenbaus)*, 1980-82 (Swiss Institute) was the first full cast room, skinned and exhibited as a single object, hung in the air by a crane (Lunn, *ibid*). Lunn notes, “Like the skinning of floors that

contained traces of the original wood, plaster, and even newspaper fragments, *Flying Skinroom (Abmenbaus)*, 1980-82, appropriated the forms of the tiled oven, paneling and grand windows of the room while materializing the fragility of memory” (247-8). However, the strength of Boucher’s language, the scale of her materials and the means of exhibition with a crane are anything but fragile. There is a clear connection between Boucher and British artist Rachel Whiteread, also a sculptor using moulds of homes and household objects in her artworks. One of her most well known artworks, *House*, 1993, was a full size cast of a soon to be demolished row house in London, similar to homes where Whiteread had also lived (Racz, 119-121). The original house was disassembled around the concrete cast made of the negative interior spaces of the home. Where Boucher’s, and my own, works were intimate partial replicas of our immediate domestic environments, Whiteread’s represented an entire architectural structure, typical of a neighbourhood, and whose duration in that neighbourhood was not only accompanied by loud local media interest, but was cut short by local politicians, thereby connecting the art and the home to the public, socio-economic, historical conditions of a specific urban environment (Whiteread, 1995; and Massey in Whiteread, 1995; Racz, 2015). Biographies were referenced in the full-empty concrete space, displaying traces of living in the house. Many biographies were also recorded in all of the ensuing publicity.

Palestinian born, British artist Mona Hatoum and Katrin Sigurdardottir from Iceland both use dramatic scale and precise construction to exploit domestic effects in installations and sculptural objects. In *Homebound*, 2000, Hatoum assembled domestic furniture such as a dining table and chairs, lamps and kitchen equipment, such as funnels and graters, connecting the metal objects with electric cables connected to light bulbs, all set behind a wall of horizontal wire, like a high fence, while using the grating sound of electric current within the space (Racz 93-99). The massive *La grande broyeuse (Mouli-Julienne x 21)*, 1999, is surprisingly terrifying, as is *The Grater Divide*, 2002, a steel sculpture of a seven foot food grater, emphasizing the monstrous in the everyday equipment of a kitchen

(Hatoum). These haptically engaging pieces create dissonance and disorientation through their uncanny juxtaposition of familiar sized objects with unfamiliar objects, sounds and size. Both Hatoum and Sigurdardottir offer examples of not just material but scale differentials that I realize could have been exploited in *Her Place*. Katrin Sigurdardottir also referenced home, and childhood home in two different artworks on a miniature scale, *Langahlið 11 Series*, 2011 (Sigurdardottir, 35-6) and *The Green Grass of Home*, 1997 (Ibid, 2). The latter was a multi-compartmental unfolding suitcase/toolbox, like a mobile travelling memory box, containing almost two dozen tiny models of parks that had been close to the artist's various homes, juxtaposing the vast expanse of open green space trapped inside a suitcase; a veritable physical "encyclopedia of the places for which she has been homesick" (Clark 28). Although most of her work is not so tiny but varied in relation to human scale, *Langahlið 11 Series*, 2011, is a collection of "miniature abstractions" of sections of Sigurdardottir's childhood home, constructed individually so that they could be reconfigured to resemble the original, in effect, an interactive past place, and past memory. This invitation to others to 'reconstruct' architecture/ a memory of architecture from her past, (as if anyone else might 'get it right!') is an interesting statement about the ambiguity of memory and how we do, or don't, attach ourselves to particular versions or physical forms of memory. Is it really any less personal if others touch or rearrange our memories?

Each of these four artists have made bold, physical artworks that allude to auto/biographical memory and an understanding of domestic effects through the use of architecture, architectural forms and objects associated with the domestic sphere. Giuliana Bruno describes the connection between architecture and our imaginary uses of it in artworks:

The abstract, imaginary power of architecture is an everyday reality, for architecture functions daily as the place where social relations and perspectives are modelled. Space provides a material kind of modelling: it fashions our social existence. Our mode of social interaction and our position as subjects are affected by where we live. Architecture houses the multiple shapes of our diverse, quotidian, collective experience and figures their styles. It plays a crucial part in the fashioning of social forms of connectivity and in the actual modelling of intersubjectivity. (2009, 41)

Boucher and Whiteread, although working on a one-to-one scale through casting, exploited the uncanny familiarity of domestic space with the vacancy of a loss of humanity. Hatoum and Sigurdardottir bring scale into play with humour and fear, pleasure and 'homesickness.' *Her Place* on the other hand, as one-to-one scaled rubbings in fragile paper is muted, vulnerable. Art is not 'reality' but its truths, lies, resemblances and fantasies ricochet in and out of reality.

Griselda Pollock proposes a vision for interpreting the complex social practice of art that precludes matching a narrative as pre-given to an artwork; narrative, I propose could be broadly interpreted. Using the psychoanalytic model of interpretation as a shared interchange, the 'medium' as the artwork generates a present moment of 'fluidity' of meaning, perhaps moving between Kuhn's personal moment of memory and the social moment of memory:

Interpretation is thus not the application of a pre-given system to an artwork in order to maintain its function as the support of the system. It is the engagement with the working, the economy of a complex material, intellectual, sensuous, affective and social practice in which a medium functions as an intermediary screen between subjects generating a moment of potential transsubjectivity. (2011, 10)

### **August 17, 2015**

*Haegue Yang's: 'Series of Vulnerable Arrangements - Voice and Wind.' 2009. Use of blinds allude to the concept of home; "The domestic materials are unfettered from their mundane roles, engaged as elements of an artwork meant to provoke subjective associations by bringing the private into the public realm." Multi-sensory with scent emitters; immersive environments. Her body of work includes quotidian and domestic found objects. Guggenheim website: Storylines.*

## RUBBINGS and the EXHIBITIONS of HER PLACE

**July 30, 2015**

*I do wonder what compelled me to make these things that I would not enjoy making, that would test my patience and my physical endurance to this extent.*

The actual making of the rubbings was so physically forceful that it raised my ire as I did the work.

My neighbour said she could hear me next door, through the walls and windows, during that long hot summer as I rubbed and scrubbed my way around the Lake House. Flat paper becomes inflected not only with the marks made by the textures of objects, but the paper itself initially retains some of the three-dimensional character of the object when carefully squeezed and caressed during the rubbing process.

**August 1, 2015**

*Why I use 1 sheet of paper with wrinkles, creases, overlaps and all? It is the restriction. It is against precision. It is demonstrating its own falsehood. It is minimally accommodating. In fact, I am impatient.*

Compared to the flat section of a monument, war memorial or a tombstone where inscriptions are placed and anonymous members of the public might make their own rubbings, the varied surfaces and structures contained within a home pose numerous physical challenges for the process of making rubbings on brittle tracing paper. But then, once the paper is removed and partially opened or opened completely, the three dimensional object is now stretched. Top, side and bottom are a sequence of shapes on a single two-dimensional plane, recognizable, yet now oddly strange and misshapen, due to the simultaneous view of multiple surfaces. These rubbings were made on tracing paper, which is a tactile medium in some respects; it is much more lightweight than canvas, yet also quite brittle. A heavy seven-foot pine door is transferred on a one-to-one scale, retaining its life size and recognizable features, onto light, frangible paper. This is a transfer from one materiality to

another, from an enduring, seventy year old, solidly structured, very particular wooden door, to a fragile material quickly encumbered with rips and tears. The image, the rubbing, the transfer on paper is already facing its material demise, acknowledging its mortality. This is one of the alluring qualities for using rubbings in this artwork, as the rubbing is at once an exact, yet meagre rendition of itself; *Her Place* is house-like, but it is flaccid, floating translucent paper, partially there, partially true but mostly provisional, interrupted by empty spaces.

### **August 5, 2015**

*These rubbings of chairs become much more interesting when finally removed from their wooden original - a bit like ghosts - there - a presence but so flimsy and lacking substance. Non-sculpture. Drawing as sculpture with the reality of paper. The worry is getting it back into shape again later. It is 'pretend'? The point isn't 'truth to materials' that modernist claim - but rather pretending, semblance with materials. More like theatre than the didactics of a museum or art gallery. Let's pretend we are somewhere. Baudrillard?*

Rubbings have only recently been considered artistic in their own right, as demonstrated in the 2015 historical overview exhibition, *Apparitions: Frottages and Rubbings from 1860 to Now*. As Allegra Presenti states in the catalogue,

This singular type of draftsmanship depends on materials and materiality, yet it encapsulates the essence of immateriality...The gesture of rubbing is aggressive, but it can render the lightness of fleeting shadows and the poetic subtleties of form. Through the very act of their making, rubbings are physical witnesses of a place or a moment in time. ... Proportionate with the human scale, they also connect physically to the author and to the beholder through their one-to-one relation with the objects reproduced... A metamorphosis of the rubbed object may arise in that process as well as a revelation of previously unrecognized traces and textures. Appearances become apparitions. (23)

The revelation that arose through the process of making the rubbings for this exhibition was that the specific physical work spurred the stories to mind, as previously sparse traces and textures; a physical version of Kuhn's memory work, the metamorphosis was from tactility, to action, to a visual tactile object, to rubbing the dust from memory, to memory stories that connected into a

series of stories. The exhibition is the metamorphosis of place and objects to artworks that are apparition-like, joining the previously separated and unacknowledged.

### **August 26, 2015**

*Trying to think of alternative to tag on wall with title of artwork. Kathleen Stewart: Ordinary Affects. Rather small piece of writing - more poetry than theory, reflective, small bits of writing.*

### **September 5, 2015**

*Rubbings- Medieval Brass rubbings of graveyard markers - tombs of the dead. Surrealists.  
Generic: vulnerability of women.*

In the next section, “Rubbings in History, Art and Home: Monuments, Place and Auto/Biography,” I will explore more fully the historical and contemporary uses of rubbings. Briefly, the common purpose of rubbings in the west has been documentary, particularly during the 19th Century, rubbings recorded names, titles, dates, and geographical place, providing a biographical function. Whereas China has a long history of using ink imprints, similar looking to dry rubbings, yet they were meant for archival but mostly educational purposes, not particularly biographical. With this mix of memorial, archival, sepulchral, biographical, geographical and educational histories of rubbings in mind, and the physical experience that equates to cleaning, the rubbing process brings additional weight, or appropriateness of material process to form, in *Her Place*. This large artwork refers simultaneously to a place of memory, to biographies, to looking back on loss and death, in addition to being a place currently lived in, yet a source of ambivalence and disquiet. The artwork alludes to a gendered place where secrets are whispered in graphite.

**September 7, 2015**

*This entire 'set' - like a stage for a play - is about vulnerability. The vulnerability of girls and the women who should look out for them, protect them. These women, too, in the face of abuse, are also vulnerable, they must be afraid to risk acknowledgement and all of the results that would pour out afterwards. The men often, I'm not sure how often are repeating a cycle of abuse - a re-frame of their own vulnerability, whether through an excuse - their own victimization - or aggression - mixed with fear, self-loathing, hatred, hurt, anxiety. The rolls of tracing paper have no pretence. Vulnerability, brittleness, weakness, thin, flimsy, torn, creased, folded, bent.*

### **HER PLACE and WHAT WAS LEARNED THERE**

The first exhibition was *Her Place and What Was Learned There* in October 2015 at Eleanor Winters Art Gallery at York University, Toronto.

**September 14, 2015**

*No matter how hard I press on a soft thing - how much pressure I exert [with the graphite stick while rubbing] the soft thing - the robe - will not show itself the way that I imagine it should/could.*

*re. Melancholy*

*After abuse and more abuse - [the victimized turned predator]. There is no learning. How does one learn after abuse? Do women as a group see a future conflicted, contradicted, disparaged, undone, destroyed by the many layers of abuses? If patriarchy and sexism persists to pervade every moment of our lives, do we turn that hatred and disdain upon ourselves? We cannot simply mourn and let go. It damages us and we carry a damaged self. Are women perpetually melancholic?*

*Her Place* as a title makes allusion to the traditional stereotype of a woman's *place* in the home, as well as to a specific woman's home, as in *her place*, yet the title uses *Her*, as opposed to a name, as it was also intended to connote any/every woman's place or home. At the same time the title is a double entendre of place as in the idiom of knowing *her place* or *her status*, as a less powerful, compliant,



*Her Place and What Was Learned There*. 2015. Drawing Installation, west view. Eleanor Winters Art Gallery, York University, Toronto.

minor participant. In effect, *What Was Learned There* refers to the artwork's refusal to accept the expected place or behavior of silent colluder, pretend forgetter, bystander, assistant to the abuser, restricted to a certain domestically respectable view of the home. *Her Place-Scraps* refers to place of fragments, the aimless, leftover bits that serve no purpose; it also refers to *Her Place* as a place of dirty, mean fights.

### **October 3, 2015**

*Hanging: The chairs - there is more information on rubbings of chairs than memory retrieves. In other cases rubbings are entirely inadequate for memory - in the case of the beach or soft objects like a bed. Cornelia Parker explodes objects. These are unfolded, unravelled, unrolled, unwrapped.*

## Her Place and What Was Learned There

### Artist Statement

This drawing installation incorporates rubbings of domestic spaces, partial and fragmented, materializing melancholia within specific architecture and in relation to objects therein. While also referencing gender, these rubbings set apart and reacquaint the home as an inheritance. The tedious and repetitive process of making rubbings with a graphite stick on brittle paper over the variously textured, three-dimensional surfaces of a domestic sphere reveals the capacity as well as the limits of these materials in capturing the sensory surfaces of a place, actual or remembered. In many respects, paper echoed the elusiveness and specificity of memory, along with its inconsistency, clarity, unreliability, fragility and incompleteness.

The domestic sphere contains privacies within the privacy of home, and in that respect, *Her Place*, is general and specific. In its recognisability and ordinariness, the everyday may belie issues of disappointment, mistrust, transgression and loss. The ordinariness of white paper and grey graphite reveal impressions of domestic particulars without embellishment, while the irregular structure of the hanging paper objects intimates ambiguity and uncertainty. The installation of the parts and fragments of *Her Place* attempts to assemble a feminist version of familiar vulnerabilities.

The tactile endeavour of rubbing objects, walls, floors, doors, furniture, wrapping and unwrapping, covering and uncovering, was a subjective process that entailed rubbing, scrubbing, scratching, stroking, caressing, squeezing, crumpling, folding, unfolding, rolling up and unrolling. In some instances, the rubbings revealed an excess of visual and sensory information, as in the case of the chairs; whereas in other instances, particularly the soft surfaces, such as the bed or the food, or the highly textured surfaces, the rubbings revealed less visual detail, thereby hinting at other specific tactile qualities. The domestic sphere revealed itself predictably, but more often with surprising unpredictability. In both regards, a re-acquaintance has been made.

In this exhibition, I was interested in creating a setting, like a stage of a home with the various sheets of paper. Just prior to hanging the exhibition, I realized that the rubbings themselves did not convey the memories, the stories or narratives that had erupted for me while working in the Lake House. As a means to open these narratives of the home, to bring them into the exhibition, rather than have traditional art gallery wall labels for each individual rubbing, I decided to use rubbings of framed oil paintings from the Lake House to which I then added rubbings of cardboard text as titles. These framed titles were placed as if they were paintings, decorations on the wall, beside their corresponding rubbing: *Hammock; Hair Tub; Dyslexic Curtains; Father's Dresser; Trespass; Impossible*

*Impassable Hallway; Incest Ceiling.* These brief bits of text seemed replete for my purposes. I liked the juxtaposition of text where the framed artwork should be on the wall of a home, interspersed between the fragile translucent yet dusty shadows limply hanging where a solid house should be. For *Incest Ceiling*, I broke up the letters in the words, spelling across two horizontal lines, so that they were legible but through this simple rearrangement, seemed ‘coded’ or hidden, which hinted at the coded and hidden nature of incest.

	I	C	S	
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However, I realized at the opening that most people either weren’t noticing these text-pictures, or if they did, they asked me to explain them, which was uncomfortable. I was also surprised how literally some people interpreted the whole setting: “This reminds me of my grandparents’ house: the doors, the kitchen, the old chairs.” I wondered what the next step was, how to move people beyond that ‘one-to-one’ translation: mine=yours, known=known. On the other hand, it was pointed out, that the one-to-one document of the rubbings created an archive of the inherited home.<sup>7</sup>

Because this was set up like a stage set, I included many of the rubbings that I had maintained in their three-dimensional forms of kitchen ware and food: a coffee pot, a lemon squeezer, a wooden basket each of tomatoes, peaches and yellow plums; and a dinner plate with the text: “Joy was not meant to be a crumb” rubbed in the circular shape of the plate, from Mary Oliver’s poem, “Don’t Hesitate.” In such a dire place, such insight needed minding.

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<sup>7</sup> Thank you to Naomi Norquay for pointing out the archival nature of *Her Place*.

Thinking back to my prior discussion of Ann Hamilton's installations, I note an area for improvement or future consideration. For instance, I have numerous recordings of the sounds of the lake in a storm, or of a hurling windy day, and of the awakening of early morning birds across the lake. I did not consider sound, even the repetitive sound of making the rubbing, or how I might include these in either of my installations as I was so focused on creating the rubbings. Although the making of the rubbings was intensely sensual and physical, how could the hanging produce a more full, haptic aesthetic experience for my viewers?

This was a very satisfying show. The hanging was easier than I had planned - I had over planned - had drawings of layouts with measurements, had photos of the pipes we were hanging everything from, and had more rubbings than I could use, plus extra white plumbing tubes and excess fishing line. The sheets of paper were hung with the fishing line threaded through the plumbing tubes. The large space meant pieces could be moved and adjusted until it worked. It looked better, but different than I had imagined it. It was not a well-attended show, however. Due to its location at the university, and the very restricted hours it was open - noon to 4 pm, three or four days a week, no weekends - it was difficult for people with jobs, including me, to get there during the times the gallery was open to the public. Important logistical points to check for in the future.

Working toward an exhibition was a completely different experience than working at the beginning of the process, looking for a main or sustaining idea, or a concept that stands out somehow from all of the various studio explorations. The summers of 2013-4 were much more challenging and disconcerting as in that initial searching I had not started with a 'research question' but rather, with visual images that I wanted to make. The images alone were compelling but I wasn't sure where they would lead or how they would comprise or be comprised within a bigger body of artwork. Whereas during the summer of 2015, I had a plan to make rubbings of a place for exhibition. Although there was intense pressure, it was very enjoyable to know what to do next - there were many lists, that grew, which meant I had a lot of work to choose from for the two

exhibits. By the end of the summer, I had planned, and over planned, and organized all of the materials and assistance for this first exhibition, which made the hanging relatively straight forward. Not to say it wasn't an anxious time, but it changed my perspective entirely on the full cycle of creating a body of work for exhibition. I had had open studios, small scale shows of one or two large pieces, and contributed individual artworks to small shows, but had not had a full scale solo installation exhibition. It was a clear progression in developing a more professional practice and opened up possibilities for thinking about artworks as installations, as a larger contextualized group of pieces relating a concept, rather than individual pieces. I look forward to finishing all this writing so that I can plan a next one.

### **October 8, 2015**

*"Mira Schor Investigates What the Home Means to Contemporary Women Artists."* *Huffington Post*. "Roaming House" exhibition, follow-up to 1972 "Womanhouse" exhibition. [Exhibit January 2014]

'Home' is an ongoing subject in contemporary women's art:

### **October 18, 2015**

*Difference between therapy and art: therapy driven by need and impulse or therapist. Art driven by need and impulse initially but then conceptualized into some sort of tangible existence.*

*Why exhibitions are important - push the need and impulse into conceptual form. It exists outside of the artist - it is made to exist outside. The very act of planning is a meta-cognitive endeavour as the artist expands perspective beyond self and impulse to audience - what do I want to convey? If I do this, will that be different from this? How do they mean different/ same things? What would/ could happen if...? And then there are all of the unpredictable. Eleanor Winters turned out to be the perfect spot: size, light, height; black and white. Exhibition forces a certain kind of thinking about your work, no longer introspective.*

## HER PLACE-SCRAPS

**December 31, 2015**

*Scraps: definition: 1. a small piece or bit; a fragment; leftover bits of food; discarded waste material, especially metal (or textile); crisp pieces of rendered animal fat, cracklings; 2. To fight, usually with the fists; to fight or scuffle; brawl.*

By winter, I was looking ahead to the next show. I knew I wanted to convey a more dishevelled array of estranged bits and pieces, somewhat unrecognizable once unmoored from the recognizable “house” of the first exhibition. What is inherited that we don’t understand? A home seems like a coherent package, but if the home exists in unrelated parts, do we recognize it as a home? I was thinking that if the rubbings were a form of archive, the various components only made sense in relation to the whole. In the moments before an archivist can apply categories, the relation of the pieces to the whole should be clear; I wanted to resist that archiving function somehow. Removing the rubbings of perishable items, such as the food and the rubbings of the smaller household items, such as the coffee pot and dishes, meant that the archive was of the bones of the house, the hard structures, rather than the soft tissues. In the end I did include the rubbings of two bathrobes, and the rubbing of the tree - the tree as the stalwart indicator of a specific place, while the bathrobes implicate the unfleshy human presence. Each rubbing in this exhibit was flayed, spread open flat, with no attempt to maintain the echo of the three-dimensional form that the paper had held after being so determinedly wrapped around each piece of furniture or building structure. Each rubbing is in a sense, over-exposing, in too much detail, rendering the forms somewhat unrecognizable; they are hung limply, simply hung without pretence as an archivist might find them. Just bits and pieces, scraps, whose original purpose is unclear.

