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MA Contemporary Dialogues: Textile.

Confirmative Praxis M7X02024

Word count : 5434

St(tt)uttering, hovering and loom(ing)

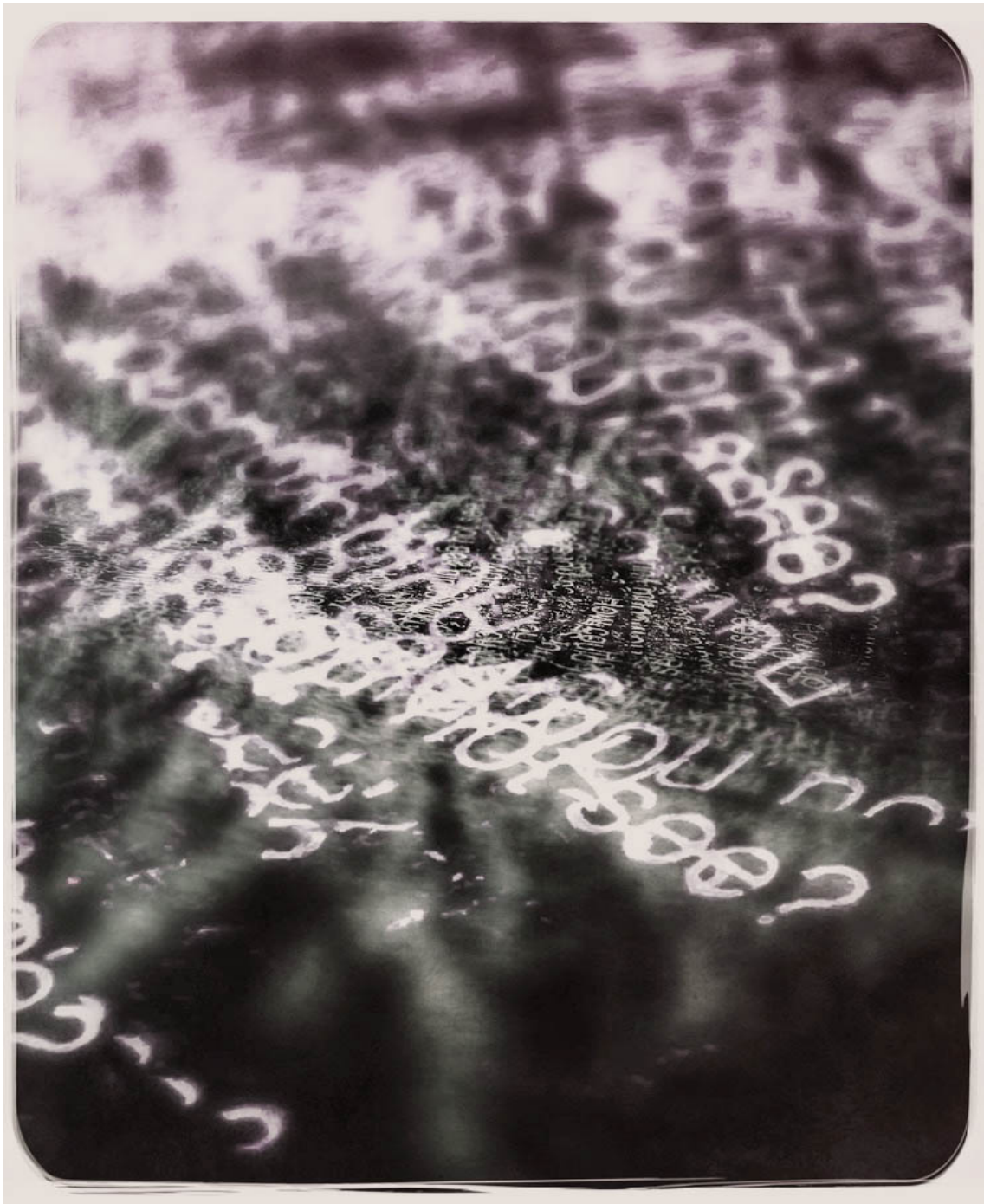


Figure 1. © Imogen Mills. How can you not see?

St(tt)uttering, hovering, loom(ing).

Introduction

Isn't it all guess work anyway? As we puncture the surface, we make our mark. The unseen underside produces a rupture point, an intuitive intermingling of aesthetic decisions and technical judgement. Lived experience witnesses a back and forth, stories interweave with each other, accumulating experience, knowledge. We learn when to duck and dive, when to expose ourselves, when to hide.

The purpose of this writing, much like my practice, is to weave together lived experience with material and the technical expertise of making through practice. I use 'weave' and 'stitch' to conjoin these elements since both, here in writing, and there, in practice, have remained integral components of my work, even while I attempt to deconstruct weave's meaning. The praxis "doing, thinking, learning" (Woods, 2022) draws from a wealth of voices both inside and outside of textile including Dormer, Bruno, Massey, Bennett, Deleuze and Guattari.

