Textiled Becomings:
Making from Scratch

Hagit Haya Cohen
BA (HONS)
School of Humanities
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Griffith University
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Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Haya Cohen

Date:
Abstract

*Textiled Becomings* is a creative work with an accompanying exegesis. This project explores the ways in which cultural, social and environmental forces are intertwined in the creative process, and examines how the final products reflect specific material processes and embodied performative activities.

My creative work entails the production of living textiles ‘from scratch’: growing cotton from seeds to make yarn, implanting the hand-spun yarn with barley seeds and weaving the seeded yarns together using my body as a loom. No tools are involved in this process. Some of the woven pieces take the shape of the space between the limbs of my body, while others take the shape of the space between my limbs and those of another person, which together form the loom. A selection of woven pieces will be hung in the gallery and irrigated to begin growing and perform their life cycle in the final exhibition. This accompanying exegesis contextualises the project and discusses particular issues pertaining to its development. The exegesis begins by discussing a range of theoretical frameworks and their contribution to the methodology that developed before examining my ability to correlate the material processes, then looking at the embodied experience of making the work, which culminates in the decision-making process involved in presenting the final exhibition.

Throughout the exegesis, I argue for the interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary nature of practice-led research and creative practice. The Introduction establishes the context and importance of weaving and textile work. I outline the way in which the exegesis should be considered in
relation to the creative work, emphasising that the two work together in tandem, and are much greater and more far-reaching than the sum of their parts.

In Chapter 1, I explore five theoretical frameworks: feminism, philosophy, anthropology, cognitive science and art theory. I found it useful to explore each of them individually first, before weaving them together to inform my work. Although I discuss these frameworks separately, there are many areas that overlap and impact, both directly and indirectly, upon each other and on the creative practice. My engagement highlights the history of ideas, as well as language and symbolic systems that link thoughts, feelings and materiality to existing research.

In Chapter 2, I propose that the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature of practice-led research reflects the ways in which I have negotiated and correlated my creative practice in relation to the theoretical frameworks I have assembled. The particular ways in which I have organised my decisions around a ‘from scratch’ approach inevitably lead towards ethical engagements and practical ways of understanding self and other. My methodological approach entails a set of methods, each embedded in the next. I begin with the most general context of practice-led research and move to a more specific concept of production within a creative site where the self, other and materials are researched in a nomadic mode. I argue for the use of nomadic subjectivity as a model for nomadic research. This approach is based on the movement that led to my stripping back the elements of the project to the extent that it became possible to work with ideas, materials and experiences ‘from scratch’.

In Chapter 3, I articulate the specific perceptions, thoughts and actions that constitute my decision-making process, which emerged when making ‘from scratch’. I draw on the insights
afforded by this approach through a process of reflection. I also discuss my connections with the work of various artists to accentuate understandings to be gleaned from their processes. I discuss an important emphasis that has remained a constant throughout my project: the co-dependency of materials, living bodies and lived experience. I show the connections fostered by the idea of the nomadic subject, as well as its direct influence on the ways in which I use materials, and I articulate how my decisions follow my aims of materialising thinking and thinking through materials.

Throughout this exegesis, I argue that social connections reflect forms of materiality. Weaving supplies both a metaphorical model and a literal process for understanding and exploring the reciprocal impacts of culture, history and art. I also insist that there are cyclical interrelations between material thinking and thinking through material; when tracked and articulated, these represent the contribution made by practice-led research because they enable recognition of the role of embodied approaches and multiple intelligences in research practices.
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— Haya Cohen, November 2010
Introduction

Then there are those who plant. They endure storms and all the many vicissitudes of the seasons, and they rarely rest. But, unlike a building, a garden never stops growing. And while it requires the gardener’s constant attention, it also allows life for the gardener to be a great adventure.

Gardeners always recognise each other, because they know that in the history of each plant lies the growth of the whole World.

– Paulo Coelho, Brida (2008)

Among many other things, I am a gardener. I work with seeds as worlds of potential. By introducing my self as a gardener, I am trying to set the tone for all engagements within my practice, my research and my practice-led research. It is a hands-on engagement with the soil and with communities.

My PhD project includes a creative component and an exegesis. For the creative work, I have decided to weave cotton that I grow in my backyard. I spin the cotton fibres on my body and implant the cotton fibres with barley seeds. The weaving is done using my body as a living loom to make pieces that correspond to the spaces in between my body parts, and in some cases the spaces between my body and that of another person.

This exegesis is intended to accompany the creative product rather than to act as an explanation of the artwork. Although this document includes descriptions of the process and the methodological modes by which I operate, it also provides a context for what I am
doing. Because it is not a direct explanation of the creative work, it must be read as a supplement or parallel construction, which works in tandem with the creative work to address *how* I think and *what* I think – my decision-making process. The exegesis and the creative practice work together, and thus are bigger and more far-reaching than the sum of their parts.

Research on creative research suggests that the purpose of the exegesis should be taken as a ‘preface, introduction, forewords, afterwards, etc, etc’ According to Nigel Krauth (2002: 2), ‘Exegetical activity occurs also dislocated from the original work.’¹ The important point made by Krauth is that the exegetic activity ‘provides an opportunity for graduate writers to “speak twice” about the literary nerves of their work, about the creative mechanisms driving it, and about the personal and cultural orientations that inform and frame and guide it’ (2002: 14). That is the tactic I have adopted. I speak twice: once about the social and cultural and personal threads that are woven into the fabric of research, which includes theoretical frameworks and research into methodology, and once about the ‘nerves’ of the project (which, although it is not creative writing, includes the material processes of making work ‘from scratch’). I suggest, therefore, that my exegesis be considered within the frame of an academic higher degree where the writer takes on multiple roles. As Krauth (2002) explains it, at the same time the writer is self-critic, and self-reader – a reader of the pulse of his or her social and cultural milieu. It is within the context of the social milieu and one’s awareness of this context that creative practice makes its contribution. The story of this

¹ Nigel Krauth is Associate Professor and Head of the Writing Program in the School of Humanities, Griffith University, Gold Coast, Queensland, and the convener for the postgraduate program at Griffith University’s Gold Coast Campus. He is also the literary editor of refereed journal *TEXT*. 
negotiation across the boundary identities of self and other, practitioner and writer, gardener and lecturer carves out the sphere of my connections. I am writing this exegesis not only as an arts practitioner – although I am one; not only as a feminist – although I am one; not only as a nomadic subject – although I am one, but as a person: the person who is *becoming* through all these speaking positions. To that extent, all practice-led projects are about methodology – how one does this – and how it is reflected in the quality of the making and the quality of the connections made.

My research question takes the form of a hypothesis, which has driven this project from the beginning. Social connections reflect forms of materiality. For an arts practitioner conducting practice-led research, this hypothesis has several implications for the domains with which I must engage and the methods by which this knowledge can be acquired. When a hypothesis about materiality immediately opens up research questions about textile and fibre art, it also instantaneously brings up the status of these domains as art and craft. When questions of materiality and material processes turn back on the issue of method and research practices, then for an arts practitioner the research always includes bodily forms of knowing through doing and making, as well as material processes that connect the artist to material culture. To that end, I investigate the making of connections through the topological metaphor of textile-making/fabrication, and observe the ways in which it allows fluidity and multifaceted connections to the world. The premise of practice-led research in general is that any material will produce connections, but the results are specific and situated in the particular historically rich mode of making through which my connections are explored: textile–fibre–production–weaving, living art and installation art. The exegesis component of this multidisciplinary research approach includes creative arts processes,
together with a range of theoretical and interpretative approaches in philosophy, anthropology, the social sciences, cognitive science and art theory.

The motivation for this project came from my understanding of the importance of fabricated/material thinking and thinking through materials in the postmodern era, and the way in which this affects interpersonal interactions and concepts of body, space and creativity. This project is informed by my perspective as a woman, as a contemporary arts practitioner, as an immigrant from a troubled land, and as a resident in a world where notions of displacement and unsettled belonging echo through my practice-led research, which in turn is interwoven with my everyday life.

Taking into consideration the importance of each of these aspects of the project, the research questions can be stated as:

- How do form of sociality reflect materiality?

- How does textile provide a material site in which to explore personal social, cultural, historical and conceptual connections that may lead to insights about the relationship of the individual to the collective?

- How does practice-led research provide a range of investigative strategies that integrate different ways of engaging with and producing knowledge and information?

This project undertakes a process that maps these relations of material constructions upon our world. It is not an answer to the world’s problems, but rather a constructive mode of
interaction. I observe and react to the world through the processes of fabric-making. The process that I have chosen to use in Textiled Becomings allows me to slow down, follow and display the processes of embodiment, thought and practice, and transpose the becoming-of-the-self to the surface of these interactions captured in the weavings. The process leads to a point where the work of art stops being a translation of, or comment on, cultural or social values, and becomes a viewfinder. The benefit of considering the work of art as a viewfinder rather than a representation enables the inclusion of what is around and impacts upon the art production, allowing me to bring selected key issues into focus. In his essay ‘Taking Place: Acts of Survival for a Time to Come’, Charles Merewether (2006)\(^2\) identifies why the constantly shifting relation of art to life is so important:

> This is where the structure and form of the work, its language, carry the day.
> Not simply mediating but giving visible shape to the coarse fabric of everyday life. (Merewether 2006: 57)

Conventions of art in postmodern times affirm the fabricating of everyday life by embracing many styles and approaches. An imaginative practice such as art explores the connection noticed as well as the way one observes a specific relationship. It is neither reducible to nor entirely able to be separated from the intricate sense of the body through sociological and cultural lenses.

\(^2\) Dr Charles Merewether is an art historian, writer and curator who has worked in Australia, Europe and the Americas. He has taught at the University of Sydney, Universitat Autònoma in Barcelona, the Ibero-Americana in Mexico City and the University of Southern California, and has lectured at the Beijing Academy of Art, Lingnan University in Hong Kong and the Asia Research Center at the National University of Singapore.
When discussing art and the social relations in which it is embedded, it is necessary to examine the relations between thinking socially and thinking aesthetically. Moreover, art practice such as Textiled Becomings is not entirely focused on aesthetics decisions, and places the accent on the process rather than on judgments based on notions of taste, beauty, formal relationships or the history of art. Contemporary art has allowed multiple strategies of expression, critical discourse and collective production to emerge in ways that are aesthetic, anti-aesthetic and paraesthetic (somewhere in between).

I concur with Griselda Pollock’s view that the two aspects of aesthetic practices:

enact both the singularity of each subject and their relation through language to the common, their multiple identifications and their relativity suspended between the corpo-material and the symbolic [that] have historically contingent social effects and even necessity. (Pollock 2007: 144)

Considerations of the intimate and the collective experience are crucial within a constantly proliferating and amending cultural fabric. I argue that the context of textile works, and in

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3 Although Pierre Bourdieu discusses the sociology of culture and its literature as a point of interest for sociologically minded art historians, I was not able to pursue this line of inquiry in this project. Bourdieu was an anthropologist, sociologist and philosopher who placed an emphasis on anti-globalisation. Key terms in Bourdieu's sociological thought include social field, capital, and habitus. Habitus is adopted through upbringing and education. At the individual level, the concept means ‘a system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment … as well as being the organizing principles of action’ (www.kirjasto.sci.fi/bourd.htm).

4 Griselda Pollock is a philosopher and Professor of Social and Critical Histories of Art, and Director, Centre for Cultural Analysis, Theory and History at the University of Leeds.
particular fibre art within a contemporary art context, has its greatest impact when it draws upon cultural concerns and issues of identity.

Fibre installation was rediscovered during the 2009 Venice Art Biennale (Sider 2010: 46). This was a biennale in which the theme ‘Making Worlds’ was emphasised by the director, Daniel Birenbaum, resulting in a focus on process rather than product. Birenbaum states that a work of art ‘embodies vision of the world … and must be seen as way of making a world’ (in Sider 2010: 50). The works varied from the woven bodies of Ahmad Askalany’s Those Who Pray (2009) to an installation of ropes and stones in Pak Sheung Chuen’s Half Soul Half Body (2009). I argue that the increased use of textile and fibre art as a contemporary art medium all over the world indicates both a shift in the social thinking associated with global changes and the re-use or re-employment of traditional materials and procedures, demonstrating a desire for connecting and re-connecting with history and to possible futures.

My own fascination with women’s textile work is focused on the processes of making and using histories, stories and embodied experience of materials as a critical form of expression. As Ruesga-Bono (1999) makes clear, textile-making can claim back a critical space. Fibre art is becoming an important medium for rethinking subjectivity and identity in an era of

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5 The Venice Art Biennale is a contemporary visual art biennale founded in 1895. It has long been recognised as a pinnacle of achievement for artists. Traditionally, this government-run biennale showcased the traditional genres of painting and sculpture; however, from the 1960s it also included fibre art performance and video arts. Fibre art was excluded from the biennale from the 1970s to 1998, a period when the event was privatised (Sider 2010: 47).

6 Julián Ruesga Bono is an artist working with textiles and digitalised images. His work focuses on the semanticity and social use of textiles and cultural intertextuality (Rowley 1999: viii).
globalisation. Sue Rowley (1999) also advocates the role that textile art can play in reclaiming a critical place. She observes that ‘in a sense, [textile art becomes] both superfluous to the requirements of contemporary art, and redundant because the trajectory of traditional Modernist art practices leaves no space for their inclusion’ (1999: 7). This omission has been redressed in recent times with exhibition themes such as that at the Venice Biennale 2009 mentioned above.

The context that makes fibre work so significant is much greater than the history of contemporary art or even the history of art. Women have been twisting filaments and engaging in fabric and textile production for thousands of years (Barber 1994; Soffer 1996, 2000; Hamby 2005). Professor of Anthropology Olga Soffer (1996) claims that woven clothing was produced 27,000 years ago, and hence ‘we must consider the role that women and children may have played more carefully’ (1996: 1). Soffer asserts that this is because, by catching small prey and allowing surplus to be generated, women and children contributed to the growth of society (Adovasio et al. 1996; BBC 20 February, 2000; BBC 14 June 2000). For this reason, archaeologists believe that women might have enjoyed high status in society at this time. In her book Women’s Work, The First 20,000 Years: Women, Cloth, and Society in Early Times, Elizabeth Barber (1994) emphasises the importance of women’s work, particularly the production of string. Like Soffer, Barber sees these processes of string making not only as an inevitable invention, but also as a ‘momentous step down the road of technology’ (1994: 70). More significantly, Barber builds the argument that string should be

7 Olga Soffer is a Professor of Anthropology and the Head of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
8 Elizabeth J. Wayland Barber is Professor Emerita of Archaeology and Linguistics at Occidental College in Los Angeles and a research associate at the Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, UCLA.
seen as a representation of a continuous process and movement towards others in the literal and historical sense (1994: 21, 22, 29–33). In other words, string and filaments, connected by knotting, weaving and later knitting, were more than objects of utility – they were a way to transmit social messages and values. As physicist Fritjof Capra notes:

The more we study the major problems of our time, the more we come to realize that they cannot be understood in isolation. They are systemic problems, which means that they are interconnected and interdependent. (Capra 1997: 3)

One of the main concerns of our time pertains to a crisis of perception. From the structure of the physical world to problems such as poverty, climate change and the extinction of animal and plant species, the challenges faced by contemporary society are unprecedented in their scope and scale. Thus, if a shift in perception and the values produced by modes of thinking are to be changed, the Cartesian and Newtonian mechanistic paradigm that regards the

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9 Barbara DeMott and Marvin Cohodas (1985) argue that textile designs articulate and transmit social relationships such as status and affiliation, as well as events including rites of passage such as puberty, marriage and death (1985: 104). Furthermore, DeMott and Cohodas compare women’s art to men’s art (in North America). Men’s art is created primarily for use within a ritual context, including painting and sculpture as well as narrative arts such as dance and drama. Women’s arts ‘fulfil utilitarian functions of clothing and container, and are fabricated primarily through the constructive techniques of weaving, embroidery pottery and basketry’ (1985: 99).

10 Fritjof Capra, PhD, physicist and systems theorist, is a founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy in Berkeley, California. The Center advances schooling for sustainability. Capra follows the school of thought founded by the Norwegian Philosopher Arne Naess. He defines ‘deep ecological awareness’ as one that ‘recognises the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that, as individuals and societies, we are all embedded in (and ultimately dependent on) the cyclical process of nature’ (1997: 6).

11 Cartesian (the Latinised name of Descartes) has become the accepted term for the dualistic view of human coined by the philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650). He identified thinking with the mind and related it to the human soul, while the body – secondary to the mind – was seen as the material, working as a machine.
world as a perfect machine with exact mathematical order must give way to a holistic, ecological view that considers processes, practices and the *connections* that emerge from human activity to be of primary importance. Physicist Fritjof Capra (1996) is one of the first scientists to appeal to Eastern philosophy and join a choir of contemporaries in emphasising the need to understand the ways in which relationships of persons to their environment/s are organized, both within the organism’s inner environment and in collaboration with the external environment.\(^{12}\) Weaving is particularly well suited to exploring this connection, by providing access to an experience of the relation between body and environment through the movement and materials intimately connected to the body and the land.

Any system of thinking that identifies primary properties and relationships – which give rise to a whole embedded in other wholes and a whole emergent from the constituent parts – relies upon a particular mode of engaging with the world. This mode is active and enactive – which is to say that it is always in relation to the ongoing and concurrent systems of selection, perception and action that shape the shared environment and social context. This project – the creative products and practice-led research and exegetical writing – takes movement and perception as its central and driving issues. The questions that follow immediately related to ethical action and interdisciplinary understanding of the common world. Although a PhD project cannot deal with the world as much as it may wish to, it is the singular application of the particularities of practice, the method by which relationships

\(^{12}\) Environment is a general term for the surrounding context that includes the social, cultural, economical and natural components that influence the person’s life. Capra’s famous book *The Tao of Physics* (2000) contains the epilogue ‘Physicists do not need mysticism, and mystics do not need physics, but humanity needs both’, as a reminder that the perspectives of science, literature, art and humanities, in and of themselves, are reductive and must be correlated to understand the world and produce an ethical and sustainable future.
are constructed, maintained and displayed for discussion, that renders the world inside the more modest set of connections presented here. The actions are on a human scale, but the implications and stakes are always great. The stakes are no less than self-invention, intersubjectivity and ethical interaction through embodied understanding and material engagement.

The interdependence of social, scientific and cultural processes, together with considerations of the person/object/subject relation to the environment, is the key to participating in a transformation of the everyday. Fabric-making can be seen as a critical practice as well as the model for a system of relationships. Practice-led research comes down to a set of behaviours that operate across these many levels, which include connecting the exploration of materials with material ways of thinking. Paul Carter’s (2004) notion of material thinking is conceived as an engagement with materials that allows artists’ works to become discursive in the ways in which the materials enter into and direct the processes of invention, and the ways in which meaning is constructed in a cultural and social milieu. For an exegesis, it is crucial that materials can be articulated within a discursive frame; however, there is also a need to recognise that art processes also offer experiences that are signifying and irreducible. Hence the capacity of the creative work and the exegesis to sit side by side and talk across different ways of understandings that occur with/in/through each medium is beneficial to an open approach to art.

Textile- and fibre-making has become a research method and a research tool through which I sharpen the surroundings by making the relationship of my body to the environment clear and perceptible to me and to the audience through the materials and the processes I use. I explore the embodied significance of textile art-making as a reflective and reflexive critical
process that sustains the material production of the self and/in relation to the environment. It is the material thinking of women’s art and the relation of art to the production of self and society that drive this investigation. When we consider textile art as a mode of interaction, I propose the topology of textile/fabrication as a crucial link between creativity and an increased, fluid connectivity with the world.

The trajectory of this exegesis will inscribe a series of arcs – from discourse to experience, from embodied experience to collective understanding and from material engagement to understanding of materiality. In the following chapters, this will take the form of discussions that move from the context of the project to the specific outcome, or culmination, of the project. Chapter 1 sets out the context through a range of theoretical frameworks; Chapter 2 outlines the three-tiered methodology that describes how theory and practice comes together as a decision-making process; Chapter 3 unpacks my influences and fabrication processes; and the conclusion, Chapter 4, highlights the insights that can be drawn from the project and details some of the decision around the final exhibition. While none of these areas of activity is more important than the others and they cannot be divided into linear sequences, I have structured the exegesis to tell the story of the components and links that informed the development of the project as it headed towards the final exhibition. Lastly, the discussions have been given a defined structure because it has proven to be the best way to deal with the numerous movements (to-ing and fro-ing) across thematic connections that have shaped and ultimately emerged from my practice-led research.
Chapter 1

Theoretical Frameworks

The main frameworks that inform this project are anthropology, feminism, philosophy, art theory and cognitive science. These frameworks have been selected for two reasons. The first reason is to indicate the range of information and expertise required to address contemporary issues such as the way social connections reflect forms of materiality, the importance of material thinking and how this affects interpersonal interactions and concepts of body, space and creativity (the research objectives stated in the Introduction). The second is to signal that practice-led research and creative projects operate at the intersection of the personal level of influence, making selections that drive the production of creative work and the history of ideas, which influence the connections an individual might make. Taking these two factors into account, the theorists and concepts selected within these frameworks are offered not as a comprehensive summary of the ideas each framework names, but to highlight the theories and discourses I have selected, which inform my work. As a result, the naming of each area or inquiry locates a set of ideas and issues. The particular selection is made at the personal level of influence and relevance to my process and project, to allow me to discuss the issues that would help situate a reader specifically in relation to my project and way of working. It is in this spirit that the exegesis proposes to offer insight into my creative process, whether that is reflected in the engagement with theory or by the particular artists who represent a constellation of qualities that pertain most directly to my work and working process.
It is important to explore these frameworks individually first, before weaving them together to explore my work. It also is important to signal the ways in which theory is approached by a creative arts practitioner. This approach involves engaging with the history of ideas, language and symbolic systems from an embodied perspective – that is, through the relationship of thought to feeling to what ideas allow a person to do. The frameworks I have gathered will reflect on body–environment connections and highlight the non-essentialist and non-anthropocentric tone, perceiving the world as a dynamic web of connections between human and non-human, where the body is a point of reference rather than a centralised and separated entity from the environment.

In order to understand the web-like connections between the subject and the world, an interdisciplinary frame is necessary. A creative approach to research recognises first and foremost that observing the world is interacting with the world, and the analysis changes the relationship made available for further action. It is always on this basis of collaboration and reciprocity that a practitioner’s point of view is characterised. The benefit of this approach is that it places attention on the ways in which meaning is made. Interdisciplinarity highlights the cross-fertilisation necessary to address the dynamic relationship of producer, materials, environment and the history of ideas.

There are many different interpretations of the interdisciplinary research practice, depending on which discipline acts as the starting point. For my project, the notion of interdisciplinary is taken as the integration of concepts, philosophies and methodologies from various fields of
knowledge. The concepts and trajectories within philosophy in general, and feminist philosophy in particular, have had the most influence on my work. The significance comes from feminism’s emphasis on the inclusion of the human body as a dynamic component in a web-like system of relationships between human and non-human. In this exegesis, I explore research from anthropology, cognitive science and art theory to examine the shift from Modernist values of aesthetics to contemporary postmodernist values, which illuminate the connections between art processes and our everyday interactions. Within art, the main trajectories that are relevant to my practice-led research include installation art, bioart, living art, performance/video and textile art, through which the questions of art and craft are played out.

The following discussion outlines the key domains of knowledge that frame my project. Within those domains, I identify the issues that have driven my inquiry.

**Philosophy and Feminism**

Employing an approach consistent with those described by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, I am interested in making ‘use of everything that came within range, what was

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13 See Derry and Schunn (2005), who accentuate the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration as a dialogue for the production of new knowledge, new solutions and even new disciplines that ‘would not be possible without such dialogue’ (2005:xiii)

14 Gilles Deleuze is a French philosopher who came from a long line of European philosophers concerned with various means of destabilising essentialism (Spinoza, Nietzsche). In *Difference and Repetition* (1995), Deleuze works with the nature of thought, identity and time, and the book poses a significant disruption to the canonical traditions of philosophy – an attitude for which he would become known in his body of work in general. Deleuze wrote many books dedicated to the work of other practitioners, and his work is full of unexpected...
closest as well as farthest away’ (Gilles and Guattari, 1987: 3), I will gather here the main ideas that have informed my project from within philosophical discourse.

From this extensive area of inquiry, I have selected specific trajectories that enable me to focus on the ways in which subjectivity is constructed and materialised. The feminist critique of the biases of philosophical investigation becomes the framework for the way in which I look at how textile work perpetually ‘writes’ women into cultural and social environments through their embodied experiences and the practices generated by these experiences. The flexibility of becoming articulated by feminist philosophers is a significant factor in my creative work, and relates directly to feminist exposure of anthropocentric tendencies. Philosophy provides the concepts that enable a practitioner to sharpen the relationships between materiality, ethics and communities of users.

My creative project, Textiled Becoming, is the ‘here’ for me. It is where I am when making use of everything of which I am aware. Becoming is not solely an intellectual project, but rather requires a wider perspective: the relation between thinking and doing, theory and practice. The movement between all the things that have formed me, and the ways in which I consciously choose to form things and the relationships between things, constitute a creative references, often citing obscure authors. These texts do not constitute a philosophy of the arts, but represent philosophical encounters with specific artistic productions, consistent with Deleuze's approach in all his work of dedication to the creation of new philosophical concepts.

site. The forming of a creative site is part of the methodology (to be discussed in the next chapter) that is inseparable from the various practices that stimulate and support each other within the wider context of qualitative investigation.

Becoming is a fundamental component in my project. The philosophical investigations that have articulated the ways in which becoming, subjectivity and materiality are entwined have assisted me in understanding the relationship between theory and practice, writing and textiles. Becoming can be described as ‘the movement by which the line frees itself from the point, and renders points indiscernible: the rhizome, the opposite of arborescence; breaks away from arborescence’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 324). Therefore, becoming is always the in-between and interconnects shared deterritorialisations.  

Deleuze and Guattari explain:

A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the border or line of flight or descent running perpendicular to both. If becoming is a block (a line-block), it is because it constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernability, a no-man’s land, a nonlocalizable relation sweeping up the two distant of contiguous points, carrying one into the proximity of the other – and the border-proximity is indifferent to both contiguity and to distance. (1987: 323–24)

Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate how becoming leads to lines of flight, where there is no central subjectivity sending roots to one territory or one discipline. Instead,

16 Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that forms relate to codes and processes of coding, which in turn allows for decoding, or deterritorialisation.
deterritorialisation is where there can be multiple subjectivities. These subjectivities are interconnected – becoming woman, becoming a minority, becoming animal, becoming molecular, becoming nomad. Deterritorialisation implies constant movement from one territory to another, always in a process temporary settling and moving away to another and reterritorialising, connecting and reconnecting in a non-centralised way. Thus subjectivity is always in the process of becoming, perceiving of life as a network of singularities (Colebrook 2002: 58). My project is driven by the constant process of becoming, both following processes evolving multiple subjectivities – such as becoming art practitioner or becoming nomad – and the way in which they all are linked to processes of materialising.

I use the plural form of becoming in the title of my project *Textiled Becomings* to indicate the plural paths through which embodied subjectivity is constructed. Following Deleuze’s (1983) argument, sensation is always working through the bodies of both the maker and the viewer. The artwork becomes a performing project, in which ‘the nervous system, vital interior movement’, ‘instinct’ and ‘temperament’ of the subject (1983: 104) are indivisible from the object, where ‘the fact, the place, the event’ (1983: 104) all come together as sensation. Deleuze maintains that, through sensation, a person becomes ‘the other’. The two are always in concert through the body that gives and receives (1983: 104).

What is important to notice in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983) concept of becoming is that there is no fixed subject and that desire is one machine and the object of desire is another machine.¹⁷ This concept is important to my discussion because it is through this concept that

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¹⁷ The machine Deleuze and Guattari (1983) discuss is an assemblage of connections – connections between genetic material or ideas or social connections. Rather than a pre-existing and given connections, the machine
Deleuze and Guattari open the fixity of the machine to the way it relates to the nomadic subject. They explain that there is a gap between the act of producing and the product. It is the same gap that exists between an object when it is used, as opposed to the object’s meaningless state when it is not in use. This gap allows the nomad to have a residue (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983: 26). The ‘machinic’ refers to the directness of the raw assemblage of connections that are ready to be interconnected.

Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of difference prove invaluable to the feminist project and equally, their concepts of process prove invaluable to a creative practitioner. The common denominator for feminist thinkers is an unwavering focus on the relationships between women’s bodies, their embodied world experiences and subjectivity. The main thinkers include Griselda Pollock (1996), Janis Jefferies (1995)\(^{18}\) and Pennina Barnett (1995);\(^{19}\) and here I have focused in particularly on the works of Elizabeth Grosz (1994, 2004, 2006)\(^{20}\) and Rosi Braidotti (1994, 2002, 2006),\(^{21}\) who developed Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts – involves a constant process of connecting and disconnecting and connecting again. ‘There is no finality, end or order that would govern the assemblage as a whole; the law of any assemblage is created from its connections.’ (Colebrook 2002: xx) For example, a body of society is comprised of the assemblage of bodies and the connections between them.

\(^{18}\) Janis Jefferies is an artist, writer and curator, Professor of Visual Arts in the Department of Computing, Director of the Constance Howard Resource and Research Centre in Textiles and Artistic Director of Goldsmiths Digital Studios, Goldsmiths University of London.

\(^{19}\) Pennina Barnett is Senior Lecturer (Critical Studies) in the Department of Art, Goldsmiths, University of London, where she teaches in the Textiles and Art Practice programs. Her research focuses on cloth and metaphor; culture, identity and difference; and art and psychoanalysis.

\(^{20}\) Elizabeth Grosz is Professor of Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers University. She also teaches gender studies and architecture at the University of Bergen, Norway, and The University of Sydney, Australia.

\(^{21}\) Rosi Braidotti is Distinguished Professor in the Humanities and Director of the Centre for the Humanities, University of Utrecht. Her work has significantly contributed to fields of feminist philosophy, epistemology, poststructuralism and psychoanalysis.
Braidotti towards nomadic subjectivity and Grosz towards the connections of nature and art. Both Grosz and Braidotti theorise difference in relation to art, ethics and the culture of consumerism, and both emphasise the notion of becoming. Jefferies articulates the connections between material processes such as textile and digital technologies in order to develop an understanding of the ways in which contemporary textiles can be seen as text that enables women to inscribe bodily experience and knowledge within the social. I discuss these thinkers in more detail below, with the exception of Braidotti whose development of ‘nomadology’ will be discussed at length in the next chapter on methodology.

Griselda Pollock supports the notion of the importance of writing the body into the social, and argues that because the body is also a place where sexual difference is written, it is a site of feminist resistance. She observes that ‘the body is precisely a point of transaction between the social and the subject, between what is classically presented as an intimate or private inside and a public or social outside’ (Pollock 1996: 6).

While Grosz emphasises the necessity of rethinking the traditional dualistic perception of the human being, she draws attention to the importance of the body in culture and politics, where fluidity is needed. A theme throughout Grosz’s work is how subjectivity is constructed, and she examines this theme again and again, through notions of the dichotomised body and mind, body and soul. She argues that split results from hierarchal relations where one concept is privileged and the other is subordinate, and argues against the notion that, in the computer era, the body is regarded as an outmoded counterpart. If subjectivity would have been conceived as cohesion of body and mind, Grosz suggests, then perhaps other ways of understanding corporeality, sexuality and the idea of differences between the sexes may be opened up. In order to undertake the constant re-examination that other understandings
require, it is important to divert from considering subjectivity in terms that portray women as a collective, which have been used by traditional philosophical and feminist understanding in the past (Grosz 1994: vii). The shift from an essentialist classification of women is also asserted by Rosi Braidotti, who argues for an understanding of women based on openness to other systems of thought, such as cross-cultural connections or non-anthropocentric views. The resistance to essentialism affords what Braidotti (2006) calls ‘transposition’, which results from dynamic movement across multiple axes of interaction.²²

Grosz (1994) focuses on the body as meaning, and problematises the relations between inside and outside through the metaphor of the Möbius strip,²³ on which the body is dynamically writing and which it is being written upon somewhere in between these two alternatives.

The Möbius strip has also been used as a metaphor to help Grosz explain Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s (2002) phenomenological understanding of the body as flesh. Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the flesh supports his idea that the body is neither material substance (biological) nor a container in which the mind is stored and hence separated from the world. Rather, the flesh is the intertwining of the material body and the world (experience) in mutual relation. Flesh denotes a body that is integrated with the mind, and enmeshed within experience. If we

²² The term ‘transpositions’ has double source of inspiration: from music and from genetics. It indicates an intertextual, cross-boundary or transversal transfer, in the sense of a leap from one code, field or axis into another, not merely in the quantitative mode of plural multiplications, but rather in the qualitative sense of complex multiplicities. It is not just a matter of weaving together different strands, variations on a theme (textual or musical), but rather of playing the positivity of difference as a specific theme of its own (Braidotti 2006: 5).

²³ The Möbius strip is a continuous surface of interconnected sides. Rather than a loop, which has an inside surface and an outside surface, in the Möbius strip, through a kind of twisting or inversion, one side becomes the other. Inside and outside are no longer separate but intertwined, interconnected and continuous (Grosz 1994).
consider flesh as operating in a similar fashion to the metaphor of the Möbius strip, we once again find the realm of the in between, where beings (bodies) constitute themselves not as objects, but as meaning through embodied existence. Embodiment captures a sense of the body’s immersion in places, spaces and environments in which it encounters the world. Likewise, embodiment disrupts the notion that the inside (psyche) and outside (corporeal) are separate but rather flow one into the other, with the surface or border becoming a place of interaction and transformation (Grosz 1994).

For Grosz (2004), transformation cannot occur until we ask what has been forgotten and where we have come from. She answers the rhetorical question, commenting on the impact upon lived experience by an excessive fascination with technological developments and a constant chase after the ‘new’. She identifies what we have forgotten: ‘the nature, the ontology, of the body, the conditions under which bodies are enculturated, psychologised, given identity, historical location, and agency’ (2004: 2). Materiality is what is left behind as we move into new the era of technologies. It would be too easy to interpret Grosz’s comments as a lament about technology. Rather, her insight suggests that different qualities of experience provided by specific technologies are forgotten as the new replaces the old. A non-anthropocentric approach does not curtail experience to one single mode of expression or production, but opens experience to the various benefits derived from material processes.

The newest technologies that must be considered include the fast-developing biomedical processes that not only posit ways of controlling and transforming life, but also might consider the body as a bio-commodity. From IVF to cloning, from transgenesis to ectogenesis, from pharmaco-gnosis to genetic therapy, all such technologies mark a pivotal turning point in the evolution of capitalisation of bio-informatics matter to become a bio-
political power (Parisi 2009). The implications of this are raised by Katherine Hayles (1999),\textsuperscript{24} who asks whether bodies are already being thought about as objectified fragments in order to more easily become bio-commodities. For Hayles, this is a question of the post-human in which the body dematerialises as the reliance on computerisation today is increased. The body is not only dematerialised through the extensive use of technology, but at the same time is also extensively objectified. For example, the organs, tissues and cells can be manipulated, exchanged, bought, sold, cloned and transformed.

Luciana Parisi (2009)\textsuperscript{25} has observed the shift from cyber-information cultural boom to the bio-commerce rush over recent decades. Over the last few years, the development of bio-information has become a major contributor to the altered subjectivities perspective that has become so critical within feminist debates. Parisi argues that with the incorporation of bio-power\textsuperscript{26} also comes the engendering of new ontology and the styles that express over-arching

\textsuperscript{24} Katherine N. Hayles (ASC Senior Fellow) is an authority on digital media and literary theory that encompasses new technologies. She is Hillis Professor of Literature and Distinguished Professor in the Departments of English and Design/Media Arts at the University of California, Los Angeles. Hayles’ books \textit{How We Became Posthuman} (1999) and \textit{My Mother was a Computer} (2005) have been hailed as cornerstones of this emerging field of literary studies.

\textsuperscript{25} Luciana Parisi convenes the MA in Interactive Media at the Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths University of London. Her research looks at the asymmetric relationship between science and philosophy, aesthetics and culture, technology and politics to investigate potential conditions for ontological and epistemological change.

\textsuperscript{26} When interviewed by editorial collective of \textit{Quel Corps?} (1975) Foucault explained the relations of bodies to power: ‘Starting in the 1960s, it began to be realised that such a cumbersome form of power was no longer as indispensable as had been thought and that industrial societies could content themselves with a much looser form of power over the body. Then it was discovered that control of sexuality could be attenuated and given new forms. One needs to study what kind of body the current society needs … The fact that power is so deeply rooted and the difficulty of eluding its embrace are effects of all these connections. That is why the notion of repression which mechanisms of power are generally reduced to strikes me as very inadequate and possibly
question of ‘what counts as worth living’. With new technologies, the ethical rights for life interlaced with issues of subjectivity, racism, profit and labour, gender and aesthetics come to the fore. Instead of the ethico-aesthetic paradigms suggested by Guattari, Parisi suggests the subject’s constant self-transformation is one mode of survival.

At stake in new technology is the barrier to fluid subjectivity and the ability to move in between the constantly changing relationships of the environment. This focus on fluid subjectivity is discussed in length by Braidotti (1994, 2002, 2005, 2006), who expands on Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) notion of the nomadic subjectivity (1987: 315–423). Nomadism is a strategy for resistance, which ‘refers to the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour’ (Braidotti 1994: 5). Embodiment of the subject is to be understood as intertwined between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological. I find Braidotti’s development of nomadic subjectivity particularly useful in articulating the type of methodology most conducive to practice-led research, and will discuss nomadism at length in Chapter 2.

Grosz (2004) also moves the discussion from specific concerns with technology to the importance of interconnectivity. She suggests that there is a need to remember the delicate balance between the biological and the cultural. She explains:

dangerous. What's effectively needed is a ramified, penetrative perception of the present, one that makes it possible to locate lines of weakness, strong points, positions where the instances of power have secured and implanted themselves by a system of organisation dating back over 150 years. In other words, a topological and geological survey of the battlefield – that is the intellectual's role.’
It is precisely because we are interested in the social, the cultural, the historical, and the political forces shaping subjectivity or identity that we need to turn again, with careful discernment, to those discourses, once rejected by feminists and political activists, that place the body in the larger cosmological and biological orders in which it always find itself. (2004: 3)

Grosz and Braidotti come to similar conclusions, but from different points of view with regard to a non-anthropocentric approach that map the body back on to cultural materialism and evolutionary histories. Both call for changes in the existing forms of bio-power that involve exploitation of women and nature. For both For Grosz and Braidotti, this move towards the non-anthropocentric indicates the ethical importance of joining the human–non-human collective. However, difference emerges when the finer detail of their agreement is examined. Braidotti (1994) emphasises the ethical relations of intersubjectivity in capitalist society while Grosz (2004) emphasises aspects of time and temporality, and the relationship between nature and culture, explaining that the space between biology and culture requires a philosophical exploration that includes political theory and collaborates with science.

Grosz (2004) identifies biology as a system of physical, chemical, organic differences. Her solution of including the body as a part of a system of environment explores the ways in which politics, culture, social and conceptual evolutions are working as a web that works against the historical view of Darwinian evolution as a straight line of progress.

Braidotti (1994) sees the problem of a traditional view of evolution as embedded in the dualistic view that promotes intelligence as a life force-producing movement. In place of the traditional view, she proposes a rhizomatic set of relationships and movements that suggests the subject is one force among many, in contrast to the view that the force of the subject controls the other forces. Thus she implies that a neo-materialist\textsuperscript{28} appreciation of the body would mean ‘to think through the kind of techno-teratological universe we are inhibiting’ (Braidotti, 2006: 5). She takes account of the post-human within the political economy of global capitalism, and clarifies it as the embodied subject, hybridisation of cyborg, monsters, insects and machines (Braidotti, 2006: 1).

Other feminist thinkers view the issue of technology through the filter of globalism. In the context of globalisation and the impact on environmental systems, Sarah Franklin (Franklin et al. 2000)\textsuperscript{29} offers a feminist investigation of the multiple ways in which the global produces de-naturalised and re-naturalised identities, subjects, properties and worlds in terms of traffic-in-nature, where ideas connected to nature are moved across domains such as contemporary biological, subjective and imaging technologies. Franklin emphasises the connections between:

\textsuperscript{28} Braidotti (2006) reminds us that genderisation, recialisation and naturalisation are ‘in the grand philosophical tradition, the three structural axes of Otherness’ (2006: 57) that need to be interconnected in order to produce a valid cartography of contemporary power relations. To free ourselves from the promises of perfectibility that neo-liberal technologies are selling us, neo-materialist vitalism is the most effective way to address ‘these contradictions and work towards a materialist culture of critical affirmation’ (2006: 58).