**January 9, 2016**

*Title for Propeller show: Her Place-Scraps - scraps are material things - also fist fights. Left-overs as if for an archive, there are bits of things left from another more substantive object/thing/place/time.*

Carolyn Steedman, in her book, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, captures the random array and arrangement of the meaningful and the meaningless in an archive that I wanted to capture in the exhibition, *Her Place-Scraps*:

An Archive may indeed take in stuff, heterogeneous, undifferentiated stuff ... texts, documents, data... and order them by the principles of unification and classification. This stuff, reordered, remade, then emerges - some would say like a memory - when someone needs to find it, or just simply needs it, for new and current purposes... But in actual Archives, though the bundles may be mountainous, there isn't in fact, very much there. The Archive is not potentially made up of *everything*, as is human memory; and it is not the fathomless and timeless place in which nothing goes away that is the unconscious. The Archive is made from selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past and also from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there.... But as stuff, it just sits there until it is read, and used, and narrativised. (67)

Which would indicate that without the narrativisation, they become forgotten. *Her Place-Scraps* was meant to show the stuff, the scraps as they lose their narrative, become unrecognizable, they could become forgotten or they could be remembered - but how will they be remembered?

### **January 15, 2016**

*"Does a Francis Bacon smell like bacon? Lessons from the Tate Sensorium."* *The Guardian*. "Can taste, touch, smell and sound change the way we see art?" *Creative agency Flying Object*, "partnered artwork with multi-sensory installations designed to get visitors thinking differently about the art."

This second exhibition, was held at Propeller Gallery in Toronto, February 2016. I chose from the same group of rubbings with slightly different selections due to the different intentions and experiences I was trying to create and convey. After the first exhibition, I not only did not want to repeat, but I had a completely different idea to convey; also, the second space at Propeller was half the size. As part of a pedagogy of making, rearranging the same rubbings in a different environment demonstrated the flexibility of pieces used in installations to extend a range of meanings and experiences in the viewing and interpretation of those same pieces. This offers tremendous potential as a study in exhibition curation, in the rearrangements of meanings between

and among artworks, and in the relationship of viewers to those various artworks. Rather than a direct re-hanging in a different space, but an intentional re-thinking of the possible experiences and encounters with the artworks in the exhibition, with the ways and means of creating various meanings. This was an intriguing discovery.

## Her Place-Scraps

### Artist Statement

This drawing installation explores specific domestic architecture through tactile rubbings. Her Place-Scraps is composed of fragmentary sections of rooms, an archival rendering of a home, undone from its original forms, while reassembled as a feminist commentary. The hung rubbings displace and distort, as with memory, which is also a provisional archive.



*Her Place-Scraps*. 2018. Drawing Installation. Propeller Gallery, Toronto. South view.

**February 15, 2016**

*I am unhappy with the Propeller hanging so far - not sure why it's not the look I want. Demonstrates the crucial role of appropriate hanging strategy. Maybe requires a different concept/guiding idea. This installation juxtaposes materials, ideas and the gallery space AND the availability of good hangers - the pipes to hang from in the spots where I want them. All of these elements effect/control the configuration fo this exhibit. How well I can bring together these different pieces - and live with the outcome. ... pragmatically, we were doing the obvious things. Maybe that was the problem- to not do the obvious somehow. I was surprised - I wasn't expecting it to not work- just hang them!*

For this second show at Propeller *Her Place-Scraps*, I focused on the idea of archive, or a pre-archive of a 'place,' a home as an archive, but before it is formally archived. In this instance an inherited home formed an archive, its walls, hallways, doors and windows, furnishings and a tree were the structures left behind, but seeping into all of that, lives and experiences as embodied and remembered in the objects and architecture, found within a particular geography. An archive is a final structuring or organization, or as Steedman pointed out above, just a collection of available bits and pieces that are inevitably left behind after the fact, after action, but mostly, after death. In this second exhibition, I wanted to convey the scraps and leftovers that are not yet archival material, having lost most of their 'narrativised meaning' now separated from their originary belonging, separated from their supporting narrative environment. As Steedman points out, "... nothing starts in the Archive, nothing, ever at all, though things certainly end up there. You find nothing in the Archive but stories caught half way through: the middle of things; discontinuities" (45). Although the individual rubbings were already fragmented, I wanted to have the pieces be somewhat "disloyal" and less cared for in their particular assembly; however the actual hanging of the pieces in the gallery did not accentuate this. I wasn't sure if my discontent was in relation to what I was actually trying to get at: scraps, as scraps are disconcerting, they have no purpose, it is hard to make them look good, formally or purposefully. Or, should they look good, formally? My original idea, a drawing in my Process Journal from April 2015 when I first considered the idea of rubbings of the home for an exhibition, shows each of the various elements hung non-contextually: the table was hung vertically



*Her Place-Scraps*. 2018. Drawing Installation. Propeller Gallery, Toronto. East view.

on the wall, the stairs moved parallel to the ceiling then dropped. Yet during the hanging of *Scraps I* was still caught in thinking of maintaining some sense of recognizability, that in retrospect, should have been dismissed in light of the idea of ‘scraps.’

The movement in this smaller gallery was much more restricted and the pieces were hung leaving a middle passage for walking. Jennifer Fisher points out that,

What distinguishes exhibitions from other communication media is that they demand movement. Beholding requires perambulation through the spaces of display. It is through proprioception - the sense of dimensionality and motion in space - that we understand exhibitions. In this way, haptic awareness encompasses a key aspect of exhibition experience accounting for “how we are touched” by the kinaesthetic demands of exhibition choreographies and the proprioceptive impact of both ambience and arrangement. (2)

This “proprioceptive impact of both ambience and arrangement” was not as convincingly achieved. I wanted to deal with the sheets of paper “as if” they were scraps, left-over bits whose identity, purpose or meaning was no longer clear or mattered. None of the rubbings were “moulded” to resemble the original table or bath tub, for example, as they were in the first exhibition; I used

straight pins and clothes pins to hang pieces on the wall and fishing line with plastic tubing to hang from the ceiling. All of the chairs, the table and the *Matriarch* and *Patriarch Bath Robes*, were hung open vertically, not horizontally opening like an article of clothing, but from the back down to the front, ceiling to floor, like the hides of animals. This repetition of splayed forms was meant to defamiliarize the objects simply by flattening what had been a three-dimensional rubbing, but also to seem more like random specimens, than a place of coherent memory or belonging. Fisher adds to her discussion of proprioceptive engagement of the viewer, “While in conventional museum narratives haptic beholding typically involves movement from exhibit to exhibit... recent art nuances the haptic in a wider range of its modalities: interoceptive, climactic, vibratory and tactile (5). *Her Place: Scraps* was less successful due to the lack of a range of modalities, as Fisher mentions. What if there had been an air conditioner blasting - in mid-February? Coating the sheets of paper with Vaseline (or bacon fat) would have added to the haptic relationship. She also describes an exhibition as a ‘choreography’(5), casting the bodies of viewers as dancers, movers in a defined space, moving at pre-determined rates in specific poses throughout, but improvisationally, in their own time. I had thought of setting the installation as a confrontation - a tunnel that would lead people to a dead end facing the bed and the rubbing of the painting on the wall, *Incest Ceiling*. I worried that such a tunnel would not allow for the viewer to enter or leave of their own will. Perhaps a more convoluted hanging arrangement of zig-zags would have still allowed for the flow of viewers, where the choreography of their bodies called upon them to pay attention and turn their heads and shoulders often, change the pace and direction of their feet, while also allowing them to move through from one end to the other without being stopped or captured.

In an artist run space you are your own curator. My focus during the hanging became driven by my anxiety. It felt exposing to hang, and it felt like there was no where to hide, to remain out of sight. What I suspect about developing a “practice” that is established, built up, repeated, is learning to deal with that anxiety, the “not knowing” and the inability to articulate in the moment. I knew

something wasn't quite how I wanted it, but wasn't sure why or how to re-arrange the pieces to create the "sense" of it. Part way through the first week I brought in three more pieces and added them, all of which improved the physical space. The question is, then, how do the formal tangible qualities of an artwork, this installation, enliven, produce, create the desired intangible sense, affect or impression?

Writing about it now demonstrates how the specifics of the artworks could have been thought through with writing, and a more experimental approach to hanging the installation would have been helpful. Although I was unsatisfied with the actual hanging, that it wasn't 'scrappy' enough, these two separate exhibitions did present me with the realities of dealing with two very different architectural spaces in each of the galleries, and the physical and curatorial experience of hanging the same materials, but with a different intention for each. As I said above, I had not expected to find such provocative potential in hanging the same art installation differently, in distinct venues, offering a range of experiences and intentions for viewers. In terms of creating a body of work, installation encompasses its own curation, inviting multiple modes of experience and understanding, which I would like to exploit further, whether with rubbings or other materials.

### **Fear Of Exhibition: Too Close To Home**

I was surprised how difficult it was to show this work even though I believed that what I was bringing to exhibition were ideas of a 'home' and experiences that were not unique, and had constructed it in such a way as to relate generalities, intending that *Her Place* could be any woman's *Place*. I expected to be a little uncomfortable, but I was surprised how very uncomfortable I became, more so with the second exhibition, *Her Place-Scraps*, as it was a more public, accessible and better attended gallery. Colleagues, family members, neighbours, people I did not expect, people who knew

me well, even strangers, who questioned me about the titles and the content. One such stranger attempted some kind of humour, “So, is this some kind of deep dark confessional?” I said no, it could be anyone’s story. He didn’t seem to buy it. I felt pinned down. With others, I avoided showing them certain parts of the exhibit. I had thought I would be able to distance myself emotionally more than I was able to. I wished I had painted flowers or innocuous abstractions, or pet portraits. Unlike Gerald Ferguson, rubbings were not a distancing device for me, and I was not seeking distance; however, managing the proximity of closeness to these general/personal/private stories in a public setting was challenging. The reactions from viewers and the experience of engaging with “the public” were an entirely unexpected part of the experience that I had absolutely not predicted. Staying away during an opening or a show is recommended, yet at the same time, obviously, it was more moving than I had expected, seeing so many people come out and give their attention to my work. By itself, the exhibition was an emotional roller coaster, albeit a rewarding one.

## Secrets

A year after the exhibition I was well into the third phase of this art practice research project, the writing about it. I realized that these paintings/titles were consistent with Evan Imber-Black’s four categories of secrets: sweet, essential, toxic and dangerous (13-16). For example, *Hammock* is a kind of sweet secret, shared with and for the benefit of another; *Hair Tub* refers to an essential secret, as between matriarch and daughter, a secret shared to promote well-being at a time of adolescent development. *Dyslexic Curtains* betrays the visible evidence of a learning disability that haunted a matriarch’s life; it is a toxic secret, held since early childhood when her educators delivered it as condemnation. A toxic relationship with education has rebounding effects across generations, permeating how daughters, descendants, even those without learning disabilities, consider their own intelligence and education. *Father’s Dresser* and *Incest Ceiling* reveal dangerous secrets where someone

is at risk and abuse is present. I would add, after the fact, once the abuse has passed, although not revealed, a dangerous secret also becomes a toxic secret.

The photo here is of *Trespass*, which was placed beside *Stairs*. Acknowledging these secrets, not only through following the impetus to make the specific rubbings that I chose to make, but by adding the titles, I now felt that the secrets had invaded the Lake House. And, they were out in the world. Secrets are different from privacy, which is about keeping some information among a small group of people; a secret, that is not a sweet secret, brings with it a prohibition against sharing; it is like an infection or a virus that spreads, undiagnosed; a secret changes everything in your emotional, psychic, physical world. It becomes the floor you walk on. It is not something separate that is put in a drawer, closed and “forgotten.” It permeates, infects, inflects, decays whatever it is hanging on to. It is an independent, autonomous system that brings all other systems into alignment with it.



How did I remember these secrets? How were they stored as memories? Thinking of Proust’s terms of voluntary and involuntary memory, how does a secret function in relation to memory? There are certain facts that I could ask myself to voluntarily recall; but the impact of these secrets was in their involuntary arrival “in some material object...of which we have no inkling” as Proust said, (59) and there they were, as I climbed the stairs, was on hands and knees on the kitchen floor, or staring up at the ceiling.

The stories that became apparent are not unique or unique to me, reflecting a wider view of home, and what is or isn’t thinkable within a home depending on who continues to live there or whose presence continues to pressure what is or isn’t remembered. So these are memories of experiences and stories that the house divulged, that through the requirement of writing, using

creative writing methodologies to explore the various voices within a home, experiences rose to the fore. Memoirist Patricia Hampl, sees memory and imagination as inextricably linked, as:

memory is not, fundamentally, a repository. If it were, no question would arise about its accuracy, no argument would be fought over its notorious imprecision. The privacy of individual experience is not a right ... Not a right, but something greater – it is an inevitability that returns no matter what invasion seems to overtake it. This privacy is bred of memory’s intimacy with the idiosyncrasy of the imagination. What memory “sees,” it must regard through the image-making faculty of mind. The parallel lines of memory and imagination cross finally, and collide in narrative. The casualty is the dead body of privacy lying smashed on the track. (1999, 127)

The titles I created for *Her Place* testified to the collision of memory and imagination with narrative. Apparently I was very clear about the narratives surrounding the secrets. Secrets tend to be biographical; my intent was to generalize narratives and their implications. Making the rubbings transitioned my relationship to this inherited home from nostalgic childhood memory to adult despair. Perhaps my own cruel determination to set myself apart from the tarnished family past is what has provoked me to find a way to refuse that “blood is thicker than water,” to convey the unspoken, to unleash the secrets, and shake them out.

“Whose memories, whose traumas, ‘disappear’ if only archival knowledge is valorized and granted permanence?” (Taylor 193)

### **The Rubbings And What Was Learned There: Writing**

After the exhibition, I turned to writing the dissertation. If I were not required to write about the artmaking, the process of arriving at this exhibition, the curatorial decisions, I wouldn’t have. My personal aftermath made this much more difficult than writing a report to document the working process. When confronted with the writing about these various rubbings of an inherited home, the unspoken, the secrets, returned. They worried me. I thought there had only been one. Slowly it

became apparent that there were several, intertwined, indicated in *Her Place*. My writing then shifted from being 'about' to being 'in'. How was I going to explain any of this? Was it an explanation that was needed? A description? How much needed to be said? In the midst of wondering, I read Orhan Pamuk's novel, *My name is Red*, which is structured through a succession of first person accounts given by people, dead and alive, by ordinary objects, artworks and red paint. If red paint, a gold coin or a drawing of a tree could speak as a particular physical entity in a novel, could a house speak in my dissertation? Could a family home? How would a building or a home think? What would it notice? What patterns of movement, and pause, as Tuan pointed out, would define the perceptions of a home? Would each room have a unique vision or experience of its inhabitants? Would a home have morals? Given Krasner's specific emphasis on tactility within the home as a form of intimacy (15), and my idea of the haptics of home that adds the kinesthetic and spatial to Krasner's definition, would the home notice the physical interplay of bodies against its surfaces, contained within its spaces?

### **Her Place: I Am Theirs**

*I have watched them all, overseen them, overheard them, stored and protected them and their belongings, waited for them, felt each arrival and departure, longed for them, longed for the softness of bare feet, the simmer and steam from the kitchen, the gregarious and ticklish humour, the crowds shifting, lingering, until dawn awoke us all. They move in and through me, call me by name, stroke my walls, my banister, my windows, scratch my floors, they fill me up - and then they empty me.*

*But I am theirs. While holding them, in their countless movements, they shuffle back and forth, moving from one resting spot to another, I follow their footprints, feel the trace of their fingers along my walls, gently turning a door knob, twisting a tap, damp hands along the edge of a door, brushing a light switch with the backs of their fingers or with a thumb and finger - they all do it differently - removing their body clothes and laying them on chairs or dresser or my floor, then the weight of their bodies spread out across a bed. Some join another in resting or frolicking in one of my rooms, usually they join in patterns of elders. Occasionally there is a certain stealth. But I am yet so sturdy, bold against creak and crack, my wood parcels so solidly fit that we share the load together and obtain a beautiful gliding*

*silence throughout my hallways, kitchen, stairs. We are well joined and so very still, even as my inhabitants are constantly in motion.*



*Her Place and What Was Learned There*. 2015. Drawing Installation, west view. Eleanor Winters Art Gallery, York University, Toronto.

*But I listen, there is no choice. My walls, floors and doors, flow between one and another, a floor above, a ceiling below. We listen. In the bright. In the dark. I hear. I cannot say how many times I hear a patriarch creep through the halls, in the night, stalking worries, ghosts, those lost people, prowling around, cursing, swearing, alone, disturbed, frantic, exasperated, humiliated, exhausted, never sleeping more than two or three hours, desperate, lonely, furtively counting, counting, counting, the numbers elusive, the pictures like acid, knowing not knowing, disappointing disappointing, listing each gain as a set of numerals - slicing them, dissecting their fractions, fractious remainders.*

The house responding to the bodies of those within it, the house as a body intimately connected to dwellers' bodies, seemed appropriate to the narratives and secrets within *Her Place*, that were mostly about bodies or things made with bodies. Perhaps it could then notice affect, or the emotion of the inhabitants, the anxiety, tension, pleasure, anger. I decided that although a house may

not have morals, as they are culturally defined, it could notice patterns, patterns of movement. This was the next step in trying to find a methodology for exploring the complex web of multi-generational family interactions.

Narrative became a thread running through my writing, narration of my sensory experiences at the Lake House, writing from memories, poetic writing relating to my artwork, the rubbings, the secrets. Vera Caine, et al., discuss the uses of fiction in qualitative research, specifically in written narrative inquiry. The three main reasons they found for researchers to choose fictionalization are: 1. to protect and blur the identities of participants and the site of research – pseudonyms being the common use of fiction in research; 2. to create an Other to tell more; 3. to create ‘As if’ worlds. Pseudonyms, third-person narrators, and the creation of ‘as if’ worlds serve, where “fictionalization can be understood as analysis in another manner, creating another layer to deepen awareness”(216-217). By adding the voice of the house for each of the framed titles, I explored these uses of fiction through an imaginative process of trying to “think like a home.” Italics are incorporated for each narrative in response to its corresponding rubbing and title. Below are four of these narratives: *Hair Tub*, an essential secret; *Father’s Dresser*, a dangerous secret that became a toxic secret; *Stairs*, a toxic secret; and *Incest Ceiling*, a dangerous secret that became a toxic secret.

**July 18, 2015**

*A paper wrapped figure and attempt rubbing them in the bathtub - who has been there before me?*

### **Hair Tub**

*I am always here, a soft echo, alone, warmly caressing their legs, their delicate flanges. Two matriarchs now stand beside me. The elder matriarch speaks, tilted at the waist, a timber about to fall, to the limber matriarch, adolescent, swinging slightly on the medicine wardrobe door. “You will become a woman. And now once a month, you will have blood. You will have to use these pads. Attach them with this belt.” She hands the limber matriarch white objects inside her closed fist, which the girl then holds behind her back. “You will have to shave. But don’t shave your thighs. Just under your arms and your legs. Don’t cut yourself.” She holds up a metal razor then places it back on the shelf.*

*The girl's head slants, eyeing between the open folds of the matriarch's bathrobe to those darkly gloomy thighs. Hair, blood, these bodily expulsions and discharges interfere and compel, repugnant to the matriarch and therefore to the girl, imposing a good deal of subterfuge and hiding on their way in or out of my room. Nonetheless, I contain, then, swallow their discharges.*

This memory spurred the rubbing of the bathroom and bathtub. I had waterproofed the leaky faucet, stuffed it with plastic bags to do the rubbing of it. So much shame around the materiality of womanhood: the breasts, the bras, the blood, the log-sized sanitary pads, the elastic sanitary pad belt contraption (before temporary adhesives were invented), and the hair. While bent over the tub, I found the rubbing with the stick of graphite



*Hair Tub*. 2015. In *Her Place And What Was Learned There*. Eleanor Winters Art Gallery, York University, Toronto.

incredibly tedious, much more so than washing the tub with water and a sponge, which is smooth and easy to flick around in an arc and cover much of the area of the tub. The surface of the old metal tub is mottled enough or curved enough to ensure that the flat graphite stick only struck points, producing long hair-like strands in vertical black lines, around the tub. It was perfect: the lines pushed forward the notion of hair which by association represented the undesirable, unseemly, unpredictable, uncomfortable, visible and invisible aspects of the sexuality of a woman.

If this is a woman's house, the memory of learning about sexuality is certainly alive in the house, found in the various corners, bathrooms, bathtubs and showers, in the sharpness of a razor transparently coated in leg blood, in the bathroom cupboards, the discreetly placed cardboard boxes, in the red and pink stained toilet water, in the garbage pails where the sanitary pads were hidden and

hopefully invisible, inside the drawers and in the mirror of the vanity, and in the dampness clinging to the towel.

