

Painting as emergent knowledge

**Exploring contemporary artistic labour as a process of ecological
cognition**

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Abstract

This research seeks to understand the contemporary artistic labour of painting in a 'post-aesthetic' view, in which artistic knowledge is seen as socially situated, embodied, and emergent; existing in *processes* rather than *artefacts*. This has implications for understanding the 'work' of painting. Debates on artistic subjectivity and creative work ignore skilled and *cognitive* processes of labour (Taylor, 2011). An exception is Roberts (2007) who proposes that artistic subjectivity has become 'decentred', distributed across people, skills and tools. However, his labour theory does not address painting in any depth. My research explores decentred artistic subjectivity from *within* painting. Using a practice-led method, it explores how painting can evolve a practice in line with new norms around 'spectatorship', and asks how we might understand this labour. Painter-researchers have done much to understand artistic subjectivity as distributed across bodies and materials, but lack focus on 'social' conditions of practice. My research brings this social focus, employing a framework of 'ecological cognition' to develop a theory and practice of painting as emergent knowledge that unfolds in relationships between bodies, materials, the 'social', and the environment. It tests a new practice-led perspective for understanding creative work, exploring *cognitive* processes of contemporary artistic labour. It brings a 'social' perspective to understanding the work of artist *and audience* in painting as research. It develops a post-Cartesian understanding of 'making-as-thinking' that involves body and material interactions, rhythm and gesture. It considers the embodiment of social structures in artefacts and individual habitual practices, examining cognition as a 'social' process. It suggests that 'co-responsibility' (Bolt, 2007) encompasses artist, audience, and artefacts in meaning-making. It contributes a practical framework for sharing artwork and proposes that 'creative labour' (Gulli, 2005) can be a *shared* art of inquiry that is not just a way of knowing; it reveals social '*being*'.

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Preface

This *written thesis* both develops and conceptually supports the emerging practice by developing and testing a posthuman, new materialist framework of contemporary artistic labour as a process of ecological cognition to develop insights about the *creative work* involved in *painting as inquiry*.

The *practice* is documented on videos which are hyperlinked within the text, so you will find it easier to read the eThesis on the accompanying CD. The accompanying DVD contains videos for each of the three practice events. The complete dataset is held at <https://doi.org/10.5518/361> (Kirk, 2018).

Chapter 1 Introduction

The central concern of my research is to understand the contemporary artistic labour of painting in a 'post-aesthetic' view, and particularly to understand the work of painting *as inquiry*. I use the creative work of painting as a method of inquiring into our feelings and responses to human responsibility for climate change. In this uncertain climatic context, we need to consider our relationship with different *kinds* of knowledge, including practice-based forms (Wilson, 2010). Revisiting our ways of 'knowing' the world, particularly in the context of what has been termed 'the Anthropocene'¹, is something that is being addressed with increasing urgency amongst artists (Macfarlane, 2016; Davis & Turpin, 2015). This coincides with changes in the way that we 'view' art which has been termed the 'post-aesthetic'². The conditions of contemporary artistic labour in a post-aesthetic view include changing notions of spectatorship and of the way that 'art' is defined and valued. Contemporary creative practice situates knowledge within *processes* "of creating, mediating and encountering art" (Sutherland & Acord, 2007: 125) rather than in the final *form*. For example, the American artist Eve Mosher in *High Water Line* drew a chalk line along the New York City waterfront to indicate the potential extent of flooding from climate change (Brown, 2014: 224), whilst talking to passers-by about climate change and actions we can take. Her stated objective was to have these *conversations*. This has its roots in the Performance Turn of the 1960s in which artists began to turn away from traditional art methods and materials (and the 'rules' of spectatorship embedded within traditional forms and institutions), instead employing the materials and spaces of everyday life. Movements such as 'Happenings' and the FLUXUS group challenged notions of artistic authority and authorship, with artists such as Allan Kaprow

¹ The term 'Anthropocene', included in the Oxford English Dictionary in June 2014, was first coined by Paul Crutzen in 1999 at a conference on the Holocene (Macfarlane, 2016).

² Removing distinctions between 'art' and 'non-art'; construing art *as* life rather than autonomous from life; and valuing art in terms of its efficacy at 'revealing' life and 'truth' rather than in terms of beauty, form, or economic value (Babich, 1989).

and Joseph Beuys removing perceived boundaries between art and life in an attempted democratisation of art (Harrison & Wood, 2003). The question is whether this ‘democratisation’ is possible with *painting*, a traditional art form which carries a history of ‘viewing’ practices and associated ‘rules’. These can be difficult to renegotiate. Painters are grappling with these issues. For example, the Tate exhibition: *A Bigger Splash: Painting after Performance* (Wood, 2012) asked: “How have painters devised alternatives ... to Kaprow’s two options: to make neo-Pollocks or to give up painting and make happenings?” (Wood, 2012: 14).

Structures that have sustained the identification of ‘art’ are dissolving and new norms are developing. But what do these new conditions mean in terms of the artistic labour of painting, traditionally reliant on the unique ‘hand’ of the artist? Where does artistic subjectivity now reside? Cultural economist Calvin Taylor points out that debates on artistic subjectivity and the conditions of creative work have tended to ignore the skilled and *cognitive* processes of labour that go into the ‘work’ of artistic production (Taylor, 2011). An exception is provided by the art theorist John Roberts (2007) who develops a theory of artistic labour after the ‘readymade’ which called into question the role of the artist’s ‘hand’ in authorship. He proposes that artistic subjectivity has become ‘decentred’, with authorship ‘distributed’ amongst multiple players (through collaboration) and across various technical tools of reproduction. However, his theory, in focusing on new technologies, does not address the labour of painting in any depth³.

Understanding artistic knowledge as socially situated *process* (rather than situated in the artefact) raises questions for understanding the work of contemporary painting. My research explores decentred artistic subjectivity from *within* painting practice. It explores how painting can evolve a practice in line with new norms around ‘spectatorship’, and seeks to understand how we might understand this labour as a process of embodied *cognition*.

Practice-led painter-researchers have done much to reconsider ways of ‘knowing’ through a focus on ‘material’ processes (e.g. Barrett & Bolt, 2013). However, this type of research does not tend to focus on the ‘social’

³ Discussed in Chapter Two.

conditions of artistic practice or audience experience, and that is what my research does. Understanding contemporary artistic authorship as ‘decentred’ has implications for practice-led research in painting. My research explores these implications by using the central framework of ‘ecological cognition’ to develop a theory and practice of painting as emergent knowledge that unfolds in relationships between bodies, materials, the ‘social’, and the environment. This brings an embodied, practice-led perspective to the field of *creative work* – specifically to understand cognitive processes of contemporary artistic labour – and brings a ‘social’ perspective to understanding the work of both artist and audience in *practice-led research in painting*. The outcome is a case study of creative work, during which an ‘extended’ practice of painting as inquiry was developed alongside a theoretical model of contemporary artistic labour as ecological cognition⁴.

This chapter introduces this model. It summarises the trajectory of the practice-research and indicates how ideas develop through each chapter. It explains the context and need for my research in a literature review which shows how research questions were developed. It states the research aims and focus, and then outlines the philosophical and methodological principles, including the rationale for the format of a practice-led submission.

First, let me introduce my practice and its context.

1.1 Painting as inquiry

My research is grounded in painting as a form of inquiry, which I refer to as ‘painting as inquiry’. Through practice, I explore ‘painting’ as anthropological inquiry into subjectivity in the context of climate change. I will first outline what I mean by ‘anthropological’, and then explain what I mean by an ‘inquiry into subjectivity’. Finally, I will explain my artistic methodology.

⁴ Conscious of the post-medium debate (Krauss, 2006), I use ‘extended’ to signify that painting moves beyond the studio and beyond the medium; for example, to incorporate mediation of the event-space, and technologies such as video.

1.1.1 Anthropology

I adopt the anthropologist Tim Ingold's view of anthropology as "a sustained and disciplined inquiry into the conditions and potentials of human life" (2011: 3) in which 'life' is "a path of movement" (ibid: 4). For Ingold, anthropology is a process of tracing these paths of becoming alongside those who make them, to "*follow what is going on*" (ibid: 14) [original emphasis]. Advocating art-making as a method, Ingold proposes an anthropology *with* art (rather than *of* art) which aims "to correspond with it in its own movement of growth or becoming" (2013: 8). This is an "art of inquiry" (ibid: 6) in which making *is* thinking. The visual anthropologist Amanda Ravetz describes this as reverie, "a way of 'thinking through making'" (2016: 159) with no preconceived outcome, where knowledge is emergent in play with materials. By thinking *with* my practice I explore personal and collective responses to human responsibility for climate change. I collect photographs of climate change affected landscapes; cultural images that form our view of climate change and our emotional response to it. I combine these with snapshots of myself as a child.



Figure 1.1 *Shelter*, 2014, acrylic and collage on board, 40 x 34 cm

Photographs are a way of seeing ourselves in relation to our landscape. Traditionally landscape painting has formed our view of this relationship, from signifying ownership (e.g. Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs Andrews*) to representing our emotional landscape (e.g. Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*). By constructing a relationship between climate-change affected landscapes and childhood snapshots through painting, I invite an imaginative engagement with this world in which a viewer can *think* differently about their relationship with it. Through practice I explore ways in which painting can help us to make sense of climate change responsibility. This enters the newer field of 'visual anthropology', which I will now outline.

Grimshaw and Ravetz (2015) take a critical look at attempts to align the fields of art and anthropological practice, and in particular at the 'ethnographic turn' within which these have often been framed. Highlighting differences in the ways in which artists and anthropologists have interpreted and expanded the 'ethnographic', the authors warn that these expanded notions of ethnography can obscure important *differences*. Art and anthropology involve different ways of knowing, with art seeking to disrupt and sustain uncertainty, whereas anthropology seeks to build cumulatively on what is already 'known' (ibid: 430). Both fields, they suggest, share a concern for aesthetics – but for anthropology this concerns a 'vehicle for content', whereas for art it is an open space of not knowing (ibid.). With these differences in mind, I position myself as an artist rather than an anthropologist. I make a claim to 'anthropological inquiry' because I am exploring *with* my practice our 'felt' experience, addressing the need to pay attention to cultural responses to climate change (Smith et al, 2014) through *rethinking subjectivity*, taking a posthuman and new materialist approach as I will now explain.

1.1.2 'An inquiry into subjectivity'

1.1.2.1 The Posthuman

For Humanities theorist Rosi Braidotti, 'subjectivity' refers to how we think, know, and represent ourselves (2013: 12). Her book, *The Posthuman*, is

centrally concerned with devising ways to think differently about ourselves “in the era known as the anthropocene” (Braidotti, 2013: 186). The ‘posthuman’ refers to theories that are literally ‘after humanism’ in their aspiration to rethink subjectivity beyond anthropocentrism. It is an approach that breaches dualisms between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, distancing itself from social constructivism which distinguishes between nature as ‘given’, and culture as ‘constructed’. The new field of environmental or ‘anthropocene Humanities’ (Braidotti, 2013: 159) informs the debate on climate change by examining social and cultural factors underpinning the representation of climate change. My practice of painting as inquiry as described above is situated in this space. One strategy that Braidotti suggests to achieve a post-anthropocentric view of subjectivity is defamiliarization from habitual ways of thinking by employing imagination as well as critical thought – to think *differently* (ibid: 88). My practice of painting as inquiry seeks to *think* differently about how we know and make ourselves in our changing world.

1.1.2.2 New materialism

Braidotti’s approach centres on a concept of ‘vital materialism’. This stems from the Spinozist concept of ‘monism’ (ibid: 56) which led to the development by French philosophers of ‘vital materialism’ which is also known as ‘radical immanence’ in its rejection of transcendentalism. This means that materials as living, interconnected processes are of and in *this* world (‘immanent’), not expressions of essential forms that live in the world of ideas (‘transcendental’). Theories stemming from the idea of a ‘vital materialism’ (e.g. Bennett, 2010) tend to be grouped under the rubric of ‘new materialism’, and focus on ‘matter’ and its processes. These approaches aim to overturn the dominant anthropocentric narrative of humans ‘making’ the world – which has ethical, ecological and political consequences – and replace it with a perspective that puts material processes centre-stage (Bolt, 2013: 2–3). Performance theorist Rebecca Schneider (2015) explains the core ideas of new materialism, which in summary are: i) matter has agency; ii) agency is distributed in relationships between materials; iii) matter is ‘discursive’ or a non-linguistic way of thinking about meaning. Political

theorists Coole and Frost (2010) identify three strands of new materialist thought, which can be summarised as: i) a posthuman focus on *ontological* reconsideration of matter as vibrant, lively and agential; ii) a focus on biopolitical and bioethical issues raised by scientific and technological developments; and iii) a *critical new materialism* that considers relationships between the materiality of everyday life and socio-economic structures.

My research develops ideas from the first and third of these new materialist strands. I explore a *new materialist ontology* by examining the processes of handling materials as a way of thinking that focuses on the interactions of the material flows of the body with the material flows of the materials of art-making. I then venture into *critical new materialism*, looking at ways in which the 'social' is material and embodied in habits and artefacts. Thus my research responds to the posthuman project of thinking beyond the anthropocentric whilst remaining realistic about political power by considering the materiality of 'the social'. I adopt 'new materialism' to reconsider the artistic labour of painting, in which artistic subjectivity occurs *between* things, and agency is distributed in an 'assemblage' of bodies, tools and materials through which political power emerges. Through the exploration of these theories (in particular, the ideas of Tim Ingold and the political theorist Jane Bennett), I develop an extended practice of painting that *enacts* the rethinking of subjectivity that we need to see in the world. I will now describe this practice methodology.

1.1.3 Artistic methodology

I use collage techniques, cutting and re-arranging printed images until I see something that *feels* interesting. I use these collages as a source from which to paint, letting the material qualities and bodily gestures shape the painting. This leaves room for ambiguity and 'accident'. I use artisanal and new technologies, including digital imaging, found materials, and sound. I use studio footage as creative material. As such, my practice enters the 'post medium debate' in which artwork is no longer defined by its medium, and is instead underpinned by 'technical support' (Krauss, 2006). I continue to use the term 'painting' to represent this extended practice, as it is

grounded in painting. My practice includes curating and mediating dialogic encounters between participants and paintings. The process of curating the artefacts and of facilitating audience participation is central to the practice and not an end point. This dissolves boundaries between the 'internal' world of art-making and the 'external' world of exhibiting. A key influence on my facilitation style is my experience of the 'silent crit'. Ravetz (2007) describes this UK arts teaching practice, in which the audience give their responses to the artwork without prior presentation of the artist's intention. The approach emphasises "the centrality of the relationship between the audience [...] and the work" (ibid: 257) in which it is "the *affect* of the work as relayed through the audience that takes priority and is valued" (ibid: 258). In group crits at college, I preferred this polymorphous space to imposing my own (tentative) meanings or 'intention'. I did, however, reject the 'inside out' therapeutic assumption that my work was an 'inner' expression (telling us all something about *my* childhood). Instead, I felt that the meanings expressed by others represented a collective articulation of *shared* cultural anxieties or longings. Ravetz's work with students, in which they explored photographs as a means of opening up dialogue, suggests a method of investigating "social worlds that are 'in the making', relational and unfinished [...]" (ibid: 262). Through painting I bring an added dimension to this dialogue. Many contemporary painters explore photographic sources by painting (e.g. Rugoff, 2007), including artists who have been a key influence on my work such as Gerhard Richter, Marlene Dumas, and Luc Tuymans. Painting provides a method of imaginatively exploring photographs, allowing the body to intervene in the production and reproduction of cultural images, and bringing the audience body into dialogue with the paintings through sharing their affective response. The art *work* is in this shared dialogue. My inquiry explores concerns about climate change. These are not *private* concerns. They constitute a shared anxiety which is social, global, and mediated. This practice of painting as anthropological inquiry into subjectivity sits within a wider context of artistic responses to climate change, as follows.

1.2 Artistic context

The enormity of the Anthropocene poses a challenge to artists – but also an opportunity to shock us out of our tendency to move on and ignore it (Macfarlane, 2016). As highlighted by both Macfarlane (2016) and Davis and Turpin (2015), a common starting point for artists is climate change. Much contemporary climate change art involves art-science collaborations such as the Cape Farewell project (Giannachi, 2012). But these ignore personal responses to the ‘everyday’ experience of climate change:

Artistic explorations should not be restricted to illustrating our scientific discoveries [...] Instead, a work of art may help us to experience and reveal our inner⁵ participation with climate, the rupture of its balance and its meaning for our inner world, in the same way as landscape artists who reframed the relationship of humans to their environment. (Knebusch, 2008: 3)

My paintings depict figures in landscapes, drawing upon a visual heritage influenced by Hopper and Friedrich, both of whom used landscape to represent an ‘inner’ state. Knebusch suggests that climate is experienced phenomenologically as landscape, a “multidimensional phenomenon in which are combined the contributions of nature, culture, history and geography, but also the imaginary and the symbolic” (2008: 5). Painting can engage imagination and emotion. An exhibition of paintings in Melbourne, *Climate Change: The Wonder and the Dread* (Metro Gallery, 2012) aimed to target *emotions* rather than educate on the science (McCulloch, 2012). A supporting video documentary revealed the artists’ processes.

The latter represents a wider contemporary interest in presenting artists’ processes as part of the work. For example, the Tate exhibition *A Bigger Splash: Painting after performance* (Wood, 2012) looked at the relationship between painting and film in the work of Pollock and Hockney. Wood suggests that the “collision of the designed arena of painted space, and the reality of living or performing to camera, is a productive contamination that

⁵ Knebusch uses the term ‘inner’ participation. I interpret this as ‘affective’ participation; enacted and occurring in a phenomenological moment, rather than a ‘thing’ to be found inside.

bleeds both ways” (ibid: 22). This ‘productive contamination’ occurs in my own practice through edited videos of studio activities. The *Bigger Splash* exhibition included painters who perform, for example the artist Joan Jonas who is interested in what happens when you draw in front of an audience. In *Reanimation* she responds to issues such as glacial melt in a collaborative performance with jazz musician Jason Moran (Young, 2013). Her concerns are similar to mine, including human impact on climate change, and the visibility of artistic process as *part* of the artwork. But whereas Jonas employs live performance, I use recorded footage, only bringing myself into the frame as a performer in the third event⁶ – in which I performed modernist collage skills of cutting and placing rather than traditional artisanal skills. Another key difference between my work and Jonas’ is my staging of the ‘exhibition’ as a *shared* inquiry. A transition occurred through my three practice events, as the audience shifted from ‘viewer’ (event one) to ‘participant’ (event two) to ‘collaborator’ (event three). By events two and three, the audience’s participation was key in the *making* of the work. I don’t situate the work in the artist’s actions through staging a performance. I *do* retain the primacy of the artefacts by drawing awareness to the process of engaging with them. I will show through this thesis and the accompanying practice documentation how my practice evolved to remove the artist from the centre of the meaning-making process, culminating in the final practice event in which I created an *experience* of distributed artistic subjectivity (Chapter Five). This practice evolved with, and is supported by, the development of a posthuman, new materialist model of contemporary artistic labour as ecological cognition. I will now introduce this model, along with the first phase of practice during which the model was developed.

1.3 Making as thinking: Artistic labour as ecological cognition

At the start of my research, in August 2012, I started working in my studio with a simple objective: *To explore my concerns about climate change through making images*. This studio practice involved selecting images that

⁶ This will be explained in Chapter Five.

'drew' me to paint them, experimenting in the studio with ideas and materials, and simultaneously working out how to record the process and make sense of it. I started to work with images of climate change affected landscapes, and through play, the idea emerged of combining these with family snapshots. During this phase I was also reading. Whilst I mulled over what I had read and jotted down reflections on theory and practice in my studio journal, a tentative model of artistic labour started to emerge. What follows is a description of the logic of that model.

Through painting, I explore making as a process of *thinking*. 'Making' involves the socialised, skilled artist body labouring with materials, responding constantly to tactile, visual and emotional feedback from the emerging form. Whilst I am manipulating and rearranging materials in my studio, I am making more than a painting – I am making *sense*. My imagination is engaged alongside the rhythmic gestures of brush strokes, exploring the emerging object as a landscape, inhabiting it, exploring its contours. In this process, I come to know more about the concerns that occupy me – problems of the nature of human dwelling in the world. This has been explained as 'extended' cognition, with the made artefact as an 'outside' reflection of ourselves mediating meaning (Crowther, 1993: 166) – but this sustains a Cartesian 'inside-out' assumption of 'mind' seeing a 'reflection' of itself. Taking an ecological view of cognition, knowledge of the world comes from engagement *with* things (Ingold, 2011). Rather than studying the world as an object, we "correspond with it in its own movement of growth or becoming ..." (Ingold, 2013: 8). This 'correspondence' sets up a relation *with* the world which opens up our perception to what is *going on* so that we can *respond* to it (Ingold, 2013: 7). Knowledge is emergent as the artist engages with the environments and processes of practice. Adopting a conception of cognition as *ecological* assumes thinking and perceiving occur as an organism *moves* through its environment (Ingold, 2000). It is not a hidden, unconscious internal knowledge that is 'expressed' to be 'mirrored' in the artefact. It is a knowledge that is *performed* in the moving interactions of body, material, and social actors in space and time of which the artefact is a trace.

This is a *social* process. I look at artworks and see how they have been critiqued by curators or commentators, and memories of these judgements influence my decisions. I may put aside ideas as unfashionable, or I may exploit them for that reason. There is an invisible but very real web of social structures that I flutter against, either getting stuck or breaking beyond. The forming of the artefact in a process of wrestling with ideas, gesture, tools, materials and a sticky social web, is a way of 'knowing'. And this way of 'knowing' through 'making' is not contained purely within the artist's studio, but is *also* in the encounters with the artefacts. Artistic labour includes mediating the ways in which those encounters are shaped. Therefore artistic authorship involves co-responsibility⁷ of physical, social and material agents situated in a particular time and space. This is 'artistic labour' understood as a process of ecological cognition. This model forms the main theoretical framework which has been developed *in relation* with the practice; informing, forming, and formed by it.

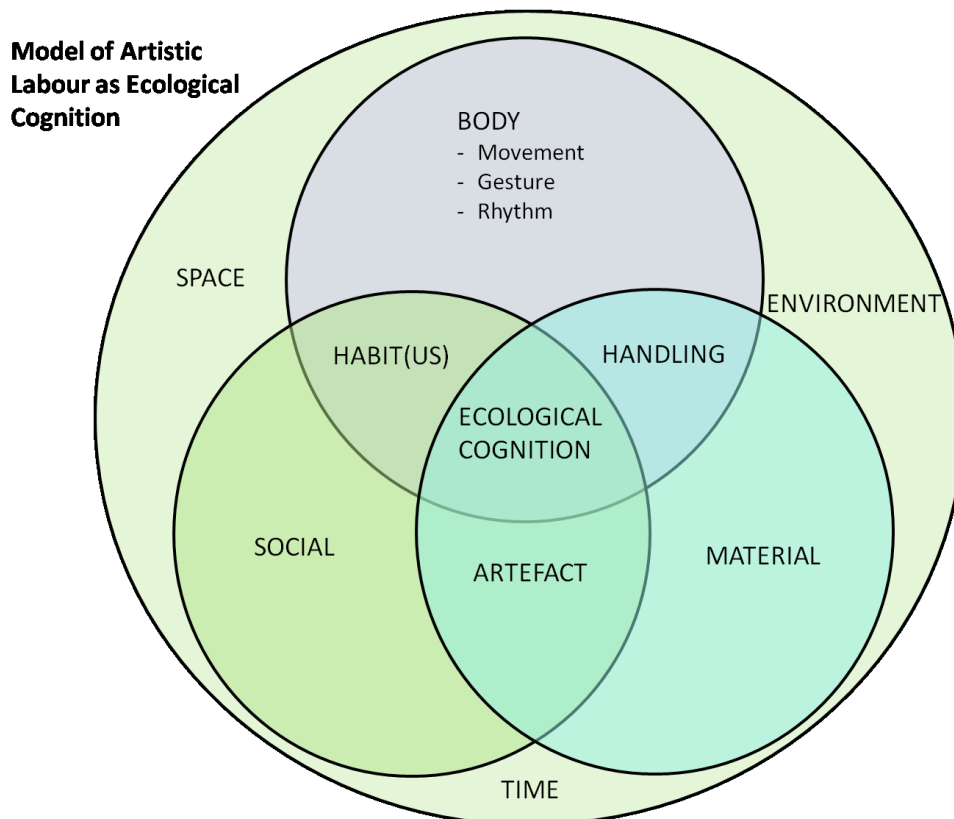


Figure 1.2 Artistic labour as ecological cognition

⁷ I explain this term in more detail in Chapter Four.

I have deliberately included the 'social' as a lens of the model, rather than taking a purely new materialist position, in order to retain a focus on power relationships. Critics of new materialism have suggested that it can ignore the contributions of the social turn (e.g. Bolt, 2013; Schneider, 2015), obscuring the political reality that there is often an unequal balance of power for humans and other 'things'⁸. This is a particular issue given the current context of environmental fragility. I have sought to address this critique by employing a 'critical' new materialism (introduced earlier) which I develop in Chapter Four to consider *relationships* between 'body', 'material' and the 'social'. By 'social', I mean the ways that humans communicate, organise, and transform things; the embodied and material processes of creative labour (Gulli, 2005) that *make* a social world⁹. To learn about that social world, I've employed a cultural phenomenology (Csordas, 1999)¹⁰ which understands 'reality' as experienced by human senses, by a body immersed in a culture.

However, there are challenges in trying to marry two different philosophical approaches. For example, Ingold (2000) suggests that the concept of the 'social' risks implying a division between biology (or nature) and culture. Ingold says that humans come into being as "organism-persons" (2000: 5) in a world inhabited by human and non-human organisms. Therefore, he says, "relations among humans, which we are accustomed to calling 'social', are but a sub-set of ecological relations" (ibid: 5). Ingold suggests that the 'cultural' phenomenology proposed by Csordas, in moving 'the body' from biology to culture, risks 'disembodiment' of the organism. Embodiment as a *process*, says Ingold, is the development of the human organism in its environment through the development of *skills*. This skills-based perspective brings culture and biology together, as body and mind are employed in situated activity in an environment. We need, he says, to look at how people engage in their practical activities "in the lived-in world" (ibid: 171). For this reason, I have employed a practice-led methodology to learn about artistic labour from within that world. Through the employment and

⁸ See Chapter Three.

⁹ See Chapter Five.

¹⁰ See Chapter Two.

development of my own skills, I have investigated how the 'social' is *embodied* in habits and artefacts¹¹ of everyday practice, rather than seeing 'the social' as a cultural 'object' separate from nature.

I have used the model above as a methodological tool which allows me to retain a sense of control over the messiness of creative practice (Trimmingham, 2002). It represents a hermeneutic-interpretive spiral "where progress is not linear but circular; a spiral which constantly returns us to our original point of entry but with renewed understanding [...] as one part of understanding changes, the whole changes too" (ibid: 56). The model does not *represent* artistic labour, but is a tool to help make sense of it. It is not a map, but a framework to hang onto whilst exploring the often chaotic processes of creative labour. The centre of the model as viewed through its 'lenses' is not as neatly categorised as it looks. Gaze into the lens of the cornea of the human eye, and you see something like this:



Figure 1.3 Representation of 'messy middle' of the model

As well as representing the 'messiness' of creative practice, this visualisation also represents the difficulty in using two different philosophical approaches as described above. Branches intertwine and overlap, but don't necessarily graft together comfortably. A bee, flitting between branches, could take pollen from the flowers of each and this could create a stronger hybrid. It

¹¹ See Chapter Four.

could also create a specimen that is unproductive or vulnerable to attack. It could create both.

Using the model as a framework for my research, I focused on one lens at a time to reflect on and evolve my practice, and from this, to develop theoretical insights about artistic labour. Research insights unfold throughout the following chapters, and are summarised in Chapter Six. The following section introduces the trajectory of the research and an outline of the chapters.

1.4 Trajectory of research and outline of chapters

Chapters Two, Three, and Four are structured around the lenses of 'body', 'material', and 'social' respectively. Chapter Five focuses on overlaps of the three lenses to achieve a closer focus on 'ecological cognition'.

The first phase of practice from 2012 to 2013 focused on 'body', exploring processes of embodied cognition to understand creative practice as a corporeal activity. I started using collage techniques, cutting, tearing, and superimposing images, whilst simultaneously finding ways to digitally record these corporeal processes. This phase culminated in the first event: *The Gesture of Thinking* in May 2013, which presented paintings, videos of studio process, tools, journals, and materials. It aimed to create a 'felt' sense of embodied cognition for the audience by inviting them to 'touch' artefacts and materials. It invited them into my world, revealing *my* artistic subjectivity. The audience, at this formative stage, were 'viewers'. Chapter Two reflects on this first phase of practice, focusing on the lens of 'body' and the intersection with 'material'. It moves artistic intentionality out of the artist's head, exploring how 'thinking' extends into and beyond the body, with materials and emerging artefacts forming part of an 'extended' cognitive apparatus (Clark, 2011). It considers what might be learned by focusing on *painting* through Roberts' (2007) lens of 'decentred' artistic subjectivity. It raises questions about the role of rhythm and movement in making-as-thinking.

The second phase in the latter half of 2013 focussed on 'material' and the intersections with 'body' and 'social'. The starting point for studio work was

the question: *Is it possible through painting and video to explore and fragment agential and social boundaries of 'self'?* This question mirrored the theoretical understanding of 'decentred' artistic subjectivity which I was starting to develop. During the first event, I had been struck by a sense of significance of video footage of cutting out a figure. For this second phase of studio work I played with this technique *within* the painting process. Chapter Three reflects on one of the resulting paintings to exemplify how the artefact facilitates the artist's cognitive process through an exegetical (meaning-making) process of *critical reflection* on artefacts made through *material handling*. This critical process connected the personal to the political. Reflecting on studio practice journals, the chapter considers the role of movement and rhythm in the handling of materials in achieving a 'liminal' state, using theories from anthropology (Ingold, 2013) to develop an understanding of 'gesture' as a technical act in which hand, tool and material are brought together. It explores body and material interactions as 'material thinking' (Carter, 2004; Bolt, 2004), and the importance of *movement* in perception, a key aspect of ecological cognition (Gibson, 1986). Finally, it considers theories which pose that 'material' is also 'political' (Latour, 2005; Bennett, 2010) such that the 'social' is present in interactions between bodies and materials. It proposes that 'material thinking' could be expanded to include 'sociality'.

Chapter Four addresses this proposed expansion of 'material thinking' by focusing on the 'social' and the intersections with 'material' and 'body'. It reviews concepts of 'practices' and '*habitus*' (Bourdieu, 1977) which seek to explain *production* of social structures through repeated and learned embodied behaviours. Referring to specific examples of studio practice from the second phase, it uses these theories to explore how the 'social' is inscribed in the emerging artefact such that it affects the body of the artist as she works. Adopting a *critical new materialism* (Coole & Frost, 2010) (introduced earlier), it considers how the social is embodied in and performed through individual habits and public objects (Turner, 1994). It proposes that materials and artefacts are mediators of what is socially determined as 'art', thus having 'political agency' (Latour, 2005; Bennett, 2010). This leads to a consideration of audience meaning-making. The first

event raised questions concerning the *viewer's* processes of meaning-making. Are they just a 'viewer'? The second event, *Feeling a way through ...* (December 2013) moved from showing *my* artistic subjectivity, to attempting to *share* artistic subjectivity. I aimed to make audience meaning-making consciously part of the event, such that the audience become aware of their role in the 'work' of art, shifting from 'viewers' to '*participants*'. In the chapter, I explore audience responses to seeing artistic process on video to understand whether there is meaning in seeing the work done. I propose an addition to Bolt's theory of 'co-responsible' artistic authorship (2007) to include the *audience* as well as the artist and her materials in processes of inquiring and meaning-making. I suggest that framing painting as a *social* practice in which artistic agency is 'distributed' raises questions of implications for painting 'viewing practices', the place of the artist's voice, and her skills of mediating encounters with artefacts.

The third phase from 2014 to 2017 drew together the 'body', 'material', and 'social' to review what the perspective of ecological cognition had contributed to understanding contemporary artistic labour for *painting* – for both artist and audience. Chapter Five describes how a growing ecological sensibility has shaped my studio practice and the way in which I *share* artistic process through video. It discusses how the third event, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* held in May 2017, was designed to facilitate an experience of 'distributed' artistic subjectivity. In the second event 'process' had distracted from 'content', sometimes obscuring what the artwork was about. The third event sought to navigate this tension between the *artist's* voice (what she intends the work to be about), and creating space with an *audience* to 'make' meaning from the work. The chapter performs a selective analysis of this final event by focusing on the creative work of the audience, their bodily gestures, use of tools and materials, and their creative responses to the videos of artistic process. It suggests that in taking up an invitation to 'make' work through provision of sketchbooks and materials, the audience 'enacted' a human compulsion to 'make' things. They became not just 'participants' but also '*collaborators*'. The chapter proposes that this 'creative labour' of the audience is social *ontology* (Gulli, 2005); not just 'knowing about' the 'social' but *being* it. It suggests that the artist's voice

could help to mediate this awareness by framing the 'social' that is being made in the room.

Chapter Six returns to the research aims and questions and summarises key insights gained and their implications. It considers methodological implications of my research for painting as inquiry, and reflects on what has been learned from the research methods used. It suggests how the research insights might contribute to current debates in creative work and painting as research. It considers limitations and questions for future research.

Throughout the above research trajectory, 'gesture' became a repeated and central theme, and my understanding of it evolved as follows. I started by looking at the painterly gesture as a physical dimension of *thinking*, rather than as the expression of an 'internal thought'. I came to realise that these 'thinking' gestures involved *rhythm*, forming a dialogue between body, tools and materials to find a 'liminal' or 'flow' state of focused awareness. These gestures leave a trace on the artefact; a trace of knowing and of being that can be 'felt' by a viewer. This extends the 'value' of the painterly gesture beyond the monetary one defined by 'uniqueness' of the artist's hand. Reflection on the second phase of practice introduced a social dimension to understanding 'gesture' as something that is learned and embodied through repeated practice, and constitutive of a social *habitus* of making 'art'. The final phase of practice reflected on *audience* gestures, bringing together the different understandings of 'gesture' to encompass *both* bodily knowing through movement, *and* carrying and constructing cultural meaning. I noticed 'mirroring' of bodies, and explored this insight using the notion of 'migration of gesture' (Noland & Ness, 2008). Gestures seemed to be 'copied', and this may have represented a collectively negotiated 'staging' of the body. In summary, this evolving notion of 'gesture' provided a central analytical tool that was consistent with the framework of ecological cognition.

Having described the research trajectory and structure of this thesis, I will now explain in more detail the context and need for my research.

1.5 Literature review and research questions

The following literature review shows how the research questions were developed (questions are indented in the text). First, it outlines how the position of the ‘viewer’ has changed and suggests that contemporary accounts of creative work are inadequate to understand these changing conditions of practice. It introduces Roberts’ labour theory of ‘decentred authorship’, and identifies a gap in his theory for understanding contemporary *painting*. It suggests that understanding creative work requires understanding how knowledge is formed through the interaction of the *whole* body and socially inherited practice, as well as the agency of material ‘things’ with which human bodies interact. It proposes that arts practice-led research provides a way of investigating these interactions, in particular the painter Barbara Bolt’s ‘material thinking’ (2010). It considers what is missing from Bolt’s approach in terms of a focus on the ‘social’, and suggests that ‘thinking in context’ (Sullivan, 2010) would help to understand painting as a public, dialogic, research process. It introduces cultural industries theorist Nick Wilson’s concept of social creativity (2010) and suggests that this can bring a sociological perspective to Bolt’s theory, by moving beyond the studio into the contexts of ‘viewing’. Finally, it discusses digital reflection (using digital technologies to facilitate creative reflection (Kirk & Pitches, 2013)) as a method of finding new insights and learning.

1.5.1 The position of the ‘viewer’ – the ‘post-aesthetic’

The term ‘post-aesthetic’ does not imply that we are ‘beyond aesthetics’ or that aesthetics are no longer important. The term ‘aesthetic’ is concerned with ideas of beauty and taste (Munro & Scruton, 2017), and has come to be understood in many different ways including “a kind of object, a kind of judgment, a kind of attitude, a kind of experience, and a kind of value” (Shelley, 2017). Aesthetic theorisation today divides over questions such as “whether to define aesthetic experience according to its phenomenological or representational content” and “how best to understand the relation between aesthetic value and aesthetic experience” (Shelley, 2017). Clearly as a painter, I work with aesthetics in terms of representation. But I also

situate the 'aesthetic' in the experience of making sense of the artefacts, and this is where the 'post-aesthetic' comes in. The 'post-aesthetic' perspective *develops* ideas of the 'aesthetic' rather than rejecting the concept. It is concerned with changing understandings of the *consumption* of artwork, with spectators demanding a more active role (Bishop, 2006). Viewers are increasingly seen as co-authors of meaning, rather than 'receivers' of a message (Rancière, 2011)¹². Art work can be seen in the context of its process of production, in which viewers may collaborate or participate. The artist does not 'know better' than the viewer, who may create meanings from the artwork that the artist had not considered. The artefact can be seen as an intermediary in this process, rather than 'containing' meaning (Rancière, 2011). Walmsley and Franks (2011) observe how the role of some arts organisations has changed from 'gatekeeper' to 'facilitator', with audiences invited into the creative development process to create their own meaning or collective response. A prominent example is the Tate Modern's Bloomberg Connects project (launched in 2013) which uses digital technologies to create opportunities for visitors to make responses to the collection. Through different types of digital activity audience responses are invited through mark-making, reflective questions, and invitations to add their own captions. Artists' processes are made visible through live events and video (Tate, 2017).

