Writing Through Textiles
(as expansive experimental praxis)
Shellie Holden

Friday 25th October 2024

Textiles enter academia two- fold: once through language in Metaphor, metonymy and structure and simultaneously as tacit embodied knowledge, and thus end up in and In- between all disciplines.
(Goett 2016: 124)

Materials, Memories and Metaphors - The Textile Self Re/collected, Solveigh Goett, Chapter Eight, *found in* Jeffries, J, Wood Conroy, D and Clark, H (2016) . *The Hand book of Textile Culture, Bloomsbury Visual Arts*

Writing textile through Matrixial theory

as part of/ within/ amongst

I first encountered Ettinger in the pandemic through Chantal Akerman's slow cinema, 'Jeanne', film theory and Brenda Longfellow, Feminist art history and Grizelda Pollock.

Ettinger developed her now established theory in the 90's, proposing a new consideration of the "feminine" through a feminist post - structuralist psychoanalytical lens which she referred to as the matrixial, Interogating the role of language. "It does not submit or fold into the phallic difference – into a difference formulated in terms of positive versus negative, having versus not having, presence versus absence". (Ettinger:76/77)

Ettinger uses Matrixial theory as a **borderspace** between her psychoanalysis and painting practice. I use it as a **borderspace** between arts practice and expansive textile making and writing.



https://marionkalter.blogspot.com
/2015/12/interview-with-chantal-akerman-around.html

Jeanne = (seemingly) tidy, resolved, completist.
Shellie = (most of the time) messy, unresolved, cascading.





‘I made the film to give those actions that are typically devalued a life on film’ (Akerman).

17:04:2020

To watch ‘Jeanne’ in many respects is to enter a territory of clichés relating to the domestic and the feminine.

William Kentridge - Artist as a coffee cup



William Kentridge and Judith Butler: Video Art and Social Intervention: Forms of Life Introduced by Shannon Jackson, Cal Arts,





Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley 2023
Meeting at Berkeley for a free-ranging conversation, Kentridge and Butler consider the relationship between art and politics, the paradoxes of identity, the ethics of activism and the power of “the less good idea”. March 2023
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFnQ6e28rn8

William Kentridge and Judith Butler in conversation at the École Normal Supérieure in Paris on the 25th of January, 2024
https://www.kentridge.studio/william-kentridge-and-judith-butler-in-conversation-ecole-normale-superieure/



Thinking through the body, rather than psychologically
(Butler, quoting from Kentridge: Jan 2024)



I need the physical activity of drawing……and being physically present in the studio
(Kentridge: Jan 2024)

.

“I trace pathways in painting and in psychoanalytic practice with the experience of transference”.

(Ettinger: pp77)

Ettinger, B.L (date) Weaving a Woman Artist With-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event.



Transference is a broader psychological phenomenon which relates to unconscious emotions or desires, (Freud: 1895). Transference in a material sense might relate to a ‘contact boundary’, or the action of moving something from one space to another.

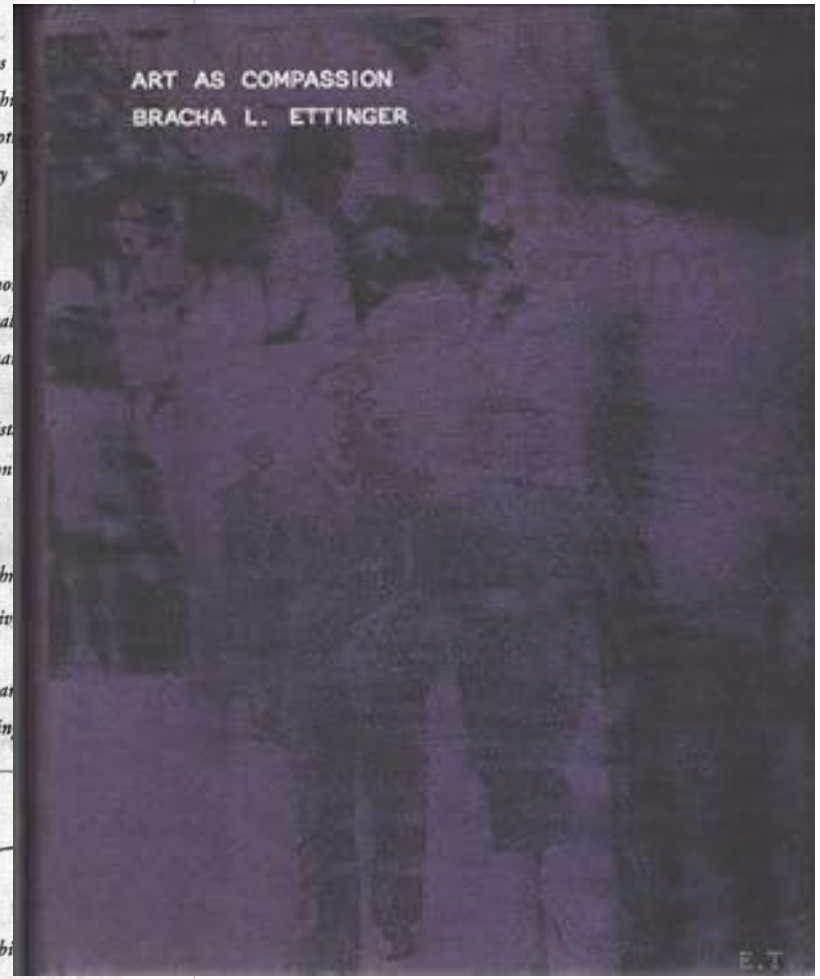




Jeanne (Deilman) and Me: Lockdown, 2021.Digital assemblage.
tracing pathways that are psychologically loaded domestic spaces - transference found in the experience of domestic/ professional practices.

It is Ettinger's visual map of matrixial concepts that I am drawn to, and it is this that I return to.



