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Design Crafts

Research in Practice ADAD5004

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In this body of work, I will be looking into the meanings of three keywords that I feel reflect my practice. The keywords I have chosen are intuition, response and adornment. I will look at these words from a maker's point of view in addition to the physical, from the material and object's perspective. In my work, I explore the possibilities of using materials to create body adornments, and I am curious to see how objects interact with the body. I am also intrigued by the maker's ability to tune into a material while working with it, and to use materials in an experimental way.

The meaning of intuition is '(knowledge from) an ability to understand or know something immediately based on your feelings rather than facts' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). The ability to feel something and not to be able to explain it is how Michael Polanyi (2009) describes tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 2009). Throughout a maker's career, they will build their own intuition and tacit knowledge of the materials and processes they work with. Polanyi (2009) describes thinking as a concept where we are aware of a thought, however, our thoughts 'dwells in its subsidiaries' meaning we process the thought more than we know 'as if they were parts of our body' (Polanyi, 2009). This means that when we complete an action, we are thinking about what we are doing but our brain is processing more information. We think about completing the action, but our brain moves our limbs without us thinking about how we are moving. He shows an example of an experiment where a man was given an electric shock based on 'shock syllables'. Throughout the course of the test the man showed symptoms of expecting the shock, but when asked could not explain why. He had developed a knowledge of expecting an outcome based on signs that could not be explained. I can relate this to my work when I have been sandblasting many pieces of glass. By doing so many so often, I started to be able to tell when the glass was going to break and how it was going to break, but I cannot explain why. This ability meant that I could break the glass more carefully and into the shape that I wanted more easily and quicker than when I first started.

When we do a task for the first time, we are more aware of what we are doing and how we are doing it. However, after doing it several times we stop thinking as much about the task and can complete the task while thinking about external thoughts. This is because the action has become second nature.

The idea of 'heuristics' is explored by Bruce G. Douglas (1985). They are connections made in the brain that help to make judgments and problem-solving. These connections help create pathways to work more efficiently but also help to understand methods of working and predicting outcomes. There are misconceptions that heuristics are not reliable as they find quick and optimal solutions rather than being logical. However, through studies and research, it has been found that these connections can become more reliable than logic and probability as these they are built from experiences and can be adapted to solve a wider range of problems (Gigerenzer, 2008).

Tim Ingold (2013) shows that materials play a vital role to makers, and only with time and experimentation do we learn about them. He talks about when he taught in Aberdeen, he took a group of students to the beach to weave baskets in willow. At first, they struggled with making the willow fold in the way they need but after weaving for three hours the students found a rhythm that worked for them and the material and were able to create the baskets (Ingold, 2013).



Figure 1- Making baskets in the sand, near Aberdeen beach in north-east Scotland. (Courtesy of Raymond Lucas.)

He then moves on to say that a material is just a lump and it is how we use them that makes the work. 'Suffice it to say, at this point, that even if the maker has a form in mind, it is not this form that creates the work. It is the engagement with materials. And it is therefore to this engagement that we must attend if we are to understand how things are made' (Ingold, 2013). This shows the idea that material is just a material and a thought is just a thought, but it is only when we combine the two and interact with the material that we produce a final outcome. This interaction and experimentation are where we learn about a material and gives a maker the knowledge and skills that can be transferred through other practices. This supports the view that when a skill has been practised over a period of time, the action of it becomes second nature and is an extension of the body. This results in the becoming intuitive to the maker.

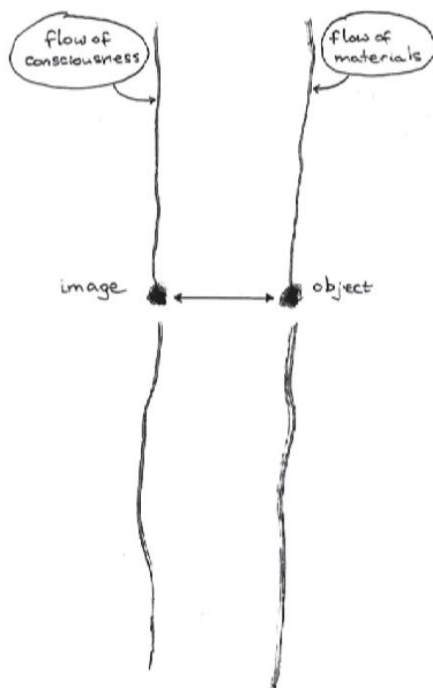


Figure 2- Consciousness, materials, image, object: the diagram

In the Cambridge Dictionary response is described as 'something said or done as a reaction to something that has been said or done; an answer or reaction' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022).

