

CATHERINE
BROWN

MATERIAL PRACTICES

(Coexistent Perspectives Lecture 15)



Question 5. Design Thinking and Material Practices: How are Contemporary Practices of design and making reshaping ideas of authorship, agency, and materiality in response to shifting technological, ecological, and philosophical paradigms? Consider how approaches such as speculative design, generative systems, or post-digital craft are contributing to these developments.

3 EXAMPLES TO LOOK OUT FOR.....

Anicka Yi

Biologizing the machine, 2015

Biotic materials Theory: Bennett

Edmund De Waal

Craft, skills, material connection

Craft and Phenomenology Theory: Sennett, Adamson, Heidegger

El Anatsui

Recycled craft.

Post Digital Craft Theory: Barad



1. Materials / Matter / Materiality
2. Human relationship to materials
3. Sensory experience
4. Material cycles, qualities and uses.

MATERIAL / MATTER

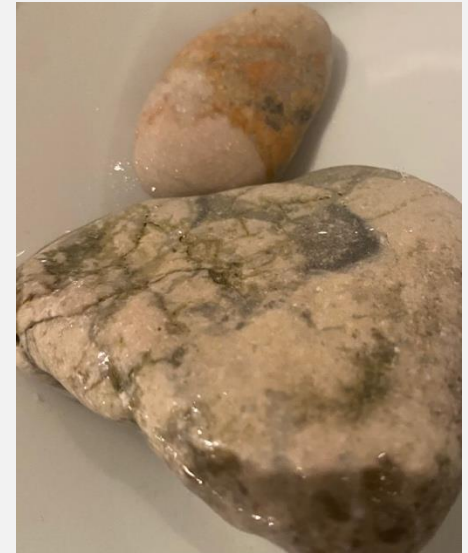
dictionary definitions

- Material : the matter from which a thing is or can be made
- Materiality : A material quality or thing.....materiality may also refer to the matter rather than the form. The quality of being material; having a physical existence.
- Matter : is defined as anything that has volume or takes up 'space'. Objects are made of materials, which are the matter or substance from which they are produced.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES ON MATERIAL & MATERIALITY

Tim Ingold text – Materials against Materiality – ‘observing stone’.

‘What then is the material world? Of what does it consist? For heuristic purposes, Christopher Gosden suggests, we could divide it into two broad components: *Landscape and Artefacts* (1999, 152). Thus, it seems that we have human minds on the one hand and a material world of landscape and artefacts on the other. That, you might think, should cover just about everything, but does it? Consider, for a moment, what is left out. Starting with landscape, does this include the sky? Where do we put the sun, the moon and the stars? We can reach for the stars, but cannot touch them; are they, then, material realities with which humans can make contact, or do they exist for us only in the mind? Is the moon part of the material world for terrestrial travellers, or only for cosmonauts who touch down on the lunar landscape? How about sunlight? Life depends on it.’ (Ingold, 2007)



OTHER PERSPECTIVES ON MATERIAL & MATERIALITY

- Glen Adamson – Fewer Better Things (p152)

Glen Adamson “To philosophize about Materiality, the first point made was that ‘matter’ and materials are from the philosophical perspective quite different from each other. One of the questions ancient thinkers poshed themselves was about physical transformation. How should we understand change from one state to another? Let’s say a carpenter has a pile of timber, lying in the yard outside their shop. Then one day the carpenter takes the timber and makes it into a simple table. What has happened? Well. There has been a rearrangement. Boards have been sawn out of logs and joined together. But it is not just any old rearrangement – It seems fundamentally different.....

MATERIAL / MATTER / ART

Do artists / designers / makers consider all ‘Matter’ to be materials?.... in order to create?

‘So, the maker, working with materials, is like an alchemist: he's interested not in what the materials are but what they do. In short, materials are what they do. So, to define or specify a material is, in a way, to tell a story, about what happens to it when it is treated in particular ways.’

Tim Ingold

Artists who explore our perceptions of materials –

- Anish Kapoor
- Eva Hesse
- Olafur Eliasson
- Mona Hatoum



ANISH KAPOOR – SCULPTURE THAT
MANIPULATES MATERIALS TO
CHALLENGE OUR PERCEPTIONS

EVA HESSE – USE OF
UNCONVENTIONAL
MATERIALS IN
SCULPTURE
CHALLENGES THE
DISTINCTION
BETWEEN MATERIAL
AND MATTER

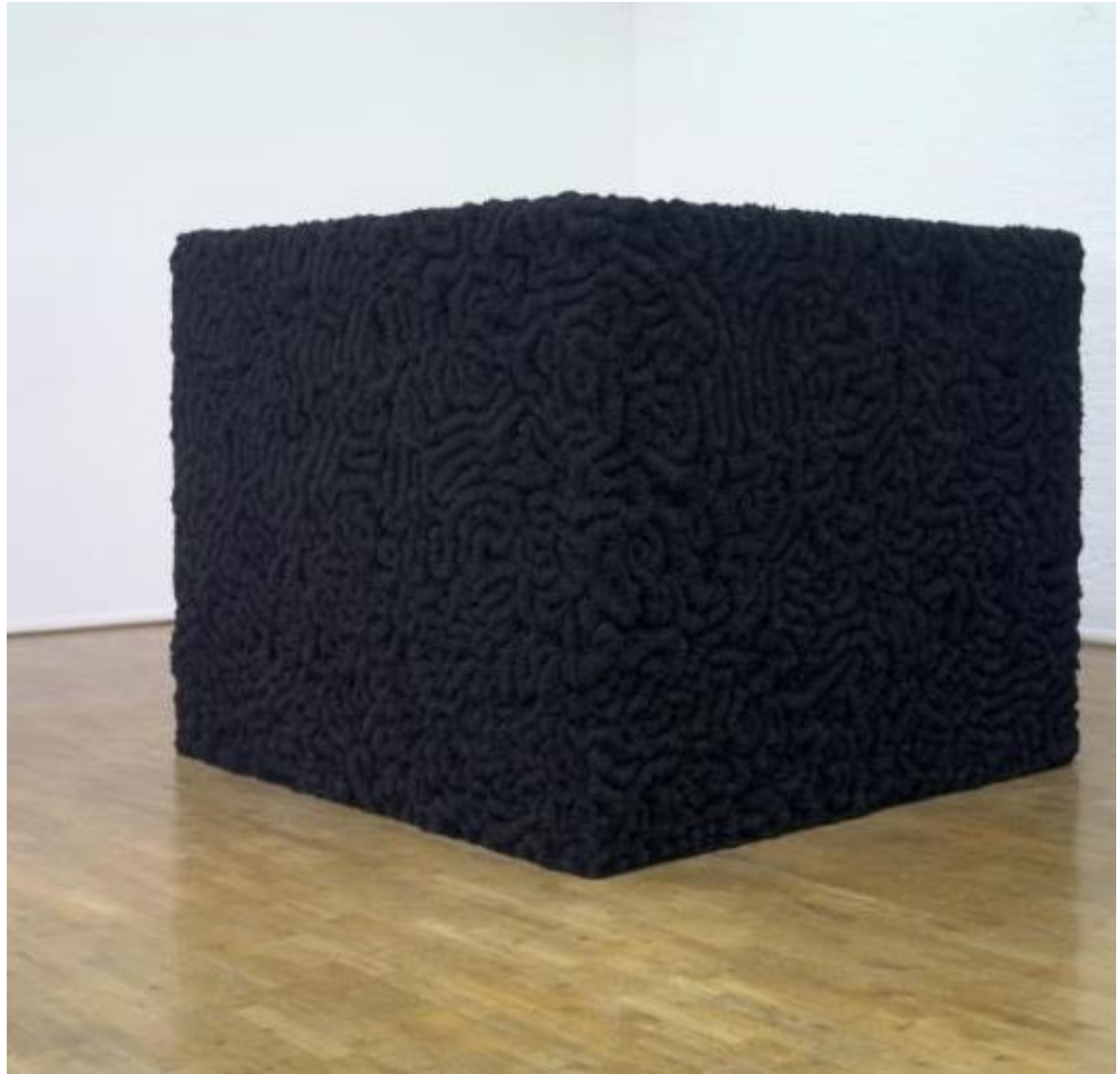




OLAFUR ELIASSON – IMMERSIVE INSTALLATIONS THAT
OFTEN INVOLVE, LIGHT, WATER AND OTHER MATERIALS /
MATTER TO EXPLORE PERCEPTION AND SPACE.