My own voice in this shift from autoethnography, justifying the first person, to anecdotal and poetic expression, with the academic contextualising my ideas more formally. Thread is a confounding element....st(tt)uttering, hovering, loom(ing) throughout, linkage, slippage. There have been disruptions, restrictions, a pandemic, a reframing; in and out of digital and physical space, an enfolding, back tracing, separation. Then came the unexpected death of my father which brought grief, mourning and new resonance to (threads) tension. My praxis has splintered off into iterations and then re-assembled. I will be

fluctuating between fragments of practice and lived experience. My intention is to tangibly make these connections through assemblage as a methodological approach.

Thread.

Thread here is the founding component.

By trapping thread, we witness its release.

These parts are rehearsed over and over, actions are repetitious.

Components selected, assemblages form.

His snuff boxes hold my thread.

“Word is thread and the thread is language...

The thread feels the hand, as the word feels the tongue” (Vecuña, 2011)

I am interested in deconstructing “analyse...reduce...to reinterpret it” (Dictionary, 2022) the idea of weaving, “to form or construct” (Dictionary, 2022), in examining the idea of tension “a strained relationship” (Dictionary, 2022) and the point of collapse “to break down” (Dictionary, 2022). An intermingling of lived experience, the precarious nature of life and tension inherent in chaotic relationships. Here thread can snap, the “potential threat to the cloth matrix.” (Dormor, 2020)

Therefore, thread is the confounding component because it is multitudinal in its meaning. A thread of conversation, the thread of life, thread has the potential to repair, mend, stitch together or fray and unravel. Thread that binds things together, wound and bound as we are to each other, sometimes I lose the thread, sometimes I feel threadbare, sometimes a thread holds out hope, sometimes a thread ties us to the past yet can create a path to the future. “It’s within the capacity of thread

to bind things together, to be in tension and to be fluidly potent.” (Kettle, 2022) A thread can knot, fray, break and entangle. It is a delicious word embedded richly in textile language that enfolds life and meaning. It is beginning, middle and end. As textile theorist and practitioner Dormor suggests “The journey-lines, or threads, move to and fro between elements, concepts and narratives, seaming and joining as they pass.” (2020, p. 41) It is linkage, slippage, weight and lightness which, “proposes textile as a form of meditation between matter, process and concept.” (2020, p. 2) I am exploiting the potency of thread as a metaphor for lived experience, “textile’s potency as maker of meaning...folds itself between material presence, language and affectivity” (2020, p. 17) and I acknowledge the collective understanding of thread as a powerful tool for collaborative thinking between audience and artist; “Thread has the potential to make change, transform the materials and people it engages with and to describe the world” (Kettle, 2022).

Loom(ing)

“To come into sight indistinctly... to take shape as an impending occurrence” (Penguin, 2000)



Fig 2. © Imogen Mills. Inside the Loom. 2019.

The loom is the secondary component and a site of deconstruction. Without the loom, thread cannot become self-sufficient. The warp tension is a critical parameter in weave. The loom is the physical space where thread is activated, inside the loom, *the taskscape*, is one where “the relationship of the finished work to the movements of the body... control[led] the tensions of the stretched filaments.” (Stritzler-Levine, 2007) Yarn is calculated, measured, wound and thread intricately through this machine. Each length of thread passes through the hand, placed in formation in an interplay between warp and weft, longitude and latitude. Zheng Qio states “Images (tu) are the warp threads, and the written words (shu) are the weft... the image without writing is like seeing a person but not hearing his words.” (Francis, 2020)

Inside the loom thread is activated in “taskscape...dwelling activities’... emerging through rhythmic, patterned social interaction.” (Hicks, 2016) The act of organising thousands of individual threads could almost be described as a phenomenological in its act. “They reveal neither form nor ‘final product’... but performance, process and ‘the actual work... existing only as long as people... are engaged in the activities of the dwelling.” (Hicks, 2016) Weave is procedural, a critically focused labour, and dexterous, where body is integral to that taskscape. For me the process is haptic, creating feedback between weaver and thread. Wound and bound over loom, tension is pivotal, held at precipice, giving the cloth construction integrity, too tight the warp threads snap. This threshold transforms a singular thread into self-sustaining cloth. If one fragile thread breaks; utter collapse.

We hold ourselves on the cusp.

Life has altered completely.

We are constantly in flux. The pandemic has ripped through life, with twists and turns. We are separated, disparate, released; we are in digital space, then physical, a constant changing threshold. Each opening, then closing, there is a st(tt)uttering, hovering, loom(ing).

Repeatedly I have been struck by the alteration of cloth nature, from taut to limp once removed from the loom. I peer in, tracking the event of thread and interrogate photographically; initially digitally manipulating then developing into darkroom photograms reaching for that elusive capture of thread in action. “(C)rossing two threads... one stretched taut... the other undulating and intertwined with the first... two threads [must] be bound, otherwise each will remain a fragile and fluttering potentiality... [they are] defined by [their] opposite”. (Merrill, 2022) As with cloth and thread we are also bound inexorably to each other, yet there is always the *fluttering potentiality* for it all to totally fall apart. The shared space that we each occupy, gone.

