



Ismanah Joce

The Silk Garden

Recycled fabric floristry.

Evolving wedding waste into a fresh reality.

Report

Introduction

My installation is designed to bring attention to and provide a possible solution for the issue of environmental sustainability within the wedding industry, which is of more prevalence and significance than most people are aware of.

I believe that this issue should be at the forefront of the industry and my installation is intended to challenge the current lack of discourse around the industries overconsumption and consumerist culture.

I posit that, in the 'information age', in the UK, nobody can be wholly unaware of the need for environmental responsibility. Therefore, it becomes necessary to search for explanations as to why the industry is sustaining a culture of environmentally irresponsible practices.

I will endeavour to explore and analyse some of the possible reasons behind the seemingly inexplicable phenomenon of couples neglecting to make effort to reduce the significantly high environmental impact of their weddings.

I will examine this from a philosophical and psychological perspective, whilst referring to my own experiences as an industry professional.

The Environmental Impact of the Wedding Industry

The wedding industry is a vast sector which generates a significant impact on the global economy (*Terrado, 2023*). However, there is a growing awareness of the industries poor environmental practices and lack of environmental responsibility (*Terrado, 2023*).

Although an increasing number of professionals are working to adopt more environmentally sound practices, there is a poignant lack of discourse among the customers of the industry, e.g. the couples who are planning to be wed (*Terrado, 2023*).

Shocking statistics demonstrate that the carbon footprint of the average UK wedding is greater than the yearly carbon footprint of the average UK household (*Wray, 2024; Miles, 2021*).

The average UK wedding has a carbon footprint of 14,500 kgCO₂eq (*Wray, 2024*).

Comparatively, the average American wedding sits significantly higher at 57,152 kgCO₂eq, whilst the average Australian wedding is also higher at 21,486 kgCO₂eq (*Wray, 2024*).

With approximately 278,599 weddings being held every year in the UK, that is a shocking 4,039,685,500 kgCO₂eq of yearly emissions (*Miles, 2021*).

Furthermore, this figure was estimated to double in the year 2021, as the industry 'caught up' on the 'postponed covid weddings' (*Miles, 2021*). With these figures we can estimate that a shocking 8,079,371,000 kgCO₂eq of emissions occurred as a result of the UK wedding industry that in year alone.

It must be recognised, indeed ought to be at the forefront of the industry, that the sector is causing significant environmental issues (*Terrado, 2023*).

For example, excessive energy consumption, food waste, and single use items, such as candles, flowers, and 'favours', which must be disposed of after the event (*Terrado, 2023*).

Furthermore, wedding dresses have arguably become a 'fast fashion' commodity and are contributing to the growing environmental crisis caused by the highly polluting fashion industry (*Terrado, 2023*). Unfortunately, modern wedding gowns are often made of synthetic materials and manufactured in China (*Terrado, 2023*).

Current research recommends that UK couples should be working towards a goal of halving their emissions by making "sensible, considered choices" (*Miles, 2021*). Which would prevent a significant 3,985,500 tons of CO₂e from entering the atmosphere each year (*Miles, 2021*). The equivalent of taking 866,847 cars off the road (*Miles, 2021*).

Couples could work towards this goal by making simple changes, such as opting for: locally produced food; candles made of natural materials, e.g. soy; locally made wedding dresses, made from natural or recycled materials, e.g. silk; locally grown and seasonal flowers, arranged using 'foam free' floristry techniques (*Terrado, 2023*).

To ascertain whether this may be a realistic method of halving wedding emissions, I used a tool, backed by industry statistics, to calculate the emissions of my own wedding, held recently in 2022.

As an environmentally conscious person, I followed the advice of making “sensible, considered choices” (*Miles, 2021*).

My décor was recycled, vintage, and antique. My dress was made locally, from natural materials. The food was locally produced. The floristry was seasonal and ‘foam free’, consisting entirely of locally foraged foliage and dried organically farmed flowers from a local grower.

I was able to calculate that my wedding emitted approximately only 2,000 kgCO₂eq (*Wray, 2024*). Thus, indicating that making “sensible, considered choices”, truly can halve the emissions from your wedding, or, in this case, more (*Miles, 2021*).

Although weddings clearly sit within an industry of luxury, the current ways in which the industry is operating are inarguably unsustainable (*Miles, 2021*). Existing as a collation of a multitude of some of the most wasteful and polluting industries in the world, it is the responsibility of both the professionals within the industry and their customers to enact a sustained change to the way in which the industry operates (*Miles, 2021*).

In the following chapters, from the perspective of the customers of the industry, I will explore three possible reasons, selective memory, counter memory, and sentimentality, which I hypothesise could be contributing factors to why the environmental issues within the industry are not being appropriately addressed.

Selective Memory

Selective memory, also referred to as selective amnesia, is clinically defined as “the ability to retrieve certain facts and events but not others” (*Dodson, 2023*). It has previously been a source of controversy within the scientific community, however it has since become a widely accepted term (*Domaleski, 2023; Donson, 2023*). Everyone experiences selective memory to

some extent, however, some individuals can experience it more severely, where it can affect their quality of life (*Dodson, 2023*).