### Father's Dresser

*I am unremarkable. Ebony stained, plain drawers adorned with circular marquetry pull handles, a singular curve of the smaller top two drawers, distinguish me as a gentleman patriarch's dresser. And from a line of gentlemen patriarchs I come. There are discreet metal-lined keyholes in each of my five dark drawers, but I do not recall the feel of key recently in any one of them. (Do matriarch dressers have locks in them?) Why, you might ask, would a gentleman patriarch require locks for his socks and underwear, his sweaters or weekend pants while his work clothes hang openly on hangers in the wardrobe? Why, indeed. So many locks. A puzzle of suggestion. Of unease and disquiet, suspicion and dread. Was it for the worried one that I was intended or was he one in a continuing line of recipients of patriarchal symbols of ownership, dominance and control?*

*The worried one packs more into my drawers than his socks. His fat stories, shoved in the woolen balls, pushed into every corner, no air between; sheaves of paper with strange lettering underneath, envelopes harboring their missives, smaller ones holding tiny hard objects, a hand softened Bible to one side. Belt done up. Belt undone. A snake, curled in a spiral, waiting.*

*These top drawers live in suffocated remorse. Socks are innocuous. Who would suspect?*

*The pants and sweaters rotate in rows of regret. Colour blind combinations, worn threads, sweat marks. Surfaces scratched with anxiety. Pockets filled. Pockets emptied. Flies done up with determination, or relief.*



*Father's Dresser*. 2015. In *Her Place And What Was Learned There*. Eleanor Winters Art Gallery, York University, Toronto.

*Long after one of the patriarchs was gone, a neighbour came by. There had been a personal confession in his late elder years. But in sharing it, "I think you will want to know this," it became an overdue secret, a secret cracked open. How to say it? How to put it? Well, the patriarch came for a treatment, seeking solace from pain. He was raped, he said. By a Catholic priest. As a teenager. Sixteen.*

*How did he begin confiding the story? What words did he use? What impelled him to tell - at such a late age? Did he know - expect - hope - fear - that the professional confidence would be transferred, transforming a secret into a revelation? Or a revulsion? A secret that changes everything. Explains everything. Doesn't it? Or was it an intended excuse for repetition? Where to put it? Where to put it? What to do with it? It doesn't fit horizontally into any of my drawers. It doesn't fold and flatten and stack. It*

*doesn't follow pleats or creases. Perhaps more like socks, lucky to be a pair, rolling consoling together, inside becoming outside, suffering the whole into a bulging unbearably compressible mound. Easy to shove around. Easy to squeeze. Swallowing all the air in my sullen sock drawer.*

*Am I unremarkable? A secret that changes everything. Explains everything. Does it? Can a secret do that, like god or religion? Or was it an intended excuse for repetition?*



*Stairs. Behind: Hair Tub, Right: Father's Dresser. 2015. In Her Place And What Was Learned There. Eleanor Winters Art Gallery, York University, Toronto.*

## **Stairs**

*Every night he stalks, stubborn tomcat, intent on a mysterious hunt.*

*Up and down, weather worn leather from ill-fitting slippers rasps across each of my steps.*

*Grasping, stroking my railing with each lift, hauling one flank, then the other.*

*Not a creak I*

*creak not*

*My silence*

*is my loyalty*

*Where should you be right now? I ask him. But he shakes his head. He refuses to answer.*

*Why he does not return to his elder matriarch but goes instead to his limber matriarch - like a cleaner - intent on doing what must be done. It is a pattern. I couldn't tell you how often it repeats. At a certain point it does change. He is slow and fragile, stiff and crippled, unable to climb my stairs, unable to traverse my hallways or to sit on my porch wearing his soft blue cardigan into the dusk. I try to be welcoming. I try to heal them all, despite the lonely ones and the closed doors. I want them to return.*

## **Incest Ceiling**

*Here I am. In all four corners at the same time. Balanced atop these four walls. Opposite from the floor but not opposed to the floor. As I am both above and below the floor. I am always between floors. I surround, cover, offer essential protection. I am fully and completely desired. There is no survival without me. The walls may hold by the sides, but I spread more resolutely as I would still be desired without the presence of walls. Escape is always possible. I am an unrestraining necessity.*

*Assumptions are made about me: Paint with flat white latex. Smooth and dry. Friend of cobwebs. Silent. Placid. Unambitious. Unadorned. Undecorated.*

*But I am none of these things. I am screaming. Screaming into the dawn. Black shadows stab defeated crows across me. The walls have betrayed me and closed in. The window is a dream I had. It isn't really there. The bed below me is wet. Sloshing in vomit from the sheets. Rusty screeching and thumping above. Contemptible corners and floors anchor me. Light fixture pins me. I would fold along my seams. Collapse and crash the sloshing bed, puncture the iron springs. I would fly open the walls. Disassemble this house. Ricocheting floor boards return to be clenched between the teeth of all broken ceilings. There is no room, there are no walls, I have fled.*



*Incest Ceiling: Light Fixture. 2015. In Her Place And What Was Learned There. Eleanor Winters Art Gallery, York University, Toronto.*

This writing did not feel like academic writing, these brief slices of narrative, mostly poetic, imaginative forms. As A Pedagogy of Making, once the text was initiated, experimenting with writing caused me to think and give words to censored knowledge. In trying to conjure how a house might think, I had to pinpoint specific moments of the house's bodily awareness of its dwellers, or rather, the house's awareness of the dwellers' bodies. Annette Kuhn notes that memory work produces idiosyncratic "texts:"

Particularly prominent among the peculiar characteristics of memory texts is a rather distinctive organization of time: in memory texts, time tends not to be fully continuous or sequential...The memory text is typically a montage of vignettes, anecdotes, fragments, 'snapshots', flashes...Memory texts, being metaphorical rather than analogical, have more in common with poetry than with classical narrative. (162)

Patricia Hampl, memoirist, would agree with Kuhn, noting memoir's links to poetry:

Strangely enough, contemporary memoir... has its roots not in fiction, which it appears to mimic and tease, but in poetry. The chaotic lyric impulse, not the smooth drive of plot, is the engine of memory. Flashes of half-forgotten moments flare up from their recesses... Shards glinting in the dust. These are the materials of memoir, details that refuse to stay buried, that demand habitation. Their spark of meaning spreads into a wildfire of narrative. They may be domesticated into a story, but the passion that begat them as images belongs to the wild night of poetry. It is the humble detail ... which commands memory to speak...(1999, 127-8)

The juxtaposition of the familiar lived experience with “the humble details” of Mezei’s ‘domestic effects,’ with the haptics of home, the small tacit, textural details that opened onto the range of family secrets, and all of the fraught loyalties, disloyalties and disappointments, memories, power structures and knowledge systems at the heart of this inquiry, are all hinted at through a work of visual art. Candace Stout and Vittoria Daiello advocate for creative practitioners to use expressive writing as a means to dig out, formulate and articulate what is underlying, although perhaps vaguely apparent, but significant, in their art work: “Writing toward the articulation of an evocative, elusive awareness brings the slippery qualities of the creative process into tangible form” (623). Creative writing invites the inquiring artist/writer to connect their writing-thinking with their studio-thinking. As previously stated, Laura Marks’ discussion of the process of writing as a translation is apt, as writing requires movement from one medium or experience, whether sound, colour, gesture, feelings, arousal, anxiety, nausea, or bereavement, into the static form of words; this translation is in effect a form of Synesthesia where one sensory experience is conveyed through another sense (Marks ix), and the task is “to make the dry words retain a trace of the wetness of the encounter” (x).

Moving simultaneously through personal experience, creative practice, written articulation while securing theoretical framing was supported by the interdisciplinary breadth and flexibility of the as yet, un-closed field of Art Practice Research, as well as that in Social Sciences, of Family

Methodology. Despite my many struggles with writing, and the various disciplinary expectations of writing (art history, art criticism, sociology and education, memoir and creative writing), in the end, this post-exhibition exploration of writing has provided an anchor that has kept me close to the project while still allowing me to move around its circumference. Writing in the discipline as a studio artist can require writing across many disciplines.

### **Inheritance - Disinheritance**

*Her Place* is an inherited home, disclosing an excess of memories. Lucy E. Bailey's "Necessary Betrayals: Reflections on Biographical Work on a Racist Ancestor" has provided a framework for thinking about inheritance. She proposes the term, "genealogical refusal" (113) to describe when a researcher of a family member resists a romantic biographical interpretation of their ancestor. There is no glossing over or omission of undesirable information. She describes the dilemma for the researcher: "The researcher's 'relationship' with his/her ancestral subject may become threaded with family lore, shame and pride, the trope of bloodlines, and significantly, the identity work of the researcher" (117). In particular, this idea of "the trope of bloodlines" has been significant to my work. Why should they matter, those tropes, those "bloodlines"? Can inheritors reject obligations of belonging when ethically the obligations of secrecy harboured there are abhorrent? Blood is stickier than water.

Inheritances are properties, such as this Lake House, which included objects of every description. Inheritances are biological, apparent in our physical bodies. The study of the genealogical is a sociological practice validating physical and biological inheritance, as well as social class and social status inheritance. Social status, racial, cultural, and economic forces shape our inheritances and shape which family narratives are told. What may accompany any of these

inheritances are the narratives that flesh them out, bring them character; establish timelines, explanations, expectations and agreements about what is in and what is out of the established narrative. Some of these narratives bring empty traces, dead ends and questions. Inheritances are unpredictable, sometimes desperately sought or, sometimes, completely undesirable. They spur emotion. Mine is anger. And, grief.

Harold Goodall, in his research regarding his parents, used the term “Narrative Inheritance,”

to describe the afterlives of the sentences used to spell out the life stories of those who came before us. What we inherit narratively from our forebears provides us with a framework for understanding our identity through theirs. It helps us see our life grammar and working logic as an extension of, or a rebellion against the way we story how they lived and thought about things, and it allows us to explain to others where we come from and how we were raised in the continuing context of what it all means. (497)

But, he acknowledges, we don't always inherit a sense of completion. “We too often inherit a family's unfinished business, and when we do, those incomplete narratives are given to us” – he says “to complete”(Ibid), but I do not assume that completion is possible. We can flesh out the shadows in an ever more provisional way, perhaps. Potential inheritance material then, could include physical places, objects, and their stories; blood and biology, as validation; stories as plausible explanations; beliefs and defences; and emotional ‘contracts.’ Completion, closure, coming to terms, understanding, acceptance, forgiveness? No, not necessarily. Why do we expect this? The genealogical refusal proposed by Bailey has provided a significant personal and theoretical framework that allows me to step aside from implicit assumptions of acceptance, just because it's family, and reconsider the narrative, the memories, and bodily inheritances that happen to us. I make a claim for disinheritance. This does not arrive without cost. As Krasner points out, grief is not just an emotional state, but is a condition embodied as postures in specific locations within the home (21), whereas, “[u]nlike visual memorializing - dwelling on pictures, reimagining scenes from the past - bodily memorializing emerges spontaneously from habitual bodily acts”(39). The making of *Her Place* demonstrates, perhaps, a specific haptic response to grief.

Although the studio project is finished for the moment, this writing continues. Amy Prodrômou considers modes of dealing with grief and loss in memoirs written by women who “attempt to understand the ambiguity of grief; to avoid ‘redemptive tropes’”(71) and “the almost endemic pervasiveness of what ...has [been] called ‘the recovery arc’ in many narratives dealing with loss”(72). The author sees “grief as a complex process, and recovery as ‘textured’ and ambiguous” (72). Much like Bailey’s “trope of bloodlines” the trope of redemption is perhaps not only not realistic for me, but also not necessary or desirable. I wonder whether grief that is almost entirely spurred by anger offers a different cycle or process. Grief is about the past; as I said above, grief can be a response to what was, as well as to what wasn’t. It is difficult to project anger about what wasn’t, the narrative gap, into the future; it would be aspirational to create something altogether different.

As I continue to live around and in this inherited home, surrounded by the biographies of many things and people in this multigenerational place, the temporalities are constantly shifting. I have sorted through many stories. I have made a decision without choosing it. I am anchored here, for now, through my senses. How memory, affect, loss or grief arrive, proceed and form a confluence when concentrated through the sensorium are at work in *Her Place*.

**RUBBINGS in HISTORY, ART and HOME:  
MONUMENTS, PLACE and AUTO/BIOGRAPHY**

Rubbings are perfunctory documents. Historically, in both Western and Eastern practices of rubbings, a rubbing is a record of the material transfer or fact of an object onto another material, usually paper. A rubbing in itself eschews artistic idea or the artistic ‘hand’ as irrelevant; drawing skill is unnecessary in the creation of a recognizable rubbing. I will briefly discuss the varied practices and distinctions between Western and Eastern uses of rubbings as well as artists who use this material documentary process in relation to place. Max Ernst, Sari Dienes, Anna Barriball, Gerald Ferguson and Ian Howard each explore rubbings combining material processes from Western and Eastern rubbing traditions, and all but Ernst have made rubbings in relation to place. Also, two contemporary Asian artists, Xu Bing from China and Do Ho Suh from Korea, have used traditional and combined approaches to rubbings of large architectural structures in expansive, collaborative art projects that were then hung as installations. These form points of comparison to *Her Place* as artworks with shared processes of formation and shared content of place, specifically home, as in the work of Do Ho Suh. Throughout I ask: How are rubbings inherently auto/biographical and place-based?

**Max Ernst: Frottage and Juxtaposition**

Rubbing as a decidedly artistic, interpretive process in the west was distinctively explored in a collection of precise drawings by Max Ernst in 1925. He used rubbings as an intentional means to counter the “thematic conformity” of cubism, whereby the juxtaposition of previously unrelated objects created a “poetic transformation” (Seitz 41). Using banal objects in a variety of combinatory processes, Ernst demonstrated his inventive use of *frottage* in a collection of drawings that can be

found at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, titled *Histoire Naturelle - Natural History*, circa 1925, published 1926, (Ernst), an archival title for a whimsical collection where the imagery or titles might relate to the theme of nature, but not necessarily even to each other. Ernst “claims he discovered the *frottage* method while staring transfixed by the deep wooden grain of his floor boards...” (Ernst, 1948, 7). This *frottage* approach to image making is one of many Surrealist techniques, and is used in Art education classes as it demonstrates the Surrealist intent to foster “the serendipity of the resulting imagery and the passivity it encouraged, bypassing the constraints of the artist’s rational mind” (Ernst: MoMA: Max Ernst). Allegra Presenti clarifies the the definition of *frottage*, the French word for rubbing as determined by Ernst, as that “formed from a pattern of rubbings that converge to produce imagery that is unrelated to its source” (11), so that for Ernst it was a compositional device that he used not only with humour, but with the sophisticated skills of 19th century art training in drawing, where his use of textures, shapes, lines, marks and shading bring life to flat areas of unrelated rubbed textures and inventively delineate the picture plane. I venture that the clarity and structure of Ernst’s images belie a sense of the Surreal irrational, let alone a spontaneous or unplanned use of his materials or ideas. Presenti affirms my point, “Although Ernst suggested that his frottages were made without forethought, they are in fact sensitively conceived and configured” (12), yet, none the less, “an important breakthrough in draftsmanship” (13) within, and beyond the bounds of Surrealism. He used rubbings as a radical approach to composition and to the content of composition; and composition in western art occurs within the picture plane. Ernst’s use of rubbings is therefore unlike the other artists I will discuss below, partly because the picture plane is not the defining feature of the other artists’ uses of rubbings, but more so, these artists are keenly interested in the production of imagery that is related to its identifiable source. In this way, Ernst’s rubbings are also unlike my own use of rubbings where the reproduction of the surfaces of the object I rubbed were intended to build composite images of recognizability toward reconstructing a dimensional semblance of the original architecture.

## **Sari Dienes: Urban *Frottages***

As an urban precedent in the use of rubbing, in the 1950s in New York City, Sari Dienes created *Sidewalk Rubbings*, including subway grates, cracks in the pavement and manhole covers, for which she was at the time particularly renowned. She made numerous rubbings, or transfer drawings as they are described by the Drawing Centre, (Drawing Centre), including a variety of found objects, surfaces, natural or hand-made, discovered during her travels. The resulting images appear to be “*frottages*” according to Presenti’s definition above, where the whole composition is comprised of rubbings of parts of disparate objects, where the picture plane is still a structuring force for some of her smaller images. Sari Dienes is credited with being not only involved and connected, but influential through her experimental approach to materials and group art making processes with younger artists in the New York scene at the time, including John Cage, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg [ibid Drawing Centre]. Dienes covered sections of Manhattan streets with massive sheets of paper then invited artists to participate, using printmaking rollers inked with various colours. A roller, whether six, eight or ten inches wide, would advantageously cover large surfaces more easily, and be less stressful to hold than a two by one half inch graphite stick; there would be a greater facility maintaining pressure on a palm sized grip of a roller while focusing on the impression made of the object (Dienes, Life). On the other hand, a roller of any size might also make it difficult to cover the more varied three-dimensional forms scaled for the domestic sphere, such as chairs, framed paintings, coffee pots, dishes, fruit and vegetables in bowls, baskets or pots, as I did. Considering that most of the surfaces in her artworks appear to have been flat, it is possible to infer that she may not have tried rubbings of objects that were not flat, and the finished works are exhibited framed and hung on a wall in a gallery. These artworks exist individually and as a body of work made in specific geographical locations, but were not made as components for an installation,

nor do they seem to have been exhibited as parts of a whole or parts relating to a specific geographic 'place.'

### **Anna Barriball - Architectural Elements**

Contemporary British artist Anna Barriball has created a number of rubbings of architectural elements, such as heating vents, sections of ceilings, windows, doors as well as commonplace objects, through a rubbing process where her images bear an intense darkness and convey a grey-black, velvety sheen from both the pressure and layers of coverage she applies, apparently (in the descriptor) with a pencil, or more likely it seems from the effect, a graphite stick much like mine. Her *Door*, 2004, demonstrates this. Anna Barriball's rubbings form one pursuit within her overall art practice, and seem to stand as individual artworks that can be framed and sold as individual pieces, but as yet do not appear to refer to, or sustain a narrative connection to a specific place, or comprise pieces of a larger installation of a whole place, such as *Her Place*. (Barriball). While she considers the time required for such labour intensive work to be valuable to her process, I on the other hand, thoroughly resented the mundane and repetitive nature of the task, and the physical demands of holding the graphite stick, as well as of holding the bodily postures required to make the rubbings.

### **Gerald Ferguson: 'Distancing Device'**

The late Gerald Ferguson, contemporary Canadian conceptual painter and teacher at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, was renowned for his use of *frottage* for over a decade from the mid 1990's. Like Sari Dienes, he also used a roller with paint rather than ink or a dry stick of graphite. His use of the term *frottage* differs from Presenti's definition above as

his are in effect, rubbings, or more precisely, paint-imprints of individual, whole, recognizable objects, such as a garden hose or coil of rope. However, as Dennis Young humorously, commented, “his so-called “*frottage*” works ... should really have been called “roulage”...though nobody seems to have been troubled by the misnomer” (Young). A roller over canvas would be an entirely different process than a graphite stick over tracing paper, and the original *frottages* of Max Ernst were done on a very small scale with graphite, requiring more scratching and rubbing. As Ferguson described it, “For the past 15 years I have made impressions on canvas using a house-painting roller loaded with paint passed over a variety of common materials” (Dault, pg. 2). Curator Susan Gibson-Garvey clarifies his process, and further, of pertinence to my rubbings, she infers an archival impetus:

Some of the objects that Ferguson has placed under his canvasses before passing a paint-soaked roller over their surfaces include cast-iron firebacks, clothesline, lengths of garden hose, dowel rods, rope, door mats, fence palings, drain covers, and ash-can lids and bottoms. The list is a virtual inventory of the artist’s environment, in- and outside the studio, and aligns his painting practice with plain work and common materials.

Ferguson’s choice of method made it possible to create artworks, pictures, images while it strategically circumscribed any of the systems of traditional art making, such as drawing or painting, and the requisite Visual Art questions of whether to represent perspective, control composition, choose colour schemes, or decide on symbolism or narrative, for example. In addition, rubbing/*frottage* effectively removed the personality of the painter’s hand from his work through the use of the rollers. As a conceptual statement against the history of the glorification of art, or the modernist trend to glorify the genius of the expressionist artist, “*Frottage* is a distancing device,” for Ferguson, states art critic Dault (2). Where Ferguson saw rubbings as a means to distance the artist’s hand from a modernist notion of genius or romantic expressiveness, what I found in rubbings was, what he might term a romantic, nostalgic indulgence. I have made rubbings in previous artworks, of a matriarch’s wedding dress, of family heirloom hand made rugs, of leaves of plants from my garden, of rubbings combined with other kinds of drawing, and found the same experience. The domestic

sphere, narrative, biography, auto-biography have been consistent in my artwork, reflecting a desire for an alternative to the distance that was espoused through out my modernist art education of the late 70s and early 80s; a desire for a localized, gendered and embodied experience *of experience*, and of making art.