MONA HATOUM

Metal cube that is magnetized to attract Iron filings..... Hard, metallic materials that look like soft textiles....





RAW & CREATED

Some matter / materials
come from ground /
nature..... E.g. clay, wood.

Some are made from matter
/ materials from the ground /
nature..... E.g. glass / fabric

DESIGN & MATERIAL INNOVATION

Designers who create materials to innovate. These artists are not formally identified as 'new materialist' in the philosophical sense, their practice is widely **interpreted** through new materialist frameworks because of collaboration or connection between human and nonhuman relations.

- Iris Van Herpen
- Neri Oxman
- Suzanne Lee
- Diana Scherer



IRIS VAN HERPEN

- Endorsing the plastic recycle company *Parley for the Oceans*, who scour the global oceans and seashores for the tons of throwaway consumer plastic that flow within the ocean currents, that either ending up dumped on beaches or consumed by wildlife.
- To which Van Herpen has used these recycled polyester fabrics in some of her more elaborate 3D printed styles.



NERI OXMAN -

Architect and Designer who works with design, nature, biology and technology to create new materials and systems/

Silkworm structure.

- <https://oxman.com/projects/silk-pavilion-i>

SUZANNE LEE BIO-FABRICATION

- Excited by spider silk materials and their potential to be blended with other fibres to bring new functionality such as strength and warmth whilst being lightweight. I'm also a huge fan of companies like Biomason which are growing building materials like bricks and tiles in greenhouses. Instead of shipping these heavy materials around the globe, they can be grown locally, using grey water and local aggregates producing materials that are even stronger than current products and with a massively improved environmental footprint.
- The clothes feel like vegetable leather and look like creamy, worn vellum.





DIANA SCHERER

NEW MATERIALISM

New Materialism emphasizes:

- The agency and vitality of matter – materials have their own forces and capacities
- Entanglement – human nature and technology co-produce one another
- Posthumanism – moving beyond human-centred design
- Process and becoming – matter is dynamic, always in transformation.

Key thinkers:

Karen Barad / Jane Bennett

LINKING THEORETICAL THINKING

- Karen Barad

Challenges the traditional separation between matter and meaning, nature and culture or the physical and the discursive.

This aligns with new materialists who treat nonhuman entities as having agency.

- Jane Bennett

- Bennett proposes 'Vital Materialism' which claims that all matter – organic or inorganic possesses a kind of vitality or agency.

- This aligns with new materialists who blur the boundaries between nature and culture, subject and object and human and nonhuman.

What is “living architecture”?

I think very simply, living architecture is about constructing spaces that possess some of the properties of living things. What if our homes could grow

RACHEL ARMSTRONG

Rachel Armstrong’s vision for “living” buildings that grow, metabolise and defend us like an immune system

Uses biology, design and architecture.

Rachel Armstrong takes an alternative approach to environmental design that couples the computational properties of the natural world with the technology of liquids and productivity of soils. She calls the synthesis that occurs between these systems and their inhabitants “living” architecture.



ZENA HOLLOWAY



Bio-fabricated crafted forms

THE SILENT ART OF GROWTH

Studio Rootfull cultivates textile by guiding plant root, as it grows, with templates that are intricately carved from beeswax. The process goes from seed to harvest in just two weeks and uses only organic and locally sourced ingredients; any excess shoot or seed is repurposed as animal fodder, leaving no waste behind. Through contemporary craft, innovation and invention, Rootfull bio-designs memorable artefacts that cultivate material intelligence and regenerative design.

ANICKA YI



Sensory and synesthetic experience, questions the boundaries between natural and synthetic, human and non-human, materiality and immateriality.

intersection of politics and macrobiotics. Her practice questions the increasingly hazy taxonomic distinctions between what is human, animal, plant and machine

Biologizing the machine, 2015
Biotic materials:

Theory: Bennett's Vital Materialism - nonhuman matter has its own "thing-power" or active, lively agency that is not separate from humans.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGp8EKFUqko>



THE EVERYDAY

Materials and our relationship to them

My familiar materials of glass and clay through study, but what is all of our material experiences and knowledge?

Cooking / making / building / wearing /
....all human contact – led to collaboration with Shellie about domesticity / materials and skills – the everyday!

‘domestic procedure to creative process as a way of both acknowledging and celebrating these overlooked aspects of daily household chore’.

Everyday.... Water, food, fuel, protection – basic needs (Maslow’s hierarchy of needs) all links back to materials and our connections to them.



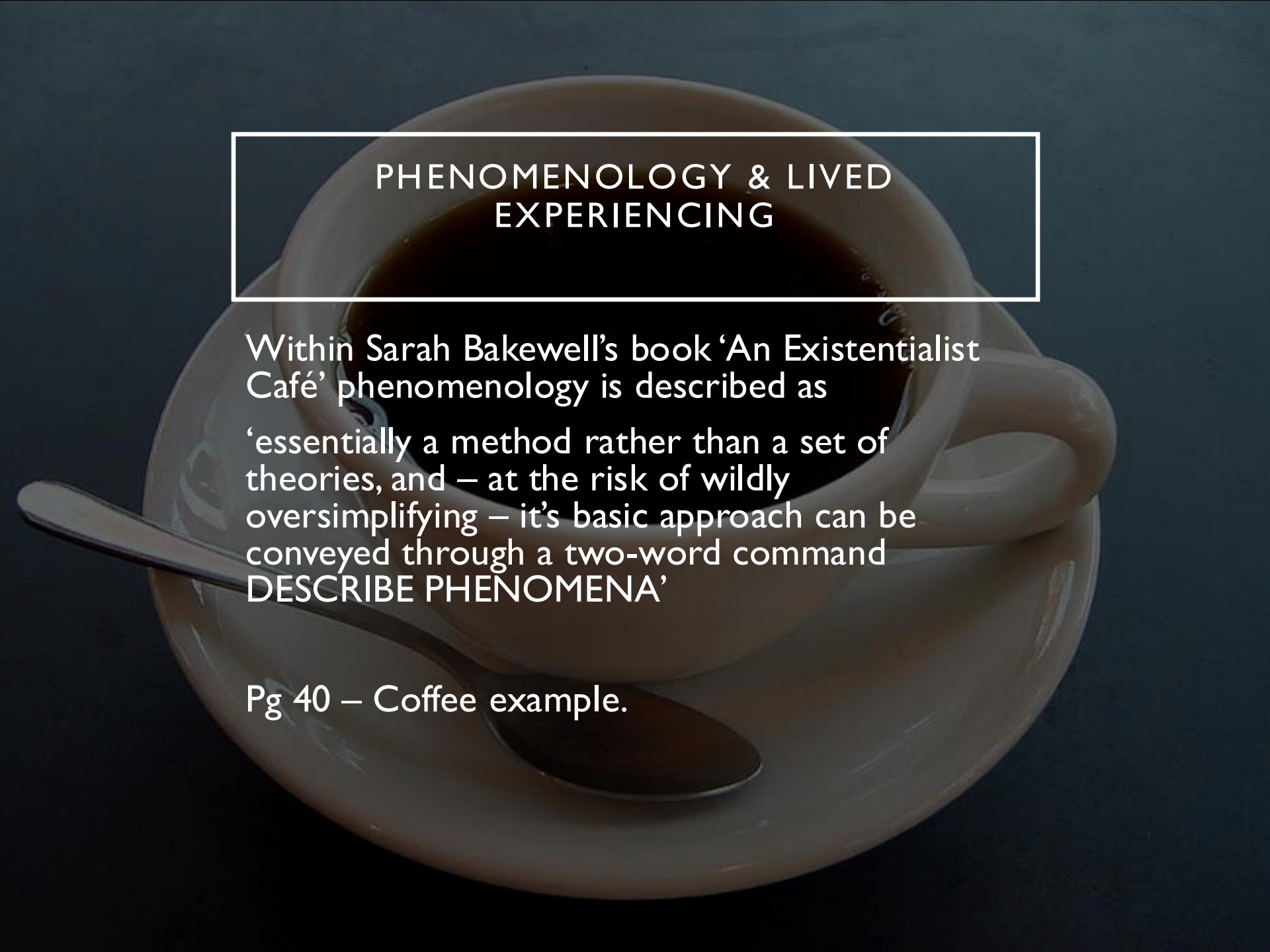
Discussion and practice with regards to the cross over of domestic and life
Experience with craft and making skills.