Many studies have sought to ascertain the cause of selective memory (*Dodson, 2023*). Recent findings demonstrate the role that emotional influences have on a person's memory, learning, and retention of new forms of information (*Tyng et al., 2017; Dodson, 2023*). Researchers have used neuroimaging techniques to find that different regions of the brain, including the medial temporal lobe, prefrontal cortex, and the amygdala, are cooperating in encoding and modulating memory consolidation and in the event of successful learning and long-term memory retention (*Tyng et al., 2017*).

A similar study also shows that selective memory is more likely to occur when people experience scenarios which are high in emotionality, e.g. weddings (*Waring & Kensinger, 2011*).

Waring and Kensinger conducted a study using fMRI to explore how the brain functions during the selective memory process for emotional scenes (*Waring & Kensinger, 2011*). They discovered a common set of brain regions that are involved and discovered that different areas of the brain are activated depending on whether the scene is of a positive or negative nature (*Waring & Kensinger, 2011*).

They concluded that the brain's ability to remember things becomes heightened by the experience of feeling strong emotions, especially in detailed scenes (*Waring & Kensinger, 2011*).

However, the researchers concluded that there is a 'trade-off' effect involved in this, where some of the background information was found to be forgotten (*Waring & Kensinger, 2011*). This occurred in both the positive and negative emotional scenarios (*Waring & Kensinger, 2011*).

Interestingly, research also demonstrates that selective memory can occur in relation to a person's perception of the climate crisis (*Leiserowitz et al., 2021; Howe & Leiserowitz, 2013; Rasmussen, 2013*).

A study conducted by Leiserowitz et. al. found that a person's memories of weather can be altered by their opinions on climate change (*Leiserowitz et al., 2021; Howe & Leiserowitz, 2013; Rasmussen, 2013*).

With a sample size of 1000 respondents, it was found that when answering most of the weather-related questions, respondents had accurate memories (*Leiserowitz et al., 2021; Howe & Leiserowitz, 2013; Rasmussen, 2013*). However, when it came to the question most 'strongly associated' with climate change (regarding heat during summer), those individuals who did not believe in climate change, were found to have inaccurate memories of the weather events (*Leiserowitz et al., 2021; Howe & Leiserowitz, 2013; Rasmussen, 2013*).

The researchers concluded that this strongly indicates a link between perceptions of climate change and the occurrence of selective memory (*Leiserowitz et al., 2021; Howe & Leiserowitz, 2013; Rasmussen, 2013*).

Selective Memory, Weddings, and the Climate Crisis

I propose that the strong positive emotions associated with weddings, could be causing instances of selective memory to occur. I posit that the 'forgotten' information could be the issues of sustainability and environmentally responsible practices.

For example, in my professional practice, I have witnessed couples who normally make environmentally responsible choices, forget to consider the environmental impact of their wedding. Conversely, one would expect that an important event, commonly considered to 'reflect the personality' of the couple, ought to have this at the forefront of its design.

For instance, a bride who chose to follow a vegan diet for the purpose of combating climate change, purchased a wedding dress which was crafted from plastic materials and made in a factory in China.

It is notable that a person who is clearly environmentally conscious, forgot to consider that in this scenario.

I propose that the high levels of emotions which a couple typically experiences whilst planning their wedding, causes instances of selective memory to occur, where the environmental impact of their choices are forgotten to be considered.

Counter Memory

Michael Foucault

Counter memory, as a term, originated with Michael Foucault (*Foucault, 1971; Tello, 2019*). As a concept, it was intended to challenge traditional, monolithic views on memory and history (*Foucault, 1971; Tello, 2019*).

Writing after the historical events of 1968 (e.g. the Vietnam War and the assassination of Martin Luther King Junior), an arguably radicalised Foucault conceptualised counter memory as a method of opposing the teleological and positivist models of history (*Foucault, 1971; Tello, 2019*). Foucault's counter memory exists to challenge the dominant narratives of recorded history. He sought to create an alternative temporality which would preserve and acknowledge the records of oppression and resistance (*Foucault, 1971; Tello, 2019*). It has served as a method of remembering oppressed histories, enacting social justice, and energizing a movement for change (*Tello, 2019*).

Foucault's notion of counter memory has been applied across disciplines, e.g. in art, literature, and film (*Tello, 2019*).

For example, in 1975 a French film journal, 'Cahiers du Cinéma', staged a conversation with Foucault, discussing the nexus of class struggle and counter memory (*Foucault, 1974; Foucault, 1975; Tello, 2019*).

They analysed films, such as 'El Coraje del Pueblo', which re-enacts a historical event in Bolivia, in a way which disrupts the state-controlled narratives, as the film re-enacts miners and their families being attacked by the military (*Soria, 1971; Foucault, 1974; Foucault, 1975; Tello, 2019*).

Furthermore, Reiko Tachibana explored how the notion of counter memory could be applied to disrupt the 'officially sanctioned' national mythologies and war narratives in post-war Germany and Japan (*Tachibana, 1998; Tello, 2019*). In his influential book 'Narrative as Counter Memory', Tachibana explored the 'minor narratives' from the works of experimental writers Mishima Yukio and Christa Wolf (*Tachibana, 1998; Tello, 2019*).