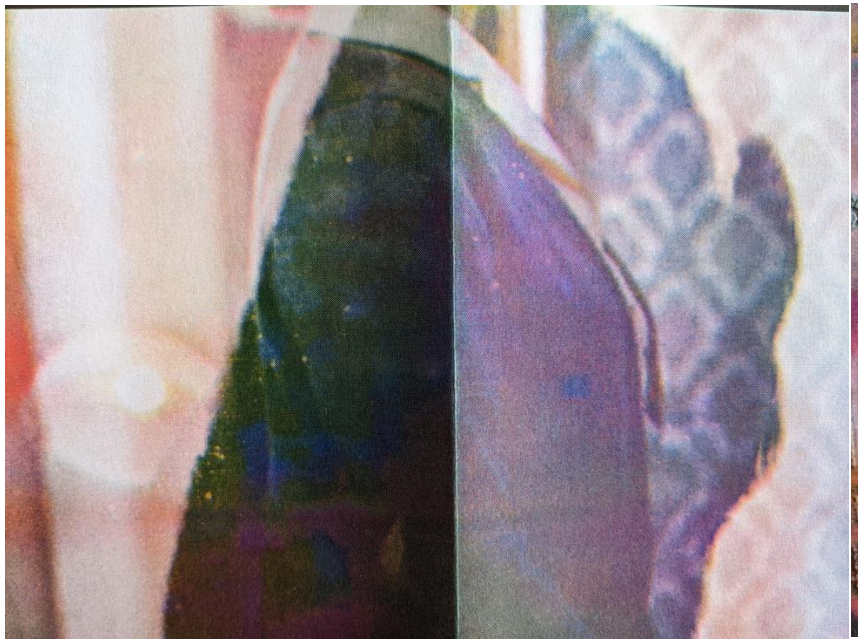


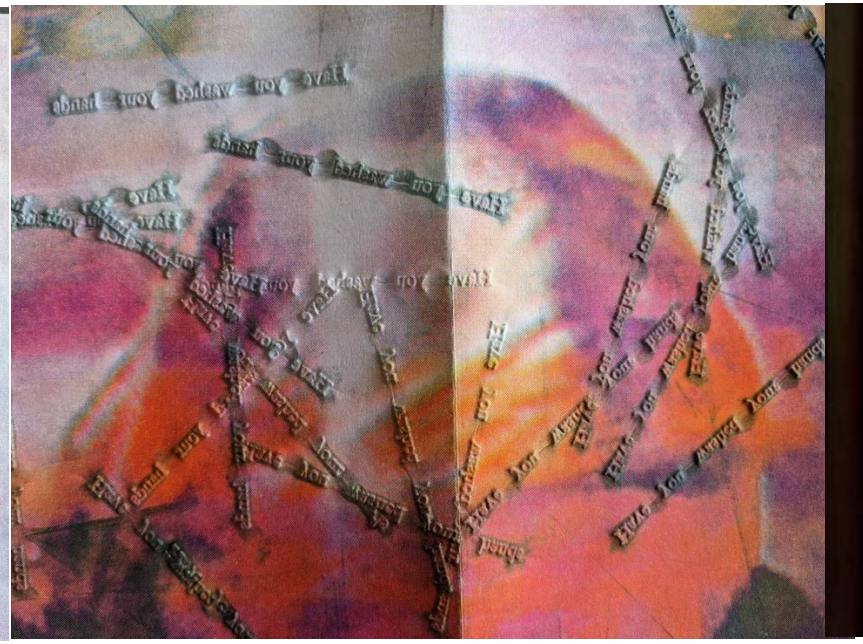
I consider how concepts such as **co-emerging**, **Distance in proximity** and **severalities** can become conceptual tools in which to encounter within arts practice – expansive textile, thinking and writing.

This terminology becomes a site for writing chapters and making experimental responses

As feminist art historian Grizelda Pollock suggests,

> The key concepts of Ettinger's theoretical complex include the following: Matrix, matrixial borderspace, metramorphosis, borderlinking, copoiesis, differentiating-in-co-emergence and co-fading, wit(h)nessing, relations-without-relating, distance-in-proximity, partners-in-difference, encounter-event, metramorphic transformational potentiality, besidedness, severality, potential shareability, the-impossibility-of-not-sharing, com-passion, compassionate hospitality, transcryptum, trans-inscription and cross-inscription, and transubjectivity.

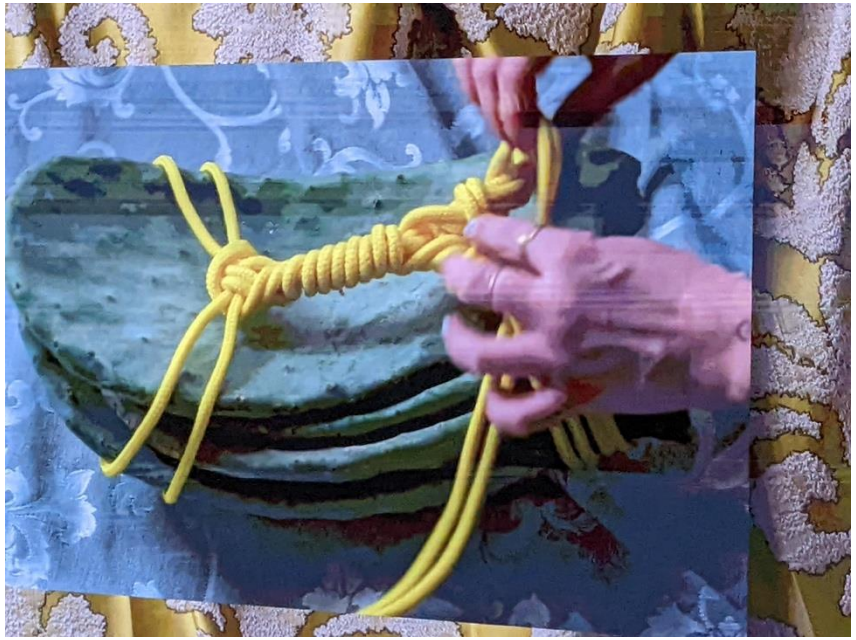






It provides a host of terminology in which to consider aspects of lived experience including the role of the contemporary professional/ domestic and the application of a (post/expansive) textile discipline that enact states of becoming.

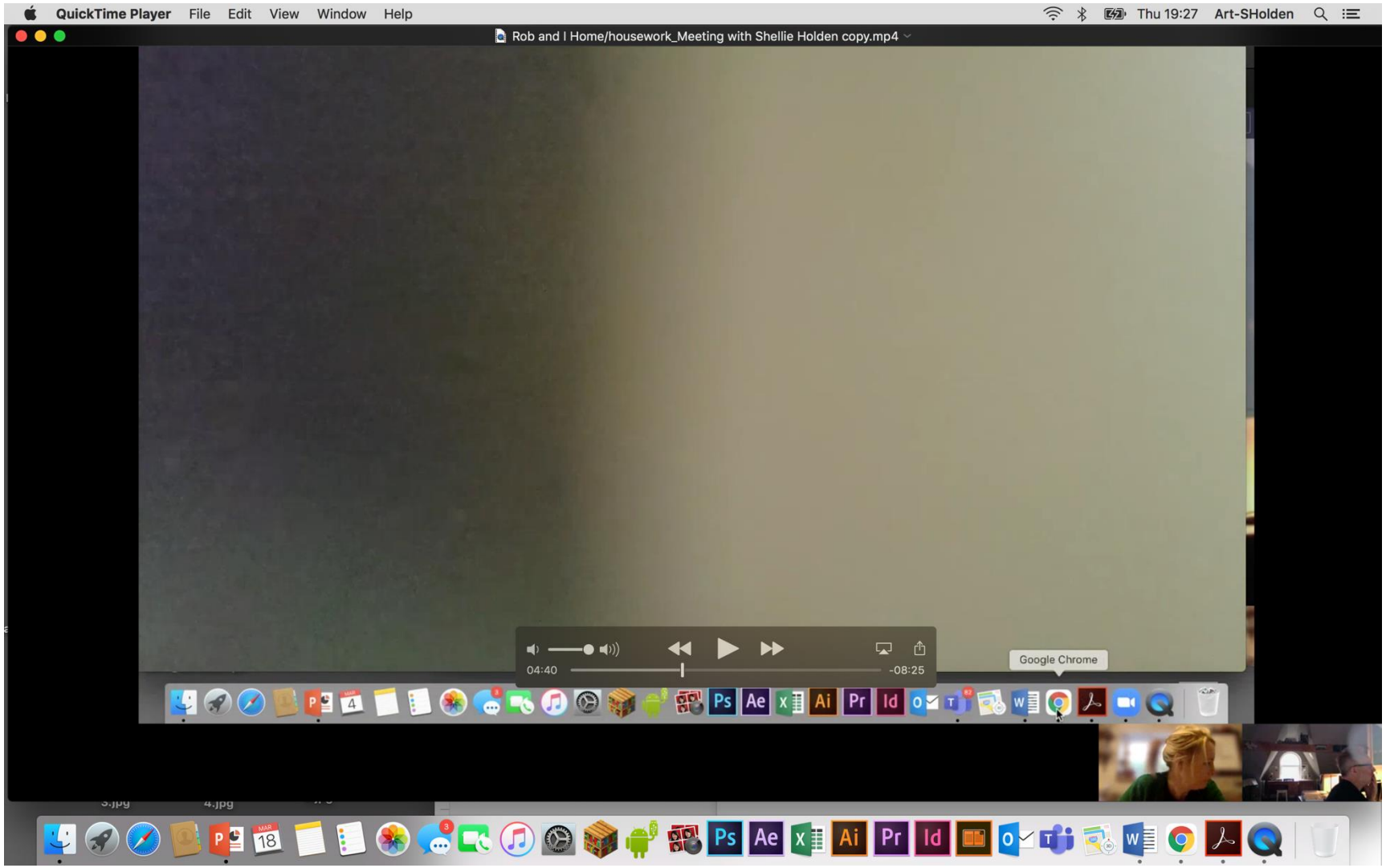
As Ettinger states,
“The matrixial subjectivity refutes opposition and fusion because it is woven – a textile and a texture”.
(Ettinger: 2004, pp89).