COLLABORATIVE MAKING

- This project began as a collaborative experiment in lockdown whilst we were teaching the MA Collaborative Dialogue module, and we discovered that there were loads of similarities around our making practices and lived experience as mothers, artists, university lecturers, and researchers.
- Our research then became broader, and we explored the wider context of craft in society, and we specifically reflect on the domestic environment since this has a particular resonance for both of us, informing and influencing the work that we both make as independent practitioners.
- Here, we work conceptually but also technically honing our craft skills, tools and technologies to produce bodies of work whilst considering how 'Traces of Making' becomes a visible and viable way of talking about our 'Aesthetics of Making'. Through our practices, we demonstrate how our lived experience enables us to develop work around this theme and effects how, why and when we make.

EFFECT & AFFECT OF CRAFT IN SOCIETY
SHELLIE & CATH'S COLLABORATIVE CRAFT
HUB PROJECT 2023

The purpose of this project has been to consider the significance of the domestic space, in relation to our making practices as mothers, artists and lecturers. The home as a space constantly 'in flux' has impressed itself upon us, whilst enmeshing the "rhythms and changes of inner and outer worlds" (Miller, 2008:3); of a struggle but also resilience to express the creative self in the midst of work- life.



PHENOMENOLOGY & LIVED EXPERIENCING

Within Sarah Bakewell's book 'An Existentialist Café' phenomenology is described as

'essentially a method rather than a set of theories, and – at the risk of wildly oversimplifying – it's basic approach can be conveyed through a two-word command
DESCRIBE PHENOMENA'

Pg 40 – Coffee example.

PHENOMENOLOGY

Edmund Husserl – Established School of Phenomenology

Influenced

Martin Heidegger - Being & Time

Being / Experiencing / Sensory

SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Sensory experiences when making:

Some believe we have between 14 and 20 types of senses (5 obvious ones being, sight, sound, smell, touch and taste)

Are these complexity of senses and Multisensory Perceptions linked to Tacit knowledges?

Robert Morris in his 'Notes on the Phenomenology of Making' discusses making as a bodily experience and uses 'Pollocks' painting as 'the interaction of body and materials as they exist in a three-dimensional world' (Adamson, G (2010) The Craft Reader. Bloomsbury. P543)

EDMUND DE WAAL



EDMUND DE WAAL

Top - Conceptions Of Space In A Non-Digital World.

His stated goal is to “slow down time”, to emphasise the long hours spent at the potter’s wheel and that are therefore somehow contained in this exhibition.



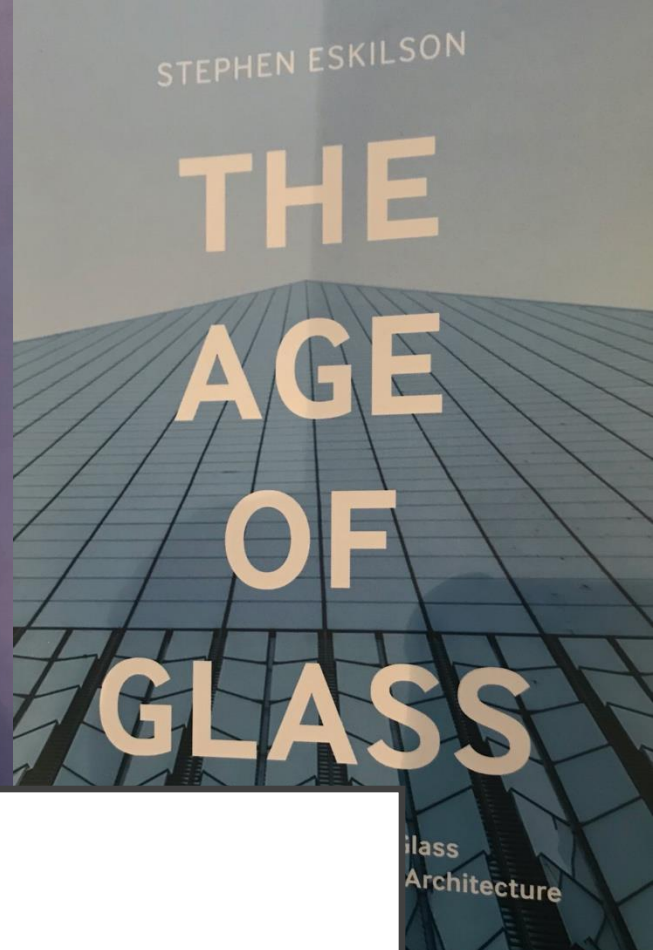
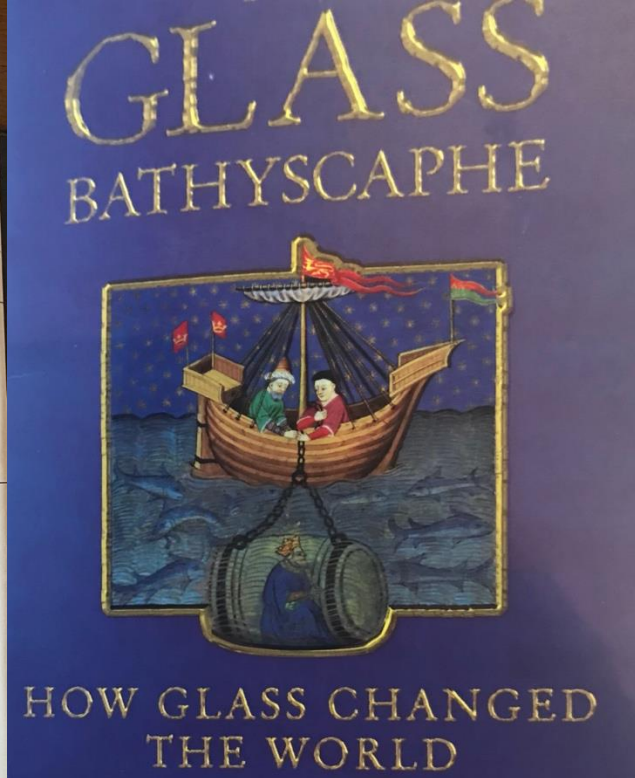
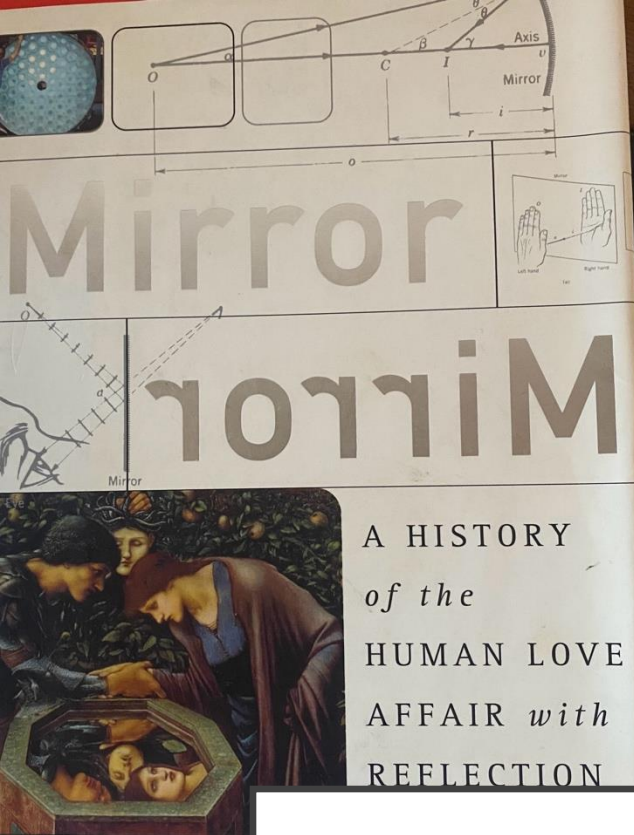
**DH LAWRENCE QUOTE FROM CHRISTOPHER
FRAYLING'S ON CRAFTSMANSHIP**

**Things men have made with wakened hands,
And put soft life into are awake through years with
transferred touch,
and go on glowing for long years.
And for this reason, some old things are lovely
warm still with the life of forgotten men who made
them.**

DH Lawrence, from Things Men Have Made.

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS WITH MATERIALS

- The everyday and familiarity – life experiences
- Implicit knowledge
- Tacit Knowledge



INVISIBLE GLASS.....

What would the world be like if glass was never invented?

Medicine, science, astronomy, architecture....etc

EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE

- Implicit knowledge - knowledge that is gained through incidental activities, or without awareness that learning is occurring.
- Tacit Knowledge - refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities an individual gains through experience that is often difficult to put into words or otherwise communicate.

ERAUT DESCRIBES IMPLICIT
LEARNING AND PATTERNS OF
BEHAVIOUR AS:

‘The often-unconscious absorption of norms, values and other kinds of culturally embedded knowledge’ (Eraut, 2008)

Raymond Michael Eraut (1940-2018) – Education Theorist

“Non-formal learning and tacit knowledge in professional work” (2000)

Explores how professionals learn in the workplace, emphasizing the role of tacit and implicit knowledge.

WARREN SEELIG – MATERIALITY AND MEANING



TACIT KNOWLEDGE

Michael Polanyi's words

'We can know more than we can tell. Tacit knowledge is an active and personal involvement of knowing. One dwells in the way he / she knows 'the world'

Therefore, we can gain tacit knowledge without words....

EXTENDING OUR BODILY EXISTENCE OF THE WORLD (POLANYI)

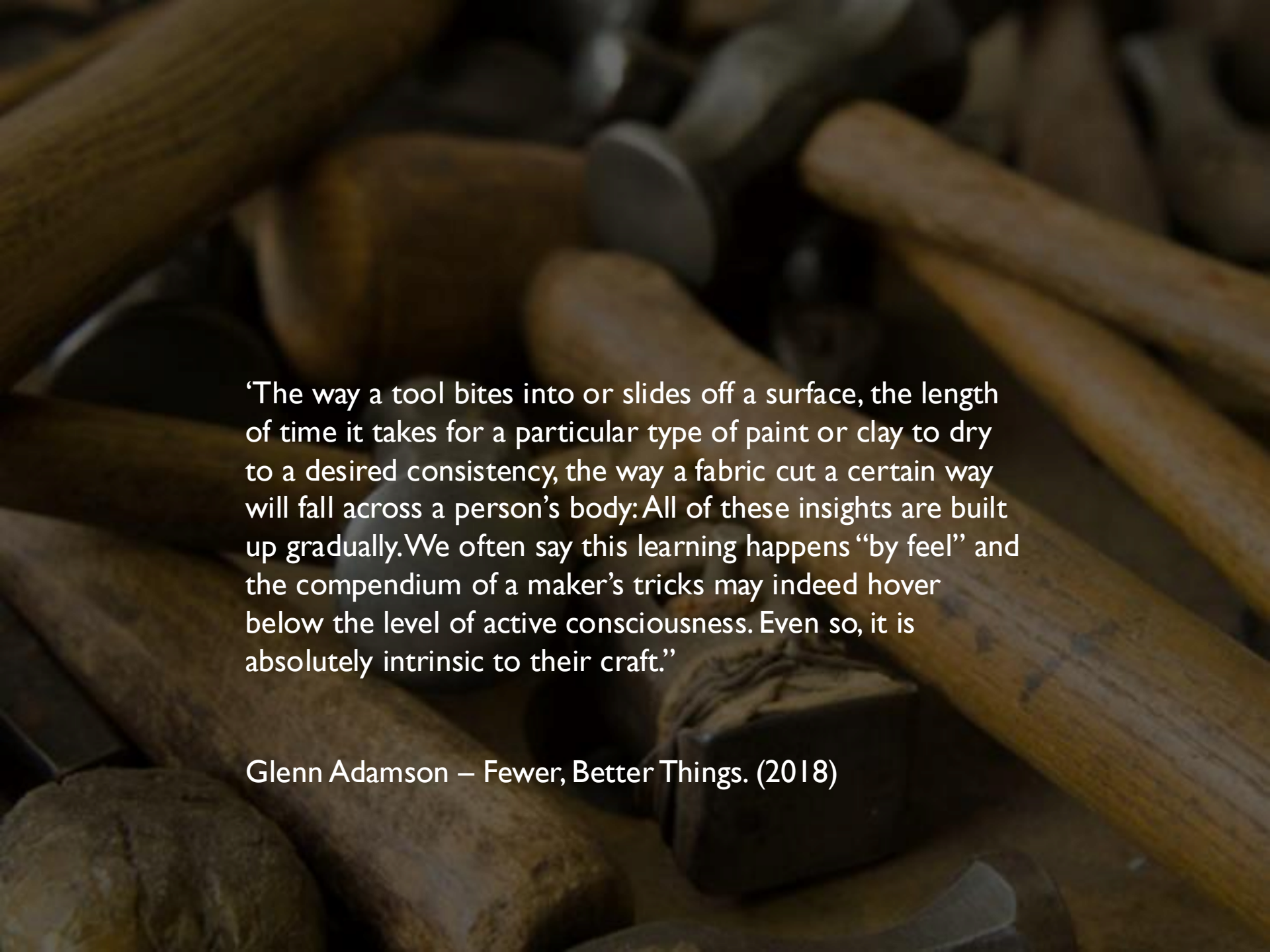
Example:

When a blind man first faces a stick, he attempts to understand it, he learns how to use it, tries to master it. After learning how to use a stick, he no longer pays attention to it. It becomes an extension of his bodily existence. He directs his attention to things the stick touches. He begins to find his way with the help of the stick. The stick becomes transparent for him. It remains there and shapes the blind man's explicit understanding of entities that he experiences in his world through the understanding of the stick. He begins to indwell in it"

TACIT KNOWLEDGE AND CRAFT SKILLS

- Bruce Metcalf (Ceramic reader - pg 245) states:
- ‘Tacit knowledge comes only from practical, hands-on experience and cannot be learned simply by reading or recitation. It takes a lot of practice to learn how to solder with confidence, how to blow a thin glass vessel, or how to cut a perfect dovetail. This knowledge resides in the person, and recent research suggests that it consists of permanently altered neural pathways. In effect, it’s equivalent to the first definition of craft that I offered: skilful labour’.