I am trying to capture that moment of ultimate collapse.

Warp and weft are bound to each other in cloth.

Reliant on each other.

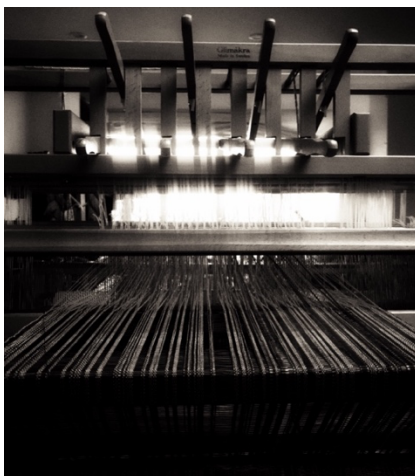


Fig 3. © Imogen Mills.2019.

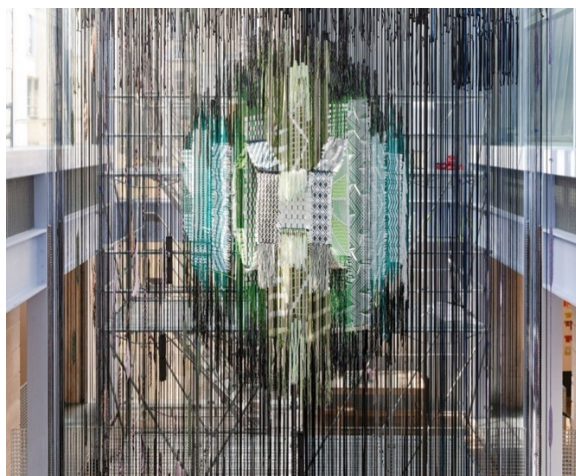


Fig 4. Hella Jongerius. Space Loom. Research for the Seamless loom.

<https://www.metalocus.es/en/news/hella-jongerius-transforms-lafayette-anticipations-a-space-loom>

The loom is a highly technical machine and a focus of reverence, it is hierarchical in nature and the site of intensive labour. Hella Jongerius's Space Loom raises conversations around criticality and cultural production reversing "the ancestral hierarchy of the loom." By using irregular warp and weft yarns "...my interest is in unravelling a piece of cloth and in deconstructing hierarchies: what if the warp becomes more important than the weft?" (2019) By deconstructing the cloth matrix Jongerius alters the loom's role away from the highly mechanised fast production of current textile and into a site for creativity. "Instead of expecting the machine to provide answers, it is the trial-and-error work process that generates answers to questions the experimenters could not have asked in advance." (Jongerius, 2021) Her methodology here expects all questions to be open-ended and repositions the loom as derestricted artefact, "the unfinished, the provisional, the possible – they hide in the attention for imperfections, traces of the creation process" (Jongerius, 2019).

Re-emergence into the physical world of activated tactility.

Fresh selections of materials each journey.

Pack/unpack.

Small enough to fit in my pocket.

Low tech, low key, repurposing materials.

I cast aside the loom but continue to think in terms of weave. In deconstructing the loom, weave rematerialises into stitch. In this moment of flux, digital space opens into physical. There is a back and forth, studio to home, I want to act, react, select, so I pack, unpack for smallness, flexibility, adaptation. I limit resources, unencumbered, singular items, kitchen table finds, tabletop protectors become a harness

for the stitch, captured mid-flight, small enough to fit in the pocket. Pack, unpack.

Stitch gatherings begin in physical space, generous tactile conversations. St(tt)utterings, assemblages of ideas are loom(ing). They hover, come into view here and there. The winding and binding of bare iron wire, forms loom of heddles, an enactment with horsehair knotted around gramophone needles evolve to become heddle ties. Paper warp yarns are measured, words are printed, organised, bound, the weavers knot. Linkage, slippage of components from loom. What is a loom in its constituent parts?

Threshold.

**“The thread dies when it is released but comes alive in the loom;
the tension gives it a heart.” (Vecuña, 2011)**

*Yet a fray, a loosening, a release of tension and
a threat appears.*

*The cloth matrix exposes fragility,
tenuous relationships.*

Threshold is described as “a designated area of intensity. The magnitude or intensity that must be exceeded for a certain reaction [or] phenomenon...[to] be manifested.” (Google Dictionary, 2022) Therefore, threshold could be viewed as containing expectation, being a transitional space. Dormor (2020) proposes that threshold can be critically examined through the frayed cloth. Taking Merrill’s threads that are ‘*bound to each other*’ (2022), thread here holds things together, flexing with movements. Witnessing its collapse is “a key moment in the process of

deconstruction that reveals its construction and process.” (Dormor, 2020, p. 93)

Here, the frayed cloth is a “conscious tactic of aesthetics and memory.” (Dormor, 2020, p. 83) This place of potentiality is raw in its physicality, with Dormer, who cites Spivak’s reference to the “neurological excitation caused by a new brain pattern forming resistance”, and goes on to say that the frayage is a “form of ‘surrender’ to the known.” (Dormor, 2020, p. 83) Studying this critical moment “the art-work opens up in its own way the Being of beings...this de-concealing... the truth of beings...happens in the work. Art is truth setting itself to work.” (Heidegger in Plummer, 2012)

I assert here then, that threads vitality is inherent in the breach of this tension. This is the critical focus of my work. “In the absence of the structuring scaffold of the cloth, its material presence becomes revealed.” (Dormor, 2020, p. 93)

Then my father dies.