Of particular interest, Gary Michael Dault describes Ferguson's 2002 exhibition, *The Artist's Studio*, that included *frottages* of his studio ceiling, the floor and the inside and outside of the door, and quotes Ferguson, as "literally recording my place of work" (5). Ferguson's process over the years proceeded from creating individual *frottages* of diverse objects, to making records of a larger, specific place; this is a process that I also followed, from individual objects to architectural space. Although Ferguson's recording of his place of work would appear to be an auto/biographical rendering of place, his interest would more likely be upon the literal, documentary recording, rather than a personal statement about his profession or his place of work. As a conceptual artist, Ferguson's use of *frottage*/rubblings seems to bear little correspondence with mine; however, the very making of the *Artist's Studio* still remains as a *frottage*/rubbing of what is clearly a specific, if not significant, place.

### **Ian Howard: Places of Military Significance**

Australian artist, Ian Howard has used rubbings throughout a fifty year career, as a form of political activism and intervention. He has made rubbings on canvas with wax crayon of historically renowned walls, such as the Berlin Wall in 1968 and the Great Wall of China in 2000, and more recently of border walls between countries, represented by fences or bridges such as the Israeli Barrier between it and Palestine, the US Mexican border as well as stretches of land on the borders between China, Russia and North Korea, to name a few. He also chooses places, structures and vehicles of political, but more so, military significance, such as tanks, navy patrol boats and air craft.

He refers to his art as “military art” stating, “Military art illustrates histories not many of us get to see close up,” (Lang) emphasizing accessibility, not just to his rubbings as they are framed and exhibited in galleries, but to ‘history’ or historically significant sites. Howard’s thinking of the rubbings he makes indicates that the one-to-one relationship of the object rubbed to the rubbing made is not just one of scale but one of contact with an ‘important reality’ or as he puts it, a place of significance, that is not only significant in itself, but *transfers* some of that significance to his re-materialization of it. I will try to explain this.

As a point of entry to thinking about Howard’s political activism through the use of rubbings, I will focus on his images of walls as they are architectural, and structurally integrated in monuments. The rubbing of the Berlin Wall is described:

the artwork itself only hints at the knotted story behind its deceptively banal appearance, announcing itself as a generality rather than a specificity; *a wall* rather than that wall or this wall—that is to say, as something indistinctive rather than a very particular political edifice or historic monument. And while the work speaks to the literal trace of the wall’s materiality through the work of rubbing, it nonetheless also suggests to us something primarily ghostly, immaterial, unreal, or impossible. (Olubas 41)

Olubas points out a core issue for Howard, for myself, and for other artists using media that are somehow accurate in their depiction and reproduction: the content, or significance is not apparent, it is separate from the image. But how is the content separate from the process of making the image? Howard’s work includes the formidable process of permissions and access granting in order to bring in his crew and lay their hands on various countries’ governments protected landmarks, structures and equipment. How does a rubbing move from being an archeological, anthropological, historical or journalistic record of a significant object to being an artwork? Is this the line that rubbings, along with artworks incorporating found objects, walk, since Duchamp, between the lived everyday world and the world of art? How do we/artists/Howard/I use objects to represent human culpability? We cannot incriminate an object alone, of course. Yet, the rubbing itself looks simple.

Howard’s scale is macro, whereas mine is micro; on a domestic scale, *Her Place* drawing

installations were attempting to address the politics of power in the home and the inseparability of that lived experience from the place. Given the demands of scale of his work, and the implicit human dimension caught in the web of intentions of the subjects of his rubbing, why doesn't Howard choose a medium that could capture all of that, such as journalistic or documentary photography or film? Rather than using cameras to document his laborious rubbing process, he could use the camera to simply show the whole thing: the naval ship, the bomber, the border wall. How does a rubbing bring a different or surprising engagement, for both the artist, including his volunteers, and the viewer? Ian Howard acknowledges the unique experience and impact of making a rubbing:

The import, power and poignancy of messages on walls is difficult to represent satisfactorily either through photography or conventional painting and graphic art. The rubbing technique, transferring the wall image onto paper or canvas with wax and paint, seems best suited for capturing the essence of these significant surfaces, signs, and locations. The reason for this is partly because of the very direct, one-to-one relationship between the surface being represented (the stone wall, for example) and the material of representation (the paper or canvas), partly because the artist more easily has a direct vision of the scale and structure of the graphic message and partly because of the 'on location' imperative and the insights this brings, when undertaking a rubbing directly from a place of significance. (Olubas 41)

But the 'essence' that is captured seems to be more for the artist and the informed viewer than for the rubbing itself. Walls are silent keepers. How is the 'import, power and poignancy of their messages,' the narratives of the events that occurred in relation or proximity to those walls - or also in my case the doors, floors, ceiling, cupboards - transferred to paper or canvas? What exactly is transferred in that one-to-one relationship of material through material? Looking at it, nothing but the materiality of the thing is transferred. Without more information or hints at an additional layer of meaning, provided by the artist, or a critic/historian, is there significance? The onus is then on the artist to use titles, to explain, to use language, or better, to use curation, to communicate with the viewer to understand the significance.

Despite the political power being addressed by Ian Howard, or the abuse of power by *Her Place*, the material bearing the transfer from the place of significance, is thin fragile paper, in my

work, and for Howard, durable canvas. Although it is a multi-sensorial experience to make a rubbing, is it an ocular experience to look at a rubbing? Do we engage kinaesthetically while looking at a rubbing, or rather, *imagine kinaesthetically*, how it felt to move across something large or something small? Or do we simply have a one-to-one visual recognition with the object represented when we look at an artwork? Without moving beyond the visible, the ocular interaction, the rubbings for *Her Place* might rest as simply a messy, ripped and torn document, which does contrast with all of these other artists' use of rubbings. The biographical does inform the material.

Rubbings are used by all the artists discussed thus far to attest to presence, to being in a significant place, to having touched particular objects, to making a record of that touching. I therefore pose the question, whether the impulse to make a rubbing is partly biographical? Howard's access to politically controlled sites works on a global scale of depth, movement and proximity and the reduction of that to his own body and those of his volunteers is the shift to personal, the biographical, as if to say, We were here, we touched this place, this wall, this border. These marks record our temporal, geographical movement, where we held ground. A rubbing amplifies what it represents; and yet, a rubbing diminishes while it emphasizes, reducing the object rubbed to its material or formal qualities, rendering an abstract or partial view. The transfer is also an exchange of materialities, and an exchange of scale - in both Howard's and my case, of diminishing scale. There is a transfer of life expectancy, of duration. The impact of the specific object represented in both Howard's and my case, but not Ferguson's, is dependent upon knowing what the object is or why it was used as the source for a rubbing: its narrative. That object may or may not continue to exist; a rubbing is of a particular moment, a temporal wave of a hand. A moment of capture. Perhaps, as in Howard's case, we may have a political aspiration about its existence, whereas in Ferguson's case, it may not have mattered if the object continued to exist as that particular external reference was of simply that. The object of Ferguson's rubbings/*frottages* functioned as part of a strategy, not as part

of a narrative. Howard's narrative is not personal, but political on a governmental scale. Mine is personal and political on the scale of domestic politics.

All of the artists mentioned above have chosen to exhibit their rubbings as two-dimensional artworks hanging vertically on a wall. Except for Ferguson's 2002, *The Artist's Studio*, other artists have not used installations of rubbings of 'place', as *Her Place*, although aspects of place have been recurrent themes in rubbings.

### **Brasses: Sepulchres, Biographies, Geographies**

The use of rubbings until the 20<sup>th</sup> century was restricted in Western culture to historians and anthropologists, interested in social historical information found on tombs. Rubbings played an intentional anthropological, historical documentary and archival role in the collections of rubbings of Brasses of tombs found in England. These documents can be found in the *Catalogue of Rubbings of Brasses and Incised Slabs* re-published after the 1915 version in 1979 (Clayton) for the Victoria and Albert Museum of London. They are referred to as "Monumental Brasses of ..." followed by the name of the town, or "Ancient Sepulchral Effigies and Monumental and Memorial Sculpture" (32) and "Memorial Brasses" (33). They are therefore tied to specific geographical locations, to place, while they also document names, titles, and dates. Hence, rubbings have also provided a biographical function. These rubbings employed in the service of anthropology made it possible to bring together carefully detailed images of massive, unmovable tomb sculptures of people (mostly men) from the military, the ecclesiastical and academic fields, as well as from civilian life, which included some women and children, into one archival cataloguing venue. These rubbings were done en masse, by "rubbing the paper with a drawing medium, usually a black wax heelball, to create a detailed

negative image of the original brass. There was a revival of interest in monumental brasses and incised slabs in the mid-nineteenth century, and rubbing brasses became a popular activity,” (Ashmolean) which explains the vast numbers of rubbings that were made. The point of these brass rubbings in a museum archive is to study and preserve the paper records together in one place, from across a country in order to analyze changes in artistry and technology, political or monarchical will, as well as the clothing styles across social strata from the 13<sup>th</sup> century to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. What an extraordinarily revelatory medium. We might think of these rubbings as ‘backward looking’, with a purview of the past.

With this memorial, sepulchral and archival history in mind, this dry rubbing process brings additional weight, or appropriateness of process to form in *Her Place* as it is simultaneously a place of memory, loss and death, a place currently lived in, it is a source of ambivalence, disquiet, and yet, it is also a specific piece of architecture, intricately folded into the geographical dimensions of land, the rhythms of northern climate, weather and seasons, the surges of wind, bodies of water and bodies in water, tucked into the passages of time.

Place, monuments and architecture are common threads, except for Max Ernst, among the artists discussed thus far. Two contemporary artists, Xu Bing from China and Do Ho Suh from Korea, have made works related to place, monuments, architecture and memory using either the Chinese method of ink imprints or variations of that technique and the Western method of rubbings. For all of these reasons they are pertinent examples to consider in relation to my work on *Her Place*.

### **Chinese Ink Imprints: The Wet Method**

Chinese rubbings of monumental stelae echoed the Western purpose of honouring the names of people whose deeds were commemorated along with the geographic location of the deed. In

addition, the Eastern practice also included the use of rubbings of small carvings of calligraphy for preserving examples that could be widely distributed on paper for teaching purposes (Ledderose, xxviii). This pragmatic educational intent, could be thought of as ‘forward looking’, with a purview of the future. Rubbings, or rather ink-imprints as they are called, served as well for commemorative, religious and other documentary purposes. The engraved stones from which Chinese ink-imprints are made represent more than 2,000 years of cultural history. Alice Schneider describes ink-imprints as:

simply prints, misnamed “rubbings” because in English we do not have a close equivalent for that art from: impressions made by tamping indelible ink on [damp] mulberry paper that has been placed over an incised surface, usually stone or wood. This is called the “wet” method, as distinguished from the “dry.” In the latter, paper is truly rubbed with charcoal or crayon. Because dry, or “English rubbing”... are more familiar to us, we borrow the term “rubbings.” The wet technique far outlasts the dry...But for some reason, the wet method continues to be used almost exclusively in the Orient, notably in China and Korea. (12)

Korean rubbings seem to have been made historically of engraved monuments, it would seem for purposes similar to those of the Chinese and English Brasses. Comparing Ferguson and Dienes use of materials, they used rollers, rather than dabbers, to apply paint and ink onto dry paper, whereas the Chinese approach used dabbers on damp and shaped mulberry paper; Ferguson and Dienes seem to have fused the two dry and wet methods for the most efficient combination: rolling wet ink/paint on dry paper.

As a documentary process, rubbings and ink-imprints have been esteemed as superior to photography by both the artist Ian Howard as quoted above and by archeologists.

Indeed, it is in the service of archaeological studies that the technique of taking rubbings still plays an important role today, be it in the reproduction of the characters on oracle bones, or the intricate patterns of bronze decor, or of the inscriptions and incised decorations on Buddhist stelae. In all these and in many other instances, rubbings can reproduce the design more clearly than is possible with photography. (Ledderose xxxvi)

Is it not just the clarity that is so revealing in a rubbing or in an ink-imprint, but that the fragmentation revealed by a slice of paper brings an isolating focus, even though it is clearly inadequate to capture the entirety of the original, we see more clearly by not seeing the familiar whole, but by a focus on an amplified, discrete section. It is accurate yet unfamiliar; a three-dimensional or relief object is rolled and stretched flat, inch by inch, a flayed and limp skin, in an unusual monochrome. The reversal of positive and negative, in that the shadows become white, as they become defined by structure, unaffected by the direction of light, while the closest areas become dark, rather than bright and well lit, that also render a rubbing unfamiliar, or uncanny. Although this partial monochromatic skin makes sense in one respect, it is still recognizable, but it no longer belongs to the original, it is too revealing, too ordinary, too distorted, too amplified.

### **Xu Bing: The ‘Countermonument’**

Contemporary Chinese artist, Xu Bing took advantage of all of these distortions and amplifications when he gathered a team of volunteers to make ink-imprints of a section of the Great Wall of China, entitled, “Ghosts Pounding the Wall,” 1990-1991. They produced “29 rubbings of a section of the Great Wall taken by means of a traditional Chinese ink-rubbing technique,” which involved damp paper and the ‘pounding’ (as one meaning of the word in the title) with the ink dabber (Panczenko 18-31). After 24 days the crew of students and peasants covered thirty-eight meters (Hung, Wu 412). The Great Wall, “a prime symbol of China’s national identity and political unification - has been turned into a ‘paper wall’” (Ibid, 415). In the context of Xu Bing’s work, Wu Hung considers this ink-imprint to be one of Xu Bing’s ‘countermonuments,’ in part, due to the use of Chinese cultural

traditions, such as ink-imprinting, and the building of the Great Wall itself, to create a contrary, paper version of that same monumental wall. Like Howard, geographical, historical, political and military meanings are entwined in this piece; in addition, there are as well biographical and cultural connections and references. Ian Howard is an outsider to many of the places of significance framed in his rubbings; Xu Bing is critiquing each element of his culture as it is referenced in this monumental rubbing installation. The biographical engagement of Xu Bing and his volunteers is one of intimate, cultural belonging, and critique, or outright rejection, but without any of the details of an autobiography. Whereas Howard and his volunteers are biographically engaged more as visitors; and I, as the long-time dweller and keeper of an intimate space.

The transference of materiality is dramatically displayed in Xu Bing's huge installation of a paper monument. Here, the sections of the architectural structure of a multi-storey brick wall are hung high up in the museum gallery, requiring the viewers to look up at the startling stretches of black on white, stone-like paper walls hanging down from a great distance on three sides, with a long section in the centre, flowing down and across the floor, like a welcome carpet or a waterfall; however, there is rich black soil piled high at the base of the centre paper structure where it lays across the floor. Is it an avalanche? Fertile soil at the base of a paper replica of an enormous political stone monument? There is a heavy stone on top in the middle of the soil strategically placed to weigh down a pile of folded, imprinted papers. Bury the past? Or plant and start over? Rock - writing - soil. Xu Bing is the only artist of those using rubbings/ink imprints that I discuss who has added other materials to bring additional meaning to the paper images.

The tradition of rubbings in both east and west are based on monuments: Western monumental brasses that would have been an over-sized human tomb, while Chinese ink-

imprints were commonly taken from monuments, in order to preserve the inscription and to disperse the samples of calligraphy (although I am unclear of the standard size of these imprints from monuments). Although the Great Wall declares territory and power, hoping for protection, this paper wall is a facade. Unlike my installations of *Her Place*, of an everyday home and its objects, hung on a bungalow scale (at Eleanor Winters Art Gallery) or bachelor condominium scale (at the Propeller Art Gallery), Xu Bing intentionally distorts and amplifies the structure by turning the centre rubbing of a long narrow horizontal section of the wall in a vertical direction, flowing down across the floor under the soil. It is a patchwork monument of a monument; mine is a drooping home of a home. The references to the original are inherent in both installations: the parts are recognizable and the hanging is somewhat in keeping with the original scale.

An issue with *Her Place* and maintaining a home-size scale, or of going smaller, is the ‘doll house effect.’ One viewer said that she liked my show at Eleanor Winters as it reminded her of a ‘cute doll house,’ which really surprised me, and irritated me as by that point, doll house was the farthest thing from my mind. She had read none of the rubbings of framed oil paintings that also contained the ‘text’ or the ‘information’ about each of the sections of the exhibition, such as *Dyslexic Curtains*, *Hair Tub*, *Trespass*, for example. I wonder that the scale of the Eleanor Winters show, and the recognizability of a ‘home’ made it too easy in a sense, too much like a history museum diorama of recognizable pieces. How would a slight exaggeration of scale, similar to Katrin Sigurdardottir, shift from miniature to beyond human scale, and change the ambiance, the interactions, the assumptions and recognizability? I don’t mean to make a giant chair that would render the regular chair cute, but to slightly exaggerate so that it seemed cumbersome, out of proportion, not quite right, a bit puzzling for the viewer who would look and consider their own body getting closer to the architecture and the furniture, or having to get up into the chair or climb the excessively

long and winding staircase. It would play with the movement, experience of depth by the viewer, as well as their haptic - kinaesthetic appreciation of the specific place rendered in the installation.

The process of making dry rubbings and Chinese ink-imprints is a fully kinaesthetic experience. In Xu Bing's *Ghosts* project, not only were people sitting, standing, shifting and working on hand-built scaffolding, fairly high up alongside the Great Wall, but the process entailed "endless, monotonous sound and motion" [412 Hung, Wu]. Like Sari Dienes and Ian Howard, a crowd of volunteers assisted with the task of creating Xu Bing's countermonument, not only in the interest of scale, but as a great art happening [412 Hung].

## **Do Ho Suh: Home And Memory**

**March 12, 2016**

*Do Ho Suh: Soeul/Home... 1999. He brought in engineers and architects to do all of the measuring for it. Looks machine made. External structure. Mine is distinctly handmade and the internal structure and furniture and belongings of a home.*

Since 1999, Korean artist Do Ho Suh has made a number of striking, colourful, large ethereal sculptural installations, mostly constructed in some kind of transparent fabric, related to his various lived-in homes. The impetus for Do Ho Suh is specifically autobiographical. I was surprised while researching Swiss artist, Heidi Boucher, that her 1980-82 latex cast room, *Hautraum (Abnenhaus) (Flying Skinroom)*, is so similar to his *Soeul/Home... 1999*. He had initially used rubbings of sections of his home as a means to make the patterns from which to construct the sewn fabric replica of his childhood home (Levin). As he stated, "I was constantly seeking some other means to capture the information of this space that was lacking from my fabric version. When I discover it by rubbing it just brought

the memories associated with those details. And there's hundreds and thousands of it" (Art21. "Rubbing/Loving: Do Ho Suh."). Do Ho Suh and I had very similar experiences during the process of making rubbings of our childhood homes. Neither of us used rubbing to be a distancing device of any kind, and both of us found the process so compelling as to make rubbings of large expanses of our home architecture, including the small details like light switches and door knobs. I also included furnishings, clothing and food.

Although all of his works connected to the theme of home would be interesting to discuss in relation to *Her Place*, I will limit my discussion now to three of his more recent works which are rubbings, all with the main title *Rubbing/Loving Project*. The most recent is *Rubbing/Loving Project: Apartment A, 348 West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA*, 2014, (Ibid); *Rubbing/Loving Project: Dormitory Room at Gwangju Catholic Lifelong Institute*, 2012, and *Rubbing/Loving Project: Company Housing of Gwangju Theater*, 2012. (Victoria Miro). These represent three approaches to the use of rubbings as artistic medium and as strategy, and to the conveyance of the idea of home. In these projects, he uses the wet paper of the traditional Chinese method of ink imprints, but he and his team of volunteers used coloured pencil crayons for the first two and black graphite for the latter, to do the rubbings once the paper had dried. He has reversed the process used by Dienes and Ferguson: where they used wet rollers on dry paper/canvas, he used wet paper, and then, once dry, applied dry rubbing.

It is a challenge to question someone else's idea of "home" or what reminds them or lingers with most clarity in all of their memories of home. How to cast a critical eye at the various works about home by Do Ho Suh or of my work, *Her Place*? When and how does gender matter in the making and in the reception of artworks about 'home'? I attempt through comparison to both understand his approach to memory of home in these rubbings, and to critique the separation of his work from other work about 'home' as a form of gendered privileging. Seeing images online of his *Rubbing/Loving Project: Apartment A, 348*

*West 22nd Street, New York, NY 10011, USA*, 2014, I consider that Do Ho Suh's artworks about 'home' and mine of an inherited home, have points of similarity as well as distinctions. We humorously represent several binaries: Asian male and Caucasian female; global traveller versus locally rooted parent; male and female stereotypes of public edifice versus the private domestic; geometric engineering exactitude in drawings, constructions and rubbings, contrasted with my soft, floppy, wrinkled, ripped and torn, inexact representations of interior spaces and ordinary household objects; global male citizen-artist, if not celebrity citizen-artist, and anonymous middle class female. These are my distinctions. Is there a counter stereotypic point that in Do Ho Suh there is an Asian man reminiscing and missing his childhood 'home,' discussing and demonstrating affect, and acknowledging the significance and impact of many other 'home' places, despite transience? He is, laudably, demonstrating Mezei's concept of domestic effects that are salient with his lived experiences in various homes. His art about home is in the company of work about home, not just about architecture, by a number of other men.<sup>8</sup> I will discuss his three rubbing projects as they are the only other installations of rubbings related to home that I have been able to find and with which to form a comparison with *Her Place*. I do have conundrums with some aspects of Suh's works related to home, and again I find the same questions around language, and what is communicated in rubbings compared to what we say we are communicating.