These changing notions of spectatorship raise questions for contemporary *painting*, providing the context for my primary research question, which is:

How does painting evolve a practice in line with new norms around 'spectatorship', and how can we understand this labour?

I address the first part of this question *through* the development of my practice. By reflection *on* that practice, this thesis addresses the latter part, showing how developing an understanding of artistic labour as ecological cognition has enabled me to develop an artistic practice in which artistic subjectivity can be experienced by artist and audience as 'distributed'.

¹² I discuss Rancière's 'active spectatorship' in Chapter Four.

This question seeks to develop an understanding of the *artistic labour* of painting in these changing conditions of practice. I will now explain why this is important, and why it suggests an original perspective on understanding 'creative work'.

1.5.2 Artistic labour and artistic subjectivity

Cultural industries theorist David Hesmondhalgh (2008) explains the importance of understanding the conditions of creative work. By the late 1990's the term 'creative industries'¹³ was being adopted for cultural and education policy, and included media, visual arts and crafts, computer software, and anything related to intellectual property (ibid.). The 'creative industries' have in the last decades been seen as key to economic growth, and this has led to cultural policy becoming subject to the values of the market. Hesmondhalgh points out that in a context largely controlled by large corporations, following market-oriented values in cultural policy is less than ideal. We need, he says, to pay attention to the relationships between culture, society and economy, and to critique creative industries policy with this in mind. One route to do this, he explains, is by looking at the conditions of 'creative work'. Another reason that understanding creative work is important is because this labour is what *produces* 'cultural value', as identified by cultural industries theorist Mark Banks (2015). Banks also notes that the labour of cultural work is subject to tensions between 'economic' and 'cultural' value, and concludes that the economic imperative appears to be threatening the cultural values of creative work. He suggests that this art-commerce tension requires 'academic attentiveness' to the conditions under which cultural workers operate.

Hesmondhalgh (2008) points to ways in which labour has formed a basis for critique of cultural policy. Some approaches find that the conditions of creative labour are characterised by 'precarity', exploitation and the stresses of self-employment. Others look at the art-commerce relationship in terms of

¹³ Defined as "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2016).

how artists' desire for 'freedom' and 'autonomy' act as self-disciplining devices leading to self-exploitation. Banks (2007) outlines traditions that underpin this type of research, including Marxist and Foucauldian approaches which tend to employ social constructionist methods, exploring narrative constructions of 'creative identity work' (e.g. Bain, 2005; Taylor and Littleton, 2008). These are valuable approaches which show that policies used to support 'creative' industries can come close to "endorsing inequality and exploitation associated with contemporary neoliberalisms" (Hesmondhalgh, 2008: 567). However, Taylor (2011) suggests that they ignore the *cognitive* processes that go into the 'work' of artistic production. He notes that accounts of creativity within the creative industries are either over- or under-socialised, mistrusting concepts of 'agency' or falling back on enlightenment notions of artist-as-genius (ibid.). Taylor suggests that we need to reintroduce human *cognition* into the picture "to tie creativity back to *socially* situated individuals as creative *agents*" (2011: 45) [my emphasis]. Therefore, rather than doing the type of 'identity' work described above, I have used a practice-led approach to explore creative work from *within* practice. I use new materialist approaches that value my embodied, material and social experience as a process of ecological *cognition*, thus accounting for social structures *and* artistic agency. My research tests a new perspective for understanding creative work by developing a situated case-study of contemporary painting.

It looks at ways in which cognition can be collective and social, situating creative work within *relationships* between artist, audience and artefacts. For this, I am indebted to Roberts' (2007) theory of 'decentred' artistic subjectivity which locates authorship and artistic agency within relationships between the artist, the society in which they are embedded, and the skills and techniques that they employ. His labour theory of culture aims to explain how avant-garde art (and particularly the readymade after Duchamp's *Fountain*) changed our understanding of artistic authorship, from value created by the individual expressive artisan, to value as created by productive labour dispersed amongst 'skilled' and 'unskilled' hands in "circuits of artistic authorship" (2007: 1). He questions what happens to authorship once you remove 'the artist' from the centre of production, and

“what happens to the artist’s identity after the artistic subject can no longer derive its stability and security from a sense of its own expressive unity, from the idealisms of a self-enclosed subjectivity?” (ibid: 102). One of the ways in which he addresses this is to consider the move from artisanal craft to what he calls ‘general social technique’ (modern tools of technical reproducibility). He suggests that the move away from ‘craft-based’ authorship, towards artistic labour which involves employing technology and science in the service of conceptual ideas, changes the way we understand authorship. Skill in art is no longer defined as handcraft, but incorporates prosthetic devices and technical (especially digital) tools of reproduction (ibid: 102). Roberts suggests that artistic subjectivity *is* this use of tools (ibid: 15). The artist’s agency does not sit outside of these skills and techniques; rather authorship *is* the employment and development of skills (ibid: 103). Roberts insists that the first person singular is not lost altogether, but is simply unable to speak *outside of* its embeddedness within intellectual and technical sociality. This, he says, is why concepts of ‘inner creativity’ no longer make sense.

However, his focus moves away from traditional artisanal skills, rather than incorporating them into a wider set of techniques¹⁴. And whilst he focuses carefully on the role of the artist’s hand, the rest of the body does not receive the same attention. Taylor suggests that one way to investigate the cognitive processes involved in creative work is to understand how knowledge is formed through ‘innovation traditions’ and *embodied* in the work of individuals (2011: 45). Within performance, for example, practice can be seen to be both embodied and socially transmitted (e.g. Pitches, 2012), combining taught craft and the cultural conventions of a community of practice with the tacit embodied knowledge of the practitioner. We need to understand the interaction of the *whole* body with socially inherited practice. And as I discussed earlier, a new materialist approach suggests that we also need to consider the agency of the material ‘things’ with which human bodies interact (e.g. Bennett, 2010).

The following sub-questions aim to investigate these multiple interactions.

¹⁴ See Chapter Two.

- i) How do bodies and materials interact in creative practice?
- ii) How do social processes, cultural and environmental factors interact with human and material bodies in creative practice?¹⁵
- iii) What is the place of the artist's voice in a shared ecological artistic subjectivity?

I use a practice-led method to address these questions, and I will now explain why I use this approach, and how my research also offers methodological insights into understanding painting as a research method.

1.5.3 Practice-led research

Practice-led research takes place in the settings of artistic practice focusing on practitioner creative processes (e.g. Barrett & Bolt, 2010; Leavy, 2009; Sullivan, 2010). As such, it is a suitable methodology within which to develop a situated account of creative work. Creativity and cognition researcher Linda Candy distinguishes between *practice-led* research, which “leads primarily to new understandings about practice” (2006: 1) and *practice-based* research in which “a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge” (ibid). Practice-led research is that in which artistic practice can be viewed “as the production of knowledge [...] derived from doing and from the senses” (Barrett & Bolt, 2010: 1). A helpful framework for *painting* as inquiry is offered by Bolt (2004) who develops a logic of practice in which the material processes of making the work through ‘material thinking’ put ‘reality’ into the painting, and the painting reflects this back into the world, creating real effects. In this way, she argues, the visual image can move beyond pure representation, towards performativity – “to bring into being that which it figures” (2004: 3–4). But if the ‘knowing’ is in the *making*, does that just get ‘disseminated’ through the artefact, or is it also ‘produced’ during processes of making *and* viewing? If the latter, attention needs to be given to sharing the *making*, and to the way that the artwork is *viewed* (Chapter Four addresses these questions). Bolt’s valuable insights focus on the ‘making’ process, but with little focus on the ‘social’ in terms of

¹⁵ This considers ways in which the ‘social’ *is* material and corporeal, rather than assuming that ‘human’ and ‘material’ bodies are separate from the social and cultural.

the conditions of creative work, the contexts and ways in which audiences make meaning from the work, and how this shapes the artist's process – 'thinking in context' (Sullivan, 2010: 137). In artist and scholar Graeme Sullivan's typology of ways in which painting can contribute to knowledge, he suggests that 'painting as idea' researches *with* painting, acknowledging "that artistic practice is not only a personal pursuit but also a public process that can change the way we understand ourselves in the world we inhabit" where the "purpose is to open up dialogue between the artist and the viewer" (2008: 245).

In summary, *painting* as inquiry often has little focus on the social conditions of artistic practice or audience experience. By attending to the 'social' immanent in studio practice, and to the ways in which I curate and facilitate engagement with artefacts for an audience, my research offers a sociological perspective to Bolt's theory of painting as research; one that accounts for decentred authorship in painting. Specifically, it asks:

- iv) What are the implications of decentred artistic authorship (Roberts, 2007) for practice-led research in painting?

To help me to focus on audience experience, I turned to a particular type of performance research which investigates audience engagement with scenography in immersive performances (McKinney, 2015; Shearing, 2014). In these types of performances, materials and objects are placed within a multi-sensory constructed environment, and audiences are guided through the space and invited to explore and intervene. Guidance mechanisms are subtle and simple, such as written labels. These researchers investigate questions of co-authorship and dialogue with audiences, an area that tends to be neglected in painting. This represented an opportunity to conduct an interdisciplinary exchange to consider how painting can learn from research into audience experience of immersive scenographic performance. Paying attention to the ways in which audiences can encounter and experience the artefacts is important because we need to understand creativity as a *social* process, as I will now explain.

1.5.4 Social creativity

Wilson (2010) has argued that we need to reclaim creativity as a potential force for transformation – for which he argues we need to understand creativity as a *social* phenomenon rather than the preserve of ‘artistic’ individuals. Wilson’s concept of ‘social creativity’ responds to our current climatic context of complexity and uncertainty in three ways: i) by challenging authority and authorship of knowledge; ii) by considering our relationship with different kinds of knowledge (including practice-based forms); and iii) by attending to how that knowledge is shared “to promote a culture of reflexivity and dialogue” (2010: 9). Arts sociologists Sutherland and Acord suggest that the future of public engagement with creative practice requires focusing on the viewer’s relationship with the work of art, understanding knowledge as situated in that relationship as an *action* (2007: 127). This suggests that a practice-led painting methodology needs to move beyond the artist’s studio into the environments in which the artwork is shared, paying attention to *how* it is experienced. It also requires attentiveness to how studio process (‘knowing’ produced by *making*) can be shared and how that might be experienced by an audience. For this, I used video recording and editing in a process of ‘digital reflection’ which I will now explain.

1.5.5 Digital reflection

Previous research (Kirk & Pitches, 2013) investigated the potential for digital technologies to enhance creative development processes. ‘Digital reflection’ refers to ways in which digital technologies can be used to capture and archive creative practice, and to facilitate creative forms of reflection on the digital artefacts produced. The term means more than just ‘looking again’ at recorded material, but also manipulating it using the skills and language of the creative practitioner. This employs techniques such as montage and juxtaposition to intuitively explore the material. In this process, it can be possible to find something ‘new’. In an ethnographic project, Ravetz described using video editing as a *research process*, in which she aimed “to be sensitive to the presence” of things “as they appeared in the material”;

and “to reorder this material in such a way that [she] might discover and communicate something [she] had not known before” (2002: 21). This can be understood as ‘digital reflection’, both ‘re-viewing’ and ‘creatively manipulating’ material intuitively to find new insights and learning.

The role of documentation in practice-led research is well discussed, usually focusing on artistic process (e.g. Fortnum & Smith, 2007; Lehmann, 2012; Nimkulrat, 2007) or providing a durable record of ephemeral performance research outcomes (Nelson, 2009). However, the ways in which digital documentation forms a reflective part of the artist-researcher’s process *and* an artistic outcome which can lead to new insights is not much discussed¹⁶. Through testing and evaluating the effectiveness of digital reflection as a method my research asks:

- v) What can digital reflection as a method contribute to practice-led research?

Having detailed the research context and questions, the aims and focus can now be summarised, as follows.

1.6 Aims and focus

My research aims to understand the labour of painting from inside the activities, rather than ‘inside’ the psyche; that is, without falling back on the ‘inside-out’ psychoanalytical model of artistic expression and authorship. It aims to problematise the individualistic model of artistic subjectivity from *within* practice, and to ‘rehearse’ an ecological alternative. The central focus is to understand what decentred authorship means for a *painter* engaged in a practice of painting as inquiry.

¹⁶ A search of three collections of writings on practice-led research (Sullivan, 2010; Biggs & Karlsson, 2010; Grey and Malins, 2004) found that ‘documentation’ was not included in the index.

The research aims can be summarised as follows:-

1. To develop a situated case study of painting as inquiry which offers an account of decentred artistic subjectivity, agency and authorship, and contributes towards understanding the conditions of 'post-aesthetic' creative labour;
2. To critique Roberts' view of a decentred authorship aligned with general social technique (2007), and its implications for practice-led research in painting;
3. To contribute an epistemological grounding for practice-led research in painting that accounts for social structures *and* artistic agency;
4. To contribute insights to practice-led research methods, in particular 'digital reflection' (Kirk & Pitches, 2013).

1.6.1 Scope of written component

Through practice, I have carried out *projects* of inquiry into subjectivity in the context of climate change, with the *meta-project* of reflecting *on* that practice to develop insights about the creative work of painting as inquiry. Thus there were two projects, looking *at* my practice and looking *through* my practice. The limits of a PhD research project in terms of time and word-count meant that I couldn't include both of these projects in the scope of the written thesis. The *core* focus for this written component is to develop an understanding of contemporary artistic labour through the body, material and social lenses of the 'ecological cognition' model. The practice of painting as inquiry that is being reflected upon explores cultural responses to climate change, insights from which are embedded *within the practice itself*, rather than being included in the written thesis. I have curated a set of suggested insights in Appendix A, and as I suggest in Chapter Six, further research could consider in more depth the 'meanings' made from the artwork.

The term 'creative' practice as used throughout this text refers to the labour involved in making original artworks – where 'labour' includes artist and audience, and 'artworks' include practice events as well as artefacts. Whilst this necessarily references 'creativity', itself a much-debated concept, my research does not specifically address these debates. Definitions of

'creativity' include both 'originality' and 'effectiveness' (which can take the form of 'value') (Runco & Garrett, 2012). Original artworks which look at the 'familiar' in new ways have the 'value' of stimulating dialogue, out of which new understanding might emerge through cultural disruption and estrangement. This strays into the 'cultural value' debate, and into the 'sociology of art' (e.g. Tanner, 2003), but this thesis does not directly address these debates. The main focus of this text is to develop a situated account of the creative work of painting as inquiry. Thus the prime methodology is practice-led, as I will now explain in more detail.

1.7 Philosophy and methodology

The methodological principles which underpin my research design can be summarised as:

- Practice-led
- Hermeneutic
- Attentive to social relations

1.7.1 Practice-led

Focusing on creative labour suggests a practice-led method, and therefore the *primary* method involves making artworks and events, reflecting-*through*-practice, and employing reflexive methods to reflect-*on*-practice. Rather than observing my practice as a 'found object', I reflexively develop a practice which I simultaneously record and theorise. In this way, theory and practice emerge together as *praxis*. I write in order to reflect, and through writing, the practice develops. Writing is *generative*, and has been described as 'discursive writing' (Murphy, 2012) and as a 'method of inquiry' (Richardson, 2000). Through scholarly writing I generate new questions and lenses to facilitate my ongoing sense-making of, and within, practice.

Through an inquiry process of making artwork, the *work* of art is investigated through different theoretical lenses of the ecological cognition model. The building of these lenses and the exploration of them through practice affect each other. Sense making emerges through a *hermeneutic* process.

1.7.2 Hermeneutic

My research takes a phenomenological perspective (Merleau-Ponty, 2012) to understand 'reality' as experienced by bodily senses, constantly emergent as organism and environment interact. This ongoing process can be 'revealed' through a *hermeneutic* approach. *Hermeneutics* is an interpretive methodological principle that requires the parts to be understood in relation to the whole through a *hermeneutic spiral* in which whole and parts are repeatedly revisited, with understanding added at each loop of the spiral. Trimmingham (2002) outlines a suggested hermeneutic methodology for practice as research in Theatre and Performance. Rigour, she suggests, may be provided by setting tasks guided by clear aims and objectives. The process of evaluating the work at each stage, and setting new tasks, aims or objectives maintains a sense of control over the research process. She advocates paying careful attention to the entry point to the spiral, as a basic hermeneutic principle is that of the question always determining the answer. She suggests initially asking a very open question, then progressively aiming to ask better questions as the research progresses. Following these principles, I started the practice with an open objective, and developed more focused questions throughout each phase. Trimmingham takes this method of open questioning from a phenomenological approach which is aware of the "accretions of culture, habit, prejudice" (2002: 57) and aims to strip away preconceptions whilst simultaneously being aware that this is not always possible. Here I run slightly counter to Trimmingham's methodology, as rather than attempting to strip away the 'cultural'¹⁷, my research adopts a 'cultural phenomenology' which is "concerned with synthesising the immediacy of embodied experience with the multiplicity of cultural meaning in which we are always and inevitably immersed" (Csordas, 1999: 143). This is explained in Chapter Two, but in principle requires attentiveness to social relations.

¹⁷ This refers to phenomenological 'bracketing', an approach which I have not detailed fully here.

1.7.3 Attentive to social relations – (critical) autoethnography

This phenomenological approach is combined with the critical realist view that human experience is always embedded in *social relations* that humans both re-produce and are produced by (Bhaskar, 1989; 1998). I follow Turner's (1994) suggestion that social structures are *embodied* in habits and behaviours or material artefacts¹⁸. An autoethnographic approach has been used to develop a first-person study of a culture of practice – although with some caution. Autoethnography is defined by Ellis and Bochner as “an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (2000: 739). However, de Freitas and Paton (2008) deconstruct the notion of ‘self’ as it is used in autoethnographic texts, questioning whether readers believe that they are reading ‘realist’ tales about the self. They explore the tacit notions of the self that appear within these texts, noting a tension between the espoused understandings of a posthuman ‘fragmented’ self, and the humanist ‘authentic’ self that often seems to appear. Guarding against this, I have critically reflected upon my own first-person account, which I term ‘critical’ autoethnography (described in detail in Chapter Four). This brings me onto considerations of subjectivity – where I am as a researcher in this.

1.7.4 Researcher subjectivity

This written thesis reflects on practice to address the research questions. This has been achieved through an aware development of my emerging creative practice which has simultaneously been informed by theory. The researcher adopts a dual role – artist (project), and theorist (meta-project). As both voices author this report, some further explanation might help you to understand the philosophical reasons for this. Taking an ‘ecological’ approach to cognition assumes a view of knowledge as emergent in our interactions with the world. ‘Labour’ is the point at which the body interacts with the material and the social (Figure 1.2). Hence the primary method is practice-led through ‘labouring’. The key orchestrating agent of this report is

¹⁸ See Chapter Four.

the *artist*, whose role is to understand the world through experiencing it and articulating an account of that experience. To facilitate this, links to short video clips in the text provide a trace of artistic practice at critical points, and these need to be viewed as they are encountered within the text to give you a full understanding of *praxis*. The *theorist* aims to provide a more ‘distanced’ level of interpretation, through employing theoretical frameworks and retaining a conscious focus on the lenses of the model. This brings me onto the place of the practice in the format of the submission.

1.7.5 Philosophical rationale for the format of submission

The contributions from my research concern the nature of artistic labour in a post-aesthetic view, and particularly the labour of painting as inquiry. This needs to be experienced by *doing* this work. Philosopher Mark Johnson, who writes on embodied cognition and aesthetics, suggests that the ‘work’ involves researching *through* art to enhance knowing through a *process* of inquiry rather than creating a *body* of knowledge (Johnson, 2010).

Johnson draws upon Dewey’s view that we develop ‘patterns’ of behaviour from past experience and inherited through culture. In problematic situations (such as climate change) we may need to change these patterns, and inquiring into them provides an opportunity to transform experience (ibid: 147). My inquiry into climate change responsibility is experienced as a process over time, in which knowledge is emergent. Artefacts, rather than being bodies of knowledge, exist “as enacted in and through us” (Johnson, 2010: 150). This *enactment* of knowledge involves the presence of an audience. Their experience of ‘making sense’ of the work *is* the work, and this cannot be wholly transcribed (although it can be reflected upon). The practice documentation provides a trace of this experience, but cannot substitute for it.

The practice events ‘present’ findings in the form of an experiential inquiry – the curation, facilitation, and design of which have been informed by insights from the practical and theoretical research. They are complementary to the written submission. ‘Exegesis’ as a process of ‘knowing with’ the artwork occurs in the *event*, which therefore forms part of the final submission. The

artist Graeme Sullivan outlines the history of the term 'exegesis' which was originally used to refer to the hermeneutic tradition of interpreting religious texts (2010: 120). Today, 'hermeneutics' is used to describe meaning-making more broadly, and the term 'exegesis' is sometimes used for practice-led PhD research to refer to a written component. This is often understood as 'contextualising' the arts practice, but has also been described as a *method* of developing ideas (ibid: 221) or "a mode of revealing" (Bolt, 2010: 34). For Bolt, the job of the exegesis is to articulate what has emerged through practice (ibid: 34). In my research, knowledge emerges in the process of audience participation, exegesis as 'event' rather than articulation in a written form¹⁹.

But this understanding of the *audience's* work came in the last two events. Going back to the beginning of my research, I started by paying attention to the *artist's* 'making' as a process of thinking through the 'body'. The next chapter discusses 'embodied cognition' and the insights gained.

¹⁹ In Chapters Four and Five I investigate how an audience holds *shared* responsibility for exegesis.

Chapter 2 The Gesture of Thinking: Embodied Cognition

The aim of this chapter is to begin to develop an account of artistic labour as ecological cognition through reflection on the first phase of practice, starting with a focus on the lens of 'body' and particularly the intersection with 'material' ('handling') (Figure 2.1). It develops a post-Cartesian understanding of ways in which 'thinking' is extended into and beyond the body.

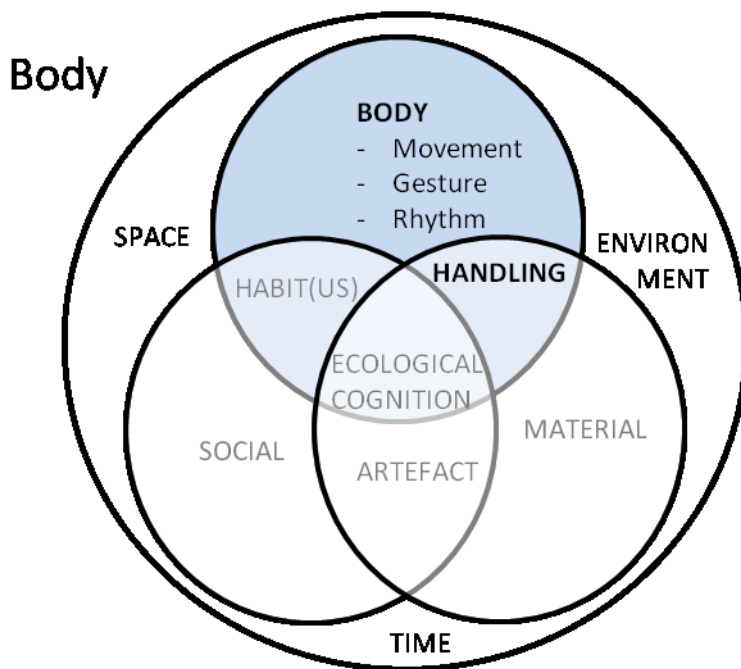


Figure 2.1 Artistic labour as ecological cognition – 'Body'

This chapter explores the following research sub-question from the perspective of *bodies*:-

- i) How do bodies and materials interact in creative practice?

The methods and sources used to consider this are:-

- studio practice (journal and digital reflections)
- design of, and reflection on, event one (artwork, documentation, audience postcards, observations)
- reflective mechanisms (literature review, scholarly writing, digital reflection)

After introducing the first practice phase, the chapter outlines perspectives on ways that 'the body' can be 'known' as *both* nature *and* culture (Weiss, 1999). It suggests how the perspective of ecological cognition can transcend this nature / culture dualism (Gibson, 1986; Ingold, 2000). It then takes this perspective to reflect on the first phase of practice. It proposes that *making* is a process of 'embodied cognition' in which the materials and emerging artefacts form part of an extended cognitive apparatus (Clark, 2011). It further explains 'digital reflection' (Kirk & Pitches, 2013) and shows how using an audio recorder as an 'extended cognitive apparatus' created a trace of *affect* (McIlwain, 2006). It further explains and critiques Roberts' (2007) theory of post-Cartesian artistic labour including his detailed consideration of 'handling', and considers what might be learned by considering *painting* through his lens of 'decentred' artistic subjectivity. It looks at the painterly gesture as thinking, rather than as the expression of an 'internal thought', and raises questions about the role of rhythm and movement in making-as-thinking. It proposes that movements leave a physical trace on the artefact; tactile properties that can be perceived by the viewer-body. It reflects on insights from the first practice event (see below) and raises questions for the second phase of practice.

First, let me introduce the first phase of practice which forms the basis for the theoretical reflections which follow.

2.1 Practice phase one



Figure 2.2 Warehouse, 2012, Oil and collage on paper, 21.5 x 15 cm

During the first months, my studio practice involved *feeling* for the concerns I wanted to explore through painting, experimenting in the studio with ideas and materials, and simultaneously working out how to record the process and make sense of it. Following Trimmingham's (2002) hermeneutic principle of initially asking a very open question, I started with a simple objective: *To explore my concerns about climate change through making images*. I started to work with found images of climate change affected landscapes, combining these with family snapshots of my childhood. My research objective was to explore ideas of embodied cognition through practice and reading, recording reflections through writing and audio recording. In an attempt to 'study' embodied practice, I video recorded my movements, and reviewed the digital artefacts by editing videos through 'digital reflection'. This involved capturing digital records of studio practice and spoken reflection. These were then reviewed and edited in a process of deepening creative reflection (Kirk & Pitches, 2013). Digital devices create a record of a body acting in its environment, and these records provide both a

trace of practice, and a distancing mechanism. The creative process of digital editing enables a 'felt sense' of process. The digital records are montaged in a process of layering of reflections allowing insights to emerge through playful juxtaposition (Nelson, 2006: 109). This alternative aesthetic means of analysis uses the language of vision, sound and movement.

The Gesture of Thinking was the first event, held on 9th May 2013 in Alec Clegg studio, stage@leeds at the University of Leeds. It aimed to show creative practice as a corporeal activity, foregrounding body, movement, and materials. I aimed to create for the participant an embodied, 'felt' sense of the work through: (i) inclusion of materials and objects from the studio; (ii) edited video footage; and (iii) an invitation to 'touch' the artworks, objects and materials – first when I greeted visitors, and secondly by labels on the work. I invited visitors to record their responses on a postcard using either words or images. Reflection prompts on the card read: i) I'm noticing... ii) I'm feeling ... iii) I'm wondering The drop-in event had around 25 visitors, and 19 returned postcards. The event is documented here: [The Gesture of Thinking](#). You may find it helpful to watch this video before reading on.

The next section reflects upon this first phase of practice through the lens of 'body'.

2.2 'Embodiment'

The body could be described as a tangible fleshy 'object' – a physical entity. However, it seems the question is whether it can be studied as such. How do we come to *know* about this body (as distinct from biological knowledge of cellular structures)? Philosopher Gail Weiss challenges the idea that 'the body' or 'body image' can be a discrete phenomena of investigation, quoting Merleau Ponty's view that the body is "never isolated in its activity but always already engaged with the world" (1999: 1). She also challenges the use of the definite article – '*the* body' – which she suggests assumes a neutral body "unaffected by the gender, race, age, and changing abilities" (ibid.). For Weiss, body images are not discrete, cohesive or coherent, but are formed of overlapping identities. There is also a question as to whether

we can 'watch' our body or whether, as philosopher Drew Leder (1990) suggests, it resists observation remaining largely invisible. It seems *conscious* study of the body may be problematic. What about the *unconscious* functioning of our body? Weiss notes that a number of researchers distinguish between conscious awareness of one's body, and a "prereflective awareness of how one's body occupies space" (1999: 2). According to this view, 'body image' comes from *conscious* reflection, whereas 'body schema' (or corporeal schema) refers to the *unconscious* dynamic organisation of bodily capabilities. According to Weiss, Merleau Ponty, whilst not making this distinction explicit, suggests that "consciously focusing on one's body already presupposes a more primary, prereflective way of experiencing the body" (ibid: 2).

Foucault (according to Weiss) challenges this notion of unmediated 'prereflective' relationship to our body, arguing that body images are socially constructed by disciplinary practices. Relations between self and body are not 'private' but are embedded in power relationships. Hoy (1999) further explains that Foucault and Bourdieu suggested that subjectivity is socially and culturally constructed *unconsciously* – and therefore invisible to (ahistorical) phenomenological introspection. Bourdieu saw bodily comportment as formed by social structures (*habitus*) and bodily orientation (*hexis*) which were acquired through culture or class (ibid.). As such, Bourdieu and Foucault see 'body' as a culturally defined concept rather than a natural 'essence' – a view which Hoy sees as problematic in two ways. First, if the body is socially constructed rather than natural, how can its 'rightness' or 'wrongness' be critiqued? And secondly, if agents are powerless to change their comportment, how can bringing acculturated bodily constructions to light meet the 'emancipatory' claims of these writers? Weiss (1999) also cautions that placing too much emphasis on social construction of body image risks 'disembodiment', and argues that *both* discursive *and* physiological factors play a part in the ongoing construction of bodies.

The anthropologist Thomas Csordas (1999) deals with this 'split' between body-as-phenomenological and body-as-cultural by proposing a 'cultural phenomenology'. This proposes that studies of embodiment as an

“existential condition in which the body is the subjective source or intersubjective ground of experience” (ibid: 143) are not *about* the body, but are about culture as it is understood by a body-in-the-world. Thus a cultural phenomenology is “concerned with synthesising the immediacy of embodied experience with the multiplicity of cultural meaning in which we are always and inevitably immersed” (ibid: 143). Csordas also makes a methodological distinction between ‘body’ and ‘embodiment’ which he likens to Barthes’s ‘text’ (as object) and ‘textuality’ (as activity of discourse). He defines ‘body’ as biological, material entity and ‘embodiment’ as “an indeterminate methodological field defined by perceptual experience and by mode of presence and engagement in the world” (ibid: 145).

2.2.1 An ecological account of cognition

So it seems body can be understood as *both* nature *and* culture. But, as philosopher John Sanders (1999) points out, what do these *mean*, and where do you start? Sanders goes back to a principle of ‘first philosophy’. He argues for an *ecological* perspective of human beings functioning in an environment, understanding the world by interacting and evolving with it regardless of whether their ways of dealing with it are ‘natural’, cultural or social. One way in which he suggests we can do this is via the principle of *affordances*. This is a term developed by the American psychologist James Gibson to describe “opportunities for action in the environment of the organism ... [which are] ‘picked up’ by organisms as they negotiate the world” (Sanders, 1999: 129). According to Sanders’ account of Gibson, it is *affordances* (rather than objects or sense data) that are the basic objects of perception, and they are perceived *directly* as opportunities for action. We move to sit on a chair because it affords a horizontal surface at the right height relative to our knees, rather than because we first identify it as ‘chair’. Thus Gibson’s concept of *affordances* transcends the nature/culture dualism. Gibson (1986) suggests that our consciousness is the intentional *movement* towards affordances. Perceptual activity consists in the “intentional *movement* of the whole being [...] in its environment” (Ingold, 2000: 166). ‘Intentionality’ in Husserl’s phenomenological sense means that “consciousness is always the consciousness of something” (Sepp &

Embree, 2010: 151); it is a holistic *action*. Consciousness *is* the reaching-out-towards, rather than consciousness first, which then reaches out²⁰. This intentional movement *is* perception: “the body is given in movement, and that bodily movement carries its own immanent intentionality [...] it is because of this intentionality that the subject’s action is [...] a movement of perception” (Merleau-Ponty, cited in Ingold, 2000: 170). *Intentional movement* transcends mind/body dualism – we don’t ‘see’ a thing with our head/eyes, and then instruct our body to move towards it. Ingold’s ‘dwelling’ perspective (2000; 2011) transcends another dualism, which is the split between ‘things’ and their ecosphere. ‘Things’ interact with elements such as temperature or airflow, so our engagement with them is physical *and* cultural *and* mediated by the properties of things and surrounding elements.

Taking this perspective to look at the work of the artist, knowledge of the world comes from engagement *with* things (Ingold, 2011) and is *emergent* as the artist engages with their world of practice (material, social and environmental). By looking at Ingold’s conception of ‘skills’ as “the capabilities of action and perception of the whole organic being (indissolubly mind and body) situated in a richly structured environment” (Ingold, 2000: 5), the next section will examine the process of developing a ‘body’ of work by a whole body immersed in its environment.

2.3 Practice as ‘embodied cognition’

To make sense of my practice, I adopt a *cultural phenomenology* (Csordas, 1999) in which I pay attention to my subjective experience as a body-in-the-world, seeking to understand what this tells me about the cultural. I observe my body as ‘text’ through watching video to become aware of its movements ‘outside’ my subjective bodily in-the-moment experience. And I observe the ‘textuality’ of my embodied experience through written and spoken journal entries, trying to articulate *the feeling that I get*. In making sense of these observations, I adopt an ecological perspective to understand ways in which I negotiate the world of practice. In the following section, I review theoretical ideas alongside observations from journal reflections (indented in boxes)

²⁰ See, for example, Merleau Ponty’s discussion of motor intentionality (2012: 112-113).

and videos (hyperlinked). The video clips provide a trace of artistic practice at critical points, and need to be viewed as they are encountered within the text.

2.3.1 Extended cognition and tool use

In November 2012, whilst trying to 'get to know' one of my paintings, I used audio reflection to externalise my thoughts. (You can listen to these reflections in the video [Looking](#), which I will refer to throughout this chapter.) 'Externalise' suggests something 'inside' that I needed to get 'out', as if I wanted to 'capture' pre-existing thoughts with the voice recorder assisting my memory. But was it *just* assisting memory? Without it, would I have had the *same* thoughts? Did I put my 'mind' into it, or did it become *part* of my mind? Many writers have attempted to dissolve the Cartesian dualism of mind/body which assumes that 'thinking' is done in the head by the brain which the body is slave to. The philosopher Teed Rockwell (2005) employs a pragmatist inspired approach to develop a post-Cartesian theory of mind heavily influenced by Dewey. In this theory, 'mind' is "equally dependent on the interactions among a brain, a nervous system, a body, and a world" (ibid: xii). Through exploring neuroscience, Rockwell unpicks the assumptions of Cartesian dualism, finding for example that 'mind' is hormonal (located in the body) as well as neural. "Almost anything that takes place within the skin has some claim to being part of the embodiment of mind" (ibid: xv).

And it would appear that cognition doesn't end at the skin. Professor of Logic and Metaphysics Andy Clark (2011) tells us of the Nobel Prize winning physicist Richard Feynman, who said that his original notes and sketches were not a *record* of the work but *the work itself*. Clark suggests that the 'loop' into the external medium was integral to the intellectual activity, and that Feynman was actually *thinking* on the paper. "The loop through pen and paper is part of the physical machinery responsible for the shape of the flow of thoughts and ideas" (ibid: xxv) – and thus a functional part of an extended cognitive 'machine'. Clark argues for an extension of the 'machinery of mind' out into the world, where human sensing, learning, thought and feeling rely on our body-based interactions with the

extraorganismic environment. The reflective mechanisms that I use such as a written journal or audio recorder are part of an extended cognitive apparatus. By audio recording my 'wandering' around the painting, I'm extending my 'mind' using technology. The exploration of the painting did not involve words-forming-in-the-head that I then recorded via my voice onto the recorder. The looking/talking/recording happened simultaneously. 'Thinking' is realised in action as a *process* in which knowledge is emergent. The recording extends the effectiveness of cognitive performance, providing a trace of this emergent process. Listening *again* to the recording carries this process forward, providing a feedback loop to reflect upon and further 'process' my ramblings. There is additional information in the qualities of my voice which attracts my attention – changes in tone, speed and energy. Audio reflection employs different bodily gestures to writing (using voice/tongue/lips/ears) and culturally it uses different conventions (Mey, 2006). *Langue* in written form uses syntactic signs and textual framing, whereas *parole* in audio reflections employs the performative rhythms and pitches of voice – which may afford possibilities for “play, intuition, chance and imagination” (ibid: 206).

'Thinking', says Clark, often relies on 'environmental supports' such as the arrangement of Scrabble tiles to prompt word recall²¹. This is an example of what Clark and Chalmers describe as 'epistemic action', one which involves altering things 'in the world' to help with a cognitive activity such as recognition (Clark, 2011: 222). This contrasts with a 'pragmatic' action, in which things are altered for a practical purpose. The human organism and its external 'tools' create a 'coupled system' *without which cognitive performance would be reduced*. Hence this coupled process is cognitive, despite not being 'in the head'. Language itself (together with other symbol systems) is a 'tool' with which we think, an external structure with which our brain evolves in a coupled system (ibid: 225) – and this would include the visual language of art-making.