\textsuperscript{29} Sarah Franklin is a reader in anthropology and women’s studies in the Department of Sociology, Lancaster University; Celia Lury is a reader in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths College, University of London; and Jackie Stacy is a reader in sociology and women’s studies in the Department of Sociology, Lancaster University.
The ways in which the natural is deployed in the production of both everyday and specialised knowledges and practices – in the production of transgenetic breeds and global brands, in self-conscious practices of health and well-being, in emergent fashion styles and film genres, as well as in the formation of global commodity markets and transnational flows of people, ideas and capital. (Franklin et al. 2000: 5)

Franklin and colleagues argue that a feminist approach must be taken into account, and that nature, culture and gender are still under-considered in relation to the over-arching backdrop of the global. Since globalisation also suggests an increase in uniformity and assimilation resulting from the constant movement of people, Franklin and colleagues propose the notion of traffic in nature. In other words, they see the points of intersection, where criss-crossing between nature-culture, nature-history and nature-technology emerge as fundamental to the understanding of the globalisation processes. The action to be taken, they argue, is to explore what gender does rather than what it is: dynamics versus static identities. The commercialisation of new life forms that become property and push the lines that define nature is becoming increasingly important.

My project entails a close consideration of materials and the materiality involved in the negotiation of subjectivity. For example, working with seeds and cotton, I purposely avoided the use of techniques of manipulating cell lines that frequently are used in bioart. Rather, my work as a negotiator never ‘closes the deal’, but instead finds ways in which I can move through ruptures between frameworks, practice and the world. The idea of the artist as a
negotiator, as identified by Homi Bhabha, is the passage from the ‘aura of rapture’ to the \textit{agora} – the marketplace or the environment (1994: 10). Bhabha sees the power of art as the mediation between the sublime, silence and the noise of everyday. Art reveals the ‘in-betweenness’. Speaking between is at the same time an interruption and an interpretation. Reading between the lines and the spaces of inter-subjectivity allows the web of communication and community to emerge. Bhabha (1994) describes the moment of rapture:

> When stealth and singularity, the moment of rapture transforms the long labour of devotion, sacred or amorous, into the sudden surrender of human agency. If rapture is transcendent, it is also subliminal. Just below the threshold of consciousness, under the skin, rapture’s passage turns the body translucent, and the mind is blinded by the rush of light. (1994:8)

An exchange between hybrid bodies and their milieu occurs in a conversation that never stops, producing constant changes in the intensities of experience. There is never a moment of stillness or equilibrium: the negotiation is between layers of material, image, imagined, skin and flesh. Negotiation, Bhabha adds, is the ability to articulate difference in space and time while making meaning by linking language to images in new symbolic orders. This theoretical framing is obviously a methodological proposition consistent with both nomadism and interdisciplinarity.

\footnotesize{30 Homi K. Bhabha is Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities, Department of English, Harvard University, Director of the Humanities Center at Harvard University and Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Humanities at University College, London.}
Feminist thinkers consider language – the symbolic system of shared meaning – and the act of writing to be a material process of embodiment. Because of the developments of technology and availability of information in recent years, access to traditional practices has become much greater for a wider audience. Cross-cultural practitioners combine traditions, languages and gender inscriptions to proliferate in-between practices. It is in this context that Grosz (2004) explains how the body is written upon by culture, and how the body is open to participation in inscriptions – for example, as a way of engaging with the environment. This way of thinking about writing as a powerful tool of production and interaction is the linchpin between theoretical and material practices. Grosz argues that all theorists interested in relations between subjectivity politics and culture need to change the bio-power. She explains:

> We need to understand not only how culture inscribes bodies’ preoccupation of much social and cultural theory in the past decade or more – but more urgently what these bodies are such that inscription [cultural/social] is possible, what it is in the nature of bodies, in biological evolution, that opens them up to cultural transcription, social immersion, and production, that is to political, cultural, and conceptual evolution. (Grosz 2004: 2)
Hélène Cixous, a strong advocate of the power of writing, emphasises the need for women to perpetually weave into the history of the world and write their bodies. Writing means freedom, which is a means to escape sexual hierarchy:

Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing …Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement. (Cixous 1975, in Robinson 2001: 627)

Cixous explains that the writing is in her body, at her throat or as her second blood, where text is related to as a whole that interweaves the story with experience. I understand my creative practice as a form of writing, and at the same time think of writing as a form of materialising embodied experiences.

The flow of writing as movement leads to understanding, witnessing and reflecting on the creative process, in which writing is one of the integral elements. It is here, Jefferies (1995) argues, that the threads of ‘language, femininity, and that of gendered subjectivity [are] concealed with text’ (1995: 169), and must be picked up. Within the context of feminist discourses on the body, writing and process, it is more evident that an argument can be made regarding a gap that exists between textile as a product and textile as a way of writing the body.

31 Hélène Cixous is a Professor at the European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. She is known for her experimental writing style, which crosses the traditional limits of academic discourse into poetic language. Her practice crosses many discourses, and she is admired for her role as an influential theorist, as well as a novelist and playwright. Hélène Cixous is also noted for her role in initiating and developing new models of education. In the United States she is primarily recognized for developing ‘écriture feminine’, a method of dealing with subjective difference in writing and social theory, and overcoming the limits of Western logocentrism. (www.egs.edu/faculty/helene-cixous/biography).
into cultural discourses. This may be a function of the shift of many traditionally craft-based practices into art and performance context, which is also an effort to bring cultural tradition and embodied experience together. Through the process of making fibre/textile ‘from scratch’, there is the potential for writing the body/bodies\textsuperscript{32} in the gap between the spoken and written language and other voices that materialise through embodied experience.

Jefferies (1999) addresses this gap by asking how a female subject can inscribe herself in an avant-garde textile practice. Applying a semiotic perspective, she cites Derrida’s view that a word may be inadequate but necessary because, in a way, the word and what it may come to signify is ‘not quite’ there. Therefore, her understanding of the word ‘textile’ is continuously breaking apart, as the word ‘text’ falls in and out of the identity of textile. The text is both not yet complete and ingrained within the textile (1999: 168). Textile production in general, and fibre-making in particular, place a woman as the speaking subject, whereby her thinking, sensing and producing body mix in conversation. Putting ‘woman’ into discourse unpicks the traditional connotations of femininity and, by analogy, textiles. That is to say, contemporary textile art, as Jefferies clarifies, moves in between practices rather than belonging to a defined one, so is in a constant slippage of identity, where language too takes a hybrid form.

Within the hybrid forms of contemporary textiles, there are layers of communication with eclectic cultures and an exchange of both traditional and new knowledge. It is important to use the opportunity of fluid connections toward critical – which is to say ethical – ends. Jefferies (1999) notes that ‘to encode critically is to force a dislocation with old forms in order to make

\textsuperscript{32} I consider the growing, living plants as collaborating partners, which I treat as potential bodies in my creative project, Textiled Becomings.
explicit both old and new meanings’ (1999: 166). *Thus, a shift in the definition of practice occurs.* In the past, practice was defined by medium. For example, if textile was used to make art, then it belonged to the practice of textile craft, which was located outside the art mainstream. Consequently, textile considered as women’s communicative text stayed outside the art’s mainstream language. However, since the 1990s the perception of practice has shifted to be based on a set of terms for which, Jefferies emphasises, any medium might be used and appropriated for craft as a material for producing critical debate within art. It is important to note that the push towards new technologies has meant considering anew the old technologies that had been aligned with craft. In this way, movements like steam punk or artists such as Tsai Charwei\(^{33}\) find in the combination of new and old a vital mode of re-engagement with tradition. Then the circle begins again if the shift in perception of textile art is to be included as an art form that is not quite there and not quite here. Such a constant repositioning of textile reflects on the understanding of craft and, perhaps in this case, of woman as well. Jefferies (1999) observes the double displacement of women and nature, and parallels the displacement between femininity and textile within the context of postmodernism.\(^{34}\) We may conclude from Jefferies’ observation that the gap between fine art, dominated by men in Modernism, and craft as the preview of women has shifted significantly, making it possible to ‘eclectically appropriate or replace, quote and parody’ (1999: 166) contemporary textile artworks. Jefferies

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\(^{33}\) Tsai Charwei is a Taiwanese artist who incorporated the traditional calligraphy writing of the Buddhist heart mantra on to mushrooms and other organic materials she exhibited at the Asia-Pacific Triennial at the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane in 2010.

\(^{34}\) Postmodernism’s definition is wide, and varies with every citation. I will refer here to the postmodernist thought that is theorised by artists’ critics and theorists. Postmedicine is explained by Christopher Reed (1981: 272) as challenging the Modernist certainty about autonomy of art that sees representation and reality as overlapping and concepts of originality identity and authorship are fluid.
suggests that this shift to bringing together text and textile has been interwoven through women’s bodies, and therefore parallels the shifts occurring with regard to the concept of ‘woman’.

Jefferies (1999) brings feminist thinking and material thinking together within the context of the philosophical considerations of practice. Within the contemporary context in which living matter can become the material of artworks, the shift of craft into art is part of the playful, wilful reconfiguring of relationships within and after the postmodern. I would add that there is also a growing respect for cultural diversity and exchange, which leads paradoxically to conservation of the traditions through textile or thinking about textile as a form of cultural writing.

To recap, the main ideas that I have drawn upon from feminist thinkers are the construction of subjectivity in relation to the backdrop globalisation, a fluid approach to the production of identity, an interdisciplinary approach to research and a view of writing as a realm of in-betweenness that includes material forms which write the body into culture. These considerations come to bear on my project in the way I have positioned textile production alongside performance (through the video of making the work), cultural exchange and bioart. These modes of production have interacted to produce a literal, material and embodied form of writing in which the most intimate aspects of self and other are triggered and revealed by making my relationship with the world from scratch.

What I have learned from these thinkers with regard to framing my project and informing my practice is the importance of plasticity when dealing with the ways in which cultural manifestations are inscribed upon the body. This realm of cultural inscription and the
interconnectedness of cultural objects present an area of overlap in the concern of both feminist philosophers and anthropological researchers, which is the next framework I discuss.

**Anthropology**

Anthropology has been an important aspect of my theorising of a methodological approach. Since I am focusing on the connection between the embodied experience of fabric and fibre-making (textile), women’s subjectivity and creativity, and the shared experiences prompted by such work, ethnographic studies of culture provide an invaluable context for practice-led research and the issues of, and related to, the body in relation to materiality, inter-cultural exchange and performativity. As an arts practitioner, anthropological information offers numerous correlations between the influence of social/cultural structures and a sequence of discontinuous partial selves, or the self as a historical process. The interweaving of thinking through material and materialising thought accentuates the ways in which textile can become a direct expression of embodied experience.

Schneider and Wright (2006) explore the limits of representation and the perception of the two disciplines of art and anthropology. They ask how these two disciplines can enrich each other rather than remain in opposition to and critique of one another. The suggestion is that researchers need to explore new strategies and practices without making prior definitions that distinguish art from anthropology (2006: 2). In many ways, this resonates with current trends

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35 Arnd Schneider is Senior Lecturer in Anthropology and European Studies at the University of East London, and Senior Research Fellow (Habilitationsstipendiat, DFG) at the University of Hamburg. Christopher Wright is Lecturer in Anthropology at Goldsmiths College, University of London.
in interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary work. Since both art and anthropology are made up of a complex range of diverse practices, the emphasis should be directed toward creatively refiguring the ideas and practices of training. Art and anthropology can work as catalysts for one another. For example, if anthropologists engage with art practices it would mean ‘embracing new ways of seeing and new ways of working with visual materials’ and would ‘provide stimulus for dialogue’ (2006: 25). For arts practitioners who engage with anthropology and apply it to creative methodologies, it can open up new ways of negotiating material processes through alternative considerations of perception, cognition and location.

A danger to any inquiry can be its potential to give priority to description over observation, experience or situatedness. Art and anthropology often share a problematic assumption that text can tell the story of an artefact. For both disciplines, the conventional dichotomy between subject-object is based on the assumption that an artefact is static. In contrast to this view, anthropologist Stephen Riggins (1994)\textsuperscript{36} suggests that societies are composed of people \textit{and} artefacts that are \textit{constantly active and in conversation}. Conversation in this case, does not necessarily mean text-based discourse; rather, Riggins is raising the idea that a thing can exist in a pre-linguistic form and enter into meaningful relationships in a collection of minds with multiple ways of conceptualising things independent from language.

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\footnote{Stephen Harold Riggins is Associate Professor at Memorial University, Newfoundland Canada. His early publications were about the sociology of classical music and government policies for democratising the fine arts, especially in France. His current interests involve symbolic interactionist approaches to the symbolism of material artefacts and the application of critical discourse analysis to news stories.}
\end{flushright}
I find the work of anthropologist Joan Vastokas (1994)\textsuperscript{37} important and relevant. It is worth discussing at length here in order to relate a number of her key ideas to my research. To apply a multifaceted perspective to the claims Vastokas is raising, I have found Carl Knappett’s (2005)\textsuperscript{38} exploration of the connections between object and culture far reaching. He elaborates on the anthropological connections from a cognitive science perspective, examining the dynamic cyclical relations between materials and thinking-through-materials. Hence I have incorporated the discussion of the same issue by both theorists in order to set them into dialogue and to provide a richer understanding of the issues raised.

The first claim Vastokas (1994: 337) makes that is worth noting is that the meaning of artefacts, including works of visual ‘art’, is constituted in the life of the objects \textit{themselves}, not in words or texts \textit{about} them. Concurring with Riggins, Vastokas resists using textual models of material culture in her research. For example, in her discussion of Lithuanian scarves, the meaning of objects is constituted in the lives of the things themselves rather than in the text written about them. Of course, writing is an important means of disseminating knowledge, but too often description is substituted for a host of experiences (making, being there, sensory information, and so on). This point brings the viewfinder of research values to frame the difference between the traditional research and practice-led research because, for Vastokas, artefacts are interactive and go beyond the textual aspects to the sensual and sociocultural life and cognition.

\textsuperscript{37} Joan Vastokas is Professor Emeritus at Trent University, Ontario. Her main interest is in the anthropology of art and architecture, and of material culture and technology in general.

\textsuperscript{38} Carl Knappett is Associate Professor of Archaeology at the University of Toronto. Among his research areas are Aegean Bronze Age political economies and geopolitics, and Minoanisation in the Cyclades, Dodecanese and Asia Minor.
Vastokas (1994) argues that throughout Western history the methodological emphasis was placed on the written document and not enough consideration was given to the work of art itself (1994: 338). According to her first claim (1994: 337), meaning resides in the discourse surrounding the artefact rather than in the artefact itself. While context is undeniably important, Vastokas questions these notions by turning to the human body. Connecting the field of cognitive psychology to the anthropological methodology, and applying the way the brain works, she accentuates the notion that thought and feeling originate in the direct sense experience of the phenomenal world. It is in this sense that words might be viewed as secondary ‘translations’. Thus focusing on a method of interpretation that is embedded in the object itself can open from ‘within the complexities of its full sociocultural and environmental context’ (1994: 339).

On a similar note, Knappett (2005: 3) argues for the need to review the relationships between mind and matter, agent and artefact in order to expand material culture theory. He discusses two approaches that are useful for bringing anthropological methods to my project: ‘linguistic knowledge’ and ‘practical knowledge’. Linguistic knowledge is based on the formal symbolic codes where it is not necessary to be able to actually perform the activities under investigation. In contrast, practical knowledge is non-symbolic and implicit in the bodily engagement with activities investigated. However, Knappett suggests that there is a crossover between agencies as well as cross-fertilisation between disciplines. In this way, symbolic and non-symbolic modes of acquiring knowledge feed each other to impel the whole process forward. Moreover, phenomenological insights have a great impact on anthropology, sociology and cognitive science. Thus, in order to understand how humans think through materials in material culture, there is a great benefit to be gained from drawing upon as wide a range of disciplines as possible (2005: 169).
The second important claim made by Vastokas (1994: 337) is that the artefact is not an inert, passive object, but rather an interactive agent in sociocultural life and cognition. Vastokas refuses a methodology that depends upon a linguistic approach positioning artefacts as static documents that are read as self-contained, non-contextualised objects isolated from the embodied activities that connect them to the human context from which they arose. Concurring with Vastokas, Knappett (2005) takes her approach further to explain that semiotics may work for language but it is not suited for the study of meaning in material culture, since it does not include the pragmatic dimension where there is an interaction of body, artefact and life – where, as he claims, ‘the world of the real inhabited by solid objects bumping up against human bodies’ (2005: 169). Knappett emphasises the main criterion that is traditionally seen as separating the human subject from the material object: animacy. He suggests that the term ‘agent’ should be linked to the psychological dimension of the bio-psycho-social, and adds the dimension of ecological organism where ‘the human organism agent-person in extricably enfolded with material culture’ (2005: 12).

The third point I would like to highlight from Vastokas (1994: 337) is that the signification of the artefact resides in both the object as a self-enclosed material fact and in its performative, ‘gestural’ patterns of behaviour in relation to space, time and society. Both Vastokas (1994) and Knappett (2005) see the need to shift the perception of an artefact as inert object mirroring cultural patterns to the active performative role in cultural processes. Both Vastokas and Knappett cite the work of archaeological theorist Ian Hodder, who proposes the idea that artefacts are both interactive and operate as ‘symbols of action’ (Hodder in Knappett 2005: 7). Vastokas and Knappett agree that a phenomenological approach, which enables viewing an artefact as meaningful in a context and expressive in itself is valuable. Vastokas
states that an artefact is ‘a ritual performer in social and cultural life…able to move within spatial, temporal and social universe’ (1994: 341). These two anthropologists give a clear indication that a wider view needs to be applied to account for social and environmental dimensions when exploring the context of cultural performance.

Vastokas’s third point (1994: 337) is that the processes, materials and products of technology, especially those of society’s dominant technology, function as cultural metaphors at many levels and in many sociocultural domains. Not only does the artefact need to be considered, but the technical processes must carry weight in the evaluations as well. Both Vastokas and Knappett insist on the importance of including the dynamics of the technical processes because, as Vastokas states, they play a significant cognitive role in the social ideational life of cultural systems on many levels (1994: 334). Through a case study of a Lithuanian woven sash, she observes the tools used for textile production, the materials the processes employed and the embodied performance required to finish the textiles. This information, which was acquired at first hand, showed the interconnections among the metaphors and models of group identity, the social interaction that emerged and expressions used. Vastokas concluded that ’spinning and weaving constituted the “praxis for cognition” in much of Lithuanian folk culture’ (1994: 344).

To summarise, both Vastokas (1994) and Knappett (2005) agree that an approach to methodology should include the experience of the object within its environment rather than an approach that considers it sufficient to provide information about the object. Both theorists perceive the artefact as a dynamic participant in life. Here, Knappett (2005) highlights the idea of the artefact’s agency to be interwoven with human’s material culture. Moreover, they both call for the inclusion of the process of making and the incorporation of the artefacts into

(Textiled Becomings: Making from Scratch 39)
ritual life, but also in the role cognition plays in understanding social, ideational life-systems. First-hand information is seen as essential to the understanding of the connections between the human and non-human environment.

Knappett (2005) recognises the two-way, somewhat paradoxical psychological bond that exists between human and non-human. On the one hand, humans believe they control the relationships between humans and non-humans, and on the other hand the object has the ability to ‘act back’ and affect human psychology. Agency, Knappett claims, emerges reciprocally as humans and non-humans interact (2005: 28). This feeling of the agency of things occurs very strongly in my experience of working with live materials and making from scratch. It does feel that, in growing, making and touching fabric, the fabric touches back. Even though the physical connection between human and non-human may only be temporary, the psychological relationship may persist. This connection is directly related to how our body remembers and chooses to act upon that memory. Knappett goes on to argue that the contemporary notion of the post-human requires a different approach towards methodology, where animacy, agency and personhood enfold the human and the non-human

39 Knappett uses an example from Bruno Latour, where the debate over guns occurs. On one hand, the view is held that guns kill people, and on the other hand there is a view that it is people who kill people. Latour claims that there is another option where, when a person has a gun, a new actor is created – a hybrid composed of a person with a gun and institutions such as lobbies manufacturers. In this opinion, there is never pure forms (see Knappett, 2005: 30).

40 ‘The bodies we inhabit are internally and externally bioartificial; agency which cannot be described as either a human or non-human property, is distributed across bodies, artefacts and environments; and we live not in societies but in sociotechnical collectives.’ (Knappett 2005: 30) Latour (2004) explains the connections between humans and non-humans using the term ‘actants’: ‘every non-human that is a candidate for existence finds itself accompanied by a series of lab coats and many other professionals who point to the instruments, situations, and protocols, without our being able to distinguish yet who is speaking and with what authority’ (2004: 75).
(2005: 30). In relation to this idea, he cites the Melanesian idea of the body as permeable in a state of flux with its surroundings.

In Western society, Knappett claims that the mind is still treated as a separated domain from the body and the world, not only in cognitive science but also in much psychology and in cognitive anthropology (2005: 35). The consequence of this view is that models of cognition are based upon the model of the computer: input–output information seen as bits and bytes, disembodied and disassociated from any material presence (Hayles 1999: 1). Knappett (2005) follows the view that cognition, perception and action are interlinked in a distributed, situated and embodied\textsuperscript{41} process. The computational approach does not allow for fluidity or a dynamic relation. Things are wrapped in a hard-shell capsules (for example, an animal is any such organism other than a human being, especially a mammal). I am reminded here of Foucault’s discussion in the Preface of The Order of Things (1980), in which he cites the categories of animals from a Chinese encyclopaedia. For Foucault, the passage poignantly brings home the realisation that we must ‘break up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things’ (1980: xv). In the Chinese encyclopaedia, animals are divided into: ‘(a) belonging to the emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs … (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from long way off look like flies’ (1980:

\textsuperscript{41} Distributed cognition is explained by Edwin Hutchins (2000) as a cognitive process that is involved in the organisation of memory, decision-making, inference, reasoning, learning and knowledge organisation. This process involves the propagation and transformation of representations. Cognitive distribution can be across the members of social groups or across cognitive systems that involve ‘coordination between internal and external (material or environmental) structure, and process may be distributed through time in such that the products of earlier events can transform the nature of later events’ (2000: 2).
Although Foucault was concerned here with the way our thoughts bear the ‘stamp of our age’, his later works on the history of sexuality would pay attention to the negotiations between embodied individuals and culture, environment and history. The animal in the Chinese encyclopaedia is a fluid set of possibilities with agency. The perceptual filters we deploy in order to interact with categories of our world depend upon flexibility it takes to adapt and connect at the thresholds of identity. ‘A single idea in this way has a spreading activation effect.’ (Spitzer, in Knappett 2005: 39)

An additional point raised by Vastokas (1994: 337), and also discussed by Knappett, is that theoretical insights derive not from theorising in the abstract, but from direct observation and experience of the phenomenal world (of nature and culture). This has enormous implications for my project. By actually being in the place and time of textile production, and by living the moments of ceremonies and everyday rituals during her research into Lithuanian women’s woven sashes, Vastokas was able to see the gestalt performance of the actual objects (1994: 345–55). Beyond the technical procedures and performances, the processes of which she was able to become aware allowed her to glimpse an underling dynamic for the social and ideational life of Lithuanian society. Knappett (2005) uses the same approach, and asks us to consider the boundary between the organism and the environment, between animate and inanimate as fuzzy in terms of structure (composition) and organisation (form) (2005: 16).

For example, when a tool is not used it becomes a detached object of environment. I would add to this the insight that when we pay attention to an object, it becomes a part of a

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42 Vastokas talks about numerous studies that demonstrate the interlinking of technology and culture. The dominant materials and technical processes, and the artefact, are living within the cultural patterns and ideology at many levels in many domains, such as cosmology, ritual, social relations, literature, philosophy, dance and visual art (Vastokas 1994: 343).
conceptual blend (I discuss the idea of conceptual blending below as a part of the cognitive science framework).

The human plans and goals that constitute intentionality are not formulated as pure internal mental representations that are then simply executed in the exterior world; rather, intentionality is ‘pre-disciplined’ by the cultural environment in which the human agent is located (Pickering, in Knappett 2005: 22). The more interdisciplinary research I conduct, the more convinced I become about the nature of practice-led research, which increasingly focuses on methodology and ethical behaviour when researching and, by extension, when acting in relation to all things. Just as philosophy can assist in the understanding of writing as a form of material-making, so too anthropology assists in the connection of memory, history and activities handed down through time.

The question that arises from Vastokas’s and Knappett’s anthropological inquiries concerns agency, and whether it is centralised or distributed. The symbolist representational approach considers that, in a semantic network, nodes represent concepts, and these are connected to other nodes by various forms of association (Goldblum, in Knappett 2005: 39). In contrast, the connectionist approach maintains that a web of interconnected nodes represents a single concept: ‘Cognition is both dynamic and a distributed process. Humans are purposeful agents, actively seeking out environmental features rather than passively awaiting cues and stimuli.’ (Knappett 2005: 41). This will be supported by the cognitive science research discussed below.

In April 2003, a conference titled The Anthropology of Art was held at the Clark Institute. It brought together art historians and anthropologists in order to discuss ‘understanding art as a
cross-disciplinary and trans-historical human activity’ (Westermann 2005: vii). Vastokas’s paper, as well as the other papers presented at the Clark conference,\(^{43}\) helped me to situate my project within the current context of cross-disciplinary scholarship involving the arts and sciences. The problems raised by the Clark conference speakers – such as Mariett Westerman,\(^{44}\) historian Hans Belting, art historian Janet Berlo and Professor of Fine Art Suzanne Preston Blier (2003) – revolve around the methodological issues of first-person experience versus third-person objectivity.

In many ways my interest in textile, as both communication and a mode of (self-) embodiment, is precisely an effort to bridge this divide through practice-led research. My aim is for this mixture to facilitate critical reflection and provide investigative ways to understand the folding of art, culture and women’s communication. Anthropologists also apply fluid approaches to the structure of their inquiries, in much the same ways that feminist philosophers deem necessary in their investigations. Philosophers and anthropologists both suggest that the boundaries between organisms and the environment, between objects and subjects and between animate and inanimate entities are fuzzy – both in terms of structure (composition) and organisation (form). The next section, which outlines the perspective that

\(^{43}\) Clark Conference: 25 and 26 April 2003 (www.clarkart.edu/research). This conference brought together leading art historians and anthropologists for two days of talks and discussion about the intersections and divergences between their disciplines. The issues addressed were relevant to the academic study of art as well as museum practices. One of the issues was how anthropology and art history understand the term ‘art’, and what sorts of questions these disciplines ask of the work of art. Is it possible to find a cross-cultural definition of art, or are such definitions inevitably Western in their origins and concerns? What implications do the answers to these questions have for the collecting and display of Western and non-Western objects in art museums?

\(^{44}\) Mariet Westermann is Director of the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University. She is the author of *Rembrandt: Arts and Ideas* and has contributed to many exhibition catalogues on seventeenth-century Dutch art (http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/book.asp?isbn=0300103530).
cognitive science offers practice-led research, focuses on the way conceptual blending in particular is used as a tool of understanding and a mode of engagement (methodology). Once again, practitioners use the theoretical frameworks not just to acquire knowledge, but also to prompt a way of interacting with the world, to experience and communicate with oneself and others in new and meaningful ways that are mutually beneficial and enrich our embodied experience.

**Cognitive Science**

In this section, I examine the notion of embodiment from the point of view of cognitive science in order to determine why contemporary art might be concerned with, and why it might benefit from, the science of mind–body connections. I correlate various views by theorists such as Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002), as well as by the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, who have all dealt with embodiment. The perspectives they offer help us understand the extent of the embodied mind as a function of biology, environment and history.

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45 Gilles Fauconnier is a Professor and Chairman of the Cognitive Science Department at the University of California, San Diego. Mark Turner is Associate Director of the Centre for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences at Stanford University.

46 Antonio Damasio is an internationally recognised leader in neuroscience. His research has helped to elucidate the neural basis for the emotions, and has shown that emotions play a central role in social cognition and decision-making. His work has also had a major influence on current understanding of the neural systems, which underlie memory, language and consciousness. Damasio directs the USC Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California.
Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1993) define cognitive science as a study of mind that consists of an affiliation of disciplines rather than a discipline of its own (1993: 4). The disciplines that play an important role include artificial intelligence, ‘linguistics, neuroscience, psychology, sometime anthropology, and the philosophy of mind’ (1993: 4, 5). Varela and colleagues go on to provide a chart of the various researchers who are situated in shared domains between these disciplines that link with three views of mind: cognitivism, connectionism (also called emergence) and enaction (1993: 7). The reason that this domain of inquiry is important to my project is summed up by Varela et al.’s (1993) objective in writing the book: ‘We have argued that it is necessary to have a disciplined perspective on human experience that can enlarge the domain of cognitive science to include direct experience. We suggest a perspective already exists in the form of mindfulness/awareness meditation.’ (1993: 33) I would suggest that arts practice and practice-led research align with this concern, and that the supposition that a mode of practice – akin to meditation or conducive to meditative states such as weaving – is crucial to understanding the embodied mind.

With the aim of accentuating the flows between a person’s engagement with materials, theoretical ideas and personal experience, I have paid close attention to the cognitive processes, such as conceptual blending, that occur during the creative process. Conceptual blending describes the merging of elements from different domains to produce ‘emergent structure’ that generates new meaning (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002; Coulson and Oakley, 2000). Fauconnier and Turner assert that conceptual blending47 ‘choreographs vast networks

47 Conceptual blending is defined by Fauconnier and Turner as ‘we in the twenty first century have come to realise that the miracle of form harnesses the unconscious and usually invisible powers of human beings to
of conceptual meaning’, and provides a way to think about a range of issues including the relationship of cognitive and embodied approaches to perception, abstraction and context (2002: v). They insist that ‘the mind is not a Cyclops; it has more than one ‘I’; it has three – identity, integration, and imagination – and they all work inextricably together (2002: 15).

The benefit of an approach to art practice that pays attention to processes such as conceptual blending is that it shifts the emphasis from a static, single perspective to that of a multidisciplinary inquiry. I argue that the value of incorporating the perspective of conceptual blending as part of the cognitive science discipline lies in its understanding of the web-like connections and the cross-fertilisation necessary to construct a creative site: the dynamic relationship of producer with materials, environment–bodily environment and the external milieu and the history of ideas plus the application of this awareness through the production of an artefact (object, performance or relational marker). The study of conceptual blending has led me to conceive of my processes as ‘from scratch’, through which I endeavour to explore the complex interaction of matter/mind, bodily action and living art. The role of the becoming(s) of the researcher and the researched – as a nomadic subject – is to recognise that the multiple mappings of the world are inseparable and indistinguishable from the production of the world.

A reflexive48 reflective artist can begin to correlate the numerous contrasting activities that run concurrently through the body-environment. For example, actions such as perceiving

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48 I will look at the idea of reflexivity as an approach within the creative site towards research in the following sections.
similarity and difference appear simple and somewhat ‘automatic’, yet in actuality they involve extremely ‘complex, imaginative, unconscious processes’ (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 6) that are provided to consciousness after the intricate work of combining imagination and reason. If we follow Fauconnier and Turner’s line of argument, which views the links between the world and the body/thought/action as involving myriad interconnections and unconscious blending processes, it becomes apparent that these links require only the element of making to become integrated as a creative site, reflecting within the creative acts as a catalyst for connectivity. The emphasis, which Fauconnier and Turner place on the flows between action, imagination and reason, can help us understand the way ‘meaning systems and formal systems’ are intimately connected and ‘co-evolve in the species, the culture, and the individual’ (2002: 11).

My research on conceptual blending was intended to illuminate the ways consciousness and unconsciousness are tightly interwoven, and has influenced the decision to make my work from scratch:

But blending does not happen on-line from scratch. Cultures work hard to develop integration resources that can then be handed on with relative ease … With such templates, the general form of the projections and the completion are specified in advance and do not have to be invented anew. The creative part comes in running the blend for the specific case. In cultural practices, the culture may already have run a blend to a great level of specificity for specific inputs, so that entire integration network is available, with all of its projections and elaborations. (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 72)
Here, Fauconnier and Turner are suggesting that there is a critical point or critical mass in the accumulation of knowledge that is available to be put to use. In my project, the strategy of making from scratch allows me to slow down and take the steps of making backwards (as much as I can) to the point at which I can recognise when mental processes such as a conceptual blending come to the surface. In this way, I am able to focus on the experience of sociocultural environments that follow similar processes to self-organisation. These experiences affect the ways of materialising ‘complex and mostly unconscious operations [that] are at the heart of even the simplest possible meanings’ (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: xi).

Conceptual blending is seen by the Fauconnier and Turner (2002) as an instrument of compression *par excellence*. The goal is to achieve ‘human scale’ in the blended space where conscious manipulation occurs (2002: xiii). Conceptual blending presupposes brain plasticity in which there is no central processing location in the brain, but rather the functions are distributed and each part interacts with the others. Colin Ware (2008: 19–20) suggests that this is the reason we are able to carry out more than one task simultaneously. Human intelligence is highly flexible, and perception is a skilled, evolving and active process.

The complex production of a creative body of work requires a complex process of thought that activates multiple brain regions and their functions. The list of activities includes planning, motor control, hand–eye coordination, the hippocampal formation, memory, long-
term memory, concepts, semantic knowledge of the world, emotional circuitry, the parietal lobes, the control of meaning and space, global and detailed perception, disembedding strategies, sustained attention and other widespread neural networks as explained by Dalia Zaidel: 50

Both the right hemisphere and the detailed, analytic, and sustained attention of the left hemisphere are simultaneously involved in the production of visual art. In the visual arts, the tilt, angle, size, shape, form, height, or depth of the elements in relations to each other constitutes the theme of a picture … it was found that, rather than starting with a global contour of the visual model – something associated with the right hemisphere and its cognitive style – the artist, Humphrey Ocean, nearly always began with a detail first, working on his way from the inside outwards … The attention to local details is precisely the cognitive style associated with the left hemisphere … This strategy demonstrates that both hemispheres concurrently play roles in the production of visual art. (2005: 7)

Far from being a universal description of the way artists work, this demonstrates that plasticity is a feature of engagement rather than cognition as a determined set of ‘programs’ run by an organism. Zaidel’s identification of the connections between working from the

50 Dahlia Zaidel is Adjunct Professor of Psychology and Behavioral Neuroscience at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and a Member of the Brain Research Institute of the University of California, Los Angeles.
details to the whole is particularly important to me, since I found this pattern personally relevant as well.\textsuperscript{51}

Meaning-making versus accessing brain function involves conceptual blending. Human beings have the most elaborate forms (language, maths, music, art) and abilities for the construction of meaning through connection-making. Forms become meaningful because they are suited to the meanings they prompt. Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 6) argue that: ‘On their own the forms are hollow. In particular, meaning is not another kind of form.’

However, Zaidel (2005) maintains that communication is not dependent upon the relation of language to expression:

\begin{quote}
At the same time, neuropsychological evidence from artists with brain damage suggests that the two forms are not necessarily related, that is, language can become severely affected in a given artist following damage while art expression is only minimally or not at all affected. This in turn raises the possibility that at the dawn of human brain evolution, language and art were not closely intertwined. (Zaidel 2005: xiii)
\end{quote}

This evidence supports the claim that brain activity is flexible, and works in regions rather than from a central point. However, Zaidel claims that the association between art and brain has proven to be elusive, since the options of creating physical connections are impartial as well as indefinable. Therefore, just as anthropology

\textsuperscript{51} I was injured on the right side of the brain during a car accident.
utilises cognitive science in its research, in order to know more about the connections between art and neurology ‘we need to consider the life of early humans, evolution of the human brain itself as well as evidence and discussion from diverse fields such as archaeology, biology, mate selection strategies, anthropology, the fossil record, and ancient art’ (Zaidel 2005: 1).

If we take Zaidel’s advice seriously, then material culture becomes more than the understanding of object: the forms of the object themselves indicate the relationship between actors, cultural constraints and environments. Once a conceptual blending is expressed as a materialised concept – such as money or a watch or even a social action or ritual – we are not consciously aware of the different input spaces these represent. The projections that occur across the neural network contribute to decision-making later on (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 391). Fauconnier and Turner draw on Edwin Hutchins’52 work on conceptual blending. They concur that wristwatches, for example, act as a material anchors that in themselves are pointless, but in the everyday human life become (like many other things) ‘props for our double-scope conceptual integration networks’ (2002: 196). In Hutchins’ view, ‘cognitive activity is sometimes situated in the material world in such a way that the environment is a computational medium’ (2000: 7). This notion supports, and is perhaps in response to, David Chalmers and Andy Clark’s (1998) important essay on the theory of the ‘extended mind’:

> Epistemic action, we suggest, demands spread of epistemic credit. If, as we confront some task, a part of the world functions as a process, which, were it done in the head, we would have no hesitation in recognizing as part of the

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52Edwin Hutchins was a Professor of Cognitive Science at the University of California, San Diego.
cognitive process, then that part of the world is (so we claim) part of the
cognitive process. Cognitive processes ain’t (all) in the head! (Clark and
Chalmers 1998: 8)

Clark and Chalmers’ notion of the extended mind can be related to making art. In the
creative site that art creates there is a constant exchange of sensations and processes that can
be seen as an epistemic action embedded in the world. This extension of mind into
environment can also be seen as part of a problem-solving process of working with the world
rather than as a process of changing the world. Problem-solving processes, Clark and
Chalmers explain, are a sub-routine of the computational process in the brain that is
distributed to the neural and environmental structures ‘via a call to the world’ (1998: 515).

Conceptual blending creates emergent structure, but it is also works by combining already
innate inputs that it has available. In this way, conceptual knowledge develops step by step,
through the cascade of blends.

Generally, we live directly in the blends and a process of blending all the time. For example,
we live according to a clock that, in the early years of childhood, is an object that means
nothing other than its aesthetic qualities (shape, colour, movement); later, however, the clock
becomes time itself, as Fauconnier and Turner explain.

Since the pieces I make are living textiles woven on my body or between my body and those
of others, they are not strictly conceptual or material. They do not fit into a system of
meaning like Hutchins’, Turner’s or Fauconnier’s artefacts. That is, they do not enter into a

53 Andy Clark is Professor of Philosophy and Cognitive Sciences, University of Sussex. David Chalmers is
Professor of Philosophy and Co-head, Center for Consciousness, University of Arizona.
system of pre-established meaning; rather, they produce the relationship, which is their meaning. By slowing down the processes of making, I wanted to consciously unpack the processes of becoming. I discuss these processes as related to an inside and outside (just for sake of convenience, though I am painfully aware of the limitation of language in making this distinction). I believe that, in this process, the threshold between catalyst and thought is not identical with the inside/outside boundary of the skin but there are many scales to the interaction between a person and their surroundings. Starting with the big picture, ‘becoming’ in a new geographical place and a new cultural context as an immigrant, just learning to read and write a new language requires not only blending but also de-blending and decompressing. As Fauconnier and Turner claim, a much richer network needs to be produced with ‘the greater flexibility of going from outer space to inner space and back’ (2002: 392).

Learning about the way we use conceptual blending has helped me to make the connections between the processes of embodiment and processes of making meaning. The flow between materialised thought, expressed through materials, and thinking through material is the site of connection between processes of embodiment and the work of art. Fauconnier and Turner discovered that the same cognitive operation – conceptual blending – ‘plays a decisive role in human thought and action and yields a boundless diversity of visible manifestations’ (2002: vi).

Creating the advanced blends typically requires decompressing the intermediate ones (Fauconnier and Turner 2002:393). This leads to the idea of breaking prior conceptual blends into their components, step by step – and so the process of making ‘from scratch’ makes all kinds of connection and relationships available to me. For example, I am aware of my relationship to other as an immigrating citizen who grew up in another culture and developed
a particular structure of conceptual knowledge. Decompressing the immediate structures and creating a new blend is a very different process from the erasing old blends and replacing them with new ones. I cannot separate the process of conceptual blending from the way I have conceived of the methodology of making from scratch. It is through making from scratch that I understand and am able to organise the experiences of immigration to reflect on the new space that I have created, which jockeys into position in its new surroundings. The new space is a space of ‘betweenness’ in which my physiological self is shaped by an environment – for example, the way my vocal cords are trained to pronounce words in Hebrew or the way I hear another language or the way the muscles of my face influence how I pronounce (or mispronounce) English words.

Conceptual blending and learning to make my work as the relation between myself and my environment from scratch are parallel processes. Therefore, I never mark my position of belonging as a foreigner. This becomes a new blend that will influence the network within my embodied consciousness as well as unconscious blends to come where there is a hybridity of forms/languages/words and meanings. The continual blending allows me to become aware of the ‘gaps’ that are created when there are mental spaces that need to be put into forms/words. But when there are no shared forms or words for meaningful communication, or no form of expression for feelings or emotions. I am at a zero point, a new space of production. This is where I can blend the form (i.e. corporeal)\(^{54}\) with a lack of words, which

\(^{54}\) During the course of this project, expunging the imaginary line between the corpus (body) and the self has led to the emergence of the term ‘corporeal’ to define the materialised, whole person. The corporeal makes itself up as it goes along, sensitive to the physical, social, cultural and historical environment in which it operates. The notion of a flexible and fluid corporeal is central to this project, used to indicate where the materiality of the
requires the invention of new forms to initiate a process of deblending/undoing. As in weaving or knitting, the holes that are created allow movement and play with the ‘unconcreted’. Textile in general, and fibres production in particular, have been chosen for this reason because of their inherent constraints, which allow flexibility and many degrees of freedom.