The difference between the first and the other two of his pieces, is that the *Rubbing/Loving Project: Apartment A* was made and exhibited initially in that same apartment where he had lived and then made the rubbings. The artist covered the apartment with damp paper that dried in place, formed around the walls, doors and all of the fixtures. This is what the

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<sup>8</sup>See Imogen Racz: *Art and the Home: Comfort, Alienation and the Everyday*. 2015. For example, George Segal, Michael Landy and Donald Rodney

public saw when they went to his apartment for the exhibition: the paper still fastened in place, visible through the coloured pencil marks made while rubbing the dry formed paper. This exhibition, not in a gallery, but within his 'home' is somewhat reminiscent of *Womanhouse*, 1972, as both exhibits had the intent of acknowledging the home as a significant site or place for making and exhibiting art, and that artwork is depicting the life within the home; however *Womanhouse* was a critique of women's experiences of home, largely focused on the interior and the objects found there (Racz 67). Suh's rubbings of his apartment were then peeled off, removed from the apartment building, some were framed, and then exhibited mostly as flattened out sheets of paper in Lehmann Maupin gallery in New York. Do Ho Suh's precision renders his rubbings with complete recognizability, whether in place, still wrapped around the original object, or, once removed they bear the exactitude of architectural blueprints.

The other two works, *Rubbing/Loving Project: Dormitory Room* and *Rubbing/Loving Project: Company Housing* were reconstructions or replicas of living quarters in Gwangju where he had lived as a student. The replica rooms were then used to make rubbings on the inside, where the rubbings remained in place for exhibition inside an art gallery. These were three-dimensional replicas with rubbings of the replicas.

Of the three, the latter is the most interesting to me, but also the one that points to some of the small issues and questions I have about Do Ho Suh's working process in this artwork. For *Company Housing*, the artist and volunteers were blindfolded as they felt their ways around the constructed room, rubbing black graphite across all of the prepared paper covered surfaces of the room. This was a statement about the censorship that rendered Suh and the country oblivious to the anti-government protests followed by violent suppression in 1980, at a time when he lived in Gwangju as a student (Lehman Maupin). This was a moment of political deceit; outrage upon outrage. However, the concept of blindness in the

making of these rubbings is only partially enacted, and therefore a less powerful metaphor. A large part of making any rubbing, or ink imprint, is the preparation and positioning of the paper to be rubbed upon, prior to using the rubbing material, whether ink, paint or dry graphite. For me, using the dry method, cutting the paper to the adequate size, squeezing, stroking, shaping, caressing the excess paper against the three-dimensional form was a necessary and an integral part of the process prior to beginning to rub with the graphite stick. The prior tactile engagement determined the results. Likewise for Suh, I imagine the wet method as he employed it would have been tremendously tactile, tedious and time consuming as, unlike me, he (or his assistants/volunteers) methodically fit each paper to each three dimensional section of each object, and, to ensure there were no overlaps of paper, they carefully cut, trimmed and folded precisely either while dampening and attaching the paper pieces to the walls and doors, the three dimensional forms of the constructed room so that there were no folds, bumps, excesses of the paper with overlapping bulges or wrinkles - as there were plenty in mine.

To state that the Gwangju *Company Housing* rubbing was completed while blindfolded is therefore misleading, as only the rubbing could have been done blindfolded. The forming, cutting and attaching of the paper to the replica structure of a dormitory must have taken a great deal of time, let alone specific and precise skill, to prepare, and I am not convinced that it could have been so finely accomplished blind, yet there is no information to clarify this point. A great part of the accuracy of the Gwangju *Company Housing* finished rubbing, then, was accomplished with sight. This explains why it looks so similar to the other two rubbing projects, except for the variation in colours present in those. To be blinded throughout the entire process would have produced perhaps a more nuanced, distorted, messy, ugly, possibly indignant piece of work. The use of black graphite for this aspect of his project, while being my choice of media, seems insufficient to his intention.

The question of what is revealed in a rubbing, is also present regarding Suh's rubbings. The Lehmann Maupin Gallery which hosted his exhibition, "*Drawings*" of all three parts of "*Rubbing/Loving*" in the fall of 2014, states: "Here Suh painstakingly covered the flat walls and three-dimensional fixtures of the interior and exterior of architectural spaces that hold great personal, cultural, or historic significance to him with vellum and rubbed each surface with colored pencil or graphite. These rubbings create imprints of the spaces, uncovering a particular location's history, memories, and traces of its use" (Lehman Maupin). But do they? Do his, or anyone else's rubbings, 'uncover a history and memories' except for the person making the rubbing? Gerald Ferguson made an inventory. Ian Howard documents places of significance, designated as they are through titles and description to verify political significance. I asked this question earlier, in relation to Howard's work: What exactly is transferred in that one-to-one relationship of material through material? Looking at it, nothing but the materiality of the thing is transferred. Without more information or hints at an additional layer of meaning, provided by the artist, or a critic/historian, is there significance? How would any of us distinguish rubbings of the Berlin Wall from those of the side of a brick building without being told which was which? Rubbings certainly might show traces, or a history of use through the asymmetry of wear; how does that then become a multitude - uncovering a particular location's history, memories? Or is this simply poetic language? Is it poetic license that we speak this way about art? Or, some art. But then, how to articulate the haptic, unpredictable, spontaneous, irrational, intelligent, and affective experiences that occur during art making?

When is the meaning of the artist written and directed by the gallery or by the critic(s)? "On the gallery walls and floor, Suh will splay open the 1:1 scale rubbings of the walls and floor of his apartment. In this way the rubbings convey a former life, suggesting the shedding skin of a place that has been the artist's home and has great personal and

emotional importance” (Lehmann Maupin, Exhibitions). I note the use of the concept of “skin” in relation to the rubbings, the home, a former life, in relation to Heidi Boucher’s “skinning” and “skin” latex moulds. Or do Suh’s rubbings just look like blueprints, and less like skin? The contrast between this descriptive language and the actual appearance of these rubbings on the gallery wall is striking: his rubbings look like architectural renderings, blueprints for industry. Is this a strategy for Suh, a ‘distancing device,’ a way to remove romantic notions of artist talent, like Ferguson? But then, where is memory?

I actually concur that making rubbings of a significant place like a home is akin to both finding and making a ‘skin’ partly due to the intense haptic engagement in the making, but also due to the recognition of memory to place through the skin while making. So why do I find this comment from the gallery so irksome? How have these architecturally precise rubbings of a home obtained this sacred status holding ‘great personal and emotional significance’ in an art gallery? Or is it that Do Ho Suh’s home is afforded this status of ‘great personal and emotional importance’ because all works of art about home receive this response? Swiss artist Heidi Boucher, whose work *Flying Skinroom*, 1980-82, is mentioned above, and whose work included casts of door handles, a stair rail and windows, always used houses familiar to her, yet her artworks languished forgotten in Switzerland until recently (Lunn 247); she is a case in point (Vali). Would Do Ho Suh’s works about home have been received/perceived differently if made by a woman? Griselda Pollock, as noted above, would probably agree, as she stated: “If you are a woman, the linking of art and life is merely reductive” (2011, 2). Or what if Suh had made work with less precision? Or with more of the clutter of daily life. His homes consist of walls, hallways and doors, with permanent structures, such as bathtubs, built in shelving, radiators, floors - rendering the whole as an exterior shell. Is this why they are compared to shed skin, and not an entire body? And not a gendered body. Where are the furnishings, the household items that facilitate specific and

particular daily lives? The kitchen table, the chairs, the bed, the clothing, the dishes, the food - what of them? By comparison, all of the women artists whose work I discussed above in relation to domestic effects, Louise Bourgeois, Heidi Boucher, Rachel Whiteread, Mona Hatoum and Katrin Sigurdardottir focus on the interiors of domestic spaces and the variety of objects and sensory experiences found there; or as in Sigurdardottir's *The Green Grass of Home*, 1997, she brings exterior spaces, into an interior, in this case, a suitcase.

The issue of language in the description of art becomes complicated when dealing with rubbings, partly due to the journalistic or documentary evidence of the rubbing, and partly because of the direct link with biographical details of the artist. What are we looking at, in both Suh's work and mine, when we look at these rubbings of 'home'? When he says in the Art 21 video on the Victoria Miro Gallery website, "I'm trying to show the layers of time" (Victoria Miro, Artists). I have to wonder, but can we show that? What does a rubbing show, and at what does it hint, point, imply, betray? How much can be done with bald 'reality'? Perhaps through feeling the object we might imagine the histories, memories, layers of time - but is that what we are showing? He and I make claims to time: that he lived in that apartment for 18 years, his precise period of becoming an artist; and that I grew up in the Lake House and have been around it for 55 years. It is as if this narrative seals a doubt about meaning: as Mieke Bal pointed out, where meaning here equals emotionally significant. Or even, unquestionable, unarguable significance: "My energy has been accumulated and in a way I think my rubbing shows that. The ... doorknobs and locks, that's the objects that you touch every time, and just imagine how many times I actually flipped the light switch when I was living in here for 18 years," (Art21, Do Ho Suh Video). As with Ian Howard, the significance of the place in the rubbing must be explained.

Although in the binary described above, I placed the public edifice in opposition to the private domestic, in Do Ho Suh's work, what seems to be at play is the private edifice

while for me, I am bringing the previously private, domestic life into a public gallery. Suh has managed to aggrandize ordinary architecture. I am not interested in aggrandizement, but in unsettling, peeling back, unwrapping fragments of domestic secrecy in public exhibition in relatively small, torn segments. The artists who all make extensive rubbings on a large scale, hire art students or recruit volunteers to make a collaborative “event” of it - Xu Bing, Ian Howard, Do Ho Suh, Sari Dienes. Gathering the participation of “the public” makes sense for rubbings of public places or from constructed structures, as Do Ho Suh did; however, to make rubbings of a home, or of the studio as Gerald Ferguson and I have done, as personal spaces of living and working, perhaps the appeal of outside help is less apparent, and the process of many hands on a private space possibly changes the meaning of the artwork, from ‘place of significance’ to place made significant by intention for display.

The oft repeated quote about the meaning of Do Ho Suh’s title, *Rubbing/Loving Project*, is distinct from my own affective charge while making rubbings: “If I write ‘rubbing’ in Korean, people could read it as ‘loving’ because there is no distinction between ‘r’ and ‘l’ in Korean alphabet. I think the gesture of rubbing is very loving gesture. So I made the connection between rubbing and loving and that is how the title came about” (Art 21 *ibid*). It is interesting that the gesture of the technique is intrinsic to the meaning of *Rubbing/Loving Project: Apartment A*, yet I do not see the connection with *Gwangju Company Housing* and this title; why a loving gesture in a critique of the cover-up of a government mass murder of innocent students? If it is the performing of rubbing for Do Ho Suh that is a form of loving, why have volunteers do the “loving”? Who is the lover? What is it that is loved?

Making rubbings for *Her Place* inspired other strong affective reactions in relation to the memories in that place, however not all that loving - anger, resentment, abandonment, frustration, hatred. The process of making the rubbings, the crouching and straining,

produced an unusual series of physical actions, patterns of gestures, habits and movements through a familiar space that contrasted with a habitus of previous physical repertoires of movement. A sensual biography of place emerged. Memory, remembering, stories, narratives of place - in place - arose. In this way, *Her Place* is uniquely configured through the art process of rubbings within a specific geographically placed architectural inherited home, yet unlike Suh, it produced specific critical narratives and biographies of loss through rupture of silences. *Her Place* is a feminist reclamation; a fragile and torn adaptation in place of its narratives; a rejection of inheritance. Despite that I might articulate my purpose or experience of making the rubbings for *Her Place* in similar language to Do Ho Suh, more as remembrance than to memorialize in my case, his work has pushed me to question that language and the assumptions inherent in it. And then, I reprimand myself, why do I hang on his words so literally and completely, if language is also an incomplete reference to experience? How much of this unquestioning language is the 'habit' or trope of artist monographs? Perhaps in the position of celebrity artist, it is prudent to offer one story, even a simple one, and to keep the rest to oneself and go on working, hoping that others may take an interpretive leap.

While considering the rubbings made by this group of artists, along with the varied cultural influences from Europe and China/Korea in the contemporary procedures and uses of rubbings, I have noted the following connections and distinctions: the processes include dry rubbings, wet ink imprints and hybrid combinations of the two; the one-to-one scale is a unique inherent quality in this process of image production, unlike other approaches to two-dimensional image making, such as drawing or photography; there is a history of collecting, preserving and consulting both visual and textual information in rubbings/wet ink imprints/hybrids; these processes have a history of collective participation; unlike Max Ernst's

imaginative use of *frottage*, other artists use rubbings/imprints as direct transfer; imagery of large scale buildings, with references to specific places, is a commonality; imagery of three-dimensional objects found in places of significance is also a commonality; there are pragmatic anthropological reasons to transfer large scale and smaller scale three-dimensional information onto paper or canvas; there are artistic and poetic reasons to transfer large scale and smaller scale three-dimensional information onto paper or canvas; both pragmatic and artistic uses of rubbings depend upon the reliability of information found in a rubbing; a rubbing is an unusual handmade document: simultaneously evoking the poetic while providing the prosaic.

Do Ho Suh, Xu Bing and I have used rubbings of architectural structures of home in full scale art exhibition installations. In each case there is a clear auto/biographical impulse, connected to a narrative of place, and a sense of continuity, even if disavowed, through memory.

### **Her Place And What Was Learned There: Scraps And Dust**

I began this project considering biographies of memory and dementia, and arrived near the end of it, remembering secrets, the obligatory gaps in memory, the unwarranted memories, the misremembered, the disavowed. I have poured over and across this building, this geographic setting, this place, as an artist, as a detective, as a researcher, as a child, teenager and as an adult woman - with all of the bodily spillages. The stories, and the memories here have changed, been remade by me, but also remade themselves through the overlapping time frames and the continued relationships within and beyond this building, this community, this geography.

In the end, I have *Scraps* of a haphazard archive, loosely stored in multiple shaggy rolls around my basement and living spaces. By contrast Do Ho Suh has a carefully measured, constructed and displayed archive of each section of his personal living spaces. Xu Bing and Ian Howard have documents of political places of significance, Gerald Ferguson made an inventory of everyday items, while Anna Barriball has created abstractions from everyday elements of architecture, and Sari Dienes documented streets in Manhattan. My archive seems to be slipping toward its demise, sliding off the dryer, being crushed by randomly tossed articles, tearing as the passersby catch the crinkled corners, the graphite merely a dust across the surface of this crackling pale paper. And yet, I find it comforting. Graphite still noticeably marks the ceiling in the kitchen of the Lake House.

In her contemplation of the reality of dust in archives due to the physiological makeup of the archival materials (2002, 27), Carolyn Steedman notes that “‘Dust’ is one of those curious words that in its verb form, bifurcates in meaning, performs an action of perfect circularity, and arrives to denote its very opposite” (160). Which is much like the definition of *heimlich*, which changes its meaning to *unheimlich*, adding to its suitability in the definition of the uncanny. One characteristic that is shared in many of the artworks discussed throughout this thesis, both mine and those of other artists, is that sense of anxiety and uncanniness: familiar and unfamiliar together, familiar and its opposite, such as architecture in paper, the tangible and multi-sensory haptic experience of home rendered in graphite dust. Steedman continues: “If you ‘dust’, you can remove something, or you can put something there...you cleanse a place - usually a room in a house - of dust... [while] its opposite action, which is to sprinkle something with a small portion of powdery matter... ‘Dust’ is established as a culinary term...to dust toast, or the surface of a pie, with nutmeg, or cinnamon, or sugar...” (Ibid, 160). In other words, to feed. To clean and to feed. To remove and to provide. The repetitive nature of making these rubbings for *Her Place* with

the 2B graphite stick, so much like scrubbing and cleaning, produced its own dust, blackening my hands and feet, as well as the floors and anything I touched at the time. It was a reverse process of cleaning where the rubbing produced the desired black marks as well as the blackening dust. In doing so, it provided a means to dust away memory, to throw a narrative powder across it, and to now, leave it to slowly disintegrate among the stuff of my everyday life.

**BACKYARD**  
**CONCLUSION**

A Yard is where the inhabitants or things of the world dwell in a house between heaven and hell.

**July 13, 2016**

*How can studio experience be theorized and understood as an educational event? What can art practice teach us about pedagogy?*

*Different kinds of practice in the Arts: practice for the purposes of repetition: music, dance, theatre.*

*Visual Artists searching ideas that are unknown: requires a different language.*

**A PEDAGOGY OF MAKING**

**On Thinking, Knowing, and Not Knowing**

I return to this concept, A Pedagogy of Making that I introduced at the beginning of this document in ‘Ground Floor’ and to which the dated entries from three Process Journals refer in the hope of illuminating my experience of an assimilative pedagogy of the studio art making process. As visual art teacher and artist, I outline in this conclusion how this pedagogy of making entailed a range of studio explorations and two exhibitions which were professionally directive. Writing about studio making is still an evolving academic concern, yet writing, particularly a form of narrative is considered to be appropriate. This pedagogy of making also exemplifies entwined processes of making, thinking and theorizing, working with loyalty from uncertainty, following curiosity, considering not knowing as intrinsic to art practice. Griselda Pollock’s theory of art as a social, shared event/encounter foresees art and its interpretive invitation as intrinsically ethical and future directed. In looking toward an unknowable future, art practice is considered in relation to Diana Taylor’s theory of the archive and the repertoire, and Madeleine Grumet’s theory of curriculum to

meet Hannah Arendt's concept of *natality* and the necessity of education to continually re-invent itself.

One pedagogical distinction of art making is that art establishes its own requirements; it dictates its materials and forms, its process and presentation. Making an art work is not pre-determined the way a standard approach to research tends to be; for example, my Masters of Education thesis was pre-determined, with a required structure before I even began, with ensuing pre-set research processes, choices of methods, and the form for the written explanation of findings or 'data.' Whereas, art pursues its own fascination with an idea, whether visual, conceptual or material. James Elkins' discerning directive to art practice researchers is to "address the day-to-day experience of making - its exact pedagogy, its methods, knacks and skills, its feel ...[because] that experience, rather than ways of conceptualizing the product of the experience is at the root of the incommensurability of studio art production and university life..." (246-7). Artists' individual processes and uniquely derived outcomes are part of that incommensurability. The Process Journals here provide a record of one person's art making and the ensuing final art works. The pedagogical aspect is in the movement from beginning point to unknown endpoint, as Nancy de Freitas described it, that becomes known through a making process with an internal determination of sense-making, and, sensory-making. As Art Practice Research enters the university, a term such as a pedagogy of making underscores *making* as agent, as director and facilitator of its own process, its own progress with possible realizations and achievements. Barrett and Bolt point out the need for art practice researchers to fully describe their studio research in their writing in order to bring a "meta-discourse or explanation of just how practice operates as the production of knowledge"... and shows "how the dialogue between theory and practice emerges in the project" (193). As discussed earlier, it is not knowledge that I am aiming to show as the end result of art making but rather, as Carter described, specific, disciplinary knowing, "active, procedural or process knowledge, knowing *how*" (387) by

writing *in* the discipline of studio practice as art practice researcher. This meta-discourse, a pedagogy of making as shown here, attempts to highlight the dialogues not only between theory and practice, but also the essential connectedness of thinking and affect with materials and objects, as described by Turkle.

Tracking and documenting the experiences of making with “it’s exact pedagogy, it’s methods, knacks and skills, it’s feel” as Elkins states, was done in Process Journals. The usefulness of such a journal was varied in the moment, as a writing/thinking space, as an organizer for photos of works in process, with drawings of ideas and photocopies of articles about other artists’ artworks or stuff of interest. In addition, the Process Journal provided the permission and the expectation to think out loud’ to take the running internal over dub, and to focus on my thinking while making. I say permission, as unravelling my thinking while making art has only occurred in past studio work in minor, fragmented ways, despite the characteristic loud volume and overwhelming preoccupations that shift through my mind as I would try to work; given the impetus and intention to elaborate and examine threads, to analyze direction and outcomes, to build relations with existing theories or ideas - this rambling noise in mind is better harnessed and directed, which points to the benefit to me to maintain a writing practice in conjunction with studio work.

It was during the writing of this thesis that it became evident that the Process Journals conveyed not only the progress of studio work through many photographs and the corresponding thinking through regular writing. More significantly, the journals conveyed the nature of that progress, detailing its recursive, layered, forward and backward, not entirely chronological direction, with variable divergent movements, building upon, pursuing with intention but sometimes with and sometimes without explicit goals, allowing for shifts and evolving ideas. And so the Process Journals’ pedagogy of making was two-fold: as an in-the-moment accumulator, a willing correspondent of thoughts and images; and as a record of that particular and specific accumulation of thoughts and processes of making.