Images:Woven Memory, The fabric of interface.A disorderly Tale, (2022), Elisa Giardina Papa Venice Biennale 2022/ Cecilia Vecuna, Tate Modern 2022, H Mackenzie, Queered warps

Textile has serves as a point of entry but also expansive medium for thinking and making, which demands to be interrogated further. What is or what can a textile become?



Fuzzy Film as Digital Domestic Document, 2021, film recording, Shellie Holden
(scene from) *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Commerce Quay, 1080 Brussels*, (1975) Directed by Chantal Ackerman C.[film] Belgium, France., The Criterion Collection Inc.(accessed 15/05/2020).

Performing the Matrixial - A space/place of tensions

Inhabiting 'fuzzy thinking' in relation to a domestic/digital film screen, or metaphorically tie-ing myself in knots, to untangle complex or sticky ideas. In turn these lead to other points of reference as they once again borderlink to other feminist arts practices, metaphor or metonymy or material- conceptual production elsewhere as part of an expansive or post textile landscape.
To quote from Goett again,

> Textiles enter academia two- fold: once through language in Metaphor, metonymy and structure and simultaneously as tacit embodied knowledge, and thus end up in and In- between all disciplines. (Goett 2016: 124)

As a (feminist) methodology, Naomi Pearce's notion of D.I.Y. as "a messy affair, both 'sticky and knotty", (Sonja van Kerkhoff's application of "fuzzy -edged feminism" are both relevant, since in this practice they play into the inter-relation between film and textile methods. *Fuzzy Film: 12.59* (Holden, 2020), for example, is experimental sp/lice of my assemblage, made as a direct response to a first viewing of Jeanne Dielman, watched in the early lockdown stages last March. 'Sticky', 'knotty' and 'fuzzy' become even more relevant when I consider their relationship to textile, thus bringing the film and textile screen into a place of convergence and, when applied to Ettinger's matrixial theory, the making of micro-politics is more evident. Kerkhoff's suggests that 'fuzzy -edged feminism' is "not [...as...] a form of apologetic but as a strategic position."

She states that:

> Feminism slides into all worlds and in general I chose a conceptual approach in my artworks as a means to address multiple issues blurring the edges of the binary artifice of the object/subject as well as the dichotomy between the marginalized other and the unmarked Subject at the centre (Kerkhoff, 99).

Artist Elena Marchevska, confessed in her own work,

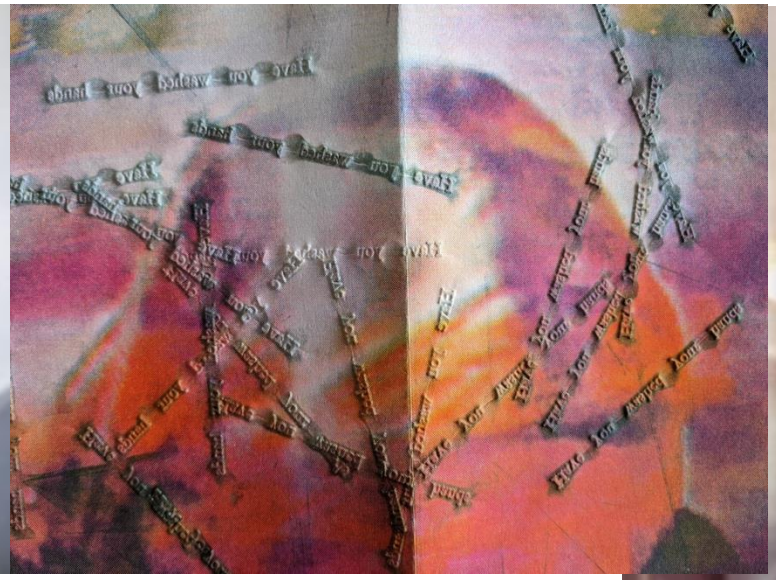
> “to never fully managing to put my research aside for my family and my professional life.” This has been both a blessing and an incredible burden. The resulting shape of this research therefore stems from these complicated relationships and bares a strong resemblance to this real-life assemblage.” (2012: 7).

Associate Professor of Performance Studies in the School of Arts and Creative Industries,, London South Bank University



Co-a-lism is the product of a two year co-living experiment. Ten artists from seven countries met during their educational journey with Transart Institute for Creative Research. They shared a space for longitudinal experimentation and thinking, for connecting over a prolonged period of time. They speak and work with each other across borders and divides of politics geographies, and disciplines. What co-a-lism brings to the fore therefore are friendship and solidarity as the core support structures for a better way of creating, thinking and caring about the art and the artist.