Additionally, in the work of art historian TJ Demos he encourages counter memory as an act of political subjectification (*Demos, 2012; Tello, 2019*). He describes it as a political and social practice which could be used to challenge the official historical narratives, as a method of collectively remembering suppressed histories (*Demos, 2012; Tello, 2019*).

In his writings, Demos describes that counter memory "designates a practice of memory formation that is social and political, one that runs counter to the official histories of governments, mainstream mass media, and the society of the spectacle" (*Demos, 2012; Tello, 2019*). He goes on to describe it as "a collective practice of relearning—of forgotten, suppressed, and excluded histories, which then becomes an act of political subjectification" (*Demos, 2012; Tello, 2019*).

Roland Barthes

In the year 1980, Roland Barthes took the term counter memory and gave it a new meaning (*Barthes, 1980; Tello, 2019*). Barthes utilised it as a way of depicting the amnesic nature of photographs, as he proposed they work to override the original memory itself (*Barthes, 1980; Tello, 2019*).

In his book 'Camera Lucida', he details that "not only is the Photograph never, in essence, a memory (whose grammatical expression would be the perfect tense, whereas the tense of the Photograph is the aorist), but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a counter-memory" (*Barthes, 1980*).

It was in this book, which he described as his 'final exploration', as if in anticipation of his death shortly after, that Barthes' writing took on a more personal theme (*Wigoder, 2001*).

Subsequent to his earlier work on semiotic analysis, Barthes took on an exploration of the phenomenological properties of photographs (*Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*).

He depicts his search for a photograph, which he deems to be the 'object of remembrance' for his late mother (*Barthes, 1980; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*). After spending a significant amount of time searching, he eventually settled on what he titled 'The Winter Garden Photograph' (*Barthes, 1980; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*). An image taken of his mother in her youth, which he deemed to capture her 'essence' (*Barthes, 1980; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*).

Counter Memory, Weddings, and the Climate Crisis

I propose that the phenomenon of couples viewing wedding photographs on social media is creating a microcosmic counter memory effect.

I posit that social media is presenting couples with an alternative narrative which they are being manipulated and/or 'influenced' into following. The manipulative powers of social media is a well establish issue (*Lamey, 2023; Choi, 2023; Wu, 2023; Bradshaw and Howard, 2017; Stuart, 2021; Delacroix, 2020*).

Demos also touched upon this effect, calling the age of 'mass media' a time of 'collective memory', 'culture industry' and 'advanced capitalism' (*Demos, 2012*).

I believe that this phenomenon is, in part, responsible for the shift, in my experience, in the priorities of weddings, from experience to photographic appearance.

Put simply, the couples I encounter are no longer prioritising the experience of their weddings (e.g. 'having a good time'), instead, they are seeking to ensure that they will have a fashionable portfolio of photographs to share on social media after the event.

For example, for every wedding I take part in designing as a professional, the couple provides us with a description of what they would like us to create. This has become a description of how they would like the floral designs to look in photographs, with no mention of how they will be experienced during the wedding, e.g. the atmospheric effect which they could create in the room.

Through discussing this notable shift with other professionals from across the industry, I have ascertained that it appears to be an industry wide change, not isolated to the floristry sector or to my local area.

Indeed, it has become common opinion in the industry that to work with a couple who prioritises experience over appearance is a rare and valued thing. Although these weddings tend to be less profitable, they are said to carry a greater depth of feeling and it is considered an honour to be a part of them.

I posit that the well-established psychologically manipulative nature of social media is, in part, responsible for this change (*Lamey, 2023; Choi, 2023; Wu, 2023; Bradshaw and Howard, 2017; Stuart, 2021; Delacroix, 2020*).

Social media is continually designed to manipulate the human psyche into desiring and subsequently purchasing anything which is advertised to its users (*Lamey, 2023; Choi, 2023; Wu, 2023; Bradshaw and Howard, 2017; Stuart, 2021; Delacroix, 2020*).

For example, the phenomenon of 'TikTok' driving the sales of the immensely 'trendy' 'Stanley Cup' (*Demopoulos, 2024; Awomoyi, 2024; Issawi, 2022*).

This product reportedly earns the 'Stanley' brand over 750,000,000 US dollars a year in profits (*Vega and Shamo, 2023*). Compared to the 70,000,000 US dollars the product was earning prior to 'trending' on the 'TikTok' platform (*Vega and Shamo, 2023; Demopoulos, 2024*).

The new career term 'influencers', punctuates this idea, meaning people who are employed in the profession of manipulating or 'influencing' social media users into purchasing products (*Lamey, 2023; Choi, 2023; Wu, 2023; Bradshaw and Howard, 2017; Stuart, 2021; Delacroix, 2020*).

The psychologically manipulative nature of social media exists as a method of maximising profit and is the result of irresponsible capitalist practices (*Demos, 2012; Lamey, 2023; Choi, 2023; Wu, 2023; Bradshaw and Howard, 2017; Stuart, 2021; Delacroix, 2020*).