Any discussion of pedagogy begs a reciprocal discussion of learning. The studio learning comprised in this Pedagogy of Making was continuous and self-propelled; it was visually, physically and haptically incited and planned; tacitly constructed; it was discussed and considered in the running internal ‘over dubbed’ conversation in mind, yet consciously questioned, sometimes during, but more often, after the fact. It was learning that didn’t feel like ‘learning;’ it was assimilation. This was learning a practice, a practice that is both a verb and a noun (or in other spelling, practise the verb and practice the noun); yet despite the division in English, the verb and the noun are inextricably entwined when manifest. The practice is a poly-rhythmic, generative material activity that accrues those materials and processes of movement into a renewable structure of continuity. It was intensely intellectual, physical, haptic and emotional. As I struggled with ugly and repugnant substances and with found objects those first few summers, the learning was partly about maintaining a reasonable comfort, a certain awe, with the uncomfortable and the unreasonable, not knowing what to do next or why, while pursuing visual and tactile ideas that kept evolving. Loyalty to unruly ideas, visual and otherwise was a basic tenet of this pedagogy of making. Sometimes it was possible to be loyal to the fascination, yet, as I discussed, sometimes it was difficult. However, it was essential to do the preliminary messing around, as that opened numerous options, a number of which still remain to be pursued in future studio projects.

The decision to exhibit, to write proposals and to then work toward them, was crucial for creating a focused inquiry, for the material research, the experiments and planning, and for thinking and framing the significant concepts that I developed in relation to home and place: a sensual biography of place and the haptics of home. Finding connections with other contemporary women artists indicated a community of artists with similar interests. The drawing installations and these concepts also link to memory which then provided an impetus to explore creative writing. Researching art historical questions regarding the uses of rubbings led to finding a common thread among a number of contemporary artists who have used rubbings to represent aspects of auto/

biography while exploring relationships to specific places; thereby rubbings have been used as both social acts and as finished artworks which comment upon or are used to demonstrate biographical and geographical significance. This art history of rubbings brought material, tactile, and social-historical contexts to my work in *Her Place*, situating my installations in relation to a range of practices and artists, yet offering a distinct feminist interpretation and encounter.

Having exhibitions also provided the public occasion for others to make connections, such as thinking about the project in relation to archives, and to Family Methodology. As the rubbings formed representations of many sections of the inherited home on translucent paper, they had a crinkled look of aged paper, and with each section labelled and hung to show its relation in preserving part of the real home, it bore something of the aged and archival document. This archive of an inherited family home made a direct link with Family Methodology, an area of sociological and biographical research that corresponds with the above concepts of a sensual biography of place and the haptics of home, while also linking memory work and auto/biography.<sup>9</sup> Not only do family photos, letters and family documents comprise an archival means to consider family history, (Bailey 2016; Norquay) but an inherited home proved to be an evocative, and provocative object. One advantage of architecture that continues to be a dwelling is that it does not face the same conundrums regarding its use that other inherited archival objects, such as hand written letters, face once they have outlived their original purpose. This architectural inheritance maintains a continuance, prolonging the enjoyment of its everyday use, where some of its people interact with it firmly in the present. I, however, move in and out of temporalities in this place with an eastward wind blowing across the great lake gusting into the west side windows, swiping floors, ceilings and walls of the big room, flinging doors shut, smacking windows into walls on the way through the dining area and out the kitchen door, flaunting through the screen porch.

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<sup>9</sup> Thank you to Naomi Norquay for inviting both of these connections.

The two exhibitions offered the unique opportunity of curating from the same body of art work to create two distinct installations. Not only was scale a factor in distinguishing them, but the intent from the first to the second shifted, and in a sense the larger, set-like arrangement corresponded to that larger space; whereas the second more cramped gallery also contributed to the sense of “scraps” and disheveled left-overs. This specific contribution of the exhibition space in conveying potential interpretations to installations contradicts the notion of art gallery neutrality - or of architectural neutrality. Site specific installations such as those of Ann Hamilton are sensual biographies of specific places, installations that respond to and evoke the memories and the past of those same places. These two installations of *Her Place*, despite being very much about a specific place, treated the gallery space as a neutral frame with certain dimensions. Whereas, taking into consideration the place of exhibition as intrinsic to the overall artwork is important to keep front of mind in my future art work, particularly when it is related to place.

The exhibition of my artwork could have been about any number of the initial explorations detailed in Ground Floor; however, the experience of deciding on a particular exhibition and then making the work for that purpose was a distinct experience, unlike the incidental showing of whatever is on-hand in the studio. It also indicates that any particular project could lead to numerous visual, material, theoretical and conceptual opportunities, both inside and outside of the immediate discipline of visual art.

Reading back through the Process Journals, many other project ideas were drawn or noted, which also indicate the intrinsic relation of making to reading and to thinking. Ideas proliferated interdependently as I read, connecting memory and memory objects, place and architecture, the senses, haptics and materials. There are ideas for drawings, sculptures, installations; room-sized foldable drawings and a room-sized book with moveable parts incorporating Augmented Reality; drawing installations of architecture including differently scaled images in AR; installation ideas using sticky-found objects as a Wunderkammer of various recognizable and unrecognizable objects

that represent some of the traditional requirements of Wunderkammer/cabinets of curiosities: the objects collected and exhibited there should represent nature, be human made, and science related. What of a Feminist Cabinet of Curiosities? There are also comments pertaining to a sensory community experience of making and sharing of food.

There are numerous unfinished ideas as well as incomplete research in a variety of areas. Combining Augmented Reality (Papagiannis 2017) as I did in the earlier artwork, *Running in the Family Body*, (2009) is still of interest and I plan to research haptics in technology (Heywood 2018; Jones 2006) as used in artworks and in clothing. Feminist Art (Pollock), Affect and Trauma (Pollock 2013; Bennett 2005; Papenburg 2013) continue to be pertinent. I gravitate to an overall structure of narrative and auto/biography including memoir (Hampl 1999, Kadar et al. 2005) and graphic novels (Bechdel 2007 and 2012), and these artists have made works in relation to these same themes: Mona Hatoum, Shahzia Sikander, Nalini Malani, Bharti Kher, Yin Xiuzhen, Doris Salcedo, William Kentridge. The following fields as informed by feminist perspectives are all front of mind as I look forward to next projects: Haptic Aesthetics (Fisher 1997; Drobnick and Fisher 2015), Sensory Studies (Classen 2017, 2012, 2005; Classen and Howes 2013, 1994; Drobnick 2006), Phenomenology (Levesque-Lopman 1988), Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* (Adkins and Skeggs 2004), Memory Studies (Brockmeier 2016; Groes 2016), along with questions of inheritance, disinheritance, bloodlines and identity (Hill 2013; Appiah 2018). I maintain an interest in theories of place and Geography (Casey 2001, 1993; Hawkins 2015, 2016), using the idea of Sensual Biographies of Place, as in the artworks of Ann Hamilton; and Architectural theories (Franck and Lepori 2007), in art and cultural experience (Bruno 200, 2002; Ellsworth 2005, Vidler 1992) and of home in particular (Blunt and Dowling 2006) with Object/Thing Theory (Appadurai 2103; Schweitzer and Zerdy 2016; Schwenger 2006), and the Haptics of Home in relation to Krasner's "The home...emerges as a bodily operation rather than an architectural structure" (5). Many of these disciplinary fields and researchers could not be encompassed in this dissertation yet they linger and I hope they will inform future studio art/

research interests. I am preparing to make submissions for membership to two local artist-run centres, which will bring an impetus to work toward exhibitions, however I am aware I may need to resolve the gallery vs. site specific issue. The various concepts and practices addressed throughout this doctoral project have proven to be substantial areas for inquiry within and outside of visual art; none of them feels finished or completed, but rather, introduced.

I plan to attend an international art education conference and submitted the following art making proposal, “Community Art Project: *Rubbings of Our Places*:”

*How are rubbings inherently auto/biographical and place-based? This is one question that my art practice research raised in the making of two exhibitions of rubbings made on tracing paper of an inherited home. I invite participants of the conference to make rubbing/s of ‘their place/s’, however they interpret that, or of the place from where they depart before travelling to the conference. Any size or quality of paper, or fabric, with dry materials – pencil, ball point pen, chalk, pastel, graphite stick (the material I used) – could work, or participants could use a wet material and roller. Both the dry and the wet method have historical precedents in the West and the East respectively. The various rubbings of all of “Our Places” could then be assembled as people arrived at the conference, reassembled and reconfigured, depending on the curatorial decisions of the designated curatorial person/group. How does this notion and representation of place intersect with Indigenous knowledges and experiences of place? With identity? How could this artistic experiment with a collective representation of places broaden our understandings of these questions, as well as the potential of art? Text may be added with Post-it Notes, collage, QR codes. Rubbings would then be made while temporarily at the conference, in response to: the presentations; encounters in the local places; encounters/experiences of shifting places while in transit. I would bring rolls of 36” and 40” tracing paper, graphite sticks and NuPastels to enable larger scale rubbings, including large collective rubbings made in places of significance, as decided “in situ.”*

What this proposal makes evident is the versatile nature of rubbings, and the capacity of rubbings to communicate personal interpretations of place through a tactile method that can be easily transported and collectively appreciated. As with the Brasses and stelae of old, the immense breadth of biographical, cultural and geographical information conveyed by rubbings is a distinguishing

feature of the medium. At the same time, making rubbings is a tradition with collective roots, that connects people to place through their bodies and their senses, while producing an evocative image that testifies to the temporal nature of the material. Memory is recorded, significance is claimed, auto/biographical details are narrativised. Or, it is simply a perceptive document. Either way, a *collective representation of places* as proposed above is an invitation to gather, to bring bodies and hands onto shared materials to produce tactile documents of places and to contemplate their significance. This invitation to explore and produce tactile objects, and more importantly, to consider their personal significance, has been a vital aspect of much of my teaching practice with adolescents.

### **Educator Practice**

In this section I will briefly outline some of the projects from my practice as a Visual Art educator in the Middle School where I work. There is an interplay of my art practice research with my educator practice, but it is not intentional; my artist considerations are not entirely removed or separate from my teaching considerations. My educator practice continues to evolve, which I consider to be a professional necessity.

Above in Ground Floor I described student projects where I invited students to share the various personal objects they make at home, as well as their collections of ordinary everyday objects, and to *Think Inside the Box* about their important objects. These are other projects that I have developed as Visual Art teacher, an educator in a Middle School, working with 11-13 year olds. Changing projects regularly is essential - for me as the teacher/artist, trying to find ways to meet the students while inviting, provoking and challenging their ideas, or finding another way to have them consider materials. Some projects are worth repeating, while some work better with one group of students, but not others. Sometimes getting the right - or wrong - project is a complete surprise. I try

to create projects where the students can demonstrate some of the skills they have been taught; they are encouraged to make many choices; the project is open to interpretation; they can choose to draw on their own lives for ideas, subjects, themes.

Students explore identity, memory, their body, personal objects, and place in a number of studio projects.

### **Identity**

- Handmade book of memories: all visual, no writing. Considering the verge of teen-hood many of them are poised to enter, making mixed media in images of their important memories from childhood has been a rich topic. They consider important people, places, objects, events and activities. They plan a hardcover book, make the cover, bind the pages, combine all hand drawn images in watercolour, use drawing materials, add collage, but no photographs.
- Your Backpack: Our personal objects and the relationships we have with them. This is what I say to the students: “This is an object carried on your body everyday, many times a day for a year, or several years. Your backpack touches your body more often than any other article of clothing you own. How well does your backpack “know you”? Draw: your backpack and its distinguishing features.” What is missing in your backpack, especially after a long summer upon return to school? Draw what is missing on tracing people and glue it on. Draw on or around your backpack the music that you carry on your phone: What does your music look like? Add a post-it note: What would your backpack say to you?” One year I did this activity with parents, asking them to draw or make rubbings of their keys, likewise an object carried on or next to their bodies, following them wherever they went, making certain important activities possible. What was missing and what would their keys say to them? They posted their drawings in the art studio for their kids to find.
- Draw your hands and bare feet: This produced such an outcry! These ordinary and visible parts of our bodies seem to cause such embarrassment, shame, disdain - they joked about how badly their feet smelled; but most students declared they didn’t like their hands; they

“hated” their feet, their feet were “ugly,” saying even in the summer they wore socks and running shoes to hide their feet.

- *Personal Matters: Inside Out*. I simply asked the students, What matters to you? This involved discussion, brainstorming, considering issues whether social or personal that were important to individuals. We looked at artworks that used materials that contributed to the meaning of the artworks or added metaphorical layers (El Anatsui, Brian Jungen, Chakai Booker, Nick Cave). They then considered materials and forms that could help communicate their ideas using: plaster, stitched canvas, collaged magazine photos, found clothing, cardboard boxes, plastic tarps, pin and safety pins, clear plastic, burlap, embroidery thread, nail polish for paint. Some of the subject categories that resulted: dolls; clothing and accessories; media images of women; the home as self; masks; games. Themes addressed war; illness; body image and the internal fight with media images of women; public vs. private self, self-love and self-hate; keeping emotions inside; loneliness; bullying and name calling; the importance of friendship.

## **Place**

- *My World Map* is an introductory drawing project using oil pastels inspired by interpretations of the concept of a map across cultures, over several hundred years. Ranging from bird’s eye view to side view, symbolism and games, with or without labels, students create a map of their personal significant places, using rubbings of textured objects in much the way Ernst used his, to add texture to their maps. They are accompanied by a description written in the role of tour guide.
- Students draw *What is home for me?* This is not meant to be a drawing of a building, but of the ‘place’ where they feel most at home in the world, where place may be physical or a state of being: swimming; riding a bike; singing; playing a sport; being with a friend; being in their bedroom; listening to music, are some examples to get them going.
- Connecting family history to world events that make up “history” is one goal of the integrated *Family History Printmaking Project*, which I initiated and developed with the Social Studies, and now English teachers. The first time I taught this was in 2011, prior to starting my doctoral research. I shared my photographs of different generations of family,

and they then brought photos of their extended families. We went to the ROM to see Canadian Aboriginal artist Jane Ash Poitras; artist William Kentridge, also addresses history, social justice issues, and they are both printmakers, they both paint, draw and mix media. We also looked at Paula Scherr and her use of maps. Together the Social Studies teacher and I have planned and worked on this now for several years. She teaches students to use their family photos and family documents as primary source historical documents, and then how to conduct an oral history interview. In the art studio, students carve in softoleum, creating a composite image that represents family homes, occupations, skills, favourite plants, recipes, family heirlooms, objects to show cultural background, and biographical stories. After they learn to make an edition of black prints, they then print mixed media images combining their family photos, documents and maps of their family origins, with quotes from transcripts of their oral history interview and from the poem they re-write, *Where I'm From*. They make a portfolio of colourful layered monoprints and they read their poem and share their portfolio with family during the Exhibition of Learning. They then teach family members to make a print.

- *Stepping into the Future* is a project about shoes, pragmatically and metaphorically, reflecting identity while connecting us to the ground of a specific place. Katherine Govier's *Shoe Project* at the Bata Shoe Museum renders a timely connection between the shoes we have on our feet with our stories of important journeys and places. Six contemporary artists' interpretations of shoes are considered (Meret Oppenheim, Birgit Jurgenssen, Sigalit Landau, Brian Jungen, Chiarhu Shiota, Nick Cave). Students create a pair of life-size sculptural shoes in white card, one shoe for their present and the other shoe for their future – future self, future place or concerns for their future world.

### **Process and Imagination**

- *Useless Machines* is a teacher collaborative project I initiated to emphasize a non-predetermined, organic and whimsical process and outcome. We want the students to focus on an exploratory process of building simple machines so that the exploration of materials leads to ideas for a *Useless Machine*, and the ideas for the *Useless Machine* lead to exploration of materials. We teachers are interested in de-escalating the tendency of STEM/STEAM/Design teaching to be straightforward and pragmatic, “useful,” aimed at

a known result with pre-determined measurable outcomes. We also think adolescents have terrific senses of humour and an appreciation for the significance of the “useless.”

My own exploration of art practice and process seems to have shaped choices in my approach to teaching Visual Art but these weren't conscious decisions. Projects came to mind and I worked on them and tried them out to see what would happen. Usually my first time through a project I realize many things to be done to improve it, and so it is usually advantageous to do a project a couple of times. Then it's value can be determined; sometimes I cut projects short if it is just not working with a particular group.

I have found that having a strong focus on student photographic documentation of their studio working process has encouraged insightful reflection writing about their thinking and ideas, their decision making and skill development. Similar to my own preoccupations with photos of work in progress, yet I realized I had to structure this into their studio classes. They pass around the iPads and save photos of their working process. Now I have them write a three-part reflection with corresponding photos of the beginning, middle, and end of a project. This way they can see transitions, remember decisions or what happened that determined that their work turned out a certain way. Pragmatically, when the students had photos of work from the beginning, middle and end, they themselves stated that it was much easier to talk about the evolution of their making and the thinking at each stage.

### **A Pedagogy of Making and Building Community in Teacher Education**

A fundamental ember lit by this doctoral project is that its humble beginning expanded to rich engagement with many materials and their histories, a place of dwelling, multiple theories and explorations in writing. All of this took time. It was difficult to rush making, and the thinking about that making. Art educators already understand this pressure of time and endure the strictures of

schools as well as possible. It is difficult to think outside of education's box. Its physical box is full with many people all with many different abilities; then there is education's social organizational boxes of timetables, class rotations, the given curricula, marking, assessing and evaluating, report writing, among others. It is not art teachers I would address, but Faculties of Education, administrators of schools. In the educational environment where STEM, design and technology are rising to prominence, this dissertation is evidence of Art's contribution as an exploratory material means of thinking, enjoining theoretical connections while contributing to critical dialogue. Contributing to the wider culture of making in conjunction with a Project-Based Learning approach<sup>10</sup>, artists and Art Departments now have occasions to engage with educators across subject areas to plan, build, and exhibit student work that could be pragmatic, innovative, historically rooted in Design AND Visual Art's many cultural histories, while challenging across disciplines and rolling over exhausted notions of curriculum.

Given my research process during this project as well as some of the educational professional development I have been fortunate to participate in, here are some reflections that I offer to faculties of education about structuring a curriculum for teacher education, and Visual Art in particular, particularly as the Faculty of Education programs are now two years.

- Teacher candidates participate in organized learning groups: Critical Friends Groups or Professional Learning Communities - they can be self-selected, and the idea is to work together over a long term. They can form around topics, common concerns, similar responsibilities or be completely random.
- Use protocols to help structure productive conversations among adults. They can also be used with students. There are a variety of protocols that have been developed by the National School Reform Faculty<sup>11</sup>. These are useful to build community, create safe spaces for sharing professional work, to give and receive feedback, and to stretch personal and professional vision and skill. For example, in Project Based Learning, teachers often design the project, like an art teacher designs

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<sup>10</sup> See: <https://www.innovationunit.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Work-That-Matters-Teachers-Guide-to-Project-based-Learning.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.nsrffharmony.org/>

art projects, and a Tuning Protocol can be used to consider the project with others and to receive specific feedback around a particular aspect of the project.

- Encourage Process Journals - for all teachers - and for Art teachers in particular: build a visual, textual, “reflective/reflexive practitioner” practice in relation to personal art pursuits; and in relation to pedagogy, the day to day practice of each. What is the Pedagogy of Making for each person? Peer group share summary every 3 months for 2 years: insights, quotes; highlights, main moments, main learning/struggles/accomplishments. End of year 1: use Process Journal to discuss personal art research/pedagogical moments/and to look ahead. End of year 2: use Process Journal from 2 years to do the same. Build the practice of practise.
- Find opportunities to use and develop the personal narrative/biography/voice for a Visual Art educator - and for any teacher, as well as educational researchers. Write in the 1st person: it is highly revelatory; provides insight for researcher and insights for reader/audience. Reader can relate to different points, and connect and contrast. It affirms the value of personal experience, and mirrors the message we try to give students: your voice matters, it counts, and we are listening. Modelling message to kids.
- Encourage the adults to consider their bodies, their emotional and intellectual investments: Physicality of their art and teaching projects, as I found, are worth noting and commenting on! We simply focus on end product and ignore all of what Elizabeth St. Pierre (1997) would call the “transgressive data” - the emotions, the dreams, and the sensual data: How does the process of making art and of teaching art affect us? How do these experiences shape our impressions of process and end results? What awareness can we bring to what we do? How does what we do change us?
- Make time for teacher candidates to be involved in all aspects of experiential learning, and sharing that learning process. This is what art making and Project Based Learning ask students to do. This could be an integral part of teacher education and a means to change the direction of pedagogy. Even if school budgets are low, what could teachers build/make/explore/experiment with students? What can they learn this way that they wouldn’t learn any other way? Have exhibitions and peer sharing. This is as important for adults as it is for kids: Critical Friends Groups (CFG) or Professional Learning Communities (PLC) foster community; working on a project, giving and receiving feedback, and then exhibiting together could all build community.
- Develop a CFG/PLC of art teachers, science and technology teachers and administrators: to discuss, consider, wonder, question, muddle over, address the intersection of Art and Art thinking, Design and Design Thinking, and Technology and its uses and current practices across all.