Hutchins, Fauconnier and Turner propose that ‘things’ and object function as anchors. On a cognitive level, anchors float between conceptual blends where they instigate various meanings that might become connected. For example, when using cotton to make fibre for my weaving, the cotton is no longer a participant solely in a conceptual blend where it triggers a memory of the sensation of the fabric of a t-shirt. As a function of the way the cotton is used in my process, it becomes part of the conceptual space that integrates the seeds, the flowers, the cotton wool, the watering, the caring and much more. Also, the material concept of the fabric cotton was unblended in order to become part of a bigger construction consisting of many blends that are connected to each other and to a wider picture. The word ‘cotton’ and the material ‘cotton’ can no longer stand alone without a hyphen that joins it to other things and processes: cotton seeds, cotton flowers, cotton wool, cotton fibres, woven cotton artworks.

I utilise material processes in order to comprehend processes of identity construction, especially realising the process of immigration – being there and here. The making of objects that have been made throughout history; the going through the motions and thinking about corporeal is knitted by/with mind/self and vice versa. The term was inspired by the ways in which Damasio discusses the connections between body and self in his books (1994, 1999, 2003).
my relation to the tradition, the materials, the people the places which come into proximity because of my actions – these have a profound effect upon my understanding in ways that take conceptual blending to the extreme. In practice, conceptual blending is a bodily experience not contained by the language that communicates concepts; rather, it has opened the blending that has forged the concept and from which the concept has emerged in me. The process of immigration has a kind of intensity that is similar to the production of artwork. It involves de-anchoring over a long period of time, acquiring floating anchors and re-anchoring things in new relationships that is not always guaranteed to work. Fauconnier and Turner explain:

The cathedral is developed as a conceptual structure in the blend before it has an accurate material anchor to support that blend. The material anchors once constructed support the mental activities … but also enables to communicate that concept, structure to the community, and to organise their activities. (2002: 209)

I have focused almost exclusively on the work of Fauconnier and Turner because this notion of conceptual blending has been a powerful tool in the production of my thinking and the fabrication of my creative practice. As mentioned already, conceptual blending is the active choreographing of vast networks of conceptual meaning. While appearing simple, they are actually complex (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: v), just as the fluidity of identity in the theories of feminism supplies both an analytical and a methodological tool for how to proceed, and in this way is consistent with practice-led research and the imperative to learn by doing.
Art Theory

In this section, I look at a range of issues within art theory that pertain to my project and reflect the shifts in the concept of aesthetics from a Modernist perception of art as a practice distanced from the social to the postmodern conception that values the relationships of art and life. Art theory and consideration of aesthetics can elucidate the shifts across disciplinary practices, such as the work that emerges from arts and science collaborations as bioart. Considerations of form and sensation require working with and understanding various materials and techniques that cross time, as when past procedures are brought into the contemporary moment. In addition to discussing the impact of aesthetics on the context of my process-oriented work, I also address the issues around bioart, immersive environments (or installation work), false division between art and craft, and the context of the performative in art and art theory.

In a society that allocates a vast space for aestheticised commodities, where rapidly growing bodies of information in evolving databases and dematerialisation of artwork through computation are becoming more prevalent, the perception of aesthetics as a unified idea is thrown into question. Contemporary arts practitioners, historians, philosophers and curators increasingly renegotiate fundamental aesthetic issues, acknowledging the limitations inherent in traditional aesthetics.
Aesthetics

Here, I discuss issues related to shifts in concepts of aesthetics, highlighting ideas discussed by Jacques Rancière (2009), who argues against representation and employs the notion of witnessing through art as narrative. He is interested in the way art might operate between what is sayable and what is not (2009: 7). Another approach to the changes in aesthetic concepts is brought by Francis Halsall et al. (2009), who propose that aesthetics is being rediscovered. I show how aesthetic theory ranges from an emphasis on taste and beauty to seeing the importance of considering aesthetics as a vital arena for critical discussion and a valid interpretative criticism of traditional Modernist values through, for example, the incorporation of cross-disciplinary collaboration. I discuss the contribution made by bioart, installation art and fibre/textile art to the understanding of the dynamic interconnections between matter and thought, and add my voice to those who would erase the line between art and craft.

Tomas McEvilley (2005) states that, through history, the values used to judge what makes a work of art ‘good’ have changed from age to age and from culture to culture. The shifts in values depend on the changing frameworks around such a judgment (2005: 18, 20, 21). The Modernist approach distinguished aesthetics from disciplines such as art history and visual culture by making aesthetics almost entirely about formal relationships.

55 Jacques Rancière is a French philosopher and Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School in Saas Fee and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the at University of Paris, who came to prominence when he co-authored with the philosopher Louise Althusser.
56 Francis Halsall is a Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Art History and Theory; Julia Jansen lectures in philosophy at University College Cork; Tony O’Connor is a Lecturer in Philosophy at University College Cork.
The difference between the Modernist view of aesthetics and the contemporary view, Jacques Rancière contends, lies in the continually closing gap between the art form and the social exchange of imagery (2009: 21). The Modernists saw it as beneath them to require the incorporation of imagination within art. At the same time, Modernism expected the power of illusion to fascinate and entertain. In other words, during Modernist times the artist seems to have had the role of translator – or, as Francis Richards\(^57\) describes it, ‘the power to transform an electrical current from one voltage to another … to make it compatible with the common voltage’ (1996: 5). As with identity and conceptual blending, the practitioner is the one who must materialise the connection between one form and another, one way of working and another.

The period that saw the end of the image, Rancière proposes, was during the 1910s and 1920s. Art was transformed during the remainder of the twentieth century, ‘with the forms of new life abolishing the very specificity of art’s lost identity between life forms and art forms’ (2009: 21). The image that was lost to Futurists and Constructivists, who identified the pure art with forms of art that emphasised space rather than mass, was rediscovered after semiotologists saw the benefit of the image as knowledge. In the 1960s, artists such as Eva Hesse questioned aesthetics through their expanded practice, which led to a rejection of the paradigmatic formalist aesthetics and forms that would be considered anti-art. The importance of positioning activities such as anti-art within the art world can be traced back to Duchamp and Dada, if not much further to ancient Greece in the personage of Diogenes or

\(^57\)Richard Francis of the Tate Gallery in London has been named Chief Curator at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art.
the philosophy of Pyrrhon. Anti-art allows an artist to cross the boundary that usually sets art apart from other activities in a specialised domain. My work and the works that stake a claim as anti-art attempt to signal that when other concerns enter the making process – be they political, ethical or disciplinary – the meaning is shifted to the making process and the space of shared inquiry, to which art makes a contribution.

The distinction between art and non-art led to Danto’s ‘end of art’, resulting in a diminished interest in aesthetics. Recently, as the conceptual artist Joseph Kossuth claims, art theory and art practices have become more philosophical and self-reflexive (Kosuth in Halsall et al., 2009: 5), and philosophy and criticism become intertwined and connected with art history. Rancière explains this convergence further:

> Others reopen their albums to rediscover the pure enchantment of images – that is, the mythical identity between the identity of *that* and the alterity of the *was*, between the pleasure of pure presence and the bite of the absolute Other. (2009: 22)

Rancière uses a metaphor to highlight the difference between approaching the image as a representation and seeing it as a narrative that is not only embedded in the form but also combines times – present and past – and identities that always evolve. On the other hand, Foster Hall (1983) identifies that in postmodernity the line between creative and critical stances dissolved. What Modernism considered to be the qualities of a ‘work’ of art –

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58 Thomas McElviley (2005) offers a comprehensive account of the ways in which anti-art operates within art, and connects artworks to larger concerns, such as the political and ethical positions outside art that directly affect art and art production.
unique, symbolic and visionary – postmodernism regards as the qualities of an opened text, contingent in order to challenge the Modernist master narrative (1983: xi). Anti-aesthetics, Hall claims, challenges the grand narratives of modernism and signals that the very notion of aesthetics marks the cultural position in the present where models of subjectivity are fluid and the questions of taste and beauty are continuously unsettled (Hall, 1983: xi).

With the revitalisation of what aesthetics can mean today has come a growth in the awareness of the cross-disciplinary. Changing the position of aesthetics to work against the idea of a privileged aesthetic realm, Francis Halsall et al. (2009) argue that rediscovering aesthetics also brings attention to the interconnectedness of art history, philosophy and art practice. Bearing in mind that aesthetics has no single definition or subject-matter, and generally invokes questions of beauty, taste and ‘sensuous’ experiences such as ugliness and disgust, Halsall proposes two problems arising with the rediscovery of aesthetics that focus on matters of taste. One is maintaining the critical position of art and the second is maintaining the connections to social action or life. Halsall and his co-editors consider these two connections to be essential to the value of aesthetics in contemporary times (Halsall et al. 2009: 8).

Three core themes identified by Halsall et al. (2009) for critical cross-disciplinary debates are issues of validity, subjectivity and the political implications of aesthetics (2009: 7). Validity can be achieved when the artwork evokes multiple interpretations, opening itself to the complexity of everyday disciplines and practices as well as to the public debate. Subjectivity can be addressed, in contemporary discourse, when the inter-subjectivity context is recognised and no single perspective is given from which an absolute aesthetic judgment can be made. McEvilley (2005) claims that when expanding the horizon of
learning to appreciate the value of the group – other than one into which a person is born – a positive reception of values will emerge and contribute to the development of selfhood. Because aesthetic judgment is never politically neutral, the political dimension of aesthetics must constantly be negotiated through structures of social power. Halsall and colleagues conclude that aesthetics is relevant ‘to the preservation of the possibility of criticism and debate in a pluralist world’ (2009: 11).

For Rancière (2009), the images of art generally present a relationship between the sayable and the visible, where the words describe what the eye sees or express what the eye will never see. Furthermore, words can clarify or deliberately obscure ideas, while images play on both analogy and dissemblance, and operate between the sayable and visible (2009: 7). Words make ideas visible through narration and attenuation. He explains:

The word is only made flesh through a narrative. An additional operation is always required to transform the products of artistic operations and meaning into witnesses of the original Other. The art of Voici must be based on what it refused. It needs to be presented discursively to transform a ‘copy’, or a complex relationship between the new and the old. (Rancière 2009: 30)

While Rancière offers a useful notion of witnessing through the art of ‘here it is’ within postmodernism, he seemingly wants the additional operation – which makes artworks meaningful as witnessing – to be a discursive context. This position is similar to one expressed by Paul Carter (2004) in which, ultimately, materials are meaningful only as they participate in discourse. While Rancière believes that discourse is no longer a translation or a codified expression of thought or feeling (2009: 13), it does not access that value of
material production or embodied processes. The sensory access to the meaning of material occurs within a signifying system, as does the muscle memory of embodied activities like weaving or shared embodied history that occurs through traditions of textile-making. Calling the meaning derived from these embodied knowledge discursive may have some benefit, but it tends to diminish the power of what materiality and experience have to offer: a sensory and perceptual knowledge of the world.

Rancière (2009) suggests that the trend for artwork to no longer translate codified meaning took effect during Modernist times – this is the way in which the art itself either speaks or chooses to be silent. He concludes that we must take a closer look at the exchanges between arts and mediums, the visible and the sayable in relation to how the image operated. For practitioners, the meaning of these distinctions and relationships are in the bodies, the artworks and presentation, not in the words that are spoken about them.

**Bioart: Theorising the Body from Subject-matter to Medium**

What made bioart possible in the history of art was both the aesthetic change and the increase in collaboration with other disciplines, particularly the sciences. The notion of cross-disciplinary research loosens the perceived autonomy of any individual discipline, and opens up debates about meaning and value. Bioart marks a significant shift in the way art and science interact, especially around the ideas of the physical body, its processes and its genetic information as media for expression, commentary, critique and the production of new forms. The by-product of these collaborative ventures has been procedures that question disciplinary, social and ethical discourses.
The importance of material and materiality is not reduced to the discursive; rather, they are presented in their full intensity. This raises the question of the use of living material – especially human material – in the production of art and shared meaning. Robert Mitchell (2010) outlines three eras of bioart that have some resonance with Rancière’s conclusions, namely that some things are unrepresentable and that art bears witness to this fact while at the same time questioning what the ‘duties to witness’ are (2009: 130–33). Bioart pushes this ethics of witnessing and the experience of witnessing into further abstraction and increasing intimacy with the human.

Bioart, Mitchell (2010) explains, is a confusing term because it has been associated with the material used in different kinds of artworks. Mitchell suggests that is it more useful to think about connecting works by concept or by the media used. Media in biological experimental system represent a combination of the growth medium such as cells reagent, the researcher and some sort of visualising mechanism (Mitchell 2010: 99). Additionally, Mitchell states, the bioart medium focuses on the relation of a biological system and the environment rather than remaining a passive object that lies between the sender and a receiver. He argues that the definition of bioart might be approached through the problematics of biotechnology. Since bioart is situated within a field that not only includes the relationship between inorganic matter and living beings but also includes human social institutions and relations, there will be shifting tensions between these elements. Thus art bioart becomes one of the elements that help determine these biotechnological transformations between humans and

59 The artist Edward Steichem exhibited his genetically manipulated variety of Delphiniums (1936) at the Museum of Modern Art New York. His cross-over from science to art by bringing biological media and technology into the gallery can be seen as a first sparkle that will push towards the cross-disciplinary approach identified in postmodernism.
nature (Mitchell 2010: 26–27). Mitchell cites Simondon to describe the crux of bioart’s emphasis on ‘living’ material. Living consists of being both the agent and the environment, together with an element of individualisation where they create their own milieu by connecting the immanent potential of systems (Simondon, in Mitchell 2010: 106). Bioart establishes new points of communication within the metastable reality, where ‘newness’ should be taken as an index of vitality rather than relating to the temporal aspect.

The evaluation of bioart and the importance of living materials in artwork are both crucial to my project. The work that I make ‘from scratch’, involving living plant matter and human interaction, can be seen as bioart. This is because I recognise that it is made in an atmosphere of obsession with biotechnologies, such as genetic manipulation and nanotechnologies. Thus my project, *Textiled Becomings*, uses biological materials that are worked with traditional procedures, such as implanting, involving a fascination with the simple act of growing and living in an art space. I suggest that my work focuses the relationship of agent to environment that Simondon (in Mitchell 2010) specifies for living and Mitchell (2010) uses to define the domain of bioart.

One aspect of bioart, which Mitchell calls ‘vitalist’ bioart, is defined as works that ‘are designed to bring art to life – and life to art quite literally’ (2010: 31). The experimental quality of vitalist bioart provokes questions in relation to what life can do rather than what is the meaning of life. Although aesthetic features of bioart provoke responses that ‘dazzle’, ‘fascinate’ or ‘disturb’, it allows the individual to question the ways in which relationships between humans and non-humans are formed and the ways that bioart returns us to a confrontation with living matter, especially within the context of increasing technological capacity and work towards reclaiming the body’s materiality.
Art that involves life and organic matter resonates with newer scientific paradigms for repositioning human action and behaviour in a continuum with the entire living world. (Munster 2008: 18)

Anna Munster⁶⁰ also discusses the ethical arena of bioart, referring mostly to artists who manipulate living human or animal cells, and arguing for a non-anthropocentric approach in which human is held in the same regard as any other living system. Munster claims that bioartists have not only challenged ‘the separation between ethics and aesthetics but have also foregrounded the extent to which bioethics must, in the contemporary climate, be considered more than a mere branch of applied ethics’ (2008: 14). She argues that if we keep bioethics under the umbrella of a field of applied knowledge, the very old Western philosophical distinction between thought and action, human and non-human will be kept intact. But because the products of biotechnologies disregard the confining normative ethics and instead allow the network flow between art and science, by removing the consequences of bioart from the utilitarian ethics of medicine and science, and placing the artefacts in an art gallery ‘world reserved for the beautiful and useless, bioartists already call into question the underlying ethical principles of instrumentalist, technological culture’ (2008: 17). To add to the role of bioart, Munster calls for further involvement of bioart in not only questioning the commercialised mainstream biotechnologies but also in the bringing awareness to the social and cultural issues that are attached.

⁶⁰Anna Munster is the Deputy Director for Contemporary Arts and Politics in the Centre for Contemporary Arts and Politics, University of New South Wales. She is the author of Materializing New Media (2006) and is an active artist, with multichannel and interactive installation work exhibited internationally and nationally.
Munster (2006) discusses a radical ethology that involves mainly human and animal living cells, suggesting that both the idea that human properties are given by nature and the indication that the possession of agencies constitutes effects produced by the relations and interactions between bodies become mediated confrontation with a living medium (2006: 182). For Munster, the focus of bioart is on affectivity and the creation of life through symbiotic, competitive, parasitic and mutualistic combinations in which life goes beyond the properties of bodies. Bioart is concerned with manipulating life literally for the purposes of ‘producing cultural objects, processes and concepts or critically examining the use of biotechnologies in society’ (2006: 182). Hence ethics needs to deal with becomings as a processual task of life by evaluating the affective process of making (Munster 2008: 19). In order not to lose its critical ethical and political edge, Munster concludes, bioart should avoid falling into the trap of pure aesthetics, which historically has been associated with fascism and racism under regimes that used bioethics to legitimate the most atrocious catastrophes (2008: 21). Interacting with bioart, Munster claims, we arrive at the conclusion that life ‘is not simply a force that inhabits the organism but a network coextensive with information gathering retrieving storage and manipulation’ (2006: 183).

Roy Ascott (2008) proposes the term ‘Moistmedia’ as the substance of the twenty-first century. Moistmedia is a substance that is a result of convergence between the dry digital world and the wet biological world of living systems that considers nature a dynamic network of processes and relationships (2008: 70). Like Capra, he also calls for perceiving nature as vegetal reality: the plant world ‘can be understood in the context of techno-ethics, as the transformation of consciousness by plant technology usually seen in Western culture as a shamanic knowledge although being appropriated in recent years by the pharmaceutical industry’ (2008: 70).
Even though the term ‘living art’ more commonly refers to growing live cells, my interest was in something that I could grow without harm, something I could care for, and something that would produce material that could be textilised. My decision to work with living ‘things’ crystallised when, through my research, I realised the importance of growing and making ‘from scratch’. The symbol of a seed as a starting point with the potential to become a flower or a tree fascinated me, and matched the idea of performing a life cycle in a gallery as opposed to the notion of bioart that, for example, grows cells out of cell lines. I also wanted to collaborate with something that went through a cyclical process to become an artwork.

In the case of working with living material (plants in my own work, or cell-line cultures in bioart), knowledge overflows beyond the visual perception of the work to areas where caring and handling create mental and emotional attachment and co-dependence. Practitioners Oron Catts and Ionat Zur of SymbioticA, who work with tissue culture and art, observe:

> Biological technologies have one fundamental difference from anything preceding them: both products and the processes are dealing with life. The very existence of some of the outcomes of biotechnologies brings into question deep-rooted perceptions of life and identity, concepts of selfhood, and the position of the human vis-à-vis other living beings. (Catts and Zurr, in Pandilovski 2008: 140)

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61 The SymbioticA: Tissue Culture and Art Project is ongoing research at the School of Anatomy, University of Western Australia. It is being carried out by a group that includes artists such as Kac, who experiments with genetics, and Svenja Kratz, who works with living cell-lines.

62 In their work creating semi-living worry dolls (1998), Oron Catts and Ionat Zur have grown pieces of meat out of a mouse’s cell line to become the worry dolls (www.tca.uwa.edu.au/publication/tcleonardo.pdf).
This destabilisation of identity, however brief it may be, is where the line between object and subject becomes blurred, and where a conversation between art/science/biology and the living subject ensues. The blurring of the work of art and the process of making evokes the potentiality of life by weaving the components literally into a ‘subject-object’. In my Textiled Becomings project, as the pieces of fabric (implanted with seeds) are watered, the work is alive and feeding back into the many systems, which comprise and sustain it. It becomes a performance in the making and in the showing of the life cycle. Not only is the thickness of the fibres altered by the roots and leaves, but the smells and the colours of the cotton also change (see Image 1).

**Art and Craft: Theorising Textiles**

After looking into the relationships between art and science, it is valuable to consider the connections of art and craft in order to understand the quality of the connections between materials, women’s work and the various ways in which we write the body into culture. For instance, Hélène Cixous (1994) suggests that by altering relationships that are hierarchically organised in an oppositional system, which appropriates, represses and excludes the other, it is possible to form different relationships with the other and otherness (Blyth and Sellars 2004: 23). Cixous offers the process of women’s writing as the process by which this relation to otherness can be achieved. I am investigating the relation to others through the qualities of materials and, although not in the form of words, the string and yarn are tied to history and language.
Textiled Becomings – Performance of life cycle:
Growing and dying within the woven pieces
Photographed by artist
The making of string, yarns, cloth and baskets is a literal and material writing of which women were the prime developers. There are still cultures today (e.g. in Papua New Guinea) that construct their culture around the billum, a basket made from a single string. This ‘becomes an embodiment of ritual potency representing cultural knowledge’ (Mackenzie 1991: 10). Through textile and textiling, I look at the ways in which the divide between art and craft that was clear during modernity is now closing.

Taking a few steps back in time to when craft movements in industrial societies had been perceived as a way to ‘provide an alternative aesthetic to that of mainstream mass-produced goods’ (Colchester 1993: 105), it becomes evident that the clear lines separating craft and art were deliberately blurred during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. Fibre artists reacted to the smooth finish of the industrially produced cloth prevalent during these times. Weavers began to create a rougher ‘wholesome’ cloth that emphasised the hand-made process when, later, ‘Industry drove the craft towards the exaggeration of the hand-made aesthetics’ (1993: 105). Exaggeration of the hand-made quality of fabric making also came through the labour-intensive qualities of the mediums used by artists, such as sisal and cotton.

The debate about whether fibre art is really art or craft was not something that could be settled either at the time or subsequently, due to changing approaches and attitudes that continue to be contested. The debate indicates that, during the 1960s and 1970s, there was a

63 Colchester (1993:105) comments that hand-made artefacts provided an antidote to the functional architecture in modern times.

64 According to Colchester (1993), it also marks a significant break with tradition by bringing in to the work the connotation of the nineteenth century vision of women at home embroidering. A group of neo-primitive artists from Chicago called the ‘Hairy Who’ used a ‘raw’ style in their textiles during the 1970s (1993: 109). One example is works by Clair Zeisler (1977/78) made from knotted sisal and cotton fibre form.
resistance to the prevalent machine or industrial aesthetic to which the hand-made aesthetic provided an alternative. This irresolvable tension leaves the artist to judge whether the object is craft or art, and whether the institutions should be the ones to decide its status. Fibre art was rarely considered to be art during this period, but was supported by an alternative infrastructure of craft councils and museums. Artists like Eva Hesse (discussed in Chapter 3) made work that successfully crossed the boundary between art and craft by allowing the embodied and critical aspects of the work to connect the two domains. It is only through the re-evaluation of craft and art in current debates that the importance of contesting this distinction becomes evident in terms of equality and the politics at work in the knowledge economy.

Other considerations that have contributed to the shifting boundaries between art and craft were the growing knowledge coming from the research into techniques of indigenous cultures. The unique hand-made baskets became sculptural objects popular in America during the 1970s (Colchester 1993: 110). Fibre art became architects’ solution for covering Modernist-style rooms. The organic qualities of fibre allowed them to transform over time into monsters. It was during these crucial decades for art and crafts that Modernist fibre artists such as Magdalena Abakanowicz and Olga de Amaral explored the qualities of

65 Later in 1986, in his introduction to the exhibition Craft Today: The poetry of the Physical, the critic Edward Lucie-Smith argued that ‘any distinction between art and craft rested entirely on the intention of the maker’, while the alternative view was that an object could be considered art only if the institution – art press, gallery or museum – defined it as such (Colochester 1993: 138).

66 The demand for fibre works may have contributed to the quality of the final products. Many of these works would have been rushed in the making, and consequently resulted in badly made objects. These works were heavy, liable to collect dust and difficult to dismantle. In many cases, they were impossible to clean and became the ‘hairy monsters’ that were ‘a bête noir for the fibre art movement in the 1990s’ (Colchester 1993: 140).
textiles, emphasising lightness and wind by using ultra-light tension fabric structures. In Australia in the 1970s, there were shifts in both social and political concerns that influenced the nature and conceptual focuses, as well as the aesthetic concerns, of textile practices (King 1998: 22). Issues of practice were (and continue to be) influenced by political social and cultural changes in which Australian Aboriginal artists offered techniques to non-Indigenous Australians, and émigré artists and international visitors brought a range of practices and materials to the mix. In addition, Australian artists have expanded their knowledge of both craft materials and procedures through travel to the international exhibitions around the world and exchanges with other artists.

There is a wide use of craft materials and procedures by artists in order to question or celebrate traditional approaches and embodied knowledges, and to reconnect to history through doing and making.

Câmara Pereira and Cardoso (2002) argue that the creative process fulfils the demands of novelty and usefulness because usual expectation and judgments are ‘satisfying the subsumed goal’ and yet are precisely the attribute from which art hopes to escape (Câmara Pereira and Cardoso 2002). Grosz (2008) adds to this notion of the goals of artwork:

Instead of supervening from above, taking art as its object, how can philosophy work with art or perhaps as and alongside art, a point of relay or connection with art? Only by seeking what it shares with art, what common origin they share in the forces of the earth of the living body, what ways they divide and

67 This includes émigré artists such as Magdalena Abakanowicz and Olga de Amaral, who I have mentioned in my previous discussion, as well as Ewa Pachucka from Poland who migrated to live in Australia in 1971 (King 1998: 22).
organise chaos to create a plane of coherence, a field of consistency, a plane of composition on which to think and to create. (2008: 4–5)

This proposed collaboration of art and philosophy echoes Ranciere’s (2009) and Carter’s (2004) requirements of a discursive context for material in art. However, if we accept that mind and matter achieve co-dependency through the medium of bodily action, then it follows that ideas and attitudes, rather than occupying a separate domain from the material, actually find themselves inscribed ‘in’ the object. Moreover, to connect to ideas discussed earlier by Knappett (2005), who states that as the bodily activities of intentional human agents draw in and complicate objects, and subsequently the latter cannot be neatly separated, we are confronted by what are effectively hybrid forms (we may even go so far as to classify objects as bodily and cognitive prosthetics). Objects generally, and artefacts in particular, are bound up in humans in their guises as biological, psychological and social beings, as bio-psycho-social totalities (Knappett 2005: 169). Therefore, it is through this process of textilising – making fibres ‘from scratch’ and weaving on the body – that the work of art and the art process, which have the potentiality of life, literally become interwoven into an ‘objectsubject’. I unite these words, which are usually regarded as the two poles of a dichotomy, to emphasise the way in which it becomes useful to think about artwork and living processes. The notion of becoming both object and subject through sensation follows Deleuze’s argument that sensation is always working through the bodies of both the maker and the viewer (1983: 104). The artwork becomes a performing project, which has two indivisible faces. One would be the subject face, as he argues, showing ‘the nervous system, vital interior movement, “instinct”, “temperament” and all the rest of a vocabulary that is common to naturalism’ and the second face would be the object where ““the fact”, the place, the event” (1983: 104) all come together to be the sensation. Through sensation, Deleuze
(1983: 104) states, a person becomes the other, always in concert through the body, which gives and receives.

Conventions of art in postmodern times affirm the fabricating of everyday life by embracing many styles and approaches accumulated from the past that enhance the possibilities of the imagination. Richard Kearney (1988) claims that today we are aiming at a ‘mutual convergence of horizons, a meeting of old and new minds where each may grow from contact with the other’ (1988: 40). The fluid sense of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary art has contributed to the dissolution of the boundaries between art and craft to a place where these boundaries become transparent and the technologies of craft re-enter art not through the traditional values they come to symbolise but through the continuity of the bodies looking at, listening to and making the work. At the same time that craft and art are seen to be collaborating, Rowley (1999) argues that hand-technologies, in an era obsessed with technology, remain peripheral to the focal concerns of postmodern theory and practice (1999: 4). Ruesga Bono (1999) picks up on this point, and makes it clear that:

Within Western artistic culture, textiles are considered as secondary and marginal elements, relegated to the category of the lavish, the popular and the functional, far from the sublime expressive level in which our culture catalogues what we call art. However, precisely because of that, many artists are working from within the textile category, within its functional and social usage, as a critical form for rethinking culture and its relation to power and hierarchy. (1999: 91)
It is through textile-making that the critical space can be claimed back. Fibre art is becoming a critical tool for rethinking subjectivity and identity in an era of globalisation – a time in which notions of culture are left open to new formations. Sue Rowley (1999) reclaims textile art’s place in her book *Reinventing Textile*, where she explains:

Craft can be used to signify non-western and resistant modes of creative practice without actually being recognised as contemporary art, or as critical practice, on its own terms. Indeed, critically engaged, signifying practices within contemporary craft are, in a sense, both superfluous to the requirements of contemporary art, and redundant because the trajectory of traditional modernist art practices leaves no space for their inclusion. (1999: 7)

Craft – in this case, textile making – can be seen not only as a way of critical praxis, but also as the model for a system of relationships and a set of behaviours that links up across many levels: individual, cultural and historical. This is a material⁶⁸ way of thinking about and organising the person in a world where fluidity is a recognised value. Textile has become a research method and research tool through which artists such as Susie Brandt find textile to be ‘a lens she focuses to sharpen her surrounding’ (Mensing 1999: 75). Looking at textiles for more than their aesthetic qualities, traditional values, utilitarian functions or skilled labour, I explore the embodied significance of textile art-making as a reflective and critical process that sustains the material production of the self in relation to the environment. The theoretical

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⁶⁸ Paul Carter’s book *Material Thinking: The Theory and Practice of Creative Research* (2004) proposes an engagement with material that allows artists to become discursive in the way they enter into and direct the processes of invention.
discussions around art and craft, textile and critical discourse help to focus the issues that a living art, crafted as textile, combines or displaces.

Creative practices offer new ways of thinking about the body/soul/spirit, and about experiencing the body as a whole. Installation art, in particular, absorbs the theoretical positioning of material and embodied activity (performativity vs. performance) to be a part of the practice, and allows artists to undo traditional concepts by communicating in ways in which perceptions are the subject of the work and experience of perception is held open for reflection and correlation. Erika Suderburg (2000) states that the motivation of installation art is:

- to fabricate interior and exterior environments, to alter surfaces until they envelop the viewer, to contrast ‘all-over’ compositions utilizing natural and man-made objects, and to relocate and disorder space – can be situated in relation to myriad historical art movements and smaller, sometimes private domestic actions. (2000: 6)

Philosophers, anthropologists, art theorists and artists agree – despite the vastly different ways in which they articulate their agreement – that the relationship of the person to the environment (the larger context) through the process, and the object or work that focuses that process, is the source of meaning and vitality. Installation art provides an immersive mode of sensation and awakening of the shared space of embodied experience. The reactions of the audience, reactions that result from bodily stimuli such as smell, touch, sound and vision, are interwoven with emotions and feelings that are already inscribed. These sets of reciprocal relationships form a complex whole that is autonomous yet bound
to the surroundings. Installation art plays out reactions similar to those happening in the body, which Damasio (2003) describes as a ‘nesting of simpler reactions within complex ones’ (2003: 37–38). Hal Foster (1998)\textsuperscript{69} notices that installation art also marks the shift from a medium-specific to a debate-specific form of art that opens up the defining boundaries created by traditional art, which relates a specific medium to a specific art framework. Artists and art theorists increasingly are turning to the sciences to describe physiologically what makers and viewers of artworks have understood phenomenologically. This is why interdisciplinary projects are so important, and why the correlation of theoretical perspectives is so useful to creative practitioners.

**Theorising the Virtual Within Immersive Environments**

In recent years, with the intensive growth in the use of digital technology and the growing availability of new means of production and reception, the approach to art practice, exhibition and spaces has become more fluid and focused on responsive or interactive devices. Accessibility of technology also contributes to the interconnection between cultures, encouraging what I will describe in Chapter 2 as nomadic and heterogeneous practices.

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\textsuperscript{69} Hal Foster is Professor of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University. He is a former staff critic for *Artforum* (1977–81) and Senior Editor for *Art in America* (1981–87), founding editor of *Zone* magazine and books (1985–92) and editor of *October* magazine and books (1991–present). He is also the author of a number of books He has been the recipient of Guggenheim and CASVA Fellowships.
The role of the artist is also shifting in relation to the influx of new modes of interaction. Nicolas De Oliveira (2003)\textsuperscript{70} characterises the shift ‘from generator of original or primary materials, to that of an editor of existing cultural objects to be inserted into new contexts’ (2003: 22). De Oliveira’s suggestion is to accentuate the dynamic exchanges between cultures and social systems, rather than seeing them as passively defined. This shift can be seen particularly in works that are produced across national boundaries or international work through collaborations between artists from multiple practices. Technology also enables the dematerialisation of the artspace, and breaks down geographical distances for artists to exhibit across the world at once.

Today, installation art moves within the mainstream, where museums along with commercial and non-commercial galleries play a vital role in promoting the change into large-scale exhibitions. Interaction between artist, art, the audience and the artspace produce different interpretations, which ‘suggest a creative engagement with the content of the artwork’ (De Oliveira 2003: 46). Rancière’s (2009) view of installation art – which he regards as an interruption that brings into play the unstable nature of images – challenges the notion of representation through changes of medium, locating them in different mechanisms of visions (2009: 26). Since these unstable images are circulating between the world of art and the world of images that increasingly condition our life, he argues, installation art agitates, fragments and reconstitutes the relation of art and life ‘by a poetic of the witticism that seeks to establish new differences of potentiality between these unstable elements’ (Rancière, 2009: 26). The challenge to the notion of representation can be seen

\textsuperscript{70} Nicolas de Oliveira is Director of the Museum of Installation in London. As a critic, teacher, exhibition organiser and artist, he pioneered the systematic study of installation art.
most strongly in performance art, which often goes hand in hand with installation art. Performance art that draws direct attention to the body and bodily processes has enabled the practitioner to understand the performativity involved in all forms of making, and to see how these modes of performativity are linked to the collective shared understanding of artefacts or immersive works (which I address below).

Furthermore, De Oliveira (2003) relates the shift from exhibiting art in institutional context to the situation in recent years, where open-ended projects have become site-specific and use almost any site that might contribute to the meaning-making. Installation art allows the composite characters of the new experience to be enmeshed with what is already embedded in the viewer’s perspective. My project literally knits diverse materials, persons and practices together in order to tap into the audience’s singular and cultural experience of body – their corporeal self.

Installation art attempts to touch the conditions of consciousness. As Adam Geczy and Benjamin Genocchio (2001) argue, ‘not in some final, static state of self-realisation, but in the awareness of particularities of time space and of shift modes of the art object, the artistic gesture as well as the artist who brings the relationship into being’ (2001: 1). They are describing the different levels and degrees of permeability involved in our encounter with objects and ideas in the world. Installation art participates in the world of everyday objects

71 Performativity is a central method across a range of artistic disciplines and practices. Central to this inquiry is the question of both ‘how the artist’s own ‘self’ – both as a complex identity and as a physical agent – might, through performance, become the ‘subject’ of art’ (www.biadart.com/?q=node/294) and how, through exhibiting in the gallery, the life cycle process of the plants and the woven pieces becomes a performatively subject.
and the world of highly designed and positioned information. ‘[M]emory and fantasy collapse into a kind of post-Prussian impossibility: the perfectly private yet perfectly shared locale. And this no-place abode is still evolving.’ (Do Ho Suh, in Richards 2002, n.p). This combination and juxtaposition of everyday and hyper design, memory and fantasy, contributes to the experience produced by installation in which the boundaries between the real and the artificial are unclear and loosened from habitual ways of understanding things and ourselves.

Video forms an important facet of many installation works and immersive environments. The cinematic video installation is vying for a place in direct experience through the use of space and scale. For example, I have visited the last few Sydney art biennales and Brisbane Asia-Pacific Triennial exhibitions, where video projections represented a vast portion of the exhibitions and used the majority of the exhibition spaces. The spatiality video and film installations have evolved in three distinct phases, argues Chrissie Iles: the phenomenological and performative phase, the sculptural phase and the cinematic phase (in Goldberg 1998: 252). The making of a video can also be used to supplement a performative or sculptural work documenting the process, and thereby allowing it to come alive within an exhibition. The video can become a narrative of the making/decision-making process.

The earliest video installations were created in the mid- and late 1960s. They were dramatically different from the digital video works made today. Iles (in Goldberg 1998) sees the difference between the large projections of the 1960s and contemporary video works as a

72 Chrissie Iles is Curator of Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Her specializations include film, minimalist and process-based art of the 1960s and 1970s, and film and video installation. She is part of the curatorial team formulating the artistic policy of the Whitney Museum.
function of technological advances, to a point that ‘new consciousness doesn’t want to dream its fantasies, it want to live them’ (Manovich 2007: 253). Lev Manovich\textsuperscript{73} identifies the change through the introduction of the database or structured collection of data (2007: 39). He prefers to relate to database and narrative as ‘two competing imaginations, two basic creative impulses two essential responses to the world’ (Manovich, 2007: 51), suggesting that they are interrelated but differentiated by the materials in which they are stored. Moreover, the digitally stored data in the computers allows for an endless variation of elements or transformations of data using the computer as a filter. Today, the omnipresence of computerised data in general, and the moving image in particular, has become the logic of the global culture.

**Performing Life: Theorising Performativity**

The interrelations between the materiality of installation, its space and the bodies moving within it – whether the artist’s or the viewers’ – become a way of performing. Performance art is described by Marvin Carlson\textsuperscript{74} (2004: 4) as an event that stands ‘in and of itself as an event; it is a part of the process of production … not an entity that exists temporally for the spectator, rather the spectator intersects in a trajectory of continuous productions’ is a part of production, but can comprise a series of performances.

The contemporary argument against art as representation insists on perceiving the material practice as performative. Barbara Bolt (2004) asserts that, through the creative practice, there

\textsuperscript{73} Lev Manovich is an artist and a theorist of new media.

\textsuperscript{74} Marvin A Carlson is Distinguished Professor in Drama and Theatre, Cornell University.
is a dynamic material exchange that occurs between the objects the body and the images. Rather than perceiving the fabrication as a system of signification, Bolt maintains the possibility of investigating the process of making and the ‘productive materiality’ as a performative act. She states that ‘we are also able to reveal art in its poietic form’ (2004: 188). Here, Bolt uses the word poiètic in its original sense of making to indicate that we live art and that art cannot be distinguished from the performativity of life. It is not Bolt’s aim to diminish the conceptual component, which has been the dominant component in the production and understanding of artwork; rather, she suggests that material handling and conceptualisation cannot be separated. I will discuss the notions of performance and performativity at length in Chapters 2 and 3. Let it suffice for now to emphasise the importance of framing each material expression – whether artefact, sculpture, art installation or textile – as a function of performativity. We may do actions unthinkingly, but attention and conceptual thinking give them the quality of performance (Carlson 2004: 4). The difference between doing and performing resides in positioning that activity through intention, purpose and attitude.

The performativity of life encompasses the activity that involves both human and non-human, in Textiled Becomings, for example, life and the living art meet, to ‘begin to look more like mutual improvisations that highlight the agency of the non-human – the fox … the germinating seeds’ (Szerszynski et al. 2003: 4). Hence, these collaborations can lose the sense of being prefigured and become performative, opening on to a continuous improvisation and creativity. Szerszynski and colleagues (2003) see the problem ingrained

75 Dr Bronislaw Szerszynski is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Lancaster University. Dr Wallace Heim is an independent curator who writes on performance and nature, on the philosophical, ethical

Textiled Becomings: Making from Scratch
in identifying nature as an object – static and fixed – rather than open and fluid. Performance is a primal term that enables the broadening of perspectives (in the social sciences, humanities, arts and life sciences) to include more active metaphors for the natural and the cultural to encompass the ever-changing complex world.\textsuperscript{76} This is fitting for my work, which moves between creating a ‘living sculpture’ and creating ‘living art’. There are two dimensions to the living art: the body that becomes beyond sculptural form during the process of making and becomes a living loom on which the artwork is formed (woven), then the artwork that comes to life when watered in order to present the process of growing (living). At each level of engagement, there is a performative aspect and a way in which the actions of the material, the human and/or the organic come to the fore.