For example, 86% of social media users belonging to 'Gen Z', feel these platforms influence their fashion choices (*Awomoyi, 2024*).

Social media creates also desirable ideals which exist beyond what is attainable to the average person.

Studies show this can have a negative impact on a person's mental health and wellbeing, with social media being linked to suicide and depression (*Memon, et. al., 2018; Regis, 2024; Wanzo and Hilu, 2024; Lamey, 2023; Choi, 2023; Wu, 2023; Bradshaw and Howard, 2017; Stuart, 2021; Delacroix, 2020*).

For example, in my professional practice, we are often requested to reproduce floral arrangements for weddings which were, unbeknownst to the couple, created for social media photoshoots. Therefore, the practicalities of these arrangements may not be applicable to weddings in the real world.

For instance, a couple may see a 'flower wall' on social media, which consists of roses suspended on ribbon. However, this could never be recreated for a real wedding as the roses would quickly die without access to water.

I posit that this could be considered a new form of counter memory and is, in part, responsible for the poor environmental practices of the wedding industry.

As couples are constantly exposed, through social media, to weddings of significant overconsumption and scale, they have been manipulated into believing that this is the 'new norm'. Couples have been manipulated into believing that they 'must have' an incredible number of different elements in their wedding, often at great expense to themselves financially, whilst also at the expense of their environmental responsibilities too.

I propose that the counter memory effect, as caused by social media, is altering the traditional narrative of weddings, from being the spiritual union of two persons, into a consumerist agenda of rampant overconsumption on an incredible scale.

Sentimentality

Many philosophers, artists, and authors have explored the concept of sentimentality, especially in the context of time and memory.

For instance, Barthes' notion of the 'studium' and the 'punctum' are often applied to sentimental works, "for sentimentality has an inherent sense of melancholy and, therefore, is certainly appealing yet punctuating in its bittersweetness" (*Barthes, 1980; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*).

Furthermore, artists such as Kara Walker, Mirosław Balka, Jane and Louise Wilson, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Rachel Whiteread, Tacita Dean, Louise Bourgeois, are also known to explore this concept (*Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*).

Additionally, Yoko Ogawa explores the notion of sentimentality in their 1994 novel 'The Memory Police' (*Ogawa, 1994; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*). In this book Ogawa explores an alternate reality where sentimental attachment is outlawed and is punishable by death (*Ogawa, 1994; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*). In the book, memory and sentimentality are inextricably tied to one another (*Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*).

Furthermore, the notion of sentimentality is also explored in the multimedia artworks of Angela Deane, titled the 'Ghost Photographs' (*Deane, 2022; Deane, 2022; Gotthardt and Deane, 2019; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*).

She focusses on the concept of nostalgia and explores it by painting primitive ghost figures over the people in vintage film photographs, which she refers to as 'found objects' (*Deane, 2022; Deane, 2022; Gotthardt and Deane, 2019; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*).

In addition, in the 1913 novel 'In Search of Lost Time', philosopher Marcel Proust, likely influenced by his cousin-in-law, philosopher Henri Bergson, also conducted an exploration into the concept of sentimentality (*Bergson, 1896; Proust, 1913; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*). The main character of the novel, which is named Marcel after the author, experiences a "profound recollection of a childhood memory when he brings a madeleine dipped in tea to his mouth" (*Proust, 1913; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*). Proust called this phenomenon 'memoire involontaire' (*Proust, 1913; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*).

Moreover, the philosopher Christian Boltanski explored the concept of sentimentality through the context of the intersection between childhood and death.

He was especially interested in how memories can influence a person's perception of reality (*Boltanski, 1996; Tate, 2022; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*). Boltanski also had a specific interest in exploring the significance of 'small memories', "those which are extremely personal and seemingly inconsequential from the perspective of others" (*Boltanski, 1996; Tate, 2022; Dixon, 2022; Joce, 2023*).

Sentimentality, Weddings, and the Climate Crisis

I propose that the high level of sentimentality, the value which is placed on the memories of a wedding, is, in part, responsible for the lack of environmentally responsible practices in the industry.

The common narrative being to encourage couples to plan weddings of a vast scale using sentimental notions, such as; 'you only have one wedding', 'you've been dreaming of this day all your life', and 'you'll remember this forever'.

This has led to an industry which produces a shocking amount of waste and perpetuates a culture of rampant overconsumption (*Wray, 2024; Terrado, 2023; Miles, 2021*).

Conversely, the weddings which are, arguably, currently held in the most sentimental light, are those of our recent ancestors, despite being of a significantly smaller scale than the weddings of today (*Lucchesi, 2016*).

In fact, the lavish weddings which we now consider to be 'traditional', did not come into fashion until the 1970's (*Lucchesi, 2016*).

Historically, people were married at home (*Lucchesi, 2016*). They did not travel to grand, expensive venues to 'feel like a princess for a day' (a narrative I hear perpetually from brides). This practice was indeed reserved for only the very wealthy (*Nelson, 2018*).

For instance, my grandparents, wed in the 1960's, in their local village Church, before celebrating at a venue a short walk from their house.