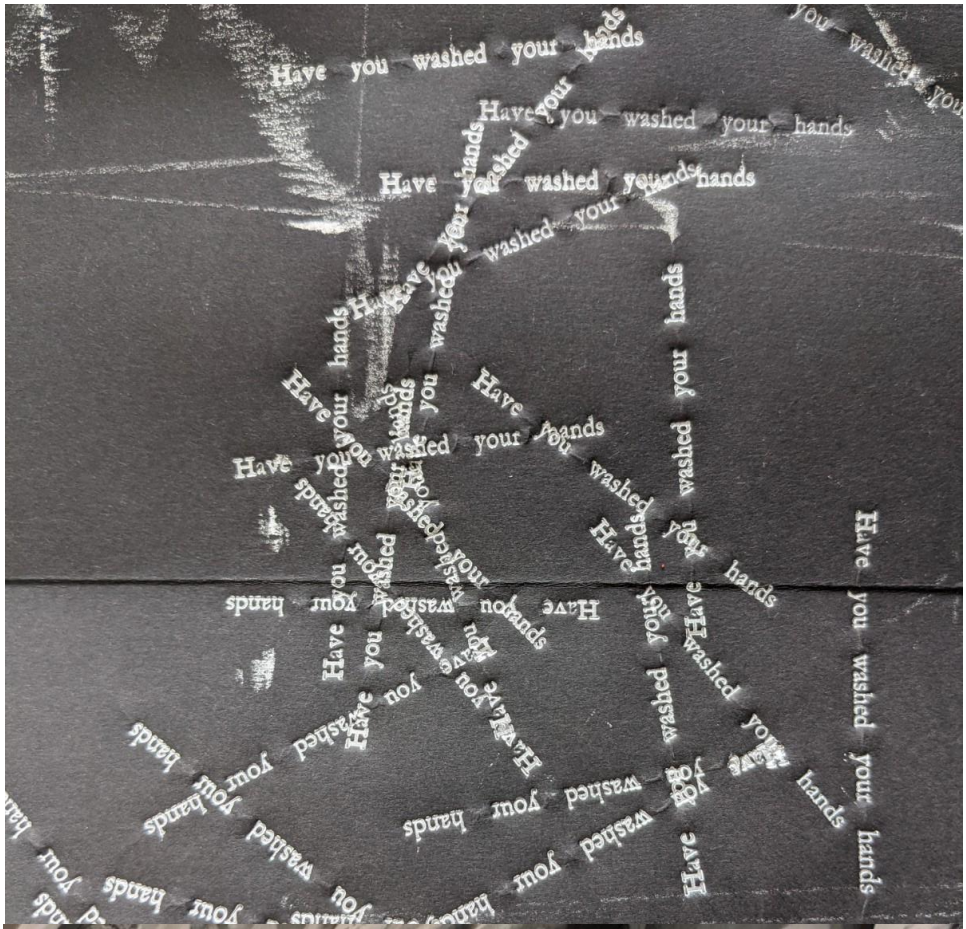


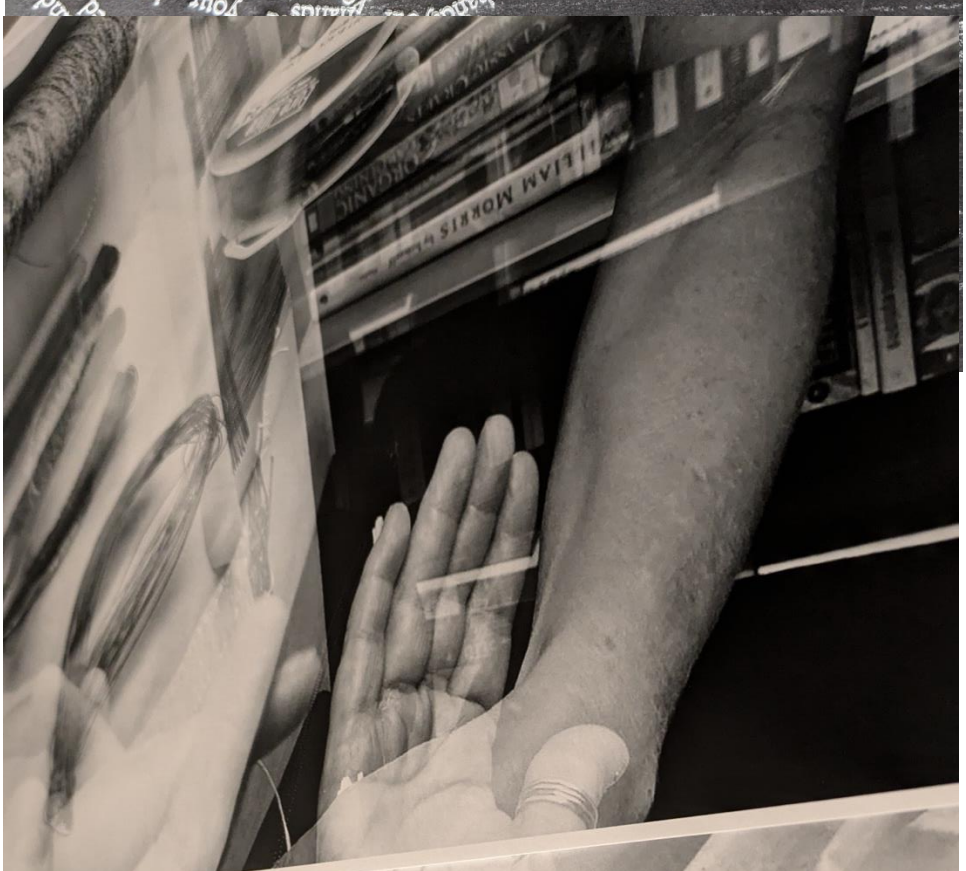

matrixial theory and assemblage theory might both be understood to pull tacitly from

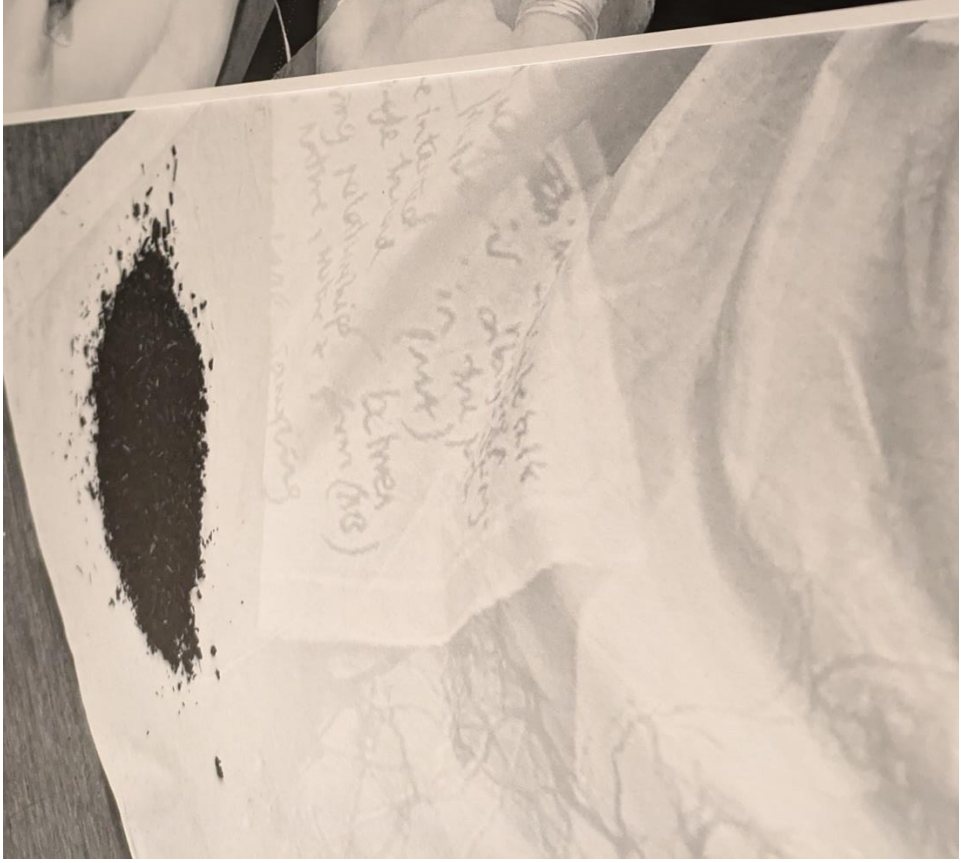
> “systems of reference; symbolic and discursive systems, such as myth, philosophy, art theory, psychanalysis, and any number of others” (Massumi: 2000,29)

so too this writing involves threading together a multitude of practices, and practitioners (from a wide field of references). This threading together might otherwise be described (from the position of textile artist) as

> the sewer [who] is bringing something back together using mind and body to stitch together an understanding….to bring aspects of the research together and make sense of the findings’. (Vuletich: 2016).


Have you washed your hands





For example, artist Veronica Ryan develops her sculptural vocabulary and utilises textile processes such as sewing which she suggests,

“acts as a metaphor for mapping the contours of mindscapes, hinting at the connections between one’s interior world and external objects….sewing is a way to connect different parts together…connecting the past and the present” (Ryan: 2021)



Veronica Ryan, Along A Spectrum: Spike Island, Bristol, Sept 2021

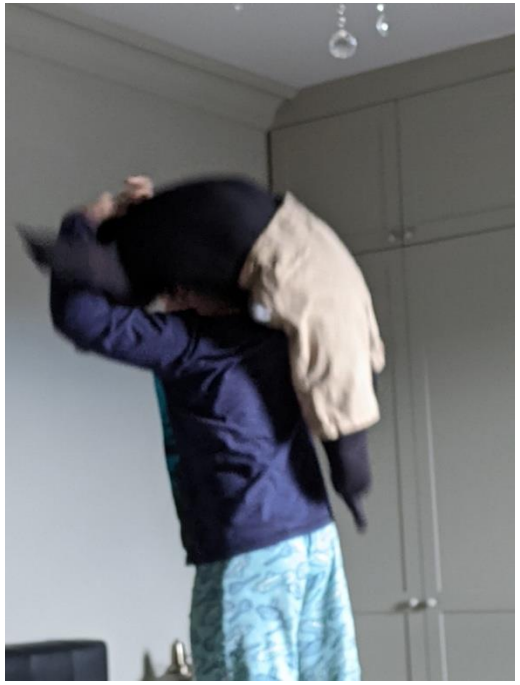
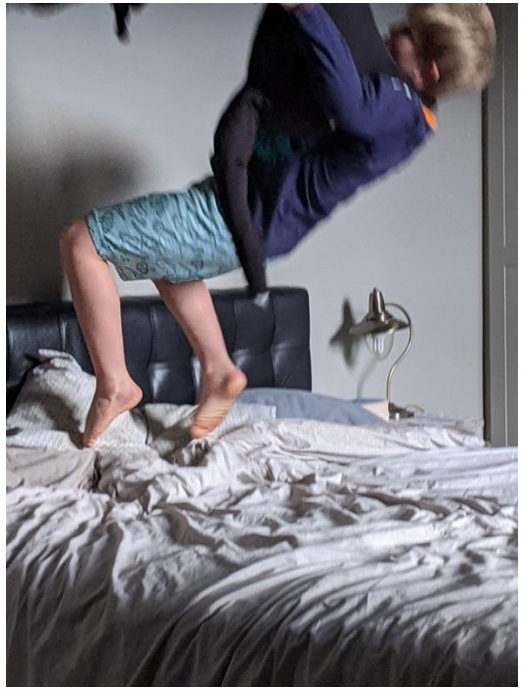
Further to this, Denzin and Lincoln provide a further relevant analogy between the bricoleur and the quilt maker which refers to:

“a patching together of disparate elements to make something new”. (Denzin, N and Lincoln, Y, 2005), whilst Andrews reflects on our identities as

> **”thinkers, makers, plays and storytellers - homo sapiens, faber, ludens** - [a working or playing human]
>
> to suggest,
>
> **“we are narrative selves, creating meaning in our lives through narration. (Andrews 2000:77), concluding**
>
> **“but whatever we might be and do we are also textile selves”**
> (Goett, S: 124)
>
> in which she makes a call to textiles for the impact it makes on our lives, and which I identify here in the prosaic and playful moment ‘performing textile.’

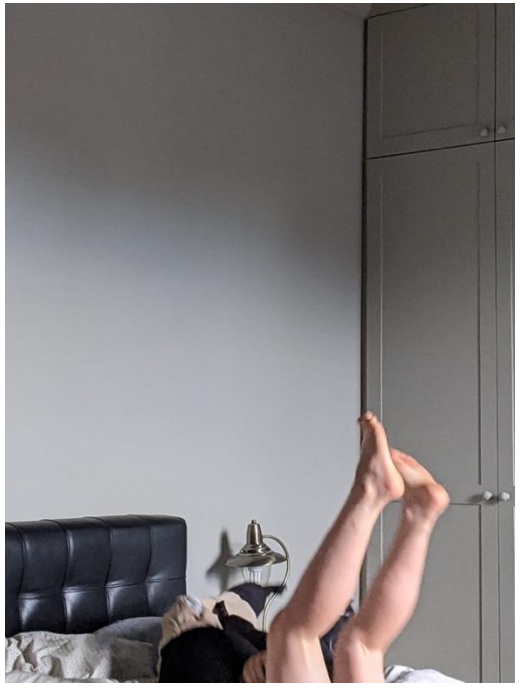


:Film Still
Wrestling with himself, Lockdown, Oct 2019 Performing Textile







Bricolage

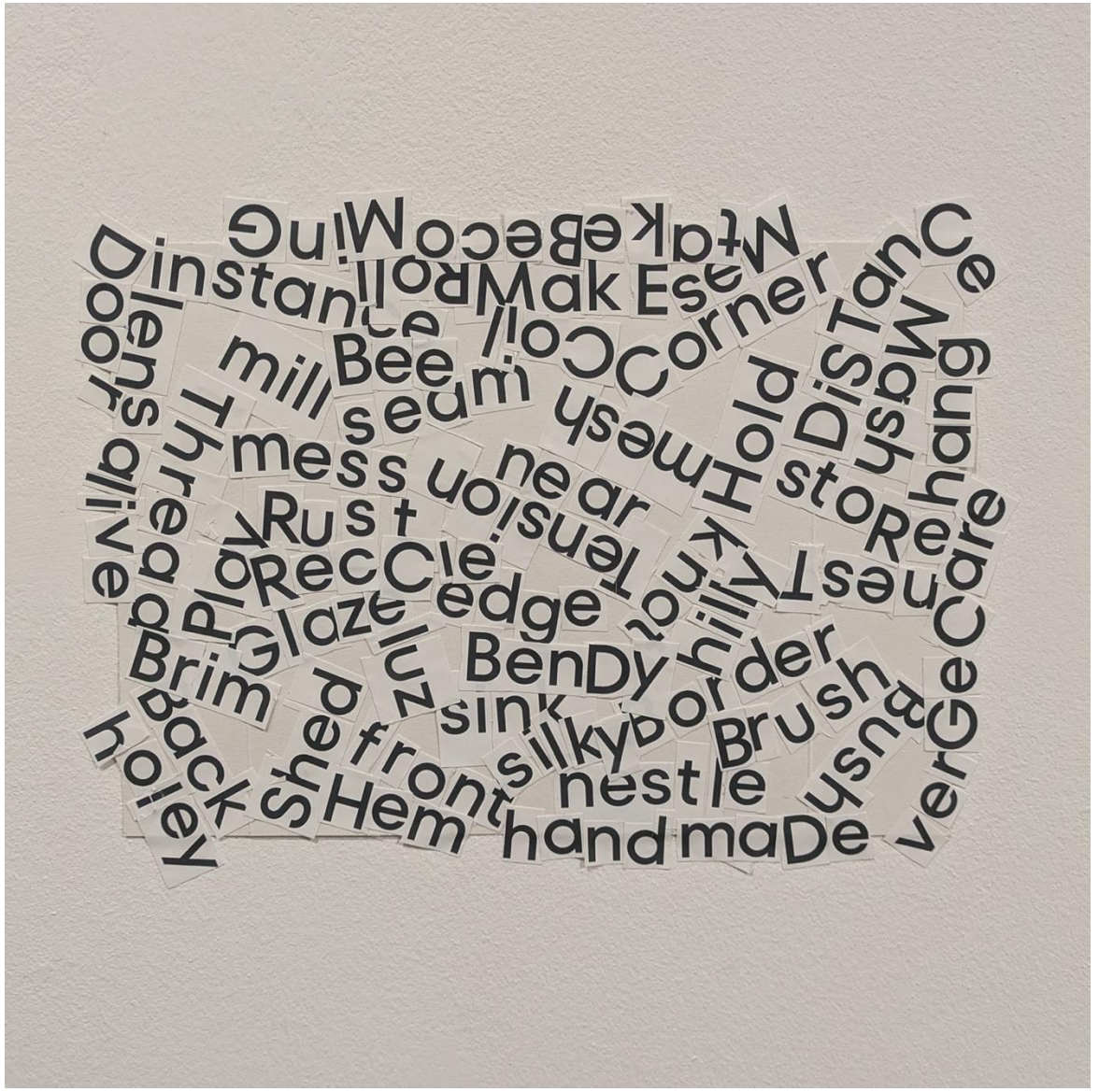
DIY, performance, the act of making do,

‘the poetic making do’ (De Certeau 1984),
Ingold’s “ready-to-handedness” pull tactically and expediently from the “taskscapes” (Ingold, 2000) of everyday life.

Bricolage is applied as:

Local Vicinity – (significance of) home
(human) resources (members of the family)
(Immediate) technologies - equipment - phones, laptops…..

Walter Benjamin’s understanding of Baudelaire’s Rag Picker (Leslie, 2007: 251- 266)
Agnes Varda’s (street) gleaners in the Gleaners…