- He goes on to describe that ‘Skilled Crafts’ people have a loyalty to their material, and paraphrases Adrian Piper who says:
- ‘I propose we think of the craftsperson as being a maker of objects who will not subordinate his or her medium, whatever the medium, to intellectually interesting ideas. I believe that loyalty to medium is a basic characteristic of craft culture’.
- Perhaps the loyalty to material that builds the excellent tacit knowledge that many crafts people have.



‘The way a tool bites into or slides off a surface, the length of time it takes for a particular type of paint or clay to dry to a desired consistency, the way a fabric cut a certain way will fall across a person’s body: All of these insights are built up gradually. We often say this learning happens “by feel” and the compendium of a maker’s tricks may indeed hover below the level of active consciousness. Even so, it is absolutely intrinsic to their craft.’

Glenn Adamson – Fewer, Better Things. (2018)

CAMILLA GROTH (2016)

DESIGN AND CRAFT THINKING ANALYSED AS EMBODIED COGNITION

(...) the feel of the material as it is actually touched gives us both the tactile feel and emotion, and thus also the anticipation of what this material has to offer us. For an experienced ceramist, the density of a bit of clay immediately gives an idea of its possible uses, together with an either positive or negative background feeling simultaneously. If the clay is too hard, it is not good because it cannot be easily handled and needs to be soaked. If the clay is too wet, it is also not good and it needs to be dried until workable. A perfectly smooth and dense bit of clay gives a good forecast for any project, and it is therefore experienced with positive emotions.

CHOICE OF MATERIAL QUALITIES

Material qualities that are:

- linked or relevant to concepts or ideas
- Functional
- Both.....

**BODY AND NARRATIVE: A STUDY ON THE CREATIVITY OF CRAFTSMAN FROM
THE PERSPECTIVE OF EMBODIED COGNITION**

YUE CHENI, DUODUO ZHANGI(*)

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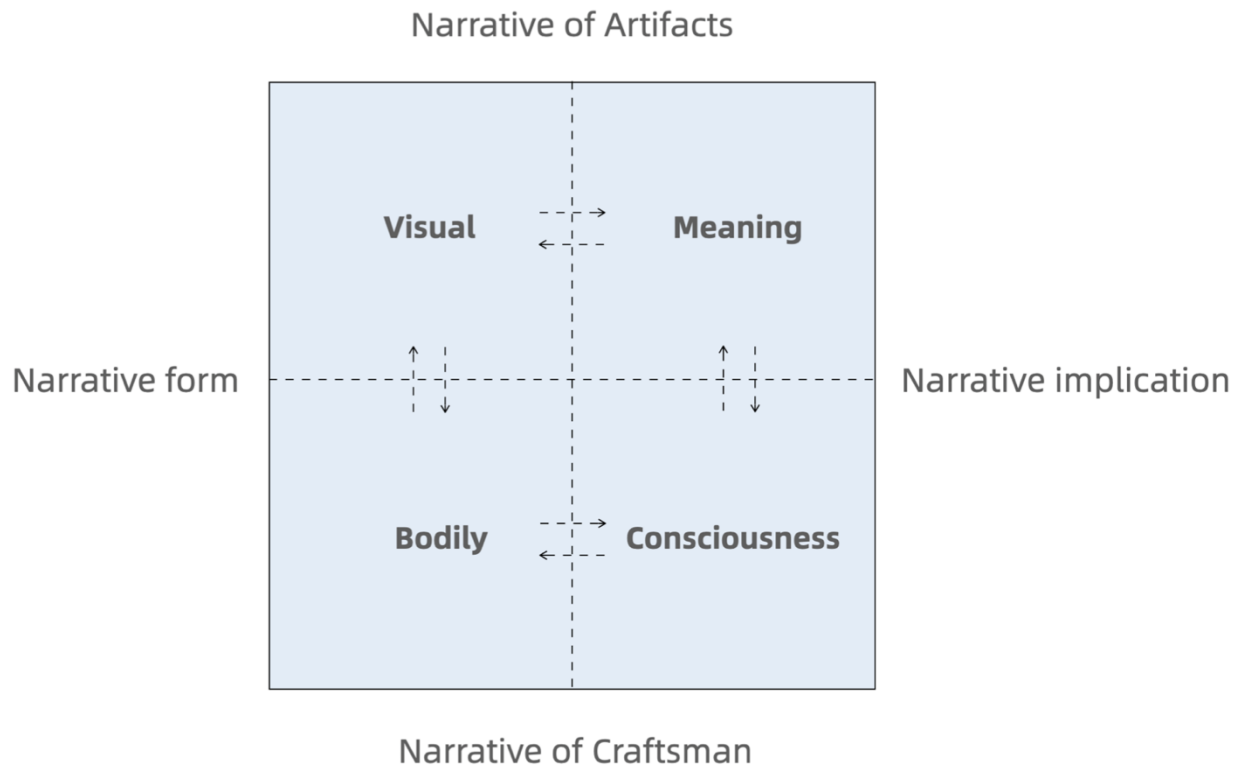


Figure 5. Four elements of craftsmen's narrative ability

LINK BETWEEN INTEROCEPTION
AND TACIT KNOWLEDGE

EMBODIED COGNITION AND
PHENOMENOLOGY.

MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY – PHENOMENOLOGIST
EXPLORES BODILY EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS
AND THE EMBODIES NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE.

SHAUN GALLAGHER – HOW BODILY EXPERIENCES
INCLUDING INTEROCEPTION CONTRIBUTE TO TACIT
KNOWLEDGE.



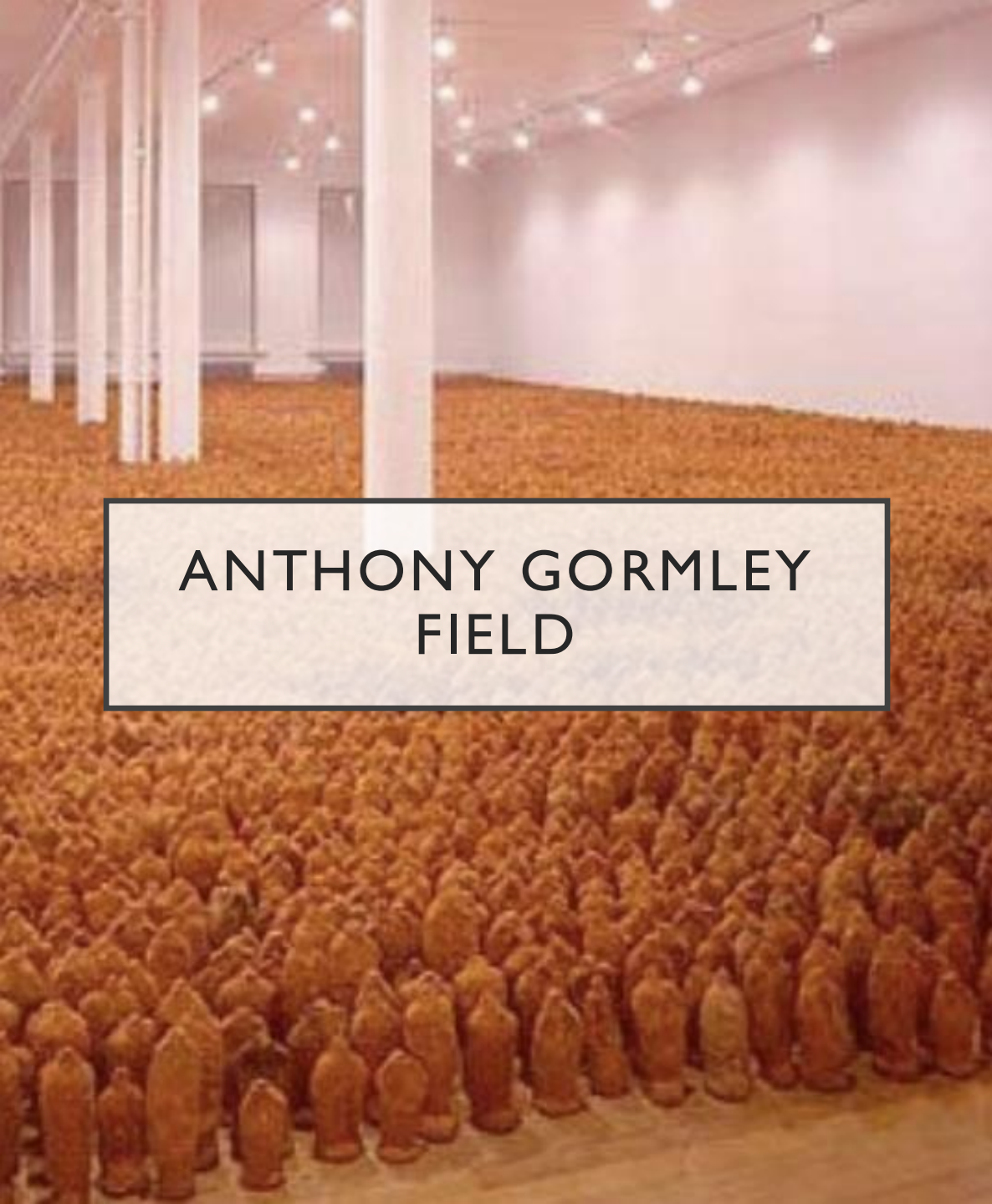
HUMAN / MATERIAL / MATTER / CYCLES

Mexican Ceramist Jorge Llaca' ceramic work allows a more visceral approach to his philosophies of life's cycle. The pure physicality of clay gives him the raw material to express the organic, tangible quality he searches for in his art. He says:

'Our existence is embedded in an endless circle of life and death. We are forced into the conflict, surrounded by metaphors of beginnings and endings. Today, we find the real truth of our existence in recycling and composting: giving to the universe that which has been given to us in life, with the payment of our own death, so life can emerge again" (Ceramic Reader, pg47)

Clay ... from the ground.... Burial.....

Composting mimics the cycle of life and decomposition in nature, it is endlessly circular!

The image shows a large-scale art installation by Anthony Gormley titled 'Field'. It features a vast number of small, reddish-brown ceramic figures, each about the size of a person, standing in a dense, organized grid across a large, open space. The figures are made of a material that looks like fired clay, with a warm, earthy tone. The installation is set in a modern gallery with white walls and a high ceiling, where several long, thin white columns support the structure. The floor is covered with a layer of the same reddish-brown material, creating a continuous field of figures. The lighting is soft and even, highlighting the texture of the clay and the scale of the work.

ANTHONY GORMLEY FIELD

CERAMIC READER:

In conversation with
Anthony Gormley>

‘I want it (clay) to be earth. I am very keen on the colour – the redness of the clay being something to do with the iron in the earth, which is also the iron in our blood, which somehow makes a connection between flesh and planet. That connection is very important. ‘Field’ suggests that the earth holds the memory of our ancestors and also the promise of the unborn. It has a life, a memory and a conscience”
Gormley, Craft Reader
(Pg219)

EL ANATSUI

Recycled craft.

Theory: Barad, post digital craft.

Anatsui engages with the poetic possibilities of his materials. 'Each material has its properties, physical and even spiritual,' he explains. *Behind the Red Moon* explores elemental forces interwoven with human histories of power, oppression, dispersion and survival.



EL ANATSUI BEHIND THE RED MOON





MATERIALS AND COMMUNICATING THEIR QUALITIES

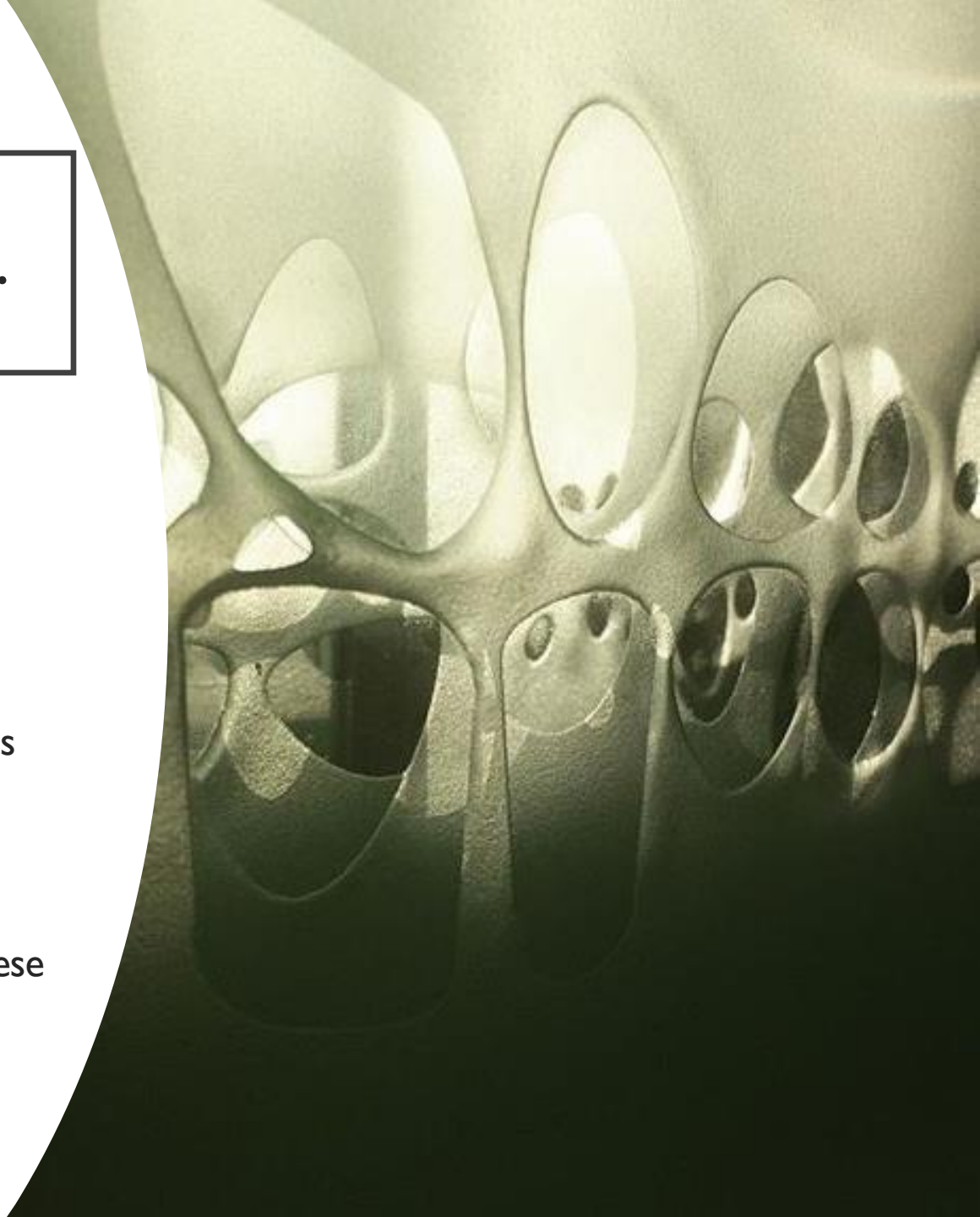
- WORDS (describing)
- THINGS (material)
- EXPERIENCES (senses)

Simon Sullivan discusses 'Affect Theory' as not just seeing or describing but experiencing....

'Affects' are moments of 'intensity' a reaction in / on the body at the level of matter'

WHY GLASS.....

- 'Fragile yet strong' – material of contradictions.
- Transparency, translucency and light.....core qualities
- It often provokes a reaction in people... as quite often people as scared of it....
- Playing with balance and tension with this material emphasizes these things.



IMPORTANCE OF MATERIALITY AS A **MAKER**.....
THE FIRST THINGS THAT COME INTO MY MIND WHEN I
LOOK AT ANY OBJECT... ARTWORK OR MATERIAL THING
ARE:

What is it made of?

What material is it?

How was it made?

JOAHANNA DRUCKER

BOOK ARTIST,
VISUAL THEORIST,
AND CULTURAL
CRITIC.

- 'It is sometimes helpful to ignore how things look and what they are supposed to be about and instead focus on how they were made'

She discusses the 'Blunt Objects' exhibition and the

- 'material contradiction in the works between their appearance of solidity and the fact that in many cases they were highly fragile'

(The Craft Reader pg. 596)





MATERIAL EXPERIMENTATION

- Pushing to the limit to fully understand the material limitations.....e.g. over firing a kiln or sandblasting a piece of glass until it cracks and breaks..... gives valuable and essential material information.
- This often leads to the 'happy accidents' that can lead to innovation and new work.....

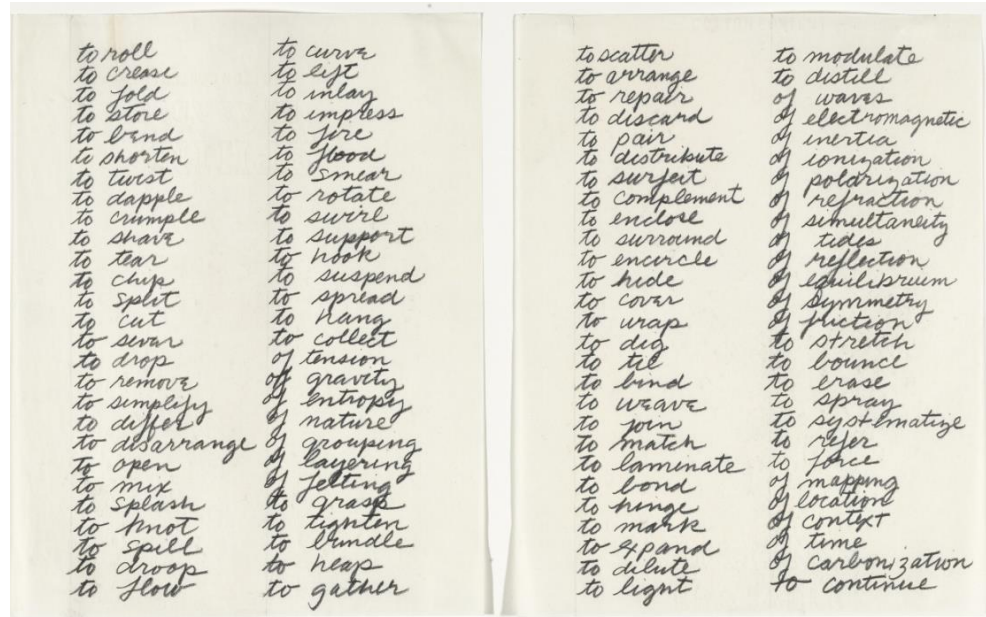
'I push materials to their limits and often treat one material as if it was another. For instance, I sew metal or ½mm skin ply on an industrial sewing machine using a leather needle, harden paper with liquid fiberglass or draw with domestic cleaning products particularly liquid graphite used for cleaning iron stoves'

Eleannor Glover (2016) Craft Research Journal, Vol 7, No 2.
(intellect books)

RICHARD SERRA'S – VERB LIST (1968)

Blast / heat / etch away /
destroy / manipulate / change
states / layer / mix / combine
/ stretch / dilute / sand /
shave / smear / repair / fold /
chip / curve / laminate

Serra famously said,
"Drawing is a verb." In
Verblast, he compiled a series
of what he called "actions to
relate to oneself, material,
place, and process."



MATERIAL STATES GLASS & CERAMICS

- Temperature and Moisture content –
- Earth / Fire / Water

	Powder	liquid	Plastic	Solid
Glass	Glass Frit Enamels Paint	Molten Glass (hot glass) Within kiln		Sheet Glass (variety of specialist glass made in different ways) Casting glass (object-based work) Fired
Ceramics	Clay dust and raw materials Colourants Oxides	Clay slip for decorative techniques or slip casting	Plastic clay for modelling, sculpting and manipulating	Ceramic objects fired to usually 1000c and above

SOLID, LIQUID, GAS STATES OF MATTER.....

- Water – breath on glass – Roni Horne
- Smoke - Anish Kapoor Ascension (Venice Biennale 2011)
- Ice – Nele Azevedo – ‘Melting Men’

RONI HORNE

- Uses her breath on glass as a metaphor for human presence, identity and the transient nature of life.

Roni Horn: When You See Your Reflection in Water,

- Do You Recognize the Water in You?



ANISH KAPOOR
ASCENSION –
VENICE BIENNALE
2011

- Exploring the transience of smoke, the work creates a tangible, rising column of the traditionally immaterial substance. previously exhibited in several gallery spaces, the work takes on new meaning in the spiritual context of Venice's basilica di San Giorgio.