Similarities, differences, how to strengthen any of them? How to bring them together in interesting ways. Try to avoid the predictable design and technology outcomes.

- In Art and in PBL the process can be more important than the end product. Which means there has to be room for process to: diverge, and go in new directions; to evolve; to fail; to start over. There needs to be recognition that the merits of work are not judged solely on the basis of final product.
- Therefore, having a reflective process in a Process Journal is essential in order to capture all of the process - including failures. Important for students and teachers and art teachers.
- Project Based Learning expects everyone to exhibit and to share their work. Peer Critique as done at High Tech High, San Diego, follows three simple rules: Be kind, helpful and specific. This way of structuring a 'feedback conversation' can go a long way to creating a safe space so that failure becomes a learning opportunity and revising and re-working is appreciated.
- The power of exhibition: although it is expected in art, it does not guarantee that students are invested in the exhibition, depending on the artwork; it is unusual for science or history to have exhibitions, so the investment changes there. Personal exploration, or, exploring beyond what we already know and do well, is by definition risk-taking: where knowledge and new discoveries reside. This is a quality we encourage in our students. We need to be willing to do that ourselves.
- Art teachers could initiate interesting projects with other teachers: seek artists who make artworks that could inspire non-art subjects. Art Teacher could work with one other teacher in a different subject to create either A. An interdisciplinary project (both subjects do something that is typical to their discipline on a shared theme or topic; or B. transdisciplinary project where two teachers create a project that actually goes beyond both disciplines and creates new objects and expectations. Look for artists doing something sort of related to share and explain how artists work. Making room for Arts-based explorations across disciplines would mostly benefit students, and for that reason, is worth considering; maintaining input from an artist/teacher throughout would help to plan, develop skills, assess and give feedback about projects.
- Year #1: Year-long personal art practice inquiry, in class whenever time permits, and beyond class. Exhibit space provided over 3-4 months during Year #2; People sign up for exhibition. Bring an original project (it could be related to art practice personal inquiry, or not) into classrooms for students. Teachers make presentations to kids in the placement school about that personal art practice inquiry. Both teacher project and student projects are exhibited. They could be seen as a whole, but with 2 different parts or as 2 separate projects. This is the same process as Project Based Learning, except that art has more latitude.

- Exploration of personal and family history shared in artworks. Insight into who we are in present, as teachers & as students.

These are some of the suggestions I have for increasing the opportunities for making art, or other kinds of making in schools, for creating opportunities for adults and students to have productive dialogues with each other about that making, and to discuss the disciplinary assumptions that reside with making in the various subject areas. Artists are accustomed to dealing with “not knowing,” uncertainty, ambiguity, and the heuristic, or repetitive attempts to learn the necessary, perhaps unusual, skills to make the specific art idea/object in mind. These are all disciplinary advantages not only in processes of making but in approaching education as an evolving and necessary movement toward the new and the unknown.

### **What is Writing in Relation to Thinking in Art Practice Research?**

Writing as a way of thinking is a slithery no good aquatic land animal. It has annoyed and frustrated me. It pushed me, and I have had to develop a practice in relation to thinking with writing: sometimes it is cold-blooded and other times it is warm-blooded, but like art making, the writing process has been entirely unpredictable. I have had to find my way with writing. I have re-written until I could listen to my own voice as I read it on the page and not cringe. It has forced its own difficult pedagogy, and I, an exasperated, suspicious learner. Gradually, however, writing also made it possible to hear myself think, conceptualize the strengths and the weaknesses of making whatever I made, the partial bits and pieces as well as the two exhibitions, by looking more carefully in relation to other artists' works and writing, rather than noting these in passing.

Below are some Process Journal excerpts of my observations and questions around thinking, knowledge, knowing in relation to art and art making; and what is new in art. All of which lead to the question of how 'not knowing' plays a role in the creative process, and how that might be incongruent with education.

### **March 21, 2015**

*Thinking about thinking - my art practice begins with a visual idea - an image - a visual thought. Not a word thought - as in the high heeled shoes filled with Pond's. Is this kind of "Having an idea" really that different from a 'word' idea or an aural idea for a musician who hears a melody? How to compare this kind of thinking to academic research models of thinking? Wesseling summarizes Arendt's "Thinking" as Reason=Meaning and Intellect=Knowledge. I'm not sure thinking is so dichotomously split.*

*In a 2007 journal while writing my MEd thesis, I wrote: It is challenging to think of using your imagination as a serious undertaking.*

*In my discussion of Research I need to add to the 'knowledge'-'new knowledge' claims and assumptions about thinking, process of thinking and as Freud described, 'working through' artworks as thinking, evocative, emergent, provocative objects. Do they produce knowledge? Reflect knowledge? New knowledge? New for who or in relation to who and to what? To a theoretical system only? To the art, culture, educational paradigms of what is current contemporary, 'new for now' until the 'next new' comes along? Is 'new' really a euphemism for an iteration of what is known now, that the new known expands that a little bit, with a new small area of thought visited upon it...*

### **April 7, 2015**

*Griselda Pollock. 'Virtual Feminist Museum'. "I invoke feminist thought in honour of the work of Julia Kristen who has argued that thought as opposed to the compromised term Reason offers some space for serious dissidence..." Note 33, pg. 235. [emphasis mine].*

*Janneke Wesseling. Introduction to 'See it Again, Say it Again' discusses art and knowledge: "There is no simple answer to the question of whether research in art generates knowledge and the kind of knowledge that this may be. What do artists know? Of course they know something about images; they know what it is to produce a 'picture.' Artists have a grasp of phenomena, how things appear to us in a visible guise - about this they know a great deal, but this is too general and therefore too noncommittal. The assumption that artists know how things appear to us can only be demonstrated on the basis of specific works of art and this still leads us with no answer to the broader question of*

*what artist know.” ... “In the context of research in art, perhaps it is better to pose a different question, namely how do artists think?” (8).*

One of the most pertinent discoveries of this long dissertation research project has been in finding generative relationships for thinking while using writing to not just assist but to generate a back and forth process between the researched, my thinking, and the writing of that on the screen/page. Writing creates a different product using language in relation to art objects. The question most often posed has been: What is this in relation to that? How could these everyday places and objects/art objects/art histories/ideas be brought together with those objects/ideas? Like a series of rooms for slightly different purposes in a home, each combination of objects/ideas/histories/theories offered distinct, yet related, potentially useful and provocative ways and relations for thinking. Griselda Pollock states, “Theory, of course, just means thinking about things, puzzling over what is going on, and reflecting on the process of that puzzling and thinking”(2007, xiv), which, frankly, surprised me. I had thought of theory being much more like wallpaper, permanently glued to the walls of contained, closed and immutable spaces, rather than a mobile braided rug that could be rolled up one way and unrolled another in any room, changing the experience of each room it is positioned within. My use of thinking and theory, therefore, is provisional, a productive activity willing to change. As a researcher straddling both Education and Visual Art, my textual research was circumscribed by neither, yet my frames of reference here in my conclusion attempt to reflect something of both.

For example, Pollock’s critique of the reception of autobiography in women’s art (2011) led me to consider other views, such as Kadar and Perreault, of auto/biography and its significance and cultural importance in Social Sciences. Not that this ‘solves the problem’ in visual art, but it offers another ‘room’ in which to consider the persistence of domestic effects particularly in women’s artworks, but also in the work of artist Do Ho Suh. My working process during the summers

2013-14, of moving from immediate sensual experience and notions of memory to reading in order to find theories of both, and then to the idea of haptics of home that encompassed both the sensory and memory, was an intriguing step toward seeing how thinking and puzzling about things can lead to productive relationships for further thinking. This has demonstrated the importance of building a personally significant and particular inquiry, forward seeking, backward looking, sideways stretching, and then pulling the various forays together. The thinking and puzzling with this in relation to that has brought depth to ideas; it slows down thinking, and creates a space to reconsider something new and unanticipated. The merit is in that searching for connections, distinctions and disconnections. It is not pre-planned. It is unknown, unthought, unconsidered. Becomes new. Theory, I have come to see, is about articulating those interconnected, possible relationships, finding artists and thinkers who made art or wrote about art or ideas that I found intriguing, who introduced concepts that corresponded to what I was trying to convey or, more usually, introduced a whole other way of thinking about something - it has been thrilling.

There is also the unannounced idea and the obscured idea. William Kentridge describes how the 'unanticipated' is what forms the basis of his new arts incubator project, *The Centre for the Less Good Idea* in Johannesburg. The "less good idea," "[b]y which I mean the secondary idea," Kentridge explained ... "You start with one plan and then something better emerges from the periphery that would have been impossible without the first thought" (Art21, William Kentridge). This counters the notions of 'knowing in advance what' one is doing, should do, must make, must think. Kentridge is humorously honouring the process intrinsic with art production of 'not knowing' in advance, before, as a predictor of outcomes. The whole of *Her Place* would not have occurred without the prior multi-faceted explorations with the found objects, household substances and the random array of rubbings; these first explorations may still form the basis for other artworks, but in this instance, they were the 'first idea' and the secondary, less good idea took root from there.

Writing begged me to think and articulate the unanticipated - in a similar sense to

Kentridge's 'less good idea.' Barbara Bolt describes the opportunity of writing about art making as a thinking activity, as distinct from art making, and discursively crucial:

The task of the exegesis is not just to explain or contextualize practice, but rather is to *produce movement in thought itself*... Such movement cannot be gained through contemplative knowledge alone, but takes the form of concrete understandings which arise in our dealings with ideas, tools and materials of practice. It is not the job of the artwork to articulate these, no matter how articulate that artwork may be. Rather the exegesis provides a vehicle through which the work of art can find a discursive form." (Emphasis mine. Bolt 33 in Barrett and Bolt, 2010)

'Producing movement in thought itself' describes it. This has been one advantage of this extended process of doctoral writing about an isolated experience of art practice, as it has provided the impetus to think about the making in specific yet multiple ways. Given the changes in Social Sciences writing, as outlined by Stout and Daiello, that include embracing Arts-Based Research practices with writing, the possibilities open for artists to approach the writing process as related or, even, as a distinct creative practice to produce 'movement in thought' about their art making process, as well as about their art works made in a research context. It makes it possible for artists to consider not only what is written but how it is written. Stout and Daiello sum up the evolution in writing practices taking place over the last forty years in the academy:

Research writing emanating from these evolved circumstances rejects the staid politics of form traditionally embedded in academic writing, blurs genres, and takes the singularity out of knowing for both writer and reader. Research writing emanating from the confluence of all of these critical turns has brought us new beginnings toward writing that connects with life. (610-11)

And so, in addition to writing with ideas and theories, art practice researchers could choose whether to write through to their specific 'pedagogy of making' as it is produced through their gendered, racialized, cultured, aged bodies, with accompanying intellectual practices, memories, experiences and affect. In academic writing, such 'writing that connects with life' functions as a means to locate/situate the many intersectional selves that take up the challenge, not just to make art, but to consider that process of making, thinking, reading and writing, to be research.

Brian Paltridge et al. discuss debates regarding models of doctoral writing and propose a model that most closely resembles what I have done. It is “The Commentary Model,” described thus:

[it] puts the practice component first by offering a commentary on the practical component... [it] is a research report that ‘presents[s] the research framework: the key questions, the theories, the disciplinary and wider contexts, of the project; or a report that tells the story of the research: its aims, its methods, its achievements... In this model when the studio is ‘the crucible within which disparate intellectual, material, formal and experimental elements are brought into creative alignment’... the written component often becomes a process-based reflection (including theory), the work episodes and post-project reflections... Thus, the written component can become a valorisation of the creative practice, an elaboration of the values of its outcomes... The Commentary Model implicitly positions[s] the creative/production component of the thesis as essential research, and the exegesis as writing that supplements creative practice. (250-251)

However, given that I spent three years working through the studio work, and now three years working through the writing, I would not say that this written dissertation is a ‘supplement.’ It seems substantially more than that. I agree however, with Barbara Bolt, above, that the writing has produced movement.

Interestingly, Bill Gillham and Helen McGlip argue for ‘practice-integrated’ recording, analysis and commentary during the process of making that can be visual and textual, and “should be recognized as fundamental to constructing practitioner research,” although it is “still insufficiently appreciated as a research methodology *in its own right*.” (178, emphasis in original). I would agree with this, as although my two Process Journals are replete, I have still needed to write this full report; however, as stated above, this full report has been a productive endeavour, as a means to think. Rebecca Fortnum and Chris Smith concur with Gilliam and McGlip, as they have done extensive research with numerous artists regarding documentation of work in order to bring to light the “‘real challenges’ faced by artists. It acknowledges that most visual artists make a number of decisions whilst making their work that aren’t purely conceptual or only to do with material and technique but lie in the relationships between these aspects of making” (169). They mention their interest in artists’ “creative decision making” (ibid, 169) without specifically elaborating on it; meanwhile

creative decision making is also a question I ask my students, yet have not focused on that in my own documentation of my own artwork. Part of a Pedagogy of Making, then, is that some decisions are sometimes fluidly assimilated rather than strategically enacted or recorded and there is no presumption of linearity from one moment or stage to the next, and no obligation to repeat, maintain or continue. To have made 'creative decision-making' a focal point would have changed this entire project, but might be interesting for a future project, although it might also be a frustrated venture to maintain or track.

Gillham and McGlip consider two ways to communicate the 'findings' of what occurred or became known throughout the project, which I seem to have assimilated into one discussion: the formal analytical essay, or "what might be called the 'chronologic' of a narrative report" (178). They state that the research report that might best serve the "'creative' disciplines [is] the narrative format ... because the research process in the arts is more individual in character, and it is here [during the art production] that the main research is carried out and the discoveries made" (179); yet as with Bolt's statement above, it is the writing that can render the movement in thought into an accessible form. Yet, notably, Fortnum and Smith, above, refer to examples of artists' oral histories not being entirely accurate but given these accounts' shape and emphasis, contribute to the artists' sense of identity and "thus inform the artists' path, containing the seeds of future works. The artist does not work in a vacuum but constructs 'narrative strategies of the self' that are both 'cultural and personal' negotiating historical and contemporary figures, encountered both in person and through art works" (171). This is an important point: it is a disciplinary practice across disciplines, to understand the history of the discipline, flawed or biased as that history may be, and to then be in a position to revoke or re-inform that history; yet it still remains as the constitutive base of the practitioner of the discipline from which the 'new' may be established. This reflects Barrett and Bolt's statement, that the "complex experimental, material and social processes through which artistic production occurs"(3) is a multi-faceted shifting arrangement of many intellectual, personal and physical

elements within a social construct. This also again, echoes Kuhn, as well as, mentioned above, Kadar and Perreault's concept of the blurred relationship with 'narrative strategies of the self that are both cultural and personal.' I take Fortnum and Smith to mean that this is not a benign process, but rather intrinsic to and generative within an artist's education, whether in formal settings or independently, through seeking the artistic relationships that inform, buttress, evoke, propel or antagonize an individual art practice. A point to remember, as this forms the crucial gap for those Social Science researchers exploring Arts-Based Research practices. I found that while writing I frequently used comparison with other artists or theorists as a means to consider my artworks and my thinking about them: without theory or the range of art references, how would I evaluate what I had done? Writing this doctoral paper has inched me toward theories, the reading of which I was surprised to find so all encompassing; it has provided pleasure in finding relationships between ideas, both visual and textual; and as a requirement, has forced me to re-think what academic research could be or entail: a creative working of relationships, whether through tangible objects, abstract thought, or pragmatic explication. This makes it possible to go forward being less encumbered by difficult nouns, such as knowledge and outcomes, that plague education, from JK-doctoral studies.

## **Not Knowing**

**June 26, 2016**

*Artists always working in future conditional: What would/ could happen if...?*

*Rests in not knowing, having some idea perhaps but inviting the unknown - even the unknowable.*

How do artists think, and how do artists research, and what is new - questions that have arisen throughout this dissertation. But the turn around to these reveals more pertinent perspectives. Barrett and Bolt address the descriptive gap in understanding that the 'new' is not predicated on the organization of 'knowable methods or outcomes:'

That studio production as research is predicated on an alternative logic of practice often resulting in the generation of new ways of modelling, meaning, knowledge and social

relations is still a relatively foreign idea within the wider university research community ..there is a need to generate appropriate discourses to convince assessors and policy-makers that within the context of studio-based research, innovation is derived from methods that cannot always be pre-determined, and “outcomes” of artistic research are necessarily unpredictable. (3)

In their book, *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum bring together artists, art educators and art thinkers to discuss the various experiences, approaches and theoretical launching points for how artists assume, use, or address ‘not knowing’ in art practice as a means to invite something new. As an educator, I continuously feel caught between two poles: the expectations to know, to explain and explicate art; student artworks and the specific learning that occurs while making artworks; and fundamental ‘enduring understandings’ from my own art education. This book reminds me of those basic assumptions that I feel I hypocritically hold and struggle to uphold, but from which I also easily slide given the educational prerogative within which I am employed. If knowing is the mark of intelligence and knowledge, then artists take a risk in allowing that ‘not knowing’ is intrinsic to their thinking while making art or in encountering art objects. The point is made many times by artists and academic thinkers in this book that a disposition of not knowing is a means to invite the new; there are a number of strategies mentioned to invite the unexpected and unthought into the experience of making art, and into the object itself. This could be a point of conflict with Arts-Based Methods or with artworks that try to be directive and ‘educational’ or convey knowing and knowledge gained through other research methods. By contrast, in her discussion of strategies, artist, writer and lecturer, Emma Cocker discusses “Tactics for Not Knowing: Preparing for the Unexpected” and elucidates the intention to cultivate not knowing, working against the pressure to confine through clarity:

Not knowing is an active space within practice, wherein an artist hopes for an encounter with something new or unfamiliar, unrecognizable or unknown. However, within artistic practice, the possibility of producing something new is not always about the conversion of the not known towards new knowledge, but rather involves the aspiration to *retain* something of the unknown within what is produced. In these terms, the new is that which exceeds existing knowledge, not by extending its limits but by failing to be fully comprehended

within its terms. Paradoxically, perhaps, art involves an attempt to smuggle a trace of something infinitely unknowable *within* the parameters of finite form. Artistic enquiry might toil towards making something *less* rather than *more* known, actively moving towards rather than away from the experience of not knowing.” (Crocker in *On Not Knowing*, 127, emphasis in original)

This not knowing as an 'active space within practice' also imposes not knowing upon the viewer of art then. As Elizabeth Fisher states, the artist's process of not knowing is maintained by the art object in relationship with the viewer: “The ability of art to invite and defy interpretation simultaneously, to reflect the artist's and the viewers' experiences and yet exist independently, is what sets it apart from other disciplines. Art pursues knowledge and yet resists the assimilative urge to know” (Fisher, E. 8). This clearly differentiates visual art thinking from the general educational project. As a pedagogy of making, 'not knowing' as a foundational strategy, or disposition, as an expectation or outcome in Visual Art is not directly taught. I agree with artists Bruce Gilchrist and Jo Joelson of London Fieldworks (in *On Not Knowing*, 57, 59) that the roots are found in the 1930s Surrealist ambition to bypass the conscious mind by using found objects, dreams and daydreams, along with spontaneous strategies of image making that replace picture plane composition and picture content decisions. This echoes Max Ernst's *Natural History* portfolio of *frottages* drawing compositions, discussed in “Second Storey”. In a sense the Surrealists' stance to 'not control' with the conscious mind, has now become, 'not knowing' with the conscious mind. Surrealists based their new strategies of creative making on Freud's theories of mind in psychoanalysis.

### **August 9, 2015**

*Finished Automatic Cities. Clarified the role of Surrealism in many artists' approaches to architecture - but more so, the influence of Freud in thinking as an artist in contemporary art. 'The uncanny in architecture.' My thought is this is widely known. What then of Freud's influence on Art Education? If we artists are trained and soaked in the assumptions of Surrealism, embrace 'automatic writing and drawing' dreams, the uncanny, among others - then as art teachers, do we not then bring those assumptions to our pedagogy? Has Freud in fact underwritten Art Education/ Art pedagogy? In methodology as well as evaluation?*

Griselda Pollock would agree that Freud, and subsequent psychoanalytic practitioners and theorists, have underwritten art practice, art objects, the cultural engagement with art, and therefore, I surmise from there, art education: “Enabled by psychoanalysis, the artist also learnt to recognize ‘its’ own division, its non-unitary condition, its own inner otherness, the unconscious, its own occupation of several positions” (2011, 10). Not knowing with the conscious mind has allowed for ‘other kinds of knowing’ as well as knowing ‘the other’ as she elaborates below.