It is absolute.

The space he occupied has gone.

Tension.

Held by tension all my life, there is release. Mourning and memory breathe new life. The cloth frays, the glass is smashed again, his needles were in my pocket.

Weave, tension, collapse. I am negotiating reconciliation through form and shape, embracing the tactility of physical making. A lack of thought, unable to concentrate, comprehend or digest. I cannot think.

“The cultural theorist Sianne Ngai suggests that, when shocked or grieving, we find ourselves able to speak of the experience only in ‘thick speech’. When speaking thickly, Ngai says, we are challenged in our usual ability to ‘interpret or respond’. A drastic slowdown and recursion of language occurs, a rhetorical enactment of fatigue and confusion. Tenses work against one another. There is a ‘back flowing’, a loss of causal drive, a gathering of hesitations and stutters. We speak an eddying speech, cloyed to the point of congealing.” (Ngai, 2005)

My father as the adversary. For me, there lives in the word ‘tension’ a duality. The loss of my father brought back many vivid memories of a terse and uncomfortable relationship where tension, and the threat of it, hung in the air for much of my young and adult life. This leaves stains of intrigue in the tension found in cloth, but also resonates in the lived experience. There is a wearing thin “or overly rubbed, creating a thinness, that threatens the whole”. (Dormor, 2020, p. 92)

This potent textuality has multitudinal meaning here; a relationship constructed and constricted through its tension, yet the cloth matrix disintegrates without it. The materiality of thread and gramophone needle have added renewed bonds, trapping thread in snuff boxes, ideas have looped and folded back. I have brought thread under tension, under my terms.

*Paper thread
enables words that
I dare not speak.
It is threaded,
looped, folded,
enfolded.*

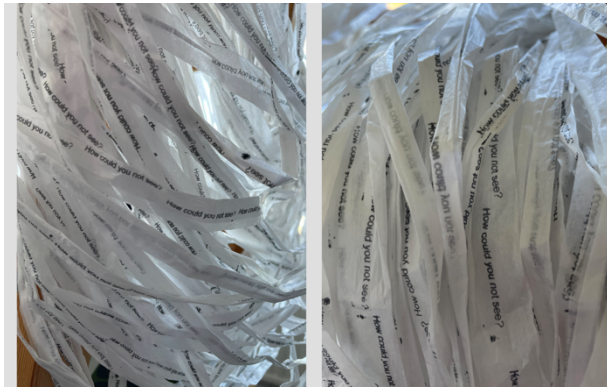


Fig 5. © Imogen Mills

This duality of meaning led to the creation of a piece of work on washi paper yarn. This repetitious action of text, an enactment of words unsaid, was stamped continually for 159 metres “consider what they mean and how they mean.” (Scholes in Nordquist, 2019) A contemplative process, the hank of paper was then tied in weavers’ bundles. The substrate of overspilled printed words became a new explorative site. “(A) relationship still continues between text and the textile, meaning and its body, or the process by which its narrative thread is woven into meaning.” (Kruger, 2001) The paper yarn here was just paper yarn, the text was just words, but body and matter brought about a textuality, as material was imbued with meaning, they became intrinsically linked.

“We find it familiar to consider objects as useful or aesthetic...we are on less familiar ground when we consider objects as companions to our emotional lives or as provocations to thought.” (Turkle, 2007) The materiality: thread, gramophone needle, snuff box become sites of intense meaning. Silverman asserts that “Because of its textuality, the [work] eludes itself, defines itself, or determines itself in particular ways.” The textuality of the work is more so now not about the what, but “the how...the meaning and structure” (1986) There was a letting go of control, the hands of the maker took over. Instinctual acts

occurred through material and process, “actions that relate to oneself, material, place, process.” (MoMA, 2022) Seelig describes this “tacit knowledge” in making, “in allowing the material to play a significant role in the discovery of form.” (2012) Albers also states that “a sound, a touch, hardness or softness; it catches us and asks us to be formed, we adjust, we invent, and in that process, we begin a ‘dialogue with our medium.’ (1982) These materials have a subliminal and profound affect. The sensuous touch, the haptic, reaches into the core of our being, their materiality, the rusted, gritty, crinkly, smoothness, sharpness, their behaviour, their tensile strength “instinct is a behaviour that we are especially prone to trust”. (Seelig, 2012) Mourning brought about a slowing of thought, a wearing thin, but also an instinctual act of making. This thinness “as warp and weft thin and separate, so they become new points of departure. These new lines of flight...one based on difference [gives us] the possibility of new combinations.” (Dormor, 2020, p. 93)

*Thus, a rhythm begins,
Pack unpack.*

Assemblage.