NELE AZEVEDO

- Néle Azevedo's melting ice figures are a poignant take on climate change and humanity



JAMES TURRELL

DISCUSSES THE MATERIALITY OF
LIGHT.....DESCRIBING:

‘ the thingness, the materiality of light
itself’

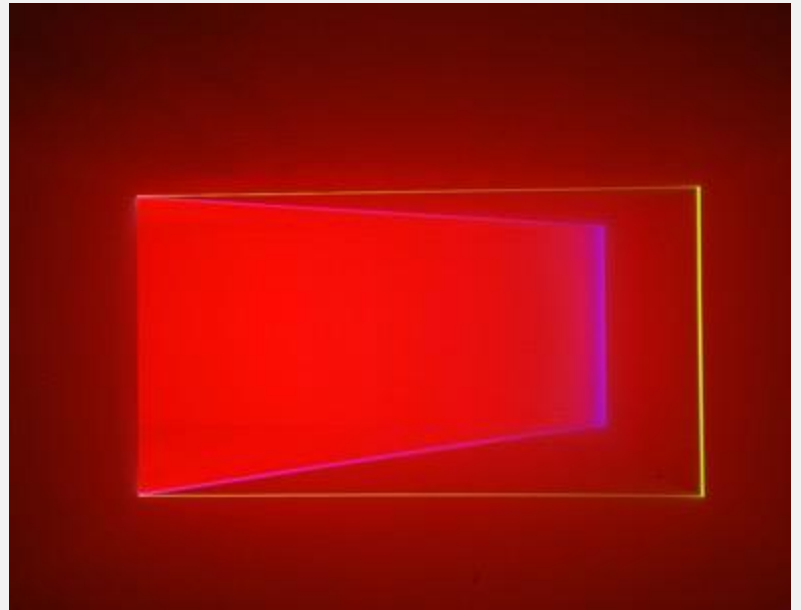
**Scientists might argue the light is not
matter or material.**

Light does not occupy space, have no
mass or volume, and therefore is not
considered matter.

Light has the wavelength ranges from 380
nm-780 nm. Light exists in tiny packets
called photons. Photons have no rest
mass and they do not occupy any volume.
So light is not matter.

Into the Light – A conversation with James Turrell (by Elaine A. King)

‘Turrell’s work induces introspection, prompting observers to look at their own viewing processes. His inquiries invites us to pause and probe our inner selves and encourage us to reconsider our own connection to and comprehension of the outside world’



JAMES TURRELL



LIGHT FOR BEING /
LIFE / ENERGY
KANDINSKY'S (1914)
QUOTE

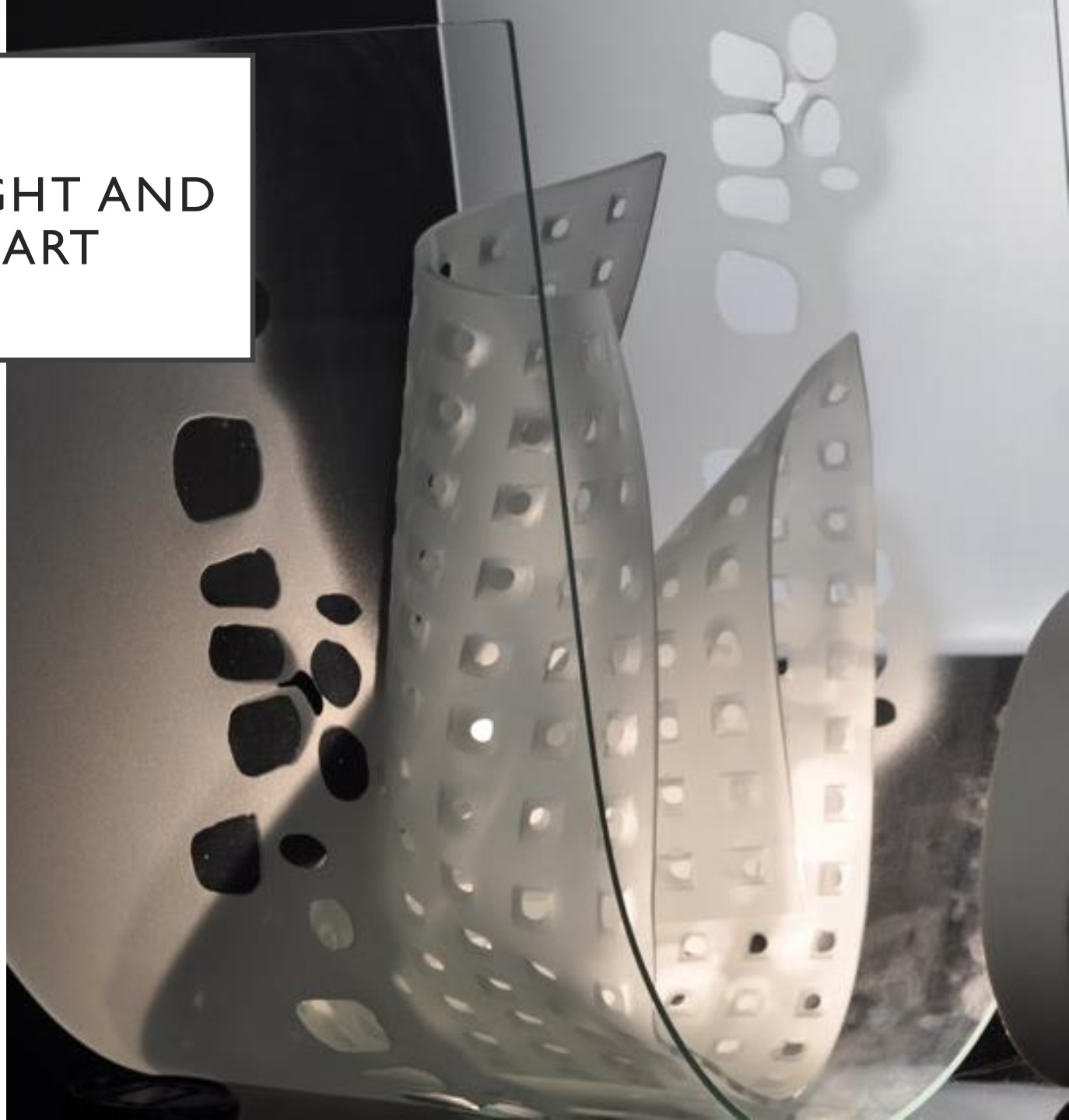
Kandinsky's (1914) description of a child learning about light also helps us to contextualise our psychological connections as he describes 'it drives away the darkness, makes the day longer, is essential to warmth, cooking, play-acting' and we could also add promotes growth. In this sense light is associated with positive and comforting feelings and therefore we connect positive feelings with natural light.

NATURAL LIGHT AND KINETIC ART

'In some ways light is the most effective means of presenting rhythms and patterns of movement visually.....

Barrett, C (1994)
Concepts of Modern Art –
Kinetic Art Chapter.

Role of Photography –
contrasting light / images of
the same work = contrasting
expression visual experience
of glass.



ANICKA YI
(BIOLOGIZING THE MACHINE, 2015)
BIOTIC MATERIALS

Biotic materials: Theory: Bennett

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POSSIBLE QUESTION

How does Anicka Yi's 'Biologizing The Machine' 2015 reshape ideas of agency, in response to shifting technological, ecological, and philosophical paradigms? Consider how approaches such as speculative design, contributing to these developments.

EDMUND DE WAAL

CRAFT, SKILL AND MATERIALS

Theory: Phenomenology (Heidgger, Merleau-Ponty) Craft: Glen Adamson.

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POSSIBLE QUESTION

How does the work of Edmund De Waal reshape ideas around materiality in response to shifting technological and philosophical paradigms? Consider how approaches such as post-digital craft are contributing to these developments.

EL ANATSUI

BEHIND THE RED MOON

- El Anatsui
- Recycled materials / craft, making, repetition, collaborating and joining, global industry
- Theory: Barad, post digital craft.

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POSSIBLE QUESTION

How does the work of El Anatsui reshape ideas of agency, and materiality in response to shifting ecological, and philosophical paradigms? Consider how approaches such as post-digital craft are contributing to these developments.

Key Texts.

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