### **The Art Event/Encounter with Difference**

**March 20, 2015**

*This is not reading an image. It is interpreting, an imaginative engagement, a cognitive recognition, with confusion, loss of meaning. My only guide was affect and recognition - loss of meaning at first encounter, but recognition on pre-verbal kinaesthetic and imaginative domain. It is not reading an idea when it originates in mind. Full encounter - or removal from encounter.*

I would like to borrow from Griselda Pollock’s exploration of the psychoanalytically-informed concept of Event/Encounter (2011) that produces an encounter with difference and defines art as a unique inter-subjective cultural occasion. (However, I will not elaborate upon her use of Bracha Ettinger’s matrixial psychoanalytic theory). Pollock, like Jennifer Fisher <sup>12</sup> partly bases her analytical inquiry upon reigniting interest in Kant’s idea of the sublime as a modern aesthetic. This modern aesthetic, she believes, is not a “domain of judgement but of sociality” (11), unlike the current curricular focus in schools upon critical analysis. Why I find the concept of event/encounter pertinent is it captures the sense of exchange between artwork and viewer that has always ‘felt’ to me, for lack of better words, personal, affective, unaccountable and beyond me, in a thrilling way, as well as intellectually stimulating, not simply a matter of ‘reading,’ and decoding, and so, entailing

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<sup>12</sup>See page 65, this document.

inter-subjectivity. She introduces a new territory (similar to the shared space of clinical psychoanalysis) where there is “space for a self-critical exploration of the modes in which we experience and think about culture and specifically that dimension of our encounter with certain kinds of experience that cannot be defined as rational or cognitive on the one hand or purely perceptual and sensuous on the other...” (5). Which describes my experiences during this project quite succinctly.

Pollock’s shared space of the event/encounter is both aesthetic and interpretive, and I would add, auto/biographical, or personal and social:

Interpretative activity is occasioned because there is transference potential accompanied by a will to assist the other into shared speech through the opening of bordered entities to become shared thresholds for movement between self and other, now and then. Both parties to the event are deposits and accumulations of histories and futures. Why futures? Because interpretation is a creative processing, as opposed to merely a reception of the readymade. (8)

A question for education in general, would be, how to move beyond ‘reception of the readymade’? How to encompass the ‘accumulations of histories’ and address, or think about the shared ‘accumulations of futures’ that “sustains plurality, and preserves some hope that there are domains yet to be known” (11)? The question that I believe is worried about in our shared sociality regarding ‘the domains yet to be known’, is this: some artists accept not knowing in the present; how can artists, art educators and education in general move toward the clearly unknowable future, with a theory of mind, as far reaching and ambitious as Freud’s was over one hundred years ago, but also with a theory of materiality, that acknowledges the anthropocene? How will art and art education be valued, and encompassed in this evolving mix without being instrumentalised toward employment and ‘fixing’ the many controversial ills that plague the planet? What does and can, art do in a way that education understands? The value of art’s distinct offering is in the event/encounter that Pollock describes as being an aesthetic one: “The aesthetic...is the ethical moment of encountering both the otherness of all subjectivity: its unconscious structuring and the otherness of all subjects

through which I learn non-phobic partnership in difference,” (11-12). Its very unknowability, its controversy, its humour or hints, lead to that ethical moment: how will we embrace the unknown?

Elizabeth Fisher concurs:

The shifting status of the art object, and the re-contextualisation of artistic practice within expanded fields of research, politics and the social, open new ways of approaching an ethical position in relation to how we know as well as what we know or do not know. Art performs a vital function within contemporary culture, specifically because of its ability to adapt to wider cultural shifts. Whether artists or audiences, teachers or learners, art draws us into a space of not knowing, a space of thinking in the widest possible sense, in which to test what it means to be in the world. (Fisher, E. 13)

I will conclude with a brief conversation of three theorists whose ideas are pertinent to art practice, art education and education in general in relation to knowing, not knowing and the future: Hananah Arendt, Diana Taylor, Madeleine Grumet.

### **Nativity, The Repertoire And The Event Of Curriculum**

I never planned to be an educator; I had planned to be an artist. I have had a very contested relation to education - through my relatives' experiences of education, through my own, long drawn out and extended educations, and through my profession as an educator - to name a few. What I have found specifically as a teacher of Visual Art, is that it is a doubly cursed position: educators and education often disdain artists and art, while artists disdain educators and education. This mutual despising is interesting, and in part, I posit, is likely due to art's robust relationship to not knowing. In addition, Visual Art as a discipline has an unusual relationship to the archives in education: Whereas Young Adult Literature and YA Creative Non-Fiction are thriving publishing enterprises, filling classrooms and school libraries, there is no Young Adult Art. There are no artists making art for teens. How art is “taught” remains very much a matter of the individual actions, choices, interpretations made by art educators. Where not knowing is a disciplinary mindset or strategy, and diversity or unpredictable

outcomes are desired, then the educational process in Visual Art classes is very much a repertoire of actions, relations and meanings with a localized focus. Pop music can be played by school bands, learning arrangements and notes played by musicians they - or their parents - can listen to on iTunes or watch on YouTube. But in Visual Art education, we do not invite students to copy artists as they might a musician, nor do we want to simplify the complexity of an artist, such as Meret Oppenheim, Louise Bourgeois or Janine Antoni, in our attempts to find acceptable websites for adolescent or teen learners that will not compromise the artist or the artwork. Perhaps of all educational undertakings, visual art education is the least possible to archive or *know*. Students of art are required to learn from adult artists whose artworks are made for the most part for an adult audience. I believe this is part of the tension between education and art, prior to post secondary art education. Adult art educators (whether in schools, galleries or museums) are the intermediary between adult art and young people. And that relationship is primarily verbal while re-showing the adult art. There is no Young Adult Visual Art experience contrived expressly for youth.

### **Hannah Arendt: Natality**

As I complete this dissertation I would like to briefly consider how the mutual despising could be seen as indicative of Hannah Arendt's concept of Natality and what that might/could mean for art and art education. I have been thinking about the notion of futurity and its unknowability as a shared impetus between Hannah Arendt's notion of Natality in education and art.

My leading questions is this: Is art practice closer to Hannah Arendt's view of Education (elementary education, but by extension, education in general) and the requirement of Natality (2006, 171, 189, 193) than Education itself? Does art practice, which is meant not to pre-determine its outcomes, meet the needs of the "unknowable future" more readily than the current institution of Education?

Schooling of the young in education as a social structure and as an institution is drenched in

the life cycle, each year welcoming new, three and four year old youngest members of the community, while sending the oldest ones as teenagers out into the world beyond. In this way, schools are ‘renewed’ each year, and Hannah Arendt’s term for this is ‘natality’: “The essence of education is natality, that fact that human beings are *born* into the world” (171). Natality as a concept reminds us that schools pivot on the temporal, on the new of the newest, youngest members in a world that is already very old. Her discussion of “The Crisis in Education” written in 1954, addresses political and educational contexts beyond the scope of this thesis<sup>13</sup>. Arendt’s discussion pivots on the imperative of contradictory values inherent in education due to natality: there is the need in education to evolve with the new, but due to the vulnerability of the young, there is the requirement to be conservative. The conservative requirement, is an approach of conservation that is to cherish and protect while performing the task of introducing the world to the child. While the child is in the process of becoming, as a new living being, they are also in the midst of developing a relation to the world, for which the child will eventually become responsible.

To preserve the world against the mortality of its creators and inhabitants it must be constantly set right anew. The problem is simply to educate in such a way that a setting-right remains actually possible, even though it can, of course, never be assured. Our hope always hangs on the new which every generation brings; but precisely because we can base our hope only on this, we destroy everything if we so try to control the new that we, the old, can dictate how it will look. Exactly for the sake of what is new and revolutionary in every child, education must be conservative; it must preserve this newness and introduce it as a new thing into an old world, which, however revolutionary its actions may be, is always, from the standpoint of the next generation superannuated and close to destruction. (189)

The conservative is required for protection while the new is already present because of natality, and so education is always poised toward a world that is already behind. Meanwhile, the creation of or identification of the ‘new’ is a stated requirement both of art and of knowledge in university research, which begs the question, what is new? Is it completely different, somewhat different, or is it an iteration of a previous precedent? Does it confront us with Pollock’s aesthetic event/

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<sup>13</sup> Although the issues of authority, tradition and future employability remain central to considerations in current twenty-first century education, see for example, Ron Ritchhart, 2015, p. 17.

encounter? What would be required to know whether the new had been achieved? What does the new do differently? Arendt points to the shifting value given to the past, posing a crisis in education for the educator who “mediates between the old and the new,” requiring “an extraordinary respect for the past.” (190). How is a concern with the historical counter-balanced with that of the contemporary in any particular educational context? What is new - in relation to now or the past? In looking at the balance of authority, tradition and future expectations would be a way to follow Arendt’s critique of education. And then, how do we think about the future? Or perhaps, how do we think at all? What are our theories of mind? How do those theories of mind influence our postulations of a future? How functional or operational must knowledge be? Is it only in terms of employability? Now that we find ourselves in the Anthropocene how should education consider natality? Is the new an inevitable shipwreck that must be saved? Does all that is new require functionality?

I bring up natality as I continually feel the weight of the “known” in schooling education, the tradition (and the necessity of constant supervision, regulation and care), the samenesses, the repetitions, the expected, the already perceived end-results and the ensuing boredom for adults, but also for children, with the predictable. I change what and how I teach from year to year, unpredictably and variably, depending on any number of personal or external factors. I consider this a disciplinary trait, a tendency and necessity as an artist. This always confronts the contradictory stance of the artist with education. As Emma Cocker describes it:

Schooling emerges as a discipline for increasing the territory of what is known, an accumulative undertaking where knowledge is thought of as information to be taught and duly tested. Here, to not know is treated as a deficiency or failure, as a mark of stupidity, the lack of requisite knowledge...The unknown is taken as an anomalous breach or gap in existing thought that must be filled, bridged by the production of new knowledge. Not knowing is the state from which we strive to make sense. (In *On Not Knowing*, 126)

How does the artist, who acknowledges, perhaps only tacitly, their ‘own division, non-unitary condition, inner otherness, the unconscious’ as Pollock stated above (2011, 10), maintain a practice

in art education in an environment that works toward wholistic educational experiences, that nurture the whole child? Does that whole child include the divided self?

This leads me to the question about responding to natality, with Diana Taylor's concept of the repertoire and Madeleine Grumet's concept of the event of curriculum: What could visual art practice as a predisposition, as a field that is continually pre-occupied with the unknown and the new, with change, bring to the consideration of what is new, and necessary on a daily basis, to education?

### **Diana Taylor: The Archive and the Repertoire**

In her 2003 book, *The Archive and The Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor distinguishes between the archive, that which endures and is collected, and the repertoire, the embodied enactment of memory, consisting in the small and multiple acts that once performed, although no longer present, continue to connect performers, viewers and stories. An archive then consists of tangibles, and the repertoire, gestures, actions, movements, interactions of bodies and beings - intangibles and passing presences. Diana Taylor points out that the archive and repertoire are often interdependent, as in a marriage ceremony. I am thinking about these terms, archive and repertoire, as an educator, as teaching is also embodied performance, often repeated, and learned from prior childhood educational experiences of those repertoires. I will return to the idea of repertoires in education below in my discussion of Madeleine Grumet's theory of Curriculum.

The repertoire, as embodied, enacted and performed memory, cannot be contained within the archive; it is not stable like a dated, old letter, or educational text, that can be re-read, and although repetitive, a repertoire of embodied memory may also transform and elaborate, as in a traditional dance, song or sport, (Taylor 20) or in an educational setting, the teacher may also transform the experience with students through various interactions in their the gestures and

performances of pedagogy. I would add to the repertoire as I am trying to address it, the gestures of art making and those of art education, which, as discussed, often contain a disposition toward not knowing. Artists move in and out in depth and levels of touch and perception; it strikes me that these actions, these repertoires of exploration and physical, sensual engagement are both particular and generalized to visual artists. However, in relation to the issue stated above, of the lack of Young Adult Visual Art, of artworks made by adults for children, part of the issue is how the adult artworks are then “explained” or experienced with children. The repertoire of that educational experience is by nature, limited; it can only be ‘about.’ Young Adult writing brings young adult issues and concerns in young adult language to the young adult audience. Is the material, sensual, meaning relationship in visual art somehow so distinct in adult contemporary art, that it reinforces the gap, the not knowing, the unpredictable and unreliable of art, thus proving an even greater frustration for education’s project of conserving through prediction and control of outcomes?

The repertoire of art making, and of art pedagogy is propelled by on-going memory simultaneously as it brings memory and the person into the present and steers toward the unknown future. I would also like to borrow from Taylor her definition of the theoretical term, performance, which does work with my thinking of the repertoire in art studio practice, in that it “functions as an episteme, a way of knowing, not simply an object of analysis.” [xvi], and again, while “simultaneously connoting a process, a praxis, an episteme, a mode of transmission, an accomplishment, and a means of intervening in the world” (15). Art making, and art educating are practices, both auto/biographical, personal and social, that reflect a specific and general episteme, that are in their own doing, modes of transmission and ways to intervene in the world, and perhaps, most uniquely, intervening through veering toward the unknowable future through a practice of not knowing that fosters Pollock’s ethical aesthetic of encountering difference.

How do Arendt’s and Taylor’s concepts work with *Her Place and What was Learned There?* What of the repertoires of a place, or of a home, the movements and repetitions of touch that are

inherent there? What I made was an archive of a home, or the scraps of a home that haphazardly show up before archiving, yet that archive required a repertoire of memories of actions and movements to create. How does the familiar place of a home lead to an encounter with difference? If the encounter with difference is an unexpected and unplanned occasion, is this what supports Arendt's concept of natality? Where this leads me is to consider my art making throughout this project as embodied searching through artistic practices of memory and not knowing. I wasn't making art *about* memory; I made it as a muddled process that led to memory, through a repertoire of bodily operations, to use Krasner's term. In and of itself, this was an educational project that led from loss of memory and dementia to memory, from not knowing to discursive relationships of thought and thinking. Although what my artworks evoked for me was personal, the specific details of these memories have a social base. Diana Taylor confirms:

Memory is embodied and sensual, that is, conjured through the senses; it links the deeply private with social, even official, practices. Sometimes memory is difficult to evoke, yet it's highly efficient; it's always operating in conjunction with other memories, . . . Memory, like the heart, beats beyond our capacity to control it, a lifeline between past and future" (82).

Part of that lifeline is through the repertoire of haptic engagements that expand beyond the boundary of self, and in a sense, encompass difference. She asks: "How does one come to inhabit and envision one's body as coextensive with one's environment and one's past, emphasizing the porous nature of skin rather than its boundedness? (82) Taylor sets the stage for the experience of art as being, not *about* something, but an encounter. Or as Turkle posed, what does this evocative object evoke? What does this imply about how we learn? Does education that confronts natality and the necessity of the future and the new, honour the capacity of haptic knowing to engage with Pollock's concept of ethical aesthetic experience of difference? Art making and art viewing are cultural bridges.

Diana Taylor's theory of the archive and the repertoire has an immediate rapport with education. Much of education is prescribed by governments in required documents, used by

teachers, communicated through written documents to students, with results recorded and distributed to parents as legal representations of learning. This aspect of education very much reflects the importance of the archive to education's past, present and future. What teachers do in class with students, however, is under documented, if not invisible, except in the story telling that might circulate as conducted by either the teachers or the students, or the community at large. What teachers do in class is also endlessly simplified and horrendously misrepresented in popular culture, in movies and sitcoms. However, Taylor's theory of repertoire is an interesting way to reconsider or to bring a new lens to pedagogy, the day to day exchanges that occur among the people who flood in and out like rivers through the hallways and corridors, the doorways and classrooms of an educational institution. In addition, Madeleine Grumet's theory of curriculum offers correspondences to Taylor's archive and repertoire; and, it also bears resemblance to how I think of an artist, how artists work and what artists do. As a feminist, Grumet brings the force of feminist thinking to challenge curriculum. In relation to *Her Place*, Grumet locates the auto/biographical as an essential educational project:

In feminism, 'self' has come to stand for embodied experience, for sensuous connection to the world, for intuitions and feelings that float beneath language. Language has come to stand for cultural systems of representation with complex intertwined relations and histories. Although the designation of these two poles of the human continuum may serve as a heuristic for feminist thought, helping us to bring to language what has been silenced or unspoken, and helping us to bring language to account for experience it has excluded, in curriculum – the process of learning about the world – both are necessary. (2000, 192)

As a feminist artist, this project within the Faculty of Education, of Teaching, Culture and Language was the opportunity to use art practice research, which was until recently an excluded field of research. And yet, consider Pollock's stance about artworks as offering the occasion to learn 'the non-phobic partnership in difference' (stated above). If curriculum is to mean 'a process of learning about the world' then Grumet is insisting that education address the unspoken and unacknowledged curricula of the multiple selves who comprise our social world, which, these theorists indicate is the province of visual art.

## Madeleine Grumet: A Theory Of Curriculum

Madeleine Grumet's theory of curriculum (2008) is a model for studying curriculum that could also work to bridge the divide between visual art and education. It is a very useful and timely model or theory for teachers and the administrators within schools, and for educational ministries of governments, to encounter as part of their day to day work of educating, or planning and organizing education. It expands the idea beyond curriculum pertaining only to what is taught (the archive) to encompass the entire building, location and all of the personnel and community implicated in an educational setting. Grumet's model is threefold: there is the object of curriculum; the event; and the situated context and subjectivity of the researcher, to which I would add the subjectivity and context of both the teacher and the student (2008, 137-138). The object of curriculum corresponds with Taylor's archive; while the event corresponds to the repertoire. Grumet describes it thus:

1. The study of curriculum as *Cultural Object*: What is taught, the topic is "anchored in ideology and nested in layers of meaning that call for clarification and interpretation." These objects are easily archived, stored, reviewed, reused and exhibited.

2. The study of the curriculum object as *Event*: it happens in schools, every day, consists of transactions that occurs among teachers, students, admin, boards, legislators and agencies; and I would add the community, including families, outside educational settings, such as art galleries and museums, and all maintenance staff. "This is a strand of ethnographic research that strives to grasp the lived experience and meaning of curriculum to these actors" (138). I assume this includes the action of pedagogy, the repertoires of individual teachers, the repertoires that comprise the learning of students, and the evolving repertoires of learning of teachers, as opposed to the object of curriculum. Curriculum as event is far-reaching, inter-subjective and ethically always challenging. It is a repertoire of continually overlapping layers.

3. The study of curriculum in the *Perspective of the Researcher* (I add *Teacher/Artist*): This echoes Elizabeth St. Pierre (above) where qualitative inquiry cannot be separate from the lived experience of the researcher. Grumet states, “Curriculum inquiry requires a recapitulation of the researcher’s own history of experience and associations with the object to be studied” (Ibid). For teachers, this consideration is enormously important as it reveals our memories of being educated, our expectations as they are shaped by the archive and repertoires, the objects and events of our experiences of curriculum.

The performances of pedagogy, working in situ with young people carry meanings of intention, implication, memory, and future opening. As an artist, one is working in a studio, experimenting, trying one physical arrangement with materials and then another; so too, as a teacher, my actions are not archival, solid; they are repetitive, transforming, predictable at times, sometimes not so. These repertoires of pedagogy also engage corresponding repertoires from students that are repetitive, transforming, predictable and then, not predictable at all. Together I think of these as constituting the events of curriculum and enactments of the subjectivity of the teachers and the students.

Grumet’s theory of curriculum in relation to visual art and to art practice research can be seen thus: the cultural object, obviously could be the art object; the event(s) of making artworks, the Process Journals, and exhibition; and the perspective of the researching artist, and whether the art work is autobiographical or not, there is a personal motivation and/or a theoretical point of view, that can be identified. This crossover with visual art is echoed by Grumet, also reflecting Arendt’s dual concern with conservation and the unknown future:

Curriculum takes place in schools, but it is a part of the world... Curriculum theory explicitly recognizes these relations and returns curriculum to the world, interrupting its putative exile in schooling, but the world is wide and deep, and selecting its relevant themes is a daunting task. Finally, curriculum takes place in us. None of us approaches the school for the first time, and our past experiences fund our interest in change.... (155)

We as teachers, art researchers, art educators, artists, for a wide variety of reasons, rarely see education as aspiring to being static. This complex interaction of object, event and autobiography offers an educational theory to link with art education, and its relevance within schooling. Art connects selves with the world, with difference and with the past and the future. Art educator, Dennis Atkinson emphasizes the significance of this learning in art education as an ethical imperative that undermines normative, predictable learning,

through which learners and their respective learning practices can emerge into existence. It is an ethics of the unknown of becoming rather than established forms of being... making a distinction therefore between an act of real learning involving a leap into a new ontological space, where the event of learning precipitates a new order of becoming[,] and *normative learning* as that which comprises much of the daily procedures of learning, teaching and assessment.” (In *On Not Knowing* 139-140)

Once again, this imperative of learning through art practice pushes against the enormity of the normative pedagogical occurrence. Art practice, built around not knowing, is poised toward a future that can encompass plurality through multiple events/encounters.

I have attempted to establish the significant relationships among Arendt’s natality, Taylor’s repertoire and the archive, and Grumet’s interwoven theory of curriculum, all in relation to art practice and art education. My research has attended to an examination of these complex relationships, and finally, at the end of all of this research, poses the question:

What could visual art practice bring - with its far reaching histories and contemporary practices, as a disposition, and as a field that is continually pre-occupied with the new and the unknown, or with another point of view and another experiment with another material, another interpretation and idea - to the consideration of what is new, and necessary on a daily basis, to education in education’s imperative quest to renew itself?

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