²¹ 'Scrabble' is a word game using tiles containing single letters which are arranged by players into words. Randomly organising your letter-tiles can prompt ideas for word formations.

It must be noted that the extended cognition thesis is not without its critics, who fear that the 'questionable' benefits of such a disruptive theory come at the unacceptable cost of losing the "standard object" of cognitive theorising, which is "the stable persisting individual" (Wilson & Clark, 2009: 71). However, this 'stable' individual is also under question, as we shall see.

In the process of *exploring my concerns about climate change through making images*, I started to use collage techniques. I created source images from which to paint by cutting out figures and placing them in landscapes. My consciousness *is* the reaching-out-towards those images, an intentional movement which *is* perception. This process of 'thinking' involves selecting and manipulating the printed and cut out images, extending my 'mind' using collage techniques. The collage materials are 'environmental supports' and playing with the pieces to see how they 'fit' together is an example of 'epistemic action'. The collage pieces become part of my cognitive apparatus. But what I'm looking for as I create these images is a *sensation*, a gut feeling that has no words. The painting is also an 'environmental support', a landscape which I wander around, recording my 'rambling' as I search for sensation. The digital technology of the voice recorder affords the opportunity to capture the emergent knowledge contained in the performative rhythms and pitches of voice. Through 'digital reflection' – using digital technologies to enhance reflection on creative processes (Kirk & Pitches, 2013) – I look-and-listen again whilst editing footage of the painting surface. Reflection is a 'felt' process, using an 'expressive' medium which can illuminate more 'explanatory' linguistic reflective modes (Reason & Hawkins, in Kirk & Pitches, 2013: 215). The resulting digital artefact can be reviewed to find new learning, such that knowledge is emergent in processes of framing and re-framing reflections (Moon, in Kirk & Pitches, 2013: 225). Watching and listening again to the video *Looking* creates *sensation* which knocks on the door of 'thought'. These sensations which are before words or understanding can be likened to 'affect'.

2.3.2 Affect

Psychologist Doris McIlwain provides working definitions of 'affect', 'emotion', and 'feeling' (whilst cautioning that there is no agreement within psychology on definitions). She suggests the following: i) 'affect' is best used "to denote *primary* affects, individuated at the level of the body"; ii) 'emotion' can refer to the modification of affect from "the coassembly (through experience) of affects with cognition" where the same basic 'affect' might co-assemble in multiple ways to produce different 'emotions'. And iii) 'feeling' can be taken to refer to phenomenological experience as in "the feeling of what happens" which cannot be totally explained by affective or emotional responses (McIlwain, 2006: 385). Philosopher Brian Massumi (2002) discusses *affect* in the context of understanding the impact of images (specifically film) on a viewer, which historically has employed structural terms (semiotic or narrative meaning). He suggests that what is often lost is what he calls the 'expression *event*'. By this, he means an *intensity* of experience in which "nothing is prefigured" (ibid: 27). He equates this intensity with *affect*, which he says has increasingly been used by arts disciplines as an alternative way of understanding image-based culture to the dominance of deconstructionist theories of signification. Massumi also suggests that emotion differs from affect, as an emotion "is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience" (2002: 28). Thus emotion is that in which affect is *qualified* by convention, consensus, narrative, and semiotic structures. Affect is *unqualified* – and for this reason there is no recognised language to use to critique it. However, affect *matters* because it has political potency. Bennett (2010) discusses the importance of *affect* and its micro-political and ethical power, arguing that "if a set of moral principles is actually to be lived out, the right mood or landscape of affect has to be in place" (2010: xii). She argues that 'things' have agency which can *affect* human bodies and therefore have political power (ibid: xii)²².

²² This will be discussed in Chapter Three.

I listen again to the video *Looking* to hear how the painting *affects* me in my spoken exploration. The first responses suggest material excitation on my body – ‘*thick* brushstrokes’ – the thick texture of the voice communicates a sense of response to the material. The material qualities *lead* me into the reflection. The voice then wavers and rambles as it quietly traverses the colours of the land and sky – and then lands with a pitch of certainty at the ‘solid’ building. A bored monotonous reading out of financial scraps of information follows; some quiet musing on the splash – and then a shift in tone on the discovery: “*Actually if it comes over it’s going to engulf that child.*” The voice lifts, has more energy. It strengthens as a narrative develops: “*actually the next thing that would happen is it would engulf her.*” The voice gains in power as it describes the girl being “*too big – towering.*” At the end there is a deepening of tone and a staccato certainty: “*big. oblivious. about. to go. under.*” I can hear traces of ‘affect’ in my voice, shifting from uncertain and exploratory, to an increase in energy and assertiveness as realisations start to ‘drop into place’. These are ‘primary’ affects which can be felt without being ‘translated’ into emotion or feeling. In terms of a response to climate change, the realisations of what that painting was ‘doing’ (for me at that time) become apparent towards the end of the video, and hearing the qualities of my voice and how it changes adds a dimension that would be missing in transcription. The audio reflection helped me to get to grips with how the painting *affected* me. By creating a trace of the embodied process of ‘rambling’, and letting my body listen to this ‘trace’ through paying attention to *affect*, I deepen my reflections.

2.3.3 The invisible body

Mind extends into my body, and through the cognitive apparatus of the audio recorder and the painting, it extends into the world. But it does take some coaxing. I find that my train of thought recedes, whistling into a tunnel as soon as I start recording. Leder describes this as ‘nullpoint’ – the part of the body that does the perceiving can’t perceive itself (1990: 13–14). The mind that is ‘mulling’ disappears when I focus on it. It seems that you can’t watch yourself think without externalising it. This is where Clark’s (2011) ‘loop’ into an external medium comes in handy. But this ‘invisibility’, Leder suggests,

even extends to tool use. Leder describes tools as “part of an equipmental structure that tends to withdraw from our explicit attention” (1990: 33). He illustrates this (referring to Polanyi and Merleau Ponty) with the example of the blind man’s stick which becomes an extension of touch, disappearing from awareness as a tool. But if mind extends into body and tools, why does Cartesian dualism retain such a strong hold? Leder suggests that *mind* remains uppermost, because *body* is effectively ‘invisible’ to us. We cannot see the part of our body that does the perceiving. In action, our attention is focussed outwards such that we are not aware of the body that acts (Leder, 1990: 18).

As I paint, I am both acting and perceiving and it is impossible to untangle the two. I am not conscious of my body’s movements. My whole body is involved in making a painting, but I can’t ‘watch’ how it is doing it. If I tried, I would lose the qualities of ‘flow’ or absorption. ‘Digital reflection’ methods do the ‘watching’, enabling my body to ‘disappear’, which Leder suggests is crucial for lived embodiment. Lack of perception of body regions is a necessary condition for their effective operation (1990: 111). So our everyday lives assume the Cartesian ‘I’. Roberts (2007) suggests that the workings of consciousness itself also disappear from view. From the perspective of neurology, he suggests consciousness has no ‘centre’ but is the dynamic outcome of a “vast distributive network” (2007: 112). We form our subjectivity out of a range of possibilities, ‘authoring’ human agency by electing the best ‘self’ for the task in hand. Roberts suggests that it seems essential to our effective cognitive functioning that our introspective activities do not reveal this, or our consciousness would be ‘swamped’. So much for the ‘stable persisting individual’.

If agency is distributed across a network that includes tools of extended cognition, what does this mean in terms of understanding artistic labour? Who is the ‘artist’ who labours to ‘know’ the world? Where does artistic subjectivity reside? Roberts (2007) considers these questions partly by examining the changing role of the ‘hand’ in artistic labour.

2.3.4 Handling

Roberts develops a post-Cartesian labour model of artistic subjectivity, defined as the use of tools, copying devices and so on. He explores the replacement of traditional artisanal technique with a reskilling of what he calls 'general social technique' (referring to technical tools and techniques of reproduction used in avant-garde arts practice). The 'sensuousness' of artistic labour, he says, is transformed into 'immaterial forms of labour' in which skills move from 'craft-based' to 'immaterial' skills (2007: 87–89). This "divergence between skill and expressive movement" (ibid: 89) represents for Roberts a new set of 'cognitive relations' between eye and hand. In this context, he suggests that the place of the artist's hand needs to be revisited, using the example of the Picasso/Braque papier collés which involved the hand in *placing*, *ordering* and *selecting* rather than the expressive manipulation of paint (ibid: 88). With the posthuman landscape of digitalisation, in which machines have signalled a move away from the handcraft of tool use – a "crisis of handcraft" (ibid: 98) – Roberts insists that there is still a place for the hand. With the advent of the readymade, he suggests the hand was released from "expressive mimeticism", instead finding "new forms of dexterity and facility through the manipulation and transformation of the sign-values of extant symbolic materials" (ibid: 98). This 'craft of reproducibility' involves skill in the precise control through the fingers of surrogate devices that control the manipulation of technology.

In my practice, I worked with readymade images, sourced digitally, then manually rearranged and replicated. Using video, I focused on these activities of selecting, cutting out, organising and placing (see the video [Explore through collage](#), which will also be referred to later). These activities involved a range of 'old' and 'new' tools – from computer mouse, to scissors and glue. Working with collage, I made simple juxtapositions. I cut out figures from childhood snapshots and placed these into landscapes. Instantly it *felt* right, a frisson of excitement, an *affect*. These sensations were felt in my *whole* body, thus involving more than just my hand. The

'cognitive relations' involved hand, eye and *whole body* in a movement that *is* perception.

During the first event, I cut out figures and placed them on a growing pile of collage pieces on the floor. I noticed that some audience members crouched down to see these better. Some of them moved the pieces around, placing figures into landscapes, creating new pictures. I hadn't anticipated this. The original intention was to share the materials and processes of making. This was a key insight in which I realised opportunities for audience participation, for carrying out the same skills of selection and placement, thinking *with* the pieces as environmental supports.

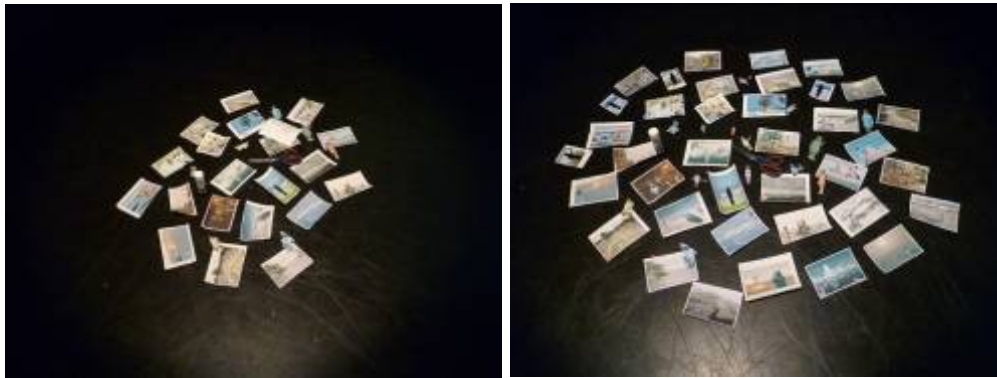


Figure 2.3 Collage pieces – before and after audience intervention

Roberts' model of 'decentred' artistic subjectivity is central for my research, providing an alternative to the 'inside-out' model of artistic authorship. However, as a painter, I feel that it does leave some gaps for understanding my practice. I *merge* the craft of reproducibility with traditional artisanal technique, moving from digital to paint and collage, and back into digital. Roberts focuses on the implications for artistic labour of modernist artisanal practices, considering how the role of the hand changes with mechanical technologies. His discussions of the post-readymade "crisis of craft" describe a 'split' from craft-based authorship to immaterial labour; from "expressive mimeticism" to "conceptual acuity as an expression of craft" (2007: 98). The point he is making is that this split *forced* a reconsideration of artistic labour, as art's value could no longer be located in the unique

expressive 'hand' of the individual artist. His consideration of the ways in which we understand artistic authorship and labour therefore shifts away from traditional artisanal practice. From my experience as an artist using both traditional and mechanical artisanal practices, I think that there is something to be gained from bringing back a focus on the direct gestural handling of materials whilst *also* understanding artistic subjectivity as 'decentred'. It must be noted that Roberts' theory was developed to understand a post ready-made world under Capitalism. It addresses the need to understand artistic labour through the employment of skills and techniques rather than "expressive and formal uniqueness" (ibid: 18). However, I propose that there is value in 'expressiveness' that extends *beyond* the monetary one defined by 'uniqueness', in that it is a physical trace of knowing and of being (I discuss this more fully in Chapter Five). 'Expressive' need not mean 'inside-out' expression but can refer to the traces of bodily movement – gesture *as* thinking; traces of an intentional movement *towards* in the sense of affordances. In the context of art's ability to help us find new ways of knowing and of *being*, this has value – but sadly this may not be understood as 'economic' value under Capitalism. So – can Roberts' model explain the contemporary artistic labour of painting (as an extended practice that includes digital and traditional artisanal technologies)? What might be learned from considering *painting* through the lens of decentred artistic subjectivity?

2.3.5 Post-Cartesian authorship for painting

Roberts does address the question of whether the craft of reproducibility can translate back into painting. He suggests that in Duchampian scholarship, painting craft "is remade as painting as *idea as craft*" (2007: 57). In the phrase 'idea as craft' the body (or bodies) in artistic authorship seem to be made subservient to the head. This echoes a common view of *making* as a project that progresses from idea, through to the making of the form, resulting in an artefact – an approach that Ingold (2013) describes as *hylomorphic* (from the Greek 'hyle' (matter) and morphe (form)). Instead, Ingold proposes that we view making as 'growth', where the maker 'joins forces' with the materials to see what might emerge from an intervention in

processes that are *already going on* – a process which he describes as *morphogenetic*, or “form generating” (ibid: 22). Roberts himself says that knowledge “is not a property of abstract mind, but of the mind-body through its motor-intentional and labouring modes” (2007: 196). From the perspective of ecological cognition ‘motor-intentionality’ is not hylomorphic – a brain forming an order that is dictated to the musculature – but occurs in spontaneous action in relation with things. Roberts, describing Benjamin’s skills-based analysis of art post-readymade, describes how the ‘new’ skills of replication, reanimation and montage redefined the relationship between hand and eye such that “(b)y *not* painting [...] the artist’s hand is able to act on *intellectual decisions* in a qualitatively different kind of way” (2007: 23–24)[my emphasis]. Roberts goes on to say “[t]he hand moves not in response to sensuous *representation* [...] but in response to the execution and elaboration of a *conceptual* schema ...” (ibid: 24) [my emphasis]. The ‘execution’ of a ‘conceptual schema’ again seems to evoke hylomorphism. A ‘conceptual schema’ suggests something ‘mental’ (a thought) or an ‘idea’ (abstract), located in the ‘head’. The skills of selection, arrangement, juxtaposition, and so on can be employed without a prior ‘conceptual schema’, by using intuition and play. However, we could also understand a ‘conceptual schema’ as morphogenetic by locating ‘thought’ in the processual relationships between the whole body and the objects that it is handling; as an ‘epistemic action’ where ‘mind’ is an extended cognitive machine. Roberts is certainly clear that the move to immaterial production (in the service of a conceptual and intellectual framework) has not moved artistic production to the ‘head’. “Machines mediate and transform artistic subjectivity” (2007: 104) – but it is the hand of the artist who determines the use-value of the technology. But, he says, the forced split between *traditional* handcraft and the craft of technical reproducibility brings into question where the artist’s voice speaks from. The artist can now speak with multiple voices or from a collective voice through collaboration (ibid: 116).

My intention has been to exploit this forced re-consideration of the location of the artist’s voice, whilst also healing the apparent ‘split’ between traditional and new artisanal technologies. Using the much older social technology of paint and brush, what happens when painters intervene in the

ongoing flow of digital images? Does a painter have to be understood only as 'expressing' an inner self, or can painting be another set of tools for the post-Cartesian artist? Roberts makes the point that the idea of authorship and subjectivity as 'embedded' in skills, competencies, and conditions of sociality can apply equally to painting techniques (ibid: 115), and that the materials of painting are essentially 'readymades' – they use manufactured canvases and paints which already have the labour of others incorporated in them (ibid: 52–53). His term 'circuits of authorship' refers to the way in which the artwork transfers from the artist's hands to 'non-artistic' hands; from an instruction to delegated manufacture. He develops this idea of authorship as a network-in-process (ibid: 177), a discussion in which he talks about the use of cultural images: "The recycling and appropriation of images and texts involves a continuous process of negotiation with the dominant culture" (ibid: 182). He suggests this re-contextualisation of images has a 'denaturalizing' function, as the post-Cartesian artist "re-narrates readymade elements" (ibid: 183).

This can be achieved in paint. Many contemporary painters work with photographic sources, re-narrating images from visual culture using a range of painting styles, 'expressive' or otherwise (e.g. Rugoff, 2007). Painters such as Gerhard Richter, Marlene Dumas, Luc Tuymans, and Michael Borremans all explore photographic sources. Richter's hyper-realist portraits, for example, deliberately use technical aids (projecting the image onto the canvas) to reject painterly 'expression'. Dumas and Tuymans exploit the 'accidental' properties of the painting medium to create dreamy (in a nightmarish sense) 'expressive' paintings which both affect the viewer and engage imagination. Their technique works *with* the medium, allowing it to smear, drip, and run away of its own accord. So – if painting is being combined with new technologies of reproduction, then we need to explain post-Cartesian artistic authorship for these painters (including myself).

Painters work with 'readymade elements' by re-making, 'materialising' and transforming images, rather than re-presenting found entities. They retain gestural mark-making as part of the process. Painting allows the body to intervene in its own language of intuition and imagination:

As I'm painting, I'm immersed in imagination [...] I'm imagining myself into the space of the image while my body and its tools and materials create a new image from that space.²³

Imagination as part of our phenomenological experience is commonly a language used by artists (particularly in surrealism). As the above journal extract demonstrates, imagination is 'caught up' and interwoven with the gestures of the making body (this is discussed in Chapter Three). By painting, rather than copying and re-presenting printer-ly images, I materially transform and distort them using whole body movements in interaction with the materials and properties of painting, as follows.

2.3.6 Gesture and movement

I spend ages looking at something I've made or painted, exploring its surface [...] just letting my gaze wander around it, resting at certain places. I like oil paint, the play of light on the brushstrokes, and the shadows cast by textures. I enjoy it like a mini-landscape. There is no conscious evaluation or planning going on – the best words to describe this type of 'looking' are wandering, gazing, grazing. Later, I will evaluate, but not yet...²⁴

My eyes and imagination explore the space, my gaze wandering the landscape of the surface, getting lost in the world it contains. Ingold asks whether we should understand a painting as an image to be interpreted, or as "a node in a matrix of trails to be followed by observant eyes" (2010: 16). Are paintings *of* things, or are they *like* things, such that we "find our ways through and among them, inhabiting them"? (ibid: 16). This describes my feelings as I paint, of inhabiting and exploring a world.

I enjoy painting it because I feel I am visiting a world, or creating a world [...]. I get lost in both images (the source and the painting)²⁵

²³ Journal 22/11/12 – journal extracts will be identified by indented boxes throughout this thesis.

²⁴ Journal 01/11/12

²⁵ Journal 22/11/12

As I'm immersed in making a painting, I become absorbed by the emerging image. I inhabit and dwell in it. My eyes wander around the painting and I start to feel as if I am *there*. All the time, my body is moving to form the image even as I am dwelling in it. There seems to be a link between rhythmic movement and gesture, materiality, and imagination. Seemingly incoherent threads of thought become woven; sensory activity creates sense. And in this concurrent weaving of materials and imagination, I work out what *matters*. Making paintings involves *movement*, gestural skill, and enhanced tactile and sensory awareness.

Philosopher and ex-dancer Maxine Sheets-Johnstone suggests that we 'think' in movement and that this kinetic way of being is "foundational to being a body" (2009: 39). This is something that is implicit, she suggests, in Merleau Ponty's account of Cezanne's description of "thinking in painting" as a process in which "vision becomes gesture" (ibid: 39). From this, Sheets-Johnstone suggests that he is describing perception as 'interlaced' with movement, rather than movement following perception. In *Eye and Mind*, Merleau Ponty says:

[...] we cannot imagine how a mind could paint. It is by lending his [sic] body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations we must go back to the working, actual body – not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement. (Merleau Ponty, 1964: 2)

Leder uses the concept of 'motility'²⁶ to break down distinctions between perception and movement, suggesting that "perception is itself a motor activity" (1990: 17). The perception of objects or spatial depth is only possible, he suggests, for a body that moves through space. In the example I gave earlier of participants in the first event crouching down to rearrange collage pieces on the floor, I had (unwittingly) created an opportunity for *body motility*, encouraging movement within the space; a movement that *is*

²⁶ Derived from 'motile': "a person whose mental imagery strongly reflects movement, especially his or her own" (Collins English Dictionary, 2018).

perception. The action of crouching down involved their *whole* body and a shift in perspective. This insight, however, only crystallised during the third phase of practice, in which I became consciously aware of the role of audience body motility in perception, as will be explained in Chapter Five.

I used video editing to explore my movements by choreographing footage, picking out gestural phrases, and noticing pace and rhythm (see the video [Wordless fragments](#)). I notice that besides the 'practical' movements required to hold a brush and make marks, there are also 'thinking' movements that occur in the pauses between brushstrokes. They might be an example of what Clark describes as 'material carriers', a concept which suggests that bodily gesture is an actual dimension of thinking and not just an expression of an inner thought (2011: 126–127). Gesture is *making* meaning rather than conveying it. The gestures that become apparent in the edited video may be a part of the cognitive process of developing the work. (In Chapter Five, I revisit this idea in relation to the *audience's* gestures). This makes me wonder about the role of bodily rhythm in 'thinking'. If thinking happens in movement, does rhythm enhance it in some way? Do repeated, 'ritual' rhythmic movements help access a 'limen' or threshold state where 'newness' is possible? I address this question in Chapter Three.

The materiality of the frayed edges, working the primer into them, I was making angrier movements feeling the frustration.²⁷

The rhythmic gestural engagement with tools and materials leaves a physical trace in the 'painterly gesture'. The physical trace of this corporeal-material-affective transformation (or production) has tactile properties that can be directly perceived by the body of the 'viewer'. The painting is not a representation *of* the world, it is a thing *in* this world that is perceived through movement, light and haptic response. The materials carry a history of movement which can be traced; their transformation can be seen both in the layers of the painting, and in the layers of the video.

²⁷ Journal 22/11/12

What am I looking for in the video? I find that what it does is bring back memories of the studio. The sensory experience – soft silence, smells of oil paint and paper, the feel of the materials.²⁸

The *sensory* experiences of studio making are significant. Whilst the digital and material are just different tools for art making, for *my* practice, painting is central and the ‘digital’ aims to recreate a connection to the studio; to recreate *the feeling that I get*. The sensuality of the tools and materials play a part in their effectiveness as ‘extensions’ of cognitive processing. Painting involves gesture, feeling and sensing of materials. To understand how the *whole* body thinks through making I needed to look at how the rhythmic engagement of gesture corresponds with materials. This will be the focus for the next chapter. Meanwhile, the next section considers what I learned from the first event by looking at it through the lens of ‘body’ and ‘handling’.

2.4 The Gesture of Thinking

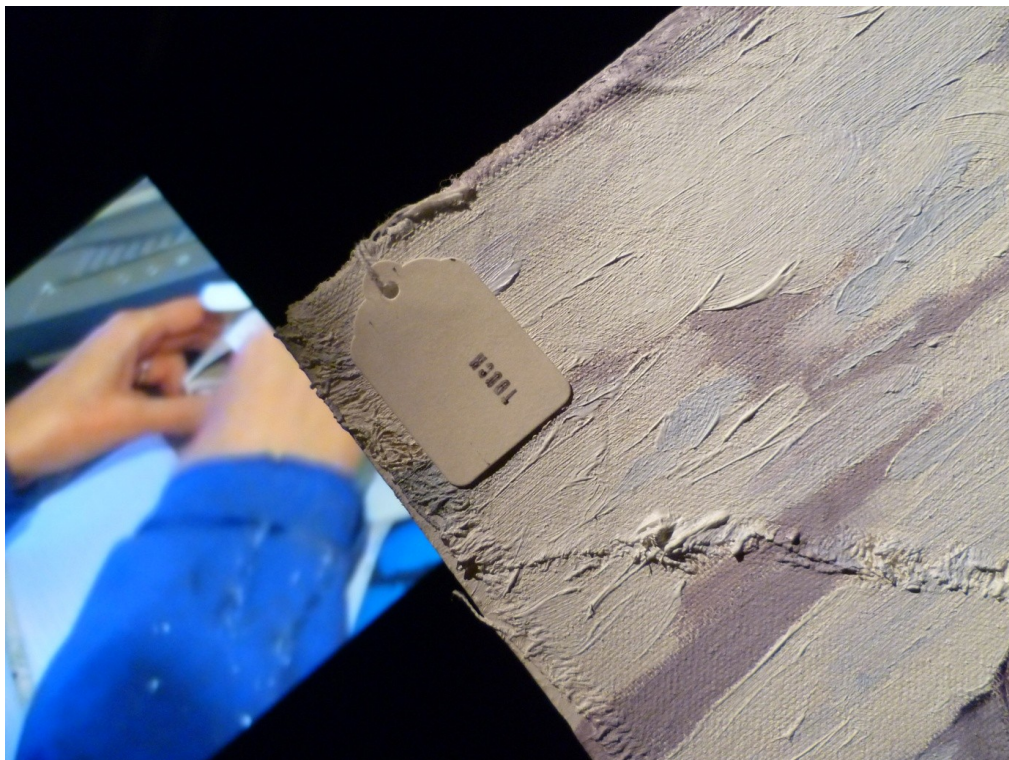


Figure 2.4 Still from *The Gesture of Thinking*

²⁸ Journal 23/01/13

The first phase of practice had the simple objective: *To explore my concerns about climate change through making images*. Insights started to emerge from processes of digital reflection, such as the audio-reflection video *Looking* in which a child, too large for her environment, is oblivious to the wave about to swamp her. By watching the video *Explore through Collage*, I started to realize that there were potential meanings in ‘seeing things done’ which had resonance:

I also thought, as I was reviewing my digital files, about ‘cutting myself out’ of a photo, detaching myself from my environment...²⁹

I realized that there may be significance for a viewer in seeing the *actions* of cutting out the figure, marking its boundary and removing it from its environment. This led me to think about focusing the camera on the work being made as a meaningful act. *The Gesture of Thinking* was reflective and documentary, revealing *my* artistic subjectivity through sharing these experiments with *how* to document embodied processes. By reflecting on the event I realised that the audience postcards were a tool of extended cognition – and a part of the experience of the artwork itself. One of the postcards echoed my words at the end of the *Looking* video: “*Big. Oblivious. About to go under.*” Another viewer seemed to be stimulated to make her own work: “*cut. paste. make. draw. paint. For myself.*” I started to become aware of the *audience’s* role in making the artwork, not just as ‘feedback’ but as actors in the event. I began to think of the event as ‘immersive’, partly because of the role of sound in the space, and partly because of the absorption of the audience in postcard and collage activity. ‘Immersive performance’ combines “the act of immersion – being submerged in an alternative medium where all the senses are engaged and manipulated – with a deep involvement in the activity within that medium” (Machon, 2013: 21–22).

²⁹ Journal 20/09/12

I was interested to further explore how a viewer's experience might be enhanced if they were invited to touch the work and explore it with their fingertips in the same way that I do. If the hand plays a role in thinking, should a viewer be able to *touch* the artwork? What might 'touch' add to the experience of 'painting' for an audience? "Touching is *the body asking questions* and finding answers [...] The participation of the body in exploring art *expands the possible sources of meaning*" (Driscoll, 2013: 111) [my emphasis]. From the postcards, there was a range of responses to the invitation to 'touch'. One said "*I like the encouragement to touch the work.*" Another was "*Immersed in texture.*" But quite a few felt that they couldn't touch. For example: "*Can't touch for some reason – it's simply not right to do so.*" This surprised me. I had given spoken permission, and I had labels inviting participants to touch. What this brought to the fore was a *social* convention of habits and codes of viewing practice, a history of the prohibition of touch in museums and galleries (Candlin, 2004). I wondered what would happen if I drew attention to, and invited the breakage of, these 'rules'. Another 'code' of viewing practice that I observed was the participants' silence. This created a quiet contemplative space – however, it meant that opportunity for *shared* meaning-making was lost. Immersive performances such as those of Punchdrunk often have a separate space for post-show meaning making, and I started to consider how I could create such opportunities. I also considered feedback mechanisms, learning from research into audience experience of immersive scenographic performance (Shearing, 2014). The main formal feedback mechanism that I had used was postcards. There was a second, informal, feedback mechanism in that I was present in the room, and a couple of people talked to me. The third form was observation – through watching participants I observed their reluctance to touch, and also their play with collage pieces.

From these observations, I developed three aims for the second phase of practice:

- i) To test how videos and paintings work together as artworks. If knowledge emerges in the *process* of making, is it the painting (as a noun) that is performative as suggested by Bolt (2004), or is it *painting* as a verb? If so, does that *process* need to be shared? I

aimed to explore how seeing an edited process of *making* affects the meanings that are made from the artwork. Does seeing video of the painting develop enhance or stimulate a sense of 'inhabiting' paintings for a *viewer*?

- ii) To test ideas around 'touch' as participation or immersion. I aimed to explore what 'touch' (or the conscious realisation of a barrier to touch) would contribute to the experience of the artwork.
- iii) To test practical ideas for facilitating and capturing audience meaning-making. Through paying attention to place, sound, and dramaturgy, I aimed to re-present 'painting'; to find ways to present process, materials and artefacts as part of an event in which the viewer's meaning-making is part of the art *work*. Through making their own artefacts and discussing their observations, feelings and thoughts, my hope was that the audience become aware of *their* part in the ongoing 'making' of the art work.

These aims can be summarised in the following questions:

- What meanings does a viewer make from seeing the work made?
- In what ways can viewers' awareness of their participation in the *work* of art be facilitated?

These questions were taken forward into phase two of practice, and are addressed in Chapter Four.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the sub-question: i) How do bodies and materials interact in creative practice? Focusing on the lens of 'body' and 'handling' (Figure 2.1) it reflected on the first phase of practice. It showed how knowledge can be understood as emergent in our interactions *with* things, and perception can be understood as intentional movement towards affordances. Developing a post-Cartesian understanding of ways in which 'thinking' extends into and beyond the body, it showed that making paintings is a process of 'embodied cognition', in which the materials and emerging artefacts form part of an extended cognitive apparatus. It demonstrated how

tools of digital reflection can act as external supports to embodied cognition. It introduced Roberts' (2007) theory of post-Cartesian artistic labour, and considered what might be learned from considering *painting* through the lens of decentred artistic subjectivity. It looked at gesture as thinking, rather than as the expression of an 'internal thought', and proposed that the 'painterly gesture' has value, not in terms of the unique 'hand' of the artist, but as a trace of knowing and being, with tactile properties that can be physically apprehended. It raised the question of the role of bodily rhythm and movement in making-as-thinking. If thinking happens in movement, does *rhythm* enhance it in some way? Do rhythmic movements help access a 'limen' or threshold state where 'newness' is possible?

It considered what was learned from the first practice event. Key insights included: (i) the realisation of opportunities for audience participation in 'making as thinking', using collage pieces as environmental supports; (ii) recognising the potential meaningfulness of recorded studio work and its significance for a viewer; (iii) recognising that the audience postcards were tools of extended cognition and part of the artwork itself; and (iv) becoming aware of the *audiences'* role in making the artwork. These insights were taken into the second event (see Chapter Four).

The next chapter addresses the above question of 'rhythm', exploring the interaction of the *whole* body with the 'material', including the role of movement, gesture, and materiality in imaginative process.

The primary methods and sources used are:-

- exegesis
- studio making (evidenced by written and digital reflection, and artefacts)

One of the ways in which I investigated how bodies and materials interact was to consider how the emerging artefact facilitates the artist's cognitive processes of sense-making. The first section looks at the 'artefact', and how the artist developed meaning from an artwork before it was shared with an audience. This is not to infer authorial intention in terms of communicating those meanings to an audience. Rather, the purpose is to exemplify how the process of exegesis (Bolt, 2010) carries the work forward. Through an exegetical exercise I explore how the emerging artefact operates as a mediator of meaning as I make the work. Reflections on meaning emerge during the 'making' process as well as from 'looking' at finished artefacts, and the exegesis considers both by reflecting on an edited video of studio practice. The use of political theory connects the personal to the social, and exemplifies how the 'social' is embedded in the 'material' development of the 'artefact'.

The second section looks at studio processes to consider the artistic labour involved in *making* the 'artefact'. It reviews concepts of 'material' and 'materiality' (Hong, 2003), before reflecting on studio journal extracts using ideas from anthropology (Ingold, 2013), ecological cognition (Gibson, 1986), and material thinking (Carter, 2004; Bolt, 2004) to examine ways in which bodies and materials interact in creative practice. It examines the role of rhythm and gesture in stimulating a state of absorption, using ideas from dance theory (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009) and anthropology (Ingold, 2013; Ravetz, 2016). It recognises that the 'social' is always present in interactions between bodies and materials (Latour, 2005; Bennett, 2010) and proposes that 'material thinking' could be expanded to include *sociality*.

3.1 Section One – *artefacts* and exegesis

This section reflects on selected artefacts created through painting as inquiry to exemplify the cognitive meaning-making processes involved in the development of a body of work. Insights are tentatively suggested from the artworks below, rather than trying to authoritatively ‘narrate’ the work. According to Bolt, the job of the exegesis is to explore and articulate what has emerged “through the process of handling materials and ideas” (2010: 34). The section also refers to the [Keep Off](#) video and you might find it useful to watch this before reading on.



Figure 3.2 *Keep Off*, 2013, acrylic and collage on board, 40 x 34 cm

3.1.1 Background and introduction to the work

I started this second phase of studio practice with a general inquiry, with little idea of how (or whether) I might answer it: *Is it possible through painting and video to explore and fragment agential and social boundaries of ‘self’?*

My starting point for this painting was a photograph taken after the USA hurricane 'Sandy' in the summer of 2012. I have combined this image with a childhood snapshot of myself. The painting panel is covered with fragments of a torn map which I found in a charity shop, and which had several biro annotations suggestive of orienteering. A second (separate) map of Aldershot is used in the video. The video was an attempt to share studio making processes with a viewer. Unsure whether the 'emergent knowledge' from studio making is apparent purely in the resulting artefact as Bolt has suggested, or whether there may be benefits in sharing the 'process', I started to consider what might happen if I shared studio process using video. Artist and academic Michael Jarvis argues that an effective articulation of the tacit (or unseen) dimensions of creative practice can facilitate a closer relationship between artist, artwork, and viewer – developing a "more informed viewer" (2007: 212), and activating dialogue between the artwork and the viewer. I edited studio footage, selecting material that recreated *the feeling that I get* as I'm making a painting (footage which triggered embodied memory), and moments of action that *felt* significant (as I was watching the footage), using 'digital reflection' (Kirk & Pitches, 2013).

In my journal, I mused on what the painting and the video *might* suggest in response to the above question, from which I will share extracts. The journal reflections were written just after I had edited the video, on the 9th August 2013, *before* the public event in December 2013. I watched the video, pausing to make notes of observations and interpretations. I then wrote down thoughts and observations from the painting as if I were looking at it as a stranger. Some of the reflections were audio or video recorded in the studio whilst making the work, and these have been hyperlinked in the text. The journal extracts indicate meanings that occurred to me *at that time*. Interpretations are never definitive, and can change. Viewers may see different meanings, associations or interpretations (Chapters Four and Five will look at how I have facilitated *audience* meaning-making).

3.1.2 Exegesis

Watching the video, themes of land ownership and the military felt significant, and I connected this to the early memory of my parents' role in the British Royal Air Force. In terms of the *fragment agential and social boundaries of 'self'* question which framed my artistic inquiry, this raised (for me) questions of tribalism (the collective) and the need to protect territory (boundaries). The 'social' or collective identity marked by 'land' is just as 'bounded' as the individual 'self'. Fragmentation of these marked boundaries is represented by the torn 'islands', which tangibly re-form ...

Tearing and making islands out of maps. The map becomes land mass, as viewed on an atlas, or from space, a change in perspective, a fragmentation and expansion at the same time. The map that was a detailed marking out and labelling of territory becomes an object like an island, a physical thing with edges and mass.³⁰

... and become connected

Connecting up the islands by tracing lines between the roads.
Making new roads.³¹

The geopolitics of self, family, and community are associated with *land*, protection of 'home' and rights to the resources of the land. The footage of the grass in a summer garden connects this marked-out territory (map) with footage of 'home' and of *my* patch of land and nature (the grass blowing in the wind), and my appropriation of it (the hand picking the grass).

Warmth and natural footage of grass in sunshine, gentle breeze. Hand strokes, and then plucks the grass. Cuts to gluing it onto painting, colours are cold. Adding something 'real' from nature, but stilling it, killing it, controlling it. Gluing it, like the figure, to another remote landscape. Displacing it.³²

³⁰ Journal 09/08/13

³¹ Journal 09/08/13

³² Journal 09/08/13

The politics of climate change are beset by power inequalities around ownership of, and rights to, resources. The repetition of the figures in the video felt significant. The same children kept appearing. The process of painting five girls in blue jumpers in a row, performed hurriedly by a hungry body, evokes a factory process, with lack of care or precision so that each figure differs. The politics of climate change are further complicated by a growing population (the repeated figure) which needs more resources, and by overconsumption from a media-manufactured consumerism which has become careless of resources, both human and non-human.