Szerszynski et al. (2003) recognise the dynamic relationships between nature and society and nature and human. They emphasise the shift from static structures to active structures using the rich layers of meaning embedded in performance to make the transition. They refer to nature as materiality – rock, ocean, atmosphere, organism, hillside – and, as a process, evolution and causality connecting the signification and myriad associations with the ‘abstract’ substrate underlying appearances in which nature becomes the referent in the processes of signification rather than the signifier (2003: 2). Lastly, the essays in the volume emphasise performance as going beyond the concept of process to that which includes

and aesthetic dimensions of how nature-human relations are performed, through art-making and everyday life. Dr Claire Waterton is Senior Lecturer at Lancaster University.

\textsuperscript{76} Bruno Latour (2004) conceptuallyse the term actants in relation to the ‘non-human’ as participating as interveners rather than as things since, as he states, ‘as soon as we stop taking non-humans as objects as soon as we allow them to enter the collective in the form of new entities with uncertain boundaries … we can grant them the designations of actors’ (2004: 76).
practice, to again arrive at the way in which theorising become a methodology and a way of constructing life connections. Embracing the feminist approach, they argue that bodies are dynamically involved in ‘the play of signification’, where all that seems natural is performed (2003: 3).

**Conclusion**

This last section on art theory encapsulates or recapitulates the previous frameworks of philosophy and feminist thought, anthropology and cognitive science, and highlights issues more directly related to my project. The trajectory from aesthetics to bioart, to installed features of immersive environment to the performative aspect of all objects, is the arc that frames my practical engagement with material, and focuses my use of the theoretical understanding I have accumulated. As a practitioner, it is vital that I recognise the dynamic at the heart of practice, which is always situating itself in relation to what one knows and can rally into action at any point in the process. This includes what one knows, feels, remembers and thinks at a given moment as the result of an ongoing process that stretches the practitioner back into history and out into the future, touching the ancestors and leaving a message in a bottle on the shore. The aim of identifying each disciplinary and discursive framework was to suggest the interdisciplinary nature of the investigation question. This has resulted in the ongoing production of self and of life as the main question, expressed in the use of living materials in artwork.

Deleuze (2002) observes: ‘It is vital as potent pre-organic germinal, common to the animate and the inanimate, to a matter which raises itself to the point of life, and to a life which spreads itself through all matter’ (2002: xxii). I take this as an imperative to bring these
considerations of relationality back to the very core of my research methodology. Not only is it important to look how material and ideas are brought together in experience, but it is necessary to understand how they influence and shape one another. I *become* in the sensation. Something happens through the sensation that is not thought or feeling alone, not autonomy or historical construction, but is the body. The ruffled surface of the body demonstrates the movement of these frameworks. It is happening to the body.

From these frameworks, the issues that have driven my choice of material and the thoughts upon which I dwelt during my creative practice include:

- interconnections, interdisciplinary and cross-cultural enterprise of practice-led research
- the notion of becoming(s) in an era of globalisation
- the dynamics of subjectivity
- the non-anthropocentric view adopted by feminism, anthropology, cognitive science and art to set a higher value on non-human and inorganic life
- the interconnections between the object and subject
- the movement away from formal systems to the emphasis on embodied meaning, and
- the study of conceptual blending and its relation to art practice.

All these points derived from contemporary discourse and were steeped and chewed over in the process of my repetitive and meditative work, showing that the complexity of an artwork requires composite integration. Furthermore, the value of ideas is no greater than their ability to influence, guide and inflect ethical action and interaction with the world.
The goal of this survey of theoretical frameworks and the aims of my project is to contribute to an understanding of the ways in which cultural forms condition the ways ‘how’ we make meaning. The notion ‘from scratch’ has emerged from these theoretical investigations and the long-term process of reflecting on the way in which my artwork was created and how it connects with others. Artwork allows a slowing down to occur in the process of making connections, having thought and associating feelings. It is the relationship of the body to the action and the material that produces this dilation of personal time into historical time. Thinking through/with the material and materialising thought is the only methodology suitable for practitioners that I have gleaned from the history of ideas. This is explored in detail in the next chapter, where I construct a methodology that employs a web-like approach to the production of a creative site within a practice-led methodology through the ethos of making ‘from scratch’.
Chapter 2
Methodology

Beginning with Play

The psychiatrist Russell Mears (2000)\(^{77}\) discusses the idea of intimacy as a part of a conversation between self and the environment. Mears understands the ‘self’ as a ‘special form of conversation’. It is a conversation, he explains, that is ‘non linear, associative and apparently purposeless’ (2000: 2). This approach diverges from the dualistic view of the self as dictated by logic,\(^{78}\) which positions the self as separated and hierarchically inferior to the mind/brain. Understanding the self as one element of a conversation opens up the idea to a developing process of exchange with environments. The conversation has the shape of languages that include traditional language – linear, logical and clearly purposeful – but only as they operate alongside the language of inner life, which has ‘the form of stream of consciousness and certain kind of play’ (Mears 2000: 2).

The notion of play is important to the process of human development, claims Mears (2000). This is because, in the West, play is categorised collectively with pleasure and amusement; it is therefore seen as ‘lacking the seriousness of the “real” world. It seems to be beyond the boundaries of respectable science and philosophy.’ (2000: 15) Lack of seriousness appears to

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\(^{77}\) Russell Meares has been Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry at Sydney University and Director of Joint Centres of Mental Health Excellence, Sydney since 2002.

\(^{78}\) Contrast the psychologist Gilbert Ryle’s post World War II approach – for example, in The Concept of Mind (1949) in which the human condition is mechanical. The head is ‘real’ and the mind is not (Mears 2000: 7).
be attached whenever there is a diversion from the traditional, as in the case of practice-led research. I would like to draw attention to two levels of play that are interlinked to nurture each other, and also rely one on the other. The first involves play as a part of experimentation within practice-led research. The second brings attention to the ways in which play is central to a person’s individual becoming (Mears, 2000:15). Marjanovic-Shane and Beljanski-Risti see play as a mode of engagement that brings self and other, work and environment into a state ready for change:

Play activity should be seen as a ‘dissipative structure’ – a ‘self-organising system far from equilibrium’ (Capra, 1996: 86) This self-organising system on one hand negates the existing order between individuals and, on the other, calls for creation of new self-organising activity systems (i.e., new identities, new rules, and new objects) Although they are forged in play, elements of fictive activity systems might become social and psychological tools used to create and understand, that is, to mediate understanding of the actual activity system. (Marjanovic-Shane and Beljanski-Risti 2008: n.p.)

Play and intimacy set the scene for the exploration of theories that would frame a methodology and allow a practitioner such as myself to develop and apply methodological perspectives in the production of my creative work.

79 Ana Marianovi-Shane is Professor of Multidisciplinary Human Development at the University of Pennsylvania.
Embodied Knowledge

Because I am interested in the ways that cultural, social and environmental forces are intertwined in the creative process, and are reflected through specific materials and embodied performative activities, it became increasingly important to construct a mode of engagement that values both the discursively acquired knowledge and the embodied knowledge that merges from producing artwork.

In order to make sense of and correlate the range of theoretical frameworks into a coherent methodology that accounts for the material processes with which I have engaged, the embodied experience of making the work and the decision-making process for presenting the final exhibition need to be articulated.

The consolidation of these research processes requires that the interdisciplinary nature of practice-led research and creative practice deploy theoretical frameworks in order to lead inevitably towards a method of ethical engagement. Discussion of my methodology consists of a set of notions of method, each embedded in the next. First, I begin with the most general context of practice-led research and move to a more specific concept of production of self, other and material in a nomadic mode. Finally, I discuss the development of a specific mode of operations involved in making work ‘from scratch’, and explore the embodied understandings that emerge from this assemblages of methods. At the core of all this activity is the imperative to enact decisions and connections at the most basic level of everyday practice as directly as possible. This enactment entails a constant movement within and between all the elements of the project.
**Practice-led Research**

To begin, practice-led research needs to be discussed in more detail. This is the largest field of methodological description, and includes a range of research approaches about which there is no consensus. These approaches all value performativity and engagement with materials, including addressing the material practice of writing (and writing an exegesis). My particular understanding of practice-led research attempts to integrate theory with practice in the social field. I have called this aspect of my methodology the production of a creative site. Rosi Braidotti’s (2006) development of Deleuze’s notion of nomadism has been used to theorise the strategy of applied ethics of this embodied methodology. The purpose of all this is to arrive at a more basic and tactical understanding of how one might proceed with research and the stakes of making decision and coordinating theory and practice.

This section is concerned only with theorising method. I will discuss the specifics of the decisions made, the experiences that ensued and the forms and relations that arose during the process of making, in Chapter 3.

**Debates About Practice-led Research**

Practice-led research is perhaps one of the most important developments in academia for creative practitioners. It suggests that the processes and products of art, like those of any other disciplinary inquiry, can and may contribute to the reproduction and development of knowledge. Most notably, for such a notion to become widely accepted, there must be a premise that knowing by doing constitutes a contribution equivalent to language-based
discursive scholarship. With this comes the recognition of many types of intelligences, as famously outline by Howard Gardner\(^8^0\) in *Frames of Mind* (1993). As might be expected, tensions can arise between academic writing and a creative project such as *Textiled Becomings* that does not belong within the traditional framework of art research.

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2008), who have written extensively on research methodologies, define the traditional methodological period as belonging to the time between 1900 and 1950, when methodology was associated with a positivist foundational paradigm.\(^8^1\) The Modernist or golden age – between the 1950s and 1970s – offered new perspectives on qualitative research and included such approaches as hermeneutics, phenomenology, cultural studies and feminism. Denzin and Lincoln argue that the period from 2005 onwards – a period they define as ‘fractured future’ – can be characterised by confrontation of the ‘methodological backlash associated with the evidence–based social movement’ (2008: 3). Thus qualitative research becomes a situated activity, locating observers in the world as a function of the research they employ as a set of interpretative material practices by which to make the world visible. While Denzin and Lincoln focus their discussion mainly on the benefits of qualitative and qualitative research, it is important to conduct a selected survey of artists and theorists who have participated in the debate about what constitutes practice-led research.

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\(^8^0\) Howard Gardner is the John H. and Elisabeth A. Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

\(^8^1\) Positivism is a trend in bourgeois philosophy that declares natural (empirical) sciences to be the sole source of true knowledge and rejects the cognitive value of philosophical study. Positivism emerged in response to the inability of speculative philosophy (e.g. Classical German Idealism) to solve philosophical problems, which had arisen as a result of scientific development (www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/help/mach1.htm).
Robyn Stewart (2001)\textsuperscript{82} points out that most art schools are members of a university community ‘underpinned by the notions of research as a tool for ongoing development of and challenge to, knowledge’ (2001: 4). Qualitative research therefore can be said to incorporate critical conversations rather than a collection of verified facts. As Mears (2000) states, conversation occurs across a number of languages (or knowledge bases), and requires ‘play’ to work against the tyranny of forms and categories.

To ensure a more productive mode of positioning oneself and the information for which one has searched, two points need to be explored. The first is the idea of the researcher as an observer, which assumes a third-person position rather than a first-person experience. Second, and connected to the first, is the need to consider artworks such as \textit{Textiled Becomings} as movements between disciplinary vantage points such as visual art, sensual art, live art and bioart. Instead, the movement itself enacts the shift in attention, which emphasises the performative aspect of the artwork rather than representation aesthetics of the image.\textsuperscript{83}

Practice-led research enables a synthesis of the world-artist-artwork and openness to becoming art. This, of course, needs to be balanced with the rigour of observation and attending faithfully to one’s thoughts and feelings, tracking their associations and foundations.

\textsuperscript{82} Robyn Stewart is Head of the School of Creative Arts at the University of Southern Queensland.

\textsuperscript{83} I would dispute Denzin and Lincoln’s (2008) assertion that material practices, such as art, transform the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews conversations photographs, recording and memos to the self (2008:4). The point of this project is to propose that; consistent with the premise of practice-led research, material practices are forms of knowledge and communication that work in tandem with discursive practices that they designate as representations.
to their hidden biases of formation. Barbara Bolt (2004)\textsuperscript{84} argues that the artist ‘no longer sets the world before her/him as an object, but rather allows a total openness to the Being of art, that is the “work” of art’ (2004: 186). In this way, she believes, ‘we can begin to understand that art is a performative not a representational practice’ (2004: 186). Bolt asserts that starting the investigation of the field of an art-of-practice from the bottom up (that is, the activities of the hand and eye) rather than from the top down, will allow articulating the logic of practice: ‘this logic follows on from practice rather than prescribing it’ (Bolt 2004: 7).

Estelle Barrett (2006)\textsuperscript{85} argues that openness in practice-led research can be obtained through an understanding of the dynamics of creative production and its capacity of extending the horizons of research, and therefore of knowledge. This works in contrast to a process of outlining criteria for measuring the benefits of artistic production, such as Register of Research Activity in Australia. Similarly, Springgay and colleagues (2005) argue that moving beyond the existing criteria for qualitative research towards interdisciplinary research requires moving away from an emphasis on the product towards active participation and meaning-making within the research texts. Approaches that interweave rather than patch up knowledge piecemeal, they maintain, become productive ruptures that open up new spaces for living, inquiry and knowledge.

Considering that diverse approaches to the visual arts within the academy are more accepted today, Graeme Sullivan (2005) argues that visual art research still should be grounded within

\textsuperscript{84} Barbara Bolt is Associate Dean in the Graduate Program at the Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Music at the University of Melbourne. She is a practising artist who has also written extensively on the visual arts and its relationship to philosophy.

\textsuperscript{85} Estelle Barrett is Deputy Head of the School of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University.
the practice of the studio and that ‘these [practices] are robust enough to satisfy rigorous institutional demands’ (2005: xiii). Furthermore, he claims that the artist-theorist as a practitioner works from within their practice, implying action research rather than research distanced by interpreting the art-practice as a teacher. While it is certainly important to consider the work of art to be as coherent and internally consistent as any essay or experimental design, it is also important to notice that, with the recognition that social, cultural, historical and discursive perspectives are on an equal footing, comes the necessity for each domain to open itself to other applications in life, research and community. This means that practitioners who decide to produce Doctorates of Philosophy would be expected to also articulate the contexts, procedures, insights and connections that arts practice has to other knowledge economies.

**Transdisciplinarity**

Sullivan’s (2005) exit point is the conjecture that studio-based researching within academia will make the art-making central to the research. As for the theoretical aspect, though interdisciplinary investigation of cultural texts theories and practice bring out the meaning, a transdisciplinary\(^\text{86}\) approach is required for a critical perspective. According to Sullivan, the reflexive researcher will not only identify problems but also becomes responsive to potential changes. This approach takes into consideration the view that nothing is totalised or hierarchically positioned.

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\(^{86}\) The transdisciplinary approach is a particular form of interdisciplinary research that encourages dialogue between various disciplines and frameworks that may lead to development of both through a process of each internally appropriating the logic of the other as a resource for its own development without setting one set of research values above another (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002: 186).
Wendy Russell (2000) prefers to use a transdisciplinary approach to conduct research in an era when specialised knowledge has become more accessible through the development of technology. She claims that such a research method not only needs to be responsive to and inclusive of the various parties involved, but should also consider the option of sharing the research outcomes with a wider and versatile public. Transdisciplinary research, she continues, considers areas that have fluid boundaries such as ‘sustainable development, science and technology policy, public health and climate change’. These are all examples of areas which, ‘by their nature, cut across several disciplines’ (Russell 2000: n.p.)

The origins of such an approach, according to Basarab Nicolescu, President of the Centre International de Recherché et d’Etudes Transdisciplinaires (CIRET), can be traced to an:

Inexhaustible richness of the scientific spirit, which is based on questioning, as well as on the rejection of all a priori answers and certitude contradictory to the facts. At the same time, it revalues the role of deeply rooted intuition, of imagination, of sensitivity, and of the body in the transmission of knowledge. Only in this way can society of the twenty-first century reconcile effectiveness and affectivity. (http://perso.club-internet.fr/nicol/ciret)

When research involves more than one discipline, the communication between disciplines should not take the metaphorical shape of a bridge that crosses gaps between them; rather, it should be considered an overflow. In other words, the prefix ‘trans’ indicates between, across

87Wendy Russell is a Lecturer in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Wollongong. She is now researching ethical, legal and social aspects of biotechnology.
and beyond disciplines, where the interaction may cause modifications to all sides. Transdisciplinary research, however, is not antagonistic to interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary researches, but rather is complimentary to them as an overflow of these disciplines.

Graham Sullivan (2006) discusses the relationship between the artefact created in practice-led research and the critical process that leads to conceptual shifts, deconstructions and new understandings that ‘have the potential, to reveal new truths’. In addition, Sullivan claims that there is ‘making or a productive feature that links knowledge and understanding whereby new insights are enacted in some conceptual or material way and it is “understanding” rather than mere explanation that is of central interest in research activity’ (Sullivan, 2006: n.p.).

**An Emphasis on Action**

Although the legitimacy of practice-led research attracts considerable debate, the value of creative practice, Barrett (2006) asserts, lies precisely in its capacity to provide alternative modes of inquiry that foreground emergence and experiential bodily engagement usually deemed unimportant within traditional research paradigms. This emphasis on action, on bodily experience and tacit knowledge, is used by Barrett (2007) to describe the embodied ‘pre-logical phase of knowing’. It is particularly relevant because of the role of the body’s interaction with the world in knowledge production, which would enable challenging the separation and privileging of mind over body. Pre-logical space is where sensations of touch, smell and taste are not yet organised into conscious thought. Accessing this space can also lead to introspection and inner experience, attending to ‘anything that is going on in your awareness at any moment … anything that emerges, or coalesces, or becomes a phenomenon, or experiences, out of the welter of inner and outer stimuli that simultaneously impinge on a
person’ (Hurlburt and Heavey 2006: 1). Gallagher (2005) discusses this pre-logical space under what he calls the prenoetic\textsuperscript{88} experience – that which follows the body that perceives, memorises, imagines, believes and judges before embodying. The extent to which the awareness of the body is included in the consciousness of the experience, and the role embodiment takes in shaping the processes of consciousness, are his main concerns, which become relevant in the meditative process of making repetitive work like textiles. The question for practice-led research is how much of this awareness and non-awareness can and should be included in research.

The prenoetic, as Gallagher (2005) describes it, enters conscious awareness through intuition. In the creative site, perceiving all that is going on yet being aware of those things results in a feeling that, if examined, becomes an intuitive insight. One way of evoking intuitive insight and sensitivity to all that is environment is by becoming extremely intimate with materials and material processes with which one is working. This will also include an increasing awareness of the body as material processes: movement affect, sensations and cognition. Therefore, ‘within the context of studio-based research, innovation is derived from methods that cannot always be pre-determined’ and ‘outcomes of artistic research [studio-based] are necessarily unpredictable’ (Barrett and Bolt 2007: 3, emphasis in original). The unpredictability accompanying the notion of experimentation does not necessarily contradict the aspects of the careful design. Creative work is a rigorous movement between the known and behaviours that might produce or deal with unknown possibilities.

\textsuperscript{88} Prenoetic signifies the hidden aspects of consciousness that are happening before we are aware of it (Gallagher 2005: 144).
When the *process* of making the artwork is accentuated, then the idea of becoming – in my project, the continual process of knitting the fabric of life within the artwork and vice versa – lets the body write itself and be written through/with/in the artwork.

Both Bolt (2004) and Barrett (2007) have written on process, both in this regard and in relation to practice-led research. Bolt discusses the effect that materialisation has upon perception and embodiment, arguing that reflection of experience becomes matter and ‘the outside world enters the work and the work casts its effects back into the world’ (Bolt 2004: 10). Barrett (2007) sees the artistic practice-led research as a situated inquiry that cannot separate the knowledge acquired from the situation in which it was used. The benefit of this type of research, she adds, goes beyond the curricular frame since it involves revealing and producing ‘new’ knowledge that was not anticipated by such discipline (2007: 5).

I tie together threads that inform my own practice through material thinking and making material where experimenting with thought is becoming intensive and creative.

The world is exposed, Bolt (2004) argues, in arts research that demonstrates a very specific kind of knowing that is gained through handling materials. Relying heavily on Heidegger’s elaboration of ‘handability’, which is a form of understanding through hands and eyes that leads to a particular assemblage in art, ‘new’ knowledge in creative practice can be seen to emerge in the involvement with materials, where a ‘dynamic material exchange can occur between objects, bodies and images’ (Bolt, 2004: 8), using methods, tools and ideas of practice. Materials provide a key to rethinking of the conditions of understanding and meaning-making within creative research. Bolt clarifies that handling is ‘a relation of care and concernful dealing, not a relation where the world is set before us (knowing subjects) as
an object’ (2004: 52). She clearly differentiates between her understandings of ‘material productivity’ and the concept of ‘material thinking’ developed by Carter (2004). Carter subsumes materials into a system of discursive signification, wanting the qualities to translate to be effective. For Carter, material thinking centres on the collaboration between artists and writers rather than the relationship between artists and materials being seen as important. Even though he claims that research is unavoidably creative when an act of creative remembering occurs during materialisation of ideas (2004: 7), Bolt argues that the purpose of deploying words to express plastic art is knowing the world as a form of representation. We come to know the world, she implies, through handling that includes not only the materiality of the ingredients, such as paint or clay, but also materiality of the tools and how they collaborate with the artist’s body to produce knowledge. Material productivity, as she calls it, comes from the combination of multiple intelligences that are generated from the conjunction of particular responsiveness to materials, tools and processes, both of materials and body, within practice. Understanding this mode of thinking through material as the logic of practice, she maintains, is to realise practice as a specific way of knowing: ‘material practice in terms of co-emergence rather than mastery’ (2004: 78).

Bolt (2004) argues that revealing the body through practice-led research requires reflection and experience to become matter and continue to perform themselves dynamically, bringing into the light the ‘body of labour’ (Bolt, 2004: 184). But Graham Higgs (2008) suggests that this can work in both directions when making art. He describes a transformative process in which the artist, the medium, the environment and the viewer are affected.

Donna Haraway (2006) agrees with Higgs’ idea of mutual impact, where almost any ‘serious knowledge project is a thinking technology insofar as it re-does its participants’ (2006: 154).
She explains that ethnographic practices are thinking technologies that reach into the researcher and rearrange the world for purposes that go beyond mere function to open something that is yet to emerge. The body labouring in art crosses disciplinary boundaries, and various sensory modalities improve the quality of life. Explorations of sensory modalities in practice-led research allow the creator and the viewer ‘to imagine possible ways of being, encourage the individual to move personal boundaries, and challenge resistance to change and growth’ (Higgs 2008: 552).

The question that needs to be theorised here is whether, when incorporating more tactile practices such as fibre and textile-making – which uses no tools other than the body – this affects the experience and production of new knowledge. When the body that appears in the work of art is both a tool and the maker, the question of handability moves back on to the body as material and the interaction with material with the body. Bolt’s discussions are almost exclusively concerned with long-established practices such as painting and drawing, and thus handability in relating to tool use. The term ‘handling' already has a hierarchal tone to it, where the artist’s hand is privileged, and has control, over the material – the object. The lines become blurred, however, when the artist is working with the body and environment, bioart or living art, as I am in *Textiled Becomings*. Because it is difficult to categorise seeds or plants as objects, or even as in-between subject-objects, the idea of handling might be more useful if it is shifted towards the emotion of conversing or conversation that Mears (2000) proposes. These ideas are consistent with Bolt’s (2004) emphasis on co-emergence, and allow the pre-logical or prenoetic to participate and inform the conscious design of the performative interaction. My project sits more comfortably in the theoretical space that Mears (2000) defines, simply because it is in this conversant space that action, decisions and
perception impact so directly upon subject and environment, artefact and viewing community.

If handling revealed the limits of conceptual thinking and if, in pursuing the notion of handling, my work were to move in a different direction, the work might become more about the weavings as objects rather than as the shape of the interaction between myself and the material, myself and the space the weaving constructs or myself and another person who works to make an enlarged loom. This is a space of relationality, not of aesthetic object or text (but of relational aesthetics\textsuperscript{89} and relational form, which I discuss at length in the Conclusion - pp. 229, 230, 231- the final exhibition section). And since the work I weave is in a constant process of growing and dying, as the different seeds sprout and go through their life cycle at different times, my ‘making’ of the work includes caring for the seeds – the cotton and the barley – by watering them and maintaining their health. There are relationships that develop through care and nurturing that go beyond a question of handability and beyond a give-and-take relationship, to become a conversation with the elements that have joined and that articulate themselves separately and together in the process. The work, the shape of the piece that is developing, seems to occupy the space before a technologisation of thought (Bolt, 2004: 7) or at the point where thought is considered the ‘from scratch’ technology that prompts a series of actions – none of which aligns with mastery so much as with a duty of care. Without being Aboriginal, it is this kind of intense interaction with materials that brings one to the most fundamental relationship with the world with which one is engaging.

\textsuperscript{89} Relational aesthetics and relational form, introduced by the critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud, also talk about “the role of the artworks [which] is no longer to form imaginary and utopian realities, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within existing real whatever the scale chosen by the artist” (2002:13)
In her essay, ‘The Hand of the Maker’, Beverly Gordon (2003) argues that the experience of making a textile is an important component of understanding the meaning of textile. She notes: ‘We must encourage textile researchers to include hands-on experiments as part of their investigation.’ (2003:n.p) In this regard, practice-led research attempts to bridge introspective insight with communally verifiable analytical findings. The emphasis in this project is on communication, interconnectivity and cyclic shared flow between the nomadic practitioner/researcher and the world.

Gordon’s (2003) argument is that, through textile-making and fibre-making in particular, there is an additional dimension that needs to be distinguished, separate from being immersed in aesthetics and beyond capturing notions of form or beauty. This additional dimension in which ‘painters make visible forces that previously were not, much as composers make us hear sounds that were unheard of’ (Braidotti 2006: 146) is also what emerges in the ‘hands on’, ‘from scratch’ approach in Textiled Becomings.

Bolt (2006) offers a discussion of the revelations that confronted Hockney, which he had not set out to find. She explains:

The ‘shock of the new’ is thus a particular understanding that is realised through our dealings with the tools and materials of production, and in our handling of ideas, rather than a self-conscious attempt at transgression. This is material thinking. (Bolt, 2006: n.p)

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90 Beverly Gordon is Professor of Human Ecology, Ohio State University. Her areas of expertise are the history of domestic life and women’s ‘background’ activities. Gordon was the President of the Textile Society of America between 1998 and 2000.
Writing an Exegesis: On Method

I perceive the act of writing as an additional factor or alternative mode of materialising experiences in my research. Writing is an ongoing practice in itself, suited to exploring the relationships between concepts and ideas such as intersubjectivity and embodiment, and the experiences of making and writing. Most importantly, writing is integral to the process of materialising thinking that aims at reflexively accentuating points of intersection that pertain to theory practice.

The main concerns I had when I came to write the exegesis were the need to weave together and address the gaps that existed between my experiences and various intelligences for the readers. Eileen Honan and Margaret Sellers (2006) argue that we are always being steered ‘in the direction of producing a linear text – an ordered progression of theoretical ideas and practical application that leads to a coherent conclusion’ (2006: n.p) – which is, of course, difficult in relation to a creative process that is non-linear and emergent. My research was conducted in a rhizomatic style, mapping the connections and disconnections between and across a wide range of paths. In an interview, Donna Haraway talks about the difficulty that arises when working in a web to categorise and divide. She comments that she agrees with Latour’s challenge to collect or classify if you think the world through connections, and adds:

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91 Dr Eileen Honan is Senior Lecturer in English and Literacy Education at the University of Queensland. Margaret Sellers is a Senior Lecturer School of Education Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Queensland.

92 The rhizome is explained at length by Deleuze and Guattari (1987). In short, the rhizome is working according to a signifying rupture, where it can be broken or shattered at a given spot ‘but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or new lines … these lines always tie back to one another.’ (1987: 9) Thus, because the lines are always connected and related, there can never be dichotomy or dualism. (1987: 9–10)
‘Humans, wherever you track them, are products of situated relationships with organisms, tools, much else.’ (2006: 146).

I found Haraway’s (2006) linking of the terms ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ useful to explain the ways in which writing an exegesis can be seen as an ongoing negotiation between the two poles. She sees fiction as a mode of active making. Noting that fact and fiction have etymological connections, she observes that fact is a past principal that is already done, whereas fiction is constantly happening (Haraway 2006: 153). By extension, it is possible to say that there is no clear dividing line between social reality and theories of reality.

Approaching the exegesis as fiction also implies writing about the ongoing process of understanding through the exegetic structure. Bolt (2006) combined art practice with writing about her experience to ‘develop an argument for a performative understanding of art’ (2006: 9). However, Sullivan (2005) specifies the current debate among international theorists and practitioners who find it challenging to position the ‘artist-theorist’ as a critical figure in higher education research. Even though, for some, the ‘written component’ is seen as helping to critique, confirm and reconfigure theoretical positions and research directions, for others exegesis is perceived as redundant due to the insistence that there is a gap between academic and practice-led research. Barrett (2009) suggests overcoming the debates by shifting the focus from the evaluation of the work as a product to the understanding of the project as a process. She uses Foucault’s conception of discourse that refers not only to language, but also to the practices that operate to produce objects of knowledge (2009: 136). Her argument is that the creative research is not only motivated by emotional, personal and subjective
concerns, but also incorporates tacit\textsuperscript{93} knowledge. Further, she contends that through materialising practices the relationship between practices and text emerges as inquiry, where the researcher’s self-reflexive mapping is vital. The connections that surface from a practice-led inquiry should reveal new knowledge and understandings that might have not emerged from using another methodology.

Continuing the survey of practice-led research and the issue of how to think about writing in tandem with creative practices, Hazel Smith and Roger Dean (2009)\textsuperscript{94} propose a model of an interactive cyclic web applied to practice-led research and research-led practice (2009: 2). Smith and Dean argue that the concept of knowledge is unstable, ambiguous and multidimensional in the postmodernist world-view, and therefore it must be treated as an activity rather than monolithically. I agree with their statement that practice-as-research in recent years can be understood in terms of a broader view of creative practice which includes not only artwork but also the surrounding milieu, theorisation and documentation (2009: 5).

Similarly Brad Haseman and Daniel Mafe (2009)\textsuperscript{95} argue there is still not enough flexibility towards the ‘newcomers’\textsuperscript{96} of practice-led research in the academy, and that too linear an

\textsuperscript{93} Michael Polanyi (1966) argues that considerations of human knowledge should include the idea that we can know more than we can tell; therefore, most knowledge cannot be put into words. Moreover, he states that tacit knowing will be ‘shown to form the bridge between the higher creative powers of man and the bodily processes which are prominent in the operations of perception’ (1966: 7).

\textsuperscript{94} Roger T. Dean is a composer/improviser and research Professor in Music Cognition and Computation at MARCS Auditory Laboratories University of Western Sydney. Hazel Smith is a Research Professor in the Writing and Society Research Group at the University of Western Sydney. They were both founders of the intermedia arts group austraLYSIS.

\textsuperscript{95} Daniel Mafe is a Senior Lecturer in Visual Arts for the Creative Industries Faculty at QUT and Brad Haseman is Professor and Assistant Dean (Research) for the Creative Industries Faculty at QUT.
approach causes anxiety and unresolved tensions, dampening the ‘dynamism of the process of inquiry which lies at the heart of their [newcomers] creative production’ (2009: 212). They argue that practice needs to be understood within a context of all the activities in which the artist or creative practitioner partakes.

As a multi-arts practitioner and a ‘newcomer’ to academic research, I fit somewhere in between. I don’t belong strictly to the fine arts or humanities or science-based point of view, either in my formation or my career as a practitioner. I move in between these positions and domains. The guidelines or strategies available for researchers, who are working in the in-between areas, overlapping art, biology, cultural studies, anthropology, cognitive science and philosophy, are under continual development. Given this context, in which the value of creative research is not yet clearly established – for example, the new ERA\textsuperscript{97} scheme for

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\textsuperscript{96} The term ‘newcomers’ relates to those who start their path in the academic research disciplinary environment. \\
\textsuperscript{97}The Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative assesses research quality within Australia's higher education institutions using a combination of indicators and expert review by committees comprising experienced, internationally recognised experts. In its classification manual, it states: ‘Research and Development is defined according to the OECD standard as comprising creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications. An R&D activity is characterized by originality. It has investigation as a primary objective, the outcome of which is new knowledge, with or without a specific practical application, or new or improved materials, products, devices, processes or services. R&D ends when work is no longer primarily investigative. Some Research Projects, especially in the social sciences, require a multi-disciplinary approach in order to achieve a purpose. Applied research is original work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge with a specific application in view. It is undertaken either to determine possible uses for the findings of basic research or to determine new ways of achieving some specific and predetermined objectives.’

‘Experimental development is systematic work, using existing knowledge gained from research or practical experience, which is directed to producing new materials, products, devices, policies, behaviours or outlooks; to installing new processes, systems and services; or to improving substantially those already produced or installed.’
\end{flushright}
evaluating creative output by Australian academics is yet to confirm how to verify the research value and impact of creative work – this is a situation that needs to be remedied in Australia in order to enable real recognition of the contribution that all modes of inquiry might make and to produce a cultural awareness of the values of the arts and humanities.

It is evident that the debate around what practice-led research is, and how it contributes to the positioning of arts practice in a wider community of researchers and meaning-makers, is yet to be conclusively decided. For me, practice-led research involves the combination of creative processes and all forms of writing, but especially critical writing, which aims to reveal the intimacy and tactile sensuality in the processes of making through and with the body. By articulating this in all manner of materialisation, the interwoven relationship between artist, medium and the world is perpetually exposed and developed.

**Creative Site**

Practice-led research, including the written component, focuses on the dynamic aspect of the research and the outcomes in light of the processes that are revealed. By proposing that practice-led research sets up a creative site to facilitate inventive reconfigurations of research methods and first-hand experience, I argue that a researcher must attend to a combination of moments in time and to the material processes in order to produce adequate connections between ideas and things and contexts. In some respects, creative practitioners are performing a type of cognitive blending in which the process of producing artefacts resulting from learning about learning, perceiving perception, feeling what happens when you make things in a certain way all becomes the production of experience gathered together in the
Creative site. If cognitive blending is the type of engagement, the creative site is the threshold beyond which all things relevant at any given time enter into the project to be correlated.

Creative sites such as Textiled Becomings combine multiple inputs and acknowledge unconscious and emotional connections to provide insight into how artists may have opportunities to experiment with what is conscious and what is not. It is in a creative site that the open-ended connections constituting embodied awareness are materialised and become available to become further connections. Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2003) describes the reflective moment that occurs as a result of the processing of emotions:

We process not only the presence of an object but its relation to others and its connection to the past. In those circumstances the apparatus of emotions naturally evaluates, and the apparatus of conscious mind thinkingly coevaluates (2003: 54).

He describes the ways in which relationships between thought, feeling, emotion and the world of objects keep on moving back and forth like a knitting needle in a work where the holes created by the motion of the needle allow movement and flexibility between all other parts. He goes on to explain how being able to modulate our emotional response through our educational development and bringing these emotions in line with the cultural requirements, demonstrates the co-shaping of individual social and environment. It can therefore be stated that if we avoid the emotions and feelings that are woven into the process of research, we will also avoid a part of what we are – both personally and in terms of our connection to others, socially, culturally and historically.
The constructing of a creative site, I suggest, is an inclusive activity in which rhizomic\(^{98}\) connections are made between the embodied experiences, information, questions, acquired practices, new experiences and knowledge perceived from multiple sources. I regard knowledge both as what I am aware of and what I am not initially aware of, but which affects me. Therefore, instead of considering my practice as leading the research – which might be limiting when approaching information – I have found it useful to regard the whole project as a dynamic creative site. Thus the creative site is a space where I become conscious to various sensations. It has been argued by scientists such as Antonio Damasio (1999) and feminists such as Griselda Pollock (1996) that all information that is embodied is perceived through a sensing organ – the body as a whole. Thus the body of the researcher becomes not one point but potentially a constellation of infinite points of transactions between the social and the subject, ‘between what is classically presented as an intimate or private inside and a public or social outside’ (Pollock 1996: 6). The site where overlapping spaces in between and of the body and world converse has a semi-permeable membrane that allows flow and change.

From the discussions on theoretical frameworks, we can draw the conclusion that contemporary research in general, and certainly creative research in particular, requires both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary platforms, and in many ways cannot avoid this complication as the core relationship within practice-led inquiry. My project, Textiled Becomings, privileges interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches that enrich the embodied experiences involved in the space and time of research. However open one’s

\[^{98}\text{A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo.}\) (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 25). The Deleuzian rhizome suggests multiple connections where any point can be linked.
methodology is when writing about visual creative practices, there is the problem of expertise that highlights the divide between experiential, non-linguistic and performative knowledge in relation to analytical and descriptive language-oriented discourses. For the creative practitioner, practice is the site that opens up the relationships, and theory informs the capacity to perceive and act. Practice also shows the limitations of disciplinary values as a form of experimental learning. Hence we arrive at the conundrum of practice-led research. The practitioner is focused on ideas that assist with the ability to produce creative work and to that end become ‘expert’ at correlating information, skills and experience that impinge upon, contextualise, assist or question that process. The practitioner becomes an expert at method – the method specific to the task. For example, how does one correlate the insights and phenomenological understanding of the body that Spinoza, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze offer, with neuro-scientific information from Damasio or Gallagher on awareness before conscious perception, with processes like applied anthropology in which researchers build historical inventions (such as the water screw for up hill irrigation, or the catapult to learn from doing or the recreation of the Gutenberg press99), with the communication codes woven into the textiles of Bedouin women, with the basket-weaving processes of the women of Papua New Guinea that help one understand the use of fibre and connection to body and land, 99 In a revealing documentary, Stephen Fry investigates the story of one of the most important machines ever invented: the Gutenberg Press. He does so through a ‘hands-on’ process where he travels to France and Germany on the trail of Johannes Gutenberg, the inventor of the printing press and early media entrepreneur. Along the way, he discovers the lengths to which Gutenberg went to keep his project secret, explores the role of avaricious investors and unscrupulous competitors, and discovers why printing mattered so much in Medieval Europe. But to really understand the man and his machine, Stephen gets his hands dirty – assembling a team of craftsmen and helping them build a working replica of Gutenberg's original press. He learns how to make paper the fifteenth century way and works as an apprentice in a metal foundry in preparation for the experiment to put the replica press through its paces.
and so on. The list is endless, and endlessly opens on to new connections. Such is the practice-led researcher’s mission statement: to make connection across and within domains of knowledge production.

I am not a trained textile expert, but have been making fibres and textiles in recent years. Damasio engages with Spinoza from the perspective of a neuroscientist (2003). Painter Barbara Bolt relies heavily on Heidegerian philosophy (2006) or the way that dance theorist Maxine Sheets-Johnstone rethinks experience through movement by engaging Husserl (2009) or the way in which Luce Irigaray famously engages with patriarchal thinkers from Freud to Heidegger to Nietzsche (1996). It may be argued that the expert is locked into a perspective and method that constrains particular modes of investigation and the knowledge these modes would deliver. I argue that in this project, because of my focus on the process of making rather than on perfecting the final visual component metaphorically, there are holes that allow me movement rather than being a lack of some kind. The ‘amateur’, who loves the production of connection and the feeling of learning, is more mobile, more open to knowledge from diverse areas. Methodology requires a lead, following a lead, becoming a leader within the many connections that are available. This is why part of the methodology of a practitioner requires the notion of a creative site – the place from which to coordinate and correlate, and the ongoing construction site that is in progress. The artist as creative research concerns herself with the production of creative sites and producing the condition under which knowledge can be attained.

Information that is extracted through the practice of making, planting, weaving, touching my body, delivering workshops to other people, inviting audiences to exhibitions, watching documentaries or reading academic writing – this is all included in the creative site. The
creative site is a space that is multidimensional, dynamic, unhinged and always-in-flux. It is an indivisible part of me – at the same time it also shapes me and is shaped by me. Hence I see the importance of not only looking at the history of ideas and the ways in which thought is materialised – for example, as a work of art, or as the written piece that accompanies it – but also of the way thinking through materials is an inseparable part of the process of embodiment. There are heuristic aspects to this kind of research, where ‘process that affirms imagination, intuition, self reflection and the tacit dimension as valid ways in the research for knowledge and understanding’ (Douglass & Moustakas 1985: 39) can be done only through practice. However, one problem with practice-led research concerns the notion of research as problem-solving task. Sandy Sela-Smith (2002) disputes the notion of problem-solving that is attached to heuristic research, and suggests that when there is no paradigm established for the field, then an open-ended exploratory with a question as a guide to discovery, using the senses, emotions, interconnection and even a trial and error process rather than testing hypotheses, becomes the goal.

Practitioner and theorist Erin Manning (2006, 2007, 2008) focuses her argument on the importance of exploration, experiment and the bodily sensing experience, and movement within the research. She argues against research methodologies that continue to dichotomise

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100 The term ‘heuristic’ originates from the Greek word that means to find out or discover. Clark Moustakas and Bruce Douglas (1985: 39) define heuristic research as ‘a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem-solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathway of the self’.

101 Sela-Smith follows the origins of the heuristic research to earlier use by Polya (1945) as procedures used to move through in the process of solving problems in mathematics (2002: 58).

