

BA Fine Art: Studio, Site and Context

Independent Project (ADAA6000/C)

Lecturers: Estéfani Bouza, Paul Duerinckx and Alex Duncan

Annotated Bibliography

Branwen Jones

2003745

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My research addresses the question:

How can artists intervene in the material of everyday life in a way that disrupts our habitual understandings of the present?

I am reading about materials, the notion of disruption, and the work of Mona Hatoum, Doris Salcedo and Gordon Matta-Clark, three artists whose work I have been very affected by.

Miodownik, M. (2014) *Stuff Matters*. London: Penguin.

This is a wide-ranging and accessible exploration of materials by a scientist and engineer who has done PhD research about high performance alloys and worked in industry and advanced research laboratories. Miodownik weaves a fascinating narrative about his own deep interest in materials. He combines material science and history in a way which roots materials in the historical unfolding of conditions of everyday life, for example identifying steel as ‘the defining material of the Victorian era’ (p. 6).

The discussion moves between the anecdotal and the explanatory, making the reader want to follow the thread that the author is unwinding. Chapter headings are single words – ‘Indomitable’; ‘Delicious’; ‘Marvellous’; ‘Refined’ – which give little away in terms of the focus of the chapters, so the reader has to read them to find out what they are about.

Both the style and the content of *Stuff Matters* are relevant for my research. The book fuses the materiality and historicity of materials, their material properties and social use, rather than separating out their abstract material-ness. For example chapter 6, 'Imaginative', about the history of plastics, is spun through a discussion of film, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, and celluloid – the first commercially mouldable plastic (p. 144) which came to underpin camera photography and cinema. Miodownik holds in simultaneous focus the question of materials and how they come to be in our everyday lives.

O'Sullivan, S. (2006) *Art Encounters. Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

In this book O'Sullivan draws on philosophical and theoretical literature to explore the experience of encountering art. He uses the work of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to argue that art works operate in ways other than representation.

The book is inspiring because O'Sullivan's analysis makes sense of the significance of otherwise obscure arguments. He shows how Deleuze and Guattari, with their concept of *rhizome*, develop a new approach to thought which departs from the dominant Western approach centred on hierarchy, representation and interpretation. They propose that thought can operate by making connections between diverse aspects of life and experience, rather than by establishing singular meanings.

This book connects to my research by providing a theoretical basis for thinking about how certain art works affect the viewer, enabling them to see or feel things in new ways. O'Sullivan uses the work of Deleuze and Guattari and Henri Bergson to argue that apprehending art is a bodily encounter: 'art produces affects on and in the body that are irreducible to signification or representation' (p. 19).

Hatoum, M. (2000) *The Entire World as a Foreign Land*. London: Tate Gallery Publishing.

This is the catalogue published to accompany Hatoum's solo exhibition *The Entire World as a Foreign Land* held at Tate Britain, 23 March – 23 July 2000. As well as colour images of her works installed in Tate Britain's Duveen galleries, the essays by Edward Said and Sheena Wagstaff are important for my research.

These essays are helpful because they analyse Hatoum's practice with reference to a broader theoretical and literary field, such as works by Franz Kafka and Jonathan Swift. They emphasise Hatoum's rejection of the mind-body dualism which is dominant in Western thought.

As if directly addressing my own research question, Said focuses on the dislocations created by Hatoum's works, which operate because of the familiarity of the everyday items that she uses. His discussion amplifies the notion of disruption, exploring how Hatoum turns domestic items into 'radically inhospitable objects' (p. 15). Wagstaff

examines the work *Mouli-Julienne*, a giant-sized vegetable shredder placed in the centre of the gallery, with its huge cutting disks alongside. She introduces the idea of 'corporal learning' which operates through the body, and considers how it is the scale of the work which serves to create a sense of simultaneous familiarity and horror for the viewer.

Moreno, L. G. (2010) "Troubled materiality": the installations of Doris Salcedo', *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 43(2), pp. 95-111. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44030626>.

This article provides a theoretical and contextual discussion of Salcedo's works, informed by authors such as Jacques Rancière, Hal Foster and Giorgio Agamben. Moreno underlines that Salcedo's practice responds to the experience of decades of political violence in Colombia. She describes how Salcedo's work often involves domestic objects removed from their familiar context, and thus rendered estranged, evoking a sense of harm, fracturing and loss.

The article is helpful because it combines theoretical discussion with poetic description and inspiring analysis of Salcedo's installations, demonstrating how understanding of art works can be enhanced by close attention and theoretical reflection.

Moreno's enquiry addresses questions which are central to my research. She focuses on how Salcedo's alterations in the materiality of everyday items of clothing and furniture creates a sense of unease in the viewer through an effect which unfolds

gradually. The works have a subtlety and an uncanny stillness. Moreno emphasises how the works often combine marks made through violent acts such as cutting, piercing or drilling, with more gentle gestures of repair such as sewing or weaving, and discusses how the fragility of these reparative elements indicate the insufficiency of repairing losses resulting from political violence. She talks about the effect of Salcedo's removing objects from the location of their usual use: this move disturbs the usual legibility of these objects but thereby enables the inanimate objects to 'speak'.

Walker, S. (2009) *Gordon Matta-Clark: Art, Architecture and the attack on modernism*. London: IB Tauris.

This book explores Matta-Clark's practice by focusing on his tense relationship with architecture and his critical response to modernism. The book draws on extensive research about Matta-Clark's work, detailed knowledge of modernism in art and architecture, and frequent engagement with Matta-Clark's interviews and writings.

This book is helpful because, instead of just describing Matta-Clark's works, Walker provides fascinating analysis of how and why his work achieves a specific kind of effect or critique. Secondly, Walker analyses aspects of Matta-Clark's practice which are not necessarily evident when seeing a final work on display in a gallery or museum. He emphasises how Matta-Clark's practice was not just making a work for exhibition but a process of ongoing enquiry with materials: 'any particular stage of a project provided raw material for further working' (p. 16). This is inspiring for the dissertation and for my own practice.

The book directly addresses concerns which I will explore in my dissertation regarding how intervening in everyday materials can produce a sense of unease for the viewer. Walker analyses how Matta-Clark's work achieves defamiliarisation not through strange juxtaposition, as, for example, in Surrealism, but by revealing unseen layers of the familiar itself.