Figure 3.3 Painting of the five figures

The hand cuts out a figure, distances it from its environment, sticks it onto another. The digital reflection video [Talking about edges of figure on 'Keep Off'](#) shows how I started to make meaning from this process by thinking out loud *with* my painting.

She is glued into place. The glue is very physical. The process is highlighted by the uncanniness of seeing it from two viewpoints. Sometimes the timing matches perfectly; other times not quite. There

is slippage. The slippage is made more apparent by the moments that seem synchronised.³³

Evoking the ease with which we travel, the boundary of the figure is located, cut, detached, plucked out into the air, and dropped into another environment. This has social, political and environmental consequences. We expand our boundaries, we can travel and 'fit in' anywhere. Just glue ourselves down. This may not be easy if we have been displaced *because* of climate change.

The child – the original cut boundary is visible, she has been 'shrunk' but her original impact is visible, she is stuck on, her mass/materiality is visible.

The glue is running out.³⁴



Figure 3.4 Detail from *Keep Off*

This piece evokes issues around 'land' and the ongoing processes of owning it, marking it, remaking it, obliterating the marks, exploring it, claiming it, defending it. The child turns her back on the signs that say 'Keep Off'. 'Self' is defined by 'homeland' or by power over land, ability to travel and claim

³³ Journal 09/08/13

³⁴ Journal 09/08/13

land. 'Self' is indistinct from 'land', and is interdependent with 'place' which is our labelling and claiming of territory.

The above observations and personal connections can be further explored through theoretical research connecting the personal with the 'social'. Becoming posthuman involves redefining our attachment to our 'shared world', our sense of territory and belonging (Braidotti, 2013: 193). A sense of connection between identity and land is critical in understanding the politics of climate change even at a local level. So-called NIMBY ('not in my back yard') behaviour can be linked to 'place attachment' (Devine-Wright, 2009), an emotional connection with place which affects our sense of identity. The material connection to our natural environment indicated by the grass, and the sense of displacement that comes from taking it out of its context, could be related to our 'compulsion' to draw out the resources of the world into 'standing reserve' (Heidegger, 1977). Maps and boundaries can be explored further – for example, Ingold talks of the drawn outline as a "cultural construct: the visible expression of a process by which the mind [...] more or less arbitrarily divides the continuum of nature into discrete objects that can be identified and named" (2013: 134–135). The painter Christian Mieves explores the beach as an ambiguous 'boundary zone' (2008). Looking at landscape and agency, Olwig understands the representation of landscape as a political act, from the definition 'lLand' "something to which a people *belong*" and -scape (-ship) from Germanic 'shape' "the abstract 'nature', 'state' or 'constitution' of something" (2005: 20). So landscape could be understood as the abstract constitution of something to which a people belong. Olwig suggests that creating a representation of this 'abstract nature, state or constitution' makes it a 'concrete' object enabling it to be grasped and shaped as a social and material phenomenon, enabling ownership of rights and therefore loss of rights and alienation.

The scope of this thesis precludes going further into theoretically informed exegesis. However, the above paragraph illustrates how following up with theoretical research can feed the next phase of practice, to continue making sense of these ideas *alongside and with* artistic practice. This process of *critical reflection* on artefacts made through *material handling* deepens my

inquiry. It carries the body of work *forward* as it draws together strands from artefact, political theory, and autobiography.

3.2 Section Two – Art ‘work’ processes

The next section considers the artistic labour involved in *making* the painting. It looks at studio processes and suggests ways in which bodies and materials interact in creative practice to ‘form’ the artefacts. It addresses the question raised in Chapter Two: If thinking happens in movement, does *rhythm* enhance it in some way? Do rhythmic movements help access a ‘limen’ or threshold state where ‘newness’ is possible?

The section refers to short extracts of video which provide a trace of artistic process at critical moments in the development of the theory, and I encourage you to view these as they are encountered within the text. It refers to a thematic analysis of, and extracts from, studio journals.

Sometime after writing the journals, I undertook a thematic analysis using the three lenses (body, material, social) as categories. I then assigned ‘tags’ to themes (or ‘units of meaning’). I kept a document in which I recorded insights during this process. I used ‘Wordle’³⁵ to create word clouds as a ‘check’ that I was not ignoring often-repeated words. The journal themes are developed in the following analysis using theoretical ideas from anthropology (Ingold, 2013), actor network theory (Latour, 2005), material thinking (Bolt, 2004; Carter, 2004) and the political ecology of matter (Bennett, 2010). ‘Ecological cognition’ (Gibson, 1986) continues to provide the *central* framework.

3.2.1 ‘Material’ and ‘materiality’

First, a note on terminology. The terms ‘material’ and ‘materiality’ have a long and complex history of use in philosophy and aesthetics, with ‘material’ referring not just to physical matter, but more broadly to anything that can be ‘formed’ (for example, ‘digital’ material). Art historian JeeHee Hong (2003) outlines this history, in which discussions of art and philosophy have long struggled with the split between ‘form’ and ‘content’. The ‘material’ turn in art

³⁵ <http://www.wordle.net/>

in the early 20th Century involved a Greenbergian concern with defining art by its physical manifestation and the way this could affect corporeal bodies; whilst Fried emphasised form over the specificity of material. More recent theories of media and cultural studies have taken the 'material' to include the 'immaterial', and used the term 'materiality' to signify the difference between any 'material' form, and that which has physical substance. However, 'materiality' can also signify something that has agency (can affect outcomes) without necessarily having observable content or form, such as electricity. In the next section, 'material' indicates physical substance or object, and 'materiality' references the tactile, sensorial nature of physical, textural mediums and artefacts. I work with both physical 'material' and cultural 'material'. Whilst the two are interrelated, the *primary* focus for this chapter is on the physical, reflecting a contemporary concern with the corporeal and sensorial experience of art (e.g. Bacci & Melcher, 2013; Barrett & Bolt, 2013). I explore a *new materialist ontology* (Coole & Frost, 2010) by examining the handling of materials as a way of thinking that focuses on bodily rhythm and movement, and on the interactions of the material flows of the body with the material flows of materials and tools.

3.2.2 Material thinking

Let me first share with you a journal entry scribbled after a moment of realisation in the studio:

[...] the sensory, tactile pleasure of wielding brush and primer, stroking onto canvas, the familiar feel of it [...] The smell of the primer and feel of the material through my finger-tips, responding to gesture and handling of the brush. [...] The silence, gentle sounds of the brush tapping against the pot, of scrubbing the primer into the textures of the cloth-covered panel. It is deliciously sensual and it prepares my 'mind', relaxes me, I feel more 'together' as a body; it is contemplative [...]³⁶

³⁶ Journal 16/08/13

The *sensory* qualities of materials and the feedback from handling them affect my physiology in a way that *prepares my mind* and is *contemplative* (“expressing or involving prolonged *thought*”³⁷). Materials and bodies interact in creative practice as a form of *cognition*. Studio making involves handling materials, responding constantly to tactile, visual and emotional feedback from the emerging form. This is also a *sense-making* process, as meanings and feelings emerge out of the sensory immersion in practice. As I rearrange and paint images, the materials in front of me enable imagination to be *enacted*. I incorporate materials as part of a cognitive apparatus, such that the ‘thinking’ happens on the canvas in a process of ‘extended cognition’ (Clark, 2011). I will now explore this process of ‘material imagination’ prompted by the thematic ‘tags’ from my journal of: ‘material histories’; ‘material tactility’; ‘material imagining’; ‘flow’; ‘handling/ gesture/ rhythm’; and the ‘material/social artefact’. Rather than these forming an organising framework, they are woven throughout the analysis.

I use painting as a way of inquiring into the existential challenges of facing up to climate change responsibility, working intuitively without a vision of the end-piece in mind, but always attentive to what is emerging in front of me.

I have cut out my little figures (videoed) and placed them on my landscapes. As I was recording, I played with my figures as a group, seeing how they worked as a multiple, but repeated, figure. As I was placing them, I started to place both figures on each landscape, although my original intention was one solitary figure. It felt right to put both in; it suddenly started to make sense.³⁸

This entry shows an example of playing, placing, and arranging in a process of making as thinking, rather than thinking a way into making. Ingold describes this as “prising an opening and following where it leads” (2013: 7). I stop when it suddenly *feels* right, a sense of completeness that I experience bodily as *affect*. But at that point, I don’t necessarily know what the work might be *saying*. Significance is ‘felt’, and meaning may later

³⁷ Oxford English Dictionary, 2018

³⁸ Journal 20/01/14

emerge in dialogue with the work. This is in direct conflict with the model of artistic authorship that relies on artistic intentionality, or what the artist *intended* to 'say' (e.g. Wolff, 1993). Instead, it is an 'art of inquiry' in which, rather than studying the work of art as an object and aiming to trace back to its original 'intention', we "correspond with it" (Ingold, 2013: 8). Ingold suggests that the artist 'joins forces' with materials to see what might emerge from an intervention in "processes that are *already going on*" (Ingold, 2013: 21) [my emphasis]. An example of this is my use of collage elements such as texts or maps which have a previous history of use. Whilst 'playing' with the map of Aldershot in the *Keep Off* video I disrupted a socially inscribed ongoing process of marking and claiming 'land'. The digital reflection video [Talking about Aldershot Map](#) records my studio reflections on the significance of this map; a significance which became richer to me during the process of making (and reflecting on) the work. Another example is my use of found images as source material. Each photograph is a trace of a moment documented by someone else, shared globally. The original photographer of the *Keep Off* image (Evans, 2017) saw a significance which I have re-appropriated. In reworking these materials I am intervening in an ongoing durational and social process of looking and recording, paying attention to what we *pay attention* to.

According to Gibson's concept of *affordances*, what we 'pay attention to' (what humans perceive) is not 'things' in themselves, but the opportunities that they *afford* for action (Gibson, 1986)³⁹. The materials and tools that I work with afford opportunities for action. In the above example of 'playing' in the studio with the map, I was recording the process. As I explored materials and images in my studio, I realised the possibilities of including the camera as a tool in my exploration, and exploiting the potential of video editing. By having the camera in the room, I became aware of the participation of a potential audience (in Chapter Four, I develop this understanding of 'social imagination'). This awareness emphasised potential 'meaning' and significance in my activities (placing the figures; drawing new roads) and actions (making 'ritual' movements):

³⁹ I expand on the concept of 'affordances' in Chapter Five.

Select a piece of map from a pile, place it down. Palms placed flat, deliberately, either side of the island of map, pause. Remove and place on another pile.⁴⁰

The digital tools, once introduced to the studio for documentation purposes, became tools for art-making rather than just documenting. This, according to Gibson's theory of 'affordances', was a cognitive process in which I perceived opportunities for action amongst the tools available to me. In this 'emergent' process, which the camera makes me hyper-aware of, materials, tools and my bodily movements co-respond (to use Ingold's term) in a process of *material thinking* (Carter, 2004; Bolt, 2004). The artist Paul Carter suggests that materials have a propensity to form and perform in particular ways (a map will tear according to the orientation of its fibres and the folded history of its use). He suggests that this activity can be described as discursive, a process in which "something else emerges" (2004: 180). This exercise of 'material imagination' can lead to chaos, in the Greek sense of a gap or opening in which there is a mutual reciprocity between creativity and materials.

Tearing and making islands out of maps. The map becomes land mass [...] an object like an island, a physical thing with edges and mass.⁴¹

Material thinking relies on the plasticity of materials, their ability to "yield information through their creative transformation" which goes beyond purely the 'dreams' of their maker-artist (ibid: 186–7). Carter sees this as a process of inventing, remembering, or imagining – quoting Bachelard: "Through the imagined image, we come to know that absolute of reverie that is poetic reverie" (Bachelard, cited in Carter, 2004: 188). Bachelard's 'material imagination' suggests that "poetic images had the power to evoke and revivify the deep affective bonds between human subjects and the objects and spaces of their everyday world" (Lane, 2006). The map as island

⁴⁰ Journal 09/08/13

⁴¹ Journal 09/08/13

becomes a tangible landscape to explore, transformed into the physical space it represents.

But what is 'imagination'? Can it be 'out there' *in* the image rather than an 'imagined image'? Gibson discusses the relationship between imagining and perceiving, making a distinction between "surfaces that exist and surfaces that do not" (Gibson, 1986: 256). The 'imaginary' *does not exist*. He discusses the difference between an object and "an image in the space of the mind" (ibid.). This recalls the idea that a painter has an image in their mind which they paint (intentionality). This may be true for some. For me, the image emerges as I paint, so the imaginary image is only 'in the space of the mind' if the *mind* extends onto the canvas – if it is 'thinking out loud' in the language of images, colour, form, and texture as an intuitive *act*. Could this be described as 'material' imagination? Coole and Frost suggest that we tend to 'distance' ourselves from material and talk about 'immaterial' things like agency, *imagination*, emotions, and meaning, "presented as idealities *fundamentally different from matter*" (2010: 2) [my emphasis]. In the same volume, Frost discusses Hobbes' account of the causes of 'fear' as a learned affect, in which 'imagination' is something that does not purely have an origin *within* us, but is made up of previous and current perceptual experiences, affective responses, and physiological stimuli forming a type of 'memory' which each 'thinking-body' carries as its own particular history (Frost, 2010).

[...] I've been thinking I want to add texture to the canvas surface e.g. through stitch. Then [...] I thought instead about torn fragments or rips or scored, split fabric. This 'urge' to add texture to my panels is a 'felt' thing [...]⁴²

This 'tactile imagination' is made up of previous felt experiences of materials. And as discussed previously, materials (such as maps) also carry their own histories, which each 'thinking-body' will perceive and interpret according to *their* history and the context of encounter. It could be said that imagination *emerges* in ongoing interactions between 'subjects' and 'objects'. Frost

⁴² Journal 20/09/12

describes imagination as “a composite of sensory percepts and memories that arise and resound as the body ages, moves, and encounters and *responds to the context of its action*” (ibid: 162) [my emphasis]. Note the predominance of verbs in this description – ‘moves’, ‘encounters’, ‘responds’ – imagination is something that is *done*. And, returning to the question of rhythm and movement raised in Chapter Two, that ‘doing’ seems to be enhanced by *rhythm*, as follows.

3.2.3 Material thinking and gesture

Imagination is engaged in an entwinement with the emerging image or material object, and the *gestures* of the making body. I experience this type of ‘rhythmic imagination’ as something *in movement*, in which the rhythmic actions of my body take over and I experience something like ‘liminality’ – a state of being ‘in-between’, of passing through “a period and area of ambiguity” (Turner, 1982: 24). I “‘play’ with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarise them” (ibid: 27), which cultural anthropologist Victor Turner suggested can be a source of innovation in culture (ibid: 28). Carter’s (2004) account of ‘material thinking’ does not consider the role of movement and gesture, the physical engagement of bodily rhythms in, perhaps, achieving a liminal state. How does the ‘gesture of thinking’ work together with the plasticity of materials? Liminality occurs (for me) once I enter a kind of ‘flow’ state or enhanced immersion in studio making. To better understand this experience in which bodies and materials seem to interact *seamlessly*, I reviewed a video of myself painting during a period when I know that I experienced a switch into that state of ‘flow’. You can see this in the video [Painting the Sea](#), in which I’ve juxtaposed studio footage with video that I took of the sea whilst I stood watching the waves, absorbing their rhythm. The notes below were made after re-watching the studio footage, and are based partly on observations from that footage, and partly from the embodied memory of the studio experience:

[...] I can see where rhythm takes over, my movements are more gestural, faster, my whole body moves, less careful, I step back more, and this is where I experience a state of ‘flow’, where the emerging

image and my own movements merge so that I am not looking, analysing, deciding, making a mark. Rather, I am moving and mark-making and the image is emerging and this is all one process. And this involves more of my body, and it involves rhythm.⁴³

This 'rhythmic imagination' might be similar to what many fellow artists have described colloquially as 'being in the flow'. However, this is not necessarily the same thing as psychologist Csikszentmihalyi's 'flow' (1996) – although it does have similar characteristics, including immediate feedback and merged awareness/action such that self-consciousness, worry and distraction disappear and sense of time is lost. But I don't have 'clear goals'; nor do I know that the actions are the 'correct' ones. I do things by 'feel', but when something 'feels' right, it is not necessarily 'correct'. What is missing from Csikszentmihalyi's account of 'flow' in terms of understanding my *own* experience is the rhythmic movement that occurs in material engagement with the sensuality of materials that stimulates this 'flow' state of absorption in the present moment.

Dance theorist Sheets-Johnstone suggests that as humans became bipedal, movement was not just functional but also enjoyable and meaningful in an aesthetic way, so that "self-movement is close to play and to rhythmic patterning" (2009: 319). She says "rhythm is inherent in the movement of living bodies, inherent in their kinetic ways of going about making a living for themselves" (ibid: 320–321) and further suggests that "(r)hythmic qualities of painting [...] in fact derive from a sense of movement" (ibid: 321). Relating our rhythms of movement to our perception of the environment, she cites Duncan whose idea of dance "came from the rhythm of the waves" (Duncan, cited in Sheets-Johnstone, 2009: 320). In *Keep Off*, the painting of the sea was a 'problem-solving' exercise until I 'felt' a switch to a rhythmic state of relaxation in which the gestures formed the waves and I *felt* their ebbs and flows as my body swayed from side to side. This created a state of focused concentration in which the rhythm was not metronomic (or mechanical), but formed a continuous dialogue between hand, tool and material (Ingold, 2013: 115) *and* the emerging image. In this rhythm, my body remembers

⁴³ Journal 29/04/14

how to paint as “hand and tool are [...] *brought into use*, through their incorporation into a regular pattern of rhythmic, dextrous movement” (ibid: 116) [original emphasis]. It is this continuous, responsive, and focused dialogue in the ‘gesture’ (or technical act) in which hand, tool and material are brought together that Ingold describes as ‘correspondence’ (ibid: 115). This experience of immersion (in the context of drawing) is described by Ravetz (2016) as achieving a ‘heightened awareness’ in which *self becomes merged with surroundings*. She refers to the painter Marion Milner, who overcame her block to painting through finding “a rhythmic interchange of two kinds of attention” (2016: 168) – one analytic and focused, and one of embracing the world, a ‘dreamy’ state. The ‘heightened awareness’ stimulated through reverie and play demonstrates “interplay between movement, rhythm, dreaminess, improvisation, intentionality, action, focus, planning and knowledge” (ibid: 169). Ravetz likens this state of ‘reverie’ to the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott’s ‘transitional object’ – “an object both created and discovered that involves two kinds of attention: the focused kind that recognises the separate identities of things in the world and the embracing kind that dissolves boundaries between things and child” (ibid: 169). Through immersion in the rhythmic painting of the waves, focusing on their form, I *became* the sea – a “loosening of boundaries between self and world” (ibid: 158).

However, the *sensory* experience of handling can also be unsatisfactory, disrupting this rhythm and immersion:

[...] the feeling from the fingertips did have such a profound effect on my experience of painting. Both from my actual fingertips (skin-to-canvas) but also from the brush – feeling the resistance of the brush instead of it gliding smoothly across the surface. This slowed and interrupted the ‘dance’ and I wasn’t enjoying it as a tactile experience. I couldn’t get absorbed, and the painting was unsatisfactory. [...] it was the materials and the tactile experience that interrupted the flow of painting. It didn’t ‘flow’ at all – it ‘juddered’ and ‘scraped’.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Journal 05/12/12

The rhythm was interrupted, which disrupted my focused concentration. It should be noted that this 'disruption' or interruption can also be productive, stimulating surprise and unpredictable outcomes. However, in this case rhythm was affected by a dissatisfying tactile experience. This can also be a result of environmental conditions and their effect on materials. Material properties work together with bodily movement *and* environmental conditions. Ingold uses the example of flying a kite (2013: 99). The kite is affected by the air, which affects your movement, which affects the kite. The paint I use affects my gesture and the speed with which I paint, which affects the image. On a hot day, painting with fast-drying acrylic paint, I have to move fast with firm gestures, and the resulting image is dynamic, sketchy and builds up in layers. With oils which dry very slowly, I have more time, and the work is more considered. However, *because* the paint dries slowly and I am impatient, I am more likely to complete a painting in one sitting, rather than build it up in layers. Even the smell of the paint affects my mood, which changes my body pace, movement and sense of immersion. As I paint, my imagination is *exercised* in an entwinement with the emerging image, material responses to environmental conditions, and the rhythmic movements and sensations of my body. In this connection between sensory stimulus, rhythmic movement, imagination and immersion in the forming image, I inhabit the emerging object as a *landscape*. Ingold (2010) suggests that we find our way *through* paintings, that we *inhabit* them, and whilst he is talking about the viewer this also describes my feelings as I paint. In this process, I explore some of the *social* problems of human dwelling in the world.

3.2.4 Material thinking and sociality

The art work evolves over time, as it takes elapsed time for potential meanings to emerge. I might suddenly realise interpretations that seem 'meant' but were not intentional. This 'realisation' (in the sense of something coming into being) can be triggered by an observation from a viewer, by current events, or by a conversation. I see this 'making sense' as an ongoing *social* process, and one that yields information about the 'social'. Actor Network Theory ('ANT'), as explained by philosopher, anthropologist

and sociologist Bruno Latour (2005), suggests that the 'social' is not a thing that exists, but it can be made visible by following the associations between actors. ANT recognises the enduring inequalities of power relations in social life (a particular problem in finding solutions to climate change) and proposes that their durability is enabled by *objects* (2005: 65). Power relations are *enacted* by associations of agents, which include objects as participants in action. An object can be an actor because it can *mediate* meaning (in the sense of transforming or modifying it in some way) – rather than simply carrying meaning as an 'intermediary'. 'Things' can "authorise, allow, afford, encourage ..." (ibid: 72) as in Gibson's *affordances*. The map is a good example, as a highly symbolic coded material in which 'social' power relations are inscribed. In the studio, the map became a mediator of meaning. The process of looking at and playing with this map (and recording and reviewing that playful process) drew out multiple signifiers relevant to my art inquiry, leading me to think about 'land' and 'landscape' more critically. According to Latour, action occurs *between* mediators rather than one agent 'causing' the other to do something. For example, puppeteers often report that their puppet 'made' them do something, as if they control the strings together (ibid: 60). The puppet and the puppeteer as *mediators* co-act rather than *act* and *react* in cause and effect. Knowledge emerges in the dynamic *relationships* between social actors (corporeal and material) and the ways that these are mediated. In the process of painting, an imaginary world evolves 'on the surface' of the developing artefact and this 'artefact' mediates meaning in a fluid process in which I am both forming, and in-formed by the emerging image:

[...] I feel I am visiting a world, or creating a world. I get lost in both images (the source and the painting) and I'm making up narratives/make believe/it's like a dream space or a ghost space [...]

I'm imagining myself into the space of the image while my body and its tools and materials create a new image from that space.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Journal 22/11/12

It might be helpful to clarify how I am using agency here; who is the 'I'? According to Latour, action is *distributed* amongst multiple actors in "a concatenation of mediators" (2005: 62) in which the 'origin' of the action is uncertain (ibid: 46). (Human) actors may tell an account of action, in which they refer to 'agencies' (ibid: 52) where:-

- i) *agencies* are presented as *doing* something;
- ii) they are given a figure of some sort (which may not be human);
- iii) they are opposed to other competing agencies;
- iv) they are accompanied by a theory of action.

In the above journal account, I *present* the agencies of 'my body, tools and materials' as *creating* a new image. The 'space of the image' is also an agency in which 'I get lost'. 'I' as the figured agent '*imagine* myself into the space of the image' (I *do* imagination and *inhabit* the image-space); whilst *opposed* to this is 'my body and its tools and materials' *changing* that image. Although I describe 'me' as the agent 'making up narratives' this 'action' occurs as a 'concatenation of mediators' (canvas-space of the image, body, material, and tools). In this way, the image 'affects' me and I affect the image.

The term 'agency' has, however, been challenged by Ingold, who suggests that saying 'things' need to be sprinkled with 'agency' to bring them to life ignores the material processes of becoming that are always ongoing – 'life' itself rather than 'agency' (2011). He suggests instead that we think of objects in terms of their material forces, processes and ways of coming into being. His view here is consistent with Bennett who suggests a vitality or force that *is* material rather than a spirit *in* the material (Bennett, 2010: xiii). Bennett says an 'actant' is "a source of action" using Latour's definition (ibid: 9), and that 'actant' is a substitute for the term 'agent'. Thus an agent, for her, is a source of action. However, it is Bennett's (and other theorists') use of the term 'agency' that Ingold objects to. In his essay *When ANT meets SPIDER* (2011a) he pinpoints his objection to the term by defining it as an action that involves perception and skill. He says it is *attentive* movement

that qualifies it as action and therefore the actor as an agent. All action, he says, is skilled, and skill is developed over time. Thus, he argues, it does not make sense to attribute agency to objects that do not grow or develop (ibid: 94). In *Making*, Ingold takes up this challenge again, this time centring it on connotations of causality – ‘agency’ is something that is ‘internal’ or ‘within’; actions can be causally attributed to agency of which the action is an effect (2013: 96). Ingold suggests that neither humans nor nonhumans ‘possess’ agency – “[t]hey are rather possessed by action” (ibid: 97). He suggests that this language of causation is not fit for the purpose of explaining processes of growth. “We need a theory not of agency but of life” he concludes (ibid: 97).

The definition of ‘agency’ according to Merriam Webster is: “the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power [...] a person or thing through which power is exerted or an end is achieved.”⁴⁶ This language does seem to imply that power is ‘prior’ to the action, and then enacted through the agent – ‘...an end is achieved’ implies the ‘end’ was in mind prior to the action that ‘achieved’ it. However, a posthuman new materialist perspective suggests rather that power is *emergent* through action, and that ‘ends’ may be emergent outcomes (which may also be unintended). In this emergent sense, agency concerns the ongoing *production of power* through *action*. Therefore I will use the term in the sense of *power emerging through action*, rather than assuming meanings of prior intentionality, causality or choice. This clarification aims to facilitate a post-human perspective on ways in which agency and authorship can be ‘distributed’. It does not, however, infer that *human* agency in the context of climate change is incapable of ‘intentional’ or choiceful action. Having clarified these points, I will now return to Bennett to explore how an artefact has *political* power.

Jane Bennett is an American political theorist whose book *Vibrant Matter* addresses two aims: first a political project: “How would political responses to public problems change were we to take seriously the vitality of (nonhuman) bodies?” (2010: viii); and second, a philosophical project: To

⁴⁶ Merriam Webster, 2018

avoid the trap of assuming human uniqueness when discussing subjectivity by using Latour's ideas of *actant* (any source of action that does things) and *distributive* agency. Bennett uses the expression 'vibrant materiality' to refer to the capacity of *things* to act as agents with tendencies of their own, including propensities to *affect* other matters (including human bodies) in unpredictable ways. Borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari, Bennett locates agency in *assemblages* of human-nonhuman working groups (ibid: xvii) where "agency always depends upon the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces" (ibid: 21). *Things* are neither subjects nor objects but 'modes', subject to modification and modifying others in alliances within assemblages. The process of modification is not hierarchical and is subject to tension and to chance encounter (ibid: 22). In what she calls this 'event-space' "... power is not distributed equally [...] not governed by any central head [...] the effects generated by an assemblage are, rather, emergent properties" (ibid: 23). These effects are the property of the assemblage as a whole, rather than the "sum of the individual parts" (ibid: 23–24). She discusses the inherent creativity of all materials, and their ability to improvise to the situation that they find themselves in.

Adopting Bennett's approach of 'vibrant materialism' to look at my studio practice would pay attention to the processes that are going on in the *ecosystem* of the studio. An ecosystem looks at *interactions* within a community that includes biotic (organisms) and abiotic (environmental factors – air, water, temperature) components, and at how energy flows between them. My bodily movements and rhythms work in partnership with tools, materials and climate, and they affect each other. Movement is notably affected by a sore shoulder, my mood is affected by the poor quality brushes and the rough texture of canvas across which the paint will not glide, and by the paint that dries too fast because it is hot and the sun is bright and it gleams on the wet surface and it hurts my eyes and this disrupts the 'flow' of energies and activities. Dust floats and settles on the surface, glue sticks to my fingers, there comes a point where I have to stop and clean brushes, or let the paint dry a little before I can work further. Some parts

work wet-in-wet where others won't. All the time the image is emerging and affecting me and my body responds by looking, moving, and feeling.

There is a point where I think 'that's it' and it is 'me' who decides. Being open to the agency of other bodies, materials and elements does not mean I have to deny my own agency. We work as an assemblage, but I still make decisions and have choice over my actions; when to pause or stop. But I'm not sure 'how' I decide. It 'feels' right; an *affect*. But this will also be influenced by *social* 'benchmarks' or things I have seen from which I am making a judgement. It might 'feel' right because it is like a 'Hockney' or a 'Tuymans'. This is the 'social' as a *thing* in the room.

Critics of new materialism suggest that it can ignore the contributions of the cultural turn, moving focus away from the ideological and political (Bolt, 2013: 12) and taking an 'anticonstructive' stance (Schneider, 2015). An optimistic view of 'vibrant' materiality can obscure the political reality that some humans and some things live more precariously than others (Schneider, 2015: 13). This is of particular urgency given the current environmental fragility for human and non-human cultures, life forms and ecologies. In this context, Schneider highlights the danger that attributing agency to matter might also let humans 'off the hook' – and therefore some new materialists are more cautious, for example suggesting materials have 'partial' agency (ibid: 10). In her earlier work, Bennett (2010) responded to similar critiques that new materialism can be seen as 'anti-constructivist' as follows. First, aiming to deconstruct the hidden 'will to power' of humans does not develop positive alternatives – we need *both* critical and affirmative approaches. Second, assuming that *human* power is at the centre of this 'will to power' does not consider the power of other bodies, reducing political agency to humans (Bennett, 2010: 17). She counters this by deliberately *over-emphasising* the political agency of non-humans (ibid: xvi).

The emerging artefact has an *agency* that affects me – but that agency might be due to a kind of social 'power' that the artefact mediates *in relationship* with my remembered experience of actual things and the way that they have been judged. What constitutes 'art' is 'socially' determined (by

its inclusion in a curated exhibition, for example), but this determination would not exist without the artefacts themselves. 'Action' is felt as a 'node' of agencies to be disentangled (Latour, 2005: 44). The 'judgements' that I make in the studio may be influenced by a memory of artefacts which a material might suggest to me, and the interaction of myself, this memory, and the material form a 'node' out of which something happens. Memory, history, and associations are human cognitive factors, but without the 'affordance' of other 'mediating' actors (texts, photographic images, or paintings) those associations and memories would not occur. Judgements, choices and actions are influenced by prior social learning, taking place in a context of embodied learning, shared patterns of meaning, and the affordances of mediating technologies.

Although at some point I choose to 'stop', the materials, in their own way and in their own timescales, will carry on. Light will affect the printed word and the paper, and the colours may fade; these are all considerations for the archivist. But materials will also continue to change in *meaning*, in history and symbolism. People will 'read' and experience them differently; interactions will depend on environment and context. *My* agency may no longer be an active part of the finished 'object', but the artefact will join other assemblages of things, people and places, and will contribute *its* agency – *power emerging through action*.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has reflected on the second phase of studio practice to further address the research question: i) How do bodies and materials interact in creative practice? Focussing on 'materials', it explored the gestural 'handling' of tools and materials to form 'artefacts' (Figure 3.1). The first section described the artist's exegetical reflections from *Keep Off* to exemplify the sense-making cognitive processes that can be undertaken by the artist in the process of developing a body of work. Themes that emerged from a detailed re(view) of, and reflection on, *Keep Off* included land ownership and territory, and the need to define boundaries of the 'collective' as well as the 'self'. They included the associated geopolitics of

climate change, and the relationship between land ownership and natural resources. 'Self' cannot be indistinct from 'land'. These are not *new* revelations or authoritative statements of the work's meaning. Instead, they suggest what the artwork *might* evoke from a tentative starting point of: *Is it possible to explore and fragment agential and social boundaries of 'self'?* They exemplify how *critical reflection* on emerging artefacts made through *material handling* takes the creative work forward, connecting the personal to the political.

The second section considered the artistic labour involved in *making* the painting, by examining the art 'work' processes involved. It addressed the question of 'rhythm' raised in Chapter Two. It described in detail how the act of handling materials through making *is* a process of thinking (rather than thinking, then 'doing'). An 'art of inquiry' involves a correspondence with materials to see what emerges from an intervention in processes that are already going on (Ingold, 2013). These processes are corporeal, 'material' (physical), and 'social', and are affected by environmental factors. In and amongst these processes, affordances are perceived as opportunities for action which may involve multiple 'things'. Having the camera in the studio raises awareness of the participation of a potential audience (*social imagination*). The digital tools, introduced to the studio for documentation, also afford opportunities for art-making. Once 'things' become engaged in relationship with each other, each has its own agency, its own tendency to respond and react in a way that affects the outcome. Sensory qualities of materials and tools affect mood and stimulate contemplation. *Tactile imagination* emerges out of the artist's previous felt experiences of materials. Creative practice can be experienced as an exercise of *material imagination*, in which 'mind' extends onto the canvas in an imaginary habitation within an emergent image. This image is formed by the interactions of materials, environmental conditions, tools, bodily sensation and movement through 'gesture', a technical act in which hand, tool and material are brought together (Ingold, 2013). This involves finding a rhythm and physical immersion in sensory experience to create a 'flow' state of concentrated awareness (or *rhythmic imagination*). This can invoke a state of liminality, which may be a source of innovation in culture, and can dissolve boundaries

between self and world. It occurs in an ecosystem in which environmental factors also play a part. And the environment is social as well as physical. Power relations are mediated by 'things' which have their own agency. Materials carry their own histories which are perceived and interpreted according to the artist's history and the context of encounter. Reworking these materials constitutes an intervention into ongoing social processes of looking and recording. Action occurs between 'mediators' which include objects, materials, and humans within the ecosystem of the studio. The artist still has her own agency (although not overall control). The artist 'decides'. Yet those decisions, which may *feel* intuitive, will be influenced by socially determined judgements mediated by the emerging artefact. The 'social' is inscribed in the material, affecting and affected by the artist. The resulting artefact will carry its own mediating agency into future assemblages of things, people, and places.

These insights suggest that a theory of *material thinking* could be expanded to include 'sociality'. The next chapter will consider the second practice event and how it helped me to achieve this extended understanding of material thinking.

Chapter 4 Thinking Together: Embodied Sociality and Collective Cognition⁴⁷

The aim of this chapter is to develop an expanded theory of material thinking that includes *sociality*. It focuses on the 'social' lens of the model, and the intersections of 'artefact' and 'habit(us)⁴⁸' (Figure 4.1). It considers the embodiment of social structures in the artefact, social practices of art, and ways in which cognition extends to the 'social' body of the audience.

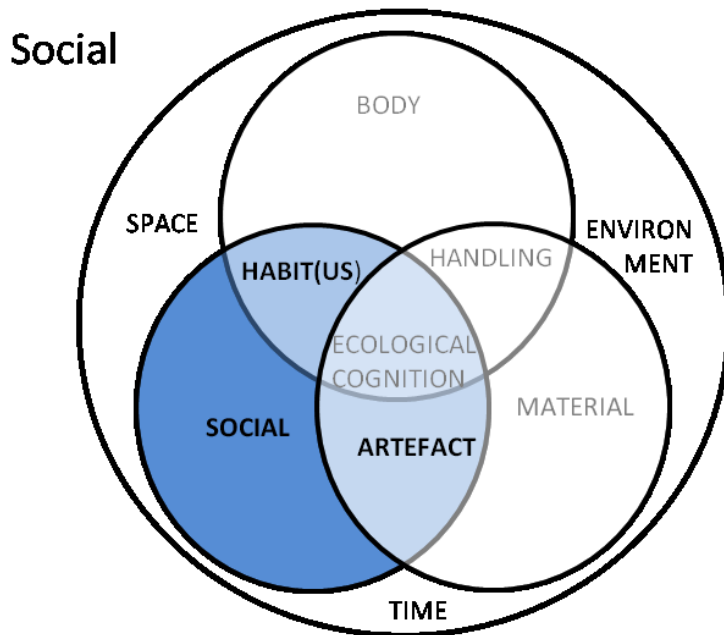


Figure 4.1 Artistic labour as ecological cognition – 'Social'

The chapter addresses the research sub-question:-

- ii) How do social processes, cultural and environmental factors interact with human and material bodies in creative practice?⁴⁹

It also addresses the questions that were raised from practice phase one (in Chapter Two):-

⁴⁷ Sections of this chapter have been taken from Kirk, 2014.

⁴⁸ The term 'habit(us)' references both Bourdieu's theory of habitus, and Turner's suggestion that this is made up from individual 'habits'.

⁴⁹ This will consider ways in which the 'social' is material and corporeal, rather than bodies *separate* from the social and cultural.

- What meanings does a viewer make from seeing the work made?
- In what ways can viewers' awareness of their participation in the *work* of art be facilitated?