102 Dr Erin Manning is a philosopher, visual artist and dancer, and is currently a University Research Chair at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Concordia University, Montreal. She is also a founder and director of The Sense Lab, an interdisciplinary laboratory on research, creation and an international network focusing on intersections between philosophy and art through the sensing body in motion.
sensing as that which stands in opposition to reason. She suggests instead a research that takes the senses as a main focus and pushes beyond the rational approaches to the body:

To write about the senses it is necessary to write against the grain of a mind-body, reason-senses model that continues to privilege staid readings of gender, biology, and politics. To write against the grain is to become sensitive, at all junctures, to how the body is defined, composed, and compartmentalised.

(Manning, 2007: xii)

I understand Manning’s notion of writing as multifaceted, where she emphasises the immense load involved in the exposure of the sensing body on one hand and the need to be aware of the cultural inscriptions of the sensing body on the other hand. These are intertwined as an embodied subjectivity. A creative site such as Textiled Becomings involves my sensing body, and reveals intimate conversations on multiple levels where both the first-person personal and cultural are exposed not only to myself but also to those who read and view the work.

Manning (2007) suggests that to think the body in relation to the senses is to encourage thinking the body in movement beyond just that relating to the organs. She would agree with Gallagher (2005), who considers movement an indication of the way lines of intentionality can be prefigured and therefore ‘how the body shapes the mind’. Manning claims that we conceive of bodies through movement as both ‘worlds and as creators of the worlds that world them’ (2006: n.p).
A creative site prepared for practice-led research would incorporate the intimacy that involves touch and a first-person narrative of the body. Merleau-Ponty (2002) is talking specifically about touch when he discusses the synthesis of one’s own body. He argues that when the body interprets itself or makes sense of its organs, it has to use the tactile data available through sight – each localised movement against an inclusive position as a background; this is a system rather than an object. While Gallagher (2005) emphasises the difference between first-person and third-person experience, he ultimately argues for a redefining of the terrain of methodology to consider the phenomenological embodied experience of the researcher.

Nina Czegledy (1999) proposes that touch bridges the gap between the ‘local’ (the self) and the translocal (the environment), since the obsession with the virtual ‘could lead to further atrophy of our sensibilities’ (n.p). The notion of haptics has been theorised by philosophers and theoreticians such as Levinas, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, and Jean-Luc Nancy. The haptic space is both a space in between and the sensing body. It is (together with taste) the sense that needs contact, as Derrida (2005) observes. He talks about the reciprocality that is touch, when one ‘feels oneself feeling one’s self touch’ is also feeling itself touching a limit and feeling touched by a limit and its own limit (Derrida 2005: 111). However, he claims that contact does not mean there is fusion or any

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103 An independent media artist, curator and writer, Nina Czegledy divides her time between Canada and Europe. Czegledy is of Hungarian origin. Originally a broadcast documentary filmmaker, she has also worked in digital video and installation art.

104 Czegledy argues that in recent decades various new interfaces have been created to facilitate interaction between the environment and ourselves (e.g. remote control). Due to these developments, we rely heavily on distant externally mediated connections through things such as digital technologies. Therefore, the sensing becomes visually centred, reducing the other sensual familiarities.
identification or any immediate awareness of contiguity. Haptic is a better word than tactile, Derrida argues, since ‘it does not establish an opposition between two sense organs but rather invite the assumption that the eye itself may fulfill this nonoptical function’ (2005: 124).

For Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 388–467, 543–51), the haptic is tied to the idea of the nomad in that it is regarded as an aesthetic model, which incorporates both a smooth space and the striated space.105 The smooth space integrates ‘close range’ – as far as the hand can reach. The haptic106 space, as distinguished from optical space, is different:

The whole and the parts give the eye that beholds them a function that is haptic rather than optical. This is an animality that can be seen only by touching it with one’s mind, but without the mind becoming a finger, not even by way of the eye. (1987: 545)

The haptic aspect, evoked by those aspects of agency such as orientations, landmarks and linkages, is always in a process of variation and operates gradually. Striated space is defined by the long-distance vision where stability, inertia, thickness and lack of movement – belonging to a place – result in ‘immersion in an ambient milieu, constitution of central

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105 Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 494) explain: ‘Striated space is defined by the requirements of long-distance vision: constancy of orientation, invariance of distance through the interchange of inertial points of reference, interlinkage by immersion in an ambient milieu, constitution of a central perspective.’ My understanding of the idea of the striated relates more to the notion of the haptic as opposed to the visual thinking haptic as nonoptical function: ‘no line separates the sky from the earth – that is happening in the close range – the smooth space’ (1987: 494).

106 Deleuze and Guattari specifically make a note to distinguish between tactile and haptic as haptic, ‘since it does not establish an opposition between two sense organs rather invite the assumption that the eye itself may fulfil this non-optical function’ (1987: 543).
perspective’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 545). For striated space, the absolute would be the global or the background, since it is against that background that the form will be defined. The practice of an art practitioner takes place at close range, where they have a hands-on experience. This is what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) would call a smooth space (1987: 494–99). The smooth space is the nomad space, where finding orientation occurs through various centres rather than a central single point of orientation. Hence there is a constant process of orientation and reorientation that occurs in creative practice, and connections are made as the nomad researcher/practitioner moves within the area in which they are located at the time. These connections are haptic, tactile, sensual experiences – what is within a hand’s distance as a first-person experience.

It is evident from the way I have framed my methodology that I draw upon work that aligns with Spinoza, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze and others who can contribute to a phenomenological and heuristic approach. The main concern is still the one stated by Spinoza – finding out what the body can do rather than what the body is – as well as the view of Merleau-Ponty (2002), who states:

not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths to my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people’s intersect and engage each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which find their unity when I either take up my past experiences in those of the present, or other people’s is my own. (2002: xxii)

The practice of making yarns, and then fabricating living objects, has become a self-reflexive methodological approach that informs my decisions regarding historical, ethnographic and
creative research. My creative practice is methodology for both correlating academic research and producing experiential-based research that increases ‘bodily possibility’. Postmodernism seems to have been the culmination of a desire to have all ideas available, to move between them and to ‘suspect all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests on local, cultural and political struggles’, as Laurel Richardson (2000: 928) claims. In this schema, the mobility of the practice-led researcher within the creative site is inseparable from the boundary-crossing activities of the nomadic subject.

In my project, nomadism has become an important concept for conceptualising my approach to research as one that moves against the traditional established forms of research which attempt to control and pre-empt the value of the outcomes. A nomadic approach allows for a convergence of the interconnectedness of thought, place, space, time and materials by applying a process of connecting, which must include and be based upon embodied interaction and encounter.

**Nomadic Researcher: A Methodological Organising Principle**

This section focuses on the notion of the practitioner as a nomadic subject in order to examine the ways imagination and movement catalyse practice-led, cross-disciplinary and transdisciplinary research.

107 The artist Robert Morris classifies art-making as ‘a complex of interactions involving factors of bodily possibility, the nature of materials and physical laws, the temporal dimensions of process and perception, as well as resultant static images’ (in Carter 2004: 8).

108 Laurel Richardson is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Ohio State University.
Practice-led research is the broad umbrella under which my project is sheltered, but it does not deal specifically with the system of relationships from which I make decisions and pursue leads. After looking at the ways in which creative sites facilitate practice-led methodology, I focus in this section on the connections between the practitioner as a nomadic subject to the nomadic researcher. In order to examine how the imagination catalyses practice-led, cross-disciplinary and transdisciplinary research, I emphasise the importance of the nomadic researcher. I argue that within the context of globalisation, scientists, medical practitioners and arts practitioners who use the nomadic approach can interlace embodied experiences of becoming within the process of research.

Nomadism does not require movement across land, space or place – not every nomad has travelled or moved between countries, states or continents. Rather, nomadism relates to becoming, and to the subject-in-process that flows from one set of experiences to another. The notion of the nomad was introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987)\textsuperscript{109} and developed by Braidotti (1994) to be utilised by any artistic, medical and cultural practitioner of the everyday. The concept of the nomadic subject deals with the ways in which the contemporary person understands the importance of utilising any artistic, medical and cultural information to construct connections across previously separated boundaries (subject–object or subject–environment).

Embodied experiences, as Braidotti (1994: 4) defines them, are ‘a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological’. Many axes of differentiation, such

\textsuperscript{109} Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) figuration of the nomad and nomadism, and their specific relation to nomadism, are based on artefacts made by nomadic people, as they claim, where ‘the twisted animals have no land beneath them; the land constantly changes’ (1987:545).
as class, race, ethnicity, gender and age, are interlaced to become complex and multilayered identities constitute subjectivity. In my *Textiled Becomings* project, the many identified axes that I move across and between as starting points that include the artist, and the other of the living, growing work itself.

Although some of these ideas were discussed in the section on theoretical frameworks, it is now in terms of methodology that one must begin to organise relationship and take actions based upon both knowing and know-how. Nomadic research is a research of in-betweenness, and never assumes residency as a specialist in a particular discipline. Moreover, the nomadic style of research extends and enriches the learning experience by drawing insights that contribute to common understanding from the variety of embodied modes of intelligence. In many ways, process of conducting academic research as a nomadic practice-led research is not metaphorical but must be described this way in order to indicate the role of embodied action – perceptual, sensory and kinaesthetic movement of the body in relation to the knowledge acquired and produced. In *Textiled Becomings*, I bring into the contemporary milieu traditional styles of fibre and fabric-making while moving between social and cultural practices. As is consistent with practice-led research, I emphasise process rather than product. I have also decided to discuss Braidotti’s (1994) ideas at length, since her work is not just the development of theories but is a prompt to action, a methodology waiting to happen.

Nomadism as a style of research cannot be distinct from the notion of nomadic subjectivity. Affected by fragmented identity, where nationality, cultural values and social values are hybridised, such an identity is woven out of moveable diversity in ‘an inventory of traces’ and ‘vertiginous progression toward deconstructing identity; molecularisation of the self’ (Braidotti, 1994: 14, 16). Nomadic practitioners cannot be precious about the objects,
materials and experiences they collect, and must be prepared to let go and move on in order not to compromise the ability to move. Temporality is a great consideration. Because artworks – and my work in particular – are alive and continuous, there is a constant movement within them that marks the passage of time. To become a nomad, one must give oneself over to instability and indeterminacy, while rigorously taking note of and reflecting upon the structured connections that spontaneously arise.

In *Transpositions* (2006), Braidotti theorises the nomad and expresses her concerns with the obsession of the ‘new’ by the majority of contemporary society. New wars, new weapons, new generation, new ways to manipulate the body, the much-celebrated phenomenon of globalisation and its technologies, reveal the fragmented, almost depressive, social status of the subjects. Through connected overlappings in the postmodern era, the fast current of globalisation, techno-communication and biotechnologies contribute to the unfixed identity. The subject is continuously in a process of transition, creating the necessary connections for survival in a fast-changing social fabric. The ever-changing dynamic is affecting the nomad's strong will to trespass and transgress, driven by the evolving process of becoming. Nomadism is a dynamic site of interconnections with the world; the creative site is a set of connections to a process.

My life is very much defined by the feeling of not really belonging anywhere, but belonging everywhere – a fluid life between the here and there, the now and then. Not belonging entails moving beyond, because of the open spaces that are present. Braidotti (1994) explains the notion of non-belonging:

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122 *Textiled Becomings: Making from Scratch*
In between zones where all ties are suspended and time stretched to a sort of continuous present. Oasises of nonbelonging, spaces of detachment. No-(wo)man’s lands. Maybe this is why these open, public spaces of transition are privileged sites of creation for contemporary artists. (Braidotti 1994: 18–19)

An intellectual style of movement, nomadism incorporates the processes of old and new, separateness and integration. Braidotti (1994) explains nomadism through homelessness: ‘not so much in being homeless, as in being capable of recreating your home elsewhere’ (1994: 16, my emphasis). For me, home is a hybrid space where layers of experiences network through semi-permeable membranes of subjectivity:

The nomad is literally a ‘space’ traveller, successively constructing and demolishing her/his living spaces before moving on. S/he functions in a pattern of repetitions, which is not without order; though it has no ultimate destination.

(Braidotti, 2005: n.p)

If the molecules of the ‘old’ home are interconnected within the ‘new’, what would be recreated? Not home, but a sense of place. My subjectivity is a collection of daily negotiations between the cultures that I bring from there and cultures with which I make connections here. In many ways, the concept of the nomad applies to my life in so many ways, but most directly as an immigrant to Australia. The types of boundary negotiation involved in the making of artwork run parallels with immigration experience in many ways.

The nomadic subject ‘is consequently a move against the settled and conventional nature of theoretical and especially philosophical thinking’ (Braidotti, 1984: 2). To enact such a
theoretical description means opening up the ways in which I am researching. I became attentive to the processes of becoming in a new country and to the connections of these processes with those I am using in my project generally and as forms of research in particular.

Irit Rogoff (2000)\textsuperscript{110} tells of her immigration experience, describing it as a paradox where there can be a sense of ‘being-not-at-home’ while ‘being-at-home’ elsewhere. This ambiguous state is both belonging and unbelonging (2000: 18). She argues that there is a need for an open understanding of home, not as a set of relations in which scientific knowledge or national categories of the state determine belonging or not belonging. Rather, belonging should be linked to ‘sets of political insights, memories, subjectivities, projections of fantastic desires and great long chains of sliding signifiers’ (2000: 7).

However there is a difference between the migrant and the nomadic subject, as distinguished by Braidotti through her experience as a migrant. Even though she was a migrant,\textsuperscript{111} she chose to become a nomad. In this way, she embraces the sense of location where a subject is in a transitional state and yet ‘is sufficiently anchored to a historical position to accept responsibility and therefore make myself accountable for it’ (Braidotti 1994: 10). Here, the emphasis is on the connecting and reconnecting experiences of places from past and present.

\textsuperscript{110} Irit Rogoff is a theorist, curator and organiser who writes at the intersections of the critical, the political and contemporary arts practices. Rogoff is Professor of Visual Culture at Goldsmiths College London.

\textsuperscript{111} Although Braidotti has a richly awarded history, I would like to name here only several points on her life’s map to demonstrate her migration movement and her experience as a polyglot. Born in Italy, Braidotti migrated to Australia during her childhood; she completed her degree of philosophy with a university medal at the Australian National University in Canberra in 1977 and did her doctoral degree at the Sorbonne in France. She founded a women’s studies program at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.
While the migrant has a clear destination from one point to the other and a clear purpose, the nomad is concerned with crossing boundaries.

Braidotti (2006: 7) uses the phrase to ‘weave a web connecting philosophy to social realities; theoretical speculations to concrete plans; concepts to imaginative figurations’. One of the aims of her book is to transpose philosophical theory on ethical practice and, by making it nomadic, remain loyal to the feminist politics of location. The politics of location is a cartographic method that takes on a non-centralist, non-dogmatic approach. One of the effects of globalization of societies is that information and difference are commodified. Empowering methods should be developed, Braidotti and feminist theorists argue that tools must be made available to the subject to resist the idea of the commodified identity. She calls for a politics of locations that will challenge the historical idea of unified identities, which were based solely on notions of race, gender or sex. She suggests a politics that will open up new interconnections, which include a bundle of interrelated social relations and hence dynamic ties that are constantly formed and deconstructed to promote understanding between communities to avoid generalisation.

The nomadic tense is imperfect. The nomadic action is continuous. The nomadic trajectory is controlled speed. Thinking nomadically is not bound topologically nor ungrounded, since a location is an ‘embedded and embodied memory: it is a set of counter memories’ (Braidotti, 2006: 29). Braidotti also emphasises the notion of the nomadic thinking that elaborates the spaces in between self and other. In terms of the background of advanced capitalism and its globalised economy, she sees the need to support forms of social and political operations that are non-pejorative and non-dualistic notions of others (2006: 76). The poststructuralist approach, she proposes, provides the advantage of inclusion of both critique and the priority
given to figurations that embrace processes of change and transformation – ‘that is to say in-between-ness and flows’ (2006:78). I have used the creative site as a way of producing the experience of being ‘other’. It is methodological in this regard because my own experience of ‘being the other’ (in the sense of relating to there and here, before and after coming) is constantly signalled by my (foreign) accent and the language barriers that come with it. I am always performing different translations. However, when I say translation I don’t mean in a metonymic way, where word-to-word image-to-word or image-to-image correspondence is made, but as a constant performance of ambiguity of meaning that keeps on becoming – not quite t/here and not yet said. What makes this kind of ambiguity possible is the living inquiry where both my embodiment and the living art draw attention to the tension between material processes and awareness of movement between cultures.

The notion of mobility became an important concept to track in Braidotti’s (1994) work – that is, mobility that implies transition and transpositions. The term ‘transposition’, inspired by music and genetics, highlights the multilayered meanings that come with the notion of nomadism. On the one hand, the focus of transposition relates to material embodiment and the interdependency between agencies that can be traced a posteriori as a reflection by the nomadic subject. On the other hand, there might be a negative aura coupled with the notion of displacement that is tied to the term ‘transposition’. This negativity might be perceived when the researcher is seen as active, transposing meaning from one layer – for example, textual encounters – to another – for example, analytical – while the environment is seen as passive and controlled (Braidotti 2006: 9).

The concept of a nomadic researcher who writes and makes works as the movement between semi-permeable flexible membranes where the possibilities of engagement become a living
inquiry. Springgay et al. (2005) explain the notion of living research as a research that listens and breathes through rendering. Rendering, they clarify, are ‘theoretical spaces through which to explore artistic ways of knowing and being research’ (Springgay et al. 2005: 899). In music, Braidotti (2006) explains, when trying to learn a music score there need to be some ‘powers of listening and respect for the text and its effects. It is about duration, repetition and thus, ultimately, about movement’ (2006: 22). This movement is the freedom to change and at the same time practise cultural diversity and imaginative possibility.

The body of the nomadic researcher within the living inquiry moves between the roles of researcher, writer and becoming the artwork itself. These roles connect and disconnect, and at times reconnect. Springgay et al. (2005) interpret that: ‘These dialectical in/between spaces amid these roles are dynamic living spaces of inquiry: spaces touching at the edges, then shifting to be close, adjacent, but not touching – only to touch again’ (2005: 901). In this way, the nomadic researcher avoids categorisation and respects difference; nomadism is an ethical stance.

Respecting difference does not mean becoming the same or losing one’s own subjectivity, but rather learning through the uniqueness of the diverse cultural practices and the singular experiences of others. Becoming advocates a consciousness that relates to the awareness of the subject to her position – not as former other to becoming the same, but rather taking strength from the experience, whether of exclusion or marginalization, and establishing counter-ideologies, new theoretical frameworks and emancipatory ideals and practices. Becoming woman/animal/molecular, Braidotti explains, not only marks a shift of perspective from a central norm-driven hierarchy, being in a dominant subject position, but also involves
acquiring a voice to challenge disruptive binary oppositions, marking a shift of consciousness.

**Becoming Polyglot**

To conclude the discussion of nomadism, I examine a series of becomings, which recap and provide examples for the types of theoretical transpositions I have accumulated here. Becoming other is tied strongly to *language*, where a person is categorised according to her accent, for example. As a nomadic researcher, I took the language difference as an advantage and see them all (Hebrew English, German, Yiddish, and bits and pieces of other languages) as becoming one language spoken by me. This cocktail of languages becomes my own language of in-betweenness that takes the hyphen out of the definition of my identity. I am not only an Israeli-Australian but I become a nomad. Braidotti (1994) discusses this idea of becoming through the concept of the polyglot:

> The polyglot knows that language is not only and not even the instrument of communication but a site of symbolic exchange that links us together in a tenuous and yet workable web of mediated misunderstandings, which we call civilization. (Braidotti 1994: 13)

The polyglot is the medium for constituting of an instable identity – always in transit between languages. Neither here nor there, it is taken as a difference even within the same culture and within every individual. Braidotti (1994) argues that there are no mother tongues but linguistic sites from which we take our exit point. The polyglot, she says, is able to slip in between languages to make up words from assemblages of different languages. The nomad
polyglot is an inventory of traces that resists settling into one dominant identity that becomes the prototype of the postmodern speaking subject (Braidotti 1994: 13). It can be argued that today, with the advanced techno-communication developments, the exposure to various languages leads to a more widespread trend to becoming polyglots.

Becoming the other also incorporates becoming woman. I become a woman that is the other – that is, a nomadic researcher. I research as a woman who speaks her femininity, thinks it and performs it through her body. I become a subject-in-process, as Braidotti describes the ‘She’, the other of the Other. She describes the space of becoming woman as ‘one of affinity and symbiosis between adjacent particles’ (Braidotti 2003: 48). I write my body as a mother to integrate my caring for the plants as a conscious way to materialise this notion. My research draws heavily on the body – my body and the bodies of the growing plants and later the bodies of the gallery visitors.

I research the ways in which my understanding of becoming includes me as a feminist subject of knowledge who functions in a net of interconnections that go beyond the immediate proximity to connect with women who practise textile and fibre artworks. The body of the nomadic women subject, Braidotti (2003) articulates, is ‘an interface, a threshold, a field of intersecting material and symbolic forces, it is a surface where multiple codes (race, sex, class, age, etc.) are inscribed; it’s a cultural construction that capitalises on the energies of heterogeneous, discontinuous and unconscious nature’ (2003: 44).

As a nomadic researcher who works with growing plants, I draw on embodied and embedded experience that is the key to the shift from anthropocentrism to an ecological method where the person is collaborating with the environment as opposed to controlling it. For Braidotti (1994),
the nomadic subject is ‘the antithesis of the farmer, the nomad gathers, reaps, and exchanges but does not exploit (1994: 25). An open-ended approach such as nomadism can work within practice-led research because it does not put forward a specific goal to be reached. It is a form of ‘intransitive becoming’, which ‘marks a set of transformations without end product’ (Braidotti 2005: n.p).

What is missing from discussions on theories of research is an articulation of how a practitioner-researcher orchestrates, weighs and evaluates the myriad modes of knowledge production and data – in short, methodology – as decision making. This is the mode in which creative practice operates. It is also the mode that results in a series of creative works or a body of work that examines a particular constellation of ideas. Theories of research methodology often stay comfortably within the technical and practical structure of a formal approach. Certainly, what emerges from different researchers conducting inquiries is a huge range of idiosyncratic, situated modes of engagement or styles of thinking, problem-solving and researching. The nomadic researcher will choose, Braidotti (1994) argues, a creative sort of becoming, ‘a performative metaphor that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of interaction of experience and of knowledge’ (1994: 7). This is where slowing down of processes amplifies the number of possibilities. Braidotti (1994) uses the metaphor of weaving to explain:

The nomadic subject as a performative image allows me to weave together different levels of my experience; it reflects some autobiographical aspects, while also experiencing my own conceptual preference for post metaphysical vision of subjectivity. (1994: 7)
I agree with Braidotti (2006), who claims that: ‘It is pure creativity, or an aesthetic mode of absolute immersion of one’s sensibility in the field of forces-music, colour, light speed, temperature, intensity- which one is attempting to capture.’ (2006: 146) Braidotti’s exploration of creativity in art and music is based on her exploration of nomadic subjectivity. I rely heavily on Braidotti’s notions of the nomadic subject, and will show how they are intertwined with and motivate me as a nomadic researcher. I argue that an approach such as nomadism, applied within practice-led research, provides a multidimensional perspective not only on the project being studied, but also on the ways in which it weaves together social connections and embodied knowledge.

Nick Crossley (2006)\textsuperscript{112} suggests that reflexive embodiment occurs when enmeshed relationships between bodies and society eventuate (2006: 1). He defines reflexive embodiment as the ability to perceive, emote about and act upon one’s own body. These actions include body modification and maintenance, as well as ‘body image’ where ‘subjectivity entails that the object and the subject of a perception, thought, feeling, desire or action are the same’ (2006: 1). In addition, he argues that:

Just as consciousness emerges, as an irreducible structure, out of the biochemical interactions and relations which comprise the human organism, and out of the interaction between that organism and its immediate environment, so too [emphasis by author] interaction between conscious human agents generates emergent social phenomena … The social is nested in the chemical and so on, but at each level we find irreducible phenomena. (2006: 5)

\textsuperscript{112} Nick Crossley is Head of Sociology at Manchester University.
Crossley (2006), like Grosz (2004), sees the ‘becoming’ of a person as a system interlaced with cultural and social systems. Making fibres and textile works has enabled me to reflect on these multifaceted notions through the performative aspect of the work. A significant aspect that Jefferies (1999) addresses is a residue of ‘Women’s Time’. She relates time to materialisation of textile, where ‘at one and the same moment these pieces can rhythmically pattern and reassemble touch and texture, offer intricate and ingenious design to interrupt the masculine model’ (1999: 165). Dimensions of time and space take on different qualities. When one focuses on the movements of making, which break down into smaller and smaller activities that connect to the material environment, it becomes possible to also connect to social histories through the body’s relationship with others and otherness. At this point, the structure of temporality changes or transforms, making fluid the links between past, present and future.

Sue Rowley (1999) observes, that there is a difference between the quality of the time taken when in the process of making (for example a basket) as opposed to the time of using (the basket). Furthermore, Braidotti claims we need to consider that the subject is the evolutionary engine, ‘endowed with her or his own embodied temporality, in the sense of both the specific timing of the genetic and the more genealogical time of individualised memories’ (2006: 42). These modes of time and experience of time emphasise the body as a whole.

**Conclusion: ‘From Scratch’**

In this chapter, I have discussed the ways in which methodology involves an embedded set of creative practices that need to be opened up and are inclusive of a variety of intelligences. I have discussed practice-led research, which includes a large range of research approaches,
including an approach that integrates theory with practice in the social field, which I have called the production of a *creative site*. These approaches all value performativity and engagement with materials. Within the creative site, I have specified the interwoven connections between my style as a nomadic researcher and my constructed nomadic subjectivity. Although the idea of the nomadic subject has been developed extensively by Rosi Braidotti, I have chosen to relate this idea to the intersections at work in forming an identity: becoming other, becoming woman, notions of home and belonging, and the ways in which this research is reflexive it is as mediated through senses in general and haptic in particular.

I rely heavily on my experience of my body in this research. In order to make my creative work, I literally become the loom, the weaver and the woven. In the next chapter, I focus on the process of making ‘from scratch’, which has emerged from these investigations of practice-led research and nomadism, which describe the context and concept of a type of engagement or methodological movement. ‘From scratch’ is the lynchpin whereby method becomes process and draws attention to the point at which a more generalised idea of method cannot be separated from a very specific set of decisions and actions that occur when reflecting upon and weaving textiles. It is for this reason that I have chosen to end this chapter by signaling the importance of ‘from scratch’ as a method that directly impacts upon discussions of process explored in the next chapter.
Chapter 3

The Process: ‘From Scratch’

There are many artists who have worked with living plants, setting the context for my work and working process. The approaches to the use of living materials range from Jeff Koons’ *Puppy*, which used over 70,000 multi-hued flowering plants that grew from the steel and soil structure\(^{113}\) (see Appendix 1) to the *Vertical Gardens* by the French botanist and artist Patrick Blanc, who brings urban buildings to life by installing layers of felt in which the garden will bloom.\(^{114}\) Yoko Ono used living trees in her installations on various occasions, including the exhibition of a wish tree in places around the world such as Helsinki (2005)\(^{115}\) and the installation of trees\(^{116}\) growing out of coffins, an installation that also toured around the world. All of these works, and many others, sit within the bioart movement, using living

\(^{113}\)The floral statue was first created in 1992 for a temporary exhibit in Arolson, Germany, then again in 1997 at the Guggenheim and later in the Rockefeller Center in New York. According to Koons, the puppy is a symbol of love, warmth and happiness brought as a triumph of scale (rising to 43 feet) colour and material. The puppy was installed in 1996 in Sydney’s MCA and one year later in Bilbao, Spain (Koons 1992:n.p ).

\(^{114}\)Blanc’s *Vertical Gardens* are kept moist by pumping water solution with nutrients up from a 2000 litre reservoir below. The plants are put into pockets in the felt and grow as epiphytes would on trees or rocks. The artist has designed vertical gardens around the world, and states that ‘what I think is interesting is to try and install a vertical garden in the places where you think life is not possible … where the nature and man can be close even in the worst environments … I try to show that everything is possible between man and nature.’ (Blanc, 2008: n.p)

\(^{115}\)For Ono, the work is tied to her childhood memory of the Buddhist custom of tying a wish upon a tree. This idea of wishing tree was installed across America in places such as Washington and Pasadena.

\(^{116}\)In 2000, Ono brought her installation *Ex-It* (first exhibited 1998) to Sydney, where 100 coffins were displayed with Australian paperbark trees growing out of the opening where the dead person’s face would normally be (60 men, 30 women and ten children) (www.a-i-u.net/exhibitions3.html).
materials as the expressive media or support upon which statements and demonstrations of art-life-science connection are crafted/grafted.

In this chapter, I articulate the specific perceptions, thoughts and actions that constitute my decision-making process and form the basis of my creative arts practice. The aim is to draw out the insights that, through reflection, this approach has afforded. One aspect that has emerged and remained a constant throughout my reflection process, and to which I will often return in the following discussion, is the co-dependency between materials that are used in this project with the living bodies and living experience. Because my PhD project is practice-led research, and the methodology I have described is informed by nomadic subjectivity that becomes a way of understanding how practices emerge, it is important to make the connection between the theoretical framing of my decision-making approach and an account of the actual process that unfolded. The idea of the nomadic subject not only drives the methodology but also steers the way I am using materials in order to follow both a materialising of thinking and thinking through materials. ‘From scratch’ has emerged from thinking about process to become a way of deciding what to do, how to do it, how to position my decisions and how to present them. When one tries to go back to the basic and fundamental point of contact or interest, theories are only as good as the actions they enable.

While there are many textile artists that have the use of textile as the best medium by which to demonstrate their experience, I will not be able to discuss them all. However, artists such
as Julie Ryder, Anne Hamilton, Annette Messager, Erin Manning,\footnote{117} Korean textile artist Kea-Nam Cha, Kyung-Ae Wang, Indian artist Sharmila Samant\footnote{118} and Taiwanese artist Tsai Charwei have all been extremely influential in helping me to think through a range of theory–practice issues. In addition, the works of Australian Aboriginal artists such as Elizabeth Djuttara\footnote{119} and Clara Yam have inspired me with the processes they utilise when they take materials collected from their environment to dye and fabricate. Likewise, the Bedouin women who use their textiles to improve their living conditions have demonstrated how, through their textile works, they have received their voice.\footnote{120}

\footnote{117} I participated in a workshop presented by Erin Manning at the Seams Conference in Sydney (2009), where one of the activities was to interact with her textile works that were made in a way which allowed us to connect and disconnect the pieces by the buttons zippers and Velcro that were sewn on to the pieces of fabrics.

\footnote{118} Samant’s work was exhibited at the Sydney Biennale. It deals with issues of the homogenising effects of globalisation and commodification on identity. She states: ‘The projects I undertake involve eclectic collecting, documenting and recycling of urban debris, looking at the mundane and the profane’, and offers a critique of the market forces that ‘define the cultural and art practices of the peripheral nations and question how our identities, within the global set up can be sustained via a hybridisation of our culture’ (Culturebase.net). Samant says: ‘Art to me is the conscience, a kind of awareness and a reflection of my experiences.’

\footnote{119} Elizabeth Djuttara is seen by Ruth McDougal (2009) as a reminiscent of Eva Hesse. Djuttara breaks away from the gridded structures that constitute the traditional woven basket form to create an organic work that moves between painting sculpture to resonate with the rhythm of ceremonies of seasonal harvesting of the yam (2009: 84).

\footnote{120} The Bedouin nomadic culture, which mostly involves living in a textiled environment where both the house and content are literally woven or sewn together, is going through a major period of change. This change has intensified over the last two decades as people settle into permanent housing. Because of this, the economy is also embracing modern technology that is seeping into the domestic milieu, resulting in women becoming breadwinners by selling their pieces of cloth. I met and interviewed the director of the Association for Improvement of Women’s Status in Lakia, who explained that, since 1986, their quiet revolution is done mainly through their textile works. This significant step towards connection and communication occurred in a specific meeting space, where the women drop their finished work, collect their next batch of material and receive their remuneration. This is (almost) the only opportunity for women to come together and socialise without their men.
Due to word limitations, I discuss only a selection of the works by the artists who I found to be the most stimulating and motivating, and who enable me to articulate my work. I work through a selection of themes that I have chosen to highlight, in particular issues that arise in making and use by a selection of artists, to unpack these issues. Before discussing them in direct relation to my work, however, I will recap the significance of ‘from scratch’ in relation to my project.

‘From scratch’ operates at the tactical level, where one must actualise or realise what must be enacted – specific forms of knowing and know-how put together. Through this approach, the boundaries between the work as object and the worker as subject are blurred. While the nomad is a model of organisation, making ‘from scratch’ is the process that emerges from nomadic interaction, materials, sensations, thoughts, feelings and historical traditions. The next chapter will discuss the decisions I made once the method of ‘from scratch’ was launched. However, before discussing those decisions, I first address the importance of the grassroots approach to creative practice. Making ‘from scratch’ allows a different kind of knowledge to unfold. It is a kind of knowledge in which someone not only knows about and is able to contemplate an artefact, but also is able to gain insight through dynamic involvement in the making. Part of the intended power of the ‘from scratch’ method lies in the tensions and contradictions it holds, which will be seen in the way my process unfolds. The ethos of ‘from scratch’ marks an approach and a way of connecting the embodied meaning of research, as opposed to offering a principle or law that is followed to the letter. Processes undergo different pressures that are internal, external and contextual. I can say with

On these occasions, there are opportunities to deliver lectures, and receive training and education. It is also their only chance to notify the organisation of any crisis situations.

*Textiled Becomings: Making from Scratch*
conviction that the overriding ethos of my embodied engagement, which is constantly moving across and within conceptual, material, logistical and historical domains, impacts upon me in a personal and bodily way. Not only is my personal engagement with the world on the line, it is also on display. As Fauconnier and Turner (2002) note, ‘from scratch’ is an idea that cannot be achieved because all ideas and things bear the mark of associations, and are therefore never pure or original. This seemed to be a productive and useful notion to explore and challenge, and it is discussed at length later in this chapter.

Working ‘from scratch’ enables me to perform and keep track of my embodied connections. The work of art stops being a translation of, or comment on, cultural or social values and becomes a viewfinder for the movements necessary to produce oneself. Both the textile fabrication and the weaving products (in my project) are reflective research tools, which facilitate two things:

1. the slowing down of material processes in order to perceive them more clearly, and
2. becoming other, which involves connecting objects, persons and environment in order to observe emerging and existing connections.

This process, performed outside the function of growing cotton, is subsumed by the purpose of sharing this interaction and displaying, at every step, the way the process affects me, and the way my reflective process and decision-making process affect the work. Thus, in every respect, a reflexive performativity generates what is made, what is done and what emerges to be viewed publicly.
I see a nuance of difference between ‘making’ and ‘performing’ an artwork. The difference lies in the degree of reflection brought to the actions. I consider ‘making’ to be routine and habitual, whereas ‘performing’ is self-conscious and undergoing constant modification as a result of increased awareness. Based on this distinction, I argue that most art practices tend towards the performative.

The long and painstaking procedure of making ‘from scratch’ allows an awareness of the sensations as well as an understanding of the connectivity and dependability of cultural, social and economic systems acquired through bodily sensation. Making ‘from scratch’ differs from making something out of already processed materials (i.e. already spun wool or sorted cotton yarns) in that ‘from scratch’ involves embodying knowledge extracted from the environment that becomes a form of creative cognition focused on the relationships between pre-established things. This movement is performative because it cannot be done without reflective awareness and reflexive movement. The goal of this exercise, the PhD project, is the production of a creative site, which can emerge only where the performative process of making and experiencing of materials combines to reshape the relationships between thought, actions, objects, persons and environment. The connections to the history cannot be avoided, as Haraway argues when she says: ‘That’s [humanism,] our resource for making connections – we’re never starting from scratch.’ (2006: 151) Through this process, what we have forgotten with the development of new technologies and the discarding of the old can be retrieved and remembered in order to shift the ways in which we live and perceive connections to the environment.

Apart from the immense benefits of ubiquitous technological developments, working ‘from scratch’ looks at peeling off the layers that come with industrial and technological assistance.
It can be seen as going back to unmediated connections, except that such a place or state does not exist. Rather, going back is also going forward and reinvestigating the knowledge of materiality through one’s own body and the vibrant materials through which one responds to others directly. Hence, when I am tying yarns on my body to become a loom, which I have made by rolling fibres on my leg, made from the cotton that I have grown in my backyard, there are multilayered interconnections that form, persist and develop. In order to take the impact of learning ‘from scratch’ further, it is important to move from general concepts of process to specific situated action and consequences.

My Textiled Becomings project brings into the contemporary milieu traditional styles of fibre-making in the context of social and cultural practices, and moves between contemporary art (installation and video) and transdisciplinary research (art, philosophy and science). The emphasis in my project and in this exegesis is placed on the process rather than on the product. In this way, the acquisition and production of knowledge is embodied and performative.

To begin an investigation of the ways in which cultural social and environmental notions are intertwined and reflected through textiles, I needed to make the fibres. So I began from scratch in my backyard, growing cotton from seed and implanting the resulting hand-spun cotton fibres with barley seeds. The cotton fibres with implanted seeds are then woven together using my body as a loom, with no tools involved. I am going back to the most basic materials and processes to build up layers of meaning.
The humble beginnings of a ‘from scratch’ process does not mean that the materials are any less ‘loaded’ or complex in the way they align with or are associated with hybrid experience connections between places, cultures and languages.

Beyond the practical use of material such as cotton in my project, the history of cotton and the decision to use cotton must be discussed briefly. Cotton is a material that contains many contested values. On the one hand, cotton is associated with ‘greediness’ because of its water and nutrient consumption; on the other hand, cotton carries a chequered cultural social and environmental history because of the class struggle and labour required to produce it. I see cotton as a common denominator that connects the industrial aspects of commerce and commodity exchanged with the extensive exchange of knowledge in global markets and in relation to cultural development. The material an artist uses shares with all industrial products a history of capitalist exploitation, and my efforts to use materials at a modest scale are still affected by the history and global reality of contemporary production and distribution.

Cotton has been woven into civilisation for over five thousand years;\textsuperscript{121} it has not only related to clothing people around the world, but is also connected to social issues such as slavery, hard labour and changing economies (Editors of American Magazine 1972: 72). The use of cotton in this project is based upon respect for the peoples and histories it represents, as well as the revival of practices it offers. I have borrowed techniques from the Papua New Guinean

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{121} According to history books, cotton was first mentioned in the writings of the Greek historian Herodotus (484 BCE), who mentioned in his diary when returning from India that ‘there are trees in which fleece grew surpassing that of sheep and from which the natives made cloth’ (Editors of American Magazine 1972: 72). ‘Archaeological discoveries in the valley of the Indus in Sind date cotton at about 3000 B.C or earlier. Columbus had found cotton plants in the Caribbean and in South American places such as Peru.’ (Editors of American Magazine 1972: 73).
\end{footnote}
and Australian Aboriginal women in an attempt to open a critical dialogue regarding the
history of cotton and its relationship with indigenous practices for many centuries.122

Historically, the story of cotton is tied to the development of the industry as a part of
colonialisation in both my birth area of the Middle East and in the country of my current
citizenship, Australia. The Hebrew connections go back to the time when cottonseed was first
brought by the conqueror Alexander the Great123 to North Africa and the Nile Valley, where
it became known for its excellent quality. According to Cotton Australia, the First Fleet that
came to Australia in 1788 also brought cottonseed.

Cotton growing involves intensive labour and has received harsh criticisim for is association
with exploitation. During the 1950s, the young state of Israel developed a cotton industry for
local and international markets. During the same period, the cotton industry in Australia had
almost disappeared, only to be revived during the 1960s. Like Australia, Israel has a large
percentage of dry land, which makes it very difficult to grow such a labour-intensive and
water-thirsty crop. However, these environmental conditions have led to Israel researching
and developing irrigation and ‘micronutrient’124 techniques that are distributed around the
world. In recent years, pioneering research on cotton growth has been influenced by pressure

122For example, during the seventh and eighth centuries the Arab conquests and the Crusades brought the art of
spinning and weaving from Egypt to Spain, where it was first practised by the Moors and then taken eastward
by the Spaniards into northern Africa (Editors of American Magazine 1972: 73).

123 Alexander the Great was King of Macedonia and conqueror of the Persian Empire around 324 BC
(www.historyofmacedonia.org/AncientMacedonia/AlexandertheGreat.html).