In 1989 feminist art critic Lucy Lippard proposed that,

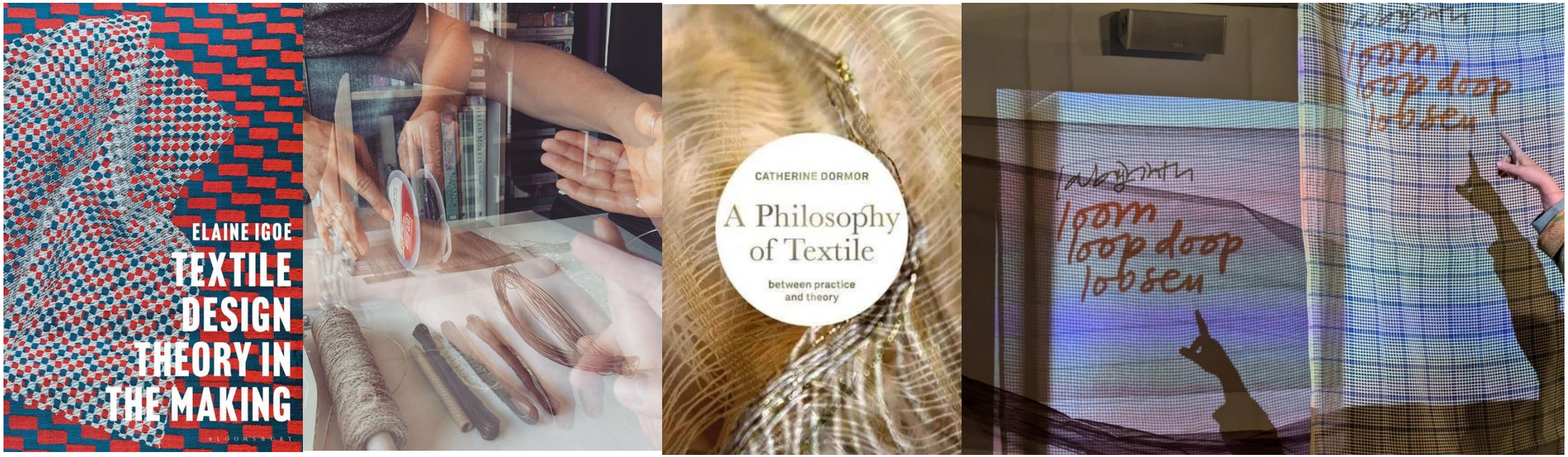
the mixing and matching of fragments is the product of an interrupted life […] What is popularly seen as ‘repetitive,’ ‘obsessive,’ and ‘compulsive’ in woman’s art is in fact a necessity for those whose time comes in small squares
(Lippard, 1986: 228).



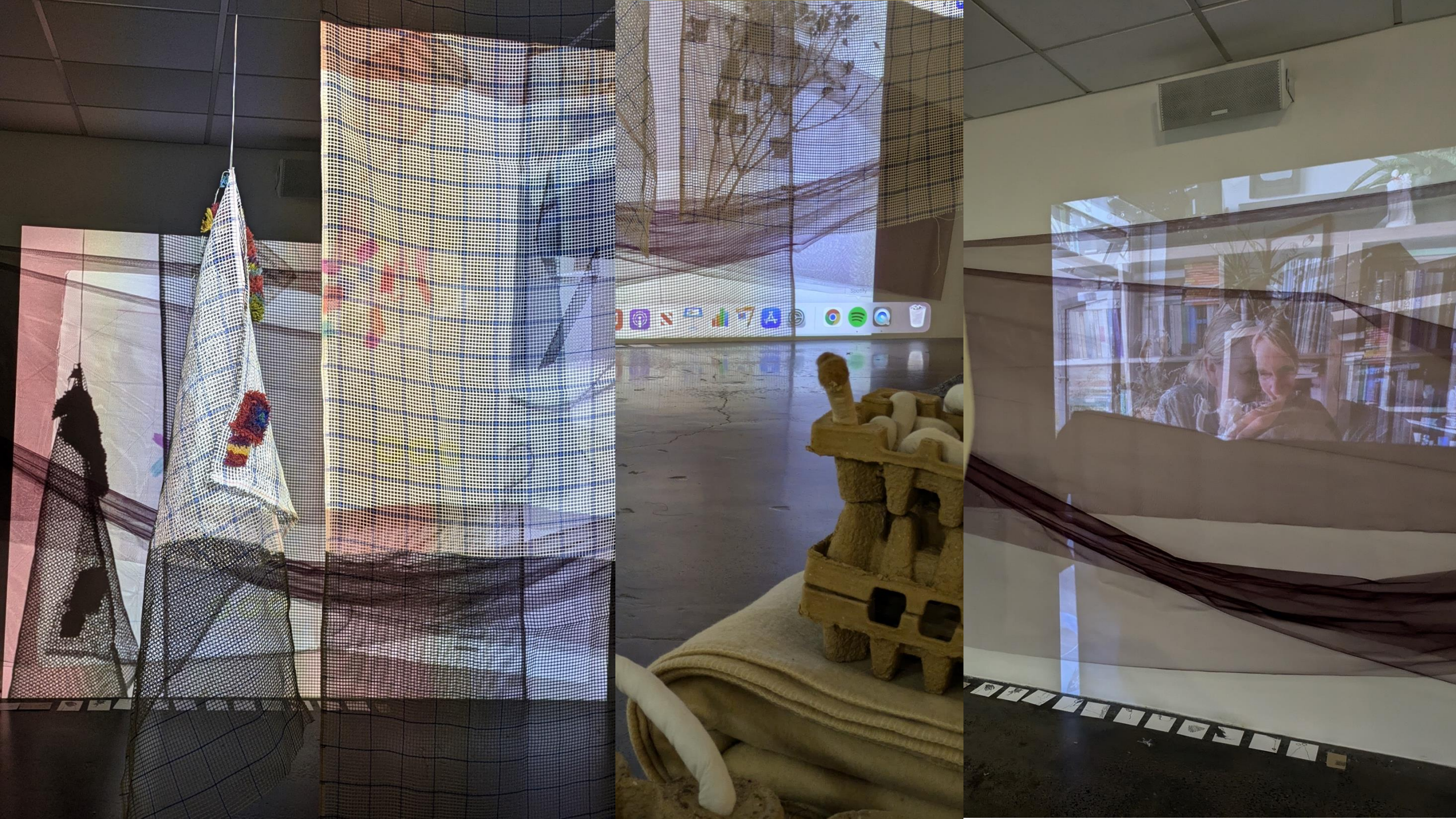
Nudging up to the edges- inhabiting borderspace between you and I

How I came to write in a matrixial way through textiles.

Writings firstly encountered through psychoanalysis and painting (Ettinger), and then applied across a variety of fields including feminist activism and art history (Pollock), film theory (Longfellow), textile practice and textile theory (Dormer), textile design and theory (Igoe), and textile sustainability (Igoe), Psychogeography (Sullivan), academic teaching and education (Kiesel, A: 2022), The Anthropocene (Christoph Solstreif -Pirker: 2023) and the covid 19 pandemic (Mandalaki, Emmanouela (2022) are indicative of inter/trans disciplinarity interests forming a discursive matrix of their own.



Working in the midst or within this research and practice has prompted a theoretical perspective developing upon post- structuralist theory whilst offering feminist perspectives. Weaving together contextual references including Akerman, Ettinger, Monterio, Marchevska, Deepwell, Dormer, Igoe, Pajaczkowska and Pollock have allowed connections to be made at the intersection of domestic culture, textile practicing, contemporary art, philosophy, pedagogy and collaboration.



Speaking Nearby: Trin T Min Ha meets Diffraction as New Materialist Method

Additionally, through collaborative arts practice, Holden, Lester and Mills acknowledge how their practices and working lives are both ‘interwoven and entangled’ enabling textile as both a tactile and tangible practice to be felt between them.

Through this collaboration, they seek to tease out some of the processes and concepts inherent in our work through durational (sometimes spontaneous, sometimes slow) making methods and materials as a collaboration in conversation.





To echo textile artist Catherine Dormer words, here,

“the journey lines, or threads, move to and fro between elements, concepts and narratives, seaming and joining as they pass.” (Dormer, 41:2020)

Practice - based makers, researchers, lecturers, but activists for textile thinking and making (this is because textile continues to get overlooked, or under presented.

A Meeting with the Matrixial.

The shifting State of work(wo)manship (in **severalities**) - A case study of evolving practice, including Between Screens and A splice of life (2020-22) case studies from the covid 19 pandemic.

These two chapters explore pandemic life (during the early stages of the research and practice) enabling new and multiple ways of working to emerge, with a consideration to matrixial application of theory and practice.