*I observe the emergence of these new objects in space, of time.
Components that collaborate to assert an idea.
Witness the event of thread,
Capture the moment before, threshold.
The fluttering potential for it all to fall apart.
Curated, collated textile language.
Connections, mappings, lines drawn.*

**“...word and thread exist on another dimensional plane.
Vibratory forms in space and in time.
Acts of union and separation.” (Vecuña, 2011)**

To explain my thinking, I am required to, as within my practice, to assemble elements, concepts around space, time, objects, and assemblage.

Firstly, to space. If we consider space to be mapped with the “first axis [weft]...as subjective and the second axis [warp] as objective... about the interactions within a given environment.” (Goldberg, 2017) Each interaction with material, self, and process, creates new relationships amongst the objects; “Maps establish protocols for active invention...they don’t merely inform, they propose”. (Paez, 2019) With this we see the (studio) space or (loom) space as having movement and possibility.

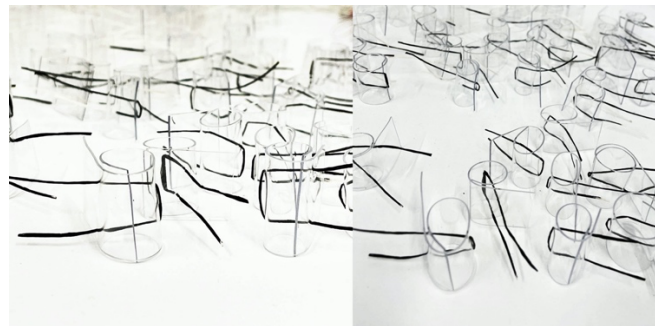


Fig 6. © Imogen Mills. Fields. 2022.

Massey explains “space as a material...a product of our relations, our connections with each other... [and is] filled with power.” (2013) This space is active, there is movement. She continues “space as the dimension that presents us with the existence of the other...the dimension of multiplicity.” (2013)

Connections between objects are being made, lines drawn, mapping new territory. Objects gather, assemblages form, *heddled* (an

amalgamation of huddled and heddle) on tables, objects in space, with “time...[as] the dimension of change...of dynamism...space and time become intimately connected.” (Massey, 2013) I contend therefore that space is an intrinsic constituent part that these assemblages require, a space that is active and “always under construction.” (Anderson, 2005) In addition to this, my body interacts with space, as observer and participant, with each material intervention repositioning my body in space. The body “is the means through which we relate to environment, the material form of our way of being in the world and *place* where subjectivity, feeling or identity meet.” (Gómez, 2017) This gives me areas of space that are assigned, but moving with new evolutions being reassigned, “time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh...spaces become charged and responsive.” (Harvey, 1993, p. 294)

Secondly, to objects. Are these inanimate objects or do they hold more vital energy, do they communicate something entirely more visceral? Within New Materialism, Bennett contends there is a defined split between ‘matter’ that of passive objects and ‘vibrant life’ which we understand to be ourselves. She goes on to assert that there is a vital materiality in the things we pick up, collect, that an anonymous object once collated becomes “vibratory” transitioning from object to “live presence.” (Bennett, 2010, p. 5) Bennett cites Latour as naming these sources of action as *actant* (2010, p. 9) rather than objects, and a *member actant* when as an assemblage.

“While the smallest...bit may indeed express a vital impetus...an actant never really acts alone. Its...agency...depends on...collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces... agency... [of]... nonhuman things are figured less as social constructions

and more as actors, and once humans themselves are assessed not as autonyms but as vital materialities.” (2010, p. 21)

I also contend that these objects, whilst part of an assemblage, are both textile and sculpture; objects made with wire and paper. But they are objects loaded with emotion, narrative, and can interact. In places, they can be the literal material embodiment of a person. I assert that in these sculptural assemblages, I take the static, non-living and that they become vital as they participate in active space. “(S)culpture reveals spatiality... three-dimensional in character, sculpture occupies the space around it and presents a relation between body and space.” (Lorentzen, 2019)

Elusive trappings of a single stitch in action

Junk shop plastic table coverings offer succinct solutions to expose that action

Held in motion to observe

I make one, then a few.

They populate, ever growing, traversing across the table.

Time passes.

Thirdly, to assemblage. I am drawn to the rhizomatic metaphor by theorists Guattari and Deleuze which use oppositions like tree or rhizome, striated or smooth, but who also assert that those oppositions can be disrupted. They describe “lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories: but also, lines of flight, movements of deterritorialisation and destratification.” (1980, p. 3) This theoretical model of assemblage is constructed through rhizomatic lines of thought, branching off, evolving ideas in transit, “it is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it

expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines.” (1980) So the objects of the assemblage are not fixed and can be displaced. They can “stabilise or destabilise; deterritorialising forces that compel behaviours... to find new (and) territorialising forces that stabilise and resist change.” (DeLanda, 2006:12) As vital materialities are formed, others are under construction, ideas branch off, material experiments reveal new tangents, offering further opportunities for work. There is “freedom, difference, [it is] nonlinear, everything [is possible]. The rhizome is non-hierarchical... [there is] multiplicity... assigning rupture.” (Then & Now, 2018)

*Iterations, fragmentation, disruption,
pack unpack,
disruption,
collective loss,
st(tt)uttering, hovering, loom(ing).*

In summary, the assemblages have a constant potential for multiplication, new chance encounters, with equal status. This is a dynamic way of working, full of intuition. It allows for experimentation and a licence to be led by material “assembling disparate elements.” (Tate, 2022) These non-linear assemblages are populating active space enabling relations to build up between vital objects. The vibrant objects interact (relate) with my body in space, across the dimension of time.

My head and hands as “vibrant life” (Bennett, 2010) are implicit in the handling of materials; I am also an *actant*, actualising the objects within the assemblage. They are assimilating through my participating body, the movements of my making. “The life of a component, and by extension the assemblage it is an integral part of, is contingent on each

component's ability to form harmonious relationships with its surroundings.” (Thorén & Kitzmann, 2015) I listen, record, puncture, rupture, pack, unpack. I work with these vital materialities in activated space, recognising rupture points, going off on tangents. The thread is material, metaphor, physical and actual.

S(tt)uttering...Hovering

I am situated in my body looking in, within the thread, looping, winding, ducking and diving, avoiding collisions. Life inevitably interrupts and I am abruptly halted.

I cannot puncture the surface.

Bobbin(g)...

*Make a knot. Thread the needle. Down through cloth,
touch, thread,
surface, rupture...*

Grief and loss gave me making. Weave, tension, collapse. I was in a slow process, there was fragmentation, disparate thoughts, a hovering, restrictions came and went. Sullivan describes this “stuttering and stammering” as a “glitch, the affective-event... the potentiality of something else.” He goes on to say, “in these moments of noise... or glitch... free[s] language from itself.” (2009) Ngai’s ‘*Thick speech*’ (Ngai, 2005) enabled reconciliation. Tishman explains slow looking as that of a “generous amount of time to observe more than meets the eye,” it is the idea of “a deliberate mind” that notices “careful inferences.” (2018) My praxis became that of a lingering, a noticing, but also of a balancing of information and judgements, “go slow to learn fast” (Bryk, et al., 2015) There was a procedural criticality, itself encased in tension “while fast thinking is automatic, instinctive, unconscious and emotional... slow

thinking is effortful, deliberate, conscious, and logical.” (Richmond, et al., 2021, p. 402) A compulsion to make became the rudder of the intuitive mind, “decisions don’t have to be perfect in order to work. Intuition can be marvellous.” (Kahnemann, 2019)

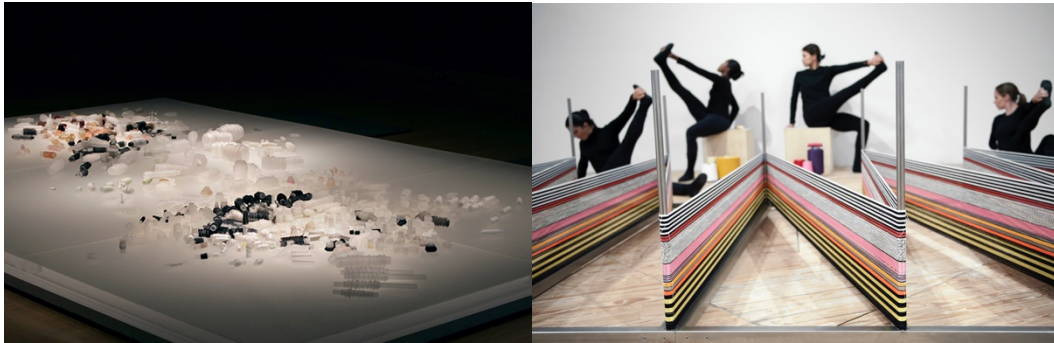


Fig 7. Anne Wilson. Rewinds. 2010 Fig 8. Wind Up. Walking the Warp. 2010.

©<https://www.annewilsonartist.com>

Wilson’s Topologies of objects, tools, threads & her performed warps liberated ideas of iterated fields of textile objects and originated the idea of dismantling the loom into a framework for thinking. “(T)he organization of fields and the objects they help generate is constantly subverted by the swarming, anarchic energy of the objects themselves.” (Wilson, 2022) Wilson also utilises a slow looking methodology “Materialising the drawing line (putting into thread) ...each mark records a movement of hand.” She describes “sensory lingering”, “Slow close focus with acute awareness reveal complexities.” (GW Museum and Textile Museum, 2021)

*Weave, enweave,
Rusted woven forms take shape.
Loom(less) constructions
iron harnesses paper,
Heddle(d) expressions, mechanical marks
held tight in a rusted embrace.*