124 The development of micronutrients involves conducting periodical laboratory tests of the growing plants to
detect deficiencies at an early stage and then compensating them through adding nitrogen, potassium and
phosphorus through drip irrigation (CHIEAM 2011).
to grow more crops using less water through monitoring and genetic modification.\textsuperscript{125} Although local consumption in Israel has been very small in recent years, 90 per cent of the lint is exported and thus contributes to the Israeli economy.\textsuperscript{126} This issue of irrigation connects the two places I move between (Israel and Australia) and the irrigation operates as a point of reference in the exhibition (nomadism). I use a technique of recycling water and a timer to operate the irrigation to water the barley seedlings within the woven cotton.

The use of barley seeds in \textit{Textiled Becomings} is also loaded with social and cultural layers of significance that provide a meeting point for my Israeli heritage and my Australian life. Barley is strongly connected to omit the history of the Israel-Jordan region where it was first domesticated.\textsuperscript{127} It was an integral part of both everyday and cultural life in biblical times, and this is still the case today. Barley was perceived as the poor people’s food, and was used

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{A figure showing the irrigation system.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{125} Several Israeli research programs, including the Water Research Institute at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, are working to maximise the mileage farmers globally can receive from each gallon of water at their disposal. The WRI, based in Haifa, Israel, carries on extensive research on water resource demand management, including conservation and recycling, conflict mediation and resolution related to water use, and allocation, market-based redistribution and water demand forecasting. In addition, researchers are studying national water markets, genetic engineering and agricultural technology. \textit{Israel21c} editor Rick Radin contributed to this story (www.israel21c.org/social-action/israel-lending-us-farmers-its-expertise-in-saving-water).

\textsuperscript{126} The cotton crop goes beyond providing only fibres for textile industry, also supplying the feed and oil industries. (www.netafim.com/crop/cotton).

\textsuperscript{127} According to research by Badr et al. (1999), the wild populations from Israel-Jordan are molecularly more similar than any others to the cultivated gene pool. These results support the hypothesis that the Israel-Jordan area is the region in which barley was brought into culture. Moreover, the diagnostic allele I of the homeobox gene BKn-3, rarely but almost exclusively found in Israel’s \textit{H. spontaneum}, is pervasive in Western landraces and modern cultivated varieties (1999: 499).
as feed for livestock. However, barley had a prestigious place amongst the seven species brought to the temple during the celebration of Shavuot. These facts draw attention to the social connotations that can be drawn from the examination of materials that represent a variety of rituals and cultural events. This aspect of inclusiveness within society represents a vital clue when considering notions of belonging/non-belonging within this project (and is discussed at length in Chapters 1 and 3). The use of barley as a dynamic growing material within the gallery – as opposed, for example, to the use of my own hair – is a way to connect the complex layers of cultural, social history and interaction through materials related to both Australia and Israel.

Barley has undergone a decline in popularity similar to that facing cotton in both Israel and Australia. The importance of other fibres means that the use of barley is marginal, relegated to a culinary ingredient: it is now used primarily as feed for livestock and as an ingredient in beer production. It is perhaps for this last reason that barley is the second largest industry in Australia. Barley has fewer negative associations than cotton. According to the Queensland

128 The Seven Species (Shivat Haminim in Hebrew) are the seven types of fruits and grains named in the Torah (Deuteronomy 8:8) as the main produce of the land of Israel.

129 Shavuot is one of the three pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and was regarded as the time to celebrate the acceptance of the Torah.

130 The malting, brewing and intensive livestock industries (beef, pork, poultry and dairy) are all major consumers of barley, and demand often exceed supply. Both the feed and the malt industries require barley grain for energy, which it provides in the form of starch. The starch is utilised for live weight gain by the intensive livestock industry, and in the malt industry it is converted to sugars, which are utilised for alcohol fermentation in the brewing process. Therefore, a large plump brightly coloured grain of good hectolitre weight is preferred for both end uses. (www.dpi.qld.gov.au/documents/PlantIndustries_FieldCropsAndPasture/Barley-Planting-Guide-2008.pdf).
government, the benefits associated with barley are its efficiency in terms of low water use and rapid maturation. Its fast growing time allows it to be planted later than wheat, and it is used for the establishment of ground cover that is beneficial for both smothering weeds and producing early grazing feed in mixed farming operations.

At a material and practical level, cotton lets me make threads that have spaces naturally suited for implanting and growing barley. However, it is when this practical approach is combined with my experience of growing cotton in Australia, and the methods developed by researchers in Israel, that all the meanings and implications of the process come together in the woven pieces newly overlaid with my experience of becoming and the sensations of living in-between geographical locations and between states of mind-body. It is through the textile, the material and the action of making that I can accentuate the embodied significance of textile production and the way that my understanding of the body, the ‘other’ and the environment becomes amplified through the process of making.

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Weaving is a slow process. I am able to exploit the slowness and slow down material processes even more by making ‘from scratch’. What occurs when a slow process is slowed down is that meditative and reflective states ensue, slowing me to follow processes of

131 Barley’s water efficiency also makes it an excellent choice as a double-cropping summer crop back into a winter rotation (www.dpi.qld.gov.au).
becoming other – connecting objects, persons and environment – in order to observe the nuances and patterns of emerging and existing connections. Within the cultural contexts, the handling of materials and the movement of making are happening in multiple directions where the ‘maker’, ‘the made’ and the ‘active viewer’ reshape all relationships. The benefits and implications are reciprocal as the maker, the made and the active viewer all give and take from the encounter, which ultimately sets up ecology of meaning in a shared context. The slowing down afforded by the ‘from scratch’ process heightens attentiveness to the point where the work of art stops being a translation of, or comment on, cultural or social values and becomes a viewfinder that allows me to locate and track the movements that cross the body, the weaving materials and the environment. It allows me to find the movements necessary to produce myself.

The term ‘from scratch’ is used in common language in a few ways. First, it refers to cooking in terms of making a dish from unprocessed ingredients – for example, making a cake from scratch instead of using a packaged cake mix.\textsuperscript{132} Second, it refers to a colloquial phrase meaning to begin again without relying on previous work or possessions, and without going back to an original state. A similar phrase is ‘to go back to the drawing board’. These phrases are used in everyday language, which has informed my use of the term. However, I have applied this colloquial usage to creative process and creative research. Finally, the other way in which I have applied this phrase is even more fundamental, relating to the idea of the person-in-process and the operations of cognition. In this sense, from scratch has a very

\textsuperscript{132} Although there are aspects in this project that are strongly related to domestic themes, such as those involved in cooking of the cotton fibres, or that might imply a tone of mothering, I have focused on the ideas that are related to the content of the chapters where the domestic themes might become resonant.
different connotation having to do with a mode or self-reflection and self-awareness that is not underwritten by psychology, psychoanalysis, neuroscience, theories of mind or phenomenological accounts, but that attempts to observe what Damasio would call ‘the feeling of what happens’ in cognition (Damasio 1999).

Increasingly, in the industrial era, artists have relied heavily upon mass-produced and manufactured art materials (oil paints, canvases, clays and more). The decision to produce art materials from the most basic state – that is, from seeds, grasses and fibres – means that forgotten knowledge in the experiences of the actions, interactions and embodied movement is brought back to life for us. Fauconnier and Turner (2002) are quick to remind us that, in relations and the notion of things being made from scratch, an original, pure and unencumbered state of idea or materials does not exist. All things have associations and connections by virtue of being in the world that is shared by humans and non-humans. So, for example, conceptualisation never happens from scratch since there is always a cultural integration resource involved. These integrations work as templates that are relatively easy to handle, and therefore they are also easy to take for granted (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 72).

For me, their idea of nothing being ‘from scratch’ was a provocation or challenge. I took it as a way of investigating my own embodied process, and I attempted to follow conceptual processes through working with materials, which I made ‘from scratch’. When sitting for days, hand-spinning yarns and then weaving them, I found my approach to the challenge was to be found in the meditative state, in the material interaction and in the temporality of the process, which slowed down and amplified my embodied experiences.

I have structured the following discussions of process into a series of themed sections. The themes have been chosen from the issues and concepts that have emerged and remained
important throughout my project. Many have already been mentioned as ideas that emerged in the theoretical framing of my project, while others persisted through the thinking and producing of the creative work. Each thematic section will have four parts:

1. a brief discussion of the theme that represents an important issue in my project and a discussion of this theme as it pertains to the decision-making process
2. an artist, artwork or works relating to the theme to enable me to unpack the theme by way of engagement with that work, and thus indicate my connection to and practical development of that issue
3. the relevance of the theme by way of personal insight into that idea, and
4. the process that resulted in my work or the application of that idea to my work by way of anecdote or description of a specific instance in the research and development of my creative process.

I will repeat this format for each theme. I have chosen to use a set of themes rather than another more chronological technique because such a medium-based structure allows me to deal with the complexity and interrelatedness of the experience and considerations that go into the making of the works. Such an approach also has strong ties to the theoretical frameworks that inform the process. In this way, I hope to give a better indication of the decision-making process by correlating the influence of other works with a reading or sensing of such works in relation to my own, and to follow this analysis with a specific instance in my own work to which the theme and artist’s work applies. Despite the formal organisational structure of the discussion, the effect should be one of an enactment of the myriad elements that are vital to a creative practice and material process.
**Theme 1: Materials and Materiality**

Art is the regulation and organization of its materials … any materials – according to self-imposed constraints, the creation of forms through which these materials come to generate and intensify sensation and thus directly impact living bodies, organs, nervous systems. (Grosz 2008: 2, my emphasis)

Many ideas in contemporary practice are conceived as a physical form. Grosz (2008) uses the topological notion of the Möbius strip to highlight the flow of relationships between the artist’s materials and the world. In my project, this metaphorical description is taken literally, as the activity of weaving makes one aware of the continuous surface that is inside and outside and constantly moving between the two. *Textiled Becomings* is a project that allows me to go back to the fundamental stage of the material process as a form of interaction, to the extent to which that is possible.

A few key theorists have shifted my understanding of the material and materiality. Jane Bennett (2010)\(^{133}\) advocates for the perception of vitality in matter, rather than the perception of matter as instrumentalised and inert. Bennett warns that the instrumentalist view ‘feeds human hubris and our earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption’ (2010: viv).\(^{134}\)

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\(^{133}\) Jane Bennett is Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University.

\(^{134}\) Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘Treatise on Nomadology’, Bennett’s book *Vital Materiality* (2010) highlights the full range of the non-human forces and processes that can aid, destroy, enrich or disable us, and that demand our ‘respect’.
The issue of materiality, especially the materiality of the body, is of utmost importance in the distinction of the post-human,\textsuperscript{135} as explored by Katherine Hayles (1999, 2000). She theorises that information, seen as bits and bytes disembodied and dissociated from any material presence, accentuates the growing problematic of the comparison between the brain and the computer – hence the materiality of the body is replaced by computational representation.

My project becomes an exploration of materials in conjunction with the material way of thinking, explained by Paul Carter (2004)\textsuperscript{136} as an engagement with material that allows artists to consider material within the discursive system of meaning, in terms of the way they enter into and direct the processes of invention. This way of understanding the relation of materials to the thought that organises them allows textile production to become both a research method and a research tool. Through textile, I utilise traditional processes in contemporary milieu, accentuating the relationship of body to and as the environment.

These notions about materiality might be taken further and not only related to the forms of materiality traditionally used in art, but also used to consider aspects of broad spectrum – free-floating materiality that connects persons to each other and to their environment. I situate the viewfinder that connects the cognitive activities with material explorations I have used. My thinking, in relation to this thematic, was organised through the notion of

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\textsuperscript{135}The idea of the input–output that is tied to the computer emphasises a Cartesian dualism. Hayles’ view is that the ‘cultural project at this historical juncture is to find forms adequate to express and construct the posthuman without erasing embodiment as the essential enabling ground for human existence’ (2000: 1). These ideas are not superficial connections today, when our notion of body and self (uploading our mind into a computer as Moravec suggests (Hayles 1999: 1) still follows this line of disembodied thinking.

\textsuperscript{136}Paul Carter is the Creative Director of Material Thinking at Deakin University Melbourne.
conceptual blending, and I have selected the artist Yvonne Koolmatrie to elaborate on this theme.

**The Artist: Yvonne Koolmatrie**

Yvonne Koolmatrie, an Indigenous Australian contemporary textile weaver, works with materials that are traditionally used by women. She takes her role as an artist beyond that of merely creating aesthetically beautiful objects and elaborates on respect to the land and the need to preserve:

> I get my material [rushes] from the river, in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. It is becoming very hard to find … people are burning them … That’s why I’m trying to protect the seeds in my work now, in a time capsule. I put the seed heads in the middle of my sculptures for the future. Because the way they are going on, people destroying the material, we just won’t be able to find it anymore, it will be extinct. (Koolmatrie, in Moon 2009: 21)

For Koolmatrie, weaving grasses that she has collected into sculptural objects or entwining river rushes into the form of an *Hot-air Balloon* (2006) (see Image 2) has been both a healing experience and a tool to deal with prejudices and negative attitudes towards her people (Moon 2009: 11). As a form of quiet revolution, she follows the ancient Aboriginal narratives that are told through stringybark and rock paintings, and emphasises their importance in daily life in order to voice the community and the land. Her materials, such as grasses or seeds, are picked from specific places integral to the Aboriginal sense of identity, and are made hybrid through their incorporation into her artwork (Moon 2009: 19). Koolmatrie’s use of traditional materials and the production of layers of meanings tied to
specific roles of educating and mediating between communities and the environment are important to understanding the connections between communities and the land.

I understand Koolmatrie’s Hot-air Balloon as a creative site that links cultural and botanical conceptual blends, in Fauconnier and Turner’s (2002) sense. She is not only creating a contemporary aesthetically appealing object that goes beyond the practical role of the traditional basket, but her incorporation of the traditional processes also opens up the
concept of materials as actants, in Latour’s (2004) sense. Materials are not inert objects, but vibrant agents that need care and respect, a feeling evoked by Koolmatrie’s work.

I agree with Diana Wood-Conroy (2009), who calls attention to the importance of maintaining network connections between humans and the environment through interaction. She states that although there are actions that are no longer necessary in our contemporary life, such as hunting and gathering (and I would add growing our food or making our own objects), the metaphorical import remains alive for the people performing these activities. In this way, makers using fibres become storytellers because ‘searching for materials across country is a vital tactic for re-sensing a way of being’ (Wood-Conroy 2009: 30). I propose that this material tactic, which opens up story (meaning) and connection (sensory engagement) accentuates the constant process of becoming, whether in a new place or in refamiliarising oneself with a known place.

**Relevance**

Material, materiality and the materialisation of thought, connections and extended relationships with others and the environment are important to the development of identity, continuity and community. Employing similar techniques shared by women from various cultures, I have become increasingly aware of how this type of interaction produces a creative site (the open space of making connections deliberately set up through creative practices). Women who are creating in a process by which interactions with the land and with their own body, through materials, are augmented by social and communal relations employ this type of open space. One important aspect would be the intimacy that is involved in such a creative
site where body and the work become one through making and caring for the created artefact. I learned from Koolmatrie’s approach, which uses traditional materials and processes, then I applied this understanding of the hybrid nature of identity, culture and environment to my working process for *Textilled Becomings*. I use traditional methods of making yarns and weaving to negotiate cultural and social connections. In addition, Koolmatrie’s approach to materials such as seeds, which plays an active role within her work, is taken here in its broadest application, which is to understand the use of materials as actants that perform the power of life.

**The Process: Starting with the Seeds**

When I am making fabric and focusing on the materials chosen and the material qualities, I become open to the knowledge shared by women in many cultures across the world. Some examples are works by Australian Aborigines and Papua New Guinean women. During the process of collecting materials from their environment, drying, dying and weaving or knotting those on the body, dimensions of time and space take on different qualities. When one focuses on the movements of making, which break down into smaller and smaller activities that connect materials of the work to the material environment, it becomes possible to connect social histories through the body’s relationship to others and otherness.

The materials I am using in *Textilled Becomings* were chosen carefully after a long period of experimentation. It is important to describe the decisions I made in terms of the materials and the processes that I used, starting with the seeds. I see the seed as a starting point, although it is a chicken and egg matter. After going through a long trial and error period
with different seeds, in various growing conditions, I decided to use versatile barley\textsuperscript{137} seeds because of their rapid growth and tolerant nature. Barley matures within approximately a month, allowing the life and death cycle as well as regeneration to be visible as it occurs within the time of a single exhibition – unlike rice,\textsuperscript{138} which requires longer time or tea, which takes two years to mature. In order for the seeds to be implanted in the yarns, I needed a seed that would show growth within a period of a week or two. The reason for a fast-growing seed was due to the average exhibition time of a month. Going through experimentation with a wide range of seeds, barley’s life cycle occurs quickly enough to see the slowness of growth and slowly enough to see the fluidity of connections emerge in the work.

In regard to the fibres into which the barley would be implanted, I looked for a plant that I could grow in my backyard. In this way, I could care for the plants daily and document the progress of multiple aspects of the work. Considering the climatic conditions and type of soil in my area, I found that cotton was the most suitable. In addition to its adaptability, the fibrous texture of its wool could envelop the hosted seeds and at the same time be hand-spun into flexible fibres. Out of twenty cottonseeds that I planted two years ago, only one grew to become the supplier of the cotton for this project.

\textsuperscript{137} Barley seeds are the second most widely grown crop in Australia. (department of primary industries 2008)

\textsuperscript{138} I have experimented with rice seeds, wheat and even tea leaves.
Two forms of cotton have been incorporated into this project. The first form of cotton came from the seeds I obtained from a local supplier\textsuperscript{139} in order to grow my own cotton, which I collected. I then picked out the seeds from within (see Image 3) and implanted the barley seeds instead. The second form of cotton is packaged pure cotton that was sent to me by my mother from Israel. There are two reasons for the use of the imported cotton. The first is practical – I needed more cotton than my plants were able to supply\textsuperscript{140} for this exhibition. The second is metaphorical significance, which ties together the notion of here and there through the use of the materials and their relation to nomadic subjectivity.

\textbf{Image 3}

\textit{Textiled Becomings 2005–2010}

\textbf{Process: extracting seeds from cotton fibres and implanting barley seeds}

\textit{Photographed by the artist}

\textsuperscript{139} I received the seeds from Cotton Australia’s Discovery Centre.

\textsuperscript{140} In this final exhibition, I have used cotton that I stored from last summer, as well as cotton collected during the very short period of growing this year.
In the early stages of the project, I started with processed cotton and recycled shopping bags. Since the processed cotton is compressed, it required cooking to loosen the bonding between the cotton fibres to facilitate separation into thin layers so I could spin them by hand. I had to hang these pieces to dry on the clothesline. The barley seeds were implanted one by one within the cotton fibres and spun on my body to become yarns. (I refer to making the yarns from scratch as hand-spun, when in fact, it is more accurate to say the fibres are rolled between my hand and thigh) Since these yarns made from processed cotton were not strong enough to take the function of the warp, I incorporated recycled plastic bags that I had processed into threads. It is only after the significant amount of fibre is produced into yarns that I can start weaving a ‘living textile’ on my body. Tying straps around knees and to my waist forms the first position in order to weave between them.

It was difficult to find a way to make the warp from the cotton I grow that would be strong enough to withstand the pulling and stretching involved in the weaving work. The solution was to incorporate glue. Again, numerous experimentations with various materials led to

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141 How is cotton processed? First the cotton is harvested from the fields. The cotton seeds and fibres are put into a machine called a cotton gin. The cotton gin separates out the cotton fibres from the seedpods and seeds. At the cotton mill, the raw cotton fibre is a light brownish colour. To make it white, it is usually bleached using hydrogen peroxide. This powerful bleach then needs to be removed from the cotton fibre. This is to prevent it from reacting with any dyes that are used afterwards to colour the cotton. Cotton is the largest fibre crop in the world. It produces around half of the world's fibre needs, and is produced in more than 60 countries around the world. The biggest producers are the United States, China, India, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Turkey. It is an important source of income for millions of small farmers. Cotton production is also a major player in the national economies of many developing countries. (Cotton Growers 2007).

142 I knitted recycled bags in my early work Watch Every Drop (2007), exhibited at the Logan Art Gallery. This work was a part of a process of looking for materials to become the visual component that would allow me to explore issues of embodiment.
producing glue out of milk and vinegar. The combination of materials including milk suited also the symbolic aspect of mothering and caring for the living work. Making the glue in this way served two purposes: to make it from scratch and to use the nutrients in the glue for the seeds to grown in the work when it is irrigated in the gallery exhibition. The role of the glue in the work is both to hold the seeds within the yarns (as the work is kept dry until the exhibition time) and to strengthen the fibres for later, to be used as warp.

My decisions emphasise the idea of flow between theory, processes and materials (associations of material with culture, ideas about the vibrant materiality way all share, ethical concerns about the human and non-human relationship and the political implications of specific materials), rather than implementing a hierarchy in which practice leads the research or research leads the practice.

Interconnected levels of materiality are cognitively linked to various experiences and various cognitive blends. This touches again on Fauconnier and Turner’s (2002) illumination of the ways in which we make meaning, which coevolves in the species, the culture and in the individual. Cognitive blending is the compression of unconscious activity involved in every aspect of human life, required to achieve ‘human scale’ and conscious decision-making. I am not suggesting that I am able to deconstruct the cultural blending processes, or my own specific mode of blending; however, with the awareness of cognitive

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143 For the exhibition at the Tokonoma Art Gallery in November 2009, I made my own organic glue out of milk and vinegar. After a day or two, the milk went stale and caused decay of the seeds. Therefore, after experimentation with many other options and formulae, I chose to use non-acidic ready-made PVA glue.

144 Warp threads run the length of the fabric. The weft threads run from selvage to selvage across the width of the fabric across the warp threads.
processes, I am able to be conscious of the links that are revealed through handling, sensing and connecting of materials.

Materials such as the cotton seeds and the barley seeds in this project are active in triggering reciprocal connections between the cognitive space and the sensing space of the body. Since I live with the materials with which I work, the multiple levels of connections are a ‘cross-space mapping between the input spaces in a frame–to-values connection – that is, an organised bundle of role connectors’ (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 120). The roles that I link to the seeds become their value as a source of food, their potential as life and their impetus as starting points for an idea, as well as taking a role in the living artwork. When handling the seeds – touching, smelling, and placing them into both the soil – and then handling the cotton fibres, they receive further roles as sensual materials and functional objects both with intrinsic worth. The seeds become a bundle of roles that are all connected to the values that are the seed: artwork or food or metaphor, medical use, absorbents, fibres, yarns and extension to cocoons or to creaturely comforts. The value of the seeds also includes other parts of the plant and the life around it: the seedling, the leaves, the flowers, the pods, the pests that live on it, together with the aesthetic and sensing the various parts that are all connected to the value of the cotton, which takes a part within the conceptual blend that is connected to Textiled Becomings.

My experience of the material and the materiality of the seeds in Textiled Becomings afforded an understanding of a reflective space focused on the connections to bodies, to the process of the life cycle (seed, soil and water) and to shared histories, particularly of women, as well as an understanding of the embodied experience of the cognitive space of perception, sensation, identity formation and thinking about thinking. In this doubled effect
produced by the engagement with materials, there are various organising frames that contribute to the cognitive network. These frames include the involvement with the living/growing plants from seeds as well as the frame of art/craft and research. The connection between these organisations of meanings and associations can be viewed as tied through a giver–taker relationship. Nonetheless, I became aware of the networks that produce vital connections between the materials and the ‘inner’, already established cognitive blends such as motherhood, immigrant, woman. They all become an integrated space of an overlapping and connecting network that ‘establishes deep vital relations of causality, intentionality, and the time between inputs’ (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 136). The cotton becomes a connection to the ground and an impermanent material that can be carried between places. Thinking through and with the materials allowed me to experience the ethereal or transient quality of the plant life and to experience the ways in which I map these connections on to and into my body.

My body has learned about the different thresholds that the yarns and the woven parts make evident. This sense of boundary and intensity feels as though it is located in various parts of my body, with varying degrees of intensity. These collaborate to hold the material together. For example, if the feet need to ease the tension in relation to the knee in relation to the neck in relation to the other knee, then the back needs to pull in order to keep the weaving going. At that moment, there is both muscle memory and associated images of giving birth. When considering the subject as embodied, Waskul and Vannini (2006)145 argue, an emphasis

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145 Dennis Waskul is an Associate Professor of Sociology at the Minnesota State University Mankato. He is author of Self-Games and Body Play: Personhood in Online Chat and Cybersex (Peter Lang, 2003), editor of net.seXXX: Readings on Sex, Pornography, and the Internet (Peter Lang, 2004) and co-editor of
needs to be directed at how subjectivity, meaning and consciousness do not exist prior to experience, but situate ‘action as a primary conceptual and analytical focus’ (2006: 3).

Materials and engagement with material can also deconstruct existing conceptual blends. The blend that was established when I wove the cotton that I grew on the loom of my body has the effect of loosening the ties between the land and the notion of stability. The loosening of some concepts allows others to be built – identity and movement, cause and effect, time and intentionality, for example, come together in a new way. The placement of seeds into the cotton fibres rather than into the soil goes against the ‘natural’ way in which we associate seeds and nutrient support. The seeds too become nomads.

I deliberately wanted to use the cotton fibres and seeds to break down the processes and spaces and, through the making from scratch, to become consciously aware of the different inputs I use to construct my concept and make my conceptual blends. My subjectivity became ‘nomad’ within my identity as an immigrant.

**Theme 2: Identity, Belonging and Unbelonging**

My identity is unstable; it has multiple hyphens. I am an Israeli-Australian-student-mother-arts-practitioner-gemmologist-immigrant-nomad and many more. As a nomad with a fragmented identity, I cross different domains of belonging. With cross-nationality, cross-cultural and cross-social values that are hybridised, I am a ‘space traveller’ who collects a

diverse inventory of traces from which my identity is constantly woven and undone. The feeling of living is always a feeling of in-between: the here and there, the now and then. Becoming an immigrant has inherent connections to the materials and procedures that I am using. As my identity became unstable, my subjectivity became nomadic, and my research became a breathing creative site. It was then that I started using fibre and textile-making to set up conversations across and between my movements in-between. The feeling and comprehension of these becoming has influenced my decision-making and fabrication processes, as well as my choice of materials.

For me, becoming in-between means also being able to move, rather than being connected to one place. As a nomadic subject, I am not precious about the objects, materials and experiences I collect, and I am prepared to let go and move on without compromising the ability to move. Growing up in Israel meant there was a strong emphasis on belonging – not only to the land of Israel but also to a certain culture such as Ashkenaz\footnote{Ashkenaz Jews were mainly located in Eastern and Western Europe, while Sefarad Jews were located in Spain and North Africa.} or Sefarad. Irit Rogoff (2000), an Israeli herself, extensively discusses this notion of belonging. She explains the problematic relations that construct a fragmented and fluid subjectivity, which arises as a result of a huge array of differences and discriminations within the small area that is Israel. The constant flow of immigration from all over the world has created a ‘fake bubble’ of unity under the title of belonging. This bubble keeps on bursting and is pumped up again and again where the luggage of internal and external discrimination and injustices against Asians, Jews, local Arabs, Palestinians and women by the Eurocentric, bourgeois patriarchy is constantly denied. She explains:

\footnote{Ashkenaz Jews were mainly located in Eastern and Western Europe, while Sefarad Jews were located in Spain and North Africa.}
This, then, is a position of cultural hybridity which produces the need to problematise the seamless rhetoric of constructed national identity through the transnational critical tools evolve within my own generation’s movements of resistance to homogenic culture and the categories through which it establishes itself as normative and indexical. (Rogoff 2000: 156)

Rogoff’s observations further explain the idea of non-belonging as the express purpose of the journey and its unexpected consequences, which I see as tied to the notion of Braidotti’s (2006) development of the nomad. I see the notion of being in-between as a circular flow between the past, present and future of non-belonging. One does not belong in the past or yet in the future: the island of the present is what you bring with you. It is a mixture of being an Israeli Jewish woman, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, and the mother of new immigrants. In this way, it can be argued that I have taken the active form of ‘unbelonging’ or non-belonging that has impacted on my exploration of borders, boundaries and thresholds, each of which describes a different domain of relations.

**The Artist: Eva Hesse**

Exploring boundaries was crucial to Eva Hesse. Reading through her works, diaries and interviews with Cindy Nemser (1970),¹⁴⁷ I could relate to the sense of belonging and non-belonging in the ways she contemplated her art. Moving between belonging to the American culture or the German culture while residing in America can be connected to her constant efforts to challenge the conventional forms and processes of art. When I looked through her works and mapped the passage of time, the travels and the progress of her illness, rather

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¹⁴⁷ Cindy Nemser is a theater and art critic.
than analysing a particular one work, it is possible to see the shifts in her processes and in the use of specific materials across her short life. I could relate the in-depth research that emerged through her drawings and paintings and developed gradually into her decision to work with cords and strings, latex and papier mâché as her illness progressed in her last years.

Image 4
Eva Hesse: *Untitled (Rope Piece) 1970*
Whitney Museum of American Art
Eva Hesse: Sculpture’ at the Jewish Museum
Rosalind Kraus (1993)\textsuperscript{148} explains that, after her return from Germany, Hesse’s understanding of the flexible qualities of materials such as latex, fibreglass and rubber tubing would produce a continuum in her work that had to do with breaking the frame. By exiting the frame of painting and not necessarily fitting within the brackets of sculpture, Hesse’s work can be located at the space of in-between, positioning her ahead of her time. In her diaries of 1964 and 1965, she talks about her life with a recurring illness, and specifies the books that she has read and exhibitions she has visited. These passages are

\textsuperscript{148} Rosalind Krauss is a professor and American art critic, and theorist in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at the Colombia University, New York.
juxtaposed with her discussion of her works and the materials she has started to use, such as wires and cords.\textsuperscript{149}

If, in her early drawings, a line is a line, in the Kettwig reliefs lines start to emerge in three dimensions, right out of the painted surface. In the last works, they become an installation of cords and fibres (see Image 4). For Hesse, everything was a process\textsuperscript{150} that enabled her to get to where she was going. In her works, she is constantly problematising the idea of boundaries:

Where does painting end and drawing begin? The drawings could be called paintings legitimately, and a lot of my sculpture could be called paintings, and a lot of it could be called nothing – a thing or any object or any new word that you want to give it. (www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/hasse)

\textsuperscript{149} On Friday, 11 December she remarked that she had finished knitting a scarf and learned to crochet, and at the same time she was working with cords and plaster.

\textsuperscript{150} Process art emphasises all aspects of making art (rather than any predetermined composition or plan) and the concepts of change and transience as elaborated in the work of such artists as Lynda Benglis, Eva Hesse, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Alan Saret, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson and Keith Sonnier in the United States and Europe in the mid-1960s. Their interest in process and the properties of materials as determining factors has precedents in the Abstract Expressionists’ use of unconventional methods such as dripping and staining. In a ground-breaking essay and exhibition in 1968, Morris posited the notion of ‘anti-form’ as a basis for making artworks in terms of process and time rather than as static and enduring icons, which he associated with ‘object-type’ art. Morris stressed this new art’s de-emphasis on order through non-rigid materials, pioneered by Claes Oldenburg, and the manipulation of those materials through the processes of gravity, stacking, piling and hanging. Process artists were involved in issues attendant to the body, random occurrences, improvisation and the liberating qualities of non-traditional materials such as wax, felt and latex. Using these, they created eccentric forms in erratic or irregular arrangements produced by actions such as cutting, hanging and dropping, or organic processes such as growth, condensation, freezing or decomposition (www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/show-list/movement/?search=Process%20art).
Hesse’s work *Contingent* (1969) is a good example of this (see Image 5). The work consists of a series of eight hanging pieces of ripple cloth coated in latex and fibreglass, which could be called a painting or sculpture, moving beyond definitions of figuration or abstraction. For Hesse, questioning through duality is also coming through a combination of both rigidity and pliability, the machine-made and the handcrafted, hard geometric abstraction and soft organic curves, all came as gradual shifts between things that seem to interest her.

Being in-between, for Hesse, is also portrayed in the catalogue *Art in Process* (1969), where she wrote that she wanted to make what was not yet known-thought-seen-touched (this is how she put it without punctuation) as if it was one word. To me, this shows her perception of being always in process of becoming. I interpret the movement between materials and the connections she makes between ways of working and her personal experiences as integrally related to the negotiation of her identity, belonging or non-belonging. I feel a strong affinity with her through my own experiences with very similar situations.

**Relevance**

Because of my own active involvement within the work, Eva Hesse’s work demonstrates clearly the embodied experience of both her illness and the constant cultural exchanges that were a function of her identity and her engagement with a range of materials. Whereas the materials are important, it is the movement across the experiences and the development in relation to identity and belonging that speak to an adaptive and fluid identity. For me, Hesse’s work had opened up the concept of unbelonging to be intertwined with material processes that cross the boundaries of being a passive object to that of active process and subject-in-process. Her endeavours emphasise processes of both the artist as a subject and the art as a laborious and rigorous research. Her awareness of being in between cultures,
bodily condition and art processes indicates an explicit understanding in the work. This is echoed in her writings, and has contributed to my understanding of the connections between the ideas of identity and material processes.

**The Process: The Body as Loom**

The processes undertaken in *Textiled Becomings* allow me to move through the embodied significance of cultural contexts, handling of materials and the movement of making. This mode of engagement as movement, and movement as the production of identity and belonging, is happening in multiple and reciprocal directions where the ‘maker’, ‘the made’ and the ‘active viewer’ reshape their relationships. Exploration of art processes and materials allows me to follow the connections between identity and belonging. When I started my weaving work, I began by tying the warps on to objects such as chairs or tables, rather than to my own body. As the work progressed, I began to research the process of weaving and ideas of belonging, which led me to the realisation that I would use my own body as the loom. I realised the need to carry the ‘tools’ and the materials with me. My body became a wider space that included the spaces in between the organs that belong to my body and the spaces around my body, which can be accessed. The ideas of belonging became connected to the fluid concept of becoming, which leads to the concept of the body as a loom on which I can weave wherever I am, no tools needed but my own body. Identity and belonging are intimately related, and so too the spaces of and within the body are intimately tied to the space of the environment and context with which the body interacts. Identity and belonging can be focused through the material activity as a way of moving within and across these domains that are collectively constructed and individually inflected.
When I am materialising spaces, I am not only involved in creating and materialising spaces in between my body parts but also in between myself and other bodies. The degree of intimacy varies when there is a movement between them, and the spaces of both bodies bleed into one another. There are variations of intensities of intimacy, and therefore it is reflected in the intensity of feeling comfortable. For example, in workshops in which I have participated with various groups of students to groups of adults, I have noticed that when I was weaving in the space between myself and other people, the intensity of that space varied: for one person it was agitating, while for another it was comfortable. A tension was created, and in some cases people got up and left the work while in other cases the work between people became a catalyst for conversation. For me, working with different people could be explained as working within two transparent breathing bubbles. It started with a personal bubble around one’s own body space, which transformed as the work progressed (see Image 6) to either blending the bubbles together or staying apart from each other.

There are two ways of materialising the relational spaces of the body or bodies as loom. One is a direct connection from my waist to another’s waist in a straight line, where two people would weave towards one another. The second involves connecting various body parts such as waist to knees to underarms. When the connections became more intricate, it became more awkward for both weavers and required negotiation that went beyond the technical procedures. Through intercorporeality and touch, Springgay and Freeman claim, ‘the body’s boundaries are fluid, interconnected, and permeable’ (2007: xxii–xxiii).

151 These workshops were conducted outside of the PhD frame.
Manning sees the connections between bodies as ‘created through intensities of composition that in turn produce new bodies’ (2007: xvi). However, although the sense of touch is vital, where there is touching of the materials while touching one’s own body, there is also a liminal space. This more complex space is temporary and relational. It is a space of transition in which the weavers stay for a while and then move on, in which the weaver communicates with him or herself and/or with another weaver while working. Touch here is ‘one way of thinking body-in-movement’. Understanding touch synesthetically allows us to see that we are always in conversation with other senses rather than isolating touch as one aspect of the whole concert of making. Gallagher (2005) reminds us of the multimodality of

Image 6

Textiled Becomings 2005–2010

Process: weaving on my body. Photographed by the artist.
the senses. Each sense adds to the others, as with touch and sight, where ‘previous tactile sensation inform first perception in the visual modality’ (2005: 153). Gallagher observes that a tactile space is different from a visual space, but says they do communicate naturally and perception works internodally (2005: 161). However, the question here is: what happens when one sense (such as the haptic in my work) is developed more than the other? Will it take over? Manning (2007) claims that touch is not a stable concept, but it opens paths for inventions. Every time we touch we are being also ‘touched by’, and therefore it becomes an option for invention of relationship that in turn will become a form of self-invention.

Working on/with my body as a loom also opened up the visual prediction of the forms of the woven pieces that would map the spaces between my body parts (since the imagined shapes differed from the actual materialised forms that emerged). These pieces move between sculptural, textile, bioart and performative works to become an artwork that is not yet known, thought, seen or touched. The work refuses the comfort of the stable soil, enabling me to perform my embodied nomadic subjectivity on the loom of my body.

**Theme 3: Performance and Performativity**

Performance is discussed by Rosalie Goldberg (1988) as an extension of ‘conceptual art’, where it becomes an intangible and ephemeral work that could not be bought and sold. Performance art, now a hybrid form called live art, is where artists use their bodies as art

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152 Conceptual art was formulated as an art of which the material is the concept. Conceptual art can be understood as an attack on the institutions of commercialism by positioning the art object as superfluous (Goldberg, 1988: 152–53).
materials and media of expression, rather than using canvases, brushes, clay, text or image. To amplify the experience and politics of time, space and materiality, performance artists use the body as the most direct medium for their expression rather than utilising form and object to represent expressions (1988: 152). Performativity, as a concept of performance applied to the conscious awareness of the way actions are influenced by and affect the relationships to one’s own body, history and social-cultural context, is linked to the processes of becoming. Performativity is the heightened awareness of our participation and interactions involving a conversation with the world, which allows the dynamics of constructing subjectivity to emerge.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) stress the importance of the performative facet of becoming and becomings, which are ‘involutionary’. They see involution (complexity and complication) as creative (1987: 263). Moreover, nomadic becoming ‘is neither reproduction nor just imitation, but rather emphatic proximity, intensive interconnectedness’ (Braidotti 1994: 5). The body-in-process is the idea, intelligence and actions performed as artwork. It is the connection between becoming and performing oneself as a conscious tracking and inflection of that process that has influenced my decision-making process.

Linnèa Axelsson (2003) explained this view in her presentation ‘Body, Room, Artist’ at Luleå University of Technology:

In the moment of performance, in the choices and actions the artist makes in a certain place, in a certain time, the artist him or herself becomes the art. In that moment the body of the artist is art, and it is a link or path for the viewer to follow, toward a phenomenon of quite sublime meaning … being bodies is
what enables these artists to become art. Therefore it is not a matter of the mind manipulating the body, but a logical art form, from humans being embodied.

(Axelsson, 2003: n.p., emphasis in original)

The connections between the body and art are also emphasised by Barbara Bolt (2004) through her discussions of performativity, in which the body becomes a language rather than being inscribed with/by language (2004: 10). It is through the creative process that the chasm between the artist and world is closed and s/he ‘allows total openness to the Being of art’ (Bolt 2004:186). In this way, Bolt argues, the art is a performative rather than a representational practice.

Manning (2006) explores the connections between the performing body and movement understood as a flow between senses and the environment. The ‘human’ is a collection of actively sensing bodies moving in rhizomic systems, she claims, where they become through relational matrices through bodily adjustments across visceral and emotional dimensions essential to the accomplishment of embodied perceptual experience (2006: 1).

Gallagher (2005) points out that the picture of the human can never be comprehended fully unless aspects such as intimacy, touch and ‘prenoetic’ perceptions are considered,

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153 Manning (2006) challenges the idea of a passive embodiment through her study of the computer program designed to replace the dancing body by developing sensitive software. She says ‘it may direct the techno-dance process toward establishing a kind of grammar of movement that would – paradoxically – be more likely to tie the body to some established understanding of how it actualises’ (2006: 1).

154 Prenoetic is a concept coined by Gallagher (2005), which signifies the hidden aspects of consciousness that are happening before we know it: ‘those embodied processes and performances that cannot be reduced to neurophysiology, but that necessarily happen before one knows anything in a cognitive manner’ (2005: 12).
otherwise the body is only represented, not explained\textsuperscript{155} (2005: 133). Gallagher is referring to a phenomenological awareness, which connects notions of embodiment to the feeling ‘inside’. What he means by this is that pre-reflective self-awareness may include a sense of agency (being the initiator or source of movement, action or thought) and a sense of ownership (that I am experiencing the movement or thought). Donna Haraway (1991) puts in perspective the shift from body as an object to the body as an experiencing agent. She attributes this shift to the moving between multiple constructs of ‘body’. The personal body shifts to social and biological body moderated by the technological changes (Haraway 2006: 144). The sensing body, however, is a moving body. Manning (2006) argues that ‘to move is to create [with] sense. A body perceives through difference. A change in environment provokes a sensory event.’ (2006: n.p). As in the discussion of identity and belonging, movement is a key feature of performativity. However, entirely different types of movement are evoked in each case. For the nomadic subject, it is the movement across relational sets of information or constructs that is compounded by the action of making or travelling. In performance and performativity, movement is to be understood, more literally, as the way of enacting the connections that require bodily movement and interaction with materials and allow self-awareness.