It offered an expansive period of experimentation beyond the confines of textile production, offering other materialities gathered from this domestic isolation (with the family) to **emerge through digital montage, sound and performative documentation which have produced a body of bricolage, in the sense they are discrete and disparate elements which are intended to be disseminated in further ways through academic and artistic process**. In this chapter I am paving the way for future work to come as a way to find a tangential link between (my/the) origins of bricolage and assemblage and how that has evolved through matrixial theory and method. (It therefore needs the Ettinger's Cloud Glossary to rationalise this perspective (and also my own Word cloud glossary that sifts and lifts from the various contextual and artistic sources so that, as often cited,

"the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes: 1977, p. 146).



The case studies/articles examines how **‘Art/Working’** as an artistic method is generated from the modes and tools of production in which one is situated in everyday life. A historical context related to women’s domesticated artist practices (1970s Feministo, mail art….Lippard: Life in Squares, Jeanne Deilman) alongside Ettinger’s tools for generating painting (see Massumi, The Voice of the Grain) become two frames of reference in which to cite this practice, as a form of artivism/activism for/against domestic- professional occupations – during and beyond the pandemic (see also Katy Deepwell texts).

The case studies demonstrate how the combination of mixed methods of artistic process (including film stills, image and text, photocopy, collage, letter press, RISO print and digital montage) can bring together disparate aspects of daily life into a shared screen space.

Between Screens

The theme of home is explored in the experimental spaces and intersections **‘between screens’** (home/work, virtual/actual, digital/textile, professional/domestic, academic/creative). The enquiry is pursued through an interdisciplinary practice, which generates both theory through practice and a theorised practice, to enact and illuminate the **entanglement** of the professional/domestic, embodied by this artist/mother/lecturer/Ph.D. candidate whilst performing her/my role(s) and homeworking within the domestic environment. Viewing Chantal Akerman’s 1975 film, Jeanne Deilman, 23, quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles in early lockdown was instrumental in thinking through this professional/domestic **‘work(wo)manship’ (my neologisms).** When witnessed through Microsoft TEAMS and Zoom technologies, domestic gestures can become lasting artefacts of daily house/home life, whilst also operating as a method of arts production. My intention within this paper is to develop a practice-based discourse on the **professional/domestic phenomenon** of working from home, situated between Jeanne Dielman and Bracha L. Ettinger (a psychoanalyst, visual analyst, and artist/painter), as a method to reflect upon the **(in)visibility** of occupations in the home. Professional/domestic life is explored through my **D.I.Y. matrixial making methods** to address how work(woman)ship can be ‘pieced’ or ‘stitched’ together, and where the (im)materiality of the screen is (re)positioned between textile theory and digital **assemblage, intertwined with bricolage, assemblage**, (Deleuze & Guattari) **matrixial theory,** (Ettinger) **and art activism** (Deepwell et al.) as a context for making work(wo)manship visible.

The borderspace in domestic/ professional occupations - work(wo)manship during the covid 19 pandemic.





In Fuzzy Film, ‘textile’ is continually implied within digital surface, since it possesses its own type of felted materiality made up of light and atmosphere. Felting is a versatile material when related to building insulation and can perform several functions at once. It can accommodate thermal, acoustic, and impactful requirements and it is often utilised within the unseen spaces and intersections of internal walls within the home. I mention this as it is this function of felt, when used metaphorically, that can relate to the atmosphere and acoustics of a home. In the digital screen, it is through the disrupted ambiance of household sounds drifting in and out of a space that perhaps allude to the unseen spaces of work, elsewhere, nearby, but on the periphery. This border space between physical space and digital space can also be explored between image and sound, or something and nothingness, for example.

A Sp/lice of life (home, Laptop, Wi-Fi)

AMPS proceedings Journal Series (Architecture Media Politics Society)
https://amps-research.com/proceedings/ ISSN 2398-9467
Representing Pasts - Visioning Futures

This paper examines Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's matrixial theory in relation to her concept of **Metramorphosis** as "a process of change on borderlines and thresholds" when experienced from the perspective of living at home during the pandemic. It attempts to do this by addressing the circumstances of the artist/author of this paper, as a way to (re)produce encounters, firstly lived through the screen, then later developed upon through a palimpsestic process whereby layers and layers of **'artworking'** are applied through interdisciplinary virtual, digital and analogue methods, as a response to working through the pandemic. (Ibid p.61) The term artworking is derived from the title of Ettinger's exhibition and catalogue of the same name - Artworking (1985 - 96) and thus forms a referential place to consider a host of materialities as those produced in accretions.



Distance – in - Proximity

A critique of Grizelda Pollock reading through Bracha L Ettinger's Concept of the Matrixial.

Focusing on Ettinger's theoretical concepts – (which include fascinance, distance in proximity and wit(h)nessing) offers a supplementary way of thinking and being, or more appropriately 'becoming – in -the -world' that is intrinsic to approaching Ettingerian concepts and of working beyond the oedipal complex.

For Pollock, this involves a process of 'looking back', across feminist art histories, that are interwoven with her academic and activist work.







Historical Context (in second wave feminism) The Women's Postal Art Event – Monica Ross and Su Richardson.

Grizelda Pollock (b. 1949)

feminist art historian, activist and cultural theorist/analyst, who has altered the perception and visibility of women in the arts.

“Artists get it”







Bracha Ettinger – Resonance/ Overlay/ Interweave: In the Freudian Space of Memory and Migration

In this deeply cathected space of memory and migration, the renowned Israeli artist and psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger holds her first major exhibition in Britain since 1993

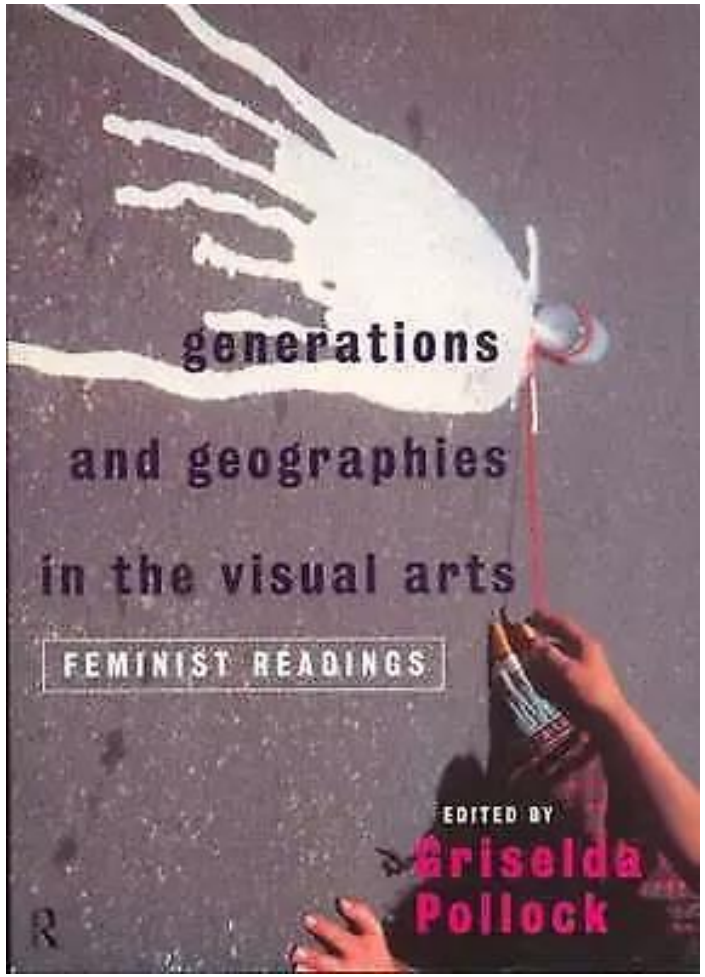
Sam Belinfante and art historian Griselda Pollock as they discuss ideas of theatricality, gesture and music within contemporary visual arts.