A response can be used in art in different ways. There can be a response to a piece of artwork or a piece of artwork created in response to something. In the book 'The Art of Seeing' (Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Robinson, R. E., 1990) the authors found that people analyse a piece of artwork using four responses which are, perception, the focus on the visual balance, colour and arrangement and emotion, a reaction that triggers any type of emotion such as happiness or sadness. The other two responses are communication, trying to understand the meanings behind the work and see what the artist is trying to say and intelligence, trying to solve the work by working out its meaning or creating one based on knowledge.

Often artists will create work that is made so the viewer has to question how it is made, what it is made from and what it represents. They may also create something that can only be viewed from a particular angle or with a special device, as it is otherwise distorted. This is called anamorphosis or anamorphic art (Hickin, 1992). This type of art invites the viewer to engage with the work and therefore is more likely to cause a response. Because the work has been designed to allow the viewer to see it only from one perspective, it can shock the viewer. Trying to understand how the artist made the work, can fascinate and amaze someone who had seen it for the first time and can encourage the audience to study it further so they can understand the work better.

Another way artists can prompt response is by making a piece of work from a contradictory material. By this I mean, a piece of work that has been made from one material to look like another, or from a

hard material that looks soft and delicate. For example, Daniel Mirchev (Macadam Gallery, 2022) creates sculptures from wood to look like rippled fabric. This method of working challenges the preconception of the work as it makes the viewer question their understanding of it. Other artists and makers may feel more intrigued by the work. This is because as a maker they may understand the process other artists go through and so when they see something unusual made from a material, they will be more inclined to question the piece. These are all responses of curiosity that have been generated consequently from the work.



Figure 3- WIND GUST 56°

Duchamp (1957) often placed value in the viewer's response to his work. He thought it was important that they had involvement with the work and in 1957 said 'The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.' (Khanacademy.org, 2022). His work would sometimes prompt participation and visual awareness and was open to interpretation.

Controversial art such as the cadavers displayed in Damien Hirst's work can provoke a range of responses from the viewer. 'He deploys real cadavers in gallery settings to confront viewers with the implacable fact of death.' (Goldstein, 2017). There are varying reactions to his work, some say that killing animals for art is unethical and makes the viewers feel uncomfortable. This is because the idea of death placed in front of the audience is unsettling. As a nation, we see death as a negative emotion, compared to other cultures that embrace it. Other reasons for people finding his work upsetting are the thought of the animals being killed for display and profit. On the other hand, some would say that there are hundreds of museums that display taxidermy animals yet people do not respond in the same way about them as they do Hirst's work (Aloi, 2019). Despite this, these taxidermy animals have been preserved for education rather than entertainment. These are emotional responses to the work.



Figure 4- Away from the Flock

To adorn is 'to add something decorative to a person or thing' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). It is used to physically enhance the body through make up, decorating hair, and nails, painting the body and wearing jewellery and clothes (DeMello, 2007). Evidence shows that adornments and body modifications have been used for thousands of years. Excavations have found bodies with tattoos and jewellery showing that these practices have 'always been a central and crucial human practice' (DeMello, 2007). These adornments have been seen in varying ways across all countries and cultures and have historically been used to show identity and status. Adornment allows individual expression but is also used as a communicative tool for society to establish religion and political power (Cordwell and Schwarz, 2011).