\textbf{The Artist: Nelly Aggasi}

Nelly Aggasi, an Israeli artist, incorporates fibre art within her performances, using her own body as a reference. One of her aims is to make the audience aware of their own interactions

\textsuperscript{155} Gallagher explains that ‘a full picture of human cognition can be drawn only by exposing the details of the various prenoetic processes that constitute the body’s contribution to the shaping of experience. One cannot get these details neither through phenomenology alone, nor through neuroscience alone.’ (2005: 133)
with the environment. This is especially the case in her recent work, in which she developed a series of dresses. Each dress is a project by itself, relating to a specific site. For example, Wall Dress (2002) (see Image 7) uses filaments randomly hung from the walls and placed on the floor while some appear as though they are already attached to her dress. Agassi picked the filaments up, one by one, and sews them to her skin-coloured dress as if sewing them to her own body.

![Image 7]

**Image 7**

*Nelly Agassi: from Palace of Tears 2001*  
*Performance with Wall Dress, Ein Harod Museum of Art*

Even though Aggasi ‘does not deal with issues of body and identity, gender or class’ (Maor, 2002: n.p), these ideas are evident in her performances. When she positions her body in the centre of the gallery, she is using the exaggerated large scale of the dress to play with the perception of her body as small and almost disappearing within the work. In this regard, there are affinities with Hesse’s later works that Aggasi picks up and elaborates upon. Aggasi’s use of soft materials and forms associated with Hesse’s are referenced in the performances, where she adds her own narrative or private elements. In doing so, she performs an inversion of the abstract elements that Hesse saw as important and brings back the story of the body and the space to problematise the interrelations between her own body.
and the spaces in which she performs. In this way, performance comments on performativity, as Aggasi uses performance to comment upon and develop the already performative forms in new ways.

Through the movement of her performing body and the materials that she connects to her body, Aggasi creates an in-between of body and threads that transgress the boundaries defined by an art gallery space, a body or an artform. Hadas Maor\textsuperscript{156} explains that Aggasi’s work represents ‘the transition from the preoccupation with the body itself to a discussion through the body – a discussion that touches upon issues of context, representation and space, but without an exclusive withdrawal into the subject’ (Maor 2002: n.p).

Beyond the actual performative events that Aggasi produces, I found that the works keep the feeling of the performance through the suggestive form of her body that remains in the dress and through memories of the way she used the space. By inhabiting the whole space of the gallery with her threads but still allowing the spaces in between the yarns to invite occupancy, she is able to manipulate the gallery visitors’ movement. Her control of the space, body/bodies and materials creates tension that heightens awareness of intimate relationships. Importantly, she invites the people to enter her ‘private’ space, which has been materialised between the dress/body and the walls.

Through her movement in space and sewing herself through her dress to the space, Aggasi enacts a form of control and of losing control at the same time. While she is meticulously

\textsuperscript{156} Hadas Maor is a contemporary arts curator and arts critic. In addition to her ongoing work as an independent curator, she is also a consultant to some of the major international contemporary art collections in Israel, among them the Brandes Family Art Collection and the Angel Collection of Contemporary Art.
sewing piece by piece to the skin-coloured dress, she is also letting out the threads according to the movement of people in the space. Aggasi produces a situation where the expressive penetrates the conceptual, and all discursive field and contexts blend together (Maor 2004: n.p).

**Relevance**

It is the shift from a dress as a mere object to a performative collaboration between the dress, Agassi’s body and the audience that has contributed to my project. I have found Agassi’s accentuation of her reliance on her body as art to be important for the ways in which I can reveal the dependence on my body in the process of making and configuring the body–material–environment relationships of *Textiled Becomings*. I have taken the idea of the performative dress and transformed it into the living form of a relationship; the fabric thus becomes a living art.

The open spaces that are created by Agassi through her movement, as well as through the performative work, suggest for me a space of negotiation that converges through her body and the bodies of those in the audience. I identified with her meditative performance and could relate to the proprioceptive aspects of her work because I have experienced a similar involvement in a meticulous process of performative making. Not only is her meditative process reflected in my own work; the use of threads as a medium through which she negotiates space, body and story of her embodied experience also reflect the emphasis of my own approach.
The Process: The Life Cycle Performs Itself

Textiled Becomings incorporates performativity involved in the making of the work, as well as the body aware of performing itself and performance involved in setting up the best conditions by which to present the living art’s life cycle put on display: performing itself. I see performance and performativity as reflective ways of understanding processes of embodiment. Handling materials and the movement of making constitute a creative site where reflection can reshape all relationships: thoughts, actions, objects, persons and environment.

Textiled Becomings multiplies the instances of reflection, from the making of the fibres to the movement of growing, as the pieces of fabric (implanted with seeds) are watered and grow in the final exhibition. The work is alive and feeding back into the many systems that comprise and sustain it. The artwork becomes a performance in the making, and in the showing of its life cycle. Not only is the thickness of the fibres altered by the roots and leaves as they grow, but the smells and the colours of the cotton also change and show themselves over time (see Image 8).

Image 8
Textiled Becomings 2005–2010
Performative process: Life cycle
Photographed by the artist
I see a nuance of difference between ‘making’ and ‘performing’ an artwork. The difference lies in the degree of reflection brought to the actions. I consider ‘making’ to be routine and habitual, whereas ‘performing’ is self-conscious and undergoing constant modification as a result of increased awareness. Based on this distinction, I argue that most art practices tend towards the performative (the self-reflective and deliberate self-awareness of the process).

Image 9

**Textiled Becomings 2005–2010**
**Performative process: Performing the making**
**Photographed by the artist**

I discuss here the meditative notion of the performativity inherent in my weavings and the literal performance movements that, when captured, tell of the technique, ability and embodied reflexivity (see Image 9). During the stages of weaving when I use my body as a loom, there are two ways of moving and performing. At the beginning of making, only ‘small-scale’ movements are required. Since I am tying my body parts to one another with the extremely delicate yarns to stay in a fixed position until the piece is completed, the force and size of the movements have consequences. In these moments, there is a ‘struggle’ that can be seen as a conversation between intention and physical ability and coordination. On the one hand, my body is restricted in movement, so my awareness moves between a focus on weaving, as the fibres are pulled and stretched, and a focus on the body, as muscles are
stretched and constricted. The conflict between meditative states of mind induced by the repetitive movement of the hand between the yarns and the physical pain demands a decision. The choice is between stopping the meditative state and returning to a comfortable position, or holding on and moving through the pain to ‘teach’ the body to ignore the pain and remain in meditation.\textsuperscript{157} Teaching oneself to perform cognitive adjustments can be seen as a combination of working with proprioceptive registered information and proprioceptive awareness. Gallagher’s (2005) view is that bodily movement is closely tied to perception in various ways while it is also linked to other forms of cognition, as well as emotions where ‘the body – movement, and posture informs and shapes cognition’ (2005: 8). The postures that I hold as a living loom contribute to the ways in which I become aware of my body and at the same time allow insight into my cognitive processes, such as an awareness of my proprioceptive preferences and adjustments.\textsuperscript{158}

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\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{157} In an interview about combating pain, Dr Lonnie Zeltzer, Head of the Pediatric Pain Program at UCLA, explains to the reporter Patricia Neighmond that: ‘Positive mood and comfort actually change the activity in the nerve connections and the chemical environment that bathes the brain in very powerful ways to actually turn off pain perception.’ Patricia Neighmond: ‘In fact, studies with Buddhist monks show that while the monks are meditating, almost all of the brain's electrical activity is on one side, the side that gives you a sense of well-being. The fact that monks can alter the chemical activity of their brains through meditation has helped motivate research into what more ordinary people can do to achieve similar results.’ (NPR 2005)
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\textsuperscript{158} Proprioception is explained by Gallagher (2005) as the incorporation of both proprioceptive information and proprioceptive awareness as integrated to become proprioceptive system (that is, a system that registers its own self–movement). Proprioception contributes to the self-organising development of neuronal structures responsible not only for motor actions but also for the way we come to be conscious of ourselves, to communicate with others, and to live in the surrounding world (Gallagher 2005: 1).
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The feelings that resulted from these actions of weaving on my body and being tied were documented during the process of making (a video recording of the weaving process will be shown at the exhibition). The common denominator in relation to these difficult positions was a resentment or ‘hate’ towards performing the actions. This inconvenience is explained by Damasio (2003) as ‘imbalance’. Feelings, according to Damasio, depend on consciously monitoring your own body and experiencing what your body is doing while the specific contents of your thoughts roll by. He cites a situation similar to the one I have described above, but from a scientific perspective. He starts from the point of feelings and determines that feelings arise from neural patterns. Body activities, he claims, shape the patterns as well as giving intensity and a temporal profile to shape how we feel. Damasio states that ‘the quality of the feelings probably hinges on the intimate design of the neurons themselves’ (2003: 129). Hence, he concludes, feelings depend on the medium in which they are realised with the physiology of the neuron and the physicality of the actions, materials and environment.

Pain is explained by Damasio (2003) as a stage where life process struggles for balance, which also indicates chaotic interaction or out-of-balance processes. However, when I look at the experience of being a living loom and weaving, there is awareness of how the chaotic and the will for organisation work together through the materiality of the body and that of the woven work. Performativity, which partly deals with pain, brings together the benefits of repetition, movement and forms of connection, accentuated by reflection and self-awareness, in order to make the ideas presented in creative research accessible to a wider audience.
The last aspect of performance and performativity that is important to my project is the sensation of touch. Again, while touch is not the thematic itself, it is an important way to understand the connection between materials, nomadic movement and performative movement. Creative work becomes an ongoing negotiation between my body and materials through touch, which connect the action of care to the potentiality of the seeds. Performance and performativity depend greatly on the sense of proprioception, and proprioception depends upon the sensitivity of touch (conscious touching with intention and unconscious touching that registers gravity upon the bones and organs). There is also the connection of touch to vision, where the visual observation or touching of certain objects evokes the most suitable motor program required to interact with them. For example, the cottonseeds within the wool require that I use three fingers and small movements limited to a very small radius of work. As Gallagher explains, there is activation of motor preparation areas in the brain that form part of what it means to perceive such an object (2005: 161). The size of the seeds, the softness of the wool as well as the resistance to the pulling action the length of the fibres should be also considered alongside the shape and strength of my hands and my ability to connect, to perceive and to execute the action. How bodily movement and the motor system influence cognitive performance is an important part of the experience of making, and is given a correlate in the time the work takes to grow in the gallery.

**Theme 4: Language and the Polyglot**

The use of various languages is seen as becoming multiple in my creative site. This is how I understand Braidotti’s (1994) use of the polyglot: that experience where she contrasts the need to communicate with the stereotyped categories or expressions that happen according
to the accent one has. Through this type of classification, Braidotti comments, the subject becomes hyphenated. I certainly exist across a series of hyphenated links. Just in terms of nationality, I am an Israeli-Australian, a German-Israeli and a Polish-Israeli, and therefore experience multiple fragmentations. Combined with being a polyglot, the fragmentation allows inclusion – I can be included in the conversation of more than one language but always with the notion of not quite being there.

Home and language are interlaced through cognitive functions. They not only coordinate with each other, but also mediate and are being mediated by culturally developed semiotic tools. Braidotti (1994) claims that language is a site of symbolic exchange, as it links us in a web of communication but also has the potential for misunderstandings (1994: 13). Rogoff (2000) connects her own displacement with the notion of complex daily negotiation between all the cultures, languages and histories that inhabit her because of her living in a multicultural place such as Israel. From this complex negotiation results a ‘suspension of belief in the possibility of either coherent narratives or sign systems that can actually reflect straightforward relations between subjects, places and identities’ (Rogoff 2000: 6). It is this tension between the desire for a direct correspondence with things and the inability of languages to deliver consensus on such relationships that links with nomadic subjectivity and the exploration of embodied and material ‘languages’.

The narration of the body is materialised through writing the body into a cultural and social milieu. Jefferies (1995) calls attention to the importance of the continuous process of writing, where we should ‘not stop the loom or the weaving, not to censor or to tidy or to edit the thought’ (1995: 167), which leads to understanding, witnessing and reflecting involved in the creative process, of which writing is one of the threads. It is here that the
threads of language, femininity and ‘gendered subjectivity [are] concealed with text’ (Jefferies 1995: 169). It is here that a gap exists between textile as a product of a thought and textile as a form of material thinking. It is here that the emphasis is put not only on the perceiving the embodied body, but also on the creating body and subject-in-process. Textile, when used as the focus of practice-led research, can be seen as a way of thinking through the body as material and material processes.

The two essential terms of language and home theorised by Braidotti (1994) in relation to the nomadic subject became unhinged within my own nomadic research process. The symbiotic connections of materiality – objects and words – to ways of thinking and feeling became an important point of reflection that echoed through my practice. In other words, my experience as an immigrant and as a polyglot is not only molecularised into a continual experience that cannot be separated from the research, but it is exactly why there are no borders between these two terms. Home for me is where I have lived for the past thirteen years, and it is also in other places where I grew up, where I have studied and where I brought up my kids. For me, home is linked also to language, where I can speak and joke in Hebrew that is woven with the local humour.

The polyglot is a concept that can be extended to forms of communication and situations involving changing contexts. In that way, it is a useful concept for practice-led research and the thinking processes that occur within and across the body and the chosen material.

159 Rosi Braidotti maintains that the nomad is neither a migrant nor a person in exile – which are in many cases seen as the same (1994: 21–32).
**The Artist: Ghada Amer**

Nomadism has inspired the artist Ghada Amer, who uses processes such as embroidery to challenge viewers to rethink female sexuality by making them sensitive to processes of translation of texts from the Qur’an on garment bags (Auricchio 2001: 2). She uses embroidery as ‘an ever-changing system’, a never-ending process that creates meaning, where ‘to express something in another language is a way of understanding it’ (Lotman, in Auricchio 2001: 2). Amer refuses to be perceived as the ‘other’ – as a person who is beyond the Eurocentric projection – and prefers to position herself as a hybrid who moves between worlds. This position enables her to use a critical tone in her art both towards the Western and the Islamic/African popular constructions of gender and sexuality (Peffer, 2003:n.p). This sense of moving in-between is expressed in her subjectivity as a polyglot who speaks French, Arabic and English. However, her resistance to being positioned as a stereotypical ‘other’, as one expected to exhibit her foreignness, is because she considers such expectations to be humiliating (Peffer 2003:n.p). Amer is both critical toward Western and Islamic cultures and chooses to use the written language – usually Arabic – which allows her to move between those cultures. In her work *Encyclopedia of Pleasures* (2001) (see Image 10), she embroidered an English translation of original Arabic excerpts from seven of the chapters from the Qur’an that deal with women’s pleasure and beauty.

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160 She presents the multiplicity of Islamic attitudes towards women, countering monolithic gender politics of religious conservatisms.

161 In *Private Room* (2000).

162 Shirin Neshat is an Iranian-born artist who moves around the world but explores mainly issues of women’s life under Islamic law. She uses written language on women’s bodies and in her videos and photographs. In addition, I found that works by Palestinian artists such as Mona Hatum and Iman Abu Hamid, who place photography works on white pieces of fabric, and Manar Zu’abi, who places threads into specific sites, all bring a critical approach through textile materials.
Not only is translating such a text into a Western language already a critical gesture, but the manipulation of the text (by blurring some of the words and by placing them on 57 canvas boxes) makes it time consuming and laborious to read. In positioning the embroidered words on boxes, she asks the audience to touch, lift and connect the text to the physicality of making the work. In this way, it can be seen as a laborious work by the artist and at the same time requires effort from the audience who experience the exhibition. There are multiple connections that are established when the artist negotiates between both cultures – that of the artist and that of the audience – and invites the audience to negotiate between these cultures as well.


Relevance

Amer views herself as a mirror to what is going on politically and to what has always gone on historically. She claims it is part of her ‘because I am a hybrid of West and East’ (Amer, in Peffer 2003:n.p). I connected with Amer’s use of language as a critical tool of both religion and cultures, but more significantly I found her choice of textile and textiling techniques to incorporate notions of her body as a woman, a hybrid and an artist. I also see it as important to acknowledge her desire to transcend her social status as an Arab woman in the Western world, where she resists being stereotyped as the ‘other’. Like Amer, I prefer to see my position within the cultural fabric ‘like the threads she sews into her canvases, intricately woven into the fabric of her art’ (Finkelstein 2008: n.p). Amer’s use of embroidered canvas to challenge values within the sociocultural context has influenced my practice. By incorporating embroidery techniques in my early works, such as Translation, I endeavored to bring the body into my art through this problematic of material and language, which embroidery brings together. The embroidered text becomes inextricably stitched together with experience in a complex network of language games and femininity.

The Process: Strange New Languages

Movement in between languages and places, combined with the repetitive daily practice of making fibres, weaving and writing in different languages, led me to develop a strange ‘made up’ language of in-betweenness. Weaving is a language that writes at the same time from right to left and left to right. In my journals, where I keep process notes, I have found that this phenomenon (of writing in both directions) occurs constantly. In addition, I have found myself in situations where there was a ‘lack’ of words to express some concepts. For example, I shifted the word ‘textile’ from a noun to a verb: textiled, textiling.
I have also found myself making words up. I began to use the sounds that were occurring during the making as a verb. For example, ‘ficking’ is the sound made when the yarn is pulled off the ball when stuck by the glue. I began to use this as a word to describe the action. Here the sounds are the words, and onomatopoeia is invoked. They are then used as verbs rather than descriptions. In this way, one could say the materials influence the development of their own language. This action of ‘ficking’ and the verb ‘to fick’ not only had a sound but also it became a part of the rhythm of the weaving, as well as my thoughts about these actions.

As a result of my polyglot and material-language experiences, I have a slightly different take on the postmodern than that offered by Michael Dorn (2002). He claims that, for the poststructuralists, ‘the postmodern nomad must develop the ability to switch quickly between different tongues’ (Dorn, 2002: 184, my emphasis). For me, a postmodern nomad, there is no ‘switching’ between tongues but there are various qualities of relationship in collaboration, difference and correlation.

While the forms, meaning and values of systems can be imported and sampled, there is a residual process of interrelation that is a function of materials, including the materiality of language. Therefore, the multiple layers and systems can be abrupt in the movements across a person’s lived experience. Otherwise, what would be the purpose of having the degrees of freedom to move from one system to another, one language to another, if a blending did not occur and a singularity did not result from the situated nature in which they occur? With time and practice, the process of flow between languages and within a single language becomes hybrid – moving between consciousness and affective ways of processing embodied thought. Moreover, because there is not always a direct correlation or exact
translation between two languages, a process of thinking where two languages work together to make meaning – perceive and reflect – becomes ‘teamwork’ of human and non-human.

**Theme 5: Repetition**

It is now necessary to explore a few approaches to repetition and what attention to repetition brings to my project. First, repetition\(^{163}\) functions as a calming movement. Second, it has a way of organising relationships. Third, repetition is a way to question and investigate through comparison and difference arising from a ‘single’ action. Lastly, in relation to the third point, repetition (the ‘same but different’) becomes a way of beginning anew again and again. In addition, I relate to the aspect of rhythm that is interwoven in, and comes as a result of, repetition. Within the process of making, rhythm becomes visible through repetition, which produces indispensable outcomes for a reflective artist.

Mi-Kyoung Lee\(^{164}\) associates the repetitive act involved in textile as calming movement. In her introduction to the Korean version of *Art Textiles of the World* (2005), she asserts that these repetitive techniques were not only developed from social gatherings by women, but also that repetitive movements have comforted women in the past and in the present (2005: 10).

\(^{163}\) Repetition is widely used by male artists as well – for example, Aboriginal bark painters using hatching.

\(^{164}\) Mi Kyong Lee is a published writer who has organised two international exchange exhibitions, ‘-trans’ (1998) and ‘66595miles (10614KM)’ (2004) between Korea and the United States.
In regard to repetition as an organisation mode, Cohodas and DeMott (1985) discuss repetition as a compositional movement, which creates visual effect or order, homogeneity and rhythm (1985: 101). Carter (2004) points out that, through repetition and meditation, artists increase their capacity ‘to perceive analogies existing between matters far apart and, apparently, most dissimilar, mythopoetically [which] creates “poetic-wisdom” through laborious work’ (2004: 7). Repetition allows the time for reflection, which is built into the processed chosen material. Each material carries a time value, and therefore a mode of reflection.

Clair Colebrook (2002) explains Deleuze and Guattari’s observation concerning repetition as a means of beginning again and at the same time a mode of questioning that refuses to remain the same (2002: 8). This approach conceives of repetition in a positive way.

For Merleau-Ponty (2002), repetition relates to habits, which he describes as both motor and perceptual repetition because it lies between ‘explicit perception and actual movement, in the basic function which sets boundaries to our field of vision and our field of action’ (2002: 175).

These different ways of thinking about repetition all come into play in my practice, and in the way I move from reading to writing to growing to weaving. Repetition also comes into play as I move across the terrain of each activity – whether the landscape of my own thoughts continuously scanned, or the spaces delineated by the beginning of the weaving, or the whiteness of the page as I write. There is repetition in traversing again and again the connections, covering the same ground over and over, sitting down to write, tying the yarn
to my body and then moving my finger across the keys or in and out of the yarn accumulated in the body as muscle memory and in the thoughts as cascades of difference.

**The Artist: Fiona Hall**

Repetition and multiples are integral to the work of Australian artist Fiona Hall. One aspect of repetition can be seen in the way she collects the multiple pieces of materials as a catalogue of experiences and associations. This procedure of collecting fragments the idea of the continuous narrative. In most of her work, Hall repeats scenes, motifs and images with slight variations, which become meaningful as statements, questions and political comments on environmental issues. An example can be seen in her work *Paradisus Terrestris* (1989–1990) (see Image 11), where she embossed, engraved and cut into sardine cans the image of different body parts and detailed botanical plants, which were labelled, classified and arranged.

![Image 11](image11.jpg)

*Image 11*


Aluminium & tin 25 x 12 x 3cm
Hall’s repeated images can be seen as taking the same path identified by Eva Hesse when Hesse talks about repetition as a way to exaggerate, since it is ‘more absurd if it’s repeated’. (Hesse, in Krauss 1993: 49). Repetition as absurdity, or as insistence or petition, can be seen in the use of the materials that Hall selects (sardine cans), or in the patterns of body organs and plants engraved and embossed on to these cans. The almost impossible softness of the body that is convincingly made to come through the tin is repeated many times until the sense of the metal is almost lost. Hall’s repetition offers more than exaggeration. She keeps on drawing (also tracing) on to the tins (it can be Coca-Cola cans or Sardine tins), engraving into and embossing. She accentuates the ‘underrated crafts such as knitting and weaving transform the throw-away materials of aluminium cans, plastic bottles and videotape … through artifice, natural forms become fetishised and potent’ (Webb 2007:12).

From the videorecording (1989) demonstrating her work, I could observe her position and posture during the working process. It was very similar to Agassi’s tying and untying performance: the gesture of Hall’s head and the intense gaze down – repeatedly shaping and forming the work – indicated the repetitive actions of making. For Hall, it is the repetition that creates openness since, as she states, the artist repeats the pieces and revisits it, over and over again (Hall, in Ewington 2005: 102). This plenitude carries a charge. Hall clarifies: ‘One image would be charming, intimate, special; twenty-three are compelling, confronting, inescapably public, eventually cathartic.’ (2005: 102)

Hall’s process is one of appreciation, of valuing and re-valuing (Webb 2007: 12) of artificial and natural form. Her repetitive forms can also be seen as teasing the intellect in a game of interpretation where, as Webb (2007: 12) states, a complex play of connections collapses and conflates play with notions of science, language, finance, politics and morality through
her combination of body, plants and materials. Hall maintains that ‘it is these classifications\textsuperscript{165} that reveal the cultural episteme active in how we perceive, value and understand the world and our place within it’ (Hall, in Webb 2007: 12).

**Relevance**

Hall’s process of repeated making, combined with her confronting images and her laborious procedures, results in a strong strategy that affects the viewer, making him or her aware of the repetition as an important aspect of the meaning of the work. The repeats, the actions of tracing, engraving, cutting and embossing, and in doing so she repeatedly questions the values attached to materials and the techniques. The utilitarian role of the sardine cans is shifted to that which supports an artwork. Because I work with contrasting materials, such as soft cotton and rigid seeds, I could sense the dialogue into which Hall enters when handling tools and metal in order to make the materials and the active engagement vibrant. On the one hand, the repetitive works can be calming and on the other hand these actions become rhythmical movements that connect her bodily beat to the embodied connection a viewer makes to her art.

**The Process: Biorhythms**

The long, attentive process of fabric-making and the repetitive movements in my works emphasise the rhythm, biorhythm and beat. Body connects the beat of things, people and the environment that talks and tap in sync.

\textsuperscript{165} Fiona Hall has selectively emphasised the tendency towards conjoined terms in systems of Western classification. This is not a merely whimsical rubbing together of similarities, differences and binaries: it is a purposeful play between different orders of things, set up to embrace, pull apart, to slip and to slide (www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/work/54-2000-a-dddd+cash-crop).
Repetition is a prevalent feature that goes beyond the obsessive aspect in my work. The repeated movement of making – repeatedly pulling the cotton seeds out of the wool, implanting barley seeds into the wool, rubbing the yarn against my body, rolling into a ball, tying the yarn around my body, weaving the pieces – has a paradoxical effect (see Image12).

![Image 12](Textiled_Becomings_2005–2010_Process_details_-_various_positions_Photographed_by_the_artist)

On one hand, when an action is repeated again and again, it can become a habit or an automatic action in which nuances become marginalised. On the other hand, in repeating actions I have the prospect of revisiting the same action in order to re-sense and find the answer to the over-arching questions I have asked throughout the project about body, connection and communication. At the same time, the repeated sensing through the same action can make the question irrelevant and take it out of circulation. In this way, repetition affords a focus on the sensual feedback that clarifies as well as delivers a constant update on the relationship of the work to the body.
Repetition also seems to work on a cognitive level that opens up a research, such as *Textiled Becomings*, that involves embodied sensual inquiry in relation to memory. Memory is a repeated cognitive action that reassembles disparate bits of information to produce again a relation, an experience or a detail. It might be useful to consider Arakawa and Gins’ clarification of the idea of ‘memory expander’. In their book *Architectural Body* (Gins and Arakawa 2002), they use computer lingo to explain the ways in which human short-term memory can be expanded by freeing space and striking out data, provisionally – just as you would extend a computer’s machinic memory. Thus a great reduction in one area can allow one to bring in new data from the external world, which is always there to supply what one might otherwise feel obliged to remember. Memory is therefore freed for matters other than keeping track of the immediate surroundings, which might qualify as a memory expander for the sighted: ‘Memory is freed up when one no longer needs to remember what is perceived because one is simply able to revisit it, and this, by most accounts, is what the external world has to offer’ (Gins and Arakawa 2002: 15, my emphasis).

In my project, it is through the repetition of the movements of making that that actions become ‘familiar’ to the brain and therefore are ‘pushed’ to the background rather than being erased or taken out. The ability to organize, reorganise and organise again through the repetition in relation to the spatial qualities of size and scale makes another area’s expansion

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166 Since 1963, artists-architects-poets Arakawa and Madeline Gins have worked in collaboration to produce visionary, boundary-defying art and architecture. Their seminal work, *The Mechanism of Meaning*, has been exhibited widely throughout the world. In 1987, Arakawa and Gins founded the Architectural Body Research Foundation, which actively collaborates with leading practitioners in a wide range of disciplines, including but not limited to experimental biology, neuroscience, quantum physics, experimental phenomenology and medicine (www.reversibledestiny.org).
possible. Massumi’s (1999) notion of biograms was introduced to describe a way of understanding the experience of the body as an abstract topology, which is lived and relived:

They [biograms] are lived diagrams based on already lived experience, revived to re-enter further experience. Lived and relived: biograms might be better word for them than diagrams. (Massumi 1999: 16)

Repetition as a mode of constantly reliving connections is very close to the function of memory, and can also be seen as leading to habit, which in textile work it becomes a way to know something but make it automatically. Despite the fact that habit is defined as an acquired automatic self-regulation, as explained by Brian Massumi (2002: 11), it also resides in the flesh. If I were weaving a piece in a certain way again and again, some habits would be altered due to changes of position, changes of temperature or changes of the strength of the yarn that demanded a flexible degree of attention; then the amount of attention would be the moderator of habit. Carter (2004) explains how some patterns of behaviour can be regarded as habit:

But creative knowledge cannot be abstracted from the loom that produced it. Inseparable from its process, it resembles the art of sending the woof-thread through the warp. A pattern made of holes; its clarity is like air through the basket. Opportunistic, it opens roads. (2004: 1).

167 Brian Massumi is a political theorist, writer and philosopher, and is currently a Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences at the University of Montréal in Quebec.
An example is the action of pulling the seeds out of the cotton. If I pull a seed out, I must at the same time sense the softness of the cotton and the hard edge of the seed. This relationality involves difference between the textures and a set of repetition of actions, the judgment of which becomes familiar. Familiarity enables a degree of openness to sensation but is not necessarily a habit. Rather, familiarity becomes an option for relations with the living plant – seeds of potential – and there is augmentation of the connections between thinking to both the sense of touch and the action of pulling the seed from within the fibres.

The flow between these layers of attention is refusing to pin down knowledge, Manning argues, but ‘asks us to invent’ (2007: xvi). Manning observes that the body senses in various ways, ‘in layers, in textures, in rhythms and juxtapositions that defy strict organization into semiotic system’ (Manning 2007: xiv). This communication can happen through semi-permeable membranes of identities in repetitions and movements that provide continuity as well as difference.

Rhythm and biorhythm provide a good example of the cyclical relationships between thought and action, body and material. When rolling the yarns on my thigh, I found that not only was my hand moving and rubbing the fibres, but my whole upper torso was moving as well. Although it seems that the torso has no role in the production, it becomes kinetically linked to the movement. I also found that I was thinking with a rhythm that matched the rhythm of the rolling. To make this clearer, I started to talk to myself in simple sentences, such as ‘The day is nice’ or ‘I have to wash the dishes’, and found myself following the rhythm. It shows how thought, action and materials are working to shape each other, rather than as one distinctly being identified as the cause and one as the effect. In my studio work, I involve the whole body – from the lines of thought that are inspired by the academic...
research leading to reflections through the artwork or vice versa, where involvement in a certain activity, such as growing, can connect to theoretical frameworks or can be explained through them.

**Theme 6: The Non-anthropocentric**

A non-anthropocentric approach implies a shift in the way we position the natural environment. Typically, humans are positioned in the centre controlling nature, and all else is marginalised by human concerns. This stands in contrast to the perspective that sees the world as collaborative systems intertwined and dependent on one another.

Feminist theorists, such as Braidotti and Grosz, and theorists interested in the relations between subjectivity, politics and culture, claim that there is a need to have more nuanced, intricate accounts of the body’s immersion and participation in the world if, as Grosz (2008) states, they are to develop political strategies to transform the existing social regulation of bodies – that is, to change existing forms of biopower, of domination and exploitation, but more urgently. Grosz further claims that the visual arts extract something imperceptible from the cosmos, and that is transforming the lived body into ‘unliveable power, an unleashed force that transforms the body along with the world’ (2008: 22). Art is the most direct intensifying connections in the web of life or between bodies and the cosmos. We need to understand – perhaps with more urgency than in the past – the ways our biologies work with, and are amenable to, the kinds of cultural variation that concern politics and political struggle. Bennett (2010), in accord with Grosz and Braidotti, sees the importance of emphasising the pursuit of non-anthropocentric alternatives to materiality necessary to defy the narcissism of humans in relation to the world. Anthropologist Knappett (2005)
recognises the two-way psychological bond that exists between humans and materials: the presumption of controlling nature and the reading of the ability of objects to ‘act back’ and affect human psychology. Agency, Knappett asserts, emerges reciprocally between human and materials that have a direct impact on how our body remembers and chooses to act upon that memory. Both Bennett and Knappett rely on Latour’s (1999) claims that materials are actants – the source of action, the combination of human and non-human.

The Artist: Janet Laurence

For Janet Laurence, working with living art is working with nature, its substances and its secretions, its dynamic processes and its destruction. The natural world has always infused and informed her work. For Laurence, it is the blurred line between subject and object that becomes possible by incorporating living materiality into art. She uses honey ochre, oxides, minerals, fur, seeds, bones, salt, straw, ash, shells and diverse spices of flora and fauna, including deer, birds and plants. These materials carry opposing impulses and associations: nature/culture, art/science, order/flux and growth/destruction. These binaries allow her to suggest an ‘interconnectedness’ of things in a way reminiscent of the nomadic, ‘preoccupied with the creation of an in-between or liminal space in which this sense of interconnectedness, as well as notions of transience and transformation, can be apprehended’ (Couacaud, 2007: n.p)

In her recent work for the Sydney Biennale, Working – Medicinal Garden for Ailing Plants (2010) (see Image 13), she used glass veils and laboratory equipment in which she grew plants in the installation.
Through the incorporation of actual living plants, her aim was to draw attention to the threatened environment, employing metaphors from medicine to drive the point home. In a white tent, she created a sick bay for the plants. She reversed the role plants have in medicine to cure people. In her tent, it was the plants that needed medical care. She located the tent in the middle of Sydney’s Royal Botanical Gardens. In the past, Laurence has produced site-specific environmental works such as *Veil of Trees* (1999), in collaboration with Jisuk Man. In *Shadow* (2000), she planted new trees to accentuate the notions of restoration, remediation and becoming.

Walking between the various heights of medical paraphernalia (of *Medicinal Garden for Ailing Plants*), some plants were growing while others were black and dead. This experience of her work emphasised for me the idea that nature also undergoes processes of displacement at the hands of human misunderstandings. Her strategies of diminution and transplantation meant that living plants in the veils could be moved from place to place. ‘We
become intimately imbricated into their precarious existence – the fragility and uncertainty of their future suggested in their tenuous life-support systems.’ (Couacaud 2007:n.p).

**Relevance**

I related to Janet Laurence’s awareness of the fluidity of human and non-human negotiations. In *Textiled Becomings*, my awareness of the dependency between my body and the growing and living agents became an essential part of the research. The collaboration with living materials operates on many levels, from the inversion of the caretaking role, to the actual care needed to maintain the plants, to the poignant dependency we have upon the exploitation of plant life for the sustainability of our own species. Typically, the position of the human as the highest value is highlighted throughout relationship with animals. However, Laurence brought home this message through her work with plants.

Another aspect of Laurence’s work that is relevant to my own process is the notion of always being in process. This is evident in Laurence’s ‘unfinished work’, where ‘images never concluded but caught in the hiatus of forming … Within her language of evocation, identities of fragments are never fixed but, like metonymic signs, are veiled and open, shifting in an associational process of incessant mutation.’ (Brauer 1989: n.p.) Lastly, it is the correlations between the body parts become relationships with living materials in Laurence’s work, and also in my own work; these then grow to form relationships that constitute the living art.

**The Process: Collaborating with Plants**

In the early stages of my creative process, I started to work with processed materials, which later became less appealing as an awareness of the sharpened questions of collaboration
rather than control grew. For me, everything that was already made, packed and ready to use was perceived as an additional thick layer to be peeled off. I wanted to go through the day-by-day life of the artwork and document each step, starting arbitrarily with the seeds. The seeds of the barley were implanted one by one within the cotton fibres. However, in order to have a space for the barley seeds, I had to pick the cotton seeds out from in between the cotton fibres. The cotton fibres implanted with the barley seeds were rolled and rubbed intensively between my hands and against my body to become yarns. The yarns are rolled into balls to be stored for later weaving. These yarns are woven into shapes corresponding to my body’s constriction as they are worked over and around it with no tools used – as has already been described. What I am emphasising here is the importance of the material in this process: the organic collaborators whose movements are orchestrated but cannot be choreographed (I can affect the timing of the sprouting, but not the way the plants grow and die).

Documentation of the process and the work was done in various forms. I have documented the process of making both the fibres and the textile using video recording. In addition, a video recording was made to document the growing barley within the woven pieces. For this task, I also used a ‘from scratch’ approach. Manually, I have taken footage four times a day over a period of five weeks. The short pieces of footage were edited and made 500 times faster. I have used digital photography to document the growing stages of the cotton

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168 In order to reach the quality of the final video I had to go through three cycles of growing and documenting. Each cycle takes approximately a month of recording segments of 20-minuted three or four times a day, every day. For each cycle I have devised a different constellation where I have built various boxes and devices in order to reach a clear image and on the same time consider the growing conditions that the plants need (light, watering, position of the woven piece)
plants. Drawing was incorporated in every stage, whether sketching the positions in which I would work in or designing the installation (see Appendix 2). The sounds that were involved in the work were recorded digitally.

Curiously, in order to highlight the non-anthropocentric life of the materials, I have had to focus on the documentation of the plants’ contribution and the aspects of their involvement that were not under my control (even though I am in control of what is presented in the documentation). The use of time-lapse and the engagement as a slowing down meant that I began to deal with the plants in their own timeframe, and adjust my temporality to theirs.

**Theme 6: Time and Temporality**

The idea of time, or more accurately the experience of time (temporality) in this project, has varied and changed greatly. Movement through time has changed from slowing-down processes involved in the making, to the time of organic life cycles, to the cultural and historical time of women weavers of the past and the dispersed concurrent time of women’s communication today. These aspects are all connected and represent enormous personal challenges to me in my attempts to incorporate, address and deal with vastly different scales and qualities of time in this project. The connections between fibre and textile-making, and time and temporality are explained by Mattiebelle Gittinger,¹⁶⁹ who tells us:

> The woven textile carries connotations beyond those of merely women’s labour
> … just as music is an experience monitored through time, so too does the total

¹⁶⁹ Mattiebelle Gittinger is one of the foremost researchers and scholars in the field of Southeast Asian textiles.
cloth emerge as the finished expression of the metrical time invested in each throw of the weft. The cloth thus becomes a metaphor for both time and fruition. (Gittinger, in Barber 1994: 163)

Bruno Latour (2004) argues that political ecologists needed to slow down their movements and ‘take their time then burrow down beneath the dichotomies like the proverbial old mole’ (2004: 3). Grosz (2008) also suggests that visual and sonorous arts capture the vibrant structure of matter and organise chaos through the extraction of colour, rhythm and movement in order to slow down and reshape a new harmonics in order to give independence to what is non-measurable (2008: 19).

The experience of time takes its place next to the experience of materials (organic and non-organic), the experience of the living body (human and non-human) and the experience of community (cultural and historical) to constitute the active elements in my creative site and the ground from which I am able to make connections and speak about those connections.

**The Artists: Klaus Rinke and Monika Baumgartl**

Although artists’ work always has some relation to time, the performance work by German artist Klaus Rinke and his partner Monika Baumgartl pushes the boundaries of time to the extreme. In their work *Primary Demonstrations* 1971 (see Image 14), the body becomes a living artwork. The geometric configurations created with their bodies by moving slowly from one position to another, usually for several hours at a time, change the perception of the body as a subject to one that perceives it as a sculpture.
According to Rinke:

These works contained the same theoretical premises as stone sculpture in space, but the additional elements of time and movement altered the viewer’s understanding of those premises: they could actually see the process of making sculpture. (Rinke, in Goldberg 1988: 160)
Rinke used the whole gallery space and placed a huge clock on the gallery’s wall. It was an instrument, he claims, to demonstrate the shortness of life. At the same time, he placed a plumb bob in the middle of the room, which demonstrated a different type of time or measure of movement associated with time. In addition, he divided the space by drawing lines to exact parts of the space, and designated one for the woman and the other for the man. He explains that it was ‘to show the public what it means to be together at the same time – man and woman getting up, sitting, standing, being there, getting tired, going slowly down, lying – daily rhythms, life rhythms, gravitation, earth bounded-ness’. Time for Rinke was reality moving in the direction of the future. The performance took the whole day, from eight in the morning to the closing of the Baden-Baden Kunsthalle museum, during which the audience was invited to visit (www.klausrinke.com-autobiography.htm).

Relevance

Rinke and Baumgartl’s work is concerned with slowing time to the extreme, and making different ways of understanding time visible to a viewing audience. The artists’ ‘control’ over the instruments of time, together with their accentuation of the effects of time (temporality), is tied to the idea of performance. These considerations of temporality and performativity have become prominent in Textiled Becomings. The time of making ‘from scratch’, growing the cotton, making yarns and the activity of weaving are linked to the time of the barley’s life cycle in the gallery. The idea of pushing the time boundaries was also applied in the process of production of the video documenting the lifecycle of the barley within the woven pieces. The tie of performance in Rinke and Baumgartl’s work makes me think of the different time scales implied by Janet Laurence’s work with plants, especially when we think about drawing attention to the negotiations between human and non-human time. In Textiled Becomings, my
awareness of the temporal relationship between my body and the growing and living agents became an important insight into the benefits of practice-led research.