The primary methods and sources used to consider these questions are:-

- critically reflective autoethnography
- design and analysis of second practice event (video; audience participation)

The first section considers studio making as a *social* process. It reviews concepts of 'practices' and '*habitus*' (Bourdieu, 1977; Narvaez, 2013) and applies these to consider how social processes, cultural and environmental factors interact with human and material bodies in creative practice.

Adopting a *critical new materialism* (Coole & Frost, 2010) it considers how the social is embodied in and performed through individual habits and public objects (Turner, 1994). It continues the previous chapter's exploration of materials and artefacts as mediators of what is socially determined as 'art', thus having 'political agency' (Latour, 2005; Bennett, 2010).

The second section considers audience responses from the second event, *Feeling a way through* It discusses ways in which cognition may extend to the collective social body of the audience. It proposes an addition to Bolt's (2007) theory of artistic process and authorship as 'co-responsibility' to consider the *audience*, exploring how 'making' is a relational and ongoing performance in which artistic subjectivity is 'distributed' amongst artist, audience, and artefacts. It proposes that framing painting as a *social* practice of inquiry could open up new spaces of understanding mediated by paintings and people as part of an *event* in which artistic agency is 'distributed'. It raises questions of what this means for painting viewing practices, including the place of the artist's voice.

4.1 Section One: Creative ‘practice’ and the embodiment of the ‘social’



Figure 4.2 Courbet *The Artist's Studio*, 1854 – 1855, Oil on Canvas

It has been suggested that Figure 4.2 is an allegory of the artist's role as 'mediator' in society. On the right are what Courbet called "shareholders [...] friends, fellow workers, art lovers", whereas the left shows "the other world of everyday life" (Lewandowski, 2015). This painting would suggest that, for Courbet, society was *in* the studio.

This section considers the 'social' immanent in creative practice, explicitly rejecting a conception of studio work as a solitary activity of making artefacts which then get put into the 'public' domain. It will look at how 'intuitive' engagement with materials in the studio has an inherent sociality by addressing the question: ii) How do social processes, cultural and environmental factors interact with human and material bodies in creative practice? First it will outline the critically reflective autoethnographic method used, and introduce a critical incident (Crisp et al, 2005) from studio practice. It will then consider this case study using the framework of practices as '*habitus*' (Bourdieu, 1977). It will consider the role that the 'sensory' might play in triggering collective embodied cultural memory (Narvaez, 2013), and discuss how social structures become 'embodied' in the artefact such that they affect the artist, thus having political agency (Bennett, 2010). Finally, it

considers how *habitus* is 'reproduced' (Turner, 1994) to question *how* 'practices' get 'transmitted' and what role 'objects' or 'artefacts' play in this.

4.1.1 Critically reflective autoethnography

Autoethnography is an autobiographical approach that *connects the personal to the cultural*. By recording my *personal* reflections on studio practice I created a rich description to critically reflect on, identifying frames of reference used and what these might suggest about the *cultural*. I kept an autoethnographic journal, in which I prompted myself to jot down social and cultural influences. At the head of this journal was written: *Culture, context, conversation, boundaries, rules, where am I in this?, power, politics, social relations*. I was able to reflect on these journal entries after a period of elapsed time to find new learning (Moon, 2004). By critical reflection on my first-person account, I aimed to challenge unquestioned assumptions and to make visible the social structures within which I am embedded.

Effective autoethnography, suggest Ellis and Bochner (2000), is written in an engaging first person narrative to facilitate critical reflection from the reader. However, as noted in Chapter One, critics of autoethnography challenge the realist notions of 'self' that appear in these accounts (de Freitas and Paton, 2008). Therefore, rather than carefully constructing a narrative, I have openly shared a two-layer process of: i) recording reflections; ii) critical analysis of those recordings, through which I aim to understand the 'social' immanent in the reflections through the theoretical frames above. I have focused on one 'critical incident' which involved an "element of surprise" (Crisp et al, 2005: 7), and which was "indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures" (Tripp, cited in Crisp et al, 2005: 7). I show this critical incident through a combination of digital story (hyperlinked) and extracts from journals.

4.1.2 Ruffles – introduction to critical incident

In July 2013 I audio-recorded a spoken realisation that the *sensory* activities of using ruler and pencils reminded me of childhood learning. I also recorded a sudden notion that the cut-out card figure reminded me of paper

fashion dolls⁵⁰. This realisation was pivotal, and triggered a chain of ideas which I developed through studio activities and audio-reflection. The digital reflection video [Digital story for Jetty making](#) shares these studio reflections, and will be referred to in the following analysis. These reflections led me to think about the contemporaneous tragedy of the Rana Plaza factory collapse (April 24, 2013)⁵¹. I was aware of connections between this event and the consumerist impulses which have human, environmental, and climatic consequences. The following analysis shows how those connections became clearer through painting, video, and reflection on the artefacts produced. Below is the painting that I developed. I created the video [Ruffles](#) from footage of studio activities whilst making the painting. This video was presented alongside the painting in the second event *Feeling a way through ...*, and I will refer to it throughout the following analysis.



Figure 4.3 *Ruffles*, 2013, acrylic and collage on panel, 40 x 34cm

⁵⁰ Press-out card 'dolls' with cut-out clothes which could be attached to the doll with folded paper tabs, circa 1970s.

⁵¹ 1,129 garment makers died in the factory collapse (Butler, 2013).

4.1.3 'Practices' and '*habitus*'

To consider how the *social* is immanent in creative practice, it might be useful to reflect on what is meant by 'practice' (and indeed by 'social'). Taking a posthumanist view of the 'social' involves moving beyond pure discourse to consider ways in which the 'social' is *corporeal* and *material*. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977) suggested that social structures are *embodied*, and that 'practices' can be understood as ways of 'generating' social structures through the simultaneous embodying (copying or learning) of the habits that make them, and the 'doing' of rituals, gestures, or routines. This brings a social dimension to understanding 'gesture' as learned and embodied through repetition. (This 'social' dimension of gesture will be further explored in Chapter Five in relation to the audience.)

Bourdieu uses the term '*habitus*' to describe this *production* of structures, as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" (1977: 72), where 'disposition' can mean "the *result of an organizing action*; [...] a *way of being*; a *habitual state* (especially of the body); and [...] a *predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination*" (ibid: 214) [original emphasis]. The responses or 'propensities' of the *habitus* comprise a set of possibilities available in the present moment, "things to do or not to do, to say or not to say" (ibid: 76). Relating this to Gibson's 'affordances' (what humans perceive are *opportunities for action*) the concept of '*habitus*' suggests that these opportunities are culturally learned, even perception itself. For example, visual perception involves brain activity, cultural 'contents' (which we learn to interpret), and *affect* (embodied response). According to the sociologist Rafael Narvaez, we apply 'visual templates' from memory to help us to 'read' what we see and feel (2013: 161).

This is relevant to thinking about my starting point for the *Ruffles* painting – the selection of a source image:

I looked for images of the Bangladesh factory on Google, and I was so upset by them that I felt I could not use them. It felt disrespectful and inappropriate [...] I do not want to trespass on others' grief [...] I

follow a 'creed' (in Tony's⁵² voice) to 'follow your sensibility' or intuition, or paint what you want to paint, but at times like that, it 'feels wrong'. Despite the fact that I do want to paint the picture. Although it would be upsetting. I am also afraid of upsetting people, despite the fact that what is at stake is clearly people's lives. By not being aware of the connections between fashion, cheap clothing, obsession with self-appearance, and the kinds of working conditions for those who labour to grow, harvest and process cotton, and then to machine it into badly-made cheap throw-away clothing. The social and environmental cost (water, chemicals, loss of wildlife habitat, loss of human life) is too high. Why, then, am I afraid of 'upsetting people'????? [...] I 'feel' my way through intuition (or 'want' – what I want to paint) but I sometimes encounter boundaries. Sometimes these boundaries are imagined consequences. I don't want to upset people.⁵³

Here, there is a choice to act (or not) on the 'felt' impulse to use that source image. Bourdieu suggests that *habitus* is embodied as 'propensities' to act. Employing Narvaez's description of visual perception, the image contains 'cultural contents' and *affect*. The 'cultural contents' include the hand holding a family snapshot, a familiar object that speaks 'family' and demands empathy. In the journal extract, *affect* is indicated by 'upset' and 'distress'. There is imagined social consequence, being 'afraid of upsetting people'. But there is also a felt propensity to paint the image. This is followed by a rationalising *why* I might paint the picture (moving beyond the felt 'want' to paint it), and then back to the felt 'barrier' of upsetting people. There are propensities to act, and embodied barriers or rules to *not* act. 'Things to do or not to do'. Prior social learning has created barriers that are felt in the body.

Bourdieu describes the *habitus* as a "durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations" (1977: 78); and as "history turned into nature" (*ibid.*) as the stories of our past are internalised, informing our actions.

⁵² 'Tony' was one of my tutors at art college.

⁵³ Journal 12/07/13

Tony's voice – ‘follow your sensibility’ – represents an internalised voice; a predisposition that I have developed, a ‘generative principle’ that involves listening to intuition. The *fear* that I was expressing in the above extract was that *people will say* ‘how can you make money / success out of others’ misfortune’? This is based on previous ‘stories of my past’ where people *did* say that in response to my paintings of Madeleine McCann⁵⁴. In that instance, I was being ‘disciplined’ by those voices for breaking an unseen ‘code’, ‘value’ or ‘rule’. The memory of this judgment ‘regulates’ my improvisations in the studio – a kind of *social imagination*. This example might indicate what Bourdieu refers to as ‘symbolic violence’ – the maintenance of the dominant social order in a way that feels ‘natural’ and that removes people’s capacity to experience “the indignities imposed by the social order *as indignities*” (Narvaez, 2013: 40) [original emphasis]. By *not* provoking critical discussion into these ‘distressing’ things, and through avoiding the imagined risk of alienation that might result from asking challenging questions about participation in ‘fashion’, I become complicit in the indignities of those fashion workers. And yet it “is critical [...] to see the interconnections among the greenhouse effect, the status of women, racism and xenophobia and frantic consumerism” (Braidotti, 2013: 93). By painting the dead women, I bring these issues to attention – but only if the painting *does* bring them to attention. I presented the painting without supporting information and the audience did not mention the factory collapse. Had the event already been forgotten? Or was the painting too ambiguous? And what does my response say about ‘artistic intentionality’? I *wanted* the audience to know its source.

I then move onto thinking of other rules i.e. “but I’m an artist – my role is to ‘shock’, to ‘estrangle’, to raise awareness, to make people think”. And these are conflicting ‘rules’:- be nice to others to be social ‘glue’ and smooth the path of interactions; vs take responsibility to show a ‘mirror’ or not stand for inequality. These conflicting ‘rules’ affect what I paint, whether I put an image back down or don’t print it off in the

⁵⁴ Madeleine McCann went missing from Portugal in 2007 just before her 4th birthday. Her disappearance has had and continues to have a high profile in the UK media.

first place. [...] If I perceive 'affordances' these are moderated by 'laws' or 'rules' – a whispered “no, you mustn't do that”. Are these immanent in practice? They certainly affect it, and I feel they can get in the way of what I might do.⁵⁵

Although studio-work happens alone, it is *embodied* (through emotional *affect*) and it is *social* (involving learned responses). The making of artefacts is in the service of a social body – having the camera in the room, I became aware of a potential audience. And it represents a tricky negotiation of two kinds of '*habitus*' – that of the compliant female who avoids conflict, and that of the contemporary artist who does risk 'upset' and exclusion. A *gendered* subjectivity is clearly apparent in both the reflections above, and in the artwork itself. To reflect briefly on this, Narvaez (2013) discusses gender as an example of 'symbolic violence'; discourses of 'femininity' that direct the way women move and speak, and the roles they perform, such that they become 'invisible' to themselves. The ideology of 'womanhood' is constructed through an *enactment* of “such 'natural' female characteristics as self-abnegation” (2013: 43). 'Self-abnegation' (or self-denial) is relevant to my analysis here, as what may be occurring is the removal of my voice. I am trying to speak, but at the same time I am silencing myself, and this behaviour is *enculturated*.

Although not 'live' interactions, imaginary relationships are always present; imagined consequences, discussions, or criticisms. These voices threaten to regulate my actions. As discussed in Chapter Three, 'fear' is a learned affect, made up of previous and current experiences which are present in the emergence of 'imagination'. Imagination is 'social'. Agents both produce and re-produce meaning through actions (unconsciously performed) from a *pre-existing* mode of operation, and these contain an 'intentionality' of which they are unaware (Bourdieu, 1977: 79). The 'internalised voices' suggest a desire to 'smooth over' *despite* the obvious human suffering. Does this 'smoothing over' contain a prior 'intentionality' to act in the interests of the powerful rather than the powerless? If so, why could I not see this at the time? Bourdieu tells us that as the *habitus* is repeated across a community,

⁵⁵ Journal 12/07/13

and therefore familiar, it becomes taken for granted or *invisible* (ibid: 80). Narvaez however challenges this notion of *habitus* as invisible (and therefore unchangeable) by reintroducing the notion of *individual agency* via the 'pre-social', or *id*: "a psychosomatic agency that, Freud suggested, is in constant conflict with the agents of culture" (2013: 6). He suggests that whilst socialisation can suppress individuality, it can *also* be seen that disruptions to the 'cultural' are a historical constant – 'biology' and 'culture' modify each other (ibid: 7). As can be seen in the above extracts, 'intuition' can be experienced as conflicting. I 'want' to paint that picture, set against 'it feels wrong'. Is this the 'id' at work ('I want') in conflict with culture?

Narvaez is clear that the concept of 'id' is necessary to understand the complexity of human phenomena, which cannot be 'known' precisely using hypothetico-scientific method in the way that physical 'matter' can be known (ibid: 198). We are never truly 'free', suggests Narvaez, as our options are "preceded by organic *and* cultural structures" (ibid: 198) – and yet we are not totally determined either. "What makes us human," he says, "is the fact that we do not follow laws and patterns in the same way in which *lower* animals or things in the *organic* world do" (ibid: 198) [my emphasis]. What he seems to be saying is that humans must have agency because they demonstrate unpredictability. This assumption, that humans are complex and unpredictable whilst *other* 'organic' things are not takes a human-centric view. Humans are also 'organic', and possibly more predictable than we would like to think (market research, for example, *does* take a scientific approach to predicting human behaviour). And as Bennett (2010) tells us, materials (and other 'organic' things) are less predictable and more improvisational than we might think. 'Things' affect 'humans'.

4.1.4 Embodiment of social structures in the artefact

I 'wanted' to paint that picture. It *moved* me. The image 'did' something. It had *agency*. It affected an outcome in a 'node' of actants (Latour, 2005) interacting in an assemblage in which I was emotionally 'moved'. Set against it were the competing agencies of the imagined dissenting voices, and my own felt distress. In the previous chapter, I suggested that social

structures are 'inscribed' on the artefact, as the artist's decisions (consciously or unconsciously) are influenced by memories of socially determined judgements. This section looks in more detail at how the 'social' is embodied in artefacts by exploring how 'practices' include 'objects'.

Bourdieu suggests that the meaning of an object is 'done' by a practitioner of a *habitus*, rather than being inherent in the object itself. 'Objects' are products of a particular practice of constructing that world of objects (1977: 91). The way that we understand *art* objects, therefore, depends on practices of art. Bourdieu says: "every made product – including symbolic products such as works of art [...] exerts by its very functioning, particularly by the use made of it, an educative effect which helps to make it easier to acquire the dispositions necessary for its adequate use" (ibid: 217). We learn the function or value of objects by observing how they are 'used'. How we view an 'art object' and what use we make of it will be influenced by what artists 'do', by our exposure to art experiences or education, and by the way the art object is presented and discussed. If paintings are encountered in a hushed environment, supported by organised talks by an 'expert' who tells you the history of the artist and points out things to look at, this sets an expectation of the art 'object' as a sacred thing, 'containing' a prior intentionality which you have to correctly guess, or be told. The 'disciplining' voices in my journal assume a view of *art* as about 'making money'. How could we instead adopt a 'use' view of the art object as a participant-in-inquiry (rather than a repository of wisdom, or a means of making money)? How would an 'exhibition' as a collective inquiry challenge 'viewing' practices? Section Two will consider these questions.

Drawing on Bourdieu's *habitus*, Narvaez (2013) investigates the ways in which *collective* memory exists in *embodied* social structures which become invisible, taken-for-granted. Does the sensory engagement with materials and objects make this embodied memory *visible* to us? The digital reflections from the video *Digital story for Jetty making* suggest that *embodied* memory was triggered by sensory experiences (the smell of fabrics and pencils; the feel of fabrics and paper and textiles). Improvisational play stimulates sensory embodied collective memory through imagination as re-enactment, making a sensory link to the 'cultural'.

In *Ruffles*, the patterns, scissors and fabrics (the feel of cutting them, the smell, the distinctive sound of dressmaking scissors) powerfully brought back childhood memories of making clothes. And this is connected with the Bangladesh event; the careless delegation of dressmaking to an unseen group of bodies. In the *Ruffles* source image, the fabrics that cover the bodies connect to the fabrics that I was laying out in the studio. The resonances in the *Ruffles* video of recreated studio play get stronger each time I view it. This is what I describe as working 'intuitively' – exploring a concern in a multi-sensory, playful way, where 'play' is not 'joyful' but is the way we cope as children, dealing with difficult experiences through improvising with objects. Play is 'attached to history and culture', as the story of my childhood included making clothes. This history is *shared* and may be triggered by sensory experiences. This one critical incident entwines social, material, sensory corporeal and cultural memory. If I want the audience to *share* these connections, I need to share the source of the image. Learning from this, the third event (discussed in Chapter Five) included details of the source image with each painting.

If the sensory experience of materials – fabrics, patterns, and scissors – triggered embodied memory for me, these might *also* be shared as objects that have political agency (the third event did share objects, as discussed in Chapter Five). With reference to ideas from Dewey, Latour, and Rancière, Bennett (2010) develops a notion of a materialist political ecology, in which humans and non-humans are actants. Latour, says Bennett, proposes that political action responds to 'propositions' (rather than enacting 'choices'), where 'propositions' are experienced as a 'weighting towards' a particular direction. Action comes about as a result of various propositions and energies in a situation, rather than as a result of deliberations; *feeling a way through* rather than 'thinking' or conscious choice. In the 'making sense' of my responses in that critical incident there were various propositions felt in the 'form shaping' of creative practice. *That* image 'moved' me; it had agency. In looking closely at the image, I experienced a 'punctum' (Barthes, 2000) – the fabrics shrouding the bodies drew my attention. This triggered a compulsion to pull out a stash of fabrics kept in a drawer. The distinctive feel and smell of them reminded me of making clothes. I shook out their

folds and laid them out, watched by the camera. Latour, says Bennett, “distributes agentic capacity also to the ‘event’” (2010: 103) – in action, there is always an element of ‘surprise’. She cites Latour: “Whenever we make something we are not in command, we are slightly overtaken by the action” (Latour, cited in Bennett, 2010: 150).

Where I felt ‘overtaken’ was in play with paper dolls:

Playing in my studio like a child with all things I used to do – dressmaking, paper dolls. [...] The paper doll clothes are deliberately careless and rough. But the process of drawing cutting colouring and ‘trying on’ still feels like familiar play⁵⁶.

The cut-out girl was a physical reminder, which prompted a compulsion to re-enact ‘trying on’ with the materials of paper, crayons and scissors. ‘Playing’ in the studio with materials brings back memories, the same feeling, the same improvisational actions, from childhood processes of social learning. This pays attention to the sensory nature of the learning of the *habitus* through imitation, the role of materials in that, and the embodied sensory memories triggered by re-enactment. I also felt ‘overtaken’ in the play with the pattern paper. It was the relationship between my body and the material and auditory propensities of the paper that created opportunities to influence the outcome. This was improvisation *with* the paper, knowing the camera was there, responding to the qualities of the material – the rustling sound, its transparency, and the markings on the surface. In the unfolding play in the studio, the connection between childhood doll-dressing, dress-making, and the factory collapse occurs as an *event* (using Latour’s term). The trace of this event remains in the video and in the painting. The editing of the video aimed to recreate those moments of ‘felt’ compulsion to inter-act with materials. The video ‘shows’ the rigour of play as a research method (Nelson, 2009); an improvisational *event*-full process. Some of the actions re-presented on the video have meaningful potential. The shadowy hand ruffles the pattern-paper with increasing urgency. ‘Placing’ the paper doll onto the image, she (I) accepts responsibility. But here, I might be

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unconsciously playing into a social history of looking, of sexualisation performed through imaging (Rose, 2012: 154). The paintings position the viewer as spectator, looking *at* a vulnerable, lost, powerless and passively watching little girl rather than looking *with* her.

The 'work' of art ('making' and 'viewing') negotiates these social histories of looking, mediated by artworks as 'public objects' that participate in the history and ongoing production of the '*habitus*' of art practice. Philosopher Stephen Turner (1994) considers the role of 'public objects' in his discussion of how 'practices' are 'reproduced'. If shared practices are tacit (hidden) then how, he asks, can we be sure that the shared practice is *the same* for everyone? An alternative to an internalised practice 'object', he suggests, is that participants *perform* the practice in a convincing enough manner to be taken as a member of that practice-community. The means by which they produce that performance may be developed through 'habituation', and these invisible means *may well differ* from other individual practitioners, rather than the cause of the performance being a shared, hidden procedure. The contemporary painter's gesture is evolved and embodied through repeated practice, rather than by copying another painter. But this leaves the problem of how traditions *persist*, and how they are *transmitted*. In terms of 'persistence', he proposes that traditions may comprise "individual additions to what is explicit and public" (ibid: 97) – in other words, public 'objects' (artefacts or performances) play a part in the continuing performance of a tradition (or 'practice'). In terms of 'transmission', he proposes that individuals 'emulate' these *explicit* public observances and artefacts, the performance of which develops *habits* in the individual that enables them to reproduce these consistently. These are *individual* habits, not collectively shared ones called 'practices'. I've employed the term 'habit(us)' to signify this specificity.

Determining an individual 'habit', however, can be problematic. As Turner points out, 'habit' is a hybrid term which points to both: a) an observable repeated behaviour; and b) a 'mental cause' which has to be inferred. Turner points out that identifying a habit has epistemic difficulties because we can only infer it from observable signs – what an individual does or says (ibid: 15–17). 'Habit', he says, can *also* be understood as a 'habit of mind',

which can *only* be inferred because there is no attached observable behaviour. There are implications here in terms of applying a method to understand individual 'habits' of creative practice. I can only make *inferences* based on the traces of my 'mental' habits (through journal writing) or habitual performances (through video). Therefore any account that I present of my 'habits' will necessarily be tentative.

[...] I have been reflecting on the work of three female artists – [...] I am making connections with these artworks, as if they can help me find my identity as a female artist. Somehow. I guess the question I'm asking is "what does a contemporary female artist 'do'", and does this help me think about what I do and how I do it?⁵⁷

In looking at these artworks as 'public objects', I navigate my 'role' – what it is to *perform* the practice of 'contemporary female artist' in a convincing enough manner to be taken as a 'member' of that practice-community. I look at what other artists 'do', but I am not aiming to emulate their corporeal acts. I'm looking at the traces of what they've done – video, painting, supporting information. Public 'objects'. But I am not 'emulating' these objects either. They are 'credible stimulants' – 'credible' because of their inclusion in a high profile arts space; 'stimulants' because they catch my attention, prompt thoughts, and live in my memory. I converse with them. They mediate my development of *individual* 'habits of thought' – and of gesture. Another painting's topography may *affect* me in a way that stimulates my own development of gestural handling of paint.

If individual 'habit' is more helpful than a shared '*habitus*' for explaining the transmission of practices, then bringing 'I' back into the picture might help us understand how creative practice is learned, performed, and transmitted. For example, the acquisition of drawing skills challenges 'emulation' as a transmission mechanism. Drawing and painting are commonly taught by demonstration, but (certainly in my experience) this is not always successful. Success requires perception as well as motor skills, and perception cannot be observed (and therefore emulated). Narvaez suggested that perception

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is *culturally* learned (in terms of what we pay attention to), and this is what Edwards (2001) does – she tells artists *what to pay attention to*, for example boundaries (line) and light (form). She gives artists the visual language to learn how to ‘look’. Edwards developed this language through reflection on her embodied ‘knowing’ as a drawing practitioner. She was able to account for her own tacit knowledge of how to draw, through a practice-led research process. She identified perceptual skills in such a way that she could teach them (by setting practical activities for the learner to develop the skills by *practising* them, paying attention to feedback from the emerging image, rather than by *copying* her). Her work illustrates the potential pedagogic value of self-reflection on tacit (individually developed through habituation) knowledge.

4.1.5 Summary of section one

Looking at ‘practices’ and ‘*habitus*’ raised questions which helped me to consider the ‘social’ immanent in my creative practice. What have I been ‘copying’ such that it has become ‘embodied’ in repeated gestures, habits and performances? What have I learned ‘from body to body’? What unconscious intentionality is already-embodied in these repeated acts or performances? What predispositions or propensities to act (propositions) do I feel, and in what ‘events’? How does the artefact have political agency in the ‘practice’ of art-making? What does it mean to ‘perform’ art in a ‘convincing enough manner’? Considering these questions through reflection on practice, I argued that I learned, not from ‘body to body’, but from ‘artefact to artefact’ through looking at public artworks and making my own, all the time asking ‘how do I make artworks that are *art*?’ In shaping the emergent artefact, I am informed by social memory of public objects, and with these ‘credible stimulants’ I work out (through practice) my own habituated ways of putting on a ‘good enough’ performance. I’ve discussed ‘feeling a propensity’ to act (or not) in the selection of a source image, the ‘internalised’ voices (or historical narratives) that make up this ‘weighting’ as *social imagination*, and the conflicting ‘*habitus*’ between the contemporary artist who risks ‘upset’ and the compliant female who ‘smoothes over’ which may represent ‘symbolic violence’. I have described ‘events’ in which

interactions with materials, through improvisational play following 'propositions', stimulated sensory memory which is also *cultural* – such that materials and the emerging artefact have political agency, influencing the outcome. But what are the effects of those artefacts in the world? And is it possible to create a viewing practice in which the artefact is a participant in a collective inquiry? The next section will start to consider these questions by reflecting on the second event. They will be addressed in more depth in Chapter Five in relation to the third event.

4.2 Section Two: Audience experience

Bolt's (2010) description of the material process of allowing art to emerge and the 'shift in thought' that can occur through the exegesis is clearly important *for the artist* (as illustrated in Chapter Three). But what effects occur for a *viewer*, and how can these be gauged? This section brings in the audience. First, it introduces the second event '*Feeling a way through...*' and describes the two main practice-led research methods used: video editing, and audience participation. It goes on to explore audience meaning-making from seeing artistic process on video. It discusses ways in which cognition may extend to the collective social body of the audience, and develops a notion of 'co-responsibility' that encompasses the viewer in the process of inquiring and making meaning. Audience observations are discussed, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of actor network theory (Latour, 2005; Bennett, 2010) to explore the 'social' agency of the artefacts, and active spectatorship (Rancière, 2011) to explore audience co-authorship.

4.2.1 Feeling a way through ...



Figure 4.4 Still from *Feeling a way through ...*, 2013

On 17th December 2013, I created an installation of paintings and videos in Alec Clegg studio, stage@leeds at the University of Leeds. This was the invitation:

'Feeling a way through ...' is an invitation to participate in the 'work' of art. In a shared exploration of paintings and video made during the artist's ongoing project of making sense of climate change responsibility, you will share your readings and responses to the artwork – through reflection, conversation, dialogue. Come and feel part of it.

The event is documented here: [Feeling a way through ...](#). You may find it helpful to watch this video before reading on.

The next section summarises the research methods used to address the questions that arose from *The Gesture of Thinking* (in Chapter Two).

4.2.2 Methods

4.2.2.1 Video

What meanings does a viewer make from seeing the work made?

I used video to explore this. I recorded improvisational play in my studio, and used this digital material to edit and juxtapose video fragments through

digital reflection, aiming to recreate that playful experience; to share the 'feeling that I get' as I'm making the painting. I presented the paintings and videos adjacent to each other.

4.2.2.2 Audience participation

In what ways can viewers' awareness of their participation in the work of art be facilitated?

I invited participation to explore how 'co-responsibility' encompasses the 'viewer' as well as the artist in the process of inquiring and making meaning. In my introduction to the audience, I explained that the artwork is part of my ongoing project of making sense of climate change responsibility, and invited them to participate in *making* the artwork, telling them: "*There are no 'right' answers – I ask questions with my studio practice and the work is in making sense of it*". I gave each participant a hand-made sketchbook and a pencil and invited them to respond in writing or drawing. I invited the audience to touch the paintings *if they wanted to*, and included 'touch' labels on the artworks. After 30 minutes, I facilitated a group discussion which I introduced with three questions: i) Where is the artwork? ii) What did it mean to you? iii) Who made it? If they didn't mention 'touch', I prompted them by asking how touch affected the meaning of the work (if at all). The sketchbooks and the discussion were intended to be part of the experience of the artwork as well as providing a 'trace' of audience reflections.

Methodologically, however, there were ethical and philosophical difficulties. One concern is the relationship between the experience itself, and the audience member's ability to consciously articulate that experience.

Assuming that audience members mean what they say is both necessary and problematic according to audience researcher Matthew Reason (2010).

It is necessary because it is unethical to attempt to reinterpret responses.

How do we know 'better'? And problematic because as Reason says, "we cannot and do not always say what we mean – or indeed know what we mean" (2010: 17). Another difficulty is that asking audiences to *analyse* their experience might disrupt their ability to *know* how they felt (ibid: 17).

Reason has worked with drawing to help audiences explore embodied or intuitive responses: "drawing introduces opportunities for change, accident

and intuition to interrupt the process; for slippage to occur between intention and realisation” (ibid: 28). As this is one of my own motivations for painting, it is appropriate to offer drawing to audiences as a means of making sense of their experience. Sketchbook prompts also aimed to stimulate immediate (rather than analytical) responses: *‘what are you noticing? what are you feeling? what are you wondering?’*

Through this intervention, I am inviting the audience to ‘co-create’ meaning or interpretation. Within arts marketing, discussions on managing the audience experience have coined the term ‘co-creation’ to describe the increasing involvement of audiences in creative processes. ‘Co-creation’ has been defined as working with audiences “to create something together: it could be meaning or interpretation; a space or exhibition; an online resource or collective response” (Govier cited in Walmsley & Franks, 2011: 7). However, as Walmsley and Franks have highlighted, not all audience members want a high level of involvement, and there are still important questions about co-creation, including the extent to which audiences can “really become part of a collective creative process” (ibid: 8). Boorsma (2006) points out that co-creation requires willingness from participants, an open mind, acceptance of the challenge, and belief in the potential of the artwork to tell them something new, and this requires an atmosphere of trust. Brown and Ratzkin also suggest that ‘co-creation’ encompasses the idea that “audiences increasingly want to see ‘under the hood’ of a work in progress” and that being “part of the creative act itself” deepens their experience (Brown & Ratzkin, 2011: 68). It is these two aspects of co-creation (creating meaning together and making artistic process visible through video) that I investigate in the next section.

The event had a fixed duration of an hour, and was run twice with an audience of around ten each time. At the end, I collected the sketchbooks (participants could choose to have them returned). I recorded and transcribed the discussion.

4.2.3 Observations and analysis

I will now share selected observations from audience responses and reflect on insights they might offer (bearing in mind the difficulties in audience research outlined above). First, I will look at audience responses to the videos. Second, I will introduce and discuss how a notion of ‘co-responsibility’ might encompass the viewer as well as the artist. I use the term ‘co-responsibility’ rather than ‘co-creation’ (above), as I will explain.

4.2.3.1 Seeing the ‘making’

What meanings does a viewer make from seeing the work made?

Bolt (2004) argues that processes of ‘material thinking’ put ‘reality’ into the painting, and the painting reflects this back into the world, creating real effects. She argues that the resulting painting is not purely representative, but is ‘performative’ such that it brings “into being that which it figures” (2004: 3–4). If knowledge emerges in the material processes of making, the above question sought to understand whether it is the painting (as a noun) that is ‘performative’ as suggested by Bolt, or whether it is *painting* as a verb – and if so, whether that *process* needs to be shared. I aimed to explore how seeing an edited video of studio *making* affects the meanings that are made from the artwork. Does seeing video of the painting develop enhance or stimulate a sense of ‘inhabiting’ paintings for a *viewer*? To help me understand whether there is meaning in seeing the work ‘done’, and whether this is experienced as *part* of the work, or simply *documentation*, I looked for responses in which participants seemed to be commenting on the video, or on the relationship between the video and the paintings. The following observations have been drawn thematically from audience sketchbooks and discussion transcripts.

- **Craft processes get noticed:** enjoyment in watching process, a sense of the physicality of the making process, a feeling of ‘being there’, noticing the activities of my hands.
- For some participants, seeing my hand touching the work on the video made them **want to copy** it.

- **Symbolic connections** were made between the paintings and video, 'the girl in blue' is both the girl in the painting and me-the-artist in my blue shirt.
- Some responses suggested that certain actions carried meaning in a sense of **the action doing something** – using a ruler to draw a line; the repeated painting of several girl figures; the actions of moving, placing, and cutting out the girl figure.
- **Associations or memories** are triggered by processes shown on video.
- **Artefactuality is exposed** though seeing the making of the artefact.
- Video footage **draws attention to features of the painting**, for example the scale of the girl, and the layering of materials.
- **Layers of process are revealed** which are not visible in the painting.
- For some, seeing the process seemed to be experienced as a **distraction**, detachment or disconnection from the narratives or meanings that could be experienced from the work's content.

The stories of memories and associations suggest that the video triggered connections with personal experience. Some of these actions were no longer visible in the painting, so these connections may not otherwise have been made. In this way, my exploratory and playful activities in the studio made a direct connection with audience members. In the case of maps, participants' accounts of their memories and associations are consistent with my own feeling of our strong connection to place and identity, and our compulsion to mark out, map and own the land. Clearly, the actions on these videos had *meaningful potential*. The above responses also suggest a 'feeling of being there' and of wanting to 'copy' the video. This sense of *participating* in the action and copying it will be further explored in Chapter Five through the final practice event.

It is also worth looking at what these videos *don't* do. Whilst the audience were clear that the work was about climate change, for some of them 'process' became a distraction from 'content'. (This seemed to be further exacerbated by the invitation to 'touch' the work, which was experienced as a distraction rather than adding meaning to the work.) In terms of whether

the videos enhanced a sense of 'inhabiting' paintings, some responses suggested that the explicit footage of crafting activity (such as a time-lapse video of the painting *Amber*) may actually *distract* viewers from an imaginative 'state', feeling, or experience. The artist Michael Jarvis discusses the potential difficulties in the 'making visible' of artistic process, citing the example of Namuth's documentation of Pollock's material practice: "observation of intimate transactions between an artist and his/her material processes can blunt and even ossify practice" (2007: 202). It can also fall into the trap of 'fictional fakery', he suggests, "a performance put on for the benefit of an audience" (ibid: 203). My videos seem most useful where they draw attention to a feature of the painting such as scale or repetition, and where they show a layer that is no longer visible. But the video has to form part of the narrative, otherwise it seems to break the flow of imagination and distract from content. This raises a question for my future practice: How might the work enhance a sense of collective imaginative engagement? This could be achieved through paying attention to the *meaningful* qualities of the work, avoiding a focus on craft. Actions such as placing and replacing figures, rather than showing skills of 'making' images, have *meaningful* potential; suggesting something, not just documenting. This is constructed and conscious, using the camera as a new tool, but still part of an imaginative playful process. As I rearranged the cut-out girl figures on the map, I was exploring something intuitively. At the same time, I knew I was recording it and could use that footage. I am not recording the 'authentic' process of making a painting which, as I would agree with Jarvis (2007: 203), can only be treated with suspicion. I *know* the camera is there, as is the ghost of a potential audience.

4.2.3.2 Co-responsibility

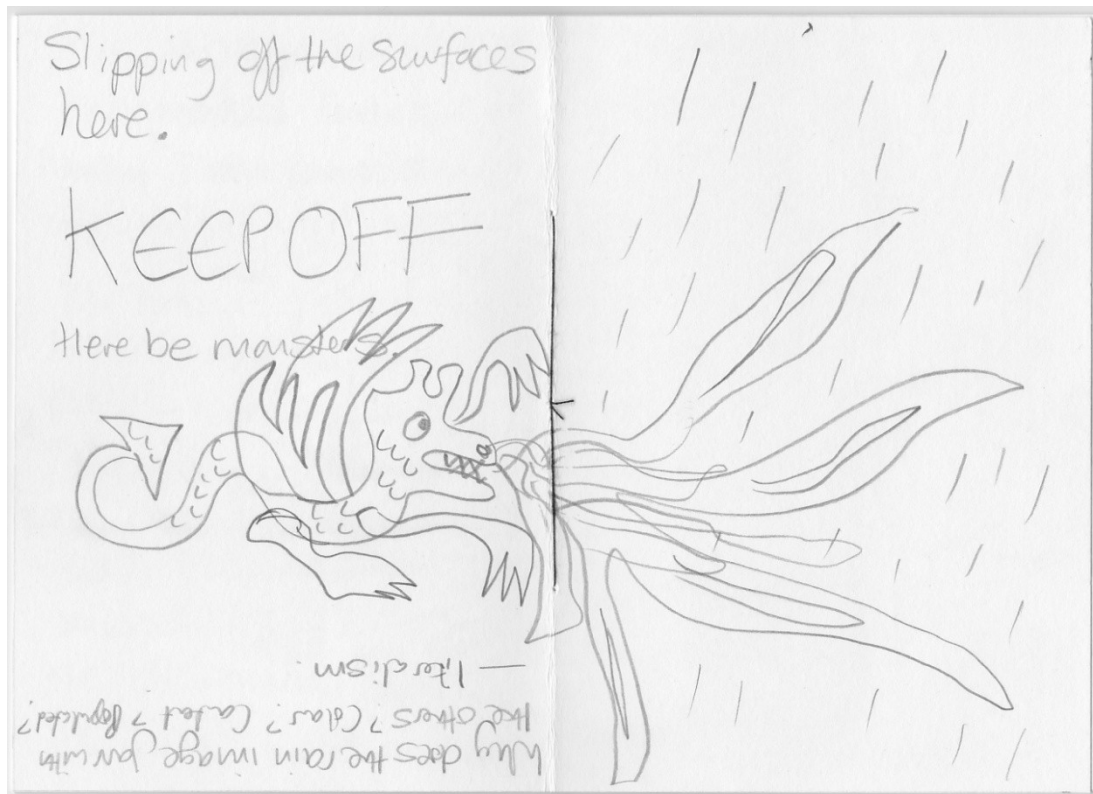


Figure 4.5 Audience sketchbook, *Feeling a way through ...* 2013

I will now consider how a notion of 'co-responsibility' (Bolt, 2007) might encompass the viewer as well as the artist in the process of inquiring and making meaning (audience contributions are indented). *The Origin of the Work of Art* (Heidegger, 1971) explores the 'riddle' of art, which goes thus: What is the origin of the work of art? The art is found in the artwork – but what is the origin of the artwork? It is not a work of art without being made by an artist. But what is the origin of the artist? The artist is defined by making the work of art, therefore the origin of the artist is the work of art. The essay explores this circle from various vantage points, including materials, form, context, and the cultural systems of critique and commerce within which the artist operates. Heidegger suggests that a work of art is not just a 'thing', 'formed' out of 'materials' – it is something in the presence of which the 'unconcealedness' of *being of things* comes to presence. This is a 'happening', an 'unconcealment' rather than a static thing. But who is present at this 'happening'?

Bolt's posthuman understanding of artistic process and authorship is partly based on Heidegger's notion of 'co-responsibility' of artist, tools and materials in the process of making art: "in the artistic process, objects have agency and it is through the establishing conjunctions with other contributing elements in the art that humans are co-responsible for letting art emerge" (2007: 1). Her description here suggests consistency with my working definition of 'agency' as *power emerging through action*. But she does not include the audience in her analysis. I have attempted to do so via a notion of 'co-responsibility' that encompasses audience as well as artist in the process of 'unconcealment', and this is why I use the term instead of 'co-creation'⁵⁸. The sketchbooks and discussion facilitated viewers' awareness of their participation in the *work* of art. The sketchbooks were intended to stimulate reflection in-the-moment, providing a tool for extended cognition – thinking on the page. The discussion formed part of the art work, as participants worked together to construct meaning. Reason terms this "experience as countersignature", a presence in itself, and an integral part of the experience (2010: 27). The discussion included the question: "*Where is the artwork, and who made it?*" to explore whether the audience experienced 'co-responsibility'. One participant did seem to experience it in this way:

In terms of where the artwork is, I kind of got the impression that the entire space was supposed to be the work of art? [...] I also felt that us in the space was intended to be part of it; the fact that we're being recorded, the way that we interacted with the space. I really felt that [...] I've written in the notebook that I was very conscious of my own impact on the space (some other sounds of agreement here), the sound of my own footsteps, casting shadows, obscuring people's views, I felt that I was very much part of what was happening, and the artwork was actually the entire place, not specifically the painting or whatever.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ As will become apparent in Chapter Five, the term 'responsibility' also makes an important connection with the *content* of the artwork in respect of climate change.

⁵⁹ Audience discussion 17/12/13

This self-awareness and feeling part of the work was echoed by another participant:

conscious that I'm now performing in the piece 3 audience members looking at me⁶⁰

Another response suggested a sense of experiencing a moment in a continuing and shared process, in which the participants 'take' the work with them:

the artwork at the moment's in this room, I don't think it's going to stay there, it's going to journey on out. I think when we leave we'll take some of that process with us. But clearly it didn't start in this room because you can see the process that led to this room⁶¹

Another participant suggested that the 'take out' is unique to each individual, and the art exists in the *interactions*:

when you say who made 'it', it could be the interactions, or even what we take out of this, in which case the 'who made it' is going to be very unique to each person, so there are as many 'its' as there are people in the space⁶²

These responses suggest a shared sense from some audience members of a 'felt' sense of 'co-responsibility'. For one participant, however, the 'origin' of the work of art rested with the artist:

I would say you are the originating artist, and then there's clearly from the credits at the end that there are people who helped facilitate its arrival in the space, and I think those engagement materials, so there's layers of making going on, but in terms of the originating catalyst it's still assigned to you⁶³

⁶⁰ Audience sketchbook 17/12/13

⁶¹ Audience discussion 17/12/13

⁶² Audience discussion 17/12/13

⁶³ Audience discussion 17/12/13

Other agents in this assemblage which are co-responsible are *artefacts*. The paintings were mediators (rather than transmitters) of meaning – for example, some participants seek narrative – “*what is the girl doing?*” The sketchbook gives them the space to write their own story mediated by the painting – “*At one point I got lost and started a story of my own...*” The sketchbooks contain a trace of the viewer’s work of experiencing and making sense of the art. They became an ‘external memory’ as their contents were shared verbally in the discussion, performing as mediators which shaped the event. Some participants suggested they were “*part of the artwork*”. These traces of audience responses take the studio work forward. Examples of such responses include a comment about my use of recycled materials, creating a “*unity of theme and form*” which I had not fully appreciated. This related to my anxiety about (un)sustainability of art materials, and led me to source used wood panels. For one participant, the painting-over of the figure in *Keep Off* “*absorbed*” the girl, as if she had “*dwelt there*”, and this adds something new to my reading of the figure’s boundary remaining, her impact always visible. These traces of audience experience are part of ‘revealing’ and forward-shaping the studio work. This represents a process of ‘co-creation’. By seeing ‘under the hood’ the audience made further meaning from the artworks, and those meanings informed my future practice and ongoing creative process.

But this required facilitation skills and an ability to ‘let go’ as discussed by Lynne Conner, a performance theorist and practitioner, and community-based arts activist. Conner’s model of ‘arts talk’ (2013) is based on the premise that sharing in the interpretation of meaning is pleasurable for audience members, and increases their engagement in the work. The problem, she says, is that some arts workers either don’t want to give up control of the meaning-making process, or simply don’t know how to facilitate this. Audiences, too, don’t necessarily have the preparedness or skills to participate in the meaning-making process after decades of meaning-making being imposed on them. They are not used to public opportunities to participate in articulating meaning; *social* interpretation rather than individual meaning making. She proposes that arts workers and their audiences can work together as a learning community to share

knowledge and insights from the art work. She uses the term 'arts talk' to describe arts-centred conversations, dialogue, discussion, analysis, debate and exchange of views in a "productive arts ecology" (ibid: 5). Her approach is particularly relevant to the understanding of artistic labour as ecological cognition which I have developed in this research, because she investigates interpretive meaning-making processes as *both* embodied and socially constructed (ibid: 9). The 'arts talk' model, she says, "(1) creates a conscious relationship with the audience that is transparent in its goals; (2) offers productive facilitators and/or facilitation structures that ask, listen, and request rather than tell, lecture, or direct; and (3), begins and ends with the audience's interests in mind" (ibid: 99).

The audience are co-authors of meaning. The French philosopher Jacques Rancière questions "the logic of straight, uniform transmission" (2011: 14) from artist to viewer, or a presupposition that an audience will 'feel' whatever the artist has 'put in'. For his 'Emancipated Spectator', the art object is a mediating object "whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them" (ibid: 14–15). Sutherland and Acord (2007) also suggest that artworks as mediators have *transformative* power. Making artwork in the studio is not the whole work – making sense of it is a fluid and social process that involves the artist and the audience in engaging actively with the work and each other. The traces of the audience's work mediate my own sense of the work's 'happening'. I need "spectators who play the role of active interpreters" (Rancière, 2011: 22) and the echoes of their engagements accompany me in my studio.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter set out to develop an extended theory of material thinking that includes *sociality* by focusing on the lens of the 'social' and the intersections of 'artefact' and 'habit(us)' (Figure 4.1). Chapter Three showed the process of making paintings and videos as one of 'extended cognition' involving 'material thinking', which artefacts both mediate and record a trace of. The current chapter has shown how the 'social' is *embodied* in this process and

embedded in the artefact, through habitual performances, social imagination, and felt relationships between images, materials and bodies.

Section one addressed the research sub-question: ii) How do social processes, cultural and environmental factors interact with human and material bodies in creative practice? It suggested that 'feeling a propensity' to act is influenced by 'internalised' voices, a kind of *social imagination*. It identified conflicts of '*habitus*' between the contemporary artist who risks 'upset' and the compliant female who 'smoothes over'. It described how interactions with materials through improvisational play stimulated sensory memory which is also *cultural*. Learning how to be an artist involves developing '*habitus*' through practice, developing habitual ways of putting on a 'good enough' performance. Shaping the emergent artefact is informed by social memory of public objects as 'credible stimulants'.

The second section examined the social effects of those artefacts. It showed how the form-shaping process included the design of the second event, *Feeling a way through...* which was designed to orchestrate and emphasise 'co-responsibility'. It reflected on this event to address the questions raised from event one. From asking: *What meanings does a viewer make from seeing the work made?* key insights included: (i) craft processes were noticed, and for some were experienced as a distraction from the content of the work; (ii) the video seems most useful where it is narrative, where it draws attention to a feature of the painting, and where it shows a layer that is no longer visible; (iii) personal connections were made by watching exploratory and playful studio activities. These insights raised the question: How might the work enhance a sense of collective imaginative engagement? This is addressed in the next chapter.

From asking: *In what ways can viewers' awareness of their participation in the work of art be facilitated?* key insights included: (i) the sketchbooks and discussion facilitated viewers' awareness of their participation in the *work of art* as 'co-responsible' agents; (ii) some discussion responses suggested a shared 'felt' sense of 'co-responsibility', mentioning factors such as the use of a *theatre* space, being *recorded*, feeling *watched*, and *interacting* with people and space; (iii) the sketchbooks mediated and recorded traces of the

viewer's sense-making of the artefacts, and became an 'external memory' mediating the discussion; (iv) these traces of audience experience affect the forward-shaping of the studio work.

By framing 'painting' as a social practice of looking, feeling, imagining and talking, we can open up new spaces of understanding mediated by paintings and people, in which artistic agency is 'distributed' amongst artist, audience and artefacts. However, if artistic agency is 'distributed' in this way, I am left with the question of what this means for my own artistic subjectivity:

- iii) What is the place of the artist's voice in a shared ecological artistic subjectivity?

The next chapter, along with the third and final event, explores the implications of 'distributed' artistic agency. It describes how drawing attention to collective meaning-making parallels the *content* of the artwork – a collective responsibility in relation to climate change.

Chapter 5 Making as thinking: Artistic labour as ecological cognition

The aim of this chapter is to explore the implications of ‘distributed’ artistic subjectivity, including the place of the artist’s voice. It describes how a growing ecological sensibility has shaped my studio practice and the way in which I *share* artistic process through video. It addresses in more detail the artist’s work of mediation of the encounter with artefacts. It performs a selective analysis of the third practice event, focusing on audience bodies and their interactions with materials and each other. Previous chapters have explored in detail the work of the *artist* and the *artefacts*. This chapter seeks to understand the artistic labour of the *audience* using the ecological cognition model. Rather than focusing on one lens at a time, the chapter entwines them, as if the model were a cross-section of rope (Figure 5.1). It focuses on the model overlaps and interactions between lenses.

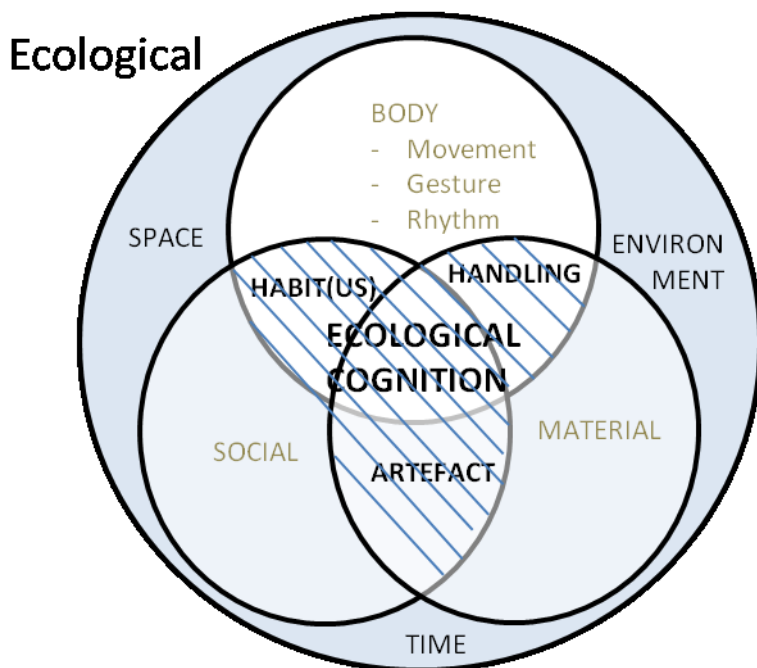


Figure 5.1 Artistic labour as ecological cognition – overlaps

The chapter brings together research insights from the previous chapters to focus on the primary question:

How does painting evolve a practice in line with new norms around 'spectatorship', and how can we understand this labour?

It shows how understanding artistic labour as ecological cognition has enabled me to develop an artistic practice in which artistic subjectivity can be experienced by artist and audience as *distributed*. It also addresses the research sub-question raised in the previous chapter:

- iii) What is the place of the artist's voice in a shared ecological artistic subjectivity?

The primary methods and sources used to consider these questions are:-

- Reflection on third phase of studio practice
- Design and analysis of the third practice event (audience participation; digital reflection)

The first section reviews how insights from my research have shaped studio practice together with my sharing of that practice⁶⁴. It reflects on the third phase of practice to consider ways in which understanding artistic labour as ecological cognition has enabled me to develop an artistic practice in which artistic subjectivity can be experienced by artist and audience as *distributed*.

The second section turns to the third event. It reflects on my event design decisions, reviewing the means by which I mediated an experience of distributed artistic subjectivity. It then performs a selective analysis of what that event *did* using 'gesture' as a meaning-making device that recognises overlaps between the 'body' and the 'social' (Noland & Ness, 2008). It argues that meaning was realised in *action*, shaped by a sense of 'infectiousness' from watching the creative work of both artist and audience. It proposes that a human compulsion to 'make' things was *enacted*, a

⁶⁴ Chapter One explained how sharing artistic process is increasingly seen to form part of the art 'work' in a 'post-aesthetic' arts context.

'performance' of the 'social'. It considers the place of the artist's voice and proposes that mediation skills could include voicing the 'social' that is being made to raise awareness of its 'happening'.

First, let me briefly introduce the third practice event upon which the analysis is based. *The Garden of Earthly Delights* was held on 18th May 2017 in Alec Clegg studio, stage@leeds at the University of Leeds. It was advertised as an inquiry into the feelings that arise from being affected by climate change – and from knowing that we are *affecting* climate. Participants were invited to participate in making the art *work* through reflection and dialogue. The event sought to navigate a tension between creating space with an *audience* to 'make' the work, and the need for the artist to be clear about where intention needs to be voiced (such as sources of images). It had two aims:-

- to focus on *relationships* between artist, audience, artefacts, and environment; and
- to facilitate a sense of immersion in *making* the work (*being* with it) to create a sense of collective imaginative engagement.

The event addressed two questions that were raised from the previous phases of practice:

- *In what ways can 'painting' help us to make sense of climate change responsibility?*
- *How might the work enhance a sense of collective imaginative engagement?*

These are addressed *through* the practice, and responses to them are embedded within the outcomes of the event itself. I have curated some of these in Appendix A.

It should be noted that participants included the examination and supervision teams. Contributors therefore had differing levels of power in terms of their impact on this project. Being transparent about this, I have included, respected and valued all contributions within the analysis. Whilst the event invitation was posted on a general arts email list, the ten participants who *chose* to come were artist-researchers, and this will have influenced

outcomes. An audience who were not arts practitioners may have behaved differently.

5.1 Section One: Evolving a practice of *distributed* artistic subjectivity

I will start by reflecting on the form-shaping of the 'artefacts' from the third phase of practice to review how insights from my research have helped me to evolve an ecological sensibility that shapes my work.

5.1.1 Intention and attention⁶⁵



Figure 5.2 *Fat Fun; Huts; Shelter*. 2014, acrylic and collage on board, 40 x 34 cm

These paintings were presented with the video [Seals](#), which will be referred to throughout this section so you might find it helpful to view this now.

The UK storm surges of December 2013 demanded my attention. A media storm that closely followed the meteorological storm made hundreds of images available. As discussed in the previous chapter, these images had agency; they prompted me to act. I was swept up in a social storm, held by an uncanny fascination with this manifestation of the implications of a warming planet. Ingold suggests that we come to understand the world as we engage *with* it, tracing paths of becoming to “follow what is going on”

⁶⁵ Marshall (2001) in her practice of action inquiry works in cycles of ‘intention’ and ‘attention’, the former setting the frame for her inquiry, and the latter adopting an attitude of careful observation within that frame.

(2011: 12–14). I wanted to follow *what was going on* by immersing myself in the event. I did this by noticing what I was *reaching-out-towards*. As I discussed in Chapter Two, ‘intentionality’ in Husserl’s phenomenological sense refers to consciousness always being *of* something; it is a holistic *action*. Consciousness *is* the reaching-out-towards, rather than consciousness first, which then reaches out. Artistic *intentionality* can be understood in this sense of reaching-out-towards (rather than preconceiving an idea). This involved physical affect and a propensity to act (a political action responding to a ‘proposition’⁶⁶) which was both ‘corporeal’ and ‘social’. Perception is culturally learned. Learning about climate change affects what I pay *attention* to.

I particularly reached-out-towards the seal pups. They ‘pulled’ at me. I had observed seals at length during a holiday in Pembrokeshire, and my sense of being ‘pulled’ came not just from the images but from the memory of *being with* the seals, lying on a cliff, haunted by their cries. The *corporeal* memory of being in that *environment* was part of the ‘pull’. In the presence of the camera, the paper seal became the focus for play. The cut-out paper forms, fitting into the palm of my hand, reminded me of tiny fish. Only now, as I write, do I remember the story of the herring gulls coming inland to feed because herring populations crashed through overfishing. I was told this by an RSPB warden years ago, and his story, unconsciously, found its way into the video in the gulls’ cries. My hands handling the ‘fish’, and my ears ‘fishing’ for sounds, made the connection before my conscious mind caught up. The story shaped what I had learned to pay attention to.

In Chapter Two, I introduced Ingold’s ‘dwelling’ perspective (2000; 2011) which transcends the split between ‘things’ and their ecosphere. ‘Things’ interact with elements such as temperature or airflow, so our engagement with them is *corporeal* and *cultural* and mediated by the properties of *things* and surrounding *elements*. In ‘handling’ the cut-out seals I noticed the flimsy paper responding to air movements caused by bodily motion or breath. I watched them flutter gently, before blowing them off the board. Playfully, I became the storm. The camera afforded the opportunity for that

⁶⁶ See Chapter Four.

kind of attentive play. Through developing an aware studio practice where the camera is present, interactions with materials and tools become an opportunity for experimentation and play, such that artistic agency shifts around in the ecosphere of the studio. I have learned to pay *attention*, to become aware of the materials, tools and environment as co-active agents in an art of inquiry. I become aware of the present moment, being with materials, allowing myself to be led by them. I have developed the sensitivity and confidence to notice and follow moments of ‘agency’ where materials ‘make’ me do things. The video creates a trace of this – yet this is an edited trace; the editing software is another artistic tool.

These recorded and edited moments of *intention* (reaching-out-towards) and *attention* (noticing what is going on) add layers of meaning. They record an awareness of being and a tracery of paths for others to explore. Gibson suggests that a picture is a *record* which “*preserves what its creator has noticed and considers worth noticing*” (1986: 274) [original emphasis]. A painting is a trace of movement which can be *felt* (ibid: 275). Pictures, he says, are not ‘representations’; rather the markings on the surface record an awareness – a trace of paying attention. A picture can locate the observer in an environment in which they see themselves:

What is induced in these pictures is not an illusion of reality but an awareness of being in the world. This is no illusion. It is a legitimate goal of depiction, if not the only one. (Gibson, 1986: 283–284)

This can be described as *poietic*. The Greeks distinguished *praxis* (a will expressed through action or ‘doing’) from *poiesis* (to produce, as in ‘bringing into being’) (Dionea, 2012). Feedback from *Feeling a way through ...* had suggested that videos of studio craft (*praxis*) distracted from content (*poiesis* or ‘bringing into being’ of the artwork). This raised the question: *How might the work enhance a sense of collective imaginative engagement?* To address this, I ‘felt’ for meaningful actions with *poietic* potential, sharing play, discovery and *inhabiting* the work rather than showing technique. From my analysis in the previous chapter, actions on video that were narrative or had meaningful potential were less likely to distract from ‘content’. The videos seemed most effective where *praxis* and *poiesis* merged into each other,

such that the 'doing' had the function of 'bringing into being'. This created *meaningful potential*. By sharing *my* imaginative process (intuitively exploring the unfolding present moment) I aimed to engage the *audiences'* imagination, inviting an experience of 'production into presence'. The *Seals* video provides a trace of imaginative engagement with the paper cut-outs that is *doing* something, not just 'documenting'. The video is *a record of what I noticed* during the journey of exploring an event that caught my attention; a trace of an emergent awareness of being in the world.

5.1.2 Artistic agency as 'distributed' – shared inquiry into 'being'

Ingold cites Merleau-Ponty: "The painter's relation to the world [...] is one of 'continued birth' [...] of the world becoming a world" (2011: 69). *The Garden of Earthly Delights* sets up a relation with the seaside world which is real, drawn from actual *embodied* and *cultural* experience. Ingold suggests that knowing something involves knowing its story and connecting it to one's own (ibid: 160–161). *The Garden of Earthly Delights* suggests a continuous unfolding of stories and invites the viewer to connect these to their own. Through sketchbooks and discussion, these stories can be shared and further stories emerge. This is a *shared* exegesis or "a mode of revealing" (Bolt, 2010: 34) through exploring and articulating what emerges from the 'artefacts'. In this collective process of 'making as thinking', a social world unfolds. A fundamental component of the 'art' is made during this *event*. And this event is also a 'making' of the world, a 'becoming' which is ontological as the next section will explain.

5.1.3 Creative labour as ontology

We learn about the world by interacting with it, and we interact with the world through labour. Philosopher Bruno Gulli (2005) discusses 'labour' in this expansive sense of sensuous purposive human activity in which we are always immersed in the world. The central thesis of his book, *Labor of Fire*, is that the economic concept of labour as understood under Capitalism is not the same thing as 'labour' itself. This understanding of 'labour itself' is distinct from concepts of production, productivity and profit as understood in

economic terms. Gulli argues that to be human is to labour. As social beings, we have always communicated, organised, and transformed things. He says: “*world* is nothing but the *making* and the *having been made of* labor” (2005: 6). Labour *makes* a social world: “as labor enters into the constitution of a social praxis, that is, the work of ideas, the constitution of communities, the structures of governance, the shaping of individuality [...] it also *makes* what is properly called a *world*” (ibid: 9). Thus Gulli contends that ‘labour’ is to social and political ontology what ‘being’ is to pure ontology. He explains this with reference to Polanyi, who said “[l]abour is only another name for a human activity which goes with life itself” (Polanyi, cited in Gulli, 2005: 3). Making ourselves as beings through labour, we *enact* society. This ontological concept of labour ‘sits above’ both economy and culture. “Labor is being as sensuous human activity” (ibid: 147). The concept of ‘sensuous’, Gulli says, takes us to aesthetics as a metaphysical concept relevant to both artistic production and (non-artistic) production. Looking at artistic production, Gulli refers us to Heidegger’s work on Nietzsche in which the artist brings forth into Being (ibid: 149) (which I referred to in Chapter Four). He cites Heidegger as saying “[t]o be an artist is to be able to bring something forth. But to bring something forth means to establish in Being *something that does not exist*” (Heidegger cited in Gulli, 2005: 149) [my emphasis]. Here, Gulli suggests that Heidegger misses Nietzsche’s “emphasis on the sensuous and on *this world*”, instead introducing the “supersensuous” and “metaphysical split that Nietzsche explicitly rejects” (ibid: 149). By rejecting a metaphysical ontology of an ‘apparent world’, Gulli suggests that we are left with the sensuous as “the world we are” (ibid: 149). Gulli insists that the emphasis on ‘this world’ is important to heal the split between our *concept* of ‘world’ and the world-we-are.

Methexis heals this split. Gadamer explains the meanings of *methexis* in the context of Plato’s use of it in place of *mimesis*. He tells us that *mimesis* is ‘re-presentation’ or ‘approximation’ of the thing itself; whereas ‘methexis’ (participation) incorporates the “idea of the whole and the parts” and “Participation [...] completes itself [...] only in genuine being-together and belonging-together” (2007: 310–311). There is a *participation* of form and

substance (or idea and material) rather than one 'representing' the other. Our sense-making of world (idea) inter-twines with the world that we are (material); they belong together as "a concurrent actual production" (Carter, cited in Bolt, 2000: 205). Performance theorist Laura Cull (writing in the context of participatory performance) uses the Deleuzian concept of *immanence* to describe attentive participation in *this* world as distinct from a transcendent escape to another world. For Deleuze, Cull says, "immanence means there is only *one* kind of thing or being in reality" rather than a separation between the 'real' and its 'representation', and this one 'thing' is a 'process' (2015: 7). The whole "expresses itself in the parts" or bodies and this expression *is* ontological participation (ibid: 168) – or *methexis*. This will be discussed further later in this chapter.

The world that I make as an artist is not another world; not a subjective or psychological inner world. The world in the painting *as it is perceived* is the world that we are. Gulli's concept of 'creative labour' is relevant to understanding the work of both artist and audience, as I will now explain. Gulli bases his philosophy on Vico's practical metaphysics "of the human being as a being in the world with the material and spiritual needs of dwelling in it and making sense of it" (2005: 13), which Vico based on the 'first truth' that "*verum* (the true) and *factum* (what is made) are the same" (ibid: 14). For example, Gulli explains that in Vico's metaphysics, 'thinking' is a practical activity in which we gather up what is already there and, in that process, we make something new: "We make the truth and add to it" (ibid: 14). *Being* comes about through *making*; they exist in each other. He says "what labor does is constitute a *praxis* that makes a world. The power of praxis, that is, labor, is at one and the same time the power of poiesis [...] *making* and *judging as true*" (ibid: 7). Gulli argues that if you cannot separate production (making) from action (doing), then production ('what is made') cannot stand on its own – it contains 'action' within it, such that it becomes ontology (ibid: 153). In terms of 'artistic' production, the thing that is made (such as a painting) contains labour (action) within it, and the labour that made the painting exists only through that act of 'making' or 'transforming' that made the painting. 'Painting' is an act, both being and becoming, and the 'artefact' contains the action within it in the marks of its

making. Gulli, however, removes distinctions such as art or craft, seeking to connect action and production as 'creative labour' (which collapses together 'labour' as action (*praxis*) and 'creative' as transformation (*poesis*)).

'Production' is not *either* economic *or* artistic, but can include any 'world-making' transformation through action; action that makes something that contains the action within it (transformed material). This can also be understood in terms of *social* production, in which labour is a 'doing' that at the same time *makes* a world, and that world that is made contains the 'doing' within it. This is relevant to thinking about the work of the audience, as their making sense of the artefacts is also a making of a world, as I will now explain.

The previous chapter outlined Heidegger's (1971) suggestion that the work of art 'holds open' a space in which *being of things* can be revealed; 'coming to presence' as a *happening*. Heidegger also tells us that *techné* (which is present in both craft and art) denotes "a mode of knowing", and was understood by the Greeks as "a bringing forth of beings" rather than an action of making (ibid: 57). As I argued in the previous chapter, *techné* includes the work of mediation; creating the conditions of encounter *with* the work in which 'being of things' can be revealed. This is important because the 'creative labour' of the audience (their labour of 'doing' that 'makes' something) *constitutes* society. And this leaves a trace, as "being constantly changes, and the changes brought about into it by thinking are traces of permanence" (Gulli, 2005: 172). Creative labour is 'social' labour.

Referencing Adorno, Gulli tells us that society is immanent in artworks – not just a *reflection* of society, but *constituting* it. I propose that this immanence of society in the work extends to viewing practices (what we *make* of the work, rather than something the artist 'puts into' the work). I make paintings with figures of children and these often look ambiguous and unsettling. My paintings have been interpreted as 'expressing' troubles from my childhood, assuming individual artistic intentionality 'reflected' onto the painting.

However, from a perspective of creative labour as social labour, I argue that these interpretations *enact* a wider social anxiety around children which is mediated by the painting. Society is *constituted* by the dialogue with the paintings. This immanence of society in art, Gulli suggests, points to what-

could-be. Art's autonomy, rather than being limited to a resistive, critiquing of society, can *make* it. It can have "the affirmative power to ground and sustain a radically different concept of the social", which he admits may remain at the level of *potentiality*: "not merely a question of reproduction, but rather one of original production" of society (2005: 188) – *methexis* rather than just *mimesis*. This is why it is important to pay attention to how we 'view' paintings; how we 'use' them. I'm proposing that painting as inquiry can be understood as an 'extended' *dialogic* practice which encompasses the form-shaping of the event (mediation as *techné*). If this is so, then what are the means by which I mediate such an event, and what does this do? How can I create the experience that Gulli points towards, of 'making the social'? The next section considers these questions through reflection on the third event.

5.2 Section Two: Creating an experience of distributed artistic subjectivity

I will first describe my form-shaping of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and the influences on my event design decisions. I will then consider what the event *did* through a selective analysis. First, let me briefly introduce the format of the event. On arrival, participants were greeted with a spoken introduction before they entered the space. In the space itself, there were four 'workstations' arranged on the floor, with artefacts, sketchbooks, paper cut out figures, mark making materials, and stick-glue. Each sketchbook belonged with a particular piece of artwork. After 50 minutes, participants were invited to join a discussion, and to bring an object that had particular resonance or meaning for them. The event is documented here: [The Garden of Earthly Delights](#). You might find it helpful to watch this video before reading on.

5.2.1 Meaningful space

I aimed to create a 'meaningful' space in which the audience could develop a dialogic relationship with the artefacts and each other. In this 'dialectical practice' "meanings are 'made' from the transactions and narratives that

emerge and these have the power and agency to change on an individual or community level” (Sullivan, 2009: 50). The aesthetic experience is *relational*, moving artworks from a conception of ‘display’ to “a period of time that has to be experienced, or the opening of a dialogue [...]” (Bourriaud, 2006: 160). *Relational aesthetics* as “a state of encounter” (ibid: 160) has three themes: (i) being-together; (ii) the ‘encounter’ between viewer and painting; (iii) the collective elaboration of meaning (ibid: 161). I used these three themes as a loose framework to guide my mediation design, as follows.

5.2.1.1 Being-together

I learned from event two that a fixed duration (rather than ‘drop-in’) could facilitate a shared experience of being-together. The collective task in the third event to contribute to sketchbooks *located with each artefact* (rather than with individuals) invited participants to be affected by, and add to, each other’s responses, creating a sense of *working together*. I also considered the audience’s being-together *with the artist*. Would I be present in the space? Would I participate with them, or just be present at the introduction and discussion? Would feeling ‘watched’ affect their experience? I chose to return to my role as ‘maker’, cutting out figures as I did in the first event. I increasingly recognised the meaningfulness of this repeated gesture, and gave it prominence by performing it live. The cut-out figures draw attention to processes of reproduction: ecological, artistic, and commercial.

[...] that fact that you've spent hours cutting them out, all that meaning behind it, and the making, the repetition, they've all got a little aura because I know you've done a lot of that.⁶⁷

Providing scissors and glue afforded opportunities for participants to join me in that meaningful action.

⁶⁷ Audience discussion 18/05/17



Figure 5.3 Still from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*

5.2.1.2 The ‘encounter’ between viewer and painting

Gulli suggests that our dialogue with paintings involves a labour of ‘thinking’ that constitutes a world of everyday life (2005: 171), a “questioning” which is “not putting questions, but listening to the question that comes by itself and speaking back to it in essential conversation” (ibid: 172). This is the conversation that I aimed to facilitate – not *interpretation*, but rather ‘coming to apprehension’ or ‘gaining value’ in dialogue with the work. The spoken introduction to the participants was one mechanism by which this relationship was set up: “*I’m inviting you to make sense of the artworks for yourself, to make them **meaningful** by having a **conversation** with them*”. My aim was to engage the *audiences’* imagination through opportunities for mark-making and ‘handling’. The paper cut-outs created opportunities for imaginative engagement: noticing air movements, placing them in arrangements, and sticking them in the books. My invitation to “*have a conversation with each other*” was taken up, and shared stories, drawing, and other play in the sketchbooks suggest imagination was *enacted* through the materials. The wording of reflection prompts was carefully considered to focus on content rather than process: ‘*What do you make of it?*’

5.2.1.3 The collective elaboration of meaning

I invited *shared* artistic subjectivity by opening out the elaboration of meaning through sketchbooks and discussion, staging the 'exhibition' as collective inquiry. This was made explicit in the introductions to the event and the discussion, as I explain below. This brings me to the question raised in Chapter Four: iii) What is the place of the artist's voice in a shared ecological artistic subjectivity? I experience a tension between providing supporting information and leaving space for audience meaning-making. However, I learned with *Ruffles* that I *wanted* people to know its source. I also learned from the second event that I didn't *want* process to distract from content. I want the audience to focus on the work of making sense of anthropogenic climate change. Given the ethical provocation in my work, there are times when I need to 'impose' meaning, thus I don't entirely delegate meaning to the audience. Mediation includes judging where 'content' needs to be explicit, and contriving subtle ways of providing enough information for the audience to co-create an emergent set of meanings *in the context of the overall inquiry frame*. This frame has to be voiced by the artist. I did this in the introduction to the third event: "*The artworks are part of my ongoing project of making sense of climate change, and particularly of being responsible for it. I realised that I can't do this on my own. Climate change is something we all experience and we all affect. So I saw this as an inquiry that needed to be shared.*"

Implicit in this introduction is an analogy between the aim for collective meaning-making in my work, and the need for collective meaning-making in respect of the *content* of the work – a collective responsibility in relation to climate change. Within this frame, I sought to avoid a traditional artistic subjectivity in which it is assumed that 'I' hold authorial authority. In the discussion set-up I reiterated that we have a *collective* responsibility for the elaboration of meanings, that these may be emergent and tentative, and that all contributions are valid. I invited participants to choose an object, asking: "*What drew you to that object?*" Following this, I asked: "*Do you have any responses for each other?*" which aimed for collective elaboration of the emerging themes. "*Are there any final reflections on any of the themes that*

have come out of this discussion in relation to our query about climate change?" aimed to bring the discussion back from 'process' to which it had wandered – although this didn't dominate. No-one asked me what I 'meant' or 'intended'; *this* group seemed comfortable with an open space of shared meaning-making (another audience may not have been).

But does 'participation' automatically assume that meaning is democratised?

5.2.2 Participation

Cull (2015) notes that 'participation' has come to be seen automatically as 'democratic' – with the 'participant' more involved in authorship of 'art'. Rather than uncritically making such assumptions, Cull suggests that we need to examine the extent to which participatory practices provide opportunities to experience *immanence* (introduced earlier). Cull considers the example of the artist Allan Kaprow's participatory *Activities*. She describes these as "attention training" (2015: 150), using Bergson's theory of 'attention' which suggests that whatever you pay attention to changes, and also changes the perceiver. Cull suggests that Kaprow's *Activities* developed a concept of "attention as a *particular mode of observation* in which ontological participation – or being part of the whole – might occur" (ibid: 155). Kaprow was concerned with breaking habitual ways of attending to performances, thinking *in* the task differently, and really paying attention to it (ibid: 160–161). The *Activities* devised ways of making an everyday action (such as sweeping) *strange*, employing distancing mechanisms that make the participant *aware* of the activity. "Meaning is experienced in the body, and the mind is set into play by the body's sensations" (Kaprow, 1986). *Activities* involved participants in paying attention to embodied experience as 'immanent' in a world that *is* process (Cull, 2015: 171).

But what if they don't want to participate?

5.2.3 Enforced participation?

One concern with 'participatory' practices is whether audiences feel 'forced' to participate. Performance theorist Adam Alston, writing about 'immersive' theatre in which the participatory is "the site of aesthetic appreciation" (2013:

130) has argued that such experiences demand ‘entrepreneurial’ participants, valorising neoliberal values such as individual risk-taking. ‘Risks’ can include not knowing what to do or what is expected, or feeling silly (ibid: 135). Alston suggests that a shared sense of vulnerability might *also* be productive, by fostering a ‘mutual accountability’, and that “the risk of participating [...], arising from an awareness of agency, may well promote a desire for mutual responsibility premised on an uncomfortable recognition of accountability for one’s actions” (ibid: 136).

Returning to my event, the initial briefing and reflection prompts were designed to address these concerns, to be clear about what I was inviting the audience to do. The briefing was clear that the audience could simply watch and listen if they chose. Cull points out that ‘observation’ is *also* participation; itself a kind of action (2015: 145). A potential ‘risk’ was the *shared* sketchbooks – contributions could be seen by others which might be inhibiting compared with having personal books. There might also have been a reticence to participate in the discussion, a fear of ‘getting it wrong’. I aimed to mitigate against this by saying there are “*no right or wrong answers, any contribution is valid*”. However, as one participant pointed out, given the context of the inquiry, it would be hard *not* to participate:

Because to not act here would be a big act [...] there were pools of darkness from which to retreat, and you were very careful in the pre-material that we received that action wasn't required, [...] but to opt out is a massive, massive statement, it's actually possibly easier to opt in [...] inaction was a *massive* action⁶⁸

This suggests that that they did feel ‘forced’ to participate through a sense of ‘mutual responsibility’ (Alston, 2013). Inaction would be conspicuous, a ‘risk’.

This critical examination of ‘participation’ raised questions for my event design, as I will now elaborate.

⁶⁸ Audience discussion 18/05/17

5.2.4 Design questions

The first event led me to realise *opportunities* for audience participation. The second event was concerned with raising the audience's *awareness* of their participation in the 'work' of art. For this third event, I focused more critically on what this 'participation' *meant*. Cull's challenge to increase opportunities to experience *immanence* led me to consider how I could create a "'sense of the whole' through practices involving the undoing of habit, the defamiliarization of routine and the training of attention" (Cull, 2015: 177). How might embodied attention and ontological participation be encouraged, given that I am working within the lineage of the 'painting exhibition'? Can 'painting' as an event *perform* immanence? To help me consider this, I looked to immersive scenographic performance research because of its concern with audience experience. I do not claim to create 'immersive performances'; rather I am 'borrowing' from this particular performance genre to think differently about painting. The artist-researcher David Shearing (2014) creates immersive environmental performances designed for audiences to explore and interact with. He seeks to understand the design relationship between spectator, space and other elements through a concept of *landscape* that is action-centred rather than scopic; something that is *done* by bodies as they move through their environment (2014: 41). He devises ways to encourage body motility to "forge a deeper, more intelligent perception" (ibid: 49), inviting agency and choice. This led me to consider how understanding my event as a landscape that is 'done' by bodies could influence my design. How could I encourage bodily motility and choice as to how participants navigate the space?

Reflecting on this question informed my design thinking. Presenting paintings on the floor (rather than at eye-height) provided an estrangement which also encouraged body motility⁶⁹. The participant was invited down to the level of the child in the paintings. Sitting on the floor afforded the opportunity to dwell with the work, inviting an intimate encounter. Another estrangement involved turning the backs of the paintings to the entrance. To

⁶⁹ Chairs were available to cater for participants who may not be mobile enough to crouch or sit on the floor.

see the work, participants had to walk around it. Instead of the exhibition being 'laid out' to be 'spectated', these small estrangements aimed to encourage attention 'training', breaking the 'habit' of scanning the exhibition. The workspaces had to be 'inhabited'. *Embodied* participation was encouraged. The perspective of immanence, Cull says, "suggests that participants are *produced by processes of participation*" (2015: 147). This layout 'produced' a more mobile participant, one whose perception is shaped by increased somatic experience such that meaning can be experienced 'in the body'.

The inquiry *framing*, the sharing mechanisms, and the estrangements aimed to increase opportunities to experience immanence or 'being part' of the whole, an ongoing *process* of sense-making which mirrors the change we need to see in the world in respect of climate change.

As one participant described the experience:

I really like [...] the invitation to perform [...] yes, it's led by visual art, which we are I guess acculturated to adopt a certain relationship to which is spectatorial and not necessarily engaged and dialogic, but [...] you're encouraging us to do that, and in a sense it then becomes our responsibility to do that [...] I did feel implicated here, and I did feel I was helping to perform it ⁷⁰

5.2.5 What did this *do*? What did participants make of it?

The third event directly addressed the first part of the primary research question *through* practice: How does painting evolve a practice in line with new norms around 'spectatorship'⁷¹? The rest of this chapter reflects *on* practice to address the second part: *how can we understand this labour?* It does this through a selective analysis which refers to instances from the event (hyperlinked in the text), using the model of artistic labour as a guiding framework. I have focused on the overlaps (Figure 5.1) as I move towards a

⁷⁰ Audience discussion 18/05/17

⁷¹ These 'new norms' were explained in Chapter One.

holistic understanding of ecological cognition that sits in the centre of the model. It becomes harder to categorise as I shift focus between the lenses.

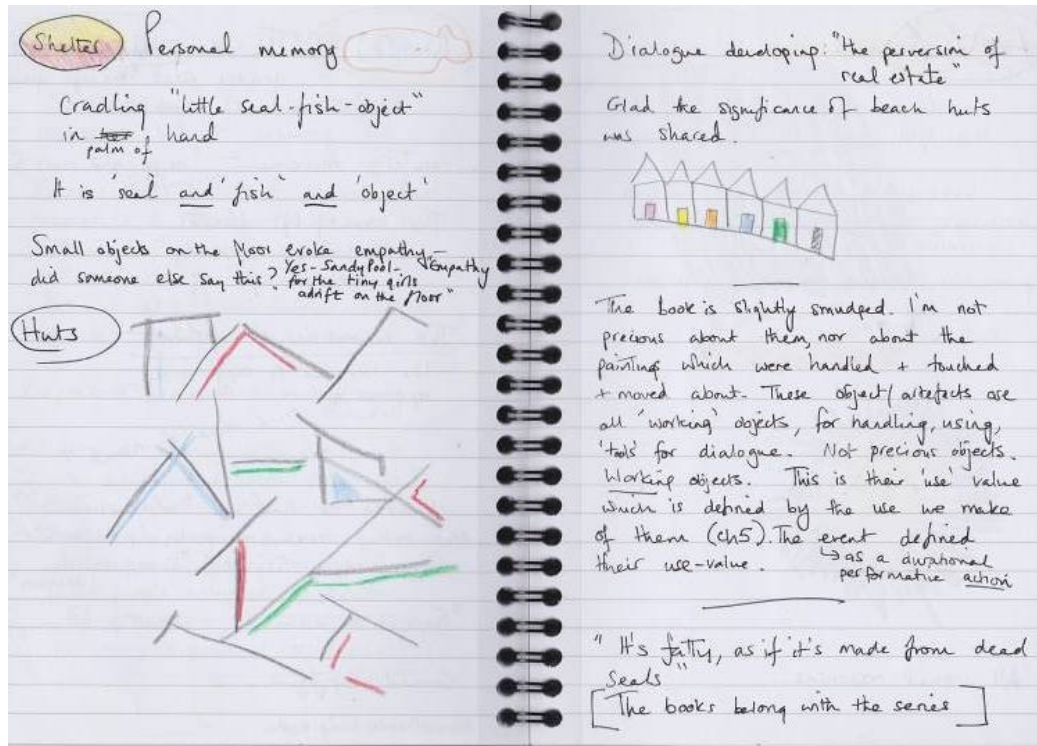


Figure 5.4 Journal page

After the event, I kept a journal of reflections whilst documenting it. I audio-typed the discussion. Two participants emailed me with their reflections. I worked through the audience sketchbooks, writing and drawing my own responses to them. I watched videos of the event, grabbed stills that interested me, and wrote observations. Finally, I drew upon the digitized material in a process of digital reflection through video editing, intuitively working with images, juxtaposing them with sketchbook pages and sounds, noticing what *drew* me. After a period of elapsed time, I watched this video and wrote a prose-poetry journal account of it. I then interrogated that document to focus on what I noticed through the *juxtapositions*. My intention was to reflect on the material in a practice-led way, rather than purely relying on linguistic sources. The resulting video was [*the migration of gesture*](#) I have used this video as both a source and a guiding mechanism for the

following selective analysis of the event, and I'd encourage you to watch this before reading on.

The following analysis suggests a cross-section of insights which exemplify the research. There may be many other insights and perspectives which I don't have room for. In this analysis, I employ 'gesture' as a meaning-making device. So far, I have considered the role of the *artist's* gesture in 'making-as-thinking'. I will now consider 'gesture' in relation to the *audience*. The book *Migrations of Gesture* demonstrates ways in which gesture can be used as a hermeneutic tool (Noland & Ness, 2008). Noland (2008) describes how gesture, from latin *gerere* "to carry, act, or do", can be understood as *both* body 'expression' which is 'indexical' of the human subject (for Merleau-Ponty, gesture is a way of *knowing* generated by movement) *and* cultural signification of meaning. Noland cites Thomas Csordas, whose cultural phenomenology I described in Chapter One, who says we need to appreciate *both* embodiment as being-in-the-world *and* "textuality and representation" (2008: xv). Thus gesture is a tool consistent with ecological cognition; thinking that is *done* as a 'body' moves through its 'environment', at the same time informed and shaped by the 'social' and cultural. This brings together the different understandings of 'gesture' that have developed through the previous chapters. *Migration* of gesture is understood as geographic movement, but also as moving from one support to another; for example, the painterly gesture moves from hand to canvas support (ibid.). Thus it recognises interactions of the 'body' and 'material', as well as interactions between bodies ('social').

I will now turn to *the migration of gesture* video which forms the guiding narrative for the analysis. The indented boxes indicate extracts from my journal account of this video, acting as 'snapshots' to indicate which part of the video is being referred to. These extracts *lead* the analysis, providing cues for the theoretical discussions which follow them.

5.2.5.1 Kinesthesia

Starting from the level of the floor, our focus moves towards the artist.
Gentle sound of water lapping. A girl is lying on her stomach [...]72

Participants noticed the 'material' sensation of the floor, the difference with and without a cushion, taking shoes off to get closer to it.

I was aware of the cool floor [...] on my knees, elbows, forearms and tops of my feet as I crouched in a prayer position/child's pose [...] This helped me connect with the freshness of the sea sounds73

Contact with the floor encouraged *embodied* attention. Body responses to the floor are dictated by individual flexibility, which affects posture, perspective, and perception through *kinesthesia*. We perceive information through awareness of *movement* through our environment, an awareness generated by the body's vestibular, muscular and visual systems, which "cuts across the functional perceptual systems" (Gibson, cited in McKinney, 2012: 4). Gesture, understood in this way, is a dimension of thinking and not just an expression of an inner thought (as discussed in Chapter Two). Crouching in child pose generates body knowledge of itself through the perceptual systems, whilst *also* signifying meaning (albeit unconsciously) – thus I interpret such actions as 'gesture'. The movements required to lower the body to the floor "offer opportunities for kinesthetic experience" (Noland, 2008: ix) – through nerve stimulation, body knowledge of itself emerges through the *movement* of the gesture (ibid.). The invitation to the floor increased somatic experience, encouraging body motility and movement as 'body' interacts with the 'material' of the 'environment'. It would also appear to interact with other bodies, as follows.

5.2.5.2 Mimesis of gesture

people sitting on the floor, their postures are identical, symmetrical, mirror images.74

72 Journal 15/06/17

73 Participant email 19/05/17

As I watched footage of the event, I started to notice multiple occurrences of bodies ‘mirroring’ each other. There was an apparent *mimesis* of gesture.



Figure 5.5 Still from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*

Earlier, I referred to a distinction between *mimesis* and *methexis*. The Greek *mimēsis*, ‘to imitate’ is used as a theoretical principle in art, meaning “re-
presentation” rather than “copying” (Encyclopædia Britannica, 2017). Plato used the term *mimesis* to distinguish the ontological difference between the ‘copy’ and the ‘original’ (Gadamer, 2007). The ‘mirroring’ *could* be understood as ‘re-presentation’ of one body by another. However, this would imply that one participant was an ‘original’ being re-presented by another. Plato’s use of *methexis*, on the other hand, “implies that one thing is there together with something else” (Gadamer, 2007: 311) and suggests a “relationship of participation” (ibid.). ‘Mirroring’ of gesture might be better understood as *methexis*, a physical manifestation of being-together; a ‘relationship of participation’. It may also have been indicative of ‘*habitus*’ (Bourdieu, 1977), a process of socially negotiated ‘staging’ of the body, as follows.

5.2.5.3 Gesture as socially negotiated

Gestures refer partly to the self-expression of a singular body with particular physical capabilities, but *also* take meaning from their performance in specific cultural and historical locations – a “staging of the body through structures of signification that are not necessarily the body’s own” (Noland, 2008: xv). In Chapter Four, I explained how *habitus* is partly composed of learned, repeated and embodied gestures. The options available to each participant given the invitation to work on the floor may have been drawn from a tacit understanding of what is culturally appropriate – ways to sit, kneel, crouch, or lie down. These are learned responses particular to a Western European culture; a ‘*habitus*’⁷⁵ formed through repeated *situated* body actions. These postures may have different meanings in different cultures. From the instances of ‘mirroring’, it seems that gestures consciously or unconsciously migrated from body to body, and may have been collectively negotiated. Responses to the floor may feel ‘natural’, but might be partly copied, partly learned ‘habit’, and partly dictated by musculature and flexibility. The bodily responses to the floor would also be dictated by context – this was a performance space, yet an intimate space. ‘Body’ responses are informed by ‘*habitus*’ and ‘space’. Bodies also ‘read’ and respond to other bodies – and in this analysis, they have been ‘read’ and ‘inscribed’ through the medium of video.

⁷⁵ Embodied production of social structures, as explained in Chapter Four.

5.2.5.4 'Inscribed' gesture



Figure 5.6 Still from event, showing 'mirroring' juxtaposed with audience sketchbook page

The sketch of coloured lines seems almost like a choreographic score, an annotation of the postures of the bodies on the floor.⁷⁶

'Choreographic score' in the above journal extract leads me to the idea that these gestures are *inscribed* via the medium of film editing. In *Migrations of Gesture*, Lippit's essay looks at how bodies inscribe gesture onto film, which becomes a medium for editing (Noland, 2008: xx). Editing gesture can change its meaning. By editing the digital reflection video I am *constructing* meaning – I see the material in a certain way, and represent it out of its original context, frozen in time. I notice 'mirroring' because I first 'inscribed' those gestures through the medium of the video still. I reached-out-towards something that drew my attention and my hand clicked 'pause' as my body recognised the symmetry. Someone else might not have noticed. I *choreographed* the material. Schneider notes that the word 'choreography' is used in new materialist discourse (its relationship to dance often unremarked) pointing towards *embodied* sense-making (2015: 8). My video editing 'choreography' *makes* meaning from the 'social' relationships of

⁷⁶ Journal 15/06/17

'bodies'⁷⁷. It also makes meaning from bodies' relationships with *things* which shape the body's gestures. The next section explores the participants' relationships with objects, weaving together the 'body' and 'material' through 'handling' – whilst still intersecting with the 'social'.

5.2.5.5 Affordances – intentionality and improvisation

two figures, reaching across the floor, a sense of movement towards (in the sense of affordances perhaps).⁷⁸

The body has to curve inwards to *move towards* the affordances of objects. (In Chapter Two I introduced Gibson's concept that consciousness is the intentional movement towards *affordances*.) One participant tentatively feels the scissors. Her hand 'knows' them. But this is a *learned* knowledge – so can we understand it in terms of 'affordance'?



Figure 5.7 Still from *The Garden of Earthly Delights*

The psychologist Harry Heft (1989) suggests that we can. The range of affordances that can be perceived are relative to the physical characteristics of the perceiving body. For example, an object that can be held within a handspan affords 'grasping'. Following Merleau Ponty, Heft suggests that

⁷⁷ This is not to invalidate the insights gained. Taking a practice-led cultural phenomenological approach, this deliberately subjective method values the subjectivity of my embodied, cultural experience, in that I was *also* part of the event and one of the bodies present.

⁷⁸ Journal 15/06/17

the body *also* comprises an ‘intentional repertoire’ of goal-directed actions – a range of possibilities “instantiated in a particular form in interaction with situational factors” (1989: 11). He proposes that affordances can be perceived “in relation to the body as it participates in a particular goal-directed act” (ibid: 13), enabling us to extend the concept of affordances to include socio-cultural meanings of objects. The scissors afford the opportunity for cutting because the participant knows how to use them. This ‘knowing how’ is *situated* knowledge, developed over time in relation with object, body and a history of intentional action (ibid: 13).

For a long time, the above participant sat watching. Then she reached out and touched the scissors, turned them around, and with a decisive motion picked them up, selected a picture, and started cutting. Her ‘intentional repertoire’ includes ‘knowing how’ to use scissors, and the scale of the tool is suited to her particular handspan. Heft’s intentional analysis suggests that “the perceived affordant meaning of an object resides neither in the object [...] nor in the mind [...] but [...] emerges from their relationship” (ibid: 14). ‘Meaning’ is situated in an intentional act in which the perceiver brings into being some of the potential meanings of objects available to them (ibid: 15). This participant brought into being *the meaning* of cutting through the *act* of doing it.

Affordances can also be *discovered*. One participant picked up pieces of paper left from my cutting-out of figures, and started to play.



Figure 5.8 Audience stencil works

I was interested in the space created by the removal of the figures, and used those as stencils [...] colouring in the gap [...] before removing the stencil to reveal a new figure – or is it a ground? [...] I felt connected and grounded as I used your pile to create something [...] ⁷⁹

The cut-away negative shapes, once grasped, afforded the opportunity for stencilling, which was partly from a learned action ('stencilling'), but also involved repurposing, from 'waste' to creative opportunity. Performance theorist Teemu Paavolainen (2010), writing in the context of cognitive studies in theatre and performance, employs the perspective of affordances to explore how 'props' afford theatrical action. He proposes a nuanced typology of affordances as "*intentional, immediate, and improvised*" (2010: 118). 'Intentional' here is not a phenomenological intentionality (as in Heft's analysis), but refers to the 'proper' use of objects; what they are designed for (such as cutting with scissors). 'Immediate' refers to *physical* affordance irrespective of design or expectation (a letterbox affords the deposit of objects other than post). 'Improvised' affordances refer to widening the range of use beyond what is 'proper' (ibid: 122–123), for example through imaginative play. The participant who made stencils grasped the cut-outs and played with them. She widened her 'intentional repertoire' of goal-directed actions through play, discovering an 'improvisational' affordance *within the activity* of repurposing waste cut-outs. This was not designed or anticipated, but was a creative outcome which was unexpected.

Her playfulness extended to wanting to mark the floor:-

Touch was allowed but not marking. Somehow we all knew this. Perhaps if there had been no note-book this would have been different, as the only other spaces to draw and stick would have been the floor (I was tempted, as you know! But my orange crayon didn't mark it so I didn't try!)⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Participant email 19/05/17

⁸⁰ Participant email 19/05/17

Paavolainen says affordances do not *cause* action, so much as “make it possible within a very precise set of constraints” (ibid: 120). Participants suggested there were *tacit rules*. Despite the estranging mechanisms, rules of traditional artisanal practice were still in play. The sketchbooks, presented horizontally, were the space for mark-making. The paintings, presented vertically, were for ‘looking at’. The ‘intentional repertoire’ (Heft, 1989) was constrained by ‘tacit rules’ that were inherent within this *situated interaction*. These ‘rules’ limit the interpretations that can be made, encouraging some and discouraging others. For example, the types of materials provided encouraged a certain set of meanings. Drawing in wax crayon afforded emotive responses in bold mark-making and colour, and seemed to evoke childhood comfort rituals. Participants described *retreating to the crayons*, wanting to be that child that you know you’re not – being reduced to playing like children. The stubby crayons were small relative to an adult handspan, requiring awkward ‘grasping’. The gestures afforded by the crayons therefore differ from those afforded by painting materials. This ‘hierarchy’ of artistic materials was noted by the audience⁸¹. The *meaning* of crayon-drawing is *instantiated* in the child-like grasping and gestural movements, within the situated context of the event.



Figure 5.9 Audience sketchbook page

⁸¹ Audience discussion 18/05/17

Paavolainen suggests that the ‘field of potential affordances’ enables or constrains “what the spectators can possibly *make of it*” (2010: 124). Interpretation is grounded in perception, and meaning is realised in action. For my event, actors were also spectators, both acting and meaning-making. Their ‘doing’ *made* something, collapsing together *praxis* and *poiesis* (Gulli, 2005), as I will now illustrate.

5.2.5.6 Migration of gesture

Two artists, balletically leaning over in the same direction, focused on their work on the floor. Their spatial arrangement echoed by the ‘S’ in the sketchbook, the seals in circular motion, ‘power of the artist, make them whirl around’. The same two artists, symmetrical spiral of bodies in a circle of focus on making. A circular process. ‘It never stops’. ⁸²

‘Making’, a process, circular, and infectious. One participant used the phrase *the migration of gesture* to refer to a sense of ‘infectiousness’:

all I knew was that I really wanted, I think, to imitate what I saw in the video⁸³

The *making* gesture of the artist – a gesture of ‘thinking’ – migrated to audience-bodies. This ‘infectiousness’ is a theme that follows from previous events. From asking: *What meanings does a viewer make from seeing the work made?*⁸⁴ I have learned from audience feedback from all three events that process is infectious. Artistic labour *wants* to be shared. But ‘making’ has consequences:

⁸² Journal 15/06/17

⁸³ Audience discussion 18/05/17

⁸⁴ See Chapter Four.

Does art, in the sense of craft, involve the same kind of doing/making with the doings that brought about climate change?⁸⁵

The ‘felt’ and infectious sharing of artistic labour becomes analogous to a human compulsion to *make*. The provision of sketchbooks, cut-outs, and mark-making materials afforded an opportunity for the audience to *enact* that compulsion, to participate in ‘making’. The ‘form’ of the event created opportunities to find a way into the ‘content’ of the work. Whilst the ‘infectious’ artistic labour witnessed by the audience could not be exactly ‘imitated’ using the materials provided, it *could* be ‘re-presented’. And this shared activity of ‘making’ seemed to lead to an experience of coming together.

I could feel us all becoming connected⁸⁶

Participants described a ‘conversation’ developing, a ‘creative generation’ and ‘momentum building’⁸⁷. The activity in the books stimulated participants to further creative contributions. This infectiousness spread between participants. Gestures – the artist’s and participants’ actions of ‘making’, and the corporeal responses to the floor – migrated between bodies and between supports (from hand to crayon to book).

Although I can’t extrapolate beyond this event (another audience might have behaved differently), I suggest that the apparent *mimesis* of gesture may have enhanced a sense of *social ‘being’*. The themes of infectiousness and migration of gesture, in which bodies move together in repeated processes of making and sense-making, suggest “a concurrent actual production” (Carter, cited in Bolt, 2000: 205) or *methexis*. The actions of the audience brought into being the meaning of objects such as scissors, and gestures such as cutting. Within this situated interaction, participants *enacted* a human compulsion to ‘make’. A ‘participation’ of form and idea was realised through performing *immanence* – ‘being’ the social. This ontological

⁸⁵ Participant email 13/06/17

⁸⁶ Participant email 19/05/17

⁸⁷ Audience discussion 18/05/17

participation, the whole expressing itself in the parts (Cull, 2015: 168), was an “original production” of society (Gulli, 2005: 188) – albeit in an academic context with arts practitioners. There are implicit parallels between the content of my work, the explicit invitation for collective meaning-making, and the need for ecological awareness and collective responsibility (or ‘co-responsibility’) in respect of climate change. There are also complementarities between my growing awareness of ecological modes of cognition in arts practice, and the need for a more ecological way of ‘being’ in the world. The art ‘work’ and the event of its encounter contains *potentiality* within it for this ‘world’ of ecological awareness to emerge.

But do I ‘delegate’ meaning entirely to the encounter? Is meaning-making totally democratic, or do ‘I’ still hold some responsibility for artistic intentionality? This leads me to the question: iii) What is the place of the artist’s voice in a shared ecological artistic subjectivity?

5.2.6 The artist’s voice

In Chapter Four, I considered whether I withheld the *Ruffles* information for fear of ‘upsetting’ which might be a learned (gendered and enculturated) ‘silencing’ of ‘symbolic violence’. This question of ‘voice’ and silencing emerged again in the final stages of the third event discussion. There were some valid concerns about what would change as a result of a seminar room discussion, and whether the work should be taken ‘out of Uni’. Whilst this discussion was constructively suggesting that ‘art as activism’ might need to move ‘outside’, the dynamic that was immanent *in the room* was a present-moment lived-performance of a familiar pattern of responses to climate change. What will change? What can we do? Take it to another community to make *them* change. Some contributions seemed to recognise this immanence of the ‘social’ in the room:

what you were saying about process was very interesting, which is kind of continuing, isn't it, we're kind of all actors in this process, and we make the decisions to change things, or not⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Audience discussion 18/05/17

and

what was happening here was people starting to acknowledge each other in that space, and that I guess is what we've got to do with climate change is to acknowledge each other⁸⁹

One place for the artist's voice might have been *framing the 'social'* that was being made in the room, *voicing* these patterns. The artistic labour of mediation may need to include the skill to be fleet-of-foot enough to notice these 'happenings'. In Chapter Four, I discussed how sociality (my relationship with 'society') is embedded in my tendencies to act (or not). This requires sustained attention and building awareness over time to a) notice what is happening; b) notice any reluctance to 'voice' the 'happening'; and c) develop skills and strategies to frame the 'happening' carefully but clearly. The aim of doing so would be to facilitate immanence as attentive participation in *this* world, one reality as an ongoing and present-moment process – adopting Bergson's theory that what you *pay attention to* changes, and changes the perceiver (Cull, 2015: 150). My work raises the question of living an ethical life – the nature of our being in the world. It is important that I do not allow the 'artist's voice' to be silenced, but instead, speak out and issue that ethical provocation. And then trust the participants to work with it.

5.3 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to explore the implications of 'distributed' artistic subjectivity with a focus on the audience, addressing the primary research question: How does painting evolve a practice in line with new norms around 'spectatorship', and how can we understand this labour? It also considered the sub-question: iii) What is the place of the artist's voice in a shared ecological artistic subjectivity? It described how I have developed an ecological sensibility through repeated focus on the lenses of the model (Figure 5.1), evolving a practice of 'painting' (which includes curating and mediating encounters) that has self-consciously promoted an *experience* of

⁸⁹ Audience discussion 18/05/17

distributed artistic subjectivity for artist and audience. The first section reviewed how insights from my research have shaped studio practice together with my sharing of that practice. Using ecological cognition (Ingold, 2011; Gibson, 1986) as a framework, it explained how artistic *intentionality* can be understood in a phenomenological sense of reaching-out-towards. This involves paying *attention*, becoming aware of 'body', 'materials' and 'environment' as co-active agents. Addressing the question from practice phase two: *How might the work enhance a sense of collective imaginative engagement?* it showed how in editing video, I 'felt' for meaningful actions with *poietic* potential, sharing *my* imaginative process to engage the *audiences'* imagination. Recorded and edited moments of *intention* (reaching-out-towards) and *attention* (noticing what is going on) leave marks on the artefact that record an *awareness* of being, creating paths for an audience to explore. The way I *make* work becomes a way for an audience to *encounter* the work. Reviewing Gulli's concept of creative labour (2005), it proposed that this shared art of inquiry can be ontological as well as epistemological. The 'work' of art includes paying attention to *how* we 'encounter' paintings. The artist's voice, present in the form-shaping of the artefacts, is also present in the skills of mediating encounters with them. Putting this into practice, it described how the third event was designed to create a 'meaningful' space in which the audience could develop a dialogic relationship with the artefacts and each other. The event design aimed to increase opportunities to experience immanence, and to encourage bodily motility and hence body knowledge through kinesthesia. Reflection on this event suggested the following insights:

- i) The inquiry frame was voiced as an invitation to participate in *making* the artwork 'work' within the context of a shared inquiry about climate change. This was experienced as 'insistent'; it would have been hard *not* to act, suggesting a sense of 'mutual responsibility'.
- ii) 'Mirroring' of bodies was observed (as 'inscribed' through the medium of the video still). This insight was explored using the notion of 'migration of gesture', referring to both apparent *mimesis* of gesture and infectiousness – 'bodies' moved together in repeated processes

of making which may have been a collectively negotiated '*habitus*'; 'a concurrent actual production' or methexical making of the 'social'.

- iii) Audience meaning making was *instantiated* in gestural interactions with 'materials' and objects through 'handling'. Grasping affordances, participants brought into being the socio-cultural meaning of objects through '*intentional*' and '*improvisational*' action.
- iv) The invitation to work on the floor encouraged *embodied* attention, shaped by tacit understandings of culturally appropriate ways to sit/kneel/crouch, and by the nature of the space and environment.
- v) Tacit rules were inherent within this *situated interaction*, encouraging some meanings and discouraging others. 'Social' rules were attached to 'artefacts': paintings were for looking at, sketchbooks were for altering.
- vi) This encounter of 'mutual responsibility' contained potentiality within it for ecological awareness to emerge through the parallels of form and content.
- vii) The artist's voice could help to mediate awareness of this by framing the 'social' that is being made in the room.

Understanding creative labour as *social* labour suggests that society is *constituted* by our dialogue with paintings which enacts wider social concerns. A key insight arising from this practice-research is that artistic labour understood as 'creative labour' (Gulli, 2005) is a shared art of inquiry that reveals social 'being' and is therefore ontological and not just epistemological.

So far my research has focused on one case study of my own practice. But what are the methodological implications of the insights gained, and how might they inform current debates and research? The next chapter will summarise the insights gained, and consider wider implications.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

The central aim of my research has been to understand the contemporary artistic labour of painting as inquiry in a 'post-aesthetic' view. Through my research I have developed an extended practice of painting as a method of inquiring into cultural responses to climate change, addressing the wider need to consider our relationship with different *kinds* of knowledge, including practice-based forms (Wilson, 2010). My research has explored decentred artistic subjectivity from *within* painting to evolve a practice in line with new norms around 'spectatorship' and participation, and sought to understand how we might understand this labour as a *cognitive* process. It has done this through using a central framework of 'ecological cognition' to develop a theory and practice of painting as emergent knowledge that unfolds in relationships between bodies, materials, the 'social', and the environment. This offers an embodied, practice-led perspective to understanding cognitive processes of contemporary artistic labour, contributing to the need to understand *creative work* in the creative industries. It offers a 'social' perspective to understanding the work of both artist and audience in *practice-led research in painting*.

This final chapter returns to the research aims and questions and summarises the insights gained and their implications. It considers methodological implications of my research for painting as inquiry, reflecting on what has been learned from the research methods used. It suggests how the research insights might contribute to current debates in creative work and painting as research. It considers limitations, and questions for future research.

First, let me recapitulate the key insights.

6.1 Summary of insights

Insights emerged from reflection *through* practice, and these were documented in the conclusions of Chapters Two, Four and Five and are embedded in the practice itself. Appendix A shows some selected audience responses from *The Garden of Earthly Delights* that are suggestive of ways in which painting (as an extended practice that includes video and mediation) helped the audience to make sense of climate change responsibility. What follows is a brief thematic summary of these responses. Participants shared personal stories and memories, making links with their own childhood. They made metaphorical or symbolic connections from both the artefacts and the form of the event itself. They referred to a sense of scale, of vulnerability and fragility, and to a sense of personification of people affected by climate change. What I find most interesting in terms of my future practice is the responses that suggest a sense of parallels between the form and the content of the event. This could be a focus for future research in terms of what this *does*, or could do.

However, the core focus for this written thesis is to reflect *on* practice to understand the *creative work* of *painting as inquiry*. What follows is a summary of the insights gained, showing how the research aims (*in italics*) and questions have been addressed.

The primary aim was: *To develop a situated case study of painting as inquiry which offers an account of decentred artistic subjectivity, agency and authorship, and contributes towards understanding the conditions of 'post-aesthetic' creative labour*. My research has developed an understanding of the *creative work* of painting as 'emergent knowledge'. It proposed that 'making' is a process of 'thinking' during which imagination (rhythmic, material, and social) is *enacted* through movement, gesture and handling. In this enactment, materials and emerging artefacts form part of an extended cognitive apparatus, and 'gesture' is a dimension of thinking rather than an externalisation of thought. It suggested that artistic *intentionality* can be understood in a phenomenological sense of *reaching-out-towards*, an intentional movement which *is* perception (rather than the traditional understanding of artistic intentionality, in which the artist has an idea which

they wish to communicate). Recorded and edited moments of *intention* (reaching-out-towards) and *attention* (noticing what is going on) leave marks that record an ecological awareness of being, creating paths for an audience to explore. 'Painting' is an act of perception, and the artefact contains that action within it in the marks of its making.

My research considered: i) How do bodies and materials interact in creative practice? It suggested that materials and artefacts contribute their own agency⁹⁰, as the artist intervenes in ongoing processes which are corporeal, material, social and environmental. Creative practice can be experienced as *material imagination*, in which 'mind' extends onto the canvas, inhabiting an emergent image whilst immersed in sensory experience. It raised the question: 'If 'thinking' happens in movement, does rhythm enhance this in some way?' and suggested that finding a 'flow' state (*rhythmic imagination*) can invoke a state of liminality; a source of innovation, and a dissolving of boundaries between self and world.

It considered: ii) How do social processes, cultural and environmental factors interact with human and material bodies in creative practice? It showed how the emerging artefact facilitates the artist's cognitive processes of sense-making through an exegetical process of *critical reflection* on artefacts made through *material handling*, connecting the personal to the political. This deepens the inquiry, carrying the body of work forward. It described how sociality is *in* the studio by looking at the embodiment of social structures in the artefact and individual habitual practices. It described how the memory of social judgments 'regulates' improvisations in the studio – a kind of *social imagination*. Interactions with materials through improvisational play stimulate sensory memory which connects to cultural processes of learning. Navigating, learning and performing the role of artist involves developing through practice habitual ways of putting on a 'good enough' performance (*habit(us)*). Repeated gestures of making become embodied and learned through practice rather than by copying. This process can be informed by artworks as 'public objects' which are 'credible stimulants' – 'credible' because of their inclusion in a high profile arts space; 'stimulants' because

⁹⁰ In the sense of power emerging through action, rather than enacting an intention (Chapter Three).

they mediate the development of individual 'habits of thought'. My research proposed that the 'social' is therefore inscribed in the material in the processes of making, affecting and affected by the artist. It developed an expanded theory of 'material thinking' that includes movement, gesture, and sociality. Building on Bolt's (2004) analysis of artistic process and authorship in painting based on Heidegger's 'co-responsibility', it contributed a sociological perspective to develop 'co-responsibility' to encompass the audience as well as the artist in the process of inquiring and making meaning to *make* the art *work*.

The third and final phase of practice exemplified how understanding artistic labour as ecological cognition has enabled me to develop an artistic practice in which artistic subjectivity can be experienced by artist and audience as *distributed* amongst body, materials, the 'social', and the environment. Addressing the primary question: 'How does painting evolve a practice in line with new norms around 'spectatorship', and how can we understand this labour?' the final event was designed to create an *experience* of distributed artistic subjectivity. By undertaking a selective analysis to understand what the event *did*, I observed 'mirroring' of bodies and 'migration of gesture' or 'infectiousness', as bodies moved together in repeated processes of making. An apparent *mimesis* of gesture co-emerged with a *metheuxical* making of society; an experience of being-together in a co-performance of compulsive 'making'. A sense of 'shared responsibility' was set up by the *inquiry frame*. Understanding creative labour as social labour (Gulli, 2005), my research suggested that society is constituted by our dialogue with paintings which *enacts* wider social concerns. The art 'work' and the event of its encounter is an original production which contains potentiality within it for a 'world' of ecological awareness to emerge. A key insight arising from this practice-research is that artistic labour understood as 'creative labour' (Gulli, 2005) is a shared art of inquiry that reveals social 'being' and is therefore ontological and not just epistemological. Considering the question: iii) What is the place of the artist's voice in a shared ecological artistic subjectivity? it proposed that the artist's voice is present in the skills of mediation, clear voicing of the inquiry frame, and *framing* the 'social' that is being 'made'.

In Chapter One, I highlighted the potential conflicts in trying to combine 'social' and 'new materialist' philosophical approaches, such as risking a division between 'nature' and 'culture', and of 'disembodying' the body by moving it from 'biology' to 'culture' (Ingold, 2000). The insights summarised above are rooted in instances of everyday skilled practice; in bodily interactions with materials, and the ways that previous experience (of the voices or artefacts of other people) *affect* that body, becoming part of gestures, actions and decisions that might feel 'intuitive'. I've employed Gulli's (2005) concept of the 'social' as the 'creative labour' of communicating, organising, and transforming things. The insights show the 'social' as instantiated in bodies through these activities, continually produced and reproduced through the ongoing development of habits and skills of practice. They show biological and material bodies *making* culture, affecting each other in ways that produce power relationships and influence outcomes. Agency is *distributed*. This brings me onto a more detailed consideration of the methodological insights and implications from my research.