Pre-1970 weddings were, in fact, very different to modern weddings in several ways (*Lucchesi, 2016*).

They were traditionally held on weekdays, weekend weddings were avoided and considered to bring 'bad luck', whilst being 'terribly unfashionable' (*Lucchesi, 2016; Livingstone, 1903*). As brides were informed in the 1903 'White House Book of Etiquette'; "Wednesday the best day of all, Thursdays for crosses, Fridays for losses, and Saturday for no luck at all" (*Livingstone, 1903*).

Furthermore, post-ceremony receptions were considered an optional choice (*Lucchesi, 2016*). The popular 1961 guide 'Check List for a Perfect Wedding', details alternatives, such as a 'receiving line' (*Follett, 1961*).

For those who did choose to have a reception, it was a simple affair, typically limited to punch and cake, with details which we would now consider minor, being held in great significance (*Lucchesi, 2016*). For example, a North Carolina newspaper reported on the 'crystal bowl' from which the punch was served at a local wedding (*Lucchesi, 2016*).

Furthermore, the 1879 guide 'Wedding Etiquette and Usages of Polite Society' details that no 'procession' was necessary for couples who were marrying at home (*Carroll, 1879*).

During this time, it was popular for couples to be wed in their parents houses with only a few witnesses and family members present (*Lucchesi, 2016*).

The notion that a wedding must be grand, of a vast scale and expense, to be sentimentally significant is clearly an inaccurate notion.

I propose this notion is a result of capitalist propaganda and a product of social media manipulation (*Lamey, 2023; Choi, 2023; Wu, 2023; Bradshaw and Howard, 2017; Stuart, 2021; Delacroix, 2020*).

Conclusions

I propose that, among other reasons, these phenomena, both individually and through the interplay between them, are, in part, responsible for the lack of discourse among couples on the significant environmental issues which are caused by the modern wedding industry.

In the age of social media causing fleeting 'trends', 'throw away culture', and rampant consumerism, weddings have grown to be almost unrecognisable from their humble roots. Once practiced as a ritual of the spirit, I argue that modern weddings have become a consumerist product.

The industry, although appearing romantic and heart-felt on the surface, is perpetuating a dangerous norm of an unsustainable level of consumerism and waste.

It is necessary for both customers of and professionals within the industry alike to make sustained changes to the ways in which weddings are conducted, as the current levels of waste and overconsumption are clearly not sustainable.

The Installation

The Silk Garden

Please find photographs of my installation in Appendix A, B, and C.

My installation has been designed as something which could theoretically be used to decorate a wedding. It is a focal piece, generally this would be the installation piece in front of which a couple would be wed. This is always the most expensive and elaborate element of any weddings floral design.

The installation piece is, however, lacking in any genuine practical purpose. It exists purely to be perceived and photographed. Thus, invoking and alluding to a sense of environmentally irresponsible practices and unsustainable overconsumption.

The enormity of the scale, design, and creation process of my installation mean that my piece would likely be too expensive for a couple to purchase for their wedding, as it would cost many thousands of pounds.

This is an intentional design choice, as my installation represents the unattainable nature of the massive scale of the desirably fashionable modern wedding one may see in photographs on social media.

My installation is of an exaggerated scale. It fills and reaches expansively across the space it sits within. It is without boundary and unconfined.

The pillars themselves are large and designed to appear to be 'bursting at the seams'. Meanwhile, the height of the piece overall is vast, it reaches to the ceiling and spreads across it, whilst also reaching and spreading out across the floor too.

The Silk Garden

The brass candlesticks surrounding it are similarly vast and decadent. They represent every single candlestick used in my own wedding, therefore, enough to decorate a large venue for one-hundred-and-fifty guests.

To utilise them in this way, to decorate a single installation piece with the sheer quantity of them, alludes to a sense of immense overconsumption. However, they are vintage objects that have been reused for many years.

My installation is one of contrasts. It visually represents a massiveness of scale and alludes to a practice of overconsumption and unattainable ideals. However, it is made entirely of waste materials.

To put it simply; the way it looks and the way it is constructed are directly and intentionally contrasting with each other.

In this way, it is designed to be thought provoking. A direct answer to the lack of consideration most couples give to the environmental practices of their wedding.

Furthermore, my work has also been created in the interest of innovating a new type of circular economy. This exists as a direct response to the issues of sustainability and environmental responsibility within the modern wedding industry and offers a possible solution for negating it.

All of the materials in my installation piece are either recycled from previous weddings or are waste from the industry. For example, all of the flowers are handmade from discarded wedding dress samples.

If I were to develop this idea further, I would produce the florals on a smaller scale, e.g. bouquets. Thus, making them more affordable, whilst still providing a practical solution to reducing the environmental impact of weddings on both an individual and professional scale.

The Process

Please find a sketchbook and visual diary, with more details and insight on the process, in the 'OneDrive' folder.

The creation of my installation utilised my skills in both the textile art and floristry sectors. Before commencing my project, the first stage of planning was to conceive of a 'floral' recipe for the design. This requires a sound knowledge of flower varieties and the principles of floral design.

I spent four months designing and creating these blooms. Meanwhile, my installation was built in situ over the course of approximately one month.

The flowers were created using a variety of practices:

Anemones: Thermoplastic techniques and wire.

Hydrangeas: Weaving and the practice of 'rag rugging'. A skill passed down through the women in my family, I used my late grandmother's tools and hessian material to create these blooms.

Pampas grass: Carding brushes were used to split the woven fibres of taffeta fabric.

Stocks: Primitive bows tied onto wooden sticks and layered wire.

I also created large stylistic floral blooms from wire and lace, which I did not include in the design due to the practical constraints of not being able to access the higher aspects of my design once it was hung.

They could not be included in the lower parts as this would have been unbalanced. The principles of floral design tell us that the majority of the flowers should be towards the bottom sections of an installation such as this, as this is how flowers would grow and bloom in nature.

All of the fabric for the flowers was sourced from local wedding dress suppliers. For example, ex-sample gowns from 'Perfection' bridal and leftover fabric from couture designer Stephanie Allin.

The Silk Garden

I was blessed with the idea to utilise these waste materials during the process of having my own couture wedding gown designed by Stephanie Allin in 2022. She told me that she 'could not give the leftover fabric away' and that 'it hurt to see it go to landfill'. This is especially poignant when one considers the considerable expense of the fabrics, as they are some of the finest available in world.

It was a great privilege to be able give new life to these waste materials, the beautiful fabrics were a joy to work with.

At the end of my project, I still found myself with many bags full of leftover sample dresses, which I put to good use, donating them to the foundation degree programme at my university for the other students to be creative with.

The other materials in my installation were also recycled in similar ways. For example, the foliage and roses were all rescued from the bin at work. They had all been previously used in arrangements for other people's weddings.

The oasis, which I attached to the back of the pillars to be viewed from the chair, was also waste from a wedding.

I wished for the back of my design to have some visible waste features, such as labels from the recycled dresses; 'made in China' and '100% polyester'.

I designed my installation so that those who sat within it, would have a sort of gentle confrontation with some more obvious forms waste from the industry.

I hoped this would be a thought-provoking experience and wanted to experiment with the idea that perhaps the experience could aid in bypassing the aforementioned philosophical and psychological phenomena.

Tasha Marks

Furthermore, inspired by artist Tasha Marks I also included perfumed objects in my installation, which provided a rich foliage scent and created a multisensory effect.

Visitors to the exhibition were treated to the illusion of the delicious scent of fresh foliage, which added a significant sense of depth to my installation piece.

Marks is an award-winning artist and founder of 'AVM Curiosities' whose work explores the complex relationship between art and the senses (*Marks, 2023; Robinson and Marks, 2023*). She champions the use of fragrance as an artistic medium (*Marks, 2023; Robinson and Marks, 2023*).

Marks' projects include scented installations, olfactory curation, and interactive lectures (*Marks, 2023*). She also creates limited-edition fragrances for institutions, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Royal Academy of Arts, The National Gallery, Historic Royal Places, and The British Museum (*Marks, 2023*).

Her portfolio is diverse and full of curiosities. It ranges from manufacturing the scent of human breastmilk, to recreating ancient Egyptian beer (*Marks, 2023*).

As a florist, I find the usage of scent as an artistic medium to be a fascinating concept. Especially as floral fragrance is often overlooked by couples planning their wedding floristry. In a professional capacity, I always encourage couples to consider how they would like their florals to be scented. I believe it is a valuable notion that a bride may, for example, smell lavender and be reminded of her wedding bouquet.

Feedback from the Public

Much to my surprise, many people thought that my installation was constructed of two potted trees with a large branch from a tree hanging above it. People were continually astonished to learn that it was entirely, in fact, created, designed, and constructed by me. As a florist, to receive feedback that people genuinely believed my work consisted of real trees, simply dragged in from outside, decorated, and put on display, is extremely gratifying, as this is precisely the effect which florists seek to create.

Furthermore, to achieve this in an installation which consists entirely of foliage and fabric, in my line of work, is rather extraordinary and strikingly radical.

In a world which is in desperate need of alternative ways of approaching wasteful practices, I successfully managed to conceive of, design, and to create something so convincing, so

The Silk Garden

captivating, that people believed it had simply come from nature itself. That is certainly an extraordinary thing in my profession.

I was also very surprised to learn that people were shocked to discover that I had made the textile florals myself. They thought that I had simply sourced the fabric florals and arranged them to decorate the installation. Whereas, in reality, I had been working every moment of the previous four months to design them myself and create them entirely by hand. Which truly did mean working every moment of that time, from sourcing the fabric, to adding the finishing touches to the installation piece, I took only a few days away from my project between September and December.

One person, who had settled comfortably into the chair, described to me how relaxed sitting there was making them feel. They described how it made them feel peaceful and cosy. They detailed how sitting there gave them a moment of stillness and created a blissful pocket of calm within their chaotic day.

Although I had hoped it might be, I had not expected my installation to be quite so successfully evocative, as there was no intrinsic emotionality attached to it, as there would be with one's wedding installation, for example. I was extremely touched to receive this feedback and marked it within myself as a milestone moment of success in my occupation as a florist.

Bibliography

Awomoyi, J. (2024) 'What is behind the TikTok thirst for Stanley water cups?', BBC News, 20 January. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-67999424> (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Barthes R (1980) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage.

Bergson, H. (1896) *In Matter and Memory*.

Boltanski, C. (1996) "What interests me is what I call 'small memory' Boltanski's tribute to the dead," WACBA. Available at: <https://www.macba.cat/en/art-artists/collectables/christian-boltanski> (Accessed: December 14, 2022).

Bradshaw, S., & Howard, P. (2017). *Troops, Trolls and Troublemakers: A Global Inventory of Organized Social Media Manipulation*. In *Computational Propaganda Research Project* (pp. 1–37). Oxford Internet Institute.

Carroll, G.D. (1879) *Wedding Etiquette and Usages of Polite Society*. New York.

Choi, S.Y. (2023) *When You Can't Trust Your Own Eyes: Deepfakes and Metacognitive Experiences in Manipulative AI-Mediated Communication*. dissertation. University of Southern California ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. Available at: <https://www.proquest.com/openview/ba1e504f37a5317b18ec3da2f5f2121d/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y> (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Christian Boltanski born 1944 (2022) Tate. Available at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/christian-boltanski-2305> (Accessed: December 15, 2022).

Deane, A. (2022) Bio & statement, Angela Deane. Available at:
<https://angeladeane.com/page/1-Bio%20%26%20Statement.html> (Accessed: December 14, 2022).

Deane, A. (2022) Ghost photographs, Angela Deane. Available at:
<https://angeladeane.com/section/333599-Ghost%20Photographs%20.html> (Accessed: December 14, 2022).

Delacroix, S. (2020) 'Social media manipulation, autonomy and capabilities', SSRN Electronic Journal [Preprint]. doi:10.2139/ssrn.3710786.

Demopoulos, A. (2024) 'Stanley cups took the world by storm. Then the backlash began', The Guardian, 12 January. Available at:
<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2024/jan/12/stanley-cups-tumblers-water-bottle-trend> (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Demos TJ (2012) Sites of collective counter-memory. Animate Projects: Sites of Collective Memory. Available at: http://animateprojectsarchive.org/writing/essays/tj_demos

Dixon, I. (2022). Research and Critically Evaluate the Role of the Artist/Designer/Maker in the Context of Time and Memory. UWTSD.

Dodson, J. (2023) An overview of selective memory, BetterHelp. Available at:
<https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/memory/an-overview-of-selective-memory/> (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Domaleski, J. (2023) 'The problem of intentional selective memory', The Citizen, 24 January. Available at: <https://thecitizen.com/2023/01/24/the-problem-of-selective-memory/> (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Follett, B. (1961) Check List for a Perfect Wedding.

Foucault M (1971) Nietzsche, genealogy, history. Republished in: Faubion JD (ed.) *Aesthetics, Method, Epistemology* (vol. 2). London: Penguin, 1998, pp. 369–391.

Foucault M, *Cahiers du Cinema* (1975) Film and popular memory. *Radical Philosophy* 11: 24–29.

Foucault, M. (1974) 'Michel Foucault: Film and Popular Memory', *Cahiers du Cinema*.

Gotthardt, A. and Deane, A. (2019) "Angela Deane Paints Playful Ghosts onto Family Photographs," *Artsy*. Available at: <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-angela-deane-paints-playful-ghosts-vintage-family-photographs> (Accessed: December 14, 2022).

Howe, P.D. and Leiserowitz, A. (2013) 'Who remembers a hot summer or a cold winter? the asymmetric effect of beliefs about global warming on perceptions of local climate conditions in the U.S.', *Global Environmental Change*, 23(6), pp. 1488–1500.
doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2013.09.014.

Issawi, D. (2022) 'The Sisterhood of the Stanley Tumbler', *The New York Times*, 17 May. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/17/style/stanley-tumbler.html> (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Joce, I. (2023). *Sensations of Synaesthesia*. UWTSD.

Lamey, D. (2023) *The Grip of Giants: How Social Media Platforms Control People, Creativity, and Opinions*. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Effat/publication/376410485_The_Grip_of_Giants_How_Social_Media_Platforms_Control_People_Creativity_and_Opinions/links/6577a79acbd2c535ea17ce75/The-Grip-of-Giants-How-Social-Media-Platforms-Control-People-Creativity-and-Opinions.pdf (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Leiserowitz, A. et al. (2021) 'Global warming's six Americas: A review and recommendations for climate change communication', *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 42, pp. 97–103. doi:10.1016/j.cobeha.2021.04.007.

Livingstone, H.C. (1903) *White House Book of Etiquette*.

Lucchesi, E.L.B. (2016) '7 Wedding Traditions That Have Virtually Disappeared Over the Past Century', *Country Living*, 27 April. Available at: <https://www.countryliving.com/life/a38375/wedding-traditions/> (Accessed: 24 January 2024).