The insight that the Matrixial delivers in psychoanalyitical language are already to be found in Ettinger's writings recorded in her artists notebooks. Indeed, that is the point, I have found consistently that, while intellectuals wedded to their selected theoretical god resist the challenge matrixial theory poses to the deeply rooted phallocentrism underlies so many of the thought systems of these gods of the Academy, artists 'get it'- they 'get' matrixiality and Metramorphosis and run with it (Pollock: 2022,p.6)

If we utilise Ettinger's concepts, it does this, for example, by co- emerging with the past and present; acknowledging acts of resistance and revolution (such as the Woman's Liberation Movement), and tracing remnants and residues of other (traumatic) events. In fact, Ettinger's own process of artworking, has brought forth ethical encounters and aesthetic events, through the realm of the matrixial which brings proximity in distance, durational time and (feminist) artistic method into a space of encounter.

This chapter intends to examine some of the mechanisms Pollock employs to stitch together some of these experiences through her interventions with artists ideas and methods to demonstrate how these events are relevant to the future, whilst acknowledging the influence they have had on my own artistic practice.

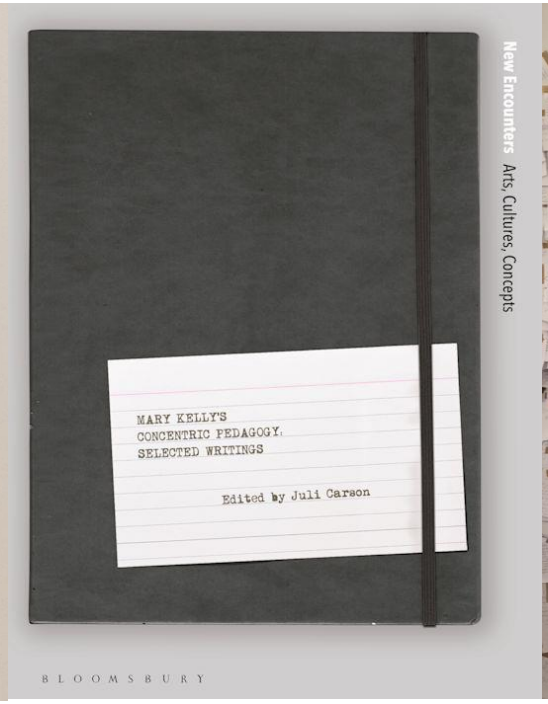
See also Judith Butler and Bracha Ettinger (2011) (accessed 24/10/20240 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5O9KsXVpLI

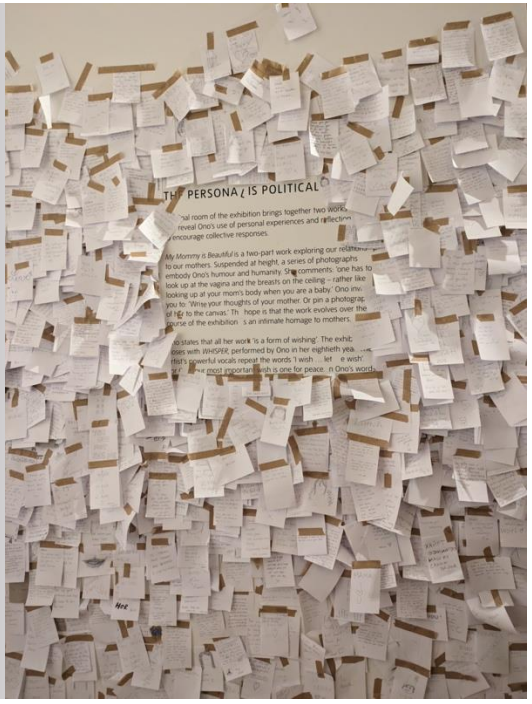


Unravel, The Power and Politics of textiles in Art, 13 Feb- 26 May 2024, Barbican, Textile Exhibition
Yoko Ono Music of the Mind, Tate Modern, 15 Feb- 1 September 2024
Women in Revolt, Art and Activism in the UK 1970-1990 8 Nov 2023 - 7 April 2024





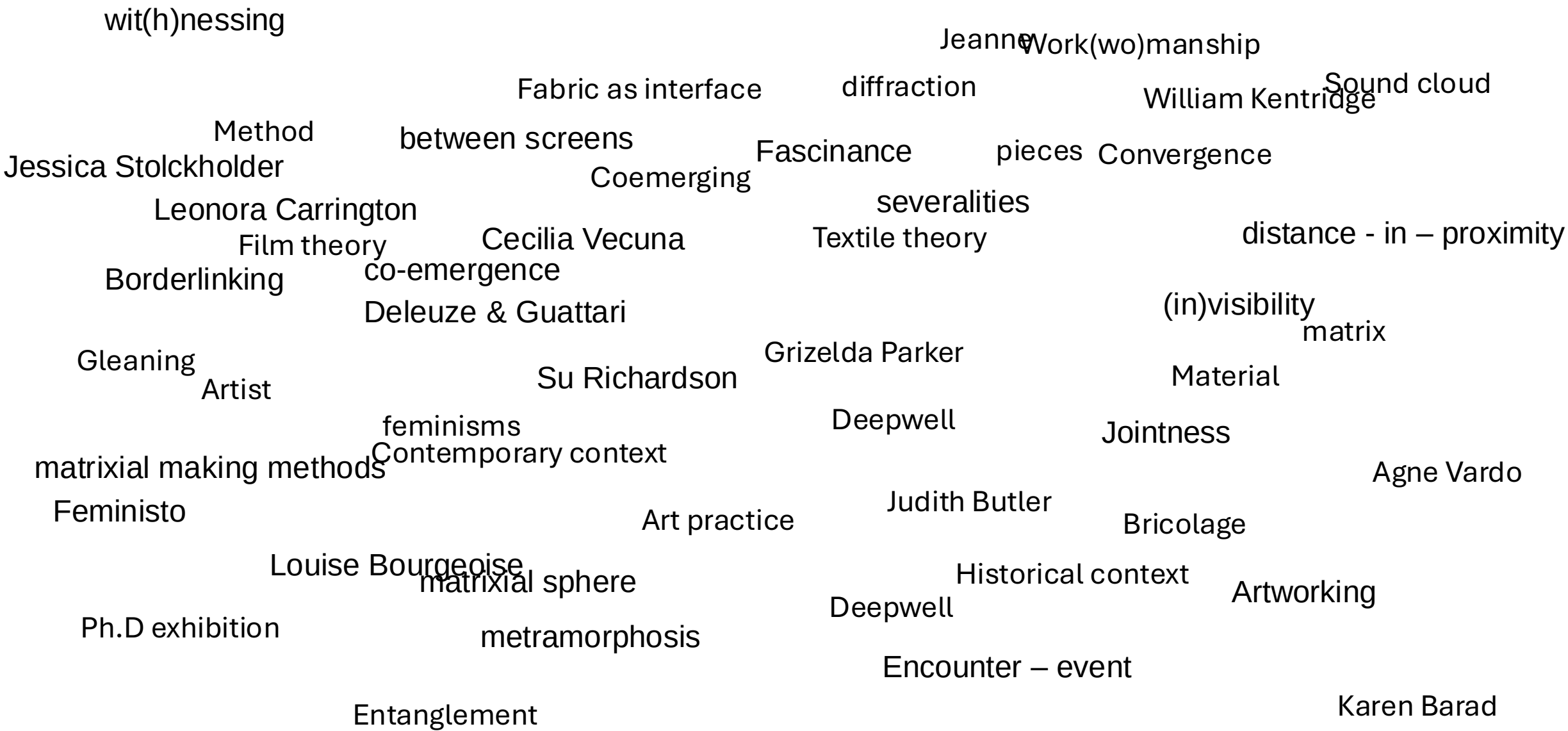




Mary Kelly and Griselda Pollock in Conversation: A free event at Tate Britain on March 6, 2024, 18.00- 20.00 to celebrate the launch of Mary Kelly's book Concentric Pedagogy. Pollock will chair the discussion, with Kelly and Juli Carson joining via Zoom

Concentric Pedagogy explores how working at the intersection of teaching, artistic practice, and radical political engagement might transform our approach to all three. It is essential reading for students and teachers of art and design studio practice, art history and theory, contemporary, and feminist art.

A web of connections



End