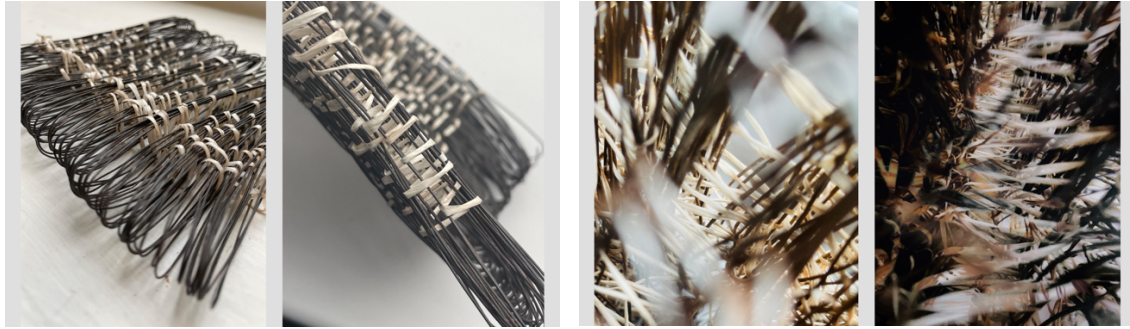


Fig 9. © Imogen Mills. 2022.

The surface materiality penetrated through the ‘cloyed’ (Ngai, 2005) mind, with bare iron wire and Japanese paper yarns, haptical embraces with gritty, rusty hands, echoes of tool maker and weaver. Paper yarn surface became stained with rust as it harnessed iron.

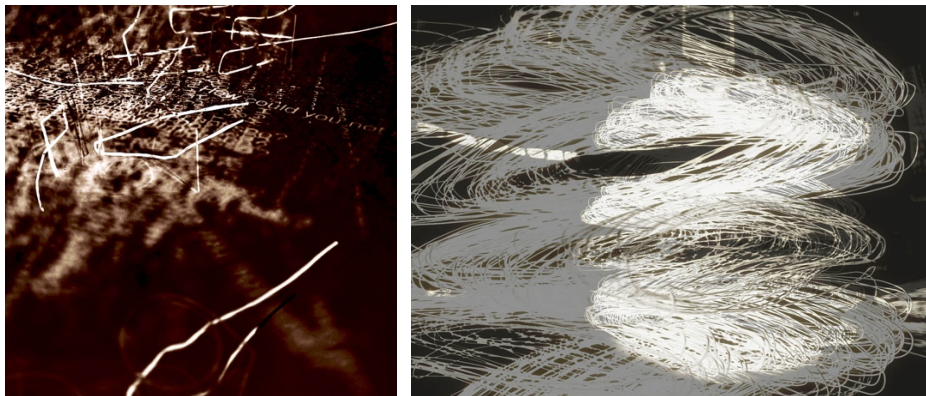


Fig 10. © Imogen Mills.

Photographed and examined through screen, multiple surface sites became the rich ground for thinking. Bruno describes the “surface as a connector” (2019) and by surface here, I relate surfaces of the digital, skin and cloth. She goes on to say that materiality here is “not about the material, per say, but about reinventing material relations.” The surface materiality became a place of “encounter and mixture... memory and transformation” (2019) Lived experience was connected by threads, surface connections were made through makers hand, haptic experience, screen scrutiny.

Describing “screen as a material of transformation.” (Bruno, 2019) Heffer transforms the materiality of her lace weaves into animation, the flicker and flux of her mesmeric images, of textile animated in digital space, brings about ideas of smooth and striated space. It abstracts and gives movement to a two-dimensional artefact. As Wilson states about Heffer’s work, it offers a “new spatial territory, whereby the viewer is able to experience an embodied sense of transience through a material lace liminality... continually moving, unravelling and coming into being.” (Heffer, 2021) This st(tt)uttering and hovering creates a zoomed in focus



Fig 11. Cecilia Heffer; Reimagining lace in a digital space (stills from animation)

<https://biccs.dh.gu.se/2021/60/1>

on thread’s event, “the cadence & rhythm of thread... punctuation of knots, evidence of practice” (Wilson, 2022) creates a loom(ing) that is unavoidable. Bruno describes the screen as an environment with its own texture and that the screen is “unfolding space” in offering a “reimagining of the form”. (2019) As with Heffer and Bruno, here I utilise the screen to transform thinking, as its own surface, the screen mediates a re-examination of my work, a back and forth in the “illuminated fabric” of the screen membrane to the surface materiality of wire and paper. “My work threads through the material of visual fabrics to activate those surfaces on which communal space can be created and in which one can partake.” (Bruno, 2014)

Intentions.



Fig 12. Thread exhibition poster.

Fig 13/14. © Imogen Mills.

Fig 15 © Imogen Mills. The Work Room. Thread. Elysium Gallery. 2021.

In August 2021 I was invited to be part of the exhibition ‘Thread’ at Elysium Gallery, Swansea. In response to my research at the time I produced a large stitch-scape textile sculpture, a thread event, an explanation of sorts. Within the exhibition was the Work Room, a non-hierarchical space where all artists and curators shared assemblages of thoughts and ideas, paused experiments, samplings, an open generous space for textile dialogue. Small material iterations, as a collective, negotiating, reconciling ideas. The interactions in that space have directly influenced my practice and through discussions with other members of the Makers Room, will now be incorporated into our exhibition space. A generous space for glass, textile and fine art exhibitors to collaborate.