Macleod, C. and Mathews, A. (2004) 'Selective memory effects in anxiety disorders', *Memory and Emotion*, pp. 155–185. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195158564.003.0005.

Marks, T. (2023) *About, AVM Curiosities*. Available at: <https://www.avmcuriosities.com/about> (Accessed: 24 January 2024).

Memon, A. et al. (2018) 'The role of online social networking on deliberate self-harm and suicidality in adolescents: A systematized review of literature', *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 60(4), p. 384. doi:10.4103/psychiatry.indianjpsychiatry_414_17.

Miles, M. (2021) 'Why does the wedding industry need to be more sustainable?', *Sustainable Wedding Alliance*, 1 September. Available at: <https://sustainableweddingalliance.com/why-does-the-wedding-industry-need-to-be-more-sustainable/> (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Nelson, J. (2018) *Royal Weddings in history: Dynasty and diplomacy*, *The National Archives blog*. Available at: <https://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/royal-weddings-in-history-dynasty-and-diplomacy/> (Accessed: 24 January 2024).

Ogawa, Y. (1994) *The Memory Police*.

Proust, M. (1913) *In Search of Lost Time*.

Rasmussen, C. (2013) *Selective memory The power of negative thinking*, NASA. Available at: <https://climate.nasa.gov/explore/ask-nasa-climate/1016/selective-memory/> (Accessed: 22 January 2024).

Regis, A.W. (2024) 'Deep learning to explore the correlation between screen time and depression through analysis of the NHANES DATASET', *Studies on the Semantic Web [Preprint]*. doi:10.3233/ssw230029.

Robinson, T. and Marks, T. (2023) 'What Did The Past SMELL like?', Tony Robinson's Cunningscast. A Zinc Media Group production.

Soria, Ó. (1971) *The Night of San Juan (El coraje del pueblo)*. Bolivia and Italy: Grupo Ukamau and RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana.

Stevens, H.M. (2005) *The myth & magic of embroidery*. Cincinnati: David & Charles.

Stuart, A.H. (2021) *Social Media, Manipulation, and Violence*, HeinOnline. Available at: <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals%2Fscjilb15&div=11&id=&page=> (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Tachibana R (1998) *Narrative as Counter-Memory: A Half-Century of Postwar Writing in Germany and Japan*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Tello, V. (2019) 'Counter-memory and and—and: Aesthetics and temporalities for living together', *Memory Studies*, 15(2), pp. 390–401. doi:10.1177/1750698019876002.

Terrado, A. (2023) 'The Environmental Impact of the Wedding Industry', *The Green Side of Pink*, 9 June. Available at: <https://www.thegreensideofpink.com/lifestyle/2023/the->

environmental-and-economic-impact-of-the-wedding-industry/?lang=en (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Tyng, C.M. et al. (2017) 'The influences of emotion on learning and memory', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01454.

Vega, N. and Shamo, L. (2023) 'How a 40-ounce cup turned Stanley into a \$750 million a year business', *CNBC*, 23 December. Available at:
<https://www.cnbc.com/2023/12/23/how-a-40-ounce-cup-turned-stanley-into-a-750-million-a-year-business.html> (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Wanzo, R. and Hilu, R. (2024) 'The Long History of Social Media', *Feminist Media Histories*, 10(1), pp. 1–16. doi:10.1525/fmh.2024.10.1.1.

Waring, J.D. and Kensinger, E.A. (2011) 'How emotion leads to selective memory: Neuroimaging evidence', *Neuropsychologia*, 49(7), pp. 1831–1842.
doi:10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2011.03.007.

Wigoder, M. (2001). *History Begins at Home: Photography and Memory in the Writings of Siegfried Kracauer and Roland Barthes*. *History & Memory* 13(1), 19-59.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/ham.2001.0007>

Wray, K. (2024) *Wedding footprint calculator*, *Mindfully Wed*. Available at:
<https://mindfullywed.com/weddingfootprintcalculator/> (Accessed: 23 January 2024).

Wu, A. (2023) 'Branding your brain - How Internal Branding Creates Unsafe Work Conditions', *MacEwan University Student eJournal*, 7(1). doi:10.31542/0wxg8613.



The Silk Garden

Appendices:

Photographs of my installation.



Appendix A

Photographs by Ann Dineen.























Appendix B

Photographs by Joann Randles.





































































A photograph of a funeral home casket, which is a wicker basket with a white fur lining. It is heavily decorated with a large, dense arrangement of white and cream-colored flowers, including lilies and hydrangeas, along with greenery and dried floral elements. Several lit candles in brass holders are placed around the casket, creating a warm, somber atmosphere. The background shows a white radiator and a light-colored wall.

Appendix C

Photographs of the public, friends, and family.









Jorjie Drakefield



Jorjie Drakefield updated their profile picture.



18 Dec 2023 · 🌐

Make sure to check out the arrival exhibition that's running until January at the Alex design exchange building 🥰💖

(the beautiful flower nook is created by the insanely talented silk garden on Instagram, one of the many elegant designs we have on display)



Love



Comment



Send



Share

Write a comment...



@the.silk.garden