6.1.1 Methodological insights

One of my research aims was: *To critique Roberts' view of a decentred authorship aligned with general social technique* and to address the question: iv) What are the implications of decentred artistic authorship (Roberts, 2007) for practice-led research in painting? Roberts does not clearly address *painting*, as he develops his theory by setting post-Cartesian practice against traditional artisanal practice. By explicitly focusing on the creative work of painting through the lens of decentred artistic subjectivity, I have shown how it can form part of a wider skill-set for the post-Cartesian artist. My research argues for painting as having value in inquiry through gesture and rhythmic movement, involving tactile and sensory awareness such that the artist is aware of *this* world. It proposes that there is value in the 'expressive' painterly gesture *beyond* the monetary one defined by 'uniqueness', in that it is a physical trace of an intentional movement *towards* and of paying *attention* that can be directly perceived by the body of the 'viewer'. Rather than the artisanal artistic subject relying on 'expressive

unity', my research shows how painting as inquiry can be understood as 'decentred authorship' – social, collaborative, and distributed across a range of traditional and modern tools, materials, skills and technologies.

I have also shown how 'painting' – in its broadest sense, including the sense-making of artefacts – is *methexical*. In Roberts' descriptions of painting he suggests that it is *mimetic*. He suggests that the use of the readymade "releases the hand from the tedium and preposterousness of expressive painterly mimeticism" (2007: 101). And that it "relieves the artist of the burden of mere representation" (ibid: 49). However, my research has shown, with reference to Bolt (2000), that painting is also methexical. Bolt's argument is that the methexical engagement with materials leaves a trace on the painting such that it has real effects in the world (2000: 212). I agree, but have expanded on this to suggest that *methexis* extends to the *encounter* with the artwork. Through the trajectory of my research I have shown how the 'creative labour' (Gulli, 2005) of artist, audience and artefacts can be ontological; a process of enacting or 'becoming' society, leaving traces that mediate in a continuing process of inquiry into 'being'. Through developing an expanded theory of 'material thinking' as 'creative labour', I propose an epistemological and ontological grounding for the extended practice of painting as inquiry that I develop in this research. This addresses the aim: *To contribute an epistemological grounding for practice-led research in painting that accounts for social structures and artistic agency.*

In terms of the implications of this, I propose that painting as inquiry would need to evolve its practice in line with a view of authorship as 'distributed'. This challenges the economic view of the 'painting' as an object of financial value. Instead, the 'value' of the artefact might be understood as its efficacy as affective mediator, or its potential agency. Johnson describes Dewey's notion that "the value of an artwork lies in the ways it shows the meaning of experience and imaginatively explores how the world is and might be" (2010: 149). I would emphasise that the 'artwork' includes the event of its viewing. The artefacts, rather than being bodies of knowledge, exist "as enacted in and through us", a "way of organizing experience" and a "particular way of engaging a world" which as a form of knowing "can be more or less successful in helping us carry forward our experience" (ibid: 150). Their

value can be judged in these terms. This proposal challenges traditional views of the painting 'exhibition', instead viewing the creative labour of 'painting' as an ongoing event with ontological power. This requires a reframing of 'viewing' practices as *dialogic*, allowing a voice for all participants – artist, audience and artefacts. Understanding artistic agency as 'distributed', 'viewing' practices as dialogic, and the artefact's 'value' as a mediating agent requires painter-researchers to consider the role of mediation and the creative labour of the encounter *with* the work as part of the research process. Whilst my research has started to consider the labour involved in terms of mediation skills, it is based on one case study and this is therefore an area for further research. However, there is more to be learned from reflecting on the methods used.

6.1.1.1 Reflection on research methods

My research aimed *to contribute insights to practice-led research methods, in particular 'digital reflection'* (Kirk & Pitches, 2013). I will now address this by reflecting on two methods used: audience participation, and digital reflection.

Audience participation

One method that I used to explore implications of decentred artistic authorship was to consider how painting could learn from research into audience experience of immersive scenographic performance, in terms of both design and research methods. Thinking through the lens of performance has helped me to broaden the way that I think about 'painting'. It has given me practical and theoretical tools with which to think about audience experience and ways of mediating encounters. The experience of the first event led me to look at 'immersive' performance, partly because of the role of sound in the space, and partly because of the absorption of the audience in activity. Reflecting on this event, I recognised a need for a shared meaning-making space, prompted by immersive practitioners such as Punchdrunk. Reason (2010) led me to think of this shared meaning-making as *part* of the experience, a 'countersignature' – and also to think

critically about the audience member's ability to *articulate* their experience. I borrowed his use of drawing to help audiences explore embodied or intuitive responses. Reflecting on my own experience from attending immersive scenographic performances of Shearing (2014) and noting the theatrical devices he used to encourage participation, helped me to think about creating *meaningful* spaces. Cull (2015) helped me to think critically about what I mean by *participation*, and to employ the perspectives of immanence and attention training to think about the final event design and mediation, and perceived 'risk' of audience participation (Alston, 2013). These performance researchers and practitioners have given me conceptual lenses, critical frameworks and practical mechanisms to expand painting as inquiry beyond singular artistic exegesis, towards developing the event-space as an experience of distributed artistic subjectivity and shared art-of-inquiry. These insights could be transferable to other painter-researchers to help consider the work of mediation.

Digital Reflection

I was keen with my PhD research to further explore the potential for digital reflection (Kirk & Pitches, 2013), asking: v) What can digital reflection as a method contribute to practice-led research? Moving beyond pure documentation of practice, the process of recording and editing became part of the research itself – and one of its artistic outcomes. Initially, I set out to circumvent difficulties of Cartesian dualism by observing my body to see the experience from the 'outside'. Ravetz filmed herself whilst making landscape art, describing this as “an attempt to report on the experience whilst being deeply immersed in it” (2002: 19). This parallels my initial aims for recording studio work. I was aware of how I 'felt' during studio practice and could watch the video to see how I 'looked'. Video-recording provided a method of attempting to remain absorbed in practice, allowing the video to 'watch' me. However, I am aware of being 'watched' – a danger of this 'sweatbox' method that has been highlighted by Gray and Malins (2004) – but also a productive opportunity, as described below. The process of video

editing led to new insights on ‘flow’ and rhythmic movement⁹¹. The raw footage became ‘material’ which I manipulated intuitively in an exploratory manner. The video evoked memories of sensory experiences. I aimed in the editing to ‘recreate the feeling that I get’ in the studio, and found that watching these videos could bring back those feelings. Thus I hoped to create a trace of those feelings for a viewer. One participant in the first event wrote on her postcard “*cut. paste. make. draw. paint. For myself.*” which suggests a sense of ‘infectiousness’ or compulsion that I felt myself on re-watching edited footage. This ‘infectiousness’ of the videos became a theme throughout the three events, and a key artistic outcome.

Having the camera in the room, I became aware of its potential to capture playful processes that would not be apparent in the final painting. I noticed how the cut-out seals moved in air currents, and gently blew at them. This awareness of being ‘watched’ stimulated hyper-awareness of the materials that I was using, and of their interactions with movement, air, and sound. The presence of the camera stimulated an ecological awareness and sensibility. In the edited videos, these captured observations offered new layers of meaning to the artworks. Digital reflection became an emergent development *of* my practice, rather than reflecting *on* my practice as a ‘static object’. The edited videos which were originally intended to ‘show’ my practice became part of the artwork itself.

This extended beyond purely recording studio work. One of the questions arising from the first event was: Do the videos create a sense of ‘haptic’ touch, where seeing the making can activate “a sensory involvement akin to touch?” (Machon, 2013: 78). I aimed to share the feeling of *inhabiting* the painting, which occurs whilst exploring the surface visually and with fingertips. To recreate this feeling, I created zoom-and-pan footage of the surface of the paintings, and footage of my hand feeling the work.

For some participants, seeing my hand touching the work on the video made them want to copy it.

⁹¹ See Chapter Three.

When I saw the video you touch the painting. I want to touch it too; can I duplicate what is happening in video?⁹²

Some participants suggested the 'hand' footage created a haptic experience which was more satisfactory than touching the actual painting. It gave them a sense of how it felt *to me* which they could not replicate by touching the work themselves.

[...] the video of your hands was, there's something imbued in that that I can't get when I'm touching the painting. So I think the strong sense of touch for me is watching that hand [...]

I agree, I felt like with your hand touching, I was touching it *with you* (*Yeah, yeah, yeah*) and I was touching it more looking at that than when I was touching the painting. (*Exactly.*)⁹³

This 'participatory' function of practice documentation was identified by Lehmann who suggests that "demonstration incites pleasure in the viewer through kinaesthetic identification with the depicted process" (2012: 9).

There were also responses that suggested the scanned surface images seemed more textured than the actual objects:

Texture in the video seems much more pronounced than in the actual objects.⁹⁴

This is an interesting comment on digitisation – the scanned, zoomed and panned digital image, projected large-scale, seemed more 'real' than the painted artefacts, such that one person needed to take up the invitation to 'touch' to check this out:

In the video, the painting of the girl on the pier looked more 3-D than it did in real life – I wanted to touch it to find out why.⁹⁵

⁹² Audience sketchbook, Feeling a way through ... 17/12/13

⁹³ Audience discussion, Feeling a way through ... 17/12/13

⁹⁴ Audience sketchbook, Feeling a way through ... 17/12/13

⁹⁵ Audience discussion, Feeling a way through ... 17/12/13

There was also disappointment that when touching the work, the experience was not as the video had 'promised':

Actually my touching of the object is slightly disappointing given watching your hands touch⁹⁶

These responses suggest that the audience did experience a sense of 'haptic' touch. This seemed to be experienced as 'more satisfying' than the experience of touching the artwork itself, and the footage of the scanned surface seemed 'more real'. These responses surprised me, and thus I learned something new from the *audience's* reflections on the digital material.

'Looking again' at the edited videos showed significance in actions and material tendencies, and suggested new meanings. Materials such as glue took on metaphoric or symbolic significance. The video made present the environment: change of seasons, geographic location, weather, the space of the studio, my clothing. The audience noticed significance in these details; insights and meanings that were new to me. Zooming in on detail revealed significance that I had not noticed when actually handling materials. Juxtaposition of elements suggested new connections and meanings. Things became apparent when watching the video full size; significant details that I hadn't been able to see when I was editing the video using the small preview window.

In summary, a key insight was that digital reflection as a method for practice-led research can contribute more than just reflection on process. Processes of capturing, reviewing, creatively manipulating, and sharing digital artefacts can contribute new insights, new creative outcomes, and lead to new processes.

6.2 Implications of insights

The implications of these insights for understanding the artistic labour of painting as inquiry in a 'post-aesthetic' view are threefold. First, moving

⁹⁶ Audience discussion, Feeling a way through ... 17/12/13

away from the traditional understanding of the encounter between 'viewer' and 'painting' as a one-to-one relationship, the creative work of 'painting' can instead be understood as an experience of collective responsibility in which artist, audience and artefact are co-responsible. This implies that painter-researchers need to consider mediation as a research skill. Second, Chapter Five exemplified how understanding the creative 'work' of painting encompasses the artistic labour of the *audience*, which can also be understood as a process of ecological cognition; a collective 'thinking' experience shaped by space, environment, bodies, objects, artefacts and the socio-cultural. Using the model of artistic labour as ecological cognition to inform this understanding of the audience's labour can help to shape mediation skills. Third, in a post-aesthetic era where sharing process is the 'norm', the creative work of the audience can be facilitated by video of studio process, and through the provision of materials that enable the audience to *enact* artistic labour.

I will now suggest how the insights might contribute towards current debates in the fields of (i) creative work; and (ii) painting as research.

6.3 Contributions to current debates

6.3.1 Creative work – artistic labour, subjectivity and agency

My research contributes a situated case study of painting as inquiry which offers an account of decentred artistic subjectivity, agency and authorship, and contributes towards understanding the conditions of 'post-aesthetic' creative labour. Chapter One outlined some of the features of the contemporary conditions of creative practice, including changing notions of spectatorship and audience engagement. Artists draw upon ancient and modern technologies and increasingly work with collaborative and facilitative methodologies. My research has considered some of the implications in terms of the nature of artistic agency and labour in a 'post-aesthetic' view. Specifically, it has considered what these new conditions of practice mean for artistic subjectivity for *painting*. Debates on creative work in the cultural industries employ social constructionist approaches. These are inadequate

for developing a posthuman rethinking of subjectivity (Braidotti, 2013), and tend to ignore normative issues (Hesmondhalgh, 2010) or ‘good work’ in the cultural industries. I make paintings about climate change because I am deeply concerned about it. Analysing that statement purely as a ‘narrative construct’ would ignore the ethical impulse that I am acting upon to set the agenda for my creative work. Focusing on strategies to ‘demystify’ the ‘human will to power’ promulgates a human-centric view of the world and does not develop positive alternatives or result in positive action (Bennett, 2010). My research contributes to these debates through *practice*, taking a posthuman, new materialist approach that values my embodied cultural phenomenological experience rather than doing a kind of ‘identity’ work. By intervening in these debates in a practice-based way, my research has stepped ‘inside’ processes of artistic labour with ethical purpose. Responding to Taylor’s call to understand creative work from the perspective of human *cognition* “to tie creativity back to socially situated individuals as creative agents” (2011: 45), it has developed an understanding of artistic agency as neither uniquely individual nor socially constructed, but *distributed*; a shared art of inquiry, as follows.

6.3.2 Painting as research

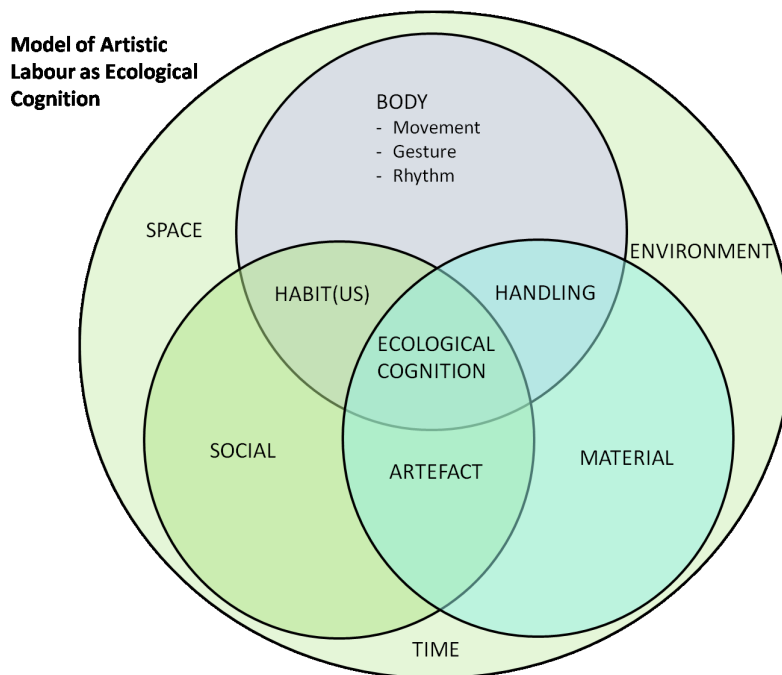


Figure 6.1 Artistic labour as ecological cognition

My research contributes a model of artistic labour as ecological cognition which is offered as a methodological framework or tool for understanding (rather than representing) artistic labour for painting as inquiry in a post-aesthetic view. This framework can be used to understand the creative work of *painting as a process of inquiry* that enables us to think differently about our being-in-the-world: a way of thinking together that also *makes* the social. It provides a frame for understanding 'distributed' artistic subjectivity as a decentred, participatory form of art making fit for the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene thesis and associated issues of climate change demand a posthuman rethinking of subjectivity (Braidotti, 2013: 83) to develop a *relational* understanding of ways of knowing and being. My research has explored our 'knowing' *with* the world through a dialogic practice of painting as inquiry that developed and rehearsed a 'felt' experience of distributed subjectivity, experimenting with "modes of posthuman subjectivity" (ibid: 141).

This might also inform the field of *visual anthropology*. Grimshaw and Ravetz (2015) highlight ways in which artists and anthropologists have expanded the 'ethnographic' as follows: incorporating modernist techniques such as montage and surrealism as an experimental 'mode of inquiry'; viewing art as being potentially "good for anthropology to think with" (2015: 424); an "anthropology *with* art" as "a generative way of moving through, and making, the world in collaboration with others" (ibid: 425); and 'ethnographic conceptualisation'. The latter, rather than representing culture, *manufactures* it, with the exhibition as "a catalyst for, or activator of, relationships between authors and audiences, people and objects" (ibid: 425). Grimshaw and Ravetz also highlight important differences. Anthropologists communicate their insights *to* an audience, whereas art work is made in the encounter *with* the viewer, as emergent knowledge (ibid: 430). In exploring cultural representations of climate change, I have engaged with the source photograph's *affective* and open qualities (Ravetz, 2007: 257). In this process of inquiry I combined modernist techniques of montage and collage with the more traditional artisanal skill of painting. The child snapshot figure surveying the landscape played with time and

displacement, and invited viewers to connect with their own childhood memories. This 'exploration' by artist and audience was a process of making connections with climate change, memory, culture and history. I mediated processes of *encountering* the artefacts, and came to understand the event of this encounter as 'making the social' – manufacturing rather than representing culture. This was an open intervention, which aimed not to 'document' but to inquire *with* ongoing processes of immersion in visual culture. It did not seek to communicate a 'message'; rather it issued an invitation to dialogue. The event *did* the work of anthropological inquiry. It intervened in an ongoing process of finding paths through an unsettled world that is changing around us, changed by us, and changing us.

An example of a debate that indicates the relevance and potential contribution of my research is the ERC Advanced Grant funded project 'Knowing from the inside' led by Tim Ingold which aims to "reconfigure the relation between the practice of academic inquiry in the human sciences and the knowledge to which it gives rise", studying *with* things such that knowledge grows "from our direct, practical and observational engagements with the stuff of the dwelt-in world" (Ingold, 2015). 'Telling by hand' is one of five sub-projects and seeks "to extend the interface between contemporary art practice and anthropology" (ibid.). It asks "how we can tell what we know, and how we are able to transform our knowledge and practices as creative practitioners into something that can be understood in some way by others" (Hodson, 2015). In an earlier project, Ingold (2016) calls for a 're drawn' anthropology that explores drawing and handwriting – specifically the making of 'lines' – as methods of research. I have explored *painting* as a method of inquiry – not the tracing of lines, but the rhythmic and affective engagement of the *whole* body and *audience* bodies with colour, form, texture, light and shade.

In summary, my research contributes to thinking differently about how we know and make ourselves in the world, how we see ourselves in our environment, and our notions of subjectivity. There are, however, some questions outstanding, and some limitations to my research.

6.4 Future research, and limitations

6.4.1 Mediation skills

I have suggested that post-aesthetic creative work needs to encompass mediation skills. The techniques that I developed (as exemplified in the practice) could be transferable to other projects, so it is worth reflecting on what skills I used and how I used them. The reflection-on-action method I have used is typical of action inquiry approaches (Marshall, 2001; Torbert, 2001) – but it must be noted (as I think these authors do make clear) that habits and behaviours, even once noticed, tend to hide again and are difficult to change. For me, the issue of ‘voice’ and ‘silencing’ is one that needs sustained attention within my future practice. As identified in the previous chapter, this awareness may be an important mediation skill. Mediation techniques and skills that I used for the events included the design, curation and layout of the space; the wording of invitations and confirmation emails; the spoken introduction to the event; the reflection prompts and discussion facilitation; the provision of meaning-making materials; and the design of the event format. Principles that I evolved included voicing a clear inquiry *frame*, and setting a tone of *shared* inquiry. I recognised a need to balance democratisation of meaning with the need to be clear about where I *do* have an ‘intention’. The skill of mediation included voicing this intention appropriately, in supporting information and in the event facilitation. My own group facilitation skills were developed in previous roles in coaching and management development. They are influenced by ideas of management theorist William Isaacs, and writer and researcher John Heron. Isaacs’ notion of dialogue as a way of thinking together is based on the principle that “how we talk together definitively determines our effectiveness” (Isaacs, 1999: 3). I use facilitation skills informed by Heron (1999), and in particular the idea of research as a ‘co-operative inquiry’ which involves collective reflection on shared experience (ibid: 117), and ‘imaginal interpretation’ (ibid: 107) that uses symbolic means of interpretation, stories and memories, myths and metaphors. This informed my use of objects and of drawing to facilitate audience meaning-making in the final event.

In the third event, I raised a further question as to the role of the artist when facilitating the discussion. Do you just let the ‘happening’ happen, or do you intervene to point out or ‘frame’ what is ‘happening’? This question may be relevant to any artistic practice underpinned by the idea of a performance Happening. In Kaprow’s work, the human agents who are the ‘medium’ of the Happening affect the outcome – and yet these events were heavily scripted (Cufer in Wood, 2012: 28). There was a play between the ‘score’ and the ‘unexpected’ (Cufer in Wood, 2012: 27), suggesting that Kaprow’s ‘voice’ was clearly present in the ‘script’. This is an area for further research; one where painting could continue to learn from immersive theatre practice and from audience research (particularly theories of ‘co-creation’) about how to mediate *audience* experience. One particular model that could inform the development of mediation skills for future research is Lynne Conner’s ‘arts talk’, introduced in Chapter Four (Conner, 2013).

6.4.2 Audience participation

Throughout my research, I’ve been unsure what to call the ‘audience’. My work demanded a higher level of engagement than that required of ‘viewers’. Performance theorist Steve Dixon, writing in relation to digital performance, suggests four levels of audience engagement: (i) *navigation*; (ii) *participation* (joining in); (iii) *conversation* (opportunity for dialogue); and (iv) *collaboration* (co-authorship of artistic outcome and meaning) (in Pitches & Popat, 2011: 168). Reflecting on the trajectory of the three events, I recognise a transition from *navigation* (event one), to *participation* (event two), to *collaboration* (event three). But what sort of audience is needed to work as *collaborators* in this shared-inquiry type of event? This ‘role’ requires increasing levels of engagement and willingness from participant-collaborators to ‘make’ the work. Would it work with an audience of non-academics or non-arts-practitioners in the same way? The value of investigating this for future research is that this type of ‘shared responsibility’ event brings ethics into how we value the ‘cultural’ (Taylor, 2015). There also seems to be an appetite for a more engaged type of experience, with spectators demanding a more active role (Bishop, 2006). This type of inquiry event may be appropriate to offer to audiences who want a more engaged experience.

However, how would the invitation be posed to be clear about what is offered and expected? And how would the introductory framing and other 'cues' be clear about what is expected from a 'collaborative' audience? Such dramaturgical decisions about audience 'prompts' form a key consideration in immersive theatre design in terms of demands made on audiences and could inform future research into mediation skills.

Throughout, I have struggled with what to call the 'event', and this would be a consideration for any future research. If the audience are 'collaborators' and this is a shared experience of 'making', what is this event? A 'workshop' evokes team away-days. 'Happening' focuses carefully on the present moment, but suggests a certain type of event which historically moved away from artisanal practice. Perhaps the event is a 'Making'. This 'naming' of the event for future practice might be productively ambiguous, as there are no set rules for a 'Making'.

6.4.3 Limitations of research

My research relies on self-reflective inquiry practices (Marshall, 2001) and audience responses (Reason, 2010), and is therefore subject to the limits of personal awareness, ability to self-report, and the available frames of reference that have been chosen to 'make sense' with. It is also a situated account of one painting practitioner, with all the social and practical advantages of access to University resources. As such, it makes no claim to be universally applicable. The research took place in a higher education (HE) environment within a skilled academic interpretive community⁹⁷. Non-academic or non-artistic audiences may have behaved differently. Whilst it can offer insights to the HE community, future research could explore through non-HE environments how the 'value' of the painting artefact can be redefined as a participant in inquiry, and how the role of the audience in 'making' the work can be facilitated – without alienating those audience members who prefer 'passive' experience (Walmsley & Franks, 2011).

⁹⁷ The three events occurred in the 'laboratory' environment of stage@leeds. Most of the participants were members of the academic community, both inside and outside the University of Leeds.

There is more to understand in terms of the way 'painting' has been used as part of a wider multi-media set of tools, and particularly how 'digital making' might be understood as 'material thinking'. The events created a sense of equivalence between digital and analogue materials of making, breaking down artistic material hierarchies. They highlighted similarities and differences between traditional and digital skills and processes. As mentioned earlier, this evokes the 'post-medium debate' in which practice can no longer be defined by its medium, instead relying on 'technical support' (Krauss, 2006: 56)⁹⁸. What this might mean in terms of 'material thinking' for a post-medium 'painter' is an area that needs further reflection.

My research raised the question of mediation and facilitation skills for the artist, and this is another potential area for further research and practice. Research with wider audiences in traditional and non-traditional arts venues could test the transferability of the mediation skills and techniques developed in my research. For example, the tools of artistic making that were provided were 'non-artistic' or childlike and afforded a particular set of meanings. Further research could investigate different types of materials for audience interaction. Questions for future research include: What skills does a painter require to create a 'meaningful' space which disrupts the traditional authority-model of artist or curator? Does this require new skills? What skills are required of her audience? And in what ways might this mediated, facilitated, 'meaningful' space hold *potentiality* within it? As one of the participants asked:

How does this as a gesture of thinking continue repeating and proliferating out into action?⁹⁹

A potential clue was provided by another participant, who said:

I wondered about the child who highlights the individual, rather than [...] think about the group [...] what people have spoken about is feeling individually responsible [...] I would think about that as political

⁹⁸ I have continued throughout this thesis to use the term 'painting' as it forms the core of my practice which the 'digital' always references.

⁹⁹ Audience discussion, The Garden of Earthly Delights 18/05/17

[...] neoliberalism wants us to be individual and wants us to not act in solidarity [...] we need to feel separated out [...] it may be interesting to consider how we might be taken to another kind of feeling [...] which is less about individual responsibility and more about solidarity and action.¹⁰⁰

It seems significant in relation to this that the artwork I was making in the final event had *two* child figures, walking together ...



Figure 6.2 Two child figures

...marching towards purposive action? Or walking away from the issue? This research has stopped short of developing a detailed exegesis, instead focusing on the form-shaping (the ‘making’ of the artefacts and events). Future research could consider in more depth the ‘meanings’ made from the work, and in particular Gulli’s contention that the immanence of society in art points to *potentiality*, to what-could-be: “to ground and sustain a radically different concept of the social” (2005: 188).

¹⁰⁰ Audience discussion, The Garden of Earthly Delights 18/05/17

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Appendix A Responses to climate change inquiry

This document curates some of the audience comments and sketchbook pages from *The Garden of Earthly Delights* that seem to form a response to the questions that I had for my final event, which were:

1. In what ways can 'painting' help us to make sense of climate change responsibility?
2. How might the work enhance a sense of collective *imaginative* engagement?

In what ways can 'painting'¹⁰¹ help us make sense of climate change responsibility?

The following suggested responses to the above question are from the audience discussion on 18th May 2017. There are many others in the sketchbooks, some of which are included in the responses to the second question below.

- You can actually believe there might be some action as a result of saying 'look mate this is what's happening' ... and I think that this book and these paintings are doing that as well.
- I chose the little cut out of the girl in the pool. It illustrates to me the idea of protection from the elements, we're creating artificial space and that can be construed as one of the problems; that we seem to be afraid of nature, we admire nature, but we want to create a safe environment, and the action of creating that safe environment is one of the problems.
- I had the same object too, the little girl in the pool, for me it was like a little subuteo model, particularly when I saw the whole team, and it struck me as a kind of as an interesting metaphor, those large forces coming to bear, on a tiny scale, on this little individual that was just literally being flicked around the landscape.
- This image of this figure is the only one I think that has a tool in her hand, and she just made me think about, like, what are the tools that we ... like the tool is to shovel the car out, or the tool is to beat off the potential threat of an animal, and there's something to do with the scale of that, like how big she is in relation to this animal, or just the scale of the

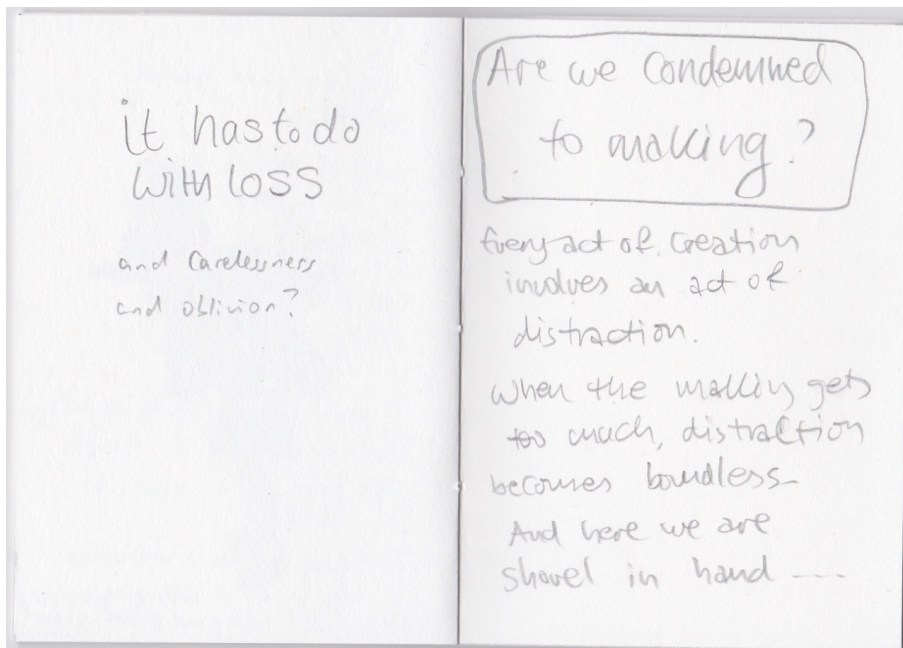
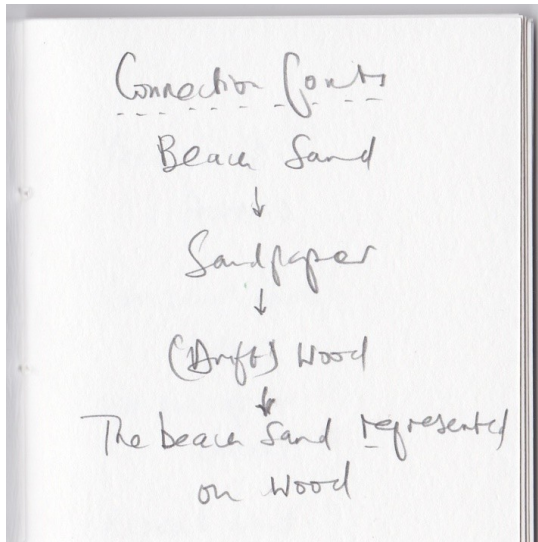
¹⁰¹ By 'painting' I refer to my extended practice that includes other media and mediation, whilst remaining firmly rooted in painting.

problem, or questions that I have around climate change and it feels like we only have a shovel to work with – so the metaphor around the tool, the tools that we have somehow resonated with me in that particular figure.

- A metaphor, those bigger gestures of making, creating, constructing, making making making stuff, can have all sorts of consequences.
- For me the initial, and still the overwhelming impression was of innocence and fragility, and the way you reduced us to the floor playing with crayons and the sticky tape and all that kind of thing. And of course the child image and the seal image, the seal pup image, which is so powerful because it's an innocent affected by these overwhelming forces, that's the overwhelming, the overall impression that I got from this.
- For me that was captured in the figure of the girl looking away, I hadn't really seen that figure before, I'd always been drawn to the figure in the red coat and the blue, but this time I was looking at the figure looking away, and that fragility, that sense of critical commentary that comes with that, I have to turn my back on this future that you've given me, the fact that it's absolutely freezing cold and she's dressed in swimwear, and a kind of bodily gesture to her, which is almost broken and certainly in some kind of pain, so I found it quite haunting, and its iteration that makes it more haunting when you see it in other environments.
- For me it just spoke of that guilt of culpability really and that you feel as fragile ... (?).... and sort of 'what have I done' except exacerbate the situation you know so that is kind of problematic, so that was ... there was a lot of retreating to the crayons and drawing and wanting to be that child that you know that you're not.
- A woman observing there with the binoculars, which to me was a really potent metaphor of we're just idly standing by while drowning quite literally.
- Yeah, my response to this girl was always meaning you, it was you, but my response to those individuals were always like, these are the people that we know have been affected so far, but we don't see them *here*, we don't ... you know sometimes there is the odd kind of flood here or there and we see it on the news, but it's not anything as tragic as what happens in other parts of the world, and to me this is what those figures always stood for, that kind of devastation in certain parts of the world, and it's just that we are the lucky ones and we're not there yet, and again goes back to questions of responsibility and ... are certain animals more important than others?

How might the work enhance a sense of collective *imaginative* engagement?

Suggested responses to this are selected from audience sketchbook pages from 18th May 2017, many of which also suggest responses to the first question above.



I want a 'fab' ice lolly.
I want one so badly. But
they are 2/6, and a conet
is only 1/- and that's what
I've got. So I buy one.
I don't really like the taste.
It's fatty, as if it's made
from dead seals.



I put my hands up,
to surrender
to take a sharp intake of breath
to prepare to jump into something
to show I'm afraid of what is in
front of me.
to express the knowledge that
this is not my doing
to show my confusion
to think about the possibilities
to make myself feel bigger



I can't remember 1947,
obviously - but I was told
all through the winter of



1962-63 that this was worse.
Ours was the only house in the
road with running water,
everyone else's pipes

had frozen. Mr. Philips
from across the road came to
the door with a bucket, and
my mother filled it up for him.
My father was shovelling
snow off the driveway.
I was helping. Where is my
coat? Maybe it was
hot work.

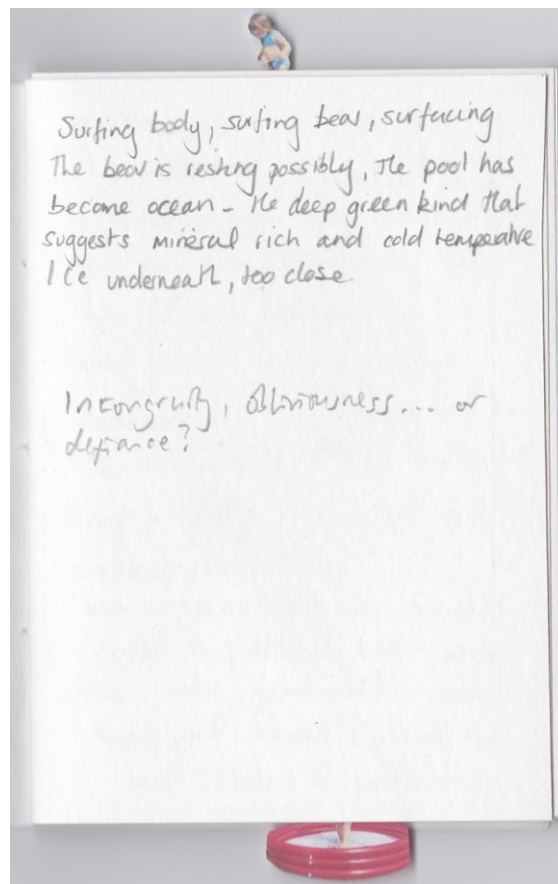
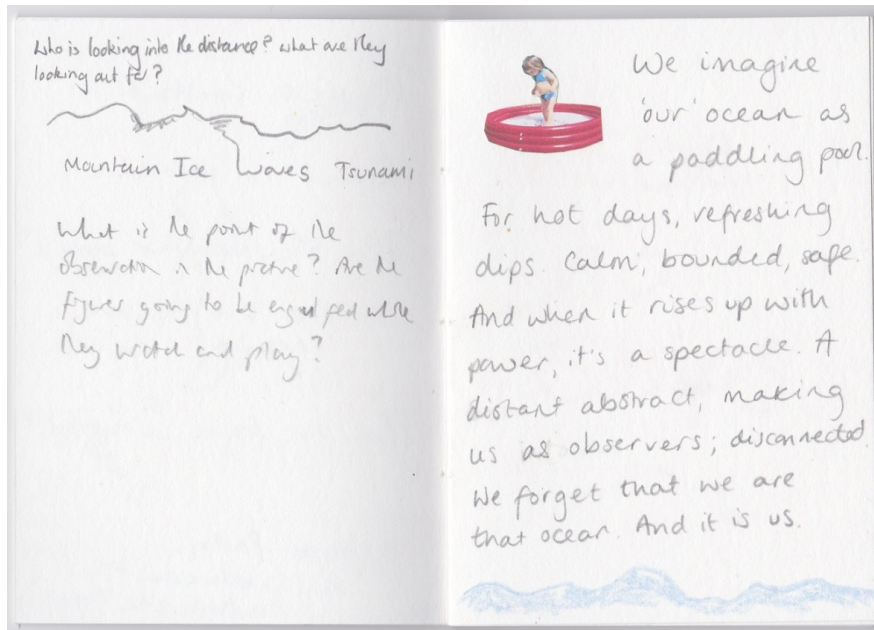
This is me, around 1963.



I can remember hearing on the
Home Service, the news that
JFK had been assassinated

It meant that a storm was
brewing. We know that
now.

It's no wonder I look a little
apprehensive.



I remember this storm surge
Veg well. Storms upon
Storms. with a day's rest
between them.
West Wales was battered
and bombed ...

UNBEARABLY HOT


too much



WARM


boreable

Is this place
going to be
here when
we come back?



I think that perhaps
it will be too rough to even
sail back here one day

There is a lot of water and movement here,
everything is being drained out by the noise
and mass of water.



— Paradise lost —
but why and because of what?