My intention is also to construct an assemblage of textile responses based around ideas of relationship between tension in cloth and the relationships with thread as the surface connector. Choosing the Makers Room to exhibit has been a very deliberate one. Consciously I choose the archetypal gallery space, clean, white, timeless, pristine where “we see not the art but the *space* first.” (O'Doherty, 1986) This hegemonic white gallery space, where the eye of the spectator and object are defined through the context in which they sit in. “Context

becomes content...the outside world must not come in...the art is free...to take on its own life". (O'Doherty, 1986) These spaces are an opportunity for the artist to render their vision without interruption, to exercise ultimate control in communicating ideas. I both recognise these hierarchies and acknowledge them directly but accept this is more about the relationship I have had with my own body in this space. As my *work room*, it has been a space of power, especially given the disparate nature of the last two years.

I require the viewer to be passive, separated, the work defined as *art* with all its loaded 'otherness'. I refer in this to the hierarchies interlaced within textile as *art* object. Jessica Collins describes textiles as "notorious for their behaviour" as they "twist(ing) and drift(ing) away from the clean lines of contemporary interiors, textile often read as floppy." (Hemmings, 2019) Whilst I don't have bolts of cloth to hang, the work is textile and has the potentiality to be relegated to that of just 'process'. I contend that although *process* is critical to my *praxis*, that these textile objects are *art* with conceptual thinking critically embedded and should be thus read. "Textiles as a creative medium and social device enables artists to be intensely personal and yet simultaneously resonate with an audience." (Farley, 2020) As such, I want to position this work as textile *art* (although I resist feeling compelled to clarify) and the "conventions of the art gallery" (Hemmings, 2019) will assist in this reading. To place the viewer as "absent. Presence before a work of art, then, means that we absent ourselves in favour of the Eye and Spectator." (O'Doherty, 1986) I am consciously not placing works behind glass, so that the materiality of the surface can be witnessed. However, I relish the tension created by our innate desire to touch textile, against the strict 'no touch' code of the gallery space. I choose a space almost clinical in nature, where the art object can be revered.



Fig 16. © Imogen Mills. Zoe Preece at Glynn Vivian Gallery Swansea April 2022.

Fig 17. © Imogen Mills. Alison Morton Exhibition at Ruthin Crafts Centre April 2022.

Initially I envisaged a large table full of thread iterations, however, I was concerned it may mimic Wilsons work, and that of fellow students. An acquisition of a white round table later engendered personal meaning, giving an altered perspective. Two exhibitions also provided clarification, there was Zoe Preece's reverential show of everyday objects, where space was implicit to their interpretation. There was limited material placement, and the relationship to the domestic was explicit. Later in a visit to Ruthin Crafts Centre to see Alison Morton's exhibition, I was reminded of the procedural action of weave. Her simple utilitarian artefacts were interrogated using only two threads, that of flax linen and cotton thread. Dames explains that "[in her] rigour there is zest, an intellectual excitement in the inventiveness of pattern making within the limitations of the weaving process." (Dames, 2022) For me here thread was witness to the loom, the loom was translator of threads potential. I felt a re-emergence of weaving sensibilities.

In placing works, I therefore intend to strip back, mediate between space and object on site. Curatorially this will be site specific and may need adjustment therefore it may differ from what is stated here. I will need to assess when an object in the assemblage needs to act alone or as part of a collective. There are some deliberate actions to consider, as

in Collis' reworking of ordinary objects of production with valuable materials. Items that are cast out, worthless, they are "memorials to labour, hopes, aspirations." (Forward, 2017) The intentionality of the objects used to hang, the connotations and diversity of those object relations, is delicious. Here I am drawn between the use of two separate objects that afford differing textuality to the hank. The text on the hank relates to tension in a relationship from which the rusty nails originate. In contrast, the tapestry awl is used with consideration to ensure the tension of cloth in its construction (the tapestry awl was purchased from Alison Morton's studio collection at Ruthin Crafts Centre).

In recognition of the surface materialities examined during this research I am also considering hanging photograms. Photograms and the digital examination of work have been a pivot point throughout. They offer both similarity and difference, their presence feels pertinent, but their variation in material could render them complex company. I had thought of hanging them on a line, assigning a relationship with prints or washing drying, with further reference to the domestic. However, I will possibly hang them outside in the corridor, as independent to textile assemblages.

By way of a conclusion, firstly I must state that it was never my intention for this research to be the culmination of my work. I will continue iterating along this thread of ideas, harnessing thread in action, interacting with materials, experimenting, to see where it will go. I am considering ideas around the kinetics of weave, or I may return to the loom to dismantle it altogether. I will continue to agitate at the border of *fine art* with plans to join research groups and textile collectives and will investigate opportunities for exhibiting and collaborative working. As a lecturer this research will also directly impact my teaching practice

where I will encourage generous textile, tactile collaborative thinking and making across all disciplines.

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