Culturally jewellery can have many different symbols and meanings behind them. Tribal jewellery can display traditions and rites of passage as well as a display of the ideal appearance. The jewellery is typically worn by women but can also be worn by men. There are many tribal groups who have their own ideas of what is considered beautiful; however, these ideas may be less appealing to others. These differences are what make each tribe and their traditions unique. Tribal jewellery will often use amulets and talismans to encourage good energies and reject evil spirits (Tribal Muse, 2022). Their jewellery will often have protective powers but can also provide physical protection. Ouled Nail (Nailiyat) women wear a cuff called a 'Swar' bracelet. It is a bracelet that has delicate patterns on the base but is covered in spikes. These women would use sex as a commodity, but this also meant that they could also become victims of abuse. The women could use these cuffs for protection and they symbolise 'strength, beauty and vulnerability' (Corbett, 2022). These iconic pieces of adornment meant that these women could continue to work safely and save money. Their wealth then gave them the freedom to live their lives without the fear and risk of abuse or murder.



Figure 5- Swar bracelet

Body adornment takes into account the ideas of conceptual jewellery and wearable art. Wearable art is difficult to explain as it can be described as artwork or fashion but does not belong strictly to either worlds (Whitley, 2013). Despite the work being wearable like a piece of clothing, it does not fit in with mainstream fashion as often they are pieces that are one-offs or made in small batches. Jewellery is considered something pretty that is worn as decoration; however, conceptual jewellery is a piece that has a meaning or concept behind the work. It can also be a piece of jewellery that defies the norms of jewellery. A typical piece of jewellery could be a ring, bracelet or necklace, though conceptual pieces may break the boundaries and be something that balances on the arm or completely covers the face (BAJ, 2017).

Rowan Merish is a sculptor, he creates work that interacts with the body and has varying scales of wearability. This piece (Figure 6) has been inspired by the everyday objects in his life such as coins, CDs and vinyls. He covers these objects in fabric and allows the objects to become something new and create shapes and patterns to turn into sculpture. 'subsiding to their affiliation with the fabric and the geometric landscapes they create.' (Merish, 2014). He says that he is drawn to working to the female form as it is three dimensional and can be used for the installation of sculpture. The sculpture can be used to celebrate the body or the body can be used as a way of displaying the work. The body also shows features of the work such as scale and movement, that cannot be demonstrated through a flat presentation. He states that it is the relationship between the object and the space it sits in, that shows the image of the work (Merish, 2014).

Body adornment is an integral part of human history and is still as important now as it was a thousand years ago. It allows creativity and individual expression. It also celebrates the body and invites new ways of making jewellery and interactive wearable art.



Figure 6- Fabric sculpture series 1

Through researching these words, I have been able to gain a deeper understanding of how they relate to my work. I can see why making and experimenting with materials is just as important to the practice as making finished pieces. I found the book 'The Tacit Dimension' inspiring to start understanding the processes makers go through to nurture their practice. 'I shall reconsider human knowledge by starting from the fact that we can know more than we can tell' (Polanyi, 2009). Tacit knowledge combined with a maker's engagement with materials is how skills are developed. I then looked at how a material can provoke a response from the audience and how the audience can play a vital role in how the work is given value. In my work, I create pieces that are made for the body. I found it interesting to learn about the Ouled Nail women who use their jewellery as physical protection. Rowan Mersh's ideas of using the body as a way of displaying the work and using the spaces of the body is an interesting way to approach adornment. This research has led me to create a question for my independent project 'How can makers use experimentation and response to develop their tacit knowledge of materials and understand the processes of making?'

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Figure 3- Macadam Gallery. (2022). *DANIEL MIRCHEV - Macadam Gallery - Brussels*. [online] Available at: <https://macadamgallery.com/gallery/daniel-mirchev/>

Figure 4- Tate (2022). 'Away from the Flock', Damien Hirst, 1994 | Tate. [online] Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hirst-away-from-the-flock-ar00499>

Figure 5- Corbett, S (2022). *The Ouled Nail. Defense bracelets by Sarah Corbett | Ethnic Jewels Magazine*.

Figure 6- Rowan Mersh. (2014). Rowan Mersh | Selected works....