**The Process**

As I discussed in relation to documenting different time scales of human and plant life in the thematic or non-anthropocentric, I have chosen to document the process of making – both the fibres and the textile – using video recording. This has allowed me to capture the weaving and the growing of the barley within the woven pieces. For this task, I also used a ‘from scratch’ approach. Manually, I have taken footage four times a day for five weeks. I followed step by step the process of seedling, growing, maturing and dying of the barley plants. The short segments of footage were edited and made 500 faster to allow human scale of perception to register the change. The strong contrast between the imperceptible time and movement of growing to the time on the video, play also with the tension between technology and life, nature and human, real time and digitally manipulated time and temporality.

In addition to the time of the work captured for the exhibition, the temporality and labour are a central part of textile production and also can be seen as the structure of a critical process. The time taken to produce textile artworks over the course of my PhD candidature – for example, eight months (*Becoming*), six months (*Edginess*) and four months (*Translated*) – is

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170 In order to reach the quality of the final video, I had to go through three cycles of growing and documenting. Each cycle takes approximately a month of recording segments of 20-minutes three or four times a day, every day. For each cycle, I devised a different constellation where I built various boxes and devices in order to reach a clear image and at the same time consider the growing conditions that the plants needed (light, watering, position of the woven piece).
interlocked with the ‘context of time’ in which the work was created.\textsuperscript{171} The lived experience of time produces relationships that enable ‘recurring threads to be drawn between the objects and human (which is to say, mortal and social) lives’ (Rowley 1999: 13). These long-term timeframes stretch out the ability to hold and structure continuity, while the ‘from scratch’ process slows down the immediate and the detail of incremental time in the process of one session of making. Hence time becomes a component of the methodology and a methodological consideration in terms of the way time can be used to structure, track and observe the ideas, issues and implications of practice-led research.

**Conclusion to the Thematic Discussion of Process**

It has been important to correlate the overlapping sets of concerns at work in my creative practice and in my decision-making process. The themes have enabled me to avoid the over-simplification of a chronological account of the artworks. The themes act as a site for a number of concerns that appear in both the analytical processes required by theoretical research and reflective processes required by the experiential and performative creative research. As a result, the influences of other selected artists, which supply a context for my own work, could be combined with the insights gleaned from specific instances revealed in the making process. It is only in the integration of these aspects that the enactment of a methodology such as ‘from scratch’ could be addressed and presented.

Appendix 2 documents the works that have led to the final exhibition in order to provide a context for the development of my engagement and supplement these discussions of process.

\textsuperscript{171} Huyssen (in Rowley 1999: 14) observes that the context of time transforms ‘the structure of temporality in which the link between past, present and future is being fluid’.
Conclusion: Key Ideas, Insight and the Emergence of Intimacy

The aim of both my project and the discussion within this exegesis has been to point out the implications of first person, transdisciplinary, practice-led research that highlights the indivisible relations between the social-cultural-historical forms of collective expression and experiential forms of materiality through a nomadic mode of research.

A few issues have emerged from my project that are important to consolidate from and carry forward into further research. The honing of the general method of practice-led research into two specific modes of engagement is of primary importance. The first is the experience-based mode of nomadic connections that allows the diverse aspects of my identity and my embodied understandings of difference to influence the way in which cultural, social and environmental forces are intertwined. The second is the material-based ‘from scratch’ mode reflected through specific materials and embodied performative activities that influence the creative process.

In Textiled Becomings, I draw from all aspects to find the importance of embodiment and cultural interconnections. Since practice-led research addresses, to a great extent, what counts as knowledge and what are the best means by which knowledge is acquired, the contribution that a practitioner can make boils down to the benefits of a specific difference – in this case, the connection between social forms of communication and creative forms of materiality.
This endeavour suggests that an interdisciplinary investigation is required, which links the ongoing production of self and the collaborative construction of life as the overriding question behind the use of living materials in the artwork. Whereas the contribution of my project cannot be captured in such a general and broad claim, it is my assertion that the particularity and specificity of the engagement allows the benefit to move from art and life to understanding the labour, purposefulness and meditative qualities of hand-spun yarn woven on the spaces of my body’s interaction with itself and its environment – implanting it with additional life. This is what has been investigated and put on display. It cannot be reduced, translated or given analogy. The presentation of process entails a confrontation with the irreducible – for example what use is a reduced version of the telephone book? Granted, in presenting the work for exhibition and in documenting the documentation of the work on video, there have been slices taken from the project, either abridged or technically altered (time-lapse) depictions of process. But the woven works, irrigated and hung in the gallery, are living texts and living works that are the culmination of all the work that preceded the exhibition and exceed those works by continuing to grow in the gallery. The slices of practice reassembled in the gallery and the exegesis work together to provide contexts for *Textiled Becomings*.

To begin, I will attempt to recap the line I have taken through the project and the exegesis. I have argued that the separation between human and non-human is detrimental to understanding the materiality of the world and the position from which practice-led research speaks. I have also focused on specific histories of thought, which have brought the constructed and material aspects of subjectivity into the present context of globalisation. I drew from various feminist theorists that emphasise the benefits of dynamic web-like
relationships between women’s bodies, their embodied world experience and subjectivity to the world. And I have deployed Grosz and Braidotti’s elaboration of the Deleuzian notions of becoming to emphasise the need to an open in-process subjectivity. Nomadism, as developed particularly by Braidotti, allowed me to examine the ethical relations of intersubjectivity in capitalist globalisation. In turn, this led me to an understanding of the need to remember the delicate balance between the biological and cultural, and what is lost in the devaluing of material processes. The suggestion that something is lost does not give in to nostalgia, but rather recognises that with each material process comes a unique embodied experience. The delicate balance between re-collecting possible ways of knowing and sentimentalising the past dissolves when we value the difference in self-production. The difference becomes a constant writing of women’s bodies into culture in order to arrive at a state of witnessing and reflecting upon our collective understandings.

The web-like relationship between human and non-human was informed by a series of disciplinary perspectives, the importance of which was described by anthropologists Vastokas (1994) and Knappett (2005), who saw the continuing inattention to material culture by disciplines such as psychology, anthropology and sociology as significant. The notion of the artefact as a dynamic agent that ‘holds and encapsulates both action and thought’ (Knappett 2005: 170), points to the need for interdisciplinary collaboration. While Vastokas emphasises the benefits of the inclusion of the social, the ritual and the making of the artefacts, Knappett applies a cognitive approach to archaeological research that emphasises the sensual embodied experience of the artefacts. Concurring with Knappett, I see cognitive science as a crucial perspective for understanding the connection that a person makes with his/her environment, as well as to the understanding of how these relationships are organised to make meaning. In this way, the feminist methodology connects me into the
larger realms of communication, history and identity while the cognitive sciences points me towards understanding my connection to materials and materiality through introspection of experience and an embodied understanding of communication, history and identity.

The emphasis in *Textiled Becomings* has been on the notion of embodiment throughout the project. Ideas of fluidity and process have been placed above aesthetics of taste and formal beauty. I have put the most weight on processes that are included in the making of art, embodying art, perceiving art and performing art. The fluid frames that bioart, installation art and performance art make available are enhanced by utilising cross-disciplinary approaches and ultimately facilitate the freedom to move in between areas of art, science and philosophy. It is this in-between approach that I have emphasised in the careful gathering of disciplinary elements that benefits an art practitioner, such as myself, who is focused on the interconnectedness of person to the environment. In my creative practice, art is not a product, nor is it a goal. It is the materialisation of movement and relation, demonstrated by the always-in-process idea of vital materiality.

The medium in bioart is the living material – both the agent and the environment itself – that brings life to the art and art to life quite literally (Mitchell 2010: 31). While often bioart is associated with genetic engineering, the use of human cell lines or the live or dead body as expressive material, I have chosen to work with plant life directly by using growing plants within my woven pieces. In this way, the work becomes a hybrid performance. I am performing only behind the scenes, using the body as the loom, while the plants are performing their life cycle for the audience at the exhibition. The process of making bioart in this way emphasises the idea of the relationships of human and non-human as a system, refusing to represent these relationships by allowing them to present, for themselves, the
dynamic performative aspect of the creative act. The world-artist-artwork is reconfigured in plain view and is presented as becoming art.

In order to track both the history of ideas embedded in the textile and bioart production, and my own thoughts and feelings about the material with which I am working, I have relied heavily on Fauconnier and Turner’s (2002) notion of conceptual blending, through which they explain the process of meaning-making. Most of the process of meaning-making is folded invisibly within the unconscious processes. I have found that conceptual blending is both an explanation of what is happening in the production of meaning and a way of paying attention to the decision-making process through the evidence and indications of the ways in which I organise and interact with the material and ideas I have selected and to which I have given value. In this way, conceptual blending makes me aware of the constructed nature of identity: ‘Identity [sameness and difference], integration and imagination – basic, mysterious, powerful, complex, and mostly unconscious operations – are at the heart of even the simplest possible meaning.’ (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: xi)

Therefore, it is crucial for an art practitioner to consider the value of incorporating a perspective that relies on the body as a system and as always in a process of connecting (threading itself into) to the world. For me, the challenge became evident in a few areas of my making process. The first challenge was to honestly account for the incorporation of theoretical and practical (yet no less historically influenced) frameworks that dealt with fluid connections between the subject and the world. The second challenge was to consider the body, literally, as my research and the means through which to endeavour to find out not only how ‘things’ are made but to follow how bodily processes unfold, including thought construction and sensory experiences. The third challenge was to take the ‘from scratch’ as

_text elected Becomings: Making from Scratch_
far as I could back into the primacy of making, which also at times seemed like a movement back or across time, tracing back the connections between body materiality to world, to artefact – from scratch. This challenge to make my own material through the material means of the body was devised as a way to become aware of the connections between the social structure of communication expression and the untranslatable in relation to the historical and personal interaction with materials and ideas of materiality. This constituted my practice-led research.

I would describe myself as following a line though Spinoza, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze to tie into the history of ideas and concepts of process and embodied production. Working within practice-led research that interlinks theory with practice in the social field, I aimed to open the boundaries of research to be inclusive to a range of intelligences. As an arts practitioner, I also found it difficult to ‘fit’ into the ways in which practice-led research is theorised today. With the growing tendency to encourage practice-led research, there is still not enough flexibility afforded researchers who employ creative processes and outcomes, especially if the work falls in between disciplines.

My project belongs to the in-between. It is not strictly a humanities inquiry, fine arts exploration or science-based investigation. Given this context, where the value of creative research is not quite developed, there is a place to suggest an open creative site to facilitate reconfigured research methods and first-hand experience. I propose a creative site that combines multiple inputs and acknowledges embodied, situated, unconscious and emotional connections in combination with analytical intelligence in order to provide insight into how arts practitioners may have opportunities to experiment with various levels of cognitive
processes in relation to the co-selection and development of a common world and shared experiences.

In the creative site, there is not one leading discipline but rather multiple shifts in leadership where, for example, at times the practice is leading the research and at other times the research gives the practice its direction. The process works in the same way that the Möbius strip provides a topological analogy – movement from inside to outside on a single continuous surface. The views of scientists such as Damasio, Fauconnier and Turner, together with feminist philosophers such as Grosz, Braidotti and Pollock, and anthropologists such as Vastokas and Knappett, acknowledge the body as a whole, sensing organ. The creative site consists of overlapping connections and non-linear conversations. The practitioner becomes a specialist at this method of interconnecting phenomenological information with neuro-scientific information, with materialistic information and with biological information. I suggested this movement across is the nomadic approach to research. I argued that within the context of globalisation, where the idea of the subject becomes fluid, practitioners who use the nomadic approach in research are able to interlace and correlate embodied experiences of their engagement with the history of ideas. Understood in these terms, research cannot be conceived as an observational mode of acquiring knowledge and analysing information. Instead, research is always a practice and embodied, performative mode of producing the world in relation to others.

The movement from practice-led research to nomadism – introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and developed by Braidotti (1994) – to ‘from scratch’ describes the arc of my methodological decision-making process. It was the concept of the nomadic researcher and its inextricable relation to the nomadic subject that allowed me to understand and
connect my fragmented identity (consisting of nationality, cultural values and social values) in relation to a body-person becoming and always in-process. Once again, the notion of the hybrid or hybridised process is a relevant image.

The nomadic style of research draws from a variety of embodied modes of intelligence (nomadic subject) as well as from embodied actions such as perceptual, sensory and kinesthetic movements. The body of a nomadic researcher moves between the roles of researcher, writer and maker to become the artwork. The movement across territories and domains of thought requires negotiating with different materiality, in particular the ways we think about specific materials. In this way, the nomadic researcher avoids categorisation and respects difference, making nomadism an ethical stance. The nomadic researcher opens ‘intransitive becomings’ for sustained exploration.

Through my project, both within the written and the practical components, I repeatedly discuss the co-dependency between human and non-human. The idea of the nomadic subject catalyses the ways in which I am interacting with and employ materials in order to follow both the materialising of thinking and the effects coming from thinking through materials.

I have chosen to use the process ‘from scratch’ in order to both slow down processes and to be able to follow nuances and patterns of emerging and existing connections, and also to connect through traditional material processes to social and cultural understandings of the body, the ‘other’ and the environment. Working ‘from scratch’, I am able to go back to the most basic materials and processes in order to be able, at the same time, to unpack and build up combined, hybridised and reconfigured layers of meaning. The idea to use the ‘from scratch’ process was provoked by the statement of Fauconnier and Turner (2002), who
explain that no idea is constructed ‘from scratch’ but it is always connected into either a cultural or social blend. I took this idea literally as a challenge to one’s self-reflective abilities, to research and analysis and to understand the era in which one lives to look, and to feel and think about how one builds upon past ideas, past practical knowledge, past experiences and past memories in order to find the connections between materiality and meaning-making.

The connections that I was able to identify through the processes I used also helped me to connect with and understand my own process through the artists I researched. From works by Australian Aboriginal contemporary textile artist Yvonne Koolmatrie, German-American Eva Hesse, French-American-Egyptian Ghada Amer and Israeli artist Nelly Agassi to Australian artists Fiona Hall and Janet Laurence, the connections between the use of specific materials and the formation of identity and community were extremely strong. Connections included the use of soft materials such as latex and cords in Hesse’s, Agassi’s, Koolmatrie’s, Hall’s and Amer’s work. The awareness to the importance of process, and the emphasis placed on it by artists such as Hesse, Koolmatrie, Agassi and Laurence in order to bring to light the idea of ‘what the art does’ rather than what the art means, signals a move away from the concept of representation towards experience of/with/through materiality and the importance of including the body (whether as a suggestion in Amer’s, Laurence’s, Koolmatrie’s and Hesse’s works, or literally in Agassi’s works).

Insight into the specificity of difference is at the heart of practice-led research, the story of nomadology and the particularities of making oneself and one’s relation to materials ‘from scratch’. In a performative approach to research, each choice changes the outcome, and for that reason the choice to use weaving as the primary mode of engagement is the single most
important decision I took in structuring my PhD project. Weaving, using traditional means and a contemporary set of relational concepts, has meant that I have had to confront my own ideas about the most important shared concepts (identity, otherness, ethical interaction and respect for the human–non-human collective). The slow, up-close engagement with materials and with the processes of my own thoughts produced an intense intimacy with the things to which ideas and materials are connected – the plants themselves, where the seeds come from, who produced the seeds, how the yarns were spun, how weaving has developed and the audience that engages with these weavings produced from my own body or done in between my body and that of another person.

It is this feeling of intimacy, and an understanding of the benefits of engaging with culture and history in an intensely intimate way, that I shall offer as the culminating insight of my project and the subject of my concluding remarks.

**Intimacy**

In this section, I use the notion of intimacy to focus all that I have discussed in my exegesis. The inclusion of the body in the artwork is a vital component within *Textiled Becomings*, and is accentuated not only through the sensing body as a loom but also the body as the artwork. These two modes of connection highlight the notion of intimacy that has intensified throughout this project. It is the quality of the connections that can be shown through the idea of intimacy, and therefore the quality of the information upon which to act – ethical know-
how. Cognitive scientist Francisco Varela (1999) maintains that ethical action comes down to a reality that is ‘perceiver-dependent, not because the perceiver “constructs” it as he or she pleases, but because what counts as a relevant world is inseparable from the structure of the perceiver’ (1999: 13). This is the insight that practice-led research affords and fills out in detail. The detail exists across the experience of the work and the discourse around the work, both in the exegesis and in the discussions during the exhibition that extract the work’s meaning.

The value of intimacy is ultimately my way of understanding the relationships between society, culture and the community, and it constitutes my ability to move across community, education or health situations by delivering workshops, lectures or demonstrations that enact these intimate connections.

What I have extracted from the overall process of focusing through this PhD project is that when people become involved with this intimate space of weaving, they come closer to the work, to the practitioner and the embodied connections that trigger memories and associations.

It is perhaps more obvious how intimacy applies to the notion of interacting with material and materiality to produce embodied experience, but I would also like to address the way in which intimacy affects my research. The theoretical facets, which include philosophical, psychological and sociological factors that relate to my methodology, cannot be excluded

172 Varela sets out the enactive theory of cognition based on two interrelated points: ‘that perception consists of perceptually guided action and that cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensory motor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided’ (1999: 12).
from embodied experience, or from the way they guide perceptions and decisions about what actions to take. Intimacy intensifies affective relations that are often invisible. Through the affective intensities, I engage, understand and organise even the textual, linguistic and analytical aspects of my research. In turn, these directly implicate the bodily connections and internal conversation that result in my idiosyncratic pursuits. The thematic through which I explored the process of decision-making and fabrication, such as rhythm, meditation and sensation, all indicate the way in which affective intensity becomes an intimate, personal relationship with what is being studied, observed or made.

As a sensory experience, intimacy (via touch, smell, taste) is intensifies during the course of the exhibition as the plants grow, change, flourish and die. The process of living and growing is shown through the textures, the colours and the smells of the work for the artist and later for the viewers. Those viewing the exhibition will find that they will need to move in close to look and be positioned (potentially) across from another person who also leans in to look more closely. Intimate bodily positions, the feelings of tension and perhaps pain and pleasure are some of the emotions involved in the making and the viewing. Hence intimacy not only informs the breadth of knowledge made available in the creative process, but it also allows for an unfolding of ideas and experiences across projects in various disciplines.

Intimacy also involves intuitive and innovative ways of engaging with the subject of one’s research. A conference called ‘Inventing Intimacy Through Research’, which took place at Goldsmiths College, London in 2006, brought researchers together from diverse disciplines to describe the ways in which intimacy is incorporated within their research and how it is
contributing to the research. Mariam Fraser173 and Nirmal Puwar174 explored a few of the reasons why intimacy is not often included within the descriptions of methodology in their ‘Introduction: Intimacy in Research’.175 They state that although these are affective properties of research labour, the fruits of intimacy in research are too often reduced to autobiography, since it is not always acceptable for researchers in the academic sectors to discuss ‘what it is “really like” in the field of collection and production, as an embodied being’ (Fraser and Puwar 2008: 5) Moreover, they claim that: ‘The risks of appearing to be overly or overtly sensational in the discussion of the flesh, fabric, glamour, sounds, grease and grit of the everyday nature of research, often polices communication of how the research was undertaken’ (Fraser and Puwar 2008: 8). The result of acknowledging intimacy as a factor of methodology would be an ‘embodied recognition’ that occurs when movements and sensations are taking part within the research. For example, the movement of my hand passing between the yarns or intensively ‘rubbing’ against my body while spinning the fibres into a yarn suggests that the body has a memory distributed across the spaces of everyday life. This is precisely the type of knowledge production through intimacy for which they argue.

In her essay ‘A method of Intuition: Becoming, Relationality, Ethics’, Rebecca Coleman (2008)176 suggests that a Bergsonian approach of intuition is useful in that the only way a thing can be known is by ‘coinciding with the uniqueness of its becoming’ (Coleman 2008:n.p). This is also a form of intimacy. Becoming, for Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 277),

173 Mariam Fraser is a Senior Lecturer at Goldsmiths College, University of London.
174 Nirmal Puwar is a Senior Lecturer and at Goldsmiths College, University of London.
176 Dr Rebecca Coleman is a Lecturer at the Institute for Cultural Research, Lancaster University.
acknowledges that things are constantly transforming in an endless process of change. Both intimacy and intuition can contribute to our understanding of research processes and methods, and open up ethical considerations regarding the unique becoming of the objects/subject of inquiry.

Coleman uses Bergson’s distinction between intuition and analysis to explain the ways in which intuition is not a translation while analysis is. Analysis begins with an opposition outside of the thing and understands the thing through a system of representations, interpretation and symbols, as Bergson explains:

All analysis is thus a translation, a development into symbols, a representation taken from successive points of view from which we note as many resemblances as possible between the new object, which we are studying and others, which we believe we already know. (Bergson 1999: 23–24)

Coleman concludes that representation implicates symbolic systems that are removed from the object and therefore allow an infinite number of points of view or interpretation to be generated about the object being scrutinised.

Intuition is working-from-within. It allows imagination to be included in the object’s becoming. This occurs not through a pre-existing system of symbols, as it would in translation, but through the coming-into-being, which is a situated and material process. Coleman also states that because intuition involves understanding the uniqueness of an object:
Intuitive research makes it difficult to see research as having predictable aims, procedures or outcomes, and the effects that it might be hoped to have are understood to be produced through the becoming of the researched and researcher(s) themselves. (Coleman 2008:108)

If the object of research is always in movement, then the researcher must move constantly and transform in relation to others. I suggest it is through recognition of the intimate relations between the practitioner and the artwork or the sub-object of research that I am able to notice notions of intimacy in other practitioners’ work and to visualise intimate connections through the observation of artefacts. Coleman argues that Bergson’s ‘entering into’ method is also ‘going closer’ or intimate with her subject of interest (Coleman 2008: 105). Intimacy, she claims, is a method not determined by the researcher; rather, it is produced through relations between things (2008: 109). This suggests the concept of the nomad or the nomadic researcher since the nomadic researcher is involved in relationships with diverse areas. For example, in my research I am developing intimate relationships by growing plants in soil to harvest the cotton for the produced yarns that are to be woven and implanted with seeds, which become growing pieces.

I began in Chapter 2 with a discussion of psychiatrist Russell Mears’ notion of play. Coleman’s words bring us back to where we began by tying into Mears’ (2000) idea of intimacy as a part of conversation between the self and the environment. The ideas of method pile up, and each one tells a slightly different story about the relation of all the components.

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177 Coleman is researching the connections between body and image in girls aged 13–14 years. She emphasises ‘the relations between social researcher and researched, subjects and objects, bodies and images’ (Coleman 2008: n.p.).
The movements from a generalisable notion of method (practice-led research) to a concept of process (nomadism), to tactical approaches, to production (from scratch), to the construction of open spaces that hold the investigation (creative site), to the glue that binds personal to social to historical (intimacy) are all qualities of movement that position one in relation to the task at hand – the task of identity and the task of ethical interaction with persons, animals and the inorganic materiality of the world.

Intimacy can shed light upon my original research question that drives my practice and the description of my own processes. It is my hypothesis that social connections reflect forms of materiality. Against the backdrop of globalisation, modes of producing affective intensity become intimacy works against displacement, as reflected in the ways in which materials are utilised. I propose that the topological metaphor of textilising/fabrication breaks down the boundary identities between self, material and other to allow fluidity and multifaceted connections with the world.

In the postmodern era, I believe it is a misconception to suggest that ‘anything goes’ when in fact it is more accurate to say that everything is available (again) for use and serious consideration. This distinction and the degree of freedom it makes available require more, not less, ethical know-how. Therefore, despite the fact that there are so many things that I could have done to emphasise the importance of process in the final exhibition, no other material (fibre production) or method (from scratch) or process (weaving) could have provided the delicate and nuanced experiences of materialising, connecting and reflecting upon my own cultural and social intersubjectivity.
Further Research

I can see a few paths that can be taken further as developments of the project or implementations of the methodological processes I have enacted. However, the area of textile research that I would like to pursue next is an area called extreme textiles. While not within the scope of this project, the extreme textiles speak to the way in which weaving, knitting and textile techniques contribute to cutting-edge technological innovation. An exhibition of extreme textiles was held at the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum of the Smithsonian from 8 April to 30 October 2005. The textiles on display were designed for high performance and developed from collaborations between science, industry and design. Extreme textiles come in all shapes and forms, including special materials used to build lighter and faster racing cars or stronger fabrics able to lift tonnes of materials. However, I found the medical use of textiles, in which they are embedded into the body in order to replace or enhance human tissue, to be the most inspiring. For example, the alternative uses of knitted and woven polyester tubes that have replaced human arteries in bypass surgeries since the 1950s are explained on the website of the exhibition:

The flexibility of machine embroidery may allow customized replacement ligaments to be produced in a matter of minutes. Fibrous breast implants are being suggested as a safe replacement for silicone in reconstructive surgery.

(www.lightweightid.com/ExtremeTextiles.pdf)

My interest is in extreme fibres and innovative processes of textile production because they are perceived to be more suitable for implanting into the body, due to their flexible qualities. I
could foresee the possibility of offering my knowledge of textile and embodied experience to collaborate with scientists and fibre manufacturers.

Another pathway for further research that emerged from my project involves the observation that there is a need for research into women’s language and communication that utilises textile patterns. My interest in this area came from looking at many textiles and communities of textile makers – mostly women – across the world. For example, the cross-stitching of abstracted patterns embroidered by the Bedouin women in Israel is visually similar to patterns embroidered by women of Eastern Europe. I would suggest that research could be done on the production of the patterns, and their use as alternative forms of communication would require a long-term research project.

**Final Exhibition**

In order to demonstrate a process that consolidates and reiterates the process(es) employed through the PhD project, in this section I summarise and specify the ways in which I have made my decisions in relation to the final exhibition. I discuss specific decisions involved in the project and included in the final exhibition from two perspectives. First, I write from the point of view of the artist, who is driven by a set of investigative parameters and embodied explorations. Second, I offer my thoughts from the point of view of the curator of the exhibition, who must conceive a format for the presentation of selected works that clearly emphasises the creative and research process undertaken and provides an experiential engagement for the viewers.
The exhibition component ties together the material relationships, fabrication processes and theoretical perspectives that constitute my creative site and represent the culmination of the research project by orchestrating the experience of living art and artefacts. My objectives in deciding how to arrange the exhibition focused on how the visitors would be affected by the evidence of the processes presented to them. Further, my ambition was to allow the audience to derive the meaning of the work from the connections the ‘artefacts’ make to time, labour, historical ideas of body, textile and alternate modes of communication, extending through the art context to other fields of inquiry (as suggested in Chapter 1).

While the primary purpose of the exhibition component was to act as the culmination of the research process, it also evidenced the necessity of an interdisciplinary, practice-led research in which methodological investigation requires embodied knowledge. The creative work implicitly presents what this exegesis makes explicit through concepts of process and the articulation of my working processes. The final exhibition uses the spatial strategies available through installation art that orchestrate the sequence and relationships available to a viewer by accentuating a bodily engagement with the work.

As a result of these aims, the exhibition design is infused with an interest in producing a dynamic whole. Visitors encounter a space where pieces generate forms and meaningful relationships that collapse the time of production and reception. The social meaning of this kind of exhibition relies upon the installation genre, in contrast to the production of objects for exhibition by orchestrating the spatial relation of the works and how the viewers move through and access information. This way of thinking about meaningful connections in a
social space fits into what Bourriaud calls relational art and relational aesthetics. Rather than arranging the gallery space to be walked through and appreciated visually, the strategy of installation art allows the researcher-practitioner to produce ‘a period of time to be lived through’ (Bourriaud 2002: 15), which has embodied and social affects. The social dimension opens a dialogue with other viewers, with the artist and with the histories upon which the artist has drawn. Therefore the exhibition has the possibility of tightening the space of relations that constitute everyday life in a more general and dispersed way, condensing them into a saturated place and time. This approach to the overall dynamic of the installation functions as an invitation to viewers to take time – to read and absorb the depth and breath of the possibilities (of meaning) accumulated and displayed in the gallery.

Nomadism, discussed at length in previous chapters, suggest a way to understand the relational aesthetics that Bourriaud (2009) outlines, not only because nomadic subjectivity is entwined into ways of researching, but also because it works against ‘enshrin[ing] specific forms, processes of visualisation peculiar to our own epoch’ (2009: n.p.). My curatorial decisions are intended to accentuate the dynamics of connectivity that can be achieved through the spatial strategies of installation and an emphasis on the tensions between the temporal aspects of the maker and embodied engagement of the audience of the exhibition. The decisions that I have made open up a space of intimacy as the embodied implication of

178 Relational art and relational aesthetics suggest that aesthetics be expanded beyond the consideration of material forms to include and emphasise the social forms of engagement produced by a work of art. In this way, a relational aesthetic that sees the essence ‘of human kind as purely trans-individual made up of bonds that link individuals together the in social forms’ (Bourriaud 2002: 18) and relational art that takes as its ‘theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space’ (2002: 14), are connected.
these weavings unfold for the audience. In this way, a notion of intimacy in the exhibition experience comes to the fore and produces pockets of sociality and discussion in the gallery.

**Experiencing the Weavings**

*As the artist,* I wanted audiences to be able to experience the bodily relationships that would enable viewers to imagine and potentially feel how the woven pieces were made on my body.

*As the curator,* I decided to install the pieces according to the height at which they were woven in relation to a standing body. The aim is to enable people to walk around the works, and if a person were to be standing across from someone on the other side of the hanging woven piece, they would be able to visually correlate the woven piece with the part of the body used as a loom. This would also allow a person to relate the weaving back on to his or her body. Therefore, pieces hung at head height, torso height or hip height will allow people to walk around the pieces (see Appendix 1), as well as view the drawings and sketches of the layout of the works (Appendix 1) and examine the irrigation of the hanging woven pieces.

**Documenting Change**

*As the artist,* I decided to document the processes in still images and video. One video was made of the process of making ‘from scratch’ and a second video was made using time-lapse imagery of the process of the barley growing within the woven pieces. The decision to produce videos came from my emphasis on the process and the importance of including the performative body within the artwork. The decision to include the process of growing barley plants by speeding the imagery 500 times came from a conceptual aim of juxtaposing the fast procedures of technology against the slowing down processes of ‘from scratch’.
The decisions that I have made have been driven by the notion of intimacy in the exhibition experience:

**Viewing the Weavings**

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As the curator, I decided to place the video of the process of making the fibres within the gallery but in a space that is away from the hung and irrigated woven pieces. This decision was made by considering the fact that the experience of the pieces should be different from the experience of viewing of the video. This will allow the materiality of the pieces to have a non-narrative presence and yet provide information about the body weaving the works available. In the same space in which the videos are projected, I have decided to also project the video that portrays the time-lapse of the barley growing so the viewers can move between these two processes to think about the time of making and the time of growing – the before and after involved in the life of the works (see Appendix 1).

**Statistical Descriptions and Associations**

As the artist, I decided to incorporate statistics as a way of narrating each piece. The statistics indicate the time it took to make the yarns and the time to weave the piece, as well as the words that I developed or associated with each piece. I have also included a very short slide show of still images documenting the process of making – for example, the different positions I took in the weaving process. These images are shown on a miniature monitor. I decided to use small and unobtrusive monitors rather than large-scale projections, in order to bring the viewer closer to the documentation and keep them looking inward at the labour, the growth and the nuanced relation of time, form, material, body and context.

As the curator, I decided that the display boards or placards containing the statistical stories and associated words, as well as the images documenting the weaving positions, would be placed directly next to each piece in order to make the correlations and connections clear and easily accessible.
**Plant Baby Album**

*As the artist,* I decided to create a baby photo album to document the stages of growing the cotton plants, to indicate the care and patience needed to raise the plants and to emphasise the caring and almost motherly relationships I have with the plants and the woven pieces.

*As the curator,* There will be a specific area designated for the album not far away from the central installation of the pieces (see appendix 2) for images of the placement of the baby-album.

**Works in Context**

*As the artist,* I decided to include work leading up to the final exhibition, but which does not represent what I consider to be the body of work that is the culmination of the PhD project. This includes all the embroidered images of my body scans and the furniture knitted with my CT scans. Displaying these works provides a way to show the movement of my thinking and making processes away from representation and towards an enactive or process approach. I will include only the works that I see as stepping-stones in the research and that inform the final body of work.

*As the curator,* I decided to display the earlier works on the wall across the room, which is divided by the stairway from the second floor to the gallery floor, so that the viewers will be able to have a context for the final works and of the trajectory of the project. This is intended to support the idea of the process that is crucial to the final exhibition (see Appendix 2 for floor plan sketches of the exhibition).
**Life Cycle**

*As the artist,* I decided to include in the exhibition the woven pieces from previous exhibitions that had died. This decision comes from a desire to show the performative aspect realised through the cyclical process of life. The dead woven pieces indicate the performative aspect, but also push the works towards anti-aesthetic by emphasising process and allowing the visual sensation (the colours and textures of decay) to help shift the focus from formal to relational works.

*As the curator,* I realised that, even though the smells associated with organic decay would contribute to the experience of the work, for health reasons these dead woven pieces needed to be enclosed and sealed behind glass. I decided to hang the collection of the ‘dead’ pieces on the opposite wall to the growing pieces in order to emphasise the cyclical process of life.

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All my decisions and all my efforts have been focused on emphasising process, delivering an experience that bridges personal, sensory and embodied understanding in relation to social, cultural and historical understandings. The method of my engagement, embedded in the materials, has also been foremost in my considerations of the making and the presentation of these works. The quality of the movement of my body in making the weavings resonates with the quality of the movement with which a person must negotiate and move across and between domains of knowledge and experience (like nomads). The experience of the weavings made on the loom of my body is always in relation to the body of the viewer. In this regard, the weavings aim to evoke a social and communal setting. Bringing the past into the embodied experience of the present and the weaving might suggest that embodied
experience, accentuated by practice-led research, will enrich our productive and communicative capacity as we reinvent ourselves, the meaning of our shared experience and the shape of our common world.

Note:

Please see Appendix 2 for drawings that document my curatorial decision-making process for the final exhibition as well as documentation of works and the process of making the woven living pieces. Videos of the making process will be on display in the exhibition and will be provided to the examiners on a DVD after the exhibition opening in order to allow me time to document the installation and include this in the durable record. Therefore, the supporting DVD will not be submitted with the exegesis but will be waiting for the examiners when they visit the gallery.
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*Textiled Becomings: Making from Scratch*


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Appendix 1:

Previous Works Leading to the Final Work

I have worked for many years with cotton fibres – *Knitting a Corporeity* (2004) and *Textiled Becomings* #1 (2007/8) and #2.

Since my enrolment in the PhD program, I have produced three main bodies of work: *Translated* (2005), *Edginess* (2005) and *Becoming* (2006). These works consist of different forms of textile, emphasising the idea that we enact our embodiment and cultural/social experience. Fabricating has become the most demonstrative way in which I could re-enact the making of oneself in relation to/with an environment, as well as exploring the ways in which this activity may become a way of thinking. I will give a brief description of the work in this appendix to suggest how the thematic and the materials are brought together in the experience of making.

A particular quality throughout my creative process has been the incorporation of materials that exhibit opposing or contrasting characteristics: rigid canvas vs. softness of the embroidered filaments; chicken wire as opposed to the soft knitting yarn; and industrial hoses filed with fluids. The contrast is used to stress the tension between materials and the use of a material as a marker, in an effort to keep the work open, uncertain and transitional. *Edginess* and *Becoming* are made of media with contradicting qualities.

In *Edginess*, I have knitted the softness of the yarns into the rigidity of metal chicken wire. In *Becoming*, I have sucked (using my mouth) fluids such as rainwater and food dye representing blood into industrial water pipes. This material composition undermines the idea
of an unremitting pursuit to control and direct nature by leaving the edges hanging and emphasising the possibility of further connections to the environment. My body unites these materials into objects, referencing a corporeality willing to communicate through the body and the processes of enacting the body in artwork.

Translation #1 – 2006
Embroidered (knots) ultrasound images into canvas, cotton threads
Exhibited in MetroArts Gallery, and substation, Brisbane and Tweed Rivers Art Gallery, Murwillumbah, 2010
Photographed by Vince McKillop

Translation #1 – detail, 2006
Embroidered (knots) ultrasound images into canvas, cotton threads
Exhibited in MetroArts Gallery, and substation, Brisbane and Tweed Rivers Art Gallery, Murwillumbah, 2010
Photographed by Vince McKillop
Translated and Edginess deal with notions of embodiment while challenging the idea of translation through the use of different processes. The intention of translating the internal body parts and abstraction of the body is an attempt to situate the body not as mere container but also as an artwork. Ultrasound, an internal bodily image such as the throat and gallbladder (in Translated) or of the head (in Edginess), is printed on acetate and displayed on a light box. Digital photography is then used in order to make it possible to be transferred.
on to fabric, beautified by hues of blue paint through Photoshop. Then and only then, the canvas is embroidered with metallic, silk and cotton filaments or knitted into the furniture. This process abstracts the image then reorders it through embroidery (knot stitch). *Edginess* deals with the notion of knitting a CT scan of my own head, which intersects the boundaries of wearable craft/art and science. This movement across established genres (for example, knitted furniture) allows the boundaries of art and science to be crossed over and overlapped.

*Edginess* – 2005
Acrylic yarns, chicken wire, knitted CT scanned images of head.
Exhibited in MetroArts Gallery, Brisbane
Photographed by Vince McKillop

*Edginess* – Detail – 2005
Acrylic yarns, chicken wire, knitted CT scanned images of the head.
Exhibited in MetroArts Gallery, Brisbane
Photographed by Vince McKillop
In *Becoming*, the space of the work is enclosed within and is enclosing the environment through its permeable membrane by allowing air to flow in and out between the yarns. The knitted cocoon encloses a space around the body and enables a space of communication. The industrial hoses filled with liquids changed transparency in response to the temperature of the environment. The size of the work (2.30 m x 1.10 m) blurs the boundaries between the weaver and what is being weaved in such a way that my body is moving in and out of the space, being aware of its enclosure.

*Becoming* – 2006

Clear acrylic tubes inserted with red food dye and rainwater.

Exhibited at the Swell Sculpture by the Sea Festival, Gold Coast

Photographed by Vince McKillop
Connected strongly to my project is *Knitting a Corpoself* (2004), in which producing the yarn myself played a central role. I realise that very few contemporary fibre artists produce their own yarns ‘from scratch’. On the other hand, Indigenous artists such as Aboriginal and Papua New Guinean women have inspired me to see the potential of going back to basic forms of production. I have decided that I will return to making the component parts of my work from scratch, and explore the deeper understanding and connection it provides with my own processes and with my physical and cultural environment.

The work *Knitting a Corpoself* (2004) consisted of making knitted female body out of hand-spun cotton and soil threads, suggesting the Jewish myth of the Golem. The work was based on the idea that we enact our embodiment to call ourselves forth from our material surroundings of clay and cotton and glue. I have extended and amplified this notion by emphasising the processes involved in such enactments, using knitting as my medium. Fabricating was the most demonstrative way I could find to re-enact the making of oneself in relation to an environment. The process and the resulting material objects together comprise what I am calling the ‘corpoself’, a term I have adopted to indicate where the materiality of
the corporeal impacts upon the self and is knitted into one unit, which both forms and is formed by the environment.

**Knitting a Corpoself**

2004

Cotton, red soil, glue, video

This view is from Counihan on Brunswick Art Gallery, Melbourne, 2008

Photographed by Iris Fisher

**Knitting a Corpoself – detail**

2004

Cotton, red soil, glue, video

Photographed by artist

**Knitting a Corpoself**

2004

Cotton, red soil, glue, video

This view is from Counihan on Brunswick Art Gallery, Melbourne 2008

Photographed by Iris Fisher
Appendix 2:

Designs Leading to the Final Exhibition

The images in this appendix include two exhibitions that were produced specifically to help me think about the presentation of the woven pieces as well as to solve problems of irrigation and the final hanging arrangement. I have organised the images in this appendix in chronological order; First, the two "test exhibitions" and then my sketches for the final exhibition. The sketches should be understood as trials and variations from which the final presentation was chosen. The purpose of these sketches is to indicate my thinking process in regard to the physical gallery space and the constraints and opportunities that the space provides. Key factors in my thinking process were the large windows as a source of light for the plants and potential presentation platform, the need for irrigation and water sources, the best hanging arrangement for viewing purposes and the placement of documentation and previous works to ensure that viewers are given a context and a way to make connections within and across the bodies of work presented."

I have organised the images in a chronological order:

1. These images were included in a proposal to the Judith Wright window space in 2008.
These are photographed models that I have built to demonstrate the way of installing in the gallery space.

2. Exhibition at the Tokonoma Art Gallery 18 November 2009.
3. Designs for final exhibition at the QACI art gallery space: